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The trip  
of a  
Lifetime



# EUROPE by TRAIN

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## INTRODUCTION:

This detailed book about our Rome to London train trip gives you an accurate idea of what the experience is all about. It describes the events of each day as they happen, so it is like a diary or a scrapbook of the tour. During the past 24 years we have conducted this trip 32 times, and have developed an ideal outline of events that take place each day, with a very efficient sequence of things that we see and do. Of course there are always minor variations in the daily routine described here, and there is some free time each day for you to pursue particular interests.



You will find this tour is much different than the typical bus tour, for we take the time to see the sights properly, instead of rushing madly from one

place to the next, changing cities every night the way typical group tours do. We have selected six of Europe's most wonderful places and we stay for two or three nights in each of them to give you a good look around.

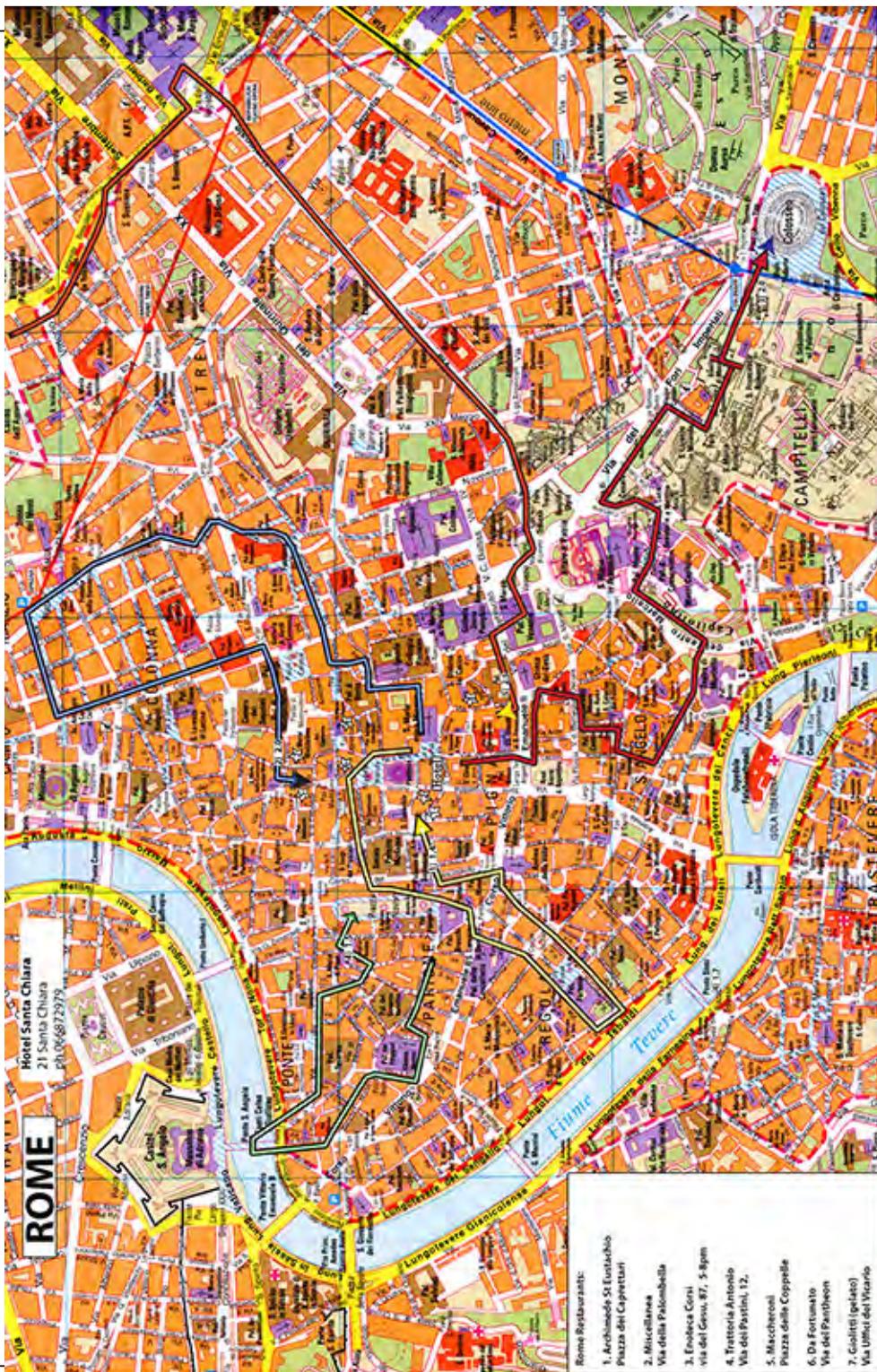
About 25 years ago we did conduct several bus tours through Europe and were very dissatisfied with that approach. The tour moved through these places too quickly, and the bus was just not very comfortable, especially when you had to sit in it for an average of six hours every day. We looked at other Europe tours and found they were all the same — stuck on the bus, changing cities every day, using hotels far from the center of town. The result was a very superficial tour that was extremely tiring, and really did not show you very much.



We worked hard to create a better way for a group to see Europe, and developed this unique alternative: Europe by Train. It has worked out amazingly well. Our travelers have really enjoyed this approach, as you can see from their comments later in this brochure.

Once we got rid of the bus, and replaced it with the deluxe comfort of Europe's first-class train service, we found that everything changed. A









# ROME

During three days we will have ample time to see the standard highlights – plus some hidden corners that most tourists never see. Wear comfortable shoes to protect your precious feet, which is crucial to discovering this city. You cannot see much of the real Rome on a standard bus tour, which actually wastes a lot of time getting stuck in traffic -- so you have got to walk to appreciate the incredible art, ancient architecture, the best food, impressive churches, quaint cobbled alleys, unlimited shopping and cozy neighborhoods.

**ROME DAY ONE:** We arrive in Rome about nine o'clock in the morning and transfer to our hotel for check-in, orientation walk and lunch. We stay at the Hotel Santa Chiara, located next to the Pantheon in the midst of Rome's historic center, just five minutes walk from the Piazza Navona and the Campo dei Fiore.



## PANTHEON and PIAZZA NAVONA

Our first walk brings us to the best-preserved ancient building in Rome -- the Pantheon, a perfect structure, still standing with its great

dome intact after one thousand nine hundred years. It was the largest dome in the world until this century, and forms a spherical space that creates a balanced feeling of harmony. The Pantheon's spherical design takes the shape of a bubble on a barrel where the height of 140 feet is equal to its width, a dome atop the cylindrical base wall. The Pantheon was designed by the emperor Hadrian in A.D. 125 as a temple to all the gods, and has served a variety of historical functions over its many years. It is situated on the Piazza della Rotonda, which has several over-priced cafes and restaurants, and a beautiful fountain in the middle with an Egyptian obelisk.



After visiting the Pantheon you might consider popping into another church, San Luigi dei Francesi, a church for the French community, built in the 16th century. The important attractions inside are three paintings by Caravaggio depicting the life of Saint Matthew,

in a small chapel on the right front side. Put a coin in the light box so that you can get a good view, especially of the canvas on the left side, the Calling of St. Matthew, depicting a dramatic scene of Christ pointing his finger, choosing Matthew as his disciple, with a startled reaction from the saint that says, “you want me?”

Upon leaving the church, head towards Corso del Rinascimento, arriving at the Roman Senate housed in the noble Palazzo Madama, built during the 16th century for the Medici family. Not open to the public, it is guarded by several beautifully dressed police standing out front – they seem to always select the tallest and most handsome officers for this job.



We continue across the street into the the Piazza Navona, with its picture-postcard perfect St. Agnese Church by Borromini, and the stunning Fountain of the Four Rivers by Bernini -- artists you will encounter several more times in Rome as they were the greatest of Baroque architects and sculptors. This centrally located piazza is considered one of the most beautiful and lively outdoor spaces in the world, and you will probably return here several times, for it is interesting night and day. Originally built as a racetrack by the ancient Roman emperor Domitian, it still retains the original oval shape that gives it a unique appearance. Lined with restaurants and palaces, the piazza is enclosed by

faded pastel facades all around that produce a rich feeling of antiquity.

You probably don't want to have a meal here at the Piazza Navona because these restaurants around the square are notoriously touristic, which means they are going to overcharge you and serve food of mediocre quality. You can find much better restaurant deals in the nearby streets. It is a fine place, though, to sit and have a drink, or just hang out for free in the center and do some people-watching. You'll notice that many artists have set up their easels in the square – they could do a quick sketch of you, or you could purchase an original watercolor of the various scenes of Rome and Italy. Just be sure it is an actual painting and not some cheap print going for a high price.

### **CENTRO STORICO**, the historic center

We leave the south end of Piazza Navona and cross the busy Via Vittorio Emmanuele to the church of Sant Andrea Della Valle, with the second highest dome in the city, after St. Peter's. Inside the church it's a chance to look at these incredible artworks on display. Back in the Middle Ages, then onto the Renaissance and the Baroque, the church was all-powerful in Rome and throughout Italy and was the great patron of the artists. It has got an impressive mirror that allows you to look at the ceiling without straining your neck. You've got to get around in see every nook and cranny when you go into a stupendous church like Sant Andre della Valle. Another counterreformation masterpiece, and the Baroque style, built in the late 1600s. There is nearly a church is on every street it seems in the city. In fact, they have 500 churches in Rome.

After our visit to Sant Andrea we worked up an appetite, and fortunately, just around the corner is the Campo de Fiori. It's surrounded

by restaurants. Granted these restaurants are somewhat touristic, but it's really wonderful place to eat. It's our first meal of the tour and already we're starting off with a bang. This is great. Everybody diving in and having some beautiful red wine at lunch. That's a good start. Okay, granted for you restaurant purists out there, you can get a better meal in Rome certainly and you can get a worse meal in Rome, of course but these restaurants around the Campo have that one essential unique ingredient and that is this wonderful location. It's just a lively spot to eat with great scenery sitting at an outdoor table at Campo de Fiori.



Campo dei Fiori is a colorful outdoor fruit and vegetable market that has been in business for three hundred years and has always been one of the main piazzas of the city. Its food stands are very popular with the local residents, and you will even find some clothing stalls and souvenirs scattered among the local wares. Early-birds will be rewarded for it is one of the only places in Rome that have something happening at 6:30am, when the vendors are just setting up their stands. Another early rarity are the several cafes that open at 6:00am, pumping out that dark fuel to get you going. So if you are an early-bird do consider coming out to this market at the crack of

dawn. At any rate, get here about lunch time.

Campo dei Fiori is a colorful place for candid people pictures, but the produce market is open only in the morning then closes just after noon when all the restaurants come to life around the square. Come back at night as well, for this is one of the most popular spots for young people to hang out.

Have a look at the huge Palazzo della Cancellaria just past the north corner of the campo, and take a peek inside the impressive courtyard if the big doors are open. This belongs to the Vatican State and as such is not part of Italy, but is extra-territorial, sovereign property of the church.

The Palazzo Farnese is one block south, one of the most famous renaissance palaces of the city, currently housing the French Embassy. Michelangelo designed the towering façade and its attractive piazza has two impressive fountains and several restaurants and snack bars around it.

Now walk to Via Giulia, a wider, straight road that was a major thoroughfare during the Renaissance, leading from downtown to the Vatican. Over the centuries this neighborhood went up and down in quality, but has thoroughly bounced back now as a very expensive, restored district with exclusive apartments in the former palaces and a few art galleries, antique shops and offices at ground level. The arch across the road extending from Palazzo Farnese was designed by Michelangelo for a bridge, never finished, to extend across the Tiber River one block over. Continue a block to Fontana del Mascherone then turn north for a quick look at Palazzo Sapada and the famous illusionistic arcade designed by Borromini.



After a brief rest we continue with our afternoon walk, starting at Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, the only significant gothic church in the city. Even though Rome has been a religious and artistic center for 2,500 years, during the Middle Ages it was relatively unimportant and produced little in the way of gothic architecture that has survived, except for this impressive church.

Let's walk one block to another incredible church, St. Ignazio, with its illusionistic ceiling mural painted during the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the Jesuit priest, Andrea Pozzo. This vivid three-dimensional perspective will shock your eyes with its realistic depiction of the heavens opening above and painted architecture that blends magically with the building so you don't know where one begins and the other ends. Notice the stage-setting quality of its small piazza in front, where it seems an outdoor opera could begin any moment. This is one of Rome's few building ensembles of rococo design, with graceful curved facades unified in earth-toned colors.



### **TREVI FOUNTAIN and SPANISH STEPS**

A few blocks away, across the busy Via del Corso, is the spectacular Trevi Fountain, made famous in the movies “Three Coins in the Fountain” and “La Dolce Vita”. It is very possibly the world's most beautiful fountain, depicting Neptune, god of the ocean, being pulled through a triumphal arch by wild horses amidst a torrential cascade, heralded by conch blowers. Here you must toss a coin over your shoulder once to come back to Rome, and once again for another wish. Trevi was built during the 18<sup>th</sup> century in a baroque style, but it celebrates the ancient Aqeduct of the Virgin, one of a dozen important waterways that brought water into the city. Two thousand years ago Rome had more fresh water per capita than any modern city, which explains how a million people could live here at the empire's peak – giving rise to the ancient world's largest city.

We finish our excursion by walking a few more blocks to the Spanish Steps, but along the way look for the Church of St. Andrea delle Fratte to see another combination of great works, the angels inside by Bernini, and the brick dome by Borromini. There is also a peaceful cloister where you'll find a moment's refuge from the busy streets.



The Spanish Steps and adjacent Piazza di Spagna are absolutely bursting with people all the time, attracted here by a special combination of wonderful urban elements. The setting is another painting come to life, with the curvaceous broad staircase elevating your eye to the twin-towered church of Trinita di Monti, accented by an Egyptian obelisk, and equally interesting sights in all other directions.



each with their own unique cultural variations. It shows how much we have lost in America by destroying our towns for the sake of uniform drive-in malls.

We could settle in for dinner in any of a dozen fine restaurants in this neighborhood. Some of the best bets include La Rampa, Re Degli Amici, Al 34 and Mario.

After dinner you will have renewed energy to keep walking on a fascinating route back to the hotel, or you could simply take a taxi if this day has caught up with you.



Five of the city's best shopping streets emanate from the foot of the steps, creating a 20-block grid of retail heaven where cars are prohibited. The delightful ambience here shows why Rome has no need for modern shopping malls. This is a recurring pattern of pedestrian-only retail zones repeated in most of Europe's major cities, 10



A particularly good spot for some evening browsing here is the Via del Corso, one of the main retail streets of Rome where most shops now stay open all day. We continue walking through the narrow back lanes, alive with many others out for an evening stroll, and after about 45 minutes we reach our hotel where we shall enjoy a good night's sleep.

## ROME DAY TWO:

Our schedule will take us to the four most important historic highlights of Rome: the Ancient Forum, the Colosseum, the Vatican Museum and St. Peters.



### LARGO ARGENTINA

We start our walk at the Largo Argentina, an unusual collection of four ancient temples right in the middle of the busy city streets, also home to Rome's largest collection of wild cats. The temple complex was only discovered during the 1930s when a construction project uncovered them. The government wisely chose to protect this site and partly rebuild the temples to give the modern visitor a glimpse below the surface into prehistory. Here you clearly can see that modern Rome is about 30 feet higher than the ancient ground surface, which makes one wonder what other treasures are still buried.

We are now walking into the "Ghetto" neighborhood, which is not a slum but the historic section where Rome's Jews lived in the Middle Ages. It still retains a medieval feeling so typical of the many hidden nooks and crannies of the city. Narrow cobbled alleys lead from one little crooked space to another -- a palace here, a church there. The cutest item is the Fountain of the Turtles, a Renaissance fixture of four life-size naked youths standing on giant seashells in the Piazza Mattei,



attached to some legend about a nobleman losing his fortune in a card game but having the fountain built overnight anyway to impress his future father-in-law.

Continuing along in the Ghetto, you could walk past the Portico of Octavia, built by Rome's greatest emperor, Augustus, as a large complex that has now been reduced to a few columns and broken fragments. Next to it is one of the three great restaurants of this neighborhood, Giggeto, the others being Vecchia Roma and Al Pompiere. It's too early to eat now, so make a note for this evening when you are looking for something wonderful to eat. The huge building beyond the Portico that looks like the Colosseum is actually the Theater of Marcellus, also built by Augustus.



This remarkable building was constructed two thousand years ago as an enclosed theater that could hold 13,000 people. Not only is it still standing, the upper floors have been converted to luxury modern apartments for millionaires.



## CAPITOLINE and FORUM

Walk up the busy Via Teatro Marcello to the Capitoline Hill, ascending the broad steps to the top for a grand view of three palaces and a classic overview of the forum. This hilltop is reputed to be the site of Rome's first settlement, 2,750 years ago, and has been utilized ever since. Re-designed by Michelangelo to include the equestrian bronze statue of Marcus Aurelius in the center surrounded by neo-classical facades, this piazza is home to the world's oldest museum, The Capitoline, and the adjacent Conservators Palace. They are the only museums open most evenings until 9:00 p.m., so make note of their schedule and come back later.



The best view looking down at the forum is from the right side of the hill, then return to the left side for another view and the route down along a curved narrow road.

At the bottom of the hill you will be facing Trajan's Forum, with its towering column and impressive covered market, two of the most important ruins from antiquity. The Roman Empire reached its maximum size at the beginning of the second century under the emperor Trajan after his conquests over Dacia, today's Romania. This is celebrated by the spiral relief sculpture that wraps around Trajan's Column, depicting his victories in a marble scroll that would stretch for 656 feet if it were unfurled. The huge market was built with the gold captured in the wars.

Most of this forum is gone now, but the one structure you must look at for free from the sidewalk is Trajan's Market, perhaps the world's first multilevel covered shopping mall. A beautiful brick buildings five stories high, it had 150 stores and offices arranged in a graceful curved brick building that still stands. Many little shops of modern Rome are quite similar to these ancestral spaces. Return across the street and enter the Ancient Forum, which was the heart of downtown 2,000 years ago, filled with all kinds of action.



Meander through the ruins of the Imperial Forum, where Romans gathered for business, gossip, politics, and just hanging out. This site is the forerunner of our modern town centers and shopping malls. Walk the smooth paving stones of the Via Sacra from one end to the other, covering a half-mile lined with marble ruins. Three triumphal arches have been standing proudly here for 2,000 years, honoring the emperors Constantine, Titus and Septemius Severus.



Inspect the House of the Vestal Virgins, where an ancient flame was miraculously kept constantly burning. The largest building was the Basilica of Constantine and Maxentius, its brick arches and roof soaring 115 feet high, covering an area

the size of a football field. Originally used as a courthouse and general gathering place, one third of it is impressively preserved today.

We will skip the Palatine Hill, home to many emperors, for it's a strenuous hike and there is not much left to see up there anyway. Just looking at the Palatine from the Forum is impressive enough -- it was reinforced with so many old brick walls it almost looks like the entire natural hill was man-made. Exit the Forum past the remains of Hadrian's Temple of Venus, said to have been the most beautiful of all, but today just a few stubs of columns.



## COLOSSEUM

You are now facing the Colosseum, home of Rome's gladiators and largest building ever constructed by those engineering masters of the ancient world. Admire the grandeur of this massive stadium, the model for all our modern sports arenas. Packed with 70,000 spectators screaming for blood nearly every day for 300 years, it was the place where commoners could be entertained and relieve the tensions of their otherwise difficult lives. Most people lived in crowded appalling conditions, so this stadium played a role in keeping the public satisfied – at least they were not down on the floor getting

eaten by lions! It still stands, despite being looted for centuries as a marble quarry for the many palaces built throughout the city. Your \$7 admission charge includes access to the upper level, so take advantage and climb the steps, then walk all around to gain wonderful views inside and out across the forum, our next target. Be sure to walk on the new wooden ramp that leads through the middle of the arena and provides great views down into the former cages.

Next we are going to the Vatican Museum, by subway, riding a couple stops to the Termini and changing trains, heading for Ottaviano, end of the line a few blocks from the Vatican Museum entrance. The museum is less crowded in the afternoon, so the wait to get in should be minimal, unlike mornings when you might stand on line for two hours.



## VATICAN

By now you are hungry and slowing down. It's best that you have a convenient lunch right in the Vatican cafeteria, where the prices are reasonable and the food delicious. This break will give us the energy to power through the enormous museum.

Led by your knowledgeable tour escort you

will see the principal highlights: the Belvedere Courtyard with its half-dozen essential statues, especially the Laocoon; Gallery of the Maps for its astonishing ceiling of painted stucco sculpture and cooling views over the pope's gardens; and Raphael's Rooms where the great genius did his most important murals.



Of course the major single attraction of the Vatican Museum is the Sistine Chapel. Looking up you will see the world's most important painting, summarizing the development of life on earth and mankind's quest for salvation. Take fifteen minutes to absorb the genius of Michelangelo. Then, there is a secret passage out the back corner of the Sistine Chapel that will lead you right to St. Peter's, which saves you from walking two miles in the wrong direction.



## SAINT PETER'S

St. Peter's is the most spectacular room ever built! No place else can even come in a close second to this. We will spend one hour admiring the vast noble spaces with 500 statues, 45 altars, subterranean crypts, Michelangelo's dome and Pieta, Bernini's Baladacchino, mosaics, monuments, tombs, marble details and angels everywhere.

Congratulations, you have just completed one of the best days of the tour. After an experience like this there is nothing much else you want to do except return to your hotel for a rest and then look for another great Roman meal. You can leave the Vatican by taxi, or if you are feeling adventurous, take the city bus back to the center of town.



