



Italy - Rome and Florence Trip Notes **December 27 – January 12, 2018**

Overview

- Florence touring and a favorite apartment was our goal for Marie's holiday break.
- Rome was added to the trip because our apartment wasn't available for the first five days.
- The combination for 12 days turned out to be excellent and we did a one hour super-fast train between cities. The Rome train station is always an experience too.
- Parisian friend, American but now more French, Richelle, joined us in Florence for four days. It was a perfect mid trip break for Marie to escape the old folks.
- Old ruins were very much enjoyed and appreciated by Marie. She had plenty. When I was 16 I had declared they were creating ruins and I don't think I appreciated them as much.
- Rome for me was my 6th trip: when I was 16; in 2007 when I ceased working; for the marathon: before and after the Amalfi hike; and now. Tom was on three of those stays. I've stayed in a lovely hotel near the rail terminal; (at age 16 I stayed nearby coincidentally in Hotel Diana), in the lush and luxurious Grand Hotel twice, in a Villa near Borghese Park, and now in this ritzy apartment near the Spanish steps. (It was luxury with a few screwy problems).
- Florence for me was my 4th trip: in 2007; and after the Cinque Terra hike and with Tom, and in November 2015 with a bunch of artsy hiker newbies to Europe. I stayed in the historic Baglioni Hotel, and now three times in this wonderful historic yet modernized apartment near to the Pitti Palace.
- Tour guides in both cities are tried and tested, private, much enjoyed and will be employed again. They all now feel like friends or part of the family.
- I want to go again to both places but especially to Florence. I probably should go alone because food was a priority for my traveling companions whereas. I am prone to eat a peanut butter sandwich and keep touring. I missed too much for sitting in restaurants – smile.



From the eyes and in the words of Marie

Re Rome: Spending 5 days in Rome just wasn't enough to see everything. It was like every street we turned on had history and or some ruins. I will never forget walking the Roman Forum and seeing the ruins that had bend standing there for 2000 years and approaching the colosseum at the end of it all. Hopefully I will return to Rome and see them again.

Re Florence: Florence was a beautiful city filled with history that was even in our own neighborhood. We were a stone's throw away from the Pitti Palace and a 5 minute walk from the river. The most memorable experience I have is on a tour with Elizabeth we were walking down the street and we turn the corner and the first thing I see is the Baptistery and the Duomo towering over me in all marble. I climbed the Duomo and had the opportunity to be up close with the art painted inside the dome and then once I got to the top and I had the best view of Florence that I will never forget.

Diana says "Amen" as this input made it all worthwhile.

Our Rome Apartment – at the Spanish Steps

It was a big time luxury apartment full of expensive features, but ill conceived. Did I need a color-chronotherapy shower? I did need the missing microwave. Did I need Wi-Fi? Surely yes but it kept going in and out and the smart teen had to work at fixing it and especially the extender. Dramatic but useless bathroom lighting. One towel per person? Dacron pillows? Zero supplies? We have been spoiled by our Paris apartment company. Tom commented to someone that he'd expected a #10 rating and maybe it was a #7 or 8.



<https://www.homeaway.com/vacation-rental/p1660776>

Notes home were limited to two missives only. Was I tired, or lazy, or just done with notes?

Off we go.

First to Rome for five nights and then into Florence for seven nights. I have had a few trips to Rome, most recently in November 2015. I've had a few trips to Florence and stayed in the same apartment twice before. To see the two places through the eyes of 19-year-old Marie will be a treat. You can tell that Tom is very happy with the trip and taking Marie. This is the day after a major marathon of a shopping trip. She always looks good but she will look even more decorative and fashionable with all of her new clothing.

Coming up. Smoked duck, a salad, probably the seared beef short rib but it might be the poached shrimp or the lentil chili, international cheese assortment and a choice of sweet treats or ice cream Sundays.

This could be dangerous as last night we had a major barbecue meal. The night before it was sushi. Do we sound international? We are working on it and considering Athens, the Greek Isles, and Santorini for next year. Health permitting. Bon Voyage to us!

Rome tour guide on New Year's Day, who gifted us 8-9 hours instead of the 5 we had arranged:

Franco Lattughi [<mailto:f.lattughi@gmail.com>]. Rate this a #10, but then Franco was a referral by Elizabeth in Florence who has always been a #10 too.

Tom to Franco: You are a walking/talking encyclopedia of history and anecdotal information that kept us mesmerized and enlightened and entertained throughout the day. Grazie Mille.

Tom to friends at home: We're just in from a wonderful day with a wonderful and a super guide in his car and both in the city out of town. He is a long time professional and worldwide guide with at least five languages (that we know of) with about eight hours and he never stopped talking and was a walking encyclopedia. PHENOMENAL!!! This from a cool little village on the banks of a volcanic made lake about an hour out of Rome.



Lunch on January 1 in the town of Castle Gandolfo overlooking Albano's Crater Lake.



Still at Castle Gandolfo with Franco and then at El Bolognese near Popolo Plaza, and finally at the Tivoli Fountain. Tom is still with a bit of left over bruising from his eye surgery but all is well now.

From Tom about New Year's Eve: While Diana and Marie were off on the Colosseum tour, I was out looking for a super market, I had lunch at a nice little restaurant. The weather was mild enough to even sit outside. I had a really nice lasagna Bolognese and asked for a glass of house red. No house red. So I said to the nice young waitress, "well, what's your favorite wine?" She said the Shiraz. So I of course said good, I'll have a glass of that. The Lasagna was perfect and the wine was delicious. When the check came, I didn't even notice that the glass of wine came in at 26 Euro! Sacre Bleu!! (Or aka WTF!). When Diana noticed the print-out I left on the table she asked if I knew what the wine cost. When I said I hadn't noticed, it was then that her frugal MO kicked in and the rest is best left unsaid. (Just joking. You know Diana...) the lunch was delicious and the wine very tasty followed by a double espresso with hot milk on the side ending a very satisfying interlude. (And, we're still friends).

The Luxury Apartment: Rome is still a great place to visit, and the apartment, though not living up to the 10 that the pictures and write-up depicted, is still very nice and even more than adequate. We're

having a bit of trouble with the Wi-Fi but its quite comfortable and in a really nice part of town so, so far, that's the only complaint.

Underground Colosseum, Roman Forum and Palatine Hill – This tour was done on New Year's Eve Day, took much of the day, and is outlined in the itinerary below. We had read in National Geographic in a special called "Terror on the Low 'Seas'" about how the colosseum could have been flooded in order to have manned ship wars. We saw how that could have happened by the historical adaptive ways of the Romans. We also saw how National Geographic researched and built a method for getting as many as 24 animals (lions?) up from the bowels of the colosseum to the fighting stage. I'd taken this tour in November 2015 but learned even more from the excellent guide.

Trajan's Amazing Column, cut from one piece of marble 126 feet tall and deeply carved with 155 scenes was one of the ruins that fascinated Marie. That too was the subject of a feature in National Geographic and one that I toured in 2015 into the underground. It used to be painted brightly.

One tour I have been unable to do is the underground of Nero's old home at Oppian Hill. Stunning stories. I once went to the start of the hard-hat-required tour hoping someone didn't show up and I'd be able to go. His grand ambition included a bronze statue of himself 100' tall which took 24 elephants to move to a new location.

Doria Pamphili Galleries was a first for me and had been on my list as I'd walked past this old city palazzo many times. I recognized a Bernini bust and sure enough . . . Marie and I had an audio to take through and we learned how amazing was the woman of the house, marrying and using her wealth to create much strength and power. There have always been women who liberated themselves.

Rome food tour – pictures by Marie and Tom – We've done this company's food tour before in another area of Rome and can only rate it a full #10. Wonderful way to learn about a town and its culture. We used the same company again in Florence.



Off to Florence

Rome is Rome and always good. Maybe I've been here six times and would be most willing to come again. I think Marie has certainly enjoyed it and Tom and I have enjoyed seeing it again through a teens eyes.

