



La Vita Bella in Italia:
Rome, Florence & Venice
May/June 2025 (specific dates TBA)

Ancient history will come alive as we step into the Colosseum where gladiators fought to the death, explore the Forum where Julius Caesar walked, and visit some of the earliest Christian churches in the Western world. Exploring the catacombs just outside the ancient walls of Rome will provide us with insights about early Christian burial practices. Renaissance and Baroque art and architecture will come alive as we visit museums and churches scattered throughout Rome, Florence, and Venice, including St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.

Our selection of accommodations and means of transportation reflect the local culture, providing you with experiences that are different from those that millions of tourists have who come to Italy every year. In fact, you will be more than a tourist: you will be a student whose curriculum comes alive in archaeological sites, museums, parks, churches, and piazzas. You will also have opportunities to travel on your own and focus on areas of interest to you. Italy's extensive and easy-to-navigate train system will allow you to travel to places such as Cinque Terre (five towns that hug the coast of the Italian Riviera), Siena (a medieval Tuscan city), and Pisa. The choice is yours.

Our trip's title says it all: "The Beautiful Life in Italy."

Day 1: Departure for Italy

The group will likely depart from Pittsburgh International Airport. If you fly into Rome on your own, plan your travel so that you arrive at the Rome airport no later than 10:30 a.m. local time the following day. You must arrive at our accommodations no later than 12:30 p.m. on Day 2.

Day 2: Arrival in Rome

Your overnight flight arrives in the Eternal City.

Students who arrive earlier than today or independently on this day may apply for a refund of up to €18 for their transportation into Rome. Students must supply an invoice, taxi receipt, train ticket, or bus ticket to be eligible for a reimbursement.

Our time in Italy begins this afternoon with an orientation to our program and Rome's transportation system as well as a neighborhood walking tour where you'll learn about the nearest restaurants, grocery stores, and other useful points of interest.

Today's lunch and dinner are included in the program fee as is our after-dinner gelato!

Day 3: Exploring Rome's Ancient Past

We'll spend the day touring the heart of ancient Rome, home to the Forum, Flavian Amphitheater (Colosseum), and Palatine Hill which overlooks what remains of the Circus Maximus. The evening is free.

Day 4: A Roman City

Today we'll visit Ostia Antica and wander among its ruins. Located not far from the Mediterranean coast, Ostia was Ancient Rome's port city and offers a glimpse into the everyday life of Romans. The evening is free.

Day 5: The Remnants of Imperial Rome

We'll begin our day at Santo Stefano in Rotondo, a church whose cycle of frescoes recount the martyrdom of saints. We'll then walk to the Capitoline Hill from which we can see the Colosseum and Palatine Hill for a reminder of what we visited earlier in the week. We'll also visit the Pantheon whose dome and oculus are world-famous. The remainder of the day is free. You might consider going to the exciting area of Trastevere for dinner.

Day 6: Art, Architecture, and the Early Church

We'll begin today with a tour of the intriguing San' Clemente church and its astonishing layers of archeological history going back to a pre-Christian temple. Seeing the three layers of history as we descend to the lowest level will provide us with a visual indication of the truth that Rome is built on itself. This afternoon we will visit the Catacombs of Priscilla. Those planning to travel this weekend may leave Rome this evening. *Check with the trip leaders before making plans to be sure your travel times work with our schedule.*

Day 7: Free Day

Stay in Rome and explore historical sights we won't get to as a class, visit one of the city's many beautiful parks, go out to the beach at Ostia and swim in the Mediterranean, or travel on Italy's extensive train system to exciting towns and cities across the nation. It's your choice.

Those staying in Rome might choose to worship at one of the city's few English-speaking churches, such as St. Paul's Within the Walls Episcopal, Rome Baptist, or All Saints Anglican. Of course, there are always Rome's 900+ Catholic churches as well as St. Peter's Basilica which offers Sunday mass in Latin. You might consider heading out for a picnic to the Via Appia Antica, the ancient road that, during the age of the emperors, ran 350 miles from Rome to the port of Brindisi in the south.

Day 8: Free Day

Everyone must be back at our hotel no later than 9:30 p.m.

Day 9: Assisi

This morning we'll board a train for a visit to Assisi, a hill town which is the home of St. Francis, the founder of the Franciscan order. We'll take in fantastic views of the beautiful Italian countryside from the top of the city and visit the Basilica of St. Francis where the saint is buried. There will be plenty of time to relax and eat lunch in this medieval town. We'll head back to Rome in the late afternoon. The evening is free.

