CULINARY ADVENTURE IN ITALY
FROM CHIANTI TO FLORENCE

WALKING & HIKING    |    Casual Plus Hotels
DAY 1

On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks in Backroads T-shirts) at 9:30 a.m. in front of the Arezzo train station in Tuscany, Italy.

Please arrive dressed in your walking clothes and bring your luggage and a daypack with your rain gear and anything else you may want for today’s walk (your luggage will be transported to our first night’s accommodations).

LATE TO THE TRIP START? See “Arriving & Departing” for more information.

SHUTTLE TO CASTELLINA IN CHIANTI 1¼ Hours

CASTELLINA TO VESCINE ROUTE 4.2 Miles (600’ elevation gain)

SHUTTLE TO TUTTI A TAVOLA 30 Minutes

TUTTI A TAVOLA COOKING SCHOOL 4 Hours

Benvenuti in Italia! After meeting in Arezzo we shuttle to the town of Castellina in Chianti, a fortified hamlet with commanding views of the Pesa, Arbia and Elsa River Valleys. Castellina served as a Florentine army outpost until the fall of Siena in 1555, and its military past can be seen in its old ramparts and arcaded walkway, Via delle Volte.

Shortly after our arrival in Castellina, our Tuscan sojourn begins along pedestrian walkways, forested paths and strade bianche (gravel roads) en route to Radda in Chianti. Along the way, we stop by a family-owned farmhouse-turned-villa for a visit with our friend Roberta. For our first taste of Tuscan hospitality, we sample her olive oil that’s produced on the property! Next we’re treated to an alfresco pranzo (lunch) buffet hosted by Roberta’s brother, Giovanni.

After lunch, it’s a gradual climb through the woods and ordered vineyards, a quintessential Tuscan landscape that seems too beautiful to be real. Our destination is the charming Il Borgo di Vèscine, our home for the next two nights—perfectly positioned to offer striking views of the surrounding Chianti Valley. There’s time to enjoy the hotel grounds and swimming pool, or perhaps a degustation of the hotel’s very own Chianti Classico.

This afternoon we shuttle to Tutti a Tavola, a cooking school operated by two Italian women who share a deep passion for cooking and for their homeland. Here we’re welcomed into the heart of the home, the cucina (kitchen), to learn how Italians cook on a daily basis. It’s a marvelous evening with great food and wonderful company.

Afterward we head back to the hotel for some rest before the culinary adventure continues tomorrow. Lodging: Il Borgo di Vèscine

DAY 2

WALKING & HIKING OPTIONS:
Panzano Route: 4.7 Miles * (500’ elevation gain)
Le Bocce Route: 5.7 Miles * (500’)
Panzano Loop: 8 Miles * (1,000’)

CHIANTI CLASSICO WINERY VISIT & TASTING 1½ Hours

SHUTTLE TO VESCINE 30 Minutes

PIZZA MAKING WITH MARIO 1 Hour

*with shuttle

We start the day with a quick shuttle to Castelveccchi, where we begin our journey on foot along strade bianche to the lovely ridgetop town of Panzano. There’s time to peruse Panzano’s artisan boutiques and enoteche (wine shops) before hitting the trail to Le Bocce winery. If you’re a meat lover, take a glance at the incredible selection of medieval spices available at Macelleria
Cecchini, considered the best butcher shop in the region.

From here, we take a short walk to Fattoria Le Bocce, where we enjoy a private tour of the grounds and a wine tasting after a picnic lunch overlooking the vineyard. This spectacular family-owned winery is housed in a former convent surrounded by 175 acres of land, most of which is designated for the winery’s vineyards and olive groves. Not open to the public, our visit here is exclusive to Backroads guests!

If you’re ready to return to the hotel after our wine tasting, the shuttle is available to give you a lift back. Otherwise, continue hiking along a ridge that offers expansive views of the Chianti countryside, through densely shaded oak forests, statuesque cypress trees, and manicured olive orchards.

This evening, our friend Mario lets the dough fly in a lively pizza-making demonstration at the hotel. Summon your inner pizzaiolo (pizza chef) and have fun! Lodging: Il Borgo di Vèscine

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DAY 3

**SHUTTLE TO GAIOLE** 30 Minutes

**WALKING & HIKING OPTIONS:**
- Le Bonatte Route: 5.7 Miles *(800’ elevation gain)*
- Volpaia Route: 7.1 Miles *(1,300’)*

**WINE & BALSAMIC VINEGAR TASTING** 1 Hour

*with shuttle*

After breakfast this morning, relish lovely views of the Ricasoli fortresses in the surrounding hills as we take a shuttle to Gaiole, where we begin today’s hike.

A short climb through the woods gets us hiking along a picturesque ridgeline with views of Radda in the distance as we make our way toward the wonderfully preserved hamlet of Vertine. The trail then drops below town, passing through small villages and row upon row of neatly manicured grapevines en route to our lunch spot at a favorite agriturismo.

If you’re up for a bit more hiking after lunch, follow a loop trail from Castelvecchi to Volpaia, a fortified village once home to a family of clock and instrument makers. Otherwise, it’s a quick ride in the shuttle to the charming town of Radda where we find tonight’s hotel, Palazzo Leopoldo. This artfully restored palace welcomes us with historic frescoes, inviting fireplaces and comfortable guest rooms adorned with antiques. Enjoy an afternoon by the pool or perhaps head to the spa for a little pampering. (Spa treatments are not included in the trip price. Advance reservations are recommended.)

Tonight we head to a wine and balsamic vinegar tasting with our friend and Radda local Fabrizio. Then you’re on your own to dine at one of Radda’s excellent restaurants. Lodging: Palazzo Leopoldo
DAY 4

SHUTTLE TO MONTE OLIVETO MAGGIORE 1½ Hours

WALKING & HIKING OPTIONS:
Chiusure Route: 3.3 Miles* (400’ elevation gain)
San Giovanni d’Asso Route: 4.3 Miles* (700’)

TRUFFLE HUNTING 1½ Hours

SHUTTLE TO BAGNO VIGNONI 30 Minutes

*with shuttle

We start the day by shuttling to the 14th-century Abbey of Monte Oliveto Maggiore, still inhabited by Benedictine monks. Take a look around the grounds of the monastery, founded in 1313 by a group of Sienese merchants attempting to escape the temptations of city life. Check out the cloisters to see some of the best-preserved Signorelli frescoes in Europe, considered masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance for their lifelike figures and use of perspective.

Then set off on foot along ridges flanked with splendid scenery en route to San Giovanni d’Asso. Along the way, be sure to stop at Chiusure for dramatic views of the abbey and the crete senesi (chalk hills) of Siena. Once we arrive in San Giovanni d’Asso, we learn more about the elusive—and coveted—truffle from a local tartufaio (truffle hunter) while savoring a multi-course, truffle-themed lunch.

Afterward, hop aboard the van for a ride to the charming town of Bagno Vignoni, a perfect setting for an afternoon sampling of gelato. The town is famous for its ancient baths that date back to Etruscan times, and it’s said that the Medici and Saint Catherine of Siena were known to enjoy the healing qualities of the waters. Our hotel for the next two nights, Albergo Le Terme, sits in the main piazza facing the ancient Roman baths.

