

Parent and Student Comments about Roman Holiday

When the programme concludes at the end of July, students and parents in the *Roman Holiday Summer Studies Programme* reflect and comment on the "experience of a life-time". Here's what some have said over the years...

2019

I also would like to extend my sincere thanks to you. My son had such an incredible experience of learning and growing. He truly loved the trip and the experiences he had. I am so grateful to you for providing both my boys this truly amazing and once in a lifetime experience. I am very happy that he decided to go after all! – Mrs. Gioiosa

It was clear that my daughter had an incredible time—she worked hard, bonded with many of the other kids, saw so much of the city of Rome, and learned some independence. We are so happy that she was able to gain this experience at this point in her life. – Mrs. DePaoli

It was a trip of a lifetime for my daughter. She learned a tremendous amount and absolutely loved immersing herself in Italian culture. She hasn't stopped telling us stories about her time there. She mentioned how great were her teachers and supervisors. – Mrs. Lockington

Daniel had such a great time on the trip. He came home eager to share with us many beautiful stories and experiences. He loved the trip, he enjoyed the program and all that it entailed. I truly want to thank you for allowing him take part of this trip. Thank you for all you have done and continue to do. – Mrs. Rizzi

Ciao Mr. Bellisario, In ansi tutto colgo l'occasione per ringraziarvi per l'attenzione che avete avuto verso Massimo. anche cendo la citta preferita di mio figlio, viaggiando con voi, la vissuta e la apresattta di piu di quanto pensase. E stato un'esperienza bellissima ed indimenticabile. Grazie !!! (Hi Mr. Bellisario, Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your attention to Massimo. Rome became the favourite city of my son traveling with you. The experience and your openness were more than he thought. It was a beautiful and unforgettable experience. Thanks !!!)

2018

I wanted to thank you for all the hard work you put into organizing the trip to Rome and giving up your summer holidays for us. I had a wonderful trip, and it is one I will always remember. Please extend my thanks to the rest of your family as well. I hope you have a wonderful rest of the summer. See you in September. – Sofia

2017

Dear Mr. Bellisario, Thank you for your dedication and guidance in making the grade twelve English course in Rome an amazing experience and such a milestone in Victoria's life. We were confident in entrusting Victoria to you and are grateful for the learning opportunity that you provided. – Mr. and Mrs. Weigand

We have spent the day listening to Alessia tell us about her month in Rome and Sophia reminisce about fun she had two years ago. You have given them experiences they can share and stories they can laugh about. Spending a month with sixty teenagers can't be easy, so thank you! – Mrs. Amato

We are now home from our family vacation in Italy and wanted to drop you a line to express our sincere thanks for providing the students with a most memorable experience in Rome for the month of July. When we met Christopher at your hotel he regaled us with stories of the many adventures the group had and the strengthened and new friendships that had been established. It was Christopher's first time in Italy and he fell in love with every aspect of it. – Mrs. MacDonald

Thank you for the kind note. Danya really enjoyed the trip. She loved the course and told me about the clear connections between the books she studied and what she saw on her tours. She grew from this experience, gained independence and it gave her perspective. The world is full of wonder, history and culture. She also appreciates all she has at home, a loving family, Nonna's homemade pasta and having her own room. It's an experience of a lifetime and thank you for being a great teacher, coach and guide. In your note, you gave us credit for the kids' behaviour although kids are also influenced by those around them. We owe a great deal of gratitude to you and your colleagues for the support and guidance they provided to our kids on this trip. It takes a village! – Mrs. Colavecchia

Mr. B, Thank you for everything you have done to make the trip a success. I don't understand how you do it year after year without fail! It was such an amazing experience and I know the memories will last forever. Ever since we landed in Toronto, there have been so many posts on social media about wanting to go back. You have truly given us the experience of a lifetime! – Julia

We just wanted reach out and say thank you so much for all your effort and enthusiasm in organizing the Rome trip. Hallie had just a fantastic time and as parents we are so pleased not only in the academic effort but also the cultural experience that she was able to enjoy. I know sometimes many take efforts for granted, but understanding the work and responsibility entailed in guiding a large group of young adults, we just want to express our appreciation to you, your family and team. – Pearce Family

I just wanted to thank you so much for such an incredible experience this past month. Getting the opportunity to travel all over Rome for the month of July was absolutely amazing. Everyone from Del was extremely welcoming to the BA kids which made it very easy to make new friends. I have learned so much the past month and I am extremely grateful to have had this opportunity. I will never forget the amazing memories that I've made, the new friendships I've created, or lessons I've learned. Thank You for giving us this incredible experience that I truly will never forget. – Ashley

Hope all is well back in Toronto. The last month spent in Rome with all my classmates and teachers was very exhausting and hot but most of all it was the trip of a lifetime, which I will never forget. Thank you for all you've done to make the last month such a success.

