Untold Italy Episode 346: Essential Italy Travel Q&A - Honeymoons, Day Trips, Shopping, and Agriturismo Tips

Choosing between Sicily and Sardinia, day trips to the Amalfi Coast, mapping out a travel plan that includes Rome, Umbria, Sardinia, and the Dolomites, choosing an agriturismo in Tuscany, plus shopping in Florence and Capri. These are some of the topics we will be covering in our Q&A episode this week.

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 the Untold Italy podcast where we help travellers move beyond the checklist so they really feel part of Italy. This is the Untold Italy way. I'm your host, Katy Clarke, and on today's episode I'm answering listener questions that were sent in over the past few weeks. Thank you, grazie mille, to everyone that sent through queries. We had so many that I am focusing on the questions that I think will help listeners the most. We have over 6,000 people tuning in every week, which is simply amazing. Now, some of you are traveling for the first time, some are going back after a long time and a break, and others are Italy tragics who keep going back every year. That is definitely me, guilty as charged, but I wouldn't have it any other way. Grazie mille to you all for supporting the show. We are so happy to help you plan your trips to Italy.

Katy Clarke:
If you are new to our podcast, you may not know that apart from hundreds of podcast episodes, we also have a website, untolditaly.com, which has hundreds of free articles to help you plan your travels in Italy. This is also where you'll find our show notes for each episode, where we detail all the places and concepts and words that you might need when you're planning your trip. There are also accommodation guides, information about the Italian regions, guides to trains and driving in Italy. And how to get from point A to point B - on our website. And the podcast and website are the best places to start, but if you need personalized assistance, we also have a team of Italy trip planners who can assist with a trip planning consultation or a Q&A session. If you are thinking of traveling in 2027, now is a very good time to begin and book in for one of these sessions. A lot of travelers put off the planning until after all the end-of-year celebrations are over, and this is in fact the busiest time to plan and book any travel. It is a bit of a frenzy, in fact.

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Katy Clarke:
So if you want a head start and the best selection of accommodation and travel plans, then I strongly recommend beginning your trip planning for the next year before Christmas. Speaking of getting started, we have a lot of questions to get through, so andiamo, let's get on with the show.

Katy Clarke:
Our first question comes from Drew, who is planning a honeymoon, and Drew wrote, my wife and I are on our honeymoon in June and they're deciding between Sicily, Taormina, Etna, the Aeolian Islands, and Sardinia, the Costa Smeralda and the northeast. They love Italy, but they've never been to either, and they like food, outdoorsy activities, and exploring. They're leaning towards Sardinia, but they're wondering if there will be enough to do since there aren't as many towns to walk around. And Drew said he loves the show. Thanks, Drew, and congratulations to you and your wife. What a great way to celebrate your marriage.

Katy Clarke:
And I think As you have discovered, there is no right or wrong answer here, but there's probably a few questions that I'd ask if I had a one-on-one chat with you. I'm not sure how long you're going for and also how much beach time you like. So I'll do my best here with some context and just to let you know that I'm not really a beach and splodge person. I'm one of those people that likes to get out and about unless I'm really specifically going somewhere to relax and do nothing. My family finds it a little bit irritating because I do like to get out and explore, but that's just the way I am. And you know, I'm the one that organizes the travel, so bad luck everyone. Now, if you're thinking for going to either of these places for over a week, I would consider broadening your scope for Sardinia in particular. A lot of people think Sardinia is all about beaches, which it is, and they are some of the most spectacular and sandy beaches in Italy.

Katy Clarke:
But the mountains are lovely too, and you can also, from Olbia, which is the main town in the northeast there, you can rent a car and you can get to some really lovely cities. Alghero is one of them, and it's absolutely gorgeous. I think if you restrict yourself to the Costa Smeralda, that's where the challenge is if you want to explore a bit. But if you do decide on Sardinia and this area, make sure to spend a day in Porto Cervo, which is absolutely stunning. The part of Sicily that you mentioned has a rockier shoreline, and of course Taormina is so popular now thanks to the White Lotus TV show. You could do a few days here and then move on to the islands, but also apart from Taormina, you're not going to have a lot of towns to wander around. And be aware that Taormina at this time of year in June, it's crazy busy with day trippers, and it will be the most crowded place on Sicily. So I guess what I'm saying is if you want towns to walk around, there are options on both islands, but you will likely need a car or to expand your frame of reference of where you want to go.

