

# **AUTHENTIC ITALY**

## **GUIDED GRAND TOUR SOUTH**

### **Naples, Amalfi, Matera, Puglia in 12 days**

*September 24<sup>th</sup> – October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019*

From lively Naples to the coast of Amalfi, magically suspended between the sky and the sea, and Matera and its unique sets. Then Puglia on the footprints of an endless procession of conquerors and cultures, stamped in stone, gold and marble. Seas of olives, olive-green seas and food the equal of any in Italy. And finally Castelli Romani, where Romans celebrate their food traditions.

Around Southern Italy at the discovery of the culture and spirit of the country.

#### **TOUR SUMMARY**

- Group size: 6 to 10 Pax
- Tour Start Date: September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019
- Tour End Date: October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019
- Type of tour: Circular
- Duration: 12 Days + 12 Nights
- Tour starts and ends in Rome

#### **WHAT'S INCLUDED**

- **The Tour is led by an Italian Authorised Tour Leader**
- **Accommodations in Double Room with Continental Breakfast (\*):**
  - Day 1: 4\* Hotel San Pietro - Via San Pietro ad Aram 18, Napoli
  - Days 2 to 5: 4\* Hotel Villa Margherita - Via Umberto I 70, Praiano (SA)
  - Days 6 & 7: 3\* Hotel Locanda di San Martino - Via Fiorentini, 71 - 75100 Matera
  - Days 8 & 9: Tenuta Monacelli Lecce - Via Giacomo Monticelli, Località Cerrate – Lecce
  - Day 10: Lama di Luna Biomasseria - Contrada Lama Di Luna, Località Montegrosso – Andria (BAT)
  - Days 11 & 12: La Locanda dello Spuntino - Cicerone St. n. 22, Grottaferrata (RM)

**(\*) Accommodations are indicative. Before confirmation, we reserve the right to replace the ones indicated above with others with similar or higher characteristics.**

- **All transfers by private minibus**
- **Private Guided Visits / Tours / Activities:**
  - Day 1: Meeting Point at Monti Palace Hotel in Rome city centre - Visit of Montecassino Abbey
  - Day 2: 3-hour private walking tour of Naples city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide - 2-hour private waking tour of Pompei Archeological Area with an Authorised Tourist Guide
  - Day 3: Full day tour of the Amalfi Coast: Amalfi, Cetara, Ravello - Visit of a “Colatura di alici” artisan lab in Cetara
  - Day 4: Full day Boat Tour to Capri with lunch on board
  - Day 5: Half-day hiking tour of the “Path of the Gods” trek above Positano with an Authorised Tourist Guide
  - Day 6: Visit of Paestum Greek Archeological Area with an Authorised Tourist Guide - Visit of a “Mozzarella di bufala” farm in Paestum with light lunch
  - Day 7: Full day tour of Matera area with an Authorised Tourist Guide
  - Day 8: 3-hour private walking tour of Lecce city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide
  - Day 9: Visit of an olive oil mill with tasting - “Pugliese” cooking class at your accommodation
  - Day 10: Visit of a “Rosso del Salento” wine cellar with tasting
  - Day 11: Visit of Castel del Monte with an Authorised Tourist Guide
  - Day 12: Full day tour of Castelli Romani area: Frascati, Castelgandolfo, Ariccia - Visit of a Frascati wine cellar with tasting
- **Admission Tickets to:**
  - Cappella Sansevero in Naples
  - Pompei Archeological Area
  - Villa Rufolo in Ravello
  - Paestum Archeological Area
  - Castel del Monte in Andria
- **All dinners at selected home-style local restaurants (wine not included)**
- Full assistance 24 hours/day by our Back Office
- All taxes (tips not mandatory)

## **DAY 1 – MONTECASSINO**

Benvenuti in Italia, welcome to Italy! Your Tour Leader will meet you at Monti Palace Hotel in Rome city centre, here you'll meet your travel mates too. Let's have a coffee together, just to know each other!

