

Untold Italy Episode 314: A New Way to Experience Italy (And Why It Works)

Amalfi Coast on your mind, but you can't figure out how to make it work in a short space of time? In this episode, we are chatting about a new way to have an exciting southern Italian experience that covers the highlights and takes you away from the obvious to feel the true spirit of the region in 2 wonderful days.

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, I'm Katy, the host of Untold Italy. We help 1000s of travelers each year explore Italy from the top to the toe of the boot and over the years, I can confidently say around 80% of them, especially new travelers to Italy, have a strong desire to visit the Amalfi Coast and Pompeii or fit Florence and Tuscany into their shorter trip or time in Italy. And many of them struggle with logistics

If you look at a map of Italy, it can be quite deceptive as so many of these places seem quite close, but pulling it together can be tricky, especially if you are short on time. So people either make the decision to skip their dream destination altogether or try to do it on a day trip.

So when our partner Walks of Italy told me about a new style of experience they are offering, I wanted to hear more.

Travel offerings in Italy have become a little bit stale over the last few years but this idea really made me sit up and take notice. Because not only does it solve a lot of logistics problems, but it embraces slower travel principles - meeting the locals, treading more lightly, and traveling in small groups. It is This approach to travel and shared values are some of the reasons we have partnered with Walks for over 8 years now.

Joining me today is Cyra Alcock, their Director of Operations, who has a long and deep affection for Italy, to let you in on their new secret. Let's welcome her onto the show and make sure you stick around to the end to hear about a special trip they have opened up exclusively to Untold Italy listeners.

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Katy Clarke:

Benvenuta, Cyra! Welcome on to the Untold Italy podcast.

Cyra Alcock:

Thanks for having me. It's great to be here speaking with you, Katy.

Katy Clarke:

Oh, it's fantastic! I love speaking to anyone who's got a passion for Italy, and today we're going to have a chat about a different way of traveling, which I think you may have dreamed up yourself, and actually, I think it's pretty genius. But before we kick things off, can you please introduce yourself and let us know your connection to Italy and why you love traveling there?

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, sure. So I have always been a fan of - from as young as I can remember, I've been fascinated by the Italian culture, food, language. And I did end up living there. I was living in London, it was pouring with rain. I was working in a bar and I'm like, man, I could be, you know, earning £5 an hour in the sun and went to Italy and lived in - lived and worked there for a while. And while I was there, ended up working for Intrepid Travel. Which is actually an Australian company, you probably know them, as a tour leader. And so that for me was just, you know, the experience that solidified the, wow, I love this country.

Cyra Alcock:

It's so fascinating. There's so many corners. And I worked with Intrepid for, for 3 or 4 years or seasons. And yeah, and had the opportunity to explore all over, you know, of course the destinations that you would expect, like Rome, Florence, Venice, the Amalfi Coast, we'll speak about more later, but also places that you wouldn't go to if you, if you were normally just traveling there for a, for a holiday or whatever. So yeah, I'm fascinated by the country. These days I'm still working in tourism, as you know. So now I'm working for Walks and Devour. My role is a director of operations, and specifically, I'm looking after the design and the execution of these new - I guess you could call it a new series of trips that we're doing, or a new style of trip.

Cyra Alcock:

I didn't come up with it myself. I, I was a collaborative effort, but I've been overseeing the design and the execution of the first ones, and the very first ones that we're launching are in Italy.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, amazing. I can't wait for everyone to find out about them because, honestly, I wish I thought of it myself. It's so innovative and great for people that are traveling that have got a limited amount of time but really want to get to the heart of Italy and some of those amazing experiences that you can have when you get there. Just before we get on to that, do you have any favorite places or experiences that you had in Italy was something that really sticks out in your mind?

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Cyra Alcock:

Oh wow, there are so many to choose from. I've always loved the, the little towns, you know. I love Lucca, for example, in Tuscany. I think it's always been such a, such a great example of like a small Tuscan town, and you can rent bicycles and cycle off into the countryside and, you know, just run into local characters along the way and I, I also remember one place that I would go quite often with tour guests was a small town in the very north of Italy near Asti. And I mean, this town was like population 30, most of the people over 90. And we would visit a winery there that was now being run by the, by the younger generation, as is common with many businesses like this in Italy, that they get passed down from generation to generation. And it was just such a special experience. You know, they would, they would create this like 5-course meal with the antipasti, the primi, secondi, all the me - all, all the courses.

