

# Italian Excursion

small group tours to Italy



Italian Excursion, small group guided tours to Italy, Tuscany, Umbria, Venice

## **Italian Excursion Tours and Greg Tamblyn present Your Magnificent Italian Adventure! -- Venice, Florence, Tuscany, and Rome -- 11 days - 10 nights, October 16-26, 2010**



### **A Small-Group Tour of Italy for Discriminating Travelers**

Join us on a special journey to famous (and not-so-famous) regions of Italy, so rich in all this extraordinary country has to offer. Hosted by Greg, and guided by experts Cheryl, Allison, and a cast of vivacious Italians, you're invited to come relax in the rhythm of La Dolce Vita, the authentic Italian lifestyle.

Are you a food and wine lover? An art or history buff? Or do you just love people and making connections with new cultures? If you love traveling in the company of other like-minded, positive people, and would like to explore Italy at least partly "off the beaten track," you'll have the opportunity to do what you enjoy -- in the most magical way Italy has to offer.

Or perhaps this is your first European trip and you need some guidance for traveling safely and with confidence. You'll gain the skills you need to travel with ease in Italy. Our group size is limited, to ensure your comfort and enjoyment. We guarantee you a treasure trove of new cultural experiences, exciting discoveries, and wonderful memories!

### **Fabulous Features!**

- Caring, attentive guides, concerned about your comfort and safety.
- Knowledgeable, fun guides, brimming with fascinating information
- Country living or city stays with en-suite accommodations at four star lodging.
- Daily trips with expert guides to local sites reflecting the art and culture of the region.
- Wine tasting/food pairing at local wineries and restaurants producing the finest (not your tourist fare)
- The most magical, mysterious side of Venice, where locals gather.
- The streets of Florence, where Leonardo da Vinci and Michaelangelo walked.
- Italy's "Ideal Renaissance City", Pienza, looking more like movie set than something built in the 15th Century.
- Local villages and towns that still maintain centuries-old arts and crafts.
- Plenty of leisure time for exploring your own interests.
- History, Archaeology, and Spirituality of Ancient Rome and The Vatican
- Full breakfasts daily, plus seven lunches and six dinners
- Musical musings and mindful mischief hosted and provided by Greg Tamblyn

Hike in the woods, study Italian cooking with an expert, take simple language lessons, go mushroom hunting, olive oil tasting, grape harvesting, learn journal making, or spend time wandering in some of Italy's hidden gardens. And more!



### ***Join Cheryl***

Cheryl has been traveling to Europe, particularly Italy, for over 15 years. Her interest in Italy, its history, art and rich culture led her to purchase property near Orvieto, allowing her to spend more time there. Cheryl's exploration of Italy includes the regions of Tuscany, Umbria, Lazio, as well as the areas around Venice and south towards Sorrento. She continues to travel into Italy's less traveled regions, and enjoys sharing her discoveries with others.

She spends the rest of her time near the beach in San Diego, cavorting with her two small grandchildren. She's an avid reader, health advocate and community volunteer. Her career as a social worker brings an understanding of people's needs to the tour business.

***We treat our guests like visitors to our own homes. Your comfort is our greatest concern.***

### ***And Alison...***

Alison Berry moved to Italy three years ago and lives in Northern Lazio where she can see a 13th century church from her balcony. She studied Art History and Classical Civilization and worked for years for an art auction house. Now she spends her time showing the splendors of her region of Italy to others, making books, doing printmaking, reading fiction, and tasting lots of wine. She delights every day in the beauty of her adopted home. Her husband Neil is British and their son Max is a student in Seattle.

***Along with several other colleagues in Italy***, who specialize in certain topics and regions, Italian Excursion provides you with interesting and memorable information about the places you visit with us.

**Contact Cheryl to register:**

760-448-5920

[aparnaca@gmail.com](mailto:aparnaca@gmail.com)



***Italian Excursion Tours for the discriminating traveler***

## Testimonials

**From Anne in San Diego.....**"Cheryl was a super host from the time she picked us up as we arrived in Italy till she dropped us off at the end of the week. She always consulted the group as she planned each day's activities, respectful of pacing and choosing daily itineraries she thought we would like. She was organized, and warm and welcoming, without doing more than we wanted or needed. There was also plenty of free time to lounge, enjoying the scenery and weather, or to read, if we chose to have some time alone. We enjoyed every minute of our stay with Cheryl, and her love of Italy was apparent throughout."

**From Jamie, Nevada.....**" I know I need more time to put it all in prospective but I will say that the hill towns where we toured was the best part of my adventure. Thank you so much. You are a wonderful tour guide."

**From Janet, Massachusetts.....**"Traveling with Cheryl and Alison was not just an interesting, informative experience, but fun, easy and comfortable. I plan to do it again."

**Cindy and Michael, San Francisco.....**"We enjoyed this kind of travel, with a small group, to less traveled places in Italy. No rushing or waiting in lines, no crowds to contend with, and some great new places we wouldn't have found on our own."