This evening, after a brief rest, another option is a walk to Trastevere, just across the Tiber River. Numerous little trattorias abound in the side streets, or around the outdoor terrace on Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere, facing a fine 12th century church. Returning back towards the hotel we continue walking in this colorful neighborhood for more great evening sights, and further refreshments.



## ROME DAY THREE:

Great choices today include more museums, historic churches, and more walks. The top museum suggestion has to be the newly Borghese Gallery, especially noted for the best collection of Bernini sculptures set amid the lush interior of a former noble palace. It is on the edge of town, so we go there by taxi. It just takes about one hour to go visit the museum, including the painting galleries upstairs and many statues by Bernini and others downstairs.



When finished the museum, take a stroll through the Borghese Gardens, heading towards Via Veneto. You could actually walk back to the hotel from here in one hour, down the Spanish Steps and through the historic center, or you can take a taxi to a number of alternative possibilities. If tired, simply taxi to the hotel.



For those eager to see a bit more of Rome, the next adventure will be a walk down Via Veneto, a classy promenade famous for 5-star hotels, elegant cafes, and “La Dolce Vita.” At the bottom we pass the American Embassy and then continue around the bend to Santa Maria della Vittoria, where we see one of Bernini’s most profoundly beautiful sculptures, The Ecstasy of Theresa, set in a theatrical chapel complete with an admiring audience carved in marble.

One block over we reach busy Piazza della Repubblica and the Michelangelo-designed church of Santa Maria Degli Angeli, formerly the ancient Roman Diocletian Baths.



This is another jaw-dropping experience, for here you have the unique combination of colossal

ancient architecture modified by the world’s greatest artist. In old Roman days the bathhouses were the biggest public buildings in town – and this one has been clad in multi-colored marble and converted by the genius into an important Catholic church.

At this point one could take a taxi back to the hotel or keep walking on a delightful downhill stroll along Via Nazionale, the main shopping street of the city, always buzzing with locals and visitors on the busy wide sidewalks.



One more attractive option is a four-block detour to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, an awesome building, with a huge nave based on the ancient Roman form, coffered gold ceilings (the first gold brought back from the New World by Columbus), and two eye-popping baroque chapels on each side of the transept. First built in the fifth century and embellished ever since, it is one of the five most important churches in Rome and well worth a visit.

After another chance to rest up, we will lead an afternoon walking tour that will show you another part of “the real Rome,” into fascinating and historic neighborhoods in the heart of town within the curve of the Tiber River.

We pass through the south edge of Piazza Navona to Piazza Pasquino and along the historic pedestrian lane of Via del Governo Vecchio and stroll along the charming narrow streets of this neighborhood to experience the center of Renaissance Rome. Amazingly, this is still the heart and soul of Rome, yet few tourists ever see it. We enter the Chiesa Nuova, where we



can sit and rest while admiring the elaborate decorations in the high baroque style. Next door is the convex facade of Borromini's Oratorio, and behind it look for his Orologia Clock Tower, recently restored.

This path leads you back into the calm historic center of the city, walking along Via dei Banchi Nuovi on the way to Ponte Sant' Angelo, the beautiful bridge across the Tiber lined with Bernini's divine angels.



These neighborhoods are saturated with charm and character. You will walk along cobblestone pedestrian lanes lined with old brick buildings five stories high, containing little stores and workshops on the ground level, with apartments upstairs in a pattern followed for two thousand years.

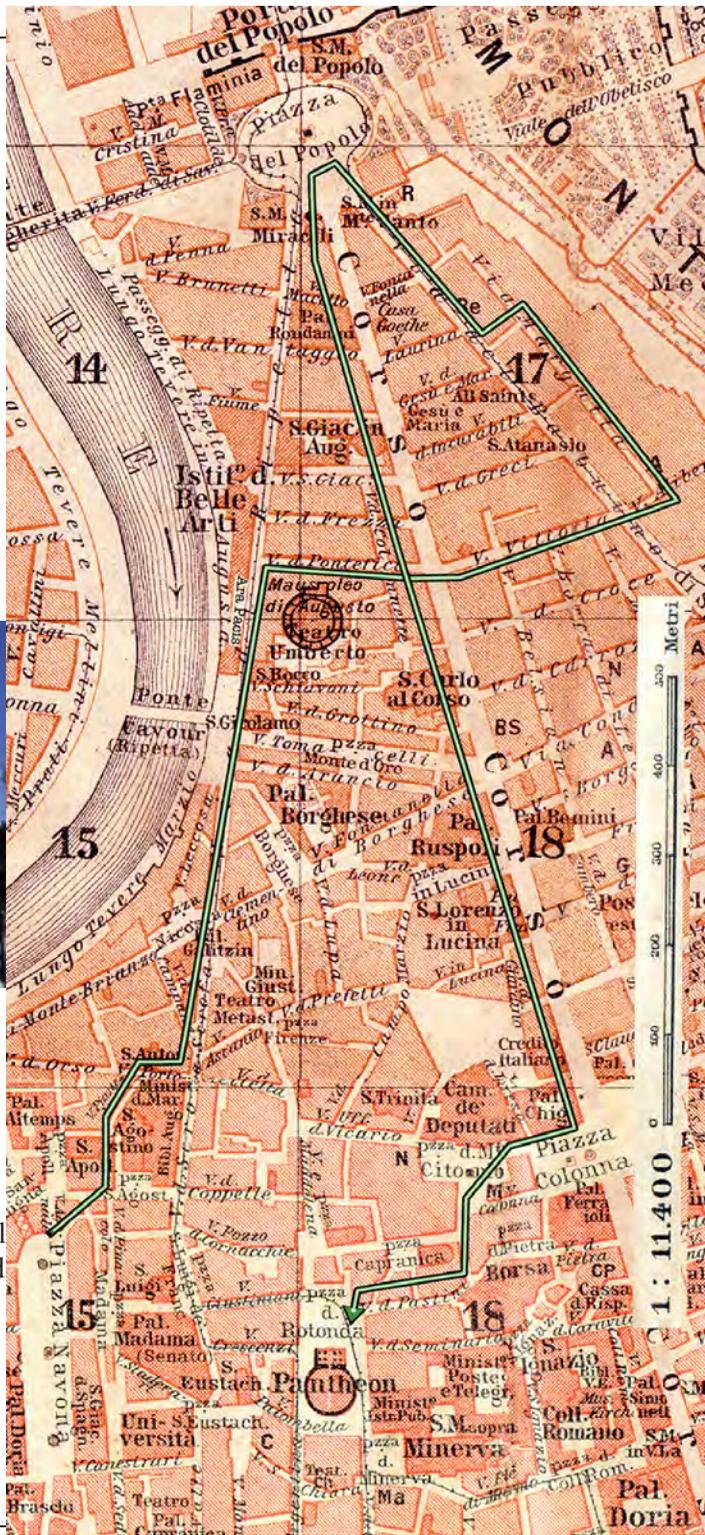
Walking in this simple quiet neighborhood will be one of the most interesting experiences of your entire European trip. You will see artisans working in shops unchanged for centuries; fruit and flower stands for the local residents; attractive little restaurants for locals; fountain faces popping out of walls; stray cats prowling the alleys; ivy-covered brick walls 400 years old.



Take your time as you wander through, passing the antique shops of Via dei Coronari on your way back to Piazza Navona, visiting the church

of Sant' Andrea della Pace and the delightful tangle of cobbled lanes around it. Behind is the cloister designed by Bramante, his first work in Rome, before he became principal architect for Saint Peter's.

Our final afternoon in Rome is free for you to do as you wish. For those not interested in more shopping, there is another wonderful walk we can enjoy, from Piazza Navona to Piazza del Popolo. We get there by meandering the streets of what Romans call the 'Trident' between the three streets, Corso, Babuino and Ripetta, riddled with little shops, galleries, churches and cafes. An artsy little side street, Via Margutta, is also fun to stroll.



The Trident comes together at the twin Baroque churches on one side of the Piazza del Popolo. The other side of this vast plaza rewards you with Rome's earliest domed Renaissance church, Santa Maria del Popolo, which contains Caravaggio and Pinturicchio paintings, Bernini sculptures, and architectural details by Raphael. A towering 3,000 year-old Egyptian obelisk and lion fountain stands at the piazza's center, anchoring all the elements in perfect Roman style. From here we can easily taxi back to the hotel.

# FLORENCE: the Renaissance Town



[Click for Index](#)

We travel to Florence by train in the morning, enjoying a scenic two-hour ride through the farmlands of Tuscany. You will find that traveling by train is a very comfortable way to go. Our first-class cars are air-conditioned, so they are cool and quiet, making for a most enjoyable ride. You can bring snacks on board, or eat in the dining car, or just relax and talk with your travel companions.

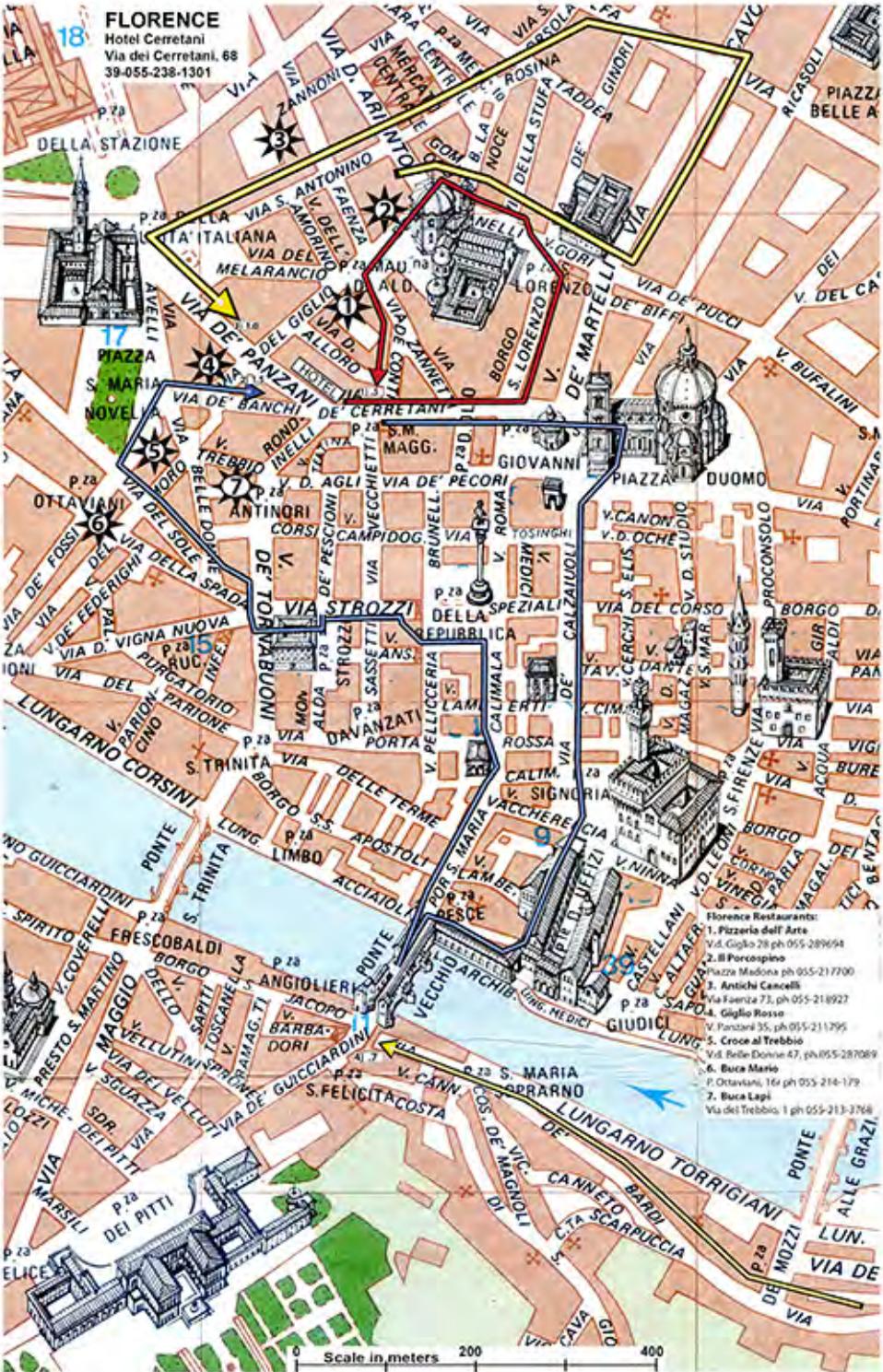


The train is also a place to meet some local Europeans, most of whom speak enough English to communicate with you. The train goes faster than a bus, and doesn't have to stop for traffic, or toilet breaks, so you arrive at your destination sooner and more refreshed. This is one of many differences between our approach and the standard bus tours.

We will explore this fine art capital and see many amazing and beautiful sights. You will see how Florence became the birthplace of the Renaissance, and visit the places where these early artistic developments happened in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. Our hotel, the Grand Hotel Baglioni, is in the middle of the city, making it very easy for us to explore the many historic attractions, shops and restaurants. After checking in and having lunch we will go on a walking tour covering many of the important sights.



Consistently ranked among the world's top-four cities to visit by magazines like Travel and Leisure, and Conde Nast Traveler, Florence is an Italian treasure. In this detailed two-day itinerary we will show you exactly how we get the most out



of our visit, which is all about culture, history, art, people, shops, architecture, museums, palaces, food and fun.

### **BRIEF HISTORY:**

Tuscany's capital is most famous as the birthplace of the Renaissance -- the city where art took major leaps during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries combined with advancements in science, literature, politics and business to help pave the way to our modern civilization. By 1300, Florence was already considered Europe's largest and wealthiest city, with historic roots that reached all the way back to the ancient Romans, who founded the town and laid out many of the streets in the grid pattern still used today.



With the patronage of the Medicis, superstars of the art world like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Botticelli, Brunelleschi, Donatello, Giotto and many more, created masterpieces here which defined new ways of seeing that still influence us with their dramatic use of perspective, color and realism. Great Florentine thinkers like Galileo, Dante, Boccaccio and Machiavelli also played important roles in their hometown. The great Medici dynasty managed to provide a stable government throughout this time, despite constant military threats from the nearby city-states of Pisa

and Genoa. This confluence of talent was unique in history, with more important geniuses gathered in one small place than ever before or since.

The history created by these great people is a dramatic story that has been partly frozen in stone, displayed in the beautiful architecture now seen in the ancient buildings of the city center. Florence looks much like it did centuries ago, filled with wonderful palaces, piazzas and more art per square inch than any other city on Earth.



As a bonus to the art and history here, you also get to experience some of the best street markets, for leather goods and the usual souvenirs, or can shop up-scale in the many fancy boutiques that line the quaint narrow medieval lanes. For those more interested in shopping than art, you are in retail heaven. Florence is especially famous for its locally manufactured high-quality leather goods, and while Hawaii people do not need much in the way of leather clothing, you will still enjoy the beautiful shoes and handbags. If you are ready for serious spending, there are plenty of designer boutiques and the jewelry shops to discover. If you just want some small leather items, the numerous sidewalk stands clustered around the church of San Lorenzo have low prices on a variety of wallets, belts, lipstick holders, bags and souvenirs of all kinds.



Florence is an ideal city for walking, as the distances are short and many lanes are reserved just for pedestrians, so wear comfortable shoes and come along as we show you the sights. The main part of town is only one square mile, but densely packed with interesting things to see -- so you do need several days to catch it all. Don't let the town's 66 museums intimidate you, because we will show you how to navigate through the important sights. Because the town's small size makes it easy to get around, we have done our best to lay things out for you here in an efficient, logical sequence.

### **FLORENCE DAY ONE:**

Duomo, back alleys, Piazza della Signoria

### **THE DUOMO:**

We start our walking tour at Florence's most important landmark, the great Duomo Cathedral, which was the tallest building in Europe when it was finished in 1434, and is still the world's fourth largest church. You can easily see it by looking up from almost anywhere in town, for the huge dome towers 300 feet over the city. This ever-present dome is a handy landmark that will keep you oriented throughout your stay, especially since the rest of town is low-rise, filled with historic buildings about four stories high.

Back in the Middle Ages the residential buildings were actually much higher than today, with nearly 200 "skyscraper" towers that reached up to 240 feet, built for status and defense, until a more egalitarian-minded government cut them down by half in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time a building boom commenced, with the construction of the cathedral, Palazzo Vecchio, and Santa Croce, all designed by the same Gothic genius, Arnolfo de Cambio.



The 500 foot-long cathedral was an immense achievement of the medieval masons who invented new construction techniques as they worked, creating Europe's largest building. The vast exterior was covered with multi-colored marble, arranged in geometric patterns related to the carpets and fabrics that were created by their wool industry, the most important business in Florence. The wool guilds were the main financiers of the cathedral, eager to show off their success and create an attraction that would draw travelers from throughout Europe, to further enhance their prestige and sales.

Unfortunately, for the first hundred years of construction they could not figure out how to build a roof to cover the huge hole over the altar, until Filippo Brunelleschi came along in the early 15<sup>th</sup>

century with his brilliant plan for a great dome that spanned the gap. Some historians suggest that the Renaissance began with the completion of that dome. You can climb it if you feel adventurous and can spare an hour, winding your way up a narrow staircase between the inner and outer shells, emerging at the top to a spectacular view over the city (see listings for details).



The Piazza del Duomo in front of the church has two more fascinating structures covered in similar multi-colored marble, Giotto's Bell Tower and the Baptistery, both of which charge admission, but you can happily appreciate them from outside for free. You could walk up the tower for an thrilling view of the cathedral, but the dome is far more exciting to climb. The Baptistery is probably the oldest standing building in Florence, built over a thousand years ago, but choose to pay for entry only if you want to see the impressive ceiling mosaic of the Last Judgment.

The most famous treasures of the Baptistery are on the outer doors, especially copies of the "Gates of Paradise" by Lorenzo Ghiberti (1425-1452) on the side facing the Duomo, important for their early use of perspective. Compare these vivid scenes with the prior Gothic approach of Andrea Pisano (1333) on the south side, where figures are rigid in

the typical medieval style. These buildings are so big it is hard to see or photograph them, but there are some good camera angles from the edge of the piazza on Via de' Pecori opposite the Duomo facade, which gets you far enough away so you can take it all in.

For those interested in sculpture and the history of the Duomo, walk around behind the cathedral later on your own to visit the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, which has several rooms of beautiful statues taken from the cathedral, especially Della Robbia's Choir Galleries, Verrocchio's reliefs, Michelangelo's final Pieta, Ghiberti's original panels from the Baptistery doors, Arnolfo di Cambrio's gothic statues -- and perhaps most interestingly of all, the actual tools used to build the great dome, with explanations of how it was done.



### **IDEAL FOR WALKING:**

Next, we meander through the piazzas and alleys heading towards Piazza della Signoria and the Ponte Vecchio. We take our time and explore the charming little pedestrian streets to gain a feeling of life in the Middle Ages, for the buildings have not changed much since then. It's completely safe and easy to find your way through the regular

grid of lanes named Oche, Studio, Cerchi, Presto, Magazzini and Corso -- so we don't just follow the typical tourist route along Via dei Calzaiuoli, which is the main street of tourist Florence that you will inevitably spend time on anyway, checking out its many shops and eateries.



We get off the beaten track to escape the mobs and soak up the quiet atmosphere of the side streets, looking for medieval towers, tiny churches, neighborhood trattoria, corner snack shops, and locals out for a stroll. A favorite spot is the tiny Piazza Santa Elisabetta, with three surviving towers from the Middle Ages, the earliest one uniquely oval in shape and belonging now to the deluxe Hotel Brunelleschi next door.

### **PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA:**



After thirty minutes of wandering we will arrive at the Piazza della Signoria, the town's other major square, with its many statues, cafes, and the massive architecture of the Palazzo Vecchio looming above, the center of political power for 700 years. Looking like

a giant castle with its tower reaching 95 meters, the Palazzo Vecchio has an interesting public courtyard with a bronze replica of Verrochio's puto holding a dolphin.



There are clusters of important statues in the Piazza della Signoria, but don't be fooled by the big David, which is only a copy of Michelangelo's original masterpiece that you must see tomorrow in the Accademia. Foremost in the square are Giambologna's equestrian statue of Medici hero, Grand Duke Cosimo I, and Ammannati's Neptune Fountain, but the best treasures are



in the open arcade of the Loggia dei Lanzi. Cellini's Perseus is probably the most outstanding of all the outdoor statues in Florence, cast in perfect bronze that a recent restoration has brought back to original

luster. Unfortunately, the other statues are still being renovated, including Giambologna's Rape of the Sabines, so this lovely arcade is somewhat marred -- but it still makes a good place to sit on the surrounding bench and rest.

This was a huge day that covered nearly all the top attractions. By now you should be ready for a brief rest and then tackle some serious shopping at the vast outdoor market right next to our hotel.



### **SAN LORENZO MARKET:**

The busiest outdoor market of town is just one block from our hotel. This market is amazing! It is one of the largest in Europe, with about 150 different outdoor stalls, but of course most of the merchants offer the same things: belts, t-shirts, wallets, jackets, little statues, and souvenirs that say Florence. Don't bother trying to bargain with these people -- they are not interested, unless you are buying a dozen items from the same person. The prices are pretty reasonable and the quality is ok, so this is a good place to spend, spend, spend. However, if you want top quality leather goods, stick to the real stores.

