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## NEIGHBOURHOODS

### top picks

- **Museo e Galleria Borghese** (p149)  
The 'queen of all private art collections'
- **St Peter's Basilica** (p128)  
A testament to artistic genius and Catholic power
- **Pantheon** (p72)  
The capital's best-preserved ancient monument
- **Colosseum** (p58)  
Rome's great gladiatorial arena sets the heart racing
- **Piazza Navona** (p78)  
Beautiful baroque square in the heart of the *centro storico*
- **Capitoline Museums** (p67)  
Magnificent classical sculpture on Michelangelo's Piazza del Campidoglio
- **Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere** (p121)  
Gold mosaics glitter inside this 12th-century church
- **Terme di Caracalla** (p110)  
Towering ruins set the scene for summer opera
- **Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Altemps** (p78)  
Baroque frescoes provide a colourful backdrop to the Ludovisi sculpture collection
- **Trevi Fountain** (p98)  
Rome's flamboyant fountain is a sure-fire crowd-pleaser

# NEIGHBOURHOODS

The result of 3000 years of ad hoc urban development, Rome can seem an overwhelming prospect. Its street layout owes more to ancient road builders than to any norms of urban planning, and there's little apparent order to the patchwork of ruins, *palazzi* (mansions) and *piazze* that constitute much of the centre. To help you plot a course, we've divided the city into seven manageable chunks.

Centred on the Colosseum, **Ancient Rome** is where you'll find the thrilling remnants of Rome's imperial past: the Palatino (Palatine hill), the forums, the Campidoglio (Capitoline hill) and the Circo Massimo. Easy to get to by public transport, it sits at the southern end of the city centre, at the bottom of Via Cavour, the busy road that connects with Stazione Termini, Rome's main train station.

Many visitors, however, prefer to start in the **centro storico** (historic centre), curious to see if the Pantheon and Piazza Navona live up to their legendary billing. Here, among the tangled lanes and romantic corners, you'll almost certainly lose your bearings, but don't let that worry you. It's not a big area and you can never really get that lost – if you do find yourself going round in circles head west for the River Tiber or east for Via del Corso, Rome's principal shopping street.

To the east, **Esquilino, Quirinale and Piazza di Spagna** is a large area rising east from Via del Corso up to Stazione Termini. Encompassing three of Rome's seven hills (the Esquilino, Quirinale and Viminale), the city's smartest shopping district and a host of iconic sights (including the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps), it's a rich and varied district.

**Southern Rome** is a fascinating area largely overlooked by the crowds that flock to the Colosseum and Roman forums. Among its better-known attractions are the Basilica di San Giovanni, the Terme di Caracalla, Via Appia Antica and the catacombs. But there are also a number of delightful surprises: there's the leafy Villa Celimontana and the tranquil Aventino (Aventine hill); there's EUR, with its strange, world-apart atmosphere; and there's Testaccio, with its pumped-up clubs.

Over the river from Testaccio, **Trastevere** is one of Rome's most photogenic neighbourhoods. Formerly a bastion of working-class independence, it's now a trendy hang-out for foreigners and fun-seekers, its pretty alleyways thronged with restaurants, cafés, pubs and pizzerias.

Continue north from Trastevere and you come to the **Vatican City and Borgo**. Independent since 1929, the Vatican is the world's smallest sovereign state and home to St Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel, two of Rome's top attractions, as well as hundreds of overpriced restaurants and souvenir shops.

On the other side of the River Tiber, the highlight of **Villa Borghese and Northern Rome** is Villa Borghese itself, Rome's most famous park. Here you'll find several art galleries (including the must-see Museo e Galleria Borghese), the city zoo and plenty of benches to rest your weary legs.

Everywhere you go in Rome, everywhere you look, there's something to see. Too much, maybe; certainly too much for a single visit. The trick is not to worry about it. Stroll the streets, have an ice cream, stop for a coffee – do as the Romans do. For that's the beauty of Rome: you don't need to march round museums and churches to appreciate its unparalleled cultural legacy, you just need to walk its streets. Even without trying you'll see more than you bargained for.

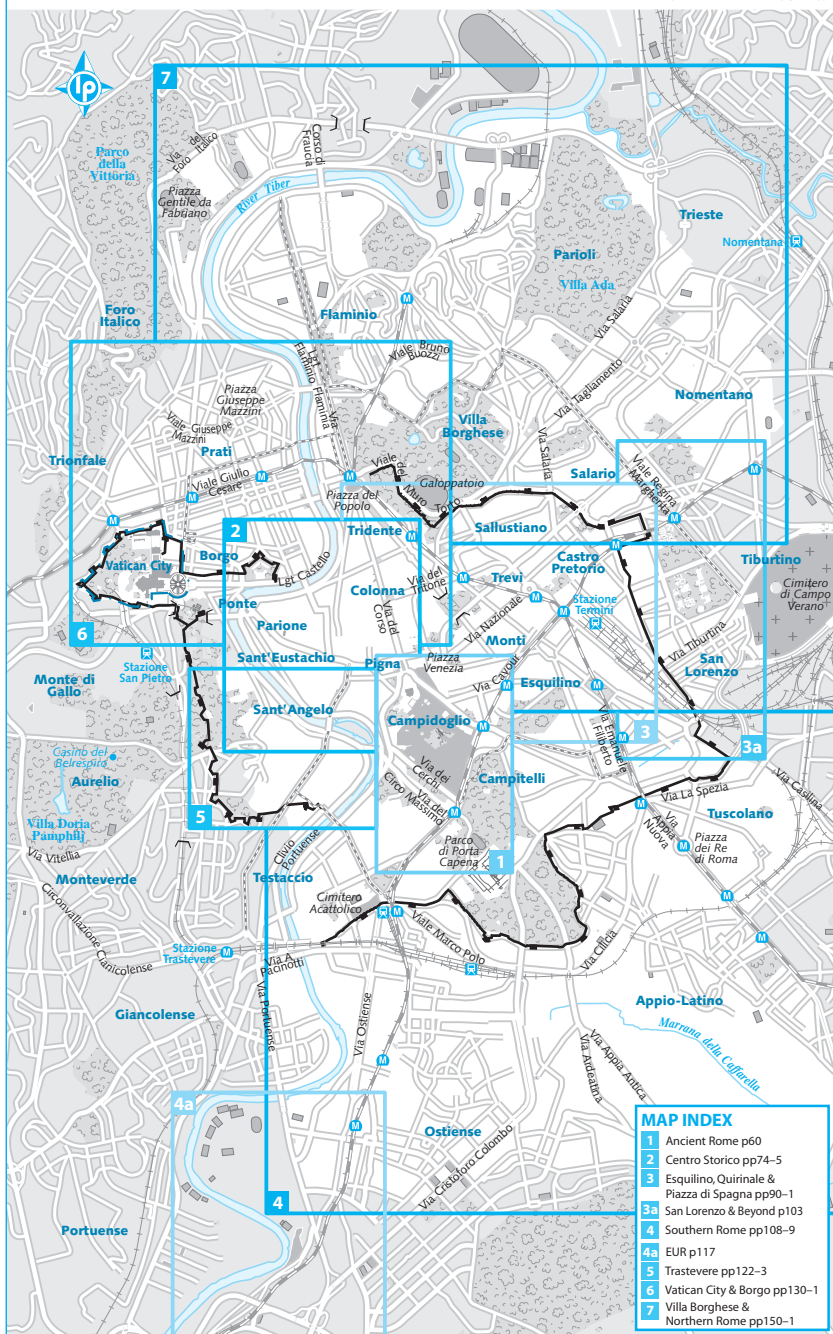
Public transport makes getting around pretty straightforward, and throughout this chapter we have included the best transport options. (For more on transport, see [p281](#).)

**'That's the beauty of Rome: you don't need to march round museums and churches to appreciate its unparalleled cultural legacy, you just need to walk its streets.'**



**GREATER ROME**

0 1 km  
0 0.5 miles



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**ITINERARY BUILDER**

The table below allows you to plan a day's worth of activities in any area of the city. Simply select which area you wish to explore, and then mix and match from the corresponding listings to build your day. The first item in each cell represents a well-known highlight of the area, while the other items are more off-the-beaten-track gems.

AREA	ACTIVITIES	SIGHTS	EATING	DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE
Ancient Rome	Colosseum (p58) Palatino (p59) Piazza del Campidoglio (p66)		San Teodoro (p186) Ara Coeli (p198) La Piazzetta (p186)	Oppio Caffè (p212) Caffè Capitolino (p212) Cavour 313 (p213)
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# ANCIENT ROME

Drinking & Nightlife p212; Eating p185; Sleeping p246

In a city of extraordinary beauty, Rome's ancient heart exerts a compelling hold. It's here that you'll find the great icons of Rome's past set imperiously against the realities of modern urban life. Buses crammed with commuters thunder past 2000-year-old ruins, while sharks dressed as centurions pose with grinning tourists.

Yet just as modern hustlers get by on their wits, so the ancients did what they had to do to get ahead. It was on the Palatine that Romulus killed his brother Remus and founded the city in 753 BC; it was in the Roman Forum that senators conspired against each other; and in the Colosseum that gladiators fought to the death. Away to the southwest, the 250,000-seat Circo Massimo was the scene of vicious chariot races.

Nowadays, you don't have to sweat blood to visit the area – it's easy to get to and easily navigated on foot. There are two focal points: the Colosseum to the east and the Campidoglio to the west. In between lie the forums, on either side of Via dei Fori Imperiali. Now Rome's most famous ruins, the forums were once showpiece examples of cutting-edge urban design, incorporating shops, markets, courts, temples and government buildings.

They were dramatic public spaces, richly decorated and grandly scaled. Fascinating as the ruins are, they're not always well labelled and it's often difficult to know what you're looking at. To help, get a copy of the Electa *Ancient Rome* map (€3.50) from the Roman Forum ticket office at Largo Romolo e Remo.

To the southwest, the Forum Boarium was once Rome's cattle market and river port. Not a lot remains of what must once have been a noisy, smelly part of the capital, and the area is today crisscrossed with busy roads. The one big crowd puller is the Bocca della Verità, Rome's mythical lie detector.

By public transport the best way to get to Ancient Rome is to take metro line B to Colosseo or one of the frequent buses to Piazza Venezia (H, 40, 60, 63, 64, 170 or 716). There's also a metro station (line B) at Circo Massimo.

visitors a year. This inevitably means lengthy queues and long waits. But don't be put off – there are ways round the queues (see the boxed text, p62).

If you want information but don't want to join a tour group, grab an audioguide (€4.50) or video guide (€5.50).

Built by Emperor Vespasian (r AD 69–79) in Nero's palatial *Domus Aurea* (p95) complex, the Colosseum was inaugurated in AD 80. To mark the occasion, Vespasian's son and successor Titus (r AD 79–81) staged games that lasted 100 days and nights, during which some 5000 animals were slaughtered. Trajan (r 98–117) later topped this, holding a marathon 117-day killing spree involving 9000 gladiators and 10,000 animals.

The combatants – prisoners of war, slaves or volunteers – were paired off to ensure the greatest spectacle. Thus, one would have a heavy sword and shield and

the other, almost naked, would carry a net and trident. Bouts were not necessarily to the death, as a defeated gladiator could appeal to the presiding VIP, who would judge on the basis of the crowd's reaction. For more on gladiators, see p24.

Originally known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, the 50,000-capacity stadium might have been Rome's most fearful arena but it wasn't the biggest – the Circo Massimo could hold up to 250,000 people. In fact, the name Colosseum, when introduced in medieval times, was not a reference to its size but to the *Colosso di Nerone*, a giant statue of Nero that stood nearby.

The outer walls have three levels of arches, articulated by Ionic, Doric and Corinthian columns. They were originally covered in travertine, and marble statues once filled the niches on the 2nd and 3rd storeys. The upper level had supports for 240 masts that held up a canvas awning over the arena, shielding the spectators from sun and rain. The 80 entrance arches, known as *vomitatoria*, allowed the spectators to enter and be seated in a matter of minutes.

The interior of the Colosseum was divided into three parts: the arena, *cavea* and podium. The arena had a wooden floor covered in sand to prevent the combatants from slipping and to soak up the blood. It could also be flooded for mock sea battles. Trap doors led down to underground chambers beneath the arena floor. Animals in cages and sets for the various battles were hoisted onto the arena by a complex system of pulleys.

The *cavea*, for spectator seating, was divided into three tiers: magistrates and senior officials sat in the lowest tier, wealthy citizens in the middle and the plebs in the highest tier. Women (except for vestal virgins) were relegated to the cheapest sections at the top. The podium, a broad terrace in front of the tiers of seats, was reserved for emperors, senators and VIPs.

With the fall of the empire in the 6th century, the Colosseum was abandoned and gradually became overgrown. In the Middle Ages it became a fortress, occupied by two of the city's warrior families, the Frangipani and the Annibaldi.

Damaged several times by earthquakes, it was later used as a quarry for travertine and marble for Palazzo Venezia, Palazzo Barberini and Palazzo Cancellaria among

other buildings. Pollution and vibrations caused by traffic, the metro and the occasional concert have also taken their toll.

## ARCO DI COSTANTINO Map p60

Via di San Gregorio; ☐ Colosseo  
To the east of the Colosseum, the Arco di Costantino (Arch of Constantine) was built in 312 to commemorate Emperor Constantine's victory over his rival Maxentius at the Battle of Ponte Milvio (see p155). One of the last great Roman monuments, it is, in fact, a patchwork of panels from other sculptures – the lower stonework dates from Domitian's reign (AD 81–96) while the eight large medallions depicting hunting scenes are Hadrianic (117–138).

Between the Colosseum and the arch you can see the brick foundations of an ancient fountain known as the *Meta Sudans* (Sweating Meta).

## PALATINO Map p60

☎ 06 399 67 700; www.pierreci.it; entrances at Via di San Gregorio 30 & Piazza di Santa Maria Nova 53; admission incl Colosseum adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €11/free/6.50; ☐ 8.30am-7.15pm Apr-Aug, 8.30am-7pm Sep, 8.30am-6.30pm Oct, 8.30am-5.30pm mid-end Mar, 8.30am-5pm mid-Feb-mid-Mar, 8.30am-4.30pm Nov-mid-Feb, ticket office closes 1hr before closing time; ☐ Colosseo  
A suggestive area of majestic ruins and memorable views, the Palatine (Palatine) hill is where Romulus is said to have killed his brother Remus and founded Rome in 753 BC. And while it's impossible to prove a myth, archaeologists have unearthed evidence of human habitation in the area dating to the 8th century BC.

If you want further explanation there's a one-hour guided tour in English every day at 11am (€3.50). Note also that if tickets are issued after 1.30pm, they are valid until 1.30pm the following day.

Sandwiched between the Roman Forum and Circo Massimo, the Palatine was Ancient Rome's poshest neighbourhood. Augustus lived here all his life and successive emperors built increasingly opulent palaces. But after Rome's fall, it fell into disrepair and in the Middle Ages churches and castles were built over the ruins. During the Renaissance, members of wealthy families established gardens on the hill.

Most of the Palatine as it appears today is covered by the ruins of Emperor Domitian's

## top picks

### ANCIENT ROME

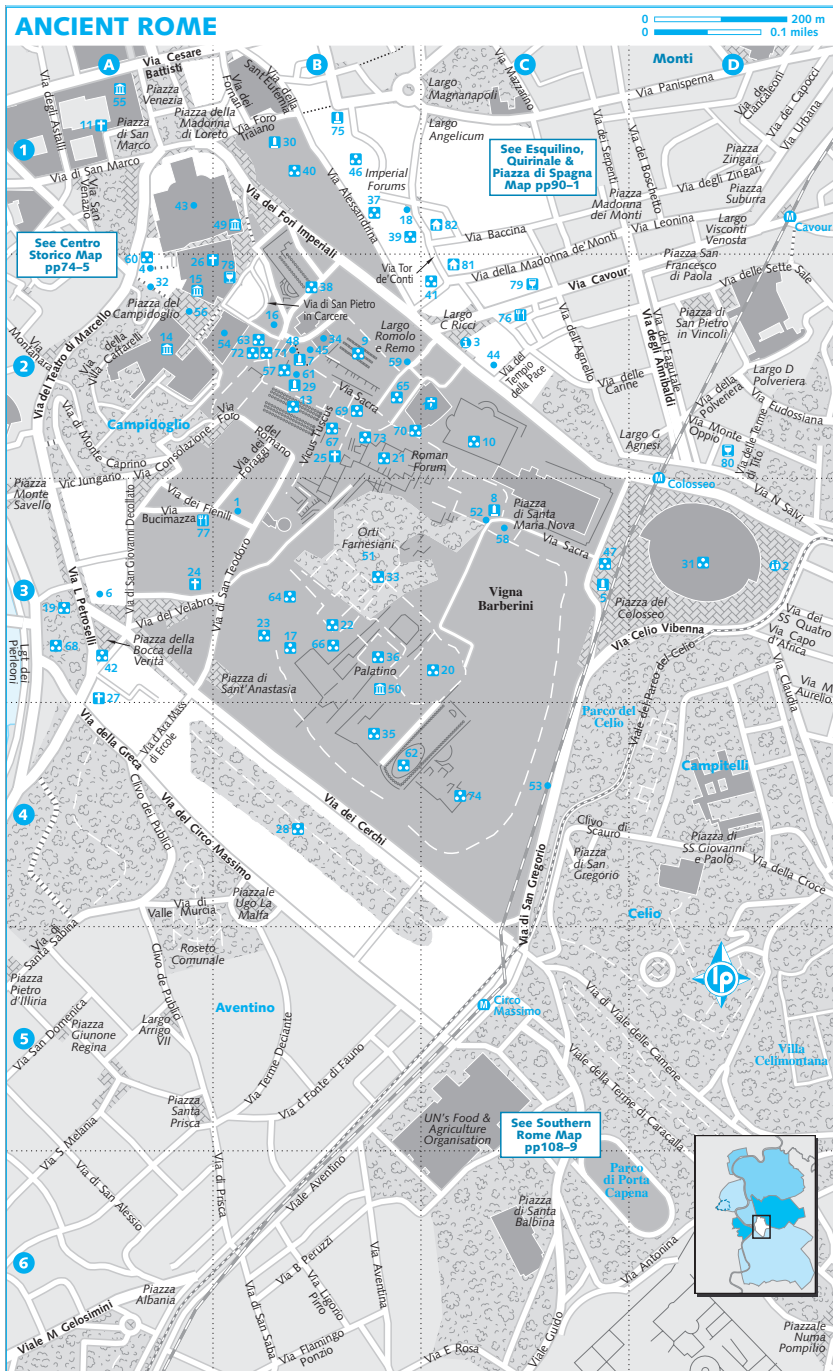
- Capitoline Museums (p67)
- Colosseo (below)
- Roman Forum (p63)
- Il Vittoriano (p68)
- Bocca della Verità (p69)

## COLOSSEUM & PALATINO

### COLOSSEUM Map p60

☎ 06 399 67 700; www.pierreci.it; Piazza del Colosseo; admission incl Palatino adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €11/free/6.50; ☐ 8.30am-7.15pm Apr-Aug, 8.30am-7pm Sep, 8.30am-6.30pm Oct, 8.30am-5.30pm mid-end Mar, 8.30am-5pm mid-Feb-mid-Mar, 8.30am-4.30pm Nov-mid-Feb, ticket office closes 1hr before closing time; ☐ Colosseo; ☐

Opposite the metro station of the same name, the Colosseum (Colosseo) is the most thrilling of Rome's ancient sights. A monument to raw, merciless power, it was here that gladiators met in mortal combat and condemned prisoners faced wild beasts in front of baying, bloodthirsty crowds. Two thousand years on and the Colosseum is one of Italy's top tourist attractions, pulling in about four million



## ANCIENT ROME

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- Arco di Giano.....6 A3
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vast complex, which served as the main imperial palace for 300 years. Divided into the Domus Flavia (imperial palace), Domus Augustana (the emperor's private residence) and a *stadio* (stadium), it was built by the architect Rabirius in the 1st century AD.

On entering the complex from Via di San Gregorio, head uphill until you come to the first recognisable construction, the *stadio*. This sunken arena was probably used by the imperial family for private games and events: an oval recess in the eastern wall is thought to have served as the emperor's private viewing area. Adjoining the stadium, to the southeast, are the scant remains of the complex built by Septimius Severus, comprising baths (the *Terme di Settimio Severo*) and a palace (the *Domus Severiana*).

On the other side of the *stadio* are the ruins of the huge *Domus Augustana*, the emperor's private residence. It was built on two levels, with rooms leading off a *peristilio* (peristyle or garden courtyard) on each floor. You can't get down to the lower level, but from above you can see the basin of a fountain and beyond it rooms which were paved with coloured marble. The palace

had an elaborate two-storey colonnaded façade to the south, overlooking the Circo Massimo.

The grey building near the Domus Augustana houses the *Museo Palatino* and its valuable collection of artefacts found on the Palatino. For much of the 20th century, the most important pieces were kept in the Museo Nazionale Romano, and although many still are, a considerable number were returned to the revamped museum in 1998. Admission is included in your Palatino ticket, although the museum closes one hour earlier than the Palatino itself.

The downstairs section of the museum tells the history of the hill from its origins to the republican age. There are pots and eating and cooking utensils from the Palaeolithic Age to the Bronze Age, as well as models of how the Iron Age huts and tombs might have appeared. Sala (Room) IV contains artefacts from the archaic and republican ages (6th to 1st centuries BC), including an altar to a pagan god, and ceramic masks.

Upstairs, you'll find artefacts from the Augustan period (27 BC–AD 14), including



## QUEUE JUMPING – OR NOT

The Colosseum, St Peter's Basilica, the Sistine Chapel – chances are these will be pretty high on your must-see list. If they are, you'll be in good company: in 2006 more than 4.2 million people visited the Vatican Museums (through which you access the Sistine Chapel) and some four million tourists flocked to the Colosseum. Rome's big sights are the most popular in Italy and queues are inevitable. But is there any way round them?

At the Colosseum there are a number of options:

- Buy your ticket from the Palatino entrance (the nearest ticket office is by the Arco di Tito entrance to the Roman Forum). Tickets are valid for both the Palatino and the Colosseum and there are rarely queues outside the Palatino.
- Buy your ticket online at [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it), although you'll have to pay a €1.50 booking fee.
- Get the Roma Pass (see p289), which is valid for three days and a whole host of sites.
- If all else fails, join an English-language tour (you'll almost certainly be approached by a tout as you near the ticket offices). These cost €3.50 on top of the regular Colosseum ticket price and, in theory, allow you to skip the queues. In practice, however, you still have to queue to get a ticket, just in a separate, usually shorter line.

The Vatican is more difficult. Security checks outside St Peter's Basilica mean long queues but they usually move quite quickly. Much worse is the situation at the Vatican Museums. In January 2007 the museums reduced their opening times to give greater access to tour parties, and huge queues (sometimes up to 2.5km) have become the norm. About all you can do, if you don't want to join a tour, is to time your visit, and even that's far from foolproof. Avoid Mondays (when many other museums are shut) and Wednesday mornings (when the Pope addresses the faithful in Piazza San Pietro), and try to arrive around lunchtime, when queues tend to be at their shortest (relatively speaking, of course). You can't prebook tickets for the Vatican Museums.

a beautiful 1st-century bronze, the *Erma di Canefora*, and black marble statues from the [Tempio di Apollo](#), as well as objects from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD. Highlights include a rare bust of Emperor Nero and the beautiful sculpted head of Giovane Principessa, the daughter of Nero's successor Marcus Aurelius.

North of the museum is the [Domus Flavia](#), the public part of Domitian's huge palace complex. The Domus comprised three halls: one to the north; one in the centre, which was the emperor's throne room; and, to the south, a large banqueting hall, or *triclinium*, decorated in coloured marble. The *triclinium* looked out onto an oval fountain, the remains of which are still clearly visible. Domitian was terrified of being assassinated and had the peristyle lined with shiny black marble so that he could always see who was approaching. It didn't do him much good, though, as he was murdered in his bedroom.

The Domus Flavia was constructed over earlier edifices. One of these is the [Casa dei Griffi](#) (House of the Griffins; closed for restoration at the time of research), the oldest building on the Palatino. Dating to the late 2nd or 1st century BC, it takes its name from a stucco relief of two griffins in one of the rooms.

Among the best-preserved buildings on the Palatino is the [Casa di Livia](#), northwest of

the Domus Flavia. Home to Augustus' wife Livia, it was built around an atrium leading onto what were once reception rooms, decorated with frescoes of mythological scenes, landscapes, fruits and flowers. In front is the [Casa d'Augusto](#), Augustus' separate residence. Both these houses are being restored and can sometimes be visited depending on what the archaeologists and restorers are up to.

Next to the Casa d'Augusto is the [Casa di Romolo](#), where, it is thought, Romulus and Remus were brought up after their discovery by the shepherd Faustulus. Excavations in the 1940s revealed evidence of supports for wattle-and-daub huts dating to the 8th-century-BC Iron Age. Nearby, the [Tempio della Magna Mater](#), also known as the Tempio di Cibele, was built in 204 BC to house a black stone connected with the Asiatic goddess of fertility, Cybele.

To the northeast of the Casa di Livia is the [criptoportico](#), a 128m tunnel built by Nero to connect his Domus Aurea with the Palatino. Lit by a series of windows, it boasted elaborate stucco decorations, the originals of which are now in the [Museo Nazionale Romano: Crypta Balbi](#) (p78).

The area west of this was once Tiberius' palace, the Domus Tiberiana, but is now the site of the [Orti Farnesiani](#) (currently off-limits for restoration), Cardinal Alessandro Farnese's mid-16th-century gardens.

Considered some of Europe's earliest botanical gardens, they were designed by the fashionable architect Vignola and planted with species new to Italy. Twin pavilions stand at the northern point of the garden, commanding breathtaking views over the Forum below.

## CIRCO MASSIMO [Map p60](#)

Via del Circo Massimo; 𐌆 Circo Massimo  
To the south of the Palatino and surrounded by car-choked roads, the Circo Massimo (Circus Maximus) is now little more than a basin of rather forlorn grass. In the 1st century, however, this was Rome's biggest stadium, a 250,000-seater capable of holding a quarter of the city's entire population. The 600m racetrack circled a wooden dividing island with ornate lap indicators and Egyptian obelisks.

Chariot races were held here as far back as the 4th century BC, but it wasn't until Trajan rebuilt it after the AD 64 fire that it reached its maximum grandeur.

## THE FORUMS & AROUND

The administrative and commercial centre of Republican Rome, the original Roman Forum got too small around 46 BC, forcing successive emperors to build new ones (the Imperial Forums) as demand and expedience required. To the west, there was little glamorous about the Forum Boarium, the ancient city's cattle market.

## ROMAN FORUM [Map p60](#)

☎ 06 399 67 700; entrances at Largo Romolo e Remo 5-6, Piazza di Santa Maria Nova 53 & Via di Monte Tarpeo; admission free; 𐌆 8.30am-7.15pm Apr-Aug, 8.30am-7pm Sep, 8.30am-6.30pm Oct, 8.30am-5.30pm mid-end Mar, 8.30am-5pm mid-Feb-mid-Mar, 8.30am-4.30pm Nov-mid-Feb; 𐌆 Colosseo

To picture the Roman Forum (Foro Romano) as the gleaming centre of the ancient world requires an active imagination. Centuries of neglect and pillaging have left the area in tatters, and what were once majestic temples and proud basilicas are now badly labelled ruins. You can give your mind's eye a helping hand by forking out €4 for an audioguide or joining the daily 12.30pm tour in English (€3.50, departure from the Piazza di Santa Maria Nova entrance).

The oldest and most famous of the forums, the Roman Forum grew over the

course of 900 years. Originally an Etruscan burial ground, it was first developed in the 7th century BC and expanded to become the centre of the Roman Republic. Its importance declined after the 4th century AD until eventually the site was used as pasture land.

In the Middle Ages it was known as the Campo Vaccino (literally 'Cow Field') and was extensively plundered for its stone and marble. During the Renaissance, with the renewed appreciation of all things classical, the forum provided inspiration for artists and architects. The area was systematically excavated in the 18th and 19th centuries and excavations continue.

As you enter from Largo Romolo e Remo, to your left you'll see the [Tempio di Antonino e Faustina](#), erected in 141 by the Senate and dedicated to the Empress Faustina and later to Emperor Antoninus Pius. It was transformed into a church in the 8th century, and the soaring columns now frame the [Chiesa di San Lorenzo in Miranda](#). To your right, the [Basilica Aemilia](#), built in 179 BC, was a vast 100m-long public hall with a two-storey porticoed façade lined with shops.

At the end of this short path you come to [Via Sacra](#) (Sacred Way), which traverses the Forum from northwest to southeast. Opposite the Basilica Aemilia stands the [Tempio di Giulio Cesare](#) (Temple of Julius Caesar), erected by Augustus in 29 BC on the site where Caesar's body had been cremated 15 years before. Head right up Via Sacra and you reach the [Curia](#), the big brick building on the right just after the Basilica Aemilia. Once the meeting place of the Roman Senate, it was rebuilt successively by Julius Caesar, Augustus, Domitian and Diocletian and was converted into a Christian church in the Middle Ages. What you see today is a 1937 reconstruction of Diocletian's Curia. The bronze doors are copies – the originals were used by Borromini for the [Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano](#) (p106).

In front of the Curia is the famous [Lapis Niger](#), a large piece of black marble that covered a sacred area said to be the tomb of Romulus. Down a short flight of stairs (closed to the public) under the Lapis Niger is the oldest-known Latin inscription, dating from the 6th century BC.

At the end of Via Sacra stands the [Arco di Settimio Severo](#) (Arch of Septimius Severus), one of the forum's most intact structures. Dedicated to the eponymous emperor and

## A PASSION FOR MARBLE

'If we want our grandchildren and great-grandchildren to see Rome's ancient monuments we need to close them. They simply can't take the wear or tear any more. But to do so would require a lot of courage as it would be a highly controversial move.'

The suggestion comes from Simone Colalucci, an expert art restorer of more than 20 years' experience.

'The problem with the monuments is that the marble they're made of becomes very fragile if it loses its equilibrium. Inside, in the right conditions, marble can last almost indefinitely, but outside it needs to be protected against the cold, against heat and humidity, and against pollution, something which I might add is not an entirely modern phenomenon. In the past, carbon-fired heating systems caused a lot of pollution, as did the small fires people would light to keep warm on the streets.

'I always find it amazing that the Romans imported so much marble that they never found time to use it all. Right through the Renaissance and up until the 20th century, the city was being built with marble that the ancients had imported from North Africa, Greece and other Mediterranean countries. Even today there are artists, particularly on Via Margutta, who are still using ancient marble.'

A chip off the old block, Simone learned his craft at the hands of a master – his father, Gianluigi Colalucci, who masterminded the restoration of the Sistine Chapel.

'I started off working with my father, although I never worked on the Sistine Chapel; I only ever went there as a visitor. But we worked together on some beautiful frescoes at Palazzo Spada and Castel Sant'Angelo, a building which I think deserves to be much better known.

'My most satisfying job, though, was the year I spent working at the Roman Forum. I worked on the Tempio di Castore e Polluce and it was quite unique. Let's face it, you don't get too many opportunities to work on such a subject.'

his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, it was built in 203 to celebrate the Roman victory over the Parthians (from modern-day Iran). The centre panel depicts defeated Parthians being led away in chains.

Nearby, at the foot of the Tempio di Saturno, is the **Millarium Aureum**, which marked the very centre of Ancient Rome, from where distances to the city were measured. Built by Augustus in 20 BC, it was originally covered in gold.

On your left are the remains of the **Rostrum**, an elaborate podium from which Rome's movers and shakers would harangue the masses. It was here that Shakespeare's Mark Antony made his famous 'Friends, Romans, countrymen...' speech.

The eight granite columns that you see from here are all that remain of the **Tempio di Saturno** (Temple of Saturn), one of Rome's most important temples. Inaugurated in 497 BC, it was used as the state treasury and during Caesar's rule contained 13 tonnes of gold, 114 tonnes of silver and 30 million silver coins. Behind it, and backing onto the Campidoglio, are (from north to south): the ruins of the **Tempio della Concordia** (Temple of Concord); the three remaining columns of the **Tempio di Vespasiano** (Temple of Vespasian); and the **Portico degli Dei Consenti**, of which 12 columns remain.

Turning round, you'll see the Piazza del Foro, the forum's main market and

meeting place during the republican era, marked by the **Colonna di Foca** (Column of Phocus). The last monument erected in the Roman Forum, it was built in 608 to honour the Eastern Roman Emperor Phocus, who donated the Pantheon to the Church. To your right are the foundations of the **Basilica Giulia**, a law court built by Julius Caesar in 55 BC.

To the southeast of the basilica is the **Tempio di Castore e Polluce** (Temple of Castor and Pollux), also known as the Tempio dei Castori. Built in 489 BC to mark the defeat of the Etruscan Tarquins, it was dedicated to the Dioscuri (or Heavenly Twins) who, it is said, miraculously appeared to the Roman troops during an important battle. Three Corinthian columns mark the spot.

Behind the temple, at the end of the **Vicus Tuscus** (Etruscan Street), is the **Chiesa di Santa Maria Antiqua**, the oldest Christian church in the Forum. Inside are some early Christian frescoes and nearby is a welcome loo.

Back towards Via Sacra is the **Casa delle Vestali** (House of the Vestal Virgins), home of the vestal virgins (see p66), whose job it was to keep the sacred flame alight in the adjoining **Tempio di Vesta**.

Once back on Via Sacra turn right and after the **Tempio di Romolo** (Temple of Romulus), part of which is now in the **Basilica di SS Cosma e Damiano** (opposite), you'll see the vast **Basilica di Massenzio** on your left. Emperor

Maxentius initiated work on the basilica, and Constantine finished it in 315 (it's also known as the Basilica di Costantino). The largest building in the forum, it originally covered an area of approximately 100m by 65m, and was used for business and the administration of justice. Its design provided inspiration for Renaissance architects, including Michelangelo, who is said to have studied its massive barrel vaults when planning the dome for St Peter's.

Continuing, you come to the **Arco di Tito** (Arch of Titus), built in AD 81 to celebrate Vespasian's and Titus' victories against Jerusalem. In the past, Roman Jews would avoid passing under this arch, the historical symbol of the beginning of the Diaspora.

You then exit to the Colosseum.

## IMPERIAL FORUMS Map p60

**Via dei Fori Imperiali:** ☺ **Via dei Fori Imperiali**  
The expanse of ruins to the northeast of Via dei Fori Imperiali (on the right as you walk up from the Colosseum) are known collectively as the Imperial Forums (Fori Imperiali). Constructed by Caesar, Augustus, Vespasian, Nerva and Trajan between 42 BC and AD 112, they were largely buried in 1933 when Mussolini built Via dei Fori Imperiali between the Colosseum and Piazza Venezia. Excavations have since unearthed much of them, but work continues and visits are limited to the Foro di Traiano.

To see what the area would have looked like in ancient times, check out the plastic model at the **Imperial Forums visitor centre** (☎ 06 679 77 86; Via dei Fori Imperiali; 11 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat), where there's also a small café and free toilet.

The youngest and most extensively excavated of the forums is the **Foro di Traiano** (Trajan's Forum; ☎ 06 679 00 48; entrance Piazza della Madonna di Loreto by Colonna di Traiano; admission €3.10; 11 9am-2pm Tue-Sun). In its heyday the vast 2nd-century-AD precinct measured 300m by 185m and comprised two libraries, a temple, a triumphal arch, Rome's largest basilica and a huge column. Unfortunately little recognisable remains except for some pillars from the **Basilica Ulpia** and the **Colonna di Traiano** (Trajan's Column). The column was erected to mark Trajan's victories over the Dacians (from modern-day Romania) and is decorated with a spiral of reliefs depicting his glorious battles. Minutely detailed, the reliefs are regarded as among the finest

examples of ancient Roman sculpture. A golden statue of Trajan once topped the column but it was lost during the Middle Ages and replaced with a statue of St Peter.

Dominating the **foro** is the vast semi-circular construction that once housed the **Mercati di Traiano** (Trajan's Markets). The ancient equivalent of a shopping mall, the markets were spread over three floors and sold everything from oil and vegetables to flowers, silks and spices. At the time of research, the upper levels were closed as work continued on a museum dedicated to the Imperial Forums (due for completion in October 2007).

Above the markets, the tall red-brick tower is the **Torre delle Milizie** (Militia Tower), a 13th-century addition. Nearby, the 12th-century **Casa dei Cavalieri di Rodi** (Piazza del Grillo 1) was the medieval home of the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, better known as the Knights of Malta.

To the southeast, the **Foro di Augusto** (Augustus' Forum) was completed in 2 BC. Three columns of a temple dedicated to Mars are still standing and others have been reconstructed from fragments, but more than half the original forum is now under Via dei Fori Imperiali. The 30m-high wall behind the forum was built to protect it from the fires that frequently swept the area.

The **Foro di Nerva** (Nerva's Forum) was also buried by Mussolini's road-building, although part of a temple dedicated to Minerva still stands. Originally, it would have connected the Foro di Augusto to the 1st-century **Foro di Vespasiano** (Vespasian's Forum), also known as the Forum of Peace.

On the other side of Via dei Fori Imperiali, three columns on a raised platform are all that remain of the **Foro di Cesare** (Caesar's Forum), built by Julius Caesar at the foot of the Campidoglio. Caesar claimed the goddess Venus in his family tree and his forum included a temple to her as Venus Genetrix – Venus the Ancestor.

## BASILICA DI SS COSMA E DAMIANO

Map p60

☎ 06 699 15 40; Via dei Fori Imperiali; 11 8am-1pm & 3-7pm; 117 Colosseo

Connected to the Roman Forum by the Basilica di Massenzio, this 6th-century basilica incorporates a library from the **Foro di Vespasiano** (above) and part of the **Tempio di**

## LIKE A VESTAL VIRGIN

Not known as great advocates of sexual abstinence, the ancient Romans actually held virginity in high regard. Or, rather, they held the vestal virgins in high regard.

Every year six physically perfect patrician girls between the ages of six and 10 were chosen by lottery to serve Vesta, daughter of Saturn, goddess of hearth and household. And while to be picked was a great privilege, it was hardly the ticket to a fun-filled life. Girls spent their first 10 years in training, learning, among other things, the rudiments of fire preservation – as a fully fledged vestal their most important task was to keep the sacred fire of Vesta burning in the inner chamber of the Tempio di Vesta. To let what was considered the hearth fire of Rome go out was a sin punishable by flogging.

Once fully qualified, the girls faced 10 years of service, during which they were treated as deified beauty queens, appearing at public ceremonies, participating in harvest festivals and taking the seats of honour at dinner parties and spectacles at the Colosseum.

To round off their 30-year period of service was a decade spent teaching the next generation of vestals. Only after this were they free to marry. Most retired virgins, however, chose to stay on in the Casa delle Vestali (House of the Virgins).

The wellbeing of the state was thought to depend on the cult of Vesta, and in particular on the vestals' virginity. While they were held in the highest esteem and received all privileges, punishment for dereliction of duty was severe. If a priestess lost her virginity she was buried alive, since her blood could not be spilled, and the offending man was flogged to death.

The vestals left the Roman Forum when non-Christian cults were outlawed in the late 4th century.

**Romolo (p64)**, visible through the glass wall at the end of the nave.

But it's to the magnificent apse mosaics that most eyes are drawn. Against a blue background, the central figure of Christ is flanked by St Peter and St Paul (in white robes), who are presenting St Cosmas and St Damian to him. On the far left is St Felix, holding up a model of the church, and on the right is St Theodore. Below this scene is a frieze of the Lamb of God (representing Christ) and his flock of 12 lambs (representing the 12 apostles).

In a room off the tranquil 17th-century cloisters is a vast **presepio** (nativity scene; admission €1 donation; h 10am-1pm & 3-6.30pm daily Apr-Oct, 10am-1pm Tue-Thu, 10am-1pm & 3-5.30pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar). A fine example of 18th-century Neapolitan workmanship, it features a varied cast of wooden and terracotta figures, including the baby Jesus and various animals.

## CAMPIDOGGIO

Rising above the Roman Forum, the Campidoglio (Capitoline hill) was one of the seven hills on which Rome was founded. An important political and spiritual site, it was considered the true heart of the Roman Republic. At its summit were Rome's two most important temples: one dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus (a descendant of Jupiter, the Roman equivalent of Zeus) and another

(which housed Rome's mint) to Juno Moneta. More than 2000 years on, the hill still wields considerable clout as seat of Rome's municipal government.

The hill's modern highlight is the Piazza del Campidoglio, designed by Michelangelo and home to the fabulous Capitoline Museums.

### PIAZZA DEL CAMPIDOGGIO Map p60

#### ☞ Piazza Venezia

The magnificent centrepiece of the Campidoglio, Michelangelo's 16th-century piazza is considered by many to be Rome's most beautiful square. Commissioned by Pope Paul III and designed by Michelangelo in 1538, it took more than a hundred years to build and was completed in the late 17th century.

There are various ways to reach it but the most dramatic is via the **Cordonata**, the graceful staircase that leads up from Piazza d'Aracoele. At the top of the stairs, the piazza is bordered by three **palazzi**: **Palazzo Nuovo** to the left, **Palazzo Senatorio** straight ahead and **Palazzo dei Conservatori** on the right. Together, Palazzo Nuovo and Palazzo dei Conservatori house the **Capitoline Museums (opposite)**, while Palazzo Senatorio is home to Rome's city council.

