

## Villages of Italy – short small group tours

### 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.

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#### **The Popes: A History**

by John Julius Norwich

John Julius Norwich examines the oldest continuing institution in the world, tracing the papal line down the centuries from St Peter (traditionally - but by no means historically - the first Pope) to the present. Of the 280-odd holders of the supreme office, some have unquestionably been saints; others have wallowed in unspeakable iniquity.

One was said to have been a woman, her sex being revealed only when she improvidently gave birth to a baby during a papal procession. Almost as shocking was Formosus whose murdered corpse was exhumed, clothed in pontifical vestments, propped up on a throne and subjected to trial.

From the glories of Byzantium to the decay of Rome, from the Albigensian Heresy to controversy within the Church today, The Popes is superbly written, witty and revealing.

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#### **Veni, Vidi, Vici: Everything you ever wanted to know about the Romans but were afraid to ask**

by Peter Jones

The Romans left a long-lasting legacy and their influence can still be seen all around us - from our calendar and coins, to our language and laws - but how much do we really know about them? Help is

at hand in the form of *Veni, Vidi, Vici*, which tells the remarkable, and often surprising, story of the Romans and the most enduring empire in history.

Fusing a lively and entertaining narrative with rigorous research, *Veni, Vidi, Vici* breaks down each major period into a series of concise nuggets that provide a fascinating commentary on every aspect of the Roman world - from plebs to personalities, saucers to sexuality, games to gladiators, poets to punishments, mosaics to medicine and Catullus to Christianity.

Through the twists and turns of his 1250-year itinerary, Peter Jones is a friendly and clear-thinking guide. In this book he has produced a beguiling and entertaining introduction to the Romans, one that vividly brings to life the people who helped create the world we live in today.

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### **Invisible Romans: Prostitutes, outlaws, slaves, gladiators, ordinary men and women ... the Romans that history forgot**

by Robert C. Knapp

Robert Knapp seeks out the ordinary people who formed the fabric of everyday life in ancient Rome and the outlaws and pirates who lay beyond it. They are the housewives, prostitutes, freedmen, slaves, soldiers, and gladiators who lived commonplace lives and left almost no trace in history - until now. But their words are preserved in literature, letters, inscriptions and graffiti and their traces can be found in the histories, treatises, plays and poetry created by the elite. A world lost from view for two millennia is recreated through these, and other, tell-tale bits of evidence cast off by the visible mass of Roman history and culture.

*Invisible Romans* reveals how everyday Romans sought to survive and thrive under the afflictions of disease, war, and violence, and to control their fates under powers that both oppressed and ignored them. Their lives - both familiar and foreign to ours today - are shown against the tumult of a great empire that shaped their worlds as it forged the wider world around them.

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### **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.

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### **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.

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