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Katy Clarke:
We have a Sicily guide on our website, so you can just use the search function there to find that one if you want to get a little bit more detail on what we think about Sicily. Now, this is a pertinent moment to bring us to the next question, which came from Angelo in Canada. And he said that he definitely enjoys our podcast and guests and the amazing Italiaphile host. I guess that would be me. Thank you, Angelo. And he said, is it true that there are certain parts of southern Italy, including Sicily, where due to car theft statistics that rental agencies will not insure for theft? In other words, if your rental is stolen, such as Catania, then you'll be on the hook for a small fortune. Angelo, I haven't heard of this and perhaps it happens. But I definitely would not be renting a car from anywhere that doesn't insure for theft.

Katy Clarke:
If you go through the major agencies like Hertz or any of those places, or there's a local one called Sicily by Car, you know, they'll be very clear about what is and isn't included. And if they're saying they're not going to cover for theft, obviously you have to read the fine print. I would not be renting a car. But here are some of the things to consider if you do want to rent a car in Sicily, which is actually the easiest way to get around if you're not joining a group tour. Firstly, think really hard about whether you want to drive in cities like Palermo and Catania because they're really chaotic and, you know, you need some pretty decent skills as a driver and to stay very calm. And, you know, I don't know about you, but when I'm on vacation, I want to relax. I don't need the stress of having to navigate and drive through big cities. My husband is a very good driver.

Katy Clarke:
And he's driven in Italy a lot, and we just don't drive in the cities because it's just not worth the stress. So what to do is to pick up your car at the airport and just steer clear of the cities. And to avoid any thefts, obviously do not have any visible luggage or belongings in the car. So have everything locked up and covered. And we always park in a covered, secure car park where possible, and one where there's someone that's on site that's keeping an eye on things. So it really pays to do your research before you hit the road to look out for these garages. Regardless, if there's no insurance coverage, do not rent the car because it's not worth it.

Katy Clarke:
Okay. Our next question comes from Johnna, and Johnna's from Oklahoma in the United States. And I met Johnna on one of our tours last year on our Umbria tour, and we had such lovely chats. And I'm so glad she sent this question in. Johnna and her husband are joining our Untold Italy Northern Italy trip next September, which is a 12-night trip, and it starts in Turin and it ends in Bolzano. Johnna wanted to know, as it's a 12-day trip, she wanted to know how she could make it into a 14-day trip. So this is one of our signature tours, and as I said, it starts in Turin, Torino. And it ends in Bolzano. And on this trip, everyone gets to experience wonderful Piedmont, which is a lovely region in the north of Italy, famous for truffles and wine.

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Katy Clarke:
And then they go onto the lakes, Lake Como and Lake Garda, and finish in the Dolomites. So it's a full adventure across northern Italy, and there are some beautiful stops in nature. But what's not included here, and what I will say to Johnna, is that they start in Milan. Which has an international airport, and it's the 2nd largest airport in Italy after Rome, and that's the Malpensa Airport. And from Milan, it's an easy train ride over to Turin, and you can do that in under an hour. So fly into Milan and then you can spend the day in the city and sort of acclimatize before getting the train across to Turin for the start of the tour. So Milan is a big city and it's probably Italy's most modern, but there are some important sites to visit like Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper painting and the Duomo. That can, that can all be done in a day if you like.

Katy Clarke:
I really love Milan. I could spend weeks there, but if you just wanted a day to explore a little bit, then those are the 2 things that I would do. There are also some fantastic restaurants there too, which we will suggest to you. Johnna, closer to the time. But just letting everyone know if they are visiting Milan that they do need to book Last Supper tickets well in advance if you're interested in that, because they sell out really quickly and it's very limited each day. But it's a wonderful experience to see this painting, this fresco in situ where he did the painting on the refectory of the church Santa Maria delle Grazie, which Is a very important church in Milan. I would bookend the tour with Milan at the start, and the tour actually ends in Bolzano up in the mountains, but we don't spend too much time there on the tour. Bolzano is a really lovely city in the foothills of the Dolomites, and it has one of my favourite museums in the world that tells the story of Ötzi the Iceman, who was found frozen in time 5,300 years after he died.

