

Italian Lakes

Depart Cairns 10 August at 10.45AM arrive Singapore 3.25PM – Silk air

Depart Singapore 10 August at 11.30PM arrive Milan 11 August at 6.10AM – Singapore airlines

Accommodation: Milan IN: 11 August OUT: 12 August

Commence the following tour on the 12 August and ending on the 27 August

Day 1: Stresa welcome

Commencing in central Milan at midday we will transfer you to Stresa on wonderful Lake Maggiore, where you will stay the next four nights. Join us tonight for a welcome drink before dinner in a local restaurant. This is an ideal chance to meet, and get to know, your Tour Manager and fellow travellers.

Meals: D

Hotel: Regina Palace Hotel

Day 2: Scenic train journey to Locarno and visit Ascona

This morning we drive north to Domodossola at the foot of the Italian Alps. Here we board the famous Centovalli Express train which runs through the 'Hundred Valleys' to Locarno. Relaxing in the panoramic carriages, we pass over numerous bridges and through numerous tunnels, travelling beside waterfalls, villages and vineyards. A spectacular journey! Arriving in Locarno we will make a short stop in the grand square before boarding our coach to visit nearby Ascona. Lunchtime will be at leisure in this delightful lakeside town. As a finalé, we follow the scenic route home hugging the shores of Lake Maggiore all the way back to Stresa. Dinner tonight is in your hotel.

Meals: B/D

Hand Selected Experience

Fancy a trip into Switzerland? To the north of Lake Maggiore are the massive Italian and Swiss Alps. Just before the mountains get really high there is a delightful valley that cuts through them into the pretty Ticino region of Switzerland. Boarding the Centovalli Express mid-morning, we relax in a panoramic carriage, as the train follows this dramatic valley crossing 83 bridges, goes through numerous tunnels, passing waterfalls and unspoiled scenery. To cap off the day our return route by coach follows the beautiful shores of Lake Maggiore back into Italy. Delightful!

Day 3: Island of Isola Bella and lakeside Orta San Giulio

Boarding our private boat we visit Lake Maggiore's famous island of Isola Bella where we have included entrance and a guided tour of the palatial Borromeo villa and gardens, which dominate the island. The villa boasts Murano glass chandeliers, gobelin-covered chairs, intricate tapestries and paintings. The spectacular formal gardens rise behind the ornate villa, with patterned flower beds falling in terraces, with statues and ornamental stonework completing the Italianate style.

Lunchtime is at leisure back in lakeside Stresa. Later this afternoon we visit the delightful town of Orta San Giulio beside the beautiful, and some say most romantic, of all the lakes – Lake Orta. Your evening is at leisure to discover a local trattoria for dinner.

Meals: B

Day 4: Cruise on Lake Como to Bellagio

This morning we drive to Lake Como where we follow the western shore of the lake to Cadenabbia. Here we board our private boat and enjoy a cruise on Lake Como, past a number of striking lakeside villas, to delightful Bellagio. This beautiful town is situated at the tip of the peninsula separating the lake's two southern arms, with the Alps visible across the lake to the north. It's time to relax in this delightful town which boasts peaceful villas and gardens nestled by the lakeside, elegant shops and walkways plus stylish al fresco dining at its very best. Your evening is at leisure to discover a local trattoria for dinner.

Meals: B

Day 5: Explore medieval Genoa

Bidding farewell to Lake Maggiore we drive south to the coastal region of Liguria, arriving around midday at Genoa. Once the capital of a naval empire, Genoa boasts the largest intact medieval city centre in the whole of Europe. Here we are joined by a local guide to enjoy a walking tour through the city's old heart, with its pedestrian shopping malls, beautiful churches and squares, and nearly 50 UNESCO Listed palaces and stately homes. We have included a guided visit to the opulent Royal Palace.

Meals: B/D

Hotel: Grand Hotel Savoia

Day 6: Santa Margherita Ligure, Portofino and Abbey of San Fruttuoso

We spend the morning at leisure in the beautiful harbour town of Santa Margherita Ligure with its elegant shops, boutiques and cafés that litter the port. Later we take a boat along the rugged Liguria coastline to the world famous harbour of Portofino. Delightfully set in a tiny bay, overlooked by the church and castle high above, this old port makes a perfect afternoon stop. Later, we continue around the coast to visit the Abbey of San Fruttuoso, which is only accessible by boat. This evening your coach is going to the delightful seaside town of Arenzano. Join us if you choose! We suggest a stroll along the promenade before you discover a local restaurant for dinner.

Meals: B

Day 7: Cruise the coastline of the Cinque Terre

A delightful day is planned as we explore the famous Cinque Terre. The name means 'five lands' and comes from the five unspoilt fishing villages that cling to the cliffs, overlooking the sea. Our first stop of the day will be in the pretty port of Monterosso. From here we catch a boat and cruise along the spectacular coastline of the Cinque Terre to visit the delightful villages of Vernazza and Portovenere. Arriving in La Spezia we board our coach and travel to Tuscany. We stay the next four nights in the typically 'Tuscan' town of Lucca – a medieval walled city, filled with palaces, churches and ancient houses. Dinner tonight is in a local restaurant.

