

THE GIRL IN THE YELLOW DRESS



Hello! My name is Lauren Thibault, and I studied abroad in Rome, Italy from August 2021 to December 2021. Throughout this experience, I have gotten to travel to amazing places throughout Italy and Europe as a whole, met amazing people, learned more about the world and myself, and maybe ate a bit too much gelato and pasta (but, I mean, is there such thing as too much pasta and gelato?). In this guide, I go through each of my weekend travels by the different regions of Italy, by country, and the dos and don'ts of all of them (because, trust me, there ARE dos and don'ts). Additionally, I have added a list of apps that made my time in Italy easier to navigate, as well as other countries I traveled to. I am currently writing this during the COVID-19 pandemic, so things are constantly changing and I am only able to speak on what I have gone through during these last couple of months.



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Overall Tips for Traveling in Italy

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial that, if you are vaccinated, you carry your vaccination card with you everywhere. You will not be allowed in restaurants or on various forms of public transportation if you do not have proof of vaccination.
- Learn some Italian, starting with basics. It helps to communicate in the smaller towns where they might not know as much English and in the bigger cities where they might take you a bit more seriously if you know some Italian.
- Always have cash! The bigger cities and some of the touristy towns allow you to use cards, but having cash always helps for purchases and emergency situations.
- Restaurants do not split checks, so if you're traveling with other people, figure out an easy way to transfer money to one another. My friends and I use Venmo and alternate between who pays. Also, always check the check when you get it to make sure they charged you the right amount. Restaurants will charge for bread (sometimes) and water, as well as a service fee for each person at the table (it should be only a couple euros). This is normal!
- Ask about student discounts! There are many places around Italy (mainly museums and exhibits) that have student deals or deals if you're under 25. Always ask if you're planning on going on a tour or visiting somewhere!
- ALWAYS keep an eye on your things, especially in crowded places, such as piazzas or train stations. Crime is low in Europe, but pickpocketing is prevalent, so watch your stuff!
- Don't be surprised if you don't see peanut butter in many places! Nutella is the European equivalent and I suggest eating as much of it as possible, in whatever form it comes in.
- I would use Omio.com (the app listed below) if I wanted to buy train, bus, or plane tickets. It was so easy to pick where I wanted to go and find the cheapest price to do so. We would also use websites like Skyscanner and Kayak to find the cheapest prices among various companies.
- Along with Omio.com for tickets, my friends and I would consult Viator.com, which gives us hundreds of options for tours and experiences anywhere we traveled to.
- Check the weather of wherever you are traveling to! Packing light but weather appropriate is key.

APPS TO USE ON TRIPS



CurrencyConverter: Helps to convert from dollars to any form of currency you need! This helped a lot when my friends and I were splitting the bill in Euros and had to pay each other in dollars over Venmo.



Venmo: A money app that allows you to pay friends and family if you don't carry cash or want to pay exact amounts. This helped my friends and I split costs of Airbnbs, tours, meals, etc.



LearnItalianLanguage: This app helped me learn basic phrases and words in Italian before (and while) I was in Italy. Very helpful if you're looking to learn Italian.



FREE NOW: My friends and I swear by this app during our travels! It is a taxi service if we don't want to take trains or buses at night or in an unfamiliar area. It is like Uber in the United States where you can track where your taxi is at, the license plate/make/model of the car, and the name of the person driving the car.



WhatsApp: This was how my family and I communicated while I was away. If you have access to Wifi, this is a free app where you can text and call people in another country instead of getting a cell phone plan.



MyVodafone: Vodafone is a cell phone company that offers deals on SIM cards for study abroad students. This gives you data and minutes so you can use your phone on and off wifi. This app helps you keep track of everything.



myCicero: I used this app mostly in Italy for bus, train and tram tickets so I wouldn't be stuck getting fined if officers were checking. Many locals will go to tobacco shops (shops with a big blue T outside of them) to get tickets, but they can sell out or the shops could be closed when you need to get tickets. This app was always helpful to get tickets ahead of time.



