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# Italy: 1944

FROM ANZIO TO THE GOTHIC LINE

Rome • Anzio • Lucca • Borgo a Mozzano  
Ponzalla • Giogo Pass • Futa Pass



*In collaboration with The National WWII Museum*



Dear Graduates and Friends of West Point,

I invite you to join the West Point AOG on a journey of “Mud, Mountains, and Mules,” focused on the liberation of Italy during World War II. The year 1944 was remarkable for the Allies. The Normandy landings had thrown the Germans into retreat and resulted in the liberation of most of France by year’s end. In the Pacific, hard-fought campaigns in the Mariana Islands yielded airfields close enough to Japan to support continuous B-29 raids on the Japanese home islands. Lost in the middle of these decisive events was the Italian campaign.

The fighting in Italy after the liberation of Rome on June 4, 1944, has become a footnote in most histories of the war, which unfortunately does little to recognize the supreme effort it took to reach “The Eternal City.” Still, to understand the progress made in France, one must understand Italy and the battle-scarred men who crossed this formidable terrain.

After more than a year of fierce battles in Italy and Sicily, Allied forces landed in Anzio on January 22, 1944. At first, the operation seemed to be a success. Soon, the Allied commanders squandered their initial advantage, failing to advance inland. Within a week, tough German reinforcements had arrived in the sector and brutal fighting ensued. As the Allies tried to advance, the Germans repeatedly tried to shove them back into the sea. For months, Allied troops sat in a shallow beachhead, under constant German observation and artillery fire. This bloody stalemate lasted until May, when the men at Anzio finally linked up with those coming from the Gustav Line to the south.

Following the liberation of Rome, the focus of the war shifted to Normandy. The Italian campaign, however, continued. German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring deployed his forces in the mountains north of Florence in an attempt to delay the Allied advance. Italian laborers, working under German supervision, dug a dense network of fortifications known as the Gothic Line. With the defensive positions etched directly into the mountains, the Allies had no choice but to maneuver their way through a virtual labyrinth of German strongpoints.

Florence was liberated on August 4, 1944. Bologna, less than 80 miles through the mountain passes, remained in German hands until April 21, 1945. The fighting was slow, grinding, and bloody throughout. Indeed, that was true of the Italian campaign as a whole. Visitors who stand at the summit of some of these mountains will come away with a great respect for the men who fought to force their way through the “forgotten front” of Italy.

With exquisite hotels in Rome and Florence and expert battlefield guides throughout, you will experience the best that Italy has to offer, with all of its sacrifices, heartbreak, and triumphs on the road to victory.

Sincerely,

Mark D. Bieger '91

Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)

*The Honorable & Mrs. Robert A. McDonald* '75 President & CEO  
West Point Association of Graduates

PHOTO Page 3: A GI visits the Coliseum with local Italian guides. Courtesy of the US National Archive.





# Mud, Mountains, and Mules

*The campaigns in Italy from the first landings in September 1943 through May 1945 tested Allied soldiers to the limit.*

Following the initial landings in the south, the Allies found themselves bogged down facing the formidable Gustav Line, a network of German defenses in the mountains between Naples and Rome. Attempting to outflank this line, the 36th and 45th Infantry Divisions achieved a successful amphibious landing in Anzio on January 25, 1944, but sluggish commanders failed to move rapidly enough, resulting in another stalemate. The destruction of Monte Cassino by the Allies in 1944 served mainly to generate headlines and fodder for German propaganda. The spring thaw in the mountains found the Allies once more on the advance, liberating Rome on June 4, 1944, creating brief headlines around the world that would soon be outshined by the June 6 landings in Normandy. Meanwhile, German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring retreated to the northern Apennines to establish yet another defensive position known to the Allies as the Gothic Line. General Mark Clark's Fifth Army faced a desperate enemy and unforgiving terrain, and it was here he coined the phrase that defined the Italian campaign: "Mud, Mountains, and Mules."

PHOTO: African American soldiers lead mules to the front in Italy and pass a wrecked German tank lying by the roadside. A Signal Corps member films them with a camera in the lower right corner, May 21, 1944. Courtesy of The National WWII Museum collection.



PHOTO: Aerial view of Lucca, Italy.

## Stand where history was made *Lucca, Italy*



A 92nd Infantry  
Division Patch

Courtesy of The National  
WWII Museum collection.