In the centre of the square, the bronze equestrian **statue of Marcus Aurelius** is a copy. The original, which dates from the 2nd century AD, was in the piazza from 1538 until

1981, when it was moved to Palazzo Nuovo to protect it from erosion. The fountain at the base of Palazzo Senatorio's double staircase features a 1st-century **statue of Minerva** in a central niche. On either side of her are statues of two laid-back men representing the Tiber (on the right) and the Nile (on the left).

To the left of Palazzo Senatorio is Via di San Pietro in Carcere and, down the stairs, the **Carcere Mamertino** (Mamertine Prison; ☎ 06 679 29 02; donation requested: h 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar), where prisoners were thrown through a hole in the floor to starve to death in the basement dungeon. St Peter was believed to have been imprisoned here and to have created a miraculous stream of water to baptise his jailers. It's now a church, San Pietro in Carcere.

### CAPITOLINE MUSEUMS Map p60

☎ 06 820 59 127; www.museicapitolini.org; Piazza del Campidoglio 1; adult/child/student without exhibition €6.50/free/4.50, incl exhibition €8/free/6, combined Capitoline Museums, Centrale Montemartini & exhibition €10/free/8; h 9am-8pm (last tickets 7pm) Tue-Sun; ☞ Piazza Venezia; √ Boasting some of Ancient Rome's most spectacular sculpture, the Capitoline Museums (Musei Capitolini) are quite magnificent. The world's oldest national museums, they date to 1471, when Pope Sixtus IV donated a number of bronze statues to the city, forming the nucleus of what is now one of Italy's finest collections of classical art. The collection is today beautifully housed in Palazzo Nuovo and Palazzo dei Conservatori on Piazza del Campidoglio. Audioguides (€5) are a worthwhile investment.

The main entrance is in **Palazzo dei Conservatori**, where you'll find the original core of the sculptural collection and, on the 2nd floor, an art gallery with a number of important works.

Before you head upstairs, though, take a moment to admire the ancient masonry littered around the ground-floor courtyard, most notably a mammoth head, hand and foot. These all come from a 12m-high statue of Constantine that originally stood in the Basilica di Massenzio in the **Roman Forum (p64)**.

The 1st floor is dominated by the **Sala degli Orazi e Curiazi**, a vast hall decorated with 16th-century frescoes and a statue by Bernini of Pope Urban VIII, his artistic

sponsor. It was here that the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, establishing the European Economic Community. Of the sculpture, the Etruscan **Lupa Capitolina** (Capitoline Wolf) is the most famous. Standing in her own room, the Sala Della Lupa, the 5th-century-BC bronze wolf stands over her suckling wards Romulus and Remus. The statue was given to the Roman people in 1471 by Sixtus IV and, surprisingly, the twins were only added at this time. Other crowd-pleasers are the **Spinario**, a delicate 1st-century-BC bronze of a boy removing a thorn from his foot, in the Sala dei Trionfi, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini's head of Medusa in the Sala delle Oche.

Also on the 1st floor, in the Area del Tempio di Giove Capitolino, you can see the foundations of the Tempio di Giove (Temple of Jupiter), one of the two temples that stood on the Campidoglio in republican days.

On the 2nd floor the **Pinacoteca** (art gallery) contains paintings by such heavyweights as Titian, Pintoretto, Reni, van Dyck and Rubens. Look out for Giovanni Bellini's **Ritratto di Giovane** (Portrait of a Young Man; 1500), Garofalo's **Annunciazione** (Annunciation; 1528) and Titian's **Battesimo di Cristo** (Baptism of Christ; 1512). The Sala di Santa Petronilla has a number of important canvases, including two by Caravaggio: **La Buona Ventura** (The Fortune Teller; 1595), which shows a gypsy pretending to read a young man's hand but actually stealing his ring, and **San Giovanni Battista** (John the Baptist; 1602), a sensual and unusual depiction of the New Testament saint.

At this point, a coffee in the museum's panoramic café does wonders for flagging spirits.

To get to Palazzo Nuovo on the other side of the square, take the tunnel via the **Tabularium**, Ancient Rome's central archive, beneath Palazzo Senatorio.

**Palazzo Nuovo** is crammed to its elegant rafters with classical Roman sculpture. Highlights include the graceful **Venere Capitolina** (Capitoline Venus), in the Gabinetto della Venere, and the Sala dei Filosofi with its busts of various philosophers, poets and politicians. The real show stoppers, however, are in the Sala del Gladiatore. These include the **Galata Morente** (Dying Gaul), a Roman copy of a 3rd-century-BC Greek original that movingly depicts the



anguish of a dying Frenchman; the 5th-century-BC *Amazzone Ferita* (Wounded Amazon), created for the Sanctuary of Ephesus; and a marble *Satiro in Riposo* (Resting Satyr), said to be the inspiration for Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Marble Faun*.

For more sculpture head out to the museum's southern outpost, the **Capitoline Museums at Centrale Montemartini** (p117).

### CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA IN ARACOELI Map p60

☎ 06 679 81 55; Piazza del Campidoglio 4; 11 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm; 12 Piazza Venezia

Marking the high point of the Campidoglio is this dramatic 6th-century church. Accessible from Piazza del Campidoglio or more theatrically by way of the steep 14th-century Aracoeli staircase, it sits on the site of the Roman temple to Juno Moneta. According to legend it was here that the Tiburtine Sybil told Augustus of the coming birth of Christ, and even today the church has a strong association with the nativity. It's home to a venerated statue of Jesus and is a popular place of worship at Christmas. The so-called *santo bambino* (holy baby) is, however, a copy. The original, said to have healing powers and to have been carved of wood from the garden of Gethsemane, was stolen in 1994 and never recovered.

The church has a rich interior, with a Cosmatesque floor, an impressive 16th-century ceiling and, in the first chapel of the southern aisle, an important 15th-century fresco by Pinturicchio.

### ROMAN INSULA Map p60

Piazza d'Aracoeli; 13 Piazza Venezia  
At the bottom of the Campidoglio, next to the Aracoeli staircase, are the ruins of a Roman apartment block or *insula*, typically used to house the poor. The unexcavated ground-floor shops of this building are now 9m below the current road level.

### PIAZZA VENEZIA

Spread out below the Campidoglio, Piazza Venezia is dominated by Rome's most visible landmark, Il Vittoriano, aka the Altare della Patria. It's an undeniably impressive structure whose rooftop terrace commands the best views in town.

### IL VITTORIANO Map p60

☎ 06 699 17 18; Piazza Venezia; admission free; 11 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun; 12 Piazza Venezia  
Love it or loathe it, as most locals do, you can't ignore Il Vittoriano, the massive mountain of white marble towering over Piazza Venezia. Known as the Altare della Patria (Altar of the Fatherland), it was begun in 1885 to commemorate Italian unification and honour Vittorio Emanuele II, Italy's first king and the subject of the gargantuan equestrian statue. It also hosts the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which means that you can't sit anywhere on the monument, a rule that the hawk-eyed guardians strictly enforce.

Whatever you make of 'the typewriter' (as Romans have dubbed it), there's no denying that the 360-degree views from the top are quite stunning, especially at night when the entire city is lit up beneath you. To get to the top, take the glass **panoramic lift** (adult/up to 10yr/10-18yr & over 65yr €7/free/3.50; 11 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-11.30pm Fri & Sat, 9.30am-8.30pm Sun) from the back of the building.

Less appealing is the **Museo Centrale del Risorgimento** (☎ 06 679 35 98; Via di San Pietro in Carcere; admission free; 11 9am-6.30pm) in the building's hollow interior. Exhibits, including the blanket used to cover Garibaldi at the Battle of Aspromonte and assorted military knick-knacks, document the history of Italian unification. The museum, often referred to as the Complesso del Vittoriano, is often used for temporary art exhibitions.

### PALAZZO VENEZIA Map p60

13 Piazza Venezia  
On the western side of Piazza Venezia, Palazzo Venezia was the first of Rome's great Renaissance palaces. It was built between 1455 and 1464 for the Venetian cardinal Pietro Barbo, who later became Pope Paul II (r 1464-71), and was used for centuries as the embassy of the Venetian Republic. Its most famous resident, however, was Mussolini, who used the vast Sala del Mappamondo as his centre of operations. He famously made speeches from the balcony overlooking the square, and kept the lights on throughout the night to give the impression that he was working.

Nowadays, the *palazzo* houses the **Museo del Palazzo Venezia** (☎ 06 699 94 318; Via del Plebiscito 118; admission €4; 11 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat; 12), with its superb Byzantine and early

Renaissance paintings and eclectic collection of jewellery, tapestries, ceramics, bronze figurines, arms and armour. Highlights to look out for include the early-15th-century *Madonna con Bambino Angeli e Santi* (Madonna with Child, Angels and Saints) by Mariotto di Cristofano and the charming *Ritratto dei Figli di Virginio Orsini*, a 16th-century portrait (artist unknown) of the five sons of the Orsini family.

You can also admire the *palazzo's* secret gardens from the top floor of a loggia decorated with sculptural fragments, sarcophagi and assorted archaeological finds.

The eastern wing of the museum – where you'll find Mussolini's old office – is often given over to temporary art exhibitions.

### BASILICA DI SAN MARCO Map p60

☎ 06 679 52 05; Piazza di San Marco; 11 8am-noon & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Sun; 12 Piazza Venezia

Actually part of **Palazzo Venezia** (opposite), but facing onto Piazza di San Marco, the Basilica di San Marco dates to the early 4th century. Built over the house where St Mark the Evangelist is said to have stayed while in Rome, it has undergone several face-lifts over the centuries. In its current form it has a Renaissance façade, an 11th-century Romanesque bell tower and a largely baroque mid-18th-century interior. The main attraction is the golden 9th-century mosaic in the apse, which depicts Christ with saints and Pope Gregory IV.

### FORUM BOARIUM & AROUND

#### BOCCA DELLA VERITÀ Map p60

☎ 06 678 14 19; Piazza della Bocca della Verità 18; 11 9am-1pm & 2.30-6pm; 12 Via dei Cerchi  
A round piece of marble once used as an ancient manhole cover, the *Bocca della Verità* (Mouth of Truth) is one of Rome's great curiosities. According to legend, if you put your right hand in the carved mouth and tell a lie, the mouth will snap shut and bite your hand off. Apparently, priests used to put scorpions in the mouth to perpetuate the myth and Roman husbands used it to test their wives' fidelity. Fans of the film *Roman Holiday* will know it from the scene where Gregory Peck pretends to lose his hand and draws shrieks of unscripted terror from Audrey Hepburn.

The mouth lives in the portico of the beautiful **Chiesa di Santa Maria in Cosmedin**. In

# top picks

## IT'S FREE

Many of Rome's museums are free to EU citizens under 18 and over 65. If that's you, make sure you have a passport or ID card to prove your age, otherwise you'll be paying the full admission price. Free sights for all include the following:

- Roman Forum (p63)
- Trevi Fountain (p98)
- Spanish Steps (p99)
- Pantheon (p72)
- Bocca della Verità (left)
- all churches, including **St Peter's Basilica** (p128)
- **Vatican Museums** (p133) on the last Sunday of the month

Note that while all churches are free, many have small museums and/or excavation sites that require payment.

its current form the church dates to the 12th century, when the seven-storey bell tower and portico were added and the floor, high altar and *schola cantorum* (choir) were decorated with Cosmati inlaid marble. However, in its original form it goes back to the 8th century, when Pope Hadrian built it by merging an arcaded colonnade from a Roman market with walls from a 7th-century Christian welfare centre. There's not much left of the original structure but you can still see a fragment of 8th-century mosaic in the souvenir shop.

#### FORUM BOARIUM Map p60

Piazza della Bocca della Verità; 13 Via dei Cerchi  
Piazza della Bocca della Verità stands on what was once Ancient Rome's cattle market (Forum Boarium). The forum later became an important commercial centre and had its own port on the River Tiber.

Opposite Chiesa Santa Maria in Cosmedin are two tiny Roman temples dating to the 2nd century BC: the round **Tempio di Ercole Vincitore** and the **Tempio di Portunus**, dedicated to the god of rivers and ports, Portunus. To the north are the ruins of the **Casa dei Crescenzi**, a former tower fortress transformed into a mansion in the 11th century by the powerful Crescenzi family.

Just off the piazza, the **Arco di Giano** (Arch of Janus) is a four-sided Roman arch that

once covered a crossroads. Beyond it, on the northern side of the street, is the medieval **Chiesa di San Giorgio in Velabro** (☎ 06 692 04 534; Via del Velabro 19; 10am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm), a beautiful, atmospheric church whose original 7th-century portico was completely destroyed by a Mafia bomb attack in 1993. The version you see today is a faithful copy.

## ANCIENT ROME

### Walking Tour

**1 Il Vittoriano** More than the Colosseum, more than the forums or Palatino, it's this vast hulk of white marble (p68) that dominates Ancient Rome's cityscape. Dedicated to Vittorio Emanuele II, unified Italy's first

king, it's uniformly disliked but boasts spectacular views.

**2 Piazza del Campidoglio** Considered by many to be Rome's most beautiful square, Michelangelo's stunning piazza (p66) sits atop the Campidoglio. In ancient times this was the spiritual heart of Rome, home to two of the capital's most important temples; nowadays, it

hosts the Capitoline Museums and the headquarters of the Rome city council.

**3 Capitoline Museums** Dating to 1471, these are the world's oldest public museums (p67). Their collection of classical sculpture, one of Rome's finest, is housed in the two *palazzi* that face each other over the square: Palazzo dei Conservatori and Palazzo Nuovo. Inside, the tasty Caffè Capitolino supplies good coffee and views over the forums.

**4 Roman Forum** Rome's most famous ruins (p63) once constituted the epicentre of world power. If you can imagine it, this is where senators, consuls and emperors met to plot the course of the Roman empire and virgins coyly fuelled the flames of the vestal fire.

**5 Colosseum** One of Italy's top tourist attractions, the Colosseum (p58) is an electrifying sight, its tiered stands towering over armies of queuing visitors. A spectacular feat of Roman engineering, the 50,000-seat

stadium was inaugurated by Emperor Titus in AD 80.

**6 Palatino** According to legend the Palatino (p59) is where Romulus killed his twin and founded Rome in 753 BC. An evocative and atmospheric area of giant ruins, this was Ancient Rome's most exclusive neighbourhood, home to the cream of imperial society.

**7 Circo Massimo** This sorry-looking expanse of browning grass was once Ancient Rome's showpiece stadium (p63), an enormous arena capable of holding a quarter of the city's population. Chariots would hurtle round the 600m racetrack in front of crowds of up to 250,000 people.

**8 Bocca della Verità** Lodged in the porch of a beautiful medieval church, the Bocca della Verità (p69) is said to snap shut on anyone who tells a lie. In fact, it's little more than an ancient manhole cover with a man's face etched onto it.

### WALK FACTS

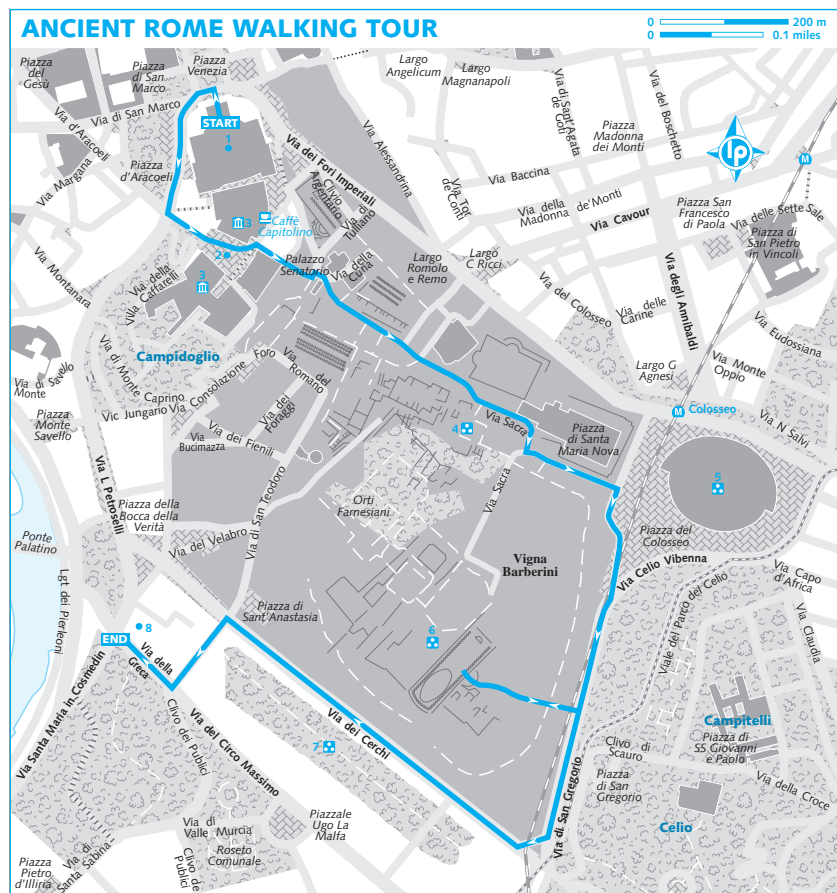
**Start** Il Vittoriano (G Piazza Venezia)

**End** Bocca della Verità (G Via dei Cerchi)

**Distance** 2.2km

**Duration** Four hours

**Fuel stop** Caffè Capitolino (p212)



# CENTRO STORICO

Drinking & Nightlife [p213](#); Eating [p186](#); Shopping [p161](#); Sleeping [p247](#)

Bound by the River Tiber on one side and Via del Corso on the other, Rome's tightly packed *centro storico* (historic centre) is the Rome that many visitors come to see. A suggestive area of cobbled alleyways and animated piazzas, of baroque churches, chic cafés and Renaissance *palazzi*, it's a neighbourhood made for aimless wandering. This is the place to put your guidebook away and discover the streets for yourself, to give yourself up to the whim of the moment. Even without trying you'll come across some of Rome's great sights: the Pantheon, Piazza Navona and Campo de' Fiori, as well as a host of monuments, museums and churches, many of which boast works by Michelangelo, Raphael, Caravaggio and Bernini.

But the *centro storico* is not all about history and art – it's also the political heart of modern Italy. Politicians hatch their plots in the hundreds of restaurants, trattorias and cafés that pepper the area, while the two chambers of the Italian parliament sit here and the Presidente del Consiglio (the Italian prime minister) has his official residence in a gracious 17th-century *palazzo*.

The history of the centre goes back to Roman times, when the area around Piazza Navona and the Pantheon was known as the Campo Marzio (Field of Mars). A peripheral district full of sports arenas, barracks and temples, it was incorporated into the city proper in the Middle Ages and grew to become the core of Renaissance Rome. Many of the grand *palazzi* that you see today were built in the Renaissance building boom of the 15th and 16th centuries.

But it's to the baroque 17th century that the area owes most. No two people did more to fashion the face of central Rome than Gian Lorenzo Bernini and his bitter rival Francesco Borromini, whose flamboyant churches, fountains and *palazzi* astound today as they must surely have done 350 years ago.

The *centro storico* is not a big area and is best explored on foot. Starting from Largo di Torre Argentina, Corso Vittorio Emanuele II heads west towards the River Tiber and the Vatican. To the north are the Pantheon and Piazza Navona; to the south the Jewish Ghetto, Piazza Farnese and Campo de' Fiori.

From Termini, buses 40 and 64 stop at Largo di Torre Argentina and continue down Corso Vittorio Emanuele II. From Barberini metro station (line A), bus 116 stops off at Corso Rinascimento (for Piazza Navona), Piazza Farnese and Via Giulia. Tram 8 connects Largo di Torre Argentina with Trastevere.

## PANTHEON & AROUND

**PANTHEON** [Map pp74–5](#)

☎ 06 683 00 230; Piazza della Rotonda; admission free; ⌚ 8.30am–7.30pm Mon–Sat, 9am–6pm Sun; Ⓧ or Ⓨ Largo di Torre Argentina; Ⓣ Along with the Colosseum, the Pantheon is one of Rome's major icons. A striking 2000-year-old temple, now church, it is a truly remarkable building, a magnificent monument to the skill of Ancient Rome's visionary architects.

In its current form it dates to around 120, when Emperor Hadrian built over

Marcus Agrippa's original temple (27 BC). For centuries, historians read the name Agrippa in the inscription on the pediment and thought that Hadrian's version was the 1st-century-BC original. When excavations in the 19th century revealed traces of the earlier temple, they realised their mistake.

Hadrian's temple was dedicated to the classical gods – hence the name Pantheon, a derivation of the Greek words *pan* (all) and *theos* (god) – but in 608 it was consecrated as a Christian church. During the Renaissance it was much studied – Brunelleschi used it as inspiration for the Duomo

in Florence – and became an important burial chamber. Today you'll find the tomb of the artist Raphael, alongside those of kings Vittorio Emanuele II and Umberto I.

From the outside you get no idea of the dimensions of the extraordinary dome that tops the building. Considered the Romans' most important architectural achievement, the dome – the largest masonry vault ever built – is beautifully symmetrical (the diameter is equal to the interior height of 43.3m). Light enters through the oculus, an 8.7m opening in the dome that also served as a symbolic connection between the temple and the gods. Rainwater also enters but drains away through 22 almost-invisible holes in the marble floor. For more on the dome see the boxed text, [p47](#).

Somewhat the worse for wear, the exterior is still imposing, with 16 Corinthian columns (each a single block of stone) supporting a triangular pediment. Rivets and holes in the brickwork indicate where the original marble-veneered panels were removed.

Thanks to its consecration as a church in the 7th century, the building was spared the Christian neglect that left other structures to crumble, although it wasn't entirely safe from plundering hands. The gilded-bronze roof tiles were removed and, in the 17th century, Pope Urban VIII allowed Bernini to melt down the bronze ceiling of the portico for the baldachin over the main altar of St Peter's (plus 80 cannons for Castel Sant'Angelo). Thankfully, they left the original Roman bronze doors.

**ELEFANTINO** [Map pp74–5](#)

Piazza della Minerva; Ⓧ or Ⓨ Largo di Torre Argentina

A short skip south of the Pantheon brings you to the Elefantino, a curious and much-loved sculpture of a puzzled elephant carrying a 6th-century-BC Egyptian obelisk. Unveiled in 1667 and designed to glorify Pope Alexander VII, the elephant, symbolising strength and wisdom, was sculpted by Ercole Ferrata to a design by Bernini. The obelisk was taken from the nearby Chiesa di Santa Maria Sopra Minerva.

**CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA SOPRA MINERVA** [Map pp74–5](#)

☎ 06 679 39 26; Piazza della Minerva; ⌚ 8am–7pm; Ⓧ or Ⓨ Largo di Torre Argentina

Built on the site of an ancient temple to Minerva, the Dominican Chiesa di Santa Maria Sopra Minerva is the only Gothic church in Rome. Initially, it was modelled on the Basilica di Santa Maria in Florence, but it later underwent various transformations and little remains of the original 13th-century design. The surprisingly restrained façade is baroque and the rose windows are a 19th-century addition. Look closely, however, and you can still see some Latin inscriptions on the façade. These are flood markers, the oldest of which dates to 1422.

Inside, the church harbours a treasure-trove of Renaissance jewels. In the Cappella Carafa, the last chapel in the southern transept, you'll find two superb 15th-century frescoes by Filippino Lippi, depicting episodes from the life of St Thomas Aquinas. On the right wall St Thomas triumphs over heresy, while in the central *Annunciazione* (Annunciation) he's pictured presenting Cardinal Olivieri Carafa, the patron of the work, to the Virgin Mary. Carafa, who later became Pope Paul IV, is also buried in the chapel.

Left of the high altar is one of Michelangelo's lesser-known sculptures, *Cristo Risorto* (Christ Bearing the Cross; 1520), to which blush-saving bronze drapery was later added. An altarpiece of the *Madonna and Child* in the second chapel in the northern transept is attributed to Fra Angelico, the Dominican friar and painter, who is also buried in the church.

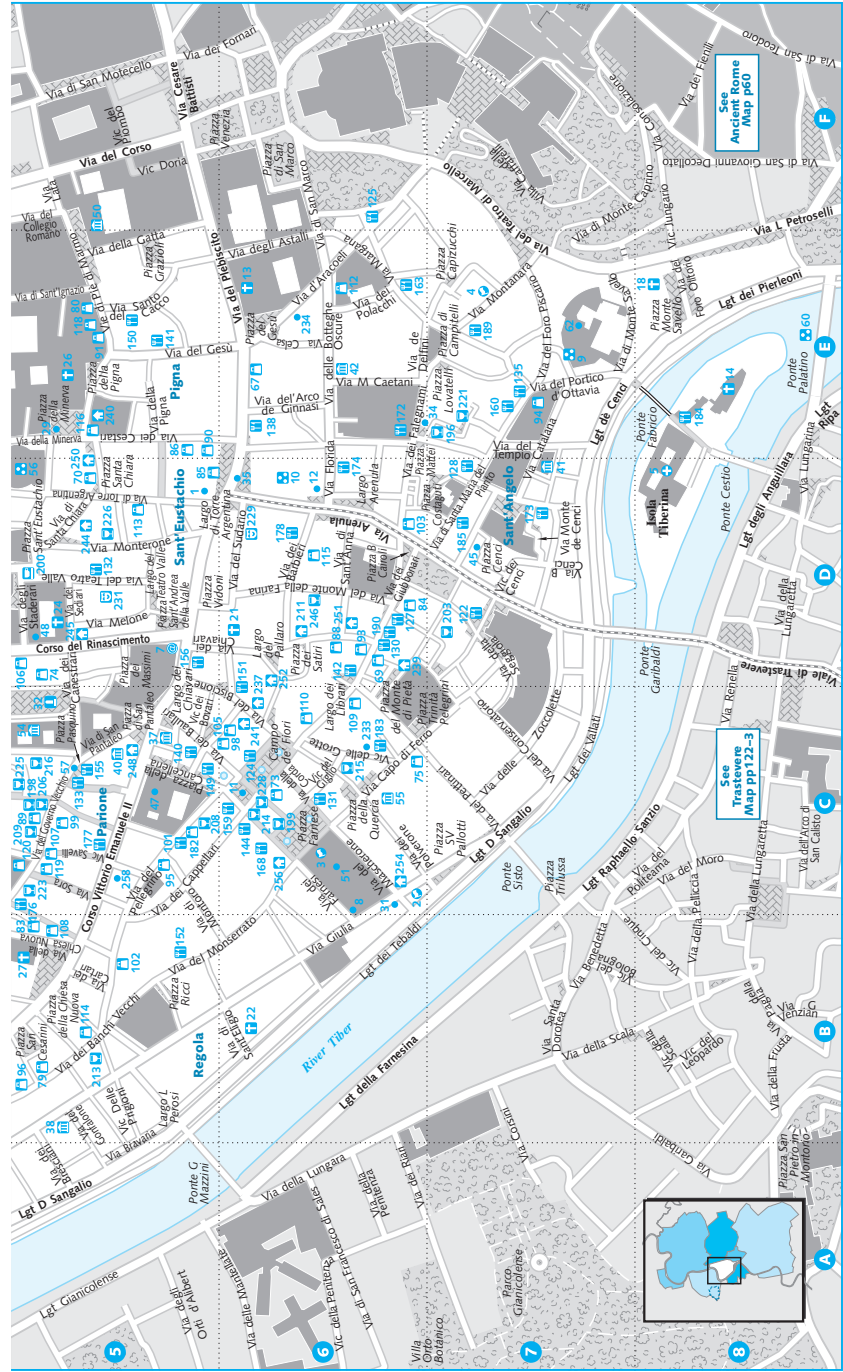
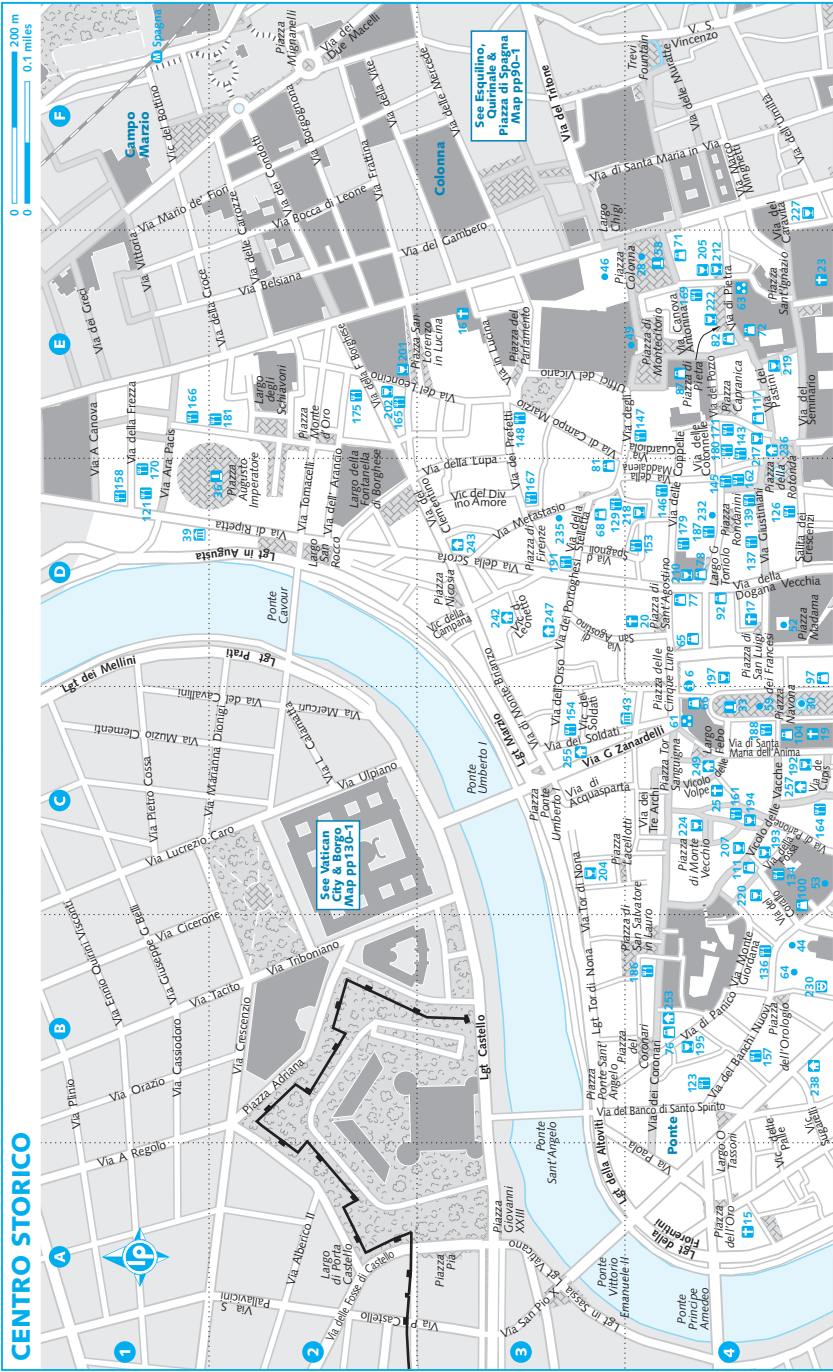
The body of St Catherine of Siena, minus her head (which is in Siena), lies under the high altar, and the tombs of two Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, are in the apse.

**LARGO DI TORRE ARGENTINA** [Map pp74–5](#)

Ⓧ or Ⓨ Largo di Torre Argentina  
A busy transport hub, Largo di Torre Argentina is set around a sunken area, the *Area Sacra*, in which stand the remains of four republican-era temples. These ruins were unearthed during construction work in 1926 and although off-limits to humans are home to a thriving population of stray cats and a *cat sanctuary* (☎ 06 687 21 33; [www.romancats.de](#); ⌚ noon–6pm Mon–Sat). To learn more, and to visit the ruins, the sanctuary runs a free guided tour daily at 5pm.

On the piazza's western flank is Rome's premier theatre, the *Teatro Argentina* ([p234](#)),





## CENTRO STORICO

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built close to the spot where Julius Caesar was murdered on 15 March (the Ides of March) 44 BC.

### CHIESA DEL GESÙ Map pp74-5

% 06 69 70 01; Piazza del Gesù; h 6.45am-12.45pm & 4-7.45pm; G or j Largo di Torre Argentina

A formidable and much-copied example of Counter-Reformation architecture, the Chiesa del Gesù is Rome's most important Jesuit church. It was built between 1551 and 1584 with money donated by Cardinal

Alessandro Farnese, who was subsequently said to own the three most beautiful things in Rome: his family palazzo, his daughter and the church of Gesù.

Although the façade by Giacomo della Porta is impressive, it's the towering, glitzy interior that's the real attraction. Designed by his contemporary Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, a pupil of Michelangelo, it's an amazing ensemble of gold and marble built to draw worshippers to the Jesuit fold. The huge open-plan nave later became the standard for churches throughout Italy.

## CENTRO STORICO

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Works to look out for include the *Trionfo del Nome di Gesù* (Triumph of the Name of Jesus), the astounding vault fresco by Giovanni Battista Gaulli (aka Il Baciccia). His masterful use of perspective is evident as figures appear to tumble from the vault onto the coffered ceiling. Baciccia also painted the cupola frescoes and designed the stucco decoration.

The Cappella di San Francesco Saverio, to the right of the main altar, was designed by the Tuscan master Pietro da Cortona. A silver gilt reliquary above the gold altar

holds the saint's right forearm (with which he is said to have blessed, baptised and healed many).

On the other side of the main altar, in the northern transept, is the Cappella di Sant'Ignazio. Here you'll find the tomb of Ignatius Loyola, the Spanish soldier who came to Rome in 1537 and founded the Jesuits in 1540. Crafted by Andrea del Pozzo, the tomb, which doubles as an altar, is an opulent marble-and-bronze affair with columns encrusted with lapis lazuli. On top, the terrestrial globe, representing the



Trinity, is the largest solid piece of lapis lazuli in the world. On either side are a couple of sculptures whose titles vividly portray the Jesuit ethos: to the left, *Fede che vince l'Idolatria* (Faith defeats Idolatry); on the right, *Religione che flagella l'Eresia* (Religion Lashing Heresy).

The Spanish saint lived in the church from 1544 until his death in 1556. To the east of the main church, you can visit **Loyola's rooms** (h 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun), which contain a masterful trompe l'oeil perspective by Andrea del Pozzo.

### MUSEO NAZIONALE ROMANO: CRYPTA BALBI

Map pp74-5  
% 06 399 67 700; Via delle Botteghe Oscure 31; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €7/free/3.50, plus €3 supplement if there's an exhibition; h 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun; g or j Largo di Torre Argentina

The least known of the Museo Nazionale Romano's four museums, the Crypta Balbi provides a fascinating insight into Rome's multilayered past. More than the exhibits, it's the structure of the building itself that's the main point of interest. It's built around the ruins of medieval and Renaissance structures, themselves set on top of a grand Roman portico and theatre, the Teatro di Balbus (13 BC). You can duck down into the underground excavations before perusing artefacts taken from the Crypta, as well as items found in the forums and on the Oppio and Celio hills.

## PIAZZA NAVONA & AROUND

### PIAZZA NAVONA

Map pp74-5  
g Corso del Rinascimento  
With its ornate fountains, baroque *palazzi* and pavement cafés, Piazza Navona is central Rome's showcase square. A busy, buzzing place, it has long been a hive of Roman activity – for 300 years it was the city's main market area and still today it attracts a colourful crowd of street artists, pickpockets, tourists and pigeons.

Like many of Rome's great landmarks, it sits on the site of an ancient monument, in this case, the 1st-century-AD **Stadio di Domiziano** (% 06 671 03 819; h by appointment only). This 30,000-seat stadium, remains of which can be seen from Piazza Tor Sanguigna, just to the north of Piazza Navona, used to host games – the name Navona

is a corruption of the Greek word '*agon*', meaning public games. Inevitably, though, it fell into disrepair and it wasn't until the 15th century that life returned to the area. The crumbling arena was paved over and Rome's central market transferred here from the Campidoglio.

Today interest centres on Bernini's extravagant **Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi** (Fountain of the Four Rivers). Commissioned by Pope Innocent X and completed in 1651, it depicts the Rivers Nile, Ganges, Danube and Plata, representing the then-known four continents of the world. Legend has it that the figure of the Nile is shielding his eyes from the **Chiesa di Sant'Agnese in Agone** (h 9am-noon & 4-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1.30pm & 4-8pm Sun), designed by Bernini's hated rival, Borromini. It's not true, however. Bernini completed his fountain two years before Borromini started work on the church and the veiled gesture indicates that the source of the Nile was unknown at the time.

Borromini's church is a wonderful example of his trademark style, with it's calculated yet vibrantly theatrical concave façade. Dedicated to the virgin martyr Agnes, it is said to be built on the spot where she was killed in the 4th century.

The **Fontana del Moro** at the southern end of the square was designed by Giacomo della Porta in 1576. Bernini added the Moor holding a dolphin in the mid-17th century, but the surrounding Tritons are 19th-century copies. The 19th-century **Fontana del Nettuno** at the northern end of the piazza depicts Neptune fighting with a sea monster, surrounded by sea nymphs.

The largest building in the square is the elegant **Palazzo Pamphilj**, built between 1644 and 1650 by Girolamo Rainaldi and Borromini to celebrate Giovanni Battista Pamphilj's election as Pope Innocent X. It was later occupied by his domineering sister-in-law, Olimpia Maidalchini, and is now the Brazilian Embassy.

### MUSEO NAZIONALE ROMANO: PALAZZO ALTEMPS

Map pp74-5  
% 06 683 35 66; Piazza Sant'Apollinare 46; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €7/free/3.50, plus €3 supplement if there's an exhibition; h 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun; g Corso del Rinascimento; v  
Just north of Piazza Navona, Palazzo Altemps is a gem. A beautiful, late-15th-century

*palazzo*, it today houses the best of the Museo Nazionale Romano's formidable collection of classical sculpture.

Many of the pieces come from the famous Ludovisi collection. Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi, a nephew of Pope Gregory XV, ruthlessly exploited his connections to acquire ancient sculpture unearthed during the building boom of Counter-Reformation Rome. He eventually amassed one of the most extensive and celebrated private collections of all time.

As was the custom among collectors, Ludovisi employed leading sculptors – including Bernini and Alessandro Algardi – to repair and 'enhance' the works by replacing missing limbs and sticking new heads on headless torsos.

The museum's prize exhibits (untouched by baroque hands) include the 5th-century **Trono Ludovisi** (Ludovisi Throne) in room 21. Discovered at the end of the 19th century in the grounds of Ludovisi's private villa, the carved marble throne depicts Aphrodite being plucked from the sea as a newborn babe. Most scholars think that it originally came from Magna Graecia, the Greek colony in southern Italy, but there are some who claim it's a 19th-century fake. It shares a room with two colossal heads, one of which is the goddess Juno and dates from around 600 BC. The wall frieze (about half of which remains) depicts the 10 plagues of Egypt and the Exodus.

Equally impressive is the sculptural group **Galata Suicida** (Gaul's Suicide), a melodramatic depiction of a Gaul knifing himself to death over a dead woman. It's a marble copy of a 230 BC bronze, probably commissioned by Julius Caesar. Here, in room 26, you'll also discover the **Grande Ludovisi**, a sarcophagus featuring detailed battle scenes.

Baroque frescoes throughout the building not only provide a decorative backdrop to the sculpture but are also fascinating in themselves. The walls of the Sala delle Prospettive Dipinte (on the 1st floor) are decorated with landscapes and hunting scenes seen through trompe l'oeil windows. These frescoes were painted for Cardinal Altemps, the rich nephew of Pope Pius IV (r 1560-65) who bought the *palazzo* in the late 16th century. The Sala della Piattaia, once the palace's main reception room, has a superb 15th-century fresco by Melozzo da Forlì, of a cupboard full of the wedding gifts received by Girolamo Riario and Caterina Sforza.

The Egyptian collection from the Museo Nazionale Romano is also housed here, along with the Mattei collection, formerly at Villa Celimontana (the 16th-century estate of the powerful Mattei family).

### VIA DEI CORONARI

Map pp74-5  
g Corso del Rinascimento  
Named after the *coronari* (rosary-bead sellers) who used to work here, this elegant pedestrian street is famous for its antique shops. A lovely, quiet place for a stroll, it follows the course of the ancient Roman road that connected Piazza Colonna with the River Tiber and was once a popular thoroughfare for pilgrims.

### CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DELLA PACE

Map pp74-5  
% 06 686 11 56; Vicolo dell'Arco della Pace 5; h church 10am-noon & 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun, cloisters depends on exhibition; g Corso del Rinascimento

Tucked away in the backstreets west of Piazza Navona, this small 15th-century church warrants a quick look. Inside, the main draw is Raphael's *Sibille* (Sibyls) in the first chapel on the southern side. Outside, it's the adjacent Chiostrò del Bramante that steals the limelight. One of Bramante's finest works, the cloisters are a masterpiece of Renaissance styling, their classic lines a marked counterpoint to the church's undulating baroque façade. The cloisters are often used to house art exhibitions, but you'll usually be allowed to take a free peek at the ground-floor courtyard.

### PASQUINO

Map pp74-5  
Piazza Pasquino; g Corso Vittorio Emanuele II  
A grubby statue covered with tatty bits of paper, the Pasquino is Rome's most famous 'talking statue'. During the 16th century – when there were no safe outlets for dissent – a Vatican tailor named Pasquino began sticking notes to the statue with satirical verses lampooning the church and aristocracy. Others joined in and soon there were talking statues all over town. Even today Romans still leave messages, known as *pasquinade*.

