


to the Jubilee

Get expert advice on churches to
pray at, art to see, and food to enjoy.




100+

TIPS AND FACTS
YOU **MUST KNOW**
ABOUT THE VATICAN
AND THE JUBILEE



Welcome



We here at Verso Ministries are very excited for the 2025 Holy Year, and we wanted to share some of that excitement with you through this Ultimate Guide. At Verso, we believe in the importance of embarking on a pilgrimage well-prepared—mind, body, heart, and soul. While God can do incredible things through any pilgrimage, he can do even more when we've begun to till the soil ahead of time. That's why pilgrim formation is a priority for us. Your pilgrimage to Rome doesn't begin when you step off the plane. It can begin right now.

In the following pages, you'll see evidence of our love and knowledge of the Eternal City. We pride ourselves on striving to be experts in both travel and ministry, and we hope this guide can help you experience the Jubilee to its fullest, whether you choose to travel with us or not. From an engaging conversation with a fellow pilgrim over an Aperol spritz to the profound moment of walking through one of the holy doors, Christ wants to encounter you in a variety of ways on this journey.

Don't hesitate to reach out to any of us here at Verso with your questions about Rome, the Jubilee, or a potential pilgrimage. We would be honored to help you explore the sacred and discover what the Lord has in store for you.

John Paul Lichon

Founder & CEO

Joan Watson

Pilgrimage Formation Manager



05

10 Things You Need to Know about the Tradition of Jubilee

07

10 Facts about Past Jubilee Years

08

10 Ways to Encounter the Sacred while on Pilgrimage

10

10 Best Places to Pray in Rome

12

10 Fun Facts about St. Peter's Square

13

Churches You Didn't Know You Needed to See

15

10 Places to See Roman Genius at Work

17

10 Things to Keep in Mind about the Food Scene in Rome

19

10 Tips, Tricks, and Facts about Gelato

21

10 Things NOT To Do in Rome



Verso Ministries is the premier Catholic pilgrimage agency, having helped thousands of pilgrims experience faith-enriching travel. Let us handle the travel and accommodation logistics so you can focus on enjoying your spiritual adventure.

Below is a list of the Jubilee Year pilgrimages we're leading. We hope to see you on one (or more) of them!



For Deacons	Feb. 18 – 24, 2025	<u>Learn More</u>
For Families	May 27 – June 2, 2025	<u>Learn More</u>
For Seminarians, Bishops, and Priests	June 22 – 28, 2025	<u>Learn More</u>
For Young People	July 27 – Aug. 4, 2025	<u>Learn More</u>
For Catechists	Sept. 23 – 29, 2025	<u>Learn More</u>
For Those in Consecrated Life	Oct. 5 – 11, 2025	<u>Learn More</u>

10 Things

You Need to Know About the Tradition of the Jubilee

1/ The Jubilee Year has its roots in the Old Testament.

In Leviticus 25, God commanded the Israelites to observe a “sabbatical year” every seventh year. It would be a year without sowing or harvesting or pruning—even the land was given a sabbath rest. After the seventh sabbatical year—the fiftieth year—there would be a Year of Jubilee, a year of celebration dedicated to the Lord. It is one of the greatest examples of social and communal mercy in the Old Testament. Debts were forgiven, slaves were freed, and property was returned. The people were to learn mercy by giving mercy. This year of Jubilee was a physical reminder of the greater mercy God wanted to shower upon his people in his Kingdom to come.

2/ Jesus proclaimed a Jubilee!

In Luke 4:16-21, we hear that Jesus returns to his home in Nazareth and preaches in the synagogue. The passage he reads is from the prophet Isaiah: “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (cf. Isaiah 61:1-2.) At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus is proclaiming a Jubilee! As in all things, Jesus comes to not only fulfill the Old Testament but also to go beyond. He is fulfilling the Old Testament Year of Jubilee but with a promise of greater freedom: freedom from death and sin.

3/ We are all called to celebrate this Jubilee Year 2025, regardless of whether we can travel.

The Christian Jubilee Year is a time to rejoice in this mercy and freedom. Like the Jewish Jubilee year, it is a time for reconciliation with God and neighbor. As we receive the graces of this year, also called a “Holy Year,” we are called to a holiness of life, engaging in acts of mercy and conversion. While we cannot take a break from our “sowing” or “harvesting” for a year, we can find ways to dedicate this year in a special way to the Lord.

4/ The first Christian Jubilee was called by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300.

In the midst of plague, war, and material hardship, it wasn’t easy to travel to Rome on pilgrimage. But the Christian faithful felt that they needed to amend their lives and seek God’s blessing in the midst of the trials they faced. Thousands of pilgrims came to Rome at Christmas in 1299, asking for God’s blessing and the protection of the Apostles. Inspired by their faith, the Holy Father called a year “of forgiveness of all sins” for 1300. Special graces were attached to visiting the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul.

5/ Jubilees have happened at various intervals throughout history.

