

# Grand Tour of Italy



## Grand Tour of Italy 2022

**Bon Journo - Greetings.**

**I'm Bill Jepson your tour guide today.**

**This morning we will embark on a Grand Tour of the most famous and amazing sites of Italy.**



Venice, Pisa, Florence, Rome, Sorrento, Pompeii, Amalfi, Capri

**After a 12 hour flight we have landed in Venice.  
Flights today cost about \$600 and when you land in  
Italy it will be 7 hours ahead of Minnesota.**

**This week we will proceed by train south to Pisa and  
Florence in the heart of Tuscany. Then further south to  
the Capitol of Italy: Rome and the Vatican City. Then  
2 hours further south to Sorrento as a base on the bay  
of Naples, which I always recommend as my favorite  
part of Italy. There we will explore 3 amazing places in  
3 days: The ancient city of Pompeii, the Amalfi Coast,  
and the beautiful Island of Capri.**



Rome Italy 1975



Pompeii Italy 2003



**I have been to Italy 5 times: in 1975 as a 20 year old student on a semester in Greece I traveled throughout Europe for 2 months, spending 10 days in Italy. Here I am in Rome with a beard.**

**Then in the 2000s as a World History high school teacher I directed an overseas program where I led many tours throughout Europe and China, including 3 in Italy.**

**We usually went with EF Tours, who would book the hotels buses and flights for us. Each teacher could go for free if they recruited 6 students.**



### **Venezia narrative:**

**We land in Venice (Venezia) in the northeast corner of Italy, and take a train along the causeway to Venice in the Adriatic Sea, which is part of the Mediterranean Sea.**

**You can see how unique Venice with it being made up of hundreds of islands.**



**From the station you immediately hop onto a large boat bus called a vaporetto. The experience is very surreal and exhilarating with the sounds of boat engines, and Italian conversation, and strange smells and signs written in Italian.**

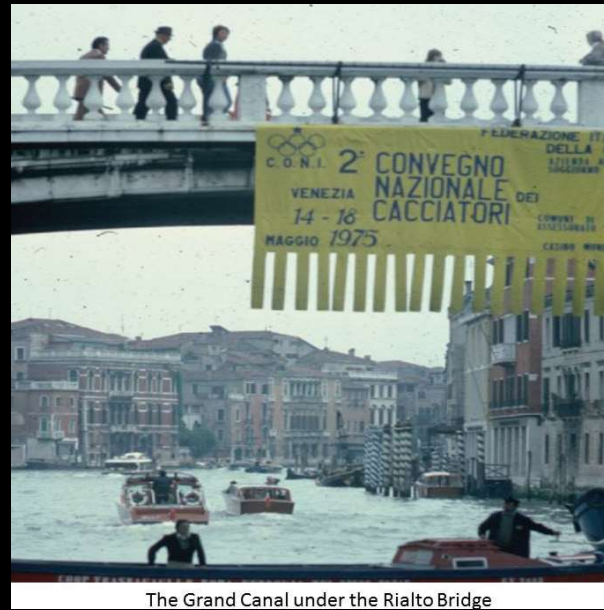




**If you've spent your whole life in America where the oldest buildings are a couple hundred years old, it's quite a culture shock to see 700-year-old on either side of you as you cruise down the grand canal.**

**And they are sinking slowly into the Mediterranean Sea due to global warming.**





The Grand Canal under the Rialto Bridge

**Here is the route we will take from the train station to the hotel and later the main square San Marco or St Marks.**

**I took these kodachrome slides back in 1975, when you used to take one photo every hour to save expensive film.**

**Here is the Grand Canal under the Rialto Bridge**



**There are many strange types of boats on the canals.**

**What are these? A hearse.**

**A cement mixer.**



**They drop us off at the famous Rialto Bridge which was built in 1591 over the Grand Canal**

**It's wide enough to have many shops on it.**





Everyone wants to get their picture taken from the Rialto Bridge.  
 And nearby we can shop at the Rialto Fish Market. A good place to see the  
 locals  
 calling out in Italian in morning.

We were there just before they changed to the Euro. So to buy calamari or a  
 basket of strawberries you needed 3,000 Lira in a bundle of paper bills for \$6.  
 Today a Euro is \$1.20 so it's easier to figure. About 20% more than a dollar.





**In Venice you have to take a gondola ride.  
Today it costs about 80 euros for a couple hours through the narrow canals and  
under many ancient bridges.**



**The gondolier, dressed in stripes will wing Santa Lucia for you, and maybe he'll let you try steering the boat yourself...**

**if you say Per favore and Grazie  
Please and thank you.**



**We'll spend a couple hours floating slowly through the canals.**

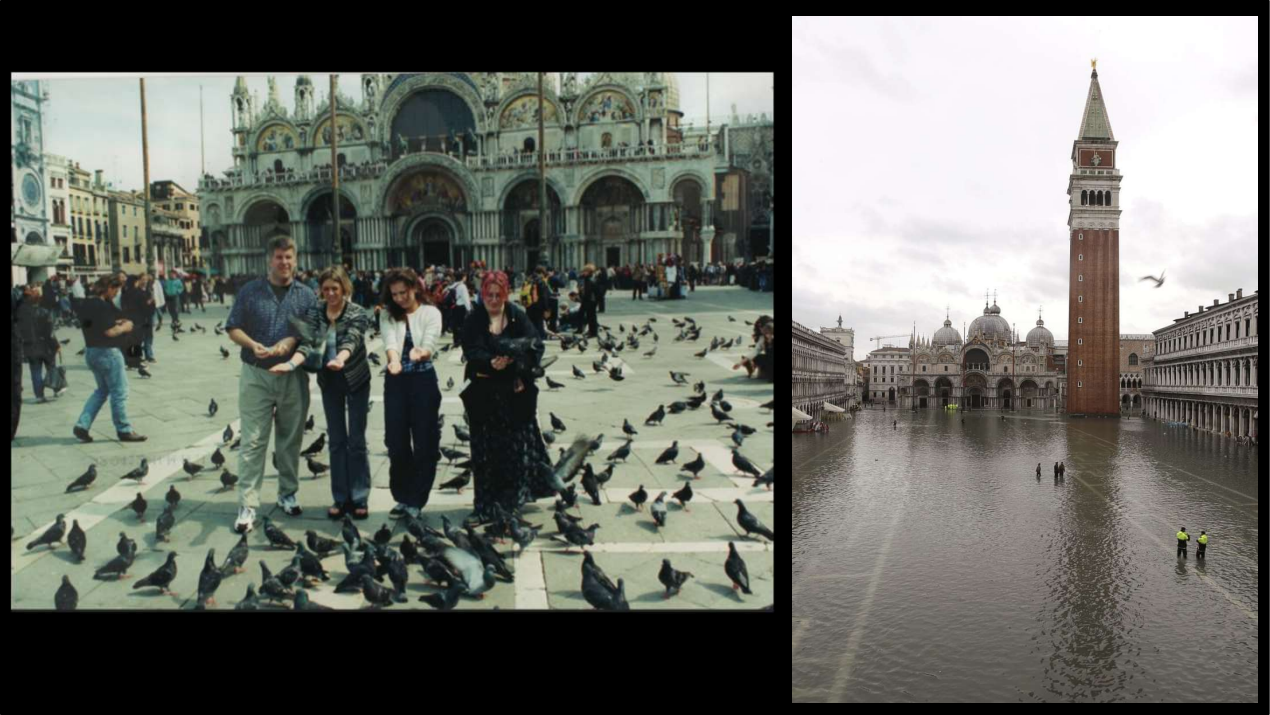
**We even floated past Marco Polo's house which he lived in before he left on his 20 year adventure in China around 1280AD.**



**Later, on foot we take a stroll to Piazza San Marco.  
(Plaza of St. Mark)**

**At one end of this largest square in Venice, you see the  
very ornate San Marco Basilica with four bronze  
horses and a golden frescos over the doors.**





**You know you're now in Europe when you hear the Bell Tower ring every hour as your surrounded 600 year old buildings. And it's fun to take pictures as you feed the pigeons and they land on your arms and head. (play bells here)**

**Because of global warming and the rise of the oceans, this whole Piazza is now flooded for about a 100 days every winter.**



**Next door we visit the Doges Palace, the seat of the prosperous Venetian Republic which was a trading power throughout the Mediterranean Sea for 1000 years until 1800.**

**And across the canal from the court in the palace was the prison. And when a criminal was sentenced, his last look at the outside was out these windows on the “The Bridge of Sighs”.**



Now we'll take a train about 3 hours from Venice to Lake Como where the rich and famous live. Bellagio is famous for its beautiful villas overlooking Lake Como in the foothills of the Alps.

The actor George Clooney has lived there for many years.





**I stayed here on the way to Rome in 2005.**

**I had a serious problem getting back on the train to Rome because all of Italy was going to see Pope John Paul II on what would probably be his last Easter Mass. So, the conductor told me I had to get off because it was full. Instead of arguing that I had to meet my family arriving in Rome tomorrow, I turned to the side to avoid the stares of all the locals looking at me, and I flashed him a \$20 Euro bill, (more than the price of the ticket) which he quietly took and let me stay. So, I had the Hotel in Rome ready for my family near the Spanish Steps the next morning.**





Next stop on the way to Pisa is Milan, the financial and fashion capitol of Italy.

Here is the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele with its famous glass roof, which has several luxury retailers offering jewelry, haute couture, and art amongst the bars and cafes,



**In the center of Milan is this magnificent gothic cathedral called the Duomo de Milano.**

**It is the largest in Italy (not including St Peters in Vatican City), and has 135 spires.**

**After 600 years of construction, it was finished in 1965.**



**In Milan is Leonardo Da Vinci's famous Last Supper painting from the year 1498,  
on a wall of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie.**

**For 15 Euro, you can see it in small groups for 15 minutes.**





**Pisa Italy**

**Next we take a train a few hours south to the iconic city of Pisa for a day.**

**We walk a few blocks from the train station to see the Leaning Tower.**



## **Campo di Miracoli**



**You can see here how much the Tower is leaning from vertical, which is 3.99 degrees.**

**The whole complex is called the Campo di Miracoli,  
Which means Field of Miracles**



The aerial view shows the tower, which you can climb for 18 Euro.  
The buildings including the Cathedral and the Baptistery date from before 1100AD.



**The tower has been leaning since the 12<sup>th</sup> century but was stabilized in 2001 with huge cables to reduce it's 5-degree tilt.**

**My students here did the obligatory lean to the left for the group picture.**

**There are numerous ways to take your selfie with the tower for your Facebook or Instagram page as you can see here.**

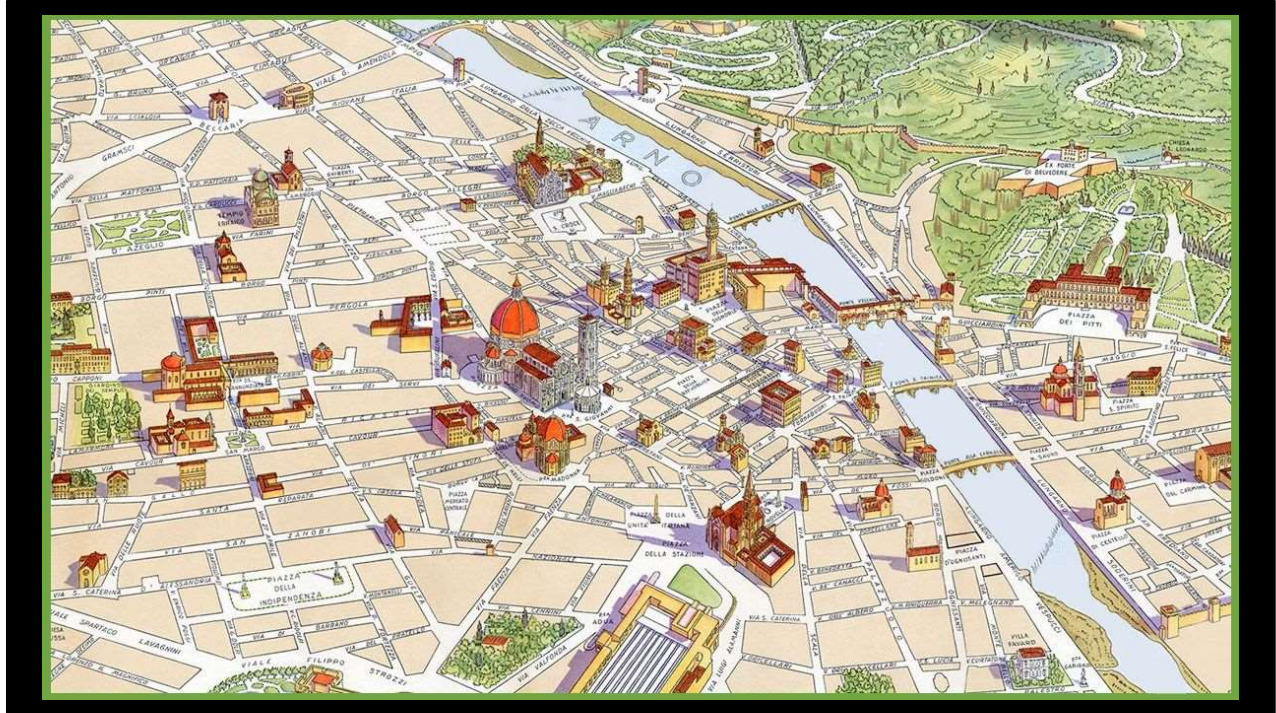


# Florence



**Now let's head east about an hour east up the Arno River to the famous city of Florence in the Tuscany region.**

**We'll spend a couple of days in this quintessential Renaissance city steeped in art history.**



**On this map you can see the most popular places on a typical itinerary:**

**The Academia with Michaelangelos David statue, and then the Duomo Cathedral with its Baptistry. Then over to Santa Croce cathedral and an evening walk to Piazza Signoria.**

**The next day we'll visit the Uffizi Gallery with all it's masterpieces, the Ponte Vecchio over the Arno River and the Boboli Gardens.**



**First we'll go to the Academia and see the David.**

**Michelangelo Buonarroti was only in his 20s when he carved this masterpiece of David staring at Goliath as he is about to load a stone into his sling to hurl it at him.**

**I had to stand in line at 4AM to get tickets for my students. By 8AM when they opened, the line was 4 blocks long in 2001. We were done by 9AM having gotten the first tickets.**





**It was chiseled out of one 18-foot-tall piece of solid marble that his contemporaries said was too imperfect to carve anything from.**



Up close you can see the details of his hair and eyes and the veins in his neck and hands. On the right is a statue of Michelangelo.



