

Rome

Written by

Wednesday, 15 June 2011 08:19 - Last Updated Friday, 29 July 2011 11:00



Day 1

INTRODUCTORY WALKING TOUR. (from Ponte Sisto Hotel to Grotta di Teatro di Pompeo Restaurant)

5.30 pm-7.30 pm Introductory walking tour.

Nearby landmarks, including the Piazza Navona, a treasury of Roman Baroque art and design. In the center is the Fountain of the Four Rivers by the great sculptor Bernini who, along with the architect Borromini, was responsible for the remarkable façade for the Church of Sant' Agnese in Agone. Dinner at the Grotta di Teatro di Pompeo, near the Campo de' Fiori.

Day 2

ANCIENT ROME

9.00 am-1.00 pm

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Spend the morning in Ancient Rome. Begin at the Colosseum, the massive amphitheater that the Emperor Vespasian commissioned in 72 AD. It may resonate for you as the site of bloody gladiatorial combat and animal fights, as a feat of engineering on which arenas and stadia have been modeled for 2,000 years, as a romantic ruin shaped by centuries of pillage, or all of these and more. Then tour the Roman Forum, whose ancient temples and basilicas, now interspersed with medieval churches, 19th-century reconstructions, and ongoing excavations, were the center of Roman civic life. Continue up the wooded slopes of the Palatine Hill to see the remains of the Imperial Palace. Have lunch at a restaurant near the base of the Palatine Hill.

The afternoon is free for activities of your choice.

6.30 pm-7.30 pm CONFERENCE.

An History of Art professor will give a one-hour illustrated talk at 6:30 PM at the hotel. Then join friends for dinner on your own at your choice of the area's restaurants. B/L Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star)

Day 3

APPIAN WAY AND CATACOMBS

8.30 am-1.30 pm

Villa dei Quintili – Catacombe di s. Sebastiano – walking tour : Cecilia Metella and Circo di Massenzio The Appian Way, built to connect Rome with parts of its empire, became an area with countryhouses, estates and a burial place lined with tombs and bordered with catacombs. We will visit the Villa dei Quintili, an estate so vast that when it was first excavated, it was thought to be a town, and the most important catacombs of the area. Then a walk by the tomb of the noblewoman Cecilia Metella, with its frieze of the skulls of oxen, and by 4th-century Circus of Maxentius, the best preserved of the Roman circuses. After lunch by the Appian Way

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at the Ristorante Cecilia Metella, via Appia Antica 125/129, tel. 06/5136743 oppure l'Archeologia, via Appia Antica 139, tel.06/7880494 have the afternoon free to explore other sites, neighborhoods or shops. Dinner on your own. B/L Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star)

Day 4

PIAZZA DEL POPOLO - THE PINCIO - VILLA BORGHESE

8.30 am – 1 pm

Villa Borghese (11 pm) Today's route takes you to a Renaissance villa with magnificent gardens and a major art collection, a church that houses paintings by Caravaggio, and an ancient monument with an improbable history. Begin at the public park on the hill called the Pincio, where Lucullus once attended the garden by his villa, and enjoy the splendid view of the city. Then visit the Galleria of Villa Borghese to see works by Titian, Raphael, Caravaggio, Rubens, and Bernini, part of a collection that originated with the holdings of the art-loving Cardinal Scipione Borghese. Enjoy the park and gardens around the Villa Borghese, and continue to the Piazza del Popolo, one of Rome's great squares, where in the church of Santa Maria del Popolo you will see paintings by Caravaggio and sculptures by Bernini. 3 pm - 6 pm Stop to see the Roman sacrificial altar called the Ara Pacis, or Altar of Peace. Now housed in a new museum designed by Richard Meier, it was created to honor the Emperor Augustus for consolidating the Empire and thereby restoring the pax romana. Beautifully carved in high relief, it was consecrated in 9 B.C. on the road that is now the Via del Corso. Gradually it was covered with silt from the Tiber, to be discovered in fragments in the 16th century, excavated through the 20th, subjected to complex reconstruction, and finally provided with the new museum. Later in the walking tour will explore churches in which are Caravaggio's paintings still in the sites where have been hang up 400 years ago. B Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star)

Day 5

PANTHEON & CAPITOLINE HILL

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9 am- 1 pm

Although the domed pagan temple called the Pantheon was consecrated as a Christian church in 609 A.D., the structure has scarcely been altered since ancient times; Emperor Hadrian designed it so that the portico hides the dome from the street. Entering the building, one discovers the great hemisphere of the dome, senses the harmony of proportion, and appreciates the light provided by the oculus at the dome's center. Raphael and other revered artists and heads of state are buried within. After your visit to the Pantheon, continue to the Capitoline Hill, where a collection of classical statues is housed in the Palazzo Nuovo, designed by Michelangelo. (One of your options this afternoon is sketching with our History of Art professor, who will also give an illustrated one-hour talk at 6:30 PM at the hotel. B/L Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star)

6.30-7.30 Conference.

