

Tim's 50th Birthday Pilgrimage

Poland & Italy | November 4-12, 2026

Itinerary & practical essentials. All times are local in Poland and Italy.

Emergency help

Call 112 for emergency services in Poland and Italy. If separated from the group, move somewhere safe, send your location in the group chat. Use your hotel below if you need help returning.

Our hotels

Krakow group guesthouse

Krakow · through Nov 6

Koletek 13A, 31-069 Kraków, Poland

Phone: +48124306283

[Webpage](#)

Beata Angelina guesthouse

Assisi · Nov 6-8

Via Cardinale R. Merry del Val 4, Assisi, Italy

Phone: +39075813582

[Webpage](#)

Hotel Atlantico · Bettoja Hotels

Rome · Nov 8-12

Via Cavour 23, 00184 Rome, Italy

Phone: +3906485951

[Webpage](#)

Between our stops

Estimated travel times only. Visits, meals and airport waiting are extra; traffic and group boarding can add time.

Nov 4 | Krakow ↔ Polish Highlands / Szaflary

Group bus for the Highlands day.

Krakow → Szaflary area: About 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours by bus

Szaflary area → Krakow: About 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours by bus

Nov 5 | Krakow ↔ Auschwitz / Birkenau / Harmeze

Group excursion with Piotr.

Krakow → Auschwitz: About 1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes by bus

Harmeze / memorial area → Krakow: About 1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes by bus

Nov 6 | Krakow → Rome → Assisi

Ryanair FR83 to Rome Ciampino, followed by the group bus to Assisi.

Departure: Krakow (KRK), 08:30. Arrival: Rome Ciampino (CIA), 10:30. Local times.

Flight duration: 2 hours.

Krakow: main passenger terminal. Ciampino: passenger terminal, Arrivals. Both airports have one terminal for scheduled passenger flights.

Krakow → Rome Ciampino: Flight: 2 hours · 08:30-10:30

Rome Ciampino → Assisi: About 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours by bus

Nov 7 | Assisi → Bevagna → wine country → Assisi

Afternoon hotel pickup, Bevagna, wine tasting and dinner; return to the guesthouse afterward.

Assisi → Bevagna: About 30 to 40 minutes by bus

Spello area → Assisi: About 20 to 30 minutes by bus

Nov 8 | Assisi → Rome

Group bus after breakfast and Mass.

Assisi → Hotel Atlantico, Rome: About 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours by bus

Nov 12 | Rome → Fiumicino Airport

Group travel to Rome Fiumicino Airport.

Hotel Atlantico → Fiumicino Airport: About 40 to 60 minutes by road

Before heading out

Walking shoes you have already broken in, warm layers and a rain jacket.

A swimsuit for the hot springs on November 4.

For St. Peter's: long trousers for men, below-knee skirts or trousers for women, and covered shoulders for everyone. Bring similarly respectful clothing for other churches.

The St. Peter's dome involves 320 steps after the lift. You can skip the climb.

Passport, boarding pass, day bag, medicines and a suitable travel adapter.

Poland uses the złoty (PLN); Italy uses the euro (EUR).

Tipping in Poland & Italy

Tips are voluntary. Practical guidelines for good service:

Poland • PLN

Restaurants: around 10% for good table service; 15% is a generous thank-you for excellent service. Example: a 200 PLN bill + 20 PLN tip.

Cafés and bars: small change or rounding up is enough for a small order; no need to calculate a percentage every time.

Taxis: rounding up is a simple optional gesture, especially for helpful service.
Example: 47 PLN → 50 PLN.

Italy • EUR

Restaurants: tipping is optional. Round up or leave a few euros for good service; around 10% is a generous gesture for a particularly good meal and service.

Cafés and bars: tipping is not expected for a quick coffee at the counter. Leaving a coin is optional.

Taxis: no tip is expected. You can round up for helpful service or assistance with bags.

Check the bill first: if a service charge is already included, an extra tip is optional. In Italy, "servizio incluso" means service included; "coperto" is a separate cover charge, not a tip.

Guides and group drivers: an optional thank-you depends on the length and quality of the service. A shared group collection is a simple way to tip together without duplicating individual tips.

Keep small amounts of local cash: PLN in Poland and euros in Italy. Cash makes it easier to leave the amount you choose.

Airalo eSIM

Get US\$3.00 off your first eSIM with referral code JARDAR2928.

[Airalo webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Set up your travel eSIM

Select your travel eSIM for mobile data. Keep Data Roaming off on your regular SIM; your travel eSIM may need it enabled, as specified in its installation instructions.

Install with a stable internet connection. Read your package's activation policy first: some plans begin when installed.

Bring a travel adapter labeled for both Poland and Italy, including Italy's type L sockets. A plug adapter changes the plug shape, not the voltage. Read each device's input label before use.

Pay in local currency

Choose PLN in Poland and EUR in Italy when a card terminal or ATM offers to convert the payment into USD or MXN. Decline the offered currency conversion.