**Almost as awe inspiring are the incredible statues of slaves by Michelangelo in the same hall, where you can see his chisel marks as the muscled arms emerge from the stone.**

**Later in Rome we will see his Pieta statue of Jesus and Mary, and the Sistine Chapel frescoes which he painted. Truly one of the greatest artistic geniuses to ever live.**



*Duomo - Santa Maria del Fiore - Baptistry*



**A few blocks away is the Duomo, the beautifully ornate cathedral with a bell tower.**

**("Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore" means "Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Flower")**



**It was built in the Gothic style and was completed with  
a bell tower  
in 1436 after 140 years.**



**The intricate façade and bell tower were painted with pastel colors which have faded in the sun over the six centuries.**





**You can climb the stairs inside to the cupola, where you look down upon the red tile roofs of Firenze, the Italian word for Florence.**

**Here you see the Campanile Bell Tower and the Baptistry below.**



**You can see the Vecchio Tower in Piazza Signoria in this photo I took from the top of the Duomo in 1975.**



**The Baptistry next to the front of the Duomo features the famous Gates of Paradise on one of it's 8 octagonal walls.**

**They are gilded doors that were created by goldsmith Ghiberti in 1452.**



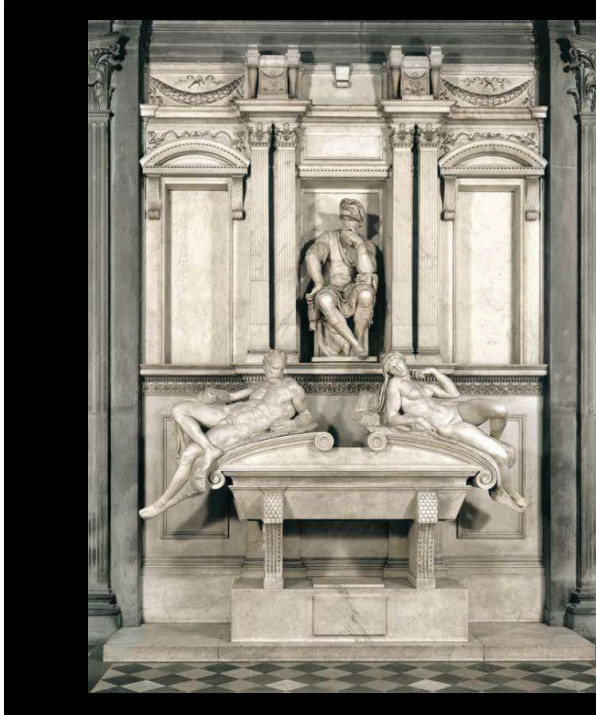


**The Gates have been praised by generations of art historians for their compelling portrayal of scenes from the Old Testament in gilded bronze relief.**



**On the left is the Baptistry, and 2 blocks away are the Medici Chapels.**

**They contain the tombs of the Medici banking family who were the benefactors of the great Renaissance artists such as; Michelangelo, Raphael, Donatello, and Leonardo da Vinci.**



**Michelangelo's famous statues in the chapel are of the Medici's above Dawn and Dusk on the left and Night and Day on the right.**



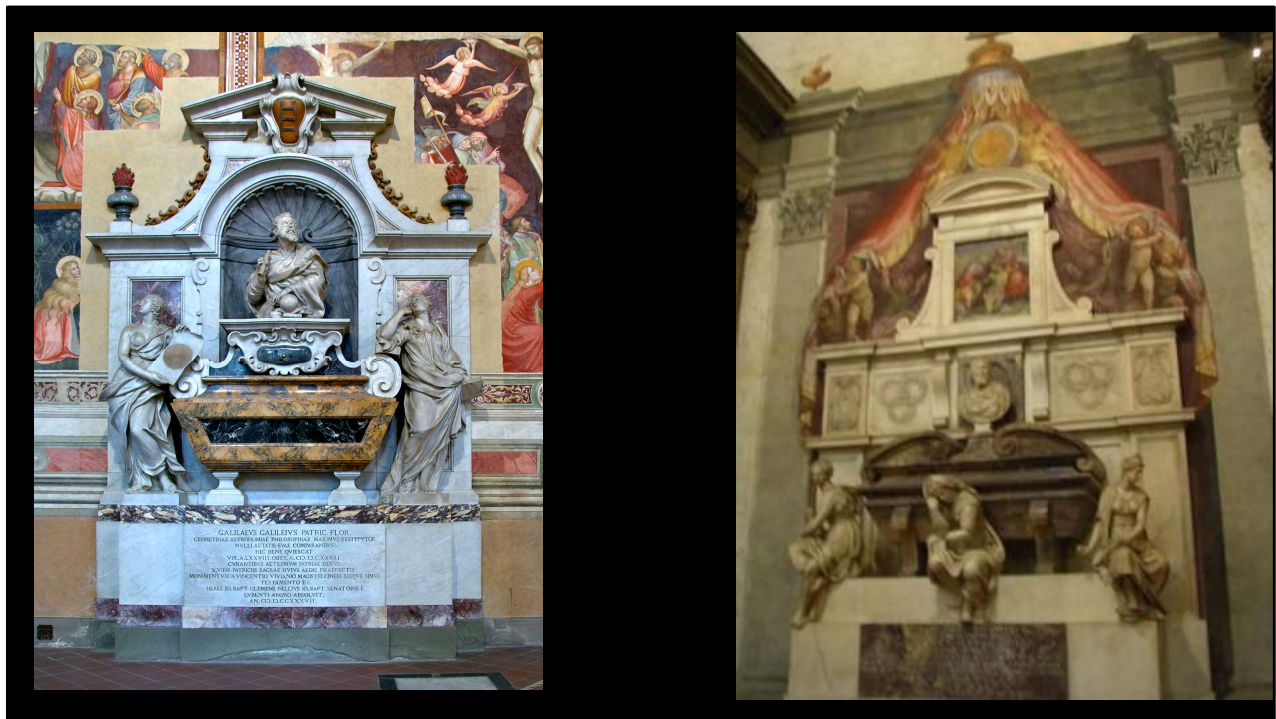


**Now we'll walk many blocks away to the Piazza di Santa Croce.**

**Here I am in 2001 with my students in front of San Croce, which is a great place to eat Pizza as we watch kids play soccer. And for dessert, a gelato ice cream cone.**

**On the left is a statue to the great writer of the Divine Comedy:**

**Dante Alighieri,** who is entombed here.



**It is also where Galileo the great scientist is entombed.  
 And Michelangelo on the right, along with Machiavelli and Rossini.**



**Three great Florentinos:**

**Niccolò Machiavelli the father of modern political science. His most famous work, *The Prince* (1532), gave immoral advice about how to rule ruthlessly.**

**And Galileo Galilei who got in trouble with the Catholic Church because he proved with his telescope, that the planets revolve around the Sun, and not around the earth.**

**And, of course, the quintessential Renaissance man: Leonardo Da Vinci, inventor, artist, scientist.**





**Here is what Firenze looked like back in the 1500s Renaissance or Rebirth, when this city was generating worldwide influence in science and art.**

Palazzo Vecchio in Piazza della Signoria



**This is the Palazzo Vecchio (Old Palace) in Piazza di Signoria, the 1000-year-old main square of Florence. It's where the Medicis ruled, as citizens and not Monarchs, due to their wealth owning the largest bank in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.**

**Here we'll have lunch at the David Ristorante like my students did.**



**Tourists meet up in this Piazza Signoria: where there are numerous huge statues and fountains on display outside.**

**You can hire a horse and carriage for a ride around town.**





**Here is the fountain of Neptune the God of the sea.**



**Here you can see Perseus beheading Medusa,  
I got under it looking up at the tower to take this artistic photo in 1975.**



**And here you can see the statue of the Rape of the Sabines on the right.**

**And Hercules, and a replica of the David near the door to the Palazzo.**



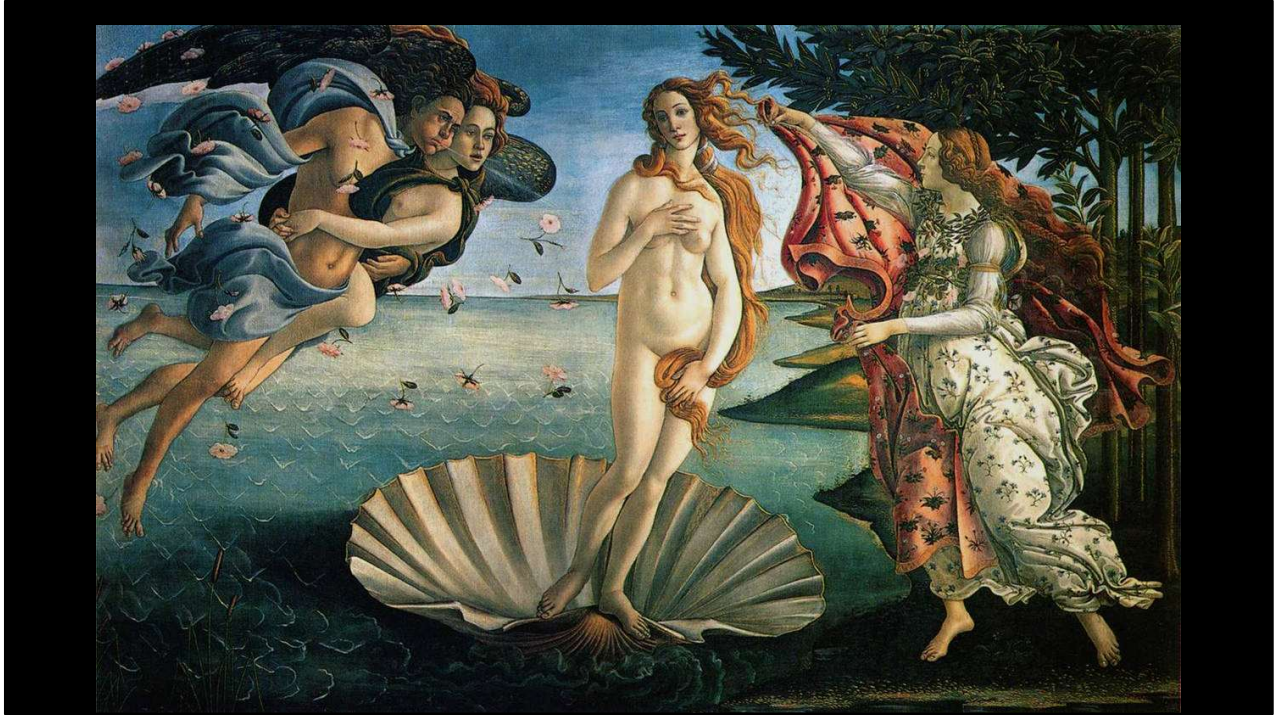


**As you walk away from the Piazza towards the river you are now in front of one of the greatest museums in the world: the Uffizi Gallery.**



