

Spend 8 nights exploring Italy's most beautiful cities. Immerse yourself in the culture, learn & experience the history of the Romans and witness some of the most famous works of art by such artists as Michelangelo & Donatello.

## **9 Day: Rome-Siena-Florence-Venice / Sample Itinerary**

### **Day 1 - Arrive Rome**

On arrival today at Rome's Da Vinci Airport you will be met by your Select Travel Service representative and escorted to your waiting executive motorcoach. Transfer to the hotel for check in. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure. In the early evening you will reconvene in your hotel lobby prior to your transfer to reception arranged for you at a Etruscan Art or Antiques Gallery. Following your reception you will continue onto a dinner in a local restaurant to celebrate the start of your visit to Italy.

### **Day 2 - Rome & Vatican City**

After breakfast this morning you will meet once again with your local Rome guide and head off in your motorcoach for Vatican City. We will spend much of the day at Vatican City. We escape much of the crowds at the Vatican by seeing some of the areas traditionally off limits to regular visitors. We begin with the Vatican Gardens, first enclosed by walls in the 13th century. We then come inside St. Peter's Basilica where following a visit to the superb Sistine Chapel, we take a private tour into the crypt of the basilica to view the remains of St. Peter. We will also spend the day with our specialist guide touring several of the other museums at the Vatican before returning to the hotel late afternoon. Dinner is at leisure tonight.

### **Day 3 - Ancient Rome**

This morning we tour Ancient Rome with visits to the renovated Pantheon one of the true great spiritual buildings in the world. Originally built as a Roman temple it was later consecrated as a Catholic Church. The only natural light is emitted from an oculus in the middle of the dome focusing sunlight on the granite and marbles of the walls and floor. Then we move to the Roman Forum for a walking tour down into the Forum itself. Here your specialist guide will bring everyday Roman life into vivid focus – social structure, marriages, the position of women and children, the Vestal Virgins, education, myths and legends, religion and death. The afternoon is a leisure for personal visits to museums, galleries or of course the great shopping. Tonight we transfer to a local restaurant where we have access to the kitchens for a hands on cooking demonstration of local Roman dishes, and having worked up a suitable appetite, sit down for dinner.

### **Day 4 - Siena/Florence**

This morning leave Rome and tour north to Tuscany. We first stop in Siena, perhaps the best preserved Medieval town in Italy. We will visit the striped Duomo before continuing to the Musee Civico with its unique collection of works of art. For those in good health, we recommend joining the guide for the climb up the Torre de Mangia for some fantastic views of the city and countryside beyond. Leaving Siena behind we travel to Greve, a town named for the river running through it, and the true centre of the Chianti Classico wine region. We will take lunch at the spectacular 5th century castle, Castel Vicchio Maggio. Following a leisurely lunch, we arrive in Florence late afternoon and check in to the hotel.

### **Day 5 - Florence**

There is really only one way to see Florence, and that is on foot. Today we don our walking shoes and set out with a local guide to see the sights. We will start with the Uffizi Gallery where our reservations will allow us to miss the crowds. Then it's onto the Medici Chapel, part of the San Lorenzo Church, designed by Michelangelo and now a mausoleum for the Medici Family. Following an opportunity to buy lunch, we continue on to a well known local leather factory to witness the tanning and waxing process explained by a master craftsman as it transformed into exquisite jackets, shoes, briefcases and pocket books. This evening we gather for dinner at a local restaurant specializing in local beef and other cuts of specialty meats.

### **Day 6 - Southern Tuscany**

Today we lose ourselves in southern Tuscany – the one you dream of in movies and novels, with the small tucked away hill towns and villages seemingly lost in time. We see Val d'Orcia and Pienza and visit Monte

Oliveto Maggiore a time lost monastery and abbey with fantastic works of art including Signorelli frescoes. On occasion may one still hear the Gregorian Chant of the monks. We will also visit the monastery Sant'Anna where the English Patient was filmed. Late afternoon return to Florence. Dinner at leisure.

### **Day 7 - Ravenna / Venice**

Today we leave Florence behind and make our way towards Venice. En route we stop in the majestic town of Ravenna for a visit to San Vitale Church home to some of the greatest mosaics in Italy. We also take a light lunch at a local trattoria before continuing into Venice for check in. Dinner at leisure.

### **Day 8 - Venice**

Our morning tour of Venice begins with a small fleet of gondolas that will take us on a 1 hour trip through the back "streets" of Venice – enjoy the sights and sounds of this most romantic city from the proper perspective of the water. We disembark at St. Marks Square and undertake a 2 hour walking tour including the famous sights of St Marks Basilica and Doge's Palace. The afternoon is totally at leisure for personal sightseeing, relaxation or shopping. We gather for dinner tonight on the terrace of the Bauer Grunwald Hotel with its imposing position overlooking the Grand Canal. A suitably splendid way to conclude our Italian adventure.

### **Day 9 - Depart Home**

Transfer to Marco Polo Airport for your return flight home.

*\*Operated in conjunction with Select Travel Service*

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