

10 of the best open spaces in Rome

Rome tour guide **John Fort** finds some favourite places in the city to wander in peace and tranquility



Piazza Farnese

Dominated by that magnificent monument to papal hubris, the 16th-century Palazzo Farnese, now the French embassy, and the twin fountains created out of enormous Roman granite bathtubs, the largest in existence, the Piazza Farnese is one of the finest outdoor drawing rooms of the city. To enjoy the square, either sit on the stone benches which run along the façade of the palace, or take a cup of coffee in the Caffè Farnese at the corner with Via dei Baullari. You could also settle down for a good meal at the restaurant in the corner, Ar Galletto, an old-fashioned trattoria serving classic Roman dishes (closed on Sundays).

• *Piazza Farnese*

Villa Torlonia



The park of the Villa Torlonia is set round a somewhat self-important mansion dating from the first decades of the 19th century and built for the immensely wealthy banking family, the Torlonias. It became Mussolini's residence from 1925. The main house is decorated pompously, but the bedroom used by Mussolini contains some of his handsome art deco furniture. The park contains many fine trees and handsome stands of huge bamboos, and sprinkled throughout it are assorted buildings in various states of repair, such as a theatre, a small museum of Roman statuary, and the enchanting House of the Owls (Casa delle Civette), art nouveau in style, with a roof in multicoloured tiles, blues, red, turquoise, and housing some beautiful Roman stained-glass works.

• Via Nomentana 70, museivillatorlonia.it. Park open every day from dawn to dusk, main house and Casa delle Civette from 9am-7pm. Entrance to the park is free, combined entrance to the villa and the Casa delle Civette €10, free for EU citizens under-18s or over-65s

Santa Costanza



This enchanting circular chapel dates to the middle of the 4th century AD and is the earliest church in the city surviving more or less in its original form, with exquisite mosaics covering much of the ceiling. Constantia (Costanza) was the daughter of the emperor Constantine and built this as her mausoleum. It is part of a religious complex containing another ancient church (S Agnese, early 7th century and also with beautiful mosaics) and catacombs. As you enter through the gate on the Via Nomentana and wander around the courtyards, ramps and gardens, there is a feeling of going back 1,600 years, leaving behind sounds of traffic and the dreary suburban surroundings. Santa Costanza and the Villa Torlonia are about 600 metres apart and can easily be combined.

• *Via Nomentana 349. Open Mon 9am-noon, Tue-Sat 9am-noon and 4pm-6pm, Sun 4pm-6pm. Free*

Villa Borghese



The enormous Borghese park contains the [Borghese Gallery](#), but also many other delightful buildings and follies, an artificial lake with a temple, an aviary, an orangery and much more in a carefully landscaped setting created in the English style for the Borghese family by the Scottish artist [Jacob More](#) in the 1770s. There are various entrances, but the main one is from just outside the Piazza del Popolo, from the Pincio gardens along from the Spanish Steps and from the top of the Via Veneto. This is much the largest area of green anywhere near the centre of the city, and provided you do not object to dogs being walked, it is a delight to lie on the grass under the towering umbrella pines or stroll right the way across towards the Etruscan Museum, the Gallery of Modern Art or the zoo.

- *Via Veneto. Open every day from dawn to dusk. Free*

Cloister of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte



Photograph: [Juliana Brint on Flickr](#)/ [All rights reserved](#)

A miraculously quiet spot, considering you are within a few hundred yards of the Trevi fountain on one side and Spanish Steps on the other. It is best to enter from the Via della Mercede, have a look at [Bernini](#)'s magnificent statues of angels to your left, and then slip through the doors on the far side into the peaceful, slightly decrepit cloisters. A fountain thickly covered in fern and moss drips quietly at the centre, lemons and cypresses scent the air. There is nowhere to sit, but this is where to come if you wish to regain your calm after a hectic morning of shopping or of battling round the big tourist draws of the area.

• *Via della Mercede. The church is open 8am-12.30pm and 4pm-7pm, but the cloisters only in the morning. Entrance at Via S Andrea delle Fratte 1, or from the side on Via della Mercede. Free*

Courtyard of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza



Enter this glorious courtyard, lined on three sides with a sober, handsome double portico, either through the main entrance at Corso Rinascimento 40, or if you have been visiting the Pantheon, from Via del Teatro Valle VI/VII. This was once the university of Rome (hence Sapienza – wisdom), and dates mostly from the second half of the 16th century, except for the great, white church of Sant'Ivo at the end, one of [Borromini](#)'s most sublime creations, with the extraordinary spiral creation that soars above it. Annoyingly, the only way to see the equally original interior of the church is when it opens for mass on Sundays 10am-noon. There may well be a group of keen young students of architecture sketching away in a corner, but they will not disturb the mixture of amazement and tranquillity engendered by this building.

• *Corso Rinascimento 40 or Via del Teatro Valle VI/VII. Open 7.30am-8pm. Free*

Gardens of Palazzo Barberini



The Palazzo Barberini is one of the grandest of papal palaces, now looking even more magnificent after years of restoration. It houses the main state collection of paintings up to 1700 (including Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII and many other treasures), but unexpectedly the visitor, without buying a ticket, can wander all round the grounds of the palace. Enter through the very grand gates, have a quick glance at the glorious elliptical spiral staircase (Borromini) to be found through the doors on the right side, and then pass under the building, up a long ramp, to the terraces and gardens behind, where you can wander in peace and tranquillity and often in solitude. On the way out also look at the square staircase (Bernini) through the doors on the other side of the building.

- Access to the Palazzo Barberini, Via delle Quattro Fontane 13, +39 06 32810, galleriaborghese.it/barberini/en/einfo.htm, 8.30am-7.30pm. The building and gardens can be visited every day (no charge), but the gallery is closed on Mon. Entrance to the gallery €5. Free entrance to citizens of the EU who are under 18 or over 65

Villa Celimontana and Parco del Celio on the Celio Hill



Photograph: Alamy

The Celio hill – up above the Colosseum and a good place to escape to if you are flagging from the rigours of visiting the archaeological heart of the city – boasts numerous Roman remains, several very early churches and two interlinked parks. The gardens of Villa Celimontana have many fine trees and are focused on a handsome 17th-century villa, while the Parco del Celio is grassier and shadier. In the immediate vicinity is the church of S Maria in Domnica (Piazza della Navicella) with exquisite 9th-century mosaics and the round church of S Stefano Rotondo (Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo 7), mostly 5th-century and set back in a leafy enclave of extraordinary peace.

