

Welcome to Rome

A heady mix of haunting ruins, awe-inspiring art and vibrant street life, Italy's hot-blooded capital is one of the world's most romantic and inspiring cities.

Historical Legacies

The result of 3000 years of ad hoc urban development, Rome's cityscape is an exhilarating spectacle. Ancient icons such as the Colosseum, Roman Forum and Pantheon recall the city's golden age as *caput mundi* (capital of the world), while its many monumental basilicas testify to its historical role as seat of the Catholic Church. Lording it over the skyline, St Peter's Basilica is the Vatican's epic showpiece church, a towering masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. Elsewhere, ornate piazzas and showy fountains add a baroque flourish to the city's captivating streets.

Artistic Riches

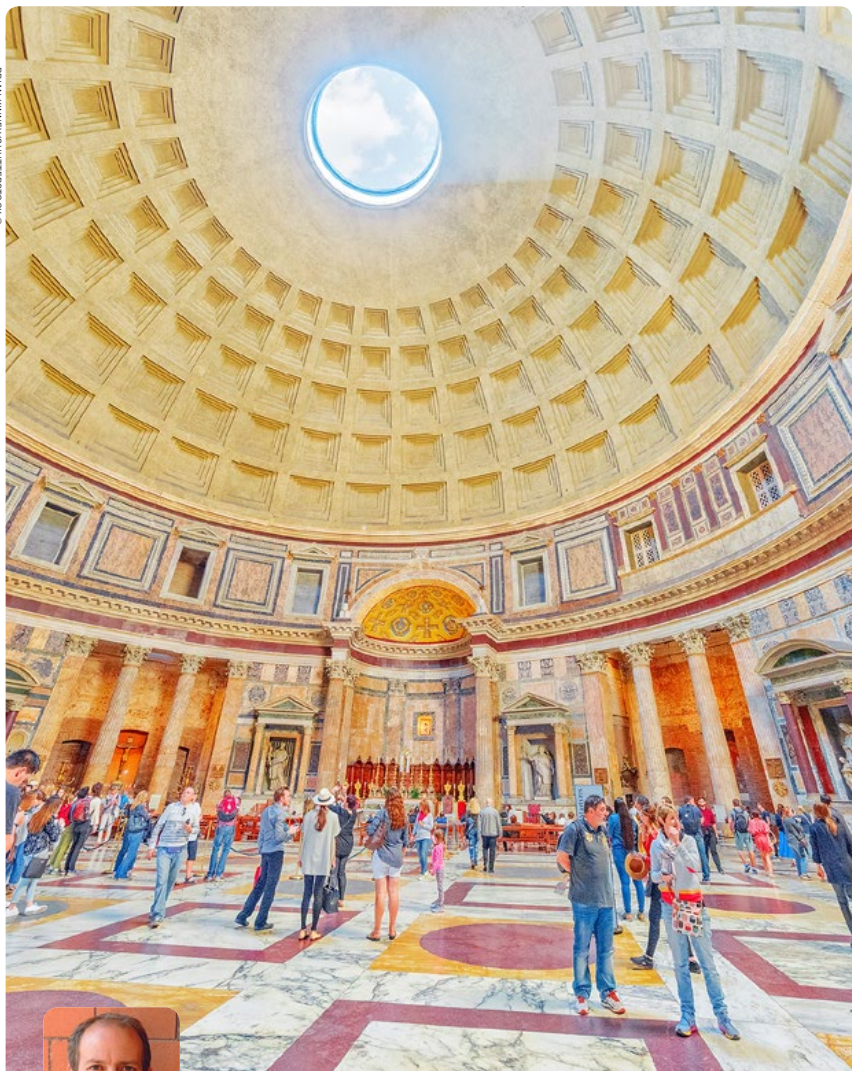
Few cities can rival Rome's astonishing artistic heritage. Throughout history, the city has starred in the great upheavals of Western art, drawing the top artists of the day and inspiring them to push the boundaries of creative achievement. The result is a city awash with priceless treasures. Ancient 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 Western art – sculptures by Michelangelo, canvases by Caravaggio, Raphael frescoes and fountains by Bernini.

Living the Life

A trip to Rome is as much about lapping up the dolce vita lifestyle as gorging on art and culture. Idling around picturesque streets, whiling away hours at streetside cafes, people-watching on pretty piazzas – these are all an integral part of the Roman experience. The tempo rises as the heat of the day gives way to the evening cool and the fashionably dressed *aperitivo* (pre-dinner drinks) crowd descends on the city's bars and cafes. Restaurants and trattorias hum with activity and cheerful hordes mill around popular haunts 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 alfresco settings and superlative food is a guarantee of good times. For contemporary fine dining and five-star wine there are any number of refined restaurants, but for a truly Roman meal head to a boisterous pizzeria or convivial neighbourhood trattoria. These are where the locals go to dine with friends and indulge their passion for thin, crispy pizzas, humble pastas, and cool white wines from the nearby Castelli Romani hills. Then to finish off, what about a gelato followed by a shot of world-beating coffee?



Why I Love Rome

By Duncan Garwood, Writer

As much as its great monuments – the Colosseum, St Peter's Basilica, the Pantheon – what I love about Rome are its details: the cobbled lanes and hidden corners, the vivid colours, the aroma of freshly ground coffee wafting out of its cafes. Rome's streets and piazzas are an endless source of entertainment and, as a history buff, I get a real kick when I think of all the legendary events that have taken place here. Rome is also a fabulous place to eat well and there's little I love more than a long lunch at a favourite trattoria.

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