



The Northern Illinois University Alumni Association

*Presents*

# *Italy's Florence & Rome*

**March 7 – 16, 2019**

**\$3,779 Per Person, Double Occupancy from Chicago**



*This is an exclusive travel program presented by the Northern Illinois University Alumni Association*

# Day by Day Itinerary

## **Thursday, March 7 – CHICAGO / EN ROUTE (I)**

We depart Chicago's O'Hare International Airport this afternoon by scheduled service of Swiss International Air Lines on the overnight transatlantic flight to Zurich, Switzerland.

## **Friday, March 8 – ZURICH / FLORENCE (I,HD)**

As the sun begins to rise on the Swiss Alps, we arrive in Zurich and change planes for the connecting flight to Florence, Italy. On arrival, we'll meet our Italian Tour Manager who will accompany us throughout our vacation. Leaving the airport, we'll set our sights on the city of Florence. Julius Caesar founded the colony of Florentia in the 1st century on the north bank of the Arno. Today the city occupies both banks of the Arno River and is famous for its art treasures and glorious history.

## **Saturday, March 9 – FLORENCE (B)**

Our day will begin with an introduction to Florence, starting with a visit to the Galleria dell'Accademia to see Michelangelo's statue of David, a colossal nude of the biblical hero who killed the giant Goliath. Afterward, we'll explore the heart of the city beginning with a visit to the magnificent Cathedral adorned with green, red and white marble, and see the nearby Baptistry with its famous bronze doors, most notably the Gate to Paradise. From here, we'll wander along the Via dei Calzaiuoli to see the Piazza della Signoria with its wonderful backdrop formed by the Old Palace's powerful presence, before ending with a visit to the unforgettable Ponte Vecchio, the oldest surviving bridge in the city, built in 1345. Originally the domain of blacksmiths and butchers, today the Ponte Vecchio is home to visitors that come to admire the views as well as to browse among the antique and jewelry shops. Following our tour, the remainder of the day is free to explore Florence at your leisure.

## **Sunday, March 10 – FLORENCE (Tuscany) (B,RD)**

A delightful day on tour awaits us as we prepare to experience Tuscany, a region of low lying hills with clean graceful curves, complete with plains, forests, and vineyards joined by the serenity of cypress and pine. Our travels will take us to the most remarkable of all the Tuscan hill towns, San Gimignano, a virtually untouched medieval city-state where time seems to have stood still since the Middle Ages. Comprised of 14 towers, some over 165 feet high, a walk will take us through the tiny cobblestone streets to the Piazza del Duomo where the Collegiate Church and seven towers of nobility line the majestic square. This timeless location is also home to the famous Piazza della Cisterna, named for the bricks laid in a herringbone pattern. On our return to Florence, we'll immerse ourselves in a traditional Tuscan lifestyle setting with a visit to a family owned farm. We'll enjoy the simple, friendly and sincere hospitality, accompanied by a traditional dinner with a menu of fresh local products and a breathtaking view.

## **Monday, March 11 – FLORENCE (Venice) (B)**

Today we embark on a rail journey to Venice. As we'll soon

find out, Venice is singular among the world's cities, situated on a broad lagoon and built over a sprawling archipelago of little islands, separated by more than 150 canals and 400 bridges.

We'll see the Statue of Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king of a united Italy, and pass by the Hotel Danieli, a 19th century haunt for writers and artists alike, before reaching the Ponte della Paglia. Also known as the "Straw Bridge", it is here where we'll find the best views of the neighboring Bridge of Sighs, the covered bridge that links the Doge's Palace to the old prisons from where Casanova was said to have made his fantastic escape. Our walking tour will continue into the Piazza San Marco, a great marble saloon with covered galleries, famous cafes and luxury shops. Here we'll see the Campanile, a 325-foot-high bell tower that provides an unforgettable view of Venice, and visit the remarkable Basilica San Marco. We'll also learn of the folklore and history that accompanies the arcades of the Procuraties and the countless festivities and pageants throughout the long history of the Piazza San Marco. Following our tour, the afternoon is free to enjoy a gondola ride through the fascinating canals or to simply remain in St. Mark's Square and relax with the music of Venice before our return to Florence.

