Code: ITA10-003

PILGRIMAGE to ITALY
Venice, Florence, Assisi, Loreto, St.father Pio, Rome

A 10 day itinerary. With the arrival of the flight in Venice and departure from Rome, the route is optimized. The tour combines both spirituality and the vision of the pinnacle of Italian Renaissance art. The spirituality of Saint Anthony of Padua, the saints with the stigmata of two different eras: St.Francis and St.Padre Pio, Rome the center of Christianity and the center of the spread of culture in Europe.

DAY 1 Padua / Venice
Late afternoon arrival at Marco Polo airport in Venice. Meet Italian tour escort and transfer at hotel in Padua for accomodation, dinner and overnight.

DAY 2 Venice
Mass will be Celebrated in the Basilica of St. Anthony
Transfer to Venice for a full day of excursion part by boat and on foot in this fascinating town. In the morning a guided tour to visit the Doge's Palace, the Basilica of St. Mark the Evangelist. Balance of the day at leisure for an optional "Gondola ride", for shopping or to discover the city on your own. Return at hotel in PADOVA in the late afternoon.
Dinner and overnight.

DAY 3 Florence
We drive to reach Florence (240 Km–approx. 3 hrs drive)
Today's destination is regarded as the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance and is one of the most beautiful and inspiring cities of the world with its rich artistic, historic and spiritual heritage. Florence is birthplace or chosen home of Dante, Boccaccio, Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Donatello, Galileo, We will be treated to a wonderful tour of this Cradle of Renaissance, allowing us to see many unforgettable sights such as the cathedral of the city, Santa Maria del Fiore and the Giotto's Bell Tower, the bronze "gate of Paradise, of St. John's Baptistery, Piazza della Signoria, Palazzo Vecchio and the David Michelangelo's sculpture.
Balance of the day at leisure to explore additional treasures of Florence and shop on your own. The outdoor Market of San Lorenzo boasts leather products, and the Ponte Vecchio, covered since medieval times with goldsmiths' shops, is a must for Florence's other specialty, gold jewelry.
Transfer at hotel, dinner and overnight

DAY 4 Assisi
Depart Florence and travel south to reach ASSISI (170 Km – approx. 2 hrs drive)
Upon arrival in Assisi, visit the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, containing the Porziuncola. *The very ancient chapel, venerated for an apparition of angels within it, was originally property of the Benedictines of Subasio. It was located on a piece of land known as the Portiuncula; this name became attached to the chapel. After a long period of*

abandonment, it was restored by St. Francis. Here he was given an understanding of his vocation. He founded here the Order of Friars Minor (1209), "establishing here his home".
Transfer to hotel for check in.
In the afternoon, the tour includes visits to the Church of St. Clare which houses her incorrupt body. One of the chapels contains the crucifix that ordered St. Francis to "repair God's Church"
Afterwards, your will tour the Basilica of St. Francis built in 1228 to house the Relics of the saint. The "upper " basilica houses beautiful frescoes of Giotto which represent the life of St. Francis.
Mass will be celebrated here at the Basilica of St. Francis
Return to the hotel, dinner and overnight.

DAY 5 Cascia / Loreto
Early morning departure, first stop in Cascia (85 Km–1,5 hrs drive) to visit the shrine of Santa Rita and celebrate Mass.
Then to Loreto (170 km–3 hrs drive) to visit the Shrine of the Virgin Mary's House, which arrived from the Holy Land. This precious relic was brought to Italy after the fall of the kingdom of the Crusaders in the Holy Land.
Dinner and overnight in Loreto.

DAY 6 Lanciano / San Giovanni Rotondo
Depart Loreto towards Lanciano (180 km–2 hrs drive) to visit the site of the Eucharistic Miracle. *The host that turned to flesh and the wine that turned to visible blood in the 8th century.*
Mass will be Celebrated at the Shrine of the Eucharistic Miracle.
Late afternoon we arrive in San Giovanni Rotondo. Hotel accomodation, dinner and overnight.

