

PICTURES AND STORIES OF LEC TRIP TO ITALY 2018



BY PAOLA BASILE

Departure, May 15.



Our first stop is in Villa d'Este in Tivoli.

The gardens of the Villa d'Este are among the earliest and finest of the Italian *giardini delle meraviglie* and symbolize the flowering of Renaissance culture. With its impressive concentration of fountains (500!), nymphs, grottoes, troughs and pools, cascades, plays of water, and music, it constitutes a much-copied model for European gardens. A magic place filled with beauty, myths, genius, and peace. One fountain periodically surges to splash unsuspecting visitors; a water organ fountain plays music at set times; a long row of 100 different “face” fountains offers an intimate place to take a stroll... The rooms of the Palace d'Este built on the ruins of an ancient Roman villa (absolutely gorgeous!) were ambitiously decorated under the tutelage of the stars of the late Roman Mannerism, such as Livio Agresti, Federico Zuccari, Durante Alberti, Girolamo Muziano, Cesare Nebbia and Antonio Tempesta.

A student: Once we landed and got going on our adventure to Italy, I was exhausted. I love flying and traveling but that plane ride was long, and I couldn't sleep. Once at the airport in Rome, we took the bus ride to Villa d'Este in Tivoli. It was so beautiful and amazing to see the artwork and foundation that was made into the gardens and fountains. I loved seeing the youth fountain, the faces, the landscaping of flowers, trees, and just the overall scenery. It was a beautiful first stop on our crazy adventure. Once done with the Villa d'Este, Katie and I went exploring in local alleys and just looking around at such small, intimate, and beautiful shops nearby. We ended this journey with some delicious Caramel gelato!

A student: Some of my favorite things that we visited included the Villa d'Este from day 1... Throughout our entire walk through the gardens of Villa d'Este, I was awestruck by the incredible fountains, sculptures, and even the plant life. I

wished we had had even more time there; I could see myself spending days just wandering through those grounds, taking photos, getting inspiration to write or play music, or just admiring it all.





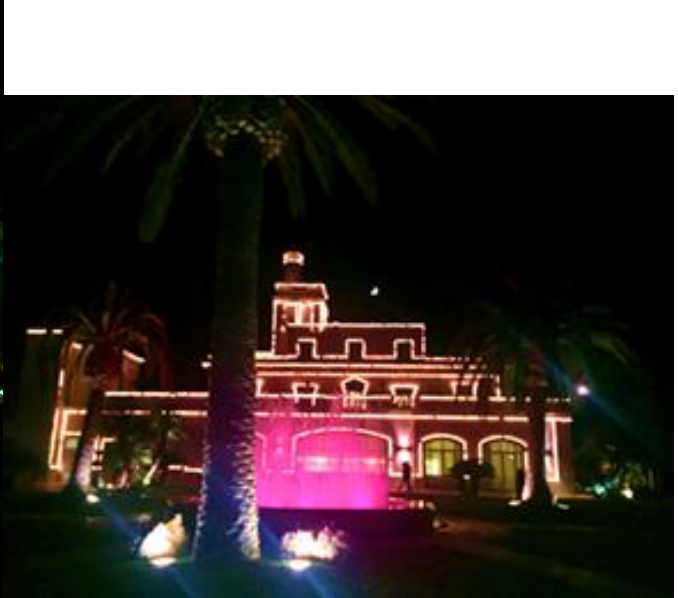
After Villa d'Este we stopped for a delicious dinner in an “agriturismo” in Candela and then we arrived at our gorgeous hotel in Polignano a mare, around midnight!

A student: It was a long bus ride, but we made it to a restaurant that was fresh farm food.... a fantastic and overfilling first Italian meal.

A student: The food that I tasted in Italy was amazing. Even though we had many appetizers and multiple courses, I never felt overly stuff as I sometimes do eating one course here in America. I feel like this is due to the food over in Italy being grown naturally and then using those organic material without it being processed. I thought it was amazing that the pasta was homemade that day along with the other food used in the courses.

A student: When we arrived to the hotel I was absolutely stunned, it was such a tasteful hotel with amazing rooms and views to look at out on the sea. I loved the breakfast that was served every morning along with the beautiful weather we got to experience.





