

Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN CUSTOMIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide®



Northern Italy: The Alps, Dolomites & Lombardy
2026

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

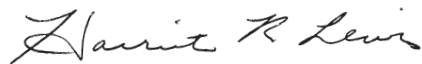
When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Dolomites

Northern Italy: The Alps, Dolomites & Lombardy

Small Group Adventure

Italy: Lecco, Tirano, Lake Iseo, Trento, Bressanone (Dolomites), Venetian Countryside

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

16 days starting from \$5,695

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/itr2026pricing

Witness the awe-inspiring landscapes and cultural treasures of Northern Italy on a journey from Milan and the Lombardy Lakes to the towering Dolomites. Along the way, meet fishermen and farm families, sip Franciacorta wines, journey by rail across the Alps into Switzerland, experience the unique culture of the Ladins, and much more.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 14 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 29 meals—14 breakfasts, 8 lunches, and 7 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 18 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters on the main trip and extensions
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

Northern Italy: The Alps, Dolomites & Lombardy



WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 6 locations in 15 days with one 1-night stay

Physical requirements: Travel on some rugged paths and many cobblestoned streets on foot, as well as over bumpy, narrow rural roads by bus; several elective hikes up and down hills in the northern Italian countryside

Flight time: Travel time will be 11-18 hours and will most likely have one connection

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/itr

NORTHERN ITALY: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Share a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local family in Tirano, and tour an apple orchard in Valsugana—learning about the fruit’s integral role in the local cuisine from the orchard’s caretaker as we go. Plus, meet with a Ladin-speaking Alpine hiking guide living in the Dolomitic valleys, who will share his insights on Ladin culture, how they came to settle in these hidden valleys of northern Italy, and why ongoing efforts to preserve their unique language is so important.

O.A.T. Exclusives: During our **A Day in the Life** experience, we’ll immerse ourselves in the traditions of the Valtellina valley and learn about the production of buckwheat used for *pizzoccheri*, the region’s specialty pasta. You’ll also have opportunities to discuss **Controversial Topics** throughout your adventure, such as the rise of fascism.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Milan, Italy
2-4	Lecco
5-7	Tirano
8-9	Lake Iseo
10-11	Trento
12-14	Bressanone
15	Venetian countryside
16	Return to U.S.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Italian Riviera, Genoa & the Cinque Terre

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,995**

The Swiss Alps: Lucerne, Bern & Zermatt

PRE-TRIP: 7 nights from **\$3,495**

Classic Venice: Murano & Burano

POST-TRIP: 4 nights from **\$1,795**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Genoa** before your Italian Riviera pre-trip extension from **\$270** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Lucerne** before your Swiss Alps pre-trip extension from **\$330** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Lecco** before your main adventure from **\$300** per room, per night

Northern Italy: The Alps, Dolomites & Lombardy

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Italian Riviera, Genoa & the Cinque Terre*

Day 1 Depart the U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Genoa, Italy

Day 3 Explore Genoa

Day 4 Monterosso • Riomaggiore

Day 5 Monterosso • Optional Cinque Terre by boat tour

Day 6 Monterosso • Corniglia

Day 7 Transfer to Lecco • Join main trip

OR

7 nights in *The Swiss Alps: Lucerne, Bern & Zermatt*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive in Zurich, Switzerland • Transfer to Lucerne

Day 3 Explore Lucerne • Conversation about Swiss neutrality

Day 4 Lucerne • Optional Mt. Pilatus tour

Day 5 Luthern discovery walk & hike • Transfer to Bern

Day 6 Explore Bern • Visit Tierpark Bern • Optional Lake Murten tour

Day 7 Explore Andermatt • Glacier Express ride to Zermatt

Day 8 Explore Zermatt • Discover Sunnegga & Blauherd

Day 9 Zermatt • Lake Orta • Transfer to Lecco • Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

You depart today on your overnight flight from the U.S. to Milan, Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Milan, Italy • Transfer to Lecco

- Destination: Lecco
- Accommodations: Hotel NH Lecco Pontevecchio or similar

Morning: You'll arrive in Milan sometime this morning. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with your transfer to the hotel in Lecco.

Afternoon: After checking in, you'll have some time to settle into your room and unpack, or begin getting acquainted with Lecco on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will lead orientation walks throughout the day to accommodate the varied flight schedules.

We'll be joined this afternoon by travelers who took our optional *Italian Riviera, Genoa & the Cinque Terre* or *The Swiss Alps: Lucerne, Bern & Zermatt* pre-trip extension and those who arrived early in Lecco before their main adventure. Later, we'll gather as a small group for the first time in the hotel for a welcome aperitif.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to share their recommendations, if you'd like. The food in Lecco is heavily influenced by its geographic location and landscape. In fact, one of the most traditional dishes is *risotto* with perch fillets, fresh from Lake Como.

Evening: The remainder of the day is on your own—you can either rest in your room after your flight to prepare for tomorrow's discoveries or head out to begin getting acquainted with the city. You can always ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations on things to do in the area.

Day 3 Explore Lecco

- Destination: Lecco
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel NH Lecco Pontevecchio

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing in the hotel. Then, we'll set off with our Trip Experience Leader on a 1-hour discovery walk of Lecco. Home to just under 50,000 inhabitants, Lecco sits about 30 miles north of Milan, on the peaceful, gently winding shoreline where Lake Como flows into the Adda River. A respite from the hustle and bustle of the more touristic locations in the region, Lecco features architectural landmarks such as the Torre Viscontea, a 14th-century medieval tower, as well as the Teatro della Società, a neoclassical work of art. In ages past, the dominant industry here was iron and silk production; now, however, Lecco's involvement in manufacturing is minor.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you'll try regional specialties like Milanese *risotto*, various puff cheese pastries, and *pizzette* (miniature pizzas).

Afternoon: Your afternoon is free to explore Lecco at your own pace. Perhaps you'd like to rent a bike and cycle along the River Adda, or take a cable car ride to Piani d'Erna, a nearby mountain offering picturesque views of the region. If you'd like, you may join your Trip Experience Leader for a visit to one of the charming lakeside towns of the area, traveling via public transportation.

Dinner: Enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant, featuring authentic regional fare.

Evening: You are free to return to your room to rest before your explorations tomorrow. Or, if you'd prefer, take in the tranquil shoreline with a moonlit stroll.

Day 4 Explore Milan

- Destination: Lecco
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel NH Lecco Pontevecchio

Activity Note: If you have your heart set on visiting The Last Supper during your free time in Milan, make sure you plan ahead and buy your tickets on the museum's website at least three months in advance. We advise that you book a reservation between 11:30am–2pm.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today's explorations will take us to the elegant city of Milan. Here, we'll meet with a local guide and set off on a 1-hour walking tour through the city's historic center. The capital of Lombardy and Italy's second largest city, Milan was an important trading center for more than two millennia, and once served as the capital of the western half of the Roman Empire. Today, it's a vibrant, fashion-conscious metropolis with a population of 1.3 million. Our discoveries include a stroll through the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, which connects both the Teatro La Scala and the Duomo di Milano, Milan's striking Gothic cathedral. One of the world's largest churches (it can seat 10,000), the white-marble Duomo covers an entire city block and has some 3,200 statues and 135 spires adorning its extravagant façade—more than any other building in the world.

We'll have a chance to marvel at the Duomo's magnificent interiors as well, as our tour continues inside. Gazing upward, you'll witness statues clinging to massive and the technicolor

glow of soaring stained glass windows. Look down, and you might discover your Zodiac sign hidden within the ornate patterns of the cathedral's marble floors.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will provide recommendations based on their favorite local spots. Meat eaters might enjoy seeking out *ossobucco*, a veal dish that's a specialty in the city.

Afternoon: You'll have some time to explore Milan independently before returning to Lecco. The rest of the day is yours to do as you wish.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Free. In the mood for something sweet? Stop for a gelato after dinner.

Day 5 Explore Varenna • Transfer to Tirano

- Destination: Tirano
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Centrale Tirano or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we drive to Varenna, a fishing village nestled along Lake Como. We'll head right down to the waterfront area for a stroll along the Walk of Lovers, a pedestrian footpath renowned for its views of the lake, village, and surrounding mountains. This red-fenced promenade is dotted with steep alleys and quaint corners, attracting local and international couples from around the world.

Following our walk, you'll have some time to explore on your own. You may choose to accompany your Trip Experience Leader on an elective hike to Villa Monastero, an ornate villa situated on the eastern shores of Lake Como. Originally a Cistercian convent, this eclectic residence features a botanical garden, museum, and convention center. Alternatively, you

may wish to visit Castel Vezio. Constructed in the early twelfth century, the castle was once connected by walls to Varenna and served as a military outpost. The structure features a series of gardens, dungeons, and a prominent tower topped with square merlons. Inside the castle, you'll find a permanent exhibition about the Lariosaurus, an extinct sea reptile named after the lake.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll then board a bus for Tirano, arriving in the mid-afternoon. After we check in to our hotel, you'll have a couple of hours of free time to relax or perhaps to begin exploring the city center of Tirano on your own. Later, we'll gather at the hotel lobby for a short orientation walk with our Trip Experience Leader.

Dinner: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant suggestions.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish, whether you want to retire to your room to rest before tomorrow's discoveries or take an evening stroll around the town.

Day 6 Experience *A Day in the Life* in the Valtellina Valley

- Destination: Tirano
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Centrale Tirano or similar

Activity Note: Depending on departure, some groups will spend *A Day in the Life* on a farm in Castello dell' Acqua, Borgo Baruffini, or Teglio. Activities will be comparable to those detailed below.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we experience the region's scenic splendor during our **NEW *A Day in the Life*** in the Valtellina Valley. O.A.T. is the only travel company featuring cultural discoveries like these in the Alpine region of Italy. Set in the Alps near the Swiss border, the valley is renowned for its natural beauty, local wines, and regional cuisine. Blanketed in orchards and terraced vineyards, Valtellina boasts winemaking traditions that pre-date even the ancient Romans.

To reach our destination, we'll drive through the valley past quaint mountain villages. Traditionally, these mountain villages were formed by 26 small hamlets (8-10 farmers' houses and a small church) and locals made their living with agriculture and cheese-making. In the 1960s and 1970s most of these villages were abandoned and their inhabitants moved to the valley, but a few "pioneers" have started returning to their former family properties, and restarting the businesses of things like cheese-making, organic wine-producing, and organic eggs and vegetable farming. This has had a positive impact on the area as more and more people work to keep the villages and organic products of the Alpine region alive.

When we arrive, we'll meet with a local in whichever hamlet we are spending the day—Castello dell' Acqua, Borgo Baruffini, or Teglio. Then, we'll walk to a local farm, where we'll learn about the history of the family who owns it and what types of products they produce. We'll also help prepare a selection of regional dishes for lunch.

Lunch: We'll sit down for a lunch consisting of the dishes we helped to prepare. We'll dine much like the hardworking farmers do—on a buckwheat pasta known as *pizzocheri*, or on *taro*, a typical farmer's lunch of local salami and cheese and a glass of milk or wine.

Afternoon: After we eat, we'll bid our hosts farewell and return to Tirano, where the remainder of the afternoon is free to explore independently or relax at the hotel. Perhaps you'll walk around the surrounding countryside, taking in the beauty of the terraced vineyards. Or, you can consult with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: You are free to spend the remainder of the evening as you wish.

Day 7 Bernina Red Train to Switzerland • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Tirano
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Centrale Tirano or similar

Activity Note: Please bring your passport with you for today's discoveries, as we cross the border into Switzerland. On our cable car journey today, we will reach altitudes of almost 10,000 feet. We recommend travelers stay hydrated and eat a light lunch to help adjust to the high altitude.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We set off today for a full-day excursion across the Alps and into Switzerland. At the nearby Tirano train station, we'll meet a local guide who will accompany us as we board the local Bernina Express Train. One of the few rail journeys designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Bernina Express Train is not just the world's highest Alpine crossing (reaching an altitude of 7,400 feet), but also the steepest, with gradients up to 7%. Panoramic views from the train allow us to sit back, relax, and enjoy the unfolding Alpine scenery as we travel over bridges and viaducts, through tunnels, and past glaciers, villages, alpine meadows, and vineyards.

After crossing the border into Switzerland, we'll disembark the train at the Diavolezza station for a cable car ride that will transport us farther up the Alps. Reaching an altitude of almost 10,000 feet, we can enjoy what is considered the best vantage point for panoramic views of the snow-cloaked mountains and glaciers.

Lunch: We'll stop at a sheltered hut high in the Alps for a light lunch.

Afternoon: Another cable car ride will bring us back down to *terra firma* at the train station in Diavolezza, where we'll catch the Bernina Express Train back to Tirano. Our return journey will feature the same views we saw this morning—sit back and enjoy the ride. Back in Tirano, enjoy a few hours of free time to do as you'd like.

We'll regroup in the lobby of our hotel for one of the highlights of our northern Italy adventure: a **Home-Hosted Dinner** with a local family. When we meet the families at the hotel, we'll break up into smaller groups and then either drive or walk to one of their homes. This is a unique opportunity to learn more about life in the region—so come hungry for your home-cooked meal, and bring plenty of questions for your generous hosts.

