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in partnership with
Volendo Viaggi

PRESENT

CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI AND THE BEST OF NORTHERN ITALY

The places where the polychoral style was developed!
Your voice will resound among the beautiful mosaics of St. Mark's!
Visit Venice, Verona, Mantua, Cremona, Milan!

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CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI AND THE BEST OF NORTHERN ITALY

Milan - Cremona - Verona - Venice - Mantua - Milan (6 days / 5 nights)



Highlights of the tour:

La Scala Theatre and Museum in Milan

Da Vinci's *Last Supper* in Milan

Duomo's rooftop sights of Milan

Stradivari Violin Museum in Cremona

Visit of *Arena* of Verona, a place of world famous Opera Festival

Guided tour of the historic opera house of *Teatro La Fenice* in Venice

Visit of *Bibienna's Theatre* in Mantua

Performances:

Saint Abbondio Church in Cremona, the native town of Claudio Monteverdi

One of historical *churches* in the centre of Verona

Singing at a mass in *Basilica of St Mark's* in Venice

The present program is built to pay a tribute to a great Italian composer, *Claudio Monteverdi* (1567 - 1643), a pioneer of transition from Renaissance music to Baroque era and inventor of a new genre of opera. His heritage in Renaissance polyphony and in the new basso technique of the Baroque music is more than notable.

Monteverdi, native from Italian city of Cremona, has lived and worked in Venice, Milan, Mantua and Ferrara. The itinerary of this tour covers all these cities where you will be able to perform and explore them with professional guides, specialized in history of arts and music.

DAY 1: Milan

Arrival of the group to Milan in the morning, the unofficial northern capital of Italy. Meeting by our assistant and transfer to hotel. After checking in and taking rooms, our bus expects you to start the exploration of Milan.

We shall start our tour with famous Duomo, the third biggest church in Christendom, and in a clear day we shall not miss the opportunity to climb the roof for a surprising view of the city, stroll in Vittorio Emanuele Gallery, the oldest covered shopping arcades in Europe, proceed to world famous opera house, Theatre della Scala for a guided tour of the Theatre and its Museum. The Theatre is located in Anguissola palace dating back to 18th century, a gem by itself, and a unique opportunity for opera and theatre lovers to admire a rich collection of costumes, musical instruments and portraits. During your tour, led by an expert guide, you'll visit this incredible theatre's foyer, and see the auditorium, the theatre boxes, the pit orchestra and the stage itself.

The visit continues to see a majestic Sforzesco Castle (from outside), once home to the noble Visconti family, and reach Santa Maria delle Grazie Church to see The Last Supper.

We stop for dinner in the most truly Milan restaurant, Antica Trattoria della Pesa, located in a 19th century weigh station, to taste a fabulous pasta and local wine.

After dinner, transfer to hotel. Overnight in hotel 4 stars in immediate surroundings of Milan.

DAY 2: Milan - Cremona

After breakfast in hotel, transfer to Cremona, a native town of Claudio Monteverdi and a capital of violin making. Our guide takes you around the town. We walk in the centre of the town where Monteverdi lived and worked for 20 years, visit a Cathedral dated 1107 with its beautiful frescos, Baptistery, and proceed to Stradivari Violin Museum to admire a rare collection of violins and to learn more about secrets of violin - making.

In the late afternoon a performance in Church of Saint Abbondio in centre of Cremona.

Dinner in a typical restaurant of Cremona Il Violino where we shall taste a famous Cremona's dessert - *il torrone!* Overnight in hotel 3 stars in Cremona.

DAY 3: Cremona - Verona

After breakfast in hotel, transfer to Verona. We start our guided walking tour of Verona's centre to see Shakespeare's Romeo and Giulietta places and admire Duomo Sant'Elena, St Anastasia Cappella Giusti, Santa Maria in Chiavica and San Fermo Inferiore churches.

We visit Verona's beautiful and remarkably well-preserved first-century Roman amphitheatre, Arena di Verona, and learn more about summer Opera Festival held here annually.

