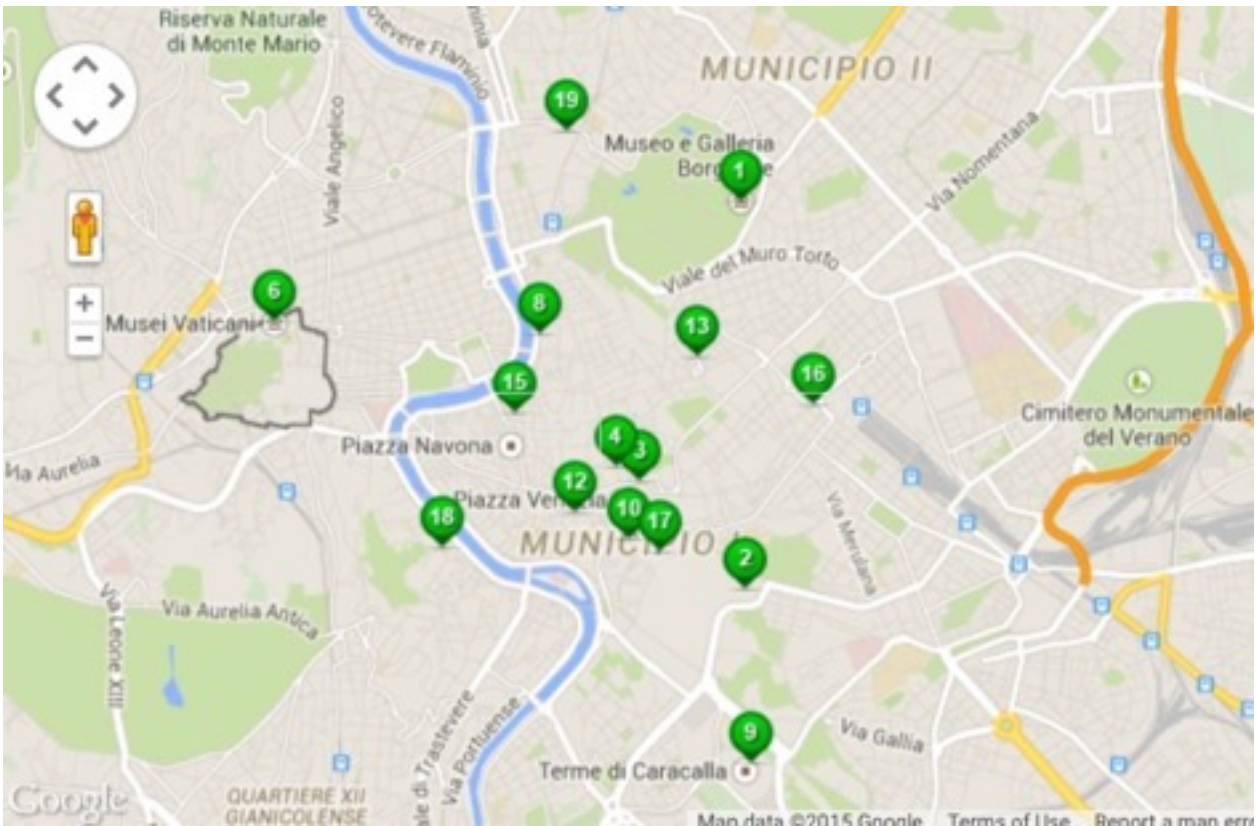


<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/travelnews/10586491/Telegraph-Travel-Guides-app.html>

The Roma Pass (romapass.it) discount card, currently priced at €36 (three day) or €28 (two day) and available online or from tourist information offices, gives free entry to two museums of your choice and reductions for many others, plus unlimited use of citywide public transport.



The challenge is deciding what not to do: there are so many churches, archaeological sites, piazzas and paintings to see that a lifetime is hardly enough. Don't try to cram too much in: [Rome](#) moves at a slower pace than many northern cities, and to enjoy it you should take time out in pavement cafés as well as shuffle round the Sistine Chapel.

£££

Borghese Gallery (1 on map)

One of the world's great art collections, the haul that Cardinal Scipione Borghese assembled in the early 17th century in his Roman garden villa includes Titian's Sacred and Profane Love, a gaggle of Caravaggios and Bernini's sublime sculpture Apollo and Daphne - perhaps my single favourite work of art in the whole of Rome. Later generations made some bad mistakes (allowing Napoleon, for example, to make off with 154 statues and countless other artefacts) but also some worthwhile additions, such as Canova's risqué statue of Pauline Bonaparte. Flanking the villa are a magnificent 17th-century aviary (uccelliera) and a series of 'giardini segreti' - secret gardens. They're usually closed but the Bell'Italia 88 (bellitalia88.it) association runs occasional tours. Note that visits to the gallery have to be booked, and run on designated timeslots - though if you turn up at a quiet time of year, there may be still be spaces that same day. You should be at the gallery to pick up your ticket 30 minutes before your entry time.



The Borghese Gallery is one of the world's great art collections.

Address: Piazzale del Museo Borghese 5, 00197

Contact: 00 39 06 32810; galleriaborghese.it

Getting there: Bus to Villa Borghese (116), Via Pinciana (53, 910) or Via Po (multiple services)

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 8.30am-7.30pm

Price: €11; EU citizens aged 18-25, €6.50; children under 18, EU citizens over 65, free. Price varies during special exhibitions

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: essential

Colosseum (2)

Half circus, half sports arena, Rome's most famous classical ruin is unmissable – especially now that they have extended the visitor route to the underfloor passageways through which gladiators and wild beasts made their entrances. The massive arena – officially called the Amphiteatrum Flavium – was inaugurated in 80 AD, and seated well over 50,000 people in its neatly arranged stands: emperor, aristos and Vestal Virgins down the front; plebs, slaves and all the other women up the top. Some 5,000 wild beasts were killed for the gory opening event. By the time the last man vs beast fights took place in 523, the wild animal population of north Africa had been decimated. Occasionally though, the felines were fed too: any malefactor handed down a sentence of damnatio ad bestias was simply ushered unarmed into the arena and left there to make a lion's lunch. The ticket office queues can be daunting: those in the know purchase tickets at the quieter Palatine entrance (Via San Gregorio 30). In high season, I also recommend purchasing tickets in advance, through coopculture.it.



Rome's most famous classical ruin is unmissable.

Address: Piazza del Colosseo, 00184

Contact: 00 39 06 3996 7700; coopculture.it

Getting there: Metro Colosseo; bus to Via dei Fori Imperiali or Via Labicana (multiple services); tram 3

Opening times: Daily, 8.30am-sunset

Price: €12; EU citizens aged 18-25, €7.50; children under 18, free; ticket also covers the Roman Forum and Palatine. Price varies during special exhibitions

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: recommended

Domus Romane (3)

Beneath the offices of the Rome provincial council lies a treat for anyone frustrated by the uncommunicative nature of many of the city's ruins. This recently excavated swanky home of a well-heeled late Roman is impressive in itself for sheer dimensions, but the computer graphics which transform the gloomy spaces into bright reproductions of a frescoed, peopled Roman dwelling, complete with indoor water features, put the ancient masonry into fantastically lively context. The 75-minute visits, with a thorough but entertaining narration, set off once an hour on the half hour (every 30 minutes on Saturdays and Sundays). Booking is recommended, especially at weekends. There are two or three visits in English each day: check the booking area of the Domus' website for details. The excavations are not the only attraction in the provincial council office. Nip around the back to the Enoteca Provincia Romana to sample the excellent wines, cheeses and other products of the area around Rome.



