

FAMILY BIKING ITINERARY
PREMIERE INN TRIP

BACKROADS
THE WORLD'S #1 ACTIVE TRAVEL COMPANY

Tuscany

A TASTE OF TUSCANY NORTH OF SIENA

TO RESERVE YOUR
TRIP CALL
800-462-2848 OR
SIGN UP ONLINE [HERE](#)



Important Facts
at a glance

6 DAYS, 5 NIGHTS

Click [here](#) for departure dates
and pricing details

ROUTE RATING

Levels 2–4

See [below](#) for details.

**IN BUSINESS FOR
29 YEARS,
BACKROADS IS
RECOGNIZED YEAR IN
AND YEAR OUT AS
ONE OF THE WORLD'S
TOP 10 TRAVEL
COMPANIES BY
TRAVEL+LEISURE**

Treat your family to Tuscany—a Backroads favorite with something for everyone! Our routes in this famously hilly region are tailored to adults and kids alike and allow for plenty of family time both on and off your bicycle. Ride through tiny hamlets, and amid endless olive groves and vineyards. Explore the famed town of San Gimignano, crowned with medieval towers, and visit one of the best *gelaterie* in Italy. Along the way, a horseback ride in the countryside will delight young equestrians. In beautiful Siena, we learn about its warring medieval past from a local guide. And throughout our journey, meet a few of the region's proud artists and vintners, who are eager to share their culture with you. Come discover Tuscany's irresistible combination of natural beauty, Renaissance art and architecture, friendly people, and unbeatable accommodations and cuisine on this unforgettable family vacation.

DAY 1

Meet your Backroads Trip Leaders (the folks wearing Backroads shirts) at 11 a.m. in Florence in front of the **Santa Maria Novella train station** (near the main entrance of the station facing the lawn). **Please arrive dressed in your biking clothes and have your rain gear handy.** See "Arriving & Departing" for additional logistics information.

SHUTTLE TO MONTAIONE 1½ HOURS

SAN GIMIGNANO WARM-UP ROUTE 9 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTION: LA COLLEGIATA 13 MILES (600-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

Welcome to Tuscany! After meeting we shuttle to a lovely spot near Montaione, where we fuel up with lunch in preparation for the warm-up ride. After your leaders fit your bikes and give a brief demonstration of biking techniques and safety, head out on a spin among rolling hills—it's a great kid-sized route and a nice introduction to the region's terrain. The views of vineyards, olive groves and the towers of San Gimignano provide a taste of the gorgeous landscape to come. If you're interested in more climbing, take on the longer option—either way, you'll enjoy a breezy downhill to our hotel La Collegiata, located just outside the World Heritage site of San Gimignano. This evening we gather for a wine (and juice!) reception before indulging in delicious Tuscan fare amid the hotel's elegant surroundings. *Lodging: La Collegiata*

DAY 2

VOLTERRA ROUTE 18 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (2,000-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTION: VOLTERRA LOOP 37 MILES (2,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

FAMILY OPTION: VOLTERRA EXPRESS 8 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (540-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

KIDS HORSEBACK RIDING

WALKING TOUR OF SAN GIMIGNANO 1 HOUR

Today's route features rolling terrain and a hearty climb into Volterra, one of Italy's oldest towns. Put yourself to the test by biking the entire way or, if you'd rather take it easy, let the van whisk you to the top. Once in town, park your bike and look around. With its maze of cobblestone streets and wealth of historic sites, such as the Etruscan arch and the



Our Accommodations
Premiere Inns *

LA COLLEGIATA

(2 nights) Originally a Franciscan convent built in 1587, this Relais & Châteaux member overlooks the surrounding countryside and features a swimming pool.

San Gimignano
phone: 39-0577-943-201
www.lacollegiata.it

IL PICCOLO CASTELLO

(1 night) This inviting hotel with hand-crafted furnishings offers a sauna and swimming pool with bubble jets.

Monteriggioni
phone: 39-0577-307-300
www.ilpiccolocastello.com

RELAIS BORGO SCOPETO

(2 nights) You'll feel as if you're in a medieval stone village during your stay at this elegant hotel, set amid classic Tuscan scenery with two heated swimming pools, tennis courts, a jogging track, immaculate gardens and superb views of nearby Siena.

