# From the Bosphorus **to the Tiber**

*Istanbul, nine nights through the Greek isles and the Adriatic, then Venice to Rome*

Wednesday 22 September – Saturday 16 October 2027 · 23 nights abroad · US round trip

**23 – 26 SEP**
## Istanbul
*3 nights*
Livro Hotel, Sultanahmet · the Old City, a hammam, Galata at sunset

**26 SEP – 5 OCT**
## The Aegean & Adriatic by sea
*9 nights*
Ephesus · Mykonos · Athens · Olympia · Corfu · Dubrovnik · Bar · Split

**5 OCT**
## Ravenna → San Marino
*1 night*
Train and mountain bus to La Grotta Hotel, high on Monte Titano

**6 – 9 OCT**
## Venice
*3 nights*
Casa Verardo Residenza d'Epoca · St Mark's, the lagoon islands

**9 – 12 OCT**
## Lake Como
*3 nights*
Borgo Le Terrazze, Bellagio · Varenna, Balbianello, Villa Carlotta

**12 – 16 OCT**
## Florence & Rome
*3 + 1 nights*
Il Guelfo Bianco · Hotel Maximus · fly home from Rome

**IN THIS DOCUMENT**

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A sample itinerary: port times and train times are from the 2026 sailing and timetables; confirm the 2027 schedules when booking.

Costs are the planned trip's own figures plus research-based estimates gathered Oct 2026. Photos: Wikimedia Commons (credited). Prepared by Vagabond Valet.

# The Journey at a Glance

*22 September – 16 October 2027*

Three trips, joined end to end. Three nights in **Istanbul** come first, with a private guide for the Old City and a free day for the bazaars, a hammam and Galata at sunset. From Istanbul a **nine-night Norwegian Cruise Line sailing** runs through the Aegean and down the Adriatic: Ephesus, Mykonos, Athens, Olympia, Corfu, Dubrovnik, Montenegro and Split, with a small-group or private excursion planned in every port. The ship ends in **Ravenna**, and the last ten nights are Italy by train and ferry: a night on the clifftop of **San Marino**, then **Venice**, **Lake Como**, **Florence** and a final night in **Rome**. Every hotel includes breakfast.

### WHERE YOU SLEEP

| Dates (nights) | Leg | Hotel | Pages |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Thu 23 Sep – Sat 25 Sep (3)** | Istanbul, Türkiye | Livro Hotel, Sultanahmet · breakfast included | 4–5 |
| **Sun 26 Sep – Mon 4 Oct (9)** | At sea | Norwegian Cruise Line, Istanbul → Ravenna · 8 ports in 4 countries | 6–8 |
| **Tue 5 Oct (1)** | San Marino | La Grotta Hotel, inside the old walled town · breakfast included | 9 |
| **Wed 6 Oct – Fri 8 Oct (3)** | Venice | Hotel Casa Verardo Residenza d'Epoca, Castello · breakfast included | 10–11 |
| **Sat 9 Oct – Mon 11 Oct (3)** | Lake Como | Borgo Le Terrazze, Bellagio · buffet breakfast | 12–13 |
| **Tue 12 Oct – Thu 14 Oct (3)** | Florence | Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco · breakfast included | 14–15 |
| **Fri 15 Oct (1)** | Rome | Hotel Maximus · breakfast included | 16 |
| **23 nights** | **Total abroad** | Plus the overnight flight out on Wed 22 Sep; fly home Sat 16 Oct | |

### TRAVEL DAYS

| Date | Journey | Mode | Time (2026 schedules) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Wed 22 Sep** | US → Istanbul (IST) | Turkish Airlines, overnight nonstop | Departs 21:50, lands 15:40 the next day · ≈ 10 h 50 |
| **Sun 26 Sep** | Livro Hotel → Galataport cruise terminal | Car; board the ship | Board 14:00–14:30 · sail 17:00 |
| **Tue 5 Oct** | Ravenna port → Ravenna station → Rimini → San Marino | Shared transfer · regional train · Bonelli bus | Ship docks 06:00 · train 09:19 → 10:20 · bus 10:40 → 11:35 |
| **Wed 6 Oct** | San Marino → Rimini → Venezia Santa Lucia | Bonelli bus · direct train, business class | Bus 12:00 → 12:55 · train 13:15, ≈ 2 h 54 |
| **Sat 9 Oct** | Venice → Milano Centrale → Varenna → Bellagio | Italo (Prima) · Trenitalia regional · ferry | 10:57 → 13:25 · 15:20 → 16:24 · ≈ 15 min ferry |
| **Tue 12 Oct** | Bellagio → Varenna → Milan → Florence SMN | Ferry · regional train · Frecciarossa | ≈ 3½ h of rail, plus the ferry |
| **Fri 15 Oct** | Florence SMN → Roma Termini | High-speed train | 08:59 → 10:35 · ≈ 1 h 36 |
| **Sat 16 Oct** | Rome (FCO) → US | American Airlines, nonstop | Departs 13:30, lands 18:25 local · ≈ 10 h 55 |

### DATES TO KNOW

- **Friday 24 Sep:** the Old City tour day falls on a Friday. Mosques close to visitors for the midday prayer, so the guide visits the Blue Mosque first thing or mid-afternoon.
- **Port times** on these pages are from the 2026 sailing of this itinerary. Confirm the 2027 times before booking any shore tour; every tour here is timed to return well before all-aboard.
- **Tuesday 5 Oct** is the one long travel morning: ship to train to bus. It is planned with a spare train and a spare bus (page 9).
- **October on Lake Como:** ferries thin out in the evening as the season winds down, so dinners are planned in Bellagio, where you sleep.
- **Schengen count:** about 19 days (Greece, Croatia and Italy, 28 Sep – 16 Oct), well inside 90 of 180. Türkiye and Montenegro are outside Schengen.

