



Adventures in Mind

Travelling Together ... Learning Together

2026 Adventure #1: Renaissance Italy

Location: Florence, with day-trips to other cities.

Dates (to be confirmed): April 5 – May 1, 2026 (including days of travel to and from Florence).

Group Leaders: John Black; Constance Kovalenka.

Adventures in Mind is an educational travel program for adults. It will appeal to life-long learners who are inquisitive, open-minded and looking beyond the usual tourist experience. It is open to free spirits of all ages: a level of physical and mental fitness is highly advisable; curiosity and a sense of community are essential!

The Renaissance Italy Adventure provides a stimulating interdisciplinary exploration of one of the most dynamic and significant periods in the history of European culture. The setting is perfect because of the immense contribution of Florence to the 14th-16th century blossoming of humanistic learning and artistic endeavour known as the Renaissance.

Our Adventure will cover art, architecture and literature through the works of such figures as Dante, Giotto, Donatello, Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Leonardo, Michelangelo and Gentileschi. Activities include lecture/presentations, seminar discussions and visits to museums, galleries and other sites, in Florence and elsewhere. Preparatory sessions will be available in Nanaimo and online in February/March.



Under expert guidance, a group of 8-15 participants will encounter the Italian Renaissance not only by hearing the thoughts of the group leaders but, more importantly, by sharing with others their own background knowledge and responses to what they are witnessing during the Adventure. There will be ample free time for independent activity.

Group Leaders



Professor Emeritus Dr. John Black taught in and coordinated the Liberal Studies Abroad credit program at Vancouver Island University from its inception in 1997 until his retirement in 2017. He has Master's degrees from Cambridge and Simon Fraser, and a PhD from UBC, all in Philosophy. A devotee of mediaeval and Renaissance music, he has travelled extensively in Europe, and has led many study groups there. He values Florence in particular because of the opportunity it gives him to encounter his favourite painters Giotto and Masaccio, and favourite sculptor Donatello.

Connie Kovalenka is a graduate of the Liberal Studies program at VIU, and herself studied the Renaissance in Florence in 1997. An artist in her own right, she has a special interest in Florentine visual art, modern as well as Renaissance, and is very knowledgeable about the geography of the city, its markets, its antiques and vintage shops, and its cats.



Tentative Itinerary

- Day 0 Leave Canada
- Day 1 Arrive Florence; settle into accommodation
- Day 2 Orientation; Walk in the Historic Centre; Lunch
- Day 3 Church of San Miniato al Monte; Piazzale Michelangelo; Gardens
- Day 4 Baptistery; Cathedral Museum; (optional: Cathedral)
- Day 5 Daytrip to Ravenna
- Day 6 Seminar TBA; Church of Santa Maria Novella
- Day 7 Free Day
- Day 8 San Marco Monastery; Fiesole
- Day 9 Seminar: Renaissance Music; Uffizi Art Gallery
- Day 10 Brancacci Chapel
- Day 11 Away Trip to Padua: Baptistery; Scrovegni Chapel
- Day 12 Free Day in Venice
- Day 13 Return to Florence; Free Afternoon
- Day 14 Free Day
- Day 15 Orsanmichele Museum
- Day 16 Daytrip to Siena
- Day 17 Bargello Sculpture Museum; Seminar on Poetry
- Day 18 Church of San Lorenzo; Medici Chapels; Walk to Arcetri
- Day 19 Daytrip to Assisi
- Day 20 Santa Trinità; Pitti Palace and Boboli Gardens
- Day 21 Free Day
- Day 22 Daytrip to San Gimignano
- Day 23 Church of Santa Croce; Final Dinner
- Day 24 Free Day
- Day 25 Leave Florence



Inclusive Packages

Package costs include program overheads, accommodation, all program-related travel within Italy, tourist guides, educational materials, and admissions to cultural sites and events. Participants must arrange their own air travel to Florence and travel insurance, including medical. Food is not included, but accommodation is in apartments which have kitchens, so that food costs are minimal.

Program Fee: \$5995 CAD

Shared Accommodation (Apartment for 2-9 people, with wifi, living room, kitchen and bathroom(s); two people sharing a bedroom): **included in program fee.**

Single Supplement: \$1000.

Private One-Bedroom Apartments (for one or two) may possibly be available: cost TBD.

Payment Schedule

In order to allow us to make a firm decision to proceed with the Adventure, which depends upon enrolment, and to make bookings for accommodations etc., it is essential that we are able to cover our overheads well in advance of leaving Canada. The following payment schedule is therefore necessary:

1. Payable on application: commitment fee of \$500- this saves your place
2. Due December 15, 2025: booking deposit of \$2000
3. Due February 1, 2026: payment of remaining balance

Please note that all payments are non-refundable, except in case of cancellation of the program by Adventures in Mind. Late applicants may be allowed some leeway from these deadlines.

Air Travel

Participants must arrange their own air travel, but **should not do so until they receive official word (probably in January 2026) that the Adventure will proceed.** Before departure you will be given instructions on what to do on arrival in Florence.

Travel Insurance

Participants are strongly advised to obtain travel medical insurance as well as coverage for trip cancellation and interruption. **Please do not buy insurance until the Adventure has been confirmed.**

For medical, safety and other advice on travelling overseas, please visit the federal government website travel.gc.ca/.

Important Notice

A level of physical and medical fitness is required to get the most out of the Adventure. Some of the sites visited are accessible only on foot (some may not be wheelchair-accessible), and some visits may require lengthy periods of walking and standing. On arrival and departure you will have to carry your own luggage. If you have any limitations or concerns in this area, please consult Adventures in Mind personnel before applying.

Application Process

To register your interest in the 2026 Adventure, or to apply for the Adventure, please email

info@adventuresinmind.org

Our website: adventuresinmind.org