

Untold Italy Episode 297: How to Travel Italy Your Way

- Insights From Our Experts

Travel is a deeply personal activity, don't you think? From inspiration, planning and booking - to arriving and experiencing our time in Italy - we all have preferences and biases.. But sometimes we don't know what we don't know, so today we're sharing different ways our Untold Italy team likes to travel and experience bella Italia for your inspiration.

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 Clarke:

Ciao friends, welcome to our weekly dose of beautiful Italia and one where I hope you will be inspired by my special guests - some of the Untold Italy team. Many of you know my voice very well, but Untold Italy is actually a team effort, so today I've brought along some of our tour hosts and trip consultants to share their insights into traveling Italy in the 2020s.

Among us, we've got decades of experience traveling Italy in various different styles. Some of us like deep cultural exploration and diving into the food traditions of a region, others love being out in nature and relaxing by the sea or hiking. We're all at different life stages and have different priorities, but we share the same passion for Italy.

All the team travel for pleasure as well as work with guests and clients traveling around Italy and so I thought it would be fun to share some different perspectives and ways we can think about travel in this modern age. So without further ado, - andiamo! let's jump in.

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have different priorities, but we share the same passion for Italy. All of our Untold Italy team travel for pleasure as well as work with guests and clients traveling around Italy. And so I thought it would be fun to share some different perspectives and ways that we can think about travel in this modern age. So without further ado, andiamo, let's jump in.

Katy Clarke:

Bentornate team. Welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Olivia Windsor:

Ciao, Katy. Ciao, everyone.

Sarah Marano:

Ciao.

Cassie Tressl:

Ciao, everyone.

Katy Clarke:

Well, it's great to have you all here beaming into me from all the corners of Italy for this very special podcast episode where we're going to have a chat about the different ways that we travel and the ways that we can enjoy our time in Italy. Depending on our travel style and preferences. But before we kick things off, I'm sure our listeners would love to hear about you, how you like to travel, and your roles at Untold Italy, because some of you have a few. Well, most of you do, actually. Okay, Liv, off you go. Can you kick things off?

Olivia Windsor:

Sounds great. Hi everyone. So I'm Olivia. I'm an Australian who's been living in Rome for the last three years, but in Italy for the last six years. And I do have a few roles for Untold Italy. So I'm our Chief Experience officer and I get to design all of our tours to really capture the beauty, authenticity and connection that we love about Italy. In addition to that, I have been a tour host. I haven't hosted this year just because I had a baby at the start of the year.

Olivia Windsor:

However, I am still helping all of our travelers also with their trip consults. So if you book in for a trip consult, you might get to chat to me and plan an amazing trip to Italy or someone else in our team. I've done a lot of travel in Italy, so obviously over the last six years I have been here, there and everywhere. But even before moving, I traveled Italy quite extensively too. I've done it a lot of different ways. My very first time in Italy was as a young 20-year-old with a Contiki tour. So that was my first experience. Very, very different to how I like to travel today.

Olivia Windsor:

That was kind of quick, fast and furious. And today I like a slower approach, a little more premium experience as well. And the thing that I love about travel Italy is really getting to

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know the locals, which I've been able to do having an Italian husband and, you know, living here and having kind of experiences that is just really not possible. If you don't know the locals or have someone like Untold Italy to guide you.

Katy Clarke:

Amazing, Liv. Okay. Cassie, how about you?

Cassie Tressl:

Hello everyone. So I am Cassandra. I am originally American, born in Seattle, Washington, but I have been hopping around Europe since 2019. I recently settled in Italy in the region of Abruzzo about three years ago. The very first time I went to Italy was similar to kind of Liv's story Fast and Furious. It was more of like a city-hopping thing. I did do it self-guided but I really didn't get a sense of Italy at all. I saw Rome for a couple of days and I think a lot of people do that so there's nothing wrong with it as your first time.

Cassie Tressl:

Nowadays, I am much slower. I do road trips a lot with my husband and our young daughter. So we are very keen on hitting the road and we're lucky to not really have too many time constraints so that allow us to just kind of literally take the roads less traveled. At Untold Italy, I help with our Untold Italy app, which is actually geared towards kind of those self-guided travelers, so the ones that do prefer to kind of have the resources in their own pockets. Additionally, I also do help with the trip consult, as does Olivia.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, everyone's so busy. I don't know how we keep up sometime. Anyway, moving on to you Sarah and can you fill us in on your experiences in Italy?

Sarah Marano:

Yep, sure. Hi Katy. So quite similar to the other two, but I have to say that my first experience in Italy was 25 years ago with my now husband and it was a complete baptism by fire. My first day in rural southern Italy was at a wedding of about 400 people and 13 course meal. So my learning curve was fast and furious, to use the words of the other guys. And I've been traveling around Italy for 25 years and my experience of traveling around Italy is almost always through family and friends. So, really traveling like a local. And also, I live like a local because I've lived in Umbria for 20 years.

