

Welcome to Rome

A heady mix of haunting sights, awe-inspiring art and vibrant street life, Italy's Eternal City is one of the world's most beautiful capitals.

Historical Legacies

The result of 3000 years of ad hoc urban development, Rome's cityscape is an exhilarating spectacle. Ancient icons recall Rome's time as the fearsome hub of the Roman Empire, the *caput mundi* (capital of the world), while catacombs and clandestine churches hark back to the early days of Christianity. Lording it over the Vatican, St Peter's Basilica is the greatest of the city's basilicas, a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. Elsewhere, ornate piazzas and elaborate churches add a baroque flourish to the city's streets.

Artistic Riches

Few cities can rival Rome's artistic heritage. Throughout history, the city has starred in the great upheavals of Western art, drawing the top artists of the day and inspiring them to push the boundaries of creative achievement. The result is a city awash with priceless treasures. Ancient statues adorn world-class museums, Byzantine mosaics and Renaissance frescoes dazzle in the city's art-rich churches, baroque facades flank medieval piazzas. Walk around the centre and you'll come across masterpieces by the giants of the artistic pantheon – sculptures by Michelangelo, canvases by Caravaggio, Raphael frescoes and fountains by Bernini.

Living the Lifestyle

A trip to Rome is as much about lapping up the *dolce vita* (sweet life) as gorging on art and culture. It's about relaxing into the city's rhythms and idling around the picturesque streets. Whiling away hours at streetside cafes and people-watching on pretty piazzas are an integral part of the experience. The tempo rises as the heat of the day fades into the evening cool and the fashionably dressed *aperitivo* (aperitif) crowd descends on the city's bars and cafes. Restaurants and trattorias hum with activity and cheerful hordes mill around before heading off to cocktail bars and late-night clubs.

Roman Feasting

Eating out is one of Rome's great pleasures and the combination of romantic al fresco settings and superlative food is a guarantee of good times. For fine dining and five-star wine there are any number of refined restaurants, but for a truly Roman meal search out the city's boisterous pizzerias and convivial trattorias. These are where locals indulge their passion for crispy pizzas, humble but delicious pastas, and cool white wine from the nearby Castelli Romani hills.



Why I Love Rome

By Duncan Garwood, Author

I'm a walker and I love exploring Rome on foot, losing myself in the tangled lanes of the historic centre and neighbourhoods like Trastevere and Monti. I love the aroma of freshly ground coffee that comes out of the cafes and sharing a carafe of local wine over lunch in a trattoria. I enjoy the gruff humour of the locals and the way they have an opinion on everything. I'm also a history buff, and after 15 years in the city, I still get a kick every time I see the Colosseum or spy St Peter's dome looming over the skyline.

For more about our authors, see p328.