Thank you... for staying at tutorial with us until 11, for taking us throughout all of Rome, for quickly, but effectively teaching us all the course material, and for always keeping us safe and happy. I have memories from this trip that will cherish for many years to come! – Jacob

We are so very happy that the trip was such a huge success! As we waited at the airport with other parents, we watched the boys arrive one by one with huge smiles, somewhat tired but so happy. Nobody was in a hurry to leave, still savoring a few moments longer to be together. We were all so very happy to be together and to relish this important step in our children's lives. For that opportunity we want to thank you and for organizing such an amazing trip for the students. Joe and I also want to express our outmost gratitude for giving Christopher so many chances throughout the year and for believing in him no matter what. We will always remember you as an outstanding teacher in our kids' lives and how privileged they were to experience your mentorship. – Mr. and Mrs. Magony

Thank you again for your enthusiasm and skill in making this a fantastic experience for our children. Grace will remember this experience as life-shaping! She has had the opportunity to spread her wings and experience so much—so many great memories for her. Thank you for making this possible and for making it exceptional. – Mr. and Mrs. Arthur

Mr. Bellisario, prior to having you as my teacher, I have only heard the stories at school. That is partly why I was so excited for the trip, as I wanted to experience the legend. I am glad to finally experience what it is like being in your class. You made everyone feel like family. Thank you for the funny stories and noteworthy lectures and proving why you are so remembered and loved by your students. You not only made one of my favourite subjects enjoyable, but you also provided your students with the experience of a lifetime.

2016

Hearing my daughter talk about university always makes my heart sing. She is really loving her courses. She is worshipping Mr. Bellisario every day, who set her up to do exceedingly well in her essay assignments across Poli Sci, Economics, Business, Women's Studies and her writing course! – Mrs. Greco

2015

This summer I was given the fantastic opportunity to travel to Rome for a semester with De La Salle College School. I was a little bit intimidated going in, not really knowing any of the almost 60 other students, but my fears were short lived. I was immediately given the warmest of welcomes and was treated like a regular De La Salle student from the first day of classes, weeks before we left, to the goodbyes after the flight home. The students and teachers alike we're incredibly kind, helpful and friendly. You could talk to or get help from anyone. It was an atmosphere of, "we're all here to succeed and we can do that best by helping others".

This course structure itself had a perfect balance of work and pleasure. Being in Rome you want to take the chance and see everything you can, however it's important to remember you're there first and foremost for school. The course was designed to allow the students to complete the full number of required hours while still managing to tour every afternoon, or

morning in the case of the scorching hot days. It created a perfect balance of school and tourism allowing the students to take in all the sights, sounds, and experiences that coming with living in Rome for a month, while still managing to focus on their studies, do a good job, and come out a better, writer and student.

This course allowed me to become a much better writer and to learn a lot, while still having a great time. It's an opportunity I encourage everyone to take if they have the means to do so, and if you do seize every moment of the trip. You will make life long memories and friend ships. It's an ideal trip and I think every student should get to go on an exchange at least once. - Luke

Hi Mr. Bellisario, I just wanted to say thank you for such an incredible, eye opening experience. This trip was a once in a life time opportunity that I will never forget and i have you to thank for it. I want you to know that i had an amazing time and I cannot thank you enough for taking the time, energy, and patience for putting up with all 60 of us for a whole month. I want to applaud you for dealing with all our drama and craziness, I can't imagine how difficult that could be. You are not only an amazing teacher, but also an amazing person. You have taught me so many things inside and outside the classroom. This trip meant way more to me than just an English credit. You have opened my eyes to what life is truly about and there are no words to describe how thankful I am. This trip is unforgettable and it will always hold a special place in my heart. So thank you for this. Enjoy the rest of your summer, and I will see you in September. - Jessica

