



Liberation Route Europe

TOUR & TRAVEL GUIDE ITALY

The landings in Sicily

The Allied armies landed in Sicily in July 1943.

The initial landings on the beaches were hardly contested but further inland the Italian and German forces put up a stiff defence, especially around the heights of Mount Etna. The fighting in Sicily lasted until 17 August. By then, large parts of the German and Italian forces had withdrawn to mainland Italy via the strait of Messina. The Allied landings in Sicily strongly contributed to the fall of Mussolini and Fascism.

The Gustav Line

By the end of December 1943, the advance of the Allied forces in Italy was hampered by strong German defences on the Gustav or Winter Line, in Central Italy.

It took several months and hundreds of deaths to break the line. The areas of Cassino, in the Western part of the Line, and Ortona, close to the Adriatic Sea, were centres of heavy fighting. Cassino and its Abbey, with its heavily fortified mountain defences and difficult river crossings, was the key position. After the destruction of the Medieval Abbey and four battles, the Gustav Line was broken in late May 1944, paving the way for the liberation of Rome.



Local children aboard a Sherman



Flying Fortress over Monte Cassino



13th Armored Regiment enters Rome



Entry of Allied Troops Into Rome



Churchill tanks advance to Gothic Line

Rome

Rome was the first capital to be liberated from the German occupation on 4 June 1944, just two days before D-Day.

Rome had been declared an open city, which meant that it could be captured without any fighting, considerably preserving its heritage. However, Rome and its citizens had endured all the hardship of the Fascist period and especially of the German occupation, including the roundup of the Jewish community, the bombing of the popular San Lorenzo neighbourhood, and the reprisals of the German forces against popular riots and against partisan attacks, as in the Fosse Ardeatine massacre. Therefore, Rome was a place of spontaneous resistance but also of political reorganisation of the country. Sheltered in Rome, the anti-fascist parties united in the Committee for National Liberation (CLN) and planned the creation of a democratic Italy.

The Gothic Line

The Gothic Line, situated in the Northern Apennines between Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna, was the ultimate defence line built by the German forces before the Po valley and the large industrial towns of the North.

The German retreat behind the Gothic Line in late 1944 brought civilian massacres in rural and mountainous areas, such as in Monte Sole and Sant'Anna di Stazzema. The Allies were stuck on the line for a long winter, unable to break the German defences. Local resistance units contributed to the fight, especially thanks to their knowledge of the mountainous terrain. In April 1945, the Gothic line was eventually broken with coordinated attacks at its western, central and eastern part, marking the beginning of the end of the war in Italy.



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Key events & commemorations

27th
of January
Holocaust
Memorial Day

25th
of April
Liberation Day

10th
of May
National Memorial
Day of the Exiles
and Foibe

2nd
of June
Republic Day

28th
of September
Insurrection of
Naples against the
German occupation

History



The Liberation of Naples

When the war broke out, Fascist Italy was part of the Axis alliance. In 1943, Mussolini's regime fell and Italy announced its capitulation on 8 September.

The German forces quickly occupied the country, while local resistance movements formed and the Allies moved to the mainland, after landing in Sicily. In the movement northwards, major fighting erupted around the Gustav Line and the Monte Cassino Abbey in the winter of 1943-1944, and later on the Gothic Line, in the Apennines of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. The retreat of the German forces was particularly violent, with plenty of reprisals on the civilians. The Gothic Line was broken only in April 1945: a national insurrection of the partisan forces and the fast German retreat allowed the liberation of the north of the country, quickly followed by the Allied entrance in all the main cities of the Po valley, and especially Milan.

Cervi Brothers



The Cervi family

The seven Cervi Brothers – Gelindo, Antenore, Aldo, Ferdinando, Agostino, Ovidio, and Ettore – were active members of the resistance, first against Fascism and later against the German occupation in their village in Emilia-Romagna.

Their house became a safe place for partisans, anti-fascists and prisoners of war. In November 1943, the brothers, their father Alcide and other partisans were arrested in a roundup. The seven brothers were tortured and executed as a reprisal on 28 December 1943. Their father, who escaped from prison in 1944, kept the memory of his sons alive for decades. Today, their house (Casa Cervi) is a museum and hosts a very peculiar reenactment: every year on 25 July, the day of Mussolini's arrest, a so-called anti-Fascist pasta (Pastasciutta antifascista) is distributed – just like the Cervi family did in 1943, to celebrate with their community the arrest of the dictator.

Ivan J. Huston and the Liberation of Lucca



92nd Division in Massa, Italy

The city of Lucca, in Tuscany, was liberated on 5 September 1944 by the Buffalo Soldiers, 92nd division of the US 5th Army.

The division was composed by African-American soldiers, who were segregated in the US Army. Ivan J. Huston was one of these soldiers. What stroke him was how the local people welcomed the liberators and made them feel like humans and equals for the first time, since they were treated as second-class people in their own country. This warm welcome would help Ivan and many other African-American soldiers build awareness and engage against racial discrimination at home and for equality in their own communities. Ivan's liberation story is told in a book and in a documentary called 'With one tied hand'. During his last visit, he was awarded the silver medal of the city of Lucca.

