TOUR CODE

IT1

ADVENTURESABROAD

NORTHERN ITALY

Rome, Florence & Venice

14 days

Updated 22/03/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Rome*

Today we arrive in Rome and transfer to our hotel.

Few cities in the world are as beautiful as Rome, and few are as glamorous. The Eternal City's ancient monuments and spectacular galleries are looking more magnificent than ever after an extensive restoration program.

Overnight in Rome. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Rome: City Tour*

We begin our guided tour* of Rome at the 2,000 year old colosseum. Built to seat 55,000 spectators, this arena staged Rome's most brutal gladitorial combats. Next we walk through the Roman Forum where we will see the Curia, the Rostra, the Temple of Vesta, the Basilica of Constantine, and the Arch of Titus. Continuing onwards and upwards we reach the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill), seat of the Roman Senate since the 12th century and the original citadel of the city. This beautiful square was redesigned by Michelangelo in the 16th century.

We arrive at Piazza Navona where we can break for lunch at one of the many restaurants and cafes on or near the square. In the square itself we can admire the impressive Fountain of the Four Rivers, with detailed figures representing the Nile, Ganges, Danube and Palata rivers.

We continue to the famous Trevi Fountain, designed by Nicholas Salvi in 1732. It's water was supplied by one of Rome's earliest aquaducts. Throwing a coin into the fountain is said to ensure your safe return to Rome. We also visit the temple-turned church called the Pantheon, and have the opportunity to admire its perfect proportions on our way to the Spanish steps, where we finish our day's tour. Balance of the day at leisure.

* NOTE: Due to traffic problems and the fact that today's sites are reasonably close to each other, much of today's tour will occur on foot and with Rome's efficient public transit system (cost of tickets included).

Overnight in Rome. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Rome: the Vatican Museums & St. Peter's*

Today we begin our visit to Vatican City with a guided tour through the immense Vatican Museums.* This amazing collection houses some of the most important Greek and Roman sculptures, Renaissance paintings, Flemish tapestries and mosaics in the world. Understandably this collection is visited by more than 3 million people a year. We also visit Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel to take in its breathtaking frescoes. Heading into the cavernous interior of St. Peter's Basilica, we can appreciate it's many treasures, including Michelangelo's Pieta. At the end of the tour we visit the elegantly symmetrical Piazza St. Pietro.

* NOTE: The timing of today's sightseeing can vary depending on seasonality. Early spring and late fall tours can often begin in the morning due to lighter crowds at these times of year. Busier times often dictate an afternoon visit in order to avoid morning crowds. Weather may also be a consideration. Your Tour Leader will advise further upon your arrival in Rome.

Overnight in Rome. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Rome - Assisi - Siena*

This morning we drive from Rome to Siena, a region famous for its wines.

Our first stop will be Assisi. Despite the millions of tourists and pilgrims it attracts every year, the hometown of St Francis remains a beautiful and tranquil refuge. St Francis was born here in 1182 and his spirit hovers over every aspect of the city's life. He renounced his father's wealth in his late teens to pursue a life of chastity and poverty, founding the order of mendicant friars known as the Order of Minors (the Franciscans after his death) which attracted a huge following in Europe.

St Francis' Basilica is the city's, and possibly Umbria's, primary attraction. Unfortunately, this peaceful town was hit by a strong earthquake on the morning of the September 26, 1997. During the initial shock, the Basilica of the upper church was damaged. An aftershock later that day brought the cupola down. The community of Assisi with assistance from individuals and organisations worldwide is now trying to save and restore as much of Assisi's priceless masterpieces as possible.

After a guided tour of the Assisi Basilica, we depart for Siena, arriving later in the afternoon.

Overnight in Siena. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Siena & San Gimignano*

Siena is best seen on foot. In fact, the city council was Europe's first to ban motor traffic from the city centre. Siena today seems frozen in time. The town has traditionally been Florence's rival as the centre of art and architecture in Tuscany. While Florence is known for its Renaissance art and buildings, Siena takes us straight back to the Middle Ages. Perhaps by preserving its original character more than any other city in Italy, Siena is a showcase of the Italian Gothic style. The walled city of Siena occupies three hill tops and contains a rich artistic heritage.

Included on our guided walking tour of Siena's charming medieval streets and squares is a visit to the Palazzo Pubblico (Town Hall), a famous example of Italian medieval architecture with Gothic influences. Also famous for its frescoes, the best-known are a secular series on government in the Hall of the Nine (also known as Sala della Pace), by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. These frescoes are collectively known as "Allegory and Effects of Good and Bad Government."

Our next stop is the Duomo. This huge cathedral, built in bands of black and white marble, dates from the 12th century. Built in the Romanesque and Italian Gothic styles, it has a dramatically painted façade -- partly designed by Giovanni Pisano -- and a soaring black and white bell tower. The inlaid marble floor depicts different Biblical scenes and the cathedral contains a glass-enclosed box with an arm. Tradition maintains that the arm is that of John the Baptist and was used to baptise Christ.

