



David McGuffin's **EXPLORING EUROPE**

ROME DESTINATION GUIDE



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Overview and Orientation

Rome, the Eternal City, is a must-see destination for any European tour. There is no way to pack all the sights into just one visit. For many, being a tourist in Rome can be a grueling process, especially in the hot and humid summer months. Cars, motorbikes, buses, and millions of people culture the city center, and all this commotion seems to put a certain amount of stress and fatigue on every tourist venture around the city. However, with a little planning, you can get an enjoyable overview of this world-class city.

I guess I've visited Rome close to a hundred times in my lifetime, most visits being for two or three-day stints. Early on, I enjoyed the city as a tourist, following a tour leader or a guidebook from one landmark to the other. Later, as I shifted my focus from a tourist to a tour guide, I've delved deeper into the diverse layers of Rome. In this chapter, I'll try to weave these elements into Rome's historical landmarks, museums, neighborhoods, and off-the-beaten-path destinations.



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Neighborhoods

In order to get a handle on the whole Roman touring process, you need to think of the city as four very different tourist destinations. I like to divide the sprawling city into three historical regions: ancient Rome, Vatican City, the Baroque city center, and neighborhoods beyond the historical sights. Each destination has its own historical and cultural significance as well as a unique character.

Ancient Rome—The major tourist sites in this area are the Roman Forum, the Colosseum, Palatine Hill, the Arch of Titus, the Arch of Constantine, Capitoline Hill, and the Circo Massimo. Nearby are several important churches dating from the post-Roman era: San Clemente, San Pietro in Chains, San Giovanni in Laterno.

Vatican City—Sights here are all related to the Holy See and include Saint Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Museum and gardens.

Baroque City Center—Fanning out from either side of the via del Corso are Rome's historic neighborhoods and monuments, dating from the Renaissance to the present. Major landmarks include the Trevi Fountain, the Spanish Steps, Piazza Navona, the Pantheon, the Vittorio Emanuele Monument, many Bernini land-

marks, Campo de' Fiore, Villa Borghese, and several important churches.

Neighborhoods with character - Spiraling out from the city are several notable lived-in neighborhoods that present a peek into the life of Romans. Hopping on a tram, city bus, or the Metro will get you to these destinations in a matter of minutes. These are Trastevere, Monti, and Testaccio.

Itinerary Suggestions for 1,2, or more days
One Day - It is possible to see Rome in one day if you have to. I don't recommend it, but if there is no other choice, here is my plan. Visit the Colosseum first thing in the morning (arrive by 08:00-08:30), spend about an hour inside and out. Then, walk across to the Roman Forum and stroll along the via Sacra, make a detour up to Palatine Hill, and then exit near the Imperial Forum. Walk uphill, around the backside of the Victorio Emanuele II monument, entering the square on Capitoline Hill. Walk down the steps and catch a taxi near Piazza Venezia and cross the river to Vatican City. Eat a quick lunch nearby and then visit the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's Basilica in about three hours. Exiting the Basilica, taxi downtown to the Pantheon for a quick visit inside (be sure to check the closing times). Then walk around the neighborhood, pop into nearby Piazza Navona or Campo dei Fiore for dinner. Finally, pick up a gelato and stroll over

to the Trevi Fountain to close out your whirlwind tour of Rome. Be sure to book your entrance tickets before you arrive in Rome. Better yet, hire a local guide for the day and leave it all to them.



Two Days - Visit the Colosseum, Forum, and Baroque city center on the first day. Cap it off with dinner near the Pantheon or your hotel. Visit the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel, and St. Peter's Basilica on the second morning. Leave the afternoon to see a few churches and then end your day in Piazza Navona, Campo dei Fiore, or in one of the neighborhoods, such as Trastevere.

Three Days or more - Do everything mentioned in the two-day itinerary. Slow down in the middle of the day for a long lunch and a restful siesta. Incorporate Villa Borghese and gardens into your plans, walk through the Monti neighborhood in the early evening and have dinner there. With another day, consider going out to Osti Antica, the Catacombs, Appian Way, and St. Paul's Outside the Walls.

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Practical Information

Getting to and from Rome By Plane

There are two airports in Rome, Fiumicino and the secondary airport Ciampino. Both airports share the Aeroporto di Roma website: <http://adr.it>

Fiumicino (FCO) Airport - or Leonardo da Vinci Airport

The airport is connected to the central train station (Termini) by a dedicated train known as the Leonardo Express, which takes only 31 minutes to make the non-stop trip. Trains depart about every 30 minutes. The first departure from Roma Termini is at 05:52 and from Fiumicino at 06:36. The last departure from the airport is at 23:36 and from Roma Termini at 22:52. Only first-class service is offered at a fare of €15. Tickets can be purchased online for €14.

Tickets can be purchased at the station near the departure platform. The Trenitalia desk seems the safest option (because it looks official), but it usually is loaded with people waiting to purchase their tickets. Another option is a collection of automatic ticket machines in the stations. These are convenient, fast, and multilingual. The drawback here is they are usually crowded and often a local is hanging around offering to help you push the correct buttons, for a tip, of course. My best suggestion is to visit the tobacco shop in the

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station (just behind the Trenitalia desk) and purchase your ticket there. It is quick and easy. Just ask for a Leonardo Express ticket to Roma Termini.

The same ticket purchase choices are available at Roma Termini, the Trenitalia Ticket office, Trenitalia Auto Ticket Machines, and any tobacco shops. At Roma Termini, the Leonardo Express leaves from platforms 23 and 24. This service is also guaranteed in the event of a strike (if necessary, the trains will be replaced by buses). Additional information can be found on the web at:

trenitalia.com/en/services/fiumi-cino_airport.htm

Ciampino (CIA) Airport

Ciampino, the smaller airport south of Rome, handles charter flights and several of Europe's budget airlines. Several bus companies connect this airport with downtown Rome. It is easy to hop on a bus (LiLa/Cotral, SIT, and Terravision) outside the terminal and ride it for about 45 minutes to Roma Termini train station. These buses run about 2/hour and cost €5. You can also take the LiLa/Cotral bus to the Anagnina metro stop (25 minutes), where you can connect by Metro to Termini station or a metro stop near your hotel.

By Taxi

Official Roma taxis run between both airports to central Rome. When you get in the taxi, buckle up, and expect something like a road race with horns honking, brakes squeeling, and the driver raising his hands a lot. I've never had an accident in a Roman taxi, but it is always an adventure!

Official taxis are white, have a "taxi" sign on the roof, and have a maroon Roma Capitale

logo on the door. Don't be fooled by other unofficial car services posing as taxis. They often have hawkers waiting for unsuspecting tourists at exit doors, just itching to offer a rip-off deal in to Rome. Rome imposes a flat rate of €55 for a taxi ride from central Rome to/from Fiumicino or €55 to/from Ciampino. The fare covers up to four people and a reasonable amount of luggage. Have cash ready at the end of your ride and a tip of €2-3 per person. Many drivers cannot accept credit cards. This flat rate is for any location inside the ancient city walls of Rome. Other destinations outside the walls of Rome, such as The Vatican, are metered fares. You may encounter an official taxi from the town of Fiumicino, they charge €60 for the trip into central Rome, so I suggest avoiding them if possible.

When leaving Rome, your hotel can arrange a taxi at any time you wish. Some hotels work with car services and private drivers that charge the same fares as official taxis. These are generally fine and maybe will offer a not so hectic trip to the airport.

By Train

Two major train stations serve Rome, Termini, and Tiburtina. Termini, the largest and busiest, handles an assortment of all trains from local to the fast freccia. Tiburtina is in the northeast quadrant of the city and is adjacent to the Tiburtina Metro station and across the street from the Tiburtina Bus station.

Termini Station - <http://www.romatermini.com>
Termini station hosts 24 tracks terminating at a huge indoor area housing an assortment of shops, restaurants, bars, kiosks, travel agencies, and the Trenitalia ticket offices. The tracks and platforms are behind a glass security barrier, which requires a train ticket for entry, but no metal detectors or bag checks. Beyond this glass barrier, the public areas of the station sweep through two large chambers, separated by a breezeway.

Exiting the platform's secure area, you'll come to the first chamber housing coffee bars, snack shops, and stores. Walking to the left, you'll find the Coin Department Store (paralleling via Giovanni Giolitti), with a walkway running

through the store to an atrium housing rental car agencies, travel shops, and the luggage storage area. Beyond this is the Mercato Centrale offering a collection of food vendors selling authentically good food, fast, and at reasonable prices (free toilets here). To the right, in the direction of via Marsala and track 1, you'll find a pharmacy and a waiting area.

