ROMAN WALKS



"THE WALKING OF WHICH I SPEAK HAS NOTHING IN IT AKIN TO TAKING EXERCISE . . . BUT IS ITSELF THE ENTERPRISE AND ADVENTURE OF THE DAY."

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Gentle Wayfarer,

Welcome to the University of Notre Dame's Rome Global Gateway, nestled in the heart of the Eternal City. Rome is a city that needs to be walked in order to be truly experienced and understood. Every corner of Rome, every street, has something surprising and precious to reveal. We invite you to approach the city on foot, step by step, walking these nine "Roman walks," at your own pace. We encourage you to combine their pathways, and to find new ones. Rome generously offers itself to pilgrims and wanderers. In the end, you won't be able to help calling yourself a Roman.

Walk with us . . .

Notre Dame International

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Piazza del Colosseo
LA PACE DEL CERVELLO
PIZZERIA LUZZI
NOTRE DAME GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via di San Giov
SHAMROCK
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CAMDEN TOWN
CAFFÈ PROPAGANDA
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Via Labicana
HOSTARIA
ISIDORO
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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

THE NOTRE DAME ROME GLOBAL GATEWAY IN VIA OSTILIA: THE RIONE CELIO IN THE HEART OF THE CITY

The main entrance to the Notre Dame Rome Global Gateway is in Via Ostilia 15, in the Rione Celio (Caelian neighborhood), on the slopes of the Caelian Hill, overlooking the Palatine, Aventine, and Esquiline Hills. The building, dating back to the turn of the twentieth century, originally hosted the pharmaceutical company "Dottor Ravasini." Newly restored, the building, painted in a warm yellow ochre, typical of the center of Rome, is three storeys tall; its windows open onto Via Ostilia, as well as two side roads: Via dei Santi Quattro and Via Capo d'Africa.



The site is in the heart of Rome, enclosed and served by large thoroughfares such as Via Labicana, Via Celio Vibenna, Via dell'Amba Aradam, Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, Via Merulana, and Via Emanuele Filiberto: beneath here run the two lines of the subway (metro lines A and B), with a third under construction (line C). And yet, walking around the building, in the narrow streets where the vehicle traffic is very limited, the site itself is an oasis of peace and quiet. The surrounding neighborhood is lively, and mainly inhabited by Romans (by either birth or adoption). Although there are a number of hotels, given the strategic position and the beauty of the area, it is not populated by hordes of tourists like other neighborhoods in the center of Rome.

Here, modern life flows among the fourth- and fifth-century churches, with their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century façades, perfectly integrated into the centuries-old stratification of the city's history, still visible in the monuments and panoramas. The Caelian neighborhood is one of the pulsing hearts of modern Roman life. For instance, this is a site traditionally devoted to study. In fact, two other international institutions have their campuses in this area: the Pontificia Università Lateranense (Pontifical Lateran University), founded in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV, and the Pontificio Collegio Irlandese (Pontifical Irish College), founded in 1628. Besides these universities, there is San Giovanni-Addolorata, one of the major hospital complexes of the capital, with its physicians and students of medicine. Moreover, the Ospedale

Militare del Celio (the Military Hospital) dominates the top of the Caelian Hill, not far away from the entrance to the Villa Celimontana, a wonderful public park.

Rome's political and religious life has revolved around this neighborhood as well. Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, in front of the façade of the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, has periodically been the theatre of political demonstrations and rallies. Since the 1950s, the leaders of the major left-wing political parties and trade unions have spoken in this square in front of thousands (sometimes hundreds of thousands) of people. May 1st, which is Labor Day in Italy as well as the rest of Europe, is celebrated in Rome in Piazza San Giovanni with a major pop rock concert accompanying the trade union leaders and workers' speeches. Almost all the most important and famous Italian singers have performed at least once in their career at this annual event, and on these occasions the square has been able to host up to one million participants and spectators coming from all over Italy.

The Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano is Rome's official cathedral and the official site of the Bishop of Rome (the pope), and its liturgical significance exceeds that of the Basilica of San Pietro. This is particularly felt during certain festivities of the liturgical year, such as Holy Thursday, when the pope performs the traditional washing of the feet at San Giovanni in Laterano (even though Pope Francis I had to break the tradition in 2013 because, having only recently ascended to the papal throne, he had not yet taken "official possession" of the Lateran). The ceremony of *Corpus Domini* (Feast of Corpus Christi) is celebrated in San Giovanni as well, and culminates with a procession of the pope and the cardinals that proceeds from San Giovanni through Via Merulana to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, on the Esquiline Hill.

The *Via Crucis* (Way of the Cross), celebrated by the pope on Good Friday, gathers crowds coming from all over the world, and it takes place inside the Colosseo (Colosseum), two blocks away from Via Ostilia. The *Via Crucis* in Rome is a very intense celebration mainly because it happens at night, illuminated by street lamps and especially by hundreds of torches and candles brought by the faithful, while the Stations of the Cross are recited in many different languages, so that everyone can understand and participate.

The Notre Dame Rome Global Gateway is truly a microcosm that reflects the same essence of Rome: the coexistence of monuments that are not simply the vestiges of a remote past, but which have been progressively readapted, through the centuries, to the transformations of the city and of its life, in harmony with the changing practical needs and tastes. And these transitions and metamorphoses are still visible. The present and its forms here function as a real time machine, taking us back to both the origins of Roman civilization and of Christianity, as well as to their various renaissances.



The walks that we propose here have their center in Notre Dame's Roman neighborhood, and at the same time they intend to project in various directions, towards other centers and monuments in Rome and beyond. For each of these walks, different perspectives will be offered: these explorations will not be exclusively limited to physical tours, but will be enriched by descriptions of literary works, movies, documentaries, and songs that relate to our subject.

Here is a brief overview of the neighborhood and of the walks that will be fully illustrated in the following pages:

THE CAELIAN HILL

The XIX rione (district) or Celio, where Via Ostilia is located, corresponds roughly to the *Caelimontium*, the second of the fourteen regions (the Italian word *rione* derives from the Latin *regio*, *regionis*) into which the Emperor Augustus (31 BC-14 AD) had divided the administration of Rome's territory. However, the Caelian Hill was already part of Rome at the time of the monarchy. Nowadays, the rione Celio is enclosed on the south/southwest side by a section of the Aurelian walls, between three of the city gates: Porta Metronia, Porta Latina, and Porta San Sebastiano. It borders on the districts of San Saba, Ripa, and Campidoglio; while to the east/northeast it borders on the Monti district, along the Stradone di San Giovanni (also known as Via di San Giovanni in Laterano) and Piazza di Porta San Giovanni.

THE NINE WALKS

I. The first walk we propose is the path along the Aurelian walls between Porta San Giovanni and Porta San Paolo, passing by Porta Metronia and Porta Latina (with the nearby Parco degli Scipioni and Basilica of San Giovanni a Porta Latina). This itinerary culminates with the visit to the Museo delle Mura (Museum of the Walls) and a section of the walkway that can still be accessed at Porta San Sebastiano. It then continues to Porta San Paolo and the surrounding area. As the border of ancient Rome, the walls are also a starting point for excursions outside the city, along Via Appia Antica and its archaeological remains.

2. The second walk consists of a visit to the Basilicas of San Clemente and Santi Quattro Coronati, and to the Church of Santo Stefano Rotondo, that almost watch over the Notre Dame Rome Global Gateway in Via Ostilia, and whose original nuclei date back to the first centuries of the Christian era.

3. The third walk leads to Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo, up to the top of the Caelian Hill, in front of the Basilica of Santa Maria in Domnica, standing next to the entrance to the Villa Celimontana. The other entrance to this park is guarded by the Basilica of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, on one side, and by the Basilica of San Gregorio al Celio on the other. This path offers a wonderful succession of art, walks in the green spaces of the villa, archaeological sites, and spectacular views of the city.

4. The fourth walk culminates in the panorama offered from Via di San Giovanni in Laterano towards the Colosseum, with its view of Via dei Fori Imperiali and the archaeological sites that emerge on its sides. The walk finishes on the top of the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill), and with the visit to the collections of the Musei Capitolini (Capitoline Museums).



5. The fifth walk, extremely compact on the map, is extraordinarily rich. Going up Via di San Giovanni in Laterano towards Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, there is the magnificent complex consisting of the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano and the annexed Palazzo Lateranense (Lateran Palace), the Battistero (Baptistery), and the Scala Santa (Holy Stairs).

6. The sixth walk leads through the gardens parallel to Via Carlo Felice, literally covered by an arcade of sycamore trees on one side, and to a section of the Aurelian walls on the other, between Porta San Giovanni and the Anfiteatro castrense (Castrense Amphitheater). Via Carlo Felice also connects the Basilica of San Giovanni with that of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, which, together with the Amphitheater and the Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali (National Museum of Musical Instruments), is another wonderful site.

7. The seventh walk, going up along Via Ostilia towards Via Labicana and crossing it, leads inside the gardens of the Colle Oppio (Oppian Hill). In the highest part of the gardens is the entrance to the Domus Aurea (Golden House), built by the Emperor Nero in the first century AD. Not far away, sloping down towards Via dei Serpenti, is the Basilica of San Pietro in Vincoli (St. Peter in Chains).

8. The eighth walk goes from Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, through Via Merulana to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, one of the biggest and most impressive basilicas in Rome. Not distant is also the Basilica of Santa Prassede, a jewel almost unknown to Romans.

9. Finally, at a ten-minute walk from Via Ostilia, there is the Museo Storico della Liberazione (History Museum of Liberation) in Via Tasso. The museum is in the same building where, between 11 September 1943 and 4 June 1944, the German police headquarters in Rome was located, with its prison cells in which Jews and political dissidents were imprisoned and tortured.





TRANSPORTATION

Via Ostilia is at the center of a neighborhood well served by urban arterials for both private and public transportation.

Some of the main stops of the two currently functioning metro lines are not far from Via Ostilia: line A stops at Piazzale Appio, just outside Porta San Giovanni, and on Viale Manzoni. Both stops are about twenty minutes away from Notre Dame's facility, but they can easily be reached by bus; line B stops at the Colosseum, a five-minute walk from Via Ostilia. Line C, currently under construction, will stop both at San Giovanni (connecting to line A) and at the Colosseum (connecting to line B). Many buses and trams stop a few hundred meters from Notre Dame's facility in Via Ostilia, connecting this area with the rest of the city.

The major "consular" roads (Appia, Aurelia, Cassia, Flaminia) and the *Grande Raccordo Anulare* (Great Ring Road, a major toll-free motorway around Rome connecting the capital to other Italian highways) are all easily reachable from this part of the city.

Rome's major train station, Termini, is two stops away from the metro line B station "Colosseo" (a five-minute walk from Notre Dame's facility). From Termini, buses and trains connect with Rome's two international airports: Ciampino and Fiumicino.

TRAIN COMPANIES IN ITALY

Trenitalia:
trenitalia.com

Italo:
italotreno.it/IT/Pagine/default.aspx

PLACES TO EAT AND THINGS TO DO NEARBY THE NOTRE DAME ROME GLOBAL GATEWAY

Notre Dame's facility in Via Ostilia is surrounded by so many different restaurants and pubs that it can be difficult to choose. Many of them are quite expensive, and a few can turn out to be nothing but tourist traps. The ones suggested here are good and reliable, with excellent price/quality ratio:

- **Caffè Propaganda** is in Via Claudia, just a few blocks from Notre Dame's building. Excellent for an aperitif before dinner, Caffè Propaganda does not even seem to be in Rome, but rather in what Italians call Mittel Europa (essentially Central Europe), or perhaps in Chicago (think of Julius Meinl, which brings a Viennese touch to the north side of Chicago). The atmosphere here is quite warm and the food is good.
  caffepropaganda.it/?lang=en



- **Luzzi**, in Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, 88, is a very traditional and rustic pizzeria romana.

- **Hostaria Isidoro**, in Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, 59/a, is a restaurant where creative chefs revisit traditional dishes (especially pasta dishes).
  hostariaisidoro.com/home.html

- **Hostaria Cannavota**, in Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano, 20, is a typical *osteria* (tavern) run by the same family since 1962, with traditional and very good Roman dishes.

- **La pace del cervello**, in Via dei Santi Quattro, 63, is a traditional pub where you can eat and play board games. There are phones that connect all the tables, so that part of the fun is to make phone calls to other tables, if you want to meet new people.

There are also several Irish pubs, which are great places to watch soccer games:

- **Shamrock**, Via Capo d'Africa, 26. Very close to Notre Dame's facility, this is a typical Irish pub:
  shamrockroma.it/en/

- **Camden Town**, in Via Ostilia, 30:
  colosseo.org/camdentown/

- **Coming Out**. The most famous gay bar in Rome is in Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, 8:
  comingout.it

USEFUL LINKS
Pontificia Università Lateranense:
pul.it/?lang=en

Pontificio Collegio Irlandese:
irishcollege.org/college/

ATAC (the major public transportation company in Rome):
atac.roma.it


WALK I
Via dei Cerchi
Lungotevere Aventino
Via Aventina
PORTA S. PAOLO
N
CENTRALE
MONTEMARTINI


Piazza del Colosseo
NOTRE DAME
GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via Capo d'Africa
Via Labicana
Via Annia
Via Claudia
Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo
Clivo di Scauro
Via della Navicella
Via di Sant'Erasmo
Via Sannio
Via di Valle delle Camene
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
PIAZZALE
METRONIO
Via di Porta
Latina
S. GIOVANNI
A PORTA LATINA
S. GIOVANNI
IN OLEO
PARCO DEGLI SCIPIONI
Via Latina
Viale di Porta Ardeatina
PORTA ARDEATINA
MUSEO DELLE MURA
EATALY-PIAZZALE
XII OTTOBRE



1. A WALK ALONG, (INSIDE AND OUTSIDE) THE AURELIAN WALLS: FROM PORTA SAN GIOVANNI TO PORTA SAN PAOLO



I.

A WALK ALONG (INSIDE AND OUTSIDE) THE AURELIAN WALLS: FROM PORTA SAN GIOVANNI TO PORTA SAN PAOLO

The walk we propose here, along the Aurelian walls, can take up a whole morning or afternoon, from start to end. But it can, of course, be broken up and completed at different times. The Museum of the Walls can also be reached by bus: the number 218 bus has one of its stops in Piazza di Porta San Giovanni (a fifteen-minute walk from Via Ostilia) and it takes fifteen minutes to go to Porta San Sebastiano, where the museum is located. And yet, walking is of course the best way to get an idea of the route along the walls – and to enjoy the green grass and trees in which you will be immersed.

At the end of this walk, additional itineraries are suggested. These are walks in their own right, and evocative detours outside of the city walls.



PORTA SAN GIOVANNI AND PORTA ASINARIA

From Via Ostilia it takes about fifteen minutes to walk to Porta San Giovanni (St. John's Gate), or various buses (numbers 85, 850, 87) and tram (number 3) go there from Via Labicana. Once in Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, leaving the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano behind, you will be captivated by the stretch of walls on the left towards the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (St. Cross in Jerusalem), and by Porta San Giovanni, the main arch that opens in the city walls onto whose sides another six arches open (three on each of its sides). The gate, which Pope Gregory XIII had built in 1574, replaced the ancient Porta Asinaria that can still be seen on a much lower level in between two fifth-century towers. Through the centuries, this older gate was almost entirely buried, and it was completely dug out only in the 1950s thanks to archaeological excavations.

If you stop to look at Porta San Giovanni from the outside, you will notice the brightness of the travertine marble covering it, and it is not difficult to imagine the effect that in the past the gate must have made on the traveller coming from afar, when the Roman countryside stretched out beyond the gate itself.

Porta San Giovanni and the more ancient Porta Asinaria are gates/openings through the Aurelian walls that the Emperor Lucius Domitius Aurelianus (270-275) had built in the third century to defend the city, and that Flavius Onorius (395-423) had reinforced between the fourth and fifth centuries. The Aurelian walls, an impressive battlemented construction lined with bricks of a warm color between red and brown, extended about twelve miles around the city, reinforced by rectangular towers at regular intervals. Nowadays, many parts are still well preserved.

The walk starts from Porta San Giovanni, heading southwest, while keeping the walls on the right. This walk will give an idea of at least a part of Rome's perimeter at the time of the Roman Empire, and of what the city looked like seen from the outside. It will also reveal the architectural stateliness of the wall fortifications, and give an idea of the technical skills and the number of workers necessary to construct them, as well as the materials used. But this is also simply an enchanting walk that will allow you to discover the monuments incorporated within the walls themselves.

From Porta San Giovanni take Via Sannio, where you can also find a second-hand market (especially for clothes, shoes, and accessories) as famous as Porta Portese, which is located instead between the neighborhoods of Testaccio and Trastevere. It is advisable, at least the first time, to go accompanied by somebody who knows it in order to avoid being ripped off (or as Romans say in a not very elegant jargon, to avoid *fregature*, "scams," or *sòle,* "rip-offs").

PORTA METRONIA

Via Sannio, along the walls, turns into Via Farsalo and then Via Ipponia, ending up directly in Piazzale Metronio, where the walls open through a postern (an unadorned secondary city gate), which grants access to the Caelian Hill (if you cross the door and go up Via della Navicella, after the Ospedale del Celio, the military hospital, you will find yourself at the Colosseum, one block from Via Ostilia). The following stretch of the walk, along Viale Metronio, is quite fascinating: the walls and their towers are extremely well preserved and surrounded by very nice meadows; there are benches where to sit, and fountains of cool water every few steps. Speaking of fountains, in Rome there is no need to buy water: if you just buy a bottle or jug, you can get clean water from the *fontanelle* or *nasoni* ("big noses," from the shape of the faucets), namely the small fountains that are all over the city. The water gushing out from the *fontanelle* is completely safe to drink; it is cool, and tastes very good.







PORTA LATINA, PARCO DEGLI SCIPIONI, AND THE BASILICA OF SAN GIOVANNI A PORTA LATINA

At the end of Viale Metronio is Porta Latina, covered with travertine and displaying its original inscriptions. Here you can walk through the gate towards the beginning of Via Latina and make two stops. On the left, there is the entrance to the Parco degli Scipioni, a luxuriant park full of plants, especially pine trees, holm-oaks, cypresses, oleanders, and myrtles: you can either walk in the gardens or sit down on a bench, or on the grass, to read, or just rest. This park, like most Roman parks, is a social place for the people of the surrounding neighborhood, who take their children there to play: a new playground occupies a whole area; and in every season of the year, you will see a pony cart to children's delight.

The most surprising feature of these gardens, though, is that they host two magnificent archeological treasures: the sepulcher of the Scipioni family, whose members were among the protagonists of Rome's history during the Republic (the tomb dates back to the third century BC); and the *columbarium* of Pomponio Hylas, built in the first century, and decorated with well-preserved mosaics and frescoes. The access to these monuments is through the Museo delle Mura (Museum of the Walls, see below) where you can book a guided visit.

Coming out from the same entrance on Via Latina, you will find on your right the "tempietto o oratorio" (temple or oratory) of San Giovanni in Oleo, built in the sixteenth century, and further adorned in the following centuries. The little temple stands on the place where St. John the Evangelist is said to have been tortured by the Emperor Domitian (51-96), who had the saint immersed in a cauldron full of boiling oil. When, however, the saint emerged unharmed, Domitian finally exiled him to the Greek island of Patmos.

On the other side of Via Latina, in front of the park, some 150 feet further, is Via di San Giovanni a Porta Latina, which leads to the eponymous basilica dating back to the end of the fifth century. Covered with the typical Roman bricks, it has an elegant bell tower dating from the twelfth century. The interior, divided into a nave and two side aisles, shows on the walls of the nave a cycle of frescoes depicting Old

and New Testament scenes. These frescoes, along with those found in the Basilica of Santi Quattro Coronati, constitute one of the most significant examples of medieval painting in Rome.

Going back through Porta Latina, you can continue your walk along the city walls. This stretch of road takes on a new name, Viale delle Mura Latine: on your left, you will see elegant mansions from the beginning of the 1900s.



PORTA SAN SEBASTIANO AND THE MUSEO DELLE MURA (MUSEUM OF THE WALLS)

The street gently descends to Porta San Sebastiano, one of the best preserved city gates of the entire walls. It is one arch, covered with travertine and flanked by two massive semi-cylindrical towers. Porta San Sebastiano was originally called Porta Appia as it marked the beginning of Via Appia Antica (one of the main consular roads, which connected Rome with Brindisi, a port city in Puglia, in Southern Italy) outside the city walls. The name Porta San Sebastiano derives from St. Sebastian, who suffered martyrdom towards the end of the third century. The Basilica of San Sebastiano, with its annexed catacombs (underground tombs where early Christians buried their dead and celebrated their rites) stands not far from here and it is worth a visit.

Porta San Sebastiano houses the Museo delle Mura, a tiny jewel, not very much known even by Romans themselves. The entrance to the museum is in Via di San Sebastiano 18, across the city gate and to the left. The museum, open in the morning, offers a seven-room tour (with explanatory descriptions in both Italian and English) of the history of the walls and of Rome's other fortifications through the centuries, as well as construction techniques and materials. Scale plastic models reproduce the route of the walls and their gates at different stages of their construction.