While it was initially assumed that Jubilees would happen every 100

years, there was quickly a request that they occur more frequently so that more Christians could take advantage of a Holy Year during their lifetime. Currently, ordinary Jubilee Years occur every 25 years.

6/ A pope can call a Jubilee any time he wants!

For special occasions or if he determines there is a special need, the pope can call a time of Extraordinary Jubilee. These can last a year or even a few days; they can be restricted to a certain place or be for the universal Church. In 1983, John Paul II called an Extraordinary Jubilee for the 1950th anniversary of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. In 2016, Pope Francis held an extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy.

7/ One hallmark of a Jubilee Year is pilgrimage to the four major papal basilicas.

Since the beginning, pilgrimage to the tombs of Peter and Paul was the emphasis of the Christian faithful’s penitential pilgrimage to Rome. Since 1390, the four major basilicas were all included in the requirements for the Jubilee indulgence: St. Peter, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major, and St. John Lateran. Under the current Jubilee practice, pilgrims must visit at least one of these churches on their pilgrimage. We can get distracted by everything Rome has to offer; it is important to remember our focus should be to pray at the tombs of Peter and Paul.

8/ There's a door that remains closed... for years!

There are four of them, in fact! Each of the major basilicas has a Holy Door. While these doors are main entrances to the basilicas, they are only open during Jubilee Years. The Holy Door at St. Peter, in fact, is bricked up by stone masons. Prior to its opening on December 24, 2024, workers will have to remove the wall that stands behind the door. The Holy Father used to ceremoniously swing a hammer at the wall. Bits of the masonry fell dangerously close to Paul VI in 1974. Now the wall is removed prior to the Christmas Eve rites.

9/ Entering through the Holy Door is a tangible reminder that the Lord calls us back home in the Sacrament of Confession.

Jesus called himself the “gate of the sheepfold,” and he is always waiting to call us back into that fold. As Good Shepherd, he invites us home, no matter how we have strayed. The gift of the Sacrament of Confession is part of the requirements for a Jubilee indulgence and is the way we participate in the Jubilee’s call for reconciliation to God and neighbor, discovering the true freedom found in the mercy of God.

10/ The Jubilee Year remains a time of reconciliation and mercy because of the special graces given in the Jubilee indulgence.

Each Jubilee Year offers particular Jubilee indulgences, given to the Christian faithful who receive the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion, pray for the Holy Father’s intentions, and participate in the Jubilee by entering through the Holy Doors, praying at the tombs of the Apostles, etc. To be clear, an indulgence is not permission to commit a sin, something you pay for, a “get out of jail free card,” or a way to earn God’s love (which isn’t earned, but is freely given). Rather, indulgences are the remission of the temporal punishment we deserve for our sins. Indulgences are graces given through the Church as she opens “the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints.” The Church encourages us to do works of devotion, penance, and charity. ■



Left:

The Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica that is opened by the pope only at the beginning of a Jubilee Year.

10 Facts about Past Jubilee Years

When you participate in a Jubilee Year, you are becoming part of a tradition that includes countless saints, sinners, and pivotal moments in Church history.

1/ Dante goes to Rome.

During the first Jubilee Year, pilgrims included the artists Giotto and Cimabue, the brother of the King of France, Carlo de Valois, and Dante. In fact, Dante's Divine Comedy is said to take place during this Jubilee Year.

2/ Where's the pope?

After the first Jubilee, the Romans asked if the time between could be shortened to every 50 years. They hoped if there was a Jubilee Year in 1350, Pope Clement VI would return to Rome from Avignon, where he was living... but he did not.

3/ A Jubilee marked with tragedy.

Pilgrims flocked to Rome for the Jubilee Year of 1450 at a rate of 40,000 pilgrims a day. But when crowds surged and panicked on the Bridge of the Angels over the Tiber River, tragedy struck. Nearly 200 pilgrims died when the railings collapsed

under their weight. Chapels were erected on the spot, now marked with statues of Peter and Paul.

4/ Merry Christmas!

In 1470, Pope Paul II decreed that Jubilees would begin with the opening of the Holy Door on Christmas. He also declared that Jubilees would be held every 25 years, a shortening from the previous 50.

5/ The third apostle to Rome.

St. Philip Neri is known for his ministry to pilgrims, particularly during the Jubilees of 1550 and 1575. The hospital he founded served over 145,000 pilgrims during the Jubilee of 1575. He was so moved with a desire to re-evangelize the city of Rome he is known as its third apostle, after Peter and Paul. His devotion to the "Seven Churches" in Rome continues to impact us today, as we visit those churches on pilgrimage. These are the seven churches established for the Jubilee by Pope Gregory XIII in 1575.

6/ Jubilees disrupted.

1825 was the only ordinary Jubilee held with pilgrims during the 19th century, due to periods of intense political unrest, popes being taken prisoner, and an anti-Catholic Italian government that outlawed pilgrimages.

7/ A Jubilee with a dogma.

During the ordinary Jubilee of 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption.

8/ A Jubilee of reconciliation.

