



GASTON
COLLEGE

GLOBETROTTERS

GASTON

A Publication of Bob Blanton Study Tours @ Gaston College

Fall 2022

Rome - Northward to the Alps



Our last two college Study Tours to Italy have concentrated on the south of the country (Amalfi, Naples, Sorrento, Capri, and the Island of Sicily). Due to requests, our Spring 2023 Bob Blanton Study Tour will begin in **Rome** and move northward to the **Alps** and **Milan**. Of course, the highlight of any visit to this part of Italy is **Tuscany**, where we will visit not only **Florence**, but also an interesting ancient town nearby (**Lucca**). We will also spend a couple of days in the **Lake District of Italy**, especially **Lake Como** and **Bellagio**. We have been able to negotiate the price down from \$4,250 per person to our price below the \$4,000 mark. As we know, here in America everything is higher in price (and much of western Europe is suffering from even higher prices while in their economic recession). We have moved the dates back from our usual mid-May departure to

(continued on page 2)

Inside...

Rome-Northward to the Alps	1
Itinerary Overview	2
Tour Details	2-5
Tour Package	5
Reservations	6

*Created & Edited by Bob Blanton
Design & Layout by Debbie Bowen*

Itinerary Overview

Day 1 - Tuesday, April 25

Flight to Rome

Day 2 - Wednesday, April 26

Arrive Rome - Walking Tour

Day 3 - Thursday, April 27

Vatican Museum & St. Peter's Basilica

Day 4 - Friday, April 28

Travel to Florence

Day 5 - Saturday, April 29

Lucca

Day 6 - Sunday, April 30

Florence - Morning Cooking Class

Day 7 - Monday, May 1

Travel to Milan & Lake Como

Day 8 - Tuesday, May 2

Lake Como & Varenna

Day 9 - Wednesday, May 3

Lake Como & Bellagio

Day 10 - Thursday, May 4

Milan to Charlotte



Rome - Northward to the Alps

April 25 - May 4, 2023

the last week of April (which saves us a good deal on our airline fares on Lufthansa). We have priced this tour on 18 paying participants, but if we can increase that number to somewhere between 20 and 25 participants, our price should be lower per person. Please look over the daily itinerary for this quality Italian study tour and plan to join us in the spring. For those who are regular travelers with us, we have secured the services of the best guide/tour manager in Europe (John Lionet) who will be with us from the beginning to the end of our tour in **Milan**.



DAY 1

Tuesday, April 25

Flight - Charlotte to Rome

- You depart from **Charlotte** today for the overnight flight to Rome.

DAY 2

Wednesday, April 26

Arrive Rome - Walking Tour

- You arrive in **Rome** today where you are met by your Tour Manager and private tour bus and transfer into the city and your hotel.
- In the afternoon you have an introductory walking tour to explore the legacy of baroque **Rome** and its historic center.
- You begin at the **Colosseum**, Rome's most famous sight, where gladiatorial combats took place.
- You walk alongside the **Roman Forum** to **Piazza Venezia** where you can see the dazzling white marble of the **Vittorio Emanuele Monument**, built in the late 19th century as a memorial to Italy's unifying Monarch, and now incorporating the memorial

to Italy's unknown soldier. Also here is Michelangelo's graceful **Cordonata Staircase** which leads to the **Capitoline**.



- You continue to the **Pantheon**, which was originally built by the Roman Emperor Hadrian and is now a church. It contains the tombs of two of the Kings of Italy as well as the artist Raphael.
- You soon reach the **Trevi Fountain**, at the heart of tourist Rome, and you conclude at the wonderful spectacle of the **Spanish Steps**.
- There will be a **welcome group dinner** this evening at a city center restaurant.

(continued on page 3)

Rome - Northward to the Alps (continued from page 2)

DAY 3

Thursday, April 27

Vatican Museum & St. Peter's Basilica

- This morning you have a guided tour of the **Vatican Museums**, which house one of the most impressive collections of archaeology in the world.
- Highlights of the tour include the magnificent **Gallery of Maps**, a stunning collection of frescoes which date from 1580 and depict in glorious color the Pope's dominions. The center piece is undoubtedly Michelangelo's extraordinary ceiling in the **Sistine Chapel**.



- You continue to **St. Peter's Basilica** itself. The majesty and size of the Basilica is truly unforgettable and there are many treasures and artworks, including the famous **Pieta** sculpture by Michelangelo and Bernini's magnificent **Baldachin** over the Altar. Perhaps the most fascinating is Bernini's final masterpiece, the **Monument to Pope Alexander VII**. The Pope is surrounded by the allegorical statues of Justice, Prudence, Charity and Truth, with the Angel of Death holding up the curtains over the Door to Eternity.
- The afternoon will be free to explore Rome on your own.
- Dinner on your own this evening.

