

Romantic Italia: Northern Italy

Twelve Day Tour ~ September 1-12, 2024

Highlights: Nonstop, Roundtrip Airfare Newark to Rome • Three Charming Nights in a Local B&B, Chioggia • Six Serene Nights at Hotel Splendid Palace, Limone Sul Garda • One Dreamy Night at the Historic Residence Relais Castrum Boccea • Vaporetto Day Trip to Fabulous Venice • Vaporetto to Explore the Island of Torcello • Mosaics in Cathedral Santa Maria Dell'Assunta • Charming Canal Village Chioggia • Ferry Ride to Venetian Island Pellestrina • Medieval Town Bassano del Grappa • Picturesque Limone sul Garda • Historically Beautiful Riva del Garda • Funicular Ride to the 16th Century Bastione • Hiking Trail to Chapel Santa Barbara • Fairy Tale Town Canale di Tenno • San Martino Archeological Site • Lake Garda Ferry Ride to Magnificent Malcesine • Scenic Cable Car to Mount Baldo • Splendid Village Cassone • Italy's Shortest River, Aril • Trek Across Lake Garda's Tibetan Bridge • Picturesque Promontory Punta di San Vigilio • Rocky Cliff Town Arco • Arco Castle • Heavenly Sanctuary Madonna della Corona • Castel Roncolo • Spectacular Seceda Ridgeline • Orrido di Ponte Alto Waterfall • Mysterious Ciucioi Gardens • Serene Val di Non • Stunning St. Romedio Sanctuary • All Breakfasts • Four Lunches • One Dinner • Fully Escorted

Like a brilliant diamond, Italy has many magnificent facets each glimmering in its own unique way. Many famous destinations that travelers dream of visiting at least once in their lives are found in Northern Italy, a region that is also just bursting with beautifully scenic and historic hidden gem towns and villages waiting to be explored. Romantic Venice is brimming with magnificence and magic with untouched Venetian Gothic architecture, beautifully majestic palazzos, and narrow callettes that reflect in the turquoise canals. Famous beauty also draws crowds, so we'll wander away from the tourist spots and get lost in the maze of narrow cobbled streets to experience the heart and soul of this ancient city. There's much more heart and soul to explore along the Venetian Lagoon! Unspoiled towns and islands as old and canaled as Venice but with no crowds and perfect authenticity to fill your senses await. Nestled among the Dolomites is Lake Garda, Italy's largest lake, whose beauty has been the inspiration for many famous writers due to its awe inspiring landscapes and scenery. It's here among lush and fragrant Mediterranean flora we'll explore the many charming lakeside villages and surrounding medieval mountain towns. This northern region offers a culture that's unique from the rest of Italy that we'll discover not only in the look and feel of each town and village but also in the traditional cuisine and diverse dialects. We'll travel off the beaten path to fully experience the wonders of northern Italy's history and art. There are so many more masterpieces here other than the most famous major works of art, hidden in small churches and among local architecture. Your understanding of Italy's art and culture will grow and deepen as you open your eyes to these hidden gems allowing your appreciation for a work of art to evolve beyond dependence on a name or recognition. Our exploration of this diverse cultural unknown region will help us look beyond these limitations and experience things on a deeper level that leads to the truly authentic feel of Italy.

Day 1. Let's hop aboard our overnight flight and grab a few winks before we wake up in Italy!

Day 2. After arrival in Rome, we hop aboard the train that will whisk us through the lovely countryside to the southern entrance of the Venetian Lagoon which will be our home for the next three nights. The town of Chioggia is a quieter, more relaxed unspoiled "Venice" with canals, narrow streets and architecture that makes you feel you are still in the famous city except with a calming, serene



Chioggia



Limone sur Garda

atmosphere. Take your time to explore the maze of pedestrian only narrow cobbled streets and picturesque canals and relax the evening away at our comfy hotel within walking distance of many restaurants for dinner on your own.

Day 3. Today we take time to explore our new home in Chioggia. Take in all the serenity of this smaller version of Venice and wander the colorful streets with the most photogenic clotheslines around. The authentic Venetian Island paradise of Pellestrina is only a short ferry ride away. Enjoy the slower pace of this fishing village as you wander the village and Ca' Roman nature reserve or just find a comfy spot on the beach. For spectacular scenery, walk the Murazzi, Istrian stone dam walls into town. As you wander, find a great spot for lunch on your own. Once back in Chioggia, enjoy the night as you please.