Save maps before heading out

Download the Krakow, Assisi and Rome areas in Google Maps while connected to Wi-Fi. Save screenshots of important walking routes too: Google Maps does not provide walking directions offline.

Entry documents • U.S. & Mexican passports

For a short tourism visit, U.S. and Mexican passport holders do not need a visa for Poland or Italy. The limit is 90 days in any 180-day period across the Schengen Area combined.

Your passport must have been issued within the last 10 years and remain valid for at least 3 months after leaving the Schengen Area. Six months' remaining validity is recommended.

If you leave on November 12, 2026, the three-month minimum means validity through February 12, 2027.

Keep your return ticket, hotel details and itinerary downloaded and accessible.

ETIAS status checked October 25, 2026: it is not operational and no applications are being accepted.

EES border registration can include a photograph and fingerprints. It takes place at border control and is free.

This guidance applies to ordinary U.S. and Mexican passports.

Airports

Krakow Airport (KRK)

Kpt. M. Medweckiego 1, 32-083 Balice, Poland

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Rome Ciampino Airport (CIA)

Ciampino Airport, Rome, Italy

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Rome Fiumicino Airport (FCO)

Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport, Italy

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Read & listen before the trip

Get to know Fr. Luke Doyle, one of our guides in Italy.

Priest in the Wild

Stories of Meeting God in the Everyday - short personal stories about finding God in ordinary life.

Book · English

[Book webpage ↗](#)

Homilies with Fr. Luke Doyle

Short homilies to listen to before the trip or during a quiet moment along the way.

Podcast · English

[Listen on Spotify ↗](#)

Wednesday 4 November

A day in the Polish Highlands

Krakow & the Polish Highlands

Mountain food, local traditions and a warm-water afternoon with Piotr's highland hosts.

Dr. Piotr Drag is guiding our time in Poland. He works with Zakopane's International Festival of Mountain Folklore, bringing a connection to the region's living Highlander traditions.

Bring: Walking shoes and warm layers; Swimsuit for the hot springs; Rain jacket and a small day bag

Walking & pace: Time outdoors in the Highlands, with a cooking and dancing workshop and an afternoon at the thermal pools.

Morning | Into the Highlands

Travel by bus from Krakow to the Polish Highlands (Podhale) with Piotr and the local hosts. Estimated bus ride: about 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Podhale region, southern Poland

A day in the mountain region. Wear comfortable shoes and bring warm layers.

Maps (internet required)

Daytime | Cook, dance & share a meal

A workshop making pierogi and moskole, a Highlander dancing lesson, and three meals of mountain food with a local family.

The story

The Polish Highlands lie beneath the Tatra Mountains. Their highlander communities developed distinctive music, clothing, woodwork and pastoral traditions. Mountain life depended on understanding weather, animals and seasons, with practical skills passed between generations. These traditions remain part of contemporary life, including celebrations, craft and the food prepared with local hosts.

The architecture associated with the Zakopane area is recognizable for steep rooflines and carved wooden details. Regional dress can express local belonging and mark important occasions. String music and energetic dancing are another part of that identity. Pierogi vary with the cook and family, while moskole are potato flatbreads cooked on a hot griddle.

Why the pools are warm

The Podhale geothermal reservoir is recharged by precipitation in the Tatra Mountains. Water travels underground through fractured rock and warms as it circulates deeper into the Earth. Wells bring thermal water back to the surface. The region's geothermal resources also supply heating: the warm pools are one visible use of a much larger underground system.

Afternoon | Thermal hot springs in Szaflary

Relax at the hot springs with views toward the Tatra mountains. Bring your swimsuit.

Evening | Back to Krakow

Return to the group's accommodation in Krakow. Estimated bus ride: about 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Koletek 13A, 31-069 Kraków, Poland

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Thursday 5 November

A day of remembrance

Auschwitz-Birkenau & Harmeze

A quiet, respectful day at Auschwitz and Birkenau with Dr. Piotr Drag.

Dr. Piotr Drag, our Poland guide, accompanies today's remembrance visits. His work focuses on intercultural communication and interfaith dialogue.

Bring: Layers for time outdoors; Bag no larger than 35 × 25 × 15 cm; comfortable shoes; A quiet, respectful approach to the memorial visits; No photographs in the room with victims' hair (Block 4) or the basements of Block 11.

Walking & pace: Outdoor walking and time standing at Auschwitz and Birkenau, followed by the indoor exhibition at Harmeze.

Daytime | Auschwitz I

Guided remembrance visit with Piotr.

Więźniów Oświęcimia 55, Oświęcim

Bag no larger than 35 × 25 × 15 cm. Allow at least 30 minutes for security before the booked entry.

