



Tour: Rome: Culture & Faith
Destination: Rome, Naples, Pompeii & Vatican City, Italy
Itinerary: 8-days / 7-nights total trip
Specialization: History, Art & Culture

Rome: Culture & Faith				
A History, Culture, Art & Faith Tour				
Day	Morning	Afternoon		Evening
1	Overnight flight to Rome, Italy			
2	Arrive in Rome, transfer to Hotel; check-in and relax	Welcome, Safety & Orientation	Time Elevator: History of Rome	Welcome Dinner
3	Ancient Rome Guided Tour: Coliseum, Roman Forum & Palatine Hill		Gladiator School	Dinner at Hotel
4	Guided Tour: Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica		Castel Sant'Angelo	Pizza Cooking Class
5	Guided Walking Tour of Naples & Naples Underground		Guided Tour of Pompeii	Dinner at Hotel
6	Attend Mass at Local Roman Chapel	Saint John Lateran Basilica & The Basilica of Saint Mary Major	The Roman Catacombs	Dinner at Hotel
7	Ostia Tour & Ostia Archaeological Site		Guided Walking Tour: Baroque Rome	Farewell Dinner
8	Transfer to airport; fly home			



As with all sample itineraries, please be advised that this is an 'example' of a schedule and that the activities and hotels shown may be variable dependent upon dates, weather, special requests and other factors. Itineraries will be confirmed prior to travel.



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Day 1

Overnight flight; meals in flight

No services; in flight.



Day 2

Meals in flight; dinner in destination

Arrive in Rome, Italy - Upon arrival and after immigration and customs formalities, our English-speaking guide will be there to welcome and assist. After hotel check-in, get settled and have our Welcome, Safety & Orientation Meeting.

Rome... Modern and old, past and present go side by side; all the time. You can decide to follow the typical paths, or you can be lucky enough to go off the usual tracks. The 'Eternal city' of Rome is not only represented by its masterpieces of art, breathtaking architecture and its monuments and museums, but by its typical streets and alleyways where one can discover traits of Italian lifestyle, tradition and culture. Don't forget to throw a coin in the Trevi Fountain before you leave. It is said that this will ensure your return to the Eternal City!



Rome is one of world's most photogenic cities - not surprising when you remember what's here – The Vatican, the Trevi Fountain, St. Peter's Square, the Spanish Steps, the Coliseum... A visit to Rome will allow you to discover the many different historical layers which have built this beautiful city through the centuries, from the remains of the Roman Empire, through the Medieval and

Renaissance periods, up to the modern day architecture that dots the city throughout. Rome is one of those cities you could spend a year in and still feel like you've barely scratched its surface - amazing historical sites, mind-blowing art—and then there's the food.

It may no longer be *caput mundi* (capital of the world), but Rome is an epic, bubbling-over metropolis harboring lost empires. One visit and you'll be hooked. Rome has a glorious monumentality that it wears without reverence. Its architectural heirlooms are buzzed around by car and Vespa as if they were no more than traffic islands.

People in Rome encapsulate the spirit of the city. Pass a central café and the tables outside are animated with people, downing fast shots of espresso and sporting big black sunglasses. Nuns flutter through the streets, on the trip of a lifetime or secondment, bustling across the road before treating themselves to an ice cream. Churches fill during Mass, and the priests, dressed in purple, cream or red silk (right down to their socks), read the rites to a hushed congregation (mostly from out of town).

Here the national preoccupation with the aesthetic fuses with incredible urban scenery to make Rome a city where you feel cool just strolling through the streets, catching the sunlight on your face outside a café, or eating a long lunch. It's a place that almost encourages you to take things easy. Ready to go?

Did you know?

- ✓ Rome's Coliseum, a huge amphitheater located in the center of the Ancient City, at one time could seat as many as 50,000 spectators of gladiator games and other public battles. The Coliseum which was constructed between 70 and 72 A.D. is among the Seven Wonders of the World. This historic monument can also be found on the Italian five-cent euro coin.
- ✓ Did you know that 60% of the world's art treasures can be found in Italy?
- ✓ Shakira isn't the only one who knows something about she-wolves. Did you know that Rome's mascot is a she-wolf that cares for the brothers Romulus and Remus (the founders of Rome)? Legend has it that the brothers were abandoned by their uncle in the wild. The twins were later discovered by a she-wolf who rescued and nursed them. Romulus and Remus eventually returned to their birthright and decided to found a new city. Hence, Rome was born.
- ✓ Just about every tourist heads over to the Trevi Fountain to throw a coin in and make a wish that they too will return to the Eternal City. But have you ever wondered just how much money gets tossed into the Fontana di Trevi each year? According to the City of Rome, nearly €700,000 worth of coins get tossed in each year. The proceeds are donated to help the needy.
- ✓ Everyone knows that pasta is Italy's staple dish. Italians eat it for lunch; they eat it for dinner. They simply can't live without their pasta. Just how much of it do they consume each year? It is estimated that Italians eat about 60 pounds of pasta per person, per year.
- ✓ The Pantheon which was built in 27 B.C. by Marcus Agrippa is the only monument belonging to ancient Rome that still remains intact. What is even lesser known, is that it entombs Italy's King Vittorio Emanuele II, and his successor, Umberto I.
- ✓ Rome has a museum which is entirely dedicated to pasta. The Pasta Museum is a one-of-a-kind around the world and showcases different pasta-making machines, as well as paintings related to pasta by contemporary artists.
- ✓ St Peter's Basilica inside Vatican City is the largest church ever constructed.



