

Monday, April 24 _____ Rome

With your driver and expert guide, enjoy a private tour of the Palazzo and Galleria Doria Pamphili. The Palazzo and Galleria are named after the Pamphilj family (also written Pamphili), who through marriage into the Doria family are now known as Doria-Pamphilj.

The palace is situated along Via del Corso, near Piazza Venezia. The oldest parts of the palace go back to the fifteenth century. Over time it was expanded by members of Rome's most illustrious families, including the della Rovere, Aldobrandini and Pamphilj families. In 1601 the palace came into the hands of Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, who decorated it with a number of paintings that would form the start of the art collection that is now on display in the palace. Around the same time the palace was expanded with several wings.

The Doria-Pamphilj family opened a section of the palace to the public, including some of the most opulent private apartments. You enter the apartments through a beautiful inner courtyard. Inside, the rooms are embellished with paintings, chandeliers, sculpture and magnificent ceiling decorations.

The first room you encounter is the bathroom, adorned with statues and wall paintings. The following room is the Jupiter Room, notable for its eighteenth century armchairs. The walls of the next room, the Poussin Room, are completely covered with large landscape paintings.

The Throne Room is named for the throne which, following an old Roman tradition, faces the wall when there is no papal visit. Other rooms you'll pass include the Blue Room, the opulent Velvet Room - with a bust of pope Innocent X (a member of the Pamphilj family), the Green Room, the large Ballroom and the Yellow Room.

The chapel is also worth a good look. It was designed in the late seventeenth century by Carlo Fontana; the ceiling painting was added later, in the nineteenth century, by Tommaso Minardi. The chapel contains some interesting relics: the completely preserved body of St. Theodora and - supposedly - relics of one the soldiers who guarded Jesus during his crucifixion.

The highlight of the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj is the art gallery, which contains one of the best art collections in Rome with about four hundred works from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

The first gallery is the Aldobrandini Gallery, where you can admire the museum's most

famous painting, a portrait of Pope Innocent X by Velázquez (1650). This is considered to be one of the greatest portraits ever painted. You can compare the painting with two busts of the same pope, created by Bernini. The first bust was slightly damaged so Bernini created a new one in just one week. Allegedly Innocent X wasn't too happy with the sculpture since he deemed it too realistic. Other highlights in the gallery include the 'Fighting Putti', a painting by Guido Reni, which symbolizes the fight between the nobles and the lower classes, and the 'Moneylenders' (or 'Usurers'), from Quinten Matsys. These were themes that Caravaggio also explored in his paintings.

Next is the Gallery of Mirrors, undoubtedly the most opulent room in the palace. It was designed around 1730 by Gabriele Valvassori. It is embellished with frescoes depicting the Labours of Hercules, a creation of the Bolognese painter Aureliano Miani.

The third gallery is the Pamphilj gallery. Some notable works of art here include a work by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 'Battle off the Port of Naples', one of the few Italian paintings created by the Flemish master. Another famous painting shows Mary adoring her child, by Guido Reni.

The following gallery is the Doria Gallery where you find several works of Jan Brueghel as well as two paintings on wood panels by Parmigianino. There is also a bust of Olympia Maidalchini Pamphilj (sister-in-law of Innocent X), created by Alessandro Algardi.

Next is the Aldobrandini Hall, which is home to a couple of masterpieces from Caravaggio: 'Magdalene' and 'Rest on the Flight into Egypt'. There are also plenty of sculptures in the hall, most notably a large sculpted sarcophagus and a colored marble statue of a centaur, from around the second century AD.

The last room is the Primitives Room, where you find paintings on wood panels, in particular from Italian and Flemish artists.

Once you've gotten a taste of Caravaggio, you can't leave Rome without seeing what many say is his most powerful work. You'll have to go to church to do it.

The Calling of Saint Matthew hangs in the Contarelli Chapel of the San Luigi dei Francesi church, a reminder that 400-year-old art was provocatively modern when it was first conceived. Two other Caravaggio works — St. Matthew and the Angel and the Martyrdom of St. Matthew — which round out the triptych, are also on permanent display here. Seeing such a renowned work in a church you might otherwise have easily overlooked is proof that Rome really is a living museum.

You'll also visit the church of Sant'Agostino to see yet another Caravaggio, the Madonna di Loreto.

Enjoy the afternoon on your own to explore Rome as you'd like.

Meet the group at the hotel before you proceed to dinner.

Tuesday, April 25 Rome

With your driver and expert guide, you will visit the Galleria Borghese this morning.

The Borghese Gallery and Gardens Tour (3 hours)

The perfect tour for art lovers! The original sculptures and paintings in the Borghese Gallery date back to Cardinal Scipione's collection and include masterpieces by Rubens, Bernini and Caravaggio. You will enter with a reservation and your expert guide will lead you through the gallery with explanations to appreciate these famous works of art. Afterwards you can take a stroll through the Borghese Gardens, one of the first parks of its kinds in Rome with its formal gardens divided by avenues and graced by statues. Otherwise your guide can call a taxi for a ride through the park before returning to your hotel.