The story

Auschwitz I was established by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland in 1940, using former Polish army barracks. It became the main camp of a much larger system of imprisonment, forced labor and mass murder. The brick blocks, prisoner photographs and confiscated belongings preserve evidence of how people were stripped of their rights, possessions and identities. The history includes Polish political prisoners, Jews, Roma and Sinti, Soviet prisoners of war and other persecuted groups.

For Catholic pilgrims, the camp is also connected with St. Maximilian Kolbe. In 1941 the Franciscan friar volunteered to take the place of Franciszek Gajowniczek, a fellow prisoner condemned to starvation. Kolbe was killed on August 14; Gajowniczek survived the war. This individual story belongs within the wider history of the camp and the Holocaust, rather than replacing it.

How the camp changed

The camp initially held mainly Polish political prisoners. Its later expansion joined imprisonment and forced labor with the Nazi project to murder Europe's Jews. Officials, guards, railways and administrative systems made deportation and killing possible. The Memorial's preserved evidence and survivor testimony document decisions made by people and institutions, rather than an inevitable or anonymous disaster.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Daytime | Auschwitz II-Birkenau

Continue to Birkenau to remember the Jewish people and all others who suffered and died here.

Brzezinka, near Oświęcim, Poland

A large outdoor site. Allow for uneven ground, weather and time standing.

The story

Auschwitz II-Birkenau was built from 1941 and became both a concentration camp and a central site of the Nazi murder of Europe's Jews. Deportation trains brought families from across occupied Europe. Many people selected on arrival were murdered without ever being registered as prisoners. Across the Auschwitz complex, approximately 1.1 million people were killed, about one million of them Jews.

The railway entrance, surviving wooden and brick barracks, and ruins of gas chambers and crematoria show the scale and organization of these crimes. The SS destroyed major killing installations near the end of the war to conceal evidence. Birkenau's large, open landscape differs sharply from the brick blocks at Auschwitz I: the two visits explain different parts of the same camp system.

Why this location matters

These were German Nazi camps on occupied Polish soil. Nazi Germany controlled the territory, and rail links enabled deportations from across Europe. That geography must not be confused with Polish national responsibility for operating the camps. Auschwitz I and Birkenau belonged to one complex, but their surviving structures reveal different functions within it.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Daytime | Frames of Memory exhibition • Harmeze

Visit Marian Kołodziej's exhibition, Frames of Memory. Labyrinths, at the friary in Harmeze.

Franciszkańska 12, 32-600 Harmęże, Poland

The story

Marian Kołodziej arrived at Auschwitz on June 14, 1940, in the first transport of Polish prisoners from Tarnow. He was given prisoner number 432. After surviving the camps, he worked as a theater designer. In 1993 he began creating the drawings that became Frames of Memory. Labyrinths, returning to experiences that had remained with him for decades.

The exhibition occupies the space beneath the Franciscan church in Harmeze. Densely packed faces, skeletal figures and repeated prison imagery turn the rooms into a visual account of captivity and trauma. These are a survivor's later drawings

and installations, rather than photographs made inside the camp. Following Auschwitz and Birkenau, the exhibition brings the focus from the physical sites to one person's long struggle to give form to memory.

From stage design to testimony

For decades after the war, Kolodziej said little about his imprisonment. Following a serious stroke in 1992, he began confronting those memories through drawing. His professional skill in creating spaces and images for audiences became a means of communicating an experience he had long struggled to describe. The exhibition is both art and personal testimony.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

During the day | Mass

Mass will be offered during the day.

Evening | Return to Krakow

Dinner in Krakow and prepare for the next morning's flight to Italy. Estimated return bus ride: about 1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 45 minutes.

Friday 6 November

From Poland to the heart of Umbria

Krakow → Assisi

Travel to Italy, settle into Assisi and begin the next chapter of the pilgrimage.

Bring: Passport and boarding pass; Pack before the early departure; Keep essentials in your cabin bag

Walking & pace: Flight and road travel, followed by arrival in Assisi's sloping old town.

08:30 → 10:30 | Ryanair FR83 · Krakow → Rome Ciampino

Fly directly to Rome Ciampino. After baggage collection, continue to Assisi on the group bus.

Departure: Krakow (KRK), 08:30. Arrival: Rome Ciampino (CIA), 10:30. Local times.

Flight duration: 2 hours.

Krakow: main passenger terminal. Ciampino: passenger terminal, Arrivals. Both airports have one terminal for scheduled passenger flights.

Ciampino Airport, Rome, Italy

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

After arrival | Group bus to Assisi

Group bus from Ciampino Airport to Assisi after arrival and baggage collection.

Estimated bus ride: about 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours.

Afternoon | Check in at Beata Angelina guesthouse

Settle into Beata Angelina guesthouse, our Assisi base until November 8.

Run by the Franciscan Sisters of Blessed Angelina, this guesthouse belongs to a congregation renewed in 1915. The sisters' Assisi house was damaged in the 1997 earthquake and became part of the congregation's decade-long rebuilding effort.

