

A Day at the Vatican



Likely to sell out

An inside tour of the secrets and treasures of the Holy City

Rome's most popular attraction, the residence of the Pope and the World's smallest country is a chance of a lifetime opportunity which is not to be missed!

At only €110



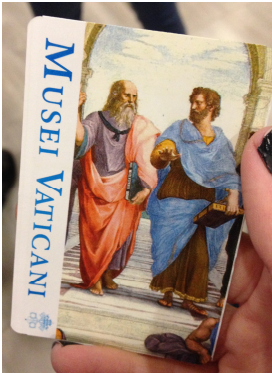
Enjoy the breath-taking Sistine Chapel and admire St Peter's Basilica with our experienced tour guide. With our Vatican tour we ensure a hassle free day without having to queue and entry one hour before the general public.

What to see at the Vatican?



The Vatican City State is one of the most popular of tourist destinations in the world- and one definitely not to be missed on your visit to Rome. The most holy of places, as well as having a wealth of history, culture and art it is the home of the Papal State, the residence of the Pope and the birthplace of Catholicism.

Within the tour we will visit some 12,000 rooms which contain nearly 4,000 years of history. You will see the breathtaking highlights of what the Vatican has to offer including the extraordinary Sistine Chapel, the Vatican museums and St Peter's Basilica.



Times of tours:

9-11 am

12-2 pm

3-5 pm

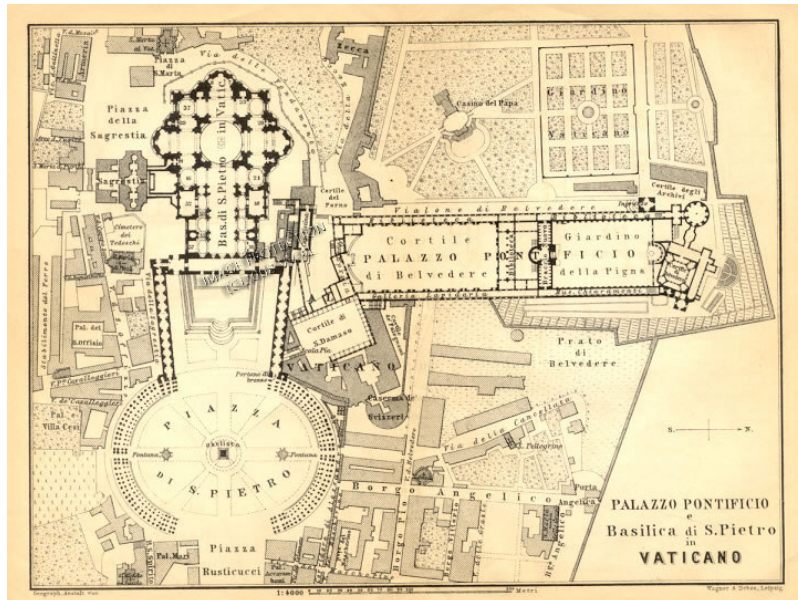
History of the Vatican

For over two thousand years the Christian faith has played an integral part in the lives of billions of people from all across the globe. After the death of Jesus Christ, the care of the Christian Church was handed over to the apostle Peter, ordained by Jesus as "the Rock of my Church" within Matthew 16:18. The Christian church honours Peter as a major saint within the faith and considers him to be the founder of the Church of Antioch and later the Church of Rome, taking over the position of the first Bishop of Rome. According to Christian tradition, Saint Peter was crucified upside down in Rome and buried nearby whilst under the reign and order of Emperor Nero, as was the fate of many Christian during Roman times.

Early traditions suggest that this spot at which Saint Peter met his end was the site of the Circus of Nero. It was 250 years after his death that an exquisite basilica was built by Emperor Constantine in dedication to the influential figure. However, this unfortunately fell into disrepair and was neglected until Pope Nicolas V (1447-1455) decided to rebuild it. However, it took 176 years, a number of Popes and various designers (including Raphael and Michelangelo) until the great architectural project was completed in 1626. This dome was to be St Peter's basilica, the greatest Church in Christendom.



