



Italy Contents

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If you are not already familiar with them, please see the suggestions for optimum viewing setup in "Viewing Setup Hints" on www.travel-pix.ca.

Italy Introduction

Here are my photos from my trip to Italy.

The heart of this trip was a tour operated by Astrid Baur, *Italian Highlights – Rome, Florence and Venice*.

On that part of this trip I was participating as company photographer, shooting for www.europeancastlestours.com.

I added some extra days before and after Astrid's tour.

Three days based in Naples gave me a chance to see Capri, the Amalfi Coast, and Pompeii.

At the end of the group tour I went north to Stresa to explore Lake Maggiore, and finished up in Milan, to see that city and to venture down to the Cinque Terre.

– Bruce McKay



Italy

Sightseeing in Italy begins in Naples with three days of independent regional exploration.

The Italian Highlights Tour starts in Rome, moves to Florence, and ends in Venice, with regional excursions from each city.

The final phase consists of independent travel based in Stresa and Milan.



Naples

Naples is one of the world's oldest cities (8th century BC), and it is one of Europe's busiest ports. Metro population is about 3 million.



Naples

Naples has tourist sites, such as this *Piazza del Plebiscito*, but I'm using Naples as a base for exploring the region around it.



Naples

Central Station Square. Naples has been described as "chaotic, dirty, and corrupt." I only know it's chaotic, dirty, and loud.