This recently excavated swanky home of a well-heeled late Roman is impressive in itself for sheer dimensions.

Address: Via IV Novembre 119a, 00187

Contact: 00 39 06 32810; palazzovalentini.it

Getting there: Bus to Piazza Venezia or Via IV Novembre (multiple services)

Opening times: Mon, Wed-Sun, 9.30am-6.30pm

Price: €12; children 6-17, €8; children under 6, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: recommended

Doria Pamphilj Gallery (4)

The art collection of the aristocratic Doria Pamphilj (or Pamphili) family – now headed by two half-British siblings – is truly magnificent, as is the palazzo where the works are still displayed according to a 1760 inventory. Artistic highlights of the place include a striking portrait by Velázquez of the Pamphili pontiff Innocent X: this was the inspiration for Francis Bacon's 1953 'screaming pope'. There are also masterpieces by Caravaggio, Titian, Raphael, Bernini, Breughel the Elder and Hans Memling. The ticket price includes an excellent audioguide narrated by Prince Jonathan Pamphili himself - I love the bit about how he and his sister used to roller-skate through these august halls. For a multi-sensoral experience, join the Saturday (11am) tour accompanied by an art historian and a live early music orchestra; €30, €8 reductions, booking essential.



Artistic highlights of include a striking portrait by Velázquez of the Pamphili pontiff Innocent X.

Address: Via del Corso 305, 00186

Contact: 00 39 06 679 7323; dopart.it

Getting there: Bus to Piazza Venezia or Via del Corso (multiple services)

Opening times: Daily, 9am-7pm

Price: €11; young people aged 6-26, €7.50; children under 6, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

MAXXI (5)

Back off, naysayers - I love this daring piece of contemporary architecture in the newly hip northern Flaminio district, designed by Pritzker prize-winning architect Zaha Hadid. Sure, the contents of the Museum of 21st Century Arts (MAXXI) don't always live up to its eye-catching exterior, but although the permanent art collection is not the world's most exciting, MAXXI stages very good exhibitions and retrospectives, especially on architectural themes. Locals have taken to the place too – perhaps more for the space than for the contents, as testified by the crowds of cappuccino-sipping loungers at café tables and their careering offspring in the piazza outside on any sunny weekend. Right around the back of the museum, you'll find Neve di Latte, one of Rome's truly great new-generation ice-cream shops.



MAXXI stages very good exhibitions and retrospectives.

Address: Via Guido Reni 4a, 00196

Contact: 00 39 06 320 1954; fondazionemaxxi.it

Getting there: Bus to Piazza Mancini (multiple services) or Via Flaminia (M, 910); tram 2

Opening times: Tue-Fri, Sun, 11am-7pm; Sat, 11am-10pm

Price: €11; students with ID 26 and under, €8; children under 14, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Vatican Museums (6)

It's tempting to think of this vast repository as “the rooms full of papally collected or commissioned art that you have to schlep through to get to the Sistine Chapel”. But in fact there's plenty to enjoy along the way, from stunning classical statues such as the Laocoon, to Pinturicchio's delightful Borgia Room frescoes, from magnificent decorations by Raphael to an Egyptian museum complete with mummies. However, there's no denying that Michelangelo's masterpiece, vibrant after its end-of-millennium restoration, is the big draw here - it's just a shame it's so crowded (if you're first in at 9am and rush straight through to the Chapel, you might buy yourself a few minutes' peace). I won't mention here that I once had the privilege of going up on the scaffolding while they were restoring it, as it wouldn't be fair. The dress code for St Peter's (no bare shoulders or midriff, no very short shorts or skirts) applies to the museums too: cover up, or you risk being turned away at the door. This is one Roman sight that benefits from a little forward planing: you should book a timed slot via the website, or be prepared for a long queue. Note also that last entry is a good two hours before closing time, and be aware that the Vatican Museums close on Vatican holidays, which don't always coincide with Italian public holidays - check the list on the website.



The dress code for St Peter's (no bare shoulders or midriff, no very short shorts or skirts) applies to the museums too.

Address: Viale del Vaticano, 00165

Contact: 00 39 06 6988 3145; museivaticani.va

Getting there: Metro Ottaviano; bus to Via Leone IV or Via Candia (multiple services)

Opening times: Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm (last entry 4pm); last Sun of month, 9am-2pm (last entry 12.30pm)

Price: €16; children 6-18, students with ID under 26, €8; children under 6, free; online booking fee €4.

Museums are open and free for all visitors on last Sunday of every month

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: recommended

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Appian Way & Catacombs (7)

Constructed from 312 BC to move troops and goods swiftly between the metropolis and the south, the Appian Way was also the well-off ancient Roman's burial venue of choice. Few of the impressive mausoleums remain above ground (the tall round tomb of Cecilia Metella, and the Mausoleum of Romulus – reopened in 2014 after a 20-year restoration – being the exceptions): their decorations and masonry were too tempting for future generations seeking building materials. But beneath what is now a pleasant, semi-rural lane – some of it with the original basalt paving slabs still in place – lie many miles of catacombs where early Christians were laid to rest under the watchful eye of the pagan authorities. Largest and most rewarding of all the catacombs are those of San Callisto, where nine popes and dozens of martyrs were among those stacked in 18 miles of tunnel.



The Appian Way was also the well-off ancient Roman's burial venue of choice.

Address: Via Appia Antica 110/126, 00179

Contact: 00 39 06 513 0151; catacombe.roma.it

Getting there: Bus to Appia Antica (118, 218)

Opening times: Mon, Tue, Thu-Sun, 9am-noon, 2-5pm

Price: €8; children 6-15, €5; 6 and under, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not possible

Ara Pacis (8)

In 13BC the Emperor Augustus marched home from three years of imposing peace on his formerly fractious empire, and the Senate promptly commissioned a monument to mark his achievements. Four years later, the Ara Pacis Augustae – the Augustan altar of peace – was inaugurated: a simple altar at the centre of four marble walls gloriously carved with friezes hailing the emperor, his family, piety, peace and the prosperity of the pacified Empire. The altar didn't originally stand here: it was pieced together in the early 20th century from scattered fragments. Now housed in a hyper-modern (and widely unloved) outer shell designed by US architect Richard Meier, the Ara Pacis museum also doubles as an exhibition venue. Next door, the church of San Rocco has a fine Baroque interior.



Ara Pacis houses a monument to Emperor Augustus' achievements.

