

# “Passeggiate Romane”



18 ITINERARIES TO UNVEIL, STEP AFTER STEP,  
THE WONDERS OF ROME



“PASSEGGIATE  
ROMANE”



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# SUMMER

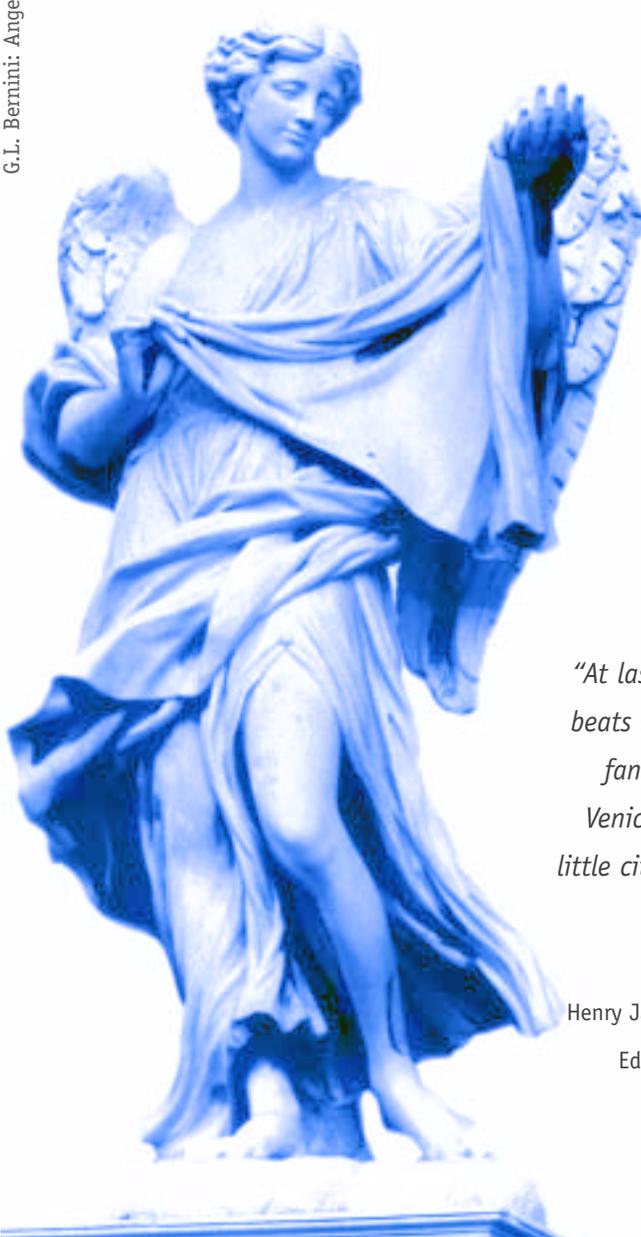
G.L. Bernini: Angel – Ponte Sant'Angelo

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*“At last, for the first time, I live! It (Rome) beats everything: it leaves the Rome of your fancy, your education, nowhere. It makes Venice, Florence, Oxford, London, seem like little cities of pasteboard... For the first time I know what the picturesque is.”*

Henry James, Letters of Henry James, edited by Leon Edel, London Macmillan 1974; Vol.1 1843-1875.

## Itinerary 1



4 H

**WATER IN ROME:  
Fountains of All Kinds**

Undoubtedly there is no city in the world that has more waters and fountains than Rome. It has been thus since ancient times, when 11 aqueducts supplied thousands and thousands of litres of water to the city each day, feeding the countless fountains and magnificent baths. The sacking of the Goths, resulting in the cutting of the aqueducts, ended this richness, and only at the end of the 16th century did the popes tackle the water supply problem adequately. Since then Rome was adorned with dozens of monumental fountains celebrating the pontiffs' munificence, often flanked by drinking troughs and public basins for practical uses. And today still, while we admire these masterpieces, we refresh ourselves by drinking the excellent water running from the typical drinking-water fountains affectionately called "nasoni" – big noses – because of the curious shape of the curved spout.

The theatrical **Fountain of the Naiads**, one of the most beautiful fountains of modern Rome, is the work of sculptor Mario Rutelli, who created it in 1901 to adorn Piazza della Repubblica, originally called Piazza Esedra.

The old name derives from the fact that the square was created, in the late 1900s, following the curved line of the large exedra of the majestic Baths of Diocletian, recently restructured and reopened to the public. Between the two semicircular porticoed buildings opens Via Nazionale, an important main street and lively commercial zone. At no. 194 is the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, the site of important exhibitions. The roof garden is one of the most popular places in Rome for short snacks, lunches, or mundane and cultural events.

The four bronze nymphs placed around the basin of the Fountain of the Naiads were the subject of fierce controversy, which led to the raising of a fence to prevent the sight of the female figures, considered too sensual because of the manner in which they were embracing the sea monsters. The fence was removed by popular acclaim, but the criticism did not end, so the sculptor created the central group which, depicting three tritons, a dolphin and an octopus, was quickly christened

"mixed fish fry". The group was transferred to Piazza Vittorio and replaced with the figure of *Glaucus Fighting a Triton*.

For those with a sweet tooth a stop at the *Dagnino* bar-pastry shop, Via V. Emanuele Orlando 75, is a must. It offers the best Sicilian specialities, from cannoli to marzipan fruit. Those, on the other hand, in search of guidebooks or other books can go to *Feltrinelli International*, Via V. Emanuele Orlando 84, or *Mel Book Store*, Via Nazionale 255.

Often the creation of aqueducts and fountains was dictated, more than by the desire to meet the population's needs, by the desire to satisfy private interests of the popes. This is the case of the **Fountain of Moses** in Piazza San Bernardo, which forms the "display", i.e. the terminal part of the Felice aqueduct, thus named after Pope Sixtus V, Felice Peretti, who restored the ancient Alessandrino aqueduct. This was done mainly to serve the huge villa, which no longer exists, that the pope had built starting in 1585 and which occupied the entire Termini Station area as far as the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. The figure of Moses as he makes water gush forth from the rock, an obvious reference to the pope who restored the aqueduct, was so strongly criticised for its lack of elegance and proportion that it became the subject of a humorous pasquinade:

*Guarda con l'occhio torvo  
l'acqua che sgorga ai piè,  
pensando inorridito  
al danno che a lui fè  
uno scultor stordito.*

(He looks with a surly eye  
at the water gushing at his feet  
thinking, horrified,  
of the damage done to him  
by a dazed sculptor.)

Going down Via Barberini we reach the square of the same name, characterised by the lovely **Triton's Fountain**, a masterpiece by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who created it in around 1642. The whimsical composition, which decorated the square in front of the palace of the noble Barberini family (see Itinerary 11), depicts a triton held up by four dolphins as he is blowing into a shell, proclaiming the family's glory to the world. Up until the 18th century a macabre ritual would take place in front of the fountain: the corpses of the unknown would

be shown there as a crier would call for them to be recognised.

At no. 120 of Via del Tritone is *Planet Hollywood*, part of the chain of restaurants opened all over the world by a company formed by a group of famous American movie actors including Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Bees, the heraldic symbol of the Barberini, in addition to decorating the base of the Triton's Fountain, are the protagonists of a small but lovely composition placed at the corner between Piazza Barberini and Via Veneto, the **Fountain of the Bees**. The three insects, situated on the hinge of an open bivalve shell, were sculpted by Bernini in 1644, to celebrate the twenty-second anniversary of the papacy of Pope Urban VIII. The fact that he finished it before the actual date of the anniversary seems to have been a bad omen for the pontiff, who unfortunately died eight days before it.

From here starts Via Veneto, "twinned" with Fifth Avenue in New York, the symbol of the *Dolce Vita* of the '50s and '60s. The elegant street, celebrated by Federico Fellini, is the hangout of politicians, intellectuals, entertainers and journalists, often immortalised by the ever-present "paparazzi". Renowned the world over are its luxurious hotels, the *Excelsior*, the *Majestic*, and the *Regina Hotel Baglioni*, and its famous cafés, such as *Café de Paris*, *Doney* and *Harry's Bar*. Across from the American Embassy, a *Hard Rock Café* has also been opened recently.

The entire quarter was created between the late 1800s and the early 1900s, when the Boncompagni Ludovisi princes decided, with an unscrupulous action of real estate speculation, to divide the land belonging to their 17th-century splendid villa into lots. Of the villa, only the Casino dell'Aurora (on Via Boncompagni), decorated by Guercino and Caravaggio, remains, and unfortunately it is not easily accessible.

From Via del Tritone we enter Via della Stamperia, which leads to the **Trevi Fountain**, certainly the most famous and spectacular fountain in Rome, made even more famous by the night-time wading of Anita Ekberg in Federico Fellini's film *"La dolce vita"*. The fountain is the terminal part of the Vergine aqueduct built by Agrippa, a general of Augustus, in 19 B.C. to bring the water coming from the Salone springs, 19 km away, to Rome.

Legend, illustrated in the fountain's upper panels, has it that it was a young girl who showed Agrippa's thirsty soldiers where a copious spring gushed forth. Hence the name of the aqueduct which, running underground for a long stretch, is the only one in Rome that has remained in use almost uninterruptedly from the time of its construction to the present day. This is the aqueduct that supplies the water to the monumental fountains of the historic centre, from Piazza Navona to Piazza di Spagna.

The name "Trevi", on the other hand, allegedly derives from the word Trivium, a meeting point of three streets that form this little widened area.

It is truly surprising to see such a large fountain in such a small square, but the artist Nicola Salvi, who created it between 1732 and 1762, carefully studied the way to increase the sensation of marvel. Indeed, he set it almost entirely against the face of Palazzo Poli, preceding it with a little balconied scene, almost as if it were a theatre! The artist was, however, disturbed during his work by the continuous criticism expressed by a barber who had his shop in the square. To shut him up, during one night Salvi created the large basin, familiarly called the "Ace of Cups", situated on the right-hand balustrade, which completely blocked the view of the fountain from the shop. Everyone knows that, if they want to return to Rome, they have to throw a coin into the basin, but be careful: for the dream to come true, you have to toss it over your shoulder with your back to the fountain!

Across from the fountain it is possible to admire the lively façade of the Chiesa dei Santi Vincenzo e Anastasio. The building, which was a Papal Parish for centuries, preserves the hearts and lungs of 22 popes who died in the Quirinal Palace standing nearby (see Itinerary 9): from Sixtus V, who died in 1590, to Leo XIII, who died in 1903. Pope Pius X abolished this custom which had prompted Belli, the famous Roman dialect poet, to call the church "museo de' corate e de' ciorelli" (pluck museum), from the popular term used to refer to the viscera of butchered animals.

Returning onto Via della Stamperia and continuing along Via del Nazareno, we soon reach Piazza di Spagna (see Itineraries 8 and 14) where, at the foot of the staircase of Trinità dei Monti, the "Spanish Steps", we find the **Fontana della Barcaccia**. This is the work of Pietro Bernini, who created it in around 1629, probably with the aid of his famous son Gian Lorenzo. According to tradi-

tion, the unusual fountain shaped like a semi-submerged boat was ordered by Pope Urban VIII Barberini to commemorate a boat that had ended up stranded in the square during the great flood of 1598. In reality, the idea of depicting the boat as it is sinking was dictated by Bernini's genius, since he had to solve a technical problem: in fact, here the pressure of the Vergine aqueduct was rather low, and it was necessary to create a fountain beneath the ground level.

From Piazza di Spagna starts Via del Babuino, famous for its antique shops, which owes its name to a small fountain against the Church of Sant'Atanasio dei Greci. The ancient statue overlooking the granite basin depicts a supine, sneering wanderer but the Romans, because of its ugliness, compared it to a monkey or, more exactly, a baboon. It is said that a cardinal, a bit on in years, would kneel down before it in respect every time he passed by, believing it to be the portrait of St. James. The *Baboon* is one of Rome's "talking statues", where satirical pieces and diatribes of a political nature, strictly anonymous, used to be posted (see Itinerary 10).

Parallel to Via del Babuino runs Via Margutta which, since the 1600s, Italian and foreign artists have chosen as the picturesque location for their studios. Although it is no longer as it once was, the street has preserved a considerable charm, also thanks to the presence of shops such as "*Marmoraro*", at no. 53, where marble is still worked using traditional artisan techniques and old tools. The pretty **Fountain of the Artists**, near no. 54, was created in 1927 by Pietro Lombardi precisely to recall this peculiarity, since it depicts easels, stands, paintbrushes, and palettes.

This original composition is one of the "**Fontanelle Rionali**" series, created starting in 1927 by architect Pietro Lombardi. Each quarter of Rome is represented by one or more objects symbolising that neighbourhood – the pinecone for Rione Pigna (Piazza San Marco), the papal tiara for the Vatican (Largo del Colonnato), amphorae for the Testaccio (Piazza Testaccio), the helm for Rione Ripa (Lungotevere Ripa), and so on – all harmoniously inserted into their surrounding contexts.

For vegetarians who also love contemporary art, there is *Margutta Vegetariano RistorArte* where, in addition to the traditional menu, every day it is possible to enjoy a "Green brunch" while admiring shows of young artists, Via Margutta 119, Piazza del Popolo side.



## MOSAICS: from Santa Maria Maggiore to Santa Maria in Trastevere

Perhaps not everyone knows that in Rome there are some extremely important wall mosaics which, today still, tell ancient stories and illustrate theological concepts which at times are difficult to interpret. These fascinating “paintings” made almost exclusively of glass pieces, in a wide range of colours and shadings, applied on layers of mortar, were created in various places of worship, some of which can be visited by following this itinerary.

On Via Urbana is the **Church of Santa Pudenziana**, an ancient 2nd-century thermal building turned into a church and redecorated starting in the late 4th century.

At the end of the nave it is possible to see the apse mosaic, probably done during the papacy of Innocent I (401-417). It is the oldest apse mosaic which has come down to us in a Christian church, and is a fundamental example of the art of the early centuries since the mosaics that decorated the early Christian basilicas of St. John Lateran and St. Peter's have been lost.

The mosaic of Santa Pudenziana depicts Christ enthroned among the apostles and two female figures, generally interpreted as the Church of the Jews and the Church of the Gentiles. In the background there is an exedra: it is the monumental courtyard of Jerusalem which enclosed Mt. Golgotha, which can be seen behind Christ, topped by a jewelled cross.

For one square metre of mosaic, approximately 10,000 tesserae were needed, all hand-set using the thumb. It may thus be hypothesised that, to create a large mosaic, the work of an entire shop of artisans specialised in the trade was needed and, in a city such as Rome, there must have been numerous such shops, considering the growing demand for mosaic work.

From Santa Pudenziana it is easy to reach the **Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore**, the main entrance to which is on the square of the same name.

The building was erected between 432 and 440 by Pope Sixtus III, who dedicated it to the Virgin.

The Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore is the first basilica in Rome built not by an emperor, but by a pope, who also had it splendidly decorated.

The arch of triumph and the nave still preserve their original mosaics, from the time of Sixtus III.

They depict the unusual theme of the childhood of Jesus and scenes from the Old Testament. For the first time, a mosaic revetment has the function of telling, through its images, the holy story: from Christ's ancestors in the panels over the columns, to the life of Jesus illustrated on the triumphal arch.

The events narrated are clearly readable from below because they were done respecting the principle of functional colourism of the early Christian mosaics, that is to say according to the practice of intensifying the tones of the subjects represented. Observing the panels closely, it is possible to note the infinite shadings and colour contrasts of the skies, vegetation, buildings, faces, clothing, weapons, and all the other details making up the single scenes.

Instead, the apse mosaic created by Jacopo Torriti between 1291 and 1296 dates from the time of Nicholas IV. The artist signed the mosaic on the vault, at the lower left: IACOB(US) TORRITI PICTOR H(OC) OP(US) FEC(IT). At the centre of the vault, at the top Jesus and Mary are seated on the same throne and Christ, crowning his mother, shows the faithful the book with the words explaining the entire mosaic “Vieni mia diletta e ti porrò sul mio trono” – “Come, my beloved, and I shall place you on my throne”. The models to which Jacopo Torriti must have referred for the Coronation of the Virgin come from France, as indicated by similar scenes depicted on the portals of the Cathedrals of Notre-Dame in Paris, Strasbourg, and Sens.

On the other hand, the little scenes depicted at the feet of the central group, with putti-cupids sailing the waters of the River Jordan, are more Roman!

The visit to Santa Maria Maggiore may be concluded by going up to the Loggia (for information, go to the room adjacent to the Baptistry, where souvenirs are sold), or taking a look at the mosaics on the external façade of the church. Done by Filippo Rusuti between the 13th and early 14th centuries, the episodes illustrate, in the lower part, the story of the miraculous summer snow connected with the building of the church.

### The legend of the summer snow

It is said that during the night of 4 August 358, the Virgin appeared simultaneously in a dream to Pope Liberius and to the rich and devoted John, to ask them for the dedication of a basilica on the site in Rome where snow would have fallen that night. The next morning John went to the pope to tell him of the apparition of the Virgin and, together, they went to the Cispian Hill, where the pope traced out, in the fresh snow, the outline of the new church. The miracle of the snow is still remembered in the basilica every year on 5 August: during the celebration of Mass, white jasmine and rose petals are made to flutter down over the high altar.

Leaving the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore we can continue the itinerary towards the **Basilica of Santa Prassede**, whose secondary entrance is on the street of the same name.

Among the numerous and valuable works of art contained in the church, the Chapel of St. Zeno and the mosaics of the apse and triumphal arch created for Pope Paschal I in the 9th century are stand-outs. They are the expression of the rebirth of a Roman mosaic school which ended up playing a fundamental role in the resumption of a religious art in the Christian West.

But it is the second chapel of the right-hand aisle that holds the most significant example of Byzantine artistic culture still visible in Rome.

The chapel, dedicated to St. Zeno, was built as a mausoleum for Theodora, the mother of Paschal I, and was called the "Garden of Paradise" because of the richness of its decorations. The mosaics have no equals in medieval Roman art for their complexity, creative fantasy, richness of symbols, density of colour, and profusion of gold.

At Largo Leopardi 4-10, is *Panella*, famous for its bread, baked according to the various Apulian, Roman, French, Arab, etc. traditions, and for its foods produced according to recipes of ancient Rome.

From Santa Maria Maggiore, crossing Via Carlo Alberto we reach Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, called more simply by Romans Piazza Vittorio. It is the largest piazza in Rome of those created after the unity of Italy, in the late 19th century (measuring 316 x 174 m). Designed on the model of English squares, it has been the site, since 1902, of a traditional market which is really worth a visit. Characteristic foods of many countries, especially Chinese, African, Arab and Indian, are sold. Moreover, in several neighbourhood shops run by immigrants, it is possible to find imported objects, furniture and clothing.

From the Esquiline, it is possible to continue the visit by going to the Trastevere quarter, with its Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere.

If you happen to find yourself in this zone of the city, we recommend that you eat in Trastevere, where numerous trattorias still have the atmosphere of the old inns. Among these are *Checco er Carrettiere* on Via Benedetta, *La Cisterna* on the

street of the same name, or the pizzeria *Ciceruacchio* in Piazza dei Mercanti, a characteristic tavern set up in the old jails of Trastevere, where folk music is played.

In Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere, the heart of the quarter, stands the church of **Santa Maria in Trastevere**, one of Rome's medieval gems (see Itinerary 5). Founded in the 4th century by Pope Julius I (337-352), it was the first church in the city to be dedicated to the veneration of the Virgin. The apse mosaics depict the Coronation of the Virgin, executed in 1143, and the Stories of the Virgin, executed by Pietro Cavallini ca. 1290, on commission from Cardinal Bertoldo Stefaneschi. The mosaic cycle documents the gradual transition from an elegant but immobile Byzantine language to three-dimensional compositions, in which figures and architecture gain greater thickness and depth. Architecture plays a decisive role, seeming to be a protagonist of the scenes: it is not yet possible to speak of perspective, but a new conception of space is evident. The figures also, with their bodily volume, are imbued in their gestures and expressions with a humanity that recalls Giotto, another great protagonist of painting between the 13th and 14th centuries.

Practical suggestions: It is advisable to wear suitable clothing when visiting places of worship.