Sarah Marano:

We fell in love with it 20 years ago. For the last 15 years we've been helping guests explore its hidden secrets and gems because that's how we like to travel. I think I was born with itchy feet and traveled around the world about three times. And our best experiences are always, always when you connect with the locals. Connecting with the locals normally is absolutely integral to nature and food. And I think I've traveled around Italy through food and wine too. So yeah, that's me. I often travel vicariously through helping Untold Italy clients through travel Consults, which I started a year ago, I absolutely love.

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Sarah Marano:

And also since last year, I've been managing the logistics for the tours. So really loving it and been collaborating with Katy for about four years. So that's one of the things about living in Italy. New experiences just never end. And it's been really great the last four years, experiencing Italy in even more new ways.

Katy Clarke:

You forgot one of your jobs, Sarah.

Cassie Tressl:

Oh, yes.

Sarah Marano:

And yes, I just, I can't believe I forgot that yesterday I even came back from the last day of hosting the Untold Italy tour in Umbria. So yes, since last year I've also been hosting tours and again, just a very new way of traveling around Italy for me with other people. And I love it. I just love all of it.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, and you're very good at everything that you do. Thank you, Sarah. Now, Giulia, now Giulia probably has a bit of a different experience to everyone because Giulia is, in fact, Italian. So Giulia, how did you start on your travel journey?

Giulia Tamarri:

Well, actually, I did what my colleagues just did the other way around, which means just straight after university, I decided obviously, to explore the world. The world is my oyster. So I've traveled and lived extensively for 10 years, mainly in Australia, by the way, teaching English, which seems quite, you know, an Italian teaching English in Australia. Anyway, so Australia, the UK, Austria, New Zealand. So during my young years I have traveled and lived abroad for 10 years. After that I decided to move back to Bella Italia. And since 2015 I've been working as a tour host for different agencies and four years ago, finally with the team of Untold It Italy. So my roles are tour hosting and I also helped co-design some of the tours, such as in particular the one in my region, Emilia Romagna, and also the Sicily one.

Giulia Tamarri:

And I'm loving it. And as Sarah, I've just come back from a very busy Fall season, which was fantastic. I have led a tour in Puglia, one in Emilia, and I just got back a few days ago from Sicily.

Katy Clarke:

And everyone loves Giulia. In fact, all of our tour hosts, just such wonderful people and we have a bit of a crew of them, but they're busy at the moment leading tours, so unfortunately, not everyone can join us, but I think we've got some good representation here. Okay, now,

Giulia, I'll start with you first. What do you think the pros and cons are of traveling independently versus on a tour? Because I know you've recently been on a tour in South America, so you had the chance to be on the other side of things and be a tour guest on that tour. And I know you also like to travel independently too. So what do you think the advantages and disadvantages are, or the, you know, they're just very different, aren't they? Different styles of traveling.

Giulia Tamarri:

So, well, in my point of view, I am a very independent traveler, but at the same time experiencing a tour, I just thought, wow, this is so great. This is completely stress-free. Because normally I am the one in charge, you know, of thinking about everything, about all the plans, A, B and C and D. Because as you know, as a tour host, and even though everything is very organized with Untold Italy, we always face different clients with different needs and different personalities and we always have some surprises coming up here and then so our minds as tour hosts are always do, do, do, do. So from the other side. I love the fact that if you are on a tour, number one, stress-free. Number two, the fact that traveling with an experienced host makes you learn so many more things and makes you also observe things from a different angle and perspective.

Giulia Tamarri:

So for me, that's so important, you know, And I like to mix and match. Maybe some parts where I do some independent days where I'm just on my own and I can do my routines. But having the tour also really helps because, number one, you are also sharing with other people. That's another aspect that I love. So sharing a meal is so different than having a meal on your own. Because, for example, I'm thinking about our tours and that's one of the best parts of our tours, when we are just all sitting around the table. A meal is not just a meal. The host describes very well about each specific dish you are tasting.

Giulia Tamarri:

The wine - I mean, everything is so important and everything is so local. So, for example, it's funny because many of our guests, maybe it's their first time they travel to Italy and they say, oh, will we have Prosecco? And maybe we are in Sicily or Emilia. And I'm like, no, no, no, no, no. I'm sorry, but no Prosecco for us. For example, we are in Sicily, so let's taste some amazing, diverse wines here, you know, so maybe these things that as an independent traveler, you wouldn't really think.

Katy Clarke:

I agree. And you know, I learned this over many, many years myself traveling. It took me a good 20 or so years to catch up to that point. So anyone who's going on their first trip to Italy now with one of our amazing team is going to find that out a lot faster than I did. Which - lucky for you, because then you're starting on a journey that's you know, really, truly amazing. So people go through evolutions when they travel, I think, and. And it depends on your life stage and your situation. I used to do a lot of travel for work, and I'd tack on a few extra days

here and there, and that was fun, but for me, it wasn't until I slowed down, and it was when I had my kids, actually, because I was absolutely forced to.

Katy Clarke:

There's nothing like a couple of toddlers to stop you dead in your tracks. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me, you know, And I started noticing so many more things. And from that experience has come this amazing opportunity in this company and ability to meet you all. So, you know, I always thank, you know, the children for giving that gift to me, in fact. Okay, Liv, who's just become a mum, in fact, what about you? What do you think the pros and cons of independent travel and tours?