We dedicate a lunch to wine tasting in a small intimate trattoria with local cuisine and excellent wines. In the afternoon a performance in one of the beautiful churches of Verona.

Free dinner in Verona. Overnight in hotel 3 or 4 stars zone of Verona.

In the evening possibility to attend a concert at Arena of Verona in the period corresponds to the dates of the Festival. The bookings should be done at least 2 months in advance.

DAY 4: Verona - Venice

After early breakfast in hotel, a transfer to Venice. We start our visit of Venice with introduction about Monteverdi's connections this city. We visit St Marks' Basilica (10th century) to admire its mosaics and proceed to visit Palazzo Ducale, founded in the 9th century and the official residence of each Venetian ruler. Then we visit the Ospedale San Lazzero dei Mendicanti, one of several churches in Venice that provided musical education for impoverished young girls. After a free lunch in the centre, we visit a historic opera house of Teatro La Fenice and stroll along the Bridge of Sighs and take our time for a romantic gondola ride.

Transfer to a sea resort near Venice, Lido di Jesolo. Dinner in a seaside restaurant and overnight in hotel located 200 meters from the beach.

DAY 5: Venice - Mantua

After breakfast we travel by private coach to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Mantua. We admire Mantegna's 'Camera degli Sposi' in the magnificent Ducal Palace with its 500 rooms. We have a lunch in a centre of Mantua to taste pumpkin ravioli or risotto as per mantovan traditional recipes. Then we visit a famous Theatre Bibiena, where thirteen-year-old Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart performed a resoundingly successful concert in 1769. Free dinner in Mantua. Overnight in hotel in Mantua or close surroundings.

DAY 6: Mantua - Milan

After breakfast in hotel, transfer to the airport of Milan and departure. If the flight is late in the afternoon, it is possible to have some free time in Milan before departure.

The suggested dates for this tour: period of spectacular Lyrics Festival held in Arena of Verona (consult the official site for the dates and the program: <http://www.arena.it/en-US>)

The dates when the tour is not effected due to closure of Museums: 24 - 26 December, 31 December-1st January, 1st May and 15th August.

The package includes:

Accommodations:

01 night hotel 4 stars near Milan;

01 night in hotel 3 stars in Cremona;

01 night in hotel 3 or 4 stars in surroundings of Verona;
01 night in hotel 3 stars in Lido di Jesolo, max 200 meters from the sea;
01 night in hotel 3 stars in Mantua or close surroundings;
The accommodations are intended on double basis with 2 singles and other singles on request.
Treatment: bed and breakfast (breakfast is served buffet);

Professional English speaking guides in:
center of Milan walking tour, Theatre La Scala with Museum;
Cremona and Stradivari violin museum;
Verona center;
Venice and visit of La Fenice Theater;
Mantua and Theatre Bibiena.

All transfers as indicated in the program in a comfortable bus with air conditioning;

Performances in:
Saint Abbondio Church in Cremona, the native town of Claudio Monteverdi;
One of historical churches in the center of Verona;
Singing at a mass in Basilica of St Mark's in Venice.

Extras:

Single room supplement on request;
Insurance;
Entrance fees to places of interest (State run museums free to over 65s);
Lunches, dinners and tastings during the tour;
Audio headphones during the excursions;
City taxes if applicable to be paid directly in hotels (from 1,50 up to 3,50 euro per person per day);
A possibility to attend an opera at Teatro La Fenice in Venice (to be booked in advance, see the program here:
www.teatrolafenice.it .