## MEDIEVAL CLOISTERS

The cloister, from the Latin *claustrum* – meaning “closed place” – is a large quadrangular courtyard, surrounded by arcades, situated within a monastery. Developed in the early Middle Ages for essentially practical purposes, since it had to connect the various rooms of the monastic complex, it derives in style from the peristyle of Roman houses. Initially devoid of particular ornamentation, the cloisters came to be executed with increasingly greater care and were enriched with precious and refined decorative elements. Through this itinerary it will be possible to rediscover these places which, in a city like Rome, are true oases of peace and tranquillity since the medieval atmosphere is kept intact.

The cloister of the Basilica of **St. John Lateran**, in addition to being one of the most beautiful, is the largest in Rome, with each side measuring 36 metres. An undisputed masterpiece by the Vassalletto family, Roman marble workers, the cloister was built between 1215 and 1231.

Normally we use the term “cosmatesque” to define architectural elements or religious furnishings (tabernacles, ambos, candelabra, portals, pavements, columns, etc.) executed with geometric-pattern inlays of white marble and polychrome stones. The word “cosmatesque” derives from the name of the Cosmati family, who were particularly active in this field between the 12th and 13th centuries. They were, however, only one of the approximately 60 families who did fine marble work. The shops of the “marmorari”, very widespread in 12th- and 13th-century Rome, worked by skillfully combining the classical heritage with Byzantine and early Christian styles.

The rich repertoire of ornamental motifs, due to the inexhaustible imagination of the artists, shows the most varied influences: medieval bestiaries, classical sources and Egyptian traditions, observable in the pairs of crouching sphinxes marking the passageways into the internal garden. The marvellous external band is finished at the top by a cornice in which leonine heads alternate with human ones, including, along the northern side, what are probably portraits of the artists, with their 13th-century hairstyles and very open, realistic facial expressions. Among the numerous remains of the ancient basilica, exhibited along the four arms of the cloister, much curiosity is aroused by the sight of the so-called “stercoral chair”, probably a Roman-age chair used in the baths and characterised by a crescent-shaped cleft. It was one of the three chairs

used in the complicated ceremony of the coronation of the pope, who was made to sit there as the clergy sang a psalm in which it was remembered that God can raise the elected from the lowest condition (from dung) to glory. Immediately afterwards the pope could sit on the “porphyritic chair” where he received the insignia of power. For the people, however, this chair with such a particular shape was used to verify if the pope was really a man.

The Basilica of the **Santi Quattro Coronati**, which stands on the offshoots of the Caelian



Hill, is reached easily by taking, from Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano, the long, narrow Via dei Ss. Quattro.

The complex, preceded by the oldest bell tower in Rome (9th century), is dedicated to four Dalmatian sculptors who allegedly refused to carve the statues of pagan deities and were thus martyred by the Emperor Diocletian.

The atmospheric cloister, the smallest in Rome, dates from the early 1200s and is characterised by an extremely sober, modest decoration which has a certain charm. Observing the masonry, it can be seen that the cloister suffered the impact of the church's construction vicissitudes. In fact, the original 9th-century building was larger but when, in the 12th century, the church was rebuilt of a smaller size, part of the side aisle became the side of the cloister next to the church. The lovely fountain in the centre of the garden dates from the 9th century and once adorned the entrance atrium to the church, serving as a lustral basin for ablutions.

For lunch we can stop at *Ai Tre Scalini*, specialised in fish and with a wine bar, at Via dei Ss. Quattro 30, or at *Li Rioni*, at Via dei Ss Quattro 24, but the entire zone as far as the Colosseum is full of pizzerias, restaurants, cafés and ice-cream shops for all tastes and wallets.

Descending from the Caelian Hill towards the Colosseum, and turning to the left, after a lovely walk across Via di San Gregorio and the Circus Maximus, we ascend to the Aventine Hill where, along the street of the same name, stands the Basilica of **Santa Sabina**. This splendid church, which has magically kept its 5th-century early Christian plan intact, is closely tied to the figure of St. Dominic who presented the rule of his order to Pope Honorius III here. The pope decided to donate the church and connected buildings to the saint and his brothers in 1222; they were then greatly modified to adapt them to the needs of the monastic life. This is the context within which the cloister, very large but extremely simple from the decorative standpoint, was built. In fact, the elements typical of the cosmatic workers are absent, but a strong affinity with contemporary Cistercian construction sites can be seen.

Of an entirely different appearance is the cloister of the Basilica of **San Paolo fuori le Mura** (St. Paul's Outside the Walls), easily reached with the B line of the underground. Miraculously spared by the terrible

fire that almost totally destroyed the basilica in 1823, the cloister is a splendid example of the activity of the Roman marble workers. Compared to the cloister of St. John Lateran, there is less homogeneity because of the fact that three sides were built between 1208 and 1214, while the fourth, the one adjacent to the church, was completed only around 15 years later. This last side, unanimously attributed to a member of the Vasselletto family, shows a greater decorative richness. It is not possible to recognise a precise iconological plan, since the artist shows influences of the medieval, classical, Byzantine, and even Etruscan traditions – observable in the portrayal of the chimera, the mythological fire-breathing monster with a lion's head, goat's body, and the tail of a serpent. In some scenes it is, however, definitely possible to note a precise intention to admonish the monks, as in the amusing representation of the episode of the "wolf at school", visible in the third outside pendentive of the first right-hand bay. Even though it has been chiselled, in the scene it is possible to recognise a wolf dressed as a monk who, as he is learning the alphabet, immediately associates the letter "A" with the image of a lamb ("agnello" in Italian), clearly referring to the monks' heedlessness of the vows imposed by the monastic life. On the other hand, the entire beautiful inscription, in blue letters on a gold ground, running along the three sides of the cloister not adjacent to the church is perhaps the best description of the function and meaning given to this place, where "... the monks study, read and pray. The cloister enclosing the monks takes its name from "to close" and, in exultation with Christ, the pious throng of brothers is shut in..."

The itinerary ends around dinner time. It is recommended that you spend the evening in the popular *Testaccio* quarter, a lively night-time hangout of Roman young people. Here there is almost too much to choose from, because the numerous restaurants proposing typical Roman cooking, such as *Lo Scopettaro*, Lungotevere Testaccio 7, and *Checchino* dal 1887, Via di Monte Testaccio 30, have been joined by many spots featuring live music and proposing international cuisine. Among these are *l'Akab*, Via di Monte Testaccio 69, the *Caffè Latino*, Via di Monte Testaccio 96, *Caruso*, Via di Monte Testaccio 36, and the *Four XXXX Pub*, Via Galvani 54.

Practical suggestions: It is advisable to wear suitable clothing when visiting places of worship.

## ALONG THE TIBER

This itinerary unwinds along the Tiber, always a characteristic element of the Roman landscape. Up until the construction of the embankments, in the late 19th century, it was completely navigable and characterised by an unending sequence of buildings that faced onto and were reflected in the water. The river was used for fishing and bathing; the water was used to drink and for motive power.

A regular river transport on the Tiber is operating from Ponte Duca D'Aosta to Ponte Marconi. On week-ends the boats sail as far as the excavations of Ostia Antica ([www.battellidiroma.it](http://www.battellidiroma.it) tel. 06 6789361). On the other hand, for bicycle lovers there is a bike lane between Ponte Flaminio and Ponte Risorgimento.

Our walk starts from the **Isola Tiberina**, which was of exceptional importance in the history of the birth and development of Rome. In fact, starting in extremely ancient times, the island's presence facilitated the crossing of the river, leading to the building of the first permanent settlements on the surrounding high ground.

According to ancient tradition, the island was allegedly formed in the late 6th century A.D. after the Etruscan kings were driven from Rome, when the people threw into the river, out of contempt for the monarchy, the wheat harvested on the royal properties of Campus Martius. Another legend tells of a large boat grounded in the middle of the river during a flood, and later filled up with sand transported by the current.

In reality the island is situated on an ancient volcanic rock core similar to that on which the nearby Capitol stands, but the shape actually does seem to resemble a ship. This did not escape the attention of the Romans who, in the 1st century B.C., accentuated the shape, modelling the island's sides with travertine and raising an obelisk in the centre, like a majestic mast. This "stone ship" was meant to commemorate the healthful ship of Aesculapius, the god of medicine, and his miraculous intervention.

Legend has it that in the 3rd century B.C., during a plague, the Romans went by ship to Epidaurus, in Greece, to learn from the god Aesculapius how to escape the scourge. But when the returning ship was ascending the river, the god's sacred serpent slipped out of it, at the point where the island was, indicating that that island was to be consecrated to him.

The construction of a building sacred to the god Aesculapius, where the present-day church of San Bartolomeo now stands, determined the definitive

destination of the island to a place of medical treatment, also facilitated by its position segregated from the residential centre. Today, still, the Fatebenefratelli Hospital is the building which occupies the island almost entirely, characterising it deeply.

A historic trattoria of the Isola Tiberina is *Sora Lella*, at Via di Ponte dei Quattro Capi 16, which belonged to the sister of the Roman actor Aldo Fabrizi.

The island is connected to the mainland by two bridges: the **Cestio**, connecting it with the Trastevere bank, and the **Fabricio**, or Ponte dei Quattro Capi, which was built in 62 B.C. and is the oldest bridge in Rome which has arrived to us practically intact. From the island it is also possible to see a third bridge, the **Ponte Rotto**, which collapsed in the late 16th century. In the past the Ponte Fabricio was called **Ponte dei Giudei** (Bridge of Jews) because it joined the Isola Tiberina to the area of the Ghetto where Rome's Jews lived.

The term "Ghetto" is used to indicate the quarter lying between Monte dei Cenci and the Theatre of Marcellus, lying entirely within the Sant'Angelo district. It was founded by Pope Paul IV Carafa in 1555, and abolished only in 1870, with the end of the Church State. It was surrounded by a wall in which there were three gates, opened in the morning and closed at dusk. In an area of approximately three hectares, in the 17th century around 9,000 inhabitants lived there in frightful sanitary conditions.

The Ghetto faces onto the Lungotevere Cenci with the monumental building of the **Synagogue**, built in 1904, today also the seat of the Israelite Museum of the Jewish Community of Rome. Behind the Synagogue runs the **Via del Portico d'Ottavia**, which owes its name to the ruins of the ancient portico built at the end of the 1st century B.C. by the Emperor Augustus for his sister. Inside part of the monument stands the church of **Sant'Angelo in Pescheria**, so-called in reference to the important fish market held here from the Middle Ages up to the end of the 19th century. The stone tablet used in the market to remind customers of the obligation to give the Municipal Magistrates the heads of any fish whose length was longer than that of the tablet itself is still there.

The church of Sant'Angelo was one of the four churches where Jews had to go every Saturday with the obligation of listening to the sermons aiming to convert them. It was possible to avoid doing so by paying a fine, but more often the Jews preferred to fill their ears with wax!

Today the Ghetto is one of the zones of Rome which, more than any other, has kept the physiognomy, aromas, and flavours of the old city: for a taste of the specialities of authentic Roman and Jewish cook-

ing – carciofi alla giudia (crisp-fried whole artichokes), filetti di baccalà (fried fillets of salted cod), coda alla vaccinara (braised oxtail “butcher” style) – we recommend the trattorias *Giggetto*, at Via del Portico d'Ottavia 21a/22 (ph. 066861105), and *Al Pompiere*, at Via Santa Maria dei Calderari 38 (ph. 066868377). Also make a stop at *Boccione*, Via del Portico d'Ottavia 1, for cakes, pastries, and unleavened bread baked in the best Roman-Jewish tradition.

Continuing the itinerary southward, we reach the zone of the **Forum Boarium**, the site in ancient times of the cattle and beef market, and the **Velabrum**, once a stagnant marsh where, according to tradition, the basket with the twins Romulus and Remus was found.

The sons of Mars and Rhea Silvia, the twins were saved by a she-wolf who nursed them. For this reason the she-wolf has become one of the symbols of the city of Rome.

Dominating monuments in the area are the two famous Temples called of **Vesta** (the one with a circular plan, in reality dedicated to Hercules Victor) and of **Fortuna Virilis** (in reality dedicated to the river god Portumnus). Following is the church of **Santa Maria in Cosmedin** dating from the 6th century and entrusted later to the Greeks who had fled to Rome from the East. In fact, the church's name comes from the Greek, referring to the splendid decorations characterising it. Here, each Sunday at 10.30 a.m., a Greek-Orthodox mass is held.

Beneath the portico of the church, to the left, is the famous **Bocca della Verità** (Mouth of Truth), a large stone disk depicting the face of a faun or river god, with its mouth open. It is probably a monumental slab to close a drain but, according to legend, the stone was used to judge people's honesty: whoever told a lie while holding his hand in the mouth would have ended up pulling out only the stump.

Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck also fell subject to its mysterious charm in the famous film *Roman Holiday*!

At this point the walk continues towards Castel Sant'Angelo, northward; we can either continue on foot or take a bus. If, on the other hand, we want to take a short break, on the other side of the Tiber, at the entrance to Ponte Cestio, we can enjoy one of the most famous “grattachecche” (water ices) in Rome.

**Castel Sant'Angelo** was built in the early 2nd century by the Emperor Hadrian, as a monumental tomb for himself and his successors. It is connected to the left bank of the Tiber by Ponte Elio, today's **Ponte Sant'Angelo**, decorated with ten marble stat-

ues of angels with the symbols of the passion of Christ, carved after a design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The monument's fate was decided in 403, when the Emperor Honorius incorporated it into the city walls, making it into a bridgehead on the river. From the 13th century it became an “annexe” of the nearby Vatican, and Pope Nicholas III created the famous “Passetto di Borgo”, a covered corridor connecting St. Peter's to the Castle.

The fortress became famous down through time, especially as a prison; here Benvenuto Cellini and the famous adventurer Giuseppe Balsamo, known as the Count of Cagliostro, were imprisoned.

The name Castel Sant'Angelo with which the fortress is known derives from a miraculous event which took place in 590: Rome was in the midst of a severe plague, and Pope Gregory the Great had organised a solemn procession to pray for its end. When the procession reached the Mole of Hadrian, Archangel Michael was seen flying up and sheathing his flaming sword, symbolising the end of the plague. The statue of the angel, placed on the top of the castle to commemorate the event, was replaced six times.

Leaving Castel Sant'Angelo behind us and again going along the Tiber, we go past the Palace of Justice and reach Ponte Cavour, on the other side of which is the **Ara Pacis**. The altar of peace was ordered by Augustus to celebrate the peace in the Empire after the conquests of Gaul and Spain. The monument, which originally stood near the present-day Via in Lucina in the Campus Martius quarter, was moved here in 1938. Before the altar is the **Mausoleum** built by Augustus as a tomb for himself and his family. The monument, which fell into abandon, was at various times used as a vineyard, a garden and, in the late 16th century, an area for tournaments and bullfights. At the end of the 19th century it was called “Anfiteatro Umberto”, and from 1905 to 1930 it was a concert hall called “Augusteo”. At the end of the 1930s the monument was separated from its surroundings, with the creation of the large Piazza Augusto Imperatore.

Right on the piazza, at no. 9, we recommend the restaurant *Gusto* (063226273), with extremely refined cuisine and decor; on Saturdays and Sundays it is also open for lunch. Also, for excellent fettuccine, at no. 30 there is *Alfredo all'Augusteo*.

Practical information: Synagogue and Museum of Jewish Art, open from 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1.30 p.m., Sundays from 9 a.m. to noon, closed Saturdays and Jewish holidays (ph. 0668400661).

Castel Sant'Angelo, open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., closed Mondays (ph. 066819111).

Ara Pacis, closed for restoration.





# AUTUMN

- Itinerary 5

**MEDIEVAL ROME:**  
the Isola Tiberina and Trastevere

- Itinerary 6

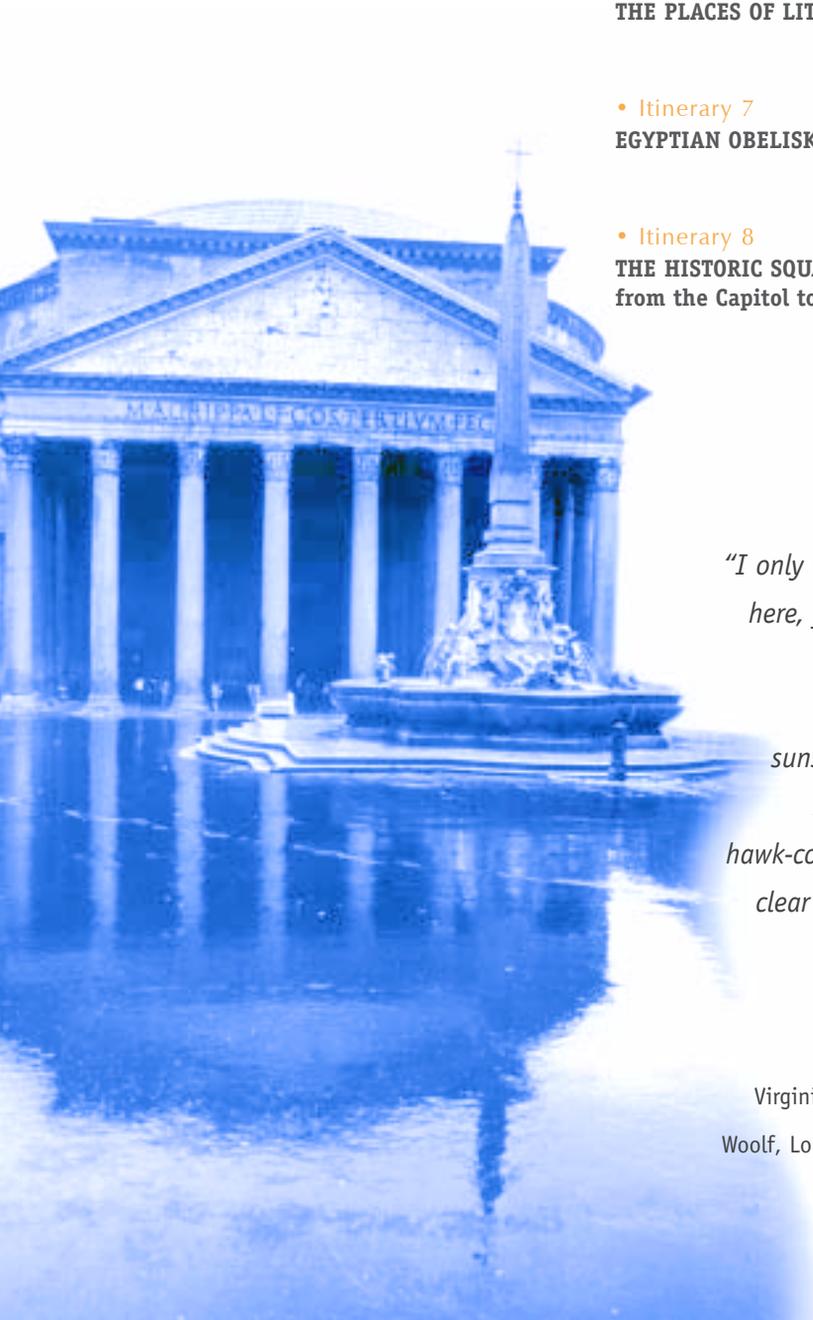
**THE PLACES OF LITERATURE**

- Itinerary 7

**EGYPTIAN OBELISKS**

- Itinerary 8

**THE HISTORIC SQUARES:**  
from the Capitol to Piazza di Spagna



*"I only wish to be allowed to stay  
here, for ever and ever, never to  
see a soul...*

*... Figure us sitting in hot  
sunshine on the doorstep of a  
Roman ruin in a field with  
hawk-coloured archways against a  
clear grape-coloured sky, silvery  
with mountains in the  
background..."*

Virginia Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, London Hogarth Press 1975-1980.

## Itinerary 5



## MEDIÉVAL ROME: the Isola Tiberina and Trastevere

It is not easy to find artistic remainders of the Middle Ages in Rome, also because they are often incorporated into buildings built during later periods, or hidden in places rarely visited by the occasional tourists. In addition to the ancient, Renaissance or Baroque city, there is also a medieval Rome with its monuments and works of art which can, in part, be discovered through this itinerary.

Of the numerous churches built in the Middle Ages in Rome, around 40 remain with their original appearance. And of the 300 existing towers, we can count 50 of them, many of which are absolutely unknown because they are hidden by the buildings against which they stand.

In the Middle Ages Rome was obviously smaller than it is today, and extended along the Tiber, a fundamental resource for water supply and a communication route. In the Trastevere quarter, along the right-hand riverbank, there are still churches and residential buildings dating from the Middle Ages.

