VENICE, FLORENCE & ROME

Lecture by Rick Steves

VENICE/VENEZIA
Europe’s best preserved big city
Arsenale
St Mark’s Square, glitter
Rialto bridge
Vaporetto, slow boat down Grand Canal fine intro tour
   (Rick Steves Audio Europe App self-guided tours)
Doges Palace, Bell tower, St Mark’s
Glass blowing, tours just off main square
Great art – Accademia, Scuola San Rocco
Gondola – $100 for 40 minutes
Traghetto – ferry gondolas, very cheap
Wander, get lost, you’re on an island, it’s ok; navigate not by streets but by landmarks and signs
Flood in winter “acqua alta”
Carnival, 40 days before Easter, masks
Stand-up-progressive-Venetian-pub-crawl-dinner, see Rick Steves Italy for step-by-step,cichetti = bar snacks

Nearby islands:
• Burano (lace and peaceful)
• Murano (glass works)
• Torcello (old church, mosaics)

CRUISE PORTS
Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples
Rick Steves Mediterranean Cruise Ports guidebook

FLORENCE/FIRENZE
Birthplace of Renaissance
Duomo = cathedral, center, huge dome by Brunelleschi
Arno River, Ponte Vecchio
Bargello – best sculpture
Santa Maria Novella, Masaccio
Uffizi Gallery – Botticelli, best Italian paintings
Baptistry – Ghiberti’s “Gates of Paradise”
David and “Prisoners” at Accademy, Michelangelo
Fra Angelico – in San Marco near Accademy
Science Museum, Galileo’s finger
Central Market – now a trendy food court

EATING
Restaurants – focus on ingredients
Small, hand-written menu in one language
Eat with the season and go local
Antipasto
Local favorite deli, markets
Food tours
Aperitivo (free snacks with drink)
Spritz – happy hour with locals in the squares
Gelato

MILAN/MILANO
Cathedral, climb onto roof
Galleria
Leonardo’s Last Supper, disappointing
Michelangelo’s last Pieta
Canal District (Naviglio Grande) trendy dining

ROME/ROMA
Colosseum, 50,000 numbered seats
Forum, center of ancient city
Pantheon – best look at “grandeur that was Rome”
Ara Pacis, celebrating establishment of Empire
Capitoline Hill – museum open Tues and Thurs eves
Victor Emmanuel Monument, fine view from top
Villa Borghese, Borghese Gallery, fine Baroque museum
   (Bernini) and park
Vatican – center of Catholicism, become a temporary Catholic, climb St. Peter’s dome, Vatican museum, Sistine Chapel, Etruscans
Cappucchin Monastery, bones galore, off Piazza Barberini
Moses by Michelangelo in St Peter in Chains church near Colosseum
E.U.R. – Mussolini’s planned futuristic suburb, museum of ancient city
The evening stroll, Piazza del Popolo down via del Corso
Trastevere – the seedy, colorful side of river
The Ghetto, Rome’s Jewish Quarter
Night spots, Trevi fountain, Spanish Steps, Piazza Navona, Campo di Fiori
Side-trips from Rome:
• Tivoli, Villa D’Este fountains, Hadrian’s Villa
• Ostia Antica, Europe’s most under-rated site, (Rome’s ancient seaport, an easy subway ride from downtown)
ITALY (BEYOND VENICE, FLORENCE & ROME)

CINQUE TERRE
5 tiny towns on Riviera between La Spezia and Genoa
Vernazza is best town (the flood damage is repaired)
Wine, hiking, swimming
Cinque Terre better than Portofino or Portovenere

ITALIAN LAKES DISTRICT
Lago di Como
Varenna is best town
Bellagio, classier resort town on lake

ALPS
Sud Tirol/Alto Adige, Dolomites, bilingual
Bolzano, Kastleruth – good homebases
Alpi di Siusi
Reifenstein Castle near Vipiteno/Sterzing, just south of Brenner Pass (Innsbruck), great castle tour
Ride mountain lift from Chamonix, France to Valle d’Aosta, Italy
Lift crosses Alps at Aiguille du Midi, aside Mt. Blanc Aosta, “Rome of the north”

NEAR VENICE
Padova, Basilica of St. Anthony, university, Giotto frescoes in Scrovegni Chapel
Ravenna – 6th century Byzantine mosaics, 2 hours south of Venice
Verona – home town of Romeo and Juliet, fine Roman sights, charming old town

HILLTOWNS OF TUSCANY AND UMBRIA
Pisa, tipsy tower, one hour from Florence
San Gimignano – towers
Volterra, Etruscan museum, alabaster
Siena – Gothic city, Campo, Palio festival
Assisi, St Francis’ town
Montalcino, Montepulciano, Brunello wine country
Agriturismo, Chianina beef
Orvieto, Duomo
Civita di Bagnoregio

NAPLES/NAPOLI AND SOUTH ITALY
Intense urban jungle, 2 hours south of Rome, birthplace of pizza
Naples life in street, Spacanapoli
Pompeii, stopped by Volcano Vesuvius in 79 AD – best Pompeii art in Nat’l museum, Naples
Sorrento – fine town for regional base, one hour from Naples, gateway to treacherously scenic Amalfi Coast and Paestum, the best Greek temples in Italy, tour with a private taxi
Scenic Isle of Capri, Blue Grotto
Sicily – night train from Rome/Naples
• Taormina, Cefalu
• Greek ruins – Agrigento, Syracuse

LEARN MORE
Read: Rick Steves Italy, Rick Steves Florence & Tuscany, Rick Steves Venice, Rick Steves Rome, Rick Steves Italian Phrase Book & Dictionary, Rick Steves Europe 101: History & Art for the Traveler
Watch: Rick Steves Italy’s Cities Blu-ray/DVD, Rick Steves Italy’s Countryside Blu-ray/DVD
Listen: Travel with Rick Steves radio podcast archives at ricksteves.com
Rick Steves Tours: Best of Rome in 7 Days, Best of Venice, Florence & Rome in 10 Days, Heart of Italy in 9 Days, Best of Italy in 17 Days (see route below), Village Italy in 14 Days, Best of South Italy in 13 Days, My Way® Italy in 13 Days