

# *Frequently Asked Questions*

## *about*

# *Nada's Italy Tours*

**IF YOU DON'T SEE THE ANSWER TO WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, PLEASE CONTACT US: [INFO@NADASITALY.COM](mailto:INFO@NADASITALY.COM).**

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## WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO TO ITALY?

Well, that's an easy question to answer! ANYTIME!! Nobody has control over the weather anyway, so why delay? **Spring and Fall** have replaced Summer in being the **highest travel season**, and consequently, the most expensive in flights & accommodations. As the **Summer** months can be **uncomfortably hot** as far as temperature is concerned, more and more people are avoiding travel during July and August. This can translate into an opportunity to get **discounted rates** on hotels and other services. The same thing goes for **Winter** (except for the period between Christmas and New Year's), as the weather **can be rainy and cold in the low 30's to mid-50's**, this is a great time for discounts, but alas, not a great time to be outside walking... You should keep this in mind when planning a trip to Italia: you will mostly be spending your time outside exploring the city streets so pack in accordance with the average weather guidelines.

Keep in mind that Italy is not a large country, especially compared to the USA: about the size of the states of Georgia and Florida combined. This means that the weather doesn't change dramatically from North to South, but there are differences still determined by the actual topography. For instance, the Alps are the highest mountain complex in Europe and the run like a wall from East to West at the Northern border of Italy. This so called "wall" protects Italy from a variety of storms and cold-fronts coming from Northern Europe, giving it a mild climate throughout the year. The Appenini mountains run from North to South of Italy, kind of like a back-bone, also preventing storms coming from the East to make it to the Western part of the country, and vice-versa.

### :: SPRING: MARCH/APRIL/MAY:

As the season crosses from Winter to Spring, the weather can be quite unpredictable, usually between the low 50's at night time and even go up to the high 80's on a warm sunny day. The weather can be rainy, especially in the Northern & Central regions. This is the time that most schools have field trips, so expect to see a lot of students around. The landscape turns luscious green, can be quite beautiful with fields covered in spring flowers in bloom.

### :: SUMMER: JUNE/JULY/AUGUST:

The weather can sometimes become unbearably hot, remember that most Italian homes do not have air conditioning! This is the time that Italians (and many other Europeans) go on their own vacation. Where? At the beach, of course! So, the beaches are very crowded, but the cities are in fact deserted. So if you can stand the heat, this is the best time to visit the big cities: no lines in museums, hardly any traffic, quiet and peaceful piazzas that would otherwise be hectic and chaotic during the rest of the year. I would advise to avoid Venice during this time, as a bad odor can rise from the water and make the experience quite unpleasant. Temperatures throughout Italy can vary from the low 70's to the high 90's at this time. Make sure your hotel has air-conditioning, otherwise you'll be forced to open the windows at night time for a breeze, but keep in mind that Italians rarely use screens, so you may be annoyed by mosquitos and other insects.

### :: FALL: SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER/NOVEMBER:

September and October are excellent months to go as far as weather is concerned, but for this reason prices can be very high overall, and services book up very quickly, so make sure you give yourself several months to plan your trip if you are counting on going this time of year. If you are planning on staying in the countryside, September is the month of the grape-harvest, so a unique time to be in areas such as Tuscany. Temperatures can vary from the low 60's at night time to the high 80's on warm sunny days. November instead is the beginning of the rainy season, which is very humid, cold, and uncomfortable.

### :: WINTER: DECEMBER/JANUARY/FEBRUARY:

During the winter months days are short, usually rainy and cold, kind of like a "Portland" type of weather. Temperatures can vary from the low 30's to mid-50's. Still, the past couple of years haven't followed the usual average temperatures, so what I'm saying is that you should fly over with your fingers crossed. The good thing about this season is that hotels, as well as airlines offer great discounts.. gee, I wonder why? It may seem like the perfect time to explore Southern Italy, where the weather is very mild and sunny even in the Winter. But wait! BECAUSE it is not a tourist season, this is the WORST time to go to the South, as most services (ferries, trains, tours, hotels, etc.) are not open!!! Oh well...

### **YOUR TRIPS ARE IN THE SPRING & FALL, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO SEASONS?**

Weather in Italy is very similar to the South East of the USA - hot and humid summers, cold and rainy winters, typically with snow only in the mountains. We enjoy 4 seasons, just like here. Temperatures can vary during the day, but typically both late Spring tours and early Fall tours enjoy warm temperatures in the high 70's. At nighttime, we are in the hills and there is always a cooler breeze, so it can go down to the high 50's. Dress in layers so you can put a garment on or off depending on temperature variations! You can always leave your jacket/other clothes in the van.

Traveling in the Spring and Fall shouldn't be a deciding factor, because either time is going to have beautiful weather, which plays a major role for trip planning, as you will mostly be outdoors. You want your pictures to be bright and sunny, right? The only major changes between Spring and Fall are seen in the colors of the countryside. In May there are many wild field flowers, such as red poppies, white daisies, and mostly, beautiful purple Iris flowers (the symbol of Florence is the Iris). Also, the crops are just beginning to grow, so the hills are covered in a luscious sea of bright green. The harvest for corn, wheat, sunflowers, and other crops is in August, therefore September is the time the soil is tilled and turned over before re-planting. The landscape takes on a golden-brown color, also very pleasant to the eye. This is the time for grape harvesting, so the grapes are ripe and plump, hanging from the vines.