• Entrances in Piazza della Navicella and in the Clivo di Scauro. The two parks are open from sunrise to sunset. Free

Piazza del Campidoglio at night



Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome Photograph: Richard T Nowitz/Corbis

The time to visit this square is after dinner. Crowded during the day, it empties as the evening wears on and by 10pm will be quiet. The exquisitely proportioned space, where you see the masterly hand of Michelangelo as designer and architect, has the [Capitolini Museums](#) on each side and at the end, the [Palazzo Senatorio](#), the finest town hall anywhere in the world. Go down the little street to the right of this, to the flat space at the back from which you get a most romantic panorama over the heart of the ancient city. Subtle lighting gives a magical beauty to the assorted ruins below, the Colosseum looming in the background.

- *Piazza del Campidoglio is at the top of the Capitoline Hill (Campidoglio)*

The Orange Garden on the Aventine Hill



The Orange Garden (Giardino degli Aranci) on the Aventine is, as you would expect, strong on orange trees but distinctly short on grass. However, compensation comes in the form of wonderful panoramas it gives over much of the city, particularly towards St Peter's, and extreme tranquillity (usually – children do play here after school). In fact the Aventine hill, now a superior residential quarter near the centre of the city, is almost all rather leafy and tranquil. Dotted around are also a number of very ancient churches, of which the most beautiful, the sublime S Sabina, large and mostly 5th-century, is right next to the Orange Garden and well worth visiting. Down the road, in the Piazza dei Cavalieri di Malta, is the famous keyhole view of St Peter's.

• *Via di S Sabina, corner of Piazza Pietro d'Iliria, and is open every day from sunrise to sunset. Free*

Top 10 free things to do in Rome

A holiday in Rome can mean expensive tickets for tourist attractions, but the eternal city has museums, music venues, markets and cinemas that can be enjoyed for free



The Forum, Rome. The city also has many free activities, events and venues that mean you don't always have to follow the crowds. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod Murdo Macleod/Murdo Macleod

A stroll into Rome's industrial past

Until it closed in the late 1970s, the Mattatoio in the Testaccio district of [Rome](#) was the city's main slaughterhouse. Today, the complex is a jigsaw of different entities: a modern art gallery, a school of architecture, a music school, an organic supermarket. There is a weekend farmers' market and a cafe whose tables spill out onto a grassy space in which children play while parents drink in the deckchairs provided. Although specific events and exhibitions have to be paid for, there is always something wonderful that doesn't: an art installation, a freshly painted mural, a cheese-tasting, an impromptu concert by students from the music school. Parts of the complex are yet to be developed and this provides a fascinating reminder of the original purpose of one of industrial Rome's most significant buildings.

• *Piazza Orazio Giustiniani. How to get there: Metro B to Piramide, Number 3 tram to Via Marmorata, 75, 23, 280 bus to Via Marmorata or 719 bus to Via Galvani*

Basilica Santa Maria and St Valentine's skull



St Valentine's Skull. Photograph: AlfvanBeem/Wikimedia Commons

There's a scene in *Blackadder* when Lord Percy proudly reveals he owns a "true relic": a bone "from the finger of Our Lord". Baldrick looks stunned: "I thought they only came in boxes of 10," he exclaims. Relics may not always be convincing but that doesn't diminish the remarkable aura of some of the holy artefacts in Rome's churches. And as saintly relics go, the flower-crowned skull of Saint Valentine is a sight to behold, whether it belongs to the patron saint of lovers or not. It is in a gold box, and is surrounded by candles and fresh bouquets. The skull is an intriguing attraction to witness, in addition to the rest of the Roman temple it's located in.

- *Piazza della Bocca della Veritas 18. Open daily 9am-5pm and 10am-5.50pm during the summer*

The world's most classical cat sanctuary



Photograph: Veronidae/Wikimedia Commons

Cat homes don't come much plusher than this feline resort set among the ruins of Torre Argentina. Excavated in 1929, the area contains the remains of four Republican temples as well as [Pompey's Theatre](#): the site at which Julius Caesar is believed to have been assassinated. Cats began hanging out there when the archaeological site was first opened, making the most of the shelter and protection provided by the below-street-level ruins, and were kept fed by friendly "gattare" or cat ladies. In the 1990s it became a more formal operation, although the shelter is still technically squatting on the land, and visitors drop in to enjoy what is one of Rome's more curious attractions.

• *Via di Torre Argentina, +39 06 454 25240, romancats.com. Open daily midday-6pm. Donations welcome*

Find your own treasures at Monti's vintage market



Not far from the [Colosseum](#) you'll find the hip quarter of Monti, which hosts a fantastic "urban market" every weekend – held in the conference hall of [Grand Hotel Palatino](#). Founded in 2009, the market is a blend of contemporary creativity and vintage fashion: expect to find everything from handicrafts from cutting-edge designers to retro clothing, furniture and homeware items. The colourful and diverse array of trinkets and fashion on sale makes Mercato Monti an ideal place for a weekend wander, and the perfect excuse to explore the other independent stores and galleries dotted around the rest of the area's small streets.

• Via Leonina, mercatomonti.com. Every weekend 10am-8pm

Enjoy a film for free



Photograph: Casa del Cinema

In the beautiful [Villa Borghese](#) – a public park well worth a stroll around – the Casa Del Cinema is the result of an ambitious project, launched in 2001, to transform a derelict pavilion into a hub for the silver screen. With state-of-the-art projection equipment making it the most modern cinema in the city, the Casa Del Cinema (also home to a film library and a cafe) is a dreamland for film fans. The cinema has special presentations where you may get the chance to mingle with directors, producers and stars. There's an emphasis on screening classic original language films, but you can also expect to see films from the most recent [Venice film festival](#), and the City of Rome subsidises screenings every afternoon and evening – meaning you can always catch a cinematic treat for free.