- ✓ The Monumental Cemetery of the Capuchin Brothers has used the bones of over 4,000 Capuchin monks, some skeletons fully intact, to create symbolic works of art in its series of chapels.
- ✓ The Vatican Museum is a huge museum complex with over 1,000 museums and galleries like the Gallery of Tapestries and Etruscan and Egyptian Museums that are full of masterpieces collected by the successive Popes. It is the world's largest museum complex.
- ✓ St. Peter's Basilica was a structure that stood for almost 1,000 years until it neared collapse and was rebuilt in the 1500s and 1600s. It is an overwhelming structure which displays the work of some of Italy's greatest artists like Raphael, Michelangelo, and Maderno.

Upon check-in, SST groups will have an opportunity to rest after their long journey. Enjoy a snack from the restaurant, steal a nap, stroll the grounds, the choice is yours. In the late afternoon, we'll have a multisensory experience to get us familiar with our home for the next week with a discovery of "Rome through the Ages" show at the Time Elevator.

Roman Time Elevator – The Roman Time Elevator is an exciting journey that involves all the senses. Thanks to digital-mechanical and stereoscopic technologies, you can go back in time and learn more about history, science, art and nature: a great launch pad to the most exciting explorations of our time.

Anyone who enters into Time Elevator enters into the history of Rome. Fly back in time to the legend of Romulus and Remus and the founding of the city. See victories and defeats, the development and decline of the Roman Empire, and then later in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, the events of the Popes until the Fascist period and the present day. It's an original and funny way to present a scenic trip to the major historical moments of the city and its artistic treasures to the audience.

After our journey through time, we'll return to the hotel for our welcome dinner and a relaxing evening.

Day 3

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Rise and shine Rome! After breakfast we'll transfer to the city center of Rome for the Classic Rome guided tour. Our personal English-speaking guide will lead us through the Eternal City to experience some of history's greatest monuments.

The Coliseum - The Flavian amphitheater is the biggest and most imposing in the Roman world and is also the most famous monument, known as the Coliseum. Started by Emperor Vespasian of the Flavia family, it was opened by his son Titus in 80 A.D. The highly ostentatious opening ceremony lasted one hundred days during which people saw great fights, shows and hunts. For the opening, the arena space was filled with water for one of the most fantastic events held in Roman times, *naumachias* – real sea battles reproducing great battles of the past.



The Coliseum is one of the most imposing ancient structures. Imagine it all white, completely covered in splendid travertine stone slabs. It is elliptic in shape to hold more spectators. It had four floors; the first three had eighty arches each; the arches on the second and third floors were decorated with huge statues. What we see nowadays is just the skeleton of what was the greatest arena in the ancient world. In the Middle Ages, when no longer in use, the Coliseum was transformed into an enormous marble, lead and iron quarry used by Popes to build Barberini Palace, Piazza Venezia and even St. Peter's Basilica.



After the VI century, with the Empire's decline, the Coliseum fell into disuse and its walls housed confraternities, hospitals, hermits and even a cemetery. From the Middle Ages onwards, the Coliseum has been one of Rome's greatest marvels, attracting hordes of visitors. Threatened with demolition by Sixtus V for town-planning reasons, it was declared a sacred monument dedicated to the Passion of Christ by Benedict XIV, placing a cross on a pedestal, as a symbol of the sufferings of all Christian martyrs. This cross is still the starting

point for the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday. Since then, it has become an object of worship for Christians and was protected from further destruction and ruin.

The Roman Forum - Situated in the area between Piazza Venezia and the Coliseum, the Roman Forum is one of the most important archaeological sites in the world. Three thousand years ago, this valley between Campidoglio and the Quirinal, which was to become the future social and political center of one of the greatest empires of ancient times, was submerged in marshland. By an incredible invention of engineering, a canal that is still in function today allowed for the drainage of the land. The area soon began to develop and already at the end of the 7th century BC, it was home to many markets and a hive of social activity.