**We may have to wait many hours to get in here if we don't get tickets way ahead of time.**

**Many local artists sell their drawings in the streets of Florence.**



**The Uffizi Gallery contains the most valuable Renaissance collection of art in the world.**

**For example: 'The Birth of Venus' by Sandro Botticelli**

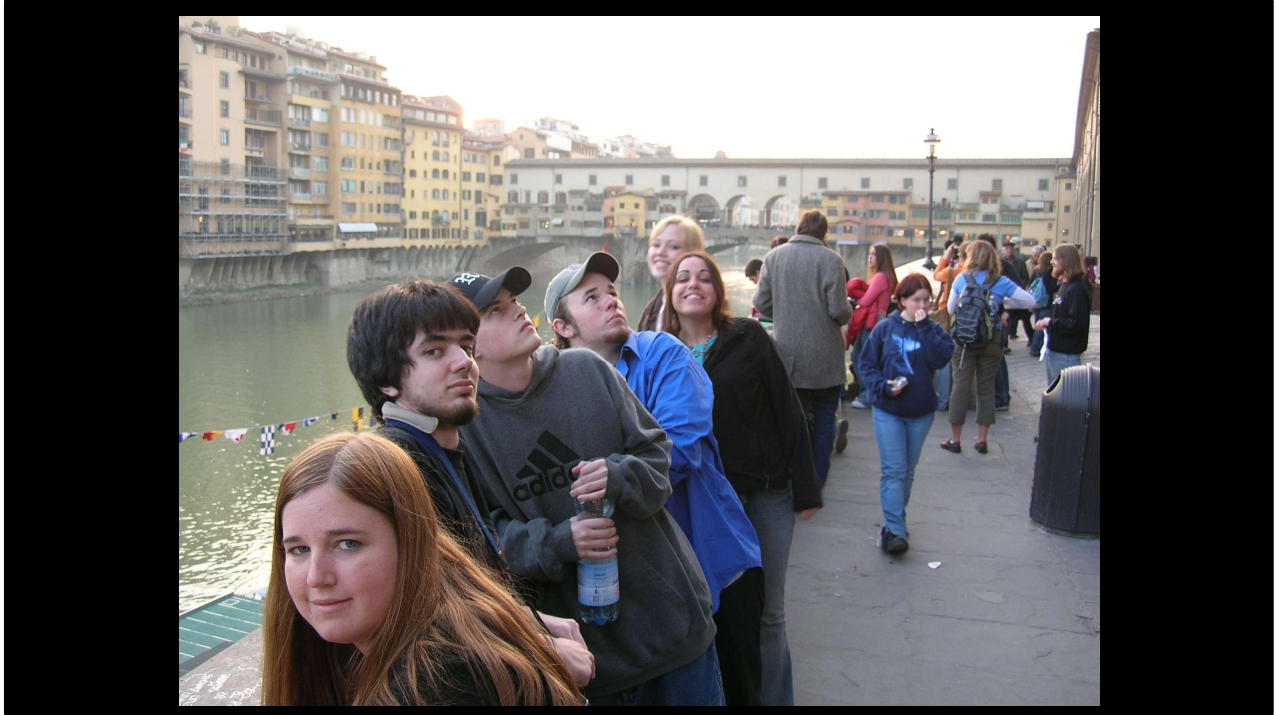




**The Virgin Mary by Leonardo Da Vinci and**

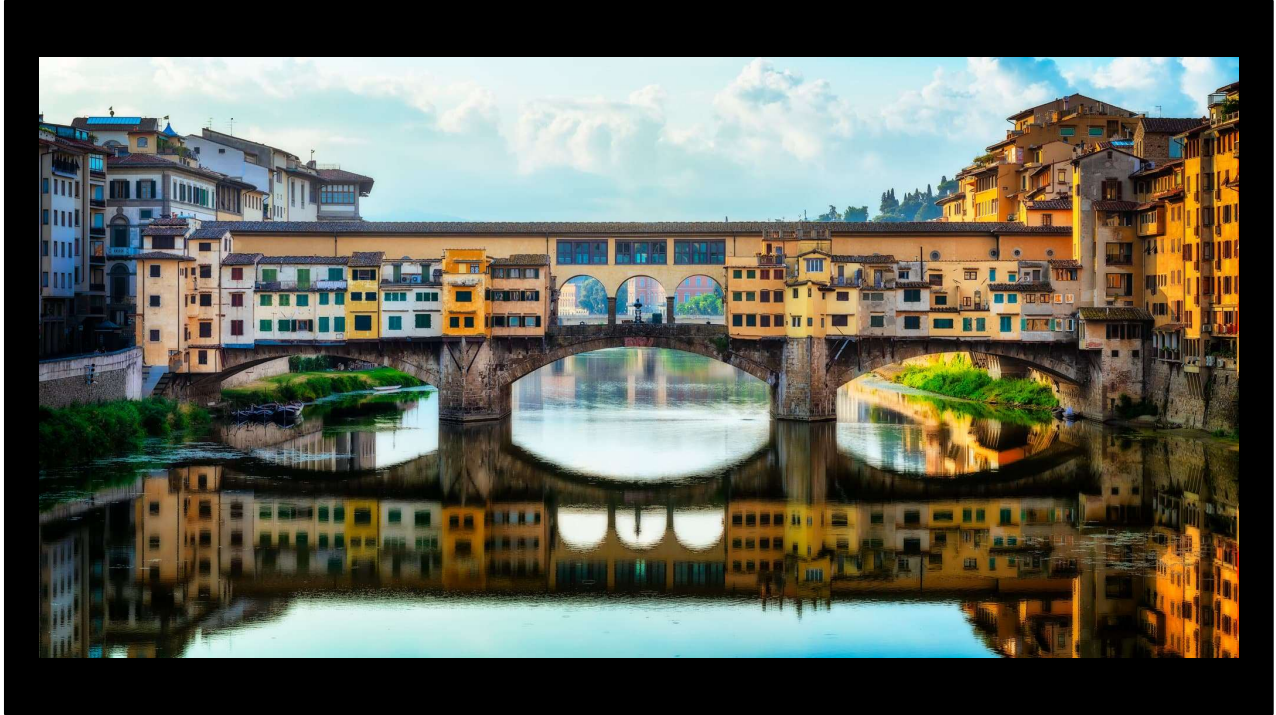
**The 'Rite of Spring' by Botticelli.**

**Below right is the 'Sleeping Ariadne' from 200AD**



**Here are my students, relaxing on the Arno River next to the Uffizi Gallery which flows through the town to the Mediterranean Sea.**

**In the background you see the Ponte Vecchio where we will walk across next.**



**Ponte Vecchio means Old Bridge. It was built in 1345.**

**During World War II it was the only bridge across the Arno that the fleeing Germans did not destroy.**

**It known for having many gold jewelry shops on it.**





Now we watch the sun set over Florence from Piazzale Michelangelo, a plaza across the river.

Buono Serra Firenze. (Good night Florence)



**Now we take the train further south to Rome.  
It takes less than 2 hours and costs less than 20 euros.**

**You will see some of the most spectacular scenery as you ride past Vineyard Villas on the train. My exhausted student is sleeping as we pass many villas on the way to Rome.**



Many tourists come to Siena when they hold their famous horse race every year in the Piazza on the left. And the Siena skyline on the right with its clock tower.

Another impressive town in Tuscany is San Gimignano with its 12 towers preserved from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.



## Rome



**Now we arrive in Italy's capitol city Rome, here we are on day one in 2003 in front of the Colosseum.**

**Here, instead of the buildings being 500 years old back to the Renaissance like in Florence.**

**In Rome they go back 2000 years to the Roman Empire for which Rome was the beating heart**

**From roughly 500BC to 500AD, (before Christ and after Christ).**

**I went there in 1975, 2003, and twice in 2005 when I met my family there for a 10 day tour of Italy.**



Here are 2 tourist maps of Rome showing some of the sights we'll see on either side of the Tiber River which runs through it.

Like the Trevi Fountain, the Pantheon, the Vatican, the Forum and the Colosseum which is where we will start today.

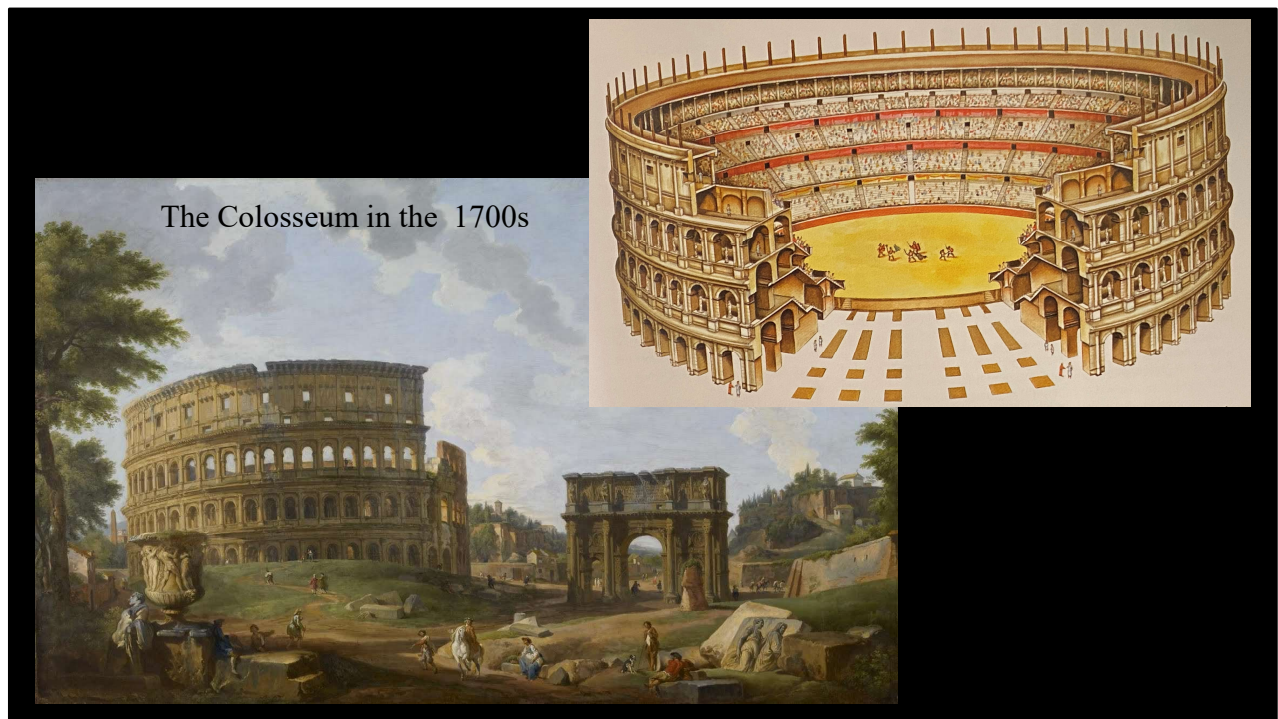
And on the right, the Colosseum, the Circus Maximus and the Forum in between.





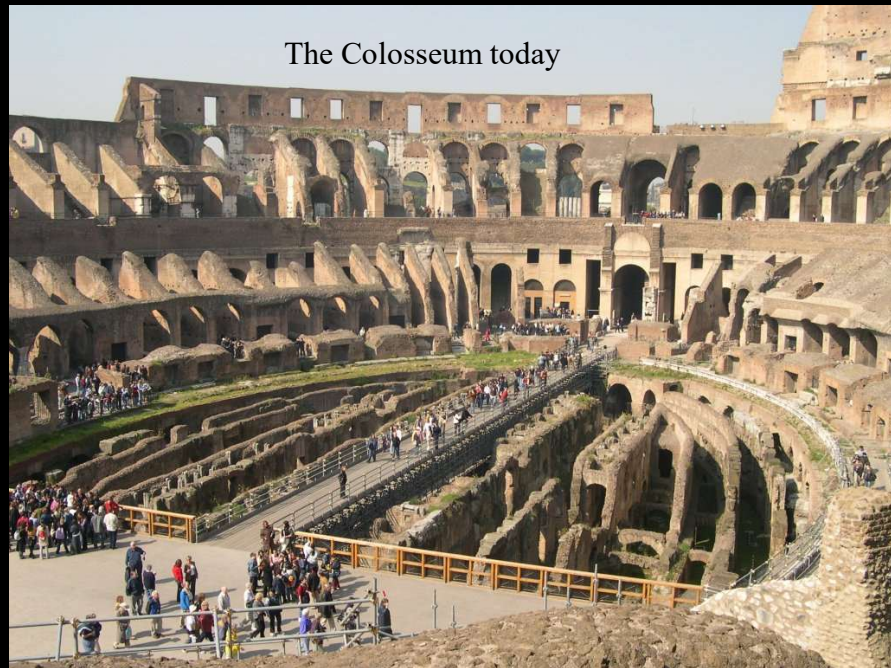
**The Colosseum, also called the Flavian Amphitheatre, was built in 80AD**

**and held 70,000 people, about the same as US Bank Stadium.**



**The ruins of the Colosseum, as it looked in the 1700s.**

**And an illustration of how it looked in the first century when it would host hundreds of spectacles where tens of thousands of animals and prisoners were put to death for entertainment.**



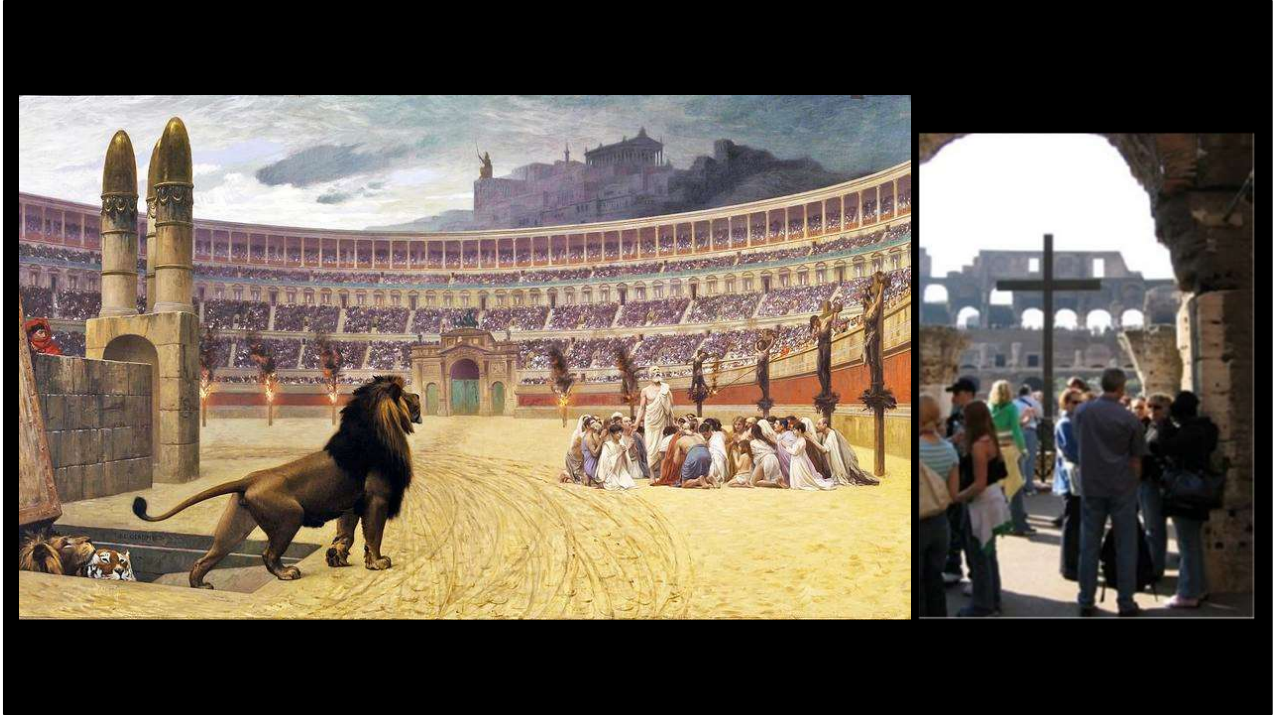
**It was featured in the movie gladiator as seen here as two gladiators fight to the death with tigers menacing them nearby.**

**Here we are getting attacked by pretend gladiators for tips.**

**You can walk across the stadium floor and look down where the cells holding animals and gladiators awaited their turn. They would rise up on elevators into the center of the arena.**

**Most of the seats and the floor are gone but you can imagine the cheers of the crowd.**





**Thousands of Christians were martyred here by the Emperor who made it illegal to worship anyone but him.**

**There is a Cross in the Colosseum today where the Pope has a ceremony for the Christian martyrs every year.**



**You may want to take a horse carriage ride around the area.**

**Here is how they feed them with an oat bag.**



**In 312AD, Christianity was adopted by the Emperor Constantine.**

**The Arch of Constantine, next to the Colosseum, commemorates the event when Constantine saw a vision of a cross before a crucial battle that he won and decided to make Christianity legal throughout the Roman Empire which included most of Europe.**





## The Ancient Forum

South view: Temple of Venus, Arch of Titus, and the Coliseum

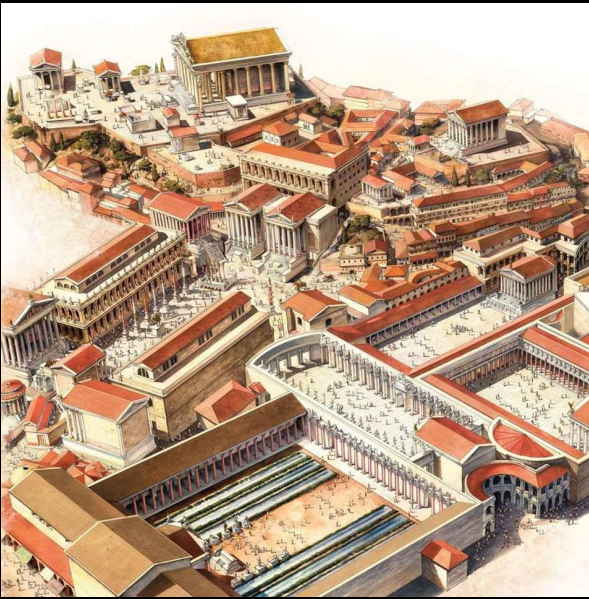


**Next door to the Colosseum is the entrance to the Ancient Forum of Rome.**

**This Arch of Titus commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman Army in 80AD.**

**For many centuries, the Forum was the seat of the government of the Roman Empire. It includes dozens of 2000 year old temples, basilicas, libraries and arches.**