After you complete your time at this gem, continue on to the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo to view the Cerasi Chapel, which holds two famous canvases painted by Caravaggio - Crucifixion of St. Peter and Conversion on the Way to Damascus . These are probably the most important works of art in the basilica, but while you're there, be sure to peek at the Chigi Chape as well. The chapel, designed and decorated by Raphael, is a treasure trove of Italian Renaissance and Baroque art and is considered among the most important monuments in the basilica.

Head by cabs to Trastevere, where you will enjoy dinner this evening.

Wednesday, April 26 Rome to Ostuni

Puglia (or Apulia), Italy's southeastern-most region, the "heel" of the boot, is bordered by both the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, giving it one of the longest coastlines of any region in Italy. It is largely untouched by tourists, with a few exceptions. Because of its proximity to Greece and the east, Puglia's towns have influences that represent those diverse ancient inhabitants.

Puglia's landscape is often flat and arid, punctuated by millions of olive trees and charming, often whitewashed towns. While much of our time will be spent in towns,

we'll see broad expanses of vineyards and olive groves as well as miles and miles of azure-tinged coastline.

Your first stop will be Ostuni, known as the White City. It is one of the most stunning cities in southern Italy famous for the dazzling effect of its whitewashed houses. The city is a series of levels, staircases, small roads, alleys, and arches. Hints of the Middle Ages are at hand in every corner, in every view to the sea, in the portal of a palace, in the walls of a convent or the front of a church. The brightness of its whitewashed houses, set against the pink-tinged brown of its principal monument, makes the town stand out in the green of the surrounding area.

We'll enjoy dinner together tonight at a local establishment focusing on fresh seafood.

Thursday, April 27 Ostuni

Full day of painting and touring in Ostuni

Friday, April 28 Ostuni to Lecce

Work in the a.m.

Lecce, known as the Florence of the South, is the main city on Puglia's Salento Peninsula. Because of local soft limestone that's easy to work, Lecce became the center for the ornate architecture called the barocco leccese and the city is filled with over-the-top Baroque monuments. The historic center is compact making it a great place for walking and exploring. Also notable are the traditional handicrafts, especially the art of paper mache'.

Dinner at a local establishment.

Saturday, April 29 Lecce

PRIVATE TOUR: LECCE HIGHLIGHTS (3 hours)

Today we will enjoy a unique walk through Lecce, exploring some of the wonderful monuments. Lecce can definitely be considered one of the most beautiful areas of the Apulian region, famous for its historical monuments, Baroque architecture and of course its delicious cuisine that is why it is indeed the perfect place to enjoy a mix of culture and gastronomy. Departing from our hotel with our local expert guide we will make our way to the Greek amphitheater, followed by a visit to the Column of San

Oronzo, the Church of Maria della Grazia and the Basilica of Santa Croce, just to mention a few of the sites.

This afternoon, you will work

Dinner at a local restaurant.

Sunday, April 30 Lecce to Matera

This morning after breakfast, you will travel from Lecce to Matera, stopping in the utterly unique town of Alberobello on the way.

The drive from Lecce to Alberobello is just about 80 miles, but you will feel that you've entered another world when you arrive. The small town has been made a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its unusual districts of trulli, the characteristic white-washed conical-roofed houses of the area. They exist nowhere else in the world but in this area. More specifically, a trullo (singular) is a small dwelling built from the local limestone, with dry-stone walls and a characteristic conical roof. It is a traditional and simple type of structure which you'll see dotted around this part of Puglia, sometimes in its most basic form used as a kind of shed among the olive groves. The Monti region is the main area of town with lots of tourist shops; we'll spend our time in the Aia Piccola area, where people still live in these charming little houses.

Dinner at 7:30 in town. Suggestion: Baccanti Via Sant'Angelo 58/61. Tel. +39.0835.333.704.

Monday, May 1 Matera

After breakfast, you have a tour of Matera, which has gained international fame for its ancient town, the "Sassi di Matera" (meaning "stones of Matera"), a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Sassi originate from a prehistoric settlement, and are suspected to be some of the first human settlements in Italy. The Sassi are houses dug into the tufa rock itself, which is characteristic of Basilicata and Apulia. Many of these "houses" are really only caverns, and the streets in some parts of the Sassi often are located on the rooftops of other houses. In the 1950s, the government of Italy forcefully relocated most of the population of the Sassi to areas of the developing modern city. Until the late 1980s this was considered an area of poverty, since these houses were, and in most areas still are, mostly unlivable. Current local administration has promoted the re-generation of the Sassi and today there are many thriving businesses, restaurants, bars and hotels.

This area is dotted with no less than 150 rock (called rupestrian) churches, some of them dating back to the days when Matera was part of the Byzantine Empire. Perhaps the most artistically impressive and historically important of these is the so-called Crypt of Original Sin, which was opened just about 8 years ago after being discovered in the cliff of a ravine that shears through a wine estate. The frescoes within, of apostles and angels, Adam and Eve, and God the creator, are thought to have been painted by a Benedictine monk in the early ninth century, shortly before Matera was seized by Muslim conquerors.

Dinner tonight at Osteria Pico. – Osteria Pico on Via Fiorentini, 42. Tel. +39.0835.240424.

Tuesday, May 2

Free full day painting Matera

Wednesday, May 3 Depart Bari

Depart from Bari. We will provide a transfer to work for the following flight back to Rome: