

Secret Relics **IN ROME**

A full-page background image of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The central focus is the massive dome, covered in dark, weathered lead tiles, topped with a cross. Below the dome is the ornate facade with its columns and statues. The sky is a heavy, grey overcast. The text 'Secret Relics' is in white, and 'IN ROME' is in large, bold yellow letters.

7 Sacred places
that you should know

Discover 7 secret churches in Rome and the relics they hold



Discover 7 hidden churches in Rome and the relics they hold

In this guide, you'll discover 7 sacred places you shouldn't miss in Rome, where they are located, and what to see in each one.

Rome is much more than just the Colosseum and St. Peter's Square. The Eternal City is home to hundreds of churches rich in history, art, and spirituality that are absolutely worth visiting.

Some contain unique relics brought from Jerusalem by Saint Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, while others are home to masterpieces of art that often go unnoticed by most tourists.

In this guide, you'll discover 7 sacred places perfect for those looking to experience Rome in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Why visit it:

It is one of the four papal basilicas of Rome and holds one of the most beloved relics of Christianity: fragments of the manger where Jesus was born.

What you will see:

- Under the apse are preserved relics of the manger of the Child Jesus, brought from Bethlehem.
- The chapel of the Virgin “Salus Populi Romani”, venerated by popes before their journeys.

Interesting fact:

Every August 5th, a shower of white petals falls from the ceiling to commemorate the “miraculous snowfall” that, according to tradition, indicated the place where the basilica should be built in 358 AD.

Practical tip:

Entry is free, but for 7 euros you can access the upper level and admire the mosaics on the façade.



Church 1 SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE



Church 2 BASILICA OF SANTA PRASSEDE

Why visit it:

Located near Santa Maria Maggiore, it was built by Pope Paschal I to house relics of martyrs and sacred objects brought from the catacombs.

What you will see:

- A fragment of the column of Christ's flagellation, brought from Jerusalem.
- The Chapel of Saint Zeno, considered the "Sistine Chapel of Byzantine art", covered in golden mosaics.
- Relics of Saint Praxedes and her sister Saint Pudentiana under the altar.

Interesting fact:

Pope Paschal I, who appears represented in the mosaics, moved more than 2,000 relics of martyrs to protect them from looting.

Practical tip:

Entry is free and it's ideal to visit after Santa Maria Maggiore, as it's less than a 5-minute walk away.

Church 2

BASILICA OF SANTA PRASSEDE



Why visit it:

This church is famous for preserving the chains that imprisoned Saint Peter in Jerusalem and in Rome.

What you will see:

- The chains of Saint Peter displayed under the main altar.
- The majestic sculpture of Moses by Michelangelo, one of the masterpieces of the Renaissance.

Interesting fact:

According to tradition, when the two chains (from Jerusalem and Rome) were brought together, they miraculously joined into one.

Practical tip:

Entry is free, but I recommend going early in the morning to better enjoy the Moses sculpture without crowds.



Church

3

SAN PIETRO IN VINCOLI



Church 4 SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO

Why visit it:

This is the cathedral of Rome and the mother church of all churches in the world, even above Saint Peter's in the Vatican. Its construction began in 324 AD under Emperor Constantine.

What you will see:

- Relics attributed to Saint Peter and Saint Paul (parts of their heads) on the high altar.
- One of the most monumental basilicas, with ancient columns and Byzantine mosaics.
- The papal chair, symbol of the Pope's authority as Bishop of Rome.

Interesting fact:

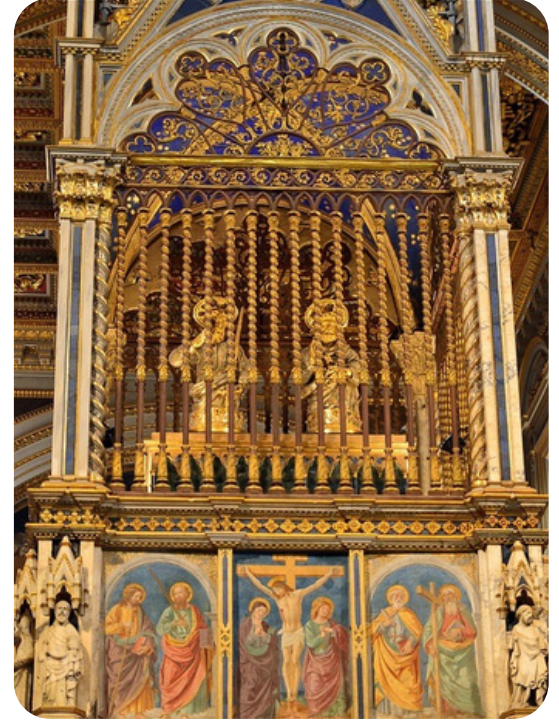
For over 1,000 years, the Popes resided here, not in the Vatican.

