

“Benedictine Heritage Tour of Italy”

*Sponsored by the Benedictine Way Committee of the
St. John’s Alumni Board*

February 27 – March 7, 2015

Friday, February 27

Depart from Minneapolis/St. Paul for your overnight flight to Rome.

Saturday, February 28

Arrive at Rome Fiumicino Airport where you are greeted by your escort. Board your private transportation and proceed to Orvieto (about 2 hour drive). Arrive in Orvieto and check in to your hotel.

***Hotel Palazzo Piccolomini, Piazza Ranieri 36,
05018 Orvieto*** www.palazzopiccolomini.it



The Hotel Palazzo Piccolomini is remarkable for its beautiful palace, which belonged to the pontifical family Piccolomini since the end of the 16th century. A recent and accurate restoration has given new splendor to the different age-long structures; from refined facade overlooking Piazza Ranieri down to the underground rooms cut into the tufa mass, on which the Etruscan Orvieto rises. One realizes how history wed to architecture at the Hotel Palazzo Piccolomini, a place where Renaissance, Medieval and Etruscan structures can be found. The restoration has preserved its artistic and historical riches, and yet has not neglected any comfort suited to a high-level hotel. The Hotel Palazzo Piccolomini has an enchanting position, for Piazza Ranieri is plunged into the historical-artistic charm of the medieval quarter. The palace is within easy reach of Piazza della Repubblica (shopping area) and of the Cathedral.



Lunch and the rest of the day are at leisure. This evening enjoy a group welcome dinner at Restaurant Maurizio or similar.

Sunday, March 1

After breakfast, start your day with a morning walking tour of Orvieto. Located in Southwestern Umbria, the medieval town sits upon steep cliffs of volcanic tuff. It has a dramatic setting and the soil from the ancient volcano accounts for the famous regional white wine. The early Etruscans began digging into the rock and created shrines, passageways and wells that still exist today. Your walking tour of Orvieto will provide you with a chance to experience an intimate Italy: one of many towns of



Etruscan origin in the countryside north of Rome. Orvieto is built on isolated rock, governing the valley of the Paglia River. The town is most noted for its great gothic cathedral, the Duomo di Orvieto built in the 14th century and whose architecture incorporates its environment: blue volcanic basalt rock is woven into its architecture, with beautiful interior chapels boasting frescoes by Fra Angelico and Signorelli. (Orvieto is home to the miracle of Bolsena, the piece of linen believed to be stained with the blood of Eucharist). A light lunch will be served at a local restaurant following the tour.



The afternoon and evening is at leisure.

Monday, March 2

This morning you will travel to the medieval village of Montalcino, homeland of the famous “Brunello” wine.

In the Etruscan period Montalcino already played an important role due to its strategic position, 564 meters high on a hill, which allowed perfect control over the river valleys of the Ombrone and Asso. Since 1559 under Florentine government, it was quickly forgotten by great politics, and only recently acquired an outstanding reputation thanks to the production of one of the finest Italian red wines, the Brunello di Montalcino. Your tour starts at the Rocca, the fourteenth century fortress built by Siena. From here you reach Piazza Garibaldi and the Romanesque-Gothic church of Sant Egidio. After visiting the church, walk to the Piazza del Popolo, dominated by the elongated tower of the former town hall, an elegant loggia, and other late medieval buildings. Not far away is the cathedral, renewed in neoclassical style at the beginning of the 19th-century.



After enjoying a brief tour of this charming medieval village, drive on to the “Fattoria dei Barbi” for a guided tour of their cellar with wine tasting, followed by a light lunch of local specialties.



After lunch, drive to the nearby Abbey of Sant’ Antimo in Castelnuovo dell’Abate.

Surrounded by olive groves, vineyards and oak trees, the Abbey of Sant’ Antimo lies 10 km south of Montalcino. According to a legend, the construction of the Abbey was financed through a donation by Charles the Great in 781. Between the eleventh and twelfth century it was one of the most powerful abbeys in Tuscany. The monastery decayed rapidly during the following centuries and was restored only in the twentieth century. The Abbey of Sant’ Antimo presents one of the most important Romanesque churches in Tuscany: entirely built with Travertine,

a typical stone in this area. The church reveals a strong influence of French architecture in its semicircular apse flanked by radiating chapels, while the bell tower follows patterns of Lombard style. The richly decorated portal introduces into a three-aisled basilica with an array of black-and-white frescoes.

