

RESOURCE LIST

A Ramble Around Mont Blanc: France, Italy, and Switzerland

July 12–21, 2023

Italy & Slovenia: Food, Wine, and Walking

August 26–September 3, 2023 and September 4–12, 2023

Because these two walking programs have some overlap, we've compiled one list to cover both. Some of you can ignore the France and Switzerland entries, and others of you could ignore the Slovenia entries. (Or perhaps you'll enjoy learning about those countries, even though you won't walk in them with us. And some of you will walk in all of them. 😊)

This list was compiled in the hopes that you would find it useful in preparing yourself for departure or in continuing the learning experience after you return home.

Guide Books

A guide book will go a long way in answering many of your general questions about what things to do and where to eat during your free time. It will also typically provide a few words and phrases, sometimes a tip on pronunciation, and other useful things such as tipping guidelines, how best to obtain money, and maps.

Keep in mind that your St. Olaf hosts will not know the cities like the back of their hand. They are present to help influence the group experience, not to be an expert on tourism in each location. Thus, we recommend bringing a guidebook to help you make decisions about your free time. You can find all the standards, such as *DK Eyewitness Guides*, *Fodor's*, *Frommer's*, *Insight Guides*, *Lonely Planet*, *Rick Steves*, and *Rough Guides*.

More specific to hiking, you could try Cicerone Press, Lonely Planet ("Hiking & Tramping" or "Walking in" guides), and Trailblazer Guides.

General Books

The Happy Traveler: Unpacking the Secrets of Better Vacations, by Jaime Kurtz

A psychology professor applies research on happiness and decision-making to enhance the experience of travel.

Travel as a Political Act, by Rick Steves

I've been sharing this same idea with travelers for years, captured here in the summary on amazon.com: "By sharing his experiences from Europe, Central America, Asia, and the Middle East, Rick shows how we can learn more about own country by viewing it from afar."

Two articles, each about a 3–4 minute read:

"What is Cultural Appreciation (And How It's Different From Cultural Appropriation)?"

<https://preemptivelove.org/blog/what-is-cultural-appreciation/>

"The Difference Between Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Appreciation"

<https://passionpassport.com/cultural-appropriation-appreciation/>

Destination-Specific Reading

Italian Ways: On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo, by Tim Parks. Through his interactions with people – while taking trains from Verona to Milan and Rome to Palermo – Parks deepens his understanding of just how the country works, even with some glaring contradictions.

In Other Words, by Jhumpa Lahiri. This Pulitzer Prize-winning author moves with her family in 2012 to Rome in order to better connect with a language she has been in love with since just after college.

Chewing the Fat: An Oral History of Italian Foodways from Fascism to Dolce Vita, by Karima Moyer-Nocchi. Besides the author's notes, the book is composed of eighteen remarkable oral narratives with recipes for the real cucina povera. It's likely you'll not want to make them. The information gleaned from these remarkable women makes the book a treasure.

Friuli Food and Wine: Frasca Cooking from Northern Italy's Mountains, Vineyards, and Seaside, by Bobby Stuckey

The First Ascent of Mont Blanc, by T. Graham Brown and Gavin de Beer (1957)

First on the Rope, by Roger Frison-Roche (1942) – Mont Blanc.

Culture Smart! Slovenia: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, by Jason Blake (2011). Slovenia historically belonged to Western empires, but after the Second World War it became part of the Republic of Yugoslavia, before declaring independence in 1991. This cultural legacy is what sets Slovenia apart, matched by an amazingly varied topography packed into a small area.

Culture Smart! Italy: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, by Barry Tomalin (2021). Like the Slovenia book above, these books introduce us to the “inner world: of these places, helping us understand their culture, values, attitudes, traditions, and social norms.”

Walking/Hiking-Related Reading

A History of Mountaineering in the Alps, by Claire Eliane Engel (1908)

Killing Dragons: The Conquest of the Alps, by Fergus Fleming. In a riveting narrative of daredevils and eccentrics, Fergus Fleming gives us the breathtaking story of some of history's greatest explorers as they conquer the soaring peaks of the Alps.

A Walk in the Woods, by Bill Bryson. Though this book is about the Appalachian Trail, and we won't have to carry all our belongings on our back (thank goodness!), it's got great humor and insights about preserving trails and hiking as a cultural pursuit.

On Trails: An Exploration, by Robert Moor. In 2009, while thru-hiking the Appalachian Trail, Robert Moor began to wonder about the paths that lie beneath our feet: How do they form? Why do some improve over time while others fade? What makes us follow or strike off on our own? Over the course of the next seven years, Moor traveled the globe, exploring trails of all kinds, from the miniscule to the massive.

Wanderlust: A History of Walking, by Rebecca Solnit. The author provides a history of walking, exploring the relationship between thinking and walking and between walking and culture. She argues for the preservation of the time and space in which to walk in an ever more car-dependent and accelerated world.

The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative, by Florence Williams (2017). We'll be hiking in beautiful alpine settings, and this book highlights the science behind many of nature's documented positive psychological effects.

Movies/TV

Somebody Feed Phil, Netflix. A very human and enthusiastic look at travel with an undertone of beautiful silliness. There's also a season or two under the name *I'll Have What Phil's Having*, as it started as a PBS show.

The Way, starring Martin Sheen. A hiking-related movie based on the Camino de Santiago.

Dino Buzzati is an Italian novelist from Belluno – the town where the Italy & Slovenia journey begins. Some examples of his writings include *Catastrophe and Other Stories*, and *The Tartar Steppe*.

Ivan Cankar is a Slovenian playwright and novelist, sometimes referred to as a "Slovenian Tolstoy." His works might be harder to find, but a couple examples are *Dream Visions and Other Selected Stories* or *The Bailiff Yerney and His Rights*.

Websites, including links to music

Understanding the Swiss cultural connection to hiking:

<https://ultra.swiss/a-guide-to-switzerlands-hiking-culture/>

https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/business/take-a-hike_the-numbers-that-show-switzerland-loves-walking/43218498

This website has a small description of music in the Friuli region, with some examples:

<https://www.italyheritage.com/italian-songs/regional/friuli/>

And this one has information and samples of traditional/folk songs from Slovenia:

<https://folkcloud.com/folk-music-by-country/slovenia>

Language

Duolingo, Babbel, Rosetta Stone – some lessons may be free and others only accessible with payment

<https://www.myguideslovenia.com/usefulinfo/slovenian-language-basics>

<https://www.101languages.net/slovenian/basics.html>