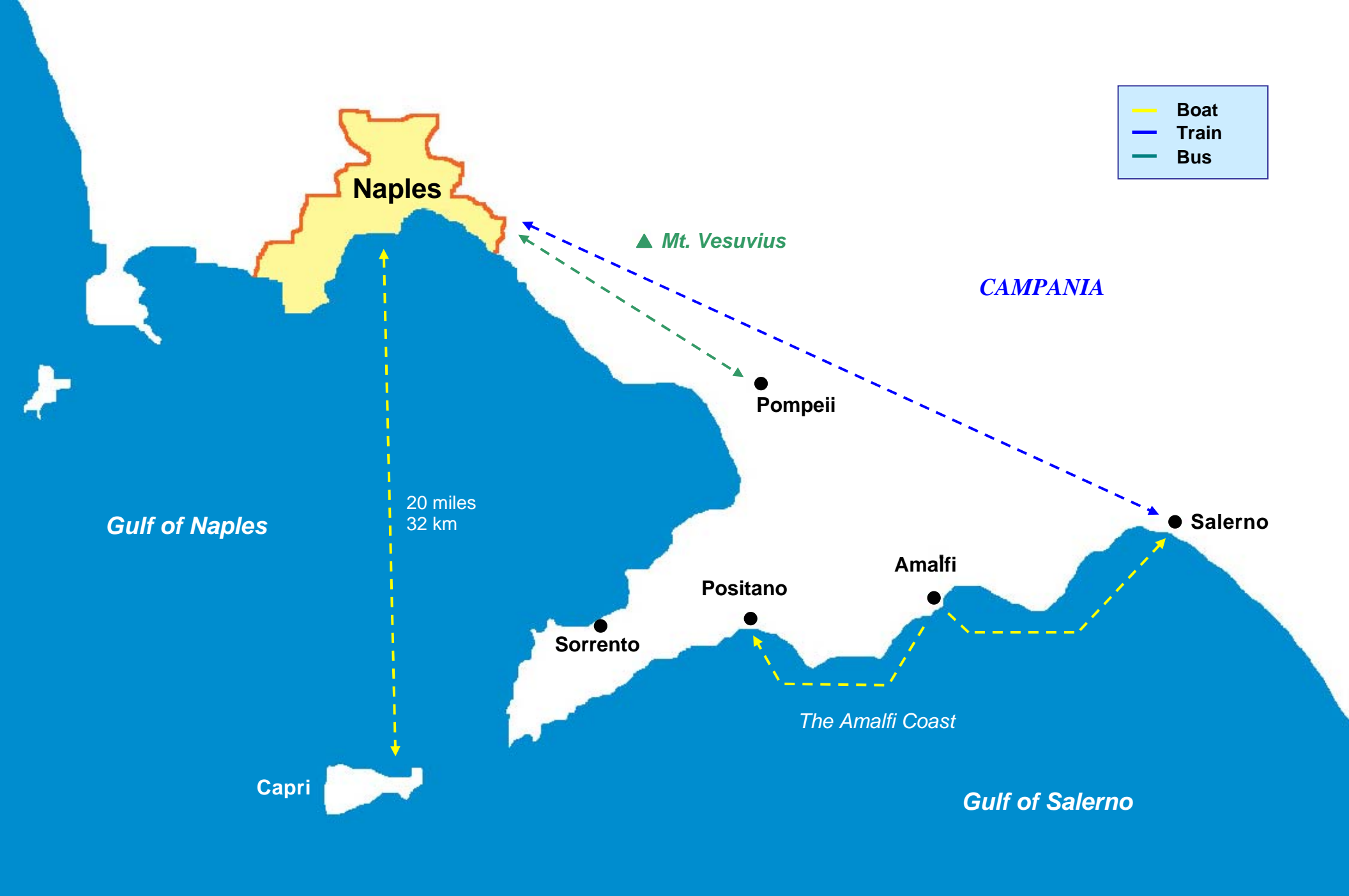
Naples

Naples is about 5.6 miles / 9 km from Mount Vesuvius, one of the most dangerous volcanoes in the world because of the 3 million people nearby.



Naples

Vesuvius erupted 6 times in the 18th century, 8 times in the 19th, and in 1906, 1929, and 1944. It has not erupted since 1944.





Pompeii

Pompeii was buried by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD that covered it with 20 feet / 6 metres of pumice and ash.



Pompeii

Excavation began in 1748 and revealed a city petrified in time, with its artifacts and inhabitants preserved under the volcanic debris.



Pompeii

Pompeii was a large and advanced Roman city of 20,000, with a central forum, an amphitheatre, four baths, houses, villas, and businesses.



Pompeii

Streets were laid out in a grid pattern. An aqueduct supplied running water to villas and more than 25 street fountains.



Pompeii

The Forum was the economic, religious, and political centre. The temples, civic buildings, courts, and markets were here.



Pompeii

These columns formed the entrance to the Temple of Jupiter.
The arch at the left honoured Emperor Nero.



Pompeii

The columns in the background framed part of a large arcade that isolated the Forum from the surrounding urban area.



Pompeii

This theatre was constructed in the 2nd century BC and could accommodate up to 5,000 spectators.



Pompeii

Home businesses along major streets sold hot take-out lunches to busy workers from cooking counters at the fronts of their homes.



Pompeii

Although most of the finest sculpture has been removed to museums for preservation, some examples of exquisite workmanship remain.



Pompeii

Frescoes, painted while the plaster was still wet, depict scenes from everyday life in Pompeii.



Pompeii

Part of one of the four large public bath complexes in Pompeii, important both for hygiene and for social interaction.



Pompeii

As we prepare to say goodbye to Pompeii, Mount Vesuvius still lurks in the background.



Capri

Capri is an island 20 miles / 32 km south of Naples that has been a popular resort since the time of the Roman Republic.



Capri

Most visitors arrive at *Marina Grande*, the island's transport hub that's nestled safely below the limestone cliffs above.



Capri

A series of Roman Emperors built villas on Capri. Tiberius moved to Capri in 27 AD and ran the Empire from there until his death.



Capri

The permanent population of the island is about 13,000.
Around 8 million tourists descend on it each year.



Capri

But it is possible to escape the throngs.



Capri

The Belvedere of Tragara provides a clear view of the *Faraglioni*, three limestone pinnacles that rise vertically out of the sea.



Capri

The winding Via Krupp pathway, built by a German industrialist in the early 1900s, leads down to Marina Piccola, about 330 feet / 100 metres below.



Capri

The Gardens of Augustus were created for the villa of the German Krupp family, and were donated to the Town of Capri.



Capri

The highlight of my day was a boat trip around the island.



Capri

Wind, rain, and the sea have eroded the limestone shoreline and created caves and grottos.



Capri

This little summer cottage in the hills belongs to Giorgio Armani.



Capri

Our boat passed right through the
arch in the *Faraglioni di Mezzo*.



Capri

The famous Blue Grotto itself is closed today, but sunlight is filtered by water in other places too, absorbing red tones and leaving only blue ones.



Capri

Marina Piccola (the Little Harbour) on the south side of the island is smaller and less crowded. We say goodbye to Capri here.



