

Anacapa Italy 2012 Tour

Chaperones: Gordon and Suzie Sichi

Participants: Patrick Alcerro, Grayson Baggiolini, Julio Bernal, Alex Carlson, Hannah Erickson, Nichole Francia, Zinnia Gonzalez, Genevieve Hatfield, Alicia Kovary, Chris Lancashire, Colin Lancashire, Esai Macario, Isaac Macario, Molly Snyder, Douglas Throop, Kiara Trujillo

Thursday/Friday, July 5-6, Santa Barbara to Rome

Months of preparations included Gordon and Suzie's extensive planning, (mostly Gordon!), and research by each student about someplace on the itinerary which they shared orally to the group on the trip just before actually visiting the sight. Our 16 Anacapa students, including three alumni, arrived with great anticipation to Anacapa's campus on Thursday morning for good byes to family and friends, and transfer to LAX. We were slowed down when our Santa Barbara Airbus popped a rear tire in Carpinteria, but Airbus quickly sent another bus, and we were on our way 30 minutes later, arriving in plenty of time for our flight. Our Lufthansa flight included a transfer in Frankfurt, and we finally arrived in Rome on Friday afternoon and met Fabrizio, our courier for our panoramic bus tour into Rome. After a few stops to take our first peaks of the Eternal City, we checked into the clean and tidy Hotel Prati, strategically situated in a very nice neighborhood, five minutes from Vatican City. Our first excursion was to St. Peter's Square, followed by a stroll to our first dinner at Trattoria al Palazzaccio, which was outstanding. The menu included the first of our almost nightly tiramisù desserts, which we discovered has many delicious variations! We also began our evening ritual of finishing the meal with each person sharing something noticed or learned that day, a daily recap of the many things observed as we enjoyed the incredible experience of two weeks in Italy. Back to the hotel by foot and everyone crashed pretty early after our long flight.

Saturday, July 7, The Vatican and Walking Tour of Rome

We met our excellent Roman guide, Agnese Angelini, at the hotel who distributed the "whisper" headsets for our tour of the Vatican Museums. Highlights included the renowned collection of Roman antiquities, the Raphael Rooms, and of course, Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. Afterwards, we took the short cut into St. Peter's Basilica to wander through the largest cathedral in the world. Students had free time for lunch, and then met our same guide for an afternoon walking tour of Rome, including, Castel Sant' Angelo, Piazza Navona, the Pantheon, Trevi Fountain, and the Spanish Stairs. Dinner at Trattoria Vaticano da Gigi was so, so, and students then had free time after dinner and most made their curfews on time (two came in 15 minutes later).

Sunday, July 8, Imperial Tour of Rome and Mass at St. Peter's

This was our day for the Imperial Tour of Rome. We took the Metro subway to the Coliseum stop, met our same guide, Agnese, and started our tour at the nearby St. Peter in Chains to see Michelangelo's Moses, which was done for Pope Julius II's tomb. Afterwards, we walked to the nearby Trajan's Market, and then hustled over to make our 11:20 reserved entrance to the Coliseum. After the Coliseum, the tour continued to the Roman Forum. Along with the big highlights (Arch of Titus, Arch of Constantine, etc.), the students got to enter the newly opened House of the Vestal Virgins, which provided a good photo opportunity for our seven girls and Suzie. After saying goodbye to Agnese, we took the Metro to our specially arranged Sunday Lunch at La Villetta, founded in 1940 and still run by the same family. Roman soccer stars dine there often and their photos, along with other celebrities, filled the walls. Lunch started with an exceptional antipasto plate, followed by three different pastas, and gelato and fresh strawberries for desert. After lunch, we walked by the Roman Pyramid to catch the metro, and successfully transferred lines and made it back to the hotel in time for a Sunday siesta. We met in the lobby at 5:10 and walked over to attend the 5:30 Sunday Mass at Saint Peter's, which is closed to tourists. Everyone was successfully admitted to the mass. With the evening light streaming through Bernini's golden alabaster window, and a professional German choir filling the cathedral with beautiful singing, the mass was a very powerful experience for everyone. We then walked back to the hotel and later took off for an excellent meal at the very friendly La Caravella Restaurant.