## **Tuesday, March 12 – FLORENCE (B)**

The day is at leisure in Florence, a surprisingly compact area where many sights can be easily reached on foot. Walking the streets of Florence is like taking a voyage back in time. Artists, poets, philosophers and politicians flourished here, including Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Machiavelli. Not too be missed is a visit to the Uffizi, Italy's greatest art gallery. Nearby, in the streets of Oltrarno you'll find the equally interesting Palazzo Pitti with its adjacent Boboli Gardens. If you're looking for an unforgettable view of the city, climb the steps of the Duomo or the Campanile, and the shoppers in our group will find that Florence is a paradise.

## **Wednesday, March 13 – FLORENCE / ROME**

### **(Ostia Antica) (B)**

Today we depart Florence and travel to the seaside town of Ostia where we'll visit the ruins of Ostia Antica. Buried for centuries by sand, Ostia Antica is remarkably well preserved, and provides a window into the everyday life that went on in a town of the Roman Empire. We'll enter the ancient city through the gate of Porta Romana from where we'll explore the remains of the docks, warehouses, apartment flats, mansions, shopping arcades, and baths that served this once-thriving port of 60,000 people. A walking tour will take us along the Decumanus Maximus and include a visit to the Baths of Neptune, named after their fine black and white floor mosaics, and the House of Diana, one of the more elegant three and four story apartment complexes where the lower middle-class lived. Our tour will end in the Forum, Ostia Antica's main square that is home to the Capitulum, the Temple of Roma and Augustus, and the Basilica. Afterward, we'll have an opportunity to visit the Ostia Museum, offering





a look at some of Ostia's finest statuary. Then we'll set our sights on Rome, the "Eternal City" of the West and capital of the Republic of Italy. Rome rises from both banks of the Tiber River on the slopes of seven hills from where its mighty ruins and superb art have attracted the world's people for centuries.

#### **Thursday, March 14 – ROME (Monumental Rome) (B)**

Our introduction to Rome will begin with a visit to the famous Colosseum, a masterpiece of classical architecture where fights between men and beasts, gladiatorial contests, races and simulated naval battles took place. Then we're headed to the world-famous Trevi Fountain where King Neptune's Tritons guard the sparkling waters of Rome's most beloved monument. Toss a coin in the fountain and you'll ensure your return to the Eternal City. We'll also visit the majestic Pantheon, dedicated to "all the Gods" as a celebration of celestial order, and Piazza Navona with Bernini's most famous Fountain of the Four Rivers. No other piazza in Rome can rival the theatricality of the Piazza Navona, and with its luxurious cafes, this is the perfect spot for an afternoon luncheon. Following our tour, the afternoon is at leisure. While Rome entices with its extraordinary monuments, Trastevere, one of its many distinct neighborhoods, captures the traveler's heart. Trastevere, which translates literally to "across the Tiber," was once considered the outskirts of Rome. Allowed to develop its own flavor and now part of il centro storico, it's the perfect place to glimpse a bit of the old world while still enjoying the lifestyle of today's Romans.

#### **Friday, March 15 – ROME**

##### **(Vatican Museums & St. Peter's)**

**(B,RD)**

Our day will begin with a visit to the Vatican Museums, where four centuries of papal patronage and connoisseurship have resulted in one of the world's great collections of Classical and Renaissance art. The Vatican's greatest treasures are its Greek and Roman antiquities highlighted by the Raphael Rooms and the Sistine Chapel where you'll find masterpieces by Botticelli, Signorelli, Perugino, and above all the Genesis and Last Judgment by Michelangelo Buonarroti. Afterward, we'll make our way to St. Peter's Square, as dramatic an entrance as you'll see anywhere! The embracing arms of Bernini's colonnades will then draw us into St. Peter's Basilica, the center of the Roman Catholic faith. Although you may see hundreds of elaborate and priceless works of art in St. Peter's, none is as moving as the sorrowful Pieta, Michelangelo's masterpiece in white marble. At the completion of our tour, the afternoon is at leisure. Be sure to stroll down the Via dei Condotti lined with its elegant shops, and visit the Piazza Di Spagna dominated by the majestic Spanish Steps. Afterward, climb the stairs to Viale Trinita Dei Monti for the view and then follow the Villa Borghese walls to the top of the fashionable Via Veneto, one of the best-known streets in the city, which descends in a lazy curve from the Porto Pinciana to Piazza Barberini, and enjoy a cappuccino at one of the famous outdoor cafes.