• *Largo Marcello Mastroianni 1, Villa Borghese, casadelcinema.it. Open daily, see website for screening times*

View contemporary art at the Sala 1 gallery



When Sala 1 opened in 1970 it was one of the city's first galleries to showcase experimental and contemporary art; hosting shows such as an exhibition of South African art in 1993, and more recently projects from Iraq and Bangladesh. Today, the not-for-profit gallery, which was founded by priest-sculptor [Tito Aodei](#) and is directed by American curator Mary Angela Schroth, continues to programme dynamic exhibitions that visitors are unlikely to find elsewhere in a city traditionally more focused on its historical trophies. With that in mind, the gallery's location inside an ex-basilica owned by the Vatican and offered to Aodei by the Holy See, only makes the space all the more fascinating.

• Piazza di Porta San Giovanni 10, salauno.com. Open Tues-Sat 4.30pm-7.30pm

Diggin' the blues at Big Mama



Photographer: [Daniela Vladimirova](#) Photograph: Flickr

Opened in 1984, this blues joint offers free admission to most shows and with a hall of fame that includes the likes of [Chet Baker](#) and Jeff Healey, it is one of the best live music venues in the city. In the Trastevere district, the cosy venue – which can only seat around 150 people – puts on hundreds of gigs each year. Having just celebrated its 30th birthday, there's never been a better time to drop by and don't be put off by the blues tag: the venue hosts a wide range of acts, playing jazz, rock, disco and soul.

• *Vicolo di San Francesco a Ripa, +39 06 581 2551, bigmama.it. Open Mon-Sat 9pm-1.30am, shows start at 10.30pm*

Discover the work of sculptor Hendrik Christian Andersen



The ambitious yet somewhat obscure Norwegian-American artist Hendrik Christian Andersen moved to Rome at the end of the 19th century where he lived for over 40 years. When he died he left all his works to the Italian state, and his studio home – an art-nouveau villa between the river and via Flaminia – was eventually converted into a museum where some 200 sculptures, 200 paintings and 300 graphic works are now displayed. With an interest in urban planning and architecture, much of Andersen's work is inspired by the idea of a great "world city", an intriguing concept to explore in the context of a visit to Rome itself.

• Via Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, 20, museoandersen.beniculturali.it. Open Tues-Fri 9.30am-6pm, Sat-Sun 9.30am-7pm

The drama of the Burcardo Theatre Museum



Photograph: Burcardo Museum

Filled with costumes and artefacts, the Burcardo Museum holds a collection dedicated to Italian theatre history. Open to the public since 1932, the collection includes a number of beautifully crafted sculptures, including plaster busts depicting writers and actors from the past two centuries and a photography archive with thousands of dramatic (literally) black and white images of thespians in action.

• *Via del Sudario*, +39 06 681 9471, burcardo.org. Open Tues and Thurs 9.15am-4.30pm, Fri 9.15am-1.15pm

Take in the view from the Gianicolo hill



Photograph: Alamy

It is outside the ancient city, so Gianicolo may not be counted among the proverbial "Seven Hills" of Rome, but it makes up for it by providing one of the best views across the rooftops. The hill provides a spectacular view of the domes and spires that make up the historic skyline. Up on the hilltop itself is a statue of Garibaldi: a charismatic figure in the Risorgimento (a movement that sought to unify Italy), and this marks one of the best spots to enjoy that great view and, in true militaristic style, every day at midday a cannon is fired, part of a tradition that started in 1847 to signal the time to the surrounding bell towers.

10 of the best museums and galleries in Rome



Maxxi, the National Museum of Art from the 21st century

At least as impressive as the still-modest collection it houses is the Maxxi building itself, designed by the Anglo-Iraqi architect, Zaha Hadid. Covering more than 27,000 sq metres, Italy's first national museum dedicated entirely to contemporary art is a curving, jutting structure of glass, steel and concrete. Visitors find their way from collection to collection through a labyrinth of bridges and ramps. Opened in 2010, the Maxxi is located north of the centre, in the Flaminio neighbourhood, on the site of a former military barracks. Its permanent collection includes works by the Neapolitan painter, [Francesco Clemente](#), and the British sculptor [Anish Kapoor](#). It was recently enriched by the donation of 58 works from the collection of the late Milanese art dealer and historian, Claudia Gian Ferrari.

• Via Guido Reni 4A, +39 06 399 67350, fondazionemaxxi.it/en. Open Tue-Wed-Fri-Sun 11am-7pm, Thur and Sat 11am-10pm. Adults €11, concessions €8, under-14s free

Macro: Museo d'Arte Contemporanea



The Macro on Via Nizza, which opened last December, is the newer and bigger of two spaces that make up Rome's municipal contemporary art museum. The other is in trendy-grungy Testaccio. Nestled among 19th-century apartment buildings, the main part of the museum was fashioned by the French architect, [Odile Decq](#) from a disused Peroni beer plant. Among other things, it houses an archive of the works of the postmodern painter and collagist [Mario Schifano](#). Macro aims to be more active, daring and fun than the Maxxi: the lavatories have mirrored walls and translucent plastic sinks that flash different neon/UV colours as you use them. In the car park, you can see the remains of an ancient Roman house unearthed during the restoration.

• Via Nizza 38, Piazza Orazio Giustiniani 4, +39 06 6710 70400, macro.roma.museum. Macro open Tue-Sun 11am-10pm, Testaccio Tue-Sun 4pm-midnight. Adults €10 combined ticket, concessions €8, under-18s free

Palazzo Altemps



Just across from the Piazza Navona, this Renaissance palace acquired its unlikely name when it was bought by an Austrian-born cardinal in the 16th century. Taken over by the state in 1982 and not opened as a museum until 1997, it remains one of the capital's best-kept secrets. Inside is an entrancing collection of classical sculptures. They include the so-called Ludovisi Ares, a Roman copy of a 4th-century BCE Greek original, and the Ludovisi Gaul, part of the same group as the better-known Dying Gaul in the Capitoline Museums. But for sheer technical virtuosity the most astonishing exhibit is a 3rd-century sarcophagus, carved from a single block of stone, showing the Romans fighting the Ostrogoths. From the same Renaissance collection as the others, it is known as the [Grande Ludovisi](#).

