

# INSIDER'S GUIDE TO ITALY



By Guest Contributor - Jun 16, 2021

We sat down with Italian travel specialist Dino T. to discuss Italy's lesser-known regions, day trip ideas from major cities, the country's best beaches, insider tips to the islands, family-friendly activities and more. Dino shares insights about the mountain havens of the Dolomites, where to stay when visiting Lago d'Orta,



how to get the best views of Mount Etna in Sicily, which monuments kids can climb on and more.

## What are some excellent day trips from major cities like Rome, Venice and Milan?

**Dino:** From Rome, you can either jump on a train from the Vatican station or hire a private limo service to Castel Gandolfo, the incredibly scenic lake district approximately 45 minutes south of the city. This town is famous for one reason alone: it's the Pope's summer residence! Aside from its famous citizen, Castel Gandolfo is a quaint little village overlooking the gorgeous lake Albano. Lunch or dine at the ristorante Pagnanelli overlooking the lake whilst enjoying a tapas-Italian style menu and let the team there take you on a hidden labyrinth-like wine cellar visit where they store their vast collection of vintage wines from all over Italy, many of which are signed by famous celebs!

To escape the frenetic pace of Venice, look no further than the mountain havens of the Dolomites. These gorgeous peaks are not just for skiers; you can hike, walk, climb or just relax at one of the new luxury spa resorts that are set in glorious mountain surrounds. The towns of Madonna di Campiglio & San Casciano are just some of the few settings where you can enjoy a luxury retreat and savor the delicious mountain local food. The Dolomites have a variety of locally grown produce, and their wines are now receiving worldwide recognition.

The Milanese are known to flee Milan on weekends heading to the chic town of Portofino or the lake shores of Lago di Como, but going off-piste to Lago D'Orta, the most quaint northern Lake in all of Italy, deserves a "look in." Stay

at the Moorish-styled Villa Crespi, known for its outstanding restaurant or one of the new up-and-coming boutique hotels that are opening. If the sea is preferred to the lake, then head to the lesser-known towns of the Ligurian coast. Sanremo or Savona certainly would not disappoint; they are art-nouveau in style and more laid back than the more famous towns of the southern Italian Riviera.

## Which regions of Italy are under the radar?

**Dino:** The regions that are quietly welcoming curious tourists in Italy and are still off the radar of mass tourism would include Piedmont and the Dolomites. Both contrasting, yet these stunning regions share the values of slow travel, food, wine and at the Moorish-styled Villa Crespi, known for its outstanding restaurant or one of the new up-and-coming boutique hotels that are opening. If the sea is preferred to the lake, then head to the lesser-known towns of the Ligurian coast. Sanremo or Savona certainly would not disappoint; they are art-nouveau in style and more laid back than the more famous towns of the southern Italian Riviera.

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natural beauty. Piedmont is famous for its annual truffle festival held in November, but even during this busy week or so you can still enjoy peaceful stays whilst visiting local wineries to experience the famous Barolo wines and taste the famous white truffle of Piedmont. Instead, the Dolomites is certainly an unrivaled setting for a detox vacation, immersing yourself in pure nature, long walks into the woods and hills, finding a Rifugio where you can taste local products and stopping by small quaint villages.



*Truffles being weighed on vintage scales at Piedmont's annual truffle festival*



*Taormina, a small town on eastern coast of Sicily*

## Why should more people visit Sicily and Sardinia?

**Dino:** Sicily has something for everyone: full history immersion from the early Greek settlers, the Spanish and Arabs. Yet, the alluring aspect of the island is the friendliness of its people, the diverse cuisine from east to west and the extraordinarily beautiful baroque towns of the east coast: Modica, Ragusa, Noto &

Siracusa. Seeing Sicily is unlike being on the mainland. It feels and tastes different, from the landscape, to its people, to its illustrious past. And sitting on a mountain-top overseeing the island is the tempestuous Mount Etna, a place where one can enjoy the Etna nature reserves, discover the abundant wineries that produce fine wines unlike anywhere else in Italy and escape from the world. Sicily has it all, you just need to be curious and an explorer at heart!

Whether honeymooning or seeking an idyllic beach escape with your family, Sardinia is the place to be. Alluring white sandy shores, hidden coves and mesmerizingly crystal-clear waters abound here. Sardinia is all about delicious food, whether fresh fish or the countryside tradition of “Su Porcheddu” (suckling bbq pig) to be enjoyed at the charming Agriturismo La Colti, a cultural eating experience that should not be missed!

## Where would you find Italy's best beaches?

**Dino:** Sardinia again. Its sheer amount of never-ending glorious beaches seem to be from another world. Hire a boat for the day and discover hidden and private coves.

There are so many that if you seek you will find perfect seclusion! The boat experience also extends to its archipelago islands, the group of La Maddalena, a drop-dead gorgeous cluster of white-sanded islands, one of which is famed for having pink precious sand!



*World famous Cala Luna Beach in Sardinia*



*Family visiting the Leaning Tower of Pisa at Piazza  
del Miracoli*

## What are some unique experiences that families with kids can enjoy?

**Dino:** Italy is a hidden treasure trove for kids to enjoy, and let's not forget that the Italians boast to being the kid-friendliest country on the planet! Explore museums with a kid-orientated guide, making them understand the history without

boring them to tears, learning how to make real gelato that they can replicate when they return home or even a fun day learning how to create their individually styled pizza. Many of Italy's main monuments, like the leaning tower of Pisa, the cathedral of Milan, can all be climbed, and fun-kid roof-top walks can also be enjoyed. From cycling the ancient walls of Lucca to splashing in the sea, Italy has endless possibilities for kids and families to enjoy.