Moving away from the tracks, you'll exit the first chamber into a long breezeway stretching from via Giovanni Giolitti, to the left, to via Marsala, to the right. Shops and kiosks are lining the breezeway. Stairs and escalators at either end of the breezeway, lead down to a basement loaded with news vendors, tobacco shops (selling Metro and train tickets) Saponi & Din-to (a great grocery store), a couple of pharmacies, clean public pay toilets, and access to the Metro.

Stairs and escalators lead up from the breezeway to Ciao, a self-service cafeteria, and the Terrazza Termini Food Court. Both of which offer authentic local food at reasonable prices. The Terrazza is air conditioned, has a departures board, and public pay toilets.

Stairs and escalators lead up from the breezeway to Ciao, a self-service cafeteria, and the Terrazza Termini Food Court. Both of which offer authentic local food at reasonable prices. The Terrazza is air conditioned, has a departures board, and public pay toilets.

Continue through the breezeway into the second chamber, and you'll find self-service Trenitalia ticket machines, ATM's, a bookshop, and the Trenitalia ticket office. Ticket windows are always busy. Take a number from the nearby tiny red kiosk and wait until your number appears on the screen. Avoid the ticket line altogether by using one of the automated ticket machines or purchasing your train ticket online or with the Trenitalia App. Watch out for the riff-raff and sleazy characters hanging out in and around the train station. Often, these characters hang out around the automatic ticket kiosks and offer to "assist" you with the purchase, for a fee of course. Others, will approach you with unbelievable offers for a taxi or limo ride to your hotel, or offer to carry your luggage for you. Assume any of this is a scam or at least an attempt to finagle you out of some cash.

Outside, beyond the second chamber, official taxis queue on the north and south side. City buses depart from the big plaza (Piazza del Cinquecento) out front and to the left. The Metro is underneath the square and can be reached by stairs in the station and at the outdoor entrances flanking the square.

Tiburtina Station

<http://stazioneromatiburtina.it>

Tiburtina is Rome's second-largest train station and, as mentioned above, is near the central bus station and Metro Lina B. It is located northwest of the city. It is mostly a transit station for the fast trains running north and south from Milan to Naples. If your journey terminates here, there are a few options to get into central Rome.

Metro Lina B (located on the Rebibbia split line) is here and is only four stops to Termini. The city Bus #492 stop is out the front door and to the left. From Tiburtina, this bus runs through the city center with stops at Piazza Barberini, Piazza Venezia, Piazza Navona, and more.

By Bus

Most long distance and regional buses to Rome will end at the Tiburtina bus station. From here, you can take the Metro, city bus, or taxi to your final destination.

By Car

Don't drive your car in Rome! The streets are small, loaded with vehicles, crazy drivers, and many restricted traffic zones (ZTL), which, if you accident venture into, will automatically trigger a ticket and fine showing up in your mailbox at home. Consider beginning or ending your trip in Rome to avoid having a vehicle when you visit the city.

If it cannot be avoided, consider parking your car at one of the airports or in a nearby town, and take the train to the city center. Also consider parking in one of the many park-and-ride lots near Metro stations outside Rome's urban sprawl. South of town, Anagnina Metro station, on via Tuscolana, has such a lot available for €5/24 hours. Parking at the Pantano garage, at the end of Metro Line C, offers excellent parking with the benefit of riding the Metro into town. For other suggestions search <http://atac.roma.it> for “park and ride” parcheggi di scam-bio. Closer to town, find the underground parking near the Spagna Metro station and Villa Borghese Gardens at Viale del Galoppatoio, 33. You pay €18/day. More information at <http://www.sabait.it> in Italian only.

If you do decide to drive to your hotel, you should contact them first and have them send your license number to the police to avoid being ticketed. You should leave your car parked at the hotel or in a parking garage.

By Cruise Ship

Cruise ships dock at the port in Civitavecchia, approximately 50 miles northwest of Rome. A shuttle bus will take you from the quay to the entrance of the port. A 10-minute walk down Viale Garibaldi will take you to the train station. From here, board a train to San Pietro Station, near Vatican City.

It is a good idea to buy a one-day travel pass at the station (approximately €10). It includes travel to and from Rome and bus or metro travel within the city.

How to Get around Rome on your own. Public Transportation

One ticket covers all of Rome's public transportation options. These tickets are valid on all buses, trams, Metros, and some trains within Rome's urban area. Once a ticket is validated, it is good for 100 minutes, making it possible to switch from the bus and Metro lines if necessary.

Be sure to validate your ticket! On the Metro, this is done automatically when entering the Metro turnstiles. However, on buses and trams, you will need to validate your ticket at the machine on the bus or tram. Although Romans frequently travel without a valid ticket, I suggest you follow the rules. If caught traveling without a validated ticket, a hefty fine will be assessed, on the spot, from a ticket inspector. You can purchase tickets from tobacco shops, newsstands, bars, or ticket machines at the Metro stations and major bus stops. Costs vary and become cheaper with longer duration.

Single ticket for 100 minutes = €1.50.

24-hour ticket = €7.

48-hour is = €12.50.

72-hour = €18.

7-day ticket = €24.

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Be sure to validate your ticket the first time you use it.

Rome Metro (Metropolitana di Roma) There are three metro lines which makes mapping out a journey quite simple. The three lines are known as **A (RED)**, **B (BLUE)**, **C (GREEN)**. Trains run approximately every 7-10 minutes from 05:30 to 23:30 every day. On Saturdays, the trains run one hour later until 00:30 Sunday morning. The metro is notorious for closing early due to construction and labor strikes. Ask for the metro hours at your hotel and be sure to ask about early closure for construction, especially on the RED LINE. The **C (GREEN)** line is Rome's newest and is totally automated with driverless trains, unfortunately, as a tourist, you'll probably not use this line as it is not yet completed in the city center.

Buses and Trams

There are hundreds of buses linking together all areas of the city. Typically, buses run from 05:30 until midnight.

Bus #64 connects many of the tourist sights between Termini and the Vatican. Stops at Piazza Repubblica, Via Nazionale, Piazza Venezia, Largo Argentina, St. Peter's Basilica, and San Pietro Station. #64 is crowded and a haven for pickpockets.

Bus H is an express linking Termini and Piazza Repubblica with Trastevere (get off the first stop beyond the river).

Tram #8 connects Piazza Venezia with Largo Argentina (near the Pantheon) and Trastevere (get off at Piazza Mastai).

Electro Bus #116 runs through the medieval center of Rome connecting Campo de' Fiore, Pantheon and Piazza Barberini.

Electro Bus #117 connects San Giovanni in Laterano, the Colosseum, via dei Serpenti, the Trevi Fountain, Piazza Spagna and Piazza del Popolo.

Walking

Rome's historic city center is fairly small and is best traversed on foot. It is only about 2.5 km (1.5 miles) from the Colosseum to the Spanish Steps and most of the tourist sights are between these two points.

Hop-On-Hop-Off Buses

There are a number of sightseeing bus options for Rome. They all cover the main attractions, although their routes may vary. Some offer a ticket to complete a loop around the city without the hop-on-hop-off feature at a lower price. Plan on about €28-€50 for one, two, and three day packages. Be sure to check out their websites to see which is right for you. The five operators are Big Bus

([Big Bus Tours website](https://www.city-sightseeing.it/en/rome/)) City Sightseeing (<https://www.city-sightseeing.it/en/rome/>), I Love Rome (https://graylinerome.com/tours/rome/i-love-rome-hop-on-hop-off-panoramic-tour-9888_142/), Panoramic (<https://www.greenlinetours.com/panoramic-open-bus/>), and Roma Cristiana. The latter is operated by a Vatican organization and has a religious focus.

Taxi

Taxis are a good transportation option, especially if you have two people splitting the tab. You must go to a taxi stand to hail a cab. Very seldom will a taxi stop on a street corner. Taxi stands are located near most major piazzi, sights, and attractions. Taxi stands are marked with a sign that says, “Taxi”, well duh! If you can’t find a taxi stand, ask a local or shopkeeper (Dov’è una fermata dei taxi?).

Always use metered taxis. These “legal” cabs usually have phone numbers printed on their exterior and are white with a maroon Roma Capitale logo on the door.

Check to see if the meter is on when you enter the taxi. The meter (tassametro) is on the dash or on the rearview mirror. Upon entering, it should read €3, the basic fare, or €5, if you telephoned the taxi.

Insist that the meter runs! Keep an eye on it during your ride... a driver may try to trick you by quickly turning the meter off as soon as you reach your destination and then tell you another amount.