• Piazza di Sant'Apollinare 48, +39 06 399 67600, archeorm.arti.beniculturali.it/en. Open Tue-Sun 9am-7.45pm. Adults €7, concessions €3.50, free for EU citizens ages 18 to 24 and under-17s

CineCittà Studios



Mussolini founded Cinecittà because of his belief in the power of cinema. The studio and set complex, on the road that leads from central Rome to Ciampino airport, was bombed by the Allies in the second world war before rising to global fame in the 1950s when it was used to make the first in a string of budget-busting classical epics that included Ben-Hur and Cleopatra. CineCittà was also where Federico Fellini shot most of his films. The 40-hectare site is still claimed to be continental Europe's largest film and TV production facility. But its heyday has long gone. Among the few internationally distributed movies to be shot there in recent years was Martin Scorsese's Gangs of New York. Guided tours are available for groups of at least 20 people.

• Via Tuscolana 1055, +39 06 583 34360, cinecittastudios.it. Tours must be booked in advance by calling Mon-Fri 9am-1pm, 2pm-6pm

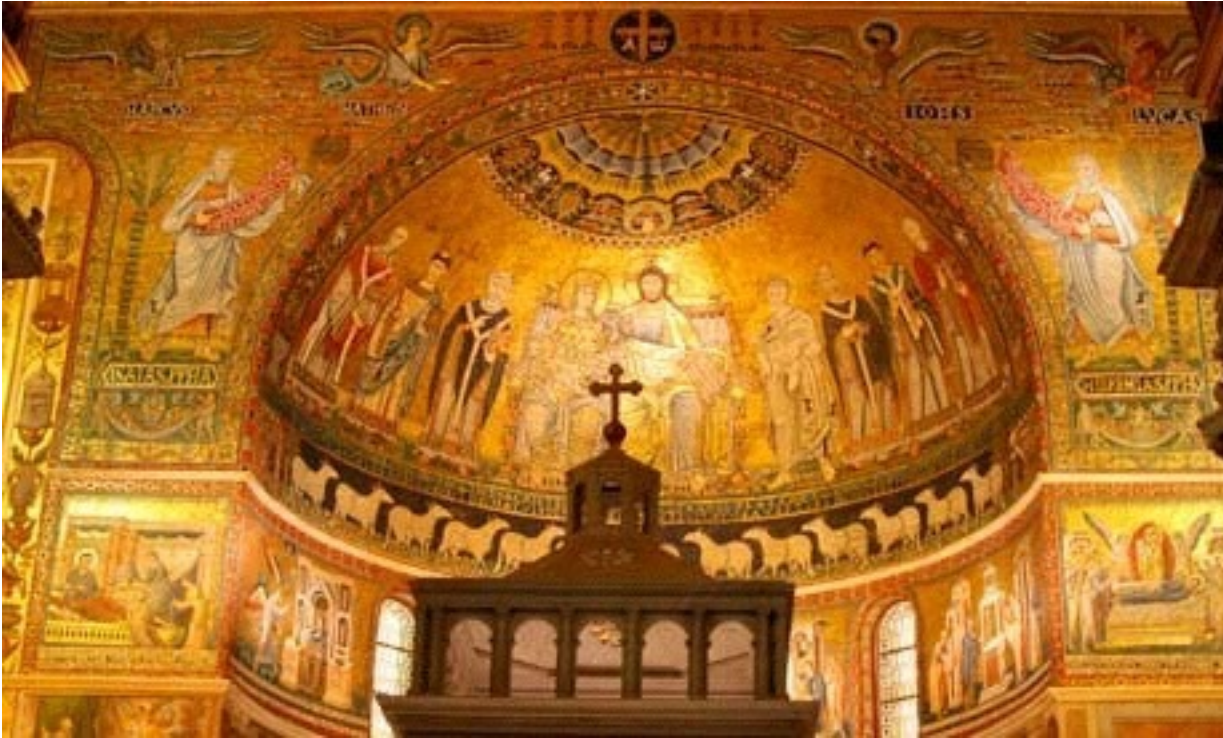
Auditorium Parco della Musica



Along with the Maxxi and Macro, the Auditorium is the tangible embodiment of Rome's recent cultural renaissance. The architect Renzo Piano called his building a "factory of culture". The three concert halls, which stage not only concerts but also ballet and theatre productions, each hold between 700 and 2,800 people. The imposing foyer, which links them, is an exhibition space. In addition, there is the Cavea, an open-air theatre reminiscent of a classical amphitheatre; an art gallery, and an archaeological museum that displays artefacts found during the construction including an oil press from the 6th century BC. Guided tours are available, but note that an English-language tour (tickets €9) must be booked in advance.

• *Viale Pietro de Coubertin 30*, +39 06 802 41281, auditorium.com

Santa Maria in Trastevere



Santa Maria in Trastevere Photograph: Alamy

The Basilica of Our Lady is among Rome's oldest places of worship, and the one that perhaps gives the most vivid impression of a grand medieval church. It dates from around 340 AD and is thought to be the first church in Rome dedicated to Mary. In the nave are two rows of columns – 22 in all – that were taken from ancient Roman sites. The basilica was rebuilt in the 12th century by Pope Innocent II and, at the end of the 13th century, [Pietro Cavallini](#) embellished the apse with six mosaic panels of scenes from the life of Mary. Together with a gilded octagonal ceiling painting by the Baroque master [Domenichino](#), they give the basilica a memorable glow.

• *Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere*, +39 06 581 4802



Looking for traces of the "dark ages", perhaps the last place you would start is the EUR district, built as a showcase for Fascist architecture. Yet it is there, in a less visited museum, that you can gaze on evidence that the period that followed the fall of the western empire was not as dark as is often thought: finely decorated weapons; extraordinarily intricate tapestries; glamorous earrings and necklaces. Other exhibits include an ancient metal dog chain. But the most stunning dates from late antiquity: an entire hall, taken from an aristocratic villa in Ostia, adorned with designs created using a technique known as *opus sectile* in which coloured marble is cut and inlaid. The most spectacular show tigers and lions catching prey.

