

Untold Italy Episode 118 - Florence, Amalfi Coast, Rome: Live Itinerary Consultation

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 118.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Ciao everyone, welcome to another episode of Untold Italy. Today we're trying something a little different and sharing a session I did live in our Italy Travel Planning Facebook community. Group member Jen joined myself and Danielle Oteri from Feast Travel for a trip consultation which is an itinerary review with suggestions on how to structure your trip and make the most of your time in Italy.

Jen and her family are travelling to Italy in June for the first time and she was a bit stuck on how to plan her days so her family would have an incredible time. Danielle, with her deep experience of traveling in Italy was on hand to guide her through some choices that would best suit them but I have to say I picked up a few pointers too! Jen's family plans to visit Florence, the Amalfi Coast and Rome which are very popular destinations for many of our listeners..

Now it's a pretty long session so we're going to jump straight in

Katy

Okay, Ciao. Hi, everyone. Welcome to our regular weekly series of travel tips. And I'm Katy. I'm the host of the Italy Travel Planning Facebook community and also the founder of Untold Italy travel resources, podcast, and small group tours.

Katy

We're doing a lot of things these days. Anyway, today we have a very special event, and I'm excited to bring it to you. What we're doing today is we're going to do a live Itinerary consult. A few weeks ago, we put a call out or I did a session a bit like this talking about itinerary overwhelming. I know a lot of people really feel overwhelmed with their itineraries. And so my friend Danielle, who is here and she actually does itinerary consult for people who are a bit stuck with their Italy itineraries. And so what we thought we might do is do a live consult

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so you can see exactly what this service will give you if you choose to take away the overwhelming and let someone help you with your planning your trip. So joining us today is our wonderful group member Jen. And she's joining us live from Wisconsin. And she's going to run through her itinerary with Danielle. But before we do that, I'm going to try to try to Jen, and she's going to explain just to give a little bit of an introduction and tell you all about her and her family's trip to Italy and what she needs help with over to you, Jen.

Jen

Thank you so much. My name is Jen. I live in Wisconsin and my husband and my three kids, we are going to Italy for two weeks in June. It'll be our first trip. I have a 17 year old daughter, a 14 year old son and a 9 year old son. As I said, it's our first trip, so it is a little overwhelming. We are going we're flying into Florence, and we will be there for four days. And then we're spending nearly a week in Atrani on the Amalfi Coast. And then we are spending our last four days in Rome. So kind of, besides our airfare and our Airbnbs, we have everything up in the air. So I'm very much looking forward to this.

Katy

Oh, great. Thanks, Jen. And so how long are you going for?

Jen

Yes, we're going for two weeks.

Katy

Two weeks. Okay. That's a pretty standard time for an itinerary, especially from the States, I think. So. That's good. Okay. And now I wanted to introduce my lovely friend Danielle, who if you listen to our Untold Italy podcast. She is a regular on our show. And that's because she knows so much. She's got a lot of just a passion for Italy. And she also has a lot of in depth knowledge about the whole Italian Peninsula, but especially the south around the Amalfi Coast area and south where her family is from, but a little bit further south from there in the Cilento Coast. So, Danielle, would you do a quick introduction for us, too?

Danielle

Yeah. My name is Danielle Oteri, and I am the founder of Feast Travel. I've lived in Italy. I'm an art historian by training, and I've lived especially in Florence, but have spent a great deal of time in Southern Italy, where my family is from, and have a real passion, especially for the south. But having traveled in Italy as much as they have professionally and for fun, of course, I have picked up lots of good information along the way. And, you know, I plan trips. I plan group trips, custom itineraries for my clients. But I began doing these itinerary consultations because I see so many people, especially following the pandemic or mid pandemic post, I don't know where we are pandemic, but people have a lot of time to dream about their trips,

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to plan to listen to Katy's wonderful podcast episodes. And I also look at a lot of the message boards, the planning groups, and sometimes go yeah, that's a good idea. And then sometimes go, that's not good advice at all, Katy. But sometimes people offering ideas that they may have found on Instagram especially and so these Itinerary consultations are designed to really help people make sure that they're getting the most out of what they want to experience from Italy, because there's a lot of advice out there, and not all of it is appropriate to each person. Also to help them with logistical stuff because there's a lot of mountains in between destinations and there are some roads you want to drive and some you don't. There's all sorts of logistical things that I've had first hand experience with. And so that's what I do on these Itinerary consultations. Additionally, I also put you in contact with the really good tour guides who are hard to find and connect you to what I think are some of the better tours out there. As a professional in this industry, I've taken them all the good and the bad, and I have sharp opinions on which one.

Katy

And we respect those opinions very much. Okay. So what I'm going to do is I'll pop everyone back up here and I'm going to disappear and leave it to you too. So off you go.

Danielle

Okay. So the way these work is, I've read your notes. You sent me your notes ahead of time. Then I'm going to ask you a few questions to try to understand a little bit more about what you want to get out of your trip. And then I have some suggestions already. But based on what you tell me, I'm going to modify probably on the fly. And then at the end of this call, I'm going to put together all of my notes for you in a document because I know when you're thrown out Italian names, it's like, how do I spell that? And a lot of email addresses and phone numbers and things like that. And that usually comes a day or two after this consultation. So you'll have all of those things to continue on yourself. Planning journey. So you said this is your first time in Italy, right?

Jen

Yes, our first time.

Danielle

Okay. And tell me, why are you going to Italy this summer?

Jen

Well, originally we were going to go in March over my 40th birthday and kind of in the middle of winter with things ramping up with probate and everything, we just felt like it would probably be in our best interest to delay it to the summer. So we pushed it to June, which we realize is the peak and very busy, but we're going for it and we're super excited. I've always

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wanted to go to Italy, so we're so excited to experience it. And hopefully it won't be our first trip or our last trip.

Danielle

What made you choose the destinations that you've chosen for your trip?

