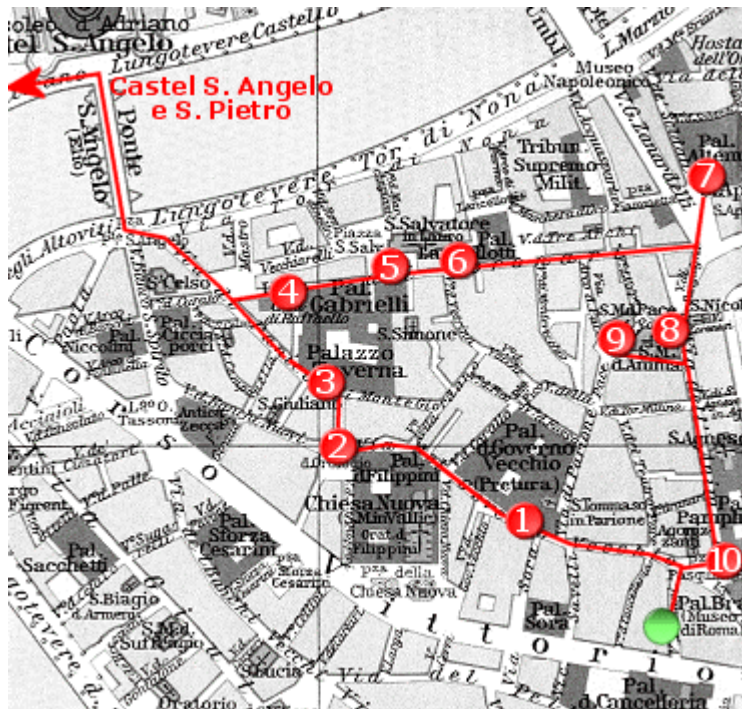


TO ST. PETER'S AND CASTEL S. ANGELO



When you leave Palazzo Olivia turn left and reach Via del Governo Vecchio, with a large number of Renaissance houses.

VIA DEL GOVERNO VECCHIO (1)

The street takes its name from Palazzo del Governo Vecchio, the seat of papal government in the 17th and 18th centuries. Once part of the Via Papalis, which led from the Lateran to St. Peter, the street is lined with 15th and 16th-century houses and small workshops. Particularly interesting are the 15th-century houses at No. 104 and No. 106. The small palazzo at No. 123 was once thought to have been the home of Bramante. Opposite is Palazzo del Governo Vecchio. It is also known as Palazzo Nardini, from the name of its founder, which is inscribed on the first-floor windows along with the date 1477.

The streets ends in Piazza dell'Orologio, with a clock tower by Borromini.

TORRE DELL'OROLOGIO (2)

Borromini built this clock tower to decorate one corner of the Convent of the Oratorians of San Filippo Neri in 1647-9. It is typical of Borromini in that the front and rear are concave and the sides convex. The mosaic of the Madonna beneath the clock is by Pietro da Cortona, while on the corner of the building is a small tabernacle to the Madonna flanked by angels in the style of Bernini.

Then proceed on Via di Panico.

VIA DI PANICO (3)

This street has connected for long time the stronghold of the Orsini family with the Tiber and the Vatican. This is the area of Monte Giordano.

MONTE GIORDANO (3)

This is one of the many artificial elevations filling the town, together with the traditional seven hills. Its origin was probably the usual build-up of archaeological debris, or of wastes from the near Tor di Nona river port.

Since 1286 the Orsini family settled here, taking advantage of a pre-existent small fort, and influencing the life of the town and of the Church by controlling the path to St. Peter's.

The Orsini family lived on the "Monte" for four centuries, building gradually several palazzos for all its feudal branches. In 1688, run up by debts, they were replaced by the Gabrielli family. In 1888 the Taverna family took over, giving its name to the palazzo.

Today Palazzo Taverna has the aspect of a severe castle. The large doorway on Via di Monte Giordano leads to the central courtyard. To the left, a second courtyard of the oldest palazzo, with a tower; to the right, Palazzo di Bracciano, a further courtyard, and Palazzo di Monterondo with the Augusta Tower.