Foro was the name that the Romans gave to the central square of the urban settlement and we must imagine this busy, crowded place as the pulsing center of a modern city. Here the masses would flock to see the meetings of the orators, attend criminal trials and discuss internal politics or the latest military campaigns, or quite simply to comment on the games or running races (an activity that the Romans particularly enjoyed). In the area around the Forum, the city was also home to markets, shops and taverns. You could also find the typical *Termpolia*, which were the ancient's equivalent of today's fast food restaurants. In short, the Forum was the heart and soul of city life. It was in Caesar's time when Rome had become the capital of a vast empire, that the Forum became a place for celebration. In the Imperial era, it was the true symbol of the Empire.

Palatine Hill - The Palatine Hill is the centermost of the Seven Hills of Rome and is one of the most ancient parts of the city. It stands 40 meters above the Roman Forum, looking down upon it on one side, and upon the Circus Maximus on the other. Recent excavations show that people have lived there since approximately 10,000 B.C.



Many affluent Romans of the Republican period (c.509 B.C. – 44 B.C.) had their residences there. During the Empire (27 B.C. – 476 A.D.) several emperors resided there; in fact, the ruins of the palaces of Augustus (27 B.C. – 14 A.D.), Tiberius (14 – 37 A.D.) and Domitian (81 – 96 A.D.) can still be seen. Augustus also built

a temple to Apollo here, beside his own palace. According to Roman mythology, the Palatine Hill was the location of the cave, known as the Lupercal, where Romulus and Remus were found by the she-wolf Lupa that kept them alive. According to this legend, the shepherd Faustulus thereafter found the infants, and with his wife, Acca Larentia, raised the children. When they were older, the boys killed their great-uncle (who seized the throne from their grandfather), and they both decided to build a new city of their own on the banks of the River Tiber.

Suddenly, they had a violent argument with each other and in the end, Romulus killed his twin brother Remus. This is how "Rome" got its name - from Romulus. Another legend to occur on the Palatine is Hercules' defeat of Cacus after the monster had stolen some cattle. Hercules struck Cacus with his characteristic club so hard

that it formed a cleft on the southeast corner of the hill, where later a staircase bearing the name of Cacus was constructed.

Following our afternoon exploring classical Rome, we'll transfer to our hotel. This evening groups will discover a Roman tradition as old as some of its most historical ruins, Gladiator training!

Gladiator School - Find out what it takes to be an ancient Roman gladiator at the Gladiator School of Rome. During a hands-on lesson with instructors from the Historic Group of Rome, learn how to fight with authentic weapons of the time while wearing a traditional gladiator tunic and belt. Located on the Appian Way not far from the Colosseum, this class is a unique and interactive way to learn about ancient Roman history, sports and culture.



In this 2-hour Roman gladiator training, students will learn gladiator fighting techniques from members of the Historic Group of Rome while wearing traditional clothing and using traditional training weapons. Includes entrance to the Gladiator School of Rome Museum.

Day 4

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Good morning Italy! After our breakfast, we'll travel to the Vatican Museum and the Sistine Chapel, one of the largest museum complexes in the world. Located in the grand and magnificent Vatican Palaces, there are over 4-miles of galleries to be seen, displaying works from the immense collection built by the Roman Catholic Church throughout the centuries, including some of the most renowned classical sculptures and most important masterpieces of Renaissance art in the world. The Museums celebrated their 500th anniversary in October 2006.

In the Vatican Galleries you will admire the modern entrance built for the Jubilee 2000, the Galleries of the Chandeliers, of the Tapestries and of the Geographical Maps, the Sobiesky Hall and the Immaculate Conception Hall. The galleries will lead visitors to the breathtaking Sistine Chapel. It is without doubt one of the greatest art treasures of all time, one of the most celebrated masterpieces in the world. It was Pope Paul III who asked Michelangelo to decorate the wall behind the altar with a fresco showing the Last Judgment; the moment when God judges man. It became one of the most celebrated and admired frescoes in the world.



Vatican City - The world's smallest sovereign state (a mere 0.44 sq. km), the Vatican sits atop the low-lying Vatican hill just a few hundred meters west of the River Tiber. Centered on the domed bulk of St Peter's Basilica and Piazza San Pietro, it is the capital of the Catholic world; a spiritual superpower whose law is gospel to the world's one billion Catholics. On a more temporal level, it's one of Rome's most visited areas.

Vatican Museums – The Vatican Museums and Galleries include art collections of the Popes since the beginning of the 15th century, housed in the papal palaces and other buildings in the Vatican. The Pio-Clementino Museum was founded in the 18th century by Pope Clement XIV and enlarged by Pope Pius VI. This museum exhibits the pontifical collection of ancient sculpture that originated with the collection of Pope Julius II. The Chiara Monti Sculpture Gallery, established by Pope Pius VII in the 19th century and designed by the sculptor Antonio Canova, is also devoted to ancient sculpture. The Gregorian Etruscan Museum, founded in 1836 by Pope Gregory XVI, houses a collection of objects from Etruscan excavations and objects from the Regolini-Galassi tomb with its collection of Etruscan jewelry. The Egyptian Museum, also founded by Gregory XVI, was opened to the public in 1839. The Pinacoteca, founded by Pope Pius VI in 1797, has been housed in its present gallery (commissioned by Pope Pius XI) since 1932. It has an outstanding collection of Italian religious paintings and also includes Russian and Byzantine painting.