Call a taxi on your own at 06 3570, 06 4994, or 06 0609. But it is much easier to have your hotel or restaurant do it for you when you are ready to leave.

Fares start at €3 (€5 if telephoned) and then charge about €1.50 per km. There are surcharges for Sunday (€1.50) and night between 22:00-06:00 (€3.50). One luggage item per person is included free of charge. Tipping= about €1 per person. For about €10, three-four people can ride anywhere in central Rome.

Figure about €15 from central Rome to the Vatican.

Tech savvy travelers should download the free MyTaxi app (<http://mytaxi.com>) to call and pay for your ride with a smartphone. The app charges standard taxi fares and gives an option to leave a tip.

Uber

Uber works in Rome like it does in the USA. I've only encountered Uber Black professional drivers in limos or Lincoln SUV's and their rates are reasonable. Figure €8-10 for a ride from the Pantheon to Termini.

Touring and Sightseeing in Rome

Thus far, we've covered arriving in and getting around Rome. Now that you've arrived, your next task is to chart out what to see, what to do, and how to make the best use of your time in the Eternal City. I've been to Rome hundreds of times and with each new journey, I try make a point to experience another layer of the city. The possibilities are endless. To get started, refer back to my "Orientation to Rome" section in this chapter to review suggestion on how to spend your days in Rome. Once you chart out your time, the next few sections will help you decide if you want assistance or to go at it on your own.

Roma Pass

The Roma Pass provides free admission to one or two museums (see below), reduced tickets to all other museums in the network (45 in total), unlimited free travel on public transportation and discounts for other exhibitions and events. Reservations are still required at the Colosseum.

Consider using the Roma Pass for the more expensive sites (such as the Colosseum or Capitoline Museums) to get the most out of it. 48-hour Roma pass: €28, free entry to one museum. 72-hour Roma pass: €38.50, free entry to two museums. See romapass.it for more information.

Church Attire

Respectful attire is required to enter churches. Shoulders and knees must be covered. Hats and sunglasses must be removed. Shorts are ok, but your knees must be covered.

Museum Reservations

Rome is a major tourist destination and many museums and sights have long lines. Your best bet is to reserve tickets online. There is usually a booking fee (approximately €4), but this will be well worth it to avoid the long queues. See “Sights in Rome” for museums and attractions, reservations, and ticket prices.

Other Useful Information

Emergencies

112 the European emergency number to call 24/7 in all 28 member states of the European Union. You will get immediate assistance, in your native language, from the fire brigade, a medical team or the police. You can call the number 112 with a landline or mobile phone. The European emergency number is free everywhere. See Chapter 1: What to

Know for more specific information about doctors, clinics, and English-speaking medical services.

The US Embassy in Rome has provided a list of doctors, clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies in Rome. Visit there website at <https://it.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/67/2016/09/ACS-Doctors-Rome.pdf>

Hospitals

There are many hospitals in Rome. San Giovanni Addolorata Hospital is a public hospital near the Colosseum. at via dell'Amba Aradam, 9. Clinica Mater Dei is a private hospital with an excellent reputation located at via Antonio Bertoloni 34, 00197 Rome, Tel: 06-802-201. Clinica Paideia is another private hospital located at Via Vincenzo Tiberio 46, 00191 Rome, Tel. 06-330-94.

Pharmacy

There are many pharmacies in the city center, look for the green cross signs. I'll list a few here but also check with your hotel reception desk for up-to-date information. Near the Pantheon, between Piazza Navona and the Pantheon at Corso del Rinascimento 50 is Farmacia Senato, M-F 07:30-24:30, Sat. 08:30-24:30, and Sun. 08:00-23:00.

Farmacia Cristo Re, on the underground level in Termini train station, is open daily, 07:30-22:00, Tel. 06 4880776. On the ground-floor level of Termini is Farmacia della Stazione at Piazza Cinquecento

51,00185 Rome Tel: 06-488-0019. Finally, the Farmacia Piram is open 24-hours every day, near Piazza della Repubblica at via Nazionale 228.

Laundry

All the laundries mentioned below are within a 15 walk of Termini Station. For other neighborhoods in Rome, search “lavanderia” on <http://maps.google.com>.

Wash Point, Via Santa Maria Maggiore, 119, Open daily 08:30-19:00. Drop off early and pick up later. Lavanderia Self-Service Punto Blu, Via Cavour, 168, M-Sat. 08:30-20:15 Sun. 09:00-18:00. Lavanderia Self Service e non solo, Via Napoli, 26, Daily 08:30-21:00. Washing Planet, Via Magenta, 47, Daily 08:00-10:00.

Public Toilets

The train stations in Rome have clean toilet facilities, with attendants, and cost about €1.50 for entrance. Museums have mostly free public toilets as well. Look for the universal icons pointing the way. Always have some coins handy so you are not caught in a bind!

[Theft, Pickpocket, and Areas to Avoid](#) Rome, being a big city with lot of people and public transportation, is a haven for petty theft, pickpockets, and ever-changing scams. Always were your moneybelt under your clothing and keep valuables tucked safely inside. If you use a backpack, try to choose one with only a few zippers and keep it attached to your body at all times. Never leave your backpack unattended! Take personal responsibility for your luggage and gear and keep it with you when traveling in public. I never ask someone to watch my stuff, even if it is a family or group member, because I don't want to place added stress and responsibility on them.

Carrying a purse is not a good idea, either. The more you can do to keep your hands free, the better. If you must carry a purse or backpack, keep it in front of you when boarding, exiting or riding public transportation. Be aware of your surrounds. Thieves tend to strike when you are distracted. Often thieves work in pairs or groups to provide that distraction. Don't be fooled, thieves can pose as businessmen, police, mothers with a baby, gangs of children, and even tourists! Suspect any bit of commotion as a deliberate distraction to rip you off.

Thieves are as thick as fleas on a dog on the most popular tourist public transportation routes. Be particularly aware when riding the Metro Line B between Termini Station and the Colosseum, Metro Line A between Termini and Ottaviano (Vatican), and public bus routes #40 and #64.

Reporting Theft and Loss to the Police If you do lose something, either by accident or theft, you should file an official report with the police. This is most important when making a claim with your insurance company when you

get back home. The Railway Police in Roma Termini is located facing platform 13 and along the pavement of platform 1. There is also a Police (Carabinieri) office at track 22. Police Offices can also be found at Piazza Venezia, 6 (Carabinieri), and at Via S. Vitale, 15 (Questu-ra). Filing an official report with the police will take several hours. Arrive in the morning or afternoon after 14:00. Many offices do not accept people during the midday. Expect a lot of “red tape,” slow service, and difficulty understanding English. I have had the displeasure of filing lost property police reports in Italy on two occasions. Each instance was exactly as I described above... lots of lost time, but I did get an official signed and sealed report!

