

Suggested Italy Itinerary – Students

10 Days

Day 1/2 – Depart USA, Arrive Italy

Depart USA, arrive Rome, and transfer to our hotel in the heart of ancient Rome. After an introduction to Italian culture, we take a walking tour of our neighborhood, including the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore and the Colosseum, before dinner out at a local trattoria.

Day 3 – Rome: Colosseum, Roman Forum

For thousands of years, emperors, priests, merchants, and tourists have journeyed to the Eternal City of Rome. With a rich ancient history matched only by its own Renaissance influence, Rome is easily one of the most important cities on the planet. We'll begin our tour at the world-famous Colosseum, where we marvel at the impressiveness of Roman architecture and learn about the deadly games that once took place. From the Colosseum we visit the Arch of Constantine and talk about how this ancient Roman emperor ushered in the age of Christianity. We then walk down the ancient Sacred Way into the Roman Forum, the heart of the world's greatest empire. After lunch, we take an elevator to the top of the Victor Emmanuel monument for sweeping views of the Eternal City.

Day 4 – Ostia Antica, St. Paul's, St. John Lateran

In the morning we'll make our way outside the city to visit Ostia Antica, the old port town of ancient Rome. Viewing half the site as a group, we'll then have some time to explore on our own, meeting together for lunch. Afterwards we'll continue our studies in the life of the early church by visiting the church of St. Paul Outside the Walls, built over the site of Paul's tomb to discuss his Gospel message to the Romans. Lastly, coming back into town we stop at the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran, the official ecclesiastical seat of the Pope.

Day 5 – Rome: Pantheon, Piazza Navona, Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps

Today we begin our walking tour of Rome as the ancients did, at the Porta del Popolo gate at the Piazza del Popolo. After marveling at the Egyptian obelisk and the paintings by Caravaggio in the Basilica of Santa Maria we stroll along the Tiber River, passing by the Ara Pacis monument and over the beautiful Bridge of Hadrian with its famous angel sculptures. We then enjoy some free time in the wonderful Piazza Navona before heading to the Pantheon—perhaps the greatest fully extant ancient building in the world. After stopping for gelato, we continue to the Column of Marcus Aurelius, enjoy free time on Rome's main drag, gaze at the stunning Trevi Fountain, and end our day soaking in the atmosphere from the Spanish Steps.

Day 6 – Rome: Catacombs & Vatican City

On our final day in Rome we explore Rome's Christian heritage, from its early history during the Roman persecution to the glory of the Renaissance Popes. In the morning we explore the ancient Christian catacombs and their winding, underground chambers as we discuss the Roman persecution of the Christians. We then make our way to Vatican City, home of the Catholic Church. We tour the world-class museum, admiring works from the ancient Greeks to the Renaissance masters, before marveling at the stunning Sistine Chapel with its famous frescoes by Michelangelo. We end our tour in monumental St. Peter's Basilica, the spiritual center of the Catholic faith and its grandest church.

Day 7 – Assisi

Visiting Assisi and its church dedicated to St. Francis is a moving experience for all visitors. Francis, born here in 1181, renounced his earthly possessions and lived a life of holiness and poverty, making him one of the chief saints of the Catholic Church. His basilica is a magnificent tribute to the venerated man, with world-famous frescoes by Giotto, Cimabue and Martini. After a guided tour through town and the basilica, we continue to beautiful Florence where we check into our centrally located hotel for the next three nights.

Day 8 – Florence

Florence is truly one of the world's most amazing cities. Our walking tour will include many of the signature works of the Renaissance as we learn about the city that launched modern European culture. We'll start in the heart of Florence at the Baptistry of St. John where we see the Byzantine style mosaics of the roof. Stepping outside, we see Ghiberti's famous *Gates of Paradise*, considered the beginning of Renaissance sculpture. From here we marvel at the grand Duomo and Brunelleschi's magnificent, red-tiled dome. We continue to the Duomo Museum before lunch, followed by a visit to the Academia where we see one of the crowning works of the Renaissance, Michelangelo's *David*. Students are then free to hike to the top of the Duomo, grab a gelato, or shop in the streetside leather market.

Day 9 – Pisa, Lucca

Pisa is famous for its Leaning Tower. It is a strangely appealing building, yet it is just a single component of Pisa's breathtaking and dazzling architectural complex of the Campo dei Miracoli. We visit the Romanesque Duomo and acoustically remarkable baptistery before a climb of the tower. We then continue to the beautiful Tuscan town of Lucca where students are free to ride a bike along the still intact Renaissance walls and explore the town's engaging mix of past and present. In the evening, we return to Florence for our final dinner and closing meeting.

Day 10 – Depart Florence, Arrive USA

Depart for home with new experiences, lasting memories, and a lifelong love of Italy!