

Untold Italy Episode 53 - 2021 Kick off - planning the perfect Italy itinerary

[00:00:00.060] - Katy

You are listening to the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and this is episode number 53.

[00:00:12.700] - Josie

Ciao and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, I'm Josie.

[00:00:15.790] - Katy

And I'm Katy, and we're here to help you plan your trip to Italy.

[00:00:19.630] - Josie

Between us, we have many years of travel experience and we want to help you uncover your own as yet untold stories and adventures in Italy.

[00:00:27.670] - Katy

Each episode, you'll hear practical advice, tips and ideas to help you plan your own trips to the magical land of history, stunning landscapes and a whole lot of pasta.

[00:00:36.520] - Josie

We'll have interviews from experts and focus on local destinations and frequently asked questions about travel in Italy.

[00:00:43.630] - Katy

Thanks for listening and make sure to subscribe to our show.

[00:00:46.720] - Josie

Now let's get started on your regular dose of Bella Italia.

[00:01:01.380] - Katy

Buon Anno! Happy New Year, everyone, it's Katy here with a big, warm welcome to 2021 and what is hopefully going to be a very exciting year for us with our dreams of being in Italy getting ever closer. We have so many fun episodes coming up for you this year. We're going to take you all around Italy uncovering the places and experiences that you will cherish forever. I can't wait to share some of these dreamy places with you and introduce you to some of my new friends.

[00:01:33.900] - Katy

But on today's episode, we're going to get started on your planning so that you are ready to book that trip you've dreamed about as soon as it is possible or when you're ready to do so. I know it is winter in the northern hemisphere and many of you are stuck indoors. Others of us are on an annual break and looking to do a little mini project. And we recommend getting started on planning your trip to Italy and not just because we think it's a good thing to do.

[00:01:59.610] - Katy

It was actually revealed in several psychological studies recently, including one by Columbia University, that travelers planning a vacation were reportedly happier than those with no intention of going away. And it seems that the lead up to a trip is what produced feelings of happiness in travelers versus non travelers. So with time on our hands and the need for something to look forward to, it looks like there's never been a better time to plan a trip. This week, I've asked my friend Corinna Cook, who is the author of the Glam Italia Guides and also leads tours in Italy to come back on the show and share her tips for planning travels in Italy.

[00:02:39.390] - Katy

We're going to walk you through her itinerary building process step by step and hope that you pick up a few tips along the way. It's going to be lots and lots of fun. But before we begin, if you're super keen to get started planning your own draft itinerary, then we've also got a special challenge starting in a few days that we'd love you to join. The Italy Itinerary Challenge is a five day challenge where you'll create a draft itinerary for your trip to Italy.

[00:03:04.800] - Katy

How it works is we'll send you an email for each of the five days of the challenge. With small task to complete, most only take about 15 to 20 minutes of your time, although you might find that you want to spend more time on it. It'll walk you through the planning process, so at the end of the five days you have a draft itinerary for your travels that takes into account your travel style interests, must sees and logistics.

[00:03:30.510] - Katy

You'll be able to discuss your ideas and get feedback on what you've got planned in the Italy travel, planning community on Facebook or directly from me and other experts in our Untold Italy Insiders group, if you're a member. Are you keen to join the challenge? Great. Then head on over to your podcast app, where I've left a link to all the information on how to join the challenge in the show notes. Or you can go straight to Untold Italy dot com forward slash itinerary challenge and you can get the information directly from there.

[00:04:01.590] - Katy

The challenge starts on January the 3rd 2021. So sign up now to be part of all the fun. We can't wait to see what fun itineraries you produce. But right now, let's welcome Corinna back on the show and hear her ideas on how to manage the Italy trip planning process.

[00:04:20.860] - Katy

Ciao, Corinna, welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

[00:04:25.030] - Corinna

Thank you, Katy and happy New Year. Happy New Year, everybody.

[00:04:29.200] - Katy

Oh, yes. Buon Anno! We are recording this recording a little bit before New Year's, but it is Buon Anno for everyone else. And it's so great to have you here. I just love our chats both on and off the air. And I know all our listeners appreciate your insights. And I wanted to share with you this comment from our Facebook group, Italy Travel Planning, that happened recently. And it just may be from ear to ear. And Donna said, My boyfriend and I have never been to Italy, but it's on our list for a while. I got hooked on your podcast and decided to plan a trip for next summer. The recent podcast on Florence makes me want to spend more time there and also inspired us to work on our list of experiences vs sites. How good is that?

[00:05:20.680] - Corinna

Oh, that makes me so happy.

[00:05:22.790] - Katy

I know. I thought you might like that

[00:05:27.850] - Corinna

It makes me happy.

[00:05:28.690] - Katy

Yeah, it does. I thought I was so happy when I heard that, because I really believe that you need to focus on what experiences you want to have in your trips to Italy and so, you know, what I was reading recently that there's been some recent research about planning trips and it said that planning trips and adventures for the future is a huge mood booster. Do you find that's the case?

[00:05:51.970] - Corinna

Absolutely. And in my own life, when I went through, like, the toughest time of my life was shortly after I got divorced. And I was working all the time and I was just scrambling to try and have enough money to get through the week, which is like everybody's story. But at that time, my big stress buster was that I would make these pretend trips to Italy and I would research things and figure it out. And I would imagine what I was going to do. And like in those moments when I had to myself, it was what I would do to de-stress, you know, and then all the research I would do to plan out these trips was fantastic. And then who knew that I'd end up writing books and actually doing tours and stuff. But it was such a wonderful way to escape. And I think that right now the world's been through so much stress. It's quite nice to be able to just sit there and tinker around and research things and figure out imaginary trips or trips that you may go ahead and do once everything opens back up again.

[00:06:56.920] - Katy

I know I've been doing that too, especially this year. It's been so tough, or last year, I should say, 2020, and I've made so many new itineraries to replace the one that got canceled. But it's really helped me to stay positive and to dream of the future. And, well, you know, let's hope in 2021 that we can finally get back on the road and get back on the plane and get over to Italy.