Pope Paul VI desired that the 1975 Jubilee be a time of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Buddhist monks were present for the opening of the Holy Door, and a commission was set up for theological dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

9/ The Great Jubilee.

From the time of his election in 1978, John Paul II saw preparing the world for the Third Millennium as his great mission. After years of spiritual preparation, this Jubilee included poignant moments like the Mass of Pardon and World Youth Day.

10/ An Extraordinary Jubilee.

Pope Francis called for an extraordinary Jubilee dedicated to Mercy that ran from December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016. ■

10 Ways to Encounter the Sacred while on Pilgrimage



1/ Bring intentions with you.

The opportunity to go to Rome on Jubilee is a great gift. Offer to take others with you spiritually, by collecting their intentions and praying for them at the holy sites.

2/ Pick a patron!

Choose a saint to ask for help throughout your trip. Peter, Paul, Catherine of Siena, Francis of Assisi, Thérèse of Lisieux, Ignatius of Antioch... you're not the first one to go on pilgrimage to Rome! Of course, St. Ignatius went on "pilgrimage" in chains and it ended with martyrdom in the Colosseum, so maybe be wary of choosing him...

3/ Pray a morning offering.

Wake up each day and offer what is about to come to God. He alone knows what you will encounter. Give it to him and make your day a prayer.

4/ Look around - right, left, down, up!

Put down your camera and your phone and take in all your surroundings while walking through Rome. Think of the saints who have walked those cobblestones; keep your eyes out for one of the thousands of *Madonnelle*, the ancient street shrines on corners and the sides of buildings; look for the brass cobblestones that mark where Holocaust victims lived or worked before being taken to the death camps.

5/ Slow down.

The Italian pace is often not the same as the American pace. Rather than allow this to frustrate you, embrace this slower way of life. You will find that most churches and even some stores close for a few hours after lunch. Embrace this time for rest, journaling, or peaceful wandering.

6/ Don't forget to visit the Master of the house.

Sometimes we get distracted by the art or even the tomb of a saint when we get to a church that we forget the whole reason that church was built. Never forget to seek out the tabernacle (sometimes in a side chapel to ensure it's a place of quiet) and have a word with the Lord.

7/ Be open to surprise.

Our God is a God of surprises! No matter how well you plan, there will be surprises on your trip. Be open to seeing these as gifts from the Lord.

8/ Journal at the end of the day.

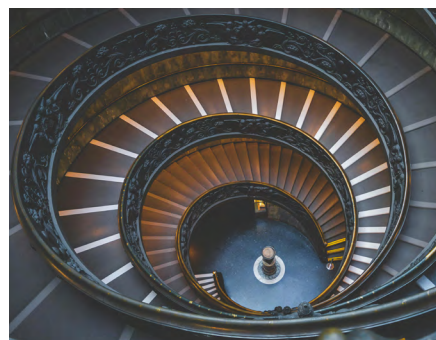
Make a habit of journaling at the end of each day. It might even just be a bullet list, but jot down your adventures, thoughts, prayers, and where you saw the Lord at work.

9/ Pause in front of one beautiful thing a day.

It's easy to become desensitized to the beauty and history that surrounds you. Make a concentrated effort to pause and take in one beautiful thing each day.

10/ Prayerfully participate in Jubilee events.

Walk through the Holy Doors intentionally. Pray for the intentions of the Holy Father. Profess the Creed surrounded by the history and majesty of the major basilicas. You are a Jubilee pilgrim, and you join millions of Jubilee pilgrims before you. ■



*From top to bottom:
A Madonelle on Piazza di Trevi near the fountain of the same name;
Journaling as an end of day devotional practice;
The Bramante Staircase of the Vatican Museum, one of many beautiful thing you can see in Rome.*

10 Best Places to Pray in Rome

It can get noisy and full... maybe you just need a moment away from the crowds. Below you'll find our favorite quiet places to pray, some off the beaten path, as well as places specifically dedicated to prayer for an intention you may be carrying in your heart.

1/ **San Lorenzo in Piscibus** / Via Padre Pfeiffer Pancrazio, 24

This hidden jewel is truly hidden - its facade was destroyed to make way for Via della Conciliazione and now it's surrounded by a building! John Paul II gave this church to the youth of the world in 1983, saying he wanted it to become "a hothouse of faith-filled evangelization." If you need to escape the crowds and pray in the simplicity of an ancient church, this is your place.

2/ **The Adoration Chapel of Madonnella di San Marco** / Piazza Venezia, 00186

A simple doorway in Palazzo Venezia on the corner of Via del Plebiscito leads to a small chapel that holds an ancient miraculous image of Our Lady (once a street shrine). Beyond this is a larger chapel dedicated to extended Eucharistic Adoration. You'll hardly realize you're in the middle of one of the busiest intersections in Rome. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed after the 7:30 a.m. Mass to 12:30 p.m., then 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday to Saturday.

3/ **Blessed Sacrament Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica**

This chapel, found on the right of the basilica just beyond John Paul II's tomb, is specifically reserved for prayer. Simply approach the guards, indicate that you would like to go in to pray, and let the heavy velvet curtains block the crowd noise behind you. The Eucharist is exposed for Adoration during the week.