The visit may thus begin from the Isola Tiberina, and end in the heart of Trastevere, in Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere.

On the **Isola Tiberina** today it is still possible to admire what remains of the Castle of the Caetani, built against the Torre dei Pierleoni dating from the 10th century. In 1087 Matilde di Canossa and Pope Victor III hid in the tower to escape the dangers of the army of the antipope Clement II and, in 1089, Pope Urban II resided there. The Caetani became the owners of the fortress in around 1294, the year Benedetto Caetani was elected pope with the name Boniface VIII. The tower, which today is still at the head of the Ponte Fabricio, is also known as the Torre della Pulzella (Tower of the Maid), referring to the small marble head of a young woman set into the brick facing.

The towers were residences and fortresses of the aristocratic families, and symbols of their power. Down through the years, many of the tower-houses suffered damage from earthquakes or were torn down as ordered by Senator Brancalione degli Andalò in 1252. With the Renaissance, the residential palace style took hold, and the towers were

incorporated into the new buildings or else totally demolished.

Inside the **Church of San Bartolomeo all'Isola**, before the steps of the presbytery, is one of the most important medieval pieces of the church: a marble puteal or well curb created from a Roman column fragment. It is one of the very few pieces of Ottonian art found in Rome. In fact, it dates from the 10th century, from the time of Otto III, who probably commissioned it. To the left of the church façade rises the Romanesque bell tower, built in the 12th century.

From the Isola Tiberina it is possible to reach the **Piazza in Piscinula** with the Casa Mattei, an elegant complex of 14th-century dwellings built for the noble Roman family and restored, during the Fascist period, by Lorenzo Corrado Cesanelli. On the ground floor of the building several rooms were occupied by the inn called "della Sciacquetta".

The Romanesque poet Trilussa lived for a certain period in the building on the corner of Via della Lungarina.

From Piazza in Piscinula we take the **Via Arco dei Tolomei**, which takes its name from the medieval arch which can still be seen, even if it has been considerably reworked. The monument was erected for the noble Sienese family who lived in this quarter from the 14th century. From Via Arco dei Tolomei we turn onto Via dei Salumi ("of the Cold Cuts": like many streets of the quarter, it owes its name to the trades of the shopkeepers), from which the picturesque Vicolo dell'Atleta starts.

The **Vicolo dell'Atleta** is so named because the *Apoxyomenos* statue ("The Scrapper": an athlete scraping off the sweat and dust mixed with the oil with which he was coated before the fight) was found there in 1849. The sculpture, a 1st century A.D. Roman copy of a Greek original by Lysippos, is now kept in the Vatican Museums.

At no. 14 of Vicolo dell'Atleta we can see a pretty 13th-century construction, with a loggia and small pointed arches on stone corbels, and with an inscription in Hebrew on the central column. It is considered the only surviving ancient Jewish synagogue in the quarter, which was populated by a sizeable colony of Roman Jews in the Middle Ages.

In this zone of Rome, the centre of the oldest Trasteverine folklore, people danced the "saltarello", a typical dance from the regions of Abruzzo and Ciociaria dating from the 14th century.

Each year since 1535, the traditional “Festa de Noantri” (“Festival of Us Others”, i.e. the citizens of Trastevere as opposed to “voantri”, the “you others” of the other quarters) is held, dedicated to Our Lady of Carmine, whose feast-day falls on 16 July. The religious feast-day is supported by the civil festivities which include concerts, sports competitions, and various attractions, ending with a display of fireworks.

Going back to Via dei Genovesi, we can take Via di Santa Cecilia, which leads into the square dominated by the church of the same name. Across from the entrance to the **Basilica of Santa Cecilia**, at the corner of Piazza dei Mercanti there is a lovely example of a 14th-century house.

The church of Santa Cecilia, considerably changed down through the centuries, has a beautiful Gothic tabernacle executed by Arnolfo di Cambio in 1293, and precious 9th-century apse mosaics. The monks’ choir holds the famous fresco with the *Last Judgement* by Pietro Cavallini, the greatest Roman painter of the late 13th century.

Once again going back to Via dei Genovesi, we arrive in **Piazza Sonnino**, which has one of the most well-known medieval constructions: the Torre degli Anguillara, better known as the “House of Dante”. The fortress, consisting of a crenellated wall which, strengthened by a tower, enclosed dwellings and stables, dates from the 13th century. Enlarged in the 15th century by Count Everso II, the building was heavily restored in the 19th century. Since 1914 it has been the seat of the “House of Dante”, a cultural institution that promotes studies on the poet.

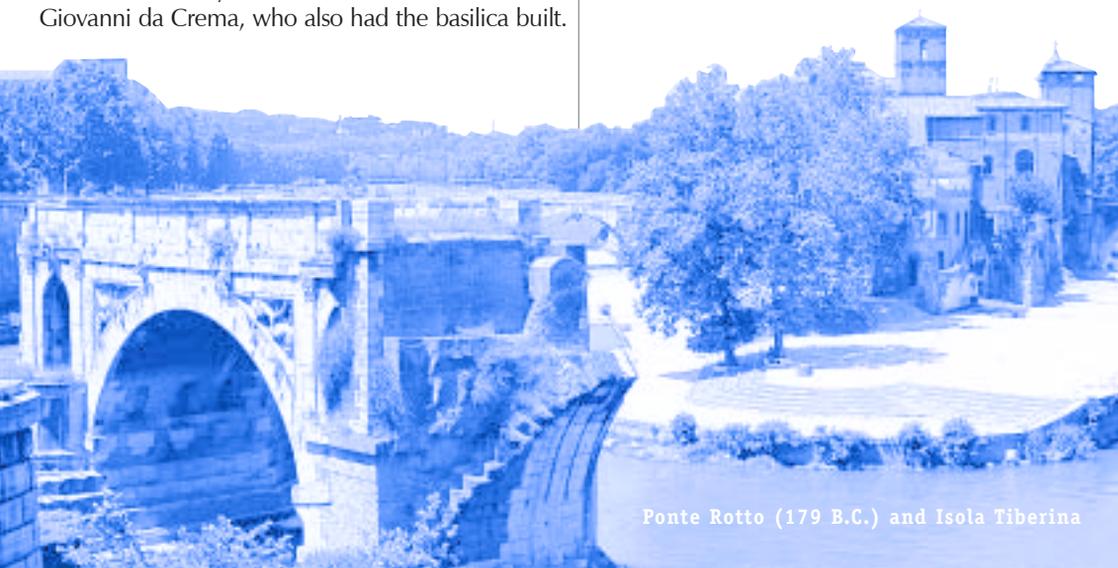
Near the square is the church of **San Crisogono**, one of Trastevere’s great medieval basilicas. In the apse is a 13th-century mosaic erroneously attributed to Pietro Cavallini. The bell tower, 5 storeys tall, was built ca. 1120 by order of the church’s cardinal, Giovanni da Crema, who also had the basilica built.

Going all the way down Via della Lungaretta, we arrive at the square where we find the basilica of **Santa Maria in Trastevere**, one of Rome’s medieval gems (see Itinerary 2). The apse contains the famous mosaics with the *Coronation of the Virgin*, executed in 1143, and the *Stories of the Virgin* done by Pietro Cavallini in the 13th century. To the left of the apse is the Altemps Chapel, containing the 6th-century Our Lady of Mercy, one of the oldest images of the Virgin arriving up to the present day.

The church allegedly stands over the *Taberna meritoria* where, in 38 B.C., a miraculous eruption of oil took place, interpreted later as an annunciation of the birth of Jesus. The first church in the city dedicated to the cult of the Virgin was thus founded on the site of the miracle in the 4th century. In reality, more than a miracle, the eruption was caused by the natural emission of oil from the ground.

This quarter, fairly tranquil during the daytime, at night becomes populated with Romans and foreigners seeking a place to eat and have fun. An excellent pizza can be enjoyed at *Da Ivo*, at Via San Francesco a Ripa 158, or you can eat at *Gildo*, at Via della Scala 31/A. In Piazza di Santa Maria in Trastevere there is the restaurant Sabatini, a true institution in the quarter. In any case, almost all places propose excellent selections, suitable for all tastes and wallets!

Practical advice: The itinerary takes place on foot. We recommend taking it in the afternoon, in order to be able to end the day with a meal in a typically Roman restaurant.



Ponte Rotto (179 B.C.) and Isola Tiberina

## Itinerary 6

- ☉ half-day, if only the centre is visited;
- ☉ entire day, with excursions to the Janiculum and the non catholic Cemetery.

### THE PLACES OF LITERATURE

The itinerary starts in Piazza di Spagna where, at no. 26, we find the house where John Keats lived for a few months before dying there of tuberculosis, on 23 February 1821. In the little house – “like living in a violin”, Alberto Savinio later said – Keats lived with his painter friend Joseph Severn, who stayed by his side until he died. In the **Keats-Shelley Memorial House** there is also a collection of documents concerning the English Romantic poets, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley and George Byron.

From Piazza di Spagna it is easy to reach the **Antico Caffé Greco** at Via Condotti 86, a famous resort of Italian and foreign artists and literati present in 19th-century Rome. Founded in 1760 by Nicola della Maddalena, a Greek, the café achieved fame later when it began to serve a better coffee, served in small cups. Much appreciated by foreigners was also the service, which made it possible to receive mail in a characteristic wooden box situated near the entrance. Among the most famous habitués of the café were Liszt, Gounod, Stendhal, Heine, Wagner, Schopenhauer, Twain, Gogol, Trilussa and D’Annunzio.

The café, which still maintains its 19th-century appearance today, is now owned by the heirs of the Gubinelli Grimaldi family, who have been running it since 1873.

Another customer of the Caffè Greco was **Giacomo Leopardi** (Recanati 1798-Naples 1837), who stayed in Rome in 1822-23, in Palazzo Mattei di Giove, at Via Caetani 32, as a guest of his uncle Carlo Teodoro Antici. Instead, during his second stay, in 1831-32, Leopardi lived between Via delle Carrozze and Via dei Condotti, since he found his uncle’s house too disorderly and dirty for him. Leopardi, who loved neither Rome nor the Romans, was however struck by the classical ruins and the sculptural works exalting the ancient world. It was thus that, after visiting the studio of sculptor Pietro Tenerani, he wrote the lyrical poems *Sopra un bassorilievo antico sepolcrale* (*On*

*an Ancient Sepulchral Bas-relief*) and *Sopra il ritratto di una bella donna* (*On the Portrait of a Beautiful Woman*).

It is worthwhile to remember that **Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol** (Sorocincy, Ukraine 1809-Moscow 1852) composed most of his *Dead Souls* in Rome, according to the tradition of the Caffé Greco, where he stayed several times between 1836 and 1848, and where he became friends with Belli. In the papal city Gogol also wrote the story *Rome*, which remained unfinished and was published against his will in 1841.

There are numerous traces in Rome of **Giuseppe Gioacchino Belli**, the city’s greatest bard, who was born in 1791 and died in 1863. Memorial tablets can be found at his house of birth at Via Monterone 76 and residence of Via del Corso 391, where he lived until the death of his mother in 1807. The poet also lived in Piazza San Lorenzo, at Via Lucina 35 and Via Capo di Ferro 28. His study, in the home of Prince Stanislaw Poniatowsky, was at Via della Croce 78/A, while his tomb is in the Verano Cemetery.

Via Condotti ends at Largo Goldoni, which takes its name from the famous writer **Carlo Goldoni** (Venice 1707-Paris 1793), who arrived in Rome in 1758, at the peak of his career. He stayed in the house of Pietro Poloni located between Via del Corso and Via Condotti, where he wrote the comedy *The Lovers*.

At Via del Corso 18, near Piazza del Popolo, is the **Goethe Museum**, set up in the rooms of a small boarding house, Casa Moscatelli, where the poet stayed when he was in Rome. The guests of the house also included other German travellers such as Johann Heinrich Tischbein, who painted Goethe in famous portrait with the Roman countryside in the background.

Wolfgang Johann Goethe (Frankfurt am Main 1749-Weimar 1832) arrived in Rome for the first time in 1786 incognito, under the name of Jean Philippe Moeller, and stayed until 1787, the year he left for Naples and Sicily. Returning to Rome in 1788, and staying for just a few months, the poet left for his homeland after stating, “Leaving this capital of the world, of which I have been a citizen for so long, and without hopes of returning, gives a feeling that

cannot be expressed in words. No one, except for those who have felt it, can understand it”.

In Rome Goethe, who had perhaps come to escape from his office as a functionary of the State of Weimar and from his companion, Charlotte von Stein, also found the love of Faustina Antonini, a young girl he met in an inn at Via Monte Savello 78.

In the **Museo di Roma in Trastevere**, in Piazza Sant’Egidio, the study of the Roman poet and journalist Carlo Alberto Salustri, better known with his pseudonym **Trilussa**, born on Via del Babuino on 26 October 1871, has been recreated. This section is temporarily closed for restoration. The museum also has autograph writings by **Gioacchino Belli**, to whom a monument is dedicated in the square of the same name in Trastevere.

If there is still time at your disposal, we recommend that you visit the monastic complex of **Sant’Onofrio al Gianicolo**, in whose convent lived, during the last years of his life, Torquato Tasso (Sorrento 1544-Rome 1595). An enchanting, atmospheric place, it was also visited by Giacomo Leopardi who, in a letter to his brother Carlo, wrote: “I went to visit Tasso’s tomb and cried on it. This is the first and only pleasure I have felt in Rome”. In the **Museo Tassiano** (to visit it, just ring the buzzer at the Ordine Equestre del Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme, ph. 066828121) there are manuscripts by the poet, editions of his books, his death mask, and his tombstone from the Church of Sant’Onofrio where Tasso is buried (first chapel on the left). The oak tree, in whose shade the poet, alone and depressed, loved to rest during his walks, is still there today, along the promenade of the Janiculum, near the Piazzetta dell’Anfiteatro.

Also outside the centre, near Porta San Paolo, behind the Pyramid of Cestius, is the **Protestant Cemetery**, the final resting place for non-Catholic foreigners who have died in Rome since the late 18th century. There are numerous tombs, including that of Keats, with the simple epitaph “Here lies one whose name was write in water”, and the tomb of Goethe’s only son, August (1789-1830), born of the poet’s affair with Christiane Vulpius, the inspiring muse of the “*Erotikon*”. On the tomb there is only a marble portrait, without a name, accompanied by the simple indication “Goethe filius”.

Practical information: Keats-Shelley Memorial House, Piazza di Spagna 26, open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m., closed Sundays (ph. 066784235).

Goethe Museum, Via del Corso 18, open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., closed Mondays (ph. 0632650412).

Museo di Roma in Trastevere, Piazza S. Egidio 1/b, open from 10.00 a.m. to 8 p.m., closed Mondays (ph. 065816563).



Monument to G.G. Belli – Piazza G.G. Belli

## EGYPTIAN OBELISKS

Rome has been nicknamed the city of obelisks, since it is the city with by far the largest number. At present there are thirteen, although there are legends of a fourteenth obelisk buried near the church of San Luigi dei Francesi. The Emperor Augustus was the first to raise them, bringing two from Egypt; Caligula followed his example by raising one in the Circus Vaticanus and building in the Campus Martius the large temple dedicated to Isis and Serapis, in the vicinity of which 5 obelisks were later found; many Roman emperors continued to erect obelisks down through the 4th century, including Constantius II, who in 352 erected in the Circus Maximus the obelisk that now stands in front of St. John Lateran, the tallest and oldest obelisk in the world. In fact, it is 32.18 metres tall and dates from the 15th century B.C.

For the ancient Egyptians the obelisks were the simulacra of the sun god Atum-Ra. The apex represented the starting point of the ray, i.e. the centre of the sun's power, while the base represented the formless matter that the divine light of the sun transforms into cosmos. The first obelisks were erected at Heliopolis, a city dedicated to the sun, and were usually erected in the centre of the sanctuaries and next to temples. They are the relicts of an extremely remote age, when even stones were objects of worship! In Rome they completely lost their original meaning, and took on another: that of a sign of the greatness of the Roman Empire first, and the papacy later.

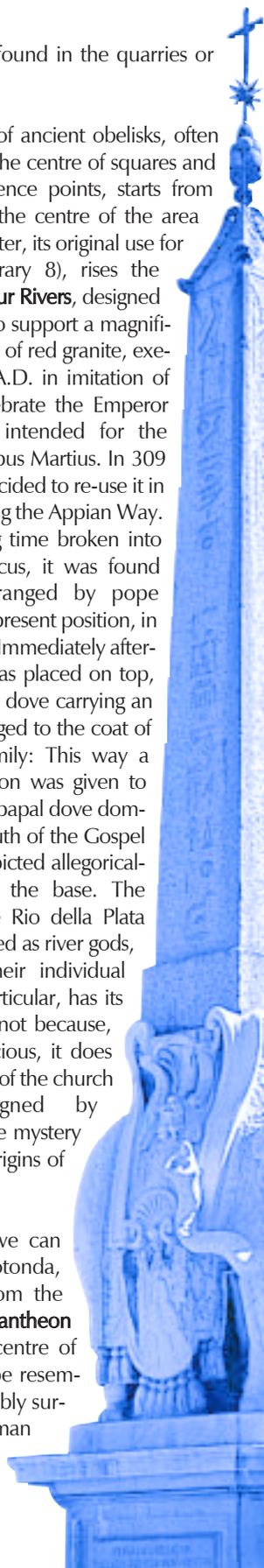
The term we use today to refer to obelisks, different from that used by the ancient Egyptians, is of Greek origin: it derives from *obeliskos*, which means, perhaps with a hint of not-so-involuntary irony, "skewer".

To extract the huge monoliths from the quarries, the Egyptians allegedly used a tool similar to our drill, equipped with a sort of stone or bronze milling-cutter, whose abrasive action was greatly increased by the use of sand. Once it was detached from the rock, the obelisk was made to slide towards the river and hoisted up onto a large flatboat to be carried to its destination. The erection took place using an embankment: the progressive elimination of the sand on which it rested made it possible to bring the monolith down onto its base. The obelisks often broke during these long, delicate operations, as

proven by the fragments found in the quarries or on riverbeds.

Our itinerary in search of ancient obelisks, often arranged by the popes in the centre of squares and crossroads as visual reference points, starts from **Piazza Navona**. Here, in the centre of the area that recalls, with its perimeter, its original use for athletic games (see Itinerary 8), rises the famous **Fountain of the Four Rivers**, designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini to support a magnificent obelisk. The monolith of red granite, executed in the 1st century A.D. in imitation of the Egyptian ones to celebrate the Emperor Domitian, was perhaps intended for the Temple of Isis in the Campus Martius. In 309 the Emperor Maxentius decided to re-use it in the circus he had built along the Appian Way. After remaining for a long time broken into five pieces inside the circus, it was found again in 1649 and arranged by pope Innocent X Pamphili in its present position, in the centre of the fountain. Immediately afterwards the bronze point was placed on top, decorated on its tip with a dove carrying an olive branch, which belonged to the coat of arms of the Pamphili family: This way a strong symbolic connotation was given to the complex, because the papal dove dominates and transmits the truth of the Gospel to the four continents, depicted allegorically by the four rivers at the base. The Danube, the Ganges, the Rio della Plata and the Nile are represented as river gods, easily recognisable by their individual attributes. The Nile, in particular, has its face covered with a veil: not because, as suggested by the malicious, it does not want to see the façade of the church of Sant'Agnese, designed by Borromini, but to show the mystery that still surrounded the origins of the river's sources.

From Piazza Navona we can go towards Piazza della Rotonda, which takes its name from the cylindrical shape of the **Pantheon** (see Itinerary 8). In the centre of the square, which in shape resembles the arcade that probably surrounded the temple in Roman times, there is a fountain with a mixtilinear plan



designed by Giacomo della Porta in 1575. In the centre of the basin Pope Clement XI Albani, in 1711, ordered the erection of the obelisk that can still be seen there. The red granite monolith, 6.43 metres tall, comes from Egypt, where it had been erected by Ramses II in the 13th century B.C. in the city of Heliopolis. Brought to Rome in an unknown time, it was reused in the temple dedicated to Isis and Serapis in Campus Martius.

To eat, we can go to Via dei Pastini, where there is an excellent bread and pizza baker. Also on the same street, at no. 122-123, there is the restaurant *Er faciolaro*, specialised in Roman dishes.