Moovit: This is an extremely helpful transportation app! My friends and I would use it to see where the tram was at, what bus stops to get off of if we were traveling, etc. Not only did it help us with timing our routes, but it also gave us the confidence to move throughout the city and the country with ease.



Omio: Along with WhatsApp, this was the app I used the most. I used Omio to buy train tickets, plane tickets, and bus tickets for traveling. You can compare prices at different times, buy one-way or roundtrip tickets, and pick what stations or airports you wanted to end up in. It's really easy, and then your tickets can be accessed on the app.



Ryanair: This is one of the cheapest airlines to get tickets from! My friends and I got a lot of plane tickets for under 30 dollars round trip. These are not fancy planes that you might be used to if you've traveled before, but they will get you from point A to point B for a cheap price.



Kiwi.com: Similar to Omio, this will compare plane ticket prices at different departure and arrival times.

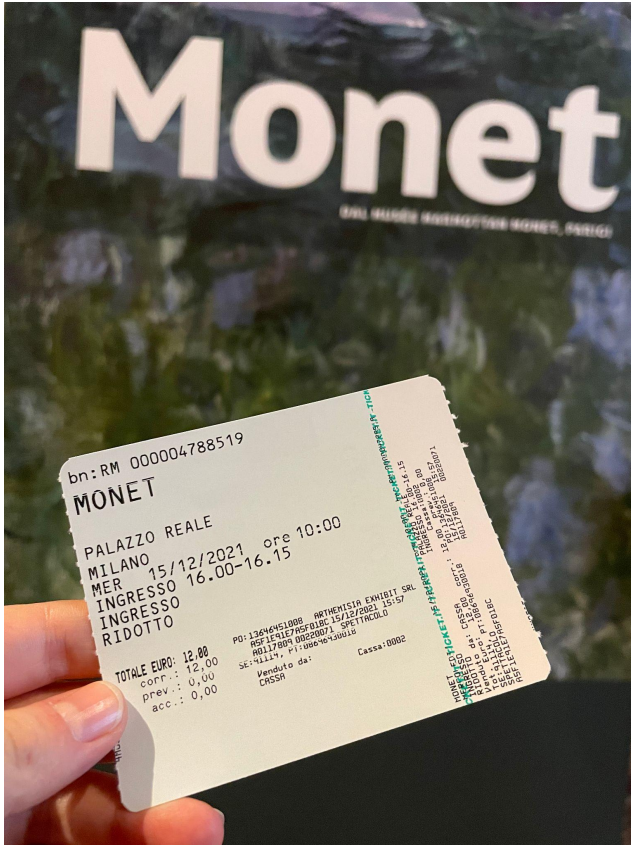
Lombardy Region

Milan



DO

- Go inside the Milan Cathedral AND buy tickets to access the rooftop! This was one of the best parts of my solo traveling. The Cathedral opened in 1965 and was dedicated to the Nativity of St. Mary. You can purchase tickets for different packages near the Cathedral. Mine consisted of access to the Cathedral and its rooftop (by stairs, but there is an option for an elevator), as well as access to the museum. I went through it all and it was a very rewarding experience.



- Check out other museums. During my experience, I saw a Monet exhibit at Palazzo Reale, which is located to the right of the Cathedral, and it was absolutely amazing.
- Walk around the city! Milan is a high-end, touristy city so explore and window shop (or shop shop, if you would like).



- Shop at the Christmas markets if you travel here during the Christmas season! Christmas markets are one of my favorite things in the whole world, and the markets in Milan did not disappoint. I got a handmade bracelet that I wear all the time, and it always makes me think of my time in Milan. Check it out!

DON'T

- Be surprised if stores close earlier than American stores. I went during an offseason for tourists, and stores closed before 9pm. Grabbing a late dinner can combat this!
- Forget to get tickets ahead of time for visits to museums and other sights. I was barely able to get into the exhibits that I wanted to, or I had to use my phone to purchase tickets online anyway. Just to make it easier on yourself, look up exhibits and experiences ahead of time and buy tickets before you travel if you can. It only helps!

