



# A Taste of Italy

## A Custom-designed tour for Darlene Chitty & Friends

November 11 - 24, 2008

As powerfully different as the three famous tenors, the charismatic combination of Rome-Florence-Venice reveals three archetypal faces of Italy. At once sensual, robust, and achingly artistic, these cities and their surrounding villages, steeped in medieval mystery, will stimulate your senses and enliven your perceptions, while rewarding you with glorious vistas and a tantalizing glimpse of La Dolce Vita.

From the dreamy timelessness of Venice floating out of the mists, to the sprawling magnificence of Florence's Duomo and the architectural wonders of St. Peter's Square and the sublime simplicity of Michelangelo's *Pieta*, here is an excursion that serves as a reminder of civilization's glorious past and present.

We begin in the Italian Lakes region, an idyllic starting point to relax and unwind from the flights and head to Venice; a dazzling city that marries light, water, open space, and Gothic grandeur in a breathtaking amalgam.

And on through olive groves and vineyards to Florence, the "Capital of the Renaissance." Here, at the heart of romantic Italy, we'll soak up treasures of the art world, views from Brunelleschi's magnificent dome, and travel to Pisa to admire its astonishing Tower—one of the wonders of the world. Our pilgrimage ends in Rome—the Eternal City—with a day spent exploring the splendors of Vatican City and the swirling madness of a vital city that flaunts its impressive Roman Forum, hulking Colosseum, and joyful Trevi Fountain—a fitting way to culminate our visit to Italy's priceless treasures.



*Brunelleschi's dome in Florence*

The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

Houston Departure:       **\$4550**

*Airfares are available from many U.S. departure cities. Please call for details.*

The following services are included:

- Airfare:** Round trip, economy class airfare on Continental Airlines  
All airport taxes and customs fees included.
- Hotels:** 12 nights accommodation in superior tourist class hotels.  
All hotel taxes and service charges included.
- Coaching:** All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary.
- Meals:** Continental breakfast daily, 5 dinners, 1 agriturismo lunch
- Guides:** Discover Europe driver/guide until arrival in Rome;  
local guides in Rome, Florence, Venice.
- Entrances:** Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary.



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**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November.** Morning departure from Houston aboard Continental's service to Newark, connecting on to Milan. **Overnight: Plane**

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> November.** Upon arrival in Milan, your driver/guide Sara Cereda, will meet you for the drive to Tremezzo on Lake Como, the most dramatic and beautiful of the northern Italian lakes. Time to rest from the flight before beginning to explore this lovely resort town that nestles on the shore of Lake Como, enjoying spectacular views of the Alps. This evening we gather for dinner in a local restaurant. **(D)** **Overnight: Tremezzo**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November.** This morning we explore Lake Como, traveling south down the lake to the provincial capital of Como. The palatial villas of the Milan aristocracy line the southwest arm of the lake. Arriving in Como, we'll visit the 14<sup>th</sup>-century cathedral of Santa Maria Maggiore. Built entirely of marble, its intricately carved portal is flanked by statues of the two Plinys, the earliest tourists to Como! Free time to find lunch before a late afternoon visit to Villa Carlotta; originally built by a Prussian princess for her daughter, the setting and gardens are unequalled. **(B)** **Overnight: Tremezzo**

**Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November.** East today across the top of Italy. We'll stop in Verona for lunch and a chance to walk around this ancient city, founded by the Romans in 89 BC. We might buy lunch in the Piazza delle Erbe, a large fruit and vegetable market, before continuing through the Piazza dei Signori to the cathedral and campanile. There will be time for a quick sprint to the top of the Roman Amphitheatre, one of the largest of its kind, for splendid views across the city. And, of course, a stop at the Casa di Giulietta for a view of Juliet's balcony. We continue to Venice, a city built upon 118 small islands. We drive to our hotel on the Venice Lido, where we have time to relax before dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Venice Lido**

