



ROME - ANCIENT & BAROQUE

FIVE DAYS FROM ONLY £499

- *Return flights*
- *Four nights bed and breakfast accommodation at a centrally located four-star hotel*
- *Guided tour of Baroque Rome – flamboyant yet elegant, the city of the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps*
- *Guided tour of ancient Rome – home to the Colosseum, the Forum and the capital of one of the world's mightiest ever empires*
- *Timed visit to the Villa Borghese – home of some of the city's finest museums, with artefacts from throughout Rome's history plus one of the world's finest collections of paintings*
- *Escorted by our experienced tour manager*

Rome was, is, and probably always will be, one of the world's most compelling cities with probably more to see here than in any other capital on earth. Boasting an uninterrupted recorded history for upwards of 2,500 years, nowhere else seems to have managed to combine, and with such finesse, a heritage of classical antiquities, and medieval buildings from Renaissance palaces to intricate Baroque piazzas. From the grandeur of the Colosseum, scene of some of the most cruel acts ever committed, the Appian Way where Spartacus was crucified, the magnificence of St. Peter's, the grandeur of the Vatican, the sheer brilliance of the Sistine Chapel, to the Trevi Fountain and flamboyant Baroque buildings – the list is endless. But Rome is much more than monuments, incredible though they are! A city is nothing without people and Rome's citizens have been amongst the most colourful in history with probably nowhere on earth having been visited by so many of the world's most famous characters: Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, Nero, Attila the Hun, St Peter, the Medici, Michelangelo, Napoleon, Byron, Garibaldi, Mussolini and Pope Jean-Paul II - all captivated by its magnificence.

The vivacious, emotional and noisy Italians of today however, still add to this very unique atmosphere: the best-dressed and most stylish people on the planet, senior citizens immaculately turned out, the fashion-conscious young astride their vespas - sunglasses everywhere, a country

where image is everything! The shopping is legendary too with no other country being home to so many famous 'labels': Gucci, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Prada, plus many more, in fact another endless list! It costs nothing to look and not everything is of the designer variety. You will find some very good value items, particularly leather goods. Italy also boasts one of the world's greatest cuisines.

Far from being pizza and pasta, one of the first things that really strikes you about visiting a restaurant here, is how deeply embedded in the culture food and drink really is. Fresh vegetables and salads abound, with succulent meats, seafood, a hint of garlic, the finest olive oil, combined with wonderful wines, creating simple, tasty, wholesome and healthy menus. Add all this together and you have a superb destination, simultaneously educating, entertaining and relaxing! The best way to explore this wonderful city is to wander where your feet take you, through its beautiful piazzas lined with layers of history, where the smell of fresh coffee drifts from the numerous cafés. Admire its monuments, meet its people, sample its food and let your mind be carried away into the magnificent past of what has always been, and always will be, one of the world's most truly beautiful and historic cities.

DAY 1 You should arrive at the airport to take your flight to Rome. On arrival a coach will take

you to your hotel, the President, Royal Santina or Universo, all family run. The hotels are situated in similar locations right in the heart of the Eternal City within walking distance from the main Termini station, providing superb transport links via metro and bus to all areas of the city and the main sights - including direct connections to the Colosseum, the Vatican and the Spanish Steps just a few stops away. All three hotels offer stylish, modern accommodation, spacious reception areas, comfortable seating, a breakfast room serving a full continental buffet breakfast, restaurant offering both local and international cuisine, and bar where you can meet your fellow travellers for a relaxing well-earned drink after a day of sightseeing. All rooms are tastefully decorated in a modern style and have private facilities, air conditioning, minibar and satellite TV. Your comfort is assured whichever hotel you are allocated. This really is an excellent location from which to explore the city. You will find a myriad of shops nearby on the Via Nazionale, and the area around each hotel has plenty of cafés, bars and restaurants should you wish to explore the city further in the evenings. The hotels are close to the National Roman Museum, which includes the extremely well preserved Diocletian baths, the grandest of the public baths of ancient Rome capable of accommodating 3,000 bathers in sumptuous surroundings - as well as three other sites giving a great insight into the ancient city and the Roman lifestyle.