Going along the left-hand side of the Pantheon, we reach the **Piazza della Minerva**, decorated admirably by another monument by Bernini. The little obelisk of red granite, 5.47 metres tall, was constructed in the 6th century B.C. by the Pharaoh Apries, and was rediscovered in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva. Immediately after the discovery, Pope Alexander VII Chigi decided to erect it in the square in front of the church, and entrusted the design of the monument to Bernini, who thought up the elephant as a base. For the creation of the monument, Bernini allegedly drew inspiration from a novel published in the late 1500s by Francesco Colonna, mindful of the symbolism of Egyptian hieroglyphics. In fact, the stele should represent the divine wisdom that descends from the strong mind depicted by the elephant, as is also stated in the inscription on the base, with the warning from Alexander VII: "a strong mind is necessary to support solid wisdom". The monument is known today as the "Pulcino della Minerva" (Minerva's Chick), which derives from the 18th-century name of "*Porcin della Minerva*" (Minerva's Piglet), which stressed the elephant's resemblance to a piglet.

From the Piazza della Minerva we can go towards **Piazza Montecitorio** where, in front of the palazzo which is the seat of the Parliament, we see the red granite obelisk originally erected in the 6th century B.C. at Heliopolis by Pharaoh Psammetichus II, and transported to Rome by Augustus in 10 B.C..

Augustus used this obelisk as a gnomon, that is the style of a gigantic sundial constructed in the Campus Martius. It was supposed to project its shadow onto a marble-paved square, indicating the hours, seasons, signs of the zodiac and years, which were marked out in bronze. This sundial was not only a technological wonder: it had been constructed in relation to the Ara Pacis, which originally stood near the church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, and was regulated so as to direct its shadow towards the altar on the Emperor's birthday.

The obelisk was erected where it is today in 1794 as per the wishes of Pope Pius VI, who had it restored, filling in the missing parts with granite from the Column of Antoninus Pius, which was thus destroyed.

On the square is the characteristic *Caffè di Montecitorio*, whose clients include the deputies of the Italian Republic. On the nearby Piazza di Pietra is, instead, the famous *Caffettiera*, a renowned Neapolitan café.

We recommend that you now take the Via del Corso and conclude this itinerary by reaching **Piazza del Popolo**. In the splendid setting of the square, stands the 23.9-metre-high obelisk dating from the 14th century B.C. It was the first obelisk to be transferred to Rome in the time of Augustus, to celebrate the victory over Egypt, and it was originally set up in the Circus Maximus. Its present position, at the crossroads of the three streets that make up the so-called trident (Via del Corso, Via di Ripetta and Via del Babuino), dates from 1589 and is due to the untiring work of the town-planner pope Sixtus V and his architect Domenico Fontana. The architect and the pope moved three obelisks into the areas of three Roman basilicas: St. Peter's, Santa Maria Maggiore and St. John Lateran.

In the past the obelisk of Piazza del Popolo served as a source of fun for the Romans who, after blind-folding a playmate, would force him to walk from the obelisk as far as Via del Corso. It would be very difficult for the hapless victim to succeed, because he would be blocked by the obstacles he found along his way.

For eating, go to Via di Ripetta, where you will find the restaurant *Buca di Ripetta* and the pizzeria *Pizza Ré*, specialised in Neapolitan pizza. On the other hand, for just a quick snack, there is "*Pane e Formaggio*".

## THE HISTORIC SQUARES: from the Capitol to Piazza di Spagna

This itinerary can start from nowhere else but the **Piazza del Campidoglio**, situated on the Capitoline Hill, which has always been the privileged seat of divinity and power. Although it is the lowest and least extensive of the Seven Hills of Rome, in the early 6th century B.C. there stood the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, by far the most important temple of ancient Rome. Near the present-day church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli was, instead, the Temple of Juno Moneta.

It was precisely in the Temple of Juno Moneta, i.e. "exhorter, admonisher", that the first mint of Rome was established, and the goddess's epithet later gave rise to the Italian word "moneta", to mean "coin".

In 390 B.C. the Gauls, commanded by King Brennus, stormed into Rome, crossing the Capitoline Hill, but the sacred geese of Juno, kept here, started squawking. The Romans, awakened by the noise of the animals, were thus able to repel the assailants.

During the Middle Ages the summit of the hill, partially abandoned, leading it to be called Monte Caprino after the goats grazing there, was the site of a marketplace.

In the market the measure for wine was the inside of an ancient column drum, while that for wheat, the ruggitella, was the urn of the ashes of the Empress Agrippina.

The square, as an actual urbanistic element, was created only starting in 1538, when Pope Paul III entrusted its arrangement to Michelangelo. Michelangelo designed the lovely star-shaped pavement pattern, the façade of the Palazzo Senatorio, the seat of the City of Rome since 1143, and the two palaces embracing the square, today the renovated seat of the Capitoline Museums, the oldest museums in the world.

The equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, of which a faithful copy can be seen in the centre of the square and the original is in the museums, managed to pass unharmed through the Middle Ages, a period when metals were melted down and reused, only thanks to a misunderstanding: the popes, who were its owners until the 15th century, had identified the

person depicted as Constantine, the first Christian emperor. Legend has it that when the screech-owl between the horse's ears will hoot, the end of the world will arrive. This event seems to be very far off, however, considering that the owl is, in reality, a tuft of the horse's mane!

A new passageway connects Piazza del Campidoglio to the Terraces of the Vittoriano which offer a breath taking view of the city. The monument, devoted to the first king of Italy Victor Emmanuel II, and, since 1921, to the Unknown Soldier, includes the Museum of the Risorgimento and the Sanctuary of the Flags. It is entirely accessible to the public.

At the foot of the Capitoline Hill opens out **Piazza Venezia**, which takes its name from the monumental palace ordered by Pope Paul II, who was of Venetian origin, in the mid-15th century.

In 1929, when Palazzo Venezia became the seat of the head of the Government, the square was proclaimed "Forum of Italy", becoming the true centre of the city. One side of the square is dominated by the theatrical backdrop of the Vittoriano. The construction of the building unfortunately carried with it the total destruction of the pre-existing medieval and Renaissance quarter where Michelangelo had lived until his death.

From Piazza Venezia it is possible to reach fairly quickly, going down a stretch of the Via del Corso, **Piazza Colonna**, thus named after the 2nd-century marble column celebrating the victories of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius over the Germanic populations.

The column escaped destruction because during the Middle Ages the little Benedictine church of Sant'Andrea was built against it. It was possible to go up to the little terrace at the top, using the internal staircase, on payment of a fee. From there, where the statues of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina were once situated, the pilgrims could admire a vast panorama.

The square was the site of the papal post office, a place of famous cafés, and famous band concerts. At present it is the centre of the Italian political life, which gravitates around Palazzo Chigi, the seat of the Prime Minister.

From Piazza Colonna we can go, passing in front of Palazzo Montecitorio, seat of the Parliament of the Republic, towards the **Piazza** called della **Rotonda**, which takes its name from the unmistakable structure of the Pantheon.

The Pantheon is the building of ancient Rome which has been preserved best down to the present day, and is a true masterpiece of architecture. The name of Agrippa, which can still be read on the façade, remembers the son-in-law of the Emperor Augustus, who first built this temple dedicated “to all the gods”. The present-day Pantheon, however, completely different from the original, is the work of the Emperor Hadrian, who rebuilt the monument in the early 2nd century, keeping only the ancient inscription out of modesty.

In the 6th century the Byzantine emperor Phocas gave the building to Pope Boniface IV, who turned it into the present church of Sancta Maria ad Martyres.

For the solemn consecration of the church, the pope had 28 cartloads of bones of martyrs brought from the catacombs, putting them underneath the altar. During the ceremony, as the notes of the Gloria were struck, the Romans saw swarms of devils rise up and fly out the hole in the dome.

The most amazing characteristic of the building is the exceptional covering dome. It is the largest dome ever created out of concrete: it measures 43.30 m in diameter and is greater than that of the dome of St. Peter's!

The entire building is conceived as a perfect geometric figure: a sphere inserted in a cylinder. The diameter of the sphere coincides with the height of the cylinder. The dome, created with different materials, increasingly lighter as they go upwards, ends with a large open

“eye”, of a diameter of 9 metres. Through this opening enters the rain, which is conveyed into the drains visible on the pavement.

The Pantheon today is the sanctuary of the kings of Italy: in fact it holds the tombs of Victor Emmanuel II, Humbert I and Margherita di Savoia. In an ancient sarcophagus there is also the tomb of Raphael. On the cover of the sarcophagus are inscribed the two Latin verses that Pietro Bembo wrote for the famous artist: *This is Raphael: living, great Nature feared he might outvie Her works, and dying, fears herself may die.*

If you have time for a short pause, we suggest you have a coffee or a coffee ice (“granita”) with whipped cream at the *Tazza d'Oro* coffee shop, at the corner of Via dei Pastini. Gastronomical delicacies can be purchased at the Rossi delicatessen at Piazza della Rotonda 4.

From Piazza della Rotonda the distance is short to **Piazza Navona**, one of the most extraordinary examples of town planning in the city. The original shape of the piazza, in fact, repeats with extreme faithfulness the perimeter of the ancient stadium of Domitian built in 86 A.D. for athletic competitions.

The remains of this ancient complex lie 5-6 metres below the current road level, and can still be seen underneath a modern building in Piazza di Tor Sanguigna and in the base-



G. Della Porta:  
Fountain of Piazza della Rotonda (detail)

ments of the church of Sant'Agnese in Agone. The present-day name of the piazza derives, by linguistic corruption, from the term "Agones", which in Latin means "games".

The church of Sant'Agnese in Agone stands on the spot where, according to tradition, the twelve-year-old Agnes was martyred at the end of the 3rd century during the violent persecutions of the emperor Diocletian. The saint was exposed to the mockery of the pagans, but her nakedness was covered by the miraculous growth of her own hair.

The nature and appearance of the present-day piazza were impressed in the 17th century since the noble family of the Pamphili, who had established there residence in the zone, entrusted the greatest architects of the time with the task of monumentalising the area and making it one of the most scenic spaces existing in the city.

One of the most amusing spectacles was the so-called "lake" which was created in the piazza during the hottest months. The mouth of the sea monster twisting amidst the waves, the only drainage point of the water of the Fountain of the Four Rivers, was closed, thus causing the piazza to be flooded. The carriages going to Palazzo Pamphili were decorated in the most bizarre fashions, always in any case having to do with water. As they went by they were admired by the people, who took advantage of the lake to freshen up a little. The custom was interrupted in the late 1800s for sanitary reasons.

The piazza is surrounded by excellent cafés and ice-cream shops: we recommend a stop at *Tre Scalini*, for their famous chocolate "truffle", or the *Caffè della Pace* on Via della Pace, which for years has been one of the liveliest meeting places of the capital. At night it is the preferred spot for young people and entertainers, while in the daytime it is the haven of artists and intellectuals.

The necessary close to the itinerary across the historic squares of Rome is **Piazza di Spagna**. Extremely original in shape, with a narrowing at the centre which divides it into two parts, almost like a butterfly's wings, since the 17th century it has been the meeting place for travellers coming from all over the world, who could easily arrive here with their carriages. Thus hotels, shops and cafés began to spring up, where painters, writers, and children of rich families would meet, in an international atmosphere, described in the late

19th century by Gabriele D'Annunzio. The European nature of the area is clearly stressed by the presence of the diplomatic offices of France and Spain, which also influenced the name of the piazza itself. In fact, at first known as *Platea Trinitatis*, after the church of Trinità dei Monti overlooking it, it later became Piazza di Spagna, on the right side, in front of the building of the Spanish Embassy, and Piazza di Francia, on the part towards Via del Babuino.

In 1857, the column of the Virgin was raised in front of the Palazzo di Spagna. It is one of the last monuments of papal Rome, ordered by Pope Pius IX to celebrate the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. Each year, on 8 December, the city's firemen, in the presence of the pope, pay homage to the Virgin by placing a floral wreath on the statue.

On the hilltop, where in antiquity there were fabulous residential villas, today there is the striking façade of the church erected in the 16th century for the French monarchs on the spot preferred by St. Francis of Paola for solitude and peace. In fact, the site was completely isolated from the lower part and, where today the staircase is admired, there was originally an actual wood, often the site of crimes. The staircase built by Francesco de Santis, starting in 1732, is made up of 138 steps which are ascended very easily because the architect had included in his plan benches and small resting spaces between one ramp and the next.

If it is afternoon, we recommend stopping for the ritual 5 o'clock tea at the renowned *Babington's Tearoom*, a true piece of old England established in 1893 by the enterprising Miss Babington and Miss Cargill. Here an excellent brunch is also served, but for a quicker snack there is always *Mc Donald's* in Piazza di Spagna. For the other numerous eating places and shops of the zone, see Itinerary 14.

# WINTER

G.L. Bernini: Fountain of the Rivers (detail) – Piazza Navona

• Itinerary 9  
**BAROQUE ROME:  
Bernini and Borromini**

• Itinerary 10  
**RENAISSANCE ROME:  
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**THE PALACES OF THE NOBILITY**

• Itinerary 12  
**THE PLACES OF THE SAINTS**



*“Maria and I have just come back from a week in Rome, where we had been lent a flat to do some sightseeing. What a place! It inspires one at once with a kind of passion to know it utterly and inside out”*

Aldous Huxley,  
Aldous Huxley at UCLA a catalogue  
of the manuscripts in the Aldous Huxley collection.  
Los Angeles, University of California Library. 1964

## Itinerary 9


**BAROQUE ROME:**  
**Bernini and Borromini**

If there is a period in art that can be said to have left its nature indelibly impressed on the city of Rome, this is the Baroque. The concrete expression of the triumphant Church that managed to overcome the crisis caused by the Protestant Reformation, the Baroque is the style of theatricality, wonder and amazement par excellence that emotionally involves the viewer. During the 17th century palaces, fountains, squares and churches were created, totally invading the city and giving it a new face which, today still, sets it apart in the world.

Throughout this itinerary, two names are alternately repeated: those of the two great and undisputed protagonists of this season, Bernini and Borromini who, perhaps because of the rivalry that characterised their relationship, both proved to be authentic geniuses.

The itinerary begins with the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, where it is possible to admire a true masterpiece, the amazing **Ecstasy of St. Theresa** carved by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Situated in the Cornaro Chapel, to the left of the transept, the work is conceived in a theatrical manner, respecting the words of St. Theresa of Avila who, to describe the moment when an angel pierced her heart, wrote that she had felt “inflamed by the love of God”. The “staging” of the work is accentuated by the presence, in side balconies, of several members of the Cornaro family, who are the privileged spectators of an experience in which all the faithful are invited to participate.

In the 18th century the sculpture was particularly criticised for being too sensual, so much so that the Marquis de Sade found it hard to believe that Theresa was really a saint and De Brosse, a French man of letters, even stated, “If this is divine love, I know it well”.

Next, the design for the church of **San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane**, on Via del Quirinale, is by Francesco Borromini. The strange, fanciful shapes of the architectural elements, as well as the continuous alternation of concave and convex lines in the decorative elements, were achieved thanks to the

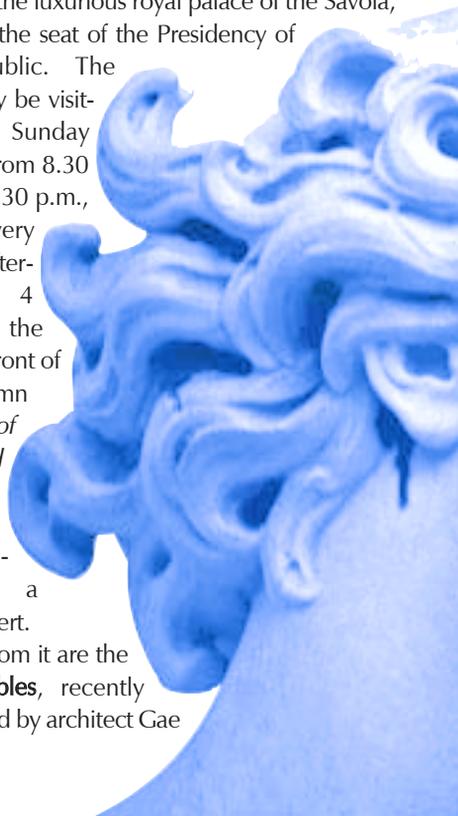
exclusive use of stucco, a particularly ductile material that was very suitable – more than marble – for the fantastic designs of the architect. Borromini managed to create an absolute masterpiece, in spite of the extremely small dimensions of the church. It is said that the entire surface of the church is as large as a single supporting column of the dome of St. Peter’s!

Continuing along the street, on the same side as San Carlino, there stands the church of **Sant’Andrea al Quirinale**, a masterpiece by Bernini. Called the “pearl” of the Baroque because of the precious materials used in its construction, the church was the building to which Bernini felt closest. During the last years of his life, in the later afternoon, he would have himself taken to the church to admire the light that, filtered by the windows, was reflected on the marble walls and gold and stucco decorations.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini was also responsible for two works in the **Palazzo del Quirinale**: the benediction loggia and the circular tower, added as a defensive bulwark at the time of Pope Urban VIII.

Originally a 16th-century suburban residence, the Palazzo del Quirinale was later chosen as the pope’s summer residence thanks to the salubrity of the air and the closeness to the centre of the city. After becoming the luxurious royal palace of the Savoia, today it is the seat of the Presidency of the Republic. The palace may be visited every Sunday morning, from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., while every Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m., in the square in front of it, the solemn *Changing of the Guard* takes place, accompanied by a band concert.

Across from it are the **Papal Stables**, recently restructured by architect Gae



Aulenti to hold important art exhibitions. From the coffee shop, set up inside the exhibition space, one of the most spectacular views over the city can be enjoyed.

Descending from the Quirinal along Via della Dataria, and going past Via del Corso, a visit to the church of **Sant'Ignazio** is worthwhile, even if it contains no works by either Bernini or Borromini. The huge ceiling, frescoed by Father Andrea Pozzo, who created an architecture which opens up into the sky where St. Ignatius is received and glorified, is in fact one of the last and astounding expressions of Baroque painting. An incredible illusion is created by the fake architectural structures that give the idea of a space that extends forever. But even greater is the amazement before the fake dome. It is a *trompe-l'oeil* effect done in perspective in such a way as to be seen by the congregation arranged along the nave. In order to admire the dome, painted on canvas, you can stand on the porphyry disk in the centre of the nave. Instead, to grasp the visual illusion, it is necessary to move towards the transept! The mind and hands behind this masterpiece is Andrea Pozzo, a Jesuit priest, painter, architect and mathematician who also worked as a cook for his religious order.

Before continuing the visit, you should stop to admire the small but lovely little square in front of the church.

When, in 1727, the architect Filippo

Raguzzini designed the lively buildings, he was criticised for having created a square in the shape of a "canterano" (chest of drawers), a piece of

furniture much in vogue at the time. In reality, the space today appears as one of the most successful rococo creations. The Via del Burrò, which winds behind one of the buildings, takes its name from *bureaux*, i.e. the French offices that were housed in those buildings.

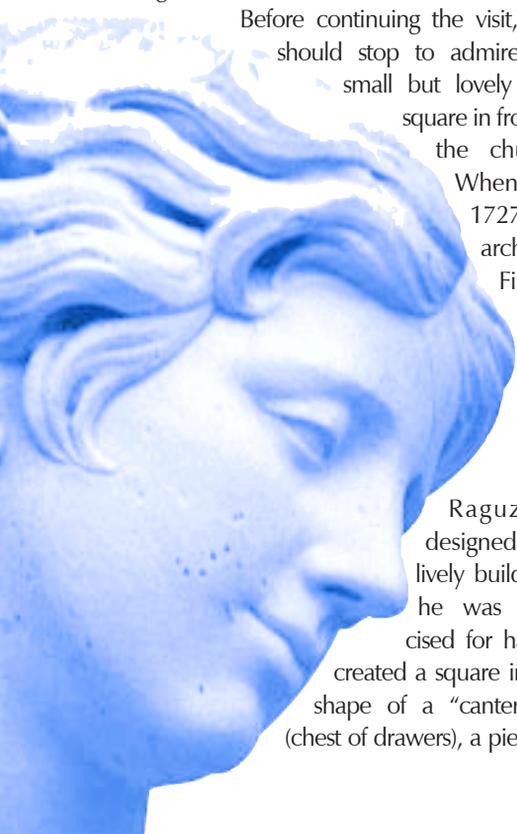
At Via dei Bergamaschi 59 there is a shop, *Tulipani Bianchi*, where two amicable young Swiss people, Monika e Franz, create extremely original bouquets and elegant floral compositions.

