



**ISI FLORENCE**
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES INSTITUTE



Mini Travel Guide



Italy





Benvenuti in Italia!

“You may have the universe if I may have Italy”
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

There are countless things to do in Italy! This guide contains some basic travel information about how to get to your destination, and what to do when you’ve arrived!

If this ISI Florence Mini Travel Guide isn’t enough, don’t hesitate to ask more information at Student Services!
Buon soggiorno!

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TUSCANY

SIENA



INTRODUCTION

Siena is undeniably one of Italy's most enchanting cities! It was an Etruscan settlement and a small Roman town, and became an important political centre only during the 12th century. The historic centre, declared by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, is known for its art, cuisine, museums, medieval cityscape, and the Palio, a high-stakes horse race held twice a year.

Through history, Siena and Florence were rivals. Even today, the Siena-Florence rivalry continues. It often boils down to aesthetic preference: while Florence saw its greatest flourishing during the Renaissance, Siena's enduring artistic glories are largely Gothic.

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Relax on the shell-shaped Piazza del Campo, regarded as one of Europe's greatest medieval squares!
- Climb the Torre del Mangia
- Admire the stupendous façade and interior of the cathedral (il Duomo)
- Visit the Palazzo Pubblico, the seat of the political power of the city. It's considered one of the most beautiful civil palaces in Italy!
- Watch the Palio! (on July 2 and August 16)

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

Every hour, there's a direct line from Florence SMN to Siena. It takes ca. 1h30min. Siena's train station is about 1 mile from the historic centre.

Bus

The SITA bus, which departs just around the corner from the train station in Florence, will let you off in Siena's historic city centre. Make sure you take the rapido (express and direct at 1h15min) and not the ordinario (which stops in Poggibonsi and Colle Val d'Elsa).



LUCCA



INTRODUCTION

Lucca is a beautiful old city that inspires love at first sight with its rich history, handsome churches, and excellent restaurants. It is famous for its Renaissance-era city walls, which remained intact as the city expanded and modernized, unusual for cities in the region. Lucca was the second largest Italian city state after Venice with a republican constitution (comune) to remain independent over the centuries. Today, Lucca remains a strong agricultural centre. The long periods of peace it has enjoyed explain the almost perfect preservation of the city walls, which were rarely put to the test.



TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit the Torre Guinigi and be surprised by its hanging garden on the roof of the tower!
- Rent a bike or even a go-kart and take a turn around the city walls
- Enjoy a gelato on the Piazza Anfiteatro, built on the ruins of an ancient Roman amphitheater
- Visit one of the many events in the city centre: Lucca Comics & Games (the second largest exposition of comics and games in Europe, at the end of October), the Summer Festival (an international music meeting, in July)



GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

Lucca is on the Florence–Pisa–Viareggio train line and frequent trains run to/from Florence SMN. It takes ca. 1h30min.

Bus

Take the Vai Bus (1h15min, departs frequently from Via Fiume). Buy your ticket around the corner of Via Fiume, in Largo Fratelli Alinari nr.9 at the ticket office "CAP tours".



AREZZO

INTRODUCTION

Arezzo, located 80km from Florence, isn't a popular tourist destination, despite being one of the many gems in the Tuscan hills. The history, culture, and art, not to mention the beauty of its architecture and beautiful scenic views, make Arezzo one of Italy's best-kept secrets!

Before being conquered by the Romans in 311 BC, Arezzo was one of the twelve most important Etruscan cities. It was eventually subjugated by Florence in 1384. Today Arezzo is known for its churches, museums, shopping, and the Saracen Joust (Giostra del Saracino), an ancient game of chivalry. You may also recognize the city as the setting for two Oscar-winning films: *The English Patient* and Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*.

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit Piazza Grande, the most noteworthy medieval square in the city, and visit the cathedral (il Duomo)
- Shop at Arezzo's large antique market on the first weekend of every month. You can find authentic and reproductions of Italian antiques, as well as other artesian wares and terracotta goods!
- Watch the Giostra del Saracino (at the end of June and the beginning of September)! Knights on horseback charge at a wooden target attached to a carving of a Saracen king and score points according to accuracy

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

Plenty of trains run to/from Florence SMN every day. Take a Regionale Veloce (ca. 1h) or a Regionale (ca. 1h30min) train.



