



# Arts in Italy Through the Back Door

Spring 2023

## Description:

There is far more to Italy than the iconic tourist sees and students will be pushed to peel back the layers of a developed country to explore raw topics related to immigration and emigration, the pressures of cultural and historical preservation versus modernization, and the impacts of modern development – with special importance placed on the role of the family and traditions. This ECS requires students to explore the unknown with tolerance, openness, curiosity, and compassion, and will immerse them in Italian heritage via hands-on activities, group homestays, and lessons on art, history, local traditions, and culture. In Tuscany, students will stay on a fully functioning organic farm that focuses on responsible ways of working the land and raising heritage breeds native to the region. Students will work with locals to learn a variety of ancient artistic traditions, exploring Etruscan, Roman, Medieval, and Renaissance influences through the lens of art-making, cooking, and farming while gaining important skills in cross-cultural communication. They will meet with immigrants who have come to Italy to work the land and hear what it is like to make a life in a different country. Transitioning into the more urban environment of Florence, where Machiavelli established the roots for modern political science and the Medici family created the base for modern banking (and funded some of the most influential art and ideas of any age), students will learn that culture and belief in contemporary Italian society are far more complex than meets the eye. Staying in a centuries-old monastery-turned-guesthouse outside of the city of Lucca, which is encircled by some of the most well-preserved medieval walls in Italy, students will gain an acute look at the waves of immigration and emigration experienced in Italy. They will visit the History of Italian Emigration Museum to explore the fascinating backstory and current movement of emigration from Italy, and engage in crucial discussions about the impacts of immigration to the peninsula. This ECS will conclude with a brief visit to Rome, and a meeting with Italian NGOs, professors, and government officials to help students process their experience.

## Essential Questions:

- How do we begin to understand the interweaving of art and history and cultural influences on people around Florence over the past 2,000 years?
- What are the different viewpoints of citizens regarding development, modernization, and historical preservation?
- In what ways can we develop and recognize our own sense of art, history, and culture, and maintain this for future generations?

# Puppies, Gelato & Sustainable Farming

By Sofia O. '23  
March 4, 2023

We began our first day in Tuscany with a gentle schedule following our extra long day of travel nearly 6,000 miles from Colorado Springs to Pulicaro. Marco, the owner and head farmer, introduced us to the different animals and plants that they take care of here in Pulicaro. We visited the main chicken pasture walking around with the 300 hens that lay eggs. Marco told us about the symbiotic relationship between the olive trees in the chicken pasture and how the chickens and the trees both help each other to survive. The chickens eat the bugs and provide fertilizer for the trees and the trees provide shade for the chickens. Throughout our orientation, Marco emphasized the importance of biodiversity around the farm such as this example. Then we moved on to the other pastures of younger chickens and met the new puppies! They use over 50 dogs here on the 240 acres at Pulicaro to help protect the animals when people are not around and told us that the puppies should become familiar with humans as well as living on their own to become independent. Lunch was homemade pesto pasta. After that Gigi, a third-generation gelato master, taught us how he makes gelato and about his family history growing up in a gelateria in Milan. While the gelato was freezing and churning, we went out with Marco to the goat pasture where there were many baby goats that had just been recently born. Marco also told us about many of the plants that grow naturally on the farm and help the baby goats stay healthy as another example of how biodiversity is essential for a healthy farm. After dinner, we enjoyed our homemade gelato and a traditional “hundred-layer” cake to celebrate Katelyn’s birthday! After this long and exciting first day, we were all ready for a good night’s rest.



# Etruscan Ruins, Museum Walkthrough & Fresco Workshop

By Ahna W. '23  
March 5, 2023

Today we started off with an early morning, headed in private vans to the charming town of Tarquinia to learn about its amazing Etruscan history with our local guide, Isa. We walked through the tombs of an Etruscan necropolis while learning about elements of the stunning frescos that awaited inside some of the burial tombs. After Isa showed us around, we took some time to enjoy the scenery and beautiful sunny weather a little bit longer by having our lunch at the archeological site before departing to the Etruscan Museum, which was located in the heart of Tarquinia. Isa guided us through the museum and we got the opportunity to see ancient sarcophagus coffins adorned with rich detail unique to the people of their time as well as a variety of many other artifacts. This was a wonderful example of just how far historical preservation can get us when done right, and how much information can be learned from ancient civilizations that are still relevant today. Getting to see such amazing artifacts in person and learning the stories behind how (and why) all of them were created with such purpose and individuality put a face to the Etruscan people and added another level of depth to our experience. Once we had finished our walk through the museum, it was finally time for the fresco painting workshop! We walked down the streets of Tarquinia to the painting studio located in a 13th-century castle where we were given an introduction to the basics of fresco painting and got the chance to make our own unique designs which we brought back with us to Pulicaro as we returned for the evening. After yet another delicious dinner prepared from products grown on the farm, we were ready to call it a night!