We've had an extensive tour of the Colosseum, Palatine Hill, and the Roman Forum. Marie is especially fascinated by the age of the ruins. We've eaten some lush food and some high caloric pasta. Yum.

Our early morning tour of the Vatican meant getting up at 5 AM but it was worth it. We have walked sometimes near 10 miles a day and Marie has accepted the blisters on her feet. Our food tour was coincidentally by the same American guide Dominic that we used in November 2015 but to a new area. I had previously "attacked" him for being an American (did I come to Italy to meet at American?) until I found that he has lived here nearly 20 years married into an Italian family. I was especially pleased to have his company and found that Marie and Tom were also.

I couldn't miss seeing the Moses statue by Michelangelo again. We hired a guide and his car and went to the Pope's Castle outside of town via the Appian Way. On a lovely volcano lake. I would like to go there again. We had about eight hours of fruitful educational touring with Franco.

Our apartment looked like a 10 on the Internet and certainly it is filled full of luxurious specials. Yet it needed a female designer. It needed consistent Internet but our smart teen fixed it each time. Tom rated it a 7 or 8. The weather has been reasonable from cool to cold and only one day of rain.

Maybe more info later if I'm not worn out. We meet Richelle from Paris in Florence and have a heavy schedule booked.



Marie enjoyed the ruins and on the last night in Rome asked to return to them. I have always returned to the statue of Moses by Michelangelo and am always moved by it. On the Lake Albano at the Pope's Castle. We would hear later that friend Ellen had visited and been blessed by the Pope from this very balcony. Apparently the current Pope lives austere and leaves the 'castle' (which isn't really a castle but maybe a large villa) to the tourists. Nice.



Franco our tour guide for 5 hours who stayed with us for more like 9 hours. The apron? Called 'the fruits of Italy' though I preferred the 'statue of David' one. Marie and Tom preferred eating and here they are on the Rome food tour.

Our Florence apartment - for the third time staying here



From www.vrbo.com: The apartment is located in one of the historical sites of Florence: via Maggio, next to the Pitti Palace and the famous Boboli Garden and it's just a few minute walk from Ponte Vecchio. The street itself has always been the street of the antique shops in Florence, however, since it's only a short walk from the historical square of Santo Spirito, the area is surrounded by typical local restaurants and by many other shops for each type of need. The Palace, though very old, in fact it belonged to the Corsini family until the XIXth century and then to the Rosselli del Turco family it is still under the protection of the Fine Arts, but has a modern elevator and the apartment maintains the beauty of a conservative restoration and provides all the amenities and comforts. In the apartment there is a spacious living room of 40sqm or 1292 SF, a separate dining room with a dining table for 6 persons and a fully equipped kitchen. The master bedroom has a king size bed and it is very spacious and comfortable. The second bedroom has a baldachin king size bed and both the bedrooms has original drawings on the walls. In the loft there is a double bed. There are three bathrooms. In the apartment there is AC in all the rooms, WIFI internet access. The renovation has been completed in October 2012 so the apartment is brand new and accurate in every detail.

Our first full day was with tour guide Elizabeth of www.SignatureItaly.com. We'd met her through another friend tour guide, Anjelica, and spent time with her in November 2015. She found us Florinda in Rome before, Franco in Rome this time, and introduced us to Leonardo who spent two days with us this time. I'm hoping to see all of them again in the near future. Elizabeth would chose the sites with Marie in mind firstly, then Richelle (who had visited Rome as a teen). Tom and I enjoyed the review and instead of 4-5 hours, we had lots of extra time. A few days later she would give us much of her day touring in the Uffizi Museum.



Downtown Florence where you must rub the nose of the boar to return to Florence; Richelle and Elizabeth; Richelle and Tom; we three in front of the Pitti Palace.



Inside the Pitti Palace, a visit worthy of a few days; then Marie and Diana went off to the Galileo Museum where Marie could have spent the day but Diana already had 26 months earlier; at the American Cemetery on the way to Siena; then we three high up in the hillside town. This was on our second full guided day tour taking us to **Siena and Gimignano** and through Chianti, driven by Leonardo and guided by Anjelica.

The Parade of Holiday January 6th. This is when Italian children get their gifts and if its “coal” in their stockings, it’s an edible coal. I heard they manage to celebrate December 25 too.

[Epiphany in Europe: Sweetness to Share by Rick Steves](#) from Rick Steves’s [Tweet](#) We were at the Pitti Palace to watch the rehearsals for the parade and the beginning and had many pictures. It was a challenge to stay busy for the **Day of the Epiphany** which is a big holiday but Elizabeth sent us to tour sites anyway. The Pitti Palace, the Parade, and the Galileo Museum were all hits. Elizabeth gave us a gift of two little witches with candies. I went to the Ferragamo Shoe Museum and also the Duomo newly renovated museum on my own.



More pictures from by Tom from our Siena day:



Food! Always a priority for some, and maybe not for me because I get plenty of it anyway. Our refrigerator was full and that was more my style, but I do love food tours. We used the same company as from Rome. Here we start off inside a kitchen.



From the website: Florence – birthplace of the Renaissance and home to Michelangelo’s famous statue of David, not to mention the world-renowned Uffizi Gallery. But did you know that Tuscan cuisine holds its own among the tastiest regions in Italy? Or that Florentine people are more likely to eat a bowl of bread and bean soup than a plate of pasta? On our 4-hour walking food tour through Oltrarno – the Florentine equivalent of Paris’ left bank – you’ll get to taste what makes this city’s cuisine so special and unique within Italy. Through countless food and wine tastings at 8 authentic stops, you’ll learn how to make Italian cantucci (cookies), you’ll sample the local salami, and you’ll experience the neighborhood’s Bohemian vibe – full of students, artists and lively culture. You will meet the families that have been serving up the foodie treasures locals have savored for generations.

FOOD TOUR HIGHLIGHTS -

- Watch how Cantucci (Italian cookies, often known as biscotti) are made – and of course get to taste them afterwards!
- Sample typical Tuscan cheeses and our deliciously fennel-spiced salami, Finocchiona.
- Sink your teeth into a typical Tuscan Crostino, washed down with a glass of the region’s famous wine: Chianti.
- Visit an authentic Italian trattoria, and taste one of their seasonal soups or stews.
- Try real-deal Gelato – we promise you’ll never look at frozen treats the same way again!
- For the adventurous foodies, try Florence’s famous Lampredotto (cow stomach sandwich) – better than it sounds!
- Wander down cobblestoned streets as your expert guide makes the city’s history come to life.
- Experience Florence’s Bohemian side in one of Oltrarno’s quintessential cafes.

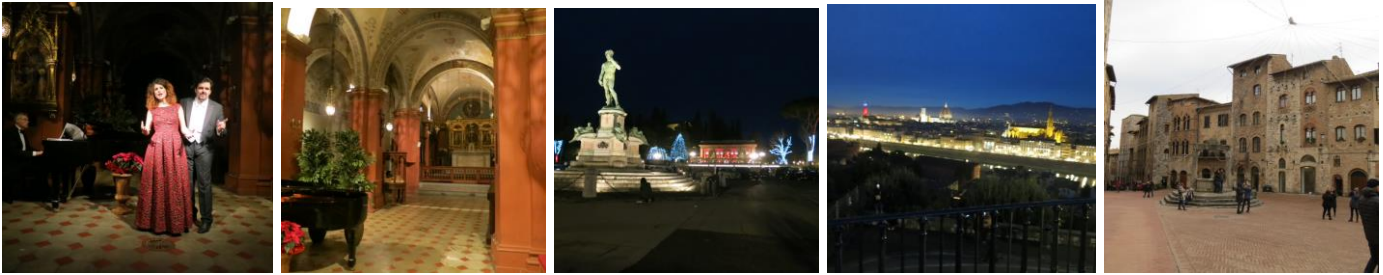
Did we see the famous **David statue by Michelangelo**? Yep, in real and in copy on the plaza. On another trip I found an apron of it and sent the picture to a friend. She found another rendition and use of David body part in the form of a light switch. Perfect!

