



ACADEMY INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SERVICES, INC.

The Ennobling Interplay of Art, Science, and Theology A Union Presbyterian Seminary Travel Seminar to Italy

May 9-24, 2017

Tour leaders: Dr. Samuel E. Balentine and Dr. E. Carson Brisson

All religions, art, and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it up from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.

Albert Einstein

Itinerary

Departure and arrival times are subject to change by the airlines. Schedule adjustments for some days can be expected, especially to avoid crowds and maximize time at particular venues.

Tuesday, May 9 Washington to Venice

We depart in the late afternoon from Washington/Dulles on United Airlines for Venice, Italy, via Frankfurt, Germany. A majority of the group will travel from Richmond by chartered coach or by a connecting flight from Charlotte; a few other participants may meet us at Dulles or possibly in Frankfurt.

Wednesday, May 10 Venice

Early morning arrival in Venice and transfer to hotel. In the afternoon, we will have a leisurely walking tour of St. Mark's Square, then return to our hotel for dinner and a good night's sleep.

Thursday, May 11 Venice

After breakfast at the hotel, we return to St. Mark's Square for a closer look at St. Mark's Basilica, the Clock tower, and the Doge Palace (don't miss the sculpture at the northwest corner of the judgment of Solomon, with the archangel Gabriel looking on



Arrive in Venice

from above). In the afternoon, we will head to the northern end of the Venetian lagoon for a visit to the small island of Torcello and its sights, including the seventh century Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta with its vivid Byzantine mosaics.

Friday, May 12
Venice

We begin this day with a visit to the Accademia and its marvelous collection of paintings from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Our tour guide and our tour leaders will help us “see” the truth and beauty in master works like Titian’s famous “Mourning of Christ,” and Veronese’s “Christ at the House of Levi.” Here, as in all of the museums we will visit on this tour, we will not attempt to see everything but instead will select specific pieces to which we want to give special attention, always leaving free time for participants to explore these treasures more fully on their own. We will discover other art treasures in the Frari Church and the Scuola di San Rocco, especially Tintoretto’s depiction of the biblical story from Fall to Redemption. In the afternoon, we will take a boat ride out to the islands of Murano and Burano, where Venetian glass and linen are made. If we time our visit just right, we will be able to look back over the



Venice Clock Tower and Doge Palace

waters as the sun descends over Venice and see the dazzling spectrum of shimmering lights that mesmerized so many of the great Renaissance artists.

Saturday, May 13
Venice-Padua

After breakfast at our hotel, we will take a short coach ride to Padua to visit the Scrovengi Chapel and the amazing fourteenth century cycle of frescoes by Giotto, which inspired the works of his contemporary Dante and later Michelangelo. Next, we make our way to the University of Padua for a tour of the Palazzo Bo and the anatomical theater where Galileo once lectured. After lunch, we enjoy a leisurely coach ride through the countryside to Ravenna for dinner and overnight stay.

Sunday, May 14
Ravenna

We begin the day in Ravenna with a visit to the Arian Baptistry and a first glimpse of the most beautiful Byzantine mosaics outside Turkey that we will see at our next stop, the Basilica of San Vitale. After lunch, we will visit Sant'Apollinare in Classe, a beautiful example of an early Christian basilica, and the



Ravenna: Arian Baptistry

Mausoleum of Galla Placida, a chapel shaped as a Greek cross, with glittering fifth century mosaics covering its vault. Note especially the depiction of Christ as the Good Shepherd just over the north entrance, which makes interesting changes to the image that was common in the Roman catacombs. In the late afternoon, our coach will take us to Florence, the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance. After dinner at the hotel, some may want to take a stroll through the heart of the city, taking time to enjoy some gelato in a nearby café along the way.