# Feeding the Farm & Visiting Orvieto

By Jaiden S. '24 & Katelyn R. '24

March 6, 2023



Early this morning we headed out to feed the chicks, puppies, and lambs. We split up into groups for each animal area. The lamb group was trained how to bottle feed newborn lambs by using their hand to cover the lamb's eyes and nose with their palm to create a warm, dark, and comforting space for nursing — you can't just set out a bowl of milk for lambs as they don't know how to drink! The chick group walked the entire rearing greenhouse to clean all the feeders and refill them with a nutritional mix of wheat seed, legumes, and oat husks. After the puppy crew snuggled the puppies for a long time to get them more used to people (and warm our hearts), we fed them raw meat parts and bones left over from the processing of animals on the farm. The older puppies' meal included the bodies of chicks that had passed during the night since everything on the farm is recycled. Half of us then went out to the goat pasture to feed the mother goats. We learned how to milk a goat and then helped a newborn baby goat learn to drink milk from its old mother. The other half of our group collected eggs from the chicken coups and fed the laying hens out in the olive orchard.

After our farm assistance, we came back to the house for a risotto and fresh gorgonzola lunch and packed for our day trip to Orvieto. The first thing that we got to experience was







the beautiful Orvieto cathedral. We had the chance to admire beautiful fresco paintings like we learned about earlier, and there were so many exquisite paintings and marble carvings in this wonderful historic cathedral. Once we got the full experience we went out exploring the incredible town of Orvieto. There was so much local history and culture in this town, like discovering a really old fresco just randomly on the ceiling of a perfume shop, or the steep staircases leading to Etruscan caves underneath most buildings. We explored in small groups with a small scavenger hunt to guide our journeys. At first, this was a little intimidating speaking Italian to all of the locals, but they were all so nice and helpful! Every person that I encountered wanted to speak to us and try to work past the language barrier. I was in a little jewelry shop and I was trying my best to speak to the lady in Italian about the piece I was going to get, and I accidentally said a couple of phrases in Spanish instead (super confidently) and she looked at me and said, "Sweetheart, that was Spanish, but good try!" There was beauty in every corner that we looked at. We took a lot of pictures and felt a very Italian immersion experience.

# Stone Carving

By Paige H. '24  
March 7, 2023

Thomas, the caretaker of the place we are staying at in Santa Maria, is a stone carver and shared his knowledge and experience with us. Before we even started carving the stone he had us take a step back and just look at it. We talked about its shape and flow. How it moves and what color and texture it was. People gave ideas of what they could see the slab of marble turning into. All of these activities made me understand the artistic process more and how much thought has to go into every sculpture. It was interesting to realize that there were so many steps before you even started doing anything. He gave us a demo on how to do it which he made look easy and simple. He asked for volunteers to try it out and I immediately volunteered. Stone carving was one of the things that I was most excited about. I didn't know if we were going to just watch a demo or if we would get to do it ourselves so when I was given the opportunity I dove for it.

At first, I was struggling with how to do it, but Thomas gave me a few pointers and I felt like I eventually got a hang of it. I wanted to make a shape to try out. If I could actually make something after I just messed around with the tools for a while. It was a really slow process. I messed up a few times and had to think of how to work around the problem since you can't undo a mistake in stone. I got wrapped up in the work and didn't walk away from it until it got dark. This experience showed me how long it would have taken real stone carvers to make the large-scale detailed workers that they do. I feel like I now understand what Michelangelo went through to make David, and how he adapted to the large section of marble broken off the original block David was carved from. I see the scale of work that had to be put into it by him and all of his apprentices. The experience of being able to appreciate and try out this style of art in Italy, with Italian marble and at the place that is most known for it is something that will stay with me and makes me want to try stone carving when I get back to school.





