



UNEXPECTED RICHES - EMILIA ROMAGNA TOUR

29 SEPTEMBER - 11 OCTOBER 2026





OVERVIEW

AUD 9,870

P.P. (double/twin-share)

AUD 11,970

P.P. (solo traveller)

Since 2007, Italian Tours has created journeys that reveal Italy's culture, food and landscapes at a gentle pace. With no more than 12 guests, our tours are relaxed and personal, giving you time to connect with each place you visit.

This journey through Emilia-Romagna celebrates the region's art, history and remarkable food. We begin in Parma, famed for its music, elegant architecture and Parmigiano Reggiano. From there, we travel east to Modena, home of traditional balsamic vinegar, and on to Bologna and Ferrara, where Renaissance heritage meets lively street life.

We continue through the colourful murals of Dozza and the ceramics of Faenza before settling into a wine estate in the Romagna hills. From here, we visit artisan towns such as Santarcangelo, taste local wines and enjoy sweeping countryside views. The tour concludes in Ravenna, where glittering Byzantine mosaics and tranquil lagoon towns like Comacchio bring a graceful finale to our time in Emilia-Romagna.

With longer stays in just four locations — Parma, Bologna, the Romagna hills and Ravenna — this itinerary blends cultural discovery with the pleasures of slow travel.





ITINERARY

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL IN PARMA

Our journey begins in Parma, a city renowned for its elegance, music, and gastronomy. Guests will make their own way here, and we're happy to provide advice on the easiest routes, whether by train or private transfer. After settling into our centrally located hotel, we'll meet for aperitivi followed by a relaxed welcome dinner. Parma's refined architecture, lively squares and its role as home to Verdi set the tone for the days ahead.

Overnight: Parma

DAY 2 - EXPLORING PARMA

This morning, a local guide will introduce us to Parma's rich history. Highlights include the Romanesque cathedral and baptistry, with their extraordinary frescoes, as well as elegant piazzas lined with cafés. Parma is compact and easily explored on foot, and we'll finish our guided visit by lunchtime.

The afternoon is free for you to enjoy at your own pace — whether that's a stroll through the historic streets, a coffee in one of the city's lively squares, or a spot of shopping. You may also wish to visit the Palazzo della Pilotta, once the seat of the Farnese dukes, which now houses a fascinating museum complex featuring the Galleria Nazionale and the extraordinary wooden Farnese Theatre.

Overnight: Parma



DAY 3 - PARMIGIANO AND TORRECHIARA

We head into the hills south of Parma to Langhirano, the heartland of Parmigiano Reggiano. At a local producer, we'll learn about the traditional cheesemaking process, explore the ageing cellars, and enjoy a guided tasting of cheeses at different maturities — a fascinating way to appreciate why this product has been prized for centuries.

Afterwards, a short drive brings us to the fairytale castle of Torrechiara. Built in the 15th century by Pier Maria Rossi for his beloved Bianca Pellegrini, its golden-hued walls rise above rolling vineyards. Inside, the frescoed rooms tell stories of courtly life, with the famous "Chamber of Gold" celebrating the couple's romance.

Overnight: Parma

DAY 4 - MODENA AND BALSAMIC VINEGAR

Leaving Parma behind, we travel east to Modena, a drive of around an hour. A guided walking tour of the historic centre introduces us to its UNESCO-listed cathedral, medieval squares and bustling covered markets. There's time to enjoy lunch in one of Modena's many trattorie, before we visit a family-run acetaia outside the city. Here, you'll step into the fragrant attics where barrels of different woods hold Modena's renowned balsamic vinegar, slowly ageing over decades. You'll learn how generations have cared for these casks, and of course, taste the results — from young, condimenti to dense, syrupy tradizionale.

We'll continue on to Bologna in the afternoon.

Overnight: Bologna

DAY 5 - EXPLORING BOLOGNA

Today, we explore Bologna, a city celebrated for its portico-lined streets, lively markets, and centuries-old university. With a local guide, we'll visit Piazza Maggiore and the Basilica of San Petronio, then explore the historic university

quarter, where medieval scholars once debated philosophy and law. Bologna's arcaded streets, stretching for over 40 kilometres, give the city its distinctive character and make it a delight to explore on foot.

The afternoon is free for you to continue discovering at your own pace, perhaps browse the food markets, or enjoy a quiet coffee under the porticoes.

Overnight: Bologna

DAY 6 - FERRARA

We venture north today to Ferrara, a Renaissance city shaped by the powerful Este family. Our walking tour includes the imposing Castello Estense with its towers and moat, as well as the elegant streets and piazzas that reflect Ferrara's status as one of Italy's first planned cities. A highlight is the Palazzo Schifanoia, home to the extraordinary fresco cycle of the "Months," a richly detailed portrayal of Renaissance courtly life, allegory, and astrology that has fascinated visitors for centuries. After time for lunch and a wander through the historic centre, we return to Bologna by late afternoon, leaving the evening at leisure.

Overnight: Bologna

DAY 7 - TO THE ROMAGNA HILLS VIA DOZZA AND FAENZA

We leave Bologna this morning and head to the hills. Our first stop is Dozza, where the walls of the town are alive with colour thanks to murals painted during the biennial art festival. It's a charming place for a coffee and a wander. Continuing on, we visit Faenza, long renowned for its ceramics, and even the origin of the word faïence. At a local workshop, we see how traditional techniques are still practised today. By late afternoon, we arrive at a beautiful wine estate nestled in the Romagna hills, our home for the next three nights.

