• Walking Tour 1 •

Ancient Rome

Start: Colosseo Metro station.

Finish: Circo Massimo Metro station.

Time: 2½ to 3 hours not including visits.

Best Time: Early mornings and late afternoons, to enjoy the best light.

Worst Time: Lunch recess (12:30–4:30pm), when most of the churches are closed (the Capitoline Museums are closed on Mon and the Domus Aurea on Tues).

Right at the heart of modern Rome lies the archaeological area of the Fori and the Palatine Hill. In Latin, *fori* is the plural of the word "forum," which refers to the center of town. As the largest city in the empire, Rome had not only one forum but several, which were all additions to the original forum, the Forum Romanum (Roman Forum). The Fori and Palatine Hill were the heart of the ancient city, with its Capitol, its major public buildings, temples, and markets, and (later) the Imperial Palace.

Feeling today like a strange hole in time cut through the urban fabric, the area occupied by the Fori and the Palatine was very much integrated in the life of the city until the 20th century. The area's layered architecture stood as a testament to

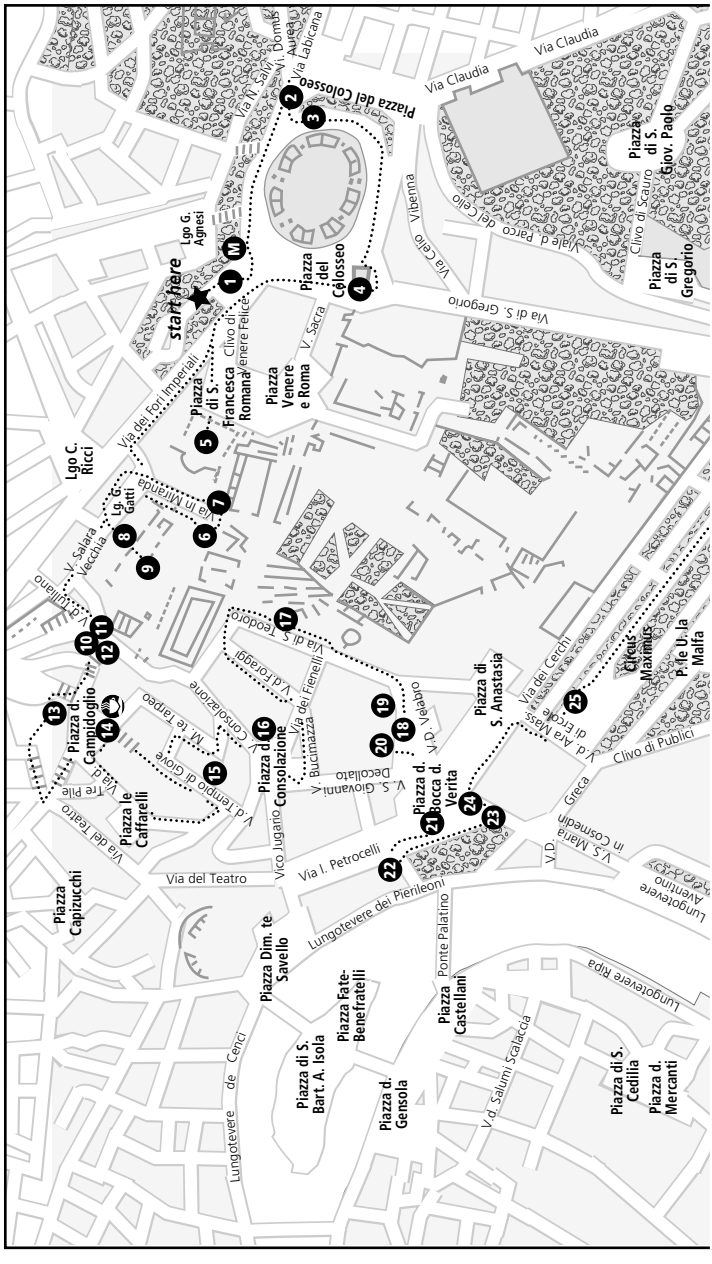
Rome's long, rich history. Medieval and Renaissance buildings surrounded, and often were built directly over, ancient Roman temples and structures. While some of the largest monuments such as the Colosseum had been used as a quarry for marble and construction materials by the popes of the Renaissance as they were busy rebuilding the city, other structures remained largely intact because they had been turned over to other uses. Temples were transformed into houses and churches, or used as foundations for newer buildings.