[00:07:22.720] - Corinna

I've got a feeling we're going to be able to I'm keeping my fingers crossed. But it makes it a perfect time now to be doing the kind of legwork, the kind of research that/so that once we can travel, you've got all dialed in and all figured out. And I think that travel will probably have a slightly different look to it. That's also another reason to do some really good planning now.

[00:07:47.320] - Katy

Yeah, I agree. I think everyone is kind of itching to go. And so on the one hand, you could have quite a lot of competition for people, flights and all the best accommodation. And also you're probably going to find that people want to change around their, what they were thinking of doing and maybe slow things down a bit. And so, yeah, I think it's going to be really interesting, but I do think it's really important to be organized as soon as possible, because in Italy, especially in the peak seasons, even if you're planning out for 23 or 23, it's a really good idea to have things in your mind of what you want to do so you can jump on deals and also get organized and book as soon as you can.

[00:08:31.480] - Corinna

Yes. And I think there's a good chance, too, that things like the big bus tours and the big cruise events may not be back or may not be back looking the same way, I have a feeling that people are going to want to do more small group tours or travel more doing things themselves, perhaps. So it's good to have an idea of what some of the things that you can do and how you would put it together and maybe venture out on your own a little bit more.

[00:09:00.850] - Katy

Well, that sounds like fun. Okay, so as we head into 2021, which as we've said, is bound to be much, much better than 2020, I thought we could give our listeners a bit of an insight into our itinerary planning processes and hopefully give them some more inspiration, now because even if you don't travel for a while or even next year or the year after, as we said, it's never too early to start planning now last year, my co-host, Josie, I recalled an episode on itinerary planning, but I thought since you write guidebooks for Italy and take tour groups there, that you're bound to have a different perspective. So what do you think? Can we walk our listeners through your itinerary planning process? Where do you start?

[00:09:44.260] - Corinna

So I start with what is the goal with this whole thing. And for me, the goal is to make this the most special experience and the most amazing, fun, fascinating trip of your life. That's the goal going in. And I want to create something that you're going to look back at forever. And go 'this was incredible. This was my greatest travel moment' or my greatest time of my life was when I did this thing'. So that's where I start from and I work backwards. And I was thinking for your listeners. The first thing you want to do is you want to figure out what type of traveler are you. So - and all types of travelers are great so that there's no there's no stigma or anything. So you might be a frequent traveler who buzzes around the world and has been to lots of places and feels very confident, comfortable taking off out there on your own. Or maybe you're a first timer and it's like, well, I really want to go see the stuff but this is a whole new country with a whole new language and it can feel a little bit overwhelming. Or perhaps you're someone that has always traveled with a five star experience and you fly first class and you stay in five star hotels and you eat at Michelin restaurants, or maybe you're someone who travels on a budget. And most of my travel as a single mom has been on a supertight budget, a budget so tight it squeaks. But whatever it is that you're at, you kind of want to figure that out first and then design something that's going to work for you. And then you figure out like what type of trip do you want?

[00:11:18.100] - Corinna

And, you know, a lot of that will impact what time of year you go. So, for example, I absolutely love spending my summers on the beaches in Italy. I can never get enough of it. I can never get enough of being on boats and beaches and running around the coast. But if you're not someone that loves being out and about in the heat, then that wouldn't necessarily be the trip for you. Or if you're someone that doesn't care about going to beaches, then you're going to be like, well, I don't want to do that. I want to do this.

[00:11:51.730] - Corinna

I want to go and see museums and things and I want to go and walk the old streets. So you figure out what are the things that really are of most interest to you and kind of get some of that lined up. Or maybe you want a relaxing trip and you love the idea of staying in a villa in Umbria or Tuscany or somewhere and pottering around and having a relaxing time and just enjoy breathing the Italian air. So when you have an idea of what type of trip you want to do, that helps narrow things down some more as well.

[00:12:28.270] - Katy

Yeah, it's true. And I think that some of the challenge is that there's so many possibilities. But I think when you start planning, you're gathering inspiration as you first start planning and you're taking in things from lots of different sources. And so and that helps you form the type of trip that you want. I think at some stage you've got to kind of try and prioritize, I think.

[00:12:52.270] - Corinna

Yeah. And if you have a little bit of an idea going in of what type of trip you want to do, like a more a more extreme example would be if you're into backpacking and tents, like buzzing

around the countryside and pitching a tent and saying and that that's very easy ones that, well, I want to go and do something like that. But trust me, you'll never catch me doing that. But it just helps you kind of figure out, like when you want to go and how you want to go and the types of places you want to go to. For example, it gets really, really, really, really hot there in July and August. So I don't take any of my tours through in July and August. It's too hot, too crowded, too expensive. But were I to be doing a chill out and a villa kind of a deal, I'd be happy to be there right through that whole time.

[00:13:47.380] - Corinna

And I know some people will tell me that they really don't enjoy the heat. So I know that for them walking around sightseeing in like mid-June to say mid September might be too hot. So they might be better off doing a trip that was, you know, so like April, May or October or November, that kind of time. So when you can isolate down some of those things, it really helps a whole lot.

[00:14:12.610] - Katy

I agree. I agree. I think that getting real about what you want. Compared to what other people might think that you want is is a really, I guess, important step in the trip planning process. We, one of our last trips, can't remember which one, but we met a lovely couple that were on honeymoon. And I said to them, how did you come up with your itinerary for this trip? Because they were hitting all the high spots and all the, I guess, really popular places and they actually said to me that they one hundred percent copied a friend of his itinerary. And I thought it was really interesting because I can understand why people would do that, because it's quite obviously easy and they know their friends had a great time, but then I was wondering, are they going to have the most amazing experience that they could have if they're not fully invested. But you know what? It's up to you. If you if you want to follow someone's itinerary, then that's amazing but I think if you want those memories to come through and those ones that you that you are going to cherish forever, then it's going to be those moments that you put a little bit of planning into and then just sit back and relax and let it all wash over you.