Cyra Alcock:

And then we, we'd walk around the town after to go get the bus back to the bigger town, Assisi, that we were staying in. And, you know, we'd be like the talk of the town. They'd be looking like, who are, who are these strange people speaking English walking around our town? I love the south of Italy as well. I, in general, I love southern Europe. In all of the countries. And specifically, a few years ago, I did - I, I hadn't actually been before, but I did a trip around Puglia, which is the heel of the boot, and that was amazing. I mean, it's just, it's amazing. What I find fascinating about countries like Italy is that you can travel from north to south, and as you go down, down, down, the culture changes, the attitude changes, even the language and the, and the climate and the food that they eat and the way of life.

Cyra Alcock:

And I think it's, you know, coming from Australia, where I grew up, where, you know, you can go to Sydney and Melbourne and Adelaide. Yeah, I mean, they've, they've got their differences, but they're kind of the same as well in a way. Not, not exactly, but you know, culturally, that we're quite similar. And then you go to Italy and it just changes so much from north to south. And I, and so I find that super fascinating and I love nothing more than just driving and stopping in some random tiny town that you didn't even know existed and like finding this amazing pizza and it turns out to be like the best pizzeria experience you've ever had. So yeah, a lot to say about Italian experience. That's for sure.

Katy Clarke:

Absolutely. I think you're spot on. The differences between north and south and all of the little tiny towns and regions in between that makes it so special for everyone. But, you know, we've both worked with travelers over the years, many, many travelers, and Italy has got some unique challenges, just like any other country. And one of those biggest challenges I've certainly seen, and I don't know about you, but it's how to fit everything that you want to do into your trip allocated time, but also at the same time have really a lot of time to enjoy what you're doing and not rush around from place to place, uh, and you, you want to have that Italian experience and maybe not spend so much time, uh, in the transit zone.

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Cyra Alcock:

That's so true. And I think another thing that people don't realize when they're planning their trip to Italy is you think, well, you know, I'll have 2 days in Florence and 3 days in Rome and that will be enough. And then you don't take into consideration that you know, then there's the travel time, then there's the fact the trains are late, then there's time from, from the transfer, from when you get in to when you get to the hotel. So it might seem that simple when you look at things - oh yeah, there's a train, there's a bus, and these towns or these cities are connected, and I'm going to be able to make use of my time there. But when you actually get on the ground, in reality, you don't know which way you're going, you get lost, which could be a good thing as well, but if you're trying to get from A to B - it can be frustrating. And so it is logistically complicated to travel around a country that you are not familiar with the networks, the transport networks, how they work, where you're going. And if you have planned a really ambitious itinerary where you're only staying 2 nights in each place, which I - having worked for many years with people traveling to Italy and I see that's common. People will, will think, oh yeah, 2 nights in each place is enough.

Cyra Alcock:

I'll have 2 full days. It's like, no, it doesn't actually play out like that in reality. So yeah, it, it is challenging. And you know, and then there's the other problem that if you think, well, I've got 9 days, 10 days, however long you've got to stay in Italy, and maybe you'll stay 3 nights in each place, but then you've got the challenge of only seeing the big cities. Like, and of course, they're amazing. I mean, I love, I love Rome, I love Florence, um, I always recommend people to visit there who are going to be traveling in that area. But where you actually find the charm of these countries is outside of the big cities. Or at least once you scratch the surface, you can find that charm in the cities, but you need to spend a good amount of time to get to that level.

Cyra Alcock:

Let's say once you've ticked off the must-see sites, and then - so it's when you actually get out to those smaller places, I think anyway, that you really get to understand the culture and what, what makes this country so special.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, absolutely. And then it's how do you get there? All of this adds up in time and complexity. And I think one area that really sort of encapsulates these - and we'll get on to this in a bit later - is the area around Naples, because around there, there's so much to see and do. You can do Naples, Pompeii, Amalfi Coast, Sorrento. I mean, the Amalfi Coast, you can stay for a week on it easily. And so there's so much right there, and it might seem, oh yeah, we can, um, fit in a few things in a day, and And unfortunately, the way that it is, is that the transport is not really - I mean, it's probably some of the best transport tourist infrastructure in the country, but it's still going to take you some time just because of the terrain and the, the geography of everything around you. So that's it, that's one example. I had another example too, and that was Tuscany.

