

2024



TIKI TOURS



Boutique Collection

Europe

INSPIRATION
AND
DISCOVERY



NEW HORIZONS

TRAVELLING IS AN ART AND PRIVILEGE

The secret is to do it well



Looking for a boutique small group tour of Europe with a difference? For 26 years, we have introduced Australians to the very best on offer.

The essence of our fully escorted small group journeys has always been on small numbers with quality high on our list. On creating unique travel experiences, taking a road less travelled and adhering to sustainable travel practises.

In a global environment that is continuously changing, booking and travelling with a reputable company is now more important than ever. Personal contact with a real person who is committed, can be easily reached and is there for you once a reservation is made will be every travellers most trusted source.

With the combined expertise of our long-standing partners and staff in Europe, please be assured that you will be in good hands.

Updated booking terms and conditions go hand in hand with a new era of travel. We invite you to get inspired today, please enjoy our 2024 touring program and contact us with any queries you may have.

It will be our pleasure to welcome you on board shortly.

Danielle & Peter Venn
Directors



EMBARK ON A JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME

3 AND 4 NIGHT STAYS



*Photo courtesy:
Chateau Hotel Mont Royal Chantilly – France*



TOURS



DISCOVER THE
WONDERS
OF CULTURES IN NEW
AND OLD LANDS

*Photo courtesy:
Chateau Hotel Mont Royal in Chantilly – France*

UNSPOILED SICILY & SOUTHERN ITALY
20 DAYS | 30 AUGUST - 18 SEPTEMBER 2024



38

COUNTRY ROADS FRANCE IN STYLE
20 DAYS | 3 - 22 SEPTEMBER 2024



52

HIDDEN ABRUZZO SARDINIA & CORSICA
20 DAYS | 4 - 23 OCTOBER 2024



66

2024 TOURS

SPAIN - THE SILVER ROUTE
20 DAYS | 3 - 22 OCTOBER 2024



78

TIMELESS PORTUGAL & MADEIRA
20 DAYS | 2025 TOURING DATES TBA



90

ENCHANTING ITALY UNCOVERED
21 DAYS | 2025 TOURING DATES TBA



104

2024 TOURS

TIKI TOURS PERSONALLY INVITE YOU TO
EXPERIENCE THE OLD-WORLD CHARMS
OF EUROPE IN COMFORT AND STYLE



DESTINATION SPECIALIST

DO YOU LOVE THE GRANDEUR OF EUROPE
AND APPRECIATE THE LITTLE LUXURIES?
LOOK NO FURTHER...

INSPIRED BY THE ESSENCE OF THE CLASSIC
17TH C 'GRAND TOUR' LET US TAKE YOU ON
A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

The old continent is truly blessed with immense cultural diversity, breathtaking natural landscapes and the legacy of many ancient civilisations. It is no secret that romantic Europe is a paradise for history, culture and art lovers, and if that is not enough, the abundance of good food and wines are the envy of the rest of the world. Rich in custom and tradition, it has its fair share of tales and legends, there is always a story to tell, a mystery to reveal, this special region seemingly has it all.

Our boutique small group tours, with a strong emphasis on the Mediterranean, have been designed for anyone who appreciates the finer things in life. We take great pleasure in sourcing quality heritage accommodation in unique locations and share them with you. After all, a stay is only memorable if we remember that special something that sets it apart. Finding it, is what we do.

As a small group tour operator working in a niche market, each of our programs has been meticulously researched and hand-crafted, resulting in day to day content that is stimulating, filled with authentic travel experiences, fun and surprises. Travel is off the beaten track and due to the multiple night hotel stays the days are leisurely paced. Tour features have been carefully designed offering a balanced mix of culture, history, art and nature always keeping the needs and interests of the mature, discerning Australian traveller in mind.

For 26 years, as a European specialist, we are knowledgeable and passionate about each of our beautiful destinations. We value old-fashioned customer care, we listen, apply attention to detail and offer a personalised service at all times.

What makes our journeys so unique can only be described as a combination of many exceptional ingredients. So let us take you on a journey of discovery, sit back and relax and take in the elegance and sophistication of Europe starting today.



26
YEARS
EUROPEAN
SPECIALIST

OUR STORY

TIKI TOURS STARTED OVER 26 YEARS AGO WITH A STRONG DESIRE TO SHARE THE MANY UNIQUE TREASURES OF EUROPE

Whilst we now happily call Australia home, we are both European born and have lived in, personally visited and researched our destinations. Our fully escorted tours are carefully hand-crafted.

With the support of our long-standing European tour directors, we inspect the hotels, select special venues and only then create the actual itinerary. We sell the tours and from time to time we also join the groups in Europe so there is control at every stage of the process.

As a European specialist, one of our aims from inception was to provide our guests with authentic travel experiences. With the combined expertise of our tour directors and from our years of living in Europe – Italy and Portugal – we have added extra local touches to our tours.

Professional industry educational tours and workshops also add precious first-hand introduction and access to new products and trends. Together they contribute to ensuring we locate only the best to maintain the highest standards across each and every tour offered to you.





BENEFITS OF SMALL GROUP TOURING

SMALL PERSONALISED GROUPS

As a small group tour operator there has got to be a point of difference. Within the segment of small group European travel, our groups have always been smaller than many similar touring products. With a strong emphasis on delivering quality, boutique travel experiences and always keeping the needs of the mature, discerning traveller in mind. Our tours are guaranteed from approx. 8 tour participants with most groups operating with around 10-12 pax making it the ideal group size.



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Companionship is important, in life, in travel. Nothing is better than to share the good times and enjoy the journey together. Amongst the many obvious positives of small group travel outlined earlier, we know that going on an adventure with a group of like-minded people is high on your list and we understand why.

As a destination specialist, TIKI TOURS is fortunate to attract a high-end market with a genuine interest in the history, culture, art, nature and gastronomy of our European destinations. Our cultural heritage tours are fun and come with many surprises, they are fully escorted yet offer ample free time to explore on your own ensuring the best of both worlds.



VALUE FOR MONEY

Booking a conducted small group tour is a defining moment, especially if it is the first time.

You may feel that you are no longer in control and miss a certain degree of freedom. Our small group tours offer many advantages. Other than leisurely morning starts and convenient multiple night stays, our luxury tours of Europe offer ample flexibility and the opportunity to extend your holiday in Europe post tour.

Small group tours offer value for money and peace of mind, they take the hassle out of tedious forward planning, there is the benefit of safety in numbers and the assurance of seeing the best of each destination with your tour director and local guides, not to mention not having to lug your own luggage.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

Solo travellers will not feel alone on our tours, on the contrary. It is a growing trend that more and more people travel individually but for peace of mind and social interaction prefer the company of a group so why not enjoy both?

Single travellers make up a large part of our groups and since you all share similar interests our tours offer compatibility and often friendship. To accommodate solo travellers we usually package, where possible, a double room for single use.

POST TOURING

In Europe post-touring options are in no short supply. Add a few nights in one of your favourite hotels, consider a relaxing river cruise or meet up with family and friends, the choice is yours. Please contact us in good time to discuss your requirements and it will be our pleasure to assist.

ALL INCLUSIVE TOURING

TOURING PROGRAMS ARE ALL INCLUSIVE, PRE PAID IN AUSTRALIAN DOLLARS AS PER TOUR CONTENT IN BROCHURE



APART FROM SHOPPING, SOUVENIRS AND OTHER PERSONAL EXPENSES EVERYTHING IS INCLUDED - THERE ARE NO HIDDEN EXTRAS

PERSONALISED SERVICE

This is your holiday and you will be in good hands. All tours are fully escorted by our European tour directors and accredited city guides, highly skilled individuals who give the best of themselves day in day out.

Our tour managers are there from start to finish, their service starts with meet and greet at the airport and this is also where they wave goodbye. They have been with us from the start, they know what makes you tick. They have a caring nature, offer humour and expertise, they are knowledgeable, professional and passionate about their destinations.

MODERN COACH TRAVEL

You will travel in comfort and style as, depending on the size of the group and the destination, we contract comfortable 30, 40 or 50 seater coaches. When working with smaller groups and sometimes due to road networks and access, we work with 16 - 19 seaters.

We only partner with licensed coach operators and contract senior drivers who have worked with us for many years. With portage included on our tours, they will take care of your luggage and assist where possible and become good friends along the way.

Upon completion of your tour, there is no need to rush home, the option to stay on in Europe is available to you. Visit family or friends or simply do your own thing. It is important to remember that each tour only offers one departure each year, therefore early reservations are recommended as places are strictly limited.

TAKE A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

TRAVEL HAS GOT TO BE MORE THAN GETTING FROM A TO B. WE BELIEVE TRAVEL IS FIRST AND FOREMOST MEANT TO BROADEN THE MIND

Of course, rest and recuperation are just as important. At TIKI TOURS, we aim to cover it all and take you on a road less travelled introducing you to unique travel experiences.

Travelling in a smaller group offers flexibility and makes it so much easier to get around and interact with the locals. Spending time together is meaningful and gives travel that extra dimension. After all, nothing is more fun than making that pizza with those who know best.

Our itineraries are off the beaten track where possible exploring many of Europe's lesser known towns, villages and monuments with programs including visits to sites not always open to the public. All tours offer a good first introduction but are also ideal for those who already have a solid knowledge of our destinations and wish to gain a deeper understanding of certain regions.



*Photo courtesy:
Provence Alpes Côte D'Azur Tourism Board*

IMMERSIVE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES



TOUR FEATURES AND DAILY TOURS
ARE DESIGNED FOR THE MATURE
AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLER



OUR PERSONALISED TOURING PRODUCT OFFERS IMMERSIVE, SENSORY TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

LOCAL CULTURE

When we travel, our little 'wish list' is long and the desire to connect with people at the other end of the globe is important to all of us. Nowadays, it is easier than at any other time to engage with others. On our boutique tours we introduce you to the local culture and people, to interact, learn and share.

To give you some idea, in the Langhe area, culinary mecca of Italy, you will join a 'Trifolao', a truffle hunter and his dog for a walk and visit a family-owned hazelnut business later in the day. In Sicily, enjoy a home-shared cooking class and spend time with a local lecturer in Corleone. In Merida, Spain, you will enjoy a typical Roman Dinner at the Parador while in France the colourful studios of the many artisans will get you inspired.

With ample free time between touring in the day and dining at night, you can fill in the rest of your personal little 'wish list' on tour.



SUSTAINABLE VALUES

FROM INCEPTION, OUR OUTLOOK AND LONG-TERM VIEW ON SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL PRACTISES HAVE ALWAYS CLOSELY ALIGNED WITH OUR CORE VALUES AND TOURING CONCEPT

From the very start, our boutique small group journeys of Europe have been operating with respect for nature and the global environment always keeping the needs of the local people in mind. Its what we do and continue to do.

As much as our world has changed, not too much has changed in our world and in how we have always viewed responsible travel practises.

As a Europe destination specialist, building long-lasting relationships add value and meaning for all and it is what makes our product round and gives it substance.

Whether its supporting local artisans and their art, visiting small rural eco wineries or crediting talented local chefs through taking their cooking classes, responsible local tourism is at the core of everything we do.

Starting with this first paperless brochure, we are fully committed to adhering sustainable values in the travel and tourism industry, they are now more important than ever.



CATERING FOR THE AUSTRALIAN 60+ MARKET



LEISURELY TRAVEL IN STYLE

Do you dread the idea of joining a large tour group? Of 6:00 am wake-up calls and rushing from city to city until your head is spinning? After all that, did you actually get to know the real people and culture or were you just passing through? It makes you think!

At TIKI TOURS, we believe in a good breakfast before we start the day. Daily touring starts around 8:30-9:00 am allowing ample time to relax or explore individually between touring in the day and dining at night. In addition, the many multiple 3 and 4 night hotel stays ensure a restful holiday with time to appreciate our specialty hotels to the full.

WELL BALANCED CONTENT

Tour features and daily tours are designed with the needs of the discerning, mature traveller in mind. Having said that, the programs have no age limit and are suitable for anyone who believes in a relaxed style of travel. Our personalised tours never exceed large numbers and tour content is well-balanced on a day to day basis ...without visiting too many churches.



ART & ARTISANS



Photo courtesy of Bordal Bordados Da Madeira

FESTIVALS & FETES

Europe's change of seasons leans itself well to countless festivals and fetes.

Each time of the year comes with its own celebrations when village squares and creative communities come alive and are transformed into bustling hubs of colour and hand-made products.

Perfect opportunities for local artists and artisans to showcase their talent and craftsmanship to the wider world.

From up and coming painters to glass blowers, from pottery and jewellery makers to sellers of artisan cheese and bread. From boutique wineries and olive farms selling their annual crop. The list is endless and on tour we will capture the best on offer.

TRADITION & CRAFTSMANSHIP

LOCAL ART STUDIOS

Visit the studios of Monet, Cezanne and Van Gogh – learn more about the lives of Toulouse Lautrec and Leonardo da Vinci on our popular Country Roads France in Style tour.

ESSENCE OF ART

Capture the essence of Europe's unique art treasures, visit prestigious galleries and museums as well as the quaint studios of some of the world's most famous masters.

Admire the creativity of local artisans and their crafts during immersive workshops and support these communities and their cause of keeping traditions alive in a modern world.

ART AND ITS POWER

The power of the arts is impressive, dynamic and without boundaries, quietly co-existing alongside a changed world and inviting us to take a step back and look beyond. Art transcends, its beyond words.

Immerse yourself and discover the very best on offer during your boutique travel experience of Italy, France, Spain and Portugal.



BOUTIQUE HERITAGE

ACCOMMODATION

CHARM AND CHARACTER

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FEATURES

Of our small group tours of Europe are the convenient multiple night hotel stays in charming heritage hotels. Our programs offer personally selected high quality accommodations, mostly 4 and 5 star, as working with smaller groups means easier access to the boutique accommodation we want to share with you.

Some of our tour hotels belong to the 'Leading Hotels of the World', the 'Small Luxury Hotels of the World' and the 'Relais du Silence', prestigious groups of specialty hotels with the elements of luxury, charm and character high on their list.