**From the Emperors balcony you can look down upon the ruins and see what is left after the barbarians sacked it around 500AD.**



**Here is what the Roman Forum looked like at its height around the time of Christ whom they crucified in 30AD.**



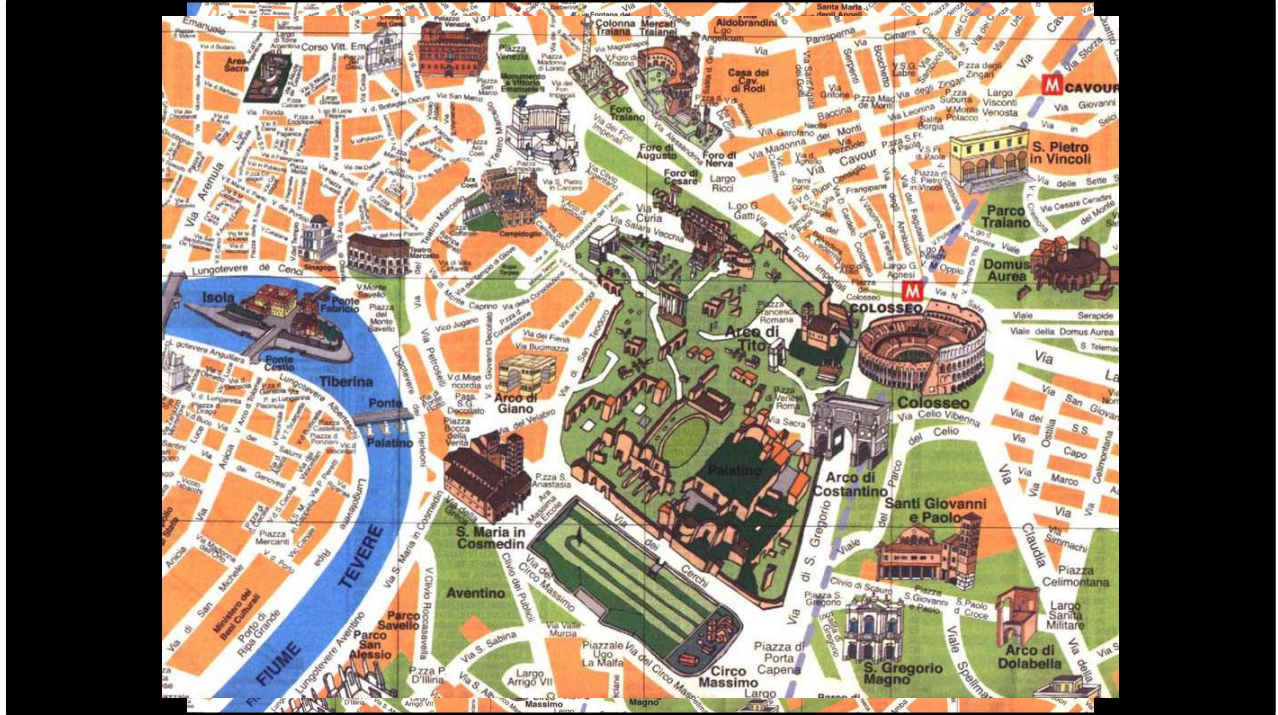


**This is the Temple to Antonius Fauvius from 141AD whose columns are well preserved because it was converted to a Roman Catholic Church, built inside it around 700AD.**



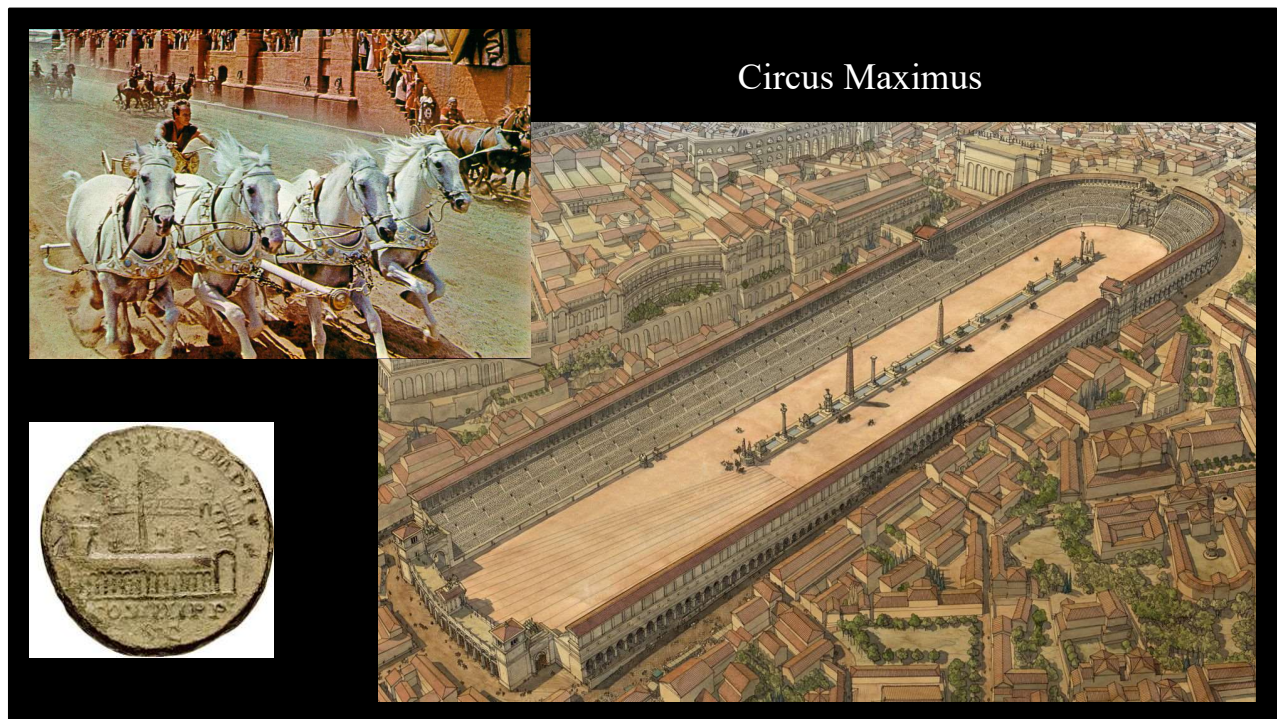
**The Temple of Saturn was the earliest at 498BC.**

**And the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus from 203AD next to a more recent Catholic Church.**



Here is the map of the forum near the colosseum and the circus maximus where we will walk next.





**This is the Circus Maximus that you saw in Ben Hur with the chariot races.**

**Here it is on a Roman coin.**

**And an illustration of how massive it was, the largest in the Roman Empire, holding 150,000 spectators in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.**



**Today it is just a beautiful city park overlooked by the Ancient palace of the emperors.**

Moses



**Nearby is the church of San Pietro di Vincoli featuring Michelangelo's amazing 8-foot-tall statue of Moses holding the ten commandment tablets from 1515.**



## Boca Verita



**And the Boca Veritas, or Mouth of Truth, where you put your hand in his mouth to get a true answer to your question.**

**You may remember Gregory Peck teased Audrey Hepburn in Roman Holiday by pretending it bit his hand off.**

Trajan's Column



Trajan's Market and Column is across the street, built in the 100s AD it is 125 feet tall with St Peter on top (replacing the Emperor Trajan).

The column commemorates historic battles in a storyboard frieze around it. **It can be climbed by a spiral staircase inside the column.**

**The gigantic monument is known derisively as "the Wedding Cake" by the Romans because it sits audaciously among the famous ancient ruins.**

Vittorio Emanuel



**It is the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele, built only 100 years ago to honor Victor Emmanuel II, the first king of a unified Italy.**





Capitoline Hill

**Next door is the Piazza del Campodoglio where the Capitoline Museums are on one of the 7 ancient hills of Rome.**

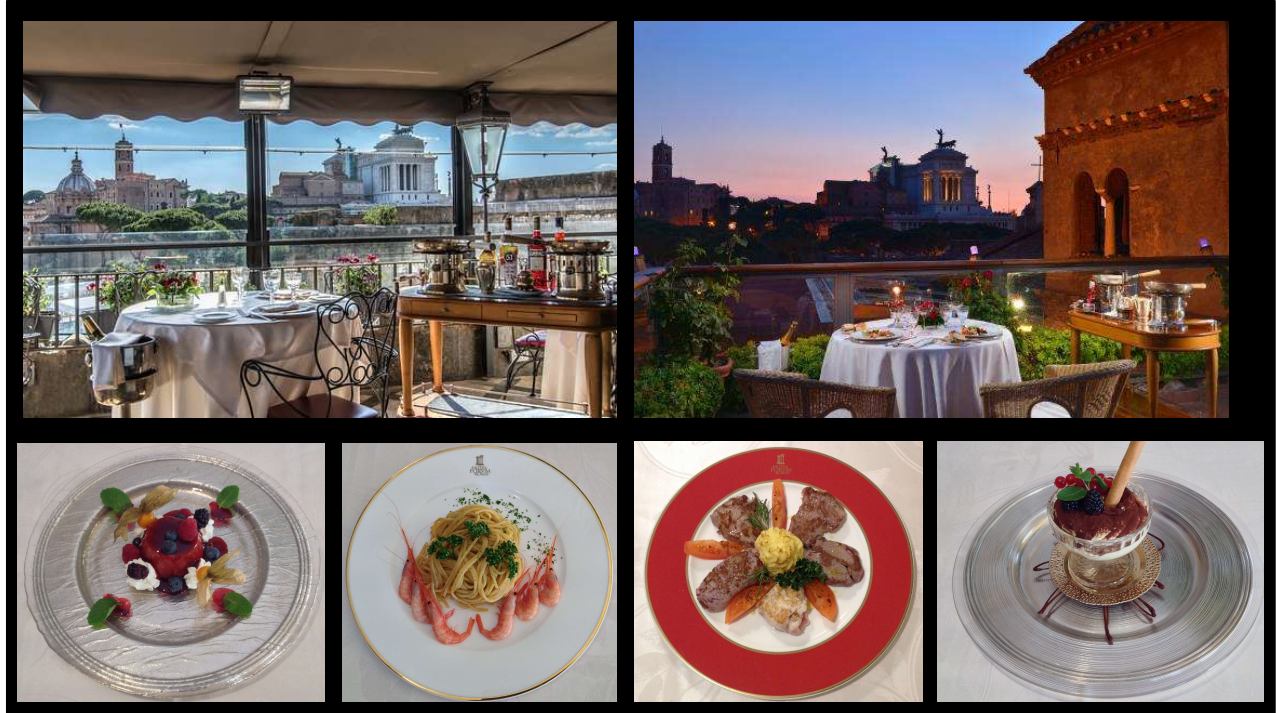
**As you walk up to the piazza you are flanked by imposing statues of Castor and Pollux.**

**Inside the museum are pieces of a colossal statue of Emperor Constantine that stood in the Forum and was toppled by the barbarians.**



**It has an interesting 12-star pattern on the floor designed by Michelangelo, who placed a statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius on horseback in the center in 1538.**

**Here are my boys Jonny and Joey overlooking the Piazza.**

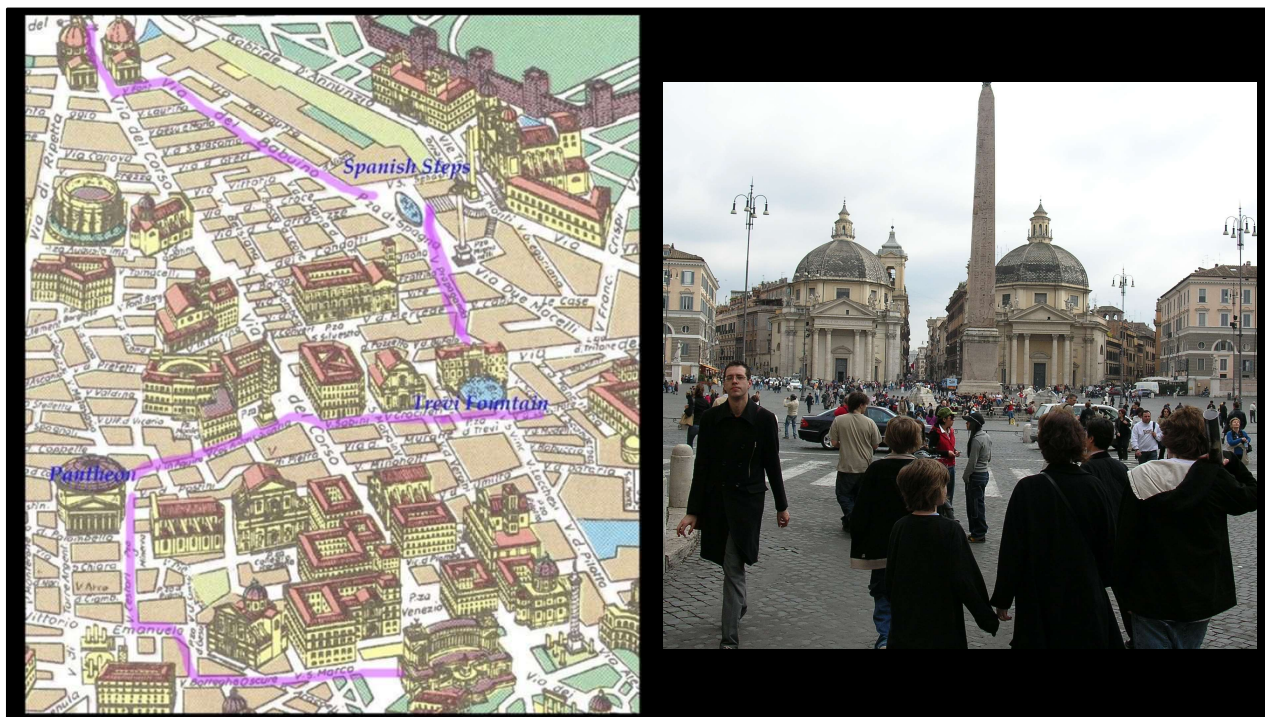


**At the end of the day, you can savor these delicious dishes overlooking the sites at the Ristorante Forum Roof Garden:**

**Fruit parfait, prawns and pasta, mixed grille, and tiramisu for dessert .**







**Now on our 2nd day in Rome we take the metro to Piazza di Popolo shown here, to begin our long walk from the Spanish Steps to the Vatican,**

**with many famous stops along the way that you will never forget.**



**The Spanish Steps - climbing a steep slope up to the Trinità di Monti church at the top.  
(The Spanish embassy used to be in the Piazza di Spagna at the base)**

**Many movie scenes were shot here like 'Roman Holiday' and 'The Talented Mr Ripley'  
with Matt Damon and Cate Blanchett**





**The steps are a great place to meet and in the evening sing along with the Italian guitar players.**



**From there we walk about eight blocks to the Trevi Fountain.**

**Along the way you will see what seem to be statues,  
but as you stare,  
you realize that they are frozen actors dressed up to  
collect tips from the tourists.**

Trevi Fountain



**The Trevi Fountain was finished in 1762 at the intersection of 3 streets.**

**And thus the name ‘Trevi’**

**It was built over an ancient aqueduct and is a huge Baroque stature of Neptune the God of the Sea and his horses.**





**It is beautiful all lit up at night with the sound of the falling water.**

**My students are throwing coins in the fountain.**

**The saying is that if you throw a coin over your shoulder and make a wish, you will return to Rome someday. (I did it 4 times, so it worked!)**



Many movies were filmed here including '3 Coins in a Fountain' and 'Gidget Goes to Rome' which they are showing here in the outside theater.



