



ITALIAN CLASSIC



VENICE

Venezia, La Serenissima, Queen of the Adriatic, city of canals and palaces...or tawdry sewer alive with crowds and charlatans? Venice's nature is dual: water and land, long history and doubtful future, airy delicacy and dim melancholy. When this precious place sinks, the world will be the poorer.

Take time to meander - losing yourself in the maze of canals and lanes is one of Venice's principal pleasures. The cluster of sights around the Piazza San Marco are heart-clutchingly beautiful, but the more secret pleasures of the hushed backstreets are just as entrancing.

FLORENCE

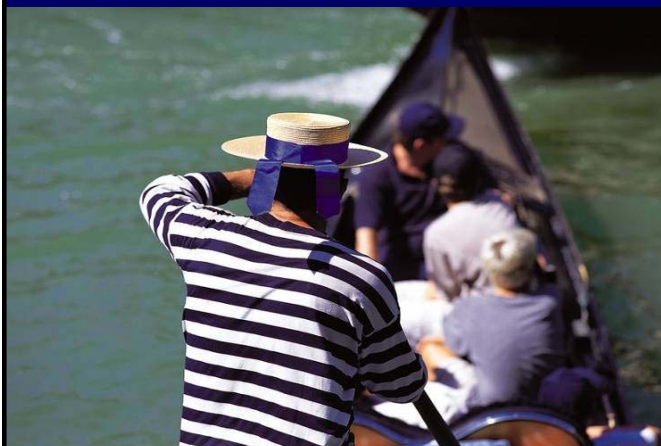
The cultural and historical impact of Florence (or *Firenze*) is overwhelming. Close up, however, the city is one of Italy's most atmospheric and pleasant, retaining a strong resemblance to the small late-medieval centre that contributed so much to the cultural and political development of Europe.

For eye-watering attractions you won't need to venture far from Florence's medieval core, a Renaissance wonderland containing the graceful span of Ponte Vecchio, the Duomo's skyscraping dome, the gilded splendour of Basilica di San Lorenzo and the well-hung Uffizi gallery.

ROME

It's hard to say what you'll find most breathtaking about the eternal city - the arrogant opulence of the Vatican, the timelessness of the Forum, the top speed of a Fiat Bambino, the millions of cats in the Colosseum, trying to cross a major intersection, or the bill for your latte.

Sightseeing in Rome is exhilarating and exhausting. That it wasn't built in a day is quickly evident when you start exploring the temples, residences, basilicas, churches, palazzi, piazzi, parks, museums and fountains. All this and the Vatican too!



9 DAYS

VENICE, FLORENCE & ROME



Gondola's glide along Venice's miles of canals



The Coliseum - scene of Gladiatorial Battle

HIGHLIGHTS

- St Mark's Square
- St Mark's Basilica
- Rialto Bridge
- Florence Duomo
- Piazza Signoria
- Ponte Vecchio
- Coliseum
- Vatican
- St Peter's Basilica
- Roman Forum
- Pantheon
- Trevi Fountain
- Spanish Steps

INCLUDED

- Return Flights
- Tour Director
- Football Coordinator
- City sightseeing tours
- Licensed local guides
- Hotel accommodation
- Breakfast & dinner daily
- Private motor coach
- Entrance fees
- 2 Rugby games
- 1 Rugby practice
- Awards dinner

Day 1 > Depart on overnight flight to Milan

Day 2 > Arrive in Milan & transfer to Venice

Your Tour Director will lead your adventure in Milan, Italy's capital of fashion and finance. See the renowned La Scala opera house, with Europe's largest stage. The city's marble Duomo took almost 450 years to complete, and is the world's largest Gothic cathedral. On clear days, its 135 spires can be seen from the Alps. Continue to Venice.