Day 10: Depart for Florence

After packing up and storing our large luggage, we'll visit the Capuchin museum and crypt where the monastic order has arranged the bones of more than 3,7000 of its deceased members.

After lunch we'll take a high-speed train to Florence. When we arrive we'll check into our accommodations (a convent-hotel situated in what was a Renaissance palace) and take a walking tour of the city, visiting the Ponte Vecchio, Piazza della Signoria, and Duomo. The evening is free.

Day 11: The Birth of the Renaissance

We'll begin the day by seeing what many people consider to be the greatest statue ever created: Michelangelo's *David* in the Accademia Gallery. After lunch we'll visit the Duomo in the center of the city where we'll learn about Brunelleschi's dome and marvel at Giotto's campanile. We'll also encounter Florence's baptistery with its famous mosaics and bronze doors and visit the Duomo Museum. The evening is free.

Day 12: Renaissance Florence

Today's excursion takes us to the stunning overlook of the city from the Piazzale Michelangelo. We'll also visit San Miniato al Monte, one of the most beautiful churches in Italy. The remainder of the day is free for shopping in Florence's markets, visiting sights that are not on our itinerary, or taking a train to Pisa to visit its famous sights.

Day 13: Renaissance Florence

This morning and afternoon (two separate groups) we'll end our time in Florence by visiting the Uffizi Gallery, home to some of the greatest Renaissance art in the world. Around lunchtime we'll visit the Church of Orsanmichele. The remainder of the day is yours to explore Florence.

Day 14: From Florence to Venice

After morning devotions, we'll leave Florence on an early train to Venice, the Canal City. After settling in, we'll head to one of Europe's most beautiful churches, St. Mark's Basilica. With views of the lagoon from its upper balconies, the church represents an architectural style that reminds us of Venice's once-important position as a trade center serving Europe and Asia. We'll tour the Byzantine basilica dedicated to Mark, the Gospel author and patron saint of Venice, and then head to the second floor museum from which we'll have an up-close view of some of the church's brilliant mosaics. More than 8,000 square meters of mosaics created over more than 800 years cover the walls, vaults, and cupolas of the basilica. Before leaving the church, we'll venture out onto the outdoor balconies for fantastic views of the lagoon and piazza as well as a group photo. The remainder of the day is yours. A great way to begin your time here is with a gondola ride—a quintessential Venetian experience. Consider going before 7 p.m. when the cost increases.

Day 15: Peggy Guggenheim Collection

Get ready for something different. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, situated on the Grand Canal, offers modern and postmodern art extraordinaire. As we engage this museum's collections, we'll talk about what modern art is, what it attempts to do, and how to interpret it. Guggenheim was the daughter of Benjamin Guggenheim, a man who made his riches in the copper mines in the late 1800s and died heroically on the *Titanic*. She lived in the villa that is now home to the museum and used her fortune to purchase works of art from famous and up-and-coming artists who lived during the 20th century. Pieces by Picasso, Calder, Pollock, Dali, Ernst, Rothko, Magritte, and others fill the walls of this intimate museum.

The afternoon is yours to explore Venice and its surrounding islands. Choose Murano for its many shops that sell the island's famous glass that comes in all shapes, sizes, and prices—from jewelry to huge works of art—and attend a glass-blowing demonstration in one of the workshops. You might also choose Burano, famous for its lace-making, quiet canals, and brightly-painted houses. There's also Lido, which offers a beach culture and sunning along the Adriatic Sea. You might consider wandering through the narrow streets of Venice, especially around the Rialto Bridge and its bustling market area.

Day 16: Doge's Palace

This morning we'll visit the Palazzo Ducale (Doge's Palace), the grand residence that was home to the city's rulers for hundreds of years. Not only was it a residence, but also the seat of government and the place where Venetian justice was served. Its rooms remind us of the palace's former uses and include the jail cells where prisoners served time. We'll walk across the Bridge of Sighs where convicts had their last glimpses of the outside world before serving their sentences. The afternoon is yours to explore Venice and its surrounding islands.

Day 17: Return to Rome

Late this morning we will take a high-speed train back to Rome. The remainder of the day is yours to become reacquainted with the city.