Via Cardinale R. Merry del Val 4, 06081 Assisi, Italy

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Late afternoon | Meet Msgr. Anthony Figueiredo

A meeting focused on St. Carlo Acutis and his relics. Carlo (1991-2006) was an Italian teenager who used his computer skills to create an online exhibition about Eucharistic miracles. He died of leukemia at 15 and was canonized on September 7, 2025.

Dinner | Monaci

Group dinner in Assisi.

Via Eugenio Brizi 8 / Scalinata dei Fiumi 10, Assisi, Italy

[Maps](#) (internet required)

[Webpage](#) (internet required)

Suggestions on what to eat and drink

Pappardelle al cinghiale: broad ribbons of pasta with a rich wild-boar ragù.

For a starter to share, try salvia frita: crisp, battered sage leaves.

For something different, try the Fra Renato pizza with gorgonzola, pear, walnuts and honey.

Wine & drinks: For dessert, pair tozzetti almond biscuits with the local passito, a sweet wine.

Homemade tiramisu is another good way to finish.

[Tripadvisor reviews](#) (internet required)

Saturday 7 November

Saints, small towns & Umbrian wine

Assisi / Umbria

Explore Assisi with Fr. Sean and Fr. Luke, then head into the countryside.

Our Italy guides include Fr. Luke Doyle, director and chaplain at the St. Lawrence Catholic Center at the University of Kansas. He is also the author of *Priest in the Wild*, stories about encountering God in everyday life.

Bring: Walking shoes for Assisi's slopes; Church clothing and a warm layer; A small day bag for the countryside

Walking & pace: Several Assisi visits on sloping streets and different levels, followed by the countryside excursion. San Damiano and St. Mary of the Angels are outside the hilltop center.

Morning | Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels

Visit the basilica built around the small chapel associated with St. Francis.

Piazza della Porziuncola, Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi

The story

The enormous Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels was built between 1569 and 1679 to shelter a tiny chapel: the Porziuncola, closely associated with the beginnings of the Franciscan community. According to Franciscan tradition, this was where Francis came to understand his vocation and welcomed Clare as she began her religious life. The chapel is also associated with the Pardon of Assisi, a Catholic indulgence.

The small, fresco-covered chapel stands inside the much larger basilica. Nearby is the Chapel of the Transitus, marking the place where Francis died on October 3, 1226. These two spaces connect the beginning and end of his religious life. Their modest scale helps explain why this sanctuary in the valley is as important to Franciscan pilgrims as the more imposing basilica above in Assisi.

Before the Franciscan movement

Francis was the son of a prosperous cloth merchant. His early ambitions included military adventure, and he experienced imprisonment after fighting against Perugia. His change of direction developed over time. The small community associated with the Porziuncola grew into a movement carried by companions, supporters and later generations of friars, sisters and lay people.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Morning | San Damiano sanctuary

Visit the place central to the stories of Francis and Clare.

Via San Damiano 7, 06081 Assisi, Italy

Sloping paths below Assisi's old town. Plan a comfortable pace.

The story

San Damiano stands among olive trees outside Assisi's walls. According to Franciscan tradition, Francis heard Christ speak to him from a painted crucifix here, calling him to repair the church. He initially responded by restoring the building itself. The original crucifix is now in the Basilica of St. Clare; the one at San Damiano is a copy.

Clare and her community lived here for many years, developing the life of the Poor Clares. She died at San Damiano in 1253. The choir, dormitory and refectory preserve the setting of that community's daily life. The small church and domestic rooms tell a different part of the Assisi story from the great basilicas: this was a home of shared meals, work and prayer, as well as a place associated with Francis's conversion.

A repair that became a wider calling

Francis's first response to the call associated with the crucifix was physical work on a damaged church. Franciscan tradition later understood that episode as pointing toward renewal of the wider Church. Clare's community gave the same small complex a different, enduring role: it became the setting for decades of shared work, prayer and community leadership.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Morning | Basilica of St. Clare

Continue the pilgrimage through Assisi.

Piazza Santa Chiara, Assisi, Italy

The story

Clare came from a wealthy Assisi family but chose a life of poverty inspired by Francis. She and her community settled at San Damiano, where she lived until her death in 1253. The basilica dedicated to her was begun in 1257 on the site of the earlier Church of San Giorgio, which had temporarily held the bodies of both Francis and Clare.

The basilica holds Clare's remains and the original 12th-century San Damiano crucifix. In Franciscan tradition, this is the painted cross from which Francis heard the call to repair the church. It is in the Chapel of the Crucifix, distinct from the large cross above the main altar. Outside, the rose window and large supporting arches help identify the building. Together, the basilica and San Damiano connect Clare's public legacy with the place where her community actually lived.

Clare's own achievement

Clare defended a demanding ideal of shared poverty and negotiated with church authorities to protect her community's way of life. The Rule she wrote received papal approval on August 9, 1253, two days before her death. Her legacy was not simply an extension of Francis's: she developed and sustained a distinct community of women. Poor Clare communities continue in monasteries around the world.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Morning | Basilica of St. Francis

The basilica, its frescoes and the tomb below.

