

Sacred Steps

Sacred Steps: Faith Walks

A global travel series exploring biblical history, Christian tradition, and living faith through immersive sites, cultural connection, meaningful reflection, and shared discovery across sacred landscapes.

Italy: Footsteps of Faith

Rome · Assisi · Florence

Day	Meals	Morning	Afternoon		Evening	
1	Sat	AIR	Overnight travel to Rome, Italy; meals in flight			
2	Sun	D	Arrive Rome, Italy; meet Tour Director & transfer to Hotel; Check-In	Welcome, Safety & Orientation Briefing	Rome City Tour & Baroque Rome: Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon & Piazza Navona	Italia Welcome Dinner
3	Mon	B, D	Ancient Rome: The Coliseum, the Roman Forum & Fori Imperiali	Mamertine Prison & Capitoline Hill Overlook	St. Paul Outside the Walls: Basilica of St. Paul Tour & Paul's Mission Map Scavenger Hunt	Local Dinner & Gelato-Making Master Class
4	Tues	B, D	The Vatican Museums, St Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel & St. Peter's Square		Castel Sant'Angelo Walk Early Christian Rome	Dinner & Indoor Rock Climbing
5	Wed	B, D	E-Bike Tour of the Appian Way with St. Callixtus Catacombs	Transfer to Assisi	Basilica of St. Francis Guided Tour & Early Christian Symbols Workshop	Pizza-Making Dinner Experience
6	Thur	B, D	Basilica & Tomb of St. Clare, the San Damiano Cross & Assisi Town Walk	Franciscan Service Project	Travel to Florence, Hotel Check-in & Refresh	Local Dinner & Free Time
7	Fri	B, D	Accademia Gallery, Michelangelo's David & Florence Duomo Cathedral	Baptistry of San Giovanni & Piazza della Signoria Walk	Santa Croce Basilica & Florentine Leather Workshop	Farewell Dinner & Reflections
8	Sat	B	Transfer to Florence International Airport; travel Home			



As with all sample itineraries, please be aware that this is an "example" of a schedule and that the activities and hotels shown may be variable dependent upon dates, weather, special requests and other factors. Itineraries will be confirmed prior to travel.

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EXPEDITIONS**

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**STEM
STUDY TOURS**
TRAVEL WITH PURPOSE

A Message From Our Team

At STEM Study Tours, we believe students learn best when they're immersed, engaged, and inspired. Every program is built with intention - blending hands-on discovery, academic depth, and meaningful experiences that help students see the world (and themselves) in new ways. Our goal is for each itinerary to spark curiosity, build confidence, and create moments students carry long after the trip ends. We're honored to partner with schools who share that vision and to help bring learning to life beyond the classroom.

— Michele & The Hammock Expeditions Team

Why Travel With Hammock Expeditions & STEM Study Tours

Schools choose us because we design programs that are organized, intentional, and built around real learning. Our itineraries combine strong academics with smooth logistics, giving teachers confidence and giving students opportunities to explore, ask questions, and grow. We partner with trusted local experts, communicate clearly, and support groups every step of the way so educators can focus on their students - not the logistics.

What Sets Us Apart

- **Purpose-Driven Itineraries** - Students actively participate in meaningful, real-world learning.
- **Safety, Structure & Professionalism** - From 24-hour support to vetted partners and clear communication, we ensure teachers can focus on their students while we manage the logistics.
- **Hands-On, High-Impact Learning** - Our programs emphasize field science, conservation, and experiential learning - the kind that sticks with students long after the trip ends.
- **Student-Centered Design** - We balance learning with fun, reflection with adventure, and structure with flexibility. Every day is crafted to keep students engaged, energized, and supported.
- **A Team That Travels With Purpose** - We're educators, planners, naturalists, and travel professionals who care deeply about student growth. Your goals become our goals.

Our Commitment to You

When you travel with us, you gain a partner who understands your vision, anticipates your needs, and delivers an experience your students will remember for years to come. We're here to support your school, empower your students, and make every moment meaningful.

We want to be your educational partner. Let us know how we may serve you.

Michele, Christina, Izzy, Dana, Taylor, and the Team



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This series is dedicated to the legacy of Daryl Hall, a dear friend whose unwavering commitment to missions, humanitarian outreach, and faith-driven service continues to inspire communities around the world.

Day 1: The Journey Begins

Dinner in flight

Travel on an overnight flight to Rome, Italy.

Day 2: Straight Into the Postcard

Breakfast in flight, lunch on own, dinner included



Italy: Footsteps of Faith

Where Faith Finds Its Story: Italy invites travelers into a landscape where faith, history, and beauty intertwine across ancient streets and peaceful hill towns. From the echoing corridors of Rome's early Christian sites to the quiet charm of Assisi and the artistic brilliance of Florence, each place reveals a different chapter of the Christian story. Students wander through basilicas shaped by centuries of devotion, trace the footsteps of saints who lived out compassion and courage, and experience the settings that inspired generations of believers. This itinerary transforms Italy into a vibrant learning journey where art, tradition, and lived faith come together, inviting travelers to see familiar stories through a new and deeply meaningful lens.