Katy Clarke:

I think Tuscany is sort of wedged there right between Rome and Florence, and you think, ah yeah, this is, this is easy, I'll just do Tuscany on the way up. But there's no direct train line to any of the big cities in the regional areas like Siena, which a lot of people want to go and visit. So you kind of have to go to Florence and then, you know, or you have to pick up a car, and that has its other challenges as well.

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, absolutely. I, I'll admit it took me years to visit Siena precisely because I was always traveling independently, and I would get to Florence and then it just kind of went into the too hard basket, especially when there was so much to do in the city. So I can - yeah, I can completely relate to that challenge because I've experienced it myself when I've been traveling in Italy, that there's been places that I've had on my bucket list, and while I've been planning the trip, I'm like, yeah, you know, I'll be able to do that, I'll be able to get the bus there, I'll be able to see all these things. And then when push came to shove and I'm on the trip, I'm like, oh, actually, like, I can't figure out whether the bus goes from like bus stop 1 or bus stop 2, can't figure out what time it goes, like, is this timetable even right? I'm like, I'm just going to stay in Florence or in the city that I'm in at that point.

Katy Clarke:

And I think all of it's doable if you have a lot of time, you know, if you have time to - piano piano, as they say in Italian - and you can take your time and you'll, you know, you maybe have a few days to settle into a city. But the reality is most of the people that are traveling, especially first-time travelers to Italy, they probably don't have that time. And they, you know, like trying to understand a whole different transport system and navigate it, plus get around different cities, and they're completely different. I love that analogy that you said about Australia, because in Australia, most of our cities are laid out in a grid for everyone who hasn't been here. So it's pretty like, like a Manhattan grid, so it's easy to get around. Whereas in Italy, it's all higgledy-piggledy, you've got the lasagna of history happening, and yeah, it's really not as straightforward. So you need some time to be able to sort that out, and unfortunately, these days a lot of the time we don't have that time to plan. So you've come up with a pretty cool concept here at Walks, and I honestly - I was so blown away.

Katy Clarke:

I thought, this is a genius move. And when I saw how you had actually executed it, then I became very, very excited because I do think this is something that will help a lot of people that are short on time and that really want to have a really great taste of Southern Italy and also Tuscany. So maybe you can explain the concept as a whole, and then we'll deep dive into one of the trips that you've got planned?

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, the thinking behind this new concept of the overnight trip, it's almost like a micro-vacation. We've been doing day trips to places like Tuscany and Rome, and these day trips have been really popular with people because, honestly, to travel to those places, um,

independently, as we already discussed, is a little complex sometimes. And so day trips have been a great solution. That, that's not unique to Walks, and many operators are doing day trips, but these day trips come with a unique set of challenges, and that is that the time is so rushed. And also, if you look for a Rome to Amalfi day trip, for example, on the internet, you'll find every tour operator or many tour operators offering a very similar itinerary of these day trips. So you leave super early in the morning from Rome, you get to the destination at the same time as every other tour bus. It's crowded. I mean, it's already crowded by nature.

Cyra Alcock:

It's especially crowded. Those beautiful photos that you see with no people around those have been Photoshopped. That's not the reality when you, when you're actually there in June, in summer in Italy. And so we wanted to get past this, right? So, we wanted to give people the opportunity to really experience these places that - to use somewhere like Positano on the Amalfi Coast as an example. I think anyone who's planning a trip to Italy, or at least that part of Italy, will have read about Positano and will have it on their bucket list without a doubt. And for a reason. I mean, it's beautiful, it's iconic. But yeah, when you go on these day trips down there, you're there for 40 minutes or maybe an hour and at the same time as everyone else.

