



DRIVE TO DISCOVER

ITALY

THE ULTIMATE
ITALIAN ROAD TRIP
ESCAPE



Monterosso al Mare 4



Camogli 3



Monteriggioni 2



Rome 1



Civitella del Tronto 5



Vieste 6



Ostuni 7





What would you do and what would you see if you won a free road trip in Italy?! Well in this post you'll find out where our guest blog contributor and avid traveler Diana Russler & her husband Bill visited when she won our [7 Night Italian Road Trip Escape sweepstakes](#) last year.

Road Trip Drive	Distance	Driving Time
Rome to Monteriggioni	155 miles	2 hours 45 minutes
Monteriggioni to Camogli	165 miles	2 hours 50 minutes
Camogli to Monterosso al Mare	46 miles	1 hour 12 minutes
Monterosso al Mare to Civitella del Tronto	356 miles	5 hours 51 minutes
Civitella del Tronto to Vieste	186 miles	3 hours 41 minutes
Vieste to Ostuni	169 miles	3 hours 21 minutes
Ostuni to Rome	317 miles	5 hours 22 minutes
Total Distance Covered:	1,396 miles	

There's nothing quite like the freedom of a road trip, trundling along wherever serendipity takes you. Driving across Italy lends itself well to this type of exploring. The ever-changing succession of remote hill towns, winding mountain roads, coastlines, and castles ensures that there is always something new to see.

As winners of a seven-day Italian road trip sweepstakes (which is part of this itinerary), there were three specific locations we were scheduled to visit - Rome, Camogli and Puglia. For the rest of our time, we wandered freely, visiting iconic landmarks and unknown corners, sampling the various regional cuisines and enjoying life on the road for a whole month.

TO/FROM: Rome Fiumicino Airport

In this road trip guide, you'll begin and end your journey at Rome Fiumicino airport.

1. Rome

The adventure starts in Rome on a beautiful sunny autumn day. No matter how many times we visit the city, there is always something new to discover or revisit. This time, recent renovations to the Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, Circus Maximus and other iconic treasures make Rome shine.

A food walking tour of Trastevere (part of the prize) takes us through cobblestone streets with ivy-covered buildings to the neighborhood where the traditions of Roman cuisine are still preserved. Along the way, we stop at a restaurant/wine bar with a cellar that is 150 years older than the Colosseum, a trattoria with an eclectic menu and mismatched chairs, a shop specializing in pork sausages and a hole-in-the-wall selling Roman street food; fried rice balls and pizza!

2. Montegrignoni

Driving out of Rome is an adventure all on its own; however, we eventually find ourselves heading north to Monteriggioni. This spectacular Tuscan hill town near Siena is entirely surrounded by a wall, protected with 14 watchtowers. We make this our base for a week exploring the iconic areas of the Crete Senesi and Val d'Orcia, the wine country around Montepulciano and the Strada Chiantigiana between Siena and Florence, including a stop at the Castello di Verrazzano (home of the famous explorer) near Greve.

3. Camogli

South of the city of Genoa, the Riviera di Levante (Sunrise Coast) with its cliffs and bays is home to picturesque towns and villages. A hair-raising drive down the cliff road leads to the charming Cenobio Dei Dogi Hotel in Camogli. Steps lead down to the beach and it's only a short walk to the colorful seafront promenade that takes us to the harbor where ferries leave for Portofino, the quintessential, most luxurious, coastal village favored by the rich and famous, whose super yachts dot the harbor.

4. Monterosso al Mare

Just south of Camogli are the legendary Cinque Terre - five dramatic medieval cliff-top villages accessible only by train, ferry or on foot. Basing ourselves in Monterosso al Mare, we hike to the village of Vernazza and take the train to Manarola, Riomaggiore and Corniglia. Each has its special charms, and it is difficult to tear oneself away from the magnificent vistas.

5. Civitella del Tronto

In the mountaintop village of Civitella del Tronto, we are the only guests at the Hotel Zunica, housed in a 17th-century building under the brooding walls of the Fortezza, the largest medieval fortified castle in Europe. The views from our room extend from the Grand Sasso Mountain to the blue Adriatic coastline, shimmering in the morning sunlight.

6. Vieste

Our first stop in the Puglia region is Vieste on the Gargano Peninsula, the spur on Italy's boot. Built on top of the steep Pizzomunno cliffs, Vieste perches on a promontory jutting into the azure Adriatic. Basing ourselves here, we explore the area with a number of day trips, including to the magnificent Castel del Monte, a 13th century citadel and castle built by Emperor Frederick II.

7. Ostuni

Our last stop in Puglia is the fantastic Masseria Il Frantoio near the so-called "White City" of Ostuni (in the Salento region). The region is filled with fantastical, conical, stone Trulli structures, medieval castles, and beautiful white sand beaches. Olive trees, some over a thousand years old, stretch to the horizon between ancient stone walls.

New York-based adventurers, writers and photographers Diana Russler and Bill Gent, delight in sharing their discoveries, especially from lesser-known parts of the world. You can follow their adventures on their blog [The Winged Sandles](#) and on their photography website [Allegrria Photos](#).