Veneto Region

December 11th – 14th

Venice



DO

- Walk around the town! There are many shops and restaurants to explore and experience. It is a more touristy town, but there is still a lot of beauty in the city and near the water.



- A day trip to Murano and Burano, two small towns near Venice that can only be visited by boat. Murano is a town that's well known for its handmade, glass-blown art, while Burano is a colorful town that makes a person like they're in a fairytale.
- Stay in a hostel (for the solo travelers or for those traveling on a budget). I stayed in the [Anda Venice hostel](#), a quick 10-minute train trip away from Venice. It was extremely nice and clean, and I always felt safe there.



- Visit the Basilica of Saint Mark. This important religious building sits in the Piazza del Marco, which is a beautiful square with stores along the edges. While this basilica is one of the darker ones that I have visited (light wise), it is still a place you need to go and marvel at. Don't forget to look down and admire the floors!

DON'T

- Get lost! While it is easy in Venice, and many people get lost in the small alleyways with small shops and restaurants, make sure you have your bearings about where you are. I found that my Google Map helped me a little bit, but it would act up from time to time, so it was not a reliable source to get me back to the train station at the end of the day.
- Forget to check about water taxi strikes! If you are traveling for a short period of time, make sure to ask at the water taxi stand about strikes. The day I wanted to go to Murano

and Burano had blessed me with a taxi strike, so I was forced to buy a tour of both if I wanted to see them. While it did work out for the best (and ended up being the same price as a day pass), those who want more flexibility may not enjoy their one and only option on those days.

- Visit Torcello, at least during the cooler months. When our tour took us to this island, I found there to be not much to experience. There were some cool historical buildings that were left standing, but if you do not have much time travel wise, I would spend more time in Murano and Burano.

Liguria Region

October 23rd

Cinque Terre



DO

- Spend time in all of the towns! Cinque Terre means Five Towns in Italian, and each town has its own charm. Cinque Terre consists of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, and Riomaggiore and has an overall population of 5,000 people. We started our tour in Manarola, the second town, but there is no specified order in which to explore. These colorful towns have been protected as a national park since 1999. Trains connect the towns for easy transportation.



- Check out the [hikes](#) if interested. If visitors are looking for a bit of hiking fun, there is the option to hike between the towns. My family and I hiked between Corniglia and Vernazza, which is a two-mile route in a bell curve shape. Stop at the top where a small bar by the name of Bar Gabbiano offers the most amazing refreshments of frozen orange juice and frozen lemonade. It was the best orange juice I ever had in my life!



- Try monterossina, a cake pastry that the town of Monterosso specializes in! This dessert consists of cake, cream, chocolate, and jam. Worth a try if you have as big of a sweet tooth as I do! Panfritto, a fried dough, is also popular in this town.
- Taste all five white wines of Cinque Terre. In Monterosso, there is a restaurant called Enoteca Internazionale that offers wine tastings of each town's own white wine. While Tuscany is known for their wines (mostly reds), white wine lovers will find their heaven in Cinque Terre.

DON'T



- Come too late in the fall. While Italy stays warm longer than the Midwest (where I am from), it does get to be chilly as it gets later in the fall and winter. Cinque Terre is a coastal destination, and I recommend visiting when the weather is warm in order to best enjoy the beaches as well as the towns.
- Expect these towns to have as many attractions as bigger cities. Cities such as Rome and Milan have many buildings and museums to explore, while smaller towns like Cinque Terre have a calmer air about them. I recommend going to Cinque Terre for a break and a chance to relax.



- Forget to take pictures. Cinque Terre is an Italian National Park with so much beauty from the colorful buildings to the clear to the vibrant water that surrounds it. This was truly one of my favorite places in Italy!

Tuscany Region

October 1st

Siena



DO

- [Take a tour of the town](#) and learn about the history and what makes this place so unique. Siena is organized into districts, each labeled by animals or objects (ex. Seashell

district, She-Wolf district). When you walk around this charming area, look on the walls of buildings and try to find the symbols of each district!

- Explore the beauty of the duomo in the town!