Return to Orvieto in the late afternoon. Your evening is at leisure.

Tuesday, March 3

Enjoy breakfast before departing Orvieto to the village of Norcia, birthplace of St. Benedict, patron of Europe (about 2.5 to 3 hour drive).

Norcia was founded by the Sabines, set against the Sibylline Mountains and it was the birthplace of St. Benedict, the patron saint of Europe and the patriarch of Western monasticism. His Rule, which encapsulates the Eastern Orthodox monastic tradition, shrewdly and discreetly adapting it to the Latin world, opened up a new way for European civilization after the decline of Roman civilization. Following in St. Benedict's footsteps, centers for prayer, human enhancement and hospitality for the poor and pilgrims were set up in mainland and island Europe. Two centuries after his death there were to be more than a thousand monasteries guided by his rule. Pope Paul VI proclaimed him patron saint of Europe on 24 October 1964. Enjoy a tour of this enchanting village which major highlights stand right around the main square dominated by the imposing statue dedicated to St Benedict and the beautiful Basilica: tradition tells of the twin saints sharing a close spiritual bond from childhood and that after Benedict left for Rome, Scolastica also dedicated her life to God by living in community with other holy woman on an area of land near Norcia. It was on this land that the Church of Santa Scolastica was built centuries later. A light lunch will follow at a typical local restaurant, before continuing your journey to Rome (about 3 to 3.5 hours drive).



Arrive in Rome in the late afternoon and check in to your hotel. Your evening is at leisure.

Hotel Rose Garden Palace, Via Boncompagni 19, 00187 Roma

www.rosegardenpalace.com

The Rose Garden Palace is where style, hospitality and comfort come together in Rome. Enjoy unparalleled service in elegant and peaceful surroundings, in the heart of one of the Eternal City's most beautiful areas. The Rose Garden Palace is located in a beautifully restored historical building, just off Via Veneto. Rooms are spacious, elegant and beautiful, with gracious amenities and all the comforts of home. Step outside, and you'll find the best shopping, dining and sightseeing all within easy walking distance. Villa Borghese, the Spanish Steps, the elegant shops on Via Condotti, the Trevi Fountain and Tritone Fountain, are at your doorstep.



Wednesday, March 4

This morning you will depart the hotel for an *“Early Christian to Medieval Churches Tour”* featuring some of the most splendid churches in Rome.

You will start with a visit to Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano. This church is the cathedral of the diocese of Rome, where the pope comes to celebrate Mass on certain holidays. Built in A.D. 314 by Constantine, it has suffered the vicissitudes of Rome, forcing it to be rebuilt many times. Only fragmented parts of the original baptistry remain. The present building is characterized by its 18th-century facade by Alessandro Galilei (statues of Christ and the Apostles ring the top). Borromini gets the credit (some say blame) for the interior, built for Innocent X. It's said that in the misguided attempt to redecorate, frescoes by Giotto were destroyed (remains believed to have been painted by Giotto were discovered in 1952 and are now on display against a column near the entrance on the right inner pier). In addition, look for the unusual ceiling and the sumptuous transept, and explore the 13th-century cloisters with twisted double columns. Next door, Palazzo Laterano (not open to the public) was the original home of the popes before they became voluntary "Babylonian captives" in Avignon, France, in 1309. Across the street is the Santuario della Scala Santa (Palace of the Holy Steps), in the Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano. It's alleged that the 28 marble steps (now covered with wood for preservation) were originally at Pontius Pilate's villa in Jerusalem and that Christ climbed them the day he was brought before Pilate. According to tradition, Constantine's mother, Helen, brought the steps from Jerusalem to Rome in 326, and they've been in this location since 1589. This is one of the holiest sites in Christendom, although some historians say the stairs may date only to the 4th century.



Continue to the Church of SS Quattro Coronati. Originally built in C. IV, the church owes its name to the tradition of the martyrdom of four Roman soldiers who refused to adore Esculapio, and five sculptors from Pannonia, accomplices with the soldiers.