4/ **Blessed Sacrament Chapel, St. Paul Outside the Walls**

This major basilica is often less crowded, perhaps making it the easiest place to pray. The chapels along the back wall of the church are great options, especially the Blessed Sacrament chapel (just to the left of the apse). The crucifix here spoke to Saint Bridget, and St. Ignatius of Loyola professed his vows in this chapel in 1541.



Above:
*Blessed Sacrament Chapel of
St. Paul Outside the Walls.*



From top to bottom:
 “Madonna del Parto” statue at the Basilica of Sant’Agostino;
 The Holy Stairs, at the top of which you will find a chapel that used
 to be for the pope’s private use.

5/ Basilica of Sant’Agostino / Piazza di S. Agostino, 00186

While the church holds amazing art (a Bernini, a Raphael, and a Caravaggio!), it also has the tomb of St. Monica, mother of Augustine, and the “Madonna del Parto” statue, where countless pilgrims have invoked Our Lady for protection in pregnancy or in a desire to conceive. Praying for a child who has left the Faith? Praying for someone who is having difficulty with pregnancy? This is your church.

6/ Chiesa Sacro Cuore del Suffragio / Lungotevere Prati, 12

This neo-Gothic church, just up the Tiber from St. Peter’s, is dedicated to giving aid to the souls of Purgatory.

7/ Chapel of Madonna of the Miracle, San Andrea della Fratte / Via di Sant’Andrea delle Fratte, 1

At this side altar, atheist and virulent anti-Catholic Alphonse Ratisbonne had a vision of Our Lady that spurred an instantaneous, miraculous conversion. If someone you know needs prayers for conversion, head to this place, where St. Maximilian Kolbe celebrated his first Mass.

8/ Chapel at the top of the Scala Santa / Piazza di S. Giovanni in Laterano, 14

While the main chapel at the top of the Holy Stairs (the stairs Jesus ascended to Pilate on trial) was the pope’s private chapel for centuries and requires a ticket, we recommend that pilgrims take a moment in the chapel found around to the left. You’ve just climbed the Holy Stairs on your knees - a powerful prayerful experience. Before descending the side stairs to the busy world, take a moment and rest with the Lord.

9/ Church of Saint Benedict ‘in Piscinula’ / Piazza in Piscinula, 40

Sometimes you just want to sneak away to a medieval, quiet church. Tradition holds that this is where St. Benedict lived when he was a young student in Rome. This is not a place to see great works of art, and you’ll likely not find it on other lists of “must-sees” in Rome. But if you’re in the Trastevere neighborhood and looking for a quiet place with a tangible feeling of peace, go here.

10/ The Borghese Chapel of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major

This large chapel can be found on the front left side of the basilica and is home to the ancient icon of Mary as *Salus Populi Romani*, Salvation of the Roman People. Carried in procession by Gregory the Great to end the plague, this icon has been a refuge of Christians for centuries. Pope Francis prays here frequently. Have an intention weighing on your heart? Take it to her. ■

10 Fun Facts About St. Peter's Square

It's perhaps the most famous piazza in the world. Pause and take it all in—there's a lot!—either while in line for security or sitting at the base of a column and resting.

1/ The loving arms of the Church.

Gian Lorenzo Bernini designed the colonnade of St. Peter to remind us of the motherly arms of the Church, calling everyone home.

2/ No passport needed.

As you cross into St. Peter's Square, you're crossing into another country, Vatican City. During World War II, the Nazis painted a white line to mark the boundary and remind the Vatican where their power stopped. (This didn't stop people like Msgr. O'Flaherty from eluding the Nazis and covertly hiding Jews, even on Vatican property!)

3/ Straight out of Egypt.

Like many (but not all!) Roman obelisks, the one that stands in the middle of St. Peter's Square is from Egypt. It was brought to Rome during the reign of Caligula to sit in the center of the circus on Vatican Hill.



4/ Need a bigger moving van?

In 1586, recognizing the obelisk was the last sight for Peter and so many martyrs, Sixtus V wanted to move it from where it stood south of the basilica (near the sacristy) to the middle of the piazza. How do you move a 327-ton, 83-foot-long obelisk? Very carefully. It took 13 months and the invention of special machines to execute successfully.

5/ It's not magic, it's math!

On either side of the piazza, you'll find white travertine marble disks that mark the mathematical point where the rows of the colonnade—four columns deep—perfectly line up!

6/ Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses.

The 140 statues of the saints that top the colonnade are 11 feet tall and include Doctors of the Church, martyrs, hermits, widows, and a queen!

7/ The miracle of May 13, 1981.

On the north end of the piazza, just west of the fountain, look for a white marble plaque in the cobblestones that bears the coat of arms of John Paul II. This marks the spot where he was shot while making his rounds in the popemobile at his Wednesday Audience. The bullet missed all major organs, a miracle he attributed to Our Lady.

