



## CLASSIC ITALY: ROMA, FIRENZE & VENEZIA

**SMALL GROUP GRAND TOUR FOR 2017** Experience the camaraderie and small-group privileges of traveling with 22 guests as you ... savor an unhurried look at Michelangelo's painted genius blanketing the vaulted ceiling of the Sistine Chapel ... stroll the lavish halls of Doge's Palace ... hear echoes of the past in the Colosseum, still echoing the roars of a Roman crowd ... the astonishing splendor of the Vatican Museum ... celebrate the Renaissance in Florence ... sample a taste of village life in San Gimignano ... experience the golden mosaics inside St. Marks Basilica ... all the while creating lifelong memories on the trip of a lifetime!

**TOUR DATE:** September 12 – 22, 2017

### 1. TOUR BEGINS WITH AN INTERNATIONAL OVERNIGHT FLIGHT TO ROME

**2. ARRIVE IN ROME** – A transfer is included from Rome Airport to our elegant hotel. Time for lunch and a brief tour. There will be time for a little exploring on your own or rest and recover from jet lag. A group evening dinner is included at IL Gallo Nero – a short walk from our hotel.

**3. FULL DAY ANCIENT ROME** – Today you will see the main sites of the Ancient Rome and also some of the other major sites of the city. We begin with a 3 hour guided tour of the Roman Colosseum, Palatine Hill and Roman Forum. You will also be able to see: Circus Maximus, Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, Janiculum Hill, Keyhole and more as time allows.



**4. FULL DAY CHRISTIAN ROME** – Awe sets in on a guided visit to Saint Peter's Basilica and Square, where Michelangelo's dome houses an ornate cathedral and galleries filled with masterpieces including the *Pieta*. The inspiring Sistine Chapel will also be a part of this full day Christian Rome. Also as a part of this full day Christian Rome you will visit the Catacombs and stop along the Appian Way.

**5. TIVOLI and CASTEL GANDOLFO** – Today we head out of Rome to the town of Tivoli where you will begin the tour with Villa d'Este, whose gardens make it one of the most visited places on earth! Then off to the nice and picturesque town of Castel Gandolfo. You will have a walk around the walls of the Summer residence of the Pope and the chance to eat lunch with the view of the lake of Albano.

**6. DEPART ROME AND HEAD TO FLORENCE – ON OUR WAY TO FLORENCE YOU WILL VISIT SIENA & SAN GIMIGNANO** – You will journey to Siena through Chianti country, abundant with locally produced red wine, timeless art

and classic architecture, as well as landscapes rich in vineyards olive groves and cypresses. In the medieval town of Siena, walk to the Piazza del Campo, where the *Palio*, Siena's world-famous bareback horse race, has been run twice a year for centuries. Wander through the narrow streets to visit the black-and-white Duomo, then continue on through the green countryside of Tuscany. Tuscany is an enchanting region, where for centuries the beauty of nature has blended with the ingenuities of mankind; your travels through the rolling Tuscan hills take you through golden landscapes dotted with olive and fig trees. Arrive in the hilltop town of San Gimignano, one of its gems. The town's famous medieval towers, built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by the nobility, are visible from afar. Stroll the quaint streets and visit Piazza della Cisterna, one of Italy's most picturesque town squares. Lunch today is included at one of the wineries near San Gimignano.



**7. THE RENAISSANCE CITY OF FLORENCE** – Today is a private walking tour of all the main sites, including the Academy Gallery that houses the statue of David. Art and architecture whisper the history of the ages in Florence, birthplace of the Renaissance. Florence is a monument of Renaissance riches, like Piazza della Signoria, home to Florence's town hall; the elaborate Duomo topped by Brunelleschi's masterpiece dome; and the 14<sup>th</sup> century Ponte Vecchio, framing delightful views of the Arno River. After lunch the remainder of the day is free for you to spend as you wish.

**8. DAY TRIP TO PISA AND LUCCA** – Few buildings in the world have captured imaginations as much as the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the most instantly recognizable building in the Western world (except, perhaps, for the Eiffel Tower).