Practical tip:

Entry is free, but you must wear clothing that covers your shoulders and knees.



Church 4 SAN GIOVANNI IN LATERANO



Church 5 HOLY SCALA (HOLY STAIRCASE)

Why visit it:

According to tradition, these are the 28 steps that Jesus climbed in Pontius Pilate's praetorium in Jerusalem.

What you will see:

- Pilgrims climbing the stairs on their knees in silence and prayer.
- The steps protected with wood to preserve the original marble.
- At the top, the Sancta Sanctorum, the Pope's private chapel and one of the holiest places in Christianity.

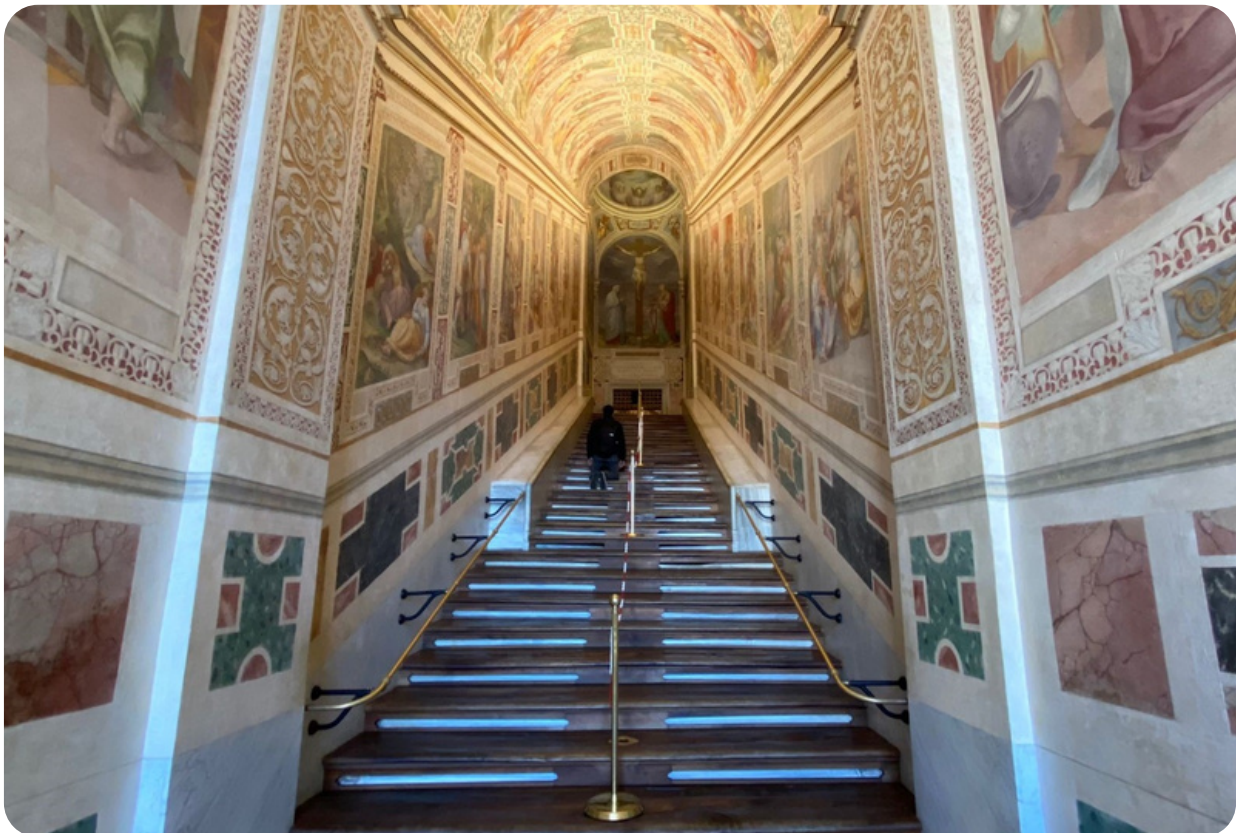
Interesting fact:

Saint Helena brought the staircase from Jerusalem to Rome in 326 AD, and the tradition of climbing it on one's knees has continued for centuries.