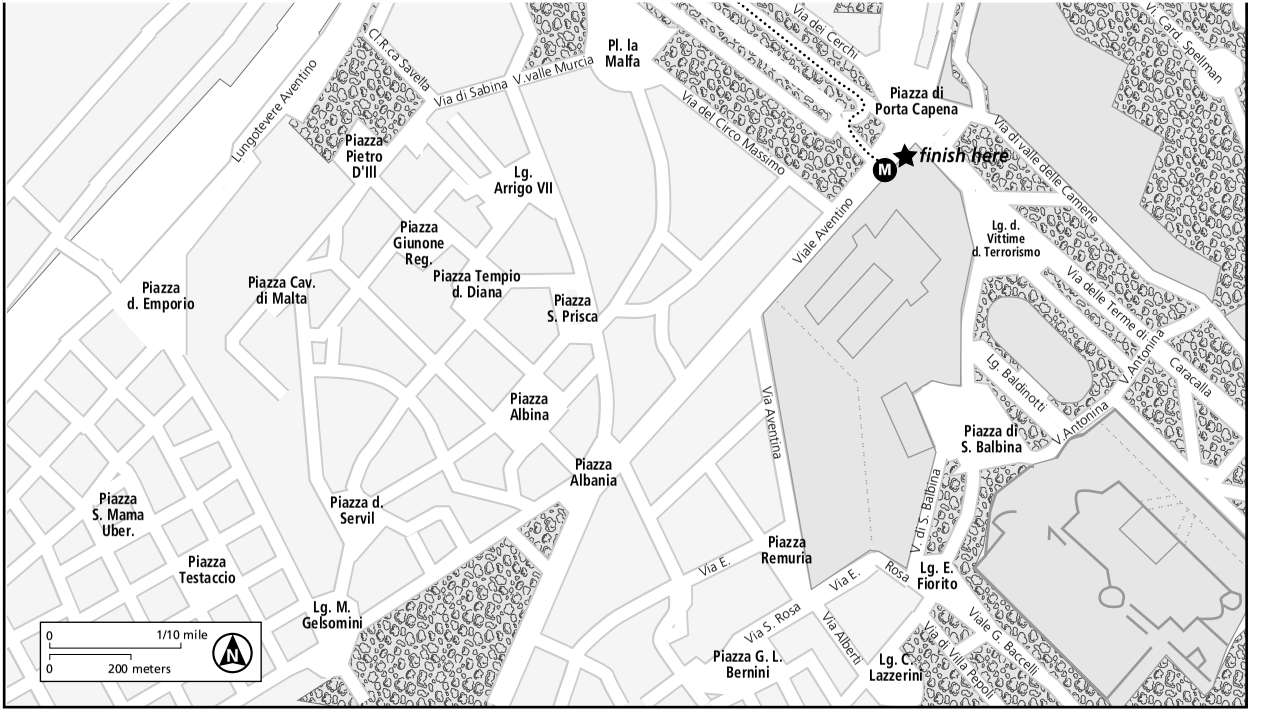
While premodern ages are often blamed for lacking our historical sense and appreciation for the past, the truth is that the Fori and Palatine Hill area suffered as much, if not more, from urban "renewal" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as it did in the previous thousand years. The kings of the House of Savoy began the damage with the building of the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II over the Campidoglio—a symbolic location, meant to establish the continuity of the postunification monarchy with antiquity. Unfortunately, making this architectural-political statement required the demolition of a large part of the neighborhood that had developed on the hill. The Fascist regime completed the spoilage by demolishing the entire neighborhood that lay between the Colosseum and Piazza Venezia; the government justified this demolition by constructing the Via dei Fori Imperiali, the major thoroughfare now connecting the two landmarks. (It was a high price to pay just to facilitate what today we consider the bane of urban existence—traffic.)

The Fascist government also demolished part of the remaining neighborhood on the Campidoglio to create Via del Teatro Marcello on the western side of the hill. The government also "isolated" all ancient Roman monuments by demolishing whatever later building had been built around and over them, even if these structures were hundreds of years old. It is actually surprising that anything survived and still remains to be seen.

The lost neighborhoods—said to have afforded numerous magical and picturesque views of ancient Roman buildings layered with Medieval and Renaissance additions—are gone forever. However, in an attempt to recover some of the archaeological remains covered up by the Via dei Fori Imperiali, and perhaps to make amends for the scientific loss, an ambitious

Ancient Rome

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Pl. la Malfa
Via dei Cerchi
Via del Circo Massimo
Via di valle delle Camene
V. Card. Spellman
Lungotevere Aventino
C.R.ca Savella
Via di Sabina
V. valle Murcia
Piazza Pietro D'III
Lg. Arrigo VII
Piazza Giunone Reg.
Piazza Tempio d. Diana
Piazza Cav. di Malta
Piazza d. Emporio
Piazza S. Prisca
Viale Aventino
Lg. d. Vittime d. Terrorismo
Via delle Terme di Antonina
V. Antonina
Caracalla
Lg. Baldinotti
Piazza Albina
Via Aventina
Piazza di S. Balbina
V. di S. Balbina
Piazza Albania
Piazza S. Mama Uber.
Piazza d. Servil
Piazza Testaccio
Piazza Remuria
Via E. Rosa
Lg. E. Fiorito
Lg. M. Gelsomini
Via S. Rosa
Via Alberti
Viale G. Baccelli
Via d. Villa Pepoli
Piazza G. L. Bernini
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archaeological excavation was started in 1998. This much-criticized project, which is open to the public, focuses on the Imperial Forums (east of the Roman Forum), and is the largest archaeological excavation in the world. At the time of this writing, the work is approaching its final phases. When it is complete, ancient Rome will be more alive than ever to visitors.

The Fori and Palatine Hill are probably the most visited area of Rome, yet few tourists venture into the streets where we'll take you, and even fewer notice the many landmarks that are of such great historical and cultural importance to Romans today. During this walk we show you the grand monuments of ancient Rome, but we also lead you through the tiny leftover corners of the lost neighborhoods of the Campidoglio, so that you can have a glimpse of what the neighborhood was like before the government rebuilt it. We also point out monuments and works of art that are usually overlooked by harried tourists. Explore!