Amalfi Coast

Salerno is a modern town of about 200,000 on the Gulf of Salerno, at the eastern end of the Amalfi Coast.



Amalfi Coast

As the boat to the Amalfi towns leaves Salerno, the physical challenges of the region start to become clear.



Amalfi Coast The coastline rapidly becomes much more rugged.



Positano
Amalfi Coast

Positano is the most famous of the Amalfi Coast towns.
Population 4,000 – excluding tourists.



Positano
Amalfi Coast

Positano has been described as "a village
clambering down a steep slope to the sea."



Positano
Amalfi Coast

Positano began to attract large numbers of tourists in the 1950s, partly because of publicity by John Steinbeck.



Positano
Amalfi Coast

Some of Positano's streets are nearly vertical.



Positano
Amalfi Coast

Many streets are actually just staircases.



Positano
Amalfi Coast

Once a fishing village, Positano has converted to the tourism business, and seems to do it well.



Positano
Amalfi Coast

Positano is reputed to be the Coast's most expensive town.
Nevertheless, it's irresistibly photogenic.



Amalfi
Amalfi Coast

Amalfi is the main town on the Amalfi coast.
Population about 6,000.



Amalfi
Amalfi Coast

Amalfi became a popular tourist destination for British upper classes in the 1920s and 1930s.



Amalfi
Amalfi Coast

Amalfi features an appealing mix of small shops, hidden alleyways, and beachside restaurants.



Italian Highlights Tour

This tour starts in Rome, exploring its ancient wonders and other highlights in the Lazio region.

It then moves north through Umbria to picturesque Tuscany and Florence, cradle of the Renaissance.

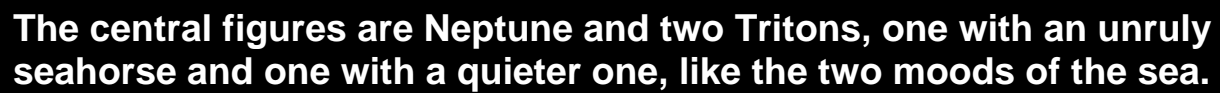
The final phase of this tour goes north through Bologna and Verona to visit the Venice area.





Rome

Tour Director Astrid Baur welcomes us to Rome and takes us to see the famous Trevi Fountain, completed in 1762.





Colosseum
Ancient Rome

Our first full day in Rome starts at the Colosseum, commissioned by Emperor Vespasian in 72 AD.



Colosseum
Ancient Rome

The emperor built the forum to entertain Rome's increasingly restless population with blockbuster shows, most of them bloody.



Colosseum
Ancient Rome

The Forum's great height and massive size were made possible by the Roman arch, which provided structural strength but minimized weight.



Colosseum
Ancient Rome

Franco, our Roman expert guide, explains how work on the construction of the Colosseum was cleverly organized.



Colosseum
Ancient Rome

The Colosseum could hold about 55,000 spectators. The floor on which the shows took place has now been partially restored.



Colosseum
Ancient Rome

The main attractions were gladiatorial fights, often to the death, hunts of wild beasts imported from Africa and the Middle East, and executions.



Colosseum
Ancient Rome

Elevators and trap doors allowed the gladiators and animals to be readied in two lower levels and then quickly deployed onto the floor.



Colosseum
Ancient Rome

The Colosseum is a great work of Roman architecture and engineering, but not a great contribution to the advancement of civilization.



Ancient Rome The Arch of Constantine, near the Colosseum, was built in 315 AD to celebrate one of Imperial Rome's last military victories.



Roman Forum
Ancient Rome

The Forum was the central area around which Roman civilization developed. The royal residence, temples, the Senate House, and law courts were here.



Roman Forum
Ancient Rome

At centre: the remains of the front portico of the Temple of Saturn – eight surviving columns and the partially intact pediment.



Roman Forum
Ancient Rome

The Temple of Antoninus and Faustina was begun in 141 AD (and incorporated into a Catholic church as early as the 7th century).



Roman Forum
Ancient Rome

These columns are the remains of the Temple of Castor and Pollux.
Popes used the Forum as a quarry later to build other projects.



Pantheon
Ancient Rome

The Pantheon, the Roman "Temple of All the Gods", is the most extraordinary and best preserved ancient building in Rome.



Pantheon
Ancient Rome

The current structure was built by Emperor Hadrian in 118 AD.
The interior is huge: 142 feet / 43 metres in diameter.