### **WILL I GET TO SEE SUNFLOWER FIELDS?**

Unfortunately the month of sunflowers in bloom is July/August (the hottest weather and busiest time of the year for tourism in Tuscany), so if you go in May the hills will be a luscious green with occasional wild flowers such as the blue iris, while in September you'll see a lot golden-brown colors because the soil will have been tilled.

### **WILL I GET TO SEE THE GRAPE HARVEST OR OLIVE HARVEST?**

If you go on any Nada's Italy Tours during the month of September, you will definitely see farmers everywhere in the region harvesting grapes. Every single vineyard decides when it is the time to pick the grapes, but this typically occurs during the last 2 weeks of the month. The olive harvest occurs towards the end of November, which is a very rainy season. Nada's Italy usually does not take groups over during the month of November.

### **ARE THERE MORE COUPLES OR SINGLES IN YOUR GROUPS?**

There is usually a mix - and if travelers are flexible on the dates, Nada's Italy always makes maximum effort in trying to put together people who share common interests and hopefully will travel well together. Most single people that travel with Nada's Italy are those who don't feel comfortable traveling completely alone, but at the same time they don't want to go on a "cattle tour" with a big group. So they feel good knowing that they will be pampered, as groups are small, intimate, and they will have an authentic experience with local people, instead of feeling like a tourist wandering alone.

### **WHAT IS THE AVERAGE AGE OF THOSE IN YOUR GROUPS?**

The tours are open to adults 21 and up, because of the alcohol that is regularly served during meals, but without having to divulge age information, the typical traveler that chooses Nada's Italy tours is one who enjoys my tours is someone who loves wine, food, enjoys quality of life, and has a certain appreciation for art, history, and the Italian culture. The tours are a relaxing experience surrounded by calming natural environments, enjoyed mostly by educated travelers. 90% of my clients are between 35 and 65 years old.

### **WILL THERE BE A LOT OF WALKING?**

Although you must be in good physical health and be able to walk and stand for extended periods of time to sign up, Nada's Italy tours are fairly flexible so that you can do as much or as little physical activity as you wish. There is a certain degree of physical activity, so if this is a concern, you should contact Nada's Italy directly. For those who love physical activity outdoors, there are walking trails around the properties where we stay (whether you go to Tuscany, Veneto, or Sicily), you can rent a mountain bike, go running, go swimming, etc. Or, you can just relax on the patio with a glass of wine in one hand, and a book in the other. When we go on the various daily excursions to the surrounding towns, you'll have plenty of "on your own" time that you can spend however you want: shopping, exploring the town and its streets, visiting museums and churches, or just sitting at a cafe' in the piazza and people-watching.... it's up to you! Still, there may be times when the driver cannot drop us off in the historical center, so we will all need to walk together from the van to the center of the city before you're on your

own, and sometimes this walk may be uphill or downhill, so you should be prepared for that. As a general rule, you should wear comfortable shoes as you will be walking and standing a lot more than you would on a regular basis at home. Some walking tours are included in the tour packages with a private tourguide, and this also means that you will be walking a lot.

### **WHY DON'T YOU OFFER AIRFARE WITH YOUR TRIP PACKAGE?**

There are several reasons why Nada's Italy does not offer airfare: nowadays many people have air miles that they wish to use to fly overseas. Several people may want to extend their stay in Italy and visit other cities, so it would be unfair to restrict them to a set return date. People may prefer leaving from other airports than the cities where we stay. And frankly, Nada's Italy, as other tour operators, does not get any better rates on airfare than anybody else to be able to offer a competitive price.

### **HOW WILL I MEET UP WITH THE REST OF THE GROUP IF WE'RE NOT ALL ON THE SAME FLIGHT?**

#### **:: FOR VENICE & VENETO TOURS:**

It is your responsibility to arrive at the Venice International Airport "Marco Polo" on Thursday ready for pick-up. There will be 2 pick-up transfers, so be sure to communicate your arrival time promptly to Nada's Italy. Also remember that all flights to Europe are overnight, so to get there on Thursday, you will need to leave on Wednesday from the USA. Because of the time change, on your way back, you will return on the same day you leave from Italy, whatever day it may be. (Nada's Italy Veneto tour ends on Tuesday).

#### **:: FOR FLORENCE & TUSCANY TOURS:**

It is your responsibility to arrive in Florence on Friday and to be in the hotel lobby on Saturday ready for pick-up at 4pm. Also remember that all flights to Europe are overnight, so to get there on Friday, you will need to leave on Thursday from here. Because of the time change, on your way back, you will return on the same day you leave from Italy, whatever day it may be. (Nada's Italy Tuscany tour ends on Monday).

#### **:: FOR SICILY & EOLIAN ISLANDS TOURS:**

It is your responsibility to arrive at the Catania International Airport on Thursday ready for pick-up. There will be 2 pick-up transfers, so be sure to communicate your arrival time promptly to Nada's Italy. Also remember that all flights to Europe are overnight, so to get there on Thursday, you will need to leave on Wednesday from the USA. Because of the time change, on your way back, you will return on the same day you leave from Italy, whatever day it may be (Nada's Italy Sicily tour ends on Tuesday).

