



Essential Rome

The complete spectrum of art, architecture and antiquities

24 February – 2 March 2026 (MM 887)

£3,910

Speaker: Dr Thomas-Leo True

13–19 October 2026 (MM 201)

£4,290

Speaker: Christopher Garibaldi

A perfect introduction – or reintroduction – to Rome; a representative selection of all periods from Ancient Rome onwards.

Covers vast swathes of the city, seeing the major monuments, buildings, and works of art, from the Colosseum to Caravaggio.

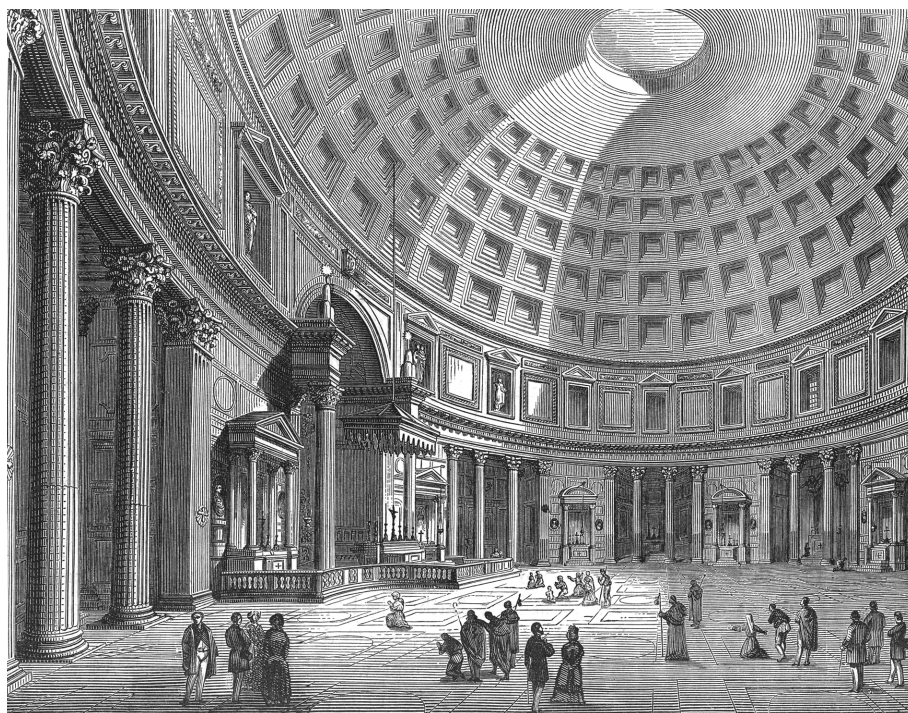
Private visit to the Sistine Chapel, shared with participants travelling on *Connoisseur's Rome* (February) or *Raphael* (October).

Rome presents three major challenges to the cultural traveller. Firstly, it is big. Items of major importance – many of which on their own would make any town in the world worth visiting – are generously strewn through an area that is approximately four miles in diameter. The second problem is that there are hundreds of such places in the Eternal City.

The third challenge is that these items are from such a wide span of time – well over two millennia – for much of which Rome was the pre-eminent city in its sphere. Capital of the Roman Republic and Empire, centre of western Christianity, a role regained with consequent splendour with the triumph of the Catholic Reformation and finally, from 1871, capital of a united Italy.

Over the years MRT has devised many tours to Rome, but mostly they have all attempted only a single episode or theme – Ancient, Medieval, Baroque, Caravaggio, Michelangelo, Raphael, music. This tour selects from the whole range of Rome's heritage.

The key has been generally to give preference to geography over chronology, proximity over theme. Meandering walks explore a particular district, picking out the most significant buildings and works of art, enjoying alluring vistas as they arise, glimpsing major and minor treasures – whatever period they belong to. But it's irrefutable that the itinerary includes most of the most important places and works of art in Rome.



Pantheon, wood engraving c. 1890.

There is a lot of walking, though regular use is made of minibuses (never coaches, which are excluded from the centre). Not every place seen is mentioned in the description below, and the order may differ.

Itinerary

Day 1. Fly at c. 9.15am (British Airways) from London Heathrow to Rome. See the glorious Byzantine mosaics in the churches of Sta. Maria Maggiore (one of the four patriarchal basilicas) and Sta. Prassede.