Address: Lungotevere in Augusta, 00186

Contact: 00 39 06 0608; arapacis.it

Getting there: Bus to Lungotevere Marzio or Via Tomacelli (multiple services)

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 9am-7pm

Price: €10.50; young people 6-25, €8.50; under 6, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Baths of Caracalla (9)

It took rampaging Goths to close down this massive thermal bath complex (they severed the water supply in AD 537). Founded in AD 217, the baths could host up to 1,500 people at any one time. As well as two huge gyms, an open-air pool, and steam-bath rooms of varying temperatures – including a vast, domed extra-hot caldarium – ancient clients could enjoy a library, shops and landscaped gardens. Still today, the towering ruins are impressive, though the sculptures that littered the place are now in the Vatican Museums and Naples' archaeological museum. Part of the six-odd miles of tunnels beneath the baths through which slaves scurried to keep the fires fanned were re-opened to the public in 2013; these are not visitable on Mondays. In summer, the Baths become an atmospheric open-air opera venue (operaroma.it).



Founded in AD 217, the baths could host up to 1,500 people at any one time.

Address: Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 52, 00153

Contact: 00 39 06 3996 7700; archeoroma.beniculturali.it

Getting there: Metro Circo Massimo; bus to Via delle Terme di Caracalla (118, 160, 628)

Opening times: Mon, 9am-2pm; Tue-Sun, 9am-sunset

Price: €6; EU citizens aged 18-25, €3; children under 18, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Capitoline Museums (10)

By the time the public was given access to the Capitoline Museums in 1734, popes had been amassing this peerless collection of artworks for some 250 years. The gems are now spread through two palazzi on opposite sides of the Michelangelo-designed Piazza del Campidoglio. In Palazzo dei Conservatori, the courtyard is home to pieces of colossal statues. Inside are works ancient and modern, including Rome's emblem, a bronze Etruscan (or perhaps medieval) she-wolf suckling twins Remus and Romulus, Bernini's remarkable statue of Pope Urban VIII, a picture gallery with paintings by Caravaggio, Tintoretto, Titian and others, and the second century AD equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius (the one in the piazza outside is a copy). Accessed via the Tabularium, with its view along the Forum, the Palazzo Nuovo is home to a superb collection of ancient statuary. On entry you have the option of paying €1 more for a ticket that includes access to the wonderful Centrale Montemartini, which I highly recommend visiting if you have time.



Inside are works ancient and modern, including Rome's emblem, a bronze Etruscan (or perhaps medieval) she-wolf suckling twins Remus and Romulus.

Address: Piazza del Campidoglio 1, 00186

Contact: 00 39 06 0608; en.museicapitolini.org

Getting there: Bus to Via del Teatro di Marcello or Piazza Venezia (multiple services)

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 9am-8pm

Price: €11.50; EU citizens aged 6-25 or over 65, €9.50; children under 6, free. Price varies during special exhibitions

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Centrale Montemartini (11)

One of the more unlikely – and arguably most satisfying – venues in Rome's panoply of ancient offerings, this decommissioned power station has had its huge turbines, boilers and cogs polished up to provide a dramatic backdrop for choice pieces from the Capitoline Museums' storerooms. What counts as a 'minor' ancient artwork or architectural decoration in Rome, of course, would be a major centrepiece elsewhere: the dreamy muse Polymnia and a towering statue of the goddess Fortuna are cases in point. The Centrale is visitable on a joint ticket (€11.50/€9.50) with the Capitoline Museums. Visit the museum's website for updates on kids' activities and the occasional jazz concert.



This decommissioned power station has had its huge turbines, boilers and cogs polished up to provide a dramatic backdrop for choice pieces from the Capitoline Museums' storerooms.

Address: Via Ostiense 106, 00154

Contact: 00 39 06 0608; en.centralemontemartini.org

Getting there: Metro Garbatella; bus to Via Ostiense (23, 769)

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 9am-7pm

Price: €7.50; EU citizens aged 6-25 or over 65, €6.50; children 6 and under, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Crypta Balbi (12)

In the 1980s, archeologists got to work in this centro storico site, digging down through Renaissance and medieval layers to the crypta itself – not a crypt in the modern sense but the courtyard and lobby of a theatre built by the wealthy Spaniard Cornelius Balbus in 13 BC. The result is a fascinating small museum that I always recommend to friends, as it's the only one to show a slice through a vertical timeline of Roman life. Tours of the crypta ruins in the basement depart at intervals from the ticket office. Upstairs, intelligently presented displays (with interactive graphics to keep children absorbed) show how street levels rose though centuries of building, scavenging and restoring. They also make clear how little the basic equipment of an average household has changed: there are pots, cutlery, ceramics and tools here, plus a wonderful view across Rome's rooftops from the top floor. The crypta ticket also covers Palazzo Altemps, Palazzo Massimo and the Baths of Diocletian.



Not a crypt in the modern sense but the courtyard and lobby of a theatre built by the wealthy Spaniard Cornelius Balbus in 13 BC.

Address: Via delle Botteghe Oscure 31, 00186

Contact: 00 39 06 3996 7700; archeoroma.beniculturali.it

Getting there: Bus to Via delle Botteghe Oscure or Largo Argentina (multiple services); tram 8

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 9am-7.45pm

Price: €7; EU citizens aged 18-24, €3.50; children under 18, free. Price varies during special exhibitions

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Museum and Crypt of the Capuchins (13)

A recent makeover has turned what was once just a creepy crypt beneath the Capuchin church into a Franciscan monk 'experience', complete with displays of the knotted whips with which the friars liked to flagellate themselves, cases of odd artefacts confiscated by missionaries from 'natives', and rooms dedicated to the order's saints and heroes. Don't let the wishful-thinking label fool you into thinking that the painting of St Francis in the museum attributed to Caravaggio is by the 17th-century genius – it isn't. The crypt is the main draw. In ghoulish glory, the bones of generations of monks, buried here in soil brought from Jerusalem then dug up to make room for newcomers, are arranged artfully in patterns on walls and ceilings, and fashioned into macabre chandeliers. Just in case you don't get the message, a jolly sign at the entrance reads 'You will be what we now are'.



The crypt is the main draw.

Address: Via Veneto 27, 00187

Contact: 00 39 06 8880 3695; cappucciniviaveneto.it

Getting there: Metro Barberini; bus to Via Veneto or Via Barberini (multiple services)

Opening times: Daily, 9am-7pm

Price: €6; children under 18, over 65s, €4

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Ostia Antica (14)

Why do the long haul down to Pompeii and Herculaneum when you have this wonderful alternative just outside the city? A half-hour hop on the commuter train to Ostia brings you to Ostia Antica, the impressively preserved port of the ancient city. The Med is now two miles away but for well over 600 years, until its decline in the fourth century AD, Ostia buzzed with maritime trade from the whole immense Empire. The decumanus maximus (main street) leads through the site to a theatre, a cosy communal toilet block, a forum where trade guilds' emblems appear on floor mosaics, and houses with first floors still partially intact. My favourite bit is the ancient bar-restaurant, with the day's menu still frescoed on the walls. The Roman theatre is still used for plays and concerts during the summer months: see ostianticateatro.it for programme details.



A half-hour hop on the commuter train to Ostia brings you to Ostia Antica, the impressively preserved port of the ancient city.

