

GRAND CATHOLIC ITALY WITH OBERAMMERGAU* 13 DAYS



DAY 1 ARRIVE IN ROME, ITALY.

Welcome to Rome! At 5 pm, meet your Tour Director, then enjoy this evening's welcome dinner at a local restaurant to celebrate the start of your spiritual journey through Italy. (D)

DAY 2 ROME. Begin your discovery in Vatican City with a guided visit of the VATICAN MUSEUMS, a unique collection of religious and secular art that spans for centuries, with some of the finest examples of Renaissance paintings, including the SISTINE CHAPEL, world famous for Michelangelo's ceiling paintings and *The Last Judgment*, as well as for being the place where the conclave takes place for the election of the new popes. Continue the

visit with monumental ST. PETER'S SQUARE where the Pope prays the Angelus every Sunday in front of thousands of believers and the BASILICA, not only an incredibly rich architectural and decorative wonder, but also the place where all Catholic popes are buried. Cross the Tiber River and dip into ancient Roman history. See the Colosseum, the largest amphitheatre ever built, and the Roman Forum, site of military processions, elections, trials, and the overall centre of Roman public life for centuries. (B)

DAY 3 ROME. This morning, attend the PAPAL AUDIENCE (subject to availability) for the chance to see the Pope and receive the Papal Blessing. Later, visit ST. PAUL OUTSIDE THE WALLS, one of Rome's four major Papal basilicas built by Constantine on the grave of St. Paul, and explore the mysterious ancient CATACOMBS that run under the city. During the persecutions, the catacombs were used as places of refuge for the celebration of the Eucharist. Next, visit ST. JOHN LATERAN BASILICA and the HOLY STAIRS, brought from Jerusalem to Rome around 326 AD by St. Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. Officially, pilgrims may only ascend these 28 white marble steps on their knees. Then, visit the hallowed halls of ST. MARY MAJOR BASILICA. Its beautiful treasures are of inestimable value, and represent the Church's role as the cradle of Christian artistic civilization in Rome. For nearly 16 centuries, St. Mary Major has held its position as a Marian shrine par excellence and has been a magnet for pilgrims from all over the world who come to the Eternal City to experience the beauty, grandeur, and holiness of the basilica. (B)

DAY 4 ROME-CASCIA-ASSISI. Depart Rome today and head north into Umbria for a stop in Cascia to explore the life of St. Rita, known as the "Saint of the Impossible," as she went through many problems through the different stages of her life but always managed to get through thanks to her faith and prayer. Visit the BASILICA, see the tomb with the saint's incorrupt body, and attend Mass. Also, visit the lower basilica, home of the Eucharistic Miracle, which is commemorated each year with the Feast of Corpus Christi. Continue to hilltop Assisi, home of St. Francis and St. Clare. Here, visit ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS BASILICA, where St. Francis consecrated St. Clare as the "Bride of Christ," and the PORZIUNCOLA, where he founded the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor in 1209. (B,D)

DAY 5 ASSISI. Attend Mass this morning, followed by a guided walking tour of Assisi. Visit the BASILICAS OF ST. FRANCIS and ST. CLARE, and see the crucifix that spoke to St. Francis. St. Francis abandoned a life of luxury for a life devoted to Christianity after hearing the voice of God who commanded him to rebuild the Christian church and live in poverty. He is the patron saint of animals and the environment. St. Claire was one of St. Francis' first followers and founded the *Order of Poor Ladies*, a monastic religious order for women in the Franciscan tradition. A short trip by minibus takes you to the CARCERI HERMITAGE, a peaceful oasis in the woods of Mount Subasio where St. Francis came to pray. Finally, visit the MONASTERY OF ST. DAMIAN, a Franciscan shrine built on the spot where St. Francis heard the voice of Christ, and where he wrote the *Canticle of the Creatures*. The convent founded by St. Clare is still intact, and is where she died in 1253. This afternoon, you may wish to join an optional excursion to magnificent medieval Spello. (B)

DAY 6 ASSISI-SIENA-FLORENCE. Leave Assisi and enter Tuscany. In Siena, meet your Local Guide and learn all about St. Catherine—a saint, a mystic, a doctor of the Church, and the patroness of Italy and Europe—as you visit the BASILICA OF ST. DOMINIC, the SANCTUARY, and the HOUSE. Then, enjoy a walk through the ancient narrow lanes and visit beautiful PIAZZA DEL CAMPO. Afternoon arrival in Florence, "Cradle of the Renaissance." (B,D)

DAY 7 FLORENCE. Follow your Local Guide and visit the ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS with Michelangelo's *David*. Later, walk to beautiful Cathedral Square, admire Giotto's Bell Tower and the Baptistry's heavy bronze "Gate of Paradise." Attend Mass at the magnificent DUOMO, with its incredible Renaissance dome designed by Filippo Brunelleschi. Also see sculpture-studded SIGNORIA SQUARE and famous SANTA CROCE SQUARE with its Franciscan basilica. (B)

DAY 8 FLORENCE-PADUA. Travel through the Apennine Mountains to arrive in the flat Po area. In Padua, a guided visit of the BASILICA OF ST. ANTHONY shows you the tomb and reliquaries of this miracle-working saint and patron of lost and stolen articles. St. Anthony is one of the Catholic Church's most popular saints. He was a powerful Franciscan preacher and teacher. He was born in Lisbon in 1195 and died just outside Padua in 1231, having led a short but very intense religious life. (B)

DAY 9 PADUA. EXCURSION TO VENICE. A short drive brings you to Venice. Enter the city in style by PRIVATE BOAT and see the sights with your Local Guide. Visit lavish DOGES' PALACE, the BRIDGE OF SIGHS, and ST. MARK'S SQUARE and its BASILICA. Time at leisure or take an optional gondola ride. Return to Padua. (B,D)

DAY 10 PADUA-INNSBRUCK, AUSTRIA-OBERAMMERGAU, GERMANY. A scenic drive through the impressive Dolomites brings you to the capital of Tyrol, Innsbruck. Follow your Tour Director for a pleasant walk to the GOLDEN ROOF, and you may wish to shop for crystal, for which the city is famous. Cross the German border and arrive in picturesque Oberammergau. (B,D)

DAY 11 OBERAMMERGAU. The afternoon and evening are dedicated to the world-famous PASSION PLAY, held every 10 years and performed by the people of Oberammergau. (B,L,D)

DAY 12 OBERAMMERGAU-MUNICH. Arrive in Munich, where Germany's "Secret Capital" comes alive during an orientation featuring the Olympic Stadium, 1,000-foot-high Olympic Tower, and MARIENPLATZ, in the historic heart of the city. Afternoon at leisure; and tonight, enjoy a farewell dinner at your hotel. (B,D)

Day 13 MUNICH. Your vacation ends with breakfast this morning. (B)

Tour TVO*—Prices from \$5,299 to \$5,339 CAD, per person, double occupancy, tax included.

*Dates, prices, and terms and conditions will be advised at time of reservation and are subject to change. Itinerary subject to change.