# Day by Day

*25 days · 23 nights abroad*

| Date | Night | Sleep | Plan |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Wed 22 Sep** | — | In the air | Evening nonstop from the US to Istanbul. |
| **Thu 23 Sep** | IST 1 | Livro Hotel | Land 15:40; a private driver meets you at arrivals. Evening stroll through Sultanahmet, lit up at night. |
| **Fri 24 Sep** | IST 2 | Livro Hotel | **Private 7-hour Old City tour** from 08:10: Topkapı Palace, Basilica Cistern, Hagia Sophia, Blue Mosque, Grand Bazaar. Lunch at Ortaklar Kebab. |
| **Sat 25 Sep** | IST 3 | Livro Hotel | Süleymaniye Mosque 09:00 · Spice Bazaar · Cağaloğlu Hammam 13:00 · Chora 15:30 · Galata Tower 18:30, İstiklal, sunset dinner in Karaköy. |
| **Sun 26 Sep** | Ship 1 | At sea | Board at Galataport 14:00–14:30; sail at 17:00 down the Bosphorus. |
| **Mon 27 Sep** | Ship 2 | At sea | **Kuşadası** 13:30–22:30: private tour of Ephesus, the Terrace Houses, the House of the Virgin Mary. |
| **Tue 28 Sep** | Ship 3 | At sea | **Mykonos** 07:00–22:00: water taxi to town, Little Venice, lunch at Kastro's, a beach club. |
| **Wed 29 Sep** | Ship 4 | At sea | **Athens (Piraeus)** 05:30–18:00: 08:00 small-group tour with the Acropolis. |
| **Thu 30 Sep** | Ship 5 | At sea | **Katakolon** 09:00–19:00: ancient Olympia and a farm lunch, from 10:00. |
| **Fri 1 Oct** | Ship 6 | At sea | **Corfu** 07:00–17:00: 09:00 island tour with a boat ride or a beach stop. |
| **Sat 2 Oct** | Ship 7 | At sea | **Dubrovnik** 07:00–23:00: the walls, Lokrum, the cable car, dinner at Taj Mahal. |
| **Sun 3 Oct** | Ship 8 | At sea | **Bar, Montenegro** 07:00–18:00: 08:00 Lake Skadar cruise; dinner at Los Lobos on board. |
| **Mon 4 Oct** | Ship 9 | At sea | **Split** 07:00–18:00: 10:30 tuk-tuk tour, Diocletian's Palace, the Riva, Marjan Hill. |
| **Tue 5 Oct** | SMR 1 | La Grotta Hotel | Disembark in Ravenna; train to Rimini, bus up to San Marino by 11:35. The towers at sunset. |
| **Wed 6 Oct** | VCE 1 | Casa Verardo | Bus down 12:00; 13:15 train to Venice. Dinner at Corte Sconta, 19:00. |
| **Thu 7 Oct** | VCE 2 | Casa Verardo | Doge's Palace 09:45 · St Mark's Basilica 11:30 · cicchetti at All'Arco · Rialto · a gondola. |
| **Fri 8 Oct** | VCE 3 | Casa Verardo | Murano and Burano, or La Fenice and the Correr Museum. Dinner at Nevodi, 20:00. |
| **Sat 9 Oct** | COMO 1 | Borgo Le Terrazze | Italo to Milan 10:57, train to Varenna 15:20, ferry to Bellagio. Gelato and the lakefront. |
| **Sun 10 Oct** | COMO 2 | Borgo Le Terrazze | Varenna's villas; 13:30 boat tour with Villa del Balbianello. Dinner at Gioya, 19:00. |
| **Mon 11 Oct** | COMO 3 | Borgo Le Terrazze | Villa Carlotta at 10:00; lunch at Grand Hotel Tremezzo; Menaggio or a self-drive boat. |
| **Tue 12 Oct** | FLR 1 | Il Guelfo Bianco | Ferry and trains to Florence (≈ 3½ h). Evening walk to the Duomo; dinner nearby. |
| **Wed 13 Oct** | FLR 2 | Il Guelfo Bianco | Accademia and David · Duomo and Giotto's Campanile · Vivoli · pasta cooking class with wine. |
| **Thu 14 Oct** | FLR 3 | Il Guelfo Bianco | Uffizi, Ponte Vecchio, the Oltrarno; Divina Terrazza; dinner at Atto di Vito Mollica, 19:15. |
| **Fri 15 Oct** | ROM 1 | Hotel Maximus | 08:59 train, Roma Termini 10:35. Pantheon, Piazza Navona, the Trevi Fountain at dusk. |
| **Sat 16 Oct** | Home | — | Car to Fiumicino; nonstop home at 13:30. |

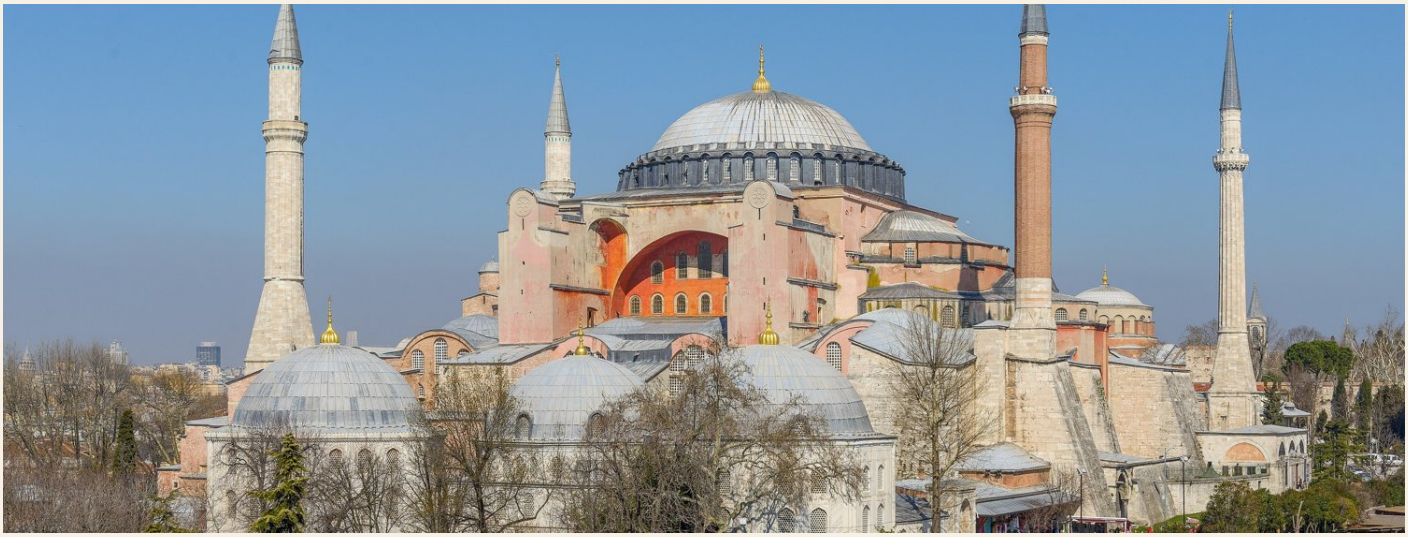
IST = Istanbul · Ship = cruise night · SMR = San Marino · VCE = Venice · COMO = Lake Como · FLR = Florence · ROM = Rome. Port and train times are from the 2026 schedules. Florence's middle day was left open in the original plan; it is filled here with the city's essentials.

