

Italy and Greece Tour 2012

DAY 1 - FLY OVERNIGHT TO ROME



Italy Profile - Population: 57,300,000

Time zone GMT: +1 (+2 in summer)

Capital city: Rome

Leader name: Silvio Berlusconi

Leader title: Prime Minister

Language(s): Italian

Religion(s): 84% Roman Catholic, 6% Jewish, Muslim and Protestant

Dialing code: 39

Currency code: EUR

Currency name: Euro

Weather - Italy's climate varies from north to south and from lowland to mountain top.

Temperatures at sea-level tend to be similar around the country, with altitudes creating steep changes between summer and winter. Winters are long and severe in the Alps, with snow falling as early as mid-September. Storms develop in spring and tend to last to autumn, making summer the wettest season. The northern regions experience chilly winters, hot summers and regular even rain distribution, while conditions become milder as you head south. The sirocco, the hot and humid African wind that affects regions south of Rome, produces at least a couple of stiflingly hot weeks in summer.

DAY 2 - ARRIVE IN ROME

The city of Rome is located in the Lazio region and is the capital of Italy. Rome used to be the capital of the Roman Empire during Antiquity. The city is often called the city of the seven hills (the Cermalus, the Cispius, the Fagutal, the Oppius, the Palatium, the Sucusa and the Velia). The historic city center is part of the UNESCO's world heritage since 1980.

DAY 3 - GUIDED TOUR OF VATICAN CITY - THE HOLY SEE

Virtual Tour –

[http://www.vatican.va/phome
_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm)



THE SISTINE CHAPEL

Without having seen the Sistine Chapel one can form no appreciable idea of what *one man is capable of achieving.* (Johann Wolfgang Goethe in 1787 in Rome)



Virtual Tour

http://www.vatican.va/various/cappelle/index_sistina_en.htm

ST. PETER'S BASILICA

Virtual Tour:

http://www.vatican.va/various/basiliche/san_pietro/vr_tour/index-en.html



A GUIDED TOUR OF ROME

THE FLAVIAN AMPITHEATRE - COLOSSEUM



Virtual Tour

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/launch_ani_colosseum.shtml

VISIT THE ROMAN FORUM

The **Roman Forum** is situated in the area between [Piazza Venezia](#) and the [Colosseum](#) is one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. Three thousand years ago, this valley between [Campidoglio](#) and the **Quirinal**, which was to become the **future social and political centre of one of the greatest empires of ancient times**, was submerged in marshland. By an incredible invention of engineering, which was commissioned by the last two Etruscan kings, the so-called *Cloaca Maxima*, a canal that is still in function to this very day, allowed for the drainage of the land. The area soon began to develop and already at the end of the 7th century BC, it was home to many markets and a hive of social activity.



Foro was the name that the Romans gave to the **central square of the urban settlement** and we must try to imagine this busy, crowded place as the pulsing centre of a modern city. Here the masses would flock to see the meetings of the orators, attend criminal trials and discuss internal

politics or the latest military campaigns, or quite simply to comment on the games or running races (an activity that the Romans particularly enjoyed).

In the area around the **Forum**, the city was also home to **markets, shops and taverns**. You could also find the typical *Termopolia*, which were the ancient **equivalent of today's fast food restaurants**. In short, the **Forum** was the heart and soul of city life. It was in **Caesar's** time, when Rome has become the capital of a vast empire, that the **Forum became a place for celebrations** and in the Imperial era it was the symbol of the Empire.

The **most incredible panoramic view of the entire Forum complex** can be seen from the magnificent [terraces of Campidoglio](#). Here you can observe the imposing ruins of **Basilica Emilia**, the only remaining Republican basilica, or the **Curia**, which was once the seat of the Senate. Nearby you will also note three trees, a vine, fig and olive tree, cited by Pliny the Elder, which were replanted in recent times.

