



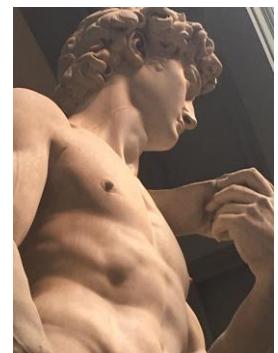
This past March, fifteen intrepid globetrotting scholars embarked on a journey to Italy where they embraced the ideals of the Renaissance man, saw the connections between ancient and modern ways of life, strengthened their faith in the pews of St. Peters Basilica, and marveled at the natural beauty woven by God and man in the stunning vistas, geographical formations, and architectural masterpieces. In their own words, here is their story:



Florence was the first stop on our journey and served as an exposition of the renaissance culture centuries ago. The Renaissance and Baroque architecture remained in the city and was central to its character. Walking down any street, we saw modern stores and vendors but against the backdrop of incredible beauty from centuries ago. Ponte Vecchio was the highlight of this, many of us had never seen a bridge that was so steeped in history and a center of commerce. The views from the bridge and of the bridge were iconic of Florence's charm. The food we tried was always an experience, from crostini at a sidewalk café to the wall of flowing chocolate inside the Venchi gelato shop, we were eager to try everything we came across.

Throughout our time in Florence, Mitra, our tour guide, talked about the backstories of many of the statues and pieces of art. These stories were the first experience many of us had with personifying and humanizing these escalated figures we read in the history books about. The Uffizi art gallery showed us just how important the city was during the Renaissance and how the evolution of art took place. The vibrant colors in the Sleep of Ariadne and Birth of Venus were mesmerizing and the view from the balcony of the museum was fantastic.

When we saw the David, we were fascinated by its structure. It seemed so life like. And the underlying story behind it was fascinating - the David turns towards Rome, glaring, to show the hostility between the two cities back during the time of its construction. Michelangelo's method of dissecting human bodies to learn ways in which he could make his work more realistic, was fascinating. The perfection of the David from every muscle and vein sculpted from what used to be a giant stone astonished us all. The close detail made it look like it was moving, and it captured each of our imaginations.





Leonardo Da Vinci's museum in Florence held other mechanical wonders. Although some of his ideas, like humans flying with mechanized wings, seemed absurd, nevertheless his creativity was essential for the advancement of human technology. Pulley systems and bearings nowadays are practically identical to the ones that Da Vinci invented. The true nature of the Renaissance man was evident in Da Vinci's works that ranged from scientific, to architectural, to artistic. Ultimately, Florence showed us how Western Civilization evolved from darkness into light through its visionaries.

In our next stop, Siena, we had a more unfiltered Tuscan experience. Escaping the crowds of tourists in Florence, we wandered from the plaza where the local clans race horses to Catherine of Siena's house. We tried pan forte (a cinnamon based concoction of almonds and raisins in a turkish delight type filling) and all kinds of local specialties within a matter of hours before we departed for the south.

At Pompeii and Herculaneum, we witnessed a time capsule of life from almost two millennia ago. We learned about the lifestyle of the Romans, in particular, their interactions with each other and what they ate. The exploration



of the ruins was like discovering a lost city. All of us were struck by the fact that the Romans lived no differently than we. Many of us didn't know previously how religious the ancient Romans were, but as we came across numerous altars to deities in homes, it became obvious how integrated worship was for their daily life. We came to appreciate the extreme efforts that the Romans took in decorating their homes with intricate mosaics and colorful frescoes. Herculaneum and Pompeii allowed us to actually see and wander through actual ancient Roman cities and understand how they went about their daily lives. In Pompeii, the vastness and complexity of the city impressed us. While we knew the Romans were incredibly advanced engineers, but seeing their city-planning and its perfect grid system first-hand truly made us appreciate the innovations that they pioneered so long ago.

The skeletons we saw in Herculaneum further emphasized the humanity of the ancient Romans because even though today the Romans are sometimes perceived as immortal or legendary from their fame, they lived and died just like the rest of us. The plaster casts in Pompeii combined with the human remains in the boatsheds of Herculaneum heavily impacted us. Seeing them in huddled positions holding onto each other made them seem more like former people than ancient bones. The remains gave us perspective on how life can be taken so quickly, which is sad but also a truly helpful thing to recognize. These two sites readily brought the expression *carpe diem* to our minds. As we gazed at the cloud-surrounded Mt. Vesuvius resting peacefully a few miles away, many of us thought about the capabilities and unpredictability of nature.



Upon arriving in Sorrento, we were inspired by the rugged terrain and crystal blue seas. After arriving in Capri, this awe was only heightened. Surrounded by the azure water of the Mediterranean, Capri is an island



chocolate cake), and discovered Italy in a way we could not find anywhere else.