All visitors are provided with headsets upon arrival



Over two thousand years of architectural history can be found within the Vatican walls. The Vatican is comprised of a mixture of architectural styles that can date back as far as ancient Rome. The name Vatican was in fact already in use during the time of the Roman Republic, in which the land across from the river Tiber was a boggy area separate from the city of Rome. Even before the arrival of Christianity, this part of Rome had long been considered to be a sacred place. Some of the earliest historical features can be found underground, dating back as far as the 2nd-4th

century. Pagan shrines as well as a number of small early Christian churches found here have been preserved for hundreds of years here due to very little building within the Vatican City during the last century.

St Peter's Square



When you approach the Vatican St Peter's Square is your first introduction to the immense grandeur of the home of the Catholic Church. The immensity of the square is worth a visit alone, with breath-taking sights such as the Basilica amplifying the piazza. With Michelangelo's blue dome and the Egyptian granite obelisk dominating the scene, there is far more to witness than just the architecture. You will see the balconies of the Papal apartment and also a Papal Audience if taking place. The striking square was built by the artist Bernini between the years 1656-67, under the leadership of Pope Alexander VII (1655-67).



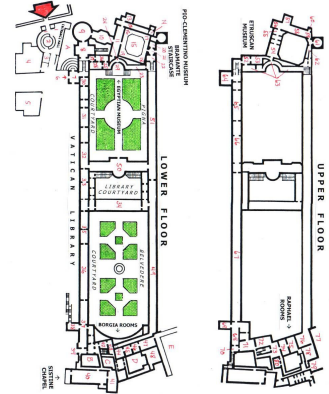
Originally, the area that surrounded the Basilica building was a selection of small chapels and buildings with no organised design. Bernini was to improve this by creating a striking effect, a vast open space in which the pilgrims would enter after emerging from the maze of buildings and streets. The square was to be the largest in Rome at 314 metres long by 240 metres wide, encircled by 140 statues of the Saints at 3.20m high running along the surrounding columns.



Vatican Museum

The Vatican Museums were formally established under both Pope Clement XIV (1769-1774) and Pope Pius VI (1775-1799) who were the first popes to open up the mass collections of artwork to the general public to view, encouraging culture within the arts to the people of Rome. As the decades passed, more popes began to add and contribute to the collection of artwork, displaying it with the ever growing collection of which it began. Today, these pieces of artwork are spread out amongst thirteen museums within the vast complex of the two Vatican palaces.

Fun fact: The Vatican museum sees over 4 million visitors per year!



A strong appeal to the Vatican Museums' for many is the impressive collection of ancient Roman and Greek art which it holds, housing some of the most famous statues including the Laocoon and the Apollo del Belvedere. The Apollo del Belevdere resides in the Octagon Court, the oldest part of the Vatican Museum which contains several masterpieces. A Roman copy of a Greek statue, it depicts the god Apollo stretching his arm out in front of him. The Laocoon (middle image) however, remains more famous. Created around 30 BC it was probably copied from an original made in the 2nd century BC. It depicts the Trojan priest Laocoon between his two sons, whilst being strangled by serpents. According to the Roman poet Virgil, Laocoon warned the Trojans not to bring the wooden horse within the city of Troy causing the goddess Athena to send out two serpents to kill the priest.

Book early to avoid the mass queues! Within our tour, booking will ensure you missing out the long lines and waiting times. You will be ensured early access to all the Vatican highlights!





The Raphael Rooms



Within the tour we will then visit the Raphael rooms. Despite not being as well-known as the Sistine Chapel they are both in close competition due to the artwork within them, the set of frescos within the rooms being as just as beautiful as the work of Michelangelo. The artist Raphael, who alongside Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were the greatest of the Renaissance masters, was commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1508 to decorate the four vast rooms of the papal apartments. Raphael was still young at this time, just 25 and was relatively unheard of within the art world. Out of the four rooms Raphael himself only painted two due to his premature death at 37, the others being completed by his students following his designs.

The first of the rooms is the Constantine Hall, painted after Raphael's death. Within this fresco are scenes of the life of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who made Christianity the first official religion. The next room is the Room of Heliodorus, partly done by Raphael, the theme within this room focuses on the divine intervention protecting the church and saints. Within the room there is a painting showing the expulsion of Heliodorus from the temple in Jerusalem. The Room of the Segnatura follows this. Named after the group that gathered here, the subject within the room is harmony and the values of Christianity. The only room completely painted by Raphael himself, it depicts a debate between the two Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. However, many other faces are within the scene including Pythagoras and Socrates, even Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. The final of the rooms is the Room of Fire, named after the fresco of Pope Leo III and Leo IV. The painting depicts the Fire in the Borgo in which Leo IV extinguishes it by making the sign of a cross. All the paintings within these rooms occupied much of Raphael's working life, considered to be masterpieces of Renaissance art it is astounding to see how much of an impact he made during a short period of time. If there's only a few things to aim to see within the Vatican Museums besides from the Sistine Chapel, make sure it's the Raphael Rooms.

