

# The Italian 'Grande'

18 Stunning Days – Milan to Rome



Marina Grande, Isle of Capri, photo courtesy of Linda Appleby

Explore idyllic fishing villages, Italian castles, Venetian canals, Roman relics and Capri sunsets as you travel through the heart of Italy from Milan to Rome discovering regional delights and stunning scenery along the way.

## DAY 1 STRESA ON LAKE MAGGIORE

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. This is an ideal chance to meet, and get to know, your Tour Manager and fellow travellers. (D)

Your Hotel in the Italian Lakes – La Palma Hotel or Regina Palace Hotel

## DAY 2 STRESA ON LAKE MAGGIORE

This morning we drive to the town of Como and follow the shore of the lake to Tremezzo, where we visit the world famous Villa Carlotta. This wonderful Villa is set in 70,000 square metres of romantic Italianate Gardens and faces across Lake Como to the Bellagio peninsula. The classic gardens boast fountains and pergolas and in spring time is famous for its Rhododendrons and Azaleas. Later 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. Later we return to Stresa. Dinner tonight is included in a local restaurant. (B,D)

## DAY 3 STRESA ON LAKE MAGGIORE

There is nothing like a day in the mountains - especially amongst some of the

highest and most dramatic in the Alps! Following a deep valley we soon reach the mountain village of Macugnaga, close to the Swiss border. Used as a location in many films, the village is famous for its beautifully preserved wooden huts and chalets, and the stunning backdrop of the Monte Rosa (Pink) Massif and the 4,638 metres high Dufourspitze – Europe's second highest mountain.



# AAA

Authentically Albatross

World famous Bellagio epitomizes the gorgeous towns lining the shores of the majestic

Italian Lakes. That is why we charter a private cruise boat to admire the sumptuous villas and mansions adorning Lake Como before enjoying a relaxing lunchtime in beautiful Bellagio. Our leisurely 4 night stay in lakeside Stresa allows you the necessary time to do this, plus another cruise on Lake Maggiore and take in the Lakes of Garda and scenic Orta, and visit the mighty Alps. *Absolutely Albatross!* See Days 1 to 4.

## Discover more with Albatross...

- Spend 4 nights by Lake Maggiore in the magnificent Italian Lakes District, visit Villa Carlotta and the town of Bellagio on the shores of Lake Como plus cruise on Lake Maggiore to the Borromean Islands
- Visit the traditional mountain village of Macugnaga set high in the stunning Alps and spend an evening lakeside in beautiful Orta San Giulio
- Stay 2 nights in a centuries old Italian castle, visit Lake Garda and the romantic canals of Venice
- Spend 5 nights in Tuscany in the spa town of Montecatini Terme, visit Florence and the Accademia Gallery, Pisa, the medieval cities of Lucca and Siena, the fairytale 'town of towers' San Gimignano, sample the regional wines, olive oil and delightful local produce in a Tuscan farmhouse
- Savour traditional Tuscan cuisine at Fattoria il Poggio
- Explore the scenic villages of the famous Cinque Terre
- Enjoy 2 nights in the Umbrian Hills staying in medieval Spoleto and visit Assisi
- Relax over 3 nights on the stunning Amalfi Coast, visit Capri, Amalfi and picturesque Ravello
- Marvel at the ancient ruins of Pompeii and eternal Rome



AVERAGE KMS PER DAY: 165

- Tour commences
- Overnight stays
- Included excursions



# 18 days - Over \$1,800 value of extras already included

With NO additional 'on tour' costs!

## Discover the Albatross difference

- Small group size – average 22, maximum 28
- Longer stays, with NO 1 night stops on tour
- Genuinely inclusive, with NO additional on tour costs
- Stay in authentic, character style hotels
- Tours designed specially for you – Australians and New Zealanders