Katy Clarke:
And you don't need too much time there, and I don't want to give you any spoilers, but I love this museum, and I think it's worth hanging around in Bolzano for an extra day. Plus, you can just go and enjoy the city, which is a really pretty city that a lot of people loved. So I would add a day here to round out your trip. And that would make the ultimate Northern Italian adventure. And if you'd like some more details about our Northern Italy tour, we'll put a link to the trip details in the episode show notes. Okay, this is another question about something to do in Northern Italy, and well, it's not actually Northern Italy, but it is a day trip from destinations in Northern Italy. So Julie wrote, hi Katy, could you tell us about the Bernina Express? Is there any difference taking the red train? Is it best to go through the website or a provider like GetYourGuide? And do you recommend this as a day trip? Hi Julie. Well, This is a popular day trip from Milan and it is of course into Switzerland.

Katy Clarke:
So it's an international day trip. You must take your passport. This is speaking from someone who did do a day trip into Switzerland and did not take their passport and realized when I was in Switzerland. Anyway, it is a popular day trip and the Bernina Express is one of the world's most popular Alpine train rides and it goes through some absolutely spectacular scenery. It is

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the UNESCO World Heritage Site and it winds through the pristine Alpine landscapes. So it goes from, usually most people start, well, many people start in Switzerland from the city of Chur, and which is the oldest town in Switzerland. And it takes you over 196 bridges and through 55 tunnels, over wild gorges and the famous Landwasser Viaduct, up to the Bernina Pass, to the glaciers, and down to the palm trees in Tirano in Italy. It is a beautiful train ride and you don't need to do the full length of the train ride, which goes up to Chur.

Katy Clarke:
Many people stop around St. Moritz and get off in St. Moritz. When people are traveling from Italy, they either go from Milan or several stations along Lake Como, like Varenna and Lecco also have stops to get you there. So the way you do that from Milan is that you take the train from Milan to Tirano and you swap trains over to the Bernina Express. There are a couple of ways to do this. You can go on the scenic train, which has covered glass panoramic views, or there's the local train. So the scenic sort of tourist train is obviously a little bit more expensive, and the local train or the regional trains are, you know, much more cost effective.

Katy Clarke:
The regional trains go every 30 or 60 minutes. And the Benina Express runs twice a day in winter and 4 times a day in summer. So you don't really need to book if you're going on the regional trains, but you do if you're going to go on the Benina Express because it is very popular. Also worth noting, the regional trains are very quiet, or they're much quieter, and they don't have allocated seating, so you can switch sides from one to the other if you prefer. And with the Benina Express, they do tend to be busier and you will need to remain in your allocated seats. Both of those 2 trains run over the exact same tracks, and it's personal preference. If you prefer to be on the panoramic carriages, it's up to you. So they do make little announcements about the history of the line on the panoramic train as well, and some heads up when approaching some key places.

Katy Clarke:
But you can also, you know, do your own research and get the train schedule on your phone and research in advance. The other option that Julie mentioned is that there are day tours from Milan. And so what that will do is there is a coach transfer usually to Tirano where you pick up the Bernina Express, and then it's a coach transfer back from either St. Moritz or Tirano. So either way, like you probably save a little bit of time doing it that way, and you don't have to rely on your own research or scheduling to sort that out. So. It's really 6 of one, half a dozen of the other, which you prefer. Is it worth a day trip? Well, it is absolutely spectacular scenery.

Katy Clarke:
There's no doubt about it, and it's very beautiful. And if you feel like having a relaxing day sitting on the train and maybe getting off for a little wander in St. Moritz, then definitely you can do that. But yes, there are many, many day trips you can do from Milan, and that's just one of them. I mean, you can also go to Verona for the day or Turin or Lake Como. So there's always choices to be made in travelling in Italy, and they're never easy. But I think if it was

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me, I'd probably, and depending on who's travelling, I'd probably take the regional train. The other thing I just found out actually as well is the Pullman Express is doing some very fancy trips on the Bernina Express, which includes lunch.

Katy Clarke:
So if that's more your vibe, you can look that up too. Okay, we're now heading down to southern Italy and Jaime Fitzgerald sent in a bunch of questions that I'm gonna do my best to answer, but they're really, really helpful because I think a lot of people will have similar questions about their time in these places in southern Italy. So the first one is she's going to Capri and she had some questions about boat tours and the Blue Grotto. They're gonna be staying on Capri. Great idea. And they would love to book a private island boat tour that includes the Blue Grotto, but she would prefer to book directly with a local captain or company rather than through a large third-party booking site. Do we have anyone we particularly recommend or a good way to find a reputable local captain? This is a great question, and it also illustrates a few things that everyone should know about traveling in Italy. One is that if you want to go with a local - often your best bet is to ask at your accommodation as they will have people that they work with and that will work very well with them and they've got a very good relationship with, especially on Capri, which is, yeah, it's localized and people have strong relationships with one another.

