

12-Day Pilgrimage to Italy

Assisi, Cortona, Siena, Cascia, Norcia, Foligno, Camerino, Loreto, Monteprandone, Lanciano, San Giovanni Rotondo, and Rome

Day 1

Depart on overnight flight from the US to Rome's airport. Dinner and breakfast is served on board.

Day 2

After arrival in Rome Fiumicino airport (also known as Leonardo da Vinci), we will take a private chartered bus to our hotel in Assisi. After check-in, we will visit the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels, also called the Portiuncula. This is probably the most important Franciscan sanctuary in Assisi for the memories of St. Francis that it contains. Francis and the brothers lived in a community surrounding this small church after abandoning the huts of Rivotorto. Here Francis gave Clare the tonsure after she left her family and sought refuge in a nearby monastery in 1212. In 1223, the Chapter of Mats was held here. And Francis died on October 3, 1228. Finally, the Portiuncula permits a plenary indulgence to anyone who would visit it on pilgrimage. We will conclude our first day together on pilgrimage with dinner in our hotel.

Day 3

This morning we will with Mass and a guided visit of the Basilica of St. Francis (1182-1226), which houses St. Francis's tomb. The Basilica was built in his honor and was adorned with beautiful frescoes painted by the artistic masters of the high middle Ages like Giotto, Martini, and Lorenzetti. After lunch, we will explore medieval Assisi with a walking tour through some other important Franciscan sites including St. Francis's birth-home, the home of his first follower, the cathedral of Assisi and the Basilica housing St. Clare's body. We will conclude with dinner and overnight in the hotel.

Day 4

Today we will visit the cities of Cortona and Siena of Tuscany and explore the lives of two mystic women: St. Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297), a penitential third Order Franciscan who experienced a deep conversion, and St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), a third Order Dominican who served as a Reformer during a time of deep troubles within the Church. We will also visit a Eucharistic miracle in the church of St. Francis in Siena. We will return to Assisi for dinner and overnight.

Day 5

Today we will visit several more well-known saints native to Umbria in Cascia and Nursia: Sts. Rita, Benedict, and Scholastica. In the beautiful hill-town of Cascia, discover St. Rita (1371-1447), known as the Saint of the Impossible. She was a daughter, sister, wife mother, Augustinian nun, and stigmatic. Then go to Nursia (*Norcia*) and visit St. Benedict (480-547), the founder of the Benedictine Order, and his twin sister Scholastica. St. Benedict was born of a noble family in Nursia and went to Rome to study. Appalled by the licentiousness of contemporary Romans, he fled to the hills to live as a hermit. He eventually founded twelve monasteries and wrote his well-known Rule which continues to guide monastic life to this day. Known for its culinary traditions, we will have lunch in a nice restaurant in Norcia. We will return to Assisi for overnight.



Day 6

Today we will leave Assisi, continuing our journey in Italy through the Apennine Mountains via private coach to the little-known region of the Marches of Ancona. First we will stop at Foligno and visit the remains of Blessed Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), a Franciscan Third Order mystic. In the Marches, we will visit a monastery of Poor Clares of Camerino, where one of the sisters will talk to us about the life of St. Camilla Battista da Varano (1458-1524), the daughter of a local prince who underwent a profound conversion and maintained a deep devotion to the Passion of Jesus. After lunch prepared by the delightful Sisters, we'll continue to San Severino where we will visit another community of Poor Clare Sisters who will charm us with a talk about St. Francis who passed through their region in 1212. After Vespers with the sisters, and dinner with the sisters, we will continue to Loreto for overnight in our hotel.

Day 7

We will begin today with a visit to the Basilica built over the traditional birth-house of Mary in Loreto. This house has been studied by archaeologists who have concluded that the stones are indeed from Nazareth, and the house was transported to Loreto during the Crusades. After our visit, we will go south along the Adriatic and visit the body of St. James of the Marches (1391-1476), an incorrupt Franciscan saint who dedicated his life to preaching, peace, and service to the poor. After lunch with the friars, we will continue to Lanciano, home of the most well-known Eucharistic Miracle in the Catholic Church. We will arrive in San Giovanni Rotondo in time for dinner in our hotel.

Day 8

In the morning, we will have a guided tour of the church and monastery where Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (1916-1968) lived most of his life. Padre Pio was known for many supernatural experiences such as bilocation, reading souls, and bearing the wounds of Christ. We will also visit the new church recently built by renowned architect, Renzo Piano. In the afternoon, we will visit nearby Monte Sant'Angelo, an important place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages, as it was a port city for pilgrims and crusaders journeying to the Holy Land from Italy. Return to San Giovanni Rotondo for dinner and overnight in the hotel.

Day 9

In the morning, we will have some free time in San Giovanni Rotondo, then we will depart for Rome. In the afternoon, we will visit the Basilica of St. Peter's including a guided visit to the Vatican Museums, the Sistine Chapel, and the tombs of the popes. You will have dinner and overnight in the hotel in Rome.

Day 10

This morning, we will attend the weekly Papal Audience where you will see and listen to our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, give a talk in seven languages**. In the afternoon we will visit St. Peter's Basilica, the church of St. Ignatius (the founder of the Jesuits), and the church of St. Philip Neri. We will conclude with dinner and overnight.

Day 11

This morning we have Mass and a visit of one of the Catacombs- an underground burial site for early Christians martyred during the persecutions. Afterwards, we will visit the major Basilicas of St John Lateran (dedicated to Sts. John the Evangelist and John Baptist) and St. Mary Major (dedicated to Mary, the greatest of the saints). We will conclude our pilgrimage with a farewell dinner.

Day 12

This morning, we will be transferred to Rome Fiumicino for return flight to the US.

**Contact us for dates and/or pricing.*