At the nearby Piazza di Pietra 45, you can eat at the *Osteria dell'Ingegno* (066780662). Also very popular are the American pub *Miscellanea*, which offers tasty salads for lunch, Via delle Paste, and the *Pub Incontro*, at Via del Collegio Romano 6.

Going along Via del Seminario, after passing the Pantheon (See Itinerary 8) we turn left to reach Piazza Sant'Eustachio, where we can admire the dome of **Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza**, a masterpiece by Francesco Borromini.

The church was conceived to be the chapel of the University of Rome, founded in 1303 by Boniface VIII. The original seat was in Trastevere and, only in the mid-15th century, the university was transferred to the area of Sant'Ivo, where the building still stands today. The building was the seat of the "La Sapienza" University of Rome until 1935, when it was transferred to the "Città Universitaria".

The task of building the chapel of Sant'Ivo was originally assigned to Gian Lorenzo Bernini who, considering the work troublesome and difficult, entrusted it to Borromini, who instead created a structure as extraordinary as it was complex. The very original hexagonal plan takes up, in a schematised manner, the bee symbol of the Barberini family who commissioned the work. Also extraordinary is the dome, with an unusual spiral shape culminating with a crown of flames. It is the symbol of charity, the main virtue of St. Ives, protector of lawyers, who placed himself free of charge at the service of the poor and defenceless, thus becoming the "poorman's lawyer". The lantern of the dome recalls the valve of a mollusc which Borromini kept in his shell collection. It is thus probable that the artist was inspired, in his design for the bejewelled crown



topping the building, by the elongated shape of the mollusc!

If you would like a good cup of coffee, don't miss the *Caffè Sant'Eustachio*, Piazza Sant'Eustachio 82, while at no. 54 is *Camilloni*, famous for its pastries and home-made ice-cream.

After a stop at Piazza Navona (See Itinerary 7), always a beautiful setting for festivities, shows and processions, the itinerary on the Baroque can only end at the Vatican, where Bernini left countless specimens of his talent, starting from the spectacular **Colonnade of St. Peter's Square**.

The elliptical shape, symbolising the Church's embrace of all of mankind, is defined by a series of 284 columns arranged in four rows. If, however, you stand on one of the two focuses of the ellipse, marked by a granite disk, it seems that the colonnade is made up of only a single row of columns! At the end of the right-hand arm of the colonnade, two Swiss Guards stand watch before the **Scala Regia**.

Skilfully exploiting the little space at his disposal, the artist managed to give the illusion of a much bigger staircase through the use of optical devices.

Inside the basilica, also, Bernini's ingenious inventions never cease to amaze. The huge space under the dome was occupied by the gigantic **Baldacchino**, 29 metres high like Palazzo Farnese and the Louvre, whose twisted columns were cast of bronze taken from the Pantheon, a fact that immediately became the subject of the famous pasquinade "*Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini*" (What the Barbarians did not do, the Barberini did).

The Baldacchino was erected over the altar, which in turn was placed exactly over the spot where, according to tradition, St. Peter is buried.

On the bases of the bronze columns supporting the Baldacchino, it is possible to see the shields with the Barberini bees.

A closer examination reveals, however, that in reality they show the sequence of expressions of pain on the face of a woman giving birth. Going around the monument clockwise, seven different

moments of pregnancy can be seen, up to the smiling face of a baby. Bernini intended, evidently through the figure of Pope Urban VIII Barberini, to celebrate mankind who suffers while awaiting salvation.

At the back of the apse is the **Cathedra**, the large bronze chair, supported by four gigantic statues portraying the Doctors of the Church, which was created to hold the episcopal chair where Peter sat. In reality, the cathedra, kept inside the Baroque monument, dates from the 9th century and is a gift from King Charles I (the Bald) to Pope John VII.

To give an idea of the dimensions of the cathedra, just imagine that 121 tons of bronze were used and that the wingspan of the dove of the Holy Spirit in the stained-glass window is 1.75 metres long. The tiaras of the Doctors of the Church, situated below, are also about two metres high.

Bernini also did the funeral monuments for Popes **Urban VIII** Barberini and **Alexander VII** Chigi. The latter, situated in the left transept, originally had the statue of Truth carved nude; but the pope, judging the female figure scandalous, had it covered with a bronze robe. Bernini, who by then was on in years, in spite of his objections, had to surrender before the pope's request and see his work modified.

The door at the bottom of the monument is the Door of Death, symbolised by the macabre skeleton with hourglass in hand, through which all mortal beings must pass sooner or later.

## RENAISSANCE ROME: from the Vatican to the Parione, Regola and Trastevere Quarters

During the Middle Ages, the city of Rome was abandoned due to the transfer of the papal court to Avignon, in France. The absence of the pope thus caused an economic crisis that forced the population to abandon the city. This, reduced to poverty, soon became a mass of ruins where herds of sheep and cattle grazed. But after 1418, the year when Pope Martin V re-established the Papal See in Rome, the city began to be born again and, at the end of the 15th century, it returned to being the great capital it had once been.

This itinerary starts with the Vatican Museums, within which it is possible to visit the **Sistine Chapel**, one of the most famous and visited monuments in the world. Ordered in the late 15th century by Pope Sixtus IV, from which it takes its name, the chapel is the most emblematic example of papal patronage during the Renaissance. It is decorated with extraordinary frescoes executed by Perugino, Ghirlandaio, Luca Signorelli, Botticelli and Cosimo Rosselli, who at the end of the 15th century were the most famous painters working between Tuscany and Umbria. Later the chapel, to be used by both the pope and the congregation, was adorned with the extraordinary paintings done by Michelangelo in the 16th century. The great artists – who was also of Tuscan origin – painted the frescoes of the vault between 1508 and 1512, and those of the altar wall, with the extremely famous *Last Judgment*, between 1534 and 1541. The approximately four hundred characters crowding the Judgment scene are almost all naked, and in some cases persons who were the artist's contemporaries are portrayed. Minos, with his sides encircled by a snake biting his testicles, has the features of Biagio da Cesena, a papal Master of Ceremonies, while in the skin of St. Sebastian, who was skinned alive, it is possible to recognise the face of Michelangelo. The nudes caused a great scandal at the time and, when Michelangelo was still alive, they were partly painted over with garments by Daniele da Volterra, earning him the nickname of "Il Braghettone" (the "breeches maker"). The restoration work to clean the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel was completed in 1999 and made it possible to rediscover the vivid original colours, darkened for so many years by soot.

From the Vatican Museums, where it is also possible to see **Raphael's Stanze**, painted between 1509 and 1512, and the **Borgia Apartment**, frescoed in the late 15th century by Pinturicchio, we can arrive in St. Peter's Square.

The square is dominated by the largest church in the world: **St. Peter's Basilica**. The dome was designed by Michelangelo, who also designed the plan of the Renaissance church, rebuilt over the early Christian one as ordered by papal architect Donato Bramante, who had the ancient basilica torn down. For this reason Bramante was nicknamed "Mastro ruinante" ("ruining master"). By Michelangelo there is also the beautiful Pietà, kept in the first chapel of the right aisle. It is the only work actually signed by the great artist. It is said that the sculptor, angry because no one knew who had done the masterpiece, decided to engrave his name on the band encircling the Virgin's breast. Michelangelo also engraved his monogram "M" in the folds of the Virgin's right hand, the one turned towards the viewer.

From St. Peter's, by crossing the Ponte Vittorio Emanuele II, we can go for lunch at *Lilli*, a typical Roman trattoria, at Via Tor di Nona 26. At Via del Governo Vecchio 28, on the other hand, is *Da Giovanni*, a very popular food store specialised in pizza with various fillings!

Near Piazza Navona is the beautiful church of **Santa Maria della Pace**, with a Baroque façade by Pietro da Cortona. In reality it was built on order from Sixtus IV, the same pope who had the Sistine Chapel built, in the late 15th century. Inside there are frescoes by Peruzzi and Raphael, the *Sibyls*. The cloister is an extraordinary example of Renaissance architecture, and is the first work completed in Rome by Bramante.

To plunge completely into the Renaissance atmosphere, it is sufficient to lose yourself among the alleys of the **Parione quarter**, between Piazza del Fico, Via di Parione, Via del Governo Vecchio, Via di Monte Giordano and Via dei Coronari, famous for its antique shops. Looking at the façades of the buildings is a real pleasure, often compounded by the amazement over the unexpected discovery of a lovely courtyard.

The areas around Via della Pace, Piazza del Fico and Via del Governo Vecchio come alive, in the late afternoon through to late at night, with crowds of people that make the quarter one of the city's

livieliest. For eating or drinking there is a vast selection to choose from, although for a “Roman” style pizza we recommend *Baffetto* on Via del Governo Vecchio and *Il Corallo* on the street of the same name. Also delightful is the restaurant *Ciccia Bomba* at Via del Governo Vecchio 76.

In Piazza Pasquino there is the **statue of Pasquino**, the most famous “talking statue” in Rome. For centuries the torso of the ancient statue has been used to post satirical writings, the so-called “pasquinades”, written by anonymous citizens or famous poets such as Pietro Aretino and Gianbattista Marino.

There were at least six talking statues. Those that are still known are *Madama Lucrezia* in Piazza San Marco; *Marforio* in the courtyard of Palazzo Nuovo at the Capitol; the *Facchino* (the Porter) on Via Lata, *Abbot Luigi* in Piazza Vidoni, and the *Baboon* on Via del Babuino.

Crossing Corso Vittorio Emanuele, we arrive at the Regola quarter, where other Renaissance streets open out. **Via di Monserrato**, which takes its name from the Spanish sanctuary of Montserrat, was called in olden times *Via di Corte Savella*, after the prisons and tribunals under the jurisdiction of the Savelli family. Along the street, there are many buildings erected between the 15th and 16th centuries, including the House of Pietro Paolo della Zecca, Palazzo Incoronati (no. 152), Palazzo Ricci (no. 25) and the one at no. 117.

Used in the Renaissance by prostitutes, the building was restored in 1870 by the owner who, criticised for having wanted to modernise the façade too much, had the architrave engraved with the phrase “Trahit sua quemque voluptas” (Everyone is moved by his own pleasure), thus intending to claim his right to act freely. **Via del Pellegrino** is a section of the straight medieval street that connected the zone of the Porticus of Octavia with the Ponte Sant’Angelo. Reorganised in the 15th century by Popes Sixtus IV and Alexander VI, the street still has several façades of buildings painted in the 16th century (nos. 64-66). At no. 58 lived Vannozza Cattanei, the lover of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, later pope Alexander VI, from whom were born Lucretia and Cesare, called Il Valentino. At the end of the street, towards Campo de’ Fiori, on the right there opens a closed alley leading into a very picturesque courtyard, the “Archetto degli Acetari”, shown in numerous paintings and prints.

At Via Monserrato 107 we find *Hollywood*, a store specialised in videocassettes of quality films, with an extraordinary quantity of cassettes to rent or buy. And on Via del Pellegrino, the *Libreria del viaggiatore* is the most well-supplied bookshop specialised in travel books in Rome.

Among the largest and most important palaces of the quarter are, in Piazza della Cancelleria, the beautiful **Palazzo della Cancelleria**, built in the 15th century by Cardinal Raffaele Riario. The titular of the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso and nephew of the late Pope Sixtus IV, Riario built his palace with money won in a dice game against Franceschetto Cybo, son of Pope Innocent VIII. The building, extraordinarily imposing for being the residence of a cardinal, was built on the basis of a design by an unknown architect. Today the plan is attributed to Andrea Bregno, probably helped by Donato Bramante, who conceived the elegant courtyard (see Itinerary 17).

**Campo de’ Fiori** is certainly one of the most characteristic squares in Rome, with its open-air market and the statue of Giordano Bruno in the centre. The Dominican philosopher was burned at the stake in Campo de’ Fiori on 17 February 1600 because he was judged a heretic (he supported the heliocentric theory of Copernicus and Galileo, who were his friends). The statue was executed by Ettore Ferrari in 1887.

At no. 22 of the square, there is a *baker’s shop* that is worth a stop. Its pizza, just out of the oven, is one of the best in Rome. In the evening Campo de’ Fiori becomes a meeting place, especially for young people who go to the *Vineria* and the little restaurants of the zone. For lovers of Roman cooking, we point out *Carbonara* and the *Hosteria romanesca*, which serves an excellent “amatriciana”.

The most famous street of the quarter is undoubtedly Via Giulia, which can be reached by crossing **Piazza Farnese**. The palace which has given the name to this great open-air drawing-room is the Palazzo Farnese, built by Antonio da Sangallo il Giovane for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, who became pope in 1534 with the name of Paul III (see Itinerary 17).

Finished by Michelangelo, who did the central window, the cornice and the third floor of the court, since 1871 the building has been the seat of the French Embassy. If the French so permit, it can be visited by reservation, calling 06686011. Entry into

the palace is a true privilege considering that, up to a short time ago, the ambassadors did not appreciate visits. Inside the building are the Galleria dei Carracci and the Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani, frescoed by Salviati.

Nicknamed "il Dado" (the Die) because of its shape, the palace has recently been restored. The cleaning of the façade brought out the original polychromy of the losenge-shaped bricks decorating the surface.

**Via Giulia** takes its name from Pope Julius II, who had it opened, after a plan by Bramante, in the early 1500s, in order to establish the seats of the palaces of power there. However, the ambitious project was never carried through, even if work was begun on the construction of the tribunal of which it is still possible to see today, between Via del Cefalo and Via del Gonfalone, several large marble blocks, nicknamed by the Romans "the sofas of di Via Giulia", which formed the base of the façade. On Via Giulia is the Cavalcavia dei Farnese, a large arch which creates a romantic view of the street. It was constructed in 1603 to unite, by crossing the road, Palazzo Farnese with other buildings across from it. This part of the street was the side of several Roman festivals, including the "palio de barberi e cavalli" (competition of barbarians and horses) in 1638.

To cross the Tiber we go over the **Ponte Sisto**, the origins of which date from the 2nd century A.D. The present-day bridge, which until 1999 underwent a major restructuring and reinforcement operation, was erected in the second half of the 16th century, over the foundations of the ancient one, by Pope Sixtus IV della Rovere, from whom it took its name. On the occasion of the Jubilee of 1475, the bridge was to connect the two banks of the river, allowing the Trastevere quarter to be directly connected with the rest of the city.

In Trastevere, from Piazza Trilussa we arrive on **Via della Lungara**, passing underneath the Porta Settimiana. Constructed, in the 3rd century, as an arch honouring the emperor Septimus Severus, the gate was later incorporated into Aurelian's wall and enlarged in the 15th century. It owes its present appearance to Pope Pius VI.

At Via Santa Dorotea 19 it is believed that Fornarina, Raphael's lover, lived. The woman, also immortalised in the famous painting kept in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica of Palazzo Barberini, supposedly also lived in another house at

Via del Governo Vecchio 48, as remembered by the inscription in the lobby. At Via di Porta Settimiana 8 there is *Romolo*, one of the most characteristic restaurants in Trastevere. With its internal garden, it was Trilussa's favourite eating place.

The Renaissance itinerary can only end with **Villa Chigi**, known as La Farnesina, at Via della Lungara 230. An architectural masterpiece by Baldassarre Peruzzi, the suburban home was built in the early 16th century for the rich Sienese banker Agostino Chigi. Inside are frescoes by Peruzzi, Sebastiano del Piombo, Sodoma and Raphael. It is an extraordinary place which is an absolute must to visit.

The banquets organised by Agostino Chigi were famous for their pomp. At the end of a banquet in 1518, to the amazement and dismay of the guests, all the plates and gold tableware which had been used for the food were thrown into the Tiber. But Agostino Chigi's astuteness was such that numerous nets, arranged beforehand on the riverbed, made it possible to recover the valuable objects afterwards!

Along Via della Lungara is the Regina Coeli prison, founded in the late 19th century, whose name derives from the pre-existing church of Santa Maria Regina Coeli. It is said that there are no Romans "de Roma" who have not descended, at least once, "er gradino der Coeli", i.e. the steps leading into the prison.

To wind up the evening we can eat at *La Scala*, a pleasant bistro where it is also possible to listen to live music, Via della Scala 60.

Practical information: Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel, Viale del Vaticano, hours: November to February 8.45 a.m.- 1.45 p.m., March to October 8.45 a.m. - 4.45 p.m.; closed Sundays and other religious holidays. Admission fee. Open and free of charge the last Sunday of each month - 8.45 a.m. - 1.45 p.m. (ph. 0669884947).

Villa Farnesina alla Lungara, Via della Lungara 230, hours 9 a.m.-1 p.m., closed Sundays. Admission fee (ph. 0668027268).

## THE PALACES OF THE NOBILITY

The presence of the papacy in Rome has undoubtedly strongly influenced the city's history, affecting its urbanistic and monumental development as well. The patronage of popes and cardinals, supported by enormous financial resources coming from increasingly heavy taxes imposed on the Roman population, left copious examples of the luxury with which the noble families loved to surround themselves. Today it is still possible to visit some of these splendid palaces, fortunately open to the public, where it is not difficult to imagine the sumptuous life that once went on inside.

The imposing **Palazzo Doria Pamphilj**, seat of one of the most prestigious art collections comprising works by Caravaggio, Raphael, Titian, Velasquez and Bernini, is still owned by the noble family, who live in a wing of the building which is not open to the public. Visiting the splendid rooms, decorated with the precious original furnishings, it will seem as if you have taken a leap two or three centuries back in time, because everything has remained as it was. The history of the building, which in the 16th century was owned by the Aldobrandini, is closely tied to the vicissitudes of the family whose name it bears today. Giovanni Battista Pamphilj, pope from 1644 with the name of Innocent X, had built for himself and his family the splendid palace of Piazza Navona (see Itinerary 8), today the Brazilian Embassy and thus difficult to visit. In accordance with tradition, his nephew Camillo was appointed nephew cardinal, or rather, as it was said at that time, "master cardinal", because he combined so many offices that he was, in practice, the true governor of the Church State. Camillo, however, fell in love with Olimpia Aldobrandini, whom he married after abandoning the purple, arousing great indignation in his pope uncle and his mother Olimpia Maidalchini. When things cooled down, the young couple, who got married in secret outside of Rome, decided to come live in the Palazzo Aldobrandini, which was enlarged and made more beautiful, suitable for holding the original nucleus of the art collection that can still be admired today.

Continuously embellished down through the centuries, the palace aroused the amazement and embarrassment of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany who, participating at a reception there in 1882, felt the need to excuse himself for not being able to return such hospitality.

From the Piazza del Collegio Romano we can take a pleasant walk to Piazza della Minerva, going along Via del Pié di Marmo with its characteristic shops. The unusual name derives from a large marble foot, which once belonged to an ancient colossal statue, which today stands at the start of Via di Santo Stefano del Cacco. Originally the foot stood along the street which still bears its name, but it had to be removed in 1878 because it obstructed the passage of the funeral procession of Victor Emmanuel II on its way to the Pantheon.

Crossing Via del Corso, we arrive at Piazza Santi Apostoli, where we find the **Palazzo Colonna**, another side of a prestigious art collection, which still belongs to the noble family. The Colonna celebrated in 2000, with a sumptuous reception, the 900th anniversary of the birth of their dynasty. Bearing witness to the magnificent life that has always gone on here, suffice it to think of the custom regarding the festivity of the Holy Apostles, celebrated on 1 May. On this occasion, in the past, from the palace windows facing into the church of the Santi Apostoli, foods and delicacies used to be thrown to the people, who would fight with each other to get their hands on the goodies, and then be hit by a shower of cold water. This all took place before the amused eyes of the nobles and clergy who watched the scene.

An outstanding member of the family was Marcantonio Colonna, the winner in 1571 of the Battle of Lepanto, which put an end to the Turkish domination in the Mediterranean. The episode is commemorated in the frescoes adorning the rooms, and also in the sumptuous *consoles* which have figures of Turkish slaves in chains as their base. On the steps leading to the art gallery is preserved a cannon ball fired from the Janiculum, remaining embedded here, during the fighting between the French and Garibaldi's troops in the defence of the Roman Republic in 1849.

The magnificent art gallery, one of the most beautiful in Rome, was the setting for the famous final scene of the film *Roman Holiday*, with Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck.