Vagliagli
phone: 39-0577-320-001
www.relaisborgoscopeto.it

**With one Casual Inn night
at Il Piccolo Castello*

**EACH YEAR,
3 OUT OF 4 OF OUR
GUESTS HAVE
PREVIOUSLY
TRAVELED WITH US OR
BEEN REFERRED BY
SOMEONE WHO HAS**

Roman amphitheater, Volterra seems tailor-made for wandering. This is alabaster country, so virtually every shop here is brimming with bowls, vases, ornaments and statuary crafted from the local mineral. You're on your own for lunch to choose from sit-down restaurants and cafés offering quick and tasty *panini* (sandwiches). Afterward kids saddle up for a horseback ride through olive orchards and forest outside San Gimignano. Meanwhile parents can return to the hotel by shuttle or bike.

This evening we reconvene in San Gimignano for a private walking tour of *la città delle belle torri* (the town of beautiful towers). One of Tuscany's crown jewels, this exceptionally well-preserved medieval village was established in the 10th century on the site of an Etruscan settlement and was named for Saint Gimignano, the Holy Bishop of Modena, who is said to have saved the town from barbarian hordes. Construction of the distinctive towers began in the 11th century. The 13 towers still standing are impressive, but incredibly, the town once boasted 72. Walk along the city wall for views of the countryside, explore the squares and medieval fortifications, visit a museum, climb a tower and check out the 13th-century cistern, which still works. This evening adults dine on their own while kids dive into pizza with the Backroads leaders. Later we all meet up for a shuttle back to the hotel.

Lodging: La Collegiata

DAY 3

IL PICCOLO CASTELLO ROUTE 28 MILES (1,800-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTIONS: MONTERRIGGIONI 32 MILES (2,000-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

OR PIEVESCOLA 41 MILES (2,300-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

FAMILY OPTION: 22 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (1,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

After breakfast kick into high gear by conquering the climb out of San Gimignano. (Kids travel this section in the van.) From here it's a long scenic downhill, followed by a steep ascent to Casole d'Elsa, a medieval town with most of its city walls still intact. Enjoy lunch on your own at a restaurant, pizzeria or *enoteca* (wine cellar where food is served), and stretch your legs on a walk about town. Look for the colorful painted tiles and sculptures that appear where you'd least expect them. If you're up for the Pievescola long option, you'll be in for some challenging climbs and stretches on country roads winding through olive orchards. Otherwise coast down to the Elsa Valley and enjoy the rolling route to our hotel, located just outside Monteriggioni. To add a few more miles, ride on to this striking hilltop village, best known for its 14 towers that Dante once compared to gigantic Titans. The tiny hamlet—only two streets wide—is an excellent spot for an espresso or gelato break. This evening we dine at our hotel. *Lodging: Il Piccolo Castello*

DAY 4

LILLIANO ROUTE 22 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTIONS: 40 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (1,000-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

OR 47 MILES (1,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

KIDS COOKING CLASS AND ADULTS WINE TASTING

Today you'll explore the famed Chianti Classico region, biking through a landscape of undulating hills, gnarled olive trees and orderly vineyards. During our climb to Castellina in Chianti, we relax over a fantastic picnic lunch at a working winery in picturesque Lilliano. Then cycle into the heart of this premier wine region to Vagliagli and our next hotel, Relais Borgo Scopeto, a medieval estate-turned-luxury hotel with amazing vistas of Siena and the Chianti countryside. Spend the afternoon swimming in the two pools, playing a match of tennis, strolling the gardens or simply admiring the view.



Top Reasons Why *you should take this trip*

We provide a variety of route options so you can do as much or as little activity as you like each day.

You'll stay in the area's finest hotels, each carefully selected based on our rigorous quality standards.

You'll enjoy the best of the region's cuisine, as well as Backroads' trademark grand picnics.

Our Trip Leaders have undergone hundreds of hours of training and are the best in the industry.