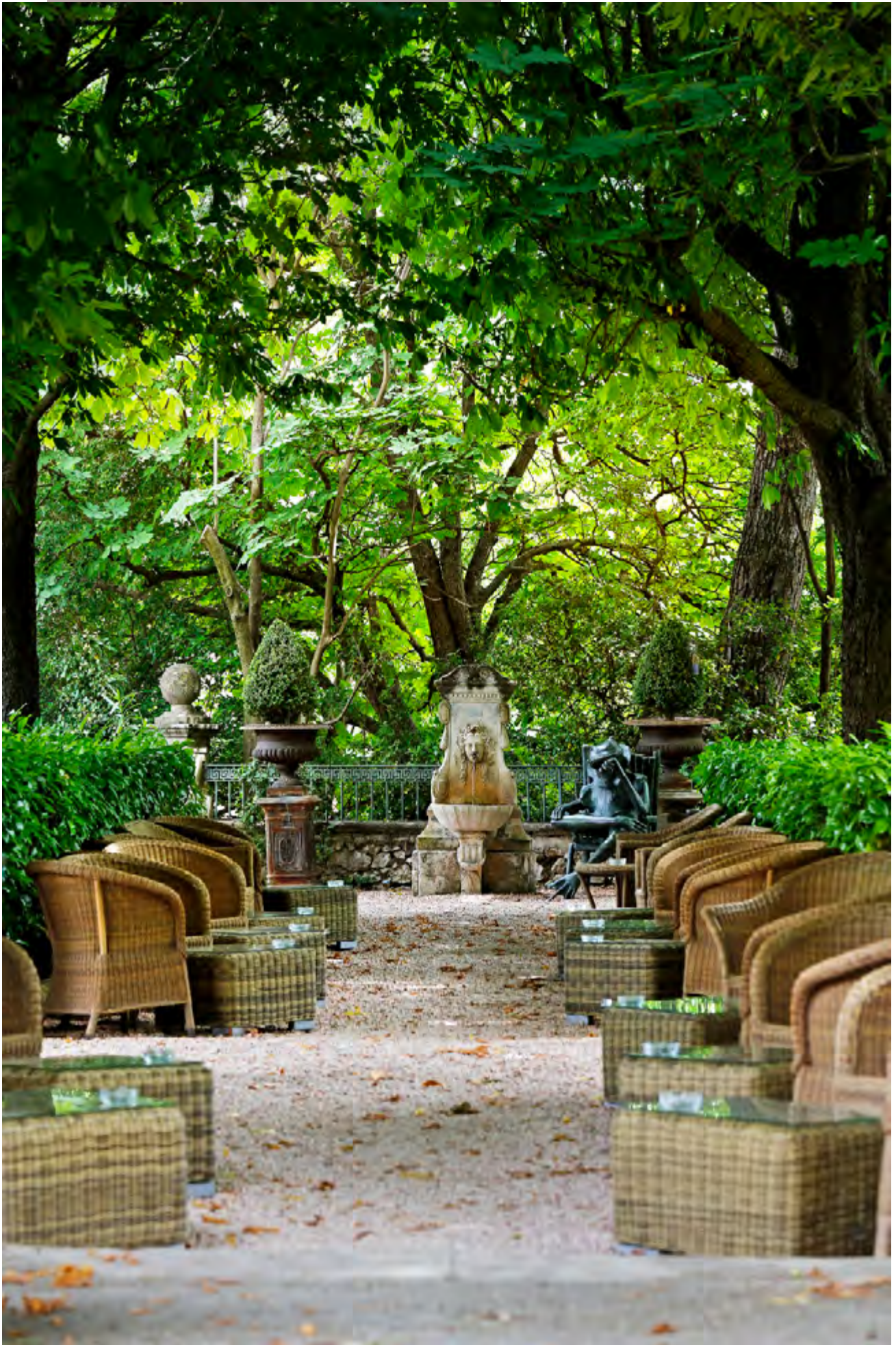
TRADITIONAL HOSPITALITY

LEAVE ORDINARY HOTEL ROOMS BEHIND

And enjoy relaxing stays in exquisite chateaux, villas, manors, castles and palaces on a fully escorted tour of Europe. To give you the best of both worlds, many of our properties are located in the countryside, offering unforgettable settings, peace and calm, close to vineyards and quaint villages. Others are located on the seaside or in the city, resulting in a well-balanced travel experience.

No matter the location, all hotels have been selected for their warm hospitality. You will feel their pride and centuries old traditions shining through in their local cuisine. With our fully escorted tours of Italy, Spain, Portugal and France encompassing most regions, there is bound to be a true gem waiting for you.

*Photo courtesy:
Hotel Le Pignonnet Aix en Provence – France*



BOUTIQUE CHIC UNIQUE

OUR LUXURY SMALL GROUP TOURS OF EUROPE FEATURE CONVENIENT
MULTIPLE NIGHT HOTEL STAYS IN CHARMING HERITAGE HOTELS



CONVENIENT MULTIPLE NIGHT STAYS

PARADORES AND POUSADAS

The historic hotels of Spain and Portugal...imagine waking up in a medieval convent where time stands still.

Unique to each of our Spain and Portugal tours, it is our pleasure to introduce you to the charming 'Paradores' and 'Pousadas', heritage hotels of a different time and era. The concept of preserving historic buildings by converting them into boutique accommodation is quite exceptional.

Formerly monasteries, palaces and castles etc., they have been restored in order to maintain the elegance of a by-gone era whilst incorporating all modern conveniences. Faithful to their origins, the hotels are furnished and decorated in harmony with the local elements or simply evoke the historical ambience of the monument. And remember, there is always a story or legend to tell, a tradition or secret to reveal...

ITALIAN COUNTRY VILLAS

With so many Italy lovers amongst our audience, we give you the special boutique accommodation you are looking for. Often located in the countryside or on the seaside, away from the hustle and bustle of daily life, we have carefully selected hotels that will give you the best of old-fashioned Italian hospitality.

You will stay in charming country villas, manor houses and 'turn of the century' hotels and enjoy our popular concept of consecutive 3 and 4 night stays unique to all of our Italy tours with time to relax and enjoy each location to the fullest.



CHATEAUX IN FRANCE

A country has got to be pretty special to officially carry the label of 'most visited destination' in the world.

Travelling the charming country roads of France, you will be waking up in exquisite chateaux and boutique hotels unique and different for each region. Imagine 4 nights in an old-world hotel in Provence and a 3 night stay at a family-owned castle in the Loire Valley located in the country side. Our French hotels do what they do best, offering refined and classic hospitality of the highest standard possible.



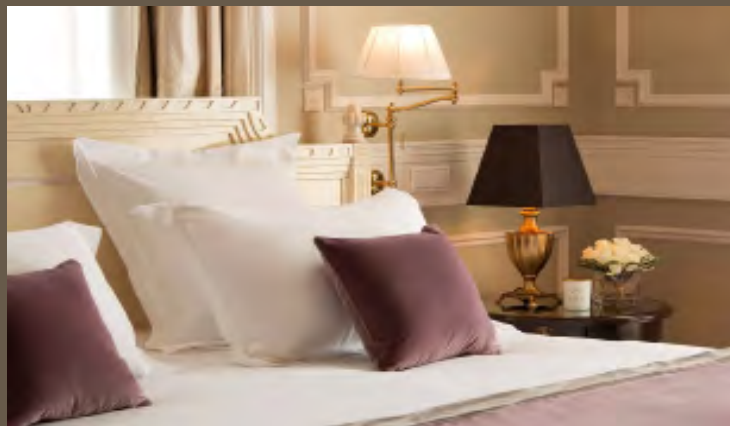
*Photos courtesy:
Chateau Hotel Mont Royal Chantilly – France*

SIT BACK, RELAX
IT'S ALL BEING
TAKEN CARE OF



3 AND 4 NIGHT STAYS

*Photos courtesy:
Chateau Hotel Mont Royal Chantilly – France*



Photos courtesy:
Chateau Hotel Mont Royal Chantilly – France



WELLNESS

REJUVENATE
& RESTORE



*Photos courtesy:
Chateau Hotel Mont Royal Chantilly – France*



MINDFULNESS

Its all about you



Mindfulness is something that lives at the core of our values and touring concept, and is the common demeanour in your contact with us prior, during and after your travels.

Your holiday is about you and everything you experience, your rest and recuperation. We will do everything to ensure that your time on tour will pass seamlessly.



WINE & DINE IN STYLE



STROLL THE LOCAL MARKETS

TO UNDERSTAND A DESTINATION START WITH ITS KITCHEN

No visit is complete without a stroll through the local markets to learn about a region's specialties, seasons and the long culinary traditions that survive through generation to generation.

We know you have a strong passion for Europe's cuisine and wine, undoubtedly one of the greatest pleasures of travel has to be sampling the local delicacies.

CULINARY DELIGHTS & REGIONAL CUISINE LOCALLY SOURCED



CAREFULLY SELECTED THREE COURSE DINNERS WITH WINE

Dinner is included most nights. Every now and then, where the location allows, for variety, we package dinner at a local restaurant instead.

To give you additional free time after touring, on some occasions, we substitute dinner for a long lazy lunch so that you can enjoy an evening at your leisure. We want you to maximise your time in Europe to the full.

Generally, lunches are not included, offering the option to sample dishes perhaps a little more adventurous.



ICONIC JOURNEYS



A COMMON FEATURE OF ALL
JOURNEYS ARE THE POPULAR
LOCAL WINE TASTINGS

*Photo courtesy:
Il Melograno Hotel - Puglia - Italy*



DESIGNED FOR MATURE DISCERNING TRAVELLERS



'Spaghetti alla chitarra', also known as 'maccheroni alla chitarra,' is a variety of egg pasta typical of the Abruzzo region in Italy.

Following local custom, it is pressed into long square shaped spaghetti strands using a stringed chitarra pasta cutter.

IMAGINE HAVING YOUR OWN
PRIVATE COOKING CLASS IN ITALY
AND LEARN FIRST HAND ABOUT
THE AGE OLD TRADITION OF
MAKING A TYPICAL LOCAL DISH

ART



UNSPOILED SICILY & SOUTHERN ITALY



20 DAYS

UNSPOILED SICILY & SOUTHERN ITALY



TOUR OVERVIEW

Starting and finishing in Rome, this tour captures the scenic beauty of the Amalfi Coast, takes in the best of hidden Puglia and southern Calabria and highlights in particular the rich cultural heritage of Sicily.

Long regarded as the 'last bastion of Italy', haunted by its reputation as poor and beholden to the mafia, Sicily insists that change has arrived. Closer to Africa than to Rome, the Mediterranean's largest island was first colonised by the Greeks in the 8th century.

Over time it attracted waves of invaders resulting in an interior enriched by the remains of ancient civilisations and the survival of many old traditions. Greek temples, Roman ruins, Norman churches and Byzantine domes are all evidence of Sicily's rich and diverse past.

With a coastline of some thousand km, Sicily offers the visitor sandy beaches, sheer cliffs and a rich array of delicious local cuisine and full-bodied red wines. If you like Italy, you are simply going to fall in love with Sicily, possibly still one of the best-kept secrets in Europe.

3 & 4 NIGHT STAYS





TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

ITALY :

Paestum • Amalfi • Ravello • Sorrento
Polignano a Mare • Alberobello • Matera • Lecce

SICILY:

Palermo • Monreale • Mondello • Erice
Segesta • Cefalù • Scopello • Mount
Etna • Castelmola • Taormina • Siracusa
Ortigia • Agrigento • Sciacca • Mazara del vallo
Marsala • Corleone • Selinunte • Catania

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included



DAY 1 - ARRIVAL ROME

Amalfi Coast Region (3 nights)

Benvenuti! At Rome airport your tour director and coach will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your hotel on the Amalfi Coast. Upon arrival, you will enjoy a light lunch followed by hotel check-in. Many writers have written about the natural beauty of this part of the Italian coast and the islands in the Gulf of Naples, Capri, Ischia and Le Sirenuse, home of the mythical sirens, are sure to call you back long after.

Famous for its breathtaking caves and subtropical vegetation the charming villages attract many visitors. The afternoon is at your leisure to rest or explore the local surroundings. Dinner at the hotel. (L/D)

DAY 2 - PAESTUM

Buon giorno! We start our adventure with a guided visit of Paestum, a former Greek colony and part of the 'Magna Grecia' located on the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. The ruins of Paestum are famous for their three ancient Greek temples in the Doric order, dating from about 550 to 450 BC.

This area of Italy is also known for its Buffalo Mozzarella production and in the afternoon we will visit a typical farm for a tour and tasting of this famous delicacy. The evening is at your leisure to explore and try one of the local trattorias for dinner. (B)



DAY 3 - RAVELLO - AMALFI

Today you will enjoy a panoramic tour of the scenic coastline of the Amalfi Coast partly by bus and partly by foot, offering a relaxing day out. At its peak in the 11th c. Amalfi was a supreme naval power and a bitter enemy of the north. The town flourished in the 9th c. through its connections with the Orient. The city claims it introduced to Italy such modern wonders as paper, coffee and carpets.

This 50 km stretch of coastline running from Sorrento to Salerno is one of Europe's most beautiful. Today we will spend time in Ravello, high above the sea, and have lunch in Amalfi. We will also view the town of Positano with its hillside houses during a brief photo stop. Dinner again at the tables of our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 4 - CASTEL DEL MONTE

Puglia Region (4 nights)

After a good rest and a leisurely breakfast (in Italian 'colazione'), this morning we venture further south to enter the heartland of Puglia, the region that is probably best known for its typically shaped 'Trulli' houses and strong Baroque influences. It is also one of the nation's largest wine regions and producer of olives, citrus fruits and vegetables. This ancient land, the heel of Italy's boot, has some of the country's most unspoiled scenery, fascinating artistic and historical sites and sandy beaches.

On sea voyages to their colonies and trading posts in the west, the ancient Greeks invariably headed to Apulia first, it was the shortest crossing, before filtering southward into Sicily. En route we will enjoy a guided tour of the enigmatic, octagonal Castel del Monte. A unique piece of medieval military architecture, the castle is a successful blend of elements from classical antiquity, the Orient and north European Cistercian Gothic. Dinner at our hotel. (B/D)

DAY 5 - ALBEROBELLO - POLIGNANO A MARE

Alberobello is the town with the greatest concentration of the beehive shaped 'Trulli'. The origins go back to the 13th c. and possibly further. They are built on local limestone, without mortar, with a hole in the top for escaping smoke. Some are painted with mystical or religious symbols, some are isolated, others are joined together with roofs on various levels.