Mr. Bellisario, We would like to thank you and your wonderful family soooo much for this great opportunity you provided for the children. Victoria hasn't stopped talking about the trip, all she did, and how great the teachers and your family is. Actually, she just hasn't stopped talking since we picked her up yesterday!!! Today, she took us on a tour of Rome  and warned us of pick pockets and not to take things that "look" like they're free. Although the children had a blast, I'm sure the supervisors are exhausted. Enjoy some much needed and well deserved rest! - The Simones

I just wanted to thank you for such an amazing trip and unforgettable experience that would not have been possible without you. I had the time of my life studying in Rome and for my first time in the northern part of Italy I made memories I will carry on with me for a lifetime. Thank you and your entire family for being supportive and making this an excellent learning experience for me and my friends. I miss the trip already. Have a good and restful summer! – Dominique

Our daughter enjoyed herself so much and has already made plans to go back when her younger sister goes to Rome. Lol. I know what it's like to plan small class trips and can only just imagine the logistics of a trip this size. Not to mention a group of 16 year olds in a foreign country. Thank you again for all your hard work. – The Arones

2014

Thanks for the amazing and memorable trip. It is something that my classmates and I will remember for the rest of our lives. - Emma

I hope all is well. I just wanted to let you know that I had an amazing trip. It has changed my life forever and I will never forget the great memories that were made on all of our tours, at the hotel, or by the pool. I just wanted to say thank you for all of the effort that you put into this trip to make it possible and for making this trip fun! Additionally, I have some drafts that I still need to complete. I'm going to Florida in two days but I will be sure to bring my laptop in order to complete these drafts. I have put in a lot of effort in hopes of achieving a 90% so I will be sure to continue to put in effort with these last drafts. Thanks for a great trip. - Julia

I wanted to take this time to thank you so much for this amazing trip. I have been to Rome many times, but I have never experienced it the way I did this past month and I am extremely grateful that I was given this opportunity. You truly are filled with knowledge and it is evident how passionate you are about the city. I miss Rome every day, and frankly, I'm not sure what to do with myself without my 50+ siblings and full days of touring. In those 30 days, I don't think I ever stopped complaining about how hot Rome was but as of right now, I would gladly change our cold, rainy Toronto weather for sweating out of every part of my body ha ha. What I love most about this trip is that after coming back, everyone is sharing what they miss and it seems as though we're all going through some Post-Rome Depression. Yesterday, I received a Facebook message from one of the waiters (at our hotel). Attached was a photo of the empty dining hall that said "I miss my Canadians!!" and it brought a smile to my face because I think it shows not only the mark Rome left on us, but the mark we left on it. Again, thank you ("TANTO", as Jessica would say) for this amazing experience, and I look forward to reminiscing in September. - Mercedes

Mr. Bellisario, I wanted to write you a short note to thank you so much for all of your hard work to make Stephanie's trip to Rome so successful. She had a wonderful time and tells me that she learned so much. She seems so much more self-assured and confident and I am sure this trip was instrumental in achieving that goal. Your dedication is not lost on our family as both my girls speak highly of you and Mr. Luchka and consider both if you among the best teachers they had the pleasure to know through their high school careers. Again, thank you and enjoy your vacation! - Parent

I really didn't thank you properly at the airport. This trip was one of the most amazing experiences I've ever had and I am so grateful that you gave me this opportunity! thank you so much for everything this summer. Words cannot describe how much I appreciate everything you did for us this past month. - Laura

I can't thank you enough for organizing what was probably the best month of my life. These memories will last me a lifetime. Have a great last month of summer. - Leon

2013

I would like to thank you again for everything you have done for us this summer. I know how hard you have worked, how much patience you have had with us, and how thoughtful and dedicated you are to this course. Thank you so much for organizing this trip, and for being so understanding. It is most appreciated! – Stephanie

I wanted to thank you for the amazing month in Rome that we shared together! This trip gave me the opportunity to learn and to grow as a person and as an English student. I really felt that this experience helped to develop my writing skills and made me more cultured as an amateur historian. July was filled with so many happy memories and I can honestly say that it was one of the best months of my life! I hope you enjoy the rest of your summer, especially your adventures back in Italy! I am looking forward to seeing you again in the new school year!

