

## 1. The Vatican and St Peter's

You may want to go to the Vatican first, this is a big visit and you will need to get to the museum before 9.00 because there is always a queue. You will probably want to go direct to the Sistine (I have included my guide to the paintings so that you know what you are looking at) and the nearby Raphael's Stanze. Be warned, the Sistine is a long walk through most of the old palace and both the Chapel and the Stanze will be heaving. It is usually less frantic around lunch time and later in the afternoon. There will also be crowds in the Gregoriano Profano and Pio Clemente sections which house very famous Greek and Roman works including the Apollo Belvedere and the Laocoon, Other parts of the museum are less busy and contain some lovely stuff. The Pio Cristiano section is one of my favourites, full of wonderful early Christian art and since it contains nothing especially famous it is usually quiet.

The Pinacoteca has paintings from the medieval to the 19th century, a lovely Giotto triptych, a Bellini Pieta, several Raphaels including the extraordinary Transfiguration (his last work) and some Caravaggios. There is also a 20th century collection of religious art with some famous names, it pains me to say this but a lot of it is deeply uninspiring. Maybe the same applies to paintings as to tunes, the Devil gets the best! On a practical note, the museum has lots of loos, decent coffee shops and a self-service restaurant with a garden terrace. Restricted parts of the Vatican Gardens are open to the public should you get arted out.

Unfortunately, unless you are taking a guided tour you have to walk all around the Vatican walls to get into St Peter's Square. There may be a queue for the Basilica but there is no predicting this, I have waltzed straight in several times. You will not be allowed in at all if you are wearing shorts and if you have on a sleeveless top you will need something to put over your shoulders. The approach road to St Peter's from the Tiber was built for Il Duce and is a wonderful piece of Fascist bombast. The piazza on the other hand is amazing with colonnades designed by Bernini to reach out from the Basilica in an 'embrace', drawing in the faithful. The Basilica itself was designed to impress and succeeds despite the fact that it is a bit of a patchwork. The first design was Bramante's, Michelangelo was responsible for the dome and most of the east end but his facade was never built - the extant one by Carlo Moderno was finished in 1613.

Once inside you certainly be overwhelmed by the vastness of the space, I recommend taking some time just to stand and look before beginning to explore. You will find Michelangelo's Pieta just beyond the doors on the right, still beautiful and moving despite being incarcerated in a glass box like a Damien Hurst shark. Unless you are extremely short sighted you can't miss Bernini's Baldichino designed as a great triumphal canopy and made from bronze stripped from the cladding on the Pantheon. The twisted columns are based on one in the Vatican collections supposed to have come from the Gate Beautiful of the Temple at Jerusalem. Framed by the Baldichino at the east end is Bernini's 'Chair of St Peter' a spectacular piece of theatre housing the 'actual, genuine' chair of the saint. (It apparently dates from around the time of Charlemagne). If you are a Bernini fan there are various other of his works in St Peter's, two papal monuments and a St Longinus in one of the tabernacles in the columns supporting the dome. If you have the energy you can get up into the dome and onto the roof of the Basilica where there are truly spectacular views to be had.

At the other end of the Duce's ceremonial approach road is the Castel Sant'Angelo, originally built as a modest little mausoleum for Hadrian in 139. It has subsequently served as a prison and as a fortress for various popes, an underground corridor was built to link the Castel to the Vatican in the 13th century and Clement holed up here during the siege of Rome in 1527. There are some painted apartments and there are regular exhibitions but the building itself is the real star. On the upper terrace (a hefty climb) is a nice little cafe with great views in all directions.

## **2. Starting from Piazza Venezia**

General notes; this is the walk with the fewest good cafes, loos and places to get lunch. There are wagons selling cold drinks and snacks which are horribly expensive. Depending on how many museums you decide to sample you might do best to get lunch before going to the Colosseum in which case the squares leading to the left off Via dei Fori Imperiali have some decent restaurants with outside tables. On the Piazza itself are the Palazzo Venezia and the church of San Marco - the Venetian church in Rome. The Palazzo is a lovely museum and seldom crowded; if it were any place other than Rome it would be full of swooning art lovers but I suppose that there is just too much competition here. The collections cover medieval and Renaissance art and applied arts including some wonderful Byzantine stuff. If you don't feel like visiting another museum just yet, do go into the church for the 9th century mosaic in the apse. Directly in front of you is the Vittorio Emanuele Monument known since its construction as the typewriter, it does look like a gigantic old fashioned Remington. - you may as well look at it because it can't be ignored! Over to your left is Trajan's Column (110 AD), still impressive despite the wear and tear on the sculptures. When the repro in the V&A Cast Court was made 150 years ago everything was still pin sharp; the damage is mostly down to 20th century traffic fumes.