For this reason the church is subject to particular devotion by stone-cutters and marble-carvers. The third-century cloister, probably defined the most evocative one marble-carvers ever left in Rome, and the Oratorio di San Silvestro, famous for the decorations with frescoes dated C.XIII, show episodes from the legend of Costantino. The ensemble of buildings still shows the severe character it had during the Middle Ages, when it was used as a defensive bastion for the nearby Basilica di San Giovanni e del Patriarchio.

Afterwards, you will visit San Clemente al Laterano (Basilica of San Clemente). San Clemente in Laterano is one of the most interesting and antique basilicas in Rome. It was built before 385 and dedicated to St. Clemens, the third Pope after St. Peter. It consists of two over-imposed churches, built over Roman buildings of the Republican period, and on the ruins of a temple of the God Mithras. The lower church was the seat of various councils during the fifth century. Destroyed after invasion by Robert Guiscard (1084), it was restored during the eighth and ninth century. In 1108 Pope Paschal II built the upper church on its ruins, and it was restored by Carlo Fontana under the papacy of Clemens XI. The architect built the modest baroque façade using the antique granite columns for the arched portico. The interior was remodeled by Fontana, and yet still preserves the typical aspect of an antique Roman basilica: it is divided, in fact, into three naves with two marble and granite columns having Ionian capitals. The church is served by the Irish Dominican Fathers. The archeological complex that lies under the Basilica of San Clemente is situated in the valley that separates the Caelius Mountain from the Esquiline Hill. The structures currently visible belong to two buildings. The former

consists of a house of at least two stories built between the end of the first and the beginning of the second century AD. Successively between the end of the second and the beginning of the third century the central room of the house was transformed into a Mithreum. The side walls of the central room of the sanctuary present two long benches, where the congregation sat. The altar for the cult was placed at the rear of a niche, where Mithra is depicted killing a bull with his two assistant torch-holders, Cautes and Cautopates. The Mithreum was abandoned at the end of the fourth century and the entire complex was filled in. The latter building is situated east of the Mithreum and at a lower level. The complex probably served as a storehouse, or based on inscriptions found in the zone, as a mint for the production of imperial coins. Around the middle of the third century the first floor of the building was demolished and replaced by new construction to be identified with the Titulus of Clement, seat of the first Christian community in the zone. In the course of the fourth century the building was partly demolished to build the early Christian church that is still visible underneath the current one.



After a light lunch at a local restaurant, you will walk back to your hotel.

The rest of your afternoon and evening are at leisure.

Thursday, March 5

After breakfast, depart for a full day excursion to Cassino (about 2 hours drive).

The Abbey of Montecassino is one of the most known Abbeys in the world. We might list thousands of motivations to show you why people travel so much to reach this mountain. The most likely one is they want to be, at least once in their lives, within the walls where the foundations of western culture and monasticism are. In 529 Saint Benedict chose this mountain to build a monastery that would host him and those monks following him on the way from Subiaco. Paganism was still present here, but he managed to turn the place into a well-structured Christian monastery where everybody could have the dignity they deserved through praying and working. Within the centuries the Abbey has met magnificence and destruction many times, and has always come out of its ruins stronger. In 577 Langobards destroyed it, then Saracens in 887. In 1349 a violent earthquake occurred and in February

1944 a bombardment almost flattened it. *Ora et labora et lege*: this is the motto of Saint Benedict's Rule that the monks still follow in their daily routine. Some of them study in the library surrounded by ancient books, or make researches in the archive on breathtaking manuscripts. Some others host people seeking for a moment of inner peace and serenity. And if you are visiting the Abbey you might meet some of them having a walk in the cloisters before they go back to their rooms to pray alone or to gather later for the common prayer. Every day thousands of pilgrims and visitors from all around the world come to this



threshold. They silently go through the cloisters and then up the big ramp to the Basilica at Saint Benedict and Scholastica's grave. Then the Crypt is there beneath to be revealed with the astonishing golden mosaics. But it is in the museum where finally visitors can see the magnificent paintings, the wonderful manuscripts and ancient books. They can go through the history of the Abbey from the very beginning till today and grasp why Montecassino Abbey is known as the Lighthouse of Western Civilization.