## Incredible Value Inclusions

- All the sightseeing, scenic drives and excursions (as per the itinerary)
- Fully escorted by our experienced Tour Manager
- Travel in a first class air-conditioned touring coach
- End of tour tips to Tour Manager and Driver, tips for local guides
- 17 nights authentic, specially selected hotel accommodation
- Hotel portorage (1 bag per person)
- Breakfast daily
- 12 dinners including welcome and farewell dinners, local restaurant dinner in Stresa, Tuscan dinner at Fattoria il Poggio and welcome drink in Stresa
- Local guides – Isola Bella, Castelbrando, Venice, Florence, Assisi, Pompeii, Capri and Rome
- Entrances: Borromea Villa and Gardens, Villa Carlotta, Accademia Gallery and Pompeii
- Cinque Terre excursion, private boat for tour of Borromean Islands on Lake Maggiore, private boat for Lake Como cruise to Bellagio, private water transfers in Venice, return ferry to Capri, Amalfi Coast excursion to visit Amalfi and Ravello, food, wine and olive oil tasting in a Tuscan farmhouse
- Personal audio system whilst on tour
- Free WIFI available on most coaches and at hotels

## 2015 Dates and Prices

18 days only \$6,889 pp twin share  
Single supplement \$929 (land only prices in Australian dollars)

STARTS MILAN	ENDS ROME	STARTS MILAN	ENDS ROME
26 April	13 May	19 August	5 September
3 May	20 May	26 August	12 September
6 May	23 May	30 August	16 September
13 May	30 May	2 September	19 September
17 May*	3 June	6 September*	23 September
24 May	10 June	9 September	26 September
3 June*	20 June	16 September	3 October
10 June*	27 June	23 September*	10 October
21 June	8 July	27 September	14 October
15 July	1 August	1 October	18 October
9 August	26 August		

\*Stay 2 nights in Venice. \$7,129 pp twin share. Single supplement \$1,249

 **Book before 15 January 2015 & SAVE \$300 pp**  
Further discounts may apply – see page 17 for details

## Guaranteed Group Departures

Book our tours with confidence! If you book and deposit on any of our tours, as long as there are just 10 or more people travelling on your designated group departure, we guarantee it will travel.



Lake Como, Italy, photo courtesy of John Vernon



Grand Canal, Venice, photo courtesy of Paul Thornton

Your time is at leisure to explore the village and surroundings, and perhaps take a mountain cable car ride (subject to operating) to enjoy lunch and the extraordinary views. Later today we also 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. (B)

#### DAY 4 STRESA ON LAKE MAGGIORE

Boarding our private boat we visit the famous islands of Lake Maggiore. First stop will be 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. Next we visit Isola Pescatori (the Fisherman's island). Lunchtime is at leisure on this small, picturesque island with its quaint cafes and restaurants set amongst the old houses with wooden balconies, tiny boats and fishing nets. The afternoon and evening are at leisure in delightful, lakeside Stresa. (B)

#### DAY 5 CASTELBRANDO

Bidding farewell to Lake Maggiore we drive east and arrive at Lake Garda late morning. This is the largest of the Italian lakes and the meeting point of three Italian regions. With a circumference of about 100 kilometres, the lake is surrounded by lemon and citrus groves. There will be time at leisure for lunch in one of the colourful and diverse lakeside towns. Later we reach the foothills of the Dolomites and the superb CastelBrando, where we stay for the next two evocative nights.\* Located above the village of Cison di Valmarino, this 2,000 year old Roman fortress was turned into a sumptuous noble's palace in the 13th century. Access to the castle is by funicular. On arrival we have included a guided tour of the castle. (B, D)

*Your Castle Hotel – CastelBrando.\* Skilful restoration and sensitive modernisation have brought the original magnificence back to life. Guelph style decorative battlements, stone cellars, tapestries, swords and suits of armour set the scene for the elegant halls, dining rooms, manicured gardens and terraces overlooking the valley. Glorious for those après dinner drinks on those long summer evenings! See [www.castelbrando.it](http://www.castelbrando.it)*

*\*17 May, 3 June, 10 June, 6 September & 23 September departures will stay at the Carlton on the Grand Canal hotel in Venice and dinner is not included on Day 6*

#### DAY 6 CASTELBRANDO

After a leisurely start we descend to the Po Valley and visit nearby 'Venezia' (Venice) – arguably one of the most romantic cities in the world. At Tronchetto we board a private boat to take us along the magnificent Grand



**AAA**

Authentically Albatross

We used to spend 4 nights here in Montecatini Terme, but then many past clients

commented on how lovely and typically Tuscan this elegant spa town is and suggested that adding an extra day here - completely free - would make the stay perfect. So we did. Yes, we fully explore this amazing region, but now, by staying 5 nights in this delightful town, we add a fabulous, authentic activity – a completely free day to 'go native' simply for the pleasure of it! See Day 9.

