



**LAKE ERIE**  
COLLEGE

*Alumni*

*A wonderful and personalized trip to Italy organized & accompanied by the LEC professor of Italian Studies: Dr. Basile (a native of Italy).*



**When: October 1–October 8, 2023**  
**Seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites**  
**Total cost \$4,300.00 per person that includes:**

1. **4-star hotel with thermal baths + SPA** immersed in a dream landscape (in the **Val d'Orcia** in Tuscany, a UNESCO World Heritage Site). Same hotel for the full trip. Double occupancy. Single occupancy, if available, is an extra \$480 (must be requested in advance).
2. **Private Bus** with A/C + Local chauffeur for the entire trip
3. Breakfasts
4. Fine Cuisine **Dinners** with prosecco/wine... (every evening)
5. Cooking class
6. Guided Winery Tour
7. Guided *agriturismo* tour
8. Guided tour in **Florence** and entrance in *Galleria dell'Accademia* and in the Duomo. (A UNESCO World Heritage Site).
9. Entrance in **Villa d'Este** (the gardens and the palace) in **Tivoli**. (A UNESCO World Heritage Site).
10. Tour in **Montepulciano**, and in **Pienza** (A UNESCO World Heritage Site).
11. Tour in **Siena** and entrance in the Duomo. (A UNESCO World Heritage Site).
12. Tour in **Monteriggioni Castle**, and **San Gimignano** and entrance in the Torre Grossa and Palazzo Comunale (A UNESCO World Heritage Site).
13. Tour in **Assisi** and entrance in the Basilica, and in the enchanted St. Francis' woods. (A UNESCO World Heritage Site).

Seats are limited. To secure your spot, a deposit of **\$500 to be paid to the bursar** of Lake Erie College (Mr. Brad Holton 440.375.7020, [bholton@lec.edu](mailto:bholton@lec.edu)) is due by **November 22, 2022**. A second deposit of \$1000 is due by January, 20, 2023. The full amount is due by the end of June, 2023.

## Tentative Itinerary

**Oct. 1: Meeting point at the airport** of Rome-Fiumicino “Leonardo da Vinci” (FCO) at the café in Terminal 3, Arrival, at **10:30-11:00 am** (local Italy time). To the left as you exit baggage claim there is a café there where you can wait. Our private bus will be at “Arrival” and can take us to *Villa d’Este* in Tivoli (about 33 miles away from the airport). We will stop for approximately 3 hours to visit *Villa d’Este* and the small city of Tivoli. From Tivoli we will then drive through the beautiful Tuscan region to our hotel resort in *Val d’Orcia* (approximately 125 miles). You can enjoy the beautiful thermal (hot springs) pool of the hotel, immerse yourselves in the soothing spa and an environment of enchanting beauty. Happy hour and dinner at the hotel.

Note: The hot springs have therapeutic quality renowned since antiquity. The waters are bicarbonate-sulfate-alkalinoterreos-hyperthermic, flow out at a temperature of around 38-39°Celsius. They were highly appreciated by the ancient Romans for their healing powers, and found a use in bathing-mud-therapeutic treatments beginning in 1170.

**Villa d’Este** in Tivoli: a UNESCO world heritage site.

The gardens of the Villa d’Este are among the earliest and finest of the Italian *giardini delle meraviglie* and symbolize the flowering of Renaissance culture. With its impressive concentration of fountains (500!), nymphs, grottoes, troughs and pools, cascades, plays of water, and music, it constitutes a much-copied model for European gardens. A magic place filled with beauty, myths, genius, and peace. One fountain periodically surges to splash unsuspecting visitors; a water organ fountain plays music at set times; a long row of 100 different “face” fountains offers an intimate place to take a stroll... The rooms of the Palace d’Este built on the ruins of an ancient Roman villa (absolutely gorgeous!) were ambitiously decorated under the tutelage of the stars of the late Roman Mannerism, such as Livio Agresti, Federico Zuccari, Durante Alberti, Girolamo Muziano, Cesare Nebbia and Antonio Tempesta.





**Val d'Orcia:** Medieval castles, sinuous gills, ancient villages, gorgeous farmhouses, isolated homesteads, roads lined with cypress trees, fabulous vineyards and olive groves and golden fields of grain and sunflowers: these are just some of the elements that form the fantastic and harmonious landscapes of the Val d'Orcia. This rich green valley, which encompasses the Orcia river and where it derives its name, is in southern Tuscany. The entire area is protected as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.



**Oct. 2:** After breakfast, our driver will drive us through a scenic Tuscan landscape to visit the picturesque small cities of Montepulciano (17 miles away) and Pienza (10 miles), both easy “walkable” cities. You will have some time to discover these cities by yourself. Back to our hotel to refresh and enjoy the thermal pools and SPA (in late afternoon). Then, guided tour in an *agriturismo/winery* in the area, probably *Locanda Demetra* or *Podere Il Cocco*, and have dinner there.

