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in partnership with
Volendo Viaggi

PRESENT

FROM CACCINI TO PUCCINI: MAGIC TUSCANY AND ROME

For your choir will be like living in a dream to have the opportunity to sing in these places, among the most beautiful in Italy and the entire world!

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MUSIC TOUR TO THE PLACES OF CACCINI AND PUCCINI, IN TUSCANY AND ROME

*Rome - Florence - Lucca - Torre del Lago - Pisa - Siena - San Gimignano
Montepulciano - Orvieto - Bracciano - Vatican - Rome*



Highlights of the tour:

Rome: Coliseum and Rome Forum
Uffizi Gallery in Florence
Brunelleschi's Dome in Florence
Puccini's birthplace in Lucca
Magnificent lakeside villa of Puccini in Torre del Lago
Pisa's Leaning Tower
Siena and San Gimignano
Wine tasting in Montepulciano
Visit of medieval Orvieto
Vatican by night

Performances:

Church of San Michele in a medieval town of Lucca
Tettuccio Spa concert in Montecatini Terme
Singing at a mass in Basilica San Pietro in Vatican. **This is the holiest site to perform in Italy.**

This new tour of 2015 combines singing in the most prestigious venues in Tuscany and Rome with a rich cultural program. The beauty of Tuscany is incomparable, providing a truly striking and inspirational place for you to visit and perform. This region offers a variety of venues suitable for bands, orchestras and choirs, such as the Chiesa di San Michele in medieval Lucca and spectacular Tettuccio Spa in Montecatini. You will have the opportunity to explore the city of Florence, the birthplace of the Renaissance, and Pisa, to see its famous leaning tower. Giacomo Puccini was born in Lucca, "the most fly-in-amber little town in the world". We shall visit the lakeside village of Torre del Lago, where Puccini composed inter alia Madama Butterfly, La bohème and Tosca and the place of world famous Puccini's Festival in August and admire a wonderful

collection of Puccini's Museum. We shall see the small Tuscan treasure of Montepulciano and finish our tour with a magnetic singing in San Pietro Basilica in Vatican!

DAY 1: Arrival - Rome: Coliseum, Roman Forum

Arrival to Rome. Our assistant meets a group in the airport. Transfer to hotel in Rome. Checking in and taking the rooms, quick freshening up and departure for an afternoon tour of sightseeing in Rome center with our professional guide. We start from Oppian Hill – one of the famous Seven Hills of Rome -- to enjoy panoramic views of the Coliseum and then visit (skipping the line with priority entrance tickets) the Coliseum. Learn all about the gladiators and the emperors who decided their fates. A short walk from the Coliseum brings us to the Roman Forum for an up-close look at some of Ancient Rome's most evocative ruins. See sites like the Temple of Julius Caesar and the intriguing House of the Vestal Virgins, before strolling up Palatine Hill to admire the views of the ruins below. Free dinner in a suggested restaurant in Rome. Overnight in hotel in Rome.



DAY 2: Full day in Florence

After breakfast in hotel, at 08 30 we leave Rome and head for Florence. We arrive approximately at 12 00 in Florence and have a free time for quick lunch. After that we head for Uffizi Gallery with our skip-the-line ticket. You will admire early Renaissance treasures by Giotto, and then stroll through halls dedicated to Michelangelo, da Vinci, Caravaggio and Raphael. The highlights of this visit are da Vinci's Annunciation and Michelangelo's Doni Tondo and the great collection of Caravaggio's works.

After Uffizi, we go to Duomo, topped by the distinctive Brunelleschi's Dome, visit Giotto's Bell Tower and see Florence Baptistery. We pass Piazza della Signoria – Florence's central square - and go to Palazzo Vecchio, the city hall, and continue past the New Market (Mercato Nuovo) to see Il Porcellino, the city's much-loved bronze piglet statue. Stop to rub the statue's nose for luck, and then wander back toward the river, cross the magnificent Ponte Vecchio, and finish your tour by Pitti Palace. While walking around Florence, we learn about the operas and work of great Italian composer Caccini in Florence.

Transfer to Montecatini Terme, a nice spa resort near Florence, dinner and overnight in hotel in Montecatini.



DAY 3: Pisa, Lucca, Torre del Lago, Puccini house and concert

After breakfast in hotel, we head for Pisa. The iconic symbol of Italy, Pisa's bell-tower would be a beautiful and architecturally significant building even without its famous lean. Rising eight storeys above the aptly named Campo dei Miracoli - the field of miracles - the tower was used by Galileo in his experiments on gravity.

Then we depart for the town of Lucca to visit the birthplace of Giacomo Puccini. Our guide leads you to the discovery of the sites in Lucca linked to the well-known composer Giacomo Puccini to understand the strong link between Puccini and his home place. You will visit his birthplace, the churches where he played the organ and the places he used to hang out.