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF MY FLIGHT IS DELAYED AND I GET THERE AFTER THE PICK-UP TIME?**

If you have arrived to the specified city (relative to the tour you are signed up for) after the pick-up time, it will be your responsibility to get to the accommodation from wherever you are (airport, train station, etc.). You will be given the addresses, phone numbers and emergency numbers before you leave the US, so you can come and meet up with the rest of the group and continue with the tour. No refunds are given for unused portions of the trip, for whatever reason. Consider purchasing a travel insurance policy to cover any unexpected expenses.

### **CAN I BRING MY HAIR DRYER?**

Many hotels where the groups stay provide hair dryers, but not all of them.

If you bring any electrical appliances (hair dryer, razor, etc), you will need an adapter (Italy has 2 pin plugs). The electricity supply is 220 volts, which means your appliance should have a switch that you can turn to the correct voltage. If it doesn't, you'll need a converter because an adapter alone will not be sufficient. Laptop computers, camera chargers, cellphone chargers, iPods, and other electronics usually switch automatically to the right voltage. Still, most hair dryers blow fuzes like nothing else (I guess that's why they're called "blow-dryers"!), so I would highly recommend purchasing one in Italy to avoid any problems.

### **WHAT IF I'M VEGETARIAN / HAVE FOOD ALLERGIES / REQUIRE A PARTICULAR DIET?**

Even though Italian cuisine specialties include salame, prosciutto, dairy products (cheeses), rice, pasta, fish, and savory meat sauces, there will be plenty of veggies and other non-meat dishes during meals. If you however require particular needs, or dietary supplements, the cost for these is not included and I recommend taking them with you prior to leaving the US. Please notify Nada's Italy if you are vegetarian before leaving for Italy.

If you have allergies, special dietary requirements, glucose or other food intolerance, if you are hypoglycemic, vegetarian, vegan, lactose-intolerant, diabetic, etc., you will be responsible for purchasing at your expense any menu item that is not served during the included group meals. Nada's Italy won't assume any extra costs to accommodate special diets.

### **WHAT IS THE FOOD LIKE AND HOW ARE THE MEALS SERVED?**

One thing is for certain: you will not go hungry on these tours!

All meals provided on the trip will have typical regional dishes mostly made up of local specialties and seasonal vegetables. Italian food is not spicy, very natural and simple – a lot of starches (bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, beans), vegetables, soft and aged cheeses, red and white meats, salami & cured hams, and some fish. Some of the meals will be at the accommodations, some out in local trattorias (family-style restaurants). All accompanied by house wine, bottled water, and soft drinks, also included. Please consider that bottled water and wine will be given in LIMITED AMOUNTS, so if you wish to have more, you can order more at your own expense. Also, if you wish to have a particular bottle of wine with your meal, you will have to purchase it at your own expense.

Most meals will be served "family-style", that is in large platters that will be passed around the table so persons can serve themselves. Most meals will not be based on personal menu preferences, rather on a variety of local seasonal specialties selected by the restaurant's chef and Nada's Italy. This way you will taste many different items, and will be able to enjoy most of the food presented, even if you are vegetarian or don't eat particular foods.

If you have allergies, special dietary requirements, glucose or other food intolerance, if you are hypoglycemic, vegetarian, vegan, lactose-intolerant, diabetic, etc., you will be responsible for purchasing at your expense any menu item that is not served during the included group meals. Nada's Italy will not assume any extra costs to accommodate special diets. Breakfast will be a variety of fruit juices, fruit tarts, cheeses, bread, milk, coffee, tea, yogurt, fruit, breakfast case, etc. Eggs or bacon are not typically served in Italy for breakfast.

**For Tuscany tours:** breakfast is usually available by 8:00am, it's a self-serve meal, so there will be a variety of items for you to enjoy on the table. If you get up before that time, feel free to help yourself from the fridge or to make some coffee/tea.

### **WILL MY CELL PHONE WORK IN ITALY?**

Some wireless companies offer an "international calling" option, which you have to request before you leave. I do recommend taking your cell phone with you, but check with your provider to see if they offer coverage overseas first. To verify if your cell phone will work, there are 3 major steps you need to check on: 1) it must be what is called a "tri-band" phone, which most newer phones are (dual band won't work), 2) the provider you have must be on a GSM network (Cingular, AT&T, T-Mobile, Suncom, and some others are GSM, but **not** Sprint, Verizon, Alltel, and others), 3) you need to contact them to "activate" your international calling plan. Typically there is no extra charge for this; they will just allow you to make international calls, for which the charges are different than local calls. International roaming rates can vary between \$1.00/minute to \$2.00/minute.

If bringing your own cellphone won't work, you can also rent a cell phone through a third-party company. There are some listed on Nada's Italy website, or you can do a search online.

### **WILL I NEED ANY VACCINATIONS BEFORE LEAVING? COULD I BE ALLERGIC TO SOMETHING ON MY TRIP?**

Unless you're going to other countries that require shots on your trip, Italy does not.

The only problem that could arise is if you develop a "new allergy" to either cypress trees, olive trees, and other local tree/plant pollens not common in the USA. If you are susceptible to allergic reactions (if you get a runny nose in the Spring and Fall), it would be a good idea for you to bring some allergy medication such as Claritin or Zyrtek. If instead you usually do not get allergies, be aware that you may develop some during your trip. If this is the case, you can purchase allergy medication in Italy.