A Journey That Deepens Understanding: This experience leads travelers into the spaces where the early church grew, where Francis and Clare modeled humility and service, and where faith sparked masterpieces that still speak today. From standing in the heart of ancient Rome to reflecting in Assisi's quiet courtyards, each day offers moments that strengthen connection and spark curiosity. Students explore places where prayers were whispered, communities were formed, and faith took visible shape in architecture, art, and daily life. Through guided teaching, hands-on experiences, and meaningful encounters at sacred sites, participants gain more than knowledge - they gain perspective, inspiration, and a renewed sense of how faith continues to shape the world around them.



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Did You Know?

- › **The Appian Way is one of the oldest roads in the world**, built in 312 BC - and early Christians used it to travel between communities, spreading the message of the Gospel long before churches existed.
- › **St. Peter's Basilica isn't actually a cathedral**. The cathedral of Rome is St. John Lateran, the official seat of the Pope - a detail that surprises almost everyone.
- › **Assisi's Basilica of St. Francis is really two churches stacked together**. The Upper Basilica shines with colorful frescoes, while the Lower Basilica feels quiet and contemplative, designed for prayer and reflection.
- › **Michelangelo carved the Pietà when he was only 24**. He secretly signed his name across Mary's sash after overhearing visitors assume another sculptor created it.
- › **St. Clare of Assisi founded the Order of Poor Ladies**, later called the Poor Clares - a community devoted to simplicity, service, and prayer that still exists today in over 70 countries.
- › **The Colosseum became a symbol of Christian hope**. In the 1700s, the Pope declared it a sacred site honoring early martyrs, and a cross still stands inside today.
- › **Florence's Duomo took over 140 years to build**, and its massive dome was such an engineering mystery that no one knew how Brunelleschi planned to complete it until he actually did.
- › **The catacombs beneath Rome stretch for more than 300 miles**, containing early Christian symbols, prayers, and artwork that predate most churches by centuries.

After your arrival in Rome, we'll check in to our hotel and get refreshed after our long journey. At our **Welcome, Safety & Orientation Briefing** our local team will explain details about your travel plans, give advice on how to adapt to the local culture and outline how you will stay safe during your travels. Please note that lunch is not included today to accommodate various arrival times. If you arrive early enough for lunch, we will happily get to the perfect spot to indulge, payable on own.

Today's activities include:



Rome City Tour & Baroque Rome: Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon & Piazza Navona -

This lively walk through Rome's Baroque heart drops students straight into the city's most iconic scenes. Trevi Fountain sparkles with rushing water and bright marble sculptures, inviting everyone to toss a coin and make a wish. The Pantheon rises with massive columns and a soaring dome that opens to the sky, blending ancient engineering with jaw-dropping beauty. Piazza Navona buzzes with street artists, fountains, performers, and gelato carts, creating a colorful swirl of Roman life. It's a fast-moving, high-energy introduction to the city — part postcard, part street adventure, all unforgettable.

These streets and piazzas form the backdrop of the world Paul and the early Christians once navigated. While the Baroque landmarks came later, the neighborhoods surrounding them sit on the same ancient grid where the early church grew, preached, and lived out its faith in a bustling, multicultural city. Walking here helps students imagine the vibrancy of the world that shaped the New Testament.



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Day 3: Footsteps of Courage

Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own

Today's activities include:



Ancient Rome: The Coliseum, the Roman Forum & Fori Imperiali - Stepping into the Colosseum feels like walking onto the set of an ancient epic - towering arches, massive stone corridors, and the arena floor where crowds once roared. The Roman Forum and Fori Imperiali unfold like an open-air museum, filled with temples, triumphal arches, and the remains of Rome's political and social heartbeat. Students wander through the same streets emperors, senators, and citizens once used, seeing firsthand how Rome engineered a world built on power, spectacle, and innovation. It's big, dramatic, and packed with the kind of history that makes the ancient world feel suddenly close.

These spaces shaped the world of the early church. Paul, Peter, and the first believers lived and preached within the shadow of Roman authority - an empire whose laws, roads, and culture formed the backdrop of the New Testament. Standing here helps students imagine the courage it took to follow Christ in a city where power was on full display and faith often came at a cost.



Mamertine Prison & Capitoline Hill Overlook - This stop begins in a small, stone chamber beneath Capitoline Hill - a quiet, powerful space traditionally associated with the imprisonment of Peter and Paul. Students step down into the dim, ancient room, seeing the circular opening in the ceiling and the simple altar that marks centuries of Christian memory. After this intimate moment, the experience opens up as you climb to the Capitoline Hill overlook, where sweeping views of the Roman Forum and the city's ancient heart unfold below. The contrast - from underground stillness to panoramic grandeur - makes this one of the most moving transitions of the day.