STOP 1 OF 7 · TÜRKIYE

# Istanbul

Thu 23 Sep – Sun 26 Sep 2027

*3 nights*



*Hagia Sophia, a short walk from the hotel. Photo: Arild Vågen / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0 (Hagia Sophia Mars 2013.jpg).*

THE HOTEL

## Livro Hotel

Sultanahmet, Istanbul's historic peninsula

**Breakfast included** · 3 nights ≈ $484 as planned

A small hotel in the Old City, within walking distance of Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque and the Basilica Cistern. Being on the peninsula means the first evening and the tour morning start on foot, with no traffic.

ARRIVAL

- **Private transfer:** a driver meets you in the arrivals hall at IST with a name board (≈ $60 each way). The airport is about 45–75 min from Sultanahmet depending on traffic.
- **First evening:** keep it gentle. Walk the Hippodrome and the square between Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque after dark, when both are floodlit and the day crowds have gone.

SIGNATURE TABLE

## Ortaklar Kebab

Lunch on the tour day: a busy, unfussy local kebab house the guides use themselves. Ask for the Adana and the lahmacun.

WHAT TO DO

**The Old City with a private guide** · Full day · from 08:10
Seven hours on foot: Topkapı Palace and its treasury, the Basilica Cistern, Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque and the Grand Bazaar. Entry tickets are paid on the day, so carry cash or a card for them.

**Süleymaniye Mosque** · Free · 09:00
Sinan's masterpiece on the third hill, with a terrace over the Golden Horn. Calmer than the Blue Mosque.

**Spice Bazaar** · Free · ≈ 10:00
Lokum, saffron, dried fruit and Turkish coffee; the side streets around it are the real market.

**Cağaloğlu Hammam** · ≈ €170 pp · 13:00
A Turkish bath built in 1741. Book the traditional scrub and foam massage ahead; a deposit is taken.

**Chora (Kariye)** · ≈ 15:30
Byzantine mosaics and frescoes of rare quality, reopened in 2024. Upper-floor mosaics only.

**Galata Tower and İstiklal** · ≈ 18:30
Up the tower for sunset over the old city, then down İstiklal Avenue to Karaköy for dinner by the water.

**ONWARD**

DAY BY DAY OVERLEAF →

Sun 26 Sep: car to Galataport, the cruise terminal on the Bosphorus (≈ 15–20 min). Board 14:00–14:30; the ship sails at 17:00.

STOP 1 OF 7 · TÜRKIYE

# Three Days in Istanbul

Day-by-day, dress & tips

*Then nine nights at sea*

| Day | Plan | Book ahead |
|---|---|---|
| **Thu 23 Sep**<br>Arrival | Land at 15:40 and meet the driver in arrivals. Check in, rest, then an evening walk through Sultanahmet: the Hippodrome, the German Fountain and the two great domes lit up. A light dinner close to the hotel. | Airport transfer |
| **Fri 24 Sep**<br>The Old City | **Private 7-hour tour**, starting 08:10 at the hotel. **Topkapı Palace** at opening, the **Basilica Cistern**, **Hagia Sophia** and the **Blue Mosque**, then the **Grand Bazaar**. Lunch at **Ortaklar Kebab**. It is a Friday: the guide works the mosques around the midday prayer. | Private guide · cash for entry tickets |
| **Sat 25 Sep**<br>On your own | 09:00 **Süleymaniye Mosque** · 10:00 the **Spice Bazaar** and the streets around it · 13:00 **Cağaloğlu Hammam** · 15:30 **Chora** (taxi, ≈ 20 min) · 18:30 **Galata Tower** for sunset, a walk down İstiklal, and dinner in **Karaköy** with a view of the water. | Hammam time slot |
| **Sun 26 Sep**<br>Embark | A slow breakfast and a last coffee; check out and car to **Galataport** by about 13:30. Board 14:00–14:30 and be on deck for the 17:00 sail-away past the palaces of the Bosphorus. | Car to the port |

### DRESS FOR THE MOSQUES

- Shoulders and knees covered for everyone. Women cover their hair: **carry a light scarf** every day, as it is the one thing you will be asked for at every door.
- Shoes come off at the entrance; bags for them are provided. Mosques close to visitors for about 90 minutes at each prayer time, and longer at Friday midday.
- Hagia Sophia is now a working mosque. Visitors use the upper gallery, with a separate ticketed entrance.

### MONEY & GETTING AROUND

- **Bring some cash in lira** for tickets, the bazaars, tips and taxis. Cards are widely accepted, but not everywhere.
- Tram T1 runs through Sultanahmet to Karaköy and is the easiest way across the Golden Horn. Use licensed yellow taxis or an app such as BiTaksi.
- The bazaars are closed on Sundays. Both are open on your Friday and Saturday.

### IF YOU HAVE MORE TIME

A **Bosphorus ferry** from Eminönü to the Asian side (Kadıköy or Üsküdar) costs a few lira and gives the best view of the skyline. The **Istanbul Archaeology Museums** beside Topkapı are worth an hour, and the **Dolmabahçe Palace** fits easily on the morning you board, since it is a short drive from the cruise terminal.

### ONWARD

**Sun 26 Sep:** nine nights aboard a Norwegian Cruise Line ship from Istanbul to Ravenna, calling at Kuşadası, Mykonos, Piraeus, Katakolon, Corfu, Dubrovnik, Bar and Split.