In the afternoon, we visit the town of Polignano a Mare and enjoy free time for lunch. Overlooking the Adriatic Sea, the town is perched on impressive cliffs and the well-preserved old centre is well worth a visit. Dinner at our hotel. (B/D)

DAY 6 - MATERA

One of southern Italy's most iconic towns and a World Heritage Site since 1993, Matera is known for its elegant Baroque churches, palaces and wide squares filled to capacity during the evening's 'passeggiata' when the locals turn out en masse to stroll the streets. What really sets this town apart however is the 'sassi', rock hewn cave dwellings piled atop of one another and straggling along the sides of a steep ravine. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 7 - LECCE

Sometimes described as the 'Florence of the South', Lecce has a charming historic centre, it is a minor Baroque masterpiece and we will enjoy the best on offer during a guided visit. Its history goes back a long way, you can still see ruins of a Roman theatre and amphitheatre, but the period which led to the town's current fame was during the 17th century.

This time of prosperity started grand developments and the construction of palaces and churches. These buildings adapted the fashionable Baroque style to the soft local limestone, with decorations and cherubs extravagantly covering facades and doorways. These days, the production and sale of olive oil, wine and ceramics continues to be the mainstay of the local economy. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 8 - TRANSFER TO CALABRIA - SICILY

Northern Sicily Region (1 night)

Slowly arriving in the most southern part of Italy, we enter the region of Calabria known for its warm climate, rocky coastline and sandy beaches not to mention the strong and traditional flavours of its local cuisine.

This is the region where seafood really shines, calamari, bream, sea bass and swordfish will be present on the menu, just to name a few. Unbeknown to many, the south was also a major crossroads for ancient Greek colonies and is heavily influenced by its former Norman and Spanish occupations.

Today we sail the waters and take a 20 min ferry to Sicily for our overnight near Messina. Dinner at our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 9 - CEFALÙ

(Northern Sicily Region (3 nights))

Before we head for Palermo, we break our journey for a stop in Cefalù, an attractive beachside village dominated by a large rock and the twin pyramid towers of the Cathedral offering a rare beauty inside. Cefalù, with narrow medieval streets, many good restaurants, bars and shops is well worth a visit.

Closer to Africa than to Rome, the German poet Goethe wrote: 'To have seen Italy without having seen Sicily is not to have seen Italy at all for Sicily is the clue to everything.' Greeks, Romans, Normans, Spanish, Austrians, French and the British have all left a fascinating cultural legacy on this island. Greek temples, Roman ruins, Norman churches and Byzantine domes are all strong evidence of Sicily's rich and dynamic past.

Only half an hour from mainland Italy, but a world apart, the Mediterranean's largest island has long been the 'last bastion' of Italy. At night, dinner at a nearby local restaurant. (B/D)



DAY 10 - PALERMO - MONDELLO - MONREALE

The ancient town of Palermo has been a major crossroad for civilisation in The Mediterranean throughout the ages. With its superb position by the sea, at the foot of Monte Pellegrino with the fertile Conce D'Oro Valley, the city was once regarded as one of the grandest cities in Europe. Enjoy a walking tour through the streets of the historical centre and visit the town's popular street markets. Palermo certainly has many different 'faces'. We continue with a visit to Mondello and enjoy free time for lunch.

Today we also visit nearby Monreale, the town is famous for its stunning Norman 12th c. Cathedral and is considered one of the finest examples of Norman architecture (King Roger II) in Sicily. Today should also offer free time in the large open-air 'Ballaro' market. At night, dinner at a nearby local restaurant. (B/D)



DAY 11 - CORLEONE - HINTERLAND

Today a relaxing day is planned to visit one of the most infamous of Sicilian towns, Corleone. Best known of course for its 'connection' to the sequel movies, 'The Godfather'. We have no doubt all seen the fate of several generations of Italians and being so close to where it all started, a visit must be included today. Your tour director will tell you some tales and legends but rest assured, you are in good hands today! After an organised lunch, we will return to Palermo. The evening is at your leisure. (B/L)



DAY 12 - ERICE - SCOPELLO Western Sicily Region (4 nights)

After hotel check-out we start the day in Erice, a picturesque medieval town located at the top of a mountain set 751 metres above sea level overlooking most of the western region, the Mediterranean Sea and the Egadi Islands. Today also includes a visit to Scopello, a charming hamlet still relatively untouched. This part of western Sicily feels truly different. Dinner tonight at our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 13 - MARSALA - SEGESTA

Today we start exploring the local area as we embark on a visit to Marsala, famous for its wine, mythology and history. It is a pleasant, lively town with many interesting historical sites, different cultural influences and a colourful open-air morning market.

In the afternoon enjoy a taste of its famous export product, its sweet dessert wine. The wine was 'discovered' by Englishman John Woodhouse, who after landing in the city in 1773 and tasting the local product, decided it should be marketed throughout Europe. Marsala wine is well known all over the world and today will naturally include a guided tour and tasting to a local winery with Marsala wine bottled exclusively in this unspoiled part of Sicily.

We also view the nearby salt pans and windmills on the way to Segesta, founded on and around Monte Barbaro. The Greek theatre and Doric temple are located high on a hill offering stunning views. In ancient times the city of Segesta spent much of its time in constant conflict with Selinunte in the south. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 14 - SELINUNTE

This morning we explore the nearby town of Selinunte, an ancient Greek settlement founded in the 7th c. BC. Once prosperous and powerful, this city is one of the most captivating ancient sites in Sicily, the temples will impress. In the afternoon, an organised lunch has been included for your pleasure at a typical Sicilian family home, a wonderful opportunity to interact with the local community. Dinner at the hotel. (B/L/D)

DAY 15 - SCIACCA - MAZARA DEL VALLO

We will start the day with a visit to nearby Sciacca, a good opportunity to buy those last souvenirs including typical regional ceramics. The town of Sciacca started life as a Roman settlement but only really took off with the arrival of the Arabs. The Normans fortified this prosperous farming town and these days it is a bustling port. Today we also spend time in the charming fishing port of Mazara del Vallo to view the bronze statue of the 'Greek dancing satyr'. At night, once again, a typical Sicilian dinner is planned at our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 16 - AGRIGENTO - TAORMINA

Eastern Sicily Region (4 nights)

Transferring to the eastern side of the island, today we take in Agrigento and visit the famous 'Valley of the Temples', one of the most representative sites of Greek civilisation in the Mediterranean Sea. During a relaxing morning walk, we will admire some of the most beautiful and best-preserved temples of the Magna Grecia, a fascinating rich and varied combination of history, myth, architecture and nature. Dinner at a local restaurant. (B/D)

DAY 17 - CASTELMOLA - TAORMINA

In the morning we head for Castelmola, one of the most beautiful medieval villages in Sicily. We continue with a visit to the picturesque town of Taormina and walk through the historical centre, followed by lunch and free time. Taormina, truly beautiful and famous for its Greek/Roman amphitheatre, its enchanting view of the Ionian Sea and Mount Etna, has been an exclusive Sicilian hotspot since the beginning of the 19th c. where many noble and rich families of northern Europe spent winter due to its mild climate.

Today however Taormina is famous for its 'La Dolce Vita' lifestyle, beautiful views and shops. Sicilian cuisine reflects the famous Mediterranean influences that have left their mark on the island, fish, vegetables, grains and couscous are very popular. The evening is at your leisure, a perfect opportunity to explore and have a taste of the local cuisine. (B)



PICTURESQUE SEASIDE VILLAGES
WHERE THE RHYTHMS OF DAILY LIFE
ARE UNCHANGED OVER GENERATIONS





DAY 18 - CATANIA - MOUNT ETNA

We will start our day with some free time in Catania, an ancient port settlement and the island's second largest city after Palermo, to visit the local fish market La Pescheria. Dominating the landscape in eastern Sicily between Taormina and Catania, Mount Etna (3350 metres) is Europe's largest live volcano.

Today we depart for Rifugio Sapienza (1900 metres above sea level) where it will be possible to visit the small inactive Silvestri craters. A visit to a local winery will rank amongst one of the highlights of your trip. The evening is free to sample some more of Sicily's delicious cuisine. (B)

DAY 19 - SIRACUSA - ORTIGIA

We set out and drive south to enjoy a guided tour of the ruins of Siracusa. Once a powerful Greek city rivalling Athens and one of the highlights of your visit to Sicily, the city was founded in 734 BC and colonised by Corinthians who established their settlement on the island of Ortigia.

Today you will visit the archaeological zone, the Greek theatre, Roman amphitheatre, the Ear of Dionysus and the Latomie. Lunch on the Island of Ortigia. A farewell dinner is planned at a local restaurant. (B/D)

DAY 20 - CATANIA - ROME FCO AIRPORT

All good things come to an end and after breakfast and hotel check-out we head for Catania airport to board our flight to Rome international airport where your tour director will wave goodbye.

This relaxing tour of Sicily and southern Italy is ideal for all who wish to experience something very different. (B)

Due to flight schedules, the tour itinerary of the Sicily portion of the tour may be done 'in reverse' meaning a start in Catania and finishing the tour in Palermo.

From time to time, some of the historical sites of Sicily may be closed for restoration works, in which case we will give it our best to replace the original site with one of similar interest.



TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and Greet Rome FCO International Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. One-way ferry Calabria (Southern Italy) to Sicily, one-way economy class flight from Catania (Sicily) to Rome.

19 nights in charming boutique/heritage accommodation including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp). Services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.



DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 20 DAYS

Start date Rome - Friday, 30 August 2024

Finish date Rome - Wednesday, 18 September 2024

Tour Price pp/twin share - AUD \$13,795

Single Supplement - AUD \$2,495

CULTURE



COUNTRY ROADS FRANCE IN STYLE



20 DAYS

TOUR OVERVIEW

Love life's little luxuries? Sophistication, elegance and charm await you as this unique destination has it all. France is no doubt one of the world's most visited countries and this is no wonder. With a rich cultural heritage, where else can one find such diversity, finesse and timeless beauty. Not to mention great cuisine and grand cru wines. France seemingly has it all.

Your adventure will start and finish in Paris. You will follow the popular wine trails, study the great painters, explore the many historical and cultural sights en route and enjoy 'joie de vivre' at its best.

This truly unique tour with an emphasis on central and southern France, is ideal for all who wish to leisurely explore the charming country roads and gain a good understanding of the many different regions, the culture and people. Travelling in spring time certainly gives it that extra dimension, think red poppies, purple wisteria and fields of yellow, no wonder artists have been inspired for so long.

Leisurely paced with a 5 night stay in a charming old-world hotel in Provence and a 3 night stay in a family-owned chateau in the Loire Valley, you will simply fall in love with all things French.

5 NIGHTS IN PROVENCE







TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Chantilly • Reims • Epernay • Chablis • Vezelay
Dijon • Beaune • Lyon • Avignon
Aix en Provence • Les Baux de Provence
St. Remy de Provence • The Camarque Arles • Nimes
Carcassonne • Albi • Rocamadour • Lascaux II
Sarlat le Caneda • Limoges • Tours • Orleans
Villandry • Amboise • Chenonceaux • Giverny

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included



DAY 1 - ARRIVAL PARIS

Chantilly (1 night)

Bienvenue or welcome! In Paris, your private coach and tour director will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your hotel located in Chantilly, a romantic area famous for its lace, castles, sandstone-coloured townhouses and surrounded by gardens and parkland. Upon arrival at our hotel, enjoy a light welcome breakfast awaits us before official check-in.

The afternoon is free to have a little rest or explore the local surroundings at your leisure. A special welcome dinner is planned at the hotel's charming restaurant offering refined French cuisine and wine. Welcome to France. (B/D)

DAY 2 - REIMS - EPERNAY

Champagne Region (1 night)

Bonjour! After hotel check-out, we head for the Champagne region to explore the famous town of Reims and visit the Cathedral Notre Dame, a true masterpiece of Gothic art. Enjoy lunch and take a stroll along streets where two thousand years of history are written and discover rich heritage.

We continue the day with a panoramic drive through the famous vineyards of the Champagne region before arriving in Epernay for a guided visit of a prestigious champagne cellar. A tasting of this famous drink starts our French adventure in timeless old-fashioned style. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 3 - CHABLIS - VEZELAY
Burgundy Region (2 nights)

Today we travel into the famous Burgundy region for check-in at our hotel close to Dijon. En route we stop in the wine village of Chablis to enjoy a tour and tasting of the local produce. Chablis is a well-to-do sleepy town and made its fortune growing, ageing and marketing the white wines that bear its name. True 'Chablis' derives its character from the area's unique clay and limestone soil which contains millions of fossilised oyster shells.

We continue our day with a visit to the Abbey of Vezelay, one of the most beautiful Romanesque churches which welcomed pilgrims during the Middle Ages. Located on the Hill of Eternity, Vezelay is small with a population of just 570 inhabitants. This tiny hilltop village is truly one of France's architectural gems. The ancient Basilique Ste. Madeleine is surrounded by a patchwork of vineyards, sunflower fields and grazing sheep.... dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 4 - DIJON

It is time for Dijon! The former capital 'City of the Dukes' of Burgundy cultivate the art of good living. Dijon is famous for its mustard, its sweet spiced cake, wooden panelled houses with multi-coloured roofs, varied architecture, museums, markets, parks, and nearby vineyards. Our visit today includes a walking tour of old Dijon also allowing ample free time for shopping and lunch. In the afternoon its time to taste and try the local delicacies! The evening is free, enjoy dinner at one of the many nearby restaurants. (B)



DAY 5 - BEAUNE
Rhone Valley Region (1 night)

Following breakfast and hotel check-out, we explore the town of Beaune, symbolised by its many golden and ruby colours. Upon arrival we will stroll through the morning 'country market' followed by a visit to the famous 'Hotel Dieu' and the tapestries of the Notre Dame's church. For a full understanding of Burgundy, an introduction to its wines is essential so a wine-tasting is included today. Names such as Cotes de Nuit and Hautes Cotes de Nuits are world famous. Via the 'Routes des Grand Crus' we head south, towards Lyon. Enjoy a relaxing evening at your leisure and enjoy the local cuisine. (B)



DAY 6 - LYON
Provence Region (5 nights)

In the morning we visit Lyon to take in the atmosphere of life at the local market along the river banks after which we travel further south and head for the charming Provence region. En route we will taste the famous nougat produced in the nearby town of Montelimar. Following the wine trails and passing many hilltop villages, we will arrive at our hotel. Provence is well loved and for good reason.