The most fascinating part of the visit, however, consists in the *chemin de ronde*, or walkway that can still be travelled for about 1,000 feet towards Porta Ardeatina. The walkway is covered by a vault and proceeds through a series of narrow passages, stairs, and wider rooms corresponding to fortified towers. On the external side, embrasures and larger windows open towards the outside, making the street visible (Viale di Porta Ardeatina) from above. The internal side, instead, is completely open, almost on the same level of private gardens, some of which are left totally uncultivated, others, on the contrary, perfectly kept, with mowed meadows and plants and



ornamental flowers elegantly arranged. At summertime, going through the walkway, the noises from the street are muffled, and what prevails in the hottest hours of the day are the chirping of the cicadas and the singing of birds.

Next to the gate, a member of the museum staff accompanies the visitor to the two terraces. The first one, immediately above the gate, is battlemented and rectangular, offering a view that corresponds on the one side to Via Appia, and on the other to the Arco di Druso (Arch of Drusus), the ruins of an ancient aqueduct, and Via di San Sebastiano, leading towards the city center. The second terrace is accessible through a quite steep flight of steps followed by a narrow iron spiral staircase. This terrace is on top of one of the two towers that flank the gate: from here you will enjoy a spectacular view of the walls themselves and the external walkway described above, with an exceptional 360-degree view of Rome. On a clear day, all the city landmarks are visible from here, including the Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro, also known as the "Colosseo quadrato" (the Square Colosseum) due to its shape, which towers above the EUR neighborhood; and the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano. What will also surprise you are the vast green spaces, the trees, the plants, and the gardens that you will be able to see, and from which the gate seems to emerge dominating the surrounding landscape.

Moreover, the presence of the museum *inside* the walls is another example of how, contrary to what happens in other cities in the world (usually much more recent, where constructions considered obsolete are torn down to make space for more functional modern developments suited to address contemporary needs), in Rome ancient monuments are integrated into contemporary life: they actually are the backbone of the contemporary city, and are constantly readapted, often according to a didactic perspective that preserves, and illustrates, the sense of history.

PORTA ARDEATINA

Advancing along the walls, the walk leads to Porta Ardeatina, consisting of four arches. In 1939, Benito Mussolini, the Fascist dictator, had it opened again the way it is nowadays in order to mark the entrance to Via Cristoforo Colombo (renamed during Fascism Via Imperiale, the Imperial Road), which runs to the Lido di Ostia and the sea.

If you keep on walking, you will see the Bastione Ardeatino, built in the first half of the sixteenth century as part of the project of city fortifications initiated by Pope Paul III after the sack of Rome by the Lanzichenecchi (mercenary German soldiers), in 1527.

PORTA SAN PAOLO AND THE CENTRALE MONTEMARTINI (MONTEMARTINI MUSEUM)

After Porta Ardeatina, the walls climb up towards the San Saba neighborhood and then down to Piazzale Ostiense, from where Via Ostiense begins, going all the way to the sea. Here, in Piazzale Ostiense, stands Porta San Paolo, very close to the Basilica of San Paolo fuori le mura (St. Paul outside the walls). Next to Porta San Paolo is the Museo della Via Ostiense (Museum of Via Ostiense), which shows the route of the road leading to Ostia, Rome's ancient seaport city, and illustrates the monuments that are found along the road. In the museum, you can also see the models of Rome's ancient harbors on the river Tiber, and Ostia on the Tyrrhenian coast. In the past, the gate was part of the Aurelian walls, which enclosed the Piramide Cestia, the monumental tomb of the Roman Caio Cestio Epulone (first century BC).

Between 8-11 September 1943, at Porta San Paolo, the partisans fought courageously to defend Rome against the German army that was besieging the city; they eventually capitulated, and the Germans occupied the city (if you are curious about this chapter of the history of Rome, see ninth walk). Several memorial plaques in the square commemorate these events, including the liberation of Rome by the Fifth Army of the Anglo-Americans, on 4 June 1944.



From Porta San Paolo, it is worthwhile to take Via Ostiense for about a mile, and visit the Centrale Montemartini (at n. 106), another marvelous example of how in Rome almost every site is adapted to new uses. The Centrale Montemartini was originally the Giovanni Montemartini Thermoelectric Centre, the first power plant to produce electricity in Rome, opened in the first decade of the 1900s. In 2005, it was converted into a space for temporary exhibitions of sculptures originating at the Musei Capitolini. Since this combination of industrial and artistic archaeology proved very successful, the Centrale was transformed into a permanent museum that hosts a spectacular collection of statues and mosaics from various sites of ancient Rome (including the Caelian Hill and the sacred area of Piazza di Torre Argentina). The atrium is dedicated to the history of the Centrale Montemartini.

EATALY

Not far from here, in Piazzale XII Ottobre 1492, behind the Stazione Ostiense, is Eataly, a new supermarket which sells Italian food products of excellence (both fresh and packaged) from all the different regions, and features a food court where customers can eat genuine Italian cuisine made with the same products. The mega food store, which also opened in other Italian cities, as well as in New York, Chicago and other cities worldwide, can be taken as the symbol of a new economy that tends to make good use of the variety of local resources offered by such a varied and diverse territory according to the tenets of the slow food movement. Eataly can be considered the symbol of Italians' new attitude toward the reevaluation of these resources connected both to a new perception of Italian regional identities and to a competing global market perspective: it is a virtuous attempt to launch on an international scale a niche market, preserving its typically refined characteristics (Eataly's products are quite expensive, in Italy and abroad).

ADDITIONAL ITINERARIES

- **Basilica and Catacombs of San Sebastiano; Catacombs of San Callisto:** Not far from Porta San Sebastiano lies the Basilica of San Sebastiano, built in the first half of the fourth century, over the place where the bodies of the Apostles Peter and Paul had been hidden during the persecutions against Christians, at the end of the third century. Around the sepulchers of the two apostles, an underground cemetery was built: the catacombs were in fact galleries excavated in the pozzolana stone where thousands of Christians were buried in the following centuries. The basilica was built over the catacombs (that are worth a visit), and then entirely rebuilt at the beginning of the 1600s.

  Close to San Sebastiano, you can also visit the Catacombs of San Callisto, which are especially famous for hosting the Crypt of the Popes (where five popes from the third century were buried) and the Crypt of Santa Cecilia.

- **Parco Regionale dell'Appia Antica (Regional Park of the Appia Antica):** A wonderful walk is along the Via Appia Antica, in what is now an archeological and natural park called the Parco Regionale dell'Appia Antica. The park is an oasis of nature and archaeological sites of extraordinary beauty, and if you have half a day or an entire day to spend there, you can explore various paths both walking and by bike, as well as taking little buses that will carry you around. Among the monuments that you can visit in the park are the Churches of "Domine Quo Vadis?" and of Sant' Urbano; the area of the Latin Tombs (a fascinating part of the road flanked by ancient sepulchers and surrounded by trees and flowers and the countryside); the Circus and Villa of Maxentius and the Mausoleum of Romulus (the Circus of Maxentius is the best preserved circus of its kind; it is also a peaceful and wonderful site where you can just sit down, and enjoy the quiet and beauty around you while imagining the chariot races that took place here at the times of ancient Rome); the tomb of Cecilia Metella (which is the emblem of Via Appia Antica) and the Caetani Castle; the Villa dei Quintili (a wonderfully preserved Roman villa) and the Aqueduct; and finally, the Jewish Catacombs on the Vigna Randanini. These alternative walks will provide a wonderful opportunity to feel the kind of wonder that travellers from the past centuries, and especially those who did the Grand Tour, must have experienced: these sites inspired painters (like Claude Lorrain) to paint their landscapes, and many pages of Goethe's *Italian Journey*. The website of the park is well done, and provides all the information about its monuments and the times of the day in which they are accessible, as well as web links to every single monument.

- **Ostia Antica:** Whether you visit the museum of Via Ostiense at Porta San Paolo or not, a day trip to Ostia Antica, about 30 kilometers west of Rome and 3 kilometers from the coast, is definitely worthwhile. Ostia was the ancient seaport of Rome, situated at the ancient mouth of the river Tiber, and is nowadays a wonderful archaeological site. Here the entire ancient town and the frescoes and mosaics that decorate its buildings are exceptionally well preserved. The buildings include a temple dedicated to Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, a theatre still used in the summer for performances, especially of classical comedies by Plautus (a playwright who lived from 254-184 BC), a *castrum* (military barracks), the forum, the synagogue, several *mithraea*, a Christian basilica, and houses, warehouses, taverns, marketplaces, fuller's workshops, the baths/spas, and sepulchers. Moreover, a museum shows a wonderful collection of statues and objects of all kinds excavated within the site, which is immersed in luxuriant vegetation. Next to the archeological site, you can also visit the castle commissioned by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere before he was elected Pope Julius II, whose construction, directed by the architect Baccio Pontelli, was part of the fortification of the walls and renovation of Ostia's main Renaissance buildings. You can admire the portals decorated with precious marbles, the four rooms inside the castle keep, and enjoy

a breathtaking view from the upper walkway. You can also visit the Basilica of Santa Aurea: with its splendid Renaissance façade adorned with a rose window, its single nave interior, and the Chapel of Saint Monica, which is a gem.

Not far away from Ostia Antica is modern Ostia, by the seaside, where you can enjoy beautiful beaches and many restaurants and bars along the promenade. Ostia Antica is very easily reachable by train: you need only take the line "Roma-Lido" at the train station of Porta San Paolo.

READING

- Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Italian Journey* (published in 1816-17) is an account of the German poet's journey in Italy between 1786 and 1788. Some of its most famous pages are dedicated to his visit to Rome and its countryside. An additional work of note, inspired by his journey to Rome and Italy, is his book *Roman Elegies*, a collection of erotic poems written after his return to Germany.

MOVIES

The vicissitudes of the early Christian community in Rome inspired many writers to write novels on various martyrs. The American movie industry of the 1950s and '60s rediscovered many of these novels and adapted them into "Colossal" movies. Among the most famous are:

- 1905 Nobel Prize Polish novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis: A Narrative of the Time of Nero* (published in Polish in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and then translated into many languages), is a novel set in 64 AD, under the Emperor Nero. A young Christian woman, Ligia, loves the patrician military tribune Marcus Vinicius. Their love is intertwined with the history of the persecution against the Christians and in the novel many historical characters make their appearance: the Emperor Nero, the writer Petronius, St. Peter, and St. Paul. Various cinematographic adaptations of this novel were made: two of the most famous, *Quo Vadis*? (1951), starring Peter Ustinov, Robert Taylor, and Deborah Kerr, as well as a 1985 TV mini-series, starring Klaus Maria Brandauer as Nero.

- *Fabiola or, the Church of the Catacombs*: This is a novel by the English Cardinal Nicholas Wiseman, and published in 1854. Set in the fourth century under the persecutions against the Christians by the Emperor Diocletian, it is the story of a young Roman noblewoman, Fabiola, who converts to Christianity. Her story is intertwined with those of other Christians and martyrs whose life takes place around the community of the catacombs in Rome. The most famous cinematic adaptation of the novel was the movie *Fabiola* (1949), directed by Alessandro Blasetti, starring Michèle Morgan.
- *Girlfriend in a Coma*, by Annalisa Piras and Bill Emmott (1998): This is a

documentary about vices and virtues of Italian politics and economies. The economic approach that led to the creation of Eataly, and which also constitutes the spirit of certain Italian companies, is an example of the virtuous Italy.
girlfriendinacoma.eu

USEFUL LINKS

Parco degli Scipioni:
sovraintendenzaroma.it/i_luoghi/ville_e_parchi_storici/passeggiate_parchi_e_giardini/parco_degli_scipioni

Basilica of San Giovanni a Porta Latina:
sangiovanniaportalatina.it/Benvenuto_San_Giovanni.htm

Museo delle Mura:
museodellemuraroma.it

Museo della Via Ostiense:
archeoroma.beniculturali.it/musei/museo-ostiense-porta-spaolo

Musei Capitolini – Centrale Montemartini:
en.centralemontemartini.org

Eataly:
eataly.it/blog/negozi-italia-roma

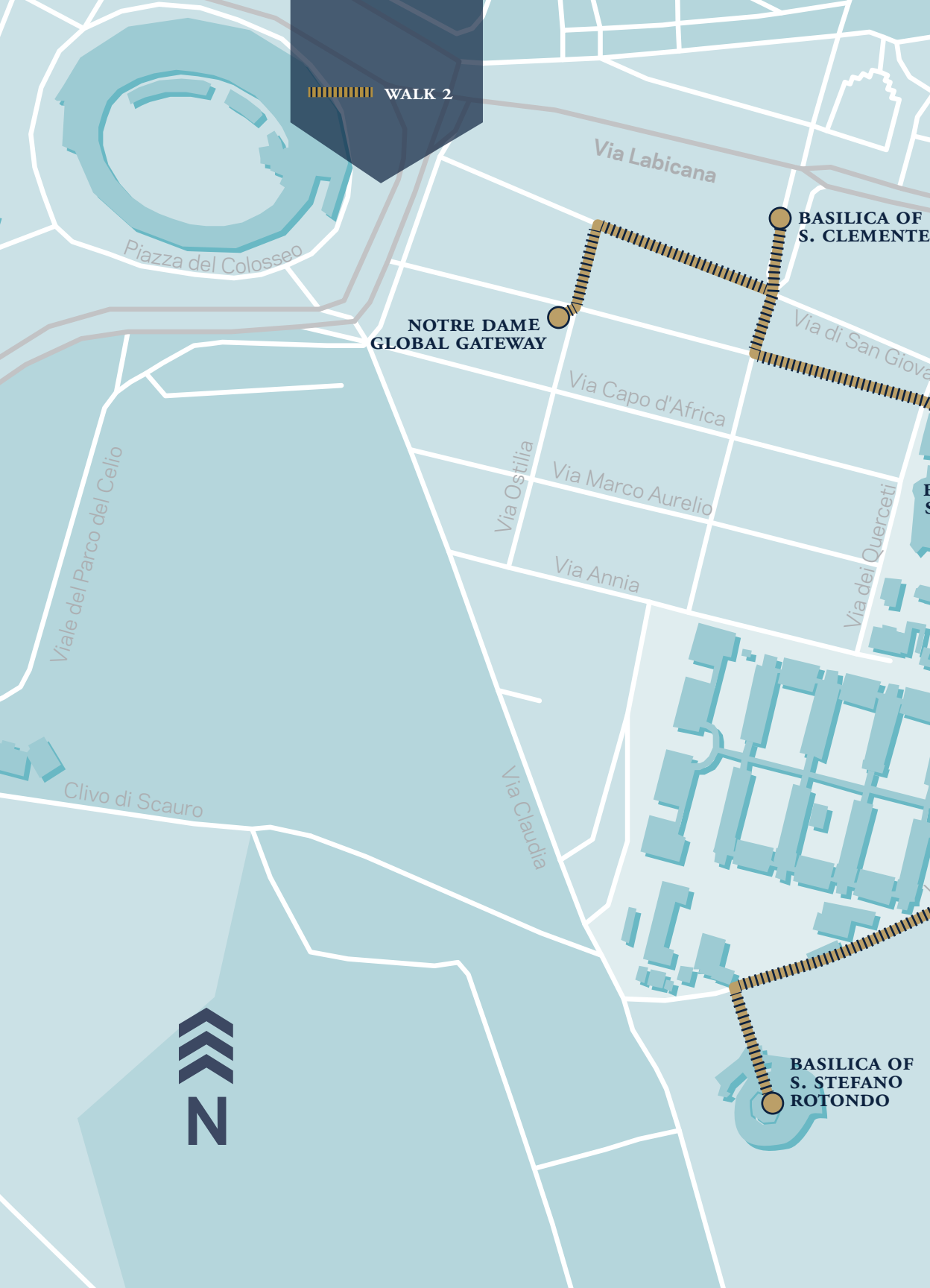
Basilica e Catacombe di San Sebastiano:
catacombe.org/basilica.html

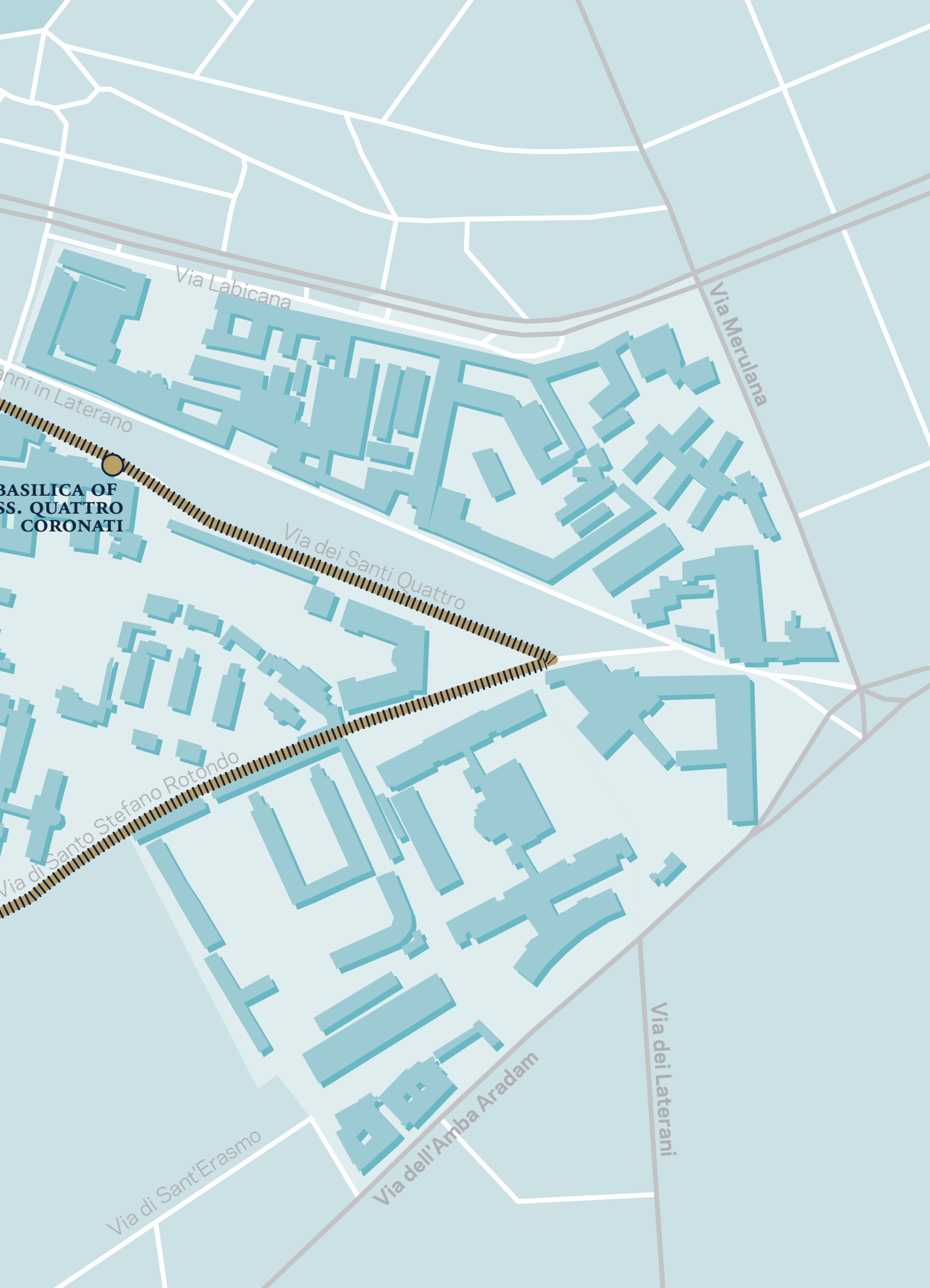
Catacombe di San Callisto:
catacombe.roma.it/en/index.php

Parco Regionale dell'Appia Antica:
parcoappiaantica.it/en/default.asp

Monuments and Museums Opening Times and Addresses:
parcoappiaantica.it/en/testi.asp?l1=1&l2=6&l3=0&l4=0

Ostia Antica:
ostiaantica.beniculturali.it/en/index.php


WALK 2
Via Labicana
BASILICA OF
S. CLEMENTE
Piazza del Colosseo
NOTRE DAME
GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via di San Giova
Via Capo d'Africa
Via Ostilia
Via Marco Aurelio
Via dei Querceti
Via Annia
Viale del Parco del Celio
Clivo di Scauro
Via Claudia
BASILICA OF
S. STEFANO
ROTONDO
N


Via Labicana
Via Merulana
anni in Laterano
BASILICA OF
SS. QUATTRO
CORONATI
Via dei Santi Quattro
Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo
Via dell'Amba Aradam
Via dei Laterani
Via di Sant'Erasmo



2. A WALK IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: SAN CLEMENTE, SANTI QUATTRO CORONATI, AND SANTO STEFANO ROTONDO



2.

A WALK IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD: SAN CLEMENTE, SANTI QUATTRO CORONATI, AND SANTO STEFANO ROTONDO

The Basilicas of San Clemente and Santi Quattro Coronati, and the Church of Santo Stefano Rotondo surround Notre Dame's facility in Via Ostilia, and seem to almost watch over it. Visiting these three churches can take up a morning or afternoon, and it is like walking in time through the strata of centuries, each of which left its own distinctive traces on these three sites. A prism of architectural styles and decorative elements are displayed before the visitor's eye: the diversity of styles and aesthetics recompose in a harmonious whole that will ultimately persuade you to visit and revisit these monuments until they become deeply familiar. What may often be perceived at a first glance as a fascinating and yet improbable combination, with time and observation makes its way in one's mind until its variety is understood as almost necessary.