- Take a guided tour of Santa Maria della Scala, a historical hospital near the duomo. Built in the 12th century, this impressive structure holds many stories, old paintings, and artifacts from the many years it was used.



- Notice all the horse-related art in stores. There is a horse race called the Palio di Siena that happens twice a year during the summertime where horses representing ten of the fourteen districts run around the perimeter of the square, Piazza Del Campo (in the picture above). The race is only a minute long, yet thousands of people (pre-pandemic) would gather to watch this historical event.

DON'T

-Mix up your bus ticket times. Now, there is a story behind this. There is a bus to Siena that is three hours from Rome, but you need to be ON TIME or they will leave without you. This is what happened to most of us, which led to us panic-buying tickets because one of our friends had gotten on the bus and was by herself. However, half of our group bought tickets for the wrong day and the bus drivers would not let them on. And, as I was getting on the bus back to Rome, I realized I had the RETURN ticket for the wrong day. Thankfully, the bus driver let me go back. SO, long story short, make sure you are on time for your bus and your ticket is the right day and time.

October 22nd

Florence



DO



- Taste a Florentine steak (if you eat meat). This is a meal that is a bit of the pricey side, but delicious and worth it! If you enjoy a drink with dinner, red wine in the Tuscany area is one of my personal favorites.
- Look at all the leather goods. Florence has more touristy areas, but they still have plenty of shops with Italian made products.
- Take pictures along the water near the bridges as the sun goes down. These are beautiful shots and it's also a stunning view to walk along the Arno River.



- Go inside the duomo (aka Santa Maria del Fiore Cathedral). This stunning building is magnificent and inspiring in so many ways. While it was built at the end of the 13th century with Gothic architecture in mind, this structure holds many colors and details that make it more inviting than intimidating. Check out every part of this cathedral, including the Bell Tower with a view of the city.

DON'T



- Have huge expectations for Accademia di Belle Arti di Firenze where Michelangelo's David is located. While David is truly striking and deserves to be seen, the rest of the museum is not as big as expected. I personally enjoyed the paintings throughout the exhibit, but my fellow travelers found everything that was not the David to be anticlimactic.

October 23nd, 2021

Pisa, San Gimignano



DO



- Spend at least a day in each area. Pisa and San Gimignano are two separate towns, but both deserve attention during your trip. Both are relaxing day trips that certainly render appreciation. I did a tour where I went to Siena, Pisa, and San Gimignano all in one day and I wish I had more time in each place.



- Take the cheesy holding-up-the-tower picture at the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Yes, you will see everyone else trying to find a good spot in front of the tower, so you might as well join! I found that, while many try to find a spot in front of the tower, there is equal opportunity to get the same picture beyond the tower as well. There are fewer people to deal with, and you still can get a nice picture!



- Pick any flavor from a Gelato World Champion gelateria, Gelateria Dondoli, and you will be impressed. While any gelato you find in Italy will certainly take your breath away, Gelateria Dondoli is sure to blow your mind.

DON'T

- Try to get to San Gimignano by train. This town is only accessible by bus or car, so I recommend either renting a car to drive through the Tuscany area and stopping there or [taking a tour](#) of multiple areas where they transport you there by bus. It makes the experience easier, and you get a tour guide to explain some history in the process.

Umbria Region

October 9th

Orvieto



DO

- Explore the markets in Piazza del Popolo. When my roommate and I arrived on a Saturday in early October (just to give you context of time to show how seasonal the markets are), we discovered vendors under white tents selling different things from clothes to produce to dried fruits and candy. Cash is important to have on hand for the markets in smaller towns.



- Go inside Saint Patrick's well. It is an interesting part of town and gives you a cool perspective from way underground.



- Explore the duomo in Orvieto as well. Each duomo you explore has its own characteristics that make it special.
- [Buy tickets to explore the caves](#). You don't have to do this ahead of time, but make sure to check the times that they are giving tours. This was something that I was unable to see when I went, but was recommended to do.



- Go up the Del Moro Tower, a clock tower with a 360 view of the city around you, as well as the mountains and valleys that hug the town.