In 1956 a modern art collection was initiated, which exhibits secular works by such 19th and 20th-century artists as Renoir, Seurat, Van Gogh, Rouault, Matisse, and Picasso. In 1973 the Vatican opened its first museum of contemporary art, including the work of both European and U.S. artists, housed in 65 galleries in the Vatican Palace.

St Peter's Basilica - It is thanks to Peter, the first Apostle and the first Pope and leader of the Church, that the most important basilica in the Christian world, the St. Peter's Basilica, was built in Rome. Peter was given his name by Jesus because he was destined to be the foundation "stone" (in Italian "*Pietra*") on which the church would be built. He was certainly one of the most enterprising of the Apostles... He was imprisoned, and then miraculously released, following which he left Jerusalem and headed for Rome, the "*Capital of the World*", which was the center of the immense Roman Empire at that time. Here, he became bishop and then reigned as the first Pope for 25 years.

During the fierce persecution of Nero, he was imprisoned with millions of other condemned Christians and died by crucifixion sometime between 64 and 67 A.D. on the Vatican Hills in the Neronian circle. Rumor has it that he wanted to be put on the cross head-down as he did not feel he was worthy of being crucified in the same manner as Jesus. Among the other tales about Peter is the one that says while he was on the road to his place of execution, or possibly when he ran away from Rome to flee his death, he met Jesus and he posed the fateful question "*Domine, quo vadis?*" to his Lord and decided to return. It was here in the gigantic complex of the Neronian circle with its palaces, temples and gardens, that the execution and burial of one of the most important Apostles of Christ took place.



A long veneration of this sacred place soon began, so much so that while the grandiose Roman buildings fell to ruin, a Christian necropolis was built and successively, in the 4th century, Emperor Constantine decided to erect the first basilica in honor of the Saint. This is how the Church, the physical and spiritual center of Christianity was born. The first basilica was an immense and magnificent building, which guarded treasures of art and gold.

Thousands of years later, Constantine's Basilica began to show the first signs of collapse. At the dawn of the 15th century, Pope Nicholas V and the architect, Bernardo Rossellino set to work on what would be one of the most famous and demanding building sites of the Renaissance; the so-called "*Brickworks of St. Peter*".

The Sistine Chapel – The Sistine Chapel is without doubt one of the greatest art treasures of all time, one of the most celebrated masterpieces in the world. It's the last stop on the Vatican Museum tour and is the most ardently awaited moment for the millions of tourists from around the world that come here every year to admire it. Step into the Sistine Chapel and the magic completely envelops you because literally everything in this place is priceless and rich in history, from the pavement to the amazing frescoed ceiling by Michelangelo.



From the outside, the Chapel gives an entirely different impression. It's imposing defensive structure is almost fearsome with its powerful walls and menacing ramparts. It's like an ancient strongbox guarding a treasure: powerful and massive outside, rich in extraordinary and unimaginably precious masterpieces inside. The creative force behind all this fame and beauty is the unsurpassed genius of Michelangelo and the most amazing thing is that he managed to complete this artistic miracle all by himself!

The Sistine Chapel takes its name from the Pope that commissioned it, Pope Sixtus IV of the Della Rovere family. The Vatican Palaces needed a new building to house religious celebrations and to host the conclave, the gathering of cardinals that elects the Pope. Thus, in around 1473, the pontiff gave the job to architect *Giovannino De' Dolci* of building the Sistine Chapel, exactly on the spot where at one time had stood the so-called Great Chapel. The architect designed a grandiose building that had the same dimensions as Solomon's Temple as it's described in the Bible: more than forty meters long and as high as a seven-story building.

Pope Sixtus IV wanted the walls of the Chapel to be decorated with stories of Moses, guiding light of the Hebrew people, and of Jesus, comparing the latter to the former as a guiding figure of the Church. For the occasion, he called upon the most famous artists of the time - Botticelli, Rosselli, Ghirlandaio and Perugino - to tell the stories of the Bible through pictures so that everyone could know them.



The Sistine Chapel's first years were not exactly happy ones however, it was the most unfortunate of events that led to the creation of a masterpiece. During the first years of the 1500s, all sorts of building sites had grown up around the edifice. The excavations for the foundations caused very serious problems for the Chapel, so much so that an enormous crack appeared in the vaulted ceiling. The frescoes, unfortunately, had suffered such damage that the new Pope, Julius II, had the idea of asking Michelangelo to re-do the ceiling.