**Montepulciano:** standing high atop a hill in southern Tuscany, Montepulciano is a medieval town of rare beauty highly recommended visiting in Tuscany. The city, full of elegant Renaissance palaces, ancient churches, charming squares and hidden corners, boasts vast panoramas all over the wonderful Val d'Orcia and Val di Chiana valleys that surround it. Montepulciano has received great attention following the filming of the vampire saga *Twilight Sequel New Moon* here and has seen a notable increase in visitors. Piazza Grande is the heart of Montepulciano and the setting for its main events. A walk through Montepulciano is the best way to view the town and its beautiful landmarks (such as: Piazza Grande with its palaces, the Cathedral, San Biagio, the Municipal museum), as well as enjoy stunning views of the surrounding countryside covered by vineyards producing the famous Nobile (wine)!



**Pienza** is a small town located amidst gentle undulating hills and wonderful natural landscapes. It enjoys a strategic position standing high atop a hill, dominating all the Orcia Valley with extraordinary views. This small town is widely known as the "**ideal city of the Renaissance**", the creation of the great humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini who later became Pope Pius II and the town was transformed into what he considered the Utopian city, exemplifying the principles and

philosophy of classical times and of the great Italian Renaissance. Thus, Pienza became the realization of a dream! The project was designed by the architect Bernardo "il Rossellino" under the guidance of the great humanist Leon Battista Alberti. In only 3 years, a group of amazing and harmonious buildings were completed: the Cathedral, the Papal or Piccolomini Palace, the Town Hall, and the lovely central square onto which all of these buildings look upon. They say that Pienza is the perfect mix of architecture, food & tradition built to represent the "Utopian City". Pienza is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



**Oct. 3:** After breakfast, we can have a bike tour in Val d'Orcia or enjoy the thermal pools and SPA, then our driver will take us to visit the charming walled Medieval Castle of Monteriggioni (42 miles away). After Monteriggioni, we will go to the *Fattoria Poggio Alloro* for an enjoyable cooking class, *agriturismo* and winery tour, and dinner there.

**Monteriggioni Castle:** it represents one of the most important walled castles in the territory. It has incredibly preserved an intact structure as if time had never passed on the hill from which it elegantly dominates the surrounding landscape. Its perfect circular perimeter makes one suppose it to be an artificial construction while in actuality it was created by just following the curves in the natural ground. The castle was built by the Sienese between **1213 and 1219** for defensive purposes: its strategic location atop a hill overlooking the Cassia road allowed the castle to control the cities of the Val d'Elsa and Staggia and be on the lookout for any armies approaching Siena. The intact fortified wall presents 14 towers along which the guards used to walk and patrol the walls and 2 gates, one called the *Franca* or *Romea Gate* which faces Rome and the other known as the *Florentine Gate* since it heads toward Florence.



**Poggio Alloro Agriturismo:** "Sharing is the basis of our philosophy. We like our guests to get familiar with old country traditions, to experience the beauty of nature, enjoy the genuine and organic products of our land, and fully appreciate the true spirit and essence of Tuscan culture and tradition. - Cooking classes teach participants how to cook genuine and traditional Tuscan dishes, surrounded by a friendly and fun atmosphere. The class takes place in the afternoon with following dinner. You will get familiar with the ingredients and with the cooking techniques of different dishes that you will taste at the end of the class! A typical cooking class includes the preparation



of appetizers, first course, second course, side dishes, and a dessert. Included with the class is an apron and the recipes that you will prepare. Cooking makes you hungry, so there is always a break with a typical snack, and a wine tasting with a glass of Vernaccia of San Gimignano. At the end of the class you can finally take a seat and taste your delicious homemade meal, all accompanied by our excellent wines.”



**Oct. 4:** After breakfast, our driver will take us to visit the picturesque city San Gimignano (56 miles). We will enter in the Torre Grossa and Palazzo Comunale. You will have time to discover the city by yourself, enjoy the art and architecture, the landscape, the cafes and restaurants, wine and food tasting, and of course the shopping area.... Dinner in our hotel.

**San Gimignano:** it is a small walled medieval hill town in the province of Siena. Known as *the Town of Fine Towers*. San Gimignano is famous for its medieval architecture, unique in the preservation of about a dozen of its tower houses, which, with its hilltop setting and encircling walls form an unforgettable skyline. Locals say they are the oldest towers in Europe! Within the walls, the well-preserved buildings include notable examples of both Romanesque and Gothic architecture, with outstanding examples of secular buildings as well as churches. The Palazzo Comunale, the Collegiate Church and Church of Sant' Agostino contain frescos, including cycles dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. The "Historic Centre of San Gimignano", is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The town also is known for the white wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, produced from the ancient variety of Vernaccia grape which is grown on the sandstone hillsides of the area. The locals are very friendly, artists and musicians welcome the visitors with their art.