BASILICA OF SAN CLEMENTE

A few blocks away from Via Ostilia, going up Via di San Giovanni in Laterano (the "Stradone di San Giovanni") towards Piazza di Porta San Giovanni, on the left side of the street stands the Basilica of San Clemente, which has its lateral entrance on the Stradone. Seen from here, the church shows its baroque "second skin" visible also in its façade, once you step in the open courtyard, which is the result of an early seventeenth-century intervention. But as soon as you enter through the side door, the wonderful green, white, and red marbles of the cosmatesque floor, with its geometrical patterns, will surprise you and take you back in time. The same effect is produced by the marble choir that occupies a great portion of the central nave, as well as by the splendid mosaic that decorates the apse; both reveal the antiquity and splendor of this church.

San Clemente is truly a symbol of Rome's distinctive trait that is the very essence of the city: its syncretic nature, which is revealed by the stratification through the centuries of buildings and monuments, readapted in each new era, and in any case preserved even merely to serve as the foundation of new monuments and buildings. The basilica, which dates back to the beginning of the twelfth century, as the

Romanesque bell tower and the portico at the main entrance testify, was in fact built over a fourth-century church. This older church had been almost entirely destroyed by the Normans of Robert Guiscard, who invaded and burnt down this part of Rome in 1084, and had been erected on a second-century Roman house and on a *mithraeum* (a place where the Persian god Mithra was worshipped) from the third century. Luckily, it is still possible to visit the different levels of the church.

The basilica is dedicated to St. Clement, one of the first popes of the end of the first century, who was martyred in Crimea under the Emperor Trajan. Clement was tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea, but when some time later the sea drew back, it revealed the tomb of the saint built by angels.

Entering then from the lateral entrance on Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, you will find yourself at the end of the left nave, where you will see one of the jewels kept in this church, namely the Chapel of St. Catherine of Alexandria frescoed in the first half of the 1400s by Masolino da Panicale. First of all, take a look at the arch at the entrance to the chapel: its frescoes portray the Annunciation. Framed by a typical Renaissance architecture, the angel on the left and the Virgin on the right are both dressed in a dark color facing each other, the former announcing and the latter sweetly accepting the will of God.

Looking through the gate that closes the chapel, on the left wall are frescoes with scenes of the life of St. Catherine of Alexandria, among which the theological disputation between the young saint and the doctors truly catches the eye: the saint's black dress accentuates her blond hair, and the gesture of the young woman strikes the spectator for the expressiveness with which it reinforces the eloquence of her discourse whose oral dimension is lost in the silent painting. The doctors' expressions vary from attention to curiosity, from admiration to surprise – and even irritation.

On the central wall of the chapel, Christ's Crucifixion is depicted on a background of a bright, clear blue sky. On the right wall, the frescoes represent scenes from the life of St. Ambrose of Milan.

The choir, or *schola cantorum*, occupies a large portion of the nave and is enclosed by a splendid marble gate, decorated with early Christian symbols. It was built in the twelfth century, but reusing materials recovered from the church underneath. The apse is decorated with one of the most splendid mosaics in the city. Between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries, many excellent masters of the mosaic art lived and worked in Rome. The mosaic in San Clemente portrays, on a resplendent golden background, the Triumph of the Cross, with the twelve doves symbolizing the apostles and, on the sides, the Virgin Mary and St. John Evangelist. The acanthus leaves from which the cross stems, spiral across the whole apse around flowers, birds, and figures of saints. From the cross, four streams depart and then rejoin at the

bottom, in a blue river at which some deer drink. On the lower part, the Lamb of God and twelve lambs symbolize Christ with the apostles. The beauty of the mosaic resides in the harmony of its figures and colors, the gold of the background and the green, blue, red, and white of the figures.

However, one of the unique characteristics of this basilica is its fascinating stratification. The first excavations of the archeological remains were carried out in 1857 by the Irish Dominican Friars, who still look after the basilica. A staircase leads about four meters underneath the basilica to the fourth-century church, which consists of a nave and two aisles, like the upper church. It is cold and humid there, and it would be very dark, except for a new lighting system that illuminates the site. Among the numerous mosaics and paintings, there are two eleventh-century frescoes on the left side of the nave: the first one portrays scenes from the life of Sant'Alessio (St. Alexis), a Roman saint who lived a life of repentance, who is also celebrated in a twelfth century poem (see below).

The other fresco constitutes another gem of this basilica. It depicts the story of Sisinnio, a jealous, pagan husband married to Teodora, a converted Christian, and who, suspicious of his wife's absence, follows her to church, where St. Clement is celebrating Mass. Sisinnio then orders his servants to tie up and carry St. Clement away; but the servants are blinded, and so they tie up and carry away a column instead. What makes this fresco a real treasure is the fact that the character of Sisinnio "speaks," just like in a comic strip, to give his servants instructions, and these inscriptions/captions are one of the earliest written records of the Italian vernacular, mainly consisting of curses: "Traite fili de le pute" (Pull, sons of whores).

Descending again to a lower archeological level, at about ten meters underneath street level, you will be able to visit the second-century building and the third-century *mithraeum*. Here it is even colder, but, paradoxically, the uncomfortable humidity and intense smell, combined with the dim lights and the echo of voices, and of a subterranean stream of water audible not far away, add to the fascination of the site. Visitors are usually reluctant to leave, and will indulge in wandering through the galleries, sitting down where possible, and perhaps going back in time with one's imagination.







BASILICA OF SANTI QUATTRO CORONATI
(FOUR HOLY CROWNED MARTYRS)

Going out from the lateral entrance of the Basilica of San Clemente, turn left again on Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, take the first right towards Via dei Santi Quattro, and here turn left and follow the street that climbs up the hill. On your right, you will see an imposing fortress that forms the monastery of the Augustinian contemplative nuns. The walk to the monastery is fascinating, and when you get to the wide stretch in front of the entrance it almost feels as if you were leaving the world and its noises behind, to plunge yourself in a dimension of silence broken only by the singing of the nuns at the canonical hours.

The church is dedicated to the four holy crowned martyrs Severo, Severiano, Carpoforo, and Vittorino, who according to one story were four sculptors who refused to sculpt the statue of the pagan god Aesculapius. According to another version of the story, they were instead four Roman Christian soldiers who refused to worship the same statue. The first nucleus of the church was probably built in the fourth century on the site of a Roman villa, but the first records of the existence of a church date back to the sixth century. Under Pope Leo IV (847-855), contemporary of Charlemagne, the square tower at the entrance was built on the east side.

Entering the complex, you will walk through the arched doorway that opens at the base of the tower itself and leads to a first courtyard. The entrance to the ninth-century basilica, burnt down by the Normans in 1084, was here. At the beginning of the following century, a new and much smaller basilica was built by Pope Pascal II. Part of the space occupied by the old basilica now forms the second courtyard that leads to the entrance of the current church.

Santi Quattro has a three-nave structure. The central nave has a splendid cosmatesque floor (as in San Clemente, you will recognize it from the patterns formed by green, red, and white marbles) and a wooden ceiling; on the walls of the aisles, you will see the remains of fourteenth-century frescoes, quite faded but very evocative, while the apse is decorated with vivid seventeenth-century frescoes. Impressive granite columns divide the nave from the aisles. If you look up, you will see the women's gallery. You will make the most of the visit to the basilica if you go in the morning, when the nuns sing lauds, or in

the late afternoon, when they sing vespers. Their voices resonate in the exceptional silence that otherwise characterizes this site, so secluded from the noises of the city below.

The two gems of the complex of Santi Quattro Coronati are the cloister that dates back to the beginning of the 1200s, and the Oratorio di San Silvestro (St. Sylvester Oratory) entirely decorated with frescoes from the end of the 1200s. The access to the cloister is through a door on the left aisle: the porches are separated from the open space by little arches formed by couples of slender columns. If you look all around, the external walls facing the open part of the cloister, a frieze of marble tesserae, each with a geometrical pattern in red, green, and white runs around above the arches. In the middle stands a fountain that was used for ablutions and which is called a *labrum*. The fountain is surrounded by a garden arranged in geometric shapes. Silence and a simple harmony of colors and shapes characterize the cloister.

To access the Oratory of St. Sylvester, you have to go back to the first courtyard outside the church; enter the building to your left, and ring the doorbell: a nun will open the door to the Oratory. The experience is intense, also because the nun will most probably leave you alone inside there and shut the door: you will find yourself in a chapel with a cosmatesque floor and a majolica ceiling. All around the walls, a cycle of frescoes from the late 1200s will catch your eye. On the wall above the entrance door, the upper-level frescoes depict Christ with the Virgin Mary, St. John the Baptist, and two angels, one of whom folds up the heaven as if it were a scroll. On the lower level, you will admire the story of the Emperor Constantine cured from his leprosy by Pope Sylvester I and finally sent to Rome. These frescoes, made by an unknown artist in 1246, reveal the influence of the Byzantine style. Given the connections between the city of Venice and Byzantium, some scholars tend to attribute the frescoes to the hand of a Venetian artist. The colors are splendid, especially the nuances of blue, green, and gold. These are the best-preserved medieval frescoes in Rome, and fit well into this complex of Santi Quattro, which is indeed one of the sites where the Roman Middle Ages, often "blurred" by the sumptuous preponderance of Renaissance art, can be fully experienced.

Finally, among the hidden treasures of Santi Quattro is the Aula Gotica (Gothic Hall), a room on the first floor of the main tower of the palace built by Cardinal Stefano Conti, nephew of Pope Innocent III (1160-1216): it is a rare example of gothic architecture in Rome, and is adorned with splendid frescoes dating back to the 1200s. The frescoes, which were rediscovered in 1995, have been recently restored and the room is now open to the public, but only a few days each month on fixed dates and times, and the visit must be booked in advance.

Exiting the complex of Santi Quattro and leaving it behind, you will walk along the last stretch of Via dei Santi Quattro, towards San Giovanni. On your left, you will walk by a series of striking low buildings, in the beautiful warm colors typical of the center of

Rome, while on your right you will have the Pontifical Irish College, whose elegant white and light yellow building is surrounded by a luxuriant garden of high trees and bushes. At the crossroad, walking around the Irish College, take Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo that runs more or less parallel to Via dei Santi Quattro. You will walk along the complex of the hospitals San Giovanni-Addolorata on your left, one of the largest in Rome. After the Addolorata, again on your left, you will see the Calvary Hospital, a private clinic run by British nun nurses and hosted in an elegant villa, and after that, the Basilica of Santo Stefano Rotondo.

BASILICA OF SANTO STEFANO ROTONDO

You will go through a gate, underneath an arch, in order to access the site of the church that, seen from outside, is a massive circular building in bricks surrounded by a garden. The church was built in the fifth century, on top of a *mithraeum* from the second and third centuries, and consisted of three concentric circles separated by ancient columns and intersected by four naves, which formed a Greek cross. It was consecrated by Pope Simplicius and dedicated to the martyr St. Stephen. When the church was restored in the 1400s under Pope Nicholas V, by the architect Bernardo Rossellino, the external circle was closed, thus reducing the plan of the church. And yet, what is really striking in this church is its size: if you sit there in silence and look at its massive columns, you can easily feel overwhelmed by the width and height of the ambulatories amplified by their circular shape.

But the main reason to visit this church is to see the cycle of frescoes that decorate the wall erected by Rossellino to cut off the external circle of the structure. The thirty-four frescoes from the end of the 1500s, by painters Pomarancio, Antonio Tempesta, and others, represent the martyrdom of many saints, in the spirit of the Counter Reformation, starting from the Slaughter of the Innocents. Some of them are quite crude and shocking.

Another treasure of this church is the chapel of the martyred Saints Primo and Feliciano, whose bodies were taken into the church from the catacombs where they had been buried by Pope Theodore I in the seventh century, and put underneath the altar where they still remain today. The apse of this chapel is decorated with a seventh century mosaic, in Byzantine style, representing Christ in a medallion over the cross, studded with gems and surrounded by flowers with the two saints at its sides. In another chapel, there is the Sepulcher of St. Stephen, King of Hungary, and, next to the entrance, a marble seat that according to legend was used by St. Gregory the Great.

READINGS

- "Ritmo su S. Alessio": This poem can be read in *Poeti del Duecento*, edited by Gianfranco Contini. It was written towards the end of the 1100s in central Italy (in the Southern part of the Marche region; it comes from the Benedictine abbey of Santa Vittoria in Matenano). It tells the story of St. Alexis, a Roman patrician who decides to live his life in poverty, chastity, and contemplation. He thus refuses to marry the



woman his father had chosen for him, goes to Syria where he donates his riches to the poor, and is increasingly looked upon as a saint. He then decides to return to Rome, as a pilgrim and mendicant, and in Rome he eventually dies; his body is finally identified by his family.

The frescoes in San Clemente portray the life of St. Alexis, and both the paintings and this poem, one of the earliest of the Italian literary tradition, testify to the vitality of this story through the Middle Ages.

- Jacopo da Varagine (or Varazze), *Golden Legend* (*Legenda aurea*; ca.1260): This was one of the most widely read books in the late Middle Ages, and it recounts the lives of many saints, providing both accurate and unlikely etymologies of their names, as well as describing martyrdoms. It also describes and explains the symbols associated with each saint, and it is a precious instrument to interpret the iconography of paintings portraying saints.

MUSIC

- Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1515-94): maestro di cappella (chapel master) of San Giovanni in Laterano and Santa Maria Maggiore, who spent part of his life in a house near Santo Stefano Rotondo, Palestrina wrote many evocative musical compositions.

USEFUL LINKS

Basilica of San Clemente
basilicasanclemente.com

Monastero dei Santi Quattro Coronati
santiquattrocoronati.org

For information about the dates of the visits to the Gothic Hall, and the way to book them, visit aulagoticasantiquattrocoronati.it.

Basilica of Santo Stefano Rotondo
santo-stefano-rotondo.it


WALK 3
Piazza del Colosseo
Via di San Gregorio
Viale del Parco del Celio
ANTIQUARIUM
DEL CELIO
BASILICA OF
SS. GIOVANN
E PAOLO
Clivo di Scauro
BASILICA OF
S. GREGORIO
AL CELIO
N


Via Labicana
NOTRE DAME
GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via di San Giovanni in Laterano
Via Ostilia
Via Capo d'Africa
Via Marco Aurelio
Via Claudia
Via Annia
Via dei Querceti
Via San Paolo della Croce
Viale Cardinale Francesco Spellmann
BASILICA OF
S. MARIA
IN DOMNICA
Via della Navicella



3. EXPLORING THE CAELIAN HILL: THE VILLA CELIMONTANA, SANTA MARIA IN DOMNICA, SANTI GIOVANNI E PAOLO, AND SAN GREGORIO AL CELIO



3.

EXPLORING THE CAELIAN HILL: THE VILLA CELIMONTANA, SANTA MARIA IN DOMNICA, SANTI GIOVANNI E PAOLO, AND SAN GREGORIO AL CELIO

At the center of this walk is the Villa Celimontana, an oasis of beautiful green plants and flowers in the pulsing heart of the Caelian neighborhood. The villa is protected by three churches, two of which stand by the two park entrances. A morning or afternoon can be dedicated to this walk, for an enchanting succession of art, the green spaces of the villa, various archaeological sites, and spectacular views of the city.

BASILICA OF SANTA MARIA IN DOMNICA

Exit Notre Dame's facility, turning right on Via Ostilia and stay on it, enjoying the peaceful neighborhood, its colorful and elegant buildings, until you turn left on to Via Claudia, a busy street that soon runs alongside the military hospital on your left, and then turns into Via Celimontana and Via della Navicella, crossing Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo (see second walk). You will see the Arco di Dolabella, an entrance through the Servian walls, beyond which is Via San Paolo della Croce and the little Church of San Tommaso in Formis, at the end of a narrow courtyard. Going back to the main road and leaving the arch behind yourself on your right, you will arrive at the Basilica of Santa Maria in Domnica on the summit of the Caelian Hill.

Romans mostly call this church (very popular for wedding ceremonies) "la Navicella," because of the marble fountain in the shape of a vessel that was sculpted in the early 1500s, and which stands in front of its façade. The church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and the expression "in Domnica" refers probably to the word *dominicum*, which designated early Christian churches (the Latin adjective *dominicum* means "of God" or "*consecrated* to God"). A first nucleus of the church was built in the seventh century on the site of a Roman fire brigade, and immediately became a diaconate, a place dedicated to the service and assistance of pilgrims, the poor, the weak, and anybody in need. The basilican structure was given to Santa Maria in Domnica by Pope Paschal I at the beginning of the ninth century, but in the second decade of the 1500s Pope Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici) had it restored, and the façade and its arcade date back to that period.

When you enter the church and you stand in the central nave, separated from the two aisles by ancient columns of grey and pink granite, three elements will immediately catch your eye: the splendid mosaic of the apse, the wooden ceiling, and the cosmatesque floor. The mosaic dates back from the time of Pope Paschal I (ninth century), and is inspired by Byzantine iconography: the Virgin Mary is sitting on her

throne with the Baby Jesus in her lap, and is surrounded by two groups of angels, while Pope Paschal I is kneeling at her feet. The scene is set in a garden of a brilliant green dotted with red flowers. In the arch that frames the apse, the mosaic portrays Christ among two angels and the apostles, on a vivid blue and green background: the sky and the grass. On the lower part, Elijah and Moses are on the sides of the apse. The brilliant colors of the mosaic will fill your eyes. Compared to them, the frescoes of the 1500s underneath the apse, depicting scenes from the lives of St. Lawrence and St. Ciriaca (a third-century Roman Christian matron, whose house was believed to be on the site where a few centuries later the church was built) are a much fainter work of art.

However, the wooden lacunar ceiling, from the end of the 1500s, is another jewel: each panel depicts a symbol on either bright red, or blue backgrounds. At the center, you will see the emblem of Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici, while each of the other two big lacunars depict a ship, symbol of the Virgin Mary and of the Church. All around are lacunars representing the litanies of the Virgin Mary (the morning star, the fountain, the gate of heaven, etc.). The church is particularly beautiful on a sunny day, when the polychromatic stained glass windows filter the light that softly suffuses each element inside. It is wonderful, when the door is wide open, to stop and look, from inside the church, at the fountain of the navicella right in front of it and outside, in the splendor of its white marble.

THE VILLA CELIMONTANA: A PARK FOR ALL SEASONS

Going out of Santa Maria in Domnica, and turning right, you will find yourself in front of the entrance to the Villa Celimontana, previously known as Villa Mattei, because property of the Mattei family, and which became a public garden in 1928. This villa is a magnificent garden of a variety of trees and plants: tall pine trees with their slender trunks and their light green foliage; bushes of white and pink oleanders; dark green cypresses; tender sweet palm trees with their lanceolate leaves; cascades of bougainvillea and wisteria; and soft green lawns spotted with daisies and clovers. The park, though not very big, offers very diverse landscapes. At the end of the entrance path stands Villa Mattei. The palace, dating back to the last quarter of the 1500s, is in a warm orange color, albeit a bit faded, and hosts the Società Geografica Italiana (Italian Geographical Society) with its very rich library and museum. Looking at the entrance of the palace and to the left, you will see an area almost completely enclosed by vegetation, especially tall trees, which during the summer offer very pleasant shelter from the heat. An elegant Egyptian obelisk stands in the middle of the main path. A curious and surprising phenomenon is visible if you lean on the parapet of the wall surrounding the garden, looking down towards the street: you will notice, on the external side of the wall, tufts of capers that literally grow out of it.

If instead you go towards the opposite direction starting from the palace, a path descends towards the other part of the villa, flanked to your left by very nice lawns, where almost in every season (given the mild winters of Rome, especially on sunny days) people lay down or sit, reading, chatting, sleeping, celebrating a birthday (especially of children) with food and beverages.

The Villa Celimontana is indeed a park for all seasons, both of the year and of life: many Romans will tell you that they, or their children, played here and learned how to bike in the playground area; or that, as young people, they walked, played drums, or other instruments, studied for an exam, read their favorite novels and poems – or even blissfully kissed on a first date on these meadows. Many will tell you that, as newlyweds, they were photographed here on their wedding day, and elderly people will say that they come here to walk slowly on sunny mornings, or to enjoy the breeze on a hot summer day, chatting the afternoon away on a bench. Others will say that they jog here, or walk their dog, while some tourists (not too many and usually connoisseurs), are attracted to the lively peace of this splendid place. A round fountain is full of big goldfish and turtles, always surrounded by groups of children. Another area of the villa is a large playground with swings, castles, sandboxes, and a circuit for bikes and roller skates, as well as benches under very tall pine trees. Close to the playground, another area of the park has hosted in the past couple of decades a summer jazz festival with evening concerts.

Going out from the entrance close to this side of the villa, you will find yourself in front of another wonder of early Christian architecture, the Basilica of Santi Giovanni e Paolo.

