

What is the capital of Australia? Answer below.

TRAVEL AMERICA

African Queen sails Key Largo canals

We wanted to touch a little piece of movie history, so we headed down to Key Largo, Florida, to get a ride on the African Queen.

The African Queen is a 30-foot, steel-hulled steamship built in 1912 as the S/L Livingston to navigate the upper Nile River. John Huston leased it in 1951 to make a movie titled "The African Queen," and the boat was later renamed for the film that made it a star. Later, the boat was brought to the United States and originally used for charters. Then it was abandoned, rediscovered, given a makeover, used for rides and finally put on display when the engine died.

Several years ago, Lance and Suzanne Holmquist leased the boat from The African Queen Trust and rehabbed it. They replaced the broken steam engine and boiler with an 1896 model as noisy as the one in the movie, oiled the black African mahogany, replaced some parts (including the bench where Humphrey Bogart sat) but deliberately left it looking as beat-up as it did in the movie.

Then they began offering rides along Key Largo's canals.

The African Queen holds up to six passengers on its 80-minute cruises down the Port Largo Canals to the Atlantic Ocean and back, but my two friends and I were the only passengers on a sunny weekday afternoon. The captain, wearing a shirt and kerchief identical to Bogart's, explained how the steam engine works and showed us photos of the making of the movie.

We took turns holding the tiller, the same one that Bogart, as the cranky drunk Charlie Allnut, used to pilot the African Queen, and we struck the same pose as Katharine Hepburn, pouring liquid out of a gin bottle as the African Queen sailed away from the dock.

As we cruised slowly past waterfront homes, the steam engine hissing and clanking, a tattered old Union Jack fluttering and the captain judiciously tooting the steam whistle, I conjured up a picture of Bogart and Hepburn fleeing on the Ulanga River and was glad we were instead in Key Largo trying to outrun nothing more than white clouds drifting in a blue sky.

Info: Cruises depart from the Marina Del Mar; park at Holiday Inn, 99701 Overseas Hwy., Key Largo; \$49. 305-451-8080, africanqueenflkeys.com. The African Queen is on a reduced schedule for the slow summer season, sailing Thursday through Sunday. It will return to its longer schedule in September.

—Marjie Lambert
Miami Herald



Tribune News Service

The broken boiler on the African Queen was replaced with an 1896 model when Lance and Suzanne Holmquist were restoring the boat to its former glory.

GEOQUIZ ANSWER

Canberra. Located in the southeastern part of the country, it has a population nearing 400,000, well below that of Sydney and Melbourne, which both are near the 4 million mark.

—Chicago Tribune

DESTINATIONS

The Gazette

Sunday, July 12, 2015—Section C

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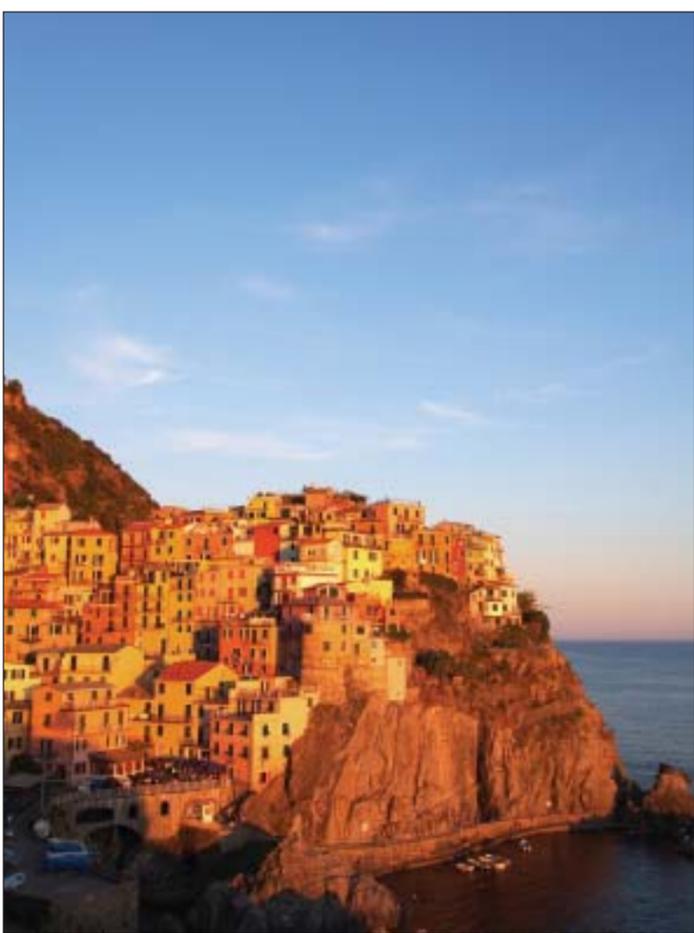
Many hotels on Las Vegas Strip offer more exclusive (and expensive) room options



