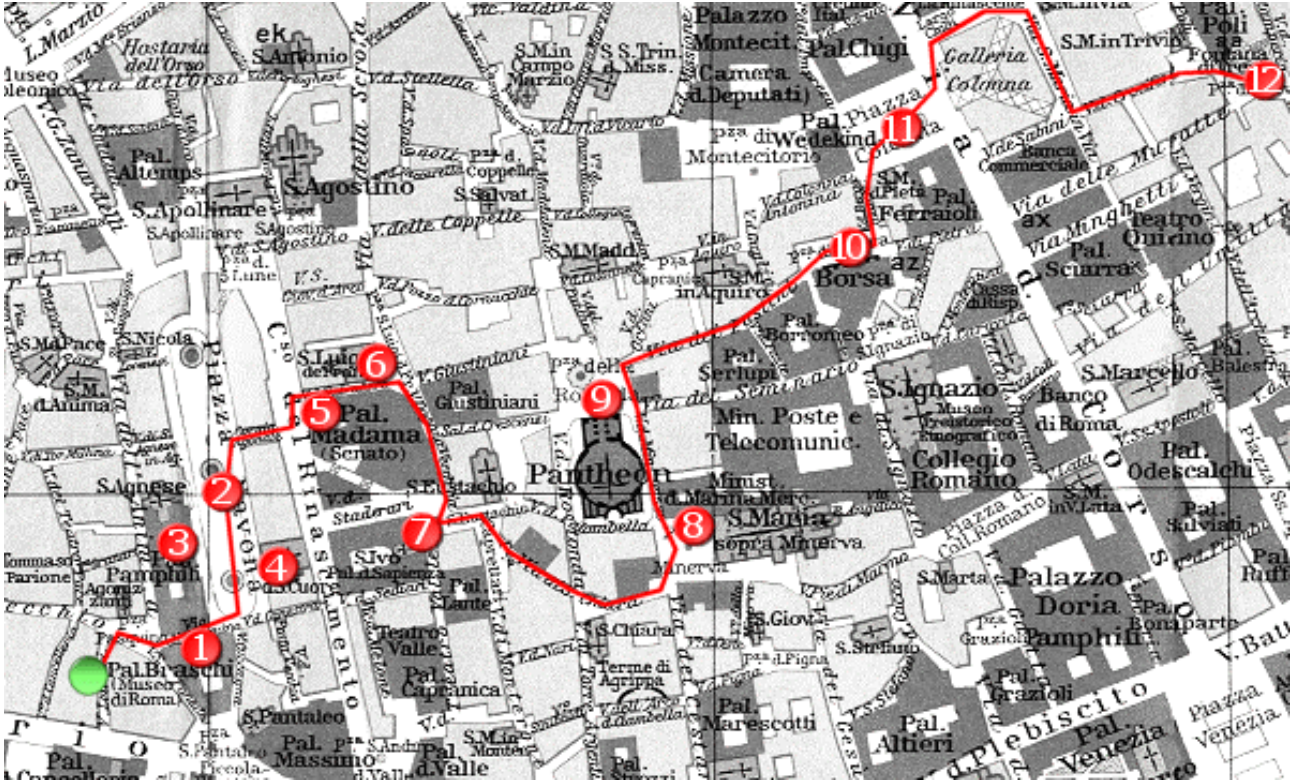


TO THE TREVI FOUNTAIN

Piazza Navona and the Pantheon, up to the Trevi Fountain. For a careful visit, this itinerary should be split in more than one day.



When you leave Palazzo Olivia turn left, pass by Piazza Pasquino and have a look at Palazzo Braschi.

PALAZZO BRASCHI (1)

On one side of Piazza San Pantaleo is the last Roman palazzo to be built for the family of a pope. Palazzo Braschi was built in the late 18th century for Pope Pius VI Braschi's nephews by the architect Cosimo Morelli. He gave the building its imposing facade which looks out on to the piazza.