This evening we gather for an aperitivo before a festive dinner at the hotel featuring rich bistecca alla Fiorentina (T-bone steak grilled rare over charcoal, lightly salted with olive oil drizzled over the top). Buon appetito!

Lodging: Albergo Le Terme

DAY 5

WALKING & HIKING OPTIONS:
San Quirico Route: 3.2 Miles* (500’ elevation gain)
Il Rigo Route: 5.2 Miles* (700’)
Pienza Route: 8.6 Miles* (1,400’)

COOKING DEMONSTRATION AT IL RIGO 1 Hour

SHUTTLE TO BAGNO VIGNONI 30 Minutes

*with shuttle

After breakfast at the hotel, we head out on foot toward the village of San Quirico d’Orcia along the gravel paths of the Via Francigena, an ancient pilgrimage route. Spend some time exploring this charming walled town or stop for an espresso.

Then set out for a wonderful walk through the spectacular Val d’Orcia, a World Heritage site. The undulating paths are vibrant with views of the bright green hills in the spring, golden hills with hay bales in the early fall, and just-plowed earth in the late fall. Our route follows farm roads past cypress trees and verdant land en route to Agriturismo Il Rigo where we enjoy lunch and a pasta-making demonstration. Afterward, take some time to relax on the terrazza and soak up panoramic views of Pienza in the distance.

This afternoon you can shuttle back to Bagno Vignoni, or continue across the rolling hills to magical Pienza. The town was designed by 15th-century Florentine architect Bernardo Rossellino, who was chosen by Pope Pius II to
transform his birthplace into a hamlet that exemplified Renaissance ideals. Walk to the main square to see two of his masterpieces: Palazzo Piccolomini and a classically inspired duomo. When you’re done exploring, shuttle back to Bagno Vignoni for a bit of rest and relaxation.

For a special treat this evening, we transfer to nearby Castiglione d’Orcia, a beautiful village in the heart of the Val d’Orcia. Here our friend Marta treats us to a truly Italian experience of cena fuori (dinner outdoors). Enjoy a full Tuscan spread, each course more delightful than the last, as you take in views of an ancient fortress perched on a hill above the picturesque landscape. Lodging: Albergo Le Terme

DAY 6

VIGNONI ROUTE 2.2 Miles (600’ elevation gain)

SHUTTLE TO FLORENCE 2 Hours

Spend a peaceful morning at the hotel or embark on a final hike to charming Bagno Vignoni. This hilltop town is known for its hot springs as well as a 12th-century castle and tower.

Then we bid farewell to our culinary adventure in Tuscany and board a private coach for Florence, where our trip ends. Please see “Arriving & Departing” for end-of-trip logistics.

KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE

We are always seeking opportunities to enhance this itinerary. We’ll be certain to notify you of any important changes prior to departure; other changes may be communicated on trip by your leaders.

SHIFT GEARS

Our trips are designed to be flexible, giving you the freedom to experience the best of the region the way YOU want. Feel like you’re ready to go, go, go? We can show you the way! Want some downtime or prefer to head out on your own? No problem! Your Trip Leaders will make sure to tell you the best days to take time for yourself (if you want it) without feeling like you’re missing out. So feel free to shift gears and make it your day!
TRIP ACCOMMODATIONS

Casual Plus Hotels

2 Nights (Pictured)
Il Borgo di Vèscine
A 13th-century hamlet handsomely restored as a welcoming hotel with unsurpassed views of the Tuscan countryside. (pool) | Radda in Chianti | www.vescine.it | +39-0577-741144

1 Night
Palazzo Leopoldo
Located in the heart of the Chianti region, this elegant 14th-century manor house features spacious guest rooms with original frescoes. (spa) | Radda in Chianti | www.palazzoleopoldo.it | +39-0577-735605

2 Nights
Albergo Le Terme
This charming family-owned hotel overlooks the town’s central piazza, whose ancient pool is fed by underground thermal springs. (pool, spa) | Bagno Vignoni | www.albergoleterme.it | +39-0577-887150

ARRIVING & DEPARTING

After reviewing the following information, please inform us of your arrival and departure plans on your Personal Information Form.

Depending on train schedules, you may need to spend the night before your trip in our meeting town or wait at the train station between your arrival and the start of your Backroads trip.

All prices are in US dollars and subject to change.

Meeting Time & Location
On the first day of the trip, meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks in Backroads T-shirts) at 9:30 a.m. in front of the Arezzo train station in Tuscany, Italy.

Please arrive dressed in your walking clothes and bring your luggage and a daypack with your rain gear and anything else you may want for today’s walk (your luggage will be transported to our first night’s accommodations).

Arriving Late to the Trip Start?
If you have a delay or emergency on the day your trip starts and need to contact Backroads, please email your Trip Leaders (you’ll receive an email 24 hours prior to the trip start with their contact info) or call the Backroads office at 800-462-2848 (domestic) or 510-527-1555 (international), 6 a.m.–6 p.m. Pacific time.

If you’re delayed and miss the shuttle in Arezzo, you can get to our first night’s hotel, Il Borgo di Vèscine near Radda in Chianti, on your own. A taxi from the Arezzo train station to Il Borgo di Vèscine takes about 1 hour and costs around $200.

Conclusion of the Trip
On the last day of the trip, Backroads provides transportation to Florence’s Campo di Marte train station, located just outside the city center, arriving at approximately 1 p.m. Trains run frequently from here to the Santa Maria Novella station in Florence where you can take an afternoon train to Rome, Milan or other destinations. Please do not book a train from Campo di Marte departing before 1:45 p.m., or before 2:15 p.m.
from Santa Maria Novella. If you’re flying out of Florence, do not book your departure flight prior to 5 p.m. See the following sections for information on train travel between Florence and other cities in Italy. Taxis are available at the station’s main entrance.

**Flight Arrangements**

This trip starts in Arezzo and ends in Florence, Italy. We suggest flying into Florence Peretola Airport (airport code: FLR; [www.aeroporto.firenze.it](http://www.aeroporto.firenze.it)), which is located a few miles northwest of the city. From the airport, it’s a short bus trip ($7) or taxi ride ($25–$30) to the train station where you can catch a train to Arezzo.

You can also fly into Rome (FCO; [www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it)), Milan (MXP; [www.sea-aeroportimilano.it](http://www.sea-aeroportimilano.it)), Bologna (BLQ; [www.bologna-airport.it](http://www.bologna-airport.it)) or Pisa (PSA; [www.pisa-airport.com](http://www.pisa-airport.com)) and take the train to Arezzo. See the following sections for details.

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel advisor or you may choose to work with the Backroads Travel Desk at Cadence Travel. Their professional expert travel advisors are ready to share their insiders’ knowledge of Backroads and our worldwide destinations and are available to assist you with any of your travel needs. Call 800-GO-ACTIVE (462-2848) to be connected with an advisor or email Backroads@CadenceTravel.com. Please note that consulting or ticketing fees may apply, depending on the services requested. Like Backroads, Cadence Travel is open daily from 6 a.m.–6 p.m. Pacific time.