INTRODUCTION

Viareggio is the main centre of the northern Tuscan Riviera of Versilia. It is known as a seaside resort, one of the first in Europe, as well as being the home of the famous carnival of Viareggio. Today, the seaside is still enormously popular with both Italians and foreign visitors, particularly those in the yachting community.

Viareggio is also an active industrial and manufacturing centre. Its shipbuilding industry has long been renowned around the world, and its fishing and floricultural industries are still fundamental sectors in today's economy.

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Don't miss the Carnevale di Viareggio (on 5 Sundays around February). It's considered amongst the most renowned carnival celebrations in both Italy and Europe!
- Enjoy the fine, sandy beachside and swim in the Tyrrhenian Sea
- Take a walk on the 2-mile promenade and enjoy the beautiful sunset

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

Every hour, there's a direct line from Florence SMN to Viareggio. It takes ca. 1h30min. From the train station, you walk ca. 10-15 min. to the beachside.

Bus

It's less convenient to take a bus to Viareggio, but you can take the Vai Bus (about 1h30min) which departs from Via Fiume. Check the schedule because buses don't run frequently! You'll find the ticket office "CAP tours" in Largo Fratelli Alinari nr.9.

NORTHERN ITALY



CINQUE TERRE

INTRODUCTION

Cinque Terre is truly one of Italy's most beautiful treasures. It's composed of five villages and spreads over a rugged portion of mountainous coast on the Italian Riviera.

Over the centuries, people have carefully built their lives into the steep landscape, erecting houses and businesses right along the cliffs that overlook the sea. Part of its charm is the lack of visible industrial development. Paths, trains, and boats connect the villages, since there is no direct road connection. Today Cinque Terre is a very popular destination for tourists and is declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Walk the sentiero azzurro ("blue trail"), a 7,5 mile footpath that connects the five villages. You will see stunning views! If you're not feeling surefooted, you can also walk the Via dell'Amore ("Lovers' Lane"). This is a flat and well-paved coastal path (0,6 mi) linking two villages (Riomaggiore and Manarola) and studded with picnic areas and stone benches.
- Taste one of the typical dishes of Cinque Terre, simple yet tasty. The main course is seafood: breams, anchovy, and squid. Have it all grilled, fried, or roasted. Don't forget that the Region of Liguria is home to pesto!

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

There is no direct train to any of the Cinque Terre villages. Take at least one train change (in Pisa and/or La Spezia) into account.

A one-way ticket from Florence SMN to Riomaggiore (the closest Cinque Terre town) takes about 3h. Once you reach Riomaggiore, buy the 5 Terre Card (options 1 to 3 days validity) for unlimited use of trains in-between the five lands and to access the walking trails.



VENICE



INTRODUCTION

Do we need to introduce Venice? The city, composed of 118 small islands, is known worldwide for the beauty of its architecture, art, and gondola-ridden canals. Venice in its entirety is listed as a World Heritage Site, along with its lagoon.

Venice was a very important center of commerce and art in the 13th century up to the end of the 17th century. It was also a major maritime power during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. This made Venice a wealthy city throughout most of its history. Today the city has one of the best-known and most popular carnivals in the world.



TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit the beautiful Basilica di San Marco and take a tour in the Palazzo Ducale
- Get lost in the tiny streets and alleys and just wander aimlessly!
- Go for a gondola ride! Romantic partner optional!
- See Piazza San Marco when it is empty.
- Watch an authentic (not touristic) glass-blowing demonstration on the Venetian island of Murano.



GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

A Trenitalia Frecciargento high-speed train run to Venezia Santa Lucia from Florence SMN (ca. 2h). You can also take the Italo train (5 times a day, ca. 2h). Compare prices and availability!