Cyra Alcock:

And then everyone leaves for the day and the crowds just totally drop off and these places are magical. And that's what we wanted to share with people. So we're still solving that problem, that pain point that, you know, you need to get out of the city somehow. And we solve that for you, but you still get to experience that magic of the places as if you were traveling independently on your own.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, it's - honestly, I think it's brilliant, and it's really great for people that want a streamlined experience. But also, like, I really want to emphasize, this is what really blew me away, because if people have been listening to this podcast for a while, they know that I appreciate a slower way of traveling and a more considered way of approaching just how we move about the planet and Italy in general. But this idea is not just a sightseeing experience, and I can tell that a lot of thought has gone into this concept so that people can really appreciate the places that they visit. I really genuinely am very impressed. So, uh, so shall we take a deep dive into one of the trips so we can get a better idea of how it works? Let's go to the Amalfi Coast, because people who've been listening for a while know that I had that - my big birthday a couple of years ago in that area, and, uh, I have some very special experiences that I particularly liked that you've managed to put into this itinerary. So that's why I was like, oh, this is great. Uh, anyway, tell us a little bit about the trip as, you know, an overarching concept, and then we'll dive into what happens day by day.

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, sure. So I mentioned the day trips that walks have been doing up to now, and, you know, a very popular itinerary for these day trips is to visit from Rome in one day Pompeii,

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which I don't think needs any introduction on this podcast with a bunch of Italy lovers, Pompeii and the Amalfi Coast. And usually the structure would be, you know, visit Pompeii, free time for lunch, pass by a town on the Amalfi Coast, go back to Rome. And so of course, first we want those basics that we know that people want to see when they're visiting Italy. So Pompeii was an absolute no-brainer to include on the, on the trip, but we also wanted to give people a chance to get a little bit off the beaten path. So we do have some places that maybe people haven't heard of before, like Cetara, which is a fishing village. They're famous for anchovies, which might sound terrifying to some people here, but once you try the anchovies in Italy, it's nothing like what you have back home. They're a delicacy, so there'll be an opportunity to try those when you're in Cetara.

Cyra Alcock:

But then, of course, there's other experiences like visiting the lemon grove. The image of a lemon goes hand in hand with the Amalfi Coast, and the, the specific variety of lemons that they grow there is unique to the region. Grown on the rocky terraces. So we do visit a farm where they have their lemon grove. They produce, uh, lemon sorbet, limoncello, obviously. So there's a chance to visit one of those lemon producers, which I think is super unique. I mean, when I was there, I was there in November when we were doing some, some research and just some, um, figuring out the nuts and bolts of this trip. And we're in the lemon grove and the daughter-in-law of the family was hosting us and she's introducing us to everyone that we're meeting.

Cyra Alcock:

And there's her, there's her father-in-law and there's her partner's uncle. And, you know, the father-in-law was like 90 and he's still there working in the lemon grove, not because he needs to, but because he loves it. It's his lifeblood, right? You know, he can't imagine not being there every day. And it was just, it's just so nice. And then these kinds of experiences that you won't necessarily come across if you go on your own. So yeah, it really is a combination between those, those must-see sites. We visit Positano. We'll join a sunset cruise from Positano.

Cyra Alcock:

There's an opportunity to have dinner in Positano after all the crowds go, which, unless you're actually staying in Positano, is never a possibility. Well, if you're staying in Positano, it's thousands of euros a night for a hotel room in summer. So obviously, that possibility isn't actually accessible for most people. So, um, yeah, we'll be in Positano into the evening and have dinner there and then head back to the hotel later on.

Katy Clarke:

So let's just take a step back because there's some bits that, um, I really like about this. There's so many things in this trip, and what I think is excellent is it's really well paced. It sounds like there's a lot of things in here, but I can tell that the way that you've created it, it's a very nice pace. And so there's a lot of different experiences, but a lot of also downtime. There's some time for people to go wandering on their own, and it's a small group, too. So this

is the, the thing that I thought was fantastic. It's not like when you go to some of these places, you're wandering around in a group of like - off the ferry dumps 40 people on the same tour group. And in fact, I just heard in Capri that they've banned groups over 40, which I was thinking, my goodness, I can't even imagine a tour group with more than 40 people in it to begin with.

Katy Clarke:

But this group is, is limited to 10, right?