If you cross the road to the VE monument and follow it around to the right you will come to the steps leading to the Campidoglio. The square was designed by Michelangelo as was the plinth for the Marcus Aurelius statue at the centre. (the statue is a repro; the original is in the courtyard of the Capitoline museum to the left). The square is spectacular; the hill on which it stands was the civic heart of ancient Rome, laurels were traditionally awarded to military heroes here. The 16th century Papacy wanted the space to become the symbolic heart of the Christian capital, hence Michelangelo's compass rose set into the paving at the centre symbolising the spread of the faith to all the corners of the world. In the far right hand angle of the square is the path which takes you to the viewing balcony over the Foro Romano; do go and look if you are planning to go into the Forum itself because you can get at least some idea of the layout from above.

From the Campidoglio you can get on to the terraces of the VE monument offering spectacular view of the Old City and in to the Church of Sta Maria in Aracoeli, one of Rome's most ancient basilicas. If you are up for a museum at this point or if it is raining you can visit the Museo Capitolino. I am rather fond of it although with the exception of the Capitoline Venus there are no 'great treasures' equivalent to those in the Vatican. The place is seldom crowded and there are a lot of lovely, odd things to

be found. (If po-faced, hilariously ugly portrait busts of Roman gentry appeal to you, this is the place)! In the courtyard of the Conservatori are the gigantic head, hand and foot of Constantine from a statue that once lived in the Basilica of Constantine at the far end of the Forum. As you leave the Campidoglio, look along the road to the left where you can see the first big theatre to be built in Rome, the Theatre of Marcellus begun in 50 BC at the behest of Julius Caesar. (The building in the middle of it is the Orsini palace). The Via dei Fori Imperiali can be reached by a path running down from the left hand corner of the Campidoglio or you can return to Piazza Venezia. On the left hand side of the road (as you face the Colosseum) are Trajan's Markets, well worth a visit assuming they are open. They are a 2nd century AD complex of offices, shops and inns, one of the most up-market commercial centres of Ancient Rome specialising in imported luxury goods. There isn't much left in the way of mosaics or decorative sculpture but the buildings are fascinating, I love this place, it is so evocative.

On the way down the Via F.I to get into the Forum itself you will find the church of Santi Cosma e Damiano (closes at 13.00) which incorporates a 4th century AD temple. Do go in, the church is tiny and odd and there is a fabulous 6th century mosaic in the apse showing Christ walking on the clouds. The Forum itself is a huge, amazing jumble of temples and basilicas. I'm not giving you a 'tour of the Forum' - best to get a map which identifies the major buildings. At the east end are the remains of the 4th century Basilica of Constantine, a huge triple-naved civic building and a great piece of engineering. Brick built and originally clad with marble, the apse vaults are done in opus caementicium - poured concrete. Buildings like this were the models for the first Christian churches. At the extreme east end of the Forum you will find the Arch of Constantine and Vespasian's Colosseum. The 4th century arch is rather wonderful; an assemblage of all kinds of bits and pieces salvaged from other, earlier monuments and always reminds me of those decoupage screens Victorian ladies used to make.

The Colosseum is still awful and magnificent despite the fact that most of the dressed Travertine stone from the facade was pinched to build palaces and parts of St Peter's. A good guide book will give you the facts and figures if you want them. (word of warning, this is tourist central, there are guys dressed as gladiators wanting to pose with you for photographs, horse and carriage drivers touting for business and sellers of dross. Beware of pickpockets around here and be prepared for large tour groups) From the Piazza del Colosseo cross a very busy road (wait for some nuns with parties of school kids to cross for absolute safety) to Via di San Giovanni in Laterano. On the left about half way along is the Church of San Clemente. (closed between 12.30 and 15.30) If you go nowhere else, go here and experience time travel! The church itself dates from the 12th century and is beautiful; lots of Cosmati work on the floors and the choir enclosure. The apse mosaic is a vast tree of life growing from the foot of the Cross and the detail is enchanting - you will need your binoculars to see it properly. In the little chapel of St Catherine are 15th century frescoes by Masolino. From the church you can get into the excavations (started in the 19th c.); on the first level are the remains of the original 4th century church which was destroyed in the 1084 when the Robert Guiscard's Normans invaded Rome on their way south to Naples and Sicily. There are some 11th century frescoes down here dealing with the life of San Clemente. Below this are the remains of a 2nd century Mithraic temple and this is amazing. The complex was evidently still in use when the

