



ITALY 2009

Ancient Land of Natural Splendor

14 Days from June 28 through July 11

Italy is known as *bel paese* – the beautiful country. Italy is blessed with a tapestry of old ruins, quaint countryside, modern cities, picturesque seaports, superb cuisine and extraordinary people. Although Italy is certainly better known for its cultural wonders with a little effort its rich natural history is revealed. Tucked away in protected areas is surprising plant and animal diversity including many large mammals. This special ecotourism trip, offered jointly by North Carolina State University and the University of Montana, is designed to explore Italy's natural history. We will accomplish this by concentrating our visit in three national parks where we will examine the natural resource management and conservation issues within the parks. Our first stop will be Abruzzo National Park in the Apennine Mountains. This spectacular park is home to a great variety of wildlife including wild boar, Marsican brown bears and wolves. From the Apennines we will head north to Cinque Terre National Park where we will snorkel in the marine reserve located just offshore from the five ancient villages comprising the park. From the warm waters of the Mediterranean we continue north to the Italian Alps and the incredible Gran Paradiso National Park and Biosphere Reserve. This beautiful alpine park is home to chamois, ibex, marmot, lammergeier and golden eagle. Although this trip's focus is natural history, we will be immersed in the local culture and language. Also we will be flying in and out of Rome and will take advantage of Rome's fantastic cultural riches while we are there. We invite you to journey with us to Italy and experience the magic of *bel paese*!

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Sunday, June 28: Raleigh/Missoula to Our US Gateway City and on to Rome, Italy

An early morning flight from Raleigh or Missoula will take us to our gateway city, likely either New York or Chicago, for our connecting flight to Rome, Italy. Please arrive at your respective airports no later than two hours prior to your scheduled departure time. Our flight to Rome is an overnight flight so we should have plenty of time to reach our gateway city prior to departure.

Day 2 – Monday, June 29: Arrival in Rome and Tour of the Vatican/St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel

Once we arrive in Rome this morning we will clear immigration and customs before gathering our luggage and transferring to our lodging. At our accommodations we will settle into our rooms and have a chance to freshen up before we have lunch. After lunch we will begin our exploration of Rome with a tour of Vatican City. Although the Vatican is the smallest sovereign state in the world, it is made up of some of the most

opulent sights on earth. Our first stop will be the Vatican Museums home to such vast collections of artifacts it would literally take days to see everything. All tours through the Museums end with the Sistine Chapel so, because our time is relatively short, we will likely visit the Galleria delle Carte (Map Gallery); the Galleria degli Arazzi (Tapestry Gallery); and the Stanze di Raffaello (the private apartments of Pope Julius II) before we enter the Sistine Chapel. If we have enough time we could also take in the fabulous paintings in the Pinacoteca prior to visiting the Sistine Chapel. Our tour will end in the Sistine Chapel and Michelangelo's magnificent frescoes on the chapel's ceiling. After we leave the crowded confines of the Sistine Chapel we will visit the vastness of St. Peter's Basilica. The cavernous interior can hold up to 60,000 people and is home to many spectacular works of art. After a full day we will have dinner on our own before returning to our lodging for a night of much needed rest. (B on the plane,L)

Day 3 – Tuesday, June 30: Travel from Rome to Pescasseroli and Abruzzo National Park

After breakfast at our hotel we will transfer by private bus from Rome to the mountain village of Pescasseroli – the gateway to Abruzzo National Park. Abruzzo National Park is situated in the heart of the Apennine Mountains which stretch the entire length of Italy. These mountains have provided a refuge for most of Italy's natural history and nowhere is this more apparent than in the ancient forests and flower-filled meadows of Abruzzo. We should arrive in Pescasseroli in time for lunch at our accommodations. After lunch we will begin our exploration of Abruzzo. (B,L,D)

Days 4, 5 & 6, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday, July 1, 2 & 3: Abruzzo NP

We will have three full days to explore the wonders of Abruzzo National Park. Abruzzo encompasses 1100 square kilometers of rolling hills, majestic beech forests and alpine meadows, and is home to a rich diversity of animal species. Among the mammals we hope to see are wild boar, red and roe deer, badger and the endemic Apennine chamois. Abruzzo is also home to two rare carnivores the wolf and the Marsican brown bear. Although the chances of seeing these two predators in the wild is rare our chances will be improved by working with the researchers studying each species. Abruzzo is a haven for birds including six species of woodpecker (black, green, white-backed as well as lesser, middle and great spotted), golden eagles, lanner falcon, Eurasian hoopoe, white-throated dipper and lots of song birds. Reptiles and amphibians are also present, but in smaller numbers. We will be up early each day when wildlife is most active to maximize our chances of seeing the greatest number of species. We will have a chance to interact with researchers who will help us understand the history of wildlife management in Abruzzo and the conservation issues that the park faces. The abundant wildlife, close association with Italian researchers, fantastic scenery, old traditional villages and locally inspired cuisine should all blend together to make our time at Abruzzo very memorable indeed. (B,L,D each day)