Overnight: Romagna hills





DAY 8 - SANTARCANGELO AND LOCAL WINES

Today we explore the quiet charm of Romagna's countryside. In the morning, we travel to Santarcangelo di Romagna, a characterful hilltown with cobbled streets, old stone houses and a proud artisan tradition. We'll visit Stamperia Marchi, an historic hand-printing workshop that's been operating since 1633, where antique wooden blocks and natural dyes are still used to decorate local fabrics in traditional patterns.

You'll have time to wander at your own pace — perhaps duck into a bakery, browse the small boutiques, or simply soak up the town's easy rhythm. We then make our way to a family-run winery in the nearby hills, where we'll enjoy a relaxed lunch paired with a tasting of local wines such as Sangiovese and Albana.

Overnight: Romagna hills

DAY 9 - SAN MARINO

This morning we cross into one of the world's smallest and oldest republics: San Marino. Perched high on Mount Titano, this independent microstate is steeped in history and offers panoramic views all the way to the Adriatic Sea. With a local guide, we'll walk through the fortified old town, explore its narrow medieval streets, and learn about San Marino's unique constitutional history and enduring independence, which dates back to the 4th century.

You'll then have free time to explore at your own pace. Visit one of the historic towers, browse for souvenirs like locally made ceramics or stamps, or simply enjoy a coffee with a view. In the afternoon we return to our wine estate base in the hills, where the evening is yours to relax and enjoy the peaceful setting.

Overnight: Romagna hills



DAY 10 - THE ROAD TO RAVENNA: LIBRARIES AND LANDSCAPES

We leave the Romagna hills this morning and begin our journey eastward, making our way through the landscapes of central Romagna. Our first stop is Cesena, a charming town with deep cultural roots. Here we visit the Malatestiana Library, founded in 1452 and recognised by UNESCO as the first public library in Europe. Stepping inside its perfectly preserved reading room, with ancient manuscripts still resting on their original wooden benches, is like entering a time capsule.

After a stroll through Cesena's historic centre and time for lunch, we continue to Bertinoro, a hilltop town known for its wines and its sweeping views across the Romagna plains. With its welcoming atmosphere and long tradition of hospitality, it's a lovely place to pause for a coffee or simply take in the view before continuing on to Ravenna, where we settle in for the final days of the tour.

Overnight: Ravenna

DAY 11 - COMACCHIO AND THE PO DELTA

Today we venture north to Comacchio, a small lagoon town often called "Little Venice" for its canals, bridges and pastel-hued houses. Life here has long revolved around the surrounding wetlands, and we'll take a gentle boat trip through the lagoon to discover the area's unique ecosystem.

Along the way, we'll learn about the region's centuries-old eel fishing traditions and visit a cason — a traditional fishing hut used to harvest seafood from these shallow waters.

Afterwards, we'll enjoy a relaxed seafood lunch in Comacchio, where dishes still follow recipes passed down through generations. Back in Ravenna by late afternoon, you'll have the evening free to enjoy the city.

Overnight: Ravenna

DAY 12 - RAVENNA'S MOSAICS

Our final full day is devoted to Ravenna, a city once capital of the Western Roman Empire and a vital centre of early Christian art. A guided walking tour brings us face to face with some of the most astonishing mosaics in the world — at the Basilica of San Vitale, the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, and Sant'Apollinare Nuovo.

These works, glittering with gold and rich in colour, were crafted over 1,500 years ago and remain remarkably intact. We'll learn how they were made, what they meant to their original audiences, and why Ravenna became such an important artistic hub.

In the afternoon, the city is yours to enjoy. Visit Dante's tomb, browse a local bookshop or mosaic studio, or take a quiet break in one of Ravenna's shady piazzas. It's a fittingly peaceful end to a richly layered journey.

Overnight: Ravenna

DAY 13 - DEPARTURE

On our final morning, we provide a group transfer back to Bologna, with scheduled stops at Bologna Centrale train station and Bologna airport. It's time to say farewell, taking with you the memories of Emilia Romagna — from glittering mosaics and Renaissance frescoes to rolling vineyards and hilltop towns.

Overnight: NA





ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

STAY

- ❖ 3 nights in Parma in a centrally located hotel
- ❖ 3 nights in Bologna, right in the heart of the historic centre
- ❖ 3 nights in the Romagna hills, at a wine estate surrounded by vineyards and olive groves
- ❖ 3 nights in Ravenna in a hotel within walking distance of the mosaics

INCLUSIONS

- ❖ Accommodation on a twin-share basis as listed above
- ❖ Breakfast daily
- ❖ Ten meals (lunches or dinners, with wine included) in restaurants chosen for their authenticity and quality
- ❖ All land transport in Italy by private, air-conditioned mini-coach
- ❖ Admission to all museums, galleries and sites in the itinerary
- ❖ Expert local guides at key locations
- ❖ Experienced, bilingual tour leader for the duration of the journey

EXCLUSIONS / ADD-ONS

- ❖ Local city tax (payable directly at hotels)
- ❖ Pre-tour accommodation in Parma (please ask us)
- ❖ Private transfer to Parma at the start of the tour (available on request)

WEATHER

In late September and early October, temperatures in Emilia Romagna are usually mild, ranging from the high teens to mid-twenties during the day. Evenings can be cooler, especially in the Romagna hills, so we recommend bringing a light jacket.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

We don't place any age limits on our clients and welcome anyone with good physical fitness. Specifically, you should be comfortable on your feet for up to 3 hours, with short breaks, and confident on cobblestones and uneven surfaces.

BOOKING

If you would like to book a place on this or any other tour or have questions about the itinerary, please don't hesitate to contact Luca or Philippa at Italian Tours.

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