Bus

Take the Baltour-Eurolines-SENA bus (couple times a day, about 5h) at the SITA bus stop (next to Florence SMN, in Via Santa Caterina da Siena 15). Be aware of possible bus changes! Check your itinerary in advance!



Milan



INTRODUCTION

Milan, Italy's largest industrial city and capital of Lombardy, has a population of 1.3 million people. It is a magnetic point for designers, artists, photographers and models. Milan has an ancient city center with high and interesting buildings and palazzos, which is why so many people from all over the world want to see the city of glamour.

Milan's origin goes back to 400 B.C., when Gauls settled and defeated the Etruscans. In 222 B.C. the city was conquered by Romans and was annexed to the Roman Empire. In 1300 the Visconti family, noblemen from Bergamo, Cremona, Piacenza, Brescia and Parma, ruled and brought a period of glory and wealth to the city. The Duomo was built in 1386 and became the symbol of Milan.



TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit the Gothic Duomo in the center of the city, home to Da Vinci's "The Last Supper" painting.
- Visit the Teatro alla Scala- the world's most famous opera house, reserve tickets in advance!
- Shop (or just take pictures) at the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele, with its glass and iron dome, mosaics and marble floorways.
- Step back in time at the Sforza castle, built in the 15th century!
- Enjoy the delicious Cotoletta alla Milanese (crispy veal cutlet)- an iconic Milan delicacy.



GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

Take a Trenitalia Frecciarossa high-speed train to Milano Centrale from Florence SMN (1h45min)

OR

Take an Italo Train (trains leaving almost every hour, travel time around 1h50min.) Compare prices and availability!

Bus

Take the Baltour-Eurolines-SENA bus (couple times a day, about 4h) at the SITA bus stop (next to Florence SMN, in Via Santa Caterina da Siena 15. Be aware of possible bus changes! Check your itinerary in advance!



Verona



INTRODUCTION

Verona, located in the northeast region of Veneto is famous for much more than just “Romeo and Juliet.” It is a mix of artistic, historical and cultural testimonies, divided in a suggestive atmosphere of alleys, squares and traditional food.

Verona was founded in the 1st century B.C. It flourished under the rule of the Scaliger family in the 13th and 14th centuries and as part of the Republic of Venice from the 15th to 18th centuries. Verona has preserved a remarkable number of monuments from antiquity, the medieval and Renaissance periods, and represents an outstanding example of a military stronghold.



TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit the Roman amphitheater used in the first century for gladiator shows.
- See Juliet’s balcony and statue, while quite touristic it is a must see when in the city.
- See the Romanesque San Zeno Maggiore church- built for the eighth bishop of Verona and one of the most important examples of Romanesque architecture in Italy.
- Wander around Piazza delle Erbe, a fruit and vegetable market surrounded by historic buildings and monuments including the fountain of “Madonna Verona”.



GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

From Firenze Campo di Marte station (NOT SMNovella) take a Trenitalia Frecciargento high-speed train to Verona Porta Nuova (1h30min). To get to Campo di Marte station you can walk for about 30 minutes from the center of Florence, or take a regional train from Firenze SMN to Firenze Campo di Marte station.

OR

You can take an Italo train from SMN to Verona Porta Nuova (around 1h30min) with trains leaving about every 2 hours. Compare prices and availability!

Bus

You can take a direct Flixbus from Florence (Piazzale Montelungo) to Verona Porta Nuova in about 3 hours. Make sure you take the direct bus, as there are also buses that have transfers in different cities greatly increasing travel time.

SOUTHERN ITALY



NAPLES - POMPEII - AMALFI



INTRODUCTION

Explore the breathtaking beauty of southern Italy! From the ruins of Pompeii, the cozy bustle of Naples (one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world) or the magnificent views of the Amalfi Coast, there's truly something for everyone. You won't regret your visit!

