



FRIENDS *of* FLORENCE

FEBRUARY 2023 FLORENCE PROGRAM

Following the Path of Dante's Divine Comedy

Thursday, February 9th through Tuesday, February 14th

ITINERARY

Hotel for the Program

The Hotel Westin Excelsior in Piazza Ognissanti, 3; 50123 Firenze Tel (39) 055 27151 will be our starting point while in Florence for all departures. Please provide us with your passport and details on any allergies you may have.

Thursday, February 9th

- ◆ **10:15 am** For those who wish to see the Uffizi Gallery with one of our resources prior to the beginning of the program, please confirm by email your availability to meet at the Hotel Westin Excelsior to go for a visit there at **10:30 am**.
- ◆ **2:00 pm** Welcome meeting at The Westin Excelsior, Sala Orum, followed by lectures by Dr. Bill Cook and Dr. Ross King on Dante's *Divine Comedy*.
- ◆ Departure for visits to the Baptistery of Florence, the Cathedral and Cathedral Museum as we walk our way through the first portion of the *Divine Comedy, Inferno*.
- ◆ Return to the Hotel in the later afternoon.
- ◆ **7:30 pm** Gather in the Lobby of the Hotel Westin Excelsior for our departure for Dinner *We shall be walking to the dinner if the weather allows.*
- ◆ Cocktails and dinner in the private Palazzo Antinori. *Cocktail attire*

Friday, February 10th

- ◆ **9:15 am** Gather in the Lobby of the Hotel Westin Excelsior.
- ◆ Morning departure to Siena to the Palazzo Pubblico, Cathedral Museum, National Archives and other sites as we walk our way through the middle portion of the *Divine Comedy, Purgatorio*.
- ◆ Luncheon in Siena at the private Club Circolo degli Uniti hosted by Momi and Simonetta Brandolini. *Gentlemen will need to wear a coat and tie in the Club*
- ◆ Return to Florence in the later afternoon.
- ◆ Gather in the Lobby of the Hotel Westin Excelsior to go to dinner.
- ◆ Departure for an informal dinner in Florence at the historic Trattoria Sostanza. *This is a short walk from the Hotel Westin Excelsior.*

Saturday, February 11th

- ◆ **8:15 am** Gather in the Lobby of the Hotel Westin Excelsior. *Please check out of the Hotel and place your larger luggage in the storage deposit of the hotel. Please carry a smaller bag if possible for the overnight stay in Verona.*
- ◆ Departure to Verona where we will visit sites that welcomed Dante while he lived in this lovely city in the Veneto region and wrote portions of the *Divine Comedy's Paradiso* and other works. *We shall be walking to the various sites in the city.*
- ◆ Luncheon at the Antica Bottega di Vini
- ◆ We shall be staying at the historic Hotel Due Torri in Verona on Piazza Sant'Anastasia. *This evening's hotel stay shall be included in the program cost.*
- ◆ Gather in the Lobby of the Hotel Due Torri.
- ◆ Departure for dinner in one of the centuries old restaurants.

Sunday, February 12th

- ◆ **8:45 am** Gather for departure with all of your belongings after breakfast. *Please settle any personal incidentals prior to departure.*
- ◆ **9:00 am** Departure by bus from Verona to Ravenna.
- ◆ During our visit to Ravenna we shall lay a wreath at Dante's tomb and visit the churches and mosaics of San Vitale, Sant'Apollinare in Classe, and other sites as we continue to discuss *Paradiso* from the *Divine Comedy*.
- ◆ Luncheon in Ravenna at the Osteria del Tempo Perso.
- ◆ Evening return to Florence with an informal dinner.

Monday, February 13th

- ◆ **9:30 am** Departure for our visit to San Miniato al Monte, San Leonardo, Santa Croce churches, and the Historical Dante Society.
- ◆ Luncheon at the Cantinetta Antinori during the day.
- ◆ Visit to other sites related to the *Divine Comedy* after lunch.
- ◆ Gather in the Lobby of the Hotel Westin Excelsior.
- ◆ Departure for dinner in the private home of Marchese & Marchesa Gondi in what was once the Convent of Suor Maria Celeste, home to the daughter of Galileo on the hillsides of Florence. *Cocktail attire*

Tuesday, February 14th

Departures

PROGRAM HISTORIAN BIOGRAPHIES

Dr. William Cook

Until recently, Dr. William R. Cook was the Distinguished Teaching Professor of History at the State University of New York at Geneseo, where he taught since 1970. He earned his bachelor's degree cum laude from Wabash College and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He was then awarded Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Lehman fellowships to study medieval history at Cornell University, where he earned his Ph.D.

Professor Cook has taught courses in ancient and medieval history, the Renaissance and Reformation periods, and the Bible and Christian thought. Since 1983 Professor Cook has directed 11 Seminars for School Teachers for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

His books include *The Medieval World View*, *Images of St. Francis of Assisi* and *Francis of Assisi: The Way of Poverty and Humility*. Dr. Cook contributed to the *Cambridge Companion to Giotto* and edits and contributes to *The Art of the Franciscan Order*, in Italy.

Among his many awards, Professor Cook has received the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. In 1992, the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education named him New York State's Professor of the Year. In 2003, he received the first-ever CARA Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Medieval Studies from the Medieval Academy of America.

Dr. Cook has produced several Great Courses for the Teaching Company that can be seen and heard on DVD and CDs on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Saint Francis of Assisi, Machiavelli, Great Christians, The Cathedral, and his latest work, *The World's Greatest Churches*.

Dr. Cook is a member of the Academic Advisory Board for Friends of Florence. He has led numerous programs for YPO and WPO members over many years.

Dr. Cook recently founded the Bill Cook Foundation, a 501(c)(3) U.S. based non-profit, that provides urgent support to needy children and young adults around the world in the form of financial aid and in-kind assistance for education, housing, medical care, and basic needs.

Ross King

Dr. Ross King is the bestselling author of several books on Italian, French, and Canadian art and history. He has also published two historical novels, *Domino* (1995) and *Ex-Libris* (1998); edited a collection of Leonardo da Vinci's fables, jokes and riddles; and wrote a biography on Niccolò Machiavelli. In October 2012, *Leonardo and the Last Supper* was published. He is the co-author with Anja Grebe of *Florence: The Paintings & Frescoes 1250-1743* (2015), the most comprehensive book ever undertaken on the art of Florence.

Translated into more than a dozen languages, his books have been nominated for a National Book Critics' Circle Award, the Charles Taylor Prize, and the National Award for arts writing. He has won both the Governor General's Award in Canada (for *The Judgment of Paris*) and the BookSense Non-Fiction Book of the Year in the United States (for *Brunelleschi's Dome*).

Dr. King's book published in 2016, *Mad Enchantment: Claude Monet and the Painting of the Water Lilies*, won the 2017 RBC Taylor Prize

His latest book is entitled *The Book Seller of Florence: Vespasiano da Bisticci and the Manuscripts that Illuminated the Renaissance* published in 2021.

Born and raised in Canada, Dr. King has lived in England since moving to London for post-doctoral studies in 1992. He has lectured widely in both Europe and North America, including numerous programs and events with Friends of Florence, at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian, the National Gallery, the Aspen Institute, and the Frick Collection. He lives near Oxford with his wife Melanie, also a writer and historian.

Dr. Ross King is a member of the Academic Advisory Board of Friends of Florence.