Italy from all angles

Tribune News Service photos

Above: The town of Vernazza juts into the Mediterranean Sea in the Cinque Terre region of northwestern Italy. **Below:** Manarola, another Cinque Terre town, glows in the light of a spring sunset. Adventurous hikers can walk from town to town on this stretch of Italy's Mediterranean coastline.



Hike along the rocky coast of the Mediterranean Sea

By Pam LeBlanc

Austin American-Statesman

This place doesn't look real.

From the top of a steep hillside covered in lemon trees and grapevines, the village of Manarola tumbles out below, like a handful of pink, orange and yellow blocks that have been shaken, then poured from a toy bag.

Manarola is one of five hamlets strewn a few miles apart along the Mediterranean coast in northern Italy. Each comes with its own personality, and the best way to see the lot is to pick one as a home base (we've chosen Manarola because it's smaller and quieter than the others), then spend a few days hiking between them, pausing to sip wine, eat grilled octopus and cool off with a swim in the sea.

We left our cliffside apartment this morning, hiked up through steep terraces covered with vineyards, paused to admire a chapel and sip lemonade in the pint-size village of Volastra, then descend-

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ed into Corniglia, where we revived ourselves with gelato before striking out for the next town up the coast, Vernazza.

It's easy to imagine the days when pirates sailed up and down this coast. The people who once lived here used stone watchtowers to defend their homes, which are perched on cliffs and tucked into nooks and crannies molded

Turn to **HIKE** on Page 2C

Save time in the crowded streets of Rome with Omnia, Roma passes

By Anne Z. Cooke

Tribune News Service

ROME—The Roman Empire might be history, but Rome is still The Eternal City, a larger-than-life destination on every traveler's wish list. Will the Omnia & Roma Pass, the city card that fast-tracks pass-holders through the experience, make a difference?

A better question is whether Rome can cope with the 5 million travelers that visit the city annually. Sightseers, retirees on holiday, historians, pilgrims, nuns in habits, school kids in matching shirts and eager fans weaned on the movies—everyone's there to see where it all began.

That means jostling crowds, straggling groups and massive lines. But flash your Omnia & Roma Pass and you're through the gate and into the Coliseum, where gladiators really did bludgeon each other to death. Or into the Vatican rooms, once palatial living



Crowds in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome push up to the railing in front of the Baldachin and main altar.

quarters, where Renaissance popes plotted to poison their rivals. Or to the Sistine Chapel to see Michelange-

lo's frescoes. Or the Roman Forum and St. Peter's Basilica.

When I was there not long ago, the

streets were so crowded and the sidewalk cafes so full that I wasted most of my first day standing in line. Then somebody, a guy who zoomed past, slowed down long enough to show me his Omnia & Roma Pass, or ORP, two separate passes sold as a single package, good for three days and priced at 98 euros.

The next day I went to the Omnia office next to St. Peter's and bought the pass. It was just two cards, a guidebook and a map, but they felt like the keys to the kingdom. For the next few days, I whizzed past ticket offices, around long noisy lines and through dedicated turnstiles.

The pass was pricey, but it cost me less than the price of buying the same tickets individually. I didn't have to carry a lot of cash—only enough for lunch—or to take my wallet out to make change. And the two passes, which do different things, complement each other.

Turn to **SAVE** on Page 2C



Tribune News Service photos

The early-morning crowd at St. Peter's Cathedral isn't as dense as it gets later in the day.

Save/Battle long lines with passes

Continued from 1C

Here's how it works: The Roma Pass card is the transportation portion, good on all city buses and the subway. You swipe it on the electronic reader in the bus or in the subway station and you're good to go. You can get on and off on a whim, take as many rides as you want, go anywhere within the city and not incur an extra fare. As a bonus, the Roma Pass also includes free entry to two of Rome's most significant monuments, museums and palaces.