Dinner: In the home of a local family, which may either be a house or apartment. Learn about life in the Alps from these residents, and watch as they prepare an authentic dinner. Each family has a different background and some may even grow a number of ingredients used in tonight's meal in their own gardens. Our meal this evening will consist of typical Valtellinese dishes using seasonal products, and the family will sit down with us to savor it. You can be sure there will be wine and a traditional dessert. Locals also often mark the end of a meal with a glass of *braulio*, a digestif made with medicinal herbs, fruits, roots and berries.

We're afforded this special privilege by our small group size, which gives us the chance to enter local homes and connect on a one-to-one level, and to even share a little with our hosts about who we are and what has brought us to Italy. This will be a great opportunity to ask them about life in Tirano, any customs they practice, and more.

Evening: Return to the hotel after dinner. As this is our final night in Tirano, you may wish to take in the town nightlife over a glass of wine at an outdoor café, or retire early to rest up for tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 8 Overland to Lake Iseo • Franciacorta vineyard and winery tour

- Destination: Lake Iseo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Villa Kinzika or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We depart Tirano and drive to Lake Iseo, the least known of the Lombard lakes, and the Franciacorta wine region. Along the way, we'll stop in Edolo. There, we'll witness sweeping views of Val Camonica, an ancient valley in the central Alps carved by glaciers and named for the Camuni people who inhabited the region in the Iron Age.

Our next stop is in Franciacorta. Upon arrival, we'll begin our discoveries with a nature walk that will reveal why this region is able to produce some of the best sparkling wines in the world. Then, our walk will bring us to one of the local wineries that produces the famous Franciacorta wines. This particular winery is run by two sisters, who will share with us the secrets of *methode champenoise*, the special method used in Franciacorta to produce the wine's "sparkle." This variety of wine is hand-harvested, fermented in wooden casks,

and aged by law for 18 months—an intricate, centuries-old process we'll gain insights on and have the opportunity ask in-depth questions about. We'll also enjoy a tour of the wine cellar, as well as the mansion located on the grounds.

Lunch: At the winery. As we sip three varieties of the wines produced here during a tasting, we'll be served a light lunch of local specialties to cleanse our palates and enhance our appreciation of the fine wines of Franciacorta.

Afternoon: We continue our drive to Lake Iseo. After checking in to our hotel, you are free to spend the rest of the afternoon as you wish. You can relax in your room, join your Trip Experience Leader on a walk through town, or join a few of your fellow travelers for a stroll.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: You are free to return to your room to rest before your explorations tomorrow, or join fellow travelers in the villa's main area for a nightcap to discuss the day's activities.

Day 9 Lake Iseo • Montisola • Optional Brescia tour

- Destination: Lake Iseo
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Villa Kinzika or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Most of today is yours to do as you'd like. You can relax with a book by the side of the lake, take advantage of the amenities at our lakeside hotel, or head out for some independent exploring. You might also ask your Trip Experience Leader about the possibility of taking a local ferry boat to Montisola. If you make it out to this island in the middle of Lake Iseo, you can go for a bike ride or stroll the ancient cobbled streets.

Or, if you'd like, you may join an optional tour of the town of Brescia to discover its culture. Those taking the tour will drive to Brescia and take a walking tour of the city with a local guide. We'll stop at sights such as the Piazza della Loggia and the Tempio Capitolino, one of the few remaining Roman ruins in the area.

Lunch: On your own. You can have lunch right in the hotel's restaurant or maybe check out the dining options near the hotel. Whatever you're in the mood for, your Trip Experience Leader can point you in the right direction. Those on the optional tour will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Your free time continues this afternoon, with the option to stay in Montisola.

Travelers who took our optional tour will arrive back at the hotel in the mid-afternoon.

Dinner: On your own this evening; ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations.

Evening: Free to retire early or gather with a few fellow travelers to work off dinner with a refreshing lakeside stroll.

Day 10 Transfer to Trento • Visit Garda Lake • Olive oil tasting & lunch

- Destination: Trento
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel America Trento or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we drive to Garda. Covering more than 140 square miles, Lake Garda is the largest of the Italian lakes—so large it straddles the border of three distinct regions: Lombardy, Trentino Alto-Adige, and Veneto. The shores of the lake are dotted with quaint, postcard-perfect towns like the one we'll explore today, Desenzano. With a population of

about 25,000 residents, Desenzano del Garda is characterized by its labyrinthine streets, a castle overlooking the lake, and a small harbor. The town attracts northern Italians looking to both relax on its shores and party in its trendy nightclubs.

Upon arrival, we'll set out on a discovery walk of Desenzano with our Trip Experience Leader. After some free time to explore on your own, we'll reconvene and drive to an olive mill. Owned and operated by the Manestrini family, this mill is well-known for its extra virgin olive oil and has even received national recognition over the years.

Lunch: We'll sit down at the farm for an olive oil tasting and finish off with a farm-fresh lunch.

Afternoon: We'll resume our journey north to Trento, driving past valleys and meadows in the foothills of the towering peaks of the Italian Dolomites. You'll have some time to settle in to the hotel in Trento before we regroup for an orientation walk.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Free to do as you wish. Relax with travel companions at the hotel or get a feel for Trento's nightlife over a *negroni*—a traditional Italian cocktail made with gin and Campari—at a local bar.

Day 11 Explore Trento • Optional Levico Terme cooking class

- Destination: Trento
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel America Trento or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we'll meet a local guide and set off on a walking tour of Trento. The city is noted in history as the locale of the Council of Trent, which began the Counter Reformation and brought half of Europe back to Roman Catholicism in the mid-16th century. At the heart of the city is Castello del Buonconsiglio, a mighty fortress that was home to Trento's bishop-princes from the 13th century until 1801.

Lunch: On your own in Trento. Considering its small population, Trento has a remarkable number of dining spots to choose from—from street food stalls to elegant Michelin-starred restaurants. You can still get pizza, but the food in Italy's northern reaches begins to have Austrian influences. Be sure to try the *canederli*, a type of bread dumpling that's a real local favorite.

Afternoon: Following lunch, you'll have the rest of the day free to relax back at the hotel or continue exploring Trento on your own. Or you can join an optional tour to the spa town of Levico Terme, where we'll meet a local chef who will teach us to prepare a few traditional dishes during a memorable cooking lesson.

The optional tour begins as we drive to Levico Terme, a town known for its beautiful lakeside scenery, and the therapeutic powers of its mineral-rich thermal springs, where we'll enjoy a short discovery walk with our Trip Experience Leader. Then we'll head to a local restaurant, which has been owned and operated by the same family for five generations.

We'll meet the head chef, Riccardo, who will tell us more about his family's history, and his passion for working with the community to grow and promote the organic, local produce that the restaurant uses in its dishes before we roll up our sleeves, pour ourselves a glass of wine, and try our hand at a few recipes

ourselves. Under Riccardo's expert guidance, we'll prepare a meal together, which we'll have the opportunity to share once it's complete.

Dinner: Travelers on today's optional tour will enjoy an included dinner as we share the meal that we worked together to prepare. Otherwise, dinner is on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: Return to the hotel at the conclusion of your optional tour, where the rest of the evening is free to rest or explore independently.

Day 12 Explore Val di Funes • Overland to Bressanone (Brixen)

- Destination: Bressanone
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Krone or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart Trento and transfer to Bressanone. Our drive will take us through the Val di Funes, a beloved valley known for its steep peaks and pastoral alpine scenes. Sloping mountain pastures are dotted with elegant farmsteads, and the occasional church spire pierces the sky.

We'll break up our drive with a stop to explore the valley on foot. We'll be joined by a local who will guide us on a leisurely hike along the Santa Magdalena, a scenic trail that cuts through a village and affords sweeping views of the surrounding area. As we walk, keep your camera at the ready: Val di Funes offers postcard-worthy views around every corner.

Lunch: At a mountain hotel restaurant in the small village of Santa Magdalena, featuring regional specialties.

Afternoon: We'll continue our journey to Bressanone. Upon arrival, we'll check in to our hotel and you'll have the remainder of

the day to settle in and relax. Or you can go for a stroll along the medieval streets of this Austrian-influenced city. Also known as Brixen, Bressanone was founded in 901, making it the oldest city in the Alto Adige.

Dinner: On your own this evening. You'll find lots of food choices in this German-speaking Italian region of the South Tyrol, where the freshly made Italian ravioli might be stuffed with jam or spinach and sour cabbage before it's deep fried in oil. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for some dining tips, and be sure to share a plate of Speck, the Alpine version of Parma ham.

Evening: Free for you to do as you wish. Continue getting acquainted with the town with a stop at one of the many classic beer gardens for which Bressanone is known.

Day 13 Bolzano • Visit Otzi the Iceman • Conversation about Tyrolean cultural identity • Optional Plose Mountain tour • Optional Novacella Monastery Winery tour

- Destination: Bressanone
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Krone or similar

Activity Note: The Optional Plose Mountain Tour is seasonal (available from late May–September) and is subject to weather conditions. During the low season of April and October, the Optional Novacella Monastery Winery tour will be offered in its place.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we take a local train to Bolzano, the provincial capital of South Tyrol.

South Tyrol is an autonomous region and enclave of small villages, medieval castles, and rolling hills. An Austrian territory for centuries, some 70% of South Tyroleans speak German

as their first language—in fact, you'll hear German spoken on the streets just as much as you will Italian (and speaking of streets, even road signage is written in both languages). Upon our arrival, we'll set off on a roughly 30-minute walking tour of Bolzano with our Trip Experience Leader to view the city's medieval buildings and pastel-painted homes.

Then, we'll stop at the Bozen Municipal Museum to discuss cultural identity in South Tyrol. This is an appropriate backdrop for our conversation, as it is the oldest museum in the region, and among other relics, contains archaeological finds surrounding Tyrolean folk culture. Next, we'll walk to the Bolzano's Museum of Archaeology to spend some time with another special guest—Otzi the Iceman. Otzi is the incredibly well-preserved 5,300-year-old mummy that was discovered in this region in 1991. After our museum visit, you can take the train back to Bressanone. Or, you'll also have the choice to spend more time in Bolzano and return to Bressanone on a later train—just let your Trip Experience Leader know how you prefer to spend your afternoon.

Lunch: On your own in either Bressanone or Bolzano. Bolzano's local cuisine is also marked by a heavy Austrian influence, and you can always grab a plate of sausages to enjoy with a local beer for lunch.

Afternoon: While some travelers may be out enjoying the medieval streets of Bressanone and others soaking up Bolzano's Alpine scenery, all those who are back in Bressanone by the mid-afternoon can choose to join an optional tour that takes us to the top of Plose, a scenic mountain near Bressanone noted for its hiking, skiing, and panoramic views of the Dolomites. Departing promptly upon return from Bolzano, a short drive will take us to the base of a nearby mountain, where we'll then take a gondola lift to the summit. There, we'll

enjoy a typical Tyrolean snack at a local chalet, followed by a light hike to take in the beauty of our surroundings.

Or, you may wish to join an optional tour and tasting at Novacella Monastery Winery. One of the oldest active wineries in the world, it was founded in 1142 and is still run by the Augustinians. It is also one of the most important wineries in the region and is especially renowned for its white wines from grapes of the Bressanone Valley. We'll enjoy a tour of the historic abbey and vineyards, followed by a tasting of three of the wines produced here before returning to Bressanone in time for dinner.

Dinner: At a local restaurant in Bressanone.

Evening: You're free to hit the town or head up to your hotel room. Or you could venture out to a local wine bar.

Day 14 Ladin Valleys • Nature hike with a Ladin resident • Bressanone

- Destination: Bressanone
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Krone or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we set off for Val Gardena, a valley nestled in the heart of the UNESCO-designated Dolomites where a trio of languages is spoken: German, Italian, and Ladin. Several of these small Alpine villages in the Dolomitic valleys are centers of Ladin culture. An ethnic minority of about 35,000 people occupying five valleys of the Dolomites, Ladins developed their own language—unrelated to German or Italian, it's the oldest language of Italy's Alpine region. The terrain here makes for a hiker's haven and skier's Shangri-La. Because of our small group size, we'll get to enjoy a unique people-to-people experience in the Dolomitic

valleys when we meet with a Ladin-speaking resident of the region who accompanies us on a nature hike of about 1.5 hours through the rolling foothills. While we admire the scenery of our surroundings, our guest will offer his or her insights into Ladin culture, and perhaps tell how they came to settle in these hidden valleys of northern Italy. We'll also learn why ongoing efforts to preserve the unique Ladin language are so important.

Lunch: At a local chalet.

Afternoon: We'll make the return journey back to Bressanone. You'll have the remainder of the afternoon free to relax after the day's discoveries. Or, you might like to visit Bressanone's historic Pharmacy Museum—which covers some 400 years of tools and tinctures used in the medical field and includes exhibits featuring plants, animals, and minerals used in healing practices.

Dinner: On your own. You may seek out an eatery serving Italian and Austrian/German cuisine, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for recommendations near the hotel.

Evening: On your own. This might be the right time to check out Bressanone's nightlife with a visit to a late-night café or maybe just a stroll through its many *piazas*. Or, you can retire early to rest up for tomorrow.