# The Opera

By Haegan M. '23  
March 8, 2023

Upon arriving in Florence yesterday, our band of CSS students had a wonderful time touring the city and making memories that would last a lifetime. But for me, personally, I was deeply moved by the overwhelming beauty of the Opera that our group had the opportunity to attend during our stay in Italy. Going into St Mark's English Church, I wasn't sure what to expect from the performance. It wasn't a large auditorium with a crowd as wide as the ocean. In fact, I'd say that there were maybe 25-30 people who attended the Opera. When it finally started, the Opera singer, Bo, made his appearance with his pianist colleague, Francesco. Instead of immediately starting, however, Bo greeted his audience with such enthusiasm. I was comforted by his friendly tone and found myself able to relax as the show began. The first few pieces were performed exceptionally well by Bo, as he manipulated his voice to hit each and every note precisely, filling the entire church with his voice. Already I could tell that this was going to be a great performance. The pieces Bo chose for the concert were a range of modern opera pieces, performed exquisitely in four different languages; French, Spanish, Italian, and English. He explained that after Puccinni's time and due to war, there was no money to produce large-scale operas in the classical tradition. However, composers have not stopped writing in the operatic style and his goal is to share this wonderful music with everyone he can by doing a great deal of research and giving concerts. Halfway through the performance, Bo informed his audience that the next piece that he would perform was in honor of the passing of his mother due to COVID. The piece was titled Take My Mother Home, and as Bo sang, I found myself crying because of the song's beautiful soulful impact. Moreover, the message of the terrors of slavery and, at one point in the song, the theme of offering oneself in place of their own mother was truly impactful as well. When the Opera was finally over, I could not stop crying because of Bo's wonderful performance. This is an experience that I will treasure for years to come.



# Visiting the Uffizi

Cailan R. '23

March 9, 2023

For those of you who don't know, the Uffizi is one of the most important museums in the world and houses the finest collection of Florentine Renaissance art. Time periods range from the 13th through the 20th century, and each art piece/section of the museum reflects the ideologies and cultures of that time. When we first entered the museum, we were allotted several hours of wandering time to explore said sections. The first few rooms were crowded with lines out the door, so Paige and I weaved through the crowd to avoid the rush. We got to see gorgeous artwork in mediums including oil, wood, and canvas. Work from artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo Divinci was present. The detail on the vast array of sculptures in the museum was mind-blowing, as each inch of fabric and skin was meticulously carved. One of my favorites was Hermaphrodite, a half-man half-woman sculpture. They were placed in a pitch-black room with only a single light shining on them. The stunning white marble radiated with emotion even though the figure was laying down and facing away from us. The museum definitely did a good job honoring and displaying the art. When I look at a masterpiece like that, I like to imagine each of the artist's individual strikes of the mallet or brush stroke, and it helps me feel more connected to the artist. Not so much an "I can do that" mentality, but more of remembering that they were human too. Not one of the most visually striking but one of the most impressive paintings in my opinion was a monochromatic painting in oil on canvas. It reflected a man kneeling down and placing a crown on a woman's head with children running and playing around them. The painting has a sort of innocence and a sense of nature that I did not see in too many paintings. The depth shows the true craftsmanship and skill it took to perfect a painting using a singular base color. I am very grateful that I got to experience this museum and the art within, and I definitely recommend visiting the Uffizi.





# Making Traditional Ceramics in Tuscany

By Francesca P. '23

March 10, 2023

During our stay in Santa Maria, we had the opportunity to learn how to make pottery from professional ceramic artists in their 'Studio Ceramico Giusti.' Upon our arrival in their shop not far from our monastery accommodations, we were greeted by the owners, Stefano and Sandra, and they were so welcoming even though they did not speak any English. Their story seemed unique compared to artisans we previously met who had many generations following in the family business; Stefano and Sandra started their business from scratch in 1980 and are now recognized both nationally and internationally for their exquisite designs and craftsmanship, along with developing all their clays and glazes in their own lab using earth and minerals sourced in the Tuscany region. In traditional Italian fashion, they too hope that their son will take over the business. They told us how important it is for them to use natural materials sourced locally and they showed us the importance of taking time in your work to really feel the clay in your hands. Sandra was very passionate about ceramics and very enthused about our attempts at making bowls, while Stefano led the other half of our group in creating a wide variety of sculptural forms. It was amazing to see their workshop packed floor to ceiling with ceramic designs of all types and in all stages of the process. Their gallery was filled with colorful and delicate creations ranging from traditional majolica to modern designs and a couple of students talked about how busy they thought their shop would be if it was in a bigger city or one with more foot traffic like Manitou Springs. They would sell out immediately with such beautiful ceramics and such reasonable prices! I really enjoyed this workshop because it was very calming to work with the clay and the shop was a very welcoming environment. It was so interesting to see everyone's different designs because all of them were so unique. Even though the shop owners did not speak English, they were very open to helping with any questions or concerns that we had with our pottery when Marco helped translate. This was a very refreshing workshop and it was definitely one of the highlights of the trip so far.



