

Italian Treasures
From the Amalfi Coast to
Rome to Florence



Tom Hatfield Signature Historical Tour

April 20-May 2, 2022

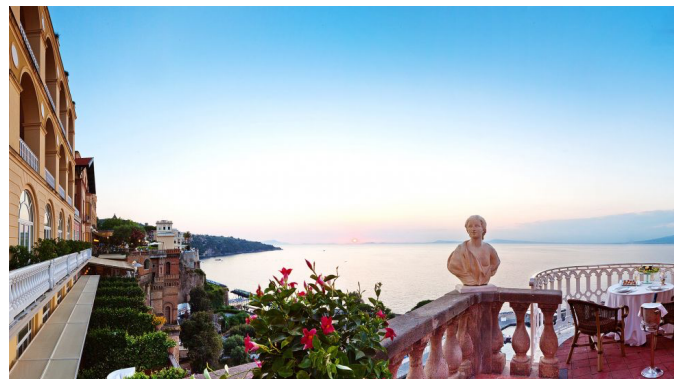
Wednesday, April 20

Depart USA

Thursday, April 21

Arrival in Rome or Naples and on to Sorrento

Since tour members will be arriving possibly on different dates in Rome or Naples, Gay Gillen Travel will assist with private transfers from either airport at a separate cost.



The drive from Naples to Sorrento is about one hour.

The drive from Rome to Sorrento is three hours. In the late afternoon, Tom Hatfield will host a welcome reception on the Vittorio Terrace of the Grand Hotel Vittoria Excelsior.

Afterwards, we all have dinner together at the hotel.

Overnight: Grand Hotel Vittoria Excelsior

Friday, April 22

The Isle of Capri

We spend the day on the island of Capri. You will have tickets on the 845 am ferry and proceed via the hotel's subterranean elevator to the dock at Marina Grande. The ferry takes about 20 minutes.

Enjoy lunch together near the piazzetta.

We have the option to return on the ferry to Sorrento or to enjoy a boat cruise around the island.

Free for dinner.

Overnight: Grand Hotel Vittoria Excelsior



Saturday, April 23

Paestum & Positano

Meet in the lobby of the hotel at 9:00 am for departure to Paestum with a brief stop in Positano on the Amalfi Coast.

Drive along the Amalfi Coast – a drive that is both beautiful and thrilling.

Our focus today is the town of Paestum, 60 miles down the coast from Sorrento. From the 7th century BC for almost a thousand years, Paestum was an important Greek Settlement. In 1943, it was the scene of the Allies' first major landing on the European continent in WWII. A major city in its time, the ruins of Paestum – three temples in the Doric Style, a forum, and an amphitheater – are more extensive and better preserved than those of the acropolis in Athens. We will have a local guide around the ruins.



A monument near the beach recognizes the Texas National Guard (36th Infantry Division) as the first American unit ashore on September 9, 1943. The division's administrative headquarters were set up amid the columns of the Greek temple, perfectly illustrating the dual themes of our tour — ancient and modern history, plus the Italian Renaissance.

The landing along this coast by British and American forces began a desperate three-week struggle merely to establish the beachhead, which foretold almost two years of unanticipated and difficult fighting that did not cease until the European war ended in May 1945. So desperate were the Americans to avoid being pushed back into the sea that, four days after the invasion, the 82nd Airborne Division was dropped on short notice a few miles inland to block German counterattacks on the small foothold on the beach.

We will enjoy lunch together at a restaurant in the view of the ruins.

6:00 PM Estimated arrival time back in Sorrento

Free for dinner tonight

Overnight: Grand Hotel Vittoria Excelsior

Sunday, April 24

Pompeii with lunch outside the entrance gates

Our lunch will include a specialty first prepared nearby - pizza!

We will spend the morning walking among the ruins of Pompeii — buried under ash, sand and pumice from the massive eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Forgotten for almost 1,700 years, Pompeii was rediscovered in 1748, and since then its continuing excavation has provided a vivid and intimate insight into the daily life of a Roman city at the height of the Empire.