Mamertine Prison has been honored since the early centuries as the place where Peter and Paul were held before their executions, making it one of Rome's most significant early-church sites. Standing here invites students to imagine the courage of the apostles in the face of Roman power, and the overlook above helps them see the world in which the early church took root - a reminder that faith grew not in quiet places, but in the center of an empire.



St. Paul Outside the Walls: Basilica of St. Paul Tour & Paul's Mission Map Scavenger Hunt - St. Paul Outside the Walls is one of Rome's most breathtaking basilicas, filled with golden mosaics, towering columns, and quiet spaces that invite reflection. Students explore with a licensed guide, taking in the portraits of every pope, the shimmering apse mosaic, and the peaceful cloister. The experience becomes interactive with the Paul's Mission Map Scavenger Hunt, where students work in small groups to find symbols, inscriptions, and artwork connected to Paul's life and ministry. It's hands-on, visually rich, and designed to help students engage with the basilica in a meaningful, memorable way.

This basilica stands over the traditional burial site of the Apostle Paul, making it one of the most important Christian locations in the world. As students explore, they trace the story of a man who carried the gospel across continents, wrote letters that shaped the New Testament, and lived out bold faith in the heart of the Roman Empire. The scavenger hunt deepens this connection,

helping students see how Paul's missionary journeys, teachings, and courage are woven into the art, architecture, and symbols that surround them. It's a moment that brings Scripture to life in a place where history and faith meet.



Gelato-Making Master Class - This playful, hands-on workshop drops students right into the heart of Italian food culture. Inside a real Roman gelato lab, aprons go on and ingredients come out as students learn how temperature, texture, and flavor come together to create Italy's most iconic dessert. They mix, churn, taste, and experiment with fresh ingredients while the gelato maker guides them through each step. It's fun, social, and delicious - the perfect way to unwind after a full day of exploring Rome.

Food has always been central to community in Scripture - from shared meals in the early church to Jesus breaking bread with His disciples. This simple, joyful experience echoes that same spirit of hospitality and togetherness. As students create and share their own gelato, they participate in a tradition that reminds us how God often uses everyday moments to bring people together.

Day 4: Into the Heart of It All

Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own

Today's activities include:



The Vatican Museums - The Vatican Museums open like a treasure house of human creativity, with galleries that wind through ancient sculptures, Renaissance masterpieces, and rooms filled with color, movement, and story. Students walk past towering maps, intricate tapestries, and the famous Raphael Rooms, each space revealing how art has shaped faith and culture across centuries. Along the way, the halls shift from quiet corridors to grand galleries, creating a rhythm of discovery that keeps everyone engaged. The pace is lively and immersive - a visual journey that builds anticipation for what comes next.

The Vatican's collections reflect how the church has preserved Scripture, history, and the story of God's people through art. Many pieces depict scenes from the Old and New Testaments, reminding students that the biblical narrative has inspired generations to express faith through beauty, craftsmanship, and imagination.



The Sistine Chapel - Stepping into the Sistine Chapel is a moment that always hushes the room. Michelangelo's ceiling stretches overhead in a swirl of color and movement - prophets, creation, humanity, and the drama of God's story painted across the vault. Students stand beneath *The Creation of Adam* and *The Last Judgment*, seeing details they've only encountered in textbooks suddenly come alive. The quiet in the room makes every brushstroke feel more powerful, and the sheer scale of the artwork creates a sense of wonder that's hard to describe. It's breathtaking, intimate, and unforgettable.

The Sistine Chapel is a visual retelling of Scripture - from Genesis to Revelation themes - inviting students to see the Bible not just as text, but as a story that has shaped the world. The prophets, the creation narrative, and the depiction of Christ's return all point to God's unfolding plan, reminding students that the biblical story is both ancient and ongoing.



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St. Peter's Basilica—St. Peter's Basilica rises with astonishing scale - soaring columns, golden light, and marble details that draw the eye upward the moment you step inside. Students move through vast aisles lined with chapels, sculptures, and centuries of devotion, pausing at Michelangelo's Pietà and Bernini's towering bronze canopy over the high altar. The basilica feels alive with history and reverence, its quiet corners offering space for reflection while its grandeur reminds visitors of the global church that gathers here. It's a place where beauty, architecture, and faith come together in a way that leaves a lasting impression.

This basilica stands over the traditional burial site of the Apostle Peter, the disciple Jesus called the "rock" on which He would build His church. Walking through St. Peter's connects students to the earliest days of Christianity - to Peter's bold faith, his leadership, and his witness in Rome. It's a reminder that the church grew from real people, real courage, and real commitment to Christ.