We advise bringing a smaller bag with you on the day. This is due to security reasons with the mass crowds in busy rooms. Also bags which are over the size of 40 x 35 x 15 cm are required to be placed in cloakrooms until to tour has finished.

The Sistine Chapel



The Sistine Chapel is for many, the main thing to see on their visit to the Vatican and you would be wrong not to. The most famous attraction in the Vatican Museums, the beauty and serenity of the world renowned place is enough in its own right to draw in the crowds. An unparalleled experience, this treasured site is a historic masterpiece.

World Famous



Situated in the Apostolic Palace, the chapel was built in the 15th century to become a private chapel for Pope Sixtus IV. The proportions of the Sistine Chapel were built to the exact as those of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, showing its importance by drawing upon the Old Testament. The chapel was originally known as the Cappella Magna; however, it later took its name from Pope Sixtus IV who restored the chapel between 1477 and 1480. Since that time, the chapel has constantly remained in use, whether for religious and papal activity to hordes of visitors seeing it each day. Although normally crowded with tourists, the Sistine Chapel became the site of the conclave not long after it was completed in the 15th century. During the election of a new pontiff, the chapel is closed to the public and the Cardinals lock themselves away in the well-fortified room until an overall majority has been achieved and a new Head of the Catholic Church decided. This unique tradition which has gone on for hundreds of years is then finalised with the burning of the ballots, the colour of the smoke which rises informs the outside world of their decision. If the smoke is black the result is negative, however, if the smoke is white it is a positive result.





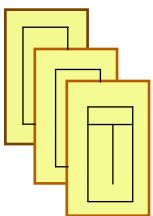
However, the fame of the Sistine Chapel lies mainly in the beautiful frescos decorating the entire room. The striking images are the famous work of the great artist Michelangelo, commissioned by Pope Julius II in 1508 to repaint the ceiling. Despite being intimidated at first by the large scale project, the painter began working on the relatively blank canvas using bright colours in order to make sure it was visible from ground level.



On the highest part of the ceiling he painted over 300 figures within nine scenes from the book of Genesis; these include “The Separation of Light From Darkness”, “The Drunkenness of Noah” and the most well-known “The Creation of Adam” and “The Fall of Man and the Expulsion from Paradise”. On the lowest part of the ceiling you will see the ancestors of Christ and above this Michelangelo painted the male and female prophets.



Fun fact: Contrary to popular belief Michelangelo did not actually paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling whilst lying down, the scaffolding he built meant he could paint it from a standing position.