[00:15:30.570] - Corinna

Exactly. And what I recommend to people is at this time when we can't travel is the perfect time to do the research and do the fun research of doing things like watching movies that are set in Italy and reading books that are set in Italy and watching TV shows set in Italy. And one of one of the things that I think is incredibly powerful is tracking travel bloggers. So I use Pinterest a lot and it's a really great way to find really good travel bloggers because they speak in a different voice and they tell a different kind of experience. Your regular travel books and everything are going to hit all those hotspots and just send you straight into the storm where all the the tour bus people are going and it's just hitting the same, not homogenize things, but it's just taking you to the same thing. Whereas travel bloggers do so many interesting bits and pieces, I constantly find fascinating things because of travel bloggers. One, for example, was I was going to Barcelona and I thought, well, what are some really unusual things to do in Barcelona? What are some other things I might not already know

about and through, like, going on Pinterest and typing in unusual things to do in Barcelona? What are some other things to do in Barcelona? That kind of thing. I found these bloggers who went to this town called Girona, which is only like it's 40 minutes by train and it looks just like Tuscany, which is right up my alley. And they had this little town I'd never even heard of before. They're like, here are ten things to do there. Of course, I went and I did all of them, but it was just really fun. And it was something that was I wouldn't have known about had I not explored that realm. So I think it's a really good thing to do. And then listening to podcasts like yours, I mean, I take notes when I'm listening to your podcast. Of things that's going I want to do because of what I've heard on the air. And actually, I'll tell you of another funny story today, I was thinking about Turin and when I was thinking about this, it's like, OK, so if I wanted to find things to do in Turin, what are some travel bloggers saying? And I actually, and your readers can do this, I Googled travel bloggers Turin and in the list up comes Untold Morsels. And I'm like, what's this? I click on it and there's your smiling face.

[00:17:59.560] - Katy

Well, I was going to say, far be it for me to just like promote travel bloggers all the time, but as a travel blogger myself, that's how I started out, you know, that's really - was my passion. And so I know a lot of other travel bloggers that put so much time and effort into producing amazing content that you can find on the web. And, you know, I think, I hope to raise up as many of those people as possible by putting them on the podcast as well so we can talk about them. And one lady appeared earlier last year, Lori Sorrentino, and she spent a lot of time in Italy exploring Emilia-Romagna in particular and so that was amazing to have her on the show. But I agree. I love Pinterest. It really is - I think it's a bit like a mood board almost. And people use it a lot for lots of different things. But yeah, it's definitely got heaps of travel content on there. So if you haven't used that, you should really give it a go.

[00:18:59.150] - Corinna

Yeah. And if you're like at that space where you're thinking, well, I don't know where I want to go and I think a lot of people, when they start out, it's like, wow, here's a map and there's this great big country and how am I supposed to figure out where to go? Pinterest can be a great resource, just typing in things to do in Italy and things to do in this part of Italy and that part of Italy. And you start getting these great visuals, obviously, because it's a visual medium, but it helps you to find these great travel bloggers and, you know, you can read through some fantastic things and be like, yeah, but that's not quite what I want to do on this trip. And that was interesting to know about, but I don't want to do that. But oh, look at this one. I, I have to do this on the must do list and I think it's really incredibly helpful and it's real people not doing corporate speak at you. You know, they're not saying eat at Chez Mario, it's dollars, dollars, dollars. To get good information about - this town is 30 minutes away by train from Florence and you can take this train and it goes straight there and when you get there across the street and there's this ice cream shop. They just give you really I find really manageable information for real people.

[00:20:11.870] - Katy

You know, I think it's great. I also use Instagram for inspiration, too, and I know Paola who appeared on an episode last year about Puglia, she was saying that she uses Instagram and not even just travel Instagrammers, but people that may have maybe lived there or have got some different perspective, like they might be a chef or something like that. And I think Instagram is a great way to get some inspiration, especially pretty places. But you have to be a bit careful because sometimes the images have been a bit, I guess, improved.

[00:20:48.350] - Corinna

But you can see something like a town that you haven't heard of before. And then you click on that on the location finder and suddenly up comes the whole page of all kinds of different people that have posted there. And you can find fascinating things as well as what to eat there because it's such a regional cuisine. So it's great to know. Oh, gosh, I didn't know you're supposed to order this thing there. How cool was that? And that goes on your list of things you want to do.

[00:21:15.550] - Katy

You know, I think it's that sandwich place in Florence that it's kind of became an Instagram star.

[00:21:22.450] - Corinna

It is the best sandwich of my entire life and I eat there every time I'm in Florence.

[00:21:29.590] - Katy

But they just did / I think some people did some amazing posts on Instagram, but it's just going viral so that there's these big, big queues, there now.

[00:21:38.440] - Corinna

Oh, yeah, they've now opened three. So when I first went there was one. And then I went back the next year when I was there and there was one, the original one and one I cross the road and now there's another one up the street is one of the three of them and it's cranking the whole time. And you do have lots of travelers now who know about it. But there's always a long line of locals who this is where they come and all the sandwiches, they were five euros are now six euros. And so you get this giant sandwich - it's the best sandwich you've ever had in your life and for like another four euros, you can get this, like, tankard of red wine it's so great.

[00:22:14.170] - Katy

I love it. I love it. But it's not just online resources that that are helpful. Even though I have online resources, I always look to books because when you're writing a book and Corinna you know this very well yourself, there's a lot of effort and research and fact checking that goes into making a book, because to get a publishing deal, you need to be producing something extremely high quality. So I always look at guidebooks as a starting point because you can get some good ideas of itineraries and, you know, a little bit deeper dive into some of the, I

guess, the regions, if you want to know from historical perspective. And so, like, I always usually get the Lonely Planet, that's been as a starting point. And I have when I discovered Corinna's books, I was off! For lots of juicy details and quirky things to do and just a passion, the passion that comes out instead of maybe more dry factual kind of book.

