DAY 1, Sun, May 12  DEPART USA
Departure from the USA for our flight to Rome. Dinner and breakfast are served on board. (meals aloft)

DAY 2, Mon, May 13  ARRIVE ROME
Upon arrival in Rome, we are met at the airport and transferred to the Hotel Assisi for check-in. (B afloat)

DAY 3, Tue, May 14  VATICAN/ROME
This morning we have a guided tour of the Vatican, including the Museums, one of the most renowned and famous cultural institutions of the Holy See, known all over the world for its masterpieces that have been commissioned, collected and preserved in time by the Roman Pontiffs; and the epic Sistine Chapel, over which Michelangelo labored for four years, and which has been restored to its original glory. This afternoon we visit the Basilica of St. Peter, the largest church in the world and said to be buried under the tomb of the crucified saint. (B)

DAY 4, Wed, May 15  ROME
Our full day of touring in Rome includes a visit to the Basilica of St. Peter in Chains (San Pietro in Vincoli), containing Michelangelo's magnificent statue of Moses and built in the middle of the 8th century to house the relics of the chains that bound Saint Peter while imprisoned in Jerusalem. We continue to the Colosseum, begun around AD 72, and the best-known structure remaining from ancient Rome. It was capable of holding more than 50,000 to view gladiatorial contests, hunts, mock naval battles and perhaps Christian sacrifices. Many of the materials from this magnificent edifice were later used in the construction of various churches and palaces. We visit Capitol Hill, the most sacred of the Seven Hills of Rome, and the Roman Forum, which served as the center of political life and commerce in ancient Rome. Later this afternoon we tour the Borghese Gallery and see its collection of paintings, sculpture, and antiquities, located in Villa Borghese and set among exquisitely landscaped gardens. (B)

DAY 5, Thu, May 16  ROME/SIENA/FLORENCE
We depart Rome this morning and drive to Siena, fascinating both for its medieval atmosphere and for the number and richness of its artistic possessions. The city flourished in the 12th and 13th centuries, when it became a major center of trade in Europe. Here we see the Duomo and the Piazza del Campo. We proceed to Florence, capital of Tuscany and home of the Renaissance. We see the Piazza della Signoria where the city's ruling family lived and ruled for generations and acquaint ourselves with the galleries, palaces, and statues surrounding this historic square. We explore the shops along the Ponte Vecchio and then travel to Piazza Michelangelo for fantastic panoramic views of Florence and the surrounding area. We check in to the Hotel Delle Nazioni for overnight this evening. (B)

DAY 6, Fri, May 17  FLORENCE
Today we enjoy a full day walking tour including a visit to the Academy of Fine Arts, home to a fine collection of Michelangelo sculptures, including the original David. There also is a Pieta and an incomplete St. Matthew. We also visit the San Marco Museum, a former convent that now houses the major collection of works by the painter Fra Angelica. We spend some time shopping in the leather market and then proceed to octagonal-shaped Baptistery, one of the oldest buildings in the city, renowned for its three sets of bronze doors with relief sculptures by Lorenzo Ghiberti. Referred to by Michelangelo as "the Gates of Paradise" because of their beauty, they were said to have begun the Renaissance. We also visit Santa Maria del Fiore (the Duomo), the cathedral of Florence, and see its striking green, white, and pink marble facade as well as the magnificent stained glass windows in its Gothic interior. (B)

DAY 7, Sat, May 18  FLORENCE/PADUA/VENICE
Today we visit the Uffizi Gallery, located in the Palace and built in the 1560s. The collection here was founded by the Medici family and bequeathed to the city in 1737. As well as paintings by artists including Bellini, Titian and Canaletto, the gallery also houses sculpture, jewelry and early scientific instruments. This afternoon we tour the Bargello Museum, where pieces by Michelangelo, Donatello, and others are housed in this former barracks and prison. (B)

DAY 8, Sun, May 19  FLORENCE/PADUA/VENICE
We depart Florence this morning and drive to Padua, home to impressive sites such as the Basilica of St. Anthony and the Scrovegni Chapel. Its unique atmosphere offers colorful market squares and pedestrian streets. We continue our drive to the enchanting canal-laden city of Venice where we check in to the Eurostars Residenza Canareggio. (B)

DAY 9, Mon, May 20  VENICE
This morning we visit Doge's Palace, which served for centuries as the seat of Venice's government. Largely constructed in the 14th century, its two most visible facades look towards the Venetian Lagoon and St Mark's Square. Today it is preserved as a museum and contains paintings by Tintoretto and Veronese. We also visit St. Mark's Cathedral, the most famous of the city's churches and one of the best known examples of Byzantine architecture. Due to its opulent, gilded design it has been known since the 11th century by the nickname "Chiesa d'Oro" (Church of gold). This afternoon we travel by way of Vaporetto to visit the famous glass-makers of Murano. (B)

DAY 10, Tue, May 21  VENICE/PARIS
Take in the energy of this bustling city as you enjoy the full day at leisure. Explore St. Mark's Square, the Bridge of Sighs, and the Clock Tower, and don't miss the opportunity for an unforgettable gondola ride! Later today we transfer to the train station for our overnight journey to Paris. (B)

DAY 11, Wed, May 22  PARIS
We arrive in Paris today and check in to our hotel, La Perdrix Rouge and have some time to freshen up before beginning our exploration of the "City of Lights." We see some of the city's main sites, such as the Arc de Triomphe, Notre Dame, the Opera, Madeleine, Les Invalides and the grand boulevards and sites of the Seine. This
afternoon we ascend to the second level of the Eiffel Tower for magnificent panoramic views of Paris.