Monday, May 15
Florence

Today includes visits to Orsanmichele, a fourteenth century grainery that was converted to a church, the Palazzo Vecchio, with a copy of Michelangelo's sculpture "David" just outside, and the Palazzo Pitti, the main residence of the Medici family. The Medicis commissioned many of the works of the great Florentine artists that are now housed in the Uffizi Gallery, which will also be on our itinerary today. With one of the most distinguished collections in the world, the Uffizi gives us a chance to immerse ourselves in the beauty and glory of Renaissance art. Our expert guide will discuss specific works, such as Botticelli's "Primavera," Michelangelo's "The Holy Family," and Lippi's "Madonna and Child with Angels." But we will leave ample free time for exploration of the rest of the Uffizi's treasures, which include paintings by Raphael, Rubens, Caravaggio, Correggio, and Titian. By days end we will have enjoyed a feast of artistic imagination and beauty that we will savor for a lifetime.

Tuesday, May 16
Florence

After breakfast at the hotel, we head off for to the Accademia, home to some of Michelangelo's most famous sculptures, including "David," a copy of which we have seen in the Piazza della Signoria, "St. Matthew," and the "Quattro Prigioni" (the four horsemen). At the center of the main market district is the Basilica of St. Lawrence, designed in part by Brunelleschi, the leading architect of the early Renaissance period. Michelangelo designed the interior façades of the basilica and the New Sacristy, which contains the tombs of the principal members of the Medici family. The last stop of the day will be the Museum of San Marco, a former Dominican convent associated with one of Florence's most distinguished (and notorious!) clergy figures, Girolamo Savonarola, whose prison cell we can visit. The museum of Fra' Angelico, which is part of this larger complex, contains frescoed interiors painted by this famous artist, along with some of his most important panel series, including the "Crucifixion."

Wednesday, May 17
Florence



Florence: Baptistery of Saint John

Our tour begins at the Duomo (cathedral) that dominates the heart of the city with its enormous dome, a revolutionary achievement designed by Brunelleschi. As the largest dome of its time without scaffolding, it was the model Michelangelo used for St. Peter's in Rome. In front of the Duomo is the Baptistry, its outside featuring the celebrated bronze doors designed by Ghiberti – Michelangelo dubbed the East doors “The Gates of Paradise.” The Baptistry’s interior ceiling is covered with colorful thirteenth century mosaics illustrating the Last Judgment. Dante was

baptized in the large octagonal font that stands in the center. Many items from the Duomo and the Baptistry, including the original Ghiberti panels from the Baptistry doors, were removed for protection and are housed now in the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo (the Cathedral Works Museum), which we will visit next. Among the other treasures we will see here are statutes designed by the famous Florentine sculptor Donatello, none more poignant than “La Maddalena,” which portrays the palpable depth of Mary Magdalene’s grief and sorrow, or more evocative than the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk, whom Florentines affectionately call lo zucone, “bone-head.” We end this full and rich day at the magnificent Gothic Church of Santa Croce, which contains the tombs of Michelangelo, Galileo, and Machiavelli. The spacious interior contains frescoes by Giotto and his student, Taddeo Gaddi. Incorporated into the cloister beside the cathedral is Brunelleschi’s domed Piazza Chapel. As we enter the Chapel, Cimabue’s damaged thirteenth century “Crucifixion” reminds us of the damage the cathedral suffered in the floods of 1966.

Thursday, May 18
Sienna, San Gimignano,
Assisi

After breakfast, we head by coach to Sienna for a walking tour of the city, which includes the Piazza del Campo, the site for the traditional medieval Palio horse races, still conducted twice each year, and the Siena Cathedral (Duomo). The day continues with a coach ride to San Gimignano, a picturesque medieval hilltop town known locally as the “town of the beautiful towers.” Once inside its walls, we will feel like we have entered another



Assisi

world – fortified gates and towers, narrow streets with arched entrances, well-preserved Tuscan homes and open gardens. A highlight of our visit will be the twelfth century Collegiate Church. The façade is simple, but once inside we are greeted with floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall frescoes. As we move toward the high altar, we “read” and “see” the biblical story from creation to crucifixion, with scenes from the Old Testament on our left, scenes from the New Testament on our right. On the one side we walk with Noah, Abraham, Joseph, and Job; on the other side, we are joined by Peter, Mary, Judas, and Jesus. As the sun begins to set on this day in the Tuscan hills, we return to our coach and head south to Assisi, the birthplace of St. Francis, where we will stay for the night.

