

University of Texas at Brownsville

Master Chorale

2009 Italy Tour

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Italy

Italy, officially the Italian Republic, is located on the Italian Peninsula in Southern Europe, and on the two largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily and Sardinia. Italy shares its northern Alpine boundary with France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia. The independent states of San Marino and the Vatican City are enclaves within the Italian Peninsula, while Campione d'Italia is an Italian exclave in Switzerland.

Italy has been the home of many European cultures, including the Etruscans and the Romans, and later was the birthplace of the universities and the Renaissance movement, which began in Tuscany and spread throughout Europe. Rome was for centuries the center of Western civilization; it also spawned the Baroque movement and seats the Catholic Church. Italy possessed a colonial empire from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

Today, Italy is a democratic republic and a developed country with the 8th-highest Quality-of-life index rating in the world. It is a founding member of what is now the European Union (having signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957), and a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It is a member of the G8 (having the world's 7th largest nominal GDP), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organization (WTO), the Council of Europe, the Western European Union, the Central European Initiative, and a Schengen state. It has the world's 7th largest defense budget and shares NATO's nuclear weapons. On 1 January 2007, Italy began a two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Rome

Rome is the capital city of Italy, and is the country's largest and most populous city, with more than 2.7 million residents, and a metropolitan area of almost 4 million inhabitants. It is located in the central-western portion of the Italian peninsula, on the Tiber River. Rome stands on top of more than two and a half thousand years of history, was once the largest city in the world and the centre of Western civilization. Rome is still the heart of Christianity, being seat of the Roman Catholic Church, which controls the Vatican City as its sovereign territory, an enclave of Rome.



Today, Rome is a modern, cosmopolitan city, and the third most-visited tourist destination in the European Union. Due to its influence in politics, media, the arts and culture, Rome has been described as a global city. Rome's international airport, Fiumicino, is the largest in Italy and the city hosts the head offices of the vast majority of the major Italian companies, as well as the headquarters of three of the world's 100 largest companies: Enel, ENI, and Telecom Italia.

As one of the few major European cities that escaped World War II relatively unscathed, central Rome remains essentially Renaissance and Baroque in character. The historic centre of Rome is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

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The Vatican

Vatican City, officially the State of the Vatican City, is a landlocked sovereign city-state whose territory consists of a walled enclave within the city of Rome. At approximately (110 acres), and with a population of around 800, it is the smallest independent state in the world by both population and area. Vatican City came into existence as a city-state in only 1929. It is thus clearly distinct from the central authority of the Roman Catholic Church, known as the Holy See, which existed long before 1929. Ordinances of Vatican City are published in Italian.



Official documents of the Holy See are issued mainly in Latin. The two entities even have distinct passports: the Holy See, not being a country, only issues diplomatic and service passports; the state of Vatican City issues normal passports. In both cases the number of passports issued is extremely limited.

The Lateran Treaty in 1929, which brought the city-state into existence, spoke of it as a new creation (Preamble and Article III), not as a vestige of the much larger Papal States (756-1870) that had previously encompassed central Italy. Most of this territory was absorbed into the Kingdom of Italy in 1860, and the final portion, namely the city of Rome with a small area close to it, ten years later, in 1870. Vatican City is a non-hereditary, elected monarchy that is ruled by the Bishop of Rome — the Pope. The highest state functionaries are all clergymen of the Catholic Church. It is the sovereign territory of the Holy See (Sancta Sedes) and the location of the Pope's residence, referred to as the Apostolic Palace. The Popes have resided in the area that in 1929 became the Vatican City only since the return from Avignon in 1377. Previously, they resided in the Lateran Palace on the Caelian Hill on the opposite side of Rome, which was out of repair in 1377. The signing of the agreements that established the new state took place in the latter building, giving rise to the name of Lateran Pacts, by which they are known.

St. Peter's Basilica

St. Peter's Basilica is located within the Vatican City. It occupies a "unique position" as one of the holiest sites and as "the greatest of all churches of Christendom". In Catholic tradition, it is the burial site of its namesake Saint Peter, who was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus and, according to tradition, was the first Bishop of Antioch, and later first Bishop of Rome and therefore first in the line of the papal succession. While St. Peter's is the most famous of Rome's many churches, it is not the first in rank, an honor held by the Pope's cathedral church, the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Catholic tradition holds that Saint Peter's tomb is below the altar of the basilica. For this reason, many Popes, starting with the first ones, have been buried there. There has been a church on this site since the 4th century. Construction on the present basilica, over the old Constantinian basilica, began on April 18, 1506 and was completed in 1626.



