

The Anglican Centre in Rome

Visiting Rome

The major sites

The major "sites"/sights of Rome are:

- the Colosseum/Forum/Palatine (classical Rome)
- St Peter's Basilica, and the Vatican Museums which include the Sistine Chapel with its famous ceiling by Michelangelo
- the Pantheon
- Piazza Navona
- the Spanish Steps
- the Trevi Fountain

These are the places that most tourists who come to Rome for the first time for two or three days choose to visit, and hence they are thronging with people and in some areas, mock gladiators. Make sure you spend some time seeing other parts of Rome or just wandering the back streets and peering into courtyards.

You need a map and a guidebook for your planning and your visit.

Some people recommend getting an oversight of the city on either of the two double decker bus tours, one which goes around Christian sites, the other more general sights.

Some tips for travellers in Rome

Frugal tip: don't forget – it's very cheap to drink your coffee standing up at a bar but expensive to drink it seated at a table.

Don't bother buying bottled water: Rome has fountains everywhere with free flowing water, delicious and entirely safe to drink. Just refill your water bottle whenever it empties.

Churches, other than the major basilicas, close between 12 and 4pm (some stay open a little later than noon now.) In fact, much of Rome closes down - apart from people eating, some art galleries, museums, basilicas and major shops - in the early to mid afternoon, so ideally get going early when you can avoid the crowds and rest in the middle of the day.

If you want to ask where something is, use the Italian for Where is....? Dov'è....?

Tickets for buses and the Metro can be purchased at stations and tobacconist shops: look for the large T and "tabacchi" sign outside. A ticket for a single ride allows you unlimited bus travel and one metro/local train ride for 75 minutes once you have validated the ticket. You can also purchase weekly tickets.

Personal safety is not usually a problem in Rome, but it is important to guard against pickpockets, especially in crowded tourist areas, on certain buses (the No 64 has a bad reputation because it travels from Termini Station to the Vatican and is therefore frequented by tourists) and at train stations.

- Leave your valuables (passport, spare money, etc) in a safe at your hotel when you are out sightseeing.
- Women: keep your handbag closed, clasp it firmly (with a strap over your shoulder if you have one) and hold it in front of your body in crowded places.
- Don't hang any bags over the back of a chair in a cafe or restaurant; place them in front of you between your feet so you can keep an eye on them.
- Men: make sure your wallet is secure and difficult to access especially in crowded places.

Classical Rome

- **The Capitoline Hill, Campidoglio, Capitoline Museums and Café**
- **Forum**
- **Palatine**
- **Colosseum**

You are required to buy a combined ticket to the Colosseum, Forum and Palatine, but it is usable for 24 hours from the time of purchase if you purchase in the afternoon. So you could head to the Forum mid afternoon and see it and the Palatine and then use the ticket again the next morning for the Colosseum, thereby bypassing the long queues there.

An easier place to buy a ticket, in terms of managing queues, is at an entrance to the Forum opposite the traffic lights half way down Via dei Fori Imperiali. Don't miss the nearby Santi Cosma e Damiano (see under Christian Rome).

However another approach is to go first to the Colosseum where there are usually long queues, and hover until you are approached to join an English speaking tour, which usually happens within minutes. Often this can be followed by the offer of a tour to the Palatine (though not the Forum in my experience.) You are obviously paying extra for these guided tours, but it is often worthwhile, and the Palatine is magical.

The Capitoline Hill is wonderful:

- Head up to Michelangelo's Piazza del Campidoglio (either approach it from the Forum side or from Piazza Venezia, to the right of the Victor Emmanuel Monument then up the second and less steep flight of stairs). Either left or right of the central building at the back of the square, you can admire the view over the Forum. At dusk it is particularly beautiful!
- The Capitoline Museums - in particular that to your right if you are facing Marcus Aurelius on his horse in the middle of the piazza - hold very significant collections.
- There is also a lovely coffee shop on the second floor of the right hand museum with a terrace with spectacular views over Rome. You can visit even if you don't enter the museum by skirting the museum on its right side, passing through an archway and entering a large door near the sign "Piazzale Caffarelli". Go up two flights of stairs (there is a useful bathroom one flight up) and look out for the coffee shop (Caffetteria Capitolina). Enjoy your coffee and light snacks/lunch inside (you can sit down for no extra charge here) and then go out to the terrace to take in the panoramic view.

For those with more time and a particular interest in classical Rome:

Call into "I Fori di Roma" on the Via dei Fori Imperiali to see the model of the later Fori.

Nearby, Trajan's Market also provides another aspect of Classical Rome.

Further afield, left off the farther end of the Via del Corso, the Ara Pacis, Augustus' altar built to celebrate peace, is now housed in a modern building designed by Richard Meier.

Near Termini Station, visit the Museo Nazionale Romano in Palazzo Massimo Alle Terme which contains exhibits from classical times. Look out for the pleasure boats excavated from Caligula's lake, Livia's Dining Room and the stunning Greek bronzes. Closed on Mondays.

You might combine this latter with a visit to the Baths of Diocletian and Santa Maria degli Angeli.