Day 7 – Saturday, July 4: Travel from Abruzzo NP to Cinque Terre

We will be up early this morning and after breakfast we will transfer back to Rome and the train station where we will board our northbound train to the Ligurian Coast. Along the way we will travel through Tuscany and some of Italy's most picturesque countryside. Our destination is Cinque Terre National Park which is strung along 18 km of cliffs overlooking the deep blue Mediterranean. The National Park, created in 1999, consists of five medieval fishing villages surrounded by olive groves and stone-walled vineyards plus a marine sanctuary offshore. Once we arrive we will transfer to our accommodations for dinner and overnight. (B,L,D)

Day 8 – Sunday, July 5: Cinque Terre Marine Reserve

Today we will explore Cinque Terre Marine Reserve as we travel by boat to some of the Reserve's best snorkeling spots. This reserve was designed to protect the high diversity of marine life found within its boundaries. The high diversity owes its existence to the many habitats found within the reserve such as expansive sea grass beds, rocky reefs, steep walls and productive deep waters. The reserve is home to a

great number of marine invertebrates, fish and even marine mammal species. While we are snorkeling we could see sea fans, nudibranches, octopus and dozens of fish species. If we are lucky we could spot striped dolphin from the boat. After a full day of snorkeling we will head back to our accommodations to freshen up before dinner. (B,L,D)

Day 9 – Monday, July 6: Travel from Cinque Terre to Aosta/Cogne and Gran Paradiso National Park

This morning we will board a train to continue our journey north to the Italian Alps and Gran Paradiso National Park. Our route will take us through the historic port of Genoa before we turn north toward Valle d' Aosta, Italy's smallest region. This region, bordering both France and Switzerland, is dominated by snow-capped peaks including three of Europe's four highest mountains. As we arrive at the region's only city of Aosta, if we have a clear day, we could see Europe's highest peak, Mont Blanc, which Italy shares with France and the Matterhorn, which Italy shares with Switzerland. From Aosta we will travel to the small town of Cogne – the gateway to Gran Paradiso NP. We will settle into our accommodations and, if enough time permits before dinner, we will hike to a nearby waterfall for a very cold swim. (B,L,D)

Days 10 & 11 – Tuesday and Wednesday, July 7 & 8: Gran Paradiso National Park

These two days will be spent exploring the lush valleys, alpine grasslands, larch/fir forests and glaciers that make up Gran Paradiso National Park and Biosphere Reserve. In 1922, Gran Paradiso became Italy's first national park and is certainly one of the most scenic parks in the world. One of the primary reasons for the creation of the park was to protect the last remaining herd of alpine ibex. Alpine ibex were historically found throughout the Alps, but decades of hunting pressure reduced the population to one herd in Gran Paradiso. In recent times this herd has been used to introduce ibex to parts of its former range. Gran Paradiso still holds the largest herd of ibex and is the best place in the world to see this spectacular goat. We will spend a good deal of time above the treeline in hopes of glimpsing not only ibex, but chamois and alpine marmots as well. The alpine meadows where these mammals are found should be blanketed in wildflowers and alive with clouds of attendant butterflies. Also, we will be on the lookout for alpine birds such as golden eagle, rock ptarmigan, choughs, alpine choughs, snow finch, alpine accentor, wheatears and the spectacular wallcreeper. If we are really lucky we could spy a lammergeier dropping bones on the rocks to extract the marrow. The forests of larch, fir, spruce and beech could contain firecrests, coal tits, citril finches, crossbills, ring ouzels, dippers, rock buntings, water pipits and the huge black woodpecker. We will overnight each night in Cogne and have a chance to taste the local Valdostane cuisine which includes plenty of chamois, venison and excellent cheeses. (B,L,D)

Day 12 – Thursday, July 9: Travel from Aosta to Rome

Today we will have a full day of travel as we board our train in Aosta for the long journey southward to Rome. Once in Rome we will have dinner on our own and settle into our accommodations for the night. (B,L)

Day 13 – Friday, July 10: The Cultural Sites of Rome

After breakfast, we will begin a full day of visiting Rome's most famous cultural sites. None of these sights is more famous or awe-inspiring than the Coliseum and it is fitting that we will begin our journey through the ancient Roman Empire here. The Coliseum, where gladiators met in mortal combat, was a symbol of the eternity of Rome. It is comprised of three areas, the arena, the cavea and the podium – all of which we will see during our visit. From the Coliseum we will visit the ruins of the Roman Forum. The Forum was once the gleaming heart of the Roman Empire. We will next visit the Pantheon which is undoubtedly the best preserved building of ancient Rome. From the ruins we will travel to the baroque magnificence of the Trevi Fountain. The fountain was designed in 1732 and is fed by one of the city's earliest aqueducts. After tossing a coin in the fountain we will visit Piazza di Spagna and the Spanish Steps. If enough time permits, we will visit the Appian Way and tour the subterranean catacombs of San Callisto. After a full day of touring, we

will have our farewell dinner on our own at a great local restaurant before returning to our lodging for a restful night's sleep. (B,L)

Day 14 – Saturday, July 11: Departure for the US

This morning we will transfer to the airport for our flight back to our gateway city in the US. Once we arrive in the US we will go through immigration and customs before transferring to our flights back to Missoula and Raleigh. (B)

* Please note that EcoQuest Travel will make every effort to adhere to this itinerary, but dates, times, activities and prices are subject to change depending on scheduling and availability.