St. Peter's Square: The Experience Outside - St. Peter's Square opens into a sweeping, sunlit space framed by Bernini's colonnades, their curved arms welcoming visitors into the heart of the Vatican. Students stand where millions have gathered for celebrations, blessings, and historic moments, feeling the energy of a place that has shaped global faith for centuries. The square hums with movement — pilgrims arriving from every continent, flags waving, cameras clicking, and conversations blending into a warm, multilingual buzz. It's a vibrant crossroads where the global church comes together, where cultures mix, and where the energy of Rome meets the heart of Christian tradition.

The square symbolizes the worldwide reach of the gospel - a visual reminder that the message of Christ has traveled far beyond Rome to every nation. As students stand in this space, they see the living expression of Jesus' call to "go and make disciples of all nations," reflected in the diversity of people who gather here.



Castel Sant'Angelo Walk: Early Christian Rome - This scenic walk begins at Castel Sant'Angelo, the ancient fortress that rises along the Tiber with its circular walls and sweeping views of Rome. Students follow the historic path that links the castle to St. Peter's, moving through narrow lanes, stone bridges, and quiet corners that feel unchanged for centuries. The walk blends river views, medieval architecture, and glimpses of daily Roman life - street musicians, small cafés, and warm light reflecting off the water. It's a beautiful, relaxed transition between major sites, offering students a chance to slow down, breathe, and take in the city's layers of history.

This route traces the same neighborhoods where early Christians once lived, worshiped, and carried out their faith in the shadow of Roman power. Castel Sant'Angelo itself stands near the ancient streets where believers gathered in homes, shared meals, and supported one another during times of persecution. Walking here helps students imagine the courage and community of the early church - ordinary people living out extraordinary faith in a city that was both beautiful and challenging. It's a quiet but meaningful moment that connects Rome's landscape to the story of the New Testament.



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Indoor Rock Climbing Experience - This session kicks the energy way up as the group steps into a vibrant climbing gym buzzing with movement. After a quick gear intro, everyone hits the walls — testing balance, problem-solving, and pure determination on routes designed for all levels. The atmosphere is loud, fun, and full of encouragement as students cheer each other on and celebrate every reach, grip, and victory. It's an active, confidence-boosting break that adds a burst of adrenaline to the day.

Day 5: Rolling Into the Story

Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own

Today's activities include:



E-Bike Tour of the Appian Way - This ride sends students cruising down one of the oldest roads in the world - the legendary Appian Way - on smooth, high-powered e-bikes that make the journey feel effortless and exciting. Ancient stones, arches, and countryside views create a surreal mix of history and adventure as the group follows a protected route away from traffic. Guides point out ruins, tombs, and early Christian landmarks along the way, turning the ride into a moving outdoor classroom. It's active, scenic, and one of the most unforgettable ways to experience Rome.

The Appian Way was a major route for early Christians, connecting communities across the empire. Paul himself traveled this road on his way to Rome, making it a powerful place to imagine the movement of the gospel in the first century. Riding here helps students picture the world of the New Testament - a reminder that faith spread along real roads, through real landscapes, and among real people.



St. Callixtus Catacombs - Descending into the St. Callixtus Catacombs feels like stepping into the hidden world of the early church. Students walk through narrow passageways lined with ancient tombs, frescoes, and symbols carved by believers who practiced their faith quietly and courageously. A guide explains how these underground spaces served as burial sites, gathering places, and expressions of hope during times of persecution. It's quiet, moving, and deeply meaningful.

The catacombs reflect the resilience of the early Christian community - men and women who followed Christ even when it cost them safety and comfort. Here, students see the earliest Christian symbols: the fish, the anchor, the Good Shepherd. These images echo the New Testament's themes of hope, courage, and eternal life, reminding students that the story of the church is rooted in faith lived out under pressure.



Basilica of St. Francis Guided Tour - The Basilica of St. Francis rises over Assisi with quiet beauty, its upper and lower churches filled with frescoes that glow with color and centuries of devotion. Students explore both levels with a licensed guide, moving through chapels, arches, and corridors that feel almost suspended in time. Giotto's fresco cycle unfolds like a storybook on the walls - scenes from Francis's life painted with warmth, movement, and humanity. The basilica's peaceful atmosphere invites students to slow down, look closely, and experience art and faith woven together in one of Italy's most beloved sacred spaces.



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St. Francis modeled a life of humility, compassion, and devotion that echoes the teachings of Jesus throughout the Gospels. As students walk through the basilica, they see how Francis's commitment to simplicity and service inspired generations of believers. The artwork and architecture reflect themes of discipleship, generosity, and caring for the marginalized - values rooted deeply in Scripture and lived out boldly in Francis's life.



Early Christian Symbols Workshop - This hands-on workshop introduces students to the earliest visual language of Christianity - the symbols believers used long before churches, cathedrals, or printed Bibles existed. Led by a local Assisi artisan or Christian art educator, students learn the meaning behind symbols like the fish, anchor, Chi-Rho, and Good Shepherd. They sketch, paint, or carve their own versions using simple materials, turning ancient imagery into personal creations they can take home. The workshop is creative, tactile, and surprisingly calming - a perfect complement to the basilica's frescoes and the day's spiritual themes.