Florence Duomo: Marie saw one of only two copies of the famous Baptistery Doors at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. The original is in the Duomo Museum and the second set is now on the Baptistery. She and Richelle climbed to the top, a real experience that I’d done on another trip.



St Mark’s Anglican Church just down the street from the apartment was wonderful. My note about it: Tom is musically trained and a performer from his early years. Our protégé Marie is on scholarship due to her music, and our visiting friend Richelle does some performing. All were quite visibly impressed with the talent at St. Mark’s Anglican Church. We saw the Opera Duets. I would be

surprised if you don't know of them but as a reminder you might do your future renters a favor to tell them about St. Mark's. The entry fee is only €30 and every bit of the money goes to a charitable endeavor.



Teatro Verdi – Florence oldest opera house and maybe oldest in Italy. We went in part because Marie is a music student but also because it's the oldest and most beautiful opera house in Tuscany, at least. It was small but historic and we saw an orchestra with supposedly a famous conductor. We could tell that the conductor felt famous by the way he strutted on and off stage numerous times. By his red socks. There was Bach, Mozart, etc. It was a very late night, well after midnight, and we had an early morning trip with Leonardo booked for Lucca and Pisa. It didn't set us up very well for the next night which was equally late and gave us about 3 hours in bed before leaving to the airport.



Pics from Tom - in the Uffizi Museum in Florence. Big stuff. He is typically unexcited about museum visits but guide Elizabeth outdid herself at making it interesting. Interesting enough for many hours of touring. You can look up Google Arts & Culture and take your own walking tour of the Uffizi and even see every piece of art with full descriptions. Yet we felt very lucky to see them in person, with one of us taking a third tour through. In 2015 we got through the Vasari corridor which is now closed for renovation and will never be the same.





The Arno River view is from up high inside the Uffizi. The Vasari corridor connects the next Palazzo to the Uffizi and then to the Pitti Palace. Elizabeth then took us to a lovely restaurant on the corner of our own street. Yet the best might have been our second night at the White Boar and their truffles which I've had three times in year's past.

Also from Tom, pictures from last day touring to **Lucca and Pisa:**



We went because Florence was near to Lucca and I'd tried on each trip to get to Lucca. Then what did we do for most of Lucca stay? Ate. Ugh. Yet it was a nice meal -- I just wonder why I made such a deal out of getting to Lucca and didn't see but a couple hours of it. But then Tom said the meal was one of the two best of the trip and that made it all worthwhile. Here we end with a picture from high up in a tower overlooking Lucca before we walked back to Leonardo via the wide ramparts and our ride home to Florence. Yes, the tower had trees growing on top. Lucca needs to be visited again.

It all needs visited again!

Itinerary

Tue Dec 26 - Marie

12:15pm Depart Kansas City MCI via UA#3489
4:08pm Arrive Newark EWR

Wed and Thu Dec 27 and 28

Free or shopping day; also a safety day in case of weather or flight cancelation; deliver Pandora; Marie to see Dr. Margiotta

Fri Dec 29 - All

5:30pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#30

Sat Dec 30

7:20am Arrive Munich for plane change

8:45am Depart Munich MUC via Lufthansa#___ also UA#9288
10:15am Arrive Rome FCO

Airport car arranged by apartment owner, 60€ cash to driver.

Apartment Via della Frezza 70, 00186 at the corner with Via del Corso - 5 nights
http://www.piazzadelpopololuxuryhome.com/room-detail_2.php and
<https://www.homeaway.com/vacation-rental/p1660776>
Piazza del Popolo Luxury Home, Edoardo Gallo, Tele: 39 334 95 56 045
piazzadelpopololuxuryhome@gmail.com

Shopping for groceries – plan for meals due to holiday closures
Check www.enjoyrome.com

Sun Dec 31

10:30am Underground Colosseum (plus Third Tier), Roman Forum and Palatine Hill
Maximum group size: 8 – 5 hours x 2 people - Link: [Underground Colosseum](http://www.througheternity.com/) –
<http://www.througheternity.com/> - Through Eternity Tours: Tele +39 06 700 9336 - Email:
office@througheternity.com – Note limited bag size allowed inside colosseum.

Meeting point: At the entrance to the Palantine Hill on Via di San Gregorio 30. Printed map in file.

Enter the tunnels of the arena, discover the secrets of the games - Join us on this exclusive Rome group tour in the fascinating underground tunnels of the Colosseum. Marvel at ancient stage machinery capable of amazing special effects, mechanical elevators centuries ahead of their time, and an incredibly complex system of underground links between various supporting buildings that made the Colosseum's spectacles possible. These were amongst the ingenious inventions that we will see on our walking tour which helped ensure the incredible popularity of the games. Along with our expert guides learn how the games, these rituals of violence, were conceived as an Imperial propaganda to unify the incredibly diverse population, languages, and cultures that made up the Roman Empire.

Re-live an entire day's entertainment on our Colosseum tour - Follow the various stages of entertainment: the processions and the salutes; the battles between ferocious beasts and gladiators made spectacular by the surprise entrance of animals into the arena through secret trap-doors; the fight to the death between gladiators amidst the cheers of a delirious crowd; the capricious decisions of the audience or of the emperor to save or condemn a defeated gladiator according to their whim.

Discover who the gladiators were - Our guides are experts in their fields (most of them are archaeologists), and on this ancient Rome group tour they will take you into the world of the gladiators, showing the manner of combat, the weapons, and the origins of these men coming from the remote provinces of the empire. The success of the games was ensured by the multi-ethnic society of the time. On our

Colosseum tour you will also learn about their daily training, which took place in the barracks where the gladiators lived, which were equipped with a small arena such as the Ludus Magnus near the Colosseum.

Admire the perfection of the Colosseum from its Third Tier - It is only from this height that we can fully appreciate the imposing magnitude of this remarkable edifice. From here, all its arcades and marbles are laid out before us, its dramatic spaces reveal a colossal feat of engineering that saw the Colosseum built over ten years on a site which was previously part of Nero's Golden House. From the Third Tier you get the most spectacular and unexpected vistas of Rome, making this a group tour not to miss.

Uncover the daily life, the political struggles and the gods of the ancient city on our Roman Forum tour - This great valley was the political heart of ancient Rome. Here we will retrace the daily life and politics of the Romans, beginning at the **Senate**, where the most memorable debates of the Roman republic took place. Then our group tour will enter into the rooms and the stunningly beautiful garden of the **House of the Vestal Virgins**; discover who they were, gaze upon their marble portraits that still survive today, and learn of the cruel destiny that sometimes awaited them. In the **basilicas of Julia and Maxentius**, seats of the courthouses, will bring you into the spaces of the great public trials during the time of Cicero and Caesar. At the **temples of Saturn, Castor and Pollux**, and **Antoninus and Faustina**, we will meet the Roman gods and explore the enigma of a Christian church built into the structure of a pagan temple. The innovations of Roman engineers will amaze you on the **Via Sacra**, still marked today with the wheel-ruts of carriages that passed over it for centuries. Meanwhile, the film-strips of antiquity carved into the marble of the **Arch of Titus** and **Arch of Septimus Severus**, tell of the great conquests of Imperial Rome. At the site where it happened, we will re-live timeless events such as the funeral of Julius Caesar near the Temple of Caesar and the decapitation of Cicero in the central square. Finally, we will explain the political rise of Augustus, who with his youthful face (or at least so he appears in countless statues) closed out the Roman Republic and founded an empire.

Explore the luxurious villas of the emperors on the Palatine Hill - The **Palatine Hill**, is still for the most part, excluded from the itineraries of other tour companies. Wonderfully preserved even today, it's a shame to neglect this beautiful part of the ancient city, a place that for centuries hosted the exclusive residences of the Roman aristocracy, until the emperors appropriated it to construct their colossal villas. **Why was it such a desirable spot? Simple. The views from here down into the Forum, the Colosseum, the Circus Maximus, and indeed the entire city are unmatched.** Our group tour will start with the origins of Rome, near the Huts of Romulus from the 8th century BC, which were later moved to the **House of Augustus** for obvious political reasons. We will explore the additions and excesses of the Imperial residences, with their gigantic colonnades. Amongst them the **House of Augustus, the Flavian palace, the Severian baths** and the **great Stadium**. You will uncover original furnishings fashioned from precious marbles and statues in the **Palatine Museum**, and retrace the lives of the most famous and extravagant emperors who ruled here, men such as **Nero and Domitian**.

