

Buon giorno, Italia Journal: Day 1

Our John Carroll group departed on a Lufthansa flight from the Philadelphia airport yesterday afternoon for Milan and the start of our week-long Italian tour.



The brief layover in Frankfurt, Germany gave us a few hours to explore what has been ranked as one of the ten largest airports in the world. Our 70-minute flight to Milan was on a smaller Lufthansa plane. The highlight was flying over the snow-covered Swiss Alps on a clear, sunny noontime. It was simply glorious.



Some fun facts about our first two stops on Thursday:

We landed in Milan at Italy's largest international airport

1. The Archdiocese of Milan in northern Italy, encompassing the areas of Milano, Monza, Alecto, and Varese, is the largest diocese in Europe covering over 1600 square miles.
2. Since 2011, Cardinal Angelo Scola has served as the Archbishop of Milano, having previously been the Patriarch of Venice. He was among those considered papable in the March, 2013 conclave that elected Pope Francis.
3. Some of Milan's famous past archbishops include: St. Ambrose, Milan's patron saint (c. 374-397), St. Charles Borromeo (1560-1584), and Giovanni Battista Montini (1954-63) who served until the 1963 conclave that elected him as Pope Paul VI.

4. Leonardo da Vinci painted The Last Supper (1495-98) (Il Cenacolo), which is housed in the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, a former Dominican monastery.

Verona:

1. On the banks of the River Adige midway between Venice and Milan, Verona is the second largest city in the northern region of Italy. It is most notable for being the setting of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.
2. There is a box at the House of Juliet where love-challenged people from around the world leave letters for Juliet. A team of volunteers reply to every letter received. Nonpaying internships are available for anyone wishing to give a two-week to one year commitment to helping the lovelorn in the name of Juliet.
3. The [Diocese of Verona](#), under the leadership of Bishop Giuseppe Zenti, covers 1180 square miles. The diocesan patron saint is Saint Zeno for whom the local basilica, San Zeno Maggiore or San Zenone, is named.
4. Pope John Paul II visited Verona in 1988, and Pope Benedict XVI visited in 2006.
5. The local cathedral, the [Duomo](#), took almost six centuries to build (1386-1965). It is considered the second largest church in the world, with 135 marble spires, over 2000 statues, and seating for 40,000 people.

Tomorrow:

We will make our way to Venice this evening for dinner and overnight, exploring that amazing city on the water all day Friday.

Arrividerci from Verona!!