



BIO-TRACKS ITALY: ECOLOGY, EARTH & EXPLORATION

An immersive STEM journey through Italy's ecosystems, coastlines, and scientific heritage - designed for curious minds and future changemakers.

8-days / 7-nights total trip; arrive in Florence, depart from Milan

BIO-TRACKS ITALY: ECOLOGY, EARTH & EXPLORATION Florence, Lucca, Pisa, Cinque Terre & Genoa

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
1 Sun	Overnight flight to Florence, Italy		
2 Mon	Arrive Tuscany, Italy; meet guide and transfer to hotel	Florence Guided Tour and the Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze	Transfer to Lucca Hotel; Check-in
3 Tues	Livorno Market Tour with an Italian Biologist for "The Tuscan Fisherman's Morning Route"	Livorno Applied Research Master Class Marine Ecology & Biology	San Rossore Migliarino Natural Park Guided Tour: Local Flora & Fauna / Diverse Ecological Habitats
4 Wed	University of Pisa & the Natural History Museum of Calci with Focus on Biology & Earth Sciences	Leaning Tower of Pisa & Piazza dei Miracoli	Transfer to Liguria (La Spezia area)
5 Thur	Guided Tour of Cinque Terre's (The Five Lands) Main Geological Formations & Habitats with the Medieval Village of Monterosso		Hotel Dinner & Free Time
6 Fri	CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche) Research Center Visit in Bonassola: Analyze Wave Dynamics, Study Sediment Layers, Marine Impacts on Metals and Supralittoral Coastal Monitoring.		Hotel Dinner & Free Time
7 Sat	The Genoa Aquarium & Biology Master Class: The Mediterranean Sea: Biodiversity at Risk	The World of Invertebrates Laboratory Project: Marine Invertebrate Diversity & Ecological Adaptations	Farewell Dinner & Trip Reflection
8 Sun	Genova Guided City Tour	Transfer to Genoa or Milan Malpensa Airport; return flight home	



As with all sample itineraries, please be aware that this is an "example" of a schedule and that the activities and hotels shown may be variable dependent upon dates, weather, special requests and other factors. Itineraries will be confirmed prior to travel.



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Day 1

Dinner in flight

Travel on an overnight flight to Florence, Italy.

Day 2

Breakfast in flight, lunch on own, dinner included

Hello Italy! Meet your local guide, transfer to your hotel, check-in and get settled. Later, we'll have our Welcome, Safety & Orientation Meeting and get some exploring in!

Italy...

Where Science Meets Story: Italy is more than a destination - it's a dynamic ecosystem where biology, geology, and cultural heritage intertwine across coastlines, cities, and centuries. From the Renaissance brilliance of Florence to the rugged biodiversity of Cinque Terre, students will explore living systems in action. Whether analyzing wave dynamics in Bonassola or studying Mediterranean marine life in Genoa, this itinerary transforms Italy into a hands-on classroom where ecology and earth sciences come alive. With every piazza, park, and research lab, students engage with the natural world through a distinctly Italian lens - one that celebrates both scientific inquiry and cultural depth.

A Journey That Inspires Discovery: This program is designed to ignite curiosity and deepen understanding. Students will collaborate with Italian biologists, explore UNESCO-protected habitats, and dive into marine research at national institutes. Alongside these academic experiences, they'll walk the medieval streets of Lucca, marvel at Pisa's architectural wonders, and reflect on sustainability in the shadow of ancient civilizations. Through immersive fieldwork, expert-led tours, and meaningful cultural encounters, students gain more than knowledge - they gain perspective, purpose, and the tools to lead in a world shaped by science and stewardship.



Upon arrival, we'll have our **Welcome, Safety & Orientation Briefing** where our local team will explain details about your travel plans, give advice on how to adapt to the local culture and outline how you will stay safe during your travels. Please note that lunch is not included today to accommodate various arrival times. If you arrive early enough for lunch, we will happily get to the perfect spot to indulge, payable on own. We'll set off to explore Florence and the world-famous Galleria dell 'Accademia di Firenze before heading to Lucca!