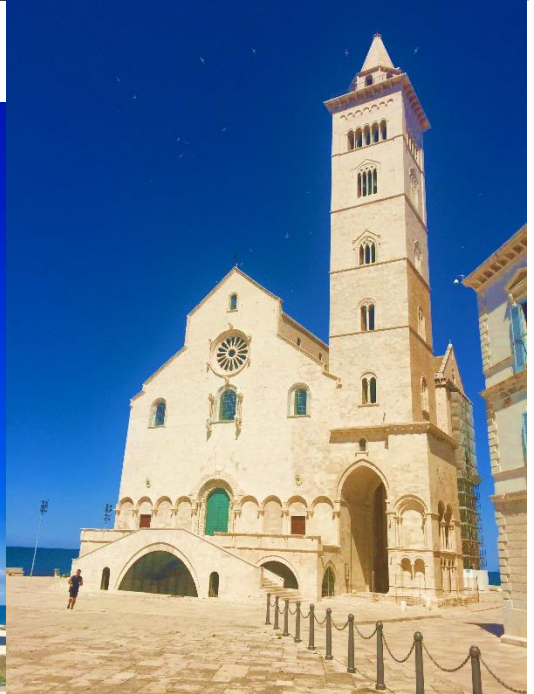




On our second day we first visited Trani, an historic fishing port in Puglia and it is known for its Cathedral di San Nicola Pellegrino (12th century), which dominates the seashore from a spectacular position at the water's edge. Trani's defensive fortress, the Castello Svevo, is on the shore just beyond the cathedral, it dates to 1249. On the low headland behind the cathedral is the oldest part of Trani's historic center. Exploring the lanes here, we crossed picturesque corners and beautiful sights. The most famed of Trani's historic dwellings is the fifteenth-century Palazzo Caccetta. Nearby is a twelfth-century church built by the Knights Templar, the Chiesa di Ognissanti. Trani was on a route used by crusaders heading to and from the Holy Land... After Trani, we shopped in an outlet mall and then went to Castel del Monte, a UNESCO world heritage site. Built in 1240, the castle is a massive and dominating octagonal structure that sits on a small stretch of the Murge plateau. Universally considered an example of genius medieval architecture, Castel del Monte actually unites elements of diverse styles and traditions from different times in history. We then went to a farm, enjoyed a guided tour and ate an amazing dinner! At night time, the students went dancing in a wedding party at our hotel, they played both Italian and American music, they really enjoyed their time and could not believe how friendly everyone is!

A student: The second day we were able to sleep in which everyone loved because of our jet lag, and we headed to Trani. Trani is such an amazing city that was full of boat docks, fishermen, little restaurants, and beautiful buildings, which I am convinced everywhere in Italy has beautiful buildings. The food in Apulia was amazing, and so much different than anything I have ever experienced with food; if you love seafood, you will definitely be in heaven here.

A student: On our way to the bus we stopped at a park and took pictures of different statues, trees that looked like pineapples, and cute turtles. We then left and went to an outlet mall where we went around and shopped a little. Finally, to end our evening, we went to the Castle Del Monte and went inside to see the architectural work and get some steps in! The farm we ate at was right by the Castel and to top it off they had a petting zoo which had some remarkable animals to pet and play with.









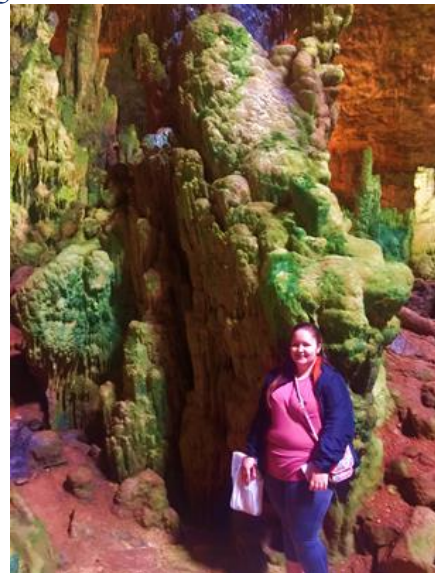


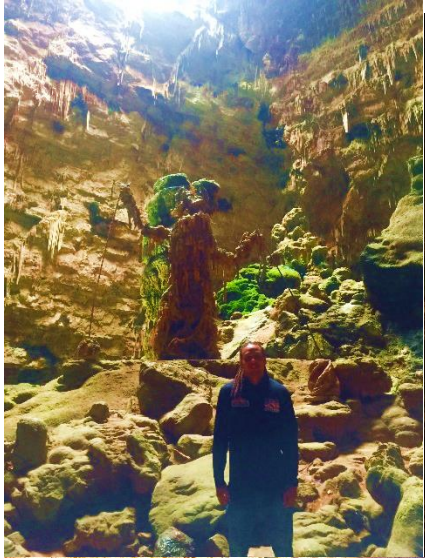
On the third day, after breakfast, we went to the magical Grotte di Castellana (caves) that began to form about 90 million years ago. These spectacular limestone caves are the longest natural subterranean network. The interlinked galleries, first discovered in 1938, contain an incredible range of underground landscapes, with extraordinary stalactite and stalagmite formations. We had

a 2-hour guided tour, it was spectacular! We then went for lunch to the fairy tale city Alberobello (meaning *beautiful tree*) with its unusual districts of *trulli*, the characteristic white-washed conical-roofed houses of the area, a world UNESCO heritage site thanks to its "*outstanding universal value... an exceptional example of a form of building construction deriving from prehistoric construction techniques that have survived intact and functioning into the modern world.*" We ended up our day trip in Locorotondo, a small picturesque town circular and perched on top of a hill. The downtown is a whitewashed maze of little lanes lined with cute historic buildings. Dinner in Polignano by the sea and night life in Polignano with amazing mojitos!

A student: One of my favorite experiences was going to the Grotte di Castellana. The Caves were amazing and something I have never seen before. The grotte started to form 90 million years ago. We walked about 2 miles and saw some amazing stalagmites and stalactites. We were told how they were formed over the years and how the human touch can ruin them and prevent them from growing and turn the stalagmites black. They were assorted colors in different areas and all the different shapes are phenomenal and they even grow sideways. Some of the formations even had names given to them because of the likeness to other objects in the world like the Duomo and the Tower of Pisa. It's true the most beautiful creations in the world are not man-made. Unfortunately, for they do not allow pictures past the opening of the caves. After the caves we got to see Alberobello which was a nice little town that had unique architecture which all the buildings were white with cone roofs. For some reason it reminded me of a smurf village.

A student: After our tour we went to Alberobello which is one of my favorite little towns mainly because of the trulli shaped houses that were surrounded everywhere you looked, it is so beautiful and unique you feel like you're in a different world. Even though it was raining that day, it did not stop us from having fun and walking around looking at all the shops and cherishing every moment we got to spend in these small but magnificent towns.