• Viale Lincoln 3, +39 06 542 28199, archeoroma.beniculturali.it. Open Tue-Sun 9am-2pm. Adults €2, concessions €1

Sant'Ignazio



The church of illusions. It was built between 1626 and 1650 and dedicated to Ignatius of Loyola. The first giant trick is [Andrea Pozzo's](#) *trompe l'oeil* ceiling fresco which uses foreshortening to create an astoundingly realistic vision of the founder of the Society of Jesus soaring towards paradise to be welcomed by Christ (no, the Jesuits never were modest). A disk in the floor marks the ideal spot from which to experience the illusion. Further down the nave, another marker signals the best vantage point for a second bit of trickery. The Jesuits ran out of cash for the dome, so in 1685 Pozzo supplied them with a canvas depiction of what it might have looked like. Destroyed in 1891, the canvas was subsequently replaced.

- *Via del Caravita, 8A. Open daily, 7.30am-12.30pm, 3pm-7pm*

Ostia Antica



Visitors to Rome who try packing in a trip to Pompeii often leave disappointed by the neglect and disorganisation they find there. Ostia Antica, less than 30km from Rome and reachable by train, offers an altogether more civilised (and arguably more instructive) experience. This, after all, was the port city of the capital of Europe's greatest empire. Scattered among the umbrella pines that now dot the site are a splendid amphitheatre which is still used for concerts, and the remains of schools, baths, temples and latrines, as well as Europe's oldest synagogue. Ostia Antica also boasts some unusually well-preserved mosaics and frescoes.

• Via dei Romagnoli 717, ostia-antica.org. Open Tue-Sun 8.30am to 7.30pm. Adults €6.50, 18-25s €3.25, over 64s and under-18s free

Galleria Lorcan O'Neill



Photograph: Francesco Clemente - Winter Women, Summer Self

For those who yearn for a reminder of Hackney in the middle of Rome. If there was one event that confirmed the Eternal City was ready to be part of the contemporary world, then it was the opening in 2003 of this gallery in a Trastevere backstreet. The lanky O'Neill, who had been a friend to many of the YBAs, launched himself into Rome almost five years ahead of the legendary [Larry Gagosian](#), who has a gallery at Via Francesco Crispi 16. O'Neill has used his Britart connections to put on exhibitions by Tracey Emin, Sam Taylor-Wood and Rachel Whiteread. He has also shown venerable non-Brits including Anselm Kiefer and provided a space for talented young Italians like Luigi Ontani and Pietro Ruffo.

• Via degli Orti d'Alibert 1E, +39 06 688 92980, lorcanoneill.com. Open Mon-Fri 12pm-8pm, Sat 2pm-8pm

10 of the best 20th-century landmarks in Rome



Rome's 20th-century landmarks and monuments mainly reflect fascism's ambitions and its tragic conclusion in the final years of the war. Many of these are still part of the city's fabric, but not all are signposted. The same anonymity marks many of the places that are associated with the political conflicts of recent decades.

Mussolini's balcony, Palazzo Venezia

As the traffic races round the Piazza Venezia, and brave pedestrians gather courage to cross it, it is perhaps hard to imagine that this was the most sacred of all the places that fascism sought to turn into symbols of its power. Mussolini delivered all his most important speeches, including the declaration of the Italian empire in May 1936, from its balcony (pictured above). During the regime, large fascist symbols adorned either side of it. Today, the prime minister's office is located off the Via del Corso in Palazzo Chigi, and Palazzo Venezia is a museum containing art works, pottery and tapestries from the medieval period. The Sala del Mappamondo, where the dictator had his office, can be visited only during special exhibitions.

• *Museo Nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia, Via del Plebiscito, 118, +39 06 699 94284, museopalazzovenezia.beniculturali.it. Open Tue-Sun 8.30am-7.30pm*

The Victor Emmanuel monument



Photograph: Richard Glover/Corbis

Derided variously by Romans as a giant typewriter, wedding cake or urinal, the astonishingly hyperbolic monument to united Italy's first king (who refused to give up his title as Victor Emmanuel II of Savoy) looks directly on to Piazza Venezia. Completed in 1911, over 30 years after the monarch's death, in time for the 50th anniversary of national unification, it features at the centre the Altar of the Fatherland and the tomb of the unknown soldier. During the day, visitors wander all over the monument and some visit the art exhibitions and the national history museum at the rear. At night it is spectacularly illuminated.

• *Piazza Venezia, 3, +39 06 699 1718. Open daily 9.30am-7pm*



Photograph: John Heseltine/Corbis

The EUR quarter at the end of underground line B today is mainly a business district. It was planned to host the Universal Exposition of Rome in 1942 that never took place due to the war. The supreme example of fascist town planning, it features several important public buildings, the most significant of which is the brilliant white Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro, or "square colosseum", whose arches symbolise the number of letters in Mussolini's first name and surname. A modernist re-imagining of the symmetrical lines of Roman roads and architecture, the quarter was completed after the war by the same architects who had been commissioned by the dictatorship. It hosts the Ethnographic Museum and the Museum of the High Middle Ages, as well as the State Archives.

• *Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro, Quadrato della Concordia Ostiense. Luigi Pigorini National Museum of Prehistory and Ethnography, Piazzale Guglielmo Marconi, +39 06 549521, pigorini.beniculturali.it. Open (11 July-9 Sep) Tue-Thurs 9am-7pm, Mon, Fri, Sat 9am-1.30pm*

Foro Italico



Photograph: David Lees/Corbis

If the EUR is a prime example of fascist modernism, then the Foro Italico (formerly Foro Mussolini) stands as testimony to the regime's romance with ancient Rome. Its continued existence shows more starkly than anything else the survival of the dictatorship's architectural heritage in the contemporary city. With a huge marble obelisk reading *Mussolini Dux* at the entrance, its pièce de resistance is the Stadio dei Marmi sports stadium which features 60 marble statues of nude muscular male athletes, each one standing for an Italian province. Examples of the twin fascist obsession with the masculine ideal and sport, they were saved from destruction by the Allies at the end of the war and the stadium was absorbed into the complex of buildings created for the 1960 [Rome](#) Olympics.