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Walk out of the Colosseo Metro stop and you'll find yourself on:

1. **Via dei Fori Imperiali.** This road is the single most criticized urban intervention of the Fascist regime; it erased one of the most picturesque neighborhoods of Renaissance Rome and destroyed much archaeological evidence. Excavations currently underway are creating a system of arched tunnels beneath the Via dei Fori Imperiali that give access to treasures that were paved over during the road's construction (unfortunately, for practical reasons, the road can't be done away with now).

   Turn left, walking past the Colosseum and up the slope of the hill to the entrance of the:

2. **Domus Aurea (the Golden House),** the most grandiose of Nero's follies. The sprawling palace sat in a beautifully landscaped park that occupied the whole valley of the Colosseum and extended to the Palatine Hill. Since Nero had dissipated so much state money (that was real gold decorating his "golden house"), his successors—the emperors Vespasian and his son Tito—had to work hard to restore faith in the government and refurbish the state's finances.

One of their first actions was to dismantle Nero's Domus Aurea and replace it with buildings of public utility: the Colosseum (see below) and great public baths such as the Terme di Tito, remains of which are still visible above the Domus Aurea and in the park behind it. The Domus Aurea is open Wednesday to Monday 9am to 7:45pm; last admission is 1 hour before closing. Admission is charged.

Directly across from the Metro station, just off Via dei Fori Imperial, is the imposing structure of the:

3. **Colosseum,** which was built between A.D. 70 and 80. Ancient Romans referred to the Colosseum as the Flavian Amphitheater because it was a gift from the new Emperor Vespasian (of the Flavian family) to the people. The gift was not completely disinterested, of course; the famous political strategy described by Juvenal as *Panem et Circensis* (literally "bread and circuses") is a formula that still makes complete political sense: People who are well fed and amused are easy to govern. This magnificent building rises four floors above the ground for a height of 50m (164 ft.) and has a diameter of 188m (617 ft.). It took 100,000 cubic m (over 3.5 million cubic ft.) of travertine marble and 300 tons of iron to build. Once completed, the Colosseum could hold more than 50,000 people. During days of intense heat or rain, spectators were protected by a huge tent—called the *velarium*—that was pulled over the top of the arena using a complicated system of ropes and pulleys maneuvered by a crew of sailors. Contrary to popular belief, the amphitheater was never used for the martyrdom of early Christians—they were prosecuted by the Roman government only for individual acts of political insubordination and not as a religious sect—because citizens were given much liberty to worship in religiously eclectic Rome.

   Several kinds of games were held in the amphitheater: chariot races, sports competitions, shows of exotic animals, and the extremely popular gladiatorial games. These were bloody and violent affairs in which trained men—mostly war prisoners who fought to earn their freedom, but also professional gladiators who performed for the glory and the money—confronted each other or ferocious beasts in a fight to death.

A Brief History of Rome

As legend has it, Rome was founded by Romolo (Romulus) and his twin brother Remo (Remus). Mars (the god of war) fathered these demigod twins; the mother, the daughter of a local king, Rea Silvia. After a close escape from death—they were saved by a wolf who nursed them—the twins grew up and set about establishing a new town. After a dispute, Romolo took over and marked on the ground the limits of his new town. The date: April 21, 753 B.C. Rome grew to be a beacon of civilization, absorbing and borrowing any good features from all other cultures it encountered (or conquered) and creating a set of rules, principles, and laws that are still the bedrock of modern Western values and institutions.

Rome began as a collection of shepherds' huts populated by the local Italic tribe. The **Etruscans,** a local people famed for their seafaring, gold and metal work, and trading, deeply influenced the town. The Etruscans gave Rome its name, drained the swamps, built sewers, and introduced writing. Weakened by their struggles with the Greeks who were colonizing southern Italy, the Etruscans lost their power over Rome near the beginning of the 5th century B.C.

The **Roman Republic** was founded in 509 B.C., when the last of Rome's kings was overthrown. The republic was headed by two consuls and the senate, all controlled by the upper or *patrician* (aristocratic) class. The *plebeians* (the working class) later obtained their own council and were represented by tribunes. It took hundreds of years for Rome to gain control over the Italian peninsula, including decades of bloody war with Carthage (the Punic Wars, which began in 264 B.C.). The city suffered many reverses.

Gradually, Roman military supremacy was established. When the Carthaginian general Hannibal took 6 months to march over the Alps to attack the Romans from behind in 218 B.C., that marked the start of the Second Punic War. Eventually the Punic Wars ended

with the Romans erasing Carthage from the map in 146 B.C. The door was then open for Rome to spread its influence across the Mediterranean. It ruled its provinces through governors and allowed subject countries to retain local government and customs—though betrayal of Rome was brutally avenged. The Republic became fantastically rich, and Hellenic and Eastern art, wealth, and cultural influences flowed into Rome. Recent archaeological finds show a Roman presence as far away as China's borders.