Following your visit, enjoy lunch with wine at a local restaurant. You return to Rome at around 5:30pm.

Your evening and dinner is at leisure.

Friday, March 6

This morning you depart Rome to the village of Subiaco to enjoy a visit of the celebrated Benedictine Monasteries (about 1.5 hours each way).

The Monastery of Saint Benedict: By climbing the Talèo one reaches the little wood of holmoaks with a series of steps leading to the shrine which is as it were spluttered against the rock, a real "swallow's nest", as it seemed to Pius II in 1461. The beauty of the shrine, which comprises two churches one above the other and several chapels, consist particularly in the artistic irregular arrangement of walls, vault and steps which are almost identified with the rocks, and in the paintings which decorate every surface, thus making numerous lights, and adorning the faint light of the passages and the caves. The Monastery of St. Scholastica is built half way up the side of the mountain where two valleys meet and above the place where was the highest of Nero's lakes. It is the only monastery of the twelve ones wanted by St. Benedict along the valley of the Aniene not to have been destroyed by earthquake or the Saracen invasions. Till the end of the XII century, it was the only monastery of Subiaco. At the beginning it was called "St. Sylvester", then, in the IX century, it was dedicated to St. Benedict and St. Scholastica and then, in the XIV century, got the present name. It is a building complex built in different times and styles. The XX-century styled entrance, above which the Benedictine motto "Ora et Labora" is written, leads to the first or Renaissance cloister, which goes back to the XVI century. Through it one enters the second or Gothic cloister, of the XIV century and, passing along there is the third or Cosmatan cloister, which is still more ancient (XIII century).

The bell-tower goes back to the XII century, while the present church to the XVIII one; the latter is the last of five churches built in time. The Façade, which was bombed on May 23rd, 1944, has been reconstructed in a sober and austere, modern style.



S. Benedetto Monastery



S. Scolastica Monastery

After enjoying these fascinating sites, pause for lunch at a local restaurant before boarding your bus and driving back to Rome.

rest of the day at leisure

This evening you will have a farewell dinner at your hotel.

Saturday, March 7

This morning you depart Rome and transfer to the Fiumicino International Airport for your flight home.

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TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- 3 night’s accommodation at 4 star Piccolomini Hotel in Orvieto including daily buffet breakfast
- 4 night’s accommodation at 4 star Rose Garden Palace Hotel in Rome including daily buffet breakfast
- Private deluxe coach transportation and English speaking escort assistance throughout the program
- Private local English speaking guide for half day service in Orvieto, Montalcino, Norcia, Cassino & Subiaco
- All necessary admission fees to sites being visited during the guided tours
- Welcome dinner at a local restaurant in Orvieto including beverages
- Set menu lunch at typical local restaurants during the tours in Orvieto, Montalcion, Norcia, Cassino and Subiaco , and during the one (1) half day Rome tour
- Wine tasting in Montalcino in connection with the visit to the Fattoria Barbi (or similar)
- Half day “Early Christian to Medieval Rome Tour” including private deluxe coach transportation, English speaking guide service and admission to San Clemente Church
- Individual ear phone rental in connection with tours in Rome
- Farwell dinner at Rose Garden Palace Hotel including beverages
- Current parking fees and municipal taxes, highway tolls
- Hotel taxes, city fees, and bellman gratuities

LAND TOUR PRICE (Hotel Athena Siena and Hotel Bernini Bristol Rome):

\$4,045 per person, based on double occupancy
\$850 Single Supplement available on request

Cash or check payment

\$4,190 per person, based on double occupancy
\$885 Single Supplement available on request

Credit card payment

All prices include the entire land package, but do not include any gratuities for drivers or guides. Prices are based on currency conversion rates in effect as of March 2014 and if the rate fluctuates significantly, the package price may be adjusted. Prices are based on 18 paying participants.

NOT INCLUDED:

Air transportation, air taxes and fees, passport fees, visa fees, airline baggage fees, meals (unless otherwise indicated in the itinerary), optional sightseeing, phone calls, travel insurance, tips to driver/guide, or any other items not specifically mentioned as included in the itinerary.