Early Christians used symbols to express hope, courage, and identity during times when open worship was not always possible. Each symbol points back to Scripture - the fish to Jesus's call to be "fishers of men," the anchor to steadfast faith in Hebrews 6:19, the Good Shepherd to John 10. As students create their own symbol, they connect with the earliest expressions of Christian faith, discovering how believers communicated truth and encouragement through simple, powerful imagery.



Italian Pizza Cooking Class - This workshop turns dinner into an adventure as the group steps into a real Italian kitchen and learns the craft behind perfect pizza. From tossing dough to choosing fresh toppings, everyone gets hands-on with the techniques that make Italy's most famous dish so iconic. The atmosphere is lively and full of laughter as students compare creations, taste their results, and enjoy a meal they made themselves. It's delicious, interactive, and one of the most memorable food experiences of the trip.

Day 6: Grace in Every Step

Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own

Today's activities include:



Basilica & Tomb of St. Clare - The Basilica of St. Clare is peaceful and understated, filled with soft light, quiet chapels, and artwork that reflects Clare's deep devotion. Students visit her tomb, a simple and moving space that invites reflection on her life of courage, humility, and service. A guide leads them through the basilica's history, pointing out the San Damiano Cross and the early Franciscan architecture that shaped Assisi's spiritual identity. The atmosphere is gentle and contemplative - a beautiful counterbalance to the grandeur of St. Francis's basilica.

Clare's life mirrors the Gospel's call to simplicity, generosity, and wholehearted trust in God. Her story echoes themes found throughout Scripture - choosing faith over comfort, serving others, and living with courage rooted in Christ. Visiting her basilica helps students see how one young woman's devotion shaped a movement that still inspires believers today.



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The San Damiano Cross - Students stand before the San Damiano Cross, the icon that spoke to St. Francis with the words, “Rebuild my church.” Seeing it in person is striking - the colors, the symbols, and the expressive face of Christ draw students in immediately. The cross feels both ancient and alive, its details revealing layers of meaning the longer you look. A guide explains the moment Francis knelt before this very image, the prayer he offered, and the calling that reshaped his entire life. The stop is short but powerful, an intimate encounter with the object that ignited the Franciscan movement and remains deeply woven into Assisi’s spiritual heritage.

The San Damiano Cross reflects Christ as the risen, living Savior - a theme woven throughout the New Testament. Its message to Francis echoes Jesus’s call to His disciples to build, serve, and restore. Standing before this cross helps students connect Scripture to real moments in history where God used ordinary people to do extraordinary things.



Assisi Town Walk - Assisi’s medieval streets create one of the most charming walks in Italy. Students wander through stone alleyways, artisan shops, small piazzas, and sunlit terraces overlooking the Umbrian countryside. As they move through the town, they pass flower-lined balconies, quiet courtyards, and small family-run cafés that give Assisi its warm, lived-in feel. The walk is relaxed and scenic, offering glimpses of daily life - locals chatting in doorways, artists working in open studios, and the gentle rhythm of a town shaped by centuries of faith and community. It’s a refreshing, joyful way to experience Assisi beyond its basilicas.

Walking through Assisi mirrors the simplicity and community-centered life that Francis and Clare embraced. The town’s architecture and atmosphere reflect values found throughout Scripture - hospitality, humility, and living closely with one another. It’s a gentle reminder that faith is often lived out in ordinary places, through everyday interactions and shared life.



Franciscan Service Project - This meaningful service experience invites students into the compassionate heart of Assisi’s Franciscan community. Guided by Franciscan staff or lay volunteers, students participate in simple, hands-on tasks such as preparing food boxes, sorting donations, tending small garden areas, or assembling care packages for local outreach. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, with gentle instruction and a focus on teamwork rather than difficulty. It’s a quiet, grounded moment in the day - a chance for students to step into the rhythm of service that has shaped Assisi for centuries and to experience firsthand the humility and generosity that Francis and Clare modeled.

Franciscan service reflects the Gospel’s call to love, compassion, and caring for those in need. The work students do - simple, practical, and rooted in kindness - echoes Jesus’s teachings about serving “the least of these” and living out faith through action. As students participate, they connect with the earliest Christian values of community, generosity, and humble service, discovering how small acts of care can reflect the heart of Christ in powerful ways.

Day 7: Florence Shines Bright

Breakfast & dinner included; lunch on own

Today’s activities include:



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Accademia Gallery & Michelangelo's David - The visit begins at the Accademia Gallery, where students walk through bright halls lined with Michelangelo's unfinished "Prisoners," sculptures that look as if they're still emerging from the stone. The path leads toward the central rotunda, and then David appears - illuminated, towering, and far more powerful than any photograph can capture. Students take in the details: the tension in David's hands, the focus in his eyes, the precision of Michelangelo's carving. A licensed guide explains how the statue was created, why it became a symbol of Florence, and how it reflects the ideals of the Renaissance. It's an unforgettable moment, one that blends art, history, and inspiration in a single room.