Day 3 > Venice sightseeing

Bubbling up on more than 100 islands in a lagoon off the Adriatic, Venice is an absolutely unique and unquestionably beautiful city. The weight of its opulent architecture – bulbous domes, gothic spires, and lacy marble – may be sinking the city by 10 inches a century, but your local guide will make sure you don't sink out of sight as you tour the intricate labyrinth of streets and bridges. Step into Piazza San Marco, an airy expanse of arches, sunlight, and pigeons. The multi-domed Basilica on one end, completed in 1094 but decorated for centuries afterward, is the final resting place of the apostle St. Mark, Venice's patron saint. The mosaics beneath the basilica's outside arches depict the arrival of St. Mark's body, stolen from Egypt in 828 by Venetian traders. The frothy Venetian Gothic Doge's Palace stands next door. Continue on to a glass-blowing demonstration. Venetian glass has long been considered the best in the world, and its production was such a state secret that during the Middle Ages, any Venetian glassblower who attempted to ply his trade outside the city was immediately arrested.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY GAME ONE

Day 4 > Travel to Florence

Enjoy a walk amid the artistic wonders of Florence, including Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise and the marble cathedral in the Piazza del Duomo. Pass through the architectural splendor of the Piazza della Signoria before having the afternoon all to yourself—you could visit the Accademia for a view of Michelangelo's David or go bargain hunting at the outdoor market at Piazza San Lorenzo.

Day 5 > Florence Sightseeing

Immerse yourself in the charms of old-world Firenze, a red-brick splendor set in the rolling green hills of Tuscany. The birthplace and focal point of the Italian Renaissance, Florence still has the masterpieces to prove it. Brunelleschi's elegant Duomo (dome) dominates the skyline, and around every corner is an architectural triumph filled with wall after wall of incomparable art. Your local licensed guide will take you to Giotto's Bell Tower and the aptly named Gates of Paradise, the bronze east doors of the Baptistery that spurred the burgeoning Renaissance. The boy guarding the Palazzo Vecchio with his slingshot is just a copy of Michelangelo's David; the real statue is over at the Accademia.

EVENING RUGBY PRACTICE

Day 6 > Game Day

Enjoy your second game today against Italian opposition. Relax and socialise with your hosts after the game with a party and dinner.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY GAME TWO

Day 7 > Rome orientation walking tour

Enjoy a walk past Rome's most beautiful and unusual Baroque fountains. At the foot of the Spanish Steps, elegant cafes once favored by visiting Brits and Americans surround the central fountain. The water pressure here was so low that the artist had to sink the fountain into the ground to get any water going through it, so he went ahead and designed the fountain to look like a sinking ship. There's no shortage of water pressure at the nearby Trevi Fountain, a Baroque extravaganza designed by master sculptor Bernini. At the Pantheon you'll see the largest concrete dome ever constructed. An oculus, or hole, in the dome lets sunlight into the beautiful temple, dedicated to all the gods.

Day 8 > Rome Sightseeing (Vatican & Coliseum)

Gods and gladiators, glory and gore. Ancient Rome lives on in its spectacular monuments, flavoring the frenetic present with tastes of the past. Don a space-age Whisper headset to get the inside scoop on the most spectacular, the Coliseum, a grisly battle arena that seated more than 45,000. An enormous retractable roof awning system kept spectators cool on sunny days. The nearby Forum provides a glimpse into everyday ancient life, with markets, meeting places, and temples all combined into one vast space. Move into Christian Rome at St. Peter's Basilica, the triumphal Renaissance church flanked by rows of columns radiating outward like welcoming arms. Within the church Michelangelo's masterpieces are on display, the "Pietà" in the main church and the recently restored ceiling frescoes and "Last Judgment" in the Sistine Chapel. (The Sistine Chapel is closed on most religious holidays and Sundays, except for the last Sunday in each month).

Day 9 > Return home to US

Return back to your home and school with great memories of Italy – Arrivederci!

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ORDER OF VISITS AND GAME DAY DESTINATIONS MAY BE ALTERED AND THIS ITINERARY SHOULD BE USED AS A GUIDE ONLY. ALL EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO INCLUDE THE ITEMS LISTED BUT ADJUSTMENTS MAY BE NECESSARY DEPENDING UPON THE GAME SITE. THE ACTUAL & FINAL ITINERARY WILL BE CONFIRMED SIX WEEKS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE.

FLIGHTS MAY ALSO ARRIVE AND/OR DEPART FROM MILAN OR PISA IN EITHER DIRECTION.