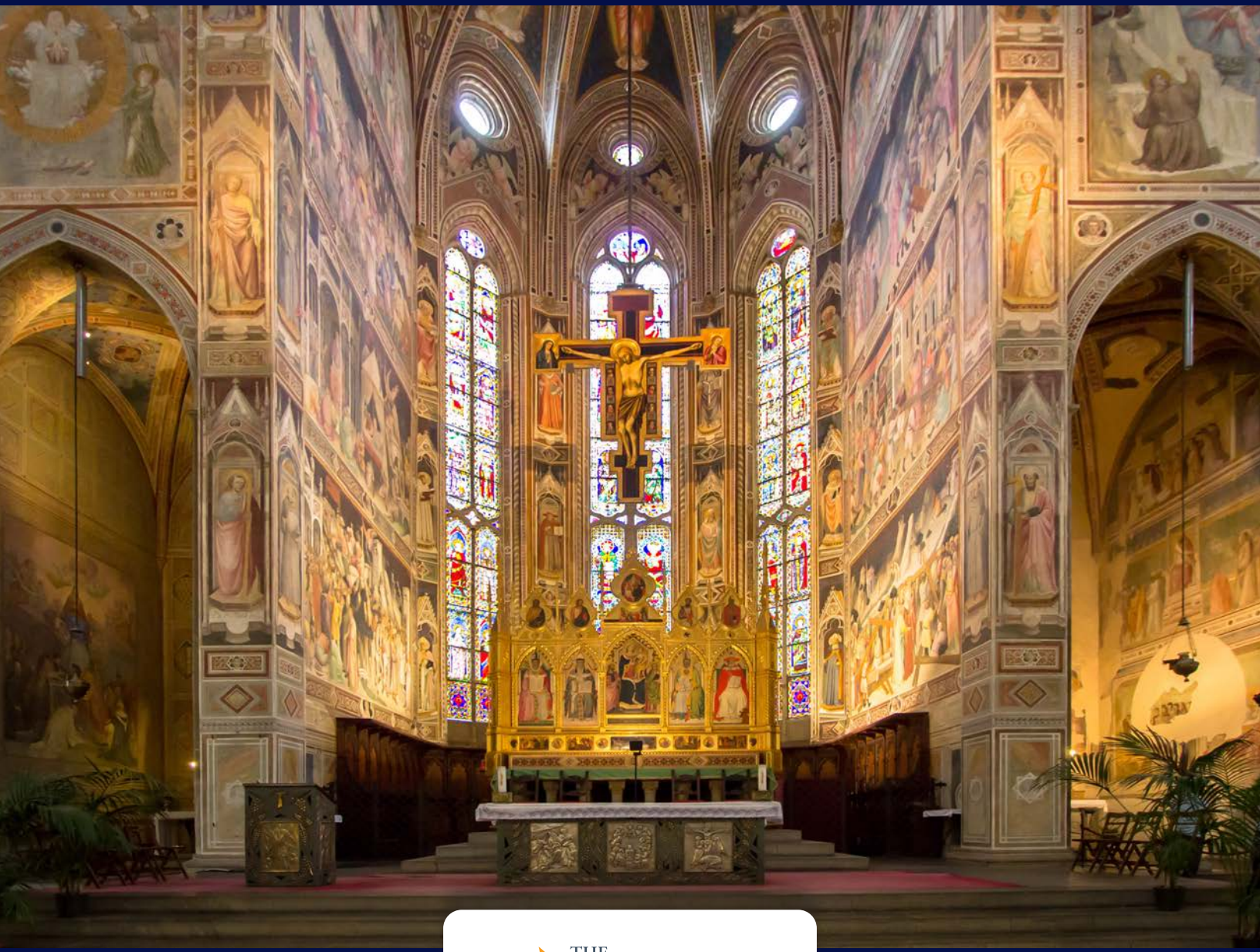


Exploring Italy's Renaissance: Da Vinci and Michelangelo

*with Jean-Pierre Isbouts (October 2026),
Dr. Noah Charney (March 2027),
or Dr. Catherine Scallen (October 2027)*

October 18–24, 2026 | March 14–20, 2027 | October 17–23, 2027



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From: \$6,750 per person

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Journey to Italy with your Great Courses expert to explore the lives, works, and legacies of two of the world's most famous artists: Michelangelo Buonarroti and Leonardo da Vinci.

Trace their work in Florence and Rome and visit their masterpieces in their social, political, and religious contexts under their famous (and sometimes notorious) patrons. See Michelangelo's *Bacchus*, his *David*, his Medici Chapels and his frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, Leonardo's *Annunciation*, *Adoration of the Magi*, and *St. Jerome*, as well as the works of artists who inspired these two creative giants. Through carefully curated visits and insight from your expert, you'll gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the lives and timeless works of these Renaissance rivals through their exemplary creations.