Michelangelo lived alone and in total poverty, notwithstanding all the wealth he had accumulated. He was unhappy with himself, obsessed with anxiety about death and salvation. He was described as a "*genius, inspired, almost removed and hostile to the world*". Even the Pope, despite his admiration for Michelangelo, agreed that there was simply no getting through to him. But why exactly did the pontiff choose Michelangelo of all people? According to gossip of the time, it was Bramante who suggested to the Pope the idea of giving Michelangelo the job; the rivalry between Michelangelo and Bramante was certainly no secret, the latter being also friend and relative to Raphael, another avowed enemy of the artist. The innocent proposal to the Pope was a way to put the hated sculptor in a bad light since he had never done a fresco in his life and wasn't familiar with the technique.

In October of 1512, the work that would be remembered for centuries to come as one of the greatest treasures of humanity was finally finished and on All Saints Day, November first, the Sistine Chapel was triumphantly inaugurated in full ceremony with a solemn mass celebrated by Pope Julius II himself. Michelangelo, in those years of unbelievably hard lonely work, had transformed the walls into masterpieces that spoke. A thousand square meters of frescoes told of the marvels of Creation and the story of Man.



Castel Sant'Angelo -- The Mausoleum of Hadrian, usually known as Castel Sant'Angelo (Castle of the Holy Angel), is a towering cylindrical building in Parco Adriano. It was initially commissioned by the Roman Emperor Hadrian as a mausoleum for himself and his family. The building was later used by the popes as a fortress and castle and is now a museum. The Castel was once the tallest building in Rome.

The tomb of the Roman emperor Hadrian, also called Hadrian's mole, was erected on the right bank of the Tiber, between 134 and 139 AD. Originally the mausoleum was a decorated cylinder, with a garden top and golden quadriga. Hadrian's ashes were placed here a year after his death in Baiae in 138, together with those of his wife Sabina, and his first adopted son, Lucius Aelius, who also died in 138. Following this, the remains of succeeding emperors were also placed here, the last recorded deposition being Caracalla in 217. The urns containing these ashes were placed in what is now known as the Treasury room deep within the building. Hadrian also built the Pons Aelius facing straight onto the mausoleum – it still provides a scenic approach from the center of Rome and the right bank of the Tiber, and is renowned for the Baroque additions of statues of angels holding aloft elements of the Passion of Christ.

Legend holds that the Archangel Michael appeared atop the mausoleum, sheathing his sword as a sign of the end of the plague of 590, thus lending the castle its present name. A less charitable yet more apt elaboration of the legend, given the militant disposition of this archangel, was heard by the 15th-century traveler who saw an angel statue on the castle roof. He recounts that during a prolonged season of the plague, Pope Gregory I heard



that the populace, even Christians, had begun revering a pagan idol at the church of Santa Agata in Suburra. A vision urged the pope to lead a procession to the church. Upon arriving, the idol miraculously fell apart with a clap of thunder. Returning to St Peter's by the Aelian Bridge, the pope had another vision of an angel atop the castle, wiping the blood from his sword on his mantle, and then sheathing it. While the pope interpreted this as a sign that God was appeased, this did not prevent Gregory from destroying more sites of pagan worship in Rome.

After our day of discovery in the heart of Rome, we'll return to the hotel for relaxation and dinner. This evening, groups will have a great evening with a pizza making lesson and dinner with local cuisine experts.

Pizza Making Lesson - Join us in the historical part of town near Navona Square in a little authentic Pizzeria with a real stone oven! Your pizza chef and his staff will introduce you to the magical art of how to make your favorite pizza. Students and staff alike love this hands-on activity where you learn how to prepare everything, roll and squeeze the dough, before your chef helps you to put it in the oven. You will then sit down to enjoy your delicious creation, staying as long as you like. You'll be led through the process of how to make one of the most delicious foods of our time out of only three ingredients.



Day 5

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Rise and shine Rome! After breakfast in our hotel, we'll board our bus to Naples, one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. We'll discover the origins on some of the earliest civilizations in the country and explore the fascinating subterranean architecture of Naples Underground.

Naples - Naples is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Bronze-Age Greek settlements were established in the Naples area in the second millennium B.C. A larger colony – initially known as Parthenope, developed on the Island of Megaride around the ninth century B.C., at the end of the Greek Dark Ages. The city was refounded as Neápolis in the sixth century B.C. and became a lynchpin of Magna Graecia, playing a key role in the merging of Greek culture into Roman society and eventually becoming a cultural center of the Roman Republic. Naples remained influential after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, serving as the capital city of the Kingdom of Naples between 1282 and 1816. Thereafter, in union with Sicily, it became the capital of the Two Sicilies until the unification of Italy in 1861. During the Neapolitan War of 1815, Naples strongly promoted Italian unification.



Naples was the most-bombed Italian city during World War II. Much of the city's 20th-century periphery was constructed under Benito Mussolini's fascist government and during reconstruction efforts after World War II. In recent decades, Naples has constructed a large business district, the Centro Direzionale, and has developed an advanced transport infrastructure, including an Alta Velocità high-speed rail link to Rome and Salerno, and an expanded subway network which is planned to eventually cover half of the region.