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Eat real pizza napoletana (true Neapolitan pizza) and sfogliatella (Naples' sweet pastry)!
- Visit one of Naples' top sights: the National Archaeological Museum, which houses one of the most remarkable collections of Roman art and artifact anywhere and is without a doubt the most important Italian archaeological museum.
- A day trip to Pompeii: explore an entire Roman city preserved by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. You'll walk the same streets that were walked 2000 years ago. Genuinely one of the most remarkable sights in the world!
- Enjoy the amazing views of the UNESCO listed Amalfi Coast, stretching out from Sorrento to Vietri sul Mare.

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

Every hour, a Trenitalia Frecciarossa high-speed train run to Naples Central Station (Napoli Centrale) from Florence SMN (ca. 3h). You can also take the Italo train (9 times a day, ca. 2h30min). From the train station, you can take a bus to Pompeii and a bus or boat to the Amalfi Coast. You can also get there by train.

Bus

You can take the Baltour-Eurolines-SENA bus (about 7h) at the SITA bus stop (next to Florence SMN, in Via Santa Caterina da Siena 15). Check the schedule because buses don't run frequently! The bus will arrive at Napoli Centrale. There, you can take a bus to Pompeii and a bus or boat to the Amalfi Coast.



INTRODUCTION

Rome is definitely one of the most enchanting cities of the world! Western civilization is rooted here, making it one of the oldest cities in Europe. The city was founded in 753 BC, and for much of its history, Rome has been at the centre of world events. First, as caput mundi (capital of the world), the heart of the vast Roman Empire, then for centuries as the seat of papal power, Rome has seen the rising and ebbing of multiple world powers and endured. Today the ancient ruins still remind us of glorious imperial days and the city receives millions of tourists a year.

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit the Coliseum and the Roman Forum and walk through history!
- Go to the Pantheon and admire a completely intact ancient Roman building .
- Visit the museum of Castel Sant'Angelo, a towering cylindrical building that used to be a mausoleum, a fortress and a castle.
- See the creepy Cappuchin Crypt, decorated with bones of more than 4000 Cappuchin monks.
- Get a tour in Vatican City, including the Vatican Museums, Basilica di San Pietro and the lesser known Vatican Scavi tour! Be sure to buy your tickets in advance to avoid long lines!
- Hang out in the peaceful and charming Trastevere area.

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

There are many trains from Florence SMN to Rome! The easiest way to get there is to take a high-speed train: a Trenitalia Frecciarossa or Frecciargento (ca. 1h30min, to Roma Termini) or the Italo train (ca. 1h20min to Roma Tiburtina or ca. 1h40min to Roma Ostiense).

Bus

Take the Baltour-Eurolines-SENA bus (about 4h, depends on the bus) at the SITA bus stop (next to Florence SMN, on Via Santa Caterina da Siena 15). Check the schedule because buses don't run frequently! The bus will arrive next to the train station of Roma Tiburtina.



INTRODUCTION

Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and a land of natural and man-made beauty! The island has a great wealth of history, architecture, and gastronomic delights. The island coastline has been sculpted by the sea into a variety of stunning landscapes, perfect for any and all photographers looking for that ideal location!

The Sicilian island has 3000 years of history as the strategic stomping ground of Mediterranean Europe. It has become a vast open-air museum and bears evidence of nearly every ancient Mediterranean civilization. With its wonderful climate, Sicily can be visited all year around. Each season has its own distinctive charm. Definitely worth a visit!

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Hike on some of the craters of Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano.
- Visit the Valley of the Temples, a must-see ridge covered with seven temples constructed in the Doric style.
- Enjoy an opera at the Teatro Massimo, the third-largest opera house in the world.
- Relax at one of Sicily's finest beaches: San Vito lo Capo or Mondello Lido.

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Plane

The easiest way to get in Sicily is to fly. You can fly from Florence Airport to Catania (with Volotea or Alitalia) and to Palermo (with Volotea). When you fly from Pisa, you can fly cheaper with Ryanair to Palermo or Trapani.

All flights take about 1h30min.