Piazza Inferiore di San Francesco 2, Assisi, Italy

The upper church, lower church and tomb are on different levels.

The story

Francis's remains were brought to the Lower Church in 1230. The complex developed as two churches, one above the other, with the tomb beneath. The lower church has a low, intimate atmosphere; the upper church is brighter and taller. Frescoes by major artists of the 13th and 14th centuries made the basilica an important center of Italian art as well as pilgrimage.

The Upper Church's cycle of 28 scenes tells episodes from Francis's life through buildings, landscapes, faces and gestures. In the Lower Church, artists including Cimabue, Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti contributed to the decoration. The crypt centers on the stone coffin containing Francis's remains, with the tombs of four early companions nearby. The building brings together three ways his memory has been preserved: burial, worship and visual storytelling.

One scene to recognize

The fresco of Francis renouncing his father's possessions makes a family conflict visible. His father and the people around him occupy one side, while the bishop shelters Francis with a cloak on the other. The separation between the groups gives physical form to a change in loyalty, status and way of life. It is one of the scenes in the Upper Church cycle traditionally associated with Giotto.

Stories before mass literacy

Pictures allowed people to follow narratives without reading a book. Faces, gestures, clothing and buildings help explain what is happening within each scene. The precise authorship of parts of the Assisi cycle remains debated by art historians, and workshops involved assistants as well as leading masters. The frescoes therefore preserve a history of visual communication and collaboration alongside the story of Francis.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

Webpage (internet required)

Midday | Tomb of Carlo Acutis

Visit Carlo's tomb in Assisi.

Santuario della Spogliazione / Santa Maria Maggiore, Assisi

The story

St. Carlo Acutis was born in London in 1991 and grew up in Milan. He combined a strong devotion to the Eucharist with an interest in computers, using digital tools for projects about the Catholic faith. He also volunteered in service of people in need. He died of leukemia in 2006 at the age of 15 and was canonized on September 7, 2025.

His remains have been at Santa Maria Maggiore in Assisi, the Sanctuary of the Spoliation, since 2019. This is a different church from St. Mary Major in Rome. The sanctuary connects Carlo's recent life with the older story of Francis of Assisi: its name recalls Francis's renunciation of worldly possessions. Carlo's tomb has made it a place of pilgrimage especially associated with young people and faith in everyday modern life.

What he gathered online

Carlo used the web to bring together accounts of Eucharistic miracles from different places and periods. Among the traditions discussed in the companion are Lanciano, where a monk is said to have witnessed a transformation during Mass; Bolsena, associated with an account of blood appearing on a consecrated host; and Siena, where consecrated hosts stolen in 1730 were recovered. These accounts are part of Catholic devotion to the Eucharist.

A project carried forward

The collection continued to grow after Carlo's death. It includes material about a reported incident at Legnica, Poland, in 2013. Like Assisi's frescoes, the exhibition brings stories of faith to a wider audience. Digital media gave those stories a new speed and reach.

Maps (internet required)

Webpage (internet required)

Afternoon | Bevagna: lunch & free time

Hotel pickup, then lunch and time to wander through the medieval town.

Historic center, Bevagna, Italy

The story

Bevagna was an ancient Umbrian settlement that became the Roman town of Mevania. The Via Flaminia, a major road connecting Rome with the Adriatic, passed through the town. Its later medieval buildings grew around that earlier layout, giving the center a different character from hilltop Assisi.

Piazza Silvestri brings together the Romanesque churches of San Silvestro and San Michele Arcangelo with the Palazzo dei Consoli, the medieval civic palace. San Silvestro was founded in 1195 and has a notably unfinished facade. The square shows religious and civic life sharing the same small space. The agenda's lunch and free time provide a chance to see this town without treating every building as a separate scheduled visit.

The work behind the landscape

Olive oil, lentils, cured meats, truffles and wine connect Umbrian towns with their surrounding countryside. Vineyards depend on decisions about planting, harvests, weather and aging, carried across generations of growers and winemakers. Bevagna and the winery stops show another part of the region's history, shaped by agriculture, craft and everyday trade as well as saints and artists.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | Cantina Dionigi winery

Wine tasting with the group.

Via Madonna della Pia 44, 06031 Bevagna, Italy

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Suggestions on what to eat and drink

Start with Colle Sorragani Montefalco Grechetto, the estate's white wine.

Compare Montefalco Rosso with Montefalco Sagrantino: the Sagrantino is the fuller-bodied red.

Try Sagrantino Passito to explore the sweet style made from dried grapes.

Wine & drinks: Taste the wines in the order presented by the winery, moving from the lighter styles to the richer reds and sweet wine.

Alongside the tasting, try the pecorino, cured meats or olive-oil bruschetta when offered.

