

St. Paul's Journey to Rome

10 days / 8 nights

And the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou has testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome (The Acts 23:11).

Far more than just experiencing a new land or seeing new sights, as our Christian tour to Italy takes us through the spiritually rich and beautiful countryside of Italy, we will reflect, come closer to God, and gratefully consider the sacrifices and dedication of those who have gone before. As we follow in the footsteps of Paul, experiencing some of the same sights and sounds and feelings he would have experienced, and as we behold holy shrines and timeless works of art regarded as the most awe-inspiring and important of the world – we will renew our commitment to the roots of our Christian faith. The worship services and meditations we celebrate along the way will draw us together as a community. They will remind us of our blessings and the call to stewardship as followers of Jesus Christ.

Day 1: Departure from the USA

Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another (Paul in Romans 14:19).

Our Pilgrimage begins with an overnight flight to Palermo, Italy.

Day 2: Arrival in Italy

(D)

Whoever observes the day, observes it for the Lord (Paul in Romans 14:6).

Welcome to Italy! After arriving at our hotel, a little rest and relaxation might be in order. Or, for the more adventurous and energetic, suggested sights and walking trails can be provided upon request.

Day 3: Palermo & Monreale

(B,D)

The night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness (and) put on the armor of light (Paul in Romans 13:12).

Palermo, Sicily's cultural capital and an important hub throughout its history, is a city rich in history, spirit, art and diversity. Our tour this morning will include San Giovanni degli Eremiti (St. John of the Hermits Church), notable for its brilliant red domes which are clearly reminiscent of 12th century Arab influences, and its bell tower which displays a Gothic flavor. Serving as one of the first major examples of town planning in Europe, Quattro Canti (officially known as Piazza Vigliena), is a must-see Baroque square replete with fountains and statues. We will visit the magnificent Palatine Chapel where we'll notice the presence of different architectural styles due to its long history of additions, alterations and restorations. The Cathedral has a heliometer (or solar observatory), one of a number built in Italy in the 17th and 18th centuries, which is quite simply a tiny hole in one of the minor domes that projects the image of the sun onto the floor to mark the seasons. After lunch, we'll drive to the small town of Monreale whose name means Royal Mountain. There we'll explore the Benedictine Abbey with its splendid mosaic pictures arranged in tiers and divided by horizontal and vertical bands to depict scenes from both the Old and New Testaments. We'll return to Palermo for dinner and another overnight stay.

Day 4: Valley of the Temples in Agrigento

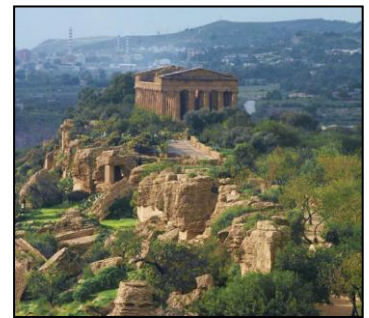
(B,D)

But there will be glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, Jew first and then Greek. There is no partiality with God (Romans 2:10-11).

The new day finds us heading for Agrigento, an ancient city on the southern coast of Sicily and capital of the province of Agrigento. Here we visit the wondrous Valle dei



Templi ("Valley of the Temples"), a large sacred area on the south side of the ancient city where seven monumental Greek temples in the Doric style were constructed during the 5th and 6th centuries BC. Some are remarkably intact because of their subsequent use as Christian churches; the surrounding area was also used by early Christians as a catacomb. Before leaving the region, we'll see the largest Doric temple in the world, the Temple of Jupiter. Toward day's end, we'll explore the Santa Maria della Catena which was built in 1490-1520 and named for a chain (catena) on one of the walls which closed the Cala port. As with much of the architecture of Sicily, we'll notice the presence of a multitude of styles, Renaissance and Gothic to name a few. The interior of the Santa Maria della Catena is late-Gothic and includes a cavanas of Nativity with Adoration of the Shepherds (17th century) from an unknown master. We'll enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in Agrigento.



Day 5: Taormina

(B,D)

Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Paul in Romans 7:24-25).

We travel east roughly 150 miles along the breathtakingly beautiful Mediterranean coast to Taormina. After some time for lunch on our own we visit the most remarkable monument remaining at Taormina and one of the chief glories of Sicily, the ancient Greek Theatre (Teatro Greco). It is built for the most part of brick, and is therefore probably of Roman date, though the plan and arrangement speak of Greek times. From the still existing fragments of architectural decorations, we learn that this theatre (still frequently used for operatic and theatrical performances and for concerts) was of the Corinthian order and richly ornamented. Besides the ancient Greek theatre, Taormina has many allures: sunny beaches, shops, old churches and piazzas to name a few. We will enjoy dinner in this coastal city and a relaxing overnight.



Day 6: Calabria

(B,D)

I myself am convinced about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another (Romans 15:14).

We leave our hotel in the early morning to take a ferry across a narrow passage between the eastern tip of Sicily and the southern tip of Calabria called the Strait of Messina. Greeks colonized the southernmost tip of Italy over 2,800 years ago. The coast of Calabria rivaled Athens as a cosmopolitan center in 8BC; the philosopher Pythagoras preached vegetarianism there and Homer set part of The Odyssey on the Strait of Messina. We will enjoy magnificent vistas as we journey north along the Tyrrhenian Sea. Our destination for today will be Naples where we have dinner and spend the night.



