



A Taste of Medieval Italy 2026

Step into Italy's enchanting Emilia-Romagna region: a place where every recipe is a story and every lovely vista is destined to become ingrained on your memory for eternity. Our 9-day journey meanders lazily through this extraordinary region, taking in timeless hilltop towns, cities that glimmer with medieval treasures and rustic castle estates where culinary traditions abound. If food is the key to your heart, prepare to fall head over heels on this carefully crafted Italian escape...





About your tour notes

These tour notes contain everything you need to know before your tour departs – from where to meet your fellow guests and local guide to what essentials to pack for your journey. We recommend you print this document out and bring it with you on your tour. Give a copy to loved ones at home so they can follow your adventure, too.

Important: please refresh this document as close to your departure as possible to ensure you're equipped with the latest information available.

Starhotel Ritz @ 18:00

Via Lazzaro Spallanzani, 40, Milan, 20129

Starhotel Ritz @ 17:00

Via Lazzaro Spallanzani, 40, Milan, 20129



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Tour highlights

- ✓ Feast your eyes on Ravenna's treasure trove of kaleidoscopic Byzantine mosaics
- ✓ Savour the feeling of cheese melting deliciously on your tongue during a tour of a *parmigiano* factory in Parma
- ✓ Immerse yourself in Italy's thrilling racing heritage at the Ferrari Museum Maranello and Enzo Ferrari Museum

More inclusions

- ✓ 8 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 2 dinners
- ✓ 8 nights in thoughtfully selected accommodation
- ✓ Luxury minicoach

Currencies you'll use

- Italy - EUR



Included meals

Breakfast (B) is included daily.

Some of your lunches and dinners are also included, either in hotels or local restaurants. These are indicated by (L) and (D) in the itinerary.

Please note that drinks will not always be included.

We will do our best to accommodate any specific dietary requirements you may have. Please ensure to make these clear to us before your tour begins so we can communicate them to our hotels, restaurants and suppliers.

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Your itinerary

Day 1 | Milan (Italy)

Renaissance grandeur, twisting Gothic spires, the soothing hum of espresso machines... where better to begin our jaunt around northern Italy than majestic Milan? While it may have a reputation for cutting-edge fashion and exquisite art, this cosmopolitan city's ancient roots stretch back thousands of years. We'll meet in its atmospheric heart and get to know the group over a delicious welcome meal at a local trattoria. Are you ready to toast to the adventure ahead?

Included today

 **Accommodation**

Starhotel Ritz (or similar)

 **Meals**

+ Dinner

Day 2 | Milan – Parma Countryside

After filling up on flaky *pasticcino* and strong espresso at breakfast, we'll wave goodbye to Milan and weave our way through the peaceful Parma countryside in our luxury minicoach. Delight in the landscape's metamorphoses as the city's suburbs give way to a patchwork of rolling hills, lush olive groves and tranquil villages that appear lost in time. And our final destination today? The storybook Antico Borgo Di Tabiano Castello; a hilltop hotel perched within the grounds of a majestic medieval castle.

Hopefully the leisurely journey has worked up your appetite as you'll be digging straight into a sumptuous local cooking class! Prepare to become dusted in flour and enveloped in mouth-watering aromas as we enjoy a masterclass in fresh pasta-making. After tucking into bowls of homemade *tortelli*, *spaghetti alla chitarra* or *maltagliati*, you'll have the rest of the afternoon to relax poolside or revel in a soothing treatment at the hotel spa. Tonight, you can choose to dine in the hotel restaurant where each exquisite dish is crafted using only locally made or homegrown produce. *Bellissimo!*

Included today

 **Accommodation**

Antico Borgo Di Tabiano
Castello (or similar)

 **Meals**

+ Breakfast
+ Lunch

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Day 3 | Parma Countryside – Langhirano – Parma Countryside

This morning, there'll be time to practice a little *dolce far niente* (the 'sweetness of doing nothing') among the hotel's terraced gardens before we venture out into the Langhirano countryside for our next culinary adventure...

We'll be swapping pasta for another classic Italian treat – *Parmigiano*! There's a reason it's nicknamed the 'king of cheeses' and we'll discover all about the centuries-old methods of producing it at a local factory. Prepare your tastebuds for a flavour explosion as we follow our guided tour with a tantalising tasting. Revel in the feeling of aged *Parmigiano Reggiano* crumbling on your tongue and then wash it down with a glass of local wine. *Salute!*

Then, it's onwards to Antica Corte Pallavicina: a once lavish 13th-century estate that was rescued from ruin and transformed into a Michelin-recognised, gastronomical mecca. Delve into its cavernous cellars which emanate with the heavenly scent of *culatello di Parma* – a cured sausage meat akin to (but arguably tastier than) *prosciutto*. After uncovering the ancient secrets of aging this regional delicacy, we'll sample some for ourselves before returning to our hotel for a little rest and relaxation.

Included today



Accommodation

Antico Borgo Di Tabiano
Castello (or similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast



Day 4 | Parma Countryside – Modena – Bologna

We might be saying *ciao!* to the Parma countryside today – but the next chapter of our journey is equally as scenic (and delicious). So far, we've savoured crumbling cheeses and melt-in-your-mouth *culatello*. Next up? The sweet delights of Modena – a city famed for its dark and syrupy balsamic vinegar.

Before we unravel the origins of this quintessentially Italian ingredient though, we'll leap forward to a more modern chapter of Italian history at the Ferrari Museum Maranello. Discover the tales behind this iconic brand and immerse yourself in a whirlwind of racing memorabilia, including several Ferrari World Champion models in the museum's aptly named Hall of Victories.

Not done satisfying your need for speed? Continue your motor-themed escapade with a saunter around the eye-catching Enzo Ferrari Museum near the centre of Modena – the birthplace of the famous founder. Exhilarated but famished, we'll then pop into a local restaurant for a light lunch before the day's main event: a tasting tour of a traditional balsamic vinegar house. Learn all about the creation process before sampling three varieties paired with *Parmigiano Reggiano*. A true match made in heaven!

Afterwards, we'll hop back in the minicoach and keep our eyes peeled on the horizon as we approach Bologna: the beating heart of the Emilia-Romagna region. The city's medieval skyline of dramatic domes and soaring stone towers hint at what's in store on tomorrow's agenda...

Included today

Accommodation

Hotel Internazionale (or similar)

Meals

- + Breakfast
- + Lunch



Day 5 | Bologna

After a restful night's sleep, it's time to awaken your senses with an espresso and begin exploring Bologna! We'll be swapping the minicoach for our own two feet as we spend an entire day connecting with this wonderful city. First up: a guided tour of the city's treasure-packed centre. Our path will take us past lavish palazzos and through sweeping piazzas dotted with tinkling fountains – each place a tribute to Bologna's majestic medieval past.

You'll also soak up the vibrancy of the city's Quadrilatero Old Market where stalls are laden with tempting treats, from jewel-like fruits to silky strands of fresh pasta. The afternoon is yours to delve deeper into Bologna. Get lost in the old town's network of ochre-hued porticoes, wander the grounds of Bologna University (the oldest university in Europe) or pop into Bologna National Gallery where Raphael masterpieces nestle alongside Titian treasures.

As aperitivo hour approaches, seek out a rooftop terrace bar overlooking the red-tiled skyline for a glass of local *pignoletto* wine and a plate of bite-sized bruschetta. You'll have a chance to revel in even more exquisite Italian cuisine at dinner. Why not savour the tomatoey, garlicky goodness of the city's namesake *Bolognese* sauce? Just ask your expert Tour Leader for the best places to try it!

Included today



Accommodation

Hotel Internazionale (or similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast

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Day 6 | Bologna – Ravenna

Sunshine yellow, burnt orange, cerulean blue. These are just some of the spectacular colours you'll soak up today as we leave Bologna behind and set our sights on Ravenna and its intricate Byzantine mosaics.

The former capital of the Western Roman Empire has been mesmerising visitors since medieval times with its fantastical mosaics. We'll encounter some of the most dazzling on a walking tour with an enthusiastic local expert. Trail through the historic centre's cobblestone streets, ducking into the 6th century Basilica of San Apollinare Nuovo where the story of the Three Kings hurrying to Bethlehem to greet the new-born baby Jesus is vividly depicted on the church's north wall. You'll also be blinded by gold in the Basilica of San Vitale where the shimmering mosaics boldly capture the likenesses of legendary Roman Emperors, including Justinian I.

Cameras filled with kaleidoscopic keepsakes; we'll turn our attention to another Ravenna treasure – the *piadina romagnola*. Bite down into soft flatbread filled with peppery rocket, soft cheese and lashings of *prosciutto*. Simple yet filling, it's the ideal treat after a morning spent pounding the cobbles. Then, the rest of the day is yours to savour every nook and cranny of this well-adorned city before we check into our palatial hotel for a night of snoozing like royalty...*buona notte!*

Included today



Accommodation

Palazzo Galletti Gubiosi (or similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Lunch



Day 7 | Ravenna – Chioggia – Padova

Is that the salty sea air you smell? Your nose – and eyes – aren't deceiving you! Today's path will see us dipping into the neighbouring region of Veneto. Specifically, the charming fishing town of Chioggia. With its web of arched bridges, glimmering canals and colourful Renaissance architecture, it really does give nearby Venice a run for its money!

Your path is yours to choose. You could soak up the bustling atmosphere at the historic Chioggia fish market where you can glimpse some of the freshest seafood Italy has to offer – before sampling it firsthand at a local restaurant. Will you tuck into *risotto alla pescatora* (catch of the day risotto) or *sarde in saor* (sardines fried with local white onions)? Afterwards, consider spending half an hour or so soaking up some *dolce vita* and a few sunny rays on the sweeping sand dunes of Sottomarina Beach.

Later this afternoon, we'll continue our journey to Padova – another Veneto gem. A walking tour will reveal the city's many secrets, including the Cappella degli Scrovegni that's home to an extraordinary fresco painstakingly painted between 1303 and 1305 by the masterful Giotto. This evening, we'll have some free time to wander through the city and discover even more culinary delights. Our pick is *bigoli con l'anatra*: a wholesome pasta dish featuring thick-cut spaghetti tossed in a rich duck ragu.

Included today



Accommodation

Hotel Majestic Toscanelli (or similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast



Day 8 | Padova

The penultimate chapter of your Italian adventure will be full of thrilling encounters – beginning with a leisurely boat trip along the meandering River Brenta between Padova and Mira. Feel the wind gently ruffle your hair as we glide past aristocratic villas lining this glittering riviera route.

We'll hop off at the outrageously ornate Villa Pisani for a guided stroll through its breathtaking Baroque-era hallways, uncovering stories of past residents and visitors – including Hapsburg princes and even Napoleon! Then, it's onwards to Mira where our boat jaunt will end with a visit to Villa Widmann. This 18th-century palace perches prettily within a grove of cypress trees which we'll stroll beneath with a local guide.

Afterwards, we'll climb into our luxury minicoach and venture to nearby Dolo for a spot of lunch. Craving dessert? Our path will then take us back to the city where there'll be time to pick up some *dolce de santo* – a much-loved Padovan dessert infused with amaretti – from a local pasticceria.

Before you settle down for the night, we'll regroup for one final feast together. Savour some more *cucina Padovan* – perhaps you'll spot *tortelli di zucca dolce* (ravioli stuffed with pumpkin) on the menu!

Included today



Accommodation

Hotel Majestic Toscanelli (or similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Dinner

Day 9 | Padova – Franciacorta Region – Milan

After indulging in one last Italian breakfast together, we'll settle down in the minicoach and begin our journey back to Milan. Our path will take us through the heart-stirring Franciacorta Region where lakes sparkle and the sweet scent of grapevines hangs heavy in the air.

Prosecco may be the most famous of Italy's sparkling wines, but Franciacorta is just as divine – and more similar in taste to French Champagne. What better way to toast the end of our unique journey through Italy than with a tasting of this delicious tipple?

Included today



Meals

+ Breakfast



Travel advice

Finances

Changing money

Cash: Foreign money can be changed at banks, airports, some railway and tube stations, and at major hotels (though at a less favourable rate).

Credit cards: Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted. American Express is only accepted in some larger establishments.

Cash machines: ATMS are widely available.

Tipping

Tipping is entirely at your discretion. If you feel you have received exceptional service, it is recommended that you tip £1-2/€ per day for Drivers and £4- 5/€ per day for Tour Leaders.

Insurance

Before travelling with Back-Roads Touring, it is compulsory for all guests to take out comprehensive travel insurance. Please ensure your insurance covers medical expenses (including repatriation), cancellation cover, loss or damage to baggage and personal effects, money and personal liability.

We recommend you carry your insurance details with you at all times. You may be asked to provide details of your medical insurance or a payment guarantee in some countries before medical assistance can be provided.

For more information, please see our [FAQ page](#).

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact our friendly Customer Service team [here](#).

Passports and visas

Please ensure your passport is valid for at least six months after the last day of your tour. Some countries will refuse entry if you do not have at least six months validity remaining on your passport after your departure date. Depending on your nationality, you may require a visa to enter certain



countries.

It is your responsibility to obtain visas prior to your tour's departure. To determine which visas you'll need, you can consult either your own government's website or the government websites of the countries in which you will be travelling.

Please note: Some visas can take up to six weeks to acquire, so don't leave it until the last minute. Also, bear in mind that the validity of a visa often runs from its date of issue rather than the date of entry into the country. Please check with the appropriate embassy/embassies prior to departure as requirements do change periodically.

We advise you to either carry a photocopy of your passport (and visa, if applicable) with you while abroad, or to ensure that you leave a copy with relatives back at home. This will enable the local embassy or high commission to arrange a replacement if the original should be lost or stolen. If you do take copies with you on your tour, please ensure that you keep these separate from your original documents.