8/ Mother of the Church.

When facing the basilica, look up to your right. You'll see a mosaic of Our

Lady, placed there by John Paul II in thanksgiving for her miraculous intercession in the attempt on his life. The image is inspired by a painting on a column from the first St. Peter's, which you can still find inside above a side altar (back left of the basilica).



9/ Habemus papam!

In the middle of the facade of St. Peter's Basilica, you'll see the Loggia of Blessings, the balcony from which the new Holy Father gives his first blessing, *Urbi et orbi*, for the Church and for the world.

10/ It all started with 12!

The top of the basilica is crowned with 13 statues, nearly 20 feet high: Jesus and (most of) his Apostles. At Jesus' right hand is St. John the Baptist, because Peter can be found down below in front of the basilica (on the left, with St. Paul on the right). ■



10 Churches You Didn't Know You Needed to See

There are more than 900 churches in Rome, so you're not going to see them all on your trip. But here are 10 that might not be on your radar now, but we'd recommend trying to find.

1/ **San Clemente** / Piazza di S. Clemente

Close to the Colosseum, this basilica has a stunning apse mosaic and the tombs of Pope St. Clement, St. Ignatius of Antioch, and St. Cyril. For many years, the church was assumed to be the ancient 4th-century church, until excavations revealed otherwise! Under the church, you can explore the ancient church and the 1st-century home of St. Clement.

2/ **Sant'Agostino** / Piazza di S. Agostino

Here you'll find Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Pilgrims*, Raphael's Isaiah, and an ancient icon of Our Lady above the Bernini-designed main altar. As mentioned in Top Ten Places to Pray, you'll also find the tomb of Augustine's mother and a well-beloved statue, *Madonna del Parto*, surrounded by unique gifts of thanksgiving for answered prayers.

3/ **Santa Cecilia** / Piazza di Santa Cecilia, 22

Patroness of musicians, her story is one of the most beloved of the Roman virgin martyrs. The church is built over St. Cecilia's 3rd-century home (the excavations of which can be visited), which she gave to the pope while she was still alive. The famous statue by Maderno is under the high altar, which depicts what the artist himself saw when the saint's tomb was opened in 1599.

4/ **Santi Dodici Apostoli** / Piazza dei Santi Apostoli, 51

The Church of the 12 Apostles is the resting place for two of the Apostles, Philip and James the Less. You can pray at their tomb by descending the stairs in front of the high altar.

5/ **San Bartolomeo all'Isola** / Piazza S. Bartolomeo All'Isola, 22

Written across the facade of this church—located on a tiny island in the Tiber— you'll find why we recommend visiting: In this basilica rests the body of St. Bartholomew, Apostle. In 2000, John Paul II dedicated this church to the memory of the martyrs of the modern era, and you'll find relics of saints martyred under Communism, Nazism, and other persecutions of the 20th century.

6/ **Santo Spirito in Sassia** / Via dei Penitenzieri, 12

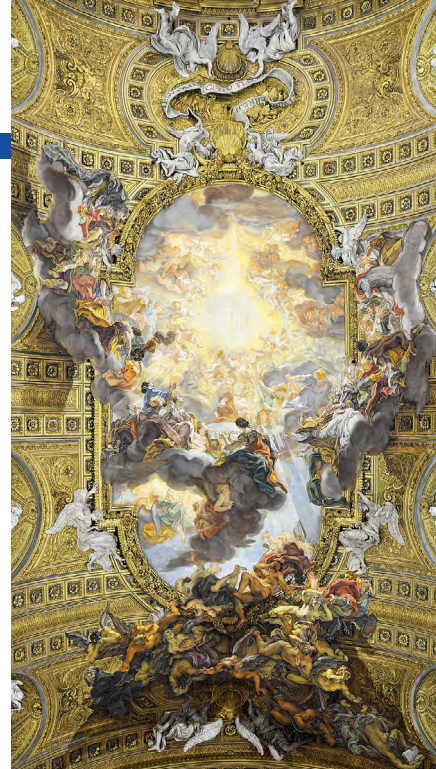
Just a stone's throw from St. Peter's, this church has been connected to "Saxon" pilgrims since the 8th century, so many of us can find a connection here. Since 1994, it has been an official shrine for Divine Mercy and contains relics of St. Faustina.

7/ **Chiesa del Gesù** / Piazza del Gesù

Some claim this is the most beautiful church in Rome. The mother church of the Jesuit order, here you will find the tomb of St. Ignatius and the relic of the right arm of St. Francis Xavier—the arm that baptized 300,000 people. Not to be missed is the ceiling fresco, the *Triumph of the Name of Jesus* by Giovanni Battista Gaulli. Next door you can visit the rooms of St. Ignatius, including where he died.

8/ **Santa Maria sopra Minerva** / Piazza della Minerva, 42

Behind a plain, unassuming facade is a stunning Gothic Dominican church. St. Catherine of Siena's tomb is under the main altar, and the Dominican artist Fra Angelico is buried a few yards to the left, just past a Michelangelo statue of the Risen Christ. The church was also the site of a papal conclave and contains the tombs of several popes (Leo X, Clement VII, Urban VII, and Paul IV).