Day 15 Valsugana • Apple orchard experience • Venetian countryside

- Destination: Venetian countryside
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Relais Villa Corner della Regina or similar

Activity Note: Today's visit to the apple orchard farm is seasonal and your experience will vary depending on when you visit.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we leave the towering peaks of the Alps for the hills of the Veneto region. We'll drive to Valsugana, a fertile plateau dotted with vineyards, lakes, and streams. Our destination today is a local apple orchard farm. Apples and other fruits have been cultivated in this scenic region for centuries, and we'll spend some time today learning about this long-established agricultural history.

Upon arrival, we'll meet with the farmer and learn about local apple cultivation and the production of apple-derived products such as juice, cider, and vinegar—as well as how apples are incorporated into traditional cuisine, particularly in desserts and cakes.

Lunch: At the farm, featuring a home-cooked sampling of the delicious apple varieties grown here, and some local delicacies that embody a typical farmer's lunch.

Afternoon: We continue our journey into the heart of the Venetian countryside, arriving at our hotel in the mid-afternoon. You'll have some free time to get settled in and explore the grounds. Perhaps you will meander through the manicured gardens, or find a cozy spot to read a book. Then, we'll gather in the bar for a Farewell Drink to toast to the friendships formed and memories made during our adventure.

Dinner: We'll sit down to a festive Farewell Dinner in the hotel restaurant.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like. You may choose to take an evening stroll around the villa's grounds, or share a final drink with your fellow travelers as you discuss highlights of your adventure.

Day 16 Return to U.S. or begin your post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Activity Note: Travelers not taking our Venice post-trip extension who are planning to visit Venice on their own after the main trip and did not purchase airfare through O.A.T. are responsible for any transfer costs incurred in reaching their Venice hotel.

Those visiting Venice independently who did purchase airfare through O.A.T. are welcome to join our complimentary group shuttle service to the Venice airport, however, where they can hire a water taxi to get to their hotel.

Breakfast: At the hotel. A boxed breakfast will be available for travelers with early departure times.

Morning: Transfer to the airport for your return flight home. Travelers taking the *Classic Venice: Murano & Burano* post-trip extension will continue overland to Venice.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

4 nights in *Classic Venice: Murano & Burano*

Day 1 Transfer to Venice

Day 2 Venice

Day 3 Venice • Visit Burano & Murano islands

Day 4 Free time in Venice • Optional San Lazzaro Island tour • Farewell Dinner

Day 5 Depart for U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Brescia Optional Tour

(Day 9 \$195 per person)

Upon arriving in Brescia, we'll meet our local guide and begin a walking tour of the city. We'll stop at sights such as the Piazza della Loggia and the Tempio Capitolino, one of the few remaining Roman ruins in the area. We'll explore the ruins in depth, learning how they were once buildings that played an important role in local life, such as a theater thought to have held over 15,000 people and an ancient law court. Once our tour concludes, we'll enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

we'll meet Riccardo, the head chef who will teach us to prepare a few traditional dishes during a memorable cooking lesson.

Riccardo will tell us more about his family's history, and his passion for working with the community to grow and promote the organic, local produce that the restaurant uses in its dishes before we roll up our sleeves, pour ourselves a glass of wine, and try our hand at a few recipes ourselves. Under Riccardo's expert guidance, we'll prepare a meal together, which we'll have the opportunity to share once it's complete.

Levico Terme cooking class

(Day 11 \$135 per person)

Enjoy an afternoon excursion to Levico Terme, a spa town known for its beautiful lakeside scenery, and the therapeutic powers of its mineral-rich thermal springs, where we'll enjoy a short discovery walk with our Trip Experience Leader. Then, we'll head to a local restaurant, which has been owned and operated by the same family for five generations, where

Novacella Monastery Winery

(Day 13 \$85 per person)

One of the oldest active wineries in the world, Novacella Monastery Winery was founded in 1142 and is still run by the Augustinians. It is also one of the most important wineries in the region and is especially renowned for its white wines from grapes of the Bressanone Valley. We'll enjoy a tour of the historic abbey and vineyards, followed by a tasting of three of the wines produced here before returning to Bressanone in time for dinner.

Plose Mountain excursion

(Day 13 \$120 per person)

Take in the sweeping views of the Dolomites at Bressanone's Plose Mountain. At almost 8,500 feet above sea level, this South Tyrolean mountain is a top skiing and hiking destination. We'll journey by bus to the foot of Plose, then take a 15-minute gondola lift ride to the summit, where we'll enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding mountains. Then, after a snack at a local chalet, we'll set off on a 1-hour nature hike to take in the beauty of the Alpine scenery. Then, we'll return by bus to Bressanone.

Please Note: *The Optional Plose Mountain Tour is seasonal (available from late May–September) and subject to weather conditions.*

PRE-TRIP

Italian Riviera, Genoa & the Cinque Terre

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 3 dinners
- » 5 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Experience the splendor of Liguria, the crescent-shaped home of the Italian Riviera. After two nights in Genoa, the ancient maritime capital, fall under the spell of the Cinque Terre, a quintet of UNESCO World Heritage Site villages perched high over the sea.

Day 1 Depart the U.S.

Afternoon: You depart today on your overnight flight from the U.S. to Genoa, Italy.

Day 2 Arrive Genoa, Italy

- Destination: Genoa
- Accommodations: Hotel Continental or similar

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Genoa late this morning or early afternoon. An O.A.T. representative will greet you at the airport and assist you with your transfer to the hotel, where you'll join travelers who arrived early in Genoa before their pre-trip extension. You'll have some free time to settle in. Early arrivals will have the option to request an orientation walk led by your Trip Experience Leader to discover the neighborhood surrounding the hotel.

Genoa is the capital of the Italian Riviera, a city studded with ancient palaces and museums. In its golden era, it was on the maritime

circuit with Pisa, Venice, and Amalfi, home to the world's great sailors, including the most famous of all: Christopher Columbus. Later, our small group will toast to the start of our Italy adventure with a Welcome Drink as we get to know our fellow travelers. *Cin cin!*

Dinner: On your own. Perhaps you'll seek out pasta with fresh seafood at one of the many restaurants lining the harbor.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. You may choose to retire to your room to rest before tomorrow's discoveries or take an evening stroll around the town, perhaps with a gelato in hand.

Day 3 Explore Genoa

- Destination: Genoa
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Continental or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing in the hotel. Then, we'll meet with a local guide and set off on a 2.5-hour walking tour of the heart of medieval Genoa. Famous for its *caruggi* (narrow lanes), this old quarter of the city is lined with cafés, restaurants, small plazas and fountains.

Lunch: On your own. You might like to have *pesto alla Genovese*. This brilliantly green basil sauce has its origins in Genoa; in order for the sauce to truly be called *pesto*, locals say, it must be ground by mortar and pestle (no food processors allowed).

Afternoon: The remainder of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you may explore the historic interior of the Palazzo Ducale, admiring 17th-century ceiling frescoes and masterpieces historic and modern in the on-site museum. You might also choose to watch locals haggle over the day's catch at the market, or ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions tailored to your interests.

Dinner: At a local restaurant, boasting a selection of classic Italian fare.

Evening: The rest of the night will be yours to explore as you wish. As this is our final night in Genoa, you may wish to take in the town nightlife over a glass of wine at an outdoor café, or retire early to rest up for tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 4 Monterosso • Riomaggiore

- Destination: Monterosso
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Palme Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today we drive to the Cinque Terre. These five villages are connected almost exclusively by pathways and train stations, making them delightfully free of car traffic. These UNESCO World Heritage Sites are clustered on terraces atop cliffs that drop dramatically into the sea.

Our destination is Monterosso, with its beaches and well-known hiking paths. In 1948, Monterosso was almost cut from the Cinque Terre designation—which would have yielded Quattro Terre—because the Italian government felt it had gotten too big (at a mere 1,500 residents). However, the outcry from Italians all over the country led to its reinstatement. When we arrive, we'll take a 45-minute orientation walk through the streets around our hotel with our Trip Experience Leader. Then you'll have some free time to continue getting acquainted with Monterosso, perhaps admiring the views of the Mediterranean or scouting out local shops.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After checking in to our hotel, you'll have some free time to settle in or continue to discover Monterosso.

Then, we'll gather again in the late afternoon to hop aboard the local train to visit Riomaggiore. Our train ride will take us along dramatic clifftops, offering views of the Ligurian seaside. The southernmost village of the Cinque Terre, Riomaggiore is famous for its slate-roofed pastel homes clinging to the cliffs and locally-produced wines. After a discovery walk, you'll have some free time to explore the area.

We'll catch a return train to Monterosso in time for dinner.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader to provide suggestions on where to dine.

Evening: You are free to return to your room to rest before your explorations tomorrow, or join fellow travelers for a stroll on the beach or in the hotel bar for a nightcap to discuss the day's activities.

Day 5 Monterosso • Optional Cinque Terre by boat tour

- Destination: Monterosso
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Palme Hotel or similar

Activity Note: The optional Cinque Terre by boat tour operates seasonally, and is subject to weather conditions.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy a full day to discover Monterosso on your own. Or, join our optional Cinque Terre by boat tour to explore the coast of the Cinque Terre. We'll depart from the Monterosso pier and set out across the Mediterranean waves for a morning packed with discoveries. We'll disembark at the village of Vernazza, with plenty of time to stroll around and admire the scenery of each. We will also have a unique view of Riomaggiore and Corniglia from our spot on the water. We'll return by boat to Monterosso for lunch.

Lunch: On your own in Monterosso. Maybe you'll seek out salted fish or fresh pasta. If you are on the optional tour, you will have an included lunch.

Afternoon: Continue to explore Monterosso and the surrounding villages on your own. Perhaps you will hike along the cliffs to take in panoramic views before relaxing on the beach with a good book and an *aperitivo*.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Free to spend as you'd like. Admire Monterosso by night with a glass of wine at an outdoor café, have a gelato, or retire to your hotel room to relax.

Day 6 Monterosso • Corniglia

- Destination: Monterosso
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Palme Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we have the rare opportunity to explore the least-visited of the Cinque Terre towns, Corniglia. Unlike the others, Corniglia is situated on a rocky promontory 300 feet uphill, with no harbor and wider houses than its coastal cousins, hinting at this town's land-inclined vocation. To get there, we'll drive in 4x4 vehicles, perfect for traversing the spectacular Cinque Terre National Park. This winding two-lane road wends its way among vineyards and olive groves high above the sea.

Lunch: At a local farmhouse. We'll savor the specialties of Liguria in a most authentic setting, with panoramic views of our surroundings.

Afternoon: We'll take a scenic drive back to Monterosso in our 4x4s, enjoying a sweeping view of Vernazza. The balance of the day is free for your own discoveries, and to soak up the sprawling sea views.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You are free to spend your last night as you wish. Perhaps you will retire early to rest before the start of your main adventure tomorrow, or join fellow travelers in the hotel bar to discuss highlights of your time in the Cinque Terre.

Day 7 Transfer to Lecco • Join main trip

- Destination: Lecco
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll bid farewell to the Cinque Terre and drive to Lecco—a journey of about 4 hours. There, you'll join fellow travelers arriving for your *Northern Italy: The Alps, Dolomites & Lombardy* adventure.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Cinque Terre by boat

(Day 5 \$160 per person)

Depart from Monterosso pier for an exclusive, private boat tour along the coast of the Cinque Terre, stopping for discovery walks and hikes along the way. Our boat ride begins with views of the emerald green waters, hidden grottoes, and five villages nestled on the coast or perched on the steep hills. We'll stop in Vernazza, home to the striking Doria Castle, positioned to guard against pirates. The Castle at Vernazza is irregular in shape; it was built to follow the contours of the ridge upon which it sits, so that there would be no blind spots and its guards would have unobstructed views of the sea. Our boat tour ends back in Monterosso, where we'll enjoy an included lunch.

Please Note: *This optional tour is available seasonally and is subject to weather conditions.*

PRE-TRIP

The Swiss Alps: Lucerne, Bern & Zermatt

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 7 nights accommodation
- » 14 meals—7 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 4 dinners
- » 7 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

From the 14th-century watchtowers of Lucerne to the undulating hills of pastoral Luthern and chiselled peak of Zermatt's iconic Matterhorn, this 7-night adventure reveals quintessential Alpine scenery and the heart of its cultural heritage.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Afternoon: Depart the U.S. on an overnight flight to Zurich, Switzerland.

Day 2 Arrive in Zurich, Switzerland • Transfer to Lucerne

- Destination: Lucerne
- Accommodations: Hotel Wilden Mann

Afternoon: Arrive in Zurich, Switzerland and transfer to Lucerne, where you'll join travelers who arrived early before their pre-trip extension. Ask your Trip Experience Leader about leading an orientation walk later today, should you be interested.

Dinner: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for dining suggestions.

Evening: Free to explore as you'd like. You might like to rest after a long travel day, or stretch your legs with a walk around the vicinity of the hotel.