What to See and When to See it

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COLOSSEUM – Large outdoor amphitheatre built in 80 A.D. for sporting events and games. OPEN DAILY 08:30 until one hour before sunset. Most likely, Apr-Aug until 19:15, Sept until 19:00, Oct until 18:30. Other months can close as early as 16:30.
ARCH OF CONSTANTINE – Located between the Col-osseum & Roman Forum. A large stone arch in honor of em-peror Constantine who legalized Christianity. VIEWS ALWAYS AVAILABLE.
ROMAN FORUM & PALATINE HILL – Ancient Rome’s city center town square. Excavated foundations, arches, and columns. OPEN DAILY Same hours as Colosseum.
TRAJAN & IMPERIAL FORUM – Near Roman Forum with fewer crowds. Trajans Column on display. Don’t pay to go ’ in, you can see everything from the street free of charge. VIEWS ALWAYS AVAILABLE.
CAPITOLINE MUSEUM – Artifacts from ancient Rome. Great views of the Colosseum and Roman Forum. OPEN DAI-LY 09:30-19:30.
PIAZZA DEL CAMPIDOGLIO – A square on Palatine Hill designed by Michelangelo. Splendid views of the Roman Forum. ALWAYS OPEN. Free entry.
VITTORIO EMANUELE II MONUMENT – Huge mon-ument built to commemorate Italian unity. Shrine of the Un-known Solider. “Rome from the Sky” elevator. Great city views. Monument OPEN DAILY 09:30-18:30. Free entry. Elevator open until 19:30.
ST. PETER IN CHAINS CHURCH – Contains Michelan-gelos statue of Moses and the supposed chains that bound Peter ’ while in prison. OPEN DAILY 08:00-12:00 & 15:00-19:00. Oct-March until only 18:00. Church attire.
PANTHEON – Roman temple with a perfectly preserved dome. OPEN DAILY Mon-Sat. 08:30-19:30, Sun 09:00-18:00. Holidays 09:00-13:00. CLOSED for Mass on Sat @ 17:00 and Sun @ 10:30. Free entry. Church attire.
MUSEO dell’ ARA PACIS AUGUSTAE – An altar, con-secrated in 9 BC, dedicated to the Pax, the Roman goddess of Peace. OPEN DAILY 09:30-19:30. Can be seen, free of charge, from the street through a large glass window.
PIAZZA NAVONA – A Baroque-era square built on the site of the Roman Stadium of Domitian. Bernini’s massive “Foun-tain of the Four Rivers” dominates the piazza. ALWAYS OPEN.
CAMPO dei FIORE – A piazza popular for outdoor restau-rants, markets, and gatherings. Flower market in the morning. Lively crowd as the evening develops. ALWAYS OPEN.
PIAZZA del POPOLO – A large public square just inside the ancient walls of Rome and at the foot of the Villa Borghese Gardens. Several nice churches are worth a visit. VILLA
BORGHESE GARDENS – A huge public park with bike and foot paths, cafés, lakes, and a zoo. ALWAYS OPEN.
BORGHESE GALLERY – A Baroque-era palace contain-ing fine paintings and sculpture by well known Italian artists. CLOSED MONDAY. OPEN OTHER DAYS 09:00-19:00. Res-ervations are mandatory.
SPANISH STEPS – Grand stairway where locals and tourist gather. PIAZZA di SPAGNA is at the foot of the stairway and contains a boat-shaped fountain attribiled to Piero Berni-ni, father of the more famous Gian Lorenzo Bernini. ALWAYS OPEN. There has been a recent movement by the Roman Police to forbid people from sitting on the steps. TREVI FOUNTAIN
– Baroque-era fountain where tourists throw coins to hope for a return trip to Rome. ALWAYS OPEN & CROWDED.
BATHS OF DIOCLETIAN & BASICILA S. MARIA degli ANGELI – Former huge Roman bath complex and now a church designed by Michelangelo. OPEN DAILY 07:30-18:30. Maybe closes later on Sunday and May-Sept. Church attire.
ST. PETER’S BASILICA – The largest place of worship in the Christian world. Michelangelos dome and <i>Pietà</i> along with ’ a stunning array of decorations. THE CHURCH IS OPEN DAI-LY 07:00-18:30; until 19:00 April-Sept. May be closed on Wed mornings. THE DOME IS OPEN DAILY 08:00-18:00; 17:00 from oct to March.

VATICAN MUSEUM – Miles and miles of some of the best art in the world. One way route through the museum ends with entry to Michelangelo’s SISTINE CHAPEL . CLOSED SUNDAY (except last Sun of each month when it is open 09:00-14:00). OTHER DAYS OPEN 09:00-18:00 . Fri night open with online reservations. Hours subject to change.
CATACOMBS OF PRISCILLA – Subterranean tombs outside the city walls. CLOSED MONDAY . OTHER DAYS 09:00-12:00 & 14:00-17:00 . Randomly closed one month a year.
ST. PAUL OUTSIDE THE WALLS – Church founded by emperor Constantine over the tomb of the apostle Paul. CLOSED SUNDAY . OTHER DAYS 07:00-18:30 . Church attire.

DM Neighborhood walking tours

Sights in Rome

Ancient Rome

The Colosseum-Formum-Palentine

A €18 ticket for the **COLOSSEUM-FORUMPALATINE HILL** comes with a reserved entrance time and is valid for 24 hours from the first use. You must arrive for entry at your reserved time. Access is at the public entrance of the Colosseum (on the east side) nearest the Arch of Constantine.

A €24 ticket known at the **FULL EXPERIENCE TICKET** comes with a reserved entrance time and is valid for 48 hours from the first use. With this ticket, one will have access to the Arena and/or Underground levels. This ticket gets you into the Roman Forum and Palatine Hill areas, the Imperial Forum, and temporary exhibits. A list of all participants must be submitted upon entry, so be sure to

bring a printed list with full names, DOB, and passport information for everyone in your group.

OPEN DAILY 08:30 until one hour before sunset. Most likely, Apr-Aug until 19:15, Sept until 19:00, Oct until 18:30. Other months can close as early as 16:30. Last entry is one hour before closing time. See website for specific details and hours.

OFFICIAL WEBSITE: <https://colosseo.it/>

<https://www.thecolosseum.org/facts/>

OPEN DAILY 08:30 until one hour before sunset. Most likely, Apr-Aug until 19:15, Sept until 19:00, Oct until 18:30. Other months can close as early as 16:30. Last entry is one hour before closing time. See the official website for specific details and hours.

OFFICIAL WEBSITES:

<https://www.coopcul-ture.it/en/thecolosseum.cfm>
and <https://parcocolosseo.it/en/>

CALL CENTER and INFORMATION:

Connect with a live English-speaking assistant by dialing, +39 06 399 67 700.

Phones are manned Mon-Fri 09:00-13:00 & 14:00-17:00. Sat 09:00-14:00. Closed Sunday.

PROHIBITED ITEMS – You’ll have to walk through a metal detector when entering the Colosseum. Small drawstring backpacks and purses are OK. Large bags, luggage, glass bottles and containers, alcoholic beverages, and aerosols are prohibited.

EXPERIENCING THE COLOSSEUM

This massive Arena is the first image that comes to mind when I think of Rome.

Constructed by Emperor Vespasian



(the first of several “Flavian” emperors), it was inaugurated in AD 80 as the Flavian Amphitheatre. It only took ten years to build this thing! The Romans were always seeking ways to take a Greek idea and put a new Roman twist on it. The Flavian Amphitheatre is no exception. In essence, the Romans took the plans for a Classical Greek theatre and built two of them end to end, coming up with the design for a huge freestanding “amphi” theatre.

Nero, Emperor Vespasian's predecessor, had constructed a lavish palace just over the hill, behind the modern-day metro station. The site where the Colosseum sits today was once a large man-made lake surrounded by porticos, balconies, and grand walkways. This palace complex, known as the Domus Aurea (Golden House), contained a colossal 33-meter-tall (100 feet) bronze statue of Emperor Nero. After the Flavian Amphitheatre was constructed, Vespasian had Nero's colossal statue placed out in front of his new colossal amphitheatre. The combination of the colossal statue of Nero and the colossal amphitheatre seemed to stick, and the amphitheatre took on the nickname of the Colossal-seum, or Colosseum. Nero's statue has perished, but you can see the site where it once stood on the grassy area between the Colosseum and the wrought iron fence flanking the forum area where the cypress trees are today.

The Romans were known as great builders and pioneered many construction techniques still in use today. One such idea was that of the "rounded arch" and concrete. Essentially, the Romans would construct a shell of bricks and mortar and pour concrete into the void making for a super sturdy and robust structure. This concrete-filled shell was then covered with gleaming white travertine marble for a finishing touch of grandeur. Once inside the Colosseum, be sure to notice the many examples of this shell and concrete construction method.

Notice the exterior of the Colosseum; see all those potholes in the walls? The huge stones flanking the exterior were initially held together with iron pegs, buried into the stone. Then, as mentioned before, the whole thing was covered in travertine marble. The Colosseum became a relic after the fall of Rome, and its ready-cut stones were cannibalized for accessible building material in the Middle Ages and Renaissance period. Later, when iron was at a shortage, the Colosseum's iron pegs were chiseled out to make weapons for war, as well as hinges, railing, and the like.

Look again at the exterior; do you see a resemblance to our modern-day soccer and football stadiums? In Roman times, the citizens attending an event at the amphitheatre had a ticket noting their seating assignment and which doorway to enter to get to their seats. Look above the rounded arched “doorways” on the ground level, and you’ll find “Roman numerals” etched into the marble, noting the doorway’s number. Like our stadiums today, the wide walkways and stairs were designed to get people into and out of the amphitheatre very quickly. These were collectively known as vomitorium, because when it came time to exit, the spectators come spill out, like vomit, in less than fifteen minutes.

Inside, along the walkways, were a multitude of kiosks in which vendors would sell official team merchandise, bowls of spaghetti, pizza, chicken wings, and even light beer.

Still outside, notice the upper levels of the Colosseum. It's not Roman at all; it's Greek. Corinthian columns on the top level, Ionic on the middle, and Doric on the ground floor. Originally, each arch on the top level contained a Greek statue copy, further contributing to the Colosseum's artistic beauty. Only a third of the original Colosseum still stands today. Some of it was destroyed in earthquakes, but most was deconstructed after the fall of Rome and used as stonework for newer buildings.

