

Rome, Italy

TEXT AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY Stephen Harby



Pantheon Exterior
graphite and monochrome watercolor wash on paper, 5x13

Rome is overwhelming—it offers unbelievable artistic riches, but it can be genuinely daunting to visit. It’s been said that it takes a lifetime to experience all that Rome has to offer. If you try to see “everything” during the length of a typical vacation, you’ll only leave frustrated. And getting around the city can be confusing for a first-time visitor. The metro system is only so useful, consisting of just two lines, which don’t serve many of the areas of interest to sightseers. Figuring out the more extensive system of buses, meanwhile, will take longer than your stay. But by starting with the basic structure of the city, and by doing lots of walking, you can accomplish a lot in a few days. You can gain a strong impression of the city’s layout and visit high points of three important periods in Rome’s history: antiquity, the Renaissance and the Baroque.

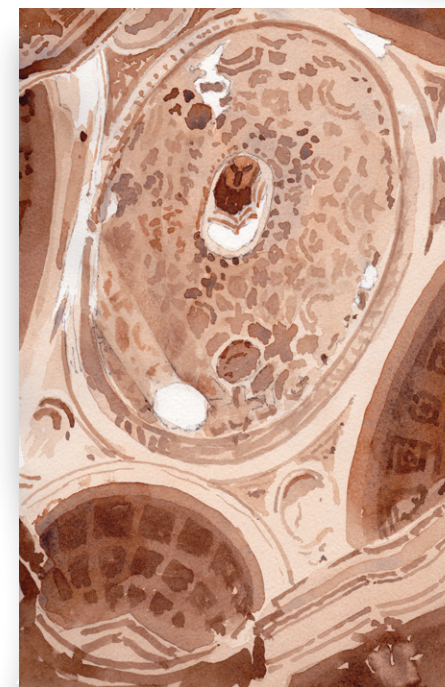
To better understand the layout of Rome, think about the challenge that faced Pope Sixtus V, who reigned from 1585 to 1590. At that time, Rome had



TEMPLETTIO: ANGELO HORNIAK/GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE
Schematic Map of Rome
graphite and monochrome watercolor wash on paper, 11x9

RIGHT
San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Dome
graphite and monochrome watercolor wash on paper, 15x12



SAMPLE THREE-DAY ITINERARY

No single itinerary will suit every visitor to Rome, but supposing you had three days to spend there, I would suggest dividing them as follows:

DAY 1

Walk around the city’s historic core, seeing Piazza Navona, the Pantheon, Piazza di Sant’Ignazio and Piazza di Spagna at the foot of the famous Spanish Steps. At the end of the day, stroll some of the city’s main axes, or hire a cab and ride along them.

DAY 2

Visit the Vatican Museums (find out when it opens and get there early) and Saint Peter’s Basilica. Then head to San Pietro in



The Tempietto

Montorio, a church in whose courtyard you can see the Tempietto—a small masterpiece of Renaissance architecture. Close to this is the Fontana dell’Acqua Paola, where you’ll also have a great panoramic view of the city. If time allows, descend to the picturesque Trastevere district, cross the Tiber and walk through old Jewish quarter.

DAY 3

Visit the Colosseum and the Roman ruins in the Forum, then visit the Michelangelo-designed Piazza del Campidoglio. Other sites to try for are the Palazzo del Quirinale and the Quattro Fontane, or “Four Fountains.”

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Foro Romano
graphite and watercolor on paper, 9x12

already become an important pilgrimage destination thanks to the great monuments and relics of Saint Peter's Basilica, the churches of Santa Maria Maggiore and San Giovanni in Laterano—not to mention the ruins of ancient Rome. But the city was still a medieval jumble of incoherent alleys and mud paths. The pope's idea was to establish a series of streets that would function as axes, connecting the major gates and key monuments and serving to conduct the crowds from one place to another in a suitably grand manner. His main contribution was to re-erect a series of obelisks, which were in abundant supply from antiquity, in key nodal points, such as Piazza del Popolo, Santa Maria Maggiore, San Giovanni in Laterano and Saint Peter's Basilica. These points anchored a web of axes. For instance, links from Piazza del Popolo extend to the Pantheon, the Campidoglio and Piazza di Spagna; another axis connects San Giovanni in Laterano to the Colosseum. These nodal points and their connecting axes became the basis for what followed for centuries.

It was a clever move on Sixtus V's part. If you do nothing else but follow these straight streets, walking from Piazza del Popolo in the north to San Giovanni in Laterano in the south, you can see a lot of Rome—and understand its structure—in the span of a short holiday. ♣

Stephen Harby is an architect, watercolorist, faculty member of the Yale School of Architecture and founder of Stephen Harby Invitational, which organizes travel opportunities for small groups.

LOCAL PICKS & INDULGENCES



RESTAURANTS

Da Fortunato (Via del Pantheon 55)

La Campana (Vicolo della Campana 18)

Trattoria Al Moro (Vicolo delle Bollette 13)



When in Rome ... eat pizza!

PIZZA AND SNACKS

Pizzeria la Boccaccia
(Piazza Pollarola 29)

Roscioli (Via dei Giubbonari 21/22)



GELATO

Giolitti
(Via degli Uffici del Vicario 40)



COFFEE
Sant'Eustachio il Caffè
(Piazza di San Eustachio 82)