Michelangelo's David draws directly from the biblical story of courage and calling in 1 Samuel. The sculpture captures the moment before the battle - David trusting God, stepping forward with confidence that didn't come from strength but from faith. Standing before the statue helps students connect Scripture to art, seeing how biblical themes shaped the imagination of Renaissance artists and continue to inspire people today.



Florence Duomo Cathedral - The Florence Duomo Cathedral rises at the center of the city like a masterpiece of color, architecture, and imagination. Students step into the vast piazza where Brunelleschi's dome towers overhead, its red tiles glowing against the sky and its marble façade shimmering with intricate patterns of green, pink, and white. Inside, the cathedral opens into a cool, echoing space filled with soaring arches, quiet chapels, and the famous interior of the dome painted with scenes of heaven and judgment. A guide explains how the cathedral was built, how the dome was engineered, and how this structure became the symbol of Florence itself. It's a moment of awe and a great architectural achievement of the Renaissance.

The Duomo reflects centuries of Christian devotion expressed through beauty, craftsmanship, and community. Its artwork and architecture point to themes found throughout Scripture - creation, redemption, and the hope of heaven. The dome's imagery echoes the Book of Revelation, while the cathedral's design mirrors the biblical idea of gathering as one body. Standing here helps students see how faith inspired artists, architects, and entire cities to build spaces that lift the eyes and the heart toward God.



Baptistry of San Giovanni - The Baptistery of San Giovanni stands directly across from the Duomo, its octagonal shape and green-and-white marble façade creating one of the most striking views in Florence. Students gather outside to see the famous bronze doors - including Ghiberti's "Gates of Paradise," masterpieces of Renaissance sculpture - before stepping inside the compact, atmospheric interior. The space feels ancient and intimate, with geometric marble patterns and shimmering mosaics overhead that reflect centuries of Florence's religious life. A guide explains how this building served as the city's original baptismal center, where generations of Florentines, including Dante, received their first sacrament.

The Baptistery's purpose is rooted in Scripture's themes of renewal, identity, and belonging. Baptism marks the beginning of Christian life, symbolizing rebirth and the washing away of the old self - imagery found throughout the New Testament. Standing in the place where Florence's earliest believers were welcomed into the faith helps students connect the biblical meaning of baptism with the lived history of a city shaped by devotion, community, and spiritual tradition.



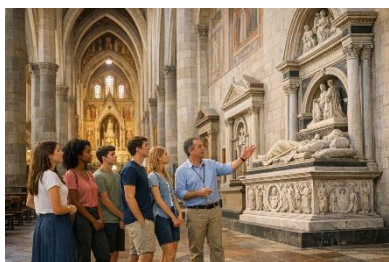
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Piazza della Signoria Walk - Piazza della Signoria is Florence's open-air gallery - a lively square filled with sculptures, fountains, and centuries of political history. Students walk through the piazza with their guide, passing the towering Palazzo Vecchio and the Loggia dei Lanzi, where masterpieces like Cellini's Perseus and Giambologna's Rape of the Sabine Women stand in full view. The square buzzes with energy: street musicians, local cafés, and the steady flow of Florentines going about their day. It's a vibrant contrast to the quiet of the Duomo area, offering students a glimpse of Florence's civic identity and artistic spirit woven together in one unforgettable space.

While Piazza della Signoria is not a religious site, its sculptures and public spaces reflect themes found throughout Scripture - courage, leadership, justice, and the tension between power and humility. Walking through the square invites students to consider how communities express their values through art and public life, echoing biblical ideas about living faithfully within society and using influence responsibly.



Santa Croce Basilica - Santa Croce Basilica is one of Florence's most meaningful churches, known as the resting place of Italy's greatest minds. Students step into a bright Gothic interior with soaring arches, peaceful chapels, and artwork by early Renaissance masters. As they walk through the basilica, they see the tombs of Michelangelo, Galileo, and other figures who shaped art, science, and culture. A guide explains how Santa Croce became the "Temple of the Italian Glories," blending faith, creativity, and national identity in one inspiring space.

Santa Croce's artwork and architecture reflect themes found throughout Scripture - sacrifice, hope, and the beauty of God expressed through human creativity. The basilica's chapels depict scenes from the life of Christ, reminding students of the Gospel stories that inspired generations of artists. Standing among the tombs of Florence's great thinkers also echoes biblical ideas about legacy and using one's gifts for the good of others. It's a moment that connects faith, history, and purpose in a way students will remember long after they leave Florence.