Pantheon
Ancient Rome

Almost 2000 years after it was built the Pantheon still has the world's largest unreinforced concrete dome.



Pantheon
Ancient Rome

The Pantheon has been in use throughout its history. Since the 7th century it has been a Catholic church dedicated to St. Mary and the Martyrs.



The Vatican

St. Peter's Square, laid out by Bernini between 1656 and 1669, and St. Peter's Basilica, with the dome designed by Michelangelo.



The Vatican

St. Peter's Basilica has the largest interior of any Christian church in the world, and can hold 60,000 people.



The Vatican

Bernini's *Baldacchino* towers over the Basilica's Papal Altar, itself above St. Peter's crypt.



The Vatican

The dome of St. Peter's is the tallest in the world, rising 448 feet / 137 metres above the floor of the Basilica.



The Vatican

The Altar of Transfiguration in St. Peter's is adorned with a mosaic copy of *Transfiguration*, Raphael's final masterpiece.



Tivoli

The Villa d'Este in Tivoli is famous for its garden, steeply raked on terraces and featuring fountains with over 500 jets of water.



Tivoli

***The Fountain of Neptune and The Organ Fountain at Villa d'Este,
built by Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in the mid 1500s.***



Tivoli

The Hundred Fountains at Villa d'Este. Water for the gravity-fed fountains is supplied by a diverted river.



Perugia

Perugia is an Umbrian hill town, famous for its painters and architects, notably Perugino, teacher of Raphael.



Perugia

Looking along *Corso Vannucci*, one of Perugia's main streets, towards the 15th century Cathedral of San Lorenzo



Perugia

Most Umbrian cities were first settled in the 9th to 4th centuries BC on easily defensible hilltops. Perugia fits the pattern.



Perugia

Umbrian countryside, seen from Perugia



Assisi

Assisi, birthplace of St. Francis, who founded the Franciscan order in the town in 1208



Assisi

The *Basilica di San Francesco*, burial place of St. Francis, was begun in 1228, two years after the saint's death.



Tuscany

Tuscany is known for its beautiful landscapes, for its contributions as the cradle of the Renaissance, and for its fine wines.



San Gimignano

San Gimignano is the most famous Tuscan hill town. Its distinctive towers were built by noble families in the 12th and 13th centuries.



**San
Gimignano**

Piazza della Cisterna, named after the well
at its centre, is the heart of the old town.



**San
Gimignano**

The towers were built when the town was prospering as a stopping point for pilgrims on their way to Rome.



**San
Gimignano**

Today the town prospers as a tourist destination,
but has managed to remain quiet and dignified.



Siena

Siena, like other Tuscan hill towns, was first settled in the time of the Etruscans, about 900 to 400 BC.



Siena

Siena's *Palazzo Pubblico* (town hall) at the right dates from 1297.
The *Torre del Mangia* tower was built between 1325 and 1344.



Siena

Siena's shell-shaped *Piazza del Campo* (town square) is considered one of Europe's greatest medieval squares.



Pisa

The Leaning Tower of Pisa began leaning soon after construction started in 1173 – due to a poorly laid foundation and loose substrate.



Pisa

Pisa's Square of Miracles: the Baptistry (front), the Duomo (Cathedral), and the Campanile (the bell tower now known as the Leaning Tower.)



Pisa

The tower has been stabilized in its current position by the removal of soil under the raised end.



Pisa

If you are fit and feeling energetic, you can climb the 296 steps to the top – to a height of 184 feet or 56 metres.



Florence

Florence was a prosperous centre of medieval European trade and finance, and is considered the birthplace of the Renaissance.



Florence

The skyline of Florence is dominated by the dome designed by Brunelleschi for the Duomo, *Santa Maria del Fiore*, and completed in 1463.



Florence

The Duomo, begun in 1296 to demonstrate Florence's might, is decorated in various shades of marble, and is Europe's fourth largest church.



Florence

The dome of the Duomo consists of an outer shell supported by a thicker inner shell that acts as a platform for it.



Florence

Brunelleschi's masterpiece was the inspiration for the domes of St. Peter's in Rome and St. Paul's in London.



Florence

The Baptistry's original bronze doors, commissioned in 1401, are often regarded as the first works of the Renaissance.



Florence

The bell tower marks the *Palazzo Vecchio*, Florence's city hall, which was completed in 1322 and still houses the mayor and council chamber.