[Tripadvisor reviews \(internet required\)](#)

Evening | Dinner with paired wines

A private group dinner with paired wines at Cantina Tini near Spello. Return to Assisi afterward.

Sunday 8 November

All roads lead to Rome

Assisi → Rome

A gentle start in Assisi, then the bus south and a first walk through the Eternal City.

Bring: Pack before breakfast; Keep essentials handy on the bus; Walking shoes for Rome

Walking & pace: Road travel to Rome followed by an orientation walk on city streets and uneven paving.

Morning | Breakfast & Mass

Breakfast, Mass, and time to prepare for departure.

After Mass | Bus to Rome

Group transfer from Assisi. Estimated bus ride: about 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours to the Rome hotel.

Afternoon | Check in at Hotel Atlantico

Settle into Hotel Atlantico, part of Bettoja Hotels, at Via Cavour 23 in Rome. Group stay: November 8-12.

Via Cavour 23, 00184 Rome, Italy

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | A walking introduction to Rome

Get your bearings on an orientation walk through Rome.

The story

Rome's history includes a republic, an empire and a major center of Christianity. Its surviving influence extends beyond monuments: later societies studied Roman institutions and inherited legal ideas about property, obligations and citizenship. The republic was not an inclusive modern democracy, but its offices, Senate and debates over power influenced later political thinking.

The city also preserves a history of reuse. Ancient buildings became churches, columns were incorporated into later structures, and roads continued to organize movement. The itinerary passes through different periods: Julius Caesar, the Colosseum and the early Christian basilicas do not belong to one simultaneous historical scene.

Evening | Dinner nearby

Dinner near the hotel.

Monday 9 November

St. Peter's & the great basilicas

Rome / Vatican City

A day through Rome's sacred places, from St. Peter's to three of the city's great basilicas.

Bring: Long trousers or a below-knee skirt; shoulders covered; Comfortable shoes; Choose whether the dome climb suits you

Walking & pace: Walking and time standing in the basilicas. The dome includes 320 steps after the lift; visiting the basilica does not require taking the dome climb.

Morning | Mass at St. Peter's

Start at St. Peter's Basilica.

Morning | The basilica & the dome

Tour St. Peter's and climb to the dome. An elevator covers part of the ascent, with stairs for the rest.

Piazza San Pietro, Vatican City

The dome still involves 320 steps after the lift. You can skip the climb.

The story

St. Peter's stands over the burial place venerated as that of the Apostle Peter. Emperor Constantine built an earlier basilica here in the fourth century. Construction of the present church began in 1506, involving generations of architects including Bramante, Michelangelo and Carlo Maderno. Keeping the shrine of Peter at the center shaped the rebuilding.

The main altar, Bernini's bronze canopy and Michelangelo's dome rise above that same focus. Michelangelo's Pieta depicts Mary holding the body of Jesus, while Bernini's colonnades give the square its great curved outline. The basilica's scale reflects centuries of papal patronage and pilgrimage. It is important to Catholic history, but Rome's cathedral is St. John Lateran, another stop on this itinerary. The dome climb offers a separate view of the building and the city.

The rebuilding and the Reformation

Raising money for the new basilica became entangled with indulgence-preaching campaigns. Martin Luther challenged indulgences in 1517, after construction had already begun. The Protestant Reformation had many theological, political and institutional causes, so the basilica should not be treated as its single cause. Its construction nevertheless connects a major artistic achievement with one of Europe's great religious divisions.

A building made by generations

The dome, long facade and great square were responses to different stages of the project. Michelangelo, Maderno and Bernini worked in different periods, alongside engineers, stonecutters, laborers and patrons. The finished setting can appear unified, but it grew through changing plans and the coordination of many kinds of work.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | Holy Cross Basilica • Rome

Visit Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Rome.

Piazza di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme 12, Rome

The story

This basilica is in Rome. Its full name, Holy Cross in Jerusalem (Santa Croce in Gerusalemme), refers to its connection with Jerusalem and the Passion of Christ. It grew from a chapel within the Sessorian imperial palace, associated with Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine. The church became one of Rome's traditional pilgrimage destinations because of the relics venerated here.

The relic chapel holds objects traditionally identified as fragments of the Cross, thorns, a nail and part of the inscription placed above Jesus. These identifications belong to Catholic tradition and devotion. The church's story connects imperial Rome with the Holy Land: an imperial residence became a place centered on the Crucifixion. That focus makes it distinct from the large apostolic basilicas visited elsewhere on the same day.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | St. John Lateran

Continue to the cathedral of Rome.

Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano, Rome

The story

St. John Lateran is the cathedral of Rome and the seat of the pope as Bishop of Rome. Its origins go back to Constantine in the fourth century, when Christianity was gaining an established public presence in the city. The church was first dedicated to Christ the Savior; the dedications to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist were added later.

