Iconic Coasts & Capitals: Rome to Barcelona via Riviera

ROME · FLORENCE · PISA

10D 9N

25–30 PAX

Cross two countries and five compelling European cities in ten days, following a route designed around places worth experiencing rather than the cheapest connections between them. Begin in Rome and continue through Italy's celebrated coast and cultural centres, including a memorable morning among the villages of Cinque Terre, before following the Riviera toward Barcelona. The pace allows time to absorb each city instead of treating it as another stop on a checklist, balancing major capitals with coastal landscapes and smaller historic settings. This journey suits travellers who want a polished European route with strong variety, purposeful pacing and fewer logistical distractions—moving naturally from Italy's classical landmarks to the Mediterranean character of southern France and Spain.

DAY

01

ROME · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Arrive Rome — the city doesn’t ease you in gently

Your first hours in Rome are spent outdoors, not in a hotel lobby. After the airport transfer, the group heads straight into the evening — an orientation walk to the Trevi Fountain and Spanish Steps while both are lit and relatively quiet. It’s a deliberate start: no lectures, no museums, just the city at its most atmospheric. Welcome dinner follows at a traditional Roman trattoria in the neighbourhood.

Trevi Fountain & Spanish Steps (evening walk) — Rome rewards you most before the crowds arrive; this evening circuit sets the right pace for the days ahead. No entry tickets, no queues — just the city as it actually feels.

MEALS

Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Rome, Prati or Monti district

DAY

02

ROME · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Imperial Rome & the Vatican

The two sites that define Rome — and the reason most people come — are both on today. The order matters: Colosseum and Roman Forum in the morning with a private guide and skip-the-line access, before the day-tripper coaches have fully unloaded. The Vatican complex in the afternoon. It's a full day, and honestly a tiring one — the Vatican alone is a lot of ground. The free evening at Piazza Navona is there for a reason: sit down, eat when you want, and let the day settle.

Colosseum & Roman Forum — skip-the-line private guided tour; seeing the Forum from inside the Colosseum's upper tier is worth the early start.

Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel & St. Peter's Basilica — a guided group tour that covers all three; the Sistine Chapel is the centrepiece but the galleries leading to it are equally extraordinary.

MEALS

Breakfast

OVERNIGHT

Rome, Prati or Monti district

DAY

03

FLORENCE · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Rome to Florence — through the Tuscan hills

A 3.5-hour drive north, and the landscape does most of the work. The Tuscan countryside between Rome and Florence is genuinely beautiful through a coach window — rolling hills, cypress lines, the occasional hilltop town. Arrive in Florence by early afternoon for check-in, then a walking tour with a local guide through the Renaissance core. The evening ends at Piazzale Michelangelo at sunset, which earns its reputation.

Duomo & Baptistery — the scale of Brunelleschi's dome only makes sense when you're standing directly beneath it; the walking tour frames why this building changed European architecture.

Ponte Vecchio — medieval, shop-lined and remarkably intact; the guide explains what's actually being sold there and what the bridge was originally used for.

Piazzale Michelangelo (sunset) — the panoramic view over Florence at dusk is the correct way to end this day.

MEALS

Breakfast · Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Florence, Oltrarno

DAY

04

LA SPEZIA · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Florence to La Spezia — via the Leaning Tower

A deliberately light travel day. The drive west from Florence to Pisa takes about an hour — the group stops at the Piazza dei Miracoli for photos and free time, then continues north up the Italian Riviera coast to La Spezia. Early hotel check-in. The afternoon is yours: the La Spezia harbour walk is calm and low-key, exactly what you need before tomorrow, which is the most active day on the itinerary.

Piazza dei Miracoli, Pisa — the Leaning Tower is genuinely more striking in person than in photographs; free time here also means lunch at your own pace before the road north.

La Spezia harbour (evening) — a quiet working port rather than a tourist destination, which is the point; rest up, because tomorrow's Cinque Terre day starts early.

MEALS

Breakfast

OVERNIGHT

La Spezia, station area

DAY

05

CINQUE TERRE · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Cinque Terre by train — then the drive into Nice

Leave your luggage on the coach. The group walks to La Spezia Centrale and boards the Cinque Terre Express — the only sensible way to move between the five villages. Riomaggiore, Manarola and Monterosso are on the itinerary; Monterosso has the best beach if the timing allows. At 16:00 the group rides one stop further to Levanto, where the coach (having driven ahead with all luggage) is waiting outside the station. Then 4.5 hours to Nice — the longest driving leg of the trip, but you'll be ready to sit down by then.