first church was built which meant that the two great religious 'rivals' - the Christians and the followers of Mithras were worshipping virtually side by side and funnily enough using some of the same rituals. It was only later, when Christianity was becoming very powerful that Mithraism was condemned and the rites declared blasphemous. Mithraic temples were always underground because the god was supposed to have been born in a cave so when Christianity triumphed the temple was simply sealed off and forgotten. If you are still ambulant you could carry on up the Via de San Giovanni in Laterano to the Lateran basilica. This was the first Christian basilica built in Rome on land donated by Constantine and is still the Cathedral of the city, the seat of the popes who are the Bishops of Rome. The Lateran palace was the official home of the popes until the 14th c. The place has been rebuilt twice, the last time by Borromini so the church is now baroque and more baroque. There are remnants of previous incarnations; the cloisters, the papal altar and odd bits and pieces of fresco. The Baptistery is the only part dating back to Constantine and even that has been given a make-over.

### **3. Starting from the Pantheon. (Piazza della Rotunda)**

Before you get to the Piazza della Rotunda you will probably go through the Piazza Colonna where stands the column of Marcus Aurelius made to commemorate his victories over the Danube tribes. If you like columns this is a good one and if you have your binoculars you can read off the narrative. The Piazza della Rotunda itself is lovely and has lots of cafes and the Pantheon is a great place to start. This temple to all the gods was built at the behest of Hadrian in the 2nd century to replace an earlier building done for Marcus Agrippa (mentioned on the portico inscription). Like the Basilica of Constantine it is a staggering piece of engineering. Brick walls with inbuilt relieving arches visible from the exterior support a vast poured concrete dome, coffered to reduce the weight. Originally the dome interior was clad in bronze embossed with images of the gods; - the oculus at the centre framed the sun at mid day, so the sun effectively became the 'power centre' of the Roman pantheon. (The cult of the Invincible Sun was favoured by Hadrian and most of the emperors) The bronze was stripped off and melted down for various papal projects including the St Peters Baldichino.

The building survived intact because it was rededicated as a Christian church in the 7th century; it subsequently became the memorial church for the great and good(ish) Raphael is buried here along with most of the kings of Italy from Vittorio Emanuele on. Behind the Pantheon you can get into the Piazza della Minerva where there is a truly hilarious statue of an elephant (symbol of intelligence and constancy) by Bernini in front of the church of Sta Maria sopra Minerva. There was a ruined temple to Minerva on the site when the Dominicans acquired the land in the 13th century and built this, one of the very few Gothic churches in Rome. The decoration of the interior is 19th century but the church is very lovely and has a lot of fine original works. Many of the tombs are Cosmati work, there is a Michelangelo Risen Christ by the steps to the choir. Both the Medici popes are buried here in the Aldobrandini Chapel, St Catherine of Siena is here and so is Fra Angelico. From here you can follow the Via del Gesu to the Gesu church but a better idea is to go back to Rotunda, walk down the left hand side of the Piazza and turn left into Via Giustiniani where you will find the church of San Luigi dei Francesci, the French church in Rome. Don't feel that you have to admire the building which is rather lugubrious but in the

5th (St Matthew) chapel on the left are three great Caravaggios; the Calling of St Matthew, the Martyrdom and St Matthew and the Angel. It is worth fighting your way through the large tour groups you will find here to get to the paintings, they are simply amazing and all the better for being seen in the church for which they were made. The street opposite the church, Via Dogana Vecchia, takes you to Borromini's Sant' Ivo alla Sapienza tucked at the back of a courtyard of the Palazzo della Sapienza, the old University of Rome. This is an absolutely exquisite tiny church and so clever - the concave facade forms a kind of apse at the end of the twin colonnades of the courtyard. It is extremely difficult to get inside as it is only open between 10 and 12 on Sundays for Mass. Believe me it is worth the effort.