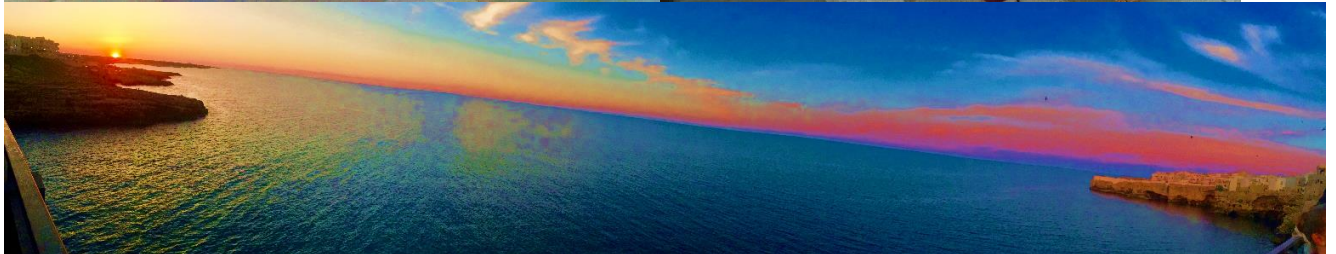






Cheers!







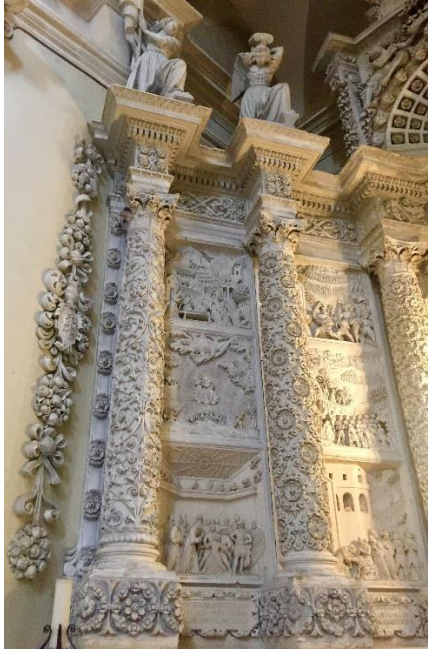
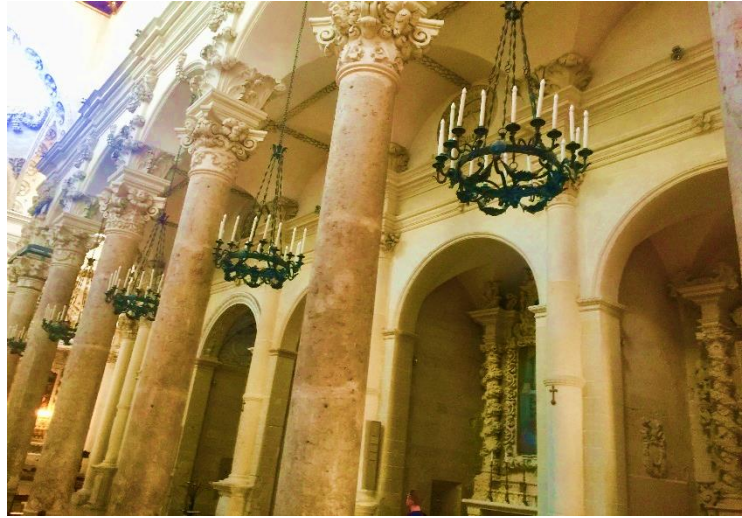
The fourth day we went first to the city of Lecce. Lecce's history goes back a long way - you can still see ruins of a Roman theatre and amphitheater - but the period which led to town's current fame was the 17th century. A period of prosperity led to grand developments and the wholesale construction of palaces and churches. These buildings adapted the fashionable Baroque style to the soft local stone, with decorations and cherubs extravagantly covering facades and doorways. This local style is known as *barocco Leccese* ('Lecce Baroque'). In Lecce, two accidents happened: one student fell while walking and had to go to the emergency care, luckily, they took good care of her quickly, and it was free! Another student while biking lost her bag and realized it only when she returned the bike, a gentleman of Lecce that saw the bag returned it to the police with everything inside (including 108 Euros!) and the student got everything back! After some emotional moments, we went for a great late-lunch on the beach in front of crystal blue sea water. We relaxed and then ended up to Punta Prosciutto, a beautiful beach where almost everyone went for a great swim in turquoise water! We then went for a short time to Ostuni also known as the "white city" and back to Polignano. Ostuni is one of the most stunning cities in southern Italy famous for the dazzling effect of its whitewashed houses. It is a genuine and charming example of Mediterranean architecture

A student: *The fourth day was by far the most interesting and eventful part of our trip, when we visited the rather big city of Lecce. My one classmate and I rented a bike car they had there for an hour and rode around the town... I loved how much free time we got to roam the towns and see what we wanted to see personally, because that is honestly so important in getting that full experience in Europe, because everyone wants to see different things. That same day we got to experience for the first time in my life, Italian beaches. Beautiful is an understatement when trying to explain the clear blue water and relaxing atmosphere. It was a late evening beach trip and then we visited the beautiful town of Ostuni, "the white city" where we ate gelato and gazed at the buildings and stars up above us. Nights in Italy will be something I remember and cherish for as long as I live.*

A student: *Lecce was the day I won't forget as it showed the unity of our tour group and how we could unite to make sure no one gets left behind. It started with an innocent bicycle ride through the town. One turn, a bag and my sweatshirt went missing. The five of us went running through the city to look for the bag. The people of the city were nice, considerate, and not like most places I would be in the United States. They have a sense of integrity. An individual found the bag turned it into the police...*

A student: *I really was awed by the city of Lecce. The buildings were so authentic and reminded me of the type of Italian streets and buildings that you saw in movies. I was glad that I split the price of getting the five-person bike and getting the opportunity to ride around the city and see it in depth. It was one of my favorite memories from the trip that I will not forget.*









On the fifth day we stayed in Polignano, a shining gem on the coast of the Valle d'Itria, perched atop a 20-meter-high limestone cliff above the crystal-clear waters of the Adriatic Sea. Students went cliff-jumping, shopping, sunbathing... and we also enjoyed a two-hour boat tour around Polignano, went inside the "grotte" and saw Polignano by the water... A beautiful relaxing day that ended with an incredible delicious dinner of which students still talk about!