Once inside the Colosseum, it may be difficult to imagine just how the exposed skeleton/foundation which remains fit in with the colossal Arena of Roman times. I suggest going directly to the arena/ground level as soon as you enter the ticket gate. Exiting from the tunnel into the Arena is much like doing the same thing in our modern stadiums. The difference here is that you are looking at the tunneling and foundations which once supported the playing field's floor. These skeletal pillars and passageways were once covered with wooden planks on which sand was spread to make the playing field. In Latin, the word, Arena, means sand, thus the origin of our modern-day term for an oval-shaped stadium.

The Colosseum's Arena was 86 by 50 meters, slightly smaller than our present-day football field. It could hold 50,000 spectators. With some imagination, you can visualize the rings of seating circling the Arena. Notice the buttresses and supports for the tunnels leading to the second level. Even higher up, you can still see the remains of dual stairs leading up to the cheap seats on level three. At the very top, wooden beams stuck out of the stone walls to support huge canvas tarps designed to be drawn to shade the spectators from the mid-day sun.

The Colosseum was constructed for the enjoyment and entertainment of the citizens of Rome. Admission was always free, and politicians often sponsored events. The Colosseum opened in AD 80 with a 100-day festival of events and games in which 2,000 men and 9,000 animals were killed in one sort of competition or the other. The games varied, sometimes pitting men against wild animals or animal against animal. Like our big modern-day concerts, the Roman games features warm-up acts followed by the major headliners. The headliners were always the gladiators, the professional warriors, and they had an avid following by their fans.



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The Arch of Constantine

Exiting the Colosseum, work your way around to the right and find this massive triumphal arch known as the Arch of Constantine. It was erected here in 315 A.D. to commemorate Emperor Constantine's victory over Maxentius in the mighty battle of Ponte Milvio and the subsequent proclamation "legalizing" Christianity. If you are a Christian, it is a very important date! Three centuries after Christ began spreading the Gospel to a group of twelve disciples, his message had spread to the "utmost" parts of the world using the Roman Empire as its broadcast beacon. Higher up on the arch are some scenes carved to depict the epic battle in 313. Don't dwell too much on the lower panels, as they have no meaning or relation to Constantine. It seems that by the time the 4th century rolled around artists were beginning to pillage older monuments to decorate the new ones.

The Roman Forum

Experiencing the Roman Forum and Palatine Hill

With the Arch of Constantine to your back, walk up the street (via San Gregorio) about 200 meters and find the entrance gate/ticket booth for the Forum and Palatine Hill. (By the way, this is a good location to purchase your entry ticket for the Colosseum, no long lines and you can walk right into the Colosseum with-

out the wait). The forum was the political, religious and commercial center of Rome. Citizens would mingle here on a daily basis to catch up on the gossip, purchase food, worship their gods, elect political leaders, and generally participate in Roman life.

From the entrance gate, wander around the right side of the Palatine Hill, making your way past present-day excavations to another triumphal arch dedicated to Titus. The rocky road leading from the Colosseum, through the arch and into the forum valley, is known as the via Sacra. This was the “Main Street” of Rome stretching from here to the distant Arch of Sep-timius Severus at the foot of Capitoline Hill (800 meters in front of you).

Roman Ruins

1. Arch of Titus— Commemorates the Roman victory over Judea in AD 70. Notice the bas-relief depicting the Jews in chains with their menorah.
2. Just beyond the Arch of Titus a path leads off to the left (uphill) to Palatine Hill, the site of ruined palaces of the Roman emperors. Taking this walk uphill provides a cool breeze, fewer crowds, and a fantastic aerial view of the Forum and surroundings.
3. The Forum’s Main Square — In its heyday, this flat spot was covered with shiny white buildings with bronze roofs.
4. Temple of Julius Caesar — Julius Caesar’s body was burned on this spot (under the tin roof) after his assassination.

5. The Curia— The Senate House was the most important political building in the forum.

6. The Rostrum—A raised platform, 3 meters high and 25 meters in length, from which political speeches and opinions were voiced.

7. Basilica Aemilia—In Roman times, a basilica was a hall of justice. Notice the floor plan, a long rectangular hall flanked by an aisle on either side. In the Middle Ages, the Christian church adopted this floor plan as the basis for many of its churches.

8. The Temple of Vesta — The most sacred of all places in Rome. Here you see the remains of a circular temple representing the circular huts that housed the original founders of Rome. Inside, a fire burned, just like in Roman homes. This eternal flame was tended to by a group of priestesses known as the Vestal Virgins. Their duty was to never let the fire go out, for as long as it burned, Rome would stand.

9. The House of the Vestal Virgins— The six Vestal Virgins lived here and were chosen from noble families at the age of ten. They served here for a term of 30 years. They were honored and held in high esteem by all Romans.

10. Temple of Antoninus and Faustina — 17-meter-tall Corinthian columns

11. Basilica of Constantine— Now, only a portion of the massive “flying buttress” type arches are standing.

The Fall of Rome

Basically, Rome could not patrol its borders and invaders from the North attacked the weakened city. The year 476 marks the date when the last emperor pulled the plug and left Rome in the dark. All of Europe wasted away for a thousand years in the Dark Ages, a time of weak government, poverty and ignorance. HOWEVER, Rome lived on in the Church! The term “Emperor” now translates to “Pope,” senators became cardinals, territorial governors became bishops, orators became priests and basilicas became churches.

Baroque City Center Piazza Venezia

This busy piazza in the center of Rome is lined with several palaces, the most important being the Palazzo Venezia. It was constructed by Pope Paul II (1464-71) and is one of the first buildings in Rome constructed in the Renaissance style. The huge white building to the south is the Monument to Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king to unite Italy. It dates only from 1885 and houses the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as well as a fantastic view for those who climb the steps.

The Trevi Fountain

This famous fountain was commissioned from Nicola Salvi in 1762 by Pope Clement XIII. It is a colossal masterpiece dating from the Baroque era. The central figure, the Ocean,

rides a chariot drawn by two seahorses and two tri-tons. It is a famous gathering spot for tourists since the 1954 film “Three Coins in the Fountain” which was filmed in Italy and ran in the United States. However, local Roman legend has it that throwing one coin in the fountain will bring good luck and assure a return trip to

Rome. It seems that the “three coin” theme arises from the movie’s title. The movie details the romantic adventures of three different young women falling in love with three different men while on holiday in Italy. It is said that over €3,000 a day is collected from the fountain and used to supply the local food bank.

[Pantheon](#)

A perfectly preserved ancient building founded by Agrippa in 27 BC. It was later rebuilt by Hadrian (117-25) as a temple to all gods. The 7th century saw it change from a pagan temple of worship to a Christian church. The portico is supported by 16 solid granite columns (all original except for the three on the left). The humongous doors are the originals and still open and close on their original hinges. Most important is the DOME, equal in width and height. This was a grand architectural achievement for its time... in fact it wasn’t until the age of the Renaissance that another such dome was constructed for the cathedral in Florence. The interior contains the tombs of

some kings and, most notably, that of the artist Raphael, on the left from the entrance.

Piazza Navona

A lively square filled with artists, musicians, cafés and street performers. It sits on the site of the former Roman-period Domitian stadium, a chariot and horse racing track. In the center of the oval-shaped square sits Bernini's Fountain of the Four Rivers, a Baroque masterpiece completed in 1851. Newly cleaned, its statues represent four rivers symbolizing the four corners of the earth... the Danube, the Ganges, Rio de la Plata and the Nile.

Vatican City

The Vatican Museums

The Vatican Museums house one of the greatest collections of Classical and Renaissance art in the world. They also contain many great archaeological discoveries from Italy. The buildings were originally palaces built for the wealthy popes of the Renaissance. It is thanks to their commissions and patronages that many of these works exist.



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Tips for Visiting the Museums

Getting There

By metro: Metro Line A – stop: Ottaviano

By bus: line 49 stops in front of the museum entrance

32, 81, 982 stop at Piazza del Risorgimento

By tram: 19 stops at Piazza del Risorgimento

By taxi: taxi station – Viale Vaticano in front of the museum entrance

Entry Procedure

When you enter the museum, you will pass through a security checkpoint with airport-style scanning. There is a coatroom on the right-hand side of the entrance hall. You will need to leave food and drinks, umbrellas, and any bags, backpacks or purses measuring more than 15in x 14in x 6in. Bags that stick out beyond 6 inches from your body will also need to be checked. If do not have reserved tickets, head upstairs to the ticket office. If you do have reserved tickets, proceed to the window marked reservations.