Cyra Alcock:

That's right, yeah, it is limited to 10, and you know, that's intentional, of course. We want to keep the group small. We, we don't want you to be having that feeling if you're going around with a tour group of 30 or 40 people. And you're right about the design. So, you know, there, there, of course, there are moments of, you know, where it's a bit more action-packed moving around, but you know, then it's coupled with moments of like sitting back and enjoying. So for example, you know, we do visit Pompeii, of course. We do a guided tour in the Pompeii ruins with one of our, um, local guides there. But then we settle in for a lunch on the slopes of Vesuvius in a winery, and it's a 3-course lunch paired with their wines that they grow there.

Cyra Alcock:

And so, you know, and then after that we'll head down to Positano in the van, and that drops us there. And, you know, once we get in Positano, there's an opportunity to wander around, explore, take photos right at the time when everyone is leaving for the day. So you can actually get those iconic photos without tons of people in them. But then we'll set off on a boat trip and, you know, a bit more action. So yeah, it, it, it does ebb and flow - the design of the trip, for sure.

Katy Clarke:

It's extremely well done. So one of our team has actually, uh, been on the day trip with Walks to do Pompeii and the winery on Vesuvius, and they loved it. So that's a very special experience too, that is not - you know, I just think it's great. So you can go for your walk around Pompeii, and it's a huge site, so you're going to get your steps up, and then you can get to Vesuvius and enjoy a glass of wine and your beautiful lunch, and it's actually really moving to be on Vesuvius and then look down on Pompeii and think, wow, this very peaceful area now was the scene of such carnage, you know, back in the, you know, nearly 2,000 years ago. It's crazy. And, uh, yeah, so then when you finish up for that day and you've had that time in Positano, and everyone - the line for the boats or the ferries back to Sorrento or Naples, and the line, and the line for the is crazy. So it's so good that you've got your own transport to get back to the hotel. So, where is the hotel actually?

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, the hotel's just located outside of Sorrento. It's in Sorrento, but it's not in the middle of the town. It's just on the outside. So it's really peaceful. You have, you know, it's perfect for a

good night's rest, but it's close enough to the town of Sorrento for people that do want to go out, do want to have a few more drinks - that option is there as well.

Katy Clarke:

All those limoncellos. Oh, that's the best part about that southern Italy. You do feel like you're - you know, you definitely feel like you're on vacation or on holiday. It's got just those excellent vibes. So then on the next day, um, how does that pan out? Is it a very early start, or you - it's okay?

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, it's a fairly early start. I guess it's relative depending on what people are used to, but we'll be on the 9 AM boat to Amalfi, and once we get to Amalfi, we'll be visiting a lemon grove there. So people will have the experience of visiting a lemon farm, trying the limoncello. After visiting the lemon grove, there's time for lunch in Amalfi town. Um, needless to say, the food in the Amalfi Coast is amazing. Get spaghetti al limone, so pasta with lemon, uh, or all the seafood pastas, seafood risotto, fresh seafood. And then after that, we get another boat to Cetara. This town is - it's, it feels really local, you know. Some of the Amalfi towns are very, they're very popular.

Cyra Alcock:

I'm going to use a word that I hate using - they're very touristy. But they're touristy for a reason. People go because they're iconic, because they're beautiful, because they're historic. Um, whereas Cetara has a bit more of like a - let's say it's less visited, so it's more, it's more local people living there. We'll be doing there some kind of anchovy tasting and have an aperitivo there before we head back to Rome. So, to head to Rome, we get on another boat to Salerno, which is one of the departure points or entry and departure points of the Amalfi Coast. And from there our bus will take us back to Rome. And you don't need to worry because your bags will already be in the bus.

Cyra Alcock:

The driver will have taken them from the hotel for you in the morning. So, when we leave in the morning, you take your luggage, leave it in the hotel, and our bus driver will pick everything up and will be in the bus for you when we get on the bus at Salerno to take you back to Rome.

Katy Clarke:

So good. No one wants to be drag - dragging their luggage on those. I mean, you can, you can do it, it can be done. It can be a little bit stressful getting your luggage on and off the ferries with 2,000 other people. And I think people are quite surprised, especially in Positano, that it's a long way to the top, um, and it's very steep. So there are porteri - there, if you are going, but of course, everything costs a little bit extra if you need that. So if you are not paying for portage, you do have to take your luggage all the way to your hotel on your own, which - I hope you've been to the gym, that's all I can say.