Practical tip:

Entry is free; wear comfortable clothing if you plan to climb the stairs on your knees. (Photos and videos are not allowed out of respect for the site.)

Church 5 HOLY SCALA (HOLY STAIRCASE)



Why visit it:

Built in the 4th century within the palace of Saint Helena, it houses some of the most important relics of the Passion of Christ.

What you will see:

- Fragments of the Cross of Christ.
- Two thorns from the crown of thorns.
- A nail from the crucifixion.
- The title of the cross, with the inscription INRI in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

Interesting fact:

The basilica was originally called "Hierusalem" because Saint Helena brought soil from Jerusalem to cover the ground, turning it into a piece of the Holy Land in Rome.

Practical tip:

Entry is free, but it's best to visit in the morning to avoid crowds.



Church 6 SANTA CROCE IN GERUSALEMME

Fragments of the Cross of Christ.



Two thorns from the crown of thorns.



A nail from the crucifixion.



The title on the cross, with the inscription INRI in Hebrew, Greek and Latin: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews".



Church 7 SAN PAOLO FUORI LE MURA

Why visit it:

One of the four papal basilicas of Rome, built over the tomb of Saint Paul. It is a place of deep spiritual significance linked to early Christianity.

What you will see:

- The tomb of Saint Paul, visible under the main altar.
- A reliquary containing the chain believed to have been used during his imprisonment.
- Monumental mosaics, a medieval cloister, and portraits of all the Popes from Saint Peter to today.

Interesting fact:

The original basilica was destroyed by fire in 1823, and much of Europe contributed to its reconstruction.

Practical tip:

Entry is free. Visit at sunset, when the light enhances the golden mosaics.

Church 7 SAN PAOLO FUORI LE MURA



Opening hours:



1.Santa Maria Maggiore
Daily (7:00am – 6:30pm)



2.Santa Prassede
Daily (8:00am – 12:30pm and 3:00pm – 6:00pm)



3.San Pietro in Vincoli
Daily (7:30am – 12:20pm and 3:00pm – 6:50pm)



4.San Giovanni in Laterano
Daily (7:00am – 6:30pm)



5.Holy Stairs
Daily (6:00am – 1:30pm and 3:00pm – 6:30pm)



6.Santa Croce in Gerusalemme
Daily (7:00am – 6:30pm)



7.San Paolo fuori le mura
Daily (7:00am – 6:30pm)

How to get there:

Take Metro Line A to San Giovanni → for the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, St. John Lateran, and the Holy Stairs.

Take Metro Line B to Cavour → to reach San Pietro in Vincoli.

Take Metro Line A or B to Termini → from there, it's an 8-minute walk to Santa Maria Maggiore.

Etiquette and respect tips:

- Wear clothing that covers your shoulders and knees.
- Avoid speaking loudly or using flash photography indoors.
- If there is a mass, wait until it finishes before visiting.

Interesting Facts:

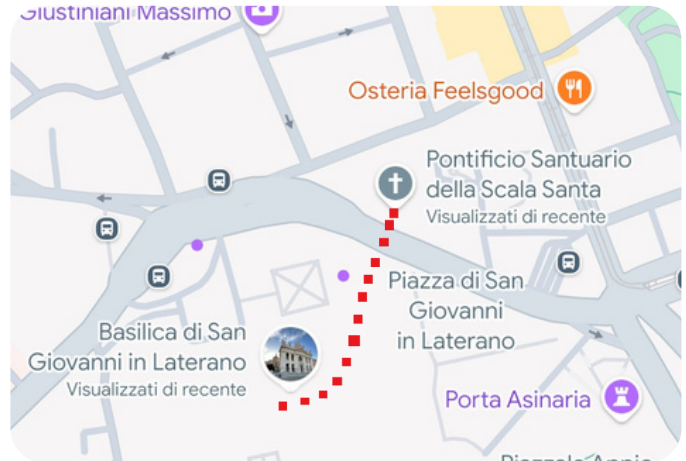
- Santa Maria Maggiore was the first church dedicated to the Virgin Mary after the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, when the Church officially proclaimed her as the Mother of God.
- The steps of the Holy Stairs are covered with wood to protect them from wear and tear.
- In San Pietro in Vincoli, Michelangelo's Moses faces slightly to the right because it was originally part of a larger sculptural composition.