DAY 4

Friday, April 28

Travel to Florence

- This morning you travel by train to **Florence** which takes about two hours.
- After check-in at your hotel there will be time to explore the historic center including the **Piazza della Signoria** where you see the **Fountain of Neptune**. The adjacent **Loggia della Signoria** is home to several bronze and marble statues including **Perseus** and the **Medici lions**.
- This afternoon you visit the **Accademia Museum**, famous for the magnificent giant marble sculptures created by Michelangelo, some of which were never completed. Above all is the glorious **Statue of David** which stands in a position of prominence at the end of a long gallery. There are also works of art by several famous Italian artists including **Botticelli**, many of which were commissioned by the powerful Medici family.
- In the late afternoon we ascend the **Cupola of the Duomo - the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore**. This spectacular basilica took more than 100 years to build and was completed by 1436.



The dome was the work of the celebrated architect Brunelleschi and over a century later was decorated with frescoes of the **Last Judgment** by Vasari.

- Dinner will be on your own this evening.

DAY 5

Saturday, April 29

Lucca

- This morning you visit **Lucca**, one of Tuscany's most charming cities and a hidden gem, visited mainly by Tuscan aficionados. Less than an hour from **Florence** this attractive, walled town was founded by the Etruscans before the Romans arrived. Evidence of its Roman amphitheater built over 2000 years ago can be seen in **Piazza Anfiteatro** where the oval amphitheater shape marks the perimeter of the piazza today.
- The city also has many beautiful churches. The façade of Lucca's cathedral is a fantastic example of Romanesque architecture, while inside the church you can admire paintings by Domenico Ghirlandaio and also Tintoretto.
- And you should not miss the façade of the medieval church of **San Frediano**, with its wonderful mosaic. If you have the energy, climb the 230 steps up to the **Torre Guinigi** and

(continued on page 4)

Rome - Northward to the Alps (continued from page 3)

enjoy the wonderful view across the red-tiled city roof tops. It's easy to find the tower because it has trees growing out the top!

- **Lucca** is renowned for the quality of its food and wine, which is fiercely regarded by the locals as being different and distinct from Tuscan.
- You can enjoy lunch in one of the attractive cafes in the **Piazza Anfiteatro**.
- In the afternoon you return to **Florence**.
- Dinner will be on your own this evening.

DAY 6

Sunday, April 30

Florence - Morning Cooking Class

- This morning you are free to explore, or you can take part in an optional cooking class where we travel outside the city to the **Chianti region** and spend the morning taking part in an authentic Italian cooking class (*cost not included*). The class is located in the midst of rolling vineyards and gardens with aromatic Mediterranean herbs, olive trees, fruits and cypress. You will recreate traditional recipes that have been handed down through generations. The class features local and traditional ingredients and, of course, a selection of Italian wines.
- After enjoying lunch amidst the vineyards, we return to **Florence** in the afternoon and there will be time to explore on your own.
- You may wish to visit the wonderful **Uffizi Museum** where you can find many of the most famous artists of the Renaissance including Botticelli, Veronese, Michelangelo and Caravaggio.

- Dinner will be on your own this evening.



DAY 7

Monday, May 1

Travel to Milan & Lake Como

- This morning you travel by train to **Milan**, the capital of **Lombardy**.
- On arrival you have time for lunch and to explore the center of the city, including the famous **Cathedral** and the **Piazza del Duomo**. Adjacent to the piazza you can visit the incomparable **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II** with its elegant designer shops.
- Time permitting you can walk through to the **Piazza della Scala** to see the eponymous **Opera House**, perhaps the most famous in Europe.
- In the afternoon we continue the journey by private tour bus to the lakeside city of **Como**. **Lake Como** is the closest of the Italian lakes to **Milan** and is considered the most fashionable. Indeed, George Clooney owns the **Villa Oleandra** which is situated on the lake shore in the small town of **Laglio**.
- After passing through the town, where we may be able to glimpse the Villa, we soon arrive at the pretty town of **Menaggio**. Just north of the town is the **Villa La Gaeta**, shaped like a medieval, renaissance castle, and which was used in the

James Bond film *Casino Royale*. The Villa is available for rental if you have the budget!

- Dinner will be on your own this evening.