**Tina and John, Toronto Canada.....**"We so enjoyed the intimacy of the small group; the comfort and varied itinerary; the knowledge of the art and cultures of Italy. Thank you for the trip of a lifetime!"



## **BENVENUTO! Welcome to Italy!**

### **Here's your Magnificent Italian Adventure, day by day.**

Breakfast is provided every morning, so get up in time to enjoy it! We will plan to leave after breakfast, most days between 9 & 10 a.m. Guests may wish to arise early to walk in the streets before we go off on our day trip. We're flexible with our time in a small group, but will want to be sure to accommodate Italy's schedule. Everything closes from 1:00 - 4:30 p.m. for lunch and quiet, including museums and cathedrals.

### **Day One (Saturday): Explore Venice with a Local Celebrity!**

Meet at the airport, then scenic transfer to our lodging. Shannon Essa, author of *Chow Venice!*, will start us on our first exploration of magical, mystical Venice. (Each group member will receive a copy of her acclaimed restaurant/bar guide!) She'll take us to the famous Rialto fish and vegetable market, where you will have a drink and sandwich al fresco. Next, a walk to Piazza San Marco and on to the Riva. We'll then grab a vaporetto (water taxi) across to Salute; explore southern Dorsoduro, stop for cichetti (Italian tapas) at Gia Schiavi, gelato on the Zattere. Then a ride by vaporetto to Grand Canal to Ca' D'Oro. La Cantina wine bar for afternoon drinks and snacks. Transfer back to hotel/apartment for a short rest.

Arrangements for your welcome dinner (on us), have been made for later. Acclimating your sleep schedule to this country's time zone is important, so we'll do all we can to keep you awake until later in the evening!



### **Day Two (Sunday): A Full Day of Magical Mysterious Venice!**

Cornetti and café en route to Frari church, which is a must see in Venice. Next we'll cross to Cannaregio, visit the Ghetto and explore northern Cannaregio. Lunch will be 2-3 cichetti stops during the afternoon. Walk to the Miracoli church, SS Giovanni & Paolo, then Fondamente Nove optional gelato for those of us who can't get enough of this wonderful confection. We'll then walk to the Arsenale, explore area around Arsenale and San Pietro di Castello, and Via Garibaldi. Let's have a glass of wine or a coffee at Wine Bar Angio on the riva, then catch a vaporetto; view Piazza San Marco from the lagoon. We'll end at Campo Santa Margherita, where we can have a spritz before going back to our lodging for a rest and clean up for dinner. Then dinner will be at Taverna San Trovaso or Casin Dei Nobili for a special taste of Venetian hospitality. Get a good night's sleep but maybe take a stroll on your own before heading to bed, on our last night in Venice, which is a magical place under the stars!



## **Day Three (Monday): Florence, Michelangelo, the Renaissance, and More!**

Today we'll leave for Florence where we have two glorious days in this center for the arts, an outdoor museum as such. Leaving Venice early enough to have some morning left to explore Florence, we will visit its Duomo Complex, with the Baptistery, Cathedral and magnificent cupola of Brunelleschi. These amazing structures inhabit more than a city block and encompass over 500 years engineering feats that are today not fully understood. We'll have our lunch before checking into the hotel, then spend the afternoon viewing Michaelangelo's "David" and lesser known works at the Dell' Accademia. Up close and personal with this piece of art is something never to be forgotten. Dinner together at a family owned trattoria with local wine and dishes special to Florence. If the weather is warm enough we may be able to catch one of the city center's own troubadour shows, which are captivating and enchanting, sometimes drawing over a hundred spectators.



## **Day Four (Tuesday): Authentic Florence, Art, Science, and Shopping!**

Today we will have a walking tour with our local guide to many of the sites that Florence is famous for. The 500+ year old Straw Market for some authentic local treasures to take home with us, a walk across to the Arno to Oltra Arno, the artist's quarter where we'll stroll through the Boboli Gardens and the Pitti Palace. If we have time, we'll visit the science museum that houses some of Leonardo da Vinci's early inventions and Galileo's renowned telescope. A free afternoon is in order today, as walking the wonderful streets and bridges of Florence is fulfilling in and of itself. Great shopping and photo opportunities are everywhere. Don't miss the incredible street artists displaying their diversified examples of the art of this country. You can take home an original watercolor for a very reasonable price that will memorialize your time spent in Florence.

## **Day Five (Wednesday): The Tuscan Lifestyle Begins**

This morning we leave for the country in Tuscany, where we'll stay for the next four days in farmhouse style lodging with views to make you weep with joy! During our stay we'll have some leisure time to walk, bike, swim, relax and a multitude of day trips that take us to vineyards for wine and olive oil tasting, hill towns and villages such as PIENZA, SIENA, MONTALCINO, PITIGLIANO AND SOVANA. Each of these places has special sites which we'll witness and explore. Of course, the food will be exceptional, since it's local and prepared fresh each day. Don't forget, we have a cooking lesson during our stay here.