Cost:

\$3,650.00/person all-inclusive tour package

estimated international airfare*

\$3,650.00/person all-inclusive

*Note: Normally it is our philosophy to provide an all-inclusive price including airfare, but due to the volatile nature of the airline industry, EcoQuest Travel is only able to provide an estimated airfare at this time. Also, being a joint trip between two universities, the cost for airline tickets will vary depending on whether you originate from Raleigh or Missoula. Recently the airfares from New York to Rome have ranged from \$1100.00 to \$1400.00. Please remember the actual date of ticketing will determine the price. Rest assured that when it is time to purchase airline tickets for this trip EcoQuest Travel will do all we can to get the best price possible.

What's Included:

- All transportation within Italy
- All accommodations – based upon double occupancy (single supplement is available at an additional cost)
- All tours within the scheduled itinerary
- Most meals are included throughout the trip (see itinerary for details)
- Permits, entrance fees and guides
- The leadership services of EcoQuest Travel professionals

What's Not Included:

- International airfare is not included in the above price – please see the note above
- Gratuities (for Italian guides)
- Passport fees
- Some meals (see trip itinerary for details)
- Travel insurance (please see the Travel Insurance Section below)
- Gifts and personal items

Travel Documents:

A passport valid for at least 6 months after our arrival is required for travel in Italy. No visa is required for US citizens.

Group Size:

The trip cost is based on a minimum number of participants – 12 people. Although 12 people are required to make this trip a reality, we are able to accommodate up to a maximum of 16 people. If we have more than 12 participants, the price will go down and the savings will be passed along to all participants.

Health Requirements:

Because we will be traveling in Europe there are no health or vaccination requirements for this trip. However, it would be prudent to make sure that your vaccine against Tetanus/Diphtheria is up to date. We highly recommend discussing all medical issues related to travel with your doctor well in advance of the proposed travel date.

Payments and Reservations:

A deposit of \$1,000.00 per person is required along with your reservation form in to reserve space on the trip. This ensures airline seating space and necessary early deposits. We encourage you to send the deposit well in advance of the date the first payment is due, as paying the deposit is the only way to secure your spot. Personal checks, money orders and credit cards are accepted. If paying by personal check it should be made payable to EcoQuest Travel, Inc. and on the memo line please indicate: For Italy Trip 2009. If paying by credit card you can include your credit card number and expiration date on your reservation form. This form is available on our website: www.ecoquesttravel.net and can be filled out online and submitted via email, or downloaded and mailed. Alternatively, you can phone your credit card information in to EcoQuest Travel at: (919) 963-3038. EcoQuest Travel accepts Visa, MasterCard and most bank debit cards.

- A payment of at least \$1,325.00 is required no later than December 5, 2008.
- The remainder of the trip expense (\$1,325.00) will be due on or before April 24, 2009.

Cancellation:

The initial deposit, and subsequent payments, will be used to purchase airline tickets and pay deposits for accommodations, travel arrangements, etc. in Italy. Therefore, if you must withdraw from the trip, irrespective of reason, a refund will not be possible. We strongly suggest that you protect yourself with the purchase of trip cancellation insurance. We will try to retain a wait list for this trip and it is possible that if you end up not being able to participate we will attempt to find a replacement for you, however, it is your responsibility to find a replacement or to have insurance.

- Please note that in the event EcoQuest Travel, Inc. does not have enough participants for this trip a refund of the initial deposit of \$1,000.00, and any subsequent payments, will be issued.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is provided as a part of the Office of Off-Campus Programs fees. These fees are collected by the Office of Off-Campus Programs when you sign up for this trip.

General Information

Upon receiving your deposit and reservation form you will be sent an information packet containing flight information, baggage requirements, hints on what to bring and other useful information. The climate will vary from potentially hot in the lowlands to quite cool in the highlands especially at night. Rain is always possible and should be planned for. You will want to bring a camera, film and binoculars. Again, a more exhaustive list will be provided after you are registered for the trip.

Trip Leaders:

Dave Davenport: Zoologist and President – EcoQuest Travel

Dr. Chris DePerno: Assistant Professor of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences – North Carolina State University

Dr. Mike Mitchell: Associate Professor and Unit Leader – Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, University of Montana

.....