### VIA DEL GOVERNO VECCHIO

Map pp74-5  
g Corso Vittorio Emanuele II  
Striking off west from Piazza Pasquino, Via del Governo Vecchio is a lively, atmospheric



street full of bohemian boutiques, old-school pizzerias and secondhand clothes shops. The road, once part of the papal thoroughfare from Palazzo Laterano in San Giovanni to St Peter's Basilica, acquired its name in 1755 when the papal government relocated from **Palazzo Nardini** at No 39 to Palazzo Madama on the other side of Piazza Navona. Bramante is thought to have lived at No 123.

### CHIESA NUOVA Map pp74-5

☎ 06 687 52 89; Piazza della Chiesa Nuova; ʘ 7.45am-noon & 4.30-7.45pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm & 4.30-7.45pm Sun; ㊦ Corso Vittorio Emanuele II

Something of a misnomer, Chiesa Nuova is far from new. It was built in 1575 as part of a larger complex to house members of Filippo Neri's Oratorian order. A popular and charismatic figure, Neri founded his order in the mid-16th century to help Rome's poor and needy. Originally he'd wanted a large, plain church, but after his death in 1595 the artists moved in. Rubens contributed the paintings over the high altar, and Pietro da Cortona decorated the dome, tribune and nave. Neri was canonised in 1622 and is buried in a chapel to the left of the apse.

Next to the church is Borromini's **Oratorio dei Filippini** and behind it is the **Torre dell'Orologio**, a clock tower built to decorate the adjacent convent.

### MUSEO DI ROMA Map pp74-5

☎ 06 820 77 304; www.museodiroma.comune.roma.it; Piazza di San Pantaleo 10; adult/child €6.50/free; ʘ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun, last exit 7pm; ㊦ Corso Vittorio Emanuele II  
Housed in the 18th-century Palazzo Braschi, the Museo di Roma's eclectic collection of paintings, photographs, etchings, clothes and furniture charts the history of Rome from the Middle Ages to the first half of the 20th century. Of more interest than the collection, however, is the *palazzo* itself. Built by Cosimo Morelli for the nephew of the Braschi Pope Pius VI, it's best known for its beautiful frescoed halls: particularly outstanding is the extravagant Sala Cinese and the Egyptian-themed Sala Egiziana. Among the paintings, most of which are portraits of popes and cardinals, look out for Raphael's 1511 portrait of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, the future Pope Paul III.

### CHIESA DI SANT'IVO ALLA SAPIENZA

Map pp74-5

☎ 06 686 49 87; Corso del Rinascimento 40; ʘ 10am-noon Sun; ㊦ Corso del Rinascimento  
Hidden in the porticoed courtyard of Palazzo della Sapienza, the Italian state archive, this tiny church is unique testament to the genius of Borromini. Based on an incredibly complex geometric plan, it combines alternating convex and concave walls with a circular interior topped by a twisted spire. Inside, there's not a lot to see but it's interesting to note how Borromini uses light to create a sense of spaciousness in such a small area.

### PALAZZO MADAMA Map pp74-5

☎ 06 670 62 430; www.senato.it; Piazza Madama 11; admission free; ʘ guided tours 10am-6pm, 1st Sat of month; ㊦ Corso del Rinascimento  
The seat of the Italian Senate since 1871, Palazzo Madama was originally the 16th-century town house of Giovanni de' Medici. It was enlarged in the 17th century, when the baroque façade was added together with the decorative frieze. The name 'Madama' is a reference to Margaret of Parma, the illegitimate daughter of Charles V, who lived here from 1559 to 1567.

### CHIESA DI SAN LUIGI DEI FRANCESI

Map pp74-5

☎ 06 68 82 71; Piazza di San Luigi dei Francesi; ʘ 7.30am-noon & 3.30-7.30pm Fri-Wed; ㊦ Corso del Rinascimento

The church of Rome's French community since 1589, the Chiesa di San Luigi dei Francesi is one of the capital's art heavyweights. Built by Domenico Fontana and designed by Giacomo della Porta, its interior is a masterclass in baroque bombast, with no less than three paintings by Caravaggio – the so-called St Matthew cycle. The first of his religious commissions, *La Vocazione di San Matteo* (The Calling of Saint Matthew), *Il Martiro di San Matteo* (The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew) and *San Matteo e l'Angelo* (Saint Matthew and the Angel), painted between 1600 and 1602, all stress the utter humanity of the saint and highlight Caravaggio's dramatic use of colour, light and narrative. You'll find them in the front chapel to the left of the altar.

Before you leave the church take a moment to enjoy Domenichino's somewhat faded 17th-century frescoes of St Cecilia in

the second chapel on the right. St Cecilia is also depicted in the altarpiece by Guido Reni, a copy of an earlier work by Raphael.

### CHIESA DI SANT'AGOSTINO Map pp74-5

☎ 06 688 01 962; Piazza di Sant'Agostino; ʘ 7.45am-noon & 4-7.30pm; ㊦ Corso del Rinascimento  
Despite boasting one of the earliest Renaissance façades in Rome, this 15th-century church is more interesting inside than out. Inside the main door, on the right, you'll find Jacopo Sansovino's much-loved *Madonna del Parto* (1521), a sculpture of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus, revered by soon-to-be mums and doting parents. On the third column in the nave, Raphael's fresco of *Isaiah* shows the influence of Michelangelo (both artists were working in the Vatican at the time). But once again it's the Caravaggio that draws the biggest crowds. A classic example of the 16th's brutal realism, the *Madonna dei Pellegrini* (Madonna of the Pilgrims) caused uproar when it was unveiled in 1604 – its portrayal of the Virgin Mary as barefoot and the pilgrims as filthy beggars was too much for the conservative tastes of the time.

## CAMPO DE' FIORI & AROUND

### CAMPO DE' FIORI Map pp74-5

㊦ Corso Vittorio Emanuele II  
Noisy and colourful, 'Il Campo' is a major focus of Roman life: by day it hosts a flower

and vegetable market, while at night it becomes an open-air pub, beloved of hard-drinking students and young Romans.

The square's commercial character dates to the late 15th century, when the transference of the city market to Piazza Navona revitalised much of what is now the *centro storico*. Traders moved into the area and artisans began to set up shops in the neighbourhood. Many of the streets near Campo de' Fiori are named after the artisans who traditionally occupied them, so there's Via dei Cappellari (hatters), Via dei Baullari (trunk makers) and Via dei Chiavari (key makers). Via dei Giubbbonari (jacket makers) is still full of clothing shops.

Il Campo was also the site of public executions. Most famously, the philosophising monk Giordano Bruno, immortalised in Ettore Ferrari's sinister statue, was burned here for heresy in 1600.

### PALAZZO FARNESE Map pp74-5

☎ 06 688 92 818; visitefarnese@france-italia.it; Piazza Farnese; admission free; ʘ 1hr tours depart 4pm & 5pm Mon & Thu, by appointment only; ㊦ Corso Vittorio Emanuele II  
Forming one side of Piazza Farnese, Palazzo Farnese is one of Rome's most impressive Renaissance *palazzi*. It was started in 1514 by Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, continued by Michelangelo, who added the cornice and balcony, and finished by Giacomo della Porta. Nowadays, it's the French Embassy and is open only to visitors

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Built in the early 16th century, Palazzo Farnese was the main residence of the all-powerful Farnese dynasty, one of Renaissance Rome's most celebrated families.

Originally landed gentry in northern Lazio, the family hit the big time in 1493 when Giulia became the mistress of Pope Alexander VI. Hardly an official post, it nevertheless gave Alessandro, Giulia's brother, enough influence to secure his election to the top job in 1534. As Pope Paul III (r 1534-49), Alessandro led Rome through the stormy waters of the Counter-Reformation, enthusiastically sponsoring the Jesuits and appointing Michelangelo chief architect, sculptor and painter to the Vatican. He also created the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza for his son, Pier Luigi.

Nepotism was rife in Renaissance Rome and a pope in the family was a perfectly acceptable route to untold wealth. Camillo Borghese (Pope Paul V, r 1605-21) made his nephew, Scipione, a cardinal and gave him the land that is now *Villa Borghese* (p153); the Siense banking family, the Chigi, amassed huge fortunes under Pope Alexander VII (r 1655-67), aka Fabio Chigi; and the Pamphilj family enjoyed a 17th-century windfall under their generous kinsman Giovanni Battista Pamphilj, better known as Pope Innocent X (r 1644-55).

Yet of all Rome's great families, only one has a metro station named after it. The Barberini arrived in Rome in the early 16th century, escaping their native Tuscany and a dangerous rivalry with the Florentine Medici. They settled well in the capital and in 1623 Maffeo Barberini was elected Pope Urban VIII, opening the floodgates to the usual round of family appointments and extravagant building projects, including the lavish **Palazzo Barberini** (p100). Some four centuries later the Barberini family still exists, its titular head officially known as the Prince of Palestrina.

who've booked a place on the biweekly guided tour. The visits (with commentary in Italian or French) take in the garden, courtyard and Galleria dei Carracci, home to a series of superb frescoes by Annibale Carracci, said by some to rival the Sistine Chapel. Even if you've reserved a visit you'll need a valid ID document to get inside.

The twin fountains in the square, currently under scaffolding, are enormous granite baths taken from the **Terme di Caracalla** (p110).

### PALAZZO SPADA Map pp74-5

☎ 06 683 24 09; [www.galleriaborghese.it](http://www.galleriaborghese.it); Via Capo di Ferro 13; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-25yr €5/free/2.50; h 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun; ☞ or j Largo di Torre Argentina South of Piazza Farnese, the mannerist Palazzo Spada was built in 1540 and restored by Borromini a century later. The central attraction, and what makes the rather steep ticket price worth paying, is Borromini's famous perspective. What appears to be a 25m-long corridor lined with columns and leading to a hedge and life-sized statue is, in fact, only 10m long. The sculpture, which was a later addition, is actually hip-height and the columns diminish in size not because of distance but because they actually get shorter. On close inspection, the hedge is also a deception – Borromini didn't trust the gardeners to clip a real hedge precisely enough so he made one of stone.

Upstairs, the four-room **Galleria Spada** houses the Spada family art collection, with works by Andrea del Sarto, Guido Reni, Guercino and Titian. Highlights include *Schiavo di Ripa Grande* (Slave of Ripa Grande) by Reni and a daring, seductive *Santa Lucia* (St Lucy) by Francesco Furini.

### VIA GIULIA Map pp74-5

☞ Via Giulia Designed by Bramante as an approach road to St Peter's, Via Giulia is a picturesque street lined with Renaissance *palazzi* and potted orange trees.

At its southern end, near Ponte Sisto, is the **Fontana del Mascherone**, a baroque fountain depicting a 17th-century hippy surprised by water spewing from his mouth. Just beyond it and spanning the road is the **Arco Farnese**, covered with cascading ivy creepers. Built to a design by Michelangelo, it was constructed as part of an unfinished project

to connect Palazzo Farnese with Villa Farnesina on the opposite side of the Tiber.

Continuing north, on the left, in Via di Sant'Eligio, is **Chiesa di Sant'Eligio degli Orefici** (h 10-11am Mon-Fri), the 16th-century goldsmiths' church designed by Raphael. Buzz at Via di Sant'Eligio 7 for admission.

Further down, the **Museo Criminologico** (☎ 06 683 00 234; [www.museocriminologico.it](http://www.museocriminologico.it); Via del Gonfalone 29; admission €2; h 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue & Thu, 9am-1pm Wed, Fri & Sat) provides a break from the Renaissance eye-candy with macabre displays of torture devices and guillotines.

The area at the northern end of Via Giulia is known as the Quartiere Fiorentino because of the Florentine colony that once lived here.

### CHIESA DI SAN GIOVANNI BATTISTA DEI FIORENTINI Map pp74-5

☎ 06 688 92 059; Via Acciaioi 2; h 7am-12.30pm & 4-7pm; ☞ Via Giulia

At the head of Via Giulia, this 16th-century church was commissioned by Pope Leo X (a member of the Florentine Medici clan), as a showcase for Florentine artistic and architectural talent. Jacopo Sansovino won a competition for its design, which was executed by Antonio Sangallo the Younger and Giacomo della Porta, while Carlo Maderno completed the elongated cupola in 1614. Inside, the altar is by Borromini, who arranged, on his deathbed, to be entombed here.

A favourite venue for concerts, the church has a 17th-century organ that's played at noon Mass every Sunday.

### PALAZZO DELLA CANCELLERIA Map pp74-5

☎ 06 698 93 491; Piazza della Cancelleria; ☞ Corso Vittorio Emanuele II Looming over busy Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, this huge Renaissance *palazzo* was built for Cardinal Raffaele Riario between 1483 and 1513. Something of a rogue, the cardinal is said to have financed up to a third of the palace with gambling winnings. However, he later fell foul of the Medici and when Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X, the Vatican promptly confiscated the *palazzo* and transformed it into the Papal Chancellery. It is still Vatican property.

Closed to the public unless there's an exhibition on, it incorporates the 4th-century Basilica di San Lorenzo in Damaso, one of Rome's oldest Christian churches. Even if you

can't get inside you can usually nip through to the courtyard to admire Bramante's double loggia.

### MUSEO BARRACCO DI SCULTURA ANTICA Map pp74-5

☎ 06 688 06 848; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 166; admission €3; h 9am-7pm Tue-Sun; ☞ Corso Vittorio Emanuele II

One for the specialists, this charming museum boasts a fascinating collection of early Mediterranean sculpture. You'll find Greek, Etruscan, Roman, Assyrian, Cypriot and Egyptian works, all of which were donated to the state by Baron Giovanni Barracco in 1902.

The *palazzo* housing the museum, known as the Piccolo Farnesina, was built for a French clergyman, Thomas Le Roy, in 1523.

### CHIESA DI SANT'ANDREA DELLA VALLE Map pp74-5

☎ 06 686 13 39; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 6; h 7.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm; ☞ Corso Vittorio Emanuele II

The setting for the first act of Giacomo Puccini's opera *Tosca*, this towering 16th-century church is topped by Carlo Maderno's dome, the second-highest in Rome after St Peter's. The baroque interior features frescoes by Mattia Preti, Domenichino and, in the dome, Lanfranco. Competition between the artists was fierce and legend has it that Domenichino once took a saw to Lanfranco's scaffolding, almost killing him in the process.

## JEWISH GHETTO

Forming the southern part of the *centro storico*, the Jewish Ghetto is one of central Rome's most enticing areas. It's a wonderfully authentic district peppered with artisans' studios and secondhand clothes shops. What makes it so appealing, though, is that even in the height of the tourist season you can walk the backstreets and find yourself alone. At night, however, the central strip – Via del Portico d'Ottavia – hums with activity as diners mill around the popular eateries.

There have been Jews in Rome since the 2nd century BC, making Rome's Jewish community the longest surviving in Europe. At one point there were as many as 13 synagogues in the city, but Titus' victory in Jerusalem in AD 70 changed the status of Jews from citizen to slave (Jewish slaves were the labour force that built the Colosseum). In the

2nd century, Romans tended to confuse Jews with the despised monotheistic Christians, making them targets for persecution. In subsequent centuries everything depended on who was in charge, with rights limited under some governments, and nonexistent under others. Things took a turn for the worse in 1555, when Pope Paul IV confined Jews to the Ghetto, marking the beginning of a period of official intolerance that lasted, off and on, into the 20th century. Ironically, confinement in the Ghetto meant that Jewish cultural and religious identity survived intact in Rome.

Via del Portico d'Ottavia is the centre of the Ghetto. To the north, buildings incorporate the remains of old Roman and medieval buildings. The house at No 1 (on the corner of Piazza Costaguti) dates from 1468 and the façade is decorated with pieces of ancient Roman sculpture, including a fragment from a sarcophagus.

### MUSEO EBRAICO DI ROMA Map pp74-5

☎ 06 684 00 661; [www.museoebraico.roma.it](http://www.museoebraico.roma.it); Via Catalana; adult/under 10yr/student €7.50/free/3; h 10am-7pm Sun-Thu, 9am-4pm Fri Jun-Sep, 10am-5pm Sun-Thu, 9am-2pm Fri Oct-May; ☞ Lungotevere de' Cenci

The historical, cultural and artistic heritage of Rome's Jewish community is chronicled in this small but engrossing museum. Housed in the city's early-20th-century synagogue, which, since a terrorist attack in 1982, has a permanent *carabinieri* (police) guard stationed outside, it presents harrowing reminders of the hardships experienced by Europe's oldest Jewish community. Exhibits include copies of Pope Paul IV's papal bull confining the Jews to the Ghetto and relics from the Nazi concentration camps.

You can take a one-hour guided walking tour of the Ghetto from here; these usually leave the museum at 1pm and 5pm from Monday to Thursday and on Sunday, and at 1.15pm on Friday, though the schedule can be inconsistent. The cost is €7 for adults and €5 for children and you must book at least 30 minutes in advance.

### PALAZZO CENCI Map pp74-5

Vicolo dei Cenci; j Via Arenula A 16th-century house of horrors, Palazzo Cenci was home to ill-fated Beatrice Cenci (see the boxed text, p125), who was beheaded on Ponte Sant'Angelo in 1599 for murdering her sadistic father. Shelley based his tragedy *The Cenci* on the family, and a

famous portrait of Beatrice by Guido Reni hangs in the [Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica \(p100\)](#). It shows a sweet-faced young girl with soft eyes and fair hair.

### FONTANA DELLE TARTARUGHE [Map pp74–5](#) Piazza Mattei; j Via Arenula

This playful 16th-century fountain depicts four boys gently hoisting tortoises up into a bowl of water. Apparently, Taddeo Landini created it in a single night in 1585 on behalf of the Duke of Mattei, who had gambled his fortune away and was on the verge of losing his fiancée. On seeing the fountain, Mattei's father-in-law was so impressed that he relented and let Mattei marry his daughter, who one assumes went along with the arrangement. The tortoises were added by Bernini in 1658.

### AREA ARCHEOLOGICA DEL TEATRO DI MARCELLO E DEL PORTICO D'OTTAVIA [Map pp74–5](#)

Via del Teatro di Marcello 44; admission free;  
h 9am–7pm winter, 9am–6pm summer; g Via del Teatro di Marcello

Rising Colosseum-like from the ruins to the east of Via del Teatro di Marcello, the [Teatro di Marcello](#) is the star of this recently opened archaeological area.

The theatre was originally planned by Julius Caesar but remained unfinished at the time of his death in 44 BC. Augustus then inherited the project and named it after his favourite nephew Marcellus, who had died earlier in 23 BC. By 17 BC the theatre was in use, although it wasn't formally inaugurated until 11 BC.

The 20,000-seat theatre was frequently restored after fires and earthquakes until it eventually fell into disuse and became a quarry for building material. In 365 it was partially demolished and the stone used to restore nearby Ponte Cestio.

The Perleone family converted it into a fortress during the 11th and 12th centuries, and in the 16th century Baldassarre Peruzzi converted the fortress into a *palazzo* for the Savelli family, preserving the original form of the theatre. In 1712 it was inherited by the Orsini family and the theatre was partly restored. Remarkably, the *palazzo* still houses apartments occupied by a few lucky Romans.

Beyond the theatre, the [Portico d'Ottavia](#) is the oldest *quadriporto* (four-sided porch) in Rome. It's not in great nick, so you'll need to

use your imagination to turn the columns and fragmented pediment you see today into the enormous square colonnade that it once was. Originally erected by a builder called Octavius in 146 BC, it was rebuilt in 23 BC by Augustus, who, surprisingly, kept the name in honour of his sister Octavia.

The vast rectangular portico, supported by 300 columns, measured 132m by 119m and included temples dedicated to Juno and Jupiter, Latin and Greek libraries, and numerous statues.

From the Middle Ages until the end of the 19th century, the portico formed part of the city's fish market. On one of the brick pillars a stone plaque states that the fish sellers had to give city officials the head *usque ad primas pinnas inclusive* (up to and including the first fin) of any fish longer than the plaque itself.

### CHIESA DI SAN NICOLA IN CARCERE [Map pp74–5](#)

% 06 683 07 198; Via del Teatro di Marcello 46;  
h 7.30am–noon & 4–7pm; g Via del Teatro di Marcello

This church was built in the 11th century on the site of three republican-era temples. Marble columns from the temples were incorporated into the church's façade and interior and are still visible today. If you're not claustrophobic, check out the excavations beneath the church, where you'll find the foundations of the temples and remnants of an Etruscan vegetable market that also stood here.

### ISOLA TIBERINA

The world's smallest inhabited island, the Isola Tiberina (Tiber Island) has been associated with healing since the 3rd century BC, when the Romans adopted the Greek god of healing Asclepius (aka Aesculapius) as their own and erected a temple to him on the island. Today it's the site of the Ospedale Fatebenefratelli.

According to some ancient writers, the island was formed by grain thrown into the river after the Roman expulsion of the Tarquins from the city. Another version holds that a Greek ship ran aground at this spot and was later surrounded by a travertine wall. In its shape the island still resembles a ship but it is in fact made of volcanic rock.

To reach the Isola Tiberina from the Ghetto, cross Rome's oldest standing bridge, the 62 BC Ponte Fabricio. Continuing over the

river, Ponte Cestio, built in 46 BC and renovated in the late 19th century, connects the island to Trastevere. Also to the south of the island, next to the modern Ponte Palatino, are the remains of Ponte Rotto (Broken Bridge), Ancient Rome's first stone bridge, which was all but swept away in a 1598 flood.

### CHIESA DI SAN BARTOLOMEO [Map pp74–5](#) h 9am–12.30pm & 3.30–6pm; g Lungotevere dei Pierleoni

Built on the ruins of the Roman temple to Aesculapius, the Greek god of healing, the island's 10th-century church has been much altered over the centuries. As you see it today, it has a baroque ceiling, a Romanesque bell tower and a marble wellhead, believed to have been placed over the spring that provided healing waters for the temple.

### VIA DEL CORSO & AROUND

Rome's principal shopping street, Via del Corso runs from Piazza Venezia in the south to Piazza del Popolo in the north. Lined with flagship department stores, banks and imposing *palazzi*, it swells with tourists, shoppers and schoolkids during the day and quietens considerably at night.

From the late 15th century, Via del Corso was transformed, once a year, into a racetrack for festive pre-Lenten games. The climax was a contest between riderless horses wired on stimulants and worked into a panic with a barrage of fireworks at the starting line. It was a popular tradition that continued until the late 19th century and gave the street its name.

### MUSEO DELL'ARA PACIS [Map pp74–5](#)

% 06 820 59 127; [www.arapacis.it](#); Lungotevere in Augusta; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18–25yr €6.50/free/4.50 h 9am–7pm Tue–Sun;  
g Lungotevere in Augusta

After years of controversy and on-off construction, architect Richard Meier's luminous glass-and-travertine pavilion was finally unveiled in 2006. The first modern construction in Rome's *centro storico* since WWII, it now threatens to upstage what it's meant to highlight – the Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Peace), Augustus' great monument to the peace he established at home and abroad.

One of the most important works of ancient Roman sculpture, the altar was completed in 13 BC and positioned near Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina, slightly to

the southeast of its current site. The location was calculated so that on Augustus' birthday the shadow of a huge sundial on Campo Marzio would fall directly on it.

Over the centuries it fell victim to Rome's avid art collectors, and panels ended up in the Medici collection, the Vatican and the Louvre. However, in 1936 Mussolini unearthed the remaining parts and decided to reassemble them in the present location.

Of the reliefs, the most important depicts Augustus at the head of a procession, followed by priests, the general Marcus Agrippa and the entire imperial family.

### MAUSOLEO DI AUGUSTO [Map pp74–5](#) Piazza Augusto Imperatore; g Piazza Augusto Imperatore

What was once one of the most imposing monuments in Ancient Rome is now an unkempt mound of earth, overgrown with weeds and covered with litter. Built by Augustus in 28 BC, the mausoleum originally measured 87m in diameter and had two obelisks either side of the entrance. Although it was designed for Augustus, it was the emperor's favourite nephew and heir Marcellus who was the first to be interred here in 23 BC. Augustus joined him 37 years later in AD 14.

During the Middle Ages the mausoleum served as a fortress and was later used as a graveyard, a private garden and a travertine quarry. Mussolini had it restored in 1936 with an eye to being buried here himself.

When you read this, though, things might have changed. Mayor Veltroni has given the go-ahead to a major renovation project, which, if it goes to plan, will re-create the original level of the street (5m below the current level) and close the area to traffic between the Tiber and the mausoleum. The scheduled completion date is 2011.

### CHIESA DI SAN LORENZO IN LUCINA [Map pp74–5](#)

% 06 687 14 94; Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina 16;  
h 8am–noon & 4–7.30pm; g Via del Corso  
Little remains of the original 5th-century church that was built here atop an ancient well sacred to Juno. The exterior, with its Romanesque bell tower and long columned portico, dates to the 12th century, while the elaborate interior is 17th-century baroque. Look out for Guido Reni's *Crocefisso* (Crucifixion) above the main altar,



and a fine bust by Bernini in the Cappella Fonseca, the fourth chapel on the southern side. The French painter Nicholas Poussin, who died in 1655, is buried in the church.

### PIAZZA COLONNA *Map pp74–5*

**G** Via del Corso  
Dominating the northern side of this stylish piazza, **Palazzo Chigi** (% 06 677 93 417; www.governo.it in Italian; Piazza Colonna 370; h visits on request) has been the official residence of the Presidente del Consiglio, Italy's prime minister, since 1961. The building, off-limits unless you've booked a visit, was started in the 16th century by Matteo di Castello and finished more than a century later by Felice della Greca.

In the centre of the piazza is the 30m-high **Colonna di Marco Aurelio**. Inspired by the **Colonna di Traiano** (p65) in the Imperial Forums, it was completed in 193 to honour Marcus Aurelius' victories in battle. The vivid reliefs on the lower part depict scenes from battles against the Germanic tribes (169–173), while those further up commemorate the war against the Sarmatians (174–176). In 1589 Marcus was replaced on the top of the column with a bronze statue of St Paul.

South of the piazza, in Piazza di Pietra, is the **Tempio di Adriano**. Eleven huge Corinthian columns, now embedded in what used to be the Roman stock exchange, are all that remain of Hadrian's 2nd-century temple.

### PALAZZO DI MONTECITORIO *Map pp74–5*

% 800 01 29 55; www.camera.it in Italian; Piazza di Montecitorio; admission free; h guided visits 10am–5.30pm, 1st Sun of month; **G** Via del Corso  
Next door to Palazzo Chigi, this grandiose baroque *palazzo* is home to Italy's Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of parliament). Standing on the piazza to which it lends its name, it was built in 1653 by Bernini, expanded by Carlo Fontana in the late 17th century and given a larger façade by Art Nouveau architect Ernesto Basile in 1918. Prior to Italian unification it was the seat of the papal courts.

In 1998 the piazza was restored to Bernini's original plan of a gently sloping ramp articulated by three radiating semicircles. The **obelisk** in the centre was brought from Heliopolis in Egypt by Augustus, to celebrate his victory over Cleopatra VII and her ally Mark Antony in 30 BC. Originally, it stood in the Campo Marzio, just north of

the piazza, as part of a huge sundial, but it was moved to its present site in 1792.

### CHIESA DI SANT'IGNAZIO DI LOYOLA *Map pp74–5*

% 06 679 44 06; Piazza Sant'Ignazio; h 7.30am–12.30pm & 3–7.15pm; **G** Via del Corso  
A beautiful little square, the 18th-century Piazza Sant'Ignazio was designed by Filippo Raguzzini to resemble a theatrical stage (note how his wildly undulating surfaces create the illusion of a larger space). On its southern flank stands the 17th-century Chiesa di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola, one of Rome's most ornate baroque churches. Dedicated to Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits who died in Rome in 1556, it was commissioned by Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi and built by the Jesuit architect Orazio Grassi. Boasting an imposing Carlo Maderno façade and a sumptuous, showy interior, it's best known for the trompe l'oeil ceiling perspective by Andrea Pozzo (1642–1709). Apparently, complaints by monks in a nearby monastery meant that Grassi couldn't build a dome, so Pozzo painted one where the real thing should have been. A masterpiece in illusion, it colourfully depicts Loyola being welcomed into paradise by Christ and the Madonna. It's best viewed from the small yellow spot on the floor of the nave.

### PALAZZO E GALLERIA DORIA PAMPHILJ *Map pp74–5*

% 06 679 73 23; www.doriapamphilj.it; entrance at Piazza del Collegio Romano 2; admission €8; h 10am–5pm Fri–Wed; **G** Piazza Venezia; **V**  
On the corner of Via del Corso and Via del Plebiscito, this huge, grey *palazzo* houses one of Rome's least-known jewels. Often overlooked by tourists, the Galleria Doria Pamphilj is home to one of the richest private art collections in Rome, with works by Raphael, Tintoretto, Brueghel, Titian, Caravaggio, Bernini and Velázquez.

Palazzo Doria Pamphilj dates to the mid-15th century but its current look was largely the work of the Doria Pamphilj family, who acquired the building in the 18th century and is still living here. The Pamphilj's golden age, during which the family collection was started, came during the papacy of one of their own, Innocent X (r 1644–55), whose generosity to himself and his family was legendary. He had **Palazzo Pamphilj** (p78) built for himself in Piazza Navona, and **Villa Doria**

**Pamphilj** (p126), Rome's largest park, laid out for a cousin.

To get to the 1st-floor picture gallery you pass through the private apartments, decorated in lavish 16th-century style. Of particular note is the family chapel, a late-17th-century addition, which boasts a frescoed ceiling and contains the bodies of two saints: St Justin and St Theodora.

The 10 rooms that constitute the gallery are divided by century and covered with floor-to-ceiling paintings, as per the style of the 16th and 17th centuries. Highlights are numerous, but include Titian's powerful *Salomè con la testa del Battista* (Salome Holding the Head of John the Baptist) and two early works by Caravaggio, *Riposo durante la fuga in Egitto* (Rest During the Flight into Egypt) and *Maddalena Penitente* (Penitent Magdalen), where the artist used the same model for the Virgin and the prostitute. However, the collection's undisputed star is the Velázquez portrait of an implacable Pope Innocent X, who grumbled that the depiction was 'too real'. In the same room, the *Gabinetto di Velázquez*, is Bernini's interpretation of the same subject.

To get the best out of your visit, make sure to pick up the excellent audioguide (included in your ticket price), narrated by Jonathan Pamphilj, one of the half-Irish siblings who heads the family. He gives loads of information about the collection, as well as recounting personal memories about growing up in the *palazzo*.

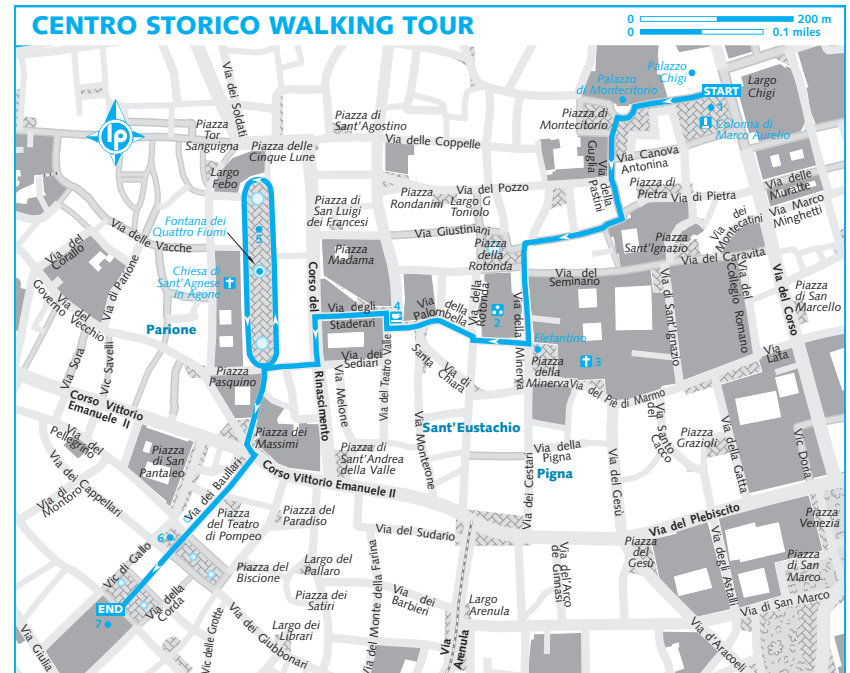
## CENTRO STORICO

### Walking Tour

**1 Piazza Colonna** Rome's political heart, this elegant square (**opposite**) is dominated by the 30m-high Colonna di Marco Aurelio and flanked by the 17th-century Palazzo Chigi, official residence of the Italian prime minister. Continue through to Piazza di Montecitorio

#### WALK FACTS

**Start** Piazza Colonna (**G** Via del Corso)  
**End** Piazza Farnese (**G** Corso Vittorio Emanuele II)  
**Distance** 2km  
**Duration** Two hours  
**Fuel stop** Caffè Sant'Eustachio (p215)



for the equally impressive seat of the Chamber of Deputies, the 17th-century Palazzo di Montecitorio (p86).

**2 Pantheon** Ancient Rome's best-preserved monument, the Pantheon (p72) was built in 27 BC, modified by Hadrian in the 2nd century AD and consecrated as a Christian church in 608. Make sure to look up and admire the largest masonry vault ever built.

**3 Chiesa di Santa Maria Sopra Minerva** A short walk from the Pantheon, this 13th-century church (p73) is one of the few examples of Gothic architecture in Rome. Inside there's a minor Michelangelo; outside there's Bernini's much-loved Elefantino (p73).

**4 Caffè Sant'Eustachio** En route to Piazza Navona, stop here for a coffee (p215). Reckoned by many to be the best in the capital, the espresso is short and creamy with a rich, deep aftertaste.

**5 Piazza Navona** Baroque central, Piazza Navona (p78) is central Rome's showpiece square. Here, among the street artists, tourists and pigeons, you can compare the two giants of Roman baroque – Bernini, creator of the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi, and Borromini, responsible for the Chiesa di Sant'Agnese in Agone.

**6 Campo de' Fiori** On the other side of Corso Vittorio Emanuel II, the busy road that bisects the *centro storico*, life centres on Campo de' Fiori (p81). By day this noisy square stages a colourful fruit 'n' veg market; by night it transforms into a raucous open-air pub, beloved of foreign students and lusty Romans.

**7 Palazzo Farnese** The focal point of refined Piazza Farnese is this magnificent Renaissance *palazzo* (p81), home to the French Embassy and some of the city's finest frescoes, said by some to rival those of the Sistine Chapel. To see them, though, you'll need to book well in advance.

## ESQUILINO, QUIRINALE & PIAZZA DI SPAGNA

Drinking & Nightlife p218; Eating p195; Shopping p170; Sleeping p250

Cutting a swathe through the eastern half of central Rome, this busy slice of the city stretches from Via del Corso in the west up to Stazione Termini and San Lorenzo in the east. A large and cosmopolitan area, it's a neighbourhood of many faces: there's the cheap Termini district with its Chinese shops and budget  *pensioni*  (guesthouses); there's Via Vittorio Veneto, still trading on its  *dolce vita*  reputation; and there's Via dei Condotti, Rome's most exclusive shopping strip. You'll find cheap drinking dens and critically acclaimed restaurants, monumental basilicas and fabulous museums, as well as the ever-popular Spanish Steps and Trevi Fountain.

It's a hilly district too, covering two of Rome's original seven hills – the Esquilino (Esquiline) and the Quirinale (Quirinal). The higher of the two, the Esquilino extends from the Colosseum to Stazione Termini, encompassing Via Cavour (a busy and unlovely thoroughfare), the charming Monti district and the impossible-to-miss Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore.

The Quirinale rises above Via Nazionale, the shop-filled road that descends from Piazza della Repubblica towards Piazza Venezia. On its summit stands the Palazzo del Quirinale, the official residence of the Presidente della Repubblica (Italy's president). Over on the other side, in the warren of streets southeast of Via del Tritone, you'll find the Trevi Fountain, a spectacular work of sculpture that attracts huge crowds.

For navigation purposes the easiest point of reference is Stazione Termini. To the east lies San Lorenzo; to the west lies just about everything else. From Piazza dei Cinquecento, in front of the station, Viale L Einaudi takes you to Piazza della Repubblica. From here Via Nazionale heads down towards Piazza Venezia, while Via VE Orlando becomes Via Barberini as it winds down to Piazza Barberini. Carry straight on down Via del Tritone for the Trevi Fountain on the left and the Piazza di Spagna to the right.

This area is well served by public transport with metro stations on line A at Stazione Termini (Termini), Piazza della Repubblica (Repubblica), Piazza Barberini (Barberini) and Piazza di Spagna (Spagna); and on line B at Via Cavour (Cavour). Buses depart from the main bus station on Piazza dei Cinquecento to Piazza Venezia (40 and 64), Via del Tritone (52, 53, 116 and 119) and Via Nazionale (H, 40, 60, 64, 116, 170).

### ESQUILINO & MONTI

Although the Esquilino hill covers a large chunk of east-central Rome, the term Esquilino is popularly used to describe the scruffy area around Stazione Termini and Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II. The district has long had a reputation as the capital's most multicultural (you'll get the best curries in town here) and is today the nearest thing Rome has to a Chinatown.

In ancient times the Suburra, the lower slope of the Esquilino's western summit (originally there were four), was occupied by crowded slums prone to fires. The area between Via Cavour and the Oppio hill, on the other hand, was a fashionable residential district. Much

## top picks

### ESQUILINO, QUIRINALE & PIAZZA DI SPAGNA

- Trevi Fountain (p98)
- Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme (p101)
- Piazza di Spagna (p99)
- Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (p100)
- Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore (below)

of the hill was covered with vineyards and gardens, many of which remained until the late 19th century, when they were dug up to make way for grandiose apartment blocks.

In between Via Nazionale and Via Cavour, the Monti district is a charming neighbourhood of narrow medieval streets full of hidden eateries, bohemian boutiques and cool bars.