The palazzo now houses the municipal Museo di Roma. It holds collections of pictures, drawings and everyday objects illustrating life in the city from medieval times until the 19th century.

The Museum is currently closed for restoration works. Re-opening is scheduled for Spring 2002.

Then devote an adequate amount of time to the glory of Piazza Navona.

PIAZZA NAVONA (2)

No other piazza in Rome can rival the theatricality of Piazza Navona. Day and night there is always something going on in the pedestrian area around its three flamboyant fountains.

Rome's most beautiful Baroque piazza follows the shape of Domitian's Stadium, which once stood on this site - some of its arches are still visible below the church of Sant'Angese in Agone. The "agones" were athletic contests held in the 1st-century stadium, which could seat 33,000. The word "Navona" is thought to be a corruption of "in agone".

The piazza's unique appearance and atmosphere were created in the 17th century with the addition of the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi. The other fountains, the Fontana di Nettuno and the Fontana del Moro, date from the previous century but have been altered several times since. The figure known as Il Moro was designed by Bernini.

Up until the 19th century, Piazza Navona was flooded during August by stopping the fountain outlets. The rich would splash around in carriages, while street urchins paddled after them.

Today the piazza is a favourite in all seasons, especially in winter when it fills with colourful stalls selling toys and sweets for the feast of the Befana (January 6).

FONTANA DEI QUATTRO FIUMI (2)

Built for Pope Innocent X Pamphilj, this magnificent fountain in the centre of Piazza Navona was unveiled in 1651. The pope's coat of arms, the dove and the olive branch, decorate the bold pyramid rock formation supporting the Roman obelisk, which once stood in the Circus of Maxentius on the Appian Way. Bernini designed the fountain, which was paid for by means of highly unpopular taxes on bread and other staples. The great rivers then known - the Ganges, the Danube, the Nile and the River Plate - are represented by four giants.

The Nile's veiled head symbolizes the river's unknown source, but there is also a legend that the veil conveys Bernini's dislike for the nearby Sant'Agnese in Agone, designed by his rival Borromini. Similarly, the athletic figure of the River Plate, cringing with arm upraised, is supposed to express Bernini's fear that the church will collapse. Sadly these widely-believed stories can have no basis in fact: Bernini had completed the fountain before Borromini started work on the church.

There are so many beautiful things on this piazza! Most important ones are Palazzo Pamphilj and the church of S. Agnese on the left, and the church of S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli on the right.

PALAZZO PAMPILJ (3)

In 1644 Giovanni Battista Pamphilj became Pope Innocent X. During his 10-year reign, he heaped riches on his own family, especially his domineering sister-in-law Olimpia Maidalchini. The "talking statue" Pasquino gave her the nickname "Olim-Pia", Latin for "formerly virtuous". She lived in the grand Palazzo Pamphilj, which has frescoes by Pietro da Cortona and a gallery by Borromini.

The building is now the Brazilian embassy and cultural center.

S. AGNESE IN AGONE (3)

The church is believed to have been founded on the site of the brothel where, in AD 304, the young St. Agnes was exposed naked to force her to renounce her faith. A marble relief in the crypt shows the miraculous growth of her hair, which fell around her body to protect her modesty. She was martyred on this site and is buried in the catacombs that bear her name along the Via Nomentana.

Today's church was commissioned by Pope Innocent X in 1652. The first architects were father and son, Girolamo and Carlo Rainaldi, but they were replaced by Borromini who worked on the church from 1653 to 1657. He stuck more or less to the Rainaldi scheme except for the concave facade designed to emphasize the dome.

A statue of St. Agnes on the facade is said to be reassuring the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi's statue of the River Plate that the church is stable.

S. GIACOMO DEGLI SPAGNOLI (4)

The ancient church of S. Giacomo degli Spagnoli, built before 1450 Holy Year, is now named Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore.

It was constructed in two stages. The oldest section is the one opening on the Sapienza. The simple facade on Piazza Navona dates from the Renaissance. It keeps the three ancient doorways.