Gelato!

**We can stop nearby for some delicious gelato.  
The best ice cream in the world from the country that  
invented it.  
(The Emperors had snow brought down from the Alps to  
make it).**

**Notice they put a slice of the fruit on the gelato to tell you  
what flavor it is.**





‘Pizza al Taglio’ Literally meaning "pizza by the cut," is baked in square pans. The price of each slice is determined by the weight (about \$2 for 100 grams) so customers decide how big of a square slice they want.

The Pantheon



**The Pantheon – originally built by Marcus Agrippa 14 AD as a temple to all the Gods.**

**‘Pan’ means all and ‘theon’ means gods.**

**It has been a Catholic Church since the 7th century, which is why it is the most well-preserved ancient building in Rome.**



**It has a beautiful rotunda shape, with a domed ceiling,  
later influencing our US Capitol and Jefferson Memorial.**

**And it has a hole in the roof where you can stand in the rain inside sometimes.**





**As you pass through the huge 24-foot-tall ancient bronze doors, you see that the intricate marble floor has a drain in it underneath the hole in the dome.**

**On sunny days a circular spotlight follows the movement of the sun around the cavernous room.**

**It is a mausoleum for many famous people like Raphael, Voltaire, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, and Émile Zola.**



**In front of the Pantheon is a 300-year-old baroque fountains with funny faces on it.**

**One of the hundreds of freshwater fountains that are still running throughout Rome.**

Piazza Navona



**The next stop on our stroll, 5 minutes away is**

**The Piazza Navona, built on the ruins of Emperor Domitian's stadium so it is shaped like an oval track.**

**With three spectacular baroque fountains in it from the 1700s.**





**And here is my family in front of the four rivers fountain in 2005.**

**You may remember the scene in ‘Angels and Demons’ (2010) where Tom Hanks finds the murdered cardinal in this Fountain.**



**Here is Piazza Navona in 1975.**

**With its 3 fountains this is a favorite place to relax, drink a glass of wine, and listen to the street musicians,  
And have your portrait drawn.**



The 12 Angel Bridge

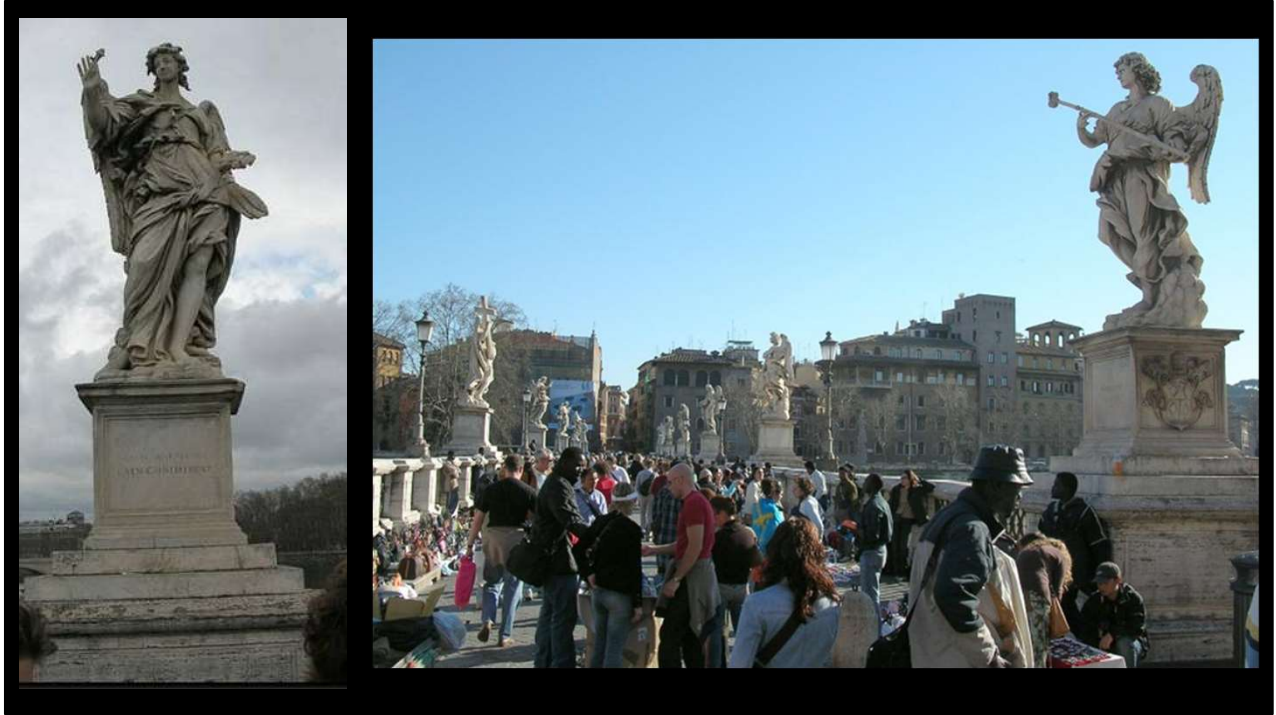


Now we'll cross over the Tiber River on the The Angel Bridge.

Built as a mausoleum for Emperor Hadrian in 134AD next to Castel St. Angelo

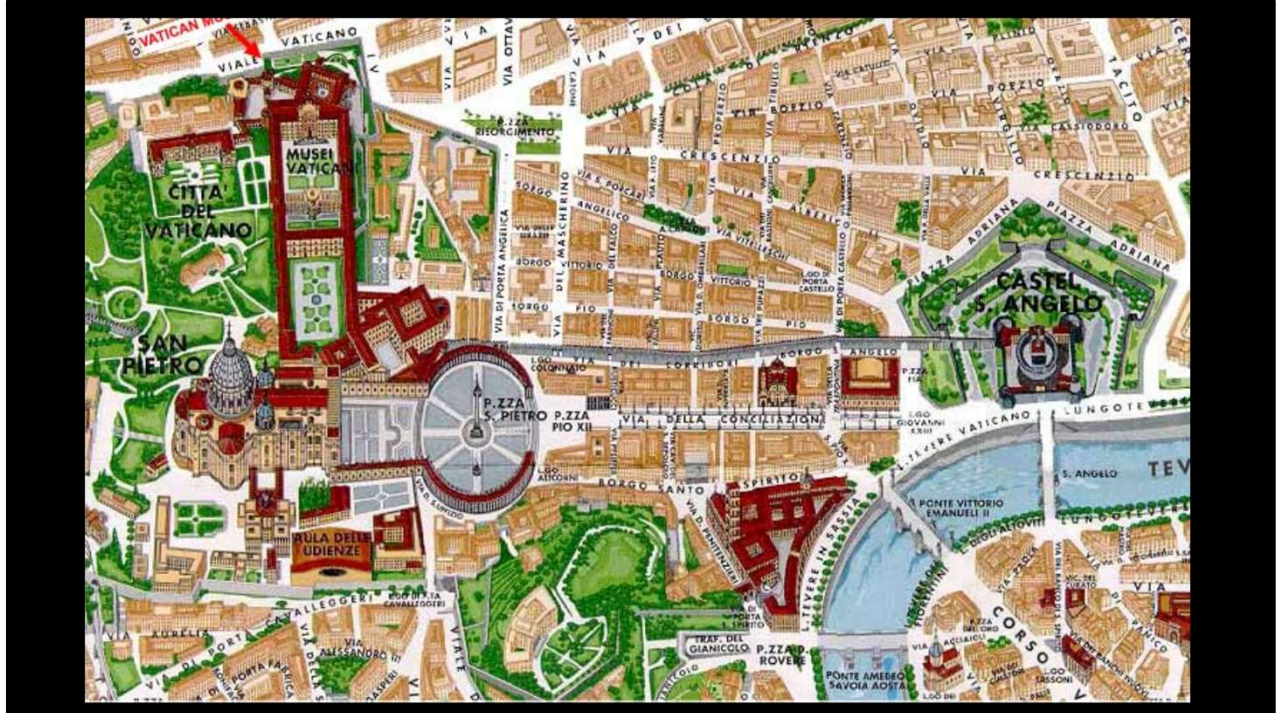
**It was later converted into a fortress, a prison,  
and a papal residence, where he  
would take refuge during difficult times.**





**It features 12 impressive marble statues of angels by Bernini.**

**Many street vendors from North Africa often sell their wares here.**



Here is a map of Vatican City which we are now entering as we walk from the Castle St Angelo to St. Peters Cathedral. It is a separate city within Rome that is the seat of the Catholic Church.

## St Peters Cathedral



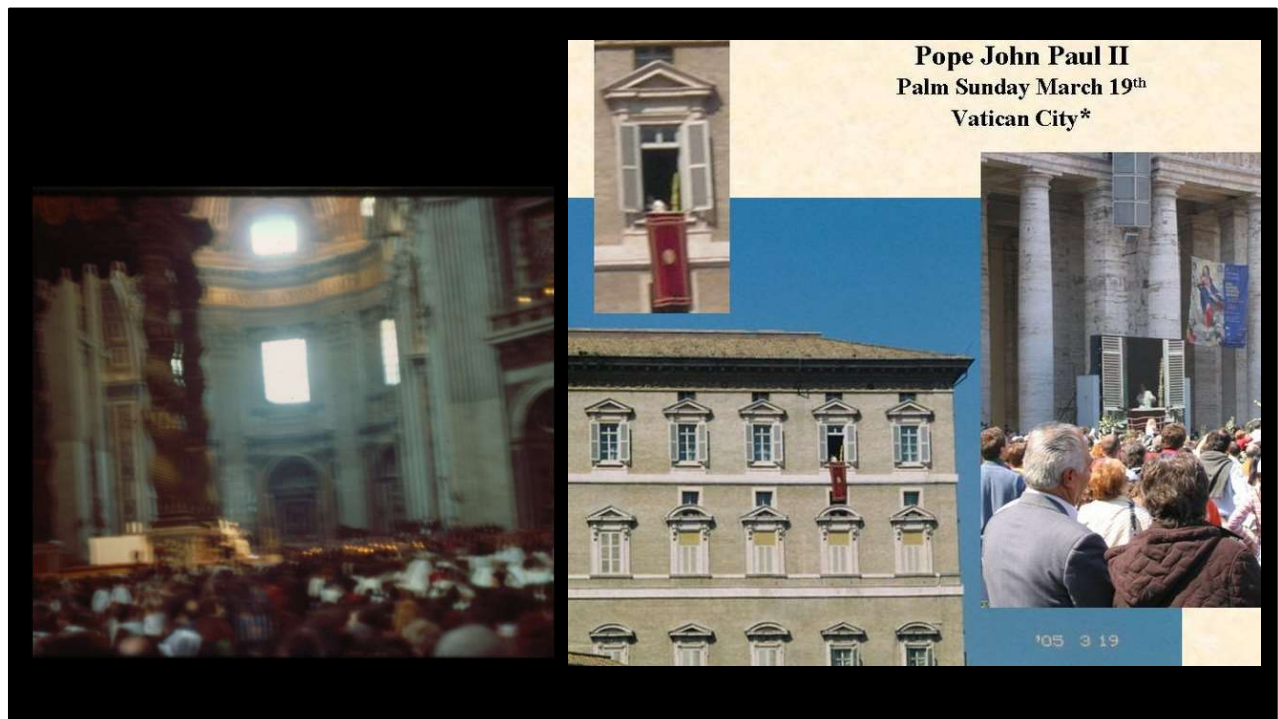
The façade of St Peters Basilica with a statue of St Peter.



**Here is the front of St Peters Cathedral, finished in 1626, after 150 years with designs by Michelangelo and Bernini among others.**

**St. Peter's is the most renowned work of Renaissance architecture and the largest church in the world.**





**The Pope lives in the Vatican Palace next door to St Peters basilica where he presides over the Catholic Services.**

**Here is my only photo of Pope Paul the 6th in 1975, it was very crowded, as I held my camera over my head.**

**In 2005 we happened to be there on Easter Week when Pope John Paul II gave his last Mass, usually from the 2<sup>nd</sup> window from the top right of his residence.**

**(We also got pickpocketed in the Metro on the way to St Peters, but that's another story.)**

**On that following Thursday when we were in Pompeii, the bells everywhere started**

ringing at the top of the hour for 84 times, signifying that he had just died, because he was 84 years old.