The Colosseum Underground and Third Tier are reserved exclusively for us - During your hour-long visit to the Colosseum Underground you may be joined by some of our other small or private groups, up to a maximum of 23 visitors. The experience of this ancient Rome group tour is guaranteed to be absolutely exclusive and unique!

Add on: [In-depth Itineraries and Tour Details](#)

Meal at Taverna Fiori de Imperiali at 06 67 98 643

What to do on New Year's Eve and day: Rome New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, 2018 version
<http://www.romewise.com/rome-new-years-eve.html>

Mon Jan 1

10:00am Franco Lattughi, tour guide with car, arranged for visit outside of Rome.

f.lattughi@gmail.com Tele: +39 388 942 8435

Agreed to 4 hours, spent 8-9 hours, using his car, touring Rome plus going to the Pope's Castle to include a restaurant reservation on the Albano Lake made by Franco: Drive out of Rome to see the Ancient Appian Road (4th century BC) where the Catacombs are and continue to Castel Gandolfo (summer residence of the Pope).

See: Searching for the (Star) Light at the Vatican Observatory (at Castel Gandolfo) -
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/22/world/europe/vatican-observatory-consolmagno.html>

Dinner and/or on alternate days? Florinda suggests three local restaurants in our area:

-<https://www.ristorantenino.it/>

-<https://www.dalbolognese.it/> Dal Bolognese

-<http://www.pizzeriasanmarcoroma.com/>

Tue Jan 2

7:20am Early Entrance Sistine Chapel & Vatican Tour – 4 hours x 2 tickets Maximum group size: 12. Conf#2A2F24. Through Eternity office: 39 06 700 9336. www.througheternity.com - Note that large bags not allowed.

Meeting Point: At the flower stand on the corner of Viale Ciullo Cesare and Via Leone IV. See map of meeting location in file. This is across the street from Burger King.

Description of Early Entrance Sistine Chapel and Vatican Tour from Through Eternity: Tour the Sistine Chapel before it opens: enjoy as did popes and princes - On this unique tour you will find yourself in the perfect environment to admire the Sistine Chapel and other works of incomparable beauty and to fully comprehend their meaning. Our small group tour will help you visualize the cultural context in which such works arose, immersing you in the climate of the Renaissance, in the passions that accompanied artists and princes, merchants and bankers in the creation of a new world of palaces, domes, and cities. On our exclusive Vatican tour you will discover this happy season of human history when the flowering of the arts was accompanied by the evolution of science, together laying the foundations for much of our modern world.

Sistine Chapel Tour: meet a genius - Whoever sees the Sistine Chapel through the eyes of Michelangelo, whoever reads in it his thoughts and sentiments, encounters a genius. Who he was, how he lived and what he thought - these are the main themes of our guided tour. Our guides will accompany you on this Vatican group tour into the great building projects of the Italian Renaissance and together we will relive the environment of the Florentine Renaissance and the Papal court in Rome in which Michelangelo created his masterpieces. The figures of Jonah, Adam, Eve, Noah and thousands of others on the ceiling of the **Sistine Chapel** and in the **Last Judgement** speak of Michelangelo and of the Renaissance: our guided visit will reveal clearly what they say, and how and why these frescoes have redefined not only art, but the way in which we look at the world.

The Raphael Rooms: enter into the courts of the Italian Renaissance - This was a period of overwhelming enthusiasm and of amazing innovation. The men of the Renaissance didn't merely dream of changing the world - they really revolutionised it. The printing press, the geographic maps with which Columbus reached the Americas, modern science, architecture, art and the sense of beauty (a concept demonized in the Middle Ages), all these were their creations. The frescoes of the **Raphael rooms** perfectly depict the world of the contemporary courts that governed the course of this new world and where the great geniuses of the age called home. The cultured conversations fueled by the wine of sumptuous banquets, the statues brought to light by a frenzied passion for excavations, new fashions, and above all new ways of thinking and living, are marvellously recreated by Raphael with the perfect touch of his graceful brush. This is an experience that we will have the opportunity to relive in the flesh on our Vatican group tours. Indeed, there is an entire world to discover here, a world of which we ourselves are the children.

Vatican Museums Tour: stories of art and history - Some of the most important works that we will discover, such as timeless Greek masterpieces like the **Laocoon**, the **Belvedere Torso** and the **Apollo Belvedere**, were excavated at the time of Michelangelo and Raphael, who studied and admired them in the same architectural context in which they are preserved today. The artworks that they created are the fruit of their careful study. And so we too will pass through the **Pinecone courtyard**, the **Belvedere courtyard** and the tapestry galleries on our Vatican group tour, discovering a selection of masterpieces with a guide capable of recreating the climate of the epoch, helping you to appreciate the Raphael Rooms and the Sistine Chapel in their historical context.

The Pinacoteca: Leonardo da Vinci, Caravaggio and the last painting of Raphael - Some of the finest paintings of the Vatican Museums are collected in the Pinacoteca, still ignored by most tours. In this tranquil part of the Vatican museums it is possible to appreciate the explosive force of **Leonardo's Saint Jerome** and the spectacular realism of **Caravaggio's Deposition**, an artist of absolute and ungovernable genius. We will also encounter **Raphael's Transfiguration**, a work that would be his last when, struck by a terrible fever, he died at the height of his fame at the tender age of 37.

From the Sistine Chapel we will directly enter St. Peter's Basilica without waiting in line St. Peter's Basilica: The Story of Fatih - This part of our guided Vatican group tour will bring us to the heart of the Christian faith, and along the way we will discover an incredible collection of relics and religious tokens that have accumulated here over the course of nearly 2,000 years at the site of St. Peter's tomb. At the same time you will have the chance to admire and understand enchanting works of art such as **Michelangelo's Pietà**, a work whose intimate embrace overflows with such tenderness that it can move even the hardest viewer to tears. The masterpieces of **Bernini**, the great genius of the Italian Baroque, also dominate St. Peter's, and the spectacular eponymous piazza dazzles with astounding optical effects. It is here that the faithful have gathered for centuries to celebrate the great events of Christianity, from the election of new popes to solemn masses. We will bring you here to read a history that will also become our own, a history lived by the protagonists of our fascinating Vatican group tours.

The Sistine Chapel Goes Full Cirque Du Soleil - <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-sistine-chapel-goes-full-cirque-du-soleil?via=newsletter&source=Weekend>

Either see Florinda or walk St Peter's and the streets between Vatican and Spanish Steps.

Florinda (official Vatican Guide) who couldn't confirm a private tour of Vatican. If she's in town, she offered a tour of St Angel Castle, Piazza Navona, Campo di Fiori, Trastere and inside Villa Farnesina. Contact: Florinda Orazi, florindaorazi@hotmail.com, Tele: 0039-347-4704890

5:00pm Rome at Twilight Among the Piazzas and Fountains - Maximum group size: 13 – Link: [Rome at Twilight](#) x 3 people for 2 ½ hours – by www.ThroughEternity.com

Meeting Point: In front of Babington's Tea Rooms, located immediately to the left at the bottom of the Spanish Steps in Piazza di Spagna.

Renaissance and Baroque Rome: the most beautiful fountains and piazzas of Rome - An evening stroll to enjoy the city, through its imposing palaces and grand piazzas, where water dances in extraordinary fountains; a tour to discover enchanted little streets where time has stopped; a stroll to dream, exploring history and art in a new way. Join us on this Rome group tour to encounter popes and emperors, artists and ordinary people in the places where their lives took shape, where the ancient and the modern mingled to create the political and religious institutions on which Italian society still rests today.

