

Heritage, culture, history of Italy, seniors small group – Short Tour

Reading List

The Italians

by John Hooper

Sublime and maddening, fascinating yet baffling, Italy is a country of endless paradox and seemingly unanswerable riddles.

John Hooper's marvellously entertaining and perceptive new book is the ideal companion for anyone seeking to understand contemporary Italy and the unique character of the Italians. Looking at the facts that lie behind - and often belie - the stereotypes, his revealing book sheds new light on many aspects of Italian life: football and Freemasonry, sex, symbolism and the reason why Italian has twelve words for a coat hanger, yet none for a hangover.

The Borgias

by Christopher Hibbert

The name Borgia is synonymous with the corruption, nepotism, and greed that were rife in Renaissance Italy.

The powerful, voracious Rodrigo Borgia, better known to history as Pope Alexander VI, was the central figure of the dynasty. Two of his seven papal offspring also rose to power and fame - Lucrezia Borgia, his daughter, whose husband was famously murdered by her brother, and that brother, Cesare, who served as the model for Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Notorious for seizing power, wealth, land, and titles through bribery, marriage, and murder, the dynasty's dramatic rise from its Spanish roots to its occupation of the highest position in Renaissance society forms a gripping tale.

Erudite, witty, and always insightful, Hibbert removes the layers of myth around the Borgia family and creates a portrait alive with his superb sense of character and place.

SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome

by Mary Beard

Ancient Rome matters.

Its history of empire, conquest, cruelty and excess is something against which we still judge ourselves. Its myths and stories - from Romulus and Remus to the Rape of Lucretia - still strike a chord with us. And its debates about citizenship, security and the rights of the individual still influence our own debates on civil liberty today.

SPQR is a new look at Roman history from one of the world's foremost classicists. It explores not only how Rome grew from an insignificant village in central Italy to a power that controlled territory from Spain to Syria, but also how the Romans thought about themselves and their achievements, and why they are still important to us. Covering 1,000 years of history, and casting fresh light on the basics of Roman culture from slavery to running water, as well as exploring democracy, migration, religious controversy, social mobility and exploitation in the larger context of the empire, this is a definitive history of ancient Rome.

SPQR is the Romans' own abbreviation for their state: Senatus Populusque Romanus, 'the Senate and People of Rome'.

The Roman Forum

by David Watkin

There are few more historic and evocative places in the world. Caesar was cremated there. Charles V and Mussolini rode by it in triumph. There Napoleon celebrated his festival of liberty. In this radical reappraisal David Watkin teaches us to see the Forum with new eyes and helps us to rediscover its rich history. This is as stimulating to the armchair traveller as it is useful as a guide to the Forum itself.

'With verve, authority and no little humour, Watkin tells the detailed and complex story of this great but mutilated landmark ... it is an almost impossible task, superbly done' Peter Jones, BBC History Magazine

'In this sprightly volume ... the distinguished architectural historian David Watkin charts the shifting fortunes of the site ... he has an engagingly romantic feeling for the place... deploying a good deal of sharp wit, he reveals how the relatively recent obsession with recovering the Forum's classical past has led to much unhappy destruction and much less scarcely happy invention' Matthew Sturgis, Country Life

The Rise and Fall of the House of Medici

by Christopher Hibbert

At its height Renaissance Florence was a centre of enormous wealth, power and influence. A republican city-state funded by trade and banking, its often bloody political scene was dominated by rich mercantile families, the most famous of which were the Medici. This enthralling book charts the family's huge influence on the political, economic and cultural history of Florence. Beginning in the early 1430s with the rise of the dynasty under the near-legendary Cosimo de Medici, it moves through their golden era as patrons of some of the most remarkable artists and architects of the Renaissance, to the era of the Medici Popes and Grand Dukes, Florence's slide into decay and bankruptcy, and the end, in 1737, of the Medici line.

The Black Prince of Florence: The Spectacular Life and Treacherous World of Alessandro de' Medici

by Catherine Fletcher

'Nothing in sixteenth-century history is more astonishing than the career of Alessandro de' Medici'
Hilary Mantel

In *The Black Prince of Florence*, a dramatic tale of assassination, spies and betrayal, the first retelling of Alessandro's life in two-hundred years opens a window onto the opulent, cut-throat world of Renaissance Italy.