STOP 2 OF 7 · AT SEA · TÜRKIYE, GREECE, MONTENEGRO, CROATIA

# The Aegean & Adriatic

Sun 26 Sep – Tue 5 Oct 2027

*9 nights*



*Dubrovnik's old town from above, the longest port day of the cruise. Photo: Akira Takiguchi / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0 (Aerial view of the Old Town of Dubrovnik - Croatia.jpg).*

The cruise does the travelling while you sleep: one Turkish port, four Greek ones, then the Adriatic coast of Montenegro and Croatia. Every port day has one booked excursion and room to wander. Port times below are from the 2026 sailing; check the 2027 schedule before you book tours.

PORT BY PORT

| Date | Port | Ashore (2026) | The plan |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sun 26 Sep** | **Istanbul** | sail 17:00 | Board 14:00–14:30 at Galataport |
| **Mon 27 Sep** | **Kuşadası, Türkiye** | 13:30–22:30 | Private tour: Ephesus, the Terrace Houses, the House of the Virgin Mary, the Temple of Artemis |
| **Tue 28 Sep** | **Mykonos, Greece** | 07:00–22:00 | Water taxi to town · Little Venice and the windmills · lunch at Kastro's · beach club (Delos optional) |
| **Wed 29 Sep** | **Athens (Piraeus)** | 05:30–18:00 | 08:00 small-group tour with the Acropolis |
| **Thu 30 Sep** | **Katakolon (Olympia)** | 09:00–19:00 | 10:00 Ancient Olympia and a Magna Grecia farm lunch |
| **Fri 1 Oct** | **Corfu** | 07:00–17:00 | 09:00 island tour with a boat ride or a beach stop |
| **Sat 2 Oct** | **Dubrovnik, Croatia** | 07:00–23:00 | The city walls · Lokrum · the Srđ cable car · dinner in the old town |
| **Sun 3 Oct** | **Bar, Montenegro** | 07:00–18:00 | 08:00 lake cruise (≈ 4 h) · Los Lobos on board at 19:45 |
| **Mon 4 Oct** | **Split, Croatia** | 07:00–18:00 | 10:30 tuk-tuk tour · Diocletian's Palace · the Riva · Marjan Hill |
| **Tue 5 Oct** | **Ravenna, Italy** | docks 06:00 | Disembark ≈ 07:30; onward by train and bus (page 9) |

SHORE-DAY RULES WE PLAN AROUND

Tours are booked to finish at least **90 minutes before all-aboard**. Carry the ship card and a photo of your passport ashore. In **Mykonos** and **Corfu** the ship may anchor and tender, which adds 30–45 minutes each way. Book signature dining on board (here, **Los Lobos** on the Montenegro evening) in the cruise planner as soon as it opens.

STOP 2 OF 7 · THE AEGEAN

# Ports of the Aegean

Kuşadası · Mykonos · Athens · Olympia

*Four days, four eras*



MON 27 SEP · KUŞADASI · 13:30–22:30

## Ephesus, the Terrace Houses & the Virgin Mary

A private guide meets you at the pier for the afternoon. Walk the marble street of **Ephesus** down to the Library of Celsus and the Great Theatre. Add the roofed **Terrace Houses**, the frescoed homes of the city's rich, which most groups skip. Then the **House of the Virgin Mary** on Mount Koressos and the one standing column of the **Temple of Artemis**. Back on board for a late dinner; the ship stays until 22:30.



TUE 28 SEP · MYKONOS · 07:00–22:00

## Mykonos: Little Venice and the windmills

Take the **Seabus water taxi** from the new port into town. It is quicker and prettier than the shuttle bus. Lose an hour in the lanes of the Chora, then the windmills of Kato Mili and **Little Venice**. Lunch at **Kastro's** with the sea at your feet. Spend the afternoon at a beach club. The boat to **Delos**, the sacred island, is the option for a history morning instead (≈ 30 min each way). Sunset from Little Venice before the late sail.



WED 29 SEP · ATHENS (PIRAEUS) · 05:30–18:00

## Athens and the Acropolis

An **08:00 small-group tour** (≈ $350 for two) gets to the **Acropolis** early, before the heat and the queues: the Propylaea, the Parthenon and the Erechtheion with its caryatids. It continues through the Plaka and past Syntagma and the changing of the Evzones guard. Ask for time in the **Acropolis Museum** if the group allows.



THU 30 SEP · KATAKOLON · 09:00–19:00

## Ancient Olympia & a Magna Grecia farm

The **10:00 "Spirit of Olympia"** tour (≈ $358 for two) runs to the sanctuary where the Games began in 776 BC. Walk through the vaulted tunnel into the original stadium and see the Temple of Zeus and the workshop of Pheidias. Lunch follows at a family farm, with olive oil, wine and honey from its own land.

# Ports of the Adriatic

Corfu · Dubrovnik · Bar · Split

*Venetian walls and Roman palaces*



FRI 1 OCT · CORFU · 07:00–17:00

## Corfu: the old town, by land and sea

A **09:00 island tour** (≈ $292 for two) pairs the Venetian old town, a UNESCO site, with a **boat ride** or a **beach stop** on the west coast. Choose the boat on a calm day and the beach on a hot one. Leave time to walk the Liston arcades and the Spianada, and for a ginger beer, a Corfu habit left by the British.



SAT 2 OCT · DUBROVNIK · 07:00–23:00

## Dubrovnik: the walls, Lokrum and the cable car

Be on the **city walls** when they open, before the heat and the crowds (about 2 km and 1–2 hours). Join a **free walking tour** of the old town, then take the ferry to **Lokrum**, with its peacocks, a botanical garden and the Iron Throne from *Game of Thrones*. The **Mount Srđ cable car** gives the view at sunset. Dinner at **Taj Mahal Old Town** (Bosnian cooking) at 18:30, a burek from **Holy Burek** and gelato at **Peppino's**. The **Dubrovnik Pass** covers the walls, the city museums and local buses.



SUN 3 OCT · BAR, MONTENEGRO · 07:00–18:00

## Lake Skadar by boat

The ship's **08:00 lake-cruise excursion** (about 4 hours) heads inland to **Lake Skadar**, the largest lake in the Balkans. Expect water lilies, pelicans, fishing villages and the limestone hills of the national park. The afternoon is free in Bar. In the evening, dinner at **Los Lobos**, the ship's Mexican restaurant, at 19:45.