Day 3 Explore Lucerne • Conversation about Swiss neutrality

- Destination: Lucerne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Wilden Mann

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning we'll begin with a Welcome Briefing, during which we'll learn what we can expect on our Swiss adventure. Afterward, we'll set out to explore Lucerne, a medieval city situated in central Switzerland. Set on the shores of sparkling Lake Lucerne and featuring a backdrop of snowcapped mountains, Lucerne is marked by 14th-century circular walls, centuries-old watchtowers, and ancient covered bridges. Led by a local guide, we'll discover historic landmarks, such as the early 17th-century Renaissance Town Hall, featuring Florentine renaissance designs, as well as Lucerne's 17th-century cathedral.

Lunch: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for restaurant suggestions. Perhaps you'll try the regional dish of *Zürcher Geschnetzeltes*, sliced veal strips immersed in a white wine, cream, and demiglace.

Afternoon: This afternoon, we'll discuss the topic of Swiss neutrality. We'll learn from our host about the historical decision Switzerland made during the Paris Treaty of 1815 to "always stay neutral," and the positive and negative effect it has today on the Swiss people.

The remainder of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll visit the Church of St. Leodegar, named after the city's patron saint, which sits on a small hill just above the lakefront. Originally built in 735 AD, the present structure was erected in 1633 in the late Renaissance style and features an ornate interior.

Dinner: This evening we'll gather for a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant, featuring regional cuisine.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Day 4 Lucerne • Optional Mt. Pilatus tour

- Destination: Lucerne
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Wilden Mann

Activity Note: The optional tour to Mt. Pilatus operates seasonally, and is subject to weather conditions.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: You'll have the day free to explore Lucerne, or you might like to join our optional tour to Mt. Pilatus. Towering over Lucerne at 7,000 feet above sea level, Mt. Pilatus is a multi-peaked massif that dominates the spectacular skyline and provides ample

opportunity for outdoor recreation. Legend has it that the mountain was named after Pontius Pilate, presumably blown here by the devil as punishment for the Crucifixion. In 1868, Queen Victoria ascended the mountain by mule, but today, visitors venture up by cable car or cogwheel train, featuring a gradient of up to 48%—making it one of the world's steepest. For those who join the optional tour, we'll brave a ride on the train, passing Alpine meadows and distinctive rock formations along the journey. Upon arrival at the top, we'll embark on a hike through forest, passing a fresh spring and crossing verdant fields. On a clear day, we'll be able to enjoy views from the top that extend nearly 200 miles, allowing us to catch a glimpse of the neighboring country of Italy.

Lunch: On your own if you do not join the optional tour. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions. For those who do join the tour, lunch will be at a mountain chalet in Krienseregg, a section of Mt. Pilatus.

Afternoon: Travelers who join the optional tour will head back to Lucerne this afternoon. The remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll venture to the Glacier Garden, a natural geological site discovered in 1872. The garden consists of a grouping of potholes formed 20,000 years ago during the last Ice Age. Visitors can examine countless fossils excavated here, many of which are shellfish, as this used to be the shoreline of a subtropical sea some 20 million years ago.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Free for your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll wander through the old town, a pedestrian-only thoroughfare.

Day 5 Luthern discovery walk & hike • Transfer to Bern

- Destination: Bern
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Savoy Bern

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll say goodbye to Lucerne today and make our way to the capital city of Bern, with a stop along the way in Luthern. A municipality in the provincial area of Lucerne, Luthern is considered one of the most beautiful villages in Switzerland. With a population of just 1,289 inhabitants, more than 95% of the 15 square miles of this village is undeveloped, reserved for either agricultural use, recreational purposes, or nature preservation. The landscape here is truly a sight to behold: wave-like green hills punctuated by evergreen forest, provincial churches, and rustic farmsteads—a welcomed respite from the hustle and bustle of urban Lucerne.

To get there, we'll embark on a short hike, taking in the sweeping views of the Swiss Central Plateau as we go. Then, in Luthern, we'll pass by the parish church and surrounding structures—the parish hall, parsonage, tithe barn and several residences—which all date back to the mid- to late 18th-century. Along the way, we may have an opportunity to meet some of the friendly locals who reside here.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll head out to visit the 16th-century pilgrimage site of Luthern Bad. Located at the foot of Napf Mountain, the site is home to a church, which offers services and blessings for people who are ill and disabled. This tradition traces back to a local man named Jakob Minder, who claimed to have been visited by the Madonna, advising him to dig for water and wash in it. In doing so, he was miraculously healed of his ailment. The

church that stands here today was built in 1949, replacing its run-down predecessor. We'll have a chance to dip our arms and feet in special areas allocated to visitors.

Later this afternoon, we'll transfer to Bern, where we'll check in to our hotel. The remainder of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries. Your Trip Experience Leader will be available to lead an orientation walk, should you be interested.

Dinner: On your own. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Evening: The rest of the day is free to explore on your own. You might wish to venture to a local bar for a nightcap with fellow travelers.

Day 6 Explore Bern • Visit Tierpark Bern • Optional Lake Murten tour

- Destination: Bern
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Savoy Bern

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: In the company of a local guide, we'll explore the capital city of Bern this morning. Built around a bend of the Aare River, this twelfth-century city is laden with covered arcades, lively squares, world-class museums, dramatic towers, and colorful fountains. Bern is considered one of Europe's most remarkably preserved medieval towns, due to its UNESCO World Heritage-listed old quarter.

Next, we'll continue on to Tierpark Bern, a renowned zoo situated on the banks of the Aare. These grounds include a special area dedicated solely to bears. Brown bears have a long, complicated history in Bern. For hundreds of years, they were kept in enclosures throughout the city, referred to as "bear pits"—in fact, this tradition officially ended only a couple decades ago, as cries from local and international

animal rights groups grew. Today, the bears of Bern live in natural surroundings with ample room to roam and exhibit their usual behaviors, such as bathing and scratching against trees.

Lunch: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions. Perhaps you'll try *leberspiesschen*, grilled calves' livers wrapped in bacon and sage.

Afternoon: The remainder of the afternoon is free for your own discoveries. You might like to visit the Bern Historical Museum, featuring historical and ethnographical collections dating back to the Stone Age.

Alternatively, you may want to join our optional tour to Lake Murten (known in German as Murtensee). First, we'll take a train to Murten, a charming medieval town located on the lake's shores. We'll set out on a discovery walk of the Old Town with our Trip Experience Leader, stopping to take in the picturesque architecture, cobbled streets, and expansive lakeside promenade. We'll also admire the 16th-century Murten Castle, which stands as a lookout over the lake.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like. Travelers on the optional tour will enjoy a wine tasting of the Vully wine region and dinner at a local restaurant before returning by train to Bern.

Evening: Free to explore as you wish. Perhaps you'd like to enjoy a slice of *Bündner Nusstorte*, a shortbread pastry filled with nuts and caramel. Travelers on the optional tour will return to Bern via train later this evening.

Day 7 Explore Andermatt • Glacier Express ride to Zermatt

- Destination: Zermatt
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Sonne Zermatt or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we'll inch closer to the Italian border with a drive to Andermatt, a scenic Alpine village that boasts postcard-worthy chalets and meandering cobbled lanes. Andermatt is also a stop on the Glacier Express railway, which connects the major Alpine towns of Zermatt and St. Moritz.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Andermatt.

Afternoon: Depart on a panoramic ride aboard the Glacier Express, a journey that will take us to our next destination of Zermatt. Known as the slowest express train in the world, the Glacier Express will take us on a stunning ride this afternoon that will come to a dramatic end in the Mattertal Valley, at the foot of the imposing Matterhorn and where we'll find the chalet-filled village of Zermatt.

Upon arrival, we'll walk to our hotel, providing the opportunity to stop and take in views of the nearly 15,000-foot Matterhorn.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: Free to do as you'd like. You may wish to try *Glühwein* (mulled wine) or *Jägertee* (strong rum punch) at a local bar.

Day 8 Explore Zermatt • Discover Sunnegga & Blauherd

- Destination: Zermatt
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Sonne Zermatt or similar

Activity Note: The funicular to Sunnegga is closed at the end of April and in the middle of October for maintenance. During those times, the group will reach the Matterhorn through the Trockener Steg or the Shwartzsee funicular.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin today with a discovery walk of Zermatt, a skiers' paradise and home to the most distinct mountain on earth, the famously-curved Matterhorn. Although dominated by its mountain surroundings, Zermatt is worth exploring in and of itself. A bustling car-free town, Zermatt is brimming with Swiss-style timber chalets, quaint shops, noteworthy restaurants, and a revolving door of spirited, international crowds. But perhaps most interestingly, Zermatt boasts a small, historic quarter, most of which lies along the main street of Hinterdorfstrasse. Here, we'll find centuries-old wooden homes, barns, and sheds, reinforced by stone and partially renovated. Some of the oldest of these structures date back to the early 17th century.

Lunch: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide dining ideas. For a taste of Switzerland, you might want to try *raclette*, a melted, Swiss-style cheese in which you can dip various ingredients.

Afternoon: Following lunch, we'll board a funicular and ride through a rock tunnel to Sunnegga, a ski resort area offering spectacular views of the Matterhorn. Keep your camera at the ready here, both for unparalleled, panoramic shots of the mountain and also for marmots, often seen scurrying about the area.

Next, we'll proceed to Blauherd by gondola, perhaps the best vantage point for viewing the Matterhorn. We'll explore the area on foot by taking one of the many trails that begin here.

Dinner: This evening, we'll come together for a Farewell Dinner.

Evening: Free to explore on your own. Perhaps you'll venture to a local pub with fellow travelers, where you can continue celebrating your discoveries.

Day 9 Zermatt • Lake Orta • Transfer to Lecco • Join main trip

- Destination: Lecco
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll bid farewell to Switzerland this morning and make our way to Italy, with a stop along the way at Lake Orta, part of northern Italy's romantic lakes district. Here, we'll embark on a discovery walk around the lake, as well as the medieval village of Orta San Giulio. Surrounded by dense, green woodlands and nestled in the shadow of the Alps, this tranquil area allows for communing with nature and enjoying life at a slower pace. Following our walk, you'll have some free time to explore the area on your own. Perhaps you'll sit by the lake and gaze out at San Giulio Island, which sits directly in the middle of the calm waters. Or, you might like to stroll through the town, which sits on a promontory and juts out from the eastern bank of the lake.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: This afternoon, we'll continue our journey to Lecco, where we'll join fellow travelers and begin our *Northern Italy: The Alps, Dolomites & Lombardy* adventure.

OPTIONAL TOURS

Mt. Pilatus Optional tour

(Day 4 \$210 per person)

This scenic excursion offers an exploration of Mt. Pilatus, a 7,000-foot multi-peaked massif that soars over Lucerne and central Switzerland. Venture up by cable car or cogwheel train, featuring a gradient of up to 48%—making it one of the world’s steepest. Pass by Alpine meadows and distinctive rock formations, as you climb high into the clouds. Weather permitting, we’ll take in views that extend nearly 200 miles, even into the neighboring country of Italy. We’ll round out our discoveries with lunch at a restaurant in Krienseregg followed by a 2-mile hike through the forest.

Please Note: *The optional tour to Mt. Pilatus operates seasonally, and is subject to weather conditions.*

Optional Lake Murten tour

(Day 6 \$170 per person)

Visit Lake Murten (known in German as Murtensee) on this optional tour. First, we’ll take a train to Murten, a charming medieval town located on the lake’s shores. We’ll set out on a discovery walk of the Old Town with our Trip Experience Leader, stopping to take in the quaint architecture, cobbled streets, expansive lakeside promenade, and the 16th-century Murten Castle. Later, enjoy a wine tasting of the Vully wine region and dinner before our return train journey.

POST-TRIP

Classic Venice: Murano & Burano

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- | | |
|--|---|
| » All land transportation | » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader |
| » 4 nights accommodation | » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters |
| » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 3 dinner | » All transfers |
| » 5 small group activities | |

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Cap off your Italian adventures with four nights exploring the cobblestone streets and captivating canals of Venice. Take in the sites of Venice on a walking tour, hop on a ferry to a colorful islands of Burano and Murano, and discover the hidden charms of Italy's most romantic city.

Day 1 Transfer to Venice

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Papadopoli Venezia or similar

Morning: This morning, we'll have an orientation meeting at our hotel in the Venetian countryside before we transfer to Tronchetto, an artificial island in the Venetian Lagoon. From here we'll take a quick ride on a local water taxi to our Venice hotel. After dropping off our bags, we'll join our Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk along the streets of this canal-laced city.

With humble beginnings as a village of fishermen, Venice's seaside allure captivated the city-dwelling Italians around the 5th century AD and continues to prove a popular destination today, and has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You might watch gondolas cruising through the canals, or visit

shops selling intricately-decorated masks traditionally used during festivals and other events to conceal the wearer's identity.

Lunch: At a local restaurant for a traditional Italian meal.

Afternoon: Enjoy a free afternoon to explore Venice. Or you may join your Trip Experience Leader for a discovery walk. You may wander to Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square), the city's only public square and home to two 1,000-year-old columns holding the guardians of Venice: St. Theodore and St. Mark. Palazzo Ducale, a Venetian-Gothic palazzo considered by many to be the grandest civic structure in Italy. It served as the residence and seat of the Doges, who ruled Venice for more than 1,000 years.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like.

Evening: Tonight you are free to continue exploring at your own pace, browsing the local shops, strolling through St. Mark's Square, or reflecting on the day with fellow travelers at the hotel.