Battles along the Gothic Line featured a multinational force made up of several segregated units. The US 92nd Infantry Division "Buffalo Soldiers" consisted exclusively of African American soldiers. The 92nd Division entered combat in Naples, and continued through Rome and into the North Apennines. On September 5, 1944, soldiers from the 92nd entered the city of Lucca, finding it intact. The local population heard that the Americans were approaching, and were initially surprised to see the black soldiers entering their city. The Italians celebrated, showering the soldiers with affection and gratitude. Soon after, troops from the Brazilian Expeditionary Force passed through the area, creating a multicultural atmosphere in the town. The 92nd Division soon moved out of Lucca to fight the Germans in the Serchio Valley. Today the local population of Lucca fondly remembers the arrival of the "Buffalo Soldiers" who liberated them from German occupation.





## Hear their stories

### *10th Mountain Division*

Before 1941, the US Army did not have specialized mountain troops. Charles Minot “Minnie” Dole, founder of the National Ski Patrol, lobbied Pentagon officials and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to create specialized mountain units. Activated in 1943, the nucleus of the 10th Mountain Division trained under brutal conditions in the mountains of Colorado. Their training was put to use immediately when the division landed in Italy in January 1945. In the months that followed, the 10th Mountain Division fought its way through the northern Apennine Mountains, helping to break through the formidable Gothic Line. On April 23, 1945, after four months of fighting, the 10th Mountain Division became the first American unit to enter the Po River Valley. The division deactivated in 1945, but reactivated in the 1980s.

PHOTO PAGE 6: Italian partisans on the street, Italy. Courtesy of MARKA / Alamy Stock Photo. Eugene Calò portrait, Courtesy of @GhettoFightersHouse. PHOTO PAGE 7: 86th Regiment, 10th Mountain Division, pause to put on their snowshoes. Courtesy of The National WWII Museum, McWhirter, January 10, 1945

## Learn their names

### *Eugenio Calò*

When the Germans occupied Italy in September 1943, many Italians became partisans, working with the Allies during their march north. One such fighter was Eugenio Calò, a Sephardi Jew, second in command of the Pio Borri Brigade, which operated in the mountains in Tuscany. Not only did the Fascists take away Calò’s livelihood, but in May 1944, they rounded up his wife and three children and sent them to Auschwitz, where they were gassed on arrival (including a fourth son who was born en route to the camp). In July 1944, Calò’s men captured thirty German soldiers. Despite his devastating personal loss, he refused to execute them, instead taking them as prisoners of war and handing them over to the Allies.

When General Mark Clark asked for two of Calò’s partisans to cross back into the German-held town of Arezzo to coordinate with the incoming Allies, Calò volunteered for the mission. He was captured along with a group of forty-eight civilians, partisans, and prisoners, who were tortured and made to dig a mass grave for themselves. When the group was in the hole, the Germans strapped explosives to the partisans, and set the bombs off. The following day, a British tank unit discovered the grisly scene, now known as the San Polo Massacre. In 1947, Eugenio Calò posthumously received Italy’s highest military medal, the Gold Medal for Military Valor, for his actions against the German occupiers, and for his humanity towards captives. To this day, he is a hero in Italy, with numerous streets named after him around Arezzo and Florence.







# Italy: 1944

## FROM ANZIO TO THE GOTHIC LINE

~~\$5,195~~ **\$4,695\*** per person, based on double occupancy

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\*\$199 taxes and fees per person are additional. Flights not included.



## Tour Inclusions

Full-time logistical Tour Manager

Expert local battlefield guides

Roundtrip Airport Transfers  
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3-nights in Rome at the Rose Garden Palace Hotel

4-nights in Lucca at Grand Universe Lucca, Autograph Collection

Private, first-class, air-conditioned motor coach transportation

VIP access to sites not offered on other tours

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Included gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, and servers

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Informative map book including useful battlefield maps and archival images to be used throughout your journey

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### *Day One*

## Arrival in Rome / Colosseum

Upon arrival at Rome-Fiumicino International Airport (FCO), transfer to the Rose Garden Palace Hotel in the center of Rome. This afternoon, explore the Roman Colosseum before a welcome reception and dinner.

**Accommodations: Rose Garden Palace Hotel (R, D)**

PHOTO PAGE 10: American troops entering Rome— ITALY, CIRCA 1944. Courtesy of Carl Mydans/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images.