# The Grand City of Florence

By Landon M. '23 & Carissa L. '23

March 11, 2023

We began our three-day exploration of Florence by boarding the train and making our way to the bustling city. Upon arrival, we were greeted by tourists, busy locals, and aggressive drivers. The historical cobblestone streets complimented the beautifully carved buildings. We went down humid side streets, every surface glossy with rainwater, and admired famous sculptures of prominent leaders of the past. The first place we visited was the Santa Maria Novella church, which was absolutely stunning in itself. The massive, hand-built church was chock full of magnificent paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and ever-complex marble work from the renaissance masters. Some of these artists were buried in the Santa Maria, like Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo themselves. After Lunch, our second stop was the Accademia, one of the primary museums of Florence that houses some of its most treasured works. The crown jewel among these is the world-famous David sculpture by Michelangelo. Seeing this 17-foot-tall sculpture towering overhead stunned us all. The posture of David and his impeccable craftsmanship was simply magnificent. Soaking up the beauty of the David, along with the other paintings, sculptures, and even the violins in the Musical Instrument Exhibit was one of the highlights of our visit. We also visited the Florence Duomo (Santa Maria del Fiore). The large dome towered over us and when I thought the building would end, it only continued. Its captivating beauty attracted tourists from all over the world. We waited in the lengthy line





with other eager visitors. The outside of the fantastical historical site was only just a taste of the beauty that was held inside. Chatter and voices rang throughout the empty building. Tall, carefully chiseled marble pillars reached the high ceiling and stunning stained glass illustrating biblical scenes let soft light seep into the church. Up near the ceiling perched on a hydraulic lift, a hundred feet above us, we saw someone quietly working on restoring a fresco. The visit was unlike any other and the long line was worth the wait. To close out our final day in Florence we were given a few hours to explore on our own, in pairs or small groups, the winding streets and spacious plazas of this magnificent city. In Florence, almost every place you look houses some stunning piece of true artistry, and certainly a number of stories from its past. Each stone that makes up the flourishing patterns of the cobblestone streets is carefully placed, each tight alleyway has its own unique personality, and the landscape of the city is almost a mosaic of beauty in itself. Although there are countless street corners and artisan shops to find, we saw our fair share in the time we had. Walking down a secluded alleyway you might see a ceramic studio or even a master lute-maker at work in his tiny shop. Florence is full of breathtaking perfections and magical quirks, many of which we had the chance to experience. Our time in this city was certainly a highlight of the trip, and the memories of its beauty will not be forgotten soon!



# Santa Maria a Ferrano to Siena

By Theo M. '23 & River V. '23  
March 12, 2023



Santa Maria a Ferrano is a beautiful thousand-year-old monastery that was built atop a hill just outside the small town of Pelago and very near Florence. Five hundred years after its construction a group of monks built a house to live in right next to the monastery, later occupied by a large family of farmers, and that house was our home for four days. The old buildings have little heat other than that of the fireplace in the main room near the kitchen, so we all filled rubber water bottles with hot water from the pot on the wood stove to warm our beds for the night. We learned the basics of the art of marble carving from the owner, Thomas, the art of ceramics from the masters Stefano and Sandra in a nearby town, and enjoyed the breathtaking views and sunsets, along with an evening campfire in an enclave up on the hillside. Thomas told us a little bit about the history of the monastery and showed us a seven-layer agriculture setup built by the monks. We learned how important it was to be aligned with a monastery like that one in order to survive and find food, as well as how 40 years ago a group of students stumbled across the site. Thomas was a part of that group and 16 years ago ownership was given to him by the professor and Thomas was able to turn the place into a non-profit retreat. The four days spent at Santa Maria followed the same trend as the rest of the trip, they went by too fast! Despite that, our time was very memorable and we all loved it.