Later, we regroup at the hotel and continue to another small, nearby museum to see one statue -- Michelangelo's David. Yes, this one piece is worth the three-block walk over to the Accademia Gallery. He stands 18 feet tall, a perfect marble figure ready to strike down the giant. Many feel this is the greatest statue ever created, and this reporter agrees, but words and pictures cannot do it justice, so you'll just have



to go and see for yourself. The problem is that everyone else in the world wants to visit David, so there are long lines outside the museum most of the time, which is pretty ridiculous when you consider these people are waiting up to three hours to see one statue. But we have a good system to beat the line: get there at the end of the day. The closing hours are a little tricky however, because like most museums, the ticket booth closes about 30 minutes before the museum closes, so don't cut it too tight. If you arrive between 5:00 and 6:00 pm you should be fine, but the door closes at 6:20 pm. It is possible to make a reservation by calling 055-238-609, but that should not be necessary if you time it right.

Once you are inside the Accademia, there are some other statues to enjoy along with the David -- in fact there is a whole room filled with Michelangelo's work that most people blindly walk past in their obsession with David. Called the "Slaves" or the "Captives," these unfinished statues were intended for the tomb of Pope Julius II, which never was built, even though Michelangelo worked off and on for half his career on this project. Because they are unfinished these pieces have an additional attraction, because they reveal the way in which the great artist cut stone, and vividly demonstrate his approach of liberating figures from the marble.

Another room has a full-sized copy of Giambologna's Sabines, and colorful paintings by Fra Bartolomea and Vivarini. Another long gallery has many plaster casts of famous statues that were used by the students when this was an art academy.



Then head into the night for a lovely dinner, because Florence is full of excellent restaurants that you don't want to miss. Everyone understands English, so you'll have no problem communicating.

**FLORENCE DAY TWO:** Ponte Vecchio, Pitti Palace, Oltrarno, shopping, optional excursion.

### **PIAZALLE MICHELANGELO**

This morning in Florence will provide time to explore a museum, perhaps the Pitti Palace, with the mid-day free for independent activities. We begin with a bus ride to Piazzalle Michelangelo, a wonderful hillside attraction that offers stunning view across the city on the other side of the Arno River.



This is the one of the world's great panoramas, so it is worth it, and the bus ride getting there takes us

through interesting residential neighborhoods. The vista takes in the full span of Florence, spreading below you in a sea of clay tile roofs, punctuated by many domes, towers, bridges and framed by hills in the background, with the commanding presence of the great Duomo rising above all. A full-size, bronze copy of Michelangelo's David stands in the middle of the square, surrounded by a small army of vendors selling snacks, film, t-shirts and other souvenirs to the many visitors who will be sharing this popular view.

It only takes fifteen minutes to soak up the scene, but this brief expedition is most rewarding. When finished we take a very pleasant walk downhill that leads to quiet lanes along the river, and then to the Ponte Vecchio, which we reach in thirty minutes.



### **PITTI PALACE:**

This will lead us to an optional visit to the Pitti Palace, the former home of the Medici rulers. Then you will have the rest of the day free for shopping or perhaps an excursion out of town. The Pitti was the largest palace in Europe before Versailles was built outside of Paris. Your Hawaii escort will bring you through the gilded galleries of the Pitti, which has a small but important collection that makes this an easy informative one-hour visit.

Pitti Palace, the former home of the Medici ruling dynasty, was the largest residence in Europe before Versailles was built. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was the royal home of the nation's king, Vittorio Emanuele II, when Florence was briefly the capital of Italy.



The palace's Palatine Gallery has a small but important collection gathered in six main rooms, that makes this an easy visit. The paintings are densely packed in, hung one above the other in the traditional way that reflects the original Medici system of showing their art treasures. These dazzling images, surrounded by lavish golden frames, hung on red velvet walls, provide almost too much stimulation, but the main attraction is waiting above you, in the ceiling murals by Pietro da Cortona, which are even more overwhelming than the paintings. The ceilings depict scenes from the life of a Medici, showing the education and maturity of the young prince, ending with his glorious apotheosis into heaven. On the walls you will enjoy masterpieces by Raphael, Rubens, Velasquez, Titian, Lippi, Perugino, Caravaggio, Van Dyke, Veronese and many more. Your visit includes ten worthwhile rooms of the royal palace, with many original furnishings. However, there are another dozen rooms of minor art along the courtyard that we can skip.

While you are here on the other side of the Arno, you might enjoy a stroll through this neighborhood that blossoms with art galleries, antique shops, ateliers, little piazzas, and of course, more restaurants. Oltrano, as the neighborhood is called, also has two important churches worth seeing: Santo Spirito, serenely designed by Brunelleschi (who also is believed to have designed the original Pitti Palace), and the Brancacci Chapel, in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine, with the famous fresco cycle by Masaccio, considered to be the painter who invented realistic perspective in the 1420s.

### ACROSS THE ARNO:

Walk back across the Arno on the pretty Ponte Vecchio Bridge, which offers a fine view of Ponte Santa Trinita. You will emerge into a busy intersection and street leading to the famous Straw Marke, also called the New Market, although it is 500 years old, just one block from Piazza della Signoria. Rub the nose of the bronze pig for good luck.



One block over is the Piazza della Repubblica, a big empty square that is not terribly interesting, but Gilli is a very pleasant café on the square that has a nice stand-up coffee bar, or tables outdoors, and convenient restrooms if you need them by now -- always a challenge. This area used to be a

bustling center of town until it was all knocked down in a misguided 19th century urban renewal project.

Nearby you will see the massive Strozzi Palace, which often has fascinating temporary exhibitions relating to the history of Florence, so peek into the impressive courtyard and see if the current show meets your interests.

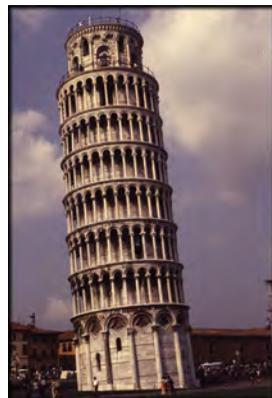
The refined shopping street of Via de Tornabuoni leads from here into the center of town. Recently converted to a pedestrian mall, this upscale shopping street is a delight. For more glamorous boutiques, take a left in a few blocks, down one side of Via Della Vigna Nuova, and back up the other. You will find it is one of Europe's great shopping streets, especially for the ladies interested in clothing, shoes, and accessories.



an early teacher of the young Michelangelo. The church has many more art works, and is beautiful to see just for its harmonious Gothic architecture. Even if you don't want to pay the 4 Euro to see another church, be sure to visit outside to admire the beautiful façade and the perfect piazza.

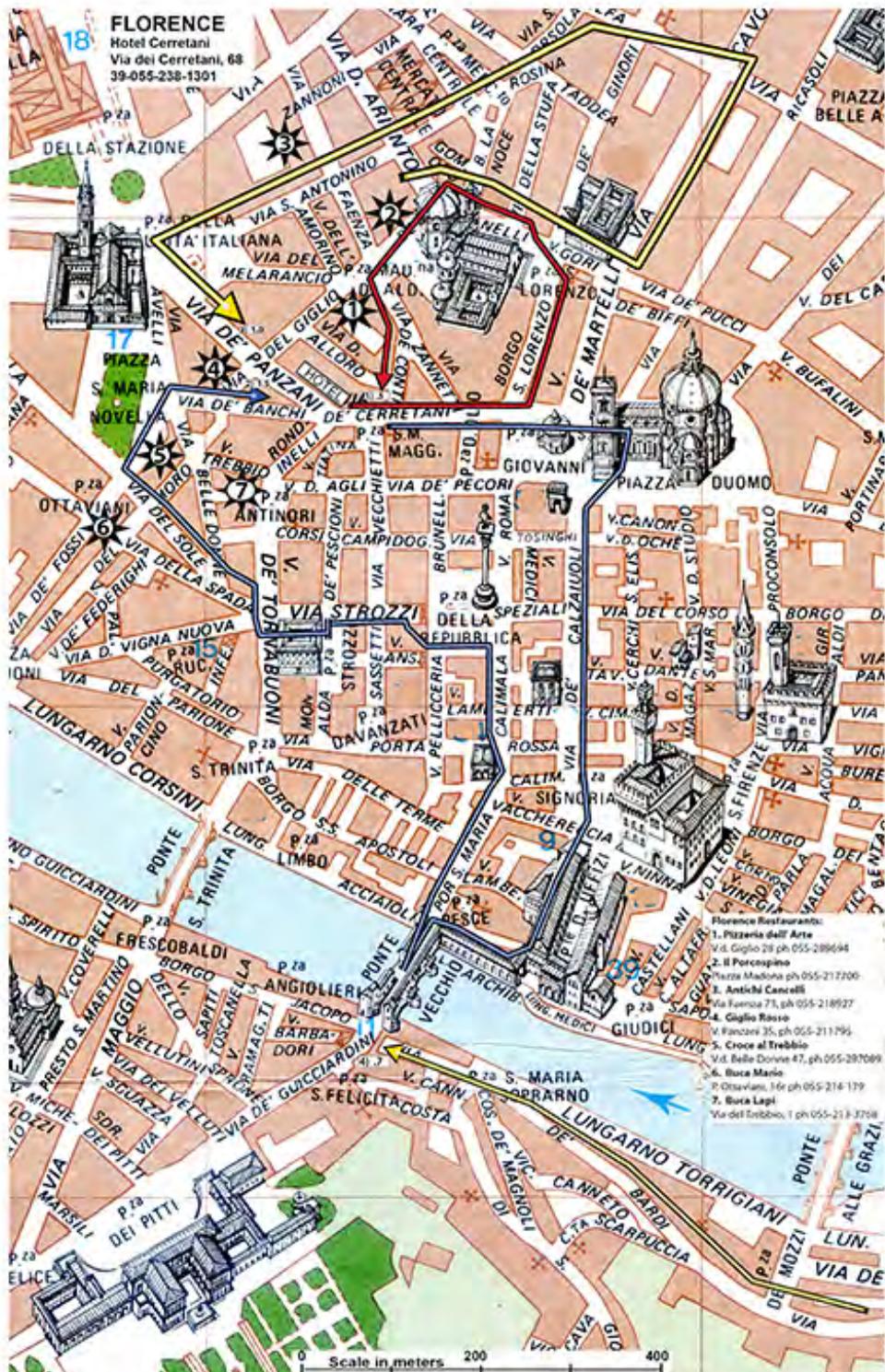
Another option for this afternoon is the Bargello Museum, with the main collection of sculpture in Florence. Built in the Middle Ages, the Bargello has served many functions over the years, including Town Hall, courthouse, prison and museum. The original architecture is still intact, so the building itself is as interesting as its contents. It has an excellent selection of statues, including several by Michelangelo, and notable pieces by Giambologna, Donatello, Verrocchio, Brunelleschi and Ghiberti, important Renaissance sculptors.

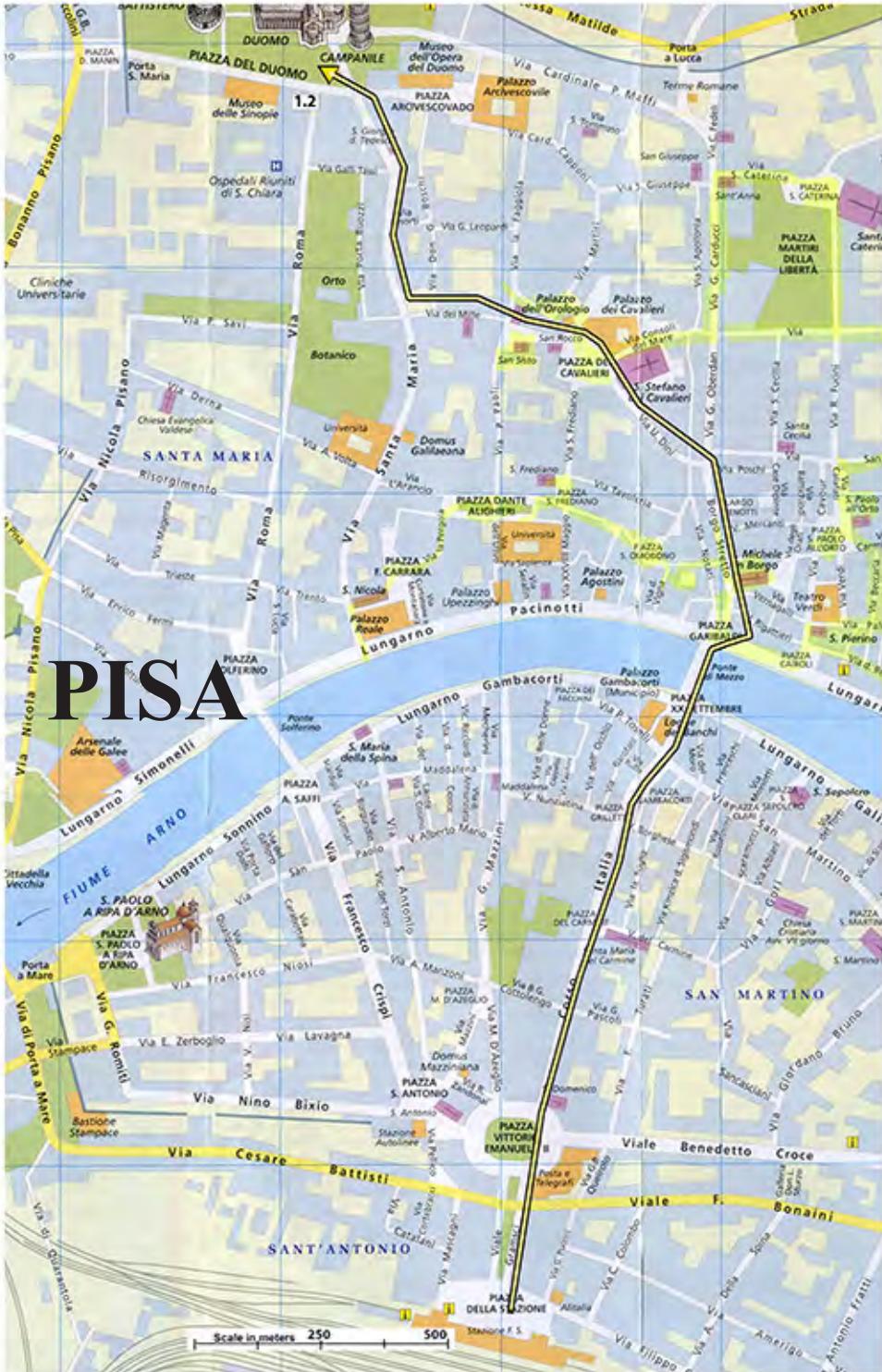
**PISA:** We can visit the Leaning Tower of Pisa, easily reached in an hour from Florence, directly by train. From the train station we enjoy a nice walk on a pedestrian shopping mall and then through the Old Town arcades and piazzas of the historic center of Pisa. Be sure to also visit the magnificent Romanesque cathedral and baptistery, which too many day-trippers overlook in their rush to only see the tower. Another advantage of going by train is that you can take your time in this "Field of Miracles," and then return to the station for the hour ride back to Florence.



We are in striking distance of another fascinating church, Santa Maria Novella, located on the piazza of the same name. Santa Maria Novella is a good example of a church that is also an art museum, with the "Trinity" by Masaccio, considered the first painting to use perspective, showing true depth and proportions, along with glorious frescoes behind the altar by Ghirlandaio,

You can see there is so much to do in and around Florence that we have carefully planned this visit so that you don't miss a thing.







[Click for Index](#)

We take the morning train from Florence directly to Venice, arriving around noon. We ride the vaporetto boat down the length of the Grand Canal past the Rialto Bridge, to the middle of Venice, where our hotel is conveniently located.

Venice is the city of canals and gondolas, city of dreams and music, city of cafes, with endless labyrinth of narrow alleys, classic ancient brick buildings, five hundred bridges, and a million tourists drawn by its compelling charms. We will have two nights and days filled with magic here in the queen of the Adriatic, seemingly adrift at sea, yet anchored to a hundred little islands connected by marble masterpieces.



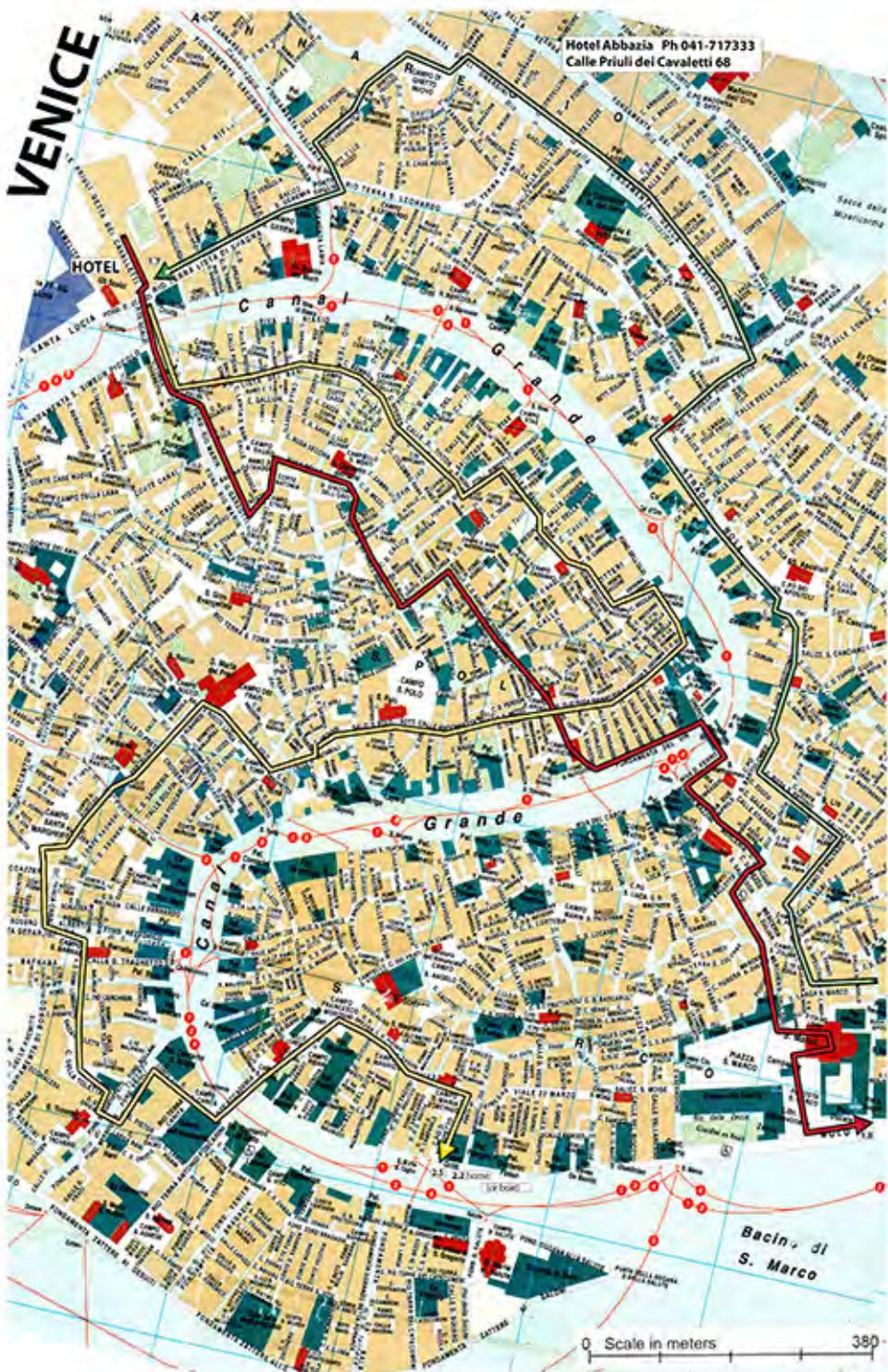
This special city is different from all others in the world -- a city of canals with an endless labyrinth of narrow alleys, without roads, cars, or buses.

Located on a hundred little islands held together by 400 bridges, in the middle of a lagoon in the Adriatic Sea, Venice is a dream come true. It is the most completely preserved historic town and largest pedestrian zone in the world!

As celebrated travel writer Jan Morris says, Venice has “changed less in the last three centuries than any other city in Europe....All in all you can probably have a better holiday in Venice than anywhere else on earth.” Morris’ “World of Venice” is one of hundreds of interesting books you can read about this amazing place, but this chapter summarizes everything you need to know for our in-depth visit.



In its glory days Venice was the richest and most powerful city in Europe, while now it is just the most beautiful. History-lovers will have much to discover, and for the shoppers, this is one big mall. While most stores are quite modern on the inside, the exteriors are all ancient, so you get a feeling for what Europe was like hundreds of years ago. Looking around, you will notice some of Venice seems to be crumbling, its buildings in various stages of disrepair with peeling plaster revealing old brick walls underneath -- but that is part of the charm people love so much. Always in the top ten of any list of the world’s best places to visit, Venice is a magical delight in any season, rain or shine, night and day.





It is so pleasant to be able to stroll everywhere and not worry about cars and trucks running you over or blasting you with noise and exhaust. Instead, Venice offers peace and serenity in a world of its own, if you know where to look. However, the main square and primary shopping street can be an ordeal of crowds and high-priced shops that could give you a very bad impression, especially if you are only in town for a day, like most visitors. Venice has the highest ratio of tourists to residents of any city in the world, which proves what a highly prized magnet this is but warns you the town is being loved to death. You will face a major challenge to get away from the mobs.

