

# THE NATURALIST



## Set off on Adventure

There is nothing like exploring the world, hands-on. And doing it with good friends only makes the experience better. On an Earth Explore Adventure you learn about your planet, its cultures, and how it all works together. We go to the most spectacular places on Planet Earth to explore the diversity of environments that makes our world so special.

Our partners are true experts, and the activities and learning adventures they provide are *available only to Earth Explore participants*. That means on our adventures you can walk jungle trails and climb temples in Belize, hike into a volcano and meet elders in Hawaii, explore the ruins of Pompeii and the art of Michelangelo in Italy, view wild grizzlies and walk on a glacier in Alaska, measure geysers and dig for dinosaurs in Wyoming, and kayak

with sea otters and cruise with whales in Monterey. And that's just for starters. Designed to our specifications, for our participants only, each activity is sure to excite and inspire our students. And that's really what Earth Explore is all about. To learn more, go online to [earthexplore.com](http://earthexplore.com).



## Grab some credit!

How about earning some academic credit on your Earth Explore program? Scores of students do it each year and it's a great way to get even more out of your experience. Earth Explore works with Araura College's Pacific Studies Outreach Center to make high school-equivalent credit available to every student who wants to earn it. Check out the article inside this newsletter for more detailed information.

## Leaders-A Great Resource

In order to have a successful, rewarding program, you need to have the best adult leadership available. That's where our Educator/Leaders come in. Each Earth Explore Leader is a unique person. He or she must be an active classroom educator who is recommended to us by a parent. All of our Leaders are great with kids and enjoy sharing time with them. They are also adept at providing the proper supervision and guidance through the trip.

Here is what Leaders Amber Reue and Michele Pecori had to say about their experiences:

*"Thank you so much for the wonderful opportunity that Earth Explore gave me. It was truly a trip of a lifetime! Everything was well planned out and very smooth. I was very impressed with each aspect of the trip; from the food to the lodging to the activities. Way to go!"*  
Amber Reue, TX Leader

*"I had a great time. I feel as though each of the children learned and grew enormously on this trip, which was wonderful to see. I loved watching the students and the leaders absorb and master so much information at each location. We had amazing discussions."*  
Michele Pecori, VA Leader

## Italy Adventure Timeline

What happens when?

### July-December

During this part of the year, Earth Explore accepts registrations from teachers and students, and the majority of groups form. Many of our Adventure destinations will reach capacity during this period. Students receive quarterly copies of the program newsletter, *the Naturalist*, as well as a study guide called the *Adventure Guide*. For many groups the initial Preparation Session may take place during this period.

### January-April

In the early part of this period additional teacher registrations may be accepted, depending upon available space in our Adventures. The final groups will form early in this period. All students take part in program Preparation Sessions during this period, during which the spring edition of the program newsletter, *the Naturalist*, is received. Health Forms are sent to all enrolled students, completed and returned to group leaders.

### May-July

During this period students receive their program caps, credentials, T-shirts, and other travel-related materials. In May, a detailed day-to-day itinerary is mailed to each family, which lists all accommodations, activities and daily scheduling. Final groupings take place, and air tickets are forwarded to leaders in late May or early June. Final Preparation Sessions for most groups occur at this time as well. Groups depart on their programs generally between June 10th and July 15th.

## Explore the Wonders of Rome

The monuments of Rome are legendary, and they reflect a history of empire building, conquest, decline and renewal. Throughout the centuries since its founding, Rome has been at the center of history. Most come to discover its place as the center of the Roman Empire, which has left a lasting legacy of Imperial structures, from government buildings, to bathhouses, arenas and racetracks. But there are other Romes, reflecting the city's importance throughout its history, including after the fall of the Roman Empire through the Middle Ages, and into the modern period. During their time here, Earth Explore students will come to understand the many "layers" of Rome, often built one atop the other, and discover why this place is called "the Eternal City."