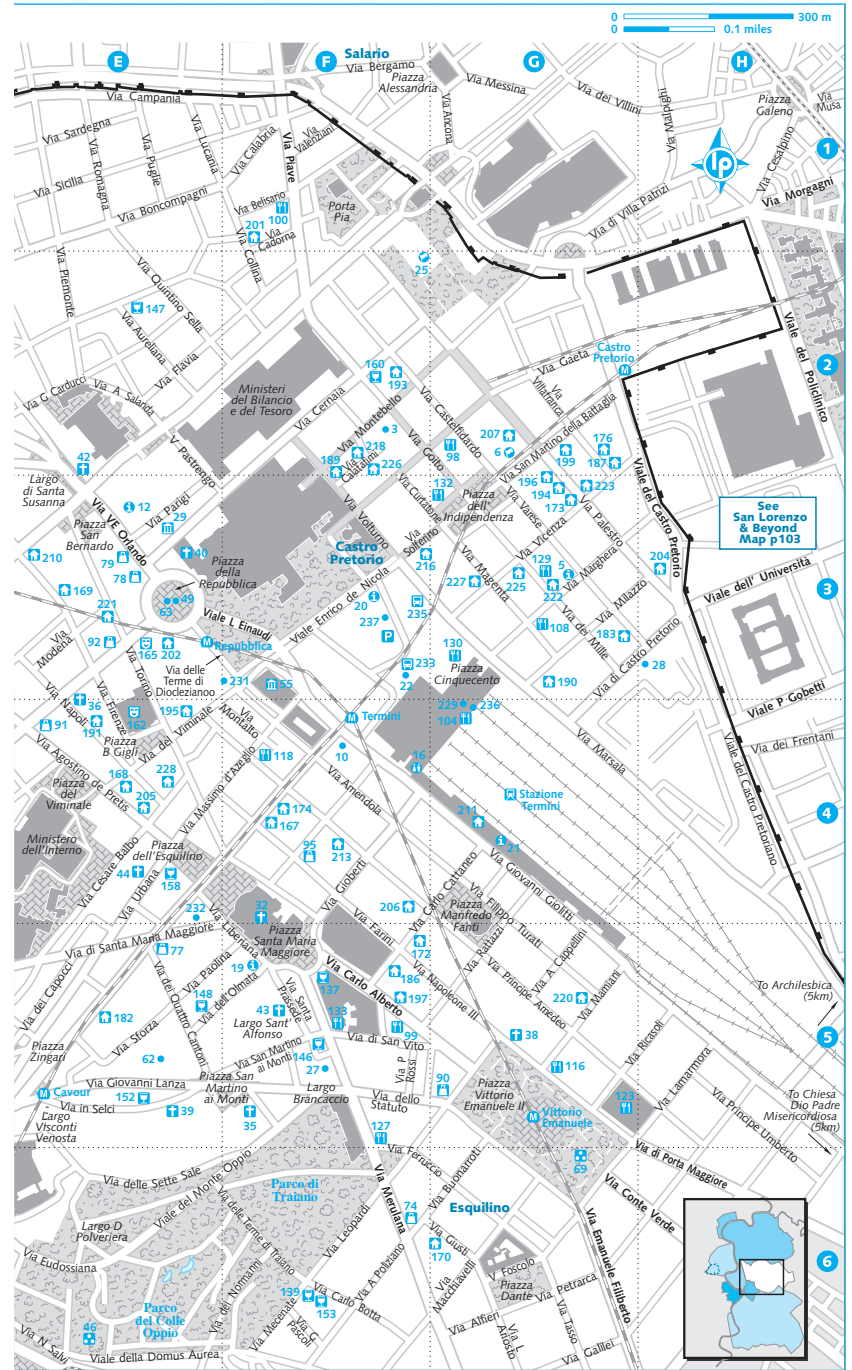
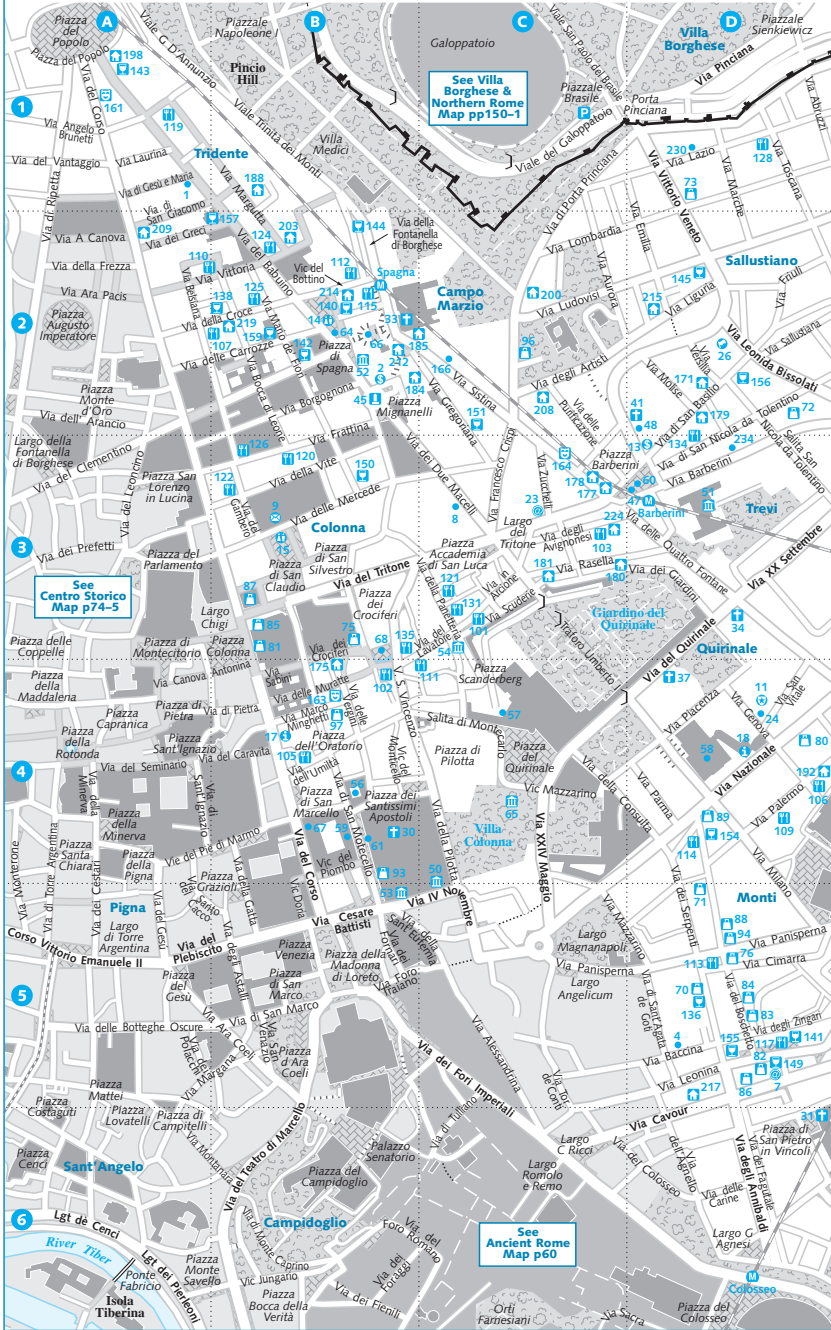
### BASILICA DI SANTA MARIA

#### MAGGIORE Map pp90–1

☎ 06 48 31 95; Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore; h 7am–7pm; ☞ Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore One of Rome's four patriarchal basilicas (the others being St Peter's, San Giovanni in Laterano and San Paolo fuori le Mura),



# ESQUILINO, QUIRIALE & PIAZZA DI SPAGNA





## ESQUILINO, QUIRINALE & PIAZZA DI SPAGNA

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this monumental church was built on the summit of the Esquilino in the 5th century. Legend has it that in 352 Pope Liberius had a dream in which he was instructed by the Virgin Mary to build a church on the exact spot that he found snow. When, the following morning (5 August – the middle of a hot Roman summer), snow fell on the Esquilino, he obeyed and began building. Whether or not it's true, the miracle is commemorated every 5 August, when thousands of white petals are released from the basilica's coffered gilt ceiling.

In its present form, the basilica is a mix of artistic and architectural styles: the 75m

belfry, the highest in Rome, is 14th-century Romanesque; Ferdinand Fuga's 1741 façade is baroque, as is much of the sumptuous interior; and the floor in the nave is a fine example of 12th-century Cosmati paving. The vast interior, however, retains its original 5th-century form.

Of the artistic splendours on show, it's the cycle of 5th-century mosaics in the triumphal arch and nave that stand out. You'll need a pair of binoculars to do them justice, but if you can see that high, they depict biblical scenes featuring Abraham, Jacob and Isaac to the left, and Moses and Joshua to the right. The central image in

## ESQUILINO, QUIRINALE & PIAZZA DI SPAGNA

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the apse, signed by Jacopo Torriti, dates from the 13th century and represents the coronation of the Virgin.

The baldachin (canopy) over the high altar is elaborately decorated with gilt cherubs; the altar itself is a porphyry sarcophagus, which is said to contain the relics of St Matthew and other martyrs. Note the nearby plaque marking the spot where Gian Lorenzo Bernini and his father Pietro are buried. Steps lead down to the *confessio* (a crypt in which relics are placed), where a reliquary preserves a fragment of the baby Jesus' crib.

The sumptuously decorated Cappella Sistina, last on the right, was built by

Domenico Fontana in the 16th century and contains the tombs of Popes Sixtus V and Pius V. Opposite is the flamboyant Cappella Paolina Borghesiana, erected in the 17th century by Pope Paul V. The *Madonna col Bambino* (Madonna and Child) panel above the altar, surrounded by lapis lazuli and agate, is believed to date from the 12th to 13th centuries.

Through the bookshop on the right-hand side of the church is a **museum** (adult/child €4/2, 11am–6.30pm) that includes a somewhat motley collection of exhibits, including a few reliquaries, some huge gilt candlesticks and a painting of Mary Magdalene showing

an indecorous amount of cleavage. You can also visit the upper **loggia** (admission €3; h guided tours 9am & 1pm), where you'll find some wonderful 13th-century mosaics (visits are by guided tour only).

### CHIESA DI SANTA PUDENZIANA

Map pp90–1

☎ 06 481 46 22; Via Urbana 160; h 8am–noon, 4–6pm; m Cavour

The church of Rome's Filipino community, the Chiesa di Santa Pudenziana boasts a sparkling gold, 4th-century apse mosaic, the oldest of its kind in Rome. An enthroned Christ is flanked by two female figures who are crowning St Peter and St Paul; on either side of them are the apostles dressed as Roman senators in togas. Unfortunately, you can only see 10 of the original 12 apostles, as a 16th-century face-lift lopped off two of them and amputated the legs of the others.

Most of the church's façade was added in the 19th century, although elements from earlier buildings, such as the delicately carved 11th-century frieze and medallions, were retained. The Romanesque arched windows and the bell tower date from the 12th century.

### CHIESA DI SANTA PRASSEDE Map pp90–1

☎ 06 488 24 56; Via Santa Prassede 9a; h 7am–noon & 4–6.30pm; ☪ Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore

Famous for its brilliant mosaics, this 9th-century church is dedicated to St Praxedes, an early Christian heroine. According to legend, Praxedes provided sanctuary for Christians fleeing Roman persecution and buried those that she couldn't save in a well on her father's land. The position of the well is now marked by a marble disc on the floor of the nave.

However, it's the glittering mosaics that you come here to see. Pope Paschal I, the church's founding father, had artists brought in specially from Byzantium to work on them, and still today they blaze with vivid colour.

Stylistically, they bear the hallmarks of their Byzantine creators, with bold gold backgrounds and a marked Christian symbolism. On the first triumphal arch, for example, angels guard the door to the New Jerusalem. The apse mosaics are slightly blocked from view by the baroque baldachin but if you climb the red marble steps

you'll get a better view. Christ is flanked by St Peter, St Pudenziana and St Zeno on the right, and by St Paul, St Praxedes and Paschal on the left. All the figures have golden halos except for Paschal, whose head is shadowed by a green square or nimbus, indicating that he was still alive at the time.

The glittering **Cappella di San Zenone** in the southern aisle was built by Paschal as a mausoleum for his mother. The mosaics on the outside show distinctive Roman faces representing the Virgin and Child, sisters Praxedes and Pudenziana, Christ and the apostles. A small mosaic in the altar niche depicts the Virgin and Child with St Praxedes and St Pudenziana; in the vault is Christ with four angels; on the inside of the doorway are St Peter and St Paul supporting the throne; and on the left, facing the altar, are St Praxedes, St Pudenziana and St Agnes. The fragment of marble in the glass case on the right is thought to be a piece of the column to which Christ was tied when he was flogged.

### CHIESA DI SAN MARTINO AI MONTI

Map pp90–1

☎ 06 487 31 26; Viale del Monte Oppio 28; h 7.30am–noon & 4.30–6.30pm Mon–Sat, 8am–12.30pm & 4.30–7.30pm Sun; m Cavour

In the 3rd century this was already a place of worship – Christians would meet here, in what was then the home of a Roman named Equitius. In the 4th century, after Christianity was legalised, a church was constructed and subsequently rebuilt in the 6th and 9th centuries. It was then completely transformed by Filippo Gagliardi in the 1650s. The sacristan can show you the remains of Equitius' house beneath the church. Up above, the 24 Corinthian columns in the nave are all that remain of the 6th-century building. Of note are Gagliardi's frescoes of the Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano before it was rebuilt in the mid-17th century and St Peter's Basilica before it assumed its present 16th-century look.

### CHIESA DI SANTA LUCIA IN SELCI

Map pp90–1

☎ 06 482 76 23; Via in Selci 82; h 9.30–10.30am Sun; m Cavour

A small church best known for its 17th-century Borromini interior, Chiesa di Santa Lucia in Selci dates to some time before the 8th century. It's not open to the public,

except for Mass on Sunday morning, but if you ring the bell and ask the resident nuns nicely they'll probably let you in.

### BASILICA DI SAN PIETRO IN VINCOLI

Map pp90–1

☎ 06 488 28 65; Piazza di San Pietro in Vincoli 4a; h 8am–12.30pm & 3–6pm; m Cavour

Pilgrims and art lovers flock to this 5th-century church for two reasons: to see St Peter's chains and to photograph Michelangelo's tomb for Pope Julius II. The church was built in the 5th century specially to house the chains that bound St Peter when he was imprisoned in the **Carcere Mamertino** (p67). Some time after St Peter's death, the chains were sent to Constantinople before returning to Rome as relics. They arrived in two pieces and legend has it that when they were reunited they miraculously joined together. They are now displayed under the altar.

To the right of the altar is Julius' monumental tomb. At the centre of the work is Michelangelo's colossal Moses (with two small horns sticking out of his head and an impressive waist-length beard), flanked by statues of Leah and Rachel that were probably completed by Michelangelo's students. Michelangelo got the idea for the horns from the mistranslation of a biblical passage: where the original said that rays of light issued from Moses' face, the translator wrote 'horns'. Michelangelo was aware of the mistake, but he gave Moses horns anyway. Despite its imposing scale the tomb was never actually finished – Michelangelo had originally envisaged 40 other statues but got sidetracked with the Sistine Chapel. In the end, Pope Julius was buried in St Peter's Basilica and the unfinished sculptures that were to have adorned this tomb are in the Louvre (Paris) and the Galleria dell'Accademia (Florence).

### DOMUS AUREA Map pp90–1

☎ 06 399 67 700; www.pierreci.it; Viale della Domus Aurea; admission €4.50; h 10am–4pm Tue–Fri; m Colosseo

A monumental exercise in vanity, the Domus Aurea (Golden House) was Nero's great gift to himself. Built after the fire of AD 64 and named after the gold that covered its façade, it was a huge palace complex covering much of the Palatino (Palatine), Oppio (Oppian) and Celio (Caelian) hills. Its

grounds, which included an artificial lake, covered up to a third of the 1st-century city.

Unfortunately, little remains of the original complex – experts reckon only about 20%. Much of it was destroyed by Nero's immediate successors, who were keen to remove all trace of his hated excesses: Vespasian drained the lake and built the Colosseum in its place, Domitian built his palace on the Palatino, and Trajan constructed a baths complex on the Oppio using the Domus Aurea as a foundation. This is the area that is currently being excavated.

Many of the original loggias and halls were walled in when Trajan's baths were built, effectively removing all the light and making it difficult to distinguish between the original complex and the later baths. Highlights include traces of frescoes depicting scenes from Homer's *Iliad* and the octagonal room where Nero is said to have played the lyre on a revolving stage.

The baths and underlying ruins were abandoned by the 6th century. During the Renaissance, artists (including Ghirlandaio, Perugino and Raphael) lowered themselves into the ruins in order to study the frescoed grottoes and to doodle on the walls. All of them later used motifs from the Domus Aurea frescoes in their work.

The excavations suffered serious flood damage in 2005 and have only recently reopened. Visits are by guided tour only and bookings are essential.

### PIAZZA VITTORIO EMANUELE II

Map pp90–1

m Vittorio Emanuele

Rome's biggest square (Piazza San Pietro is in the Vatican and so doesn't count as Rome), Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II was laid out in the late 19th century, shortly after Italian unification. Originally an upmarket residential district, it's now the noisy centre of Rome's most multiethnic district.


To most Romans the piazza is synonymous with the boisterous food market that used to stand here. The market has since moved indoors to nearby Via Lamarmora, but the surrounding streets are still the best place to find exotic spices and take-away curry. Within the fenced-off central section of the square are the ruins of the **Trofei di Mario**, once a fountain at the end of an aqueduct.

In the northern corner of the square is the locked-up **Chiesa di Sant'Eusebio**, which

was founded in the 4th century and rebuilt twice in the 18th. Each year, animals are blessed here on St Anthony's feast day (17 January).

The square itself hosts cultural festivals throughout the year and an outdoor film festival in the summer.

### PORTA MAGGIORE Map p103

**Piazza di Porta Maggiore;**  **Porta Maggiore** Porta Maggiore, also known as Porta Prenestina, was built by Claudius in AD 52. Then, as now, it was a major road junction under which passed the two main south-bound roads, Via Prenestina and Via Labicana (modern-day Via Casilina).

The arch supported two aqueducts – the Acqua Claudia and the Acqua Aniene Nuova – and was later incorporated into the Aurelian Wall.

In the middle of Piazza di Porta Maggiore is the *Sepolcro di M Virgilio Eurisace*. Commonly known as the Baker's Tomb, this pretentious monument was built in 30 BC by the widow of the baker Vergilius Eurisaces in memory of her husband.

## QUIRINALE TO THE TREVI FOUNTAIN

### PALAZZO DEL QUIRINALE Map pp90–1

**% 06 4 69 91; www.quirinale.it; Piazza del Quirinale; admission €5; h 8.30am–noon Sun Sep–Jun;  Via Nazionale**

Flanking Piazza del Quirinale, this immense *palazzo* served as the papal summer residence for almost three centuries until the keys were handed over, begrudgingly and staring down the barrel of a gun, to Italy's new king in 1870. It was passed on to the president of the republic in 1948.

Pope Gregory XIII (r 1572–85) originally chose the site for his holiday home and over the course of the next 150 years the top architects of the day worked on it: Domenico Fontana designed the main façade; Carlo Maderno designed the chapel; and Bernini was responsible for the *manica lunga* (long sleeve), the long, surprisingly austere wing that runs the length of Via del Quirinale. The *palazzo* is open to the public on Sunday mornings, when there is sometimes a free concert in the Cappella Paolina.

On the other side of the piazza, the palace's former stables, the *Scuderie Papali al Quirinale* (**% 06 69 62 70; www.scuderiequirinale.it; Via**

**XXIV Maggio 16; h depends on exhibition**), is now a magnificent exhibition space.

### PIAZZA DEL QUIRINALE Map pp90–1

#### **Via Nazionale**

A wonderful spot to enjoy a glowing Roman sunset, this bare and uneven piazza sits on the summit of the Quirinale hill. The **obelisk** in the centre was moved here from the **Mausoleo di Augusto** (p85) in 1786 and is flanked by 5.5m statues of **Castor** and **Pollux** (whose modesty is ensured by a convenient leaf) reining in a couple of huge rearing horses. These Roman copies of 5th-century-BC Greek originals were originally in the Baths of Constantine but were moved here in the 16th century by Pope Sixtus V. The granite basin, from the Roman Forum, was a later addition.

It's not much of a show, but every day, at some point between 3pm and 4pm, the two sentries outside Palazzo del Quirinale are replaced by the next pair, accompanied by minor pomp and military shouting. More dramatic by far is the classical music concert staged here on New Year's Eve.

### CHIESA DI SANT'ANDREA AL QUIRINALE Map pp90–1

**% 06 489 03 187; Via del Quirinale 29; h 9am–noon & 4–7pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat;  Via Nazionale**

It's said that in his old age Bernini liked to come and enjoy the peace of this late-17th-century church, regarded by many as one of his greatest. Faced with severe space limitations, the great man managed to produce a sense of grandeur by designing an elliptical floor plan with a series of chapels opening onto the central area. The opulent interior, decorated with polychrome marble, stucco and gilding, was much appreciated by Pope Alexander VII, who used it while in residence at the Palazzo del Quirinale.

### CHIESA DI SAN CARLO ALLE QUATTRO FONTANE Map pp90–1

**% 06 488 32 61; Via del Quirinale 23; h 10am–1pm & 3–6pm Mon–Fri & Sun, 10am–1pm Sat;  Via Nazionale**

It might not look it, with its filthy façade and unappealing location, but this tiny church is a masterpiece of Roman baroque. It was the first church designed by Borromini and bears all the hallmarks of his tortured genius. The elegant curves of the façade, the play of convex and concave surfaces and

the dome illuminated by hidden windows ingeniously transform a minuscule space into a light, airy interior.

The church, completed in 1641, stands at the road intersection known as the **Quattro Fontane**, after the late-16th-century fountains on its four corners, representing Fidelity, Strength and the Rivers Arno and Tiber.

### PALAZZO DELLE ESPOSIZIONI Map pp90–1


**% 06 48 94 11; www.palazzoesposizione.it in Italian; Via Nazionale 194; h depends on exhibition;**

#### **Via Nazionale**

Recently opened after years of renovation work, this grand 19th-century building is one of Rome's most prominent cultural centres, used for multimedia events, art exhibitions, performances and film screenings. In the past it has served as the headquarters of the Italian Communist Party, a mess for allied servicemen, a polling station and even a public loo.

### MUSEO DELLE CERE Map pp90–1

**% 06 679 64 82; www.museodellecereroma.com; Piazza dei Santissimi Apostoli 67; admission €6;**

**h 9am–8pm;  Via IV Novembre** Madame Tussaud's it ain't, but Rome's waxworks museum does at least provide some light-hearted relief from the high-brow culture all around you. Ranging from Francesco Totti to Snow White, the 250 wax figures include poets, politicians, murderers and priests.

### GALLERIA COLONNA Map pp90–1

**% 06 678 43 50; www.galleriacolonna.it; Via della Pilotta 17; adult/under 10yr & over 65yr €7/5.50; h 9am–1pm Sat, closed Aug;  Via IV Novembre** An extravagant work of art in its own right, this opulent six-room gallery houses the Colonna family's private art collection. It's not the capital's largest collection but it's highly regarded and well worth the ticket price. Entry is on Via della Pilotta, a picturesque street spanned by four arches connecting **Palazzo Colonna** to its private gardens. Originally built in the 15th century for Pope Martin V, the *palazzo* was given a major makeover in the 18th century for the Colonna family, members of which still live here.


The gallery, the only part of the *palazzo* open to the public, was completed in 1703. The outstanding ceiling frescoes are all dedicated to Marcantonio Colonna, the family's greatest ancestor, who defeated

the Turks at the naval Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Works by Giovanni Coli and Filippo Gherardi in the Great Hall, Sebastiano Ricci in the Landscapes Room and Giuseppe Bartolomeo Chiari in the Throne Room commemorate his efforts.

Among the artists competing for your attention are Salvatore Rosa, Guido Reni and Guercino, but it's Annibale Carracci's charming *Mangiafagioli* (The Bean Eater) that is considered the collection's masterpiece. Oddities to look out for include a cannonball lodged into the wall during the 1849 siege of Rome and, in the Throne Room, a chair kept ready (turned to the wall) in case of a papal visit.

### BASILICA DEI SANTI APOSTOLI

Map pp90–1

**% 06 679 40 85; Piazza dei Santissimi Apostoli; h 7am–noon & 4–7pm;  Via IV Novembre** Built in the 6th century and dedicated to the apostles James and Philip (whose relics are in the crypt), this church was enlarged in the 15th and 16th centuries and then rebuilt in the early 1700s. The unusual façade with Renaissance arches and portico dates to the early 16th century, while Carlo and Francesco Fontana's baroque interior was completed in 1714. Inside, the main attraction is Antonio Canova's tomb of Pope Clement XIV.


### PIAZZA DEI SANTISSIMI APOSTOLI

Map pp90–1

 **Via IV Novembre**

A popular place for political demonstrations, this long thin piazza is home to L'Ulivo, Italy's main centre-left political party, and is flanked by impressive baroque *palazzi*. At the end of the square stands **Palazzo Balestra**, formerly known as Palazzo Muti Papazzurri, which was given to James Stuart, the Old Pretender, in 1719 by Pope Clement XI. Opposite the **Basilica dei Santi Apostoli** (above) is **Palazzo Odelscalchi**, with its impressive 1664 façade by Bernini. Apart from the church none of these buildings is open to the public.

### TIME ELEVATOR Map pp90–1

**% 06 977 46 243; www.time-elevator.it; Via dei Santissimi Apostoli 20; adult/child €11/9; h 10.30am–7.30pm;  Piazza Venezia** Down a small side street off Via del Corso, the Time Elevator is ideal for armchair



sightseers. There are three programs, but the one to see is *Time Elevator Rome*, a 45-minute virtual journey through 3000 years of Roman history. Shows kick off every hour, and children and adults alike love the panoramic screens, flight-simulator technology and surround-sound system. Note that children under five aren't admitted and anyone who suffers motion sickness should probably give it a miss.

### TREVI FOUNTAIN Map pp90–1

**Piazza di Trevi:** ☺ **Via del Tritone**  
Immortalised by Anita Ekberg's sensual dip in *La Dolce Vita*, the Trevi Fountain (Fontana di Trevi) is Rome's largest and most famous fountain. An extravagant baroque work designed by Nicola Salvi in 1732 and completed in 1762, it depicts Neptune's chariot being led by Tritons with sea horses – one wild, one docile – representing the moods of the sea. The water comes from the *aqua virgo*, a 1st-century-BC underground aqueduct, and the name Trevi refers to the *tre vie* (three roads) that converge at the fountain.

There has been a fountain here since 19 BC, when the 22km *aqua virgo* was completed. In 1453 Pope Nicholas V had the original updated and then, in 1629, Pope Urban VIII asked Bernini to design a new one. However, Urban died and the project was dropped. It was resurrected in 1730 by Pope Clement XII, who organised a competition to elicit designs for a fabulous new fountain. Salvi won and started work two years later.

Legend has it that during construction a busybody barber criticised the project from

the balcony of his shop on the right side of the square. Architect Salvi got the last laugh, however, by blocking the barber's view with a giant ornament on the balustrade, the so-called *asso di coppe*.

The famous custom is to throw a coin over your shoulder into the fountain; see the boxed text, [below](#).

### MUSEO NAZIONALE DELLE PASTE ALIMENTARI Map pp90–1

☎ 06 699 11 19; [www.pastainmuseum.com](http://www.pastainmuseum.com); Piazza Scanderbeg 117; admission €10; h 9.30am–5.30pm; ☺ **Via del Tritone**

Raised to national-treasure status, pasta is celebrated in all its fascinating glory at this wonderfully straight-faced museum. The National Museum of Pasta is the only museum in the world dedicated to more than two millennia of pasta and it takes its responsibilities seriously – there are exhibitions explaining the production process, the differences between various pastas and how best to cook them. A highlight is the Neapolitan Room, with its photos of film stars tucking into plateloads of the stuff.

### PIAZZA DI SPAGNA & AROUND

The popularity of Piazza di Spagna dates to the 18th century, when it was discovered by travellers on the Grand Tour. Today it's conveniently served by its own metro station, and attracts locals and visitors in equal measure: Roman teenagers come here on the pull; out-of-towners come to sit on the famous Spanish Steps. Built to connect Piazza di Spagna with

the Chiesa della Trinità dei Monti, the steps are always very busy and rarely as colourful as the postcards make out. It's only in early spring that you'll find the famous azaleas lining the steps; for the rest of the year you'll have to make do with exhausted tourists.

Piazza di Spagna is also where well-heeled shoppers come to give their credit cards a workout. Via dei Condotti, home to Bulgari, Prada and Armani among others, is the most famous of the area's moneyed shopping strips.

### PIAZZA DI SPAGNA & THE SPANISH STEPS Map pp90–1

☺ **Spagna**

The favourite flirting ground of Roman teenagers, Piazza di Spagna and the famous Spanish Steps (Scalinata della Trinità dei Monti) have been a magnet for foreigners since the 18th century. In the late 1700s the area was much loved by English on the Grand Tour and was known to locals as *er ghetto de l'inglesi* (the English ghetto). It's still a hugely popular hang-out and is busy from early morning until the small hours. Officially you're not supposed to eat (or defecate, according to a sign) on the steps and if caught by the police you could be fined.

Built between 1723 and 1726 with French money – but designed by an Italian (Francesco De Sanctis) and named after the nearby Spanish Embassy – the Spanish Steps were constructed to connect the piazza with the eminent folk who lived above it. They soon became a meeting point for the city's most beautiful men and women, who gathered here hoping to be chosen as artists' models. These days you're more likely to see spotty schoolkids than any Latin Adonis. Unless, of course, you come in April, when models strut the catwalk at the annual fashion show and the tourists are replaced with a blaze of pink azaleas.

At the foot of the steps, the fountain of a sinking boat, the *Barcaccia* (1627), is believed to be by Pietro Bernini, father of the famous Gian Lorenzo. Opposite, Via dei Condotti is Rome's top shopping strip.

To the right of the piazza, adjacent Piazza Mignanelli is dominated by the *Colonna dell'Immacolata*, built in 1857 to celebrate Pope Pius IX's declaration of the Immaculate Conception. On 8 December each year, local firefighters place a wreath on the arm of the statue of the Virgin Mary.

### CHIESA DELLA TRINITÀ DEI MONTI Map pp90–1

☎ 06 679 41 79; Piazza Trinità dei Monti; h 10am–noon & 4–6pm; ☺ **Spagna**  
Looming over the Spanish Steps, this landmark church was commissioned by King Louis XII of France and consecrated in 1585. Apart from the great views from outside, it boasts some wonderful frescoes by Daniele da Volterra. His *Deposizione* (Deposition; Christ being taken down from the cross), in the second chapel on the left, is regarded as a masterpiece of mannerist painting. If you don't fancy climbing the steep steps, there's a lift from Spagna metro station up to Viale Trinità dei Monti.

### KEATS-SHELLEY HOUSE Map pp90–1

☎ 06 678 42 35; [www.keats-shelley-house.org](http://www.keats-shelley-house.org); Piazza di Spagna 26; admission €3.50; h 9am–1pm & 3–6pm Mon–Fri, 11am–2pm & 3–6pm Sat; ☺ **Spagna**

Next to the Spanish Steps, the Keats-Shelley House is where John Keats died in February 1821. He'd come to Rome a year earlier, hoping that the Italian climate would improve his failing health. Unfortunately it didn't, and he died at the age of 25. A year later, Percy Bysshe Shelley drowned off the coast of Tuscany. The house is now a small museum crammed with memorabilia relating to the two poets and their colleagues Mary Shelley and Lord Byron.

### VIA DEI CONDOTTI Map pp90–1

☺ **Spagna**

A mecca for high-rolling shoppers, Via dei Condotti is Rome's poshest shopping strip. Two centuries ago it was fashionable in a very different way: the street belonged to the writers and musicians who used to meet at *Caffe Greco* (p220).

Other top shopping streets in the area include *Via Frattina*, *Via della Croce*, *Via delle Carrozze* and *Via del Babuino*. Pretty *Via Margutta*, parallel to Via del Babuino, is lined with art galleries and antique shops and was home to film director Federico Fellini for many years. See the Shopping chapter, p160, for more details.

### CASA DI GOETHE Map pp90–1

☎ 06 326 50 412; [www.casadigoethe.it](http://www.casadigoethe.it); Via del Corso 18; admission €3; h 10am–6pm Tue–Sun; ☺ **Flaminio**

A gathering place for German artists and intellectuals, the Via del Corso apartment

### TREVI FOUNTAIN CLEANED OUT

According to tradition, to toss a coin over your shoulder into the Trevi Fountain is to ensure that one day you'll return to Rome. Throw in a second and you'll fall in love with an Italian, and a third will have you marrying him or her. It's all very romantic, but what happens to the €3000 that is chucked away on an average day?

It goes to charity, is the answer. Once a week a team from Rome's water company ACEA hoovers up the coins and sends them to Caritas, an Italian charity, where volunteers weigh, clean and sort the coins into currencies – coins have been found from up to 58 different countries.

At least, that's the theory. In practice it doesn't always work out that way. In November 2005, police arrested four members of the official Hoover team, claiming that they'd pocketed an estimated €110,000 of Trevi coins.

Before that, in 2002, it emerged that a homeless man known as D'Artagnan had been making up to €1000 a day for 34 years from the Trevi coins. The public was outraged but it wasn't at all clear if he'd been breaking the law. According to a 1994 High Court ruling, taking coins from the fountain was as legal as throwing them in. Moreover, D'Artagnan claimed he had given his loot away to other homeless people. Magistrates, however, fined D'Artagnan €500 under a 1999 law that banned entering the city's fountains. Unabated, he continued until the introduction of the euro put a damper on his scheme – the magnet he used to collect the coins didn't work on the new euro coins.

where Johann Wolfgang von Goethe lived between 1786 and 1788 is now a lovingly maintained museum. Exhibits include documents relating to his Italian sojourn and interesting drawings and etchings – including a 1982 Andy Warhol portrait of the great man. With advance permission, ardent Goethe fans can use the library full of first editions.

## PIAZZA BARBERINI & AROUND

**PIAZZA BARBERINI** Map pp90–1

▣ Barberini

More a traffic thoroughfare than a place to linger, this noisy square owes its name to the Barberini family, one of Rome's great dynastic clans (see the boxed text, p81). In the centre, the eye-catching **Fontana del Tritone** (Fountain of the Triton) was created by Bernini in 1643 for Pope Urban VIII, patriarch of the Barberini family. It depicts the sea-god Triton blowing a stream of water from a conch while seated in a large scallop shell supported by four dolphins. Bernini also crafted the **Fontana delle Api** (Fountain of the Bees) in the northeastern corner, again for the Barberini family, whose crest featured three bees in flight.

## GALLERIA NAZIONALE D'ARTE ANTICA

Map pp90–1

▣ 06 3 28 10; [www.galleriaborghese.it](http://www.galleriaborghese.it); Via delle Quattro Fontane 13, entrance at Via Barberini 18; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-25yr €5/free/2.50; h 9am-7pm Tue-Sun; ▣ Barberini; √ A must for anyone into Renaissance and baroque art, this glorious gallery is housed in one of Rome's most spectacular *palazzi*. Commissioned by Pope Urban VIII to celebrate the Barberini family's rise to papal power in 1623, **Palazzo Barberini** was worked on by a who's who of 17th-century architects. Carlo Maderno was the original architect but when he died in 1629 his nephew Borromini took over, adding the windows on the upper storey, which seem from a distance to be the same size as those on the floor below, but are in fact significantly smaller. Borromini's rival Bernini also got in on the act, designing the square staircase on the left of the ground-floor hall, in contrast to Borromini's delicious oval staircase on the other side. Pietro da Cortona painted the breathtaking fresco *Trionfo della Divina*

*Provvidenza* (Triumph of Divine Providence), in the main salon on the 1st floor, between 1633 and 1639.

Today the palace houses part of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica's collection of 13th- to 17th-century works, including paintings by Raphael, Caravaggio, Guido Reni, Bernini, Filippo Lippi and Holbein.

Highlights on the 1st floor include Raphael's lovely *La Fornarina* (The Baker's Girl), a portrait of his mistress Margherita Luti, who worked in a bakery on Via Santa Dorotea in Trastevere (now a restaurant called Romolo); the luminous *Annunziazione* (Annunciation) by Filippo Lippi; Guido Reni's *Ritratto di Beatrice Cenci* (Portrait of Beatrice Cenci; see the boxed text, p125); and Hans Holbein's famous *Ritratto di Enrico VIII* (Portrait of Henry VIII), painted on the day Henry married Anne of Cleves. Caravaggio fans will delight in his *Giuditta taglia la testa a Oloferne* (Judith Beheading Holophernes, c 1597–1600), a gruesome masterpiece of theatrical lighting, and *Narcisso* (Narcissus, c 1571–1610).

On the 2nd floor are the 18th-century apartments of Princess Cornelia Costanza Barberini.

## CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DELLA CONCEZIONE

Map pp90–1

▣ 06 487 11 85; Via Vittorio Veneto 27; admission by donation; h 9am-noon & 3-6pm Fri-Wed; ▣ Barberini

There's nothing special about the 17th-century Chiesa di Santa Maria della Concezione, just off Piazza Barberini, but dip into the **Capuchin cemetery** beneath (access is to the right of the church steps) and you'll be gobsmacked. Everything from the picture frames to the light fittings is made of human bones. Between 1528 and 1870 the Capuchin monks used the bones of 4000 of their departed brothers to create the mesmerising and macabre display. There's an arch crafted from hundreds of skulls, vertebrae used as fleurs-de-lis, and light fixtures made of femurs.

## VIA VITTORIO VENETO

Map pp90–1

▣ Barberini

Curving up from Piazza Barberini to Villa Borghese, Via Vittorio Veneto is the spiritual home of *la dolce vita*. Unfortunately, the atmosphere of Fellini's Rome has long gone, and the street today, while still impressive, is largely given over to tourism. Many of the

towering streetside *palazzi* are luxury hotels, and glass-cased restaurants serve overpriced food to tourists with more money than imagination. The huge building on the right as you walk up is the US Embassy.

## PIAZZA DELLA REPUBBLICA & AROUND

**PIAZZA DELLA REPUBBLICA** Map pp90–1

▣ Repubblica

Flanked by grand neoclassical colonnades, Piazza della Repubblica was laid out as part of Rome's postunification makeover. The piazza follows the lines of the semicircular *exedra* (benched portico) of Diocletian's baths complex (see right) and was, in fact, originally known as Piazza Esedra. The fountain in its centre, the **Fontana delle Naiadi**, was designed by Mario Rutelli and features a central figure of Glaucus wrestling a fish, surrounded by four naiads or water nymphs.

Spearing off the piazza, **Via Nazionale** heads downhill towards Piazza Venezia. A busy shopping street, its crowded pavements are lined with imposing late-19th-century *palazzi*.

## MUSEO NAZIONALE ROMANO: PALAZZO MASSIMO ALLE TERME

Map pp90–1

▣ 06 399 67 700; Largo di Villa Peretti 1; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €7/free/3.50, plus €3 supplement if there's an exhibition; h 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun; ▣ Termini; √ A stunning, light-filled museum, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme is home to some spectacular classical art. To help your navigation, audioguides are available for €4.

The ground and 1st floors are given over to sculpture from the 2nd century BC to the 5th century AD. Much early Roman art was designed to pamper imperial egos and on the ground floor you'll find plenty of macho posturing. The depiction of Augustus as Pontifex Maximus in Sala V is a perfect example. In the same room, don't miss the marble frieze from the Basilica Aemilia in the **Roman Forum** (p63), which depicts scenes from the origin of Rome. In Sala VI next door, there is a moving sculpture known as the *Niobide degli Horti Sallustiani* (Niobide from the Gardens of Sallust), which dates from the 5th century BC and depicts one of the 14 children of Niobe. Niobe insulted Lato, the mother of Apollo and Artemis, leading

to Apollo and Artemis killing all of Niobe's children with arrows.

On the 1st floor you'll find sculptures from the late 1st to 4th centuries AD. Among the highlights is a ravaged but naturalistic image of a voluptuous *Afrodite* (Sala V), from **Villa Adriana** (p277) at Tivoli. The badly damaged *Apollo del Tevere* in Sala VI shows what too long in polluted water can do to marble: this piece was discovered in the banks of the Tiber in the late 19th century. In the same room are the *Discobolus Lancellotti* and the *Discobolus di Castelporziano*, two marble statues of a discus-thrower copied from a Greek original by Myron of Athens.

The highlights of the museum, however, are the sensational mosaics and wall paintings on the 2nd floor. These include wall paintings from an Augustan-period villa found in the grounds of **Villa Farnesina** (p124) in the 19th century. The richly coloured frescoes from its *cubicula* (bedrooms) have religious, erotic and theatre subjects and are quite amazing, as are the paintings from the *triclinium* (dining room) featuring landscape scenes.

Stealing the limelight, though, are the garden paintings (dating from 20 to 10 BC) from Villa Livia, one of the homes of Augustus' wife Livia Drusilla. Excavated in the 19th century and displayed here in 1951, these stunning frescoes, which totally surround you, depict an illusionary garden with all the plants in full bloom. The room in which they were originally painted was probably a summer *triclinium*, a large living and dining area built half underground to provide protection from the heat.

The museum also boasts a stunning collection of inlaid marble and mosaics, including (in Sala VII) the surviving wall mosaics from a *nymphaeum* (shrine to the water nymph) at Nero's villa in Anzio.

In the basement there is an extensive display of ancient and medieval coins, including a collection donated to the state by King Vittorio Emanuele II.

## MUSEO NAZIONALE ROMANO: TERME DI DIOCLEZIANO

Map pp90–1

▣ 06 399 67 700; Viale Enrico de Nicola 78; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €7/free/3.50, plus €3 supplement if there's an exhibition; h 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun; ▣ Termini; √ The ruins that you see over the road from Piazza dei Cinquecento, outside Termini,

are the remains of the Terme di Diocleziano (Diocletian's Baths), the largest baths complex in Ancient Rome. Covering about 13 hectares and with a capacity of 3000 people, the complex comprised baths, libraries, concert halls and gardens. It was completed in the early 4th century but fell into disrepair after invaders destroyed the aqueduct that fed the baths in about 536. Today the ruins constitute part of the Museo Nazionale Romano.

The ground-floor and 1st-floor galleries contain a display of epigraphs and a large collection of vases, amphorae and household objects in terracotta and bronze. Among the highlights are three stunning terracotta statues of seated female figures that were found in Ariccia, southeast of Rome. The extensive 2nd-floor galleries contain artefacts (mainly burial objects such as jewellery and domestic items) from Italian protohistory – the 11th to 6th centuries BC.

Outside, Michelangelo's elegant cloister is lined with classical sarcophagi, headless statues, and huge sculptured animal heads, thought to have come from the **Foro di Traiano** (Trajan's Forum; p65).

To the north, the **Aula Ottagona** (Piazza della Repubblica; admission free; h 9am-2pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) houses yet more Roman sculpture.

### CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI Map pp90-1

h 06 488 08 12; Piazza della Repubblica; h 7am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 7am-7.30pm Sun; r Repubblica Facing onto Piazza della Repubblica, this hulking basilica occupies what was once the central hall of Diocletian's enormous baths complex. It was originally designed by Michelangelo in 1593 but only the great vaulted ceiling remains from his innovative plans. Today the chief attraction is the double meridian in the transept, one tracing the polar star and the other telling the precise time of the sun's zenith (sunlight enters through a hole to the right of the window above the entrance to the church's right wing). Inaugurated by Pope Clement XI in 1702, the sundial here was used to regulate Rome's clocks until 1846.

Through the sacristy is a plaque dedicated to the thousands of Christian slaves who died while building Diocletian's baths in the early 4th century.

### CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DELLA VITTORIA Map pp90-1

h 06 482 61 90; Via XX Settembre 17; h 8.30am-noon & 3.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 3.30-6pm Sun; r Repubblica

Stuck on a busy road junction, this modest and not particularly enticing church holds one of Bernini's most extravagant and sexually charged sculptures. In the last chapel on the left, the *Santa Teresa trafitta dall'amore di Dio* (Ecstasy of St Teresa) depicts Teresa floating in ecstasy on a cloud while a teasing angel pierces her repeatedly with a golden arrow. Watching the whole scene are a number of figures, including Cardinal Federico Cornaro, for whom the chapel was built. Whatever Teresa's up to, it's a stunning work, bathed in soft natural light filtering through a concealed window. Go in the afternoon for the most stunning effect.

### CHIESA DI SAN PAOLO ENTRO LE MURA Map pp90-1

h 06 488 33 39; www.stpaulsrome.it; cnr Via Nazionale & Via Napoli; h 9am-1pm & 4-7pm; r Repubblica

With its stripy neo-Gothic exterior and prominent position on Via Nazionale, the American Episcopal church of St Paul's Within the Walls is something of a landmark. There's not a whole lot to see, but it's a quiet spot for a breather and there are some unusual 19th-century mosaics. Designed by the Birmingham-born Edward Burne-Jones, they feature the faces of his famous contemporaries. In his representation of *The Church on Earth*, St Ambrose (on the extreme right of the centre group) has JP Morgan's face, and General Garibaldi and Abraham Lincoln (wearing a green tunic) are among the warriors. In the small garden outside there are a number of modern sculptures.