Jen

It was very hard because I know in looking at so many other people's, itineraries how easy it can be to add so many destinations because you just want to see it all. But I really felt like I wanted a mix of the cities, like a couple of major spots, and then we also wanted to make sure that we had some balance with something, especially in June that would be on the coast and warmer and beach weather and experience kind of both sides of Italy. I'd like to think actually when we booked our airfare, we did a multi city. So flying into Florence and out from Rome, we kind of are starting there and then ending in Rome. Atrani is right in the middle.

Danielle

Well, let me ask first, if you're balancing art museums, food experiences and the nature experience, meaning swimming, hiking, outdoorsy things, what's that kind of balance, ideally for you and your family?

Jen

Oh, gosh, I would say we definitely would prefer more leisure time, more time to wander around, more organically versus sticking to. "Okay. Today we have five things we have to see at this time, this time" because they feel like that might just make all of us a little cranky or overwhelmed. And then we all like exploring and hiking and checking out sightseeing and things like that outside of more urban or city areas. So I think that being down on the Amalfi Coast for six days, I hope, will bring us a lot of opportunities to try different things, like whether it's like a day on a boat or I know there's some really great hikes on the Amalfi Coast and then maybe finding a couple of swimming spots, things like that kind of unwind after Florence and prep ourselves for Rome.

Danielle

And the one thing you mentioned was that you don't like windy roads, right?

Jen

Pretty much everyone in my family except my husband gets carsick and quite easily. So that was a big thing when we originally were scheduled to go in March. I know that the boats on the Amalfi Coast aren't running, so our March, itinerary did not include the Amalfi Coast. We were originally in a state in Sorrento, but when June took over, we realized we could take a boat, which I'm hoping is better than the windy because I've heard they're pretty rough.

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Danielle

Yeah. I think we're going to start in the middle of your trip. You can talk about Florence and Rome, and there's endless options there, but it seems like I'm looking at your itinerary. You got six days in Atrani. So this is kind of the heart of the trip. This is where you're looking to kind of relax, enjoy some nature with hiking, try out different restaurants. You had mentioned off the beaten path restaurants Atrani is about the worst place you could possibly choose.

Jen

Yes.

Danielle

The good news is there's lots of other amazing options that will fulfill all those things within that immediate area. But Atrani is not it.

Jen

I think that what attracted us to it. Well, first of all, it's very hard as a family of five to find places that can sleep us all. And so initially when we canceled our trip, we didn't have a year to try and find places that could sleep us all. Originally, we were looking in Amalfi town because obviously the ferries go there and the boats go directly there. And there just wasn't anything Atrani then was appealing to us because it's right next to Amalfi and we know there's a walk involved and we'll be doing it a lot and that's okay. But also because it felt more like at the end of the day, we can go there and kind of escape all, or a lot of the crazy business and the crowds. So we were like, we'll make it work. We'll go for it. We're not afraid to put in some walking and we'll figure it out.

Danielle

Yeah. Katy's piping in in the comments with a very intelligent question. Have you paid for your Atrani accommodation already?

Jen

We have, yes. So we have Airbnbs for each of them. And it is paid for.

Danielle

Yes. Okay. All right. You're committed.

Jen

I don't even know that we would be able to find another option anyway that could we had a hard time months ago finding something for the five of us. Right. Okay.

Danielle

So that's good. Katie is an excellent question because now we can strategize appropriately. So proximity to... Amalfi, the town of Amalfi is like Times Square. You can't move. You're walking like this, especially in high season, and there's not that much there. It's not like you need to go to Amalfi to get anything that you wouldn't be able to get in Atrani. In terms of whiny roads, getting in and out of Atrani, there's no other way than to do that coastal road. So certainly if you're going to drive anywhere, that's going to be part of the deal. But if you are strategic about taking the ferries, then we can move you around to some good day trips.

Jen

And that's what I was hoping for.

Danielle

I would be sure to leave extra time. The ferries get extremely crowded. Sometimes you'll have to wait for one or two of them to go by before you can get on them. I work in Campania. You're primarily right. So I don't want you to feel like I'm criticizing you.

Jen

No.

Danielle

This is also sort of like these are the questions, like people like. But I saw it on Instagram and it looks so peaceful. And I'm like that was from this like one tiny angle in a hotel. The cruise ship, the Carnival Cruise Line just gorging thousands of people is not in that shot.

Jen

No, for sure.

Danielle

The Amalfi Coast is incredibly picturesque. It is probably one of the most picturesque places on Earth. And so a lot of people, I think, don't even necessarily believe me when I give them this advice. But in order to have the beautiful Dolce Vita experience in crowded destinations, you just need to be very deliberate. When you go to other places, like, you're not going to do

this. But in theory, for other people that are listening, it might be like, oh, this is what I was thinking. If you want to have the stroll spontaneous, I found a little old lady who's making fried fish experience. You want to go to Ischia, you go to the Cilento Coast, just a little bit south. Amalfi has been conquered fully by the cruise lines and the luxury hotels. And so good planning is the key to all of this. So a few things that I'll sort of throw out as the things that you want to do so that you can start to strategize. The Path of the Gods. Hiking., is the most beautiful hike, and it's one of the best hikes in Italy. And there are different guided tours that you can take or do them on your own. I would recommend doing them with a guide in this case. And it's not even for the information. It's just that there are multiple ways to do the paths, and especially if you're traveling with kids, you know what I mean? like, the guides really have special training. They carry first aid kits. I just think it's really worth doing one of those hiking chores for sure. I stayed in Atrani the first time I went to the Amalfi Coast. I stayed in Atrani for a few days. There's actually a staircase up to Ravello from Atrani, and it's totally doable. Make sure you have, like, a large bottle of water in tow because you're going to drink it all. But that's also just sort of like a hike to a destination that you could incorporate into your trip.

Jen

Yes.

Danielle

Most of the beaches on the Amalfi Coast are very small, very pebbly, and they're going to be the Italian word you'll learn from. This is *afolato*, which means very crowded. Think of it like foliage.

Jen

Yeah.

Danielle

Cheek to jowl. So in terms of swimming and is swimming a big priority for you?