Address: Viale dei Romagnoli 717, 00121

Getting there: Train from Piramide to Ostia Antica

Contact: 00 39 06 5635 2830; archeoroma.beniculturali.it

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 8.30am-one hour before sunset

Price: €8; EU citizens aged 18-25, €4; children under 18, free; first Sun of month, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Palazzo Altemps (15)

Powerful Roman families in the 16th and 17th centuries prided themselves on their collections of classical statuary, and they had no qualms about bringing in a sculptor of their own to replace missing hands, arms, heads and noses. Hence many of the remarkable ancient statues displayed in this gallery of collections from four local dynasties look surprisingly intact. There's an Ares patched up by Bernini, and an Athena returned to her full glory by Alessandro Algardi. You can also have your say on the great Ludovisi throne controversy: is this marble chair with its exquisite Aphrodite relief a 5th-century BC masterpiece or a more modern hoax? (The jury of experts is still out). The ticket includes entrance to Crypta Balbi, Palazzo Massimo and the Baths of Diocletian.



Powerful Roman families in the 16th and 17th centuries prided themselves on their collections of classical statuary.

Address: Piazza di Sant'Apollinare 46, 00186

Contact: 00 39 06 3996 7700; archeoroma.beniculturali.it

Getting there: Bus to Via Zanardelli (multiple services)

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 9am-7.45pm

Price: €7; EU citizens aged 18-25, €3.50; children under 18, free. Price varies during special exhibitions

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Palazzo Massimo alle Terme (16)

This 19th-century palazzo – formerly a Jesuit school – houses another of Rome's truly superlative collections of classical art. Roman and Greek sculptural masterpieces on the ground and first floors include a fine Discus Thrower and Augustus as High Priest. There's also a rare Roman (rather than Egyptian) mummy from Grottarossa, in Rome's northern periphery. The ancient Romans were fascinated by all things Egyptian, but though they imported obelisks and pyramids (there's one still standing in the Testaccio district) they didn't go in for embalming. The one exception – known as the Mummy of Grottarossa – is here. But it is the second-floor reconstructions of rooms from luxurious ancient houses, complete with brightly-coloured wall decoration, that is this museum's real high point. The leafy, plant-and-bird-filled triclinium (dining room) from Livia's villa north of Rome is spectacular. The ticket includes entrance to Crypta Balbi, Palazzo Altemps and the Baths of Diocletian.



The leafy, plant-and-bird-filled triclinium (dining room) from Livia's villa north of Rome is spectacular.

Address: Largo di Villa Peretti, 00185

Contact: 00 39 06 3996 7700; archeoroma.beniculturali.it

Getting there: Metro Termini or Repubblica; bus to Stazione Termini (multiple services)

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 9am-7.45pm

Price: €7; EU citizens aged 18-25 ,€3.50; children under 18, free. Price varies during special exhibitions

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Roman Forum and Palatine (17)

It's a good idea to come armed with a plan of how it all used to look (you can buy one at the visitor centre in Via dei Fori Imperiali) in order to make sense of the majestic ruins of Rome's power centre and, on the Palatine hill, its residential district of choice for emperors and political movers and shakers. Evidence of human activity from as early as the tenth century BC has been found where the Forum stands. By the sixth century BC the first temples and public buildings rose up here, and it continued to be the centre of Rome's public life for well over a millennium. Legend has it that Rome's founders Romulus and Remus occupied huts on the Palatine hill; later leaders generally opted for more palatial residences, as towering remains testify. But don't miss the Casa di Augusto, the early emperor's surprisingly intimate private house with vibrant frescoes.



Evidence of human activity from as early as the tenth century BC has been found where the Forum stands.

Address: Via della Salaria Vecchia 5/6; via di San Gregorio; piazza del Colosseo/via Sacra

Contact: 00 39 06 3996 7700; coopculture.it

Getting there: Metro Colosseo; bus to Via dei Fori Imperiali or Via di San Gregorio (multiple services)

Opening times: daily, 8.30am-7pm

Price: €12; EU citizens aged 18-25, €7.50; children under 18, free; ticket also covers the Colosseum.

Price varies during special exhibitions

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Villa Farnesina (18)

Agostino Chigi, banker to big-spending Pope Julius II, threw the wildest parties of the early 16th century in this pleasure villa he had built on the banks of the Tiber. When not partying, he filled the rooms with exquisite art and commissioned Raphael to fresco the place with classical scenes. The artist was too busy consorting with his lover Margherita, daughter of a Trastevere baker, to do much work himself, but his students carried out his designs to the letter, most impressively in the Loggia of Psyche, where the garlands of fruit and flowers include species that had only recently arrived from the New World. By 1577 the Chigi family was bankrupt and the villa was sold to the Farnese clan, hence the name change. It's now home to a prestigious scientific and cultural academy.



Agostino Chigi threw the wildest parties of the early 16th century in this pleasure villa he had built on the banks of the Tiber.

Address: Via della Lungara 230, 00165

Contact: 00 39 06 6802 7268; villafarnesina.it

Getting there: Bus to Lungotevere della Farnesina (23, 125, 280)

Opening times: Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm

Price: €6; children 14-18, over 65s, €5; children 10-14, €3; under 10, free. Gardens, €2

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

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Villa Giulia (19)

When the Romans vanquished the highly cultivated Etruscan people who ruled central Italy before them, they worked hard to expunge their memory. But this still mysterious culture finds an eloquent voice via the glorious artefacts housed in this delightful mid-16th-century villa. The life-size husband and wife from Cerveteri reclining on the lid of their sarcophagus look like they'd be fun to hang out with; the statues of gods from the temple at Portonaccio are remarkable for how lifelike they look. In the garden of this beautiful 16th-century villa, built for Pope Julius III, is a nymphaeum and a very pleasant bar – useful in a venue so far from other sources of sustenance.



The statues of gods from the temple at Portonaccio are remarkable for how lifelike they look.

Address: Piazzale di Villa Giulia 9, 00196

Contact: 00 39 06 322 6571; villagiulia.beniculturali.it

Getting there: Bus to Viale Bruno Bozzi (52, 982); tram 2, 3, 19

Opening times: Tue-Sun, 8.30am-7.30pm

Price: €8; EU citizens aged 18-25, €4; under 18, free

Payment type: credit cards accepted

Reservations: not necessary

Day trips

Ostia Antica

To get a real sense of the life and layout of an ancient Roman town, head for Rome's former port, which has been excavated, complete with theatre, apartment blocks, baths and communal loo. It's just as atmospheric as Pompeii – but far less touristy. Head for Piramide (south of the Colosseum) and take the Roma-Lido train line (20 minutes) to Ostia Antica; from here the entrance is a 10-minute walk.

Contact: Via dei Romagnoli 717, Ostia (00 39 06 5635 8099; archeoroma.beniculturali.it)

Opening times: Tues-Sun, 8.30am-6pm

Prices: €6.50 (£5.70)

Ninfa

One of Italy's most beautiful gardens, Ninfa was laid out between the Twenties and the Sixties by the Anglo-Italian Caetani family on the site of an abandoned medieval village, 37 miles south of Rome. If you don't have a car, take the train to Latina (on the main Naples line) and then a taxi.