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Florence: Where Science Meets the Soul of the Renaissance - Florence is a city that breathes inspiration. As the birthplace of the Renaissance, it offers students a rare opportunity to explore the intersection of art, history, and scientific thought. From the anatomical precision of Michelangelo's David at the Galleria dell'Accademia to the vibrant biodiversity of nearby Tuscan landscapes, Florence sets the stage for inquiry and imagination. Guided tours through its storied streets and museums reveal how observation, experimentation, and creativity have long shaped human understanding. In this living classroom, students don't just witness history - they engage with the roots of scientific discovery in one of Europe's most iconic cultural capitals.



Florence City Tour - Winding through Florence's historic streets is like tracing the footsteps of discovery itself. This guided walking tour immerses students in the architectural and intellectual heart of the Renaissance, where every piazza and palazzo tells a story of inquiry, innovation, and artistic brilliance. From the Duomo's engineering marvels to the scientific legacy of Galileo, explore how observation and experimentation shaped both culture and science. Along the way, encounter hidden gardens, artisan workshops, and centuries-old landmarks that reveal Florence not just as a city of beauty - but as a living archive of human creativity.



Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze - Home to Michelangelo's iconic David, the Galleria dell'Accademia is a gateway into the Renaissance mind where science and creativity coexisted. Encounter anatomical studies, early scientific instruments, and works that reflect a profound curiosity about the human form and natural world. Gain insight into how observation, proportion, and experimentation shaped both art and early biology. This visit invites reflection on the shared roots of scientific and artistic inquiry, making it a powerful starting point for a journey through Italy's living systems.

In the late afternoon, we'll travel to Lucca, check into our hotel and have our Welcome, Safety & Orientation Briefing before our Italian Welcome Dinner!

Lucca: A Walled City of Wonder and Reflection - Nestled within its perfectly preserved Renaissance walls, Lucca offers students a quieter, contemplative lens through which to explore Italy's living systems. This charming Tuscan town invites curiosity with its cobblestone streets, medieval towers, and serene botanical gardens. As students settle in, Lucca becomes a place of grounding—ideal for orientation, reflection, and cultural immersion. Its proximity to coastal ecosystems and scientific institutions makes it a strategic base for exploration, while its timeless beauty fosters a sense of connection between past and present. In Lucca, students don't just observe—they begin to belong, engaging with Italy's rhythms in a way that prepares them for deeper scientific inquiry ahead.



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Day 3

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included

Today's activities will include:



Livorno Market Tour: The Tuscan Fisherman's Morning Route - In the coastal city of Livorno, students rise with the rhythms of the sea for a guided market tour led by a local Italian biologist. As the stalls bustle with the day's catch, they explore the ecological and economic significance of Mediterranean marine life—connecting species diversity, sustainability, and tradition. From fish anatomy to seasonal patterns, this hands-on experience offers a vivid glimpse into the science behind Italy's seafood culture and coastal ecosystems.



Livorno Applied Research Master Class: Marine Ecology & Biology - An immersive experience focused on the ecological and biological dynamics of the Mediterranean Sea. This segment introduces students to research techniques used in the analysis of fishing discards from trawling operations and the assessment of regional fish resources. Through morphometric parameter detection, students will explore the biology of key commercial species, gaining insight into sustainable fisheries management and the broader implications of marine biodiversity conservation. This master class offers a rare opportunity to engage directly with field experts and contribute to real-world ecological research.



San Rossore Migliarino Natural Park Guided Tour - This guided tour through one of Tuscany's most diverse ecological reserves invites students to explore coastal forests, wetlands, and dune systems teeming with life. Led by local experts, the experience highlights native flora and fauna while introducing key concepts in habitat conservation and biodiversity. It's a hands-on encounter with Italy's natural systems—perfect for sparking scientific curiosity in the field.

Day 4

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included

Pisa: A City of Precision and Possibility - Pisa offers students a dynamic blend of scientific heritage and architectural wonder. Beyond its iconic Leaning Tower, the city is home to the University of Pisa and the Natural History Museum of Calci, where students delve into biology, earth sciences, and evolutionary studies. As they walk through the Piazza dei Miracoli and explore centuries-old institutions, students encounter a legacy of inquiry that continues to shape modern research. Pisa invites learners to think critically, observe deeply, and connect the dots between past discoveries and future innovations.