MON 4 OCT · SPLIT · 07:00–18:00

## Split: a Roman palace still lived in

A **10:30 tuk-tuk tour** covers the hills and the seafront without the climb. Then walk **Diocletian's Palace**: the Peristyle, the domed Vestibule and the cellars. Climb the **bell tower of St Domnius** for the view of the islands. Lunch on the **Riva**. If there is time before all-aboard, take the steps up **Marjan Hill** for the classic view back over the harbour.

TRANSFER · STOP 3 OF 7 · SAN MARINO

# Ravenna → San Marino → Venice

Tue 5 Oct – Wed 6 Oct 2027

*1 night on Monte Titano*

## OFF THE SHIP: TUESDAY 5 OCTOBER 2027

| Time (local) | Step | Duration | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **06:00** | Ship docks at Ravenna (Porto Corsini) | — | Put bags out the night before. Choose a self-assist disembarkation slot if you want to be off early. |
| **≈ 07:30** | Off the ship | — | Breakfast on board first; there is no rush. |
| **08:20** | Shared transfer to Ravenna station (Visit Ravenna) | ≈ 20 min | Pre-booked; the driver waits at the terminal. |
| **09:19 → 10:20** | Regional train, Ravenna → Rimini | ≈ 1 h | Also at 08:47 and 09:47. The next after that is 12:19, so the 09:47 is the last easy one. |
| **10:40 → 11:35** | Bonelli bus, Rimini → San Marino | ≈ 55 min | From the stop by Hotel Napoleon, opposite the station. Buy a round trip; it climbs to the old town gate. |



*La Guaita, the first tower. Photo: Terragio67 / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0 (Guaita Fortress - San Marino, 2023.jpg).*

THE NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

### La Grotta Hotel

Inside the walled old town of San Marino

**Breakfast included** · 1 night ≈ $157 as planned

Leave the bags and walk the ridge: **La Guaita** and **La Cesta**, the two towers on the cliff edge, the Palazzo Pubblico and the Basilica. On a clear evening you can see the Adriatic on one side and the Apennines on the other. Have dinner in the old town, then walk the walls again after dark, when the day visitors have gone back down.

## ON TO VENICE: WEDNESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2027

| Time (local) | Step | Duration | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **12:00 → 12:55** | Bonelli bus, San Marino → Rimini station | ≈ 55 min | A slow morning first: breakfast with the view, a last walk on the walls. |
| **13:15 → ≈ 16:10** | Direct train, Rimini → Venezia Santa Lucia, business class | ≈ 2 h 54 | No change of train. **Fallback:** the 14:15. |
| **≈ 16:30** | Water taxi or vaporetto to Castello | ≈ 25–35 min | A water taxi to the hotel's canal door is the grand arrival; the vaporetto is line 1 or 2 to San Zaccaria. |

**IF THE MORNING SLIPS**

Disembarkation can run late. If you miss the 09:19 train, the 09:47 still makes a later Bonelli bus up the mountain; the 12:19 is the last-resort option. Bonelli buses run several times a day between Rimini station and San Marino, so a missed bus costs about an hour, never the night. Keep the bags small enough to manage on a regional train and a coach.

**ONWARD**

**Wed 6 Oct evening:** dinner at **Corte Sconta** in Castello at 19:00, a short walk from the hotel. Book its seafood tasting menu.

STOP 4 OF 7 · ITALY

# Venice

Wed 6 Oct – Sat 9 Oct 2027

*3 nights*



*The Grand Canal and Santa Maria della Salute. Photo: kallerna / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0 (Venice Ponte dell'Accademia Grand Canal santa Maria della Salute 2.jpg).*

THE HOTEL

## Hotel Casa Verardo Residenza d'Epoca

Castello, a few minutes' walk behind St Mark's

**Breakfast included** · 3 nights ≈ $1,007 as planned

A 16th-century palazzo on a quiet canal, with its own water door. Being in Castello puts St Mark's ten minutes away, while the streets around the hotel stay local and quiet.

SIGNATURE TABLES

### Corte Sconta

Castello · first night, 19:00. A Venetian seafood institution in a vine-covered courtyard. Order the tasting menu.

### Nevodi

Castello · last night, 20:00. Modern Venetian cooking and fish from the lagoon.

Plus a canal-view dinner on the middle night, and **cicchetti** at **Bar All'Arco** by the Rialto market for lunch.

WHAT TO DO

**St Mark's Square at first light** · Free
Before 08:00 the square is almost empty. Walk the Riva degli Schiavoni for the lagoon view, and go up the Campanile once it opens.

**Doge's Palace** · Timed · 09:45
The seat of the Republic: the Golden Staircase, the Great Council hall and the Bridge of Sighs. The ticket also covers the Correr Museum.

**St Mark's Basilica** · Timed · 11:30
The gold mosaics, the jewelled **Pala d'Oro**, and the museum with the Loggia dei Cavalli terrace over the square. Book the skip-the-line slot.

**A gondola from a small canal** · ≈ €90–120
Board in a back canal rather than on the Grand Canal. It is quieter and more intimate.

**Murano and Burano** · Vaporetto pass
Glass furnaces on Murano, then the coloured houses and lace of Burano. Allow half a day.

**La Fenice and the Correr** · ≈ 15:00
The rebuilt opera house, then the Correr's Venetian art, both on the middle day if the islands are not for you.

**ONWARD**

DAY BY DAY OVERLEAF →

Sat 9 Oct: Italo 10:57 Venezia S. Lucia → Milano Centrale (Prima), then the 15:20 to Varenna and a ferry to Bellagio.

