Steve Bertrand & WGN present
An Italian Experience

9 Days Rome – Tuscany – Florence – Venice

A unique and unusual vacation in Italy - Enjoy seeing Italy as it appeared in movies and in books

Itinerary:

DAY 1 USA / ROME: Depart from Chicago on your overnight flight to Rome, Italy.

DAY 2 ARRIVE ROME: Upon arrival in Rome airport, we are met by our tour escort. This morning, we enjoy a panoramic tour of Rome’s highlights. We pause for a brief guided walking tour of the Roman squares, including the Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain and Navona’s Square. Afterwards, we check-in to our hotel and enjoy time to relax, rest, or explore. Tonight, enjoy a welcome Dinner at a local restaurant. (D)

DAY 3 ROME: Today, travel across the Tiber River to the Vatican City. Visit the Vatican Museums, part of the Papal Residence which is estimated to contain 1400 rooms, chapels and galleries. The Museums contain an extraordinarily rich collection of precious arts, maps, sculptures and antiquities however the most breath-taking masterpiece is Michelangelo’s frescoed ceiling in the Sistine Chapel. At the center of the Vatican lies the vast Basilica of St. Peter, you pass by the colorfully dressed Swiss Guard into the world’s largest church. The present Cathedral is a beautiful mix of Renaissance and Baroque architecture, formed under the hands of masters such as Michelangelo. The stunning interior is an elaborate and detailed display of marble, mosaic, gilt and bronze. Afterwards, see the classic monuments of the Ancient Rome: from the Forum, where the destinies of the world were decided, to the Coliseum, where we our guide will describe the performances of wild animals and gladiators and spectators’ reactions. A picture with one of the gladiators located outside the Coliseum will be an unforgettable souvenir of your “Roman Holiday”. You will enjoy some free time to explore. Tonight, we enjoy dinner with wine at a famous restaurant most often captured on films such as “We Were Loved So Much” and “My Best Enemy”. (B/D)

DAY 4 ROME / SIENA / TUSCANY REGION: Enjoy breakfast in our hotel. Afterwards, we depart for Siena, where after meeting our local guide, we have a guided tour of this wonderful city. Siena is the city of the blessed Virgins and the “Balzana”, black and white; decisive, just as its heraldic symbol; passionate and contemplative; always climbing and descending; clear and at the same time obscure; steep and narrow streets; the red of the Piazza del Campo appearing blinding and suddenly. In the alleys, in the museums and oratories of the Contrada, the spiritual songs of the Palio evoke very ancient rituals and modern allegories, while during the evening the shuffling of soles on the deserted pavement is in contrast with the peacefulness of the green valley’s providentially enclosed within the wall, which ancient administrators had erected hundreds of years before it became common practice. Afterwards, proceed through the Tuscany Region where we’ll see the Tuscany described by Frances Mayes in “Under the Tuscan Sun”. Onwards to our Tuscan Villa, Villa Casagrande, our base for the next three nights. This evening we will have a welcome “Tuscan Dinner” featuring local wines and traditional Tuscan fare. Buon Appetito! (B/D)

DAY 5 FLORENCE: After breakfast at the Villa, we journey to Florence by coach. Florence has been the setting for literature for centuries. It’s where E. M. Forster wrote “A Room with a View”. “In the Company of the Courtesan” by
Sarah Dunant was set in Renaissance Florence. After meeting our local guide we will enjoy a morning guided walking tour of the town in a special way. Follow the trail of Dan Brown’s 2013 ‘Inferno’ novel on a half-day walking tour, led by an expert local guide! The international bestseller, based on Dante Alighieri’s ‘Divine Comedy,’ is set in Florence and several city attractions feature in the book’s mysterious plot. Hear stories of the main character, code-cracking Harvard professor Robert Langdon, and visit key sites like Palazzo Vecchio’s secret passageways and the Baptistry of Florence. After the guided tour, we enjoy some time at our leisure: Florence offers the largest number of historical buildings and works of art in Italy, as well as several world-class museums. You might like to do a little leather, gold or clothing shopping near Ponte Vecchio.