Canal to St Marc's Square, where we join our expert local guide for a walking tour. The rest of the day is free to meander through the myriad of narrow, water lined streets and alleys spanned by humped back bridges. Dinner this evening is back in 'our' magnificent castle. (B, D)

#### DAY 7 MONTECATINI TERME IN TUSCANY

A leisurely start to the day as we bid farewell to our castle and travel south to Tuscany. We arrive in the charming spa town of Montecatini Terme mid afternoon. This was once a favourite 'cure resort' of the crowned heads of state from all over Europe. We stay here for the next five nights, in a traditional family run, four star hotel, close to the major sights. As a highlight, this evening we drive into the picturesque Tuscan countryside, where we have arranged dinner at Fattoria il Poggio with its winery and olive groves. (B, D)

*Your Tuscan Hotel – Ercolini & Savi Hotel*

#### DAY 8 MONTECATINI TERME IN TUSCANY

Today is dedicated to nearby 'Firenze' (Florence). We catch a train to swiftly reach the city centre, where you are joined by a local guide who 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. (B, D)



## Italy is big. Very big!

Did you know, with motorway service station stops for morning tea and lunch, taking into consideration tolls, traffic and entering and exiting major cities it takes over eight and a half hours to travel on a coach from Florence to Sorrento or Venice to Rome! Yet so many tours have these drives as a standard day in their itinerary. Even worse they often have just one or two night stops at either end.

**That is why Albatross Tours** breaks these journeys with five nights in Tuscany and two nights in Spoleto, en route to the Amalfi Coast. That is

also why when we travel between destinations our days are not endurance tests. We allow leisurely stops en route! For instance, between Tuscany and Umbria we enjoy visits to both Siena and delightful San Gimignano and between Stresa and CastelBrando we have lunchtime beside Lake Garda. Aren't these sorts of visits exactly why you want to travel to glorious Italy? By providing four nights in the glorious Lakes District, two in an ancient castle, five in Tuscany, two in Spoleto and three on the Amalfi Coast we perfectly complete your Italian experience!

It's all about a sensible touring style, a civilized pace, genuine inclusions and actually enjoying what you have come so far to see.

### DAY 9 MONTECATINI TERME IN TUSCANY

The whole of today has been purposely left entirely at leisure. This is a perfect opportunity for you to do as little, or as much as you want! Maybe take the local train back to the museums and shops of Florence. Alternatively explore Montecatini's old centre and parklands, or pamper yourself in one of the Spas. Perhaps just relax in your hotel or sip wine in a café and watch the world go by! (B)

### DAY 10 MONTECATINI TERME IN TUSCANY

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. We have arranged a coastal boat ride for you to admire the spectacular scenery and almost inaccessible fishing villages, and to visit Portovenere and Monterosso. Our return journey is by train through the tunnels and cliffs above. (B, D)

### DAY 11 MONTECATINI TERME IN TUSCANY

Our first stop today is in one of the most typically 'Tuscan' towns in the area, Lucca - a medieval walled city, filled with palaces, churches, ancient houses and the former home of Puccini, where he wrote Turandot. Walk on top of the city walls for the very best city views, or visit Piazza San Michele and stroll along the shops of Borgo Giannotti. Later we visit Pisa with its famous Leaning Tower, Cathedral and Baptistery in the magnificent Piazza dei Miracoli. This afternoon we visit a local farmhouse to 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. (B)

### DAY 12 SPOLETO IN UMBRIA

We make the short drive across Tuscany to the fairytale 'town of towers' San Gimignano, famous for its 13th and 14th century Tuscan towers. Exploring the pedestrian walkways of this hilltop town is an absolute delight. Lunchtime will be at leisure in the beautifully preserved streets of medieval Siena amongst the great sights such as the gothic town hall and the Piazza del Campo, scene of the famous Palio horse race. Next we wind up to the hills of Umbria and the wonderful walled town of Spoleto where we stay the next two nights. Medieval Spoleto is easily explored on foot. There are numerous romanesque churches and cobbled stone alleyways lined with shops, bars and trattorias. (B, D)