DON'T

- Forget to carry cash. To get to Orvieto's center, visitors need to purchase tickets for a bus that runs from the train station up the hill. I recommend, whenever possible, to buy two tickets: one to go to your destination and one to return.

October 16th

Assisi



DO



- Buy tickets to see Rocca Maggiore, a castle that offers a beautiful view of the city. It is a bit of a hike to climb up, but there are restaurants along the way, so it is possible to get a bite to eat as you ascend the hill. This is also one of the places where you can use a student ID to get cheaper tickets.



- Check out the shops and smaller restaurants. This smaller town has so many hole-in-the-wall places that offer handmade objects (olive wood is commonly used here) as well as desserts.



- Visit the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. This stunning church is definitely a place to go and admire. The grounds around it are also not to be missed. Saint Francis took walks in the adjacent gardens.

DON'T



- Shortchange yourself regarding time in Assisi. It is a quaint town with plenty of history and should not be rushed. My friends and I were unable to see everything in the town, but you can spend more than a day exploring and enjoying the sights!
- Be late for the bus. Similar to Orvieto, visitors need to get on a bus that brings them to a drop-off point near the busy part of the town.

Lazio Region

September 24th

Tivoli



DO

- Take this day trip when the weather is nice! We went at the end of September, which was the perfect time to go.
- Walk around and admire the town. It is a smaller place, a tiny escape away from the chaos of the cities.



- Check out the Ristorante Sibilla! We had the best lunch here. It is a more expensive place, but it has a beautiful outside patio with a tree branch canopy woven together with romantic lights hanging. We recommend any of the pastas and their tiramisu!



- Go to [Villa D'Este](#)! This was the highlight of the day, especially for my friends who had missed the grass and trees that might be a bit absent in the cities. Villa D'Este holds magnificent art pieces inside and glamorous gardens outside. You can buy tickets easily at the front that allows you to make your way around the grounds. Admire the fountains, ponds, statues and the artfully cut landscapes.

**DON'T**

- Expect to spend more than a day there and expect to have full days. It is a nice town for a day trip, but there is not much more to do in this area than explore it for a day.

Campania Region

September 10-12

Amalfi Coast



DO



- Get to Amalfi by train and ferry. From Rome, it is a quick train ride to Salerno, where you can walk right through the square (about a 4-minute walk) to the harbor. Take a ferry from Salerno to Amalfi. Make sure to sit on the top of the ferry on the right side for the best views of the coastline.



- Take a lemon tour. The best time to go is July/August time. Amalfi is known for their lemons. While we were able to see lemons and experience the tour in early September, global warming has pushed the farming of the lemons to be earlier in the year. We went through the [Amalfi Lemon Experience](#) and had an amazing experience. During the tour, we were able to taste a lemon they had grown on the island (sweeter than the American

lemon), learn how to make limoncello (a classic dessert liquor in Italy), as well as get a tour of their family museum. The farm has been passed down through six generations.



- Take a [boat tour](#), or at least see the coastline from the water. It may be expensive, but it is worth it
- Experience walking around the main square at night. A lot of the restaurants are in beautiful locations or are covered in lights
- Go to the paper museum, Museo della Carta. Amalfi was world famous for its particular type of paper, and there is one paper mill still working on the island. It is a very interesting process. If you take a tour through the Amalfi Lemon Experience, a tour through the paper museum is included!

DON'T

- Stay in a place that is far from the town square unless you are comfortable using the bus system and possibly walking in the dark. Amalfi is built up on mountains, so there is a lot of walking uphill if you stay outside of the main center. Taxis are extremely expensive, so

I would not recommend this as a mode of transportation on the island. Bus service is convenient, but limited. I found this to cut into the time I could have been exploring the town.

- Eat fried food before getting on a boat for a boat tour. Now, this comes with a story. My roommate and I traveled to Amalfi together and wanted to grab lunch before we went out on the water. Now, I am not prone to seasickness, and neither was my roommate, but it was a wavy day and we both did not feel well, which impacted our experience. Just food for thought....