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University of Pisa & the Natural History Museum of Calci – Students will explore the scientific legacy of the University of Pisa and its renowned Natural History Museum in Calci, where centuries of research come to life. From fossil collections and anatomical models to biodiversity exhibits and geological specimens, this experience offers a hands-on look at biology and earth sciences. Guided by local experts, students engage with real-world applications of scientific inquiry in a setting that bridges academic tradition and modern discovery.



Leaning Tower of Pisa & Piazza dei Miracoli - At the heart of Pisa's architectural wonder lies the Piazza dei Miracoli, a UNESCO World Heritage site where science and symmetry meet spectacle. Students will explore the Leaning Tower's famous tilt through the lens of physics and engineering, while the surrounding cathedral, baptistery, and camposanto offer insight into medieval design and cultural expression. This visit invites learners to consider how observation, measurement, and innovation have shaped both the built environment and scientific thought across centuries.

Next, we're off to Liguria.

Liguria: Where Coastlines Spark Curiosity - Stretching along Italy's northwestern shore, Liguria offers students a dynamic blend of marine science, cultural heritage, and environmental stewardship. From the colorful villages of Cinque Terre to the bustling port city of Genoa, this region invites exploration of coastal ecosystems, sustainable fishing practices, and biodiversity conservation. Whether hiking cliffside trails or visiting oceanographic institutes, students engage with Liguria's living systems in ways that connect science to daily life—and inspire a deeper appreciation for the balance between nature and community.



Cinque Terre: Coastal Science and Cultural Color - Cinque Terre's five cliffside villages offer a stunning backdrop for exploring marine ecology, sustainable tourism, and geological formations. Students hike terraced trails overlooking the Ligurian Sea, observe biodiversity in protected coves, and learn how centuries-old farming and fishing practices adapt to modern conservation efforts. It's a vibrant, hands-on experience where science meets scenery and every step tells a story of resilience and harmony with nature.



Day 5

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included

Today's activities will include:



Guided Tour of Cinque Terre's Main Geological Formations & Habitats with the Medieval Village of Monterosso - This guided tour through Cinque Terre's dramatic coastline introduces students to the region's key geological formations and ecological habitats. From stratified cliffs and terraced hillsides to marine coves and forested slopes, learners explore how natural forces have shaped both landscape and livelihood. The experience culminates in Monterosso, the largest and oldest of the five villages, where medieval architecture and coastal culture offer a living contrast to the ancient geology beneath their feet.



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Day 6

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included

Bonassola: A Coastal Haven of Tranquility and Exploration - Nestled between the sea and the hills of Liguria, Bonassola offers a peaceful alternative to its Cinque Terre neighbors while retaining all the charm of Italy's Riviera. Students can stroll through its pastel-hued historic center, explore the crescent-shaped bay with clear waters ideal for swimming and snorkeling, and walk or cycle along scenic coastal trails carved from old railway tunnels. With access to rocky coves, olive groves, and panoramic viewpoints, Bonassola blends natural beauty, local heritage, and outdoor adventure making it a perfect stop for ecological exploration and cultural reflection.



Today's activities will include:



CNR Research Center in Bonassola: Coastal Science in Practice - At the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR) facility in Bonassola, students engage directly with coastal research through hands-on fieldwork and expert-led analysis. From studying wave dynamics and sediment layers to examining marine impacts on metals and monitoring supralittoral zones, this experience offers a rare glimpse into real-time environmental science. It's an opportunity to connect classroom concepts with active research, fostering deeper understanding of coastal ecosystems and the tools used to protect them.

Day 7

Breakfast, lunch and dinner included

Genoa: Port of Innovation and Maritime Legacy - Genoa invites students into a city shaped by centuries of exploration, trade, and scientific advancement. As Italy's largest seaport and the birthplace of Christopher Columbus, Genoa blends maritime history with modern innovation. Students can visit the Galata Museo del Mare, explore interactive exhibits at the Aquarium of Genoa, and learn about oceanography, navigation, and sustainability in a city where the sea is both classroom and catalyst. With its winding alleys, grand palaces, and vibrant waterfront, Genoa offers a rich setting for inquiry into global connections and environmental stewardship.