**Private Transfers around Tuscany**

For private car service in the Tuscany area, we recommend Ricci Bus ([www.riccibus.com](http://www.riccibus.com); +39-0577-226068). Ricci Bus serves the Florence and Rome airports and can provide transportation to and from our pick-up and drop-off locations for competitive rates. Let them know you’re a Backroads guest. Keep Ricci Bus in mind for transportation if you plan to extend your stay in Tuscany before or after your Backroads trip.

**Taking the Train to Arezzo**

**From Florence**

From the airport, it’s a short bus or taxi ride into town or to the train station. Trains run frequently between Florence and Arezzo. The journey takes 1–1½ hours and ticket prices start around $15.

**From Rome**

**Getting from Rome’s airport to Rome’s train station:** If you fly into Rome’s Leonardo da Vinci (Fiumicino) airport, you can take the Leonardo Express commuter train directly from the airport to the Roma Termini train station. The train runs every 30 minutes, 6:38 a.m.–11:38 p.m.; travel time is 30 minutes and the fare is about $19. Tickets can be purchased from the ticket counter or automated machines. Be sure to validate your ticket in one of the yellow stamping machines on the platform before boarding the train. You can also take a taxi to Roma Termini for about $60–$65. Supplements may be charged for excess luggage, and late-night and holiday trips.

**Trains from Rome to Arezzo** run frequently. The trip takes 1½–3 hours and costs $20–$55, depending on the type of train you take.

**From Milan**

**Getting from Milan’s Malpensa or Linate airports to Milan’s train station:** The Malpensa Express train runs between Malpensa airport and Milano Centrale train station approximately every 30 minutes, 4:30 a.m.–12:30 a.m. Tickets cost around $13 and travel time is about 45 minutes. The train stops at basement level in Terminal 1 at the airport. For more information, visit [www.malpensaexpress.it](http://www.malpensaexpress.it). A taxi between Malpensa airport and the train station costs around $90–$120 and travel time is about 45 minutes. (Note that traffic can be heavy and may significantly increase travel time.)

Buses depart from Linate airport to Milano Centrale every 30 minutes, 6:30 a.m.–11:30 p.m. Tickets cost around $6 and travel time is 25 minutes, depending on traffic. If you plan to travel by taxi between Linate airport and the train station, expect to pay $25–$40.

**Trains from Milan to Arezzo** run frequently. Travel time is 3–4½ hours and tickets start around $55.

**From Pisa**

There’s a direct shuttle bus running between Pisa’s Galileo Galilei airport and Pisa Central Train Station from which you can connect to Florence and onward to Arezzo. The
Train Travel in Italy

For travel between major cities, we recommend that you take one of Italy’s faster trains (including Frecciarossa, Frecciargento, Frecciabianca, Italo, Intercity and other Eurostar trains). Seat reservations are required on these trains (except Intercity) and are generally included in the ticket price. Italy’s slower trains (Regionale, Interregionale and Locale) service smaller cities and don’t require a seat reservation. However, if available, you may want to purchase a seat reservation if you’ll be taking the train during a peak local travel period, such as a holiday, or you’ll risk standing.

Purchasing Tickets

There are several ways you can buy rail tickets:

Travel advisor: If you need assistance booking your rail tickets, please contact your travel advisor or the Backroads Travel Desk at Cadence Travel at 800-462-2848, available daily from 6 a.m.–6 p.m. Pacific time.

Ferrovie dello Stato (Italian state railway): Visit www.trenitalia.com for the most up-to-date train schedules and to purchase tickets.

Italo: Visit www.italotreno.it to purchase tickets for these private high-speed trains.

Rail Europe: You can also purchase tickets and make reservations through Rail Europe (www.raileurope.com; 800-622-8600). Be aware that service fees and restrictions may apply.

Waiting until you arrive: You can buy Italian rail tickets from any train station in Italy. In the larger stations, the reservation counters are usually located outside of the main departure area. Many stations are equipped with automatic ticket machines, from which you can purchase tickets and seat reservation coupons for travel in Italy and for principal cross-border routes. The machines accept cash and credit or debit cards with your PIN.

Most major Italian airports have FS (Ferrovie dello Stato) desks, where you can obtain schedules and tickets. There are also countless travel agencies and FS ticket outlets throughout Florence, Rome, Milan and greater Italy, which provide a complete range of trip planning and booking services.

If you know you’ll be taking the train during a peak local travel period, we highly recommend booking your tickets before arriving in Italy. Also, it’s usually less expensive to buy your tickets in advance.

Boarding the Train

To find your platform, which will be listed at least 10 minutes prior to departure, check the small television screens or the larger schedule boards in the main station area (larger stations only). Four columns will be listed: destination, type of train, platform number and departure time.

If you have a ticket without seat reservations, you’ll need to validate your ticket before boarding your train by stamping it at one of the small yellow, grey or green machines located on each train platform. (The machine stamps the date and time on the ticket to prevent multiple use.) If you forget, tell the on-board ticket inspector immediately in order to avoid a fine. If you’re using a European Railpass, it must be activated at a ticket counter before first use.

It’s possible that not all cars on your train are continuing to your destination. Therefore, it’s important to make sure the nameplate on your train car (usually posted outside near the door) corresponds to your travel destination. Once inside the car, look for your reserved seat. If it’s a small train and reservations are not required, you can sit anywhere. Keep your bags in sight, if possible, and stay alert; many luggage thieves and pickpockets specialize in dashing on and off trains.
DURING YOUR TRIP

Trip Leaders
Each of your Trip Leaders plays many roles during your vacation: guide, host, caretaker, naturalist, chef, historian, troubleshooter, interpreter. These remarkable individuals have highly developed instincts for making people comfortable, for seamlessly handling the logistics of travel and for successfully navigating a wide range of unexpected situations. They’re passionately committed to ensuring you enjoy an exceptional vacation—smooth, flexible and tailored to your needs. According to past guests, the caliber of our leaders is what sets Backroads apart from all other travel companies. With their knowledge, professionalism, enthusiasm and service ethic, they’re the number-one reason people return to travel with us again and again. We look forward to having you meet them.

A Word about Gratuities
We think our leaders are unparalleled at what they do—you be the judge.

Gratuities for most services during your trip are included in the price. While we’ve thought about including a Trip Leader tip as part of the overall trip cost, we acknowledge that gratuities are customary in the industry as a way to recognize excellent service on a more personal level.

We offer specific Trip Leader tip recommendations because our guests have consistently asked for them. The exact amount is up to you.

Our recommended gratuity for this trip is $190 per guest.

This amount can be covered via cash (preferred) or PayPal. To learn more about PayPal and how to sign up, visit www.paypal.com. You will receive a contact list for Trip Leaders at the beginning of the trip which also serves as their PayPal information. Regardless of the number of leaders on your trip, you can pay the full amount to any one of them. Cash and PayPal gratuities are then divided among your Trip Leaders and other Backroads support staff (van drivers, etc.).