Beautiful light and a stunning natural landscape have attracted painters throughout history. On tour, you will learn about the lives of Monet, Cezanne, Van Gogh and Toulouse Lautrec just to name a few. The charming markets, the food and wine, the lavender all add to the charm. Provençal cuisine is world famous for its many herbs and fresh ingredients used. Well, its time we try it and taste the regional cuisine and wine at our hotel. (B/D)





DAY 7 - PROVENCE

Settled in, today we travel deep into the Provence to visit one of its most famous perfume factories. Perfume came into its own when Louis XV came to the throne in the 18th century. The use of perfume in France grew steadily. By the 18th century, aromatic plants were being grown in the Grasse region of France to provide the growing perfume industry with raw materials. France quickly became the European center of perfume and cosmetic manufacture. Cultivation of flowers for their perfume essence, which had begun in the 14th century, grew into a major industry in the south of France mainly in Grasse now considered the world capital of perfume. The afternoon and evening are at your leisure. (B)

DAY 8 - AVIGNON - LES BAUX DE PROVENCE

After a good rest we are heading for Avignon, the ancient residence of the popes for discovery of the town and a visit to the palace of the popes and the famous Avignon bridge. In the afternoon, a visit to Les Baux de Provence, a small medieval Provencal village typical for the region offering many charming crafts and excellent cuisine.

St. Remy de Provence is most famous for its Roman sites and the Vincent Van Gogh monastery where he lived and painted some of his most famous works, well worth a visit for all who love the works of the Dutch painter. Did you know he only sold 2 paintings in his lifetime?

This part of France is so special, it is easy to understand why the painters fell in love with the light and beauty of the countryside. A typical Provencal dinner is planned again at the hotel tonight to be enjoyed with the local wine. (B/D)

DAY 9 - A DAY AT YOUR LEISURE

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast as today is at your leisure. The evening is free to explore on your own. (B)

DAY 10 - AIX EN PROVENCE

Enjoy a visit to the enchanting town of Aix en Provence and experience the very essence of this part of France. Elegant 18th c. Provencal buildings, old fountains, local cuisine scented with garlic and sprinkled with hillside herbs, elegant shops, festivals and that famous 'joie de vivre'.

In 'Aix' as the locals call it, we will visit the home and studio of Paul Cezanne and admire the colourful paintings of this famous French master set amidst his large peaceful garden. Lunch and free time in Aix en Provence, a good time to buy souvenirs for your loved ones at home. At night, dinner at our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 11 - THE CAMARQUE - ARLES - NIMES Languedoc Roussillon Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, we wave goodbye to this beautiful area of France but will stay on in the south. We transfer to our hotel close to Carcassonne and take in some of the unspoiled Camarque region, an enormous national park known for its birdlife, flamingos, bulls, wild horses, gypsies and legends. Visits today to the typical Roman town of Arles where the painter Vincent Van Gogh also lived and painted the many sunflowers. Arles offers a rich historical heritage and today will also include a visit to its Roman amphitheatre.

Heading towards the Spanish-influenced city of Nimes and before hotel check-in, we visit the famous Pont du Gard, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, exceptionally well-preserved, three-tiered Roman aqueduct once part of a 50 km long system of canals built about 19 BC by the Romans. In the evening, dinner in the elegant dining room of the hotel. (B/D)

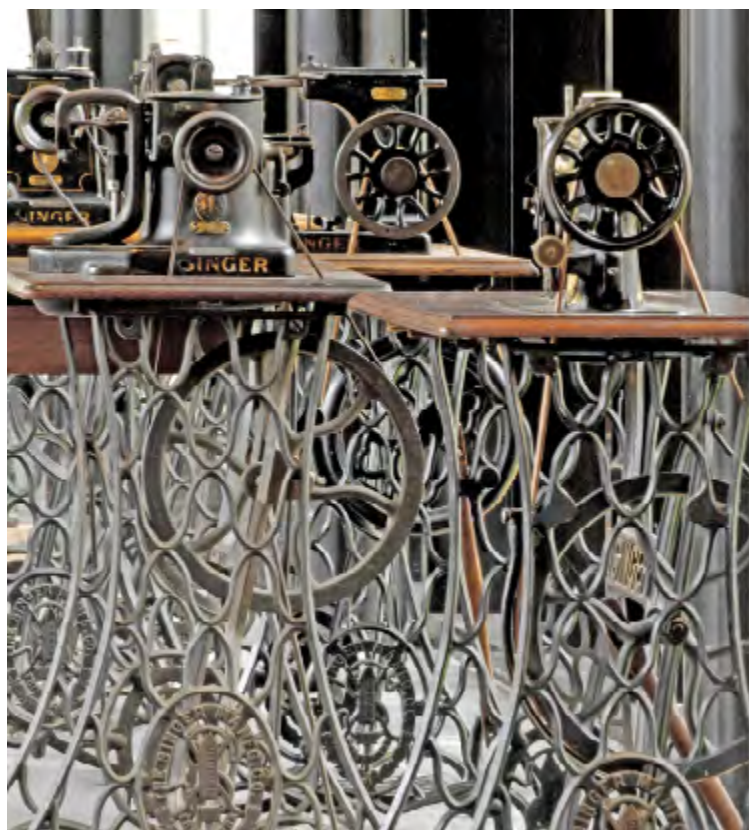


Photo credit
France Tourism Bureau - Atout France



DAY 12 - CARCASSONNE

In the morning, we will enjoy a walking tour of Carcassonne with free time for lunch and shopping. A hilltop town in southern France's Languedoc area, it is famous for its medieval citadel, La Cité, with numerous watchtowers and double-walled fortifications. The first walls were built in Gallo-Roman times, with major additions made in the 13th and 14th centuries. Château Comtal, a 12th-century castle within the Cité, offers archaeological exhibits and a tour of the inner ramparts.

Our hotel is located in the heart of this beautiful, unspoiled area of rural France. Dinner again at the tables of our ancient hotel tonight. (B/D)

DAY 13 - ALBI

Limousin, Dordogne, Lot Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, along scenic country roads, we set out for the town of Albi, famous for its impressive Cathedral and the museum of the eccentric painter Toulouse Lautrec which we will visit today. Via picturesque hilltop villages, we head for our hospitable hotel located in the heart of the lush Perigord region. Dinner at the tables of our charming residence located deep in the French countryside. You will note the area's speciality, duck in all shapes and sizes. (B/D)

DAY 14 - ROCAMADOUR - SARLAT LE CANEDA

We start the day with a pleasant scenic tour of the truly amazing Dordogne valley. Best known for its many limestone houses, rivers and medieval towns, today promises to be a relaxing day. We visit the pilgrimage village of Rocamadour, the most beautiful in the area. In the afternoon, we head for the captivating town of Sarlat le caneda. You will enjoy free time for a relaxing lunch and shopping. Make sure you try the local 'Foie Gras' (French pate), France's famous export product. Dinner again at the hospitable tables of our hotel. The French certainly know how to spoil us! (B/D)



DAY 15 - LASCAUX II - LIMOGES

Loire Valley Region (3 nights)

Today we travel further north visiting the pre-historic site of Lascaux II to view the famous cave paintings. We continue our drive to the Loire Valley, best known for its many castles. En route, we will visit the old town of Limoges, famous for its enamel and colourful, delicate French ceramics and visit a typical local factory. Limoges' history of decorative objects dates back to the 12th century.

Learn tips and tricks in identifying fine porcelain. In a country brimming with a rich and colourful history, the Loire Valley is indisputably the king of fairytale castles, splendour and extravagant architecture. Set against the backdrop of the rich fertile river valley flowing through, dotted with picturesque villages, vineyards and sophisticated cities. Dinner at the hotel tonight. (B/D)

DAY 16 - CHENONCEAUX - AMBOISE

The day will be devoted to exploring this unique part of France so famous for its numerous castles. UNESCO listed in 2000, immerse yourself in the beauty of this magical landscape and visit two of the most impressive castles of all. Today we visit the castle of Chenonceaux, the jewel of the French Renaissance and its beautiful gardens.

You will view the castle, an example of typical 15th and 16th century architecture at its finest. In Amboise, we visit the Leonardo da Vinci House 'Le Clos Luce', where he came to live and work in 1516. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 17 - TOURS - VILLANDRY

Cosmopolitan and bourgeois, the nearby city of Tours has the air of a miniature Paris with wide 18th c. avenues and formal gardens. The French spoken in Tours is said to be the purest in France. After a walking tour of the city's old monuments you will enjoy free time for lunch. In the afternoon we continue with a visit to the stunning Villandry chateau and gardens, a real treat for all who love the formal, intricate, geometrically pruned hedges and colourful flower beds. Dinner again at our hotel. (B/D)



DAY 18 - ORLEANS

Chantilly Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, we head back to where we started, beautiful Chantilly!. En route, we will enjoy a visit to the elegant city of Orleans, a town marked by events which made the history of France. Best known of course for the victory of Joan of Arc (1429), the city flourished in the 17th c. through trade on the River Loire. Medieval alleys, ancient monuments, surrounded by green valleys and the many castles and wines of the Loire Valley, this city has a lot to offer. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 19 - GIVERNY

Monet used to say: 'Everyone discusses my art and pretends to understand, as if it were necessary to understand, when it is simply necessary to love'. One of the highlights of our tour, we will drive to Giverny to visit the famous Claude Monet house and gardens, spectacular in each season. A true treat for all garden lovers it offers an insight into the life of this famous French painter and his many masterpieces.

Seasons have an enormous effect on the gardens in Giverny. From early to late spring, daffodils, tulips, wisteria and irises appear, followed by poppies and lilies. Claude Monet, the undisputed leader of the Impressionists was born in Paris in 1840. Who does not know his famous 'Water Garden' or 'Water Lilies'? Breathe in the scents and scenes of the gardens Monet lovingly created over a period of 40 years. Located on the right bank of the river Seine, the painter noticed the village from a train window and made up his mind to move there.

Lunch in the local area before return to Paris for a guided city bus tour taking in the main landmarks. Relax and reflect on the many good times enjoyed in France. At night, our farewell dinner awaits us. (B/D)

DAY 20 - PARIS CDG AIRPORT

All good things come to an end, after breakfast and hotel-check out, we head for Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport where your tour director will wave goodbye! Bon voyage! (B)



TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and Greet Paris CDG International Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. 19 nights in charming boutique/heritage accommodation including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges, city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp). Services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.



DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 20 DAYS

Start date Paris - Tuesday, 3 September 2024
Finish date Paris - Sunday, 22 September 2024

Tour Price pp/twin share - AUD \$13,995
Single Supplement - AUD \$2,495



HERITAGE ACCOMMODATION

HIDDEN ABRUZZO SARDINIA & CORSICA



20 DAYS



TOUR OVERVIEW

HIDDEN ABRUZZO, SARDINIA & CORSICA



Starting and finishing in Rome, with 4 relaxing nights in unspoiled Abruzzo, 8 nights in Sardinia and 7 nights in Corsica, this small group tour is perfect for culture and nature lovers. It provides the perfect blend of traditional island life and off the beaten track travel.

Abruzzo is still a well-kept secret, an Italian region, east of Rome, comprised of an Adriatic coastline and famous for the impressive Apennine Mountains. National parks and nature reserves cover much of its rugged interior but it also encompasses hilltop towns dating back to the medieval and Renaissance periods. The Trabocchi Coast, with sandy coves, is named after its traditional wooden fishing piers.

Sardinia comes with its own rich history and long-held traditions. We follow its enchanting coastline, from Cagliari in the south to Arzachena in the north, the tour takes you to its very heartland, into the mountainous interior, to its vineyards and 3500-year-old ruins.

Birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte, Corsica offers a mix of stylish coastal towns, dense forests and craggy peaks. Located almost in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, its coastline covers an impressive length of over 1000km. Well known for its wine industry, it has been part of France since 1768 but it retains a distinct Italian culture. Its landscapes, monuments and beautiful beaches are captivating.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

ABRUZZO: Apennine Mountains • Pescara
Rocca Calascio • Sulmona • Prezza • Trabocchi Coast
Ortona

SARDINIA: Cagliari • Barumini • Alghero Castelsardo
Arzachena • Oliena

CORSICA: Sartene • Filitosa • Ajaccio • Corte
Calvi • Aleria • Bonifacio • San Pantaleo

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL ROME

Abruzzo Region (4 nights)

In Rome, our modern coach and tour director will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your hotel. After a light lunch and hotel check-in, the remainder of the day is at your leisure to settle in, relax or explore the local area.

With mountains and the sea as its strategic borders and located in Central Italy, the Abruzzo region is still a well-kept secret, full of surprises and medieval hamlets known for their age old traditions and customs. Said to be the greenest part of the country and comprised of national parks and lakes, it is a place where nature dominates resulting in a restful start of your adventure. At night a welcome dinner is planned at the charming restaurant offering typical regional cuisine and wine. Benvenuti! (L/D)

DAY 2 - APENNINE MOUNTAINS - ROCCA CALASCIO

The tour starts off in a relaxed fashion as we take in the local surroundings and tour the Apennine Mountains including a visit to Rocca Calascio, at nearly 1,500 meters above sea level, the highest mountaintop fort in Italy dating back to the Middle Ages. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 3 - SULMONA - PREZZA

Today we visit a famous pasta production house. Abruzzo has a long history of pasta-making and has produced handmade 'Spaghetti alla Chitarra' for more than 200 years. This variety of egg pasta is pushed through a wooden contraption that has stainless steel guitar-like strings.

For all lovers of Italian food, no doubt you will enjoy your cooking class today. When it comes to wine, Abruzzo is known for its Montepulciano d'Abbruzzo wine and today we venture out to visit a family-run vineyard. At night dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 4 - TRABOCCHI COAST - ORTONA

After breakfast we set out to enjoy a relaxing day on the coast. UNESCO World Heritage protected, the 70 km Trabocchi Coast stretches from Ortona to San Salvo and features old fishing net structures known as trabocchi. While no longer in use, historically the net were used by fishermen to avoid deep waters and collect varieties like anchovies, sardines, sea bream and sea bass. Lunch and free time on the coast. Dinner tonight at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 5 - FLIGHT FROM ROME TO SARDINIA

Cagliari - Southern Sardinia Region (2 nights)

Take in the beauty and final impressions of the Abruzzo region as after hotel check-out we head back to Rome to board our flight to Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia. Strategically positioned at the center of the Mediterranean, this ancient island has been occupied for about 150,000 years and is known for its numerous archaeological sites and ruins, an impressive coastline and natural beauty.

After hotel check-in, the remainder of the day is at your leisure to explore. At night we sample some of the local cuisine during dinner at the tables of our residence. (B/D)

DAY 6 - CAGLIARI - AFTERNOON AT YOUR LEISURE

Discover Sardinia's rich flora and fauna as we set out and visit a national park with salt pans and pink flamingos. Located on the Gulf of Angels, joined by a local guide, we start the day with a guided tour of Cagliari.

