

ADVENTURES IN ITALY - June 2025

Come with us for a week in a 1700s refurbished palace in a touring and cooking school perched at the very tip top of the hill town of Carunchio in the region of Abruzzo in southern Italy.

Week begins June 21, 2025, when you arrive in Carunchio. Flower Festival is Sunday June 22.



For the third year in a row, Sister City has reserved the weekend of the *Infiorata Flower Festival* in Carunchio for the spring 2025 trip!! It is unique in Italy and features designs related to the religious holiday and other secular scenes constructed completely out of flower buds, petals, leaves and other organic products like rice and coffee grounds. There will be scenes from the old



and new testament, the logo Saluda, a globe celebrating common connections of all humans, etc. Workers labor days in advance to collect flowers and petals and create the beautiful designs. The purpose of the event is essentially to keep alive, through the paintings made of flower petals, the deep religious faith and the cultural prestige, but also to spread new meaning and artistic content of friendship between peoples.



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To help you fully enjoy the event, our host, Massimo, has agreed to arrange for everyone to come a day earlier (leaving US on the Friday to arrive on Saturday before the Sunday festival, then leaving Carunchio to return to the airport on the following Friday morning to fly out to the US on Saturday morning).



Of course, this assumes you are not going early or staying later. We have several recommendations of places to stay near the airport or in Rome if you plan to stay over. If there is enough interest, we can arrange a private tour of Ostia Antica (www.ostia-antica.org) for the afternoon of the day you return to Rome and, if enough people are interested, a final dinner at a favorite restaurant, all near the airport. Then you fly home Saturday morning unless you decide to stay for other travel adventures. The return drive from Carunchio to the Rome airport gets you there about 1:30 to 2:00 pm and flights west go earlier in the day, so it is usually not possible to fly out the day you return to Rome. Anyone can arrive in Italy early or stay late and we will provide guidance as needed on tours, locations, guides, rooms, etc. The airport is in Fiumicino, outside of Rome.

**Costs:**

The pricing works this way:

2,550 euros if paid via credit card.

2,400 euros if paid in euros on arrival.

Of course, your deposit of 300 euros is credited against this.

Our host, Massimo, will collect a deposit of the US dollar equivalent of 300 euros via credit card which will reduce the amount you will owe upon arrival in Carunchio. You will not be charged a fee on this deposit and will get full euro credit. After the deposit, you will owe 2,100 euros if you pay in euros or 2,250 euros if you pay via credit card. You will also owe for any room upgrades or single upgrades. I always buy euros from Bank of America or AAA before I leave, but you can also get them from the ATMs in Italy. Banks have limits on how many euros you can get from an ATM per day.

There are several premium rooms in the four turret corners of the Palazzo which have upgrades and lovely views. They are a 300-euro upcharge per room. I recommend them, first come-first served. There is a single supplement of 300 euros if you want a single room in the Palazzo.

Inclusions and exclusions:

Your room, all meals, all travel within Italy, cooking lessons and tours are all included. There is unlimited red wine included with lunch and dinner. White wine is available to purchase and have it served with your meals. There is a bar where you can run a tab if you want libations at other times. All bar items are priced very reasonably. Often during the week there may be an optional activity for small additional charge if you want to participate.... truffle hunting with a truffle dog (when the season is open), a massage, sometimes an art lesson, crushing grapes at the grape harvest, or whatever Massimo can dream up, all depending on the season. Massimo has opened a spa directly across from the Palazzo which you may access for an extra cost. He has not yet shared the spa fees with us. There are three new hot tubs on the patio area with amazing views while you soak and sip a glass of prosecco, but there is an additional cost because they are part of the spa package, are wood fired and take some extensive preparation time to heat up. Those are the only optional extras, other than tips for the staff, of course.

Carunchio in Abruzzo

This village is east of Rome, across the country, almost to the Adriatic, perched on the point of a chocolate-drop shaped hill. The views from the Palace and its patio are breathtaking. There are tiny hill towns all around on the distant hills and snow-capped mountains in the distance. It is definitely a “vertical” town but there is plenty to explore around the very top where it is mostly flat. It dates from 1000 AD and is listed as one of the “100 Most Beautiful Villages in Italy.” It is 35 minutes from the Adriatic and near several other towns of interest and a large national park with a fabulous destination spa if you want to stay longer and take that in. Interestingly, Carunchio and Saluda have the same population (about 600), are at the same latitude and the same altitude (but Carunchio is steeper). Four or five excursions to explore the Abruzzo area are organized by Massimo and are included in the trip cost. Twelve of us from Saluda and Charlotte went to Carunchio in 2014, and trips have continued every year (except covid years) for a total of 215 Saluda Sister City travelers over the years since 2014. Many said it was the best trip of their life.

If this date doesn't fit, the program is run from late April to late October each week and we can arrange for you to go at our special price any other week when there are openings.



The Palace.

Palazzo Tour D'Eau was built by a prestigious French noble family in the early 1700s. The Tour D'Eau family had been invited by the ruling noble in this area of Abruzzo to come and establish a vineyard and teach viniculture. The abandoned Palazzo was purchased and restored by our host's father in the early 2000s and now is used exclusively for groups who come for

a week to explore the region, enjoy incredible food and wine, and learn to cook regional specialties. There are 12 rooms, each with private bath. There is a large dining table seating 24 for dinners, cozy 8-tops in the breakfast area, another large table for 24 in the cooking school where a few lunches are served and another large table for 24 on the patio. Bedrooms are on the second floor. For those with difficulty climbing stairs, there is one room on the ground floor that can usually be arranged, though it does not have a view. The former wine cellar below, now the cooking school, boasts a vaulted ceiling, walls covered with beautiful mosaics, a wood fired pizza oven and state-of-the-art cooking fixtures. Entry to this area is from the left end of the palace at the outside patio area, an easy walk down a sloped sidewalk from the front entrance. No steps.

