



On a Private Tour of Italy Florence - Bologna – Venice – Lake Como

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Thursday **Arrive Rome**

Upon arrival at the Rome airport, you will be met by your chauffeur and transferred by private vehicle to your hotel in Rome, where you will be assisted with check-in. Your Akorn Customer Service Coordinator (CSC) will meet you at the hotel to ensure you are happy with your arrangements.

Your Akorn Customer Service Coordinator is part of a unique network of one of over 20 representatives throughout Italy to ensure your vacation operates smoothly and to your absolute satisfaction. Your CSC is there on the ground to ensure that your travel arrangements run perfectly. He/she is on the end of the phone for you should you have any queries and is there to assist you

ROME

Rome grew to rule a vast empire and as the empire began to divide, the region became the center of the Christian world. Artists and architects flocked to work for the popes and their families, notably in the Renaissance and Baroque periods when some magnificent architectural works were created. The legacy of this uninterrupted history can be seen all over the city and the surrounding areas.



The remainder of the day will be at leisure for you to enjoy your new surroundings.

Dinning suggestion: While in Rome why not dine one time at *Costanza*. Lunch at Costanza is a must. This restaurant is inside a portion of the carved-up remains of Pompey's Theater near the site of Julius Caesar's murder in 44 B.C. The crowd hits around 2:00, so arrive early and watch the place-built under the brick arches of an ancient theatre-fill up with lively Roman business types. You will feel like an insider and be treated like one. Try the zucchini-blossom risotto. Best place to do as the Romans do!

You are confirmed for 3 nights at the Splendide Royal in a Superior Room, inclusive of buffet breakfast.

Splendide Royal

Day 2 – Friday Imperial Rome

Today you will be met by your local English-speaking guide and private vehicle for a half-day sightseeing tour (4 hours) of Imperial Rome. Your tour will include a visit to the famous Colosseum, scene of gladiatorial battles, and the Roman Forum and Palatine which was the center of Imperial Roman life.



In the afternoon you will be free to explore Rome at your leisure.

INSIDER ACCESS

Bocca Della Verita

We suggest you independently visit the Roman site that has become an icon of cinema history. The image of the nervous Audrey Hepburn standing before the stone face, with Gregory Peck by her side in the film *Roman Holiday*. Embedded in the 12th century portico on the left-hand wall is what may be the world's most famous manhole cover. It was carved as a giant face to cover a drain, and the water entered through its mouth. Some centuries ago it was given the name Bocca della Verita "the mouth of truth", and a legend grew that liars who put their hands in its mouth would have them bitten off. Another version has it that hidden behind the stone was a priest with a wooden cane who swatted the hands of suspected liars. *Your Guardian Angel will assist you with directions to Bocca della Verita, which is located near the Tiber.*

Splendide Royal

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Day 3 – Saturday Vatican City

Today you will be met by your local Spanish-speaking guide and together take a taxi to the Vatican City to commence a half-day sightseeing tour (4 hours). Created as a result of the Lateran Treaty in 1929 between Pope Pius XI and the Italian government, the Vatican is the smallest independent state. Explore the treasures of the Vatican Museums, including the Sistine Chapel with its famous frescoes by Michelangelo. Visit St. Peter's Basilica, the dominant structure of the Vatican that was erected on order by Constantine, over the tomb of the crucified St. Peter. The present structure is mostly Renaissance and Baroque, formed under the hands of masters such as Michelangelo, and the inside is an elaborate and detailed display of marble, mosaic, gilt and bronze.



Visits to the Vatican Museums are scheduled early in the morning to take advantage of priority access with your private guide. First priority entry is at 8.00 a.m. so you will depart your hotel at 7.15 a.m.

In the afternoon you will be free to explore Rome at your leisure.

INSIDER ACCESS

Fountains of Rome

You may enjoy visiting some of the famous fountains, such as Nicola Selvi's spectacular Trevi Fountain, immortalized in Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita* and Bernini's impressive sculptures in the theatrical Piazza Navona, once a Roman racetrack. You will also visit the Pantheon, originally a Roman temple to the gods, more recently a church with an awe-inspiring dome.