**Oct. 5:** After breakfast, our driver will take us to Siena (32 miles away). We will enter in the breathtaking “Duomo”. The professor will then walk you around the city and you have time for yourself for shopping, touring, eating, etc. Late dinner in Bagno Vignoni.

**Siena:** it is likely Italy's loveliest medieval city, another UNESCO World Heritage site! Siena's heart is its central piazza known as *Il Campo*, known worldwide for the famous *Palio* run here, a

horse race run around the piazza two times every summer (in the past years, only once). The *Campo* is dominated by the red *Palazzo Pubblico* and its tower, *Torre del Mangia*. Along with the *Duomo* of Siena, the *Palazzo Pubblico* was also built during the same period of rule by the Council of Nine. The civic palace, built between 1297 and 1310, still houses the city's municipal offices much like *Palazzo Vecchio* in Florence.



**Oct. 6:** After breakfast, our driver will take us to Florence (76 miles). Guided tour in Florence, in *Galleria dell'Accademia* (where you can enjoy many masterpieces including Michelangelo's David) and in the *Duomo*. You will also have time to enjoy Florence by yourselves, and I am sure you will! Possible dinner in Florence or on the way back to our hotel.

**Florence:** Another UNESCO world heritage site, Florence makes art-lovers' hearts beat double time. Fans of Renaissance art will feel giddy touring The *Galleria dell'Accademia*, which is bursting with works by Michelangelo. Architecture buffs can admire the ancient *Ponte Vecchio* bridge, while serious shoppers can spend a blissful afternoon wandering the shops of *Piazza Santo Spirito*. Fuel your exploration with restaurants that pay homage to the region's bounty. When you swipe a hunk of crusty bread across a pool of local olive oil, you'll understand how sublime Tuscan food can be.

With its huge, almost outsized, bulk, the Florence cathedral, Santa Maria del Fiore (*Il Duomo*), makes its presence felt, framed by the spectacular surroundings of the religious center of the city, complete with the Baptistery and Giotto's bell tower. When it was finished, in the 1400s, it was the largest church in Europe. As with all the other great European cathedrals, this too, is dedicated to the Madonna, with the name "Santa Maria of the flower": the attribute refers not only to the cloverleaf floor plan, with the three large chapels opening onto the apse, but is an homage to Christ, the "flower" growing from the divine "stem" and, naturally, is also a reference to the flower that is the symbol of the city, the fleur-de-lis. The long, difficult work on the facade went on for centuries. For the sumptuous exterior decorations, it was used white marble from Carrara, green from Prato, red from Siena. The Duomo is also rich in stained glass windows: out of a total of 55 windows, there are a good 44 that are magnificently decorated and are among the most important works of their kind in Italy. They were based on designs of the principal artists of the period – among them Donatello, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Paolo Uccello and Andrea del Castagno.





**Oct. 7:** After breakfast, our driver will take us to Assisi (67 miles) where we will visit the *Basilica di San Francesco*, *Tempio di Minerva* and have a walk in the enchanted St. Francis' wood. You will also have time to walk around the picturesque streets. Dinner in our hotel.

**Assisi:** Pilgrims have been coming to Assisi, since the 13th century to venerate St. Francis, who was born and buried here, but you don't have to be religious to enjoy the beauty of this postcard-perfect town. Framed by the long, undulating hills of Umbria and the forests of Monte Subasio, Assisi is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in the world and one of Italy's most spell-binding gems. Assisi isn't just home to UNESCO World Heritage sites; it *is* a UNESCO World Heritage site. The entire town basks in this coveted status because of its plethora of art and historically significant buildings, like the Basilica di San Francesco. The basilica, in particular, has such a collection of frescoes and paintings that it rivals many art museums. According to the UN, the town has a singular importance for its role in the diffusion of the Franciscan Order and for its "continuity of a city-sanctuary" from its Umbrian-Roman origins to today.

The most famous and probably most impressive attraction in Assisi is the Basilica of St. Francis. It's also literally the biggest thing in the area – so massive you can see it for miles around. Construction on the Basilica was started immediately after St. Francis' death in 1228 and it was officially completed after the addition of the upper church in 1253. It is divided into the upper church and the lower church, and regardless of which one you're in, you're looking at incredible frescoes. The upper church, or *Basilica Superiore*, is covered with 28 frescoes by Giotto. Each fresco is a scene from St. Francis' life. Though completed centuries ago, the frescoes are still fabulously vibrant. The lower church, or *Basilica Inferiore*, houses frescoes by Cimabue, Pietro Lorenzetti, and Simone Martini, who were heavily influenced by Giotto's work. Also in the lower sanctuary is the *Cripta di San Francesco* – that is, the monumental tomb of St. Francis of Assisi. While the upper church seems to be a celebration of beauty and life, the lower church's dark rooms and sparse decoration reflects the spirit of St. Francis and his Franciscan order.



**Oct. 8:** Departure from our hotel to the airport of Rome, Fiumicino, "Leonardo da Vinci".