

Photography Courses in Italy



Highlights

Where better to perfect the craft of photography than in the lush landscapes of Italy? Umbria, Tuscany and Latium – the region around Rome, are all on the radar for one of these long or short photography courses. As are expert tutors, comfy accommodation in an attractive apartment, and typically excellent Italian food.

Locations don't get much more photo-friendly than Orvieto – it's a cathedral city that sits high atop a volcanic rock. Buttermilk-coloured stone houses huddle along cobbled streets, and underground, an ancient labyrinth of tunnels and caves snakes through the city. But because you'll be getting out and about in 4x4s, this is just the start. Roman ruins, medieval castles and Etruscan temples will have you permanently glued to your viewfinder, as will the hilltop towns of Tuscany, and the seascapes of the Tyrrhenian coastline. In fact, there's so much to photograph here, you may find those typical holiday lie-ins fall by the wayside.

Everybody sees things differently, and that's why these long or short photography courses are incredibly flexible. Workshop groups are small – six people is the maximum number – so if you're here to soak up the wisdom from course leader and professional photographer, Patrick Nicholas, you won't have to wait in line. What's more, it doesn't matter whether you're a complete beginner with a simple digital camera or a bit of a pro with the latest SLR – workshops are adapted to suit you. Sessions are a mix of getting out and about exploring the sights, and digitally developing, learning to manipulate images using Photoshop software, and printing them once you're happy. You'll also learn about composition, depth of field and exposure. But it's not all work – you'll also have the chance to swim in lakes and plunge pools and wander around Orvieto. And, of course, sample some of Italy's culinary delights.

Is it for me?

It doesn't matter if you're a solo traveller, a couple or a small group of friends – as long as you're interested in learning photography – you'll be in your element. Workshops are about learning and sharing – so if you already think you know everything, it's probably not the one for you. Neither does it matter if you're a beginner or a seasoned pro, as long as you want to learn, enjoy getting out in a 4x4 and seeing places, and you're happy in the company of others.

Accommodation

You'll be staying in an attractive, spacious flat in the heart of Orvieto. It's a comfy home-from-home and is perfect for relaxing after a long day's learning. It has antique beams, terracotta floors and en-suite bathrooms in every room. If you are coming with a non-photographing partner or if you just prefer to stay in a 3 or 4 star hotel ask Nicholas. He will be able to recommend a variety of hotels and agriturismos in and around Orvieto, with swimming pools and spas, saunas and even yoga. As it's right in the historic centre of the city, you'll be able to enjoy evening strolls with – or without – your camera.

In terms of food, this is Italy, so even the simplest lunches here will be vastly better than a simple lunch in the UK - it's highly unlikely pots of noodles will be on the menu! Breakfasts and lunches are all included in the price you pay. On offer are enticing picnics of buffalo mozzarella, pecorino cheese, Parma Ham, roast chicken, salad and fruit, as well as mineral water and wine. There is also the chance to enjoy a 'rosticceria' or Italian-style take away, with tables outside of course. You can't walk and eat in Italy. If you opt for the week long course two restaurant meals are also provided and one if you go for the short course, either in Orvieto or maybe by Lake

Prices from

604 GBP (4 days) per person

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Bolsena, the sea, or another town.

Itinerary

The digital revolution has had a vast impact on photography, and as a result, it means time that was often spent holed up in a darkroom can now be put to better use finding the perfect shot. You will be able to practise and hone your new skills while fully immersing yourself in this corner of Italy. Read on for a typical one week itinerary (itinerary for the short course up to Day Four).

Day One: Orvieto

You'll be picked up from Orvieto train station in the morning and taken to your accommodation. The course kicks off after lunch on Friday afternoon with a stroll around this Etruscan city. You'll see Renaissance, medieval and Roman buildings. The evening is free for you to enjoy at your leisure.

Day Two: Lake Bolsena

Today, early after breakfast, you'll visit Lake Bolsena. You'll photograph its striking shoreline, Etruscan tombs that overlook the lake and focus on nearby working fishing villages. These places are ideal for experimenting with depth of field, vivid colour composition, movement and portraiture. You'll enjoy an evening meal at a lakeside restaurant.

Day Three: Tyrrhenian coastline & Vulci

Vulci, an Etruscan city of 50,000 inhabitants, now completely in ruins, is a wonderful place for photographers. There is a medieval castle of Etruscan origin next to the so called 'Devil's Bridge', which spans a deep ravine with a torrent below. High cliffs encrusted with stalactites, raging waters running over black basalt rocks, a high waterfall plunging into a lake surrounded by steep escarpments are just some of the attractions. You'll have the morning in Orvieto to review the results of your photography from yesterday and will work with your tutor as he gives you an overview of how to use Photoshop. You will then head to the coast, which is just 7 km from Vulci. Here you will learn how to effectively use a tripod to catch the motion of the waves and practise abstract photography with the bleached white skeleton trees that line the shore. Tonight your evening is free.

Day Four: The Hill Towns of Tuscany

Pitigliano, Sorano and Sovana

After a short drive, you'll spend a relaxing morning on the shores of Lake Bolsena, with a delicious picnic lunch on the shore. From here you'll get back in the 4x4 to drive to three hill top towns in Tuscany. These towns are among the most picturesque in all of Italy and all three have been continuously inhabited since Etruscan times, 3000 years ago. The view of the town from the abandoned Jewish cemetery is very moving. You'll also have the chance to capture some of the Italian life you see here.

