



Educational Tours

Italian Gardens

A private tour designed by Julia Laughlin, in conjunction with EF Customized Tours

Requested departure date: Friday, May 18, 2012

(Dates below are subject to change. Required date flexibility of 4 days on either side of requested departure date)

Day 1

Friday, May 18, 2012

Board your overnight flight to Milan!

Day 2

Saturday, May 19, 2012

Arrival in Milan

Arrive in Milan, fashion and finance capital of Italy. With its majestically adorned cathedral and the world-famous La Scala opera-house at the center, Milan is a mixture of traditional beauty and an economically successful present.

Transfer to Venice via Verona (time permitting)

Transfer by way of Romeo and Juliet's Verona, known for its couplets and Capulets! Here you can see the town's Roman Arena, which dates back over 2,000 years. You will also find a bronze statue of Juliet in the tiny courtyard that houses the balcony made famous by Shakespeare.

Arrival in Venice

Arrive in magical Venice, home of Marco Polo. Known globally for its gondoliers and glassware, Venice is also a heady mix of busy piazzas, thronging with pizzerias and cafes, as well as deserted streets, alongside canals, leading to hidden gems such as churches or local-dominated restaurants serving regional delicacies.

Overnight in Venice

Day 3

Sunday, May 20, 2012

Guided sightseeing of Venice

Begin your sightseeing of la Serenissima (the city's nickname meaning "the most serene") at St. Mark's Square, "the finest drawing room in Europe," according to Napoleon. Allegedly buried under the altar of the basilica are St. Mark's remains, which, in the 11th century, were smuggled out of Alexandria in a barrel of salt pork to prevent a thorough search by the city's Muslim guards. Also, see the Grand Canal and the 324-foot Campanile (Bell Tower), whose steps were originally built so that a noble could ascend on horseback. Look for the clock where two bronze figures have been striking the hour for over 500 years. Venice is also famous for its glassware—you'll see why during a glassblowing demonstration.

Visit to the Doges' Palace

Visit the grand 14th century pink and white Doges' Palace, from which mighty Venetian dukes once ruled. Here you'll stroll over the Bridge of Sighs, connecting the palace and its prison. As they crossed the bridge, prisoners supposedly sighed with perfect sadness as they regarded their beautiful city for the last time. Casanova made a daring escape from this prison in 1756.

Free time in Venice

The afternoon is yours to explore wondrous Venezia. Stroll along the intertwining canals, or venture into the labyrinth of streets crammed with restaurants and shops. Alternatively, you might wish to take in the views from

the Rialto Bridge. Otherwise, enjoy a truly romantic experience and ride in one of the city's many gondolas along some of its finest canals.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Venice

Day 4

Monday, May 21, 2012

Transfer to Florence

Set deep in the heart of Tuscany is one of Italy's jewels. The city of Florence has delighted visitors for centuries with its remarkable architecture. Whether sitting by the River Arno, strolling the beautifully housed streets or viewing the renaissance masterpieces that fill the city's churches and museums, one can only be astonished by the feeling of true beauty.

Guided sightseeing of Florence

Fall under the spell of the powerful Medici family on your guided tour. See Giotto's Bell Tower and the imposing marble cathedral in the Piazza del Duomo. Stand before Ghiberti's legendary Gates of Paradise (so dubbed by Michelangelo), and pass the classical statues of the Piazza della Signoria- here you can see where Michelangelo's David originally stood. Later, watch local artisans at work at a local leather workshop.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Florence

Day 5

Tuesday, May 22, 2012

Full-day excursion to the Lucca Region

Regarded as one of the more undiscovered gems in the Tuscan crown, Lucca is a regional capital. It became a free commune in 1162 and grew rich on trade and banking. Briefly controlled by Napoleon's sister, the town was largely redesigned to its current form in the mid 19th century. Today, olive oil and tourism are the town's major sources of income.

Visit Villa Garzoni

Villa Garzoni, with its attached coeval monumental garden, is situated at the foot of the ancient medieval village of Collodi, which dates from the late 12th century. The villa, created for Romano Garzoni, was started in the mid 17th century and built on the site of the ruins of the ancient castle that once guaranteed the safety of the village at its rear.

Visit Villa Torrigiani

Later, explore the gardens at Villa Torrigiani, originally dating back to the late 16th century. Enclosed in the small gardens is an aviary, a fish farm and a secret garden of flora with an Italian nymphaeum. The heart of the park, where the paths converge, is the Nymphaeum of Winds, named for the statues personifying the winds.

Photo-stop in Pisa

Stop in Pisa and view the famous Field of Miracles. Here you will see the six stories of white marble that form the 12th century Leaning Tower of Pisa, along with the adjacent marble cathedral, and the neighboring baptistery.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Florence

Visit the Boboli Gardens

One of the first changes wrought by the ruling Medici family when they purchased the Pitti Palace was to enlarge it. Subsequently, the gardens were entrusted to master designer Niccolo Pericoli. His work resulted in a local representation of the great gardens of Europe – borrowing most heavily from designs of Versailles.

