

MITALUMNI
Travel Program

GEOLOGY OF ITALY

The Bay of Naples, Rome, and Umbria

March 21-31, 2025

*with Rob van der Hilst,
MIT Schlumberger Professor of Earth Sciences*





Roman Colosseum (u_tlt54mzkyo)

Dear MIT Alumni and Friends,

Join fellow MIT alumni and friends for a custom-built tour in Italy, focusing on the impact of Italy's seismic activity, beginning in ancient time and tracing history through present-day implications.

Start at the iconic Vesuvius volcano and explore the neighboring ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Tour the Campi Flegrei volcanic region just outside Naples. In Rome, take a private tour of the National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology's research laboratories. Finish in Umbria—a region severely affected by recent earthquakes—to explore the lasting devastation and ongoing recovery efforts. All the while, experience how Italy's geology has intimately influenced the country's cuisine and culture, and see amazing private places not open to most visitors.

MIT Professor Rob van der Hilst will lead the lecture series and provide informal commentary throughout the program.

If you have questions on this program or would like to reserve your space, please contact the tour operator, International Seminar Design, at 202-244-1448 or info@isditravel.com.

Sincerely,

Melissa C. Gresh
MIT Alumni Travel Program

Trip Highlights:

- Visit to the Vesuvius Observatory
- Private tour of Napoli Underground to understand the geology of old Naples
 - Morning in the Campi Flegrei, a unique volcanic region outside Naples
 - In-depth tour of Pompeii
- Private morning visit and meetings with scientists at Italy's National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology
- On-site looks at seismic damage in Norcia and Castelluccio, both now recovering
- Tour and have lunch at a major Italian renewable energy research center

Travel with Robert van der Hilst

Robert van der Hilst is the Schlumberger Professor of Earth Sciences in MIT's Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences Department. van der Hilst's cross-disciplinary and collaborative research focuses on understanding geological structures and processes in Earth's deep interior, both on a regional scale—for instance, continental structure and evolution of Tibet, East Asia, and North America, the subduction of oceanic plates beneath western Pacific island arcs, the upper mantle transition zone, and the complex region just above the core mantle boundary beneath Asia and Central America—and, on the global scale, unraveling, for instance, the pattern and nature of mantle convection. The main tools he uses (and develops) are global reflection seismology and seismic tomography, but he integrates these findings with constraints from geology, (geomagnetic) plate reconstructions, mineral physics, and geodynamics.

Van der Hilst received his PhD in Geophysics from Utrecht University in 1990. After postdoctoral research at the University of Leeds (1990-1992) and the Australian National University (1992-1995) he joined the faculty of MIT's Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences (EAPS) in 1996.



"Whereas Italian culture formed at the confluence of ancient civilizations, the peninsula itself resulted from millions of years of geological interaction between the European and African tectonic plates. As we travel from Naples to Spoleto, across the Apennine mountain range, we will see the effects of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions on ancient civilizations and witness how these natural phenomena continue to influence Italian society today. My lectures will focus on Italy's tectonic evolution and present-day volcanic and seismic activity." – Robert van der Hilst



Itinerary

March 21: Departures from the U.S.

March 22: Naples

Arrive in Naples, Italy. Introductory touring in Naples' historic core, filled with largely unknown masterpieces. Explore Napoli Underground - the immense labyrinth of tunnels that run beneath the city. Check into the Hotel San Francesco Al Monte, ideally situated in the heart of the city. Welcome dinner at a Neapolitan fine dining restaurant. (*Dinner*)

March 23: Vesuvius and Herculaneum

Begin the day with a presentation by MIT Professor van der Hilst, then proceed to Mount Vesuvius. Ascend by private coach to the Vesuvius Observatory to learn more about the research and monitoring activities conducted there. Enjoy lunch together before a visit to the spectacular ruins of Herculaneum. Free time back in Naples this evening.

(*Breakfast, Lunch*)

March 24: The Campi Flegrei and the National Archaeological Museum

Spend the morning immersed in the science of Campi Flegrei, exploring the topography of the land and the uplift and subsidence caused by its hydrothermal and volcanic activity. After an authentic pizza lunch, discover the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, viewing amazing ancient Roman and Greek masterpieces preserved solely because of volcanic activity. Dinner at a charming old city restaurant. (*Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*)

March 25: Pompeii and Around

Today is primarily dedicated to an in-depth look at Pompeii, from both an archaeological and volcanic/seismic perspective. Learn about the earthquake that devastated Pompeii 17 years before Vesuvius blew its top. After lunch, stop at the lesser-known ancient site of Stabiae, preserving beautiful Roman frescoes. Free evening back in Naples. (*Breakfast, Lunch*)