Now turn right up the Corso del Rinascimento until you see the Corsia Agonale going off to the left - this takes you into Piazza Navona, another tourist and cheap-jack traders central. Ignore all that because the space is fabulous, following the lines of the Roman race track which once occupied the site. There is 'famous' stuff here, Bernini made the Fontana dei Fiumi (he designed it but it was actually made by his workshop, he having been 'lent' to Louis XIV at the time) and Borromini was responsible for Sant' Agnese in Agone right by the fountain. Don't feel that you have to go in to the church, Navona is really about enjoying one of the best bits of Baroque space in Rome. There are many restaurants in the Piazza, most are overpriced but maybe worth it for the pleasure of eating amid such grandeur. (small trivial note - on the Corso del Rinascimento is a branch of Farmacia Santa Maria Novella which has the most wonderful hand made perfumes, soaps, lotions, potions and scented things. I always promise myself I won't go in and I always do, it smells like heaven).

The area around Navona is all rather lovely, small streets with antique shops and several suppliers of ecclesiastical garments. If you want to know what a bishop's socks look like or nun's vests and knickers this is the place. If you leave the Piazza at the end to the left if you are facing Sant' Agnese you will come to Corso Vittorio Emanuele - turn left along the Corso and you will pass the Torre Argentina which is a small archaeological site (presently a sanctuary for Roman cats, there is a little cat hospital there run by a very persuasive lady who will have you signed up as a donor in no time at all). A little further along on the same side of the road is the Gesu. This is the mother church of the Jesuit Order and arguably the mother of all Baroque Churches. It was built in the 16th century by Vignola and Jacopo della Porta but most of the interior decoration was done 100 years later. Hard to know what to say about the Gesu; I don't know that I like it exactly but I think it is amazing. If you want to know about Counter-Reformation art, this is the place. Be sure to see the memorial to St Ignatius in the left hand transept, Francis Xavier's relatively modest one is in the right transept. The ceiling is spectacular, with your binoculars you can just about work out what is 'real' and what is tromp l'oeil.

Now - two choices. Alternative one takes you back into the Piazza Rotunda and the other over to Trastevere. It rather depends on how bored/tired you are at this point as to which you might choose. Alternative 1 If you decide to head back into Piazza Rotunda go up the Via dei Gesu which will bring you back to Sta Maria sopra Minerva and the Pantheon. If you are up for another church go down to the front of the Pantheon and take the Via del Seminario to the left as you face the facade and this will bring you to the Piazza di Sant' Ignazio which is an extremely pretty 18th century square and home to the church of Sant' Ignazio di Loyola which has an absolutely

stunning ceiling. From here you can go down any street leading from the left of the facade and you will come onto the Via del Corso. Turn left again up the Corso and keep walking until you see Via Condotti off to the right. This and the streets running parallel to it all lead to the Spanish Steps and are the heart of super-expensive, super-designer shopping. Gucci, Armani, Prada and all the usual suspects have shops up here and the place will be heaving with tourists either looking longingly or loaded down with carrier bags. The Piazza di Spagna will undoubtedly also be crowded but it is spectacular and the view from the top of the Spanish Steps is pretty good.

If you wish you can also carry on up the Corso to Piazza del Popolo, the burial place of wicked Nero and another fabulous piece of Baroque city planning, from here you can see straight down the Corso all the way to Piazza Venezia. The Porta del Popolo marks the starting point of the ancient Via Flaminia which connected Rome with the Adriatic coast, the obelisk at the centre was brought back to the city by Augustus after he had finally crushed Egypt into oblivion. The Piazza has several rather grand 17th century churches which you need not visit and one - Sta Maria del Popolo to the right of the Porta which you must. This was originally built for Sixtus IV, the same pope who commissioned the Sistine Chapel and there are several small, richly decorated chapels inside. The Della Rovere has frescoes by Pinturicchio, the Chigi was designed by Raphael and there are another two stunning Caravaggios; - the Crucifixion of St Peter and the Conversion of St Paul in the Cerasi Chapel. (the church also has the first two stained glass windows ever to be installed in Rome in 1509). The Via di Ripetta leading from Piazza del Popolo will take you to the Mausoleum of Augustus, now in a rather sorry state and the Ara Pacis Augustae, a huge altar built to celebrate the emperor's victory over Spain and Gaul and the birth of the "Augustan Peace".