**So, weeks later the black smoke rose from the Sistine Chapel indicating that the Cardinals had voted for Pope Benedict to become the next Pope. Now it is Pope Francis.**

**Here are the Swiss guards in their strange uniforms that protect the Pope and Cardinals in Vatican City.**





**As you enter the church you hear the echoes of conversations bouncing off the 440' high ceiling and inlaid marble floor. The gigantic bronze alter, designed by Bernini is 128 feet tall.**

**The basilica is the burial site of Saint Peter, chief among Jesus's apostles and the first Bishop of Rome (Pope). His tomb is directly below the altar where he was crucified upside down by Emperor Nero in 64AD.**



**St. Peter started the line of 266 Popes seen here etched in marble. 91 Popes are buried here.**

**On the right as you walk in is Michelangelo's famous Pietà, 'the Pity', which he carved out of marble in 1499.**

**It is the only statue on which he carved his signature, because people couldn't believe he created it at the young age of 24.**



**The gigantic statues around the breathtaking interior are truly magnificent.**

**Here are two of them: of St Helena and Jesus Christ.**





**The Vatican Museum is connected to St Peter's Basilica.**

**The courtyard at the entrance has a modern sphere sculpture.**

**The Sistine Chapel, painted by Michelangelo is the rectangular building in the foreground here.**



**The sumptuous hallways go on forever it seems with priceless sculptures, tapestries, and paintings.**

**On the right is the famous statue of Laocoön and His Son with it's unbelievable serpents twisting around it.**



The Sistine Chapel

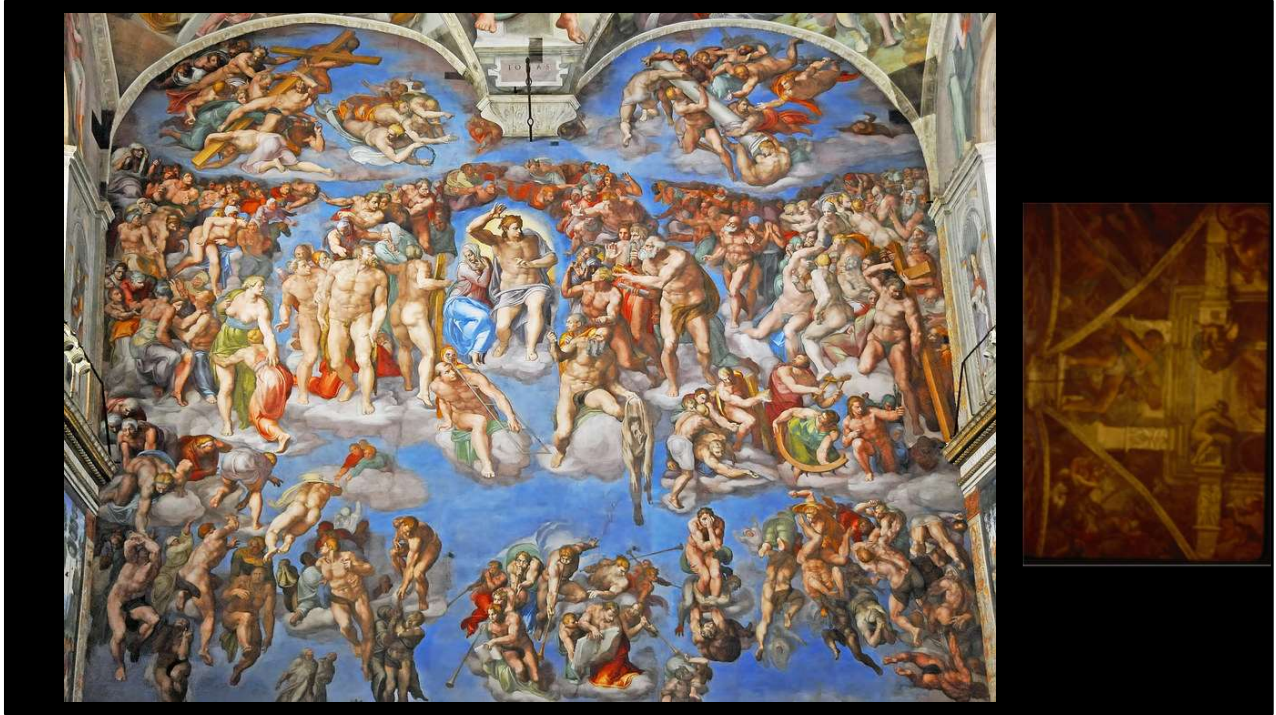


**At the end of the hall is a small door into the most famous chapel in the world; the Sistine Chapel.**

**This is where the Cardinals of the Catholic Church choose their Pope, like Pope Benedict seen here.**

**Michelangelo Buonorotti painted the incredible 'Last Judgement' on the back wall in 1541.**

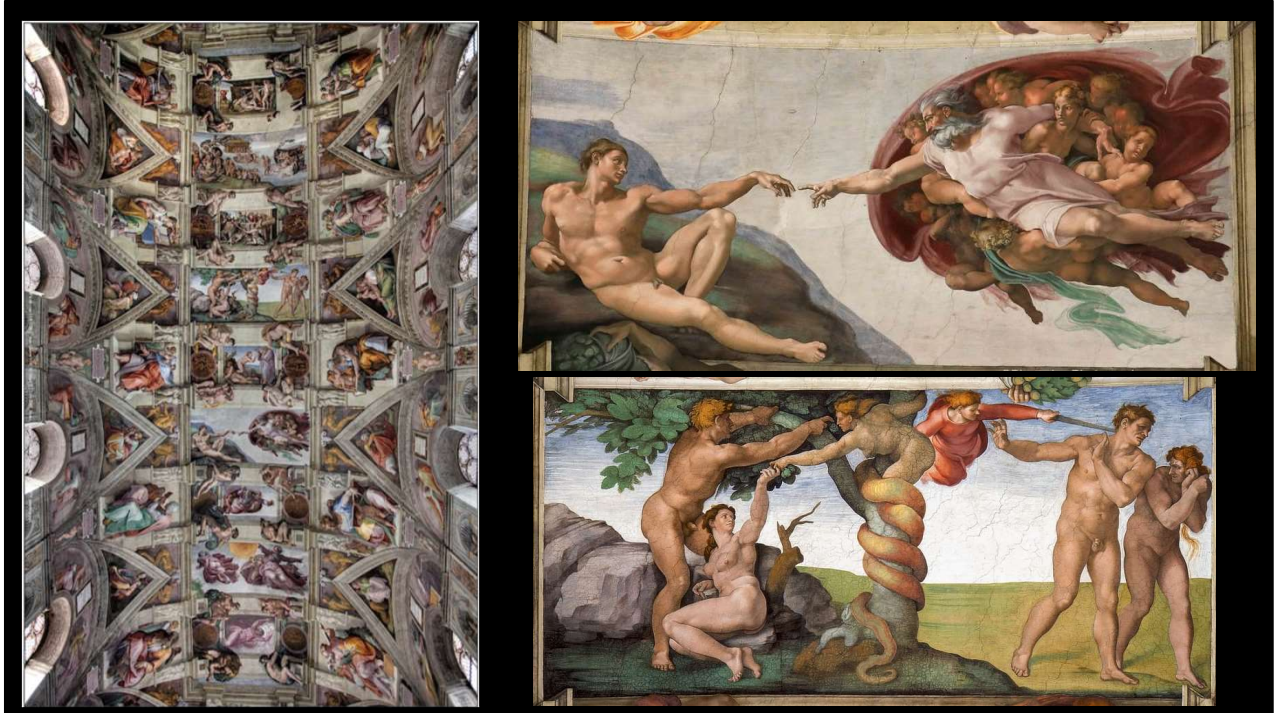




**Here it is up close.**

**The Last Judgement show Jesus Christ with all the Saints and Apostles and angels on his right, rising up to heaven with the Cross at the top. And on his left are all the sinners and demons descending down to Hell, with the Pagan column at top.**

**On the right is my photo of the Sistine Chapel ceiling in 1975 showing how dirty it was from 500 years of candle soot, before it was cleaned by 1994.**



**Michelangelo painted his amazing frescoes on the ceiling for 4 years until 1512. He laid on his back on the high scaffolding, struggling to see by candlelight as he quickly painted each of 340 figures, before the plaster dried.**

**Now you can see the vibrant colors and details after they spent 14 years cleaning it.**

**It depicts all the stories of the old testament. Here is God giving life to Adam. And Adam and Eve committing the first sin of eating the apple and being banished from the Garden of Eden.**





Here is St Peters at night.

And the alter with Gods rays shining down on me... it seems... Just kidding.





**Another interesting tour to go on is the spooky Catacombs underneath Rome where the Christians escaped persecution in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.**

**.**

**You walk through miles of eerie underground cemeteries with tombs and skulls.**

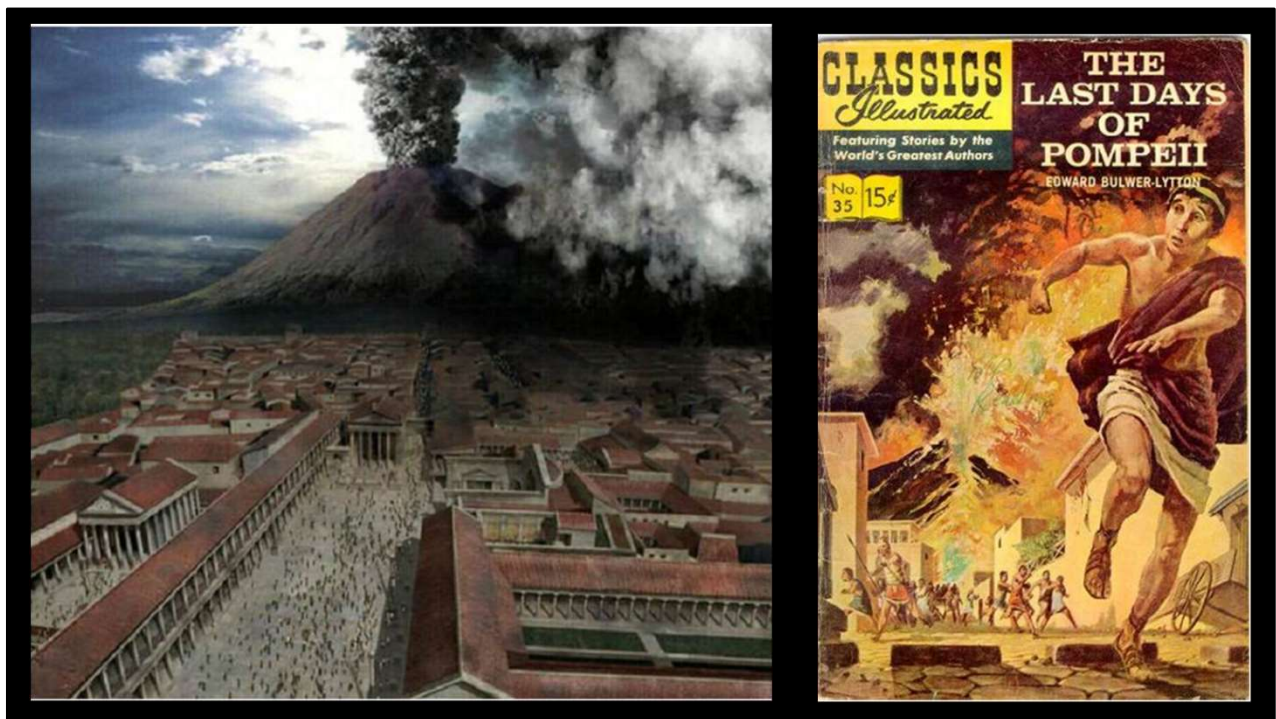




**First let's explore Pompeii, a small town of 5000 which was in the path of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius on August 24th 79AD (about 50 years after Jesus's death).**

**Here are my students in the ruins of the Basilica, which was the courthouse, where all judges and lawyers presided.**

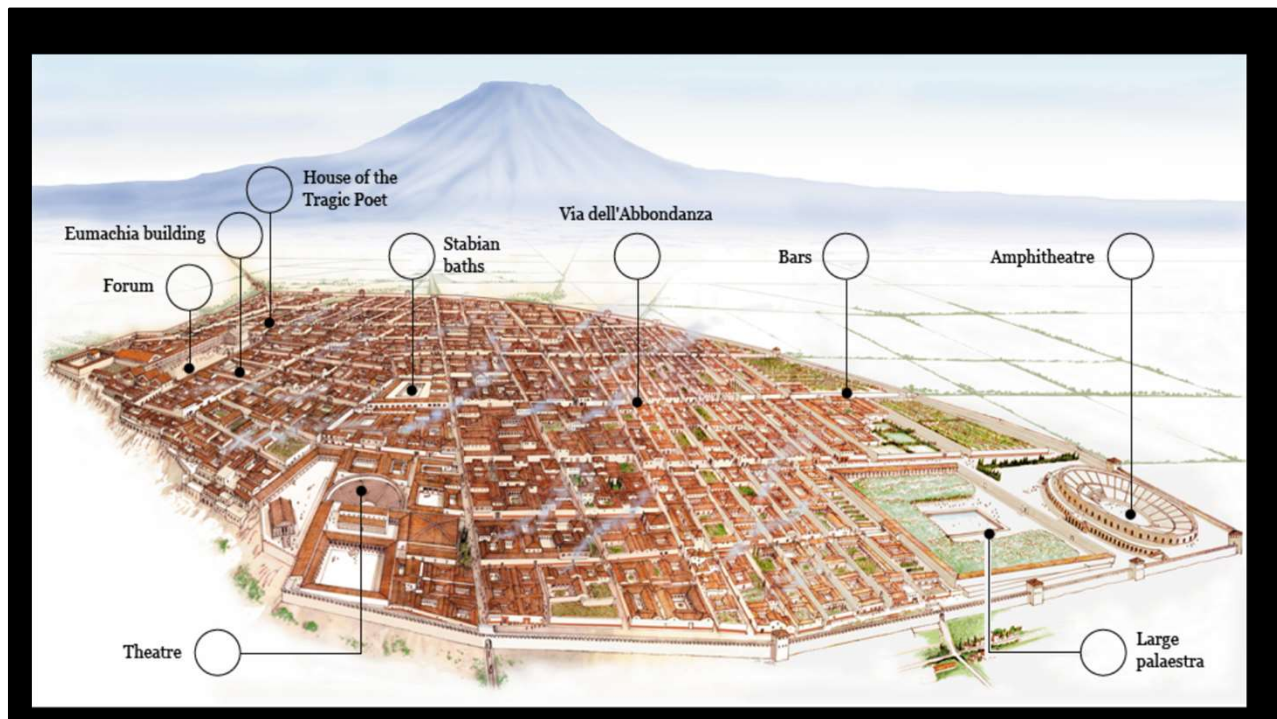




**When the volcano erupted, it started in the afternoon and covered the whole town with 20 feet of ash the next 16 hours, as it collapsed the tile roofs with big chunks of pumice but left the walls intact.**