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November.** A walking tour with a local guide this morning introduces the hub of the city: Piazza San Marco and its imposing Basilica, the Doge's Palace, and breathtaking views from the Campanile. If you'd like to visit a glass-blowing workshop to learn about the world-famous Venetian glass, your courier will be happy to arrange it. Free time this afternoon to explore at leisure; leave the crowds behind and wander the back canals, or perhaps catch a boat to the outlying islands of Torcello or Burano. This evening why not take a gondola ride to dinner overlooking one of the canals. **(B)** **Overnight: Venice Lido**

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November.** We turn south this morning along the Adriatic coast to the historic town of Ravenna to see its splendid mosaics in the church of San Vitale. The colors are truly breathtaking and the intricate detail in the Old Testament scenes is unforgettable. We'll take lunch in Ravenna before we drive across the rugged beauty of the Apennines. The Apennine Mountains run north-south down the length of the country and are known as the "backbone of Italy." We arrive in Florence, and our hotel in its heart, with time to relax before dinner at one of its superb restaurants. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Florence**

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November.** A full day excursion to San Gimignano, the "city of beautiful towers," and the Chianti Classico Wine Region. We'll start with a walking tour of San Gimignano, followed by a visit to the Collegiata, a 12th-century Romanesque church with a superb fresco cycle of Biblical scenes. You'll have free time to explore; our return route to Montecatini takes us through the rich wine-growing area of Chianti, where we'll stop for an agriturismo lunch, and at a wine estate and vineyard for tasting and buying. Free evening in Montecatini. **(B, L)** **Overnight: Florence**

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November.** This morning a local guide will lead a brief walking tour to give you an overview of Florence's highlights - the Duomo, the Campanile, the Baptistery, the Palazzo Vecchio, the Loggia dei Lanzi, the Uffizi, the Ponte Vecchio - to allow maximum time in this glorious city for individual exploration. The afternoon is yours and your courier will have plenty of suggestions to make the most of your brief time in this extraordinary artistic city. The evening is free. **(B)** **Overnight: Florence**

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November.** A full day excursion today takes us first to Pisa for a visit to the famous Leaning Tower. We continue 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 a area of such unspoiled natural beauty that it was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1997. Along the way, we'll stop for lunch in Portovenere and then take the train line along the coast that joins the five towns — there is no road! — before we return to Florence for a free evening. **(B)** **Overnight: Florence**

**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November.** A full day of driving and sightseeing today as we head south. We'll stop briefly in Siena to visit its Piazza del Campo and magnificent Cathedral, a riot of green, pink and white marble, before we head further to the exquisite town of Assisi. An earthquake in 1997 might have temporarily damaged the fabric of its famous Basilica of St. Francis but it certainly didn't harm the town's spiritual integrity, for Assisi is a town dedicated to the Church and the life of St. Francis. We visit the Basilica before we dine out in one of Assisi's pleasant family-run restaurants this evening. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Assisi**

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November.** After free time in Assisi this morning, we cross back over the Appennine Mountains and drive to the "Eternal City." Sara will bid you farewell after dropping you at your hotel and arranging dinner. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Rome**



**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November.** Rome is introduced by a morning sightseeing tour with a local guide for an overview of the city and an extensive visit to the Forum, where so much of ancient Roman life took place. We'll end at St. Peter's for time to explore and the chance to visit the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel. The afternoon and evening are free. **(B)** **Overnight: Rome**

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> November.** A free day in Rome and so much to see. Perhaps a stroll through the Piazza Navona to the Pantheon and the Spanish Steps; maybe a little shopping on the via Veneto. Remember to toss a coin in the Trevi Fountain, to ensure your return. Why not finish up the trip with an evening to remember at one of the city's fabulous restaurants. **(B)** **Overnight: Rome**

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> November.** This morning we transfer to Rome's Fiumicino airport for the return Alitalia/Continental flights to Houston, via Amsterdam.

Key to included meals: **B** - breakfast, **L** - Lunch, **D** - dinner

Trevi Fountain