Jen

No, not huge, I wouldn't say. Yeah. I think that mainly especially the kids want to at least experience it or have some time to be able to just find a spot to swim in. But no, I wouldn't say it's like a priority.

Danielle

Okay. Because we could build that swimming is a priority. There's some amazing swimming nearby, but we're going to get you on a boat to go to it. Well, let's see. People often overlook Salerno on the Amalfi Coast, and this is another city, but it is a small city and it's really the

main departure point for the ferry. So as the ferries are coming up and down the Coast, Salerno is like the big spot for it. I would also be sure to integrate at least a day in Salerno in terms of finding really good food, a variety of stuff, less expensive stuff than you're going to find in Amalfi and Atrani. Salerno is going to offer you the best experience. There is a historic center. Salerno was heavily bombed during World War II. So much of the city today is modern and sort of as you drive by, you'll see like a giant port where cars are coming in, like cars that are getting shipped, like new Fords and Nissan and stuff. But then just beyond that, there's a historic center an ancient historic center in Salerno. And it has the Duomo of Salerno, which is another Norman Arab construction from the Middle Ages, similar to the Duomo in Amalfi, but actually far more interesting and elaborate.

Danielle

It has a tomb underneath it dedicated to St. Matthew, that is exquisite. But my favorite part of the historic center of Salerno is the shopping - it's awesome. The rest of the Amalfi Coast, people go shopping is a lot of the same linens and lemons. It's a lot of the stuff made in China. Unless you're spending a lot of money. Right? You go Ravello, you go to Positano and you're going to drop some money. You can get some nice stuff, but a lot of it's just kind of the same repetitive stuff over and over again. But in Salerno, in the historic center, there's like great vintage boutiques. There's lots of little art galleries where artists are selling their art. That's like prints of their art, that's very affordable. There is a historic hat maker and I will put this in the document for you right on Via Duomo. He is the world's best salesman, but he makes these hats in this old traditional way that his father and his great grandfather did. And it's such a fantastic experience. My husband bought a couple of hats from him on our last trip. Salerno offers the kind of shopping that you think you're going to find in Florence and Rome, but like chain stores and localization have just kind of taken away. But it still exists in the know.

Jen

That's amazing.

Danielle

Yeah. So that's going to be a very easy ferry ride between Amalfi and Sorrento.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

And then in Sorrento you'll take the train.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

The name of the train is called the Circumvesuviana, which means around Vesuvius.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

And I'm in favor of a tour of Pompeii.

Jen

That's kind of what I was leaning towards also. Yeah.

Danielle

At that time, I'm going to send you the names of my two preferred tour guides. They may be busy, but maybe not. It depends on your day. Being you're flexible too you might be able to say to them, I've got these six days when are available. It's definitely worth it. And then in Pompeii, one of the more surprising things about Pompeii is that the archaeological site is Pompeii with two eyes at the end and then Pompei with one eye at the end is the city. It's still a modern city. You're like, well, really. There's people still there. Quite a few. And the food outside of the ruins is spectacular. You think it's going to just be like the worst tourist food because it's near such a famous tourist site? No, the food is fantastic. In particular, there is one place called Mercato Pompeano. It's close to the cathedral. So when you arrive at Pompei and you come to the train station, you're going to see this one big church tower.

Jen

Yeah.

Danielle

Walk toward that. And they have all sorts of like very just. They have all sorts of authentic Neapolitan food, but in particular, this is one pizza you need to get. It's called the Pizza Fritta with Ragu. So it's a pizza that's been fried, which is a tradition of Naples. Traditionally, women make fried pizzas and men make baked pizzas.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

But instead of just like a regular passata of tomato puree, they actually use that, like - tomatoes that they slow cooked meat in, like a traditional Italian American Sunday sauce. Yeah, but it's not heavy. They use just the right amount with the real Buffalo mozzarella. And I'm not kidding you. When my husband ate it, he started to cry. I have a photograph. As proof.

Jen

That sounds right up my alley.

Danielle

He cried over pizza. And it was like one of those serendipitous things because I knew that there was some good food in Pompeii, but we were not having one of those days. We were like, we're going to see the archaeological site, but we're hungry. Let's just eat something to have calories and nutrition in our bodies. And then it was like one of the most transcendent pizza experiences.

Jen

Oh, wow.

Danielle

Make sure on that day you get up early, you get on the ferry early. Get up early. Pompeii, as an archaeological site, too, is big and treeless. There is not a lot of shade. The sort of cafeteria, I guess, also closes kind of early. It closes at like three, and the archaeological park doesn't close at seven. So there's a certain point where you can't even get anything to eat or drink. But all around Pompeii, this might sound like a minor detail, but it's one of those things when you're there, you're glad to know. And it's connected to many of the old Roman aqueducts, like, just fountains that have water. So bring a water bottle with you.

Jen

Oh great, yeah.

Danielle

Yeah, because it really you get so hot and the walking. You're walking on so much uneven ground, it's tiring. It's a very physical day. So bring a water bottle with you and just fill those things up whenever you can.

Jen

Definitely will.

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Danielle

From the Circumvesuviana, also, you can go to Herculaneum. You can go to the Villa of Oplontis, which is like it was a villa of the super rich. So it's kind of a mini Pompeii experience. If you find your kids are just really wanting to hang out and not do history stuff, you can instead redirect your attention to the Villa of Oplontis. Okay. When Vesuvius exploded in 79 D, it took out the whole coast. Pompeii is just one of the towns, and it's the most famous of the town, but certainly not the only one. Villa Oplontis would be like, as if the Versace mansion got destroyed by and then it's been entirely excavated and you're just walking around in the Versace mansion. That would be the Roman equivalent. Very seldom anybody there. It's a very quiet archaeological site, so you can judge your energy. And you can also let your guide know because it's just a different train stop. Then your guides, all the guys that I work with, they live in Naples, so they travel out every day. If you find you're like, you know what? These kids of mine, they're not having it. Let them know, can we go to Villa Oplontis instead? And the mini experience of that whole history.

Jen

Awesome.

