

A Portrait of Italy

Country(ies):

Tour type: City Break

Transport: A/C coach, train & water taxi

Group size: Min: 6 | Max: 16

Days: 9 Days

Start location: Rome, Italy

End location: Venice, Italy

Departs On: Sunday

Meals: Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 1, Dinners - 6

Highlights:

Photo workshops with Me Ra Koh and Brian Tausend, 'Eternal City' of Rome, Etruscan hilltop villages, Tuscany countryside, Art and architecture in Florence, Romantic Venice

Places Visited: Rome, Calcata, Civita di Bagnoregio, Pienza, Florence & Venice



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Rome, free time to settle in

On arrival in Rome you are met at the airport and a private transfer is provided to your hotel accommodation. We'll be arranging several transfers through the day so there's a chance you may need to wait a short while for other members of the group with similar flight times to arrive. Me Ra and Brian will be there to greet you and help you settle in. The rest of the day is free to relax or perhaps head out for some initial sightseeing or to take some snaps of your immediate surroundings. If everyone in the group ends up arriving before the evening, then we will move our welcome dinner in Rome to this evening.

We are happy to help with flight bookings, or you are welcome to make your own arrangements. Extra nights in the hotels in Rome and Venice are also available on request, subject to availability (please book early to ensure you can stay in the same hotel).

If you are flying from the USA you will need to depart one day earlier as nearly all flights to Europe are overnight.

OVERNIGHT: Rome - Hotel Ars

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Single room supplement (ITETPI) || Extra day in Rome - pre-tour

Day 2: Capture Rome, the Eternal City

Our first full day in Italy is completely dedicated to the Eternal City! Over breakfast, Me Ra and Brian will begin their teaching on camera settings for best results with architecture. You will be taking in the glory of Rome, and we want your camera to be dialed in for capturing this day. A photo exercise for the day will be given.

We'll then set out to explore using public transport and on foot to visit the highlights of the city and wonderful spots for good pictures, such as the Colosseum, the Forum, the market at Campo de' Fiori, Piazza Navona, the Pantheon and Trevi Fountain.

Before dinner, we will gather to review your images and receive feedback from Me Ra and Brian. Then we'll enjoy our first special group meal together, with 4 courses of traditional Italian food & wine to savour in a local restaurant.

OVERNIGHT: Rome - Hotel Ars

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 3: Capture mystical villages off-the-beaten path

This is a day filled with magic! Over breakfast, Me Ra and Brian will provide a handful of photo tips on how to capture what you are going to experience throughout the day. They will give the photo exercise for the day, and then we will leave the eternal city for the mystical, cultural and romantic, ancient village of Calcata. It is a special place that over the centuries has managed to preserve intact its historical, artistic and natural heritage. Enjoy the fairy-tale feel of the place and its magical medieval houses, the mystic forests and the hedonistic lifestyle of its bohemian artists.

In the afternoon we'll head North to the breathtaking Civita di Bagnoregio, an almost deserted town accessible only by a foot bridge. We'll be able to stroll the narrow streets and marvel at the existence of a place where time seemingly stopped hundreds of years ago.

After dinner, we will do a sunset photo shoot that explores the golden light of Italy. We'll arrive at our castle-like hotel

late this evening.

OVERNIGHT: Santa Cristina Castle

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: Cooking class, free time, photo reviews

After a busy couple of days we slow the pace down today. A fun cooking class with the hotel chef making fresh pasta and other Italian ingredients is included this morning. You'll do some photography around this, and enjoy the fruits of your creation for lunch.

During the afternoon your time is free to relax in the beautiful surroundings of the hotel. This is an ideal time to upload your photos from your memory cards to your laptops or tablets and to try some initial editing. Me Ra and Brian will circulate to provide assistance and advice. You can review some of your favorite images from the previous few days and discuss what is working well, and what other tips and techniques you can try in the days ahead so you can break through your creative and photography glass ceilings.