From Santa Maria, we ventured to the city of Siena, a beautiful city founded in 1472 with lots to explore. Much of the time spent in the city was self-led exploration based on our project of choice. My personal project is based on street art across Italy, so much of my time was spent photographing and exploring much of the city through the alleyways most tourists wouldn't venture to. This is one of the best ways to explore a new city in my opinion, and after a while, you learn about the different streets and sights to see. A little fun fact that I learned is that every year, a horse race is held on the second of July, where riders race their horses bareback around the plaza until a winner is declared. The competition is built around different areas of the city expertly training horses in hidden locations before they are paraded the day before to the city center, led by a procession of area residents ranging from children to great-grandparents. The competition goes back to a time when expert horsemen were needed to protect the city from invaders. After exploring the wonders that Siena has to hold, we began our trek back to Pulicaro with a little twist. A spin on The Amazing Race, where two teams in separate vans would solve clues to help navigate from Siena to Bagno Vignoni then our final destination of Pulicaro. Bagno Vignoni has a lot of geothermal activity which makes it a very desirable destination for people trying to take a dip in the many hot springs surrounding the town, and the mineral deposits built up below the Roman ruins were a site to see. After finishing the great race, it was a relief to be back at the peaceful farm.

# Cathedral Mass & Basket Weaving

By Leksi E. '23 & Andrew H. '23  
March 13, 2023

We started Sunday with a visit to the pig pasture to see how they can be raised in a healthy and sustainable way. It was striking to sit in a field of beautiful wildflowers with huge pigs running around us that were having a great time interacting with each other and foraging on natural grasses and acorns. Then a group of us headed out to attend an authentically Italian Roman Catholic church service in the small town near the farm. Walking in, we found the church hall filled with beautifully resonating music from a choir of men and women at the back of the church. None of them were reading any sheet music; it appeared that each one already knew by heart the melodies and harmonies of the hymns. Following the mellifluous sound, the priest, dressed in a pristine, ornate satin purple alb, stepped up to the altar and began to speak. The community around us appeared to move as one; they sat and stood at moments throughout the ceremony that suggested a level of accustomedness and routine from each and every single one of them. Prayers were said almost entirely in unison. I was amazed by every individual's ability to recall all the words. We watched with wonder as Chiara made rounds, visiting quietly with her neighbors from the town and speaking in hushed tones so as not to disturb the service. The priest's methodical



movements were mesmerizing. Profe revealed to us that the priest had been reading scripture from 2 John; none of us had quite been able to gather as much from listening. Despite our inability to understand much of the service, the experience was truly special and one-of-a-kind. One might even argue that an inability to understand the words spoken allowed us to pay closer attention to other visual cues and happenings around us. From watching the community surrounding us as well as the conventions of the church service with an analytical eye we all learned far more through the experience than any amount of description ever could've told.

Within our last beautiful Sunday on the farm, we were trained in an old Italian form of basket weaving. We were met by an elderly couple, Andreina and David, who have years of experience in this form of traditional basket weaving. They were absolutely adorable! Although there was a huge language barrier between us students and the artists, we were very easily able to translate what they were saying through what they were doing and showing us. At the beginning of the basket weaving class, they had the beginning of the plates already made since it was the most tedious and lengthy part of the entire process. This was really helpful for everyone as being a beginner in basket weaving it is hard enough to grasp the process and get the craft down to the science within. Although it was super helpful for them to get the weaving of our plates started, I finished my own plate. I was curious about how they started our original plates before they gave them to us, so I decided I was going to give it a go-ahead and look at an example and just use what I see and try and make it in front of me by myself with no help. The lady saw me doing this process and she was amazed that I had the curiosity and intelligence to try and create what I saw in front of me. She then showed me the exact process and I tried making my own style of bowl after seeing their professional examples that they had made. After finishing up my bowl, she was talking to me in Italian and I was actually super impressed that I was able to understand what she was saying without any translation. The only issue was I didn't know enough to respond back. What she said was absolutely true and eye-opening. She told me how she was impressed that I had the CURIOSITY to explore and try something new and especially use my CREATIVITY to help me explore something new without exactly needing help. I think everybody should take these two words into their life and actively build their own creativity and curiosity to stay young and to learn the most with what they have.