Katy Clarke:
And these people are, you know, the boat captains in particular, they get a lot of business just from word of mouth and so they've, they've no interest in advertising or investing any money in marketing. They like to do their thing. They like to do their boat and they don't need to advertise. So if you want to book online and have everything organized before you go, then unfortunately you really don't have an option other than booking with bigger companies. Because like I said, Italians have a way that they like to work. And generally speaking, they either don't need to build a profile online or booking online is not for them. That's why I'll recommend reaching out to your accommodation because they will have longstanding relationships with people that they work with. And, you know, they will recommend someone that maybe can get you to the port from their accommodation and make it a little bit easier for you as well.

Katy Clarke:
Now, if you are happy to email and phone and WhatsApp in advance, there are more options. And so in this case, if you reach out to your accommodation, they might give the boat captain's WhatsApp number and you can text them. But, you know, often you can just book that when you arrive unless it's really peak summer.

Katy Clarke:
Now just one comment on the Blue Grotto. You can only book this directly with the captains of the specific boats that go into the Blue Grotto, so they are a different bunch of people that do the Blue Grotto compared to the people that do the island tours. And it's quite funny actually, like we went at the very opening one time and these guys are just kind of come from

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around the corner. There's all these little rowboats that go inside the Blue Grotto because the boats that go inside the Blue Grotto have to be very small because it's a very small opening to go in. So what you do is you are on your boat tour and you transfer over onto their boat and go inside the Blue Grotto. It is a beautiful experience and it's not a budget experience, let's just say. And you kind of are stuck in a place where you kind of have to pay because they will be shouting you a price and you either pay and get on or you just keep going. So it is a lovely experience and I do recommend it, but you need to be aware as well that it doesn't happen every day. If the tides are wrong or up and you, they can't get into the grotto or it's bad weather, they don't run. So this is only something that you can book when you are right outside the Blue Grotto. So I hope that's helpful.

Katy Clarke:
It is one of those things that's lovely to do, but it has some little quirks about it too. Okay. Jaime also asked about doing a day trip from Capri to the Amalfi Coast, the Path of the Gods and Ravello. Oh, Jaime, this is very ambitious. Okay, so I would choose one or the other because there's a lot of little steps in this plan that add up to a lot of time that you might not realize - okay? So I don't actually know when you're going. I think you might be going in October. You may have already left.

Katy Clarke:
I'm sorry about that if you have, but consider that you need to get the ferry to Positano from Capri and find your way to the start of the Path of the Gods walk. And so in October, this time in October, the first ferry from Capri is at 9:45 AM and it takes around 40 minutes to get to Positano. So conservatively, you are going to need another 45 minutes to get to the start of the walk, assuming that there are taxis available at the port. Otherwise it's a local bus. So from there, you know, once you get up to the Path of the Gods, it's now, you know, a 3 or 4 hour walk down to back to Positano. And then you need to get across to Ravello, which is another 40-minute ride depending on how you go, either by taxi, it'll be longer by bus. And that's, so that's 40 minutes each way there.

Katy Clarke:
And then you want to have a look around and 40 minutes back. And then the last ferry back to, to Capri is going to be at around, I think it's around 5:30 or 6 o'clock. So I think you'd be rushing around a lot to try and fit both of those 2 in. I think you can definitely do one or the other. But yeah, I wouldn't attempt to do both. So really, uh, have a look into those ferry schedules and how you're gonna get up to the start of the walk in Nocelle at the start of the Path of the Gods walk, because it's gonna take you a little bit of time and logistics to get up there. It's not one of those things that's really easy to coordinate unless, you know, you do pre-book a transfer, but obviously that's gonna add additional cost to your day. Okay, the next question that Jaime had is she wants to go shopping for local goods in Capri and in Tuscany.