March 26: All Roads Lead to Rome

Morning drive to Rome. On the property where Galileo first demonstrated his telescope, tour The American Academy in Rome, which opens its doors specially for our group. After lunch, discover the amazing but rarely visited archaeological remains buried under the Basilica of St. Peter's during a private guided tour led by a specialist - a truly unique perspective on the Vatican. Check into the lovely superior four-star Rose Garden Palace Hotel, followed by a Roman dinner together. (*Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*)



Photos (from top):
View of Naples with Mount Vesuvius (Hervé Simon);
Street in Pompeii (Graham Hobster);
St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City (Peyman Shojaei)

March 27: Roman Research and Ruins

Begin the day with a presentation by Professor van der Hilst followed by a privately-arranged tour and info session at Italy's National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology. Meet with scientists and learn about present-day earthquakes and other geological phenomena that affect Italy. Lunch along the ancient Appian Way followed by a visit to the Park of the Aqueducts to learn about the ancient engineering that brought water to Rome. *(Breakfast, Lunch)*

March 28: Hill Towns and their Geology

On the way to Umbria, stop in two delightful towns uniquely impacted by geological challenges. First we visit Civita di Bagnoregio, in danger because of erosion caused by earthquakes. Enjoy a lunch of traditional, seasonal Umbrian cuisine at a lovely country restaurant, then stop to view Etruscan tombs and spend the afternoon in Orvieto, famous for its impregnable position on a volcanic rock plateau and its magnificent cathedral. Arrive in charming Spoleto, with dinner as a group after checking into the 4-star Hotel San Luca. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*

March 29: Umbrian Seismology

Final presentation by MIT Professor van der Hilst. Venture out to the neighboring towns of Norcia and Castelluccio to view firsthand the effects of the region's massive 2016 earthquakes. See the beautiful Pian Grande, perhaps in early spring bloom. After a hearty country lunch, make special visits to recovery and restoration projects in the area. Back in Spoleto, enjoy an independent dinner. *(Breakfast, Lunch)*

March 30: Umbria: Fossils and Renewables

Spend the morning as special guests of the Renewable Energy Park, an old farmhouse converted into Italy's largest renewable energy research center. Conclude our visit with a "zero kilometer" lunch— featuring fresh, organic produce. This afternoon visit the Dunarobba Fossil Forest for an examination of the site's unique fossilized vegetation. Celebrate during a gourmet farewell dinner at a great restaurant in Spoleto. *(Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)*

March 31: *Arrivederci!*

Early morning transport to Rome airport for flights home. *(Breakfast)*



Hotel Accommodations



HOTEL SAN FRANCESCO AL MONTE, NAPLES

This upscale hotel in the core of Naples offers top-notch service within the heart of the city. Sample traditional cuisine at the hotel's restaurant or relax with a drink on the terrace. The hotel's ideal location allows guests to navigate easily to many of the surrounding attractions, while creating a space of peace and tranquility onsite. Many rooms offer stunning views of the area's famous localities, including a glimpse of the impressive Vesuvius.



ROSE GARDEN PALACE, ROME

Enjoy the gracious amenities and central location of the Rose Garden Palace, situated within walking distance of Villa Borghese, the Spanish Steps, and the Trevi Fountain. The superior, four-star hotel's Roseto restaurant allows guests to enjoy a range of Italian specialties in an idyllic rose garden setting. With a gym, spa area, and lovely small indoor pool, the Rose Garden Palace meets travelers' every need to relax after a long day of sightseeing.



HOTEL SAN LUCA, SPOLETO

Set in the heart of Umbria, this luxurious retreat offers classic amenities and a tranquil space in the countryside. The renovated property still maintains a distinctly historic feel, introducing guests to the rich traditions and lifestyle of Italy's past. Its stucco walls and patio spaces, filled with blooming flowers, create an atmosphere of relaxation at this countryside retreat. Enjoy more spacious, Comfort category rooms and the offerings of its onsite kitchen. Hotel San Luca allows guests to experience the best of Umbria, both onsite and in the surrounding areas.

Trip Information

Park of the Aqueducts (Mauro Francesconi)

TOUR COST:

Land Package \$7,895

Single Supplement..... \$895

Land Package price is per person, based on double occupancy, with a minimum of 15 paying participants.

WHAT TO EXPECT: Expect high temperatures in the upper 50s to low 70s Farenheit. Generally, this trip will require a moderate level of activity, with multiple hours of walking or standing a day while visiting a number of museums and ruins. Terrain may be rocky or hilly, especially in the Umbrian region, as we travel to centers or homes in the countryside. This trip will feature visits that combine the best of science, culture, and gastronomy across Naples, Rome, and Umbria.

DEPOSIT & FINAL PAYMENT: A deposit of \$1,500 per registrant is required to reserve space on the tour, of which \$500 is nonrefundable for ISDI's registration and planning fee unless the tour is cancelled due to low enrollment. This deposit may be paid by check or by Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. Final balance will be invoiced and is due on December 9, 2024, and must be paid by check or wire/ACH transfer to International Seminar Design, Inc. Registrations are accepted after this date on a space-available basis.