Special Note: Anacapa's Italian travel agent, Francesco Dolci, received two separate phone calls from our Roman restaurants complimenting how nice and well behaved our students were. *Molto ben educati* (very well mannered) was what the restaurants said about our students. This was the first time our agent ever received unsolicited compliments of this nature. *Bravi ragazzi Anacapa!* Good Anacapa kids!

Monday, July 9, Rome to Paestum

We left Rome during the Monday morning rush hour with thousands of scooters and vehicles crowding the streets to get to work. On our way south we stopped at the Old Appian Way, the Roman road, which is still very much intact after 2000 years. Then, we headed to Paestum with its three ancient Greek temples, which date back to the 6th Century before Christ, when Greeks heavily colonized Italy. Our guide, Angelo Nello, was excellent and challenged the students to use their critical thinking skills to figure out why the Greeks chose this exact site to build their temples, which turned out to have a more flexible rock strata underneath to withstand earthquakes. After the tour of the temples, we visited the nearby museum to see artifacts collected from elaborate, frescoed Greek tombs. Next stop was to check into our fabulous Villa Rita Hotel with its friendly, southern hospitality and elegant lobby and dining room. THEN, we went straight to take a beautiful swim in the Mediterranean. The water was warm and magical with beautiful mountains rising in the distant landscape. Everyone stayed in the water for the two hours we had before dinner. Both dinner and breakfast at the Hotel Villa Rita were elegantly served and tasty.

That night a group of students walked to photograph the temples lit up at night and made a bella passeggiata in the comfortable southern evening air.

Tuesday, July 10, Pompeii to Nettuno

After experiencing the Greek history of Italy before Christ, we headed north to the Roman era town of Pompeii, where we met our same guide, Angelo Nello, who gave us his authoritative tour of Pompeii, using his magical book with the plastic overlays to show the sites as they were during Roman times (abra kadabra style). After Pompeii, we headed north to Nettuno to be close to the nearby World War II “Sicily-Rome” American Cemetery at Anzio. On our way we stopped at Cassino for lunch, which has been entirely rebuilt after the devastating street-to-street battles that took place there. We enjoyed a local lunch at the family run Restaurant La Tinaia, whose small kitchen quickly whipped up different dishes for everyone. After the wonderful beach and experience at Paestum, Nettuno turned out to be a bit of a disappointment; the beach and hotel and surroundings were dirty and unappealing, although the staff of the hotel was very attentive and helpful. That aside, Anacapa is not going back to Nettuno for an overnight! Next time, we’ll just make a day trip to the Cemetery from Rome.

Wednesday, July 11, Anzio to Orvieto

Anacapa studied World War II in depth during the 2009 Synthesis unit, and we have hosted noted World War veterans, such as Art Peterson and Robert Forties, on many occasions, so our visit to the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery was a natural destination for Anacapa. Our visit could not have gone better. The cemetery is a majestic and beautifully maintained last resting spot for 7,860 American soldiers, including 17 nurses, 23 brothers, and 2 sets of twins. 3,095 names of soldiers, whose remains are unknown, are each listed in the Memorial Chapel. After somberly strolling through the cemetery and studying the names, students visited the Memorial Chapel and the adjoining wing that included detailed maps of the Italian campaign from Sicily to Rome. Afterwards, we shared the impacts we felt from the experience. We spoke by chance with a 15 year old Italian boy named Ilario, who had come to pay his respects with flowers and with a book in his hand of quotations he had written down from American presidents. He expressed great appreciation for the sacrifices the United States made for Italy. Then we walked back through the cemetery to the Visitors Center, where we were lucky to find the Superintendent of the Cemetery, Michael Yasenchak, there, ready to tell us all about the history of the cemetery and answer our questions. At the end of his impromptu presentation, an extended American family of three generations came to the Visitor Center with their 91 year old patriarch and veteran of the Anzio campaign. Dominic “Don” Storino was 23 years old when he landed at Anzio during the invasion of Italy in January 1944. He lived through the battles and entered Rome as a hero. Dominic, who was born on a boat going from Italy to New York, spoke fluent Italian, so he was used by the Army to interact with the Italians. He was in Milan on April 29, 1945, at Piazzale Loreto, when Mussolini and his mistress, Claretta Petacci, were hung upside down from a gas station. At that very historic moment, Dominic had the decency to wrap a

cord around Claretta Petacci's dress, so she wasn't exposed. The day we met Dominic was the first day he was back in Anzio since the war, and he was there with 18 proud members of his family and 18 proud to be American Anacapans! It has been said, that "luck is when preparation meets opportunity." This by chance meeting with Dominic Storino was meant to be.

