

♥ Your heart is set on... That scooter ride

Nothing says sun-kissed Italy quite like the *motorino* (scooter) — just picture Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck zipping around the capital in *Roman Holiday*. Two wheels give you the freedom to whizz across pretty piazzas, park pretty much anywhere and bypass traffic jams, the wind in your hair (the bits not covered by a helmet, of course).

Spectacular places for touring abound, from the country's precipitous coastlines (Amalfi and Liguria) to postcard-perfect panoramas in the cypress-spiked Tuscan hills. Every major Italian town has at least one agency offering scooter rentals (from about £11 an hour or £37 a day). Simply provide your driving licence and a credit card as a deposit. Take your scooter out for a trial run to make sure it's in tip-top shape — just try not to mash it up on the first corner.

Unlike the Brits, Italians generally recognise that scooters have as much right to the road as cars. Regardless, be assertive when driving. Remember to pass on the left. And if in doubt, shadow one of the many *motorini* populating these picturesque streets. You'll soon be revving, beeping and gesturing with the best of them.

For the uninitiated, or the curious, there are also great outfits offering accompanied scooter tours. See hidden Rome from the back seat of a classic Vespa, say, with Scooteroma (00 39 338 822 7671, scooteroma.com; from £110 for a four-hour tour). Then continue your local living with a night at La Piccola Maison (Via dei Cappuccini 30; 00 39 06 42016331, lapiccolamaison.com; doubles from £52, room only), on the second floor of a traditional Italian *palazzo*. *KT*

● You're thinking about... That Venetian Spritz

For a fairy-tale city (Venice's *palazzi* and *piazze* couldn't float in the lagoon this long without a dash of magic) the spritz is the perfect fairy-tale aperitif, contending with the Bellini for the title of the town's trademark tippie. The exuberant start, with the pop of Prosecco; the dash of bitterness from the slosh of Aperol; the twist of fate (OK, orange); and, assuming you don't have too many, the happy ending. Yes, it's easy to feel optimistic with a £3 neon-orange Spritz in your hand, bobbing ice clinking against the glass.

When you've made it off the plane, across the lagoon, over canals and down alleys to your room and back out into the thick of it, a Spritz is the definitive way to seal the deal. Now you're in

Venice. You can order one everywhere, so take your pick. Love lagoon views and don't care about the food? Any of the cafes on Riva degli Schiavoni will do. Feeling swanky? Soak up the sunshine, Grand Canal buzz and buxom Santa Maria dome from the terrace at the Gritti Palace (thegrittipalace.com). Want to rub shoulders with the locals? Dive down the Dorsoduro district's Rio de San Trovaso to perch on a wall opposite a gondola-repair yard with a paper plate of *cicchetti* snacks and a Spritz from Osteria Al Squero (osteriaalsquero.wordpress.com). And if you *really* want to show off your local know-how, instead of Aperol, ask for the more bitter Select, the local *aperitivo*, or Cynar, the artichoke bitters. *Cin cin!*

Handiest airport: Venice. See flights on p80. *LE* >