Danielle

I love it there. Okay, so those are two days, at least. Positano, in terms of exploring it, it's the most picturesque town of all. It's certainly very crowded. This is really the center. Positano is largely responsible for the fame of the Amalfi Coast. An important thing to sort of contextualize what the Amalfi Coast is. What's like, it was a bunch of beautiful little picturesque fishing villages that in the 1950s, Hollywood celebrities discovered and started going to. But then, like, major hotel chains started putting their stuff there, and it's become the world that it is today. And Positano is really the center of that. So if you want to have a day of luxury, I would recommend going to the San Pietro to have aperitivi or cocktails. Be prepared to open your wallet. This is like, if you're going to do Positano, put on something nice, get ready to spend \$30 on Negroni. That's what you're there to do. There's no budget Positano. You're going there to have that experience. That's how you're going to experience it. I think a lot of times people go to, like, Capri or Positano and they're budget conscious, and then that's not what you go there for. There are many other places that you could go there. Like, you go there for luxury in many cases. So if you go to Positano, that's where you would go. My personal favorite town on the Amalfi Coast, which might be a little, I don't know that the boat stops there. And this is why it's the best town. It's called Vietri Sul Mare. V-I-E-T-R-I Sul Mare. And it's the center of where ceramics production is actually even smaller towns, like, right above. It kind of connected to. It called Raito, where a lot of the manufacturing is done, and then Vietri Sul Mare is where you find a lot of workshops. It's really like what the Amalfi Coast used to feel like in the 50s and the 60s. Oh, cool. It's where more Italian tourists go.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

It doesn't have any chain hotels. It doesn't have any of that international infrastructure, which is why, I guess, it's off the radar. But I think it's like one of the most beautiful towns, really. Yeah. On the Amalfi Coast, that is also a place where you will go to find really good food. There's one place in particular, if you can stomach a night on the road called Locanda del Cantastorie which I will put in the notes. It's kind of like. So the way the Amalfi Coast is, you got, like, the front facing coast, and it's all the windy road, and then there's, like, a highway behind it that's less picturesque, but that's how you avoid the stomach aches, too. So it's kind of near the highway, so you don't actually have a beautiful view. And you're not like feeling like you're on the Amalfi coast per se. But the food is fantastic and it's really good local stuff. And it's where the locals go. So I would consider going to Salerno on the ferry and then having a taxi take you to Vietri Sul Mare. It would be like a 20 euro ride top, very close, spending a day walking around there in the town of it itself, there's actually a fairly nice beach there as well.

Danielle

It's going to be acorato, but it's a way better beach than Atrani and then you could also then take a taxi up to this restaurant, have a fantastic dinner, get drunk so that you don't mind the drive.

Jen

That's right. That sounds amazing. And I think that's what we always - anytime we travel anywhere looking for those really authentic places to eat where locals are going. And I don't want to get caught up in, I guess, what you would call like the tourist traps.

Danielle

Yeah. And it's tough to do in high season in Amalfi, it's just so discovered.

Jen

So busy.

Danielle

I'll just say in general, for other people that might be watching in terms of swimming and stuff, the very best swimming in the area is at Pestum on Chilento Coast, which you could access. So you could go to Salerno and then take a bus. There are these blue buses that say Sita S-I-T-A on the side, and they go to Pestum. They stop in front of the Pestum temples, the temple ruins. There are three giant Greek temples there. Beautiful archaeological site. That's

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also where you could then very close by, go take a tour of one of the Buffalo mozzarella farms. This is the area that is most famous in Italy that all Italians agree, and Italians agree on nothing, but they all agree on the Buffalo mozzarella. Cilento is the very best. And then the beach at Pestum are big, long, sandy, gorgeous beaches. The water is a warm, salty bathtub. Just on one side, you're looking at the Cilento Coast and on the other side. It is swimming heaven. And you could get to go to one of the beach clubs for the day. They got the towels, they got a restaurant. You can get a massage on the beach. Sprinkle me there when I'm done.

Jen

Yeah, that sounds perfect. Yeah.

Danielle

So for those who are looking for swimming in this area, don't go to Amalfi to go swimming. Put your feet in the water and you're going to have to fight somebody with a selfie in, like three inches of water. Go to Pestum to go swimming. And what I like, too, about there is Italians on the beach. They really look at it as like a restful experience. Very seldom are people like playing music or playing volleyball and stuff like you'll have here in the United States, people really go to relax. It's quiet. If you go to one of the beach clubs that's inhabited, that's visited by Italians, if you hear music playing, Americans are nearby. So I think that would. I feel like - you've got Vietri, you've got a day in Pompeii or Villa Oplontis, if that's what you want to do. Is there anything missing from the Amalfi Coast?

Jen

I don't think so. I know that we had looked at doing some kind of - it seems like there's a lot of options for hiring someone or being on a boat of some sort privately for half a day or full day or whatever. So that was something we explored also kind of in order to maybe find beaches that would be better because we knew that the beaches at Amalfi and Atrani were going to be - err. So I guess my question would be if we're coming into Salerno on the train is what I'm guessing from Florence, and then taking a ferry to get to Amalfi. At what point? Because then I'm assuming it's the reverse when we leave to go to Rome, do we just intentionally have a day to go to Salerno now again, but without our luggage and without having to do. Is that what you would recommend?