In the evening we'll sit down for a leisurely Italian dinner with plenty of wine and chat. Later, layer up as the stars rise into Italy's night sky, and experience a special photo session with Brian on how to capture time lapse photography of the stars.

OVERNIGHT: Santa Cristina Castle

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Tuscan countryside and hilltop towns

Today we'll drive through the Tuscan countryside, stopping at several more small ancient hilltop towns and enjoying the beautiful scenery en-route to Florence. After exploring and photographing during the day we check into our hotel in the centre of Florence and head out for dinner at a local restaurant.

OVERNIGHT: Villa San Filippo

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Florence, birthplace of the Renaissance

Meet for breakfast with Me Ra and Brian to discuss the day and your photo exercise. Then get ready to fill your creative soul with the inspiring renaissance history of Florence. We will dedicate the whole day to this unforgettable city.

Lorenzo de Medici transformed Florence into the cradle of the Renaissance by attracting the best artists, architects and writers of the time such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Botticelli. With a specialist local guide you'll visit the Piazza del Duomo and the magnificent Cathedral, Piazza della Signoria, and the Ponte Vecchio. More time will be spent wandering around the city, exploring the famous market of San Lorenzo and discovering hidden corners to capture.

After enjoying an early dinner in Florence Me Ra and Brian will lead a special workshop this evening on the banks of the river in the centre of Florence where you'll learn more about the techniques and options available for shooting just before and during sunset.

OVERNIGHT: Florence - Villa San Filippo

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 7: Capture Venice's romantic streets & canals

Meet for breakfast and then head to Florence station before enjoying a last taste of rural Italian scenery as we take the train to the coast at Venice. While on board, talk with Me Ra and Brian as you photographically prepare for the breathtaking, winding, romantic alleys and canals of Venice. The train arrives right on the edge of the old city, out in the Venetian lagoon and just a short walk (with our luggage) to our hotel.

After checking in, we'll have our last photography session with direct instruction and photo critiques. Then in the afternoon we head out to explore. The most incredible experience in Venice is when you allow yourself to get lost and soak it all in. So, this afternoon is free to walk or take public Vaporetto rides through the narrow streets, along canals and over bridges (a two day Vaporetto pass is included). You can head out with Me Ra and Brian or feel free to explore alone, perhaps taking a classic Gondola ride (not included) to explore corners not reachable on foot.

OVERNIGHT: Venice - Grande Albergo Ausonia & Hungaria

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: None

Day 8: Explore more of Venice and the amazing colours of Burano

After breakfast today we head out by boat to visit Burano, one of the Venetian lagoon's many islands. Burano is a fantastic place to photograph, with the green waters of the water channels reflecting the many colourful houses and ancient buildings. You can see elderly ladies embroidering original Burano lace in the squares, and fishermen in their traditional boats. We'll take time to practice frame setting and working with reflections while we explore the island.

In the afternoon we return to Venice and walk from St. Mark's square to the Rialto Bridge to capture some more iconic images. Finally this evening we enjoy a farewell dinner at a restaurant in Venice with a review from Me Ra and Brian of the photography skills you've learned. Who knows, there may even be some prizes to be won!

OVERNIGHT: Hotel in Venice

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Last exhale before heading home

After a final breakfast with Me Ra and Brian, our tour comes to an end today. Your time is free until you make your own way to the airport for your departure. Our hotel is close to the Grand Canal from where the Blue Line "Alilaguna" water shuttle service will take you directly to Venice's Marco Polo airport.

If you would like to add more nights in Venice we'll be happy to help with this. If you are looking at booking your own flights, then please aim to depart Venice after 10am at the earliest to allow for the 1 hour boat trip to the airport and enough time to check in.

See you soon Italy!