Most tourists who visit Venice are here for just a few hours and completely miss out on the authentic experience because they are in a rush to get back to their tour bus. All they see on a brief day-trip is the Piazza San Marco, a glass factory, maybe a quick gondola ride, and then they rush off to the next city on their hurried itinerary. They “saw” Venice, but missed the heart and soul of the town. This is the paradox of mass tourism – more people are traveling to more crowded places, but are in such a hurry they don’t find what they came looking for. This problem is more apparent in Venice than anywhere else. Rush, rush, rush. Most places you visit are worth more than that

brief encounter, especially a destination as wonderful as Venice. Our approach in this tour is totally different for we get the most out of every hour in this precious jewel of a city.

Our detailed two-day itinerary will take us beyond the stage front of Piazza San Marco to discover Venice’s true character. The schedule that will bring you to all the major highlights plus gets you into the quiet neighborhoods far from the crowds where you will find colorful local life. The best way to see Venice is by getting away from the tourists and walking through the little alleys. You cannot stray too far because this is a small town, about one mile wide, so just absorb the overwhelming beauty and enjoy yourself.



#### VENICE DAY ONE:

Your introduction to Venice will be emerging from the train station onto the Grand Canal, bringing us into the center of town. Our hotel is in Venice, one block from the station, so that you will have easy access to all parts of town, day and night. After checking in at our hotel and having lunch, we shall take a walking tour with our local guide through the historic heart of the city, ending up at the Piazza San Marco and with a visit inside the 12<sup>th</sup> century Basilica.



### **PIAZZA SAN MARCO:**

The most important place in town is the Piazza San Marco, the city's largest public plaza, the "outdoor living room" with the ancient Basilica, Bell Tower, Doges Palace, and other historic buildings all around the square. The Piazza is always filled with people feeding the pigeons, admiring the architecture, snapping countless photos, and perhaps sitting at one of the outdoor cafes soaking in the scene.



The ruler in the old days was the "Doge" who was elected for life by the upper-class merchants of Venice. His home, the Doge's Palace, is one of the grand buildings of Europe befitting the most powerful person in the richest city -- its beautiful rooms decorated with the most elaborate murals on the walls and ceilings, which you could visit later on your own.

Next door is the greatest single landmark of Venice, the Basilica di San Marco, consecrated in the year 1094, which makes it one of the oldest functioning buildings in Europe. This church is Europe's most authentic surviving example of the Byzantine Style, with five domes hovering over a Greek cross floor plan and an interior covered by the world's largest collection of mosaics. The Basilica's design is based on the plan of a 6<sup>th</sup>-century church in Constantinople that was built by the Emperor Justinian, who was also responsible for the Hagia Sophia, the definitive Byzantine building. The building is a pastiche of many precious parts brought from elsewhere, forming a cohesive artistic masterpiece



Later you might visit the famous Bell Tower, or Campanile of San Marco, which is open to the public for a slight fee of \$6, which includes the elevator ride to the top of this 315 ft.-high viewing platform from which you can see the entire town. If you don't want to get blasted by the boom of loud bells, avoid the hour and half-hour time slots.



Our walking tour continues behind the piazza at the Bridge of Sighs, seen from the first bridge behind the Doges Palace on the Riva degli Schiavoni, the grand promenade along the lagoon waterfront. Named after the sighs of prisoners brought across it from their trial in the palace to their punishment in the prison, you may have been inside this bridge already in your palace tour. The most romantic way to see the bridge is from a gondola, kissing your partner as you glide beneath for eternal love.



The best photo-op in all of Venice is right here along the waterfront looking out across the lagoon towards the island church of San Giorgio Maggiore. You want to frame your shot so you have a row of gondolas tied up in the foreground, with the Palladian church majestically rising like a mirage from the sea. Looking just to the right you will notice another island, the Giudecca, which you might like to visit because of the Cipriani, the most luxurious hotel in Venice. Later you could ride their free shuttle

boat and enjoy walking in their luxurious gardens and perhaps have a memorable meal. When the weather is fair they serve an outdoor lunch buffet that will totally exceed all your fondest dreams.

You will probably come back to Piazza San Marco again in your visit, for it is the town center -- and at night you can experience the atmosphere of its cafes with their live orchestras. Nothing can be better than sitting at an outdoor table sipping a drink, listening to the light classical or pop sounds of the small orchestra, looking at the floodlit façade of the Basilica, and just soaking up the scene. Florian on one side and Quadri on the other have been entertaining their guests for 300 years, so they must be doing something right. Don't worry about the prices; it's really not that much of a rip-off, and with this setting, who cares? Or, if you are on a tight budget, you can just stand next to the tables or sit on the steps and listen.

We continue walking through a variety of fascinating narrow lanes which bring us into a quiet part of town away from the tourists. We shall see beautiful small canals and little public plazas where the locals gather.



For those interested we can also visit a glass factory where you will see a demonstration of glass-blowing and visit a showroom filled with beautiful Murano glassware. Probably the main

thing to buy in Venice, aside from the obvious postcards and t-shirts, is glass, and you will find all kinds of glass goods throughout town. Rather than just buying from any old shop, be careful to find quality items. At this glass factory you will find out how they actually make the vases, pitchers and wine glasses you see everywhere. Murano is a whole island filled with these factories, but you don't have to go that far unless you are a major glass collector.



### **MERCERIE and RIALTO:**

Continuing our walking tour, we explore the busiest shopping neighborhood and end up at the Rialto Bridge. Walk north through the arch underneath the Clock Tower into the Mercerie, a series of several parallel and cross streets that are always packed with tourists browsing in the many shops. There are other neighborhoods with better shopping deals -- but the Mercerie is a mandatory part of your visit and the many enticing shop windows might even tempt you. For centuries this has been the commercial center of town. Especially good in mid-afternoon when the more remote parts of town are shut down for siesta, these shops are open all day. Yes, you are in Italy, so stores do generally close from noon until 4:00 pm, but amazingly, this historic habit is beginning to disappear.

The shops of Venice offer a wide variety of top goods, famous for glassworks, lace, fashions, shoes, handmade paper, fine arts, and souvenirs of all kinds. You will find that this center of Venice is

like a giant shopping mall that is more rewarding when you get away from the tourist shops and into the neighborhoods with local residents, tomorrow.

Wander through the rest of the Merceria, heading north to the Rialto. We walk along on various pedestrian lanes in the direction of our hotel. Along the way we can walk into the Cannareggio district and stroll along a canal that leads us to a wonderful wine bar on the canal, Al Timon, with delicious little foods called cicchetti. By now it is getting late in the day and you are ready to stop walking and have dinner, picking out some spot on the way back to the hotel.

If you have an early dinner, you will have time to hear some classical music, for there is a chamber orchestra concert nearly every night. Listening to Vivaldi or Mozart in the divine surroundings of the old churches or concert halls is a sublime experience that should not be missed. Just at



the Rialto is one of the main venues, the Chiesa San Bartolomeo, with performances by Interpreti Veneziani who also appear at other churches on different nights. Another excellent choice is Orchestra di Venezia performing with costumed dancers at Scuola Grande di S. Giovanni Evangelista near the Frari.

## VENICE DAY TWO:

We will lead you on another fascinating walking tour, through the Rialto, along a local shopping street, to the Frari. This is the best way to enjoy Venice, walking away from the main areas, experiencing the back streets, looking at building details, stopping at the top of little bridges and looking up and down the canals. In the afternoon you are free to wander on your own, or come along on another walk to see some quiet residential areas, narrow canals, with more churches, palaces and museums.



## RIALTO MARKET:

After breakfast we walk to the Rialto and cross the bridge to the market side, in the district of San Polo. This is where Venice was first founded, and it still has some of the oldest buildings in town. "What news on the Rialto?" wrote Shakespeare in the Merchant of Venice, for it has always been the center of action and gossip. The Rialto is one of the liveliest neighborhoods in the morning because it is the main outdoor fruit and vegetable market, always packed with locals picking up that day's fresh produce. Your eyes and ears will be delighted with the most wonderful sights and sounds.

The sounds of Venice are another one of the compelling charms of this unique town. One is so conditioned to tuning out offensive noises, but here your ear can be a pleasure organ because the background noise is made by people, boats, birds, and water. This city is a place where you can really enjoy listening, which is an experience so different from the usual pounding our ears take in any other town. Serene sounds of water lapping against the gondolas, melodious chatter in the marketplace, bells of the 200 campaniles, music drifting over the canals, children squealing in the campo, or pigeons fluttering in the Piazza -- all worth tuning in and appreciating. You will occasionally find moments of pure silence, but usually there is a pleasant sound in the air waiting to be appreciated, if you pay attention. The Rialto market is a major symphony starring the operatic vendors whose musical cries lure you to their tempting carts piled high with colorful foods. It's also a great place to take lots of pictures.

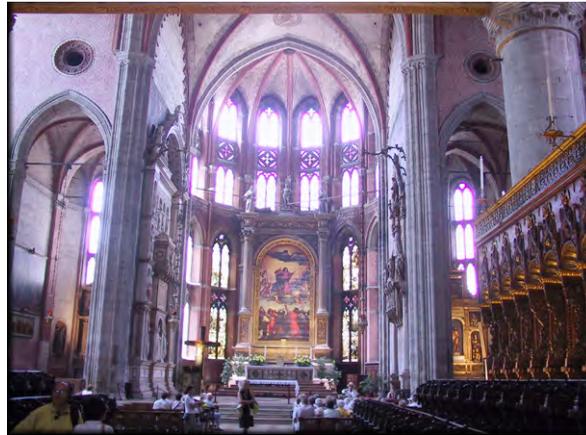
Next, we walk from the Rialto along a local shopping street in the direction of Campo San Polo. This lane begins with a number of sidewalk stands selling t-shirts, aprons, lace, bags, and various other souvenirs, at prices much less than in the main shops by San Marco. Now you are getting away from the touristy areas and walking

into a bunch of people heading for work. Soon you'll notice a "double barbican" overhead, where two old buildings have been extended out over the sidewalk to create more room inside the homes. Venice has lots of similar features, like alleys that tunnel through buildings, for it is a very dense urban concentration. Your visual pleasures are multiplied by this rich mixture, as there is something interesting to see wherever you look.

Soon you arrive at Campo San Polo, a refreshing contrast to the narrow alleys since it is the largest square in town after San Marco. Now we take a quick left and a right, and will arrive at a friendly little cafe called Ciari, with inexpensive sandwiches, clean restrooms and seating indoors or outside – perfect for our restful break.



Another good reason to visit the Frari is the excellent little glass shop next door, Vetri Artistici Di Murano, a small family operation that offers some of the best prices for glass beads, paperweights and jewelry. It will save you a trip out to Murano Island.



**FRARI:** This is a good time to visit the Church of the Frari, just around the corner. You cannot miss Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, a huge gothic structure with the second tallest bell tower (229 ft.) and many famous art masterpieces inside well worth the \$3 admission charge. Especially notable are paintings by Titian and Giovanni Bellini, but the star attraction is the architecture, with a soaring ceiling of pointed arches tied together by elaborate wooden beams and tiles in the typical red and white chromatic pattern covering the expansive floor.

Our walking tour continues through a little tunnel outside the back of the Frari, heading towards the Accademia. It is a pleasant stroll along several canals and campi, quite far from the tourist center. In a few minutes we arrive at Campo Santa Margherita, a large fascinating square always busy with local folks out shopping or just sitting around under the shade trees passing the time of day. It is one of the delights of Venice, so pause here for a while and soak up the atmosphere. At the far left exit of the campo you will see a little supermarket worth visiting to appreciate how compact things are in Venice.

Just past Campo San Barnaba, heading south, you will come across a most picturesque floating vegetable market on a boat tied up along the sidewalk, or *fondamenta*, as paths along a canal are called. Follow the crowd or signs pointing towards Accademia, just a few blocks ahead.



## SAN MARCO:

We walk across the large wooden Accademia Bridge, pausing at the top for a sweeping view down the Grand Canal. Now we are back in the center of Venice at the far western end of the San Marco district in Campo Francesco Morosini.

We soon arrive at the gondola station where we board the boats for a delightful 45-minute ride through the little canals that make this town so special.



This is the perfect time for our optional gondola ride, which we will arrange so we can enjoy a group discount. Please, you must do this when you are in Venice, even if you think it is too expensive or tacky or touristy. It is none of those things. Late in the day is the best time, an hour before sunset when the light is most magical and you can still see clearly. There is a gondola station at Giglio a few blocks from our hotel. Gondoliers are special people -- part of an ancient tradition, so treat them nicely and you will have a splendid ride.



If you would like a refreshing drink, turn right after the gondola go to the Gritti Palace Hotel for the world's finest Bellini -- a blend of fresh peach juice and sparkling white wine, served outdoors on the finest terrace in town with a sweeping view of the Church of Salute and the busy mouth of the Grand Canal. Or just drink peach juice if you abstain. You will never forget this moment.

You are now free for the afternoon, to continue on your own, wandering through these fascinating lanes and doing a little shopping. You could reach the Rialto in 15 minutes, but take your time and enjoy the sights, such as the charming Snail Staircase, Scala Contarini del Bovolo, just off Campo Manin, and look for nearby Campo San Luca, where seven little alleys converge, bringing a constant stream of locals through this pleasant meeting spot. One block further east, Calle dei Fabbri is a lively shopping street with many places to eat.





### **BRIEF HISTORY:**

So that you can better understand the sights, it helps to know some of the fascinating history of Venice -- which can be summarized here in a nutshell. Before the first settlers arrived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, this was a series of low muddy islands in the lagoon, about three miles offshore. With the frequent warfare of northern barbarian tribes invading Italy, increasing numbers of mainlanders took refuge on the mud flats and were protected by the shallow channels that invaders could not navigate. The early simple economy was based on fishing and collecting salt but soon developed into a trading society that was importing goods from Asia and selling them throughout Europe.

By the 9<sup>th</sup> century the first Basilica was built and Venice was on her way to becoming an important regional force. The peak of power was reached in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when Venice conquered Istanbul and many coastal areas throughout the Mediterranean, while expanding trade with Asia thanks in part to the travels of Marco Polo. With continued growth during the 14<sup>th</sup> century Venice kept building more palaces, shops and warehouses to form most of the precious historic city one sees today.

How were these buildings ever constructed in the water, sand and mud? Special techniques evolved using a combination of pile-driving and stone foundations, which have survived these many centuries. Trees were brought from the mainland and driven into the soft mud until they reached a harder clay layer, forming a foundation of piles. It took about one million trees to create the foundation for the Basilica, so you can imagine that Venice now stands on an underwater forest, taken from the distant Alps and Balkans. Rather than rot, these trees have petrified and become stone. On top of the wooden piles the Venetians created another layer of foundation using bricks, wood beams and large stones brought in from Dalmatia, then erected their buildings on top. This is why much of Venice today leans left or right, not politically but physically.

Venice developed a powerful navy defending its many colonies and was the main European power fighting against the expansion of the Muslims, but the inevitable decline of power began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century due to expanding strength of the Turks, and the discovery of better trade routes to Asia by sailing around Africa. Venice continued as an important sovereign Republic, despite increasing decadence and endless partying, until the 1797 conquest by Napoleon, bringing to an end 1,000 years of independence. Controlled by France, Austria and finally Italy during the 1800s, Venice became a popular visitor destination for aristocrats on their Grand Tour, and it has since developed into one of the world's great destinations.



# LUCERNE

## & the Swiss Alps



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At the mid-point of our trip we travel from Venice to Lucerne, through the majestic Swiss Alps. We travel in our deluxe Italian train all afternoon on one of the most scenic rail lines in Europe, into the heart of the Alps.



Keep your eyes glued to the window, and watch for the little village and hilltop church we pass three different times as the train winds down the mountain. We arrive in Lucerne in time for a stroll through the Old Town, where our hotel is located, followed by dinner.

We will have two nights and days in Lucerne, the most popular city in Switzerland, famous for its well-preserved Old Town, consisting of blocks of medieval buildings richly decorated with painted

murals showing village life in olden days. The banks of Lake Lucerne offer a most picturesque walk, through manicured gardens, past picnickers, swans, fishermen and bobbing boats.

Switzerland is the perfect vacation playground, with spectacular mountains and villages offering the best of nature and culture. The cute little towns are so quaint they almost look contrived, like some Disney version of Heidi's hometown, but this is the real thing. You will discover cobblestone lanes for pedestrians winding past ancient buildings that have the most modern shops inside, with everything spotlessly clean and well organized. This is the land of efficiency and charm, with very friendly people. The best of both worlds, old and new.



Two days is plenty of time to enjoy Lucerne, using it as your home base for travels by train and boat to nearby sights. This way you don't need to change hotels and can enjoy the charming ambience of Lucerne each evening, picking from many excellent restaurants for some memorable meals.

Temperatures are quite reasonable throughout the year, for Lucerne sits at an elevation of only 1,300 feet. Some of the nearby mountains do reach 10,000 feet, with snow-covered glaciers, but the temperatures in town are comfortable. Many



restaurants and cafes have outdoor seating in fair weather, some of them on the beautiful banks of the Reuss River that flows through town, so it is really nice to sit in the fresh air and enjoy your meal.



### **LUCERNE DAY ONE:** Explore the Old Town.

The historic center of Lucerne is an extensive pedestrian zone, filled with interesting shops, restaurants, and ancient buildings. The steep gabled roofs, covered with strong wooden shingles to ward off the winter snow, complete the picturesque scenario. Automobiles are not allowed into this large historic zone, so you can wander the cobbled lanes without fear of getting run over.

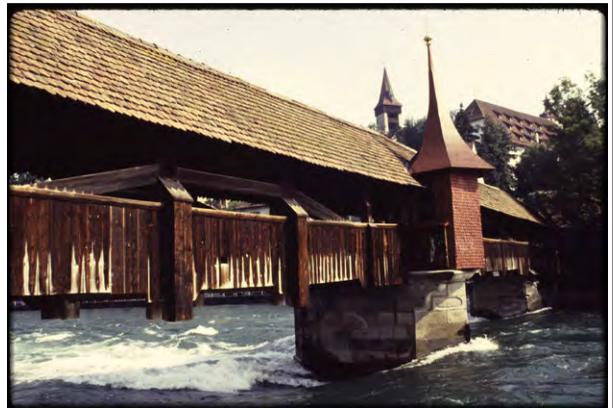
The Old Town is surrounded on one side by the river and lake, and on the other by a hillside and ancient fortified wall, which you can climb. This is a small town, so it is easy to see the principle sights in a short walk.

### **TWO COVERED BRIDGES:**

In the heart of Lucerne is its major landmark, the 560-foot long Chapel Bridge, or Kapellbrücke, the oldest covered bridge in Europe, first built in 1333. But in 1993, after 660 years, this Lucerne icon was destroyed by fire, only to be rebuilt by the



efficient townspeople within a year in the original style -- and by now has weathered to a mellow patina that once again looks hundreds of years old. The heroic rise from ashes symbolizes Swiss pride in their past and modern ability to get things done. Even here, it sometimes takes forever to repair old buildings or construct new ones, but the quality upon completion is unsurpassed. Adjacent to the bridge is the 110-foot high Water Tower, also nearly 700 years old, the most photographed image in town. For the best picture, lure some swans into your foreground with the bridge and tower behind.



The Mill Bridge is a smaller covered bridge two hundred yards south along the river, built around 1408, notable for its series of paintings, “The Dance of Death,” whose jangling skeletons of

the Black Death make you feel lucky to be alive. The clever Swiss have once again harnessed the waterpower that originally gave this bridge its name, and created a modern electricity-generating turbine, underwater and completely invisible. Both bridges also served as part of the medieval fortifications that surrounded the town.

The old fortification wall still survives from the Middle Ages, built around the same time as the two bridges, between 1350 and 1408. Called the Musegg Wall, it has nine towers, three of them open free to the public, and a section of wall you can walk along for the most spectacular view looking down on the town.



called this “the saddest and most moving piece of rock in the world.”



This is worth your effort, and easy to find, with a path just beyond the Mill Bridge that takes you there, perhaps tomorrow on your free afternoon.

### LION MONUMENT:

Another landmark we see at the end of our walk is the huge Lion Monument, carved deeply into the sandstone cliff to commemorate the 1792 death of 786 Swiss mercenary soldiers that were trying to defend King Louis XVI in Paris. Completed in 1821, it depicts a noble, mortally wounded lion, regal but dying from a spear thrust in the ribs, making a grand tragic statement of historic pride carved in stone. Mark Twain toured Lucerne and

The Hoffkirche, or Collegiate Church, is another attraction in this part of town, on a hill overlooking the lake, four blocks south of the restaurant. This Catholic church was built in the gothic and Renaissance styles during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and has a rich interior with many carvings and wrought-iron works, and a cloistered courtyard next door.

The Old Swiss House, one of the best restaurants in Lucerne, is located one block from the Lion Monument, so have a look at their menu and consider a gourmet meal right now for dinner.



With its traditional half-timbered wooden beam construction dating back to 1859, this is truly a landmark of Lucerne. They serve the best *Wienerschnitzel*, sinfully sautéed with a stick of butter right at your table, or superb fresh fish from the lake, and many other items from an extensive menu. Comfortably elegant, the cozy

interior is a perfect setting for a memorable meal. There are many other dinner options in Lucerne, ranging from a simple sausage meal to a full-on gastronomic extravaganza. Another evening option for the gamblers is to visit the Casino, along the lakefront on Haldenstrasse.