Day 4. Relax on our vaporetto ride into the world-famous beauty of Venice where you'll have the entire day at your leisure to see and explore this wonderfully watery city. If you want to see Venice from a different perspective, join us as we get lost (literally!) on our wanders to the less traveled areas and see what amazing things we find along the way. Spend the rest of the day strolling the magical streets that sometimes lead to nowhere or join us on a vaporetto ride to the tiny peaceful island Torcello. Here we'll wander in search of spectacular Byzantine mosaics, the Devil's Bridge, and Attila's Throne in the nature preserve atmosphere that was once the most important and populated island in the Venetian Lagoon. Enjoy the vaporetto ride back to Chioggia for a night on your own.

Day 5. As we make our way towards the mountainous Lake Garda, we must stop by the medieval beauty Bassano del Grappa for a chance to wander the Ponte Vecchio spanning across the Brenta River. Take your time to stroll through the picture-perfect squares and find some lunch on your own. Don't miss the spectacular views from the Civic Tower and the 12th century Ezzelini Castle walkway on your wanderings. Onto scenic Limone sul Garda, our home for the next six serene nights. Stroll the sweet streets surrounded by colorful, vibrant flowers hanging from balconies among olive and lemon trees that lead to the promenade for dazzling lake and mountain views. After checking in to our home for the next six nights, find a delicious dinner on your own.

Day 6. Let's explore another idyllic lake town, Riva del Garda with a delightful historic center where Austrian and Italian influences are combined in a unique blend of culture. Wander through the cheerful squares past historic sites like the Rocca di Riva medieval fortress, Roman baths, and Quartiere del Marocco and find a delicious lunch to enjoy. For the best scenic views, join us in a panoramic glass cabin lift that travels to the Venetian Tower, Bastione where your eyes will set upon the deep blue of the lake with a fresh green wooded backdrop. If you want even more stunning scenery, continue the upwards path leading to the small church of Santa Barbara where the reward will be indescribable views of breathtaking beauty. Now we enter a fairytale in Canale di Tenno, a medieval masterpiece with a very special authentic feel. Here we'll wander by dreamy old stone houses and mysterious ancient alleyways until our hearts are content. Nearby we can't miss the archeological site San Martino, dating back to 1st century BC. Only accessible by a short walk, this site will reveal all its ancient, beautiful history with each step. Once back in Limone sul Garda, enjoy the night as you please.

Day 7. Another Lake Garda delight is Malcesine, perched on a small peninsula overlooked by a medieval castle and towering Monte Baldo. Wander its picture-perfect narrow, cobbled and curved streets with charming views in every direction, but don't miss the secret gardens at Palazzo Capitani. Now it's time to travel upwards to Monte Baldo soaring 6500 feet above Lake Garda on a panoramic rotating cable car that flies us to the top in only a few minutes. Once upon this spectacular mountaintop, we'll fuel up with an included lunch providing energy for the amazing scenic walks that await. Choose from an easy or more moderate hike, each with the most ultimate spectacular and bewitching views imaginable, as if you're on top of the world. Take your time to soak in all the scenery where lake and sky melt into an amazing landscape. The small hamlet of Cassone, over 10 centuries old, has a quaint tranquil beauty that you'll fall in love with at first glance. We'll make a short stop to immerse in the atmosphere and see Italy's shortest river Aril tumbling through the heart of the village. Next is our Tibetan adventure! Surrounded by olive groves and lush forests near the town of Crero is Lake Garda's Tibetan bridge suspended above the steep canyon of Val Valzana. A short, scenic walk along an old mule path will bring us to the exciting entrance onto the long metal spanning bridge providing glorious views as you make your way across, just don't close your eyes! Hopefully there's time for one more photographic place of magical beauty, Punta di San Vigilio. Dotted with tall cypresses and centuries old olive trees and surrounded by water on three sides with a citrus grove and 16th century villa, it's hard not to be entranced. Have a lovely evening on your own in Limone.

Day 8. Let's visit Arco, set among sheer cliffs and overlooked by a looming castle. The houses of the old town hugged against the mountainside offer an alluring route to follow as we explore the narrow twisting streets of this small village where it's easy to find a tasty lunch. If you're intrigued by Arco Castle, a 15 min uphill walk through lovely olive groves will lead you there with an astounding view. Step inside the castle to see 14th century frescoes, prison, large tower, and venerable halls and rooms. Next, a heavenly adventure awaits! Built on a rocky terrace 2500 feet tall overlooking the river Aidge, the Sanctuary of Madonna della Corona emerges from the craggy slopes of Monte Baldo as if suspended between heaven and Earth. This incredibly serene place will make you stop to take a deep breath in awe of its beautiful gravity defying setting. You'll have the choice of a shuttle bus or scenic stroll past an alpaca farm with fabulous views over vertical cliffs and the valley of river Aidge. Take your time and slow down to immerse in this special, magical place. Relax and enjoy dinner at your leisure tonight in Limone.