With the adjacent buildings used as a hospice, it was for a long time the centre of Spanish presence in Rome. It was the seat of the Resurrection Confraternity, that used to run solemn Easter celebrations in the festively arrayed piazza.

Then proceed to Corso Rinascimento, and pass by Palazzo Madama (seat of the Italian Senate).

PALAZZO MADAMA (5)

This 16th-century palazzo was built for the Medici family, who had owned a bank here in the previous century. It was the residence of the Medici cardinals and cousins, Giovanni and Giuliano. Both later became popes: Giovanni as Leo X and Giuliano as Clement VII. Caterina de' Medici, Clement VII's niece, also lived here before she was married to Henry, son of King Francis I of France in 1533.

The palazzo takes its name from Madama Margherita of Austria, illegitimate daughter of Emperor Charles V, who married Alessandro de' Medici and, after his death, Ottavio Farnese. Thus part of the art collection of the Florentine Medici family was inherited by the Roman Farnese family.

The spectacular facade was built in the 17th century by Paolo Marucelli. He gave it an ornate cornice and whimsical decorative details on the roof.

Since 1871 the palazzo has been the seat of the upper house of the Italian parliament.

Stop at the church of S. Luigi dei Francesi, where you can admire some of the best Caravaggios.

S. LUIGI DEI FRANCESI (5)

The French national church was founded in 1518, but it took until 1589 to complete, with contributions by Giacomo della Porta and Domenico Fontana. The church serves as a last resting place for many illustrious French people, including Chateaubriand's lover Pauline de Beaumont.

Three Caravaggios hang in the fifth chapel on the left, all dedicated to St. Matthew. Painted between 1597 and 1602, these were Caravaggio's first great religious works: the "Calling of St. Matthew", the "Martyrdom of St. Matthew" and "St. Matthew and the Angel". The first version of this last painting was rejected because of its vivid realism; never before had a saint been shown as a tired old man with dirty feet. All three works display very disquieting realism and a highly dramatic use of light.

Walk by the rear facade of Palazzo Madama and reach the church of S. Ivo alla Sapienza, one of Borromini's most original creations.

S. IVO ALLA SAPIENZA (6)

The church's lantern is crowned with a cross on top of a dramatic twisted spiral - a highly distinctive landmark from Rome's roof terraces.

Seen from close by, this Borromini church is even more striking. No other Baroque church is quite like it. Based on a ground design of astonishing geometrical complexity, the walls are a breathtaking combination of concave and convex surfaces. The church stands in the small courtyard of the Palazzo della Sapienza, seat of the old University of Rome from the 15th century until 1935.

Then cross Piazza S. Eustachio and have one of the most famous coffee in Rome at the bar on the piazza. Visit S. Maria sopra Minerva, with Bernini's marble elephant.

OBELISK OF S. MARIA SOPRA MINERVA (7)

Originally meant to decorate Palazzo Barberini as a joke, this exotic elephant and obelisk sculpture is typical of Bernini's inexhaustible imagination.

When the ancient obelisk was found in the garden of the monastery of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, the friars wanted the monument erected in their piazza. The elephant was provided with its enormous saddle-cloth because of a friar's insistence that the gap under the animal's abdomen would undermine its stability. Bernini knew better: you need only look at the Fontana dei Fiumi in Piazza Navona to appreciate his use of empty space. The elephant, an ancient symbol of intelligence and piety, was chosen as the embodiment of the virtues on which Christians would build true wisdom.

S. MARIA SOPRA MINERVA (7)

Few other churches display such a complete and impressive record of Italian art. Dating from the 13th century, the Minerva is one of the few examples of Gothic architecture in Rome. It was the traditional strong-hold of the Dominicans, whose anti-heretical zeal earned them the nickname of Domini Canes (the hounds of the Lord).