Perfect for a morning wander and historically outstanding, we will take in its narrow streets and visit the Benedetto Market, the Royal Palace and the Santa Maria Cathedral before heading for the Bastione di Saint Remy to enjoy outstanding views over the bay. The afternoon is yours to explore. At night dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 7 - SU NURAXI BARUMINI

Alghero - Central Sardinia Region (3 nights)

After hotel check-out, we set out for the Bronze Age site at Su Nuraxi in Barumini, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where ancient megalithic constructions developed during the Nuragic Age (1900 - 730 BC).

Sardinia is famous for its stone villages and Su Nuraxi is known as one of the most complete examples of this incredible form of pre-historic architecture. We conclude the day with a relaxing visit heading for a traditional farm to taste the local wine, olive oil and cheese before we head north to Alghero, a beautiful coastal town. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 8 - ALGHERO

The day starts with a guided walking tour of Alghero's historic centre, which sits within its fortified city walls. We start at the 14th-Century Porta Terrace tower, the ancient entrance to the city, before continuing along the city walls. We take in the highlights of the city, including the narrow streets of the former Jewish quarter. In the afternoon, we head out on a boat trip to Neptune's Grotto, a marine cave carved into the cliff face around 20 minutes along the coast. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 9 - A DAY AT YOUR LEISURE - ALGHERO

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast as today is at your leisure. The evening is free to explore on your own. (B)



DAY 10 - CASTELSARDO - PALAU

Arzachena - Northern Sardinia (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, our next stop is the town of Castelsardo on the island's north coast. This traditional Sardinian town enjoys a spectacular setting on the hilltop of a headland overlooking the Mediterranean. As you wander through its historic streets you will get a first-hand insight into local life.

After spending some time visiting some of the handicrafts shops, we continue along the coast to Palau, the gateway to the islands of the Maddalena Archipelago. Enjoy the sights on a panoramic coach tour around the island before we will enjoy free time for lunch following check-in at the hotel. Dinner at the tables of our hotel. (B/D)

DAY 11 - ARZACHENA

Together with a local guide we set out to enjoy the breathtaking azure blue seas of the Costa Smeralda (88 km). In this part of Sardinia, we will find the famous white, fine sand beaches and small bays accessible only from the sea. Arzachena is not only sea, but also wonderful woodlands and Mediterranean underbrush with its typical aromas of myrtle and juniper.

The "stazzo" is a typical building in this region. It's an old, rural dwelling and its roof is made of reeds, juniper's branches and trunks. Arzachena also has a very interesting history. The Little Temple of Malchittu dating back to 1600 BC is unique in that it is one of the only four examples of a megaron-shaped nuragic temple (an elongated rectangle) in Sardinia. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 12 - FERRY TO CORSICA - SARTENE - FILITOSA

Ajaccio - Southern Corsica region (3 nights)

After hotel check-out, today we board a ferry (approx. 1 hour) and cross the Strait of Bonifacio. With an impressive 600 miles of coastline, this charming French island in the Mediterranean Sea is a perfect mosaic of diverse landscapes, from sandy beaches and steep, narrow paved streets to rugged mountains. Corsica boasts a long, eventful and troubled history. Rarely has it ruled itself, like so many other Mediterranean islands, it has been fought over time and time again.

En route we visit medieval Sartene, located up the hill in the valley of the Rizzanese river following with a visit to Filitosa, a pre-historic site offering almost 5,000 years of history. Because this area was both fertile and easy to defend, it was populated since very ancient times and was filled with large constructions and menhirs from 1800 BC to 1100 BC. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 13 - AJACCIO

After breakfast, we set out on a guided walking tour of historical Ajaccio, a port city on the island's western coast and the capital and largest city in Corsica. Famous because Napoleon Bonaparte was born here on August 15, 1769. We'll visit the Maison Bonaparte, the charming historical center with its color-washed, terracotta-tiled houses and narrow backstreets which have changed little in centuries.

We also visit the Venetian Renaissance-style Cathedral, where Napoleon and his siblings were baptised. After some free time for lunch and sightseeing, we head for the Ajaccio countryside for a wine tasting in a typical Corsican domain. Dinner at the hotel tonight. (B/D)

DAY 14 - A DAY AT YOUR LEISURE - AJACCIO

Enjoy a relaxing day at your leisure. Surrounded by a fantastic mountain range, Ajaccio is an elegant city, dynamic and renowned for its long welcoming traditions. From the top of its citadel, it has preserved its bay which is one of the most beautiful in the world. Strolling the lanes of the old town, you will discover its prestigious museums, its daily market boasting so many flavours so enjoy the local gastronomy over a long lazy lunch today. The evening is free to explore on your own. (B)



DAY 15 - CORTE

Calvi - Northern Corsica Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, en route we explore the medieval town of Corte, once the capital, now a small town in the very heart of the island. Unlike its sister fortress towns on the coast, Corte was not founded by the Genoese, but governed by Pascal Paoli, the father of the Corsican independence movement, after he stormed the Citadel in 1755. This was Paoli's capital - often called the "spiritual" capital, and the town epitomises inland Corsica.

In the heart of the Corsican mountains, Corte is spectacularly set amongst brooding granite mountains with its Citadel rising high up from a rocky outcrop, the rooftops of the old town cascading down to a warren of narrow, cobbled streets, surrounded by the craved out gorges of former bandit country. We continue and travel further north for our stay in Calvi. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 16 - SCANDOLA NATURE RESERVE - CALVI

Today we set sail and cruise along the coast to enjoy the fabulous cliffs and calanques of the UNESCO World Heritage listed Scandola Nature Reserve in the Gulf of Girolata. In the afternoon, there is time to explore Calvi on your own.

Located on the Northwest coast of the island, set on a beautifully shaped bay, have a stroll in its marina and esplanade and admire its Baroque influenced St. Jean Baptiste Cathedral. In Calvi, there are the remains of a house that is supposed to be the place where the famous discoverer Christopher Columbus was born. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 17 - ALERIA

Bonifacio - Northern Corsica Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, today we venture south and travel along the 'Mother of Pearl Coast' on the Tyrrhenian Sea for some of the most breathtaking scenery of Corsica, where long beaches of fine sand and crystalline waters will occupy our view.

We continue and head for Aleria, for another delicious tasting of Corsican wines. The wine industry in Corsica has a long history. Two grapes indigenous to the island form a backbone of many Corsican reds. Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks and then the Genoese were making wine here. Wine has been around 2000 years at least. Dinner and overnight in the capital Bonifacio. (B/D)



DAY 18 - BONIFACIO

In the morning, together with a local guide we discover the historical area of Bonifacio. Perched high up a white limestone cliff on the southern coast of Corsica lies the medieval town of Bonifacio. Known as the "Mediterranean's Sentinel," or simply, the "Citadel of Cliffs," it's arguably the best-kept secret in France. Blessed by beautiful cobblestone alleyways and a shoreline of sparkling waters Bonifacio is on the southern coast of Corsica, separated from the Italian island of Sardinia by the 11-kilometer-long Strait of Bonifacio, which is named after the town.

The two islands were once joined, but volcanic activity tore them apart, leaving huge parts of granite rock in the turquoise waters. Today the evening is at your leisure to enjoy some local delicacies on your own. (B)





DAY 19 - FERRY TO SARDINIA / SAN PANTALEO

Cagliari - Southern Sardinia Region (1 night)

We say au revoir to Corsica and cross the waters once more to return to Sardinia. We start the journey south, but not before visiting the Bronze Age Giants' grave of Coddu Vecchiu. We continue on to Cagliari where you will spend the last night on the island. Farewell dinner at the hotel. (B/D).

DAY 20 - CAGLIARI AIRPORT - ROME FCO AIRPORT

All good things come to an end, after breakfast and hotel check-out, we head for Cagliari International Airport for airline check-in covering our flight back to mainland Italy. Upon arrival at Rome FCO airport, your tour director will wave goodbye. (B)





TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and greet Rome FCO International Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. Economy class return flights from Rome to Sardinia. Return ferry from Sardinia to Corsica.

19 nights in charming boutique accommodation including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges, city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp), services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.



DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 20 DAYS

Start date Rome - Friday, 4 October 2024

Finish date Rome - Wednesday, 23 October 2024

Tour Price pp/twin share - AUD \$13,995

Single Supplement - AUD \$2,495

HISTORY



SPAIN - THE SILVER ROUTE



Photo courtesy: The Paradores of Spain, Parador de Zafra

20 DAYS

TOUR OVERVIEW

With the tour starting in Seville and finishing in Porto and staying in some of Spain's best historic hotels - the Paradores - this unique tour is designed for all who love Spain and off the beaten track travel.

From ancient times there has been a route through the mountains, valleys and plains uniting the north and south of Spain.

The 'Silver Route' has played a significant role throughout history and was one of the most important on the Iberian Peninsula at the time. It was originally a Roman road and is based on the belief that the Romans used this route to transport silver. From the first to the 19th c, the route was used as a foundation to build new roads therefore representing an extraordinary historical and artistic legacy. The Silver Way offers stunning scenery and outstanding views from rolling fields and lakes through forests, pastures and green hills. The route takes in numerous churches, chapels and bridges and includes some of the major Roman cities like Mérida and UNESCO protected Salamanca and Zamora.

Starting in the 9th c, as Santiago de Compostela was becoming popular as a Christian pilgrimage site and the Silver route began to be used by pilgrims travelling to and from the tomb of St James the Apostle.

SPAIN - THE SILVER ROUTE



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Zafra • Rio Tinto Mines • Mérida • Cáceres
Plasencia • Salamanca • Zamora • Douro International
Natural Park • Tordesillas • Verín • Valladolid • Santo
Estevo • Ourense • Pontevedra • Combarro • Sanxenxo
Cambados • Vigo • Baiona • Santiago De Compostela

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included



DAY 1 - ARRIVAL SPAIN - SEVILLE

Extremadura Region - Zafra (3 nights)

Bienvenido! In Seville your tour director and luxury coach will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your first Parador (hotel) located in Zafra, a majestic medieval castle with a spectacular facade and elegant spacious rooms located close to the Portuguese border and the perfect base to explore the historical treasures of this region. Zafra's 15th c. castle, our base for the next 3 nights, was built over the former Moorish 'Alcazar' or Fortress. This part of Spain is known for its lamb stewed with vegetables, wine and paprika as well as several varieties of sausage. The friendly restaurant offers traditional local cuisine and wine and a delicious welcome dinner in the evening. (D)

DAY 2 - ZAFRA

Sleep in, have a leisurely breakfast and relax as the morning is yours to do as you wish. The scenic town of Zafra, reputedly one of the oldest towns in the Extremadura region and known for its cattle fairs, was originally a Muslim settlement known as Zafar. Together with a local guide, we will enjoy its beautiful squares, 18th c. arcades and cafes. Narrow streets, framed by arches and decorated with tiles, small balconies adorned with flowers set the scene creating the perfect picture postcard all to be explored in the afternoon.

Also included is a visit to El Caprichio di Cotrina, a fascinating museum inspired by Gaudi style architecture. Enjoy an evening at your leisure. (B)





DAY 3 - RIO TINTO MINES

Settled in and after a typical Spanish breakfast, we are now ready to explore and start our adventure with a guided tour of the Rio Tinto Mines. You would be forgiven for thinking you are still in Australia...the Rio Tinto mines, located in the north of Huelva province are reputed to be the oldest mines in the world; with the exception of mines in Cyprus, they certainly have most longevity of those being worked today - since before 1000BC.

In the late 19th century, they were the world's leading copper producer. Their eight square miles have provided a major source of European copper in both ancient and modern times. The red soil that dominates the landscape is caused by the oxidation of metal-bearing rocks over many millions of years. Today will take in the very best including a visit to the museum and a former colonial house. At night dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 4 - LOCAL VILLAGES ROUTE

Southern Extremadura Region - Mérida (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, this morning we venture north and discover the land of templars and nobles, local villages with simple, charming folk, rich in culture and learned in gastronomy. We follow the 'Templars Route', places all steeped in history and tradition to explore some of the regions charming local villages including Jerez de los Caballeros, Santa Marta de los Barros and Almendralejo where we will visit a local wine cellar.

The Parador in Mérida, an 18th c. convent, comes with its 'Garden of Antiquities', an archeological ensemble made up of Roman, Mudejar and Visigothic elegents. Located on a square and just 5 minutes from the Roman Theater, the jewel of Mérida's monuments, our hotel, has housed a hospital, jail and mental asylum. At night, dinner is planned at our charming Parador with the local cuisine known for its white truffles, 'Gazpacho' soup and almond and egg yolk cake. (B/D)





DAY 5 - MÉRIDA

The town of Mérida stands on the site of the Roman Augusta Emerita, founded in 25 BC and with more than 40,000 inhabitants was the largest Roman city on the Iberian Peninsula and its political and cultural hub.

Today Mérida has more Roman ruins than anywhere else in Spain and we will take in its history with a local guide during a morning walking tour and visit the amphitheater, where gladiatorial games, wild beast hunts and battles between wild animals were held on the large wooden platforms that formed the arena, the Roman circus, one of the grandest and best preserved in the Empire. The Los Milagros Aqueduct, Roman bridge and Temple of Diana are other must-sees. The afternoon is free to explore at your leisure. At night, our residence will host a magnificent 'Roman Dinner'. (B/D)



DAY 6 - CÁCERES

Central Extremadura Region - Plasencia (2 nights)

After breakfast and hotel check-out, we head for Cáceres, the region's second biggest city with a lively student population. At the heart of the old town so little changed since the 15th and 16th centuries that it is often used as a film set with the 150 m long Plaza Mayor, a memorable part of the walled old city all to be discovered with a local guide. This particular part of Spain is known for its beautiful pasture land dotted with evergreen oaks. The bark of the cork oak can be stripped every nine years for cork.

In the afternoon we head for Plasencia for our 2 night stay. Its Parador is ideally located in the old quarter, a strategic location along the ancient commercial and pilgrimage route known as the 'Ruta de la Plata'. The hotel occupies the Santo Domingo Monastery, built in the 15th century. Thick stone walls, vaulted ceilings and beautiful décor await you in the Gothic style interior. The Parador offers quaint rooms and is the perfect spot from which to explore the city and the surrounding natural landscape. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 7 - PLASENCIA

After breakfast, together with a local guide, we will discover the old quarter and remains of Plasencia's medieval walls, fortified towers and gates, including Puerta del Sol (Sun Gate) and the smaller Postigo de Santa María (Santa María Gate).

As we walk through the town center, you will come to the Plaza Mayor (Main Square), a must-see during the Martes Mayor (Great Tuesday) celebrations, which have been named a national tourist attraction. The town also boasts one of the most representative groups of historic buildings in the area, made up of the Romanesque Old Cathedral and the New Cathedral, which has Gothic and Renaissance elements.