[00:23:19.030] - Corinna

Yeah, well, another great resource with books is there's all these people who've gone over there and bought a house and done it up and done that whole thing. And they're always full of great tidbits when you look and you read in between the lines and you read all the bits and pieces. So for me, I want to say it was 1998 when Under the Tuscan Sun came out and my mom bought me that book and up until that point, Peter Mayle's A Year in Provence was my favorite book. And then she gives me this one and it absolutely changed my world. And I was thinking about it that pre - I want to say it's 1998 but I might be wrong on that pre then who had heard of Cortona? Who even knew about Cortona. Nobody. You know, Italians/Tuscans did. But but it was just a little town on a hill in a part of Tuscany. And then Francis Mayes with her stories, made everybody fall in love with it. But like, I know which places to go to there and I know where to go and sit and have like - I'll actually write down what she has for lunch and what place and I'll go there and, you know. I've read all of her books and I get so much great information about little towns, I wouldn't otherwise know which place to look for to go have lunch and it's wonderful. And then there's so many of those books which are just - they're so pleasurable to read people who've gone and done this interesting thing that I dream about doing. But in reality, I'm never going to do. I'm not going to go buy an old house and do it up. I'd be terrible at that. But I love reading about the people doing it.

[00:24:58.600] - Corinna

And and through them, you can find fantastic wineries and fantastic things to go and look at and statues and artwork and interesting old villas with great stories. And it all - it just makes things wonderful. Like another good example is there was this book written by a lawyer who, his wife got a year sabbatical to go to Italy to work on her painting. And so he took the year off and he was just going to sit in the piazza and write a book. And it's one of the funniest books I've ever read. It's called Pasquale's Nose. And they've got this little town called Sutri. And Sutri's claim to fame is it's where Pontius Pilate was born, but that's about it. But this town is fantastic. And I read the book and fell so in love with the book that I had to go to the town. And then it was a whole rigmarole trying to find somewhere to stay because I don't really get tourists there but the more devoted to it I was, the more I was like not going to let it go. But we went there and had a holiday there and it was incredible. And it's one of those things I would never have known about it had I not read that book. And then because they don't get a lot of tourists there, everyone was very interested and it got out that - somebody had said to me, how did you know about Sutri? And I said, I read Michael Rip's book. And that got translated somehow into I was Michael's friend. And I was like no I just read the book, I don't know him, but this is where he sat, sit in his chair and then all the people coming out and meeting us and doing these fun things. And it was such a tremendous part of our holiday or our vacation that we would have completely missed had we not read that book. You know,

so there's a lot of great little bits and pieces, you can find that pad out parts of your trip by reading books and watching movies and things like that.

[00:27:00.680] - Katy

Well, actually, it's funny you say that because a friend of mine gave me a wonderful book by a guy called Anthony Doerr, and he's got a book called *Four Seasons in Rome* and my friend gave it to me because he moved to Rome with baby twins and I'm a mom of twins, so she thought, she knew how much I love Italy, so she gave it to me. So I'm reading it now. And it's just like, yeah, you're so right. And it's just like for me, it just talks to me on many, many different levels because, like, my life experience is fairly similar. We moved overseas with young twins and he moved to Rome, which I thought, wow, and to an apartment that had no elevator.

[00:27:43.670] - Corinna

And it's just right up the hill from where I stay. So he's in Trastevere, but up on the hill, up in Janiculum. And so every single place he talks about in that book, I know exactly where he's talking about. And then it's so fun to go - when you've read a book, or especially, because you almost feel like you're joining the experience with them. So when you then go and walk those streets, you'll be looking for the things that he's talked about. And when you go see them and you go do these different things, it's so exciting and it just gives another whole level of resonance to your trip.

[00:28:17.600] - Katy

It really does. And it's the same with books, movies, TV shows like there's so many of them out there that you can get inspiration. If someone's into Roman history, go watch *Gladiator* and see that get that excitement for going to the Colosseum, you know.

[00:28:34.580] - Corinna

Absolutely. And I think for someone who's like a first timer or who's planning a trip for the first time, because it's quite different than jumping on a bus tour where they've got everything lined up for you. I think for a lot of people they're like, well how do I figure out where I want to go? And so maybe going out to Cortona on your own might be a little bit of a handful, but it's great to start off with looking at the big cities and seeing which of the big cities would really interest you. And then from there, you can figure out small places to sidestep off to because the big cities are very easy to get to from one another. And the train system is so amazing that I think with Italy, perhaps more so than most other countries, you can really get around and you can really plan a tremendous trip quite easily.

[00:29:31.730] - Corinna

So I think a lot of people want to see, for example, Venice and Florence and Rome and maybe go down to the Amalfi Coast. That's actually quite doable. It's not hard to put that together. And then you might say, well, I also want to see some of Tuscany. That's easy to do, figure out from Florence. But it's just great the way it can be so opened up to you and so easy to get around.

[00:29:58.830] - Katy

That's very true, so you do have those trains, but there's a couple of practical things that I always like to tell people when they're planning their own trips. And because it does look so easy when you go, oh, it's two hours, two and a half hours between Rome and Florence. Yes, that's the bit that's on the train. But you've got to build in some transit time to get to the station, organize, get orientated at either end and then make your way to and from your accommodation. So it is a fast train, no doubt, but you are probably going to eat into half a day of your vacation with travel for doing that just to get from A to B. I think that's a really important thing to note because I see a lot of people trying to do this, you know, Rome, Florence, Venice and Amalfi Coast in 10 days. And it's -wooo - that is a fast trip.

