Avignon: A couple of days is sufficient to see the sights in and around this ancient fortress town. 7¾ hrs to Siena.

Siena: Spend a day exploring one of Italy's most enchanting medieval settlements. 1 ½ hrs to Rome.

Florence: Take in the city's Renaissance splendour from the cupola of its landmark Duomo.

Rome: Linger on the Spanish steps, beside the Trevi Fountain and in the Piazza Navona. 2¾ hrs to Pompeii.

Pompeii: The Unesco-listed ruins provide a remarkable model of a working Roman city, including baths, taverns and a brothel.