BASILICA OF SANTI GIOVANNI E PAOLO AND THE "CASE ROMANE" (ROMAN HOUSES)

The Basilica of Santi Giovanni e Paolo stands in a wide square facing the rear entrance of the Villa Celimontana and surrounded by medieval buildings and vestiges of ancient Roman architecture. Georgina Masson, in her *Companion Guide to Rome*, writes that this square has preserved its medieval appearance and atmosphere to such a degree that medieval pilgrims would still nowadays be able to orient themselves and find their way in this place.

The original church was built at the end of the fourth century, and in the following century it was severely damaged by both the army of the Visigoths led by king Alaric I in the sack of Rome in 410, and by an earthquake. The Normans of Robert Guiscard, who burnt the first Basilica of San Clemente (see second walk) in 1084, were also responsible for the sack of Santi Giovanni e Paolo. The inside of the basilica, instead, underwent a radical transformation in the 1700s when it acquired its baroque appearance. The exterior (thanks to a 1950s restoration) preserves its original medieval design. The upper part of the façade (in characteristic red bricks) shows the uncommon mullion style, with five arches sustained by marble columns. The same architectural element is still visible in the lower level of the façade behind the porch/arcade, which was erected in the twelfth century in front of the basilica, while the closed porch on top of the arcade dates back to the early 1200s. To the right of the church stands another massive medieval building which has since been a convent, and next to it a tall and elegant twelfth-century bell tower, decorated with inlay marbles and ceramics. Two marble lions guard the cosmatesque portal of the church, and the keeper tells children that one of them is the good lion and the other the evil one, while the sculpture of an eagle is on the summit of the portal.

The church interior, which has a nave and two aisles, forms a sharp contrast with the sober external architecture: once you walk in, you are struck by the redundancy of the pillars built next to the original columns that divide the nave from the aisles, by shiny baroque golden decorations, heavy chandeliers, fake marble walls (they are actually painted) and sixteenth century frescoes, as well as by the presence of chairs and decorations for weddings that are continuously celebrated in this church. But if you walk to the end of the left nave, you will find a splendid fresco from the middle of the 1200s: Christ in throne, and surrounded by six apostles. The features, clothes, and ornaments of the figures are reminiscent of the Byzantine style.

The visit to the underground directly underneath the basilica is also fascinating. Here you will have the opportunity to visit a complex of about twenty rooms belonging to different Roman houses built between the first and fourth centuries. The entrance to "le case romane del Celio" (Roman houses on the Caelian Hill) is on the Clivo di Scauro, the street that runs alongside the basilica, gently descending the Caelian Hill. Some of the buildings were the houses of artisans, while another one was the house of a nobleman. Another building housed a Christian community in the second century, and according to tradition, the bodies of the martyrs St. John and St. Paul (to whom the basilica is dedicated), who died during the reign of the Emperor Julian the Apostate (second half of the fourth century), are buried here. The most surprising feature of the Roman houses are the numerous paintings still visible throughout this underground itinerary. The *nymphaeum* (a room usually containing a fountain, and adorned with plants and sculptures), for instance, is decorated with a marine scene painted in the third century. The *confessio* (a niche for relics located near the altar), which is on top of the sepulcher of the martyrs, shows Christian subjects depicted in the fourth century. In the following century, an oratory was created and some of the rooms are decorated with paintings made between the eighth and the twelfth centuries, including a Crucifixion. The visit can continue to the Antiquarium del Celio, where most of the objects found during the excavations of the Roman houses are preserved and exhibited.

BASILICA OF SAN GREGORIO AL CELIO

Descending along the ancient Clivo di Scauro, you will pass underneath a series of medieval arches that support the side of the basilica: turn around and look up to admire the architecture of the apse of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, which is surrounded by a loggia (porch/balcony) made of arches and slender columns: this is the only example in Rome of the typical style of Northern Italian Romanesque churches. On your left is an orchard with plants of tomatoes, and through it you will enjoy the first glimpse of the Basilica of San Gregorio Magno, which was built on the site where the saint had founded a monastery dedicated to St. Andrew. The beauty of this church resides especially in its location: it is built on the slope of the Caelian Hill, and when you look at it from afar, it almost seems like it is suspended up above in the sky. Once you have the whole vision of it, you will see that a steep marble staircase leads to the church, and its architecture will seem as though simultaneously soaring and towering over you.

The church had been built in the Middle Ages, but it was renovated between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the travertine façade shows: divided in three horizontal tiers, the top one with a timpani, the middle one with three windows, and the lower one with three arched doors. Worth noticing are the three birds watching the doors: an eagle in the middle, and two winged monsters at its sides. Once you reach the top of the staircase, make sure to turn around and see the view of the Palatine Hill; you will glimpse part of its fascinating architecture emerging among the green manes of the tall and slender pine trees. To your far left, you will see the FAO building (Food and Agriculture Organization) and the avenue that flanks the Terme di Caracalla, the huge complex of baths dating back to the beginning of the third century and the Emperor Caracalla, truly worth a visit. Nowadays, the complex is used during the summer as a space for opera and ballet performances. Beneath you, in Piazza San Gregorio, a monument to Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta is surrounded by olive trees.

Entering San Gregorio, an atrium enclosed by a porch will lead you to the inside: there are a nave and two aisles with a splendid cosmatesque floor, while most of the paintings date to the 1700s. Worthy of note are the marble seat of St. Gregory, from the first century BC, and the Cappella Salviati, designed by the architect Carlo Maderno in 1600, and still showing an ancient fresco of the Madonna con Bambino (Virgin and Child), as well as a marble altar.

The three chapels outside and to the left of San Gregorio, looking at the façade, are preceded by a shady path underneath the cypress trees bordered by an orchard: they are a real treasure unknown to most Romans. The Oratorio di Sant' Andrea, in the middle, and that of Santa Silvia, to the right, date back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, and contain wonderful frescoes by Guido Reni and Domenichino. The Oratorio di Santa Barbara shows frescoes by Antonio Viviani.

ADDITIONAL ITINERARIES

- From San Gregorio and the Caelian Hill, many other fascinating itineraries are at hand, that will be just briefly suggested here. You could either decide to cross the road and visit the archeological site of the Palatine Hill, or the Circo Massimo (an amphitheater used in ancient times for chariot races); or the Aventine Hill, with its roseto (a splendid rose garden), its three early Christian basilicas (Santa Sabina, Sant'Alessio, and Sant'Anselmo), its "giardino degli aranci" (garden of orange trees) with a wonderful view over the river Tiber and the city on its two banks (including the synagogue, Trastevere, the isola Tiberina, and in the distance Castel Sant'Angelo and the Basilica of San Pietro). Here you may also enjoy walking through the neighborhood and its elegant "villini." You could also take a tram and reach Testaccio, a characteristic Roman neighborhood that underwent a process of gentrification in the past twenty five years, but that still offers a variety of genuine restaurants and cafes serving typical Roman cuisine. Crossing the river on the other end of Testaccio,

the neighborhood of Trastevere awaits you with its lively bars and restaurants, and especially the wonderful Churches of Santa Maria in Trastevere and Santa Cecilia, whereas a winding road will take you up to the Janiculum Hill with another breathtaking view of the whole city, the American Academy, and Villa Pamphili, one of the largest and most beautiful parks in Rome.

READING

- Wallace Stevens, "To an old philosopher in Rome": In this poem, Stevens portrays the philosopher and professor George Santayana (Madrid 1863-Rome 1952) who chose Rome as his last home, when he retired to a convent on the Caelian Hill. The philosopher lives on the threshold between his simple room and the city outside. He has chosen to be inside, but lets the city come in, with its sounds, and the memory of its palaces, and domes. The grandeur of the city outside, both in time and space is compared to the tininess of the philosopher's room, with its simplest objects. But Rome is a city that never lets you go, and the philosopher from his little room can sense the city outside and deeply dwell in it with his mind, in a philosophical, almost mystical experience.

USEFUL LINKS

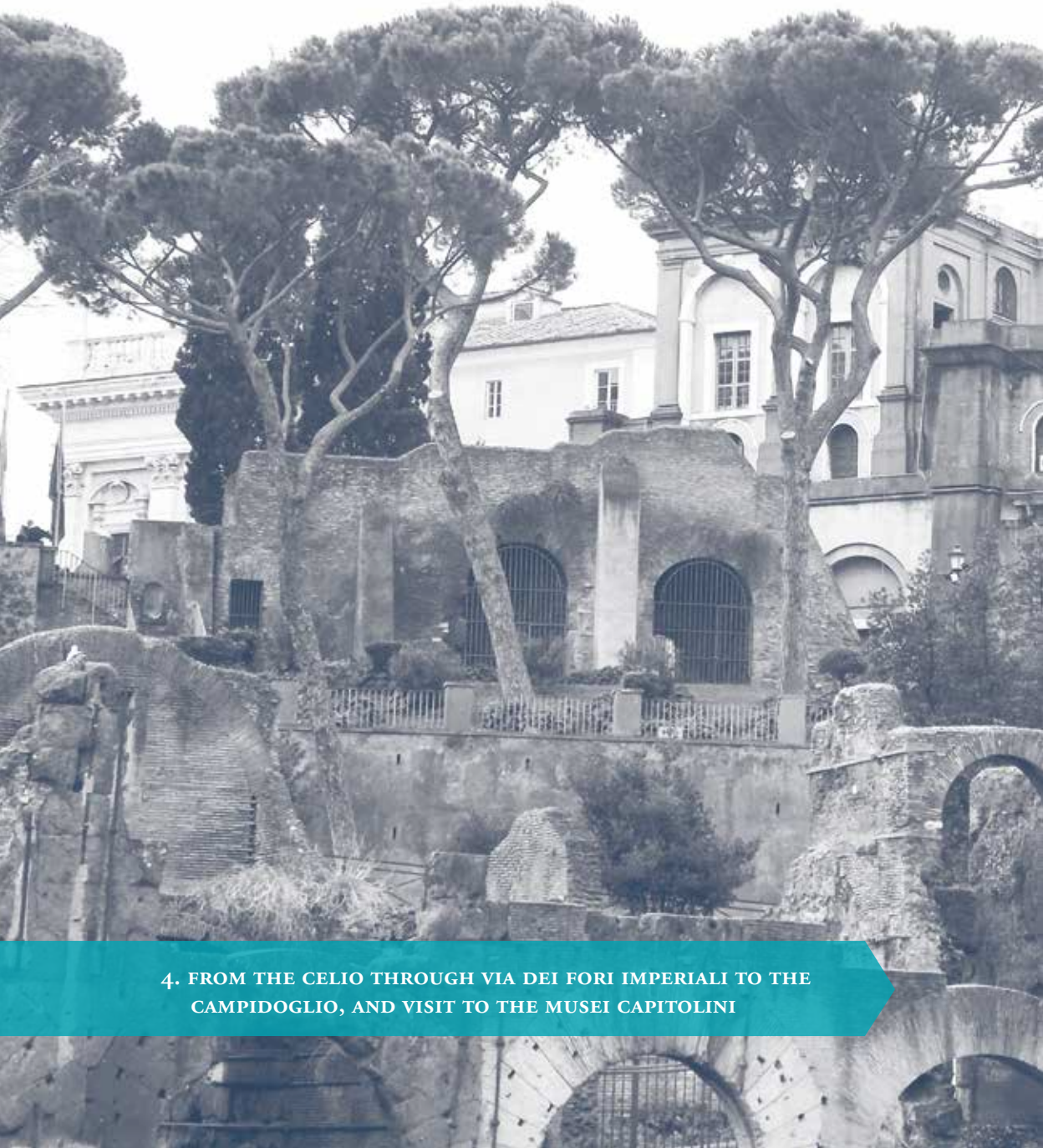
Santa Maria in Domnica:
santamariaindomnica.it

Società Geografica Italiana:
societageografica.it

Case Romane:
caseromane.it/en/index_en.html


WALK 4
FORO DI TRAIANO
Via Alessandrina
S. MARIA IN ARACOELI
FORO D'AUGUSTO
CAMPIDOGLIO
CARCERE MAMERTINO
LARGO ROMOLO E REMO
MUSEI CAPITOLINI
ARCO DI SETTIMIO SEVERO
BASILICA OF SS. COSMA E DAMIANO
Via di Monte Caprino
Vico Jugario
Via dei Fienili
Via di San Teodoro
Via del Velabro
N


Via Cimarra
Via Cavour
Via Giovanni Lanza
Via Leonina
Via In Selci
Via Baccina
Via delle Sette Sale
Via del Fagutale
Via degli Annibaldi
Via Frangipane
Via del Colosseo
S. FRANCESCA ROMANA
Via Sacra
COLOSSEO
ARCO DI COSTANTINO
Piazza del Colosseo
NOTRE DAME GLOBAL GATEWAY



4. FROM THE CELIO THROUGH VIA DEI FORI IMPERIALI TO THE CAMPIDOGLIO, AND VISIT TO THE MUSEI CAPITOLINI


CÉZANNE
E GLI
ARTISTI ITALIANI
DEL '900

4.

FROM THE CELIO THROUGH VIA DEI FORI IMPERIALI TO THE CAMPIDOGLIO, AND VISIT TO THE MUSEI CAPITOLINI

VIA DEI FORI IMPERIALI AND THE COLOSSEO

Take a left, exiting Notre Dame's building in Via Ostilia, and another left on Via dei Santi Quattro, and enjoy the view of the Colosseum just a few blocks away. Crossing the road, take Via dei Fori Imperiali: it is a broad avenue that was inaugurated under Fascism, in 1932, to celebrate the decennial of the march on Rome (22-29 October 1922) by which Benito Mussolini seized power; at that time, it was renamed Via dell'Impero. It forms a continuation of Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, and it specifically connects the area of the Colosseum with Piazza Venezia, where the monument to the "unknown soldier" stands, passing through one of the most important archeological sites of the world. On 2 June, a military parade through Via dei Fori Imperiali celebrates every year the Italian Republic.

Ever since its construction, Via dei Fori Imperiali has given rise to harsh criticism: the main critique was that its creation disrupted the original arrangement, where Roman remains had been embedded among the medieval and Renaissance buildings that were then swept away to create the massive road. Moreover, it has become a very busy street, heavily used by public transportation and private traffic, which has caused rapid and extensive pollution damage to the monuments. Nevertheless, it is still a very pleasant walk, since the sidewalk is very large; it feels like walking on a balcony suspended over one of the most breathtaking sites in the world, the Fori Imperiali (Imperial Forums). Moreover, the new mayor of Rome has recently approved a plan that will result in the whole area becoming a pedestrian area: only one tram line will pass through it, and eventually new excavations will be carried out to bring back to the surface the archeological remains that lay underneath the street. Thus, the Imperial Forums, split in two, will be reconnected, and become the largest archeological site in the world.

The first monument you will be walking by and around, and one of the symbols of the city of Rome, is the Colosseum, whose construction was started under the Emperor Vespasianus in the second half of the first century and continued under his successors of the gens Flavia (the Flavia family): Titus and Domitian. This is the reason why its original name was the Flavian Amphitheater, while "Colosseum" is a medieval designation given to it because a colossal bronze statue of the Emperor Nero was placed next to it. The Venerable Bede (673-735) quoted in one of his writings a prophecy which recited: "While the Coliseum stands, Rome shall stand; when the Coliseum falls, Rome shall fall; when Rome falls, the world shall fall."

The Amphitheater was inaugurated by Titus in 80 AD, and it was used for games that included fights between gladiators and ferocious beasts. The façade measures almost fifty meters in height and is arrayed in three tiers of eighty arches each, separated by semi-columns and made of travertine. About 50,000 spectators could fit into the amphitheater, whose seats were divided in various sectors, each destined to a different social category, from the emperor to the common Roman people. Women occupied separate seats. The spectators would access the building through circular aisles around the structure and internal staircases. Underneath the arena, a system of galleries housed the beasts and the apparatus used during the games. This was connected by an underground passage to the *Ludus Magnus*, the gym where gladiators were trained and whose archeological remains you can still see at the beginning of Via di San Giovanni in Laterano, on the left. You can visit the inside of the Colosseum, but before you do so, walk all around it glancing through its arches and enjoying the feeling of being right in front of one of the most ancient and popular monuments in the world.

Next to the Colosseum, the Arch of Constantine with its three arches, was dedicated in 315 AD to the Emperor Constantine, to celebrate his victory over Maxentius in 312: this is the biggest of the three triumphal arches in Rome (the other two are the Arch of Titus and the Arch of Septimius Severus).

THE ROMAN FORUM AND THE FORUMS OF CAESAR, VESPASIANUS, AND NERVA

Leaving the Arch of Constantine behind, and continuing along Via dei Fori Imperiali, you will start your walk by the Fori Imperiali (Imperial Forums), namely the public spaces created at different times during the Roman empire, where ancient Romans would gather to conduct their business activities, discuss politics, and attend religious ceremonies in the surrounding temples. The complex is formed, in chronological order, by the Roman Forum, whose nucleus dates back to the end of the seventh century BC, the Forum of Caesar (46 BC), the Forum of Augustus (2 BC), the Forum of Peace built by Vespasianus (75 AD), the Forum of Nerva (97 AD), and the Forum of Trajan (112-113 AD). The whole area is of course worth a long visit, but it is nice on a daily basis to just enjoy the sight of it from Via dei Fori Imperiali. This area offers one of the most striking examples of integration between classical, medieval, and Renaissance buildings. Moreover, most of it had been buried underground through the centuries. The first excavations started during the Renaissance, when the site became both an incredible source of artistic discovery and inspiration, and at the same time a quarry of construction and decorative materials of all kinds, which were taken and reused to build and decorate new buildings and monuments in different parts of the city.

The first part of the walk after the Colosseum, and towards Largo Romolo e Remo, is actually along a high wall that does not allow the sight of the Forum, but functions as a display for a series of huge maps showing Rome's expansion from its foundation as a village in the eighth century BC (traditionally 753 BC) to when it became *Caput Mundi* (Head of the World) at the peak of its empire. This part of the itinerary is even more difficult nowadays because of the construction of Rome's underground metro line C, which will eventually connect up with line B, in front of the Colosseum. However, you will enjoy the sight of the monuments described in this section once you have gone past Largo Romolo e Remo, and continuing your walk along what really looks like a panoramic terrace over the archeological park. You may also take one of the side streets departing from Via dei Fori Imperiali, or just climb the Capitoline Hill, and look down towards the Forums.

Thus, leaving the Colosseum, you will first walk by the Temple of Venus and Roma and more towards the inside of the Forums, by the Church of Santa Francesca Romana, whose first nucleus was built in the ninth century, though the bell tower was erected in the thirteenth century, and the current travertine façade and the aspect of the one nave interior date back to the 1600s. The most precious work of art to see in this church is the Madonna Glycophilusa (Our Lady of Tenderness), an icon of the first half of the fifth century, which is kept in the sacristy. It represents the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus according to the Byzantine iconographic tradition, which emphasizes the tenderness of the love between mother and child.

Then you will pass by the Basilica of Maxentius (or Constantine), built by the Emperors Maxentius and then Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century. This is a massive brick construction, with the typical three naves. However, what remains nowadays is just a small portion of the building whose interior in antiquity must have been covered with travertine and contained a colossal statue of the Emperor Constantine. Roman basilicas were buildings utilized for business purposes, and trials were conducted there as well. This space is currently used, especially during the summer, to host concerts and a literary festival (Festival internazionale di Roma, also known as Festival di Massenzio) where both internationally renowned Italian and foreign authors are invited to discuss and read their works publicly.

You will then see the Basilica of Santi Cosma e Damiano, in the Forum of Peace, from the time of the Emperor Vespasianus (75 AD), dedicated to the two martyrs executed under the Emperor Diocletian. The church was built using the pre-existing structure of the library of the Forum of Peace. The jewel of this church is the mosaic that decorates the apse, made in the sixth century: on a splendid dark blue background, it represents St. Cosma and St. Damian accompanied by St. Peter and St. Paul. On the sides, you

can see St. Theodore and St. Felix IV, who present the model of the church. At their feet are the twelve lambs, the symbols of the apostles. Christ, in a golden robe and walking on a carpet of purple clouds, dominates the center of the mosaic.

Close to Santi Cosma e Diamano is also the Church of San Lorenzo in Miranda, built on the ruins of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, and containing seventeenth-century paintings by Pietro da Cortona and Domenichino.

The next important monument is the *Tullianum*, commonly known since the Middle Ages as the Carcere Mamertino (Mamertine Prison). Some archeologists think that this was originally a cistern used to gather water and subsequently transformed into a prison, where political prisoners were kept and executed. According to a medieval legend, the Emperor Nero had St. Peter imprisoned here, and the cell is now a chapel, called San Pietro in Carcere (St. Peter in Prison). Above it stands the Church of San Giuseppe dei Falegnami (St. Joseph of the Carpenters), built in the 1600s.

Noteworthy especially for its architecture, designed by Pietro da Cortona in the seventeenth century, is the Church of Santi Martina e Luca, built on a pre-existing structure, still visible underneath.