[00:30:49.590] - Corinna

That's a lot. I have a rule that I try and stick to where you stay a minimum of three nights in any place. And I try and not move more than three times because it does take up so much holiday time, vacation time with the checking out of one place, the getting to the train station and getting to whatever I get into the new town, getting checked in - you've lost the biggest chunk of the day. So the less you're doing that, the better. And if someone's a first timer or new to setting up travel for themselves, it can be good, for example, to plan on having a few days in Florence and do some day trips from there by train, for example, going to Lucca. That's really easy. If you're based in Florence, you can buzz out to Lucca for a day out to Arezzo for a day. There's lots of things you can do from there. So you're not having to pack your bags and move. You know, you just stay in that one home base.

[00:31:54.850] - Katy

Yeah, I agree - so much easier to do it that way, and in fact, when I did my trip last year and I'm very experienced in Italy, so I know what to do, but I would still to this day prefer to do that because you can come back, relax unpack have your shower, you don't have to worry about where you're going onto the next day, because the reality is that - I don't know too many people that have been to Italy just once, actually.

[00:32:23.620] - Corinna

Exactly.

[00:32:25.120] - Katy

Once you got a little bit of a taste, you're always kind of wanting to go back. And so I think as tempting as it is to try and do it all. You can't. You actually can't even in a lifetime. You can't do it all. So, you know, just try and resist the temptation to travel every two days because it is exhausting, actually. And I think there's a few extra steps that you may not anticipate, just understanding the culture and how things work and making sure that you get from A to B and you know what? You'll make mistakes. We've got a whole episode on some of the mistakes we've made!

[00:33:03.940] - Corinna

Everything I know, I know from doing it the hard way. I make a mistake in the book, which - it doesn't matter for me because I was just swanning around doing nothing overly important anyway. But when you're saving up for your trip and you've got 10 days, two weeks, it's like the average spell, then I think it's really important to figure that stuff out and to cut back, to not do as many things as yo were originally thinking. So I'd say start off, make this big list, like, look at all these these different cities. Look at the different small things that you'd like to do. Maybe your idea of a great trip is to just go tour around Tuscany for a couple of weeks. I've done that. That's been fantastic.

[00:33:53.620] - Corinna

But I, I wouldn't plan on doing too many things. S you start off making a huge list of all these great things to do. All the great cities you want to see, the great towns you want to visit, do the research, read the blogs, read the books, listen to the podcasts, watch the movies and get all this big amount of information and then we start mapping it out. Going ok where is this on the map? And there'll be some things that you have to chop off, like people often say to me, well, I want to see Florence and I want to see Rome and I want to see Sicily and I want to see... and I'm like, whoa, whoa, whoa! I always say Sicily is its own trip, like pad it with maybe Rome at the beginning, in the end, but just Sicily don't do anything else. And I love Matera. I love it like crazy. But as much as I would love to throw Matera in on every trip, it's basically a day to get there and it's quite involved. So I'll only do that on a trip where I really can afford that time.

[00:34:57.430] - Corinna

And not everything is doable. So if you get a list and start refining down, well, some people will be like, well, I don't really don't care about, say, Venice. It doesn't - I don't need to see that but I really want to see the Colosseum and I really want to see where the gladiators were. So maybe put Venice onto your next trip or like Turin's one that gets me because I'm always trying to figure out getting Turin into a trip and I'm always trying to figure out getting Urbino into a trip. And they're both tricky and time consuming to get to. So when you look at it, well, the reality is that that will take me, you know, five hours door to door. That's the best part of a day gone, so that isn't necessarily right for this trip, it's right for another trip when it can not be so hurried.

[00:35:45.550] - Katy

And I loved Turin and I love to go there. And in fact, we've got an episode coming up just on that area, actually. So just to tempt you. But it's true that the rule of three, the three days in one spot is really, I think just ... and I am the one that likes to break the rules and I'm always pushing it with this one, but it's just it makes such a big difference to have those three days as a base and not to move around. And you'll get to know the places you have your favorite coffee shop or your gelato place that you want to go and try. And I think it's really, really good just to pick a spot and just sit for a little while and get out the map. Like this is what I do once I've got all my inspiration pieces and I've got a list of places that's like twenty places long that want to go and see, I get Google Maps and I start putting the places in and then you

can use the directions function very easily to see how long the train journeys are just make sure you put in the right times, because if you put it in at midnight in Australia, sometimes it's like, oh, it's midnight, there's no trains. I'm like, 'What there's no trains? What's going on?' But then I realized that I put in the wrong time. But then you can put in pins of where you want to go and then start mapping it. I actually keep heaps of my ideas on Google Maps. So then if I want to go somewhere, I just zoom in and it's all there. You should see my map of Italy. It's hilarious - it looks like it's yellow with all these pins on it. It's crazy!

[00:37:32.380] - Corinna

And then also if there's places that you really, really want to go and see, another thing is to look at what are the different ways of getting there. So, for example, from Florence to Siena, it's kind of like two trains. It's a little bit of a hop, skip and a jump to get there on the train. But there's actually you can get the bus and these buses are really nice. They're like the big luxury coaches and they cost nothing.

[00:37:57.430] - Corinna

And you can get the bus from Florence to Siena, like in half the time it takes to train. And so that's like a cool. And you driving through Tuscany, it's so beautiful. So the different things, little tricks you can do with that as well. So don't just stop at your first option with how you're getting somewhere.

[00:38:15.820] - Katy

Yeah, I agree. That's a really good one about Sienna because as well with the train you still have to somehow find your way into town from the train station in Siena, whereas the bus drops you ride inside.

[00:38:26.770] - Corinna

Exactly. So, I mean, there's little tricks like that. And then also we start getting this list of where we want to go and then we want to look at, well, how are we going to get around? And this is this is another big thing. So I like driving around the place. But my first experiences of driving, actually my first driving over there, I went with my best friend and she's fearless and she's driven all over Europe. And, you know, it never occurred to me that I'd actually have to get behind the wheel, that it was fine because one of us riding shotgun and doing the directions and everything was hilarious and fun. And then we did it again the following year. But she left earlier than me. And I was like, well, I'm good at driving in Italy. This is great. And staying on in San Gimignano. And I dropped her at the airport and from that moment on, everything just went so horrendously wrong. It was a nightmare.