Alternative 2 Go back along the Corso Vittorio Emanuele to the Torre Argentina and turn down the Via Arenula which leads to the Ponte Garibaldi across the Tiber to Trastevere. The bridge brings you to Piazza Belli which runs into Piazza Sonino. If you get to Trastevere around 15.30 most of the churches will be opening again. The Church of San Crisogono on Sonino was built on the site of the one of the first private houses to be used for Christian worship and the remains of 3rd and 5th century churches lie under the present 12th century one. The great columns of the nave were salvaged from Roman buildings, the floor is a fabulous piece of Cosmati work and the 13th century apse mosaic is especially lovely. Carry on a little way down the Viale di Trastevere to Via San Francesco a Ripa on the left and you will find the church of San Francesco a Ripa where St Francis once stayed. Here is the most stunning Bernini sculpture of the Blessed Ludovico Albertoni. You can get pretty close to this and it is mind-blowing, I still cannot fathom how Bernini managed to transform cold old marble into flesh, gauze and brocade.

Just north of San Francesco is Santa Cecilia in Trastevere built over the site of the home of St Cecilia, the patron saint of music. The church has a 9th century apse mosaic and in the singing gallery a profoundly moving fresco of the Last Judgment painted by Pietro Cavallini who was a great influence on Giotto. Now go back to Sonino and turn down Via Della Lungaretta and you will come to the Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere. There are lots of nice cafes in and around the square should you be feeling the need of taking on or getting rid of liquids. I know I keep saying this but this church is heartbreakingly lovely, I like it because it is still a local church, people use it and you can tell. The site was probably the first official place of Christian

worship in Rome and the place where a miraculous fountain of oil apparently burst from the earth when Christ was born. The present church is 12th century but the porch has fragments from earlier buildings complete with scraffito inscriptions. The mosaic over the porch shows a Virgin and Child and the wise and foolish virgins (the wise ones had enough oil to keep their lamps alight). The interior has the usual columns recycled from Roman buildings and a set of lovely Cavallini mosaics on the life of the Virgin. The apse mosaic is a stunner, it shows the Virgin enthroned at Christ's side and the image is one of the first I know to be based on the teachings of St Bernard of Clairvaux. Close by is the small and enchanting Museo di Roma in Trastevere, if you want to know how the city and its 'real' people (as opposed to the Church and the aristos) looked in the 19<sup>th</sup> century this is the place to go.

From the back of Sta Maria you can go up the Via della Paglia and up the steps to Via Garibaldi This is a stiff climb which brings you to San Pietro in Montorio in the courtyard of which is Bramante's Tempietto (1502) built on the supposed site of the crucifixion of St Peter. This is a lovely, useless little building, an absolute gem of Renaissance grammar studied by every aspiring architect from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on.

If you prefer to save Trastevere for a morning visit you need to time it well. The Tempietto shuts at 12, Sta Maria stays open until 13.00 so it might be advisable to see the Tempietto first, then the other churches finishing with Sta Maria. Stay in Trastevere for lunch - there are lots of nice and varied places tucked away in the quarter. After lunch you can go from Sta Maria, straight down the Via della Lungaretta to the Ponte Palatino. This brings you to the Piazza della Bocca Verita, the site of the old docks of Rome where there are the remains of some of the oldest temples of the Republican era (2nd c BC). The little round Temple of Hercules and the Temple of Portunus are both very well preserved because both were consecrated as churches. Over the road is the 6th century Sta Maria in Cosmedin which has fabulous Cosmati work - in the porch is the legendary Bocca della Verita used for testing oaths - the mouth was supposed to close over the hand of anyone telling lies. To the right of Sta Maria is the Via della Greca and to the right of this runs the Clivo dei Publicii, a winding climb which takes you onto the Via Sta Sabina and to the church of the same name. This whole area is the Aventine, one of the greenest, quietest areas of Rome and an absolute treat on a hot noisy day. Sta Sabina is an early Christian basilica, absolutely simple and rather lovely. The side portico has 5th century wooden doors with scenes from the Old and New Testaments including one of the earliest known representations of the Crucifixion. Carry on down the Via SS to the Piazza dei Cavalieri de Malta, the Piazza, designed by Piranesi in the 18th century, is wonderfully mad and theatrical. At no 3 is the priory of the Order of the Knights of Malta - the gates have a keyhole giving a perfectly framed view of St Peter's - quite magical.