This part of hidden Spain offers many local delicacies such as partridge stew, lamb, Extremadura-style fried breadcrumbs, the famous Ibérico ham and exquisite torta del Casar cheese. Since the afternoon and evening are at your leisure, this presents a perfect opportunity to sample the local delicacies. (B)



DAY 8 - SALAMANCA

Castilla y Leon region - Zamora (4 nights)

After breakfast and hotel check-out we head for Salamanca. Under Roman rule, it was an important post on the 'Silver Route' from the mines in Northern Spain to the south. The city is best known for its churches but in particular its university, founded in 1218 and it soon became the equal of Oxford and Bologna. After lunch, accompanied by a local guide, we will navigate most of its local treasures on foot.

The day continues as we head for Zamora for our 4 night stay. In the historic town center of the capital of Zamora, a beautiful palace awaits. Built on the site of an old Muslim citadel, today it houses a Parador. The hotel provides the opportunity to discover all the beauty of the natural, historical and artistic riches of this region. The medieval feel of the interior, which you will note in the armor, fine tapestries and canopy beds, blends with the Renaissance style of the courtyard, glass enclosed wooden gallery and coats of arms. Dinner at the Parador. (B/D)

DAY 9 - ZAMORA

Breakfast following a mid morning start with a guided visit to Zamora, another fortress town on the northern bank of the Rio Duero along the Ruta de la Plata (Silver Route). Roman, Visigoth, Moorish and Christian influences set the scene and today we will take in the best of its fascinating history. Zamora is dotted with 12th c churches, some of them still retaining their Romanesque charm. The afternoon and evening are at your leisure, make the most of your free time in this special part of Spain. (B)

DAY 10 - DOURO PARK - PORTUGAL

Today we briefly cross the border and explore the spectacular Douro International Natural Park including a relaxing boat trip. Located In the north east of Portugal's Trás-os-Montes region, the River Douro marks the border with Spain. This river can be seen flowing through the almost 122km long Natural Park.

The Douro International Natural Park covers the border areas of Miranda do Douro, Mogadouro, Freixo de Espada à Cinta and Figueira de Castelo Rodrigo, in the district of Guarda. You will be moved by the breath-taking views in the park. Water has carved the banks of the River Douro for centuries, forming monumental canyons covered with the local flora and populated by the various species of birds that inhabit the park. The combination of geography and Mediterranean climate provide the settings for a rich biodiversity in the entire park.

Junipers, cork-oaks, chestnut trees and holm oaks can be found in the park's forests, home to the Red Kite, Common Buzzard, also known as Buteo, and a wide variety of birds, such as the Blue Rock Thrush and the Golden Oriole. Dinner at the Parador. (B/D)





DAY 11 - TORDESILLAS - VALLADOLID

This morning we head for Tordesillas, this originally Roman town is known for the 'Treaty of Tordesillas'. Two years after Columbus had sailed the ocean, Spain's Catholic Monarchs sat down with Portugal at the negotiating table to hammer out a treaty regulating who got what in the New World.

Today we will enjoy a guided visit of the Mudejar-style convent, still home to 14 Franciscan nuns living in almost total isolation from the outside world. In the afternoon, together with a local guide, we will visit Valladolid where Columbus spent his final years. Little more than a hamlet in the early Middle Ages, Valladolid became a flourishing centre of the Spanish Renaissance to be explored in the old centre today. At night, dinner again at our Parador. (B/D)



DAY 12 - PUEBLA DE SANABRIA - VERÍN Galicia Region - Santo Estevo (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, we are heading for Santo Estevo, in the heart of the Ribeira Sacra region, a uniquely beautiful natural area in inland Galicia that is home to the Miño and Sil rivers, concealed within a great cloak of green woods, stands the Santo Estevo Monastery, which has been converted into a beautiful Parador.

The monastery's origins are believed to date back to the 6th and 7th centuries. It is easy to distinguish elements of the baroque and romanesque styles and the building has three incredible cloisters: one Romanesque, one Gothic and the third Renaissance, where you can spend a peaceful evening in a subdued atmosphere with the soft sounds of religious music as an accompaniment. Its beauty and historical features led the building to be declared a historic-artistic site in 1923. At night dinner at the Parador. (B/D)



DAY 13 - TAKING IN THE LOCAL SURROUNDS

After breakfast we will continue our journey with a relaxing panoramic day. Starting from the Parador, we will take in some unique and beautiful scenery in an area that is never overcrowded by tourism. We will visit the beautiful Sil River Canyon, which offers a spectacular explosion of color in spring and autumn and enjoy breathtaking picture postcard views of the riverbanks.

This is an area known for its churches and monasteries dating from the late 12th and 13th centuries, surrounded by magical forests of oaks and chestnuts. Sit back, relax and enjoy a scenic drive today. A typical Spanish dinner is again awaiting us at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 14 - OURENSE - PONTEVEDRA Galicia Region - Pontevedra (3 nights)

After breakfast and hotel check-out, we head for Ourense, the city of water. Here eight bridges cross the Miño river, which in Roman times was a gold mine. Today there is no gold, but very valuable waters: thermal spring waters. In the afternoon, we will explore Pontevedra, Galicia's smallest provincial capital and perhaps its most striking port reaching the height of its glory in the 16th c.

The Parador, once the residence of the counts of Maceda, is located in the old quarter of the magnificent city of Pontevedra. You will be welcomed by a stately carved stone staircase leading to comfortable guest rooms.

You won't want to leave without taking a walk through the well-preserved old quarter of Pontevedra, most of which has been pedestrianized. Visit Santa María la Mayor Basilica, a jewel of Gothic architecture and La Virgen Peregrina Church, a chapel with a scallop-shaped floor plan and beautiful night lighting. Dinner at the Parador. (B/D)

DAY 15 - COMBARRO - SANXENXO - CAMBADOS

Today is planned for a visit to Combarro, where the old quarter is a representative example of three traditional architectural elements in Galicia: raised granaries, sea houses and crosses. A few kilometers from the city, the Rías Baixas region opens onto the Atlantic, it comprises of a series of four estuarine inlets located on the southwestern coast of Galicia.

This part of Spain is also renowned for its white wines made from the Albariño grape variety and we will enjoy a tasting in Cambados today. Dinner at the Parador. (B/D)

DAY 16 - BAIONA - VIGO

Today we head for the Santa Tegra Mountain region to enjoy great views of the mouth of the Minho River between Portugal and Spain. We continue on the Northern Spanish coast to visit Baiona where we walk on the ancient walls and enjoy free time in the center. The town was an important trading port in the middle ages with a medieval historical center situated by the outlet of Vigo Bay.

The length of Galicia's Atlantic coast is dotted with pastures favoured by wild horses, particularly in the hills south and east of Baiona. Locals occasionally head out to round the horses up in what becomes a day-long fiesta or 'Curro', In Vigo, we enjoy a boat trip on the Rías Baixas to see the mussel beds and have a tasting on board. Whilst on the coast, lets enjoy a typical seafood lunch. Dinner at the Parador. (B/D)



DAY 17 - SANTIAGO DI COMPOSTELA

Galicia Region - Santiago de Compostela (3 nights)

After a leisurely breakfast and hotel check-out we start the final part of our journey and head for Santiago di Compostela for our 3 night stay. Upon arrival we will enjoy a guided walking tour to take in the best of this magnificent town. Today will include a visit to local market, the cathedral and the tomb of St James the Apostle. The tomb was discovered in the year 813 and from that moment the pilgrimages started.

Our Parador, one of the most luxurious and beautiful hotels in the Paradores chain is located in Santiago de Compostela. In this city, the destination of millions of pilgrims, rays of sunlight illuminate the building façades in summer and the rain creates a magical ambiance that overtakes the cobbled streets in winter.

The Parador de Santiago, known as the Hostal dos Reis Católicos, is a blend of history, art and tradition, the dream of pilgrims and emblem of Santiago. It is located on Obradoiro Square near the cathedral, creating an area of spectacular beauty in one of the most visited provincial capitals in the world. A stay at this Parador means a visit to a truly unique and exclusive location. After hotel check in, the afternoon and evening are at your leisure. (B)

DAY 18 - WALKING THE CAMINO

Whilst we are in town, a part of our day is devoted to walking a small section of 'The Camino'. Also known in English as 'The Way of St. James', it covers a network of pilgrimages leading to the shrine of the apostle Saint James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia in northwestern Spain, where tradition has it that the remains of the saints are buried. In the evening, a well deserved dinner awaits us at the Parador. (B/D)

DAY 19 - TAKING IN THE LOCAL SURROUNDS

After breakfast we enjoy a relaxing panoramic tour and explore the nearby local villages and conclude our adventure with a visit to some local artisans to learn about their art of cheese and wine making. The remainder of the afternoon is at your leisure.

At night a farewell dinner is planned at the tables of our ancient hotel, considered the oldest hotel in the world and built as a royal hospital in 1499 to accommodate pilgrims traveling to Santiago. (B/D)

DAY 20 - PORTO AIRPORT

After hotel check-out, we head for Porto's international airport where your tour director will wave goodbye. If you are not quite ready to fly home yet, consider a 3 night package in Porto. (B)



TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and greet Seville San Pablo Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. 19 nights in charming heritage accommodation (Paradores) including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges, city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp), services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.



DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 20 DAYS

Start date Seville - Thursday, 3 October 2024

Finish date Porto - Tuesday, 22 October 2024

Tour Price pp/twin share - AUD \$13,695

Single Supplement - AUD \$2,495

Due to the heritage nature of the Paradores, hotels included on this tour may undergo renovations throughout the year. In this instance a hotel may be replaced with a property of the same standard in the same region. The content of the tour itinerary/inclusions will not change (or as little as possible).

NATURE



TIMELESS PORTUGAL & MADEIRA



20 DAYS

TOUR OVERVIEW

Starting and finishing in Lisbon, this is the ultimate tour of Portugal and Madeira. We travel the scenic country roads of the Alentejo region for our 3 night stay and visit Evora, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

From this convenient base, we will visit Monsaraz to taste some of the famous full-bodied Alentejo red wines. We continue with visits to Marvao, Castelo de Vide, Almourol Castle and Tomar, the old headquarters of the Knights Templar in Portugal. Join us for a cruise through the Douro Valley followed by visits to Guimaraes, Porto and Barcelos, a town with a famous legend. Exploring Aveiro and its colourful Moliceiros boats is a must and the same goes for Coimbra with its old university and library.

The tour finishes in a leisurely fashion taking on the island of Madeira, known for its flower festivals and typically shaped houses. Located east of Casablanca and north of the Canaries, it is comprised of 4 islands off the north west coast of Africa. Well known for its namesake wine and warm, subtropical climate, the main island is volcanic, green and rugged, with high cliffs and pebbly beaches. Madeira is blessed with the trade winds, giving the island its temperate climate year round, which many describe as the 'eternal spring' reflected in the abundance of flowers.





TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

PORTUGAL: Evora • Monsaraz
Herdade do Esporao • Vila Vicosa • Estremoz
Elvas • Marvao • Castelo de Vide • Tomar
Abrantes • Castelo Branco • Monsanto
Piodao • Belmonte • Douro Valley • Vila Real
Chaves • Guimaraes • Barcelos • Porto • Ilhavo
Praia da Barra • Aveiro • Coimbra • Batalha

MADEIRA: Funchal • Porto Moniz • Cabo Girao
Camara de Lobos • Curral das Freiras • Santana

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included



DAY 1 - ARRIVAL LISBON

Central Alentejo Region (3 nights)

In Lisbon, our modern coach and tour director will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your hotel for a 3 night stay in the Alentejo region. After check-in, the remainder of the day is at your leisure to settle in, relax or explore the local area. At night a welcome dinner is planned offering typical regional cuisine and wine. Bem Vindo or welcome as we say in Portugal! (D)

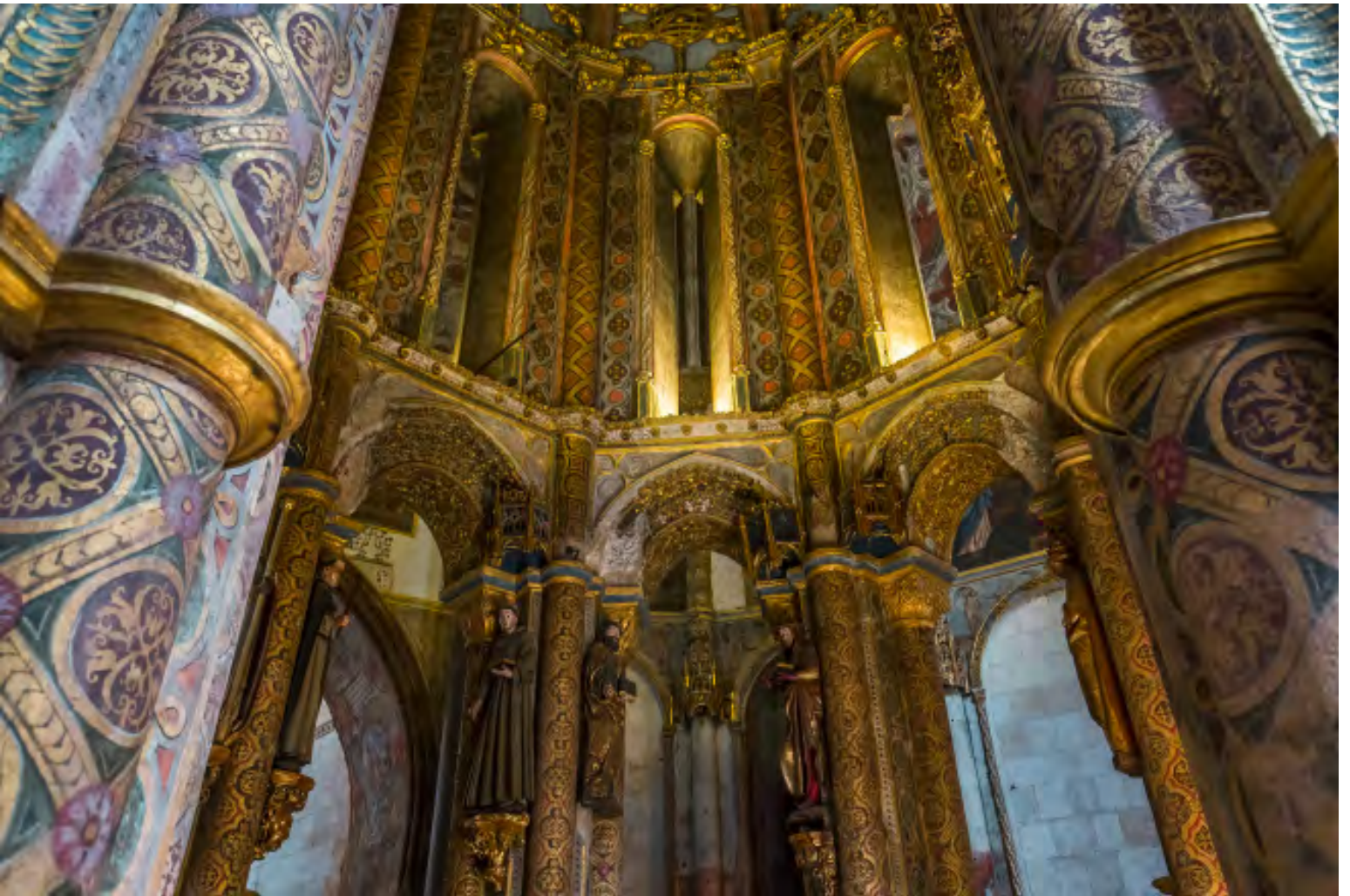
DAY 2 - EVORA

Enjoy a sleep-in and a relaxing breakfast as the morning is at your leisure. Nicknamed 'Land of bread', the Alentejo is the largest and flattest of the Portuguese regions. It has a distinctive character and beauty with vast plains dotted with cork and olive trees. This area is also rich in handicrafts, rustic pottery with native colourful designs, rugs and tapestries.