**WHEN YOU SIGN UP
FOR A TRIP, YOU'LL
RECEIVE A
COMPREHENSIVE
TRAVEL PLANNER
WITH ALL THE
INFORMATION YOU
NEED TO PLAN
AND PREPARE**

This evening we shuttle to a nearby winery, where adults can taste a variety of first-rate wines while kids take part in a fun cooking class. Afterward the young chefs will delight you with a delicious meal of their culinary creations. *Lodging: Relais Borgo Scopeto*

DAY 5

KIDS CERAMICS CLASS 2 HOURS

RADDA IN CHIANTI LOOP 19 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (1,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

LONGER OPTIONS: LUCARELLI 44 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (2,500-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

OR SAN SANO 55 MILES WITH SHUTTLE (3,000-FOOT ELEVATION GAIN)

This morning kids shuttle to Radda in Chianti, an ancient ridge-top village overlooking the Pesa and Arbia valleys. In 1415, Radda was the capital of the Antica Lega del Chianti (Chianti League) and is still recognized as a center for Chianti Classico wine production. Lies Robertson, a longtime Backroads friend, welcomes the younger set into her ceramics studio. Under her helpful direction, each child paints a piece, which she'll later fire—the perfect Italian souvenir.

Meanwhile adults travel to Radda by bike. Along the way, stop at the highly regarded Ceramiche Rampini, a family-owned ceramics business where you'll find exquisite hand-painted pieces. You can also visit the wine estate of Castello di Brolio, where the original Chianti wine is said to have been created. The castle maintains splendid gardens and offers a spectacular view all the way to Siena. Once in Radda, hop off your bicycle and check out the town's range of architectural styles, which include classical Medici villas and houses constructed from castle ruins. Radda is an excellent spot for a family lunch on your own and a sampling of what locals believe is the best *bruschetta* in Tuscany—decide for yourself! After lunch you can bike to Lucarelli—a gorgeous ride with a long descent into town and a 3-mile climb to the rolling road leading back to Radda.

If time permits on your return to the hotel, visit Gaiole in Chianti. Located on the Chiantigiana Vecchia, or old Chianti Road, Gaiole has been an important agricultural center since the Middle Ages when traders and merchants stopped here en route to Florence from Siena. For more miles, bike through the quaint community of San Sano, known for its September wine festival. At Borgo Scopeto this evening, we raise our glasses to a fun-filled week and savor a gourmet dinner. Make sure to bring your appetite! *Lodging: Relais Borgo Scopeto*

DAY 6

WALKING TOUR OF SIENA 1½ HOURS

After a leisurely breakfast, we take a quick shuttle to Siena for a guided walking tour. Learn about the city's 17 fiercely competitive *contrade* (districts), which have existed since the Middle Ages. Admire the black-and-white striped façade and exuberant ornamentation of the Duomo. Linger at the Piazza del Campo and imagine how it looks twice a year during Il Palio, the city's famous annual bareback horse race: filled with dirt, galloping horses and frenzied spectators. Afterward we say our goodbyes. Please see "Arriving & Departing" for end-of-trip logistics.



Backroads' route rating system is the most comprehensive and accurate in the travel industry. To find out how these ratings translate into varying levels of physical challenge and activity, please visit our Web site www.backroads.com and select the route rating button for the trip of your choice.

LEVEL 2
21–30 miles/day
2–4 hours/day

LEVEL 3
31–40 miles/day
3–5 hours/day

LEVEL 4
41–55+ miles/day
4–6 hours/day

Liberal van shuttling is incorporated into the itinerary to facilitate our activities and mileage is kept moderate to enable you to spend more time exploring on your own

**ASK FOR REFERENCES
FROM PAST GUESTS
WHO HAVE TAKEN THE
TRIP THAT INTERESTS
YOU**

ARRIVING & DEPARTING

Please note that meeting and departing times provided here were current at the time of printing, but are subject to change. **PLEASE DO NOT BOOK YOUR FLIGHTS UNTIL YOU ARE CONFIRMED ON YOUR VACATION AND HAVE VERIFIED THE DETAILS OF ARRIVING & DEPARTING WITH YOUR TRIP CONSULTANT.**

MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

On the first day of the trip, we meet at 11 a.m. in Florence in front of the Santa Maria Novella train station (www.firenzasantamarianovella.it). A Trip Leader wearing a Backroads T-shirt will be waiting near the main entrance of the station facing the lawn (go straight through the ticketing area). **Please arrive at the trip start dressed in your biking clothes and have your rain gear handy.**

CONCLUSION OF THE TRIP

On the last day, our trip ends at 11 a.m. in front of the Jolly Hotel in Siena, which is within walking distance of the bus station. If you're taking a train to Florence (about 1¼ hours), Rome (3 hours), Milan (4½ hours), Pisa (2 hours) or other Italian cities, your leaders will help you arrange a taxi to the Siena train station, 1½ miles outside the city center.

FLIGHT ARRANGEMENTS

The trip starts in Florence and ends in Siena.