## Day Two

# Anzio

Today, visit the Anzio Beachhead, where an initially successful Allied landing turned into a brutal stalemate. On January 22, 1944, the Allies initiated a surprise landing behind the German defensive positions known as the Gustav Line. Once ashore, the Allies paused for several days to reorganize, allowing the Germans to move reinforcements to the beachhead. Throughout February, Allied attempts to break out of the beachhead were met by German counterattacks. The unforgiving terrain hindered movement, and the scene soon resembled the trench warfare of World War I. A month of German counterattacks failed to dislodge the Allies, but casualties mounted. By March, both sides had dug into defensive positions. Tour the Anzio Beachhead Museum, the Caves of Aprilia, and the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery to gain a more comprehensive appreciation of one of the most vicious campaigns of World War II.

**Accommodations: Rose Garden Palace Hotel (B, L)**

PHOTO PAGE 12: Brothers in Arms statue at the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Nettuno, Rome, Italy.  
PHOTO PAGE 13: Upon arriving at an evacuation hospital in Anzio, two American nurses, 2nd Lt. Mary H. Fischer of Strassburg and 2nd Lt. Margaret L. Gallagher of Hibbing, Minnesota, take turns digging a foxhole on February 1, 1944. Courtesy of The National WWII Museum, Signal Corps Radio Photo.





## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

### Field Marshal Albert Kesselring



Among the German High Command during World War II, few generals caused more problems for the Allies than Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, also known as “Smiling Albert” by Allied forces. Between 1939 and 1941, Kesselring commanded various *Luftwaffe* units in Poland, the Netherlands, France, and the Soviet Union in the opening months of Operation Barbarossa. However, it was in the Mediterranean that Kesselring showed his true skill as a commander. In November 1941, he became the Commander-in-Chief South, and immediately moved his staff to Italy, taking control of the war being waged in North Africa against the British.

Two years later, Kesselring saw the war come to the Italian mainland. With the Allies back on the European continent and his Italian allies out of the war, the Germans needed to form a plan. Kesselring managed to convince Hitler that a defensive war in Italy could drain the Allies of troops and material, allowing Germany to focus on the Eastern Front. Kesselring managed to hold back the Allies in Italy for 20 bloody months, using the mountainous Italian countryside to his advantage. The resulting conflict saw the Allies slog up the Italian peninsula in what was, essentially, a repeat of World War I. After the war, Kesselring went on trial for war crimes against the Italian people and was sentenced to death. However, he was released in 1952 due to health reasons. He died eight years later in West Germany.



### Day Three

## Rome

After the Allied breakout from the Gustav Line and the linkup with the Anzio Beachhead in May 1944, the Allies successfully liberated Rome on June 4, 1944. A tour of the Eternal City features a mix of architectural styles. From the ruins of the ancient Romans to the “new city” of Benito Mussolini, witness the changes in Rome since its founding.

Benito Mussolini ordered a major construction project in a district of Rome to be called EUR (*Esposizione Universale Roma*, or Universal Exposition of Rome) to celebrate Fascism and serve as the host of the 1942 World's Fair. The neoclassical architecture of the area still bears Mussolini's image in several locations. The planned World's Fair and the celebration of 20 years of Italian fascism never took place. Continuing to the south, visit the Ardeatine Caves where the Germans murdered 335 Italian citizens in revenge for a partisan bombing that killed 33 SS police officers in Rome.

**Accommodations: Rose Garden Palace Hotel (B, D)**

PHOTO PAGE 14 (LEFT): Albert Kesselring on the Italian front, 1944. Courtesy of Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo / Alamy Stock Photo. PHOTO PAGE 14 (RIGHT): Albert Kesselring and Heinrich von Vietinghoff in Italy. Courtesy of Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo / Alamy Stock Photo. PHOTO PAGE 15: Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana (Square Colosseum), designed for the 1942 Universal Exposition and now the symbol of modern EUR district.



## *Day Four*

# Florence American Cemetery

Following the liberation of Rome, the Allies continued north to push the Germans completely out of Italy. During the fighting in the next series of German positions, the Allies coined the term “Mud, Mountains, and Mules” to describe the conditions of battle. Well-hidden German positions in the

mountains, and the difficulty of keeping the troops supplied, resulted in a months-long battle of attrition. As the tour moves to Tuscany, stop at the Florence American Cemetery where the remains of 4,393 Americans are interred along with an additional 1,409 names on the Tablets of the Missing. The cemetery serves as a permanent reminder that the war in Italy did not end with the liberation of Rome. The evening is free to explore Florence on your own.

