



Celebrate the Season From the Jubilee in Rome to Santa Lucia in Sicily

As December begins, the Jubilee of 2025 enters its final chapter. The Holy Year, which opened on December 24, 2024 with the ceremonial opening of the Holy Doors in Rome's great basilicas, continues to draw pilgrims from around the world.

Pilgrims from every corner of the globe have journeyed to Rome this year, setting a remarkable travel record as more than 30 million visitors are expected by January 6, when the Holy Doors close. Throughout 2025, the city has been alive with prayer, music, and hope, a radiant celebration of faith that has filled Rome's streets, piazzas, and basilicas with a spirit unlike any other.

The month of December also includes one of Rome's most beloved feast days, the **Festa dell'Immacolata Concezione** on **December 8**. Each year, the Pope travels to Piazza Mignanelli to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary at the base of the Column of the Immacolata. Flowers are placed at her feet as prayers rise for peace and renewal. The square fills with Romans carrying bouquets, singing hymns, and watching as a fireman climbs the tall column to crown the statue of the Virgin with a garland of white roses.

The city of Rome lights its streets with luminarie, filling every piazza with a warm holiday glow. And the Christmas trees in Piazza del Popolo and St. Peter's Square sparkle to life at 6:30 p.m.

On **December 14**, a particularly moving event takes place, the **Giubileo dei Detenuti**, or **Jubilee of Prisoners**. This day is dedicated to mercy, forgiveness, and the dignity of every person. It reminds us that no heart is beyond the reach of God's compassion and that freedom begins within.

Join me in Italy this Christmas season as I explore **Rome, Assisi, Perugia, Orvieto, Spello, Spoleto**, and more. Follow [@katerinaferraraauthor](#) to enjoy the beauty, faith, and festive spirit of Italy along with me during the holidays.

Studying Italian? Check out My Bilingual English/ Italian Book Series

🎄 **Special December Highlight: Bolzano & Trento Christmas Markets**

Tucked into the northern reaches of Italy, framed by the dramatic peaks of the Dolomites, the cities of **Bolzano** and **Trento** come alive each December with some of the most beloved Christmas markets in Europe. Both lie in the Trentino-Alto Adige region, where Italian warmth blends beautifully with Austrian and German holiday traditions. The result is pure magic: mountain air scented



with cinnamon and cloves, lights twinkling against snow-covered rooftops, and squares filled with the sound of carols and laughter.



Bolzano is often called the gateway to the Dolomites, a charming city where Italian and Tyrolean cultures meet. Each winter, its grand **Piazza Walther** transforms into Italy's largest Christmas market. Wooden chalets glow under strings of golden lights, offering hand-carved ornaments, wool scarves, and steaming cups of vin brulè. The scent of apple strudel, roasted chestnuts, and gingerbread fills the air as choirs sing traditional carols. Families gather under the Christmas tree, and visitors stroll through the market surrounded by the snow-dusted Alps. Bolzano's blend of Alpine charm and Italian elegance makes it one of the most atmospheric holiday destinations in Europe.

Just a short train ride away, **Trento** offers a slightly smaller yet equally enchanting experience. Known as the "City of Christmas," it hosts its market in the historic **Piazza Fiera** and **Piazza Cesare Battisti**, both wrapped in festive lights. Artisans sell handmade ornaments, ceramics, and wooden toys, while local food stalls serve polenta, speck, and hot chocolate made from rich mountain milk. The market reflects Trento's deep sense of tradition, community, and warmth. With its medieval towers and Renaissance palaces standing proudly against the snowy mountains, Trento feels like a living Christmas card.



Festa di Santa Lucia – Light, Faith, and Beauty in Syracuse ✨

Each year on December 13, the city of Syracuse in Sicily shines with devotion to its beloved patron saint, Santa Lucia, the bringer of light. The celebration begins on the island of Ortigia, the historic heart of Syracuse, where winding streets open to bright piazzas lined with baroque palaces and the magnificent Cathedral of Syracuse, built over the remains of an ancient Greek temple.

On the morning of the feast, the silver statue of Saint Lucy is carried from the Cathedral in a solemn procession through the streets toward the Basilica di Santa Lucia al Sepolcro. Thousands of faithful line the route, singing hymns and lighting candles as flowers fill the air with fragrance. The city glows with reverence and pride as the faithful follow in her honor.

Other cities across Italy also celebrate **Santa Lucia**.

In **Venice**, candlelight reflections shimmer on the canals. In **Brescia** and **Bergamo**, children receive small gifts left by the saint during the night. In **Palermo**, processions and the traditional sweet dish *cuccia*, made with wheat berries, ricotta, and chocolate, commemorate the miracle of the saint feeding the hungry during a famine.

But nowhere is the celebration more moving than in Syracuse. The beauty of **Ortigia**, with its marble piazzas, waterfront promenades, and golden Sicilian light, creates a setting that feels timeless. As the statue returns to her chapel a week later, bells ring and fireworks sparkle over the sea, closing one of Sicily's most heartfelt and beautiful traditions. You can discover the full story of Santa Lucia and many other Sicilian festivals in my [Ultimate Festival and Travel Guide Sicily](#).



🎄 Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! 🎄

As the year draws to a close, I want to thank all of you for joining me on this wonderful journey through Italy's festivals, culture, and beauty. Your support, curiosity, and shared love for travel make this community so special.

If the cold of December has you dreaming of sunshine, take a **virtual summer trip** with my **Immersion Travel Italy Podcast Series**, where you can explore Italy's three legendary lakes: **Lago Maggiore, Lake Garda, and Lake Como**, all free to enjoy at katerinaferrara.com/video-podcast/.

My newest book, **Book 6 in the Travel Italy Series**, is now available: [Explore Milan and the Legendary Lakes of Northern Italy](#). Don't miss it if you love art, fashion, lakeside escapes, and hidden gems across Lombardy.

You can also visit my [blog](#) for travel stories, cultural insights, and festival highlights from across Italy.

Wishing you peace, joy, and a season filled with light.

Katerina Ferrara

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