

Rome Mapped Out

LOCATION

Rome is located in the Lazio region of western central Italy (though for a Milanese or Venetian it is already considered the south!) It has a city area of 1493.45 sq. km.

COORDINATES

41°54 N – 12°29 E

POPULATION

The total population of the city is 2,655,970 (1,400,234 female and 1,255,736 male).

NUMBER OF VISITORS

20,410,000 people visited Rome in 2001, of which 13,140,000 were foreigners (non-Italian).

NUMBER OF HOTEL BEDS

74,968 – In 1996 there were only 62,000 but many hotels expanded or opened up in time for the Jubilee celebrations in 2000.

TALLEST BUILDING

St Peter's Church, which features a dome that is 452 feet (138 metres) high. It is also the second largest dome in Rome after the Pantheon. The third largest is the cupola of the San Andrea della Valle church, famous as the venue for Act I of Puccini's famous Tosca opera.

WHAT'S THE PLACE FAMOUS FOR?

For centuries it was the seat of the Roman Empire, which ruled much of the known world. In the Renaissance, several popes were instrumental in returning the city in part to its former glory. Pope Julius II (1503-13) in particular amassed what now forms the nucleus of the Vatican museum collection and invited architects, sculptors and painters of renown, such as Bramante, Michelangelo and Raphael, to work in the city. Rome is also the seat of the Catholic Church. The first Holy Year was proclaimed back in 1300 and thousands of pilgrims flocked to the town. They were the city's first tourists!

WEIRD FACTS

Within Rome is located the world's smallest country, Vatican City. The Vatican State, which is only 0.17 sq miles (0.44 sq kms) big, is the only absolute monarchy in Europe and has a population of about 300 people. A popular custom of the ancient Romans was to attach satirical comments directed against the powers that be on statues around town, especially during the papal reign when there was little freedom of speech. The most famous is Pasquino in the piazza of the same name.

BIGGEST EXPORT

Present-day Rome's biggest impact on the outside world has to be in the arena of fashion – Valentino, Laura Biagiotti and Fendi are all Roman – and crafts. With so many art treasures to restore and palazzos to fill and decorate, it is no wonder that artisans are part of the city's fabric: the historic centre's streets are filled with marble carvers, jewellers, upholsterers and furniture restorers.

CURRENT TRENDS

Women are going for that combat trousers or rolled-up jeans look with heels, and bras with see-through straps that look like clingfilm are also in vogue. Another popular Roman accessory is a Smart car, perfect for winding your way around the city centre's medieval alleys.

MOST FAMOUS RESIDENT (LIVING)

Polish-born Pope John Paul II (formerly Karol Wojtyła) is indisputably one of the main reasons why millions of visitors come to the city every year. (In 2000, 25 million pilgrims came for the

Jubilee celebrations). Ailing though he may be, John Paul II has confounded all with his longevity and stamina. He has survived an attempted assassination, has visited over 130 countries, and this year celebrated 25 years of his papacy.

MOST FAMOUS RESIDENT (DEAD)

Julius Caesar was a highly gifted general and a compelling orator, as well as an unprincipled and highly ambitious man, all factors that aided his unstoppable ascent to power. As Governor of Gaul (which he had conquered), Caesar decided to take his army south across the Rubicon, the river that marked the border with Italy in 49 BC, thus defying Rome's law of treason. He marched across Italy and on to Rome where he had himself created Dictator. Famous for his love affair with Cleopatra, he was assassinated five years later at the Theatre of Pompey. Today a charming small hotel stands on the site, with breakfast served under its stone vaults (Largo del Pallaro 8).

PLAN AHEAD

From 20 September until the end of November the Romaeuropa Festival features some of the hottest names and most avant-garde performances in contemporary dance and theatre in venues around the city. www.romaeuropa.net.

Until next July, there is an observation balloon at the Villa Borhese park, which operates every day from 9.30am until dusk. The balloon is anchored in the Galoppatoio and silently lifts 30 passengers at a time to a height of 150 metres, from where you can enjoy breathtaking and unobstructed 360° views.

DO THESE FIVE THINGS

1. Make the most of the Tiber river, which is currently undergoing a renaissance. Take a waterboat heading north (the stop is called Calata Anguillara, tickets can be bought on board) and marvel as you sweep past the majestic Castel Sant'Angelo at sunset. Get out at Ponte Cavour and walk to the city's first floating restaurant, Baja (see which three restaurants on the next page).
2. Drink out of a Renaissance fountain such as Bernini's Fontana delle Api (Fountain of the Bees) on the lower end of Via Veneto. (And don't worry: the water is safe!)
3. Walk along the Via Giulia, named after Pope Julius II who built it so that pilgrims could reach St Peter's Square without having to weave their way through back alleys.
4. Head for Campo de' Fiori, Rome's liveliest piazza, at aperitivo hour (any time between 6 and 9pm), which is lined with bars, restaurants and pubs. The recently opened Il Nolano wine bar at No. 11 has a typically Roman atmosphere and outdoor seats.
5. Consume the best gelato in Rome at the Gelateria San Crispino (Via della Panetteria 42, closed Tuesday) close to the Trevi fountain. Their signature flavour, il Gelato di San Crispino, is a basic Italian crema made with wild Sardinian honey; the Zabaglione is made with marsala, a Sicilian dessert wine, matured in oak-barrels for 30 years.

