

Welcome to Rome

An ancient superpower turned modern metropolis, Rome is a mesmerising mix of haunting ruins, epic monuments and awe-inspiring art. Its romantic streets are made for leisurely exploring and its elegant piazzas provide the perfect backdrop for memorable al fresco nights.

Rome was founded more than 3000 years ago and over the centuries it has acquired a historical and artistic heritage that few cities can rival. Ancient icons such as the Colosseum, Roman Forum and Pantheon recall its golden age as the *caput mundi* (capital of the world), while Michelangelo's frescoes and Caravaggio's canvases testify to its starring role in the Renaissance and baroque eras. Priceless treasures adorn world-class museums, and celebrated masterpieces dazzle in the city's great art-rich churches, culminating in the overpowering spectacle that is St Peter's Basilica. Walk around the centre of town and without even trying you'll come across works by the big-name giants of Western art.

But a trip to Rome is as much about lapping up the dolce vita lifestyle as gorging on art and culture. Eating in boisterous, neighbourhood trattorias, whiling away hours at streetside cafes, peoplewatching on theatrical piazzas – these are all an integral part of the Roman experience.

haunting ruins, epic monuments and awe-inspiring art



Monumental basili-

cas, towering ruins,

thumping nightlife.

traditional trattorias and

tangled lanes, ochre

boho vibe.

palazzi (palaces) and a

⊘Via Appia

Antica

beautiful, historic

Via Appia Antica and

ancient catacombs.

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Lonely Planet's

Rome

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Plan Your Trip

This Year in Rome



Rome's calendar bursts with events, ranging from traditional neighbourhood shindigs and saints' days to shopping bonanzas, catwalk parades and major cultural festivals.

Above: Natale di Roma (p9)



June

Summer has arrived and with it hot weather and the Italian school holidays.

2 June

🗱 Festa della Repubblica

A big military parade along Via dei Fori Imperiali is the highlight of ceremonial events held to commemorate the birth of the Italian Republic in 1946. Presiding is the President of the Republic and other assorted worthies.

Mid-June

☆ Isola del Cinema

The Isola Tiberina provides the picturesque backdrop for this open-air film festival (www.isoladelcinema.com), which screens a range of Italian and international films with a focus on independent productions.

23 June

🗱 Festa di San Giovanni

The feast day of St John the Baptist is commemorated around the Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano. Traditionally, stewed snails and *porchetta* (herbed suckling pig) are served

29 June

* Festa dei Santi Pietro e Paolo

Rome celebrates its two patron saints, Peter and Paul, with a mass at St Peter's Basilica and a street fair on Via Ostiense near the Basilica di San Paolo Fuori-le-Mura

Late June

☆ Roma Incontro II Mondo

Villa Ada (www.villaada.org) is transformed into a colourful multiethnic village for this popular annual event. There's a laid-back party vibe and an excellent program of concerts ranging from Roman rap to jazz and world music.



Summer

A Lungo il Tevere

Nightly crowds converge on the river Tiber for this popular summer-long event. Stalls, clubs, bars, restaurants and dance floors line the river bank as Rome's nightlife goes al fresco. VYN WILLIAMS / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO @/ARTWORK BY ALBA GONZALES



Colosseum

A monument to raw, merciless power, the Colosseum (Colosseo) is the most thrilling of Rome's ancient sights. It was here that gladiators met in mortal combat and condemned prisoners fought off wild beasts in front of baying, bloodthirsty crowds. Two thousand years on and it's Italy's top tourist attraction, drawing more than five million visitors a year.







Built by Vespasian (r AD 69–79) in the grounds of Nero's vast Domus Aurea complex, it was inaugurated in AD 80, eight years after it had been commissioned. To mark the occasion, Vespasian's son and successor Titus (r 79–81) staged games that lasted 100 days and nights, during which 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 50,000-seat arena was originally known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, and although it was Rome's most fearsome arena it wasn't the biggest – the Circo Massimo could hold up to 250,000 people. 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.

Interior of the Colosseum

With the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Colosseum was abandoned and gradually became overgrown. In the Middle Ages it served as a fortress for two of the city's warrior families, the Frangipani and the Annibaldi. Later, during the Renaissance and baroque periods, it was plundered of its precious travertine, and marble stripped from it was used to make huge palaces such as Palazzo Venezia, Palazzo Barberini and Palazzo Cancelleria.

More recently, pollution and vibrations caused by traffic and the metro have taken their toll. It has recently undergone a €25-million clean-up, the first in its 2000-year history.

Exterior

The outer walls have three levels of arches, framed by Ionic, Doric and Corinthian

