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Italy

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Abstract

Suggested Resources for the Penn Alumni Travel excursion in Italy. See the Library Guide for this bibliography [here](#).

Keywords

Italy, bibliography, penn, alumni, travel, readings, guidebooks

Comments

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Alumni Travel Reading List

Italy

April 29th – May 15th, 2014

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“Starting in Italy's Campania region, we'll stay in the stunning seaside resort of Amalfi and visit Pompeii and Sorrento. Our next stop is Montecassino, whose Abbey is a center for medieval art. During three days in Rome, we'll see the city's most famous sights and enjoy ample free time. Then, it's on to Umbria and Tuscany with their traditional villages and medieval hill towns— Orvieto, Assisi, Siena, San Gimignano. In Florence, we'll immerse ourselves in Renaissance art and in Chianti we'll enjoy a wine tasting at a local winery. Our journey concludes in magical Venice, with tours of St. Mark's Square and time on our own to explore the city.” (From the Penn Alumni Travel website)

Suggested Resources

History & Culture

Barzini, Luigi. *The Italians*. Atheneum, 1964.

“Searching into every corner of Italian life and scrutinizing every cliché concerning it, from the charm of the people (an illusion, he maintains) to the consolations of la dolce vita (another one), Mr. Barzini has written an invaluable and astringent guidebook to his country.”—New Yorker. Although nearly fifty years old, this book is still the best introduction to the people of Italy.

McCarthy, Mary. *Venice Observed*. Reynal, 1956.

A penetrating work of reportage on Venice. “Searching observations and astonishing comprehension of the Venetian taste and character” (New York Herald Tribune).

McCarthy, Mary. *The Stones of Florence*. Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963.

Renowned for her sharp literary style, essayist and fiction writer Mary McCarthy offers a unique history of Florence, from its inception to the dominant role it came to play in the world of art, architecture, and Italian culture, that captures the brilliant Florentine spirit and revisits the legendary figures—Dante, Michelangelo, Machiavelli, and others—who exemplify it so iconically. Her most cherished sights and experiences color this timeless, graceful portrait of a city that's as famous as it is alluring. (From the Publisher).

Art & Architecture

Murray, Peter. *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance*. Batsford, 1963.

A classic guide to a pivotal period in the history of architecture.

Hartt, Frederick and David G. Wilkins. *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. Abrams, 2003.

An unrivaled classic, now in its 7th edition.

Classic Italian Literature

Dante. *Inferno*. Transl. Robert & Jean Hollander. Doubleday, 2000.

In his monumental Divine Comedy, Dante defined Italian literature, and seven centuries later, it remains intriguing on multiple levels—as poetry, as theology, as a spell-binding story. There are many excellent translations. This recent, highly regarded translation is readily available in print and for the Kindle.

Dante. *Purgatorio*. Transl. Robert & Jean Hollander. Doubleday, 2003.

Dante. *Paradiso*. Transl. Robert & Jean Hollander. Doubleday, 2007.

Boccaccio, Giovanni. *The Decameron*. Transl. G.H. McWilliam. Penguin, 1995.

Another classic from a fourteenth-century author, but more easily accessible and engaging than Dante. The book consists of one hundred tales told by ten young men and women over one hundred nights during the plague in Italy. Occasionally bawdy, and always entertaining. Again, there are many translations. This fine Penguin edition is easily obtainable and frequently the translation of choice for Italian literature classes at Penn.

Italy in Modern Fiction

Forster, E. M. *A Room With a View*. Arnold, 1962.

A romance—and critique of English society—set in England and Florence. Made into a film by Merchant-Ivory in 1985.

Dunant, Sarah. *The Birth of Venus*. Little, Brown, 2003.

A thriller set in Renaissance Florence.

Italian Music

L'Incoronazione di Poppea / Claudio Monteverdi

Italy was the birthplace of opera, and Monteverdi was its first great composer. *The Coronation of Poppea* (1643) was Monteverdi's crowning achievement.

Lo spozalizio: The Wedding of Venice to the Sea – King's Consort

Venice was a major center for music-making in the early 17th century, and this fine recording by the King's Consort captures the spirit of the period.

La traviata / Giuseppe Verdi

Verdi towered over all other Italian opera composers of the nineteenth century, and *La traviata* has long been a favorite among his thirty operas.

Film

Open City. Dir. Roberto Rossellini. Image Entertainment, 1997.

Set in a poor section of occupied Rome during World War II, the film tells the story of a partisan priest and a Communist who aid the resistance. It greatly influenced the film noir movement in American cinema in the late 1940s.

Roman Holiday. Dir. William Wyler. Paramount, 1953.

Hepburn won the Academy Award for best actress in this classic film, which was selected in 1999 for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant”.

La Dolce Vita. Dir. Federico Fellini. Koch Lorber Films, 1961.

A film that defined an era. The story of a journalist's week in Rome and his search for love and happiness. Winner of the 1960 *Palme d'or* at the Cannes Film Festival.