

48 HOURS IN ROME

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let the journey begin

Feast your eyes on art and antiquities, and your tastebuds on pasta and ices, before the heat and the queues take over the Eternal City, says **Ben Ross**

WHY GO NOW?
Now is always the time to visit the Eternal City. Holy Week (1-9 April) sees a deluge of pilgrims anxious to receive the Pope's Easter Sunday blessing in **St Peter's Square (1)**, but otherwise, springtime itself confers particular benefits on Rome's visitors: the queues aren't yet eternal, for a start, and the temperature hasn't reached the sticky heights of summer.

TOUCH DOWN
Ryanair (from Liverpool, Luton, Nottingham, Prestwick and Stansted) and easyJet (from Belfast, Bristol, Gatwick, Nottingham and Newcastle) fly to Ciampino airport, to the south-east of the city, from which Terravision buses (00 39 06 7949 4572; www.terravision.it) run to Via Marsala, next to **Termini station (2)**. The 40-minute trip costs €8 (£5.70) single and €14 (£10) return. In addition, British Airways flies from Gatwick and Heathrow, Alitalia from Heathrow, and bmi baby from Birmingham. These flights land at Leonardo da Vinci airport (aka Fiumicino), which lies to the south-west. Return fares from London at £110

are available from www.opodo.co.uk for travel in April. From Fiumicino, the express train service to Termini takes 35 minutes and leaves every half an hour (€11/£7.90 each way).

GET YOUR BEARINGS
To the west, a loop of the Tiber separates Rome's celebrated seven hills from the Vatican, a city-state in its own right. The Roman Forum lies at the northern limit of the historic centre, and to the north is the green sweep of the Borghese Gardens. The two-line metro system crosses at Termini, and an all-day ticket for buses, trams and the metro costs €4 (£2.90). The main tourist office (3) (00 39 06 8205 9127; www.roma-turismo.it) is located at 5 Via Parigi, open 9am-7pm daily except Sundays. Consider buying a Roma Pass (€20/£14.30), valid for three days: the first two attractions you visit are free, with reduced prices for the rest and free transport thrown in.

CHECK IN
A stone's throw from the Vatican, the **Hotel Bramante (4)**, at 24 Vicolo delle Palline (00 39 06 6880 6426; www.hotelbramante.com), is tucked down a side-street off the bustling Borgo Pio. Its 16 rooms are all dark wood, wrought iron and exposed beams. Doubles from €170 (£121), including breakfast. Alternatively, try the **Hotel Pantheon (5)** at 131 Via dei Pastini (00 39 06 6787 746; www.hotelpantheon.it). The 13 rooms are simply furnished, the staff are friendly, and the location is surprisingly peaceful, given its position just round the corner from the **Pantheon (6)** itself. Doubles from €200 (£143), including breakfast. To the east of the Borghese Gardens, the **Hotel Fiume (7)**, at 5 Via

Brescia (00 39 06 854 3000; www.hotelfiume-roma.com), is good value, with doubles from €133 (£95), including breakfast.

CULTURAL MORNING
Set your alarm: to minimise queuing, the **Vatican museums (8)**, at 100 Viale Vaticano (00 39 06 698 83 333; www.vatican.va), are best visited as early as possible. Once inside, frescoed galleries deliver an unrivalled art-history lesson, which builds up nicely to the Sistine Chapel, with Michelangelo's masterpiece of a ceiling. (Museums open from 10am-4.45pm Monday to

Saturday, last entry 3.30pm; admission €13 (£9.30). Closed Sundays, except the last Sunday of every month, when admission is free.) After the chapel, head round the corner to gawp at the enormity of St Peter's Basilica (7am-7pm, admission free) and St Peter's Square, tended by the Pope's peacock-like Swiss Guards.

LUNCH ON THE RUN
For once, you don't have to feel guilty for snacking on pizza. Try a takeaway

pizza bianca, a pizza sandwich for which you select the filling. **Lo Zozzone (9)**, tucked down the Via del Teatro (00 39 06 6880 8575), offers these DIY delights for €3 (£2.20).