Splendide Royal

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Day 4 – Sunday Rome to Florence

Transfer to the Rome railway station independently arranged.

Upon arrival at the **Florence** railway station you will be met from the door of the train and your luggage will be handled for you. You will then be privately transferred to your hotel where you will be assisted with check-in.

Travel by modern express rail in Italy is an excellent way of traveling between destinations in comfort, style and at speed. The benefits of rail travel in Europe are numerous. In many instances rail travel can be quicker than air travel so no waiting in airport departure lounges or lost luggage!

Rail travel, even by 1st class, is also a very cost effective and comfortable method of covering long distances when compared to air travel or road transfers.

Akorn's unique Assisted Rail product means that you will be shown to your pre-reserved 1st class seating whilst your luggage will be handled for you at both ends of the journey. For your journey you will be provided with a journey bag containing an English language newspaper, bottled water and some snacks.

FLORENCE

Florence is a vast and beautiful monument to the Renaissance, the artistic and cultural reawakening of the 15th century. Writers such as Dante, Petrarch and Machiavelli contributed to its proud literary heritage, though it was the paintings and sculptures of the artists such as Botticelli, Michelangelo and Donatello that turned the city into one of the world's greatest artistic capitals.



Renaissance Florence

Today take a stroll through the city admiring some of the lovely piazzas, churches and palaces with your English-speaking guide. Your half-day walking tour (4 hours) will include a visit to the Duomo (Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore), the famous landmark of Florence, the Church of Santa Croce, where many famous Florentines are buried such as Michelangelo and Galileo. You will also visit San Lorenzo Church and chapels, once the parish church of the Medici family.

Dining suggestion: While in Florence why not dine one evening at *Cavalo Nero*, a fusion of contemporary Mediterranean and Italian cuisine is served with flair. While you will see some foreigners dining there, it really is a place for true Florentines – so great place to people watch too. The décor is contemporary but welcoming with attention to detail and quality at every level – especially the food. There is a fabulous little courtyard garden out back were the walls are covered in Jasmine bush

You will be confirmed for 7 nights at the Hotel Plaza Lucchesi in a Superior Double Room, inclusive of buffet breakfast.

Hotel Plaza Lucchesi

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Day 5 – Monday Florence at Leisure

Today will be at your leisure to explore the city.

INSIDER ACCESS

Piazzale Michelangiolo

We suggest an independent visit to Piazzale Michelangiolo. Piazzale means big piazza, and Michelangiolo is a Tuscan spelling of Michelangelo, to whom this panoramic piazza is dedicated. It could just as easily be dedicated to Cupid, given the amorous Florentines who park their cars in the postcard-perfect scenic overlook of the city, famous for its sunsets that silhouette the cypresses and major monuments and render the Arno golden as it passes beneath a succession of bridges. Michelangelo was originally supposed to be commemorated here with a museum of all his works in Florence brought together under one roof in La Loggia. As if that idea weren't ill-advised enough, in 1873 architect Giuseppe Poggi devised as a monument an odd bronze hybrid of some of Michelangelo's most famous works in Florence - David and the sculptures from the Medici tombs – the end result of which some have called a giant paperweight. Under the olive trees to the right of the piazza is an iris garden. The flower, which became the symbol of Florence, is celebrated in the piazza each May with an international iris show. The incredible view over Florence and what seems like most of Tuscany is definitely worth the climb.



Hotel Plaza Lucchesi

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Day 6 – Tuesday Florence at Leisure

Today you will visit the Uffizi Gallery and the Academia. You will be given the pre served tickets by your Akorn Customer Service Coordinator in your Welcome Pack upon your arrival.

Insider Access:

Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella

We suggest visiting the *Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella*. This historical *Antica Farmacia* dates back to the Dominican friars who in 1221 settled in Florence and was officially founded in 1612. Walking through the discrete door on via della Scala, just off the piazza Santa Maria Novella, one takes a step back in time and is immediately immersed in the scents from the past and present day. Many of the Officina's preparations are historically renowned: the essences, as well as the famous and much requested perfumes, are still prepared to a large extent following the formulas studied in 1500 for Caterina de' Medici. Here you can have your own personal scent mixed for you!