Restrooms

Restrooms are located at the far left-hand side of the entrance hall, down a flight of stairs.

There are a few other restrooms in the museum, but plan to use these before you begin your visit. Restrooms are also located at the following locations: near the cafeteria, in the area by the Cortile della Pigna, in the Raphael Rooms, near the entrance of the Sistine Chapel and by the post office at the museum exit.

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Photography

Photos may be taken in the museums without flash. Selfie sticks are not permitted. No photography or filming of any kind is allowed in the Sistine Chapel and the guards are authorized to collect any photographs or videos. The use of cellphones is permitted, except in the Sistine Chapel.



Appropriate Attire

Visitors to the Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica must be dressed appropriately: no sleeveless shirts, short skirts, shorts or hats allowed.

The Grounds

The gardens on the Vatican grounds make up half of the 44 hectares of Vatican City and can be seen from the western side of the museum. On the grounds you will see lawns, woods, gardens, grottoes and fountains. Highlights of a visit to the gardens include: many rare trees, which were donated as gifts to the Vatican from countries around the world; a papal coat of arms made of flowers; a helipad,

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used by visiting bishops; the head gardener's house, one of the few residential buildings in Vatican City; and a radio tower at the Marconi broadcast center, named for the scientist who set up the first Vatican broadcast for Pope Pius XI in 1931. You can purchase tickets for a guided tour of the Gardens.

The Courtyards

There are three courtyards enclosed by the Vatican museums. You will see nice views of them from the windows of the various galleries. The Cortile del Belvedere is on the southern end of the museum. It was designed by Bramante in 1503 to connect the two palaces at the north and south ends of what are now the Vatican Museums. The Cortile della Biblioteca is in the center of the museum and was created when Pope Sixtus V built the library across the courtyard. The Cortile della Pigna is at the northern end of the museum. It was also originally part of the Cortile del Belvedere. It is named after the large pinecone (la pigna) at the northern end. It is 13 feet tall and was cast out of bronze in the 1st or 2nd century AD. The pinecone was originally part of a fountain, then moved to the medieval St. Peter's Basilica, and finally placed at its current location in 1608 when the church was rebuilt.

In the center of the courtyard is the Sfera con Sfera, or Sphere within a Sphere, created in

1990. The sphere has been a feature of Arnaldo Pomodoro's work since the 1960s, and similar works can be found at the United Nations plaza in New York, the University of California at Berkeley, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, and Trinity College in Dublin. The spheres have inspired many conspiracy theories, but most believe they are meant to symbolize the fragility and complexity of the world. From the courtyard you also have an excellent view of the dome of St. Peter's Basilica. [Pio Clementino Museum](#)

You will start your visit in the Pio Clementino Museum, which is named after the two popes who oversaw its foundation in the 18th century, Clement XIV and Pius VI. The original collection, belonging to Pope Julius II (1503-1513), was expanded and opened to the public. This is the heart of the classical sculpture collection housed in the Vatican Museums.

Pass through the Square Vestibule and enter the Octagonal Courtyard. The two major sculptures here, the Laocoön and the Belvedere Apollo, have been standing in the same locations since the 1500s. The Laocoön dates from around 40 BC. Laocoön was a priest of Apollo. During the Trojan War he warned his fellow Trojans about the Greek wooden horse so Athena and Poseidon, who were supporting the Greeks, sent two giant sea-serpents to kill Laocoön and

his two sons. The Belvedere Apollo belonged to Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere before he was elected Pope as Julius II, and he brought it with him from his villa. The god Apollo seems to have just released an arrow from the bow which he originally carried in his left hand. The statue dates from the 2nd century AD and is considered to be a copy of an original bronze statue by Leochares dating from 300 BC.

Wind your way through the museum until you reach the Hall of the Muses. The statues in this room were greatly altered by 18th century restorers. Some of the statues did not originally depict muses and were modified to complete the nine personifications of the arts. The frescoes on the ceiling also depict Apollo and the Muses. The walls behind the statues originally provided landscape backgrounds for the statues, but they were painted over with the red paint in the 1800s. The Belvedere Torso dates from the 1st century BC and is signed by the Athenian sculptor Apollonius. Though there is much speculation as to the identity of the sculpture, the current theory is that it is the Greek hero Ajax contemplating suicide. During the Trojan War, Ajax was so upset when Achilles' armor was given to Odysseus instead of him that he killed himself. The theory of the statue's identity is based on the fact that his head is leaning sadly toward his right hand

which was gripping the sword. Can you see it? There is also a statue of Bacchus, the god of wine, and a statue of Pan playing the flute. Next you will enter the Round Hall. The architecture is reminiscent of the Pantheon, with niches to display the Roman-era statues. It is dominated by the huge oval bath at the center of the room, with a circumference of over 42 feet. It was likely used in a large public space in imperial Rome. The floor was artfully reassembled in the 18th century with mosaics dating from the 3rd century AD that were found in two different locations and moved here. The gilded bronze statue of Heracles (or Hercules) was discovered in 1864 beneath the courtyard of a palazzo. It was found buried in a trench and covered with a travertine slab. According to Roman custom, the statue was given a ritual burial with a sacrificial lamb because it had been struck by lightning. The statue shows Heracles leaning on his club with the skin of the Nemean lion draped over his arm. It is dated somewhere between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD.

Move on to the Greek Cross Hall. In the center of the floor there is a mosaic depicting a bust of Athena. The hall is dominated by the two sarcophagi. The Sarcophagus of St. Helena is believed to have held the remains of Helena, mother of Constantine, who died around 335 AD. It was brought to the Vatican in 1777. The sarcophagus is carved with military scenes of Roman soldiers on horseback and barbarian prisoners. The lid of the sarcophagus depicts

cupids and victories holding garlands, with two lions at the very top. Scholars believe that the sarcophagus was originally made for a male family member, perhaps Helena's husband or Constantine himself, given the military decoration. The Sarcophagus of Constantia was made to hold the remains of one of Emperor Constantine's daughters, most likely Constantia who died in 354 AD. It is decorated on all four sides with garlands and grape vines, and cupids with grapes. Below there are two peacocks, a ram and a cupid with a garland. The lid is decorated with greenery as well. As you continue upstairs you will enter the Gallery of the Candelabra, named for its massive marble candelabra. The statue of Artemis of Ephesus here is rather unique. The city of Ephesus was founded in what is now modern-day Turkey. The Ionian colonists substituted their Artemis for a local goddess, and the two eventually intertwined to create this version of Artemis. She is often depicted in a sarcophagus-like stance with outstretched arms and a tapered body, and always with the cluster of globules. Some say they represent breasts (as virgin Artemis was the symbol of fertility), but some argue that they represent bull testicles (as the local Ephesian goddess Cybele was associated with bull sacrifices). Be sure to look out the western windows for an impressive view of the Vatican Gardens. From here you will move to the Gallery of Tapestries. This is a collection of 16th- and 17th-century tapestries.

The Flemish tapestries were woven in Brussels by Pieter van Aelst's school and based on drawings by Raphael's students. On the other wall hang tapestries depicting the life of Pope Urban VIII.

Next is the Gallery of Maps. The gallery was commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII in 1580. The maps in this room were based on drawing by Ignazio Danti and it took him three years to complete the project. There are 40 panels which run the length of the gallery and map the entirety of the Italian peninsula, including Sardinia and Corsica. Italy was not unified at the time, so each panel features a different region.

The Raphael Rooms

Follow the building around to the southern edge and the Raphael Rooms. These rooms were used by Pope Julius II as his residence, and he commissioned Raphael and his school to do the paintings.

The first room is the Room of Constantine, which was designed to be used for receptions and official ceremonies. The walls depict pivotal scenes from Constantine's life. Raphael died before the room was completed.



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That is followed by the Room of Heliodorus. This room was used for private audiences with the pope. The paintings depict historical moments when faith was threatened to show God's protection of the Church. The four scenes from the Old Testament on the ceiling were also painted by Raphael.

Next is the Room of the Segnatura. These are Raphael's most famous frescoes and the first works he completed in the Vatican. The room is named after the highest court of the Holy See, the "Segnatura Gratiae et Iustitiae," which met in this room around the middle of the 16th century. Pope Julius II used it as a library and private office. The frescoes represent the three greatest aspects of the human spirit: truth (both theological and philosophical), goodness and beauty. The frescoes on the ceiling depict the allegorical figures of Theology, Philosophy, Justice and Poetry.