Friday, May 19

Assisi

This morning we begin at the Basilica of San Francesco (St. Francis), which is divided into upper and lower sections. The upper section contains frescoes depicting scenes from the life of St. Francis; the lower section, frescoes from medieval artists Cimabue and Giotto. We get another perspective on the life of St. Francis when we visit the basilica dedicated to Santa Chiara (St. Claire), an Assisi woman who left a family of wealth to follow Francis and became the founder of the Order of Poor Ladies, now called the Order of St. Claire. Our last stop for the day will be at the blue domed Santa Maria degli Angeli in the valley below the city, a site where Francis spent much of his time. The church was designed by Michelangelo, whose architectural fingerprints we will now begin to recognize. In the late afternoon, our coach takes us to Rome, our home away from home for the next five days. After dinner at the hotel, those who have energy may want to begin exploring this majestic city on their own.

Saturday, May 20

Rome

Our first full day in Rome begins with the “Classical Rome” walking tour, which will bring us to the Trevi fountain and the Pantheon, one of the best preserved classical temples in Rome. Close by are two churches with art treasures many tourists often overlook: San Luigi Francesca, with Caravaggio’s “Jesus Calling Matthew,” and Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, with Michelangelo’s sculpted “Christ Bearing the Cross.” After lunch, we head for the Coliseum and the heart of ancient Rome, including the Palatine Hill, the Roman Forum, and Circus Maximus. The evening will be free for participants to explore the city on their own.



Rome: Titus Arch

Sunday, May 21

Rome

After breakfast at our hotel, we visit the Borghese Gardens in the northern part of the city and the famous Borghese Gallery, where we enjoy a marvelous collection of Baroque sculpture, including Bernini’s “David,” and masterpieces by Raphael, Caravaggio, and Rubens. A visit to the Barberini Palazzo, a baroque palace designed by two of the most important Renaissance architects, Bernini and Borromini, takes us into the National Gallery, where we will study an array of masterpieces by Renaissance artists, including Simone Martini’s “Mother and Child,” and Raphael’s famous, “La Fornarina” (The Baker). With our morning’s tour complete, the rest of the afternoon is free for participants to explore other parts of the city at their leisure.

Monday, May 22
Rome

Today's itinerary begins with a visit to St. Paul Outside the Walls, one of four major basilicas in Rome. The first church on this site was established by Constantine in the fourth century to mark the burial place of the apostle Paul, whose statue stands in the front courtyard. The basilica has undergone multiple restorations over the centuries, but still preserved are the fifth century triumphal mosaic of the Apocalypse and the thirteenth century mosaic of Christ and the Apostles Peter, Paul, Andrew, and Luke. Our next stop will be the Vatican, including St. Peter's, the Vatican museums, and the Sistine Chapel. Probably most everyone has seen pictures and photographs of what we'll see at the Vatican, but there is nothing quite like standing before these treasures for the first time. Prepare to be amazed!

Tuesday, May 23
Rome

Our final day in Rome is a feast of Roman churches, including Santa Maria Maggiore, which contains some of the oldest representations of the Virgin Mary as Theotokos (God-Bearer) in Christian antiquity, San Giovanni in Laterano, the official seat of the Bishop of Rome, Santa Maria in Trastevere, with its twenty-

two granite Ionic and Corinthian columns, St. Peter in Chains, where we will see Michelangelo's famous sculpture of Moses (note the horns protruding from the top of his head – where would Michelangelo get the idea for such an “exegesis” of Moses?), and Santa Maria della Vittoria, which contains Bernini's emotionally charged sculpture called “The Ecstasy of St. Theresa.” At the end of the day, as thoughts turn toward our flight home, we should be not only amazed at what we have seen but also, just maybe, “ennobled” by what we have experienced by immersing ourselves in the interplay of art, science, and religion.



Rome: Pantheon

Wednesday, May 24
Rome

We will take an early morning coach ride to the airport for our return flight home. The Richmond group will change planes in Frankfurt and are scheduled to arrive at Washington/Dulles in the early afternoon on Wednesday. A chartered coach will take most of us back to Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond. The Charlotte group will fly out of Rome to Munich and are scheduled to arrive at the Charlotte airport in the late afternoon on Wednesday. Richmond graduands will have several days to prepare for commencement on Saturday.