

Salena Rigby - Age 14

My trip to Italy was a family vacation. I, my mom, my brother, my uncle, my uncle's friend, and my cousin all went on a 14-day tour of Southern Italy and Sicily. We went on a tour with Globus, and it was perfect.

We left from JFK airport in New York City. Our flight number when we departed from JFK airport on July 4, 2009, was AZ 611. We departed at 9:55 pm and arrived at Leonardo Da Vinci (Fiumicino) airport in Rome on July 5, 2009, at 12:05 pm. Our flight number from the Fiumicino airport in Rome when we left on July 18, 2009, was AZ 610. I enjoyed flying with Alitalia because in front of my seat was a small personal TV. As I sat in the same seat for 8 hours, I had a large array of music and movies to keep me busy. Also, there were 3 additional TV's on this one wall in front of me, where it stated how many miles we had been traveling, the estimated time upon our arrival in Rome, what the temperature was outside of the plane, and how many feet high we were in the sky. I thought the flight attendants had done a great job with making sure all passengers were okay.

While in Italy, our tour group spent the first 3 days in Rome. We visited the Coliseum and the Roman Forum, the Spanish Steps, the Pantheon, and the Vatican. The Coliseum was my favorite monument. It was amazing to be able to take steps where Roman gladiators had once done the same. After Rome, we all headed for Napoli. I loved Naples. We saw the Reggia Di Caserta, which was a 1200 room palace. It was beautiful, and the history of it was fascinating. It was the "French Palace of Versailles." During our stay in Naples, we took a ferry over to Capri. On Capri, there was this shuttle called a "Funicolare" that we took from the port, up to where there were restaurants and shops. The next day after visiting Capri, we went to Sorrento. While in Sorrento we went shopping and made homemade pizza at a local farm. Then we went to Pompeii to see ancient ruins that were destroyed by Mount Vesuvius erupting. After seeing this, we boarded our overnight ferry to Palermo, Sicily. When we woke up the next morning, we rushed off the ferry, went to our hotel, then sightseeing. We went to the Palatine Chapel, and an area called Monreale to see a Norman Cathedral from the 12th century. Most pieces of work in these places were made of pure gold. We went to a boardwalk and watched the sunset one night in Sicily, and it was simply breathtaking. After Palermo, we went to Syracuse and Taormina. In Taormina, I felt like I was in Paradise. There were palm trees, and the water was this perfectly clear, blue shade. Then we visited Alberobello, an old, rustic town, where they had this village of Trulli houses. The roofs on the white houses looked like cones. After we stayed in Alberobello, we headed back to Rome to leave Italy. On our last night, my family and I had our own special farewell dinner. We went to this restaurant called "La Lupa." The food was unbelievable. I liked everything I ate in Italy, except paninis. Every chance I got, I ordered "pasta con pomodoro e basilica." When we were back in Rome, I felt so used to the area. I kind of enjoyed that feeling.

Places I would recommend others to visit would be the Blue Grotto in Capri, the Coliseum and the Pantheon in Roma. I would also recommend walking around Sorrento, as well as Naples.

Throughout my trip to Italy, I learned so much about Italian culture, and that every place in Italy has its own way of being unique. I also learned that even though Europe is a different continent from the US, we aren't too different. Everyone gets up in the morning, works all day, goes home to their families, and does it all over again the next day. One thing I noticed that really stood out from my culture is that once it gets to about 1:30 p.m., all stores close, and workers leave. But then at 4:00 p.m., they come back and continue their shifts. In Italy, they called this a "siesta".

This was a perfect vacation.