### **IS THE WATER SAFE IN ITALY? CAN I DRINK TAP-WATER?**

Absolutely yes! The water is very safe in Italy and you should not worry about this at all. You can drink tap-water, but the taste may or may not be pleasant to you, just like some may or may not like drinking tap water in the USA. For this reason, bottled water will be provided by Nada's Italy during all meals throughout the trip.

### **AM I GOING TO BE ABLE TO BRING BACK FOOD OR WINE OR OTHER ITEMS FROM ITALY?**

Si!! Yes, you will, but not all kinds of foods are allowed. You cannot bring any meat products (like prosciutto or salame), even if they are vacuum-sealed. But you can bring cheese as long as it is an aged cheese that does not require freezing and it has to be vacuum-sealed (which some stores in Italy are able to do). You won't be able to bring back any kind of plant or seeds (sob! No Italian tomatoes in the garden..). You can bring other sealed products like chocolate, cookies, coffee, honey, extra virgin olive oil, canned goods, etc. without restrictions.

As far as wine and liqueur is concerned, you can bring as much as you want, but you will have to pay taxes on it. According to US Customs, you can only bring 1 litre of alcohol without having to pay a duty. Another option is to have the wine shipped home from Italy, that way you can easily ship bigger quantities without the risk of bottles breaking in your suitcase! For this reason, Nada's Italy recommends using a "hard-shell" suitcase, that will be more durable and sturdy to the rough throwing and stacking of the airline personnel.

Not always do the customs agents charge a traveler for bringing more bottles of alcohol or wine from another country, and sometimes paying a duty charge on a few bottles is less expensive than to have them shipped. Keep in mind that a "duty" is a tax, not a penalty.

Remember, if you are not 21 years of age or older, you cannot bring alcoholic beverages into the United States.

**:: SHIPPING BOTTLES OF WINE:** it is safe and fast to get wine delivered by the vineyards we will be visiting. Don't let the price of shipping scare you though, keep in mind that you could end up paying 2 times the price of an equivalent bottle of similar wine if you bought it in the USA, and it still wouldn't taste as good! For instance, it is about \$180 US dollars to ship 12 bottles of wine (one case), which means that it is roughly \$15 per bottle. A good bottle of Chianti Classico Riserva 2003 in Tuscany is average around \$35, and if you add shipping the value is \$50. A similar quality bottle, if purchased in the States, can easily run you well over \$80, so you do the math.

### **DO I NEED A PASSPORT?**

Yes! Make sure you get one if you don't have it already, and make sure the one you have will be valid for the entire duration of the trip. As recent regulations have changed, it takes longer for the US government agencies to issue passports, so give yourself at least a couple of months, if not more to apply for one or renew the one you have. Make sure your passport will be valid for the entire duration of your trip and at least 3 months after your return date. If you're not an American citizen, you may need a travel visa. Check with the Italian embassy or local immigration USCIS office.

### **WHAT IS THE TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HERE AND ITALY?**

Italy is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Time. This means you will be jetlagged the first few days. If you want to get used to the Italian time, Nada's Italy recommends going to bed very early and waking up as early as possible (even at 4-5am) 3-4 days prior to leaving. This will help you adjust better once you've arrived.

Some people take Melatonin (natural herbal supplement) a week before the trip, some people take sleeping pills with them, and some don't take anything at all.

### **WILL I BE ABLE TO CHECK MY EMAIL OR MAKE PHONE CALLS DURING THE TRIP?**

Internet cafés are in abundance in major Italian cities and some of the smaller towns we visit throughout the stay, but there is no connection at the villa (in Tuscany). Some hotels where we stay also offer internet connection in the lobby area.

Be aware that you may not be able to check it on a daily basis. We cannot accommodate the need for an individual to find an internet café or a phone booth while we are driving, which may interrupt the flow of the tour and hold back the rest of the group from enjoying the scheduled activities. This also goes for ATM machines. Get enough cash with you before your trip, and then don't pass the opportunity to withdraw cash when you find an ATM machine!

As far as making phone calls, the best opportunities will be in the major cities where you can find public phone booths. Unfortunately phone booths are not common in Italy, just like they are becoming uncommon to find in the States as well. Obviously if you're cell phone works over-seas, this issue doesn't apply to you.

I recommend signing up with Skype or another online messenger to be able to speak with your loved ones through the internet for free, as opposed to calling from public phones, which are not easy to find in the smaller towns we visit during the week. Internet cafés are easier to find than phones.

### **WHAT IS THE DRESS CODE (CASUAL/ELEGANT/ETC.) AND WHAT SHOULD I WEAR?**

Most of the time you are in the countryside and during the day trips, you want to wear breathable, comfortable, casual clothing.

Definitely wear layers, because it could get warm during the day and chilly at night. Many day trips start after breakfast and end after dinner, so you don't really have the chance to change into some "evening clothes". You can bring extra clothes and shoes to leave in the van, if you wish. Perhaps the times that you want to wear something a little more elegant would be in Florence, Venice or Rome (the larger Italian cities). People there are more fashion-oriented and restaurants are more elegant here than in the small towns.

Please note that you won't be able to enter any of the main churches if you wear pants or skirts above the knee, and/or sleeveless shirts (like tank tops). Same goes for men! So, if you're wearing a tank top, you may want to bring a light sweater or scarf along that you can put over your shoulders so you can get inside the church.