On our way to Naples, we will stop at Montecassino Abbey, a sanctuary of peace which was at the centre of one of the longest battles of World War II. The Abbey on Monte Cassino was originally founded by Saint Benedict in 529, making it one of Europe's oldest monasteries, becoming an important centre of culture and art. It was then destroyed by the Longobards, rebuilt, and again destroyed by the Saracens. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery was again opened and filled with beautiful manuscripts and mosaics. After being destroyed by an earthquake in 1349, it was reconstructed. During World War II the monastery became a refuge for civilians, escaping from the fight between the Allies and the Germans. On February 15, 1944, the Allies started a bombing campaign which destroyed it completely, killing many civilians. The Abbey was finally reconstructed, following carefully the original plan and today it is hard to tell that it has been destroyed and rebuilt on four separate occasions!

## **DAY 2 – NAPLES & POMPEI**

Visiting Naples's historic centre means travelling through 20 centuries of history. The design of its streets, piazzas, churches, monuments and public buildings and castles constitute a jewel box of artistic and historical treasures of exceptional importance, so much so that together, they earned their spot on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1995. Naples is a real treasure of art and history, of indelible signs from past dominations, each of which has contributed to this city's construction.

The city dominates the Gulf of Naples, expanding from the Sorrentine Peninsula to the volcanic area of the Phlegraean Fields. The most prominent Neapolitan piazza is **Piazza del Plebiscito** that displays the grand colonnade designed by Gioacchino Murat, in front of which is the magnificent Royal Palace designed by Domenico Fontana. The different but well-integrated architectural lines of Castel Nuovo, otherwise known as “**Maschio Angioino**”, evoke the double role of palace and fortress that this building played during the domination of the Anjou and Aragon families.

The churches in this city are countless. The **Cathedral** - erected upon pre-existing buildings - over time has undergone radical modifications to repair the damages caused by the earthquakes, especially on the outside. The interior hosts the famous “Cappella del Tesoro di

San Gennaro (“Chapel of St. Gennaro’s Treasure”), with the two vials containing the Saint's blood.

And, last but not least, we will not miss the **Sansevero Chapel**, commonly called “Pietatella” (Little Pietà). Here you will be astonished by the “Cristo Velato” (Veiled Christ) by Giuseppe Sammartino, a masterpiece striking the eye for the extraordinary craftsmanship employed to sculpt the marble shroud over the body of Christ.

In the afternoon we will visit **Pompei**, the Roman city excavated from the ashes of the Vesuvius, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997!

In 62 A.D. Pompei was partially destroyed by an earthquake, and as its reconstruction was still ongoing, on August 24, 79 A.D. the eruption of Vesuvius covered the city and its suburban villas with a thick layer of stones, ashes and lapilli (thick, glassy lava). Herculaneum, on the other hand, disappeared beneath a flood of volcanic mud.

The ruins of the ancient Roman cities offer an unparalleled window into the quotidian life of classical antiquity. Here you can understand how the Romans of the 1st century AD lived: from the brothels and lavatories to the posh dining rooms and the bathing establishments which included modern spas, health clubs and gym. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius destroyed the town in 79 AD and more than 3,000 people were covered by the debris from the volcano.

Due to its healthy climate and pleasant scenery, Pompeii was a holiday resort for rich Romans. It is now famous for its civic buildings lining the streets that are still intact today. Some of these include the **Surgeon’s House**, as well as those of the **Faun** and the Chaste Lovers, which are exceptional examples of the epoch’s architecture. Another remarkable construction is the **House of Mysteries**, which derives its name from the murals depicting the initiation rites (i.e., the mysteries) of the Dionysian cult. A peculiar characteristic of Pompeii is the florid graffiti covering the walls in just about every building; this is because when the volcanic eruption happened, Pompeii was set to carry out elections in the days ahead – hence the writings and ideograms, which feature both political and sexual content.

### **DAYS 3 TO 5 – AMALFI COAST**

Welcome to the Amalfi Coast!

In the following days, we will explore Costiera Amalfitana, widely considered Italy's most scenic stretch of coastline, a landscape of pastel-coloured villages terraced into hillsides, steep panoramic roads, luxuriant gardens and enchanting vistas over turquoise waters and green mountains. Considered by UNESCO "an outstanding example of a Mediterranean landscape, with exceptional cultural and natural scenic values," the coast is a World Heritage Site since 1997.

You may go from town to town at the discovery of Amalfi, Positano, and Ravello, three of the most beautiful villages in Southern Italy, world-famous for their charm and colourful architecture.