Olivia Windsor:

Yeah, it's a great question. And I agree with everything that Giulia said as well. Of course. I think traveling independently, a nice thing, is that you can be on your own schedule and so you can do exactly what you want when you want to do it, of course. However, like Giulia said, I think the beauty is in mixing and matching. So having a little bit of that time and then mixing it when you travel on a tour, because everything really is taken care of. Especially on our tours, you know, we go to painstaking details to make sure that every single detail is checked, double checked, tweaked.

Olivia Windsor:

After... you know, we've been running these tours for years now, so they're perfected again and again and again, which means that you just don't have to worry about a thing at all. I think the other thing about traveling with the tour, besides just, you know, sharing meals and experiences, is, of course, the people that you meet and the locals that you meet, especially our tour host, they've got very special relationships with these locals after years of getting to know them. So, you know, you're meeting people that essentially friends, too, and having these experiences with locals that you just cannot have as an independent traveler, maybe because they don't speak the language and you don't have an interpreter with you or simply because you're going to places that cannot open for independent travelers - it's unfortunately just not worth their time to open for two people or for big bus groups as well. They're too small to open for, you know, a group of 20 people. So for me, that's a massive, massive pro of traveling with a small group tour like ours.

Katy Clarke:

And if you go on the Emelia tour, you can even meet Giulia's dad.

Olivia Windsor:

Yes, exactly.

Katy Clarke:

And we love Giulia's dad. He's so much fun. He's a very fun and enthusiastic person, and I think that is the best type of person in the world. Anyone who's, like, going in there, like, he's

tasted balsamic vinegar for the first time - every single time, he's like, wow, one of the highlights.

Giulia Tamarri:

Because once they meet my dad, they're like, oh, is your dad. Are we gonna meet him again? Like, he's so funny. One of the highlights. Thank you, Katy.

Katy Clarke:

I love it. And live, like, I guess, you know, when you've got children, it's difficult to go on a tour. Although, you know, if you are thinking about it, you know, you can always do a private tour and we can offer those as well. But, you know, in that case as well, you know, to get a bit of expert help from someone who's been there, done that is invaluable.

Olivia Windsor:

Absolutely.

Katy Clarke:

And, you know, one of the things that I've learned over the years is, and this was another thing that my children taught me is before I was like, fiercely independent in all aspects of my life. And it's funny, when you have twins, you really, if unless you start accepting help, you're going to be in deep trouble.

Katy Clarke:

So I got in the habit of asking for help, and now I really do understand about the getting help. Okay, so, Cassie, you maybe haven't done so many tours, so maybe you can talk more about independent travel.

Cassie Tressl:

Yeah, I was going to say I'm pretty green to the. The group tours, so I might have to join one in the near future. But I do have a good example. So my aunt lives in Chiang Mai in Thailand, and around the same time, a friend I know, she kind of did a group tour in Chiang Mai in Thailand, and she hated it because she thought everything was super touristy. And I was like, oh, it's like the complete opposite for me but not everyone gets to have an aunt that lives in Chiang Mai. So I, you know, that's just an example of, like, if you don't have an in with a local or family member there, it's very difficult to have that authentic experience. And, you know, we can't all have that.

Cassie Tressl:

So from that point of view, like, I can see how a group tour is such an easy entry point for those people.

Sarah Marano:

Yeah.

Cassie Tresl:

So that's just an example. I think that a lot of people will choose a group tour just because of that fact. Like, how else are you supposed to get in there? For independent travelers, there's a lot of great things. I mean, I love independent travel. Like Liv said. I think the primary benefit to that is that you have your own schedule. You can be wherever you want to be when you want to be. I find that a lot of independent travelers typically have something that they want to specifically see, and it might not be something that a group tour will always include.

Cassie Tresl:

So if it's like a very specific stop somewhere in the middle of nowhere in Puglia that they heard about or, like, saw on Instagram, and it's like a must-see, they have to go there. You know, how would they know that a group tour would take them there? So the easier solution for them is just like, let me plan my own trip. And I can include these types of places, you know, along my own itinerary, because it's my itinerary and I can do whatever I want. So typically, when I speak to the people that we do the trip consultations for, that's kind of their biggest, like, desire. The biggest outcome that they want from this is to make sure that their primary, like, interests are what's most important in the trip.

Katy Clarke:

I think that's great. Look, I think, you know, you can get something out of everything. And what I'm hoping people get out of this conversation is to have an open mind about how you can travel. Because there's so many different ways, and there's not one way, just one way to do things. And we love, love, love helping people really bring their dreams to life. You know, whichever way, we can help them through the podcast, through helping them with consultations, through our resources, our app. And that's really the beauty of what we do, is that we have so many ways of helping people.

Katy Clarke:

Okay, now, Sarah, I'd love your perspective as well. And maybe you can tell people about... recently in Umbria, we had a lot of people that were very interested in St. Francis. And so what did you do on the tour to help them? And that's kind of an example of how, you know, maybe the tours can be a little bit flexible.

