

# TRASTEVERE

**T**rastevere (map p. 702, A3–B4) is the area across the Tiber (*trans Tiberim*), lying below the Janiculum hill. Since ancient times there have been numerous artisans' houses and workshops here and the inhabitants of this essentially popular district were known for their proud and independent character. It is still a distinctive district and remains in some ways a local neighbourhood, where the inhabitants greet each other in the streets, chat in the cafés or simply pass the time of day in the grocery shops. It has always been known for its restaurants but today the menus are often provided in English before Italian. Cars are banned from some of the streets by the simple (but unobtrusive) method of laying large travertine blocks at their entrances, so it is a pleasant place to stroll.

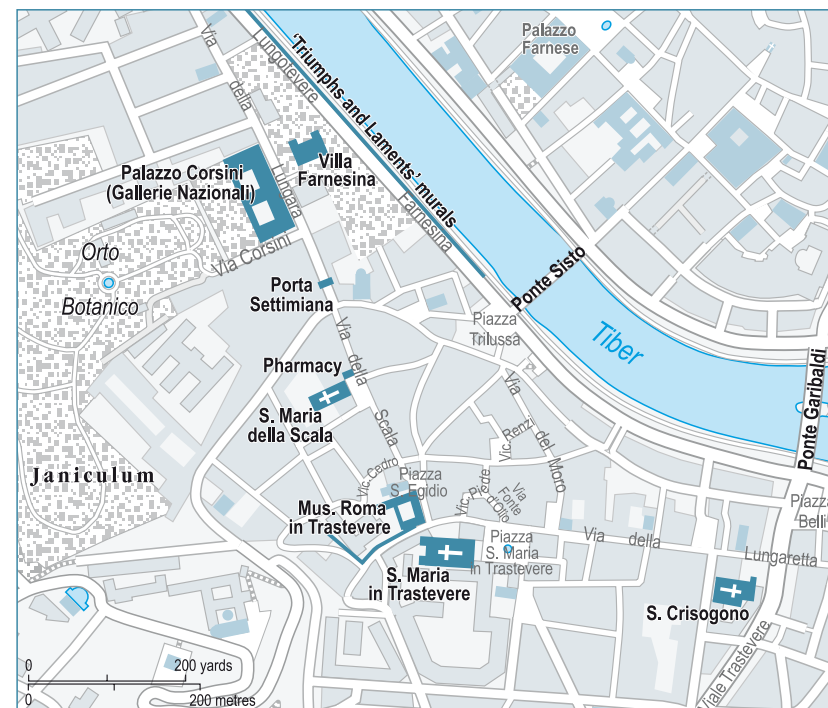
## Some highlights of Trastevere

- ✦ The beautiful and ancient basilica of **Santa Maria in Trastevere** with a wonderful 12th-century interior and mosaics in the apse;
- ✦ **Palazzo Corsini**, part of the Gallerie Nazionali, with a collection of mainly 17th- and 18th-century paintings;
- ✦ The **Orto Botanico** (botanic gardens);
- ✦ The Renaissance **Villa Farnesina**, still surrounded by a garden on the Tiber, built in the early 16th century as the residence of Agostino Chigi, famous for its delightful frescoed decoration by Raphael and his school, and other works by Siennese artists, all commissioned by Chigi himself;
- ✦ The peaceful church of **San Crisogono**, with a venerable interior and remains of the original early church beneath it;
- ✦ **Santa Cecilia in Trastevere**, a church and convent in a tranquil part of the district, with a masterpiece of 13th-century fresco by Pietro Cavallini;
- ✦ The peaceful **eastern part of Trastevere**, described on a guided walking tour which includes a visit to an atmospheric ancient hospice and a church with a tomb sculpture by Bernini.

## GETTING TO TRASTEVERE

**On foot:** The prettiest approaches are across the Tiber island to Piazza in Piscinula or by Ponte Sisto to Piazza Trilussa.

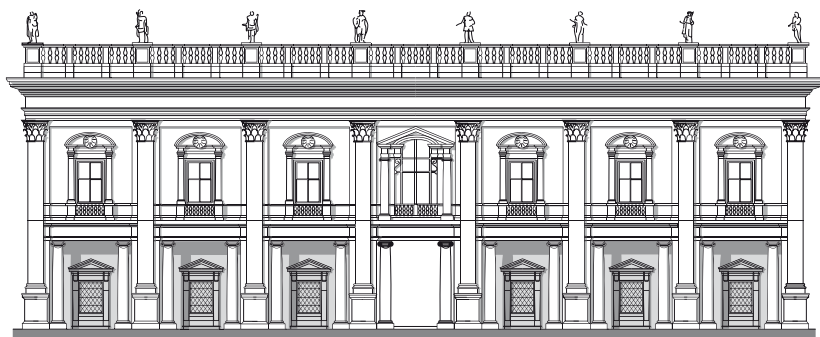
**By public transport:** An efficient approach is by tram no. 8 from Piazza Venezia to Piazza Belli at the beginning of Viale Trastevere.