DAY 12, Thu, May 23  PARIS
This morning we go to the legendary Notre Dame de Paris, one of the first buildings in the world to be supported by flying buttresses. We then tour Île de la Cité to see Sainte Chapelle, a gothic cathedral originally built to house precious relics. Also today we visit Les Invalides, a complex of buildings all relating to the military history of France. Serving as a burial site for a number of war heroes, the most famous remains interred here are those of Napoleon Bonaparte.  

DAY 13, Fri, May 24  PARIS
This morning we tour the Rodin Museum which displays many of his most significant creations, including *The Thinker* and *The Kiss.* Many of the sculptures are located in the extensive gardens around the museum. Also today we visit the Musée d'Orsay, housed in a former railway station. Perhaps best known for its extensive collection of impressionist works by Monet, Degas, Renoir, and Cezanne, it also houses French art pieces from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries such as sculpture, photography, and even furniture.  

DAY 14, Sat, May 25  PARIS
We begin this morning at the Pantheon in the Latin Quarter, an important architectural achievement and the first great neoclassical monument which today serves as the burial place for such notables as Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Louis Braille, and many others. Following a lunch stop, we visit the Louvre, home to many famous works of art including the *Venus de Milo* and Leonardo da Vinci's enigmatic *Mona Lisa.* We enjoy a special treat this evening, a concert in lovely Sainte Chapelle set against a backdrop of stunning stained glass.  

DAY 15, Sun, May 26  PARIS/ASHFORD/ CANTERBURY
This morning we transfer to the train station for our Eurostar journey to Ashford and connecting on to Canterbury, seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, spiritual head of the Church of England. Upon arrival we walk from the train station to the nearby *Falstaff Hotel* for check-in. This afternoon we visit historic Canterbury Cathedral, where Christians have worshiped for sixteen centuries. St. Augustine founded both the Abbey and Cathedral which much later became a great center of pilgrimage after the murder of Thomas Becket. Many beautiful Tudor buildings surround the Cathedral. We enjoy dinner this evening at our hotel.  

DAY 16, Mon, May 27  CANTERBURY/DOVER/ LEEDS/LONDON
Our full day of touring takes us first to Dover Castle, described as the "Key to England" due to its defensive significance throughout history. Here we tour the secret wartime tunnels that served as an air-raid shelter and then later a military command center and underground hospital. We travel on to Leeds Castle, set on two islands on the River Len in the heart of Kent, and home to royalty, lords and ladies for over 1000 years. Journey through centuries of history as you explore its architecture and furnishings. Following our tour we continue to London where we check in to the London Lodge.  

DAY 17, Tue, May 28  LONDON
Today we visit the British Museum, home to more than seven million objects comprising one of the most comprehensive collections worldwide and spanning the entire breadth of human history and culture. The British Museum has treasures from around the world including the Rosetta Stone (which helped archaeologists to interpret Egyptian hieroglyphics), the magnificent Elgin Marbles (sculptures that formerly decorated the Parthenon in Athens) and a copy of the Magna Carta (the charter signed by King John in 1215 to which is ascribed the origins of English liberty). From here we continue to the British Library, which houses more than 150 million items in a myriad of languages and formats. Second in size only to the American Library of Congress, the British Library must automatically receive a copy of everything that is published in the United Kingdom. This evening we take in a theater performance in London's West End.  

DAY 18, Wed, May 29  LONDON
This morning we visit St. Paul's Cathedral. Its dome - the world's third largest - can be seen from many an angle in other parts of the city. The cathedral has been the site of many famous state occasions, including the funeral of Winston Churchill in 1965 and the wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1981. We also visit the Tower of London, of all buildings in England the one which carries the heaviest burden of history. Here the visitor is reminded of a succession of horrors which have gone to make up the history of England. Here also are the Crown Jewels. Among the finest items are St. Edward's Crown, of pure gold, which is still used in the coronation of British monarchs; and the Imperial State Crown, set with 3000 diamonds, which is worn by the Queen on important occasions.  

DAY 19, Thu, May 30  LONDON
Today we visit famed Westminster Abbey, home to many coronations and royal weddings. We explore Trafalgar Square, located in the heart of London, featuring Nelson's Column and the four lion statues that guard it. The Square serves as a social and political gathering place for visitors and Londoners alike. On the north side of the Square sits the National Gallery. From its humble beginnings - 38 paintings purchased by the British government from a banker in 1824 - today it boasts a rich collection of over 2,300 paintings spanning six centuries.  

DAY 20, Fri, May 31  LONDON/USA
Following breakfast we transfer to the airport for our return flight to the USA. (B,meals aloft)

All sites listed in the itinerary will be seen but the sequence and days may be altered to adjust to religious holidays, special closings of sites, air schedule changes, hotel confirmation, etc. Hotels listed subject to confirmation.