Sarah Marano:

Well, I'm glad you asked me something specific, because the thing when you - when you've got a group of people and you ask a question to the group, whoever goes last, everybody else has said what they're going to say, but I do have a few other little tiny perspectives as well. But, yes, I think that that is so pertinent. What you asked about St. Francis, and especially next year, it's the 800 year anniversary of his death. So Francis, who's always been big, is going to be even bigger. And I don't know how much detail - we could do a whole podcast on this on its own.

Katy Clarke:

We will. We will do a whole podcast on it. Sarah.

Sarah Marano:

Yeah, that's why I don't want to do too many spoiler alerts. Katy.

Katy Clarke:

I guess it was more the point that when recently we had some people that were interested.

Sarah Marano:

Indeed. So we knew before we started the tour. And also when, even when you're on the tour, I think one of the things about being a good host is reading and understanding people and even on your travel consults - is understanding individuals needs, because not about how I want to travel, it's about how they want to travel. And I think that is the key to any good tour host or travel consult is really thinking about what they want and what's right for them. And I think that's what Untold does really well, because you've got such a good team of people around you, Katy, that are able to do that. And I'd say that that is a huge thing because it's easy to just roll off the tongue what you think. But the thing about St. Francis is he was this very, very, very humble man.

Sarah Marano:

And so everybody flocks to Umbria and Assisi to see the big basilicas. And quite frankly, the guy is going to be turning in his grave because it goes completely against everything that he stood for. So knowing that this particular group really were very, very interested in St. Francis and not on a superficial level, because most people come to Italy and They've heard of St. Francis and they say, "Isn't he the guy that liked animals?" And it's like, oh my goodness me, there's so much more to St. Francis. I mean, in ways that you just wouldn't know to know. And so, being a local and also being very interested in this myself, I was able to take them to lots of little... the words untold Italy - this for me, is the epitome of it. It's the Untold St. Francis.

Sarah Marano:

They had no idea what they didn't know. And so we were able to take them without affecting any of the original itinerary. So this is not, instead of this is as well as take them to some places that they would never have known how to find, to experience St. Francis and the life of St. Francis and indeed the legacy of St. Francis.

Sarah Marano:

And we are able to do that with our small group Tours and the amount of time I heard this week, this last week, because literally, as I said, got back last night. How would we ever have done this on another tour? How would we have ever have done this if we weren't in a small group? And small group, that's another word. How do you define a small group? Because lots of times people say it's a small group, but you're still with 20 plus people. But here, Untold, we really are very, very small all the time. So, yeah, it enables us to flex. We talk about when you travel independently, being able to flex, etc, and of course, you can't do it to that extent on a tour. But we're small enough and within our role, everybody's so passionate about

everywhere where we take guests and we take you like locals, so we're able to get you to those little experiences.

Katy Clarke:

I've got another example, actually, from our very first tour in Puglia. And one of our guests, Sukanya, she wanted to hug a monumental olive tree. And the beautiful driver, he said, I know exactly where to find one it's on my farm. And off they went down to his farm. And this is a dream of mine come true that we were able to do this. Like, it really does make me smile from ear to ear. And we've got a wonderful photo of Sukanya, hugging that tree.

Katy Clarke:

It's one of my favorite photos, actually, because you could really see that it was something that she really cherished. So that's a beautiful part from the tours. Okay, now onto our trip consultations and our trip planning services. Liv, what are some of the best ways that travelers can use our services?

Olivia Windsor:

Yes, so for the trip consults, I think what everyone would agree on is logistics especially, is very, very helpful.

Olivia Windsor:

Because it's one thing to look at the map of Italy and say, okay, there's Rome, there's Venice, there's Florence, but how are you going to get between A, B and C and all the little places? So logistics is probably what we get asked about the most. So whether that's train, bus, driver, rent a car, et cetera. And then obviously, we also can help provide tailored recommendations for activities, restaurants, hotels. And also, you know, when it comes to activities, not just things that you've seen on Instagram, because you might have seen heaps of different things on Instagram, going to this art gallery, going to this beach. But if your interests are not in art or in history, then why, you know, why would you want to go and do just things that you've seen other people doing on Instagram? So we're able to really understand what it is you want to get out of your trip and then provide you with a tailored recommendation. The other thing I would just say, being a new parent myself, I have had people email me with specific tips as a mum with a baby, traveling in Italy.

Olivia Windsor:

And that is another really good way that you can get advice from us, because also we live here, so we know the right things to suggest to you about traveling with little kids too.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. And even traveling with older generations. I know we've had a lot of experience - myself personally - traveling with a whole gamut of generations in Italy. And it's, you know, it's great, it's fun and I highly recommend it. But there are some challenges. You know, if someone's got mobility issues, we can definitely help out with that type of information. Cassie, did you have anything to add? What do you think people, like, get the most out of?