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra day in Venice - post-tour

Included

- Photo workshops, hands-on instruction, tuition and mentoring by Me Ra Koh and Brian Tausend
- 2 nights accommodation in a 4 star hotel in Rome in double/twin room on breakfast only basis
- 2 nights accommodation in a converted castle in Bolsena area in double/twin room on HB basis
- 2 nights accommodation in a 4 star hotel in central Florence on breakfast only basis
- 2 nights accommodation in a 3 star hotel in Venice in double/twin room on breakfast only basis
- Welcome dinner in a Rome restaurant including return coach transfers; 4 courses included 1/2 mineral water and 1/4 wine
- Dinner in a local restaurant in Civita di Bagnoregio including 1/2 mineral water and 1/4 wine
- Dinner in a Florence restaurant including 1/2 mineral water and 1/4 wine
- Farewell dinner in Venice; 4 courses including 1/2 mineral water and 1/4 wine
- Tours and transfers as mentioned by private a/c coach with driver including airport arrival transfers in Rome (3 transfers each day)
- Fast train from Florence to Venice, 2nd class
- 2-day vaporetto pass in Venice
- Professional local guide for sightseeing tour in Florence
- Sightseeing fees and permits during guided tours
- Entrance fees to Civita di Bagnoregio town
- Hotel city taxes

Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary (7 lunches, 3 dinners)
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (eg. laundry)
- Departure airport transfer in Venice (your hotel is very close to the public vaporetto stop for water bus transfers to the airport)
- Tips for tour guide, driver, restaurants etc.
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

This tour is designed for ALL levels of photography. Me Ra and Brian have been teaching photography workshops, photographing and filming abroad for over eight years. Their first Italy workshop in May 2015 was a huge success and has run every year since, apart from 2018 when we took a break to visit Athens and the Greek islands instead. Due to demand, and our love of the place, we're back to Italy again for 2019! Me Ra Koh is also one of the select Sony Artisans of Imagery, inspiring both beginners and pros. And they have both photographed, filmed and produced content for Disney, Travel Channel, Target and more. Whether you are a newbie who simply loves taking photos and/or video or a pro wanting to be creatively refreshed, Me Ra and Brian will take you to new levels with your camera proficiency and creativity while exploring the most gorgeous areas of northern Italy. If your spouse, relative or friend is not a photographer but wants to experience Italy, they are more than welcome to join us. There will be plenty of sightseeing and touring along the way too (do bear in mind though that the pace and timing of the tour will be based around the photographers in the group).

Several photography workshop break-out sessions will be included during the tour. You'll start each morning with Me Ra and Brian discussing the day's upcoming itinerary and how to approach the locations with your camera. They'll walk you through photo examples, specific shooting techniques, creative composition, lighting, editing, and the best camera settings for specific subjects (i.e. breathtaking architecture of Rome, winding streets of Venice, rolling hills of Tuscany at sunset, the old men playing cards in the town square, and the night's sky through time lapse, etc.). There will be ample time for personal feedback and hands-on help from both Me Ra and Brian. And you'll be given a daily photo exercise for you to enjoy (not compulsory, just a fun way to enhance your journey). Most of all, you are going to have an AMAZING adventure that will take your breath away many times over eight days of magic! You'll pretty much want to take a photo every three steps because Italy is that picturesque!

There is also built in time for wandering, exhaling, taking in the scenery, and always freedom to skip a photography workshop or group dinner. Me Ra and Brian are always available and there to enhance your experience, but we want you to feel free to take space at any time to soak up the magic of Italy with your journal and camera alone.

Room basis: Prices are per person based on sharing a twin/double room.

Single travellers: Single travellers may share a twin room with another single traveller of the same sex, or pay an extra single room supplement to guarantee themselves a single room throughout the tour. If you are happy to share but a same-sex room share is not available then you **will not** need to pay the single room supplement. Room shares are arranged in the order of booking but we will always aim to ensure that if you are travelling with a friend, then you share a room together.

Group size: Group size - min 6, max 16.