But the Roma Pass won't get you into Rome's big three: the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica. That's the job of the Omnia Pass, which does and, even more important, at a specific time. The ORP office near St. Peter's issues the tickets and makes appointments, an arrangement that saves hours wasted standing in line. And with a specific tour time, you can plan the rest of your day.

The Omnia Pass also includes entries to the much older and equally historic Basilica of St. John in the Lateran, and to St. Peter's Prison.

And it includes free or discounted entries to most of Rome's other major attractions: monuments, museums, Renaissance palaces, archaeological sites and current exhibitions. Additional benefits include a detailed street and tour map and as many sightseeing tours on Omnia's Roma Cristiana double-decker sightseeing bus as you want or your tired feet demand.

Lastly, the ORP's pocket-sized guidebook is an essential part of the package, explaining how to use both passes to best advantage. It also lists Rome's top attractions, describing each one briefly and giving a street address, opening hours, phone number, nearby bus and subway stops, and website. The guide is keyed to the map, a quality production that shows city streets, neighborhoods, a subway map, numbered attractions (keyed to a list) and route maps of four neighborhood-themed, self-guided walking tours.

Since I was hoping to see the Vatican Museum early, I arrived at the ORP office (adjacent to St. Peter's) at 8:30 a.m. People were already gathering, but I was up to the counter in 10 minutes, and had the Omnia Pass package in hand in another five.

With a Vatican ticket and an appointment to join the next group out, I was set to roll. Fifteen minutes later, a guide with a flag appeared, waved us over, led us across the plaza, and around the corner to the museum. Forty minutes total—count them—and we were inside.

We still had to get in a line behind two earlier groups; tours get preferential treatment so you'll never avoid some lines. And by the time I arrived, the galleries were already crowded. The rule here—and at most of Rome's other museums—seems to be that once your group is through the door, you're on your own. You can go at your own pace,



Above: The distinctively dressed Swiss guards of Vatican City, who are often standing at attention, also assist tourists who ask for help. **Below:** Raphael, the artist who painted the fresco 'The School of Athens,' included this self-portrait in the work. He is the man in the black hat looking out of the painting.

THE NITTY GRITTY

For the Omnia & Roma Pass:

For details or to purchase on the Internet, go to www.omniavatican.com. The Omnia Pass package costs 98 euros for an adult, 65 euros for children 6-12, and free for 5 and under. To purchase it in Rome or to reserve a time to tour St. Peter's and the Vatican, go to the ORP St. Peter's Office, Piazza Pio XII, 9, in Rome.

For the Roma Pass: For details or to purchase the Roma Pass separately, go to romapass.it. The cost is 28 euros for two days; 36 euros for three days.

For additional information about touring Rome, go to turismo.roma.it.



hurry through some galleries, linger in others or stay all day.

But that meant that the most popular galleries, the so-called Raphael rooms, for example, which were once the private apartments of Pope Julius II, were also the busiest. By the time I got there the place was so jammed that I couldn't see Raphael's frescoes without wriggling and wangling.

Some visitors who had come specifically to see the famous "School of Athens" fresco, never really did see the entire wall, or the painter's self-portrait in the lower right corner (he's the young man wearing the black cap). And the Sistine Chapel, said to hold a maximum of 2,000 people, was equally crowded. We were like fish in a net, slowly sliding forward and trying to look at the ceiling.

A tip: A kindly guard, instead of directing me toward the left side exit where a long line wound out, around and all the way back to St. Peter's Basilica, waved me toward a closed, unmarked door on the far right side, installed, apparently, for wheelchairs. From there it was 10 steps past the elevator and 20 more down into St. Peter's.

With the afternoon free, I bought an ice cream cone and strolled around Bernini's Four Rivers Fountain, toured the Pantheon (where a guard warned everyone to watch for pick-pockets), and spent a peaceful hour sitting on the Spanish Steps.

And since it was Rome, and when in Rome you do what the Romans do so well, I quit early enough to sit at a sidewalk cafe with a glass of red wine and a plate of pasta and watch the world go by.

WHEN YOU'RE NOT WALKING IN CINQUE TERRE ...

■ Sit on the square in Manarola, watching the local kids race their foot-powered scooters around the plaza as parents cheer them on. Stop by the toy stand there, where you can buy an Italian comic book about Texans working in an oil field.