## Parents' Perspective

*"The program exceeded my son's expectations. The first night home he wished he was still with his Earth Explore delegation. He really missed all the activities."*

*"My son saw and did so many different types of experiences. It exceeded our expectations. The program was well laid out."*

*"I feel that my daughter grew educationally, socially and in problem-solving. She shares many thoughts, things she learned, experiences that indicate her growth."*

*"His level of independence grew tremendously. He also learned some valuable money skills and travel skills. Our son had a wonderful time. We would recommend the program."*

*"She had to learn to take care of herself without relying on us and know the importance of responsibility. She expected to have fun and learn something at the same time and had a wonderful time."*

*"I think this program is wonderful. It helps them to begin to focus on the future and what's available to them."*

*"His confidence has increased and he seems more considerate of other's feelings. He was very pleased with the program."*

## Academic Credit

As part of their participation in the Earth Explore learning experience, every accepted student has the opportunity to earn high school credit for their work. In a program funded by Earth Explore, one Carnegie credit (the equivalent of a semester-long high school course), as well as up to 90 service learning hours, are awarded to students who successfully complete their research and journal assignments. Entitled *Exploring Earth Ecosystems*, the curriculum has been specially designed by the Pacific Studies Outreach Center to enhance and complement the hands-on learning available on the program. Complete information on the credit option is sent to each Earth Explore Student Naturalist upon acceptance into the program.



## Florence--Birthplace of the Renaissance

To the lover of art, Florence is magical. From the works of Michelangelo to the magnificent architecture that fills the city center, Florence invites exploration and discovery. On our Italy Adventure, Earth Explore students wander the city streets, view Michelangelo's masterpiece, David, and soak in the sights of the city sometimes called the Athens of the Middle Ages. So important is Florence that its entire city center has been designated a World Heritage Site.

We visit the Duomo, the Ponte Vecchio, the Piazza Della Signoria, and of course the Accademia where Michelangelo's statue David is on display. In contrast to Rome's dramatic art and architecture from the Imperial Age, most of the



## Leader reflections

As educators, each Earth Explore Leader brings something special to the program, and hopefully takes something special away as well. Leaders Alina Henninger of Dumfries, Virginia and Marie Gehrig of Beach Park, Illinois, sent these impressions:

*"This program encompasses all things that I would wish or hope for any child. Each of us came to Earth Explore a bit timid and anxious, but soon found ourselves a part of a family away from home. We depended upon one another, shared knowledge and experiences with each other, and grew together during our adventures. The students really seemed to build their confidence, independence and knowledge base." Alina Henninger*

*"I wanted to personally thank Earth Explore for selecting me to chaperone the June trip. I can't describe what a wonderful experience I had. The students were great and the leaders were wonderful. It was an experience I will never forget. This trip was the perfect example of what hands-on learning can do for students. The knowledge I saw these students acquire was amazing." Marie Gehrig*



masterpieces of Florence came later, during the Renaissance.

One of the joys of Florence is its compact size. Most of the city is easily covered on foot, which allow us to soak up the atmosphere of the city on a more intimate level. It has been estimated that 60 percent of the world's most important art is located in Italy, and more than half of that in Florence. Much of the work was commissioned by bankers in the Renaissance, including the powerful Medici family who financed, and nurtured the greatest flowering of Renaissance art from Michelangelo, Botticelli and others.



