

:: Pantheon



The temple of the Pantheon in Rome was built in 27 before Christ on the order of the Consul Marcus. It carries the inscription M· AGRIPPA· L· F· COS· TERTIUM· FECIT, (Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, consul for the third time, built this). Between 118 and 128 after Christ the building sees various modifications: the addition of the pronaos, and the building of the largest cupola in beton ever realized. The hemispherical dome has a skylight oculus of 8.9m in diameter. The interior is a perfect circle and the diameter and height are exactly the same, measuring 43 metres. In 608 Pope Bonifacio IV consecrates it to the Christian cult and calls it "Sancta Maria ad Martyres". Today, Italian kings are buried there, as well as the famous artist Raphael.

:: Colosseum



The Colosseum of Rome was built in bricks and clad of travertine in a valley among the Palatino, Esquilino and Celio hills after having dried a small lake that Nero was using for the Domus Aurea. The construction of the Colosseum began under Emperor Vespasian in AD 72 and was completed by his son, Titus, in the 80s AD. Originally known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, it was capable of seating 50,000 spectators. The elliptical arena measures along the axis about 77m for 46. There were two entrances: the "Triumphalis Door" for the gladiators or the animals to come in, and the "Libitinensis Door" the dead bodies of the fighters to be taken out.

:: Domus Aurea



After the Great Fire of 64 AD architects Severus and Celer built this Golden House (Domus Aurea) for Nero, and the most spectacular section was located on the Colle Oppio. The extensive gold-leaf that gave it its name was not the only extravagant element of its decor: the dining room had ceilings of fretted ivory with sliding panels. The room was circular and revolved continuously day and night, just like the earth. There is a guided underground tour that allows you to see some of the most important rooms in Nero's residence.

:: Baths of Caracalla



One of the most beautiful and luxurious public bath complexes in Rome. Equipped

with sophisticated plumbing systems, the complex could hold up to 1,600 bathers. Begun by the emperor Septimius Severus in AD 206 and completed by his son, the emperor Caracalla, in 216. It consisted of a frigidarium (cold room), tepidarium (medium), and caldarium (hot room), as well as two palaestras (gyms where wrestling and boxing was practised). Also part of the complex is an aqueduct (for the thermae or water reservoirs), where water was brought in. The Baths of Caracalla continued in use until the 6th century.

:: Imperial Forums



The Imperial Forums consist of a series of monumental fora (public squares) in ancient Rome. The Roman Forum, the most important archaeological area in Rome, extends from the Capitol Hill to the Palatine. As far back as the 7th century B.C., the Forum was the centre of political, commercial and religious life. Later on, to the original Roman Forum were added the Imperial Forums: Foro di Cesare, Foro di Augusto, Foro di Nerva, Foro di Vespasiano and the most imposing one, the Foro di Traiano, of which one can still admire the huge Column of the Markets.

:: Castel Sant'Angelo



Castel Sant'Angelo was built in the early 2nd century by the Emperor Hadrian, as a monumental tomb for himself and his successors. The monument's fate was decided in 403, when the Emperor Honorius incorporated it into the city walls, making it into a bridgehead on the river. From the 13th century it became an "annexe" of the nearby Vatican, and Pope Nicholas III created the famous "Passetto di Borgo", a covered corridor connecting St. Peter's to the Castle. The fortress became famous through time, especially as a prison. The name with which the fortress is known derives from a miraculous event which took place in 590: Rome was in the midst of a severe plague, and Pope Gregory the Great had organised a solemn procession to pray for its end. When the procession reached the Mole of Hadrian, Archangel Michael was seen flying up and sheathing his flaming sword, symbolising the end of the plague. The statue of the angel, placed on the top of the castle to commemorate the event, was replaced six times.

:: Trevi Fountain



The fountain is the terminal part of the Vergine aqueduct built by Agrippa in 19 B.C. to bring the water coming from the Salone springs, 19 km away, to Rome. The spectacular fountain was designed by architect Nicolò Salvi in the 18th century and built over 30 years. The central niche seems to impart movement to the imposing figure of Neptune who firmly guides a chariot drawn by sea horses. As they gallop over the water, the horses are guided in their course by fine figures of tritons which emerge from the water, sculptured by Pietro Bracci in 1762. The setting all around consists of rocks. The charm of the fountain is enhanced by the contrast between its large size and the small square that contains it. Don't forget to throw the famous coin to ensure your return to the Eternal City. To do it properly, stand with your back to the fountain and throw the coin with the right hand over the left shoulder.

:: Spanish Steps and Square



Piazza di Spagna takes its name from the Spanish Embassy which was established there in the seventeenth century. Beyond the Barcaccia Fountain (designed by Pietro Bernini) rise the beautiful Scalinata della Trinità dei Monti, or the Spanish Steps. The staircase consists of 138 steps of travertine stone rising in three successive flights. It was finished by 1726 by Francesco De Sanctis and became a favorite rendezvous for artists and their models, most of them peasants from the countryside south of Rome. Still today it is one of the most popular meeting-places in Rome for foreigners and Italians alike.

:: Vatican City



Vatican City in Rome is an autonomous State governed directly by the Pontificate and officially recognized through the Lateran Treaty by the Italian Republic. The size of the memorable St Peter's square facing St. Peter's Basilica is surrounded by the magnificent four-row colonnade masterpiece of Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Only when you get inside the basilica, you will be truly amazed by the size and splendour of the largest church in the world, the symbol of Christianity, extending over a total of about 22,000 sqm. The building is 136 m. high and the diameter of the Cupola, designed by Michelangelo, measures 42 m. The church contains the masterpieces of important artists: the 29 m. high bronze baldachin by Bernini, the Pietà by Michelangelo, the tomb of Clement XIII by Canova and the mosaic of the Navicella by Giotto, located above the middle entrance to the Portico. The Vatican Museums contain the famous Sistine Chapel with the frescoes of Michelangelo on the vault and on the back walls with the "Universal Judgement".