'Astonishing ... gripping and original ... a compelling portrait' Financial Times

'Packed with intrigue ... Fletcher describes with cool menace the plotting and politicking that dominated Alessandro's rule ... brought splendidly to life in this excellent book' Sunday Times

'Engrossing ... bursts with stabbings, poisonings, duels, eye-gougings, arquebus shootouts and people being run through with swords. Fletcher's approach is scholarly yet dramatic, immersed in Renaissance glamour ... a tremendous step forward in our knowledge of this intriguing man'
Spectator

'Scintillating. This is everything a historical biography should be' Ian Mortimer, author of *The Time Traveller's Guide to Medieval England*

The year is 1531. After years of brutal war and political intrigue, the bastard son of a Medici Duke and a 'half-negro' maidservant rides into Florence. Within a year, he rules the city as its Prince. Backed by the Pope and his future father-in-law the Holy Roman Emperor, the nineteen-year-old Alessandro faces down bloody family rivalry and the scheming hostility of Italy's oligarchs to reassert the Medicis' faltering grip on the turbulent city-state. Six years later, as he awaits an adulterous liaison, he will be murdered by his cousin in another man's bed.

From dazzling palaces and Tuscan villas to the treacherous backstreets of Florence and the corridors of papal power, the story of Alessandro's spectacular rise, magnificent reign and violent demise takes us deep beneath the surface of power in Renaissance Italy – a glamorous but deadly

realm of spies, betrayal and vendetta, illicit sex and fabulous displays of wealth, where the colour of one's skin meant little but the strength of one's allegiances meant everything.

'Bold, breathless and full of suspense' The Times

'Original, revelatory and gripping' Jessie Childs, author of *God's Traitors*

'Gripping ... Fletcher describes in detail without losing momentum' Economist

'Fascinating and profound' Paul Strathern, author of *The Medici*

'Accomplished and original. A newly sympathetic portrait of a monarch whose rule in Florence was even more unlikely than Henry VII's presence on the English throne' Diarmaid MacCulloch, author of *A History of Christianity*

'Brilliantly written and impeccably researched. A stunning book' Tracy Borman, author of *Thomas Cromwell*

The Land Where Lemons Grow: The Story of Italy and its Citrus Fruit

by Helena Attlee

Travellers have always been thrilled by the sight of citrus in Italy, where dark leaves and bright fruit seem to charge the landscape, making the trees symbols of a sun-soaked, poetic vision of the country. Citrus also holds a special place in the Italian imagination, and in *The Land Where Lemons Grow*, Helena Attlee sets out to explore its curious past and its enduring resonance in Italian culture. *The Land Where Lemons Grow* is a heady mixture of travel writing, history, horticulture and art; a unique journey through Italy's cultural, culinary and political past. Helena Attlee is the author of four books about Italian gardens, and others on the cultural history of gardens around the world. Helena is a Fellow of the Royal Literary Fund and has worked in Italy for nearly 30 years.

The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy

by Jacob Burckhardt and Peter Murray

For nineteenth-century Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt, the Italian Renaissance was nothing less than the beginning of the modern world - a world in which flourishing individualism and the competition for fame radically transformed science, the arts, and politics. In this landmark work he depicts the Italian city-states of Florence, Venice and Rome as providing the seeds of a new form of society, and traces the rise of the creative individual, from Dante to Michelangelo. A fascinating description of an era of cultural transition, this nineteenth-century masterpiece was to become the most influential interpretation of the Italian Renaissance, and anticipated ideas such as Nietzsche's concept of the 'Übermensch' in its portrayal of an age of genius.

Art in Renaissance Italy

by John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke

With a freshness and breadth of approach that sets the art in its context, this book explores why works were created and who commissioned the palaces, cathedrals, paintings, and sculptures. It covers Rome and Florence, Venice and the Veneto, Assisi, Siena, Milan, Pavia, Genoa, Padua, Mantua, Verona, Ferrara, Urbino, and Naples. Chapters are grouped into four chronological parts, allowing for a sustained examination of individual cities in different periods. "Contemporary Scene" boxes provide fascinating glimpses of daily life and "Contemporary Voice" boxes quote from painters and writers of the time. Innovative and scholarly, yet accessible and beautifully presented, this book is a definitive work on the Italian Renaissance. This revised edition contains around 200 new pictures and nearly all colour images.
