

The 'Cosmatesque'

This attractive and innovative style of exquisite geometrically patterned cladding for walls, floors and other surfaces using fragments of discarded ancient Roman marble was developed in the 12th and 13th centuries. It was introduced to Rome through Laurentius of Anagni, who had learned under Greek masters, but soon broke with Byzantine tradition to create a vibrant and highly original style. It became known as the Cosmatesque, after its greatest practitioners, the Cosmati family. Over four generations seven members of the family produced it. Their work is principally found in Rome (for example in the cloister of St John Lateran; see p. 43), but became fashionable all over Europe: there are two Cosmatesque pavements in Westminster Abbey. The term now refers to work of this style by any of the anonymous craftsmen who practised the technique.

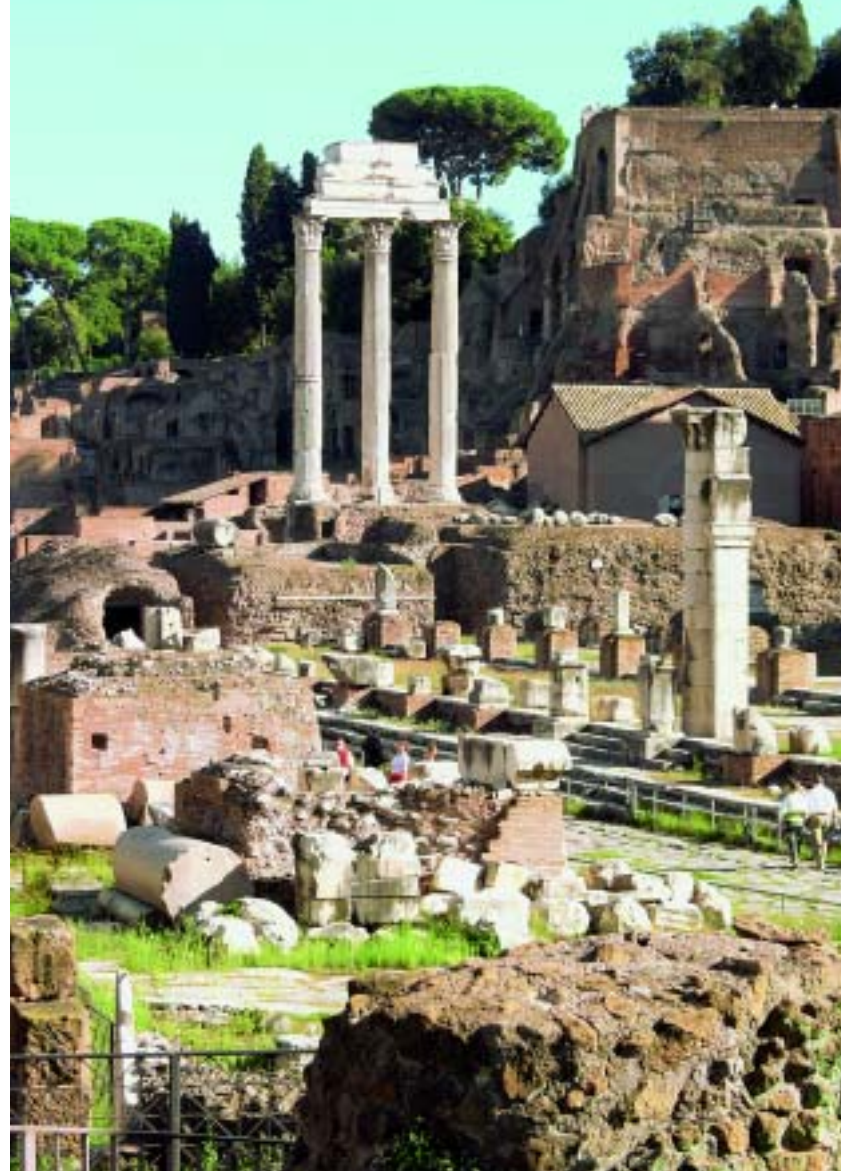
The Roman Forum

Open: 8.30–dusk **Charges:** Free entry **Tel:** 06 399 6700 **Map:** p. 21, B1–B2. *The Forum is sometimes floodlit on summer nights, and tours are available: for information call the number above.*