*Your Umbrian Hotel – Hotel Dei Duchi*

### DAY 13 SPOLETO IN UMBRIA

We spend this morning in the nearby beautiful Umbrian city of Assisi. Badly damaged by earthquakes in 1997 the city, dominated by two medieval castles, undertook a remarkable programme of restoration which soon

brought it back to all its glory. On arrival in Assisi we are joined by a lay Franciscan Monk for a guided tour of the Basilica of St Francis with its magnificent frescoes. Afterwards there is time for you to explore Assisi at your own pace. Returning to Spoleto, the rest of the afternoon is at leisure. Perhaps take a leisurely walk along the path around the castle and across the medieval viaduct in to the Umbrian countryside. This is the real Italy! (B, D)

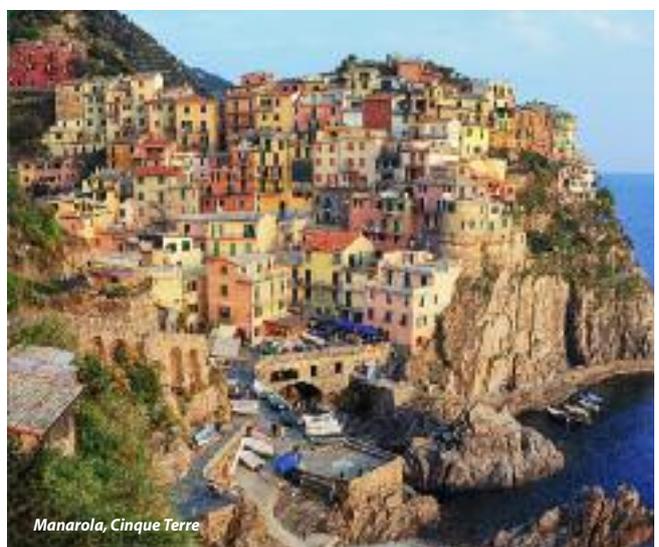
### DAY 14 MAIORI ON THE AMALFI COAST

Driving south past Vesuvius we visit the ancient ruins of Pompeii, where a local guide takes us through the city that was buried under volcanic ash in AD 79. Paintings, furniture, mosaics, sculptures, graffiti and even loaves in ovens are wonderfully preserved. From here it's only a short drive to the Amalfi coast and the port town of Maiori, where we stay for the next three nights. A perfect base for visiting all the local sights and soaking up the unique atmosphere of the Amalfi Coast! (B, D)

*Your Maiori Hotel – Reginna Palace Hotel*

### DAY 15 MAIORI ON THE AMALFI COAST

Enjoy your day as we take you on the ferry along the Amalfi coast, past Positano, and across to Marina Grande on the island of Capri, which the Roman emperor Tiberius made his capital. On arrival we meet our local guide and board a bus which takes us up to the top of the island to explore the charming village of Anacapri. We also spend time at leisure amongst the boutiques and galleries in the main town, Capri. (B, D)



Manarola, Cinque Terre



Trevi Fountain

#### DAY 16 MAIORI ON THE AMALFI COAST

The Amalfi Coast is famous for its twisting, winding scenic drive with picturesque villages and towns hugging the cliffs and craggy coves. This morning we drive from Maiori along the dramatic coastline and spend time exploring Amalfi. Later we continue to visit perhaps one of the most scenic towns along the Amalfi Coast, Ravello. Perched on the mountain, commanding panoramic views across the coast, Ravello is evocatively described as being “nearer to the sky than it is to the sea”, and has been a favourite haunt of artists and composers for centuries. Mid afternoon we return to Maiori, where the remainder of the afternoon and evening are at leisure. (B)

#### DAY 17 ROME

On arrival in Rome we enjoy a guided panoramic tour around the famous landmarks of this grand city, from the magnificent fountains by Bernini, the palaces and open squares to Piazza Venezia and the massive Colosseum (entrance not included). After checking into our central Rome hotel, our finale will be a farewell dinner in a local restaurant. (B, D)

*Your Rome Hotel – Hotel Massimo D’Azeglio*

#### DAY 18 ROME

Sadly your tour ends after breakfast in your hotel. (B)

#### PLEASE CONSIDER:

This specially designed tour visits a number of wonderful, medieval towns, hilltop villages and historic sites. Occasionally coach drop off points are a 10 minute, or so, walk away from the old town centres, with pedestrian access via old, cobbled roads with uneven surfaces. People with walking difficulties or limitations should consider this before booking.



