

Shrines of Italy, Slovenia Croatia and Medjugorje

ITINERARY:

DAY 1: THURSDAY

Depart the USA on a direct flight to Europe

DAY 2: FRIDAY Venice – Padova

Arrive Venice's airport – Meet the tour manager and drive to Padova to celebrate in the Basilica of St Anthony. Check in at the hotel, dinner and overnight (D)

DAY 3: SATURDAY Venice

We take the vaporetto which takes us through the Canal to Venice. Enjoy the walking tour of this majestic city including a visit to St. Mark's Basilica, Doges Palace, Rialto Bridge, Bridge of Sighs and more. Some leisure time for lunch on your own and shopping before we gather this afternoon for our transfer back to the mainland and our hotel in Padua. We celebrate Mass at the Basilica of St. Mark, Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

DAY 4: SUNDAY Venice – Slovenia

Breakfast - Drive to **Ljubljana** in Slovenia, (2 hrs drive). Upon arrival we will enjoy a walking tour of the city, Slovenia's capital and largest city also happens to be one of Europe's greenest and most livable capitals. Visit the **Ljubljana Castle** which dominates the city with its green dome and twin towers. Ride the funicular to go up to the castle on a hill – Break for lunch and some shopping, then we check in at the hotel dinner and overnight.

DAY 5: MONDAY Slovenia – Croatia

After breakfast we will check out and drive to Zagreb, where we will enjoy a guided tour of the city including the **Cathedral of the Assumption** built in the 13th century – In the afternoon we proceed to the **Marian Shrine of Marjia Bistrica**, which is the largest and most important pilgrimage site in Croatia. The focus of interest is the parish church which has 16th century wooden statue of the Madonna called "Our Lady of Bistrica". The statue is believed to have miraculous powers as it was not destroyed during later attacks by the Turks. Celebrate mass. Check in at our hotel, dinner and overnight.

DAY 6: TUESDAY Croatia – Bosnia

After breakfast we will depart and drive to reach Bosnia, on the way, our break for lunch will be in **Zadar**, we will spend the next three nights in Medjugorje.

DAY 7 & DAY 8 – WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY Medjugorje

During our stay in peaceful Medjugorje, we will meet and share our faith with thousands of pilgrims from all over the world. Dinner and overnight. The next day at 10 am we will assemble at **St James Church** for the English language Mass. With our local guide we climb the **mountains of the Cross**. In the evening, we can join the villages and the pilgrims for the evening Croatia Mass and the blessing of the sick. And then we climb the **Apparition Hill** where the young



Shrines of Italy, Slovenia Croatia and Medjugorje

visionaries first encountered Our Lady. Touch and pray before the cross, commemorating the spot where Mary appeared to the visionaries. Dinner and overnights

DAY 9: FRIDAY Medjugorje – Split

After breakfast, depart to Split. Upon arrival, we will meet your local guide to have a 2h guided tour of Split. Diocletian's palace from the Roman era is certainly the main attraction of the city of Split. The Palace and the entire historical core of Split have been on the World Heritage UNESCO list ever since 1979. The Cathedral of Saint Domnius, consecrated at the turn of the 7th century AD, is regarded as the oldest Catholic cathedral in the world that remains in use in its original structure, without near-complete renovation at a later date. The structure itself, built in AD 305 as the Mausoleum of Diocletian, is the second oldest structure used by any Christian Cathedral. The cathedral was named after Saint Domnius patron saint of Split, who was a 3rd-century Bishop of Salona (a large Roman city serving as capital of the Province of Dalmatia). Saint Domnius was martyred with seven other Christians in the persecutions of the Emperor Diocletian. Saint Domnius became the city's patron saint, and the city's cathedral (the Cathedral of Saint Domnius) was built in the mausoleum of Diocletian itself, the emperor who martyred him. A walk through the ancient city takes you through time, along the great examples of ancient architecture like Peristyle, and Gothic Palace, Renaissance portals of the noblemen's houses, Baroque facades and modern architecture superbly merged in the rich heritage. We then continue to the port to embark the overnight ferry boat to Italy – Dinner will be served on board. Overnight.

DAY 10: SATURDAY Ancona – Loreto – Assisi

We will arrive in Ancona in the early morning. Continue towards Loreto. Visit the **Marian shrine of Loreto** to visit the Holy House of Nazareth and the beautiful Madonna of Loreto. Tradition holds that this is the house in which Mary first prayed the Magnificat, in which Jesus grew to manhood, and in which the Holy Family lived, before it was transported several times by angels, to its current location.