DAY 7 San Giovanni Rotondo / Rome
In the morning we visit the old church of Santa Maria delle Grazie and the Convent where Padre Pio lived, then the modern Basilica designed by the famous architect Renzo Piano,
In the crypt the tomb of St. father Pio of Prietelcina and Mass celebration.
In the afternoon depart to Rome (380 Km–5 hrs drive).
Check in at hotel, dinner and overnight

DAY 8 Ancient Rome / Basilicas
We greet the new day in a city nicknamed Caput Mundi (Capital of the World) and The Eternal City, not only because Rome has always been the hub of art, education, high culture and politics in the western world, but because it is also a spiritual capital and a powerful center of pilgrimage.
After breakfast, we will walk through the very core of Roman antiquity. We tour Trajan's market, Nero's Golden House, Trajan's Forum and Column, Arch of Constantine, House of Knights of Rhodes. Next, we proceed to the Mamertine Prisons (where St Peter was held prisoner), the Roman Forum (the civic heart of the Roman Republic), the Coliseum. After a break for lunch, regain our bus for an afternoon tour of the Major Basilicas.
The ceiling of the Basilica of St. Mary Major is said to be decorated with gold that Columbus brought back from the new world. We will also visit the Basilica of St. John Lateran which is the oldest of the major basilicas and ranks first as the actual "parish church" of the Pope

(Bishop of Rome). There we will learn about the Scala Sancta (Holy Stairs). Tradition has it that these steps, said to be the staircase leading once to the praetorium of Pilate at Jerusalem, are sanctified by the footsteps of Jesus Christ during his Passion. Return to hotel for dinner and overnight

DAY 9 Papal Audience/ Vatican Museums

The day starts with the Audience of the Holy Father in St. Peter's Square (or Paulus VI Hall depending of the season). The Audience is celebrated each Wednesday by His Holiness, Pope Francis (pending the papal schedule).
After break for free lunch, continue the day with a guided tour of the Vatican Museums which house what can be described as the most important collections of art in the world. The history and awe surrounding the galleries and all the treasures they contain will truly transfix us. Highlights include The Tapestry Gallery, the Raphael Rooms, and the Sistine Chapel where we will gaze on Michelangelo's incredible masterpiece. We will also enter St. Peter's Basilica which has the largest interior of any Christian church in the world and which has been described as the reason Rome is still the center of the civilized world. Tradition and historical evidence hold that St. Peter's tomb is directly below the altar of this basilica, which American Ralph Waldo Emerson described as an ornament of the earth… the sublime of the beautiful. Next we will have the chance to marvel at Bernini's beautiful bronze canopy and Michelangelo's Blessed Mother holding her crucified son, known as the Pieta. Time permitting, we will visit the tomb of Pope John Paul II,
In the evening farewell dinner in a typical roman restaurant with music.
Return to hotel and overnight

DAY 10 Departure

Transfer to airport, assistance, check in and fly back home.

THE PRICE INCLUDES:
Accommodation at 4* hotel, airconditioned double room with private bathroom, porterage
Half-board (american breakfast and dinner)
Farewell dinner in typical restaurant in Rome with music,
Deluxe bus for the whole tour, tools and parking fees, driver fullboard included.
Boat RT ticket in Venice;
Spanish and/or english speaking tour escort for all the tour in Italy
Full assistance from our offices in Italy
Guided visits with local art historians guides (Venice, Florence; Assisi, Rome) as per program;
Wireless audio-guide each participant;
Travel information and welcome gift from incoming italian agency

THE PRICE DOESN'T INCLUDE:
Intercontinental flights and taxes
Travel Insurance
Drinks, tips, personal extras,
entrance fees to archeological sites and monuments
City taxes to be paid at the hotel;
Any other feature not mentioned under "the price includes"