**Amalfi** has a typically Mediterranean architecture, made up of lanes and characteristic white houses piled one upon the other. In the Middle Ages, it was of Italy's four powerful maritime republics, the others being Venice, Pisa, and Genoa. All sea trade in the Mediterranean was once governed by the 12<sup>th</sup> century “Tavole Amalfitane”, one of the world's oldest maritime codes. A must-see in Amalfi is the Duomo di Sant'Andrea, fronted by an intricately patterned façade, redone in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the cathedral's subsequent alterations have spared its principal glory, the main portal's 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine bronze doors. Next to the church lies the Chiostro del Paradiso (1268), or Cloister of Paradise, whose serious Romanesque tone is enlivened by the Arab elements in its sinuous columns. To escape the bustle of Amalfi let's take the popular walk along the “Valle dei Mulini”, a steep-sided valley dotted with ruined watermills – “i mulini” - once used to make paper, an industry for which Amalfi was, and still is, famous.

**Ravello** is situated in a more elevated position than the other pearls of the Amalfi Coast, boasting exceptional views of the coast and its marvellous villas and gardens which, according to French novelist André Gide, are “closer to the sky than the sea”. Here we will visit Villa Rufolo, built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which hosted popes and kings, as well as Richard Wagner, who composed part of his opera Parsifal here in 1880. Views from its idyllic gardens are magnificent!

A trip to **Cetara** is an absolute must. The village is renowned for a particular gourmet speciality, “colatura di acciughe” (anchovy sauce), which has been produced according to an ancient procedure for generations. Spaghetti with colatura di alici is the typical recipe of the place, a dish which you will remember forever.

**Positano** sits in a splendid panoramic position on one of the most beautiful stretches of coastline. Its enchanting town centre of delightful pastel-coloured houses surrounds the parish church of Santa Maria Assunta; its streets are lined with quaint, colourful shops and its numerous beaches are world famous.

On Day 5 we will take a fantastic hike on the mountains behind Positano, where the so-called “**Sentiero degli Dei**” (Path of the Gods) links the tiny hilltop town of Agerola with Nocelle, a fraction of Positano nestled on the slopes of Monte Peruso. The name of the footpath is an indication of the spectacular scenery en route. The trek runs gently downhill, with magnificent views of the Amalfi Coast and the island of Capri.

At dinner, we will not miss Spaghetti with clams in olive oil and garlic sauce, or Seafood Risotto, with a glass of excellent Greco di Tufo white wine.

## **DAY 6 – CAPRI**

An island that offers a landscape of wild beauty sculpted by wind, sea and the hand of man, this is Capri. With a precipitous, jagged coast, and encircled by the famous “**Faraglioni**” (sea stacks), enormous and uniquely-shaped boulders, and by numerous caves that tell of evocative plays of light. The most famous of these caves is the “Grotta Azzurra” (Blue Grotto), closely connected to the history of tourism in Capri.

Its discovery by the ancient Romans is hinted at by countless archaeological finds - e.g. **Villa Jovis**, whose construction was commissioned by Emperor Tiberius.

The island continues to be both a legend and a favourite destination for travellers, intellectuals and the international jet-set - "performing" at any given time in the legendary “**Piazzetta**”, the real-time theatre of the island's 'Dolce Vita'. Beyond the cultural attractions and sea and nature in all their charm, Capri also offers good shopping: tasteful boutiques and artisans' studios selling “Made in Italy” items and typical products alternate along the characteristic sidestreets and alleyways. Moreover, the exuberantly-flavoured local food is tied to the island's maritime and peasant traditions.

The island is associated with the myth of the Syrens, due to the presence of the homonymous rock of the Syrens characterizing the bay of Marina Piccola. Among the sources that feed the legend, there is a commentary by Servius to the 5<sup>th</sup> song of Virgil's Aeneid in which the poet narrates of half-bird and half-woman creatures that would have lived in Capreae and who, with their songs, bewitched the sailors and sent them against the rocks. On the other hand, the physical conformation of the island, made of coves, caves and precipices, makes it perfect as a refuge for these mythological beings.

## **DAY 7 – PAESTUM**

Located in the South-East of the Gulf of Salerno, Paestum is an archaeological site of extreme importance, recognised by UNESCO as part of the World Cultural Heritage. Built by the Greeks around the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC with the name of Poseidon, the city was later occupied by Romans who made it a thriving colony, giving it its current name.