Caesar became a tyrant after his defeat of **Pompey**—this marked the beginning of the Roman Empire. Following Caesar's murder on the Ides of March (Mar 15) in 44 B.C., civil war ensued. Caesar's grandnephew and adopted son, Octavian, won and became the first emperor, **Caesar Augustus.** His regime turned Rome into a glowing marble city we think of. A string of mostly debauched and even insane rulers followed: **Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius,** and **Nero.** Rome famously burned in A.D. 64 under Nero's reign (though not, perhaps, by his own hand).

The last hurrah, so to speak, for the Roman Empire came in the 2nd century, when it enjoyed a string of "good" emperors who brought order, stable succession, and civility to the empire: **Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius,** and the philosopher-emperor **Marcus Aurelius.** With the ascension of Marcus's 19-year-old son, **Commodus** (the villain of the fictionalized film *Gladiator*), the empire was headed once again for trouble. With his assassination in A.D. 192, the empire plunged once more into chaos.

When **Emperor Constantine** converted to Christianity and founded Constantinople in A.D. 330, Rome's wealth shifted east. The western empire began to crumble under barbarian pressure: The **Goths** sacked Rome in A.D. 410; the Huns came next under **Attila,** and they were followed by the **Vandals** of North Africa. In A.D. 476, the German chief Odoacer deposed the western Roman emperor, in effect signaling the end of the once invincible Roman Empire.

How did the Flavian Amphitheater become known as the Colosseum? After the famous fire of 64, Nero constructed a colossal gold statue of himself, represented as the sun god, with his head surrounded by rays. The emperor Hadrian moved the statue of Nero to the area adjacent to the amphitheater. In medieval times, people started referring to the amphitheater as the "Colosseo," the place of the *Colossum,* or enormous statue. The spot where the statue once stood is marked today by a platform planted with cypresses.

Transformed into a fortress during the Middle Ages, the edifice was donated to the city in the 14th century. The popes used it as a quarry for building materials. The holes in its walls are the casings for iron clamps that attached the travertine marble that originally covered the building. The marble was removed for reuse in other buildings, such as St. Peter's Basilica. In the late Middle Ages, the Colosseum was believed to be the gate of hell and a meeting ground for the spirits of all the gladiators and slaves killed there. To augment its dark fame and the local ghost population, the nearby Esquiline Hill was largely occupied by cemeteries and places of communal burial, where bodies of criminals and the homeless were easily disposed of.

You can visit this monument daily from 9am to 1 hour before sunset (last admission is 1 hr. before closing). Ticket price includes admission to the Palatine Hill.

Just southwest of the Colosseum is Rome's most famous triumphal arch, the:

4. **Arch of Constantine,** built by the Roman Senate in A.D. 315 to celebrate the victory of Emperor Constantine over Massenzio in A.D. 312. If you are surprised by the speed of construction, you might be interested to know that the Romans "recycled" a number of statues and relief sculptures taken from earlier monuments, such as the statues of barbarian prisoners at the top of the four columns on each facade, and the medallions over the lateral arches on both facades. The end product, though, is indeed magnificent—the largest and the best conserved of ancient Rome, second only to the Arch of Trajan in Benevento.

Walk back to Via dei Fori Imperiali and immediately to your left (on the side of the street opposite the Metro) climb the Clivo di Venere Felice. This leads to the church of:

5. **Santa Francesca Romana.** Built in the 9th century, this church was enlarged in the 10th century and named Santa Maria Nova in contrast to Santa Maria Antiqua (see below). In the 12th century the elegant Romanesque bell tower was added, which you can still see today. The church's name was changed again in the 15th century, in honor of Santa Francesca Romana, who pronounced her vows here in 1425. The facade and the interior decoration date from the 17th century, but inside are many earlier works of art. One of the most intriguing is the basalt slabs protected by a metal grating on the wall of the right transept; these are the *Silices Apostolici,* bearing St. Peter's imprint.

   The painting over the main altar is a 12th-century Madonna with child, and the mosaics of the apse date from the same period. Several other very early masterpieces decorate the crypt, including a precious icon from the 5th century that belonged to Santa Maria Antiqua.

   Walk down the ramp and turn left on Via dei Fori Imperiali. Walk north to Largo Romolo e Remo. Climb the ramp to the left of the archaeological area of the Roman Forum and turn left on Via in Miranda. Located here is the entrance to the church of:

6. **San Lorenzo in Miranda.** This church was built in the 7th to 8th century inside part of the temple of Antonino and Faustina (the front of the temple can be viewed from inside the archaeological area of the Roman Forum). The main altar and the painting of St. Lawrence's martyrdom above it are both by Pietro da Cortona. In the first chapel to the left you'll find a *Madonna with Child and Saints* by Domenichino, who also designed the chapel's decorations.

   Also on Via in Miranda (across from San Lorenzo in Miranda) is the new facade of the basilica of:

7. **Santi Cosma e Damiano.** This church was built in the 6th century inside the public library of the Foro della Pace—a forum built by Vespasian in A.D. 71 to 75—and one of the halls of the Temple of Romulus, a temple facing the Via Sacra inside the archaeological area of the

Roman Forum. The church was remodeled in the 17th century, when its floor was elevated by 7m (23 ft.) to bring it to the level of the Campo Vaccino (the pasture that had covered the Roman Forum), transforming the new lower level into a sort of crypt. The new facade and entrance date from 1947, but don't let that fool you; inside there is still much of value to see.