When traveling on your own in Italy, keep in mind that although most restaurants and cafés add a 15 percent service charge to the bill, it is customary to tip the waiter an additional 5–10 percent, depending on the service and the quality of the meal. Plan on tipping your taxi driver 5–10 percent as well.

Accommodations
Our accommodations for this itinerary have been carefully chosen to bring you an authentic European experience that melds the best of old-world charm and modern comfort based on a combination of amenities, character and location. Because the properties we stay in are often centuries-old buildings that have been renovated and turned into hotels, it is common for the rooms to vary in size and style. If you request a double bed, please keep in mind that European double beds are often two twin beds adjacent to each other. All rooms have private baths. Single room availability is limited.

Roommates
Backroads will try to find a roommate (of the same gender) for guests wishing to share a room. If you sign up more than 95 days in advance of your trip and no roommate is available, 50 percent of the private room charge will be due at final payment. Should a roommate be found before your trip departs, the private room charge will be refunded. If you sign up less than 95 days in advance of departure and no roommate is available, the full private room charge will apply. On some trips, twin rooms are limited or unavailable; a private room charge applies if a shared twin room is not available, regardless of the number of days before departure. Please be sure to speak with your Trip Consultant to confirm your room arrangements.

Cell Service & Internet Access
Cell phone and data service is available in nearly all of the areas we visit on this trip. All of our hotels have internet access, although the connection may be slower than ideal.

Meals
Food is an important part of the Backroads experience. For lunch we look for the best way to capture the essence of the region. It may be a Backroads Grand Picnic, when your Trip Leaders prepare the freshest and healthiest local fare at a carefully chosen setting along the day’s
route; a boxed lunch; a packed lunch; a meal together at a favorite restaurant; or the opportunity to have lunch on your own.

Our dinners showcase Tuscany’s handmade pastas and fantastic seasonal produce in satisfying dishes that transcend their humble peasant origins. Please note that the definition of “authentic cuisine” in Tuscany traditionally means “meat,” including beef, wild boar, pigeon, tripe and rabbit. If you don’t eat meat, a pasta dish is offered at each meal, and you can usually supplement with vegetables.

**Wine is a staple at the Italian table, particularly in Tuscany. Many of our meals will include table wine. There will be an additional cost for those who prefer more prestigious vintages or other alcoholic beverages.**

All breakfasts, five lunches and four dinners are included in the trip price. One dinner is on your own.

On this trip we often dine according to local custom, which may mean that meals progress at a leisurely pace. We understand that on some nights you may want to retire earlier, so feel free to opt out of dessert, or when possible, request it in your room. You’re always welcome to opt for dinner on your own; check with your Trip Leaders to find out what other options might be available.

Be aware that vegetarian/vegan, gluten-free and low-carb dishes are not always available. If you have special dietary requirements, please indicate them on the Personal Information Form. Your Trip Consultant will pass on the information to your Trip Leaders. Alcoholic beverages at meals are not included in the trip price, unless otherwise noted.

**Recommended Dinner Attire**

Restaurants on this trip are casual. You’ll feel comfortable wearing anything from jeans and T-shirts to slacks and dressier shirts.

That said, Europeans do tend to dress up for dinner. Slacks and collared shirts are certainly appropriate for men, and women won’t feel out of place in skirts and blouses.

**Lost Luggage**

On any flight, there is the possibility of lost luggage. Backroads believes that it’s a great idea to take a small carry-on bag with enough clothing and supplies to last a day or two. Also be sure to bring with you any personal gear you deem indispensable on the trip. This way, in the event of lost luggage you won’t have to spend time replacing essential items and miss activities while you wait for your bags to catch up. Please note that Backroads does not assume responsibility for any luggage lost or damaged during your trip.

**Security**

When traveling, there is always a possibility of theft. While you’re enjoying the sights, remember to stay alert and always be aware of your immediate surroundings, especially in crowded locations and tourist areas. The best rule of thumb is to carry only the cash you need for the day, along with a copy of your passport, on your person and leave the rest in a locked safe in your room. If no safe is available, it’s a good idea to keep your cash and passport in a money belt worn under your clothes. For more safety tips, refer to the Country Specific Information page on the US State Department’s website at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

**Trip Guest List**

During the trip, leaders will distribute a guest list that includes the names and contact information of everyone on the trip. If you do not want your contact information to appear on the guest list, please inform your Trip Consultant at least 30 days prior to the trip start.

**Spa Treatments**

Spa treatments are not included in the trip price. Advance reservations are recommended. Also, be sure to review the spa’s cancellation policy to avoid any unexpected charges on your credit card.

**Day 3**

**Palazzo Leopoldo:** On Day 3 book an appointment for after 3 p.m.; our optional wine tasting starts at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner on your own.

**Days 4 & 5**

**Albergo Le Terme:** On Day 4 schedule your
appointment for any time after 4 p.m.; dinner starts at 7:30 p.m. On Day 5 book an appointment for after 3 p.m.; we meet for a farewell aperitivo at 6:45 p.m. before departing for dinner at 7:15 p.m.

DESTINATION DETAILS

Climate
Summertime in Tuscany is typically hot. Temperatures are generally a bit cooler in early May and late October. On most days you’ll be comfortable hiking in a short-sleeved jersey or synthetic T-shirt, although when you head out in the morning, you might want to wear a lightweight jacket or vest and long pants. Rain is possible year-round—don’t forget to bring waterproof breathable rain gear.

Florence

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Temperatures in this region are measured in degrees Celsius. Zero degrees Celsius is 32 degrees Fahrenheit. For a quick conversion, double the Celsius reading and add 30 to determine the approximate temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

Time Zone
From the last Sunday in March through the last Sunday in October, Italy is 6 hours ahead of eastern time and 9 hours ahead of Pacific time.

In Europe, the 24-hour clock is used. Times are the same as what you’re used to in the United States up until noon. From then on, just keep going: 1 p.m. becomes 13:00, 2 p.m. becomes 14:00 and so forth. To convert these times into “p.m.” times, simply subtract 12 and add p.m. (19:00 minus 12 is 7 p.m.).

Phone Facts
Many US cell phones can operate internationally. Check with your service provider before leaving home about
International calling and data plans, and on making and receiving international calls. If your cell phone is unlocked and operates using a SIM card, you may want to consider purchasing a SIM card from a local cell phone company. These should be readily available at airports and convenience stores, and typically come loaded with prepaid credit which can be used for domestic and international calls and data service. Rates will vary.

Alternatively, it may also be possible to rent a phone for use during your international travels. We recommend Cellhire, which offers a wide range of wireless rental options in more than 180 countries. Visit www.cellhire.com or call 877-244-7242 for details and reservations.

**International Dialing Instructions**

The international phone numbers in this Travel Planner are listed using the following format:

+39-###-####

39 is Italy’s country code, followed by an area code and local number. The number of digits in the area code and local number may vary.

**To place an international call to Italy,** dial + or the international access code of the country from which you’re calling (e.g. 011 from the US) - 39 - area code - local number.

**To place an international call from Italy,** dial 00 (Italy’s international access code) - country code of the country to which you’re calling (e.g. 1 for the US) - area code - local number. For example, to call the US, dial 00 - 1 - area code - local number.