## SAN LORENZO & BEYOND

For a break from Rome's ancient ruins and historic *palazzi*, head to San Lorenzo, Rome's lively student quarter east of Stazione Termini. Long a hotbed of radical activity – in the 1920s the area's predominantly working-class population took to the streets against the Fascists – it's now a vibrant neighbourhood of highly rated restaurants and popular pubs, record shops and dirt-cheap pizzerias. Heavily

bombed during WWII, it doesn't have a lot to see unless you're a fan of graffitied walls or flyover architecture, but after dark it's one of the capital's hippest areas.

### BASILICA DI SAN LORENZO FUORI LE MURA Map p103

h 06 49 15 11; Piazzale San Lorenzo; h 7.30-12.30pm & 3-7pm; g Piazzale del Verano The only of Rome's major churches to have suffered bomb damage in WWII, the Basilica of St Lawrence Outside the Walls is one of Rome's seven pilgrimage churches.

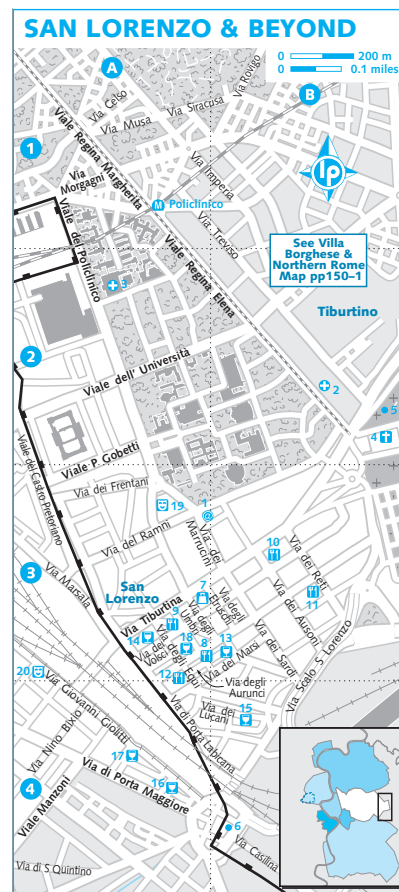
An atmospheric, tranquil place, it's a hotchpotch of rebuilds and restorations. The original church was constructed by Constantine in the 4th century over St Lawrence's burial place, but it was rebuilt

in 579 by Pope Pelagius II. Subsequently a nearby 5th-century church was incorporated – a job that was started in the 8th century and took more than 500 years to complete. The result was the church you see today. The nave, portico and much of the decoration date from the 13th century.

Highlights are the Cosmati floor and the 13th-century frescoed portico, depicting events from St Lawrence's life. The remains of St Lawrence and St Stephen are in the church crypt beneath the high altar. A pretty barrel-vaulted cloister contains inscriptions and sarcophagi and leads to the **Catacombe di Santa Ciriaca**, where St Lawrence was initially buried.

### CIMITERO DI CAMPO VERANO Map p103

Piazzale del Verano; g Piazzale del Verano Between the 1830s and the 1980s virtually all Catholics who died in Rome (with the exception of popes, cardinals and royalty) were buried here, in the city's largest cemetery. If you're in the area, it's worth a look for its grand tombs, although try to avoid 2 November (All Souls' Day), when thousands of Romans flock to the cemetery to leave flowers on the tombs of loved ones.



## SAN LORENZO & BEYOND

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## CHIESA DIO PADRE MISERICORDIOSO

off Map pp90–1

☎ 06 231 58 33; Via Francesco Tovaglieri;  
h 7.30am–12.30pm & 3.30–7.30pm; g Via  
Tovaglieri

Set in the midst of the 1970s Tor Tre Teste housing estate, US architect Richard Meier's startling white church is a classic of contemporary design. Built out of concrete, stucco, travertine and 976 sq metres of glass, it is flanked on one side by three graduated concrete shells (respectively 16.8m, 22.1m and 26.7m high), while on the other side a four-storey atrium connects the church with a community centre.

The church was inaugurated on 26 October 2003, seven years after the Vatican commissioned it for the 2000 Jubilee.

## ESQUILINO, QUIRINALE & PIAZZA DI SPAGNA

### Walking Tour

**1 Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme** Not far from Stazione Termini, this outpost of the Museo Nazionale Romano (p101) houses some stunning sculpture

#### WALK FACTS

**Start** Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme (m Termini)

**End** Spanish Steps (m Spagna)

**Distance** 3.3km

**Duration** Four hours

**Fuel stop** Il Posto Accanto (p195)



and mosaics. Highlights include a wonderfully fleshy *Afrodite* and some sensational frescoes taken from a villa belonging to Livia, wife of Rome's first emperor, Augustus.

**2 Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore** The only one of Rome's four patriarchal basilicas to have kept its original form, this bulky church (p89) boasts some wonderful 5th-century mosaics. Train your eyes (or even better your binoculars) on the ceilings above the nave and follow the Old Testament stories.

**3 Chiesa di Santa Prassede** Tucked away at the bottom of a quiet backstreet, this church (p94) is celebrated for its 9th-century mosaics that still blaze with vibrant colour. Pope Paschal I had artists brought in specially from Byzantium to create them.

**4 Basilica di San Pietro in Vincoli** The two drawcards in this basilica (p95) are Michelangelo's unfinished tomb for Pope Julius II and the chains with which St Peter was bound in the Carcere Mamertino. The former features

a famously horned statue of Moses; the latter are displayed under the main altar.

**5 Il Posto Accanto** This homely restaurant (p195) in the Monti area is a good spot for lunch. Mama serves the homemade food while her husband gets very excited about the wines and liqueurs, many of which he's distilled himself.

**6 Trevi Fountain** One of the city's most famous sights, this ornate baroque fountain (p98) is always crowded. Try to visit after dark, when you'll see it beautifully lit and have more space to throw your coin in, thus ensuring your return to Rome.

**7 Spanish Steps** Another definite on most people's must-see lists, the 18th-century Spanish Steps (p99) have long been a hang-out for guys and girls on the make. In the 18th century aspiring youngsters flocked here hoping to be chosen as artists' models; nowadays local teenagers mingle with foot-weary tourists and tat-hawking street sellers.

## SOUTHERN ROME

Drinking & Nightlife p222; Eating p201; Shopping p176; Sleeping p258

Although not exactly off the beaten track, the southern quadrant of the city boasts some quiet and wonderfully atmospheric corners as well as a number of Rome's greatest hits. Stretching south from the Colosseum and Circo Massimo, it can be divided into several distinct districts: San Giovanni, centred on its celebrated basilica; the Celio, a green and peaceful area to the south-east of the Colosseum; upmarket Aventino and beneath it earthy Testaccio; Via Appia Antica, famous for its catacombs; Ostiense and San Paolo, the increasingly trendy district along Via Ostiense; and EUR, Mussolini's futuristic quarter at the end of metro line B.

The area is very spread out and difficult to explore on foot. Fortunately, there are good public-transport connections. There are metro stations at San Giovanni on line A, and at Circo Massimo, Piramide, EUR Palasport and San Paolo on line B; there are bus connections to Via del Circo Massimo (81 and 160), Porta San Sebastiano (118, 218 and 714), San Giovanni (81, 85 and 87), Viale Aventino (60 and 673), Via Ostiense (23 and 716) and Via Appia Antica (118, 218 and 660).

### SAN GIOVANNI

Just inside the city walls, the monumental Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano is the focal point of this largely residential district. Apart from the basilica and the Scala Santa, a staircase said by believers to be the one that Jesus walked up in Pontius Pilate's palace in Jerusalem, there's not a great deal to see. There is, however, a lively clothes market on Via Sannio (p176) that can be fun to browse.

### BASILICA DI SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO

Map pp108–9  
% 06 698 86 433; Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano 4; h 7am–6.30pm; m San Giovanni; √ A huge white landmark, this monumental cathedral was founded by Constantine in 313 and consecrated 11 years later. It was the first Christian basilica to be built in Rome and, until the late 14th century, was the pope's principal residence. The Vatican still has extraterritorial authority over it, despite it being Rome's official cathedral and the pope's seat as Bishop of Rome.

The most immediately eye-catching feature is Alessandro Galilei's huge façade. A mid-18th-century example of late baroque classicism, it was designed big to convey the authority and infinite power of the Church. The original 4th-century façade, in contrast, was a much simpler affair. The

## top picks

### SOUTHERN ROME

- Terme di Caracalla (p110)
- Basilica di Santa Sabina (p115)
- Capitoline Museums at Centrale Montemartini (p117)
- Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano (left)
- Basilica & Catacombs di San Sebastiano (p112)

bronze doors were moved here from the Curia (p63) in the Roman Forum, while to their right is the Holy Door that is only opened in Jubilee years. Above the portico (built in 1736) are 15 colossal statues representing Christ with St John the Baptist, John the Evangelist and the 12 apostles.

The interior has been done up on numerous occasions. In 1425 Pope Martin V had the mosaic floor inlaid with marble salvaged from derelict Roman churches, while in 1646 Borromini turned his baroque talents to the job. His fingerprints are on the pillars in the nave and the sculptural frames around the funerary monuments in the aisles. Above these Borromini placed his trademark oval windows.

A Gothic baldachin towers above the papal altar. At the top is a reliquary that supposedly contains the heads of St Peter and St Paul. Below, a double staircase leads to the confesso, which houses pieces of what's thought to be St Peter's wooden altar table, used by 1st- to 4th-century popes. The apse was rebuilt in the 19th century and its mosaics are copies of the originals.

The fresco behind the first pillar of the right-hand aisle is an original, if rather incomplete, Giotto. While admiring it, cock your ear towards the next pillar, where a monument to Pope Sylvester II (r 999–1003) is said to sweat and emit the sound of

creaking bones when the death of a pope is imminent.

To the left of the altar, the beautiful cloister (admission €2; h 9am–6pm) was built by the Vassalletto family in the 13th century. The twisted columns were once completely covered with inlaid marble mosaics, remains of which can still be seen. On the western side there's a marble slab supported by four columns, which Christians in the Middle Ages thought represented the height of Christ.

There's a second entrance into the basilica on Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano. To the left of the door in Domenico Fontana's 16th-century two-tiered portico is the Palazzo Laterano, which was the papal residence until the popes moved to the Vatican in 1377. It was largely destroyed by fire in 1308 and most of what remained was demolished in the 16th century. The present building houses offices of the diocese of Rome.

More interesting is the domed baptistry (admission free; h 7.30am–12.30pm & 4–7.30pm) around the corner. Like the basilica it was built by Constantine and served as the prototype for later Christian churches and bell towers. Pope Sixtus III gave it its current octagonal shape. A basalt font rests in the centre, beneath a dome decorated with modern copies of frescoes by Andrea Sacchi. The Cappella di Santa Rufina is decorated with a faded 5th-century mosaic of vines and foliage against a deep-blue background, while the vault of Cappella di San Giovanni Evangelista has a mosaic of the Lamb of God surrounded by birds and flowers. The Cappella di San Venanzio and its mosaics were added by Pope John IV in the 7th century.

### SCALA SANTA & SANCTA SANCTORUM

Map pp108–9  
% 06 704 94 619; Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano 14; admission Scala Santa/Sancta Sanctorum free/€3.50; h Scala Santa 6.15am–noon & 3.30–6.45pm Apr–Sep, 6.15am–noon & 3–6.15pm Oct–Mar, Sancta Sanctorum 6.15am–noon & 3.30–6.45pm Apr–Sep, 3–6.15pm Oct–Mar; m San Giovanni Over the road from the Basilica di San Giovanni, the Scala Santa (Holy Staircase) is one of the few religious sites in the city with a genuinely spiritual atmosphere. The staircase is said to be the one that Jesus walked up in Pontius Pilate's palace in Jerusalem. Brought to Rome by St Helena in the 4th century, it is considered so

sacred that you can only climb it on your knees, saying a prayer on each of the 28 steps. Indulgence is granted to pilgrims who climb on Fridays in Lent. There was no indulgence, however, for Martin Luther who, in 1510, decided halfway up the stairs that he didn't believe in the divinity of relics and promptly turned round and walked out. On his return to Germany he further irritated the Catholic Church by starting the Reformation.

To protect the stairs, wooden boards have been used to cover them, but they are still said to occasionally bleed through the slats.

At the top of the stairs is the Sancta Sanctorum (Holy of Holies), once the pope's private chapel. A spectacular sight, it's richly decorated: the vaulted ceiling is covered with 13th-century mosaics; the marble floor is by Cosmati; and there are 13th-century frescoes depicting the apostles and saints. In June 2007, after a 13-month restoration project, a series of 16th-century frescoes by the Flemish artist Paul Bril were also revealed.

### CHIESA DI SANTA CROCE IN GERUSALEMME

Map pp108–9  
% 06 701 47 69; Piazza di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme 12; h 7am–12.45pm & 2–7pm; g Piazza di Porta Maggiore One of Rome's seven pilgrimage churches, the Chiesa di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme was founded in 320 by St Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine. It takes its name from the Christian relics, including a piece of Christ's cross and St Thomas' doubting finger, that St Helena brought to Rome from Jerusalem. The relics are housed in a chapel at the end of the left-hand aisle.

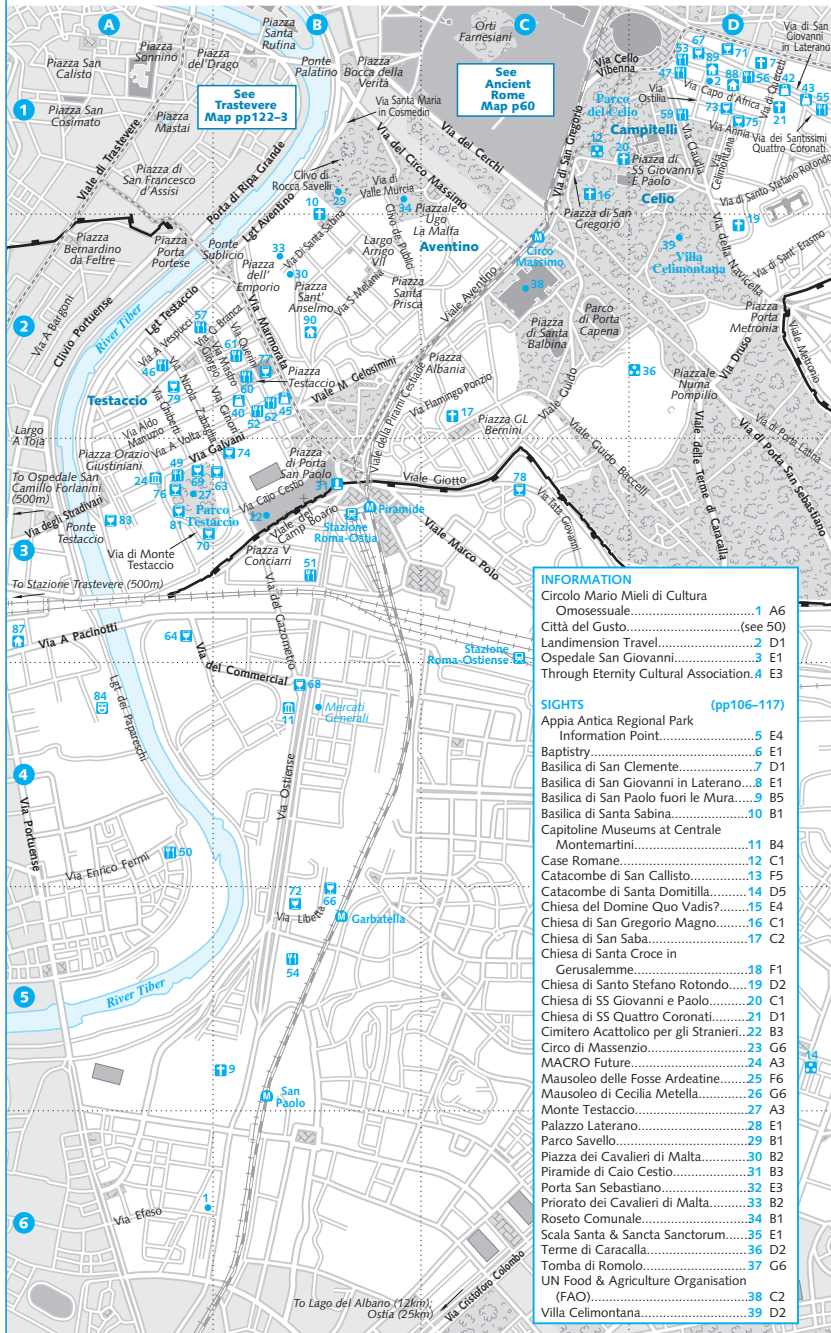
The bell tower was added in 1144; the façade and oval vestibule in 1744. The frescoes in the apse date from the 15th century and represent the legends of the Cross.

### CELIO

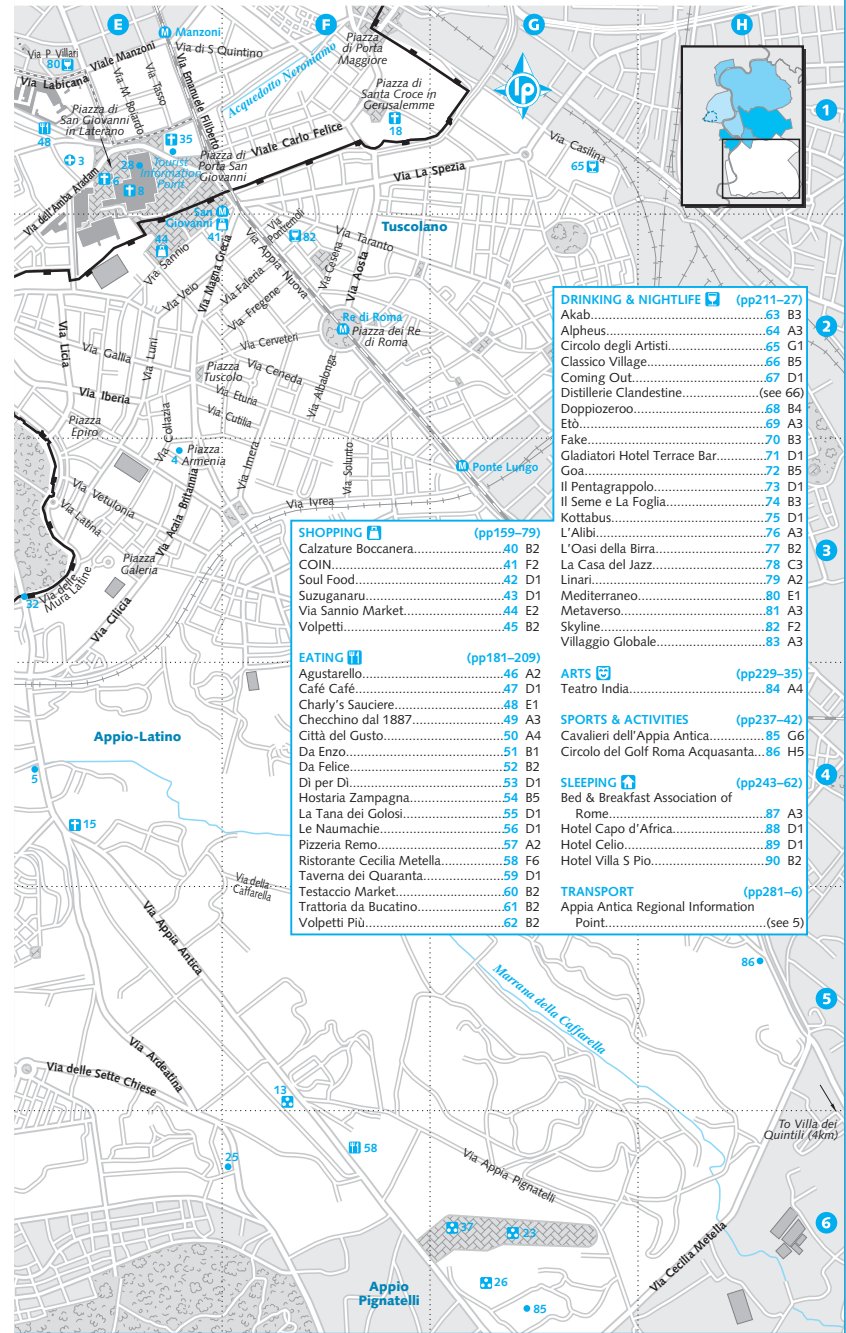
In imperial times the Celio (Caelian hill) was a smart residential district. Dominating the area were the Terme di Caracalla, the ruins of which are today one of Rome's most dramatic ancient sights. Nearby, and no less imposing (if considerably less appealing), is a huge white building on the corner of Viale delle Terme di Caracalla and Piazza di Porta Capena. This once housed Mussolini's Ministry



# SOUTHERN ROME



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of Italian Africa and is now the UN's Food & Agriculture Organisation (known locally as the FAO).

At the top of the hill, and away from the thundering roads, is the beautiful Villa Celimontana, a delightful park to get away from it all. In and around the park there are also a number of fascinating early Christian churches.

### TERME DI CARACALLA Map pp108–9

☎ 06 575 86 26; Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 52; admission incl Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella & Villa Quintili adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18–24yr €6/free/3; h 9am–7.15pm Tue–Sun Apr–Aug, 9am–7pm Sep, 9am–6.30pm Oct, 9am–5.30pm mid–end Mar, 9am–5pm mid–Feb–mid–Mar, 9am–4.30pm Nov–mid-Feb, 9am–2pm Mon year-round; m Circo Massimo; √  
Some of Rome's most awe-inspiring ruins, the Terme di Caracalla are a striking reminder of the massive scale on which the Roman emperors liked to build. Spread over 10 hectares, the ancient leisure centre could hold up to 1600 people and included richly decorated *caldaria* (hot rooms), a lukewarm *tepidarium*, a swimming pool, gymnasiums, libraries, shops and gardens. Between 6000 and 8000 people were thought to have used them every day. And while the free citizens splashed around in the pools, hundreds of slaves sweated in the 9.5km of underground tunnels, tending to the complex plumbing systems.

Begun by Antonius Caracalla and inaugurated in 217, the baths were used until 537, when the Visigoths smashed their way into Rome. Excavations in the 16th and 17th centuries unearthed important sculptures, many of which found their way into the Farnese family collection. Two enormous basins, for example, now serve as twin fountains in [Piazza Farnese \(p81\)](#).

Opera fans should note that spectacular outdoor performances are staged here in summer (see [p233](#)).

### CHIESA DI SAN GREGORIO MAGNO

Map pp108–9

☎ 06 700 82 27; Piazza di San Gregorio 1; h 8.30am–1pm & 3.30–7pm; m Circo Massimo  
Towering over Via di San Gregorio, this church stands on the site where Pope Gregory the Great is said to have dispatched St Augustine to convert the British to Christianity. Originally it was the pope's family

home but in 575 he converted it into a monastery. It was rebuilt in the 17th century and the interior was given a baroque face-lift a century later.

Inside, the stately 1st-century-BC marble throne in the [Cappella di San Gregorio](#), at the end of the right aisle, is believed to have been St Gregory's personal perch.

However, it's the three chapels in the cypress trees to the left of the main church (where Gregory's original convent stood) that are the main attraction. On the right, the [Cappella di Santa Silvia](#), dedicated to Gregory's mother, contains a fresco of angels by Guido Reni; the central chapel, the [Cappella di Sant'Andrea](#), features various depictions of St Andrew, including frescoes by Domenichino and Guido Reni; and the third, the [Capella di Santa Barbara](#), boasts a statue of St Gregory and frescoes illustrating St Augustine's mission.

### CHIESA DI SS GIOVANNI E PAOLO

Map pp108–9

☎ 06 700 57 45; Piazza di SS Giovanni e Paolo; h 8.30am–noon & 3.30–6pm Mon–Thu; m Colosseo or Circo Massimo  
Dedicated to St John and St Paul, this 4th-century church retains little of its original edifice – the façade is 12th-century and the brassy interior is 18th-century. The arches in the square are the remains of 3rd-century Roman shops.

More impressive than the church are the excavations of various [Case Romane](#) (Roman Houses; ☎ 06 704 54 544; www.caseromane.it; adult/under 12yr/12–18yr & over 65yr €6/free/4; h 10am–1pm & 3–6pm Thu–Mon) underneath. According to tradition this is where John and Paul lived before they were beheaded by Constantine II's anti-Christian successor, Julian, for refusing to serve in his court. There's no direct evidence for this, although research has revealed that the houses were used for Christian worship. There are more than 20 rooms, many of them richly decorated. To get to the excavations continue down Clivo di Scauro to the left of the church, and enter the door before the last arch on the right. Guided tours are available in English on request.

### VILLA CELIMONTANA Map pp108–9

h dawn–dusk; g Via della Navicella  
With its lawns and shady corners, this leafy walled park is a wonderful place to escape the crowds and enjoy a quiet picnic. Parents

with toddlers can let their loved ones loose at the popular playground. Famous for its annual jazz festival (see [p143](#)), the park is centred on a 16th-century villa that was once owned by the Mattei family but is now home to the Italian Geographical Society.

### CHIESA DI SANTO STEFANO

Map pp108–9

☎ 06 704 93 717; Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo 7; h 9am–noon & 4–6pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 9.30am–12.30pm & 3.30–5.30pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar; g Via della Navicella

If, like films, religious art were ever to be certified, the startling 16th-century frescoes in this round church would carry an adults-only warning. Circling the outer of two rings of antique granite and marble columns, they graphically depict the various ways in which martyrs were killed in early Christendom. About them, Charles Dickens wrote: 'Such a panorama of horror and butchery no man could imagine in his sleep, though he were to eat a whole pig, raw, for supper.'

The church, not long reopened after years of restoration, dates to the late 5th century. Subsequent alterations were made in the 12th and 15th centuries.

### CHIESA DI SS QUATTRO CORONATI

Map pp108–9

☎ 06 704 75 427; Via dei Santissimi Quattro Coronati 20; h church & cloister 6.15am–8pm Mon–Sat, 6.45am–12.30pm & 3–7.30pm Sun, Cappella di san Silvestro 9.30am–noon & 4.30–6pm Mon–Sat, 9–10.40am & 4–5.45pm Sun; g or j Via Labicana  
This fortified convent is dedicated to four Christian sculptors who were killed by Diocletian for refusing to make a statue of a pagan god. The squat bell tower dates to the 9th century, although the main complex was built in the early 12th century. The most famous feature is the Cappella di San Silvestro and its well-preserved 13th-century frescoes of St Sylvester and Constantine. There is also a pretty early-13th-century cloister and garden off the northern aisle (ring the bell for admission).

### BASILICA DI SAN CLEMENTE Map pp108–9

☎ 06 774 00 21; www.basilicasanclemente.com; Via di San Giovanni in Laterano; admission church/excavations free/€5; h 9am–12.30pm & 3–6pm Mon–Sat, noon–6pm; m Colosseo  
A short walk up from the Colosseum, this fascinating basilica provides a vivid glimpse

into Rome's multilayered past. Through the courtyard, the 12th-century church at street level was built over a 4th-century church, which, in turn, was constructed over a 2nd-century pagan temple and 1st-century Roman house. Beneath all that are foundations dating to the Roman Republic.

In the medieval church, it's the stunning 12th-century apse mosaic that steals the limelight. It depicts the *Trionfo della Croce* (Triumph of the Cross), with 12 doves symbolising the apostles and a crowd of bystanders including the Madonna, St John, St John the Baptist and other saints. Renaissance frescoes in the chapel of St Catherine, by Masolino and his student Masaccio, recount scenes from the life of the saint, who was strapped to a wheel and tortured to death (hence the circular firework named after her). The high marble pulpit on the left was added when the new church was built.

The 4th-century church below, the *basilica inferiore*, was mostly destroyed by Norman invaders in 1084, but some faded 11th-century frescoes remain, illustrating the life of St Clement. According to legend, the 1st-century Pope Clement (who, it is believed, was born Jewish) was banished to the Crimea and forced to work in the mines. His preaching among the other prisoners caused the Romans to bind him to an anchor and throw him into the Black Sea. The water receded some time later, revealing a tomb containing Clement's body. Thereafter, the tomb would be revealed once a year, when the waters miraculously receded.

Descend further and you'll find yourself walking an ancient lane leading to the Roman house and dark temple of Mithras, which contains an altar depicting the god slaying a bull. Don't be alarmed by the sound of running water: it's an underground river flowing through a republican-era drain.

## VIA APPIA ANTICA & THE CATACOMBS

Heading southeast from Porta San Sebastiano, Via Appia Antica (the Appian Way), one of the world's oldest roads, was known to the Romans as the *regina viarum* (queen of roads). Named after Appius Claudius Caecus, who laid the first 90km section in 312 BC, it was extended in 190 BC to reach Brindisi, some 540km away on the southern Adriatic coast.

Flanked by some of the city's most exclusive private villas, as well as assorted Roman ruins, this is where Spartacus and 6000 of his slave rebels were crucified in 71 BC. But the road is best known for its catacombs – some 300km of underground tunnels used as burial chambers by the early Christians. You can't visit all 300km but three major catacombs (San Callisto, San Sebastiano and Santa Domitilla) are open for guided exploration.

A Roman law banned burials within the city walls and persecution left the early Christians little choice but to dig. They wrapped their dead in white sheets and placed them in rectangular niches carved into the tunnel walls, and then entombed them with simple marble slabs. Later the underground chambers doubled as clandestine meeting places.

In 313, when Constantine legalised Christianity, the Christians began to abandon the catacombs. Increasingly, they opted to bury their dead near the basilicas being built in the city. This became common practice under Theodosius, who made Christianity the state religion in 394. Further decline set in when marauding barbarians began ransacking the catacombs in the 5th century, forcing the popes to take the remaining relics, including the heads of St Peter and St Paul, inside the city walls. The catacombs were abandoned and largely forgotten until a 16th-century farmer stuck his hoe into a 'world of the dead'.

From the mid-19th century onwards, scholars of Christian archaeology began a programme of scientific research, uncovering more than 30 catacombs in the Rome area.

If you're planning on blitzing the area think about buying the Appia Antica Card, a combination ticket for several of the roadside sights – see p288 for details. Further information is available at the [Appia Antica Regional Park Information Point](#) (☎ 06 513 53 16; www.parcoappiaantica.org; Via Appia Antica 58-60; 11 9.30am-5.30pm summer, 9.30am-4.30pm winter), where you can also buy a map of the park (€1) and hire bikes (per hour/day €3/10). Every first Sunday of the month from March till June and September to November there is a free guided tour by bike (bike hire not included) into the Valle della Caffarella with a nature guide. This leaves from the office at 10.30am and takes between two and three hours.

On Sundays a long section of the road is closed to traffic, but be warned that this is when locals and tourists arrive by the coachload. On weekdays there are fewer tourists, but walking or cycling along the road can be

dangerous due to the number of cars zooming past.

To get to Via Appia Antica catch bus 218 from Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano, bus 660 from the Colli Albani stop on metro line A, or bus 118 from the Piramide stop on metro line B. Alternatively, the Archeobus (p294) departs from Termini every 40 minutes.

## BASILICA & CATACOMBE DI SAN SEBASTIANO

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 785 03 50; Via Appia Antica 136; basilica free, catacombs adult/under 7yr/7-15yr €5/free/3; 11 basilica 8am-7pm daily, catacombs 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec; 11 Via Appia Antica

Before you duck into the catacombs beneath the church, take a moment to explore the interesting 4th-century basilica on top. Much altered over the years, it was built over the catacombs that were used to safeguard the remains of St Peter and St Paul during the persecutory reign of Vespasian. Its name, however, is a dedication to St Sebastian, who was martyred and buried here in the late 3rd century. In the [Capella delle Reliquie](#), in the right-hand nave, is one of the arrows used to kill the saint and the column to which he was tied. On the other side of the church you'll find a marble slab with the imprints of Jesus' footprints. (For the whole story see Chiesa del Domine Quo Vadis?, p114).

The [Catacombe di San Sebastiano](#) were the first catacombs to be so called, the name deriving from the Greek *kata* (near) and *kymbas* (cavity), because they were located near a cave. Over the centuries this catacomb was one of only three to remain open and receive pilgrims. The first level is now almost completely destroyed, but frescoes, stucco work and epigraphs can be seen on the 2nd level. There are also three perfectly preserved mausoleums and a plastered wall with hundreds of invocations to Peter and Paul, engraved by worshippers in the 3rd and 4th centuries.

## CIRCO DI MASSENZIO

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 780 13 24; Via Appia Antica 153; adult/child €2.60/1.60; 11 9am-5pm Tue-Sun; 11 Via Appia Antica

The Circo di Massenzio is Rome's best-preserved ancient racetrack – you can still make out the starting stalls used for chariot races. The 10,000-seat arena was built

by Maxentius around 309, but it wasn't completed before he died (in the battle of Ponte Milvio in 312) and he never got to see a race here.

Above the arena are the unexcavated ruins of Maxentius' imperial residence, most of which are covered by weeds. Near the racetrack is the [Tomba di Romolo](#) (Tomb of Romulus), built by Maxentius for his young son Romulus. The huge mausoleum was originally crowned with a large dome and had a portico similar to the Pantheon's. It was surrounded on all sides by an imposing colonnade measuring 107m by 121m, in part still visible. The tomb is indefinitely closed for restoration.

## MAUSOLEO DI CECILIA METELLA

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 780 24 65; Via Appia Antica 161; admission €2, incl Terme di Caracalla & Villa Quintili adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €6/free/3; 11 9am-7.15pm Apr-Aug, 9am-7pm Sep, 9am-6.30pm Oct, 9am-5.30pm mid–end Mar, 9am-5pm mid-Feb–mid-Mar, 9am-4.30pm Nov–mid-Feb, closed Mon year-round; 11 Via Appia Antica Difficult to miss, this massive drum of a mausoleum, measuring 11m in height and 30m in diameter, encloses a burial chamber (built for the daughter of Quintus Metellus Creticus) that is now roofless. The walls are made of travertine and the rather sorry-looking interior is decorated with a sculpted frieze featuring Gaelic shields, ox skulls and festoons. In the 14th century it was converted into a fort by the Caetani family, who used to threaten passing traffic into paying a toll.

Beyond the tomb is a picturesque section of the actual ancient road, excavated in the mid-19th century.

## VILLA DEI QUINTILI

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 718 24 85; access from Via Appia Nuova 1092; admission €4, incl Terme di Caracalla & Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €6/free/3; 11 9am-7.15pm Apr-Aug, 9am-7pm Sep, 9am-6.30pm Oct, 9am-5.30pm mid–end Mar, 9am-5pm mid-Feb–mid-Mar, 9am-4.30pm Nov–mid-Feb, closed Mon year-round; 11 Via Appia Nuova

The splendid Villa dei Quintili is a wonderfully sited 2nd-century-AD villa built by two brothers who were consuls under Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Alas, the splendour of the villa was to be the brothers' downfall – in

a fit of jealousy, Emperor Commodus had them both killed, taking over the villa for himself. The highlight is the well-preserved baths complex with a pool, *caldarium* (hot room) and *frigidarium* (cold room). There's also a small display of archaeological bits and bobs found in the vicinity.

## CATACOMBE DI SAN CALLISTO

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 513 01 580; Via Appia Antica 110; www.catacombe.roma.it; adult/under 6yr/6-15yr €5/free/3; 11 9am-noon & 2-5pm Thu-Tue, closed Feb; 11 Via Appia Antica  
These are the largest, most famous and busiest of Rome's catacombs. Founded at the end of the 2nd century and named after Pope Calixtus I, who was killed in Trastevere in 222, they became the official cemetery of the newly established Roman Church. In the 20km of tunnels explored to date, archaeologists have found the sepulchres of some 500,000 people and the tombs of seven popes who were martyred in the 3rd century. The martyred patron saint of music, St Cecilia, was also buried here, although her body was later removed to the Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere.

## MAUSOLEO DELLE FOSSE ARDEATINE

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 513 67 42; Via Ardeatina 174; admission free; 11 8.15am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.15am-4.45pm Sat & Sun; 11 Via Appia Antica  
A sobering reminder of the horrors of war, this moving mausoleum is dedicated to the victims of Rome's worst WWII atrocity.

# top picks

## FOR CHILDREN

- Colosseum (p58)
- Villa Borghese (p153)
- Bioparco (p153)
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- Catacombe di San Callisto (above)
- Capuchin Cemetery (p100)
- Museo Nazionale delle Paste Alimentari (p98)
- Museo delle Cere (p97)
- Explora – Museo dei Bambini di Roma (p155)



Buried here, outside the Ardeatine Caves, are 335 Italians shot by the Nazis on 24 March 1944. The prisoners, chosen at random, were killed in reprisal for a partisan attack. Following the massacre, the Germans used mines to explode sections of the caves and bury the bodies. After the war, the bodies were exhumed, identified and reburied in a mass grave at the site, now marked by a huge concrete slab and sculptures.

The German SS commander, Erich Priebke, who has admitted to killing at least two of the victims himself, was tried and convicted to life imprisonment in 1996. He is currently serving the sentence under house arrest in Rome.

At the site there is also a tiny museum dedicated to the Italian resistance to the German occupation.

### CATACOMBE DI SANTA DOMITILLA

Map pp108–9

☎ 06 511 03 42; [www.catacombe.domitilla.it](http://www.catacombe.domitilla.it); Via delle Sette Chiese 283; adult/under 6yr/6–15yr €5/free/3; ʘ 9am–noon & 2–5pm Wed–Mon, closed Jan; ㊟ Via Appia Antica

Among Rome's largest and oldest, these catacombs stretch for about 17km. They were established on the private burial ground of Flavia Domitilla, niece of Emperor Domitian and a member of the wealthy Flavian family. They contain Christian wall paintings and the underground Chiesa di SS Nereus e Achilleus, a 4th-century church dedicated to two Roman soldiers who were martyred by Diocletian.

### CHIESA DEL DOMINE QUO VADIS?

Map pp108–9

Via Appia Antica 51; ʘ 7.30am–12.30pm & 2.30–6.30pm Thu–Tue; ㊟ Via Appia Antica

Near the Appia Antica information office, this pint-sized church marks the place where St Peter, while fleeing Rome, met a vision of Jesus going the other way. Peter asked: *'Domine, quo vadis?'* ('Lord, where are you going?'). When Jesus replied that he was going to Rome to be crucified for a second time, Peter decided to join him and returned to the city, where he was promptly arrested and executed. In the centre of the aisle there are copies of two holy footprints supposed to belong to Christ. The originals are up the road in the [Basilica di San Sebastiano](#) (p112).

### PORTA SAN SEBASTIANO

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 704 75 284; Via di Porta San Sebastiano; admission €2.60; ʘ 9am–2pm Tue–Sun; ㊟ Porta San Sebastiano

Marking the start of Via Appia Antica, the 5th-century Porta San Sebastiano is the largest of the city gates in the Aurelian Wall. Originally it was known as Porta Appia but took on its current name in honour of the thousands of pilgrims who passed under it on their way to the [Catacombe di San Sebastiano](#) (p112). Inside is a little museum illustrating the history of the wall.

## AVENTINO & TESTACCIO

Southwest of the Circo Massimo, the peaceful Aventino is one of Rome's most sought-after residential areas. It offers sweeping panoramas over the River Tiber to St Peter's, and a quiet contemplative air. The most atmospheric street is Via di Santa Sabina, where you'll find a number of medieval churches, including the magnificent Basilica di Santa Sabina, and a beautiful walled orange garden, the Parco Savello.

The nicest way to reach the Aventino is to take the pedestrian-only Clivo di Rocca Savelli from Via Santa Maria in Cosmedin by the river. At the top turn right for Via di Santa Sabina or left for Via di Valle Murcia, which takes you past the [Roseto Comunale](#) (ʘ 8am–7.30pm), a beautiful public rose garden, down to Piazzale Ugo La Malfa and the Circo Massimo.

At the foot of the Aventino hill, between Via Marmorata and the River Tiber, Testaccio is considered one of the city's most authentic areas, its inhabitants a kind of Roman cockney. Traditionally working-class, it's kept much of its earthy character – the city's best offal (a Roman speciality) restaurants are here as is one of the city's liveliest markets – despite the onslaught of clubs and pubs that have transformed it into a nightlife mecca (see p222).

The district is built around [Monte Testaccio](#) (Map pp108–9; ☎ 06 671 03 819; Via Galvani; ʘ by appointment), a mound made of smashed amphorae. Testaccio was Rome's river port from the 2nd century BC to the 3rd century AD – supplies of wine, oil and grain were transported from Roman colonies to the city via Ostia and the Tiber. Goods were transported in huge terracotta amphorae which, once emptied, were dumped in the river. When the Tiber became almost unnavigable as a consequence, the pots were smashed and the

pieces stacked methodically in a pile which over time grew into a large hill. Highlights include a strange pyramid in the middle of a chaotic traffic junction, and a serene cemetery.

### BASILICA DI SANTA SABINA

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 5 79 41; Piazza Pietro d'Iliria 1; ʘ 6.30am–12.45pm & 3–7pm; ㊟ Lungotevere Aventino

One of Rome's most appealing churches, this atmospheric basilica is the jewel in the Aventino. Returned to its original look in an early-20th-century restoration, the basilica dates to 422, when it was founded by Peter of Illyria. It was subsequently added to in the 9th century and again in 1216, just before it was given to the newly founded Dominican order. In the floor of the nave you'll see the mosaic tombstone of Muñoz de Zamora, one of the order's founding fathers.

