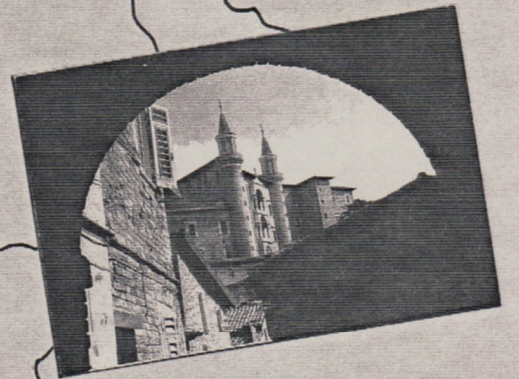
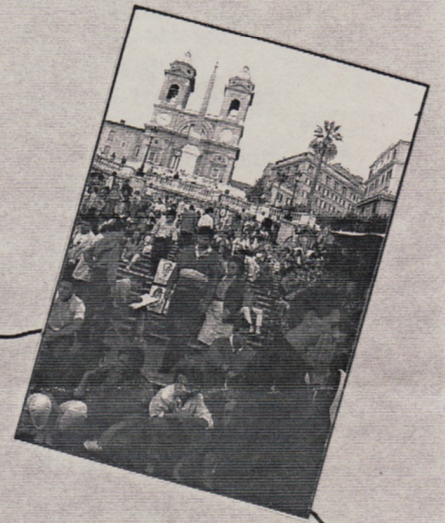
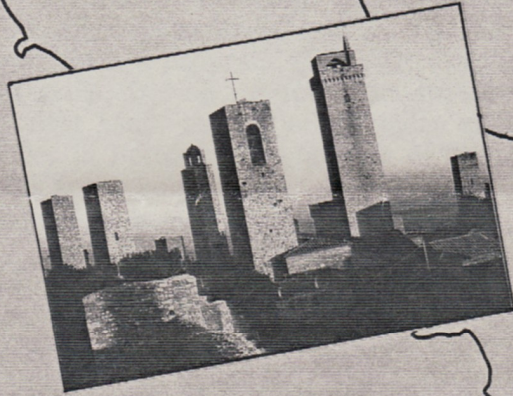


# Italy



*A Wesley College Art Study Tour*  
*April 1997*



## DAY 2 ROME

We will begin our tour in Rome – the capital of modern Italy and one of the oldest cities in Europe.

Founded over 2,700 years ago, Rome has had a long and at times turbulent history. For several centuries it was the headquarters of the all conquering Roman Empire, and since the 15th Century, Rome has been the centre of the Catholic Church. In 1870, Rome became the capital of a unified Italian nation.

The focus of our initial visit to Rome will be the monuments of the Ancient city, including the Forum – the political and commercial centre of Imperial Rome – the Colosseum, The Pantheon, the Arch of Constantine, and the Capitoline Museums with their valuable collections of Ancient sculpture.

The Pantheon, a temple to "all the gods", was built by the Emperor Hadrian in 120 AD. This magnificent building was constructed using the latest in Roman building techniques, and its beautiful domed interior has continued to inspire architects ever since.

The Colosseum was built by order of the Emperor Vespasian in 72 AD, as a venue for public entertainments such as wild animal fights, gladiatorial combats, and even mock sea battles. It could seat about 55,000 people.

The Arch of Constantine was erected in 315 AD to celebrate a victory by the Emperor Constantine.

Legend has it that Rome was founded by Romulus in 753 BC. Since that time the city has shown remarkable resilience, as it has been invaded by Gauls, ravaged by fire while the Emperor Nero fiddled, sacked by the Goths, conquered by Charlemagne and Charles V, devastated by plague, plundered by Napoleon, and monumentalized by Mussolini.

On the bright side, Rome has been painted by Michelangelo and Raphael in the 16th Century, redesigned and transformed by Bernini during the 17th, etched by Piranesi in the 18th, visited and eulogised by Goethe, Byron and Stendahl, set to music by Berlioz and Respighi, and filmed by Fellini.

In 1786, the German writer Goethe visited the city. "At last" he wrote, "I have arrived in the capital of the world!....One could say that it is like starting life all over again to see all of this with one's own eyes."

### DAY 3 ROME - POMPEII - NAPLES - ROME

From Rome we will take a day trip into the south of Italy - the "Mezzogiorno" or "land of the midday sun". The capital of the Campania region is Naples.