Around all these churches, which were constructed on archeological remains, are the Forums, the center of city life since the end of the seventh century BC, and whose areas were built at different times by different rulers and emperors. The area of the *Comitium* was devoted to politics: the *Curia* is here, a building in red bricks where the Roman Senate reunited, and the *Rostra* were here as well, from where political speeches were delivered. Other buildings were devoted to business and trials like the Basilicas Aemilia and Iulia on either side of the Piazza del Foro. But this was also an area of religious ritual practices, and many temples stand here whose structures we can still admire: the Temple of Venus Genetrix, in the Forum of Caesar (46 BC), dedicated to the goddess from whom, according to mythology, the Julian gens descended; the Temple of Castor and Pollux; the Temple of Augustus; the Temple of Saturn; the Temple of Concord; the Temple of Vesta; and the House of the Vestal Virgins, where priestesses of the Goddess Vesta lived, while the Via Sacra (Sacred Road) itself passed through part of this area.

Two triumphal arches, besides that of Constantine next to the Colosseum, almost mark off the Fori Imperiali on each short side: the Arch of Titus and the Arch of Septimius Severus. The first one was erected in 81 AD, and stands on the top of the Velian Hill, on the Via Sacra: it celebrates the conquest of Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus in 70 AD. Among other things, it shows, sculpted in its marble relief, the treasures taken from the Temple of Jerusalem, including the seven-arm candelabrum and the silver trumpets. These treasures were kept in the Temple of Peace in the Forum built by the Emperor Vespasianus in 75 AD. The Arch of Septimius Severus was built in 203 AD to celebrate Severus, his two sons Caracalla and Geta, and their victory against the Parthians, in ancient Persia.

THE FORUM, THE MARKETS OF TRAJAN, AND THE FORUM OF AUGUSTUS

Once you have left behind the Forum of Caesar, if you cross Via dei Fori Imperiali, you will be walking on another "balcony" overlooking the Forum of Trajan, the last Forum to be built, between 112 and 113 AD, partly excavated on the slope of the Quirinal Hill, and attributed to the Syrian architect Apollodorus of Damascus.

This area was considered one of the marvels of the world with its column erected in 113 AD to celebrate the military campaign of the Emperor Trajan against the Dacians (a people living in what we would call nowadays Eastern Europe, in a territory more or less corresponding to Romania and Moldova) in 101-103 and 107-108 AD. The marble reliefs of the column portray the two enemy armies, and their weapons. On the top of the column stands a statue of St. Peter that at the end of the 1500s substituted that of Trajan. Another important monument in this area was the Basilica Ulpia, whose remains Georgina Masson poetically describes as "a forest of broken columns." In this Forum, there were also libraries with important collections of Greek manuscript books.

Behind the Forum are the Markets of Trajan, whose entrance is on Via IV Novembre, on the slope of the Quirinal Hill: the site is exceptionally well preserved, since during the Middle Ages it became a fortification (with the addition of the Torre delle Milizie), while at the end of the 1500s it was incorporated into a convent, and you will see here rows of what must have been either shops selling all sorts of goods, as well as administrative offices. Inside, the museum of ancient architecture shows the recreation in scale of the whole urban complex of the Imperial Forums as they appeared in antiquity.

Going back towards the Colosseum, on this side of Via dei Fori Imperiali, you can then see the Forum of Augustus, built under the first Emperor Augustus and finished in 2 BC. This Forum is dominated by the huge temple of the Roman god of war Mars Ultor (Avenger) to commemorate the victory of Augustus at the battle of Philippi in 42 BC against Julius Caesar's murderers Brutus and Cassius.

CAMPIDOGLIO (CAPITOLINE HILL) AND THE MUSEI CAPITOLINI (CAPITOLINE MUSEUMS)

The ascent to the Capitoline Hill, departing from the last stretch of Via dei Fori Imperiali and known as the Clivus Capitolinum, now Via di San Pietro in Carcere, going up around the hill, is one of the most beautiful and romantic walks in Rome: the more you progress toward the top, the broader in the distance your sight of the Forums below becomes; and if you happen to do this at night, the lights will make the marbles glitter in a very evocative luminescence.

The Capitoline Hill was the center of religious life in ancient Rome (it hosted the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter, the Temple of Juno Moneta and that of Veiovis, God of the underworld). The *Tabularium* was here (the public archives of the city of Rome), and during the Middle Ages the Capitol became the seat of the civilian magistrates.

The Piazza del Campidoglio, on top of the hill, is one of the most harmonious architectonic creations in the world: the shape is that of a trapezoid, and the eye is immediately caught by the proportions of the various elements that dominate the piazza. If you stand with your back to the Cordonata, the marvelous staircase that descends towards Via del Teatro di Marcello and the Campo Marzio, at the center of the piazza stands the equestrian statue of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180), which Pope Paulus III had brought to the Capitoline Hill in 1538 from the Lateran: what you see is a copy of the original kept in the adjacent museum. It is a bronze statue placed where the pattern of the pavement of the square starts its centrifugal movement. At the two sides of the piazza stand two buildings whose new façades, designed by Michelangelo in the 1500s, face each other: on your right, the Palazzo dei Conservatori (built probably in the twelfth century, and then renovated in the 1400s) and on your left, the Palazzo Nuovo (built in 1655, using Michelangelo's design). In front of you, behind the statue, is the Palazzo Senatorio, of medieval origins, but renovated many times through the centuries.

The Palazzo dei Conservatori and the Palazzo Nuovo are the seat of the Musei Capitolini (Capitoline Museums), the most ancient public collection in the world, inaugurated by Pope Clement XII in 1734, while the Pinacoteca Capitolina (Capitoline Picture Gallery) was founded in the nineteenth century by Pope Benedict XIV. The first nucleus of the museum, though, dates back to 1471, when Pope Sixtus IV donated a group of precious bronze statues to the people of Rome: among which are the Capitoline she-wolf and the Spinario (thorn-puller, or the boy withdrawing a thorn from his foot).

The museum is divided in several sections. The Apartment of the Conservators hosted the offices of the magistrates of the city, and is decorated (starting from the 1500s) according to the themes of the histories of ancient Rome, from its foundations to the Republic, with a series of frescoes, stuccoes, tapestries and sculpted doors and ceilings.

The museum in the Palazzo dei Conservatori hosts one of the most marvelous collections of Roman sculptures, starting from the statues kept in the courtyard (among which the colossal head and hand of the Emperor Constantine, coming from the Basilica of Constantine and Maxentius), and continuing with the historical reliefs exposed along the main staircase, and the statues and inscriptions of the Halls of the Modern Fasti, the Halls of the Horti Lamiani (in which you can see the statue of the Esquiline Venus among others), the Halls of the Horti of Maecenas (where the most beautiful statue is that of Marsyas) to the Marcus Aurelius Exedra, where the original bronze equestrian statue of the emperor is kept among some of the Sistine bronzes with which the whole collection began (the statue of Hercules and the colossal bronze head of Constantine).

In the Palazzo Nuovo, you will see the sculpted portraits of many emperors in the Hall of the Emperors, the Capitoline Venus in the Cabinet of Venus, and the Capitoline Gaul in the Hall of the Galatian. The Sale Castellani (Castellani Halls, from the name of the

goldsmith and collector who donated the treasure of these rooms to the museum) present a splendid collection of items coming from some of the most important archeological sites in Italy. In the area of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, the foundations of the temple are still visible.

On the first floor of the Palazzo dei Conservatori you can visit the Pinacoteca Capitolina, a very rich collection of paintings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and through the 1600s, featuring artists such as Guido Reni, Caravaggio, and Pietro da Cortona among many others, as well as a collection of porcelain from various parts of Europe and Asia.

In the Palazzo Clementino Caffarelli, adjacent to the Palazzo dei Conservatori, there is the Capitoline Coin Cabinet, which displays a collection of coins, medals, and jewels.

The Basilica of Santa Maria in Aracoeli stands on the summit of a steep staircase next to Piazza del Campidoglio, on the site of the Temple of Juno Moneta. A monastery of Greek monks was erected here in the seventh century, and taken over by the Benedictines as Santa Maria in Capitolio. It was then called "in Aracoeli" following the legend according to which the Emperor Octavian had seen the Virgin Mary here. The most precious element in this church are the frescoes from the late 1400s by Pinturicchio, depicting scenes from the life of St. Bernardine. And of course the view of the city that you will enjoy from the top of the staircase is worth the climb.

ADDITIONAL ITINERARIES

- **Palazzo di Venezia:** An additional landmark close to the Capitolium is the Palazzo di Venezia, which has a museum of art, as well as the library of the Istituto Nazionale di Archeologia e Storia dell'Arte (National Institute of Archeology and Art History), with the Fondo Lanciani on Roman archeology and topography. On the other side of the Piazza Venezia, the monument to King Vittorio Emanuele II (called Vittoriano) keeps the remains of the unknown soldier. From its portico, you will enjoy a breathtaking view of Rome.

READINGS

- Livy (Padua, 64-59 BC–17 AD), *History of Rome* (*Ab urbe condita libri*): Livy's work recounts the history of Rome from Aeneas' arrival in Italy to the Emperor Augustus, and is rich in anecdotes about historical figures. A quite pleasant read.

- Virgil (70–19 BC), *Aeneid*: Virgil's epic poem tells the story of Aeneas, from his flight from burning Troy, through his love for Dido, the queen of Carthage, to his conquest of Latium after his arrival in Italy, following his destiny.

- Ovid (43 BC–17-18 AD), *Metamorphoses*, books fourteen and fifteen: The *Metamorphoses* (or transformations), fifteen books written in dactylic hexameters,

are an account of Greek and Latin mythological figures. Books fourteen and fifteen deal with Italy: the journey of Aeneas after the destruction of Troy, and the myths of the new land he conquers; the advent of Julius Caesar; and finally, the celebration of Octavianus Augustus.

- Plutarch, *Parallel Lives* (*Vitae parallelae*): Written towards the end of the first century AD, what survives of the parallel lives are the lives of twenty-three Greek historical figures paired with twenty-three Roman historical figures. All of them are wonderful accounts of these men's personalities, attitudes, and deeds. Among them, the pair on Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and that of the Greek and Roman orators Demosthenes and Cicero, would be a wonderful reading while walking through or by the Imperial Forums.

- Suetonius (first-second century AD), The *Twelve Ceasars* (*De vita Caesarum*): this is another classical account of the lives of twelve Roman emperors, rich in details, and very entertaining.

- Pliny the Younger (61-112), *Panegyric of Trajan*: this oration by Pliny is a eulogy of the Emperor Trajan, pronounced in the Senate in the year 100, which depicts Trajan as the *optimus princeps* (the best prince).

- Petrarch, *Familiares*, 6. 2. Letter to Giovanni Colonna di San Vito, 25 November, between 1337 and 1341: Rome is its own history. Petrarch identifies the city with the famous figures, kings and generals, and heroes and heroines whose history is told by Roman historians, whom Petrarch had read and reread, especially Livy. Rome is also the city where the first successor of Christ, St. Peter, built his church, and the city of the martyrs. But the glory of Rome's past is now compared with the sight of the ruins of the ancient palaces: they are at the same time the remainder (what remains) and the reminder (what is recalled by the mind) of a past civilization.

  Moreover, it seems that, according to Petrarch, Rome can live only in the knowledge of its past, which many foreigners are aware of, but which Romans seem to be totally ignorant of.

  For Petrarch, Rome is not only a place, a geographical location, but a place of the spirit, an idea. Petrarch's dream is for Rome to return to be the seat of the emperor and the seat of the pope. And the city of Rome has an evocative power that is only in part weakened by his physical distance from the city, at the time of writing his letter.

- Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560), *The Regrets and The Antiquities of Rome*: In these two collections of poems from 1559, Du Bellay explores the relationship between past and present and between power and time, glory and decay. The poet penetrates all the different aspects of Rome's history, and the contrast between the presence of the ruins and the remains of a glorious past, but also the sad image of death they represent.

- Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788): a classic of historiography, this book tells the story of the Roman Empire from the peak of its expansion and power to its decline, which the author interprets as a progressive weakening of the original virtue of the Romans.

- William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*: Both tragedies are a literary transposition of the history and the spirit of the events of the first century before Christ. Among the various film adaptations, the *Julius Caesar* of 1953, starring Marlon Brando, is quite impressive.

- Robert Graves, *I Claudius* (1934) and *Claudius the God* (1935): In these two novels, Graves recounts the life of the Emperor Claudius based on historical accounts and documents. In 1976, it was adapted into a very successful BBC TV series, starring Derek Jacobi as Claudius.

- *Masters of Rome*: a best-selling series of novels written by the Australian writer Colleen McCullough, which appeared between 1991 and 2007, and focusing on the period from the ascent of Marius to Caesar.

- John Edwards Williams, *Augustus* (1972): This is an epistolary novel about the Emperor Augustus. Though completely invented, the letters that compose this novel wonderfully interpret the figure of the first emperor of Rome, and the spirit of his mandate.

- Henry James, *Daisy Miller* (1878): in this short novel by James, the Colosseum and its immediately surrounding area form the bleak setting of a story of perdition.

- Edgar Allan Poe, "The Coliseum" (1835); a poem about Rome's immortal glory that survives in the artist's mind.

MOVIE

- Luigi Magni, *Scipione detto anche l'Africano* (1971): In the style of the bittersweet *commedia all'italiana*, this movie is set in the second century BC, and portrays in a totally anti-heroic perspective the historical character of Scipio, and the conflict between civil and military powers. Starring Marcello Mastroianni, Vittorio Gassman, and Silvana Mangano.

USEFUL LINKS

Archeological Area of the Imperial Forums:
en.mercatiditraiano.it/sede/area_archeologica

Festival internazionale di Roma, (Festival di Massenzio):
festivaldelleletterature.it/en/

Forum of Caesar:
en.mercatiditraiano.it/sede/area_archeologica/foro_di_cesare#c

Temple of Venus Genetrix:
en.mercatiditraiano.it/sede/area_archeologica/foro_di_cesare/il_tempio_di_venere_genitrice#c

Forum of Augustus:
en.mercatiditraiano.it/sede/area_archeologica/foro_di_augusto#c

Forum of Trajan:
en.mercatiditraiano.it/sede/area_archeologica/foro_di_traiano#c
en.mercatiditraiano.it/sede/il_monumento

Markets of Trajan:
en.mercatiditraiano.it/sede/mercati_di_traiano_storia

Capitoline Museums:
en.museicapitolini.org

Palazzo di Venezia:
museopalazzovenezia.beniculturali.it/index.php?en/121/il-luogo-e-la-sede


WALK 5
Via Labicana
NOTRE DAME
GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via di San Giovanni in Laterano
Via Capo d'Africa
Via Ostilia
Via Marco Aurelio
Via Annia
Via dei Querceti
Via Claudia
Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo
Via di Sant'Erasmo
N


Via Tasso
Via Merulana
Via dei Santi Quattro
SCALA
SANTA
PALAZZO
LATERANENSE
S. GIOVANNI
LATERANO
Via dell'Amba Aradam
Via dei Laterani



5. BASILICA OF SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO, BATTISTERO LATERANENSE, AND THE SCALA SANTA



5.

BASILICA OF SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO, BATTISTERO LATERANENSE, AND THE SCALA SANTA

At the top of Via di San Giovanni in Laterano (also known as "Stradone di San Giovanni," or simply "Stradone," the big road), less than a ten-minute walk from Via Ostilia, you will find yourself in Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano. Here you will see the old part of the Hospital San Giovanni (originally *Ospedale del Salvatore* (of Christ the Savior), which dates back to the 1300s) on your right, with the Lateran obelisk – made of red granite and the tallest and most ancient in Rome (it dates back to the fifteenth century BC) – in the middle of the square, and the Baptistery on your far right, next to the entrance of the Pontifical Lateran University on one side. On the other side of the piazza is the splendid Loggia delle Benedizioni (Balcony of the Blessings) by Domenico Fontana (1586), a lateral façade of the basilica corresponding to the right edge of the transept, followed by the Lateran Palace in its warm orange color. In front of you, and quite far away, is the Scala Santa, next to archeological remains, and to your left are beautiful nineteenth-century palazzi.

The Lateran had been the site of noble villas during the Roman Empire, and it became the residency of the Bishop of Rome (the pope) from the time of the Emperor Constantine, who also promoted the construction of the first nucleus of the basilica at the beginning of the fourth century. The basilica was destroyed and rebuilt a few times through the centuries. The complex, consisting of the basilica and the palace, also known as Patriarchio, underwent a total remodeling under Pope Sixtus V, at the end of the 1500s, thanks to the projects and work of the architect Domenico Fontana, who completely changed the structure of the square, opening the stradone towards the Colosseum, and what we now know as Via Merulana, which would connect San Giovanni to Santa Maria Maggiore, making Piazza San Giovanni one of the centers of Rome.

BASILICA OF SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO (ST. JOHN LATERAN)

San Giovanni in Laterano, whose full name in Italian is Basilica del Santissimo Salvatore e dei Santi Giovanni Battista e Giovanni Evangelista (Basilica of the Holy Saviour and St. John the Baptist and Evangelist) is the cathedral of Rome and the official site of the Bishop of Rome, the pope. It is in this basilica that the pope performs the traditional washing of the feet on Holy Thursdays, and the ceremony of *Corpus Domini* (Feast of Corpus Christi) is celebrated here (see introduction). The visit to the cathedral should start by entering from Piazza di Porta San Giovanni,

dominated by the façade of the basilica in travertine marble, designed by the architect Alessandro Galilei in the first half of the eighteenth century. The statues on top of the façade are well visible from quite far away and are familiar and dear figures to many Romans who live in the neighborhood and can see them, especially in the orange and golden light of sunset. They represent Christ, St. John the Baptist and Evangelist, and the Doctors of the Church. One of the enchanting aspects of the façade, which opens into a portico underneath and into a loggia in the upper tier, is that its travertine absorbs the light of the different times of the day, and appears differently at each hour and in different weather conditions.

In order to access the basilica, you will cross the portico. Notice the door at the extreme right: that is the Porta Santa (Holy Door), which is only open during the Jubilee years: the last pope to open it was Pope John Paul II, on 1 January 2000.

The interior of the basilica is a five nave structure designed by Francesco Borromini in the mid-1600s. It is a bit intimidating due to its vastness, the very high ceiling, the smell of incense, and the impression of cold (actually very pleasant in the hot Roman summer days) that strike you as you enter. You will be surrounded by gold, wood, frescoes, stuccowork, and of course, marble, starting from the cosmatesque floor showing the column, symbol of the Colonna family, one of the most ancient and prestigious Roman families, to which Pope Martin V (1417-1431) belonged. To Martin V we owe the first consistent effort to renovate the Lateran complex: he invited artists such as the painters Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello, who composed a cycle of frescoes, unfortunately now lost.

It is not the purpose of these pages to provide a complete reference to the marvels you will admire in San Giovanni in Laterano. Therefore, it is warmly suggested, besides reading a good guide (see bibliography), to listen to the descriptions provided by the audio tour phones situated at key points in the basilica: they are particularly well done.

The massive pillars separating the central nave from the lateral aisles are another element of fascination: they are adorned with colossal statues of the apostles. At the end of the central nave stands the papal altar in the ogival tabernacle underneath the arch, immediately before the transept: only the pope can celebrate Mass from here. The tabernacle is adorned, among other precious decorations, by twelve frescoes from the fourteenth century, then touched up by Antoniazzo Romano in the following century: the middle fresco, facing the central nave, represents the Crucifixion in magnificent colors, while the relics of the heads of St. Peter and St. Paul are preserved above in silver reliquaries.

Another treasure of San Giovanni, in the middle right nave, is Giotto's fresco that portrays Pope Boniface VIII (Dante Alighieri's "enemy") while proclaiming the Jubilee in the year 1300. The pope, against a splendid bright green background, wears a red mantle over his robe, and a golden cap: this is the only work by Giotto preserved in Rome. It was originally in the loggia of the old palace Patriarchio.

The chapels along the two external naves deserve a visit for the beauty of their architecture and the richness of their decorations. Noteworthy is also the thirteenth-century statue of Riccardo degli Annibaldi on a sarcophagus made by Arnolfo di Cambio, which precedes the Corsini Chapel.

Further, the imposing transept is certainly worth paying close attention to: it is considered the most splendid example of mannerism in Rome. It was renovated in the last few years of the sixteenth century, and its architecture was designed by Giacomo della Porta. Giuseppe Cesari, known as the Cavalier d'Arpino, was responsible for the paintings, made by various artists such as Pomarancio and Paris Nogari, and illustrating, among other subjects, scenes from the life of Constantine. Here, as in the Basilica of Santi Quattro Coronati, the history of Constantine revolves around his supposed donation to Pope Sylvester I, justifying the temporal power of the popes and the Church. Constantine is also linked to the foundation of the Basilica of San Giovanni itself.

The mosaic adorning the apse dates back to the thirteenth century in a dazzling combination of gold, blue, green, and red. It shows Christ surrounded by the angels among the clouds in the upper tier; in the center is the cross, studded with gems, that seems to rise from the hill on which the Heavenly Jerusalem is guarded by a dove, and seems almost resting on the River Jordan. Sheep and deer drink from the four rivers (the four Gospels). To the left of the cross are the Virgin Mary and Pope Nicholas V, the donor on his knees, and St. Peter with St. Paul; to the right of the cross are St. John and St. Andrew. The two authors of the mosaic, fra Jacopo da Camerino and Jacopo Torriti, portray themselves in the lower level: tiny kneeling figures among nine of the apostles dressed in white.