Cassie Tressl:

Yeah, I want to bring this up because it has come up like three times in some recent consultations and people are like sanity checking AI-created itineraries. So they will actually include them in like notes before our consultation call and they'll tell us like, this is from AI. And AI told me this and then I'll bring up some, you know, brand new information. They're like, well, AI didn't tell me that. ChatGPT can't know everything. But yeah, so. And another thing is that I want to harp just on that theme of like, people don't know what they don't know. I had another client go to Cinque Terre or they wanted to include Cinque Terre in their itinerary and they were really set on staying in Corniglia.

Cassie Tressl:

And I asked, okay, well that's great. Do you want to go to the beach? And I was like, because that's literally the only one that doesn't have water access. And they just didn't know that, you know, because they assume that all the towns have water access. So, yeah, it's just things like if you've never been there or you just don't know, you don't have the knowledge that we do just because we're immersed in it all the time, then it's easy to overlook details that you wouldn't think to ask.

Katy Clarke:

Yes, I think with anything to do with AI, it's asking the questions. And if you don't know what to ask, then you're not going to get the right answers that you need. So it's not even the fact that you can build an itinerary, but you don't know the supplementary questions to ask. And that's where we can prompt you to think, oh, okay, yes, Corniglia is on top of the hill and there's 330 plus steps to get up to that town. And yes, there is a shuttle bus, but you might be waiting a while in the heat. So there's all of these things to take into consideration when you're planning the trips. And yeah, I'm so proud of everyone because they really do pay close attention to all of these little quirks of Italy.

Katy Clarke:

Another one of my favorite ones is in Lake Como. There's two train stations and one involves a big trek down to the lake if you've got luggage, and the other one is right on the lake. So, you know, if you don't know, if you say, how do I get from Milan to Lake Como? It's going to tell you whatever it thinks. But you need to have those qualifying questions included. Thank you.

Cassie. Sarah, how about you? What do you think people can - how do you think they can get the best out of their trip consultation?

Sarah Marano:

Well, I'm going to go with what Olivia and Cassie said. And for me it's logistics all the way. I mean, apart from the fact that logistics is my thing, but that it's literally how to connect the dots in a coherent way. So it's not just about how to get from A to B. It's like, in what order should the letters be? In what order should A, B, C, D look like? Because often people will have a great long shopping list of places that they want to go, but they don't have enough time to do that. So it's helping them understand from their own perspective which ones they

need to prioritize, but also the best way of how to go from each place, because sometimes it might seem logical. And this is another thing about, like Cassie said, we're immersed in Italy, we live in Italy, we use the trains, the buses, the roads. We know exactly the best ways to get from A to B and also sometimes give them little added extras, like along the way.

Sarah Marano:

Do you know, if you do it this way, you can also do this, that or the other. And you said that you really like this and they maybe say that they want to go to some place and it's like, well, actually, you're going to get more out of somewhere else if that's what you like. So it's again, what I've just said is kind of everything that everybody else has said. It's like human Intelligence rather than artificial intent or human experience, I should say rather than artificial intelligence. And so that's what I really, really like, changing people's perspective on Italy even before they've got here.

Katy Clarke:

And you do such a great job of it. The other thing I, when you were talking, I was thinking, oh goodness. And I, I feel like a broken record saying this, but it's hard to overemphasize just how bad some of the online infrastructure is in Italy in terms of information. And it's not like we have in the United States or Australia and where we just expect everything to be online and working. A lot of times, things don't get published online, especially in the transport area. Like you've got ferries and they'll put up a schedule when they feel like it halfway through the season. And so if you're relying on an old ferry schedule and you've got really tight plans, you know, sometimes it can be a bit of a mess. Now I'm going to say this, this, some of those travel mistakes and bloopers and like things that go wrong, they've been some of my best travel memories in my life.

Katy Clarke:

But I feel like if you're in a tight schedule, then you know, it can mess up your plans. I have a friend whose family is actually Italian and they're from Abruzzo, where Cassie lives and she's been to Italy so many times and this time she forgot to bring her driving license and her husband did too and they weren't able to hire a car. You know, so there's things like that which, you know, we send you all checklists and make sure you're ready to go for all of that stuff. But it's hard to underestimate how different the online infrastructure is. Cassie, would you mind just having, because you're American and you've been in the online space a lot, how would you describe the situation in Italy?

Cassie Tresl:

I think in the US we are used to, even on Google Maps, I feel like bus schedules and stuff like that are published like in the US if you're in New York or something, the metro, the subway, train, like the schedule is just right there and it's in real time. It'll tell you if there are delays and stuff like that. And that is just not the case, especially in like smaller towns and cities in Italy. So I, you know, expect a little bit more of a refined process in Rome and Milan. But if you are in a small town in Italy, there will literally be a printed-out schedule that's like faded from the sun and rain and it'll just be stuck onto one wall. And like that's the schedule. And it

might maybe not have changed for the past 40 years, but like that's the schedule and you can't find it anywhere else. Like you won't find it online.