FLIGHTS: Airfare is not included in the tour price. Participants are responsible for their own air arrangements. Please do not purchase airline tickets until the operation of the tour is confirmed by ISDI.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: Cancellation by participant must be made in writing to ISDI and is effective only upon acknowledged receipt by ISDI. There is a non-refundable registration and planning fee of \$500 per person regardless of cancellation date. Written cancellation received by ISDI on or before December 9, 2024: full refund minus the \$500 per person registration and planning fee. Written cancellation received by ISDI between December 10, 2024 and February 4, 2025: Refund of all monies paid minus \$3,950 per person cancellation fee (includes the registration and planning fee). Written cancellation received by ISDI on or after February 5, 2025: no refund. Tour registration is non-transferable. In the case of cancellation, substitutions are not allowed. After the tour has commenced, no refunds will be issued for any reason including, but not limited to, unused portions of tour. If the tour is cancelled by ISDI or MIT due to low enrollment, active registrants will receive a full refund of all tour payments.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Upon receipt of registration, ISDI will send registrant a Participant Tour Agreement detailing the full terms and conditions for this tour. This document must be signed and returned to ISDI before participant's registration is considered complete and any arrangements can be confirmed. This agreement document is available to prospective travelers upon request.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel Insurance is not included in the tour cost, but participants are strongly encouraged to purchase a travel protection plan in conjunction with this tour, including coverage of trip cancellation, trip interruption, emergency evacuation/repatriation, medical expenses, lost or damaged baggage, and other expenses and/or losses incurred due to unexpected situations. Should a participant cancel at any time after registering for the tour, ISDI must strictly abide by the cancellation policy outlined herein. Travel insurance information will be provided upon receipt of your registration.

TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS: 4 nights' accommodation at the Hotel San Francesco al Monte, Naples; 2 nights' accommodation at the Rose Garden Palace, Rome; 3 nights' accommodation at the Hotel San Luca, Spoleto; breakfast daily, 8 lunches, 5 dinners, 2 glasses of wine or beer at included dinners and lunches; land transportation by private motor coach; 1 group transfer upon arrival from Naples International Airport to Hotel San Francesco al Monte and 1 group transfer upon departure from Hotel San Luca to Rome Fiumicino Airport; entrance fees to sites and visits listed in the itinerary; services of an ISDI tour manager; expert local guides; gratuities at included meals and for guides and drivers; bottled water on coach; pre-departure planning and support by ISDI; service charges and taxes.

TOUR PRICE EXCLUSIONS: Airline tickets, airline taxes and surcharges, and baggage fees; airport portorage; airport transfers for those not using the scheduled group transfers; meals other than those specified in the itinerary; gratuities for hotel housekeeping; personal items such as telephone calls, room service, valet service, à-la-carte orders, specialty wines and liquors, laundry charges, travel extensions, or tour deviations; travel insurance; any other items not specifically included in the itinerary.

TOUR OPERATOR: The MIT Alumni Travel Program provides further information about the Alumni Travel Program and the relationship between the Alumni Association and the tour operator online at alum.mit.edu/travel/about. The tour participant's financial commitments are directly with the tour operator. Trip insurance is highly recommended.

Registration Information

Park of the Aqueducts (Mauro Francesconi)

Please contact International Seminar Design, Inc. (ISDI) directly with all trip inquiries and to make a reservation. Their travel consultants are eager to take your call and answer your questions.

To reserve space on this program, please call ISDI at 202-244-1448, ext 1

or complete and return this form to:

International Seminar Design, Inc.
5614 Connecticut Ave NW #295, Washington, DC 20015
or by email at info@isditravel.com

Name - Participant 1		Name - Participant 2	
Address			
City	State	Zip	
Home Phone	Cell Phone		
E-mail Address - Participant 1		E-mail Address - Participant 2	

ROOMING OPTIONS: (please select)

- Double Occupancy; I will share a room with _____
 - We prefer separate beds
- Single Occupancy (\$895 single supplement)
 - I would like a roommate but will pay the single supplement if one cannot be found

TOUR DOCUMENTS:

ISDI will send all documents pertaining to the tour by email to the email address listed above.

- If you wish to receive hardcopy versions of the tour documents by post as well, please check this circle. Paper documents will not be sent to your home address unless this circle is checked.

DEPOSIT (\$1,500 per person):

_____ # of persons _____ Amount Enclosed

- Visa
- MasterCard
- American Express
- Check (make check payable to International Seminar Design, Inc.)

Card Number	Exp. (mm/yy)
Name as it appears on card	CVV Security Code

By registering and paying the deposit for this tour, registrant acknowledges that he/she has carefully read and understands all information contained in the tour brochure, recognizes and accepts any risks therein, and agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions outlined in this tour brochure.