DAY 2 After breakfast, we get to know this fabulous city in earnest, taking a sightseeing tour of the city. The monuments are legendary: there is the Trevi fountain, a huge gush of water, streaming from a natural spring over immense rocks, built onto the side of a Renaissance palace. Legend has it you must toss a coin into it, thus ensuring you make a return visit to this most beguiling of cities. Then there is the Piazza Navona, Rome's most famous square, as picturesque as any in Italy, lined by cafés and restaurants. Arguably the city's social centre, it is full of street entertainers and artists. You must stroll down the instantly recognisable, 18th century Spanish Steps; in the past, the haunt

of artists' models and now simply the place to be seen. At the bottom is the Piazza di Spagna, home to the poet Keats and visited by Milton, Byron and Shelley – all drawing inspiration from the uniqueness which is Rome. The afternoon is free for you to explore as you wish but whilst you are in Rome, you must visit one of the highlights, the Vatican, the independent state and of course home to the Pope and the largest church in the world, St Peter's. Allegedly the final resting place of St Peter himself, this is one of the most sacred shrines in Catholicism, and one of the finest examples of Baroque architecture there is. Inside, the Sistine Chapel is one of Art's greatest masterpieces and the largest painting ever created by one man, the genius Michelangelo! This is quite simply the largest, richest and most compelling such museum complex on earth, containing so many artefacts from the city's history. Many of the finest artists of the Renaissance worked for a variety of Popes but there are other displays too: Egyptian antiquities, furniture, sculpture and silverware.

DAY 3 Holding sway over much of the ancient world for 500 years, Rome was the greatest empire of its time. Legend has it that the city was founded by Romulus and Remus on seven hills. After subduing the neighbouring tribes and the Carthaginians by the second century BC, it became the dominant power in the Mediterranean. Plunder and slaves poured in and a building spree lasting centuries began. Ruled firstly by a series of consuls, then subsequently probably the most famous Roman of all, Julius Caesar, followed by a series

of Emperors, each wanted their place in history and to out-build their predecessors. Their names are legendary and some are infamous: Augustus, Nero, Caligula, Vespasian, Titus and Constantine. Between them they created a unique legacy, the remains of which we see today: the forum, the house of the Vestal Virgins, temples to all the gods, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and even 'foreign' ones too like Isis and Diana. Then there are the law courts and the Podium where news of military conquests was announced to an eager public. Then on the nearby Palatine Hill are the remains of the opulent villas of the elite, including the Emperor. Next to this are the immense Caracalla baths, a veritable Roman leisure centre, plus two of the most famous centres of 'entertainment' the world has ever known: the Circus Maximus and the Colosseum. Ancient Rome was a truly remarkable place! This morning we see all of this and more on our fascinating guided tour, with the remainder of the day free for you to explore at your leisure.

DAY 4 This morning we visit the Villa Borghese, a truly remarkable collection of museums set in a tranquil series of gardens which form the city's largest park. Created in the 17th century, collectively it is one of the city's greatest treasure houses. Most famously it houses one of the world's greatest collections of fine art including outstanding works by Raphael, with another pavilion housing the national modern art museum. The outstanding Villa Giulia is home to the world's most outstanding collection of Etruscan and ancient Roman artefacts. It really

is incredible: exquisitely made vases and other ceramic and glass items in almost perfect condition are displayed next to stunning gold jewellery studded with precious stones, crafted in the most skilful manner. Then there are everyday items too: agricultural implements and cooking utensils, coins, brooches, remains of clothing, leather-wear – even portable wash stands. In fact many are remarkably similar to household items used today. This is a wonderful museum where you can truly lose yourself, but above all it is a poignant reminder that no matter how grand a civilisation is and however sophisticated a race believe themselves to be, in reality we are all very similar and throughout history we have all wanted the same things.

So this afternoon what is it to be? Take a coffee in the famous Caffe Greco perhaps, once the haunt of Keats, Byron and Wagner. You could window shop along the Via Condotti for some of the finest clothes you will find anywhere – fashion straight from the catwalk. Perhaps most satisfying though, is simply to wander at will and explore this wonderful city at your leisure: let yourself be captivated and enchanted by this truly entrancing city. And whether you toss a coin into the Trevi Fountain or not, you are sure to want to return one day to the magic that is Rome!

DAY 5 Today the coach will take you to Rome airport, at the appropriate time, to take your return flight home, after a really memorable tour.