Cassie Tresl:

So if you do ask someone about it, like, they will just point you to that wall and that's that. It is also a little bit sporadic. I feel like, like it doesn't make sense what time the departure times and the arrival times are, especially when it comes to like the bus. I'm just thinking in Puglia and how people think that going to Puglia that you can like see the ent place, you know, just by bus. But you might be stuck someplace where there's no public transportation from 9 am to 4 pm so it's little stuff like this where I think we're used to in the US like, oh, I'll just, you know, call an Uber, call a taxi right away. But it doesn't always work like that everywhere in Italy. And I think that catches a lot of people by surprise.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, but it's also fun. I mean, if you're stuck somewhere and you have to sit in a bar for half a day, there's nothing wrong with that. Piano, piano, that's fine if you've got plenty of time, but if you don't, it can be a problem. Okay, So I think, yeah, we've, you know, explained a lot of the logistics problems, so let's move on to the tours. Now, Giulia, you've met a lot of our guests on tour. Many, many, many, many, many guests. And what type of travelers do you think enjoy our tours when they join us?

Giulia Tamarri:

Well, for sure, our travelers really want to dive deep down into our Italian culture, for sure. Love their food, their wine, their history, their art. So they don't just want to get an idea of it - they really want to experience hands-on to the full. They are also very curious. For sure, they don't just want to see the surface of things. So there are also the types of travelers that really ask many questions. So sometimes, you know, it happens that we think that we stay at a place roughly one hour, but normally our travelers are those that get very passionate.

Giulia Tamarri:

They keep asking questions, they want to get to know the locals, you know, so we were mentioning this before. So for sure, I would say passionate, curious, and very interested, not just the surface of things.

Katy Clarke:

And there's. It's a really broad range of ages, isn't it? So I find that really amazing. And that people want to just hang out together. And we've had relationships formed between 30-year-olds and 80-year-olds and, you know, it can always be a big mix. And I think what really binds these people together is their passion and their curiosity. How about you, Sarah? What do you. You've spent a lot of time with people lately. What do you think?

Sarah Marano:

Giulia said something earlier on about sitting around and having a meal. So when people often say to me, "What do I like most about Italy?" For me, it's always my best experience is always

around a long table with lots of people, family, friends, guests, whatever. And it's about that food and drink brings everybody together anywhere. But in Italy in an extra special way that's very hard to describe and articulate. And so on the tours, it's the putting people together. It's those age ranges. It's just there's no barriers. And it's also people from lots of different backgrounds as well.

Sarah Marano:

It's not just age, it's background. And the thing that pulls everybody together is their shared experience on the tour. They've all seen that special artisan. They've all had their eyes opened to a completely different perspective on life. They've seen a toothless nonna making pasta. Whatever the experience is, they've all shared it. Then in the middle of the day and the end of the day, they all come together and it doesn't matter - age, race, creed, background.

Sarah Marano:

Everybody's seen and experienced the same thing. And it's been something very special. And that connects them and gives them not just that experience then, but they literally take that away with them and it forms part of- it sounds really. Rosa would tell me right now, oh, my God, mum, you're sounding so cheesy - but it does help shape and form them when they go back home. It makes them think differently about how they eat, how they enjoy time together, what they share with their friends. And we see it time and time again in the little WhatsApp groups. People, even a year after the tours, they're still connecting and sending photos.

Sarah Marano:

Oh, look at this. Look, we saw this. And doesn't that remind you of this? And oh, look, we cooked the dish that we made together when we were in wherever they were. And the special connection with Italy and with each other just keeps on going.

Katy Clarke:

And Liv, when we embarked on this journey several years ago, and we really had a vision of creating something that was special and that would attract, you know, people that were curious and I feel like we've really achieved that. What do you think about that? You've met a lot of people on tour as well. What are some of the things that have stuck in your mind?

Olivia Windsor:

Yeah, I agree with everything that Giulia and Sarah have said, but I would also say on our tours we really take care of people as well. So everything is completely taken care of and, and it's hospitality, it's care, it's attention to detail. So I think that is really important. And that also might be, you know, if you look at our tours, you're getting a backstage pass to feeling like you're traveling with friends, with locals. You know, our tours as well, we are premium priced too. So you might look at Rick Steves' kind of tours, which I know are popular with a lot of American,s especially. And we're different to that because we're all inclusive,

just about - unique experiences, nearly all meals included. And also might I add, with premium artisan wine as well.

Olivia Windsor:

Beautiful accommodation, boutique accommodations, all ground transport. You know, when you come with us, you are completely taken care of and just harping on about, you know, being flexible too on our tours, if your dream is to hug an olive tree like in Puglia, that was actually on my first tour ever, we can make that happen for you too. So, yes, we do have an itinerary, but the beauty of coming with us is that we can be flexible on that. You know, if you're with Sarah, you might end up at her local butcher looking at how they cure, you know, different meats, or with her neighbour Gino, who might pop over for a glass of wine. And that's just an experience that you're not going to get. Sorry - on a Rick Steves tour or if you're traveling independently because you don't know a Gino who can just pop on over.

Olivia Windsor:

So, yeah, that's, that's what I would add to the girls.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, I think, you know, there's different types of tour experiences for everyone and different price points and all of those things. But I think you've really articulated well what we were trying to do. And we're not trying to be a huge tour company with like hundreds of departures and to grow into other markets outside Italy. No, we're really obsessed with growing and nurturing our local connections and really helping people understand Italy in a very, very special way. So I could Untold everything if I want. My brother has told me I should and I'm like, yeah, no, I like keeping it in the familia, keeping everything close. And having these really amazing relationships that I have with all of you too. Now, Giulia, one more question for you.