Your Journey Expert



Jean-Pierre Isbouts (October 2026) is a historian, biblical scholar, and best-selling National Geographic author. After earning his DLitt at Leiden University, he served as a member of the doctoral faculty at Fielding Graduate University for more than 15 years and now holds the title of Faculty Emeritus. He gained worldwide renown with his National Geographic books *The Biblical World*, *Archaeology of the Bible*, *In the Footsteps of Jesus*, and *The Ultimate Visual History of the World*. An art history expert as well, he has written extensively on Leonardo da Vinci, including the highly acclaimed books *The da Vinci Legacy* and *Young Leonardo*. His course *The History and Archaeology of the Bible* is one of The Great Course's most popular programs.



Dr. Noah Charney (March 2027) Dr. Noah Charney is an art historian and internationally best-selling author of more than 30 books, translated into 14 languages, including in 2024 *The Thefts of the Mona Lisa: The Complete Story the World's Most Famous Painting*. His book, *The Collector of Lives: Giorgio Vasari and the Invention of Art*, was the finalist for the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in Biography, and *The Museum of Lost Art* was a finalist for the 2018 Digital Book World Award. Professor Charney has taught at Brown University, Yale University, the American University in Rome, and has presented lectures and courses at the Smithsonian Institution and the National Gallery, London. He received his PhD in Art History, Criticism, and Conservation from the University of Ljubljana. Professor Charney is founder of ARCA, the Association for Research into Crimes against Art. He has produced two Great Courses: *Lost Art: The Stories of Missing Masterpieces* and *Understanding Western Art: Stories, Styles, and Masterworks*.



Dr. Catherine Scallen (October 2027) is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor Emerita in the Humanities at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), where she taught courses in art history covering Italy, France, Germany, and the Low Countries in the period 1400-1800. As a seasoned traveler to western Europe, she has served as a faculty lecturer for tour groups from Princeton University, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and CWRU. Has led art history tours of the Italian Renaissance, as well art tours of Holland and Belgium, among many others. She earned her PhD in Art History from Princeton University. Widely published, Professor Scallen is the author of *Rembrandt, Reputation, and the Practice of Connoisseurship*. She has taught two Great Courses: *Art of the Northern Renaissance* and *Museum Masterpieces: The National Gallery, London*.



Highlights

- Discover the life and legacy of Michelangelo through his masterpieces. Stand in awe of the *David* at the Accademia, marvel at the *Pietà*'s emotion and detail in the Duomo Museum and explore the innovative architectural genius of the Medici Chapels, where art and design converge.
- Explore the Uffizi Gallery, one of the world's most renowned art museums, housing iconic works by Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. Uncover the stories behind these masterpieces and witness two rare *Last Supper* frescoes in Florence—Ghirlandaio's and Castagno's—that profoundly influenced Leonardo's groundbreaking mural in Milan.
- Experience the grandeur of the Vatican Museum in Rome with a guided tour.
- Admire Michelangelo's breathtaking Sistine Chapel ceiling, a testament to his artistic genius, and delve into Leonardo da Vinci's evocative *St. Jerome*, a rare and intimate glimpse into the mind of the Renaissance master.

Exploring Italy's Renaissance: Da Vinci and Michelangelo

Itinerary



Day 1: Arrival in Florence: Center of the Renaissance

Arrive in Florence, the heart of the Renaissance, and settle into your accommodations. This afternoon, explore Florence's historical center on an orientation walking tour, including the gilded Baptistery doors, the intricate sculptures of the Orsanmichele, and the iconic Ponte Vecchio, a medieval bridge lined with shops. Later, indulge in a traditional Florentine meal with your Journeys expert and fellow travelers.

Included Meals: Dinner, Reception

Accommodations: Hotel Executive

Day 2: Michelangelo: Sculptor and Architect

Begin the morning with a lecture from your expert on the Florentine Renaissance and Michelangelo's influence on sculpture and architecture. After, discover Brunelleschi's groundbreaking Renaissance design with a visit to the San Lorenzo Church, featuring classical symmetry and balance. Continue to the Medici Chapels and admire Michelangelo's breathtaking sculptures, including the allegories of *Night* and *Day*. Examine Michelangelo's innovative architectural designs, blending functionality with artistic expression, with a tour of the Laurentian Library, a Mannerist masterpiece (*on request, due to limited availability*). Enjoy time to sample local cafés and trattorias at your own pace. After lunch on your own, visit the cathedral with the dome designed by Brunelleschi, followed by a visit to the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo to see Michelangelo's *Pietà*. Conclude your day with a meal showcasing seasonal Tuscan flavors at a local restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Hotel Executive

Day 3: Leonardo: Inventor and Artist

The day begins with a brief lecture from your expert about Leonardo da Vinci's visionary techniques as exemplified in the *Last Supper*. Then, visit the Convent of Ognissanti and the Sant'Apollonia to view Ghirlandaio and Castagno's *Last Supper* frescoes, precursors to Leonardo's revolutionary interpretation. Continue to the Accademia to admire Michelangelo's grand statue of *David*, along with his other signature works, including his unfinished



“Exploring Italy’s Renaissance: Da Vinci and Michelangelo offers the best of what travel can bring you in understanding great art and its history—original context and physical reality.”

