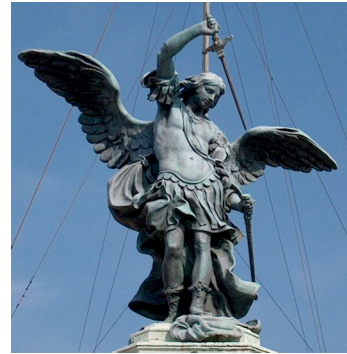


How to “Do” Rome so Rome Doesn’t “Do You In”!

Reservations for European vacations are up by as much as 20% over last year. And, according to a recent survey of Carlson Wagonlit Travel agents, Rome will rank as the No. 1 European destination for Americans in 2006. Arguably the world’s most photographed city, last year Rome was the stunning backdrop as the world watched the election of Pope Benedict XVI on TV, and this undoubtedly influenced its popularity as a tourist destination this year.



Rome *is* a spectacular travel destination. First the hub of western civilization, then the center of western Christendom, the layers and veins of history are endless. And it’s a world-class secular city, so there’s something for everybody. But it can be overwhelming.

Some vacationers will have the luxury of more than a few days at a single destination, able to get plenty of rest and to pace themselves. Others will traipse around in groups, bleary-eyed, following a bobbing pennant or umbrella held aloft by a fact-spurting tour-guide. Do-it-yourselfers will pore over guidebooks and trudge dutifully from site to site, valiantly trying to understand what they’re seeing.

To help make your stay in Rome (or any big city) a thoroughly positive experience, Jane McIntosh, frequent traveler, professional tour guide, and creator of *Jane’s Smart Art Guides*[™] (www.janessmartart.com), offers these tips.

1. Limit your agenda. It’s easy to make the mistake of trying to see “everything.” Make up your own personal “highlights” list ahead of time. That way you can pace yourself, and if you’re on a group tour, you’ll find opportunities to relax while the rest of the group races off to overdose at another site that they probably won’t remember in a week’s time anyway!



2. Concentrate your geography. One way to decide where to stay is to think about what era in history most interests you -- Roman Empire, Early Christian, Renaissance, Baroque -- and then find a hotel or rent an apartment situated near most of the sites you’ll want to see. Traffic can be snarly, and Rome’s a great walking city, but it’s big and it can be hot -- even in the Spring and Fall -- so focusing your geographic attention has definite advantages.

3. Choose a general guidebook with care. Look for one that maximizes the type of information that's useful to you so you won't be carting around a lot of unnecessary page-weight! You'll have reserved your hotel in advance, so you don't need pages of hotel listings. If you are more "artsy" and less "shoppy", for example, you'll want less information on shopping and more about art and architecture. Some publishers go so far as to suggest you tear out the pages you do or don't need ... although the idea of ripping up books makes some people cringe!

4. Consider the efficiency of audio walking tours. Whether on CD, a book-on-a-chip, or digital download, audio guides are available from many travel stores, bookstores and on-line sources, as well as public libraries. With your audio player strapped on and ear-buds in, you'll waste no time stopping to read about what you're looking at. A well-done audio walking tour can be an entertaining way to get an overview of an area in a relatively short period of time.

5. Look for a good art guide. People who think of Florence as more of an art city than Rome, don't know Rome! Extraordinary architecture and sculpture is everywhere, dozens of churches contain masterpieces of one sort or another, and the Vatican, Borghese and Capitoline are just the start of a long list of museums. Here's where a book can be more trouble than it's worth. A human tour-guide or an audio guide is an especially good idea when looking at art and architecture – they explain what you're seeing, while your eyes are free to actually look!



6. Ask friends for recommendations. Most people love to share their travel experiences, and have fond memories of a wonderful meal somewhere, or a romantic hotel, or a special site off-the-beaten-track. The quality of tour-guides is highly variable, so a recommendation from someone you trust can make the difference between disaster and delight.



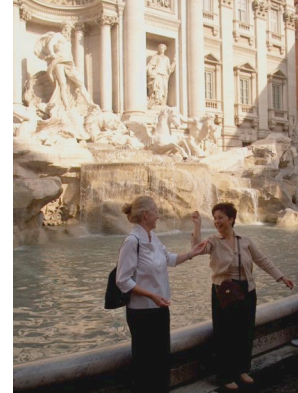
7. If you find it hard to resist the temptation to try to "see one more thing" ... until you're utterly exhausted ... keep in mind that one of the best ways to absorb the real flavor of a city is by simply sitting. In Rome, avoid tourist-swarms like the Trevi Fountain and Spanish Steps, find an outdoor café in a pretty piazza and linger over a glass of wine or a coffee. The cover charge "buys" you the table for as long as you like. Early evenings and weekend afternoons are great people-watching times.

8. Despite what you may have heard, it *is* possible to have a bad meal in Italy! The highest likelihood for disappointment is at a restaurant that caters to tourists. Sure, the menu's in English. But a kitchen that isn't trying to keep a regular clientele coming back



is less likely to care about quality, and the waiters can be cranky. Instead, arm yourself with a food dictionary and eat where the locals eat! Order a Limoncello to top of your meal, and the Romans at the next table might even think you're a regular!

If you do go to the Trevi Fountain though, be sure to toss in a coin over your shoulder. This simple act is said to guarantee that one day you will return to Rome. Since there's always more to see -- no matter how often you've been before -- that's a delightful prospect!



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