Danielle

I feel like. So you're going to be coming from Florence. I feel like - schlep there. Get in your hotel room, stay on the beach for a couple of days. I really like balance in an itinerary. Don't try to jam it in just based on convenience, especially being you're already committed to taking that boat a lot anyway. The Salerno leg is the easiest one of all, and especially going in that direction, because more people are going to be going towards Sorrento towards that way. So going towards Salerno is an easy one. And it's really like Salerno. And I can also give you a

recommendation for a tour guide in Salerno who can give you a tour of the historic center. It's so fantastic. It baffles me why it's so overlooked. It's an absolutely wonderful, fantastic town. Maybe I shouldn't even tell people about it. Yeah, I love it. I really love it getting on and off the boat, too. It's like always a little chaotic. Just have your coffee ahead of time. If you miss the boat, there's another one coming. Yeah, it's the summer on the beach, so it's going to be a little crazy, but certainly it's going to be beautiful. One last recommendation that I. Well, one and a half. I got to say, if there is the town of Maiori, which is very close to where you are, a little south on the Salerno side, and there's a beautiful restaurant there that's built into a Norman tower. So in the Middle Ages, the Amalfi Coast was the property of the Normans, who were from Northern France, and they were the rulers of Southern Italy and Sicily. Their capital was in Palermo. But there's all these old Norman watchtower towers along the coast, which you'll see when you're on boats. They look like Shrek castles. They're fortresses. And in the town of Maori, there's one called the Torre Normanna, the Norman Tower, which is also a restaurant. And they have fantastic food there. It's going to be like a nicer night out. It's not going to be the cheapest dinner, but it's not going to be the most expensive dinner. Like, you'll spend way more for far less good food in Amalfi. This is worth it. This would be like a nice dinner out. Like maybe your last night there. You're all going to get everybody to go there again, maybe dress a little nicer, but you're sitting on the top of the watchtower and it's sort of jutting out into the sea so that you're looking back at the Amalfi Coast, and it is absolutely gorgeous.

Jen

Wow.

Danielle

A lot of Italians have their weddings there.

Jen

Oh, wow.

Danielle

Okay. But get there. Get the spaghetti and clams. Look at that view. That's what I would recommend as a last visit. I forgot if it's in Maori or Minori, it's very close to the Norman Tower. It's the famous pastry shop, Sal de Riso. If you've watched the Naples episode of Stanley Tucci Searching for Italy, the guy makes Delizia al Limone. And he has a huge pastry shop there. And if you like sweets, go. Do a little windy road on the way there, but... you know.

Jen

We're packing a lot of dramamine.

Danielle

It's not that bad, though, because it's not, like up the hills. It's actually pretty, like if you go to Salerno, also, too, if you want to take a taxi, that would reduce your twisting. But look on the map and just use Google Earth, too, to make the assessment. Like, if you think you can deal with that road or not.

Jen

Okay. Yeah.

Danielle

You might have to use it at some point, but that coastal road along the Amalfi Coast is a nightmare, in my opinion. Personally, I've driven it myself. I don't know. As I get older, I just don't like this is not I can't do this anymore. It's rough in the summer because it gets so crowded, and so then you'll just kind of be stuck. I mean, there was just one time recently where I was stuck behind a bus and then a funeral procession in front of that. So it felt like the way the car was that we were, like hanging off the edge of the cliff and oh years off my life. I can't do it anymore.

Jen

No.

Danielle

It doesn't bother them. I mean, obviously the guys who drive those buses, God bless them, doesn't seem to bother them, but not for me.

Jen

If I can avoid it.

Danielle

All right, so I think we've got a Amalfi well strategised.

Jen

Yes.

Danielle

Okay, so we'll go back to the beginning of the trip, Florence, right. All right, so Florence, the whole city is like a museum. I mean, it's such an exquisitely, beautiful place. Your jaws on the floor all the time, and everything is so rich with art. What makes Florence special is that it's

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not just the museums that are filled with amazing things. Like, every church is filled with amazing things. So if art history is something that you studied in college and was your favorite class in the world, go get tickets for the Uffizi and wait online.

Jen

My husband actually did go for art history in college.

Danielle

Then he must go to the Uffizi but I'm going to give you permission to not go to the UFC, all right.

Jen

Yeah.

Danielle

For me, when I took art history the first time, it's like the first my entire final exam was, like the first five rooms of the Uffizi. Oh, my God. I know that I have that. I know this. It's amazing, right? But it's also super crowded, and I feel like it's one of those things that people are like, I'm going to Florence. What do I do? I guess I got to go to Uffizi. Everybody's on this line, this must be a thing. If it's not your passion, it's not your love, there's so many other amazing, beautiful, wonderful things to see in Florence where you have a good, meaningful experience without having to waste your time on that stupid line.

Jen

Yeah, that's good to know. I'm thinking of the kids also. That's where I'm also trying to balance. I want them to experience everything, but I also don't want them to, for my own sanity, I don't want to hear complaining about, okay, I've seen enough paintings or artwork or this. I don't know. I think I'm just looking for a good balance to see some things, but keep all of us, too.

Danielle

The trap of so many of these places. Rome, Florence, Venice, the Amalfi Coast, Cinque Terre people see the lines, and they're like, well, this is obviously going to be amazing if everybody's going there. And it's like, no, it's just because there's a lot of freaking information on Instagram and in English that makes you feel like they have to go there. And it's all about, this isn't your trip, this is your vacation. Don't feel, like, obligated to wait in line for something that's, like, not something you're very excited about. If you're excited about it, great. Wait inline. It's Italy. It's going to be amazing, but don't feel obligated. Other art experiences that I highly recommend the Church of Santa Maria Novella, because you get to go inside both the church and then the cloister around it, and you're really sort of

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understanding what Florence in the 14 and the 1500 was like when it was in its glory. So you'll see art, but it's like in its original place. Everything in the ofitse is stuff that was in a church and then got taken out, and it's put in a traditional museum, and a Gallery. But to see the works of art as they were designed to be used and experienced is a really special experience and one you really can't have in the United States. This is why we go to Europe. Santa Maria Novella for short. Okay. If you can get tickets to this, I would recommend it. There is a church called, well, the Chapel within the church is called the Brancaccii Chapel. Brancacci, the Chapel has a series of frescoes by a painter named Masaccio. Now, if your husband studied art history, he wrote an essay question on Masaccio. 100%. He's going to be like, it's closed because they are restoring it. However, they are selling a certain amount of tickets for people to actually go up on the scaffolds and see the fresh goes up close. Wow. So I think that's a really special, unique opportunity. And if you can take advantage of it while you're in Florence. Absolutely. Tickets are pretty limited. It could be sold out at this point, I don't know, but I would definitely look into that. And the church is on the opposite side of the Arno. It's called the Altro Arno from all the major tourist sites. It's a little chiller over there, a little more local. That's also the side of the Arno where you will find very good shopping. You will find artisans and jewelry makers near the Duomo. You'll see it all. It's a small city. You can walk everything on foot in a couple of hours. There's people selling handbags everywhere. Again, if it's inexpensive, it was made in India.