Rome certainly lived up to its reputation as the eternal city. I was constantly shocked by the seamless mix between the modern and the classical. Rome seemed to be a mash of every other location we had been at. We walked out of the forum, where thousands of



years of Roman culture have been excavated, and passed a Bolivian heritage parade on the way to Rome's hipster neighborhood. By seeing the Colosseum, still standing despite being stripped of all its marble, and visiting the Forum, the birthplace of many aspects of modern democracy, we gained an understanding of the workings and complexity of Ancient Rome. Standing on the

walkways inside the Colosseum, one can easily see the many layers of the Colosseum, including the places where the gladiators prepared for the fight and places where wild animals were contained. We imagined the fearless gladiators' weapons and helmets gleaming in the sun, the rumbling in the throats of the famished beasts and the roar of the crowd as blood is spilled. Seeing the Coliseum and trying to imagine how the battles played out really captivated your mind. It was great to hear how the Romans were so similar to us, such as eating chicken wings during the games.



We especially enjoyed viewing the Pantheon and the Roman forum as they were places we had read about before in class, but never had the chance to be there in person. For many of us, the Pantheon was one of



our favorite places in Rome. We were surprised to learn that it had been turned into a Catholic Church hundreds of years ago and was still being used to celebrate mass. We were intrigued by the earthquake proofing technologies that were employed by the ancient Romans in constructing the Pantheon, which consisted of large tree trunks under the foundations that move with the building in the event of tremors.

Additionally, by seeing the intricacies of the Trevi Fountain and the Piazza Navona, we experienced the reconnection to Classical beauty and artistry. As we walked around the city, we also enjoyed seeing the churches. It was amazing how the Italian culture was still able to be observed so clearly, even in such an industrial, ancient, and urban setting. Coupling these experiences with seeing Rome as a modern city, complete with its internationally famous stores and restaurants and bustling streets, we truly charted Roman history from its inception. We found it fascinating how people would recycle parts from old structures to create new ones, such as parts of St Peter's square came from the remains of the Colosseum. Rome has an identity that lives in the past, yet, despite this, it manages to wow new viewers each year. It really gave us respect for the history of thousands of years of human civilization. Seeing all the monumental architectural there made us realize that humans a hundreds of years ago and humans now are not very different and have a lot of potential.



Visiting the Vatican impacted us profoundly because we got to see the center of an institution that defines our daily lives: the Catholic Church. As a Jesuit Institution, Georgetown Prep has taught us about Church history and outlined cultural aspects like the great artwork that the Vatican contains. By visiting the

Vatican, however, we saw the history and daily workings of the Church directly in front of our eyes. Witnessing all the monumental architecture of our faith was certainly moving and had a profound impact on everyone.

The Vatican Museums were more than any of us could've even imagined. Once we were in the Vatican, it seemed like the rooms went on and on and on with lavish art, including tapestries with perspective (eyes that followed you across the room!). That tapestry hall many of us remember vividly. We saw many other rooms in the Vatican which were breathtaking: from a room of intricately painted maps to the Belvedere Torso, an unknown statue without a head, arms or legs. We also were awestruck by the Sistine Chapel, and

were just as amazed to learn from Mitra, our guide, that Michelangelo was not even a strong painter when he was instructed to paint it! He worked tirelessly to finish this masterpiece that is unparalleled to this day. As we contemplated the paintings in the chapel, we realized what amazing gifts and talents God has given us to create stunning works.



By going to Sunday mass in St. Peter's Basilica, we stood in the exact places that the Popes and monarchs of Europe had stood. In fact, one of the circular stones on the floor was the coronation place of Charlemagne, taken from the original St. Peter's. The Basilica was awe-inspiring because of its massive size and intricate detail all along the floor, walls, and roof. The enormous engravings in bold, the pure gold and lapis lazuli are merely a few examples of its magnificence. Our chapel could easily be tucked inside one of the great Basilica's many side chapels. The mass itself was a spiritual experience for many of us, even though the mass was in Italian. Many of us were able to use our knowledge from Religion and Latin to follow what was being said at the Mass. As the end of mass approached, the sun shone through the stained glass onto us, as if the Holy Spirit had descended upon us. For many of us, the mass at the Vatican was the most powerful religious event we have ever experienced.



Throughout the trip, we drew profound connections to history and culture, visiting places we had only previously experienced through textbooks. This trip introduced us to some of the earliest roots of the church and we had a very religious experience throughout. We had a great time and could not have asked for a better experience in Italy. This was an excellent experience both for intellectual growth and general fun.



*Those interested in applying for Global Scholars 2017-2018 should submit their applications to Ms. Hatmaker by September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 for consideration.*