Despite these alterations the original cypress-wood doors remain intact; they're to the far left as you stand under the 15th-century portico. They feature 18 carved panels depicting biblical events, including one of the oldest Crucifixion scenes in existence. It depicts Jesus and the two thieves but, interestingly, not their crosses. It's a bit difficult to make out the subjects in the dusky portico, but clear photographs are posted near the entrance.

The three naves in the solemn interior are separated by 24 Corinthian columns, which support an arcade decorated with a red-and-green frieze in *opus sectile* (that is, made of marble cut to shape, as opposed to mosaic, which is composed of pieces of marble of the same size and shape). The columns themselves are also of interest. They were made specifically for the church, rather than plundered from the city's ruins as was the accepted custom in the 5th century, and are Rome's first example of columns designed to support arches. Before that, horizontal beams called architraves were used.

Light streams into the echoing interior from high nave windows added in the 9th century. Also dating to the 9th century are the carved choir, pulpit and bishop's throne. The fresco in the apse was painted in the 19th century.

Behind the church is a garden, where St Dominic is said to have planted some orange trees, and a meditative 13th-century cloister.

### PARCO SAVELLO

Map pp108–9  
Via di Santa Sabina; ʘ dawn–dusk; ㊟ Lungotevere Aventino

Known to Romans as the Giardino degli Aranci (Orange Garden), this pocket-sized perfumed park is a romantic haven. If you can, grab a perch at the small panoramic terrace and watch the sun set over the Tiber and, beyond, Trastevere and the Vatican. In summer, a stage is sometimes set up among the orange trees and outdoor performances are held.

### PIAZZA DEI CAVALIERI DI MALTA

Map pp108–9

Via di Santa Sabina; ㊟ Lungotevere Aventino

At the southern end of Via di Santa Sabina, this peaceful little square takes its name from the Cavalieri di Malta (Knights of Malta), who have their Roman headquarters here, in the [Priorato dei Cavalieri di Malta](#). Although it's closed to the public, the priory offers one of Rome's most charming views: look through the keyhole and you'll see the dome of St Peter's perfectly aligned at the end of a hedge-lined avenue.

An 18th-century masterpiece, the priory is the only architectural work of Venetian Giovanni Battista Piranesi, an artist better known for his etchings and engravings of Roman ruins.

The Knights of Malta were founded in the 12th century in Rhodes and later spread to Malta to protect pilgrims en route to the Holy Land. The villa is the residence of the grand master of the Knights of Malta and has, in the past, served as the order's embassies to Italy and the Holy See.

### CHIESA DI SAN SABA

Map pp108–9  
☎ 06 574 33 52; Via di San Saba; ʘ 8am–noon & 4–7pm; ㊟ j Viale Aventino

On the other side of the Aventino, this picturesque church dates from the 10th century, although it has been substantially rebuilt. Cosmati marble work from the 13th century decorates the main door and floor, and on the left-hand nave there's a fresco of three naked girls in bed. Legend has it that these girls were saved from a life of prostitution by St Nicholas, who threw three stockings filled with gold up to their bedroom. St Nicholas is better known as Santa Claus and this story is the origin of the Christmas stocking tradition.



## CIMITERO ACATTOLICO PER GLI STRANIERI

Map pp108–9  
% 06 574 19 00; Via Caio Cestio 5; admission free, voluntary donation €2; h 9am–5pm Mon–Sat; m Piramide

Despite the busy roads that surround it, Rome's 'Non-Catholic Cemetery for Foreigners' is a surprisingly restful place. Even as the traffic thunders past, you can wander the lovingly tended paths contemplating Percy Bysshe Shelley's words: 'It might make one in love with death to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place'. And so he was – or at least a part of him was. Most of his body was cremated, but apparently his heart did not burn right away, and his friend Trelawny snatched it from the flames. It was given to his wife, Mary Shelley, and was interred here in 1851 after her death.

Shelley's contemporary and fellow Romantic poet, John Keats, is also buried here, his modest tomb bearing the inscription: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water'.

But the cemetery isn't confined to the Protestant dead – there are several Russians as well as Antonio Gramsci, founder of the Italian Communist Party.

## PIRAMIDE DI CAIO CESTIO

Map pp108–9  
m Piramide  
Sticking out like, well, an Egyptian pyramid, this distinctive landmark stands in the Aurelian Wall at the side of a massive traffic junction. A 36m-high marble-and-brick tomb, it was built for Gaius Cestius, a 1st-century-BC magistrate, and some 200 years later was incorporated into the Aurelian fortification near Porta San Paolo. The surrounding area is today known as Piramide.

## OSTIENSE & SAN PAOLO

You wouldn't necessarily know it to look at it, but Ostiense is one of the capital's up-and-coming neighbourhoods. Hundreds of restaurants, pubs, clubs and bars are squeezed into the workaday streets that line Via Ostiense, the busy, unattractive road that spears south from Piazzale Ostiense and Stazione Roma-Ostia.

If you're visiting the area to eat, drink or dance, there are two gems that merit the detour: the Basilica di San Paolo fuori le Mura and the Capitoline Museums at Centrale

Montemartini, a suburban outpost of the Capitoline Museums. About 500m outside the city walls, heading away from the centre, are the Mercati Generali, Rome's former wholesale food markets, which are currently being revamped into a huge entertainment and retail complex.

## BASILICA DI SAN PAOLO FUORI LE MURA

Map pp108–9  
% 06 541 03 41; Via Ostiense 186; h 7am–6.30pm summer, 7am–6pm winter; m San Paolo  
The biggest church in Rome after St Peter's (which makes it the third-largest in the world), St Paul's Outside the Walls stands on the site where St Paul was buried after being decapitated in AD 67 under the rule of Emperor Nero. Built by Constantine in the 4th century, the church was largely destroyed by fire in 1823 and much of what you see today is a remarkable 19th-century reconstruction.

Among the treasures that survived the fire was the 5th-century **triumphal arch**, with its heavily restored mosaics of Christ with angels, St Peter and St Paul and symbols of the Evangelists. On the other side of the arch are mosaics by Pietro Cavallini. The Venetian apse mosaics show Christ with saints Peter, Andrew, Paul and Luke.

The gothic marble **tabernacle** over the high altar was designed in about 1285 by Arnolfo di Cambio together with another artist, possibly Pietro Cavallini.

Note also the elaborate Romanesque **pascal candlestick**, to the right of the altar. Fashioned by Nicolò di Angelo and Pietro Vassalotto in the 12th century, it features a grim cast of animal-headed creatures. St Paul's tomb is in the nearby **confessio**.

Looking upwards, doom-mongers should check out the papal portraits beneath the nave windows. Every pope since St Peter is represented and legend has it that when there is no space left for the next portrait, the world will fall. There are currently eight places left.

The stunning 13th-century Cosmati mosaic work in the **cloisters** (h 9am–1pm & 3–6pm) of the adjacent Benedictine abbey also survived the 1823 fire. The octagonal and spiral columns supporting the elaborate arcade are arranged in pairs and inlaid with beautiful colourful mosaics. The sacristy contains other objects from the old church, including four fresco portraits of past popes.

## CAPITOLINE MUSEUMS AT CENTRALE MONTEMARTINI

Map pp108–9  
% 06 574 80 42; Via Ostiense 106; adult/child/student without exhibition €6.50/free/4.50, incl exhibition €8/free/6, combined Centrale Montemartini & Capitoline Museums €8.50/free/6.50; h 9am–7pm Tue–Sun; g Via Ostiense  
This modern outpost of the **Capitoline Museums** (p67) is a treat. Housed in a former power station, it has an industrial look, with classical sculpture boldly juxtaposed against diesel engines and giant furnaces.

Beyond the entrance is the **Sala Colonne**, where sculpture and ceramics dating from the 7th century BC are displayed. These include Etruscan and Greek pieces as well as discoveries from a necropolis on the Esquilino.

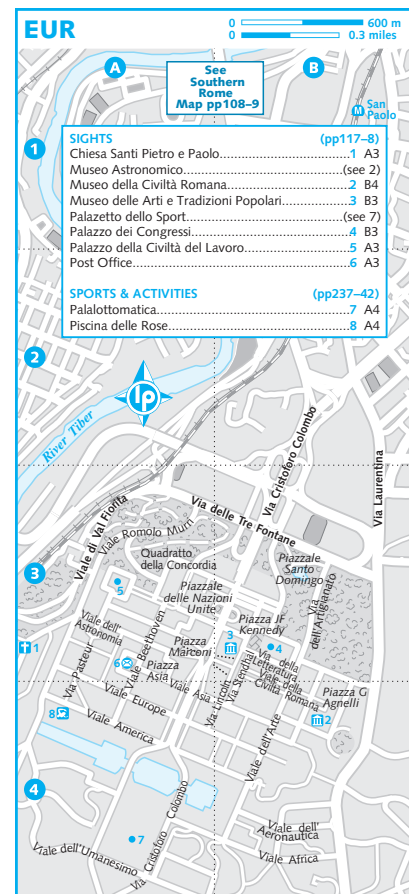
Metal stairs lead up to the **Sala Macchina**, where antiquities from the late-republican period share space with two mammoth 7500HP diesel engines. Of note are several Roman copies of original Greek works, including a number of statues of **Athena** (grouped together) and a black-basalt statue of **Orantes** (identified as being a portrait of Agrippina, the niece of Claudius). There are also sculptures that were found on the Campidoglio, in the Area Sacra di Largo di Torre Argentina and near the Teatro di Pompeo in the Campo de' Fiori area.

The **Sala Caldaia**, painted a sickly hospital green, presents the highlights of the collection set against a giant furnace. Two of the most beautiful pieces are statues of young girls: the **Fanciulla Seduta** sitting with her elbow resting on her knee, and **Musa Polimnia** leaning on a pedestal and gazing dreamily into the distance. At the far end of the room is the milky-white **Venus Esquilina** from the 1st century BC, discovered on the Esquilino in 1874.

## EUR

Mussolini's Orwellian quarter of wide boulevards and linear buildings (now largely used by banks and government ministries) has long been overlooked by serious architects. Recently, however, critics have been re-evaluating the area, debating its architectural merits rather than its political roots. And while the jury is still out, there's no doubt that EUR is like nowhere else in Rome.

One of the few planned developments in Rome's history, it was built for an international exhibition in 1942 and, although war



intervened and the exhibition never took place, the name stuck – Esposizione Universale di Roma (Roman Universal Exhibition) or EUR. There are a few museums but the area's appeal (or lack of it) lies in its unique architecture.

The district is home to some of the city's most distinctive **palazzi**. Check out, for example, the **Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro** (Palace of the Workers; Map p117; Quadrato della Concordia), one of Rome's iconic buildings. Designed by Guerini, La Padula and Romano and built over 1938–43, it's known as the 'Square Colosseum' and is the undoubted gem among the EUR building stock. It's currently undergoing a €9 million restoration and will house a media museum, a centre for Italian design, bars and a restaurant when it reopens.

Other buildings of note are the **post office** (Map p117; Viale Beethoven 36), dating from 1940

and designed by Studio BBPR; Aldo Focchini's monumental **Chiesa Santi Pietro e Paolo** (Church of St Peter & Paul; [Map p117](#); Piazzale Santi Pietro e Paolo), built in 1938–55; and Nervi and Vitellozzi's futuristic **Palazzetto dello Sport** ([Map p117](#); Piazza dello Sport), built in 1958 and now functioning as the Palalottomatica, a venue for concerts and sport. Widely acknowledged as the second-most important building after the Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro is the wonderful **Palazzo dei Congressi** (Congress Centre; [Map p117](#); Piazza JF Kennedy), built in 1938–54 and designed by Adalberto Libera.

For online information, Italian speakers can log onto [www.romaeur.it](http://www.romaeur.it). EUR is at the end of metro line B.

## MUSEO DELLA CIVILTÀ ROMANA

[Map p117](#)

☎ 06 592 60 41; Piazza G Agnelli 10; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-24yr €6.50/free/4.50, incl Museo Astronomico & planetarium €8.50/free/6.50; ⌚ 9am-2pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun; ₪ EUR Fermi; √

A proven kid-pleaser, EUR's most impressive museum was founded by Mussolini in 1937 to glorify imperial Rome. A hulking place with huge echoing halls, it contains a number of intriguing displays. The best is a giant-scale re-creation of 4th-century Rome, but there are also detailed models of the city's main buildings, an absorbing cross section of the Colosseum and casts of the reliefs on the **Colonna di Traiano** ([p65](#)). For something completely different, learn about the night sky at the on-site **Museo Astronomico** (Astronomy Museum; ⌚ 06 820 59 127; adult/child €6.50/4.40; ⌚ 9am-2pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun), complete with its own planetarium. You'll need to book for the planetarium shows.

## MUSEO DELLE ARTI E TRADIZIONI POPOLARI

[Map p117](#)

☎ 06 592 61 48; Piazza Marconi 8; admission €4; ⌚ 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun; ₪ EUR Palasport

You might well have to wake up the ticket seller at this sleepy museum dedicated to folk art and rural tradition. Not one of Rome's great museums, it's nevertheless more interesting than it sounds, with an eclectic collection of agricultural and artisan tools, clothing, musical instruments and a room full of carnival costumes and artefacts.

## SOUTHERN ROME

### Walking Tour

**1 Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella** A short walk from the bus stop at the intersection of Via Cecilia Metella and Via Appia Antica brings you to this imposing 1st-century-BC mausoleum ([p113](#)). Built for the daughter of Quintus Metellus Creticus, it was incorporated into the castle of the Caetani family in the early 14th century.

**2 Circo di Massenzio** In the 4th century AD this open area of rolling grass and towering pine trees was a spectacular 10,000-seat arena ([p112](#)) with a chariot racetrack. In the same complex are the ruins of the Tomba di Romolo,

built by Maxentius for his son, and the remains of Maxentius' imperial palace.

**3 Basilica & Catacombe di San Sebastiano** The 4th-century basilica ([p112](#)) was built over the catacombs where the apostles Peter and Paul were originally buried, and on the spot where St Sebastian was martyred. The catacombs are the main attraction but the basilica's worth a quick look, if for nothing else than to see a marble imprint of Jesus' foot.

**4 Mausoleo delle Fosse Ardeatine** This is a moving monument ([p113](#)) to the victims of Italy's worst WWII atrocity – on 24 March 1944, 335 people were shot here by the Nazis in reprisal for a partisan attack. To get here, go left down Via delle Sette Chiese, then left into Via Ardeatina and after about 100m you'll see the mausoleum on your right.

**5 Cecilia Metella** Grab a table under the vine canopy ([p201](#)) and settle down to a delicious lunch of creative Italian food before the second leg of the tour.

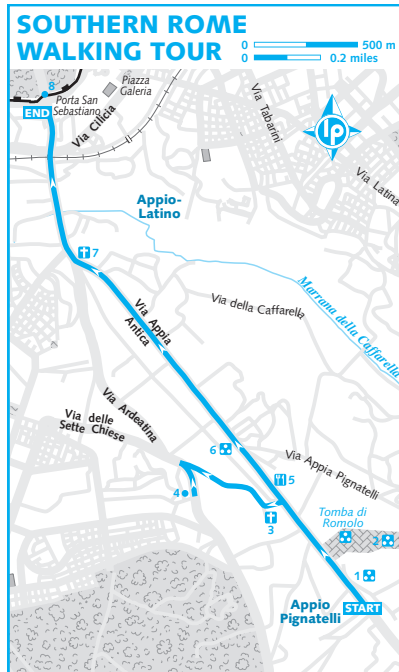
**6 Catacombe di San Callisto** If you're doing this walk on a Sunday you'll find the Catacombe di San Sebastiano closed. Don't worry, though, as these, Rome's largest, most famous, and busiest catacombs ([p113](#)), are a fine alternative. To date archaeologists have unearthed some 500,000 bodies, including seven popes, in 20km of tunnels.

**7 Chiesa del Domine Quo Vadis?** It was here that St Peter is supposed to have met a vision of Jesus and asked '*Domine, quo vadis?*' ('Lord, where are you going?'). Note that to get to this tiny church ([p114](#)) you have to walk against the traffic along a section of road that has no pavement.

**8 Porta San Sebastiano** About 700m beyond the Chiesa del Domine Quo Vadis?, this 5th-century city gate ([p114](#)) marks the start (or end – all roads lead *to* Rome, not *from* it) of Via Appia Antica. The largest and most impressive of the gates in the Aurelian Wall, it houses a small museum illustrating the history of the wall.

### WALK FACTS

**Start** Corner of Via Appia Antica and Via Cecilia Metella (₪ Colli Albani, then 660 to its final stop)  
**End** Porta San Sebastiano (9 118, 218 or 714 to ₪ Piramide)  
**Distance** 4.2km  
**Duration** Three hours  
**Fuel stop** Cecilia Metella ([p201](#))



# TRASTEVERE

Drinking & Nightlife p225; Eating p203; Shopping p176; Sleeping p259

Trastevere is one of central Rome's most vivacious neighbourhoods, an outdoor circus of ochre *palazzi*, ivy-clad façades and photogenic lanes, peopled by a bohemian cast of tourists, travellers, students and street sellers. In the midst of the daily mayhem, locals make themselves heard by shouting jokes at each other in thick *romanesco*, the Roman dialect.

## top picks

### TRASTEVERE

- Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere (opposite)
- Villa Farnesina (p124)
- Tempietto di Bramante & Chiesa di San Pietro in Montorio (p126)
- Orto Botanico (p125)
- Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere (below)

ing. Accommodation in the area is increasingly being targeted by wealthy foreigners and prices are rising. Many old-timers are struggling to keep up with sky-high rents and some have been forced to call it a day and move to the cheaper suburbs.

To a visitor, however, the area is a delight. There aren't a huge number of must-see sights, at least not compared with other parts of the city, but the Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere, on the lively piazza of the same name, is one of Rome's most charming churches and Villa Farnesina boasts some superb frescoes by Raphael. To the east, on the other, quieter, side of Viale di Trastevere, the Basilica di Santa Cecilia is the last resting place of Santa Cecilia, the patron saint of music.

But it's after dark that Trastevere really comes into its own. Its narrow alleyways heave late into the night as Romans and tourists flock to the huge number of pizzerias, trattorias, bars and cafés that pepper its atmospheric lanes.

You can reach Trastevere on foot by crossing the Ponte Sisto footbridge from the *centro storico*, or by taking tram 8 from Largo di Torre Argentina. From Termini, bus H runs to Viale di Trastevere.

## EAST OF VIALE DI TRASTEVERE

### BASILICA DI SANTA CECILIA IN TRASTEVERE

Map pp122–3  
% 06 589 92 89; Piazza di Santa Cecilia;  
h 9.30am–12.30pm & 4–7pm; G or j Viale di Trastevere

The last resting place of St Cecilia, the patron saint of music, this much-altered basilica stands on the site of an earlier 5th-century church, itself built over the house where St Cecilia lived and died in 230.

Like many Christian saints, Cecilia came to a sticky end. Her executioners first tried to scald her to death by locking her in the *caldarium* of the baths in her own house. She emerged unscathed and was then beheaded, but the executioner did such a bad job that she took three days to die. Legend

The area was originally a working-class district separated from the city proper by the River Tiber – hence its name, a derivation of the Latin *trans Tiberium*, meaning over the Tiber. However, as the city grew Trastevere was slowly enveloped by urban development and it is today very much a part of Rome's cityscape. Despite this, Trastevere-born Romans (known as *trasteverini*) like to think of themselves as being different, as being *noantri* (we others), and even have their own festival (p147) to prove it.

But times change and Trastevere is changing. Accommodation in the area is increasingly being targeted by wealthy foreigners and prices are rising. Many old-timers are struggling to keep up with sky-high rents and some have been forced to call it a day and move to the cheaper suburbs.

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has it that she sang as she was dying; for this reason she became the patron saint of music and musicians. When her tomb was opened in 1599, the body was miraculously intact, enabling Stefano Maderno to use it as a model for his delicate statue beneath the altar.

In the right-hand nave the *Cappella del Caldarium* marks the spot where the saint was allegedly tortured. There are two works by Guido Reni here. But more than these, it's the spectacular 13th-century *fresco* (admission €2; h 10–11.30am Tue & Thu, 11.30am–noon Sun) in the nun's choir that's the church's artistic glory. Although there are only fragments remaining, you can see enough of Pietro Cavallini's *Giudizio Universale* (Last Judgment) to realise what an outstanding work it must once have been.

Beneath the church, via the elaborately decorated *crypt* (admission €2.50; h 9.30am–noon & 4–7pm), you can visit the excavations of several Roman houses, one of which might have belonged to St Cecilia.

### CHIESA DI SAN FRANCESCO D'ASSISI A RIPA

Map pp122–3  
% 06 581 90 20; Piazza San Francesco d'Assisi 88;  
h 7am–1pm & 4–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 7am–noon & 4–7pm Sat & Sun; G or j Viale di Trastevere  
The overriding reason to visit this otherwise unexceptional church is to gasp at one of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's most daring works. In the fourth chapel on the left, the *Beata Ludovica Albertoni* (Blessed Ludovica Albertoni; 1674) is a work of highly charged sexual ambiguity showing Ludovica, a Franciscan nun, in a state of rapture as she reclines, eyes shut, mouth open, one hand touching her breast. The innuendo is, if anything, more obvious than in *Santa Teresa trafitta dall'amore di Dio* (Ecstasy of St Teresa) in the Chiesa di Santa Maria della Vittoria (p102).

St Francis of Assisi is said to have stayed in the church for a period in the 13th century and you can still see the rock that he used as a pillow.

## WEST OF VIALE DI TRASTEVERE

### BASILICA DI SANTA MARIA IN TRASTEVERE

Map pp122–3  
% 06 581 48 02; Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere;  
h 7.30am–12.30pm & 3.30–7.30pm; G or j Viale di Trastevere

Discreet is not an adjective you can apply to many Roman churches, but this ravishing basilica is just that. At least it is from the outside, where its portico, embedded with fragments of ancient and medieval sculpture, inscriptions and sarcophagi, blends in with the other buildings on Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere.

Said to be the oldest church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Rome, it was probably established by Pope Calixtus in the early 3rd century and subsequently rebuilt by Julius I in 337. Legend has it that it was built over the site where, in 38 BC, a miraculous fountain of pure oil sprang from the ground.

The church's present structure was built in 1138 by Innocent II and features a Romanesque façade, with a stunning 12th-century mosaic, and a Romanesque bell tower (whose bells ring every 15 minutes).

The portico came later, added by Carlo Fontana in 1702.

Inside it's the glittering 12th-century gold mosaics in the apse and on the triumphal arch that are the main drawcard. At the top of the arch are the symbols and names of the four evangelists; on either side are Isaiah and Jeremiah, each with an image of a caged bird representing Christ imprisoned by the sins of humankind. In the centre of the apse are the signs of the zodiac, beneath which is a dazzling depiction of Christ and his mother flanked by various saints and, on the far left, Pope Innocent II holding a model of the church. Below this is a series of six mosaics by Pietro Cavallini (c 1291) illustrating the life of the Virgin.

Other features to note include the 21 difficult-to-miss Roman columns, some of which came from the *Terme di Caracalla* (p110); the wooden ceiling designed in 1617 by Domenichino, who also painted the central panel depicting the Assumption of the Virgin; and, on the right of the altar, a beautiful Cosmati paschal candlestick, placed on the exact spot where the oil fountain is said to have sprung.

The last chapel on the left-hand side, the *Cappella Avila*, is also worth a quick look for its stunning dome. Antonio Gherardi's clever 1680 design depicts four angels holding the circular base of a large lantern whose columns rise to give the effect of a second cupola within a larger outer dome.

### PIAZZA SANTA MARIA IN TRASTEVERE

Map pp122–3  
G or j Viale di Trastevere  
Trastevere's focal square is a prime people-watching spot. By day it's full of mums with strollers, chatting locals and guidebook-toting tourists; by night it's the domain of foreign students getting their first taste of *la dolce vita* and young Romans out for a good time.

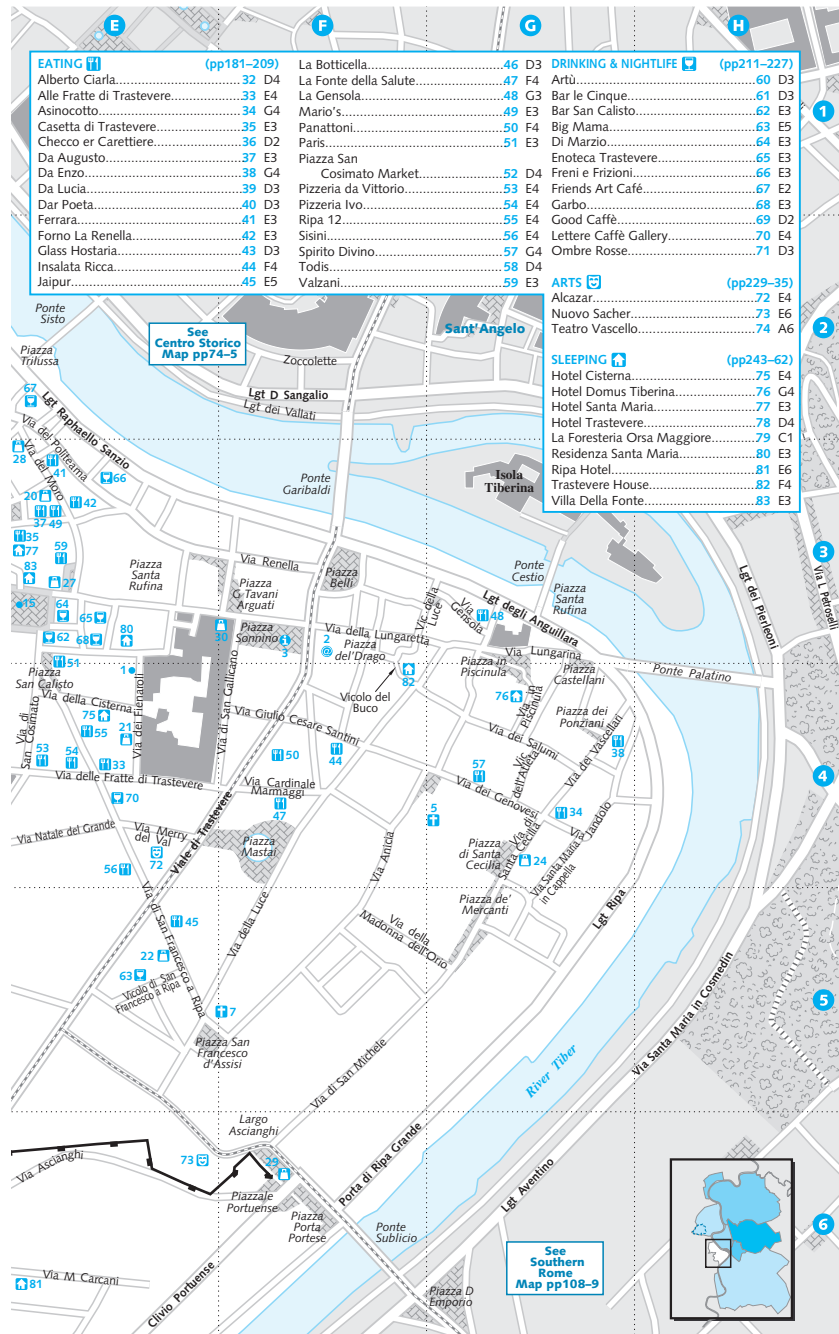
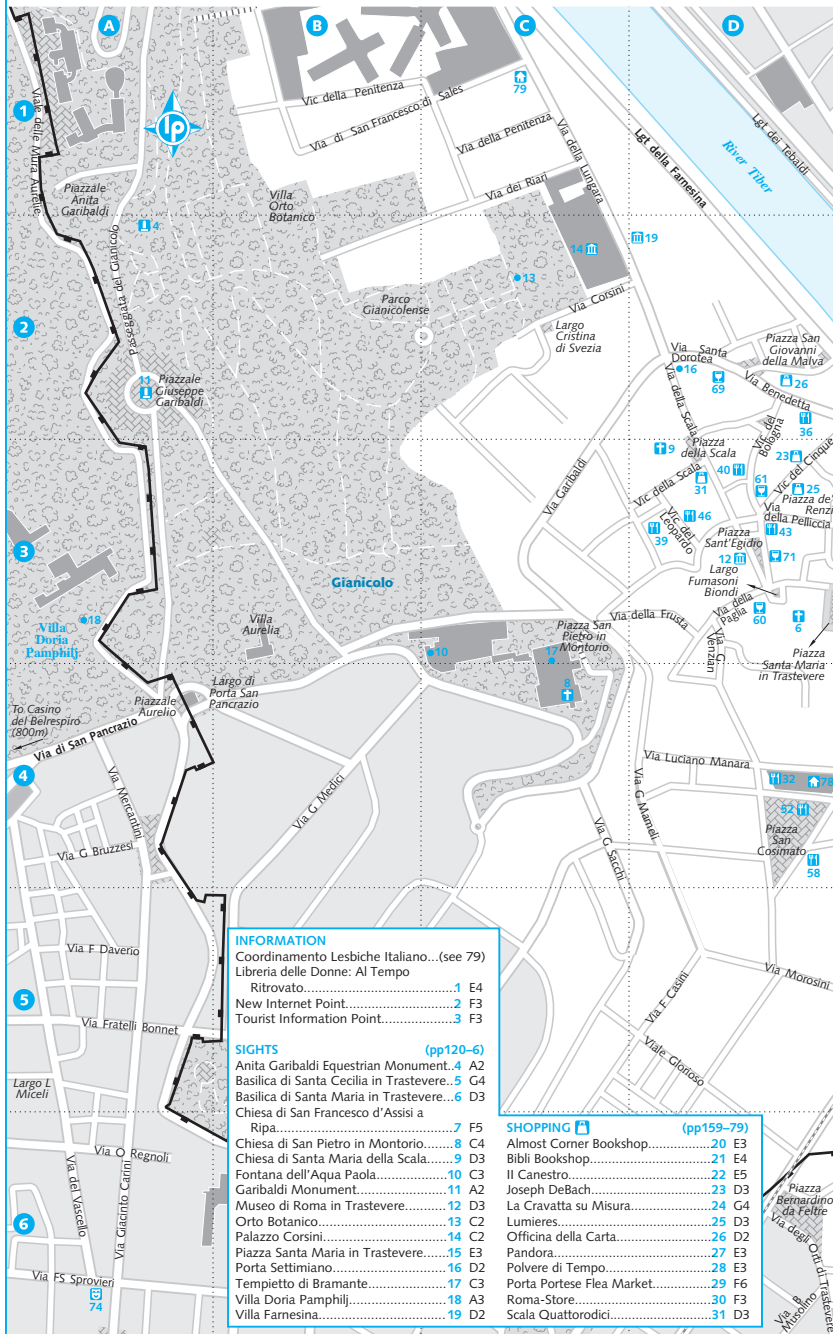
The fountain in the centre of the square is of Roman origin and was restored by Carlo Fontana in 1692.

### MUSEO DI ROMA IN TRASTEVERE

Map pp122–3  
% 06 820 59 127; Piazza Sant'Egidio 1b; adult/child €3/1.50; h 10am–8pm Tue–Sun; G or j Viale di Trastevere  
Trastevere's traditions and folklore are celebrated at this small museum. The 1st-floor



# TRASTEVERE



permanent collection comprises several re-creations of everyday scenes from 19th-century Trastevere and a small selection of watercolours depicting communal life. It's all very kitsch but the kids might enjoy it and it's been done well. The downstairs rooms are often used to stage temporary exhibitions.

### CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA [Map pp122–3](#)

☎ 06 580 62 33; Piazza della Scala 23; h 7am–12.30pm & 3.30–7pm; ☪ Lungotevere della Farnesina (Piazza Trilussa)

The Chiesa di Santa Maria della Scala dates from the building boom at the turn of the 17th century. The big white façade hides a gloriously baroque interior with a particularly flamboyant marble altar. Next door, the *Farmacia di Santa Maria della Scala*, which supplied medicine to the popes in the 18th century, is still run by monks from the adjacent Carmelite monastery. The monks are renowned for having commissioned, and then rejected, Caravaggio's *Il Transito della Vergine* (Transition of the Virgin), now in the Louvre (Paris).

### PORTA SETTIMIANA [Map pp122–3](#)

☪ Lungotevere della Farnesina (Piazza Trilussa) Marking the start of Via della Lungara, the 16th-century road that connects Trastevere with the Borgo, Porta Settimiana was built in 1498 by Pope Alexander VI over a small passageway in the Aurelian Wall. It was later rebuilt by Pope Pius VI in 1798.

From Porta Settimiana, Via Santa Dorotea leads to Piazza Trilussa, a popular evening hang-out, and Ponte Sisto, a pretty foot-bridge that connects with the *centro storico*.

### VILLA FARNESINA [Map pp122–3](#)

☎ 06 680 27 268; Via della Lungara 230; adult/under 14yr & over 65yr/14–18yr €5/free/4; h 9am–1pm Mon–Sat; ☪ Lungotevere della Farnesina (Piazza Trilussa)

Anyone with the remotest interest in Renaissance art should find a couple of hours to visit this extraordinary 16th-century villa. Commissioned by wealthy banker Agostino Chigi and built by the Siennese architect Baldassare Peruzzi between 1508 and 1511, it boasts some awe-inspiring decoration, with frescoes by Sebastiano del Piombo, Raphael and Peruzzi. In 1577 the Farnese family bought the villa from the bankrupt

Chigi and modestly renamed it in honour of themselves.

The most famous frescoes are in the Loggia of Cupid and Psyche on the ground floor. Although they are generally attributed to Raphael, the great man did little more than design the frescoes for his assistants to paint. Apparently, he was so besotted with his mistress, who worked in a nearby bakery, that he couldn't concentrate on his work. He did, however, find time to paint the famous *Trionfo di Galatea* (Triumph of Galatea) in the room of the same name.

On the 1st floor it is Peruzzi's dazzling frescoes in the Salone delle Prospettive that stand out. They are a superb illusionary perspective of a colonnade and panorama of 16th-century Rome.

The building also houses the Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe (National Print Collection), part of the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica (National Institute of Graphics), which can be consulted by scholars with permission.

### GALLERIA NAZIONALE D'ARTE ANTICA DI PALAZZO CORSINI [Map pp122–3](#)

☎ 06 688 02 323; www.galleriaborghese.it; Via della Lungara 10; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18–25yr €4/free/2; h 8.30am–1.30pm Tue–Sun; ☪ Lungotevere della Farnesina (Piazza Trilussa) Originally known as Palazzo Riario after Cardinal Domenico Riario, who commissioned it in 1510, Palazzo Corsini owes its current look to a 1736 makeover by Ferdinando Fuga. Over the years a number of esteemed guests have stayed here – Michelangelo, Erasmus and Bramante among them – but the *palazzo* is most readily associated with Queen Christina of Sweden, who took up residency in 1662. A great patron of the arts, Christina was a legendary party-goer and is said to have entertained a steady stream of male and female lovers in her private apartments.

Today the *palazzo* houses part of Italy's national art collection (the rest is in [Palazzo Barberini](#), p100). Many of the 16th- and 17th-century paintings belonged to the Corsini family collection, which, if not Rome's greatest, was still a substantial body of work. Highlights are Van Dyck's superb *Madonna della Paglia* (Madonna of the Straw) in Room 1, Murillo's *Madonna col bambino* (Madonna and Child) next door in Room 2, and a typically haunting canvas by

Caravaggio, *San Giovanni Battista* (St John the Baptist), in Room 3. The paintings of the Bologna school in Room 7 also stand out, with works by Guido Reni, Agostino and Annibale Carracci, Giovanni Lanfranco and Guercino.

You can also visit Queen Christina's richly frescoed bedroom, scene of so much royal revelry.

## GIANICOLO

Rising above Trastevere, the Gianicolo (Janiculum hill) is not one of Rome's original seven hills and was never part of the ancient city. A lovely, leafy area of gardens and spectacular views, it's an ideal spot for recharging your batteries after the energy-sapping streets below.

In 1849 it was the scene of one of the fiercest battles in the struggle for Italian unification. A makeshift army commanded by Giuseppe Garibaldi defended Rome against French troops sent to restore papal rule. Garibaldi is commemorated with a massive [monument](#) ([Map pp122–3](#)) in the centre of the hill's focal space, Piazzale Giuseppe Garibaldi. Here you'll also

find some of the best views in and of Rome, a merry-go-round and, on Sunday afternoons, a puppet show. Garibaldi's Brazilian-born wife, Anita, is also commemorated on the Gianicolo with an [equestrian monument](#) ([Map pp122–3](#); about 200m north in Piazzale Anita Garibaldi) by Mario Rutelli, completed in 1932.

The easiest way to get to Piazzale Giuseppe Garibaldi is to follow Via Garibaldi from near Porta Settimiana; it's a steep 15-minute walk. Alternatively, walk up the steps from Via G Mameli or take bus 870 from Piazza delle Rovere.

### ORTO BOTANICO [Map pp122–3](#)

☎ 06 499 17 107; Largo Cristina di Svezia 24; admission €3; h 9.30am–6.30pm Tue–Sat Apr–Sep, 9.30am–5.30pm Tue–Sat Oct–Mar, closed Aug; ☪ Lungotevere della Farnesina (Piazza Trilussa) Formerly the private grounds of [Palazzo Corsini](#) (opposite), Rome's 12-hectare botanical gardens are a great place to unwind. Plants have been cultivated on this site since the late 13th century but, in their present form, the gardens were established in 1883. Nowadays, they are managed by La Sapienza

## THE TRAGEDY OF THE CENCI

In the Chiesa di San Pietro in Montorio on the Gianicolo, there's a stone slab at the base of the altar marked with a cross and the single word *Orate* (Pray). This is where the body of Beatrice Cenci is said to lie. No-one knows for sure, as after her execution she was buried in a separate tomb according to 16th-century custom. Her story is tragic.

The youngest of seven children, Beatrice was the daughter of the enormously rich and sadistic Francesco Cenci. Of her six siblings, two were killed, and the remaining four escaped: the boys by winning legal access to some of their father's money, and a daughter through marriage. This left Beatrice, the most beautiful, on whom Francesco focused all his ire. He locked her in a room when she was about 13, abused and raped her, and forced her to sleep with her equally ill-treated stepmother, Lucrecia.

Some years later, when Francesco was away on business, Beatrice fell in love with a priest, Olimpio Calvetti, to whom she'd been introduced by her brother. When Francesco returned, the priest asked for Beatrice's hand in marriage, and was denied.

In despair and with nothing to lose, Beatrice and Lucrecia began to plot Francesco's murder. With the help of Beatrice's brother and Calvetti, they planned a fake kidnapping that would end in Francesco's death. It failed. So they turned to plan B and hired two hit men to kill Francesco in his sleep. When they chickened out, Beatrice threatened to kill him herself. The two shamed assassins, accompanied by Beatrice and Lucrecia, returned to Francesco's bedroom and killed him by driving nails into his eyes and throat.

It didn't take long before one of the hired hit men was arrested and admitted everything. The whole Cenci family was arrested. Lucrecia gave in immediately and confessed, but Beatrice wouldn't admit anything. The judge ordered her to be stripped and tortured but still she wouldn't confess. Finally the rest of the family, traumatised by her suffering, begged her to confess. When she did, the pope sentenced the family to be dragged by horses through the streets of Rome. The public, on to the story by this time, was outraged, and two skilled lawyers were sent to argue for clemency. For a while it looked like they would all be pardoned, but when a young Roman nobleman murdered his rich father, the pope decided that tough measures were needed to eradicate this rash of aristocratic patricide. Lucrecia and Beatrice, along with Beatrice's brother, were once again sentenced to death, this time by decapitation.

By now Beatrice and Lucrecia had become something of a cause célèbre and their execution on 11 September 1599 on Ponte Sant'Angelo drew a huge crowd.



University and boast up to 8000 species, including some of the rarest plants in Europe. There's an avenue of palms, a garden with 300 species of medicinal plants (Giardino dei Semplici), a collection of cacti, and even a star-shaped area with aromatic plants (Giardino degli Aromi) labelled in braille.

## TEMPIETTO DI BRAMANTE & CHIESA DI SAN PIETRO IN MONTORIO

Map pp122–3

☎ 06 581 39 40; Piazza San Pietro in Montorio 2; ⌚ church 8am-noon & 4-6pm, tempietto 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar; 📍 Lungotevere della Farnesina (Piazza Trilussa) Considered the first great building of the High Renaissance, Bramante's proportionally perfect Tempietto (little temple) stands in the courtyard of the Chiesa di San Pietro in Montorio, on the spot where St Peter is supposed to have been crucified. Completed in 1508, Bramante's temple is a much-imitated masterpiece of classical proportion and elegance, its circular design based on the style used in many Roman temples. The use of Doric columns in the peristyle is a noteworthy feature, bucking the 16th-century fashion for Ionic and Corinthian columns – Bramante is said to have used Doric columns to better represent St Peter's masculine strength. More than a century later, in 1628, Bernini added a staircase. Bernini also contributed a chapel, the second on the left, to the neighbouring church, the last resting place of the tragic Beatrice Cenci (see the boxed text, p125).