Jen

Not in Italy. Yes.

Danielle

Yeah. If you want to buy good quality leather in Italy, you got to spend some serious money. But I think in Florence in particular, there's lots of the artijani, the artisans, and that's where if you're going to do some shopping, you should spend your energy, even if you're just window shopping. I would definitely consider taking a food tour in Florence. Okay. I think it's a really great way to get and I would do that maybe not your first day because you might be jet lag still, but your second day because it'll help orient you to the city. We'll talk to you about not just the food, but really about the history of the city. That was a recommendation as well for who I really like. And then the signature dish, depending on how adventurous are you? Food wise?

Jen

I would say fairly adventurous. I would say my kids are probably more adventurous than me.

Danielle

So the signature dish for one of the world's most elegant cities is tripe, oddly enough. And they make these tripe sandwiches. It's a specific kind of tripe called Lampredotto. So there's

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like, cows have five stomachs or four stomachs. This is like the fourth or the fifth one. It's a specific stomach. Anyway.

Jen

Oh, my gosh.

Danielle

This is like the history of Florence, too, right? Because it's like it's the Medici and the Duomo and the wealth. And Florence has been dripping in wealth since the 13 hundreds, really. But what did everybody who did the actual work eat? They ate a lot of tripe, and it's actually super beloved. And it's the kind of thing where you'll see people. I was in Florence in November, in December, and I see people leaving their offices and going and waiting online for tripe sandwich. So there's one in particular, Pollini. And these guys are just the real deal. All the trip places are pretty good. They're not, like, wildly different, but I have a deep affection for this one, and it's I feel like one of the more local ones.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

The Lampredotto is served hot on this hard crusty roll. But the secret is the salsa Verde, the green sauce. It's a sauce that's made of, like, pulverized capers, anchovies parsley bread from the day before that's been sort of soaked in olive oil. I lived in Florence during graduate school, and I was like, I'm not eating tripe. I never ate it. And then on the last trip because it was so cold when I was there, I don't know why, I was like, you know what I'm going to try it. And then I'm like, how did I spend all these years coming to Florence and never try it? It's truly delicious and satisfying. It's really like, soul food in a way. It's really like, local grandma, real people food. I mean, I feel like with your kids, that might actually be a fun experience.

Jen

I feel like they would like it or try it, at least .

Danielle

Tripperia Pollini. I guess I type this into the chat box. I think everybody should go here. I just love these guys. There you go. They're on Instagram, and they have somebody the guy, the owner's son, or somebody that does a lot of real, like, great Instagram reels and stuff so you can follow them and go into that. I feel like kids, especially teenagers, they appreciate a good food adventure. And, like, for your nine year old, that'll be a really memorable experience.

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Jen

Definitely.

Danielle

Yeah. And I would say, like, a food tour. If you can book that tour the Brancacci Chapel, going inside the churches, letting your curiosity guide you. I also would say, don't feel obligated to climb the Duomo. Florence isn't as pretty unless you're looking at the Duomo. I feel the same way about Eiffel Tower. Like, I can't see the Eiffel Tower, it doesn't look like Paris. I don't know. It's me. I don't like to climb things in general.

Jen

A lot of stairs I've heard, too.

Danielle

It is a lot of stairs. A better climb and sort of a way to kind of get outside the city without having to rent a car or spend too much money. Is also a walk up to what's called Piazza Michelangelo. It's a long series of stairs, and it brings you to this park with a panoramic view of the city. It's absolutely. Wow. So you get a little exercise going up there. You'll see the Chianti Hills, you'll see the ancient medieval walls that surround Florence. It's a really breathtaking view. It'll be crowded. It's definitely like a well known tourist site. But, like, on a Sunday afternoon especially, you'll just kind of be in the rich pageant of Florence. And then the neighborhood that's right below, sort of when you're back in the city center, it's a very elegant neighborhood, and there's lots of wine bars there. So if your kids want to take off and you and your husband want to go have a nice adult glass of wine, that would be a good spot to do it. And the good thing about Florence, too, is it certainly helps to have restaurant reservations if you want to eat at a good restaurant, that's important. However, there's a lot of sandwiches. There's a lot more street food that you can eat, like gelato and all of that. You can get by without having too much planning. But if you want to make sure that you have a good dinner planned, then I would book a reservation, tell you, don't waste your time online. The sandwiches at Antico Vinaio. Antico Vinaio is the famous sandwich shop. When I lived in Florence, I lived around the corner from it. It was my local wine bar. It was a good sandwich. It was nice. Lovely. Then I got on Food Network, and then they started putting, like, four times the amount of meat inside the sandwich. And people wait on obscene lines for it. It's fine. It's a sandwich. What am I missing? How am I - no, obviously, all these people can't be wrong. It's fine. It's a sandwich. You can get a really good sandwich, like, pretty much anywhere. Wait on that line. There's better things to do. So I would make sure that you do have a signature, what's called sciattia bread, which you will experience if you take a food tour. Yeah. Don't believe the hype. Don't wait on the line. You don't have to.

Jen

No. That's very good to know.

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Danielle

All right.

Jen

You feel like with, I guess, essentially really only four days in Florence, that it is worth it to try and do some sort of a day tour outside of Florence? Or do you think that would be just, like maybe too much?

Danielle

I think it would be too much. Yeah. Especially because you're going down to a Amalfi afterwards. If this was, like, then I'm leaving Italy, then. Yeah. And if you go up to the Piazza Michelangelo, you'll circuit out and see the Cypress trees. Florence is, like in a bowl and surrounded by the hills. So as soon as you step outside the city, you're there. Yeah, I think it would be too much. And I'm a big fan of just sort of minimizing travel time because there's so much to experience. Being in these places in Florence is one of the best places in the world to just wander and just experience, just live.