Spanish Steps Tour - We will begin in Piazza di Spagna, at the foot of the iconic Spanish Steps. With our expert guides we will learn the history of the church of the Trinita' dei Monti that towers above, as well as why the young Gian Lorenzo Bernini and his sculptor father adopted the unusual subject of a boat for the fountain of the Barcaccia. We will also uncover the social significance of the majestic stairway that came to unite these two areas separated for centuries by a high cliff. After short stops at the Colonna dell'Immacolata (Column of the Immaculate Conception) and the house of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, we will reach another of the city's most indelible landmarks, the Trevi fountain.

Trevi Fountain Tour - Here we will let ourselves be lulled by the magical song of the waters, immersing ourselves in this wonderful piece of theatrical architecture that both recalls the great buildings of the past and allows us to imagine the impossible architecture of the mind. With the help of your guide you will read the many legends written in the relief sculpture of the triumphal arch, where the god Ocean advances with his Tritons and winged horses to celebrate with us an ancient festival of water. Please note that the Trevi Fountain is currently undergoing some much-needed restoration and is partially covered. We will still see parts of it from a scaffolding bridge that has been constructed to allow visitors to witness the work in progress.

The Pantheon - The Pantheon transports us to another era, and this portion of our walking group tour is all about the full grandeur of Imperial Rome. Innovative ideas, technologies and various cultures blend to make an artwork of extreme power and poetry, a design so perfect that Michelangelo considered it to be the work of angels. The history of the area is no less fascinating: it was originally a marshland subject to the floods of the Tiber, then a military training ground devoted to Mars, the god of war. The temple that dominates the piazza was first built by Agrippa for his son-in-law Augustus, before a restoration by Hadrian in 126 AD created the magnificent building we know today. According to medieval legend the central oculus in the huge dome was created by the explosive crash of pagan demons fleeing the building at the moment of its conversion into a church in 609 AD. The Pantheon also houses the tombs of Raphael who died prematurely in 1520, and the first King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele, who died in 1878.

Piazza Navona Tour - The next stop is Piazza Navona, which puts us in the midst of a totally different mystery - its form has been preserved for nearly 2,000 years, and the shape of the Stadium of Domitian (1st century AD) is still obvious today. And yet at the same time we are in the heart of the Roman Baroque: all around are spectacular optical illusions and theatrical buildings, signs of a revolutionary new approach to architectural space. Here we confront the twin genius of Bernini and Borromini, the two greatest rivals of their age and opposites in every respect. Bernini's marvelous Fountain of the Four Rivers is the piazza's centrepiece, a pyramidal structure that incorporates an obelisk and culminates in the flight of a dove. Dominating the skyline above is Borromini's curving facade and bell tower of the church of Santa Agnese, where stone takes on the malleability of softest clay.

Campo dei Fiori and Piazza Farnese - We will finish our tour of Rome in two extremely different piazzas of the city center. First in bustling Campo dei Fiori with its taverns and market stalls, a stop along the route pilgrims took on their way to St. Peter's, and once a site of public execution and torture. By contrast, Piazza Farnese is an aristocratic place of cardinals and popes. Home of the beautiful Giulia Farnese, lover of the rapacious and insatiable Borgia Pope Alexander VI, and site of countless court intrigues, the piazza is dominated by two enormous basins found in the Baths of Caracalla which were re-adapted as fountains for the popes, symbolic of their legitimate succession from the ancient emperors. All this is overlooked by the Palazzo Farnese itself, sombre testament to Michelangelo's architectural talent.

Join us on this Rome group tour on a journey to truly understand the city, and see how its picturesque streets, timeless piazzas and infinite history are all just waiting to be discovered.

Wed Jan 3

10:45am Eating Italy, Trastevere for Foodies - 4 hours until about 2:45pm - tickets for 3 people.
Eating Italy info@eatingitalyfoodtours.com and Tele if lost: 39 06 94804492.

Meeting point: Trastevere for Foodies, Via Natale del Grande #46/47, Rome 0153. Outside a café called "Antica Caffetteria Berti dal 1951. Finishes at: Spirito di Vino on Via dei Genovesi, 31. Map in file.

<https://www.eatingitalyfoodtours.com/rome/tours/trastevere-foodies/>

Formerly known as the Daylight Trastevere Food Tour, Trastevere for Foodies is a delight for the true foodie looking to get a real flavor of Roman life, through our food! With its narrow cobblestone streets and laneways, Trastevere is the most picturesque Roman neighborhood and one you need to visit during your stay. During the day, it's like a small village with timeless and artisan shops serving the same local families for generations – many of which we'll visit together, tasting the amazing food and exploring these local spots along the way. On this 4-hour guided walking food tour we visit the colorful outdoor food market and meet some of the stallholders who have been selling their produce there for generations. You'll also visit local food stores and talk to the wonderful families working hard to preserve Roman food traditions. This tour features some unique cultural and historical sites that few tourists get an opportunity to see.

Meet each business owner through pictures on the website along with pictures of the food. .

Highlights include:

- *Sample the fresh ingredients at one of Rome's most historic outdoor food markets.*
- *Meet the Polica family who have been selling meats and cheeses at Antica Caciara, their famous delicatessen since 1900*
- *Find out quickly why Romans love their supplì (mouthwatering fried risotto ball)*
- *Taste delicious amatriciana and cacio e pepe pastas with wine and fresh bread at a local osteria*
- *Meet Signora Vera, the neighborhood resident pastry chef for 40 years, and taste what she created fresh that day*
- *Get educated on real-deal gelato at Fatamorgana, the gelateria that introduced Romans to gourmet gelato*
- *Sink your teeth into an iconic Roman meat: porchetta*
- *Savor Rome's best biscotti, in the shop they've been made in since 1929.*
- *See Rome's famous slaughterhouse, and the neighborhood's very own "mountain"...*

Stay in area? See file for additional specials.

In Rome, be sure to offer Marie to see the Cat Sanctuary: Torre Argentina Cat Sanctuary
<http://www.romancats.com/torreargentina/en/introduction.php>

Thu Jan 4 – Diana, Tom and Marie

12:20pm Rail Europe from Rome to Florence – Train: Frecciarossa 9528, 2nd premium, coaches 4B and seats 4C, 4D and 5D. Tickets in file

1:51pm Arrive Florence main Santa Maria Novella train station

- Richelle

Departs Paris at 12:40pm, arrives 2:25pm Peretola Air

Turn on Diana's cell for one day international rate: 732 804 7514.

Richelle cell: 06 867 99443 richelle.sheppard@free.fr

Shop for groceries upon arrival – grocery list in file

Apt Via Maggio 50, Florence www.vrbo.com/421522 – for 7 nights – Richelle for 4 nights

Landlady: Françoise DEGRELLE at florenceintoscana@gmail.com

+39-342 99 65 329 Italy or + 352-621 65 44 14 Luxembourg or

+ 352-621 307 358 Luxembourg; Rep to meet us: George Tele: +39 346 504 0118

George to meet us street side from 2:30pm onward. kmustai_novita@yahoo.it



From www.vrbo.com: The apartment is located in one of the historical sites of Florence: via Maggio, next to the Pitti Palace and the famous Boboli Garden and it's just a few minute walk from Ponte Vecchio. The street itself has always been the street of the antique shops in Florence, however, since it's only a short walk from the historical square of Santo Spirito, the area is surrounded by typical local restaurants and by many other shops for each type of need. The Palace, though very old, in fact it belonged to the Corsini family until the XIXth century and then to the Rosselli del Turco family it is still under the protection of the Fine Arts, but has a modern elevator and the apartment maintains the beauty of a conservative restoration and provides all the amenities and comforts. In the apartment there is a spacious living room of 40sqm or 1292 SF, a separate dining room with a dining table for 6 persons and a fully equipped kitchen. The master bedroom has a king size bed and it is very spacious and comfortable. The second bedroom has a baldachin king size bed and both the bedrooms has original drawings on the walls. In the loft there is a double bed. There are three bathrooms. In the apartment there is AC in all the rooms, WIFI internet access. The renovation has been completed in October 2012 so the apartment is brand new and accurate in every detail.