**Accommodations: Grand Universe Lucca, Autograph Collection (B, L)**







## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

# The Gothic Line



After capturing Rome on June 4, 1944, the Allied armies in Italy rushed north to finish the campaign in Italy once and for all. The US Fifth Army, under General Mark Clark, moved up the Ligurian coast while the British Eighth Army continued up the Adriatic coast. Through June, July, and August, both armies were delayed by German actions during their relentless march north. Unfortunately for Clark, he lost seven divisions to Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France, bringing his battle strength from about 250,000 men to roughly 150,000 men. General Clark could ill afford to lose these men, especially the specialized mountain troops of the French Expeditionary Corps.

The German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies had problems of their own. The defensive lines north of Rome were only partially constructed, two Allied armies were nipping at their rear, and Italian partisans were blowing bridges and disrupting troop convoys. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commander of Army Group C, planned to conduct a fighting retreat into the winter and spring of 1945. This plan included fighting at three defensive lines, the Trasimene Line, the Arno Line, and the Gothic Line (later renamed Green Line). The Gothic Line, at its zenith, reached from the Ligurian coast north of Florence, across the northern peaks of the Apennines, before settling on the Adriatic Coast south of Rimini. The Allies soon found themselves fighting against another Monte Cassino, only this time without the abbey.

Against Hitler's orders, Kesselring declared Florence an open city. Even so, he destroyed the medieval bridges around the city in an attempt to slow down the Allied advance. The US Fifth Army arrived in Florence on August 4, 1944, led by the "Monuments Men," who immediately went to work evaluating the damage to the Florentine artwork, bridges, and buildings around the city. Meanwhile, plans for an assault against the Gothic Line were in the works. Fifteenth Army Group Commander, General Harold Alexander, devised a plan (Operation Olive) to strike at the center of the Gothic Line in the Apennine Mountains. However, General Oliver Leese, commander of Eighth Army, convinced Alexander to shift the attack to the Adriatic Coast, where superior British artillery fire would have a better chance of breaking through. On September 12, after word came from ULTRA (British Intelligence) that German troops had moved from the center to the Adriatic, the Fifth Army struck in the Apennines. The goal was to break through and reach Bologna and the Po River Valley beyond. The assault saw initial success, with German troops being caught completely off guard. With help from Italian partisans, the Americans made their way forward, taking peak after peak, until the drive finally halted at the end of October, just two miles from the downward slope towards Bologna. Another Italian winter had come, with rain, mud, and swollen rivers making movement almost impossible until spring.

Throughout the winter of 1944/45, the Allies in Italy used their time to save up stores of artillery shells, add new troops to their ranks, and make small gains in land. During this time, the new 10th Mountain Division, specially trained mountain troops, joined the Fifth Army and immediately proved their mettle, assisting the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in a six-mile gain just prior to the spring offensive. On April 6, 1945, General Clark, now commanding 15th Army Group, commenced Operation Grapeshot with a diversionary attack in the Eighth Army sector. Following nine days of powerful bombardments, the US Fifth Army began its assault north towards the Po River Valley. By the start of Grapeshot, German manpower, already depleted from the constant demands of the Eastern and Western Fronts, reached its breaking point. With almost no reserves, under pressure from overwhelming Allied firepower, and renewed partisan attacks in their rear, German defenses began to crumble after six days. On April 20, the Americans reached the Po River. Two days later, they crossed it near San Benedetto. On April 27, the American 1st Armored Division entered Milan, liberated by Italian partisans two days earlier. Five days later, on May 2, 1945, all German troops in Italy surrendered to Allied forces, finally ending the 20-month war on the Italian peninsula. Prime Minister Winston Churchill's "soft underbelly of Europe" proved to be everything but, with the Gothic Line serving as one of the last great German defensive stands of the war.

PHOTO PAGE 18: American General Mark Clark (1896 - 1984), Commander of the Allied Fifth Army in Italy, mulls over strategy on a mountaintop with General Geoffrey Keyes (1888 - 1967), who leads an American corps within the Fifth Army, November 10, 1944. Courtesy of Keystone/Getty Images.