Florence

The *Ponte Vecchio* covered bridge, built in 1345, crosses the Arno River in central Florence.



Florence

The *Basilica di Santa Croce* (Basilica of the Holy Cross), begun in 1294 and completed in 1442, is the largest Franciscan church in the world.



Florence

The Boboli Gardens slope down the hill behind the Pitti Palace (top centre), purchased by the ruling Medici family in 1549.



Verona

Verona successfully promotes this site as "Julia's Balcony" even though the characters in the *Romeo and Juliet* story were fictitious.



Verona

Verona's Arena dates from 30 AD, is the third-largest Roman amphitheatre in the world, and is the site of a world famous opera festival each summer.



Venice

Venice was a major maritime power during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and prospered greatly until the end of the 17th century.



Venice

The buildings of Venice are constructed on closely spaced wood piles driven through mud into a much harder layer of compressed clay.



Venice

St. Mark's Square is the principal square of Venice, and has famously been described as "the drawing room of Europe".



Venice

St. Mark's Basilica houses what is believed to be St. Mark's body, stolen from Alexandria by Venetian merchants in 828 AD.



Venice

The Byzantine and Gothic Basilica, consecrated in 1094, is adorned with sculptures and mosaics plundered from abroad in succeeding centuries.



Venice

St. Mark's Campanile, the bell tower of St. Mark's, stands opposite the Basilica (hidden right). This is a 1912 reconstruction of the 1514 tower.



Venice

The Doge's Palace, the official residence of Venice's rulers, was constructed between 1309 and 1324.



Venice

Interior courtyard of the Doge's Palace. As well as being the ruler's residence, the palace housed Venice's political institutions.



Venice

The interior of the Doge's Palace was decorated appropriately for what was then one of the world's richest republics.



Venice

The Rialto bridge, completed in 1591, spans the Grand Canal in the commercial heart of Venice.



Venice

No trip to Venice is complete without a ride in a gondola.



Venice

Water Buses on a network of 25 routes provide practical transportation. Service is fast, frequent, and affordable.



Venice

Murano has been the centre of Venice's famous glassmaking industry since 1291, when the furnaces were moved here because of the risk of fire.



Venice

Burano is famous for its small, brightly-painted houses, whose colours are regulated by the local government.



Venice

Home base for our visit to Venice has been Lido Island, home of the Venice Film Festival.