Katy Clarke:

So I mean, that honestly, it's so good. It's not for everyone, like, you know, like, it is, um, 2 days, but it's just so well designed. If you wanted to have that taste of southern Italy and have that experience - I mean, for me now, the Amalfi Coast is very busy, and I just think, well, the only way that I like to see it these days, because I'm fortunate to have, you know, seen these places actually in the off-season, which is another way to see them. But in the peak of summer, it's on the boat. You want to see these places from the boat, and you get a whole different perspective. And to have a sunset cruise in Positano is just a dream, and to have dinner there and then have everything taken care of, honestly, fantastic. So it just really sounds delightful, and I do sound like I'm gushing, and I don't really - I'm not really a gusher, to be honest, but I am really quite impressed with this trip because it's got so many, um, really great elements. What's your favorite part about the trip?

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, that's a good question. So before I dive into that, I just wanted to touch on something that you mentioned, that saying it's not for everyone, you know, that - and you're right, not everyone has the opportunity to take several weeks of holiday or be able to spend an extended time in Italy, but there is - there are quite a lot of people who only really have, you know, one, maybe, maybe two weeks if, if they can to, to go and explore. And we really - these overnight trips in general, whether it's the Amalfi Coast, whether it's, um, other ones that we're working on, they really have been thought with those people in mind, with people who really want to discover these places and want to experience them but don't have the time. And that was exactly the person that we were thinking of when we design these trips. Now back to my favorite moments. Uh, that is really hard. I think for me - there's two moments that I really love. And for me, it is firstly in the winery in Vesúvio.

Cyra Alcock:

So when I went into that winery, I'd actually never been before we started planning this trip. My colleagues had, and they told me a bit about it. I was, oh, okay. Like, yeah, I mean, they're recommending it, so it must be, it must be okay, but I, they didn't sell it to me, I guess. And when we got to this winery, and I get there, and the table's all laid out, and like, we've got like all the different wine glasses for each type of wine, and it's this beautiful room, the sun's coming in, and we just have these like unmatched views out over Vesuvius. I'm like, wow, this is amazing. This is luxury. And I'm talking about luxury in the sense of time and experience, not like high-end. This is where I want to be right now, and I want to live this. And it's kind of hard to have bad food in Italy, so I could say the food was delicious, and it was.

Cyra Alcock:

Um, the wine was delicious, and of course it was. Again, it's kind of hard to have bad wine in these kind of places, of course. But just the set, the setting, the hospitality from the owners was - that was a real wow moment for me, you know. And I had a moment of like pinch myself, like, wow, I'm working right now, this is great.

Cyra Alcock:

And then the other moment I absolutely loved was in the evening in Positano. That feeling of, you know, walking into Positano as everyone else is walking out, to be honest, and be able to sit there by the beach, by the water, with an aperol spritz. For me, that was amazing. That was another real highlight. So obviously the Italy, Amalfi Coast, is everything. It has its uniqueness and is enjoyable. But they were two real standout moments for me.

Katy Clarke:

Sometimes I think, oh, I don't need to go back to the Amalfi Coast again, but then I just go, ah, yes, I do. But I do think this - it's very difficult to achieve this on your own in that amount of time. And we plan trips for a lot of people, and I take my hat off to you. You could do it if you had a private driver, and obviously, then that comes with a cost element and whatnot. But this is like, to me, if you are short on time and you want to have these - I basically - iconic and very special experiences, then I can't really think of a better way to do it, actually. And obviously it'd have to be in your budget, but also it's just - it's a very clever thing to do. But I think if you're planning your own travels, everyone who's listening - because there are a lot of independent travelers that listen to our podcast - just think about, um, some of these experiences that have been built into this trip, because Chitara is amazing. And it's one of those places you can get there by ferry, but no one goes there.

