

## PROGRAM

### SACRED PILGRIMAGE TOUR

Rome – Lourdes – Fátima

7 Days / 6 Nights

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#### DAY 1 – ROME | Arrival and Welcome

**MORNING & AFTERNOON** Upon arrival at Rome Airport, we will collect our luggage and meet our experienced guide, who will welcome us warmly and lead us through the eternal corridors of history. We will transfer by private coach to our comfortable hotel, where we will complete our check-in and settle into our accommodations.

**EVENING** This evening, our pilgrimage begins in earnest as we gather for a welcome dinner. This is an opportunity to meet fellow pilgrims, establish the bonds of spiritual community that will sustain us throughout our journey, and reflect on the sacred intentions that have brought us together. We share a meal and conversation, setting the tone for the transformative experiences ahead.

Overnight in Rome.

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#### DAY 2 – ROME | The Vicar of Christ and Early Christian Heritage

**EARLY MORNING** Before dawn breaks, we begin with a light breakfast to strengthen ourselves for the spiritual experience awaiting us. We transfer to St. Peter's Square, where thousands gather to witness one of Christianity's most profound moments: the Papal Audience with His Holiness, the Pope.

We arrive well in advance to secure good viewing positions. Pilgrims are encouraged to bring religious items—rosaries, medals, small crosses—which will receive the Pope's blessing. The Papal Audience unfolds with solemnity: His Holiness delivers a spiritual address touching on themes central to our faith, followed by prayers, a brief homily filled with wisdom, and concludes with the Apostolic Blessing—a moment of grace that many pilgrims describe as transformative.

**MIDDAY** Following this profound experience, we enjoy lunch at a local restaurant in the area surrounding St. Peter's, taking time to reflect on what we have witnessed and to refresh ourselves.

**AFTERNOON** We then ascend the famous Holy Stairs, traditionally believed to be those very steps that our Lord Jesus Christ climbed during His Passion and trial before Pontius Pilate. As pilgrims have done for centuries, we climb these ancient stones in prayer and contemplation, feeling the weight of centuries of faith beneath our feet.

A sacred Mass is celebrated at this holy site, deepening our spiritual connection to the passion and suffering of Christ.

Following Mass, we visit St. John Lateran, the Cathedral of Rome and acknowledged as the "Mother of all Churches in the World." This magnificent basilica serves as the principal church of the Diocese of Rome and contains within its walls the spiritual heritage of the early Christian community.

We then proceed to the Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, a sanctuary holding one of Christianity's most precious treasures: relics of the True Cross, brought from the Holy Land to Rome by St. Helena in the 4th century. Standing before these sacred remnants connects us directly to the passion of Christ and to the early Church's most devoted followers.

**EVENING** We return to our hotel for dinner and reflection on the day's profound spiritual experiences.

Overnight in Rome.

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#### DAY 3 – ROME | The Glory of Ancient Rome and Sacred Tradition

**MORNING** After breakfast, we embark on a comprehensive historical tour of Ancient Rome, walking along the very streets where emperors, soldiers, and ordinary citizens once traversed. Our expert guide brings to life the stories of Rome's imperial past.

We stroll through the Roman Forum, the civic and religious heart of the ancient city, where temples, markets, and gathering places reveal the sophistication of Roman civilization. We then explore the iconic Colosseum, that colossal amphitheater that stands as perhaps the most recognizable symbol of the Roman Empire's architectural mastery and engineering prowess.

**AFTERNOON** A sacred Mass is celebrated at the Basilica of Saint Clement, a remarkable church that reveals layers of Christian history. Beneath the current basilica lie the remains of earlier churches and structures, creating a unique archaeological experience that demonstrates how Christianity transformed Rome's spiritual landscape.

Following Mass, we transfer to the magnificent St. Mary Major, one of Rome's most venerated basilicas. Here, pilgrims have the opportunity to view the sacred relics of the Holy Crib of the Nativity—the very manger in which Jesus was born—housed within this sanctuary of faith.

**EVENING** We return to our hotel for dinner and overnight rest, our hearts filled with the spiritual and historical richness of our pilgrimage.

Overnight in Rome.

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#### DAY 4 – ROME | The Apostles and the Heart of Faith

**EARLY MORNING** Our day begins with an early visit to the Catacombs of St. Callixtus, vast underground burial chambers that served as both cemetery and place of refuge for the early Christian community. These ancient passages, carved from the earth beneath Rome, hold the tombs of numerous early popes and martyrs from the 2nd to 4th centuries. Walking through these sacred corridors, we are profoundly reminded of the courage and faith of those who came before us, who worshipped in secret and gave their lives for their beliefs.

