

Italy: Itinerary



The Art of the Italian Renaissance

Days 1 & 2

Our program begins as we depart New York for Italy. Arrive in Milano and transfer to hotel. Rest from the international flight and dinner in the evening. Overnight Florence.

Day 3

After breakfast we explore the major sights of Florence, walking into the central **Piazza della Signoria**, one of Italy's most beautiful squares and the center of secular life in the Days of the Medici. There we will see the fortress-like **Palazzo Vecchio**, Florence's most imposing and famous palazzo with its 308' tower and a replica of **Michelangelo's David** standing before it. Then we walk a few blocks to the religious center of the city to see the cathedral, named the **Duomo** after Filippo Brunelleschi's amazing dome. Alongside the cathedral stands **Giotto's Bell Tower**, Europe's most beautiful campanile. Facing the cathedral we will find the octagonal **Baptistry** with Lorenzo Ghiberti's famous **bronze doors**, so perfect, according to Michelangelo, that they could have been the gates of paradise. In the afternoon we take a bus tour to see the major landmarks and the breathtaking view of Florence from **Fiesole**, a fifteen minute ride, where we see a panoramic view of the Arno valley and the city below, its Duomo huge and dominant over the red-tile roof-tops. Overnight Florence.

Day 4

This morning will be dedicated to a visit to the **Accademia** gallery. The highlight of this collection is the original of **Michelangelo's** colossal **David**, carved in 1504 and now the world's most famed sculpture, as well as his quartet of celebrated **Prisoners** or **Slaves**, originally intended for the tomb of Pope Julius II. A short distance away we visit the **Palazzo Medici-Ricardi**, home of the powerful Medici family, where we will see **Benozzo Gozzoli's** mid-15th century **frescoes** in the **Medici Chapel**. Just before lunch we walk a short distance to be amazed by the lava-like flow of the stairway in the vestibule of the **Laurentian Library** designed by **Michelangelo** for the Medici. After lunch we visit the **Brunelleschi's** church of **San Lorenzo**, a supreme example of early renaissance architecture. Here also we will find the **Medici Chapels**. We will visit the **New Sacristy**, with architecture and sculpture by Michelangelo, including his allegorical figures of **Day and Night, Dawn and Dusk**. Overnight Florence.

Day 5

Today we take a bus tour through the beautiful Tuscan landscape to the historic medieval walled city of **Siena**, where you will be transported back to the Middle Ages. Once the rival and enemy of Florence, Siena is today a showplace of Italian Gothic. We will visit the Civic museum in the **Palazzo Pubblico** to see the most important piece of secular art to survive from medieval Europe, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's frescoes of the **Allegory of Good and Bad Government and their Effects on the Town and Countryside**.

On our return journey we will visit picturesque **San Gimignano**, called the Manhattan of Tuscany because it preserves 13 of its noble towers, giving it a “skyscraper” outline. Many of its palaces and churches are enhanced by Renaissance frescoes. Overnight Florence.

Day 6

This morning we walk to the former Dominican **Convent of San Marco**, whose cell walls are decorated by the mystical **Fra Angelico**. The convent was designed by **Michelozzo** in the early Renaissance and has a lovely garden cloister, upstairs from which we see Fra Angelico’s **The Annunciation**. After lunch we will visit the most famous among the many museums of Florence - the **Uffizi gallery**. Highlights are **Uccello’s Battle of San Romano**, the **Birth of Venus** and **Primavera** by **Botticelli**, the **Madonna with a Goldfinch** by Raphael, and the **Venus of Urbino** by Titian. The Uffizi was formerly a palazzo housing the offices of the Medici family. From the Uffizi we will walk over the picturesque medieval **Ponte Vecchio** (built in 1345) over the river Arno to the **Palazzo Pitti**. The first-floor **Palatine Gallery** houses one of Europe’s great art collections, with outstanding works by **Raphael** and **Titian**. Overnight Florence.

Day 7

We say goodbye to Florence after breakfast and make our way to Venice, with a two-hour stop in **Padua**, 25 miles west of Venice. Padua is one of the major cultural centers in Northern Italy, with an old university – Dante, Petrarch and Galileo were students here. We will head for the **Chapel of the Scrovegni**, the second most famous chapel in Italy after the Sistine. It was built by the wealthy Paduan Enrico Scrovegni to atone for his father’s usury. **Giotto** was commissioned to decorate the interior, and between 1303 and 1305 created a magnificent fresco cycle depicting scenes from the life of Mary and Jesus. You will see the much reproduced scenes of Judas kissing Christ and the Raising of Lazarus, as well as a Last Judgment, Virtues and Vices, and much more. Overnight Venice.

Day 8

After breakfast in our hotel we will go on a walking tour accompanied by a guide, in order to see some of the sights including the **Piazza San Marco** dominated by the opulent **St. Mark’s Basilica** with five domes and 43,055 square feet of shimmering interior mosaics. In the afternoon we will head for the **Dorsoduro** district across the **Grand Canal**, home to the **Galleria dell’Accademia**, which has an unparalleled collection of Venetian painting. The Venetian style is distinguished by its color – the luminous light of Venice – and its sensuality. Here we will feast our eyes on the works of **Jacopo and Giovanni Bellini, Carpaccio, Giorgione, Veronese and Titian**. Overnight Venice.

Day 9

How could we visit Venice without going by boat on the canals and lagoon? This morning we will go for an excursion on a **private boat** to see the sights from the water and to visit the islands of the lagoon, **Murano**, legendary for its production of Venetian glass, **Burano**, famous for handmade lace, and **Torcello**. Afternoon is free time. Overnight Venice.

Day 10

Our wonderful program in Italy comes to an end as we depart Italy for the States.

