



Rome, Florence & Venice

A Private Getaway : April 17 - April 24, 2015



Friday, April 17. Evening departure for Rome from Boston, Logan Airport. **Overnight:Plane**

Saturday, April 18. Morning arrival in Rome where you will be met for the transfer to your city-center hotel. After checking in, you'll have time to unpack, relax, and begin to explore your surroundings before searching out dinner at a traditional Italian restaurant close by. **(B) Overnight: Rome**

Sunday, April 19. This morning your guide will meet you at your hotel and take you on a tour of the heart of Imperial Rome. You will have a brief tour of the Forum and gaze in awe at the bulk of the Colosseum, before deciding what else you want to do. You could stroll along the banks of the Tiber, past the Castel Sant'Angelo, toss a coin in the Trevi Fountain, stop for a cappuccino in the midst of Piazza Navona's Baroque splendor, explore the Centro Storico (historic center), pausing to savor the languid palms rising above the steps at Piazza di Spagna—the morning will slip by before you know it. This afternoon you could visit Vatican City, walking across Bernini's architectural masterpiece, St. Peter's Square. This very small state—109 acres in the heart of Rome—contains some of the world's great art treasures, from magnificent gardens to the glories of the Vatican Museum, Michelangelo's sublime Pieta, and the Sistine Chapel. The evening is free to sample a wonderful local restaurant. **(B) Overnight: Rome**

Monday, April 20. Picking up your rental car this morning, you head southeast out of the city taking the Autostrada del Sole (the highway of the sun). An hour's drive (depending on the traffic out of Rome) will bring you to the town of Ferentino where you will have time to explore, look up relatives and have a leisurely lunch. By mid-afternoon, you should be ready to "hit the highway" again for the 2 hour drive north to Orvieto, where you will spend the night. Depending on when you leave Ferentino, you may have time to explore Orvieto a little this evening. You might visit the Duomo, possibly Italy's finest Gothic building, or the Pozzo di San Patrizio, a vast well commissioned in 1527 by Pope Clement VII, or browse along Corso Cavour with its fine collection of shops and medieval palaces. **(B) Overnight: Orvieto**

Tuesday, April 21. Today you have a whole day to wend your way through the incredible Tuscan countryside to Montecatini Terme. A recommended route would take you first through the "Parco Artistico Naturale e Culturale della Val d'Orcia" – an area of such outstanding natural beauty that the whole valley is protected. From here it is a short drive to the ancient city of Siena. Built around the lovely Piazza del Campo, this mystical, passionate city, encircled by ramparts, invites you to stroll its narrow Gothic streets lined with palaces and mansions that converge on the famous piazza. The city's Duomo is one of the most dramatic in Italy with its striking black and white marble pillars and façade. More than anywhere else Siena conveys the aspect of a medieval city, extending over three converging red clay hills. From here it will take less than two hours to drive to your hotel in Montecatini. **(B) Overnight: Montecatini**

Wednesday, April 22. A full day in nearby Florence. Leaving the car in Montecatini, you'll take the train into Florence's Santa Maria Novella station, where you'll meet your local guide and begin your tour of the city center. You'll see the Piazza della Signoria where you'll admire the graceful Loggia dei Lanzi, the Neptune Fountain, and the copy of Michelangelo's David, standing where the artist intended it to be. You'll continue on foot to the Duomo, contrasting its extravagant exterior to its rather austere interior, and concluding with a climb up to Brunelleschi's magnificent dome to admire the unforgettable views over Florence. Continue to the Baptistry; Ghiberti's famous east doors of the Baptistry depict Old Testament scenes and Michelangelo dubbed them the "Gates of Paradise." These are copies; the original doors are in the Museo del'Opera del Duomo and this inconspicuous building contains some of the finest works of art in Florence. After bidding farewell to you guide, the remainder of the day is free before you return by train to your hotel in Montecatini. **(B) Overnight: Montecatini**

Thursday, April 23. Why not take a full day excursion today, first to Pisa for a visit to the famous Leaning Tower, and then on to the coast to explore the region known as the Cinque Terre (the Five Lands). The name comes from the five towns that are perched along this stretch of cliffs as they tumble into the sea and it is an area of such unspoiled natural beauty that it was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1997. Along the way, you could stop for lunch in Portovenere, and then take the train line along the coast that joins the five towns — there is no road! — before returning to your hotel in Montecatini. **(B) Overnight: Montecatini**





Friday, April 24. Driving into Florence, you'll return your car at the Avis office 3 blocks from the Santa Maria Novella Station and take the train to Venice, arriving 2 hours later. On arrival at Venice San Michele, you take a water taxi to your hotel. You'll have time for lunch before meeting your local guide at the hotel for an afternoon walking tour that will place Venice in its historical context. You'll visit St Mark's Basilica to observe the Byzantine influence and then the Doge's Palace in glorious Piazza San Marco, "the most elegant living room in Europe," according to Napoleon. The Palazzo, a miracle of Gothic engineering, typifies a constant feature of Venetian architecture—the predominance of open space and a peculiar quality of lightness, that is in turn echoed by the surrounding water. **(B) Overnight: Venice**

Saturday, April 25. Venice stands apart from the rest of Italy, a fairy-tale city floating on the sea (and sometimes well beneath it!), fiercely independent and a constant thorn in the side of successive empires. The "Most Serene Republic" can be dazzling, seductive, irritating, dirty, expensive, but never, never disappointing or boring. The day is free; you may wish to visit Venice's cathedral to art, the Accademia, or take an excursion to the island of Torcello and the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, built in the Ravenna style with the finest mosaics in Venice, or, if you've had your fill of churches, visit the glassblowers on Murano. Whatever your plans, Venice is a treasure trove of wonders to explore. Wander the streets, or take a vaporetto to one of the nearby islands—Murano (glass), Burano (lace), or San Michele (the cemetery island). **(B) Overnight: Venice**

Sunday, April 26. A morning transfer by water taxi takes you to the airport in Venice for your flights back to the USA. **(B)**

The cost of this itinerary, based on 2 participants is **\$3890** per person, double occupancy. This includes the following:

Airfare:	Roundtrip air on British Airways from Boston to Rome, returning from Venice to Boston, via London. All customs fees and airport taxes included
Hotels:	8 nights' accommodation in first-class hotels (see below). All hotel taxes and service charges included
Transfers:	Airport transfers in Rome and Venice
Trains:	Standard class tickets from Montecatini to Florence round trip. First class tickets from Florence to Venice with reserved seats
Meals:	Breakfast daily.
Guides:	Local guides for half day walking tours in Rome, Florence and Venice.
Car Hire:	4 days car rental to pick up in Rome and return in Florence. Compact, manual transmission car (VW Golf or similar) including unlimited mileage and all mandatory taxes and insurance.

Rome The Artemide Hotel, Deluxe room (www.hotelartemide.it)
Orvieto Hotel Aquila Bianca, Superior room (www.hotelaquilabianca.it)
Montecatini The Montecatini Palace, Classic double room (www.hotelmontecatiniipalace.com)
Venice Hotel Colombina, Deluxe room, canal view (www.hotelcolombina.com)