After lunch and now settled in, we start with a walking tour of Evora with its long and rich history, taking in the fortress-like Cathedral, Roman temple, St. Francis Church and the Chapel of Bones. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 3 - MONSARAZ - HERDADE DO ESPORAO

Today we visit the charming village of Monsaraz, visible from miles around, arguably one of the most attractive fortified hilltop villages in Portugal and explore the best on offer. We continue with a visit and wine-tasting to a local vineyard in Herdade do Esporao. With its many sun hours, this part of Portugal produces typical full-bodied red wines and the name Borba comes to mind. At night dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 4 - VILA VICOSA - ESTREMOZ - ELVAS

Northern Alentejo Region (3 nights)

After hotel check-out we venture north and break the journey in Vila Vicosa to visit the Royal Palace with its impressive facade followed by free time. Upon arrival in Estremoz, an elegant town of startling whiteness, thanks largely to its extensive use of high grade marble, we visit the nearby quarries. The town is also famous for its pottery, markets, preserved plums and goats cheese.

After free time for lunch, we continue our day with a visit to Elvas, a fortified frontier town close to the Spanish border, boasting the most sophisticated 17th century military architecture in Europe with well-preserved moats, bastions and gates. Dinner tonight at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 5 - MARVAO - CASTELO DE VIDE

Relax and enjoy as we drive through the Sao Mamede mountain ranges to Marvao, a seemingly picture perfect hilltop village offering immaculate little houses with Manueline windows, Renaissance doorways and cobbled streets. Around lunchtime we visit Castelo de Vide, sitting high above the surrounding olive plains, this ancient spa town with narrow lanes offers true character and charm.

We visit a 14th c. castle during a walking tour and have a panoramic stop at the Belvedere. For all who have a passion for horses, in the afternoon, we will visit the 'Coudelaria de alter do Chao', one of the most famous stables in Portugal. At night we sample some of the local cuisine during dinner at the tables of our residence. (B/D)

DAY 6 - TOMAR - ABRANTES

Perfect for a morning wander and historically outstanding, Tomar is best known for its Convento de Cristo, former headquarters of the Knights Templar, one of the most significant religious monuments in the country, it also happens to be home to one of Portugal's few remaining medieval synagogues.

After the visit to the monastery, we will view Almoural Castle, set on its own small island in the Tagus River, one of the most romantic and surrounded by myths. It is said there are 101 castles in Portugal, most of which were built or rebuilt between the 12th and the 14th centuries. At night dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 7 - CASTELO BRANCO - MONSANTO Central Portugal Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, we cross the Tagus Gorges and arrive in Castelo Branco to visit the Bishop's Palace gardens in true 18 c. Baroque style. We continue with a visit to Monsanto, built around and atop a steep rocky mass and once declared the most typical village of Portugal to enjoy lunch. We finish the day visiting charming Idanha a Velha. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 8 - PIODAO - BELMONTE

Driving through the Acor mountain ranges while taking in incredible views, springs and pasture land, we arrive in Piodao to enjoy free time followed by lunch. The historical village is reminiscent of a crib because of the harmonious way in which its houses are arranged in the form of an amphitheatre.

At night, when the lights are turned on, this picture is particularly magnificent. The distinctive feature of this mountain village with its narrow winding streets is schist, a stone found in great abundance in the region and used to build the houses and pavements. Dinner is planned at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 9 - CRUISING THE DOURO VALLEY Northern Portugal Region (1 night)

After hotel check-out, we set out to start our river cruise, sit back and relax and take in the best of the stunning Douro river district. The Douro is one of the major rivers of the Iberian Peninsula, flowing from its source near Duruelo de la Sierra in Soria Province across northern-central Spain and Portugal to its outlet in Porto. Along the way you will admire breathtaking landscapes and view vineyards, towns and villages. In the evening, dinner in the elegant dining room of the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 10 - VILA REAL - CHAVES
Northern Portugal Region (2 nights)

In the morning we visit the gardens and home of the famous Casa de Mateus. Built in the first half of the 18th c., the palace, set in beautiful gardens, is considered to be one of the finest examples of Baroque civil architecture in Portugal. Its interior decoration includes intricately carved wood ceilings, furniture from several periods, 17th and 18th century paintings, silverware, ceramics and an impressive library.

After lunch, we drive to Chaves for a walking tour and free time. Dinner at the tables of our hotel. (B/D)

DAY 11 - A DAY AT YOUR LEISURE

Enjoy a late start and a relaxing breakfast as today is at your leisure. Take in the unique atmosphere of your hotel and reflect on the many interesting visits to date. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 12 - GUIMARAES - BARCELOS
Northern Portugal Region (1 night)

UNESCO listed and birthplace of King Afonso Henriques, first king of Portugal, the historic town of Guimaraes is best known as the cradle of the Portuguese nation.

Today we visit the well-preserved former Duques Palace and the old centre during a walking tour followed by free time. Located in the Minho region, a visit to Barcelos, famous for its iconic cockerel motif to be seen all over Portugal, especially in pottery form, is a must. Enjoy the best of this famous town. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 13 - PORTO

Central Portugal Region (2 nights)

After hotel check-out, we explore the town of Porto taking in the city's most important landmarks including a visit to the church of San Francisco and the Bolsa de Porto. A visit to this enchanting town is not complete without a tasting at a port wine cellar on the banks of Vila Nova de Gaia. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 14 - ILHAVO - PRAIA DA BARRA - AVEIRO

Today we set out to Ilhavo for a visit to a fascinating museum dedicated to the history of fishing and continue with a drive to Praia da Barra to view the fishermen's colourful painted wooden houses. We stay at the seaside to visit Aveiro, once an important fishing port, these days salt is the mainstay of its economy.

The town offers a picturesque setting with pastel-coloured houses bordering the canals and narrow lanes around the fish market. Best known for its high prowed 'Moliceiros' boats, we naturally have to set sail and enjoy a tour on the canals. Dinner at the hotel tonight. (B/D)



DAY 15 - COIMBRA - BATALHA

Lisbon Region (1 night)

A visit to Coimbra, located between Porto and Lisbon, once the country's capital is one of the highlights of this part of Portugal. Perched high above the Rio Mondego, the city is best known for its ancient university, founded in 1290, a visit to the impressive library with its 300,000 mostly leather bound books will help you understand why.

After a walking tour in the centre to enjoy time for lunch, we drive further south and continue our day with a visit to Batalha, known for its World Heritage listed Gothic Manueline style monastery and abbey. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 16 - FLIGHT FROM LISBON TO FUNCHAL

Madeira (4 nights)

After breakfast we are heading for Lisbon International Airport to board our flight into Madeira. Funchal's history goes back over five centuries when early Portuguese settlers colonised the coast of a bright and sunny bay where fennel (funcho) grew in abundance, giving its name to the new town of Funchal. Madeira, an autonomous region of Portugal, has long been known as 'The Pearl of the Atlantic' or the 'Floating Garden'.

Located east of Casablanca and north of the Canaries, it comprises 4 islands off the north-west coast of Africa. Known for its namesake wine and warm subtropical climate, the main island of Madeira is volcanic, green and rugged, with high cliffs and pebbly beaches. Blessed with the trade winds it results in a temperate climate year round which many describe as the 'eternal spring' which is reflected in Madeira's abundance of flowers. The island is well known for its folklore, typically shaped houses, traditional flower festivals and dramatic coastline offering magnificent viewpoints. The remainder of the afternoon is free to explore. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 17 - FUNCHAL - CURRAL DAS FREIRAS

Funchal's botanical garden is perhaps the most famous of all parks on the island with over two thousand species of exotic plants. Madeira has long been called the 'Garden Isle' and it seems that almost anything will grow in its fertile soil. In Funchal, the island's capital, many tropical plants have found a home and the visitor can see Hibiscus and Bougainvillea in flower almost all year round along with Jacaranda, Spathodeas, Erythras and Bauhinias in their season.

We continue with a walking tour of Funchal's centre including a visit to the local market and Cathedral and we finish the tour with a tasting of the famous Madeira wine. Curral das Freiras ('Nuns Valley') is a small village nestling between almost perpendicular mountains in the heart of the island. The village is very isolated and the community mainly live off what they can grow. The local chestnuts are delicious and are used in everyday cooking. Today includes an organised lunch so the evening is at your leisure. (B/L)

DAY 18 - CAMARA DE LOBOS - CABO GIRAO

Today offers more panoramic highlights of this captivating island, a scenic drive passing banana plantations giving way to vineyards. Nearby Camara de Lobos, a traditional fishing village, inspired Sir Winston Churchill to paint its lovely surroundings. Camara de Lobos is also home of 'poncha', a mixture of lemon juice, honey and sugarcane spirit, available at the many local taverns.

Further along the road and up into the mountains we arrive at Cabo Girao, the second highest cliff face in the world, the view is incredible. Porto Moniz seems to have fallen from above into the northern sea and has long been famous for its natural swimming pools and pure beautiful scenery. With an organised lunch included on tour, the evening is at your leisure. (B/L)

DAY 19 - SANTANA

Get ready for a relaxing day out taking in the remote, northern side of the island. The lush mountainous island of Madeira was once totally covered with 'Laurissilva' forest, a relic from pre-historic times and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

This region lives essentially from agriculture, craftwork and tradition. Characterised by small thatched triangular houses, Santana is a beautiful village on the north coast. These tiny houses built of natural stone and thatched with straw have served the locals for centuries as stables and dwellings. There will be time to relax in the afternoon leading up to a typical folklore evening including dinner at night. (B/D)





DAY 20 - FUNCHAL AIRPORT - LISBON

All good things come to an end, after breakfast and hotel check-out, we head for Funchal International Airport for airline check-in covering our flight back to mainland Portugal. Upon arrival at Lisbon airport, your tour director will wave goodbye. (B)



Due to the heritage nature of the Pousada hotels included, this tour may undergo hotel renovations throughout the year. In this instance a hotel may be replaced with a property of the same standard in the same region. The content of the tour itinerary/inclusions will not change (or as little as possible).



TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and greet Lisbon Humberto Delgado International Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. Economy class return flights from Lisbon to Madeira.

19 nights in charming heritage accommodation (Pousadas or similar style hotels) including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges, city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp), services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.

DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 20 DAYS

2025 touring dates to be confirmed

GASTRONOMY



ENCHANTING ITALY UNCOVERED





21 DAYS



TOUR OVERVIEW

Starting in Milan and finishing in Rome, this relaxing tour of northern and central Italy is certainly taking you on a road less travelled.

The tour starts out in a leisurely fashion staying four nights in a charming residence close to Turin. Explore the small hamlets of the picturesque Langhe area, famous for Barolo wines and white truffles.

Capturing some of Europe's highest peaks, our stay in Bolzano will be the base for the next four nights when we take in the rich Tyrolean culture in The Dolomites and Innsbruck.

Travelling south, through Italy's heartland, we visit some of Tuscany's lesser known towns before we enter Umbria, province of lush rolling hills and medieval hilltop towns and the home of high quality pecorino cheese.

The tour winds up in one of Italy's most captivating regions, northern Lazio, where you will take in the ancient culture of the Etruscans and learn about their rich heritage.