In the hall to the left of the entrance you can still see the original pavement of the ancient Foro della Pace; from the entrance you access the 17th-century cloister where there are doors to both the church and the crypt. The apse of the main church—strangely shortened by the elevation of the floor in the 17th century—is decorated with the original 6th-century mosaics and a painting of the Madonna with child from the 13th century (over the main altar). In the lower church you can see the original 6th-century floor and altar.

Walk back down to Largo Romolo e Remo and turn left; here you will find the entrance to the archaeological area of:

8. **The Roman Forum.** This was the center of public life in ancient Rome. The Forum developed as early as the 7th century B.C., when the existing marshes were drained through the construction of the Cloaca Maxima, which conveyed the water to the Tiber. Building the forum was a natural step in Rome's development because the marshy area is situated on a straight line that originates in the very early settlements on the fords of the Tiber River near the Tiberina island, connects the two adjacent market areas—the Foro Boario and the Foro Olitorio (see Piazza della Bocca della Verità, later in this chapter, and chapter 6, "The Ghetto")—and ends at the Roman Forum. Most of Rome's economic, political, administrative, and religious activities were held in the buildings of the Roman Forum, which eventually stretched from the Capitoline Hill on one side to the Palatine hill on the other.

   Because it was completely abandoned with the fall of the Roman Empire, much of the Roman Forum was progressively buried under centuries of sediment and reclaimed by vegetation. In medieval times it was called Campo Vaccino (cow field) and used as a pasture. During

The Palatine Hill (Palatino)

This hill was the residential area for noble families from the foundation of the city back in the 8th century B.C.; it became the seat of the Imperial Palace with the ascension of Augustus (Rome's first emperor) in the 1st century B.C. So definite was the hill's vocation as residence of Roman nobles that its Latin name—*Palatium*—is the word we still use today for such housing: palace. In a corner of the hill (west of the House of Augustus and southwest of the House of Livia) is the *Casa Romuli,* a hut that was celebrated during antiquity as Romulus's house and restored.

The Palatine is also where the most ancient rituals were celebrated, including the festival of the goddess Pales on the 21st of April—the day of the mythical foundation of Rome, which is still celebrated today—and the *Lupercalia,* the festivals held by the grotto at the foot of the hill where the she-wolf is said to have raised the mythical twins Romulus and Remus. A real wolf was kept there until the late 1960s—I remember seeing it as a child and being duly impressed by the thing, but more than a bit sorry for the wolf, which looked truly sad in those dreary surroundings with heavy traffic noise and smoke.

The Palatine was abandoned at the end of antiquity but rediscovered in the 16th century by the powerful Farnese family, which built a grandiose villa there, the famous Orti Farnesiani, of which little can still be seen. Indeed, after the family was extinguished, the villa was progressively torn down in order to proceed with the archaeological excavations that began in earnest in the 18th century. Only part of the villa's magnificent gardens remains today.

A visit of the Palatine Hill is very rewarding for both the many remains of the Imperial Palace and the famous frescoes of the Casa di Livia, but also for the evocative atmosphere and views over Rome. It is open daily 9am to 1 hour before sunset and there is an admission fee, which also includes the Colosseum (see above); we definitely recommend a guided tour, for which you can sign up at the archaeological office (✆ **06/39967700**).

the Renaissance it became a source of construction materials free for the taking. It kept an important role in the life of the neighborhood, though. For example, it was the site of the traditional confrontation that was carried out once a year, pitting the youth of Trastevere against the youth of the Rione Monti (the neighborhood of the Imperial Fori east of the Roman Forum). This was very much a contact sport; the *sassaiola* (throwing of stones) was a real battle, with opponents wearing leather and steel body armor, and injured victims left on the ground. The best feats of courage were then celebrated in the local *osterie* on the evening of the battle, with plenty of wine to help.

Excavated and transformed into an enclosed archaeological park in the late 19th century, the area has been recently reopened to free public access (daily 9am to 1 hr. before sunset). If you plan on fully exploring this site, we definitely recommend that you book an official guided tour to make it all come to life (call the archaeological office to sign up for one at ✆ **06/39967700**).

Enter the archaeological area of the Roman Forum. Walk straight from the entrance, cross the Via Sacra, and you will come to the church of:

9. **Santa Maria Antiqua.** Still under restoration at press time, this church was built using some of the lower halls of the Imperial Palace on the Palatine Hill and consecrated to St. Mary in the 6th century A.D. It is decorated with splendid frescoes and has an interesting history. After the church sustained earthquake damage in the 9th century, it was abandoned in favor of the new church Santa Maria Nova (today called Santa Francesca Romana; see above). In the 13th century, Santa Maria Liberatrice was built over the ruins of Santa Maria Antiqua to celebrate Pope St. Sylvester's victory over a dragon. Legend has it that the beast—which had killed many innocents with its poisonous breath—dwelled under the nearby temple of Castor and Pollux, and that the pope confronted it armed only with a crucifix. Tamed by the pope's invocation of the Virgin, the dragon meekly followed him away from the temple.

Santa Maria Liberatrice was demolished in 1900 to free and restore the older church beneath. Santa Maria Antiqua is due to be opened to the public again soon.