## HISTORY OF TRASTEVERE

This was the 'Etruscan side' of the river, and only after the destruction of Veii by Rome in 396 bc (see p. 395) did it come under Roman rule. A tradition grew up in earliest days of the Republic that this bank of the Tiber was occupied by the chieftain Lars Porsenna in his attempt to support the bid made by Tarquinius Superbus for the Roman throne. Along the waterfront and on the higher ground at the foot of the Janiculum, suburban villas were built by the aristocracy. One of these next to the Villa Farnesina, dating from the Augustan age and then destroyed, was excavated in the late 19th century and its magnificent wall-paintings are now preserved in the Museo Nazionale Romano in Palazzo Massimo. Under the Empire the district became densely populated by artisans and dock-workers. It was probably not entirely enclosed by walls before the time of Aurelian (270–5), who brought it within the city enceinte (see p. 311).

Trastevere was home to a great number of Jews, who are recorded here as early as the 2nd century bc, before they were confined to the Ghetto on the other side of the river. During the Risorgimento the district was a republican stronghold.



PALAZZO DEI CONSERVATORI

with coupled columns on the *piano nobile*, crowned by a prominent entablature with a balcony. The two storeys are united by very tall pilasters, which rise from high pedestals as far as the entablature, the earliest example of the giant order being used in secular architecture to produce an effect of dignified grandeur. Some of the engaged columns in the portico are set into the wall in very shallow niches, another extremely innovative architectural feature, later much copied.

### PALAZZO NUOVO

Palazzo Nuovo, opposite Palazzo dei Conservatori, was designed by Michelangelo to match his palace opposite, but it was not built until the mid-17th century.

## THE CAPITOLINE MUSEUMS

Open daily 9.30–7.30 (last tickets 1hr before closing), [museicapitolini.org](http://museicapitolini.org). The ticket office is in Palazzo dei Conservatori. Tickets include entrance to Palazzo dei Conservatori, the Tabularium and Palazzo Nuovo. At least half a day is needed to do justice to this wonderful museum. The combined ticket (Capitolini Card, valid one week) also includes entrance to the Centrale Montemartini (p. 516). The works are well labelled. Room numbers in the following descriptions correspond to those on the plans in this text. There is a café on the pleasant roof terrace of Palazzo Caffarelli-Clementino, with splendid views.

The collections housed in Palazzo dei Conservatori (with the adjoining Palazzo Caffarelli-Clementino) and Palazzo Nuovo, grouped under the comprehensive title of the Capitoline Museums (Musei Capitolini), are famous for their magnificent Roman sculptures. Founded in 1471, they constitute the oldest public collection in the world. Today they provide a wonderful introduction to Classical sculpture, not only because of their numerous masterpieces, but also because they illustrate the way these were presented to travellers for centuries. On the upper floor of Palazzo dei Conservatori

there is also a gallery of mainly 14th–18th-century paintings. The tunnel which connects Palazzo dei Conservatori to Palazzo Nuovo contains an excellent display of epigraphs and includes a visit to the Tabularium, a magnificent ancient Roman building which provides an unsurpassed view of the Roman Forum. More important sculpture from the collections can be seen imaginatively displayed in the superb exhibition space at the Centrale Montemartini (see p. 516).

### HISTORY OF THE SCULPTURE COLLECTIONS

In 1471 Pope Sixtus IV made over to the people of Rome five wonderful ancient bronzes, among them the famous *Spinario* and the *She-wolf of Rome*, which were deposited in Palazzo dei Conservatori. This nucleus was later enriched with finds made in the city and by various acquisitions, notably the collection of Cardinal Alessandro Albani in 1733. Today those masterpieces of sculpture are still to be found in several rooms of the Appartamento dei Conservatori and all the rooms in the Palazzo Nuovo.

In the 1990s a spacious new hall was built in a courtyard of Palazzo dei Conservatori for the display of the restored equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius. Excavations beside it revealed remains of the foundations of the most important temple on the hill, dedicated to Jupiter in the 6th century BC.

### PALAZZO DEI CONSERVATORI

The lower floors display ancient sculptures and reliefs, of which highlights include the fragments of the colossal statue of Constantine; the *She-wolf of Rome*; the *Spinario* and the original equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius. The upper-floor picture gallery (Pinacoteca Capitolina) has two paintings by Caravaggio.