9/ **Sant'Andrea della Fratte** / Via di Sant'Andrea delle Fratte, 1

This is the site of the famous conversion of a young atheist Jewish man, Alphonse Ratisbonne. A friend of his had been praying and asking others to pray for his conversion, and then "dared" Ratisbonne to wear a Miraculous Medal and pray the Memorare for several days. Our Lady appeared to him in this church, causing a miraculous, instantaneous conversion. Ratisbonne was later ordained and spent his life in the Holy Land working for the conversion of the Jewish people.

10/ **St. Alphonsus Ligouri** / Via di S. Vito, 10-1

This church is relatively "new," built in the 19th century by the Redemptorists, who still staff the church. Above the high altar is the original icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which was written in Crete in the 14th century. ■

Previous Page:

Caravaggio's Madonna of the Pilgrims.

Above:

The impressive ceiling fresco of Chiesa del Gesù, the Triumph of the Name of Jesus, by Giovanni Battista Gaulli.

10 Places to See Roman Genius at Work

The Roman Empire made stunning contributions to culture, government, science, and architecture. Let's look at 10 places where you can see some of that genius still at work.

1/ The Pantheon

The oldest building in the world that stands intact and is still used. We do not have the space here to detail the stunning engineering required to build this structure. Go inside, stand in the middle of what is now the Basilica of St. Mary and the Martyrs, look up at the open oculus, and marvel at the largest unsupported concrete dome in the world.

2/ Concrete

While we're at the Pantheon, let's talk about what's up there over our heads. The Romans were the first to widely use concrete as a building material, and their version lasts much longer than our own. Researchers still study why!

3/ The Basilica of Maxentius

The Romans didn't invent the arch and the vault, but they certainly perfected it. One of the best ways to see this at work is at the ruins of this massive meeting hall in the Roman Forum. Imagine: this is just one side aisle! You can see how they incorporated arches into the brickwork to strengthen the walls and used vaults to create an unobstructed, open space.

Right:

The oculus of the Pantheon, now known as the Basilica of St. Mary.





4/ The Colosseum

Speaking of arches, let's walk over to the largest standing amphitheater in the world, the Flavian Amphitheatre. When it was in use for the games, the Colosseum featured elements like a retractable awning, a series of underground tunnels, trapdoors, and pulleys for animals and gladiators. If you look closely, you can still see gate numbers over the archways, just like our modern stadiums.

5/ Roman Walls

At various points in the city, you can still glimpse parts of the wall that circled Rome. The Servian Wall, which dates to the 4th century BC, can be seen near the Termini station. While the walls served an important defensive purpose, they were also symbolic: Hadrian's Wall, for example, which cuts across northern England, was an important sign of how far north Roman power stretched.

6/ Aqueducts

That incredible water pouring out of the Roman fountains? You can thank

the ingenuity of ancient Rome, which constructed miles of aqueducts to transport fresh water. (Thank you, arches!) The city of Rome had 11 aqueduct systems, some of which transported water over 57 miles. The water in the Trevi Fountain comes from Aqua Virgo, which was constructed in 19 BC. You can see part of the Aqueduct of Nero on Via Statilia.

7/ Cloaca Maxima

It's a little more romantic to talk about aqueducts, but did you know Rome also had one of the first sewer systems? The "Great Sewer" may have been constructed as early as 600 BC and ran from the Forum to the Tiber. It is still visible near Ponte Palatino.

8/ Via Appia

All roads lead to Rome is a saying for a reason. At Rome's peak, 29 major roads ran to the capital, and all Roman provinces were connected by roads—some 250,000 miles of them. More than 50,000 miles were paved. You can still walk down Via Appia today, one of the most important roads in the world.

9/ Pons Fabricius

The Romans were the first to build permanent bridges. They used their arch technology to better distribute force and used their concrete technology to build structures that would last. If you cross the Tiber to the Tiber Island from the northeast, you've crossed Pons Fabricius, which was built in 62 BC and still stands today.

10/ Trajan's Market

The various Roman forums whose ruins line Via dei Fori Imperiali remind us that Romans are to thank for modern democracy (see the Senate building) but are also to thank for shopping malls. The Market of Trajan consisted of over 150 shops, selling products from around the empire. The upper level of the market was used for office space. ■

Above:

The unmistakable silhouette of the Colosseum.



10 Things to Keep in Mind about the Food Scene in Rome

There's no shame in admitting that you're excited about your Jubilee pilgrimage because you're ready to eat some amazing food! Here are some things to expect.

1/ Pizza by the slice.

A great lunch option is to get a few pieces of pizza "takeaway" from a "*pizza al taglio*" place. You'll find all the options behind glass, so simply indicate which ones you want and how big of a piece. You pay by the weight, so you can even try several different kinds. We'd also recommend a *suppli* while you're there - delightful fried rice balls filled with cheese, which make a wonderful snack or addition to your lunch.