Day 2 Venice

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Papadopoli Venezia or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet our local guide and embark on an hour-long walking tour of Venice, stopping at sites such as Basilica San Marco, Venice's most famous church and an excellent example of Byzantine architecture. The rest of the day is yours to pursue independent discoveries in Venice. Perhaps you will take the *vaporetto*, the local water bus, to the Rialto Mercato where you can browse the market wares and see locals doing their shopping.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: You may continue exploring Venice at your own pace this afternoon.

Dinner: On your own tonight. You might choose to try *baccala mantecato*, a regional specialty featuring salted cod, olive oil, garlic, and parsley.

Evening: You have the freedom to explore Venice more this evening or relax at the hotel to make use of its amenities.

Day 3 Venice • Visit Burano & Murano islands

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Papadopoli Venezia or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll travel like the locals and take the *vaporetto* to Burano, an island in the Venetian Lagoon with fishing and lace-making traditions, and lots of colorfully painted houses. The custom of painting homes in bright colors on Burano may have originated from the color schemes of local fishing boats. There is also a small two-story lace museum located in the old *Scuola dei Merletti*, the site of Burano's renowned lace-making school, and a lace-making workshop featuring historic and contemporary designs. Upon arrival, we'll have some free time to take in the sights such as sidewalk cafés, local shops, and the Church of Saint Martin.

Then, we'll take another *vaporetto* to the tranquil island of Murano, home of a glass-making tradition that goes back to the 13th century. We'll enjoy a 30-minute walking tour along the canals of Murano and see some of the many glassblowing shops of this island in the Venice Lagoon.

Lunch: At a local restaurant on Murano.

Afternoon: You will have some free time after lunch to explore as you wish. Then we'll take a *vaporetto* ride back to the hotel, arriving in the late afternoon. Enjoy some free time to make more discoveries in this unique Italian city. Perhaps you will stop at a local bar for a *Bellini*, the venetian cousin of a Mimosa made with Prosecco and white peach juice.

Dinner: On your own, whenever you'd like.

Evening: Tonight, you may head out again into the city, enjoy drinks with fellow travelers at the hotel, or retire early to prepare for tomorrow's discoveries.

Day 4 Free time in Venice • Optional San Lazzaro Island tour • Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Venice
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Papadopoli Venezia or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: The day is yours to explore Venice at your own pace. If you'd like, you may accompany your Trip Experience Leader on an hour-long discovery walk to explore a few of Venice's hidden gems, such as historic landmarks and local purveyors. Or you can choose to join an optional tour to San Lazzaro degli Armeni, a small island in the middle of the Venetian Canal. Originally a leper colony (it was named after Lazarus, the patron saint of lepers), the island was abandoned and then given as a gift by Venetians to Armenian monks, who have lived and worked there for more than 300 years. About a dozen monks continue to live on San Lazzaro, which is also home to library that houses some 180,000 valuable manuscripts, texts, and books—and remains an important repository of Armenian history and culture. A private water taxi will take us to San Lazzaro, where we'll meet with one of the monks and then visit the monastery and library. Afterwards, we'll have time to explore on our own before returning by water taxi.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you will grab a pastry to go and find a spot with a view of the gondolas navigating the canals.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free to do some last-minute shopping and make our final discoveries in this Italian city. Maybe you

will seek out a shop selling vibrant Venetian masks or Murano glass, or peruse the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, located in the arts patroness' former home on the Grand Canal. Along with featuring a permanent collection of 20th-century American and European art, the museum of masterpieces boasts a sculpture garden and rotating exhibits.

Dinner: We'll gather together for a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant, enjoying our final Italian meal, and perhaps toasting a glass of wine to the new memories we've made.

Evening: You may head out again into the city, enjoy a goodbye drink with fellow travelers at the hotel, or prepare for your departure tomorrow.

Day 5 Depart for U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel. A boxed breakfast will be available for travelers with early morning flights.

Morning: Transfer to the Venice airport for your return flight home to the U.S.

OPTIONAL TOUR

San Lazzaro Island

(Day 4 \$120 per person)

This optional tour visits one of the lesser-known islands in the Venetian Canal, San Lazzaro degli Armeni. Originally a leper colony (it was named after Lazarus, the patron saint of lepers), the island was abandoned and then given as a gift by Venetians to Armenian monks, who have lived and worked there for more than 300 years. About a dozen monks continue to live on San Lazzaro, which is also home to library that houses some 180,000 valuable manuscripts, texts, and books—and remains an important repository of Armenian history and culture. A private water taxi will take us to San Lazzaro, where we'll meet with one of the monks and then visit the monastery and library. Afterwards, we'll have time to explore on our own before returning by water taxi.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip:** You will need 2 blank passport pages.
- **Pre- and/or post-trip extensions in Italy:** No additional pages needed.
- **Stopover in Barcelona, Copenhagen, Madrid, Paris, Amsterdam, Helsinki, Munich, or Rome:** No additional pages needed.
- **Stopover in London or Istanbul:** You will need to add an additional page to the applicable total listed above.

Visa Required

We will provide you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Italy, Switzerland):** U.S. citizens will require an online visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no set timeline for when this requirement will start – O.A.T. will contact all impacted travelers before their departure once the start date is confirmed.

- **United Kingdom (stopover only):** The United Kingdom requires an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) for entry. This includes entry to England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. You will need an ETA if the UK is your final destination or if you are transiting through a UK airport. The ETA will be valid for 2 years.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 6 locations in 15 days with one 1-night stay

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 5–6 miles unassisted and participate in 6 hours of physical activities each day
- Agility and balance are required for embarking a small boat
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

ALTITUDE

- Elevations of up to 9,960 feet at Diavolezza in the Alps, and 7,280 feet at Sella Pass in the Dolomites

CLIMATE

- Lecco has a typical Mediterranean climate, but summers can be very hot and humid while winters can bring occasional snow with temperatures falling below freezing; Dolomite summers are mild with average temperatures from June to October rarely going above 77°F

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Travel on some rugged paths and many cobblestoned streets on foot, as well as over narrow, windy rural roads by bus; several elective hikes
- Ability to climb steep stairs and walk up and downhill is required in several locations
- Travel by motor coach, ferry, funicular, and train

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 11–18 hours with at least one connection of 2–3 hours

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than those in the U.S. and offer basic amenities

- Some hotels do not have an elevator or air-conditioning
- All accommodations feature private baths, with either a shower or tub depending on the hotel

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to "Find International Travel Information", select "Country Information", then enter the country into the search bar; if you don't see any medications specifically mentioned under the "Health" section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.

- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Water in Italy and Switzerland is considered safe, but as an added safety precaution against possible stomach upsets, we recommend you drink bottled water as much as possible.
- If you prefer bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.
- Or you may wish to bring a reusable water bottle with you from home and fill that up before you head out for the day.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need local currency instead (i.e. euros in Italy, Swiss franc in Switzerland).

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

Switzerland: Swiss Franc (Fr.)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way to obtain local currency is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You may be able to exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices, however they do not typically offer good exchange rates and can be difficult to find. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We

recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Italy: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Italy. Occasionally a small “Mom and Pop” restaurant will be cash only, and street vendors or taxis usually are cash only, but most other businesses will take cards.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** The equivalent in euros of \$1–2 per room, per night

- **Waiters:** Your Trip Experience Leader will tip waiters for included meals. If you are dining on your own, tipping is often included in the price; look for the words *servizio incluso* in the menu or bill. If tipping is not included, a tip of 5% to 10% is customary. In addition, you may see the word *coperto* on your bill. This is not a tip, but more of a cover charge for the use of the table.
- **Public Restrooms:** Many public restrooms in Italy are manned by cleaning staff. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—about EUR .50 per person. Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. Prices range from EUR .50 to EUR 2.00 per single use. Many restaurants, cafes, and shops have pay-toilets or expect you to make a purchase before using the facilities.
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

Please note: For your convenience, tips to O.A.T. staff can be paid in U.S. dollars or local currency. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Customization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Customization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our customization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Customization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Travelers who personalize their O.A.T. air to explore Venice at the end of the main trip: If you purchased air with O.A.T. and choose to spend additional nights on your own in Venice after the conclusion of the main trip, we will provide a complimentary transfer on the group departure date

from your last hotel on the main trip (on the mainland) to the Venice airport, where you can then hire a water taxi to bring you to your hotel. (This does not apply if you purchased your own airfare or if you are joining the post-trip extension.)

IMPORTANT: Independent Airport Transfers in Venice (*post-trip extension only*): Travelers on the post-trip extension who chose to arrange their own airport transfer in Venice should keep in mind most transportation is by water and involves advance reservations. You'll have a few options:

- One option is to take a water taxi. Water taxis generally need to be pre-booked and are for a specific number of people. Your hotel should be able to help you book a taxi, but you'll want to make your reservation no later than a day or two before you leave Venice. **You won't be able to join our water taxi at the last minute.** We need a "head count" early on to arrange the water taxi, so we can only take the travelers who have booked their international flights with us.
- Water taxis can be expensive. At time of writing, Trip Advisor estimated the cost to be 100–180 euros (about \$110–\$200). There are two lower cost options: a shared water taxi, known as "Airport Link" or "Bucintoro Viaggi" and the Alilaguna ferries.
- The ferry is usually the most cost-effective option, but it can be slow and is on a fixed route that only picks up passengers in certain locations. The shared water taxi costs more than the ferry, but is considerably less expensive than a private taxi—usually about a third of the cost. For more information check a good guidebook or go online to **www.alilaguna.it** (Alilaguna ferries) or **www.venicelink.com** (Airport Link).
- **No matter which option you chose, the dock might not be directly in front of your hotel.** Depending on where the dock is, you might need to walk several blocks from your hotel to with your luggage.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

Another option is to use a smartphone app like Skype, FaceTime, or WhatsApp. We recommend you use WhatsApp to communicate with home while abroad and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan's data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Italy: +39

Switzerland: +41

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (<i>length+width+depth</i>). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches .
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights. Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.

- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any online or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.
- **Pack casual clothes:** In today's age of informality, comfortable and informal apparel is perfectly acceptable at each of your destinations. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses/skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended. Men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses.
- **Bring rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.
- **Good walking shoes are critical:** This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. Aboard ship, you'll want non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

- **Proper attire in churches:** To satisfy dress codes for Italian churches, men and women are requested to cover their arms and legs. No shorts above the knees or sleeveless garments please. Women wearing sleeveless blouses can cover their bare arms with a scarf. It's no longer necessary for women to cover their heads. Pantsuits are now acceptable in churches.

Recommended Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. Each travelers packing list may be different depending on the climate you are used to. We recommend using **www.weather.com** and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don't forget a reusable water bottle—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A warm layer, such as a sweater, fleece pullover, or jacket

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ☐ Compact umbrella
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat with chin strap
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues

- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards, prescriptions for your medicines
- ☐ Electrical transformer & plug adapters
- ☐ Venice extension only: Rubber or waterproof shoes

Medicines

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Vitamins
- ☐ Cold remedies: Sudafed, Dristan, etc.
- ☐ Pain relief: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ☐ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ☐ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ☐ Allergy medicine for dusty conditions
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)
- ☐ Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- ☐ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family, often as part of the *A Day in the Life* experience. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts’ generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity at hotels in Italy and Switzerland is 230 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

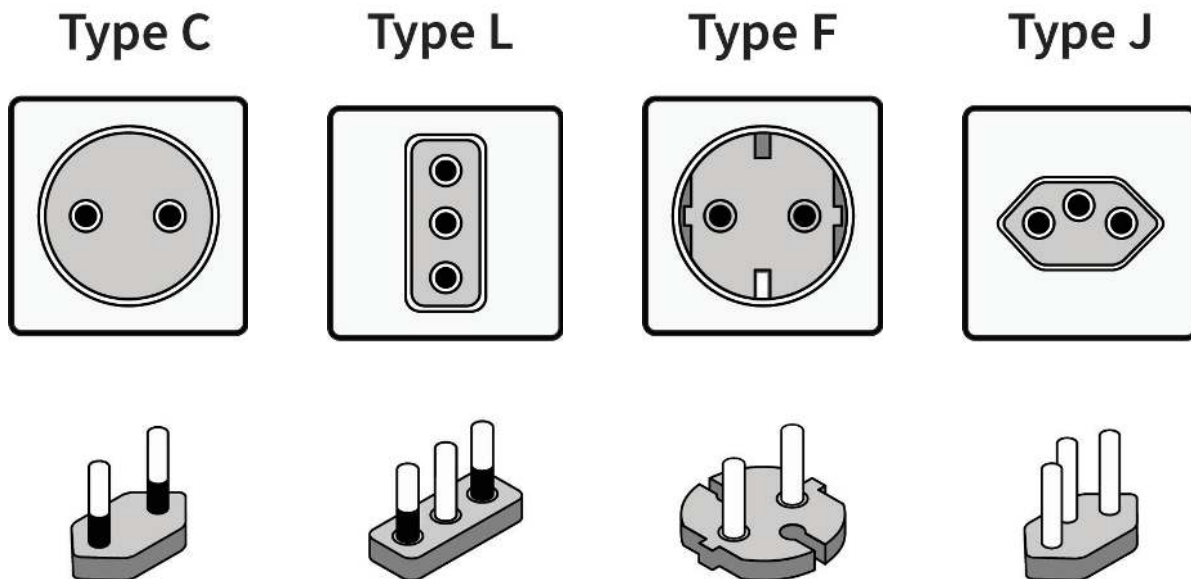
Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Although you are only traveling in one country on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Italy: C, L, or F

Switzerland: C and/or J



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Lake Como, Italy: Lake Como has a relatively mild climate with tropical and sub-tropical plants growing all year round. Some people even compare its climate to that of the Mediterranean region. In January the average daily temperature is about 36° and in July the average is 90°. This region tends to experience unpredictable snowfall, but it is most common in the areas of higher elevation.