STOP 4 OF 7 · ITALY

# Three Days in Venice

Day-by-day & tickets

*Castello as a base*

| Day | Plan | Book ahead |
|---|---|---|
| **Wed 6 Oct**<br>Arrival | Arrive at Santa Lucia at about 16:10 and take a water taxi down the Grand Canal to the hotel. Have a spritz on the Riva at dusk, then dinner at **Corte Sconta**, 19:00. | Corte Sconta |
| **Thu 7 Oct**<br>San Marco | St Mark's Square at first light, the **Campanile** and the Riva degli Schiavoni. **Doge's Palace** at 09:45, then **St Mark's Basilica** at 11:30 with the Pala d'Oro and the Loggia dei Cavalli. Lunch on cicchetti at **Bar All'Arco**, gelato at **Suso**. In the afternoon, Castello's backstreets, the **Rialto** and a gondola from a small canal. Dinner with a canal view. | Doge's Palace 09:45 · Basilica 11:30 |
| **Fri 8 Oct**<br>Your choice | **Either** Murano and Burano by vaporetto (glass in the morning, lunch on Burano) **or** a slower city day: a tour of **La Fenice** and the **Correr Museum** at 15:00, which is included with the Doge's Palace ticket. Dinner at **Nevodi**, 20:00. | Nevodi · vaporetto pass |
| **Sat 9 Oct**<br>Depart | Breakfast and a vaporetto to Santa Lucia for the **10:57 Italo** to Milan. | Italo seats (Prima) |

### TICKETS

- **St Mark's Basilica:** book a timed entry online. The Pala d'Oro, the museum and the terrace are separate add-ons; take all three.
- **Doge's Palace:** the St Mark's Square Museums ticket covers the palace, the Correr, the Archaeological Museum and the Marciana library rooms.
- **Dress:** shoulders and knees covered in the Basilica. Large bags must go to the free left-luggage nearby.

### GETTING AROUND

- A **72-hour ACTV pass** covers every vaporetto, including the islands. Validate it at each pier.
- Venice charges a **day-visitor access fee** on peak days. Hotel guests are exempt but may need to register for the QR code.
- Pack light for the train day. Bridges have steps, so a porter or a water taxi to the station is worth it.

### GELATO & CICCHETTI, THE SHORT LIST

**Suso** by the Rialto for gelato. **Bar All'Arco** for cicchetti, standing at the counter, before the lunch rush. For an evening ombra (a small glass of wine), the bacari of Cannaregio's Fondamenta della Misericordia.

### ONWARD

**Sat 9 Oct:** Italo 10:57 → Milano Centrale 13:25 · Trenitalia regional 15:20 → Varenna-Esino 16:24 · ferry across to Bellagio (≈ 15 min).

STOP 5 OF 7 · ITALY

# Lake Como

Sat 9 Oct – Tue 12 Oct 2027

*3 nights*



*Bellagio, on the point where the lake's three arms meet. Photo: . Ray in Manila / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0 (Bellagio, Lake Como, Italy (51180622244).jpg).*

THE HOTEL

## Borgo Le Terrazze

Bellagio, on the hill above the ferry piers

**Buffet breakfast** · 3 nights ≈ $1,147 as planned

Terraced rooms looking across to Varenna and the mountains. Bellagio sits in the middle of the lake, so every ferry route starts at its piers, and it is the best place to be when the boats stop in the evening.

SIGNATURE TABLE

## Gioya

Bellagio · 19:00 on the boat-tour day. Then a nightcap at **Bar Molo** on the water.

Other Bellagio dinners: **Hotel Florence** on the lakefront, **Trattoria Baita Belvedere** up the hill, and **Ristorante Aurora** in Lezzeno, a short taxi ride away.

WHAT TO DO

**Bellagio on foot** · Free

The stepped Salita Serbelloni, the lakefront, and Punta Spartivento at the tip. Finish at Gelateria del Borgo.

**Villa Melzi gardens** · ≈ €10 pp

A lakeside walk south of the village, with Japanese maples and azaleas.

**Varenna's villas** · Combo ticket

Villa Monastero and Villa Cipressi gardens (the combo ticket is sold at the gate only). Then the Passeggiata degli Innamorati along the water.

**Boat tour and Villa del Balbianello** · 13:30–16:00

A private-style boat from Varenna, with a guided visit to the villa from *Casino Royale*. You are dropped back in Bellagio. Bring euros: the balance is paid in cash at the dock.

**Villa Carlotta, Tremezzo** · Opens 10:00

Neoclassical sculpture inside, botanical gardens outside. Then lunch at Grand Hotel Tremezzo.

**Drive your own boat** · ≈ 1–2 h

Small boats can be rented in Tremezzo with no licence needed. It is the most fun way to see the villas from the water.

**ONWARD**

Tue 12 Oct: ferry to Varenna, regional train to Milano Centrale, then high-speed to Florence (≈ 3½ h of rail).

DAY BY DAY OVERLEAF →

# Three Days on the Lake

Getting there, day by day

*Ferries, villas and gelato*

VENICE → BELLAGIO: SATURDAY 9 OCTOBER 2027

| Time (local) | Step | Duration | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **10:57 → 13:25** | Italo, Venezia S. Lucia → Milano Centrale | ≈ 2 h 28 | Prima class: wider seats and a welcome drink. |
| **15:20 → 16:24** | Trenitalia regional, Milano Centrale → Varenna-Esino | ≈ 1 h 04 | Time for lunch at Centrale. Sit on the left for the lake views after Lecco. |
| **≈ 16:45** | Ferry, Varenna → Bellagio | ≈ 15 min | The pier is a 10-minute walk down from the station. Ferries run about every 30 min. |

| Day | Plan | Book ahead |
|---|---|---|
| **Sat 9 Oct**<br>Arrival | Arrive at about 17:00. Walk the **Salita Serbelloni** up through the village, out to **Punta Spartivento** for the light on three arms of the lake, then the gardens of **Villa Melzi** if they are still open. Gelato at **Gelateria del Borgo**. | — |
| **Sun 10 Oct**<br>Varenna & Balbianello | A morning ferry to **Varenna**: **Villa Monastero** and **Villa Cipressi** (combo ticket at the gate), then the **Passeggiata degli Innamorati**. Lunch in Varenna. At 13:20, meet the boat at Varenna's dock 2 for the **13:30–16:00 boat tour** with a guided visit to **Villa del Balbianello**; it drops you in Bellagio. Dinner at **Gioya**, 19:00, and a drink at **Bar Molo**. | Boat tour · Gioya |
| **Mon 11 Oct**<br>Tremezzo | Ferry across to Tremezzo for **Villa Carlotta** when it opens at 10:00. Lunch at 13:00 at **T Pizza**, Grand Hotel Tremezzo's lakeside pizzeria. In the afternoon, the ferry to **Menaggio**, or rent a **self-drive boat** in Tremezzo. Be back in Bellagio for dinner. | T Pizza · boat rental |
| **Tue 12 Oct**<br>Depart | Ferry to Varenna, then trains via Milano Centrale to Florence. | Train seats |

LAKE COMO IN OCTOBER

Ferries run on a reduced autumn timetable and stop in the early evening, so plan dinners in Bellagio and check the last boat back on navigazionelaghi.it. Mornings can be misty; the villas are at their best from late morning. Pack a warm layer for the boat.