Built on ancient ruins, supposed to have been the Temple of Minerva, the simple T-shaped vaulted building acquired rich chapels and works of art by which its many patrons wished to be remembered. Note the Comatesque 13th-century tombs and the exquisite works of 15th-century Tuscan and Venetian artists. Native Roman talent of the period can be admired in Antoniazio Romano's "Annunciation", featuring Cardinal Juan de Torquemada, uncle of the infamous Spanish Inquisitor.

The more monumental style of the Roman Renaissance is well represented in the tombs of the 16th-century Medici popes, Leo X and his cousin Clement VII, and in the richly decorated Aldobrandini Chapel. Near the steps of the choir is the celebrated sculpture of the "Risen Christ", started by Michelangelo but completed by Raffaele da Montelupo in 1521.

There also splendid works of art from the Baroque period, including a tomb and a bust by Bernini.

Now get to the Pantheon, Rome's best-preserved ancient temple.

PANTHEON (8)

In the Middle Ages the Pantheon, the Roman "temple of all the gods", became a church; in time this magnificent building with its awe-inspiring domed interior became a symbol of Rome itself.

The rectangular portico screens the vast hemispherical dome: only from inside can its true scale and beauty be appreciated. The rotunda's height and diameter are equal: 43.3 m (140 ft). The hole at the top of the dome, the "oculus", provides the only light.

We owe this marvel of Roman engineering to the Emperor Hadrian (AD 118-125), who designed it to replace an earlier temple built by Marcus Agrippa, son-in-law of Augustus.

The shrines that now line the wall of the Pantheon range from the Tomb of Raphael to those of the kings of modern Italy.

Pass by Piazza di Pietra.

PIAZZA DI PIETRA (9)

The piazza gets its name from the imposing line of columns surviving from the Adrian's Temple. The temple, built in 145, was intended to glorify Adrian's peaceful politics, aimed at optimizing the Empire administrative organization, as opposed to the conquests of his predecessor Trajan. The temple was the centre of a large complex spreading from Via Lata (current Via del Corso) to the area of Piazza Capranica.

On the temple ruins, which have also been the seat of "Dogana di Terra" (customs), Rome Chamber of Commerce and Stock Exchange were established since 1879.

Reach Piazza Colonna and Via del Corso.

COLUMN OF MARCUS AURELIUS (10)

Clearly an imitation of the Column of Trajan (located in the Forum), this monument was erected after the death of Marcus Aurelius in AD 180 to commemorate his victories over the barbarian tribes of the Danube. The 80-year lapse between the two works produced a great artistic change: the wars of Marcus Aurelius are rendered with simplified pictures in stronger relief, sacrificing Classical proportions for the sake of clarity and immediacy. The spirit of the work is more akin to the 4th-century Arch of Constantine than to Trajan's monument. Gone are the heroic qualities of the Roman soldiers, by now mostly barbarian mercenaries, and a sense of respect for the vanquished. A new emphasis on the supernatural points to the end of the Hellenistic tradition and the beginning of Christianity.

Composed of 28 drums of marble, the column was restored in 1588 by Domenico Fontana on the orders of Pope Sixtus V. The emperor's statue on the summit was replaced by a bronze of St. Paul. The 20 spirals of the low relief chronicle the German war of AD 172-3, and (above) the Sarmatic war of AD 174-5. The column is almost 30 m (100 ft) high and 3.7 m (12 ft) in diameter. An internal spiral staircase leads to the top.

From here, in five minutes you can reach the Trevi Fountain, Rome's grandest and best-known fountain.

TREVI FOUNTAIN (11)

Most visitors gathering around the coin-filled fountain assume that it has always been there, but by the standards of the Eternal City, the Trevi is a fairly recent creation. Nicola Salvi's theatrical design for Rome's largest and most famous fountain was completed only in 1762. The central figures are Neptune, flanked by two Tritons. One struggles to master a very unruly "sea-horse", the other leads a far more docile animal. These symbolize the two contrasting moods of the sea.

The site originally marked the terminal of the Aqua Virgo aqueduct built in 19 BC. One of the first-storey reliefs shows a young girl (the legendary virgin after whom the aqueduct was named) pointing to the spring from which the water flows.