You will view the basilica that was once a palace of justice, the forum, and the well-maintained large and small theaters.

Also we visit the House of Vetti — the "bachelor pad" of two nouveau riche brothers, whose sculptures and mosaics symbolize their idea that true happiness, comes from a balance of making both money and love.

After lunch we return to Sorrento for a free afternoon.

Aperitivo on the terrace of our hotel followed by a group dinner.

Overnight: Grand Hotel Vittoria Excelsior

Monday, April 25

Check out of the Grand Hotel Vittoria Excelsior

Depart for Rome at 7:30am

Our first stop is two hours north at the village of Sant'Angelo in Theodice on a bluff overlooking the Gari River (called Rapido in WW2), where in January 1944, the 36th "Texas" Division made a disastrous attempt to cross the river in the face of strong German resistance. The heavy losses of this controversial event led to a post war Congressional investigation that exonerated the American commander, Lt. Gen. Mark Clark.



Following lunch in the nearby town of Cassino, which figured heavily in the fighting, we ascend a great mountain to visit the beautifully restored Monte Cassino Abbey, which was destroyed by American bombing on February 15, 1944. The original abbey, established by St. Benedict in 529, has experienced numerous other traumatic events.

On to Rome where we expect to arrive at the Hotel de Russie about 5:30 pm. Our coach will stop on the viale Washington next to the Piazza del Popolo where we transfer to minibuses across the square to the hotel. Some might prefer to walk 10 minutes to the hotel's entrance.

Dinner on your own.

Overnight: Hotel de Russie

Tuesday, April 26

The Vatican Museum & Basilica

Early morning departure at 700am for the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel and the Basilica with historical guide, Richard Bowen.

Afterwards our minivans take us to the square near the Pantheon.



Everyone is free for lunch.

In the afternoon, Richard Bowen and Tom Hatfield will offer an optional walking tour of the Forum and Colosseum.

This evening, join together in the hotel for aperitifs and short lectures by Tom Hatfield and Richard Bowen.

Afterwards we will have dinner on the Diaghilev Terrace at the Hotel de Russie.

Overnight: Hotel de Russie

Wednesday, April 27

Anzio-Nettuno, Full day tour

Depart at 8:15 am by minibuses to cross the square and join our motorcoach for the 40-mile drive to the coastal towns of Anzio and Nettuno which have grown together since the war.

Frustrated with mountain fighting around Cassino, on January 22, 1944, the British and American forces made a surprise landing in this location further up the coast, seeking to outflank the German defenses and gain a quick entry into Rome. Once ashore, the commander, U. S. Army Maj. Gen. John Lucas paused and the Germans quickly reinforced their position. What followed was a bloody stalemate that soon resembled the trench warfare of World War One. Rome was not liberated until June 4.



We will lay a wreath at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial which contains more than 7,800 of our war dead and another 3,100 names on the Wall of the Missing. Twenty-three sets of brothers are buried side by side in the cemetery.

Large colorful maps depict American military operations in Italy and Sicily. A ceiling dome sculpture in the chapel depicts the planets in the same positions they occupied at the precise moment of landings in 1944. After lunch in a seaside café, we return to Rome.

Dinner on your own in Rome.

Overnight: Hotel de Russie

Thursday, April 28

Check out of the De Russie Hotel

Convene in the lobby at 8:30 AM and depart on our minibuses across the square to join our motorcoach for Florence. On the way we will stop for a brief lunch.



Approaching Florence, we will lay a wreath at the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial, where the headstones of 4,393 of our military dead are arrayed in symmetrical curved rows along the hillside.

Another 1,409 names are inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing; rosettes mark the names of those since recovered and identified. Most of the women and men buried here died after the capture of Rome. Included among them are casualties of the heavy fighting in the Apennines Mountains shortly before hostilities in this area ceased on May 2, 1945.

Here we will be met by Elaine Ruffolo, esteemed art historian and our guide for the next three days.

Check in the Brunelleschi Hotel located literally next door to the Duomo.