A visit to the cloister is essential: built at the beginning of the thirteenth century, it is a cosmatesque masterpiece, as we have already seen with Santi Quattro Coronati (see second walk). The slender double columns are all different from each other in shape and decorations. The space is quite vast, and in the center a palm tree and an olive tree contribute to the amenity of the space. Underneath the ambulatories, you will see all sorts of inscriptions, sculptures, fragments of tombs, and ornaments coming

from the old basilica. From one of the sides of the cloister, you will enjoy a wonderful view of the top of the external façade and its statues: from this angle they stand against the sky, towering over the architecture beneath them.

THE PALAZZO LATERANENSE (LATERAN PALACE)

The Lateran Palace, which is next to the basilica, and whose color is a warm orange, typical of Roman buildings, has three tiers of windows on its three identical façades visible from the street, with, at the center of each, a massive door surmounted by a balcony. The palace, built by the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century was known as the Patriarchio, and it was the papal residence, until Clement V transferred it to Avignon (France), in 1309. When the popes returned to Rome, the palace was in a state of decadence, while at the same time the prestige of the Vatican, where the tomb of St. Peter stands, grew. Thus, the popes established the Vatican as their residency in 1377. Pope Sixtus V had the Lateran Palace rebuilt, as we now see it, by the architect Domenico Fontana, between 1586 and 1589: the palace was then used for the consecration of new popes, and served as the summer papal residence until the nineteenth century.

On 11 February 1929, in the Sala della Conciliazione, Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, Secretary of the Vatican State under Pope Pius XI, and Benito Mussolini signed the Lateran Pacts that regulated the relationship between the Italian Kingdom and the Church. In particular, the pacts recognized the sovereignty of the Church and its independence from the Italian State, and established a Concordato (concordate, or agreement) intended to regulate civil and religious matters in Italy. Catholicism was recognized as Italy's official religion, and Italian laws regulating marriage, separation, and education had to conform to the laws of the Catholic Church. Since then, the Lateran Palace, as well as other properties of the Church, has been considered an extraterritorial entity, outside of the Italian State. The Lateran Pacts were then recognized in one of the articles of the Italian Constitution (1948), and revised in 1984.

At present, the Lateran Palace hosts the Vicariato di Roma, the Church's jurisdictional district to which the city of Rome belongs, with its offices; the *Tribunal Apostolicum Rotae Romanae* (the Apostolic Tribunal of the Roman Rota), the highest tribunal and judicial court of the Catholic Church; and the Caritas Diocesana, the Italian branch of probably the most renowned international charity led by the Catholic Church, promoting action against poverty, social injustice, and alienation through the work of trained volunteers. In particular, the Caritas Italiana aids new immigrants, offering assistance to people who do not have access to the Italian national healthcare service, and those affected by AIDS, as well as children, the elderly, the homeless, prisoners,

and the victims of usury. Since 1987, the Lateran Palace is also the site of the Museo Storico Vaticano, which includes the papal apartment and chapel that can be visited at specific and limited times of the year.

THE BATTISTERO LATERANENSE OR SAN GIOVANNI IN FONTE (LATERAN BAPTISTERY)

The baptistery, in Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano next to the Loggia delle Benedizioni, was built by Constantine at the beginning of the fourth century at the same time as the basilica, on what remained of a first century Roman villa and second century *thermae*. The outside is made of the traditional Roman bricks. The building was modified several times in the following centuries. One of the most important changes, in the first half of the 1500s, was the replacement of the old traditional dome with a polygonal one. The interior has an octagonal plan: in the center, eight porphyry columns, surmounted by an architrave and by a second tier of much smaller travertine columns, enclose a round marble fence: in the middle of this space stands the font in green basalt in the shape of an urn, and covered by a bronze lid. You can also visit the chapels all around the font, richly decorated with mosaics, frescoes, wood ceilings, stuccoworks, and bronze doors.

THE SCALA SANTA (HOLY STAIRS)

In front of the Lateran Palace, Pope Sixtus V ordered the construction of the Scala Santa, which contains the *Sancta Sanctorum*, the private chapel of the popes that belonged to the Patriarchio (the old Lateran Palace that Sixtus had demolished). The architect Domenico Fontana reused the staircase of the old palace that had been identified, by a popular legend, as the one that Jesus had to ascend when going to the trial in front of Pontius Pilatus. The Scala Santa consists of twenty-eight marble steps covered with wood that the faithful climb on their knees, while the walls and gallery are covered with frescoes. At the top of the staircase is the Cappella di San Lorenzo and the entrance to the *Sancta Sanctorum*, decorated with frescoes and a mosaic dating back to the 1200s. The external right side of the Scala Santa consists of an apse containing the mosaic that decorated the papal dining room in the old Patriarchio: it represents Christ and the apostles in the center, while on the arch St. Peter crowns Pope Leo III, in front of Charles the Great, and Christ invests both Pope Sylvester I and Constantine with their powers.

READINGS

- Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (fourth century AD): a eulogy of the Emperor Constantine, who was the founder of the first nucleus of San Giovanni and to whose edict in favor of Christianity we owe the creation in the fourth century of the many *tituli*, which were the foundation for many basilicas in the following centuries.

- Henry James, *Italian Hours* (1909): Several pages are about San Giovanni in Laterano from the year 1873. In James' description, nature and architecture seem to flow one into the other. The churches (San Giovanni and Santa Croce) are part of the landscape as the hills in the horizon, and the grass on the ground.

USEFUL LINKS

Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano:
vatican.va/various/basiliche/san_giovanni/index_it.htm

Diocese of Rome:
vicariatusurbis.org

Caritas:
caritas.org
caritasroma.it/caritas-roma

Scala Santa:
scalasanta.org


WALK 6
NOTRE DAME
GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via Capo d'Africa
Via Labicana
Via Claudia
Via Annia
Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo
N


PORTA MAGGIORE
SEPOLCRO
DI EURISACE
MUSEO STORICO
DELLA FANTERIA
S. CROCE IN
GERUSALEMME
MUSEO
NAZIONALE
DEGLI
STRUMENTI
MUSICALI
ANFITEATRO
CASTRENSE



6. BASILICA OF SANTA CROCE IN GERUSALEMME AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS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6.

BASILICA OF SANTA CROCE IN GERUSALEMME AND THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Exiting from the main entrance of the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, it is fascinating to look at the width of Piazza di Porta San Giovanni. The space in front of the basilica, partly paved and partly occupied by sober grass, is immense, and it has been the theatre of religious ceremonies (when a crowd of faithful gather to follow the celebration of *Corpus Domini*, or the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday, from the maxi screens placed in the square), political demonstrations and rallies (especially of the leaders of left wing parties and unions), concerts (like the one traditionally held on May 1st, which is Labor Day in most European countries): all events attended by hundreds of thousands of people from all over Italy.

However, on an ordinary day, especially if the weather is nice and sunny, it is such a pleasure to cross the huge square, walking towards Porta San Giovanni, looking at the Aurelian walls on your right, the Scala Santa on your left, and occasionally turning to give one more look at the imposing façade of San Giovanni and the Lateran Palace, enjoying the sight of the hustle and bustle of ordinary life in Rome: the traffic of buses, cars, and motorcycles, and pedestrians going to work, or enjoying this area of the city.

Once you reach the end of the square, with the city gate at your right, cross the road heading northeast and following the path of the walls, towards the bronze statue of St. Francis, who, along with St. Catherine of Siena, is Italy's patron saint, with his arms open towards the Basilica of San Giovanni as though embracing the entire square, and with it, the entire city. Behind the statue, a gate opens into a public garden along the busy avenue Via Carlo Felice under an arcade of sycamore trees on one side, and the Aurelian walls on the other. Part of the garden is paved, part is occupied by a playground, and part by lawns descending towards the walls. There is a kiosk, with a bar and café, and an area reserved for dogs as well.

Many people, from different generations, social classes, and provenances (including communities of immigrants with their goods to sell, most likely illegally, and displayed on the pavement) gather here in every season, and there are benches everywhere to sit. At summer, when the temperature in Rome hits 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Farenheit), this area is one of the coolest places in the neighborhood, in the late afternoon: the sun is 'turning' west towards San Giovanni, and the *ponentino* (a gentle sea breeze coming from the West) blows gently and refreshingly. While walking, let your eyes be filled with colors: the Aurelian walls give the place their warm brown that absorbs the sunlight and scatters it around; in the distance, the

marble façade of the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, which seems to face, though slantingly, San Giovanni's façade, glows in its promising white. And it is to Santa Croce that this walk takes us next.

BASILICA OF SANTA CROCE IN GERUSALEMME (HOLY CROSS IN JERUSALEM)

Santa Croce stands on the site of the imperial *Palatium Sessorianum*, constructed in the third century by the Emperors Septimius Severus and Heliogabalus, along with an amphitheater and a circus. At the beginning of the fourth century, it was the residency of the Empress Elena, Constantine's mother, who most probably used a wing of the palace to practice the Christian religion. During the fourth century, part of the palace was turned into a Christian basilica, called Basilica Eleniana (from the empress) or Sessoriana (from the name of the palace).

In the twelfth century, Pope Lucius II had the basilica divided into three naves, and wanted also the construction of a narthex (a sort of portico preceding the entrance to the basilica, typical of early Christian basilicas), a bell tower, and a cloister. But it was only under Pope Benedict XIV, in the mid-1700s, that Santa Croce acquired its current appearance. The architects Domenico Gregorini and Pietro Passalacqua renovated both interior and exterior of the church: the narthex was replaced with a different atrium and the splendid travertine façade was built. Characteristic of it are the square pillars culminating with Corinthian capitals and surmounted by the statues of the four evangelists, the Empress Elena, and the Emperor Constantine. The contrast between the baroque whiteness of the façade and the brown of the Romanesque bell tower made of Roman bricks, and of the two wings of the convent from which the façade seems to emerge, is one of the most moving and exciting views in Rome, especially at dusk and at night, when the space in front of the basilica is lit up with the characteristic orange light of the street lamps, among the tall and slender palm trees.

After an atrium in the form of an ellipsis, the inside has a three-nave design. The central nave is separated from the two aisles by twelve massive granite columns from antiquity. The wooden barrel vault dates back to the eighteenth century, and so do the stuccoworks. The floor is cosmatesque. A *ciborium*, in marble with bronze angels, contains the altar, and underneath the altar an urn keeps the bodies of St. Cesareo and St. Anastasio. In the semi-vault of the apse, a fresco portrays the Invention of the Cross by St. Elena and the Blessing Christ among cherubs, a fresco by Antoniazzo Romano (a painter active in Rome in the fifteenth century): particularly beautiful are the bright colors, the blue, green, red, and yellow. In the apse stands the tomb of the cardinal Carvajal, sculpted by Jacopo Sansovino in the first quarter of the 1500s, surrounded by frescoes by Corrado Giaquinto representing Moses, from the mid-1700s. Carlo Maderno designed the tabernacle made of marble and bronze.

In the right nave, the Cappella delle Reliquie (Relics Chapel) hosts three pieces of wood of the Holy Cross, a nail, and part of the inscription. Next to this chapel are visible the twelfth-century frescoes that covered the upper tier of the central nave before the restoration in the 1700s, along with a Crucifixion from Giotto's school. From the right nave, a staircase descends to the Cappella di Sant'Elena (St. Helen's Chapel), whose vault is decorated by a mosaic made between the end of the fifteenth century and the first decade of the sixteenth. The mosaic represents the Blessing Christ among the four evangelists. The reason why the church has the name "in Jerusalem" is that, according to tradition, St. Helen brought soil from Mount Calvary, and that this was placed underneath the floor of this chapel.

THE ANFITEATRO CASTRENSE (CASTRENSE AMPHITHEATER)

Exiting the basilica, to its left, a tall gate decorated with colorful glass is the entrance to an orchard kept by Cistercian monks, as well as to the area of the Anfiteatro Castrense. There is an intercom to buzz, and not always will you be let in; but if you are lucky and somebody lets you in, you will find yourself in a quite special place. The garden is beautiful: you will see there a variety of fruit trees, a tiny vineyard, flowers… and the city will seem to be miles away.

Nowadays, only traces of the Anfiteatro are still visible. The elliptical amphitheater was built in bricks (*opus latericium*) by the Emperor Heliogabalus in the second decade of the third century: the arena was in the middle and the *cavea* (the steps where the spectators sat) all around it. From the outside, its three tiers were visible as well, as its forty-eight arches and its columns and pillars ending in Corinthian capitals. The amphitheater was used for gladiator fights and for hunting animals (*venationes*). About 3,500 spectators could fit inside, and a huge curtain (*velarium*) was used to protect them from the sun. The animals were kept in the still-preserved underground galleries.

At the end of the third century, it was enclosed within the Aurelian walls and used as a fortress. In the sixteenth century, the two upper levels were torn down, and in the 1700s the Cistercian monks enlarged their convent at the two sides of the basilica, at the expense of the amphitheater.

THE MUSEO NAZIONALE DEGLI STRUMENTI MUSICALI (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS)

The tenor Evangelista Gorga (1865-1957) dedicated a great part of his life to gathering numerous collections of a great variety of objects. Among these, his collection of musical instruments was brought here in 1964 and made available to the public, along with other collections, to form a museum in 1974. The eighteen rooms of the museum contain about 3,000 instruments of every epoch and provenance, including very rare and peculiar ones, like the

graviorgan (a combination of an harpsichord and organ). Among them, stand out the harpsichord built by Hans Müller in Leipzig, in 1537, and the pianoforte constructed by Bartolomeo Cristofori, in 1722.

THE MUSEO STORICO DELLA FANTERIA (HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF INFANTRY) AND THE MUSEO STORICO DEI GRANATIERI DI SARDEGNA (HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF THE GRENADIERS OF SARDINIA)

Next to the Museum of Musical Instruments, you can also visit the Museo Storico della Fanteria, from antiquity to World War II; and the Museo Storico dei Granatieri di Sardegna. The Grenadiers form a regiment of the Italian Army, and they are one of the guard regiments for the President of the Italian Republic, even though their name derives from the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (the first nucleus of the Italian Kingdom). The museum shows the history of the brigade, between 1659 and 1945. In the garden behind this complex of museums are the remains of the Circus Varianus, built by Heliogabalus in the third century, and those of the Temple of Venus and Cupid, from the beginning of the fourth century.

Between the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and the open arches in the Aurelian walls, there is the small Oratorio di Santa Maria del Buon Aiuto (St. Mary of Good Help), built by Pope Sixtus IV in 1476: the fresco inside, by Antoniazzo Romano, portrays the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus, and was originally in a niche close to the basilica.

If you leave the basilica and cross the road, you will find yourself in Via di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, a busy avenue that will take you to Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II (see eighth walk). At the intersection between Via di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme and Via Statilia, there are tombs from the Republican era. Further, on the same avenue, you will see Villa Wolkonsky, the site of the British Embassy in Rome, in whose garden stands a sepulcher from the second half of the first century.

Leaving instead the basilica, and going right, following the tram rail tracks, you will reach Piazza di Porta Maggiore, one of the city gates, and part of the Aurelian walls. Immediately outside of it and in the middle of the square, which is a hub of public transportation, is the sepulcher of Eurisace, a baker from the first century BC. The tomb is decorated with a bas-relief all around it illustrating all the different stages of bread making.

USEFUL LINKS

Parrocchia Santa Croce in Gerusalemme:
santacroceroma.it/contacts.php

Museo degli Strumenti Musicali:
museostrumentimusicali.it/allestimento.asp

Museo dei Granatieri di Sardegna:
granatieridisardegna.it/museo.htm


WALK 7
S. PIETRO
IN VINCOLI
Via Degli Annibaldi
Via del Fagutale
Via delle Sette Sale
Viale Cesare Ceradini
DOMUS
AUREA
Piazza del Colosseo
N
Via Ostilia
NOTRE DAME
GLOBAL GATEW


Viale del Monte Oppio
TERME DI TRAIANO
Via Mecenate
Via Carlo Botta
PASTICCERIA CIPRIANI
Via Labicana



7. A WALK ON THE OPPIAN HILL: THE DOMUS AUREA AND SAN PIETRO IN VINCOLI



7.

A WALK ON THE OPPIAN HILL: THE DOMUS AUREA AND SAN PIETRO IN VINCOLI

The Colle Oppio (Oppian Hill) is literally on the other side of the road from Via Ostilia, at the center of an ideal triangle formed by Via Labicana, Via Cavour, and Via Merulana, divided between two rioni: Monti and Esquilino. Crossing the busy Via Labicana, the slope of the hill leads the visitor immediately to the top, to the heart of the archeological site immersed in a splendid public garden. However, it is advisable to start this walk going down Via dei Fori Imperiali and turning right on to one of the tiny streets between the metro station "Colosseo" and Via Cavour; then, keep walking through this characteristic neighborhood in the heart of the rione Monti, making your way to San Pietro in Vincoli. The best time of the day to do this walk is the afternoon on a sunny day, especially in winter, because of the way the sunlight is absorbed by the warm colors of the buildings, and because of the view of the Colosseum at sunset that awaits the visitor at the end of the walk.

BASILICA OF SAN PIETRO IN VINCOLI (ST. PETER IN CHAINS)

Reaching Piazza San Pietro in Vincoli from Via Eudossiana, you will find the church on your right: while its actual façade is inside a portico, the exterior is constituted by a first tier of arches towered by the wing of a palace painted a warm shade of yellow, with five windows each corresponding to one of the arches below. Go up a few steps, towards the arches, and then turn around and take a long look at Piazza San Pietro in Vincoli in the afternoon light: in the right corner, you can admire the Margani Tower, one of the many towers erected in the rione Monti during the Middle Ages, when this part of the city had been mostly abandoned, and it was thus fortified in order to watch over the roads of access to the inhabited areas. Nowadays, the tower functions as the bell tower of the Church of San Francesco di Paola.

San Pietro in Vincoli stands on the site of a Roman house dating back to the third century. In the fourth century, a church dedicated to the apostles replaced the house. In the fifth century Eudossia minor, the wife of the Emperor Valentinian III, had it rebuilt to hold the chains that were used to tie St. Peter. According to tradition, Eudossia had the chains that had held the saint in Jerusalem, and she presented them to Pope St. Leo the Great, who already had the chain with which St. Peter had been tied up in Rome: the two chains, miraculously fused together, are now kept in an urn beneath the central altar.

Starting from the fifteenth-century marble portal showing the coat of arms of the Della Rovere family (an oak tree; rovere means durmast oak), the presence of the Della Rovere is echoed everywhere in this church: in the vault of the presbytery, and especially in the Mausoleum of Pope Julius II (Giuliano Della Rovere) in the right transept, which is the main reason for visiting San Pietro in Vincoli.

The monument, commissioned to Michelangelo by the pope himself, was started in 1513 (the year of the pope's death) and completed many years later. At the center of the lower tier, a long bearded Moses is sitting down and holding in his right hand the tablets of the law just received from God, on Mount Sinai. Moses' head is turned left and his severe gaze should be imagined as directed toward the Jews who, tired of waiting for him to come back, had started worshipping an idol. Two little horns emerge from his fluent and thick mane: they are the symbol of divine light. The majestic stateliness, gravity, and liveliness of this Moses figure is moving and impressive.

On either side of Moses stand the statues of Leah and Rachel, who symbolize the active and contemplative life. In the upper tier at the center, the statue of Pope Julius II is reclined, as on a *triclinium*, and above it the statue of the Virgin Mary and Child Jesus, with at their sides a prophet and sybil. The statues are all framed within a monument featuring enclosing architectural elements, such as niches, pillars, and an architrave. The Della Rovere coat of arms is above the monument.

If the Mausoleum of Pope Julius II is the main attraction, it is not the only treasure kept by San Pietro in Vincoli. The interior of the church has a nave and two aisles separated by ancient columns. At the entrance, on the left, the visitor can admire a fresco portraying a late fifteenth-century procession for the plague, by Antoniazzo Romano's school. Underneath it is a funerary monument to Antonio del Pollaiolo, a Florentine painter and sculptor active in Rome, and his brother Piero, an artist as well, dating from the end of the fifteenth or beginning of the sixteenth century. The lateral chapels contain some precious paintings, such as St. Augustine by Guercino, and the copy of the Liberation of St. Peter by Domenichino (the original is in the sacristy), and tombs, like that of Nicholas of Cusa, the famous humanist, who, among other achievements, rediscovered a group of lost Latin comedies by the Latin playwright Plautus (third-second century BC).

THE TERME DI TRAIANO (BATHS OF TRAJAN)

Going back through Via Eudossiana, and leaving on your left the Facoltà di Ingegneria of the University of Rome Sapienza, which occupies part of the convent connected to San Pietro in Vincoli, cross Largo della Polveriera and take Viale del Colle Oppio: you will walk alongside the Terme di Traiano (Baths of Trajan) on your right. Built probably by Apollodorus of Damascus, the same architect who built the Forum of Trajan, at the beginning of the second century, they are in *opus latericium* and were the model for the Baths of Caracalla and Diocletian.