Those with a sweet tooth must try the specialties of *Moriondo & Cariglio*, at Via della Pilotta 2 (there is another store at Via del Pié di Marmo 21-22). First opened in 1860 by two Piedmontese pastry chefs, the shop is specialised in the handmade production of chocolates.

Descending from Via della Pilotta and turning right onto the Via del Tritone, we arrive at Piazza Barberini, where we can visit one of the most imposing buildings in Rome: **Palazzo Barberini**. The elegant dwelling was intended to show the position of prestige occupied by the family following the election to the papal throne of Urban VIII in 1623. The intention was achieved perfectly thanks to an exceptional triad of artists – Bernini, Borromini and Pietro da Cortona – who worked together, leaving one of the liveliest examples of the Baroque period. Bernini and Borromini, whose collaboration was rife with controversy and resentment, were responsible for the architectural part, which had been begun by Carlo Maderno. Indeed, it was Maderno who conceived an innovative plan, not closed with a courtyard in the centre, according to Renaissance tradition, but open, with parallel wings joined by a central volume. One of the palace's elements most worthy of note is the staircases: Bernini's on the left, wide and solemn, with a square plan; Borromini's on the right, smaller but picturesque, with a helicoidal shape. Pietro da Cortona painted the vault of the great hall, with the *Triumph of the Divine Providence*, rightly considered one of the peaks of Baroque painting. The extraordinary composition is a complex allegory intending to exalt the family of the reigning pontiff, expressed with a language full of movement, powerful chiaroscuro effects, fluid forms, and daring perspective and illusionist inventions.

The sumptuous palace, which today holds the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica, with paintings by Filippo Lippi, Raphael, Titian and Caravaggio, was extremely fascinating for Gabriele D'Annunzio, who, for a certain period, lived on Via Quattro Fontane,

across from the palace. Perhaps it is precisely for this reason that he set the love story between Andrea Sperelli and Elena Muti, the main characters in the novel *"Il Piacere"*, here.

To enjoy excellent Chinese cuisine, there's *Jasmine*, at Via Sicilia 45. For a great pizza baked in a wood-burning oven, or for grilled specialties, try *Pomodorino*, at Via Campania 45/e.

A pleasant walk along the Via Veneto (see Itinerary 1) leads to Villa Borghese, the most renowned villa (park) in Rome (see Itinerary 13). At the end of the Viale del Museo Borghese, you can see the building that holds the **Galleria Borghese**. It is amazing to note how many masterpieces are concentrated in just one place; this is thanks to the will of Cardinal Scipione Borghese who, in the early 17th century, used all means, whether right or wrong, to collect these priceless treasures. He didn't hesitate to have Raphael's beautiful "Descent from the Cross" stolen during the night from the church of San Francesco in Perugia, causing a citizens' revolt; he used a trite excuse to confiscate 107 paintings from the famous painter Cavalier d'Arpino, and even had the painter Domenichino imprisoned, guilty of not wanting to turn over to him the splendid *Diana the Huntress*, painted for another client. His expert eye and uncommon flair for recognising new talent led the cardinal to surround himself with young artists who produced authentic masterpieces to decorate the rooms of the gallery. Among these, one who stands out is Gian Lorenzo Bernini who, at just twenty-three years of age produced magnificent sculpture groups such as *Apollo and Daphne*, *Aeneas Escaping the Fire of Troy*, *The Rape of Proserpine* and *David*. Also by Bernini is the sculptural portrait of the master of the house, Scipione. Strangely, there are two of them, apparently identical, placed one beside the other.

This is due

G.L. Bernini – Fountain of the Bees (detail)

to the fact that, during the carving of the bust, the sculptor realised that the block of marble on which he was working was defective, and in one night's time, in order to avoid disappointing his great patron, he managed to produce a second version.

In the early 1800s, Camillo Borghese, who had married Pauline, Napoleon Bonaparte's sister, had Antonio Canova do the famous portrait of his wife depicted as *Venus Victrix*. The sculpture is so beautiful and perfect that, in order to be able to admire it in its entirety, Canova thought up a mechanism that permitted the statue to rotate, to the amazement of the villa's guests.

And to think that this was only the country house! In reality, the actual Palazzo Borghese, where the family lived, is on Via della Fontanella Borghese. Called the "cembalo" (the harpsichord) due to its particular shape, the building unfortunately is not open to the public.

Length of itinerary: entire day if all museums are visited.

Information: Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Piazza del Collegio Romano 2, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., closed Thursdays. Admission fee. Ph. 066797323.

Galleria Colonna, Via della Pilotta 17, open only Saturday morning, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., closed in August. Admission fee. Ph. 066784350.

Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica a Palazzo Barberini, Via Barberini 18, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., closed Mondays. Admission fee, free of charge for those under 18 or over 65 years of age. Ticket reservations: ph. 064824184.

Galleria Borghese, Piazzale Scipione Borghese 5, (Villa Borghese) 9 a.m.-7 p.m., closed Mondays. Admission fee, reservations compulsory. Free of charge for those under 18 or over 65 years of age. Ticket reservations: ph. 06328101.



G.L. Bernini: David - Borghese Gallery

## THE PLACES OF THE SAINTS

The ancient and modern history of Christian Rome may be well represented by the figures of saints, of different nationalities, who have lived or stayed in the city. Each of these figures constitutes, for the activity carried out in the spiritual and social fields, the mirror of the historic reality of his age. In addition to Saints Peter and Paul, who suffered martyrdom in Rome, and to whom the great basilicas in the Vatican and on the Via Ostiense are dedicated, numerous other saints arrived in the papal capital, leaving important traces.

The following itinerary will illustrate only some of the places, where access to the public is easier.

On Via Monserrato stands the **Church of San Girolamo alla Carità**, built, according to tradition, over the house of the matron Paola who gave hospitality to St. James, called to Rome in 382 by Pope Damasus. In the 16th century, Pope Clement VII donated the church and the adjoining convent to a Florentine brotherhood, the “Compagnia della Carità”, which had the privilege of having with them for over twenty years their fellow countryman St. Philip Neri, who founded his own oratory here in 1551. The convent rooms were also used, for example, by St. Charles Borromeo, St. Ignatius of Loyola, and St. Felix of Cantalice.

In 1654 the Spada Chapel, the first on the right of the entrance, was built in the church. Long held to be the work of Borromini, it is very probably attributable to the Oratorian Father Virginio Spada. The marble decoration of the walls simulated, imitating the Etruscan chamber tombs, domestic damask tapestries, on which medallions with portraits of the deceased are “hung”.

From Via Monserrato we reach the Piazza della **Chiesa Nuova**, dominated by the façade of the church, also called Santa Maria della Vallicella, built between the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The church was given in 1575 by Pope Gregory XIII to the Congregation of the Oratory, guided by St. Philip Neri. In the church, which has fine paintings by Pietro da Cortona, Federico Barocci and Rubens, the Saint’s remains, contained

in a crystal urn at the end of the left side of the transept, are venerated.

From the church sacristy we reach the **Rooms of St. Philip** (to visit them, apply to the sacristan), which are on two floors. It is still possible to visit the Saint’s little private chapel and the red room, originally the convent pantry. In the internal chapel of St. Philip, part of the masonry of the Saint’s bedroom, destroyed by a fire in 1620, is also kept. Lastly, of particular interest are the relics and works of art on display in the rooms.

The church also has an ampulla with the blood of St. Pantaleon which, every 27 July, the Saint’s feast-day, liquefies and bubbles. The Church has not yet made an official pronouncement on the phenomenon, which occurs simultaneously in other cities such as Ravello and Madrid.

To visit the **Room of St. Catherine of Siena**, we reach the Pantheon, near which we find the Church of **Santa Maria sopra Minerva**.

Under the high altar is exhibited the body of the Saint, the patron saint of Italy together with St. Francis of Assisi; the head, however, is missing, and is kept in the Church of San Domenico in Siena. From the sacristy we pass into the small room where the Saint died on 29 April 1380. The room, originally in the house of Paola Del Ferro, who offered hospitality to Catherine (at Via di Santa Chiara 14), was transported here in 1637, together with the detached frescoes by Antoniazio Romano (1482).

St. Catherine of Siena is often portrayed at the moment she marries Christ in what has been called the *Mystical Marriage*. It is said, in fact, that during the night of Carnival in 1367, Christ appeared to Catherine and gave her a wedding ring, which she kept on her finger for evermore, even though it was invisible to others.

After a short break, perhaps having a fruit or milk shake at *Pascucci*, at Via di Torre Argentina 20, we arrive easily at Piazza del Gesù, where we find the Professed House of the Jesuits, built between 1599 and 1623, as the seat of the Company of Jesus, after a design by Girolamo Rainaldi. Inside (entrance on Via delle Botteghe Oscure) it is possible to visit the **Rooms of St. Ignatius of Loyola**. The Spanish monk, who founded the Jesuit Order, moved to Rome, to the seat of the Company of Jesus, where he died in 1556. The rooms, which are reached through a corridor splendidly frescoed by Andrea Pozzo in 1695, were used by Ignatius, who is remembered here with relics and furnishings. Of particular interest is

the visit to the room where the Saint studied and slept, as well as the chapel where he died.

In the church of Il Gesù, the remains of St. Ignatius are buried in altar-tomb, in the left transept, with bas-reliefs by Alessandro Algardi.

We recommend that you continue the visit at the **Monastero delle Oblate a Tor de' Specchi**, open only on 9th March, at Via del Teatro di Marcello 40, where St. Frances of Rome, a patron saint of Rome together with Sts. Peter and Paul, lived. Together with a group of eleven companions, the noblewoman founded the Oblates of Mary, a society under the Rule of St. Benedict. The devout women, without abandoning their families, devoted themselves to worshipping Mary and to charity.

Widowed at forty years of age, Frances decided to move into the community of Tor de' Specchi founded by her, where she died in 1440. Her body, however, rests underneath the high altar of the church of Santa Maria Nova, better known as the **Church of Santa Francesca Romana**, at the Roman Forum.

Beyond the Colosseum starts the Via di San Gregorio, where the majestic **Church of San Gregorio Magno** stands. It is situated on the area of the Monastery of St. Andrew, founded in 575 on the properties of Gregory's family. In one of the three oratories visible to the left of the church, that of St. Barbara, St. Gregory used to feed the poor, offering them meals on a marble table that is still preserved.

Legend has it that one day, while Gregory was serving supper to twelve poor persons, a thirteenth person joined the table: an angel, to whom Gregory offered the food. Following this event, it became customary for popes, up until 1870, to serve the Holy Thursday supper to thirteen guests in the Caelian oratory.

Inside the church, at the end of the right-hand aisle, is the Room of St. Gregory, where an ancient marble seat, a few relics of the saint, his pastoral staff, and the stone used as a pillow are preserved.



Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva





# SPRING

- Itinerary 13

**VILLAS AND GARDENS:  
Greenery in Rome**

- Itinerary 14

**ROMAN SHOPPING**

- Itinerary 15

**OSTIA: Rome's Seashore**

- Itinerary 16

**THE ARCHES OF ANCIENT ROME**



*“Here was Rome indeed at last; and such a Rome as no one can imagine in its full and awful grandeur! We wandered out upon the Appian Way, and then went on, through miles of ruined tombs and broken walls, with here and there a desolate and uninhabited house...”*

Charles Dickens, *Picture from Italy* [1844-1845], ed. Pinguin Books, London 1998.

## VILLAS AND GARDENS: Greenery in Rome

Since its most ancient times, Rome has been characterised by the presence of vast green areas. Following the penetration of the Greek culture in the 2nd century B.C., it became the vogue for rich and noble Romans to attach their names to sumptuous gardens, called *Horti*. These fell into decline with the crisis of the Roman Empire, and only a thousand years later, during the fervour of the Renaissance, did they become one of the most concrete symbols of the return to classicism. Between the 16th and 18th centuries popes, cardinals and aristocrats vied with each other to achieve the richest and most beautiful villas in Rome. Unfortunately, during the 19th century many of these villas were destroyed or altered to make way for the new quarters of Rome the Capital. Nevertheless, today the city is still able to offer numerous hectares of land used as public parks and gardens, where it is possible to take pleasant walks, immersed in nature and history.

The itinerary begins with **Villa Doria Pamphilj**, which with around 180 hectares of land, is the largest of the Roman villas. The original nucleus was created in the mid-17th century by Camillo Pamphilj, the nephew of Pope Innocent X. The place was chosen because of its closeness to the Vatican (an underground passage was also created, connecting the most important building, the “Casino dell’Algardi”, today the seat of the Office of the Prime Minister, with St. Peter’s Basilica), the salubrity of the air, and the presence of water. In fact, along the side running along the Via Aurelia Antica, it is still possible to see the arches of the aqueduct built by the emperor Trajan in the 2nd century and restored by Pope Paul V in the early 1600s. At one point the aqueduct crosses the street with an arch nicknamed “tiradiavoli” (devil puller) because, according to legend, it was here that a carriage driven by devils and carrying the ghost of the sister-in-law of Pope Innocent X, Olimpia Maidalchini, called “la Pimpaccia”, would pass by. The name of the terrible woman, hated by the Romans for her wickedness, is also connected with the Fountain of the Snail, which originally was meant to adorn the space in front of Palazzo Pamphilj in Piazza Navona. The woman did not like the lovely shell, carved by Bernini, judging it to be too small and modest, and sent it to the villa outside the city walls, while on the piazza the splen-

did Fountain of the Moor was installed instead. Coming out through the Porta San Pancrazio, the scene of fighting between the French and Garibaldi’s men for the defence of the Roman Republic in 1849, we arrive at the Piazzale Aurelio where, to the left, the **Promenade of the Janiculum** begins. It was created starting in 1880 and dedicated to Giuseppe Garibaldi, an equestrian monument of whom can be admired in the square carrying his name. Slightly beyond, his courageous companion Anita is also commemorated, while the 80 busts arranged along the avenues portray heroes from Garibaldi’s campaigns. From the square, every day at noon, the hour is “announced” with the firing of an Austrian-Hungarian cannon dating from World War I.

In addition to enjoying one of the most spectacular views of the city, in Piazzale Garibaldi both old and young can spend moments of fun watching the Teatrino di Pulcinella, the amusing Punchinello’s puppet show, held every afternoon from 4 to 7 p.m., and on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For plant lovers, we recommend a visit to the “**Orto Botanico**” (Botanical Gardens). The gardens originate from the garden for the cultivation of medicinal plants created in the Vatican by Pope Nicholas III in the late 13th century. The present-day botanical gardens were established in 1883 and contain over 3,500 cultivated species. It is possible to admire the enormous plane-tree that, with its age of 350-400 years, is one of the oldest in Rome, or the bamboo collection, one of the most important in Europe. Particularly noteworthy is the Garden of Fragrances, created for the blind, with plants that can be perceived through the senses of touch and smell.

From Piazzale Aurelio we go along the Via delle Mura Gianicolensi, characterised by the powerful 17th-century city walls along it, until we reach Via Calandrelli, where at no. 26 we find the entrance to **Villa Sciarra**. In the early 19th century the last owners, Mr. and Mrs. Wurts, transformed the park into a true paradise, full of rare plants and embellished with an original sculptural decoration coming from an 18th-century Lombard villa. The enchanting place charmed and fascinated Gabriele D’Annunzio, who set the duel of Andrea Sperelli, the protagonist of his novel “*Il Piacere*”, there. After crossing the Tiber, continuing along the Lungotevere Aventino, we meet on the right the Clivo di Rocca Savelli, a picturesque staircase leading directly into the little garden that extends over the area where the fortress of the Savelli family stood in the Middle Ages. The park is more well known as the **Garden of Orange**

**Trees.** The citrus fruit plants in it were placed here in 1932 in commemoration of the Spanish orange tree brought to Rome by St. Dominic in 1220. This tree, according to tradition the first planted in Italy, still miraculously exists in the garden of the monastery of Santa Sabina and can be seen through a hole in the wall of the church portico.

At the end of Via di Santa Sabina, descending towards the Circus Maximus, we find the **Municipal Rose Garden**, one of the most beautiful in the world, also thanks to the scenic context in which it stands.

The place was used as the Cemetery of the Roman Jewish Community from 1645 to 1934, the year it was decided to change the area into a public park. The secular cypresses presently lining the Via del Circo Massimo recall the old use of the park. The rose garden was founded in 1950 but, to sanction the bond that unites it to the Roman Jewish Community, two steles, reproducing the tablets of Moses, are arranged at the entrances of the two sectors, while the avenues, as can be seen from atop the central staircase, were designed in the form of a menorah, the seven-branched candelabrum symbolising the Jewish religion.

After descending along the Via del Circo Massimo, and crossing Piazza di Porta Capena, we go up to the Caelian Hill where, on Via della Navicella, we find the entrance to **Villa Celimontana**, created in the 16th century by the noble Mattei family. In the past its fame was great not only because of the beauty of the place, but also because of a custom started by St. Philip Neri in 1552: during the pilgrimage to the seven Jubilee basilicas, it was customary to stop at the villa, where the Mattei family would offer the pilgrims a snack. It is said that, in 1668, 6,000 persons participated. The main building of the villa, today the seat of the Italian Geographic Society, is adorned with 17th-century frescoes and precious Roman mosaics found in the zone. To the left of the building, not very visible because of a fence and scaffolding which have concealed it for many years now, is a small obelisk from the time of Pharaoh Ramses II (13th-12th century B.C.), which was once the greatest attraction of the villa. The obelisk, found on the Capitoline Hill, was donated by the City of Rome to Ciriaco Mattei in 1582, thus gaining the peculiar distinction of being the only obelisk in a private collection.

If you would like to take a lunch break, you might go to Via Ostilia where, at no. 23, you will find *Isidoro al Colosseo*. The restaurant offers its clients 23 "tastes" of different first-course dishes!

To conclude the long walk, we can visit **Villa Borghese**, which can be reached with the underground. It is one of the most renowned villas in Rome, ordered by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in the early 17th century. The Roman poet Belli praised the generosity of the prince who, in the late 19th century, allowed the people to gather in the large Piazza di Siena for the famous "Festa delle Ottobrate", during which there was singing, dancing, and food to eat. The most romantic place on the villa grounds is undoubtedly the lake with its little island dominated by the Temple of Aesculapius, the god of medicine, erected in Ionian style in the late 18th century and embellished with an ancient statue of the god. A modern overpass connects the villa to the **Pincio**, the first public garden planned in Rome as desired by Napoleon, who would have liked to celebrate himself in the new *Jardin du Grand César*. As suggested by Mazzini, 224 busts of famous persons were installed throughout the park, but they have been, and still are, too often the targets of vandalism. At the base of the bust of astronomer Angelo Secchi there is a small hole through which Rome's meridian passes. Another small obelisk, found in the zone of Porta Maggiore, stands along one of the villa's avenues. Unlike most of the Roman obelisks, it does not come from Egypt, but was created in Rome for the emperor Hadrian, who dedicated it to his beloved Antinous. From the Pincio terrace, dedicated to Napoleon I, it is possible to admire another renowned view of Rome, with the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in the background.

A permanent outdoor theatre, modelled on the Globe Theatre of London, was erected in the 2003 summer in the park of Villa Borghese, at Piazza Aqua Felix. The Theatre is circular in shape, made of wood, and has a capacity of three thousand seats, and has been named after S. Toti.

Taking the ramp of the Pincio, we go down to the Piazza del Popolo, where we can have an aperitif at *Canova* or *Rosati*, historic cafés of the capital, or eat dinner at *Bolognese*, to try their famous tagliatelle.

Addresses: Botanical Gardens, Largo Cristina di Svevia 24, ph. 0649917107. Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 9.30 a.m.-4 p.m. (winter hours); Tuesday-Saturday 9.30 a.m.-7 p.m. (summer hours). Admission fee.

Municipal Rose Garden, Via dei Pubblici 3, ph. 065746810. The rose garden is open throughout the period the roses are in bloom. Free of charge.

**ROMAN SHOPPING**

It has by now become a consolidated custom to come to Rome from all over the world to go shopping. Most tourists make their purchases in the most famous streets of the centre, but it is possible to walk and spend in other, more outlying quarters as well. For this reason we would like to suggest at least four routes indicating different zones in Rome for shopping.