Traces of a long history, and the thrill of looking at one of the most tormented centres of Roman aristocratic fortunes.

At the end of Via di Panico you have two choices: you can cross the Tiber and reach Castel S. Angelo, St. Peter and the Vatican Museums (but we suggest you take a full day to visit this area).

Or else you can turn right and take Via dei Coronari the street of antique dealers.

VIA DEI CORONARI (4)

Large numbers of medieval pilgrims making their way to St. Peter's walked along this street to cross over the Tiber at Ponte Sant'Angelo. Of the businesses that sprang up to try to part the pilgrims from their money, the most enduring was the selling of rosaries, and the street is still named after the rosary sellers ("coronari"). The street followed the course of the ancient Roman Via Recta (straight street), which originally ran from today's Piazza Colonna to the Tiber.

Making one's way through the vast throng of people in Via dei Coronari could be extremely hazardous. In the Holy Year of 1450, some 200 pilgrims died, crushed by the crowds or drowned in the Tiber. Following the tragedy, Pope Nicholas V demolished the Roman triumphal arch that stood at the entrance to Ponte Sant'Angelo. In the late 15th century, Pope Sixtus IV encouraged the building of private houses and palaces along the street.

Although the rosary sellers have been replaced by antique dealers, the street still has many original buildings from the 15th and 16th centuries. One of the earliest, at Nos. 156-7, is known as the House of Fiammetta, the mistress of Cesare Borgia.

On the left Piazza S. Salvatore in Lauro, with its 16th century church and convent.

S. SALVATORE IN LAURO (5)

The church is named "in Lauro" after the laurel grove that grew here in ancient times. The church standing here today was constructed at the end of the 16th century by Ottaviano

Mascherino. The bell tower and sacristy were 18th-century additions by Nicola Salvi, famous for the Trevi Fountain.

The church contains the first great altarpiece by the 17th-century artist Pietro da Cortona, "The Birth of Jesus", in the first chapel to the right.

The adjacent convent of San Giorgio, to the left, has a pretty Renaissance cloister, a frescoed refectory and the monument to Pope Eugenius IV (reigned 1431-47), moved here when old St. Peter's was pulled down. An extravagant Venetian, Eugenius would willingly spend thousands of ducats on his gold tiara, but requested a "simple, lowly burial place" near his predecessor Pope Eugenius III. His portrait, painted by Salviati, hangs in the refectory.

In 1669 the church became the seat of a pious association, the Confraternity of the Piceni, inhabitants of the Marche region. Fanatically loyal to the pope, the Piceni were traditionally employed as papal soldiers and tax-collectors.

Pass by Piazzetta S. Simeone with Palazzo Lancellotti.

PALAZZO LANCELLOTTI (6)

The palazzo stands on Piazzetta S. Simeone. It was built at the end of the 16th century, on the ruins of oldest buildings, on behalf of Cardinal Scipione Lancellotti. It was designed by Francesco da Volterra, and completed by Carlo Maderno. Domenichino built the portal with the columns supporting the balcony. On three sides, the palazzo has a long line of architraved windows, crowned by a nice cornice. On the ashlar corners, two wonderful sacred aedicules supported by angels, of the 18th century.

The courtyard has a porch and a loggia, and is decorated with ancient marbles and stuccos.

Walk to the end of Via dei Coronari. You should now visit Palazzo Altemps, one of the seats of the Roman National Museum.

PALAZZO ALTEMPS (7)

An extraordinary collection of Classical sculpture is housed in this branch of the Museo Nazionale Romano. Restored as a museum in the 1990s, the palazzo was originally built for Girolamo Riario, nephew of Pope Sixtus IV in 1480. The Riario coat of arms can still be seen in the janitor's room. In the popular uprising that followed the pope's death in 1484, the building was sacked and Girolamo fled the city.