### **LUCERNE DAY TWO:**

Train to Mount Titlis and free afternoon

The banks of Lake Lucerne offer a most picturesque walk, through manicured gardens, past picnickers, swans, fishermen, bobbing boats, and tree-lined paths. This stroll is especially dramatic at sunrise, when the water turns to gold. Most mornings you will see the farmers' market, with cheeses, breads, fruits, produce and pretty flower stalls, which stay open through mid-day. After the refreshing sunrise excursion head back to our hotel for breakfast and prepare for your day's activities.

Enjoy your rich buffet breakfast at our deluxe hotel on the banks of the River Rues and relax over coffee. Be sure to try their dark breads if you are a whole-wheat fan, made fresh each morning in the town's excellent bakeries. Lucerne is in the German-speaking eastern part of Switzerland and they love dark bread.

We are in the middle our tour and the dirty clothes are accumulating, so this morning we shall drop

our laundry off at the Jet Wash laundromat, where they will wash, dry and fold your load for \$15, and you can pick it up at the end of the day. This is a big help and allows us to take the tour without bringing a gigantic suitcase.



### **MOUNT TITLIS:**

The most exciting, convenient excursion out of town is to Mount Titlis, where we get a chance to frolic in the snow at the top of a mountain, just two hours from Lucerne. Because it has a glacier at the 10,000-foot summit, there is snow all year round, so it is really a thrill to go up in the summer time and play, especially for us Hawaiians. It is very easy to get there.



Take the scenic train one hour to Engelberg, enjoying beautiful views of the mountains, farms and villages along the way. At one section this becomes a rack railway, where the train gears engage a metal strip between the rails and pull the train up the steep incline, giving you a chance to walk the aisle leaned over at 45 degrees, if you want to clown around. In Engelberg follow the signs and walk a couple hundred yards to the cable car lift that will take you on the 45-minute ride up the mountain. The combined rail and lift ticket costs about \$95.



Mount Titlis provides a spectacular view into the heart of the Alps, with lofty peaks of the Jungfrau, Munch and Eiger visible in the distant Bernese Oberland on a clear day. The Titlis viewing platform at 10,000 feet has an elaborate multi-storied restaurant, café and gift shop complex, along with an ice tunnel into the glacier. In typical Swiss fashion, they have civilized this mountain peak like so many other similar perches in their realm. You can walk right onto the glacier from the panorama terrace and frolic in the snow. It is cold enough that the snow never melts, but in the summer with typical sunshine you will feel comfortable with just a light jacket. For more fun on the trip down, get off the cable car at the next-to-last stop and rent a scooter (\$5) to coast down the final mile.

We return to town the same way, enjoying the scenery a second time in reverse, or take a snooze. We will be back in town about 2:30pm, which leaves some time for more shopping, or to take a boat ride. If you would just like a short two-hour ride, now is a good time. The boat docks are right in front of the train station, with frequent departures.



### **LUCERNE'S LANES & PLAZAS:**

**Begin your free afternoon with a walk through the center of town along the main pedestrian shopping street, Hertenstein-Strasse, soon arriving at the Kornmarkt, a small square with the Old Town Hall, built in 1602 with two distinctive styles that mirror Swiss cultural heritage: Italian in the lower section, echoing the Florentine Renaissance, and a Bern farmhouse wooden shingle pitched roof. An excellent restaurant for simple Swiss sausage meals is here, Pfistern, with a rustic wooden**

**interior, or tables outside on the lower terrace along the river.**

**The Picasso Museum is also on Kornmarkt, with a display of prints by the modern master, 8 paintings, and 200 photographs of the artist by his friend David Douglas Duncan.**

You will discover several other peaceful small plazas in the middle of the Old Town, where cobblestone pedestrian lanes come together and form a charming open area, ringed by ancient buildings and sidewalk cafes, with a fountain in the middle. Small independent shops, and a few department stores, make this the prime retail section of town.



You will be very happy to spend the afternoon walking through the historic section of town, which is about six blocks long and four blocks wide -- not huge, but 24 blocks that will keep you



busy with fascinating nooks and crannies.

## ZURICH:

Optional late afternoon trip to Zurich, the world's best city to live in, with the highest quality of life, according to recent studies -- so it is also a perfect place to visit. While most people know its reputation as a modern banking center, you will be surprised to discover the historic charms of its extensive Old Town, among the largest in Switzerland.

Zurich is ranked number one because of its superb cultural, economic and environmental conditions, and for high scores on other important social criteria, as determined by the Mercer Human Resource Foundation's annual study. Its residents have the world's strongest purchasing power, primarily because of their high incomes, in this is financial capital and largest city of Switzerland.

It is delightful to wander in the large pedestrian zone that is filled with enchanting little alleys which lead through an ancient town founded during the Middle Ages. With the right strategies you can see this slightly expensive city without spending a fortune. It's an easy city to cover on foot, which is always the best and cheapest way to see any historic town.



Zurich might conjure up images of conservative bankers and businessmen in pinstriped suits and the world's third largest stock exchange, but the city throbs with culture, fashion and a zest for life approaching that of Paris, Rome and London, but without the crowds and traffic congestion of those larger cities. The Swiss are famous for their efficiency, safety and cleanliness, but you might be surprised by Zurich's hip style and cutting-edge scene.

The Old Town extends about five blocks in from both sides of the river and stretches for about a mile. The right bank, or east side, of the river has the larger cluster of old buildings and is considered the prime district for visitors. Much of our visit can be devoted to exploring its many little side alleys and shops.



Niederdorfstrasse is one of the great historic streets of Europe, perfect in every way. It has been the main lane of Zurich since the Middle Ages and is still the major route for visitors to explore today. Niederdorfstrasse stretches for nearly one mile from the train station area to beyond the cathedral and is limited to pedestrians the whole way. Typical of European streets, it changes names a few times, becoming Munstergasse, Hirschenplatz and Oberdorfstrasse, but is basically the same 48' wide throughout.

What makes this lane so special? Paved with cobblestones and lined with historic buildings hosting modern shops, cafes and restaurants, Niederdorfstrasse is a place to linger and enjoy. Sometimes it widens to form small plazas as it intersects with other lanes, but mostly it is just twenty feet across. This medieval street curves here and there, and rises then drops slightly as it continues in a most pleasant pattern.



Dozens of small lanes branch off both sides leading further into the magic of the Old Town. The neighborhood is just the right size: small enough so you cannot get lost or exhausted but large enough to keep you discovering new sights for a couple of days. You can easily fill out the afternoon by meandering through this fascinating network of alleys, exploring the little shops and enjoying the variety of traditional Swiss buildings.

Across on the left bank you will find Zurich's most famous street, the Bahnhofstrasse, running about 1,200 yards from the main train station to the lake, and lined with elegant stores, department stores, restaurants and small boutiques.

After walking through Zurich for a few hours we return to Lucerne. A convenient option is get some take-out food and eat on the train while returning to Lucerne.



train schedule:  
dep Lucerne:  
3:35; 4:10; 4:35  
dep Zurich:  
every halfhour  
at 104 and 35 post

# ZÜRICH



## Lucerne to Jungfrau

On our third day in Lucerne we will explore the snow-covered Jungfrau on this optional full-day round-trip journey by train.

You are going to experience some of the finest scenery in the Swiss Alps as we take you along on a scenic ride through the Brunig Pass, then along the shores of Lake Brienz to Interlaken. Changing trains in Interlaken, the next train brings us into Lauterbrunnen Valley and from there up towards Grindelwald and around, up the mountain, heading to the Jungfrau.



The train tunnels inside the mountain and finally reaches the highest train station in Europe, from which you get spectacular



views looking out over the glacier. And at the top of the Jungfrau there are some theaters and other interesting entertainments for you including historic exhibits and restaurants.

Plan on spending at least one hour at the top, playing in the snow and exploring these various levels and exhibits at the visitor center, then we catch the train back down to Interlaken. You'll enjoy awesome views from the train looking down into Lauterbrunnen Valley.



Depending on our timing and group preference, we could take a walk in Interlaken and perhaps have dinner here before returning to Lucerne for the evening.

For those not interested in this mountain excursion to the Jungfrau there are some lovely activities to consider in Lucerne, such as a boat ride on Lake Lucerne, and perhaps going to the top of Mount Rigi by cablecar and rack rail, for excellent panoramic views.



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# PARIS

Among the world's greatest cities, Paris is a must for any serious traveler. Here we describe our carefully planned itinerary to help you see the city in an organized way, with specific suggestions that pack the most into three days, which is enough time for a good look at the important sights.

After a leisurely breakfast in Lucerne at our deluxe hotel on the lake, we board the train for a scenic ride to Paris, arriving on the high-speed TGV train in the late afternoon. This French TGV travels at speeds up to 165 mph, but you don't realize you are going that fast as the ride is smooth and steady. We will stay in Paris for three nights (the May departure will stay for four nights), which gives us time to have a good look around at the most important sights.

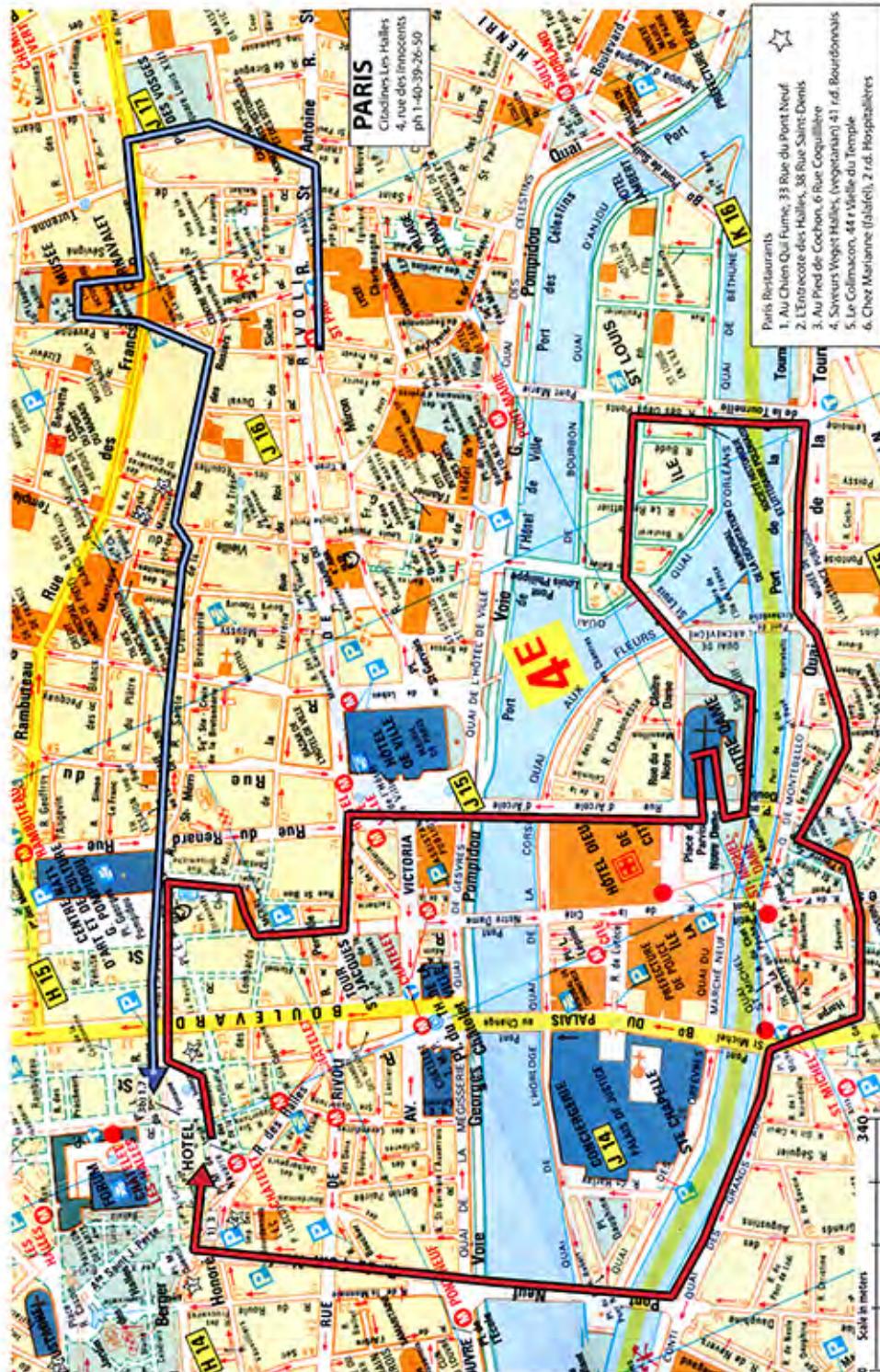


Our itinerary here is carefully planned so that you will get the most out of this opportunity to explore one of the world's most beautiful cities. Our hotel is walking distance to many of the top attractions of the city. Paris means different things to different people, so we'll facilitate your desires and help satisfy your personal interests with guided tours of this most famous place, and some free time for yourself.

Paris is a mecca of fashion and design where you will find many small boutiques, art galleries, antique shops, and specialty shops of all kinds. Eating fine French food can be one of this world's greatest pleasures, so if you value dining well, you are in the right city. Some of the world's best restaurants are here waiting for you. If you would rather conserve funds at dinner time and enjoy a quality budget meal, we can make recommendations.

It helps a lot that we use a hotel in the center, walking distance to many attractions of the city. Paris is the biggest city in Europe, with a regional population over 10 million, so we will take a half-day bus tour for an overview and use the excellent metro -- but the finest way to get around will be your own two feet. Wear comfortable shoes, as this is a great walking city. The art of walking has been called the 'flaneur' in Paris, which connotes an aimless stroll sharpened by the keen appreciation of little details. We shall modify this approach with planned routes while also retaining





some flexibility for detours and spontaneous stops.

## PARIS DAY ONE

After hotel check-in we will have a walking tour of some charming byways of the Latin Quarter, and enter the world's most beloved Gothic cathedral, Notre Dame. We will also walk along the Ile St. Louis, a historic neighborhood on an island in the middle of the River Seine, with some of the oldest shops and mansions in the city. Here we can enjoy a refreshing snack at Bertillon, the most famous ice cream parlor in the city. The narrow old-fashioned streets of the Left Bank on the other side of the Seine are sure to please. These busy Latin Quarter streets of Paris, with their quiet neighborhood markets and charming tree-lined plazas, are terrific for people-watching and shopping. We will finish this walk at Place St. Michel, where we get on the open-top bus for a scenic ride around town.



### NOTRE DAME

A few blocks from our hotel we cross the footbridge to Ile de la Cite and will immediately have a grand view of the rear of Notre-Dame, the world's most famous gothic cathedral. Walk around to the front and enter this nine hundred year

old Catholic Church and pay your respects to this overwhelming medieval assemblage of pointed arches, rose windows, flying buttresses, vaulted ceilings, and ancient statues. Notre Dame was the tallest structure in Europe, with towers 226 feet high, and was copied by hundreds of other gothic churches. Still used for services, it has recently been restored and is looking good as new. From the back of Notre Dame you get some beautiful views of the architecture of the building showing those flying buttresses framed by the trees and green area in a lovely small park.

Now we cross the Seine at Pont de la Tournelle to Ile St. Louis, in the middle of the river. This island is like a small quiet village in the midst of the city, with some of the oldest shops and mansions, and the best ice cream at Berthillon.



### LEFT BANK:

We continue our walk in the colorful neighborhoods of the Latin Quarter and the islands in the Seine. These charming cobbled lanes of Left Bank Paris, with their quiet neighborhood markets, art galleries and pleasant tree-lined plazas, are terrific for people watching and shopping. Continue into the narrow maze along Rue de la Huchette and Rue de la Bucherie, passing a bewildering variety of ethnic restaurants in one of the most magical

parts of town.

We soon reach a very old, small church in a wonderful setting in the Square René Viviani, with a beautiful view from this little square looking back across the River Seine to Notre Dame. The Église Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre is one of the oldest churches in Paris, standing here for over 700 years. Construction took place somewhere between 1170 and 1240, although the records aren't exactly clear on that. It is built on the site of an earlier church that dates back to the sixth century. The style of this church is that of the Byzantine or the Romanesque, which is just before the Gothic. It's a small church with tiny windows and thick walls, and yet parts of the interior also reflect the Gothic architecture, so it's a mixed transitional style. It was built about the time that the University of Paris was first founded around the year 1200, and there were actually classes conducted inside this church at the beginnings of that university. It's also located along a pilgrimage road that leads through Europe down to Santiago in Spain, and the church would benefit from offerings by these



pilgrims. It is still an active church and venue for frequent classical music performances by solo artists or small groups.

Across the street we have a look into yet another Gothic church, Saint-Séverin, from the late

flamboyant Gothic. You see the tracery of the stone ribs looking like flames, thus called flamboyant Gothic.

In the following blocks we enter a twisted tangle of narrow streets full of restaurants. In this



pedestrian zone and you'll find many different types of cuisine, especially Greek food -- the gyros plate is quite inexpensive, delicious and very quick, a great spot to eat.

You stand there and they cut the meat while you wait, then put french fries and salad your plate, and in one minute you're sitting down eating a real good deal. It's impressive to watch these gyros guys prepare the food. You rarely see people work this hard or this fast nowadays, but they are Greek and Turkish immigrants operating these little restaurants with great efficiency.

Before leaving the Left Bank, walk along the river to admire the booksellers with their antique books, posters, magazines and cards, and then sweep down the grand steps to the banks of the Seine and walk the quay at the water's edge for a few blocks. This is romantic Paris at its best.

We continue another few blocks to meet our tour bus and begin a lovely ride on the open-top bus.

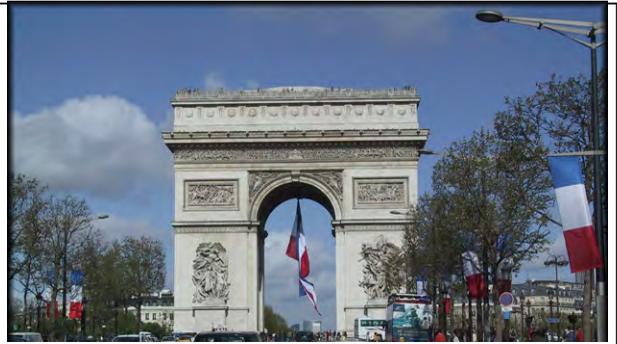
This two-hour bus tour provides the Big Picture of this huge complicated place. Driving around listening to recorded commentary will put things in context and help you plan your own priorities for attacking the sights in more detail later. The bus tour itinerary will bring you past many famous places, including the Place de la Concorde, the River Seine, the Arc de Triomphe, the Eiffel tower in the center of town at the Place de l'Opera. The hop on, hop off bus tour is a good way to get around, especially with the open top on the bus, because it's great to sit upstairs in the open air on a nice day with good weather. You can see the sights very well on all sides from this angle. It will keep you awake, with lots of fresh air and plenty of light, so it's a great place to view as well as take pictures from. However, if you hop off the bus here and there, and hop back on, wait for a second bus to come through, it often takes quite a while for these buses to arrive, depending on their schedule. You could be waiting 15 or 20 minutes, so you might consider just staying on for the whole route or perhaps hop off once along the route, such as at the Eiffel tower, or some major attraction. Doing this bus tour at twilight is especially magical with the many street lights and illuminated buildings set against the early evening sky.

## PARIS DAY TWO:



### CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES:

We begin the day with a visit to the Champs Élysées and the most famous triumphal arch in the



world, the Arc de Triomphe. A short metro ride takes us directly to the Arch where we get a fine view of this magnificent monument. The Arc de Triomphe was initially constructed starting in the year 1805, and the orders of Napoleon, and it was finally finished about 30 years later, standing 50 meters high. Twelve streets radiate from this giant traffic circle, called Place Charles de Gaulle, or Place de l'Étoile, creating a traffic pattern that is so crazy, with no stoplights, that any collision is automatically considered 50-50 blame on both parties, so be careful when crossing the road on foot.

Champs Élysées is the grand boulevard of Paris, featuring a wonderful mix of cafés, souvenir shops, car dealers, high fashion, travel agencies, theaters, famous restaurants, McDonalds, Louis Vuitton's flagship, Disney, hotels, and masses of pedestrians. The Champs has the widest sidewalks in town, nicely planted with trees and lined with fine shops, cafes, theaters and showrooms. We could keep walking its full mile length to Place de la Concorde, or more likely, duck back into the metro at George V station to speed along to our next destination, the Marais.

### MARAIS

We emerge from the metro at the St Paul stop, then enter the courtyard of the Hôtel de Sully. No it's not a hotel where you stay. You wish you could stay in a nice building like this as a visitor to



Paris, but it is a hôtel, which was a noble mansion. This was built for one of the ministers of Henry IV in the early 17th century. You see the beautiful Mansart roofs, the dormer windows, the sculptural decor dripping from the outside of the building in the style created by Jules Hardouin-Mansart. The palace was first constructed by a notorious gambler but he lost his entire fortune overnight. So let that be a warning to you. And he had to sell the building and it was purchased by Sully, who was one of the ministers of Henry IV. Sully was quite old at the time but he loved to embellish



it with these statues. There are 2 sphinxes, there are naked women up on the walls representing the 4 seasons, and four men representing the ages of mankind.

