



## Exploring Catholic Heritage Through Pilgrimage Travel

Catholics draw on a rich heritage that stretches back to the earliest generations of Christians and includes the development of art, architecture, liturgy and various institutions and traditions that span the centuries and cross borders around the world. Roman Catholic tradition is deeply shaped and formed by visionary men and women of faith who not only forged important beliefs but also generated distinct devotions and practices. Connecting with this heritage in the places where these traditions developed advances evangelization and helps reinforce Catholic identity.

### Program Objectives

#### Explore the lives of the saints

Catholics treasure the witness of faith that visionary men and women have given over the ages. Travel to places where these men and women grew up and forged new traditions is deeply inspiring as pilgrims imagine their own response in similar contexts. Travel in the footsteps of great saints – such as St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Ignatius, and St. Dominic. Many saints have given rise to unique shrines and sanctuaries – as in Lourdes, Santiago, Fatima and other places that have been traditional pilgrimage destinations for countless generations of Catholics.

#### Trace the development of Catholic liturgy and architecture

Throughout the ages, Catholics have gathered in unique architectural space to celebrate the Eucharist. Travel to historical sites allows modern pilgrims to better understand the roots of the Eucharist and to gain an appreciation for the ways artists have given expression to faith in the beautiful churches and cathedrals of the Catholic world.

#### Celebrate the global nature of Catholicism

Catholics are both deeply shaped by their local culture and ethnicity and yet share a common faith and unity in the Bishop of Rome (the Pope). This beautiful tension between local and global forms of Catholic tradition are affirmed in weekly Papal audiences, Papal Masses and in visiting local Catholic communities to experience unique traditions and forms.

The way we travel the world is always changing but the reasons remain constant - to become citizens of the world, *leading and inspiring respectful and compassionate ways of life*. People who travel the globe begin a lifelong journey of worldly citizenship to gain valuable insight about themselves and the world around them through discovery and exploration of cultures outside their own.

### Venues

#### Italy

Italy is one of the most important destination for Catholics seeking to connect with their faith heritage – visiting the early Christian sites in Rome, celebrating Eucharist at sites connected with the early martyrs, meeting the Pope, and traveling further afield to celebrate the rich artistic, architectural and devotional traditions in places such as Florence, Assisi, Florence, Venice, Padua, S. Giovanni Rotondo, Naples and other venues.

#### Spain

Spain is a great venue for exploring Catholic heritage – both through the lives of saints – St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Ignatius of Loyola and others – and it is rich in religious art and architecture – from the Cathedrals of Seville and Toledo to the iconic Sagrada Familia of Barcelona.

#### France

France offers world-renowned shrines (Lourdes), historic monasteries (Cluny), some of the most graceful Gothic cathedrals in the world – Chartres, Paris, Rouen – and places where visionary men and women shaped Catholic life and devotions – St. Vincent de Paul, St. John Vianney, St. Dominic and others.

#### Ireland

Catholic heritage – indeed Irish culture – was deeply shaped by monasteries founded in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and later. Visit large archaeological sites to see the influence of Celtic spirituality and the development of unique monastic perspectives on Christian life. Explore ancient royal centers, academic institutions in Dublin, and sites that integrate local customs with Catholic practices.

#### Other venues

Illume creates unique and customized programs to other centers of European-Catholic heritage including Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and other countries.