TAKE A HIKE...
...into Rome's ancient past. Start by wandering the steep terraces of the

Colosseum (10), where the Romans developed their love of bloodsports (open 8.30am-6.15pm, admission €11/£7.90). It's impressively intact: you can almost imagine the fans queuing for a half-time amphora or two. Your ticket is also valid for the **Palatine (11)**, reached from the nearby

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TAKE A VIEW
Climb the massive **Victor Emanuel war memorial (12)**, looming above the Forum, then feast your eyes on the undulating

vista of modern Rome laid out before you.

WINDOW SHOPPING
The Via del Corso runs southwards from the elegant Piazza del Popolo, and is shopping central. The area round the northern end is stuffed with high-fashion boutiques and trendy art galleries. By the time you get to **Benetton (13)** at No 422-3 (00 39 06 6810 2530), at least the Italian designs on offer have become more affordable.

AN APERITIF
The graceful **Piazza Navona (14)** was laid out on the ruins of an ancient Roman sports stadium.

These days, the most strenuous activity involves drinking wine as the sun goes down and the street performers come out. Alternatively, the outdoor tables at **Bar della Pace (15)**, at 3-7 Via della Pace, command a great view of Santa Maria della Pace church. A Campari will set you back €5 (£3.60).

DINING WITH THE LOCALS
For the classic *trattoria* experience, head to **Armando al Pantheon (16)**, at 31 Salita de Crescenzi (00 39 06 6880 3034), where you can fill up without draining your wallet. A main course of spaghetti is €8 (£5.75), while a fish dish costs around €13 (£9).

SUNDAY MORNING: GO TO CHURCH
The Corinthian columns



Square meal: stop for lunch at one of the cafés next to the Pantheon EPA



Graphics: Rob Brooks

impressive amphitheatre, shops, homes and detailed mosaics. (Open 9am-7.30pm Tuesday-Sunday, last entry 6pm. Admission €4/£2.90.)

A WALK IN THE PARK
The leafy avenues of the Villa Borghese gardens are lovely to stroll along, but it's not just greenery on offer there: some of the city's finest art, including several stunning Bernini sculptures, can be found at the **Galleria Borghese (18)** (00 39 06 32 8101; www.galleriaborghese.it). Open 9am-7pm Monday to Saturday, entrance €8.50 (£6), booking essential.

WRITE A POSTCARD...
...or send an e-mail. There's free Wi-Fi access for an hour in the Villa Borghese gardens. However, if you've forgotten your laptop, the **Vatican post office (19)** (00 39 06 698 83 406) on St Peter's Square is open 8.30am-7pm Monday-Friday, and 8.30am-6pm Saturday, and will sell you any postcard you like. As long as it's of St Peter's. Or the Pope.

THE ICING ON THE CAKE
In a city riddled with iconic monuments, the **Trevi Fountain (20)**, immortalised in *La Dolce Vita*, stands out for its sheer baroque silliness. Whereas the superstitious will toss their coins into the water, the sweet-toothed should save their loose change for an ice cream at one of Rome's many splendid *gelateria*.

of the **Pantheon (6)**, at Piazza della Rotonda (open 9am-7.30pm Monday-Saturday, 9am-5.30pm Sunday; free admission), mark this 2,000-year-old temple out as something quite extraordinary. Originally built to venerate Roman gods, Mass is now celebrated there at 10.30am every Sunday.

OUT TO BRUNCH
Friends (17), the bright café-bar-pizzeria at 60 Via della Scrofa (00 39 06 6861 416), is cheap, cheerful and just two minutes' walk from the Pantheon. A latte and a bulging focaccia sandwich costs a total of €3 (£2.20).

TAKE A RIDE
To reach the ruins of Ostia (00 39 06 5635 2830), Rome's ancient harbour, take metro line B to Piramide, then transfer to the adjacent Stazione Porta San Paolo, from where it's a 25-minute train journey to Ostia Antica (metro tickets valid for whole journey). The remains include an



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