

TOP 10



Not to be missed!

Our top hits – from the absolute No. 1 to No. 10 – help you plan your tour of the most important sights.

★ CAPITOLINO ▶ 50

The elegant Piazza del Campidoglio – laid out by Michelangelo, with the Palazzo Senatorio, Rome's city hall, and the Capitoline Museums – was the city's hub in ancient times.

★ FORO ROMANO ▶ 52

Atmospheric ruins of world history where you can walk in the footsteps of powerful men such as Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Cicero, and philosophise about the transient nature of things.

★ COLOSSEO ▶ 60

The largest arena of antiquity where the emperor had fearless gladiators fight wild beasts – *panem et circenses* or 'bread and circus' – in the classic Roman mega-spectacle.

★ CAMPO DE' FIORI ▶ 86

Popular vegetable market where Roman women shop in the morning and at night the city's youth meet up around the statue of the heretical monk Giordano Bruno.

★ PIAZZA NAVONA ▶ 88

The most beautiful and interesting Baroque square in Rome (left) is a papal creation that is today an open-air stage for street performers, artists and throngs of sightseers.

★ PANTHEON ▶ 92

This ancient temple has remained almost unchanged for 2,000 years. First a pagan altar, then a church, and later the final resting place of Italian kings – a tourist highlight.

★ FONTANA DI TREVI ▶ 124

Baroque fountain ensemble where Marcello Mastroianni played the Latin lover in Fellini's famous film *La Dolce Vita*. Throw a coin into the fountain to return to the city.

★ BASILICA DI SAN PIETRO ▶ 154

St Peter's Basilica is the heartbeat of Christendom – with Michelangelo's imposing dome, the inviting Piazza San Pietro and the Baroque genius of Bernini.

★ MUSEI VATICANI ▶ 162

The largest museum in the world with 1,400 rooms – you will need to be prepared to set aside some time just to admire Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel.

★ MUSEO E GALLERIA BORGHESE ▶ 126

1,000 works of art by Raphael, Caravaggio, Canova and Bernini are housed in the former summer palace in Villa Borghese Park.

THE ETERNAL CITY

The first glimpse of Rome is bewildering – massive ruins, crumbling walls, stately palazzi, towers and domes are all jumbled together. Buildings of every epoch jostle side by side. The 3,000-odd years of the city's history lie all around.

The city on the seven hills may seem eternal, but its history can be easily divided into four periods: nearly 1,200 years of history includes the ancient era of the first Etruscan settlements on the Palatine Hill to the great days of the Republic and its decline in the late Imperial period. After the devastation of the Barbarian invasions in the early Middle Ages the papacy emerged as the centre of power. The heydays of the princes of the church were, however, the Renaissance and Baroque, where they took Rome to new heights. 1871 Piedmontese troops conquered the Papal States and Rome became the capital of a united Italy, with the Vatican as an independent enclave.

Classical Rome

According to legend the city on the Palatine Hill was founded on 21 April 753BC by the twins Romulus and Remus, who were said to have been suckled by a she-wolf. Romulus, who slew his brother in battle, named the city after himself. What is certain is that there was an early Stone Age settlement on the Palatine in the ninth-century BC. Later came the Etruscans, who drained the marshy ground where the Forum is today. When the last Etruscan king was deposed in 510BC, the Roman Republic that was established would last for five centuries. After the three Punic Wars (264–146BC) against Carthage in North Africa, Rome ascended to a world power dominating the entire Mediterranean.

