

Buon giorno, Italia!! A preview to our whirlwind tour of Italy with the Sacred Triduum at the Vatican



Europe, here we come:

After months of waiting and planning, my first trip to Europe starts tomorrow. And quite perfectly, it comes less than two weeks after my husband retired from more than 48 years in the work force. A wonderful time to celebrate.

Actually George has been to Europe three times and has visited a number of countries, but he has never been to Italy. So this is a great opportunity for both of us. In Italy for twelve days, we will be on a John Carroll tour the first week, followed by five extra days in Rome during the Sacred Triduum through Easter Monday. Our hotel is on the edge of St. Peter's Square so you just know that I will be trying regularly to get glimpses of the Holy Father!!



“Buongiorno Italia:”

ACIS, a “leader in quality educational travel,” has hosted John Carroll tours in Europe for over 30 years. George and I will join their [“Buongiorno Italia”](#) experience for seven days. Along with 21 JC students, 4 relatives, and three of my closest friends on staff—Guidance counselor Larry Hensley, English chairperson Christine Zurkowski, and Spanish teacher Jane Michael—we will depart tomorrow afternoon from Philadelphia airport.

ACIS provides learning objectives for each of their tours. Here are the objectives for “Buongiorno Italia:”

1. Students will gain an overview of contemporary Italian society, learning to understand the North-South divide and the effect of regionalism on the current political landscape;
2. Students will explore the Italian architectural evolution from Byzantine Venice to the Renaissance Duomo in Florence to the Baroque colonnades of St. Peter’s Square in Rome;
3. Students will learn what life was like during the height of the Roman Empire through experiences in the Colosseum and Pompeii.

Here’s a look at our itinerary for the first week:

Wednesday, April 9:

Overnight flight from Philadelphia to Milan through Frankfurt, Germany;

Thursday, April 10: Milan to Verona to overnight in Venice:

Arrive in Milan, and meet your tour manager. Drive to Verona, the setting of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, and admire its classic architecture. Dinner in Verona before continuing to Venice for the overnight.

Friday, April 11: St. Mark's Square and Basilica, Venice, to overnight in Florence:

Experience Venice's unique beauty this morning when you ride along the Grand Canal past singing gondoliers and colorful façades. Cross under the Rialto Bridge before arriving at St. Mark's Square to see the Byzantine architecture of the Basilica of St. Mark and the Bridge of Sighs. Later drive south to Florence, the Cradle of the Renaissance.

Saturday, April 12: All day and overnight in Florence:

Sightseeing with a local guide providing commentary via personal headsets introduces you to the Duomo, Piazza della Signoria, and the Ponte Vecchio. In the afternoon you may choose to partake in an optional Tuscan cooking lesson as you help Tuscany's finest chefs prepare traditional meals before sampling the delicious results. Otherwise, why not visit the Pitti Palace and stroll through the Boboli Gardens? After dinner see the statues of the Loggia dei Lanzi illuminated in the Piazza della Signoria or sample gelato at Vivoli.

Palm (Passion) Sunday, April 13: Tuscany to Umbria to all afternoon and overnight in Assisi:

Depart Tuscany for Umbria in the morning, and arrive in Assisi in time to find lunch in its quaint town center. Visit the incredible Basilica of St. Francis, home to Giotto's famous frescoes, and learn about St. Francis' founding of the Franciscan Friars. Later indulge your sweet tooth during a gelato factory visit and tasting. See how the famous Italian-style ice cream is produced and discover your favorite flavor during a

tasting.

Monday of Holy Week, April 14: Assisi to Pompeii to dinner and overnight in Sorrento:

Journey south toward the Bay of Naples and visit Pompeii. As your local guide provides commentary over personal headsets, learn how this famous city was perfectly preserved when the eruption of Mount Vesuvius covered it in ash in 79 AD. See the villas of ancient Roman holiday-makers and the chariot-grooved cobblestone streets. Continue to the Sorrento coast for dinner.

Tuesday of Holy Week, April 15: Sorrento to Capri to dinner and overnight in Rome:

You may choose an optional morning visit to the island of Capri. Enjoy spectacular views of the sea as you wander through twisting lanes and shop in the tiny artisan stores that line the square. Otherwise, spend time exploring the citrus groves and waterfront of Sorrento before journeying north to Rome in time for dinner.

Wednesday of Holy Week, April 16: All day and overnight in Rome, including the Colosseum and the Vatican:

This morning, see the famous Colosseum, a nearly two thousand year old Roman emblem. Afterwards, your sightseeing tour introduces you to every phase of Rome's legendary history with a panoramic drive of the city. In addition, your local guide accompanies you through the incomparable Vatican Museums, including Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, and continues to St. Peter's Basilica, giving commentary via personal headsets. This evening you may opt to partake in a pizza making lesson and dinner. Learn how to create a perfect pie and work in teams to assemble and cook your own authentic, brick-oven pizza. After dinner join your tour manager to mingle with locals in lively Piazza Navona, then see the Pantheon and

obelisk-topped fountain in Piazza della Rotunda.

Holy Thursday, April 18:

The John Carroll group departs for home early that morning.

My husband George and I will then check into the [Palazzo Cardinal Cesi](#) on Via della Conciliazione at St. Peter's Square before heading to the Chrism Mass at St. Peter's Basilica.

About our hotel:

The Palace was built in 1400 and was bought by Cardinal Pierdonato Cesi who had it restructured and refurbished, turning it into an antiques and art museum, and installing a well-endowed library. Today, the Generalate of the Salvatorians has converted part of the building into an elegant and exclusive "welcoming home," with 30 rooms.

Excited to visit and worship at the Vatican:

George and I are looking forward to seeing the Sistine Chapel and all the Vatican sites on our own. We are planning to visit the three other major Roman basilicas and a few other special places are on our list.

We hope to get caught up in the pre-canonization excitement for Popes John XXIII and John Paul II. What a great time to be at the Vatican!!

Each day I will post photos and an update. Watch for my "Buon giorno, Italia Journal."

Please pray for us as we will pray for you. Many thanks!!