Venice, Italy: Venice is situated in the flat, low-lying plains of northern Italy, where the climate features year-round rain and sunshine, hot summers, and surprisingly cold temperatures during the three winter months. Fog, frost, and snow are frequent in midwinter. Thunderstorms can pass through in autumn and spring, though they are the exception and not the rule. While “off-season” travel may involve stints of inclement weather, it rewards you with the chance to explore Venice’s museums, piazzas, and canals at a time when they are wonderfully free of the summer tourist crowds.

Italian Alps: In the Italian Alps, there are great differences between the climate of the valleys and the higher mountains. In winter, the valleys are frequently cloudy and foggy with persistent frost – and the average snowfall is 12 feet. By contrast, the mountains are relatively sunny, though actual temperatures can go as low as zero degrees Fahrenheit. In summer, conditions may be quite the reverse: the mountains shrouded in cloud by day and the valleys basking in warm, clear weather. Evening temperatures will always drop due to the high altitude. A foehn wind sometimes blows from the north and raises temperatures by as much as 25° and lowers humidity. Note: In the Dolomite Mountains, we strongly suggest that you bring a windbreaker/jacket and sweater or fleece with you as the tour will take you to mountain passes and alpine peaks where there can be sudden changes and drops in temperature even in summer.

NOTE: If you are taking one of our optional stopovers before or after your OAT adventure, please be aware the climate and temperatures might be different from what you experienced during your tour. To prepare for weather differences and pack appropriate clothing, we recommend the following world weather sites:

- www.intellicast.com
- www.weather.com
- www.wunderground.com

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	MILAN, ITALY			TIRANO, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	
JAN	43 to 24	91 to 68	6	28 to 12	90	2.2
FEB	48 to 28	91 to 61	6	33 to 15	93	3.6
MAR	56 to 33	89 to 55	8	36 to 12	93	2.7
APR	63 to 40	88 to 55	8	46 to 28	86	3.1
MAY	70 to 48	89 to 58	10	52 to 35	85	5.2
JUN	85 to 67	88 to 57	9	77 to 55	83	7.9
JUL	108 to 80	88 to 55	6	108 to 80	75	4.8
AUG	108 to 80	90 to 55	8	108 to 80	77	4.4
SEP	75 to 53	92 to 59	6	63 to 39	82	2.2
OCT	65 to 44	93 to 66	7	48 to 26	81	2.4
NOV	52 to 33	92 to 68	8	37 to 21	88	3.9
DEC	44 to 26	91 to 68	6	31 to 16	75	0.1

MONTH	LAKE COMO, ITALY			MONTEROSSO, ITALY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	46 to 30	--	2.6	55 to 45	--	1.8
FEB	50 to 31	--	1.8	55 to 45	--	1.7
MAR	58 to 37	--	2.4	59 to 48	--	1.5
APR	62 to 43	--	5.8	64 to 52	--	1.1
MAY	71 to 52	--	6.5	73 to 59	--	1.6
JUN	78 to 58	--	7.1	82 to 66	--	--
JUL	108 to 80	--	5.9	108 to 80	--	--
AUG	108 to 80	--	5.9	108 to 80	--	1.2
SEP	72 to 54	--	6.7	79 to 66	--	2.1
OCT	63 to 47	--	5.7	72 to 61	--	2.8
NOV	53 to 37	--	5.6	63 to 54	--	2.0
DEC	46 to 31	--	2.9	55 to 46	--	3.3

MONTH	VENICE, ITALY			LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	60 to 32	81	6	37 to 26	84	11
FEB	65 to 33	77	5	41 to 28	80	10
MAR	70 to 40	75	6	48 to 33	75	12
APR	81 to 48	75	8	56 to 39	72	13
MAY	95 to 63	73	6	64 to 46	72	14
JUN	100 to 75	74	9	70 to 52	72	14
JUL	108 to 80	71	6	74 to 56	72	13
AUG	108 to 80	72	6	73 to 55	76	13
SEP	100 to 75	75	6	67 to 50	80	9
OCT	81 to 51	77	7	57 to 43	84	9
NOV	65 to 42	79	6	45 to 34	84	10
DEC	60 to 33	81	6	38 to 29	85	11

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

Italian Culture

Encompassing landscapes as varied as the snow-capped mountains of the Alps to the sunbaked vineyards of Sicily, it stands to reason that Italian culture would vary by region. But there are also many cultural influences shared by Italians everywhere, of course. And two of them are food and family. Italians place a great importance on *la famiglia*, and extended family members gather regularly for meals and celebrations. Lots of businesses in Italy are both family owned and family run, especially the numerous *trattorias* and *enotecas* (wine bars). And never underestimate an Italian's love of food. Many recipes are passed down through generations and they are deeply proud of their cuisine—just as they are of their country.

With vibrant villas etched into seaside cliffs and craggy mountains plunging into a cobalt sea, the Amalfi Coast is a string of romantic towns and clifftop resorts. At the gateway to this coastal paradise lies Sorrento. It was the obligatory stop on the 19th-century “Grand Tour” of aristocratic young men and became a popular vacation spot for literary geniuses, such as Byron, Dickens, and Tolstoy. The region overall is home to some of Italy's finest hotels and restaurants.

Like all of its neighbors, the Amalfi Coast is renowned for its ancient architecture and artistic history. One of the biggest draws of the region is its abundance of ancient ruins, like Pompeii and Herculaneum, two Roman towns that were buried by Vesuvian ash during the same eruption in AD 79. Over the past two centuries, the culture of this area has been influenced by an influx of artists, writers, and composers from all over the world—from Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot, and Liz Taylor to Norman Douglas, Graham Greene, and Gore Vidal. Further back in time, the Amalfi Coast has drawn writers like Swede Axel Munthe, Henrik Ibsen, Goethe, and composer Richard Wagner to its shores.

The Tuscan experience is bound together through its legendary landscapes, world-renowned art, and *cucina contadina* (farmer's kitchen). Tuscany's timeless vistas are truly postcard material—from grape-laden vines blanketing its rolling hills to honey-hued medieval villages perched along the hillsides. Then, there's the art. The Etruscans and Romans left their mark with fabled sites and monuments, such as the necropolis of Populonia and the Roman Theatre in Fiesole. But it was during the Middle Ages where Florentine art really began to flourish. From sculptors like Nicola Pisano, Giovanni Pisano, and Arnolfo di Cambio to painters like Cimabue and Giotto,

Tuscany was the pinnacle of artistic grandeur in Italy. Michelangelo, one of the greatest Tuscan artists, actually argued that his talent and skills were due to the “lightness” of Tuscan air. Today, these masterpieces are safeguarded in churches and museums throughout the region.

Tuscany is a gastronomic paradise, where residents spend most of their time thinking about, discussing, and consuming the fruits of their fertile land (understandably so). Tuscans show an enormous amount of pride in the quality and taste of their food and wine. From handmade pastas at a family-run *pastificio tradizionale* to locally produced wines in Chianti, Montalcino, and Montefalco, simple and honest flavors are the mark of central Italy’s medieval villages and terraced countryside.

Religious Festivals in Italy

As a deeply Catholic country, Italy celebrates many religious festivals. But the two biggest are Christmas and Easter. Christmas is celebrated much as in the U.S. but with some key differences. For example, the unofficial start of the Christmas season is the Day of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) and the end is Epiphany (January 6); the focal point of decoration is usually an elaborate nativity scene rather than a Christmas tree; and the festive meal often features fish and seafood rather than a turkey, ham, or other meat. Special foods like *panettone* cake or certain pastas may also be served at this time of year. Also different from the U.S. is when presents are opened—depending on what part of Italy you are from, it could be on Saint Lucia’s Day (December 13), Christmas Day (December 25), or Epiphany, when a good witch called *la befana* brings candy to children—but only if you were good last year.

The other big festival is Easter, which is on a lunar schedule, and thus changes dates each year (although it usually falls in February or March). The kick off for the Easter season is Lent, a six-week period of penitence when practicing Catholics “give up” something they enjoy as a way of showing devotion. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, when many Italians will go to church to receive a cross made of ashes on their forehead, which they will then wear for the rest of the day. Note that Carnival—which is meant to blow off steam before the seriousness—comes before Lent, but is not considered a religious festival. Instead it usually involves street parties, costumes, music, masks, eating, drinking, and crowds. (Venice in particular gets very crowded.)

Lent ends during *Settimana Santa* (Holy Week). This runs the week before Easter, and includes the Monday after. Smaller shops or family-run restaurants may be closed during this week or on special hours. But larger or famous sites generally stay open as normal except on Easter Sunday or the Monday after. If you have your heart set on a specific attraction, we suggest you check their holiday schedule in advance to avoid disappointment. Religious places of interest, such as historic chapels/churches, will often have special services that you are welcome to attend—even if you are not Catholic. Note that the Vatican celebrations in particular are very popular and will likely need some advance planning or involve waiting in some very long lines.

Dressing for Churches

Most churches in Italy have a dress code, whether overly stated or not. Typically all they are looking for is shorts/skirts to the knee and covered shoulders. If you’ll be traveling during warm weather months and want to go sleeveless or wear a tank top, then we suggest that you throw a

light sweater, cover-up, or shawl into your daypack. That way you'll have it on hand if you want to pop into a church. In our experience, the dress code is enforced the most in the Vatican/Sistine Chapel and in Rome, but it could come up in any church.

Hotel Courtesy in Italy

Italian hotels do not allow food and beverages to be taken from their breakfast rooms, nor is it courteous to eat or drink food or beverages purchased elsewhere in hotel common rooms. In conformity with municipal laws to promote urban decorum, hotels do not allow hanging laundry on room balconies. Travel clotheslines, used in your bathroom, are a more private and effective solution.

Taking Photographs

When taking photos of people in most countries, be polite and ask permission to take a close-up. In many countries, you should not be taking photos of children or older women without permission. Do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

Please obey any signs regarding photos at museum or sites; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room – use a room safe as needed. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt.

Italian Cuisine

Italy may have been unified as a nation in 1861, but its cuisine is another story—and a glorious one at that. Here, gastronomy has always been a matter of regionalism and seasonality. The country is divided up into 20 distinct regions, each with its own specialties. The good news is that there is certainly culinary overlap, and since Italians are famously passionate about food, you can enjoy many beloved regional dishes all over Italy.

The structure of a typical Italian meal is designed to stimulate your appetite, and promote moderation—along with variety. So it will begin with dishes like the following:

- **Apertivo:** A glass of sparkling prosecco or spumante white wine or Spritz.
- **Antipasto all'Italiana:** Raw vegetables served with various cheeses salami and Speck
- **Crostini** Fried polenta squares topped with sauces or pâtés,
- **Bagna Cauda:** A hot dish made with garlic and anchovies, dipping sauce for vegetables typical of Piedmont

The first course, called Primo, comes next. Here is where you may enjoy your carbohydrates as a small dish such as:

- **Polenta:** A dense cornmeal porridge can be served with various toppings, like tomato meat sauce or a “white” sauce of sausage and mushrooms.
- **Canederli:** A large gnocchi dish made with stale bread soaked in milk, eggs, and smoked bacon, flavored with butter and cheese.
- **Risotto alla Milanese:** A simple and creamy risotto with the perfect combination of simple ingredients like butter, white wine, parmesan, and saffron
- **Pizzoccheri:** Long noodles, made from a dough of wheat and buckwheat, is served with potatoes, butter, Casera cheese and stewed savoy cabbage from Lombardy

The main course is called Il secondo. This is usually a small, simply prepared dish of chicken, meat, or fish including:

- **Cotoletta alla Milanese:** A tender veal cutlet coated in crunchy breadcrumbs fried in butter
- **Osso Buco:** Braised veal shanks crusted with a citrus zest mixture called gremolata.
- **Vitello Tonnato:** A dish of cold, sliced tuna

Your meal will conclude with a Dolce (sweet) such as:

- **Tiramisu:** A layered confection of sponge cake, mascarpone cheese, coffee and liqueur.
- **Sbrisolona:** A crumbly almond cake from Lombardy.
- **Strudel di Mele:** Similar to the German apple strudel, this is a flaky pastry stuffed with apples.
- **Castagnaccio:** A gluten-free cake, baked with chestnut flour mixed with olive oil, walnuts, pine nuts, raisins, and rosemary for a slightly savory taste

Dolci may be served with coffee or an alcoholic digestivo such as herbal amaro or limoncello. It is meant to aid your digestion of a memorable meal, one that will certainly have been toast-worthy

Swiss Cuisine

Swiss gastronomy reflects the best traditions of neighboring France, Germany, Italy, and Austria. But often these borrowed dishes have a Swiss twist. Then, there are uniquely Swiss specialties that tend to be simple, but stand out for the freshness and quality of their local ingredients.