Contact: Giardino di Ninfa (0773 354242; fondazionecaetani.org)

Opening times: April-Oct on the first Saturday and Sunday of the month; also on the third Sunday in June

Prices: €10 (£8.80) with guided tour

Shopping

Rome still has enough one-off privately owned stores to make shopping here refreshingly different, so step off high street-label thoroughfares into the winding alleyways beyond.

Fashion

Via del Governo Vecchio is great for local fashion designers, such as Luciana Iannace, at Maga Morgana (No 27). Italy's fashion aristocracy lurks in the streets at the foot of the Spanish Steps.

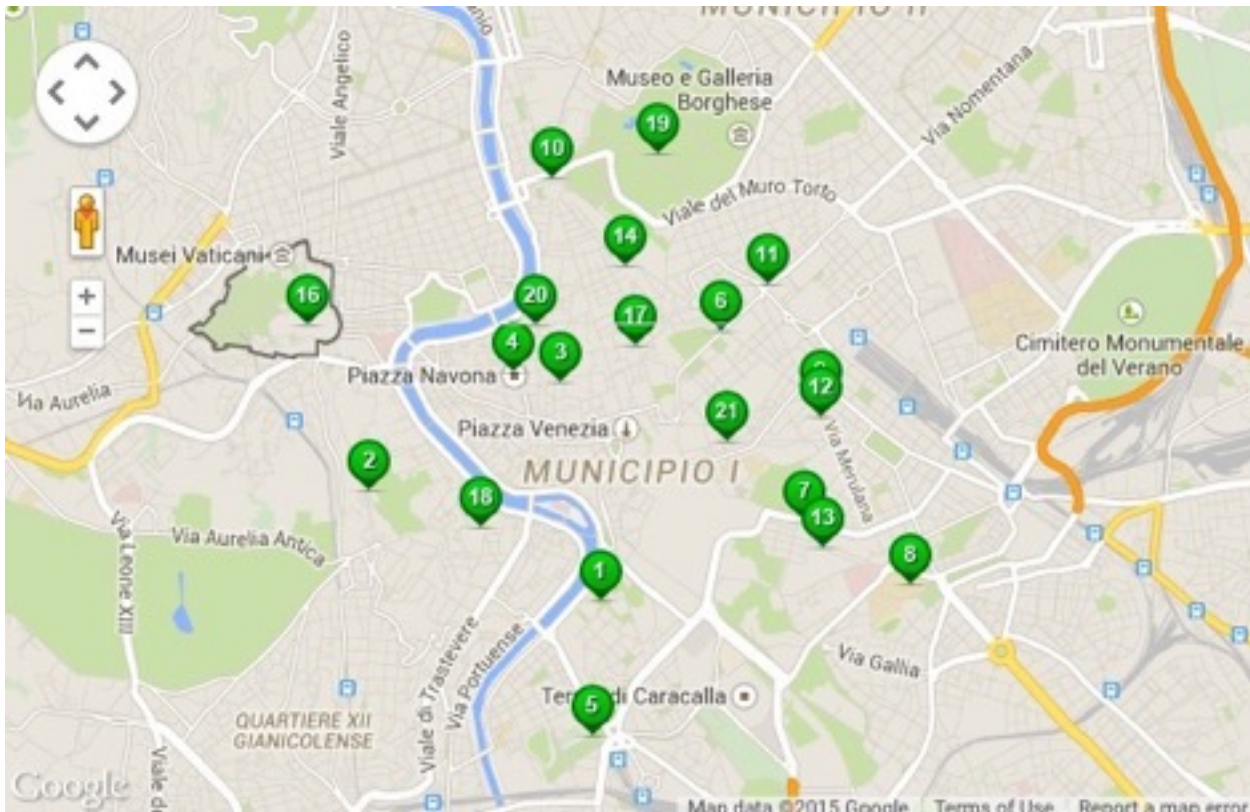
Food

For excellent food shops, venture out of the centro storico – to Via Cola di Rienzo near the Vatican, where Franchi (No 204) and Castroni (No 196; castroni.com) are gastronomic treasure troves, or to the Testaccio district, where Volpetti (via Marmorata 47) will have you slavering. The morning (Mon-Sat) food market in Campo de' Fiori is picturesque – though prices are high.

Markets

For something more genuine try Testaccio market, which is now in bright new premises in via Galvani/via Volta. It has the added advantage of several stalls selling good-quality shoes and bags at knock-down prices, and some great places to grab breakfast or snacks.

Rome: free things to do



Aventine Hill (1 on map)

To be plebeian in Roman times simply meant you were not born into the ruling class. Many plebs were very rich - and the leafy Aventine was their district of choice, a Classical-era Beverly Hills dotted with posh villas, at a safe and salubrious distance from the rough-and-tumble river port down below. It was through the latter that cults from all over the known world made their entrance to the city, with temples to their exotic gods built up here on the heights. Today's Aventine preserves the upmarket cachet; it's a quiet residential area whose pricey houses are given added value because many have gardens - a rarity in central Rome. The view over the city from pretty Parco Savelli is one of my favourites; it's a great place for a sunset picnic with a good bottle of wine. Nearby, join the queue of people waiting to peek through the famous keyhole of the Knights of Malta in Piazza Cavalieri di Malta: three sovereign territories (the Knights' garden, Italy and the Vatican) line up in glorious perspective, with the dome of St Peter's in the background.



Today's Aventine preserves the upmarket cachet.

Address: Via di Santa Sabina, 00153

Getting there: Metro Circo Massimo; bus to Via delle Terme Deciane (715)

Gianicolo (2)

The Gianicolo (Janiculum) is not one of Rome's famous seven hills but it dominates them all. With the height comes a view – a breathtaking panorama of the whole of Rome's centro storico: fantastic in the day (if you're here at noon you'll hear a cannon being fired on the stroke of twelve) and even better at night. The most popular viewpoint is the terrace in front of Piazzale Giuseppe Garibaldi, where a statue of the Italian unification hero marks his disastrous battle against the French here in 1849. On tortuous Via Garibaldi, which leads down to Trastevere, stand the grandiose Fontana Paola (another fine viewpoint) and the church of San Pietro in Montorio. In the courtyard next to this church, Renaissance architect Donato Bramante's tiny Tempietto (1508) is a miniature masterpiece.



The Gianicolo (Janiculum) is not one of Rome's famous seven hills but it dominates them all.

Address: Piazzale Giuseppe Garibaldi, 00165

Getting there: Bus to Passeggiata del Gianicolo (115, 870)

Pantheon (3)

It's difficult to believe that this temple to all the gods has been standing here for almost 2,000 years; even the bronze doors are still intact. Still more impressive is the fact that it retained the title of world's largest free-standing dome until the beginning of the 20th century. Emperor Augustus' nephew Agrippa built the first temple here in 27 AD. When Hadrian constructed what we see today in 118, he used masonry from the original building and didn't bother to remove inscriptions referring to that earlier foundation, causing archaeologists headaches for decades. The Pantheon's salvation was its early conversion to Catholic church; kings of united Italy were buried here, as was the artist Raphael. Church though it was, Pope Urban VIII didn't hesitate to strip the bronze from its portico to make the baldachin in St Peter's. The open oculus at the centre of the dome adds drama to the interior, and is the key to the building's continued stability - if it were filled in, the roof would collapse. If you want to avoid the crowds, visit in the hour after the Pantheon opens.