Cinque Terre Express train — the villages are connected by rail; the train gives you flexibility to stay longer where you want and move on when you're ready.

Levanto station pickup — the coach cannot re-enter La Spezia's restricted zone, so Levanto is the reunion point; no backtracking, no wasted time.

MEALS

Breakfast · Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Nice, Quartier Thiers

DAY

06

MONACO · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Monaco & Èze — and a free evening in Nice

The best day on the trip for many people, and it requires no packing. The coach takes the group up the cliffside Corniche roads to Èze first — a medieval hilltop village with near-vertical sea views and a traditional French perfumery worth twenty minutes of your time. Then down into Monaco: the Prince's Palace, the harbour, Monte Carlo Casino, lunch at your own pace. Back in Nice by evening with no obligations. The beach, Vieux Nice's alleys, the flower market — all yours.

Èze village — perched above the Mediterranean at 427 metres; the perfumery visit explains why the town has been associated with fragrance for centuries, without being a hard sell.

Monaco — a city-state the size of a postcode that happens to contain some of the world's most concentrated wealth; the harbour alone makes the drive worthwhile.

MEALS

Breakfast

OVERNIGHT

Nice, Quartier Thiers

DAY

07

MONTPELLIER · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 1

Nice to Montpellier — with a stop in Nîmes

A 3-hour drive west into Provence, with a deliberate stop in Nîmes that most comparable itineraries skip. The Arena of Nîmes is the best-preserved Roman amphitheatre in the world — structurally more intact than the Colosseum — and it sits in a compact ancient centre that also contains the Maison Carrée, a near-perfect Roman temple. A local guide covers both. Then 45 minutes south to Montpellier for check-in and a group dinner on the Place de la Comédie.
Arena of Nîmes — built in 70 AD and still used for concerts today; the guided tour explains how and why it survived when most of its Roman contemporaries did not.
Maison Carrée — a first-century Roman temple so well-preserved it influenced the design of the Virginia State Capitol; worth five minutes even if you're templed-out after Rome.

MEALS

Breakfast

Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Montpellier, Saint-Roch district

DAY

08

BARCELONA · OVERNIGHT 1 OF 2

Montpellier to Barcelona — via Girona

A smooth morning drive south toward the Spanish border — the Pyrenees come into view on your right as you cross into Catalonia. The stop in Girona is worth more than the 2 hours allocated: the colourful hanging houses over the Onyar River are immediately recognisable, and the medieval old town behind them rewards a wander. Lunch here before the final 75-minute push into Barcelona. Early hotel check-in, an evening orientation walk through the Gothic Quarter, and the first group tapas dinner.

Girona old town — cross the Eiffel Bridge for the river-house photographs, then walk into the Barri Vell; it's a working Catalan city rather than a museum piece, and that distinction matters.

Barcelona Gothic Quarter (evening walk) — the orientation walk is designed to give you spatial confidence in the city before tomorrow's Gaudí day.

MEALS

Breakfast · Lunch · Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Barcelona, Poblenou edge

DAY

09

BARCELONA · OVERNIGHT 2 OF 2

Gaudí's Barcelona — and a farewell by the waterfront

The morning belongs to Gaudí. A private coach city tour leads into a guided visit of the Sagrada Família — still under construction after 140 years, and more extraordinary for it — followed by Park Güell's mosaic terraces and city panorama. The afternoon is free: Passeig de Gràcia for architecture and shopping, or Barceloneta beach if the weather holds. The farewell dinner is at the waterfront — paella, a live flamenco show, the last night of the trip.
Sagrada Família — a guided visit is the only way to understand what you're looking at; the interior is unlike anything else in European architecture, and the guide's explanation of the symbolism makes it land properly.
Park Güell — Gaudí's mosaic terraces and the Dragon Staircase; arrive via coach, which means you skip the long uphill walk and have more time on the terrace itself.

MEALS

Breakfast · Dinner

OVERNIGHT

Barcelona, Poblenou edge

DAY

10

BARCELONA

Depart Barcelona

A relaxed final morning. No early start, no rushed checkout. The group gathers after breakfast for a 12:00 hotel checkout, with the private coach transferring everyone to Barcelona El Prat Airport (BCN) in time for outbound flights. If your flight departs before midday, flag this to your NEXTRIP contact when confirming the itinerary — the transfer can be adjusted. The drive from the hotel area to the airport is approximately 30 minutes, though allow extra time during the morning peak.

Barcelona El Prat Airport transfer — private coach for the whole group, door to kerb; no shared shuttles, no navigating public transit with luggage after nine days.

MEALS

Breakfast