The building has been damaged, restored and reshaped many times. Its grand interior includes the monumental statues of the apostles along the nave, while the papal altar remains a central focus. The contrast between its early Christian origins and later decoration is part of its history. Visiting after St. Peter's makes the distinction clear:

the Vatican basilica centers on Peter's burial place, while the Lateran is the pope's cathedral church.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | St. Mary Major

Visit the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore.

Piazza di Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome

The story

St. Mary Major is one of Rome's four papal basilicas. Its fifth-century mosaics, commissioned under Pope Sixtus III, preserve an unusually early Christian telling of biblical history. The nave and triumphal arch carry this early decoration, while the apse mosaic belongs to the late 13th century. The building lets visitors see how different generations added to the same sacred space.

The basilica also holds the icon *Salus Populi Romani* and the Holy Crib relic, venerated in Catholic tradition as connected with Jesus's manger. Pope Francis is buried here, in the left aisle between the Pauline and Sforza chapels. His simple tomb bears the Latin name *FRANCISCVS*. This gives the visit a recent chapter alongside the mosaics and long history of devotion to Mary.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Tuesday 10 November

Layers of the ancient city

Rome

Ancient streets, extraordinary churches and a day discovering the Rome beneath Rome.

Bring: Photo ID for the Colosseum; Walking shoes for uneven ground; A small day bag

Walking & pace: Outdoor walking on uneven ground in ancient Rome. San Clemente's underground visit involves stairs between historical levels.

Morning | Roman Forum

Explore the public heart of ancient Rome.

Parco archeologico del Colosseo, Rome

Uneven outdoor paths across a large site.

The story

The Roman Forum was a center of public life, combining government, religion, legal business and the commemoration of rulers. Its monuments were added and altered across generations. Temples honored gods and deified emperors, while monumental arches celebrated military victories and the authority of the imperial state.

The Temple of Antoninus and Faustina and the Arch of Septimius Severus belong to this later imperial landscape. Near the route toward the Palatine stands the Arch of Titus. Together, these structures show how rulers used the city's shared spaces to preserve their names and achievements. The Forum is easier to understand as a changing civic district, with people moving between different functions, than as a single building or a collection created at one moment.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Morning | Colosseum

Explore the amphitheater with the group.

Piazza del Colosseo, Rome

Bring for entry: Ticket and photo ID

Keep your ticket and photo ID accessible.

The story

The Colosseum's original name was the Flavian Amphitheatre. Construction began under Emperor Vespasian and it was inaugurated by his son Titus in AD 80. The site had previously been occupied by an artificial lake within Nero's palace grounds. Building a public amphitheater there turned part of a former imperial estate into a venue for large crowds.

Gladiatorial contests and staged animal hunts combined entertainment with organized violence. The tiers, entrances and passageways were designed to move spectators through an enormous structure. Later generations stripped away stone and metal for reuse, leaving scars in the masonry. Its Christian devotional associations developed over time, including the Stations of the Cross. Those associations should not be taken as evidence identifying particular Christian martyrs killed in this arena.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Morning | Basilica of San Clemente

A church built on a church built on a Roman house, with layers of history below.

Piazza San Clemente, Rome

The underground visit involves stairs between historical levels.

The story

San Clemente preserves Rome in layers. The present basilica dates from the 12th century and stands above a fourth-century church. Beneath that are ancient Roman buildings and a Mithraic shrine, associated with the worship of the god Mithras. The changing levels reveal how the same site served different communities over many centuries.

The upper church contains a rich mosaic, a patterned Cosmatesque floor and a marble chancel reused from the earlier church. Below are medieval frescoes in the older basilica. St. Cyril, one of the missionaries associated with the Christianization of the Slavic peoples, was buried here in the ninth century. The lower levels explain the site's archaeology; the upper church shows the continuing life of the Christian community above it.

Language on the walls

An 11th-century fresco illustrating the legend of Clement and Sisinnius includes one of the earliest surviving examples of written Italian. The words help turn an image into a narrated scene. Together with the association with Cyril and Slavic Christianity, it adds a history of language and communication to the building's archaeological layers.

The rediscovery below

In 1857, Irish Dominican Joseph Mullooly began excavating beneath the present church and uncovered the earlier basilica. Later work revealed further Roman remains. The layers were not arranged as a museum: earlier buildings had been reused, altered and covered as the city changed. Excavation made those successive histories visible again.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Lunch | Da Domenico

Lunch at Da Domenico.

Via di San Giovanni in Laterano 134, Rome

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Suggestions on what to eat and drink

Spaghetti carbonara is a good first choice for a classic Roman pasta.

Try carciofi alla romana: tender, Roman-style artichokes.

For a seafood alternative, look for the octopus.

Wine & drinks: Try the house wine with lunch.

Finish with an espresso.

[Restaurant reviews \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | Basilica of the Twelve Apostles

Continue to Santi Apostoli.