Break for lunch. In the afternoon we will continue to Assisi, check in at the hotel, dinner and overnight.

DAY 11: SUNDAY Assisi

After early breakfast, transfer to the Basilica of St. Clare, the first and most important heroine of the Franciscan movement, view her remains and see the miraculous Crucifix- Walk down through the medieval streets, passing by the church of **San Rufino, the Cathedral of Assisi**, dedicated to "the other saint", St Rufino – Continue way down to reach the **Basilica of St. Francis**. Our local guide will take us to explore the Basilica complex, which is actually composed of two churches built one atop the other. Beneath both churches is the crypt that houses the tomb of St. Francis. The lower Basilica dates from 1228 to 1230, and is richly decorated with beautiful stained glass windows, and paintings done by some of the most important artists of the 13th and 14th centuries. In the upper Basilica, built from 1230 - 1253, we will marvel at the monumental frescoes painted by Giotto, which depict scenes from the life of the saint. Continue to visit the Basilica of. Independent lunch- In the afternoon, we will visit the **Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli**. Crowned by the magnificent dome designed by Alessi, this great Basilica was built in 1569. It enclosed the shrine of the "Porziuncola" or the Little Portion Chapel around which the first Franciscan community was centered, the place where Clare received the habit from Francis, and the Capella Del Transito, which marks the spot where the Saint died. You will see the statue of Saint Francis in the courtyard where thornless roses bloom. Return to the hotel to rest Dinner on our own tonight – Overnight.

DAY 12: MONDAY Assisi - Roma –Imperial Rome - Major Basilicas

After breakfast, we check out and drive to Rome where upon arrival, we will meet our local guide. Enjoy a panoramic walking tour of Imperial Rome, see the **Colosseum**, the **Arch of Constantine**, the **Roman Forums** and Venice square, with the **Capitol Hill**. Break for lunch. This afternoon, we will visit the **Basilica of St. John Lateran**, the first Christian church to be consecrated. It was founded by the Emperor Constantine in the 4th century and was home to the Popes for many years prior to the present Vatican residence. Next, we visit the **Holy Stairs**. Then,

Shrines of Italy, Slovenia Croatia and Medjugorje

continue with the **Basilica of St. Mary Major**, one of the four major Basilicas built by Pope Sixtus III (AD 432-440). View the impressive interior with its remarkable mosaics in the nave depicting scenes from the Old Testament. View relics of Jesus' manger from Bethlehem and the high altar, which contains the remains of St Matthew the Evangelist. The mosaics above the entablature are among the most ancient Christian mosaics in Rome. Check in at the hotel, dinner and overnight (BD)

DAY 13: TUESDAY Roma Vatican Museum with Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica, Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls

After breakfast, begin our morning of sightseeing with a visit to one of the great art collections in the world, the Vatican Museums. Walk in the footsteps of the Princes of the Church through the richly decorated galleries. Continue to the Sistine Chapel, the private chapel of the Popes, where Michelangelo best expressed his genius in monumental frescoes Daily Itinerary tour continues in St. Peter's Basilica. Take in the awesome architecture and the statuary adorning this largest of all Christian churches, including Michelangelo's magnificent "Pieta." Pray at the new tomb of Blessed John Paul II, in St. Sebastian's Chapel. On our own, with time permitting, you may wish to go to the Vatican Crypt to see and pray near the tomb of St. Peter and where numerous pontiffs are buried, among incredible works of art. Independent lunch. This afternoon, we will visit the **Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the walls**. Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight.

DAY 14:Roma WEDNESDAY Papal Audience — Fountains and Squares

Early morning Breakfast at our hotel. Walk a short distance to St. Peter's Square to attend the weekly papal audience with His Holiness Pope Francis. Free time for independent lunch. In the afternoon, our tour of Rome continues through the most beautiful fountains and square. We will see the **Trevi Fountain**, and toss in a coin to ensure your "Arrivederci, Roma." Continue to the beautiful and lively Piazza **Navona**, with time to browse through the artists' stalls to buy a painting or just look...and a chance to buy one of Rome's most famous products, a "tartufo" (ice cream) at the Gelateria "Tre Scalini." Return to the hotel for dinner and overnight at hotel in Rome.

DAY 15: Departure back home