We suggest flying into Rome (airport code: FCO; www.adr.it), Milan's Malpensa airport (MXP; www.sea-aeroportoimilano.it) or Pisa (airport code PSA; www.pisa-airport.com/index.php) and taking the train to Florence. Or you can fly into Florence's Amerigo Vespucci Airport (airport code: FLR; www.aeroporto.firenze.it), located a few miles northwest of the city. From the airport, it's a short bus or taxi ride into town or to the train station.

For help arranging air transport to and from your Backroads trip, please work with your own travel agent, the airline directly or an online travel site. For assistance locating a travel agent, please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents and online travel sites charge a fee for their consulting services.)

TAKING THE TRAIN TO FLORENCE

From Rome: If you fly into Rome's Leonardo da Vinci (Fiumicino) Airport, you can take the Leonardo Express commuter train directly from the airport to the Roma Termini train station. The train runs every half-hour from 6:37 a.m. until 11:37 p.m.; average travel time is 30 minutes. Or you can take a taxi to Roma Termini for \$50–\$60. (Supplements may be charged for excess luggage, late-night trips and on holidays.) Trains from Rome to Florence run frequently. Average travel time on the high-speed Eurostar Italia is 1½ hours.

From Milan: For your convenience, we suggest flying into Malpensa airport rather than Linate. A great way to travel between Malpensa and central Milan is via the large, comfortable airport buses; travel time is about 50 minutes, depending on traffic. For more information on bus transportation to and from the airport, visit www.airpullman.com and www.malpensashuttle.it.



Note

While the information presented here details this trip's planned routes, activities, accommodations, meeting and departing times, we are constantly seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Naturally, we will keep you up to date on any changes that may affect your arrival, departure or lodging.

ORGANIZE A BACKROADS PRIVATE TRIP FOR YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES FOR THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME

Another option is to take the Malpensa Express train between the airport and central Milan; the train departs the airport every 30 minutes from Terminal 1; travel time is about 40 minutes. Visit www.ferrovienord.it/webmvp/ing/index.html for details.

If you plan to travel by taxi between the airport and city center, expect to pay \$85–\$95.

Trains from Milan to Florence also run frequently. Average travel time on the high-speed Eurostar Italia is 3 hours.

From Pisa: There is regular train service between Pisa's Galileo Galilei Airport and Florence's Santa Maria Novella station; travel time is about 1¼ hours.

See below for details on purchasing tickets, making reservations and more.

WHERE TO STAY BEFORE & AFTER YOUR TRIP

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATIONS

For help arranging pre- or post-trip hotels in conjunction with your Backroads trip, please work with your travel agent or the hotels directly. For assistance locating a travel agent please visit www.backroads.com/gettingthere. (Note that most travel agents charge a fee for their consulting services.) Of course, we also recommend extending your stay at any of the hotels that we visit on this trip; see the sidebar above for details.

Please refer to the Hotel Room Rate Guide in the sidebar for starting double-occupancy rates. Note that the chart reflects the Internet and/or Best Available rates, which were accurate at the time of printing, but **hotel rates are always subject to change**.

Rooms on the street tend to be noisy, so you might want to request a room overlooking the hotel's garden or courtyard. Make your reservations early during the busy season, as rooms book well in advance.

Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

FLORENCE

GRAND HOTEL

Deemed one of Europe's finest hotels, this historic landmark displays a noble Renaissance style highlighted by the ornate brass chandeliers, lavish Italian fabrics, marble details and frescoes spanning the guest room walls. With an extraordinary staff bringing sincerity and warmth to every encounter, the Grand Hotel's clear objective is to ensure that your every need is met. Make your stay even more special by requesting a room with a view of the Arno River. Piazza Ognissanti 1; Phone: 39-055-271-61; www.grandhotel.hotelfirenze.com; 90 rooms, 17 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HELVETIA AND BRISTOL

Considered by many to be the quintessential Florentine hotel, the Helvetia and Bristol has a timeless sophistication. A discreet clientele adds to the hotel's distinguished flavor, as it has been a favorite of diplomats, celebrities and the British nobility for more than 150 years. A lengthy restoration and a wealth of period décor, such as carefully selected antiques and oil paintings, have returned the hotel to its original ambience and splendor. As soon as you enter, you'll feel as if you've been transported to the late 19th century. Additionally, you'll value the ideal location between the Piazza Repubblica and Via Tornabuoni. Via dei Pescioni 2; Phone: 39-055-266-51; www.royaldemeure.com; 44 rooms, 23 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

