

# OSCAR WILDE TOURS

## GAY ITALY

*From Caesar to Michelangelo and Beyond*

*October 5 – 14, 2018*

- Friday, October 5 **Day 1** After time to rest following our international flights, Professor Lear starts our tour with a brief talk about Italy's gay history, with all its different eras, before leading us on a walking tour of the center of Florence, learning about the city's key role in the Renaissance and the role of homosexual love in the Renaissance. Our afternoon ends with a visit to the Galleria dell'Accademia, where we see Michelangelo's 'slaves' and the international symbol of male beauty, his David. This evening, we begin our culinary tour of Italy with a splendid dinner centering on Tuscany's famous steak and red wines.
- Saturday, October 6 **Day 2** Today, we visit two of Florence's splendid museums, where we will discover the whole history of Florentine Renaissance art, from Donatello to Cellini. We start the morning at the Bargello, where we see several key male nude sculptures from the Renaissance, including Donatello's David—the first freestanding male nude after ancient times; we then plunge into the Uffizi, the greatest of all collections of Renaissance painting. Bursting with masterpieces, the Uffizi is also a storehouse of homoerotic art by masters as varied as Botticelli, Caravaggio, and Bazzi (known to contemporaries as 'Il Sodoma'—the sodomite!). The afternoon and evening are yours to explore this charming city, its museums, and/or its wonderful fashion boutiques and artisan shops, as well as its wonderful culinary culture. Make sure to ask us for advice!
- Sunday, October 7 **Day 3** This morning we take the express train to Naples, passing through the hills of central Italy. On arrival, we have the first of our Neapolitan meals—pizza in the city that invented it! We spend our afternoon visiting the great Naples Archaeological Museum, where we see the amazing collection of frescoes and statues that were excavated in Pompeii and other nearby sites. The Museum also has some fabulous homoerotic pieces, including the joint statues of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, the male-male couple who were revered as the founders of the Athenian democracy; also, there is the fascinating Gabinetto Segreto, the collection of erotic art that until the 1960s was only open to "people of mature age and respectable morals." This evening we have dinner in our hotel's neighborhood, along the city's famous bay.
- Monday, October 8 **Day 4** This morning, we drive south to Paestum, which, like many southern Italian cities, was in ancient times part of *Magna Graecia* (greater Greece) and today is home to some of the best-preserved Greek temples in the world. We visit the temples and the museum, which contains one of the greatest homoerotic images in ancient art: a wall-painting of a symposium, where, among other party games, a man courts a youth in the ancient Greek style. For the afternoon, we return from Greek culture to Roman culture and visit Pompeii, the ancient city at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius, buried by the volcanic explosion of 79 AD and rediscovered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is the place where archaeology was invented and is still the world's greatest archaeological site—a place unlike any other, where you can see right into the private lives of ancient people. Sexuality will, of course, be our special theme: Pompeii is rich in the history of the erotic, and full of many surprises, especially in the main bordello and the locker-room of the Suburban Baths! Lunch today is at one of the area's great restaurants—one that has been feeding visitors to Pompeii since 1825—and features Southern specialties. We are in the heart of the world's mozzarella production and will get to enjoy it. The evening is yours to relax in Naples.
- Tuesday, October 9 **Day 5** This morning, we take the hydrofoil out to Capri, the pearl of the Mediterranean. We spend the day exploring the island, famous for its beauty and for the rich and famous who have played there—and in particular for their same-sex relationships. After a boat ride around the island, we go up to the village of Capri, where we learn about the Emperor Tiberius and the orgies he supposedly held on the island as well as Capri's gay culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the island was the site of a gay scandal that rocked the German empire. Passing the hotel where Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas stayed when visiting, we visit the public gardens donated to the village by Alfred Krupp, the man at the center of the German scandal; those who are up for a walk can also visit the Villa Lysis, the most spectacular remaining villa

# OSCAR WILDE TOURS

## *Gay Italy, from Caesar to Michelangelo and Beyond*

of the period and, frankly, one of the world's gayest spots. For lunch today we eat some of Capri's wonderful seafood right at the water's edge. In the late afternoon, we return to Naples to spend the evening together, learning how to make a pizza and other local specialties in one of the traditional pizzerias of the city center.

