

A Trip Perfected

Sunday, September 27, 2015 - Saturday, October 3, 2015

Day One: Welcome to Italy!

We begin our adventure in the heart of [Bologna](#) at the [Hotel Corona D' Oro](#) just steps away from the iconic [Due Torri \(Two Towers\)](#) and the famous [Piazza Maggiore](#). Our hotel is a former palace so you will truly experience Bologna just as the nobles did back in the 1800's — only with the addition of WiFi and other modern amenities!

After checking in, we will meet at the hotel's restaurant for introductions and lunch where you'll sample some of the foods the region is known for like mortadella, arancini (stuffed rice balls) and culatello. We have arranged a one-of-a-kind experience especially designed for WineRoads guests that will introduce you to the delicacies that make the [Emilia Romagna Region](#), and Bologna in particular, a destination for foodies. There will be wine tastings, cooking demonstrations, and multiple food stations where you can enjoy the regional specialties. Even in Italy, a country that takes food very seriously, Bologna stands out.

After lunch, we will be joined by a local guide for a historical tour. Bologna is a great 'off-the-beaten-path' destination that is filled with cultural treasures. This city is home to one of Europe's oldest universities and to architectural must-sees like the [Church of Santo Stefano](#) and the [Fountain of Neptune](#). It is a vibrant city lined with quaint restaurants, shops and extraordinary landmarks however it's small enough to explore by foot and less touristy than cities like Rome and Florence. After the tour, you're welcome to continue exploring the area or you can return to the hotel and relax until dinner. You choose. You're on vacation!

For dinner, we will meet at a local osteria that tops the locals' list to dine on homemade pastas. There might be tortellini en brodo or tagliatelle alla Bolognese or ravioli stuffed with ricotta cheese — and that's just the first course! You can decide to have dessert at the restaurant or discover some of the best gelato in all of Italy on your own (we recommend [Cremeria Funiviaon](#)), or you can do both.

Rest up for your Day Two!

Day Two: Living like a local in Bologna

Today, we meet our local guide and friend who will show us how to experience [Bologna](#) just like the locals do. We'll start our day at our guide's favorite coffee shop. Mind you, this is no ordinary coffee shop. It's an elegant, old-world cafe with no "Frappuccinos" nor names scribbled on cups. We will be elbow to elbow with the locals as they jump start their day. You'll get a true sense of how the Bolognese get going in the morning.

Fueled with plenty of caffeine, we'll then head out to the local food markets. There's no better way to experience the delicious food of this or any region than with a native who knows the best shops. As we explore, our guide will teach us about the aging process of various meats and cheeses while taking us to her favorite purveyors of top quality fresh Parmesan, balsamic vinegar, tortellini, tomatoes, mushrooms, and the seasonal products that will be served at local restaurants later in the day. We will learn (& taste) why these products are so renowned and prized.

Did someone say Parmesan? During our market stops, you'll have a chance to purchase yummy Parmesan cheese and have it vacuum-sealed to take back home. You will be reminded of your experience in Bologna long after your trip has ended, each time you savor your cheese.

Next, we'll visit an award-winning [Enoteca](#) ("wine repository") with over 2,000 labels to choose from, along with an aromatic and appetizing array of cheeses and salamis. By now, the rhythm of Italian life should be starting to kick in!

There are multiple ways to spend this afternoon in this quaint city. Like shopping? If so, Bologna is a paradise for you with retailers such as Versace, Cavalli, Rossini and Pollini topping the list as must-visits. For the history buff, there are museums, churches, and towers to explore. For the wine lover, there are cafes in quaint piazzas. And for the gelato fan (and who doesn't love gelato), head to [Cremeria Funivia](#) and ask for them to put the melted chocolate in the bottom of the cone!

Tonight, we will have dinner at a very special restaurant which has been in business for over a century! The recipes and produce from this restaurant's farm are just two of the reasons this establishment is on our itinerary. The Lasagna Bolognese is not always on the menu but we will make a special request for it.