Today, once we are settled into our rooms we will explore Chianti, a "region within a region", and it is guaranteed there will be wine tasting going on here! Chianti offers a unique landscape, with green, gentle hills covered with wide fields of vineyards and olive groves, small stone villages, characteristic parishes and countryside homes in stone. It covers an area that reaches roughly from Florence to Siena, with no defined boundaries and is famous for its red table wine. The Chianti landscapes are so beautiful and particular that they inspire many photographs which then become postcards and calendars distributed across the globe.



## **Day Six (Thursday): La Dolce Vita**

Sovana, a sweet, small enclave of artisans, houses two interesting churches, the larger of which started construction in the 10th century. PITIGLIANO is one of the most unusual towns imaginable, sitting atop a sheer cliff lined with Etruscan tombs. It is also home to the first ghetto of the Renaissance, built by Lorenzo d' Medici for the protection of the Jews of that era. It is now an underground museum, rebuilt by the city in honor of those people, even though there are only three left in town. After lunch we'll return home and have the rest of the day free. Guests will either be able to stay for dinner at our abode or be taken to a nearby village for dinner. It's certain that on evenings such as this, Greg will have a plan for fun and entertainment!

## **Day Seven (Friday): Cheeses, Chants, and Scenic Wonders**

Today we stay a little closer to home and visit several towns in the vicinity with very different attributes. Pienza, constructed in the latter part of the 15th century, at the wishes of native son Pope Pius II, will take your breath away with its sparkling, pristine appearance. This town is famous for its cheeses, so get ready to taste, as they are magnificent! Many photo opportunities here, too, so DO NOT forget your camera.

Montalcino is known for its Brunello wines, has breathtaking views on a clear day. The Oaks of Montalcino have covered its hills and valleys from prehistory to present day, sharing their territory with the Olive tree, the Chestnut tree and Montalcino's most famous plant the Brunello grapevine, also known as Sangiovese Grosso. After lunch we'll visit Sant'Antimo, a ninth century abbey, where the monks sing Gregorian chants at the headquarters of the excellent Brunello we have heard so much about.



## **Day Eight (Saturday): Relaxing, Enchanting Tuscany**

Siena is our destination for today. We'll have a morning guided tour of this enchanting, Gothic city and visit one of Italy's most beautiful squares, the Piazza del Campo. Let's not miss the church that houses Saint Catherine's head! (If you're squeamish, you can skip that little adventure). Then a free afternoon for lunch, wandering and shopping. Upon our return home, a walk or a rest, then a local pizzeria for some authentic country food and wine.

## **Days Nine and Ten (Sunday, Monday): All Roads Lead To Roma!**

Our journey now takes us to our boutique hotel in Rome for the last two days of our tour. A local guide will take us to the most notable sites of Rome such as the Colosseum, Forum, Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain, The Pantheon (Temple of the Gods), The Vatican's Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's. You'll get a full taste of what Rome has to offer during these two days: the food, the people and the antiquity Rome is so famous for. You will have free time to explore for yourself and time to come back together with the group to celebrate each other and your time in Bel'Italia.

## **Day Eleven (Tuesday): Arrivederci!**

Departure day is always sad as we say good-bye. The shuttle takes us to Rome's largest airport, half an hour to the west, in Fiumicino, except, of course for those staying longer on their own.

If you'd like to extend your trip and stay on in Rome, or explore some other part of the country you are interested in, we would be happy to help you plan for this as well. Just let us know when we're booking your tour.

## **WELCOME TO YOUR MAGNIFICENT ITALIAN ADVENTURE!**

### **Additional Services**

Because your unique needs are our focus, we are happy to help with trip planning; airfare, hotels, cooking classes, bike riding, catering – just about anything you might want to do on your trip.

When you are ready to make travel plans, please let us know and we will give you many good tips for travel, packing, choosing the right airline, hotel, etc. – everything that will make your trip exactly what you want it to be!

### **QUESTIONS? Contact Cheryl Alexander!**

760-448-5920 [aparnaca@gmail.com](mailto:aparnaca@gmail.com)

### **TOUR PRICE: \$3,450**

Based on double occupancy. Single supplement \$300.

Minimum group size 8 passengers, maximum group size 20.

### **Price includes:**

- Venice airport pickup and transfer
- Lodging for 10 nights
- Ground transportation for 11 days
- All breakfasts, seven lunches and six dinners
- Guided tours to special destinations - Daily!
- 24 hour travel support during the tour
- Music, commentary, and special group "moments" by Greg Tamblyn
- Transfer to Rome airport

**Not included:** airfare, travel insurance (highly recommended), some meals, most entrance fees, personal shopping, gratuities.

### **Reserve your space today...before we fill up!**

30% deposit required. Balance due August 15. Please send your registration form and deposit as soon as possible to hold your space.

Contact us now, we're always ready to answer any questions and help in any way possible. Ciao!

**Cheryl Alexander**

**Italian Excursion**

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In the event of changes due to circumstances beyond our control (it's Italy!) other venues and activities of equal value will be provided.

This tour requires a certain amount of walking, uphill walking, and standing. You must be in reasonably good physical condition to enjoy all the activities. You can always opt out of certain day trips and have more free time, or schedule other events at your own expense.

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