Hotel Room Rate Guide	
(U.S. dollars per night)	
Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL SAVOY

This Ferragamo family-owned property is one of the hottest addresses in Florence. With its décor of white chaise lounges accented by brightly colored pillows, graphic prints, sleek glass and steel furniture, it appeals to anyone who appreciates playful yet elegant contemporary design. Listed on *Condé Nast Traveler's* esteemed Gold List, the Savoy is ideally located on the on the Piazza della Repubblica and only steps from the Duomo. Request a room at the corner (04 and 06) or a room on the top floor for spectacular city views. Piazza della Repubblica 7; Phone: 39-055-27-351; www.hotelsavoy.it; 88 rooms, 14 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

ALBERGOTTO HOTEL

A recent renovation has given new life to the delightful Albergotto, a former gathering place for European literati and musicians. Light-wood floors give the place a fresh lift, while antique furnishings and walls in mustard hues lend an elegant cozy touch to spacious guest rooms. With an enviable situation on the fashionable Via dé Tornabuoni overlooking the magnificent Palazzo Strozzi, the hotel is a great base from which to explore the city. It's an excellent choice, according to the team at *Karen Brown's Guides*, with a friendly staff and all of the modern amenities. Via dé Tornabuoni 13; Phone: 39-055-239-6464; www.albergotto.com; 22 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

J.K. PLACE

This delightful and unexpected find is situated in the heart of Florence on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella. The hotel has a sleek, stylish décor with a fashionable cream and gray color scheme accented by 1950s-style lamps. However, it maintains an atmosphere of Old-World warmth and hospitality by combining these chic touches with traditional elements such as classical sculpture and a marble Louis XVI fireplace. It's an atmosphere that perfectly complements Florence and lives up to the goal of general manager Ori Kafri, who strives for "precious details and impeccable service." After a day of discovering the city, you'll find yourself eager to retreat to J.K. Place to relax and enjoy the views from the atmospheric rooftop terrace. Piazza Santa Maria Novella 7; Phone: 39-055-264-5181; www.jkplace.com; 20 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL IL GUELFO BIANCO

The three-star Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco may not be deluxe, but if you're looking for a pleasant place to stay in the heart of Florence, *Karen Brown's Guides* thinks this is it. The personal touch of owner Alessandro Bargiacchi is seen and felt as soon as you cross the threshold. Just 200 yards from the Duomo, it offers individually decorated guest rooms—some overlooking the quiet courtyards and roofs of the Via Larga—with marble-topped desks, antique furniture and exposed-beam ceilings. Some rooms feature painted-wood or frescoed ceilings and carved wooden doorways. On the ground floor, you'll find a bar and a reading room. Via Cavour 29; Phone: 39-055-28-8330; www.ilguelfobianco.it; 40 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

SIENA

JOLLY HOTEL SIENA (OUR DROP-OFF LOCATION ON DAY 6)

The modern and comfortable Jolly Hotel is conveniently located on Piazza La Lizza, within easy walking distance of Siena's bus terminal. Piazza La Lizza; Phone: 39-0577-382-111; www.jollyhotels.it; 129 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

Hotel Room Rate Guide	
(U.S. dollars per night)	
Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

GRAND HOTEL CONTINENTAL SIENA

This luxurious 17th-century palace located in the heart of Siena is a member of Leading Hotels of the World and the first five-star hotel in the city. Reopened in 2002 after an extensive restoration, the hotel has returned to its original splendor with magnificent frescoes, vaulted ceilings, coffered wooden beams and period furniture. Each guest room is unique, with meticulous attention paid to each detail. Amenities include a swimming pool, fitness facilities and a tennis court. Evenings, relax in the bar with a glass of wine (300 selections to choose from!) before dining at the hotel’s Sapordivino restaurant or venturing out to a nearby restaurant. Via Banchi di Sopra, 85; Phone: 39-0577-56011; www.ghc.royaldemeure.com; 51 rooms and suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