## FONTANA DELL'ACQUA PAOLA

Map pp122–3

Via Garibaldi; 📍 Via Garibaldi This monumental fountain was built in 1612 for Pope Paul V to celebrate the restoration of a 2nd-century aqueduct that supplied (and still supplies) water from Lago di Bracciano, 35km to the north of Rome. Four of the fountain's six pink-stone columns came from the façade of the old St Peter's Basilica, while much of the marble was pillaged from the Roman Forum. The large granite basin was added by Carlo Fontana in 1690.

## VILLA DORIA PAMPHILJ

Map pp122–3  
⌚ dawn-dusk; 📍 Via di San Pancrazio Rome's largest park is an excellent place

to get away from the relentless noise of the city. Once an enormous private estate, it was laid out around 1650 for Prince Camillo Pamphilj, a nephew of Pope Innocent X. At its centre is the prince's summer residence, the **Casino del Belrespiro**, designed by Alessandro Algardi and surrounded by manicured formal gardens and citrus trees. It was acquired by the state in the late 1950s and is now used for official government functions.

## TRASTEVERE Walking Tour

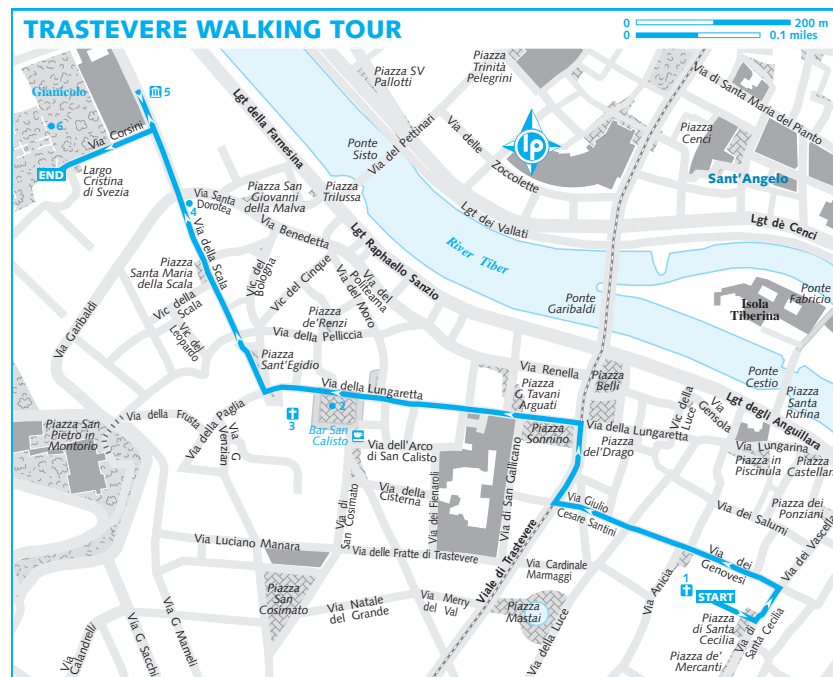
**1 Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere** Musicians can pay homage to their patron saint on the very spot where she was martyred in 230. St Cecilia lived and died in a house buried beneath a 5th-century church, on top of which the current basilica (p120) stands. Her headless body lies in a tomb under the main altar.

**2 Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere** Right in the action, this laid-back piazza (p121) is a prime people-watching spot. Grab yourself a drink from the Bar San Calisto (p225) then hang out with the tourists, rastas, diners and drinkers who converge here every night. The square's fountain is a 17th-century renovation of a Roman original.

**3 Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere** Said to be the oldest church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Rome, this gem (p121) is Trastevere's single most important sight. It was originally constructed in the 3rd century, but it's best known for its stunning gold mosaics, which were added some 900 years later in the 12th century.

**4 Porta Settimiana** Guarding Trastevere's northern entrance, Porta Settimiana (p124) was built in the late 15th century and modified three hundred years later in 1798. Leading off north, Via della Lungara was laid down in the 16th century to connect Trastevere with the Vatican.

**5 Villa Farnesina** Just outside Porta Settimiana, Villa Farnesina (p124) was one of Rome's first great Renaissance palaces. Built in the early 16th century and later bought by the powerful Farnese family, it features some superb frescoes by Raphael, including



### WALK FACTS

**Start** Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere (📍 H or j 8 to Viale di Trastevere)  
**End** Orto Botanico (📍 125 to Via della Lungara)  
**Distance** 2km  
**Duration** 2½ hours  
**Fuel stop** Bar San Calisto (p225)

his acclaimed work, the *Trionfo di Galatea* (Triumph of Galatea).

**6 Orto Botanico** Laid out on the slopes of the Gianicolo, Rome's 19th-century botanical gardens (p125) are a lovely, low-key place to unwind. Amateur botanists will have their work cut out identifying the 8000 plant species on display across the 12-hectare site.

# VATICAN CITY & BORGO

Drinking & Nightlife [p226](#); Eating [p207](#); Shopping [p178](#); Sleeping [p260](#)

The world's smallest sovereign state (a mere 0.44 sq km), the Vatican sits atop the low-lying Vatican hill just a few hundred metres west of the River Tiber. Centred on the domed bulk of St Peter's Basilica and Piazza San Pietro, it is the capital of the Catholic world, a spiritual superpower whose law is gospel to the world's one billion Catholics. On a more temporal level, it's one of Rome's most visited areas and you'll almost certainly have to queue to get into St Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums.

Established under the terms of the 1929 Lateran Treaty, the State of the Vatican City is the modern vestige of the Papal States. For more than a thousand years, the Papal States encompassed Rome and much of central Italy, but when Italy was unified in 1861 and Rome fell to Italian troops in 1870, Pope Pius IX was forced to give up the last of his territorial possessions.

Relations between Italy and the landless papacy remained strained until Mussolini and Pope Pius XI agreed to form the Vatican State in 1929.

Under the terms of the Lateran Treaty, the Holy See was also given extraterritorial authority over a further 28 sites in and around Rome, including the basilicas of San Giovanni in Laterano ([p106](#)), Santa Maria Maggiore ([p89](#)) and San Paolo fuori le Mura ([p116](#)); the catacombs ([p111](#)), and the pope's summer residence at Castel Gandolfo ([p278](#)).

As an independent state, the Vatican has its own postal service, currency, newspaper, radio station and army. The flamboyantly dressed Swiss Guards were founded in 1506 by Julius II to defend the Papal States against invading armies and are still today responsible for the pope's personal security.

The Vatican's current look is the culmination of more than 1000 years of chipping and chopping. The Leonine walls date to 846, when Pope Leo IV had them put up after a series of Saracen raids, while the Vatican palace, now home to the Vatican Museums and Sistine Chapel, was originally constructed by Pope Eugenius III in the 12th century. Subsequent popes extended, fortified and decorated it according to their political and artistic whims. The original 4th-century St Peter's Basilica was almost entirely rebuilt in the 16th century by a phalanx of Renaissance greats – Bramante, Raphael, Antonio da Sangallo and Michelangelo. Later Giacomo della Porta and Carlo Maderno added further contributions. Outside, Piazza San Pietro was designed by the baroque genius Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

The easiest way to get to the Vatican is to take metro line A to Ottaviano-San Pietro. Otherwise buses 40 and 64 run to the Vatican from Stazione Termini.

## VATICAN CITY

### St Peter's Basilica

In a city of more than 900 churches, none can hold a candle to [St Peter's Basilica](#) (Basilica di San Pietro; [Map pp130–1](#); ☎ 06 698 81 662; www.stpetersbasilica.org; Piazza San Pietro; admission free; ⌚ 7am–7pm Apr–Sep, 7am–6pm Oct–Mar; 🚶 Ottaviano-San Pietro). Put simply, it's the biggest, richest, most spectacular church in Italy, a monument to centuries of artistic genius and a mecca for millions of tourists – on peak days it can attract more than 20,000 visitors. If you want to get in remember to dress appropriately – that means

no shorts, miniskirts or bare shoulders. Audioguides (€5) are available at a desk in the cloakroom to the right of the entrance.

The first basilica was built here in the 4th century by Constantine, Rome's first Christian emperor. Standing on the site of Nero's stadium, the Ager Vaticanus, where St Peter is said to have been buried between AD 64 and 67, it was consecrated in 326.

More than 1000 years later the church had fallen into disrepair. In the mid-15th century Pope Nicholas V took a stab at reconstruction, but it wasn't until 1506, when Julius II employed Bramante, that serious work

## PAPAL AUDIENCES

At 11am on Wednesdays, the pope addresses his flock at the Vatican (in July and August he does so in [Castel Gandolfo](#), [p278](#)). For free tickets, go to the [Prefettura della Casa Pontificia](#) (☎ 06 698 84 631; fax 06 698 85 863; ⌚ 9am–1pm), through the bronze doors under the colonnade to the right of St Peter's. You can apply on the Tuesday before the audience (or, at a push, on the morning of the audience). Alternatively, write to the Prefettura della Casa Pontificia, 00120 Città del Vaticano or send a fax. Specify the date you'd like to attend and the number of tickets required. If you have a hotel in Rome, the office will forward the tickets there.

When he is in Rome, the pope also blesses the crowd in Piazza San Pietro on Sundays at noon. No tickets are required.

began. Bramante designed a new basilica on a Greek-cross plan, with a central dome and four smaller domes. He oversaw the demolition of much of the old basilica and attracted great criticism for the unnecessary destruction of many of its precious works of art, including Byzantine mosaics and frescoes.

It took more than 150 years to complete the new basilica, now the second-largest in the world (the largest is in Yamoussoukro on the Ivory Coast; bronze plates in the marble floor of the central aisle indicate the respective sizes of the 14 next-biggest churches). Bramante, Raphael, Antonio da Sangallo, Michelangelo, Giacomo della Porta and Carlo Maderno all contributed, but it is generally held that St Peter's owes most to Michelangelo, who took over the project in 1547 at the age of 72 and was responsible for the great dome.

The façade and portico were designed by Carlo Maderno, who inherited the project after Michelangelo's death. He was also instructed to lengthen the nave towards the piazza, effectively altering Bramante's original Greek-cross plan to a Latin cross.

## INTERIOR

The cavernous 187m-long interior covers more than 15,000 sq metres and contains spectacular works of art, including three of Italy's most celebrated masterpieces: Michelangelo's [Pietà](#), the breathtaking dome and Bernini's famous baldachin (canopy).

You'll find Michelangelo's hauntingly beautiful [Pietà](#) at the beginning of the right aisle just inside the [Porta Santa](#) (Holy Door). Sculpted when he was only 25, this is the only work to carry his signature (on the sash across the breast of the Madonna). It is now protected by bullet-proof glass after a hammer-wielding vandal attacked it in 1972.

Nearby, the [red porphyry disk](#) on the floor inside the main door marks the spot where

Charlemagne and later Holy Roman Emperors were crowned by the pope.

Dominating the centre of the church is Bernini's 29m-high baroque [baldachin](#). Supported by four spiral columns and made with bronze taken from the Pantheon, it stands over the high altar, which itself sits on the site of St Peter's grave. The pope is the only priest permitted to serve at the high altar. In front, the [Confessione](#), built by Carlo Maderno, is where St Peter was originally buried.

Look up and you'll see Michelangelo's [dome](#) 119m above your head. Based on Brunelleschi's design for the Duomo in Florence, it is supported by four solid stone [piers](#), named after the saints whose statues adorn their Bernini-designed niches: Longinus, Helena, Veronica and Andrew.

The balconies above are decorated with reliefs depicting the Reliquie Maggiori (Major Relics): the lance of St Longinus, which he used to pierce Christ's side; the cloth of St Veronica, which bears a miraculous image of Christ; and a piece of the True Cross, collected by St Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine.

At the base of the Pier of St Longinus, to the right as you face the high altar, is a famous bronze [statue of St Peter](#), believed to be a 13th-century work by Arnolfo di Cambio. Much loved by pilgrims, its right foot has been worn down by centuries of kisses and caresses. On the Feast Day of St Peter and St Paul (29 June), the statue is dressed in papal robes.

Back near the [Pietà](#), Carlo Fontana's [monument to Queen Christina of Sweden](#) is dedicated to the Swedish monarch who converted to Catholicism in 1655.

Next door, the [Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento](#) is a masterclass in baroque style. The iron grille separating the chapel from the rest of the basilica was designed by Borromini; the gilt bronze ciborium above the



# VATICAN CITY & BORGO

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- Del Frate.....29 C4
- Dino & Tony.....30 B3
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- To Associazione Musicale Romana (400m)

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**TOURIST INFORMATION**

- See Villa Borghese & Northern Rome Map pp150-1
- See Esquilino, Quirinale & Piazza di Spagna Map pp90-1
- See Centro Storico Map pp74-5

## THE FACE IN THE BALDACHIN

The frieze on Bernini's baldachin contains a hidden narrative that begins at the pillar to the left, if your back is facing the entrance. As you walk clockwise around the baldachin note the woman's face carved into the frieze of each pillar, at about eye level. On the first three pillars her face seems to express the increasing agony of childbirth; on the last one, it's replaced by that of a smiling baby. The woman was a niece of Pope Urban VIII who gave birth as Bernini worked on the baldachin.

altar is by Bernini; and the altarpiece, *The Trinity*, is by Pietro da Cortona. The chapel's not usually open to passing visitors but you can go in to pray.

Continuing down the aisle you'll see what looks like a huge canvas but is in fact a large mosaic on the Pier of St Longinus. Created by Domenichino, it depicts the *Comunione di San Girolamo* (Communion of St Jerome). To your right as you face the mosaic, the *Cappella Gregoriana* was built by Gregory XIII from designs by Michelangelo. Part of a marble column from the old basilica was placed here in 1578; the painting on it, the *Madonna del Soccorso* (Madonna of Succour), can still be made out.

Two notable works in the closed-off right transept are the *monument of Clement XIII*, one of Canova's most famous works, and the garish *Altare della Navicella* mosaic, based on a painting by Lanfranco.

In the tribune at the end of the basilica, the *Throne of St Peter* (1665) cannot fail to catch your eye. In the middle of Bernini's elaborate gilded-bronze throne, supported by statues of saints Augustine, Ambrose, Athanasius and John Chrysostom, is a wooden seat, inlaid with ivory. This was once thought to have been St Peter's chair but in fact dates to around the 9th century. Above, rays of yellow light shine through Bernini's extraordinarily gaudy window, framed by a gilded mass of golden angels and in whose central pane flies a dove (representing the Holy Spirit).

To the right of the throne, Bernini's *monument to Urban VIII* depicts the pope flanked by the figures of Charity and Justice.

In the left transept, the *Cappella della Colonna* is decorated with figures of angels with garlands of flowers. Above the tomb of St Leo the Great is a particularly fine

relief (1650) by the baroque sculptor Alessandro Algardi. Opposite it, under the next arch, is Bernini's last work in the basilica, the *monument to Alexander VII*.

About halfway down the left aisle, the cupola of the *Cappella Clementina* is named after Clement VIII (d 1605), who had Giacomo della Porta decorate it for the Jubilee of 1600. Beneath the altar is the *tomb of St Gregory the Great* (d 604), and above it a mosaic representing the *Miracolo di San Giorgio* (Miracle of St George) by Andrea Sacchi. To the left is a classical *monument to Pope Pius VII* by Thorvaldsen, whose work at the time was strongly influenced by Canova.

Particularly charming is the *monument to Leo XI* by Alessandro Algardi in the next aisle arch. Beyond it, the richly decorated *Cappella del Coro* is an exercise in gilt. Giovanni Battista Ricci carried out the work in the chapel following designs by Giacomo della Porta; Bernini designed the elegant choir stalls. The chapel is usually locked but it's worth sticking your nose through the gate to get a good look. The *monument to Innocent VIII* by Antonio Pollaiuolo (in the next aisle arch) is a re-creation of a monument from the old basilica.

The *Cappella della Presentazione* contains two of the most modern works in the basilica. On the right of the altar is a *monument to John XXIII* by Emilio Greco and on the left is a *monument to Benedict XV* by Pietro Canonica. Under the next arch are the so-called *Stuart monuments*. On the right is the monument to Clementina Sobieska, wife of James Stuart, by Filippo Barigioni, and on the left is Canova's superb monument to the last three members of the Stuart clan, the pretenders to the English throne who died in exile in Rome.

## DOMES

**St Peter's Basilica; admission with/without lift €7/4;**  
H 8am-5.45pm Apr-Sep, 8am-4.45pm Oct-Mar  
Entry to the dome is to the far right of the basilica. A small lift takes you halfway up but it's still a long climb to the top. Press on though and you'll be rewarded with some stunning views over Rome. It's well worth the effort, but bear in mind that it's a long and tiring climb and not recommended for those who suffer from claustrophobia or vertigo. Note also that the best time to photograph the view is in the afternoon when the light is much softer.

## MUSEO STORICO ARTISTICO (TREASURY)

**St Peter's Basilica; adult/child & student €6/4;**  
H 9am-6.15pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5.15pm Oct-Mar  
The sacristy entrance (halfway down the left aisle) leads to the Museo Storico Artistico (Treasury), which has sacred relics and priceless artefacts. Highlights include a tabernacle by Donatello; the Colonna Santa, a 4th-century Byzantine column from the earlier church; the 6th-century *Crux Vaticana* (Vatican Cross), made of bronze and beset with jewels – a gift of Emperor Justinian II; and the massive 15th-century bronze tomb of Sixtus IV by Pollaiuolo.

## TOMB OF ST PETER

**entrance inside St Peter's Basilica; admission €10;**  
H 7am-6pm Apr-Sep, 7am-5pm Oct-Mar  
Excavations beneath the basilica, which began in 1940, have uncovered part of the original church and what archaeologists believe is the tomb of St Peter.

In 1942 the bones of an elderly, strongly built man were found in a box hidden behind a wall covered by pilgrims' graffiti. After more than 30 years of forensic examination, in 1976 Pope Paul VI declared the bones to be those of St Peter. John Paul II had some of the relics transferred to his hospital room when he was recovering from the 1981 assassination attempt. The bones were then returned to the tomb and are kept in hermetically sealed Perspex cases designed by NASA.

The excavations can only be visited on a 90-minute guided tour. To book a spot contact the *Ufficio Scavi* (Excavations Office; ☎ 06 698 85 318; scavi@fsp.va; Fabbrica di San Pietro, 00120, Città del Vaticano; H 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) and stipulate the date you'd like to visit. You need to book at least one week ahead. If you haven't been able to reserve a place, it is often worth queuing by the Arch of the Bells. If the tours aren't already full, the guides will usually allow a few extra people to tag along. Note that kids under 15 are not allowed on the tour.

## VATICAN GROTTOS

**entrance inside St Peter's Basilica; admission free;**  
H 7am-6pm Apr-Sep, 7am-5pm Oct-Mar  
Extending beneath the basilica, the Vatican Grottoes contain the tombs of numerous popes, including John Paul II, as well as

several huge columns from the original 4th-century basilica. The entrance is a door in the base of the Pier of St Andrew, to the left of the main altar.

## Piazza San Pietro

One of the world's great public spaces, Bernini's massive *piazza* (Map pp130-1; ☐ Ottaviano-San Pietro) is a breathtaking work of baroque town planning. Laid out between 1656 and 1667 for Pope Alexander VII, it was originally designed to open up before visitors as they emerged from the jumble of narrow streets that surrounded the area. Mussolini, however, spoiled the effect when he built *Via della Conciliazione*.

Seen from above, the *piazza* resembles a giant keyhole: two semicircular colonnades, each consisting of four rows of Doric columns, bound a giant ellipse that straightens out to funnel believers into the basilica. The effect was deliberate – Bernini described the colonnades as representing 'the motherly arms of the church'. On the square there are two points from where you can see all the columns perfectly aligned; look for the iron paving disks between the central obelisk and the two fountains. The 25m obelisk was brought to Rome by Caligula from Heliopolis in Egypt and later used by Nero as a turning post for the chariot races in his circus. It was placed in its current position in 1586 by Domenico Fontana.

The scale of the *piazza* is dazzling: at its largest it measures 340m by 240m; there are 284 columns and, on top of the colonnades, 140 saints. In the midst of all this the pope seems very small as he delivers his weekly address at noon on Sunday. To get a good view of him train your binoculars on the top floor of the Vatican palace, itself part of the massive Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, to the right of the square.

## Vatican Museums

Visiting the *Vatican Museums* (Musei Vaticani; Map pp130-1; ☎ 06 698 83 333; www.vatican.va; Viale Vaticano; adult/under 6yr/under 14yr & student €13/free/8, last Sun of the month free; H 10am-4.45pm (last admission 3.30pm) Mon-Fri, 10am-2.45pm (last admission 1.30pm) Sat Mar-Oct, 10am-1.45pm (last admission 12.30pm) Mon-Sat Nov-Feb, 9am-1.45pm (last admission 12.30pm) last Sun of month; ☐ Ottaviano-San Pietro; √) is an unforgettable experience that requires strength and stamina. You'll need to be at the top of your game to endure the long queues (see p62) and enjoy



# top picks

## BEST OF THE VATICAN MUSEUMS

- *Genesis* by Michelangelo (p137)
- *Giudizio Universale* by Michelangelo (p137)
- *La Scuola d'Atene* by Raphael (p136)
- *Laocoön* by unknown (opposite)
- *Marte di Todi* by unknown (opposite)

what is undoubtedly one of the world's great museum complexes.

The entrance is a 15-minute walk from Piazza San Pietro. From the piazza head to Piazza del Risorgimento and turn left, following the Vatican walls north until you come to an area with heaps of people milling around.

The museums are enormous and rest assures you'll never manage to see everything in one go – you'd need several hours just for the highlights. To make navigation easier there are four colour-coded itineraries, which take anything from 45 minutes to five hours. Each starts at the domed Quattro Cancelli area, near the entrance, and finishes at the Sistine Chapel, so if you want you can walk straight there. Bear in mind, though, that you can't backtrack once you're there, so if you want to see, say, the Stanze di Raffaello, make sure you do so first. Also be prepared to jostle for position in the chapel – it's almost always packed and there's not a lot you can do to avoid the crowds.

Each gallery contains priceless treasures, but for a whistle-stop tour get to the Stanza di Raffaello, the Pinacoteca, the Gallerie delle Carte Geografiche and, of course, the Sistine Chapel.

A useful publication is the *Guide to the Vatican Museums and City* (€10), although you can also hire MP3 audioguides (€6). There are also Vatican-run **guided tours** (fax 06 698 85 100; [visitguidate.musei@scv.va](mailto:visitguidate.musei@scv.va); adult/concession €23.50/18). To book a place fax or email at least a week before your visit.

The museums are housed in what is known collectively as the Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano. This massive 5.5-hectare complex consists of two palaces – the Vatican palace nearest St Peter's and the Belvedere Palace – joined by two long galleries. On the inside are three courtyards: the Cortile della Pigna to the north, the Cortile della Biblioteca in the middle and the Cortile del Belvedere to the south.

The museums are well equipped for visitors with disabilities: there are four suggested itineraries, lifts and specially fitted toilets. Wheelchairs can also be reserved in advance – call % 06 698 85 433. Parents with young children can take prams into the museums.

## MUSEO GREGORIANO PROFANO, MUSEO PIO-CRISTIANO & MUSEO MISSIONARIO-ETNOLOGICO

These three museums are housed in the modern block to the right of the entrance hall. The Museo Gregoriano Profano contains classical statuary, including sculpture found in the **Terme di Caracalla** (p110). Greek pieces date from the 5th and 4th centuries BC, and Roman sculpture from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD.

The Museo Pio-Cristiano is dedicated to early-Christian antiquities. The collection of relics salvaged from the catacombs and carved sarcophagi was founded by Pius IX in 1854 and moved here from the Palazzo Laterano in 1970.

The Museo Missionario-Etnologico exhibits ethnological and anthropological artefacts brought back by missionaries from Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East.

## PINACOTECA

Inaugurated in 1932, the papal picture gallery houses some 460 paintings in 18 rooms. The magnificent collection was founded by Pius XI in the late 18th century and ranges from works of the 11th-century Byzantine and Umbrian schools to 17th- and 18th-century grand masters, a number of which Napoleon carted off to Paris in 1797. They are hung in chronological order and include works by Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Benozzo Gozzoli, Federico Barocci, Guido Reni, Guercino, Nicholas Poussin, Van Dyck and Pietro da Cortona.

There are several works by Raphael, who has a room to himself, including the *Madonna di Foligno* (Madonna of Folignano), originally kept in the **Chiesa di Santa Maria in Aracoeli** (p68); and his last painting, the magnificent *La Trasfigurazione* (Transfiguration), which was completed by his students after he died in 1520. Other highlights include Giotto's *Polittico Stefaneschi* (Stefaneschi Triptych), which was originally an altarpiece in the sacristy of St Peter's; Giovanni Bellini's *Pietà*; Leonardo da Vinci's unfinished

*San Gerolamo* (St Jerome); and Caravaggio's *Deposizione* (Deposition from the Cross).

## MUSEO GREGORIANO EGIZIO

Pope Gregory XVI founded the Egyptian Museum in 1839 to hold pieces taken from Egypt during Roman times. The collection is small but there are some fascinating exhibits, including the *Trono di Rameses II*, part of a statue of the seated king, and hieroglyphic inscriptions dating to around 2600 BC.

Room II contains some vividly painted wooden sarcophagi from around 1000 BC and a couple of mummies that will titillate the macabre-minded. On one you can see the henna-treated hair and a hole where the left eye should be; it was probably removed so that the brain could be extracted before mummification. There are also two carved-marble sarcophagi from the 6th century BC.

Room III boasts several Egyptian-style Roman sculptures, which were used as decoration at **Villa Adriana** (p277) in Tivoli, as well as a reconstruction of the villa's Serapeum (Temple of Serapis).

## MUSEO PIO-CLEMENTINO

Home to some spectacular classical statuary, the Museo Pio-Clementino is in the Belvedere Palace, to the left of the entrance complex. It's accessible through the Museo Gregoriano Egiziano or from the Cortile Ottagono (Octagonal Courtyard), itself part of the museum.

Of the mass of sculpture, two statues stand out: the *Apollo Belvedere* and the 1st-century *Laocoön*, both in the **Cortile Ottagono**. To the left as you enter the courtyard, the *Apollo Belvedere* is a 2nd-century-AD Roman copy of a 4th-century-BC Greek bronze. A beautifully proportioned representation of the sun god Apollo, it's considered one of the great masterpieces of classical sculpture. Nearby, the *Laocoön* depicts a muscular Trojan priest and his two sons in mortal struggle with two sea serpents. According to myth the snakes had been sent to slay the priest as punishment for his warning Troy about the dangers of the Trojan Horse. This statue was discovered in 1506 by men working on the Esquilino. On hearing the news, Pope Julius II sent Michelangelo and Giuliano da Sangallo to evaluate the find. They confirmed that it was the same statue that had been cited by Pliny the Elder some 1500 years earlier.

Back inside the Belvedere is the **Sala degli Animali**, filled with sculptures of all sorts of creatures. The floors of both sides of the gallery contain magnificent mosaics dating from the 4th century AD. Don't miss the delightful crab (made from rare green porphyry stone) at the far end of the room on the right and, facing it, the charming mosaic of a cat with ducks and fruit.

Beyond the Sala degli Animali are the **Galleria delle Statue**, with several important classical pieces; the **Sala delle Buste**, which contains hundreds of busts of Roman emperors and political figures; and the **Gabinetto delle Maschere**, named after the floor mosaics of theatrical masks.

In the **Sala delle Muse** (Room of the Muses), the *Torso Belvedere* is another must-see. A Greek sculpture from the 1st century BC, it was found in the Campo de' Fiori around the same time the *Laocoön* was unearthed and was much admired by Michelangelo and other Renaissance artists.

The next room, the **Sala Rotonda** (Round Room), built by Michelangelo Simonetti in 1780, was inspired by the Pantheon. It contains a number of colossal statues, including the gilded-bronze figure of *Ercole* (Hercules), and an exquisite floor mosaic featuring sea monsters and battles between Greeks and centaurs. The enormous basin in the centre of the room was found at the site of Nero's **Domus Aurea** (p95) and is made out of a single piece of red porphyry stone.

In the **Sala a Croce Greca** (Greek Cross Room) are the porphyry-stone sarcophagi of Constantine's daughter, Constantia, and his mother, St Helena.

## MUSEO CHIARAMONTI

A rogues' gallery in marble, this museum is effectively the long corridor that runs down the lower east side of the Belvedere Palace. Its walls are lined with thousands of statues representing everything from immortal gods to playful cherubs and ugly Roman patricians. Near the end of the hall, off to the right, is the **Braccio Nuovo** (New Wing), which contains a famous sculpture of Augustus and a statue depicting the Nile as a reclining god covered by 16 babies (supposedly representing the number of cubits the Nile rose when it flooded).

Visible through a gate at the end of the Museo Chiaramonti is the **Galleria Lapidaria**, which only opens to scholars on request. It contains more than 3000 Christian and



Roman inscriptions mounted into the walls of the gallery.

## MUSEO GREGORIANO ETRUSCO

On the upper level of the Belvedere (off the 18th-century Simonetti staircase), the Etruscan Museum contains artefacts unearthed in the Etruscan tombs of southern Etruria (now northern Lazio), as well as a collection of Greek vases and Roman antiquities. Of particular interest is Room II, with findings from the 7th-century-BC Regolini-Galassi tomb, discovered in 1836 south of [Cerveteri \(p267\)](#). Among the finds on display are gold jewellery and a funeral carriage with a bronze bed and funeral couch.

The [Sala dei Bronzi](#) houses the famous *Marte di Todi* (Mars of Todi), a full-length bronze statue of a warrior dating from the 4th century BC, as well as bronze figurines, statuettes of young boys, armour, hand mirrors and candelabra. Beyond it, the [Sala delle Pietre](#) (Room IV) displays sarcophagi and statues sculpted out of volcanic stone such as tufa and *peperino*. The [Sala degli Ori](#) (Rooms VII and VIII) is devoted to Etruscan jewellery, while the [Sala delle Terracotte](#) displays terracotta pieces, including some wonderfully expressive portrait heads.

Among the Greek goodies on show, look out for a 530 BC vase, signed by the Greek artist Exekias and decorated with an image of Achilles and Ajax playing draughts.

Magnificent views of Rome can be had from the last room at the end of this wing (through the Sala delle Terracotte). From here you can also get a glimpse down the full drop of Bramante's 16th-century spiral staircase, which was designed so that horses could be ridden up it.

## GALLERIA DEI CANDELABRI & GALLERIA DEGLI ARAZZI

By the time you reach these two galleries you're in the home straight, well on the way to the Stanze di Raffaello and, beyond that, the Sistine Chapel.

Originally an open loggia, the Galleria dei Candelabri is packed with classical sculpture, including several elegantly carved marble candelabras that give the gallery its name.

The corridor continues through to the Galleria degli Arazzi (Tapestry Gallery) and its 10 huge tapestries. The tapestries opposite the windows were designed by students of Raphael and woven in Brussels

in the 16th century. On the other side, the 17th-century tapestries were woven at the Barberini workshop.

## GALLERIA DELLE CARTE GEOGRAFICHE

One of the unsung heroes of the Vatican Museums, the 175m-long Map Gallery is hung with 40 huge topographical maps. They were all created between 1580 and 1583 for Pope Gregory XIII, and were based on drafts by Ignazio Danti, one of the leading cartographers of his day. The ceiling frescoes, representing the lives of saints and the history of the Church, are related geographically to the maps below them.

Next to the Map Gallery is the [Appartamento di San Pio V](#), containing some interesting Flemish tapestries, and the [Sala Sobieski](#), named after the enormous 19th-century canvas on its northern wall (depicting the victory of the Polish King John III Sobieski over the Turks in 1683). These rooms lead into the magnificent Stanze di Raffaello.

## STANZE DI RAFFAELLO

Even in the shadow of the Sistine Chapel, the Stanze di Raffaello (Raphael Rooms) stand out, their brilliance testament to the artistic genius of Raphael and the foresight of Pope Julius II, his first Roman patron. The four rooms were part of Julius' private apartment and in 1508 he commissioned the 25-year-old Raphael to decorate them.

But while they carry his name, not all the rooms were completed by Raphael: he painted the Stanza della Segnatura (Study) and the Stanza d'Eliodoro (Waiting Room), while both the Stanza dell'Incendio (Dining Room) and the Sala di Costantino (Reception Room) were decorated by students following his designs.

The [Sala di Costantino](#) is the first room you come to. Finished by Giulio Romano in 1525, five years after Raphael's death, it was used for official functions and decorated to highlight the triumph of Christianity over paganism. This theme is evident in the huge *Battaglia di Costantino contro Massenzio* (Battle of the Milvian Bridge), in which Constantine, Rome's first Christian emperor, defeats his rival Maxentius.

Leading off this *sala* are two rooms that are not traditionally counted as Raphael rooms. The [Sala dei Chiaroscuri](#) was decorated in the 16th century and used for ceremonial

purposes. Pope Gregory XIII had much of Raphael's original frescoes removed, but the ceiling, designed by Raphael and executed by his students, remains. A small door leads to the tiny [Cappella di Niccolò V](#), which was Pope Nicholas V's private chapel. The superb frescoes were painted by Fra Angelico around 1450 and depict the lives of St Stephen (upper level) and St Lawrence (lower level).

The [Stanza d'Eliodoro](#), which was used for private audiences, was painted between 1512 and 1514. It takes its name from the painting on the main wall to the right of the entrance, the *Cacciata d'Eliodoro* (Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple). An allegorical work, it tells the story of Heliodorus being killed as he tries to make off with booty stolen from the Temple in Jerusalem; the allusion, however, is to Julius II's military victory over foreign powers.

To the left of this is the *Messa di Bolsena* (Mass of Bolsena), showing Julius II paying homage to the relic of a 13th-century miracle at the lake town of Bolsena (see [p270](#)). Next is *Incontro di Leone Magno con Attila* (Encounter of Leo the Great with Attila) by Raphael and his school, and on the fourth wall the *Liberazione di San Pietro* (Liberation of St Peter). This depicts St Peter being freed from prison but is actually an allusion to Pope Leo's imprisonment after the Battle of Ravenna (also the real subject of the Attila fresco).

The [Stanza della Segnatura](#) is named after the Segnatura Gratiae et Iustitiae, the Vatican court that sat here in the 16th century. Here you'll find Raphael's earliest frescoes and his masterpiece, *La Scuola d'Atene* (The School of Athens), featuring philosophers and scholars gathered around Plato and Aristotle. The lone figure in front of the steps is believed to be Michelangelo, while the figure of Plato is said to be a portrait of Leonardo da Vinci, and Euclide (in the lower right) is Bramante. Raphael also included a self-portrait in the lower right corner (he's the second figure from the right). Opposite is *La Disputa del Sacramento* (Disputation on the Sacrament), also by Raphael.

The last of Raphael's four rooms, the [Stanza dell'Incendio](#), was completed after the death of Julius II (1513) during Leo X's papacy and is largely dedicated to the glory of his namesakes Leo III and Leo IV. The most famous work, *Incendio di Borgo* (Fire in the Borgo), depicts Leo IV extinguishing a fire by making the sign of the cross. The ceiling was painted by Raphael's master, Perugino.

From Raphael's rooms, stairs lead to the [Appartamento Borgia](#), decorated with frescoes by Bernardino Pinturicchio and the Vatican's collection of modern religious art.

## SISTINE CHAPEL

The one place in the Vatican Museums that not one of the four million annual visitors wants to miss is the Sistine Chapel (Cappella Sistina). Home to two of the world's most famous works of art – Michelangelo's *Genesis* (Creation; painted 1508–12) on the barrel-vaulted ceiling and the *Giudizio Universale* (Last Judgment; 1534–41) on the end wall – this 15th-century chapel is where the papal conclave is locked to elect the pope.

The chapel was originally built in 1484 for Pope Sixtus IV, after whom it is named, but it was Julius II who commissioned Michelangelo to decorate it in 1508. The complex and grand composition that Michelangelo devised to cover the 800 sq metres of ceiling took him four difficult and solitary years.

The frescoes down the middle represent nine scenes from the book of Genesis: *God Separating Light from Darkness*; *Creation of the Sun, Moon and Planets*; *Separation of Land from Sea*; *Creation of Adam*; *Creation of Eve*; *Temptation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden*; *Noah's Sacrifice*; *The Flood*; and the *Drunkenness of Noah*.

Michelangelo painted these in reverse order, providing critics with a remarkable illustration of the artist's development: the first, the *Drunkenness of Noah* (nearest the *Giudizio Universale*) is much more formal than his later works at the other end of the ceiling.

Probably the most famous scene is the image of the *Creation of Adam*, where God points his index finger at Adam, bringing him to life. God's swirling red cape surrounds a group of people, said to represent the generations to come. In the *Temptation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden*, Adam and Eve are shown (on the left) taking the forbidden fruit from Satan, represented by a snake with the body of a woman coiled around a tree. On the right, Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden by the red-robed, sword-wielding Angel of the Lord.

The main scenes are framed by *ignudi*, athletic male nudes, with which Michelangelo celebrates the male figure. Next to them, on the lower curved part of the vault, separated by trompe l'oeil cornices, are large figures of Hebrew prophets

and pagan sibyls. These muscular, powerful figures – especially the Delphic and Libyan sibyls – are among the most striking and dramatic images on the ceiling. Their butch physiques have led scholars to believe that Michelangelo modelled all his female figures on men. In the lunettes over the windows are the ancestors of Christ.

Michelangelo was commissioned by Clement VII to paint the *Giudizio Universale* 22 years after he finished the ceiling, although it was Clement's successor Paul III who actually chose the subject matter. From the outset it was a controversial project. Uproar broke out when two frescoes by Perugino (*Finding of Moses* and *Birth of Christ*) were destroyed to prepare the wall – it had to be replastered so that it tilted inwards to protect it from dust. Then, when it was unveiled seven years later in 1541, its dramatic, swirling mass of predominantly naked bodies caused controversy. Some years later Pope Pius IV had Daniele da Volterra, one of Michelangelo's students, add fig leaves and loincloths to the many nudes. Supporters, however, considered it one of Michelangelo's best works, surpassing all the other paintings in the chapel, including his own ceiling frescoes.

But whatever the technical judgment, there's no denying its ambition. Paul III wanted a powerful image to act as a warning to Catholics to toe the line during the Reformation (then sweeping Europe) – and that's exactly what he got. Depicting the souls of the dead being torn from their graves to face the wrath of God, it's a work of highly charged emotion that was said by some to reflect Michelangelo's tormented faith. Judge for yourself by examining his self-portrait on the shroud held by St Bartholomew, to the right of Christ.

The walls of the chapel were also painted by important Renaissance artists, including Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio and Luca Signorelli. Anywhere else, these frescoes would be the star of the show, but here they're often passed over with little more than a glance. They are, however, magnificent late-15th-century works, depicting events in the lives of Moses (to the left, looking at the *Last Judgment*) and Christ (to the right).

Particularly beautiful is Botticelli's *Temptation of Christ* and the *Cleansing of the Leper* (the second fresco on the right). On the other side, his *Punishment of the*

*Rebels* (the fifth fresco on the left) includes a self-portrait – the figure in black behind Moses on the far right. Ghirlandaio's *Calling of Peter and Andrew* (the third fresco on the right) includes among the crowd of onlookers portraits of prominent contemporary figures, while Perugino's superbly composed *Christ Giving the Keys to St Peter* (the fifth fresco on the right) also includes a self-portrait – the fifth figure from the right.

## VATICAN LIBRARY

Returning to the Quattro Cancelli area from the Sistine Chapel, you pass through the frescoed halls of the Vatican Library (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), which was founded by Nicholas V in 1450. The library contains more than 1.5 million volumes, including illuminated manuscripts, early printed books, prints and drawings, and coins. Selected items from the collection are displayed in the *Salone Sistino*.

## Vatican Gardens

To visit the *Vatican Gardens* (Giardini del Vaticano; Map pp130–1; fax 06 698 85 100; adult/child €12/8; h guided tours 11am Tue, Thu & Sat Mar–Oct, 11am Sat Nov–Feb; m Ottaviano-San Pietro) you need to book at least a week ahead by faxing the Ufficio Visite Guidate dei Musei Vaticani at the above number. Visits are in two-hour guided tours. The gardens contain fortifications, grottoes, monuments and fountains dating from the 9th century to the present day. There's also a formal Italian garden, a flower-filled French parterre and a kitchen garden that provides produce for the pontifical household.

## BORGO

The area between the Vatican and the River Tiber is known as the Borgo. Not much is left of the medieval (and earlier) quarter, as Mussolini had the area virtually razed to the ground to make way for Via della Conciliazione. However, Castel Sant'Angelo remains intact and many of the streets flanking the Vatican walls retain a medieval charm despite batteries of restaurants, hotels and pizzerias.

## CASTEL SANT'ANGELO

Map pp130–1  
% 06 681 91 11; Lungotevere Castello 50; adult/EU 18-24yr €5/2.50, plus €2 if there's an exhibition on; h 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun; G Piazza Pia; W With its chunky round keep, this castle is an instantly recognisable landmark. Begun

by Emperor Hadrian in 128 as a mausoleum for himself and his family, it was converted into a fortress for the popes in the 6th century. It was named by Pope Gregory the Great in 590, after he saw a vision of an angel above the structure heralding the end of a plague in Rome. Later, in 1277, it was linked to the Vatican palaces by a wall and passageway, often used by popes to escape in times of threat. During the 16th-century sack of Rome by Emperor Charles V, hundreds of people lived in the fortress for months.

On the upper floors, check out the lavishly decorated Sala Paolina and the Camera del Perseo and Camera di Amore e Psiche, both with friezes by Perino del Vaga. The terrace, immortalised by Puccini in his opera *Tosca*, offers great views over Rome.

