

Family friendly program: Rome, Florence and Venice

Written by

Tuesday, 14 June 2011 13:37 - Last Updated Friday, 29 July 2011 11:36



Friday - *DEPART U.S.*

Depart from the U.S. on your overnight flight to Rome.

Saturday - *ARRIVE ROME, COLOSSEUM, HORSE AND CARRIAGE RIDE, WELCOME DINNER*

Arrive at Rome's Leonardo Da Vinci Airport. There you will meet your guide, who will be with you for your entire trip.

Today you and your guide will tour highlights from Rome's several golden ages. Visit the Colosseum, site of gladiatorial combat. It's the model for all modern stadiums, with an ingenious system of entrances and corridors that moved 50,000 spectators to their seats in ten minutes. Over the centuries the Colosseum has been damaged by lightning and earthquakes, and mined for stone to build Renaissance palazzi, but the ruins are still among the most impressive monuments of ancient times. You will also visit the Roman Forum, the Pantheon, and the Trevi Fountain where Neptune, god of the sea, rides a chariot pulled by two horses led by Tritons. To ensure that you will return to Rome, turn your back to the fountain and toss a coin, or better three coins, over your left shoulder into the water.

A leisurely afternoon ride in a traditional horse-drawn open carriage called a "Botticella

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Romana" will show you more of the monuments from Rome's glorious past, and introduce you to the life of this vibrant modern city. Riding through Rome past decorated Baroque churches, fabled squares and fountains, and colorful street scenes will bring to life stories familiar from history, film and literature. End the day with the Welcome Dinner in a typical Roman trattoria.

Sunday - *ROME: GUIDED SIGHTSEEING TOUR AND GOLF-CART JOURNEY*

Cross the Tiber to the Vatican, a city within a city, where you will pass through the monumental colonnade that surrounds St. Peter's Square to see the stunning St. Peter's Basilica, whose great parabolic dome was designed by Michelangelo. Within the Basilica is his beautiful Pieta. Visit the Sistine Chapel to see Michelangelo's famed ceiling frescoes depicting scenes from the Book of Genesis and his Last Judgment. Later in the day you will be whisked away on an unforgettable golf cart journey through Rome, visiting the Spanish Steps, the Piazza Navona and other landmarks, noting the historic churches and the intriguing shops, and discovering the best coffee and the best ice cream in town. By the end of this day you will know your way around central Rome!

Monday - *TRAIN TO FLORENCE □ GELATO TASTING*

Leave Rome this morning on a high-speed train that takes you to Florence, passing through the lovely Tuscan countryside. Your hotel is located near the center of this Renaissance city of art and culture. After the train trip it's time for some ice cream. Visit Gelateria Vivoli, one of Florence's most famous ice cream shops, for a gelato tasting! The Vivoli family has made gelato for Florentines and visitors since 1930. This afternoon you will also have time on your own to explore the squares and byways of this Renaissance city with your family and friends, stroll the banks of the River Arno, and to enjoy dinner at one of the many outdoor restaurants.

Tuesday - *WALKING TOUR OF FLORENCE □ ACCADEMIA □ HOME-HOSTED DINNER*

Enjoy a guided walking tour of this art-filled city. One of the highlights will be the Duomo, the Cathedral with Brunelleschi's wondrous dome that dominates the skyline and stands as the symbol of Florence. The church known as "Il Duomo," or "The Dome," is the Cathedral of Santa Maria dei Fiori. It was built in the 14th century, and the dome itself was designed by Filippo Brunelleschi and added between 1420 and 1436. Though no longer the largest dome in the

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world, it remains a celebrated feat of design and engineering as well as a beautiful monument.

Your tour takes you to the Accademia, where Michelangelo's David is housed, and to the Ponte Vecchio, or "Old Bridge," which is indeed the oldest bridge across the Arno. Built in 1345, it is lined with shops selling gold, silver and other decorative items. This is the one bridge in Florence that the Nazis did not destroy before retreating in 1944. They reduced buildings at either end to rubble, making the bridge impassable, but left the ancient bridge itself. After your walking tour, you have the rest of the afternoon to visit other sites of your choice; later you are invited to a home-hosted dinner of typical Tuscan dishes with a Florentine family.

Wednesday - FLORENCE: UFFIZI GALLERY □ PIZZA MAKING

The Uffizi Gallery, near the Accademia and the Duomo, holds one of the world's greatest collections of Renaissance art. For your guided visit we have selected some of the most renowned paintings and some of interest to people of all ages. You will see Botticelli's La Primavera and The Birth of Venus, both recently restored, and his Adoration of the Magi, as well as works by Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, and portraits of the nobility who ruled Renaissance Florence. Then learn how Florentines make pizza! Your pizza-making workshop will be followed, of course, by a pizza lunch. Take the rest of the day to visit the shops, markets, museums or historic sites of your choice, and to revisit sites you aren't ready to leave. Your guide will be glad to assist you with routes and directions, and with any plans that involve transportation.

Thursday - TRAIN TO VENICE □ GONDOLA RIDE

After breakfast you'll leave for the railroad station to board a fast train to Venice. Santa Lucia Station in Venice is right on the Grand Canal, so you'll transfer to your hotel by private motor launch. Wherever you have lunch in Venice, you're likely to see canals, gondolas and gondoliers. In the afternoon you'll have your own gondola ride through the hidden canals of Venice, gliding past marble palazzi and under bridges as your gondolier expertly balances and guides the boat through the still green waters. Choose a spot for dinner that affords a view of a lovely square, a graceful old church or an especially delightful canal.

Friday - VENICE TOUR □ MASK MAKING □ FAREWELL DINNER

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On today's guided walking tour of Venice you will see many reminders of the wealth and power of the Venetian Republic. In St. Mark's Square you are face-to-face with the Basilica of San Marco, which looks very different from Europe's other great churches. For centuries Venice was a powerful trading center with close connections to the Byzantine world of the Eastern Mediterranean. The 11th-century Basilica was built in the shape of a Greek cross, crowned with five domes and filled with glowing mosaics set in gold. The four bronze horses over the entrance were brought to Venice from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade. (They are copies; the originals are in the Museo Marciano).

Walk along the waterfront, seeing the basin alive with gondolas, water taxis and the vaporetti that function as water buses. Finish your tour with a visit to the Doge's Palace, a 14th-century Gothic building that was both the Venetian ruler's residence and the government building. Ambassadors were received there, councils met, and convicts were sentenced. The walls and the ceiling of the Grand Council Chamber are lined with paintings including Tintoretto's enormous Paradise.

In your walks through Venice you have seen shop windows filled with colorful masks and half-masks. This afternoon at an artisan's studio you can decorate your own carnevale mask. An optional excursion will take you by vaporetto to nearby Lido for a bike ride through the outer islands of Pellestrina or Chioggia. Gather in the evening for the Farewell Dinner at a family-run trattoria.

Saturday - *DEPART VENICE & RETURN HOME*

Early this morning transfer by private motor launch to Venice's Marco Polo Airport to board your return flight to the U.S.