Around the Vatican

- **St Peter's Basilica**
- **The Vatican Museum**
- **General Audience with the Pope on a Wednesday morning**
- **The Excavations ("Scavi") under St Peter's.**

The Vatican Museums, which include the Sistine Chapel, are vast and worth a visit of two or more hours. It is highly recommended to prebook a tour to the Vatican Museums online (www.vatican.va Click on the English icon and search for Vatican Museums) which diminishes the waiting time to enter. Mid-afternoon is usually less crowded than in the morning, but be psychologically prepared for the crowds and leave plenty of time to get to the Sistine Chapel which comes at the end of your visit and closes around 4.30. Alternatively go early on a Wednesday morning when many pilgrims to Rome are attending a Papal audience. If you take a guided tour, you are then able to exit into St Peter's Basilica.

If you choose to visit St Peter's on its own - making sure you see Michelangelo's Pietà - remember that the queues to enter can also be very long: going in the early evening (from 5 pm) is a good way to avoid the crowds. If you happen to be with someone very elderly (my mother was 92!), make use of the fact that Italians are wonderfully kind to the elderly: if you go to the top of the queue you will be ushered in.

The excavations (Scavi) under St Peter's are extremely moving: you are taken down below the Basilica to the place where it is believed St Peter was buried. The visits here are very controlled with a strict dress code. You need to book tickets (about 12 euro each) well - ideally months - in advance. Book through www.vatican.va (choosing English and search for Scavi or Excavations) and you will be allocated a time to enter in a group of about 12 people. This tour takes about 75 minutes and you may be able to exit into St Peter's.

The Pope usually holds a general audience (of several thousand people) on a Wednesday morning at St Peter's, either in an auditorium in the Vatican or outdoors in Piazza San Pietro. You can book tickets (free, but required for entry) for this by going to the Vatican website. The audience begins at either 10 or 10.30 am, and one needs to get there early (at least by 9 am) to get a good seat. It finishes around 12 so takes up a full morning. It is an experience which gives an insight into the modern papacy, requires patience (as at least seven languages are used) and often evokes strong emotions, both positive and negative.

For detailed Vatican information (eg to check days for a papal audience & opening days for the Vatican Museums and to make bookings for Papal Audience, Vatican Museums and Excavations), go to www.vatican.va

Spend several hours wandering around the area between the Pantheon & Piazza Navona

Try to beat the crowds by getting to the Pantheon early in the morning. Don't miss Raphael's tomb inside with its moving epitaph: *Here lies Raphael: while he lived the great mother of all things (Nature) feared to be outdone, and when he died she feared too to die.* Nearby Santa Maria Sopra Minerva is Rome's only Gothic RC church, with Bernini's famous elephant statue outside. The French Church, San Luigi dei Francesi in Via della Scrofa between the Pantheon and Piazza Navona, has the three Caravaggios of St Matthew in the chapel on the left hand side at the front. Also around the corner in Sant' Agostino are Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Pilgrims* and a Raphael fresco.

See under Christian Rome for other suggestions in this area.

For coffee hereabouts, try the famous:

- Tazzo D'Oro in Via degli Orfani, 84 (or pay exorbitantly for coffee and the wondrous view of the Pantheon by sitting at one of the cafes in the Piazza della Rotonda) or
- Caffè Sant'Eustachio (82 Piazza Sant'Eustachio on the way to Piazza Navona) – made to a secret recipe!

Have a gelati while you're about it. Some famous ones in the area are:

- Giolitti (as featured in Roman Holiday; they used to deliver to Pope John Paul 11), Via degli Uffici del Vicario, 40
- San Crispino, Piazza della Maddalena 3 (see under Trevi Fountain)
- Gelateria della Palma, Via della Maddalena, 20

Wander up one of the beautiful medieval streets, such as Via dei Coronari, which led the pilgrims towards the Vatican.

The Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps

Head to the Trevi Fountain, and throw a coin over your right shoulder to make sure you return to Rome.

(NB San Crispino gelateria, reputedly Rome's best, is at Via della Panetteria, 42: walk beyond the Trevi Fountain along Via del Lavatore, then turn second left.)

The Spanish Steps are where tourists gather now and gathered in the past: English tourists on a Grand Tour and artists and writers often stayed near here. The Keats-Shelley Museum is to the right of the Spanish Steps (not open on Sunday) and All Saints Anglican Church is nearby in Via del Babuino.

Recuperate at the famous Café Greco on the Via Condotti (number 86) before a leisurely stroll up & down this street which has all the big designer labels.

Christian Rome (apart from St Peter's and the Vatican)

Ancient temples/mausoleums later consecrated as churches include:

- the Pantheon
- Santi Cosma e Damiano in the Roman Forum
- Santa Costanza with its 4th century mosaics, originally built as a mausoleum near the catacombs of Sant'Agnes.

Early Christian and Medieval Churches include the three other major Basilicas:

- San Giovanni in Laterano (St John Lateran, the Diocesan Church of Rome: check its ancient baptistry's hours of opening. Opposite is La Scala Santa: go to its website through Wikipedia for opening hours and booking details. Santa Croce is also near here).
- San Paolo fuori le Mura (St Paul's Outside the Walls) – also 4th century, although largely rebuilt after a massive fire in the 19th century.
- Santa Maria Maggiore (St Mary Major), a century later but retaining more of its original structure.