## Fundraising...Just do it!

Mrs. Esther Cooper's daughter Gabrielle participated in the Rockies Adventure program from New Jersey: *"I called for the fundraising packet, and ended up learning so much more than I could have ever dreamed. On March 1st, I started our first fundraiser. I set up a candle sale, a sub and pizza sale, and a bowlathon. Gabrielle and I made up information packets from your web-site, explaining about your organization and the trip itself...we included a letter about Gabrielle and her desire to be able to attend this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. By the end of March, I was able to pay over half the tuition. I breathed, slept and ate fundraising. It was during this time that I started to realize that I was learning a lesson about life, and people and caring. My daughter and my son were learning that anything in this world is possible if you really want it and are willing to work to get it. The outpouring of generosity and offers for help just amazed me. There are no words to express my gratitude for the incredible gift this adventure has given my child. Thank you all at Earth Explore for the lessons and confidence I have gained from this. Now when I'm asked if I think I can do it, my answer will be, of course I can!"*

# The Colosseum and Circus Maximus

## Witness to mass spectacles

Few sights evoke instant recognition like Rome's Colosseum. Built in the first century AD, it's estimated the Colosseum could hold upwards of 50 thousand people for public events like gladiator flights, mock naval battles, and wild animal hunts. The arena was used for these purposes for nearly 500 years, even after the fall of Rome. When Earth Explore students enter the Colosseum they cannot escape the sense of history, though barbaric by our standards, that took place here. Today the Colosseum is an icon of Imperial Rome, and displays some of the finest surviving examples of Roman architecture.



Although built centuries earlier, the Circus Maximus was also constructed to house huge events, most notably horse-racing. The huge race track could hold more than a quarter of a million people, making it unrivaled even in modern times. At more than a third of a mile in length, and stadium was built to satisfy the Roman public's demand for mass entertainment, and was used continuously for almost one thousand years



## Ancient Rome

### Unmatched in history

For historians, there are few civilizations that compare with the Ancient Rome in scope and influence. Over the course of 1200



## Pompeii and its People

### A city frozen in time

In AD 79 a series of massive eruptions of Mt. Vesuvius sent ash and gases hurtling toward the towns at its base. Over the course of a few days, Pompeii was buried in thick layers of ash that smothered all who could not flee. The city was forever frozen in time. When Earth Explore students walk the cobblestone streets of this fabled city, they will hear tales of the city that was lost for some 1600 years, only to be rediscovered in the 18th century.

Today Pompeii is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and its streets, homes and public places provide a detailed look at life in Italy at the height of the Roman Empire. The nearby city of Herculaneum was also buried, and together with Pompeii has given historians a treasure trove of artifacts from the first century AD.

One unique feature of Pompeii is the presence of white plaster casts, which portray where victims were actually found when excavation uncovered the city. The casts were produced by using plaster to fill the pockets left in the ash by



the bodies of the victims. These provide a human quality and poignancy to the site that is unique in archaeology.

years, the Romans grew in power to dominate their world, and in the last 400 years of their existence, extended their reach much farther than any civilization had before. For a time, they controlled an empire reaching from the British Isles to the Middle East, and North Africa. Rome's influence cast a long shadow, and can still be seen in the culture, technology, and architecture of civilizations that followed.



Although Ancient Rome was at various times a monarchy, republic, and autocratic empire, its uninterrupted reign as the seat of world power has never been equalled, and may never be again.

## Tuscany--A day in the countryside

Earth Explore students spend a full day exploring beautiful Tuscany,

and visiting the medieval city of Siena. Rich in history, agriculture and Italian tradition, Tuscany



is justifiably famous as a seat of world cuisine. During our day spent here we walk the streets of Siena, considered one of Europe's best preserved medieval towns, and have dinner in a restaurant in the Chianti Valley. A perfect gateway to the treasures of Florence.

# Leader profiles

**What does it take to be an Earth Explore Leader?** We rely on energetic, enthusiastic teachers to lead local Preparation Sessions, and help guide students on their summer Adventure to Planet Earth. A few profiles of recent leaders:

**Linda Dailey** attended a fall meeting in Doylestown, Pennsylvania along with her daughter Joelynn. Linda's enthusiasm and upbeat personality immediately identified her as a teacher who cares, and makes a difference. Here's what she had to say about her Earth Explore experience:

*"This was an excellently organized program. I am amazed at the things I learned and what I can share with my students. Everywhere we went we met awesome people who interacted with our students in such a positive manner ...asking questions, challenging them, and making each experience a memorable one."*