This afternoon we drive to San Gimignano, called the Manhattan of Tuscany. The medieval town preserves 13 of its noble brick towers, which give it a skyscraper skyline. Today its fortress-like severity is softened by the subtlety of its quiet, harmonious squares, and many of its places and churches are enhanced by Renaissance frescoes.

Our drive this afternoon back to Siena takes us through the wine growing region of Chianti.

Overnight in Siena. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Siena - Volterra - Pisa - Lerici*

This morning we drive through beautiful and quintessential Tuscan rolling countryside to Volterra.

Situated like many Etruscan cities on a high plateau, Volterra offers uninterrupted views over the surrounding hills. In many places the town's ancient Etruscan walls still stand. The exact origins of the Etruscans and when they arrived in Italy, are unknown. Their civilisation was centred in the area between present-day Rome and Florence, and had its Golden Age from the eighth until the sixth century BC. After this period the Etruscan empire was gradually superseded by the rising power of Rome, although in the process, the Romans incorporated many aspects of Etruscan culture into their own society and beliefs. Although the Etruscans had their own language and alphabet, nothing of their literature has survived. What we know of their civilisation comes mainly from their highly decorated tombs which were stocked with everything the deceased would need in the afterlife -- food, drink, clothes, weapons and furniture.

We visit Volterra's famous Museo Guarnacci, which contains one of Italy's best collections of Etruscan artifacts. Pride of place in the museum goes to the collection of 600 Etruscan funerary urns, depicting many aspects of Etruscan customs and beliefs.

We also visit the city walls and the Etruscan Gate with its basalt heads of Etruscan gods dating back to the sixth century BC. Before leaving Volterra we view the Roman amphitheatre, dating to the first century BC. This is one of the best preserved Roman theatres in Italy and enough of the original structure has survived to allow an almost complete reconstruction.

Our next stop is Pisa, where we will spend most of our time concentrating on the town's principal monuments -- the Duomo, the Baptistery, and the most famous structure in Pisa, the gravity-defying "Leaning Tower." We will take ample time to view and photograph the tower from the outside (to climb the tower requires advance reservations and a considerable amount of time to queue for entry; time constraints make this impractical for our tour).

We continue to Lerici, set dramatically on a beautiful bay on the Ligurian coast.

Overnight in Lerici. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Lerici - Cinque Terre - Florence*

Today we leave behind Lerici and travel (weather depending) by boat along the Ligurian coast to village of Riomaggiore in the Cinque Terre. Here we begin our easy-paced walk between the coastal villages. This spectacular section of the Italian Riviera is considered to rival the Amalfi Coast near Naples for its stunning views and gorgeous sunsets. From Riomaggiore we take an easy half hour walk on the Via D'Amore (lover's Walk) to Manarola. The next section (about 1 hour) takes us to Corniglia.

Those not wishing to continue with the next two more difficult sections may walk up to Corniglia centre to sample the delightful town with its wonderful panoramic views. It is also possible to take a local train to the nearby town of Vernazza to enjoy this jewel of a village. Those wishing to continue may start on the 2-hour hike to Vernazza. The hills of the rugged coast are covered in vineyards which grow the grapes for the local Morasca, Chiaretto del Faro and Sciacchetra wines.

We continue by train to Monterosso Al Mare, thus named for the red color of the area. Here we find a large statue carved into the cliffs and a lovely beach.

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the flooding that occurred in the region in late 2011, our day may need to be adjusted depending on what trails are open or under repair, and any repairs or re-construction occuring in the impacted villages.

Tonight we arrive in Florence.

Overnight in Florence. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Florence: Walking Tour*

Florence is a city steeped in history and art. Our walking tour today begins with a guided tour of the Accademia, which was Europe's first Academy of drawing and today houses a superb art collection, including Michelangelo's David, probably the most famous statue in the world. We then proceed to the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore (Duomo), complete with its magnificent red dome. Upon its completion in 1436, the dome was hailed as the greatest architectural achievement of its day, equaling, perhaps even surpassing, the monuments of antiquity. The cupola's diameter is greater than that of St Peter's in Rome and the nave is the third largest in Christendom. Even today its brilliant engineering is not fully understood.

We continue along the pedestrian mall to the Ponte Vecchio, the oldest bridge in Florence and the only one in the city to survive World War II. The Ponte Vecchio was built in 1345 and used to be lined with butchers' shops which have now been replaced by rows of gold and silver shops on both sides. At the Piazza Santa Croce, we stop to admire the facade of the Franciscan church of the same name. Inside we see the tombs of Michelangelo and Galileo Galilei and chapels covered in frescoes by Giotto.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Florence. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Florence: Uffizi Gallery*

This morning we visit the Uffizi Gallery, Giorgio Vasari's extraordinary administrative buildings which he designed for Cosimo I Medici in the mid-sixteenth century. The galleries here contain the greatest collection of Italian artworks, including hundreds of paintings by such great artists as Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian and Caravaggio. The galleries also contain one of the most famous paintings in the world -- Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus.'

The afternoon is free to take in the atmosphere of this sophisticated city.

Overnight in Florence. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Florence - Ravenna: Town Tour*

From Tuscany we drive into the region of Emilia Romagna, an area of fertile plains surrounding the Po River.

