OPTIONAL PRE-CRUISE EXTENSION IN ROME

Travel Dynamics International is pleased to offer an optional pre-cruise extension in Rome, Italy. The cost of the extension includes two nights hotel accommodations, breakfast daily, sightseeing tours, as well as transfers from the airport to the hotel on August 4 and from the hotel to the pier on August 6. A registration form, which includes pricing information, is included in your Confirmation Portfolio.

August 3–6, 2012

Please note: August 3 is the date you fly to Rome.

Arrive in Rome. The foundation of the “Eternal City” is, like many great places of antiquity, steeped in legend. When priestess Rea Silvia, daughter of a local king Numitor, was allegedly raped by Mars, she gave birth to twin sons. Numitor’s unscrupulous brother, Amalius, looked upon the infants as potential contenders to the throne and gave orders to abandon the boys in a forest. Discovered and fed by a she-wolf, the boys were eventually adopted by a shepherd, who named them Romulus and Remus. A quarrel between the brothers turned into fratricide, leading Romulus to become the first of the seven legendary kings of Rome. The new city was established on the Palatine Hill and later expanded beyond the Tiber. Following the popular revolt against Tarquinius, the last of the legendary kings, Rome became a Republic in 509 B.C. The neighboring Etruscans, Sabines, and Samnites were steadily conquered, and by the third century B.C., Rome expanded to the shores of Africa and Carthage. Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.) erected the first public monuments and initiated the draining of the Pontine Marshes. However, the truly grand building projects took place after the founding of the Empire by Octavius Augustus in 27 B.C. The port on the Tiber, the Pantheon, the Colosseum, the Baths and the Forum all date to the Imperial era of Rome. Rome’s inevitable decline commenced with the Emperor Diocletian, who divided the empire into the eastern and western parts in 284 A.D. Constantine’s establishment of the new Imperial capital in Byzantium (present day Istanbul) in 330 and the subsequent invasions of Goths and Vandals in the 5th century also contributed to the fall of Rome. The establishment of the Papacy in 590 under Pope Gregory I (“The Great”) and the mass marketing of holy relics and sites attracted a great deal of pilgrim traffic and revenue, which rescued the city from its demise. New works of art and churches were commissioned, with each pope trying to outshine his predecessor by recruiting the best sculptors and artists. This continued well into the Renaissance, especially during the reigns of popes Julius II and Leo X. Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel frescoes, Raphael’s Stanze in the Vatican palace, and the commissioning of the new St. Peter’s Cathedral all date back to this golden era of church building. The Counter-Reformation of the 17th century fueled the building zeal and resulted in such sensational monuments as the Gesù Church and the completion of St. Peter’s. The political power of the papacy declined significantly after Napoleon occupied Rome in 1798 and sent Pius VI to France as a prisoner. The papal rule was restored in 1815. King Vittorio Emmanuel II of Sardinia later was established as the King of Italy, and Rome was declared the capital. The Concordat of 1929 recognized the Vatican City as sovereign territory, independent from Italy to this day. The First World War had little direct effect on the Italian capital; however, it sprouted the Fascismo movement under Benito Mussolini. The “March on Rome” in 1922 culminated with a forced joint government between Mussolini and King Vittorio Emmanuel III. Following the defeat in the Second World War, Mussolini was killed, the king abdicated, and a general election approved the establishment of a republic. In 1946 the first Italian President, Luigi Einaudi (affectionately known as ‘Il Professore’) was elected.
Check in to the Bernini Bristol Hotel, our accommodations for the next two evenings.

