OPTIONAL ASSISI & FLORENCE EXTENSION
PRICE WILL BE Based on a minimum of 15+ travelers

**DAY 13 – MAY 29 – FRIDAY – ROME TO ASSISI**

After breakfast and check out we will be heading toward Assisi – a 3 hour drive. Upon arrival, we meet the local guide and enjoy a guided walking tour starting from the **Basilica of St. Clare**, the first and most important heroine of the Franciscan movement, view her remains and see the miraculous Crucifix. After a stop for lunch(not included) we continue to the **Basilica of St. Francis .**  Our local guide will take us to explore the Basilica complex, which is actually composed of two churches built one atop the other. Beneath both churches is the crypt that houses the tomb of St. Francis. The lower Basilica dates from 1228 to 1230, and is richly decorated with beautiful stained glass windows, and paintings done by some of the most important artists of the 13th and 14th centuries. In the upper Basilica, built from 1230 - 1253, we will marvel at the monumental frescoes painted by Giotto. Late afternoon we depart on a two hour drive to Florence to check in at our hotel for dinner and overnight. **Florence. (**B,D)

**DAY 14 – MAY 30 – SATURDAY - FULL DAY FLORENCE**

Following breakfast, we meet our local guide and will visit the **Accademia,** which holds the superb “**David” by Michelangelo**. Break for lunch at the **San Lorenzo market** area. Then, we continue to visit the beautiful **Piazza Del Duomo** and the delicately patterned green, white and **pink Cathedral of Santa Maria Del Fiore**, crowned with its magnificent Dome by Brunelleschi; **Giotto’s Bell Tower**; the Romanesque Baptistry of St. John with the exquisite **bronze doors by Ghiberti**, which Michelangelo called the “Gates of Paradise”- There will be some time at leisure for some shopping –we will visit the Franciscan church of **Santa Croce**. This evening dinner will be served at a local restaurant, then return to the hotel for overnight (BD)

**DAY 15 – MAY 31 – SUNDAY –FLORENCE - SIENA**

 We leave Florence and drive through the gentle Umbrian and Tuscan hills to the city of **Siena.** A city that is self-contained and still rural in parts behind its medieval walls. Upon arrival, we will focus on the beauty of Siena, where **Saint Catherine** (1347-80) lived as a lay-affiliate of the Dominican Order. St. Catherine is well known for her intellect and mystical visions of Christ. Visit the Basilica of St. Dominic, which contains the incorrupt head of this beloved Patron saint of Italy. Our walking tour of Siena continues to the Cathedral di Santa Maria, better known as the **Duomo**, enjoy a guided visit of the Duomo, a gleaming marble treasury of Gothic art. Large in scale and ornately decorated inside and out, Siena's cathedral is one of the finest examples of Italian Gothic architecture. The dome was painted in dark blue with golden stars in the late 15th century, and is topped with Bernini’s gold “lantern”. The exterior and interior are constructed of striped white and greenish-black marble, with addition of red marble on the facade. The Cathedral contains valuable pieces of art including the “Feast of Herod” by Donatello and works by Bernini and the young Michelangelo. It makes this Cathedral an extraordinary museum of Italian sculpture. Continue on to visit **Piazza del Campo** (Il Campo), the site of the famous Palio horse races, built at the convergence of the city's principal roads, the Banchi di Sopra, Banchi di Sotto, and Via di Citá. Time at our leisure for lunch and browsing streets and the shops before late afternoon departure heading south towards the Lazio Region about 15 miles from Rome. Our last night will be at **Castel Gandolfo**, where the popes have their summer residence – Enjoy a farewell dinner overlooking the lake! - overnight (BD)

DAY 16 – JUNE 01 – MONDAY - DEPARTURE

Breakfast and check out, transfer to the airport and fly back home on …