

When in Rome...

Jane Watkins falls in love with the Eternal City

Ancient Rome

A new view of the Colosseum Over the past few years, the outside of the Colosseum has been cleaned for the first time since it was built—conservators have been using toothbrushes to get into every cranny. Work has also been undertaken to allow visitors to go under the arena to where the gladiators and animals would have been held and up to the top level (you'll need to go with a tour or a private guide for these)

A home in Rome Visit the remains of the House of Augustus, which is surprisingly small, and be astonished at how clear the murals on the walls still are (*below right*)—for details, visit <http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it>

History is everywhere You don't have to make a special effort to see Rome's ancient past—it's all around you on the street (in one place we stayed, the entrance hall held one of the original columns from Domitian's circus at Piazza Navona)

Dome, sweet dome Don't forget to make a visit to the Pantheon, which was constructed by the Emperor Hadrian for all the gods. It's survived mostly intact thanks to becoming a Christian church in the Middle Ages. The only light comes from the *occulus* in the roof



Massimo Borchi/SIME/4Corners; Tommy (Louth)/Alamy; Maurizio Rebbini/SIME/4Corners

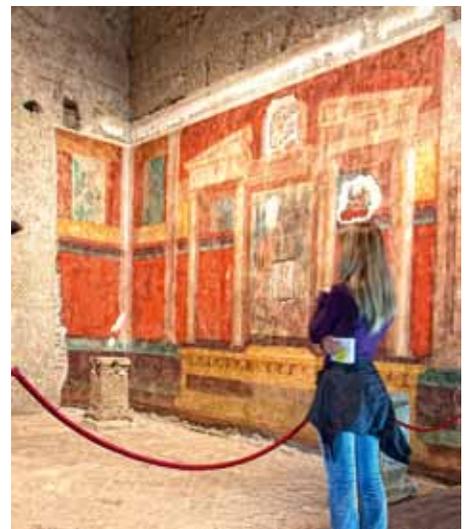
Baroque Rome

Baroque on a budget As with the remains of Ancient Rome, the Baroque isn't confined within museum walls, but explodes riotously around you. Flamboyant church interiors and the buildings themselves (ranging in size from St Peter's to tiny gems such as San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane), majestic fountains (the Trevi, the Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi in Piazza Navona) and Bernini's peerless creations for the Ponte Sant'Angelo (*left*)—which are now copies—are all free to see

Book for the Borghese However, some of the Baroque's greatest treasures can be found in the Borghese Gallery. Set in 148 acres of beautiful—and delightfully shady—parkland, it shouldn't be missed. Book ahead as entry is strictly controlled and make sure to arrive in plenty of time for your slot or it could be given away!

Supporting act Look out for Bernini's little elephant outside Santa Maria sopra Minerva, which holds up an obelisk dating from the 6th century BC—it was originally intended as a joke for the Barberini family

Get closer Currently, the Trevi is one of the sights that are being cleaned up, so tourists are deprived of its flowing waters. However, this does afford the unusual pleasure of being able to walk into the fountain and see the figures up close



NEED TO KNOW

Take a tour Dark Rome (www.darkrome.com) offers the city's best tours—dawn coming up over the Vatican on its excellent breakfast visit to the Sistine will always be one of my most beautiful memories

Get a guide We visited the Colosseum and Forum on a private tour with the informative and friendly Alessia Aletta (<http://romanjourneys.com>), who can also customise an adventure for you





Eating and drinking

Eating history Go to the Jewish Ghetto for *carciofi alla giuda* or deep-fried artichokes (at da Pancrazio in Campo di Fiori, they'll also show you the spot where they claim Julius Caesar was assassinated)

The best coffee? By the Pantheon, visit Sant'Eustachio or Tazza d'Oro for sheer nectar. Go to Caffè Greco to follow in Byron's footsteps. Ordering *cappuccino* after 11am will mark you out as a definite tourist

The best gelato? I'm counting the days until I can revisit Flor, Fatamorgana and Della Palma (yes, I would live on *gelato!*) and my neighbourhood favourite, Gelateria del Teatro on Via dei Coronari

A little something to drink On a hot day, there's no nicer way to while away a late afternoon than with an Aperol spritz on the terrace bar at the top of the Vittoriano —take the glass elevator to the very top for a sensational view of the city

Grab a Roman takeaway If you get hungry walking around, there's plenty to eat on the move: try *suppli* (mozzarella-filled rice balls), *filetti di baccalà* (fried salt cod) from Dar Filettaro in the Jewish Ghetto and *pizza bianco* (a sort of flatbread brushed with olive oil) from Campo dei Fiori

Water, water everywhere It's said that if you drink the water from any of Rome's many fountains and waterspouts, you're guaranteed to return to the city. Top up your bottles at any of them for a free cool treat—the water's very pure

Adam Eastland/Alamy; Simon Hadley/Alamy



Spiritual Rome

The centre of the world No visit to Rome is complete without seeing St Peter's (*above*)—look on the floor and you'll see how the cathedrals of the rest of the world would easily fit inside it. Bernini's magnificent baldacchino marks the spot where St Peter was buried

Layers of history Many of the city's churches are built on older foundations—at San Clemente, at street level, there is a 12th-century church, but below it lie the remains of a 4th-century church and, below that, an ancient temple of the god Mithras, worshipped by the Roman military

Divine beauty One of the wonderful things about the churches in Rome is that you can see the most exquisite art for free or, at worst, a Euro or two slipped into a slot for illumination. Visit Santa Maria della Vittoria to see Bernini's astonishing *The Ecstasy of St Teresa* (ignore the man at the door claiming you need to pay to enter—he's nothing to do with the church). If painting is more your thing, there are two Caravaggios at Santa Maria del Popolo, three at San Luigi dei Francesi and one at S. Agostino in Campo Marzio

Open every door In Rome, churches with even the most unassuming façades may contain surprising riches, so don't be afraid: open the door and go in

Essential reading Find out more about the main churches' histories and treasures in *The Pilgrim's Guide to Rome's Principal Churches* by Joseph N. Tylanda