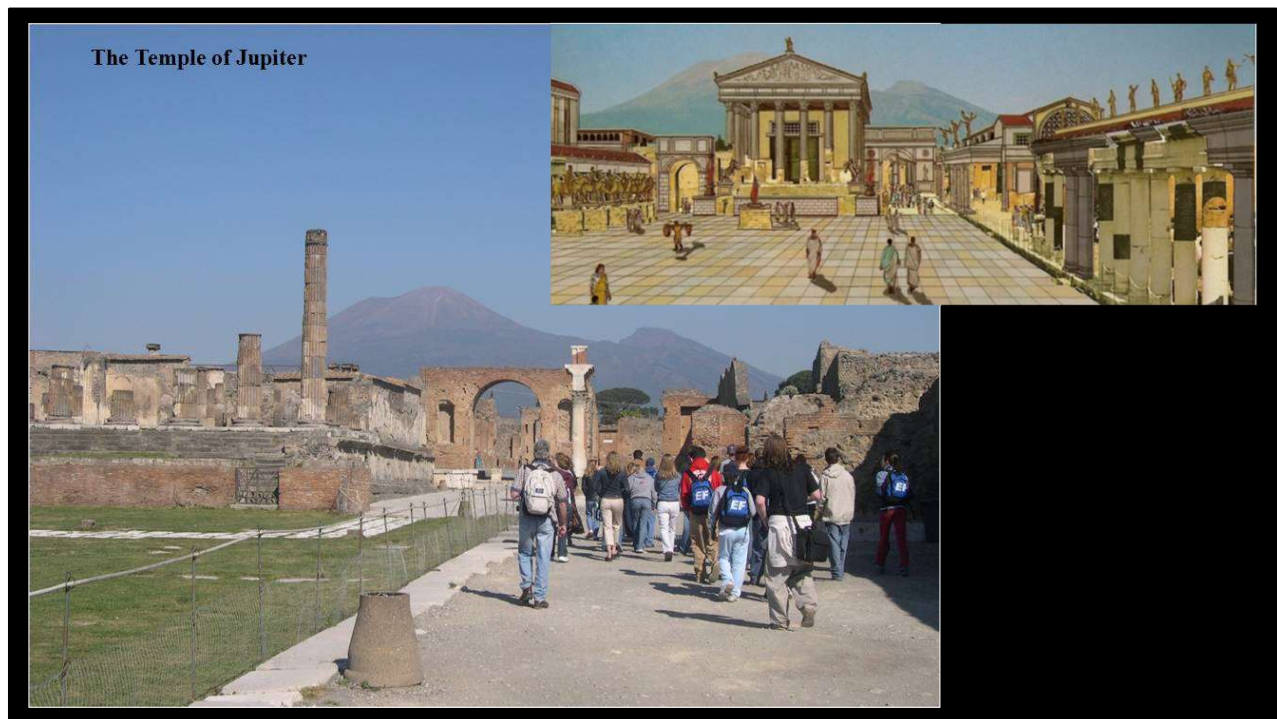
**An estimated 2,000 people died when they couldn't escape. They weren't overwhelmed by the lava, but rather were asphyxiated by the gases and ashes, and later covered in volcanic debris for 1700 years.**

**There are many books and movies about it, like this one.**



**Mount Vesuvius has a major eruption about every 2000 years and so it is overdue now and there are 3 million people living within 20 miles of it, mostly in Naples today.**

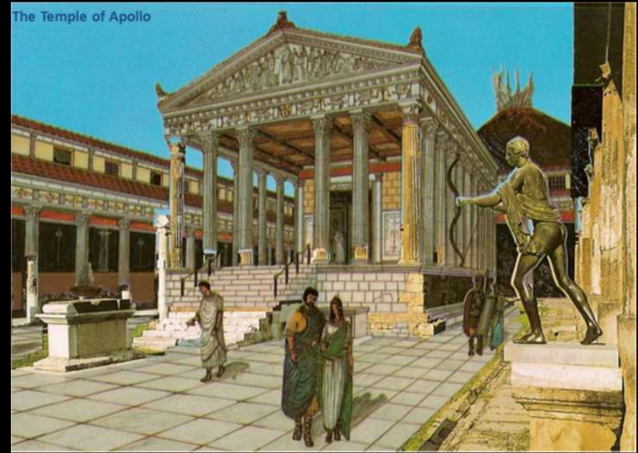
**You can see how close the mountain was in this illustrated map of Pompeii which shows some of the sites we'll visit like the Forum, the baths, the Theatres and the Amphitheatre.**



**Here is the Temple of Jupiter today in the main forum of Pompeii, and as it looked before 79AD.**

**You can see Mt. Vesuvius with it's top blown off in the distance.**





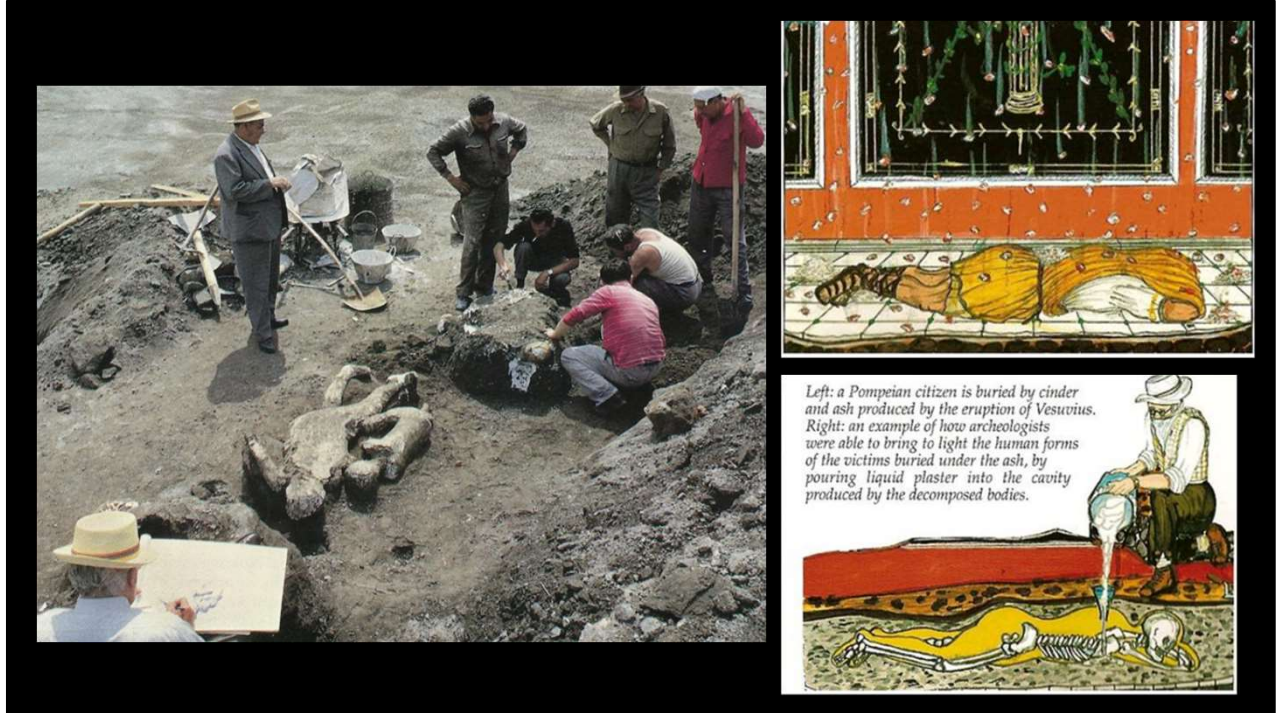
**Here is the iconic statue of Apollo, the God of the Sun with his bow and arrow, in the Temple erected to honor him.**

**The illustration on the right shows what it used to look like before 79AD.**



**The gases and heat of the pumice suffocated about 2000 people who didn't run away in the beginning.**

**The ash fell like a very heavy snowstorm all afternoon and evening, preserving their bodily position at the moment of their death.**



**There are about 1200 plaster casts of the bodies of the victims today.**

**When the excavators dug down through the 20 feet of ash a hundred years ago, they found a cavity in the solidified ash, they reached in to retrieve any jewelry or valuables that they were holding, but left their bones in place.**

**Then they poured liquid plaster into the hole, and when it solidified,**



**they could see their bodies position and the outline of their decomposed clothes frozen in time.**



**You can freely walk throughout the ruins all day for about 15 dollars today.**

**There are many public fountains in the narrow cobblestone streets, which had a sewer system. My two sons are standing on the crossing stones used to avoid the sewage.**

**You can also see here the deep indentations cut into the stone streets by wagon wheels for 250 years up until 79AD.**



**Here is a thermopile, a taverna where they sold wine and fish and hot fresh food.**

**This loaf of fresh bread had been on the counter for 1900 years.**

**It's a bit stale by now.**





## Bakery



Here is one of the bakeries uncovered at Pompeii. You can see in this illustration the way the slaves would turn the grindstones to make flour for the bread.



Baths

**You can walk through the Forum Baths where they relaxed moving from cold, to tepid, to hot saunas and pools.**

**They were called the frigidarium, tepidarium, and caldarium where you can splash cold water on your body here afterwards.**



**You can wander through the private homes of wealthy Pompeiians with their gardens and fountains and frescoes like this most well preserved one in the Villa of Mysteries.**

**This one depicts an initiation rite for the cult of Dionysus.**

**It's stunning colors were preserved under 20 feet of ash until 1909 when it was discovered.**





**In the ‘House of the Faun’ they found this magnificent mosaic made of a million tiles on a 16’ wall. It is of ‘Alexander the Great’ and his victory at Issus.**

**And this mosaic says “Cave Canum” or “Beware of the Dog”.**

**Many stray dogs roam about.**

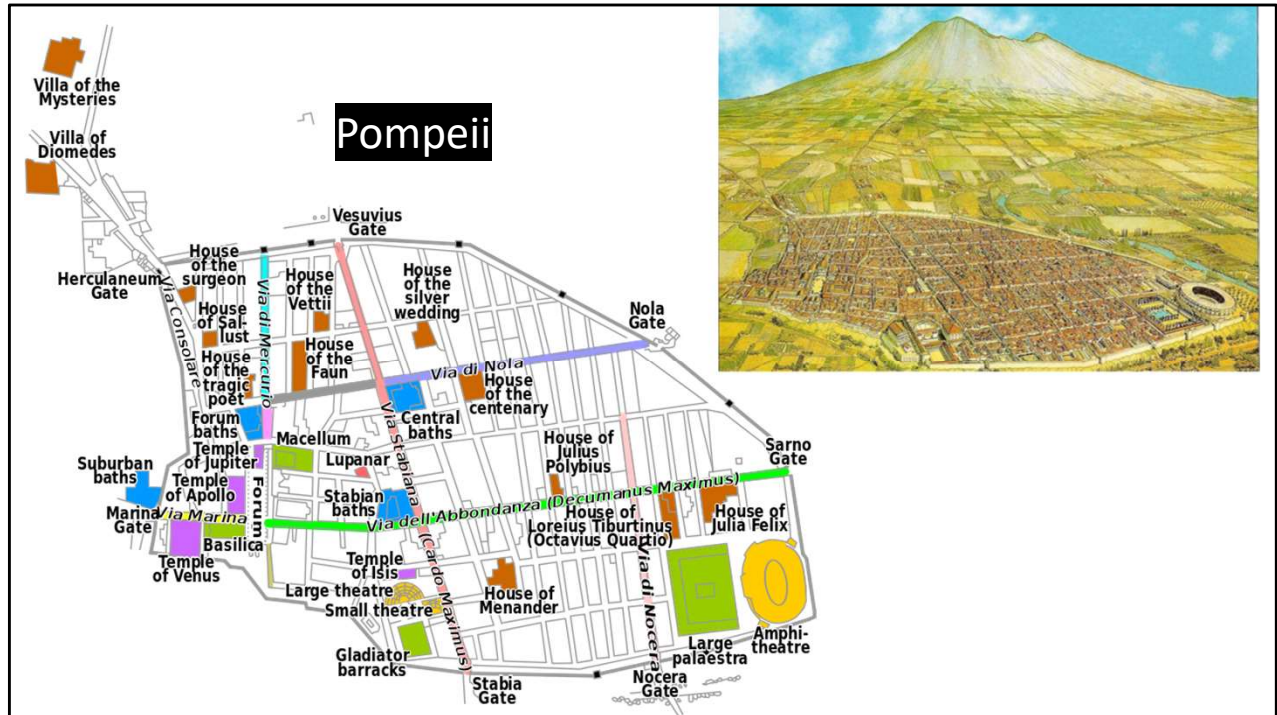
**This one is sleeping next to my son at a public fountain, one of many in Pompeii.**



**Since Pompeii was a harbor town that served the Roman Navy, it had over 20 bordellos including this one.**

**It's called a Lupanare, or 'she wolfs lair', because the women called out like wolves from the windows to entice the sailors to join them.**

**Public restrooms are located throughout Pompeii. As you can see they were less modest than we are today.**



Here is a map of where we have gone so far in Pompeii.

The Basilica, the Forum, the Temple of Apollo, the Baths, the House of Mysteries and the Lupanare.

Now let's explore the theatres, the gladiator barracks and amphitheater.





**There are two outdoor Theatres. Here is the larger one that held 4000 people, with Mt Vesuvius in the distance.**



**And here is the smaller, more well-preserved theater.**

**The Odeon was made of stone, covered with a roof, and held about 2000 people.**

**Here is the marble stage from the cheap seats.**



**Next door is a Palestra for gladiator training.**

**This scene from the movie ‘Spartacus’, shows them in training for the future battles in the arena.**

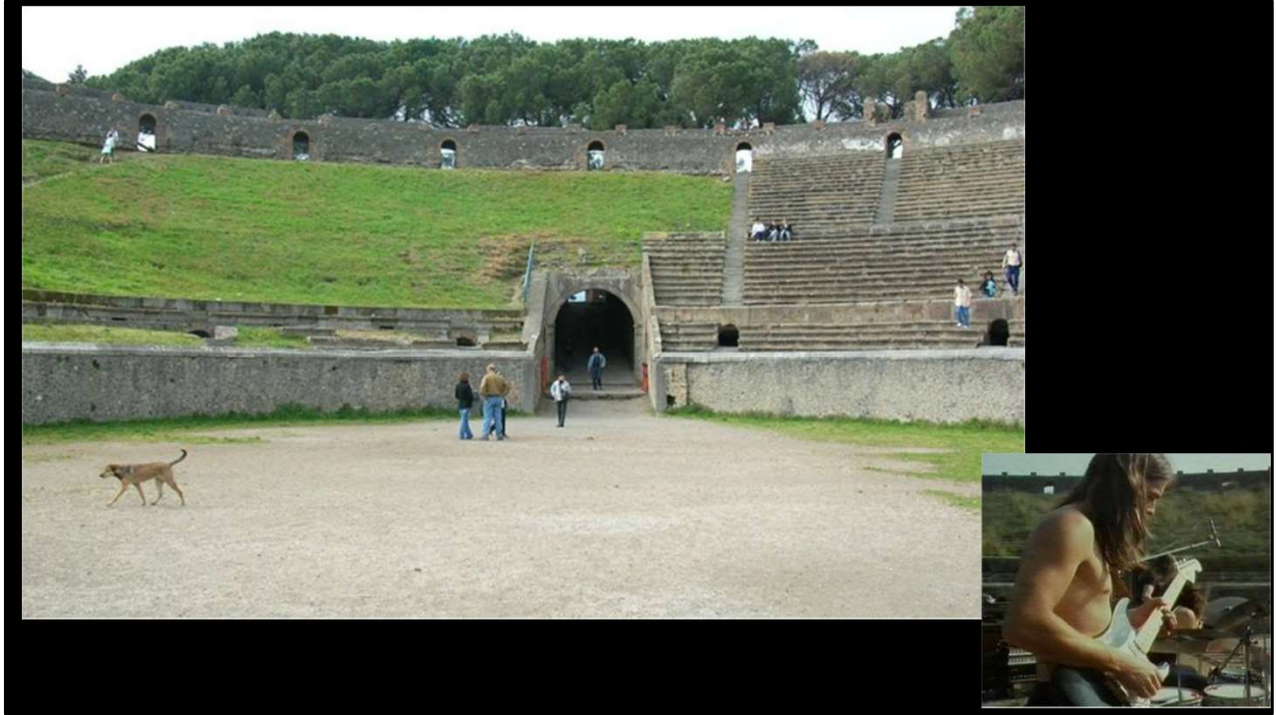
**And here is a mosaic of gladiators fighting.**





**The 80BC Amphitheatre is older and better preserved than the 80AD colosseum in Rome.**

**It held 20,000 people cheering on the gladiators who entered through an underground passageway from the Palaestra barracks next door.**



**This is the gladiator's view from of the inside of the amphitheater.**

**The rock band Pink Floyd famously made a movie performing here in 1971.**



Here are is the view from the stands overlooking the arena, with my 3 sons.