“This is the first European tour that I have done and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The accommodation, sightseeing and the majority of meals were included in the tour cost, our tour guide looked after us beautifully, the accommodation standard was excellent and the towns and cities we visited were terrific. A highlight of the tour were the longer stays, it was fantastic not having to repack every day. A fantastic tour, we met beautiful people and had a ball.” Helen

Castelbrando

## YOUR HOTEL EXPERIENCE



*Depending on your selected departure, in Stresa you will may stay in one of the following hotels:*

### **LA PALMA HOTEL, STRESA – 4 NIGHTS**

Set in its own private gardens and within an easy walking distance of Stresa's old town, this first class hotel is superbly located on the lakeside promenade with magnificent views across Lake Maggiore. The elegant dining room leads out into the hotels manicured gardens, and the swimming pool is located opposite the hotel, on the lakeshore. See [www.hlapalma.it/en](http://www.hlapalma.it/en)



### **REGINA PALACE HOTEL, STRESA – 4 NIGHTS**

The 4 star Regina Palace hotel is situated on the banks of Lake Maggiore, in the centre of Stresa and offers stunning view of the Borromean Islands. The century old hotel offers classic style interiors and is surrounded by large gardens and an open air pool. Go to [www.reginapalace.it/en](http://www.reginapalace.it/en)



*Depending on your selected departure, on Days 5 and 6 you may stay in one of the following hotels:*

### **CASTELBRANDO, CISON DI VALMARINO – 2 NIGHTS**

A beautifully restored castle with sensitive modernisation has brought the original magnificence back to life. Guelph style decorative battlements, stone cellars, tapestries, swords and suits of armour set the scene for the elegant halls, dining rooms, manicured gardens and terraces overlooking the valley. Glorious for après dinner drinks on a summer evening! Visit [www.castelbrando.it](http://www.castelbrando.it)



### **CARLTON ON THE GRAND CANAL HOTEL, VENICE – 2 NIGHTS**

This elegant hotel is conveniently located with easy access to all the main tourist attractions. Decorated with Venetian plaster-work and Murano glass, this stunning hotel is equipped with modern comforts. The terrace top sky lounge and restaurant offers a splendid view of the Grand Canal and the Venice skyline. See [www.carltongrandcanal.com](http://www.carltongrandcanal.com)



### **HOTEL ERCOLINI & SAVI, MONTECATINI TERME – 5 NIGHTS**

Located in a Liberty style building dating back to the 19th century, the Hotel Ercolini & Savi offers a fantastic location as well as being a relaxing and welcoming place to stay. The hotel is in an extremely central location in the elegant Via San Martino, close by Piazza del Popolo. Go to [www.ercoliniesavi.it](http://www.ercoliniesavi.it)



### **HOTEL DEI DUCHI, SPOLETO – 2 NIGHTS**

This unpretentious, family run hotel is located just outside the old city walls and is known locally for its cuisine. The dining area offers wide panoramic views of the stunning Umbrian countryside. The hotel has the dual benefit of being a 'town' hotel but at the same time giving the feeling as if you are in the middle of the countryside. Visit [www.hoteldeiduchi.com/en](http://www.hoteldeiduchi.com/en)



### **REGINNA PALACE HOTEL, MAIORI – 3 NIGHTS**

Located in the centre of Maiori overlooking the bay, the Reginna Palace Hotel is surrounded by tropical gardens and features a private beach. With attentive and friendly staff, you will have an unforgettable stay at the Reginna Palace Hotel. See [www.hotelreginna.it](http://www.hotelreginna.it)

*For more information about our specially selected hotels please visit [www.albatrosstours.com](http://www.albatrosstours.com)*