



# Northern Italy

11 days

## Tour Description

*This trip offers a lesser known side of Italy where the focus is on fashion, food and countryside over history and architecture. Investigate cutting edge fashion in Milan, relax and marvel at the ethereal beauty of northern Italy's lake region, try your hand at cooking Northern Italian regional dishes, stroll through the renowned coastline and villages of Cinque Terre and finally concentrate on Parma's excellent prosciutto and ham via a guided factory tour and food tasting.*

## Highlights

- ❖ Wine and olive oil tastings
- ❖ Hiking trip in Italy's lake region
- ❖ Regional cooking class
- ❖ Farm stay in hills of Parma

## Sample Tour Itinerary

### **Milan – 2 nights**

#### **Day 1: Arrive Milan**

Upon arrival meet your guide outside the customs area. Your guide will direct you to your waiting coach. En-route to the hotel, enjoy a panoramic tour of the city of Milan. After checking into your hotel, the afternoon is yours to relax or explore on your own. Welcome dinner at the hotel.

#### **Day 2:**

Today after breakfast meet your local guide in the lobby. Depart via private coach for a half-day city tour of Europe's fashion capital. Milan is home to top designer flagship stores such as Armani, Versace, Prada, and Gucci. This city is also steeped in history. During your tour, you'll visit the World's largest Gothic Cathedral, Il Duomo. This afternoon is yours to soak up Milan's culture. Bargain hunt at one of several discount outlets, visit Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper painting, or take a self-guided tour through the famous La Scala Opera House.

### **Northern Lakes Region – 3 nights**

#### **Day 3:**

This morning, depart Milan via private coach for a scenic drive through Italy's Lombardy region to the Italian Lakes district. Writers from Hemingway to Goethe have immortalized the ethereal beauty of this area, but even their words cannot do it justice. En route, you'll make stops at a couple of 17th-century villas for wine and olive oil tastings before arriving at Lake Como, one of the many lakes that fan out across Northern Italy and a favorite haunt of the rich and famous. For some amazing views, ride the funicular high above the town of Como or, if time permits, take a ferry ride up the lake to one of several other charming villages.

**Day 4:**

This is a day to get outside and soak up the incomparably beautiful surroundings of Italy's northern landscape. Following breakfast, strap on your walking shoes and jump on your private coach with fellow travelers for a transfer to a local hiking trail where views abound of mountains unfolding into low woodlands and sparkling lakeshore. After soaking up the natural beauty and fresh air, transfer back into town where you have time on your own to enjoy a well-deserved lunch at one of Como's many local cafes.

**Day 5:**

Today you will absorb some local culture and learn to make fantastic cuisine at a private cooking class in a local restaurant. Although you can find delicious Italian specialties like pizza and lasagna all over the country, you will discover there is a wide array of more localized dishes worth sampling. Follow along as your chef-instructor shares the subtleties of how to prepare Northern Italian cuisine and try to wait until the end of your demonstration before devouring this tasty feast.

***Cinque Terre – 2 nights*****Day 6:**

Transfer today via private coach to the Cinque Terre region on Italy's Mediterranean coast. Your first stop along this renowned stretch of coastline is Genoa, where you'll pay a visit to the Palazzo Ducale, see the ancient lighthouse "La Lanterna" and walk through of Genoa's most famous landmarks, "Cimitero Monumentale di Staglieno", a bizarrely beautiful cemetery that sprawls across a hillside on the outskirts of town. There is a break for shopping before continuing to our hotel in Santa Margherita Ligure, an old fashioned seaside resort offering easy access to other Italian Riviera coastal villages.

**Day 7:**

Today is all yours to discover the five fishing villages clinging to the cliffs of the Cinque Terre coast overlooking the Mediterranean Sea: Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, Monterosso al Mare, Riomaggiore. Walking along the foot-paths is the most rewarding way to get from village to village. Alternatively, the train makes constant runs along that route and there's a seasonal boat that strings the villages together. We'll meet tonight for a group dinner at a local seafood restaurant to try of the delicious catch of the day this region is known for.

***Parma – 2 nights*****Day 8:**

The first half of today is yours to relax by the sea or take advantage of some last minute sightseeing. Take a morning water taxi to Portofino. The Duke and Duchess of Windsor honeymooned at the Hotel Splendido, and years later Richard Burton proposed to Elizabeth Taylor here. Following your restorative stay on the coast, it's time to transfer via private coach to the Emilia Romagna region where you'll get to experience the agricultural side of Italian life by staying on a farm in the hills just outside of Parma. Tonight we'll experience some authentic local cuisine enhanced by the intimate surroundings of our farm accommodations.

**Day 9:**

After a walking tour around the city center of Parma, showing off the local culinary delights of Parmesan cheese and hams, you'll actually get to take a guided tour of a Prosciutto ham factory. See how this delicacy is processed and packaged and, obviously, taste testing will also take place! Later this afternoon, enjoy a few free hours in Parma. Appreciate its art, architecture, and history by making a visit to one of several museums or other important historical landmarks around town.



### ***Milan – 1 night***

#### **Day 10:**

After this truly unique experience, it is time to transfer via private coach back to Milan for one last day and night of celebration. Your afternoon is free. Tonight we will meet for a farewell dinner. Afterwards, you might decide to venture out to one of the city's night clubs or to Teatro Alla Scala to see a show at Italy's premier opera house.

#### **Day 11:**

This morning we transfer to Milan International Airport with ample time to check your luggage and board your flight back to the USA

### **INCLUSIONS**

- Accommodations: Milan 2 nights, Northern Lakes Region 3 nights, Cinque Terre 2 nights, Parma 2 nights, Milan 1 night
- Meals: Continental breakfast daily, lunch and dinner as noted in itinerary
- Ground transportation via air conditioned luxury coach
- English speaking assistants and guides
- Admission tickets as outlined in the itinerary