FACT SHEET FOR YOUR TRAVEL TO ITALY



PASSPORT VALIDITY:

Must be valid for at least three months beyond your planned date of departure from the Schengen area. (Six months recommended)

Italy is a party to the Schengen Agreement. This means that U.S. citizens may enter Italy without a visa for up to 90 days within each 180-day period for tourist or business purposes. Your passport should be valid for at least three months beyond your intended date of departure from the Schengen area. You need sufficient funds and a return airline ticket. If your passport does not meet the Schengen requirements, you may be refused boarding by the airline at your point of origin or while transferring planes. You could also be denied entry when you arrive in the Schengen area. For this reason, we recommend that your passport have at least six months 'validity remaining whenever you travel abroad. Please note that individual airlines and cruise companies may have additional, different requirements; be sure to confirm when purchasing tickets. For additional details about travel into and within Schengen countries, please see our Schengen fact sheet.

CUSTOMS:

Italy requires documentation regarding the background of all antiques and antiquities before these items are taken out of the country. Under Italian law, all antiquities found on Italian soil are considered state property, and there are other restrictions on antique artwork. Even if purchased from a business in Italy, legal ownership of artifacts may be in question if brought into the United States. Therefore, although they don't necessarily confer ownership, documents such as export permits and receipts are required when importing such items into the United States.

TOURIST VISA REQUIRED:

Not required for stays under 90 days

VACCINATIONS:

None

CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY:

10,000 Euros or equivalent

ELECTRICITY:

The electrical current in Italy is 220 volts, 50 cycles alternating current (AC); wall outlets accept continental-type plugs, with two or three round prongs.

You may purchase a universal adapter, which has several types of plugs in one lightweight, compact unit, at travel specialty stores, electronics stores, and online. You can also pick up plug adapters in Italy in any electric supply store for about €2 each. You'll likely not need a voltage converter, though. Most portable devices are dual voltage (i.e., they operate equally well on 110 and 220 volts); just check label specifications and manufacturer instructions to be sure. Don't use 110-volt outlets marked "for shavers only" for high-wattage appliances such as hair dryers.

CRIME

Italy has a moderate rate of crime. Nevertheless, you should exercise extra caution at night and at train stations, airports, nightclubs, bars, and outdoor cafes. If you are drinking heavily, your ability to judge situations and make decisions may be impaired, making you a target for crime.

HEALTH

Medical facilities are available, but may be limited outside urban areas. Public hospitals, though generally free of charge for emergency services, may not maintain the same standards as hospitals in the United States; you are encouraged to obtain insurance that would cover a stay in a private Italian hospital or clinic. In general, you are required to pay for all services up front, and get reimbursed later from your insurance company. Please note that it is not possible to obtain an itemized hospital bill from public hospitals, as required by many U.S. insurance companies, because the Italian National Health Service charges one inclusive rate for care services and room and board.

ATMS AND BANKS:

An ATM (bancomat in Italian) is the easiest way to get euros in Italy. There are numerous ATMs in large cities and small towns, as well as in airports and train stations. Be sure to memorize your PIN in numbers, as ATM keypads in Italy won't always display letters. Check with your bank to confirm that you have an international PIN (codice segreto) that will be recognized in the countries you're visiting; to raise your maximum daily withdrawal allowance; and to learn what your bank's fee is for withdrawing money (Italian banks don't charge withdrawal fees). Be aware that PINs beginning with a 0 (zero) tend to be rejected in Italy.

CREDIT CARDS:

It's a good idea to inform your credit card company before you travel, especially if you're going abroad and don't travel internationally often. Otherwise, the credit card company might put a hold on your card owing to unusual activity—not a welcome occurrence halfway through your trip. Record all your credit card numbers—as well as the phone numbers to call if your cards are lost or stolen. Keep these in a safe place, so you're prepared should something go wrong. MasterCard and Visa have general numbers you can call (collect if you're abroad) if your card is lost. But you're better off calling the number of your issuing bank, because MasterCard and Visa generally just transfer you there; your bank's number is usually printed on your card.

EATING OUT:

Italian cuisine is still largely regional. Ask what the specialties are—and, by all means, try spaghetti alla carbonara (with bacon and egg) in Rome, pizza in Naples, bistecca alla fiorentina (steak) in Florence, cinghiale (wild boar) in Tuscany, la frittura (fish fry) in Venice, and risotto alla milanese in Milan. Although most restaurants in Italy serve local dishes, you can find Asian and Middle Eastern alternatives in Rome, Venice, and other cities. The restaurants we list are the cream of the crop in each price category.

