

St Paul's (Knightsbridge) Festival Choir Tour to Bologna – Sept. 2012

Outline – submitted by A Grand Tour Ltd.



Bologna & the Emilia-Romagna Region

Bologna lies just at the point where the main routes from the North to Florence, Rome and Naples converge and begin crossing the Apennines – and many people rush past the city in their eagerness to get to olives and palm trees. Yet the area is well worth an entire visit to appreciate its riches! Bologna has retained largely intact a most fascinating, and almost un-Italian, medieval city centre – while also playing its full role as the present-day capital of Emilia-Romagna. This Region, which comprises most of the Southern Po valley, is very wealthy both from agriculture and from its very entrepreneurial medium and small businesses. High-value agricultural products from the Region include Parma ham and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, whereas modern IT companies in Bologna are complemented by the more traditional manufacturing of such stylish and quality symbols as Ferrari, Lamborghini and Maserati motor cars.

What's special about Bologna

The visitor is immediately struck by the miles of covered portico's which line most of the streets in the old town (and



provide welcome shelter both against Summer sun and Winter rain). This, and the fact that most buildings are made of red bricks, gives a great and unusual unity to the cityscape. Two prominent medieval towers dominate the skyline. When walking through the bustle of its lively, pedestrian-friendly centre, you never forget that it has a rich history going back over many centuries, which made a major contribution to Western



culture. Padre Martini, Mozart's teacher, lived and worked in Bologna, while Giuseppe Verdi grew up just outside nearby Parma, and retired there with Peppina Strepponi. The Teatro Comunale of Bologna is one of the premier Opera Houses of Italy, and the Bolognesi take their music very seriously. The large and lively University of Bologna is the world's oldest (dating back to 1088). This, and the splendid food based on local ingredients, have earned it the sobriquet in Italy of "la Dotta [= the learned] e la Grassa [=the fat one]"!

✂ *Please cut along the line below and return slip to St Paul's (Knightsbridge) Festival Choir*

I, Mr./Mrs./Miss intend to come/may come/will not come on the Sept. '12 Choir Tour.

I will/ will not bring a non-singer partner, whose name is *Please circle as appropriate.*

I should like the Tour to take nights (please fill in five or four).

My preferences for excursions and/or place for second concert are ranked as follows:

please assign the numbers 5 down to 1 – in descending order of preference – i.e 5 = most preferred, 1 = least preferred. Each number can only occur once

Destination	Ranking
Ferrara	
Ravenna	
Verdi's birthplace at Roncole + his retirement home at Sant' Agata	
Parma	
Modena & Reggio Emilia	
Other - <i>please specify:</i>	



Food

Bologna is the home of many dishes which we now regard as quintessentially Italian. These include Lasagne, Tortellini, Mortadella – and the meat sauce which goes in Spag. Bol. – but which in its home town (and in a more sophisticated version) is simply called Ragù. All food in Bologna and Emilia-Romagna is excellent – from the smartest restaurant to the simplest trattoria.

Options for excursions outside Bologna

We will be absolutely spoiled for choice for places to visit outside Bologna. Musicians may be tempted to discover the very simple farm house at **Roncole** where Verdi grew up – contrasting it with the seigneurial manor he built nearby as his retirement home. The city of **Ferrara** on the Po river was the fiefdom of the Este family – into which Lucrezia Borgia married. Their imposing castle dominates the town centre. The city and its miles-long medieval walls are so well-preserved that they have been declared a Unesco World Heritage site. **Ravenna** is a jewel in Italy's North, having been both capital of the Western Roman Empire and then undergone the influence of Byzantium – as is visible in its churches and their mosaics. It may be possible to combine Ravenna with a brief visit to Comacchio – a delightful

fishing town, built like a mini-Venice, on a lagoon off the Adriatic. **Parma** is a very elegant and proud small town. It has a long history, which includes being ruled by Marie-Louise – after she divorced Napoleon and let him go off to St. Helena. It is also the setting for much of Stendhal's La Chartreuse de Parme. **Modena** and **Reggio-Emilia** are the two cities closest to Bologna – but they have



retained their own character and sense of history. It is in towns such as these, away from the beaten tourist track, that one really gets a sense of the truly Italian way of life.

Costs

Bologna – Hotel Guercino - dep. 5th Sept. '12, return 10th (9th) Sept. '12			
5 nights/6 days	all-in (sharing): £595	single room supplement: £100	no flights - land arrangements only: £457
4 nights/5 days	all-in (sharing): £550	single room supplement: £80	no flights - land arrangements only: £412

For the avoidance of doubt, it should be clear that the length of the Tour will be determined by the preference of the majority of participants (as indicated by the returned slips). We will not offer both a five-night and a four-night option at the same time – only the one chosen scenario.

As in previous years, if Tour participants want to arrive early or stay on, yet make use of the group airline bookings, we will try to accommodate this whenever possible. Details of travelling dates should be given on the full booking form which will be distributed shortly.