In addition to the cultural value, the importance of Paestum is linked to the excellent state of conservation of properties starting from its walls, built by the Greeks and later strengthened by the Romans. The most striking thing is represented by the view of three majestic temples located in a green plain, which reflects a different light, depending on the hours and seasons. Many

writers, poets and artists like Goethe, Shelley, Canova and Piranesi were fascinated by this sight, that later became their inspiration.

These large buildings are a remarkable example of Doric style architecture. **The Temple of Hera**, dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, is the most ancient building. The **Temple of Neptune** (5<sup>th</sup> century BC) is a huge construction made of travertine marble, in a warm golden colour that varies at different times of the day. **The Temple of Ceres** (6<sup>th</sup> century BC), actually dedicated to the goddess Athena, back in the Medieval times was transformed into a church.

Paestum is popular not only for its temples but also for a gourmet speciality which you should taste on site: its “mozzarella di bufala”. Made with the best buffalo milk from the area, “mozzarella di bufala” is closely linked to the land of Campania, the dexterity with which it is made, in fact, reflects the love that the cheesemakers put to create this Italian excellence. We will visit a cheese factory in the area, to understand how it is created and taste it freshly made, an unforgettable experience!

## **DAY 8 – MATERA**

Matera is one of the oldest cities in the world, whose territory holds evidence of human settlements starting from the Paleolithic and without interruption until today. Touring Matera is like experiencing a forgotten past - you feel as though you are setting foot in a nativity scene when you visit this charming city in Lucania. It's no coincidence it's referred to as “the second Bethlehem” and was the setting for Mel Gibson's movie “The Passion”.

Matera is widely known as the city of the “**Sassi**” (Stones), the original urban nucleus, developed from the natural caves carved into the rock and subsequently modelled in increasingly complex structures. It is at the centre of an incredible rock landscape that preserves a great heritage of culture and traditions and is home to exhibitions of great national and international prestige. The city has been awarded the title of **2019 European Capital of Culture**.

In the 1950s when the inhabitants who lived in the grottos dug out of the mountain were forced to abandon those dwellings to settle in modern districts, no one would have ever thought that those grottos - the Sassi - would have become the symbol of a reborn city. UNESCO added the Sassi of Matera to its list of World Heritage Sites in 1993, as a whole and millennial way of life to be preserved and handed down to our descendants. In fact, it was recognized as a model for living harmoniously with the environment while integrating with it and taking advantage of resources without disturbing the environment.

Geologists call it calcarenite and common folk refer to it as tuff: it's the rock surrounding Matera that this land's master craftsmen learned to work with in ancient times. This friable, adaptable

material is abundant in the mountain that dominates the city, so it seemed only natural for the people from Matera to go up there and dig out that rock to build a home in it. The material that was extracted was processed to make the façade of the dwelling. After the first home, others were built until there was a network of houses, tunnels and alleyways passing over and in each other to become that magic place called Sassi - a gigantic sculpture, a miracle of town planning!

## **DAY 8 & 9 – LECCE**

From Matera, our southernmost destination is Lecce in Puglia, a wonderful region rich in ancient traditions, stunning natural sceneries and exceptional food.

Lying on a plain at the foot of the Salento Plateau, Lecce - the "**Florence of the South**" – is one of the most interesting cities in the region for its architecture, typical of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Of ancient origins, the city experienced two distinct periods of prosperity in its history: the Roman era and that of the rule of the Kingdom of Naples. Under both, construction of buildings, monuments and mansions increased heavily. These new structures were characterized by a magnificent and rich ornamentation that earned this typical architecture the definition of "Leccese Baroque". The imaginative and meticulous sculpting work was facilitated by the use of local stone, flexible and easy to inlay. A visit to Lecce can begin with **Piazza Duomo**, once used as a fortress and today considered the most elegant "salon" in the city. The grandeur of the Duomo, work of Zimbalo, Cino and Penna, the five-story-tall bell tower, the Palazzo Vescovile (Bishop's Palace) and the Palazzo del Seminario (Seminary) mark the perimeter of the square, one of the monumental works that best represent the magnificence of Lecce's style.

