

Italy on a Shoestring: 9 Days of Adventure

This itinerary focuses on budget-friendly adventures across Italy, incorporating hiking, cycling, and exploring hidden gems.

Day 1: Arrival in Bergamo - The Overlooked Beauty

- * **Fly into Bergamo's Orio al Serio Airport (BGY)** - Often cheaper than flying into Milan.
- * **Take the bus to Bergamo Città Alta (Upper Town)** - A charming medieval walled city.
- * **Explore:** Piazza Vecchia, Palazzo della Ragione, Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore
- * **Hike up to Castello di San Vigilio for panoramic views.**
- * **Budget Dinner:** Enjoy a delicious and cheap slice of pizza at Da Franco.

Day 2: Hiking in the Italian Alps - Breathtaking Trails

- * **Take an early train to Lecco, a picturesque town on Lake Como.**
- * **Embark on a scenic hike in the Grigna Mountains.** (Choose a trail based on your fitness level; plenty of options available).
- * **Pack a picnic lunch to enjoy amidst stunning alpine scenery.**
- * **Return to Lecco for a relaxing evening by the lake.**
- * **Budget Stay:** Look for affordable guesthouses or hostels in Lecco.

Day 3: Cycling Through Tuscany - Picturesque Countryside

- * **Take a train to Florence, then a regional train to Siena (store luggage at the station).**
- * **Rent bikes in Siena and cycle through the rolling hills of Tuscany.**
- * **Stop at a local farm for a budget-friendly and authentic Tuscan lunch.**

- * **Explore the medieval town of San Gimignano with its iconic towers.**
- * **Return to Siena and enjoy a delicious (and cheap!) plate of pasta at Osteria Le Logge.**
- * **Overnight train to Naples (saves on accommodation and travel time).**

Day 4: Naples - City of Chaos and Charm

- * **Arrive in Naples and leave your luggage at your accommodation.**
- * **Explore the vibrant Spaccanapoli street, immersing yourself in the local life.**
- * **Indulge in a classic Neapolitan pizza at L'Antica Pizzeria da Michele (expect a queue, but it's worth it!).**
- * **Visit the Cappella Sansevero, home to the incredibly detailed Veiled Christ sculpture.**
- * **Wander through the Quartieri Spagnoli for a glimpse of authentic Naples (be mindful of your belongings).**
- * **Budget Stay:** Find a centrally located hostel in Naples.

Day 5: Pompeii and Vesuvius - Ancient History and Thrilling Views

- * **Take the Circumvesuviana train to Pompeii.**
- * **Explore the fascinating ruins of Pompeii, frozen in time.**
- * **Hike to the summit of Mount Vesuvius for breathtaking views of the Bay of Naples.**
- * **Return to Naples and enjoy a tasty and inexpensive dinner of pasta and seafood at Trattoria Nennella.**

Day 6: Amalfi Coast on a Budget - Breathtaking Beauty on a Dime

- * **Take the SITA bus from Naples to Sorrento (much cheaper than the train).**
- * **Explore the charming town of Sorrento, known for its limoncello.**

- * **Hike the scenic Path of the Gods trail for breathtaking coastal views (part of the trail is free). **
- * **Enjoy a refreshing gelato while soaking in the beauty of Positano (slightly pricier here, but worth the splurge). **
- * **Take the bus back to Naples. **

****Day 7: Rome on a Budget - Ancient Ruins and Hidden Gems****

- * **Take a high-speed train to Rome (book in advance for cheaper fares). **
- * **Explore the Colosseum and Roman Forum (consider visiting one of these on a free Sunday). **
- * **Throw a coin in the Trevi Fountain and admire the Pantheon's architectural marvel. **
- * **Enjoy a picnic lunch at the beautiful Villa Borghese park. **
- * **Budget Dinner:** Grab a cheap and delicious slice of pizza from a local takeaway joint.
- * **Budget Stay:** Opt for a centrally located hostel in Rome.

****Day 8: Vatican City and Trastevere - Spirituality and Local Charm****

- * **Visit Vatican City early to avoid crowds: St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums. **
- * **Experience the tranquility of the Vatican Gardens (entry fee applies). **
- * **Explore the charming neighborhood of Trastevere with its cobblestone streets and lively atmosphere. **
- * **Enjoy a traditional Roman dinner at a local trattoria in Trastevere. **

****Day 9: Departure - Arrivederci Italia****

- * **Enjoy a final Italian breakfast of cornetto and cappuccino. **
- * **Visit any last-minute sights or do some souvenir shopping. **
- * **Head to the airport for your flight home. **

****Food Recommendations:****

- * **Pizza:** A classic and affordable Italian staple.
- * **Pasta:** Try different regional specialties.
- * **Arancini:** Deep-fried rice balls, perfect for a quick snack.
- * **Gelato:** Cool down with this delicious Italian treat.
- * **Coffee:** Start your day the Italian way with a cappuccino or espresso.

****Budget Tips:****

- * **Travel during the off-season or shoulder season for cheaper flights and accommodation.**
- * **Utilize public transportation whenever possible.**
- * **Stay in hostels or guesthouses for budget-friendly accommodation.**
- * **Pack snacks and have picnics to save on dining costs.**
- * **Take advantage of free activities and attractions like hikes and visiting churches.**

****Remember:**** This is just a suggested itinerary. Feel free to adjust it to your interests and preferences. Be sure to research and book accommodations and transportation in advance, especially during peak season. Most importantly, embrace the adventure and enjoy the beauty of Italy!