Jen

That's what I'm most like looking forward to is kind of just the aimless wandering. Seeing what we can find?

Danielle

Yeah. Because you are going to have to be more deliberate in Amalfi about your days - I would enjoy the wandering in Florence.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

Yes.

Jen

Good.

Danielle

So any more questions on the Florence leg of this?

Jen

I don't think so. No, I think that all sounds great.

Danielle

Okay. So then you finish in Rome for three days.

Jen

Four days. Yeah.

Danielle

Okay. So in Rome, you have got to make restaurant reservations yesterday.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

It is very hard to eat well in Rome without a lot of pre planning, which is double edged store. Right. Lots of great restaurants. Eater.com has a fantastic list. That's the list that you should use to make your choices about restaurants because there you also get a sense of pricing. You're traveling with family, want to think about budget ahead of time, that sort of thing. You're going to need generally to get the really good food sorted to the outskirts of Rome. Within the center of Rome, near the Colosseum, near the Pantheon, all that stuff when you are sightseeing. Just feel like my initial idea when I went to Pompeii, I just need to eat something. Don't be looking for the meal of a lifetime around there. Just get something that will fill you up. But yeah, you cannot be spontaneous with food in Rome. I got to make those plans ahead of time. If this is your first time in Italy, you got to do the Colosseum and the Vatican. So this is where you got to be a real tourist and you got to see these things because you're in Italy, right?

Jen

Definitely.

Danielle

So I recommend for the Colosseum doing it later in the day so you can do sunset tour for the Colosseum. These are also reservations you should make ahead of time. I recommend doing that one later in the day. The Vatican, However, I recommend doing the very early morning tour. They have a tour that you can purchase that includes breakfast. And I think if I'm getting up at 730, give me some food along the way. It's just like coffee and a brioche and like a marmalade. It's nothing special. They just feel like it's a complete experience and it honors

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the fact that you have woken up early. You do, right? And those tours, I mean, in June, they're probably pretty full, but the Vatican in general closes early. So no matter what, you have to go early. So I feel like just go for it all the way. And they do limit those. Those are smaller than later day tours, so you might want to book that up for your first day. The traveling between Florence and Rome is easy. Take the fast train, which is called the frecciarossa. There are many different train - well, not many, but there's like two train lines. In particular. There are three different companies.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

Trenitalia, Italo and the Frecciarossa, which is a fast train. It costs more than the others, but it's totally worth it.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

Totally worth it. Same thing from Salerno. Naples used to be the last stop. Naples used to be the last stop, but now it goes to Salerno.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

Yeah, 100% worth the extra money. If a quiet car is important to you, make that reservation ahead of time.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

The Italians like to talk.

Jen

So do my family so we probably should not opt for the quiet car.

Danielle

On their cell phones.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

The trains are so nice. Traveling by train in Italy is one of the great pleasures of traveling in Italy, in my opinion. And the fresh is really fantastic. And you can just buy those tickets at the kiosk. You can buy them online, but sometimes if you don't know the exact time you're leaving, you can just buy them at the kiosk.

Jen

I think that was really bogging me down. Like, do I need to be knowing exactly what time we should be trained from place to place, or is this something we truly can just. All right, we're going to go and buy tickets when we get there.

Danielle

Yes. It's always a tough call for me at first, but I've never and I go to Italy, like pre-pandemic days, like three or four times a year for work. And I usually fly direct from New York to Rome and then take trains down to Naples because it's where I work primarily. And I'm always hesitant to buy a ticket ahead of time because what if my flight is delayed and then it's such a pain in the butt to change your time? So I never do it. And I've actually never once had a problem. I'm just buying it right there. Now, I'm also not so rigid. That has to be the quiet car or I need to be first class. If I have very strict requirements about that, then I would maybe buy the ticket. I don't know. I'm flexible. I think the whole train is a million times better than any train I've ever taken in New York City. If you saw the New York City subway, it's a whole other experience. Expectations are very low.

Danielle

Yeah. So I would say in Rome, you are going to have a classic tourist experience, and that's great. And even historically, Rome is a Pilgrim city. It has always been a city that people have come to visit to see the sites to do the things. And if you haven't been to Italy before, this is where you just fully embrace your tourist self.

Jen

Yes.

Danielle

And again, don't feel obligated to do things that don't interest you because there's so many different things that you can experience. Are there any sites or any piece of history in particular that you are looking forward to seeing?

Jen

I think the Colosseum I'm most excited to see, and I don't know why, but I just am.

Danielle

It's famous and it's amazing.

Jen

And I think I've looked/kind of browse tours online, and I don't know if this one because it seems like some of them are advertising - you can go underneath and see more like exclusive areas that they have access to. Is that something that's worth it?

Danielle

Yeah. definitely.

Jen

Okay.

Danielle

Those are good. Yeah. Some of the tours/some of the guides are better than others. Some of them you can tell they've just done that tour too many times and we need to retire. Other ones are really enthusiastic and wonderful. It's hard to predict. Yeah, it depends on the time of day. Obviously. If you go earlier in the day, it's generally better in terms of the guy's energy. But then I think the sunset tour is a different experience and then just sort of walking around the Forum and all of that in the evening. It's also less hot. That's a really nice experience.

Jen

Okay. Yeah, that's good to know. I like that idea of trying it later in the evening, too. Yeah. Okay.

Danielle

Rome is going to be busy. It's going to be hot. It's a much more frenetic city than like Florence - it'll be busy, but I don't know, it's got a different energy. It's a small city. It's a very elegant place. Rome is way more - you've got everything. It's the capital of Italy. Right? So it's like

people are trying to get to work, religious tourists that are going there. So you get a lot of tour buses of people that are making their pilgrimage to the Vatican or to various pilgrimage sites around the city. You have the regular day trippers. You got it all. It's an ancient destination. So it's going to be like probably like a little more stressful that you already been enjoying all these wonderful things. And I think it's good to have after Amalfi where the pace will have been slow.