[00:39:28.580] - Corinna

And at one point I was going into the the toll area. When you get off the motorway and I got on the wrong line, I was in the telepass line and of course, I didn't have a telepass and all the cars were backing up behind me and I'm like going hot and cold and having palpitations and everyone honking their horns and I didn't know what to do. And then finally, this guy came up on a motorcycle and used his pass to open the gate so I could get through. But I think about

things like that. And I did survive it. But it was so traumatic, like that whole day was trauma. And I think, you know, if that was your first trip, that would be devastating. So you want to be driving, if you're comfortable driving in foreign countries. And if you're not, maybe don't make it your first trip that you do that. So then you'll look at things and go, OK, well - now I have this list of places that I want to go to that these ones I want to take out because I need to be driving. And that's then maybe a little bit hairy and these ones I can keep in because I can get there by train. And maybe you want to have - I use Tuscany a lot because most people can relate to Tuscany, whereas if I'm talking about Piedmonte or something, they are like 'what's she talking about now?'.

[00:40:41.320] - Corinna

Say your dream is that you want to have a Tuscan experience where you're not in a big city. You could look at that as well, which little Tuscan towns are on a train line that I can buzz to Florence and I can buzz to some different places from, and then you'll find all kinds of wonderful little places so you can change up your experience, so it's not just staying in the cities. And that can be really cool, too.

[00:41:07.510] - Katy

Yeah, I think that's so true. And there's so many great places that are on train lines. One of my favorites is Orvieto actually, which is really easy to get to between Rome and Florence. So you can easily - just - it's literally on the train line between Rome and Florence so you can jump off and spend a few days there and enjoy that completely different experience of this hilltop, it's really a small city, but it's so different to those other two places. So you can have this excellent experience. So it really comes down to what you want out of your trip and then how just to be aware of some of the practical things, because like you said, with a car, if you are thinking about getting a car, please do some research on it because. Not just the motorway or the Autostrada issues that you can have when but there's also historical zones where you're not allowed to drive. And in our group, we have lots of people who are getting fines one to two years later that have inadvertently gone into these areas. And it's very easy to do. And that's not to say that you shouldn't get a car because we love driving in Italy. But again, we have a lot of experience and, you know, we have wounds/battle scars from when things have gone wrong and - like getting stuck between two stone walls, that was an exciting highlight of mine, but it can be done, but the train is so easy, so if if you can make a train.

[00:42:39.530] - Corinna

It depends on what your stress threshold is. For me, if it was my first time going over there and I had then driving trip, that that would be really stressful for me. I'm fine driving now because I've been so many times and also when I started driving over there, I was with my best buddy who was fearless. So that changed things up. But then there's this couple that I actually met on my very first trip when I did my met in my Contiki tour and I was 21 and I don't know how old they were but we got together again last year in Florence, which was really fun. We've always stayed friends all these millions of years, but they travel everywhere like they really get out there in the world and travel and Graham drives everywhere. He loves it. It doesn't bother him. He was last year, he was driving in Oman and he was driving in

Morocco and all these places that I would find completely overwhelming. But to him, it's just fun. He doesn't get bothered by it at all. So it depends on who you are. There's plenty of people who aren't fazed, even slightly, by driving in a different country. But I just think, you know, figure out who you are. If it's going to be stressful to you, don't do it. If it's not going to be stressful to do it, it's all good fun. But really just understanding when you're planning a trip, what's going to make this the greatest thing for you? What's going to make this the most amazing trip ever, not just a good trip, but the best. The best one ever.

[00:44:01.910] - Katy

Exactly. And to that point, like, if one of the things you desperately want to do is see the Uffizi gallery or some of the museums in Florence - you absolutely must do this - because mistakes have been made by this person/by myself. You cannot see them on a Monday. Those museums are closed on a Monday in Florence. So you need to be aware of that. It's a really important thing because you literally cannot go inside those museums on those days. So even understanding the timing, of course, the churches and the Vatican are closed on a Sunday morning for the mass. And if you really want to go and look inside these churches, you obviously need to find a time in your day that's not those times, otherwise you are going to be disappointed. So, you know, having these dreams and then checking it off against practicalities is one of the most important things you can do, so you make sure that your dream come.

[00:45:00.950] - Corinna

With museums - the big/most popular ones like the Accademia and the Uffizi you need to book a ticket online, ahead of time, because those lines can be hours and hours waiting in line. So you want to have pre-booked tickets. And I know that this year they've been doing it all as timed slots. In fact, the last couple of years, in Uffizi, it's been a timed entrance. So you book your ticket ahead online and you're at nine o'clock on Tuesday morning. And that's when you go in. For the the big super popular museums that get very overcrowded, my advice is get the first slot, the earliest slot you can get there, because they just do ,they get really backed up with lots and lots and lots of people. So when you get that really early slot, first ones in, it's great.

[00:45:53.510] - Katy

Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, itineraries, we've got them. We've checked, we've got our inspiration. We've worked out the type of trip that we want and then we checked it off. And so I think that gives us a really good framework. You can probably have at that point your ten days or your two weeks mapped out. You can, if you checked the timing differences of the travel times, you've checked what's going on in the city, you've understood that whether you want to get a car or train at that point, you've got a really good rough itinerary. I think, you can have that.

[00:46:26.600] - Corinna

Yeah. So then the next thing I would do is, of course, I make that list of experiences that you want to have and that's the most most important one. But then also the list of things to do.

And I always for myself and for my tours, always will have, if I'm going to have ten things happen in a day, I'll have a list of 50, you know 20 to 50, because there's always going to be more things than you can possibly do every place in Italy is going to have more amazing things to see and do than you can possibly do, and the more you start delving in and making these big, long lists, the more things you're going to find that would actually really be of great interest to you personally. And maybe those big blockbuster things that the tour buses go to, those might not be your things. And also, I think you have to have a plan B, so but like, for example, with my tour groups, I might be taking them to plan A is I'm taking them here and I get there and there's a huge long line or whatever. I'm going to divert off around the corner and take them to plan B, but things happen. So you might have your day in whatever town you're going to mapped out and you're going to do this and this and this and this. And you get to this museum or this thing that you want to go to and it's closed. And maybe the guy's wife went to hospital and he closed it. Or maybe there's some Festo you didn't know about happening that day and it's closed.