Starting from the [Arch of Septimius Severus](#), the pathway winds through the most unique place in the world and passes beside the imposing **Basilica di Massenzio**, one of the most magnificent buildings of Imperial Rome, and ends near the **Arch of Titus**, where you will get a glimpse of the unmistakable [Colosseum](#). During the Middle Ages, the Forum fell into a state of ruin and was abandoned. Its monuments were often used to build medieval fortifications and at times were even completely dismantled and their materials used elsewhere. In those times, the area was used for cultivation and grazing and it took on the name of '*Campo Vaccino*', or '*cattle field*'.

It was only in the eighteenth century that the **Forum** was rediscovered and finally the definitive process of the recovery of the ancient ruins began, bringing this long-forgotten and barbarically plundered historic patrimony **back to life**.

A SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF ROME

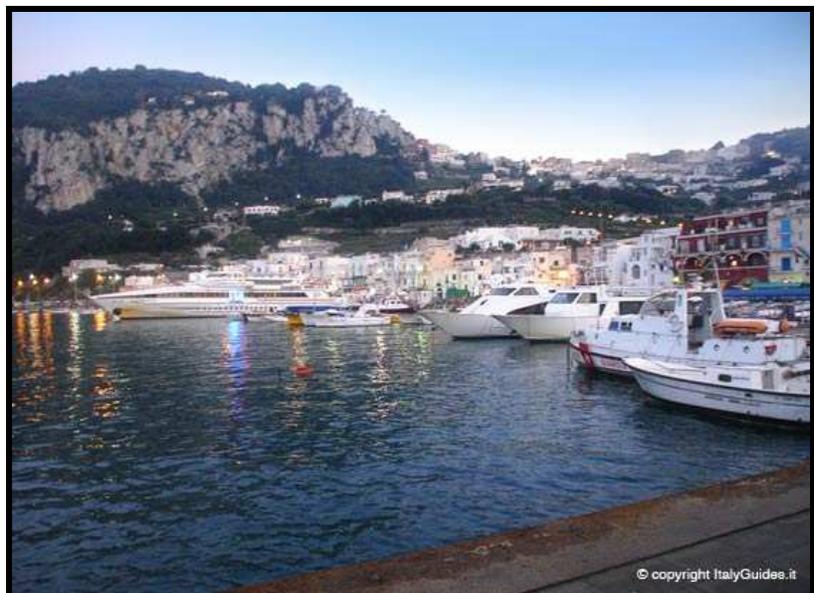
DAY 4 - FLORENCE



Virtual Travel –
http://www.italyguides.it/us/florence/florence_italy.htm

DAY 5 - TRAVEL TO CAPRI

The Island of **Capri** is one of the most picturesque and visited locations in **Campania**. Its unique beauties were celebrated in ancient times and later published for the world in **Homer's** works: Odysseus (known in Latin as Ulysses) sailing past the island, narrowly escaped the fate of



those who hear the voices of the Sirens.

Thus the island has a mythical charm, as well as its natural treasures, through the writings and legends of Ancient Greece. Its breathtaking landscapes and beauty stretch from the rocky caves around the island to the edge of the horizon, and has been an inspiration to poets, lovers and travelers throughout the centuries. Geologically speaking, the island is Karst, underlaid with limestone which has been eroded by dissolution over the years forming fantastical ridges towers and sinkholes in the rock. This process over time separated **Capri** from the mainland.

The island of **Capri** is composed of two municipalities: **Capri** and **Anacapri**, each with their own administration and touch of regional rivalry. The latter is built on a high plateau, affording staggering views of sheer cliffs from dizzying vantage points.

The sea emerging below is very deep, and harsh jagged caves have formed there. The most famous of these is the **Grotta Azzurra** or the "*Blue Grotto*", now known to have been a Roman bathing place. This lagoon is haunted by a dazzling shifting turquoise blue. Small openings in the back of the cave admit daylight which, reflecting on the limestone floor and walls, creates a fantastical and magical atmosphere. It has attracted visitors and inspired awe from all who have seen its ancient limestone walls and learned of the history of this oceanic cave.