Katy Clarke:

And you lead tours for other different companies. So how would you describe the difference between our tours and those? You don't need to mention their names at all. You stay completely neutral on that. But, you know, is there a difference or are we doing something that you can get somewhere else?

Giulia Tamarri:

Well, I think actually leaves words really explain the main difference between other companies and untold Italy. Of course, with other companies, there is also being a tour host, our high level of professionalism and looking after people, caring about people. But it's very different when you are in a group of 20 people and a small group. So the dynamics are completely different. The level of getting to know our people is different. So we end up being friends. Like, literally. I have fond memories of all my trips.

Giulia Tamarri:

I really establish great connections with our guests. Something that I really can't do with my other companies. Not because they're not nice people, but because they're is not actually the possibility to do that when you are in a big group. Thinking about another reason why we are different... imagine traveling on a big bus, rather a small minivan, pampered. You know, even the. The smoothness of traveling throughout Italy is different.

Giulia Tamarri:

Like, this is like maybe a. It's something a little bit silly, but logistically, when you are traveling in a big bus, you have to stop, you have to count people. You kind of waste some time as well doing all of this. If it's a small group, it's just us and the level of flexibility that we can add. Sarah said something before, it's not instead of. It's adding things up. So when we understand, for example, our guests have a specific interest, we are the. We are locals. We know exactly how to add things to, you know, to change the itinerary to make it even more successful.

Giulia Tamarri:

So I would say this is a huge difference.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, you're the queen of the tweak, Giulia. She knows.

Giulia Tamarri:

No. Well, I love the tweaks because obviously if I know my guests would really enjoy something, I mean, I feel it's my priority to do that, you know, so it's very important to be proactive, to read our people. And I would say that our guests are very, very, very happy that we can provide that kind of, you know, knowledge and care.

Katy Clarke:

They love it. And that's absolutely true, Giulia. And you know, every tweak you make is with everyone's best interests at heart. You really want to add to that extra experience. Liv, did you have anything more to add?

Olivia Windsor:

Yeah, I was just going to say we keep talking about how small we are, but we haven't actually said how many people we have on our tours during this podcast. Max, 12 people. And oftentimes it's actually smaller than that. So that really paints a picture for you. If you're traveling with 20 plus people or with us, we're under 12 guests. Okay.

Katy Clarke:

It's a lovely-sized group. It's so much fun getting to know people, actually. I mean, I do. I just love getting to know people from all around the world. And it's just a big eye opener. And what I always learn is that people are the same everywhere. Everyone is, you know, wanting to just live a good life with their family and friends and share stories. And that's lovely.

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Katy Clarke:

You know, it makes my spirits sore and, you know, Italy is such a great place to do that. And I think you've mentioned, just because we sit around the table and we do talk a lot. It's. It's one of those experiences where you may not get that in some other places, but you do obviously get it in lots of different places in the world. But Italy's got that special. I don't know what it is. In the French, they say je ne sais quoi. On that note, Giulia, I would love you to share with the rest of our audience all around the world what your personal vision is for how people can experience Italy.

Katy Clarke:

Well, if they only have one chance or, you know, if they would only to, you know, have one experience of Italy, how would you like them to feel when they leave?

Giulia Tamarri:

Oh, my gosh. Katy, this is a very difficult question because it's basically. Can I reply by saying condensed, all the experiences we do on an Untold Italy tour? It's very difficult to answer because obviously it's the locals, it's the food, it's the wine, it's the scenery, it's the beauty of our countryside. You know, it's very. It's impossible to give you just one answer, Katy.

Giulia Tamarri:

I don't know how to explain it. It's Italy.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, it is Italy. You're very lucky to be born in a country that it's a - It has a very special allure. I think it's all of those things. And so if you can, you should try and experience all of those aspects of Italian life, because it is very special. Cassie, how about you? What do you think? Having lived there for a while.

Cassie Tresl:

I want to always tell people to try and let go of fomo. So the fear of missing out, I think especially people that are going to Italy for the first time or they know they will only go there once, you know, in a life, of course you want to do what you think you should be doing and to some extent, sure, but like Sarah said, that is a lot of like surface type experience. And having a meal, you know, made by someone's random grandma in a random town in the countryside, like that's an experience you're actually going to remember and take home, opposed to like seeing a glimpse of the Pantheon. Yes, that's an experience, but it's just not like a deep experience. So if you only have like one chance to do it, I would try and let go of like what you think you should be doing in Italy and allow yourself to gain a different perspective to how you plan your trip or like what you should be doing. So maybe in other words, welcome in the guidance from others. Don't just go to Rome just to see xyz. Just be curious.

Cassie Tressl:
Be curious.

Katy Clarke:
I love that. I love that. Sarah, how about you? What do you think?