BEST TWO PLACES TO STAY OVER €200

1. ES – is a super slick hotel, centrally located in one of the important quarters of Rome, The Esquilino. There's two restaurants, and a swimming pool. There's also a large conference room and fitness centre. Bookable through www.octopus4easyjet.co.uk
2. Hotel Raphael – The lobby is dotted with original Picasso ceramics and the rooms are a riot of colour and faux marble opulence. Tel. +39 (0) 668 2831, www.rafaelhotel.com

BEST TWO PLACES TO STAY UNDER €200

1. RIPA – a beautifully designed contemporary hotel in the historical area of Rome known as Trastevere, one of the oldest neighbourhoods and close to the river Tiber and the Vatican. Rooms are modern and the hotel has a funky sushi bar. Bookable through www.octopus4easyjet.co.uk .
2. Hotel Britannia – close to the station, and behind Rome's opera house, this hotel boasts friendly management, neoclassical interiors and the sort of facilities that should require far higher prices. Via Napoli 64. Tel. +39 (0) 648 83153, Fax +39 (0) 648 82343, www.hotelbritannia.it

QUICK CULTURE FIX

Don't miss the Vatican Museums for a vast collection of priceless art, statues and artefacts that fill 1400 rooms and make up the largest museum complex in the world.

DON'T GO HOME WITHOUT THESE ITEMS

1. Shoes. Glamour-babes should head straight to Sergio Rossi (Piazza di Spagna 97-100, more classical types to Bruno Magli (Via Condotti 6).
 2. A handbag from Fendi (Via Borgognona 36), Tod's (Via della Fontanella Borghese 56), or the very popular and affordable Furla (Piazza di Spagna 22).
 3. In the run-up to Christmas (from October onwards) buy some delicious Torrone (nougat) with various fillings, and the traditional currant-filled Panettone cake.
 4. Any item from these top Roman delicatessens: Volpetti (Via Marmorata 47), Castroni (Via Ottaviano 55) and Roscioli (Via dei Giubbonari 21).
 5. A bottle from the oldest wine merchant in Rome, Trimani (Via Goito 20).
- PS. Most importantly, don't go home without your wallet – pickpockets are masterful in this city!

BEST FIVE PLACES TO SHOP

1. Via Condotti (Rome's Bond Street) for high fashion luminaries such as Prada, Giorgio Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Valentino and Max Mara, to name but a few.
2. Via del Governo Vecchio where second-hand clothing, treasure troves and high fashion temples dedicated to foreign and local stilisti (designers) reign supreme.
3. TAD Concept Store is a fancy emporium that sells a bit of everything as long as it's cool, exotic and expensive: flowers, magazines, furniture, clothing and cosmetics. There's also an exclusive hairdresser's, and a very zen café/restaurant. Via del Babuino 155a, Tel. +39 (0) 632 695122.
4. Named after one of the first paper-producing cities in Europe, Fabriano is still among the finest in the world. Writing paper, photo albums and travel diaries in every imaginable colour. Via del Babuino 173, Tel. +39 (0) 632 600361.
5. With over 250 daily markets in Rome, one is never very far away. The most charismatic is in Campo de' Fiori. For cheap jeans and retro gear, head to Via Sannio behind Basilica San Giovanni. Open Mon-Sat until lunchtime.

WHICH THREE RESTAURANTS

1. La Pergola remains unparalleled for quality, attentive but unflinching service and one of the best rooftop views of all of Rome (Via Cadlolo 101, Monte Mario district).
2. For a quintessential Roman experience of a good standard with honest prices try Matricianella. The roasted abbacchio (lamb) and bucatini all'amatriciana (pasta with a sauce of tomato, chili, onions and sausage) come highly recommended (Via del Leone 3/4).
3. More exotic but still undeniably Mediterranean is the cuisine on offer at Baja, a restaurant and cocktail bar splendidly situated on the Tiber below Piazza del Popolo (Lungotevere Arnaldo da Brescia, Ponte Margherita).

WHICH THREE BARS

1. The rooftop bar (and restaurant) atop new super-modern hotel built overlooking Termini station. In summer people spill out around the pool (Via Filippo Turati 171).
2. In the heart of the lively Trastevere district, Ombre Rosse is good for food and drinks all day long. At night the crowd consumes whisky or grappa whilst listening to live or recorded jazz and blues (Piazza Sant'Egidio 12).
3. Jonathan's Angels - This quirkily designed place is a must for visitors and a popular haunt for hardened night-owls. The kitsch- supreme toilets alone merit a peek-in (Via della Fossa 16).

THREE COOL ADDRESSES

1. Opulently decorated with chandeliers and divans aplenty, La Maison is frequented by both celebrities and regular denizens of the night (Vicolo dei Granari 4, closed Monday).
2. Classico Village hosts what is currently the 'in' night for a gay and gay-friendly crowd who

want to see and be seen (Via G. Libetta 3, Saturday only, not far from the Piramide metro stop).

3. Suite is a futuristic style lounge, bar and disco that caters to a cool set with house and retro music (Via degli Orti di Trastevere 1, closed Sunday and Monday).

AND IF IT'S RAINING

Centrale Montemartini is an old diesel electricity power plant that houses 400 pieces of Roman sculpture, mostly from the Capitoline museum's collection. You will be stunned by the odd juxtaposition of the old statues and the gleaming machinery, tubes and furnaces (Via Ostiense 106, very close to the Garbatella metro stop, closed Monday).

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