**1. The quadrilateral of the centre: from Piazza di Spagna to Piazza del Popolo**

From Piazza di Spagna, one of the most famous squares in the world for its 18th-century staircase (Spanish Steps), often crowded with tourists and Romans, we can start the rounds of the streets of the centre, ideally enclosed within a quadrilateral between Via del Corso, Via del Babuino, Via della Vite and Piazza del Popolo.

In **Piazza di Spagna**, which has always had an international mundane tone thanks to the presence of important shops, we find the boutiques of *Missoni*, *Dolce e Gabbana*, *Sergio Rossi*, *Genny*, *Rocco Barocco* and *Krizia*.

On **Via Due Macelli** we find *Pineider* (another shop is at Via della Fontanella Borghese 22), the famous print-shop established in 1774, specialised in fine papers and desk articles.

The Spanish Steps serve as the backdrop, creating a theatre scenery effect, for the stage of the yearly fashion show "Donna sotto le Stelle" (Woman Under the Stars), with the participation of the most important Italian and international designers.

From Piazza di Spagna branch off the most well-known and elegant streets in Rome, such as **Via Condotti**, "twinned" with London's Bond Street, today perhaps the city's loveliest pedestrian area. Popular in the past with celebrities such as King Juan Carlos of Spain, Jackie Kennedy Onassis, John Wayne, Nelson Rockefeller, Ingrid Bergman, Audrey Hepburn and many others, it is still a favourite shopping haven for all famous and important visitors passing through Rome.

Originally *Via Trinitatis*, traced out in 1544 during the papacy of Paul III to connect the church of Trinità dei Monti to the Tiber, Via Condotti owes its present-day name to Pope Gregory XIII who, in the late 16th century, had the conduits of the Vergine

Aqueduct, the one that supplies water to the Trevi Fountain, pass underground here.

The major designer names you can find along it are numerous and some of the most prestigious, such as *Armani*, *Valentino*, *Cartier*, *Bulgari*, *Hermes*, *Gucci*, *Ferragamo*, *Prada*, *Alberta Ferretti*, *Iceberg* and *Max Mara*.

There are no food or beverage shops on this street, except for the renowned **Caffè Greco**, founded in 1760 by Nicola della Maddalena (see Itinerary 6). Therefore, for eating you should go over to Via della Croce, where, in addition to *Fior Fiore*, specialised in takeaway sliced pizza, *Antonini*, famous for its snacks and canapés, *Otello*, a Roman-style restaurant, and *Fiaschetteria Beltrami*, it is possible to find numerous other wine and food establishments specialised in typical products.

To find shops of all kinds it is a must to walk



through all the streets in the vicinity of Via Condotti and, if possible, as far as **Largo Chigi**, where there is the imposing *La Rinascente* building, a historic department store which owes its name to Gabriele D'Annunzio (non-stop hours from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.).

**Via Frattina**, a very popular street parallel to Via Condotti, has numerous important and delightful shops particularly loved by young Romans, such as

*Gente* and *L'altra Moda*, in addition to the more famous *Pollini*, *Versace* and *Philosophy by Alberta Ferretti*. For stationery lovers there is also *Cartotecnica romana*, specialised in collector pens and with the exclusive "Boutique Mont Blanc".

On **Via Borgognona** there are shops of *Gianfranco Ferrè*, *Moschino*, *Calvin Klein*, *Givenchy*, *Gay Mattiolo*, *Laura Biagiotti*, *Fendi*, *Diego Della Valle* (Tod's shoes) and *Fratelli Rossetti*. The street takes its name from the French colony of Burgundians who settled here in the 15th century. Along the street is the Tuscan restaurant *Nino*, a real institution in the zone.

**Via Bocca di Leone**, **Via Mario de' Fiori**, **Via Belsiana**, **Via delle Carrozze** and **Via Vittoria** offer numerous opportunities for purchases with the various shops and other boutiques of Italian and foreign designers.

**Via del Babuino**, opened during the 16th century and embellished with 17th- and 18th-century buildings, is the most elegant and trustworthy street for

have been living and working here since the 16th century and who still have their studios here today, there are numerous contemporary art galleries to visit. Not to be missed are the courtyards of several old apartment buildings, in one of which Federico Fellini lived with his wife Giulietta Masina.

On **Via Alibert**, a small side-street off *Via del Babuino* towards *Via Margutta*, there is the shop of *Alinari*, a family of famous photographers who have immortalised the Italian cities down through the centuries in artistic prints and photographs.

*Via del Babuino* ends in *Piazza del Popolo*, from which we can continue our tour of the centre by entering the **Via del Corso**. The street, a long, straight street of ancient origin which leads to *Piazza Venezia*, is characterised by an uninterrupted series of clothing stores preferred by a young clientele.

Historic stores of *Via del Corso* are *Radiconcini*, an old hat shop opened in 1932, and *Schostal*, opened in 1870. Among its customers, worthy of mention are Pirandello and Alfredo Casella.



antiques in Rome. To buy a lovely print of the city, you can go to *Alberto Di Castro*. Along the street are also the *Feltrinelli* bookstore and the shops of the *Touring Club Italiano*, *Chanel*, *Ruffo*, *Emporio Armani* and *Etro*. Not to be forgotten is the Erulo Eruli firm, specialised in the sale and restoration of antique tapestries and carpets.

On **Via Margutta**, the street of the artists, who

Walking down the street, we arrive at **Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina**, an elegant pedestrian zone, very popular for having brunch. On the square is the *Profumeria Materozzoli*, the first perfume store opened in Rome. From here we take the **Via Campo Marzio**, where we find the *Davide Cenci* shop, which has been a guarantee of quality and elegance for three generations. A short distance away, on the

**Via Uffici del Vicario**, the *Giolitti* ice-cream shop with its specialities, among the best in Rome, offers us the opportunity for a sweet, refreshing break. Along the stretch of the **Via del Corso** going towards Piazza del Popolo we find *Ricordi* and *Messaggerie Musicali*, music shops well supplied with a vast assortment of CDs, audio- and videocassettes, and sheet music.

## 2. The Prati quarter and Via Cola di Rienzo

Via Cola di Rienzo can be reached from Piazza del Popolo by crossing the Tiber over the Ponte Margherita. The street is named after a Roman tribune who lived in the 14th century and was killed during a people's revolt, at the foot of the Palazzo Senatorio at the Capitol.

The Prati ("Meadows") zone takes its name from the *Prata Neronis*, Nero's agricultural land, and from the gardens and fields which characterised the area, which was isolated from the city centre, up until the end of the 19th century.

**Via Cola di Rienzo** is one of the main and most popular Roman commercial streets; it is possible to find many well-known stores, including *Luisa Spagnoli*, *La Cicogna*, *Gente*, *Benetton*, *Stefanel* and *Spatafora*. In particular, we recommend that you stop in at *Franchi*, a famous shop specialised in cold cuts, gastronomy and takeaway foods. On the other hand for ice-cream you can go to *Pellacchia*. Last but not least, you should also stop at *Castroni*, an old coffee shop also specialised in oriental and foreign products.

For those interested in newspapers and magazines, we would like to point out that the news-stand in Piazza Cola di Rienzo is open every day, 24 hours a day.

## 3. Via Appia Nuova

Near the Basilica of St. John Lateran is the Piazzale Appio, with the large department store *Coin*. Here begins the **Via Appia**, a commercial street full of shops of all kinds, from *Sabbatini* to *Teichner* and *Leam*, which sells prestigious brands such as Prada and Gucci. *Petit Bateau* is specialised in children's apparel, while the *Mondadori* bookstore opened just recently. You can also visit *Seterie di Como*, where it is possible to purchase fabrics of all kinds, and the *Furla*, *Barillà* and *Tuttilibri* shops. If there is time to take in a movie, along the street is the *Maestoso* multiplex cinema.

An excellent "Tiramisù" can be tasted at the bar/ice-cream shop *Pompi* at via Albalonga 11.

On **Via Sannio**, near Piazzale Appio, there is a well-supplied open-air market, specialised in clothing, open every morning except Sunday. It is particularly convenient for used clothing, including leather articles, which can be purchased at excellent prices.

From the Appio quarter we can take the underground that takes us to Cinecittà, and the *Cinecittà2* shopping mall. It is chock-full of shops, from *Furla* to *Max e Co.*, *Coin*, *GS*.

## 4. From Piazza Fiume to Viale Libia

Another itinerary to follow to get an idea of the infinite shopping possibilities in Rome is the one starting at **Piazza Fiume**, where *La Rinascente* building stands (non-stop hours from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.), built in 1957-61 after a design by Franco Albini and Franca Helg. From here we start a long route along **Via Salaria** (*Cerasari* at no. 280, one of the most well-furnished food shops) which leads us to Via Po, where there are numerous good clothing, shoe, food, housewares, and appliance stores.

Continuing along the **Via Tagliamento**, worthy of note is the *Gentilini* bakery, an old firm very well known especially for the production of excellent biscuits (cookies), which are a true classic in Rome.

Continuing our walk, on **Via Nemorense** another sweet-tooth appointment is at *Cavalletti*, which produces, among other things, an exquisite "millefoglie". Also on **Viale Eritrea** there is an excellent pastry shop: *Romoli*, very popular during the day for its ice-creams and sweets, and at night for its hot, just-baked croissants. On the same street is the well-furnished *Eritrea bookshop*, a meeting place of the quarter.

We thus arrive at **Viale Libia**, the first "green street" in Rome, closed to private car traffic, one of the city's most commercial streets. There are shops of all kinds, including *Frette*, selling quality linens, *La Cicogna* for children's apparel, and *Gennaro*, offering very fine hand-made leather goods.



## OSTIA: Rome's Seashore

### Ostia Antica

The history of Ostia stretches far back into time: according to tradition, although not yet confirmed by archaeological documentation, to the 6th century B.C., when it was founded by king Ancus Martius as the first Roman colony. In reality, the oldest remains of Ostia, whose name comes from the Latin "ostium", meaning "mouth" (of the Tiber), date back to the 4th century B.C. and belong to the first fortified citadel, the ruins of which can still be seen in the archaeological area, near the Forum.

For a long time Ostia was Rome's only river port, together with Pozzuoli, even if its access was difficult because of the banks formed at the mouth by the detritus from the Tiber. For this reason, the large freight ships that arrived here had to unload their cargo onto smaller boats that were able to go up the river to Rome.

The barges, drawn by long lines of buffaloes moving along the banks, reached Rome at the river harbour of the Forum Boarium, near the Isola Tiberina (see Itinerary 4).

Ostia was a shipyard, distribution and provisioning centre for the city of Rome; the inhabitants of Ostia were merchants, shipowners, provisioners and river, sea and land transport operators; there were also craftsmen, labourers, freedmen and slaves, of different languages and religions. Ostia's cosmopolitan nature can be seen in the sanctuaries, temples and shrines dedicated, to the local gods, as well as to the Eastern ones, mainly Persian, Phrygian and Egyptian.

When visiting the excavations of **Ostia Antica**, we recommend that you start from the **Piazza delle Corporazioni**, to evoke the city's harbour traffic and frenzied economic activity. Across from the theatre, shaded by pine trees, the square, with a temple in the centre, was surrounded on three sides by an arcade. Under it were 64 offices (*stationes*) of mercantile agencies and small shops in which the administrative clerks worked.

Marvellous mosaics, many of which are still perfectly preserved, decorate the pavements of the

square, providing us with a goldmine of information on the cities with which Ostia carried on trade, on the goods dealt with and on the guilds working at the port: well represented are *naviculari* (shipowners), *caudicari* (raft owners), *stuppatores* (oakum makers) and *negotiatores* (merchants) of wood, oil and wine.

For a lovely panoramic view you should go up the steps of the **theatre**, founded in the age of Augustus and heavily restored in 1927.

Every year during the month of July, it is possible to see plays, music and cabaret in the atmospheric open-air theatre of Ostia Antica. Entrance is through the main excavation entrance, at Via dei Romagnoli, 717 – Underground B line from Rome.



Ancient Ostia - Mask

In the year 54 the emperor Claudius gave Rome its first seaport, north of the mouth of the Tiber, in the area of what is now the Fiumicino Airport. The almost immediate filling up with sand of this first unfortunate harbour made it necessary to build a new one, Trajan's port, in the 2nd century. With the passing of time, the built-up area which developed around it became an important city (*Portus*, today's Fiumicino), which the emperor Constantine named a municipality. The recognition of Portus as a privileged place for trade led to the slow end of Ostia, by now stripped of its municipal powers.

If you happen to be in the archaeological area around lunchtime, you can stop and eat at the trattoria with the colourful name, *Lo sbarco di Enea* (Aeneas' Landing), at Via dei Romagnoli 675.

Across the street from the archaeological area of Ostia Antica is the "**Borgo**" (village) with its Basilica of Sant'Aurea, and Castle of Julius II, erected over the military stronghold known as Gregoriopolis, after the name of Pope Gregory IV (9th century).

The basilica was built between the 4th and the 5th century as a monument for the tomb of the young Aurea, martyred in 268 under the emperor Claudius "Gothicus". The present-day construction, dating from 1475, was built by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, the bishop of Ostia and future Pope Julius II. This was probably the burial place of St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, whose body,

found in 1420, was transferred five years later to Rome, to the church of Sant'Agostino.

The castle, which dominates the village, was commissioned by Cardinal della Rovere himself between 1483 and 1486 to the Florentine architect Baccio Pontelli, and was the result of the most sophisticated mathematical-geometric and ballistic studies of the time, which developed following the adoption of firearms.

The fortress, which was also the bishop's summer residence, was surrounded by a moat, which was filled when necessary with water from the Tiber, a loop of which passed by the castle.

The decline and abandonment of the fortress is connected with a particular event: in 1557 the Tiber overflowed its banks, changing its route afterwards to about two kilometres further north, depriving the castle of its moat and of its important functions as a military garrison and customs. The merlons crowning the fortress are, instead, the result of restoration work done in the 1940s; the original ones had been eliminated in ancient times because they were considered dangerous: if they were hit by cannon fire they could fall inside the castle.

### Ostia Lido

After leaving Ostia Antica, we continue our itinerary seaward, where we find **Ostia Lido**, the capital's nearest bathing resort, established about a century ago, when the State Property Office turned over to the Municipality of Rome, on a perpetual use basis, the coastal zone between Castelfusano and the left bank of the Tiber.

The marshy area was reclaimed by the work of six hundred labourers from Ravenna, still commemorated today by the name of the most important square on the seacoast.

The beach area became easy to reach after 21 April 1924, with the inauguration of the railway that still provides a fast, convenient connection between the city centre and the seaside.

Today Ostia is a great centre of attraction in the summertime, both during the day, when the beaches fill with people, and at night, when the bathing establishments are transformed into discothèques and piano bars. The bathing resort town is truly able to meet any need, in particular with the establishments near the 4 stations located along the seaside promenade. Among the most popular ones we mention the famous *Roma*, now called *Lido*, the *Tibidabo*, which

offers its clients whirlpool massages, solarium and gymnasium and the *Kursaal*, famous for its salt-water pool and high diving board.

Continuing southward along the coast, we find the beach of **Castelporziano**, with free access for everyone. It is possible to find bars, beach umbrellas, deck-chairs and showers made available by the lifeguards along the lovely stretch of beach, whose dunes are covered with a rich natural Mediterranean vegetation. It is a part of the private estate of the President of the Republic, and is known by Romans as "i cancelli", referring to the 7 access gates which are closed each evening at around 7.30 p.m. The farthest stretch of beach is called **Capocotta**: here, where it is still possible to find shrubs of myrtle, juniper and lentisk, nudism has become an authorised practice today: in fact, the City of Rome has set aside a specific area for nudists.

After having spent a few hours relaxing at the seashore or in the Castelfusano pine forest, the ideal place for walking and cycling, it is undoubtedly advisable to go for a walk along the seafront, reaching the pontile (pier), which offers a beautiful view on the many Liberty-style buildings.

Just a short distance away from the seashore and the pier, on Piazza Anco Marzio, we recommend that you stop at the so-called *Siluro*, under the arches, a pastry shop famous for its delicious filled "kräpfen" that are dropped into their sugar coating by an original mechanical "torpedo" that can be turned on also at the customers' request. On the other side of the square is the bar renowned for its ice-cream, *Sisto*.

If it is evening, we can stop for a fish dinner at one of Ostia's historic restaurants: *Gruppo*, at Via della Stazione Vecchia 9/A, *Alla Nuova Capricciosa*, Via Aldobrandini 37A, the *Sporting Beach*, a renowned bathing establishment with a seaview terrace at Lungomare Amerigo Vespucci 6, while Ostia's loveliest restaurant is probably *La Capannina*, at Lungomare Amerigo Vespucci 132. Situated on the seafront, the restaurant offers excellent fish dishes.

Every two years in early June, Ostia hosts the famous *Air Show*, three days for flying lovers. Hundreds of thousands of people arrive to watch the daring air manoeuvres of the famous "Frecce Tricolori", the Italian Aviation's acrobatic team.

Information: Scavi di Ostia Antica (Excavations), Via dei Romagnoli 717, winter hours 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., summer hours 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., closed Mondays, admission fee (ph. 0656358099).



## THE ARCHES OF ANCIENT ROME

An architectural element that was born in Rome, the honorary or triumphal arch was the greatest homage the city could pay to its victors. At the end of a victorious campaign, they had to pass underneath a sacred gate to celebrate their undertakings and, according to a more religious meaning, depose their potential destroyer. Already existing in the 2nd century B.C., the arches multiplied during the Imperial Age when, more than the victory as such, they celebrated the emperors or the members of their family. At the end of the Empire, around 40 arches could be counted in Rome, built at the entrance to the Forums, along the major access roads, or in the monumental areas and squares. Several of these are still preserved in excellent condition today.

The itinerary can start in the zone of the Velabrum, on the eastern edges of the Forum Boarium, where we find the great **Arch of Janus**, built in the 4th century A.D. in honour of the emperor Constantine or, perhaps Constantius II. It is the only four-fronted arch, with four barrel-vaults, preserved in Rome. In fact, the name “*Janus*” (from the Latin *Ianus*, which means “covered passage with four fronts”) derives from this characteristic. The monument, which in the Middle Ages was transformed into a fortress by the Frangipane family, remained intact up until 1830, when the attic and top were torn down because they were erroneously believed not to belong to the original structure. Fragments of the dedicatory inscription are still preserved inside the nearby church of San Giorgio al Velabro.

It is said that in 1601, an abyss suddenly opened up underneath the Arch of Janus, causing the disappearance of a woman, swallowed by the earth as she was walking with her daughter. Obviously, for this reason the Romans, especially in less recent times, did not willingly pass beneath the arch.

Right behind the Arch of Janus, against and partly incorporated

into the church of San Giorgio al Velabro, is the *Arcus Argentariorum*. More than an arch, it was probably a monumental gate of the Forum Boarium opened, as indicated by the inscription, in 204 A.D. by the local money-changers (*argentarii*) and merchants (*negotiantes*), in honour of the emperor Septimius Severus and his family. The monument, almost 7 metres tall, perhaps had statues of the imperial family on its top. Traces of chiselling indicate that several figures, such as those of Geta, Plautianus and Plautilla, the wife of the emperor Caracalla, were purposely eliminated because they represented persons whom Caracalla himself had killed. Following the invention of the popular motto “*Tra la vacca e il toro, troverai un gran tesoro*” (Between the cow and the bull, you’ll find a great treasure), which spread concerning the riches the arch allegedly concealed, several holes were opened in it in the past centuries, and can still be seen today.

Walking towards the Capitol, we can enter the Roman Forum where, near the Curia, it is possible to admire the **Arch of Septimius Severus**. The arch was erected in 203 A.D. to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the reign of emperor Septimius Severus, who had returned in victory from the wars in Partia (today Iran and Iraq), fought together with his sons Caracalla and Geta.



Arch of Titus

Observing carefully the inscription on the attic, it can be seen how at the height of the fourth line from the top the holes corresponding to the nails which held the bronze letters, now missing, do not coincide with the course of the current letters. This means that already in ancient times the text had been reworked: in fact, the fourth line initially contained the name of Geta, the second son of Septimius Severus, whom Caracalla had killed after their father's death in order to seize total power. On this occasion, the very memory of Geta was condemned, and his name and images were removed from all the public monuments in the Empire.

The arch, one of the largest in existence, is in a good state of preservation because it was incorporated into a fortress during the Middle Ages, against a tower belonging to the Brachis family, who gave their name to the locality called "Le Brache".