ONWARD

**Tue 12 Oct:** ferry Bellagio → Varenna, regional train → Milano Centrale, Frecciarossa → Firenze Santa Maria Novella. Allow about 3½ hours of rail.

STOP 6 OF 7 · ITALY

# Florence

Tue 12 Oct – Fri 15 Oct 2027

*3 nights*



*Florence from Piazzale Michelangelo. Photo: hozinja / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 2.0 (Sunset in Florence from the Piazza Michelangelo.jpg).*

THE HOTEL

## Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco

Via Cavour, a five-minute walk north of the Duomo

**Breakfast included** · 3 nights ≈ $859 as planned

A family-run hotel in two Renaissance townhouses, with frescoed ceilings and a small courtyard. The Accademia is three minutes away and the Duomo five, so every sight is a walk.

SIGNATURE TABLE

## Atto di Vito Mollica

One Michelin star · the last night, 19:15. Chef Vito Mollica's Tuscan tasting menus in a Renaissance palazzo. Smart casual; a deposit is taken to hold the table.

BEFORE DINNER

An aperitivo at **Divina Terrazza**, the rooftop bar facing the Duomo and Palazzo Vecchio.

WHAT TO DO

**The Accademia and David** · Timed · book ahead
Michelangelo's David, and his unfinished Prisoners leading up to it. Take the first slot of the day. Closed on Mondays.

**The Duomo and Giotto's Campanile** · Brunelleschi Pass
Climb the 414 steps of Giotto's bell tower for the best view of Brunelleschi's dome. The pass also covers the Baptistery and the cathedral museum.

**Pasta-making class with wine** · ≈ 3 h · evening
Fresh pasta and tiramisù by hand in a Florentine kitchen, eaten together afterwards with wine.

**Vivoli** · ≈ €5
Florence's oldest gelateria, near Santa Croce. Order the affogato.

**The Uffizi** · Timed
Botticelli's Venus and Spring, Leonardo, Caravaggio. Two hours is plenty with a plan.

**Ponte Vecchio and the Oltrarno** · Free
Cross the goldsmiths' bridge to the artisans' workshops of Santo Spirito, and climb to San Miniato al Monte.

**ONWARD**
Fri 15 Oct: 08:59 high-speed train Firenze S.M.N. → Roma Termini, arriving 10:35.

DAY BY DAY OVERLEAF →

# Three Days in Florence

Day-by-day & tickets

*The middle day, filled*

| Day | Plan | Book ahead |
|---|---|---|
| **Tue 12 Oct**<br>Arrival | Arrive at Santa Maria Novella in the afternoon; it is a 10-minute taxi to the hotel. Make an evening **passeggiata** to the Duomo, Piazza della Repubblica and Piazza della Signoria, with dinner at a trattoria nearby. | — |
| **Wed 13 Oct**<br>Renaissance day | **The Accademia** at opening, for David before the groups. Next, the **Duomo**, the Baptistery's gilded doors and the climb up **Giotto's Campanile**. Lunch at the Mercato Centrale. In the afternoon, Santa Croce and an **affogato at Vivoli**. In the evening, a **pasta-making class with wine**, which is dinner too. | Accademia slot · Brunelleschi Pass · cooking class |
| **Thu 14 Oct**<br>Uffizi & Oltrarno | The **Uffizi** in the morning, then across the **Ponte Vecchio** to the Oltrarno's workshops and a slow lunch in Santo Spirito. Climb to San Miniato al Monte or Piazzale Michelangelo for the view. Aperitivo on the **Divina Terrazza**, then dinner at **Atto di Vito Mollica**, 19:15. | Uffizi slot · Atto |
| **Fri 15 Oct**<br>Depart | An early breakfast and a taxi to S.M.N. for the **08:59** to Rome. | Train seats |

### TICKETS

- **Accademia and Uffizi:** book timed entries as soon as the dates are fixed; October is still high season.
- **Brunelleschi Pass:** the dome climb has its own time slot. Giotto's Campanile, the Baptistery and the museum are open-entry within the pass's validity.
- **Atto di Vito Mollica:** reserve 4–6 weeks ahead; a deposit secures the table.

### GOOD TO KNOW

- The centre is a limited-traffic zone. Taxis are fine; cars are not.
- Many state museums close on Mondays. Your three days are Tuesday to Thursday, so nothing is lost.
- The Duomo and the Campanile require covered shoulders and knees.

### WHY THE OPEN DAY WAS FILLED THIS WAY

The original plan left Florence's middle day blank, with a list of ideas. They are set here in the order the city works best: the Accademia and the Duomo early, before the tour groups; the gelato when the afternoon slows; and the cooking class as dinner, so the last evening stays free for the one Michelin-starred table.

### ONWARD

**Fri 15 Oct:** 08:59 Firenze Santa Maria Novella → Roma Termini, arriving 10:35 (≈ 1 h 36). Hotel Maximus for the last night.

STOP 7 OF 7 · ITALY

# Rome

Fri 15 Oct – Sat 16 Oct 2027

*1 night*




*The Pantheon. Photo: Roberta Dragan / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.5 (Rome Pantheon front.jpg).*

THE HOTEL

## Hotel Maximus

Rome, an easy taxi ride from Termini

**Breakfast included** · 1 night ≈ $272 as planned

A comfortable last night before the flight. Leave the bags at the desk on arrival and have the whole afternoon free in the centro storico.

FLYING HOME

- **Sat 16 Oct:** American Airlines nonstop from Rome Fiumicino (FCO), departing 13:30 and landing in the US at 18:25 local time (≈ 10 h 55).
- Book a car for about 09:45; FCO is 45–60 minutes from the centre. Aim to be at the airport three hours before departure.
- The Leonardo Express train from Termini (32 min) is the fallback if traffic is bad.

ONE PERFECT AFTERNOON

**The Pantheon** · Small fee
The best-preserved building of ancient Rome; the oculus is open to the sky.

**Piazza Navona** · Free
Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers. Then a coffee at Sant'Eustachio, around the corner.

**The Trevi Fountain at dusk** · Free
Go after dark, when the crowds thin and the fountain is lit. Throw a coin to come back.