Naples has the fourth-largest urban economy in Italy, after Milan, Rome and Turin. The port of Naples is one of the most important in Europe and has the world's second-highest level of passenger flow, after the port of Hong Kong. The city also hosts NATO's Allied Joint Force Command Naples, the SRM Institution for Economic Research, the OPE Company and Study Centre, and more. The city was named a "City of Literature" by **UNESCO's Creative Cities Network**. The Villa Rosebery, one of the three official residences of the President of Italy, is located in the city's Posillipo district.

Naples Underground - Underneath Naples lies a series of caves and structures created by centuries of mining, and the city rests atop a major geothermal zone. There are also a number of ancient Greco-Roman reservoirs dug out from the soft tufo stone on which much of the city is built. Approximately one kilometer of tunnels under the city can be visited from the Napoli Sotterranea, situated in the historic center of the city in Via dei Tribunali. There are also large catacombs in and around the city, and other landmarks such as the Piscina Mirabilis, the main cistern serving the Bay of Naples during Roman times. This system of tunnels and cisterns underlies most of the city and lies approximately 30 meters (98 ft.) below ground level. During World War II, these tunnels were used as air-raid shelters and there are inscriptions in the walls depicting the suffering endured by the refugees of that era.



While in the Naples area, we'll visit Pompeii, one of the most magnificent archaeological sites in the world. With a 2-hour guided tour we'll see and learn how the ancient Romans used to live in this amazing town, which was buried by an eruption of Vesuvius almost 2000 years ago.

Pompeii - Mount Vesuvius, a volcano near the Bay of Naples, is hundreds of thousands of years old and has erupted more than 50 times. Its most famous eruption took place in the year 79 A.D., when the volcano buried the ancient Roman city of Pompeii under a thick carpet of volcanic ash. The dust "poured across the land like a flood", one witness wrote, and shrouded the city in "a darkness like the black of closed and unlighted rooms." Two thousand people died, and the city was abandoned for almost as many years.



When a group of explorers rediscovered the site in 1748, they were surprised to find that underneath a thick layer of dust and debris, Pompeii was mostly intact. The buildings, artifacts and skeletons left behind in the buried city have taught us a great deal about everyday life in the ancient world.

Life in Pompeii - Ever since the ancient Greeks settled in the area in the 8th century B.C., the region around Mount Vesuvius and the Bay of Naples attracted wealthy vacationers who wanted to soak up the sun and the scenery. By the turn of the first century A.D., the town of Pompeii, located about five miles from the mountain, was a flourishing resort for Rome's most distinguished citizens. Elegant houses and elaborate villas lined the paved streets. Tourists, townspeople and slaves bustled in and out of small factories and artisans' shops, taverns and cafes, and brothels and bathhouses. People gathered in the 20,000-seat arena and lounged in the open-air squares and marketplaces. On the eve of that fateful eruption in 79 A.D., scholars estimate that there were about 20,000 people living in Pompeii and the surrounding region.

Mount Vesuvius - The Vesuvius volcano did not form overnight. In fact, scholars say that the mountain is hundreds of thousands of years old and had been erupting for generations. In about 1780 B.C. for example, an unusually violent eruption (known today as the "Avellino eruption") shot millions of tons of superheated lava, ash and rocks an estimated 22 miles into the sky. That prehistoric catastrophe destroyed almost every village, house and farm within 15-miles of the mountain. But it must have been easy to overlook the mountain's bad temper in such a pleasant, sunny spot. Even after a massive earthquake struck the Campania region in 63 A.D. - a quake that, scientists now understand, offered a warning rumble of the disaster to come - people still flocked to the shores of the Bay of Naples. Pompeii grew more crowded every year.



79 A.D. - Sixteen years after that tell-tale earthquake, in August 79 A.D., Mount Vesuvius erupted again. The blast sent a plume of ashes, pumice and other rocks, and scorching-hot volcanic gases so high into the sky that people could see it for hundreds of miles around. The writer Pliny the Younger, who watched the eruption from across the bay, compared this "cloud of unusual size and appearance" to a pine tree that "rose to a great height on a sort of trunk and then split off into branches". Today, geologists refer to this type of volcano as a "Plinian eruption."

As it cooled, this tower of debris drifted to earth. "It was terrifying. I believed I was perishing with the world," Pliny wrote, "and the world with me" --but not yet lethal; most Pompeian's had plenty of time to flee. For those who stayed behind, however, conditions soon grew worse. As more and more ash fell, it clogged the air making it difficult to breathe. Buildings collapsed. Then a "pyroclastic surge" - a 100-mile-per-hour surge of superheated poison gas and pulverized rock - poured down the side of the mountain and swallowed everything and everyone in its path.

By the time the Vesuvius eruption sputtered to an end the next day, Pompeii was buried under millions of tons of volcanic ash. About 2,000 people were dead. Some people drifted back to town in search of lost relatives or belongings, but there was not much left to find. Pompeii, along with the smaller neighboring towns of Stabiae and Herculaneum, was abandoned for centuries.

