

ITALY

Lecture by Rick Steves

NORTHERN ITALY

Cinque Terre

- 5 tiny towns on Riviera between La Spezia and Genoa
- Vernazza is best town
- Seafood, *trofie* pasta with pesto, hiking, swimming
- Connect towns by train, boat, scenic hike; if they say trails are “closed,” ask locals or fellow hikers
- 5-Terre better than Portofino or Portovenere

Italian Lakes District

- Lake Como – my favorite lake
- Varenna – best town
- Bellagio – classier resort town on lake

Milan/Milano

- Cathedral (Duomo) – climb onto roof
- Risorgimento – Italian unification in 19th century
- Galleria Vittorio Emanuele (shopping gallery)
- La Scala – famous opera house
- Leonardo’s *Last Supper* – requires reservations
- Canal District (Naviglio Grande) for trendy dining

Dolomites (Italian Alps)

- Südtirol/Alto Adige, bilingual
- Bolzano – city with Ötzi the Ice Man
- Kastelrotto/Kastelruth – small mountain village
- Alpi di Siusi – hiking

VENICE & THE VENETO

Venice

- Europe’s best-preserved big city, built in a lagoon by farmers escaping rampaging barbarians
- Arsenale – assembly line for ships
- Grand Canal – Slow vaporetto (water bus) ride with audio tour (Rick Steves Audio Europe app)
- St. Mark’s Square – glitter, expensive orchestra drinks
- St. Mark’s Basilica – mosaics, bell tower (campanile), winged lion = St. Mark
- Doges’ Palace – rulers of Venice, Bridge of Sighs
- Rialto Bridge
- Great Art – Frari Church (art *in situ*), Accademia
- Wander and explore...you’re on an island and can’t get off. Navigate not by streets but by landmarks and signs.
- Gondola – \$100 for 40 minutes
- Traghetto – Ferry gondolas, very cheap
- Nearby islands on the lagoon: **Murano** (glassworks), **Burano** (colorful, lace, and peaceful), **Torcello** (old church, mosaics)
- *cicchetti* = bar snacks. Try a stand-up-progressive-Venetian-pub-crawl-dinner; see *Rick Steves Italy* for step-by-step
- Flood in winter, “acqua alta”



Near Venice

- **Padua** – Basilica of St. Anthony, university, Giotto frescoes in Scrovegni Chapel
- **Verona** – hometown of Romeo and Juliet, fine Roman sights (arena), charming old town
- **Ravenna** – 6th-century Byzantine mosaics, 2 hours south of Venice

FLORENCE

- Birthplace of Renaissance
- Duomo = cathedral, center, huge dome by Brunelleschi
- Baptistery – Ghiberti’s “Gates of Paradise”
- Accademia – Michelangelo’s *David* and “Prisoners”
- Palazzo Vecchio – palace of the Medici
- Uffizi Gallery – Botticelli, best Italian paintings
- Be sure to reserve Uffizi and Accademia
- Bargello – best sculpture
- Gorgeous art in churches all over town (e.g., Masaccio)
- Central Market – now a trendy food court
- Arno River, Ponte Vecchio, Oltrarno (“other side of the river”)

TUSCANY & UMBRIA

- **Siena** – Gothic city, Campo, Palio festival
- **Pisa** – tipsy tower, one hour from Florence
- **Lucca** – walled city great for biking
- **Volterra** – Etruscan museum, alabaster
- **Montepulciano, Montalcino** – Brunello wine
- Agriturismo – tourist farm; Chianina beef
- **San Gimignano** – towers

- ✦ **Orvieto** – on a plateau, Duomo (Signorelli)
- ✦ **Civita di Bagnoregio** – tiny, scenic hill town
- ✦ **Assisi** – St. Francis' hometown

ROME

- ✦ Colosseum – 50,000 numbered seats
- ✦ Forum – center of ancient city
- ✦ Capitoline Hill – museum with excellent artifacts
- ✦ Pantheon – best look at “grandeur that was Rome”
- ✦ Victor Emmanuel Monument – fine view from top
- ✦ Villa Borghese/Borghese Gallery – top Baroque museum (Bernini) and park
- ✦ Moses by Michelangelo – in St. Peter-in-Chains church near Colosseum
- ✦ Capuchin Monastery – bones galore
- ✦ Lesser-known neighborhoods – Jewish Ghetto, Trastevere (across the river)
- ✦ Vatican – center of Catholicism, become a temporary Catholic, climb St. Peter's dome; Vatican Museum with Sistine Chapel, crowded (reserve ahead)
- ✦ E.U.R. – Mussolini's planned futuristic suburb
- ✦ Ostia Antica – Europe's most underrated ancient site, Rome's seaport, an easy subway ride from downtown
- ✦ Rome after dark – the evening stroll, Piazza del Popolo down via del Corso
- ✦ Night spots – Campo dei Fiori, Piazza Navona, Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps

SOUTHERN ITALY

Naples

- ✦ Intense urban jungle, 2 hours south of Rome, birthplace of pizza
- ✦ Naples life in street, Spaccanapoli
- ✦ Vesuvius – Volcano erupted in AD 79
- ✦ Pompeii – trapped in time by Vesuvius eruption, best Pompeii art in National Museum in Naples

Sorrento & Amalfi Coast

- ✦ **Sorrento** – fine town for regional base, one hour from Naples, lemons
- ✦ **Amalfi Coast** – treacherously scenic, pretty beach town of Positano, tour by taxi
- ✦ **Capri** – scenic isle with Blue Grotto
- ✦ **Paestum** – best Greek temples in Italy

Sicily

Not covered in this class, but check out Rick's TV show on Sicily at ricksteves.com/tv

LEARN MORE

Read: *Rick Steves Italy*, *Rick Steves Rome* or *Pocket Rome*, *Rick Steves Florence & Tuscany* or *Pocket Florence*, *Rick Steves Venice* or *Pocket Venice*, *Rick Steves Italian Phrase Book & Dictionary*, *Rick Steves Europe 101: History & Art for the Traveler*

Watch: *Rick Steves' Europe* - 16 episodes on Italy

Listen: *Travel with Rick Steves* radio podcast archives at ricksteves.com

Rick Steves Tours: *Heart of Italy in 9 Days*, *Best of Italy in 17 Days*, *Village Italy in 14 Days*, *Best of South Italy in 13 Days*, *Best of Rome in 7 Days*, *Best of Venice, Florence & Rome in 10 Days*, *Best of Sicily in 11 Days*, *My Way® Italy in 13 Days*, *Best of Europe in 14 or 21 Days*

App: *Rick Steves Audio Europe* – Free audio tours (including top sights in Rome, Florence, Venice, and Pompeii) and radio features organized in geographic playlists, for Apple and Android

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