MAPS

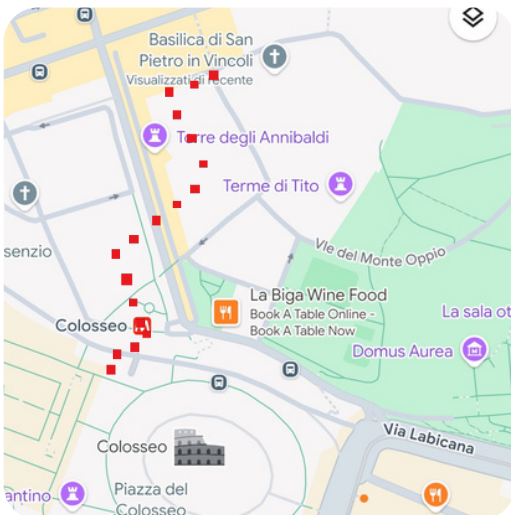
Santa Maria Maggiore and Santa Prassede



San Giovanni in Laterano and Scala Santa



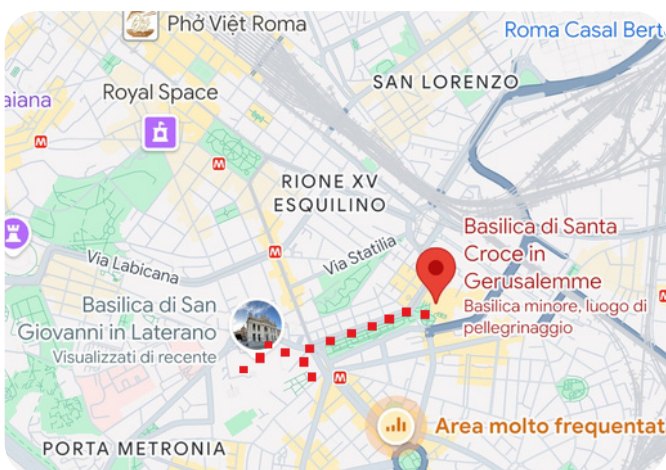
St. Pietro in Vincoli



San Paolo fuori le mura



Santa Croce in Gerusalemme



Tips:

You can complete this route in one day and visit the Holy Doors. Otherwise, depending on the distance from your accommodation, consider creating a more flexible itinerary to enjoy the experience at your own pace.

EXTRA TIPS FOR WOMEN:

Extra tips for women:

Traveling alone in Rome can be a transformative experience. Exploring relics and sacred sites is also an inner journey — one of calm, discovery, and beauty. Rome is especially welcoming for women, as it is generally a safe city full of peaceful corners.

Don't rush. Walk slowly and wear comfortable shoes (high heels are not recommended due to the cobblestone streets).

Tips for women traveling alone in Rome:

- Choose accommodations near the city center or close to a metro station (avoid walking alone at night near Termini Station).
- Avoid empty streets at night and use official taxis or public transport.
- The most famous restaurants aren't always the best explore nearby streets and you'll often find better options.

EXTRA TIPS FOR FAMILIES:

Traveling as a family to Rome creates lifelong memories. Among ruins, fountains, and gelato, children naturally connect with the history and beauty of a city that feels like an open-air museum.

Rome is ideal for families: it's safe, walkable, and full of places to rest and enjoy. Don't try to see everything in one day slow down and enjoy the experience.

Tips for families traveling with children:

- Choose accommodations in the city center or near a metro station (especially if traveling with strollers).
- Plan a few activities per day and leave time for rest children get tired quickly.
- Bring water or a reusable bottle, a hat, and sunscreen (the Roman sun can be intense).
- Turn visits into games: look for angels, animals, or symbols in mosaics.
- Avoid visiting during mass times so children can move more freely.



These are just a few of the hidden relics that Rome holds. But there are many more: underground churches, crypts, catacombs, and sacred corners that very few travelers ever discover.

Thank you for reading this guide. I hope it helps you make the most of your time in Rome.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me I'll be happy to help.

If you like discover more hidden places in Rome I've created a complete guide with more churches, relics, and detailed routes to help you explore the city in a deeper and more meaningful way.

You can find it here:

[13 Churches essential for understanding Christian Rome](#)

C O N T A C T S

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