Katy Clarke:

Why? I don't know. Like, um, it's a very nice town, and there are plenty of those little towns along the Amalfi Coast that you will - you know, you don't just need to go to Positano and Amalfi. And I love that you've got that, but I love that you've got the contrast in there with Cetara and Atrani as well. That's one of my favorites. That's the iconic town. People would know that if they see a picture of it, though. I might put one on the show notes, actually, so everyone can see Atrani because it is a lovely little town. Cyra, congratulations again on the trip planning.

Katy Clarke:

How can listeners find out more about these overnight trips?

Cyra Alcock:

Yeah, so to find out about the overnight trips, they can get in touch with us. Our website is walksofitaly.com, so very easy to remember. You actually don't need to physically get in touch with us, you can just book directly from the Walks of Italy website.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, and we'll obviously put a link to this trip. And there's another one in Tuscany too, isn't there? An overnight trip from Rome.

Cyra Alcock:

There is, yeah, yeah. So we're the same format, one night, two full days, departing from Rome by high-speed train. Um, and on the first day we explore Florence, we eat, we drink

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wine, we see the Statue of David, of course. And then in the evening we have a really special experience, which is going up - well, after the Florence Duomo, the Florence Cathedral is closed, we visit on a private visit with our group, where we climb up the Duomo when no one else is there. So, uh, it is quite a lot of steps. The exact number escapes me right now, but I think it's around 400. It sounds worse than it actually is, uh, but to get up to the top and be the only people up there is absolutely amazing.

Cyra Alcock:

And if it's the right time of year, you're up the top at sunset. And we do stay in Florence that night, and then on the second day we visit Tuscany, as we were talking about earlier. So we visit Siena, San Gimignano, and of course, a Tuscan winery. And again, We also have another, um, multi-course Italian meal, delicious food paired with their wines.

Katy Clarke:

Fantastic. I think it - yeah, if you're new to Italy, if you wanted to go back and really have some of these very special experiences, then this is such a great way to do it. And it's only in a group of 10 people, so it's going to be quite convivial, small, and easy to get around. So that's brilliant. Thank you, Cyra. Thanks very much for sharing that with us, and, uh, I hope you can continue your Italian adventures. Where's next? You've been to Puglia. Is there something else that's on your list?

Cyra Alcock:

That's a good question. I, I think that I would like to spend more time in the south. I was actually looking recently at the possibility of spending some time in Sicily. I have been, but I went and I knew what I was getting myself into. I went in August, um, and planned my trip 2 weeks before, so it was not a case of where I wanted to go. It was a case of where I could get accommodation. But I mean, I had an amazing time, but there were so many things that I wanted to do. And so, um, yeah, I've been thinking about spending potentially a couple of weeks in Palermo and visiting other places in Sicily.

Cyra Alcock:

So yeah, I think Sicily will be next for me. But, um, yeah, it's been great. Thanks for having me, Katy. I love any opportunity to talk about Italy and talk about traveling and food, and even better if it's all together. So, uh, so yeah, great to be here.

Katy Clarke:

Amazing. Thanks for joining us on Untold Italy, Cyra.

Cyra Alcock:

Thank you. Bye.

Katy Clarke:

Listeners, I hope and think this is going to be the start of some very exciting innovations in travel in Italy. Somehow, the travel industry needs to meet the moment for you and everyone

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traveling who wants to experience the beauty and culture of Italy in a meaningful way. These trips solve many trip planning problems and meet the moment by allowing travelers like you to experience everything that is enchanting about this part of Italy - the sea, the land, the history and of course the people.

The overnight trip schedule begins in July, right on time for the summer season, but if you remember, at the start of this episode, I mentioned that Walks of Italy have opened up a special Amalfi Coast trip exclusively for our podcast listeners. Departing May 6 from Rome, the Amalfi Coast overnight adventure will cover everything Cyra mentioned - a guided tour of Pompeii, lunch at the Vesuvius winery, sunset boat tour off Positano, lemon grove visit, small towns other travelers miss and all the logistics taken care of. If you have only 2 days to experience the Amalfi Coast, this is how I would do it.

I've put a link to the tour information in the show notes so you can check it out for yourselves. You'll find all the details in your podcast app and on our website at untolditaly.com/314.

That's all for this week, next week we are heading north to beautiful Alba, where my friend Monica is going to take us on a virtual wander around her hometown. But until then, it's ciao for now.