Northern Italy & Cinque Terre Walking Tour

September 25–October 5, 2015

$3,789* if booked by December 31, 2014

*Price based on 21-25 paying travelers. Includes airfare from JFK, BOS or IAD and departure fees & taxes. Other gateways available, please call for pricing. Tour participants who are not members of the General Alumni Association must join the Association ($45 for singles; $55 for couples) to participate. Please pay by separate check made payable to the General Alumni Association and mail with your reservation form.

11-DAY TOUR INCLUDES
• Round-trip air transportation with a major airline and airport transfers
• The services of a bilingual Go Ahead Tour Director
• 10 nights accommodations in well-located hotels, including baggage handling
• Buffet breakfast daily; 1 three-course lunch and wine tasting; 4 three-course dinners, including wine or beer
• Private deluxe motorcoach
• 4 escorted walks

Guided Sightseeing
Day 6: Bolzano
Day 10: Lucca

Tour Director–led walks
Day 2: Lake Orta
Day 5: Valpolicella
Day 7: Alpe di Siusi
Day 9: Cinque Terre

Tour Highlight
There’s no better way to discover Cinque Terre’s seaside hamlets than by foot. These five coastal villages hug the Mediterranean’s terraced hillsides, where locals still farm the steep, rugged landscapes as they have for centuries.

Day 1: OVERNIGHT FLIGHT
Rest your legs on a regularly scheduled overnight flight to Malpensa airport aboard an internationally recognized airline.

Day 2: ARRIVAL IN NORTHERN ITALY
After you touch down in Malpensa airport and clear customs, a Go Ahead representative will meet you at the airport and escort you to your hotel in Stresa. Take some time to wander around nearby Lake Maggiore, soaking in views of alpine hills and snowcapped peaks in the background. Later, savor your first authentic Italian meal at your welcome dinner.

Included meals: breakfast (in flight), dinner

Day 3: LAKE ORTA & SACRO MONTE WALK
Travel into a region famed for its classic Italian landscapes as you make your way to picturesque Lake Orta. Here, explore the nearby town of San Giulio’s UNESCO World Heritage site, Sacro Monte. Once a popular destination for religious pilgrims, Sacro Monte is comprised of dozens of small, fresco-lined chapels and ornate statues dedicated to Saint Francis of Assisi. After strolling along the trail that meanders among the lakeside chapels, relax and enjoy lunch in the village. Then, hop aboard a water taxi and cruise to San Giulio Island. This tiny island is home to a massive, ancient monastery. Look inside this sacred structure before heading back to the mainland and returning to your hotel in Stresa.

Included meal: breakfast

Day 4: FREE DAY IN LAKE MAGGIORE REGION
Kick back on the glamorous Lago Maggiore, a destination renowned for its breathtaking landscape and celebrity-laden shores. With a full day to yourself, you’re free to hike, bike, seek out la dolce vita at a nearby spa or just sunbathe between trips to the gelaterias. If you feel like exploring with fellow travelers, join an optional group excursion to the lake’s Borromean Islands. This small archipelago still belongs to the wealthy Borromeo family, and each small island is full of incredible architecture and vibrant gardens.

Included meal: breakfast

Day 5: VALPOLICELLA WALK & WINE TASTING
Leave the waters of Lake Maggiore behind for rolling vineyards during an included stop on your way to the Dolomites. Arrive in Valpolicella, a countryside setting acclaimed for its olive groves and superior wine vintages. Embark on your Tour Director-led walk, beginning in the town of San Giorgio. Explore the Romanesque ancient pieve (rural church) before heading downhill to the Serego Alighieri Estate. Property of the direct descendants of poet Dante Alighieri, the estate is now a fully...
functional winery and olive oil producer. After taking in the region by foot, sit down for a taste of its best fare and famous labels: Ripasso, Amarone and Recioto. After lunch, head to Bolzano, a town set against the Dolomite mountain range UNESCO World Heritage site. Spend the rest of the evening winding down with your group over dinner. Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 6: Bolzano Guided Sightseeing
Discover Bolzano (or Bozen in German), a city comprised of two very distinct cultures. Part Italian, part Austrian, the citywide divide is tangible from its architecture right down to its beer. A local guide introduces you to the charming contrasts, starting in the main city square, Piazza Walther. From there, make your way through the famous open markets to the Gothic-style Duomo, dedicated to the assumption of the Virgin Mary. Next, step into Piazza del Grano. Once home to the city’s grain market, the square remains the heart of Bolzano’s medieval village. After touring the main streets, including Via Laubengasse with its famed arched windows, you’re free to continue exploring on your own. This afternoon, join the group for an optional cable car ride above Ritten’s green landscapes and a walk to view its towering Earth Pyramids. Included meal: breakfast