Katy Clarke:
And I love that you want to support local artisans. It's really fantastic, Jaime. I think this is one way that we can really make a difference to local communities. And, you know, in Italy,

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they have so many wonderful artisans that really spend decades perfecting their craft. And it's a really beautiful way to bring your holiday or your vacation back home with you. In Capri, the thing to do is to buy yourself some custom-made sandals, and Canfora is the classic place to do these on Capri. It's where Jackie Kennedy and Grace Kelly acquired their sandals, and it is in Capri Town. It's quite ritzy, and you know, you're looking at, you know, a decent price for these custom-made sandals, which, you know, you will probably have for the rest of your life.

Katy Clarke:
So I think it's a really good investment. There are some other places in Anacapri that are not as well known. such as Da Costanzo, and they make beautiful sandals too. Jaime also wanted to buy some leather goods in Florence. In Florence, the Scuola del Cuoio behind Santa Croce is the place to go for the highest quality leather. And as you can imagine, the prices are matching that level of craftsmanship and quality. There are many, many other options in the city that are not at that level. One I can recommend is Peruzzi, which is on the other side of the Piazza Santa Croce.

Katy Clarke:
And I have a few pieces from there that have stood the test of time. They have leather jackets, bags, purses, belts, et cetera. And one place I would avoid is the San Lorenzo Market. These places, and it's not Italian craftsmanship, it's really imported, cheap imported goods. I think, you know, if you are looking for craftsmanship and artisan-level goods, you're really looking at much higher prices than the typical tourist souvenir type thing. So have a little look. I wouldn't be paying less than €200 to €300 for a leather jacket. You're probably not getting anything that's very high quality.

Katy Clarke:
So that's just something to think about. So once again, like the boat captains, these craftspeople are not marketers. They are really focused on their craft. And the way that we find craftsmen and artisans is by word of mouth, talking to locals, exploring, and serendipity. I found a really lovely ceramics piece just by following my nose around a corner in a town in Marche called Urbino. That was really fun because it's got a lovely little story to it. We met the artist and, you know, she told us all about her passion for this particular shape that I purchased. But it's not something that is easily found online, although there are some really interesting projects that are starting to collect these artisans and help preserve their works.

Katy Clarke:
But as I said, they're not marketers and they're not really, they're not good at promoting themselves. So what we are proud to do here at Untold Italy is we are documenting as many as we can in our Untold Italy app. So premium subscribers to the app can get access to our artisan list, which we are building and adding to all the time. So just to let you know, building and maintaining an app really is quite an expensive exercise. So that is why we do charge just around the cost of a guidebook for the app, and it covers every region of Italy. It's not a subscription because I think we all have enough of those, and I really wanted to make sure

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that it delivers value even if you are only going on one trip to Italy. But if you go multiple times, you get the benefit of all the free updates. And as I said, it covers the whole of Italy.

Katy Clarke:
So it's one thing that if you really wanted to make a difference and support the show, that's one thing that you could do. Now, Jaime had a lot of questions. Thanks, Jaime. But they were very, very good and I think really helpful for a lot of people. So her other question was how to choose an agriturismo in Chianti, and she was overwhelmed by choices. And that's really not surprising because there are a lot of agriturismi in Tuscany, almost 6,000. It is difficult to choose and they're not as well publicized, surprise, surprise, as maybe your standard hotels are. But they are a bit like hotels and they do cater to different budgets and experiences.

Katy Clarke:
So some are very big and like have a lot of different rooms and some are small. Some offer things like cooking classes, cheesemaking, and bike rental. And some are closer to famous tourist areas and some are not. So in my experience, it really depends what you are after, what type of experience you are after, on what is the right agriturismo for you. Probably the most important thing is location, whether you have a car, which you're probably going to need one, what you want to see and do. And like I said, some are closer to the tourist hotspots like Siena or San Gimignano or even Florence. And some are closer to smaller towns like Certaldo and Greve, where you'll probably get a more local feel. A lot of time the agriturismos have figured out experiences are a nice add-on for a little bit of extra cash.

Katy Clarke:
And as I said, some are better than others. They do their best, but let's just say I have quite high standards when it comes to experiences like, you know, visiting the farm and doing a cooking class. And I've got an example from our own travels with my family. And you know, we often, when we're in Italy, go and test things out because it's really important to do that if I'm gonna be talking to you about what we recommend. But we did do a cooking class at a very popular agriturismo near San Gimignano. And look, it was fine, but I'll go into a little bit more of it later. This agriturismo is lovely. It's got a nice restaurant.