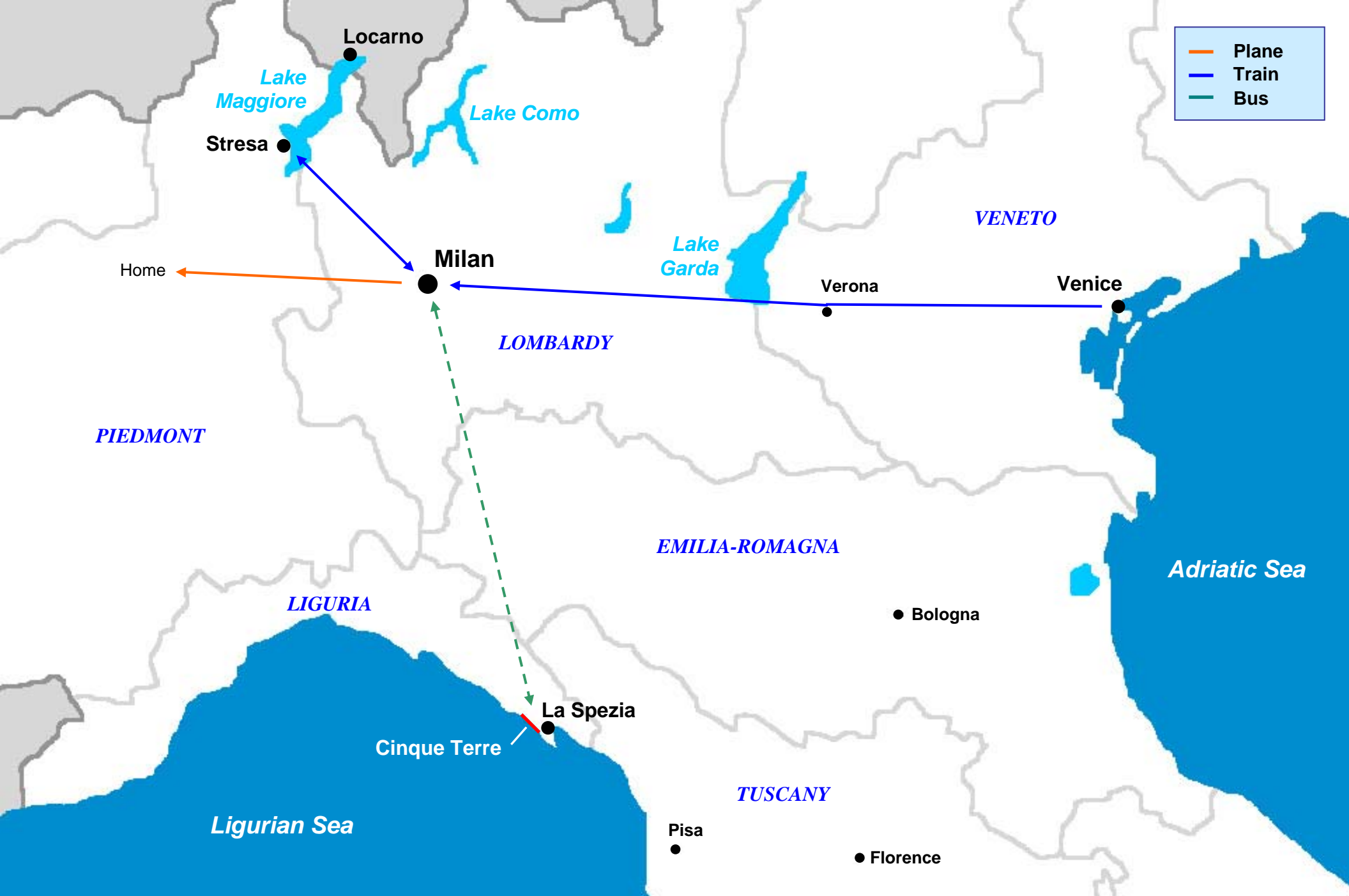
Venice

Lido is a pleasant, quiet retreat, with no gondolas and no canals.



Venice

But Lido does have a great beach, perfect for relaxing on our last afternoon in Venice.



North Map



From Venice a rail trip takes me to Stresa on Lake Maggiore.
Then back to Milan, and a side trip to the Cinque Terre.



Stresa

Welcome to Stresa, a small town of about 5,000 on the shores of *Lago* (Lake) *Maggiore*, north of Milan and just south of the Swiss border.



Stresa

The view from my hotel room window



Stresa

A large public park runs along the lakefront.



Stresa

The Mount Mottarone cable car provides great views of the town and the lake.



Stresa

Lake Maggiore is the second largest in Italy. It extends 44 miles / 70 km from south of Stresa north to Locarno, just inside the Swiss border.



Lake Maggiore The *Lake Maggiore Express* adventure consists of a boat trip up Lake Maggiore and a train trip back through the Swiss and Italian mountains.



Lake Maggiore As the boat leaves Stresa it passes the island palaces and gardens created by the Borromeo family in the 17th century. We'll be back.



Lake Maggiore Verbania, opposite Stresa, is the largest Italian town on the lake (32,000).



Lake Maggiore Our "express" boat calls in at a few of the communities on the shores of the lake on its three-hour trip north.



Lake Maggiore Luino, population 15,000



Lake Maggiore Near Cannobio,
with the Alps in the background



Lake Maggiore Ascona, population 5,000



Lake Maggiore Approaching Locarno, Switzerland



**Maggiore
Express**

The Centrovalli Railway is a narrow gauge line from Locarno to Domodossola that was completed in 1998.



**Maggiore
Express**

**The railway snakes along
the Melezza River valley.**



**Maggiore
Express**

The train passes over winding mountain roads
that are the delight of motorcyclists ...



**Maggiore
Express**

... and across bridges over deep ravines.



**Maggiore
Express**

The trip offers great views of the river ...



**Maggiore
Express**

... and of its ravines.



**Maggiore
Express**

Sometimes the train reaches great heights above the valley floor.



**Maggiore
Express**

As we approach Domodossola the terrain flattens out, but the mountain views have been spectacular. Great excursion.



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

Isola Bella (as seen from the Mount Mottarone cable car)
is one of two Borromeo family islands near Stresa.