SARDINIA

INTRODUCTION

Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily. The magical mixture of tropical beaches of crystal water and white sand and gorgeous architecture beguile every visitor. Holidays in Sardinia are truly a unique experience! Occupied by the Romans, Genoese, and Catalonians in turn, Sardinia's major towns are sprinkled with Italian, Spanish, and Baroque treasures. This island has prospered in recent time due to its success as a great tourist destination.

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit one of the 7000 Nuraghi, an ancient megalithic edifice that you can only find in Sardinia!
- Detach yourself from civilization on the Maddalena Archipelago, only reachable by boat!
- Relax at one of Sardinia's stunning beaches: La Pelosa, Li Coggi, or Cala Gonone, where the water is so clear you can see your toes!
- Visit the charming small cities of Alghero and Bosa!

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Plane

You can fly with Ryanair from Pisa Airport (take a bus or train to get to the airport, it's about 1h) to Cagliari (1h20min) or Alghero (1h).

Boat

There is also an option of going there by boat. You'll have to take a ferry from Livorno to Olbia (about 6h). Take a train from Florence SMN to Livorno Centrale (ca. 1h30min).

RECOMMENDED



ASSISI



INTRODUCTION

Assisi is the spiritual capital of Umbria and one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in the world. The town possesses a huge amount of historical, architectural, and artistic treasures and offers several breathtaking views.

The town was the birthplace of St. Francis, generally considered one of the most influential Catholic preachers in history. Assisi boasts Roman roots, has a castle and twisting alleyways from the Middle Ages, and some of Italy's finest early Renaissance art. All this makes Assisi one of Italy's top sights!



TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit for sure the St. Francis' Basilica and Saint Clare's church.
- Hang out around the Minerva's Temple and Palazzo Capitano del Popolo.
- Visit the Medieval fortress Rocca Maggiore, the first thing you see when you enter the city.
- Wander through the Regional Park of the Mount Subasio. You'll experience the wonderful natural heritage that characterize the Umbrian region!



GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

Every 2 hours, a train runs to/from Florence SMN. It's about 2h40min.

Bus

The only bus (Sulga bus) from Florence to Assisi operates only twice a week (on Monday and Friday) and departs in the evening.



BOLOGNA



INTRODUCTION

Please do not overlook this gem! Bologna is a proud college town and the fifth largest city in Italy. It hosts the oldest university in the world, the University of Bologna, which hosts thousands of students every year. Bologna is an example of careful preservation and restoration methods, making it one of the biggest historical centers in Italy. Having experienced rule under the Etruscans, Romans, and Celts, this city is composed of thousands of years of history, architecture, and art available for public viewing!

In 2000, Bologna was declared the European capital of culture and an UNESCO "city of music." It is one of Italy's wealthiest cities and boasts a long list of famous inhabitants, including popes, painters, and Olympic medalists.



TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Climb 498 wooden stairs to reach the top of Asinelli's Tower where you can witness a beautiful view of Bologna's red roofs. On a clear day, you can even see the sea and the Alps!
- Visit the Basilica di San Petronio, the fifth largest church in the world, and hang out around the Piazza Maggiore.
- Walk under the arcades; the city is covered for almost 25 miles! They represent the spirit of Bologna: a perfect refuge from the sun in the summer and a refuge from rain in the winter.
- Try a dish of the well-known kitchen of Bologna: tortelli, tagliatelle, lasagne, breaded cutlet, certosino, and, of course, spaghetti Bolognese!



GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Train

You can catch a high-speed train (a Trenitalia Frecciarossa or Frecciargento) twice an hour at Florence SMN (to Bologna Centrale). It's about 35min. You can also take the Italo train to/from Florence SMN (also ca. 35min).



ELBA

INTRODUCTION

The island of Elba is perhaps most famous for being the location of Napoleon Bonaparte's exile upon his forced abdication from the French seat of power. Historically it's known for its rich iron mines, exploited by Greek, Etruscan, and Roman invaders. More recently, Elba has fallen into the hands of multiple world powers, including the Spanish and Cosimo d'Medici, until it became part of the new unified Kingdom of Italy.