In the morning, visit the famous Coliseum. The Emperor Vespasian supervised the beginning of the construction circa A.D. 72, and his son Titus inaugurated the structure about eight years later. Domitian, the last of the Flavian emperors, completed the Coliseum, making it a popular entertainment venue. Romans came here mainly to view the gladiatorial contests designed to prepare soldiers for combat on the field. Gladiators fought one another in violent battles to the cheers of a rambunctious audience. Other spectacles included fights of men against animals and animals against animals. After the gladiatorial games were outlawed in the 5th century, the Coliseum fell into disuse. Throughout the next centuries, stone from the Coliseum was taken to construct Rome’s finest buildings, such as the Barberini Palace and Saint Peter’s Basilica. The centuries of pillaging have left the labyrinthine tunnels once used to bring animals into the arena exposed. Statues would have graced the outer walls, where only arches remain.

Continue to the Roman Forum, entered through the Arch of Constantine. Standing at the end of the Triumphal Way, Emperor Constantine built the arch in 315 B.C. to mark his tenth year in power. Most of the arch’s decorations were removed from previous emperors’ structures, suggesting that Roman art had begun its decline. On the arch’s upper portion are eight rectangular reliefs that originally decorated a monument dedicated to Marcus Aurelius. For its placement on the arch, Aurelius’ portrait was re-carved in Constantine’s likeness. The original work on the arch appears markedly inferior to the plundered carvings. Adjacent to the Arch of Constantine, the Forum was the political, religious, commercial and social center of ancient Rome.

Continue to the Pantheon, considered a perfect example of classical architecture. The structure was built by Hadrian between 118 and 125 A.D. Today, it functions as a national monument where kings and artists, including Raphael, are buried. The rotunda has been celebrated for its harmonious appearance and groundbreaking design. The proportions are a work of mastery, with the height and diameter of equal lengths. The massive dome—the largest in the world until 1960—represents an architectural and engineering feat that has influenced many future constructions. There are no visible arches or vaults that support the structure because they are all sunk into the concrete walls of the building.

Spend the evening at your leisure for independent exploration.

In the morning, visit the Vatican Museums, a cluster of museums and galleries established under popes Clement XIV (1769-1774) and Pius VI (1775-1799). The Museums include the Etruscan and Egyptian Museums, which house archaeological finds from excavations, the Gallery of Tapestries, a collection of various 15th and 17th century tapestries, the Gallery of Maps, and the Sistine Chapel, among others.

The Sistine Chapel is now the site of the papal conclaves, the process by which a new Pope is selected. A black or white smoke is emitted from the conclave, signaling when a Pope has been chosen. The Sistine Chapel is perhaps most renowned, however, for its ceiling. Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling between 1508 and 1512 through a series of nine paintings. As a self-identified sculptor, Michelangelo was initially intimidated by the prospect of doing such a large painting and viewed the paintings as a distraction from his sculpting. Nonetheless, Michelangelo agreed to paint the Chapel’s ceiling. The initial platform on which he was to paint proved inadequate, so Michelangelo built his own. Lying on his back on the scaffolding, Michelangelo painted three hundred scenes from the Bible, many of which were individually picked by him. After Michelangelo depicted many of the figures naked, he was accused of immorality and obscenity, and one of the Pope’s Masters of Ceremony declared that the painting was “no work for a papal chapel, but rather for the public baths.” Despite criticisms, it remained, and in 1994, the Sistine Chapel completed the ceiling’s ten year restoration process.

Visit St. Peter’s Square, designed by Bernini and built between 1656 and 1667. Then continue to St.
Peter’s Basilica, built on the traditional site where the Apostle Peter was crucified and buried. Founded by Constantine in 324, the Basilica was rebuilt in the 16th century by Renaissance masters including Bramante and Michelangelo, who served as the main architect for a period of time and designed the dome, one of the largest in the world. The grandeur proportions of St. Peter’s interior dwarfs those who enter, and the lavishly decorated marble, reliefs, colossal architectural sculpture and gilding undoubtedly impress. The basilica contains a large number of tombs of popes and other notable people, and crepuscular rays are regularly seen in St. Peter’s Basilica at certain times each day.

Transfer to the pier at Civitacchia to embark Corinthian II.