## Sorrento



So now we've seen Pompeii in the shadow of Mt Vesuvius that is about a half hour away from our Hotel in Sorrento.

Sorrento is a wonderful seaside town where you will enjoy eating outside in one of the many cafés.

Here is the main piazza and some old timers discussing the news of the day.



Here is an old fisherman in Sorrento mending his sardine net.



**There are many fruit and vegetable markets to browse in Sorrento.**

**Look at the size of these lemons!**

**Fruits grow very well in the volcanic soil around Naples Bay and the volcano.**





**You eat in an outside café, or shop for many wonderful souvenirs in Sorrento's shops.**

**These are scenes from a walking tour of Sorrento.**

**I recommend for an immersive experience, that the next time you are on the internet with Youtube:**

**Just type in 'walking tour' and any destination, like Paris, Rome, New York, or Athens and you will slowly walk around like you are really there with all the sights and sounds for free.**



**We stayed at the Hotel Marina Grande Sorrento, on the water, with a view of Mt. Vesuvius across the Bay of Naples, for 100 Euros per night in March.**

**It's a few blocks from Sorrento, and there are beaches and restaurants in the harbor.**

Arrivederci Sorrento



Here is Marina Grande, from the dock with all its beautiful fishing boats.

Arrivederci (Goodbye) Sorrento



## The Amalfi Coast



**We hired a driver who met us on the dock and suggested to us that for \$150 he would spend the day driving our family down the beautiful Amalfi Coast.**

**The most incredible drive we've have ever been on in our life.**



**It road winds along coast between the mountains and the seaside cliffs through many spectacular harbor towns like Positano and Amalfi.**



The aerial view shows how precarious the 2-way road is with many bridges crossing deep ravines.





**Motorcyclists love the hairpin turns and picturesque villages.**

Positano



**Here is Positano, a stunning artist and fishing village now a tourist mecca.**





**Positano is know for it's colorful cliffside hotels and restaurants overlooking the harbor.**





**A fisherman is sanding his boat before applying a fresh coat of paint.**



**Furore is one of many breath-taking villages, some with caves to explore by boat.**

Atrani



Atrani is one of the towns. With arches holding up the roadway as it passes the harbor.



## Amalfi



**And on to Amalfi, a powerful commercial center for merchants a thousand years ago.**



**The church at Amalfi basilica has a long history. Here are the steps leading up to the church under restoration.**

It was the capital of the maritime republic known as the Duchy of Amalfi, an important trading power in the Mediterranean between 839 and around 1200AD.



**Arrivederci Amalfi Coast**





**Bonjourno to Capri.**

**Capri is a 20 minute ferry ride from Sorrento.**



**This ancient island was once the home of Emperor of Rome; Tiberius, for 20 years, during the time that Jesus was crucified.**

**His villa was called Villa Jovis. Here are the ruins on the cliffs that he would toss slaves off of if they displeased him.**

**These huge rocks are called Faraglioni, where millionaires from around the world anchor their yachts.**



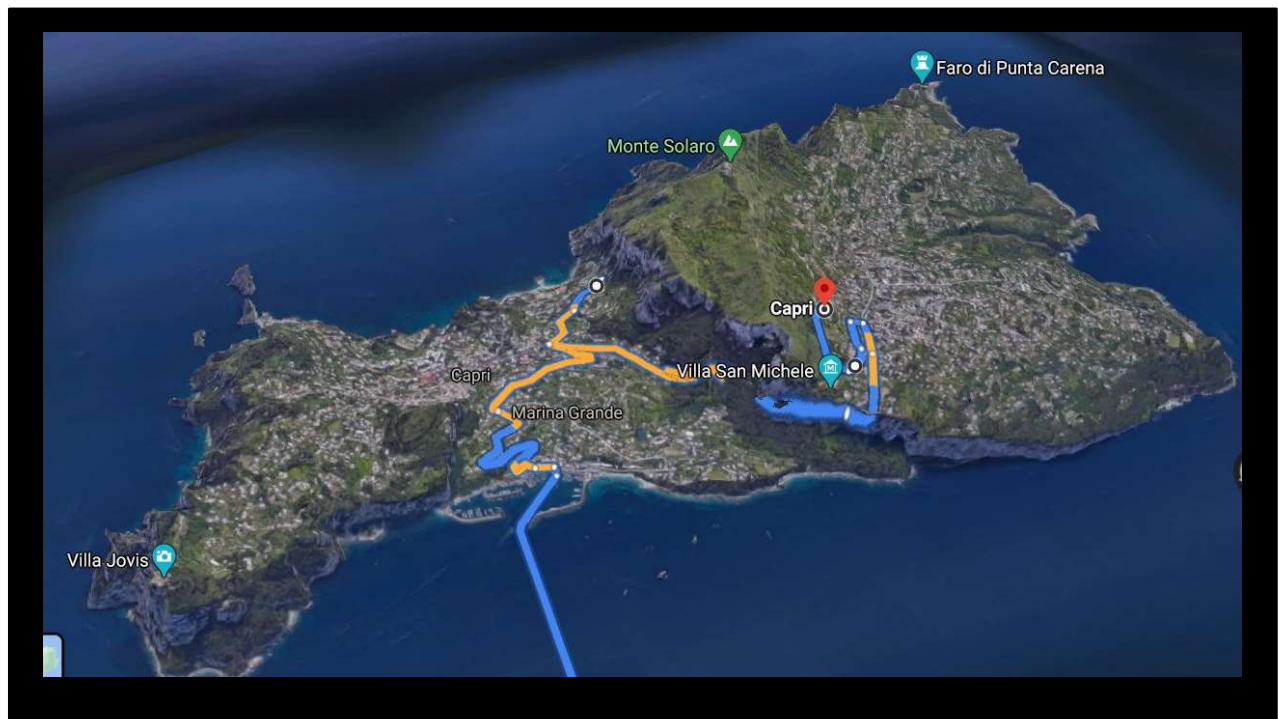
**Colorful fishing boats are lined up on shore by the pier in Marina Grande.**





**The main harbor Marina Grande.**

**Joey is enjoying a big gelato parfait in the café there.**



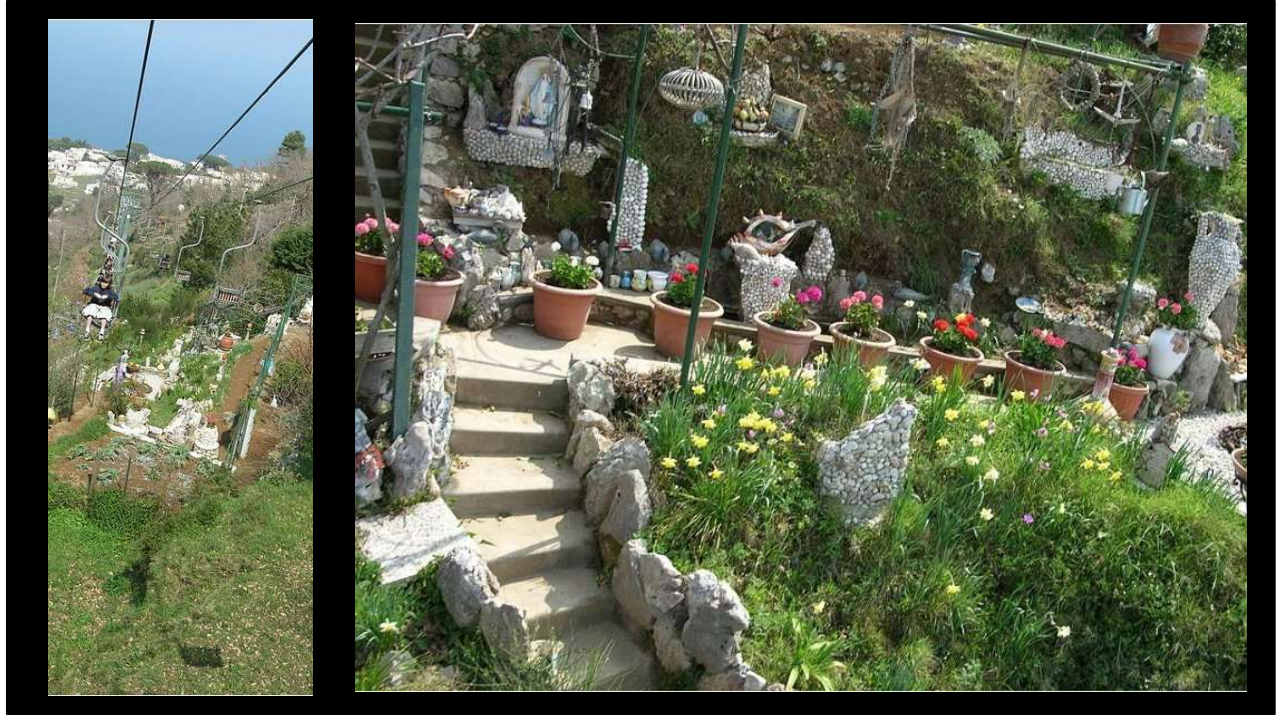
Here is a map of it showing the Marinas; Grande and Piccolo for big and small. The Villa Jovis and the ski lift up to Mt Solaro.



**We will take a winding bus ride along the cliffs to Anacapri,  
Here looking back at the harbor.**

**Near the top we will ride the ski lift up to Mt Solaro.**





**One of the funnest experiences in Italy is to take the lift ride to Mt Solaro.**

**One person per chair, you can talk to each other as you slowly float over Italian rock gardens and ponds.**



**Once you reach the top of Mt Solaro you are treated with this spectacular view of Capri from the with the Amalfi Coast in the distance.**

**The Faraglioni Rocks on the right. You can hike down to the town for an hour if you want.**

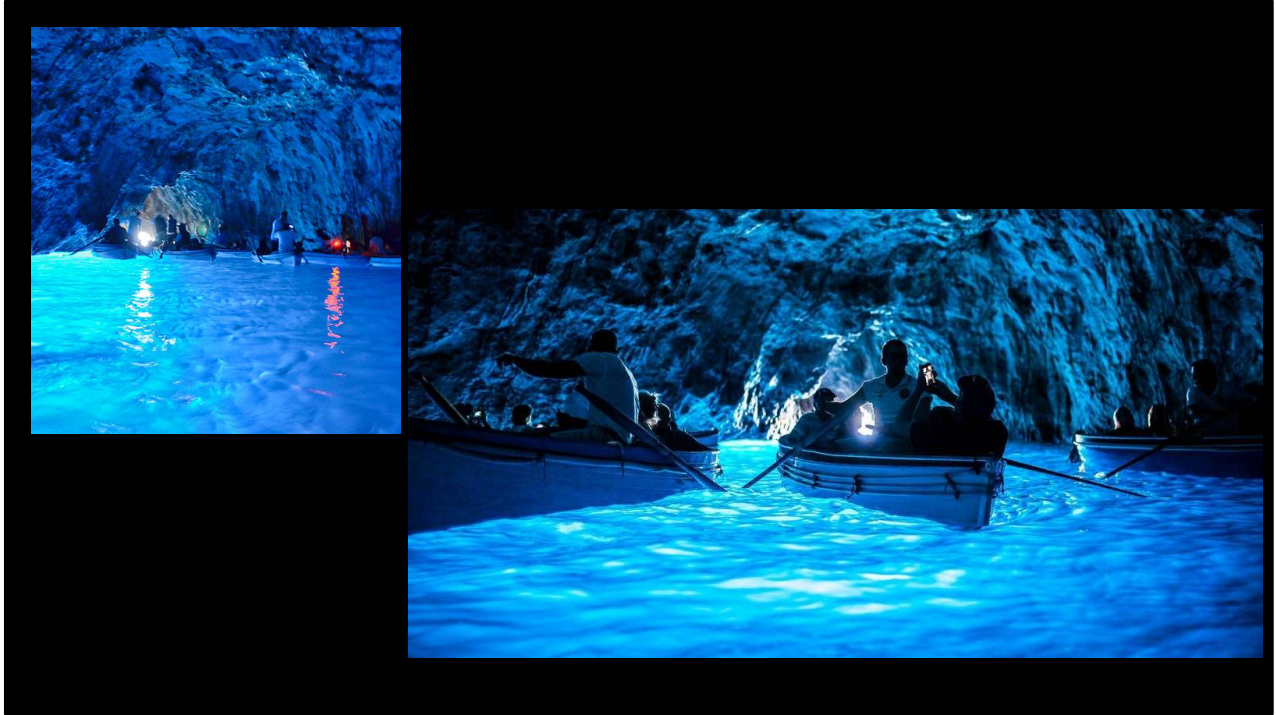


**Capri town is a great place to browse the high-end fashion stores that are patronized by the high society yacht owning elites who anchor here at Capri.**





**Capri is known for its huge lemons, with which it makes Limoncello liqueur, and perfume.**



**The Blue Grotto is a group of caves on the water that tourists go on a boat ride through to experience the natural blue colors of the crystal clear water.**

ARRIVEDERCI  
CAPRI



**And with that let's bid goodbye to Capri and the Bay of Naples.**





Arrivederci Italy

Now we fly back to Minnesota

Thanks,  
By Bill Jepson  
Minnetonka MN