[00:47:54.880] - Corinna

If you've only got these set things on your list, then you're kind of stuck. But if you've got this list of 20 things that you can do in Orvieto, you go to that one that you desperately wanted to and it's closed. No problem, because I've got all these other things to do and off you go. And I have this travel philosophy that if Plan A doesn't work, plan B is invariably a thousand times better anyway.

[00:48:21.490] - Katy

I love it. I love it. I could just see, like, you know, my younger, less experience of standing on the phone going 'where can we go now???' Googling these on the spot. And let me tell you, that's a little bit frustrating when you realize.

[00:48:37.510] - Corinna

And if you've got/ if you've preplanned all these things that you'd like to go and see, you just flip it and go to something else. And it hasn't destroyed your day in Rome, hasn't destroyed your day in Florence. And you're not standing there panicking and not knowing what to do. Instead, you're like, oh, I want to do this instead.

[00:48:54.720] - Katy

Golden.

[00:48:55.630] - Corinna

I think having that being mentally flexible is huge when you're traveling and just allowing things to just flutter off like, oh right that didn't work. So I'm going to do this instead. And I have like endless stories. Where plan A hasn't worked out and plan B has been astoundingly brilliantly fantastic. And I couldn't possibly imagine how great that experience was going to be. So.

[00:49:20.530] - Katy

Absolutely. Oh, it sounds amazing. So, Corinna, I don't know about you, but, I think I mentioned at the start of the show, I have actually thought of a few itineraries over the past few months as we've stayed resting in place. Have you managed to pull any together yourself?

[00:49:39.880] - Corinna

All the time. It's one of my hobbies - figuring out all these interesting things to do? And there's always, with Italy, it just doesn't stop. So I think some countries there's kind of a finite number of things you're going to do and then it's over. But with Italy, it just keeps on going and going and going and going. But I have lots of like I'm obsessed with Urbino at the moment and trying to get there. I always have more things I want to do in Puglia and Sicily don't even get me started, like when you brought out that list the other day - it was fantastic - of all the things to do and Sicily and there's a lot of them that I have done, there's others that I haven't done. And like you talked about Mazara del Vallo and that's one that I've had on my list for eons I haven't been to. But there's always so many more things to see and do, so it's always great. And actually there's things that we've talked about today, they're how I personally figure out trips that I'm doing and when I'm heading off into some part of Italy that I haven't been to before, this is how I put it together read the books, I watch the movies, I Google things, I find the travel bloggers, I listen to the podcasts and I take endless notes and figure out, well, that's really cool, but I really don't want to go do that. And but this, on the other hand, is something like this is on my cannot miss list and figure it all out from there.

[00:51:04.150] - Corinna

And I also make a list of what the wines that you drink when you go to that place and what the foods are that you must eat when you go to that place.

[00:51:13.060] - Katy

Do you use a particular tool to keep all your notes in, or do you just do it on like a notebook or how do you keep all your lists?

[00:51:21.340] - Corinna

Well, I have Pinterest boards that I'll make Pinterest boards for different places that I'm interested in and I keep things there. But on my phone I have you just see my notes for like Rome. I know Rome like the back of my hand and I only ever am adding more. That list never gets any shorter. And whenever, I've spent a lot of time in Rome and I'm always crossing things off and going and seeing all these interesting things that I've put on my list, but the list only ever gets longer. But yeah, I have lists for every city you can think of. And I really do take notes, so I take notes when I listen to your podcast, I take notes when I'm reading books and it's all, you know, makes it more fun, I think.

[00:52:05.100] - Katy

Oh, yeah, totally. I like to use Evernote, too, because you can search in your notes and Google Docs. I think I've got only to refine my process a bit because I got notes all over the place. It's crazy. You know, I just wanted to tell you about one little trip that I've dreamed up

in the past few months that I just really want to do. And that's one, because for some reason, the lakes really call me like we don't have that in Australia, and so these big lakes and I know lots of people have them in the US and in Europe, but we really don't have big lakes in Australia and so I've always found them really fascinating and I love Prosecco. So this dream trip that I've got, it takes me to two cities that I love and it takes me to the lakes and it also takes me to Prosecco country. So it's like win, win, win, win, win!! So like my dream would be to explore the Prosecco makers and relax by the lake with the mountains in the background and then go eat some cicchetti in Venice and find some new hot to trot cicchetti places. So I've mapped out a lovely two week trip that takes in all of that. And I've got it ready to go.

[00:53:20.120] - Corinna

That's wonderful. So I had some friends who live in the Varese, which is outside of Milan, and they took me to Lake Maggiore and we just did a day of, like, touring around. And she was showing me where she used to work and where she used to live and where she used to have an apartment. And it was one of the greatest days ever. And at the time I was, oh, my gosh, I've got another thing to add in some more lakes trips - because they're fantastic. There's so many great things to see and do.

[00:53:53.960] - Katy

I've got another one that some that I did, which is it's - I just feel like I've got unfinished business with Naples, like really such unfinished business. So I need to go back down there and then I need to go to Capri because Holly, if you haven't listened to our friend Holly Star's does episode on Capri and yeah, it sounds amazing.

[00:54:15.650] - Corinna

So if you haven't listened to it, you absolutely must listen to it. Hearing her story of how she arrived there and how she met her husband, it's just - uh!.

[00:54:27.110] - Katy

And now they have a garden above the Blue Grotto, which I must say with my own eyes, absolutely must! I love it. And I'd love to go back to Praiano and just, like, hang out and just enjoy the Amalfi Coast for being the Amalfi Coast rather than, you know, like going and seeing things and just going for swims in the sea and. Yeah.