IL CHIOSTRO DEL CARMINE RESIDENCE

Charming and intimate, Il Chiostro is not your run-of-the mill hotel. Located in a restored 16th-century nunnery near the Siena Cathedral and Piazza del Campo, the hotel’s authenticity and unique character is evident from the moment you arrive. You’ll enjoy terrific views of the countryside, abundant breakfasts featuring warm croissants and cappuccino and a friendly and helpful staff available to make sure your stay in Siena is pleasant. Rooms are spacious and comfortable, equipped with air-conditioning, Internet connections and flat screen TVs. Via della Diana, 4; Phone: 39-0577-223-476/885; www.chiostrodelcarmine.com; 18 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

PALAZZO RAVIZZA

A Karen Brown favorite situated within the city walls near Siena’s historic center, this former Renaissance palace was converted into a hotel in the 1920s. Rooms 14 and 11 overlook the peaceful garden, which provides a tranquil escape from the bustle of the city. Each guest room features high ceilings, antique furniture and big windows, and while the rooms vary in size, each has a charm all its own. Pian dei Mantellini 34; Phone: 39-0577-280-462; www.palazzoravizza.it; 30 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

HOTEL MINERVA

Located about 500 yards from the train station, the Minerva offers clean, modern accommodations with wonderful views of Old Siena. Via Garibaldi 72; Phone: 39-0577-284-474; www.tuscany.net/minervasienna; 59 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

HOTEL VILLA LIBERTY

Formerly a 19th-century private villa, this charming hotel sits just outside Siena’s historic center (about a 10-minute walk from Piazza del Campo). Guest rooms are simple yet tastefully decorated and offer all the standard amenities, including satellite TV, air-conditioning and mini bars. Viale Vittorio Veneto 11; Phone: 39-0577-44966; www.villaliberty.it; 19 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

HOTEL VILLA PICCOLA

The Villa Piccola is located just a few hundred yards from Siena’s train station (about a 20-minute walk from the historic city center). The décor of the guest rooms is traditional Tuscan, with bright fabrics and terra-cotta tile floors. In some rooms, exposed wood beams enhance the atmosphere. Via Petriccio Belriguardo 7; Phone: 39-0577-588-044; www.tuscany.net/piccolasienna; 13 rooms. Rates: ◆◆

Hotel Room Rate Guide	
(U.S. dollars per night)	
Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

ROME

ALBERGO DEL SOLE AL PANTHEON

Operating as a hotel since 1467, this charming property is best known for its outstanding view of the Pantheon. The guest rooms are simply decorated with white stucco walls, antique wooden beds and arched doorways accented by colorful and lovingly restored 15th-century hand-painted ceilings. While the price is comparable to grander and more chic hotels, the value of this hotel lies in its location. If you're sensitive to noise, be sure to request a room that doesn't overlook the piazza. Piazza della Rotonda 63; Phone: 39-06-67-80441; www.hotelsolealpantheon.com; 31 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL DE RUSSIE

Set on the Piazza del Popolo and stuccoed in a distinctive salmon color, the Hotel de Russie has an atmosphere of tranquility that feels more like an elegant private home than a 122-room hotel. The contemporary décor, by trendsetting designer Tommaso Ziffer, who also renovated Florence's Hotel Savoy, maintains the color palette of celadon green, violet and ice blue that complement the elegant and streamlined furnishings. Every detail has been thoughtfully considered, from the Italian linen sheets and the carefully selected artwork to the luxurious spa and the magnificent gardens laced with graveled walkways. It's no wonder this hotel consistently earns a spot on *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List and *Travel+Leisure's* World's Best List. Not to be missed, according to *T+L*: the new butterfly oasis created in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund. Via del Babuino 9; Phone: 39-06-32-8881; www.hotelderussie.it; 89 rooms, 33 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL EDEN

Already renowned for its gracious sophistication, the Hotel Eden emerged from a recent multi-million dollar restoration as one of Rome's premier properties. Chic yet not exclusive, the hotel has attracted the Hollywood set for years. The décor reflects contemporary sensibility enhanced by Roman details, from rich fabrics, marble bathrooms and gilded cherubs to bronze statues and terrazzo floors. La Terrazza, the acclaimed rooftop garden restaurant, offers spectacular views of Rome and the seven hills. If you'd like to take in the views from the privacy of your own geranium-filled balcony, be sure to request a room on the fourth floor. Via Ludovisi 49; Phone: 39-06-47-8121; www.starwoodhotels.com; 121 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL HASSLER ROMA