**To place a call within Italy,** drop the country code 39 and dial area code - local number. The area code is always used when placing calls within Italy.

For additional information on placing international phone calls, visit www.countrycallingcodes.com.

**Money Matters**

The standard unit of currency in Italy is the euro (EUR). At the time of printing, 0.84 EUR = 1 USD. For the most up-to-date exchange rate, visit www.xe.com (Universal Currency Converter).

The best way to access cash is to use ATMs. Before you leave home, it’s a good idea to verify with your bank that your card will work overseas and inquire whether or not your financial institution has a local partner bank that will waive ATM fees. Most international ATM keyboards have only numbers, so if your PIN contains letters, make note of the corresponding numbers. Additionally, most international ATMs only accept four-character PINs, so if yours is longer, arrange to have it changed before your trip.

If you need to exchange cash or traveler’s checks, avoid exchange bureaus, which charge sky-high rates. The rates at banks are slightly better, but still expensive. It may also be possible to exchange cash and traveler’s checks at airports, train stations, post offices and some tourist offices.

**Electric Current**

Europe’s electricity runs on a 220-volt, 50- to 60-cycle current. A plug adapter is necessary if you plan to bring appliances from home. You may also need a converter, but many newer appliances, such as computers and digital devices, are designed to work/charge over a wide range of voltage levels. Check the manufacturer’s label on the back of your appliances to see what level of input they can handle. Converter/adapter kits can be purchased at travel, hardware or electronics stores for $40–$60; an adapter alone costs about $4.

**Business Hours**

Shops and supermarkets are generally open from 9 or 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. and from 3:30 or 4 p.m. until 7:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Most banks are open 8:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. and 2:30–4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Post offices are generally open 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. during the week; weekdays, main branch post offices stay open until 6 p.m. All post offices close on Sundays and at noon on the last day of the month. (You can also buy stamps at newsstands or tobacco vendors.) Most museums are closed one day of the week, usually Monday or Tuesday. For specific museum hours—as well as entrance fees, free days, special events and more—refer to a guidebook, the museum’s website or ask the local tourist information office.

**Helpful Information**

Visit www.backroads.com/trip_prep for links to other websites offering helpful travel information.
The more you know about your destination before you go, the more you’ll appreciate all that you’ll see when you get there. We’ve selected a few of our favorite books to help capture the essence of the region.

– *Too Much Tuscan Sun: Confession of a Chianti Tour Guide*, Dario Castagno  
– *A Culinary Traveller in Tuscany*, Beth Elon  
– *Tuscany in Mind*, Alice Powers  
– *Under the Tuscan Sun*, Frances Mayes  
– *Eat, Pray, Love*, Elizabeth Gilbert

### TRIP DOCUMENTS & MORE

#### Travel Documents

A valid passport is required for travel to Italy. A visa is not required for US citizens, provided you are staying in the country less than 90 days.

**Note that some countries require your passport to be valid for a specified amount of time beyond your departure date (up to 6 months).** Be sure to check the expiration date and physical condition of your passport and verify the travel document requirements with the consulates of the countries you are planning to visit during your trip. Passports issued to minors under the age of 16 are set to expire every 5 years. Check your expiration dates carefully!

The best way to ensure you have the most current information on entry requirements is by contacting the Embassy of Italy (www.ambwashingtondc.esteri.it; 202–612–4400) or the nearest Italian consulate. You may also find helpful information on the US State Department’s website: travel.state.gov.

**IMPORTANT:** Each time you renew your passport, you are issued a new passport number. Depending on the trip, some of our service providers (like hotels or airlines) may require current passport information for each guest, so if you renew your passport after booking your trip, please make sure to update us with the new information prior to your departure date.

We recommend that you make two photocopies of your airline ticket/e-ticket confirmation and your passport. Leave one set of copies at home with a friend or relative, and bring one set with you, keeping it separate from the original documents.

#### Travel Protection Plan

Inside your Pre-Departure Packet is a brochure describing the Travel Protection Plan that Backroads offers. The plan helps provide coverage for trip cancellation/trip interruption, trip delay, medical expenses and evacuation/repatriation, lost baggage, and more. We recommend that you purchase travel protection to help protect you and your travel investment against the...
unexpected. If you are interested in purchasing the Travel Protection Plan that Backroads offers, please remit the additional amount noted on your invoice.

Cancellations & Refunds
If you must cancel your reservation, a fee will be charged. Please review your trip invoice for cancellation policy details. **Exceptions to this policy cannot be made for any reason**, including those of weather or personal emergencies. There is no refund for joining a trip late or leaving early. Private rooms and staterooms, bike rentals and internal air charges are considered part of the trip price and are subject to cancellation fees. You are required to provide a signed Release of Liability, Assumption of All Risks and Arbitration Agreement and a completed Personal Information Form prior to your trip departure. If you fail to provide a signed release form, you will not be allowed to join the trip and will be subject to Backroads’ cancellation policy.

On the rare occasions when Backroads must cancel a trip, all payments received to date will be refunded, which constitutes full settlement. Backroads is not responsible for expenses incurred in preparation for any cancelled trips, such as airline tickets or for costs incurred due to travel delays, flight cancellations or illness.

Transfers
With the exception of Private and Custom Trips, you may transfer from one trip to another without penalty, within the parameters of your trip’s transfer policy. When transferring to a different date or trip, if the trip costs more than your original trip, you are responsible for the difference in cost. Please review your trip invoice for additional transfer policy details. After the allowable transfer date, our cancellation policy applies. Cancellation penalties will not be charged if you are able to fill the vacancy with another guest(s).

Itinerary Changes
If unforeseen circumstances require a change in the trip itinerary, Backroads will make every effort to select alternative accommodations of the same quality and to keep the activity modifications minimal.

Electronics & Other Valuables
It is best to leave valuables at home. If you must bring valuables on the trip, please understand that they are 100 percent your responsibility, regardless of what anyone (including leaders) might tell you. Cash, jewelry and passports are especially important to keep in your possession. It’s not safe to leave valuables in Backroads vans; while not common, break-ins do happen. You may choose to lock them in your room’s safe, if one is available to you. If you’re concerned about forgetting items in the safe (easy to do!), a good trick is to leave something on top of it that you can’t forget, such as a single shoe.

Although we will transport your valuables during your trip as a convenience, **we do not assume responsibility for any damage or loss**. This policy applies to personal electronics as well as other items, such as luggage, jewelry, and fragile and delicate accessories, whether purchased on the trip or otherwise.

After your trip ends, if you realize that you’ve accidentally left an item behind in Backroads’ possession, we’ll do our best to honor return requests. However, we’re not able to guarantee returns based on leader availability limitations to find and send items (our leaders are on the go!) and possible shipping issues. If you’ve left an item at a hotel, please contact that hotel directly to make arrangements.

On-Your-Own Activities
During, before or after your Backroads trip, there may be time for you to enjoy some of the area’s special activities on your own. These activities are not included in your Backroads trip itinerary and are not options sponsored by Backroads, but they can often be a highlight for those who choose to participate. We mention them so you are aware and because you might enjoy these activities on your own. Please understand that Backroads is not responsible for any problems which may occur during any on-your-own activities.
GETTING ACTIVE FOR YOUR TRIP

NAVIGATION OPTIONS ON THIS TRIP

Turn-by-turn paper directions included.