Day 7: Pompeii

(B,D)

This morning we travel to Pompeii to witness the ruins of one of the most devastating volcanic eruptions in the history of the region. The eruption of Vesuvius in the year 79 A.D. covered the city of Pompeii with ash. What is left of this ancient city, including some beautiful frescoes and mosaic floors, will give us a glimpse into that era and an idea of what was going on in the lives of Pompeii's inhabitants' moments before that catastrophic eruption. Walking the streets of this 'frozen city' also helps us experience what Paul must have experienced as he walked through similar streets in his time. Our visit wouldn't be complete without visiting houses, shops, and temples, as well the "Lupanare" (house of prostitutes) and the "Subarbane Therm" with their lurid frescoes. It is worth noting that such erotic imagery and items indicate that the sexual mores of the ancient Roman culture were much more liberal than most present-day cultures, although much of what might seem to us to be erotic imagery was in fact fertility-imagery. Still, we can understand Paul's anger and loud chastisement regarding the corruption and



perdition of the ancient Romans. After our visit to the excavations we continue to Rome for dinner and overnight.

Day 8: The Major Basilicas

(B,D)

For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, The one who is righteous by faith will live (Romans 1:17).

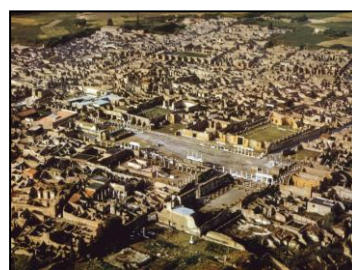
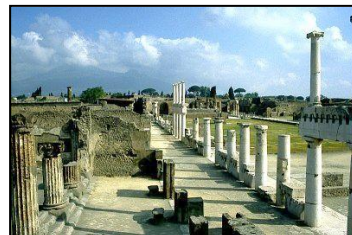
Our day will start with Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary Major. The ceiling of this basilica is said to be decorated with gold that Columbus brought back from the new world. Santa Maria Maggiore, the largest basilica in Rome that is dedicated to the Blessed Mother, is part of the day's "Christian Rome" tour. This basilica has beautiful Biblical mosaics, a marble floor, bell tower and one of the oldest shrines (containing a relic from the manger of the infant Jesus) dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. 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. Next, we'll see the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, which was founded by the Roman Emperor Constantine I over the burial place of Saint Paul. Other sites on today's itinerary include the oldest road from Roman times (the Appian Way), the Baths of Caracalla, the Arch of Drusus, and the ancient catacombs of Rome (located on the outskirts of the city where early Christians hid themselves to avoid persecution). We will once again enjoy dinner and an overnight stay in Rome.

Day 9: Papal Audience, Vatican Museums and St. Peter's Basilica

(B,D)

I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you (Peter in Acts 3:6).

We greet the new day in a city nicknamed Caput Mundi (Capital of the World) and The Eternal City. Rome has these names not only because it 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. It was here on October 11, 1962, that St. John XXIII summoned Vatican II, one of only 21 councils convened in the more than 2,000 years of Christian history. As we continue in his footsteps, we will first visit Vatican City to attend an audience/blessing with our Holy Father (schedule permitting), then we will tour the Vatican Museum. The museum houses what can be described as the most important collection of art in the world. The history and awe surrounding the galleries and all the treasures they contain will truly transfix us. Highlights of the day 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 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 Ralph Waldo Emerson described as an ornament of the earth... the sublime of the beautiful; we will also marvel at Bernini's beautiful bronze canopy over this altar. After being declared Blessed in 2000, St. John XXIII's body was transferred from the Grottoes of St. Peter's Basilica to the St. Jerome Altar in the basilica itself. The area that had held the sarcophagus of St. John XXIII (located less than 100 ft from the Tomb of St. Peter) became the original tomb of St. John Paul II, whose funeral was held on April 8, 2005. Over the last six years, roughly 20,000 pilgrims visited his tomb every day. In his will, St. John Paul II specifically wrote that he wanted to be buried on that site. His wish was to be laid to rest on soil with a simple white marble slab. After his beatification, his remains were transferred from the crypt to the basilica--as is tradition with popes, saints and the blessed. St. John Paul II's remains were taken to the San Sebastiano chapel, next to Michelangelo's Pietà (the statue of the Blessed Mother holding her crucified son). San Sebastiano is home to the remains of another beatified pope, Innocent XI. The remains



of St. John Paul II are under this altar, covered with a gravestone and just four words: "Beatus Ioannes Paulus II." Before dinner, we will have the opportunity for individual exploration: some might want to sit quietly at an outside café to take it all in while others will want to shop and savor the flavor of the "Eternal City." The remainder of the afternoon is at our leisure before we meet our fellow pilgrims for a sumptuous farewell dinner with typical Italian entertainment.

Day 10: Depart for Home

(B)

Our prayer is that in the midst of this world, there may radiate the light of our great hope in Jesus Christ, our only Savior. (Opening Message to Humanity, Second Vatican Council)

We will let the power of the holy places and priceless relics settle over us; then like other pilgrims of other times, go back to our lives with renewed faith and readiness. We leave our hotel and head for the airport to return to the US.

© Faith Journeys LLC