November 19th

Pompeii, Naples





DO

- SEE POMPEII! I took a day trip with [City Wonders](#), a tour group that took us to both Pompeii and Naples. This might be a biased opinion, but I loved Pompeii more than I anticipated. I always enjoy museums, but after a while it is hard for me to wrap my head around the history of what I am looking at because behind glass with a light on it, it looks fake to me. But Pompeii is different. You are physically walking along the same streets that the people who lived in Pompeii did, walking in their homes, admiring the art that still stands. It takes you back in time to before the volcano erupted when middle class citizens were building their town and living their everyday lives.
- Try Napoli style pizza! Pizza is a popular dish to get in Naples, and similar to Sicily and its cannoli, you have to try the area's dish of choice.

DON'T



- Be surprised when you see tall buildings in Naples! This city surprised me with how much it felt like an American city.

Sicily Region

November 5th-7th

Catania, Sicily



DO



- Check out the large markets on the weekends that wrap around roads in Catania. These markets sell everything from shirts to snails and can be a fun place to see what is native to Sicily! Here is another place I recommend you carry cash.



- HIKE MT. ETNA! I cannot express how much this experience truly shaped my confidence and became the highlight of my trip. Mt. Etna is an active volcano near the city of Catania, and is highly recommended to hike with [a guide](#). It was one of the hardest things I ever put my body through, but the views were spectacular! Having a guide who also explained more about the volcano and the history of it was equally as interesting. Plus, afterwards, you can brag to your friends and family that you hiked a volcano. How cool is that??



- Eat a cannolo (or cannoli if you are ordering multiple, which I believe you should do). Sicily is where cannoli originated, so it's only right to try them! If you don't know what they are, cannolis are delicious desserts with various fillings stuffed into a fried pastry dough shell. The classic filling usually has ricotta cheese in it, but it can also come with chocolate, Nutella, or other flavors!



- Eat Sicilian style pizza. The way pizza is prepared throughout Italy is different. Try every kind of pizza you can!

DON'T

- Be surprised if Sicilians don't understand the basic Italian you've been practicing for your trip. The further north or south you travel in Italy, the greater difference you'll see in Italian dialects. My friends and I had gotten used to the dialect in Rome and found that we had a difficult time even reading menus in Sicily! Don't feel frustrated. Northern Italians and folks from the center of the country also have a difficult time with this dialect.

Poland

October 30st -November 1st

Krakow



DO



- Explore the Wieliczka Salt Mines. These impressive salt mines in existence for hundreds of years still hold strong. Guided tours bring you through only parts of the mines, exploring the history, the legend of how salt was brought to Poland, and how miners survived way underground (and how their horses stayed down in the mines with them). Impressive rooms with handmade carvings in the walls, complete with massive chandeliers (also made from salt), are prevalent. These rooms were used as chapels to pray.



- Eat perogies! These are a classic Polish food, one I was blessed to grow up with, as I come from a very Polish family. They resemble large dumplings, stuffed with either sweet or savory fillings. I recommend trying many different kinds.



- Visit Auschwitz, a large concentration camp left standing from World War II. This was an important part of my trip, and the hardest to visit, physically and emotional. It is an hour outside of the city, and while you can get a cheap taxi there, transportation back is not guaranteed (as my friend and I found out). To get there, make reservations for the camp and the museum [online](#) (do not try and buy them there. Tickets may be sold out on site) and take a bus there. I did not purchase a group tour, although I wanted to. It was one of the saddest places I had ever been in my life, next to the 9/11 museum in New York City. But, it is a large part of history, so I recommend anyone who is staying in Krakow to go and see it.

DON'T

- Leave without trying Polish white wine. Don't tell Italy, but it was one of my favorite wines I had during my study abroad experience.
- Forget to admire the architecture. The large squares in Krakow are easy to marvel at, with its old, Gothic personality and attention to detail.

Germany

November 24th-26th

Berlin



DO

- Sign up for a [free walking tour](#)! Tours around this historic city will give you a better insight to what Berlin is all about. Some of these tours will bring you to where the Berlin Wall used to stand, which is an important part of Berlin's history. The wall went up in a matter of two weeks and separated East and West Berlin for 28 years until it was destroyed in 1989. The tour will also show you around the major squares and be able to give suggestions for restaurants and how to get around after the tour.