In 56 B.C. Caesar, Crassus and Pompey met triumvirate. By the time of the Roman Empire's Tuscany. Periodically in its valiant, ever-bloody principality, enjoying fame and prestige. Now, and travelers, rewarding those who venture off

In the late 1600's, Lucca's third and final set ramparts is largely intact and is one of the architecture ranges from Roman to Liberty. Today, Lucca is best known for its *olio d'oliva* region outside the town's walls.



in Lucca and agreed to rule Rome as a collapse, Lucca was virtually the capital of history, this town was an independent however, Lucca is largely bypassed by time the beaten track. of city walls was erected. This girdle of major reasons to visit the town, where the

*lucchese*, the quality olive oil produced in the

**9. RIDE A FAST TRAIN TO VENICE** – Your high-speed train whisks you from Florence to Venice, traversed by some 100 canals lined with palaces dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Transfer by canal boat to our hotel, conveniently located near St. Mark's Square. After lunch you will experience a gondola cruise along the timeless canals of Venice. The remainder of the afternoon is for you to explore Venice on your own, truly one of the world's most remarkable cities. You've got a lot to choose from – perhaps exploring along its narrow streets, lanes, and countless bridges; taking in the constant cacophony of café-life, live music, waiters and pigeons at St. Mark's Square.

**10. LANDMARK VENETIAN SIGHTS** – More waterfront delights await in the extraordinary city of Venice, poetically described by Lord Byron as "a fairy city of the heart." You will discover its charms on a walking tour today with a local guide who shares insights and the history that lies behind the walls of its most famous landmarks, the St. Mark's Basilica and its Byzantine Heritage, the Doge's Palace and its adjoining prisons, that retain the true secrets to comprehend how a city built on swamps became one of the most enlightened cities in the western world.

Then, leave the square and the crowds behind to enjoy a sightseeing tour of the real Venice, enter a labyrinth of narrow passageways and alleys where an enchanting city of meandering canals punctuated by delicate bridges awaits you. Explore the lively Campo Santa Maria Formosa with its outstanding Gothic Palaces and at the Scuola di San Marco learn about the famous trade schools of Venice that provided the foundations of the great mercantile empire.

After lunch you will enjoy a private two-hour boat tour of Venice as you'll travel along the Grand Canal and minor canals to see more of the city. You will enjoy an informative and entertaining tour of the Grand Canal, the main street of Venice, and some of the minor canals of Venice. As you cruise down the Grand Canal you'll be introduced to the splendid palaces, churches, gardens, bridges and warehouses that line Venice's main street.

After the tour of the Grand Canal you will get to explore some of the lesser known parts of the city as you take a meandering route through the smaller canals that traverse the city. Visit the Jewish Ghetto in the Cannaregio district of Venice, travel through the San Polo district of Venice where you can see some of the oldest buildings in Venice. Tonight we will have a group dinner in fine Venetian style.



## 11. TRANSFER FROM VENICE HOTEL TO MARCO POLO AIRPORT FOR FLIGHT BACK TO TEXAS

### HOTELS DURING THE TRIP:

Rome 4 Nights– Best Western Plus Hotel Universo (Four \*\*\*\*Star) [www.hoteluniverso.com](http://www.hoteluniverso.com)

Florence 3 Nights – Hotel Savoy (Five \*\*\*\*\*Star) [www.roccofortehotels.com/savoy-florence](http://www.roccofortehotels.com/savoy-florence)

Venice 2 nights – Hotel Concordia (Four \*\*\*\*Star) [www.hotelconcordia.com](http://www.hotelconcordia.com)

**TOUR COST: \$4,994\*** (price is per person based on 2 people sharing room) For Single Rate please call

### COST INCLUDES:

- Roundtrip Airfare from Houston
- Transfers To and From Airport
- First Class High Speed Train Ticket
- Travel Insurance
- Admission to all attractions and events
- Gondola Ride in Venice
- Gratuities to all Guides, Drivers and Meals
- City Tax for each of our hotels
- Several Meals – 9 Breakfasts, 1 Lunch, 3 Dinners

\*The price above could change if the exchange rate between the Euro and the dollar makes a big change.

### DEPOSIT INFORMATION:

\$800 Per Person Due by  
January 25, 2017

### FINAL PAYMENT DUE: August 1, 2017

This Classic Italy tour will be restricted to a small group of only 22 participants.

Please fill out the Registration Form and send in with your deposit in order to be confirmed for the tour.

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:** Traveling in Europe is much different than our bus trips here in the states. Each day of

this tour there will be lots of walking involved, some days more than others. You will need to be able to handle quite a bit of walking. There will be a couple of afternoons where you will have free time to either rest and recover or do some exploring on your own. You will also need to be able to handle your own suitcase as we deal with walking to the train station in Florence. You will have to go down several steps to get to the platform level to board the train. Then you will have to get your suitcase onto the train. You will only be able to bring one suitcase and I recommend a 22 inch suitcase but no more than a 24 inch suitcase.

**INFORMATIONAL MEETING:** There will be an informational meeting planned for everyone in February. This will help with your individual planning for the trip.