From the rear door of the garden we enter yet another green space, the peaceful little Place des Vosges. The Place the Vosges is generally considered to be the oldest square in northern Europe. Copied after the Italian style which had been prevalent all throughout the Renaissance 16th-century, Place the Vosges was inspired by Kathryn de Medici, who was originally from Florence and it was built back in the early 1600s for Henry IV. Unfortunately Henry died before it was completed. He was assassinated, so he never got to live to see this beautiful square surrounded



by arcades. There's a covered, arcade walkway with restaurants and antique shops as well as private residences around the square today. When first built there were 36 palaces around the square and it was called the Place Royale.

The street forming the north edge of this green oasis will lead us back to the center. Ramble along the Rue des Francs Bourgeoise, which becomes Rue Rambuteau, taking little detours up and down the side streets in this very trendy neighborhood, especially along Rue du Temple.

One of the neighborhood's most important buildings is the Hôtel Carnavalet, a rare example of Renaissance architecture in Paris. It contains the historical museum of the city of Paris in a palace that was first built in 1544 and then re-

built by Mansart in the 17th century. In the mid-19th century it was converted into this wonderful museum.

More than 30 important historical mansions in



the neighborhood were demolished over the last hundred years, but fortunately, the finest of their interiors, including elaborate carved wooden paneling and wall murals, were removed and replaced inside this museum.

Several galleries on the ground floor include artifacts dating back to the founding of the city. There are maps and three-dimensional models showing the growth and development of Paris over the centuries, showing how the Right Bank

was an empty meadow right up through the 14th century.

You will find exhibits of fashionable furnishings from the reigns of the Kings Louis XIV, XV and XVI. There are paintings



by Fragonard and Boucher, and many statues, furnishings, costumes, jewelry, old books, and so much more.

Other exhibits include an entire room full of old metal shop signs and a great deal of memorabilia from the French revolution. They have a rope ladder used by a political prisoner to escape from the Bastille, a model of the guillotine, and a pair of drums banged by the revolutionaries. They even have the penknife that Napoleon Bonaparte used during the Egyptian campaign. And the best part is, the museum is free. Because the museum occupies a full city block, with several levels, divided into numerous rooms and galleries, we shall stay together initially to get some orientation, then split up to browse at our own pace, then regroup to continue our walk.

From here we continue along the narrow lanes of the Marais for another 20 minutes before reaching our hotel.

After a brief rest at the hotel this afternoon we are heading for the Louvre, via another pleasant walk. We stroll west through the green park of Les Halles to the Place des Victories, or Place of Victories, with Louis XIV mounted on his horse in



the center of this circular square. In this case the statue came first and the architecture was designed



with the statue in mind to go around it and create a suitable framing for this beautiful equestrian statue.

Continue walking three blocks further west reaching two parallel galleries, Colbert and Vivienne, examples of the “Passage,” a covered shopping mall from the late 19th century found throughout Paris but rare now. They have recently been refurbished and one of them is now home to the University of Paris – they have got classes and offices there. Just like today we have covered shopping malls, we thought we had invented something new in the modern age, but no, they really got their start here in Paris over 100 years ago – and it makes sense, it keeps the rain out, lets the light in.

A surprise is waiting one block south, inside the Palais Royal.

These gardens are right in the heart of the city, you might not even notice them from the outside because they’re surrounded by buildings, but by all means step inside the Palais Royale for this green and verdant treat, complete with fountains.

From the street it looks just like another building but you pass through the arches – you can access it from rue du Beaujolais, that’s the back end of the Palais Royale, the north end, and you will enter a huge hidden garden the size of a city block filled with fountains, arcades, flowers, trees and lots of local people. There is a sandbox playground at one end for the kids, there’s art galleries and antique shops around it, and several high-quality restaurants. This piece of heaven, the Palais Royale, has been here for several hundred years.

These splendid gardens have a fascinating history. This early palace was built by Cardinal Richelieu who had his favorite architect, Mercier, come and create the design in 1636. It is an early example of a luxurious residential complex that was built on speculation without having many buyers lined up, and then the buyers soon flocked in, including the young Louis XIV, the future King of France.

Richelieu was the finance minister of France, so he was the power behind the throne, and essentially ruled the country until he died in 1642.

Fortunately, nowadays you don't have to be a royal to enjoy the Palais Royale, it's open free and clear to the public all day long, everyday.

After Cardinal Richelieu died in 1642 Louis XIII, who was the reigning monarch inherited the gardens, but unfortunately Louis XIII didn't last very long and it was then taken over by the young Louis XIV. He had been living in the Royal Louvre Palace across the street, but he preferred living in the Palais Royale instead, showing at a very young ages disdain for the Royal Palace which later expressed itself when he built Versailles 20 miles outside of the city and moved the Royal Palace out there to the suburbs.

The arcades that you see surrounding the gardens with the columns were built about 100 years later in a late 18th century, and they were constructed by a nobleman who wanted to make some money, so he rented out the shops on the ground floor and rented out the apartments upstairs. Even today there are quite a few private apartments here at the Palais Royale and some shops on the ground floor, as well as some government offices.

This quiet peaceful garden is truly an oasis in the middle of the city, with the fountains, flowers, benches and statues, lovely shops all around, and yet just outside are the very busy streets of the city. The Louvre Museum is across the street, a huge complex of the Bank of France runs along

one entire side of the exterior of the Palais Royale. Notice how the lines of trees echo the lines of the columns in the arcade surrounding the Place.

This park is never crowded so there's always space to stretch out on a bench, and maybe you'll meet some locals because it seems like most in the park live in Paris. Tourists don't even know that this garden exists because you have no clue from the outside of the building that there's a beautiful garden inside. There are no signs, there are no diagrams, there's no arrows saying walk this way. It's just a discrete passageway that leads in from the various sides of the park from the busy streets on the outside – so you have this place mostly to yourself.



## THE LOUVRE:

We enter the Louvre Museum from the Rue de Rivoli and begin with lunch at the large food court, stocked with a variety of international cuisines. We then spend several hours in admiration and contemplation of highlights from this immense collection that would take one year to see if you really studied the details. We will bring you right to the most interesting and important pieces so you don't get too lost in this million-plus assemblage of the world's greatest creations. This is the largest and best art museum in the world, and with



our guidance you can cover the highlights in three hours, which is about all anyone can stand in one visit anyway.



Of course we shall see the three most famous works, Mona Lisa, Winged Victory and Venus de Milo, and much, much more.

We start with Italian sculptures, including Michelangelo, Bernini and Canova, then go upstairs to the large French paintings by David, Gericault and Delacroix.

We enter the Grand Gallery with hundreds of paintings of the Italian Renaissance, including Raphael, Mantegna, Botticelli, and four more by Leonardo.

There are many more treasures including an early Giotto, the stigmata of St. Francis, the Hall of Apollo, with the Crown Jewels and some of the most elaborate interior décor, done by some of the same architects who created the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles.

Now go downstairs to classical Rome and Greece, veering into the Room of the Caryatids, and back



across the hall to see fragments from the Parthenon, with a vision of perfect female beauty, the Venus of Milo, at the end of the gallery. Descend the stairs behind Venus and go left for the medieval foundations and the second half of the museum.

In this basement you will find the remarkable 10th century fortress that was the foundation of the first Louvre palace, only rediscovered during the 1980s improvements. Beyond the medieval foundation you will find an elevator tucked off to the right by the toilets that will take us to the top, Floor 2. Pass through the small Impressionist room and then turn left into the Richelieu Wing for wonderful northern Europe masterpieces by Vermeer, van Eyck, Rubens, Rembrandt, van Dyke, etc., etc.



We shall not miss the Napoleon III Apartments, one level down on the First Floor. It's only three rooms, but the breathtaking opulence could bring on a heart attack, especially in your now-weakened





state, so be careful as you admire this stunning interior of gold, crystal, crimson velvet, potted palms and Second Empire furnishings that recalls the days of Louis XIV. You can see more of this over-the-top magnificence in a visit to Versailles tomorrow. Right now we are nearly finished, but on the way out have a last look through some of the objects of art from the Renaissance and Middle Ages on this First Floor. v

We can continue with another walk from the Louvre to the Opera and then along the grand boulevards and back to the hotel in a big loop through the heart of downtown Paris. Leaving the Louvre and crossing Rue de Rivoli we reach Rue Saint-Honoré, with some of the finest boutiques in town. In a few blocks we arrive in the splendid Place Vendôme.

We continue to the Opera Square, two blocks beyond. Behind the Opera you will find the two big department stores, Galleries Lafayette and Printemps, plus many other smaller stores in this prime shopping neighborhood.

This brings us to a walk along the Grand Boulevards of the city, lined with majestic buildings and of course many shops, cafes and restaurants. In ten blocks we reach one of the very popular pedestrian streets, Rue Montorgueil, always busy with shoppers, strollers and folks at

a café watching the passing parade of humanity, mostly local. At the south end we are back in the Les Halles neighborhood of our hotel, bringing this part of the walk and this busy day to an ending.

### **MONTMARTRE:**

An excellent way to end the day is with an evening trip to Montmartre. We take the metro and then walk to the foot of the hill and ride the funicular to the top of Montmartre for a view from the highest point in the city. On top you will see the spectacular white domes of Sacre-Coeur Church, but you have really come up here to visit the little artist's square called Place du Tertre, which is truly a postcard come to life.

It is filled with tourists, but we all come for a good reason – this is a slice of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with cute shops and colorful outdoor restaurants. Twilight is the best time to be here. It's the end of your first day and already you have seen a large chunk of Paris – but there is much more yet to come so go home and get some rest.

### **PARIS DAY THREE:**



**VERSAILLES:** This morning we travel to the Palace of Versailles by train. The station is one block from our hotel. Enter the metro station and take the RER to the end of the line at Versailles Rive Gauche. Nothing could be easier than the 40 minute train ride, followed by a 15 minute walk to the palace.

Louis XIV built this grand Château based on an earlier cottage here used by his father as a hunting cottage, a simple, smaller mansion.

There are 2000 rooms in the palace, but the visit goes into about 20 different rooms. One of the first rooms we see is the Royal Chapel designed by Jules Hourdin Mansart, who did much of the work here at Versailles. Other artists involved were the architect Louis Levaux, and the landscape

designer Andre l'Notre, and the painter Charles Lebrun. They all worked together and created this masterpiece of a royal residence.

Each room is a spectacle, but the most amazing room of all is the Hall of Mirrors, one of the greatest rooms on the planet. It's a spectacular room with the windows on one side, letting in light; mirrors on the other side so the light bounces and it is amplified, and the candelabras in the middle, complete with gold putti, little statues of cupids and others, painted ceilings, carved walls and balustrades.

Be sure to keep looking up at all the ceilings – they are some of the most beautiful parts of the palace. The ceiling paintings are original and have been nicely restored -- many of the original oil paintings and furnishings were recovered and returned to their original places.

We continue into the Queen's chambers which was the formal bedroom and various sitting rooms. The last queen who lived here was Marie Antoinette, who lost her head in the Revolution. She was the wife of Louis XVI, of course, and they fell to the guillotine.

We also take a walk through the splendid gardens in the rear of the Palace, and on Sunday afternoon the fountains will be going and music will be playing piped in through speakers in the trees. Take time to admire the formal flowerbeds and trimmed bushes, with paths lined by romantic statues.

From here we easily walk back to the train station for our 40-minute journey back to the center of Paris.



### **ORSAY MUSEUM:**

If the line is not too long, we can visit the Orsay Museum, where you will find the world's best collection of Impressionists, featuring Monet, Renoir, Manet, Degas, Pissarro, Van Gogh, and much more. The building is a former train station that is a marvel in its own right, with a soaring barrel vault made of steel and glass. A few tips for navigating here: briefly visit only four galleries on the ground floor with Corot, Millet and early Manet, then go to the back, walking over the miniature model of central Paris, and catch the escalators that will bring you up to the good stuff, the top floor filled with Impressionism. Be sure to cover this floor all the way beyond the café and around the bend to see Gaughin and Seurat.

On your way down the escalators stop at the Middle Level to look at the elaborate Reception Hall, the Rodin statues, and the rooms filled with Art Deco furniture. The whole museum can be done in 90 minutes, which is helpful because we have a lot more to do today.

If you are hungry upon exiting, there are four good restaurants one block inland from the front entrance that will provide a quick cheap tasty lunch.

# LONDON



[Click for Index](#)

In the morning we travel to London in the deluxe high-speed Eurostar train, going under the English Channel, arriving around noon. London will provide a grand climax to our experience for it is the favorite city of most American travelers in Europe. We have carefully arranged our activities so that we cover everything in the first two days, leaving the third day free for you to enjoy one your own, perhaps with a trip out of town.

London is a challenge to visit in three days, but it can be done! Our carefully-planned itinerary covers the major sights in two days, leaving the third day free for your personal interests! We shall steer you to the most important highlights and help you navigate this incredibly wonderful place.



One century ago London was the world's largest city, controlling the globe's most powerful empire. Today it is still one of the major urban centers, playing a dominant role in banking, commerce and culture, offering the visitor many stimulating things to see and do. The city covers a vast area consisting of separate villages that grew over time into a megalopolis twice as big as Paris or New York -- but the most interesting part of town is squeezed into a small package in the middle only one-half-mile square that can easily be covered on foot, while the rest of London's highlights can conveniently be reached by public transit.



You like theater? London ranks with New York at the top. Fine arts? Cutting edge to Old Masters, no problem. Dining out? It's not just meat and potatoes anymore. History? On full display in all its glory. Shopping? A nation of shopkeepers. Getting around? Comfortable shoes, excellent taxis and the "tube" are all you need. Architecture? All periods represented. Communicating? They invented your language. Friendly? Visit some of the 7,000 pubs. Anything else? London has it all.

## London Restaurants

1. Wagamama Leicester Square. tasty, cheap Japanese noodle bar that epitomises efficient minimalism.
2. Tibbits 12 Heddon St., 207-758-4110 Outstanding vegetarian buffet, our new favorite.
3. Joy King Lau 3 Leicester St. 0207-437-1133 Lovely dim sum and other "very good, authentic, so many Chinese eat here."
4. L'Escargot 48 Greek St. 0207-437 6828 a "civilised, classy" atmosphere and a "slightly old-fashioned but intriguing" Classic French menu.





### London Restaurants

1. Sherlock Holmes Pub 10 Northumberland next door to hotel. Upstairs dining room for traditional foods, or take a pint downstairs.
2. Garfunkel's 2 Northumberland Ave. Across street from hotel. inexpensive & good; salad bar, comfort food at low price.
3. Prezzo 31 Northumberland very nice Italian, one block from hotel.
4. Simpsons in the Strand 100 The Strand 0207-836-9112 British food, decor and service can all be summed up in one word: "traditional."
5. Food for Thought 31 Neal St. 0207-836 9072 Informal basement Vegetarian serves delicious wholesome food. One of our personal favorites!!
6. Chez Gerard 45 East Terrace, 1st fl. Covent Garden 0207-379 0666 lighthearted French brasserie chain; its "honest" bistro food "hits the spot."
7. Rules 35 Maiden Ln. 0207-836 5314 London's oldest restaurant, circa 1798, is a unique bastion of British cuisine. Lots of atmosphere.
8. Brown's 82-84 St. Martin's Ln. 0207-497-5050 This relaxed brasserie serves "inexpensive" international-modern British fare.
9. Jamie's Italian Upper St Martin's Ln, Jamie Oliver's restaurant, excellent.
10. The Ivy 1 West St. 0207-836 4751 Expensive. No. 1 for Popularity -- this "class act" is called "great stargazing"; "pretty damn close to perfection."

0 Scale in meters

400



**LONDON DAY ONE:** afternoon walking tour, bus tour, Tower of London.

After arriving about mid-day from Paris and checking in to our hotel, which is located in the center of town one block from Trafalgar Square, we head out for a walking tour of the surroundings.



## LEICESTER SQUARE

Walking through Trafalgar Square, we continue one more block to Leicester Square, one of the most exciting centers of London, so have a look around and soak in the energy that is always flowing here. Mobs of people coming and going, youths lounging on the grass, bench-sitters lining the paths that cut through the square, all surrounded by huge movie complexes and restaurants. The action picks up in the afternoon and carries on till midnight, with a steady supply of street performers

(called buskers here) to keep you entertained. We can have a refreshing lunch at Wagamama, an Asian noodle house that is always a big hit with our travelers.



While at Leicester Square we can stop at the half price “tkts” ticket booth for those interested in seeing one of the many great stage shows on offer. All the plays are in walking distance from our hotel, so it is lots of fun to catch a couple of shows while here. You can usually get good \$45 seats for half the shows in town, but not the most popular ones. The most desirable seats are in the section called “Stalls” which is equivalent to our ground level orchestra, and their balcony is termed the “Circle.” Treat yourself to the best seats available as close to the stage as possible, even if you are off to the side. We then exit the square out the northeast corner, heading for Covent Garden.





## COVENT GARDEN

We easily get to the center of the action at the Piazza by walking from Leicester Square then cross the road and disappear into the little pedestrian alleys that lead over to the Covent Garden Piazza. These few blocks of narrow passageways lined with shops are so quaint it feels like you have slipped back a few centuries. Salisbury Pub, Brown's and Giovanni's Italian Restaurant are three of the best eateries in this neighborhood. St. Martins Court, New Row and King Street lead right into the Piazza. Refer to the map we provide and you can't get lost.



Another lovely street here is called Long Acre, passing the world's largest travel bookstore,

Stanford, reaching the Covent Garden tube station, then leads to the Piazza down busy James Street, always filled with pedestrians and oddballs. Once you are familiar with the layout you will easily be able to wander this fascinating shopping and entertainment zone on your own. There is no garden at Covent Garden, but you will find many attractions that could turn this into your favorite part of town, because it is filled with unique shops, numerous restaurants, lots of sidewalk entertainment, marvelous buildings and vast pedestrian zones. For many people this is the heart of London.



In the middle of the Covent Garden Piazza is the Central Market, made famous because Eliza Doolittle sold flowers here in *My Fair Lady*. The area used to be the main food distribution market for London, but that was all moved out in 1974 and the shops came in, converting this into a daily street festival. You can usually find three or four sidewalk entertainers in various parts of this large public plaza, especially in front of St. Paul's Church, the neoclassical creation of Inigo Jones, who designed the entire piazza in the Italian style back in 1631. Street performers have been a tradition ever since. It was the first residential square in London and was an instant hit, with high society moving right in and turning the Piazza into one of the most fashionable parts of town.

Covent Garden became a cultural center with the opening of the Theater Royal in 1663 and the Royal Opera in 1732. Both theaters are still in operation today, with the latest Opera reconstruction just finished in a grand scheme that has finally completed the Piazza with the northeast colonnade. Live performances from the Opera's stage are projected on a giant outdoor video screen in the Piazza on many summer evenings.



attraction is the London Transport Museum, if you would like to see dozens of old buses, cars, bicycles and rail cars. Or have a French meal at Chez Gerard, or excellent Italian at Bertorelli's. You could wander further down towards The Strand and drop into the elegant Savoy Hotel for tea, and then continue on to Waterloo Bridge for the best views along the Thames. Art lovers might continue another block to the Cortauld Institute to admire their fine Impressionist collection.

The covered market building in the center is a grand old structure from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, built of metal and glass in the early industrial style that looks like a giant open greenhouse, with three arched atriums that shelter open-air merchant stalls. Craft fairs are held every day with a frequent rotation of sellers that gives you a reason to come back again tomorrow. Classical string quartet performances by students from the London College of Music are often happening in the outdoor lower level of the South Hall, or maybe you'll catch the Chinese ensemble on James Street by the tube station.

A favorite walk from the Piazza is to head north a few blocks along Neal Street, a pedestrian lane that has more pubs, shops and restaurants, especially Food for Thought, a wonderful little vegetarian place in a basement, offering delicious healthy food at low prices, with small communal tables. Thomas Neal's is an old warehouse converted into a chic shopping complex that retains the original brick architecture, with Belgo Centraal in the adjacent basement, for mussels and Belgian beer.

The area for several blocks around the Piazza is also called Covent Garden, and has many nooks and crannies for you to explore. Rules, London's oldest restaurant founded in 1798, is a block away on Maiden Lane, still serving traditional English food in a comfortable cozy atmosphere. Another

In a few blocks we will arrive at the busy intersection called Cambridge Circus, which is in the center of this afternoon's exploratory zone. Next we shall wander through Soho, another very popular neighborhood filled with restaurants, bars and cafes and a few more theaters. We plunge into Soho by walking down Old Compton

Street, and meander through the fascinating side streets, Greek, Frith and Dean. You will see lots of people having a great time standing on the sidewalks drinking, talking and carrying on in a big party scene. This action gets especially busy from 5:00pm on through the night, so you might want to come back here again later to hang out if it is your style of fun. There are many excellent restaurants here, especially Soho Soho, L'Escargot and Mezzo.



Next stop, Chinatown. Cross over the busy theater street, Shaftsbury Avenue, and walk one block south to Gerrard Street, the center of London's Chinatown. It's a small neighborhood, just four square blocks, but it has about 40 Chinese restaurants and lots of Asians hanging out and shopping. Greater London has several other Asian neighborhoods where people live and work, but this original Chinatown is still the busiest of all. Another block south you'll find yourself back at Leicester Square, where we catch our tour bus and begin the sightseeing tour on an open-top double-decker bus.

## BUS TOUR

The tour will enable you to sit down for two hours and relax while the sights glide by. The tour takes us by the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, through the West End, across Tower Bridge

and into the downtown financial center. Even when you are stuck in London's heavy traffic or waiting at the bus stop for more passengers, you will always have an eyeful of fascinating sights, accompanied by live commentary from the guide. We can end the bus tour at the Tower of London, where we hop off for a 90-minute visit, followed by a boat ride on the River Thames back to the hotel.

