

# ITALY TOURS



# ways

Laura French finds tours to suit every budget across this diverse, culture-rich country

From the time-honoured canals of Venice to the majestic ruins of Rome, the knife-edge peaks of the Dolomites to the aquamarine coastline of the Cinque Terre, Italy is a dream for travellers of every kind.

And while city breaks, wellness retreats and beach getaways are all sure-fire sells here, staying in one place for the entire time risks missing the real beauty of this diverse country.

Enter the escorted tour. New product has been cropping up left, right and centre in the region with options to suit every budget, meaning there's never been a better time to sell it – so where do you start?



Lake Garda

## Save

**Lake Garda:** For cobbled towns topped with medieval castles, colourful bougainvillea and laid-back beaches, look to Lake Garda. Newmarket Holidays combines a circular tour of the huge, glittering lake with wider explorations of northern Italy on its seven-night Venice, Verona and Lake Garda trip, visiting the likes of Garda and Bardolino – known for its rolling vineyards, olive groves and picturesque port – before venturing to the Dolomites and tagging on Verona and Venice for a dose of romantic flair. Prices are from £689, including flights.

**Lake Como:** Just as charming is smaller, glitzier Lake Como, star of *Casino Royale* and a hit with everyone from George Clooney to Angelina Jolie. But glimpsing its sheer-drop cliffs, belle époque villas and elegant towns such as candy-coloured, cobbled Bellagio (the 'pearl

of the lake') doesn't have to mean breaking the bank. Shearings Holidays offers an escorted coach package here with excursions to Lake Maggiore, Saint Moritz and medieval Bergamo – home to opulent Renaissance mansions and imposing Gothic cathedrals – from £749, including six nights' all-inclusive at the Hotel Britannia Excelsior, with pick-up points available around the UK.

**Rome:** It's not all about the lakes, of course. For clients more into the city side of things, look to Costsaver's Jewels of Italy trip from Rome to Venice. Taking in the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Renaissance palaces of Florence and the Roman ruins of fair Verona – home to Juliet's balcony and other spots immortalised by Shakespeare's 'star-crossed lovers' – it combines all the key highlights of the region in a stripped-back itinerary that allows for flexibility.

Various optional extras are available for those clients wanting to push the boat out – from a live music dinner in the Tuscan hills to a piazza tour in Rome and a gondola ride in Venice – and it's all pleasingly affordable, with prices starting at £950 including all breakfasts, two dinners and coach transport. Flights extra. ➤



### BEST OF THE REST

If you have clients who want to explore the boot of Italy and its whitewashed 'trulli' houses and baroque cities, suggest **Leger Holidays'** Delights of Puglia coach tour, priced from £1,499 for 16 days including door-to-door pick-up.

**Cosmos Lite's** à la carte model – letting clients choose what they add on – extends to Italy with its eight-day Italian Explorer trip visiting Rome, Genoa, Milan and beyond, from £777 on a B&B basis; flights extra.

For a taste of lesser-known Italy, try **Riviera Travel's** Turin & Piedmont – Italy's Best-Kept Secret tour, which combines the cobbled piazzas and baroque buildings of Turin with wine tasting in Alba; five days costs from £709 including flights.



## DESTINATIONS

### ITALY | ESCORTED TOURS

# Spend



The Dolomites



"Italy is an iconic destination that never goes out of style, with great food, amazing people and a rich culture. It has become much more accessible due to increased flight routes, which have seen both global and domestic traveller numbers increase. G Adventures offers a chance to see a side of Italy that the main tourist crowds cannot. Whether it's taking a migrant-led tour as part of our G For Good projects or trying our new Local Living tour in Tuscany, we show that there are still plenty of unseen sights and experiences once you scratch beneath the surface."

**Yves Marceau,**  
vice-president of product,  
G Adventures



**The Dolomites:** For clients with a little more budget, the options are plentiful – not least when it comes to booking more adventurous trips.

And nowhere does adventure quite like the Dolomites, with shards of rock rising like giant jagged teeth. Exodus Travels offers tours throughout the year, including a Classic Dolomites hiking tour in summer, from £1,049, and a Snowshoeing in the Dolomites trip in winter, from £1,349. Both include most meals, flights from London and seven nights' accommodation.