# Archeological Site & Hot Springs

By Taylor H. '23  
March 14, 2023

BCasciano dei Bagni is a small town that holds the biggest archeological finds in Italy in the last 50 years. We spent the day learning about the site and every artifact that's been uncovered since their first excavation in 2019 from the president of the archaeological excavations. We found ourselves standing on stone pillars and walls, on the actual archaeological site, peering into a 5-meter-deep pool that acted as a sort of wishing well for Romans. The archeologists working on the site have discovered thousands of artifacts ranging from coins to bronze babies and bronze statues perfectly preserved in clay. They discovered that Romans would create these magnificent pieces of art to throw into the well as a sort of offering and prayer. The mortality rate of babies at the time was around 50% and wealthy Romans that wished and prayed for the survival of their child would throw a bronze baby into the well. They would also throw in bronze ears, feet, arms, organs and other representations of body parts depending on what they wanted to be cured. Being able to stand at an active archaeological site was mind-blowing and an experience most would never have if they do not go into that profession. We were even able to hold a Roman coin that hasn't even been shared with the public. It was crazy to imagine who had owned the coin in the past and what they hoped for after throwing it into the well. A small group of us even discussed what we



thought a Roman could have bought with the coin. Was it enough for an egg, a whole chicken, or a horse? The most shocking thing the archeological president said to us was that they would still be excavating on the site for another 100 years. It's absolutely mind-blowing that the next several generations will still be digging to discover more artifacts.

After wrapping up at the site, we were blessed with a sunny sky and no clouds. Immediately adjacent to the site is a natural hot spring that had been used by the Etruscans, then Romans, then even the Medici family. For 3,000 years people have believed that this water has healing powers. Locals swear by the water and often suggest to others to bathe in it if they have an injury. We spent our afternoon enjoying the 104-degree water. At the bottom of the hot spring, there were tons of beautiful green rocks that provided something of our own to dig up while being 'healed' in the water. Despite the incredible importance of the site and the history of the hot springs I still felt like we had uncovered an Italian hidden gem. Sitting in the sun surrounded by other Italians gave me a glimpse at the life of a local.



# Cooking with Chef Iside

By Kaylee B. '23  
March 15, 2023



Last night, on our last day at Pulicaro, chef Iside di Cesare (from Michelin star-rated La Parolina) came to the farm to teach us the art of Italian cooking. She gave us an overview of what we were going to be making and then informed us that we would be splitting into two teams for a challenge. The losing team had to set up dinner. Team 1 was named Fusilli and Team 2 was named Gnocchi, both named after Italian pastas we would be making. Since all of us are very competitive, we took this seriously. We all began in the kitchen to prepare what we were going to be making. Thankfully, this wasn't part of the competition. I say "thankfully" because it was so hard to move due to the size of their kitchen with 16 students plus the professionals to help us and give us jobs. Also, we had to do everything in a set amount of time and it was short. Tasks we were doing included slicing oranges, bread kneading, etc. After preparing what we were going to be making, we began our first challenge. Our first challenge was to make pasta noodles. To do this, we mixed flour and water together. Then, we cut them into thin little pieces and twirled them onto the stick we were given. We made lots of these! Our second challenge was to make gnocchi. Gnocchi is Italian dumplings made with flour, eggs, and potatoes. For this, we mixed potato and flour





together. Then, we cut it into little square pieces. The last step was putting it into the correct shape using a fork. Our third and final challenge was making cookies, and we made enough to bring home and share with our 5th-grade buddies! We took flour and made a hole in the center to put sugar in it. After putting sugar in the middle, we broke eggs and put them in the center as well. Then we kneaded it all together so it would feel like dough. After this, we cut it and then rolled it, adding chocolate bits and hazelnuts. Team 1 won the competition by a landslide! After the competition, we put our competitive sides away to eat our final dinner together at Pulicaro. Everything was delicious! The food was by far the best we have had on this trip, in my opinion. There were 5 full courses in total! It was truly a final feast and we were all stuffed to the max! It was really sad to think about it being our last meal together. We have all had a blast, and learned a lot through our many new experiences, and it was hard to think about packing and leaving just hours after sharing tearful goodbyes with our wonderful hosts and guides.