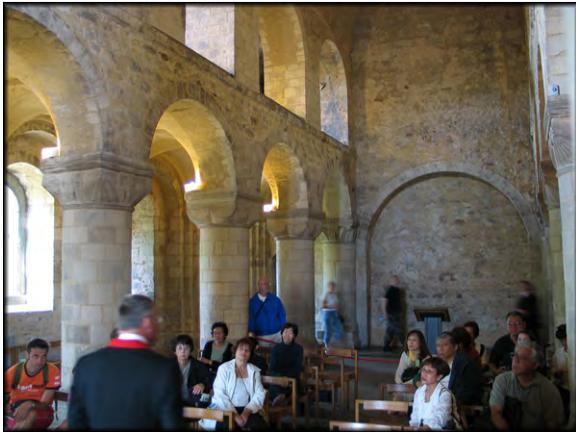


## TOWER OF LONDON

The Tower of London is the city's premier attraction. This huge castle on the Thames is the oldest building in town, dating back to 1078 when William the Conqueror began construction. It is a

complete delight, not only for the Crown Jewels, but for the entire experience. The lines to enter are very long during mid-day when all of the morning bus tours finish, so it's good we are arriving in the late afternoon to avoid the crowds.

The Yeoman Warders (or "Beefeaters") are the most famous Tower guides of all, with their Elizabethan costumes and fascinating stories about the history of torture, imprisonment, ghosts and intrigue surrounding this royal fortress. You can follow them from one part of the complex to another for a complete one-hour tour, or more likely, catch some of the stories and then continue on your own. Presentations by other guides in period costumes on the Tower grounds are also entertaining, with demonstrations of various household utensils, tools and artifacts used in the residence. These guides are happy to talk with you and answer your questions, offering a very personal experience.



Of course the Crown Jewels are the main attraction, so get to the Jewel House early in your visit before the lines start forming. Enjoy the video presentations in the two lobbies, but skip ahead if you don't feel like watching it all. The jewels display room is well-designed, with moving sidewalks along both sides of the cases

that you are welcome to ride several times to see both sides. Look for the world's largest diamond, the Cullinan stone, in the royal scepter.



The White Tower is the oldest building of the castle and has a spectacular, multi-level display that has just been completed after many years of renovation, featuring suits of armor and historic weapons, with informative signs and video displays. The Tower Green was site of many executions, including that of Anne Boleyn, who was beheaded for her inability to have a male child, even though she did give birth to a great monarch, Elizabeth I. She played an indirect role in creating the Church of England because Henry VIII broke with Rome to marry her. Not good enough -- off with her head.



You can also walk along sections of the outer wall for nice views of Tower Bridge and the

castle complex. The Tower visit can easily be completed in 90 minutes, or 2 hours if you stay with the Yeoman Warder for his entire tour.



We then board a river cruiser for the one-hour boat ride on the River Thames with narration provided by the ship's crew to explain the awesome sights, passing many of the grand buildings in the heart of the city. The boat docks at Embankment, just two blocks from our hotel, which offers a welcome rest so we can get ready for an evening out for dinner and the show, for those interested in such finer pursuits.



## LONDON DAY TWO:

This morning we are going to take a walk in London's downtown at rush hour, walking along the the busy street called The Strand, witnessing

the energy of many hundreds of local people on their way to work on the wide sidewalks of this busy street. Will continue on to the Royal Courts of Justice, a grand old Neo-gothic building that looks like a church but is really courts of law. Crossing the street, we enter into what looks like a college campus but is actually offices for the lawyers, set in a lush green park-like, garden environment, with historic buildings all around.

From here we shall walk along one of the other very busy streets of downtown London, called Kingsway, continuing our morning exploration in the heart of the city. This will lead us several blocks north into the district of Holbron, a district with many literary and academic connections.



The British Museum is located here and will be one of our main goals for this morning. Entrance is free and the collections are outstanding, featuring a large amount of treasures from ancient Greece, Egypt, Rome and England. The original marble statues from the Parthenon are on display, along with many other Greek masterpieces. Perhaps the most fascinating part of the museum collection is the Egyptian section, which features many mummies and thousands of artifacts from ancient Egypt.



There are also many Roman items on display, including weapons, jewelry, ceramics and small models of the towns and fortresses that were built by these ancient conquerors of England. British displays include treasures from burials as well as many other items from prehistory. You will also find interesting displays about ancient Assyrians, Celtic prehistoric life, and the Middle Ages.

The building itself is a great attraction because of its monumental architecture and recent modernizations that have converted a former parking lot into the largest enclosed piazza in all of Europe. We will be able to appreciate most of the highlights in a comfortable 90-minute visit. The British Museum is one of the oldest museums in the world. It opened in 1759, and has just completed a major expansion with creation of the huge indoor Great Court and special exhibition galleries.

When finished we can cross the street and have a traditional pub lunch at the Museum Tavern, a historic restaurant that has been on this site for two centuries, and serves wonderful food and drinks. From here we walk back towards our hotel along Charing Cross Rd. with a possible detour into Soho along the way.

You will be back on the busy shopping streets of Central London with several tempting destinations on hand. Two blocks west you will find the lively intersection of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road, which is shopping central. For the electronic gadget fans you can find all the latest on these three blocks of Tottenham Court, while those looking for shoes or clothing might have a go at Oxford Street. Once you have the shopping under control, resume your walking tour by heading south through this same intersection where Tottenham Court changes name and character to become Charing Cross Road, a famous literary street with many bookshops, including Foyles, the largest in town. This wonderful street for strolling leads into London's most interesting neighborhoods -- Soho, Covent Garden and Leicester Square -- which are in full swing by mid-afternoon and stay lively all night.

This afternoon there is another special place worth entering: Westminster Abbey. This is one of the grandest structures ever built, and even if you are not religious you will be extremely impressed by its majestic beauty. Westminster Abbey is one of the finest Gothic churches in the world, impressive as Notre Dame in Paris (if not more so).



Edward the Confessor began the building around

1050 and large-scale expansion commenced in 1245, with major additions made during the next 500 years, resulting in this astonishing harmonious complex.



## HARRODS

The final major option today is Harrods, Europe's largest and most deluxe department store. Paradise for shoppers, this largest store in the UK has 300 departments that sell nearly everything. It covers 20 acres on seven different levels, and while it can be confusing to navigate, the staff is always ready to assist. Unlike most modern stores, the many sales clerks here are actually experts in their areas. Be sure to experience the elaborate temple motif of the Egyptian Hall on the ground floor, which leads directly into the most famous section, the Food Halls, where you can purchase teas, jams, cookies and chocolates that say Harrods. If you are getting hungry you can eat in one of Harrods 22 restaurants. For the ultimate splurge, indulge in the expensive buffet in the Georgian Restaurant to enjoy a devastatingly delicious meal fit for a king. The flamboyant storeowner, Mohamed Al Fayed, lavishes such a personal priority on this spread that he inspects it daily and promises "there really is nothing else on earth that can compare with Harrods."



When you are done, there could be extended shopping thrills along Brompton Road, with its many boutiques, leading to another big department store of high quality, Harvey Nichols, especially for the ladies. The Nichols cocktail lounge is yuppie central for networking and hooking up after work.

## LONDON DAY THREE:

This morning we have a two-hour walking tour through some of the most interesting parts of town, visiting Piccadilly Circus, St. James, Chinatown, Soho, and ending with the Changing of the Guards at Buckingham Palace. The most interesting route is to walk north to Oxford Street, then back down through Mayfair and St. James, arriving at the Palace on schedule. It is a special route we have



done 25 times and works beautifully. This will bring us through grand examples of the finest urban architecture, and past many fine shops along the way.



## PICCADILLY CIRCUS

Piccadilly Circus was “center of the universe” during the days of Empire and is today a major intersection from which several busy streets radiate. Filled with both tourists and locals, there is always something going on here. Merely the size of one block, with the graceful aluminum statue of Eros in the middle, this busy crossroad offers many choices for your first route through town -- and you will certainly come back through a few times as your path curls back through this busy hub. Piccadilly is a special place in the early evening after a light rain, with glistening sidewalks reflecting the Times Square-like lights from the giant neon billboards, so take advantage if those conditions come together for you.

There are some shops, restaurants, theaters and amusement attractions to consider at Piccadilly Circus such as Lillywhites, a large casual clothing store, Rock Circus, a wax museum of pop music stars, and Trocadero, a gigantic multi-level video game arcade featuring Segaworld, a virtual reality extravaganza.

Facing the backside of the naked Eros, and his smiling cheeks, you will see the Criterion Restaurant, one of the city’s premier dining establishments run by noted chef Marco Pierre

White, with a luxurious Moorish-Byzantine décor, superb cuisine and the best service, making this one of the most beautiful dining experiences in town. This is an indication how far London has come on the culinary trail and how much fun you can have eating in this newly-recognized gourmet capital.

Next to the restaurant is one of London’s many stage venues, the Criterion Theater, the only underground auditorium in town, and home to a long-running comedy troupe that alternates the Complete Works of William Shakespeare with the Complete History of America. Theater is one of the exciting London activities to place at the top of your list, so consider the possibilities.

Piccadilly Circus is on the west edge of the theater district, with about 40 plays going on at any one time in a six block-wide neighborhood called the West End. Comedies, musicals and dramas are all available every night you are in town, so take advantage and go for it. There are another 100 smaller venues scattered around town with fringe theater and cabaret revues.

## REGENT STREET and MAYFAIR

Exiting Piccadilly Circus, we continue along the curved section of Regent Street, one of the most majestic promenades in town offering a sweeping urban vista that is particularly impressive when you stop after three blocks and look back from the corner of Vigo Street.



The sleek oval building across Regent Street is the flagship of Aquascutum, an elegant clothing store with superb displays and service. Garrard, jewelers to the crown, is adjacent, as is Austin Reed, another major clothing store, and all the way up Regent Street major retailers continue for nine blocks, including Europe's largest toy store, Hamleys, and Liberty, a designer department store.



This famous stretch of Regent Street was designed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by John Nash, one of England's most important architects. While it is still impressive, most of his original buildings were replaced by structures twice as large, so much of the original character was lost. The upper section of Regent Street continues to Oxford Street as a big, wide, busy thoroughfare, wonderful to walk along for a few blocks this morning.

Oxford Street is the busiest shopping boulevard for locals, one mile long and loaded with 60 shoe stores, as many clothing outlets, the huge department store Selfridges (second in size to Harrods), giant record shops, many jewelers, sporting goods stores and much more, but there is actually not much here of interest to the visitor, unless you are primarily on a shopping trip. The

crowds at afternoon rush hour, around 5:00pm, are absolutely the thickest pedestrian concentration in town, so if you enjoy people watching, come back then. Otherwise, have a brief look this morning, walk along for a couple blocks to get a quick feel, and then skip it.

Take a left onto Bond Street heading into the most expensive shopping turf in town. Before 10:00am is the least expensive time to see it, because the fancy jewelry and accessory shops are not yet open and the window displays are just being set up. Compared to busy Regent Street, this is a more peaceful route to walk and the buildings here are each unique.

Pay attention to the upper floors as you walk along and notice the fine sculptural details in the terra cotta cladding on many of the facades, some of which look vaguely Dutch with their fanciful gables. Like most of London, the buildings here are old and just six floors high, so there is a real human scale and sense of history on this street and throughout the city.

The exclusive shops on Old Bond include Tiffany, David Morris, Bulgari, Patek Philippe, Georg Jensen, Asprey and four dozen more in the first three blocks, assembled as the biggest concentration of high-end retail in the nation. Walk on by, not

buying but browsing, to the slightly less lofty northern stretch called New Bond Street. Stop for a photo at the funny statue of Churchill and



FDR sitting on a wooden bench. There are more beautiful shops for clothing, shoes, jewels and designer goods all the way to Oxford Street, but your watch should read about 9:30am so the shops are still not open. Window-shopping is great fun and provides something useful to do in that hour between breakfast and the 10:00am opening bell for stores and most attractions.



Streets sometimes change names every few blocks, and are occasionally labeled as Row, Garden, Court, Path, Yard, Field, Hill or Mews rather than Street. Ye olde terminology is part of the ancient heritage of London, which was founded by Romans 2,000 years before automobiles gave birth to modern streets.



The narrow twisted lanes are another reason you do not want to drive in this town. And of course, the British drive on the “wrong” side, which you need to keep in mind as a pedestrian because when you cross the street, you must look right instead of left. This gets confusing, so the safest strategy is to look both ways and keep looking back and forth all the way across. Drivers will only stop for you if you are in a crossing guarded by a blinking orange light -- and there are not many of those around, so be careful. Defensive pedestrian strategies are important in your travels because there will be times when cutting across a street in the middle of a block can be faster and safer than using an intersection, where a car could hit you from four different directions rather than one or two in mid-block. Just don't take any chances.



## BOND STREET 10:00am

We now enter Burlington Arcade, the city's best example of a covered shopping passage that our route will return to in an hour when the shops open.



The Burlington Arcade is one block long and has 40 small shops with exquisite, expensive merchandise. London's covered 19<sup>th</sup>-century malls were copied from the Parisian glass-covered passages that had become the rage, and are early inspirations for our modern shopping centers. While presenting the standard range of clothing, antiques and jewelry, each shop is unique with only the highest quality items on display, and they are just starting to open, as your watch should now read 10:00am. Take some time to browse, but don't run, chew gum or make loud noises, lest you be stopped by the beadle, a traditional uniformed security gentleman on duty to maintain a proper sense of decorum.



Emerging on busy Piccadilly, turn left and pass the Royal Academy, peering into the elegant courtyard for a look at how the aristocracy lived 200 years ago. Now a major art museum with changing special exhibits, make note of what is on in case you are interested for a visit later in your stay.

Take some time for a thorough visit to a very special food store across the street, Fortnum and Mason, founded three hundred years ago and going strong in their recently expanded department store. It is the most famous gourmet shop in town with an elegant atmosphere of crystal chandeliers, mahogany counters and tuxedoed clerks. The ground floor is foodie heaven, stocked with teas, caviar, pastries, meats, biscuits, wines, perfect produce, pasta, chocolates (free samples), soups, condiments, jams, and this list goes on all day, so take 30 minutes to buy something that says Fortnum and Mason, making a nice present for those less fortunate back home.



Best of all, you can have tea in their Fountain Restaurant, perhaps with a strawberry tart. Convenient restrooms are another plus. There are four levels of clothing and general items upstairs, but that is not the main attraction. Properly fortified, you are now ready for the palace guards, just five short blocks away, so we leave the store by 10:50am.



## ST. JAMES

Behind Fortnum and Mason you will find another elegant small shopping street tucked away, Jermyn Street, with a couple of aromatic interiors worthy of a sniff -- Floris, for soaps and perfumes, and then Paxton and Whitfields, with 300 different kinds of cheese on offer. You can smell a couple of divine odiferous centuries here. Look into St. James, one of Christopher Wren's magnificent parish churches, with a serene simple interior flooded with light shining through the large clear windows. The church also has a sidewalk market and café out front.



Walk a block down Duke of York Street to the centerpiece of this district, St. James Square, a small public park like Berkeley Square, with green lawns, flower beds, inviting benches and many tall trees. Pass through to the other side

and continue to Pall Mall, a fancy street lined with gentlemen's clubs. This will lead you over a couple of blocks to St. James Palace and the first phase of the Changing of the Guard.

## CHANGING THE GUARD

What follows is a plan that helps us avoid the crowds and get the most out of the colorful changing ceremony. The pomp and circumstance of this ritual is great fun, with the redcoat soldiers in their tall black hats parading to the bouncy rhythm of a marching brass band.



We get to St. James Palace at 11:10am and wait along the curb on Marlborough Road for the first phase. There will already be a small crowd there, so just walk along the block until you are able to find a clearing and stand right at the curb, which will give you an unobstructed view. In a few minutes the guards will emerge with a small band and assemble in formation in the courtyard of the Tudor-style palace, which is currently home to Prince Charles and was home to English monarchs for 300 years, starting with Henry XIII, until Buckingham Palace replaced it in 1837.



The small squad of soldiers and a marching band will walk past you quickly, so have your camera ready for the shot with a nice palace backdrop. Then you want to catch the next phase by walking across St. James Park, enjoying a very pleasant stroll, crossing the footbridge over the lake, which delivers nice views of Buckingham Palace and Whitehall in the other direction. After the bridge turn right and follow the path along the lake, looking for swans, pelicans, ducks and squirrels along the way, heading towards the corner exit at Birdcage Walk and the Wellington Barracks, where the main troops and marching band are assembling.

Rather than dashing over to the fence for a closer look at the soldiers, you want to walk right around the corner heading towards Buckingham Palace, finding another clear spot by the curb for a good view. In a few minutes the troops will come marching by in all their glory with the big band sounding off wonderfully, then disappearing behind the palace gates. That's it for the main event, but you can also catch the impressive mounted guards coming through, if you walk to the right along the curved path behind the flower beds to The Mall, where you get a perfect view of Buckingham Palace, and in a couple minutes the soldiers will ride by on their big black horses. Don't bother hanging around for the next 30 minutes waiting for the band to come out again -- it's time for lunch.



## TRAFALGAR SQUARE

After enjoying the pomp and spectacle of Changing the Guard, we walk through beautiful St. James Park  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to Trafalgar Square, another great landmark surrounded by majestic buildings, with Lord Nelson towering above it all on his soaring column. At the northeast corner you'll see the classic church spire of St-Martin-in-the-Fields, which became the model for thousands of later churches. There is a nice café in the basement with a lot of inexpensive choices.

This afternoon is free, with one very worthwhile suggested option:

After lunch we can walk to The National Gallery, one the world's great art museums, on the north side of Trafalgar Square. After all the art we have seen, this display will delight you with its many great masterpieces, and just one block from our hotel. The museum has a complete collection of all the important European painters, from the Gothic through Impressionism, displayed in beautiful galleries. This art museum ranks in the world's top four, along with the Louvre, Hermitage and New York's Met.

That covers all the important sights for three days in London, and completes our incredible tour of Europe by Train!!!!

# Let's compare our travel style with the typical bus tour:

## ■ We travel by train

The train is comfortable, smooth, quiet, relaxing, and so fast it gets you there in half the time. On the train you are free to walk around, have a meal in the dining car or enjoy a picnic lunch, and talk with some of the other travelers on board. First class trains are air-conditioned, so they are cool and quiet. The spacious seats are like sofas, and can recline to make you very comfortable -- you might even take a nap. You can use the clean, convenient bathrooms anytime you want. The rail routing is through scenic countryside, and you can move around to enjoy the views on both sides through picture windows.

## ■ Centrally located hotels

We have made a great effort to select fine hotels in the historic centers of the places we visit. This is extremely important, for it enables you to experience much more by just stepping out your front door. In such an advantageous location there are many nearby restaurants, monuments, shops, historic sights, important buildings, landmarks, and other features that you have come on vacation to see. Most European cities have a historic central district dedicated to the pedestrian, filled with these attractions, and this is where we like to stay. Our central hotel locations enable you to walk freely and safely through interesting neighborhoods, which is the best way to get to know a place. We want you to get the most out of your precious time, and really get a feeling for each destination. Nothing enhances that better than a good hotel in a central location. This is probably our biggest difference in approach.

## ■ Shopping like a local

With us you always have time for shopping in local stores, or, if you are not a shopper, use your precious time for other activities, instead of being led by the nose into tourist traps. The historic centers of town are filled with fascinating and unique little shops that are fun to browse through, and we will point you to those neighborhoods and set you loose. If you are looking for any particular items, your Hawaii escort can take some time to help you find them.

## ■ They travel by bus

Sitting on a crowded bus for up to eight hours on a long journey can be very tiring. You are confined to a small space, and cannot move around at all. There is no dining car, and often when you pull into a roadside cafeteria, long lines are waiting ahead of you. Restroom stops also slow down the journey and waste your precious time, and they might not stop when you need it the most. The "scenic view" is dominated by the highway filled with trucks and cars. Buses often get stuck in heavy traffic jams on crowded streets, with many other vehicles competing for your road space, which can produce a lot of stress.

## ■ Hotels on the edge, or beyond...

You finally arrive at your hotel after an all-day bus ride, and find that you are still far away from the main attractions of town. Your tour operator is saving money by putting you in a nondescript hotel on the fringe of the city. There will be very little to see in your immediate vicinity, so you have to spend money and time on a taxi ride into town, or you just don't bother, and miss out. You are practically held hostage in these remote locations, so your tour guide can sell you optional tours. These hidden expenses quickly increase the price you pay for the trip. Sometimes these big operators even put you in a hotel that is not in town at all, so you are really out of the picture. All you are going to see is what the tour operator shows you on a brief bus tour, and that is usually a quick view of highlights through the window, and then off to the next city for more of the same treatment.

## ■ Shopping in tourist traps

With the bus tour, during the brief time you have in a place, you are often herded into tourist-trap "factories" and "showrooms" for "bargain" shopping. You are stuck on the bus, so you are at their mercy. If the tour bus stops at a souvenir mill, you stop too, and there is usually no other shop nearby except the one they have chosen for you. Your guide and driver are getting a commission for taking you there, so that's the place they want you to shop.

## ■ In-depth city tours

We include several tours in each city, to give you a well-rounded look at the place. Our panoramic city tours are on a private motorcoach with a professional local guide, and we provide walking tours with your Hawaii escort. Our guided walks really make you familiar with a place, and prepare you for some exploring on your own. Because we are staying for two or three days, you have enough time for this, with time left over for your independent activities. We put a special emphasis on history and fine arts. The trips are educational, cultural experiences, and they are also a lot of fun. Our walking tours will take you through historic neighborhoods filled with architectural treasures, and you have time for museums and other cultural attractions.