A student: *The fifth day was the most relaxing day because we spent four hours at the beach, which was in downtown Puglia. We went swimming, cliff jumping, and even some extra shopping. Then we had a two-hour boat tour which was fantastic because we outran the coast guard and got to see the Grotto Caves. Then we went back, changed, and went to eat in downtown and hung around at night.*

A student: *I loved Polignano's downtown area. It was busy and moving, but it did not feel overcrowded to the point that it feels overwhelming with people. It had so many cool shops and my favorite places there where the mojito bar and the beach. Polignano's beach is one that I have never seen before. I was not expecting it to be an all pebbled beach, but we were able to find a ledge to lay out on. The water there was so clear that it looked like bath water. You could see every step that you were taking and when looking at it from afar the water was so blue. The best part about the beach was the cliffs and ledges that we were able to jump off from. I have never cliff-jumped before, so the experience was exhilarating and so much fun. I was able to see exactly where and what I was jumping into which made the experience so much better. I would love to be able to do that again in water just like that.*

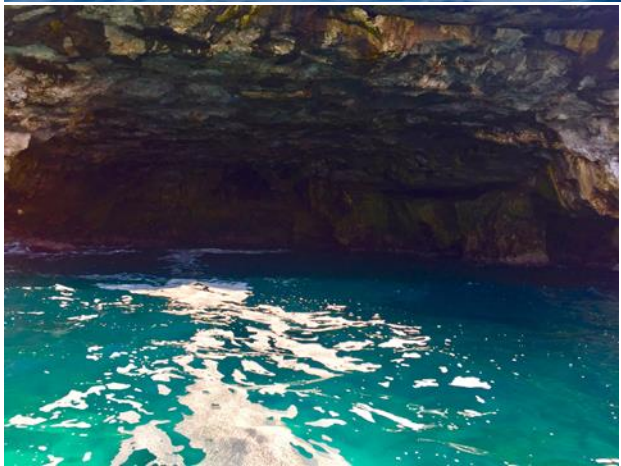
A student: *The next day was our fifth day and we stayed in Polignano where our hotel was located, and we roamed downtown Polignano. We stayed on the beach for a big portion of the day and layed out in the sun and on the sand by the Adriatic Sea. Viewing all of the people and admiring the ways of Italian culture was one of my favorite things in visiting Europe. On this day I was able to shop more and walk around with a couple of girls I became close with on the trip. Everything about Polignano fascinated me whether it was the people, the language, the atmosphere, and of course, the food!! I am so grateful for those eight days, because those days are on repeat in my mind and the experience is burned into my mind forever, which I am so grateful for.*

A student: *Our final dinner in Polignano was something I will always remember. The olives were so delicious, and they served four different types. Luckily, people understood my love of olives and let me eat a majority of them. I do not remember many of the courses of food they served that night, but I do remember the it was a gustatorial delight. The food was almost ruined by the salt of the tears shed by the diners of the most delicious food they ever enjoyed. The beef was so tender and juicy and caused my eyes to water uncontrollably. The tiramisu was equally enjoyed by another of our students and she could not contain the enjoyment and deliciousness of the popular Italian dolce.*

A student: *Polignano was definitely one of my favorite places I have been to in my life, and I am very glad we stayed there multiple nights- especially in the hotel we did! I loved that everything lit up like Christmas at night, there were always weddings or parties going on, and how picturesque the grounds were at our hotel. Downtown Polignano was also very cute and fun- one of my favorite days was the one we spent on the cliffs and beach, and just relaxing and walking around the various streets and shops of Polignano. The boat tour that day was also incredible and fun.*











Bye-bye Polignano a mare, this is our last night here.