One of the most well-known dishes is **fondue**, which is cheese melted with white wine in a special pot called a *caquelon*. It's as much a social experience as gustatory one, because it is meant to be shared by all at the table. Each diner will dip small pieces of bread into the melted cheese. Another cheesy classic is the Valais specialty, **raclette**. This is not only a type of cheese, it's a way

of enjoying it. The cheese is slowly grilled over a fire, and as each layer melts it is sliced off to blanket boiled potatoes, pickles and onions. Friends will patiently wait for their slices of *raclette* to melt while sharing conversation and glasses of local **Fendant wine**.

- **Roesti:** These potato cakes are grated, pan fried till golden and crispy, and topped with salty **speck** (bacon), a fried egg, and melted *raclette* cheese. They are delicious paired with gherkins and pickled pearl onions.
- **Papet Vaudois:** A mix of leeks and potatoes that are simmered for hours. This makes a creamy base for the plump, red **saucisson Vaudois** or sausage of the Vaud canton.
- **Risotto:** This famous rice dish is popular all over northern Italy, but here it is flavored with dark red saffron grown in the canton of Valais. It is one of the best in the world, referred to as red gold. In the Ticino, your risotto may come with veal and bacon.
- **Zurcher geschnetzeltes:** This dish hails from Zurich but is a national dish. This is diced veal, calves kidneys, and sweetbreads sautéed in a sauce of onions, butter, white wine, cream, and mushrooms.
- **Zopf:** Try this sweet, yeasty bread that is braided and baked and served with butter and jam for breakfast.
- **Birchermüesli:** A glass of oat flakes mixed with milk, yogurt, grated apple, hazelnuts and almonds. It's all left in a fridge overnight and served in the morning.
- **Cordon bleu:** You may think this is a French dish, but it was actually invented in Switzerland. It is a meat cutlet of chicken, veal, or pork that is pounded thin, layered with a thin slice of ham and **Gruyère cheese**, then breaded and fried.
- The French also made **absinthe** fashionable, but it was introduced here by a Swiss doctor, Pierre Ordinaire, who created this potent spirit that is anything but ordinary.
- **Leckerli:** If you want something sweet try these sticky, spicy, sweet gingerbread cookies with a hint of hazelnut. They originated in Bern but are now a Christmas favorite all over Switzerland.
- Of course, your sweet tooth will crave the heavenly **Swiss chocolate**, but when you want something lighter, the Swiss are wizards with **meringue**. You'll find it whipped into cake frosting, mounded on pies, or mixed into chewy cookies with chocolate, fruits, and ground nuts.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Italy

Popular souvenirs include leather goods, silk ties, knitwear, gold jewelry, ceramics, straw goods and other handicrafts, small cabinets, and jewelry boxes. Each region in Italy has its specialties. You'll also see many different items made from olive wood or Carrara marble; just remember that any marble items you purchase should be put into your checked luggage for the flight home. (If you put them in your carry-on, they may be confiscated by security as "weapons".) In Italy, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 4% to 22%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked Tax Free Shopping stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or our local staff for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special Global Tax Refund forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

Switzerland

Popular Swiss souvenirs include chocolate, cheese, clocks and watches, embroidery, and Swiss Army knives. Switzerland's bargains are to be discovered during sales in July and August. The sales tax (or VAT) is already included in the price. The amount on the price tag is the one you pay.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Italy

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 116,348 square miles
- **Capital:** Rome
- **Languages:** Italian is the official language; German, French, and Slovene are also spoken in towns near the borders of Austria, France, and Slovenia.
- **Ethnicity:** Italian, with small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian- and Greek-Italians in the south
- **Location:** Italy is bordered by France, Slovenia, Austria, Switzerland, the Ligurian Sea, the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Ionian Sea, the Adriatic Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Geography:** Italy lies in southern Europe and includes the Mediterranean islands of Sicily, Sardinia, and several other small islands. The region of Tuscany is a blend of rugged hills, fertile valleys, and long stretches of sandy beaches that curve along the west coast of central Italy and fringe the pine-forested coastal plain of the Maremma. Sicily enjoys mountains in the north and east, a vast central plateau, and a fertile coastline dotted with sea-level resort towns.
- **Population:** 58,990,000 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Christian 80% (overwhelming Roman Catholic), Atheists and Agnostics 20%, Muslims estimated at less than 2%
- **Time Zone:** Italy is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Rome. Daylight Saving Time begins the last weekend in March and ends the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Italy

In addition to the holidays listed below, Italy celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

04/25 Liberation Day

05/01 Labor Day

06/02 Republic Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Italy: A Brief History

Italy proudly wears the mantle of Rome, the polity from which so much of Italy's historical, cultural, and religious heritage has derived. But even though the Romans were the first to unify the peninsula, they were not the first to dominate it. That honor goes to the Etruscans, whose empire, Etruria, reached its zenith in the 7th century BC. It was centered between the Arno and Tiber rivers, mostly in Tuscany. The Etruscans were farmers, miners, seafarers and warriors, but they were riven by factionalism and in 509 BC, their last king was tossed out by Ligurian-Latin nobles in the small town of Rome. Tired of monarchs, they created the first Roman Republic.

Etruscan culture disappeared by the 2nd century AD, but the Romans were quick to appropriate many aspects of the Greek culture that had taken root in southern Italy and Sicily, where there were Hellenic colonies called "Magna Graecia." As the colonies were absorbed, so were Greek religion, architecture, and the basic tenets of democracy. During the 1st century BC, Julius Caesar defeated Gaul, making Rome the ruler of the entire Mediterranean world. After Caesar's assassination in 44 B.C., his nephew Octavian, later called Augustus, became Rome's first official emperor. The capital became an architectural showcase, and new territories stretched across Europe into Asia Minor, existing under a "Pax Romana" that brought prosperity and stability.

Pax Romana declined in the 3rd century A.D. thanks to inept and corrupt emperors, and attacks by outside barbarians. Rome eventually embraced Christianity in 313 under Constantine I, who established an eastern capital in Constantinople. But splitting the Rome into western (Roman) and eastern (Byzantine) halves did not halt the empire's demise. The eastern Roman empire fell in 476, and though the Byzantine half survived, it never regained the full might of Rome. In 800, Italy was briefly reunited under Charlemagne, but soon disintegrated into squabbling kingdoms.

Italian culture peaked during the 15th and 16th-century Renaissance. The independent city-states formed a delicate balance of power, with ruling families (such as the Sforzas, Borgias, and the Medicis) funding a golden age of art, invention, and intellectual activity that produced some of the greatest figures of Western civilization—Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Dante Alighieri, Brunelleschi, Galileo, and others. It did not, however, stop the rival families from fighting.

By the 19th century, many Italians believed that they could function as a single nation, a belief spearheaded by the general Giuseppe Garibaldi. Independence was declared in 1861, and by 1870, the nation was consolidated under King Victor Emmanuel II. Italy was ruled as a monarchy and joined the Allies in World War I. But the 1920s ushered in a dark era as Benito Mussolini organized discontented Italians into the Fascist Party to “rescue Italy from Bolshevism.” What he delivered was a totalitarian state. Mussolini joined with Hitler and fought the Allies during World War II, during which 400,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were left homeless, and the economy was ruined. In 1945, Mussolini was captured and killed by partisans.

Italy was again declared a republic in 1946, but remained seriously divided during the postwar era by political extremes. Governments rose and fell, and in the 1970s, a series of terrorist acts by the left-wing Red Brigades threatened stability. By the early 1980s, the terrorists had been suppressed, but public discontent spilled into the 1990s as inflation and ongoing scandals involving public officials and the Mafia altered Italian politics. Parties dissolved, new ones formed, and new alliances emerged. This led to the election of media mogul Silvio Berlusconi as Prime Minister in 1994. But within a year, Berlusconi was forced to resign. He ran again in 2001 and was reelected, setting up a pattern that repeated for more than a decade: Berlusconi has been Prime Minister three separate times between 1994–2011, and continues to remain a political force despite having been convicted of tax fraud.

The previous Prime Minister, independent Giuseppe Conte, was elected in 2018 and heads up a populist coalition. Among his accomplishments have been the introduction of a national guaranteed minimum income, the nationalization of several companies, stricter immigration policies, and the western world’s first national lockdown in response to COVID-19. The current Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Italy’s first female Prime Minister, was sworn in on October 22nd, 2022. Meloni is a member of the right-wing, national-conservative party, Brothers of Italy, a party that is considered to be the most right-wing party in power in Italy since World War II.

Switzerland

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 15,940 square miles
- **Capital:** Bern
- **Languages:** German is the main language of Switzerland. French and Italian also are widely spoken in certain areas. English is spoken widely in tourist and business circles.
- **Location:** Switzerland, in central Europe, is the land of the Alps. About the size of New Jersey, it is surrounded by France, Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Italy.
- **Geography:** Switzerland is a small country nestled amidst the Jura Mountains and the Alps. Situated between Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and Liechtenstein, it offers a combination of towering glaciers, crystalline lakes, rolling hills, fertile river valleys, and a broad central plateau.
- **Population:** 8,738,791 (estimate)

- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 38.2%, Protestant 26.9%, Muslim 5%, other Christian 5.6%, other 1.6%, none 21.4%, unspecified 1.3%
- **Time Zone:** Swiss time is six hours later than Eastern Time; when it is 6 am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Switzerland. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

National Holidays: Switzerland

In addition to the holidays listed below, Switzerland celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. Each region can also set its own holidays as well. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 Berchtold Day

05/01 May Day

08/01 Swiss National Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Switzerland: A Brief History

Archaeological evidence suggests that Switzerland's history dates back to Paleolithic times, when hunter-gatherers began to settle in the lowlands north of the Alps. Swiss territory became integrated into the Roman Empire in the centuries following Julius Caesar's invasion of Gaul in 58 BC. Under Roman rule, important cities were established including Geneva, Basel, and Zurich. These remained linked to Rome and the northern tribes by military roads and trade routes.

After the decline of the Western Roman Empire, Germanic tribes including the Burgundians and Alamanni invaded and forced the Celto-Roman inhabitants to retreat into the surrounding area. The Burgundians took over the western territory, while the Alamanni settled in the north. Both Burgundy and the dukedom of the Alamans eventually came to be known as the kingdom of the Franks, and by 800 AD they fell under the rule of Charlemagne, the first of the Carolingian kings.

The land that would eventually become Switzerland was divided in the aftermath of the three-year Carolingian Civil War. Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, signed the Treaty of Verdun in 843, the first in a set of treaties that would ultimately divide the Swiss territories into three distinct kingdoms. These kingdoms would not be re-integrated until the middle of the 10th century, when the Carolingian territories fell under the rule of the Holy Roman emperors.

In centuries to come, the Swiss territories would become an area of great importance as north to south trade routes opened up through the Alps. After the death of the Holy Roman Emperor in the 13th century, the three regions finally came together and signed a charter on August 1, 1291, leading to the formation of the Old Swiss Confederacy. The confederation experienced substantial growth as more of the surrounding regions, known as cantons, joined. This was the beginning of Switzerland as we know it today. But it wouldn't be until 1648 that Switzerland finally gained legal independence from the Holy Roman Empire.

After 1798, a post-Revolutionary French invasion led to the disintegration of the cantons and a period of severe economic decline. Napoleon's Act of Mediation eventually restored partial autonomy to the original cantons. But it was not until the map of Europe was redrawn in 1815 with the Congress of Vienna that Switzerland's independence was reestablished, and the confederation was recognized as a permanently neutral territory.

This neutrality has withstood ever since, but peace was never a given. In 1847 a civil war broke out pitting a largely Protestant army against a special league of Catholic cantons. The Protestants made quick work of it in only 26 days, but the result was a new constitution that established a compromise between those who wanted a centralized government and those who supported cantonal authority. This balance is one that was honed over time and is still a hallmark of the Swiss Confederation. So is direct democracy, which was affirmed in 1874 with constitutional amendments that require many federal laws to be approved by national referendum. Today, a petition with 50,000 signatures can challenge a proposed law, and 100,000 signatures can force a public vote.

Switzerland's neutrality left it untouched during World War I, when its only involvement was to organize Red Cross units. During World War II, surrounded by fascist-run states, Switzerland again proclaimed its neutrality, though some of its leaders advocated appeasement. But the world took note when Swiss General Henri Guisan led an army to the Rütli Meadow (site of the 1291 Oath of Allegiance) in a show of force that displayed just how ready and well-prepared the Swiss were to defend their own soil. There were some "accidental" Allied flyovers that went unpunished, and Switzerland provided a safe haven for escaping Allied POWs and other refugees. But that shelter was infamously not extended to Europe's Jews, and Switzerland's banks have been condemned for being havens for stolen Nazi assets. (In 1998, the two largest banks, UBS and Credit Suisse, paid \$1.25 billion in compensation to Holocaust survivors and their families.)