We arrive in Ravenna, an incomparable treasure-store of Byzantine monuments. Ravenna was made capital of the Western Roman Empire in AD 402 as Rome was threatened by the unstoppable Barbarians. Later in the fifth century

Ravenna also succumbed, but was recaptured in 540 by the Byzantines under the emperor Justinian. From the sixth to the eighth centuries Ravenna flourished as a great centre of Byzantine (Eastern Orthodox) culture and religion. Its influence came not from the rest of Italy but from Constantinople (today's Istanbul). Today the humble-looking churches of Ravenna house the most spectacular Byzantine mosaics outside Istanbul.

We also visit the spectacular mausoleum of Galla Placidia, a Roman princess who married a Barbarian chief. The walls, floor and ceiling of her tomb are completely covered in dazzling decoration. The Mausoleum of Theodoric, built in AD 520 to house the mortal remains of an enlightened ostrogothic ruler, has a dome cut from a single block of stone weighing almost 336 tonnes (300 tons)! Later we visit the Basilica of Sant Appollinare in Classe with its stunning mosaics. Today we will also have a walking tour of the charming streets of Medieval Ravenna.

Overnight in Ravenna. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Ravenna - Verona - Padova (Padua)*

Today we drive from Ravenna to Verona via the Colli Eugani region, known in English as the Eugenian Hills. This glorious area is well-known for its thermal springs and terrific wines.

The area is also known for balsamic vinegar, and today we'll visit an acetaia where balsamic vinegar is produced. We will see the machinery, cellar, the barrels, indeed the whole process and all the products that result.

Onto Verona, the setting for Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. With its pink marble Roman structures and rose-painted buildings, Verona is one of Italy's most appealing towns. The town contains many Roman ruins including the first century Arena which is now used as Verona's opera house, the third largest such structure in existence. The Teatro Romano is often used for the performance of plays, particularly those of William Shakespeare.

During our time in Verona we'll have a walking tour starting with the Piazza Bra, the centre of Veronese life. We'll wander the rosy-hued streets admiring the palaces, townhouses and churches. We see the Gothic mausoleum of the Scaligeri rulers of the 13th and 14th centuries. We also visit the family's fortified residence on the River Adige and a bridge named after them.

We continue to Padova.

Overnight in Padova. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Padova: Town Tour - Venice*

We begin our walking tour of Padova with a visit to the towering Basilica of Saint Anthony, patron saint of lost things. With its minaret-like towers and byzantine cupolas, the structure is a blend of eastern and western elements and a focal point for a constant flow of pilgrims. When we step inside its precincts, we leave Italy and enter the Vatican State. This is the only Vatican property (apart from Vatican City) in Italy that is extra-territorial. We continue on to the small Scrovegni Chapel, situated near the town centre. Here we view exquisite frescoes by Giotto, who led the way to the Renaissance by piercing the wall of two dimension and introducing perspective and humanism into painting in the fourteenth century. We also visit a unique structure -- Europe's oldest permanent anatomy theatre, built in 1594, with viewing balconies so narrow that when students fainted they would be prevented from falling. After a short walk from the university we come to the Piazza Bo, the scene of one of the liveliest daily markets in Italy.

We then travel the rest of the distance to Venice by road. After a brief orientation by your Tour Leader, you will have free time this afternoon for independent exploration. This evening you may choose to visit the casino, take a gondola

ride, or perhaps spend an evening at the theatre.

Overnight in Venice. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Venice: City Tour*

On our guided walking tour this morning we concentrate on St Mark's Square, surrounded with elegant, historic buildings. Napoleon called Piazza San Marco, "the drawing room of Europe". We start with a tour of the Doge's Palace. This former seat of Venetian power has the second largest wooden room in Europe. Of interest as we walk through the council rooms, is Tintoretto's Paradise over the Grand Council Chamber -- alleged to be the largest oil painting in the world. The palace is connected to the old prison by the 'Bridge of Sighs.' In the late 16th century the decision was made to build new airier prison cells to replace the original dark dungeons. It was from this new prison that Casanova made his daring escape across the rooftops in 1755.

The highlight of the square is St Mark's Basilica, a Byzantine masterpiece. This cathedral was begun in 830 to house the tomb of St Mark whose relics were stolen from Alexandria in Egypt. The inside walls are encrusted with precious art, rare marbles and magnificent mosaics. Behind the altar is the famous gold altarpiece, 'Palla d'Oro,' which is one of the finest examples of gold craftsmanship. (We do not include a tour of the interior of the basilica as lengthy queues usually make this impractical for our programme. We encourage you to visit the site during your free time this afternoon.)

Later we take the vaporetto, or public water bus, on the Grand Canal and then walk along the maze of canals, sidewalks and bridges that are uniquely Venice. At the Rialto Bridge we visit the market area. The name Rialto derives from 'high bank' because this area was one of the highest points on the islands that make up the core of Venice and was thus considered a safe gathering point. The market here is vibrant with locals buying fruit and vegetables brought in from the mainland, and a vast array of fish caught fresh in the Adriatic.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Venice. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Departure*

Departure from Venice.

BUON VIAGGIO! Meal plan: Breakfast.