### Courtyard

The huge head, hand and feet are **fragments of a statue of Constantine the Great** which were found in 1486 in the Basilica of Maxentius in the Forum (see p. 83) and which have been displayed here since then. The seated statue was about 12m high (the vault above it was twice that height) and was an acrolith, meaning that the body would have been made in wood (probably covered with bronze) while the extremities were of stone. The forefinger is raised apparently to hold a sceptre. The head, with its staring hooded eyes and hooked nose, is the best-known portrait of the emperor and would have been all the more imposing when it was crowned with a diadem. Despite the huge dimensions, the anatomical details of the arms and feet are carefully portrayed.

Opposite are **high reliefs** representing the provinces subject to Rome, which once decorated the interior of the cella of Hadrian's temple in Piazza di Pietra (see p. 169): many of these were places visited by the emperor himself. Above is a fragment of the huge **inscription celebrating the conquest of Britain** in AD 43, from an arch erected by Claudius in AD 51 on Via Lata (now the Corso). The emperor is exalted as the first ruler



Detail of the Giuseppe de Fabris's 19th-century monument to Torquato Tasso, who died at Sant'Onofrio. The funeral cortège is shown as being made up of other great writers of Tasso's day, including the poet Giovanni Battista Guarini and the historian Scipione Ammirato.

## SANT'ONOFRIO

Map p. 698, C3. Church open Mon–Fri 9–1, Sat–Sun 10–1. Cloister open daily 9–6.30 (5.30 in winter). Closed Aug. To visit the Museo Tassiano, call T: 06 68 77 347 or 06 68 28 121.

The church and monastic complex of Sant'Onofrio, today in the joint care of Franciscan Friars of the Atonement and the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, was founded by Blessed Nicolò da Forca Palena in 1419 and restored by Pius IX in 1857. It stands in a pretty garden with a fountain, benches and ilex trees. A graceful **L-shaped Renaissance portico** connects the church and friary: in the lunettes beneath the portico are three frescoes from the life of St Jerome (his *Baptism*, *Chastisement for reading Cicero* and *Temptation*) by Domenichino. To the right of the church entrance is the **tombstone of the founder** (d. 1449).

## The church

The church interior is paved almost entirely with tombstones. The first chapel on the left contains an elaborate sculpted monument to Torquato Tasso (1544–95), the epic poet, who spent his last days here, the work of Giuseppe de Fabris (1857). Beneath the statue is a relief of Tasso's funeral procession, with the poet shown crowned with laurel on a bier. The third chapel has the tombstone of Giuseppe Mezzofanti (d. 1849), titular cardinal of the church, who could speak over 50 languages. The portrait of the cardinal opposite the tombstone is by Domenichino. In the pretty apse over the main altar are repainted frescoes by the school of Pinturicchio (upper levels) and attributed to Baldassare Peruzzi (lower three). On the right, the monument to Giovanni Sacco (d. 1505) with a fresco of *St Anne Teaching the Virgin to Read*, is by a pupil of Andrea Bregno. The chapel next to it contains a *Madonna di Loreto* attributed to Annibale Carracci or his school; in the vault pendentives above the altar in the first chapel (Chapel of Sant'Onofrio) is a charming *Annunciation* by Antoniazio Romano.

## The cloister

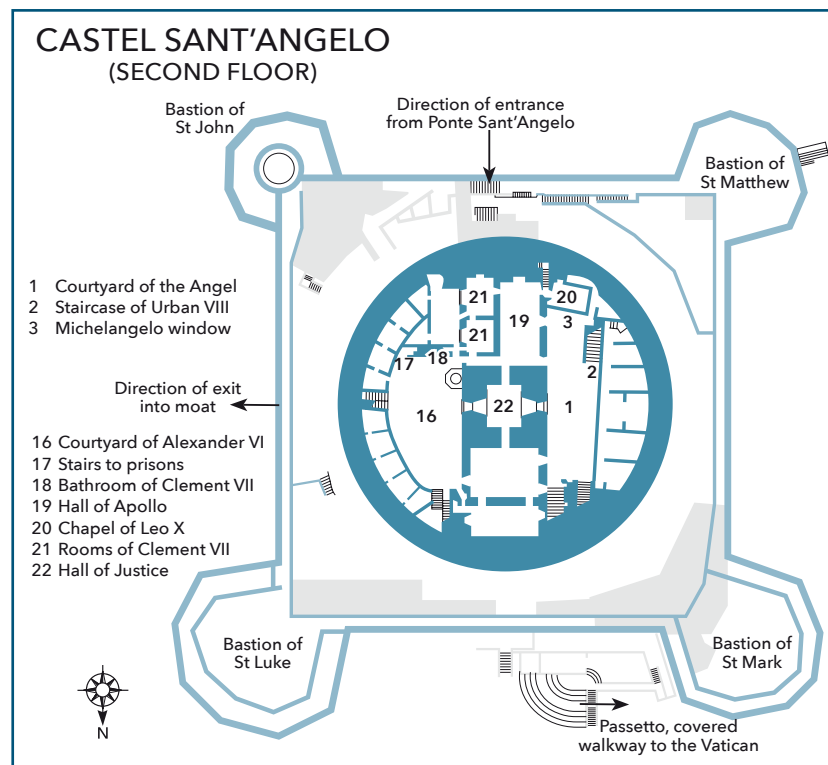
The cloister is decorated with early 17th-century frescoes of the life of St Onophrius by the Cavaliere d'Arpino and others. The Museo Tassiano (*open only by appointment; see above*) contains the poet's death mask, mementoes, manuscripts and editions and translations of his works. The French writer Chateaubriand made arrangements to be buried here also, in what he termed '*un des plus beaux sites de la terre*', should he be fortunate enough (his own phrase) to die in Rome. A plaque outside the church commemorates this fact. Chateaubriand died in Paris in 1848. Nevertheless, his burial site is far from prosaic. He lies on an island near his native Saint-Malo, accessible only at low tide.