It's difficult to believe that this temple to all the gods has been standing here for almost 2,000 years.

Address: Piazza della Rotonda, 00186

Getting there: Bus to Largo Argentina or Corso del Rinascimento (multiple services); tram 8

Contact: 00 39 06 6830 0230

Piazza Navona (4)

Rome often feels like one magnificent theatre and nowhere is this truer than in Piazza Navona. The piazza takes its unusual long, thin shape from the ancient stadium it grew up around. Amid the caricature-sketchers and purveyors of cheap tourist tat are three fountains, the most impressive of which (in the centre) is Bernini's Four Rivers, with dramatic representations of the Ganges, Nile (its head covered, because the source was unknown), Danube and Plate. St Agnes is said to have been martyred here; her tiny skull resides in the Borromini-designed church of Sant'Agnese on the piazza's western edge. The piazza changes character through the day, as local dog walkers and snap-happy tourists give way to canoodling lovers and late-night clubbers on their way home. It's fun for kids all year round, especially in the festive season when it hosts a Christmas market of craft, toy and sweet stalls (from the last week of November until 6 January) centring on a huge antique merry-go-round. The cafés in the square are very picturesque, but beware - table-service prices are punishing.



Rome often feels like one magnificent theatre and nowhere is this truer than in Piazza Navona.

Address: Piazza Navona, 00186

Getting there: Bus to Corso del Rinascimento or Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (multiple services)

Protestant cemetery (5)

That Keats and Shelley should be buried in this lovely place beneath the shadow of Rome's only pyramid is particularly fitting: the cemetery is hopelessly romantic. It was my green refuge of choice when I lived just down the road in the Testaccio district. The cemetery grew up here because it lies 'beyond the pale', just outside the town walls. Non-Catholics struggled to be allowed a burial in papal Rome, and even after this patch of land was granted to them in the early 18th century, funerals tended to take place quietly, often at night. Since 1953, this graveyard has officially been known not as the 'Protestant' but as the 'Aatholic cemetery': Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians... and Antonio Gramsci, founder of the Italian Communist Party, are buried here. But for most Romans, it's the old name that sticks. Across Via Zabaglia at the south western end of the cemetery is the equally poignant British military cemetery, where a piece of Hadrian's wall has been brought back to the ancient metropolis (cwgc.org).



The cemetery is hopelessly romantic.

Address: Via Caio Cestio 6, 00153

Getting there: Metro Piramide; bus to Via Marmorata (23, 30, 75, 130, 280, 716); tram 3

Contact: 00 39 06 574 1900; cemeteryrome.it

Open: Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm; Sun, 9am-1pm

San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (6)

What an architectural marvel San Carlo is! Enter this ingenious little church, by Baroque maverick Francesco Borromini, and you'd hardly guess that the whole footprint was the size of one of the pilasters of St Peter's (this is why locals refer to it affectionately as San Carlino - 'Little Saint Charles'). The tortured, bipolar architect twisted lines and space to such an extent that volumes seem to appear out of nowhere in this oval creation, lit beautifully by high windows. There's a tiny courtyard with perfectly proportioned Corinthian columns. And when the monks are in the mood, they'll show you their extraordinary library too. For another miniature Borromini masterpiece, visit the vertiginous church of Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza, at Corso Rinascimento 40.



Rome often feels like one magnificent theatre and nowhere is this truer than in Piazza Navona.

Address: Via del Quirinale 23, 00187

Getting there: Metro Barberini; bus to Via del Tritone or Via Nazionale (multiple services)

Contact: 00 39 06 488 3261; sancarlino.eu

Open: Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm, 3pm-6pm; Sat, Sun, 10am-1pm

San Clemente (7)

One of Rome's most worthwhile but least publicised sightseeing treats, this historically-layered cake descends from a street-level medieval and early-Renaissance church, with frescoes by Masolino, via a fourth-century early Christian church to the basement remains of a second-century insula (apartment block), complete with shrine to Mithras. When down here, listen for the sound of running water: an ancient sewer passes close by before dumping its contents in the Tiber. The main church is free, but the two lower levels carry an entrance charge.



This is one of Rome's most worthwhile but least publicised sightseeing treats.

Address: Via Labicana 95, 00184

Getting there: Metro Colosseo; bus to Via Labicana (multiple services); tram 3

Contact: 00 39 06 774 0021; basilicasanclemente.com

San Giovanni in Laterano (8)

The massive Christ, saints and doctors partying atop the 18th-century façade of St John Lateran are visible from afar, and the bulk of the basilica – the city seat of the bishop of Rome, otherwise known as the pope – makes it a salient landmark. Yet when this piece of land hard against a far-flung bit of city wall was given to the newly legalised Christian cult by Emperor Constantine's wife in 313 AD, the idea was to avoid trouble by keeping these religious upstarts as far from the city's power hub as possible. Much restored and rebuilt, the church is rather cold, but the 13th-century apse mosaic is charming, and there's a fragment of fresco by Giotto behind the first column on the right. There's also a pretty 13th-century cloister off the left aisle. Facing the basilica across Piazza San Giovanni is the Scala Santa (Holy Stairs), ostensibly the very ones that Jesus climbed to reach Pontius Pilate's house, which today's pilgrims traditionally climb on their knees (free, open daily).



Much restored and rebuilt, the church is rather cold, but the 13th-century apse mosaic is charming.

Address: Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano, 00184

Getting there: Metro San Giovanni; bus to Via di San Giovanni in Laterano (multiple services); tram 3

Contact: 00 39 06 6988 6433; vatican.va

Open: daily

Santa Maria Maggiore (9)

According to legend, in 356 AD snow fell in this spot in the middle of summer on August 5 – so Pope Liberius built a church to the Madonna to commemorate the meteorological miracle. Rebuildings and extensions followed through the centuries, but vestiges of earlier versions linger: the glorious 13th-century mosaics of a former facade in the loggia, fifth-century mosaics above the nave columns, and a marvellously Byzantine 13th-century mosaic of Mary being crowned queen of heaven in the apse. The flamboyant Sistine and Paoline chapels were added in the 16th and 17th centuries respectively. The roof of this basilica is said to be gilded with gold donated by the Borgia Pope Alexander VI, from the first shipment from the New World. Whether or not that's true, the symbol of the much-derided Borgia family – a bull – is very much in evidence.



According to legend, in 356 AD snow fell in this spot in the middle of summer on August 5.

Address: Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, 00185

Getting there: Metro Cavour or Termini; bus to Piazza di Santa Maria Maggiore (multiple services)

Contact: 00 39 06 6988 6800; vatican.va

Prices: Basilica: free. Guided tour of loggia: €3. Guided tour of excavations: €5

Open: Daily, 7am-6.45pm

Santa Maria del Popolo (10)

Demons were said to haunt this spot where evil Emperor Nero was buried, so a chapel was built in 1099 to oust them. There are many reasons to visit today's largely 15th-century church: for me, the most compelling ones are two lovely chapels decorated for the Borgias by Pinturicchio, a mosaic depicting a horoscope designed by Raphael in the Chigi chapel, some macabre carved skeletons by the main door...and – to the left of the main altar – Caravaggio's awe-inspiring canvasses, shot through with dazzling light, showing the conversion of St Paul and the martyrdom of St Peter. Note that other Caravaggio masterpieces are to be found in Rome's churches, most notably San Luigi dei Francesi near Piazza Navona, with three dramatic scenes from the life of Saint Matthew.