Near Santa Maria Maggiore, enjoy the early Christian and medieval mosaics of Santa Prassede.

San Clemente, a 12th century church built over a 4th century church built over a 1st century house containing a pagan temple, exemplifies the wonderful sense of Rome as a layered city: you might visit here if your time is limited in Rome.

Santa Maria in Trastevere and Santa Cecilia in Trastevere were both built over houses where early Christian communities worshipped in secret. If you time your visit to Santa Cecilia carefully, you can visit not only her house beneath the church, but also, with access through the adjoining convent, beautiful fragments of a 13th century fresco of the Last Judgement by Cavallini.

Other early churches include Santa Maria in Cosmedin and Santa Sabina (see later suggestions of a visit to the Aventine).

The Christian highlight of the Renaissance period was the rebuilding of St Peter's and the Sistine Chapel frescoes. Other notable churches of this period include:

- Bramante's Tempietto (above Trastevere on the Janiculum)
- Santa Maria della Pace, with a Bramante cloister, near Piazza Navona.
- San Luigi dei Franceschi, see above
- Santa Maria del Popolo, in Piazza del Popolo, with its two great paintings by Caravaggio and the Chigi Chapel designed by Raphael
- San Pietro in Vincoli (with St Peter's chains, and Michelangelo's statue of Moses)

The lavish Baroque style inspired by the counter-reformation can be seen in the Jesuit churches of the Gesù - see the 20 minute "spettacolo" or "son et lumière" (in Italian, so not necessarily comprehensible but extraordinary nonetheless) each evening here at 5.30 pm - and Sant'Ignazio nearby. Ignatius of Loyola's modest rooms to the right of the Gesù are open to the public.

Others include two tiny gems on the Quirinale by rivals Bernini and Borromini:

- Sant'Andrea al Quirinale
- San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane

as well as two Borromini churches in the vicinity of Piazza Navona:

- Sant'Agnese in Agone
- Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza (you can often enter its courtyard but check access to the church itself which seems to be limited to certain hours on a Sunday morning.)

The Catacombs (early burial places, including for Christians)

The Catacombs of San Callisto or San Sebastiano on the Via Appia Antica have guided tours in English. (The Non Catholic Cemetery, with Keats' burial place, is near the Pyramid on the way to the Via Appia Antica.)

A visit to the catacombs at Sant'Agnes off the Via Nomentana also allows you to see the beautiful Mausoleum of Santa Costanza and Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura.

Art Galleries

Outstanding amongst the galleries in Rome, the Galleria Borghese has wonderful paintings by Titian, Corregio and Caravaggio and sculpture by Bernini and Canova. You need to prebook tickets online or by phone. The numbers of people entering are well controlled: you are given a two hour time slot and the gallery is open until 7 pm. It is situated in the extensive gardens of the Villa Borghese.

Galleria Doria Pamphilj (entry off the Via del Corso) is open daily from 9 to 7 (last entry at 6pm). It has a wonderful audioguide narrated by Jonathan Doria Pamphilj and is known for its Velasquez portrait of the 17th century Pamphilj pope Innocent X. (You can combine this with a visit to the Anglican Centre which is located above the Gallery!)

Other possibilities

Visit **Piazza Campo dei Fiori** in the morning (until lunchtime) when it is Rome's big bustling food market.

Walk to **the Jewish ghetto** (trying to include Piazza Margana, the Tortoise Fountain, the Portico of Octavia, and the plaque to the Jews deported to concentration camps in 1943). It is possible to book tours of the Great Synagogue of Rome, open most days with English tours on the hour.

Cross the river to **Trastevere**, a lively area to eat and drink. Santa Maria in Trastevere is at its heart and nearby is the headquarters of the lay community of Sant'Egidio, who have a service each evening at 8.30 in Santa Maria. From Trastevere, in the day time you can walk up the **Janicular** & visit Bramante's exquisite temple (not open on Mondays). It has inspired the design of many buildings, including St Paul's in London.

Visit the Aventine Hill. If your visit is in May, on your way up the hill check out the Roseto Communale, or public rose garden, which will be open and the roses in full bloom. (NB It has one of the few public laboratories spotted in Rome).

Continue up the hill to call in at the Sevilla orange garden and enjoy its views over the city, before exploring the next-door early Christian basilica of Santa Sabina (now home to the Dominicans). Keep walking up to Piazza dei Cavalieri di Malta and peer through the keyhole at the Knights of Malta for a surprise vista which allows you to view three separate states at once. You'll know the Knights of Malta by the armed guards outside.

If you have time, call in at the 6th century Santa Maria in Cosmedin on your way there or back. Don't be put off by queues outside which are for the Bocca della Verità, not for the church itself.

Outside Rome

- **Ostia Antica**, the ancient port of Rome
- **Tivoli**, with Hadrian's Villa and the Villa D'Este (but more tricky to get to)

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(Disclaimer: these suggestions make no claim to infallibility. Please check details.)