## PONTE SANT'ANGELO

Map pp130–1  
G Piazza Pia  
Hadrian built the Ponte Sant'Angelo across the River Tiber in 136 to provide an approach to his mausoleum, but it was Bernini who managed to bring it to life. In the 17th century he and his pupils sculpted the figures of angels that now

line this pedestrian-only bridge. The three central arches of the bridge are part of the original structure; the end arches were restored and enlarged in 1892–94 during the construction of the Lungotevere embankments.

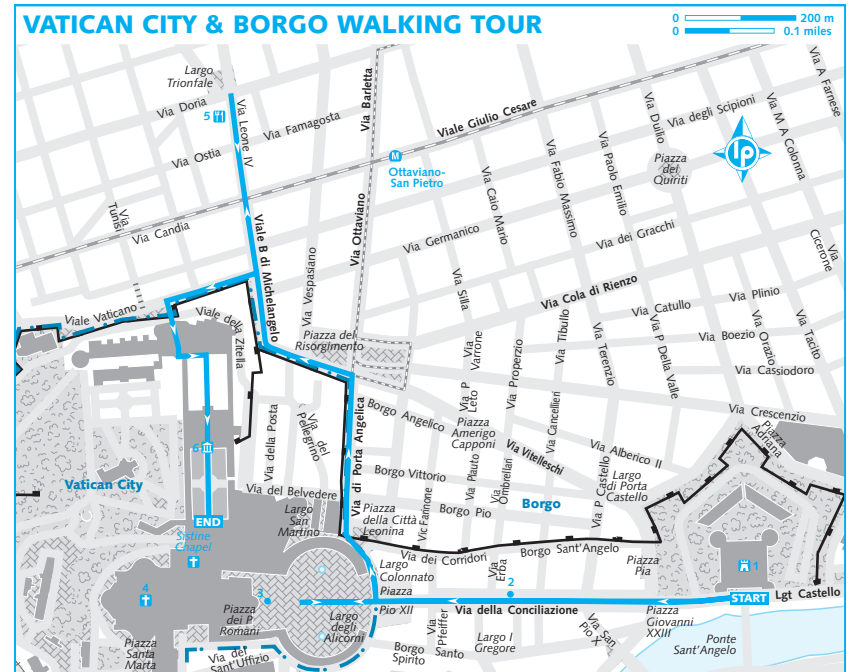
## VATICAN CITY & BORGO

### Walking Tour

**1 Castel Sant'Angelo** A squat drum of a castle, this landmark monument (opposite) was built as a mausoleum for Hadrian in the 1st century AD. Later converted into a fort, it famously served as a refuge for Pope Clement VII during the 1527 sack of Rome. Admire great views over a coffee at the upstairs bar.

### WALK FACTS

Start Castel Sant'Angelo (G 40 to Piazza Pia)  
End Vatican Museums (m Ottaviano-San Pietro)  
Distance 2km  
Duration All day  
Fuel stop Dino & Tony (p208)



**2 Via della Conciliazione** Lined with imperious Fascist buildings, Via della Conciliazione is the dramatic approach road to Piazza San Pietro and St Peter's Basilica. Mussolini had it bulldozed through the area's tightly packed medieval streets to celebrate the signing of the Lateran Treaty in 1929.

**3 Piazza San Pietro** One of the world's great urban spaces, Piazza San Pietro (p133) was designed by baroque maestro Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the mid-17th century. Flanked by two semicircular colonnades, it measures 340m by 240m at its largest, and is surrounded by 284 columns and 140 saints.

**4 St Peter's Basilica** From the instantly recognisable façade to the unbelievably lavish interior, everything about St Peter's Basilica (p128)

is designed to awe. Highlights include the *Pietà*, carved by Michelangelo when he was only 25, and Bernini's towering baldachin over the main altar. Overhead, Michelangelo's dome is one of the great feats of Renaissance engineering.

**5 Dino & Tony** One of the few genuine trattorias in this touristy area, Dino & Tony (p208) serves authentic Roman food at honest prices. The antipasti are memorable and the service is gruff and friendly.

**6 Vatican Museums** Worth a walking tour in their own right, the Vatican Museums (p133) are vast. Once you're in, and you'll need to be patient as the queues are notoriously long, you'll find yourself face to face with one of the world's great art collections. Save energy for the last stop, the Sistine Chapel (p137).

## VILLA BORGHESE & NORTHERN ROME

Drinking & Nightlife p227; Eating p209; Shopping p178; Sleeping p262

Extending north from Piazza del Popolo and Villa Borghese, Northern Rome is largely given over to business and housing. Many Italian companies have their Roman headquarters here and an address in Parioli (the district to the north of Villa Borghese) is a much sought-after status symbol. Yet the area is not without interest – Villa Borghese is a great place to relax in, and there are some fascinating museums sprinkled across the area.

The obvious starting point is Piazza del Popolo, the inspiring 16th-century square at the head of Via del Corso. From here Villa Borghese, home to one of Rome's top galleries, balloons eastwards and Via Flaminia shoots northwards, following the path of an ancient Roman road. The main attraction on this otherwise uninspiring street is Renzo Piano's extraordinary Auditorium Parco della Musica, Rome's premier concert complex. Carry on up the road and you come to Ponte Milvio, a bridge popular with star-struck young lovers and scene of a decisive Roman battle in 312. Over the river, and to the west, the Stadio Olimpico is Rome's impressive football stadium.

On the eastern side of Villa Borghese, Via Salaria, the old Roman *sale* (salt) road, is now the heart of a smart residential and business district. Among the embassies and town houses near Piazza Mincio, you'll come across a pocket of exuberant post-WWII Art Nouveau buildings in an area known as Coppede. Beloved as they are today, these *palazzi* were much maligned in their day, and Coppede, the architect who designed many of them, killed himself in despair.

To the north of Via Salaria, the vast Villa Ada park expands northwards; to the south, Via Nomentana traverses acres of housing as it heads northeastwards out of the city. Along Via Nomentana, Villa Torlonia is a captivating park, and the Basilica di Sant'Agnes fuori le Mura claims Rome's oldest Christian mosaic.

Getting to Piazza del Popolo is easy – take metro line A to Flaminio. From here tram 3 trundles along Via Flaminia. Buses 60, 84 and 90 cover Via Nomentana, while for Via Salaria you can catch bus 63, 86, 92, 217 or 360.

### VILLA BORGHESE & AROUND

Villa Borghese dates to the 17th century when, in an outburst of papal nepotism, Pope Paul V made his nephew Scipione a cardinal and gave him a sizable chunk of the city, just outside the Aurelian Wall. There, between 1605 and 1614, Scipione built his *casino* (villa) to hold his enormous collection of paintings and sculpture (now displayed in the stunning Museo e Galleria Borghese), and had the grounds laid out by leading landscape designers such as Jacob More from Edinburgh.

Peppered around the park are, among other things, a zoo, the city's largest modern art gallery and a stunning Etruscan museum.

To get to Villa Borghese you can walk from Piazza del Popolo or Piazza di Spagna, or get bus 116, 52 or 53 from Via Vittorio Veneto near Barberini metro station.

## top picks

### VILLA BORGHESE & NORTHERN ROME

- Museo e Galleria Borghese (below)
- Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia (p153)
- Chiesa di Santa Maria del Popolo (p154)
- Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna (p153)
- Auditorium Parco della Musica (p155)

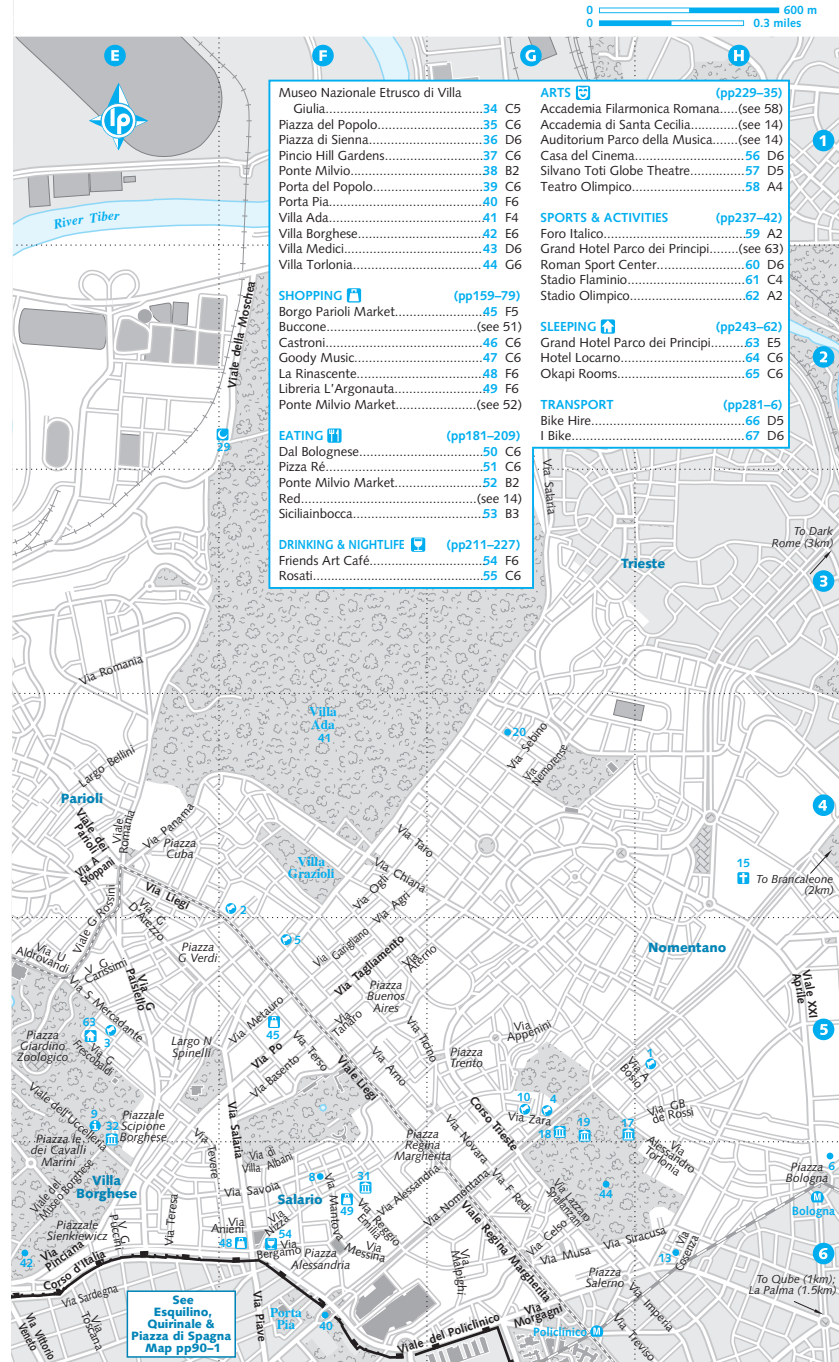
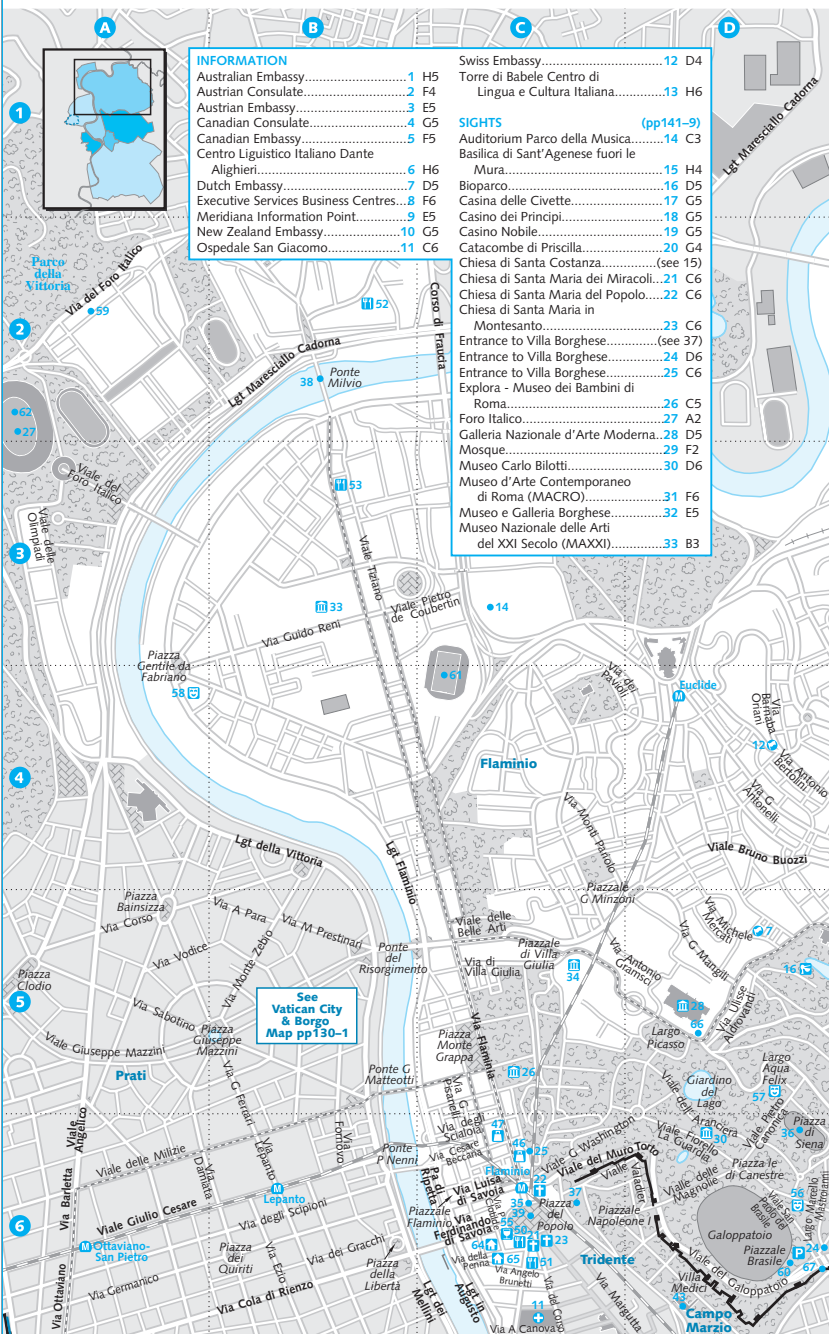
### MUSEO E GALLERIA BORGHESE

Map pp150–1

☎ 06 3 28 10; www.galleriaborghese.it; Piazzale Scipione Borghese 5; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18–25yr €8.50/2/5.25; ⏰ 9am–7pm Tue–Sun, prebooking necessary; 📍 Via Pinciana; ♿ If you only have time (or inclination) for one art gallery in Rome, make it this one. Housing the 'queen of all private art collections', it provides the perfect introduction to Renaissance and baroque art without ever overwhelming as some of the capital's larger and more famous museums do. It's an absolute must-see, well worth the two-minute phone call you'll need to make to book a ticket. In order to limit numbers, visitors are admitted at two-hourly intervals, so after you've picked up your prebooked ticket you'll have to wait for your allocated entry time.



# VILLA BORGHESE & NORTHERN ROME



# top picks

## MUSEO E GALLERIA BORGHESE

- **Ratto di Proserpina** by Gian Lorenzo Bernini
- **Apollo e Dafne** by Gian Lorenzo Bernini
- **Venere Vincitrice** by Antonio Canova
- **Ragazzo col Canestro di Frutta** by Caravaggio
- **Amor Sacro e Amor Profano** by Titian

The collection, including works by Caravaggio, Bernini, Botticelli and Raphael, was formed by Cardinal Scipione Borghese (1579–1633), the most knowledgeable and ruthless art collector of his day. A patron of Caravaggio and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, he stopped at nothing to get what he wanted: he had the fashionable painter Cavaliere d'Arpino flung into jail in order to confiscate his canvases, and Domenichino arrested to force him to surrender *The Hunt of Diana*.

Housing his spectacular cache is the Casino Borghese, whose neoclassical look is the result of a 17th-century revamp of Scipione's original villa. But while the house remained intact, the collection did not. Much of the antique statuary was carted off to the Louvre by Napoleon, whose sister Paolina was married to the son of Prince Marcantonio Borghese. Other pieces were sold off over time.

The entire collection and the mansion were acquired by the Italian State in 1902 but it was only in 1997 that it reopened to the public after a 13-year restoration.

The collection is divided into two parts: the ground-floor museum, with its superb sculptures, intricate Roman floor mosaics and over-the-top frescoes; and the upstairs picture gallery. On the ground floor, in the entrance hall, are floor mosaics of fighting gladiators dating from the 4th century and a *Satiro Combattente* (Fighting Satyr) from the 2nd century (restored by Bernini). High on the wall is a gravity-defying bas-relief, *Marco Curzio a Cavallo*, of a horse and rider falling into the void of the room. It was created by Pietro Bernini (Gian Lorenzo Bernini's father) by combining ancient fragments and modern pieces.

Moving into Sala I, and you find Antonio Canova's daring depiction of Napoleon's sister, Paolina Bonaparte Borghese, reclining topless as *Venere Vincitrice* (Victorious Venus; 1805–08). Apparently she had quite

a reputation, and when asked how she could have posed almost naked she's said to have replied that it wasn't cold.

But it's Gian Lorenzo Bernini's spectacular sculptures – flamboyant depictions of pagan myths – that really take the breath away. Just look at Pluto's hand pressing into the seemingly soft flesh of Persephone's thigh in the *Ratto di Proserpina* (Rape of Persephone; 1621–22) in Sala IV, or at Daphne's hands morphing into leaves in the swirling *Apollo e Dafne* (1622–25) in Sala III.

Other works by the master include a grim-faced and muscular  *Davide* (1624), thought to be a self-portrait, in Sala II and two lesser works in Sala VI: *Enea e Anchise* (Aeneas and Anchises; 1690–20) and *La Verità* (Truth; 1645–52), a rather strange later work.

The 2nd-century *Satiro Danzante* (Dancing Satyr) in Sala VIII is a Roman copy of an earlier Greek work. But it's the six Caravaggios in this room that are the star turn. These include a dissipated-looking *Bacchus* (1592–95); the strangely beautiful *La Madonna dei Palafrenieri* (Madonna with Serpent; 1605–06); *San Giovanni Battista* (St John the Baptist; 1609–10), probably Caravaggio's last work; the much-loved *Ragazzo col Canestro di Frutta* (Boy with a Basket of Fruit; 1593–95); and  *Davide con la Testa di Golia* (David with the Head of Goliath; 1609–10), a dramatic image where Goliath's severed head is said to be a self-portrait.

Upstairs, the picture collection represents the best of the Tuscan, Venetian, Umbrian and northern European schools. In Sala IX you'll find Raphael's *La Deposizione di Cristo* (Christ Being Taken Down from the Cross; 1507), and his earlier portraits *Ritratto d'uomo* (Portrait of a Man; 1502) and the charming *Dama con Liocorno* (Young Woman with Unicorn; 1506). In the same room are the superb *Adorazione del Bambino* (Adoration of the Christ Child; 1495) by Fra Bartolomeo and Perugino's *Madonna con Bambino* (Madonna and Child; first quarter of the 16th century). Correggio's rather erotic *Danae* (1530–31) is in Sala X, as is Cranach's *Venere e Amore che Reca Il Favo do Miele* (Venus and Cupid with Honeycomb; 1531), with its angel surrounded by bees.

Moving on, Sala XIV boasts two self-portraits of Bernini – one as a young man in 1623 and one painted in 1635 – and Sala XVIII contains two significant works by Reubens: *Pianto sul Cristo Morto* (Lamentation over the Dead Christ; 1602) and

*Susanna e I Vecchioni* (Susanna and the Elders; 1605–07). However, these almost pale into insignificance when seen next to Titian's early masterpiece, *Amor Sacro e Amor Profano* (Sacred and Profane Love; 1514) in Sala XX.

## VILLA BORGHESE Map pp150–1

entrances at Porta Pinciana, Piazzale Flaminio & Pincio (above Piazza del Popolo); h dawn-dusk; g Porta Pinciana

Formerly Cardinal Scipione Borghese's private playground, Villa Borghese is Rome's most famous park. A popular spot for joggers, cyclists, strollers and smoochers, it has kilometres of shaded avenues, hedged walks, planted flowerbeds, gravel paths and roads. The reserved, English-style *Giardino del Lago* in the centre was laid out in the late 18th century, as was *Piazza di Siena*, an amphitheatre used for Rome's top equestrian event in May.

Bike hire is available on Via delle Belle Arti, near the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, and at various other points in the park. Typically, you'll pay €3 per hour for a bike.

## BIOPARCO Map pp150–1

% 06 360 82 11; www.bioparco.it in Italian; Viale del Giardino Zoologico 1; adult/3-12yr €8.50/6.50, incl reptile house €11/9; h 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Mar; g Bioparco

Amazing but true – in 2006, Rome's zoo was Italy's 10th most-visited museum. Some 747,000 people traipsed round the far-from-inspiring 18-hectare site, gawping at the predictable collection of monkeys, elephants, lions and snakes. Quite frankly there are better ways to spend your money, but if your kids are driving you bonkers or you're crying out for a break from classical art, it's a thought.

## MUSEO CARLO BILOTTI Map pp150–1

% 06 820 59 127; www.museocarlobilotti.it; Viale Fiorello La Guardia; adult/child €4.50/2.50; h 9am-7pm Tue-Sun; g Porta Pinciana

The art collection of billionaire business magnate Carlo Bilotti is housed here, in the Orangery of Villa Borghese. It's a small collection (only 22 pieces), but it's interesting and well presented with explanatory panels in English and Italian. Paintings range from a Warhol portrait of Bilotti's wife and daughter to 18 works by Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978), one of Italy's most important 20th-century artists. There's also a fine

selection of landscapes by Alessandro Poma (1874–1960).

## GALLERIA NAZIONALE D'ARTE MODERNA Map pp150–1

% 06 322 98 221; www.gnam.arti.beniculturali.it; Viale delle Belle Arti 131, entrance for visitors with disabilities at Via Antonio Gramsci 73; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-25yr €6.50/free/3.25; h 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun; g Viale delle Belle Arti; vvv

Not on most people's hit list, the GNAM is well worth a visit. Here, in a vast *belle époque* palace, you'll find works by some of the most important exponents of modern Italian art. There are canvases by the *macchiaioli* (the Italian Impressionists) and the futurists (including Boccioni and Balla), as well as major works by Modigliani and De Chirico. International artists are also represented, with works by Degas, Cezanne, Kandinsky, Klimt, Mondrian and Henry Moore.

The wing to the left of the entrance has been transformed into a sculpture gallery. Pieces in dynamic white marble, such as Canova's majestic *Ercole* (Hercules), contrast dramatically against walls painted in rich, solid colours.

Make sure you take the opportunity to have a drink in the gallery's charming courtyard café.

## MUSEO NAZIONALE ETRUSCO DI VILLA GIULIA Map pp150–1

% 06 322 65 71; www.ticketeria.it; Piazzale di Villa Giulia 9; adult/EU under 18yr & over 65yr/EU 18-25yr €4/free/2; h 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun; g Viale delle Belle Arti

If you're planning on visiting Lazio's Etruscan sites (see p264), or even if you're not, this is the ideal place to bone up on Etruscan history. Italy's finest collection of pre-Roman treasures is bilingually labelled and considerately presented in Pope Julius III's 16th-century pleasure palace. The impressive villa and gardens were designed by a number of architects but owe most to Vignola, Vasari and the artist Ammannat. Michelangelo also chipped in before getting on the wrong side of the irascible pope. It has pretty frescoed loggias and a much-imitated *nymphaeum*.

There are thousands of exhibits here: from extraordinary bronze figurines and black *bucchero* tableware to temple decorations, terracotta vases and even the remains



of a horse-drawn chariot. Most of the items come from Etruscan burial tombs, many of which are in the surrounding Lazio region.

Highlights include the recently restored polychrome terracotta statue of *Apollo* found at Veio and the *Sarcophago degli Sposi* (Sarcophagus of the Betrothed; Sala XI in the second building) taken from a tomb at *Cerveteri* (p267). Both date to the 6th century BC. The finely sculpted sarcophagus was made not for royals, but for a regular husband and wife, and is adorned with a sculpture of the happy couple reclining on its lid.

There is also a dazzling display of sophisticated Etruscan (and later) jewellery.

## PIAZZA DEL POPOLO & AROUND

**PIAZZA DEL POPOLO** Map pp150–1

Flaminio

Perch yourself on a bench in this vast, vibrant square and you'll see all of Rome pass by: commuters rushing to the metro, excitable adolescents, dressed-to-kill shoppers, flagging tourists, buskers and black-clad *carabinieri*.

The piazza was laid out in 1538 at the point of convergence of three roads (Via di Ripetta, Via del Corso and Via del Babuino) which form a trident at what was Rome's northern entrance. In fact, this part of central Rome is today known as Il Tridente.

Characterised by Carlo Rainaldi's twin 17th-century baroque churches, *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Miracoli* and *Chiesa di Santa Maria in Montesanto*, the square was redesigned in neoclassical style by Giuseppe Valadier in 1823.

On the northern flank, the inner face of the *Porta del Popolo* was decorated by Bernini to celebrate Queen Christina of Sweden's defection to Catholicism. In the centre is an *obelisk* brought by Augustus from Heliopolis, in ancient Egypt, and moved here from the Circo Massimo in the mid-16th century. To the east a ramp leads up to the *Pincio Hill Gardens* (right).

## CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA DEL POPOLO

Map pp150–1

06 361 08 36; Piazza del Popolo; 7am–noon & 4–7pm Mon–Sat, 8am–1.30pm & 4.30–7.30pm Sun;

Flaminio

A magnificent repository of art, this is one of Rome's earliest and richest Renaissance churches. The first chapel was built here in

1099 to exorcise the ghost of Nero, who was secretly buried on this spot and whose malicious spirit was supposed to haunt the area. Some 400 years later, in 1472, it was given a major overhaul by Pope Sixtus IV. Pinturicchio was called in to decorate the pope's family chapel, the Cappella Delle Rovere (the first on the right) and, in 1508, to paint a series of frescoes on the ceiling of the apse, itself designed by Bramante. Before you leave the apse take a second to look at the stained-glass windows: crafted by Frenchman Guillaume de Marcillat, they were Rome's first.

Raphael designed the *Cappella Chigi* (the second on the left), dedicated to his patron Agostino Chigi, but never lived to see it completed. Bernini finished the job for him more than 100 years later, contributing statues of Daniel and Habakkuk. The most famous feature, however, is the 17th-century mosaic of a kneeling skeleton, placed there to remind the living of the inevitable end.

But the church's principal calling card is the *Cappella Cerasi* (to the left of the main altar), with its two Caravaggios: the *Conversione di San Paolo* (Conversion of St Paul) and the *Crocifissione di San Pietro* (Crucifixion of St Peter). Of the two, it's the latter that strikes the most, if for nothing else than the brilliant way in which the artist shows the banal awkwardness of the situation. St Peter seems more embarrassed by his position than in pain as three executioners struggle to raise the upturned cross.

## PINCIO HILL GARDENS

Map pp150–1

Flaminio

Overlooking Piazza del Popolo, the 19th-century Pincio Hill Gardens are named after the Pinci family, who owned this part of Rome in the 4th century. There's not much to do up here other than enjoy the lovely views and loaf around the shaded paths. From here you can either strike off to explore Villa Borghese or head up to the *Chiesa della Trinità dei Monti* (p99) at the top of the Spanish Steps.

## VILLA MEDICI

Map pp150–1

06 6 76 11; www.villamedici.it in French & Italian; Viale Trinità dei Monti 1; open for events;

Spagna

Enjoying one of the best addresses in Rome, Villa Medici has been home to the French Academy since 1801. It was originally built

for Cardinal Ricci da Montepulciano in 1540, but Ferdinando dei Medici bought it in 1576 and it remained in Medici hands until Napoleon acquired it and gave it to the French Academy.

The only way to get inside is to visit one of the regular art exhibitions held here. You can, however, visit the *gardens* (admission €7; guided tours in Italian/French 10.30am & 11.40am Sat & Sun) at the weekend.

## FLAMINIO

### AUDITORIUM PARCO DELLA MUSICA

Map pp150–1

06 802 41 281; www.auditorium.com; Viale Pietro de Coubertin 10; guided tours adult/under 26yr/over 65yr €9/5/7; 11am–8pm Mon–Sat, 10am–8pm Sun, tours depart hourly 11.30am–4.30pm; Viale Tiziano

Inaugurated in December 2002, Rome's €140 million concert complex has proved a musical and architectural success. Architect Renzo Piano's ground-breaking design features three grey, buglike concert halls set round an outdoor 3000-seat amphitheatre and the remains of a 300 BC Roman villa, discovered shortly after construction work began. The complex also boasts one of the capital's best-stocked CD and music bookshops. Guided tours cover the concert halls, amphitheatre (known as the *cavea*) and enormous foyer area, itself home to a small archaeology museum. For more on the Auditorium see p231.

## EXPLORA – MUSEO DEI BAMBINI DI ROMA

Map pp150–1

06 361 37 76; www.mdb.r.it; Via Flaminia 82; adult/child €6/7; visits depart at 10am, noon, 3pm & 5pm Tue–Sun Jul & Sep, noon, 3pm & 5pm Tue–Sun Aug, 9.30am, 11.30am, 3pm & 5pm Tue–Fri, 10am, noon, 3pm & 5pm Sat & Sun Oct–Jun;

Flaminio

Rome's only dedicated kids' museum, Explora is aimed at the under-12s. It's set up as a miniature town where children can play at being grown-ups. With everything from a hospital outpatients' department to a TV studio, it's a hands-on, feet-on, full-on experience that your nippers will love. And it runs on solar power.

In order to control the number of visitors, all visits are limited to 1½ hours, with entry times as detailed above. Booking is advisable on weekdays, essential on weekends.

## MUSEO NAZIONALE DELLE ARTI DEL XXI SECOLO (MAXXI)

Map pp150–1

06 321 01 81; Via Guido Reni 10; admission free; exhibitions 11am–7pm Tue–Sun; Via Flaminia

Housed in a former army barracks, and built to an avant-garde design by Anglo-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, MAXXI is one of two modern art galleries that the city authorities hoped would electrify Rome's contemporary art scene (the other being *MACRO*, p157). Unfortunately, it's not running at full tilt yet, opening only for temporary exhibitions by contemporary Italian and international artists.

## PONTE MILVIO

Map pp150–1

Ponte Milvio  
A pretty footbridge with a market on its northern side, Ponte Milvio was the scene of one of the great events in Roman history: Constantine's defeat of Maxentius in 312. These days, it's a favourite with love-struck teenagers who come here to leave padlocks chained to the lampposts as a sign of their undying *amore*. It was first built in 109 BC to carry Via Flaminia over the Tiber and survived intact until 1849, when Garibaldi's troops blew it up to stop advancing French soldiers. Pope Pius IX had it rebuilt a year later.

## FORO ITALICO

Map pp130–1

Viale del Foro Italico; Lungotevere Maresciallo Cadorna

At the foot of Monte Mario, the Foro Italico is an impressive Fascist-era sports complex. Designed by the architect Enrico Del Debbio, it remains much as it was originally conceived. A 17m-high marble *obelisk*, inscribed with the words 'Mussolini Dux', stands at the beginning of a broad avenue leading down to the *Stadio dei Marmi*, a running track surrounded by 60 marble nudes, and the *Stadio Olimpico* (p240), Rome's 80,000-seat football stadium. The latter was a later addition, built in 1960 for the Olympic Games and revamped for the 1990 World Cup. It's now home to Rome's two football teams.

## NOMENTANO

Map pp150–1

Piazzale Porta Pia; Via XX Settembre

Porta Pia was Michelangelo's last architectural work, commissioned in 1561. Three centuries later, in 1870, it was the scene of fighting as Italian troops breached the



surrounding walls to wrest the city from the pope and incorporate it into a unified Italy.

The concrete monstrosity just inside the city walls is the British Embassy. Opposite it is Villa Paolina, the residence of Napoleon's sister Paolina Bonaparte between 1816 and 1824 and now the French embassy to the Holy See.

### VILLA TORLONIA [Map pp150–1](#)

Via Nomentana 70; **h** 9am–7pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 9am–5pm Tue–Sun Oct–Mar; **g** Via Nomentana  
Less than 1km from Porta Pia, this splendid 19th-century park once belonged to the family of Prince Giovanni Torlonia (1756–1829), a banker and landowner. His large neoclassical villa, the **Casino dei Principi**, later became the Mussolini family home (1925–43) and, towards the end of WWII, Allied headquarters (1944–47). These days it's used to stage temporary exhibitions.

The park's most eye-catching building is the **Casino Nobile** (% 06 820 59 127; www.museivilla.torlonia.it; adult/child €4.50/2.50; **h** 9am–7pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Mar & Oct, 9am–4.30pm Tue–Sun Nov–Feb), a stately pile designed by the neoclassical architect Giuseppe Valadier. Inside, in the luxuriously decorated interior, you can admire the Torlonia family's impressive collection of sculpture alongside period furniture and paintings.

To the northeast, the **Casina delle Civette** (% 06 820 59 127; www.museivillatorlonia.it; adult/child €3/1.50; **h** 9am–7pm Tue–Sun Apr–Sep, 9am–5.30pm Tue–Sun Mar & Oct, 9am–4.30pm Tue–Sun Nov–Feb) is a bizarre mix of Swiss cottage, Gothic castle and twee farmhouse decorated in Art Nouveau style. Built between 1840 and 1930, and gutted by a fire in 1991, it was opened as a museum dedicated to stained glass in 1997. Alongside the house's original windows, which include works by leading Italian artist Duilio Cambelotti, there are more than 100 designs and sketches for stained glass, decorative tiles, parquet floors and woodwork.

The ticket office for both the Casino Nobile and the Casina delle Civette is just inside the Via Nomentana entrance to the park.

### BASILICA DI SANT'AGNESE FUORI LE MURA & CHIESA DI SANTA COSTANZA [Map pp150–1](#)

% 06 861 08 40; Via Nomentana 349; **h** 9am–noon & 4–6pm Tue–Sat, 4–6pm Sun; **g** Via Nomentana  
Some way off the traditional tourist trail, this medieval religious complex is a gold

mine. The apse of the 4th-century **Basilica di Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura**, built by Constantine, has a glittering 7th-century mosaic depicting St Agnes standing on the flames that failed to kill her. According to tradition, the 13-year-old Agnes was burnt at the stake by Emperor Domitian but remained miraculously untouched by the flames. Unfortunately, she was subsequently beheaded on the spot where the **Chiesa di Sant'Agnese in Agone** (p78) now stands in Piazza Navona and buried in the atmospheric, crowd-free **catacombs** (admission €5; **h** closed Jan) beneath this church.

In the same complex, across the convent courtyard, is the **Chiesa di Santa Costanza**. Built as a mausoleum for Constantine's daughters, Constance and Helen, the pretty circular building has a dome supported by 12 pairs of granite columns. The covered walkway outside of the arches has a barrel-vaulted ceiling that is covered with beautiful 4th-century mosaics, said by some to be the world's oldest Christian mosaics. There were once mosaics in the dome but they were destroyed by Paul V in 1622.

## SALARIO & BEYOND

### CATACOMBE DI PRISCILLA [Map pp150–1](#)

% 06 862 06 272; Via Salaria 430; admission €5; **h** 9am–noon & 2–5pm Tue–Sun Feb–Dec; **g** Via Salaria

These catacombs originally belonged to the patrician Acilii family in the 1st century AD. They were expanded in the 3rd and 4th centuries and became a high-society burial ground with appropriate upmarket decoration, quite a lot of which has survived. Several popes were buried in the catacombs between 309 and 555. A funerary chapel known as the **Cappella Greca** boasts good stucco decoration and some well-preserved late-3rd-century biblical frescoes.

### MOSQUE [Map pp150–1](#)

% 06 808 21 67; Viale della Moschea; admission free; **h** 9–11.30am Wed & Sat; **g** Viale della Moschea

To the northwest of Villa Ada, Paolo Portoghesi's vast postmodernist mosque sits amid the greenery of the posh Parioli district. One of Europe's largest mosques – it extends for some 30,000 sq metres – it was inaugurated in 1995, 11 years after the first stone was laid in 1984. It's open daily for

Muslims to pray and on Wednesday and Saturday mornings for visitors.

### MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA DI ROMA (MACRO) [Map pp150–1](#)

% 06 671 07 04 00; www.macro.roma.museum; admission €1; Via Reggio Emilia 54; **h** 9am–7pm Tue–Sun; **g** Via Nizza

Contemporary art displays in a former brewery are what you pay for here. A slick, light-filled gallery, it was designed by Odile Decq to house an interesting collection of post-1960s art that includes works by all of Italy's important post-WWII artists. Temporary exhibitions are also held here, many of which highlight the works of emerging international artists.

There's a second MACRO gallery in Testaccio – the **MACRO Future** ([Map pp108–9](#); % 06 574 26 47; Piazza Orazio Giustiniani 4; admission free; **h** 4pm–midnight Tue–Sun).

### VILLA ADA [Map pp130–1](#)

entrances at Via Salaria & Via Ponte Salario;

**g** Via Salaria

If you're in this neck of the woods and you need a breather, Villa Ada is the place. A big

rambling park with wooded paths, lawns, lakes and lawns, it was once the private property of King Vittorio Emanuele III. Outdoor concerts are held here in summer.

## VILLA BORGHESE & NORTHERN ROME

### Walking Tour

**1 Piazza del Popolo** Theatrical and exuberant, Piazza del Popolo (p154) is a favourite hang-out for Romans of all ages and a popular venue for political rallies and open-air concerts. In the centre rises a 3000-year-old obelisk, while the twin churches of Santa Maria dei Miracoli and Santa Maria in Montesanto mark its main entrance.

### WALK FACTS

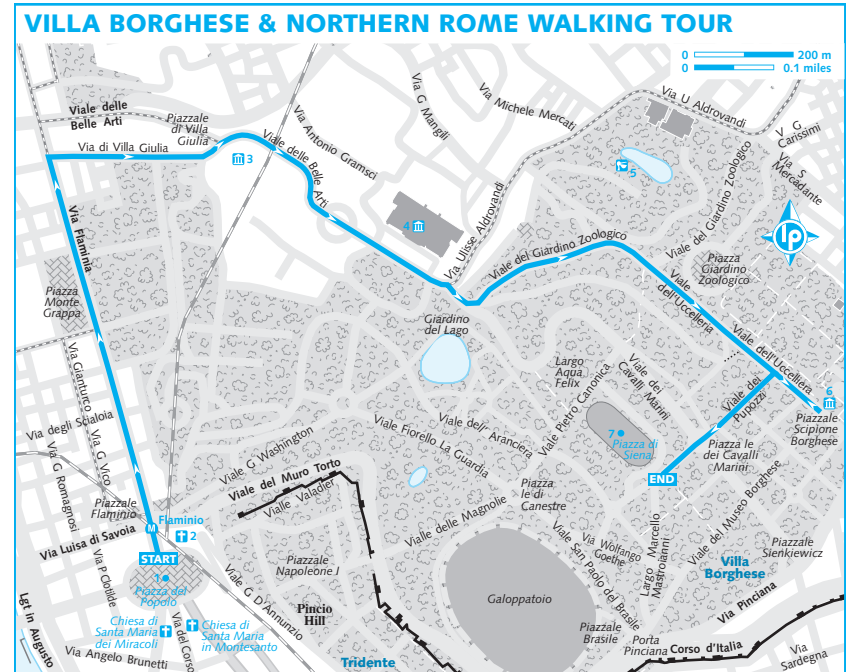
**Start** Piazza del Popolo (m Flaminio)

**End** Piazza di Siena (g 116 to Villa Borghese)

**Distance** 2km

**Duration** Three hours

**Fuel stop** A picnic at Piazza di Siena



## 2 Chiesa di Santa Maria del Popolo

Standing on the site where Nero was said to be secretly buried, this sumptuous Renaissance church (p154) is one of Rome's richest. Inside, you'll find frescoes, mosaics and paintings by a who's who of big-name artists including Pinturicchio, Raphael, Bernini and Caravaggio.

## 3 Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia

Italy's finest collection of Etruscan treasures is housed in this beautiful Renaissance villa (p153) on the edge of Villa Borghese. Highlights to look out for include a terracotta statue of *Apollo* and the 6th-century-BC *Sarcophago degli Sposi*, taken from a tomb in Cerveteri.

## 4 Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna

For a change of period, Rome's premier modern art gallery (p153) is the obvious choice. Get past the neoclassical bombast of the exterior and you'll discover an excellent collection, with works by the Italian *macchiaioli* painters, early-20th-century futurists and a host of international artists.

**5 Bioparco** Right in the heart of Villa Borghese, the city zoo (p153) won't appeal to everyone but it's a sure-fire kid-pleaser. There's the usual assembly of monkeys, giraffes, lions and elephants and a number of snack bars where you can buy overpriced *panini* (bread rolls) to feed the ducks.

**6 Museo e Galleria Borghese** Home to what's hailed as the 'queen of all private art collections', this gallery (p149) is one of Rome's must-see sights. The Bernini sculpture on display here is quite staggering and the rich painting collection includes works by Caravaggio, Botticelli and Raphael. Remember to book your tickets in advance.

**7 Piazza di Siena** This 18th-century arena (p153) is used to stage Rome's top showjumping event in May. For the rest of the year, it's a good place to flop and regain your strength. Bring your own picnic and watch the impromptu footy games and lunchtime joggers.

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