2/ Primi, secondi...

Don't be surprised by dinner consisting of multiple courses. Antipasti are smaller plates that can be shared, primi are generally pastas or soup, secondi include meat and fish, contorni are side dishes, and dolci are desserts. You don't need to order something from every course.

3/ Later dinner.

You won't find Italians making dinner reservations at 5 p.m.—in fact, most restaurants won't even be open. Make sure to have that afternoon *suppli* snack, because Italians consider 8-10 p.m. dinner time.

4/ What is coperto?!

You'll often find that choosing to sit in Italy (at a cafe, gelateria, etc) comes with a slightly high price. When eating at a restaurant, you might find "coperto" indicated on your bill. It might also be marked as "pane," or bread. It is usually a couple of euros. Even if you didn't ask for or eat the bread, this is their "cover charge" for sitting at the table. It might seem odd to us, but on the flip side, tipping 15-20% is unheard of in Italian culture, so it all balances out.

5/ Yes, water costs.

We love to talk about the free water pouring out of the sidewalk fountains in Rome, so it might be a surprise when ordering water at Italian restaurants, they bring you bottled water, which generally costs a couple of euros. If you don't want sparkling water, make sure to specify "acqua naturale" or "no gas"!

6/ Take your time.

When Italians have a table for dinner, they have it for the night. You won't find a waiter hovering, waiting to replace you with the next guest. So take your time! You have all evening. When you do want the check, you'll need to ask for it. Simply ask, *Il conto, per favore!*

7/ Roman breakfast.

The Romans aren't sitting down to bacon and eggs for breakfast, but more likely a cornetti (a light pastry, similar to a croissant) and a cappuccino. Many hotel continental breakfasts will cater to Americans, but yogurt, cereal, and cold cuts are more typical.

8/ No pepperoni!

High up on the list of American things that aren't actually Italian is pepperoni. "Peperone" are bell peppers. While you'll find sausage pizza (salsiccia), you might need to consider spicy salami (salamino piccante) as a pepperoni alternative. Or maybe just go all-in Roman and order capricciosa pizza: ham, mushrooms, artichoke, and tomato... and maybe an egg!

9/ The 4 Roman pastas.

Don't leave the Eternal City without trying at least one of the four classic and iconic Roman pastas. They are simple, only consisting of a few ingredients (you'll be shocked there's no cream.)

(1) Cacio e pepe: simple but delicious - pecorino romano cheese and plenty of fresh cracked black pepper.

(2) Alla gricia - take cacio e pepe and add crispy guanciale (pig cheek).

(3) Carbonara - think alla gricia, but add egg yolks.

(4) all'Amatriciana - we still have that amazing guanciale, but now we're serving it in a tomato sauce.

10/ Move over Happy Hour, it's Apertivo time.

A wonderful Italian cultural ritual is apertivo, a time to enjoy a pre-dinner drink. Drinks like spritzes (made with a bitter like Aperol or Campari) or a Negroni are purposefully meant to simulate appetite. During the apertivo time, bars will often bring out a variety of snacks and finger foods, included in the price of your drink. ■

Right, from top to bottom:

A typical breakfast in Rome;

One of the four iconic pasta dish you need to try: the alla gricia;

A spritz and accompanying apertivo snacks;

A classic menu in the Eternal City.



10 Tips, Tricks and Facts About Gelato

Don't head to Rome unprepared! With these ten facts and tips, you'll be ready to embark on a gelato tour of Rome.



1/ Isn't it just ice cream?

You'll soon notice that good gelato is denser than American ice cream. Gelato is made with less cream and more milk than ice cream, which means it has less fat (eat up!). It also is churned slower, meaning it has less air, which accounts for the density.

2/ Copetta or Cono?

There are pros and cons to this choice, but we generally recommend going the cup route. Because of that less air bit (the technical ice-cream word is "overrun"), gelato is served at a warmer temperature than ice cream. This means it's going to melt faster ... so it might be easier to manage a cup! Some gelaterie won't offer a cone at all—San Crispino claims it interferes with the pureness of the gelati!

3/ Beware of bright colors.

They may look fun, but think twice before diving into that bright-green pistachio or Big Bird yellow banana

gelato. When was the last time the part of the banana you *actually ate* was bright yellow? We thought so.

4/ Beware of big mounds.

Again, they may look fun, but those giant mounds of gelato luring you into the store? They're often made by first freezing the gelato solid or adding chemicals. Like the color warning, just remember that great gelato isn't *always* super attractive!

5/ So really beware of places that have dozens and dozens of bright, big mounds.

Since gelato shouldn't be subjected to a hard freeze and is served at a warmer temperature, it often can't last for a long amount of time. You might want to be wary of a place that offers 100+ flavors of gelato... there's no way they made those this morning, right?

6/ Spoons belong upside down!

Take that cute tiny spoon, grab some gelato on it, and then turn your spoon upside down on your tongue when you eat. You want your tastebuds to come into contact with the gelato, not the plastic spoon.