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St. Peter's is famous as a place of pilgrimage, for its liturgical functions and for its historical associations. It is associated with the papacy, with the Counterreformation and with numerous artists, most significantly Michelangelo. As a work of architecture, it is regarded as the greatest building of its age. Contrary to popular misconception, Saint Peter's is not a cathedral, as it is not the seat of a bishop. It is properly termed a basilica. Like all the earliest churches in Rome, it has the entrance to the east and the apse at the west end of the building. Its dome is a dominant feature of the skyline of Rome. Probably the largest church in Christianity, it covers an area of (5.7 acres) and has a capacity of over 60,000 people. Although the New Testament does not mention Peter's presence or martyrdom in Rome, Catholic tradition holds that his tomb is below the baldachin and altar; for this reason, many Popes, starting with the first ones, have been buried there. Construction on the current basilica, over the old Constantinian basilica, began on April 18, 1506 and was completed in 1626. Although the Vatican basilica is neither the Pope's official seat or first in rank among the great basilicas, (St. John Lateran) it is most certainly his principal church, as most Papal ceremonies take place at St. Peter's due to its size, proximity to the Papal residence, and location within the Vatican City walls. In the apse of the basilica is Bernini's monument enclosing the "Chair of St. Peter" or cathedra, sometimes presumed to have been used by Saint Peter himself, but which was a gift from Charles the Bald and used by various popes.

Ancient Rome

Ancient Rome was a civilization that grew out of a small agricultural community founded on the Italian Peninsula as early as the 10th century BC. Located along the Mediterranean Sea, it became one of the largest empires in history. In its centuries of existence, Roman civilization shifted from a monarchy to an oligarchic republic to an increasingly autocratic empire. It came to dominate Western Europe and the Mediterranean region through conquest and assimilation. The Roman Empire went into decline in the 5th century AD. Plagued by internal instability and attacked by various migrating peoples, the western part of the empire, including Hispania, Gaul, and Italy, broke up into independent kingdoms in the 5th century. The eastern part of the empire, governed from Constantinople, survived this crisis, and would live on for another millennium, until its last remains were finally annexed by the emerging Ottoman Empire. This Eastern Medieval stage of the Empire is usually referred to as the Byzantine Empire.



Roman civilization is often grouped into "classical antiquity" with ancient Greece, a civilization that inspired much of the culture of ancient Rome. Ancient Rome contributed greatly to the development of law, war, art, literature, architecture, technology and language in the Western world, and its history continues to have a major influence on the world today.

Sant'Andrea della Valle Church

Sant'Andrea della Valle Church was initially planned when Donna Costanza Piccolomini d'Aragona, duchess of Amalfi and descendant of the family of Pope Pius II, bequeathed her palace and the adjacent church of San Sebastiano in central Rome to the Theatine order for construction of a new church. Since Amalfi's patron was Saint Andrew, the church was planned in his honor. Work initially started around 1590 under the designs of Giacomo della Porta and Pier Paolo Olivieri, and under the patronage of Cardinal Gesualdo. With the prior patron's death, direction of the church passed to Cardinal Alessandro Peretti di Montalto, nephew of Sixtus V.



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By 1608, and banked by the then enormous endowment of over 150 thousand gold scudi, work restarted anew with a more grandiose plan mainly by Carlo Maderno. The interior structure of the church was finally completed by 1650, with additional touches added by Francesco Grimaldi. The fresco decoration of Sant'Andrea's dome was one of the largest commissions of its day. Two Carracci pupils, Giovanni Lanfranco and Domenichino, disputed the work. In 1608, Cardinal Alessandro had chosen Lanfranco, but the Ludovisi papacy of Pope Gregory XV favored the Bolognese Domenichino. In the end, both artists were employed, although Lanfranco's lavish dome decoration (completed 1627) set the model for such decorations for the following decades. Carlo Rainaldi, at the expense of Cardinal Francesco Peretti di Montalto, nephew of Alessandro, added the Baroque facade between 1655 and 1663. In the church are present the cenotaphs of popes Pius II and Pius III, whose corpses are buried somewhere in the church. In 1650, Mattia Preti painted three frescoes regarding the martyrdom of Andrew with his Crucifixion in the center in the apse, as commissioned by Donna Olimpia, sister in law of Pope Innocent X.

The first act of the opera Tosca by Puccini is set in Sant'Andrea della Valle. However, the Cappella Attavanti used was a poetic invention. The Cardinal Priest of the Titulus S. Andreae Apostoli de Valle is Giovanni Canestri. Sant'Andrea della Valle later became a model for the construction of other churches like the St.Kajetan church in Munich. On the square in front of the church stands now the fountain of Carlo Maderno, placed until 1937 at the center of the destroyed Piazza Scossacavalli in Borgo.

Assisi

Assisi is a town in Italy in province of Perugia, Italy, in the Umbria region, on the western flank of Mt. Subasio. It is the birthplace of St. Francis, who founded the Franciscan religious order in the town in 1208, and St. Clare (Chiara d'Offreducci), the founder of the Poor Clares. Saint Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows of the 19th century was also born in Assisi.