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

The family was influential in Milan from before the 12th century.
In 1632 Carlo Borromeo III began a palace here, dedicated to his wife.



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

The island's terraced gardens, described as an enormous tiered wedding cake, were completed by the family in 1671.



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

The huge palace contains works by Tiepolo and van Dyck, Flemish tapestries, and sculptures by Canova.



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

Although the palace is impressive,
the gardens are unique.



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

They feature stunning architectural perspectives, ...



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

... dramatic sculptures, ...



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

... and graceful natural beauty.



Isola Bella
Maggiore Isles

A white peacock fits in perfectly here.



Isola Madre
Maggiore Isles

Isola Madre, also a Borromeo family island, is larger than Isola Bella.



Isola Madre
Maggiore Isles

Isola Madre has a smaller palace than Isola Bella, and its gardens are oriented more towards horticulture than drama.



Isola Madre
Maggiore Isles

The particularly mild climate permits cultivating rare plants and exotic flowers from all over the world.



Isola Madre
Maggiore Isles

Isola Madre is famous for a long list of specific species,
and is a must-see destination for gardening enthusiasts.



Isola Madre
Maggiore Isles

In keeping with the more natural approach, the peacocks on this island are allowed to relax from time to time.



Milan

Milan is a big city that works. It is orderly, clean, and progressive, and it is recognized as a world fashion, design, and cultural capital.



Milan

The *Piazza del Duomo* is the city's main and most central square – with the Milan Cathedral and the Galleria (left).



Milan

The *Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II*, named after the first king of united Italy, was built between 1865 and 1877.



Milan

The glass and cast iron roof design had been used elsewhere, but Milan's was larger, and eventually led to modern shopping malls.



Milan

Milan is especially famous for its fashion houses, and Prada occupies a place of prominence in the heart of the Galleria.



Milan

La Scala, one of the world's most famous opera houses, was built between 1776 and 1778.



Milan

**Milan's Cathedral took five centuries to complete (1386 - 1858)
and is the fourth-largest church in the world.**



Milan

The open spaces of the piazza around the cathedral allow its size to become apparent.



Milan

Mark Twain wrote that "the figures are so numerous and the design so complex that one might study it a week without exhausting its interest."



Milan

An elevator provides access to the roof, where the scale of the Cathedral is even more striking ...



Milan

... and the scope of its ornamentation even more impressive.



Milan

For photographers, the Cathedral's roof provides a fine view of the piazza and the city.



Cinque Terre

My final adventure is a trip through the Apennines to the Cinque Terre (Five Lands) – five fishing villages strung along the cliffs of the Ligurian Sea.



Cinque Terre

The villages were once accessible only by sea, and today there still is no road that links them all. We're traveling in by boat from La Spezia.



Cinque Terre

Riomaggiore, the southernmost of the villages, dates from the 13th century. Current population is 1,700.



Cinque Terre

Riomaggiore. The villages had little contact with the outside world for centuries.



Cinque Terre

The *Via dell'Amore* (Lovers' Lane) connects Riomaggiore to the village of Manarola to the north.



Cinque Terre

Walking trails connect the five villages.
The *Via dell'Amore* is the easiest part to navigate.



Cinque Terre

Over the centuries the residents have built terraces on the steep landscape.



Cinque Terre

As we leave Manarola by boat we get a chance to see the layout of this village.



Cinque Terre

Manarola. The best way to visit the Cinque Terre villages is by boat.



Cinque Terre Corniglia, the middle village, is the most isolated.



Cinque Terre The villages produce their own wines and olive oil.



Cinque Terre Vernazza was first documented in 1080 and became prosperous in medieval times.



Cinque Terre Vernazza has no car traffic.



Monterosso
Cinque Terre

Monterosso, the northernmost village, is the largest and most actively engaged in tourism.



Monterosso
Cinque Terre

Monterosso was once a fishing village,
but now most boating is recreational.



Monterosso
Cinque Terre

**Monterosso consists of two districts.
The newer and more touristy area boasts a popular beach.**



Monterosso
Cinque Terre

Main streets feature cafés and all manner of shops.



Monterosso
Cinque Terre

Side streets are vertical.



Monterosso
Cinque Terre

But it's all quite pleasant and charming.



Cinque Terre
Italy

Great way to end my Italian adventure!

< End >

 Italy