After our incredible Anzio experience, we left on our bus for Orvieto. Along the way, we stopped for lunch at a super modern Italian outlet mall for a different kind of Italian cultural experience (imagine Camarillo outlet but Italian). Orvieto immediately took us back to 1200! An ancient Etruscan citadel that remains in many ways unchanged, Orvieto became a safe refuge for popes during medieval times. Situated on top of a rugged tufa mountain about 2 kilometers long and 800 meters wide with a current population of approximately 5,000 people, Orvieto is truly a very COZY enclave to step back in time. Because of its high elevation from the valley below, we took a funicular train car to the top (busses aren't allowed). We stayed at the Hotel Duomo, which welcomed Gordon and Suzie back after their first stay there during Christmas 2011. The Hotel Duomo is run by Gianni Massaccesi and his family and is perfectly situated next to the famous Duomo. For our first activity, we took the Orvieto Underground tour. Locals have been digging below the town in the tufa to create extra space for water wells, olive oil and wine production, storage, and even raising pigeons since Etruscan times because space is so limited on top of the tufa mountain. The underground tour was cool and dark and a whole world unto its own. That evening we ate dinner at La Grotta, a fine local restaurant that has been run for the past 50 years by Franco, the friendly owner-chef. Franco went all out to welcome Gordon and Suzie back with the 16 Anacapa students, serving an outstanding pasta with duck sauce for the first and wild boar for the second.

Thursday, July 12, Orvieto

We began the day with a guided tour of the Duomo, including the Chapel of San Brizio with the fabulous frescoes by Fra Angelico and Luca Signorelli. We also visited the nearby Archeological Museum to see the Etruscan frescoes there, which were taken from nearby tombs. These Etruscan frescoes decorated the inside of family tombs and depicted life, as the deceased would have lived. Banquet scenes were a common theme. After seeing the frescoes, we then walked down off of the mountain to the Etruscan necropolis (city of the dead) below to see the actual location of the Etruscan tombs, which were first excavated in the 1880's. That afternoon, everyone had free time to have lunch and wander around Orvieto or just take a siesta. That evening we again dined at Franco's La Grotta, for another amazing feast.

Friday, July 13, Orvieto to Sienna to Florence

Our baggage was transported by vans to the parking area below Orvieto, and we walked through the town to take the funicular train down the mountain. We met our bus driver and took off for a day full of great sightseeing with Florence as our final destination. Our first stop was to Montalcino to visit Sant'Antimo, the medieval

Benedictine Abbey, which was an important stop for pilgrims walking to Rome. Its monks still sing Gregorian chants during services as their way of praying. Afterwards, we visited their small tourist store, where students bought their parents some of the fine wines produced in the Montalcino area. Next stop, Sienna, where we had just 30 minutes for lunch before our tour began. Our local guide, named Anna Lisa, did a fabulous job, especially with explaining the complexities of the famous Palio horse race and how the 17 districts of Sienna compete ferociously and with bribery to win. Anna Lisa also took us through the Duomo with its many treasures, including the brilliantly frescoed Piccolomini Library, the inlaid floor designs, Donatello's St. John the Baptist, Michelangelo's St. Paul, and Pisano's pulpit. After our tour, we walked back through the town to meet our bus driver for the drive to visit Poggio Alloro, which is a family run agriturismo farm, near San Gimignano. Poggio Alloro makes their own olive oil and wine, raises their own veal, and has productive fruit orchards and vegetable gardens. Everything they serve at their outdoor restaurant is grown on the farm. After Gloria gave us our tour of the farm, we sat down to a lovely outdoor setting for dinner with San Gimignano in the distance and enjoyed a multiple course meal of Poggio Alloro specialties. Our visit was a nice way to expand on the 2012 Food Synthesis Unit to see first-hand the care and attention Poggio Alloro gives to growing organic products for the guests who stay and/or dine there. The drive into Florence got us into the Hotel Goia at 10:00 PM. Everyone was so tired from the big day that no one wanted to go out and everyone went to bed early.