By the end of this memorable day, you will have truly experienced the unforgettable sites, smells and sounds of Bologna and its special people.

Rest up for Day Three (road trip)!

Day Three: Explore Modena and Parma

Today, we leave [Bologna](#) bright and early en route to [Parma](#) which is about an hour's drive. On our way, we'll stop in [Modena](#). This city has so much to offer. Its medieval center showcases the Duomo with its gothic bell tower and the Piazza Grande, which make this part of Modena a [UNESCO World Heritage](#) site.

In Modena, you must experience the making and tasting of the area's famed balsamic vinegar. At a small, family-owned balsamic producer, we will walk through the process of producing and aging vinegar. We'll learn to distinguish more refined brands from the generics. Our tour will conclude with a tasting of the different varieties of their balsamics.

For lunch, you are on your own to leisurely explore the city center and enjoy delicacies at one of the many outstanding restaurants. The cobblestone streets are packed with cafes or you can head to the famous covered market, [Mercato Albinelli](#) which has been satisfying the needs of locals since 1931. Grab a bag of [Amaretti di Modena](#) - chewy almond cookies that are a local specialty - from the bakery at Stall 94. Then nibble on slices of culatello or stuffed pasta and make your way over to [Bar Schiavoni](#). It's tucked in the corner of the market and offers mouth-watering panini sandwiches. Wherever you go, you will be part of the quotidian life of the Modenesi.

After lunch, we'll regroup and make our way to Parma. Upon arrival, we'll check into our hotel, [Palazzo Dalla Rosa Prati](#), a historic residence in the heart of the city. It overlooks the [Piazza Duomo](#) which is one of the best preserved squares in Italy. The Palazzo has not only a coveted address but it's also rich in history. Our host, "Vittorio", will be there to welcome us with the top-notch hospitality he and his family have been giving for over 400 years. Once you settle into your hotel room, feel free to unwind or explore a little of Parma on your own before dinner.

Tonight we gather for dinner just steps away at one of the finest restaurants in Parma. The restaurant will be closed to the public and we will have a private dining experience at the table of the chef, whose kitchen is on full display behind a plate class window. Although it won't be easy, we must remember to leave room for dessert!

Oh and speaking of food: There are many misconceptions about the word Parmesan but there is no doubt whatsoever about Parmesan cheese's origin! Parmesan refers to the famous cheese made in and around Parma (right where you are today) for the past eight centuries. Creating this magnificent cheese takes a lot of time and skill. You'll learn more about Parmesan cheese and other local specialties at tomorrow's hands-on cooking class.

Day Four: Food and wine — Parma-style

Our culinary appreciation of the region deepens with a hands-on cooking class at a nearby [Agriturismo](#) (“farmhouse”) with our local expert foodie, Stefani. Stefani’s exuberant personality will have you smiling as you prepare local specialties including the big three: Tortellini, ravioli, and tagliatelle. We’ll not only learn the secrets and traditions of recipes that have been handed down through generations but also use our new-found talents to make the pastas that we’ll enjoy for lunch (topped with grated Parmesan from the vendor down the road)! While this cooking class will never appear in a tourist guidebook, it will never disappear from your memory.

This afternoon, we will be at leisure to explore the shops and historical sights and soak in the vibrant life of [Parma](#). Those of us out and about in the early evening, when the day softens into dusk, may become part of the [passeggiata](#) (“evening walk”). During this time, individuals and families stroll through town to socialize before dinner. For townspeople of all ages, the *passeggiata* reinforces a sense of belonging. The greeting of friends and the sharing of the latest news weave everyone into the fabric of the community. Walk slowly. Stop for a glass of wine. Take it all in.

There’s no group dinner planned for this evening. However, you won’t be hard-pressed to find a fantastic spot in which to dine. Our hotel’s great location places us only a few meters away from many outstanding restaurants. This is also a perfect evening to indulge in some artisanal gelato, for which we highly recommend [Emlia Cremeria](#). There may be a line but it’s well worth the wait!