Walk out of the archaeological area again and turn left on Via Salara Vecchia toward the:

10. **Capitoline Hill (Capitolino).** Strategically situated, this hill had two summits: The *arx,* to the northwest, was home to the temple of Juno Moneta and the first mint of ancient Rome; and the *Capitolium,* to the southeast, where the monumental temple of Jupiter—later dedicated to the Capitoline Triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva—was originally built in the 6th century B.C. (this temple was destroyed in a fire in 83 B.C.). In A.D. 78, the elegant building of the Tabularium—the state archives—was built between the two summits, dramatically walling off that end of the Roman Forum.

In Roman times, there were only two ways to access the hill. First was the Clivus Capitolinus, climbing up from the Via Sacra in the Forum. Second was two ramps of steps: the *Scalae Gemoniae* connecting the Forum to the *arx,* and the *Centum Gradus* connecting the Campus Martius to the Capitolium and passing by the Tarpeian rock (see below).

Abandoned in medieval times, the hill became the Monte Caprino (Goat Mountain), used for animal pasture. The only inhabited building was the monastery and church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli (see below). The hill regained a bit of its public functions with the building of the Palazzo Senatorio over the Roman Tabularium (see Piazza del Campidoglio later), and its slopes became alive with houses and convents. All this medieval warren of structures was then destroyed with the construction of the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II and of the Via del Teatro Marcello shortly after.

Take Via del Tulliano to your left and after a short climb you'll come to a belvedere overlooking the Forum, where you'll find the church of:

11. **Santi Luca e Martina.** Originally built in the 7th century inside part of the Forum of Caesar, it was completely rebuilt between 1635 and 1664 by Pietro da Cortona. The

luminous interior is one of his masterpieces, but the exterior is surprising since the church was isolated by the demolition of adjacent buildings in preparation for construction of the Via dei Fori Imperiali. The artist obtained the right to have his family tomb inside the church, and you can see his burial monument on the floor of the upper church. He also designed the beautiful altar of Santa Martina in the lower church.

Opposite the church is a portico giving access to the:

12. **Carcere Mamertino.** This building housed the state prison from the beginning of Rome. In the 17th century, a church was built over the original building, which can be visited underneath. While its facade dates from 40 B.C., the building is older; you enter into a square room where, from an opening in the floor, you can gain access to the circular room below; this is where the prisoners were thrown (and where they were eventually strangled). Legend has it that this was the prison where Saint Peter was held and that on that occasion he baptized his guards with the water from the underground spring existing there, but there is no historical proof. You can visit daily from 9am to 5pm in winter and from 9am to 6:30pm in summer. No admission is charged but offerings are welcome.

Continue past the church and climb the ramp of stairs to your right to Via di San Pietro in Carcere; follow this straight for a few steps and then turn right up another ramp. This leads to the **portico** of the monastery attached to Santa Maria in Aracoeli (see below). It is all that remains of the monastery, which was demolished together with the spectacular belvedere tower nearby, for the construction of the monument to Vittorio Emanuele. Before the portico to your left are the two remaining floors of the Romanesque bell tower and the lateral entrance of:

13. **Santa Maria in Aracoeli.** Here you will find yourself in the right nave of the church. Santa Maria in Aracoeli was originally a Greek monastery built in the 7th century over the remains of the temple of Juno. In the 13th century the church was completely rebuilt; the exterior and the cosmatesque (a mosaic of marble and colored stones)

floor inside are original and date from that period. The naves are divided by antique marble columns, while the coffered ceiling is from the 16th century. The interior contains frescoes of various periods, including a whole cycle by Pinturicchio in the first chapel from the main entrance to the right, depicting the life of San Bernardino. There are also frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli in the third chapel on the left from the main entrance. Among the artwork, also notice in the right transept the 13th-century tomb of Luca Savelli, one of sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio's masterpieces.

Exit the church from its main portal and descend the steep set of stairs leading to Piazza Aracoeli. Notice to your right the Romanesque bell tower of the small church of **San Biagio de Mercato;** this was built in the 11th century over an *insula* (ancient Roman residential block) from the 1st century—one of the few examples remaining of this kind of architecture, which was the typical dwelling of ancient Roman plebeians. Originally, the insula was probably six stories high; four stories are still visible.

Turn left and climb the monumental staircase designed by Michelangelo (the staircase was even more dramatic before being shortened in the 1920s for the opening of the Via del Teatro Marcello). Notice the two lions, which are original Egyptian sculptures from the Roman temple of Isis; they were transformed into fountains in the 16th century and placed here. Notice also the huge blocks in the garden to your right, which are the remains of the walls of Republican Rome, dating from the 7th century B.C. At the top of the staircase is:

14. **Piazza del Campidoglio,** perhaps Rome's most beautiful square, and well worth the climb. It was designed by Michelangelo, together with the facades of the surrounding buildings, and finished after his death. To your right is the Palazzo dei Conservatori, probably built in the 12th century, with the new facade designed by Michelangelo in the 16th century. To your left is the Palazzo Nuovo, built in the 17th century following Michelangelo's design for the Palazzo dei Conservatori. In front of you is the Palazzo Senatorio, built in medieval times over the Tabularium

(Roman State Archives) but also with a new facade based on Michelangelo's design. The piazza is surrounded by a balustrade decorated with antique artwork. The two statues of the Dioscuri with their horses date from the late imperial age, while the remains of two colossal statues of Constantine and his son Constantius II are from the thermal bath of Constantine. The glorious statue of Marcus Aurelius on horseback (set on a pedestal designed by Michelangelo) is a copy; the original was moved inside the Capitoline Museum in 1981. The unique pavement design of the square was built in 1940, but was carefully constructed following an original drawing from 1567.