2012

I want to thank you for all you did to make James' experience in Rome such a positive one. He came back with such great memories. Also, thank you for all the guidance you gave him with his writing. The whole experience has boosted his confidence and he appears to be more responsible with his schoolwork (in his final year of high school). He seems to finally understand if you put in the effort, you will be rewarded with good marks. Sincerely, – Parent

Thank you so much for your outstanding guidance and mentorship on the Rome trip. Jill had an incredible time. This was the perfect way for her to experience Rome and to prepare her for university studies away from her family. The breadth of opportunities the students had for touring and the course material itself were fantastic. We would (and will) highly recommend the program to other families. – Parent

2011

Thank you once again for your time. As always, my wife and I appreciate the dedication, interest and support that the teachers in your program have consistently given to Stefanie, John and Michael (he will be in your Gr. 10 class this year). The time that you have spent reviewing and commenting on John's various resubmissions over the last two weeks during your already shortened summer break is once again evidence of this. – Parent

Firstly thank you so much for taking such great care of our daughter during her month in Rome. She had an incredible time and I feel she has learned so much about herself, the beauty of Rome and all its wonders and of course has expanded her knowledge and appreciation of great writers, and poets. She has learned how to work hard and study even with distractions of a new city. A great skill for when she goes away to university. She has learned how to write research papers and to edit and re-write, all important skills that she will need for her continuing education. Upon her return she has told us about all of the amazing churches, buildings,

piazas, parks...and of course the pizza. Her expectations were high going into this trip and she was not disappointed in the least. – Parent

2010

I just wanted to thank you for one of the best, most memorable months of my life! Rome was absolutely incredible, so thank you for all the hard work you put into the trip. I hope—between all the marking and supervising—you were able to enjoy yourself too.

– Katherine

Hi sirs, I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for the Rome trip. I had a fantastic time and I can only imagine how much effort the both of you put in to make the trip possible for all of us. I know we all truly appreciated all the time you put into organizing the trip, with all of our tours, meals, structured and unstructured time, on top of all the marking you had to do. We all had an amazing trip and have you to thank. I hope the rest of your summer is enjoyable and relaxing after the hectic month we spent in Rome. Thank you for all your hard work. –

Heather

2009

Dear Mr. Bellisario, Thank you for a fantastic experience and wonderful memory for the students to cherish. Great job!! – Parent

Thank you for the great organization and effort you have put into the summer program. It is indeed a great opportunity for these teens to travel abroad and soak in the culture of another country for a whole month. Our son Aidan is hoping you will still be offering the programme when starts in Gr 11 in a few years. We appreciate your hard work and effort to have made this a very enjoyable and memorable trip for our daughter this year. Kind regards. – Parent

Thank again Mr. Bellisario for a wonderful life-altering experience Alessandra will never forget. She had a wonderful time. I enjoyed checking the blog every few days. What a wonderful idea for us folks that remained behind. While reading the daily journals from everyone and seeing the wonderful sites it felt I was part of that experience too.

– Parent

2008

We wish to thank you for arranging another successful course and trip for your students in Rome this year. Stephanie really enjoyed the experience, the time spent travelling and hanging out with new friends, and the confidence and satisfaction gained by being on her own for a month. Thanks should also go out to your chaperoning staff, who also accompanied the girls back to the airport for their flight home. This dedication and supervision provided a great comfort feeling knowing the girls were in good hands. Thanks again to you all. – Parent

Thank you for taking such good care of Emily and the rest of the students in Rome. It seemed the trip went very well and Emily will have a lifetime of great memories. I hope you and Mr. Byrne have had a chance for a rest before you start the busy school year. Regards – Parent

2007

Thank you for all of your hard work planning and teaching the Roman Holiday ENG 4U summer course. Sarah had a wonderful time and thoroughly enjoyed the course and touring in Italy. We really appreciate the incredible opportunity you provided for the students. – Parents