Switzerland's postwar history has been characterized by remarkable economic growth and stability; and buffeted by its armed neutrality, the country has moved away from its previous isolation to become a major player on the world stage. The country hosts the European headquarters of the UN and World Health Organization, despite the fact that Switzerland did not join the UN until 2002. Switzerland is also not a member of the EU, though it joined the EU's Schengen passport-free travel zone. This opened the borders to workers from the other EU members, but in 2014, Swiss voters approved a referendum to reinstitute immigration quotas.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Venice

The City of Falling Angels by John Berendt (2005, Memoir/Travel Narrative) The city of Venice as seen by the author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*.

History of Venice by John J. Norwich (1982, History) The author skillfully manages to compress 1,000 years of Venetian history into one book.

The World of Venice by Jan Morris (1960, Travel Narrative) A new edition of a classic that blends history, social commentary, and personal travel experience.

Tyrol Region

Eva Sleeps by Francesca Melandri (2010, Fiction) The novel follows Eva as she searches for her identity and learns about her mother's relationship with an Italian man named Vito. Eva's mother, Gerda, was a young girl from Austrian Tyrol, who met Vito while he was working in northern Italy during the late 1960s, a time defined by violence and tension between the Italians and the people of South Tyrol.

Italy

Princes of the Renaissance by Mary Hollingsworth (2021, History) An exploration of the lives and times of the aristocratic elite whose patronage sparked the art and architecture of the Renaissance in fifteenth and sixteenth century Italy.

Absolute Monarchs: A History of the Papacy by John Julius Norwich (2011, History) A deeper look into the most significant popes in history and what they meant politically, culturally, and socially to Rome and the rest of the world.

La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind by Beppe Severgnini (2007, Nonfiction/Humor) An Italian columnist and best-selling author journeys through his homeland while providing hilarious observations at the beautiful face Italy shows to the world, and the chaotic, garrulous, and often contradictory impulses that lie behind it.

The Monster of Florence by Douglas Preston and Mario Spezi (2008, Non Fiction) A remarkable true story by best-selling author Douglas Preston who, with Italian investigative journalist Mario Spezi, try to track down the identity of a serial killer known as the Monster of Florence.

History by Elsa Morante (1974, Fiction) A half-Jewish, Roman mother tries to survive in WWII Rome with her two sons. Though the main characters are fictional, each chapter opens with an factual account of real events that happened when the action takes place.

Switzerland

Slow Train to Switzerland: One Tour, Two Trips, 150 Years – and a World of Change Apart by Diccon Bewes (2013, Historical Fiction). Mass tourism started in 1863, when seven travelers departed London for a train ride through the Alps, to Switzerland. Follow as Bewes as he tells the story of Thomas Cook’s first Conducted Tour of Switzerland, using the diary of Jemima Morell, one of the seven travelers.

The White Hotel by D. M. Thomas (1981, Fiction) This controversial novel mixes fantasy with historical accuracy as it tells the story of Lisa, a young opera singer, who is treated by Sigmund Freud for “severe sexual hysteria.” Through erotic fantasies, poems, letters, and case study notes, we learn about Lisa’s chance encounter with a soldier, which leads to their affair at a white hotel in the Swiss countryside, to marriage and family life in Kiev, and to the barbaric Nazi atrocities at Babi Yar.

Why Switzerland by Jonathan Steinberg (1976, History) This book is based on the author’s premise that Switzerland is a unique country from which the world can learn much about how democracy ultimately rests on the community level. The author has been a lecturer at Cambridge and is married to a Swiss-German woman.

The Magic Mountain by Thomas Mann (1924, Fiction). Nobel Laureate Mann brings us to an exclusive sanatorium in the Swiss Alps, which is a microcosm for European society in the days before World War I.

Heidi by Johanna Spyri (1881, Fiction) One of the most popular works of Swiss literature, this best-selling book tells the story of a young girl’s coming of age in the Swiss Alps, where she lives with her grandfather.

Suggested Films & Videos

Italy

The Life Ahead (2020, Drama) At 86, Sophia Loren makes her first screen appearance in ten years in this Netflix original, filmed in Puglia. And it’s a stunner. She plays Madame Rosa, a Holocaust survivor who takes in the children of local sex workers. A neighbor asks her to care for Momo, a Senegalese refugee whose delinquency may be too much for Rosa, whose own tormented past is catching up to her.

The Tourist (2010, Thriller) Beautiful Elise (Angelina Jolie) has a mysterious off-screen lover, Pearce, who has fled England and is wanted by both Scotland Yard and the mob. He tells Elise to entrap an unwitting tourist (Johnny Depp), who will be mistaken for Pearce (who is rumored to have altered his appearance), and arrested in his place. This convoluted caper plays out beautifully in Venice’s mysterious alleys, romantic canals, and opulent palaces.

Rome (2005–07, Television Series) This multiple Emmy-winner from HBO deftly weaves the stories of fictional and real characters (Julius Caesar, Octavian, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, etc.) during Rome’s 1st century BC transition from a republic to an empire. Outstanding production values and a stellar cast.

The Merchant of Venice (2004, Drama) Al Pacino gives us one of the most masterful portrayals on stage or screen of Shakespeare's tragic moneylender, Shylock. He receives strong support from Jeremy Irons and Joseph Fiennes, and Venice itself, where much of the production was filmed. The city looks so enticing, it's a wonder that Pacino did not chew up the scenery.

Life Is Beautiful (1997) Roberto Benigni is the lead actor and director of this heart-wrenching comedy/drama about a Jewish Italian bookshop owner in Mussolini's Italy who tries to shield his son from the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp. Italian with English subtitles.

Switzerland

The Clouds of Sils Maria (2015, Drama) The misty Engadine backdrop sets the moody tone for this story about a middle-aged actress (Juliette Binoche), and the young assistant (Kristen Stewart) who for whom she feels both attraction, and mistrust.

Journey of Hope (1990, Drama) Three members of a Kurdish family make a grueling journey on foot, in search of a better life in Switzerland. Though made in 1990, the struggles it depicts are still topical in modern Switzerland—and all the world.

Courage Mountain (1990, Adventure) This film is about a young Swiss girl named Heidi who is sent off to an Italian boarding school at the beginning of World War I. She's reluctant to leave until she learns that her sweetheart Peter has joined the army. This film version of the sequel to Johanna Spyri's novel *Heidi* tells the charming story of Heidi and her five classmates as they embark on a journey through the forest and mountains to cross over into Switzerland.

Downhill Racer (1969, Drama) For a satirical spin on the American Dream, *Downhill Racer* is a 1969 film centered on the efforts of a self-centered and ambitious Olympic-grade skier (Robert Redford) to reach the top—a goal that he believes can only be achieved by discarding any emotional attachments that might impede his progress. When he finally attains his goal, he learns that the thrill of this victory is indeed an empty one.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo or FLuentU or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

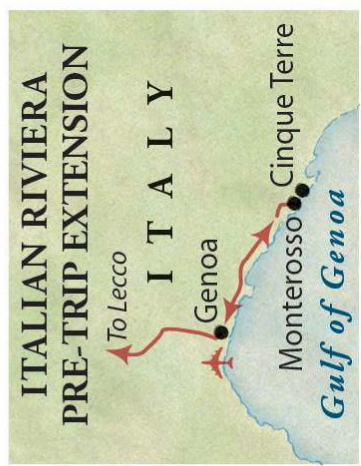
GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

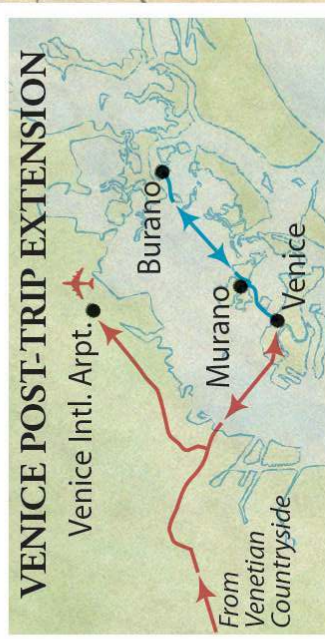
Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more

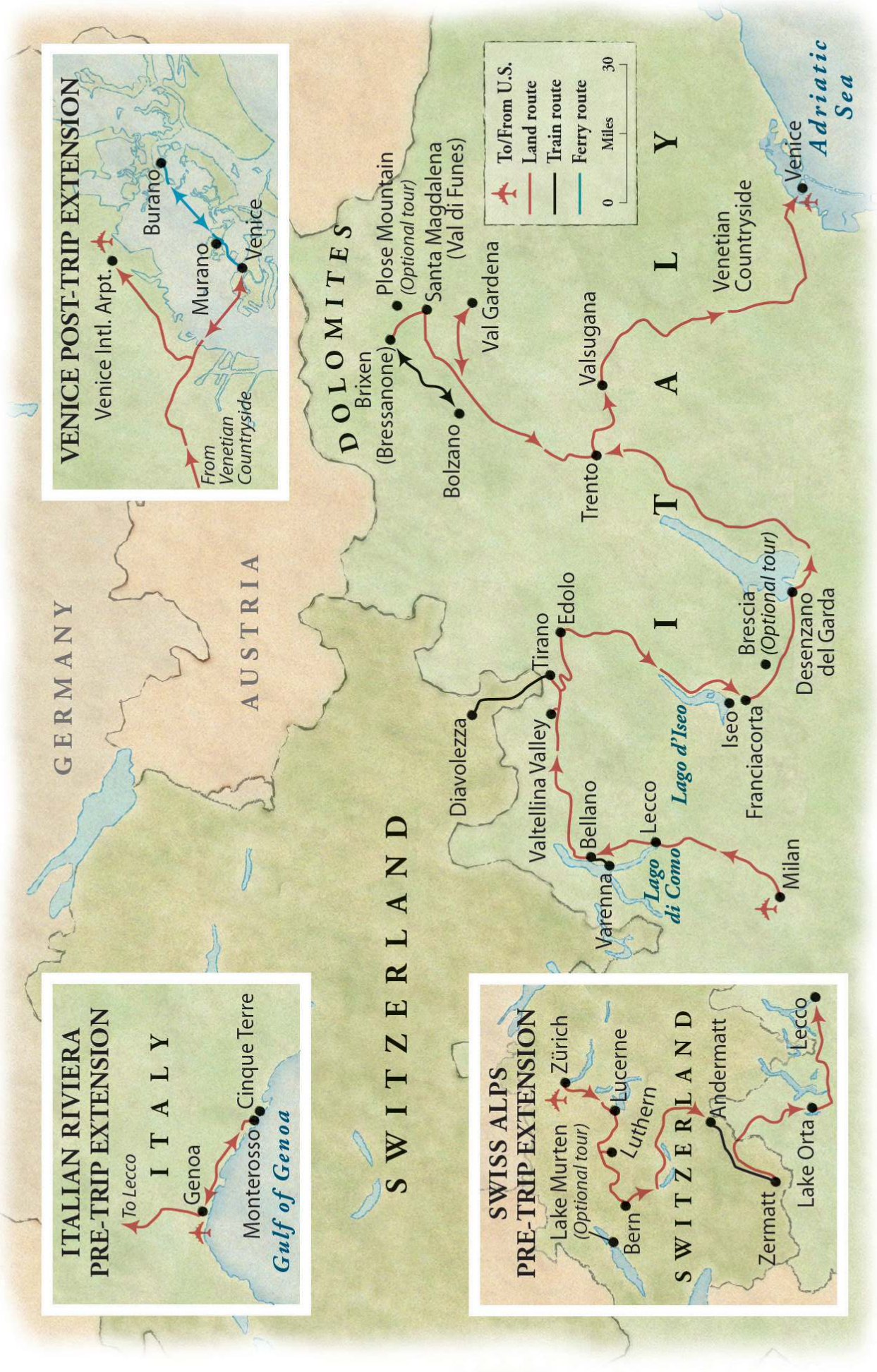
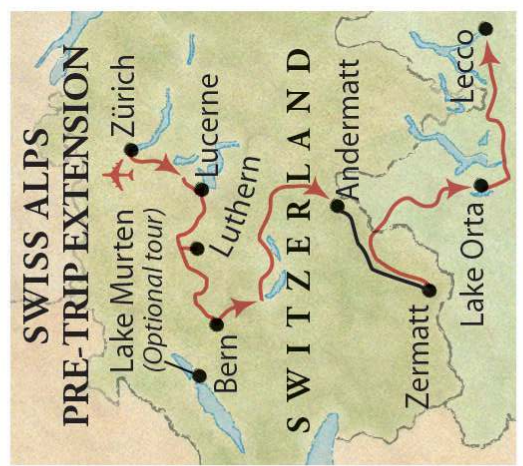
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VENICE POST-TRIP EXTENSION



SWISS ALPS PRE-TRIP EXTENSION



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Submitted by Joy and Don Janke,
8-time travelers from Stevensville, MI



Submitted by Julia Schneider,
5-time traveler from Pinellas Park, FL



Submitted by Martin Schwartzman,
30-time traveler from Woodbury, NY



Submitted by Paul Stark, 17-time traveler
from Edina, MN



Submitted by David Fong, 16-time traveler
from Foster City, CA



Submitted by Steven dos Remedios,
23-time traveler from Oakland, CA



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