Medication and mobility

Whilst on your tour, we want you to have the smoothest journey possible which requires x mobility conditions:

- You must be fit enough to get on and off the vehicle on a regular basis, and to walk around towns and villages or to attractions.
- You must be able to walk up and down stairs and use a shower over the bath.

Please note that, unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate mobility scooter or wheelchair users as we frequently stay in traditional-style hotels and the majority do not have lifts or ground-floor rooms.

If you take medicine for certain conditions, such as diabetes or heart problems, please carry it with you at all times.

Please declare any medical conditions you may have in advance of your tour. If you are in any doubt as to whether our tours are suitable for you, please contact our friendly Customer Service team [here](#).

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Mental health and wellbeing

Culture shock, homesickness and periods of feeling down happen regardless of age. Be rest assured that if you're feeling low, your Tour Leader and Driver will do their utmost to make you smile.

Measures you can take to look after your mental health and wellbeing while on the road with us are:

- Call loved ones. Hearing a familiar voice whilst in an unfamiliar destination can help ground you and remind you you're not alone.
- Eat well. Nobody feels their best when they're hungry. There are plenty of nutritious culinary delights to be savoured along the road!
- Integrate with your fellow guests. The more you socialise with the group, the less likely you'll feel homesick.

Transport

We travel in premium mini-coaches equipped with comfortable seats, air conditioning and large windows for enjoying the view.

With far more flexibility than a standard-size coach, we're able to take the scenic route – winding through beautiful countryside to the heart of tiny villages and coastal towns.

Will I have regular access to Wi-Fi?

Most accommodation we stay in will offer free Wi-Fi as well as many restaurants and cafes you may visit. If you would like more regular internet access without large roaming fees, you can purchase a Back-Roads Touring eSIM [here](#).



What to Pack

Based on our experience, the following items are essential.

Please note, this is a general packing list for Back-Roads Touring tours. What you pack will depend on the countries you're visiting as well as the time of year you plan to travel.

Clothing

- ✓ Sun hat
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Sleepwear
- ✓ Warm jacket
- ✓ Underwear
- ✓ Long-sleeved tops
- ✓ Short-sleeved tops
- ✓ Shorts/skirts
- ✓ Socks
- ✓ Smart casual evening wear
- ✓ Light jacket
- ✓ Waterproof jacket
- ✓ Trousers
- ✓ Swimwear
- ✓ Walking/comfortable shoes

Other essentials

- ✓ Multi-use adapter plug
- ✓ Batteries
- ✓ Umbrella
- ✓ Any personal medication
- ✓ Toiletries
- ✓ Sunscreen
- ✓ Reusable water bottle
- ✓ Basic medical kit (paracetamol, aspirin, plasters etc)
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Towel
- ✓ Insect repellent

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How much luggage can I bring

As we travel in mini-coaches, luggage space is limited. Here's what you can take with you on tour:



1 x suitcase



1 x small carry-on bag
(backpack or handbag)

If you have more luggage, please make arrangements to store it prior to joining the tour. **We are unable to carry extra luggage on the mini-coach.**

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FAQs

What's the weather like?

The weather in northern Italy varies depending on the time of year. Generally, summers are hot and dry (slightly cooler as you go further north), and from mid-June to the end of August temperatures can reach 40°C (104°F), so sun hats and sunscreen are essential!

Which type of hotels will we stay in?

Our thoughtfully selected accommodation is full of charm and historic details – expect elegant country inns, grand town centre hotels and even the odd castle! For this reason, rooms vary in size, and most hotels don't have lifts – meaning you'll likely need to access your room via stairs. Porterage will be included wherever possible.

Although air conditioning is mostly unavailable in historic buildings, fans will be provided during hot spells. Most hotels have bathtubs with overhead showers (rather than walk-in showers), so you'll be able to enjoy a soak at the end of the day. Kettles and coffee machines aren't usually included in rooms, but there's no shortage of places to grab an espresso!

How much walking can I expect to do?

Whilst we do cover ground in our minicoach to maximise our time, the best way to truly discover Italy is on foot! Many of the historic town centres we visit – like Ravenna – are pedestrian-only, inviting us to freely explore their hidden corners. For that reason, sometimes we'll need to walk 20 minutes or so to and from our minicoach's parking spot. Combined with our guided walking tours, which typically last for around two hours or more, we'd say that's the perfect excuse for an extra gelato at the end of the day!

What are the mealtimes in Italy?

With us, you'll embrace the local rhythm of life – including the dining times! In central and northern Italy, lunch is usually eaten between 1pm and 2.30pm (most restaurants



will open around 12pm). Dinner times are typically between 7.30pm and 9pm. Be sure to enjoy an *aperitivo* beforehand – a pre-dinner drink to whet your appetite!

That's everything!

We can't wait to welcome you on tour.

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