[00:54:51.020] - Corinna

Have you been to the island of Procida?

[00:54:53.000] - Katy

No, that's on my list too. Yeah.

[00:54:56.750] - Corinna

Magnificent - it's so great. I mean, that was another one that was, you know, from doing all this stuff. That's how I found Procida and it got onto one of my lists and then I was able to get to go there. And for your listeners, Procida is an island off of Naples and it's in the chain

where you have Capri and Ischia and Procida and it's one of the ten most colorful places in the world. And so as you're coming in, it's a little bit - so most people are familiar with pictures of Burano and how brightly colored the houses out there. This is like Burano on acid. It's just like your brain doesn't know quite how to process this incredible island. It's visually so astounding and it's teeny, teeny, tiny. So you can go and meander around for a day and be really good. And if you watch the movie *Il Postino*, most of it was actually shot on the island of Procida on the back side of it, and you can go there and sit and have lunch and it's wonderful.

[00:55:59.350] - Katy

Sighs!! That's on my... and Ischia, obviously. I've not been there either yet. So see that there's so many places and so many things to do even after, I think well over 30 trips, that I've been there, I've still got so many places to go and see. So it's actually not possible to see Italy in one trip, unfortunately, unless that unless it's a lifetime.

[00:56:26.150] - Corinna

Unless it's a lifetime trip and even then you're not going to get to see it all. But I do think another good rule of thumb when you're planning a trip is that even if you're only going to be in the big cities, regardless of where you're going to be, plan on spending twenty five percent of your time doing the big ticket things like the big tourist attractions and seventy five percent of your time doing the other stuff. So you don't need to be where the crowds are all the time. And when you have that twenty five, seventy five game plan in mind, it's going to make you look outside the box a little bit and you'll find all these amazing things to do that are just going to take your trip to the next level. And that's what we want to do. What we don't want to have just another trip. We want to create the greatest trip of all time that you're going to remember forever and ever and ever and ever. And say this was the greatest thing I ever did. So just doing like little things like that really, really, really helps.

[00:57:23.210] - Katy

Yeah, I think so. Because if you are interested in Roman history, well, yes, sure you must see the Colosseum. Of course, you've got to go see the Colosseum. It's amazing, but wow, there's so many other Roman sites in Rome and around Italy that you can go and immerse yourself in and look I've got lists of them.

[00:57:44.930] - Corinna

I follow all these people on Instagram who they do things like they go around and look at all the Spolia, which is all the leftover bits and pieces from ancient Rome that are incorporated into other buildings now. And then they'll tell you those stories about things and you see some random column that's built into, like another building's been built around it, and they'll be like, this is from Hadrian and it was, you know, part of this thing you built. And it's fascinating. So you can find all these interesting things like that that just elevate your trip to the next level because yes, you've been to the Colosseum and you've done a tour of that and you've done the Palatine Hill and everything, but then when you going up and finding all these other random bits and pieces, it's really, really interesting. And there's just -

there's never been a time like now for planning travel. There's never been so much information and so much information that's not just the corporate information, where it's real people telling real stories. And whatever it is that you're interested in, you can find people that that's their interest and they've got all the information there.

[00:58:52.110] - Corinna

So maybe you're interested in doing food tours or walking Aperitivo tours (like sign me up!) or like I have friends in the motor racing world and they go to Pagani and to Ferrari and they go and they do all these things that I'm not really interested in doing. I'm not going to go do it. But to them, it's the greatest thing ever. And I think that it's just so good that you can at this time, we can find all this great information that wasn't available to me in the 90s when I was traveling and wasn't available to me in the early 2000s when I was traveling. So there's never been a time like now for planning the most killer trip on the planet.

[00:59:31.520] - Katy

I agree. I absolutely agree. Corinna, even just simply talking to you about planning trips is making me smile and I can feel those endorphins rushing through my body. So good! Now, listeners, if you want to stay in touch with Corinna and know exactly when her new books and tours are released, she's going to tell you exactly how to do that right now.

[00:59:52.520] - Corinna

Yeah, well, the best one stop shop is my website, which is Corinna Cooke Dot com. So that's C O R I N N A C O O K E dot com. And that's a good central place. My Instagram is corinnatravels. My blog is corinnabsworld. The blog is just all, like it is really just now all Italy travel tips and interesting bits and pieces that I find and then Pinterest is corinnamakeup from the old days when, well I still am a makeup artist, but that's that's the old name but it's now just all travel content. And from there you can bounce off and find all kinds of interesting things.

[01:00:34.460] - Katy

Oh, wonderful. Now, Corinna Grazia! One trip I didn't share with you is one that I'm dreaming of, is the one where I catch up with you, Josie, and all the other friends I've met thanks to this podcasts, it will definitely involve lots of long lunches toasting each other and looking forward to the future. Thanks so much for joining us again on Untold Italy.

[01:00:55.280] - Corinna

Thank you for having me. Ciao Tutti!!

[01:00:59.220] - Katy

Gosh, isn't Corinna smart and you know what, I learned quite a few gold nuggets of information from her today that I wasn't expecting, and one of my favorite tips that she mentioned is to make a plan B, and I have actually learned that the hard way. But her suggestion to also make a Plan C is really great too. You know what? If you don't need to use

it at the time, then it's always in reserve for a future trip. Brava Corinna. It's so great to have her on the show.

[01:01:28.840] - Katy

As I mentioned at the start of this episode, we are running the Italy itinerary challenge starting on January the 3rd. You can sign up to join in by heading to your podcast app, where I've put a link to the details in the show notes. We can't wait to see you all there. Happily planning trips and getting ready for a bright and hopeful year ahead. That's all for this week. We hope you enjoyed this planning episode of Untold Italy . Grazia! Thanks as always for listening. And if you've enjoyed the show, do leave us a rating review. We've had so many lovely comments recently that brought a smile to our faces and I'll read out some next week. But for now, it's Ciao.