Visit Villa Capponi

Explore Villa Capponi, first built in the 14th century. In 1572, it was purchased by the Capponi family who extended it and enhanced it, turning it into a noble residence. In 1882 it became the property of Lady Scott, daughter of the Duke of Portland, and later passed into the hands of the Clifford family. The garden, which comprises terraces on different levels, extends along the Pian dei Giullari hillside, from where the view over Florence is quite breathtaking, and blends in with the surrounding farmland.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Florence

Transfer to Assisi

Travel into Umbria and the Vale of Spoleto to visit the hilltop town of Assisi, home to the stunning Basilica of St. Francis. Surrounded by breathtaking countryside and rich in local produce, this is one of the most endearing parts of Italy.

Guided sightseeing of Assisi

A local guide shows you the city, nestled between Mount Subasio and fields of olive groves, which draws millions of tourists every year with its religious significance and some of Italy's finest early Renaissance art.

Visit the Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi

Dominating the Assisi skyline, the Basilica is actually two churches juxtaposed upon one another. Despite extensive damage by two earthquakes in the late 1990s, much of the church has been restored. Inside is the tomb of St. Francis, as well as Giotto's artful frescoes depicting his life.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Assisi

Transfer to Rome via Villa Lante

Explore the gardens of the Villa Lante, whose flawless fountains and grottoes were designed by the legendary Tommaso Ghinucci, a hydraulics engineer and architect from Siena.

Arrival in Rome

Welcome to Rome, the Eternal City. The city is an incredible mix of archeological gems, Roman genius, Renaissance art and religious treasure. As Italy's capital, it is also the bustling heart of this exciting country. With its fashionable shopping and café-culture, Rome really is a unique European experience.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Rome

Guided sightseeing of the Vatican

The world's largest dome is located in the world's smallest country. See both as you tour St. Peter's Basilica, erected in Vatican City on the site where the saint was martyred. Enter the basilica under the watchful eyes of the brightly dressed Swiss Guard. Inside, admire Michelangelo's Pietà and try to find the artist's signature (it is the only sculpture he ever signed). Then continue on to the Vatican Museum, where elaborate galleries packed with one artistic masterpiece after another lead you directly to the Sistine Chapel. Between 1508 and 1512, Michelangelo painted some of the world's finest pictorial images on the Chapel's ceiling. This was his first attempt at working in fresco, which he did by standing up and craning backwards from a scaffold.

Guided sightseeing of Rome

Your guided sightseeing of ancient Rome takes you past the ancient Forum Romanum, once the heart of the Roman Empire. You will also visit the Colosseum, where gladiators once battled for their lives in front of 50,000 spectators. During a guided walk, stroll through the Piazza Venezia and view the Pantheon, the temple to "all the gods." End at the Trevi Fountain, a favorite meeting spot for tourists and locals alike.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Rome

Visit the Galleria Borghese

The gallery was fully renovated during the 1990s and re-opened to the public shortly before the millennium. Inside, one can see amazing sculptures by Bernini, including David, crouching aggressively with his slingshot, Apollo and Daphne, and others. Elsewhere, the collection of paintings helps confirm the status of the gallery as one of the great Italian houses of art.

Free time in Rome

Take an opportunity to visit the Forum and explore its fascinating history. You might also want to sit on the grassy banks of the Circus Maximus and imagine what it was like to watch chariot races there. Rome also has some of the most fashionable shops to be found anywhere, a trip along the Via del Corso confirms this. If not, just find a café, order a soda and watch the noise and bustle of this fascinating city go by.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Rome

Transfer to Sorrento via guided sightseeing of Pompeii

Learn how wealthy Romans lived 2,000 years ago on your visit to Pompeii, one of the richest archaeological sites in the world. When neighboring Mt. Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79, volcanic ash completely buried the Roman resort. Now it is fully excavated, and you can see the ruins of villas, ancient temples, and Stabian Baths.

Dinner is not included this evening.

Overnight in Sorrento

Day 12

Tuesday, May 29, 2012

Return to Rome via guided sightseeing of Capri

Encounter beautiful views of the Amalfi coastline on an excursion across the Bay of Naples to the captivating and mountainous Isle of Capri. Travel by funicular to the town of Capri and board a cruise to see the most spectacular views of Capri's coast. You'll see the Arco Naturale, a majestic stone arch on the eastern cliffs, and the famous Faraglioni, three enormous, pale-ochre limestone colossi that loom out of the sea. When weather conditions do not permit a cruise, groups will visit Villa San Michele in the town of Anacapri instead. Once you are finished in Capri, continue to Rome where you will spend your final night in Italy.

Overnight in Rome

Day 13

Wednesday, May 30, 2012

Transfer to the airport for your return flight

Your tour director assists with your transfer to the airport, where you'll check in for your return flight home.

Itinerary is subject to change