#### **4. Starting at Trevi Fountain.**

We once stayed in the lousiest, hottest, noisiest hotel in the world just by the Trevi so I feel a bit jaundiced about it, even so the square is pretty spectacular especially if you get there early in the day before the two million other people arrive. The famous fountain is 18th century and built on the terminus of the Roman Aqua Virgo aqueduct. There are a number of churches around the square but don't feel obliged to visit them unless you really are a fanatic for baroque interiors. Instead take the Via di

Stamperia out of the square to the Via del Tritone and up to the Piazza Barberini which is not vastly inspiring but does have Bernini's Triton fountain. From here take a right into the Via Delle Quattro Fontane where you will find Borromini's St Carlo alle Quattro Fontane. This is a great little church built in 1638 for an extremely strict Spanish order, the Discalced Trinitarians (what a great name! It just meant that they didn't wear shoes) The site is tiny and the church a most ingenious use of space with a beautiful little oval dome. Very close on the Via Quirinale is Bernini's Sant' Andrea al Quirinale built for the Jesuits. This church first made me think that I might like Baroque after all. The site was much wider than it was deep so Bernini completely rethought the standard plan, scooping back the facade and creating an oval interior with the altar opposite the main door - effectively everything is designed to take the eye around the church to the altar and up into the dome.

You now need to retrace your way back up Quirinale, across Quattro Fontane and into Via XX Settembre - up here on the left is Sta Maria della Vittoria which has Bernini's St Teresa (1646) and this you must not miss. The central pair of figures, the saint and the angel are taken from Teresa's own account of her ecstatic experience but Bernini has the event witnessed by members of the Cornaro family observing the event from opera boxes and gesturing in a refined manner. The whole thing is a stunning piece of theatre and workmanship of the highest quality.

There are two possibilities from here - you can go down the Via Orlando taking you down to Repubblica and two very good museums. (the same ticket gets you into both) Part of the Baths of Diocletian were converted into a church (Sta Maria degli Angeli) by Michelangelo in 1563, (open but not vastly interesting) much of the rest is home to the Museo Nazionale Romano, one of the leading collections of classical art. The place has been renovated and a number of galleries recently reopened, well laid out and labelled in English as well as Italian. The Palazzo Massimo just over the road has detached frescoes from the Palatine and elsewhere and is wonderful but you are not allowed around on your own, the guides are very fierce about lingering and don't even think about taking photographs! Despite the difficulties it is still worth the visit.

Instead of visiting the museums - or as well as if you have the stamina, the Via Torino takes you from Repubblica to Santa Maria Maggiore (open all day until 8) This is a vast place begun in the 5th century just after the Council of Ephesus recognised the Cult of the Virgin and finished at some time in the 18th. (Bernini is buried here) The exterior of the building and much of the interior is baroque but at its heart lies the ancient basilica with 5th century mosaics depicting the life of the Virgin on the sanctuary arch and a beautiful 13th century Christ and the Virgin in the apse. (same subject matter as the mosaics in Santa Maria in Trastevere). For a tiny sum of money you can get up to see the 'Legend of the Snow' mosaics over the porch that tell the story of the founding of then church. If you are tired or pushed for time, skip SMM and go down the Via Santa Prassede which runs off Piazza di SMM. The church of Santa Prassede is very, very special. (open 7.30 to noon in the morning 4 - 6.30 in the afternoon.) It dates from the 9th century, is tiny and has absolutely spectacular mosaics made by artists imported from Byzantium. The ones in the apse show a Christ on the clouds rather like the one in Ss Cosimo et Damiano but with Sts Peter and Paul and Prassede and Pudenziana (don't ask) to either side. The tiny chapel of St Zeno was built as a mausoleum for Pope Paschal's mother and is quite wonderful because you are so close to the mosaics and you can see exactly how they were done.