The Basilica of San Francesco d'Assisi (St. Francis) is a World Heritage Site. The Franciscan monastery, il Sacro Convento, and the lower and upper church (Basilica inferiore e superiore) of St Francis were begun immediately after his canonization in 1228, and completed 1253. The lower church has frescos by renowned late-medieval artists Cimabue and Giotto; in the Upper church are frescos of scenes in the life of St. Francis by previously ascribed to Giotto and now thought to be by artists of the circle of Pietro Cavallini of Rome.

The town is dominated by two medieval castles. The larger, called Rocca Maggiore, is a massive presence meant to intimidate the people of the town: it was built by Cardinal Albornoz (1367) and added to by Popes Pius II and Paul III. The smaller of the two was built much earlier, in the Roman Era. However, not all of it stands, and only a small portion and three towers are open to the public.



Montecatini

Montecatini Terme is a spa town in Tuscany, Italy, with c. 20,000 inhabitants. It is able to accommodate every year at least 2,000,000 tourists many of whom register with the renowned health spas. The area of Montecatini was settled since pre-historical times, but the first mention of Montecatini dates from 716 AD. In 1164 it was a free commune, but was later acquired by the Republic of Lucca. In the 14th century its castle was contented and besieged during the war between the Republic of Florence and the



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Lucchese condottieri Ugucione della Faggiuola and Castruccio Castracani. The first baths were built in 1540. In 1554 it gave itself to the Sienese, and was subsequently destroyed in revenge by Cosimo I de' Medici, first Grand Duke of Tuscany. It recovered starting from the 18th century, when the first bath resorts were built. In the 20th century it became one of the most renowned spa in Italy: people who took rest in Montecatini include Giuseppe Verdi, Pietro Mascagni, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Trilussa, Beniamino Gigli and Luigi Pirandello.

Florence

Florence is the capital city of the Italian region of Tuscany, and of the province of Florence. It is the most populous city in Tuscany and has a population of approximately 364,779. The city lies on the Arno River and is known for its history and its importance in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, especially for its art and architecture. A centre of medieval European trade and finance, the city is often considered the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance; in fact, it has been called the Athens of the Middle Ages. It was long under the de facto rule of the Medici family. From 1865 to 1870 the city was also the capital of the Kingdom of Italy. The "historic centre of Florence" continues to attract millions of tourists each year and was declared a World Heritage Site by the UNESCO in 1982.



Orvieto

Orvieto is a city in southwestern Umbria, Italy situated on the flat summit of a large butte of volcanic tuff. The site of the city is among the most dramatic in Europe, rising above the almost-vertical faces of tuff cliffs that are completed by defensive walls built of the same stone. Orvieto is noted for its Gothic cathedral, or duomo. The church is striped in white travertine and greenish-black basalt in narrow bands; its design has often been attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio, but the prevailing modern opinion is that its master mason was an obscure monk named Fra' Bevignate from Perugia; construction began in 1290. The façade is particularly striking and includes some remarkable sculpture by Lorenzo Maitani (14th century). Orvieto is also home to Etruscan ruins and the remnants of a wall that enclosed the city more



than 2000 years ago. At the foot of the butte, surrounded by peach and apple trees and a vineyard, the Etruscan necropolis of Crocefisso di Tufo counts a hundred or so chamber tombs laid along a rectangular street grid. The city of Orvieto has long kept the secret of its labyrinth of caves and tunnels that lie beneath the surface. Dug deep into the tuff, a volcanic rock, these hidden and secret tunnels are only now open to view through guided tours. Their spectacular nature has also yielded many historical and archeological finds. The underground city boasts tunnels, galleries, wells, stairs, quarries, cellars, unexpected passageways, cisterns, superimposed rooms with numerous small square niches, detailing its creation over the centuries. Many of the homes of noble families were equipped with a means of escape from the elevated city during times of siege through secret escape tunnels carved from the soft rock. The tunnels would lead from the city palazzo to emerge at a safe exit point some distance away from city walls.

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Teatro Mancinelli

A short walk from the cathedral and not far from the main square is the Theater Mancinelli, neoclassical building, one of the most interesting architectural examples of nineteenth century Italian theaters. The structure was reopened to the public in December 1993, after careful restoration that returned integrates its original beauty. Since then, the theater hosts performances Orvietano high level, planned and managed successfully by theme, in collaboration with the Municipality of Orvieto. From year to year, the programming proposals have obtained the benefit of a vast and heterogeneous, not only from Orvieto but also from other parts of the center of Umbria and Italy. A phenomenon unique in the region, due to the fortunate position of Orvieto that since ancient times has made the cliff a crossroads of trade and cultural exchanges for people from various parts of central Italy. Since 1993 there have been many viewers of Mancinelli who filled the 560 seats of the theater to applaud the performances offered by rich and diverse programming, prepared with care in order to reflect the requirements and tastes of the public.



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