■ Grab a bottle of wine and take the stroll out Via dell'Amore, the walkway between Manarola and Riomaggiore. Even though it was closed when we were there, we could walk partway out, sit on a bench and watch the sunset.

■ For spectacular photos of Manarola, walk north of town on the main trail, stopping just below the little pocket park, where the sidewalk curves with the coast. At dusk, the buildings practically glow in the most beautiful light.

■ If the coastal path between Manarola and Corniglia is closed (and even if it's not), take the high road instead, climbing up to the village of

Volastra. Grab a lemonade at the tiny grocery and peek into the beautiful chapel.

■ In Vernazza, dine at Ristorante Belforte and order the steamed mussels or grilled octopus. If you're lucky, you'll get to sit on one of the terraces clinging to the cliff.

■ Walk beneath a stone arch at the foot of Vernazza to a gravel beach created during the devastating floods of 2011. Then dive into the ocean.

■ Rent a beach umbrella in Monterosso.

■ Eat gelato in Corniglia—it was some of the best we found during our 10-day trip to Italy.

■ Eat dinner—and order the seafood antipasti—at Billy's in Manarola. trattoriabilly.com

■ Stay at least two nights. High season runs from mid-June to mid-September. Day trippers flood the towns, but by dusk most of the crowds are gone.

Hike/Plenty of beaches along popular trails

Continued from 1C

by Mother Nature. It's long been a wine-producing region, and farmers planted crops on terraces they cut into the hills.

But things have changed in recent years. In 1951, about 3,500 acres of land here were cultivated. After the Cinque Terre was discovered by tourists in the 1970s, the economy began a gradual shift from agriculture to tourism. Today, only about 275 acres are cultivated. The crop abandonment has caused soil erosion and land degradation, and the trails here periodically wash out.

We've had to adjust our hiking plans because of landslides. The flat, easy pathway between Manarola, the second village if you're counting from the south, and the next village up the coast to the north, Corniglia, is covered with gravel. So is the easy, flat walkway known as Via dell'Amore, which connects Manarola with Riomaggiore, to the south.

No matter. We took the high road to Corniglia instead, hiking the spine of the hillside to get up and over, pausing for lemonade and to admire a chapel in an even tinier hamlet called Volastra. We're in no hurry. Here in the Cinque Terre, it's all about walking, relaxing and soaking up the views (it's also about scaling thousands of steps and eating gelato, but we'll get to that later).

You'll need a trekking card from Parco Nazionale Delle Cinque Terre before you head out. You can buy it at booths along the trail or at park headquarters in Manarola. The area is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Make sure you have proper footwear before you strike out. Some of the trails (especially the one from Vernazza to Monterosso) are extremely narrow and crowded. In sections, passage is only single file, so if you meet someone coming the other direction you'll have to wait your turn.

And the steps! The section of the trail from Vernazza to Monterosso has as many as a skyscraper. Hike it northbound or your quads will stage a protest, and only attempt the walk if you're reasonably fit.

Happily, Vernazza and Monterosso offer fine swimming, too, so once you've worked up a sweat hiking, you can cool off in the sea. We



These are just a few of the steps visitors have to climb as they travel between villages in northwestern Italy.

IF YOU GO

We paid about 90 euros (about \$100) to stay in a one-bedroom apartment called da Paulin (which also offers hotel rooms in a separate building). For more information, go to dapaulin.it or email prenotazioni@dapaulin.it. For more information about Cinque Terre National Park go to parconazionale5terre.it.

braved the tiny gravel beach in Vernazza in our hiking duds—and it was totally worth it. While you're there, look for bits of tumbled, painted tile on the beach. They're a reminder of the devastating floods and mudslides that occurred here in 2011.

Monterosso's beaches are more formal. You can rent a beach umbrella for 20 euros and swim in water protected by a rocky sandbar. Or hike a little farther—up and over the spit of land that essentially divides the town in two—for a more casual beach.

Either way, spend some time exploring the market, the shops and the churches in this, the most bustling of the Cinque Terre's five villages.

The good news? If you walk from one town to the next and don't feel like hiking back, you can catch the train for a few euros. Even better, hop on a ferry boat for a different perspective of the Cinque Terre.

It's an image you won't soon forget.



Sunbathers flock to umbrellas set up on a beach in Monterosso, one of the five small cliffside villages in Cinque Terre.