Don't forget that some of the world's best shoes come from Italy!!! Florence is known for its wonderful leather, so why not purchase a nice jacket while you're there?

What matters is that you have a good time and that are comfortable so the strongest memories of your trip are those of Italy as a beautiful country and not the pain that the stone streets gave you while wearing heels.

Many people ask me what to wear so they can "fit in" and not look like a tourist. Ask yourself this question: Can you distinguish locals from foreign people at a restaurant in the USA? If you do, you know the answer: people are still going to be able to tell tourists from locals, so why even bother worrying about this? Just wear what is "you" and what makes you comfortable.

Think lightweight, comfortable, quick drying, soft and nothing that will feel tight or not let your skin breathe. Bring things you can wear in layers for both hot and cool weather. The Tuscan weather is very similar to North Carolina /South-Eastern States – bring whatever you would wear here, mostly casual, perhaps 1 or 2 evening outfits for a night on the town!

You're always in time to buy things you may need in Italy. Chances are you'll be flying back with a lot more than you came with, so make sure you leave room to pack it in!

### **DO YOU HAVE A CHECKLIST I CAN USE TO PREPARE FOR THE TRIP AND INSTRUCTIONS ON WHAT TO PACK?**

Yes! That will be provided by regular mail as well as by email once you have signed up for the trip. Not only is a checklist helpful for packing, but also for knowing what you should bring and what you should leave behind, safety issues, airport regulations, what you can and cannot bring back, etc.

### **WHAT IS THE TYPICAL WAKE UP TIME AND HOW EARLY DO OUR DAY-TRIPS START?**

Remember, this is not a GO!GO!GO! type of tour, so there are no early wake-ups!!! Typically we get going by 9:00am, although on some days we don't leave until 10:00am. This will allow you to take your time, relax, maybe go for a morning walk. It is your vacation after all! As far as the return time, if we are having dinner in a town different from the one where we are staying, it could be as late as 12:00am.

### **WHAT ARE THE ACCOMMODATIONS LIKE? WILL I GET MY OWN BEDROOM/BATHROOM?**

You can trust in Nada's Italy judgement and experience that you will enjoy the location, atmosphere, service, safety, and cleanliness of the accommodations Nada's Italy has chosen for you both in the historic centers of Florence and Venice, as well as the accommodations in the countryside. The hotels in the cities will be in the historical center, in walking distance to all the major sites and museums.

Generally speaking, the local government rates all hotels in Italy, but this can be very misleading because they are based more on number of rooms and bathrooms, rather than esthetics/cleanliness. More often than not, the smaller, historic hotels with fewer stars are cleaner and more charming than the big 4 & 5-star hotels, which often lack the friendly service and intimate atmosphere. Air conditioning and heating are not standard in some hotels abroad and are not guaranteed. By Italian standards, bathrooms and bedrooms are smaller compared to the equivalent U.S. star rating. Beds are also smaller as there is no king-size. Typically double beds are two single beds pushed together.

If you are a couple, you will get your own private bathroom and bedroom throughout the trip. If you're traveling alone, you may be asked to share a bathroom with another person, even if you are paying a single room supplement. If you are traveling alone and are not paying the single supplement, you may be asked to share a bedroom with someone of your same sex, but you will have separate beds, that will be twin-size.

**For Tuscany tours:** The villa provided for this trip is divided into 4 apartments or "suites", each complete with its own entrance, kitchen, dining room, and bathrooms. The villa is also equipped with washing machines, irons & ironing boards, available during the stay at no extra charge to travelers (detergent is also provided). There are no dryers because most Italians do not use dryers, but there are clothes lines both inside and outside.

There is also an independent suite with 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms that can be requested on some trips.

### **DOES EACH ROOM HAVE A PRIVATE BATHROOM?**

And the answer is.. YES!!! All the accommodations are larger than standard European accommodations, and each room has its own bathroom. If you are traveling as an individual, you may need to share the bathroom with one other individual, but if you are a couple, you will not have to share at all. FYI: bathrooms in Europe are smaller than US standard bathrooms and it is typical to find a box-shower instead of a bathtub.

### **ARE THE COUNTRY-SIDE ACCOMMODATIONS IN WALKING DISTANCE TO TOWN CENTERS?**

Typically the accommodations in the countryside are villas, that is houses located on the property of a working farm, which is not in walking distance to any surrounding town center.

**:: FOR TUSCANY TOURS:** The villa is a farmhouse located on a working farm, which produces olive oil and wine in what is called the "Chianti", an area of Tuscany that extends from Florence down to Siena. This area is where most of Tuscany's wine is produced and portrays some of the most beautiful views of this region. In particular, we are in the "Colli Fiorentini" section of the Chianti, which is the closest to Florence. It takes roughly 30-40 minutes to get from the center of Florence to the villa by car (about 8 miles). The property isn't in walking distance to towns; it is between the town of Bagno a Ripoli and Incisa. The whole farm is about 150 acres and has many walking trails that you can explore on foot during your stay.

**:: FOR VENETO TOURS:** The group will stay in a Medieval Castle in the countryside area between Vittorio Veneto and Conegliano, mostly known for the Prosecco vineyards. The Castle has been remodeled into a 4-star hotel, offering spa and resort services, such as wedding ceremonies and conferences. It also includes a museum and restaurant.