- Visit the Christmas markets during the Christmas season! All of the stands carry homemade goods, from gloves to soft pretzels. Explore and revel in the holiday spirit while walking around, ice skating on the popup ice rink, or view it from above on the Ferris wheel.



- Indulge in a soft pretzel and beer, a classic snack in Germany.

DON'T

- Forget your coat if you visit Germany in November and December. In Italy, you might be able to get away with wearing a light jacket, but Germany gets colder during the fall than Italy does.



- Miss out on the East Side Gallery! This is a long stretch of murals near the city created by artists around the world. Make sure to take a picture near the painting of the iconic kiss between Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, and Erich Honecker, the General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party. The kiss was a socialist greeting between the two leaders on the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the German Democratic Republic in 1979.

France

September 17th-19th

Paris

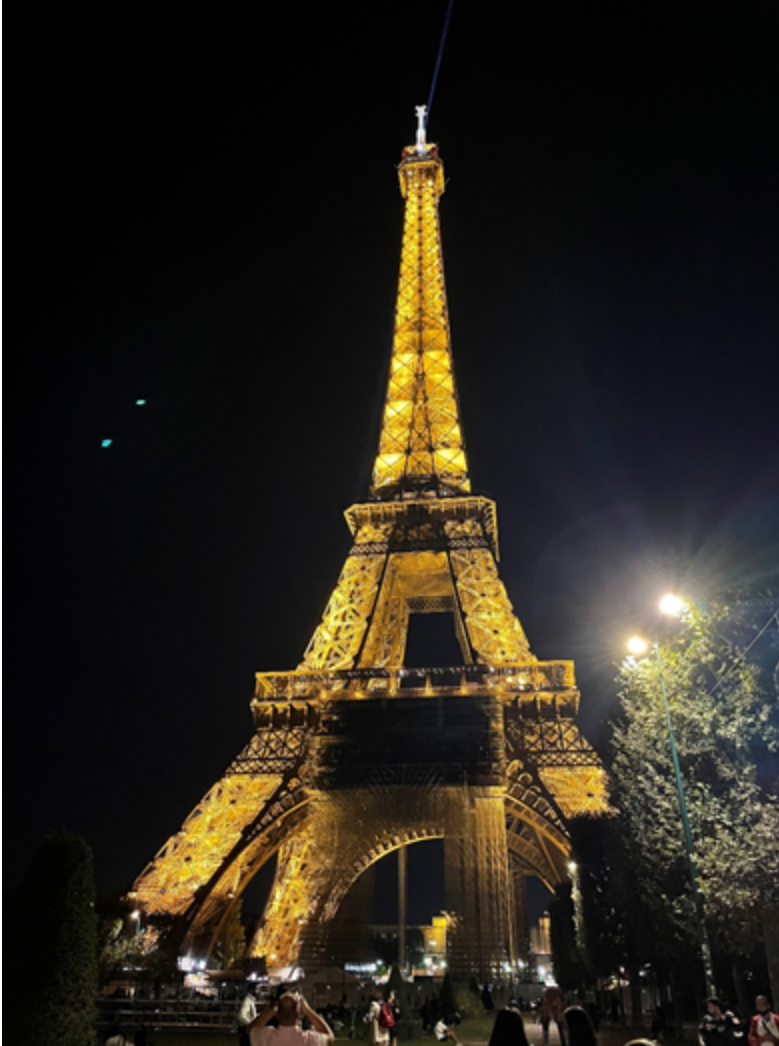


DO

- Go see the Louvre. This museum houses some of the most famous paintings and sculptures, including the famous *Mona Lisa*. Even if you don't have any interest in art history, you cannot deny how impressive some of the pieces are in not only technique but size as well. *The Raft of the Medusa* is 13.75ft x 23.5ft! Depending on how much you want to admire the art, it is easy to spend 3 to 4 hours walking around.