–Dr. Catherine Scallen



Prisoners and *Palestrina's Pietà*, showcasing raw artistic genius. Relish local specialties like *ribolita* or *pappa al pomodoro* during a group lunch at a local café. After lunch, gain appreciation of the contrasting styles and philosophies of Leonardo and Michelangelo during an afternoon visit to the renowned Uffizi Gallery, including the recently renovated Vasari Corridor. The rest of the afternoon and evening is yours to explore Florence’s vibrant streets on your own.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Hotel Executive

Day 4: Michelangelo and Leonardo: An Ideological Rivalry



Gain insight into the political and cultural dynamics that shaped Michelangelo and Leonardo’s artistry with a morning lecture from your expert. Afterward, head as a group to the Bargello Museum to discover the sculptors and sculptures that inspired the work of both artists. Continue to Brunelleschi’s Pazzi Chapel, an architectural gem at the Santa Croce Church. Enjoy a leisurely meal at one of the charming restaurants overlooking the historic Piazza Santa Croce. Then, set out on a guided walking tour of Florence, including a visit to the *Salone dei Cinquecento* in Palazzo Vecchio, where Michelangelo and Leonardo’s works, no longer extant, once reflected their ideological rivalry. Relax with tea and pastries while soaking in the elegant ambiance of the Piazza della Repubblica, a Florentine landmark.