**:: FOR SICILY TOURS:** The group stays in two different family-owned farms during the Sicily trip, to make it easier to reach all the areas that will be visited in the region. The first accommodation is a charming small-size farm on a hilltop which overlooks the North-Eastern coast of Sicily, with beautiful views of the Eolian Islands. This farm includes a restaurant.

The second farm is near the town of Enna, so more centrally-located to be able to reach the Southern parts of Sicily.

### **WHAT TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION WILL BE USED DURING THE TOURS?**

Nada's Italy provides specially-licensed private drivers and transportation for our day-trips and group transfers, but this transportation is not going to be able for any personal travel need, beyond the itinerary that is being presented during the tour. Separate travel arrangements and transfers can be scheduled for travelers before or after the tour, for an additional fee. Contact Nada's Italy if you need private transportation if you decide to extend your stay. For Tuscany tours the group will be transported by means of 2 air-conditioned vans that will seat 7 people each. For Sicily and Veneto tours, the group will be using one 16-seat air-conditioned van. All vans are equipped with a small refrigerating unit for bottled water, and a special permit that will allow the drivers to take us into the historical center of each town, which is normally restricted to pedestrians only. This is a huge benefit to traveling with Nada's Italy, because travelers don't need to worry about long walks or parking headaches, as we'll be able to arrive directly where we want to be.

### **WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO EXCHANGE MONEY?**

It's tricky to travel on a budget when the exchange rate is so bad! That's right, the US Dollar is at an all-time low, but we can't let that bring us down!! You can still go to Italy, shop for those one-of-a-kind items, and have a great

time by keeping a few useful tips in mind.

### **:: TAKE CASH BEFORE YOU LEAVE**

Nada's Italy recommends that you have a couple hundred EUROS with you before you leave the US. That is to ensure that you have some cash handy for your first expenses: taxi cab, sandwich, phone calls, etc. regardless if the ATM at the airport works or not once you get there (ATMs are not always functioning because of the high usage). For the record, the Euro is the ONLY currency used in Italy (and most European countries part of the E.U.).

### **:: USE YOUR ATM CARD**

ATMs are the best way to take cash out once you are in Italy, but the daily limit is 250 Euros (banks do that to prevent fraudulent transactions), so again, make sure you have enough cash before you leave. Banks have very strange hours to say the least (some, but not all, follow this schedule: 8:20am-1:20pm and then from 2:35pm-4:05pm), so it's not always easy to find one open while you're out. Make sure to tell your local bank the dates you will be gone so your check card doesn't get blocked!! Also, make sure your PIN number will be good overseas, some banks require a different PIN, so again, ask your local branch. DO NOT take Traveler's Cheques, they are VERY hard to change, many banks don't at all, so avoid the whole trouble by not taking any.

### **:: USE YOUR CREDIT CARD**

Most stores in the bigger cities take credit cards, but not the majority when you're in a small town. Also, stores are more willing to come down on price if you pay cash! MasterCard and VISA are the most commonly accepted cards. You will get a good exchange rate by using your credit card, but if you pay cash you can expect to get an average discount of 10% if you ask for it (I would start asking for a "sconto" from a total purchase of 100 Euros or more).

### **:: DON'T BRING CASH US DOLLARS**

A note: use your credit card, use ATM machines (which in Italy are called "BANCOMAT"), but don't exchange your cash dollars, unless it's an emergency, because that will give you a terrible rate and you'll end up paying more commissions than anything. Always calculate an additional 2-3% over the current Euro-US Dollar exchange rate, because that is the average commission fee that your bank or credit card company will add on as a service charge to each transaction you make in Italy.

### **:: GET MONEY BACK BY ASKING FOR A TAX FREE FORM**

A great way to save money is to fill out a "**Tax Free Form**", which you can ask for in many retail shops around Italy. The 20% SALES TAX (VAT) is already INCLUDED in the merchandise that you are purchasing, so if an item is 10 Euros, that is what you'll be paying at the register (tax is not added at time of payment like in the USA). You will need to fill out this form completely, with your address, passport number, and other personal information, but this is legal and controlled by the government.

The Italian government encourages foreigners to spend by refunding a little over 13% of the sales tax, but there is a minimum purchase necessary for this, which is about 150 Euros (as a total purchase in one single store, can be multiple items). By filling out the form and keeping the original receipt, you can present it at the airport of departure on your way back (at the information desk), and you will get roughly 13% refund of the tax you've paid while shopping throughout your trip. Believe me, it adds up!! The refund is given as either cash (Euros or Dollars) or by crediting your credit card (this may take longer, while the cash refund is instant). Unfortunately this doesn't apply to food or restaurants, but still, by the end of your trip you may have a stash of receipts that can give you some relief from the guilt you got from all the shopping!!

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED TO CANCEL?**

It is your responsibility to seek information on travel insurance policy information. Travel insurance is highly recommended by Nada's Italy. However, regardless of whether you choose or do not choose to purchase a travel insurance policy for this Trip, Nada's Italy does not offer travel insurance, therefore you will be responsible for all expenses relating to hospitalization should there occur any sudden need while you are on the Trip. You will also be personally responsible for all expenses incurred following loss or damage to personal property. Finally you have full responsibility for any unforeseen travel expenses related to going on this Trip (flight delays, strikes, airport shut-downs, weather conditions, terrorist threats, etc.). Please review the Cancellation and Refund Policy in your Trip Registration Form regarding possible refunds in the event of a cancellation on your part.