For the record: Tiziana Serra di Cassano ex landlord, friend of Françoise, cell 0039 338 6639282 or t.serra@aol.com. Tiziana also owns a B&B.

Per Elizabeth: There are holiday openings of Palazzo Vecchio as follows: January 4-5-6 from 9am to 11pm. In the evening could be very suggestive.

Fri Jan 5

9:30am Start of walking tour with tour guide Elizabeth to meet outside apartment door. Arranged for 4 hours. No lunch stop but rather stopping for small snack instead. To show ideas where to visit for the remaining days.

Elizabeth Michele Namack, Guida Autorizzata per Firenze e Provincia Accompagnatrice Ufficiale
Via Giampaolo Orsini 59, 50126 Firenze - Italy

Tel. +39 055 6815062, cell. +39 348 5625328 enamack@gmail.com www.signatureitaly.com

First stop with Elizabeth is St Spirito then Capella Brancacci which opens at 10am. Then general tour of main monuments. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brancacci_Chapel. Some people think of this as the Sistine Chapel of Florence.

4:30pm Academia museum reservations made for Marie and Richelle, under name of Burton #6069994.

Sat Jan 6 – Holiday called The Epiphany

Florence holiday openings: <https://www.visitflorence.com/christmas-holiday-museum-hours.html>

8:15am Elizabeth suggests going to Palazzo Pitti which is open on this holiday (on own) <http://www.florenceartmuseums.com/pitti-palace/> Note that Pitti has a number of museums in one.

Parade from Pitti Palace to Duomo Square called the Parade of Wise Men.

<https://www.florenceinferno.com/events-january-2017/> -- no page found for 2018 but maybe starting at 2pm.

Today is the Feast of the Epiphany! -- It is a national holiday in Italy, and the tradition of La Befana commemorates the day when the three Wise Men arrived at the manger bearing gifts for Jesus.

The Epiphany also marks the end of the Christmas holiday. In Florence, the Epiphany is celebrated with the traditional event of the Procession of the Magi. The solemn cavalcade, led by the Three Wise Men (or Magi) on horseback in sumptuous silk costumes, will leave Piazza Pitti at 2 p.m. and cross the streets of Florence, reaching Piazza Duomo at 3.30 p.m. Here you will enjoy a reading of the story of the Magi and a performance of the flag throwers.

8:15pm (latest) Concert at St Marks - Opera Duo at Via Maggio 18, pay cash at door for three; Richelle arranged her own tickets.

Sun Jan 7

9:00am Elizabeth arranged for driver/tour guide Leonardo for an 8 hour day for 4 people and also guide Anjelica to accompany. To Siena and San Gimignano and through Chianti. Info from 2015 bus tour:

- Visit two UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- Siena: exclusive opening of intimate and secret sights
- Wonderful views of Tuscan rolling hills and Chianti countryside
- Stop at a typical Winery with tasting excellent Chianti wines
- Picturesque medieval village, famous for its colors and charm

Along the way that will lead us to Siena, the first emotion is the enchanting view of **Monteriggioni** from the panoramic windows of the bus: the amazing spectacle of a small medieval village enclosed by its famous walls, which remained standing to this day. Upon arrival in Siena, we meet the local guide, at our disposal for two hours, who takes us on a comprehensive guided tour of the historic center, starting from the famous Basilica of **San Domenico** (inside visit), a **jewel of Renaissance art** built in the 13th century and dedicated to **St. Catherine of Siena**, of which preserves a relic. We will walk along the narrow medieval streets of the city, flanked by splendid palaces and historic shops, until we reach the spectacular **Cathedral** of the 12th century, of which we can admire the magnificent architecture and the splendor of the polychrome marbles. The tour continues then with the visit of the **Museum and Oratory of a Contrada***(exclusive opening), where we can experience the atmosphere of the authentic and most intimate soul of the town. The "**Contrade**"(districts into which the city is divided) are the real core of local social life, where inhabitants of each district compete with each other, as they devote themselves to the preparation of the famous **Palio horse-race**. The Museum of a "Contrada", as well as its Oratory, is therefore the heart of the district. It is an intimate and secret place containing historical documents and wonderful relics of the famous Palio, as well as magnificent works of art which are normally not disclosed to the public. The guided tour of Siena ends in its most beautiful square, **Piazza del Campo**, of which the **Palazzo Pubblico** (Town Hall) is the focal point. Free time to continue exploring the city and for lunch (not included). In the afternoon we reach **San Gimignano**, a small and world famous walled town located on a hilltop, which remained intact through the centuries, renowned for its tall towers, wonderful frescoes and many other valuable works of art: here we will be led until the heart of the historical center, where to have free time at disposal for its fascinating discovery. In the evening, crossing the gently **Chianti** rolling hills, we will arrive to a small and **typical Winery** where, after a short walk in the ancient vineyards, we will visit the suggestive barrique room and **taste fantastic wines**, sampling also locally produced zero food miles. Finally, we will stop in the picturesque village of **Greve in Chianti**, to admire its famous main square flanked by arcades and browse through the local artisan shops, to end a memorable experience in the heart of Tuscany.

Mon Jan 8

10:00am Florence "Other Side" Food Tour through info@eatingitalyfoodtours.com Tele 39 06 94804492. Paid for 3 tickets (in file); Richelle arranged her ticket. 4 hours.

Meeting Point: Piazza Nazario Sauro, 23r-25r, Florence, Tuscany 50124. (This is OUR apartment side.) On the corner of the piazza (on your right if you've just crossed the bridge), you see a Gelateria called "La Carraia", street number 25 red). Your guide will be between the street numbers 23r and 25r to meet you.

<https://www.eatingitalyfoodtours.com/florence/tours/oltrarno/> - about 4 hours

Description: The food tour takes place in the neighborhood of Oltrarno which is in our neighborhood. The food tour starts near the Carraia Bridge over the Arno River and ends about a 10-minute walk from the meeting point

Florence – birthplace of the Renaissance and home to Michelangelo’s famous statue of David, not to mention the world-renowned Uffizi Gallery. But Did you know that Tuscan cuisine holds its own among the tastiest regions in Italy? Or that Florentine people are more likely to eat a bowl of bread and bean soup than a plate of pasta? On our 4-hour walking food tour through Oltrarno – the Florentine equivalent of Paris’ left bank – you’ll get to taste what makes this city’s cuisine so special and unique within Italy. Through countless food and wine tastings at 8 authentic stops, you’ll learn how to make Italian cantucci (cookies), you’ll sample the local salami, and you’ll experience the neighborhood’s Bohemian vibe – full of students, artists and lively culture. You will meet the families that have been serving up the foodie treasures locals have savored for generations.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE -

Watch how Cantucci (Italian cookies, often known as biscotti) are made – and of course get to taste them afterwards! Sample typical Tuscan cheeses and our deliciously fennel-spiced salami, Finocchiona. Sink your teeth into a typical Tuscan Crostino, washed down with a glass of the region’s famous wine: Chianti. Visit an authentic Italian trattoria, and taste one of their seasonal soups or stews. Try real-deal Gelato – we promise you’ll never look at frozen treats the same way again! For the adventurous foodies, try Florence’s famous Lampredotto (cow stomach sandwich) – better than it sounds! Wander down cobblestoned streets as your expert guide makes the city’s history come to life. Experience Florence’s Bohemian side in one of Oltrarno’s quintessential cafes.