Not quite tired after today’s activities? No problem. Parma may be a Renaissance city, with a wealth of historic landmarks lining up its golden cobblestone streets, but it also knows how to have a good time. From cozy lounges to sophisticated wine bars, you’ll find places sure to surprise and entertain you.

Off to the [Piedmont region](#) in the morning!

Day Five: Discover the beauty of the Piedmont region

This morning, we will board our private bus and head to the [Piedmont](#) region, one of the most breathtaking areas of Italy. Piedmont is in Italy's northwest and borders Switzerland and France. True to the meaning of its name (foot of the mountain), Piedmont is a land of mountains. It is surrounded on three sides by the [Alps](#), with the highest peaks and largest glaciers in Italy. Remarkable views will greet us at every turn as we approach the heart of the wine region.

Our first stop will be [Barolo](#), a small town which produces some of the most prized wines in the world. The owner of a centuries-old winery will treat us to a private tour, to be followed by a picnic lunch. The wine produced here is made exclusively from the grapes grown organically in the vineyard. Production is limited to roughly two thousand bottles per year so we will be sipping something very special and unique to this region with limited distribution.

Still within view of the vineyards, we'll walk along castle walls and head to the [Enoteca Regionale del Barolo](#) to sample more wines from their extensive wine list.

In the late afternoon, we will check into the [Il Boscareto Resort & Spa](#), our home for the remainder of our time together. This five-star property blends comfort and beauty. With a world-class spa and a 360-degree view of surrounding vineyards, villages, and castles, our stay will be both luxurious and memorable.

"[La Sovrana](#)," [Il Boscareto's](#) spa, offers all of the amenities you need to truly relax. It's situated on two levels: On the top floor with wall to wall windows, you will enjoy the heated pool, whirlpool tub and fitness area. The bottom floor boasts four massage and treatment suites. If the spa doesn't interest you, you'll be able to naturally unwind by taking in the vistas of endless vineyards and rolling hills captured from every outlook of the resort.

Before dinner, we'll meet with a Barolo wine producer who has written a book that chronicles the rich history of the region. His captivating stories about the area's wine production will really enlighten us on what is involved in creating the fabulous vinos that are born here.

Dinner will be at Il Boscareto's ristorante, [La Rei](#). [Chef Antonino Cannacciolo](#), who has earned two [Michelin Stars](#), will prepare a wide selection of specially-prepared dishes that are innovative yet also firmly anchored to the flavours of the region.

The large, modern rooms of our resort will surely provide a good night's sleep for you to fully recharge for another fantastic day that's around the corner in this beautiful Piedmont region.

Day Six: Do as the Piedmontese do

This morning, we tour one of the finest wine producers in the area where the proprietors have been producing wine for five generations. You will recognize the names of their wines especially since being featured in [Wine Spectator](#) magazine where they have garnered top ratings.

Following our winery tour, we'll head to the town of [Alba](#), the area's culinary epicenter. Amid its charming streets, castles, churches and medieval palaces, you'll find numerous options for your lunch. Alba is highly regarded for its gastronomy so get ready to enjoy wine samplings, chocolates, and most of all its famous truffles which should be at their season's height when we're there.

After lunch, we'll head back to our hotel where you can enjoy the spa amenities, stroll the picturesque resort grounds or take a *sonnellino* (nap). Or, if you're still thirsty, the resort's, [Sunsì Lounge Bar](#), offers a wine list of over 1200 labels!

Tonight, we'll gather for our last dinner together. We'll enjoy a meal in a warm and informal dining atmosphere with meticulous preparation and service. We'll feast on the region's classic recipes that have been delicately developed and refined over a century. Our final evening together will be the perfect time to recount our favorite memories of this fabulous trip and make plans for future excursions.

Let's raise our glasses to Italy and all of the wonderful people, food and places you've come to love.

Day Seven: Arrivederci Italiano!

After a leisurely breakfast, we will provide a shuttle to the [Turin train station](#). From there, you can take a train to [Rome](#), [Milan](#), or other Italian cities. You may also fly to other destinations from the [Turin Airport](#).

Until next time — Grazie!