## :: CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY:

All reservations require 50% of the trip price as deposit per each person requesting participation in this Trip. A Trip minimum of six persons must be acquired for the Trip to occur. If this minimum is not met, and should Nada's Italy decide for the Trip not to take place, then you shall be given a full refund of your deposit, plus a \$200 credit towards the registration for future trips with Nada's Italy.

There is a \$200 non-refundable fee on all cancellations, regardless of the period when the cancellation has been submitted.

If traveler cancels participation 180 days or more prior to the start date of the trip for which he/she is registered, then he/she will receive a refund of 75% of total money paid to Nada's Italy.

If traveler cancels trip between 179 and 90 days prior to the start date of the trip for which he/she is registered, then he/she will receive a refund of 50% of total money paid to Nada's Italy.

If traveler cancels trip between 89 and 14 days prior to the start date of the trip for which he/she is registered, then he/she will receive a refund of 25% of total money paid to Nada's Italy.

Any cancellations made beyond the above deadlines will receive no refund. No refunds will be given to no-shows. In the event of cancellation, the appropriate refund shall be sent out within 4 weeks from date of cancellation. Any cancellation must be received in writing by Nada's Italy for it to be considered an official submission for cancellation (letter or email).

During the Trip, should a Trip member decide to leave the group at any time, a partial or total refund will not be given to that person for unused portions of the Trip package, for whatever reason.

## IS THERE A LIMIT TO THE LUGGAGE I AM ALLOWED TO BRING?

There is a limited luggage area in the van. Please be considerate to other travelers and bring as little luggage as possible. Also, if you go over the airline limit, you may end up having to pay a fee to check in heavy luggage. You will most likely be shopping during the trip, so please make sure you have extra space available to pack your new purchases. There are stores and shops in Italy where you can find personal items and clothing if the need occurs.

Not all accommodations have an elevator, so please pack light!! Also, you will be shopping (even you "non-shoppers" out there!!), so you will end up with a lot more than you came with. Shipping things to the US from Europe is very expensive and not recommended for wine and fragile items, unless you do it directly with the store/vineyard.

**Several of the vineyards and other shops we visit are able to ship heavy items such as pottery, as well as wine for you to the States.** With new Airport Security regulations, bringing any kind of liquid on board is not permitted. So make sure you have a sturdy enough suitcase in the event that you want to pack olive oil or wine bottles in it to check-in. You will also be able to pack aged cheeses in your checked-in luggage, as long as they are vacuum-packed. No cured hams or meats are allowed.

Please check with your airline company what the **luggage restrictions** are. Each airline has its own regulations regarding allowed luggage, but most of them allow **one carry-on item plus a personal item** (such as a purse, laptop, briefcase, small backpack, etc.), and **two** bags to be checked-in free of charge.

The 2 carry-on items cannot exceed a total combined weight of 40 pounds. Each checked-in suitcase cannot exceed a maximum of 50 pounds per piece. If you have more than 2 suitcases to check in, or if they exceed the weight limit, you will be charged a fee by the airline. These are general guidelines, but with the security measures that keep changing, it is best to contact your airline company for updated regulations.

If you wish to bring olive oil and wine back in your suitcase, it will be necessary for you to check the suitcase (cannot bring ANY liquids on board the plane), so a HARD-SHELL suitcase is advised to prevent any damage. Nada's Italy also recommends to pack some bubble-wrap for fragile items you wish to pack.

An excellent idea is to squeeze in a duffel bag inside your suitcase on your way there, that you can fill up and check-in on your way back.

## HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO I NEED TO BOOK MY FLIGHT?

If you are planning on using frequent flyer miles, the sooner the better. Airline companies do not like to give away free seats, so the more you wait, the more you will run into obstacles such as black-out dates, seat unavailability, or

making multiple connections each way. If instead you are buying your ticket, you can wait until about 3 months ahead of time, after which prices may increase as you get closer to the departure date. Airfare rates fluctuate, so Nada's Italy recommends that you keep an eye on prices and once a round-trip ticket costs between \$800-\$1,200, it is considered a good deal, so it's time to buy!

### **HOW MUCH TIME IN ADVANCE DO I NEED TO BE AT THE AIRPORT?**

International flights require that you are at the check-in line no less than 2 hours prior to departure. Because of new regulations and tightened security measures, travelers may find longer lines, so Nada's Italy recommends that you are at the airport 2 and 1/2 hours prior to your departure time.

### **CAN I CONTACT PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN ON THESE TRIPS TO HEAR THEIR OPINIONS?**

Yes! References are available upon request, although for privacy matters, Nada's Italy will disclose only partial information about previous customers such as a name and email address. No phone numbers or addresses will be given out. You can also visit [www.nadasitaly.com](http://www.nadasitaly.com) and take a look at the "Testimonials Page".

### **HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR A TRIP?**

To sign up for any Nada's Italy tours you will need to pick a date and a tour, then verify availability to make sure there are still spots open. You can do this through the website or by emailing Nada's Italy: [info@nadasitaly.com](mailto:info@nadasitaly.com). To reserve a spot, you will need to provide a 50% deposit per person, as well as a completed Trip Registration Form, which you can download through the website or request by sending an email to the previously specified email address. You can pay by check or credit card.

