

M.H.S. Rome Tour, Excellent Learning Experience

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On January 7, thirteen M.H.S. students accompanied by Mr. Pugh, returned from an eleven day tour of Italy. Arriving in Rome December 27, after an eight hour flight from Toronto, the students joined 250 other Ontario students, also belonging to the Italian tour.

A winding drive one hundred miles north from Rome to Trevi in the rugged Apennine Mountains, provided a fascinating view of ancient Italian villages, perched precariously on high hill tops. On December 28, the students visited the Franciscan monastery of Assisi, prior to arriving in Florence. Home of St. Francis, the monastery is renown for Giotto's famous paintings which revolutionized the art world with the concept of relief. Florence (Firenze), an elegant, aloof city of half a million, is the artistic and historic centre of the Italian Renaissance. December 29 provided the opportunity to visit the magnificent cathedral Santa Maria, with its gigantic dome, designed by Brunelleschi, the beautiful bell tower, and the Baptistery of San Giovanni, decorated by Ghiberti's magnificent bronze doors. At the Church of Santa Croce, burial places of Michelangelo, Galileo, Machiavelli and other famous Italians were viewed, followed by a visit to Michelangelo's "David".

Rome, home to three million Italians, is incredibly rich in the arts of the past: ruins, piazzas, churches, statues, columns and fountains on every corner. Rome ruins visited by the students included the Pantheon, Rome's only perfectly preserved Roman temple, the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, and the Capitoline and Palatine Hills. Rome's largest four churches, St. Peter's, St. Mary's the Major Basilica, St. John in Lateran, and the Basilica of St. Paul were also toured, permitting students to admire priceless works of art and sculptures by Michelangelo. A tour through the Catacombs of St. Sebastian, with its tiny winding dirt tunnels, and skulls of Christian martyrs excited comment.

New Year's Eve was celebrated by a highly successful dance, with a traditional Italian band. On January 2, the tour left for Pompeii and Sorrento. Pompeii, a former Roman city of 20,000 was buried by ash from Vesivius in 79 A.D. but seven square miles have now been excavated to its original appearance.

Sorrento, a popular year round resort, reached after a scenic drive along the mountainous Tyrrhenian Sea coastline, provided an embarkation point for a steamer trip to Capri. This rocky volcanic island, a small paradise, is probably the most highly developed resort town in the world. Flat roofed, Moorish style houses climb steeply up the hillside while narrow steep streets wind to attractive villas of millionaires.

Perched on towering hills the ruins of the estate of Emperor Tiberius, and Santa Costanza, an 11th century Byzantine monastery, attracted attention.

Arriving back in Rome, January 4, the students prepared for the 5:00 a.m. departure via 747 on January 6. The climate with the exception of one rainy day had been sunny but cool. High prices, equivalent to Canadian levels, meant that the Michipicoten party returned broke, but healthy and happy.

Through foreign travel these students have been exposed to a foreign culture, and a legacy of art, sculpture, architecture and history of priceless value. Now these students possess the knowledge and self-confidence to travel abroad on their own, a tremendously self-developing and broadening process, for which the \$459.00 price of the tour is a small debt to pay.