



## *The surprising benefits of group travel:*

A 2015 article in AAA magazine documents the upside of group travel. As the Italian Cultural Society's Travel Director, I have planned both group and personal tours for over 20

years. I have escorted tours to all regions in Italy, and made over 100 return trips to my native country of Italy. Like everyone, I had some preconceived notions about "group travel," but the reality is that traveling with a group has many benefits other than the obvious economical ones.

♥**Travelers Enjoy Special Access:** Off hours museum tours, front row seating at concerts, private tastings of olive oil and wine, exclusive seating, special "deluxe" hotel rooms and many other perks are just a few of the doors that group travel can open. On our Tuscany tour, travelers enjoy lunch and olive oil making at the private home and olive oil estate in the breathtakingly beautiful hills of Vinci. Solo travelers just can't get through this door.

♥**Local knowledge and repeat customer treatment:** We hire the best of the best guides. As repeat customers, we get first choice, and our carefully selected guides are passionate about their cities. On our tours you also have the benefit of traveling with a local at all times. This means you get the inside stories and information which bring Italy to life!

♥**Flexibility and Personal Adventure:** Contrary to what you might believe, group travel offers flexibility. Travelers are free to break off from the group for a few hours or even days to see specific sights of interest or visit friends and family. What's more is that they have an expert local to assist them in

doing this! Over the years, I have helped hundreds of people make contact with Italian relatives. Helping them overcome language and other barriers.

♥**Travel Companions:** Our groups bring together compatible travelers and often create lifelong friends. We have a mix of solo travelers, couples, and families. Our groups are very different in age. We have had couples on their honeymoon and couples celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on the same tour. And this made the trip all the more rich. In addition, having a local bi-lingual tour leader allows you great security in the event of problems. Your leader can help negotiate hospitals and police stations and can offer you invaluable assistance when you most need it.

♥**The bottom line:** Groups share the cost. There is the obvious discount in numbers. It is an obvious divide and conquer. A guided tour might cost 300 euro, and dividing this cost over 15 people reduces the price to only 20 euro. Estimates are that, on average, you will spend 25 to 50 percent less if you'd booked the same trip on your own. But the perks go above and beyond just cost. We have used the same hotels for 20 years and they roll out the red carpet for my groups. We get the best rooms, the best views and the best service. The same applies to restaurants, concerts, and museums.

♥**The best testament of our tours are our repeat clients.** Many travelers have traveled on every tour I offer. Several have even repeated the same itinerary many times perhaps sharing it with different family and friends. Most of our travelers come from word of mouth.



♥*I am Patrizia Cinquini Cerruti I was born and raised in Lucca, Italy. For the last 25 years, I have served as the Director of Sacramento's Italian Language School and have been a classroom instructor of Italian language and culture. I have taught Italian for Travelers and travel planning for over 20 years. In 2005, I was knighted by the Italian Government for contributions to Italian culture and language and travel. I currently divide my time between Lucca and Sacramento. I would love to have the opportunity to share Italy with you. ♥ Buon Viaggio!*