Highlights: Arch of Septimius Severus; Curia Julia (Senate house); Basilica of Maxentius

In the days of the Roman Republic (509–27 BC) the Roman Forum was an open area with shops and a scattering of temples, but from the 2nd century BC it became home to the grandiose public buildings and law courts of an Imperial capital. It remained the living, beating heart of the Empire for over half a millennium, during which time it was often embellished and added to. Today, the remaining ruins surround and tower over the seemingly endless trail of visitors to this site. Highlights are given below, and marked on the plan on pp. 30–31.

The three surviving columns of the Temple of Castor and Pollux



rounded by symbols of the seven planets then known, each guided by an angel. Work on the chapel ceased for over a century after the deaths of both Chigi and Raphael in 1520, and was completed by Bernini from 1652, after Cardinal Fabio Chigi (Alexander VII) asked him to add Baroque touches to the Renaissance church.

Next to the altar is Bernini's celebrated *Habakkuk* (right) showing his late style of elongated bodies and expressive gestures. The angel, pulling Habakkuk's hair, urges him to take food to Daniel caught in the lion's den. Bernini's *Daniel with the Lion* is by the entrance to the chapel.

The extraordinary pyramidal form of the tombs of Agostino Chigi and his brother Sigismondo are by the Tuscan sculptor Lorenzetto. The form of Raphael's original architectural scheme comes from ancient Roman models, though it was altered again by Bernini in the 17th century. Bernini added the marble inlaid figure of Death, with the Chigi coat of arms in the centre of the pavement.

The first and third chapels on the right side of the church contain more frescoes by Pinturicchio.

Museo & Galleria Borghese

Open: 9–7.30, closed Mon **Charges:** Entry fee **Tel:** 06 328101 **Map:** p. 75, B4

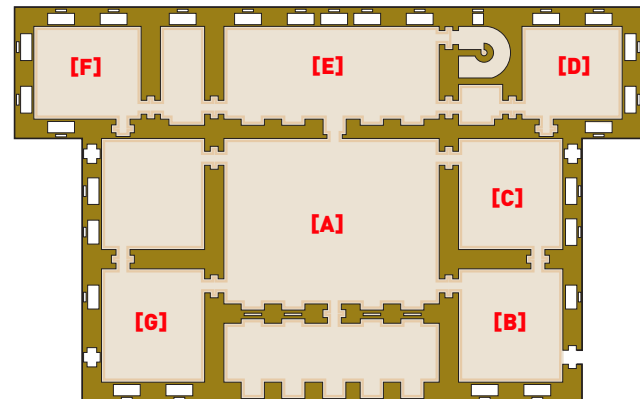
Highlights: *Pauline Borghese* by Canova; *David and Apollo and Daphne* by Bernini; *The Sick Bacchus and Madonna of the Palafrenieri* by Caravaggio

NB: It is obligatory to book your visit in advance, the entry fee covers only a strictly enforced two-hour period in the museum (which start at 9, 11, 1, 3 and 5).

Within the wonderful park of Villa Borghese is the former home of the Borghese family and now the Museo and Galleria Borghese. The Borghese pope Paul V, who is buried in Santa Maria Maggiore (see pp. 52–55), lent his architect, Flaminio Ponzio, to the project and construction began in 1608. Paul V also helped procure numerous works

of art for his nephew Cardinal Scipione Borghese who went on to create the extensive collection that can be seen today. Cardinal Scipione was Bernini's first important patron and also owned no fewer than 12 paintings by Caravaggio, six of which can be seen in the gallery.