Today's activities will include:



Genoa Aquarium & Biology Master Class: The Mediterranean Sea, Biodiversity at Risk - At Europe's largest aquarium, students dive into the fragile ecosystems of the Mediterranean through a biology master class led by marine experts. Surrounded by immersive exhibits and living specimens, they examine the threats facing regional biodiversity—from pollution and overfishing to climate change and invasive species. This experience blends scientific inquiry with conservation awareness, empowering students to analyze real-world data, explore protective strategies, and reflect on the delicate balance that sustains life beneath the waves.



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The World of Invertebrates Laboratory Project: Marine Diversity & Ecological Adaptations - In this hands-on lab experience, students investigate the fascinating world of marine invertebrates—from mollusks and crustaceans to echinoderms and cnidarians. Through guided observation and analysis, they explore how these organisms adapt to their environments, examining traits like locomotion, feeding strategies, and defense mechanisms. The project emphasizes biodiversity, ecological roles, and evolutionary design, offering students a deeper understanding of life beneath the surface and the delicate balance that sustains ocean ecosystems.

This evening we'll have our Farewell Dinner and then a time for reflection.

Farewell Reflection - End your adventure on a high note with an unforgettable Farewell Reflection. This isn't just your typical goodbye. It's a chance for students, faculty, and our team to come together and truly process their experiences. Through guided discussions, listening exercises, and thought-provoking questions, we'll unpack the amazing things you've seen, heard, and felt throughout the trip.

Day 8

Breakfast included, lunch on own, dinner in flight

Today it is time to say goodbye to Italy as we pack up and head for home. As our team's mission is to expand minds through transformative travel experiences, we hope that as you settle into your seat for the journey home, that all you have experienced during your trip will leave you with a feeling of increased confidence, knowledge, understanding and yearning for your next adventure!

Depending upon flight times, we'll have breakfast at our hotel and then our onward journey to the airport for our return trip home.

Arrivederci!



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Weather in Italy

☉ Spring (March–May): Fresh, Green, and Ideal for Exploration

- Temperature: 55–70°F (13–21°C)
- Conditions: Mild and increasingly sunny, with occasional rain showers.
- Highlights: Wildflowers bloom along coastal trails, and the sea begins to warm. Ideal for hiking, guided tours, and outdoor labs like the CNR visit.
- Packing Tips: Layers, light waterproof jacket, comfortable walking shoes.

☉ Summer (June–August): Warm, Busy, and Vibrant

- Temperature: 70–85°F (21–29°C), occasionally hotter inland.
- Conditions: Sunny and dry, with peak tourism in July and August.
- Highlights: Perfect for snorkeling in Bonassola, beach time, and marine biology sessions at the Genoa Aquarium. Trails can be crowded but stunning.
- Packing Tips: Sun protection, breathable clothing, refillable water bottles.

🍂 Fall (September–November): Golden Light and Fewer Crowds

- Temperature: 60–75°F (16–24°C) in early fall, cooling later.
- Conditions: Pleasant and crisp, with some rain in late October and November.
- Highlights: Harvest season adds culinary richness. Great for hiking, cultural tours, and quieter lab visits.
- Packing Tips: Layers, light rain gear, closed-toe shoes for trails.

❄ Winter (December–February): Quiet, Cool, and Reflective

- Temperature: 45–60°F (7–16°C)
- Conditions: Cooler with increased rainfall, especially in coastal areas.
- Highlights: Fewer tourists, moody seascapes, and indoor-focused activities like museum visits and lab work.
- Packing Tips: Warm layers, waterproof outerwear, indoor shoes for labs and museums.

Cultural Tips

Language & Courtesy

- Learn a few Italian basics: Buongiorno (Good morning), Per favore (Please), Grazie (Thank you), Arrivederci (Goodbye).
- Use polite tone and formal greetings, especially with elders or professionals.
- Saying goodbye when leaving shops or museums is appreciated.