The Brazilians in Pistoia



Brazilian cemetery in Pistoia

Soldiers of many ethnic groups were engaged in the Liberation of Italy alongside the Allies.

These included troops belonging to the British Commonwealth, but also from North-African French territories. The Brazilian Expeditionary Force fought in the Mediterranean Theatre as the only independent South-American state to support the Allied efforts. Brazilian ground and air troops engaged on the Western part of the Gothic Line and in the area of the Northern Apennines. In May 1945, at the end of the war, they reached Turin and Susa, at the border with France. The Brazilian Cemetery in Pistoia, Tuscany, was created immediately after the war. Although the bodies of the 463 fallen were brought back to Brazil, an unknown soldier still lays in Pistoia. A modernist monument by architect Olavo Redig de Campos was erected in 1967.



The Gothic Line



1 Bunkers and fortifications
BORGO A MOZZANO – facebook.com/comitato.lineagotica



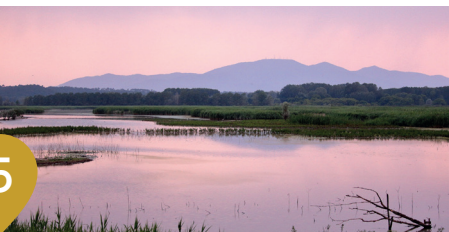
2 Park of Peace
SANT'ANNA DI STAZZEMA – santannadistazzema.org/sezioni/IL%20PARCO/ria-storica/



3 American Cemetery and Memorial
FLORENCE – abmc.gov/Florence



4 Museum and Grotta Giusti
MONSUMMANO TERME – museoterritorio.it



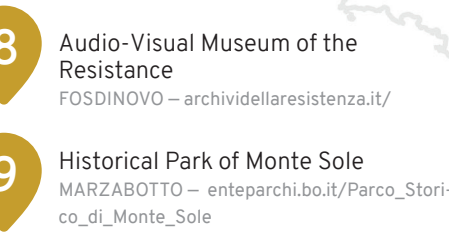
5 Padule di Fucecchio
PORCARI AND MONSUMMANO TERME



6 Colle di Compito Camp
CAPANNORI – capannori-terraditoscana.org/scopri/titinerari-culturali-e-di-istruzione/la-via-della-memoria/