Also in the Roman Forum, along the Via Sacra, going towards the Colosseum, stands the **Arch of Titus**. One of the most famous arches in Rome, it was erected between 82 and 90 A.D. in honour of the deified Titus. It was raised by Domitian, the emperor's brother, to commemorate the victory against the Jews and the capture of Jerusalem by Vespasian and Titus himself.

According to tradition, the Jews have never passed underneath the arch, in order to avoid paying homage to he who had destroyed the temple of Jerusalem.

On the side facing the Colosseum, the dedicatory inscription, originally bearing bronze letters, is still preserved. The metal was stolen, and therefore today there remain only the holes of the cramps used to hold the letters saying "*Senatus Populusque Romanus divo Tito divi Vespasiani F(ilio) Vespasiano Augusto*" (The Senate and the Roman people to the divine Titus Vespasian Augustus son of the divine Vespasian).

The abbreviation S.P.Q.R. comes from the expression *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, with which resolutions were begun in ancient Rome. Today it is still one of the symbols of Rome, together with the She-wolf. The Roman poet Belli interpreted the abbreviation, explaining it in a sonnet, as meaning "*Solo Preti Qui Regneno*" (only priests reign here), referring to the temporal power of the Church of Rome, maintained until 1870.

One of the bas-reliefs on the inside of the arch represents the procession preceding the emperor

as he passes beneath the Triumphal Gate, carrying the booty taken from the temple of Jerusalem: the silver trumpets, the golden table, the ark that contained the sacred scriptures, and the seven-branched candelabrum, the depiction of which is probably the most ancient that has arrived up to the present day. For this reason, in the Middle Ages it was nicknamed "Arch of the Seven Lamps" and incorporated into the fortress of the Frangipane family. It was freed in the 19th century during the restoration work directed by Giuseppe Valadier.

Stendhal, on a trip to Rome in the early 1800s, speaking of the arch, said, "It, after that of Drusus near Porta San Sebastiano, is the most ancient arch in Rome, and was also the most beautiful until when it was restored by Mr. Valadier. This wretch who, notwithstanding his French name, is Roman by birth, instead of reinforcing the arch... thought it well to rebuild it from scratch".

There is a fascinating hypothesis that alleges that the arch was used to keep, temporarily, the ashes of the emperor Titus before they were laid in the family tomb erected on the Quirinal Hill in 94 A.D.

Lastly, in Piazza del Colosseo we can see the majestic **Arch of Constantine**, erected in honour of Constantine, in the tenth year of his reign (315 A.D.), to celebrate the victory over Maxentius in the battle of Ponte Milvio (312 A.D.) Almost 25 metres tall, it is the largest triumphal arch preserved in Rome. It is an exceptional example of the practice, followed systematically in Rome since antiquity, of stripping ancient monuments for materials to build new ones; indeed, here we can find, alongside original Constantinian elements, reused sculptures and architectural elements coming from monuments of Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius. It is interesting to remember that the arch was completed with precious pictorial and metal decorations. The dominating colours were gold and purple, the colours of the Empire. Recent studies have also raised doubts about the fact that the arch reused pre-existing masonry structures, perhaps of the 2nd century A.D. Transformed into a fortification tower by the monks of St. Gregory in the Middle Ages and later incorporated into the Frangipane fortress, the arch was restored several times and finally brought totally to light in 1804.

# SECRET ROME

• Itinerary 17  
**COURTYARDS**

• Itinerary 18  
**UNDERGROUND ROME**



*"I should like to keep my vision of Rome as a purely distinct and undivided recollection of my life, a jewel for which no setting is wanted, for which no setting is sufficiently valuable. Rome, alone, isolated, lifted up, like a queen whom no meaner thing is permitted to approach..."*

Florence Nightingale, Letters written by Florence Nightingale in Rome in the winter of 1847-1848,  
Mary Keele editor; Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society 1981.

## COURTYARDS

Most of the buildings built in Rome starting in the Renaissance were characterised by a courtyard. Often of a remarkable architectural level, they had an important role since they were the first place where guests were received as they entered the dwellings: their decoration thus had to be up to the magnificence of the interiors and reflect the taste and use of the building, which was entered afterwards.

They were used as settings of plays or refined concerts, and sometimes held actual open-air museums.

Today, still, the courtyards, atmospheric places to be discovered, as oases of tranquillity amidst the city's chaos.

In the itinerary only a few are mentioned, where access is generally allowed, but as you walk through the centre it is easy to find buildings with courtyards adorned with ancient statues or lovely fountains. If you have the courage to ask permission from the doormen to have a peek at some of these courtyards, which are often inaccessible from the street, you can feel the unusual pleasure of entering a new dimension, in which you can immerse yourself completely.

Every year at the end of May, the Associazione Dimore Storiche Italiane organises the event "Cortili aperti" (Open Courtyards), during which several courtyards of buildings in the centre, which are normally closed to the public, can exceptionally be visited.

One of the loveliest Roman courtyards is certainly that of the **Palazzo Spada**. Entering from Piazza Capodiferro or Vicolo del Polverone, we are struck by the richness of the 16th-century stuccowork covering the walls completely with friezes and sculptures. But the greatest surprise lies on the left side of the courtyard, where, behind a pane of glass, it is possible to admire the famous "*Galleria Prospettica*" (Perspective Colonnade) by Francesco Borromini. The architect, aided by the mathematical calculations of Father Giovanni Maria da Bitonto, managed, using perspective devices, to make an 8-metre-long space appear at least triple that length. By paying the admission to the Galleria Spada, a fine 17th-century collection of paintings which has remained intact with the passing of time, you also have the possibility of entering the small court in front of the corridor, where it is possible to see the optical illusion and understand the real dimensions of Borromini's colonnade.

Not very far from Palazzo Spada, on the square of the same name, stands the majestic **Palazzo Farnese**, called "il dado" (the die) due to the compactness of its architectural form (see itinerary 10).

The courtyard is one of the most successful Renaissance specimens, perfectly harmonious even with its enormous dimensions. The end of the restoration work on the building, still in progress, will also give the courtyard, once enriched with numerous ancient statues (today in the Museo Nazionale Archeologico in Naples), the possibility to let itself be seen in a new light. A vestibule inside the palace leads into a second courtyard, with a garden, which can be seen through a door on Via Giulia. According to a plan by Michelangelo, never carried out, this area was supposed to be connected, by means of a bridge over the Tiber, with the Villa Farnesina alla Lungara, which was also owned by the Farnese family in the 16th century.

Across from Palazzo Farnese is **Palazzo Pighini Roccagiovine**, an 18th-century work by Alessandro Specchi, whose courtyard is one of the most original in Rome. In fact, an entire side of the courtyard is occupied by the theatrical open staircase which clearly recalls the architecture of the entrance halls in Neapolitan buildings.

At Piazza Farnese 50 is the elegant restaurant *Camponeschi*, where the refined menu is accompanied by fine wines. For other restaurants in the zone, see Itinerary 10.

After passing the lively Piazza Campo de' Fiori (see Itinerary 10), we arrive at the square dominated by the **Palazzo della Cancelleria**.

The palace, built in the late 1400s for Cardinal Raffaele Riario, was the most magnificent in Rome, with its façade entirely faced with travertine which came, it was said, from the Colosseum. In 1517 it became the seat of the Chancery, for the purpose of drawing up the papal documents. Following the Lateran Treaty of 1929, which acknowledged the right of extraterritoriality for numerous places in Rome belonging to the Papal State, the Palazzo della Cancelleria also enjoyed this privilege. Today it holds several important offices, including the Tribunal of the Sacra Rota.

The palace, which in the early 19th century also held the tribunal of the Napoleonic empire – as can still be read on the portal architrave – was the site in 1848 of the killing of Pellegrino Rossi, a minister of Pope Pius IX, by Angelo Brunetti, known as Ciceruacchio. In 1849 it became the seat of the Constituent Assembly and was host to Saffi, Armellini

and Mazzini. On the piano nobile it is possible to visit, by asking specific permission (ask at the porter's lodge), the *Sala dei Cento Giorni*, so called because it was frescoed in just slightly more than three months. The author of the decoration was Vasari who, boasting with Michelangelo of his feat, received the answer, "you can tell!"

The marvellous courtyard, whose architect is not known but which reveals a strong Bramantesque influence, is striking for the balance of its forms and the elegance of the simple decorative details. In the past it was the site of shows and plays during which complex backdrops painted on panels were set up. In the centre of the courtyard can be seen an elegant rose-shaped drain cover which uses an element of the coat of arms of the Riario family, also reproduced on the arches. The architect was evidently inspired by the drain covers of ancient Rome which, in the Renaissance, were still kept in various places of Rome (such as the famous Bocca della Verità [Mouth of Truth] in Santa Maria in Cosmedin; see Itinerary 4).

After crossing Corso Vittorio and going beyond Piazza Navona, in Piazza Sant'Apollinare we find the entrance to **Palazzo Altemps**. After years of abandon, the palace was purchased by the Italian Government in order to make it one of the seats of the Museo Nazionale Romano. The complex restoration work brought to light the original structures of the building, which provide a worthy setting for the splendid sculptures of the Ludovisi collection. The courtyard, a true gem of the 1500s, is the work of Martino Longhi the Elder, who used extremely harmonious proportional models. On the fountain, constructed of pumice stones, shells, and polychrome vitreous paste tesserae, the Altemps coat of arms stands out: an ibex rampant, in remembrance of the Alpine valleys of the family's origins. The animal is characterised by genitals which are totally out of proportion, symbolising a good omen and alluding to fertility.

The palace chapel has the privilege of holding, in a yellow marble urn used as an altar, the remains of St. Anicetus, pope in the 2nd century. He is the only pope to be buried in a private residence.

The itinerary continues with a visit to **Palazzo Baldassini**, at Via delle Coppelle 35. The building, the first important work assigned to Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, is considered the prototype of the 16th-century nobles' palace, taken up again countless times later. The courtyard, small but harmonious, is decorated above the arches by a frieze in which, amidst the usual liturgical motifs and weapons, there is the image of an elephant. It is the famous elephant "Annone" donated by the king of Portugal in 1513 to Pope Leo X, soon becoming a true celebrity, loved and pampered by all the Romans.

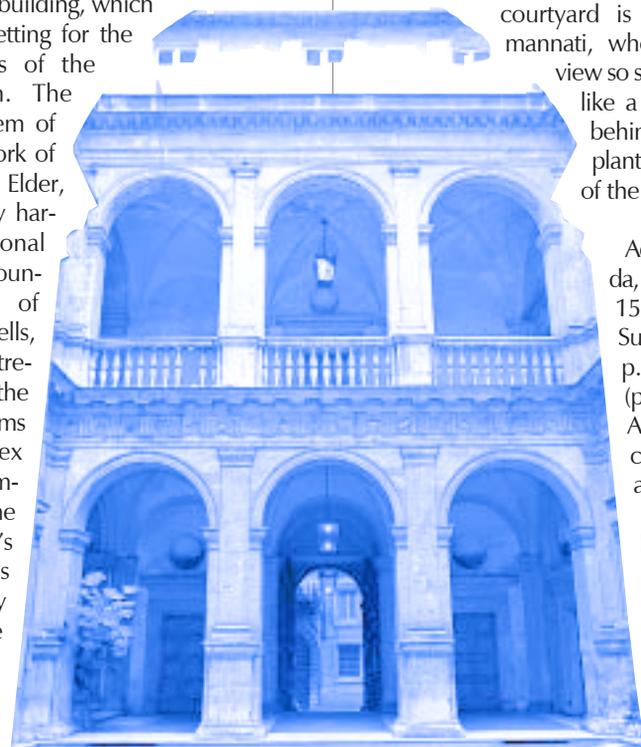
Continuing along Via delle Coppelle we arrive at Piazza Capranica where, at the *Enoteca Capranica* we can try dishes of the mediterranean tradition. On the other hand, going towards Piazza Campo Marzio, we find ourselves on Via degli Uffici del Vicario where, at *Giolitti*, we can eat one of the city's best ice-creams. On Via della Stelletta two handicraft shops, at nos. 20 and 27, create paper articles: boxes of all sizes, frames, diaries, and photo albums.

We can wind up the itinerary with Piazza Firenze, where at no. 27 stands **Palazzo Firenze**, the seat of the Dante Alighieri Society. The lovely courtyard is by Bartolomeo Ammannati, who created an internal view so sumptuous that it seems like a façade. In the garden behind, there is a magnolia plant that seems to be one of the oldest in Rome.

Addresses: Palazzo Spada, Vicolo del Polverone 15b, 8.30 a.m.-7.30 p.m., Sundays 8.30 a.m.-6.30 p.m., closed Mondays (ph. 066861158).

Admission fee; free of charge for those under 18 and over 65 years of age.

Palazzo Altemps, Piazza Sant'Apollinare 44, 9 a.m.-7.45 p.m., closed Mondays. Admission fee; free of charge for those under 18 and over 65 years of age (ph. 0639967700).



Palazzo Baldassini: Courtyard

## UNDERGROUND ROME

Underground Rome, more unusual and unknown, is able to offer the visitor continuous surprises and emotions which are difficult to find elsewhere. It is a buried city, made of hypogea, columbaria and Mithraea, but also of buildings made to be illuminated by sunlight and then ending up buried by the stratification of the soil with the slow passing of time

Our itinerary starts with the **Basilica of San Clemente**, situated only three hundred metres from the Colosseum, facing onto the square of the same name and also reachable from Via di San Giovanni in Laterano. The visit to the church's underground levels enables us, going down level by level, to go thousands of years back in time. The base of the building corresponds, in fact, to a 2nd-century house, in the courtyard of which was later created a Mithraeum, a grotto-shaped room, devoted to the worship of the Persian god Mithras. Along the walls are arranged the stone benches with which the faithful celebrated the sacred banquet. In the centre of the room is still visible the altar with the cult's image: the god killing the bull, a symbol of good and fertility.

Mithraism, which was widespread in 3rd-century Rome, was a mystery religion with a ritual similar in some ways to that of Christianity. The worshippers had to go through an initiation procedure through seven levels, and their "baptism" took place with the blood of the bull sacrificed to the god. A decisive moment of the rite was the banquet based on bread, wine and water, which the initiates took together in the grotto.

In the 4th century a church rose over the Mithraeum; it was abandoned after seven centuries because it was unsafe, and rebuilt on the upper level, that of the current basilica.

In the lower church it is worthwhile to dwell a moment on the fresco of the central nave, which represents the Story of Sisinius. The inscription under it constitutes an extremely important document for the study of the first expressions of the Italian vernacular.

From San Clemente we can take Via Labicana to go towards the park of the Oppian Hill. Almost at the park entrance is the access to Nero's famous **Domus Aurea** (Golden House). The huge underground rooms, in some cases still adorned with splendid paintings, manage to communicate only a tiny part

of what must have been the magnificence and monumentality of the complex that the emperor Nero had built, on an area of 80 hectares, after the disastrous fire of 64 A.D. caused, according to legend, by the emperor himself.

In the early 2nd century, the emperor Trajan used what remained of the Domus Aurea as the foundations for his Baths, transforming the splendid reception halls into the present-day dark underground rooms. During the Renaissance, the greatest artists all went down into these rooms and, fascinated, imitated the motifs they found frescoed on the vaults, giving rise to the painting style called "grotesque".

The term grotesque derives from the Domus Aurea and its state when it was discovered in the late 1400s. Buried, and thus hidden like a grotto, in order to visit it, it was necessary to climb in from above, after opening holes which are still visible in the ceilings of the rooms. The frescoes found inside were thus called grottesche, an expression still used today to indicate all the paintings which derive stylistically from the Domus Aurea.

Ancient authors write of the Domus Aurea: "Everything was gilded and adorned with gems and mother-of-pearl; the banquet halls with revolving ivory panels, to allow flowers to be sprinkled from above, and equipped with conduits to pipe in perfumes; the main banquet hall was round and turned continuously, day and night, like the universe".

Taking Via dei Fori Imperiali, we can reach the church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami, in the basement of which it is possible to visit the **Mamertine Prison** (named after the Sabine god Mamers, corresponding to the Latin "Mars"). The building is on two levels: the upper part, trapezoidal in shape, is the actual Mamertine Prison, known with this name since the Middle Ages; the lower part, instead, is the *Tullianum*, a cavity so called already in Roman times due to the presence of a spring, or perhaps a cistern (in Latin tullus). The lower room, dark, damp, and constantly covered with a layer of water, was used to hold political prisoners awaiting execution. Here the death sentences were carried out by strangling, involving individuals such as Jugurtha, king of Numidia, and Vercingetorix, chief of the Gauls, overcome by Julius Caesar in 49 B.C.

According to a legend that spread during the Middle Ages, the Apostles Peter and Paul were allegedly imprisoned here for nine months, escaping after having converted their guards.

Furthermore, St. Peter was said to have made a spring of water gush miraculously from the stones of this prison.

The itinerary continues towards Piazza Venezia, Via del Plebiscito and Corso Vittorio Emanuele II. On reaching the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, we turn right onto Via dei Chiavari, and proceed until reaching Piazza di Grotta Pinta. Worthy of note is the particular shape of this piazza, which outlines a semicircle with the surrounding buildings. This original shape reflects the internal curve of the Theatre of Pompey, and constitutes one of the most remarkable cases of Roman urbanistic continuity. The theatre, completed with a huge colonnade, was the first to be built of masonry in Rome, between 61 and 55 B.C., and extended over a vast area stretching between Largo Argentina and Campo de' Fiori.

In the underground parts of the archaeological area of Largo Argentina it is still possible to see the large exedra that opened up along the colonnade. During the time of Pompey, the Senate met here, and it was here that Julius Caesar was killed on 15 March 44 B.C.

Near Piazza Grotta Pinta, at Piazza del Biscione 92-94 is the restaurant *Pancrazio*. In the restaurant's basement are sizeable remains of the masonry that once supported the theatre steps. Other structures are preserved in the cellars of the neighbouring buildings.

For a brief stop and quick salad-based meal, we recommend *Insalata Ricca*, at Largo de'Chiavari 85.

After returning to Corso Vittorio Emanuele II we can go towards the **Museo Barracco** on Via dei Baullari, set up inside the 16th-century Palazzetto Le Roy, also known as the Piccola Farnesina (referring to the fleurs-de-lis on the façade, taken for the Farnese lilies). With permission requested from the caretakers, we can go down into the museum basements where, 4 metres beneath the current street level, there are interesting structures pertaining to a construction dating from the mid-4th century, probably a rich man's house. It is possible to see the remains of the colonnaded courtyard with its splendid pavement of polychrome marble slabs, the capitals of columns and a circular marble basin. Later masonry work and the presence of a weighing table (a block of marble into which hollows used as sample measures for grain, flour, etc. were carved) seems to indicate a reuse of the building for trade purposes.

At Via dei Baullari 38 we find *Mensura*, a very particular antique shop selling, among other things, furnishings and scenery from famous films.

Near the Museo Barracco is the *Palazzo della Cancelleria* that incorporates into its ground floor the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Damaso. In the basement of the palace is the tomb of Aulus Irtius, a consul who died, together with his colleague Gaius Vibius Pansa, in 43 B.C. during the battle of Modena against Mark Antony. It is a square enclosure in brick on a peperino base with various cippi at the corners on which is engraved the funeral inscription. Also running through here is a stretch of the *Euripus*, a channel of the 1st century B.C. that connected the Tiber to the artificial lake near the demolished Baths of Agrippa, which stood in the zone of Torre Argentina. The tomb and the channel can be seen today at a depth of 8 metres underground, but they were originally at ground level and in the open air, in an almost idyllic setting, rich with orderly vegetation.

Information: Mamertine Prison: winter hours: 9-12 a.m./2-5 p.m., summer hours: 9-12.30/2.30-6.30 p.m. (ph. 06 6792902); Domus Aurea, Viale della Domus Aurea; 9 a.m.-7.45 p.m., Tuesdays closed. Admission fee; free of charge for those under 18 and over 65 years of age. For reservations, ph. 0639967700.

Museo Barracco: Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 168. Temporarily closed for restoration (ph. 0668806848).



Colombarium



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Via Nazionale (Palazzo delle Esposizioni)

Piazza delle Cinque Lune

Piazza Pia (Castel Sant'Angelo)

Piazza del Tempio della Pace (Fori Imperiali)

Piazza Sonnino (Trastevere)

Via dell'Olmata (Santa Maria Maggiore)

Piazza dei Cinquecento (Stazione Termini)

Stazione Termini (Galleria Gommata)

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