Katy Clarke:
It's got a pool that overlooks San Gimignano, and it's nestled in the vineyard. So everything's looking good on paper, you know, and I was thinking, oh, okay, we'll try out the cooking class. And you know, I was a little bit disappointed because I felt like we were getting in the way of their operations. They were preparing for lunch and cleaning up after breakfast. And so we were kind of like plonked in the middle of their main kitchen and I just felt like we got in the way and we didn't get any recipes to take away and it was all very loose. So this is not the kind of experience that I am used to. It might suit some people, but I think if you are going to be spending few hundred euros on an experience like that, that you really want to have at least the recipes to take away. So we have a list on our website of popular agriturismi and places that we recommend, which we'll share in the show notes.

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Katy Clarke:
But if you do want personalized support and access to our special favorites, this is the type of thing that we cover in our trip consultations. And we go into a lot of detail about what you are looking for and then match you with what we think will suit you best based on when, You're going, how you're traveling, and what your budget is. It's very difficult to recommend specific places unless we know a little bit more about you. Okay. The next question is from Pamela and she wrote, I'm planning a trip for me and my college-age daughter. I'm hoping it will include 2 days in Rome, perhaps Umbria if time allows, and then Sardinia and the Dolomites. I'm a little overwhelmed with the logistics of this. I don't mind renting a car, but I'm a little intimidated about driving with all the nightmare stories.

Katy Clarke:
hear about car break-ins and police trying to scam you for speeding tickets, et cetera. I'm wondering if this is a real concern and how one would logistically get between these 3 regions. The more I learn, the more I'm at a loss of which area to stay on the island. So any tips there would be great. I mostly just like quiet beaches and I'm not really into nightlife or super crowded areas, and I don't mind cooking our own meals. Okay, Pamela, you don't say how long you're traveling for, but I do know that you're coming from the US and most trips from the US are around 10 to 14 days. So what I would say at the very start is that this is very ambitious for that time period, and I would be cutting at least one destination out of the equation. Sardinia does sound like it is a must-do, and so therefore I recommend spending at least a week there and choosing a couple of bases, like maybe Cagliari and the southern coast, or Olbia and the northern coast, because this is where the main flight routes go.

Katy Clarke:
So you could combine this with either the Dolomites, because I recommend a week there at least, too, or you could combine Sardinia with Rome. You can easily do 5 days in Rome and even more if you add in some day trips. As for renting a car, it is doable, but driving is very different from at home. You're always going to hear stories of scams and disasters, but I have been traveling in Italy for over 30 years and this hasn't happened to us once. None of those kind of crazy dramas. All of the dramas that we've had have been created 100% by us, and that's usually by not paying attention to instructions that we were given. Having said that, it is different driving in Italy. Italians kind of change personalities when they get behind the wheel, especially on the motorways or autostrada.

Katy Clarke:
So I would avoid the big motorways and stick to the countryside. And it's quite easy to do that if you plan your time out effectively. You would need a car in Sardinia, but you need to be aware that the roads are not great and flat tires are common. I think everyone I've ever spoken to that's driven in Sardinia has had a flat tire. I wouldn't be driving at night, as an example, and I'd probably make sure that I have a good phone connection wherever I'm going. The roads in the Dolomites are fantastic, but there you don't necessarily need a car because the local bus network is fantastic. And not all roads up the mountains are accessible. So they

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do close a lot of the roads on the mountains and you can't get through unless you are staying in a particular spot that's given you access.

Katy Clarke:
So what I would say, Pamela, is really have a think about what you want from your vacation, because I know it's so tempting to fit everything in, but there is really something to be said for choosing a couple of places and relaxing into them, especially if, as you say, you like quiet beaches and avoiding super crowded places. This is also how we can help if you want personalized support. So most of our clients want help deciding which places to visit and what makes sense for their style of travel. And, you know, we've helped really experienced travelers choose between Giulio and Elba Islands as an example. And then we have others that are deciding between Puglia and the Amalfi Coast, which is probably a more common question. So talking it through with someone who has lived there or been to these places multiple times and understands your situation is going to cut through all of the noise and help you decide a lot quicker. But as I always say, there are no wrong choices in Italy. So if you are stuck and you, you know, you don't want any help, just make a decision and you'll be fine. It will all work out because Italy has a way of doing that.