Hotel Plaza Lucchesi

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Day 7 – Wednesday Florence

Today you will be met at your Akorn Customer Service Coordinator and together take a taxi to the downtown Florence car rental station where you will be assisted with collecting your rental vehicle.

CAR RENTAL

You will be provided with a Manual transmission vehicle, Renault Megane (or similar) at your disposal from Auto Europa, Florence on 14th March until you need to drop it off in Florence on 17th March.

Included in your rental is:

- Unlimited Mileage
- Theft Protection
- Taxes
- Collision damage Waiver

Excluded from your rental is:

- Fuel, Parking, Tolls or any other related expenses

The minimum driver age is 18 years old and valid credit card details are required to be left at the rental desk in order to collect the vehicle.

Today you will independently make your way to San Gimignano with your rental vehicle.

Hotel Plaza Lucchesi

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Day 8 – Thursday
Florence

Today is at leisure to independently make your way to Perugia with your rental vehicle.

Hotel Plaza Lucchesi

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Day 9 – Friday
Florence

Today is at leisure to independently make your way to Pisa with your rental vehicle.

Hotel Plaza Lucchesi

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Day 10 – Saturday
Florence

Today is at leisure to independently make your way to Siena with your rental vehicle.

This afternoon you will need to independently return your rental car to the downtown Florence rental car station and then make your own way to your hotel.

Hotel Plaza Lucchesi

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Day 11 – Sunday
Florence to Bologna

Today you will be met at your hotel and privately transferred with your Customer Service Representative to the **Florence** railway station to begin your Assisted Rail journey. Here you will be shown to your pre-reserved 1st class seating and your luggage will be handled onboard for you. Upon arrival at the **Bologna** railway station you will be met from the door of the train and your luggage will be handled for you. You will then be privately transferred to your hotel where you will be assisted with check-in.

BOLOGNA

Bologna is known affectionately in Italy as the 'Fat City' thanks to its gastronomic delights that can be found in the market place and in the hearty local menus. At the heart of this fine city with its portico-lined medieval streets are two central squares, Piazza Maggiore and Piazza del Nettuno where the famous Neptune fountain resides as well as the symbolic two Towers which hint back to Bologna's time as residence for wealthy families. The famous cultural heritage of this city is underpinned by the university, the oldest in Europe.

You will be confirmed for 1 night at the Grand hotel Baglioni in a Standard Double Room, inclusive of buffet breakfast.

Grand Hotel Baglioni

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Day 12 – Monday
Bologna to Venice

Today you will be met at your hotel and privately transferred with your Customer Service Representative to the **Bologna** railway station to begin your Assisted Rail journey. Here you will be shown to your pre-reserved 1st class seating and your luggage will be handled onboard for you. Upon arrival at the **Venice** railway station you will be met from the door of the train and your luggage will be handled for you. You will then be privately transferred to your hotel where you will be assisted with check-in.

VENICE

Venice is one of the few cities in the world that can be described as truly unique. It survives against all the odds, built on a series of low mud banks amid the tidal waters of the Adriatic, and regularly subject to floods. Millions visit the city each year and succumb to the magic of this improbable place whose “streets are full of water” and where the glories of the past are evident at every turn.



Splendor of Venice

Today you will be met at your hotel by your local English-speaking guide for a half-day walking tour (3 hours) of Venice. Your tour will include visits to St. Mark's Basilica, with its rich decoration of marbles and golden mosaics, and the Doge's Palace, once the seat of government and residence of the doges.

Dining Suggestion: While in Venice why not dine one evening at *Ristorante al Giardinetto da Severino*, very well known in Venice and just a few steps from St Marks Square. It is the second or third generation of the family who runs it. Their specialty is Venetian cuisine, and the restaurant has a large garden – very unusual in Venice.

You will be confirmed for 3 nights at the Westin Europa and Regina in an Executive Double Room, inclusive of buffet breakfast.

Westin Europa and Regina

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Day 13 – Tuesday
Lagoon Islands

Today you will enjoy a half-day private boat excursion (4 hours) to the Lagoon Islands, accompanied by an English-speaking escort. Visit the island of Murano, where glass has been produced for centuries, and Burano, known for its lace, and the most colorful island of the lagoon with its houses painted in the brightest of colors.

