

ROME, ASSISI, SIENA, FLORENCE & MILAN

St. Peter, St. Francis & Italian Renaissance comprise the grandeur of Rome, the peaceful beauty of Assisi and the classic Renaissance art of Florence in one magnificent visit. Contemplate the beauty of the Pietà in St. Peter's Basilica, the "David" in the Accademia Gallery and Giotto's frescos in Assisi, all outstanding reflections of faith through art. Visit some of Italy's glorious basilicas and other religious sites in each of the three cities.



DAY 1: NEW YORK/ROME - We depart on an international overnight flight to Rome. Dinner and breakfast are served on board.

DAY 2: ROME - Upon arrival in Rome, we are greeted by our tour guide, and next board our deluxe motorcoach for transfer to our hotel. The balance of the day is at leisure to rest or explore the city on our own. Dinner and overnight in Rome. (D)

DAY 3: ROME - After breakfast we depart for the Vatican City, where we gather with pilgrims from around the world to attend a Papal Audience (if available). In the afternoon, we visit the Vatican Museums, home to one of the world's greatest art collections, and Michelangelo's breathtaking Sistine Chapel followed by a tour of St. Peter's Basilica, the largest church in Christendom, built over his tomb. We have the remainder of the day to sample Rome's many delights on our own. Dinner and overnight in Rome. (B/D)

DAY 4: ROME - Today we enjoy a full day tour of Rome. The highlights include the Catacombs, the Appian Way, Capitoline Hill, Basilica of St. Peter in Chains, the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, the Arch of Constantine, and the Circus Maximus. We visit the three major basilicas of Rome: the Basilica of St. Mary Major, one of the oldest shrines dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary and built on the site where the Virgin Mary appeared in a dream of pope Liberius; the Basilica of St. John in Lateran, the former residence of the popes prior to their return to Rome in 1377; the Holy Stairs, which is

believed to be a staircase from Pilate's palace in Jerusalem that Jesus climbed when he was condemned to death and brought to Rome by St. Helena in the 4th century. Time permitting, we may climb these stairs on our knees in memory of Christ's Passion. Continue to the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Wall built over his tomb. Dinner and overnight in Rome. (B/D)

DAY 5: ROME/ASSISI - We depart Rome after breakfast for a scenic ride by motorcoach to Assisi. We arrive in the Valley of Assisi where we visit the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels where St. Francis spent most of his life. Here we visit the Chapel, Porziuncola, the rose bush, and the cave where he retired for prayer. We travel up to the quaint hilltop, birthplace of St. Francis that still retains something of the atmosphere of the early 1200s, the period when St. Francis began his ministry. We visit St. Francis's huge 13th-century Basilica built over his crypt containing many of the saint's possessions and a series of frescoes depicting his life. We continue to the Church of St. Clare to see the saint's incorrupt body. The foundress of the Order of Poor Clares followed the teachings of St. Francis by living a life of poverty and humility. We may kneel before the San Damiano Cross from which Jesus spoke to St. Francis asking him to rebuild His church. Dinner and overnight in Assisi. (B/D)

DAY 6: ASSISI - Enjoy a day of leisure in Assisi. Walk the quaint narrow streets to shop, enjoy the local cafes, or take an optional tour (at additional cost) up to the Hermitage of Carceri located outside Assisi where St. Francis and his followers found a secluded place for prayer and meditation. Saint Francis returned there often throughout his

life. Here we truly can see why St. Francis was the Patron Saint of birds, animals, and the environment. Dinner and overnight in Assisi. (B/D)

DAY 7: ASSISI/SIENA/FLORENCE - Today we bid farewell to Assisi as we head for beautiful Siena, located in the central Italian region of Tuscany. Siena's historic center was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995. It is the birthplace of Saint Catherine. We visit the Piazza del Campo, the Cathedral, the Basilica of St. Francis which contains the miraculous consecrated hosts still intact since 1730, and the Basilica of San Domenico where we view the incorrupt head of St. Catherine. We continue to Florence and upon arrival enjoy city tour including visits to the Duomo, the Santa Croce Church and the famous statue of "David" by Michelangelo located on Accademia Gallery. Dinner and overnight in Florence. (B/D)

DAY 8: FLORENCE/MILAN - Morning at leisure to explore this Renaissance city on your own. Enjoy shopping for leather, jewelry, and glassware before we depart for Milan, Italy's second most populous city. Our orientation tour will take us past Duomo Square, the Cathedral, and La Scala Opera House before we check into our hotel. Dinner and overnight in the Milan area. (B/D)

DAY 9: MILAN/NEW YORK - After breakfast we transfer to Milan airport for our flight back home arriving the same day. (B)

NOTE: Papal Audience is possible only on Wednesdays and is subject of confirmation. It can be cancelled without prior notice, depends on The Pope's schedule.