**Cinque Terre:** Walking doesn't have to mean scaling precipitous

peaks, though. For slower-paced strolls, direct clients to the Italian Riviera and its crescent-shaped, turquoise-coloured coast. Ramblers Walking Holidays has an eight-day guided trip taking guests ambling through the cobbled villages of the Cinque Terre – where poets such as Keats, Byron and Shelley found inspiration – with olive groves, ocean views and picture-perfect flowers along the way. Prices start at £1,095 including flights, transfers and seven nights' half-board.

**Lake Maggiore:** For those more tempted by scenic train journeys than week-long hikes, Lake

“For slower-paced strolls, direct clients to the Italian Riviera and its crescent-shaped, turquoise-coloured coast

Maggiore calls. Rail Discoveries offers a seven-night trip exploring the highlights of this Alpine region, including a ride on the Centovalli Railway (opened in 1923), a cruise along Lake Orta and a boat trip to Isola Bella – a tiny, rocky island famed for its baroque palace and

ornate gardens – with prices from £1,215, including breakfast, meals and four-star hotel accommodation.

**Tuscany:** There's plenty to please in Tuscany, but for something a little different look to G Adventures' Wellness Italy tour. Yoga classes, meditation sessions, farm-to-table cooking classes and wine tasting are all on the agenda on this seven-night trip visiting Rome, Florence, Lucca and thermal bath city Chianciano Terme, with tumbling green hills and fresh Tuscan air on hand to lull guests into a serene daze. Prices are from £1,569 per person, excluding flights. ➤




**Amalfi Coast:** Clients wanting to really push the boat out certainly aren't short on options, but nowhere does all-out luxury and Italian beauty quite like the Amalfi Coast. Sheer cliffs, traditional fishing villages and ancient, crumbling ruins – not least those of Pompeii – are all part of the everyday here, while the narrow, maze-like lanes of Sorrento and the pastel-coloured houses of Positano lure the jet set.

Kuoni features all of these on a seven-night Highlights of Sorrento & Amalfi Coast small-group tour from Caserta to Naples, adding a visit to the ancient Greek temples of Paestum, wine tasting on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius and an excursion to the exclusive island of Capri, known for its ornate Roman villa and terraced gardens. It's priced from £1,769 based on a departure in April 2020, including flights, quality accommodation, two dinners and all breakfasts.

**Sicily:** Italy wouldn't be complete without its islands, of course, and Sicily, just off the 'toe' of the country's 'boot', deserves its reputation for world-class cuisine, volcanic

scenery, sparkling sea and classical history, giving it appeal on every level.

Cox & Kings offers a seven-night group tour of the island with visits to Cefalù, known for its mosaic-tiled Norman cathedral, plus the Byzantine art of Palermo, medieval architecture of Erice, soaring Mount Etna and ancient Greek site Valley of the Temples, with wine tasting and Sicilian pastry sampling along the way. It starts at £1,785, including flights, entrance fees, daily breakfast, welcome dinner and four and five-star hotels.

Abercrombie & Kent ups the luxury factor a notch with a seven-night Quintessential Sicily tour, where highlights include the island of Ortygia, the honey-coloured towns of Noto and Ragusa, and the hilltop town of Taormina. The nine-night trip costs from £2,995, including all breakfasts, four dinners and private transfers (flights not included), with standout accommodation including historic Hotel Villa Athena. Set within the Unesco-listed Valley of the Temples, the 300-year-old property boasts a slab of marble dating back more than 1,000 years, plus its very own farm producing food served on site. 

#### UPSELL A TOUR

☛ Suggest adding a pre or post-tour stay: Kuoni offers a three-day Sorrento tag-on to its Amalfi Coast tour, while Abercrombie & Kent and Luxury Gold offer a journey on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.

☛ Encourage upgrades: Shearings offers all-inclusive gold and platinum packages so clients can add food and drinks, while Leger Holidays offers a Silver Service upgrade with more-comfortable coaches, portorage in most hotels and more excursions.

☛ Recommend UK airport lounge passes: agents can buy them with No1 Lounges, which offers commission, or via providers such as Holiday Extras.