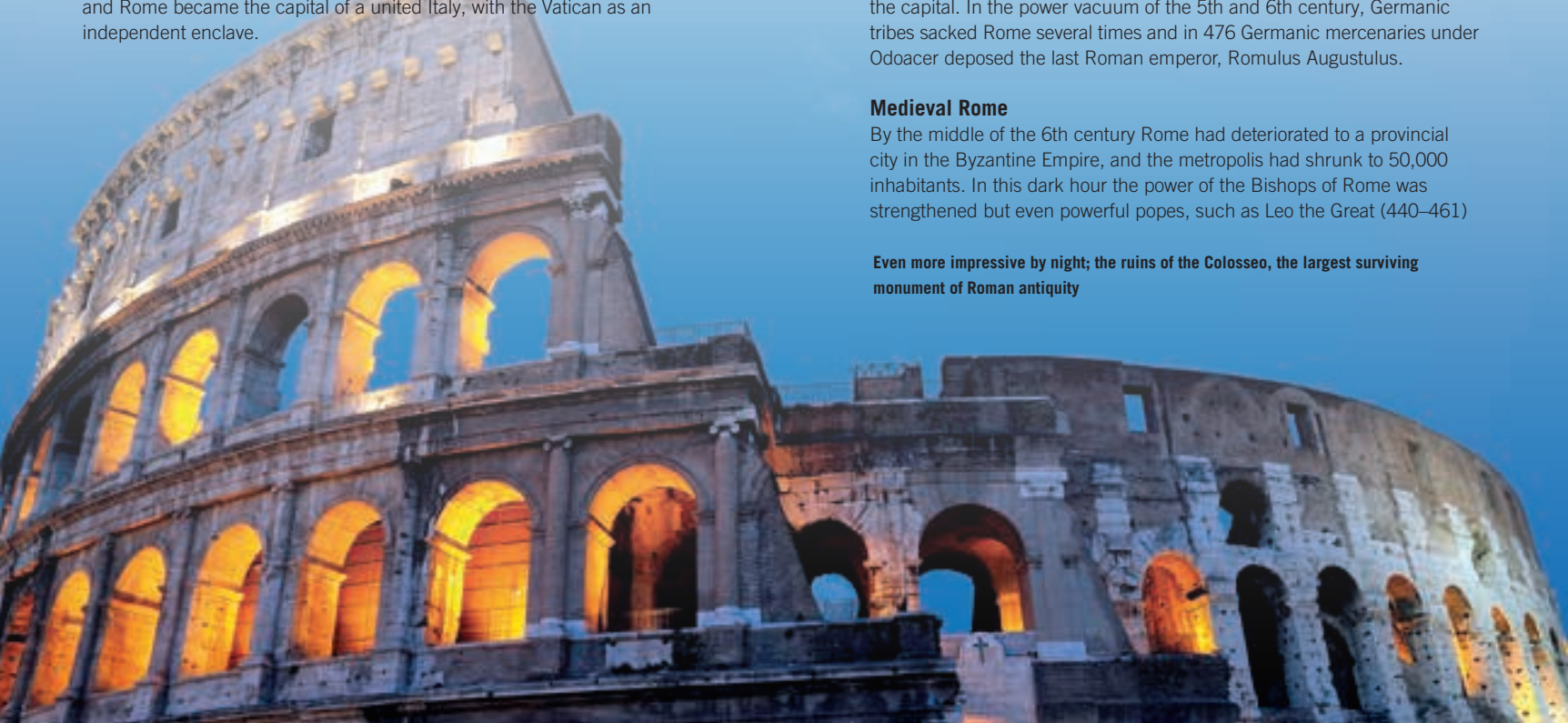
In 44BC the appointment of the successful commander, Gaius Julius Caesar, as dictator for life saw the emergence of single rulers. Following Caesar's assassination in 44BC, Mark Antony formed an alliance with Caesar's nephew Octavian, who then became the first emperor Augustus (► 12). Rome was now the undisputed ruler of the Mediterranean but was beset by internal conflicts. After years of terror under Nero, who used the Christians as a scapegoat for Rome's devastating fire in AD64, Emperor Vespasian took control, restored law and order set about creating magnificent buildings such as the Colosseum (► 60).

The death of the philosopher emperor Marcus Aurelius in AD180 saw the final decline of the Empire. Constantine (303–367) and his successors abandoned the once proud Rome and made Constantinople (Byzantium) the capital. In the power vacuum of the 5th and 6th century, Germanic tribes sacked Rome several times and in 476 Germanic mercenaries under Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus.

Medieval Rome

By the middle of the 6th century Rome had deteriorated to a provincial city in the Byzantine Empire, and the metropolis had shrunk to 50,000 inhabitants. In this dark hour the power of the Bishops of Rome was strengthened but even powerful popes, such as Leo the Great (440–461)

Even more impressive by night; the ruins of the Colosseum, the largest surviving monument of Roman antiquity



The Perfect Day

If you're not quite sure where to begin your travels, this itinerary recommends a practical and enjoyable day out, taking in some of ancient Rome's best places to see. For more information see the main entries (► 50–77).

🕒 9:00am

Begin the day by walking to busy **13 Piazza Venezia** (► 72), taking time to admire the colossal Monumento a Vittorio Emanuele II and **15 Colonna Traiana** (► 73). Then climb the shallow ramp of steps near the piazza's southwest corner to the **★Capitolino** (Piazza del Campidoglio, ► 50).

🕒 9:30am

Explore the church of **Santa Maria in Aracoeli** (► 51) and admire the view from the terraces of the Monumento a Vittorio Emanuele II. From the Piazza del Campidoglio take the small lane to the left of the city hall past the bronze Capitoline Wolf statue and admire the view down on to the Foro Romano.

🕒 10:00am

Go down the steps to the main entrance to the **★Foro Romano** (ill. below, ► 52), one of the world's most historic ruins.

🕒 12:00pm

Emerge close to the **★Colosseo** (ill. right, ► 60) and **Arco di Costantino** (► 64). You can visit them now or after lunch. You could have a snack lunch in **Cavour 313** wine bar (► 78), one of the cafés east of the Colosseo,

a meal in **Il Bocconcino** (► 78), or buy provisions in Via Cavour and head for the Colle Oppio.

🕒 2:00pm

By now the queues to the Colosseum should have eased – time to view the famous monument from within and pose for a photograph (about €2) with one of the “gladiators”.

🕒 3:30pm

Walk a short distance on Via di San Giovanni in Laterano to **11 San Clemente** (► 67). This unique church offers a journey through time: from the church above (12th century, with magnificent gold mosaics), down to the simple lower church



(4th century). And below that, a temple to the Persian god Mithra and a Roman house dating back to Caesar's era.

🕒 4:30pm

Make your way along Via dei Santi Coronati, a quiet side street, to visit the church **19 Santi Quattro Coronati** (► 76), before continuing toward the soaring San Giovanni in Laterano, the cathedral church of Rome and one of the most important places of worship in the city.

🕒 5:30pm

Explore **12 San Giovanni in Laterano** (► 70), not forgetting its ancient baptistery and cloister, the latter graced with countless superbly decorated columns. Then take a bus or the Metro A (San Giovanni) if you don't want to retrace your steps to the Colosseo and Piazza Venezia.