Meals: B/D

Hotel: San Luca Palace, Lucca

Day 8: Cooking demonstration and lunch in Lucca

After a relaxing start we will visit a cooking school for a pizza and pasta cooking demonstration, to learn how pizza, focaccia and various pasta is created. Next it is time to taste it, as we enjoy a leisurely lunch. Your afternoon and evening are at leisure in Lucca. Meals: B/L

Day 9: Florence sightseeing and 'My Time'

Today is dedicated to nearby 'Firenze' (Florence). A local guide will bring to life this truly beautiful city which is otherwise known as the 'Cradle of the Renaissance'. Your tour starts with a visit to the famous Accademia Gallery, home to Michelangelo's 'David' and numerous other extraordinary Italian, Florentine and Renaissance works of art. We see the Duomo and take in the magnificent statues in the Piazza della Signoria. Your afternoon is entirely free to enjoy Florence at your own pace. Espresso coffee on Piazza Santa Croce where Michelangelo is buried? A gelato whilst strolling across the Ponte Vecchio? Don't forget the excellent shopping.

Meals: B

Day 10: Leaning Tower of Pisa and 'My Time' in Lucca

This morning we visit nearby Pisa with its famous Leaning Tower, Cathedral and Baptistery in the magnificent Piazza dei Miracoli. Your afternoon has been left entirely free to explore delightful Lucca. Perhaps visit the former home of Puccini, where he wrote 'Turandot'. Take a bike ride or a stroll around the entire town on top of the broad city walls. As a highlight this evening we drive into the picturesque Tuscan countryside to visit a local olive oil farmhouse estate. Before dinner is served in the Osteria, we spend time amongst the olive groves and enjoy an olive oil tasting accompanied by Tuscan wines and a selection of antipasto including local meats, cheese and bread – all specialities of this region.

Meals: B/D

Day 11: Ferraris and Parmesan Cheese lunch

Driving north we visit the fantastic Ferrari Museum at Maranello, near Modena. A local guide will join us and show us around this fantastic exhibition of bright red, old, new and future Ferraris and Formula One racing cars. Later we continue to the Panini Hombre cheese farm to learn how 'Parmigiano-Reggiano' (Parmesan) cheese is made, before enjoying a cheese tasting and light lunch. Continuing to Lake Garda, we reach the charming lakeside town of Bardolino, where we stay the next three nights. Dinner tonight will be in our hotel restaurant.

Meals: B/L/D

Hotel: Caesius Thermae & Spa Resort, Bardolino

Hand Selected Experience

Who likes a bright red Ferrari? Nothing quite demonstrates Italian fire and passion as does a bright red Ferrari. In Maranello we enjoy a guided visit through the amazing Ferrari Museum with its fascinating display of past and present Ferrari road and racing cars. But it is more than that, with its engaging historical displays, Formula One racing simulators and pit stops. Later we visit the Panini Hombre Parmesan cheese farm. We will see how their organic 'King of Cheese' Parmigiano Reggiano is created, and enjoy a tasting and a light lunch. This is Italy after all!

Day 12: Lakeside Salo and wine tasting at Redaelli de Zinis

This morning we visit the delightful lakeside town of Salo. Explore its historical centre which is filled with lanes and little squares with noble houses, elegant shops and the longest promenade on Lake Garda, at your own pace. Later we continue to Redaelli de Zinis in Calvagese della Riviera. This is a famous local winery and restaurant. Here we enjoy a wine tasting and sample some of the locally sourced produce before lunch.

Meals: B/L

Day 13: 'My Time' in Lake Garda

We have left today entirely free to enjoy glorious Lake Garda. Often regarded as the most beautiful of all the Italian Lakes, Garda is also the largest and deepest. Do as little or as much as you want. Maybe catch a ferry across the lake to explore and shop in the characterful 'picture postcard' ports of Lazise or Sirmione.

Meals: B/D

Day 14: Verona and Vicenza sightseeing

Skirting the lake we will visit Romeo and Juliet's Verona. A local guide will bring to life this beautiful city, where these tragic lovers avowed a love that spanned the centuries. This afternoon we continue to beautiful Vicenza, where a local guide will join us for a walking tour to explore the medieval centre. Later we arrive at our Venetian Villa hotel, where we stay the last two nights.

Meals: B/D

Hotel: Hotel Villa Contarini Nenzi

Day 15: Bassano del Grappa & historic Treviso

After a leisurely start this morning, we visit delightful Bassano del Grappa located on the foothills of the Alps. You will have free time to stroll across the ornate, centuries old, covered bridge which spans the River Brenta, before exploring the wonderful arcaded streets and piazzas in the heart of town. Later we will enjoy a visit to the Poli Grappa Museum to taste some Grappa liqueur. This afternoon we enjoy a stop in the historic centre of Treviso. Tonight we will enjoy a farewell dinner back in our historic Villa. Meals: B/D

Day 16: To Venice

Rail Venice to Milan - 27 Aug 7.20am depart arrive 9.45am

Depart Milan 27 August at 1.00PM arrive Singapore 28 August at 7.00AM – Singapore Airlines

Depart Singapore 28 August at 8.45AM arrive Cairns 5.15PM – silk airlines

Cost per person \$9,806*pp and includes the following:

- Airfares
- Airport taxes
- 16-day tour including meals and sightseeing as per itinerary