In contrast to the intimate space and vivid color of the cavern, are the three peaks further out to sea, emerging from the azure blue water, pointing toward the sky. These peaks are known collectively as the **Faraglioni**. Their names are: **Stella, di Mezzo** and **Scopolo** or **Fuori** (meaning outside, probably because it is the furthest away). These three splendid fragments of **Capri** are known technically as stacks and are formed when erosion causes a solid land mass to divide and it becomes separated by water, or when a cave or natural rocky arch collapses. A fragment of the land is then isolated from its original body in the shape of a vertical column or steep rock rising out of the sea. The **Faraglioni** are famed for their breathtaking beauty and home of a variety of rare wildlife.

The phenomenon of **Bradyseism** is another fascinating geological aspect of **Capri** and of all the **Phlaeagraean Fields**. **Bradyseism** is a process in which the surface of the earth rises and falls due to the movement of volcanic lava deep beneath the surface of the earth. Its effects can be seen in **Capri** in various spots, including the afore mentioned **Grotta Azzurra**.

When the tide is low, Roman remains are visible through the water on the floor of the cave, suggesting that in bygone times the ground in and around the blue grotto which had itself been the site of a Roman villa, was higher. The artifacts on the floor of the cave are thought to be connected with the **Emperor Tiberius** who may have used the cave as a bathing place, and probably decorated the floor with statues. It also seems that other entrances to the grotto were created in an attempt to improve irrigation and later abandoned, supplying spaces in the rock by which sunlight could enter with dramatic effect. So unless visitors simply wish to swim in the grotto, it is wise to coincide visiting times with the falling tide.

Tiberius loved the island, and having obtained it from the possession of **Naples** in exchange for **Ischia**, he had a series of villas built there, and spent the last ten years of his tyrannical reign

secluded from the manic realities of Roman life amid the tranquillity and beauty of this unique island. He also founded the world's first Archeological Museum to display the fossils and artifacts discovered during excavation carried out by his workers for the building of the villas.

For the **Greeks** and later the **Romans** till Tiberius, **Capri** was an island of boar goats, and other animals. Hence the Island was named *Kapros*, which in Greek means "wild boar".

Capri was colonized by the **Greeks**, and was later adopted as a possession of **Naples**, till the **Emperor Augustus** upon visiting the Island saw a dry twig of the island in flower. The element of the miraculous in this made a profound impression on him, as from that time on he did everything in his power to obtain the Island. Having achieved his aim, bartering Ischia for **Capri** with the Neapolitans, he commenced with a multi villa building project probably as many as twelve, rendering the island habitable.

TAKE AN ISLAND CRUISE

CONTINUE TO SORRENTO REGION



Situated on a terrace overlooking the splendid **Amalfi** coastline, **Sorrento** is imbued with charm and echoes of the ancient past. Its position is perfect, affording a stunning panorama of the bay of Naples, but its list of attributes is replete. **Parks, villas, orange, lemon and olive** groves, picturesque narrow streets and resplendent weather, have ensured a steady stream of visitors to the town throughout the year and over the centuries. The town does suffer irregular building projects, but even this has not greatly overshadowed its rustic sea side town appeal.

The name of the town has its origins in antiquity and derives from a Greek word meaning "Flowing" due to the form of the town which appears to flow over the limestone tuff on which the town stands, defining the edge of the cliffs.

Curving along the coastline, erosion has carved the rock-face over the centuries into the majestic crags which climb to the skyline, forming the world renowned beauty of the **Amalfi** coast. Its legendary origins derive from the word Siren or Mermaids, mythical feminine creatures with celestial voices and hideous aspect, whose hands and songs lured unsuspecting sailors to the terror of the rocks, breaking their ships and wreaking romantic and tragic havoc.

Sorrento's history is connected to the ancient Island of **Lipari**, originally colonized in 8 B.C. by **Corinthians** who, exploring the lands, later settled in neighboring **Sorrento**. With the arrival of **Imperial Rome**, **Sorrento** was allied to the **Romans**, and to this day, the city centre bears testimony in the classically Roman layout of the streets to the presence of the Empire.