We would like to extend our warmest thanks for our daughter Jacqueline's positive experience in the *Roman Holiday Summer Studies* program. From the initial day in Rome, Jacqueline informed us that all events and excursions were well coordinated and truly gave the students a flavour of the Roman experience. The course material coordinated with excursions and tours truly made for a unique and well-rounded educational experience. We also appreciate your availability to students on a 24 hour 7 day a week basis. They were well supervised and our daughter felt extremely safe and secure in the knowledge that teachers were available at all times. Jacqueline also found the nightly tutorials extremely beneficial and felt they enabled her to understand and successfully complete the material for the course. The program provides students with an excellent academic and cultural experience. We thank you for the time and effort that was put into making this program such a success and wish you the best for future programs. – Parents

2006

Hi, I'm Andrea's stepmother, Ellen. I wanted to send you a quick note to say thanks for the great course! Andrea had a wonderful experience. She really felt that she learned a ton and found every aspect of the course valuable: the trip and the accommodation just great. As we were touring around in the week after the course, she showed us all kinds of things that she had seen with you, so she really was paying attention. Thanks a million to you and your staff and Mr. Bryne for organizing this. You did a great job. Thanks too for making sure that she got to our hotel on the last day. I gave us real peace of mind to know that you were there to point her in the right direction to get to us. We found her there as planned. Thanks again. – Parent

My husband and I would like to extend our thanks to You, Mrs. Bellisario, Mr. Byrne, and Mr. Zych, for your tremendous efforts in coordinating this unforgettable learning experience for the Grade 12's. Kimberly talked non-stop during the car ride home from the airport and it carried over into the following weekend. Her experience has truly made a lasting impression, and we appreciate your willingness to undertake such a program. Best Regards. – Parent

2005

A short note to thank you, your wife and Mr. Byrne for all of your efforts in the planning and taking of our kids to Rome. Tara has already told me of some of the wonderful times she and

her buddies had throughout the month. It was truly a trip of a lifetime and we wanted to thank you for making it happen...Tara's younger sister is already asking when her time will come. One step at a time. – Parent

2004

Dear Mr. Bellisario, You have no idea what an absolutely earth shattering impact you have had on each one of my beautiful girls. Where would we be if you had chosen some other type of work—I must say that over the years there have been a couple of 'teachers' who have stood out, and I believe you are on the top of the mountain. You truly are a gift to our youth—and you really make a huge, wonderfully exciting difference! ... I must say, I have never seen Natasha so excited about learning. Thanks a million! – Parent

Mr. Bellisario, I am writing to you to express my sincere gratitude to you for giving me such a memorable month in Rome. I have to say that the experience was by far one of the best of my life. I am so incredibly thankful to you for making the trip so organized, enjoyable and as smooth as it could have been. I enjoyed all the tours—despite the heat, which let me tell you, was the hottest I have ever endured. I was taken aback by all the history, culture and art that Rome has to offer. – Carolyn

2003

Classroom times were flexible. This allowed us to schedule trips into Rome with more ease and gave us the option of having our "weekends" at the most optimal time. As well, the availability of the teacher at out-of-classroom times was a great asset. Having a teacher who could help virtually at all times was probably even more helpful than having a personal tutor. – Brad

I thought the course reading anthology (specially prepared for the program) was a wonderful collaboration of written works by many well-known authors. When studying each piece of literature, I found it very beneficial to relate certain aspects of the writing to historical sites that were visited. Being that some works in the anthology were quite challenging, it was very helpful that the teacher held small group tutorials in and out of class to critique the piece with a fine tooth comb so to speak. – Jessica

I liked how each student had numerous chances to revise work, to hand in a composition and then make corrections to better his or her mark. I feel that this approach truly helped me to become a better writer by allowing me to see and understand my errors and correct them using a more sophisticated style and broader vocabulary... – Alexandra

2002

The integration of course themes and the country that we toured played an enormous role in producing a better learning environment. Altogether it brought a greater sense of learning to

students who realized how to apply certain ideas to a city like Rome itself. For example, we studied the literature of Classical, Renaissance, Enlightenment and Post-modern eras in the classroom all the while; we managed to view those developments in the architecture, art and cultural life of Rome. – Matt

Mr. Bellisario, just a little note to thank you for the wonderful time Inder appears to have had in Italy. It was a great success; I am sure, with all your students. I am glad he had this opportunity to further expand his horizons and world view. Additionally, I suspect he would never ever have had the courage to pick up Calvino's masterpiece *If on a Winter's Night*. I note that you plan to hold similar summer courses in the future. As one satisfied parent, I wish you success... – Parent