Wednesday, October 10

**Day 6** Today we take the short train ride to the great city that has been Italy's capital for much of the last 2500 years. For our first day in this breathtaking city, Professor Lear takes us on a series of walking tours through the central pedestrian area. We see many of the famous sights and many quiet, unknown nooks. We get our first glimpse of the ancient Forum and visit monuments such as the Pantheon, the Piazza Navona, the Trevi fountain, and the Piazza di Spagna with its famous staircase. With thousands of years of history in every street, we encounter some of the key themes of our tour, from Hadrian, the "gayest" emperor, to Michelangelo's biggest crush, to Caravaggio, the artistic rebel and genius, as well as Rome's great opera heritage. Along the way we make stops for lunch, for coffee (at possibly the best café in Italy) and for gelato, one of Rome's many signature specialties. The evening is free for your own explorations. Given that our hotel is in the absolute center of the city, you can return to the sights of our walk and discover antiquities of your own.

Thursday, October 11

**Day 7** This morning, we cross the Tiber and visit the Vatican: a mixture of museum, church, and palace that contains one of the world's truly great art collections. Here we will reveal (and revel in!) the irony of a superb collection of homoerotic art being housed by an institution that has a long history of homophobia. What a great place to study the history of the male nude (although, as we all know, a lot of the male "members" are missing). After our Vatican tour, we cross back over the river and have a traditional Roman lunch in the Testaccio, once Rome's meat-packing district. After lunch, we delve into the core of the ancient city—the Forum, the Palatine Hill that housed the imperial residences, and the Colosseum, famous for its ghastly gladiatorial combats. While exploring the archaeological sites, we examine the bizarre tales Roman historians relay about the emperors, in particular their complicated and lurid sex lives. We end our tour only a short walk from our hotel. Evening free.

Friday, October 12

**Day 8** Our day begins with a drive into the countryside to Tivoli, where we visit two great villas: Emperor Hadrian's country retreat (where, among other things, he built a temple to his lover Antinous, who was worshiped as a god after his death in the Nile), and the Villa d'Este, with its splendid Renaissance gardens and fountains. After a lunch in a country restaurant famous for its local produce and wine, we return to Rome to visit Palazzo Massimo, the center of the city's antiquity collections. Here we will see such masterpieces of Greco-Roman art as the Discobolus (a model of masculine form for the Greeks) and the sleeping hermaphrodite—a statue that has much to tell about the Romans' sexual attractions—as well as the stunning garden frescos from the Villa of Empress Livia. Evening free.

Saturday, October 13

**Day 9** On our last morning in Rome, we visit the Capitoline museum, with its magnificent collection—ranging from the famous she-wolf of Rome to Caravaggio's strangely erotic St. John the Baptist; and then explore a recently discovered ancient senatorial palace, where a sound-and-light show explains the fascinating and complex history of the site. After that, you have a free afternoon for shopping, wandering, or more museums and churches. In the evening, we gather for a final, spectacular dinner, to celebrate Italy's amazing cuisine and to toast our new discoveries—and the new friends we have made in our group!

Sunday, October 14

**Day 10** Our tour ends this morning in Rome, but we are happy to arrange your further travels. Please let us know about your return to the US, especially if you are leaving today.

# OSCAR WILDE TOURS

*Gay Italy, from Caesar to Michelangelo and Beyond*

## OUR HOTELS

*This tour stays in specially selected four-star hotels, where available. The hotels listed are our accommodations of choice; when they are not available for booking, we provide accommodations of equivalent level.*

### **ROME-Hotel Nazionale**

Our lovely Beaux Arts hotel looks out across the Piazza Montecitorio at an ancient Egyptian obelisk erected by the Emperor Augustus and the Palazzo Montecitorio, designed by Borromini, and now housing the Italian Chamber of Deputies. It is in the perfect location for exploring Rome—5 minutes walk from the Pantheon, and 10 or less to Piazza Navona, the Trevi Fountain, and the Spanish Steps, as well of course as many of Rome's great shops, restaurants, cafés, pizzerias, and gelaterias!

### **FLORENCE-Hotel De La Ville**

An elegant and comfortable hotel along the most fashionable shopping street in Florence, the De La Ville is a 5 minute walk from the Duomo and the Baptistery with the Gates of Paradise, and 10 minutes from the Uffizi. In short, it is a short walk from everything in Florence: shops, restaurants, cafés, open-air markets, museums...

### **NAPLES-Grand Hotel Santa Lucia**

One of Naples' most charming and best-located hotels, the Grand Hotel Santa Lucia is in an art nouveau building on a quiet (and safe) stretch of the harbor promenade, right across from the Santa Lucia port and the medieval Castel dell'Ovo. It has great views out to Capri and across the bay to Mount Vesuvius and is in easy walking distance of a number of good restaurants. In short, it's one of the best bases for a visit to Naples!