MEALTIMES

Breakfast (la colazione) is usually served from 7 to 10:30, lunch (il pranzo) from 12:30 to 2:30, and dinner (la cena) from 7:30 to 10, later in the south; outside those hours, best head for a bar. Peak times are usually 1:30 for lunch and 9 for dinner. Enoteches and Venetian bacari (wine bars) are also open in the morning and late afternoon for cicchetti (finger foods) at the counter. Most pizzerias open at 8 pm and close around midnight—later in summer and on weekends. Bars and cafés are open from 7 am until 8 or 9 pm; a few stay open until midnight.

Most restaurants have a cover charge per person, usually listed at the top of the check as coperto or pane e coperto. It should be a modest (€1–€2.50 per person) except at the most expensive restaurants. Whenever in doubt, ask before you order to avoid unpleasant discussions later. It's customary to leave a small cash tip (between 5% and 10%) in appreciation of good service: you will usually see a servizio charge included at the bottom of the check, but the server will not likely receive it.

WHAT TO PACK:

In summer, stick with light clothing, as things can get steamy in June, July, and August. But throw in a sweater in case of cool evenings, especially if you're headed for the mountains or islands. Sunglasses, a hat, and sunblock are essential. Brief summer-afternoon thunderstorms are common in inland cities, so an umbrella will come in handy. In winter, bring a coat, gloves, hats, scarves, and boots. In winter, weather is generally milder than it is in the northern and central United States, but central heating may not be up to your standards, and interiors can be cold and damp; take wools or flannel rather than sheer fabrics. Bring sturdy shoes for winter and comfortable walking shoes in any season.

As a rule, Italians dress exceptionally well. They don't usually wear shorts, unless they are at the beach. Men aren't required to wear ties or jackets anywhere, except in some of the grander hotel dining rooms and top-level restaurants, but are expected to look reasonably sharp—and they do. Formal wear is the exception rather than the rule at the opera nowadays, though people in expensive seats usually do get dressed up.

A certain modesty of dress (no bare shoulders or knees) is expected in churches, and strictly enforced in many. For sightseeing, pack a pair of binoculars; they'll help you get a good look at painted ceilings and domes.

HOURS OF OPERATION:

Religious and civic holidays are frequent in Italy. Depending on the holiday's local importance, businesses may close for the day. Businesses don't close Friday or Monday when the holiday falls on the weekend, though the Monday following Easter is a holiday.

Banks are open weekdays 8:30–1:30 and for one or two hours in the afternoon, depending on the bank. Most post offices are open Monday–Saturday 9–1:30, some until 2; central post offices are open 9–6:30 weekdays, 9–12:30 or 9–6:30 on Saturday.

Most churches are open from early morning until noon or 12:30, when they close for three hours or more; they open again in the afternoon, closing at about 6. A few major churches, such as St. Peter's in Rome and San Marco in Venice, remain open all day. Walking around during services is discouraged. Many museums are closed one day a week, often Monday or Tuesday. During low season museums often close early; during high season many stay open until late at night.

Most shops are open Monday–Saturday 9–1 and 3:30 or 4–7:30. Clothing shops are generally closed Monday mornings. Barbers and hairdressers, with certain exceptions, are closed Sunday and Monday. Some bookstores and fashion- or tourist-oriented shops in places such as Rome and Venice are open all day, as well as Sunday. Many branches of large chain supermarkets such as Standa, COOP, and Esselunga don't close for lunch and are usually open Sunday; smaller alimentari (delicatessens) and other food shops are usually closed one evening during the week (it varies according to the town) and are almost always closed Sunday.

HAVE A NICE TRIP TO ITALY AND ENJOY YOUR STAY!