Practical Info

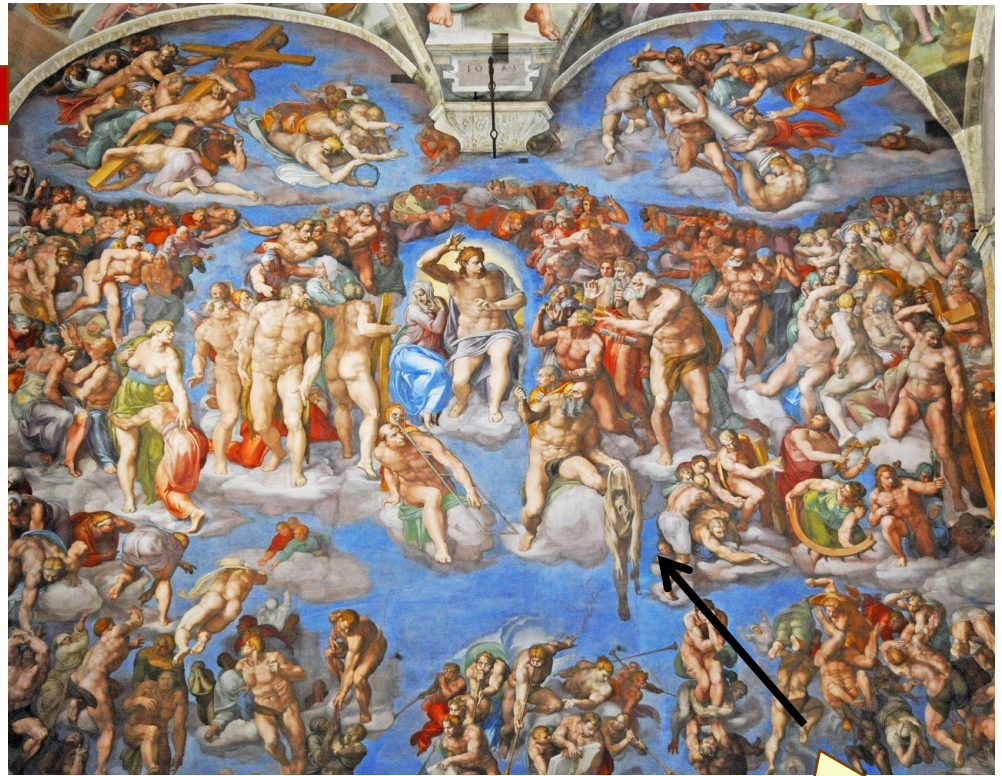
Inside the Vatican, the Sistine Chapel can be entered via the Vatican Museum around the corner from St Peter's Square. It can be reached by Metro Line A, station Ottaviana-S. Pietro-Musei Vaticani or Cipro. Tram 19 to Piazza del Risorgimento.

Please note: Due to large crowds, the lines both inside and outside can be very long. We highly recommend you pre-purchase a skip-the-line ticket.



The Last Judgment

Fun fact: Michelangelo spent four years working on the ceiling, the work was so physically hard he permanently damaged his eyesight.



Self-portrait of Michelangelo!

More than 20 years later Pope Clement VII commissioned Michelangelo to paint a large fresco behind the altar; this is the scene of “The Last Judgment”. Michelangelo, now in his sixties painted this between the years 1536-1541. The scene within the picture depicts the second coming of Christ on the Day of Judgement as described in Revelations. We see the figure of Christ in the centre with the saints surrounding him. At the bottom left of the painting are the dead rising from their graves, ascending to heaven waiting to face judgement. On the right however, we see those who have been subjected to Hell and are dragged down by demons. If you look closely at the painting, you will see that Michelangelo painted himself on the flayed skin held by St Bartholomew.

Large restoration work took place on the Sistine Chapel during the 1980's, when the fresco was cleaned in order to brighten and reveal its original colours and remove some of the “modesty drapes” that had been added over the naked bodies. The restoration was essential in that it continues to keep the masterpiece intact for future generations to enjoy. When visitors enter the chapel, they are normally filled with a range of emotions at witnessing the magnificent paintings, whilst combined with the divine and calming environment.

Practical Info

By booking with us we provide you with a front-of-the-line tour package with an opportunity to enter the chapel before the main crowd enters, allowing you to take in the fresco's in small groups before the hustle and bustle.



St Peter's Basilica

St. Peter's Basilica is known as one of the holiest of Catholic shrines and famous for being a place of pilgrimage. However, it is also one of the things everyone should see at least once in their lifetime to just experience its magnificence.

One of the largest churches in Christendom, the Basilica is named after the Apostle St. Peter whose burial site is believed to be below the Basilica building. St. Peter was considered to be the first Pope; it was the perfect place to build the centre of the Catholic Church.

The imposing Basilica on Vatican Hill in the centre of Rome was built in 1506 under the commission of Pope Julius II; however its completion wasn't until the leadership of Paul V, many Popes later in 1615.