Elba is now a popular tourist location, famed for its wine and rich cultural history. The beaches are exquisite and the ports play host to all kinds of boats, from yachts to cruise ships. This is definitely an island that you won't want to miss!

TIPS & MUST DO'S

- Visit Villa dei Mulini and Villa Napoleonica di San Martino, two of Napoleon's residences while in exile on the island!
- Take a stroll around Porto Azzurro, Elba's port, and take photos of busy ship activity.
- Experience the Parco Nazionale Arcipelago Toscano, Europe's largest marine sanctuary that preserves over 50,000 hectares of sea and 17,000 hectares of land.
- Of course, spend a day on the gorgeous beaches, taking in the sun and sand while sipping your favorite drink and reading a good book!

GETTING THERE FROM FLORENCE

Bus+Boat

There is a direct bus service to and from Florence and Piombino Marittima that takes 2.5 hours between trips. Your destination in Piombino is PIOMBINO PORTO. Visit <http://www.infoelba.com/arriving-getting-about/how-to-get-there/buses/florence-piombino/> for accurate timetables during your season!

**“Italy, and the spring and first love all together
should suffice to make the gloomiest person happy.”
Bertrand Russell (British historian, 1872-1970)**

Airport Travel Guide

From Florence to Pisa Galileo Galilei Airport

- Take the Autostrade bus from outside the Florence S.M.N. Station (Piazzale Montelungo) direct to the Pisa Airport.
- Travel time 1h10min approx.
- <http://autostradale.it/>

From Florence to Bologna Marconi Airport

- Take the Appennino Shuttle Bus from Piazzale Montelungo (outside Florence S.M.N. Station at the end of Track 16)
- Travel time 1h20min.
- www.appenninoshuttle.it

From Florence to Rome Fiumicino Airport

- Take a trenitalia high-speed train (frecciarossa or frecciargento) or Italo train from Florence S.M.N. to Roma Termini station.
- From Roma Termini station take the Leonardo Express direct train from platform 23 and 24 to Fiumicino airport. Trains depart every 15 minutes.
- Leonardo Express train travel time 32 minutes.

From Florence to Milan Malpensa Airport

- Take a trenitalia high-speed train (frecciarossa or frecciargento) or Italo train from Florence S.M.N. to Milano Centrale station.
- From Milano Centrale station take the Malpensa Express train to Malpensa Airport. Trains depart twice/hour .
- Malpensa Express train travel time 50 minutes.

- ❖ Buy bus and train tickets from Florence in advance, either online or at the station.
- ❖ Note: We find these forms of transportation to be the fastest and most convenient ways to arrive at the above airports, however these are not the only forms of transportation available. Bus and train schedules may be subject to changes, delays or cancellations, check corresponding websites for definitive information.

Italian Regional Food Guide

While traveling throughout Italy don't forget to try the local delicacies that make each region and city famous!

Milan (Region of Lombardia)

Risotto alla milanese
Osso Bucco

Bologna (Region of Emilia Romagna)

Tortellini, ravioli, lasagne with Ragù alla bolognese
Aceto balsamico di Modena
Mortadella and prosciutto crudo
Piadina romagnola

Genova (Region of Liguria)

Trofie al pesto
Focaccia genovese
Canestrelli

Florence (Region of Tuscany)

Bistecca alla fiorentina
Ribollita, pappa al pomodoro, panzanella
Lampredotto e trippa
Peposo dell'Impruneta

Rome (Region of Lazio)

Spaghetti cacio e pepe, spaghetti alla carbonara, bucatini all'amatriciana
Carciofi alla giudea
Abbacchio

Naples (Region of Campania)

Pizza and calzone
Pizza frita
Cuoppo di pesce fritto
Caffè Espresso, babà, pastiera napoletana, sfogliatelle, zeppole

Palermo (Region of Sicily)

Cous Cous alla Trapanese
Caponata, arancine, pesce spada, tonno, sardine
Pesto siciliano and pasta alla norma
Cassata, cannoli, granite, gelato (pistachio, mandorla), dolci di mandorla and latte di mandorla, brioche al gelato, iris alla ricotta