Flights: As we tend to get people booking from various different cities (and countries), your international flights are not included in the price of the tour. We are very happy to book these for you though, or you are welcome to make your own arrangements. Please contact us for details and prices from your preferred departure airport.

Dates: If you are flying from the USA you will almost certainly need to depart one day early as most flights to Italy will be overnight. Your return flight should land back in the USA on the same day you depart Italy. If you are booking a land only package, you should plan to arrive anytime on Day 1 and depart on Day 9 (we'd recommend aiming for early arrivals and late departures to make the most of your time). Extra nights are available in Rome or Venice at either end of the tour.

Airport transfers: Your airport arrival transfer is included in the price of the tour. We'll be arranging several transfers through the day, so there may be a short wait to meet other group members arriving at similar times. Your departure transfer to Venice airport is not included but is simple to arrange locally using the water bus or shuttle bus service from near the hotel (Me Ra and Brian will assist with this).

Tour escort: This is a fully escorted tour. Me Ra Koh and Brian Tausend will host the trip and handle all other arrangements for the tour while you are there (eg. hotel check ins, included meals, entrance fees etc.).

Visas: Are not required for travel to Italy for US / Canadian / European travellers.

Travel Insurance: Is a mandatory requirement for travel on any of our tours. This must cover medical expenses/repatriation/personal liability, though we strongly recommend you also take out cover for cancellation, lost/stolen baggage, and travel delays. Personal medical insurance is not generally suitable. We can offer a comprehensive policy to go with this tour costing for USD 76 per person (however you should check the value of your photographic equipment is covered by this policy or by other insurance you may hold). More information will be provided at booking.

Booking:

Demand for these workshops is normally very high so we recommend you book early.

A deposit of GBP 715 / USD 1,000 (plus any flights & travel insurance) is required to secure your place. Further payments of GBP 715 / USD 1000 are due at 10 months and 8 months before departure, with the final balance due 6 months before the tour starts. All payments are non-refundable once made. This payment schedule is designed to allow you to manage your budget for the tour and allow us time to refill places should we receive any cancellations. Payments may be made by credit card (Visa/Mastercard) or international bank transfer. Full details will be provided on booking.

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

1. Accommodation

You will be staying in a variety of different hotels throughout the tour. In Rome and Florence the hotels are rated 4-star, in Venice 3-star superior, while the property near Bolsena Lake is built around a former castle in a more boutique style that can be considered around the 4-star level. Please see the Accommodation tab on the website tour page for more details of our preferred hotels.

2. Transport

The transport used on this tour will be a mix of public and private options. This is done intentionally to give you both a taste for travel through the country as a local, as well as speed and convenience. We use public transport (buses, subway, taxis) in Rome, a private minibus/coach for the journeys between Rome and Florence, and a train from Florence to Venice. Within Venice you'll use the public water bus service (a 2-day vaporetto pass is included).

3. Airport transfers

Your airport arrival transfer is included in the price of the tour. We'll be arranging several transfers through the day, so there may be a short wait to meet other group members arriving at similar times.

Your departure transfer to Venice airport is not included but is simple to arrange locally using water shuttle service from near the hotel or a shuttle bus from Piazzale Roma (Me Ra and Brian will assist with this). Please allow at least 3 hours before your flight departure to catching the water bus or shuttle bus.

4. Your tour hosts and teachers

This tour will be hosted and led by Me Ra Koh and Brian Tausend. Me Ra, affectionately known as The Photo Mom, is the leading photography expert and educator to moms with cameras. She hosts the Disney Junior TV show Capture Your Story with Me Ra Koh. Not only do tens of thousands of moms follow her blog for photo tips and creative inspiration, but she also writes for Disney's Babble and Conde Nast Traveler in which she inspires moms to not only capture their family but live their best life. Her husband Brian, has produced, filmed and directed projects for some of the largest networks and retailers (Disney, NBC, Scripps Network, Sony and Target). He entered the production and directing world with a bang! He first produced, scripted and starred (as the nutty professor) in the instructional DVD series for parents, Refuse to Say Cheese and Beyond the Green Box, with Me Ra in 2006. You'll find Me Ra and Brian great fun to spend time with, as well as being skilled, patient and imaginative teachers.