Downloadable GPS files available for use on your own device—log into your account at Backroads.com 2 weeks before your trip for more details.

Activity Level

The routes on this trip are rated Levels 1–3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY LEVEL</th>
<th>BIKING</th>
<th>WALKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in hours</td>
<td>Gain in feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2–3 hrs</td>
<td>8–22</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2–4 hrs</td>
<td>18–32</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3–5 hrs</td>
<td>26–42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4–6 hrs</td>
<td>36–54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 5              | 5–7+ hrs        | 48–70+          | 4400’+     | 7–13+                   | 4000’+

Review the “Activity Level” section on the web for more details on daily route options.

Terrain

The terrain on this trip includes a mix of rolling vineyard paths, gravel roads and wooded trails. The region is known for its hills, so you can expect a few steep ascents and descents.

Remember, take your time and go at your own pace—
you’re on vacation! Your Backroads Trip Leaders will be available at intersecting routes when you’re ready for a snack, a cool drink, or a lift back if you’re done for the day. Most days you’ll have a choice of mileage options, so you can decide how active you want to be—it’s always up to you.

Conditioning Tips

Every Backroads trip is designed to appeal to a wide variety of interests and fitness levels. We know your pace may vary from one day to the next—and your traveling companions’ may differ somewhat from yours. So we present a range of mileage options, and each day you decide exactly what and how much you want to do.

Before your trip, we suggest walking and hiking regularly and hitting a few hills whenever you can. Review the route options in the daily itinerary for the range of mileages offered on this trip. But mostly, just show up and have fun!

Pacing & Endurance

Here are a few suggestions for increasing your endurance while on your Backroads trip:

• Make sure your muscles are warmed up before you start walking.

• Walk and hike at a steady pace that you can maintain throughout your walk—don’t push yourself too hard at the beginning.

• Eat high-energy snacks throughout your walk or hike, and drink water often—before you are thirsty—to avoid dehydration. (Your leaders will have plenty of food and water on hand.) Some people find that a water-pack hydration system, worn like a backpack and equipped with a plastic tube for drinking, is a good accessory on long outings or in hot climates, since it enables you to carry more water and drink regularly without having to stop.

• Perhaps most important, make sure your shoes fit properly and have been broken in before the start of the trip.

Resources

The American Hiking Society website is packed with all sorts of useful information related to walking and hiking. Visit americanhiking.org.

Your local outdoor store can be an excellent resource too; ask to speak with an experienced employee.

Staying Comfortable: FAQs

Q: Do I need to bring hiking boots for my trip?

A: Varying weather conditions and terrain can make any trail challenging, whether you’re hiking up a mountain or walking through a valley. We recommend hiking boots or sturdy hiking shoes (sometimes called “light hikers”) with robust tread, ample ankle support and waterproofing. Your average running shoes often have inadequate tread and stability for terrain like gravel and mud—though even these may be suitable if you know that’s what works for you. Most importantly, your shoes should be comfortable and well broken in before your trip starts.

Q: It’s not really going to rain during the trip, is it?

A: Well, it just might! Rain is possible no matter where you travel. Your best bet for staying comfortable during a shower is to wear quality rain gear that is both waterproof and breathable.

Q: Does wearing layers really make a difference?

A: Yes! The trick for staying comfortable in fluctuating temperatures is to wear three basic non-cotton layers of lightweight clothing: innerwear (to wick moisture away from your skin), insulating garments (for warmth) and outerwear (to protect against wind or rain). The different layers let you add or remove clothing in response to changes in the weather or your internal temperature.
WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

For help making hotel reservations for before and after your Backroads trip:

• Work with your own professional travel advisor.

• Contact the Backroads Travel Desk at Cadence Travel by calling 800-GO-ACTIVE (462-2848), open daily from 6 a.m.– 6 p.m. Pacific time. Please note that consulting or ticketing fees may apply, depending on the services requested.

• Book directly with the hotel or through a discount website.

Please note that Backroads does not block rooms and does not offer special rates for pre- and post-trip stays. If you plan on extending your stay at our first night’s hotel before the trip starts or our last night’s hotel when the trip ends, let the hotel reservations agent know that you’re traveling with Backroads—you may be able to avoid changing rooms. **We recommend booking your rooms as early as possible, especially during peak travel season!**

The following is a selection of recommended properties that span a range of prices, amenities and locations. Refer to the Hotel Room Rates guide for the starting double-occupancy rates, which were accurate at time of printing. Note that rates are subject to change and some hotels may require a minimum stay.
Arezzo
Hotel map: bit.ly/ArezzoHotels

Hotel Badia di Pomaio
Built as a monastery in 1644 and splendidly restored, this hotel is a lovely country retreat outside of Arezzo. (pool) | Località Pomaio 4 | www.hotelbadiaipomaio.it | +39-057-5353210 | 17 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Graziella Patio Hotel
This four-star hotel, housed in a palace with 15th-century rooms, is located in the medieval center of town. (spa) | Via Cavour 23 | www.hotelpatio.it | +39-057-5401962 | 9 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦

Villa Cilnia
A renovated 14th-century farmhouse, hotel and winery, Villa Cilnia is a proud "zero waste" company that exists in harmony with its natural surroundings. (pool, spa) | Località Montoncello 27 | www.villacilnia.it | +39-057-5365606 | 13 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Continentale
Ideally situated on Guido Monaco Square, a few steps from the old town and near the train station, the recently renovated Hotel Continentale offers class, comfort and modern amenities. | Piazza Guido Monaco 7 | www.hotelcontinentale.com | +39-057-520251 | 77 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦

Vogue Hotel Arezzo
This one-of-a-kind hotel, designed by local architect Monia Allegretti, can be found in Arezzo’s center, within walking distance of the train station and main attractions. | Via Guido Monaco 54 | www.voguehotel.it | +39-057-524361 | 26 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

Florence
Hotel map: bit.ly/FlorenceHotels

St. Regis Florence
One of Europe’s finest hotels, the historic Grand Hotel reopened as St. Regis Florence after a complete renovation in 2011. For an even more special stay, request a room with a view of the Arno River. Travel + Leisure World’s Best. (spa) | Piazza Ognissanti 1 | www.stregisflorence.com | +39-055-27161 | 100 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Helvetia & Bristol
Considered by many to be the quintessential Florentine hotel, this Leading Hotels of the World member offers timeless sophistication. Guests love the ideal location between Piazza della Repubblica and Via de’ Tornabuoni. | Via dei Pescioni 2 | www.hotelhelvetiabristol.com | +39-055-26651 | 21 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Savoy
With one of Florence’s most enviable addresses on Piazza della Repubblica, just steps from the Duomo, Hotel Savoy wins over guests with its outstanding location and superior service. Request a room at the corner or on the top floor for spectacular city views. Travel + Leisure World’s Best. | Piazza della Repubblica 7 | www.roccofortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/hotel-savoy | 888-667-9477 (from the US) or +39-055-27351 | 102 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