In the School of Athens, the greatest philosophers of ancient times are gathered together to share their ideas. In the center, Plato is pointing up and Aristotle is to the right holding the book *Ethics*. Pythagoras is in the lower left. Diogenes is lying on the stairs. Euclid is on the right teaching geometry to his pupils. Zoroaster is holding the heavenly sphere and Ptolemy is holding the earthly sphere (he has his back to us). To their right is a man wearing a black hat – this is Raphael's self-portrait.

Last is the Room of the Fire in the Borgo. The frescoes were commissioned later by Pope Leo X and depict scenes from the lives of Popes Leo III and IV.

The Sistine Chapel

Back downstairs you will enter the Sistine Chapel. The Chapel was named after Pope Six-tus IV, who had the building restored. The frescoes on the walls were painted by some of the greatest painters of the time, including Signo-relli, Botticelli, Roselli, Ghirlandaio and Peru-gino. The 12 frescoes on the side walls follow the lives of Jesus and Moses. Between 1508 and 1512, Michelangelo painted the ceiling. The central stories in the middle of the ceiling depict the creation of the world and the fall of man. They are surrounded by other biblical figures and stories. Michelangelo also painted The Last Judgement on the altar wall, between 1536 and 1541. It shows the souls of the dead rising up to face God and those who are condemned being hurtled into Hell.

From the Sistine Chapel, you can exit to the left to head back to the museum entrance with the spiral staircase or you can exit to the right to enter St. Peter's Basilica.

St. Peter's Basilica

This is the heart of the Catholic Church, though it isn't the official seat of the pope. A shrine was first erected here, at the site of St. Peter's

tomb, in the 2nd century. The first basilica was completed in 349 AD and commissioned by Constantine. In 1506, construction for the current basilica began under Pope Julius II, but it would take more than a century for the building to be completed. Many of the greatest architects from the Roman Renaissance and the Baroque periods played a part in its design. Bernini was most influential in the design of the interior and Michelangelo designed the dome.

The Interior

After much back and forth between the architects over the shorter Greek cross plan and the longer Latin cross plan, the basilica was eventually built on a Latin cross plan. The nave, or long part of the cross, is richly decorated with Baroque stuccos, mosaics, statues and marble columns. The basilica is 615 feet long. As you walk down the nave you will see markings on the floor that compare the length of St. Peter's to other churches. The niches contain 39 statues of saints who were founders of various religious orders. The vaulted ceiling is decorated with gold stucco. The “paintings” that line the walls are actually mosaics. The pieces of glass are so small that they only appear to be paintings, and some are replicas of actual works.

The nave is lined with chapels, featuring many important religious works. In the first chapel on

the right stands Michelangelo's Pietà. He was only 24 when he completed this work, in 1499. It is the only work that he signed; his name appears on the belt. Most striking about this sculpture is Mary's youthful, sweet face and Michelangelo's gift for making stone look like flesh and capturing the folds in drapery. It has been protected by thick glass since an attack in 1972.

At the end of the line of chapels on the right is a statue of St. Peter in the nave. There is some controversy over the date of the statue, but most believe that it was made by Arnolfo di Cambio in the 13th century. The foot of the statue has been worn thin by the millions who have come to the Vatican on pilgrimages over the centuries to touch or kiss St. Peter's foot. There are four huge pilasters where the transept (or shorter part of the cross) meets the nave. The four statues represent important moments of the passion of Christ. The four Evangelists: Mark, Luke, John and Matthew are depicted on the four spaces between the arches. The papal altar, a plain slab of marble, stands in the middle of the church. It is located directly above the tomb of St. Peter in the grottoes below the basilica, where many other popes are buried. Only the pope is allowed to say mass here. Bernini's Baldacchino, an extravagant Baroque canopy, stands above the altar at nearly 100 feet tall and weighing over 100,000 pounds. It was commissioned by Pope Urban VIII in 1624 to fill the empty space between the altar and the dome.

The 448-foot dome was designed by Michelangelo, but it was not completed until 1590. He worked on it until his death in 1564, when his pupil, Giacomo Della Porta, took over the work. The gold inscription at the base of the dome reads “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church, and I will give you the keys to heaven.” The drum of the dome alternates double columns with gabled windows. It is possible to climb to the top of the dome and out onto the rooftop for some stunning views of both the interior of the basilica and panoramas of Rome. In the transept, to the right of the altar is the monument to Pope Clement XIII, built in 1784 by Antonio Canova. To the left is the monument to Pope Alexander VII, Bernini’s last work in St. Peter’s completed in 1678. In the apse behind the altar, is the chair (or throne) of St. Peter, or the Cathedra Petri in Latin. The wooden chair is placed inside a bronze casing designed by Bernini. The upholstery on the casing depicts Christ giving St. Peter the keys to heaven. The window above the chair portrays the Holy Spirit as a dove and is surrounded by a cloud of angels and cherubs.

[The Exterior](#)

The façade dates to 1614 and was designed by Carlo Maderno, who lengthened the basilica to create the Latin cross plan. The central window is known as the Benediction Loggia. It is from

this balcony that the pope blesses the people gathered in the square on Easter and Christmas. The center bronze door is the Filarete Door, which dates to the 15th century and the old St. Peter's. The entrance to the dome is on the far right.



St. Peter's Square

St. Peter's Square is partially enclosed by two colonnades designed by Bernini. The colonnades are made of four rows of columns, each 5 feet in diameter and 65 feet high. The 140 statues atop the colonnades depict former popes, martyrs, evangelists and other Christian figures and were added over a span of 40 years. Bernini constructed the colonnades between 1656 and 1667.



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The marble disks on the ground mark the geometric foci of the square. Standing here, the rows of columns line up perfectly and only one row is visible. This is a testament to Bernini's architectural genius. There are two fountains in the square. When facing the basilica, the Maderno Fountain is on the left. Pope Paul V commissioned Maderno to replace an older fountain at the site in 1612. He left the lower stone of the old fountain but redesigned the rest. The basin is decorated with steps and small columns and the pedestal on top with four scrolls of stone. The Bernini Fountain was commissioned by Pope Clement X. It took Bernini 10 years to complete it, from 1667 to 1677. To maintain the symmetry of the square, this fountain is an exact replica of the Maderno Fountain.

In the center of the square is an 84-foot ancient Egyptian obelisk. It was brought to Rome from Alexandria by Caligula in 37 AD. The obelisk was removed from the "Circus of Nero" in Rome and placed at the center of the square under Pope Sixtus V in 1586. Moving the obelisk required a workforce of about 900 men and almost 100 horses and took over a year to complete.

Brief History of Rome

Rome's Founders: Romulus and Remus

Rome's history spans at least 3,000 years and is riddled with fact, legend and lore. I think

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there is no place on earth where you can walk through “history” and still see and feel the long-ago pulse of a distant society. It seems that everything from the Roman ruins to the grand palaces and ornate churches still has a story to share.

One of Rome’s most famous legends is the story of Romulus and Remus, the mythical twins who are said to have founded Rome on April 21, 753 BC. While this story is generally accepted as folklore, most historians will agree that Rome was founded in the 8th century BC by a mixture of Etruscan, Latin and Sabine tribes who settled the peninsula a century or two earlier. Rome’s first settlements were upon three of the “seven famous hills” in the region, Palatino, Esquilino and Quirinale.

Romulus and Remus are said to have been born to the vestal virgin Rhea Silva, after she had been seduced and raped by Mars. After their birth they were immediately sentenced to death because they were considered to be in line for the throne of Alba. A royal servant took pity on the baby boys and hid them in a basket by the River Tiber. A flood came along and washed the basket up on the Palatino hill where



it came to rest under a fig tree. Here the twins were found and suckled by a she-wolf until discovered by a shepherd named Faustulus who, along with his wife, reared them. Some years later, Remus got into trouble with the law and was arrested. Faustulus was very upset and decided to tell Romulus about the circumstances of his birth. Hearing this, Romulus headed off to town to rescue his jailed brother. Through a series of events, Romulus rescued Remus, killed the king and reinstated his grandfather Numitor to the throne.

In celebration, the two youths decided to found a city on the site where they had been rescued by the shewolf. However, they didn't know exactly where this place was, so they each went to one of the nearby hills to consult the omens. Remus ended up on Aventino hill and, as a result of his consultation, saw six buzzards. On the other hand, Romulus went to Palatino hill and he saw twelve buzzards. So, there was no doubt about it...the hill with the most buzzards became Roma!

Romulus got to work straight away building a city wall while Remus became very upset at the rejection of his site. Soon, in a fit of rage, Remus came bounding over the half-completed city walls of Roma yelling at his brother, "If your silly walls can't keep me

out, how are they ever going to keep out invaders?” Romulus was fit to be tied and picked up the nearest hammer and killed Remus, right then and there!