Day 2. The tour starts at the very beginning: today is largely devoted to Ancient Rome, beginning with the Colosseum, largest of all amphitheatres, completed AD 80. The Forum has evocative remains of the key temples and civic buildings at the heart of the Roman Empire. The present appearance of the Capitol, first centre of ancient Rome, was designed by Michelangelo, and the surrounding *palazzi* are museums with outstanding ancient sculpture and a collection of paintings.

Day 3. The Basilica of St Peter in the Vatican was the outcome of the greatest architects of several generations – Bramante, Raphael, Sangallo, Michelangelo – and contains major sculpture. Today also includes a private visit to

the Vatican, either at dawn or in the evening, to see Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel in peace, together with Raphael's frescoes in the adjacent *Stanze*.

Day 4. The morning includes the superb sculpture of the Altar of Peace (*Ara Pacis*) erected by Augustus, paintings by Pinturicchio and Caravaggio in Sta. Maria del Popolo, and a walk in the Pincio Gardens (good views across Rome) to the Spanish Steps. Trinità dei Monti is a convent with a refectory painted by Andrea Pozzo, as well as a unique corridor with an astrolabe table and anamorphic frescoes. The Palazzo Barberini is a great palace which became Rome's National Gallery, with paintings by most of the Italian Old Masters.

Day 5. Among today's highlights are the Pantheon, the best preserved of Roman monuments (whose span was only twice exceeded in the next 1,750 years); the lively and wonderfully adorned Piazza Navona, which retains the shape of the Roman hippodrome on which it was built; and the 5th-century church of Sta. Sabina, as perfect an Early Christian basilica as survives anywhere. See also S. Ivo, a masterpiece of Baroque architecture with a cupola designed by Borromini, and two Roman temples, of Vesta and Fortuna Virile.

Essential Rome continued

Day 6. The morning is free. Drive in the afternoon to three contrasting churches largely or partly dating to the early Middle Ages: the 6th-century circular Mausoleum of Sta. Costanza; the historically complex but exceptionally beautiful Basilica of S. Clemente; and St John Lateran, the cathedral of Rome.

Day 7. Before departing for the airport, visit two churches to see paintings by Caravaggio, S. Agostino (*Loreto Madonna*) and S. Luigi dei Francesi (*St Matthew series*). Return to London Heathrow, arriving at c. 5.15pm.

Lecturers

Dr Thomas-Leo True. Art historian specialising in Renaissance and Baroque architecture in Rome and the Papal States. He received his doctorate from Cambridge University, and also studied at the British School at Rome where he was Rome Scholar (2009–10), Giles Worsley Fellow (2013) and subsequently Assistant Director (2015–18). He has lived in Le Marche and is currently Executive Director of the Hay Castle. He is currently writing his first book on the Marchigian Cardinals of Pope Sixtus V.

Christopher Garibaldi is an independent researcher and academic. From 2010 to 2019 he was Director of Palace House, Newmarket (the National Horseracing Museum). He was previously Co-Director of the Attingham Summer School for the Study of Historic Houses and Collections. Earlier in his career he was Assistant Keeper of Art (Decorative Art) at Norwich Castle Museum. In the 1990s, he worked for the Royal Collection cataloguing the silver at Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and other royal residences. He recently completed an MPhil in the History of Art and Architecture at St John's College, Cambridge where he is currently studying for his PhD on aspects of the history of royal patronage.

Practicalities

Included: travel by private minibus; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners with wine, water, coffee; all admissions, including a private visit to the Vatican Museums; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer.

Accommodation. **Hotel L'Orologio, Rome (February)** (<https://www.hotelorologioroma.com>): An elegant 4-star hotel located in the heart of Rome, a few steps away from Largo Argentina. **Donna Camilla Savelli, Rome (October)** (vretreats.com/donna-camilla-savelli): a pleasingly restored former baroque monastery, now 4-star hotel, set at the foot of the Janiculum hill in Trastevere. *Single rooms are doubles for sole use.*

How strenuous? This is a particularly strenuous tour. Unavoidably, there is a lot of walking, as the historic area is vast, and vehicular access is increasingly restricted. Minibuses are used on some occasions but otherwise the city is traversed on foot. There is a lot of standing in museums and churches. A good level of fitness is necessary. It should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Average distance by minibus per day: 9 miles.

Group size: between 9 and 19 participants.