With a population of 1.2 million, Naples is the most densely populated city in Italy, and one of its poorest, but the natural beauty of the Bay of Naples, ~~its~~ <sup>the</sup> exuberant nature, and the reminders of its ancient past make it well worth a visit. ~~the~~ <sup>of its people</sup>

The first settlements were established around the Bay of Naples in the 8th. Century BC, and were developed by the Ancient Greeks. The dramatic beauty of the Bay with its protected harbours, picturesque islands, and spectacular mountainous backdrop inspired the mythology of the Greeks. The Romans brought prosperity to the region, and several settlements grew into flourishing cities - despite the ominous presence of an active volcano.

The subsequent history of Naples was coloured by a fascinating mixture of cultures - Byzantine Greeks, Arabs, French and Spanish all played their part in the evolution of the city during the following centuries.

Casting an ominous shadow over the Bay of Naples is Mount Vesuvius. It last erupted in 1944, but its most famous burst of activity occurred in AD 79, when a major eruption buried the nearby cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in layers of mud, hot ash and pumice stone. Today it is safe to view Vesuvius from close quarters, but there are always reminders of the energy beneath the surface of the earth. You can understand why the Greeks thought the entrance to Hell was situated nearby.

Much of what we know about the cataclysmic events of that fateful day in 79AD is due to the eye witness account of the Roman writer Pliny the Elder. The description of the early hours of the eruption as related by his nephew, paint a vivid picture.

Mount Vesuvius was blazing in several places with spreading and towering flames, whose refulgent brightness the darkness of the night set in high relief.

a black and dreadful cloud bursting out in gusts of igneous serpentine vapour now and again yawned open to reveal long fantastic flames, resembling flashes of lightning but much larger.

Soon afterwards, the cloud began to descend upon the earth, and cover the sea.

*He goes on to describe his attempt to flee with his mother...*

Ashes now fall upon us, though as yet in no great quantity. I looked behind me; gross darkness pressed upon our rear, and came rolling over the land after us like a torrent. I proposed while we yet could see, to turn aside, lest we should be knocked down in the road by the crowd that followed us and trampled to death in the dark. We had scarce sat down, when darkness overspread us, not like that of a moonless or cloudy night, but of a room when it is shut up, and the lamp put out. You could hear the shrieks of women, the crying of children, and the shouts of men; some were seeking their children, others their parents, others their wives or husbands, and only distinguishing them by their voices; one lamenting his own fate, another that of his family; some praying to die, from the very fear of dying; many lifting their hands to the gods; but the greater part imagining that there were no gods left anywhere, and that the last and eternal night was come upon the world.

During the 18th.Century excavations began at Pompeii, and since that time archeologists have gradually uncovered this extraordinary time capsule of daily life in Ancient Roman times. We will be able to walk the ancient streets and explore the homes, workplaces, and public buildings of its citizens.

Many of the sculptures, mosaics, paintings, and artifacts recovered from the excavations can be seen today in the Museo Archeologico in Naples.

One of the grislier reminders of the human tragedy produced by the eruption can be seen at Pompeii in the body casts that have frozen the last moments of many of its citizens for all time.



#### **DAY 4 ROME - SIENA**

On Day 4 we will travel north from Rome into the well known region of Tuscany. For much of our journey we will follow the ancient pilgrimage route used for centuries by travellers journeying to and from Rome. The route is lined by Romanesque churches and its valleys and passes are still marked by the remains of castles and garrison towns.

One of the finest churches in the region is Sant'Antimo, and we will stop to inspect this well preserved example of Romanesque architecture. Built in the 12th. Century, as part of an important monastic community, the church is tended today by Augustine monks and continues to be used for mass on Sundays.

Our major destination on Day 4 will be the city of Siena, a beautifully preserved Medieval city with several distinctive landmarks. The shell shaped Piazza del Campo is the site of the annual Palio, a traditional horse race in which the city's various parishes or contrade compete with extraordinary enthusiasm. The 100 metre high bell tower of the Palazzo Pubblico, or town hall, dominates the city's skyline. During the 13th and early 14th Centuries Siena underwent a major program of civic building, and today its steep, narrow streets retain much of their original Medieval flavour.