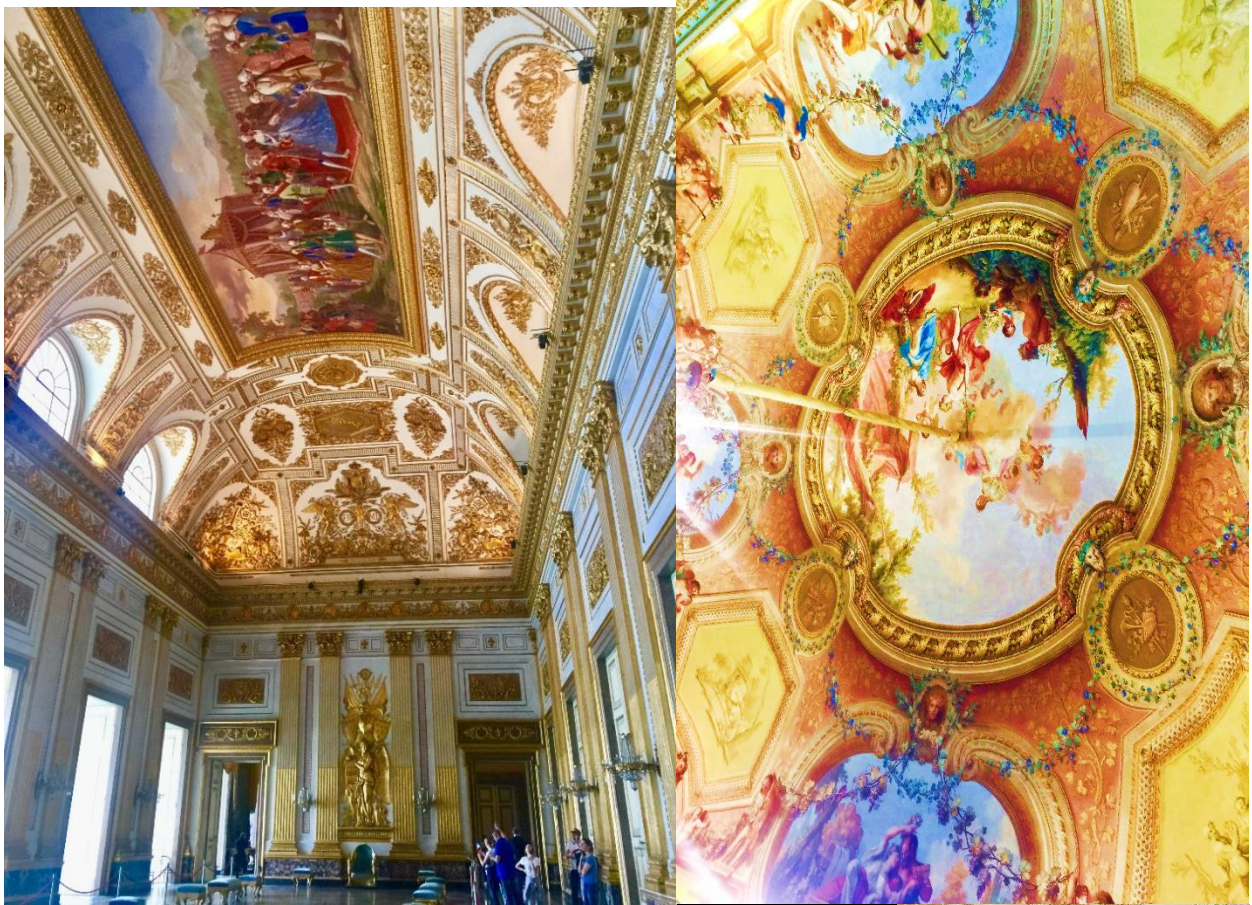
A student: On the sixth day we visited Caserta, the majestic royal palace where we had a tour, and I learned a lot of new things. It was so structurally done that you couldn't tell how old it was, because of how much they do up keeping. It had beautiful fountains and gardens, where we rented bikes to pedal around and look...

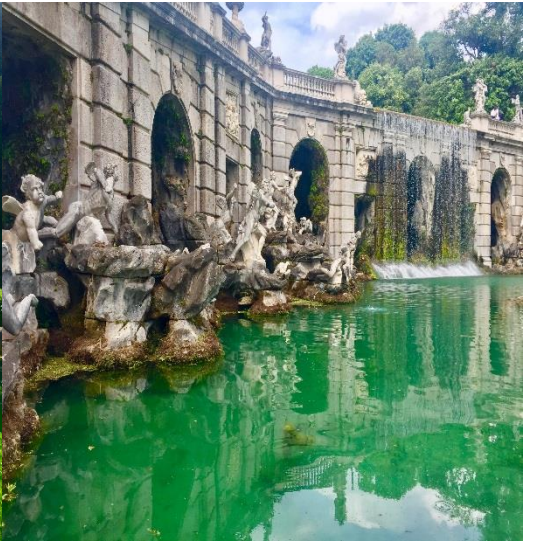
A student: The sixth day was a long day because we woke up and left our beautiful hotel with our heavy luggage and loaded the bus; off to Roma we go! The bus ride was long and tiring but we made it to the Palace of Caserta where Star Wars and many more movies were produced and filmed! The structure and all the rooms and paintings were amazing to look at. We walked a lot that day and some biked but we all got a lot of steps in with walking through the castle and then the whole outside was miles long...

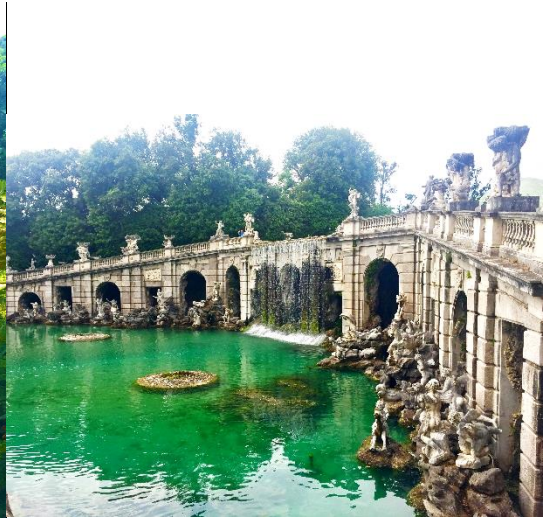
On the sixth day we first stopped for a few hours at the magnificent Royal Palace of Caserta (= Reggia di Caserta) is a former royal residence in Caserta, constructed for the Bourbon kings of Naples. It was the largest palace and one of the largest buildings erected in Europe during the 18th century. In 1997, the Palace was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, described in its nomination as "the swan song of the spectacular art of the Italian Baroque, from which it adopted all the features needed to create the illusions of multidirectional space". In terms of volume, the Royal Palace of Caserta is the largest royal residence in the world, with 1200 rooms!











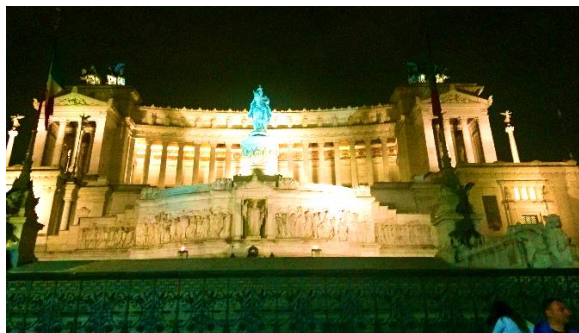
After our guided visit in the majestic palace and touring the grandiose gardens, we went to our new beautiful hotel in Rome on the top of the famous Spanish Steps, by Trinita` dei Monti! We then toured Rome on foot... Rome the “eternal city”, a UNESCO world heritage site, so much to see, too much to see! We had another great dinner, gelato, drinks, and walked until 2:00 a.m.!