Also see provided recommendations at <https://www.eatingitalyfoodtours.com/florence/travel-guide/>

Elizabeth suggests afternoon to the Duomo museum with possibility to climb to the top of the Dome. Since it is a holiday weekend, suggests book the entrance ahead of time on line or otherwise buy the ticket on Friday and book to climb Dome after arrival in Florence.

https://www.museumflorence.com/?utm_source=opaeng&utm_medium=home&utm_campaign=piazzaduomo

Suggest seeing the newly renovated Duomo Museum. Include going up the steps of three towers. We don’t have a day to do the tour but here is the description from my last trip: Terrace and Dome of Cathedral Tour 1 ½ hours then Tuscan lunch: Description: *This exclusive tour begins with an evocative introduction movie, played in an ancient rectory private room, located in the Duomo square, it will follow a guided visit of the interiors of the magnificent Santa Maria del Fiore Cathedral and its panoramic north terrace, an exclusive place from where, those who wish, will have a priority access to the famous Brunelleschi’s Dome. The video introduction will allow you to go back over the history of Florence, the “Cradle of Renaissance”, thanks to the exclusive images, showing how the city and its monuments have grown through the centuries, with a particular focus on the monuments making part of the Duomo complex. Avoiding the line you will enter, accompanied by a licensed English speaking guide, inside Santa Maria del Fiore, where you will discover the superb works of art preserved there, as Paolo Uccello’s clock, Vasari’s frescos and Bandinelli’s marble choir. Then, you will have the chance to get to one of the exclusive terraces of the Cathedral, where to enjoy your first-row position on the magnificent scenery surrounding you, dominated by the amazing Brunelleschi’s Dome. From this breath-taking location, you will experience the incredible sensation of being able to “touch” part of the city center and admire the wonderful hills surrounding it. At the end of the guided tour, you can continue your visit on your own, directly from the north terrace, without any additional queue, using your ticket to climb even higher, up to the magnificent Dome, where you can enjoy a spectacular 360° view of Florence, from its highest location. At the end of your visit, a few steps from the Cathedral square you will be offered a delicious taste of Chianti wine and tidbits of cheese with balsamic vinegar. Your ticket is valid 24 hours and allows you to visit on your own other monuments at the Duomo Complex (Baptistry, Crypt of St. Reparata, Giotto’s bell tower).* See National Geographic February 2014 - <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/02/il-duomo/design-video>

Florence Museums open on Monday: <https://www.visitflorence.com/florence-museums/open-on-mondays.html> - Note for Richelle that Uffizi and Academia are closed on Mondays.

8:25pm **- Richelle**
Departs via air

Tue Jan 9

9:30am Reservation for Uffizi made by Elizabeth - Elizabeth to guide for 4 hours (spent 7 hours) including other locations.

Main Vasari Corridor closed for renovation. Small portion open.

<http://www.visitflorence.com/florence-museums/the-vasari-corridor.html>

<http://www.partner.viator.com/en/13618/travel-tips/Visit-the-Vasari-Corridor/ttd>

Other museums: Borgello, Museum of San Marco, Palazzo Vecchio including climb to the top, Galileo Museum.

9:00pm Opera at Teatro Verdi – tickets in file for three
teatro@teatroverdionline.it

Wed Jan 10

9:00am Elizabeth arranged driver and tour guide Leonardo for 8 hours – for 3 people

Hoping Leonardo can guide us near to this bus tour offered on wrong day:

Pisa, Lucca and Viareggio mini-van – 11 hours –only Thursday and Saturday through

www.caftours.com/pisa-lucca-and-viareggio.html a division of Grayline Tours. Would have started at 8:15am at Piazza della Repubblica, in front of Caffè Gilli

Description: Plunge into a sea of beauty, and experience the heart-stirring discovery of splendid architectural, sculptural and painted masterpieces, the nostalgic charm of a famous seaside resort and a relaxing encounter with splendid natural beauty. Lucca lies between Florence and the Tuscan coast. It is a refined city crammed with majestic churches, surrounded by 16th century walls with its imposing gateways and massive bastions. One can walk along a stretch of the tree-crowned city walls, enjoying a wonderful view over the roofs, alleys, tower-houses, Romanesque churches and aristocratic palaces of the city, and then move into the compact historical town centre. Discover Piazza S. Michele, the heart of the city, with the splendid Basilica in white limestone (12th – 14th century) and the stately Palazzo Pretorio. Walk past the charming little shops lining the squares and narrow streets and enter Piazza del Mercato where you can admire its circular perimeter built on top of the remains of the Roman amphitheatre dating back to the second century BC. Continue your walk until you reach the famous Gothic Cathedral of San Martino (11th century), where you will be enchanted by the delicate effigy of Ilaria del Carretto by Jacopo della Quercia. Continue your walk and discover the solid bulk of the Guinigi tower, with a huge holm oak growing above its battlements. Leaving Lucca, after a short journey, we reach the splendid, sandy Versilia coast, and the seaside town of Viareggio, famous for its beautiful beaches, for its wonderful Art Nouveau buildings and the long and relaxing walk along the Viale del Mare with cafès–chantants, restaurants, shops, and venues that are among the most elegant of the coast. Enjoy some free time to admire the architecture of the bathing establishments along the famous Viale Margherita, the chalet and cafès, including the Gran Caffè Margherita, an Art Nouveau building, one of the symbols of the city. You can savour the fragrant cuisine of Viareggio in one of the many restaurants on the seafront and, during the warmer seasons, take a dip into the warm Tyrrhenian Sea with the spectacular backdrop of the white marble Apuan Alps sparkling in the sun. In the afternoon, we move inland and drive into the heart of the famous city of Pisa, with the glittering sight of Piazza dei Miracoli, a UNESCO heritage site, where the peerless marble masterpieces emerge miraculously from the green sward: the famous Leaning Tower, the magnificent Baptistery, the stunning Cathedral, and the Monumental Cemetery, supreme expressions of the Romanesque architecture of the 12th and 13th centuries, containing works of staggering artistic impact.

Thu Jan 11

4:30am Depart apartment via Leonardo

6:35am Depart Florence FLR via Air Dolomitti dba Lufthansa #_____ and UA#9696

7:50am Arrive Munich MUC for plane change

9:20am Depart Munich MUC via UA#31

12:50pm Arrive Newark EWR

Fri Jan 12 - Marie

12:00noon Depart home by Tom (Diana has 11-2pm appointment)

1:59pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#3586

4:21pm

Arrive Kansas City MCI

Tue Jan 16

School starts

Emergency

Registered with www.travel.state.gov and record and copy US Embassy contacts. Print 3 copies to include our apartment addresses.

U.S. Embassy Rome:

via Vittorio Veneto 121, 00187 Roma, Phone: (+39) 06.46741

U.S. Consulate in Florence: Lungarno Vespucci, 38, 50123 FIRENZE, Phone: (+39) 055.266.951

Emergency Assistance

Emergency Assistance Plus Program – 24/7

United Mileage Plus member #0186014 (card in file and D's wallet)

Tele: 866 816 2073 or 60 328 1752 collect

Miscellaneous

Romans are about to go eight hours a day without water:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/07/28/romans-are-about-to-go-eight-hours-a-day-without-water/?utm_term=.017d8e2c4968&wpisrc=nl_rainbow&wpmm=1

Rome restaurant near colosseum: <http://www.latavernadeiforimperiali.com/> Tele: 06 67 98 643

Rome Christmas Tree: People Calling It 'Spelacchio' | Travel + Leisure: Embedded in this article is a super-fast clip of traveling thru Rome. Well done.

<http://www.travelandleisure.com/holiday-travel/saddest-christmas-tree-rome>

From NY Times: My Rome: Still a Classic - https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/travel/rome-italy-classic-beauty-culture.html?_r=0

Rome Fountains and no-bathing: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/22/world/europe/no-swimming-rome-braces-for-summer-of-tourists-at-its-fountains.html?emc=edit_ne_20170622&nl=evening-briefing&nid=22982744&te=1&_r=0

15 Secrets of the Colosseum in Rome - The Colosseum is second only to Vatican City as the most visited spot in Italy: Close to 6 million tourists a year visit the monument. Now, the ancient amphitheater is undergoing somewhat controversial renovations thanks to grants from the Italian government, which announced a plan to spend \$20 million to rebuild the arena floor, and from billionaire Diego Della Valle, who promised \$33 million for refurbishments. MORE FROM TRAVELANDLEISURE.COM Before the repairs are completed, here are a few [Read the full story](#)

Movies recommended by Adrienne of Parler Paris: Woody Allen "To Rome with Love" and the old "Roman Holiday" with Gregory Peck.