- Try a crêpe (or ten). There are many places throughout Paris where you can find crêpes, whether it be little carts or more permanent stands. You can take your pick of sweet or savory. My pick was usually a Nutella crêpe because of my massive sweet tooth. My friends and I were able to get banana and Nutella crêpes at a stand right behind the Eiffel tower and eat them while relaxing on the lawn. Which brings me to my next tip...



- GO TO THE EIFFEL TOWER AT NIGHT! This was one of my favorite parts of the trip. While we didn't get the opportunity to go up in the tower (which is still possible during COVID), seeing it lit up at night was jaw-dropping. Every hour on the hour after sunset, the whole tower would sparkle. Head to the Champ de Mars, the lawn right by the Eiffel tower, with a warm crêpe and just enjoy the show. Truly magical.



- Try escargot (aka snails). My friends and I went to Au Clairon Des Chasseurs, a restaurant right around the corner from the Sacré-Cœur Basilica. Dare to be adventurous!

DON'T

- Be afraid of the Métro (subway). This is an easy way to get around the city other than walking. Using the settings on Google Maps to look up your location helps navigate which stops to use. Just make sure you're on the right side of the tracks or else you might go the opposite direction.
- Forget your walking shoes. This is just a rule of thumb for anything in Europe, but especially in Paris. There is so much to see, and walking allows you to really appreciate the city.

Spain

November 12th-14th

Barcelona



DO



- Visit the Sagrada Família, a stunning basilica created by Antoni Gaudí (whose work you will see everywhere in Barcelona). This extremely intricate structure has been under construction for over one hundred years and continues to be worked on to this day. Walk around the outer perimeter and admire every side of it, take pictures in front of it, and look at the differences in the building as it's been worked on over time. The inside is equally as stunning, with high ceilings and stained-glass windows covering almost every wall. If you're lucky enough to visit it on a sunny day, the rays of light will create a beautiful rainbow of color on the floor and all around you. [Tickets](#) are purchased online with the option of a guided tour or a guide through the Sagrada Família app!



- Visit Park Güell, another beautiful park designed by Gaudi. It opened in 1926 and became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984, which means it is under the protection of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Tourists can buy tickets at the front with cash or card, then walk through Dr. Seuss looking structures and sit in twisty mosaic seats that overlook the city. I recommend starting your trip here an hour or so before sunset so you can work your way through, then end while watching the sunset over the city.



- Take a stroll down Las Ramblas, or La Rambla street. This is an amazing walking area that attracts many tourists. There are plenty of hidden gems along this way, and I suggest signing up for a free walking tour that will explain the reasons behind the wavy design in the middle of the road, the special water fountain that guarantees your trip back to Barcelona, where the scores of the soccer games were announced many years ago, and many other parts that truly make Barcelona special. You'll find that this city in particular does and creates things for a reason.



- Spend a lot of time in El Born, a part of the city that I fell in LOVE with! It became a part of Barcelona in the 15th century and is now a mix of old and new. Modern stores and restaurants stand in this historical area, as well as the Picasso Museum, which also requires a visit if you are interested at all in art! The museum is also a place where students and young adults can get discounted tickets.



- Eat tapas and paella. These dishes are popular in Spain, and after one taste you'll see why. Tapas are dishes with smaller portions of food, so they are perfect to taste and share as many as possible! Paella is a rice dish with seafood, but they also have other options if seafood is not your style, such as chicken paella (pronounced pie-ae- a).

DON'T

- Forget your walking shoes! Just like Rome or major Italian cities, walking is common and recommended. While there are buses and metros to take you from place to place, I believe there is too much to see in Barcelona that would be missed if taking public transportation.
- Plan your meals. This might be a controversial point, but besides having paella and tapas (while washing it down with some of the best sangria you'll ever have in your life), I recommend walking around and seeing what looks good. Barcelona is a more modern city with plenty of options for all kinds of eaters. I traveled with a good friend of mine who is gluten free and dairy free, and the first meal we ate in Barcelona catered to those needs. Truly one of the best meals I had!