The guided tour starts from the house where the great artist was born in 1858, in the nearby Piazza della Cittadella stands a bronze statue dedicated to him. The guide will take you to the sites linked to his artistic training: the Church of San Paolino where Puccini started his career as a musician playing the organ and the Music Institute "Boccherini" where he learned to play the piano and the organ. You will also visit the church of San Pietro Somaldi, which contains a most valuable organ signed by Puccini, and to the Duomo of San Martino, in which all his ancestors have practiced as organists, composers and performers. The visit will end in Piazza del Giglio, dominated by the main theatre of the city where all the Puccini operas have been performed with triumphant success.

After Lucca, we are heading for Villa Puccini located close to Lucca in Torre del Lago. The renovated villa - museum was opened in 2012, after a long and generous restaurant works. This picturesque place (elegant villa on the shores of the lake Massaciuccoli) was a real inspiration for Puccini. Here he composed some of his most renowned operas. Giacomo Puccini's remains rest today in the chapel annexed to his beloved villa.

Evening performance at 17 00 in Church San Michele in the centre of Lucca.

Dinner and overnight in hotel in Montecatini Terme.



DAY 4: Siena, San Gimignano and concert

After breakfast in hotel, we depart for Siena. Our tour starts from the Basilica of San Domenico, with the sacred relic of St. Catherine, and then we see the ancient and aristocratic palaces such as the Tolomei and the Chigi ones and the historic headquarters of Monte dei Paschi di Siena, the oldest bank in the world. We shall not miss a splendid Cathedral of the Assumption, rich in masterpieces by Bernini, Michelangelo, Giovanni Pisano and Pinturicchio. The tour ends at the top of Tower del Mangia, after you make a hundred steps to climb it, to get a magnificent view all over Siena's centre.

We have a nice lunch in a typical restaurant in a centre of Siena and head for San Gimignano to see its perfectly preserved Medieval streets, squares, churches and world renowned towers. A real dive into the Middle Age! After getting to the Rocca di Montestaffoli and a breathtaking view over the surrounding

Tuscan hills, we will end the tour with a visit to the Church of Sant'Agostino: a real museum of painting and sculpture with several masterpieces by Benozzo Gozzoli, Vincenzo Tamagni, Bartolo di Fredi, Tino di Camaino. We return to Montecatini to sing in a concert in a famous Tettuccio Spa. Dinner and overnight in hotel in Montecatini.



DAY 5: Montepulciano, Orvieto, singing Mass in St. Peter, Vatican

After breakfast in hotel, we leave Montecatini to reach Montepulciano. Montepulciano is still an undiscovered Tuscany gem. Standing imperiously on a tufa hill, it is one of the most intact and architecturally beautiful towns in Italy. We shall stroll around its medieval streets and stop by in a nice winery shop for tasting its world famous red wines and buying some good local wines. After lunch, we leave to reach Orvieto, a stronghold of Etruscan times.

Upon reaching Rome, we make a quick checking in hotel and leave for participation in a Mass in Basilica San Pietro in Vatican. It is the holiest place to sing in Italy! After performance, we have time to enjoy walking in Vatican up to Castel Sant'Angelo in the evening to enjoy a fantastic illumination of the riverside and Vatican city. Free dinner in Rome. Overnight in hotel in Rome.



DAY 6: Departure

After breakfast in hotel, we have free time in Rome (depending on the time of departure from Rome) and a transfer to the airport of Rome.

The Package Includes:

Accommodation:

02 nights in hotel 3 stars in Rome;

03 nights in hotel 3 stars in Montecatini Terme near Florence;

On double basis;

5 breakfasts (in all hotel of the tour) and 3 dinners (hotel in Montecatini);

in treatment bed and breakfast (breakfast buffet) in Rome and half board (breakfast and dinner) in Montecatini;

All transfers as indicated in the program:

Professional English speaking guides in:

Coliseum and Roman Forum in Rome;

Uffizi Gallery in Florence and walking tour around Florence;

Leaning Tower in Pisa;

walking tour in Lucca;

visit of Puccini's villa in Torre del Lago;

walking tour of Siena and San Gimignano;

Tasting wines and cheese in Montepulciano.

Performances in:

Church of San Michele in a medieval town of Lucca

Tettuccio Spa concert in Montecatini Terme

Singing at a mass in Basilica San Pietro in Vatican

Extras:

Single room supplement on request;

Insurance;

Entrance fees to places of interest, museums, sites, etc. (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 (euro 1,00 per person in Montecatini Terme and euro 4,00 per person per day);

Drinks for dinner in hotel in Montecatini to be paid directly in hotel.

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!