Included Meals: Breakfast, High Tea

Accommodations: Hotel Executive

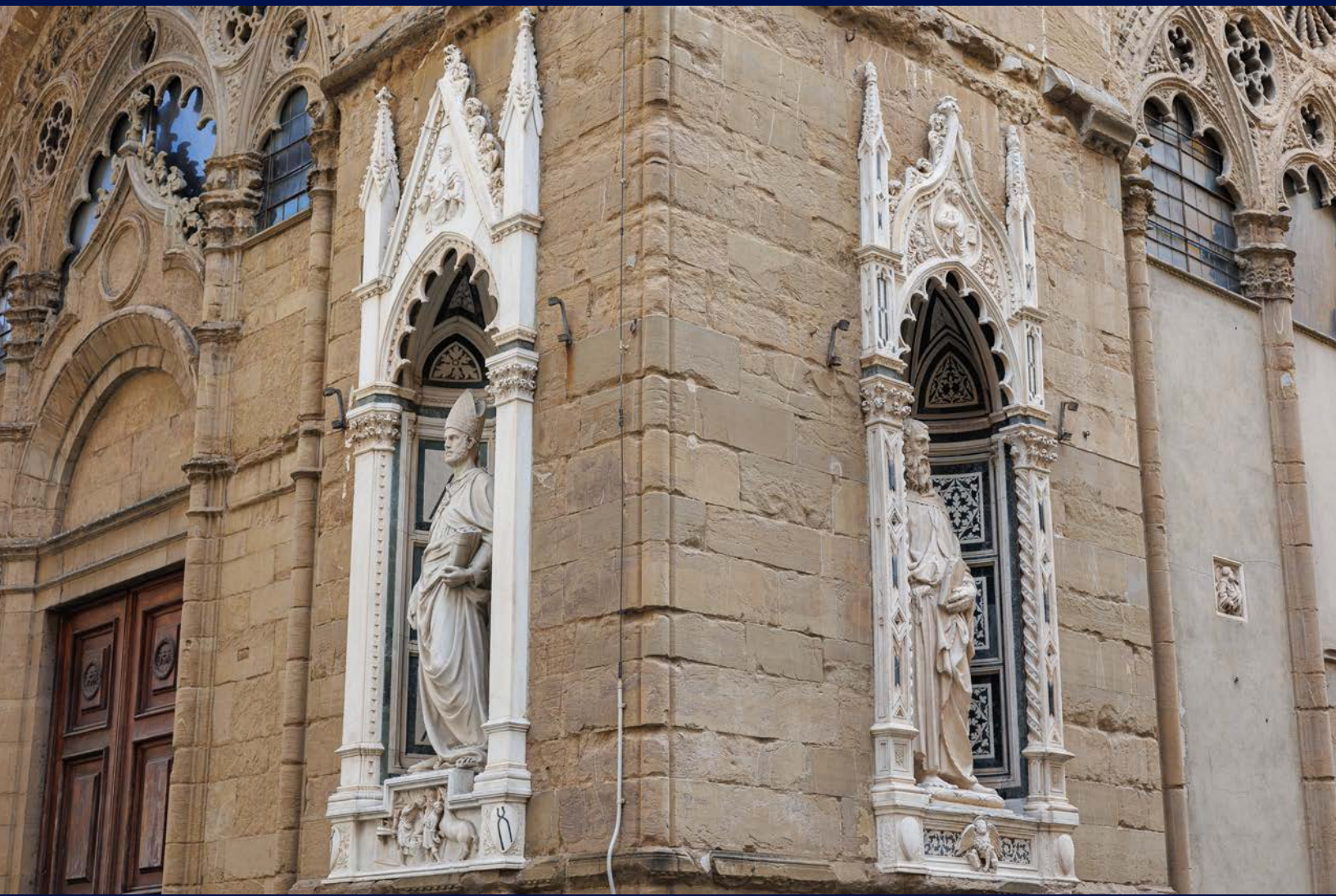
Day 5: All Roads Lead to Rome



Depart Florence for Rome this morning, traveling approximately three hours south through the picturesque Italian countryside. On arrival, savor Roman culinary delights like *cacio e pepe* or *supplì* in a traditional eatery during lunch as a group. Then, explore the Capitoline Museum on the Campidoglio, designed by Michelangelo, featuring ancient Roman sculptures. Discover Rome’s vibrant nightlife or relax at your hotel on your own this evening.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodations: Rome Times Hotel (October 2026)
La Griffe (2027)



Day 6: Michelangelo and Leonardo in Rome

Prepare for a visit to the Vatican with a lecture from your expert about its vast art collection. Then, enjoy a guided tour of the Vatican Museums, including the Sistine Chapel and Pinacoteca and uncover the stories behind these iconic works. Following lunch on your own, those who choose can visit Michelangelo's masterpiece, St. Peter's Basilica, with its breathtaking dome. Toast your journey with a final celebratory meal at a local restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodations: Rome Times Hotel (October 2026)
La Griffe (2027)

Day 7: Departure

Bid farewell to Italy and transfer independently to the airport for individual flights back to the United States.

Included Meal: Breakfast

Accommodations



Rome Times Hotel (October 2026)

Rome

The Rome Times Hotel offers a stylish retreat in the heart of Rome, just steps from Via Nazionale and close to major attractions like the Colosseum and Trevi Fountain. The hotel blends contemporary design with classic Italian elegance, featuring sleek public spaces and modern art. Guests enjoy amenities such as a rooftop terrace with panoramic views, a chic bar, and a refined restaurant serving Mediterranean cuisine. Rooms are spacious and soundproofed, with plush bedding and rainfall showers. **(2 nights)**

Hotel Executive

Florence

Nestled near the Arno River, The Hotel Executive blends historic charm with modern luxury. Located in the historic center of Florence, the Executive's prime location offers easy access to Florence's main attractions, including the Uffizi Gallery and Ponte Vecchio, the Santa Maria Novella, and Pitti Palace. The restored 18th-century palace features a refined interior, spacious rooms with plush bedding, and marble bathrooms. This boutique hotel boasts sophisticated decor, spacious rooms with plush bedding and Florentine charm, and a peaceful courtyard garden. **(4 nights)**

Hotel La Griffe (2027)

Rome

Hotel La Griffe is a four-star boutique hotel set on Via Nazionale, steps from Termini Station and within walking distance of the Trevi Fountain and Colosseum. Housed in an elegant 19th-century palazzo, the building blends historic Roman architecture with sleek, contemporary design. Public amenities include a panoramic rooftop restaurant and bar with city views and a stylish breakfast lounge. Guest rooms feature modern Italian décor, warm neutral tones, parquet floors, and marble bathrooms, creating a refined, comfortable retreat in the heart of Rome. **(2 nights)**



Pricing:

Departure	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy	Deposit	
October 18–24, 2026	\$6,750	\$7,900	\$500	BOOK NOW
March 14–20, 2027	\$7,295	\$8,820	\$650	BOOK NOW
October 17–23, 2027	\$6,995	\$8,420	\$650	BOOK NOW

What's Included:

- All accommodations for the duration of the tour
- Meals, as noted in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and visits as noted in each itinerary
- Expertise of The Great Courses Expert, travel director and local guides throughout the tour
- All gratuities for on-tour guides, drivers, hotel and restaurant staff as part of the group program
- All on-tour transportation, unless otherwise noted
- Quietvox listening devices to facilitate audibility and social distancing on tour
- The assistance of an ATA professional travel team to assist with pre-trip questions, travel arrangements, including flights, extra hotel nights and other services
- Comprehensive pre-departure mailings and materials with information about the destination and what to expect on tour, including a suggested reading list
- Emergency evacuation insurance