**Or: the Colosseum and the Forum** · Timed · ≈ 3 h
Book ahead for the afternoon. It is the alternative if you have never been.

**A last dinner in Rome** · —
Carbonara or cacio e pepe in a trattoria near the Pantheon or in Monti, then a walk home.

**ONWARD**
Sat 16 Oct: car to Fiumicino by 10:30 · nonstop home at 13:30.

# The Budget, All In

Total nights: 23 · Istanbul 3 · At sea 9 · San Marino 1 · Venice 3 · Lake Como 3 · Florence 3 · Rome 1

AS PLANNED · TWO TRAVELERS

**$11,569**

Cruise, 14 hotel nights, flights, trains and insurance
The plan's own costs, from the planning sheet

ALL IN · ESTIMATE FOR TWO

**$17,000 – $21,500**

Adds tours, tickets, dining ashore and onboard extras
Estimates, not quotes · see the right-hand table

| AS PLANNED | USD |
|---|---|
| Cruise, 9 nights, Istanbul → Ravenna | $4,399 |
| Hotels, 14 nights (6 hotels, breakfast incl.) | $3,926 |
| Flights, US → Istanbul | $1,287 |
| Flights, Rome → US | $1,379 |
| Trains, buses & transfers in Italy | $316 |
| Travel insurance | $263 |
| **Total** | **$11,569** |

| ON TOP (ESTIMATES) | Low (USD) | High (USD) |
|---|---|---|
| Shore tours & city guides | $1,700 | $2,400 |
| Tickets & passes (villas, museums, walls) | $900 | $1,300 |
| Dining ashore (14 days) | $2,100 | $4,200 |
| Signature dinners | $600 | $1,000 |
| Onboard extras & gratuities | $300 | $800 |
| **Added** | **$5,600** | **$9,700** |

HOTEL NIGHTS BY STOP (TWO TRAVELERS, ONE ROOM)

| Hotel | Nights | Board | Avg / night | Stay total (USD) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Livro Hotel, Istanbul | 3 | Breakfast | $161 | $484 |
| La Grotta Hotel, San Marino | 1 | Breakfast | $157 | $157 |
| Hotel Casa Verardo Residenza d'Epoca, Venice | 3 | Breakfast | $336 | $1,007 |
| Borgo Le Terrazze, Bellagio | 3 | Breakfast | $382 | $1,147 |
| Hotel Il Guelfo Bianco, Florence | 3 | Breakfast | $286 | $859 |
| Hotel Maximus, Rome | 1 | Breakfast | $272 | $272 |

HOW THE ESTIMATES WERE BUILT

**As planned:** the figures the trip was actually planned and priced at for two travelers in 2026: the cruise fare, six hotels, round-trip flights, Italian trains, buses and transfers, and insurance. **On top:** shore tours at the prices quoted in the plan where they were given (Athens ≈ $350, Olympia ≈ $358 and Corfu ≈ $292 for two; Lake Como boat tour ≈ €180; hammam ≈ €170 per person; airport transfer ≈ $60), with Ephesus, Istanbul, Bar and Split estimated from comparable tours. Tickets include the Dubrovnik walls, the Venetian museums and Basilica, the lake villas, the Florence passes and a cooking class. Dining ashore at $150–300 a day for two; the cruise fare covers main dining on board. Currency at €1 ≈ $1.12. Expect 2027 prices to run a little higher.

WHY THIS ORDER WORKS

*It starts in the most intense city and lets the ship do nine days of travel while you sleep. It lands in Italy at the Adriatic end and moves west on fast trains: lagoon, lake, Renaissance. And it finishes a short ride from a nonstop flight home.*

# Before You Go

*Entry rules · money · packing · bookings*

### ENTRY & DOCUMENTS (US PASSPORT)

- **Türkiye: no visa needed** for US ordinary passports for tourist stays of up to 90 days in 180. The passport must be valid for at least six months from entry and have a blank page for stamps.
- **Schengen (Greece, Croatia, Italy):** about 19 days, far inside 90 of 180. The **EES** border system records fingerprints and a photo at your first Schengen entry, which here is the ship's first Greek port. **ETIAS** is not yet in force; recheck about two months before you sail.
- **Montenegro and San Marino:** no visa for US citizens. San Marino has no border controls with Italy.
- **On the ship:** the cruise line holds or scans passports at boarding. Carry a photocopy ashore.

### MONEY

- **Turkish lira** in Istanbul, the **euro** everywhere else (Greece, Montenegro, Croatia, San Marino, Italy).
- Carry some cash for tickets in Istanbul, small bars and gelato, ferries, and the Lake Como boat balance. Contactless cards work almost everywhere else.
- Check whether the cruise fare includes gratuities and a drinks package; that changes the onboard budget.

### PACKING & DRESS

- **Modest layers:** a scarf and covered shoulders and knees for the mosques of Istanbul, St Mark's, the Duomo and Rome's churches.
- **Shoes for stone:** Ephesus, the Acropolis and the Dubrovnik walls are polished marble and uneven steps. Bring good soles and a hat.
- **Weather:** late September in the Aegean is warm and swimmable. October in Venice and on the lakes is mild by day, with cool evenings and some rain.
- **Plugs:** Type C/F everywhere; Italy also uses Type L. One adapter set covers the trip.
- **Luggage:** Venice has bridges and Italian trains have overhead racks. One medium case each is ideal.

### BOOKING TIMELINE

- **Now:** the cruise (cabins sell by category), the flights and all six hotels.
- **When the cruise planner opens:** shore excursions and the onboard dinner reservation.
- **3–4 months out:** Italo and Trenitalia tickets go on sale; the Doge's Palace, the Basilica, the Accademia and the Uffizi.
- **4–8 weeks out:** the Istanbul guide and hammam, Corte Sconta, Nevodi, Gioya, Atto, the Lake Como boat tour and the cooking class.

### STILL TO CONFIRM

The 2027 port times for this sailing (2026 times are used throughout); the 2027 Italian rail timetables, including the Rimini–Venice direct train and the 08:59 to Rome; the autumn Lake Como ferry timetable, including the crossing on the Florence day; Lake Skadar as the destination of the Bar lake excursion; 2027 prices for tours, tickets and the cruise fare. Hotel and cruise figures are the planned 2026 costs; flights and hotels will be priced again for 2027.