In a few years the city was complete, but there were no inhabitants. So, Romulus created a refuge on the other five hills in the area and invited a dangerous cocktail of misfits, criminals, outlaws and escaped slaves to set up camp. The only problem was that they were all men. Not a woman in sight!

Romulus cooked up a devious plan to remedy the dismal situation. He decided to throw a party to celebrate the Festival of Consus and invite all the neighbors from the surrounding countryside. August 21st was the big celebration day and there were thousands eating, drinking, watching football and even Nascar races. While all visiting men were preoccupied with watching the sporting events, Romulus and his gang of misfits kidnapped all the women. One of the visiting kings, from the community of Sabine, figured out they had been fooled and went into attack mode. But alas, Fate was against King Titus Tatius, the Sabine. The gods Juno and Jupiter alerted Romulus who in turn was prepared for the attacking Sabines. A war waged on for some time until finally the captured Sabine women, who had now decided they kind of liked it there in Rome, had had enough.

The women convinced Titus and Romulus to stop the fighting and make peace. For a while both Romulus and Titus ruled Rome, but then Titus died.

Romulus lived on until the age of 54. It is reported he died, or mysteriously disappeared, in Rome during the year 717 BC. Some say the gods took him away in a thunderstorm while others say the senators killed him. Nevertheless, without the she-wolf, there would be no Rome!

NOTE: If traveling to Florence, look for the statue known as “The Rape of the Sabine Women” in the Loggia situated on the Piazza Signoria, next to the Medici Palace.

[The She-Wolf Connection in Siena](#)

All over Siena you will find images of the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus. Just take a look... Il Campo, the Duomo, public squares, drain pipes, and more. I think there might be more images of the suckling she-wolf in Siena than in Rome! So, what's the connection? Legend has it that Remus's son called Senius, fled Rome, wandered north and founded Siena. The folklore seemed to stick and now you'll find the she-wolf woven into every neighborhood. Look around and see how many you can find.

Roman History: 3rd to 1st Century BC

Rome became a force to be reckoned with early in the 3rd century BC. But before it could become a superpower, its two rivals, Greece and Carthage, had to be crushed. The Greeks came first and by 272 BC, the Greek colonies in southern Italy were vacated by the fleeing Greeks heading back home. Carthage was a little more trouble, but by the mid-2nd century BC Rome had subdued the Carthaginians and conquered all of northern Africa. With the defeat of the Greeks and Carthaginians, Rome had full control of the Mediterranean world.

When the early 1st century BC rolled around, Rome had a strong hold on what is now known as Europe. It was at this time that its trouble began to come from within. Rome had been ruled by a series of military leaders with great success. Now it seemed everyone wanted a “piece of the Empire” and it became every general for himself.

By 87 BC, the ruler of Rome was the general with the strongest armies. This carried on for several decades until a general named Julius Caesar came along in 48 BC and was appointed to supreme power. By 44 BC, he was named emperor for life. Unfortunately, the “power” went directly to his head and he alienated even his most avid supporters. Finally, his former

friends had had enough of him and on the Ides of March (March 15) 44 BC, Julius Caesar was assassinated.

Roman History: 44 BC to the “Fall”

Mark Anthony took control after Caesar’s death, but peace was shaky when Octavian, Caesar’s 18-year-old grandnephew was nominated as heir to the throne. Eventually, Octavian and Anthony made peace and ruled jointly. Anthony’s love affair with Queen Cleopatra VII of Egypt caused much strife between the two leaders. It came to a head when Anthony started handing out pieces of the Roman Empire to Queen Cleopatra. Octavian attacked Anthony’s troops in the naval battle of Actium in 31 BC and that was the end of Anthony. Octavian was left the sole ruler of Rome, but he remembered what had happened to Julius Caesar. Consequently, he handed over all power to the Senate in 27 BC. The Senate promptly gave all the power back to Octavian and made him the first emperor of Rome with the title of Augustus. Caesar Augustus was a well-liked Emperor whose leadership style led to a rare time of peace and tranquility. Later this era would be referred to as the Golden Ages. He built new monuments (like the “Alter of Peace”), repaired old decayed ones, and was proud of his artistic achievement. Augustus’s successors once again sent Rome into depravity. Emperors Tiberius and Caligula were noted for being insanely cruel. Caligula

was so obtuse he sarcastically named his horse “senator” and ordered his armies to go out to the seashore and gather seashells! He was assassinated in AD 41.

A simple man, Claudius (41-54) became emperor and established a new era of peace and calm. During his reign, the port facilities were established in Ostia, just outside of Rome. He constructed a new aqueduct to bring fresh water into the city and Rome’s hold on Britannia was firmly established. Alas, he married a beautiful woman named Agrippina. Most likely, it was she who murdered Emperor Claudius in AD 54. After his death, madness returned to the city!

Claudius’s successor was Nero, Agrippina’s 17-year-old son from a previous marriage. A supposed musician, all Nero became famous for was the massacre of Christians and serial rape. His downfall came in AD 64 when a massive fire broke out and much of the city was destroyed. His reign (54-68) ended in suicide when the Senate proclaimed him a public enemy.

In the course of one year, Rome fell under the rule of four Emperors. The city fell further into chaos and mayhem. Finally, Vespasian, a respected military man, took control in AD 69. He brought honor back to the crown and peace to the empire. Vespasian is famous for constructing the Colosseum on the demolished

remains of Nero's Domus Aurea, or Golden House. He ruled until AD 79.

The 2nd century is known as Rome's Golden Age. Under the leadership of Trajan and then Hadrian (117-38) the Roman Empire flourished and expanded. Hadrian became famous for restoring the Pantheon and building "Hadrian's Wall" in northern England to keep the Scots out of the Empire.

Alas, all good things come to an end, so the Golden Age went into decline during the 3rd century. Civil war and anarchy once again became the norm for the empire. Diocletian (284-305) divided the empire in half. He took the rich eastern half and gave Maximian the shaky western half.

In 305, both Diocletian and Maximian abdicated at the same moment. The thrones were left to Constantius in the west and Galarius in the east. This did little to calm the renewed growing chaos. Eventually war broke out between Constantine and Maxentius (the sons of the previous emperors).

In 312, on the night before Constantine was to go into battle with Maxentius, he saw a vision of a cross in the night sky accompanied by the message, "With this sign, you will conquer." The next day, at what has become known as the Battle of Ponte Milvio, he defeated his rivals,

won the battle, and eventually reunited the Empire.

In 313, Constantine issued the “Edict of Milan” which officially legalized Christianity. Christianity became the new “in thing” and many joined the followers of Christ all over the Empire. It was during this time that the (Old) Basilica of Saint Peter was constructed in Rome.



In 330, Constantine moved the seat of the Empire eastward to Constantinople. This was devastating to the city of Rome and it once again fell into decay. The 5th century brought invasions from the Germanic tribes in the North, who saw the once glorious city as an easy target.

The sack of Rome in 410 by the Visigoths marked the beginning of the end. In 440, the dreaded Attila the Hun was on the attack and was persuaded by a last-minute plea from Pope Leo I not to attack the city. Unfortunately, that did not stop the Vandals from sacking the city in 455.

The year 476 is regarded as the final end of the western Empire when the last emperor, Romulus Augustus was deposed.

Tours and Tour Guides

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Consider taking a cruise on the Tiber. There are several sightseeing, dinner and aperitivo cruises available. See viator.com to choose one that's right for you.

Shopping

You can find designer labels on Via dei Condotti and the area between Piazza di Spagna and Via del Corso. There are midrange clothing stores on Via Nazionale, Via del Corso, Via dei Giubbonari and Via Cola di Rienzo. There are small fashion boutiques and vintage clothes shops on Via del Governo Vecchio and around Campo de' Fiori. High quality antiques can be found on Via dei Coronari and Via Margutta.

Markets

Rome's most famous market is Porta Portese, held every Sunday morning from 6 AM to 2 PM near Trastevere (Pizza Porta Portese). You can find antiques, clothing, furniture and more. The Via Sannio market, near Porta San Giovanni (Via Sannio) sells new and secondhand clothes. It is open Monday through Saturday 9 AM to 1:30 PM.

Entertainment and Outdoor Activities

Teatro dell'Opera also houses the city's ballet company. Rome's opera season runs from December to June. In the summer, operas are performed outdoors at the Terme di Caracalla Roman baths. Visit operaroma.it to purchase tickets. Address: Piazza Beniamino Gigli, 7.