



## VATICAN MUSEUMS & ST. PETER'S BASILICA SATURDAY OCTOBER 22<sup>ND</sup> 2011

**Website:** <http://www.vatican.va/>

**Duration:** 4 hours. Operated mornings, daily except Sundays, Catholic holidays & special events. Departure depends on reservation time.

**Highlights:** The stunning museums of the Vatican, as well as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and the St. Peter's Basilica, if available.

**Notes:**

- See "Important Notes" at the beginning of the Excel regarding reservations.
- St. Peter's Basilica may not be included in case of any special events taking place in the square or Basilica, including the Papal Audience.

From the hotel, guests will be taken to the closest parking lot of Vatican City, and after a pleasant walk, will reach the entrance to the Vatican Museums. This tour will be entirely devoted to the Vatican Museums, where the world's most important art collections of all ages are housed. The Museums of the Vatican occupy part of the palaces built by the popes from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward, extended and embellished along the way until the present day. This visit explores the Gallery of Candelabras, the Gallery of Tapestries, the Library, the Sacred Museum, sections containing hundreds of masterpieces collected over the centuries by the Popes. The major highlight is a visit to the celebrated **Sistine Chapel**, the only place where you can admire Michelangelo as a fresco painter. The Sistine Chapel was constructed by order of Sixtus IV. The sidewalls of the Chapel are covered with frescoes by great Umbrian and Florentine artists who paved the way for the three greatest geniuses of art: Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci. Pope Julius II commissioned the breathtaking ceiling of the Sistine Chapel to Michelangelo. The scenes depicted on the ceiling are meant to represent symbolically the course of human events from the Creation through the Book of Genesis towards the revelation of God the Father and Creator. Thus Michelangelo depicted the Creation, the Prophets and Sibyls. Pope Paul III Farnese commissioned the overwhelmingly dramatic *The Last Judgment* on the wall above the altar to Michelangelo. To create the paintings, two windows had to be walled over and the existing paintings scraped off, then the wall was shaped to create a projection of over 24 inches from the top to the bottom so dust could not settle on it. The paintings of the walls represent stories of the Old and New Testaments. Criticism was so violent with the nudes of the figures that Pope Hadrian VI even considered scraping the ceiling, Paul IV knocking down the wall, and Clemente VIII wanted to whitewash the frescoes. However, the critical reaction was reduced by the intervention of Daniele da Volterra who painted breeches on some of the nudes, earning him the nickname of Il Braghettone (The Trousers Man). Because of the incredible paintings, the Sistine Chapel is considered the "Temple of the Italian Renaissance." Directly from the Sistine Chapel guests will access the majestic **Basilica of St. Peter's**, the mother of all churches. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, decided in AD 324 to build a basilica on the site where St. Peter was buried after he had been martyred in Nero's circus. For two centuries, the plan of the new basilica was constantly revised. The plan of a Greek cross surmounted by a dome designed by Bramante and adopted by Michelangelo, was altered to a Latin cross at the behest of Paul V in 1606, when he instructed Carlo Maderna to add two bays and a façade to Michelangelo's square plan. From 1629 onward, the basilica was decorated in a sumptuous baroque style by Bernini. The façade, which was completed by Carlo Maderna, is surmounted by colossal figures and masks the dome. The interior of the basilica is decorated with masterpieces by Bernini, Della Porta, Michelangelo and many other famous artists. Among the various masterpieces noteworthy is the carved statue of the Pietà by Michelangelo. The magnificent dome designed by Michelangelo, which he himself built as far as the lantern, was completed by



**St. Peter's Basilica**



**Sistine Chapel**

Giacomo Della Porta and Domenico Fontana. The 13C bronze Statue of St. Peter overlooking the nave is attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio and is greatly venerated by pilgrims, who come to kiss its feet. Besides the structure and décor of this magnificent church, what this amazing structure holds is as fascinating as its history. Your guide will tell you more ... Enjoy this tour to remember!

Cost for the above tour to include motorcoach transfer, English speaking guide, entrance fees, wireless headphones:

**Euro 50,00** per person based on min. 30 full paying guests