## Day Five

# The Gothic Line

The morning starts in the picturesque walled city of Lucca. On a walk through this Tuscan city, the guide leads a discussion of life under fascism, the harshness of the German occupation, and the celebrations accompanying the liberation. Spared from destruction, Lucca retains its ancient charm. The walking tour of the city center includes stops at the fascist headquarters, buildings occupied by the German administration, and a balcony on which Mussolini delivered a speech to the local citizens. After lunch on your own, continue to the Gothic Line fortifications near the town of Borgo a Mozzano. Local associations dedicate time and funding to preserve the bunkers, antiaircraft emplacements, communication trenches, and antitank ditches that serve as ever-present reminders of the battles. During the visit, descend into the bunkers and tunnels constructed by Italian laborers under the orders of Organization Todt. Return to Florence for an evening to enjoy the city independently.

**Accommodations: Grand Universe Lucca, Autograph Collection (B)**

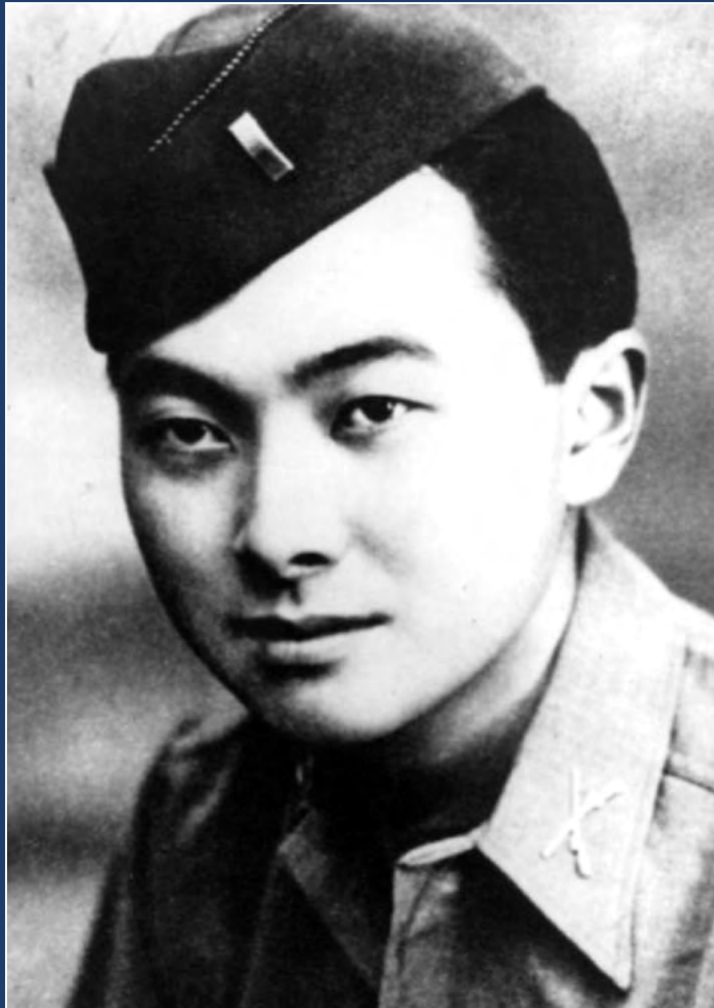


PHOTO ABOVE: View of Borgo a Mozzano. PHOTO BELOW: First German prisoner taken by patrol of the 92nd Infantry Division after crossing the Arno River at the Gothic Line is shown being questioned by 1st Lt. Lawrence D. Spencer, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, September 2, 1944. Courtesy of the collection of The National WWII Museum, US Army Signal Corps photograph, Gift of Regan Forrester.



# HONORING *our* HEROES

## SENATOR DANIEL INOUE 1924 – 2012



### Purple Heart, Bronze Star, and Medal of Honor Recipient

PHOTO: First Lt. Daniel Inouye. Courtesy of PJF Military Collection/Alamy Stock Photo.



PHOTO: US President Bill Clinton congratulates US Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, after awarding him the Congressional Medal of Honor on June 21, 2000, at the White House in Washington, DC, for his service in World War II. Courtesy of George Bridges/AFP/Getty Images.

Daniel Inouye was born on September 7, 1924, in Honolulu, Hawaii, the son of a Japanese immigrant father and Japanese American mother. On the morning of December 7, 1941, Inouye witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor by Imperial Japanese forces. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the confinement of over 110,000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast in internment camps. After petitioning the government to let them fight, Japanese Americans were given the opportunity to show their country that they too were loyal patriots, even while their families lived in internment camps around the country.