Sarah Marano:
It's a really big question as we've just, as we've just seen. So as a European and everything, all of Europe being so close because even from England to Italy, it's a two-hour hop on a plane and play your cards right for like €50 return. So it's a very, very different thing when you're talking to people within Europe or from the States or Australia, because you said about if you have one chance, Katy, if you're coming all the way from Australia or America is very different than people that even from other countries that can hop over whenever they like and it's so accessible. So if I was saying a one chance to people from the States or Australia, as much as for me, Italy is the people and those memorable experiences, you have to remember that Italy is so rich in culture and art and history that we have 40% of the world's UNESCO World Heritage sites in one tiny little peninsula of land. And so how can you, as much as I'm definitely an under-the-skin type of person, how can you not say to people, don't see Venice or some big things in Rome, because - and also from people from Australia and America, everything, everything's so old here. Whereas for us in Europe, everything's old. It's like, oh my gosh, yeah.

Sarah Marano:
Whereas for you guys, to see these things, that's also totally awesome in the true sense, the word awesome, not surfer dude, awesome so for me, the one chance would be make sure you get really good guidance about what the real top pieces of art and architecture are to see, but also make sure those things are those individual paintings or heritage sites, but that's not Italy. Make sure you also mix those with getting completely underneath the skin and taking home the real Italy. So that's where you get a really good combination of an Untold Italy tour plus a travel consult. Do a little bit independently, do it and mix it in with a tour. And one of the things as well, very quickly going back to the travel consults. One of the big things I enjoy about the travel consults is allaying people's fears, because so many people are frightened of certain things about Italy. I mean, I don't mean coming to Italy, but about getting a train, about standing in a queue or whatever.

Sarah Marano:
And sometimes it's allaying those fears to be able to do, like I say, some things independently, but then get on a tour to get underneath the skin. That's my. If you've only got one chance, coming from a really long way, have a travel consult so you can add on some really fantastic things at the beginning or the end, those pieces of art and stuff, but then do a tour and really enjoy Italy.

Katy Clarke:

And, Olivia, what do you think? So, you know, we are coming full circle now. How would you like people to experience?

Olivia Windsor:

Italy, I think, which the girls have all mentioned, but to bring curiosity to it, I think you should bring curiosity to anything that you do in life, but especially travel and especially Italy, because there might even be things that you don't think you're interested in. But then when you're here, you're like, oh, wow, it's a whole - it's a whole other way of living, a whole other way of being that I just think is profoundly interesting. Italy, as the other ladies have mentioned as well, is so. It's such a small space, but everywhere is so different, too. So think if you can mix and match city with countryside, with coastal, with inland, that gives you a really complete view, as complete as you can have in just one trip, of course, of what Italy is, is because it's so many different things. We talk about 'authentic' all the time, and it's, you know, what is authentic is the question we keep asking. Because it can be in Milan in a busy, bustling bar, but it can also be in the countryside having a beautiful passajjata stroll through, you know, through the woods or hunting for truffles.

Olivia Windsor:

There's so many different ways that you can find what your authentic Italy is. So I think, yeah, being able to mix and match different, different experiences is a great way. And then just finally, I would say that food, I think food is a great way to travel Italy and it's a way to connect you with locals. Everywhere you go in Italy, every region has a different cuisine. So that's another important way to get to know this beautiful country.

Katy Clarke:

I couldn't have said it better myself. And I think what I really learned from this conversation is that, you know, this is something that I believe very strongly, but I think, I think everyone here believes it too. There is no right or wrong way to travel. There's infinite possibilities and especially in Italy. And it really does depend on what you want from your experience. Whether that's going to be some wow, sightseeing moments or a deeper connection or really a mixture of both. And it's there for the taking. And it's also such a privilege to work with such caring and talented people who share that same vision of visiting Italy with the world.

Katy Clarke:

And so thank you - to you all for such a great discussion and I can't wait to see you all in Italy very soon. Grazie Mille. Thank you team.

Giulia Tamarri:

Grazie.

Cassie Tresl:

Grazie. Ciao.

Sarah Marano:
Grazie. Ciao ciao.

Olivia Windsor:
Ciao.

Katy Clarke:

Well, listeners, I hope you enjoyed hearing from the Untold Italy team today. I would entrust any and all of them with my Italian travel experiences and do regularly. Like I said, your travel mood and style moves and changes with moments in your life and I am endlessly grateful for my twin kiddos, who not only shaped the way I travel but the way I live my life - much more open to receiving and asking for help and building this podcast and a business that supports my passion for travel and Italy.

At Untold Italy, we are all so thrilled to help you plan your travels in any way that we can - through this podcast and our app if you like to plan things on your own, via our trip planning services if you need some hands-on local support or if you simply want to relax into Italy, come join one of our small group tours.

I've put all the details of how you can get help with your Italian trips into the show notes on your podcast app and on our website at untolditaly.com/297.

before I go. You know, we absolutely love hearing your feedback and reviews. It's what keeps untold Italy growing and it helps more Italy-loving travelers just like you find us. If you enjoyed this episode, please think about leaving us a rating or review in your favorite podcast app.

Next week we're exploring more of our wonderful untold Italy, and I can't wait to share it with you, but until then, it's ciao for now.