There are many reasons to visit today's largely 15th-century church.

Address: Piazza del Popolo 12, 00187

Getting there: Metro Flaminio; bus to Piazza del Popolo (117,119) or Viale Washington (multiple services)

Contact: 00 39 06 361 0836; santamariadelpopolo.it

Open: Mon-Sat, 7am-noon, 4pm-7pm; Sun, 7.30am-1.30pm, 4.30pm-7.30pm

Santa Maria della Vittoria (11)

Swiss-born architect Carlo Maderno may have been one of the fathers of the Baroque, but it's not his design for this early 17th-century church that attracts most visitors. If you're here, it's probably to see Gian Lorenzo Bernini's masterpiece, a side-chapel portraying The Ecstasy of St Teresa. Executed in the mid-17th century, the whole sculptural scene is pure theatre. In high-relief boxes to each side of the chapel, members of the Cornaro family, which commissioned the work, chat idly, barely watching the action. Meanwhile above the altar, the saint swoons, her drapery piled elegantly about her, as a mischievous angel prepares to prick her with his arrow. There's more of Bernini's decidedly risqué ecstasy in the church of San Francesco a Ripa, Trastevere, where the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni is similarly carried away.



If you're here, it's probably to see Gian Lorenzo Bernini's masterpiece.

Address: Via XX Settembre 17, 00187

Getting there: Metro Repubblica; bus to Via V. E. Orlando (multiple services)

Contact: 00 39 06 4274 0571

Open: Daily, 8.30am-noon, 3.30pm-6pm

Santa Prassede (12)

Not a well documented saint, Praxedes is said to have sponged up the blood of second-century martyrs who got the chop before she did, and squeezed it into a well, marked by a porphyry disc in the nave. Pope Pascal I built the first church here in the ninth century: a scaled-down replica of the original St Peter's to honour his mamma, St Theodora. As the locals didn't meet his standards, he brought craftsmen from Byzantium, hence the exotic exuberance of the spectacular mosaic decoration, especially in his mother's mausoleum, the St Zeno chapel (note Theodora portrayed with a square halo, denoting that she was still alive when the image was made). Off the chapel, a small room contains a column which, we're told, Christ was tied to for flagellation. In the apse of the church, Praxedes and her sister Pudentiana are presented to Christ by Saints Paul and Peter respectively.



Pope Pascal I built the first church here in the ninth century: a scaled-down replica of the original St Peter's to honour his mamma, St Theodora.

Address: Via Santa Prassede 9a, 00184

Getting there: Metro Cavour; bus to Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore (multiple services)

Contact: 00 39 06 488 2456

Open: Mon-Sat 7.30am-noon, 4pm-6.30pm; Sun, 8am-noon, 4pm-6.30pm

Santi Quattro Coronati (13)

I love bringing visiting friends to this hidden gem - as discreet as the closed order of nuns that lives and prays here – in a surprisingly rural part of central Rome; it barely registers in most guidebooks, but it's a delight. Who the four saints the church is dedicated to were, and why they were crowned (coronati), is anybody's guess, though traditionally (and on no evidence at all) the stonemasons' guild claims they were four men who refused to sculpt an image of the god Aesculapius and were martyred for their obstinacy. Normans rampaged through here in 1084. The out-of-proportion apse you see as you meander up Via dei Santi Quattro hails from an earlier building. In the oratory outside the church, 13th-century frescoes tell how Emperor Constantine, miraculously cured of leprosy by Pope Sylvester, endowed the Church with political and territorial powers as well as divine ones; this was in fact a fabrication, a piece of bare-faced Medieval spin. Cross the church's intricate, Cosmatesque mosaic floor to the early 13th-century cloister – arguably Rome's loveliest. In 2014, the magnificent 13th-century frescoes of the basilica's Aula Gotica were opened to the public but only for a few guided visits each year – these should be booked well in advance at aulagoticasantiquattrocoronati.it.



In a surprisingly rural part of central Rome; it barely registers in most guidebooks, but it's a delight.

Address: Via dei Santi Quattro 20, 00184

Getting there: Metro Colosseo; bus to Via San Giovanni in Laterano (85, 117); tram 3

Contact: Daily: church, 6.30am-12.45pm, 3pm-7.45pm; oratory, 8.30am-11.45am, 4pm-5.45pm; cloister, 10am-11.45am, 4pm-5.45pm; monacheagostinianasantiquattrocoronati.it

Open: Daily

Spanish Steps (14)

Why Spanish? Certainly the Spanish embassy was located below in Piazza di Spagna in the early 18th century, but funds to 'improve' the steep wooded slope rising up from there to the French Trinità dei Monti church at the summit were bequeathed by French diplomat Etienne Gueffier, and the architect who designed this elegant, butterfly-shaped ramp of 135 steps was little-known Italian Francesco de Sanctis. The official name – Scalinata di Trinità dei Monti – must have proved too much for the Grand-Touring Brits who made this most central of areas their own in the 18th and 19th centuries. Once the hang-out of country girls hoping to serve as artists' models, the staircase is now the haunt of tourists seeking the romantically picturesque, and of local lotharios checking out foreign talent. The charming boat fountain at the bottom is by Pietro Bernini, father of the more famous Gian Lorenzo. Nearby is the house where poet John Keats died in 1821, aged only 25. It's now a quaint, atmospheric museum (keats-shelley-house.org).



Once the hang-out of country girls hoping to serve as artists' models, the staircase is now the haunt of tourists seeking the romantically picturesque.

Address: Piazza di Spagna, 00187

Getting there: Metro Spagna; bus to Piazza di Spagna (117, 119) or Via della Mercede (116)

Stadio dei Marmi (15)

If, like me, you enjoy the absurdity of over-the-top propaganda art, you'll love the Mussolini-era Foro Italico sports complex in the northern Flaminio suburb, which displays Fascist-era sculpture at its most grandiloquent. Around an athletics stadium, 64 massive statues, each donated by different Italian provinces, represent sportsmen transformed into gods and heroes, preening on their marble plinths like they're auditioning for an Armani ad. Access to the Stadio dei Marmi is free; not so the nearby Stadio Olimpico, where both AS Roma and SS Lazio play home games. For tickets to the latter, book through listicket.com.



64 massive statues, each donated by different Italian provinces, represent sportsmen transformed into gods and heroes, preening on their marble plinths like they're auditioning for an Armani ad.