Florentine Leather Workshop - Florence is famous for its leather craftsmanship, and a hands-on workshop gives students a fun, creative way to experience that tradition. In a small artisan studio, students learn how Florentine leather is cut, shaped, and finished, then make a simple item such as a bracelet, keychain, luggage tag, or small bookmark. The atmosphere is relaxed and welcoming, with artisans guiding students step-by-step so the project stays easy and enjoyable. It's a light, engaging activity that connects students to Florence's artistic heritage without requiring advanced skills or expensive materials.

Craftsmanship appears throughout Scripture - from Bezalel and Oholiab building the Tabernacle to Paul's work as a tentmaker. The workshop echoes these themes of creativity, skill, and using one's hands to shape something meaningful. Students experience how everyday materials can become beautiful through patience and care, reflecting the biblical idea that work done with intention honors God.

Day 8: Carry the Light Forward

Breakfast, dependent upon travel times

As the journey comes to a close, travelers enjoy a quiet final morning at the hotel, with breakfast available depending on the group's departure time. This gentle pause offers space to reflect on the week - on the basilicas they explored, the stories of Francis and Clare, the art and architecture shaped by faith, and the moments of worship and wonder shared together. As they head to the airport, students carry home more than memories; they take with them a deeper understanding of Scripture, a renewed sense of faith, and the hope that the experiences of this week will continue to shape their walk with Christ long after they return home.

Goodbye Italy

May the peace you found here and the presence of Christ travel with you.



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Weather in Italy

Spring (March–May): Best Gelato Weather

- › Temperature: 55–70°F (13–21°C)
- › Vibe: Sunny, fresh, and ideal for exploring ancient sites.
- › Highlights: Perfect for wandering Rome's piazzas, exploring the Colosseum and Forum, and enjoying coastal breezes in Naples.
- › Packing Tips: Light layers, comfy sneakers, and a jacket for surprise showers.

Summer (June–August): Sunshine & Adventures

- › Temperature: 70–85°F (21–29°C), hotter inland.
- › Vibe: Bright, busy, and full of energy.
- › Highlights: Long summer days make Rome's monuments glow, and Naples' waterfront feels electric. Great season for e-bike rides on the Appian Way and evening cultural events.
- › Packing Tips: Sunglasses, breathable clothes, refillable water bottle, and sunscreen for long walking tours.

Fall (September–November): Golden Selfies Season

- › Temperature: 60–75°F (16–24°C) early fall, cooler later.
- › Vibe: Crisp air, golden light, fewer crowds.
- › Highlights: Rome's archaeological sites feel magical in fall light, and Naples' historic streets are perfect for relaxed exploring.
- › Packing Tips: Layers, light rain jacket, and shoes that can handle cobblestones.

Winter (December–February): Winter Warmth: Ruins, Espresso & City Glow

- › Temperature: 45–60°F (7–16°C)
- › Vibe: Quiet streets, cozy museums, and atmospheric evenings.
- › Highlights: Smaller crowds at major sites, warm cafés, and dramatic winter skies over Rome's ruins and Naples' bay.
- › Packing Tips: Warm layers, waterproof coat, scarf, and sturdy shoes for wet streets.

Cultural Tips

Language & Courtesy

- › Learn a few Italian basics: Buongiorno (Good morning), Per favore (Please), Grazie (Thank you), Arrivederci (Goodbye).
- › Use polite tone and formal greetings, especially with elders or professionals.
- › Saying goodbye when leaving shops or museums is appreciated.

Pace of Life

- › Embrace slower rhythms: meals are savored, conversations linger, and schedules may flex.
- › Expect midday closures (1–4 PM) in smaller towns.

Respect for Nature & Heritage

- › Stay on marked trails, greet fellow hikers, and keep noise to a minimum.
- › Be mindful in historic areas: no littering, respectful photography, and quiet behavior.

Student Engagement

- › Curiosity is welcomed—locals enjoy sharing stories with respectful students.
- › Dress modestly for formal visits (churches, research centers).

Faith & Tradition

- › Catholic heritage is visible in daily life - shrines, bells, and traditions.
- › Sunday is sacred: many businesses close or slow down. Use this time for reflection or scenic walks.



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Taste of Rome – Local Favorites to Try

Rome offers some of Italy's most iconic, easy-to-love foods - perfect for quick bites between activities or relaxed meals during free time. Students will find plenty of familiar favorites alongside regional classics that make central Italy unforgettable.

1. *Roman Pizza al Taglio* – Square slices sold by weight; crispy, flavorful, and perfect for groups on the go.
2. *Pasta Classics* – Cacio e pepe, carbonara, and amatriciana - simple, delicious Roman staples students love.
3. *Gelato* – Creamy, colorful, and everywhere - an easy treat between tours or after dinner.
4. *Street Food Favorites* – Suppli (Roman rice croquettes), arancini, and fried bites that are quick, familiar.
5. *Sfogliatella & Other Southern Pastries* – Still found in Rome; flaky, sweet, and fun to try.
6. *Fresh Seafood Dishes* – Available throughout the city, especially in trattorias offering fish and pasta.
7. *Classic Italian Sandwiches & Panini* – Simple, reliable, and perfect for lunch on busy days.