• *Viale del Foro Italico, 32 Ottaviano-San Pietro, +39 06 368 58218*

San Lorenzo district



Photograph: [I capperi di San Lorenzo](#)

One of Rome's working-class quarters and a notorious hotbed of anti-fascist sentiment, the San Lorenzo district, located on either side of the Via Tiburtina near the Termini station, was heavily bombed in July 1943 with the aim of disrupting the railway system. The only area to suffer in this way, the bombing left many dead and destroyed or damaged several significant buildings. Today the area, which is located near Rome's La Sapienza University, has a youthful, easy-going vibe, but the signs of that night in 1943 remain. Bomb damage can still be seen and the barber's shop on Via dei Volsci also functions as a photographic museum of the destruction. Pope Pius XII's pastoral visit in the aftermath is marked by a statue of the pontiff with his arms raised.

- *Gaetano Bordonì barber's shop, 108 Via dei Volsci*

Fosse Ardeatine



Photograph: Vincenzo Pinto/Pool/Ansa

The massacre of the Fosse Ardeatine was the greatest atrocity of the Nazi occupation of Rome. On the night of 24 March 1944, 335 Italians were executed in reprisal for an attack by communist partisans on a column of German policemen in which 28 of them were killed. Each hostage was shot in the back of the head and tipped into the caves. Ordered by Hitler and led by Herbert Kappler, the commandant of the Rome security police, the action was conducted in secret and the caves sealed. Today the site is a national monument and a ceremony involving the leading authorities of the state is held every year on the anniversary. A memorial cemetery is open to visitors.

• Museo della Fosse Ardeatine, Via Ardeatina, anfim.it. Open Mausoleum, Mon-Fri 8.15am-3.30pm, Sat-Sun 8.15am-4.30pm; museum Mon-Fri 8.15am-3.15pm, Sat-Sun 8.15am-4.15pm

Verano cemetery



Photograph: Franz-Marc Frei/Corbis

The Verano cemetery on the edge of the San Lorenzo district is Rome's largest. Dating back to the early 19th century, it features a Jewish cemetery, a Catholic cemetery, a monument to the victims of the first world war, and a rather spooky communist mausoleum in which the leading lights of the party in the postwar years, including long-serving party leader Palmiro Togliatti, are interred. Many of Rome's favourite sons are buried here, one of the latest being the much-loved comic film actor Alberto Sordi, whose name has been conferred on the former Galleria Colonna shopping arcade on the Via del Corso.

• *Verano Monumental Cemetery, Record and Research Centre, Piazzale del Verano. Free guided tours available +39 06 492 36330/36349. Open daily (1 Oct-31 March) 7.30am-6pm, (1 April - 30 September) 7.30am-7pm*

Via Veneto



Photograph: Danilo Schiavella/EPA/Corbis

After filming at the Cinecittà studios, the stars were accustomed to socialise in the Via Veneto, home to Rome's top hotels and numerous bars and restaurants. The American actors who descended on the city during the heyday of Hollywood on the Tiber in the 1950s made it their playground. The paparazzi were born here and Fellini featured the road (albeit rebuilt in the studio) in *La Dolce Vita*. Today plaques commemorate the road's appearances in the movies and the bars exhibit photographs of the time when their customers included Audrey Hepburn, Kim Novak, and Richard Burton. You won't find any stars there today, but the Via Veneto still exudes a certain faded glamour.

- *Via Veneto*

Via Caetani



Photograph: [Mike Scotto/m2genx2003/flickr/](#) All rights reserved

The killing of former prime minister [Aldo Moro](#) in May 1978 was one of the political watersheds of recent decades. Kidnapped by the Red Brigades, in an action that resulted in the deaths of his four bodyguards, Moro was the architect of a possible "historic compromise" between the governing Christian Democrats and the then-powerful Italian Communist party. Following his murder after 55 days of imprisonment, his body was dumped in a Renault 4 parked outside the contemporary history library in Via Caetani, a narrow street equally distant from the headquarters of the two main parties. Today a plaque marks his "barbarous killing" and "sacrifice".

- *The Aldo Moro plaque is located between numbers 8 and 9 Via Caetani*

Palazzo Grazioli



Photograph: Giorgio Cosulich/Getty Images

No politician since Mussolini has been as controversial as current prime minister Silvio Berlusconi. His Rome residence of Palazzo Grazioli, in Via della Gatta, hit the news in 2010 after it was revealed that he had allegedly hosted numerous parties there to which a mixture of showgirls, handpicked teenagers and prostitutes had been invited, with Berlusconi often being the only man present. Although the main allegations that surfaced about "bunga bunga" parties concerned his Milan socialising, Rome also featured prominently. There is nothing to see at Palazzo Grazioli, but it is common to find groups of passers-by in the street commenting on the notorious goings-on.