Day 9. Today we travel north to a region of Italy that may make you feel like we made a wrong turn into Switzerland. Surrounded by small mountain villages, seemingly endless vineyards, captivating castles and the impressive Italian Dolomites lies the province of Bolzano, filled with centuries of German, Italian, and Austrian influences along with a riveting history. It's here where we step into the "painted" Castel Roncolo, a well-preserved 12th century castle contains an abundance of frescoes gracing its walls providing an eye-popping window into medieval life. In their entirety, these frescoes are of inestimable value as they represent a unique testimony of the courtly world of the time, aristocratic clothing, and tournament system. Amazing! Enjoy an included lunch here at the restaurant before we make our way further north straight into the Dolomites. A quick cable car ride will take us to the most amazing view of indescribable beauty, the Seceda Ridgeline. A short 10 min walk to bring you to the spectacular viewpoint where prominent peaks of Italian and Austrian Alps dot the landscape. Wander further on the path to immerse in the beauty for even more staggering scenery. Once back at home in Limone sul Garda, grab some dinner and relax the night away.

Day 10. Let's head back north for an adventurous step into nature. A spectacular canyon carved by the tumultuous waters of the Fersina stream over thousands of years has given life to 2 waterfalls that now dive through the red rock cliffs. An expert guide will lead us through the trail among the rocks to experience this amazing feat of nature. A mysterious hanging garden between fantastical architecture and unexpected landscapes is our next adventure. Ciucioi Garden is a garden like no other, where architectural ruins and plant life combine to create a dreamlike atmosphere with the romantic charm of times gone by. Let's relax and enjoy an included lunch nearby before our next adventure. We now travel to the peaceful serenity of Val di Non, a landscape created by a mix of the endless green of apple trees with the sparkle of Dolomites as a backdrop. This purely authentic agricultural valley made up of canyons, deep blue lakes, mountains, and valleys is untouched by tourism, so get your camera ready. It's here where we visit the stunning St. Romedio Sanctuary, a famous pilgrimage place built atop a 230-foot rock outcropping with a delightful myth involving a hermit and a bear. The most amazing part is getting there along a winding path through the canyon underneath a mountain of rock with panoramic views to die for and a surprise waterfall. If you don't think you can manage the walk, no worries, there is a shorter path or shuttle bus available.

Day 11. We may have to leave lovely Lake Garda behind but we have one more fabulous night to look forward to as we make our way by train towards Rome. Our comfortable hotel outside the city will provide a relaxing and quiet night with an included dinner to celebrate our Italian adventure and fun memories along the way.

Day 12. Today we say Ciao Italia and make our way back home across the Atlantic. © 2023 Group Tours & Travel

Air transportation is provided by United Airlines. A surcharge will apply if United Airlines increases the price of its airfare. One piece of luggage per person (baggage fee by United is not included) and one small carry-on are permitted. **A valid, government-issued picture ID is required to board the plane.**

Sunday, September 1: Flight # departs Newark at AM and arrives in Rome-FCO at PM

Thursday, September 12: Flight # departs Rome-FCO at PM and arrives in Newark at PM

Price per person is \$5,075 Twin & \$5,995 Single. No reservations accepted without a deposit of \$500 per person. Make checks payable to "Group Tours & Travel", and mail to our address above. Final payment is due May 15, 2024. There are no refunds if cancellation occurs after May 15, 2024. Once airfare is purchased, despite cancellation date, we are unable to provide refunds. Group Tours is not responsible for any delays, cancellations, injuries or circumstances beyond its control and reserves the right to change the itinerary. All trip components are subject to change in accordance with Government, State and Local guidelines and/or mandates. Travel protection/cancellation coverage is available and highly recommended, but not included. This tour will run rain or shine. Visit grouptoursandtravel.com for more tours and fun photos.

Romantic Italia: Northern Italy ~ September 1-12, 2024

Please Reserve _____ seat(s). The enclosed check is for: \$_____ #3308

Legal Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Zip Code: _____

Rooming with: _____ Phone: _____

Add email for registration confirmation/final payment notice: _____