## ■ Leisurely pace -- quality time

We stay for two or three nights in each place. This gives us enough time to show you around with our tours, and then you actually have free time so you can do some exploring on your own. This approach gives you the “best of both worlds” for the guidance we provide on our included tours helps you get the most out of your free time as well. With a proper orientation to a city, you can make the best choices for your independent activities, and we are always there to help. You will have some time to relax and enjoy the sights instead of being constantly on the go. This is how you really get a sense of place, and gain a feeling for the character of each of the cultures on the itinerary.

## ■ Small groups, from Hawaii

We limit our group size to 20 or 25 people, which we have found is quite important, for when you get above that size the group becomes very impersonal. Nearly every one of us is from Hawaii, so we become a friendly ohana on the road, looking out for each other, and showing a lot of courtesy. For example, it is very unusual for anyone to be late, so we do not waste time waiting. New friendships are made that last well beyond the length of the tour, and after returning home we have a reunion party to celebrate the trip!

## ■ Quick city tour

At best they might give you a three-hour bus tour, and that’s all. You are usually in town for only one night, and then leave the next morning, so there is little time for anything else. If there is any extra time, you will find the tour guide wants to sell you options that take you away from town, and if you don’t buy the option, they set you loose with very little preparation, so you are on your own. Without proper guidance you might end up wasting time and being unable to find the important sights on your own. But usually, there is no extra time, since you are already heading for the next city. If you get lucky you might have a quick look in one museum, and the little bit of history that you hear is probably delivered in dry lectures on the long bus rides that just might...lull...you...to...sleep.

## ■ One-night stands

Most bus tours keep you moving all the time. You arrive in a city late in the day, after driving for many hours, and then you leave in the morning for your next destination. The standard bus tour operators have devised exhausting itineraries that appear to show you all of Europe in 17 days, but when you analyze them, you are sitting on the bus most of that time! Unpacking every night, and repacking every morning, you don’t have much time left for sightseeing. With a bus tour you have precious little free time for you are on the go all the time. If it’s Tuesday, where are we now? All too often the quick stream of cities becomes a fuzzy forgettable blur.

## ■ Big groups, from everywhere

You really don’t know whom you are going to be traveling with, or how full the bus is going to be. The bus has up to 55 seats, and they are usually full, with everyone jockeying for position, so you are part of a very big group, with most of the people from every place but Hawaii. A big anonymous group like that creates a less friendly environment. In this case you are just a face lost in the crowd -- and you probably will not get to know many people in the group by name, or ever see them again.

## Comments about “Europe by Train” from our travelers:

[Click for Index](#)

Note: During the past 23 years we have conducted this trip more than 30 times, bringing over 1000 people from Hawaii to Europe with great success. Nearly everybody has given us an excellent grade in their review of the trip. Here are just a few of their comments.



“We will continue to recommend your Europe by Train tour to family and friends as we are very high on it. We will be talking for a long time about the best trip we ever took...the “best” tour in the whole world! We had a great time. We highly recom-

mend you to our children and friends.”

Jim & Reiko Fobel

“Now that we’re back into our usual routines...the tour seems much like a dream. Can now understand why people take the same trip twice. It was a marvelous way to see Europe. I’ve been putting my picture album together - brings back many happy memories.”

Amelia Garcia

“Enjoyed our first trip to Europe. Thanks for a great itinerary.”

Joyce Low

“Liked the companionship and how everyone watched out for each other...Our guide was very knowledgeable about places we went and prepared us for different events.”

Eleanor Lyden

“It is difficult to single out particular experiences that were the best because they were all very good....As a whole, the tour was most enjoyable. The small size of the group certainly added to our enjoyment as not only did we get to know each other, we could all be close enough to the guide



to hear what was being said. The very convenient location of all of the hotels on the tour was most appreciated. But the biggest plus of the entire tour was the fact that we traveled by train and not by motor coach. This enabled us to spend more time in the cities and not on the motor coach. The train was very comfortable and punctual....All in all, we enjoyed the trip very much and would go along... again and even recommend it to others.”

Rachel Sada

“My first trip abroad—what a wonderful experience.”

Una Uchida

“Educational - good exposure to European history, arts and architecture. Excellent choice of hotels in terms of accommodations and locations. Travel by train was the way to go.”

Gerald Sada

“Sugi and I really enjoyed the trip and very much appreciated your narratives and taking us off the beaten paths. Someday I would like to repeat the trip.”

Bessie Sugimoto



“Thanks for a wonderful trip. Going by train and taking those walking tours were great! We appreciate the time and work you’ve put into making it one we will remember.”

Norman & Alice Kong





“Thank you very much for an interesting and exciting tour. Very educational and worthwhile.”

Eddie and Elsie Ching

“This trip was a wonderful way to broaden our horizons. We’re

convinced that your tour format is the way to go! Walking, many times off the beaten track, was a great way to see each city. Your hints/suggestions for us to explore on our own were always on target. We appreciate all your efforts to make our experience in Europe educational and fun. Our heartfelt thanks to you. Howard and Betty Hayashi

“We truly enjoyed all the cities we visited. This trip showed us a heck of a lot more than a bus tour would. With those bus tours you’ve got all those one-night stands where you get to a city late in the afternoon and leave the next morning. You don’t see anything that way-unlike your trip, which takes the time to really see these places. We appreciate you leading us through Europe, safe and sound, a little smarter and a little bit fatter.”

Betty and Clarence Kawahigashi



“The memories from that first trip to Europe will last me a lifetime. I appreciate all of the hard work that goes into coordinating such a venture....I just want to express my mahalo to you for making it very memorable for me.”

Ginger Wild



“Many thanks for the great tour of Europe - We enjoyed it immensely.” Ike and Nora Angora

“It was really exactly what I thought it would be. You carried it out exactly as presented in the brochure and travel show on tv. I loved our friendly caring group. We looked after each other and were always concerned about each other’s welfare.”

Carol Franklin

“Thank you for such a wonderful trip. We certainly did see a lot of things....Thanks for being so patient and gracious with us. We are the first among our friends to go through the English Channel chunnel! The locations of all the hotels were good....Your walking tours of all the cities were the highlights of the general tour...Mixing with the local populations gave me a chance to feel that I was part of the area. The train rides were excellent-being on the fast train was a great satisfaction....Thank you for a wonderful and intimate experience.”

Haru and Ruth Honma

“I enjoyed everyone’s company and thought it was a fantastic trip....It trip was a great experience for me. Even more so than my ’92 trip to Europe. Glad I did it.”

Steve Hughes

“We would just like to say that we had a wonderful time for two and a half weeks traveling through Europe on your tour. It has been a memorable trip in that we’ve learned so much, saw so much, and made new friends. Your talks have been informative and so interesting....your helpfulness, warmth, and caring is so much appreciated. It was so much better than a bus tour.”

Charlie & Aiko Abe



“The leisure time provided was very good....Overall, the tour was very well planned and executed. The train rides between the cities were all that I expected them to be.”  
Stan Tabata



“The hotels were gorgeous and centrally located, making it very easy to get around. I have nothing but praise for the tour...and will recommend it to everyone I speak with.”  
Mimi Tabata

“It was great traveling via train and being able to see and walk through many places that would’ve been impossible had we traveled via motorcoach.”  
Katherine Akagi

“My purpose of the trip was to see the DaVincis’, Michelangelos’, the old Master painters, Impressionists, and old excavated artifacts, sculptor, and the history to go with them, so I was thoroughly satisfied.”  
Marilyn Tabata



“Travelling by train made my trip. Highlights were Trevi Fountain in Rome, the garment factories in Lucerne and cows with bells on their necks, statue of David, the gondola ride in Venice, Venus de



Milo, Westminster Abbey with organ music-I could go on and on. Traveling, which is usually tiring, was painless and most enjoyable. The size of the group was perfect. We got individualized attention. The location of hotels selected couldn’t have been better, for they were close to everything, making it easy to go shopping or doing things on your own during free time. We would definitely travel with you again.”  
Melvin and Lorraine Yuen

“I really enjoyed the walks, and they did help in orienting me. I felt I got to know places much better this time. I would certainly recommend your tours to my friends and relatives.”  
Gloria Young

“Thank you for helping make my first trip to Europe so special. I felt that the mix of things to do on the trip was nicely balanced between orientation walks, museums, and of course, shopping. Your expert knowledge & personal attention to details for each city and for each traveler in our group was greatly appreciated. I would not hesitate to go on another trip with you in the future.”  
Carol Keating

“Your flexibility helps to make the ‘group tour’ concept attractive even to independent types like us. I’m hoping to come with you on other trips in the future. It was a great time spent with good people.”  
Roz Young

“I had an exceptionally nice time. I appreciated the extra background info you gave us on each city & country - re architecture, history, art & culture. Plus you saved us a lot of hassling, time & effort from your experiences, to smooth our way. I learned a lot, and enjoyed doing it.” Pat Young



“Seeing Europe via train was a wonderful experience, and a fast and scenic way to get from one city to the next. Your informative comments about each city were educational and added more insight than covered by a couple of books we read of Europe prior to our trip. Our group was superb-fun loving, prompt, good walkers, looked out for one



another....Everything we did and saw was an interesting experience....the Roman Colosseum; Vatican Museum; Sistine Chapel; the scenic train ride from Venice to Lucerne; Hotel des Balances;

climb to Mount Titlis and having a chance to romp in the snow; the high speed ride on the Eurostar from Paris to London; and lastly to London to view the Changing of the Guards and take in a couple of shows in London’s theaterland.”

Harry and Irene Toyomura

“What a trip that was! ‘Europe by Train’ was truly an exciting & a wonderful tour. Richard & I enjoyed it tremendously. It was certainly educational & a learning experience. Lots of fun too. The whole trip was a highlight. Just the realization that I was in Europe and got to see some of the works of

the great artists written about in our history books. I feel very grateful to the Europeans for allowing us to ‘come into their lives’ to share their history, culture, food, and the scenic beauty of their country....I can hardly wait to go on another European tour.” Lani Isa

“It was the most enjoyable tour I have ever taken. The day to day schedule was full of good food and great informative walks. Everything was planned so well - you only had to enjoy. In the time frame we had we were able to take in so much in a short time. In my earlier travels, it would have taken me 3 months to experience all that I did in 18 days! Not to mention what I’ve learned about the histories and art. Highly enjoyable and a great learning experience!” Albert Chang



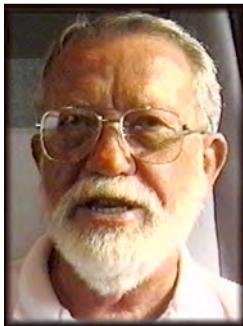
“This tour was even better that I expected...it surpassed my hopes. I got so much back from all the walking tours, the history, the food, the great company of people I traveled with. I didn’t want it to end and I can’t wait to go on another one.”

Anne Chang



“It was a fabulous trip! You seemed to have a surprise every day: the gondola ride, the tram ride up Mt. Titlis, breakfast in bed in Paris, a full course breakfast aboard the Eurostar train to London.... Your expertise in getting around the continent

translated into huge savings in time for us, the net result being that we saw more of Europe with you than we could have on our own. We would do it all over again in a heartbeat.” Barbara MacDonald



“We could not have asked for anything more. Dennis is very knowledgeable, patient, and understanding. He is a terrific tour guide. I don’t see how we could have packed more activities into the time we had. We were spared any bad experiences.”  
Jim MacDonald

“Your goal to walk and see the cities we visited was accomplished - The hotels were perfect as we could run out and walk around without worrying about catching a bus, subway or taxi. Great way to travel - we might not have seen some of the other sights as in a bus tour. Got to see and feel the cities better this way. Thank you for your tireless energy. You did more than an ordinary tour director would do. You are very knowledgeable about art history and I admire your informational background. Liked the flexibility, options given, undaunting spirit, the camaraderie of the leader and the group. Thank you for a great trip!”  
May Oshiro



“Very educational and entertaining. Tour leaders were very experienced and informative. Everything happened when it was supposed to happen. No snafus. Very well planned. Excellent services. Very professional.”  
Hugh Leslie

“Terrific tour - I enjoyed it tremendously because you were a “walking encyclopedia” on the art history/culture of each country we visited. It was a



fantastic learning experience - intellectually, culturally, and also in human relationships. Excellent.”  
Margaret Tom



“Best experiences: Walking the back alleys and seeing everyday activities of people who live there. The outdoor market activities; buying olives, etc. The best was enjoying all of the trip with such a fantastic and compatible group! Nobody stayed home on optional activities afternoons because Dennis had so much to show us.”  
Rowena Liu

“I enjoyed every city because the lectures accompanying the places, pictures, statues, etc., were wonderful. Each one was a terrific educational experience. Listening to the historical background was something so different from the usual long bus ride tours.”  
Alice Yoshioka

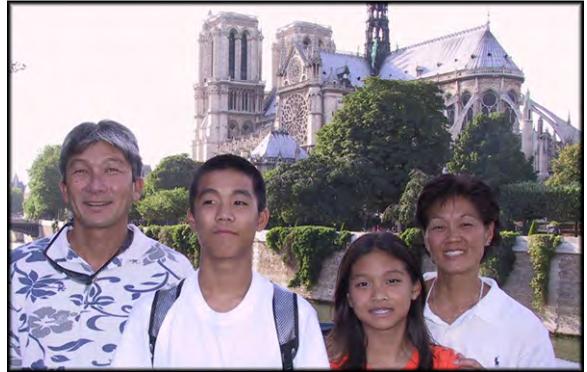


“Everything was an experience. Highlights for me were Rome; David was the most; sitting in the gondola, thinking, is it really me - here!! We’re telling everyone about the trip, sort of re-living our experiences. Dennis’ enthusiasm about history, places, times, people, were so exciting that we were never bored. In fact we were incited to pay more attention to whatever facts were being shared. Everything was great.” Lillian & Ken Chang

“Trip highlights: Trip to the Alps - Mt. Titlis. Scenery was breathtaking. Lucerne was a really clean city. I enjoyed Rome...walking by the fruit and flower stands and seeing the local people was interesting. I was impressed by all the historical art and buildings. The Louvre, and Versailles were fascinating. Traveling by train was one of the best experiences I’ve ever had. It was fast and comfortable. Our group was small and very congenial. I liked the fact that the hotels were clean, and centrally located so we could walk around by ourselves after dinner. The pace of the tour was comfortable and we had enough free time to shop. I felt that our guide did a great job.”

Clara Ching

“Absolutely wonderful. Well organized and we really enjoyed the companionship and how we all helped and watched out for each other. Some highlights were the sunset gondola ride and listen-



ing to the singing gondolier, and the see the most incredible ancient architecture. We have gone on many tours (all buses) but nothing can beat your “train tour” where we were able to walk around on the train, and talk to our companions enroute to our destination. We have nothing but praise, and we will certainly recommend it to our friends. We are still dreaming about the wonderful trip. Many, many thanks for the most memorable tour of Europe!” George and Kay Maeda

“I absolutely loved every minute of it. You taught us so much about art and European life. I was very impressed with the attention you gave us. Even on our free time” you were so helpful getting us to where we wanted to go, either by taking us there or giving us all the info we need to go ourselves.

Nancy Lee

“The magnificence of the artwork at all of the churches, museums, courtyards, etc. left me breathless. Photos and videos cannot do justice to these





awesome sights. I am so happy I went. This trip thrilled me beyond my highest expectations and wildest dreams. I particularly enjoyed the ruins of Rome, the shopping in Florence, the romance of Venice, the beautiful scenery of Lucerne, the Palace of Versailles, the ice cream in Paris, and the big city excitement of London.” Tricia Kaeo

“Trip highlights: The awesomeness of the ancient ruins - the architecture, the splendor of artistic creations! The tranquility and quaintness of Venice and Lucerne, the delicate glassware and the intricate and delicate works of lace were just superb. The night boat ride on the Seine was just gorgeous! In a word - AWESOME!!!” Agnes Haruguchi

“Trip highlights: Finally getting to see Art 101 come alive. The tour made me realize even more how young our country is in comparison. I would probably want to travel to more European countries as a result of this trip. It was an excellent introductory tour for a beginner covering each city’s



highlights. We had a wonderful group of people on the tour from various backgrounds who really knew the meaning of ohana.” Lillian Sawai

“Every city was a ‘highlight’ because everything is so different from our culture - people, architecture, etc. World history comes alive; everything I’ve seen in history books looks exactly like I expected - just awesome! Took a day trip to Pisa to see the Leaning Tower - that was exciting too. Also, we took in 2 musicals! The size of the group was just right - everyone got to know each other - everyone was so cooperative and helpful. Dennis, you have this Europe by Train Tour so very well organized - thank you!” Irene Thomas

“We thoroughly enjoyed each city and there wasn’t anyplace that we didn’t consider the best. It was our first European trip and we are happy that we were able to see and experience so much. We were especially impressed by the ancient ruins and the churches. Staying 2-3 days in each city enabled us to see and experience much more than if we had taken a bus tour. Long bus rides make us sleepy, and we would not have been able to enjoy the trip as much. We thought the train rides were quite nice as we traveled from city to city. In the end we were one big ohana.” Lynne & Hannah Kushiyama

“It was a terrific trip. It was a learning experience



and I've enjoyed the walking tour to the back streets of interesting places. Traveling by train was comfortable and fast, enjoyed the landscape of the country ride, and it made us spend more time in each country. I've seen and enjoyed many things in European countries that I don't see in Hawaii. This is what traveling is all about - visiting historic sites, museums, places with different plants and flowers. Well planned. Thank you." Nancy Coelho

"Best experiences: Gondola ride in Venice w/ singer & guitarist - absolutely wonderful - hard to top that! "Miss Saigon" in London - Louvre in Paris. I had a great time! I admit I'm pretty spoiled when it comes to hotels — I appreciate luxury & quality. All the hotels we stayed at passed the test." Laurie Taketa

"The walking tours were excellent for me. The explanations were awesome to say the least. The many buildings that were constructed many, many years ago and how they got it up is something to talk about for a long, long time. The snow on top of the mountain was speechless. The weather was wonderful all the way. The trains that we rode, and the London Tube were just exciting and fun. The gang was really friendly and caring. To sum



everything - is enough for me to last a life time - the many old structures, and paintings, and different kinds of food, and canals that I saw as a young child in school, now am seeing live in front of me. Thanks to Dennis and the Hawaii Geographic Society. Aloha." Joe Ayau

"Each city had its own highlight. Rome: the awesome ruins of an ancient time, plus the impressive churches, Vatican City and the museums. Florence: a smaller, but justifiably proud city with its own impressive museums, churches and attractions. Venice: a unique city of canals, and isolation - a totally different experience. Lucerne: a good break from the busy cities; clean, picturesque, friendly people. Paris: a city with so many things to see the Louvre, Notre Dame, the many gardens and monuments. London: Buckingham Palace and the pomp unique to England, the theater area, the Tower of London and the hustle and bustle of a big civty. All these cities were tied together by the pleasant train ride experience. I thought the overall trip was excellent. The leisurely pace, allowing for walking tours, and the location of hotels close to so many attractions were other factors which we found desirable.

Finally, the hard work by the tour director from breakfast on past late dinner was a significant reason for the trip turning out so well."

Richard Esaki





“I had such a great time and can’t wait to go back again.”  
Noreen Tanouye

“Once again, thanks for making this Europe by Train trip such an enjoyable one. For me, the second time experience with you was even more meaningful, fun, and breathtaking.

Your never-ending passion and sincere love for the work that you do in sharing your knowledge of the arts, architecture, cities, culture, and food remains unsurpassed by any other tour leader I have experienced in my travels. Your electricity is caching. Continue with this God-given talent that you have in leading these tours so that many others will come to realize how much more there is to life than just being in a static state.



The Acobas kept asking me if I had ever experienced a group as well put together and caring as this one, and my answer was, “this was the best of the best.”  
Betty Ontai-Chang

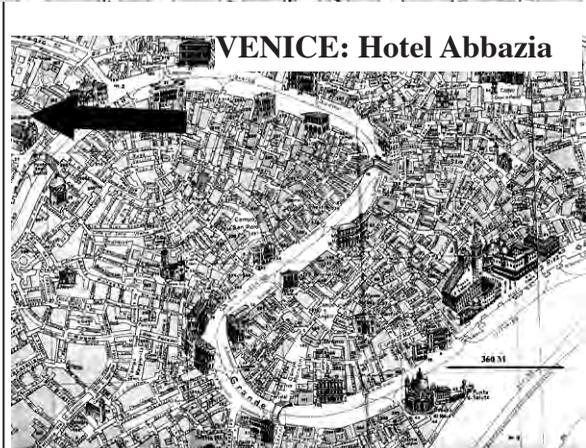


“Wonderful experience. Will be hard to match. Especially liked hotel locations and walking tours. Liked being able to wander and explore without restrictions of bus tours. Much better “hands on feeling” of the cities by walking the streets and experiencing the people. Great photo opportunities. Best experiences: Being able to leisurely walk the old Roman ruins. Wandering the streets of Venice and seeing St. Marks. Having tea at the hotel on Mt. Pilatus. The view of the Eiffel Tower at night. The first sight of Parliament in London...many other things in between. Can think of no bad experiences excepts having to end the tour and leaving the group behind.”  
Leon Celmer



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