

Wonderful RETREATS

GETTING READY FOR ITALIA: BUDGETING FOR ITALIA

One of the hardest challenges about traveling to Italy is budgeting. How much do you bring for souvenirs, food, lodging, trains...and, of course, wine?

I've compiled a recommendation of how much you could possibly bring for these additional expenses once you land in *La Bella Paese*. Personally, I tend to be pretty frugal in general so my estimates may seem low. So feel free to adjust for your own comfort, travel style or just to have a little wiggle room in your daily budget!

HOW MUCH TO BRING, AND FOR WHAT:

LODGING:

While your lodging during the retreat is already arranged (yay!), you may have to stay in another location if you're flying in a little early before the retreat, or staying after to travel some more. I highly recommend finding lodging on VRBO and AirBnb. I tend to budget **€30-60 per day**, depending on the location.

If it's a town I've already visited or a town I won't have much time in (arriving in Rome late to fly out early) I will opt to spend less and stay in a less picturesque part of town or more convenient location (closer to the train station). But if it's a new city to me and I want to stay somewhere near the center of all the excitement, I'll splurge a bit more (so long as it has a kitchen so I can cook for myself...more on that later). If you're traveling with friends, expect to spend slightly more if you don't want to share a bed but you can usually find better deals if more people are splitting the bill.

TRANSPORTATION:

Travel days are the days I have to zip up my suitcase and get to another town. The expenses on these days will vary drastically depending on where you are and the destination. Sometimes it's a quick bus ride or regional train ride to the next town over for **€5-8**. Other days it's a Freccia train (high speed) to get 4 hours away and spending **€22-28** (flying into Rome and then traveling via train to the villa will be like that). There's also the option of hiring a private driver which can cost closer to **€100** in some cases. Taxis from an airport to the city center can also be pricey (about **€50** from Fiumicino to/from the center of Rome) but this can be worth it if you're sharing the cab with a few friends (and lots of luggage). Many cities have flat rates for rides to/from the main train station and the airport which can be helpful.

Once you have your general itinerary, please feel free to send us your travel schedule and we can help you find the most cost effective way to travel around Italy! We can also give you recommendations for private drivers if you prefer that method of transportation.

FOOD:

I roughly budget **€25-60** per day. This can vary if it's a travel day, if I have access to a kitchen or a grocery store or if I'm in a city that is particularly known for great food (hellooo Bologna). To make my money go further, I like to buy groceries for my snacks and breakfasts. While breakfasts are covered on the retreats, you may have to budget for breakfast while traveling before or after your retreat.

- **BREAKFAST:** Between **€3-8** usually is enough to get me by, either on a travel day or just with groceries. I try to stay in places that have kitchens so I can make stovetop espresso in the morning. I also buy yogurt and eggs from the grocery store so I can eat breakfast in. Italy isn't really a big, sit-down breakfast country so a simple pastry, a cappuccino and a piece of fruit is all I need sometimes if I want to eat out and about, which should only set you back a few euro. More touristy cafes will charge more, especially if you sit in the piazza.
- **LUNCH:** Typically I'll budget **€8-20**, depending if I'm going out that night for dinner or not. If I'm in a town that has a great restaurant I want to visit for dinner, I'll try to eat a smaller lunch or eat in! I love making a big farro or panzanella salad in my Airbnb kitchen and eating it over the next few days (you can find recipes for these on our website). I also enjoy a nice sit down lunch with a glass of white wine during the summer! It's easy to find a nice affordable lunch in Italy of caprese salad, a pizza or just a salad to get you to Aperitivo hour (more on that below).
- **DINNER:** Of all the meals in a day, I'm most likely to go all out on dinner! I'll budget between **€12-25** for dinners. While I love a good splurge, it's really easy to eat well in Italy affordably! Especially if you do your homework in advance and research the local favorites (check Eater.com for their favorites. I check Yelp as a last resort). A glass of house red, a salad and some pasta or a pizza is all I need. Plus I like to leave a little room for a gelato!
- **SNACKS & APERITIVO:** You can ask anyone, I'm a sucker for snacks...and aperitivo! I tend to have bags of almonds or fruit in my purse at all times. So for snacks during the day, **€2-5** is usually enough for me to grab a gelato, fresh fruit or a little sandwich to get me to the next meal. Now, there's a wonderful thing called aperitivo! In the evening before the dinner hour begins (well after 7), bars will offer spreads of food that you can partake in with purchase of a drink (you can ask for non-alcoholic drinks too!). Depending on how generous the spot is, you can spend as little as **€5** or even as much as **€12** if the place offers enough food that can substitute for dinner. While I won't hit an aperitivo daily, it's a great way to grab a dinner, a drink and save a little money.