A solemn Mass is celebrated within these sacred catacombs, connecting us across centuries to the faithful of ancient times.

**LATE MORNING** Following our spiritual time in the catacombs, we visit the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, built over the sacred tomb of St. Paul the Apostle. This magnificent sanctuary stands as a testament to the

enduring legacy of one of Christianity's greatest missionaries and theologians. We pay our respects at this holy site, contemplating the profound impact of Paul's epistles and teachings on the development of Christian faith.

**AFTERNOON** We arrive at St. Peter's Basilica, the largest and most spiritually significant Catholic church in the world. Here, we encounter the masterworks of Renaissance genius: Michelangelo's incomparable Pietà, the haunting sculpture depicting Mary cradling the body of her crucified Son. We also visit the tomb of St. John Paul II, the beloved pope whose profound spiritual leadership touched millions.

As a special grace, pilgrims will walk through the Holy Door of St. Peter's, an experience rich in spiritual significance. The Holy Door represents Christ Himself—the "gate" through which we pass to enter into God's presence. Tradition teaches that those who pass through a Holy Door with sincere devotion receive a plenary indulgence, a complete remission of the temporal punishment due to sin. This passage becomes a tangible moment of transformation and reconciliation with God.

**LATE AFTERNOON** We then enter the Vatican Museums, one of the world's greatest repositories of human artistic and cultural achievement. Our guided tour leads us through gallery after gallery of masterpieces spanning centuries: sculptures, paintings, tapestries, and manuscripts that represent the pinnacle of human creativity.

The culmination of our museum experience is our entrance into the Sistine Chapel, where we gaze upward in wonder at Michelangelo's breathtaking ceiling fresco. The "Creation of Adam," in which God and man reach toward each other across the vault, stands as one of history's most iconic artistic moments. Around this central scene unfolds the entire narrative of Genesis and humanity's relationship with the Divine. The experience of standing beneath these frescoes—painted by Michelangelo while lying on scaffolding high above the chapel floor—is one that few pilgrims forget.

**EVENING** We return to our hotel for dinner and overnight rest, our minds and spirits elevated by days immersed in Rome's extraordinary spiritual and artistic heritage.

Overnight in Rome.

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#### DAY 5 – FROM ROME TO LOURDES | Journey to the Grotto

**MORNING** This morning, we transfer to the airport for our flight to France. The journey carries us north, away from the ancient stones of Rome toward a different kind of sacred site—one shaped not by imperial power but by the tender mercy of the Virgin Mary revealed to a humble girl.

**AFTERNOON** Upon arrival in Toulouse, we collect our luggage and begin our transfer to Lourdes, a pilgrimage destination that has drawn millions of faithful from around the world. Lourdes is sanctified by the appearances of the Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Bernadette Soubirous in 1858, a series of divine encounters that transformed this small mountain town into one of Catholicism's most important pilgrimage sites.

We arrive at our hotel and check in, then immediately make our way to the Grotto of Massabielle, the sacred site where Our Lady appeared to young Bernadette. This grotto, nestled against a rocky hillside, has become a place of profound spiritual encounter. The waters flowing from the spring discovered during the apparitions are believed by many pilgrims to possess healing properties, and countless individuals have experienced spiritual and physical healing here.

**EVENING** This evening, we have the opportunity to participate in the Candlelight Rosary procession at the Grotto—a deeply moving experience. Thousands of pilgrims, holding lighted candles, process in prayer and song through the sanctuary as darkness falls. The flickering candlelight reflecting off the grotto stone, the unified voices in prayer, and the sense of communal faith create an atmosphere of profound grace and spiritual presence.

Dinner and overnight in Lourdes.

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#### DAY 6 – LOURDES | St. Bernadette's Legacy and Marian Devotion

**MORNING** Our day begins with a sacred Mass celebrated at the Grotto by our spiritual director, a moment of quiet intimacy before the day's activities unfold. The Grotto at early morning holds a special peace—fewer crowds, the light of dawn illuminating the stone, and a profound sense of the Virgin Mary's protective presence.

**LATE MORNING** Following Mass, we embark on a guided tour that brings us into the life of St. Bernadette herself. We visit her childhood home, the modest dwelling where this humble girl lived before being chosen as a messenger of the Virgin Mary. Standing in these simple rooms, we contemplate how the Divine often works through the powerless and the young.

We then visit the magnificent Basilica, built to honor the apparitions and accommodate the millions of pilgrims who come seeking intercession and grace. This grand church represents the Church's official recognition of the apparitions and stands as a monument to Marian devotion.

We also visit the Basilica of St. Pius X, a modern sanctuary designed to accommodate large gatherings of pilgrims, where many masses and prayer services are held throughout the day.