Florence Travel Guide by Rick Steves - <https://www.ricksteves.com/europe/italy/florence>

The Hidden Treasures in Italian Libraries - NYTimes.com

https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/06/13/travel/italian-libraries-hidden-treasures-books-architecture-art.html?emc=edit_ne_20170613&nl=evening-briefing&nlid=22982744&te=1&r=0&referer=

How Giorgio Vasari Invented Art History as We Know It - The New York Times: Some of us saw the Vasari Corridor in Florence in January 2015. Some of us will see it again or for the first time soon, and when this books goes soft cover, I'll read it. Smile. (Too heavy!). The portion over the bridge is currently closed for renovation. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/01/books/review/collector-of-lives-giorgio-vasari-biography-rowland-charney.html>

A Handcrafted Tour by Four Seasons Florence - <http://www.fourseasons.com/magazine/immersive-travel/things-to-do-florence>

The Best City in Europe, According to Travelers - Travel + Leisure – Re Florence - The Italian gem is a paradise for art lovers, historians, foodies, and fashion connoisseurs. Read the full story at <http://www.travelandleisure.com/trip-ideas/florence-best-city-europe-2017>

Florence's Museo dell'Opera del Duomo sets Renaissance masterpieces in a religious context - The Washington Post https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/travel/in-florence-the-duomos-attendance-has-quadrupled-after-highlighting-arts-religious-context/2017/07/06/ea85bf36-5a83-11e7-9b7d-14576dc0f39d_story.html?utm_term=.6a4991359ca8&wpisrc=nl_travel&wpmm=1

Food, recommendations, by Eating Italy Food Tours:

<https://www.eatingitalyfoodtours.com/florence/travel-guide/>

In Florence - elizabeth@signatureitaly.com enamack@gmail.com www.signatureitaly.com – picture from her holiday card

The Top 10 MOST BEAUTIFUL CITIES in the World - <https://www.acityguides.com/cities/top-10-most-beautiful-cities.html>



Rome:

Unavailable – paid and credit received – follow up

9:00am Underground Rome – Maximum group size: 13 – Link:

<https://www.througheternity.com/en/rome-tours/underground-rome-tour.html>

Meeting Point: Near the entrance to the Basilica of San Clemente See map on ticket in file.

Highlights: The Basilica of San Clemente, San Nicola in Carcere, The Roman Houses beneath San Giovanni e Paolo, and Hidden Gems/overlooked sights included: San Clemente Fresco Detail,

Underground levels of the 3 sites visited

Summary: Discover underground Rome, buried deep beneath the bustling capital. Descend into the bowels of the earth on a journey to the ancient world of the eternal city. Uncover the three underground levels of the Basilica of San Clemente, a 12th century church home to breathtaking mosaics and frescoes dating back to the 4th century. Its deepest level reveals homes as old as 1st century BC that would have been on street level. Our tour proceeds to the Roman houses under the Basilica dei Santissimi Giovanni and Paolo. Here, a stone's throw from the Colosseum, you will discover an enchanting medieval piazza far from the tourist crowds. You will admire at the church with its stunning frescoes and wander the roads, exploring the homes of Imperial Rome. Finally, you will visit the Church of San Nicola in Carcere, embedded amongst gigantic columns. With our guide you will explore the basements and marvel at no fewer than three temples dating to the 2nd Century BC.

Description: Descend into the subterranean layers of Rome's fascinating and forgotten past. There is another Rome underneath the city we know and love, another silent and humble city under its grandiose Renaissance and Baroque architecture. There are centuries of history buried in the subterranean layers beneath the three churches that we invite you to visit with us on this Rome group tour, a fascinating voyage into the bowels of the earth. Our Underground Rome tour was recently selected as one of the best walking tours in the world by Independent Traveler.

There were difficult centuries for Rome, from its passage as capital of an immense empire to a small province living under constant threat of wars and economic and political crises. Even after Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Constantinople in 330 AD, Rome still numbered around 450,000 inhabitants in the 5th century AD. And yet, there were no more than 25,000 inhabitants by the 8th century AD. This drastic decline in population coincided with old political institutions falling into disuse and the rise of new power structures tied to the papacy. Meanwhile vast areas of the city within the ancient walls were abandoned or turned into vegetable gardens, and entire structures were re-adapted, often as Christian churches.

Journey back in time from the Renaissance to pagan Rome at San Clemente. San Clemente is a very beautiful 12th century AD basilica with wonderful and unique mosaics in which, among other things, the Crucified Christ is represented in a festival of trees and doves. No less impressive is the Cappella di Santa Caterina (Chapel of St. Catherine), with some of the earliest surviving Renaissance frescoes from the early 15th century AD by Masaccio and Masolino. But that is only the beginning of the surprising discoveries we will make on this group tour: a small stairway takes us to the lower basilica from the 4th century AD, which is perfectly preserved with medieval frescoes that recount some fascinating Christian legends, including the life of St. Clement himself. From here another little staircase takes us to the third underground level where we are catapulted into the first century AD: some of the rooms of this layer were part of an apartment block of several floors, separated from another large building that was perhaps a state mint by a narrow street still visible today.

From the many decorations and relief sculptures that refer to the ritual killing of a bull and to the constellations, we know that one of these spaces was used by the followers of the cult of Mithras at the beginning of the 3rd century AD, whilst a Christian sect met only a few meters away. This is not such a surprise, as from the beginning of the 1st century AD both these religions were widely diffused in Rome and the empire. Their similarities are also noteworthy: both celebrated ritual banquets with water and wine, and both encouraged the faithful to engage in morally correct behaviour in order to reach salvation in a world beyond. Nearby are remains from 6th century AD burials complete with sarcophagi, early Christian symbols, and much more.

Explore ancient life in the Roman houses beneath Santi Giovanni e Paolo. Not far from the Colosseum, the Basilica of Santi Giovanni e Paolo (Saints John and Paul) preserves intact a little corner of the middle ages in the form of a monastery and bell tower built upon the imposing ruins of a temple dedicated to the emperor Claudius. Its history begins in the 2nd century AD with a little uphill street and two houses, one of which had elegant pagan frescoes and a small garden with a pool. The story continues in the 4th century AD with a grand domus (the house of a rich Roman) which incorporates the pre-existing buildings and is decorated with frescoes of Christian subjects. The owners of this domus were in all likelihood the titular martyrs —Giovanni and Paolo. In the 5th century AD a small church was built over their tombs, where the faithful venerated their relics. With time the underlying past of the basilica was completely covered and forgotten: first excavations began in 1887 and the buried areas have only recently become accessible once again.

After a lovely walk past gardens still cultivated today by the nuns and the Circus Maximus, an immense area where the horse races of republican Rome were held, we will reach the third site of our subterranean Rome group tour.

Witness the meeting of pagan and Christian Rome at San Nicola in Carcere. The church of San Nicola in Carcere (St. Nicholas in Prison) is in fact absolutely unique in the world. Even at a distance we realize that there are six imposing columns of an ancient Roman temple built into the side walls of the church. Indeed, the church is entirely constructed on three temples of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, one of which is fully incorporated into the church. Descending to the underground level we find ourselves catapulted into a remote and magical time. We are actually in the spaces—at the time open to the sky—between the three temples. We are on the beaten path of the Romans who for centuries passed this way on their daily comings and goings to the vegetable and cattle market a few steps away. The foundations and the massive load-bearing structures of the temples amazingly survived the devastation of the centuries. During the reconstruction, around the 9th century AD, it seemed a good idea to reuse the strong arms of the temples in order to anchor a church. Amongst the many interesting historical details in the resulting church, we will note an 8th century engraving in one of the columns, whilst the bell in the medieval tower is still the original one from the end of the 13th century AD.

Marie's travel history: Vienna, Paris, San Francisco, Stanford, Washington DC x3, Philadelphia, New York City x?, Lisbon, Barcelona, Florence/Rome

Ideas: Las Vegas/Canyons/Boulder/Dam if short time, Athens/Greek Islands if 10-14 days, London/Bath, Amsterdam, Vancouver, Madrid, Venice.