Piazza dei Santi Apostoli 51, Rome

The story

The Basilica of the Twelve Apostles is especially associated with Philip and James the Less. Their relics are venerated in a stone urn in the crypt. The present crypt was constructed in the late 19th century, adding a later setting around the church's much older apostolic identity.

Although the dedication names all twelve apostles, Philip and James explain the particular importance of this church as a place of pilgrimage. The crypt and main worship space serve different purposes: one centers attention on the saints' relics, the other on the church's communal liturgical life. This stop adds another part of Rome's apostolic story to the visits to St. Peter's and St. Paul Outside the Walls.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | Circus Maximus

Visit the site of the ancient Roman chariot-racing stadium.

Circo Massimo, Rome

The story

Circus Maximus was a vast venue for chariot racing, set in the valley between the Palatine and Aventine hills. Its racing space was long and narrow, unlike the oval arena of the Colosseum. Drivers competed for teams identified by colors, including red, white, blue and green, and spectators became passionate supporters of their chosen faction.

The long outline of the site survives more clearly than its once enormous spectator stands. The open ground helps explain why this was a major public gathering place as well as a sporting venue. Comparing it with the Colosseum brings out the different forms of Roman entertainment: fast races around a track here, gladiatorial contests and animal hunts in the amphitheater.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Afternoon | Casa Santa Maria

Visit Casa Santa Maria.

Casa Santa Maria, Pontifical North American College, central Rome

The story

Casa Santa Maria occupies the North American College's original home in Rome. The building had been a Dominican convent before the college opened in 1859 to form American seminarians. When the new seminary on the Janiculum Hill opened in 1953, the older house became accommodation for priests pursuing graduate studies.

This history gives the stop a particular connection with the United States. The house belongs to Rome's ongoing life of theological study and priestly formation, alongside the ancient monuments and saints' shrines. Its current purpose is residential and academic. The visit therefore connects the group's pilgrimage with people who come to Rome to live, study and serve over a much longer period.

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Dinner | Abruzzi

Group dinner.

Via del Vaccaro 1 / Piazza Santi Apostoli, Rome

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

Suggestions on what to eat and drink

Choose carbonara for a rich pasta with guanciale, pecorino, egg and black pepper.

Amatriciana is the tomato-based alternative, also made with guanciale.

For a main course, try roast lamb with potatoes.

Wine & drinks: The house red is a good choice to share with the table.

Save room for tiramisu.

[Tripadvisor reviews](#) (internet required)

Wednesday 11 November

St. Paul & one last evening

Rome

Visit St. Paul Outside the Walls, spend time together in Rome and celebrate our final evening.

Bring: Walking shoes and layers; A rain jacket; Time to pack before the final dinner

Walking & pace: A basilica visit with walking and time standing, followed by the final evening together.

Morning | St. Paul Outside the Walls

Complete the group's visits to Rome's four major basilicas.

Piazzale San Paolo, Rome

The story

St. Paul Outside the Walls developed around the burial place venerated as that of the Apostle Paul, beside the road toward Ostia and outside Rome's ancient walls. A large early basilica was inaugurated in 390. Fire devastated the church in 1823, and the present building was reconstructed to preserve the dimensions of its predecessor. It was dedicated in 1854.

The long nave and rows of columns make the basilica's scale immediately apparent. Circular portraits of the popes continue a series that began in the fifth century and was renewed after the fire. Beneath the main altar is the sarcophagus associated with Paul, partly visible following modern archaeological work. Alongside St. Peter's, this visit connects Rome's Christian identity with the memory of its two principal apostolic figures.

The letters behind the monument

According to New Testament accounts, Paul first persecuted the Christian movement before becoming a missionary. His travels connected communities across the eastern Mediterranean. His letters addressed real disagreements, relationships and practical problems. In 1 Corinthians 13, his account of love, patience and kindness became a text still frequently heard at weddings.

A personal appeal in Philemon

In his letter to Philemon, Paul asks that Onesimus, an enslaved man, be received as a beloved brother. The letter does not explicitly call for the abolition of slavery, and its interpretation has a contested history. Its survival shows how a communication about particular people could be copied, circulated and debated by communities far beyond its original audience.

Maps (internet required)

Webpage (internet required)

Evening | Our final dinner together

A last evening to share stories and celebrate.

Thursday 12 November

Until the next journey

Rome → Home

An early start, airport transfers and goodbyes after a memorable pilgrimage.

Bring: Passport, boarding pass and luggage; Keep medicines and essentials in your cabin bag

Walking & pace: Airport walking with luggage. Keep essentials easy to reach.

Early morning | Check out & airport transfers

Check out and travel to Rome Fiumicino. Estimated journey from Hotel Atlantico: about 40-60 minutes by road.

Leonardo da Vinci-Fiumicino Airport, Italy

[Maps \(internet required\)](#)

[Webpage \(internet required\)](#)

As scheduled | Travel home

Allow time for your airline's check-in, baggage drop and security.