J.K. Place
This Leading Hotels of the World member is an unexpected find, situated in the heart of Florence and ready to treat you with “precious details and impeccable service.” A Small Luxury Hotels of the World member. Condé Nast Traveler Gold List. | Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7 | www.jkplace.com | +39-055-2645181 | 20 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Palazzo Magnani Feroni
For more than 500 years this regal residence has been at the center of Florence’s aristocratic life. Just a 5-minute walk from the Ponte Vecchio, Magnani Feroni is perfectly situated for exploring San Frediano, one of the city’s most historic neighborhoods. | Borgo San Frediano 5 | www.palazzomagnaniferoni.com | +39-055-2399544 | 12 suites | Rates: ✦✦✦✦

**Hotel Regency**

This hotel has the feel of an exclusive private villa, with luxury accommodations and a tranquil setting. The Regency serves as a serene escape from the city’s hustle and bustle. | Piazza Massimo d’Azeglio 3 | www.regency-hotel.com | +39-055-245247 | 35 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦✦✦✦

**Palazzo Niccolini al Duomo**

In 1532 the Naldini family began transforming a collection of 14th-century houses near Piazza del Duomo into this lavish palazzo. Its prime centro storico address is another plus: the Duomo can be seen from many of the hotel windows. | Via dei Servi 2 | www.niccolinidomepalace.com | +39-055-282412 | 10 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦✦✦✦

**Room Mate Isabella**

A former gathering place for European literati, this delightful hotel is in a recently renovated classic 19th-century building with a superb location on the fashionable Via de’ Tornabuoni overlooking the magnificent Palazzo Strozzi. | Via Tornabuoni 13 | www.isabella.room-matehotels.com | +39-055-2396464 | 23 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦✦✦✦

**Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco**

If you’re looking for pleasant no-frills accommodations in the heart of Florence, the Guelfo Bianco—just 200 yards from the Duomo—is hard to beat. | Via Cavour 29 | www.ilguelfobianco.it | +39-055-288330 | 10 rooms | Rates: ✦✦

**Johanna & Johlea**

While Florence has no shortage of outstanding hotels, it’s also full of charming and elegant residence inns. We recommend any of the Johanna & Johlea properties. All offer superb locations in unique buildings (a 19th-century villa, for instance, or a 1920s garden townhouse), attentive staff, lovely furnishings and a warm ambience. Please note that credit cards are not accepted at any of the Johanna & Johlea residences listed below. The properties are not staffed overnight, so you must check in by 7 p.m. Because Johanna & Johlea are such great finds in the city center, advance booking is key to securing a reservation; visit www.johanna.it for more information.

**Antica Dimora Firenze**

Via San Gallo 72 | +39-055-4627296 | 6 rooms | Rates: ✦✦

**Residenza Johlea & Antica Dimora Johlea**

Via San Gallo 76 & 80 | +39-055-4633292 | 12 rooms | Rates: ✦✦

**Residenza Johanna I**

Via Bonifacio Lupi 14 | +39-055-481896 | 11 rooms | Rates: ✦✦

**Residenza Johanna II**

Via Cinque Giornate 12 | +39-055-473377 | 7 rooms | Rates: ✦✦

**Relais Uffizi**

This inn offers modest rooms, a friendly atmosphere and an unbeatable location. Stumble out of bed and you’re in the beautiful Piazza della Signoria, within easy walking distance of museums and other points of interest. Street noise is to be expected in such a prime spot, so keep this in mind if you’re a light sleeper. | Chiaso del Buco 16 | www.relaisuffizi.it | +39-055-2676239 | 13 rooms | Rates: ✦✦

**Rome**

Hotel map: bit.ly/RomePPH

**Hotel de Russie**

Set on Piazza del Popolo, this Leading Hotels of the World member feels more like an elegant private home than a hotel. Every detail has been thoughtfully considered, from the divine Italian linens to the magnificent gardens. Travel + Leisure World’s Best. (pool,
Hotel Eden
This Leading Hotels of the World member has been welcoming royalty and dignitaries since 1889. Request a room on the fourth floor to take in the vistas from the privacy of your own geranium-filled balcony. | Via Ludovisi 49 | www.edenroma.com | 800-543-4300 (from the US) or +39-064-78121 | 121 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Hassler Roma
You’ll find the hotel atop the Spanish Steps, just a stone’s throw from the stunning Borghese Gardens. With a state-of-the-art fitness facility and Michelin-starred Imágo restaurant, it’s no wonder that it’s considered one of the world’s finest hotels by industry mavens. Travel + Leisure World’s Best. | Piazza Trinità dei Monti 6 | www.hotelhasslerroma.com | +39-066-99340 | 95 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Splendide Royal
This boutique hotel housed in a 19th-century palace is situated near Villa Borghese, three blocks from the Spanish Steps. Don’t miss dining at the rooftop restaurant, Mirabelle. A Small Luxury Hotels of the World Member. | Via di Porta Pinciana 14 | www.splendideroyal.com | +39-064-21689 | 69 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Alimandi Vaticano
Located across from the Tunisi is the luxurious Hotel Alimandi Vaticano, whose spacious Liberty-style guest rooms face the Vatican Museums’ entrance. A rooftop terrace offers views over the Vatican walls. | Viale Vaticano 99 | www.alimandivaticanohotel.com | +39-063-9745562 | 25 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Alimandi Tunisi
If you’d like to stay close to the Vatican Museums, an Alimandi brothers’ hotel may be the perfect choice. Take in the spectacular view of St. Peter’s Basilica while enjoying breakfast on the hotel’s veranda. | Via Tunisi 8 | www.alimanditunisi.com | +39-063-9723941 | 35 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

Hotel Santa Maria
Set in the Trastevere quarter, this former 16th-century convent is within walking distance of Campo de’ Fiori and Piazza Navona. Few tourists venture to the Trastevere, a wonderful neighborhood with a bohemian spirit, tiny streets, artisan shops, great restaurants and an active nightlife. | Vicolo del Piede 2 | www.htlsantamaria.com | +39-065-894626 | 19 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

Hotel Teatro di Pompeo
This quaint property was constructed over the ruins of the Theatre of Pompey, the site on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. Guest rooms are spacious, pleasant and quiet. | Largo del Pallaro 8 | www.hotelteatrodipompeo.it | +39-066-8300170 | 16 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

Mecenate Palace Hotel
A few blocks from the Termini train station, this 19th-century home offers modern rooms and fantastic views of the Colosseum and Santa Maria Basilica from the rooftop garden terrace. | Via Carlo Alberto 3 | www.mecenatepalace.com | +39-064-4702024 | 74 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦

Best Western Hotel Canada
Built in 1870 to house the officials of Castro Pretorio and conveniently situated near the Termini train station, this Best Western offers air-conditioned guest rooms and breakfast with your stay. | Via Vicenza 58 | www.bestwestern.com | 800-780-7234 (from the US) or +39-064-457770 | 73 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

