First Class 12 Day Package

Best of Italy & Malta

Day 1: Depart USA
Overnight flight to Malta.

Day 2: Arrive in Malta
Today we arrive in the beautiful Mediterranean Island of Malta and embark on our Journey to the lands of ancient treasures and Christian history. We will be walking where the Apostle Paul walked! We transfer to a lovely hotel for dinner and our lodging for the next three evenings. (D)

Day 3: Valletta, Harbor Cruise, St. Thomas Bay
A full day of guided sightseeing includes 7,000 years of history beginning in the walled capital city of Valletta, a World Heritage site. Dotted with quaint cafés and shops, the city is today one of Malta's main tourist attractions, hosting among others, the majestic St John's Co-Cathedral, the imposing bastions and a treasure of priceless paintings. Enjoy the history told of the Knight's of St. John of Jerusalem, a Crusader order who defended the westward Islamic campaign into Europe. Relax on your harbor cruise providing a stunning snapshot of Malta's Grand Harbor, often described as the most beautiful in the Mediterranean. Drive to the ramparts where you begin a tour viewing some of the palatial inns and residences en route to St. Thomas Bay, a possible shipwreck site of the Apostle Paul. (B, D)

Day 4: Mdina, Mosta Church, Dingli Cliffs, Rabat, St. Paul Bay, Catacombs
After breakfast, we have a full day excursion on Malta. The first stop will be a visit to St. Paul's and the location of the shipwreck. Our tour will take you from the point of the shipwreck, along the

route said to be taken by St. Paul where he preached, where he baptized the first Maltese at San Pawl Milqi Chapel (meaning "St. Paul welcomed"), to the place where he rested. Paul stayed for several months in the town of Rabat, here we will visit the St. Paul's Grotto, the actual place where the saint is known to have stayed. Next a visit to the “Mosta Rotunda” a magnificent domed church in Mosta. Enroute to Rabat, we will visit St. Paul’s Church and Grotto, a church founded in 1575 over the ancient caves where according to some traditions, the Apostle Paul was held captive. After a lunch break, we will walk through the streets of Mdina, Malta’s first capital where we will visit the Cathedral dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul. Mdina is also located in the highest elevations of Malta where magnificent views of the entire island are possible. Concluding our sightseeing on the western shore, we view the spectacular Dingli Cliffs before turning toward our return route. The last stop of the day will be the Catacombs of St. Paul, a fascinating labyrinth of 3rd-century AD subterranean tombs and the earliest archaeological evidence of Christianity in Malta. (B, D)

Day 5: Arrive Rome

We fly to the Rome airport and transfer to our lodging for the next three nights. This afternoon we will take an afternoon tour of the Catacombs where thousands of Christians were buried in a remarkable tiered series of galleries. (B, D)

Day 6: Forum, Mamertine, Coliseum, Ostia Antica

We begin our walking tour at the ancient Roman Forum, where our guide will divulge its secrets. We will visit the Arch of Titus which commemorated the sack of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70. We will view the Mamertine Prison exterior, where tradition says the Apostle Paul was imprisoned. The Roman church would say that Peter was imprisoned here as well, but there is no imperial evidence that Peter was ever in Rome. Next, we visit the Coliseum, where thousands of people and animals perished during gladiatorial games. The Coliseum first opened in AD 80 and within 100 days of its opening, 5000 wild beasts perished here. The slaughter of both humans and animals continued for three more centuries. Historians believe the Coliseum could hold between 40,000 and 80,000 people depending on how close the seating was. The floor has recently had a plank placed over the middle making it accessible for people to walk over the labyrinth of brick cells, ramps, and elevators used to transport animals and gladiators into the arena. Hear the stories of the games that have fascinated people for hundreds of years. We conclude our day at the ruins of Ostia Antica, which provides an excellent example of city life in classical times and the Ostian Gate, today called the Gate of St. Paul. (B)

Day 7: Vatican Museums, St. Peter's, Scala Santa, Abbey of Three Fountains, St. Paul Outside the Wall

After breakfast you will begin a full day of sightseeing. First visit Vatican City where you will see the Basilica at St. Peter, the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Museums with stunning works of art at every turn. After some free time for lunch, you will stop at The Abbey of the Three Fountains, the traditional site of Paul's martyrdom and the ancient street that he walked on. Next, visit the 4th century Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, the site of Paul’s tomb, and the Scala Santa, where Martin Luther made his stand against the practice of indulgences. This fascinating museum houses the Steps from Pilot's Judgment Hall in Jerusalem brought to Rome by Helena, the mother of Constantine. Additional sights include the Arches of Constantine and Titus, Circus Maximus and the beautiful marble monument called the Wedding Cake. (B)

Day 8: Frescoes, Assisi, Florence

After breakfast you will say "Arrivederci Roma" and board your coach and travel through scenic Umbria to the ancient walled hillside village of Assisi. After lunch on your own, you will enjoy a guided tour of this beautiful, medieval town, which will include the Basilica San Francesco, decorated with some of the most renowned frescoes in the world. The stories of the sacrificial life of St. Francis will be an encouragement to us all. Our home for the next two evenings is in the beautiful city of Florence, the heart of charming Tuscany. (B, D)

Day 9: Beautiful Florence, Michelangelo's David

You will spend the morning enjoying a guided tour of Florence, one of the world's greatest artistic capitals, which will include the Piazza della Signoria, Duomo, Baptistry and a visit to the Accademia Galley, home of Michelangelo's David. A stop will also be made on the hillside overlook across the river from Florence where we will enjoy a panoramic view of the beautiful red-tiled roof cityscape. This afternoon is at your leisure to enjoy shopping, visiting more galleries or strolling on the famous Pont Vecchio, the old bridge which spans the Arno River. Remember that Florence leather shops are the best in the world and bargains on excellent quality goods are abundant. It may be the time to purchase those special Christmas gifts. (B)

Day 10: Pisa & Verona

The sightseeing this morning includes a tour of Pisa where you will visit the Baptistry, Duomo and the famous leaning tower in the Piazza dei Miracoli. This afternoon we stop in romantic Verona, medieval setting of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, with a walk through the historic center/shopping district to see the famed balcony of Juliet. Our lodging for the next two evenings will be in Venice Mestre. (B, D)

Day 11: Charming Venice

Start the morning sightseeing in style as your guide takes you by private boat along the Giudecca canal to meet your resident expert. Highlights of your walking tour are St. Mark's Square and the Byzantine splendor of St. Mark's Basilica, lavish Doges' Palace and the Bridge of Sighs. Afterwards enjoy Venice at your own pace, or join an optional gondola ride through the picturesque canal system, visit the many charming shops and take photos galore. (B)

Day 12: Home

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight home. (B)

PRICE PER PERSON:

BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY

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