:: St. John in Lateran



St. John in Lateran is the Cathedral of Rome and one of the five major in basilica's of the Catholic Church in Rome. Around 313 a basilica with five apses dedicated to Christ Saver was built. The earthquake of 896 almost completely destroyed the church and after this, several other natural calamities damaged it. The facade with five passages characterised by the 15 statues of Christ surrounded by Saints, is a project of Alessandro Galilei dating back to 1734. The basilica is across the street from the Holy Stairs. These are the stairs that Jesus walked up to be judged by Pilot. They were brought back from the Holy Land by St. Helen. You are only allowed up these stairs on your knees.

:: Piazza Navona



Piazza Navona is one of the most extraordinary examples of town planning in the city. The original shape of the piazza, in fact, repeats with extreme faithfulness the perimeter of the ancient stadium of Domitian built in 86 A.D. for athletic competitions. The remains of this

ancient complex lie 5-6 metres below the current road level.

Piazza Navona is longitudinally marked by the presence of the three fountains; the lateral "Fountain of Neptune or of the Calderoni" and "Fountain of the Moro" were designs of Giacomo della Porta, while the central "Fountain of the Four Rivers" was designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini between 1648 and 1651. The church of Sant'Agnese in Agone stands on the spot where, according to legend, the twelve-year-old Agnes was martyred at the end of the 3rd century during the violent persecutions of emperor Diocletian. The piazza is surrounded by excellent cafes and ice-cream shops.

:: St. Mary Major



The Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore is the only Roman basilica that retained the core of its original structure, left intact despite several additional construction projects and damage from the earthquake of 1348. It is one of the five ancient basilicas of Rome. Pope Liberius commissioned the construction of the first Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore circa 360. The night between August 4th and 5th 352 the Pontiff dreamed that the Blessed Virgin Mary invited him to build a Basilica where on the next day he would have found snow. According to legend, the outline of the church was physically laid out on the ground of the miraculous snowfall that took place on August 5, 358. Dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Snows, local Roman Catholics commemorate the miracle on each anniversary by dropping white rose petals from the dome during the feast mass.

:: Campidoglio - Capitoline Hill



The Capitoline Hill (or Campidoglio) was the centre of the political, social, and religious life of Rome. In the Middle Ages, this had already become the center of the city's political life with the erection here of the Palazzo Senatorio and the Palazzo dei Conservatori. The piazza as you see it today is the work of Michelangelo, following the orders of Pope Paul III. Michelangelo's grandiose plan for the piazza was not completed until 1940 when the paving stones were laid down. As you go up his monumental flight of steps, the Cordonata, the extraordinary scenario unfolds before your eyes. The side buildings take on the role of the wings of a stage while the Palazzo Senatorio, the symbol of the city's institutions, provides the backdrop to the undisputed main actor of this stage - the statue of Marcus Aurelius in the center of the piazza. Today, the Palazzo Senatorio is Rome's City Hall. The other buildings – the Palazzo Dei Conservatori, on the right, and the Palazzo Nuovo, on the left- house the Capitoline Museums, an immense collection of artwork initiated by Pope Sixtus IV when he donated the famous Lupa, statue of the she-wolf and symbol of Rome.

:: Bocca della Verità



The church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin was built in the 6th century on the ruins of the Altar of Hercules, which are still visible from the crypt. It was one of the most important churches of the Roman deaconate. The church is famous for an absolutely profane element, the Bocca della Verità (Italian for Mouth of Truth) in the atrium. Placed here in 1632, the Bocca della Verità is a river god that used to be a drain cover, but since the Middle Ages, has served as a lie

detector. It was believed that if one told a lie with his or her hand in the mouth of this god, it would be bitten off.

:: Palatine



A walk of incomparable beauty along the most ancient memories of Rome: the Domus Augustana, residence of the emperors, and other private houses. The Palatine Hill (Latin Palatium) is the centermost of the seven hills of Rome and is one of the most ancient parts of the city of Rome. Legend tells us that Rome has its origins on the Palatine. Indeed, recent excavations show that people lived there since approximately 1000 BC. According to Roman mythology, the Palatine hill was where Romulus and Remus were found by the she-wolf that kept them alive. According to this legend, the shepherd Faustulus found the infants and, with his wife, Acca Larentia, raised the children. When they were older this is where Romulus decided to build Rome.

:: Villa Borghese and Gardens



Villa Borghese is the second largest public park in Rome (80 hectares or 148 acres) after that of the Villa Doria Pamphili. The Spanish Steps lead up to this park, and there is another entrance on Piazza del Popolo. The most romantic place on the villa grounds is undoubtedly the lake with its little island dominated by the Temple of Aesculapius. A modern overpass connects the villa to the Pincio, in the south part of the park, and offers one of the greatest views over Rome. The Villa itself is one of the most renowned villas in Rome, ordered by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in the early 17th century. It now contains the Galleria Borghese.

:: Vittoriano



This immense monument is sometimes called the Altare della Patria (Altar of the Nation) or the Victor Emmanuel Monument as it was constructed in honor of the first king of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele II. Dominating Piazza Venezia, it was built by Giuseppe Sacconi in the early 20th century and is possibly the most debated monument in Rome: although admired by tourists, it is generally despised by Romans because of its dimensions, its style and the marble used to finish it.