Katy Clarke:
Okay. Next question is from Vanessa who's traveling in winter. Vanessa is going to the Val d'Aosta, arriving on December the 26th. Are there any local companies that we recommend closer to the Alps who have Winter outfitted cars on their itinerary that guarantee that they have winter tires. Okay. So Vanessa said that she is going to Italy for 2 weeks of skiing and going to Rome and traveling around on a self-drive vacation. And that's the same cost as 1 week skiing in Colorado.

Katy Clarke:
Wow. That's a big comparison. Okay, Vanessa, the thing to know is that December 26th is a public holiday in Italy, and you will likely find a lot of things closed. So that is worth noting if you're traveling over the Christmas period, and I'm thinking that it might be an idea to stay in either Milan overnight or even take the train to Turin for better options on the car rental the next day. In the Aosta Valley, you are required to have both snow chains and winter tyres from 15th of October to the 15th of April, so it's really important. And you know what, I know it's not clear online, but I do think that most of the car rental companies will be complying with that. But of course, guaranteeing that is what you want, and I'm not sure that that is actually possible. You can usually book the winter tyres when you make your reservation, but as you've found, like I said, guaranteeing them could be difficult.

Katy Clarke:
You can try Auto Europe as they have a promotion on at the moment for winter travel, and you can click the box that says you need those tyres. Or I would also suggest going direct to Sicily by car, which actually covers all of Italy, or Locauto. And they are local Italian companies, but I feel like all of the car rental companies kind of, I don't know, I think it's some sort of, if there is a scam, it's because they all share the same inventory and it's just a

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different front end. I'm not quite sure. It's quite, quite an interesting operation in Italy. There's usually quite a few options when it comes to car rental. Anyway, Vanessa, have a great time in Italy after Christmas and enjoy your skiing in the Val d'Aosta. I think it's going to be wonderful.

Katy Clarke:
Okay. Our last question is from June Solomon, who said, thank you for the wonderful work you do making it easier to travel in Italy. Oh, thank you, June. That's what we're here for. And June's been listening for a couple of years now and has never missed an episode. So I really appreciate that and I love to hear it. So June is planning their 3rd trip to Italy and they'll be spending 5 weeks in Rome and Naples next year, beginning in April or September or October. And after that, a month or so in Padua.

Katy Clarke:
Lucky you. June. She wanted to know if waterproof sneakers would be helpful, especially for stability on wet cobblestones, and should they pack sweaters? Okay. At that time of year, it's either starting to get warm or it's starting to cool down. And it's quite interesting because people don't realize, I think people always think that spring is going to be the wettest time, but actually in Italy, autumn or fall is the wettest season in Italy. So cobblestones, yes, they can get very slippery, but I don't think you need waterproof sneakers, but you do need rubber soles on your shoes. So I would always have rubber soles. And even though leather soles are really lovely, if you've got leather soles, I actually put rubber soles on them because I do not wanna slip on those cobblestones.

Katy Clarke:
I don't think you need waterproof sneakers, but yeah, definitely invest in really comfortable shoes that have rubber soles. And when it comes to sweaters, I think the key here is to layer up. So layers, not sweaters. And really light ones so that you can add some more and not get too bulky or overheated. Because if anyone has been to Italy, and if you haven't, this is really good to know, you're going to be doing so much walking and you do heat up pretty quickly. So I like to have really light layers and light but warm long sleeve tops. And I've got some from Uniqlo that are really lovely and they come in so many different colors and they've got a little bit of cashmere in them and they're the HeatTech ones with cashmere and they're really nice and soft and they're fantastic for adding warmth without the bulk. So I hope that's helpful for you, June.

Katy Clarke:
And that's the last of our questions for this Q&A session. We covered quite a lot of ground there. I hope everyone found it useful. We'll do another one of these in a few weeks' time, so get your questions ready. I'll send out a call out on our various social media channels and here on your podcast app when we're ready to be collecting some more questions. But it is really great to see all of them coming in, and hopefully I've answered them and given you some more ideas and ways to have a think about how to plan your trip. As always, we put this transcript and detailed show notes on our website at untolditaly.com/346 for episode number

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346. Make sure to share our pod with your Italy-loving friends and get our podcast guide if you don't quite know where to start.

Katy Clarke:
Next week, we're taking a deep dive into the wonderful world of olive oil, but until then, it's ciao for now.

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