DAY 8

Tuesday, May 2

Lake Como & Varenna

- This morning we take the short ferry trip across the lake to **Varenna**, an attractive village on the eastern shores and often regarded as the most picturesque on the lake. The historic center is full of art and culture including the little **Church of San Giovanni Battista** (John the Baptist) which dates back to the 11th century.
- Make sure you walk the scenic **'Walk of the Lovers'** - a boardwalk which runs from the center of the village along the lake shore with wonderful views of the **Castle of Vežio**. The castle itself can be explored and there are sometimes medieval reenactments held here.
- There are excellent opportunities to have an al fresco lunch in the various small restaurants which can be found in the narrow lanes and on the waterfront.
- In the afternoon we return by ferry to **Menaggio**.
- Dinner will be on your own this evening.

DAY 9

Wednesday, May 3

Lake Como & Bellagio

- This morning we take the short ferry trip to **Bellagio**, another of Lake Como's pretty villages. Known as the **Pearl of Lake Como**, **Bellagio** is probably the most famous town on the lake and is the perfect mix

(continued on page 5)

Rome - Northward to the Alps (continued from page 4)

of photogenic streets, small shops, delightful restaurants, and wonderful views. It boasts historic cobbled lanes with attractive little cafes, and the elegant **Villa Serbelloni Park**, a hillside garden with exotic plantings & statuary on a

headland overlooking the lake.

- The day will be free to explore **Belaggio** and in the afternoon we return to **Menaggio**.
- There will be a farewell group dinner this evening at a local restaurant.

DAY 10

Thursday, May 4 Flight Home

- This morning you depart from Menaggio by private tour bus and travel to Milan Airport for the homeward flight.

All-Inclusive Tour Price

Land and air package:

\$3,950 per person, double-occupancy hotel with transportation and fees (based on 18 paying tour members).



What IS Included in the Tour Package

- Flights from Charlotte to Rome, Milan to Charlotte
- Accommodations at superior hotels in twin or double rooms throughout your stay in Italy
- Breakfasts at the hotel, and two dinners at local restaurants
- Welcome dinner at a city restaurant in Rome
- Farewell dinner at a local restaurant on our last night
- Transportation by private coach for airport transfers, sightseeing and touring
- Transportation from Rome to Florence, and Florence to Milan by Eurail Train
- Professional tour guide throughout
- Specialized local guides as required
- All admission fees and excursions as mentioned on your itinerary
- 100% Financial Protection through our Travel Trust Association License

What Is NOT Included in the Tour Package

- Valid passport (Visas are not currently required for US citizens)
- Travel Insurance
- Lunches, dinners (other than welcome and farewell), and drinks with meals
- Tips for driver and guide
- Additional single-room supplements
- Cost of Gaston College registration for credit students

**Reservation Form
Rome - Northward to the Alps**

April 25 - May 4, 2023

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM, DETACH AND SEND TO
BOB BLANTON STUDY TOURS @ GASTON COLLEGE
AT THE ADDRESS BELOW.**

Non-refundable* \$500 (per person) deposit by check or credit card
must be received on or before **January 30, 2023**,
(credit card payments can be made at 704.922.6435).

Full name (as it appears on your passport): _____

Current address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email: _____

Valid passport number (for airlines): _____

Expiration date: _____

Note: Many foreign countries now require that your passport be
valid at least 6 months after you end your visit. Make sure yours
will meet this requirement.

I wish to room with: _____

I require a private room at additional cost: _____

Special dietary/health needs (for hotels/airlines): _____

- I am covered by my own health/hospitalization insurance
policy while overseas. You must provide proof of coverage.
- I plan to purchase additional health/hospitalization insurance
(on my own). Trip Mate is our preferred company.

Bob Blanton, Bob Blanton Study Tours @ Gaston College
Box 76, Gaston College
201 Highway 321 South
Dallas, NC 28034-1499

**Except in cases where we can resell your space.*

Reservations

**Rome - Northward
to the Alps
April 25-May 4, 2023**

**All prices based upon a
minimum of 18 paying
participants (prices are valid
at the time of this printing,
but are subject to change).
Tours are sold on a first-
come, first-served basis.
Checks should be made
payable to Bob Blanton Study
Tours @ Gaston College,
and payment should be
sent directly to Bob Blanton,
Gaston College Study Tours,
Box 76, Gaston College, 201
Highway 321 South, Dallas,
NC 28034. NOTE: Even those
who pay by credit card
are required to return this
reservation form.**

Final Payment Deadline
February 15, 2023



Dallas Campus
201 Highway 321 South
Dallas, NC 28034
704.922.6200
704.922.2323 (f)