7/ Help! What flavor?

It might be daunting to be faced with so many options. Perhaps be willing to step beyond what you *think* you're going to like. For example, some people who don't like chocolate ice cream adore cioccolato gelato. Be willing to try something that might be particular to the region, like the rice gelato of Florence (riso) or the gelateria (Frigidarium has a frigidarium flavor).

8/ Savor it.

You'll find that servings might be smaller than what you're used to, but the density of the gelato and the richness of the flavors remind us that good things come in small packages. Take advantage of that little spoon and savor every moment.

9/ Allow yourself to judge for yourself.

There are some gelaterie in Rome that are world-famous and require waiting in long lines. Some are worth the hype... others aren't. Your favorite place might be the chain from Turin, Grom, or the artisan shop in Trastevere, Otaleg, both of which are food blogger favorites. Or you'll find a small, unknown shop near your hotel that becomes your favorite.

10/ Enjoy frequently.

There's no shame in multiple gelateria visits a day. Look at all the flavors and shops! Finding your favorite is going to take some work. Let's get started. ■

Some places to get you started

Frigidarium

Gelateria del Teatro

Old Bridge

Cremilla

Fior de Luna

San Crispino

La Romana

Günther

Flavors you might see

Cioccolato fondente

Dark chocolate

Cioccolato al latte

Milk chocolate

Gianduia

Chocolate-hazelnut

Fior di latte

Sweet Cream

Caffè

Coffee

Menta

Mint

Nocciola

Hazelnut

Pistacchio

Pistachio

Stracciatella

Like chocolate chip but better

Fragola

Strawberry

Ananas

Pineapple

Frutti di bosco

Mixed berries

Cannella

Cinnamon

Zuppa inglese

Just has to be tasted to understand (eggnog? Ladyfingers? An ancient liquor? All of the above!).



10 Things NOT To Do in Rome

You know the saying: When in Rome, do as the Romans do. With that in mind, we suggest that you...

1/ Don't go to restaurants where they're standing outside waving menus.

You'll find this phenomenon close to tourist areas. These guys might be super nice as they offer you lunch, but keep walking. You're better off going to a place with a small (even handwritten!) menu where you see Romans eating.

2/ Don't trust skip-the-line guys.

They wander St. Peter's Square and the neighborhood, wooing ignorant pilgrims with exclusive tours or deals to skip the Vatican Museum lines. You can skip the line yourself by booking your ticket online; these guys are con artists who usually don't have anything good to say about the Catholic Church.

3/ Don't be surprised when storekeepers don't want to make change.

Italians love correct change. Don't be surprised if a shopkeeper balks at your large bill. We once had a newsstand worker not want to sell us metro tickets because it would require him to break a bill!

4/ Don't buy water in bottles daily.

The water flowing into Rome from the aqueducts is not only safe to drink, it's delicious. Take advantage and just keep refilling your bottle!

5/ Don't keep your wallet in your pocket.

Pickpockets are real, and even places like the Holy Stairs and St. Peter's Square aren't immune. Don't chance it—they're slicker than you think.

6/ Don't be surprised by a riposo.

With the exception of the major basilicas, most churches close for a few hours after lunch. Keep this in mind when planning your day.

7/ Don't expect to sit and drink your coffee.

The counter is key to Italian coffee culture. While sitting down is occasionally an option, it often comes with an increased price. Be Roman and simply stand at the counter, knock back your espresso, and get on with your day!

8/ Don't try to go into churches with bare shoulders or short shorts.

Many churches, including the major basilicas, have modesty guidelines. Ladies, bring a scarf to double as a shawl.

9/ Don't wear brand-new shoes.

Italy may be known for its shoes. But before you head over there, you'll want to make sure yours are broken in. Seeing Rome well requires a lot of walking and time on your feet, and cobblestones seem to give a special kind of blister!

10/ Don't order a "latte."

Just a tip: Starbucks doesn't know Italian. Order a venti latte, and you'll get twenty glasses of milk! The drink is "caffè latte," coffee with milk. ■



Rome is Calling!

**Travel with Verso Ministries to Celebrate
the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope in Rome**

ITINERARY

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Day 1 | Depart U.S. |
| Day 2 | Arrive in Rome, opening Mass at St. Mary Major |
| Day 3 | Outside the Walls: Pilgrim Churches, Basilicas, & Catacombs |
| Day 4 | The Jubilee Day |
| Day 5 | Basilica of the Holy Cross, St. John Lateran, Holy Stairs |
| Day 6 | Tour St. Peter's, free time |
| Day 7 | Return home |



View all upcoming departures to the Jubilee at versoministries.com/jubilee

CORE PACKAGE INCLUDES

- + Verso pilgrimage director, supplemented by local guides
- + Custom booklet for each pilgrim
- + A pilgrim kit
- + Verso Jubilee formation resources
- + Registration with the Jubilee committee
- + Catholic Chaplain
- + All tickets and donations for activities listed on the itinerary
- + Double-room accommodations
- + Audio headsets