This evening, we enjoy a Pizza & Gelato making Cooking Class. Learn to make Pizza and Gelato just like the Italians do! Our chef will introduce us to the history of these glorious Italian creations! You will make your very own pizza; you’ll stretch it, sauce it, bake it, and slice it. It will be the best pizza you ever tasted! After Pizza it’s time for Gelato! The chef will explain why gelato remains Italy’s favorite dessert while giving an insight to the ‘gelato culture’ that continues to grow. Afterwards, we return to our Villa. (B/D)

DAY 6 FULL-DAY EXCURSION TO CHIANTI: After breakfast, depart from the Villa and enjoy a drive though the Chianti Hills with short stops in a couple of small nice villages like Radda and Greve in Chianti. In Greve we stop for a visit and wine tasting at Castello Di Verrazzano. During our visit, strolling in the late-Reinassance gardens of the Villa, we will discover the great history of the Navigator Giovanni da Verrazzano and have the chance to see the wild boar bred in the surrounding woods. The tours are always completed with a guided tasting of a selection of classic wines. Later, we return to our Villa for dinner and overnight. (B/D)

DAY 7 TUSCANY REGION / VERONA / VENICE: After breakfast, we depart for Venice. Along the way, we way stop in Verona and enjoy a guided tour of the “City of Love”: Although Shakespeare himself never made it to Verona, he made the city the literary home of the most famous lovers in the world: Romeo and Juliet. However, besides the famous love story, Verona is one of the most beautiful and most famous cities in Italy, which makes it well worth planning a trip. Verona and its medieval city center with the huge Roman open-air arena, where operas are still performed, became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000. Afterwards, proceed to Venice. This evening, enjoy dinner in a local restaurant. (B/D)

DAY 8 VENICE: This morning enjoy a Venetian Mask-Making Experience: Don’t just buy an authentic Venetian souvenir, make one! You will have the opportunity to paint your own Venetian mask and take it home. Learn all about the role of masks in Venice’s history, as well as what the different masks mean. This mask-making tour is an opportunity to learn about the fascinating culture behind the ubiquitous Venetian mask. Your afternoon is free to explore. Wander the same streets patrolled by Donna Leon's Commissario Guido Brunetti in “Death and La Fenice”. Tonight enjoy a Venice Ghost Walking Tour: Venice by night is a place of romance and mystery - and the ghosts of the past! This ghost walking tour takes you on a journey through the hidden Venice, and tells the tale of six intriguing ghost stories that will bring a chill to the night’s air! In addition to hearing ghost stories and legends, you'll hear little-known facts about Venice and its history, and visit tucked-away backstreets well off the beaten track. This evening you are free for dinner on your own. (B)

DAY 9 VENICE / USA: Arrivederci! After breakfast, we will take our private transfer to the airport for our return flight to the USA, arriving home the same day. (B)

Package Includes

- Round-trip air from Chicago to Italy
- Services of a Private Tour Director
- Luxury coach for services as per itinerary
- Rome – 2 nights, Hotel Cicerone
- Tuscany – 3 nights Villa Casagrande
- Venice – 2 nights Hotel Saturnia International
• Continental buffet breakfast daily, except the day of arrival
• 2 dinners in Rome
• 2 dinners at the Villa
• 1 dinner in Venice
• Half-day guided tours in Verona, and Siena
• Full-day guided tour in Chianti
• Half-day guided tour in Rome
• Admissions with reservations to The Vatican and Sistine Chapel, and the Coliseum
• Wireless Headsets where necessary
• Venetian Mask Making lesson
• Venice Ghost walking tour
• Half-day guided walking tour in Florence, following the trail of Dan Brown’s 2013 ‘Inferno’ novel
• Pizza & Gelato Making lesson
• Picture with Gladiators in Rome
• Porterage of one suitcase per person
• City taxes
• Private transfer by boat from Venice tronchetto area to Venice hotel and Venice hotel to Venice airport