Pace of Life

- Embrace slower rhythms: meals are savored, conversations linger, and schedules may flex.
- Expect midday closures (1–4 PM) in smaller towns like Bonassola.

Food & Dining

- Try regional specialties: pesto, focaccia, seafood.
- Dining is social - wait to be seated, don't rush, and avoid substitutions unless necessary.

Respect for Nature & Heritage

- Stay on marked trails, greet fellow hikers, and keep noise to a minimum.
- Be mindful in historic areas: no littering, respectful photography, and quiet behavior.

Student Engagement

- Curiosity is welcomed—locals enjoy sharing stories with respectful students.
- Dress modestly for formal visits (churches, research centers).

Faith & Tradition

- Catholic heritage is visible in daily life - shrines, bells, and traditions.
- Sunday is sacred: many businesses close or slow down. Use this time for reflection or scenic walks.



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Taste of Italy – The Top 10 to Try

Italy's culinary heritage is a mosaic of regional flavors, time-honored techniques, and deep cultural pride. From Liguria's fragrant basil pesto and golden focaccia to Tuscany's earthy olive oils and Umbria's truffle-laced dishes, every bite tells a story of land and legacy. Meals are more than nourishment - they're rituals of connection, crafted with seasonal ingredients and shared around tables that echo with laughter and lineage. Whether savoring handmade pasta in a family-run trattoria or sampling local cheeses at a hillside farm, travelers discover that Italian cuisine is rooted in simplicity, authenticity, and reverence for nature.

Flavors That Teach and Inspire

For students and curious travelers, tasting Italy becomes a sensory classroom. Each region offers lessons in biodiversity, sustainability, and cultural adaptation - from the salt-preserving traditions of coastal villages to the alpine herbs of mountain kitchens. Culinary workshops, vineyard visits, and market strolls reveal how food reflects geography, history, and community values. As travelers dip bread into fresh-pressed olive oil or sip lemon-infused water overlooking the Ligurian Sea, they're not just enjoying a meal, they're participating in a centuries-old dialogue between people and place.

1. **Pesto alla Genovese** - A Ligurian specialty made from fresh basil, pine nuts, garlic, Parmesan, and olive oil, traditionally crushed in a mortar. Often served with trofie pasta or spread on focaccia.
2. **Focaccia** - This golden, olive oil-rich flatbread varies by region; Liguria's version is soft, salty, and sometimes topped with rosemary or onions. Perfect as a snack or alongside meals.
3. **Risotto alla Milanese** - Creamy rice infused with saffron and often finished with butter and Parmesan. A northern classic that showcases Italy's love for rich, comforting textures.
4. **Tagliatelle al Ragù (Bolognese)** - Long, flat pasta ribbons paired with a slow-cooked meat sauce from Bologna. It's hearty, savory, and far more nuanced than American-style spaghetti.
5. **Pizza Napoletana** - Born in Naples, this wood-fired pizza features a soft, chewy crust, San Marzano tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, and basil. Simple, authentic, and unforgettable.
6. **Arancini** - Crispy, golden rice balls filled with ragù, peas, and cheese, especially popular in Sicily. A perfect street food that's both crunchy and comforting.
7. **Polenta** - A northern staple made from cornmeal, served creamy or grilled. Often paired with mushrooms, cheese, or hearty meat sauces.
8. **Caprese Salad** - A fresh combination of tomatoes, mozzarella, basil, and olive oil originating from Capri. It's a celebration of simplicity and balance.
9. **Gelato** - Italy's artisanal ice cream is smoother and denser than its American counterpart, with intense flavors like pistachio, stracciatella, and lemon.
10. **Tiramisu** - A layered dessert of espresso-soaked ladyfingers, mascarpone cream, and cocoa. Born in Veneto, it's a sweet finish to any Italian meal.



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Entry Requirements

Italy and other EU Schengen Area entry requirements include having a passport valid for at least three months after your departure date, proof of sufficient funds and accommodation, and proof of onward travel. U.S. citizens must also register with the EU's new [Entry and Exit System \(EES\)](#) upon entry for stays up to 90 days and require an [ETIAS authorization](#).

