

Italy Distorted

Italy has a problem: unbalanced tourism. While crowds pack the canals of Venice, clog the streets of Rome, and line up to see the Duomos of Milan or Florence, Italy's lesser known sights go unseen. These ten spots come without tourist flocks, and guarantee a truly unique experience in Italy's most underrated regions.

Skip the tourist traps and discover 10 gems of Italy's lesser-known regions.

Regions of Italy are distorted in size by their number of yearly tourists (2023)

Regions	Tourists
Molise	14,367
Abruzzo	214,064
Basilicata	222,396
Calabria	308,209
Marche	427,872
Valle d'Aosta	525,629
Umbria	690,892
Puglia	1,625,411
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	1,632,682
Sardegna	1,704,738
Piemonte	2,426,185
Liguria	2,540,517
Sicilia	2,608,332
Campania	3,018,083
Emilia-Romagna	3,239,079
Lazio	7,161,039
Trentino-Alto Adige	7,654,157
Toscana	8,130,209
Lombardia	10,045,185
Veneto	13,689,009

Undistorted view of Italy

Instead of Trentino-Alto Adige.....

1). Alagna Valsesia & the Aosta Valley

The Aosta Valley presents a lesser-known style of Northern Italian architecture, with traditional wooden-beam houses lining the streets of towns like Alagna Valsesia. The region is the least tourist-ed in northern Italy, boasting numerous ski resorts away from the large crowds of Trentino-Alto Adige.

Instead of the Colosseum.....

2). Verona Arena

Even though it's older than the Colosseum in Rome, the Verona Arena remains even more intact, giving visitors the rare opportunity to see a Roman amphitheatre as though time had never passed. Concerts and shows are commonly held in the arena, combining ancient history with modern entertainment.

Instead of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.....

3). The Two Towers of Bologna

These historic symbols of Bologna lean at a steeper angle than the tower of Pisa! The Two Towers of Bologna are the only remnants of a medieval city built of hundreds of such towers, a precursor to the skyscraper cities of today. Over the years, they have housed everything from inmates to bread ovens to iron furnaces.

Instead of Assisi.....

4). Rocca Albornoziana & Spoleto

An imposing fortress from the 14th century, Rocca Albornoziana is one of Umbria's hidden gems. It overlooks the town of Spoleto, an artistic hub known for its "Festival of the Two Worlds" held each June, attracting patrons of opera, dance, and visual arts. It is dwarfed in popularity by Assisi, its northern neighbor, yet demands a visit to its winding cliffside streets.

Instead of Lake Como.....

5). Lake Barrea & Abruzzo, Lazio, & Molise National Park

Virtually unheard of to anyone outside the region, Lake Barrea gives Lake Como a run for its money. Historic villages dot its coast with snow capped mountains providing a scenic background. The area is far off the beaten path, but rewards the brave tourist with breathtaking views and a lack of hustle and bustle.

Instead of Santuario di Oropa.....

6). Santuario dell'Addolorata di Castelpetroso

This basilica nestled in the mountains of Molise was built only in 1888, brand new for Italian standards! Believers and non-believers alike find great peace and tranquility in Castelpetroso's surroundings, a far cry from the masses of tourists found at many of northern Italy's mountain basilicas.

Instead of Pompeii.....

7). Paestum

Paestum was established around 600 BC by ancient Greeks, blossoming into an integral ancient Mediterranean city long before the Roman era. Nonetheless, the three main temples (Hera I, Hera II, and Athena) stand tall, considered the best preserved of their kind. Art and architecture displayed at this ancient site show the mixing of Greek and later, Roman culture.

Instead of Rimini & Jesolo Beach.....

8). Le Castella & the Beaches of Crotone

Crotone is situated on the picturesque coast of Calabria with an exciting nightlife scene, yet a fraction of the tourists of Rimini and Jesolo. The historic town center, nearby castella, and sandy beaches make for a unique coastal southern Italian getaway.

Instead of Florence's Duomo.....

9). Metropolitan Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (Palermo Cathedral)

Fans of architecture will not bore easily exploring the Palermo Cathedral, as it has undergone constant renovations for hundreds of years, changing from church to mosque back to church. Norman, Islamic, Gothic, Baroque, and Neoclassical influence are all found in its many arches and towers, creating a blend of style found nowhere else.

Instead of the Amalfi Coast.....

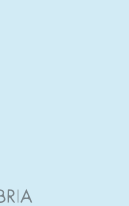
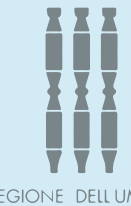
10). Neptune's Grotto & the Regional Natural Park of Porto Conte

Sardegna's Porto Conte boasts a series of natural grottos often accessible only by boat. Visitors can experience blue sea caves and see impressive stalactites and stalagmite formations with none of the chaos of the Amalfi Coast's Blue Grotto.

MINISTERO
DEL TURISMO

REPUBBLICA ITALIANA

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Data: Istituto nazionale di statistica (ISTAT): I flussi turistici 2023, GIS: Geoportale Nazionale, Natural Earth