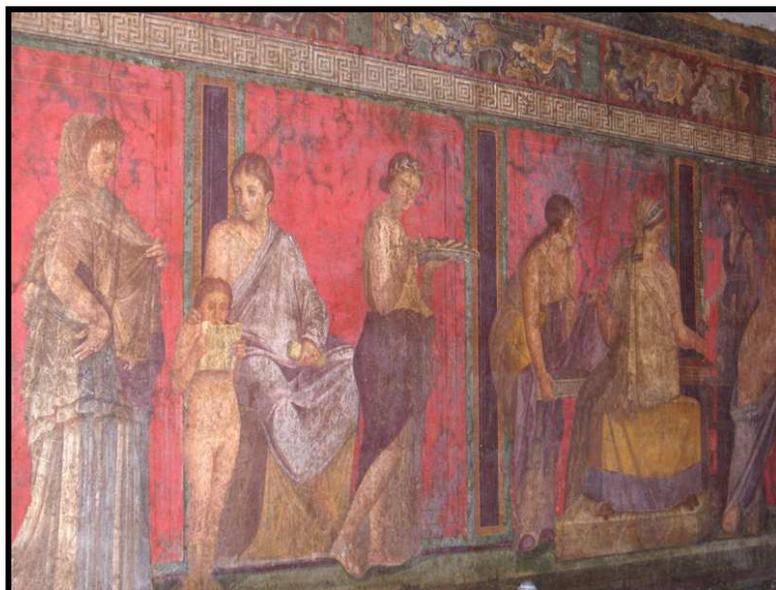
In the Middle Ages **Sorrento** fell into the hands of the **Goths** and the **Byzantines**, but resisted and repelled the advances of the **Lombards** of **Benevento** despite a siege. Due to **Sorrento's** proximity to the sea however, it was often raided and sacked in the 1500's by Pirates and sailors from the **Harbor Town of Pisa**, which led to the construction of the numerous watch towers along the coast.

Sorrento's charm lies in part in its sun drenched rustic simplicity. Quaint artisan workshops packed together onto a maze of medieval alleys, with the inevitable mix of locals and tourists bustling through the centre. The long shadows cast across uneven cobbled streets from overhanging balconies and terraces which almost meet overhead. Just enough space remains for washing to be strung out to dry Italian style from above, spanning the street in the Italian afternoon sun.

DAY 6 - TRAVEL TO POMPEII; TAKE A GUIDED TOUR

Virtual Tour –

http://www.italyguides.it/us/napoli/ancient_roman_city/virtual_tour_of_pompeii.htm



Herculaneum may have been better preserved, but to see an **entire ancient city come to life**, the only place on earth you can go is this magic time capsule, left to us by the good graces of Mount Vesuvius. **Pompeii is no mere ruin.**

Walking down the **old Roman** high street you can peek **into the shops**, read the **graffiti on the walls**, then wander off down the back streets to **explore the homes** of the inhabitants and appraise their **taste in painting** - they won't mind a bit if you do.

Almost everything we know for sure concerning the **daily life of the ancients was learned here**, and the huge mass of artefacts and art dug up over 200 years is still helping scholars to re-evaluate the **Roman world**. Though a fair-sized city by **Roman standards**, with a population of some 20,000 **Pompeii** was probably only the third or fourth city of Campania, and a trading and manufacturing centre of no special distinction. Founded perhaps in the 7th century BC, the city came under the **Roman Sphere** of influence around 200 BC.

In the fateful year of AD 79 it was still a cosmopolitan place, **culturally more Greek than Roman**. **Vesuvius'** rumblings and the tall, sinister-looking cloud that began to form above it, gave those Pompeians with any presence of mind a chance to leave, and only about 10 per cent of the population perished.

CONTINUE TO BRINDISI



OVERNIGHT FERRY TO PA

DAY 7 - ARRIVE IN PATRAS

TRAVEL TO DELPHI

DAY 8 - TAKE A GUIDED TOUR OF DELPHI

*VISIT THE DELPHI MUSEUM
GREEK EVENING*

DAY 9 - TAKE A GUIDED TOUR OF ATHENS

<http://athens.arounder.com/>

OLYMPIC STADIUM

ACROPOLIS

PARTHENON

TEMPLE OF ATHENA NIKE

WALKING TOUR OF THE PLAKA DISTRICT

DAY 10 - FLY HOME

<http://www.romegiftshop.com/vitoofro.html>