The Program at the Palace. The Carunchio experience includes transportation to and from Rome, all meals of the most amazing gourmet quality, all the red wine you want with lunch and dinner, all the cappuccino you want with breakfast, all the cooking lessons, your room, all the excursions, all transportation and Massimo's smiling face and fun commentary. The excursions generally include visits to a vineyard



and explanation of wine-making, an olive grove with tasting and explanation of the oil extraction process, the second largest bell foundry in the world, a cheese making factory, guided tour in the historic town of Vasto on the Adriatic and its beach, and the most amazing visit to an historic fish house (Trabocco) perched in the edge of the Adriatic with a seafood meal never to be forgotten (note: It has seasonal opening/closing depending on when you are traveling)! There are some seasonal restrictions on various activities due to closings or Italian law, but Massimo tries to take advantage of added special seasonal offerings to enhance the visit whenever possible.



Because you spend all day involved with the Flower Festival, that means a cooking lesson and one of the tours will be replaced by the Flower Festival. You generally have a cooking event and tour each day.

The cooking lessons at the palace are great fun and useful recipes. Even a few men who swore that were not interested in cooking joined in and loved the experience. The lessons are in the historic wine cellar below the palace. It is large and bright and there is usually beer

or wine down there when we need it. Look forward to making cheese balls (our favorite), biscotti, amaretti, gnocchetti, a great recipe for gorgonzola salad dressing, pizza, tiramisu and more! There is also a lovely little bar on the main floor where folks can gather in the evenings and order a glass of wine or other aperitif at a very reasonable price. There is a parlor with lots of board games where we often perch to share pictures and stories.



Websites of Interest

<http://www.palazzotd.com> This is the main website for the Palace and its programs.

<http://abruzzocibus.com> Lots of info about the whole experience with a video by Massimo. Highlights the cooking, personnel, tours, etc.



http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g1052388-d1052394-Reviews-or10-Palazzo_Tour_d_Eau-Carunchio_Province_of_Chieti_Abruzzo.html#REVIEWS Trip Advisor Reviews
<https://europeupclose.com/article/italys-trabocchi-coast/>. Info on the Trabocco.

HERE'S WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT WANT TO GO:

1. Read everything and look at the websites.
2. Email or call Saluda Sister City Chair with any specific questions
3. Make a decision as soon as possible and let us know to sign you up.
4. We will send you a registration card and you fill out your registration pay your 300-euro deposit to Massimo via credit card. If you are replacing someone who is having to drop out, we will work that out so you take their place and forward your deposit to them, and we will advise Massimo.
- 5.

Once you pay, deposits are only refundable if you or we or Massimo can fill your slot. Once you get signed up, we will provide any additional information you need on how to spend extra days in Italy.

We must fill the Palazzo to make it cost efficient, so please pass this to friends you think will be interested.

We will take reservations in the order you give me a definite YES.

I have been to Carunchio many times and guaranty it is an amazing experience. It is a very easy trip as everything is done for you for a fixed price. You just go to breakfast in the morning and look at the board to see what is planned for the day. The staff speak English, and everyone is dedicated to being sure you have a great time. While you are gone, your room is cleaned.

For those who want to come early or stay over, we can point you to great places to stay in Rome, Naples, Sorrento, Montisi, Florence and many other cities. We know a wonderful guide for Rome, one for Siena and several others. We have a connection to a less expensive car rental broker through major rental agencies that can keep costs down if you want to explore on your own. Italy is very easy, and we can offer suggestions. We fly in and out of the Rome airport, but you are welcome to fly in somewhere else and just get yourself to Rome airport at the appointed time for pickup.

This is a Saluda Sister City trip. We do not take any money from Massimo. However, to participate you need to be a member of Saluda Sister City. Annual dues are \$25 per person. We want you to be a part of our organization which is dedicated to helping the children of Saluda Elementary and Carunchio Elementary learn about and connect with each other. We use our funds to support both schools in many ways and we also fund exchange students in the summer. Usually, the student is a rising senior and she or he stays with local families. For our students who go to Carunchio, Massimo gives them a free week at the Palazzo with all that that includes. They also stay with the Carunchio Mayor's family and the truffle hunter's family. We also sent two of our Saluda Elementary teachers to Carunchio in April of 2024 and they brought back great ideas and information to use in our Saluda school. One teacher created a whole website for use in the classroom with lesson plans and information that could be integrated into every grade and every curriculum. The two teachers also applied for a grant to provide Italian language instruction to all the students in grades two through five. Sister City kicked in the extra funds needed to be sure the program was available to all students. Early study of a second language has been shown to be a great enhancer of mental development in a variety of ways. For the Italian students who come here, the people of Saluda volunteer to give the student a broad array of experiences and the student lives in local homes. We are opening the eyes of the children in these two small communities to the rest of the world. They are learning about different cultures and environments and are engaged in a lively internet exchange, thanks to Google Translate.

So, email us and let us know if you want more information and how interested you are. If you email, put ITALY in the subject line. If we don't hear from you, we will assume you are not interested, but please pass this info along to friends who may want to join us.

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