Saturday, July 14, Florence

We met Olivera Stojovic, originally from Montenegro, who turned out to be an excellent guide for our walking tour of Florence, including stops at Palazzo Medici, San Lorenzo, Piazza della Repubblica, Orsanmichele, Piazza della Signoria, and culminated with seeing Michelangelo's David at the Accademia. Everyone had free time for lunch and the afternoon, and we all were back in the hotel at 6:50 to walk to our dinner at Restaurant I'Toscano, which turned out to have great ravioli and tasty pork roast. Gordon's Florentine cousin, Riccardo Nesti and his American wife, Cindy, joined everyone for dinner. After dinner students had free time to explore the festive nightlife in Florence. Gordon and Suzie took a cab to Piazzale Michelangelo for a view of Florence from above and walked back into town, arriving just in time to make curfew.

Sunday, July 15, the Uffizi and Vassari Corridor

The morning was devoted entirely to visiting the Uffizi Gallery, built by the Medici family, as their offices, and which became the first art gallery in history for public viewing of their Renaissance masterpieces, including Giotto, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Michelangelo. After the Uffizi Gallery, we had an exclusive tour of the Vassari Corridor, the protected hall built by the Medici so they could travel safely from their grand Palazzo Pitti through the town and over the Ponte Vecchio to their offices at the Uffizi. The corridor was designed by Giorgio Vassari and has self-portraits of famous artists on its walls. It was nice to leave the crowds of the Uffizi and just be on our own with our guide and friendly guards for our walk into the

private world of the Medici. After the Vassari Corridor tour, our agent, Francesco Dolci, met our group to say hello and find out what the students liked best about the tour. We then walked to nearby Piazza Santo Spirito and dismissed for lunch and afternoon free time. Gordon and Suzie then had lunch with Francesco Dolci at the very Florentine trattoria Pennello to talk about how the trip was going. Dinner that night at Osteria dell'Angolo was not so great. (Next trip we'll go to Pennello!) After dinner, students had more free time, and everyone made curfew without any problems.

Monday, July 16, SAPAF, Ferrari Museum, and Venice

We took off at 8:30 for a tour of SAPAF, the luxury leather bag factory, operated by Gordon's Nesti family relatives. SAPAF is a perfect example of how important family businesses are to Italy's economy. SAPAF was founded in 1954 and is now a third generation company, employing about 30 skilled leather artisans. SAPAF makes about 20,000 bags a year, many of which are sold under the Gucci name. About 2,000 are sold under the SAPAF name, and Suzie was happy to buy her beautiful orange trimmed leather bag with the SAPAF design logo. Andrea and his wife, Luciana, and their son, Leonardo, are going forward strongly with the family business started by Andrea's parents. Our students got a detailed explanation of all of the steps involved with production. Andrea is also president of Cento Per cento Italiano (100% Italian) and is very proud that all of their finely crafted bags are truly hand made Italian works of art. After SAPAF, we made the 2-hour drive from Florence to Maranello, the birth place of Ferrari, where we had a guided tour of the Ferrari Museum, with its gorgeous collection of mechanical and artistic masterpieces, and fantastic media presentations of races and drivers. It is clear that Enzo Ferrari's passion is still very much alive with the latest evolution of today's custom built Ferraris--"The best car is the next car," according to Enzo Ferrari. Passenger cars and race cars from all of the Ferrari eras are well displayed in the museum, as well as a special visual treat of one of the two boats ever made by Ferrari, on display serendipitously only for two days when we were there! After the Ferrari Museum, we headed for Venice, the last Italian city of our tour. Giacomo, our courier, met us with two water taxis to take us into Venice and to our hotel. The Locanda Antica Venezia is a small hotel on the third and fourth floors of an old building, just 3 minutes walk from Piazza San Marco. There is no elevator, so we got a good work out carrying our suitcases up the many flights of stairs. Gordon and Suzie met their lifelong friend, Cristina Omenetto, in the lobby. She had traveled from her home in Milan to spend two days with Anacapa. The hotel has a wonderful outside patio on the top floor that overlooks the Campanile (bell tower), Saint Mark's domes, and off in the distance the dome of Santa Maria della Salute. Breakfast is served on the patio with an awning for the morning sun, but in the evening, the awning is taken back and the stars shine over the largely light-free Venetian cityscape. For dinner that night we walked quite a distance to a very nice restaurant (Trattoria San Toma') for open air dining on the Campo (piazza) San Toma'. After dinner, everyone enjoyed free time. A popular spot was to listen to the bands playing outside in Piazza San Marco (especially in front of the historic Caffè Florian, which was new when Napoleon ruled Venice).