The palaces house the Capitoline Museums, which include a picture gallery, beautifully decorated halls, and extensive collections of antiquities. Here is conserved, for example, the famous **lupa capitolina,** a 5th-century B.C. bronze sculpture of the she-wolf that nursed the mythical twins Romulus and Remus. From the museums you can also visit the Tabularium. This imposing building stood over 11 great arches and housed the archives of the Roman Empire, including civil registries. In the Middle Ages, the building was used as a deposit for salt and as a prison. You can visit the museums Tuesday to Sunday from 9am to 8pm (last admission is 1 hr. before closing). There is an admission fee.

Take a Break In the terrace of the Palazzo dei Conservatori is a great cafe and restaurant where you can comfortably sit and enjoy the views. They provide several levels of service in elegant surroundings. The place is quite popular for an *aperitivo,* especially in fair weather.

Walk to the right of the Palazzo Senatorio and descend to the **belvedere,** from which you can admire the most beautiful view over the Roman Forum and the Colosseum. It is spectacular at sunrise but also very atmospheric at night. Another great view is from the left side of the Palazzo Senatorio, from where you can also see some remains of the medieval buildings that were taken down in the 20th century.

Next take the Via delle Tre Pile, to the right of the Palazzo dei Conservatori; this is the most remote part of the hill and rarely visited. Here was the house of Michelangelo, which was demolished in the 19th century (the facade was rebuilt in 1941 on the Passeggiata del Gianicolo). Passing the 16th-century monumental portal, which leads to the Villa Caffarelli, you'll see to your left at number 1 **Palazzo Clementino,** built for Pope Clement X in the 17th century; at number 3 stands **Palazzo Caffarelli,** built in the 16th century over the ruins of the temple of Jupiter. Remains of the temple still stand in the little garden to the left of the entrance to Palazzo Caffarelli, while the panoramic terrace across the street from the palace rests on some of the temple's supports.

Continuing on, you reach Via di Villa Caffarelli; turn left at the end onto Via del Tempio di Giove, lined to your left with 19th-century buildings, and to your right by the Belvedere Tarpeo. This was built over the famous:

15. **Tarpeian Rock (Rupe Tarpea),** where starting from a very early period in Rome's history, criminals and traitors were thrown to their death. Used until quite late in the Roman Empire, it was a place of capital executions again until the middle of the 16th century. The tradition started when Rome was only a citadel on the Capitoline Hill, strenuously fighting against the Sabines. The historian Titus Livius reports that in the 8th century B.C. Tarpeia, the daughter of the gatekeeper, let the king of the Sabines Tito Tazio and his men into the citadel in exchange for "what they had on their left arm." She had in mind the heavy gold jewelry the Sabines wore but instead she was crushed by the heavy shields they also carried on that arm, and then thrown from the high rock. From that time forward, a free-fall from the rock became the traditional punishment for traitors.

Continuing straight past the belvedere, enter the vaulted passage under an 18th-century building; it leads to an elegant 16th-century **portico** designed by Vignola. The staircase at the end of the passage leads back to Piazza del Campidoglio. Instead, retrace your steps out of the portico and turn left to continue on Via del Tempio di Giove.

Turn right on Via del Monte Tarpeo, which runs at the bottom of the Tarpeian Rock and turn right on Via della Consolazione. You'll arrive at Piazza della Consolazione, the location of:

16. **Santa Maria della Consolazione,** a church built in the 15th century together with the building behind it—originally a hospital—and completely redone in the 16th century. It is richly decorated with frescoes and paintings by important artists, including Antoniazzo Romano and Giovanni Baglione.

    Cross the piazza and turn left into Via San Giovanni Decollato, leading into one of the few surviving corners of the neighborhood demolished in the 1920s. Turn left onto Via Bucimazza and stroll down it to Via dei Fienili, getting the feeling of what this whole area must have been like. Follow Via dei Fienili to Piazza della Consolazione and, retracing your steps, back to Via Bucimazza. Here, turn left into Via dei Foraggi and stroll to the end.

    Turn right onto Via del Foro Romano and immediately right again on Via di San Teodoro. Here on your left you'll see the church of:

17. **San Teodoro,** built in the 6th century but completely redone in the 15th century. The apse inside is still decorated with the original mosaic from the 6th century.

    Continue on Via di San Teodoro and turn right onto Via del Velabro, graced in the middle by the:

18. **Arco di Giano (Arch of Janus Quadrifrons).** This four-faced arch may have been a triumphal arch in Roman times or simply to give shelter to Romans in this once-bustling commercial area. In the Middle Ages it was used as the portal for a fortified tower—the Torre dei Frangipane—which was demolished in the 19th century to restore the Roman monument. Ironically, the "restorers" also took down what they thought was a medieval addition that instead later turned out to be the top of the ancient arch, built of bricks and covered in marble.

