

There's no place like Rome

Fleur Kinson on the delights of the Eternal City



LEFT TO RIGHT:

The Colosseum; the painted ceiling of St. Peter's Basilica church in the Vatican; the Trevi fountain



What to see

As the saying goes, Rome wasn't built in a day. And nor can all its wonders be seen in one. The city is packed with museums, churches, palaces, fountains and monuments, so at the very least, aim to catch the big four.

The hulking **Colosseum** is the undisputed icon of Rome, despite the slaughter practised here by the ancients. Gladiators, slaves, Christians, animals – all fought to a gory death in this grand arena. Now crumbling, it's still an awesome structure and guaranteed to awaken a keen interest in architecture.

A short stroll round the corner lie the glorious ruins

of the **Roman Forum**, five acres of ancient columns, mosaics, statues, temples and public offices, all in various states of collapse and fragmentation. It's impossible not to be moved by the place and its significance. You can learn more by joining the Ancient Rome Walking Tour, bookable through greenbee.com from £39.57pp.

Crowded and popular, but not to be missed, the **Trevi Fountain** is a rococo riot of giddy sea gods and wild-eyed horses frisking in tumbling green water – all tacked onto the back of a Renaissance palace near the **Centro Storico**, or historic city centre. Join in

the silly-but-fun tradition and toss a coin in to the fountain to ensure you'll come back to Rome one day.

Expunge your frivolous pagan-fountain sins and head across the Tiber to the **Vatican** for some heavyweight art and Catholicism. Here, you'll find one of the world's biggest art collections, the grand church of **St. Peter's Basilica** and, of course, the **Sistine Chapel**. Breeze past the entry queues by taking the Vatican Tour, bookable through greenbee.com from just £53.05pp.

Finally, there's far more to Rome than museums. Allow time for aimless wandering

through the city's piazzas and alleyways, and spy on the beguiling locals going about their colourful urban dolce vita.

Where to stay

You'll find unbeatable value at **Hotel Columbus** – a 15th-century palace that housed cardinals for 65 years, priests for 200 years, and lies 400 metres from St. Peter's.

🌿 Book with greenbee.com from £44pp per night.

Set on a quiet street off the Via Veneto, the elegant and stylish **Hotel Eden** has a Mediterranean-style rooftop restaurant with great views. Luxury comes as standard here,

You can't 'do' Rome without savouring some typically



and past guests include Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.

✿ *Book with greenbee.com from £154.50pp per night.*

For stylish accommodation in the heart of the designer shopping area, check into **Hotel Art By The Spanish Steps**. The vast lobby sports a vaulted frescoed ceiling, while the citric corridors resemble something from a Stanley Kubrick film.

✿ *Book with greenbee.com from £106.50pp per night.*

For absolute luxury, head for the **Exedra** – a breathtaking Neoclassical pile decorated in opulent marble, floral brocades and crocodile leather. Ancient mosaics glitter through the

hotel's glass floor, and a stunning pool graces its rooftop garden (above left).

✿ *Book with greenbee.com from £90pp per night.*

Where to eat and drink

You can't 'do' Rome without savouring some typically Italian food: coffee, pizza and ice cream. Top up caffeine levels at **Sant'Eustachio Il Caffè** in the Piazza Sant'Eustachio – they've been serving up since 1938.

For pizza, make a beeline for **Remo** at Piazza Santa Maria Liberatrice 44 in the Testaccio district. Thin, flat and delicious.

The city's best ice cream can be found at **Il Gelato di San**

Crispino, at Via della Panetteria 42. Flavours change according to which fruits are in season, and it's strictly tubs only – no cones to muddy the flavour.

For full restaurant dining, try the fabulous **Agata e Romeo** at Via Carlo Alberto 45 in the Esquilino district, where traditional home cooking is refined and elevated to gourmet heights. Or head for the tiny, friendly and great value **Sora Margherita** at Piazza delle Cinque Scole 30, in the old Jewish Ghetto area.

Multi-taskers can combine dinner with sightseeing by taking a two-hour dinner cruise along the River Tiber. Beautiful

waterside views of illuminated buildings spool past while you munch through four courses of fine Italian fare.

✿ *Book through greenbee.com for £48.56pp.*

Where to shop

Rome now has its fair share of dull, cut-price outlet malls on the city periphery, but for truly stimulating shopping in picturesque streets, stick firmly to the **Centro Storico**.

The **Monti** district offers all sorts of quirky and original items, the **Prati** neighbourhood is particularly good for sumptuous food-shopping, and the **Tridente** area is great for

Italian food – coffee, pizza and ice cream



ABOVE, FROM LEFT: the stunning rooftop pool at Exedra Hotel; the Roman Forum; Caffè culture in Piazza di Pietra; Italian coffee.

just about everything else. Big-name designer clothing boutiques cluster on Piazza di Spagna and Via Condotti, and you should definitely explore the pretty side streets round here. Via Mario de' Fiori and Via Bocca di Leone are perfect for those one-off, little-known boutique stores.

For super-stylish yet well-priced shoes, check out the wonderfully chaotic **Franco Borini** at Via dei Pettinari 86-87 in the Ghetto and Campo district. For chocolate to thrill the folks back home, go to confectioner **Moriondo e Gariglio** at Via di Pie' di Marmo 21 near the Pantheon

– a fairytale shop with luscious gift boxes.

Nightlife

Cool bars in atmospheric old alleys abound in Trastevere, and increasingly in Testaccio. Late-night clubbers can find plenty of opportunities to carry on dancing around Via Libetta in Testaccio or Via della Pace in the *Centro Storico*.

For cocktails and early evening nibbles in a unique setting, head to Trastevere's hip **Freni e Frizioni** ('Brakes and Clutches') at Via del Politeama 4-6. This former garage lays on epic free buffets from 7pm, to the delight of art students,

industry creatives and media types who form its switched-on clientele. The *aperitivo* (buffet) is a great new tradition in the bars. (Romans don't like to drink on an empty stomach.) Another cool venue to offer this is the **Société Lutèce** at Piazza di Montevicchio 17.

You could decamp from here to the sleek **Salotto 42** at Piazza di Pietra 42 – where gorgeous cocktails, great music and super-comfy seats might just keep you there for the rest of the night. Unless the dance clubs beckon...

Must-know info

Most museums close on a Monday. Non-food shops are closed on Monday mornings.

Visiting the Vatican or other major churches? You could be turned away if clothes expose too much thigh, shoulder, cleavage or midriff.

Rome teems with visitors year-round, so make sure you book your accommodation well in advance if possible. The only 'quiet' periods are during sweltering August, and between November and February – so make sure you time your trip accordingly.

Going to Rome?

Greenbee Travel has great special offers for Rome flights and hotels, as well as many other city breaks. Visit greenbee.com/travel-offers or call **0845 610 0320**.

Prices based on two people sharing a room, staying 12 March 2010. All prices are correct at time of going to press. Offers are subject to availability and prices may change. Please refer to greenbee.com for latest availability and prices.