Rediscovering Pompeii - Pompeii remained mostly untouched until 1748, when a group of explorers looking for ancient artifacts arrived in Campania and began to dig. They found that the ashes had acted as a marvelous preservative. Underneath all that dust, Pompeii was almost exactly as it had been 2,000 years before. Its buildings were intact; skeletons were frozen right where they'd fallen; everyday objects and household goods littered the streets. Later archaeologists even uncovered jars of preserved fruit and loaves of bread!



Many scholars say that the excavation of Pompeii played a major role in the neo-Classical revival of the 18th century. Europe's wealthiest and most fashionable families displayed art and reproductions of objects from the ruins, and drawings of Pompeii's buildings helped shape the architectural trends of the era. For example, wealthy British families often built "Etruscan rooms" that mimicked those in Pompeian villas.

Today, the excavation of Pompeii has been going on for almost three centuries, and scholars and tourists remain just as fascinated by the city's eerie ruins as they were in the 18th century.

Afterwards, we'll head back to our hotel for dinner and to enjoy a relaxing evening at your leisure.

Day 6

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Good morning, Italy! After breakfast at our hotel, groups will travel to a local cathedral to attend a Catholic Mass. Following morning Mass, we'll embark on a day exploring two of the most important churches in all of Rome and the eerie Roman Catacombs.

Saint John Lateran Basilica - The Sacrosanct Papal Cathedral Greater Roman Archbasilica of the Holy Savior and the Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist at the Lateran, the Mother and Head of all the Churches of the City and the World (Italian: Sacrosanta Cattedrale Papale Arcibasilica Romana Maggiore del Santissimo Salvatore e dei Santi Giovanni Battista ed Evangelista al Laterano, Madre e Capo di tutte le Chiese della Città e del Mondo), commonly known as **St. John Lateran Archbasilica**, **St. John Lateran Basilica**, **St. John Lateran**, or just **The Lateran Basilica**, is the cathedral church of Rome and the episcopal seat of the Roman Pontiff.



It is the oldest and ranks first among the four Papal Basilicas (all of which are located in Rome), being the oldest church in the west and having the Cathedra of the Bishop of Rome. It has the title of 'Ecumenical Mother Church' among Roman Catholics. A large inscription on the façade is translated from Latin as "Pope Clement XII, in the fifth year [of his Pontificate], dedicated this building to Christ the Savior, in honor of Saints John the Baptist and John the Evangelist". This is because the Archbasilica, as indicated by its full title was originally dedicated to Christ the Savior, with the co-dedications to the two St. Johns being made centuries later. As the cathedral of the

Bishop of Rome, it ranks above all other churches in the Catholic Church, including St. Peter's Basilica. For that reason, unlike all other Catholic basilicas, it is titled Archbasilica.



The Basilica of Saint Mary Major - The Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, 'Basilica of Saint Mary Major', or church of Santa Maria Maggiore, is a Papal major basilica and the largest Catholic Marian church in Rome, from which size it receives the appellation "major".

The ancient basilica enshrines the venerated image of Salus Populi Romani, depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary as the health and protectress of the Roman people, which was granted a Canonical coronation by Pope Gregory XVI on 15 August 1838.

Pursuant to the Lateran Treaty of 1929 between the Holy See and Italy, the Basilica is within Italian territory and not the territory of the Vatican City State. However, the Holy See fully owns the Basilica, and Italy is legally obligated to recognize its full ownership thereof and to concede to it "the immunity granted by International Law to the headquarters of the diplomatic agents of foreign States".

The five Papal Basilicas along with the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (actually in Rome) and San Sebastiano fuori le mura were the traditional Seven Pilgrim Churches of Rome, which were visited by pilgrims during their pilgrimage following a 12 mile itinerary established by St. Philip Neri on 25 February 1552. On 21 June 2011, Pope Benedict XVI issued a Papal bill granting equal indulgences of the basilica for pilgrims who travel to the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Manaoag, canonically establishing the perpetual bond of affinity between the two shrines for pilgrims who are unable to come to the Basilica of Saint Mary Major.

After exploring these stunning cathedrals, we'll gear up for our tour through the ancient Roman burial sites beneath the city in the Catacombs.



The Catacombs of Rome - The Catacombs of Rome are ancient catacombs, underground burial places, of which there are at least forty, some discovered only in recent decades. Though most famous for Christian burials, either in separate catacombs or mixed together, people of all the Roman religions are buried in them, beginning in the 2nd century A.D., mainly as a response to overcrowding and shortage of land. The Etruscans, like many other European peoples, used to bury their dead in underground chambers.