Jen

Yes, definitely. Okay. Yeah, that sounds good. I feel better. Definitely.

Danielle

There any other questions in general you have about anything at all about the trip overall?

Jen

I don't think so. Not really. I think we're just looking forward to everything and experience at all and having some good walking shoes, water bottles, the key to Italy in the summer.

Danielle

Yeah.

Jen

No, I think this all sounds really good. And I like the idea of especially in Florence, like maybe eating our way through the city during the day and maybe picking one night that we especially go to dinner intentionally and maybe make a reservation or whatever. But yeah, I think I like that plan. Yeah. No, I think this was really great, and I feel less overwhelmed. I appreciate it.

Danielle

Good. All right. Yeah. And I'm really glad we got to strategize that Atrani because otherwise, given your aversion to traveling twisty roads, that would have been really a bummer in the middle of your tour.

Jen

Yes.

Danielle

So glad we could cut that off. It's Sunday night here in New York, and then so I'm going to probably just go have a glass of wine now, and tomorrow I will type up these recommendations.

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Jen

All right.

Jen

And then you can feel free to write me back with any other questions that you have. And you'll have to give us a full report and let us know.

Jen

Definitely will. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

Danielle

My pleasure.

Katy

Oh, that was so great. I've done a lot of travel to Italy, too, and I learned a lot of things. I think the key takeaways from me from this consult, Danielle, was the planning around Atrani to make the most of your time in the amount because just to get like a plan in place, it's a really good idea because sometimes it's the only time you can travel. And so you have to take it. You're just going to make it work. And I think that's some great suggestions there. The other one is definitely book your restaurants in Rome. And if that applies to any time of year, because most people who listen know my favorite restaurant is Roscioli and I can just remember the sad faces with people coming into the restaurants and they were going, oh, no, there's no table. Sorry.

Danielle

I was there in December, as omicron is descending and there's no tourists, and I was trying to go to restaurants and they're like, you don't have a reservation, get out!

Katy

Oh, it's so true. And you do know, I mean, like, you're in Rome, you want to have a good you want the best. But I think another thing as well is, like a really favorite area for me for food in Rome is Testaccio, because that's more of a neighborhood. And you can walk there if you just get those walking shoes going and you can walk there pretty easily from the Campo de Fiori. So it's a nice walk along the Tiber there and even up the hill. But I think, yeah, I totally agree. Make those reservations. And then the last one is something that we are so in symbiosis, Danielle, is just do it your own way. Don't feel pressured to do things just because you saw it on some itinerary online or no Italy, you'll have an amazing time no matter what.

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So if you're really not into art, do not spend half a day in the Uffizi Gallery or the Vatican museums because it is amazing. There's no doubt.

Danielle

No-one likes it any more by having gone through that experience where you waited online, you were in a crowded museum, you didn't understand what you were seeing. It's so much better to have a meaningful experience of art than just an obligatory one.

Katy

Yeah, totally. And that applies to everything. It's like a cooking class, for example. I see a lot of people asking for cooking classes, and it's like, well, what do you want to learn to make? You can learn anywhere in Italy. You can learn to make like a pasta with a Ragù. They'll teach you. But is that what you want to learn to make, or do you want to learn to make something that's really special to you, like maybe a ravioli or something? I don't know, like, I'm just throwing it out there. But yeah, just have a think about what you want to learn to make rather than just have to do a cooking class, because it's kind of like if you're not going to make it later. What's the point? So then we did actually, someone just asked a question, what's the best mode of transport in Rome? And I'm not being funny. It's actually your feet. Yeah. You just get around on foot. There's no easy way. I mean, sometimes we get the odd taxi if we wanted to get from one place to the other. But last time we were there with our family, my kids were four years old, and I think we got one taxi, and I have a very low wining threshold. So, like, if the four year olds can handle it, so can you. I think that's the main thing. Well, thank you so much, Jen, for sharing your trip with everyone today and Danielle, for really sharing your expertise. And there are so many gems in there that it's just not even funny. We will be posting this on our YouTube channel, and we will. So if anyone wants to watch it again, including you, Jen, you can do that. Maria has asked what's the name of the neighborhood in Firenze where this Cibreo cafe is? And that's the Sant'Ambrogio neighborhood.

Katy

Everyone, if you would like to have your own, very own consult with Danielle where she can take you through some tips. How can they do that?

Danielle

Danielle, you can go to [Feasttravel.com](https://www.feasttravel.com) and you can book it right online. My calendar, my live calendar is available there, and you can just book your spot. And then from there, you'll send me your itinerary and we will do your customized version of what we just did with Jen.

Katy

Amazing. Well, thank you both so much for your time. And Jen having a wonderful, incredible, life changing trip to Italy. And I'm sure the kids are just going to love it. And I know I've got a feeling it's going to spark a lifetime of adventures for them, too.

Jen

I hope so. Thank you so much.

Katy

Thanks, everyone.

Katy

I hope you enjoyed the itinerary consult. I had so many takeaways. Perhaps the main one is to structure our eating plan in Rome so I'm busily making those restaurant reservations as actually that is something I usually leave to the very last minute. But also, on reflection, I kind of wish that Jen had the opportunity to talk to Danielle a little earlier in her trip planning to get some expert advice for choosing a place to stay on the Amalfi Coast that didn't involve so many winding roads. But we live and we learn!

If you'd like to book a consultation with Danielle and Feast travel just like the one Jen did you can do that via their website at feasttravel.com or we've put all the details into the show notes including the tips Danielle mentioned at untolditaly.com/118

Thanks to all our wonderful listeners for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. I hope you enjoyed today's show. If you did then it would be amazing if you gave us a rating or review in your favorite podcast app. If you're using apple podcasts then you need to go to the show page for Untold Italy - not the episode page - and scroll down until you see "ratings and reviews" You can leave your 5 star review and message there.

Next week I'm introducing you to a lovely friend of mine who has had some incredible experiences throughout Italy and I can't wait to share her adventures with you but until then it's "ciao for now"