Siena is an excellent place to view examples of Medieval art, and the walls of the Palazzo Pubblico are decorated with paintings such as the "Allegory of Good and Bad Government" by Ambrogio Lorenzetti.

The other major repository of Siennese art is the Cathedral or Duomo. This spectacular church was built in an elaborate Gothic style, complete with an ornate facade and a very distinctive black and white interior. At one time there were plans to extend the duomo and make it the biggest church in the Christian world, but the onset of the plague put paid to these ambitious plans. The unfinished extensions can still be seen today.

#### **DAY 5 SIENA - VOLTERRA & SAN GIMIGNANO - SIENA**

The hilly Tuscan countryside is dotted with farmhouses, villas and castles, and there are a number of hill towns which have retained their Medieval character. On Day 5 we will visit two of the better known, Volterra and San Gimignano.

San Gimignano's distinctive towers provide it with a special attraction and remind us of how many Tuscan towns would have once looked. Perched atop a hill and surrounded by a fortified wall, San Gimignano is a reminder of a period in history when inter city rivalry and family feuding were the norm. The towers, dating from the 13th. Century, were built primarily as private fortresses and symbols of their owner's wealth. Today only 14 of an original 76 survive. Spectacular views of the town itself and the surrounding countryside can be gained from the Torre Grossa. The church of Sant' Agostino contains a beautiful cycle of frescoes of the life of St. Augustine.

## DAY 6 SIENA - FLORENCE

### DAYS 7 & 8 FLORENCE

On Day 6 we will travel north from Siena to Florence, passing through the famous wine making region of Chianti. We should arrive in Florence early in the afternoon, and we will spend the remainder of the day acquainting ourselves with the layout of the city. A visit to Piazzale Michelangelo and the city's dominant landmark, Santa Maria del Fiore should provide a useful introduction.

During the next two days we will focus our attention on the crucial period in Western history known as the Renaissance. Although Florence began its existence long ago as a Roman colony, its great flowering occurred during the 15th Century when as a city-state it became one of Italy's leading powers. From a commune led by a collective of guilds, Florence evolved into a Republic controlled by several influential noble families, of which the Medici were the most important. During this time Florence became a commercial, cultural, and intellectual focus for all of Europe. Under the enlightened patronage of wealthy families, the visual arts prospered.

The Duomo was the centre of much artistic activity during the early years of the Renaissance. The enormous dome was the achievement of the architect Brunelleschi, the magnificent bronze doors of the Baptistery were produced by Lorenzo Ghiberti and he and other artists such as Donatello took the humble goldsmith's craft to new heights. One of the major achievements during the Renaissance was the rise of the artist beyond his traditional status as a largely anonymous craftsman, and we will see examples of great individual achievements in museums such as the Bargello and the Accademia.

We will, for example, be able to compare Donatello's sensuous bronze David with Michelangelo's massive marble figure symbolising the Florentine Republic.

In the Uffizi Gallery we will see some of the major paintings of the Italian Renaissance. In particular the magnificent works of Botticelli, including the "Primavera" and the "Birth of Venus". In the convent of San Marco we can experience the quietly expressive art of Fra Angelico.

Everywhere in Florence we will see examples of architecture in the Classical tradition, from the library and cloisters of San Marco, to the dome of the Cathedral, and the churches of Brunelleschi.

The street markets around San Lorenzo and Santo Spirito, are popular places to purchase the leathers and jewellery for which Florence is known.

Jewellery can also be bought from the goldsmith shops on the Ponte Vecchio, or old bridge. This famous bridge dates from 1345, and its shops first operated here in 1592. The Ponte Vecchio is one of a series of bridges which cross the River Arno and connect the centre of the city with the south bank, known as the Oltrarno.

The Oltrarno has its share of historic features including the Palazzo Pitti and the beautiful Boboli Gardens, designed in the Renaissance style and opened to the public in 1766.



## DAY 9 FLORENCE - ASSISI

### DAY 10 ASSISI

On Day 9 we will travel south from Florence and inland towards the neighbouring region of Umbria, but en route we will visit the Tuscan towns of Pienza and Montepulciano.

The town of Pienza was completely redesigned during the Renaissance by Pope Pius II, a humanist scholar and philosopher who decided to transform his home town using the latest ideas in town planning. The cathedral, papal palace, and town hall were constructed around a central piazza, but then the money ran out.