Not far away, Piazza Sant'Oronzo narrates the city's entire history. The Roman period is visible in the ruins of the Amphitheatre that becomes the exceptional stage for theatrical performances in summertime, and in part by the high Column - on which stands a bronze of St. Orontius, depicted in the act of blessing - erected in the 17th Century utilizing some of the Roman columns positioned on the Ancient Appian Way. Symbol of the Renaissance is **Palazzo del Seggio**, known as the "Seat," which today hosts important art exhibitions, and the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, with its interesting frescoes and works sculpted in wood.

Not to be missed is a visit to the Basilica di Santa Croce, where the inspiration of master masonry is visible in every part of the monumental façade that anticipates the beauty of its interior, a harmonious balance between the sobriety of the classical style and the splendour of Lecce's Baroque.

Puglia is famous for its *orecchiette* pasta, the glorious sandy beaches and the "Pizzica" dance to name a few, but nothing is quite as Puglia-defining as the 50 to 60 million olive trees (no one

seems to know for sure how many) that carpet the region, from the north to the south. The sheer number of trees is amazing, but so, in many cases, are their size and age. Called *ulivi secolari* (literally centuries-old olive trees), you will come across large numbers of ancient trees with knotted, gnarled, robust trunks that have been twisted into grotesque shapes by a mix of time, wind, sun and man's hand. They give an impression of wizened sagacity, seen-it-all tiredness and patient acceptance of the immutability of time. We will visit an olive oil mill, to delight in the strong taste on the local olives, then we will learn how to use olive oil in the kitchen during a Pugliese Cooking Class.

## **DAY 10 – ALBEROBELLO**

The **Trulli** in Alberobello are famous worldwide for their beauty and unique characteristics and represent one of the most extraordinary examples of Italian folk architecture. They were built in a particular historical period when the construction of stable dwellings was highly-taxed; the inhabitants of the region thus boasted a great capacity to adapt and an exceptional cleverness in coming up with the Trulli, temporary houses built with the local stone. From precariousness to stability - the process of transformation and recovery, and the deference to the originality of the work earned the Trulli of Alberobello their recognition as a World Heritage Site.

In Alberobello, the capital of the Trulli, each Trullo is of a different shape and size. Unique constructions, they are sometimes combined in a complex of communicating houses, while others are built on two levels. Most of them feature a grey cone-shaped roof that ends with a sphere or hemisphere shape. The interior, arranged as a single chamber, is constituted by several niches for a fireplace, bed and various furniture. The structure assures excellent indoor climate control: cool in summer and warm in winter!

## **DAY 11 – CASTEL DEL MONTE**

Driving back north, we will not miss the massive fortress of Castel Del Monte.

Recognized as a World Heritage Site in 1996, Castel del Monte is a brilliant example of medieval architecture, located on a hill in the Murge area. Commissioned by the eclectic and cultured Frederick II, Duke of Swabia, the Castle is an exceptional work for the perfection of its forms and the fusion of cultural elements from different periods and places. The Lions placed at the monumental entrance are typical of Romanesque art, while the friezes that decorate some parts of the castle belie Classical inspiration. And the floor's design and materials are in part reminiscent of Islamic art. It is interesting to know that the number 8 is the principal factor in the

castle's plan: 8 are the sides of the castle's plan, 8 are the rooms of the ground floor and first floor arranged in order to form an octagon, and the same goes for the massive octagonal towers.

It is still not clear what led Frederick II to build this brilliant piece of architecture. An air of mystery surrounds it and is thus the fount of many legends and of the charm of this unique place.

### **DAY 12 – CASTELLI ROMANI**

South of Rome, we will finally stop in the area known as “Castelli Romani” (Roman Castles), 20 km. south of Rome.

The entire area originated from a series of volcanic eruptions that shook an original crater, creating some lakes. The area, a traditional destination for the out-of-town excursions of the Romans, is dotted with several pretty hill towns famous for their ancient history and highly regarded wine: **Castelgandolfo**, the summer residence of the pope, **Rocca di Papa** and **Grottaferrata**, known for their culture and gastronomic delicacies, Frascati, popular for its breathtaking views and for its sweet and refreshing white wine named after the city, are only some of them.

The tour is over, but the memories of a fantastic journey will accompany you for a lifetime!

Arrivederci for another tour with VITOR, Visit Italy on the Road.