Day 8: Transfer to the Italian Riviera
Wave goodbye to the Dolomites as you travel south from Bolzano to the sunny shores of the Italian Riviera, stopping en route to enjoy some free time for lunch. After settling into your Riviera hotel, raise a toast to your new locale at tonight’s group dinner. Included meal: breakfast

Day 7: The Dolomites & Alpe di Siusi Walk
Take in the Dolomites from Alpe di Siusi, a sprawling meadow set amidst surreal limestone peaks. Trails of all levels wind through the flower-lined, sheep-dotted pastures, allowing walkers to absorb the serenity that fills the area. Board a cable car and ride to the village of Compatsch to begin your walk on the scenic Bullaccia Ring Trail. Along the way, take in panoramic views of the surrounding stone spires and mountain valleys below. Eat lunch and grab a beer or glass of wine at a nearby rifiugio, or explore at your own pace. Following your return to Bolzano, spend the evening as you like. Included meal: breakfast

Day 9: Cinque Terre Walk
Clinging to the cliffs of the Riviera coastline sits Cinque Terre, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Translating to “Five Lands” in Italian, Cinque Terre encompasses five very distinct villages, all bound by a relaxed vibe and bright clusters of color-washed homes. Get a taste for the unique flavors of each village as you walk the peaceful promenades that connect them. Start your journey in the artistic outpost of Riomaggiore and walk the Via dell’Amore (“Walkway of Love”). Find sweeping views of the sea and mountains at every turn as you make your way to the sun-bleached walls and ravines of Manarola. Your next stop is Vernazza, where you’ll have free time to refresh and refuel before continuing to Monterosso. As you walk toward the village’s sandy beaches, absorb the local scenery from high and low, traversing cliff-top bridges, terraced vineyards and low-lying valleys teeming with olive groves and lemon orchards. Later this evening, kick back and recuperate from the day’s adventures upon returning to your hotel. Included meal: breakfast

Day 10: Transfer to Florence
Trade the jetset glamour of the Riviera for the tranquility of the Tuscan countryside as you head toward Florence. On the way, make a stop in the town of Lucca, where a local guide gives you the lay of the land. Walk along the two-mile stretch of Renaissance-era walls that enclose the city for impressive views of the classic red-tiled rooftops, medieval churches and swathes of cypress trees below. Descend into the center of town to view the Palazzo Pfanner, San Martino Cathedral, Guinigi Tower, San Frediano’s Church and San Michele in Foro. Cap off your tour with free time to peruse the local shops and enjoy your first Tuscan meal. After lunch, continue to Florence, where you’ll gather with your fellow travelers for one last dinner. Included meals: breakfast, dinner

Day 11: Departure
Bid farewell to Florence as a Go Ahead representative escorts you to the airport for your flight home. Included meal: breakfast, excluding early morning departures

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Travel Pace: 4

Travel pace levels are based on criteria such as length of tour, number of cities visited, number of included activities, as well as length of flights and land transfers.

1 - leisurely  3 - active
2 - comfortable  4 - challenging

Climate

The optimal seasons for visiting the country are spring (April–May) and autumn (September–October) when the weather is good and there are fewer visitors. Walking conditions in the Dolomites are best between June and September, and the ski season runs from December to April. The sea is warm enough for swimming from June to September. Most Italians take vacation in August, but more and more shops and restaurants remain open during this period than in years past.

Lake Maggiore Region
Jan-Feb 24°–48°F / -4°–9°C
Mar-Apr 33°–63°F / 1°–18°C
May-Aug 49°–84°F / 9°–28°C
Sep-Oct 44°–75°F / 7°–23°C
Nov-Dec 26°–52°F / -3°–11°C

Dolomites
Jan-Feb 22°–48°F / -5°–9°C
Mar-Apr 35°–66°F / 2°–19°C
May-Aug 49°–85°F / 9°–29°C
Sep-Oct 42°–77°F / 6°–25°C
Nov-Dec 24°–52°F / 4°–11°C

Italian Riviera
Jan-Feb 41°–53°F / 5°–12°C
Mar-Apr 42°–62°F / 6°–17°C
May-Aug 58°–81°F / 14°–27°C
Sep-Oct 58°–76°F / 14°–24°C
Nov-Dec 43°–54°F / 7°–13°C

Walking on Tour

Will I be able to keep up?
This is a moderately demanding walking tour, but all walks can be carried out at your own pace. Travelers should be able to walk comfortably over hilly or uneven terrain while carrying water, and be prepared for some moderate inclines. Hiking boots or a pair of sturdy, comfortable athletic shoes are highly recommended. We also recommend carrying a walking stick.