- *Palazzo Grazioli, Via della Gatta*

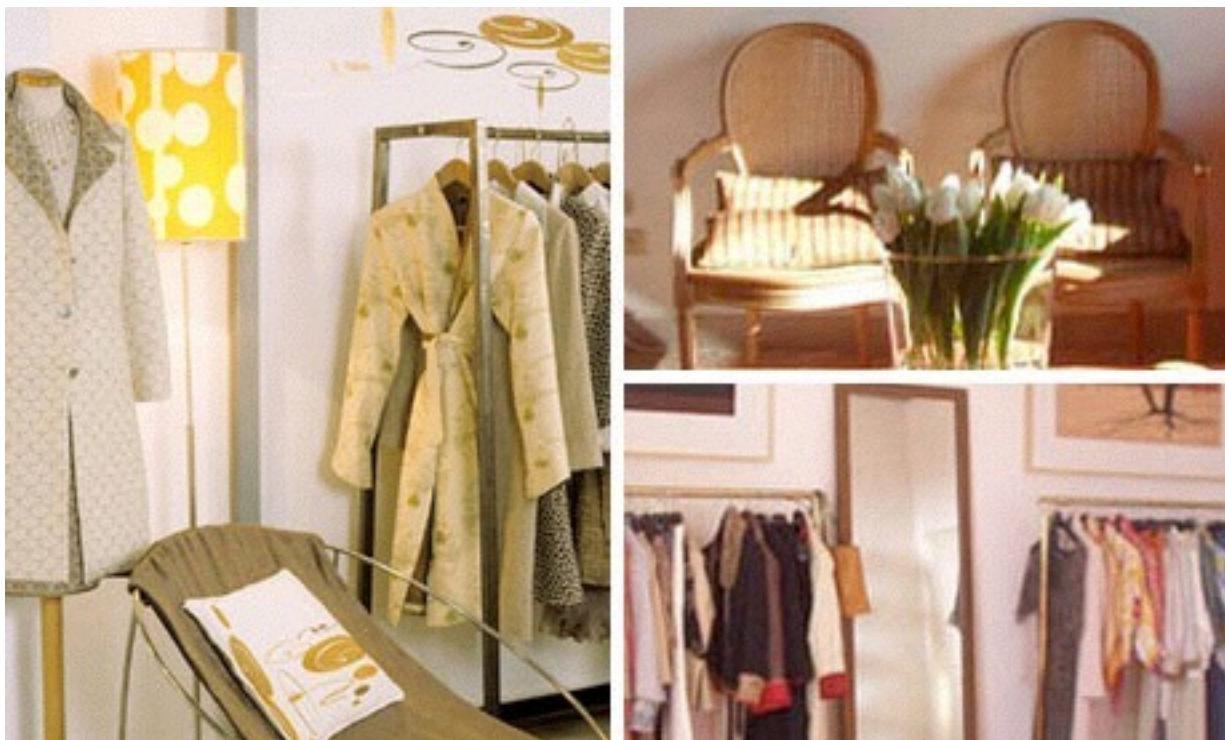
10 of the best shops in Rome



Saddlers Union

Originating in 1957, Saddlers swiftly became a cult label for its classic bags, luggage and accessories, attracting the likes of Jackie Onassis who rocked the iconic bucket bag. Cut to 2009, and now risen phoenix-like from the ashes of oblivion, Saddlers's heritage design DNA forgoes the fashionable and edgy ubiquity of other brands, relying firmly on its instinct for classic quality and timeless elegance. With a natty line in retro rustic wallets, belts, briefcases and even moccasins, there's plenty for men too, and, being true artisans, they will of course customise. Saddle up and ride 'em out.

• Via Margutta 11, +39 06 321 20237, saddlersunion.com



Sole by Soledad Twombly

Having started out designing for the likes of Barneys and Takashimaya, the extremely elegant Soledad's unique, stylish, wearable works of art were just perfect for a collection of her own, and so Sole was born. Featuring delicious, eclectic textiles from India and Persia sourced on her many travels, these one-off (or small-run) garments are paired with Italian velvets and silks and finished with a wonderful eye for detail and quirk. Sole's wrap-over jackets and skirts, kimono tops, reversible coats, jewellery and accessories are available strictly by appointment only at the pretty atelier, located a few skips from the Spanish Steps.

• Via Gregoriana 34, +39 06 699 24512, soledadtwombly.com



Society

Society is the home-and-retail arm of fabric and interiors powerhouse Limonta, hailing from the textile centre of Costa Masnaga and going strong for over a century. The contemporary-rustic, all-naturalwashed linens are woven from the finest cotton, silk, wool, linen and ramie, and come in a myriad of the softest neutral colours, solids and pastels. But wait, it's not just voile sheets, embroidered pillowslips, boiled wool blankets, jacquard throws, terry towels and striped duvet cover, it's table linen, mats, runners and napkins, beach towels, bath mats and robes, and even a nifty line in drifty tops and bottoms (men's and women's) perfect for lounging around in , not to mention relaxed scarves and canvas totes. Beware. Enter here and you will definitely need an extra suitcase ...

• Piazza di Pasquino 4, +39 06 683 2480, societylimonta.com; Mon 3.30pm–7.30pm, Tue-Sat 10am–7.30pm, Sun closed, Sat during July & Aug 10am–2:30pm

My Cup of Tea



This bright Aladdin's cave of a secret studio is filled with surprises. Billed as less of a shop, and more of a "creative space", this airy mezzanine atelier features new designers, artists, fashion, jewellery, millinery and art. With a constantly changing roster of artists and design talent there's always something to test the credit card – previous collaborations have included the woven gold bracelets of Nicotra di S Giacomo and the chic, pared back, couture aesthetic of [Anna Sammarone](#). To find the bell to buzz, enter the building's main door and scoot to the back courtyard door.

• *Via del Babuino 65, +39 06 3265 1061, mycupoftea.it; Mon to Fri 10am – 6pm, closed Sat and Sun*



One for the boys. The mad hatters of Minghetti (the road on which their store is sited) have been going strong since 1873, and regardless of whether you know your boaters from your tiffers (Pitti Uomo - a twice yearly men's trade show held in Florence - was knee deep in classic straw hats this year), it's worth a visit if only for the astonishingly atmospheric store. Crammed in, piled high and toppling over, this fabulous, dusty, fusty old stash of headwear has everything from berets to bowlers, trilbys to top hats, in one glorious millinery mish-mash. And better yet, you're just around the corner from a favourite lunch spots [Al Moro](#), (enjoyed by Fellini and Valentino, no less). Note the odd opening hours or your hat trip may be fruitless.

• *Via Marco Minghetti 7, +39 06 679 5147; 10am-1pm & 5-7.15pm, closed Sun and Mon*

Spazio IF



Tottering along the ancient Via dei Coronari, famed for its antiques, marble, and vintage furniture shops, you could easily pass by Spazio IF without ever knowing. Nestling in a tiny piazza, this enticing half-store, half-art gallery boasts a superb collection of handcrafted women's fashion, swimwear, bags and accessories that reflect the designer Irene Ferrara's southern heritage working with local Sicilian artisans. Each month a new artist gets to feature their work among the label's collections of clothes, sarongs, sandals, towels and handicraft products. Never one for waste, even the scraps of leather left over from Irene's bags are turned into funky little necklaces or brooches, and with the retail/gallery space in the capable hands of sister Carla, it really is a family affair.