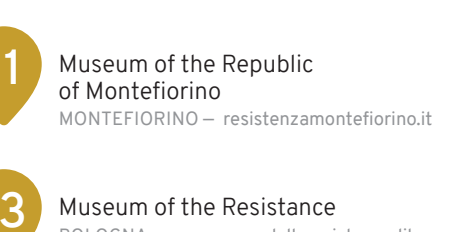
7 Memorial Don Aldo Mei
LUCCA



8 Audio-Visual Museum of the Resistance
FOSSINOVO – archividellaresistenza.it/



10 Museum of the Fossoli camp
FOSSOLI – fondazionefossoli.org



11 Museum of the Republic of Montefiorino
MONTEFIOFINO – resistenzamontefiorino.it

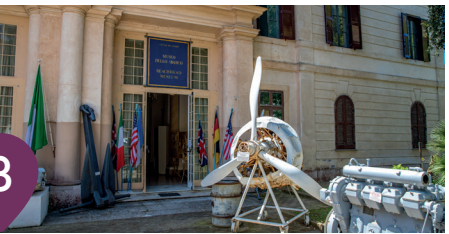
Rome



1 Museum of the Liberation
ROME – museoliberazione.it



2 Fosse Ardeatine memorial
ROME – mausoleofosseardeatine.it



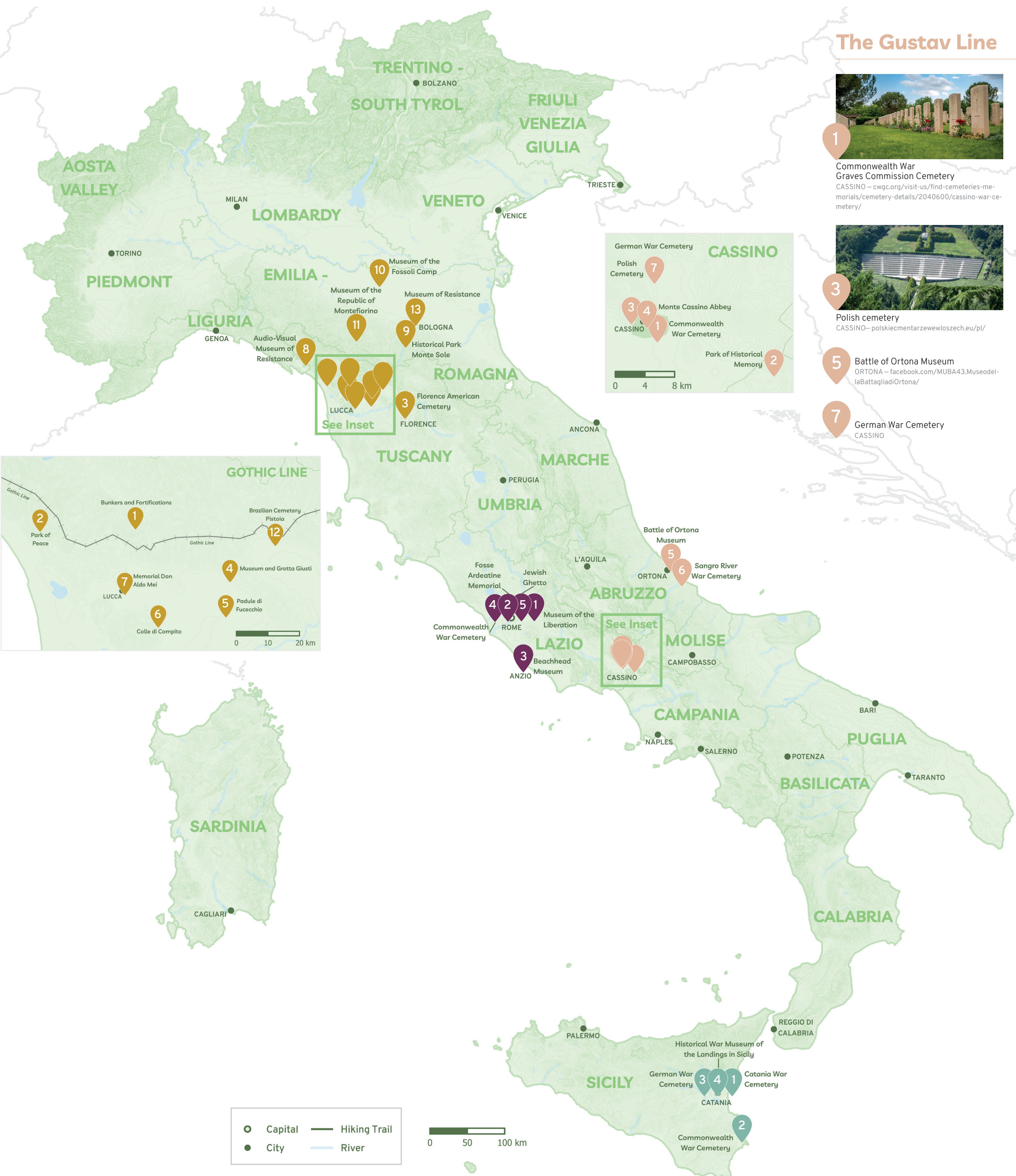
3 Anzio Beachhead Museum
ANZIO – sbarcoanzio.it



4 Rome Commonwealth Cemetery
ROME – cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2019300/ROME%20WAR%20CEMETERY/



5 Jewish Ghetto
ROME – iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-london



The Gustav Line



1 Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery
CASSINO – cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2040600/cassino-war-cemetery/



2 Park of the historical memory
SAN PIETRO INFINE – comune.sanpietroinfine.ce.it/vivere-san-pietro-infine/parco-della-memoria-storica/



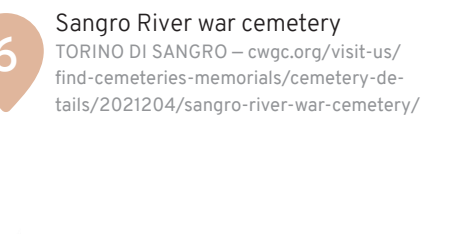
3 Polish cemetery
CASSINO – polskiecmentarzewwloszech.eu/pl/



4 Monte Cassino Abbey
CASSINO – abbaziamontecassino.org/



5 Battle of Ortona Museum
ORTONA – facebook.com/MUBA43.Museodel-laBattagliadiOrtona/



6 Sangro River war cemetery
TORINO DI SANGRO – cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2021204/sangro-river-war-cemetery/



7 German War Cemetery
CASSINO

The landings in Sicily



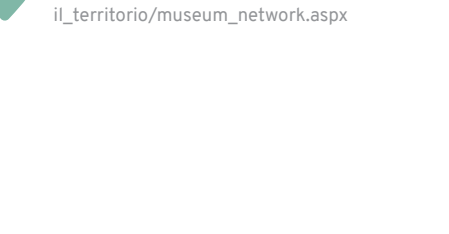
1 Catania War Cemetery
CATANIA – cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2006200/catania-war-cemetery-sicily/



2 Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery
SIRACUSE – cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2000407/SYRACUSE%20WAR%20CEMETERY,%20SICILY/



3 German War Cemetery
MOTTA SANT'ANASTASIA



4 Historical War Museum of the Landings in Sicily
CATANIA – cittametropolitana.ct.it/il_territorio/museum_network.aspx