The afternoon will be at leisure to explore this fascinating city.

Westin Europa and Regina

B

Day 13 – Wednesday
Venice at Leisure

Today will be at leisure for you to independently explore the city.

INSIDER ACCESS:
Exploring the Bacari

Why not explore the historic *Bacari* of Venice on your own? It is a long-established Venetian tradition to take a break at intervals during the day (particularly towards noon and before the evening meal). At this time, people go to a wine bar, called a *bacaro* where you can have a glass of wine and something to eat without the hassle and expense of a proper restaurant. *Bacari* are home to the true Venetian cuisine. They serve *un'ombra* (a small glass of wine) and *cicheti* (traditional snacks). There is an immense variety, including baccalà, spicy meatballs, fish appetizers, fried vegetables and many more. Another popular aperitif is the *spritz*, a light wine *cocktail*. If you want to emulate the Venetians, drink an *ombra* or a *spritz* and eat some *cicheti* at the *bacari*. The ritual visit to this wine-bar is an important part of the rhythm of life in Venice, and a Venetian way of catching up with friends.

Westin Europa and Regina

B

Day 15 – Thursday
Depart Venice

Today you will be met at your Akorn Customer Service Coordinator and together with your luggage privately transferred to the train station where you will take the short trip to the car rental station in Mestre where you will be assisted with collecting your rental vehicle.

NB. Currently there is no availability at the downtown Venice car rental office however we will continue to try to secure this rather than Mestre.

CAR RENTAL

You will be provided with a manual transmission vehicle, Renault Megane (or similar) at your disposal from Auto Europa, Florence on 22nd March until you need to drop it off in Milan on 25th March.

Included in your rental is: Theft Protection
 Taxes
 Collision damage Waiver
 One-way fees

Excluded from your rental is: Fuel, Parking, Tolls or any other related expenses

The minimum driver age is 18 years old and valid credit card details are required to be left at the rental desk in order to collect the vehicle.

Today you will independently make your way to Como - via Verona with your rental vehicle.

LAKE COMO

Lago di Como fills the glacier valley of the Adda, a narrow fiord-like area divided into two arms about half-way down its thirty-some mile length. The southwest arm is more populated, having long ago been planted with beautiful gardens and vineyards belonging to the aristocracy of Milan. Above, on the hillsides of Monte Legnone, stand plantations of chestnut and walnut groves as well as olive trees. The town of Como itself, located on the southwest tip of the lake, is a lovely ancient town whose major industry was and is silk weaving. The town of Cernobbio was a favorite resort of the exiled Queen Caroline of England in the early 19th century.



You will be confirmed for 3 nights at the Grand hotel Tremezzo in a Standard Double Room, inclusive of buffet breakfast.

The remainder of your day will be at Leisure.

Grand hotel Tremezzo
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Day 16 – Friday
Lake Como

Today will be at leisure for you to independently explore the city.

Grand hotel Tremezzo
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Day 17 – Saturday
Lake Como

Today will be at leisure for you to independently explore the city.

Grand hotel Tremezzo
B

Day 19 – Sunday
Como to Milan

Today you will independently make your way to Milan with your rental vehicle.

MILAN

As well as being the known as the industrial capital of Italy and centre for much of the country's financial and commercial productivity, Milan is an important historical and cultural centre with some of the finest museums and galleries in Northern Italy. It is also home to the newly refurbished opera house, the Teatro alla Scala. The Duchy of Milan was once the wealthiest and most powerful territory in mediaeval and Renaissance Italy and signs of this immense wealth can be seen in the legacy of impressive architecture, imposing buildings and important artwork.



Today you will be met at the car rental station and privately transferred with your Customer Service Representative to your hotel.

You will be confirmed for 1 night at the hotel Principe di Savoia in a Classic Double Room, inclusive of Buffet breakfast

Hotel *Principe* *di* *Savoia*
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Day 20 – Monday
Depart Milan

Today you will be privately transferred to the Milan Malpensa Airport.

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