Inouye joined the all Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team. In 1945, the 442nd found itself in northern Italy fighting to break the defensive position known as the Gothic Line. On April 21, 1945, Inouye led an assault against a German position called *Colle Musatello*. During the assault on three German machine gun nests, Inouye was pinned to the ground. When he stood up to lead an attack, Inouye was hit in the stomach. Despite the bullet passing through his abdomen, Inouye continued forward, destroying the first nest with grenades and his Tommy gun. He continued to fight, destroying the second machine gun nest. Under orders, his squad kept moving towards the third machine gun nest. Losing blood, Inouye slowly crawled to within 10 yards of the German position. As he lifted himself up to throw his last grenade into the bunker slit, one of the occupants spotted him and shot a rifle grenade, which hit Inouye in the arm holding the grenade, shattering his arm.

Inouye yelled to his men to stay away, fearing the mangled remains of his hand would release the live grenade at any moment. Taking the grenade with his left hand, Inouye threw it into the slit, destroying the last machine gun nest, and allowing his men to continue forward. He took one more bullet to the leg before passing out. Inouye lost his right arm, and his actions earned him the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, and Distinguished Service Cross—later upgraded to the Medal of Honor by President Bill Clinton in 2000. He spent 49 years as a public servant. When Hawaii became the 50th state, Inouye became one of its first representatives in the US Congress, then won election to the US Senate in 1962 where he served until his death in 2012.



## Day Six

# Giogo Pass

As the Allies reached Florence, the options to move through the mountains were limited to two mountain passes: Futa and Giogo. The Futa Pass, along the main road from Florence to Bologna, was heavily fortified, but offered a quick route to Bologna. The defenses in the Giogo Pass were less formidable, but the terrain would be more difficult. Attacks on German positions on Monte Altuzzo and Monticelli, the mountains that dominate both sides of the Giogo Pass, led to a clearing of the pass. On tour, visit the Gotica Museum in Ponzalla, reconstructed German fortifications, monuments to the 91st Infantry Division, and the German Military Cemetery in Futa Pass. On the final evening of the tour, enjoy a farewell dinner with the group. **Accommodations: Grand Universe Lucca, Autograph Collection (B, L, D)**



## Day Seven

# Return to US from Florence

Bid farewell to Italy this morning and transfer to Florence Peretola Airport (FLR) for individual flights back to the United States. **(B)**

PHOTO: Passing soldiers made a target of a giant portrait of the ousted dictator Benito Mussolini taken out of the former fascist headquarters in Anzio, February 7, 1944. Courtesy of The National WWII Museum/Signal Corps Radio photo.





## Rose Garden Palace

*Rome, Italy*

The Rose Garden Palace is housed in a nineteenth-century building featuring a classic architectural design with a limestone exterior and an elegant glass awning. Ideally located just off Via Veneto, in the heart of one of Rome's most popular neighborhoods, the Rose Garden Palace Hotel is a short walk to historical sites like the Spanish Steps, Colosseum, and Borghese Gallery. In addition to a stunning setting rich with history, the Rose Garden Palace provides guest access to its spacious L'Oasi Fitness Center, complete with spa, sauna, and whirlpool, and Il Roseto Restaurant, a classic Italian dining experience on the hotel's indoor/outdoor garden patio. Room amenities include complimentary Wi-Fi, satellite flat-screen TV, bathrobe and slippers, soundproofed walls, and rainfall showerheads.

## Grand Universe Lucca, Autograph Collection

*Lucca, Italy*

Grand Universe Lucca hotel, stands gracefully overlooking Piazza del Giglio and Piazza Napoleone, revealing the history untold. It has evolved through the millennia, from a glassblower's atelier in Roman times, to a majestic palazzo of the Paoli family during the Renaissance, turning into a monumental hotel in the mid-18th century. Enjoy local Italian cuisine and fine wines at the Italian restaurant *Legacy* and spend a free evening at *Sommità Rooftop Bar*, which offers a unique place to admire the city's landmarks and monuments from above while enjoying cocktails and appetizers. Room amenities include room service, free Wi-Fi, cable/satellite TV, mini bar, safe, telephone, laundry service, fitness center, air-conditioning and onsite health and beauty services at Geko® Lucca estetica.



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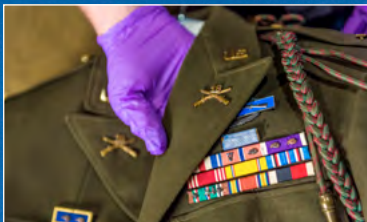
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