Day 18: The Earthly Jerusalem

The papacy was actively involved in bringing the Renaissance to Rome. This morning we'll tour St. Peter's Basilica, the world's largest Catholic church. In the afternoon we will tour the Vatican Museum and see, among other important works, Raphael's *School of Athens* as well as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling. The evening is free.

Day 19: Pilgrimage Sights

By the 17th century, there were seven churches that pilgrims visited: San Giovanni in Laterano, St. Peter's, St. Paul's Outside the Walls, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Lorenzo, Sant'Agnese, and San Sabastiano. In the morning we'll take in the ecclesiastical riches of San' Giovanni in Laterano, which preceded St. Peter's as the seat of the papacy, and also visit the Scala Santa. According to Catholic tradition, these are the 28 steps that Christ ascended on the way to His trial before Pontius Pilate. After lunch we'll visit Santa Maria Maggiore and St. Paul's Outside the Walls where, according to tradition, St. Paul is buried. The evening is free.

Day 20: Baroque Art

This morning we'll encounter one of Rome's greatest museums, the Borghese Gallery, home to spectacular works of art by Bernini and famous pieces by Caravaggio. The remainder of the day is yours. You may choose to leave Rome to visit another Italian locale as you have a free weekend. *Consult with the trip leaders before you make your plans so that they don't overlap with our time at the museum.*

Day 21: Free Day

Those staying in Rome might choose to worship at one of the city's few English-speaking churches, such as St. Paul's Within the Walls Episcopal, Rome Baptist, or All Saints Anglican. Of course, there are always Rome's 900+ Catholic churches as well as St. Peter's Basilica which offers Sunday mass in Latin. You might consider heading out for a picnic to the Via Appia Antica, the ancient road that, during the age of the emperors, ran 350 miles from Rome to the port of Brindisi in the south.

Day 22: Free Day

Everyone must be back at our hotel no later than 9:30 p.m.

Day 23: The Counter-Reformation and the Baroque

As we continue our investigation of Baroque Rome, we'll begin with Pozzo's spectacular ceiling in the Church of St. Ignatius followed by a visit to San Luigi dei Francesi with its famous Contarelli Chapel decorated with three paintings by Caravaggio, and, finally, Il Gesu the most important Jesuit church in the world. We'll take in the action at Piazza Navona (with Bernini's Four Rivers Fountain in the center), the world-famous Trevi Fountain, and the Spanish Steps. We will celebrate our time together with a group lunch or dinner (included in the trip cost) and say, "Arrivederci, Roma!" If you throw your coins into Rome's Trevi Fountain, tradition suggests that this won't be your last visit.

Day 24: Ciao, Roma!

Shuttle service to Rome's Leonardo da Vinci airport is included in the program fee. We will arrive back in the US on the same day.

Please note that the timing and sequence of events detailed in this itinerary are subject to change so that we can best tailor the tour to meet local conditions, site availability, and address events beyond our control.

Important Details

Program Dates

The program dates for 2025 are TBA. All students must plan to arrive in Rome by 12:30 p.m. on Day 2 (the first day of the program in Italy) and remain until the last day of the program. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Coursework

Students planning to participate in the trip for academic credit at Geneva College must enroll in HUM 301 (6 credits), the course connected with this trip, during the spring semester of 2025. With HUM 301, you will fulfill the requirements for HUM 203 & 303. Regular tuition and fees apply. Students who do not take the trip for credit will be expected to participate in all of the class-related activities in Italy. Students who enroll in the course but have already completed either HUM 203 or 303 will have those previously-completed courses count as electives.

The course will be offered MWF, 11:15-12:10 a.m. Students taking the class must arrange their spring schedule to be available during that time.

Flight Information

Round-trip air transportation from the US to Rome is not included in the cost of the program.

Medical & Trip Cancellation and Interruption Insurance

As part of the program fee you will receive health and accident coverage through GeoBlue. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase trip interruption/trip cancellation insurance because of the risk of further COVID-19 outbreaks. This insurance is not included in the program fee. The college recommends the Academic Explorer Adventure Plan through Education Insurance Plans

(<https://www.insuremytrip.com/?linkId=626037568c55120b79fb5bdf>) that will cover your trip fee and airline ticket under specified conditions. To find other options for travel insurance, simply do a Google search for “travel insurance.”

For further trip information, refer to the pre-departure booklet distributed at the Fall 2024 Italy meeting and provided as an electronic version after that meeting.