Day Five: Mysterious Tuscia

An early start again today as you drive to the Mysterious Etruria. The Etruscan civilization was here while Rome was still a swampy village. The Etruscans have left their mark cut deep into the volcanic rock; the tufa. This is ideal terrain for photo-stitching, a technique used to make a panoramic view in a confined space. The Etruscans loved water and you will spend the rest of the day photographing the waterfalls and streams that are to be found all over this area. The evening is free.

Day Six: Classic Tuscan Landscape

After a short drive, you'll shoot vine covered hills, hot springs, lonely umbrella pines, sentinel cypress and characteristic farms and villas. This is all part of the classic Tuscan landscape south of Siena called the Val d'Orcia. Dinner tonight will be taken with the group in Tuscany.

Day Seven: Orvieto and Bagnoregio

Today is the last day of your photography course and you'll check-out of your accommodation after an early breakfast.

Leaving your accommodation early, you'll photograph Orvieto from the hill opposite. As the sun comes up the mist often comes up from the Tiber valley. Then it's back in the 4x4 to drive to nearby Bagnoregio which is a loney town, reminiscent of a mediaeval ghost town. After lunch, your photography holiday finishes and you'll be safe in the knowledge that you will be taking home new found photography skills and pictures to be proud of.

Components of the courses

- You will get to know the basics such as composition, depth of field, lens choice and exposure tips.
- You will learn to work in manual and Raw as well as how to use flash and reflectors.
- You will have tuition in downloading and editing your images using Adobe Photoshop CS3 and Lightroom.
- You will learn panoramic photography and photo stitching using Photoshop 'merge' and become familiar with High Definition photography (variable exposure).
- Finally you will gain an overview of a technique of Fine-Art printing known as Giclée.

Details

Getting there

Flying to Italy...Rome has two airports: the busy Leonardo Da Vinci-Fiumicino (FCO) and the smaller Ciampino Airport (CIA). Easyjet and British Airways fly to Fiumicino from London Gatwick. Ryanair flies to Ciampino from London Gatwick and Stansted. If you are coming from the airports you need to travel to Rome Termini central train station and from there on to Orvieto. Orvieto is 55 minutes north of Rome, and there are trains running there every hour from the capital. Once at Orvieto you will be picked up at the station.

Price includes

Accommodation, breakfast, simple lunch (with wine), daily excursions by Land Rover, tuition, use of computer (although it is recommended you bring a laptop if you have one), printer, two night's dinner (one evening meal only for the short photography course). Any other meals and food are not included.

When is best

Workshops start on a Friday all year round. Impromptu workshops can also be organised. If you are already in Italy you can do a one or two day excursion which are arranged on an ad hoc basis.

May to October are the best months to come, when the weather is warm and sunny. However if you wish to come at another point in the year that is not a problem, and your photography tutor will alter the itinerary if the weather doesn't offer the best conditions for photographing the area.

On 14th May there is the colourful Festival of Barabbata which celebrates the traditional way of life in the region. If you are interested in coming around this time a special workshop in connection with the festival is run from 13th May.

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

A reasonable interest is all that is needed

Travellers should bring

While you are encouraged to bring a camera and a tripod with you, neither of these are compulsory (digital SLR cameras and tripods are available for you to borrow on the course).

A well-kitted out photographer should bring: a backpack with loads of pouches; a photographer's sleeveless jacket with plenty of pockets; a lightweight but sturdy tripod (although tripods are available if you do not have one); spare rechargeable batteries and a charger; an adapter for continental plugs; a hat; good walking shoes/desert boots; a waterproof cape; a mini white umbrella; two (at least) 4Gb flash cards and a portable external hard drive (at least 200Gb).

Other items you might like to bring but which are not so essential include; a point and shoot camera; a small flash; a gradual filter; a laptop; a camera manual - very important if you're not 100% familiar with the camera and a spirit level to fit hot shoe (for panoramic shots).

Very important - don't forget your swimming costume!

Reviews (2)

Reviews of this experience

“ Fantastic trip. Top marks on all counts. ”

ClaraFay reviewing Photography Courses in Italy

“ This course has been a fabulous experience! We arrived a couple of days before and stayed just outside Orvieto in a fantastic hotel called InnCasa (<http://www.inncasa.eu>) so we were refreshed and relaxed before the photography began.

Patrick Nicholas picked us up in his beat up Land Rover as promised right on time at the top of the Orvieto Funicular and our course began straight away with wine and pizza then a gear review.

The accommodation Patrick supplies is charming and comfortable but we were seduced so much by InnCasa we decided to go back there and use the hotel as the base for our course.

Orvieto is a beautiful town and Patrick knows the place and it's people like the back of his hand. A 'frightfully English' chap, Patrick has spent half of his adult life in Italy and speaks Italian like the true local man he is. You could not wish for a better guide for the area and his photography skills are second to none.

Not only did we see all the best spots in the area through the 3 day course we learnt an amazing amount from him about photography and the history of the local area.

From ancient Italian towns and architecture through to the beautiful rolling Tuscan landscape we photographed it all! Going off road in the Landrover and picnicing in 2500 year old tombs were some amazing moments. Patrick's course encourages you to discover the culture as well as the correct aperture and shutter speeds!

We were fortunate in that it was just two of us on the course, but we are considering going back again next year!

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funkbunk reviewing Photography Courses in Italy