Evening

Reception at Hotel Brunelleschi

Dinner on your own

Overnight: Brunelleschi Hotel



Friday, April 29

The Cathedral Complex

A half day walking tour

Join Elaine Ruffolo for a slide-illustrated overview of the history of Florence. After the presentation, Elaine conducts an introductory “Walk through History” exploring the historic center on a walking tour and stroll down the medieval streets and piazzas that make up the city center.



After this pleasant stroll through the past, we’ll walk over to the recently renovated Museum of the Cathedral, a complete marriage of history & modernity.

We will encounter sculptural masterpieces such as Lorenzo Ghiberti’s bronze doors for the Florentine Baptistery the Gates of Paradise, learn about the unique design of Brunelleschi’s Dome and see highly emotional works by Donatello that inspired the deep pathos of Michelangelo’s Florence Pieta, intended for his own tomb but now in the museum.

By special permission, we will climb up to the terraces of Florence Cathedral for a privileged view and close-up understanding of the structure.

(note: about 200 steps to the top and not recommended for people who are afraid of heights or claustrophobic).

Finish the morning with a visit inside the 11th century Baptistery and view the unforgettable mosaics decorating the interior.

Free for lunch on your own and a free afternoon.

2:00 pm: Meet Elaine at the entrance to the Uffizi Museum.

The Uffizi occupies the top floor of a U-shaped building on the front side of the Arno River, designed by Giorgio Vasari in 1559 to hold the administrative offices of Medici Grand Duke Cosimo I. Here the Medici installed their art collections.

Enjoy this viewing some of the most magnificent works of art in the world and follow in the footsteps of princes as you pass through the Uffizi privately. Expect to admire masterpieces by Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Bronzino, Titian and more – culminating in three works by Caravaggio.

Free this evening for dinner on your own

Overnight: Brunelleschi Hotel

Saturday, April 30

Michelangelo and the Medici, Half Day Morning Tour with Elaine.

As one of the most powerful families in Florence, the Medici were responsible for commissioning some of the greatest works of the Renaissance. Under astute Medici leadership, Florence enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity. The result was an outpouring of art and architecture.



We will begin our day with a visit to the church of San Lorenzo, one of Florence's most precious treasures, generations of Medici put some of the greatest artists to work here; men like Brunelleschi, Donatello and Michelangelo. Delve into Michelangelo's turbulent relationship with the Medici through an investigation of the Medici Chapels.

Continue on to the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, home of the family for 100 years. This home became the model for noble Florentine houses in the 15th century and was copied throughout Italy. It was here that Lorenzo the Magnificent began his Neoplatonic Society, here that Michelangelo spent the early days of his youth and here that Benozzo Gozzoli's painted his famous procession of the Magi, celebrating both the birth of Christ and the greatness of the Medici.

Finish the morning with a visit to the Accademia Galleries to see the iconic David and unfinished Prisoners by Michelangelo.

Free for lunch and the remainder of the afternoon

Evening: Private Reception and Dinner at the Palazzo Gondi

You have been invited for a private visit and dinner at Palazzo Gondi. Count and Countess Gondi are justly proud and extremely well informed about their lovingly maintained private Renaissance home. Enjoy a festive dinner in the Marchesi's dining room and be prepared to enjoy the Gondi's noted Tuscan wine, their own olive oil, and up-to-date Tuscan fare.

Overnight: Brunelleschi Hotel

Sunday, May 1

Architecture through the Ages, Half Day Morning Tour

Spend the morning walking through Florence examining the built environment. We will explore palaces, courtyards, churches and bridges from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and understand how and why they were constructed. We will finish at the Ponte Vecchio and discuss its history from the 14th century to World War II.



Lunch will be served in the Oltrarno al fresco at Quattro Leone.

This evening share an aperitivo with fellow tour members and say farewell to Italia.

Overnight: Brunelleschi Hotel

Monday, May 2

Depart today for the USA or other travel.

Gay Gillen Travel will assist with independent transfers to the airport or rail station.