SOUVENIRS:

Ahh souvenirs...this is a tough one. During my first few years of visiting Italy, I bought a LOT of *things*. Scarves, cheesy David stuff, anything with sunflowers on it. You name it, I probably bought it. In recent years though I tend to buy less "things" to bring home (except gifts for friends and family) and save my money for food!

You can shop for all price ranges in Italy. I love a good bargain shopping trip to the San Lorenzo Market in Florence to look for scarves (**€5-10**), leather wallets (**€20-40**), leather totes (**€45+**) and fun leather keychains (**€5-12**) and try to barter the prices down.

But I also like saving up for the nice heirloom treasures to bring home, like handcrafted bracelets and charms from Del Brenna (**€70+**) who we visit during the Villa Retreat, or a waxed paper purse from Uashmama in Lucca (**€90+**).

WAYS TO SAVE:

Small expenses can add up in Italy and it's not fun to be pinching pennies while trying to live "la dolce vita" to the fullest. Here are some ways I like to save a bit of money along the way when traveling in Italy...

- **PANINI AT THE ALIMENTARI:** One of the best options for a cheap lunch on the go in Italy is hiding behind the counter of the Alimentari. These small grocery stores, easily found in smaller towns and cities (or neighborhoods away from the bigger grocery stores), carry a basic selection of food goods but also stock meats, cheese and breads. For a few euro, most Alimentari will make a little sandwich for you from your choice of meat and cheeses! It's an affordable and delicious lunch option!
- **GROCERIES:** On the same note of Alimentari, buying food from grocery stores is a great way to save some euro. When traveling with my family (4 morning coffee drinkers) it was nice to be able to make our own Americanos and eat some yogurt and watermelon for breakfast. Or to whip up a quick caprese and melon/prosciutto plate for an easy lunch in. Or even a big batch of pasta with a bottle of wine on the patio of the Airbnb for our own Aperitivo! Buying groceries in Italy is fun, delicious and definitely worth it.
- **BIGLIETTO UNICO:** The magical words...single tickets. Aka more bang for your euro! While this isn't an option everywhere, it's nice to find single tickets that cover multiple sites or activities. For instance, the Duomo in Florence has a ticket for €18 that gives you entry to climb the bell tower (highly recommend), climb the dome (kinda recommend, but you need to reserve a time), visit the Baptistry, the Cathedral Museum AND Santa Reparata. The church entry is free but you still need to stand in that line. For €18 it's a great deal! You can find similar deals in Lucca like the Guinigi Tower...if you spend a little more you'll get a cheaper climb and a ticket to go climb the clock tower. Keep an eye out for deals like these!
- **APERITIVO:** I'm not just in love with Aperitivo. It can be a great way to save some money and eat some delicious food while sipping a tasty beverage in a likely lovely setting. For €5-12 depending on the location you can have a light dinner and a yummy drink for one price. WIN!
- **BRING A WATER BOTTLE:** Especially if you're travelling to Florence or Rome, bring your own water bottle. Sure, buying chilled water for €1-2 doesn't seem like much but it can add up and just creates more trash that the locals will have to deal with. So either bring your own (I have a canvas one that collapses flat when empty) or buy ONE bottle and just keep refilling it. In Rome there are DOZENS of fresh flowing cold water fountains all over the city (and it's delicious). In Florence there's a free fountain along the side of the Palazzo Vecchio that pumps out free cold water and free FRIZZY WATER (my love!).
- **PACK LIGHT:** A great way to save some cash from the get-go is only bringing a carryon suitcase! Many airlines don't charge for carryon suitcases (so long as they're within the weight limits). I try to only bring a carry-on, my backpack and I pack a collapsible duffel for the return flight in case I do any shopping during my travels. Then I only pay for one checked bag only on the flight home! Plus, having lighter luggage will make hauling your suitcase onto trains and up stairs SO much easier!
- **BRING GOOD WALKING SHOES:** This is a multi-faceted suggestion but hear me out. Investing in a good pair of shoes and breaking them in *before* you leave (not new heels or new strappy sandals) will save you money. Your feet will be comfy so you can walk all day and save money on NOT taking public transportation or taxis! Plus, I just really love walking and getting to know a city by wandering around and getting lost.