The Terme di Traiano occupied a vast area, and were in part standing on previous buildings which Apollodorus buried in the ground, including the Domus Aurea, which was thus preserved. The baths consisted of an enclosure of buildings, culminating in the southwest side with an exedra, and a central body of buildings. Between the two, there was a broad open-air green area used as a gym. The central buildings housed the different rooms of the baths: the *frigidarium*, *tepidarium*, and *calidarium* surrounded by the changing rooms. Turning right on Via delle Terme di

Traiano, you will reach the so-called Sette Sale, a cistern made of nine vaulted rooms disposed in two stories, which supplied water to the baths. If you enter the park on the hill from Viale del Monte Oppio, you will have visible remains of the baths to your right and a playground in front of you.

Once you have left the playground behind, you will be in the heart of the gardens of the Colle Oppio: the pine trees seem to reach the sky with their slender trunks and their green umbrellas. You will walk next to a dry fountain, and through the plants and flowers you will have the sight of elegant and colorful nineteenth century buildings surrounding the park. At the end of the gently declining slope, you will have a wonderful view of the Caelian Hill, Santi Quattro Coronati, and in the distance the slope that leads to the Military Hospital and the Villa Celimontana.

Walking through these gardens at dusk is enchanting and moving, and the most incredible encounters can occur, as, for instance, running into a priest—who is also an architect, archivist, and philologist—willing to explain what the archeological site really looked like in the second century AD, bringing back to life for you in his own words those buildings that until a moment before you had to make a big effort to imagine from their remains.

Take the main path on your right, descending towards the Colosseum: the more you progress, the more you will appreciate the warm light of sunset going through the arches of the Colosseum, which at this point will dominate your view. Almost at the end of the path, to your right you will see the entrance to the Domus Aurea, which is unfortunately closed at present for reinforcements.

THE DOMUS AUREA (GOLDEN HOUSE)

In 64 AD, a terrible fire destroyed a large part of Rome. Immediately afterwards, the Emperor Nero started the construction of a new imperial house, built by the architects Severus and Celer on the Oppian Hill. The Domus consisted of buildings, richly decorated with statues, paintings, marble, and stuccowork; its vaults were studded with gold and precious stones; there were gardens, *nymphaea*, and porticoes. The Domus Aurea was buried, at the beginning of the following century, once the Terme di Traiano were built on top of it. During the Renaissance, the first excavations were done, and part of the Domus Aurea was brought back to the surface. Some of the most famous painters of the time went to see the frescoes which adorned it, and later reused the same patterns (called *grottesche*, from the word *grotta*, since they thought they had discovered not a palace but a series of grottoes) in their own works.

THE OPPIAN NEIGHBORHOOD

One of the places to go to for a snack, or if you want to buy sweets for breakfast, or to bring to a friend, is the Pasticceria Cipriani in Via Carlo Botta, 21, very close to one of the entrances to the Park of the Colle Oppio. The pasticceria is particularly famous for its *biscotti*, but also for its *crostate* (tarts) and every kind of cakes.

READINGS

- Michelangelo, *Rime* (1623): Written in the tradition of Petrarchan *Canzonieri* of the sixteenth century, Michelangelo's *Rime* are in part dedicated to his beloved Tommaso de' Cavalieri, in part to his friend and platonic lover Vittoria Colonna, a poet herself. Michelangelo's language shows the artist's effort to express feelings and concepts that transcend the limits of sixteenth-century Petrarchan poetry.

- Giorgio Vasari, "The Life of Michelangelo" in *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (1550 and 1568): The "Life of Michelangelo" closes this monumental book by Vasari, which contains the lives of the most prominent artists between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, from Cimabue to Michelangelo, with a marked preference for the Tuscan and Florentine artists and their techniques. The book is in fact dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici. Vasari considers the arts as cyclical: like a living organism every art has a birth, a development, a peak of perfection, and a decline. In the Tuscan art of the Trecento, Vasari sees a rebirth of the arts, and in Michelangelo's work its perfection.

- Sigmund Freud, "The Moses of Michelangelo" (1914): Influenced by Vasari's "Life of Michelangelo," in this essay, Freud proposes an interpretation of Michelangelo's Moses according to which, and unlike the majority of critics, Moses is holding his passions and restraining himself from expressing his anger in front of the Jews worshipping the golden calf.

- Irving Stone, *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1961), and the movie (1965) by Carol Reed, starring Charlton Heston as Michelangelo, and Rex Harrison, as Pope Julius II: while the novel is an account of Michelangelo's life, the movie focuses especially on his work in the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican, and on his relationship with Pope Julius II.

- Suetonius, "Life of Nero," in *The Twelve Caesars* (*De vita Caesarum*; 121 AD).

- Seneca The Younger, *On Clemency* (*De Clementia*; 55-56 AD): the Stoic philosopher addresses this treatise in the form of a panegyric to the Emperor Nero, whose clemency is praised and indicated as the only right behavior of a monarch towards his subjects, and is compared to that of a father towards his children.

USEFUL LINKS

Domus Aurea:
archeoroma.beniculturali.it/siti-archeologici/domus-aurea
You can also follow how the restoration progresses at:
archeoroma.beniculturali.it/cantieredomusaurea

Pasticceria Cipriani:
pasticceriacipriani.com/index.htm


WALK 8
S. PUDENZIANA
S. MARIA MAGGIORE
S. PRASSEDE
MUSEO NAZIONALE D'ARTE ORIENTALE
PANELLA
Piazza del Colosseo
NOTRE DAME GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via Labicana
Via Capo d'Africa
Via Claudia
Via Annia
N


ITORIUM
IECENATE
PIAZZA
VITTORIO
EMANUELE
PALAZZO DEL FREDDO
Via Merulana
ANTONIO
PADOVA
MARCELLINO
E PIETRO



8. FROM THE CAELIAN TO THE ESQUILINE HILL: SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE AND SANTA PRASSEDE



8.

FROM THE CAELIAN TO THE ESQUILINE HILL: SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE AND SANTA PRASSEDE

Entering Piazza San Giovanni from the Stradone (Via di San Giovanni in Laterano), and leaving the Lateran Palace on your right, turn left on Via Merulana (whose name comes from that of an important family, Merula or Merli), a large street descending the slope of the Caelian Hill towards Via Labicana, under the sycamore trees, between elegant buildings from the 1800s. Via Merulana was started under Pope Gregorius XIII in the late 1500s to connect the Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano to that of Santa Maria Maggiore, where this walk is directed. It runs through the heart of the rione Esquilino (Esquiline neighborhood), enclosed within the perimeter formed by Via Merulana, Via Cavour, the train station Termini along Via Giolitti, and continuing through Piazza di Porta Maggiore, Via Eleniana, and Via Carlo Felice.

The Esquilino is nowadays one of the most multiethnic and multicultural neighborhoods of Rome, whose life revolves around Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II (or simply Piazza Vittorio), a huge square between the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore and the central train station Termini, surrounded by nineteenth century buildings with porticoes. However, this is just the most recent incarnation of the Esquilino. Since antiquity, and through the centuries, it underwent many radical transformations: how many "Esquilini" are still visible walking around this neighborhood?

Before the Emperor Augustus, the Esquiline Hill, outside of the Servian walls, had been partly used as a burial site. Under Augustus, it constituted the fifth region and became part of the city, but still outside of the center: many palaces and villas were built, and later it was finally included inside the perimeter traced by the Aurelian walls.

The Roman Esquilino is still emerging from underneath the ground, as in the case of the Auditorium of Maecenas, or towering in the Trionfi di Mario, a monument in the middle of Piazza Vittorio. In the following centuries, it was one of the centers of early Christian Rome, and three basilicas enclosed it: San Giovanni in Laterano, Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, and Santa Maria Maggiore, with their interiors revolving around precise iconographies and their structures adapting to the passing time, as their alternate baroque or neoclassic façades demonstrate. At the end of the 1500s, Pope Sixtus V completed the construction of Via Merulana, and reorganized the plan of the neighborhood: later on, many villas, surrounded by luxuriant gardens, were built in this area.

Another major transformation that completely changed the face of the Esquilino occurred in the last quarter of the 1800s, after Rome was annexed to the Italian Kingdom in 1870, and became the new capital of Italy, in 1871. Most of the villas were torn down, and the newly rebuilt Esquilino took on the aspect we see now of a Piedmontese neighborhood, following the urban model of Turin (capital of the Piedmont region), which had been the first capital of Italy (the dynasty of the kings of Italy, the Savoia, was from Turin), a model based on the system of the Roman gridiron street pattern (straight streets with right-angle intersections). The Esquilino became, along with Prati (a new neighborhood contemporary with the Esquilino, built on the right bank of the river Tiber), an example of Umbertine Rome (after King Umberto I, who ruled Italy between 1878 and 1900), where a new class of public clerks went to live. This new Esquilino was still modern under Fascism, and it is this neighborhood that Carlo Emilio Gadda described in his famous novel, *That Awful Mess on the Via Merulana*.

Thus, as other Roman neighborhoods, the Esquilino too shows the historical stratification of its own developments through time, and walking around it the visitor is struck by the sudden view of ancient Roman remains standing in front of early twentieth-century buildings next to the baroque façade of an early Christian church.

VIA MERULANA (CASINO MASSIMO LANCELLOTTI, SANT'ANTONIO DA PADOVA, SANTI MARCELLINO E PIETRO)

Descending the first stretch of Via Merulana still on the slope of the Celio, at the corner with Via Aleardi, take a right and go to Via Boiardo 16, where the entrance is to the Villa Massimo Lancellotti, the seat of the Franciscans of the Holy Land. The villa is worth a visit to admire the frescoes painted between 1817 and 1830 by the so-called Nazareni, a group of German romantic painters who illustrated in three different rooms scenes from Dante Alighieri's *Commedia* (paintings by Joseph Anton Koch, and Philip Veit), Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (paintings by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld), and Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (paintings by Johann Friedrich Overbeck and Joseph von Führich). These artists based their art on religion and patriotism, most of them converted to Catholicism, and were inspired by Albrecht Dürer and Italian Renaissance painters, especially Raphael.

The whole block is actually occupied by the Franciscans: at the same corner with Via Aleardi stands the Basilica of Sant'Antonio da Padova (St. Anthony of Padua), displaying a syncretic style combining such different architectural elements as the double staircase at the entrance, the portico and the façade made in lateritious. Built in the 1880s, it is considered a milestone in nineteenth century sacred architecture in Rome, especially with the eleven paintings standing above the ten lateral and central altars.

To the left of the street, at the end of the slope, you will also see the Church of Santi Marcellino e Pietro, whose first nucleus dates back to the fourth century, but which was completely redone in the mid-1700s, according to the wish of Pope Benedict XIV. The white travertine elements on its façade, and especially the tympanum, are striking in their baroque brightness, while the interior is in the shape of a Greek cross.

AUDITORIUM OF MAECENAS

Once you have crossed Via Labicana, the other stretch of Via Merulana ascends the Esquiline Hill: on the left stands the Church of Sant'Anna, built in 1927, and on the right side, at the corner with Via Leopardi, there is the auditorium di Mecenate (Auditorium of Maecenas), probably a *nymphaeum* which was part of the gardens of Gaius Cilnius Maecenas, friend of and advisor to the Emperor Augustus. The construction is partly underground, and it is constituted by a room covered with a barrel vault: the niches in the wall were decorated with paintings that portrayed luxuriant vegetation and fauna (trees, flowers, birds) still visible, though not very well preserved, so that the impression must have been of an underground garden.

Right in front of the Auditorium, in Via Merulana 54, is Panella, a bakery established in 1929, which is worth a stop. Here you can have a very nice (though a bit pricey) aperitif (analcoholic drinks are served as well), with different breads and delicious fried and baked appetizers, as well as desserts, while sitting at a table outside.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ORIENTAL ART "GIUSEPPE TUCCI" AND THE TEATRO BRANCACCIO

At Via Merulana 248, the National Museum of Oriental Art is hosted in the Palazzo Brancaccio, built between the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s for Princess Brancaccio, Mary Elisabeth Field. Entering through the front door, the first thing that catches the visitor's eye is a *nymphaeum* among a cascade of climbers and slender palm trees.

In its galleries, the museum features important and very rich collections presented in various sections: Ancient Near and Middle East; Islam (mainly from Iran and Afghanistan); Gandhara (Buddhist art from North-West Pakistan between the third century BC and fourth century AD); Tibet and Nepal; and graphic arts and paintings from the far East: Korea, India, China, Japan, and Vietnam.

For those familiar with the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, or with the impressive collections of Oriental art in many important American museums, such as the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan in New York, the National Museum of Oriental Art will still offer the pleasure of exploring the artistic production of different civilizations in a vast area of the globe over the centuries, and

to learn about the archeological expeditions which led to the discovery and recovery of unique collections. Other two oriental museums in Italy are in Naples, at the Università Orientale, and in Turin.

On the same block, in the same complex, at number 244 of Via Merulana, the Teatro Brancaccio features every season a varied mix of shows: plays, ballets, musicals, and standup comedians.

BASILICA OF SANTA PRASSEDE

Walking further, and taking a left turn on Via di San Giovanni Gualberto, you will reach the lateral entrance of the Basilica of Santa Prassede, in Via di Santa Prassede, technically belonging to the rione Monti. As poet Robert Browning put it in verse, "Saint Praxedes' ever was the church for peace." And although the poet was alluding to the eternal peace of the dead, even for the living this church is indeed a peaceful site as well as an astonishing jewel, slightly hidden from the hustle and bustle of Via Merulana. Even many Romans hardly know it, in part due to the fact that the façade is preceded by a courtyard accessible from the street through a front door usually closed, while an unpretentious lateral door is currently used as the entrance. It is said to have been built where St. Prassede (or Praxedes), daughter of Pudenzio, and sister of S. Pudenziana (St. Pudentiana, or Potentiana), hid a group of Christians who became martyrs.

The basilica was built by Pope Paschal I in the ninth century on a site where a church had already existed since the fifth century. The central nave is separated from the two aisles by granite columns. In the middle of the pavement, a porphyry slab covers the well where, according to tradition, St. Prassede gathered the blood of the martyrs.

St. Prassede's main treasures are the mosaics of the triumphal arch and the apse, dating back to the ninth century and inspired by St. John's *Revelation*, and those of the Chapel of St. Zenone. The triumphal arch represents the walls of the Heavenly Jerusalem with Jesus between two angels, the apostles, St. Paul, St. John the Baptist, and the Virgin Mary; while, at the city gates, the angels await those chosen by God who will enter the city. This mosaic seems to frame the second coming of Christ, as we see him walking through a dark blue sky on red, green, and yellow clouds portrayed in the apse, and recalling the iconography of the apse in Santi Cosma e Damiano (see fourth walk). Christ is dressed in a golden and red robe, and a golden halo with a blue cross is around his head, over which descends the hand of God. His right hand shows the stigmata, and his left hand holds the A and Ω scroll. St. Paul, St. Prassede, and Pope Paschal on the left, and St. Peter, St. Pudentiana, and St. Zenone on the right, surround him. At both sides of the mosaic are palm trees, one with the phoenix symbolizing Christ's resurrection. Underneath the figures the river Jordan, the Lamb (Christ), the sheep (the apostles), and the two cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem are discernible. The prevailing colors here are green, red, and white, against a golden or blue background.

St. Zenone's Chapel, in the right aisle, was built by Pope Paschal I in honor of his mother Theodora. Made in part of *spolia* (decorative elements such as columns, capitals, and architraves taken from precedent monuments), it is striking in its magnificent mosaics, starting from the entrance, which is surmounted by a mosaic arch where in two semicircles the Virgin Mary, Christ, and various saints are portrayed. The interior is a splendid mausoleum, in which architectonic elements and mosaics seem to form a continuum, as in the case of the four columns on the top of which the four angels of the mosaic seem to rest their feet while converging to the center of the ceiling where their hands hold the image of Christ Pantocrator (Almighty).

On the wall facing the entrance, a throne with the cross between St. Paul and St. Peter represents the wait for the second coming of Christ, connecting the iconography of the mosaics in the chapel with those of the apse. The mosaic wall to the right shows St. Agnes, St. Pudentiana, and St. Prassede and, in a niche below, the Virgin Mary with St. Prassede, St. Pudentiana, and Theodora, Paschal I's mother. On the wall of the altar, the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist are in the upper tier, whereas in the niche is portrayed the Transfiguration with Christ, Moses, Elijah and the apostles John, James, and Peter. Above the altar, a little apse decorated with a mosaic shows the Virgin Mary in throne holding the Blessing Child Jesus, with St. Prassede and St. Pudentiana. On the last wall, the mosaic in the higher tier shows St. John, with the book of the Gospel, St. Andrew, and St. James. The prevailing colors in this chapel are the gold of the background, the white, yellow, and red of the robes, and the green of the meadows from which red anemones emerge.

The chapel is connected to another smaller chapel containing the column to which, according to tradition, Christ was tied during his flagellation.

BASILICA OF SANTA PUDENZIANA

After visiting St. Prassede, it is worth walking a few extra blocks to Via di Santa Maria Maggiore to see the Church of Santa Pudenziana (St. Prassede's sister). Its main treasure is a mosaic dating back to the fourth century and showing Christ in throne surrounded by the apostles who are dressed like Roman senators. Above Christ stands the cross against a blue sky, and the symbols of the four evangelists with a view of an ideal city and its buildings.

On the other side of Via Merulana, instead, take Via di San Vito, which leads to the Arch of Gallieno. Made of blocks of marble and travertine, and dedicated to the Emperor Gallieno in the third century, it corresponds to the Porta Esquilina in the Servian walls. Next to the arch stands the Church of Santi Vito e Modesto, which already existed in the eighth century and was then rebuilt by Pope Sixtus IV, at the end of the fifteenth century. Here you can see a fresco by Antoniazzo Romano (the same painter who did the frescoes on the altar in San Giovanni in Laterano and in

the apse of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme; see fifth and sixth walks), portraying the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus among saints. On the other side of the arch, there is the fontanella di San Vito, a drinking fountain representing the rione Monti.

BASILICA OF SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE

According to legend, both Pope Liberius (352-366) and a Roman patrician called Giovanni had a dream in which the Virgin Mary asked them to build a church where the next day they would have found a miraculous summer snow. The next day, on 5 August 356 AD, the snow fell on the Esquiline Hill, on the site where the Roman goddess Juno Licina had been worshipped. Pope Liberius had the first nucleus of the church, known as Santa Maria Liberiana, or Santa Maria ad Nives, built there. However, scholars ascertained that in reality it was Pope Sixtus III (432-440) who had the church constructed after the Council of Ephesus (431), which had established the cult of the Virgin Mary as Mother of God, and it is thus one of the first nuclei of Marian devotion in Rome and in the Christian world.

Santa Maria Maggiore was the fourth patriarchal basilica along with San Giovanni in Laterano, San Pietro, and San Paolo fuori le mura (St. Paul outside the walls). Pilgrims in Rome are traditionally required to visit (on foot) seven churches in Rome in one day, namely the four major basilicas (San Pietro, San Paolo fuori le mura, San Giovanni in Laterano, Santa Maria Maggiore), together with Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, San Lorenzo fuori le mura, and San Sebastiano. The common Italian expression "fare il giro delle sette chiese," (to visit the seven churches) derives from this tradition, and means that you will have to search hard, going to many places and people, before finding somebody who will eventually pay attention, or offer help.

In front of Santa Maria Maggiore, and mirroring the obelisk on the other end of Via Merulana, in Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano, stands a marble column that the architect Carlo Maderno took from the Basilica of Maxentius and placed in the middle of Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, with a bronze statue of the Virgin Mary on top. Starting from the basilica's façade, you will notice the various architectonic and decorative elements from different times and styles that are either juxtaposed to each other, or contained in each other. The baroque façade designed by Ferdinando Fuga in the 1740s still keeps, as in a shrine, the thirteenth century mosaics that decorated the previous façade, and which illustrate the miracle of the snow beyond the three arches, on the second tier.

The bell tower dates back to the second half of the 1300s, and the church has also a rear façade built at the end of the seventeenth century, standing on a staircase on the slope of Piazza dell'Esquilino. The design of the façade is articulated around the five doors of the first tier and the three arches of the second tier, framed by two wings

of palaces. The lightness of this structure gives way to the contrasting and striking vastness of the interior of the church, which consists of a classic basilica with a central nave and two aisles, separated by columns.

The major innovations to the basilica floor plan are the reconstruction of the fifth century apse in the late 1200s, and the creation of a transept, formed by the two chapels, Sistina and Paolina, immediately before the high altar, underneath which a relic of Christ's crib is kept. In the central nave, the splendid cosmatesque pavement from the 1200s is juxtaposed to the Renaissance lacunar ceiling gilded, according to tradition, with the first gold from America. The nave is separated from the lateral aisles by thirty-six marble and four granite columns, which sustain an architrave above which thirty-six windows bring light to the church.

Beneath the windows, thirty-six mosaic panels illustrate stories from the Old and New Testaments. However, the heart of the basilica is constituted by the apse preceded by a triumphal arch whose mosaics, from the fifth century, show scenes from Jesus' childhood and youth and the role of the Virgin Mary starting from the Annunciation. The apse itself is decorated by a splendid mosaic made by Jacopo Torriti (the same Franciscan artist who made the mosaic of the apse in San Giovanni in Laterano; see fifth walk) in 1295. This mosaic in the Byzantine style celebrates the Coronation of the Virgin Mary by Christ: both characters are enthroned between Cardinal Giacomo Colonna and Pope Nicholas IV among the angels, and St. John the Baptist, St. Anthony, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Francis on a background of spirals, doves, and peacocks. Underneath, the river Jordan flows with swans and boats. In between the windows of the apse, the mosaic illustrates scenes from Mary's life. The prevailing color is gold in various shades, with touches of green, both in the background and in the robes worn by the characters, whose drapery looks extremely natural.