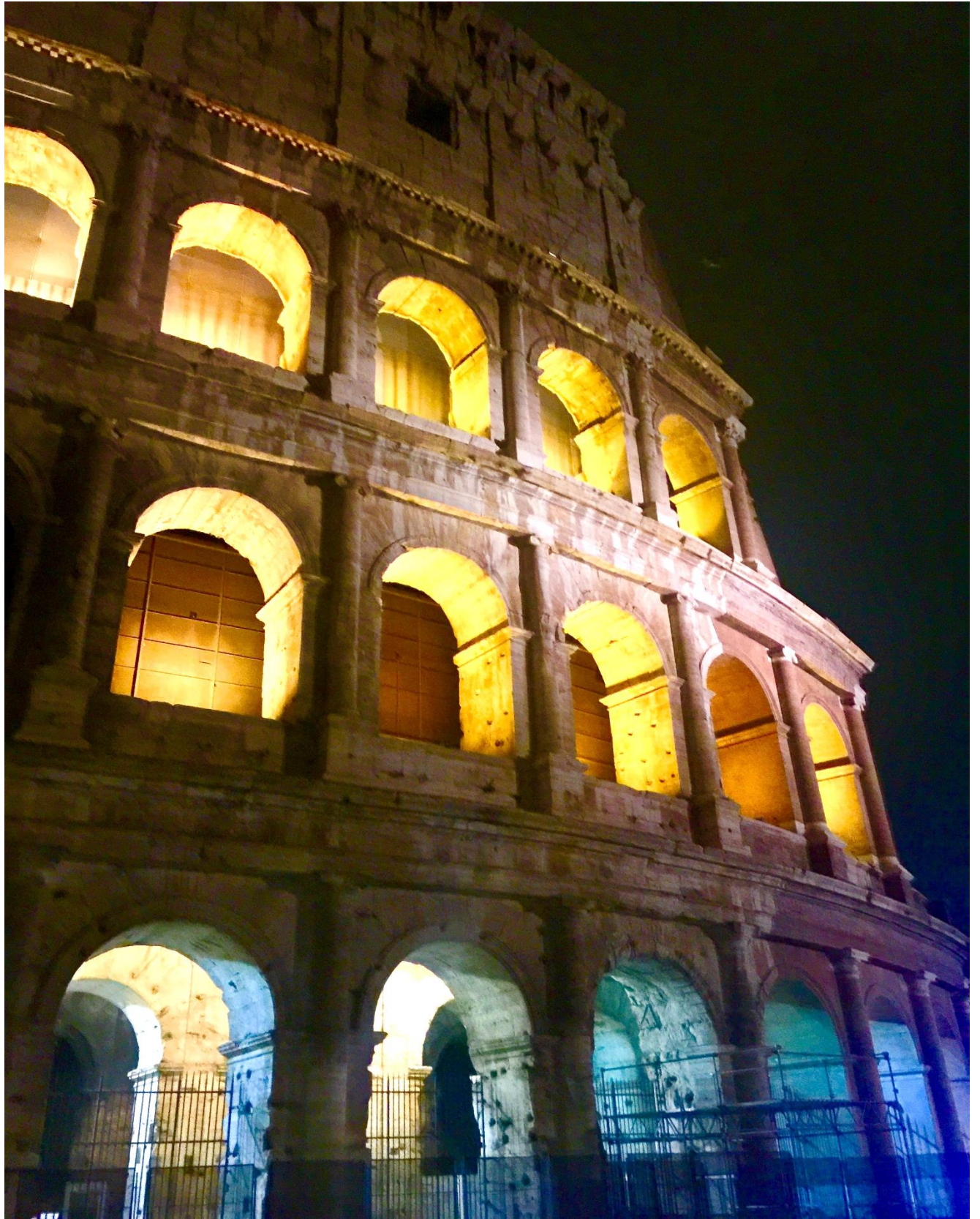
A student: Then once we arrived at our hotel in Rome, we started out on our adventure to find dinner. While doing that we visited the many world historical sites like the Trevi fountain where we all got our Lizzie McGuire movie moment, the Colosseum, the Roman forum, the pantheon.... the piazzas, sculptures, and many parliament buildings.

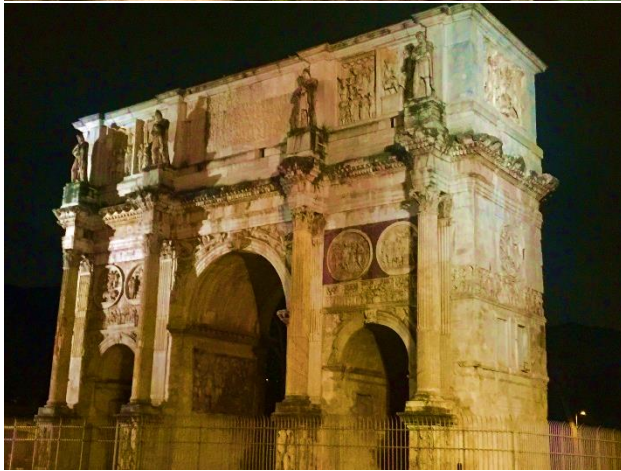
A student: In Rome we got to see the Colosseum at night which left me speechless. Imagining how it must have looked 2,000 years ago and thinking of all the history... was surreal.

