

ITALY –“Once in a Lifetime - Intro to Italy”

Rome - Montecassino - Naples - Pompeii - Florence - Assisi – Rome

Tour 90 – 8 days



Day 1 - Arrive Rome

Upon arrival your escort will warmly greet you this morning and welcome you to Italy. Transfer to your hotel and enjoy a free afternoon for rest, relaxation, or exploration. Your tour escort can suggest sights or walks for you to enjoy.

Day 2 - Rome (*Papal Audience and Vatican Museum Tour*)

Wake up in Eternal City, one of the greatest centers of Western Civilization and the first truly cosmopolitan city on earth! It is also spiritual capital for all the Catholics around the world. Today is truly a day we will have in our minds for many years to come. This morning we go to Vatican City to attend the weekly Papal Audience or Blessing given by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI (*pending papal schedule*). Following the audience visit of the Vatican Museums, a group of most impressive edifices with hundreds of galleries filled with art treasures. See awe-inspiring relics and works of art donated throughout centuries as tributes of faith. We'll cover The Tapestry Gallery, The Raphael Rooms and the most overwhelming Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo's Masterpiece, restored mural of the Last Judgment. Later, enter the largest church in Christendom St Peter's Basilica, built on the site where St Peter was martyred. Unsurpassed in beauty, a monument to the long history of the Catholic Church, to which pilgrims come from around the world, St Peter's is the grandest of the world's churches. Marvel Pieta and Bernini's amazing bronze canopy. We will also visit the grave of Pope John Paul II located at the Vatican (time permitting). Before dinner, we'll have some time at leisure, to explore your own paths, to shop, or just to sit in one of the outside cafes and watch the world go by.



Day 3 - Rome

This morning we depart for a sightseeing tour entitled "Christian Rome" which includes: the Basilica of St. Mary Major, one of the oldest shrines dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, a shrine that contains a relic from the manger of the infant Jesus; the Holy Stairs, the Basilica of St. John the Lateran, The Basilica of the St John in Lateran, is the former residence of the popes prior to their return to Rome in 1377; St Paul Outside the Walls, which houses the remains of St Paul under its main altar; and the Appian Way -- the oldest road from Roman times--plus the famous Domino Quo Vadis Chapel; see the ancient Baths of Caracalla, Arch of Drusus; Tomb of Caelia Metella, and the catacombs of St Callixtus where the early Christians hid themselves to escape persecution. We will also enjoy a visit to the Trevi fountain. Dinner and overnight for your last evening in Rome.

Day 4 - Excursion to Montecassino, Naples & Pompeii

We leave the Eternal City and head south cross through the Roman countryside with its villas and vineyards, stopping at the Abbey of Montecassino, a beautiful town founded by St. Benedict in 529. Continue through the countryside surrounding Naples. We will have a short panoramic -sightseeing tour of Naples and proceed to Pompeii for lunch (included today) and a visit to the excavations, the town destroyed when Mt. Vesuvius erupted in 79 A.D. In early evening, board the bus for your return to Rome (be prepared for a long day- dinner will be later than usual tonight!).

Day 5 - Excursion to Florence

After breakfast we depart for Florence, a paradise for art lovers, who drew to itself the greatest artists of the Renaissance: Dante, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Botticelli, Donatello and many others. We will enjoy a guided tour of Florence which includes magnificent Santa Maria del Fiore, Giotto's Bell Tower, The Baptistery's heavy bronze "Gate of Paradise" the Academy of Fine Arts containing many treasures, the Ponte Vecchio, The Duomo, whose magnificent dome was created by Brunelleschi. After lunch (included today) you will enjoy free time for exploration before returning to Rome.

Day 6 - Excursion to Assisi

After breakfast we depart Rome for our excursion to Assisi. We will visit the tomb of St Francis. Explore the quaint hilltop birthplace of St Francis that still retains something of the atmosphere of the early 1200s, the period when St Francis began his ministry. Contained within the huge 13th-century Basilica are many of the saint's possessions and a series of frescoes depicting his life. You may kneel before the crucifix from which Jesus spoke to St Francis, asking him to rebuild His church. It was in St Mary of the Angels Basilica where St Francis spent most of his life. Here we visit the Chapel, Portiuncola, the rose bush, and the cave where the saint retired for prayer. Stroll the medieval streets of the compact little town. After stopping at an outdoor cafe with a view of an ancient Roman temple, we go to the Church of St Clare to see the saint's incorrupt body. The foundress of the Order of Poor Clares followed the teachings of St Francis by living a life of poverty and humility. We will visit these two saints' tombs before returning to Rome for dinner and retiring for the evening.

Day 7 - Rome at Leisure

Today enjoy a day at your leisure for rest, relaxation, exploration or shopping.

Day 8 - Rome - home

Guidepost Tours can extend your stay in Rome or add on other pilgrimage tours in Europe.

INCLUSIONS

- 7 nights at Hotel Cicerone, Quirinale (or similar), Rome, Italy
- Transfers as per itinerary
- Breakfast and Dinner Daily
- Wine, mineral water, coffee, and tea with dinners
- Transportation by air-conditioned motor coach
- Assistance of a professional local Catholic guide(s)
- Sightseeing and admissions fees as per itinerary
- Catholic Priest available for Spiritual Direction
- Mass daily & Spiritual activities
- Luggage handling (1 piece per person)



Guidepost Tours

A Division of Platinum Travel Corporation

131 Belinda Street, Gerringong, NSW 2534

Australia Toll free Phone: 1300 733 323

Email: enquiries@guidepost-travel.com

Website: www.guideposttours.com.au

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