Both the Sistine and the Pauline Chapels are worth a close visit. The Sistine Chapel was designed by Domenico Fontana, and contains a monument to Pope Sixtus V. However, the most precious work of art, accessible through a staircase from this chapel, is the Oratory of the Presepio that Fontana transferred beneath the chapel, and which consists of statues representing the Nativity by Arnolfo di Cambio. Georgina Masson writes: "... Arnolfo's statues representing the scene in the Bethlehem stable are among the most beautiful of their kind, and one of the greatest treasures of S. Maria Maggiore. ... In Joseph's pensive stance, in the reverent figures of the three kings and the gentle gaze of the ox and ass, all the poetry and mysticism of medieval Christianity still lives and breathes. Just to look at them is an unforgettable experience..." The Pauline Chapel, built at the beginning of the 1600s for Pope Paul V Borghese, on the main altar shows the *acheiropoieton* (not made by human hand) image of the Madonna and Child in the Byzantine style, probably from the eighth or ninth century. The visit to the Museo Storico also gives access to Arnolfo di Cambio's Presepio and to the mosaics of the Loggia delle Benedizioni (Balcony of the Blessings).

PIAZZA VITTORIO EMANUELE II

Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, which Romans simply call Piazza Vittorio, is the largest square in Rome. It was meant to be the heart of the Umbertine Rome, a Piedmontese neighborhood in the city, which had just become the capital of Italy, as an homage to Turin, the first capital of the Kingdom of Italy, and its rational city plan. Piazza Vittorio follows the model of London's large squares: a huge rectangle surrounded by elegant residential buildings (whose Torinese style is embodied in the porticoes, a very rare element in a city like Rome, which enjoys a much warmer climate than Turin), with a big luxuriant garden in the center.

The square underwent a rapid decline when it became the site of one of Rome's largest markets: the busy popular life revolving around the market was immortalized by Vittorio De Sica in a sequence of his movie *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*), in which the protagonist looks for his stolen bicycle among the vendors in the market. However, after the excavation of the metro line A, the city administration decided to restore the original grandeur of the piazza. The market was recently moved inside former barracks (the Caserma Sani, a part of which also hosts rooms of the University of Rome Sapienza), and the gardens underwent significant landscaping.

At the center of the lush vegetation, among which the palm trees stand out with their slender and flexuous trunks, there are the remains in lateritious of a massive fountain built in the third century by the Emperor Severus Alexander, which originally was a cistern for the gathering and distribution of water from the spring Claudia, and that in antiquity was decorated with splendid marbles and statues ornamenting the niches still visible in the structure. The monument is referred to as I Trionfi di Mario (the Triumphs of Marius).

The Porta magica, or alchemica (Magic or Alchemic Door) built by Massimiliano di Palombara for his own villa in 1680, was rebuilt here. It is decorated with alchemic symbols and inscriptions in Hebrew and Latin, with the formula to make gold.

Another area of the gardens is now a playground, always full of children. During the summer an outdoor cinema is held in the piazza. What especially characterizes Piazza Vittorio and the surrounding streets nowadays is the presence of many communities belonging to different ethnic groups: it is one of the Roman hubs for immigrants, probably due also to the proximity of the main train station, Termini. Both in the piazza and the streets around it countless shops sell their goods. These are run by Chinese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Moroccan, and Somali immigrants who established their communities in this area of the city from the late 1980s, contributing with their own culture, religions, traditions, products, colorful clothes, and arts, especially music and literature, to the city life. Not all Romans welcomed this change in the neighborhood, and the presence of the new communities has been controversially

perceived and confronted, while many associations were created to support the immigrants and protect their rights.

A few hundred meters from Piazza Vittorio, in Via Principe Eugenio 65, is the Palazzo del Freddo, one of the best gelaterie in Rome, boasting a tradition that dates back to 1880 when Giovanni Fassi started it. Fassi's production of gelato has since been so successful (with a laboratory of two hundred square meters) that, during World War II, the American Red Cross took it over for two years, in order to make gelato for American troops.

READINGS AND MOVIES

- Carlo Emilio Gadda, *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de Via Merulana* (1946): Published for the first time in episodes in the magazine *Letteratura* in 1946, and then as a book by Garzanti in 1957, *Quer pasticciaccio...* is a detective story set in Fascist Rome in 1927, and it is considered one of the most important twentieth century Italian novels for both the philosophical way in which the murder mystery is approached, and for its language and style. Detective Francesco "Don Ciccio" Ingravallo, from the Southern region of Molise, investigates two crimes which happened in a building known as "il palazzo degli Ori" (the palace of gold) in Via Merulana, 219: the theft of the jewels of the widow Menegazzi, an old lady from Veneto, in Northern Italy, and then the murder of Liliana Balducci. In a very peculiar neo-baroque style that reflects and amplifies the linguistic diversity of the characters and of Italy, Gadda paints a vivid fresco of upper middle classes in this neighborhood of Rome, as well as of the working class in the outskirts of Rome with a shift of focus from Via Merulana to the Castelli Romani. The world that the writer presents to the reader is irremediably chaotic, "un pasticciaccio," "a mess," as William Weaver translated the title of the novel for his English translation, *That Awful Mess on the Via Merulana*.

  The novel inspired a movie, *Un maledetto imbroglio* (*The Facts of Murder*) by Pietro Germi (1959), starring Germi himself, Claudia Cardinale, and Nino Castelnuovo, as well as spawning a TV series entitled *Il palazzo degli Ori*.

- Cristina Ali Farah, *Madre piccola* (2007): The author of this novel is the daughter of an Italian mother and a Somali father. The novel tells the story of two cousins, Barni and Domenica, who are separated by the start of the civil war in Somalia. Barni goes to Rome where she works as a midwife, while Domenica travels for many years before reuniting with her beloved cousin in Rome. This poignant story offers a refreshing perspective on the condition of being an immigrant in Rome.

- Agostino Ferrente, *L'orchestra di piazza Vittorio* (2006): This is a very interesting documentary movie, which tells the story of the real multi-ethnic orchestra

created in Rome in 2002. Piazza Vittorio is the center around which the musicians, coming from all over the world, meet through the association Apollo 11, created by Ferrente and other artists, in order to rescue a traditional movie theater near the piazza from becoming a bingo hall.

- Amara Lakhous, *Scontro di civiltà per un ascensore a Piazza Vittorio* (*Clash of Civilization over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio*; 2006): The author is an Algerian journalist and writer who lives in Rome; the novel inspired the movie (2010) by Isotta Toso. It is the story of an apartment building, whose tenants belong to very different ethnic backgrounds, and who regularly fight about the use of the elevator, inside which the dead body of one of them is found.

- Robert Browning, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxedes' Church," in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845): this is the monologue, written in blank verse, of a dying Renaissance bishop who gives instructions about the kind of funeral and tomb he expects his "nephews" (read his illegitimate sons) arrange for him.

Useful Links

National Museum of Oriental Art:
museorientale.beniculturali.it

Teatro Brancaccio:
teatrobrancaccio.it

Bakery Panella:
panellaroma.com

Santa Maria Maggiore:
vatican.va/various/basiliche/sm_maggiore/index_it.html

Palazzo del Freddo:
palazzodelfreddo.it


WALK 9
Via Labicana
NOTRE DAME
GLOBAL GATEWAY
Via Labicana
Via di San Giovanni in Laterano
Via Capo d'Africa
Via Ostilia
Via Marco Aurelio
Via Annia
Via Claudia
Via dei Querceti
Via di Santo Stefano Rotondo
N


Via Bixio
Viale Alessandro Manzoni
Via Emanuele Filiberto
MUSEO STORICO
DELLA LIBERAZIONE
Via Tasso
Via Merulana
dei Santi Quattro



9. The Museo Storico della Liberazione in Via Tasso: A Walk in 1943–44 Rome


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THE MUSEO STORICO DELLA LIBERAZIONE IN VIA TASSO: A WALK IN 1943-44 ROME

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The neighborhood of San Giovanni was at the center of crucial events in the past century. It was one of Rome's first central neighborhoods to hail the arrival of the American soldiers of the Fifth Army, commanded by General Mark Clark, who liberated the city from the Nazi occupation on 4 June 1944, parading with their tanks and troops through Porta San Giovanni as well. As is documented in many films shot back then, Rome at that time was a city exhausted by eleven months of frequent bombings by the Allied Powers (mainly Americans); roundups, summary executions, and mass shootings by the occupying Germans – and widespread hunger.

On 8 September 1943, General Pietro Badoglio had asked for and obtained an armistice with the Allies, since American soldiers had landed on the coasts of Sicily in July, and had started moving up the peninsula from the South, progressively pushing the German and Italian troops towards the North. By then, the King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III had fled, and the Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini had been placed by Hitler as head of the Repubblica di Salò, in Northern Italy. Most of the Italian army had been dispersed: a section joined the Allies (the American and English troops), others joined the Italian partisans fighting against the Germans and Fascist Italians, and others simply went back home. The partisans, coordinated by the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale (CLN; Committee for National Liberation), organized the Resistance against the Germans who had suddenly changed from being allies to invaders.

Rome, because of the presence of Pope Pius XII (Eugenio Pacelli) and the Vatican, had been declared an "open city," that is a city in which armed troops were not allowed to stop and stay. But the Germans, who had conquered Rome on 11 September 1943, after three days of fighting against the partisans, nevertheless controlled it militarily.

THE MUSEO STORICO DELLA LIBERAZIONE (HISTORY MUSEUM OF LIBERATION)

The Museo Storico della Liberazione in Via Tasso 145/155, a ten-fifteen minute walk from Notre Dame's facility in Via Ostilia, documents this dark chapter of the city's history. The visit takes around thirty minutes and is free; visitors are only requested to sign in.

Via Tasso, a steep street that connects Viale Manzoni and Via Domenico Fontana, runs between two rows of buildings built between the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, some of them very elegant. The museum is situated within a large building, which dates back to the 1930s, painted in bright yellow, with a very sober, almost restrained architectural style. The building is divided into apartments. During World War II, it was used by the Germans first as the cultural institute of the German Embassy in Rome. Then, during the occupation of the city, the headquarters of the German security police, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Kappler, were located here, along with the prison where political dissidents and Jews were jailed and tortured. What shocks the visitor is the atmosphere of unexpected normality.

One enters through a wooden and glass main door: you will find yourself in an unadorned hall similar to those of many Roman apartment buildings, were it not for the museum posters. On the ground floor are the archives and the library open to the public, as well as the reception, where you will be supplied with an informative brochure either in Italian or English (most descriptions inside the museum are provided only in Italian). The museum staff is made up of volunteers, both ex-partisans (fewer and fewer, given their age), retired school teachers, and Roman citizens who dedicate part of their time to keeping alive this important document of the city and national history.

On the second and third floors, accessible going up a few ramps of stairs, you can visit the cells in which the prisoners were locked up and tortured. The cells are apartment rooms whose windows had been walled up by the Germans. In each room, there are documents on display: descriptions of the historical events, pages of World War II newspapers, maps, with pictures of prisoners, prison guards, collaborationists, the city, and lists of names of prisoners sentenced to death, of the dead, pieces of clothes, prison documents, letters, and other personal documents.

The prisoners were mainly Jews, political dissidents (including, but not limited to partisans), all arrested by the Germans in those months between September 1943 and June 1944. Two rooms of the museum are dedicated, respectively, to the Fosse Ardeatine massacre of 24 March 1944 (see below), and Jewish prisoners and the fate of their families. What shocks visitors most in the museum is the striking contrast between the seemingly ordinariness of these rooms, whose marble floor is typical of many apartments in Rome, and the horrors committed inside these very rooms turned into cells. Nowadays, some of the windows have been reopened onto the surrounding courtyards and streets, and you can see from there a view of other buildings and churches with their bell towers.

ADDITIONAL ITINERARIES

- **Le Fosse Ardeatine (Ardeatine Caves):** After this museum, you should continue the journey into Rome's recent memory, visiting the Fosse Ardeatine, where, on

24 March 1944, the Germans killed three hundred thirty-five Italians (soldiers, partisans, and civilians): the massacre was the reprisal for an attack the previous day in which a group of partisans had killed thirty-three Nazi soldiers in Via Rasella. The Germans killed ten Italians for each German (by "mistake," they killed 5 people too many). All those sentenced to death were brought to the pozzolana caves on the Via Ardeatina, just outside the city walls and not far away from Porta San Sebastiano, and shot. The cave was then blown up. The site is now a memorial complex and a museum, and the atmosphere there is still quite shocking and moving. The Ardeatine caves can be reached from San Giovanni, on bus number 218.

- **Rome's Jewish Ghetto:** The Jewish ghetto is another neighborhood in which the year of German occupation can easily be evoked. Today, the ghetto is one of the beating hearts of Rome: beautiful shops sell clothes, cloths, kitchenware, and other luxury articles; excellent restaurants serve typical Roman-Jewish cuisine (some are kosher) and are frequented by both Romans (both Jewish and non-Jewish), and tourists. The ghetto is enclosed between historical monuments such as the Theatre of Marcellus, and one of its borders is the Lungotevere, the bank of the river Tiber. But this neighborhood was the site of one of the darkest pages of Rome's history, which can still be remembered walking through the streets of the ghetto. On 16 October 1943, at dawn, the German soldiers invaded the ghetto and arrested and deported more than 1,000 people (among whom about two hundred children) to Auschwitz, a concentration camp in Poland. Only fifteen men and one woman would survive. Their homes and property were ransacked.

  A visit to the Museo Ebraico (Jewish Museum) is truly worthwhile: the museum shows the history of Rome's 2,200-year-old Jewish community, through the display of several collections including cloths, silver and marble objects, paintings, and documents. The visit to the museum includes a visit to two synagogues, the Tempio Maggiore (the major synagogue in Rome) and the Tempio Spagnolo.

- **San Lorenzo and the Basilica of San Lorenzo al Verano:** The neighborhood of San Lorenzo, a ten-minute bus drive or thirty minute walk from San Giovanni, is presently inhabited mainly by university students and professors, and is the center of a very intense night life with restaurants, bars, and clubs, as well as a tiny cinema, the Tibur, usually showing wonderful movies. In fact, San Lorenzo borders the campus of the first and most important university of Rome, Sapienza (dating back to 1303), as well as the Policlinico Umberto I (one of the major hospitals of the capital). Back in the 1940s, it was a popular neighborhood, and it became famous when the Americans bombed it (along with surrounding neighborhoods like the Tiburtino and Prenestino) on 19 July 1943, aiming to destroy a strategic railway station, which however ended up killing about 3,000

Romans (mainly civilians and a lot of children), and injuring more than 10,000 people. Most of the victims were carried to the entrance of the main cemetery of Rome (Il Verano), where Pope Pius XII blessed them. The Basilica of San Lorenzo al Verano (St. Lawrence at Verano), on the Piazzale del Verano, was recently restored: it is a splendid church, with a wonderful Romanesque cloister, and contains frescoes from the 1200s; it also documents the bombing with a permanent exhibition of photographs and descriptions.

- **Porta San Paolo:** Between 8-11 September 1943, at Porta San Paolo (see first walk), the partisans fought courageously to defend Rome against the German army that was besieging the city. When they finally capitulated, the Germans occupied the city. Several memorial plaques in the square commemorate these events, including the liberation of Rome by the Fifth Army of the Anglo-Americans, on 4 June 1944.

READINGS

- Elsa Morante, *La Storia* (*History*; 1974): The novel is an excellent account of the history of Rome during World War II through the vicissitudes of the protagonists of the novel, the elementary school teacher Ida, of Jewish origins, and her children: Nino, who ends up being a partisan in the Resistance against the Nazis, and Useppe, born after Ida is raped by a German soldier. The novel was turned into a movie of the same title by director Luigi Comencini in 1986, starring the actress Claudia Cardinale as the protagonist.

- Giacomo Debenedetti, *16 ottobre 1943* (*16 October 1943*; 1945): The Italian Jewish literary critic and journalist Giacomo Debenedetti (1901-1967) tells the story of the roundup and sack of the Roman ghetto by the Germans on that terrible day in October, when more than 1,000 Jews, including two hundred children, were captured and sent to Auschwitz, the Nazi concentration camp in Poland, while their homes and properties were ransacked. Only fifteen men and one woman survived.

- Curzio Malaparte, *La pelle* (*The Skin*; 1968): Some pages of the novel *La pelle* are devoted to the arrival of the American soldiers in Rome in June 1944, from a very critical and shockingly crude point of view. The war and its facts are described without any concession to the rhetoric of heroism.

MOVIES

- *Roma città aperta* (*Rome open city*; 1945) by director Roberto Rossellini: Starring Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi, this film is probably the emblem of Nazi occupation of Rome. The majority of the movie was filmed in Via Raimondo Montecuccoli, at the beginning of Via Prenestina, in a working class

neighborhood, not far away from San Giovanni. The movie is one of the first examples of neorealism and most of the actors were non-professionals. The story is very moving, and recounts the brutal fate of a priest, Don Pietro Morosini, and a woman, both involved in the partisan resistance against the Germans.

- *Paisà* (*Paisan;* 1946), by Roberto Rossellini: This film recounts the Allied conquest of Italy from Sicily to the Po Valley, between July 1943 and the Fall of 1944. In particular, the third episode is set in Rome, and deals with a young Roman woman named Francesca. Through the encounter between Francesca, who becomes a prostitute because of the hardship of the war, and a young American soldier, this episode shows the contradictions of those months between the liberation of the city and the loss of innocence of an entire generation of Italians, and of the country itself. You can view this episode on youtube.

VIDEO DOCUMENTARIES

The liberation of Rome:
youtube.com/watch?v=vbKmCtnjl58 (2:44') [accessed 3 September 2014]

youtube.com/watch?v=yc9iCEZeb2M (20:52', *in English; the last three minutes focus especially on Rome and the arrival of the American soldiers through Porta San Giovanni. (The liberation of Rome 1944; Department of Defense. Department of the Army.)* [accessed 3 September 2014]

youtube.com/watch?v=PJ9bge2tMR0 (7:29', *in Italian; Viva la libertà – 4 giugno 1944 Liberazione di Roma di Riccardo Spinucci)* [accessed 3 September 2014]

SONGS

- Francesco De Gregori, "San Lorenzo:" in this song, De Gregori, a Roman *cantautore* (or *chansonnier*, singer-songwriter), sings about the bombing of the neighborhood of San Lorenzo, on 19 July 1943.

USEFUL LINKS

Museo Storico della Liberazione:
viatasso.eu

Fosse Ardeatine Memorial in Rome:
memorialmuseums.org/eng/staettens/view/51/Fosse-Ardeatine-Memorial-in-Rome

Museo Ebraico di Roma:
lnx.museoebraico.roma.it/w

16 October 1943:
16ottobre1943.it

Basilica of San Lorenzo al Verano:
basilicasanlorenzo.it



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Classics:

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Leon Battista Alberti, *Descriptio urbis Romae* (1433)

Flavio Biondo, *Roma instaurata* (1444)

Baedecker Rome

Contemporary:

Blue Guide Rome

Richard J. B. Bosworth, *Whispering City. Rome and its Histories*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2011

Georgina Masson, *The Companion Guide to Rome*, 1965 (2003) (*This is the classical guide to Rome, excellent text, very well written and pleasant to read.*)

Guida di Roma del Touring Club Italiano

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Cristina Ali Farah, *Madre piccola* (2007)

Robert Browning, "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxedes' Church," in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845)

Giacomo Debenedetti, *16 ottobre 1943* (1945)

Francesco De Gregori, "San Lorenzo," song in album *Titanic (*1982)

Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* (1846)

Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560), *The Regrets* (1559), and *The Antiquities of Rome* (1559)

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*

Sigmund Freud, "The Moses of Michelangelo" (1914)

Carlo Emilio Gadda, *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (*That Awful Mess on the Via Merulana*) (1946; 1957)

Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788)

Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Italian Journey* (1786-88), and *Roman Elegies*

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Girlfriend in a Coma (2012), by Annalisa Piras and Bill Emmott

Un maledetto imbroglio (*The Facts of Murder*; 1959), by Pietro Germi, starring Germi himself, Claudia Cardinale, and Nino Castelnuovo; inspired by Gadda's novel *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*

L'orchestra di piazza Vittorio (2006), by Agostino Ferrente (*a very interesting documentary movie, which tells the story of the real multi-ethnic orchestra created in Rome, in 2002*)

Paisà (*Paisan*; 1946), by Roberto Rossellini

Il palazzo degli ori, TV mini-series, inspired by Gadda's novel *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana*

Quo Vadis? (1951), by Mervyn LeRoy, starring Peter Ustinov, Robert Taylor and Deborah Kerr; 1985 TV mini-series, starring Klaus Maria Brandauer as Nero

Roma città aperta (*Rome open city*; 1945), by Roberto Rossellini, starring Anna Magnani and Aldo Fabrizi

Scipione detto anche l'Africano (1971), by Luigi Magni, starring Marcello Mastroianni, Vittorio Gassman, and Silvana Mangano

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