Our walking tour includes sites connected to St. Bernadette's spiritual journey and her encounters with the Blessed Virgin, allowing us to walk, quite literally, in the footsteps of this saint whose simple faith changed the spiritual landscape of Europe.

**AFTERNOON** The afternoon is yours to spend as you wish. Some pilgrims spend time in personal prayer before the Grotto, others visit the healing waters, attend adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, or explore the shops and gardens surrounding the sanctuary. This time for personal devotion and reflection allows each pilgrim to deepen their own spiritual experience according to their needs.

**EVENING** This evening, we again participate in the Candlelight Rosary procession, that moving ritual of communal prayer that continues night after night at this sacred site. Standing with pilgrims from every corner of the world, united in faith and prayer, creates a powerful sense of the universal Church and the communion of saints.

Dinner and overnight in Lourdes.

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#### DAY 7 – FROM LOURDES TO FÁTIMA | Eucharistic Miracles and Portuguese Apparitions

**MORNING** This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Lisbon, Portugal. Our pilgrimage now carries us to another of Catholicism's most sacred destinations—Fátima, where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three shepherd children in 1917.

**AFTERNOON** Upon arrival in Lisbon, we first pay homage at the birthplace of St. Anthony of Padua, the beloved saint known throughout the world as the patron of lost things and lost souls. This visit connects us to another dimension of Portuguese spirituality and Catholic heritage.

We then travel north to the town of Santarém, where we visit the Church of St. Stephen to contemplate one of Christianity's most remarkable miracles: the Eucharistic Miracle of Santarém. In this sacred space, pilgrims adore the consecrated Host that, according to tradition, has visibly demonstrated its sacred nature across the centuries. The mystery of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is made palpable here in a way that touches both faith and reason.

Following our time of prayer and contemplation, we continue on to Fátima, arriving as afternoon gives way to evening.

**EVENING** Tonight, we participate in the solemn Candlelight Procession at the Fátima shrine. As with Lourdes, this is a moment of profound communal prayer where thousands of pilgrims, candles in hand, process through the sanctuary in prayer and devotion. The Virgin Mary's promise to bring peace through devotion to her Immaculate Heart seems almost palpable in these moments.

We then check in to our hotel and gather for dinner, reflecting on the journey that has brought us to this sacred place.

Overnight in Fátima.

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#### DAY 8 – FÁTIMA | The Three Children and Our Lady's Messages

**MORNING** Our day begins with a sacred Mass celebrated at the Capelinha, the small chapel built over the very holm oak tree where Our Lady appeared five times to the three shepherd children—Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco—during the summer of 1917. Standing on this exact spot where heaven touched earth, where a young girl received messages for the modern world, fills pilgrims with profound emotion and spiritual awareness.

**LATE MORNING** Following Mass, we visit the magnificent Basilica of Fátima, a sanctuary built to honor the apparitions and accommodate pilgrims from around the world. The basilica's architecture and sacred art create an atmosphere conducive to prayer and contemplation. We also explore the full Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima, including the gardens and prayer spaces that surround this holy sanctuary.

**AFTERNOON** Our afternoon excursions take us to sites integral to the children's spiritual journey. We travel to Aljustrel, the village where the three children lived and where they experienced another profound encounter: the appearance of the Angel of Peace. This location deepens our understanding of the spiritual formation that prepared these simple children to receive the Virgin Mary's messages.

We then visit Valinhos, the site of an additional appearance of Our Lady in August of 1917, an encounter that further authenticated and confirmed the reality of the original apparitions. Standing in these sacred places, we contemplate the Virgin Mary's desire to communicate her message of prayer, penance, and devotion to a world in desperate need of spiritual renewal.

**EVENING** This evening, we participate once more in the Candlelight Procession, that moving ritual of communal prayer that transforms the sanctuary into a place of profound spiritual presence. The messages of

Fátima—calls to prayer, to the rosary, to personal conversion—seem to resonate through the very stones of this sanctuary.

Dinner and overnight in Fátima.

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#### DAY 9 – DEPARTURE | Return Home

**EARLY MORNING** We rise early and enjoy a light breakfast to prepare for our journey home. We then transfer to the airport for our return flight.

As we depart from Fátima, we carry with us not merely memories of sacred sites, but a transformed spiritual perspective. We have walked where saints walked, prayed where millions have found divine grace, and encountered the sacred in ways that will continue to unfold in our hearts and minds in the months and years ahead.

The pilgrimage does not truly end with our departure—rather, it continues as we integrate these experiences into our daily lives, carrying the light of faith, the intercession of Mary, and the communion of saints back to our homes and communities.

End of services