    Before the arch is the church of:

19. **San Giorgio in Velabro,** with its Romanesque bell tower, another example of a church rebuilt in the 9th century over

an older church (this time dating from the 5th or 6th c.). San Giorgio has had many additions and renovations throughout the centuries; in the 1920s it was restored to its original Romanesque appearance. Inside, the three naves are divided by antique columns and decorated with 13th century frescoes by Pietro Cavallini (restored in the 15th c.).

To the left of the church is the:

20. **Arco degli Argentari,** a monumental Roman arch that was one of the entrances to the Foro Boario (animal market) that occupied the whole Piazza della Bocca della Verità (see below). Built in 204 by the *argentarii* (money-changers), it is dedicated to emperor Septimius Severus, his wife, Julia Domna, and his sons, Caracalla and Geta. All of them are represented in the inner face of the arch—notice that the figure to the left was abraded: It represented Geta, the younger son who was murdered in 211. The death of Severus the year before had left the boys (Caracalla was 22, Geta 21) in charge as coemperors, a recipe for trouble. Caracalla had Geta assassinated and afterward ordered all his younger brother's images and inscriptions destroyed.

A few steps away, at number 3 of Via del Velabro, you can get a glimpse of the **Cloaca Maxima,** the main channel that drained the water from the Forum and conveyed it to the Tiber. Built in the 2nd century B.C., it is still in use—you can still see it coming out just south of the Ponte Palatino, behind the temples of Piazza della Bocca della Verità (see below).

Continue descending Via del Velabro to:

21. **Piazza della Bocca della Verità.** This large square corresponds to the **Foro Boario,** Ancient Rome's animal market. Located by the ford on the Tiber, this marketplace—together with the nearby Foro Olitorio (see the Ghetto walk)—was in use since the Iron Age. Across from you are two temples that were "isolated" by the demolitions of 1924–25. The round one is commonly referred to as the **Tempio di Vesta,** because it is circular in shape like the Vestal temple inside the Forum; however, it is now believed to be the Temple of Ercole Vincitore, dating from the 2nd century B.C. It is the oldest surviving building in Rome, and was transformed into a church in the

12th century—its roof, believed to be a cupola, was lost. The second temple is commonly called the **Temple of the Fortuna Virile,** but it was actually a temple to Portunus, the god protecting the nearby harbor on the river; it was also transformed into a church in the 9th century.

Walk north and take Via Petroselli; immediately to your left at number 54 you will find the:

22. **Casa dei Crescenzi,** one of Rome's few preserved and complete medieval buildings. It was built between 1040 and 1065 by Nicolò di Crescenzio to protect the nearby ford on the Tiber and was restored in 1940. It is interesting to see how different pieces from antique buildings were reused in the construction.

Retrace your steps to Piazza della Bocca della Verità. Across from the temples and among the trees you can see a 13th-century palace—the **casa dei Pierleoni**—which has been heavily remodeled and renovated in later periods; to its right is the church of:

23. **Santa Maria in Cosmedin,** one of the oldest in Rome. It was built in the 6th century over two previous structures: a 3rd-century chapel and the ancient Ara Maxima of Hercules (Great Altar of Hercules) from the 5th century B.C., which is still visible in the church's crypt. Santa Maria in Cosmedin was enlarged in the 8th century and splendidly decorated (*cosmedin* means "ornament"). It is one of the few Roman examples of Byzantine and medieval art.

Outside the church you can admire the seven-story Romanesque bell tower from the 12th century and, under the portico, the famous:

24. **Bocca della Verità (Mouth of Truth).** This round carved marble disc was an ancient version of what we would call a manhole cover, originally placed over an aperture of the city's drainage system (the carving depicts a river god). It was placed here in the 17th century. Legend wants us to believe, however, that this stone did much more than guard a drainage pipe. It is said that if you tell a lie while putting your hand inside the face's mouth, it will chop it off. Accordingly, it became a test for

proving one's sincerity, and in fact the stone was really used in the Middle Ages to punish liars, whose hands were cut off by a man with a sword hidden behind. A witty story less grisly than this truth has become attached to this tradition, and concerns a noble young woman accused by her husband of adultery. She was brought in front of the stone and, as the crowd parted in front of her, a young man rushed forward and kissed her, pretending to offer a last Christian tribute to the poor woman. She walked to the stone and, placing her hand in position, declared that no man but her husband and the youth who had just kissed her had ever touched her. As a result of the ingenious action of her lover (the young man, of course) and her prompt understanding of his cunning plan, she was acquitted.

Retrace your steps and walk right from the church entrance, then turn right up Via dei Cerchi, passing on your left the imposing ruins of the Domus Augustana and on your right, a building that once housed a pasta mill, to the:

25. **Circo Massimo (Circus Maximus).** This grand space was used for many public performances but is most known for its violent chariot races. It measured 650m (2,132 ft.) long by 125m (410 ft.) wide and was many times rebuilt and decorated with statues and two obelisks—one now in Piazza del Popolo and the other in Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano. The circus was expanded by Trajan first and then by Caracalla from 150,000 seats to 350,000. In use until A.D. 549, it was lined with businesses and stores. The medieval tower on the grounds is the **Torre della Moletta,** built in the 12th century by the monks of the nearby monastery of San Gregorio to defend the mill that existed there.

You can walk inside the circus—it is used as a park by Romans—and reach the Metro station Circo Massimo at its other end.