At Montepulciano, our major interest will be in the pilgrimage church of Madonna di San Biagio perched on a rocky platform on the outskirts of the town. Designed by Sangallo early in the 16th. Century, the church is a fine example of the centrally planned Renaissance church.

The picturesque region of Umbria is often referred to as the "Green Heart of Italy". It is well known for the beauty of its undulating farmlands and its regions of mountain wilderness.

Umbria is also well known for its splendid Medieval hilltowns, such as Spello and the region's capital, Perugia, - but our major destination will be Assisi.

Assisi is a unique Medieval town situated on the slopes of Mount Subasio. It has a special quality all of its own - no doubt a legacy of its most famous son - St. Francis. Born into a wealthy family in 1181, St. Francis denounced all his worldly goods, and devoted himself to a simple life of poverty and chastity. The Saint attracted a loyal band of followers and his influence began to spread. Shortly after his death the first pilgrims began to arrive in Assisi.

A church was begun in St. Francis' honour, and over the next century an enormous two storey basilica arose over his tomb. The walls of the Basilica di San Francesco were decorated by many artists, the most famous being Giotto. Giotto lined the walls of the upper church around 1290 with a moving series of frescoes illustrating the life of the Saint. The artist's ability to communicate a narrative by relating his images to the experience of the viewer continues to imbue his work with a universal appeal.

Assisi attracts pilgrims all year around, from all corners of the Christian world, and the Saint's influence can still be felt today. We will spend Day 10 exploring the town and the Basilica di San Francesco. We will also visit the forest hermitage of St. Francis nestled on the side of a steep valley further up the slopes of Mount Subasio.

## DAY 11 ASSISI - URBINO

The next stage of our journey will take us north through farmlands and into the Umbrian hills.

We will stop briefly at Gubbio, a hill town which stands in stark contrast to Assisi. As Ikuvina, it flourished during Roman times, but successive invaders forced the town to be rebuilt later in a more defensive position higher up on the nearby hillside. Gubbio restablished itself during the Middle Ages as an independent commune, and its appearance today reflects this period in the town's history.

One of the highlights of Gubbio is the magnificent Piazza della Signoria, located on a ledge overlooking the lower town, and the site today of several annual "Medieaval" type festivals.

During the Renaissance, Gubbio fell under the rule of the Duke of Urbino, and it is to Urbino that we travel next.

Urbino is located in the region called Le Marche - a region best known by Italians for its coastal resorts and beaches, but as we will see, also blessed with a hilly, largely unspoilt interior. The approach to Urbino is through some breathtakingly beautiful valleys.

Urbino as we see it today is largely the product of the Renaissance, and the enlightened 15th Century ruler, Duke Federico de Montefeltro. The Duke held court in the famous Palazzo Ducale, a building which reflects the best ideas of Renaissance architects, and is considered one of the greatest architectural achievements of the period. The elegant courtyard, the distinctive turreted facade, and the spacious, light filled interior reflect the Duke's good taste and aesthetic judgement.

Some of the surviving interior decoration is of a high order - carved mantelpieces, window frames, and most extraordinary of all, a series of illusionistic inlaid wood panels which decorate the Duke's study.

The palace also houses an important art collection which includes a famous image of an ideal Renaissance city constructed using the recently developed technique of optical perspective. Also displayed here is the enigmatic "Flagellation" by Piero della Francesca - a painting whose true meaning has puzzled art historians for years.

Urbino was the birthplace of the great Renaissance painter, Raphael, and his family home in Via Raffaello, can be visited today.

A short walk from Urbino is the distinctive church of San Bernadino, in which the Montefeltro Dukes lie buried.



**DAY 12 URBINO - RAVENNA - BOLOGNA**  
**DAYS 13 & 14 BOLOGNA**

From Urbino we will travel east to the coastal resort town of Pesaro, and our first glimpse of the Adriatic Sea. Pesaro was the birthplace of the 19th. Century composer, Gioachino Rossini, and the town holds a festival in his honour each summer. His family home is now a museum.

Travelling along the coastal road we will continue our journey north until we reach the city of Ravenna. Ravenna's historical and artistic heritage is quite unlike any other Italian city and our visit will provide us with an insight into a less familiar period of European history. Ravenna rose to power during the Roman Empire when a port and naval base were established nearby. As Rome's power declined, Ravenna became the capital of the Western Roman Empire and maintained an influential role as a Byzantine city during the 5th. and 6th. Centuries.