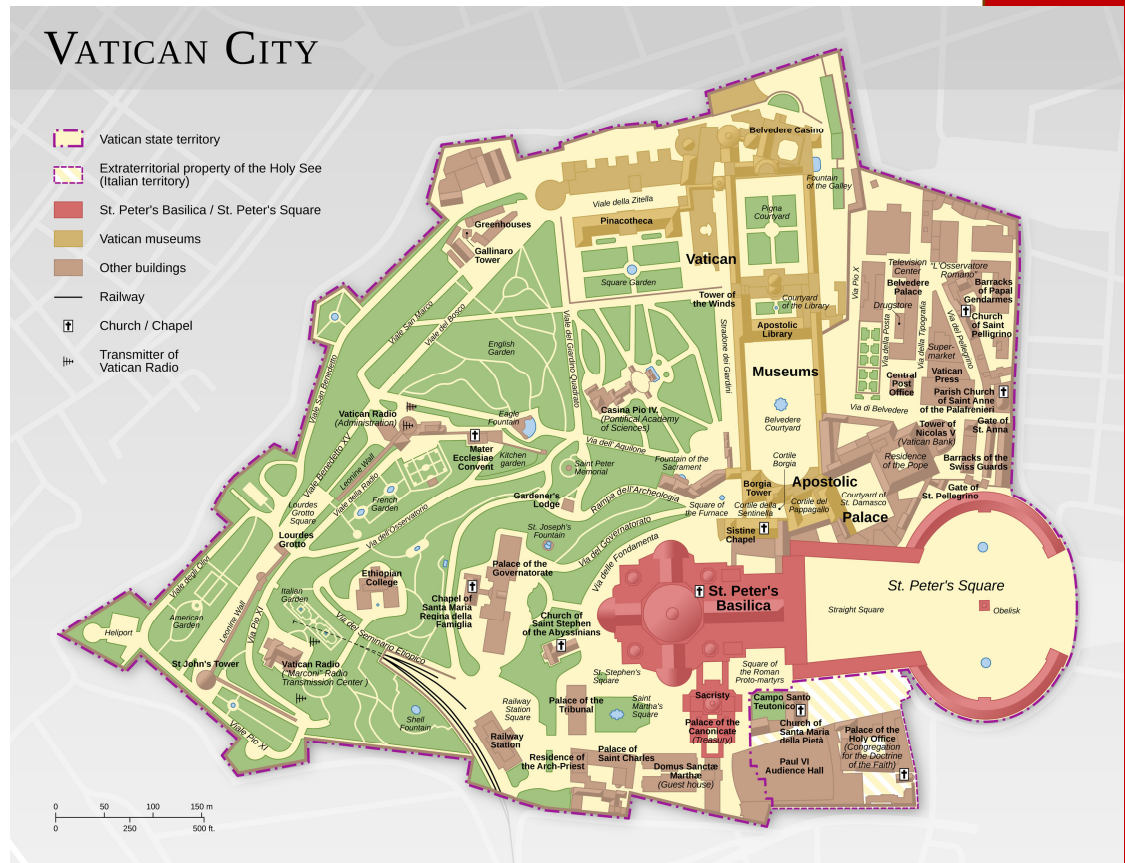
St. Peter's Basilica is also the place in which many of the past Popes have been interred; some within tombs within the church and others whose bodies have been mummified and are shown to the general public.

The grandeur and vastness of the building truly comes to light once you step inside. With a surface area of over 15,000 square meters the church is big enough to hold over 60,000 visitors. The lavishness of the interior within reflects the wealth of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, with opulent gold at every angle. The church is decorated with large monuments, paintings and statues, many of which were created by Bernini, one of the greatest artists of all time. One of his main creations within the church and which receives the immediate attention of visitors is the large twenty-six metre bronze baldachin which resides over the papal altar, sculpted from bronze taken from the ceiling of the Pantheon. Another famous monument within the Basilica is the Pietà by Michelangelo. The sculpture shows the Virgin Mary holding the dead body of her son after his crucifixion.



The Vatican City

Part of the draw that grabs visitor's attention is not only on the religious buildings and art within the Vatican but the complex itself, holding the name of world's smallest country. The tiny country is home to vast gardens; its own radio station, shops, train station, helipad and post office- send your friends a postcard from the Vatican!



By choosing our tour we will give you the opportunity to have your own time exploring what the outside of the Vatican building has to offer. Wander around the adorned gardens, established during the Renaissance and Baroque era they are decorated with fountains and sculptures. Visit the gift shops, filled with objects to remind you of your visit.

By choosing to visit the Vatican with our company you are ensured the best possible day, with our highly trained tour guides and wealth of knowledge to provide. Couple that with our years of experience guiding over 1,000,000 guests through the Vatican each year, and a TripAdvisor 2014 Certificate of Excellence, you truly cannot find a better tour anywhere else!



Buy your tickets now!

€110 each!



5 star rating

Phone 08372683746 to book now!

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