Tuesday, July 17, Venice

We met Giusy for our guided tour of Venice, which focused primarily on the Doges Palace and St. Mark's Cathedral. We learned how the elected ruler, the Doge, and the Senate, composed of wealthy Venetian nobles, governed the Republic of Venice. Venice is an amazing city, which runs entirely on the water. Whether it is with water taxis or waterbuses, water ambulances, or gondolas, everyone moves on the water or walks across the many bridges connecting the 100 islands that make up Venice. All deliveries for everything consumed in Venice come in every morning on boats, and then hand carts are used to make deliveries to small stores, bakeries, restaurants, you name it. Even UPS deliveries are made by boat---there is an official UPS boat! Watching how Venice moves early in the morning to supply itself is a one-of-a-kind experience. Only in Venice does a city move entirely on the water. No car noises, no big city lights. Students had free time for lunch and all of the afternoon. We met back at the hotel at 5:00 to walk to our scheduled 5:30 gondola ride with 3 gondolas for our group of 18. That night we walked again across the Grand Canal to an out of the way neighborhood and ate outside at the very popular Birreria La Corte and had a good dinner. After dinner students had more free time. A popular spot was the outside patio at our hotel for quiet, star lit views of Venice.

Wednesday, July 18, Murano, Torcello, and Burano

Giacomo met us at our hotel to take us on our private tour of the three most important islands in the Venice Lagoon: Murano, Burano, and Torcello. We began with a stop at Murano, which was designated long ago for glass blowing, as the process was deemed too much of a fire hazard for Venice. After watching glass blowing in action, which included a woman apprentice, students toured the showroom and purchased a variety of Murano glass items. Next stop was Torcello, which was where ancient Venice was first born as a refuge from invading barbarians. The only thing left from the past is the 6th century church, Santa Maria Assunta, and its leaning bell tower. Inside the church are stunning Byzantine mosaics, which represent the time when Venice was linked culturally and economically with the East. Our last island stop was to the colorful island of Burano, where all of the houses are painted different bright colors. The artisan specialty of Burano is fine lace work, which today is only done by the older generation of women, and is thus a disappearing art form. We watched a very friendly woman demonstrate her craft, and she also proudly shared her original work of the Last Supper in lace, which took her one entire year to make. After leaving Burano, we returned to Venice and walked across the Grand Canal to visit a 17th Century mansion build by the Rezzonico family, which is now a museum filled with art from the 17th century era with ceilings by Tiepolo, paintings by Canaletto and Guardi, and furnishings from the period. Although Gordon and Suzie would have liked to show the students Santa Maria del Salute (which was built to thank God that a plague had lifted), the students had had their fill of churches, so it was more free time for the last afternoon of our trip. Dinner that night was absolutely amazing. The dining

room of the Restaurant Alle Zettere was actually floating on the water with amazing views of Venice's waterfront in the evening light. The table was elegantly decorated with carved melons and the service was very friendly and responsive. We couldn't have asked for a more perfect spot for our last dinner together. Anacapa alums, Trevor and Jocelyn Halperin, came by our table to say hello with their mother, Stacy, and brother, Chase. It's a small Anacapa world! After dinner, we found a quiet campo (piazza) with a well in the middle. Our group surrounded the marble well with its metal cover, and used this magical setting for our traditional, end of the trip appreciations. Clearly, everyone had an awesome two weeks in Italy, and that came through in the very enthusiastic appreciations. After pounding the metal cover together with loud drum beats, we concluded the appreciations and went off for our last night of free time in Venice.

Thursday, July 19, Venice to 814 Santa Barbara Street

Heading home to SB day! We checked out of our hotel at 9:30 and Giacomo took us to our two water taxis. We had the coolest trip to the airport, going through Venice's narrow canals to the Lagoon, and then across the Lagoon directly to the airport without ever going on a road! After cooperating and shifting parcels to share weight from the "overweight" suitcases to the lighter ones in order to avoid weight penalties, we flew from Venice to Munich, and then changed aircraft to a huge Airbus 360 back to LAX. Everything went seamlessly. Our Santa Barbara Airbus arrived soon after we came out of customs, and we were even able to give a local SB resident, who had just missed his bus, a ride back to SB. We arrived back on time to Santa Barbara Street, all safe and sound, having had the times of our lives!