Artistically, Ravenna provides a rich collection of Early Christian and Byzantine mosaics, particularly in the church of San Vitale, and the adjacent Mausoleum of Galla Placidia.

We are now in the region known as Emilia-Romagna, a broad corridor extending through the hills and plains of the Po River valley. With its rich agricultural land, historical cities and thriving industries, Emilia-Romagna is one of the most prosperous areas in Italy. The region is particularly well known for its rich cuisine. Its major towns lie along the ancient Roman road known as the Via Aemilia, and include the region's capital, Bologna.

Bologna lies on the southern edge of the Po plain, on the lower slopes of the Appenine foothills. Its strategic location between Florence and Venice ensured its rise as a commercial power, and today it is a city of some half a million inhabitants. Bologna's history is characterised by a spirit of independence, and its University is one of the oldest in Europe. Bologna was the first Italian city to restrict traffic in the inner city, and today the centro storico - or historic centre - is a pedestrian only area. The two central piazzas which are the focus of the centro storico are impressively flanked by imposing palaces and churches. The famous Neptune Fountain dates from the 16th. Century and is the work of the local sculptor, Giambologna.

We will be spending several days in Bologna with the families of students from the local "Liceo Artistico", and our stay here will provide a welcome break from our busy schedule.

The Liceo Artistico "Francesco Arcangeli", is a Secondary State School for students aged 14 - 19. The students at the school select either a 4 year course which prepares them for a Tertiary course in Architecture or Fine Arts, or a 5 year experimental course which allows them access to any university faculty. Recently the school has been working on a community project with schools in the Manchester area in England, and they have expressed interest in establishing an ongoing exchange program with us.

Bologna does not possess the great architectural masterworks and extensive art galleries of other Italian cities, and is therefore less of a mecca for tourists, but it is one of the most architecturally unified cities in Europe, and Bologna's broad streets and elegant porticos give it a distinctive grandeur.

As you would expect, Bologna is a city with an abundance of restaurants and eating houses. It also offers a lively nightlife....

**DAY 15 BOLOGNA - PADUA - VENICE**  
**DAYS 16 & 17 VENICE**

On Day 15, we will leave Bologna and travel north. A short distance beyond the great Renaissance town of Ferrara, we will cross the Po River and pass into the Veneto region. The Veneto sprawls across the flat fertile plains and verdant hills of northwestern Italy, and is bordered to the northwest by the spectacular Dolomite Mountains, and to the east by the Adriatic Sea.

Our first destination in this region will be Padua, another old University town with a rich artistic and academic history. Although severely bombed during WW II, Padua has recovered and today prospers largely from the region's agricultural activities.

The artistic highlight of Padua, and indeed, one of the highlights of Italy, is found inside a little chapel built in 1303 on the site of an ancient Roman amphitheatre. Known today as the Arena Chapel, the building was commissioned by Enrico Scrovegni to atone for his father's usury, and it was decorated, floor to ceiling, by Giotto, between 1303 and 1305.

Giotto's ability to convey a story directly on a human level makes the interior of this building one of the most moving shrines in Western art. Giotto painted the walls with several series of frescos depicting the life of Christ and other members of the holy family. Each series comprises a cycle of dramatic scenes in which Giotto's solid, peasant like figures respond to each other and to their situation with a quiet dignity.

The intensity of emotion in scenes from the final days of Christ's life is quite extraordinary and is as moving today as it must have been nearly 700 years ago.

The goal of any visitor to this region of Italy is of course, the extraordinary city of Venice, and it has been so for many centuries, but in Roman times, the city of Verona on the westernmost edge of the Veneto was the dominant power in the region. Frontier outposts were established at Padua, Vicenza and Treviso, but Venice did not yet exist. During the 5th. Century, the wild rampages of Attila the Hun forced refugees from these settlements to flee from the mainland to the relative safety of the marshy lagoons to the east.

Gradually villages grew into towns, and in 811 AD the Venetian republic was born. During subsequent centuries, Venice exploited its strategic trading location between the East and the West, and the Maritime Empire flourished. Venetian power peaked during the 15th. Century, but from then on the city gradually slipped into decline. In 1797 Napoleon abolished a constitution that had lasted for 1,000 years.

The Piazza San Marco has been for centuries the public centre of Venice, and it continues to be so today.