Address: Piazza Lauro de Bosis, 00194

Getting there: Bus to Lungotevere Maresciallo Diaz or Piazza Mancini (multiple services); tram 2

Prices: Stadio dei Marmi: free. Stadio Olimpico: ticket prices for matches and events vary

St Peter's (16)

The largest church in Christendom, hub of Catholicism, was consecrated in 1626. It's a choral work by Bramante, Raphael, Michelangelo, Maderno and Bernini, replacing a classical basilica which by tradition stood on the burial place of Peter the apostle. Bernini's elliptical colonnaded piazza outside, and his superb bronze baldachin over the main altar inside, are scaled to fool your eye. But stand at the back of the basilica and gaze to the other end: the people there look tiny. In the first chapel on the right is Michelangelo's moving Pietà. Closer to the altar, the toes of Arnolfo da Cambio's bronze St Peter are worn shiny by pious kisses. Off the left-hand nave is the Museo-Storico Artistico (also known as the Tesoro), with precious ornaments accumulated by the papacy over the centuries, including the ninth-century Throne of St Peter in wood and ivory. St Peter's dome (or cupola) is Rome's highest and the view from the top is breathtaking; bear in mind that even if you opt to take the lift, there are still 320 steps to the very top. Note that if you have bare shoulders or too much leg showing, you will not be allowed in the basilica. Daunting queues form at the entrance both to the basilica and the dome at peak times, but they generally move swiftly.



The largest church in Christendom, hub of Catholicism, was consecrated in 1626.

Address: Piazza San Pietro, 00193

Getting there: Metro Ottaviano; bus to Via della Conciliazione (62) and Via di Porta Castello (23, 34, 40); tram 19

Contact: 00 39 06 6988 1662; vatican.va

Open: Basilica: daily, Apr-Sep 7am-7pm, Oct-Mar 7am-6.30pm. Dome: daily, Apr-Sep 8am-6pm, Oct-Mar 8am-5pm. Museo Storico-Artistico (Tesoro): daily, Apr-Sep 9am-6.15pm, Oct-Mar 7am-5.15pm

Trevi Fountain (17)

When Frank Sinatra crooned "Three Coins in the Fountain" for the eponymous 1954 film, he probably didn't suspect how big a favour he was doing for the charity which now rakes the haul out of the bowl at the foot of this Rococo sculptural extravaganza: until then, one coin had sufficed to ensure a return for the traveller to the Eternal City. Designed by Niccolò Salvi and completed in 1732, this gloriously exuberant fountain marks the end of the ancient Aqua Vergine aqueduct that carries water from the spring of the same name in the hills outside Rome. Tradition has it that a young girl showed the thirsty soldiers of Roman general Agrippa where the spring was hidden, hence the name. There's always a crowd here, day and night, usually under the wary eye of a vigile (traffic policeman) who's there to make sure nobody tries to imitate Anita Ekberg and Marcello Mastroianni's fully-clad wade through the waters in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. If you want to see the fountain at its least crowded, you should take at least a time cue from that cinematic dip, and swing by in the small hours of the morning. In July 2014, the fountain was drained for a Fendi-sponsored restoration effort that will last at least until autumn 2015; the upside is the chance to see the restoration up close thanks to a temporary plexiglass walkway (open from 9.30am to 9.30pm) that spans the basin.



Designed by Niccolò Salvi and completed in 1732, this gloriously exuberant fountain marks the end of the ancient Aqua Vergine aqueduct.

Address: Piazza di Trevi, 00187

Getting there: Bus to Via del Corso or Via del Tritone (multiple services)

Trastevere (18)

You have to hand it to the Trastevere (pronounced TrastEveray) district. Despite the contradiction of (a) containing some of the city's priciest real estate, and (b) being overrun by tourists during the day and rowdy, hard-drinking Anglo-American college students at night, it still manages to exude a very special rough-edged charm. Being unthinkably picturesque helps, of course; as does having more tempting cafés and bars than attention-demanding major sights. To do Trastevere justice, though, it's worth popping into a handful of wonderful churches: Santa Maria in Trastevere for its 12th-century apse mosaic; Santa Cecilia for the glorious Last Judgment fresco by 13th-century genius Pietro Cavallini; and San Francesco a Ripa for Bernini's ambiguous statue of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni.



Trastevere has more tempting cafés and bars than attention-demanding major sights.

Address: Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere, 00152

Getting there: Bus to Lungotevere Ripa (23, 44, 280) or Via Anica (125); tram 8

Villa Borghese (19)

Central Rome's largest gardens began life as the pleasure park of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, lover of art and the good life. What remains of his art collection is in the Borghese Gallery at the heart of the gardens. The cardinal's water-squirting automata and wild animals placed here for hunting forays are a distant memory, but there are bikes and scooters for hire, and dinghies for rowing across the ornamental lake. That this green lung survived at all is a miracle. While other Roman dynasties cashed in, selling their suburban estates to property in the building boom following Italian unification in the 1870s, the state saved this last patch of vegetation and opened it to the masses. The gardens' most incongruous offering is a replica of London's Globe Theatre, with productions (in Italian) of Shakespeare's classic plays: see globetheatreroma.com for programme and tickets.



Central Rome's largest gardens began life as the pleasure park of Cardinal Scipione Borghese.

Address: Piazzale Napoleone 1, 00187

Getting there: Metro Spagna or Flaminio; bus to Viale San Paolo del Brasile (multiple services)

Open: Daily, dawn to sunset

Vittoriano monument (20)

The bombastic Vittoriano is nationalist pomp at its most grandiloquent – an outsize monument to pint-sized monarch Vittorio Emanuele II, the first king of united Italy. A picturesque quarter of medieval houses on Roman foundations was razed to make room for what is variously nicknamed 'the typewriter' or 'the wedding cake'. Work began in 1885 but proceeded at a snail's pace – not helped by a decision to eschew local travertine in favour of gleaming white marble from Brescia – and didn't end until 1935. An unknown soldier was buried here in 1921, and still has a regularly rotated guard of honour. Skirt to the right of the monument and climb the steps to the Ara Coeli church, beside which an elevator shoots up to the roof. Go on a clear day: the view will take your breath away.



The bombastic Vittoriano is nationalist pomp at its most grandiloquent.

Address: Via della Scrofa, 104/108, 00186

Getting there: Bus to Corso del Rinascimento or Lungotevere Marzio (multiple services)

Contact: 0039 06 683 3728; arconroma.it

Open: Mon, 3.30pm-7.30pm; Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm, 3.30pm-7.30pm

Monti (21)

On tourist maps of Rome, Monti is a sort of Bermuda Triangle, the blank space between the major draws of the Colosseum, Santa Maria Maggiore and the Quirinal. But in fact this lively, historic residential quartiere is anything but blank – it makes up for its lack of obvious 'sights' with lashings of shabby-chic Roman atmosphere. Back in the days of Empire, this was the Suburra – a densely populated working-class district of artisans, chancers and prostitutes. Though gentrified today, its cobbled lanes still make for a refreshing, human-scale contrast with the civic bombast of the Forum and Colosseum. Full of funky bars, creative trattorias and alternative fashion and accessory shops (the latter especially in pretty Via del Boschetto), it's a great place to unwind and refuel after a long day's sightseeing.

Address: Piazza della Madonna dei Monti, 00184

Getting there: Bus to Via Nazionale or Via Cavour (multiple services)