5. Deposit and balance payments

A deposit of GBP 715 / USD 1000 is required to secure your place on the tour. Further payments, again of GBP 715 / USD 1000 are then due at 10 months and 8 months before departure, with the final balance due 6 months before the tour starts. All payments are non-refundable once made. This payment schedule is designed to help you budget for the tour and to allow us enough lead time to fill places should any cancellations take place.

6. Tipping

Tipping is common practice in Italy. For basic restaurants, taxis and local markets, leave the loose change. For more up-market restaurants we suggest 10% of your bill.

Drivers: You may have a range of private drivers on your trip. For those you see for at least several days and who are more involved with the group, a tip of around EUR 1-2 per person per day is generally appropriate.

Tour guide/tour leader: If you think your local tour guide and/or tour leader has worked hard and provided a good service then s/he will appreciate a tip of a few Euros. How much you tip is subject to your satisfaction with their service and your personal budget. You should not feel pressured to tip any particular amount. As a guideline, we can suggest that for good service, a tip of EUR 5-10 per day for local tour guides or local tour leaders would be fine (less

if you are spending less time with them).

7. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation. UK travellers visiting other European Union countries including Italy should also carry the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) as it entitles travellers to reduced cost, sometimes free, medical treatment in most European countries.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination.

You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. No additional courses or boosters are normally recommended for Italy though you could consider Tetanus and Tick-borne Encephalitis.

More information is available here: [Italy](#)

[Malaria map](#) - there is low to no risk of malaria in Italy, none in tourist areas.

Yellow fever certificates are not required.

8. Passports and Visas

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

Some foreign nationals require a visa to enter Italy, though many do not (including UK, EU, US, CA, AU, NZ, SA). More information is available [here](#).

9. Time

Italy Time (CEST) is GMT plus 2 hours. Daylight saving adjustments of 1 hour are applied, starting at the end of March and finishing at the end of October. Exact dates vary from year to year.

10. Money

The currency in Italy is the Euro (EUR). 1 Euro = 100 Euro cents. Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200. Euros Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 Euro Cents and 1, 2.

Credit Cards and Travellers Cheques are widely accepted in major cities and tourist resorts. ATMs are also accessible at all our destinations and generally offer the best exchange rate. A mixture of debit, credit cards and cash are the best forms of currency. You should split this up and keep some separately as a backup in case you lose your main money/cards. We recommend you advise your credit card company that you will be travelling abroad before you leave home.

It is difficult for us to specify the amount of money that you will spend per day, however, as a general rule EUR 20 to 40 per day can provide you with additional meals, tipping, snacks and drinks. Should you wish to purchase many souvenirs or other luxuries, of which there is a diverse range, you will have to budget for these.

11. What to take

Luggage: Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you to Italy. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. This can double as your camera bag. Your main luggage will normally be

left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips – you will not need to carry it far, and there are usually hotel porters to assist if required.

Luggage limits: There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

Clothing: Italy's climate changes drastically, with cold winters and hot summers. In Italy from late March to May, spring brings with it average temperatures of around 15C, though the weather does gradually warm up with sunny days interspersed with rain showers. From May to the end of October, the climate is hot and sunny, getting cooler as the year progresses. By the end of October you can expect the first of the winter snows in the north. So you must pack for cool and potentially wet conditions late in the year.

Other items: We also recommend you bring a sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries, money belt, small torch, as well as your camera equipment and chargers.

12. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

13. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable. Details about our own policies cover levels are given [on our website](#).

14. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

15. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudice: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to

have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

16. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

17. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.



Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