A student: Rome was our final destination and the architecture and paintings that I saw in this city just stopped me in my steps. The Trevi Fountain was one of my favorite things that I saw. It mesmerized me that someone was able to make that intricate of a fountain by hand, but also that it was made from different pieces of marble and then put together to look like it was effortlessly made from one piece of marble. I could not believe how detailed all the figures were that was a part of the fountain. Then, we visited St. Peter's Basilica which left me awestruck. My favorite piece in the Basilica was Michelangelo's Pieta. It was amazing to see in person how life like the statue was and how he was able to make the stone look so soft and human. Even though we only saw the Roman Colosseum at night, it was still one of my favorite places to see in Rome. I did my project on the Colosseum, but that did not come close to prepare me for the greatness of it. The architecture is just so beautiful and it truly fascinates me.... Hopefully, if I ever make it back to Rome I will be able to see the inside of the Colosseum.







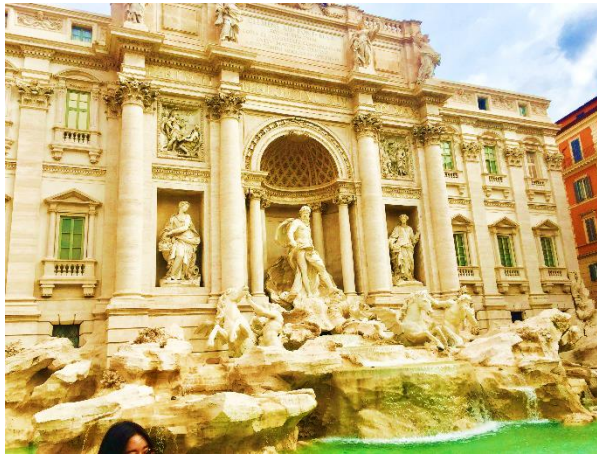




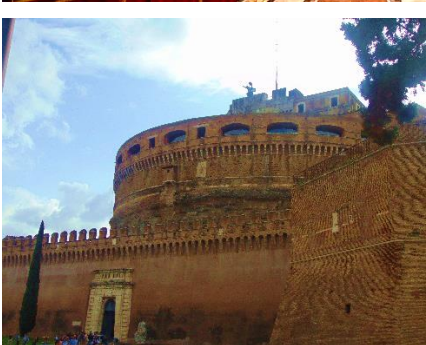
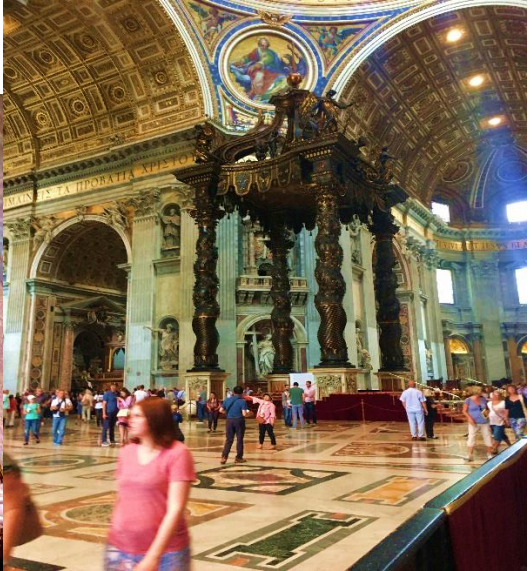
A student: I loved walking around Rome in the middle of the night when no one was really around except us. It was very cool to be able to see some of the so-very-famous fountains, buildings, and monuments without being surrounded by other tourists, or even vendors of any sort. The Vatican museums, St. Peter's, and the Sistine Chapel were, of course, breathtaking and beautiful... I am very humbled to have been there and seen such ancient and amazing artistic elements. It was crazy to look at these things and think, "So many artists, philosophers, and writers have been here, right where I'm standing."

Seventh day: we got up early, had a great breakfast on the top of the Spanish Steps, what a view! We then walked around the city of Rome in the morning, took many photos, entered into the Pantheon, in Saint Peter's Basilica, and in the Vatican Museums. Some went then to have a nap at the hotel, others walked for 20 miles around Rome to see as much as possible. The Vatican City is a UNESCO world heritage site. The incredible, world masterpiece *Basilica di San Pietro* erected over the tomb of St Peter the Apostle, is the largest Christian building in the world, the fruit of the combined genius of Bramante, Raffaello, Michelangelo, Bernini, and Maderno. The Vatican Museums with the Sistine chapel (with frescoes by Michelangelo) are the most outstanding and famous museums in the world.

















A student: The Vatican was my absolute favorite place to visit due to the Sistine Chapel. When walking into the Sistine Chapel, I was overwhelmed by all the paintings that bombarded my senses. Pictures or describing the Chapel will never come close to actually being there in the moment. The work that Michelangelo did was amazing and I can finally see why he was the best of his time. I was able to pick out the Creation of Adam and Eve and the temptation of Adam and Eve on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and then at the front of the Chapel is painting of "The Last Judgement". The colors on that were so bright and it looked like it was painted just yesterday. The whole painting is very intricate with different parts of the last judgement from people being dragged to hell to others being surrounded by god and finally a self-portrait of Michelangelo as the shed and empty piece of skin. Emotions flood you as you take in all the beauty of the Sistine Chapel and you feel changed after being able to experience it.

A student: The 7th day in Italy was our last day in Italy and it was a day I will never forget, so much history and culture in only one day. I was mesmerized by St. Peter's Basilica and how big it was; to see all the amazing art and tombs could not have been any cooler. I loved going into the shops next to the Basilica because I got my mom something that I know she'll always keep close to her heart, she is very much a religious woman and I know she would have loved to visit this magnificent place. After we visited the Basilica we headed over to the Vatican Museums where we saw magnificent artwork and sculptures and display cases.... I enjoyed every part of my last dinner in Italy. We walked around after dinner to get gelato and browse the shops one last time before we headed in the USA the next day....