Day 6

KEATS-SHELLEY HOUSE & PROTESTANT CEMETERY

9 am—1pm

Today visit two sites that bespeak the strong English connection to Rome. The Keats-Shelley Museum occupies the second floor of a pink house at the foot of the Spanish Steps. Keats died there in 1821. Along with the more 19th-century gothic mementos, such as his death mask and a lock of his hair, are facsimiles of his manuscripts and books on Keats and his circle. After visiting the Museum, drive out to the Protestant Cemetery. Keats is buried there beneath an epitaph that reads "Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water." Shelley's ashes are buried here as well.

Have lunch at the nearby Ristorante Felice, via Mastro Giorgio 29, tel. 06/5746800, which promises "tipica cucina romana," and take the rest of the day for independent touring, viewing or shopping. B/L Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star)

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Day 7

VATICAN - TRASTEVERE

9am-1 pm

Cross the river to the Vatican and the part of Rome called Trastevere, or “across the Tiber.” The Vatican holds enough treasures to warrant months of viewing, but your tour will encompass the world-renowned works as well as others. In St. Peter’s Basilica, see the famed Pieta, the dome designed by Michelangelo, and the gilded bronze canopy, the Baldacchin, that Bernini created. Bernini’s magnificently baroque Throne of St. Peter in Glory and his final work in tribute to Pope Alexander II are found in St. Peter’s as well. Whatever else you see in the Vatican’s vast museums, you will visit the Raphael Rooms and the Sistine Chapel, where Michelangelo’s ceiling towers over wall frescoes by Botticelli, Perugino, Ghirlandaio, Signorelli, and Rosselli as well as his own Last Judgment. Leaving the Vatican, tour some of the narrow streets of Trastevere, a part of Rome that has maintained much of its traditional character despite gentrification. Watch for medieval churches with Romanesque bell towers, the best known of which is the mostly-12th-century Santa Maria in Trastevere. For lunch today your guide will take you to Scarpone, via di San Pancrazio 15, tel. 06/5814094, on the Janiculum Hill. (Optional sketching with our History of Art professor this afternoon. John will give an illustrated talk from 6:30 to 7:30 PM at the hotel.) B/L Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star)

Day 8

TIVOLI: HADRIAN’S VILLA & THE VILLA D’ESTE

Full day 9am-6pm

Take a full-day excursion to Tivoli, in the Tiburtine Hills outside of Rome. Among those who have spent summers in their villas here are poets Horace and Catullus, the Emperors Hadrian

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and Trajan, and the Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este, who had the Villa d'Este built in the mid-16th century. Visit the Villa Adriana (Hadrian's Villa), where the Emperor Hadrian had built not only his own palace but reproductions of the finest Greek and Egyptian buildings. Most of what has been excavated lies in fragments, though some restorations have been made, including an island structure that was probably the Emperor's private studio. After lunch at Ristorante La Sibilla, via della Sibilla 50, Tivoli, tel. 0774/335281, just above the Falls of Tivoli, we will visit the Villa d'Este, impressive as it may be, is overshadowed by the elaborate terraced gardens, which extend down a dramatic hillside. The designers used cascades, pools, water jets and fountains throughout the terraced gardens to create a veritable encyclopedia of Renaissance water works, which spray, erupt, and cascade are a source of fascination and delight.

Then return to Rome, where it may be the perfect time to sit at a café and watch the passing scene. B/L Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star)

Day 9

CASTELLI ROMANI IN THE ALBAN HILLS

Full day 9am-6pm

Today's excursion takes you through vineyards, olive groves, and pastures to some of the towns of the Castelli Romani in the Alban Hills southeast of Rome. Frascati is known for its wines and villas, especially the imposing Villa Aldobrandini with its terraced gardens and water works. Then on to the lovely towns of Ariccia and Castelgandolfo, each of which have inspired painters since the 17th century and contain splendid centralized churches by Bernini. Stop for lunch in Ristorante La Briciola, via Gabriele Dannunzio 12, Grottaferrata, tel. 06 9459338 before you visit the the smaller and often-painted Lago di Nemi, which has long been rumored to hide in its depths a sunken ship laden with treasure.

Returning from your excursion to Rome's scenic outskirts, gather for your Farewell Dinner at Pierluigi, Piazza dei Ricci 144, tel. 06/6861302 an intimate fish restaurant on the Piazza dé Ricci. B/L/D Ponte Sisto Hotel (4-star).

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Day 10

TRANSFER TO FIUMICINO AIRPORT

Flys at 9:20am, 11:55am and 1:35pm