In 1568 the palazzo was bought by Cardinal Marco Sittico Altemps. His family was of German origin - the name is an Italianization of Hohenems - and influential in the church. The palazzo was renovated by Martino Longhi the Elder in the 1570s. He added the great belvedere, crowned with obelisks and a marble unicorn.

The Altemps family were ostentatious collectors; the courtyard and its staircase are lined with ancient sculptures. These form part of the museum's collection, together with the Ludovisi collection of ancient sculptures, which was previously housed in the Museo Nazionale Romano in the Terms of Diocletian. Located on the ground floor is the Greek statue of Athena Parthenos and the Dionysios group, a Roman copy of the Greek original. On the first floor, at the far end of the courtyard, visitors can admire the beautifully decorated Painted Loggia, dating from 1595.

The Ludovisi throne, a Greek original carved in the 5th century BC, is located on the same floor. It is decorated with reliefs, one of which shows a young woman rising from the sea, who is thought to represent Aphrodite. In the room which is known as the Salone del Camino is the powerful statue "Galata's Suicide", a marble copy of a group originally made in bronze. Nearby is the Ludovisi Sarcophagus, dating from the 3rd century AD.

Now you can start your way back. Visit the church of S. Maria dell'Anima.

CHIESA DI S. MARIA DELL'ANIMA (8)

Pope Adrian VI (reigned 1522-3), son of a shipbuilder from Utrecht, was the last non-Italian pope before John Paul II. He would have disapproved of his superb tomb by Baldassarre Peruzzi in Santa Maria dell'Anima. It stands to the right of Giulio Romano's damaged altarpiece and is redolent of the pagan Renaissance spirit the pope had so condemned during his brief, rather gloomy reign, when patronage of the arts ground to a halt. Santa Maria dell'Anima is the German church in Rome and some of its paintings, such as the "Miracle of St. Benno" by Carlo Saraceni (1618), illustrate events connected with the history of Germany.

Take a small deviation to reach the picturesque church of S. Maria della Pace in its charming small square.

CHIESA DI S. MARIA DELLA PACE (9)

A drunken soldier allegedly pierced the breast of a painted Madonna on this site, causing it to bleed. Pope Sixtus IV della Rovere (reigned 1471-84) placated the Virgin by ordering Baccio Pontelli to build her a church if she would bring the war with Turkey to an end. Peace was restored and the church was named Santa Maria della Pace (St. Mary of Peace). The cloister was added by Bramante in 1504. As in his famous Tempietto (located at the Janiculum), he scrupulously followed Classical rules of proportion to produce a thoroughly original result, achieving a monumental effect in a relatively small place. Pietro da Cortona may have had Bramante's Tempietto in mind when he added the church's charming semi-circular portico in 1656. The interior, a short nave ending under an octagonal cupola, houses Raphael's famous frescoes of four "Sybils", and four "Prophets" by his pupil Timoteo Viti, painted for the banker Agostino Chigi in 1514. Baldassarre Peruzzi also did some work in the church (fresco in the first chapel on the left), as did the architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, who designed the second chapel on the right.

Coming back home, stop by to say hallo to the talking statue of Pasquino.

PASQUINO (10)

This rough chunk of marble is all that remains of a Hellenistic group, probably representing the incident in Homer's "Iliad" in which Menelaus shields the body of the slain Patroclus. For years it lay as a stepping stone in a muddy medieval street until it was erected on this corner in 1501, near the shop of an outspoken cobbler named Pasquino. Freedom of speech was not encouraged in papal Rome, so the cobbler wrote out his satirical comments on current events and attached them to the statue. Other Romans were quick to follow suit, hanging their maxims and verses on the statue by night to escape punishment. Despite the wrath of the authorities, the sayings of the "talking statue" (renamed Pasquino) were part of popular culture right up until the 19th century. Other statues started to "talk" in the same satirical vein; Pasquino used to conduct dialogues with the statue Marforio in Via del Campidoglio (now in the courtyard of Palazzo Nuovo) and with the Babuino in Via del Babuino.