**Sharon Steckel** came to Earth Explore as the result of a parent recommendation at a meeting in the greater Chicago area. Her



experience working with her school's Outdoor Education program caught our attention. She describes her Earth Explore experience: *"Our program was exciting, well-organized, fun, educational and involving. My most rewarding experience was watching the students get excited about a new discovery. They became totally involved in the program."* Sharon says that while students grew educationally and emotionally during their program, most of the Leaders did as well. *"Yes, I grew as a result of my participation...I have a deeper appreciation of our history (and) our earth's history."*

**Jon Vondrasek** from Livonia, Michigan has over 8 years experience at the middle school level, teaching

students in an experimental, get your hands dirty style of teaching. His love of nature and the outdoors along with his positive outlook guaranteed his placement with Earth Explore. Here are Jon's impressions of his Earth Explore experience: *"We had a tremendous time playing and learning together. We developed a closeness as a group-- sharing new experiences. I have grown in my appreciation of the West and have gained confidence as a Leader. It kept me on my toes! It is an unforgettable and not-to-be-missed opportunity."*

## Travel Managers

### Keeping things organized

Our on-site Travel Managers play a key role at Earth Explore. They are staff members or teachers appointed by the National Office and our partners who travel with each group to handle all logistical details during the program, leaving Leaders free to devote their time and energy to the students. That means carrying a cell phone, coordinating check-in at the hotels and program venues, and keeping



the group on the tight schedule provided by the National Office.

One of our recent Travel Managers was Neva Im. According to a fellow Leader, "Neva was wonderful in every way. She jumped right in and helped out in any way she could. She made suggestions about what to do based upon her experience. The kids loved her and so did we!"

## The Vatican

### St. Peters and the Sistene Chapel

The Vatican, world center of the Catholic church, is the world's smallest state. Here we will explore history and art, including visits to the Sistene Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica. Both are world-renowned for their artwork and architecture, featuring the works of Michelangelo and Bernini. Even for the casual observer the frescos, sculpture, dramatic architecture and world famous works of art are impressive.

It would take weeks to tour all of the Vatican museums, but we use our time wisely here, taking a guided tour through St. Peters, and gazing upward at the famous ceiling of the Sistene Chapel, considered the greatest work of Michelangelo. It took the artist four years (working upside down) to complete the frescos depicting scenes from the Old and New Testaments, and in the 1980s accumulated grime and soot was finally removed, once again revealing their vibrant colors.



## The Leaning Tower

### An ancient marvel

If it had stayed upright, it would just be another spectacular ancient tower. But the Tower of Pisa is known the world over as one of the most unusual, and mysterious structures on the globe. On our visit we discover that this freestanding bell tower, or campanile of the cathedral of Pisa, (outside Florence) began to lean to the southeast soon after construction reached the third floor. Engineers blame a poorly laid foundation and shifting, loose soils for the lean. The tower took almost two centuries to complete, beginning in 1173 AD. Now, 800 years later the tower has shifted more than 12 feet from vertical. Amazingly, early architects tried to stop the lean by building additional stories, with the longer side away from the direction of lean, causing the structure to curve slightly. Today, engineers use weights and a system of pulleys to defy gravity.



## Meet today's Italians And share their culture

When exploring Planet Earth, there is nothing better than meeting the people and sampling the myriad of cultures that make it so unique. While in Italy, Earth Explore students will do just that in a variety of ways and in diverse locations, encountering native Italians to better understand how they live, and learning about their culture firsthand.

During one afternoon, we visit an Italian outdoor market to join in the festivities while shoppers search for fresh ingredients for the evening meal. While in Rome, we'll visit a pizzeria for a lesson in pizza-making and a chance to make our own. Italian food is a large part of the Italian culture, and this festive night will be devoted to sharing that rich tradition and learning in the process.