For Non-EU Citizens

- **Passport:** Must be valid for at least three months beyond your intended departure date from the Schengen Area.
- **Purpose of Stay:** You must provide proof of accommodation and sufficient financial means.
- **Return/Onward Travel:** You must prove your intent to return to your country of origin or travel to a third country.
- **EU Entry & Exit System (EES):** From October 2025, U.S. citizens will need to provide fingerprints, a facial image, and passport details for stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period.
- **European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS):** U.S. citizens will also need to obtain ETIAS authorization online before traveling to any Schengen country.

For EU/EEA/Swiss Citizens

- **Travel Document:** A valid passport or national identity card is sufficient.
- **Stays Over 90 Days:** You must register at the local City Hall (Ufficio Anagrafe).

General Requirements (for all visitors)

- **Purpose:** Document your purpose for visiting and show you have sufficient funds for your stay.
- **No SIS Alert:** You must not be subject to an alert for being refused entry into the Schengen Information System.

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Minimum Booking Numbers: 20 students

What's Included:

- ✓ Roundtrip international flights into Florence, Italy; return from Milan, Italy
- ✓ 6-nights' accommodation in Italy: 2-nights in Tuscany + 4-nights in Liguria (students accommodated in shared rooms with single beds; teaching staff in single occupancy rooms)
- ✓ Breakfasts & dinners in destination starting with dinner on arrival and ending with breakfast on departure (dependent upon flight times)
- ✓ 3 Lunches: 2 packed lunches + 1 group lunch at Genoa Aquarium
- ✓ Transportation to activities shown in Itinerary
- ✓ Florence Guided City Tour
- ✓ The Galleria dell 'Accademia di Firenze - entrance
- ✓ Livorno Market Tour with an Italian Biologist for "The Tuscan Fisherman's Morning Route"
- ✓ Livorno Applied Research Master Class: Marine Ecology & Biology
- ✓ San Rossore Migliarino Natural Park Guided Tour: Discover Local Flora & Fauna; Exploration of Diverse Ecological Habitats
- ✓ Leaning Tower of Pisa & Piazza dei Miracoli
- ✓ Guided Tour of Cinque Terre's Main Geological Formations & Habitats with the Medieval Village of Monterosso
- ✓ CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche) Research Center Visit in Bonassola: Analyze Wave Dynamics, Study Sediment Layers, Marine Impacts on Metals and Supralittoral Coastal Monitoring
- ✓ The Genoa Aquarium & Biology Master Class - The Mediterranean Sea: Biodiversity at Risk
- ✓ The World of Invertebrates Laboratory Project: Marine Invertebrate Diversity & Ecological Adaptations
- ✓ Genova or Milan Guided City Tour (time permitting with airport transfer)
- ✓ Personal Tour Director
- ✓ Gratuities for your Driver, Tour Director & Local Guides
- ✓ 24-hour emergency cover

What's Not Included:

- ⊗ Fully comprehensive insurance (**mandatory**)
- ⊗ Baggage costs, pay directly to airline if required
- ⊗ Baggage handling - everyone should be able to pull / load their own bag
- ⊗ Transportation to/from your local airport
- ⊗ Transportation for activities not shown in the itinerary
- ⊗ Tourist tax, payable upon hotel check-in direct to local hotel property (budget \$20 pp but determined based on participant age and location)
- ⊗ Lunches on days not shown as included (3), nor snacks / beverages outside of mealtimes
- ⊗ Meal selections other than ones provided for the entire group (we are generally able to cater for allergy conditions and vegetarians/vegans)
- ⊗ Cost of personal passports, visas or visa waiver fees
- ⊗ Cost of inoculations or medication required for travel
- ⊗ Sightseeing / Entertainment not shown in Itinerary
- ⊗ Hotel incidental deposits & bills – mini-bar items, recreation, purchases billed to room, etc.
- ⊗ Personal expenditures
- ⊗ Additional taxes, fuel surcharges or service charges levied by the governments or our suppliers
- ⊗ Credit card fees if individuals wish to pay via credit card instead of ACH (online check)

As always, our staff are always available to you to answer any questions you may have regarding programming.
If we may serve you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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