#### **Saturday, March 16 – ROME / CHICAGO**

**(B,I)**

This morning we say 'arrivederci' to Rome and travel to Leonardo Da Vinci Airport in preparation for the return journey home. No better time to reflect on memories of our *Italy's Florence & Rome* vacation that will last a lifetime and new friendships made along the way.

**\* \* \* Welcome Home \* \* \***

### **Visit [myniu.com](http://myniu.com) to make your reservation.**

#### **The Tour Price Includes:**

- Pre-trip assistance.
- Informational packet.
- Alumni staff assistance for a worry-free travel experience.
- Economy-class air transportation by scheduled service of Lufthansa German Airlines.
- Transportation by deluxe private motor coach with accompanying Tour Escort.
- Accommodations in first-class hotels.
- All meals as shown in the Day by Day Itinerary.
- Sightseeing as detailed in the Day by Day Itinerary including applicable entrance fees.
- Luggage handling and portage charges for one suitcase per person at the hotels.
- Taxes for included ground services, **and airline taxes and fuel surcharge of \$380 per person.**

**The Tour Price Does Not Include:** Items of a personal nature such as passport fees; gratuities to the motor coach driver(s), Tour Escort, and local guide(s); luggage handling at airports; personal and baggage insurance; and meals other than those stated above.

## TOUR CONDITIONS

**Tour Deposit and Payment:** Reservations may be made by check or credit card (Visa, MC, or Discover). Tour prices do increase every year and it is possible that increases could occur after the printing of this brochure in advance of your tour's departure.

**Tour Pricing:** This is a package tour in which land tour costs and special group airfares have been combined in the most advantageous way. Should you wish to make any deviation from the package tour by changing your departure and/or return dates, the advantages of the package tour price may be eliminated and additional charges will be assessed.

**Travel Insurance:** Travel insurance is very important and can be purchased through USI Travel Insurance Services. This insurance is designed to cover you and your trip investment from trip cancellation/interruption penalties and provide medical expense, medical evacuation, baggage and personal effects loss, and accidental death coverage, as well as emergency assistance. There is an advantage to early enrollment in this travel insurance program. Purchasing coverage within 21 days (Plus and Elite Options) of your initial trip deposit can make you eligible for 1) Pre-existing Medical Condition Exclusion Waiver, and 2) Optional cancel for Any Reason Coverage (Elite Option). If you wish to take advantage of the special above provisions, you must enroll within 21 days of the date your initial trip deposit is received. Contact Travel Insurance Services at 1-800-937-1387.

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**THE NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION** and/or any travel agency and/or supplier of services pursuant to or in connection with this itinerary shall not be responsible or become liable for any delay incurred by any person in connection with any means of transportation; nor for any loss, damage or injury to person or property by reason of any event beyond the control of any agency or supplier, or occurring without the fault or negligence of such agency or supplier. The right is reserved to substitute the airline to be used; the type of aircraft; and to alter the dates of the tour; the tour routing; or to cancel the trip if a minimum number of bookings is not reached for either the air or land portion of this itinerary. The right is also reserved to substitute hotels for other hotels in available categories. Further, the right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain at any time any person as a participant on any tour or to cancel any tour. No refund will be made for voluntary absence from the tour unless arrangements are made at the time of booking. The schedules contained herein are subject to change without notice. All rates are based on current Tariff and Exchange rates in effect at the time of the printing of this itinerary and are subject to adjustment without prior notification in the event of changes therein or in changes in the number of participants on which the rates are based. The carriers concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance. The passage contract in use by carrier concerned, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the carrier and the purchaser of this tour.

**For more information contact the NIU Alumni Association at 815-753-1512 or visit the Travel section at [myniu.com](http://myniu.com) to make your reservation.**

*\$100 of the trip cost is tax-deductible as a charitable donation.*

**Alumni Association  
Barsema Alumni & Visitors Center  
Northern Illinois University  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
815-753-1512**