The Basilica of San Marco echoes the history of the city in its unique blend of architectural and decorative styles from the East and the West.

The interior is clad with dazzling mosaics, and filled with treasures gathered across the centuries.

The Head of State in the Venetian Republic was the Doge, and next to San Marcos is his private residence, the Palazzo Ducale.

Venice is built on 117 islands, has 150 canals, and 400 bridges. There is no place for cars, so you either walk, swim, or take a boat. The gondola is the traditional form of water transport, but they only run at tourist prices. The more economic method of travel is by vaporetto, or motoscafi.

Its lively markets specialise in seafood, and there is plenty of interesting shopping around the Rialto Bridge.



During our stay in Venice we will take a boat excursion into the lagoon to visit the islands of Murano, Burano, and Torcello.

Burano is known for its distinctive brightly painted homes and its tradition of lacemaking. Murano is famous for its glass works, and examples of the glass blowers' art can be found in shops all over the region.

February is Carnival time in Venice, but the mask maker's art can be sampled all year round in workshops throughout the city.

The artistic tradition of Venice is a rich one, and we will visit some of the more notable sites including the church of Santa Maria dei Frari, with its magnificent altarpieces by the two great Venetian masters of the Renaissance, Bellini, and Titian.

The Accademia gallery holds a superb collection of art from the Venetian School, including the evocative painting by Giorgione, known as "The Tempest".

Another of Venice's most famous artistic figures is Tintoretto, and his work can be seen to great advantage in the Scuola di San Rocco.

Architectural landmarks abound in Venice, and one of the more distinctive is the Baroque church of Santa Maria della Salute.

#### **DAY 18 VENICE - VICENZA - BOLOGNA**

#### **DAYS 19 & 20 BOLOGNA**

The Brenta Canal runs between Venice and Padua, and it was along this transport route that wealthy Venetians built their summer villas in the 16th. Century. On our return journey to Bologna, we will visit several of these to admire not just the distinctive architectural features of the northern villa, but to view some marvellous interior decorations by artists such as Tiepolo.

The leading exponent of villa architecture was the 16th. Century architect, Andrea Palladio. One of Palladio's best known buildings in this genre is the Villa Rotonda, sited on a hill just outside the town of Vicenza.

The centre of Vicenza is dominated by the public buildings of Palladio, including his wonderful Teatro Olimpico, an intimate performing space inspired by the ancient amphitheatre, and incorporating cleverly painted, illusionistic sets.

Later in the day we will return to Bologna where we will rejoin our host families for a further two days.

## DAYS 21 & 22

The final stage of our journey will take us south from Bologna in the direction of Rome. Travelling through Tuscany, we will bypass Florence, but later in the journey we will make a detour towards the town of Viterbo, where we will view two of the most distinctive Italian gardens.

The Villa Lante was begun in 1562 by the architect Vignola, and the beautiful terraced garden with its geometric motifs and numerous fountains is a gem.

By contrast, the garden at nearby Bomarzo constructed by Duke Vicino Orsini is a bizarre creation. Scattered throughout this "sacred wood" are fantastic creatures and monsters carved from huge boulders.

Our return to Rome will provide the opportunity to study the enormous achievements of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. The major focus of our attention will be the Vatican where we will visit the awe inspiring Basilica of St. Peter's, with its dome by Michelangelo, and its colonnaded forecourt by the genius of the Baroque, Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The vast interior contains masterpieces of sculpture by Michelangelo, Bernini and others. A highlight of our visit to the Vatican will be provided by the magnificent ceiling in the Sistine Chapel, painted between 1508 and 1512 by Michelangelo. His harrowing "Last Judgement" was completed almost 30 years later.

In rooms that were once the Popes' private chambers, we will see frescoes by Raphael which epitomise the spirit of the High Renaissance.

Another of Bernini's masterly achievements is the stunning Cornaro Chapel in the little church of Santa Maria della Vittoria. Here Bernini depicts the ecstasy of St. Theresa as if the inspiring event is occurring in a theatre, with the members of the Cornaro family looking on from their private boxes.

A casual exploration of Rome will yield an endless succession of visual treats - from the Trevi fountain, to the Piazza Navona and the Spanish Steps, Rome is an endlessly fascinating city, and our brief sojourn will no doubt whet the appetite for a return visit!