The original Roman custom was cremation, after which the burnt remains were kept in an urn, often in a columbarium. From about the 2nd century A.D., inhumation (burial of unburnt remains) became more fashionable, in graves or sarcophagi often elaborately carved, for those who could afford them. Christians also preferred burial to cremation because of their belief in bodily resurrection at the Second Coming.

The Christian catacombs are extremely important for the art history of Early Christian art, as they contain the great majority of examples from before 400 A.D., in fresco and sculpture, as well as gold glass medallions. The Jewish catacombs are similarly important for the study of Jewish culture at this period. A number of dubious relics of catacomb saints were promoted after the rediscovery of the catacombs.





In 380, Christianity became a state religion. At first, many still desired to be buried in chambers alongside the martyrs. However, the practice of catacomb burial declined slowly, and the dead were increasingly buried in church cemeteries. In the 6th century, catacombs were used only for martyrs' memorial services, though some paintings were added as late as the 7th century. Apparently, Ostrogoths, Vandals and Lombards violated the catacombs, presumably looking for valuables. By the 10th century, catacombs were practically abandoned, and holy relics were transferred to above-ground basilicas.

In the intervening centuries they remained forgotten until they were accidentally rediscovered in 1578, after which Antonio Bosio spent decades exploring and researching them. Archeologist Giovanni Battista de Rossi (1822–1894) published the first extensive professional studies about catacombs. In 1956 and 1959, Italian authorities found more catacombs near Rome. The catacombs have become an important monument of the early Christian church.

In the evening we'll return to the hotel for dinner and relaxation. Get ready for a great night with a Walking Ghost Tour through the streets of Rome!

Night Ghost Walk of Rome - There are many people who have lived in the Eternal City that have a wealth of "unfinished business". It is said that spirits roam in their palaces and in adjacent squares, making their appearance at certain times of the year, often on the anniversary of their deaths. Among them, there are poets such as Keats and Shelley, kings such as Umberto I., infamous noblewomen to the Romans, as the "Pimpaccia of Piazza Navona", and even popes such as Pope Borgia, or Alexander VI. Learn the stories about spirits and famous ghosts of Rome on a 2-hour night walking tour.

Day 7

Breakfast, lunch & dinner

Today we're going to explore Ostia Antica, the archaeological site located in Ostia, Rome's seaport that is known for its beautifully preserved ruins. Later, we'll experience the Baroque side of Rome. The artistic style known from the 17th and 18th century that can be seen in abundance throughout Rome.

Ostia - Ostia may have been Rome's first colonia. According to legend, Ancus Marcius, the legendary fourth king of Rome, first destroyed Ficana, an ancient town that was only 17 km from Rome and had a small harbor on the Tiber, and then proceeded with establishing the new colony 10 km further west and closer to the sea coast. An inscription seems to confirm the establishment of the old castrum of Ostia in the 7th century B.C. The oldest archaeological remains so far discovered date back to only the 4th century B.C. The most ancient buildings currently visible are from the 3rd century B.C., notably the Castrum (military camp) of a slightly later date is the Capitolium (temple of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva).



The opus quadratum of the walls of the original castrum at Ostia provide important evidence for the building techniques that were employed in Roman urbanization during the period of the Middle Republic.

Baroque Rome Tour - The tour will start with one of Bernini masterpieces, the Trevi Fountain, then followed by the Pantheon and finally, the Piazza Navona.

The Trevi Fountain - Inspired by Roman triumphal arches, standing 26-metres high and 20-metres wide, the Trevi Fountain is the largest Baroque fountain in the city and one of the most famous fountains in the world. The Trevi Fountain is found at the end of the Aqua Virgo, an aqueduct constructed in 19 B.C. that nowadays still brings water to the fountain from a natural spring located 20km from Rome. Every day, visitors from all over the world throw a coin over their shoulder with their back at the fountain to make sure they'll return to the eternal city.



The Pantheon - Entering the Pantheon, one's attention is caught straightaway by a ray of slanting sunlight shooting down from the "oculus", a 9-metre round aperture at the very top of the dome that illuminates the entire building. The Pantheon was built between 118 and 125 A.D, over the ruins of another temple as a place of worship for all the pagan gods. Since the 7th century it has been used as a Roman Catholic Church dedicated to "St. Mary and the Martyrs".

Piazza Navona - Piazza Navona is one of the most famous and elegant squares in Rome, built over the Stadium of Domitian. Ancient Romans came to the square to watch sport events and shows and today, it still has that vibrant atmosphere with painters and entertainers performing for the joy of the people passing by. This piazza, which displays the genius of Bernini and Borromini, is one of the finest Baroque Masterpieces in papal Rome.

In the evening, we'll return to the hotel for relaxation and our farewell dinner.

Day 8

Breakfast

Rise & shine Rome! After breakfast in our hotel we will formally check-out and dependent upon flight times, take one last look around this magnificent city! Afterwards, we'll say goodbye and wave to our new friends as we leave for the airport and hopefully, take away memories that will last a lifetime!

ARRIVEDERCI!



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