If you are hell bent on seeing every Michelangelo in Rome or else are gagging to see the 'actual' chains in which St Peter was bound then carry on down Sta. Prasside, right into Via San Martino al Monte, right along Via Giovanni Lanza into Via Cavour, left into Via Eudosiana - for San Pietro in Vincoli which has the much reduced tomb of Julius of which Michelangelo's Moses is a part. The artist's grand design was nothing like this, it was meant to be free standing, about the size of a small bungalow and to have several pieces of sculpture including the slaves. The pope lost interest in the project when he started the rebuilding of St Peters and demanded that Michelangelo cut costs and made something smaller, everything ground to a halt when Julius died and stayed halted until his heirs demanded that something be completed, preferably at nil extra cost. Virtually nothing M had made for the original tomb other than the Moses could be used for the reduced scheme, he was too busy and unwilling to do anything new so most of the work was done by his assistants.

### **5. The Borghese Park.**

The park itself, laid out by Cardinal Scipione Borghese at the top of the Via Veneto is an oasis of trees and shady walks. The place is huge, you can walk from museum to museum but there is also a little 'bus which goes through the park. The museum for which everyone heads; - with good reason, is the Museo Borghese, once the cardinal's own country retreat. The bulk of the collections shown in the museum were once the cardinal's own and he knew what he was doing. Although the family sold a lot of stuff in the 19th century, mostly to France, there are still some wonderful things. Bernini's Apollo and Daphne, the Pluto and Proserpina and the David were all made for Scipione and are on show. Later additions made for the family include Canova's portrait of Pauline Borghese. There are some classical works and a number of good paintings including Raphael's Lamentation. Be warned, the Borghese is one of the more expensive museums in Rome and one of the most visited, it would be wise to book a timed entrance. Further across the park is the Villa Giulia built in the 16th century for Julius III; lots of people had a hand in the design of the villa and the gardens, Vignola who did the Gesu, Michelangelo and Vasari. It is now the Etruscan Museum and has more Etruscan art than you can possibly imagine. My favourite, at the north western corner of the park is the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna. Most guidebooks barely mention it and those that do are rather sniffy and dismissive largely because the collection doesn't include any international 'big names'. Pay no attention, the museum is very well organised and the art is super. All the 19th century Italian painters and sculptors one never sees elsewhere are here. The 20th century section has the Futurists and there are good temporary exhibitions most of the time. If none of this appeals to you the museum has a wonderful restaurant with tables out on the balconies and in a pretty garden. This is a great place to have lunch and no one who is not Roman seems to know about it.

## **6. Two Easy Days Out from Rome.**

You can get to Ostia Antica; - the old commercial and military port of Rome fairly easily. Line B takes you out to Magliana and then the local train goes on to Ostia. This is a great place, a whole working city, it wasn't buried like Pompeii, it just died a natural death when the harbour silted up and then was slowly buried under the sands of the encroaching coastline, what was the port gate of the city now opens on to a main road rather than the sea. I love Ostia, it is still reasonably quiet and if you want a clear picture of Roman commercial life this is the place to come. Along its streets and around the squares are shops, warehouses, workshops, bars, temples, apartment houses and a great theatre able to hold 4,000 people. There is also a small museum housing sculptural finds and detached frescos. Get a site map at the gates, you will need one because the town is fairly sprawling. It is also a good idea to take something to drink because there is only one rather depressing bar at the back of the museum.

Tivoli and the Villa Adriana can be reached by bus from the main station in Rome. This was where a number of Rome's wealthy citizens had their country houses in Classical times and in the Renaissance. Tivoli itself has the Villa d'Este, created for the Cardinal Ippolito d'Este and decorated with lavish Mannerist frescos. Below the villa are the terraced gardens, extraordinary formal confections of lawns, walkways and elaborate fountains some of which were created to play music with the running water forcing air into pipes. Close by is the 19<sup>th</sup> century Villa Gregoriana with gardens built in the 'romantic' style to include extant Roman ruins and complete with grottos and dramatic cascades pouring into a deep gorge.

Just outside of Tivoli lies the Villa Adriana, Hadrian's Villa, more like a small town than a country estate. The Emperor had it created as a retirement home but only managed to live there three years before he died. The place is a kind of composite of all the great buildings Hadrian had seen in Greece and Alexandria and reflects his interest in various religious cults. It is truly amazing, the kind of thing one can only do with limitless wealth and to do Hadrian credit, a fertile imagination. There is a small museum housing finds from the site but the most prestigious pieces were hauled away to Rome or into private collections a long time ago. It is possible to spend a whole day here because the site is huge and there is a lot to see. If you plan to do this, take a picnic which you will inevitably share with any number of charming cats, well versed in the art of schmoozing.