A favorite among both *Condé Nast Traveler* and *Travel+Leisure* readers for its gorgeous panoramic views and top-notch service, Hotel Hassler reigns as one of the best hotels in Europe. Located atop the Spanish Steps, the hotel is "easy to find but very difficult to leave," and with a state of the art fitness facility, its celebrated Imágo restaurant, exquisitely decorated guest rooms and romantic ambience, it's easy to see why. If your room doesn't look out into the stunning Borghese Gardens, just borrow one of the hotel's bikes to explore them firsthand or ask the concierge for you "jogging shoe" map and take a leisurely stroll. Piazza Trinita dei Monti, 6; Phone: 39-06-69-93-40; www.hotelhasslerroma.com; 95 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL LORD BYRON

With a superb location near the Borghese Gardens, Via Veneto and the Spanish Steps, this boutique hotel is a peaceful oasis amid the bustle of Rome. Drawing a distinguished and loyal following, this Karen Brown favorite and member of Leading Hotels of the World has received accolades for its refined Art Deco décor, accommodating staff and

Hotel Room Rate Guide	
(U.S. dollars per night)	
Up to \$100	◆
\$101–200	◆◆
\$201–300	◆◆◆
\$301–500	◆◆◆◆
\$501 and up	◆◆◆◆◆

exceptional setting. For a special treat, dine at the hotel's exclusive restaurant, Relais le Jardin. A minimum two-night stay is required. Via Giuseppe De Notaris 5; Phone: 39-06-32-20404; www.lordbyronhotel.com; 32 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆

HOTEL TEATRO DI POMPEO

This quaint simple property resembles a Tuscan farmhouse with wood-beamed ceilings and red-tile floors and was constructed over the ruins of the Theatre of Pompey, the site on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C. One section of the theater excavation includes a cave-like room that now serves as a breakfast nook. The guest rooms are spacious, pleasant and quiet. Largo del Pallaro 8; Phone: 36-06-68-72812; www.hotelteatrodipompeo.it; 13 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆

MILAN

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MILANO

Heading up *Condé Nast Traveler's* Gold List and *Zagat Survey's* World's Top Hotels and Resorts, the Four Seasons Hotel Milano ranks as one of the world's top hotels. Originally a 15th-century convent, the hotel has a magnificent colonnaded courtyard and a sophisticated décor of restored original frescoes, granite columns, vaulted ceilings and parquet and terrazzo floors. Adding to the elegant atmosphere are Il Teatro (Armani's favorite restaurant), a superb location and a staff providing impeccable service. If you plan to stay here during the October fashion shows, book far in advance. Via Gesù 6/8; Phone: 39-02-77-088; www.fourseasons.com; 77 rooms, 41 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

GRAND HOTEL ET DE MILAN

Opera lovers will adore this majestic hotel, a member of Leading Hotels of the World, which is located close to La Scala Opera House between the fashionable Via Montenapoleone and Via della Spiga. The Old-World décor features fine antiques, traditional crème wood paneling, bronze statues, marble floors and fireplaces and oriental carpets. The hotel offers two classic Milanese restaurants, Don Carlos and Caruso. Both are among the city's premier spots to dine. Via Manzoni 29; Phone: 39-02-72-3141; www.grandhoteletdemilan.it; 77 rooms, 18 suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆◆

HOTEL PRINCIPE DI SAVOIA

Evoking the decadence of the Belle Epoque period, this member of Leading Hotels of the World is flooded with opulence. Built in 1927, all of the rooms have been redone in 19th-century Lombard style and lavished with plush damask fabrics, gilt and neoclassical antiques. You'll appreciate the hotel's central location on the Piazza della Repubblica as well as the warm hospitality of the staff. Piazza della Repubblica 17; Phone: 39-02-62301; www.hotelprincipedisavoia.com; 401 rooms and suites. Rates: ◆◆◆◆

HOTEL SPADARI AL DUOMO

Fashionable and whimsical, this boutique hotel offers a marked contrast to the grande dames, with all-blue interior and contemporary Milanese art. If you appreciate imaginative design and love to stay at the hottest spot in town, you'll delight in this hotel. You can request a room overlooking the Duomo or the lemon tree-filled courtyard. Via Spadari 11; Phone: 39-02-72-002371; www.spadarihotel.com; 40 rooms. Rates: ◆◆◆◆

We hope you've found this information useful, but nothing substitutes for speaking with one of our experienced Trip Consultants. Please call 800-462-2848 Monday-Sunday, between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific time.