### **HOW FAR IN ADVANCE SHOULD I SIGN UP FOR A TOUR?**

Because trips are limited to 12 adult travelers, and because of the amount of services provided, they fill up very fast. Typically, tours are sold out about 4-6 months ahead of time, so to ensure your spots, provide your deposit and the completed Trip Registration Form that Nada's Italy will provide you. Obviously, if there are cancellations, some spots may show up as available, but to make sure you can pick the dates that work best for you, and to be able to get a good rate on your flight, Nada's Italy recommends not delaying too much.

### **WHAT'S INCLUDED IN EACH TRIP?**

Full description of tours, itineraries, what's included, dates, cost, and other information regarding trips is presented in Nada's Italy brochure, which you can request for free through the website or by sending an email to: [info@nadasitaly.com](mailto:info@nadasitaly.com).

### **WHEN IS BALANCE DUE FOR THE TRIP?**

**FOR ALL SPRING TOURS (to any region):** remaining balance including additional nights, extra services, single supplement, MUST be received by Nada's Italy by February 1<sup>st</sup> of the same year when the tour is taking place.

**FOR ALL FALL TOURS (to any region):** remaining balance including additional nights, extra services, single supplement, MUST be received by Nada's Italy by June 1<sup>st</sup> of the same year when the tour is taking place.

If payment is not received by the due date. Nada's Italy shall consider the failed payment a **cancellation** and it shall abandon your previously held spot leaving it available for other third parties to take. The refund to the traveler who has failed to pay the balance by the specified date is 50% of the total sum that has been paid up to that date.

### **WHAT IF I WANT TO STAY LONGER AND SEE OTHER PARTS OF ITALY?**

That's fantastic! You'll see that Italy is extremely "concentrated" with things to see and to do. Since Nada's Italy does not offer airfare packages, you can stay as much as you want before or after the guided tour! Unfortunately it's become very hard to get hotel discounts for large groups, even more so for small groups. Neither hotels nor airlines are very flexible with their rates nowadays. The best option is to book directly online through websites as the ones mentioned below recommended by Nada's Italy. Mention you've been recommended by Nada's Italy to get the best rates (option may be unavailable during certain times of the year).

### :: HOTELS IN ROME:

Hotel Canada [www.bestwestern.it/BW/EN/98058\\_hotel\\_Rome](http://www.bestwestern.it/BW/EN/98058_hotel_Rome)

Hotel Forum [www.hotelforumrome.com](http://www.hotelforumrome.com)

### :: Hotels in Venice:

Hotel Bologna [www.hotelbologna.com](http://www.hotelbologna.com) (located in Mestre, convenient if you're flying in and out of Venice).

Hotel Ai Due Fanali [www.aiduefanali.com](http://www.aiduefanali.com)

Hotel Abbazia [www.abbaziahotel.com](http://www.abbaziahotel.com)

### :: HOTELS IN FLORENCE:

Hotel Caravaggio [www.caravaggio.hotelinfirenze.com](http://www.caravaggio.hotelinfirenze.com)

Hotel Centrale [www.hotelcentrefirenze.it](http://www.hotelcentrefirenze.it)

Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco [www.ilguelfobianco.it](http://www.ilguelfobianco.it)

Hotel Ognissanti [www.hotelognissanti.it](http://www.hotelognissanti.it)

If you decide to visit other cities, keep in mind that you may have to use trains as the main transportation, which means you will have to move your luggage on and off the train. There are no porters in train stations, so that's one more reason to pack light!!!

### IF I EXTEND MY STAY, CAN I TAKE DAY TRIPS FROM A PARTICULAR CITY INSTEAD OF MOVING AROUND?

This is very doable if you are in a city that is well connected to others through the railway system. For example, Florence is centrally located, very well connected to other major Italian cities by train. Nada's Italy recommends taking a train to move in and out of Florence, no need to deal with the stress of renting a car. Florence is about 1 hour and 30mins North of Rome, 2 hours South of Milan, and about 3 hours South-West of Venice. Trains are safe, easy, and the fastest way to get around Italy, but do take the EUROSTAR train for a faster and more comfortable trip. You can easily take day trips to many cities and enjoy seeing the main highlights without having to deal with moving luggage.

You can check for train schedules online at: <http://www.trenitalia.com>

#### Types of Trains:

**Eurostar** – Best service and fast (stops in major cities). It's worth paying a few extra Euros to get a 1<sup>st</sup>-class ticket. This one should be your first choice.

**Intercity/Eurocity** – Makes all major stops, less expensive than Eurostars.

**Espresso, Diretto, Regionale, Interregionale** – These trains make ALL the stops, will get you to both the small towns and big towns. The slowest, but these trains are also the most inexpensive.

**NOTE:** Nada's Italy does not provide train tickets or reservations. Trains run often enough that in most cases you don't need to buy tickets in advance. Still, if you prefer to have peace of mind, you can get your tickets from a US travel agent or online travel agencies. Be aware of the fact that in this latter case, you will be charged a processing fee that can go up to \$20 per ticket.

### HOW WOULD I GO ABOUT GETTING PRIVATE TOUR GUIDES AND MUSEUM ENTRANCE TICKETS FOR OTHER ITALIAN CITIES?

Nada's Italy will be more than happy to assist you in extending your stay in one of the world's most beautiful countries, so don't hesitate to ask for help. We are able to provide additional services such as day-trips, private guides, drivers, transfer services, and more to make this your perfect trip to Italy!