A student: My favorite site in Rome I got to see was Castel Sant'Angelo. This was a castle built in 139 and has the Ponte Sant'Angelo connecting it to Rome. The Castle was huge and had such a large history. A history which Saint Michael (the angel on the top) appeared ending the plague. The castle was a refuge for popes of the past in times of danger.

A student: The rich history of Italy is incredible. The Italians have done a wonderful job of preserving their buildings from hundreds and hundreds of years ago. It was surreal to walk down the streets of Rome or Trani and suddenly stumble across something built so long ago. The architecture and artwork are breathtaking and it was very humbling to see pieces created by some of the greatest artist in history. My favorite piece of art I was able to observe was the Sistine Chapel. This incredible room was painted by Michelangelo and it is amazing. Words cannot describe how incredible this masterpiece is. I have seen many pictures of this room before and they do not come close to giving the room its justice. If anyone asked a place they needed to see when visiting Italy, I would have to recommend the Vatican City Museum and the Sistine Chapel. It's a place you truly have to see in person to appreciate it.

On the 8th day we had our last breakfast in Rome and then got ready to go to the airport.

Arrivederci Roma!





Comments by the students:

- ❖ *What was especially crazy about this trip was the food! I knew to expect more courses at dinner, but I was not expecting quite as many, or as large of courses as we got at most meals! I was also surprised to find just how much seafood was consumed in Italy- and how little pasta and pizza, given my expectations! Nothing I tasted there was at all disappointing, though, even with my limited vegetarian choices! If only I could have gnocchi that good in Ohio!! It was also funny to see just how much gelato we all consumed, and what an actual competition it became between us! I ate ten gelatos total last week- which is a big deal for someone like me, who doesn't eat ice cream or sweets very often back home!! I also expected to gain a couple pounds on this trip, due to the amount of carb- filled foods and gelato we were indulging in, and from drinking more wine than usual, but to my surprise I came home three pounds lighter!! I guess walking ten-twenty miles a day really counteracts the food intake, huh? Something else I found upon returning home is that American food really is just so much grosser than anywhere else, and while I knew this before, after eating so well in Italy and coming home it's like my tastes have changed. Even if it is the same dish here that I ate in Italy, the version in Italy was made with better or fresher ingredients and just tasted healthier and better in general. I'm already sick of all these processed, frozen foods!! Where are all the fresh veggies and handmade pastas?*
- ❖ *The moment I stepped off the flight in Rome I knew that this beautiful place would change my life. I have always dreamed of going to Rome and touring different cities in Italy but never would have thought I would get the opportunity so suddenly. It was the perfect time and there was no better way I could think of then doing it with my classmates at Lake Erie College. I have heard wonderful things about Italy long before I decided to attend the trip, my best friend's grandmother is Italian and has visited many times and tried to explain the best she could of what I would expect while visiting. Her words painted a pretty picture to begin with, but it is nowhere near the feeling of the experience.*
- ❖ *I want to start off by saying thank you. Thank you professor Basile for giving me this wonderful opportunity to experience the place of my dreams. The very first time I went to your office, you were so inviting. You made me feel welcomed and made me know how comfortable I would feel taking this course. I am truly grateful for that. It only took about two minutes into that very first talk I had with you, for me to know I had to take this class and go on this trip. The way you spoke about the class, the trip, and the culture of Italy all sounded so amazing, I knew I had to experience it! So again, thank you for allowing me to join your group! The trip was everything I expected, and more!! When I*

read over the itinerary and I saw the pictures of the places we would visit, it all seemed so perfect! Little did I know it would be even more perfect in person!

- ❖ *I honestly think I could speak about this trip, and everything we saw for hours and hours. Taking this class and going on that trip is something I will never forget. The friends I've made, and the memories I now have, are for a life time! Thank you again, professor!*
- ❖ *The Italian lifestyle is pretty different from the average Americans. I noticed that things are a lot more laid back. In everything that they do they are very forgiving. Also, everyone is very friendly. I wasn't sure what most Italians were talking about a majority of the time. However, no matter where we went everyone was always in a conversation. Even if two people were completely strangers they would talk for a while with smiles and laughs no matter where they went. The atmosphere was very relaxing.*
- ❖ *My experience on the Italy trip was a once in a lifetime adventure. I was so happy to have taken this class and to be able to go on this trip. It is something that I will remember for the rest of my life. Thank you Dr. Basile for everything you have done for us.*
- ❖ *This trip was everything I could have dreamed plus more! I am so glad I got to experience this with amazing people, we all became very close throughout this trip and I could not have asked for more than that. Italy was a dream come true and I am so glad I had the privilege of getting the experience of a lifetime.*
- ❖ *I first just want to start off by saying thank you for this opportunity that you gave me. This trip was a once in a lifetime experience and I loved every moment of it. On this trip I was able to connect and meet with new people that I can now call my friends. Not only was I able to make friends with people on the trip, but I was also able to make friends with the natives that lived in Polignano (Italy). This friendliness that they showed us seemed to be a common thing around the people in southern Italy.*
- ❖ *All in all, this trip was able to give me a piece of culture that I might not have ever gotten to experience if I had not taken this opportunity. I was able to see the country that my ancestors came from and gotten to experience some of the culture and beauty that they used to experience. Not only did I become more cultured as a person, but I was also able to meet some amazing people and create lifelong friends and some lifelong memories with them. Thank you again for this amazing opportunity and hopefully I will be able to experience another opportunity like this in the future.*
- ❖ *Where to even begin? The past several days in Italy have been amazing, to say the least. I am very glad a class went hand in hand with the trip, as well, so that I was able to know exactly what I was seeing and its significance/history/cultural aspects when we were there, rather than trying to learn/remember everything on the spot. It allowed me to really enjoy myself, and everything we were able to see on our trip.*