

Cynthia Cumming

WEST ORANGE, NJ – Students from West Orange High School embarked on an unforgettable 10-day journey through Italy, an immersive experience that brought language, history, and culture vividly to life. Designed for juniors and seniors, the trip offered students the opportunity to step beyond the classroom and into the heart of Italian culture, aligning with the vision and mission of the World Languages Department: helping them grow as globally competent, multilingual, and culturally responsive individuals. The group departed on March 27 and returned on April 5.

The adventure began in Rome, where students explored some of the world's most iconic landmarks. From the elegance of Piazza di Spagna and the beauty of Trinità dei Monti to the lively atmosphere of Piazza Navona, every corner revealed history and artistry. Students marveled at the Trevi Fountain and admired Bernini's masterpiece, the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi. They meandered through the historic Campo de' Fiori, walked along the Tiber River to Castel Sant'Angelo, and explored its prisons and dungeons.

Their journey through ancient Rome included visits to the Roman Forum, Trajan's Column, Arch of Titus, and the awe-inspiring Colosseum. A highlight for many was stepping inside St. Peter's Basilica, where art, faith, and history converge.

From Rome, the group traveled south to Sorrento and the breathtaking island of Capri, where stunning coastal views left lasting impressions. Students participated in a hands-on pizza-making lesson and visited an agriturismo, Azienda Agricola La Sorgente, where they toured a cheese factory and enjoyed tastings of fresh, local products, an authentic farm-to-table experience.

A visit to Pompeii offered a powerful glimpse into ancient life, as students walked through the preserved ruins of the city frozen in time. The journey continued through southern Italy with stops at Castel del Monte, the historic city of Bari, and the extraordinary Matera, where students explored ancient cave dwellings and rock-hewn churches.

In Altamura, students tasted traditional breads and cheeses and visited one of the oldest ovens in the region. In Alberobello, they were enchanted by the unique Trulli of Alberobello. Another highlight was Grottaglie, where students participated in a pottery lesson, learning from local artisans.

The trip concluded at the beautiful Masseria Parco delle Querce, where students celebrated with a traditional Pizzica dance lesson and a memorable farewell dinner.

Throughout the journey, students embraced every opportunity to speak Italian, connect with locals, and immerse themselves in the culture. Lily Harrison shared that her favorite moment was “seeing the Trevi Fountain for the first time, walking through all the little alleyways, and singing all the time.” Jill Alvarez reflected on “making new friends and learning about the history of Italy, it was so beautiful.” Ben Rheingold especially enjoyed “singing and visiting the Colosseum.”

Many students agreed that they will never have pizza or gelato quite as good as what they experienced in Italy.

The trip was led by Rosanna Zamloot of West Orange High School, with chaperones AnnaMaria Grammatica of Roosevelt Middle School and Carlo Felici of Liberty Middle School. It was planned in collaboration with Superciao Tours and guided by the exceptional tour leader Eleonora “Nora” Sanguineti, who quickly became like family to the group. By the final day, there were many tears, as students were not ready to say goodbye to such a meaningful

experience.

As Rosanna Zamloot reflected, "These trips are a lot to plan, organize, and execute, ensuring that all students are safe while also learning and enjoying Italy. My greatest joy is seeing their faces when they encounter the many masterpieces Italy offers, hearing them communicate in the target language, and watching their happiness as they sing Italian tunes while walking through the alleyways."

Special thanks go to Supervisor Felix Plata, Principal Oscar Guerrero, and Superintendent Hayden Moore for their continued support of this incredible opportunity. A heartfelt thank you also goes to the dedicated chaperones, AnnaMaria Grammatica and Carlo Felici, who made the experience even more special, and to the parents who entrusted their children to this journey.

This trip was more than travel, it was a living classroom, a cultural bridge, and a memory that will last a lifetime.

Andiamo!

Many thanks to Signora Zamloot for her assistance with this article. Photos by Signora Zamloot.





St. Peter's Basilica



Chaperones AnnaMaria Grammatica, Rosanna Zamloot, and Carlo Felici