• Via dei Coronari 44a, +39 06 6476 0639, spazioif.it; Mon 4pm-8pm, Tue-Sat 10am-2pm and 4pm-8pm, closed Sun

Delfina Delettrez



When you come with a pedigree like Delfina's, it's likely you're going to be creative. As a fourth generation [Fendi](#), it was only a matter of time before the muse takes hold and now visitors can behold the glam-rock results. Delfina's wares vault over the bounds of contemporary jewellery with witty retro glances – at once wild and refined, fashion forward and classic. Incorporating a huge and wanton list of materials – from copper to crystal and gold to leather, bone and Capodimonte ceramic - Delfina references nature, passion, the elements, dreams and desires. Saucy, irreverent but always elegant and wearable (even if you don't buy) it's a joy just to visit this gorgeous little store with its myriad drawers of goodies.

• Via Governo Vecchio 67, + 39 06 6813 6362/4105 delfinadelettrez.com; Mon 3.30pm–7:30pm, Tues-Sat 10.30am-2pm and 3.30pm-7.30pm, closed Sun

Strategic Business Unit



Hipster menswear can be a challenge in this city where pastel tailored slacks and cashmere pullovers rule, but sited conveniently next to perennial lunch spot [Cul de Sac](#) and only a short distance from Piazza Navona, SBU fits the bill. Founded by two brothers Patrizio and Cristiano Perfetti back in 1993, when the area was all but derelict, the 200-square-metre store now takes pride of place at the foot of shopping magnet Via Governo Vecchia, racking heaps of own-brand distressed denim, casual, sports and tailored wear, plus Japanese white denim, parkas, shoes, button-down shirts, T-shirts, and sweaters.

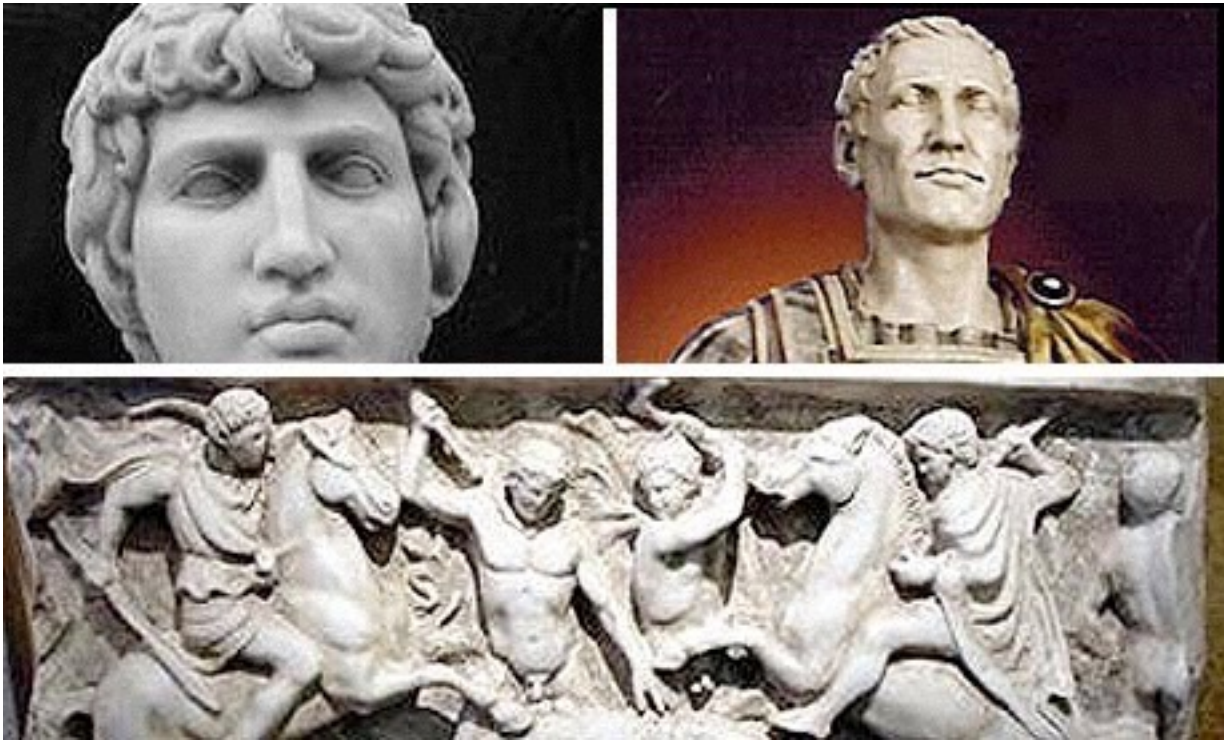
• *Via di San Pantaleo 68-69, +39 06 688 02547, [sbu.it](#); Mon 3.30pm–7.30pm, Tues-Fri 10am–1.30pm and 3.30pm–7.30pm, Sat 10am–7.30pm, Sun closed*

Di San Giacomo Gioielli



The key to looking fabulous in Italy is shoes; and if cobbling is an art form, di San Giacomo Gioielli takes it to a higher level with handmade sandals. The di San Giacomo family has been designing and making intricate jewellery at its Via del Governo Vecchio shop, and last year one of the brothers put his best foot forward with costume jewellery creations and accompanying bejewelled sandals. Think [René Caovilla](#) lounging on the Costa Smeralda.

Via di Tor Millina 10/11, +39 06 968 47938, disangiacomo.com



If you've ever fancied taking a torso or two home, now's your chance. Top of the block busts in ready-to-lug, or carved to order, full-size or miniature repro statues and busts, the Grossi statuery in Via Margutta bursts at the seams with marble and stone of every colour and hue, shape and size. Not quite ready yet for a bas-relief of priapic satyrs or a full-size head of Diocletian? Fret not, the imitation marble fruit, vases and bowls, columns, obelisks, mosaics, lamp and candle bases are infinitely more portable. Marbleous!

• Via Margutta 109, +39 06 3600 1935, marble.8m.com; Mon–Sat 10am– 7.00pm, closed Sun