What happens if it rains?
The day-by-day itinerary is an outline of daily activities. This kind of program requires maximum flexibility, and events are likely to be rearranged as local conditions demand. If you experience inclement weather, we will arrange more activities in town and fewer in the countryside.

Who is my guide?
Go Ahead Walking Tour Directors have been trained on how to lead a program of this kind. They not only have a comprehensive knowledge of the region, but also a genuine enthusiasm for Italy. All tour directors are bilingual.

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Pre-departure information for your tour

Passport and Visa Requirements
In order to enter Italy, U.S. and Canadian citizens need a valid passport. The expiration date must extend at least six months beyond the date of your return home. No visa is required for U.S. or Canadian citizens. If you are not a U.S. or Canadian citizen, contact the Italian consulate for your particular entry requirements.

Airport and Departure Taxes
All airport and departure taxes for this tour are included in the total trip cost printed on your invoice.

Baggage Allowance
Airlines have varying weight restrictions on luggage. Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage; be advised that you are responsible for any such costs. Contact your airline for detailed information regarding luggage size and weight restrictions for your flight, but please note that Go Ahead travelers are restricted to one checked bag per person due to storage limitations on motor coaches and other internal transfers, which may include train connections or flights. One carry-on bag is also permitted, provided that it does not exceed 45 total inches (length + width + height). Make sure you label your baggage and carry valuables, medication and documents in your carry-on bag.

Clothing and Packing Tips
Your Italian itinerary focuses on the outdoors, so your clothing should be casual and appropriate for outdoor use. Loose-fitting, layered clothing that can accommodate varying temperatures will probably be most comfortable. A sun hat, sunglasses, and a bathing suit are recommended. Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots are crucial. Occasional rain showers are common in the areas you will be visiting, so pack light rainwear.

Health
Travelers should be reasonably fit (see “Walking on Tour” for more information). Take proper care for sun exposure. Consult your doctor at least eight weeks prior to departure about possible preventive measures and personal travel requirements.

Cuisine
Undoubtedly one of the most exciting aspects of traveling to Italy is sampling the local cuisine. Eating isn’t just an activity here—it’s an art form. Be sure to sample the homemade pasta sauces and the vast range of cured hams, cheeses, rustic breads and desserts. Italian fare often varies slightly by region, and many cities and towns have their own specialties. Northern Italy is known for its meats and pastries. For more authentic meals, try the local trattorias—small, family-owned restaurants that tend to be set away from the main piazzas.

Italians are known for indulging in long, often-boisterous meals featuring wines and the occasional beer, followed by after-dinner drinks, such as grappa or limoncello.

Transportation
Round-trip flights arrive at Malpensa airport and depart from Florence. After you arrive at Malpensa airport and clear customs, a Go Ahead representative will escort you to your hotel. Included transportation on this tour is by private motorcoach. Destinations on tour are all easily walkable, although some local buses may be available.

Electricity
Italy uses the European standard 220 volts.

Time Zones
Italy is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and six hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). When it is noon in New York, it’s 6 p.m. in Florence.

Currency
The euro is the currency you will be using on your tour. Better rates of exchange are usually available in Italy, although it is worth ordering some currency from your local bank to use when you first arrive. We strongly advise that you take debit/bank cards and credit cards, which can be exchanged for cash at local banks, as needed. You can use most debit/credit cards at ATMs on the international networks Cirrus and Plus, but make sure to check with your home bank about withdrawal fees. We suggest informing your bank and credit card company of your travel plans, so that they don’t confuse your international purchases for fraudulent charges.

Tipping
At the conclusion of your tour, it is customary to offer your Go Ahead Tour Director and driver a gratuity. We recommend tipping in your tour country’s currency, the equivalent of $3USD/CAD per person per day for your driver and $6USD/CAD to $9USD/CAD per person per day for your Tour Director. If applicable, we also recommend the equivalent of $2USD/CAD per local guide. Tips can only be paid in cash. Please keep current local currency exchange rates in mind when tipping.

Purchasing Optional Excursions on Tour
If you have not yet purchased your optional excursions, you may be able to do so while on your tour. Your tour director will only accept cash (in U.S. dollars only), Visa or MasterCard as payment for optional excursions. Please be advised that if you pay for an excursion by credit card while on tour, it may take up to three months for your card to be charged. Some optional excursions may only be purchased in advance. See the separate “Optional Excursions” sheet for more information.

International travel is, by its very nature, unpredictable. We must therefore reserve the right to change this itinerary without advanced notice to meet with local conditions at the time of travel. We appreciate your understanding. Please refer to the current catalog for terms & conditions, dates and prices.