Museo & Galleria Borghese (Ground floor: sculpture)



Ground floor and Sculpture Collection

[A] The Salone: This room is representative of the sumptuously decorated ground floor. Antique busts and sculptures are placed alongside 17th-century statues and the walls are covered with precious marbles and early reliefs. The ceilings are intricately frescoed while ancient Roman mosaics are set into the floors to

great effect. The relief of Curtius is particularly arresting as it appears to leap down from high up on the wall, mirroring the myth surrounding the brave Roman citizen who, in 362 bc, plunged himself and his horse into a chasm to save Rome, following a declaration from a fortune-teller that Rome's greatest

bright orange walls and black sofas. The restaurant is situated on a bright corner of Via Margutta, a pleasant, quiet street in what is known as the artists' district. The Green Brunch Buffet is very good value and a good way to try out many of the vegan and vegetarian dishes available (*Mon-Sat lunchtime*), or the à la carte menu offers variations on traditional Mediterranean dishes such as rucola and champignon carpaccio or sheep's cheese in an almond crust with chicory. There is outside

CAFÉS

7 Antico Caffè Greco, *Via Condotti 86*. ■ The coffee house of coffee houses, on the most exclusive shopping street in Rome, at the foot of the Spanish Steps. Antico Caffè Greco has been serving coffee since the 1760s. Goethe, Keats and de Chirico have all drunk here, and with reason: the red velvet furnishings, the series of small salons, the marble-top tables and the personal mementoes of past customers all add up to a unique atmosphere. If it's too busy to find a table (and it often is), a stand-up espresso at the bar is a cheaper way to take in the ambience. **Map p. 75, D2**

8 Babington's English Tea Room, *Piazza di Spagna 23*. A bastion of the very English tradition of afternoon tea, Babington's was established in 1893 (and prospered

seating at the back of the restaurant. **Map p. 75, C2**

6 € Gina, *Via San Sebastianello 7a*, *Tel: 06 678 0251*. Handily located on a narrow street leading from Piazza di Spagna, Gina is the best place to pick up a *panini* to eat on the Spanish Steps or a more elaborate picnic lunch box to take to the nearby Villa Borghese. With its bright white interior, this isn't the sort of restaurant where you linger over multiple courses, more a trendy stop-off between sights. **Map p. 75, D2**

quickly during the era of the European Grand Tour) and is still managed by descendants of the same family. This charming tea room offers over 30 different types of tea to sip alongside muffins, scones and cakes. If you find yourself at Babington's outside of the teatime hour, there is also a selection of light lunches and english breakfasts to choose from. The 'rooms' still retain a 19th-century atmosphere, with dark wood furniture and prints of that period, while the open fire is welcome in the winter. The shop is well-stocked with English goodies such as jams, chutneys, fudge and chocolates. **Map p. 75, D2**

9 Caffè del Arti (*at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna*), *Via Gramsci 73*. If you forgot to pick up your picnic lunch box from Gina's



Ornate decorations inside the coffee house of coffee houses: Antico Caffè Greco

(see above) then the Caffè del Arti is a good Plan B after hours enjoying the modern art on show at the neighbouring Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna. Here, you can refuel on the perfectly reasonable salads and pasta on offer. However, it's the lovely terrace attached to the café which is the real draw. **Map p. 75, A2**

10 Caffè Fontana, *Via Flaminia 101-103*. A café with friendly and efficient service, necessary to keep up with the constant stream of office

workers stopping by for a quick espresso at the counter, perhaps from the Ministry of Defence across the road. The room is bright, although a little worn around the edges, with five or six large tables which seem to invite conversation. Good coffee, tea, pastries and sandwiches are all available. The No. 2 tram passes outside, to and from Piazza del Popolo, and the Etruscan Museum in the Borghese gardens is close by. **Map p. 75, A1**

ST PETER'S SQUARE

St Peter's Square (*map p. 120, C3*) is a work of undiluted brilliance by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and a fine example of Roman civic architecture, providing a fitting approach to the world's largest and most revered church. The view down the broad Via della Conciliazione—completed during Mussolini's reign—is equally captivating, while the horsedrawn carriages that queue here add to the square's charm. The street is named after the pact of 1929 when the Vatican was recognised as an independent state and renounced all hope of regaining the temporal power it had previously enjoyed since the Middle Ages. In the centre of the piazza, on a tall plinth, is a 25.5m obelisk brought from Alexandria in AD 37. It is the only obelisk in Rome that has no hieroglyphics. The two elegant fountains in the square were designed by Carlo Maderno in 1614 (on the right), and Bernini in 1667 (on the left).

A bird's eye view of St Peter's Square, designed by Bernini