4 NIGHT STAYS

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

The Langhe • Turin • Alba • Alte Langhe
Sirmione • Bolzano • Innsbruck • The Dolomites
Modena • Florence • Brisighella • Lucca
Pienza • Perugia • Gubbio • Torgiano
Panicali • Castiglione del Lago • Assisi
Montefalco • Orvieto • Tarquinia • Pitigliano
Sovana

(B/L/D) Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner included

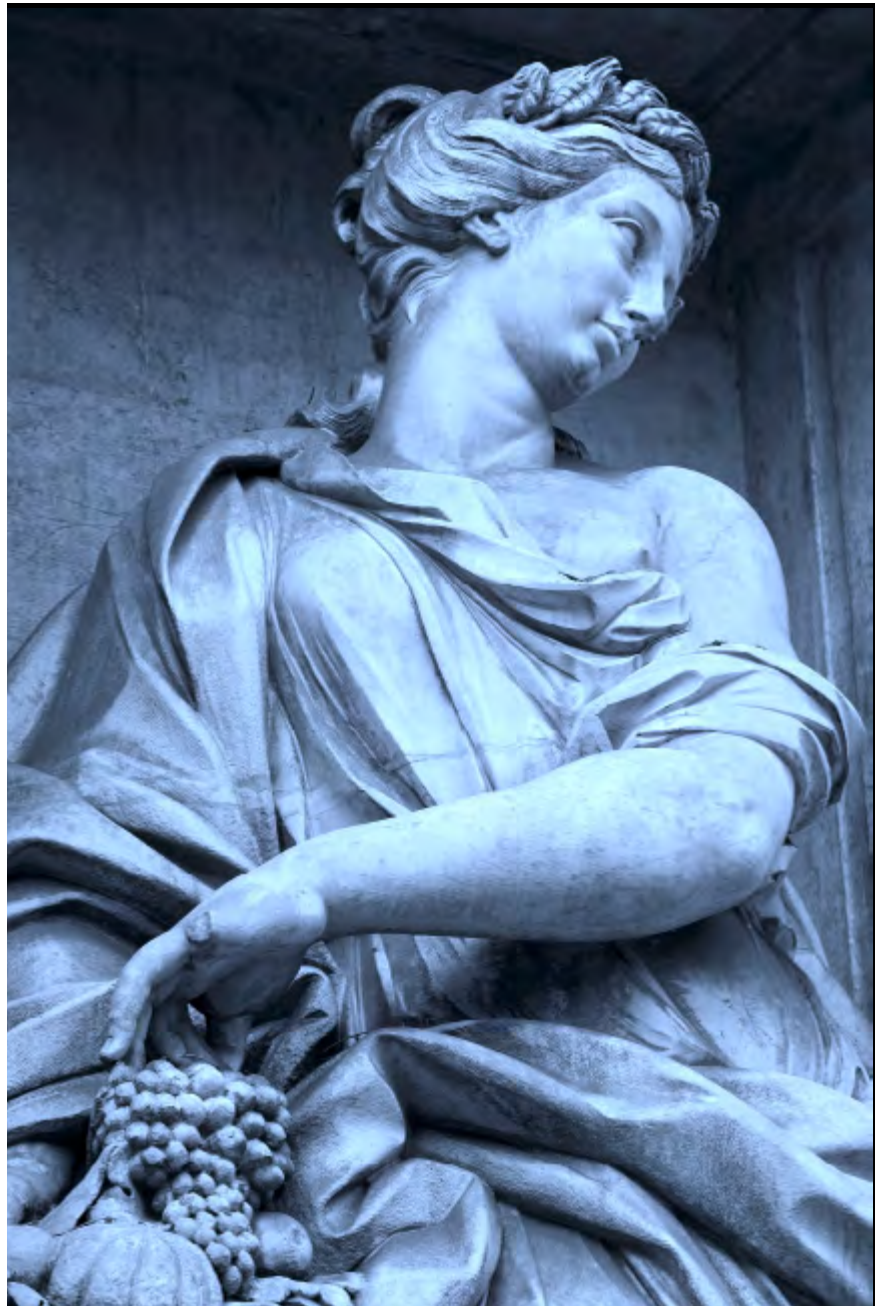
DAY 1 - ARRIVAL MILAN

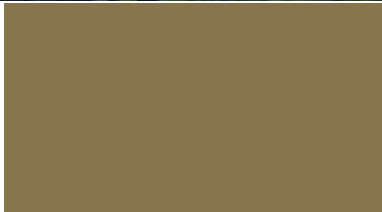
Piemonte - Valle D'Aosta Region (4 nights)

Welcome to Italy! In Milan, our private tour coach and tour director will be awaiting you at the airport for transfer to your hotel located in The Langhe area.

After hotel check-in and a light welcome lunch, the remainder of the day is at your leisure to settle in and relax. At night a special welcome dinner is planned at the hotels charming restaurant offering typical regional cuisine and wine.

Bordering France and Switzerland, Piemonte is a region of snow capped mountains, Italy's first capital, FIAT, the stylish Borsalino hats and of course the refreshing Asti Spumante. (L/D)





DAY 2 - ALTE LANGHE - ALBA

Discover the world's most celebrated underground mushroom, the truffle. Venture into the woods to meet a 'trifolao' (truffle hunter) and his hunting dog. Get to know the techniques used in gathering truffles during a hunting demonstration. Then the opportunity to sample this rare delicacy.

Next we travel to Alba to independently explore this culinary mecca renowned for white truffles and chocolates. In the afternoon, we venture deep into the Alte Langhe area and visit a family-owned hazelnut business, a highlight of your trip. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 3 - TURIN

Italy's first capital Turin is situated in the centre of the Piemonte region. Located on the Po River, the city offers wide tree-lined boulevards and fills a role as north-west Italy's major industrial, cultural and administrative hub. It is known as the centre of education, science and the arts. Believe it or not, it also has a reputation as Italy's capital of black magic and the supernatural. Join a local guide who will lead you on an exploration featuring the many treasures of this elegant city.

Get a glimpse of the grand lifestyle of the House of Savoy as we visit the impressive Royal Palace. As you stroll through the exquisite, gilded rooms you are sure to be awed by the opulence. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 4 - THE LANGHE

The day starts off in a relaxed fashion as we take in the local surroundings of The Langhe area, a hilly region to the south and east of the river Tanaro in the province of Cuneo in Piemonte, northern Italy, the birthplace of the 'slow food' movement. The Langhe is also a land of castles and today we visit one of the most famous with a local guide. This pristine area is also known for its Barolo wines, cheeses, and particularly the white truffles of Alba. Its perfect for lovers of good food. Dinner at the Hotel. (B/D)



DAY 5 - SIRMIONE - LAKE GARDA

Trentino - Alto Adige Region (4 nights)

Today we transfer to the Trentino-Alto Adige region, relatively untouched and situated in the very north of Italy bordering Austria and Switzerland and best known for the beauty of its stunning peaks. Offering an extraordinary variety of landscapes, from dramatic rose-coloured mountaintops to forests and crystal clear lakes, this unspoiled region is breathtaking, little wonder Leonardo da Vinci depicted

The Dolomites behind his Mona Lisa. It is also the region where Gothic art blends with that of the Italian Renaissance. En route to Bolzano, we will enjoy free time for lunch in the historic town of Sirmione, located on Lake Garda, complete with narrow, cobbled streets that wind their way through medieval arches. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 6 - THE DOLOMITES

Unlike other famous Alpine ranges, The Dolomites in northeast Italy are relatively undeveloped. This expansive land of rocks and valleys covers some of the highest peaks whilst the lowland valleys are laced with rivers and dotted with secluded villages, fairy-tale castles, unexpected historic sites, rarely seen animals such as bears, deer, mountain goat, birds of prey and unique plant species.

The Dolomites play host to a mixture of culture and languages and amongst German and Italian, there is still another language to be heard in the area called 'Ladin', an offshoot of Latin, testament of centuries of isolation in mountain strongholds. Sit back and relax and take in the best of this stunning region on a panoramic tour. Today will include a hearty organised lunch instead of dinner so the evening is at your leisure. (B/L)

DAY 7 - BOLZANO

We start the day with a visit of Bolzano including the fascinating Iceman at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology. Once voted Italy's most liveable city, Tyrolean culture dominates Bolzano's language, food, architecture and people and it is hard to remember that you are in Italy and not Austria when walking with our local guide along the city's cobblestone streets. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 8 - INNSBRUCK (AUSTRIA)

Today we head for the region of Tyrol (Austria) and visit Innsbruck, the capital of The Alps. We take in the best of the well-preserved historic part on a guided visit and follow the trail of the Habsburgs. The city dates from 1180 and started as a little market settlement. It is a gem of a city, where nature meets culture and tradition meets design. View the Golden Roof of Emperor Maximilian and the Royal Palace. The afternoon is free to enjoy at your leisure. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 9 - MODENA

Tuscany Region (4 nights)

This morning we transfer south to central Italy and enter the heart of Tuscany, possibly one of the most beautiful regions of the world. Rolling hills, dramatic cypress trees, silver green olive groves and enchanting hill towns greet us, not to mention the richness in art and architecture. A visit here is simply magic and food for the soul. Around lunchtime, en route, we break in Modena for some free time. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less travelled by
And that has made all the difference.

ROBERT FROST



DAY 10 - A DAY AT YOUR LEISURE

Sleep in a little, have a relaxing breakfast as today is at your leisure.

Perfect for those who wish to explore and venture into nearby Florence. With the lily as its symbol, Florence gave birth to the Renaissance and changed the way we see the world. For centuries, its art has captured the imagination of travellers who walk in the footsteps of native sons Dante, Donatello, Botticelli and Michelangelo, a keystone of the famous 'Grand Tour' in the 17th c. continues to exert the same fascination today. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 11 - BRISIGHELLA

Travelling through the Apennini mountain range, we arrive in Brisighella, once named 'the most beautiful medieval village in Italy'. Well recognised as 'the three hills village', its character is enhanced by three surrounding rocky hills: one with a 14th century castle, La Rocca, another with an 18th century church sanctuary, the Monticino and a third with a clock tower of the 19th century.

This charming thermal town is made up of ancient lanes and streets and remains of the defensive walls and stairways carved into the chalky rocks. We will enjoy the best during a guided visit followed by free time. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 12 - LUCCA

Lucca, a scenic fortress town, was the first town in Tuscany to accept Christianity. Within the city's 16th to 17th c. ramparts, the famous composer Puccini was born. Lucca is rich in history, Roman origins, Medieval and Renaissance power and wealth.

Our local guide will walk us through these areas, from Imperial times to the Lucca of the 1800's, a century that began with the reign of Elisa Bonaparte. We will explore the massive walls and fortifications, the piazzas and palazzos of Lucca's many transformations. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 13 - PIENZA

Umbria Region (4 nights)

After breakfast we enter the region of Umbria, the lush centre of Italy is ever changing, offering untouched landscapes consisting of hills with a few sparse trees, wide plains dotted with lakes and medieval hilltop towns. It is also the home of truffles - more are found here than anywhere else in Italy - sausage and rich green olive oil.

Enroute we will enjoy some free time in the town of Pienza the 'ideal city' constructed by Pope Pius II, overlooking the cypress-lined hills of the stunning Orcia Valley, located just south of Florence. Admire the towns rich Renaissance splendour and take in the finest buildings and piazzas. The town is also known for its high quality 'pecorino', Italy's sheep milk cheese, an unforgettable culinary experience! Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 14 - PERUGIA - GUBBIO

In the morning we explore Perugia, possibly the best-preserved hilltop town of its size, and enjoy free time to discover its many treasures.

Gubbio is located in a rugged, mountainous corner of northern Umbria, this medieval, walled town is also called the 'City of Silence'. The town is a true gem offering spectacular views of the surrounding green countryside. Accompanied by a local guide, this afternoon we will explore its narrow lanes and learn about its 12th c. Cathedral and Ducal Palace. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 15 - TORGIANO - PANICALE

A visit to this lush part of Italy would not be complete without a tasting of the local olive oil and so we visit the Olive Oil Museum in Torgiano for a guided tour. Today will include an organised lunch in Panicale following with a visit to Castiglione del Lago, a town dotted with olive trees and dominated by a 14th c. fortress. The evening is free and yours to enjoy. (B/L)

DAY 16 - ASSISI

The hill on which the walled town of Assisi sits rises dramatically from the flat plain. Best known for the legacy of St. Francis born here in 1181 and founder of the Franciscan monastic order, the city hosts several million pilgrims each year. Together with a local guide, we explore its ancient centre on foot and take in some of the many churches including the Basilica di San Francesco, with its brilliant cycle of frescoes on the Life of Saint Francis by Giotto.

In the afternoon we will spend time in the Montefalco area and enjoy a tasting of some of the best wines known to this region, in particular the Sagrantino variety. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)





DAY 17 - ORVIETO

Lazio Region (4 nights)

After breakfast we transfer to the region of Lazio, cradle of Christian culture, lakes and legends, thermal spa's and ancient Roman roads. En route a visit is planned to Orvieto, located on an enormous plateau of volcanic rock high above a green valley, this town truly offers natural defences.

The Etruscans were the first to take advantage of this and settled here digging a honeycombed network of more than 1200 wells and storage caves out of the soft stone. Together with a local guide, we will take in the best of the towns sights including its impressive Cathedral, one of the most dazzling in Italy, a triumph of Romanesque-Gothic architecture. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 18 - A DAY AT YOUR LEISURE

This ancient part of Italy is also famous for its thermal spa's and sulphur springs so it is time for some rest and relaxation. Relax today and enjoy the luxurious facilities of our accommodation at the in-house spa and reflect on the journey so far. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)

DAY 19 - TARQUINIA

Overlooking the sea, Tarquinia was home to the remains of ancient settlements and was also a major centre in the Middle Ages. From the 7th to the 6th c. BC, Etruscan culture was at its height. The Etruscans were pre-dominantly navigators and traders, competing against the Phoenicians and Greeks for markets in the Mediterranean. Tarquinia's narrow medieval streets open onto quaint squares dominated by palaces and churches, encircled by medieval walls and towers. Together with a local guide we visit the local museum to take in the towns rich heritage and artefacts including pottery, vases, temples and frescoed underground tombs. Dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 20 - SOVANA - PITIGLIANO

It is time to visit Sovana and the nearby Archaeological Park where we'll have a fascinating guided tour of the 2700 year old necropolis and the profound experience of walking along ancient roads. Nearby Pitigliano, with its medieval stone houses, is known for its many local specialties including the white wine, olive oil, cured meats and cheeses. Etruscan tombs, which locals use to store the wine, are connected by a network of caves and tunnels. Pitigliano is one of the most unusual towns you can imagine, sitting atop a sheer cliff, lined with holes that were once tombs and now used as cantinas, stables and storehouses.

With a local guide we will discover its impressive medieval centre, 16th century fortress, massive aqueduct and old Jewish ghetto. Enjoy a relaxing dinner at the hotel. (B/D)



DAY 21 - ROME FCO AIRPORT

All good things come to an end and after breakfast and hotel check-out, we will head for Rome Fiumicino International Airport where your tour director will wave goodbye. (B)

If you are not quite ready yet to collect your boarding pass, consider a 3 night package in the city of Rome!



TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS

Meet and greet Milan Malpensa International Airport. Return airport transfers in Europe. 20 nights in charming boutique/heritage hotels including daily buffet breakfast, 3 course dinner (or lunch) with beverages based on typical traditional regional cuisine where indicated.

Private coach travel in Europe, entry fees covering sightseeing and entertainment, hotel service charges, city taxes, most tipping, baggage handling (1 bag pp), services of a full-time professional tour director and local city guides.



DEPARTURE SCHEDULE LAND ONLY - 21 DAYS

2025 touring dates to be confirmed

KEY TOUR FEATURES

European specialist for 26 years

Designed for mature, discerning travellers

No daily packing and unpacking

3 and 4 night stays in charming boutique/heritage accommodation (castles, palaces, villas, convents, manors)

Paradores & Pousadas specialist

Fully escorted with European licensed tour directors and local accredited city guides

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Leisurely morning starts 8:30 - 9:00 am

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Daily buffet breakfast & 3 course dinner (or lunch) wine, coffee, mineral water

All-inclusive tours no hidden or optional extras pre-paid in Australian dollars

Porterage included

Ample free time

BOOKING TERMS & CONDITIONS
PLEASE REFER TO WEBSITE

EXPERIENCE TRAVEL
THE WAY
IT OUGHT TO BE



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