Hotel Sole al Pantheon
Best known for its outstanding view of the Pantheon, Hotel Sole is one of Rome’s oldest hotels, in operation since 1467. Ask for a room away from the piazza if you’re sensitive to noise. (spa) | Piazza della Rotonda 63 | www.hotelssolealpantheon.com | +39-066-780441 | 31 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦
If you plan to spend your time in Milan shopping, consider staying at this five-star Leading Hotels of the World member, which overlooks Via della Spiga, the city’s most celebrated shopping street. (spa) | Via Senato 5 | www.baglionihotels.com | +39-02-77077 | 101 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Four Seasons Hotel Milano
Ranked as one of the best hotels in the world by industry experts, the Four Seasons offers exactly what you’d expect from this luxury hotel chain: exceptional service, exquisite accommodations and a new, highly anticipated spa. If you plan to stay here during Fashion Week, book your room far in advance. Travel + Leisure World’s Best. (spa) | Via Gesù 6/8 | www.fourseasons.com/milan | +39-02-77088 | 118 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Grand Hotel et de Milan
Opera lovers will adore this majestic hotel, an Andrew Harper pick and a member of Leading Hotels of the World, which is located close to La Scala Opera House and fashionable avenues. | Via Manzoni 29 | www.grandhoteletdemilan.it | +39-02-723141 | 95 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Spadari al Duomo
Fashionable, hip and whimsical, this modern boutique hotel offers a contrast to the grande dames with its sleek furnishings, all-blue interior and contemporary Milanese art. | Via Spadari 11 | www.spadarihotel.com | +39-02-72002371 | 40 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Westin Palace
The Westin Palace features plush spacious guest rooms with classic Italian decor and Empire-style antiques. And you can look forward to those excellent signature Westin beds and showers. | Piazza della Repubblica 20 | www.westinpalacemilan.com | 800-937-8461 (from the US) or +39-02-63361 | 228 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦ ✦

Hotel Straf
The hotel’s innovative style manages to make high-tech functionality and minimalism warm, inviting and elegant, with industrial materials such as concrete, metal and slate at the center of the design. | Via San Raffaele 3 | www.straf.it | +39-02-805081 | 64 rooms & suites | Rates: ✦ ✦

Antica Locanda Leonardo
This family-run boutique hotel sits on the exclusive Corso Magenta in Milan’s old quarter. Just a short walk away is the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, home to da Vinci’s The Last Supper. | Corso Magenta 78 | www.anticalocandaleonardo.com | +39-02-48014197 | 16 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

First Hotel Malpensa Airport
Make catching that early flight from Malpensa Airport hassle-free. Located between Terminals 1 and 2, this no-frills contemporary hotel offers all the amenities you need, including a lobby bar and restaurant. A private shuttle service is available at an additional charge for travel between the hotel and both terminals. | Via Baracca 34 | www.firsthotel.it | +39-03-31717045 | 58 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

Hotel Lancaster
Within easy reach of the city sights from its setting in the tranquil residential district of Sempione, the Lancaster’s classical contemporary-style guest rooms feature cherry-wood furniture and bathrooms with marble tile. | Via Abbondio Sangiorgio 16 | www.hotellancaster.it | +39-02-344705 | 30 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦

Hotel Sanpi Milano
This modern boutique hotel provides a great location near the historic center with convenient access to the metro. It features contemporary art by Ercole Pignatelli. Most rooms overlook a private garden and all suites have whirlpool tubs. | Via Lazzaro Palazzi 18 | www.hotelsanpimilano.it | +39-02-29513341 | 79 rooms | Rates: ✦ ✦
EXTENDING YOUR VACATION

Arezzo

The enchanting hilltop town of Arezzo was the setting for Roberto Benigni’s Oscar-winning La Vita è Bella (Life is Beautiful). There are several interesting museums to visit here, and the town is also known for its antiques fair, which takes place the first weekend of the month. Arezzo can be reached by train from major Italian cities.

Florence Walking Tours

Florence is brimming with so many artistic, historic and cultural sights, you could spend weeks exploring it. If you don’t have that much time, however, you may want to organize a special outing.

Rosa Macri (rositamacri@hotmail.com; +39-338-3431340), a longtime Backroads friend and licensed city guide, is happy to customize walking tours to your interests.

Florence Cooking Classes

Learn the secrets to fine Florentine cooking at the Apicius International School of Hospitality in Florence. Apicius offers everything from wine appreciation and cooking classes, to tours of cooking supply shops, dinners in private Tuscan homes and gastronomic walking tours. Opt for a group or individual lesson, or customize your own program. Visit amateur.apicius.it for more information.

The Florence Chefs (Barbara and Silvia) cooking school and Olio, The Florence School of Olive Oil, offer a wide range of classes and services, including sessions on olive oil and food tours. Learn to make pizza and focaccia, homemade pasta or traditional pastries like cannoli and tiramisu. For a more intimate experience, book a class at Silvia’s apartment or Barbara’s country home, which start with a visit to the local market then a hands-on experience in preparing a complete meal: one starter, one pasta dish, a meat or fish dish, a side dish, dessert and matching wines. Visit www.theflorencechefs.it and www.florenceoliveoilschool.com for more information.
## LUGGAGE REMINDERS
Please limit your luggage to one medium-sized suitcase (we recommend 25”–28”, preferably not hard case) and one small carry-on bag. Be sure to mark your luggage with your contact information.

## Essential

**Travel Items**
- international travel documents (i.e. passport, visa, etc.)
- photocopy of front page of passport (kept in a separate place from passport)
- wallet (credit cards, bank cards & ID)
- cash for incidentals & leader gratuities
- airline tickets/e-ticket confirmation details
- sealable, quart-size plastic bags for stowing small liquid containers, swimsuit, etc.
- toiletries (including sunscreen & lip ointment)
- medications & copies of prescriptions
- list of important addresses & contact numbers

**Active Clothing & Gear**
- light hikers or boots
- hiking socks
- walking/hiking shorts and/or lightweight pants
- non-cotton base layers of varying weights
- lightweight hiking jacket or vest
- hat with brim, bandana or sweatband
- daypack/waistpack (for water, camera, snacks)
- sunglasses (with retention strap)
- sport sandals and/or flip flops
- swimsuit

## Optional

- camera & charger *(remember to enter our Guest Photo Contest!)*
- cell phone & charger
- voltage converter/plug adapter (if applicable)
- alarm clock
- CamelBak or similar hydration backpack
- guide book and/or field guides
- notebook/travel journal & pens
- local language dictionary/phrase book (if applicable)
- reading material
- earplugs
- insect repellent

## Rain Gear & Cold Weather Clothing
You may not need all of the items listed here, but they are necessary to stay comfortable in case of rain or unseasonably cold weather.
- waterproof (breathable) rain jacket & pants
- waterproof/water-resistant warm gloves
- warm jacket (easy to pack)
- warm hat

## Non-Active Clothing
- clothing & shoes for downtime & restaurants
- lightweight jacket (like fleece) or warm sweater

Backroads provides water bottles & walking sticks.

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**GREAT GEAR VENDORS**

For a list of some of our favorite gear and gadget retailers, visit [www.backroads.com/gearup](http://www.backroads.com/gearup).