

THE OTHER ITALY

From cruising the forgotten islands of Venice to devouring the street foods of Naples, our specialists reveal their tips for escaping the tourist trail and experiencing Italy like a local...





Keeping afloat
Gondolas are still the ideal way to explore the crumbling canals of ancient Venice

ITALY

SEE THE OLDEST BUILDING IN THE LAGOON ON A BRAGOZZO TOUR OF VENICE

By Kimberly Fitzgibbon



I journeyed to Torcello, five miles northeast of the city, where I crossed the lagoon on a *bragozzo*, a traditional Venetian flat-bottomed boat with a motor. Very soon, I felt like we were entering a different world.

We skimmed past uninhabited swathes of marshland covered in reed beds and tall grasses, among which heron and other wading birds stalked. Fishermen stood in the shallows, collecting crabs by hand, their boats moored nearby. These shallow mudflats and sandbanks are one of the lagoon's secrets.

Rising out of the swamps and saltmarshes, the barely-populated islet of Torcello looked almost ghostly. A listing bell tower stood above its vineyards and grass, which spread out around a small gravel piazza and were crossed by silted canals. Similar to the popular Venetian island of Burano, most of Torcello's houses were painted,



albeit patchily. The whole island was a vignette of a Venice lost in time.

The simple brick facade of Torcello's basilica gave no hint of the startlingly golden mosaics inside. They're even older than those found in St Mark's Basilica. I enjoyed pouring over the Last Judgement, which took up the whole of the west wall. Its expressive demonic and angelic figures were accompanied by more quirky details, such as sea monsters. Interestingly, it also incorporated non-biblical images: the scales used to weigh human souls come straight out of Egyptian theology.

Canal dreams
Colorful facades found in the islands of the Venetian lagoon



Rome with a view

The Basilica of St Paul, as seen from Aventine Hill – one of the Seven Hills on which ancient Rome was built



TAKE A VESPA TOUR OF ROME

By Eva Costanza



Taking a Vespa tour in Rome feels like the quintessential Italian tour. It's the ideal balance of new and old Rome – discovering the city's history on a staple of modern-day Roman life.

While my guide drove, I was able to take in the views and cover a wide range of the city, including sites like the Pantheon, the Baths of Caracalla, the Circus Maximus, and the Giardino degli Aranci (orange garden) overlooking Rome. My driver made sure to stop at each and describe the history I was seeing.

Being on a Vespa also gave me time to visit some lesser-seen sights, such as the Roman Spa and Testaccio, which is home to some unique remains. My favorite part, though, was exploring Trastevere's narrow winding streets and cafe-lined piazzas, where I was able to get a glimpse into real Roman life.



DEVOUR A FOOD TOUR OF NAPLES

by Caroline Quinn



To really get to know Naples like the locals, you have to first get to know its food. Naples

is known as the birthplace of pizza, but it also has many traditional foods sold in cafés and stalls that contribute to its culinary culture.

This summer, I strolled through the narrow streets of the historical center, sampling everything from ‘pizza fritta’ (fried pizza) to rum babas, small cakes soaked in rum and served at most local cafés.

Since Naples is on the coast, there is a wealth of seafood. Cones of *fritto misto di mare* (fried mixed seafood) are a popular street food, and one of my favorites. During summer, you’ll also find vendors selling *granita* – frozen desserts made with sugar and water – with lemon being the most popular flavor. One can easily eat a whole meal by sampling a few of the local street food specialties.

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Food for the eyes
Naples' love affair with food goes far beyond the humble pizza – a dish the city is also credited with creating

Travel Essentials

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