Entry Requirements for Italy

Travel Entry Requirements for Italy & the Schengen Area

Entry requirements for Italy and other Schengen Area countries can change, and all travelers are responsible for checking the most current information during planning and before departure. The guidelines below are accurate at the time of writing but are **subject to change without notice**. Always verify requirements through your government's travel authority and the official Schengen/ETIAS websites prior to travel. (Note: EES and ETIAS are upcoming systems. Their launch dates may shift, so travelers must check for updates before departure.)

General Requirements (All Travelers)

- ✓ A valid travel document (passport or national ID for eligible EU/EEA/Swiss citizens)
- ✓ Proof of sufficient funds for your stay
- ✓ Proof of accommodation (hotel, program lodging, or invitation)
- ✓ Proof of onward or return travel
- ✓ No active alert in the Schengen Information System (SIS)

Non-EU Travelers (Including U.S., U.K., Canadian, Australian, and others)

- ✓ **Passport Validity:** Must be valid for at least three months beyond your intended departure date from the Schengen Area.
- ✓ **Purpose of Stay:** You may be asked to show documentation of your travel purpose and accommodation.
- ✓ **Return/Onward Travel:** You must demonstrate intent to return home or continue travel.
- ✓ **EES (Entry/Exit System):** The EU is implementing a new biometric entry/exit system. Once active, non-EU travelers will provide fingerprints, a facial image, and passport details upon entry for short stays (up to 90 days in any 180-day period).
- ✓ **ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorization System):** The EU is also introducing a pre-travel authorization system. Once active, non-EU travelers will need to obtain ETIAS approval online before visiting any Schengen country.

EU/EEA/Swiss Citizens

- ✓ **Travel Document:** A valid passport or national identity card is sufficient for entry.



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Italy: Footsteps of Faith

Minimum Booking Numbers:

20 students

What's Included:

- ✓ Roundtrip international flights to/from Italy (into Rome, out from Florence)
- ✓ 6-nights' accommodation – 3-nights Rome, 1-night Assisi, 2-nights Florence (metro areas)
- ✓ Breakfasts & dinners daily starting with dinner on arrival, ending with breakfast on departure (dependent on flights)
- ✓ Airport transfers & transportation to activities shown in Itinerary
- ✓ Rome City Tour with Baroque Rome: Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon & Piazza Navona
- ✓ Ancient Rome: The Coliseum, the Roman Forum & Fori Imperiali
- ✓ Mamertine Prison & Capitoline Hill Overlook
- ✓ Basilica of St. Paul Tour & Paul's Mission Map Scavenger Hunt
- ✓ Gelato-Making workshop
- ✓ The Vatican: Museums, St Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel & St. Peter's Square
- ✓ Castel Sant'Angelo Walk - Early Christian Rome
- ✓ Indoor Rock Climbing
- ✓ E-Bike Tour of the Appian Way
- ✓ St. Callixtus Catacombs
- ✓ Basilica of St. Francis Guided Tour
- ✓ Early Christian Symbols Workshop
- ✓ Pizza-making Workshop
- ✓ Basilica & Tomb of St. Clare & the San Damiano Cross
- ✓ Franciscan Service Project (specific project TBD, based on needs & availability)
- ✓ Accademia Gallery & Michelangelo's David
- ✓ Florence Duomo Cathedral
- ✓ Baptistery of San Giovanni
- ✓ Piazza della Signoria Walk
- ✓ Santa Croce Basilica
- ✓ Florentine Leather Workshop
- ✓ Personal Tour Director & Italy National Guide
- ✓ 24-hour emergency cover

What's Not Included:

- ⊗ Fully comprehensive insurance (**mandatory**)
- ⊗ Baggage costs, pay directly to airline if required (if traveling from abroad, generally one bag is included per person)
- ⊗ Baggage handling - everyone should be able to pull / load their own bag
- ⊗ Transportation to/from your local airport nor transportation/activities not shown in the itinerary
- ⊗ Lunches nor snacks/beverages other than at meal times
- ⊗ Meal selections other than ones provided for the entire group (we are generally able to cater for allergy conditions and vegetarians/vegans); beverages other than table water (pay on own for extra beverages)
- ⊗ Cost of personal passports, visas or visa waiver fees
- ⊗ Cost of inoculations or medication required for travel
- ⊗ Hotel incidental deposits nor any personal expenditures
- ⊗ **Gratuities for your Driver, Tour Director & Local Guides**
- ⊗ Additional taxes, fuel surcharges or service charges levied by the governments or our suppliers
- ⊗ Credit card fees if individuals wish to pay via credit card instead of ACH (online check)

Our staff are available to you to answer any questions you may have regarding programming.
If we may serve you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.



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