

## **Rome, Florence, Venice & Lake Maggiore**

**Day 1** Rome, Italy. Benvenuto—welcome! Your Local Host is on hand to help you maximize your time in Italy's capital city.

**Day 2** Rome. Your morning guided sightseeing, with headset, is rich in religious and ancient history. Visit the VATICAN MUSEUMS to see its amazing treasures. In the SISTINE CHAPEL, where the Conclave is held to elect new Popes, view Michelangelo's The Last Judgment and his famous ceiling paintings. Also on the agenda today, see monumental ST. PETER'S SQUARE and BASILICA, built in 313 AD above St. Peter the Apostle's tomb and home to Michelangelo's masterpiece Renaissance sculpture, the Pietà. Cross the Tiber River and continue your immersion in history at the iconic COLOSSEUM, built for 50,000 spectators, and the ROMAN FORUM, where the oldest structures of the ancient city are located.

**Day 3** Rome. Ask your Local Host for the best way to discover the "Eternal City" today. You may wish to try "The Magic of Rome" with the Catacombs, visit the Borghese Gallery and gardens, or relax while sipping a glass of locally produced Frascati wine.

**Day 4** Rome–Florence. Travel by HIGH-SPEED TRAIN (First class) to Florence.

**Day 5** Florence. Morning guided sightseeing with headset: visit the ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS featuring Michelangelo's original David. Walk through Cathedral Square; sculpture-studded Piazza della Signoria, the center of the city's political life since the 14th century; and Santa Croce Square. Also admire medieval Ponte Vecchio, the arched, stone merchant bridge spanning the Arno River.

**Day 6** Florence. Full day at leisure to visit one of the city's wonderful museums; take an excursion to San Gimignano; experience Florence by night; or shop at Santa Maria Novella Pharmacy, famous for its centuries-old formulas for remedies, soaps, and perfumes. Your Local Host can help you plan your day.

**Day 7** Florence–Venice. Travel by HIGH-SPEED TRAIN (First class) to Venice.

**Day 8** Venice. Morning guided sightseeing with headset; see ST. MARK'S SQUARE and BASILICA with its exceptional gold mosaics. Visit DOGES' PALACE and the evocative BRIDGE OF SIGHS. Watch skilled GLASSBLOWERS fashion their delicate objects in the age-old manner and learn why glassmaking was so important in Venetian history. ENTRANCES to Marciana Library, and the Correr and Archaeological Museums are included; ask your Local Host for details.

**Day 9** Venice. Today you may choose to relax and glide along the canals by gondola, try a Venetian dinner, attend a Vivaldi concert, shop for famous Murano glass items, or admire the views from atop St. Mark's Bell Tower. Your Local Host will have many ideas.

**Day 10** Venice–Lake Maggiore. Travel by HIGH-SPEED TRAIN (First class) to Milan, then transfer to your hotel in beautiful Stresa on Lake Maggiore.

**Day 11** Lake Maggiore. On your morning guided sightseeing take a short boat ride to the opulent PALACE and monumental GARDENS of ISOLA BELLA. Once a rocky island, and home to a community of fishermen, it was purchased by Carlo III Borromeo in 1630 and eventually transformed to the beautiful location it is today. Carlo III named the island after his wife Isabella, and it is still owned by the Borromeo dynasty to the present day.

**Day 12** Lake Maggiore. Your Local Host will have many recommendations for your day at leisure, such as an excursion to Isola Madre; a picnic in the gardens of Villa Pallavicino; or a ticket for the Lake Maggiore Express.

**Day 13** Lake Maggiore. Your vacation ends with breakfast this morning (nearest airport is Milan Malpensa).