From here the peaceful, residential Salita di Sant'Onofrio descends to the Tiber near the Vatican.

## EATING AND DRINKING ON THE JANICULUM

In Piazzale Aurelio, the square in front of Porta San Pancrazio (map p. 699, C2), there are two places to sit and enjoy a drink or a meal. The **Bar Gianicolo** offers coffee, drinks, simple snacks and sandwiches; and at the **Ristorante Antico Arco** ([www.anticoarco.it](http://www.anticoarco.it)) you can eat good Roman cuisine or assemble a meal from their 'finger food' menu.

There are refreshment stalls and a café/restaurant on **Piazzale Garibaldi** and near the Sant'Onofrio end of the Passeggiata del Gianicolo (opposite the paediatric hospital; map p. 698, C3) is the pleasant **Bar Tasso** refreshment kiosk.

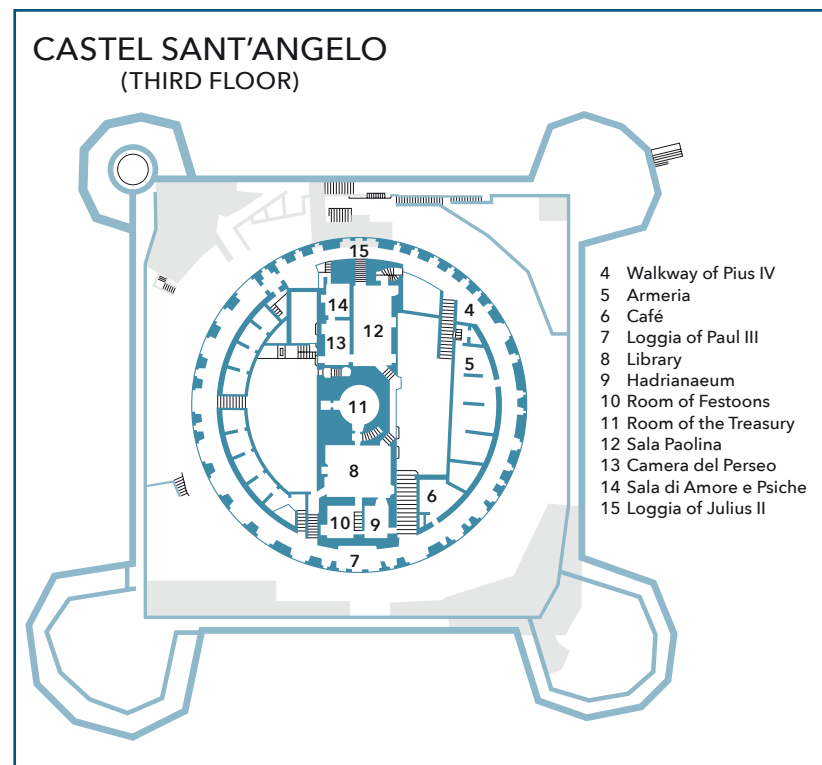


The **Library** (8) has a fine chimneypiece by Raffaello da Montelupo and a stucco frieze of pagan sacrifices, Classical gods and Farnese emblems (e.g. putti exalting the Farnese lily). Above is a painted frieze of cavorting mermaids and mermen. These decorations are by Luzio Luzi and assistants. Luzi also provided the frieze of Dionysiac revels in the **Hadrianaeum** (9) and the decorations in the **Room of Festoons** (10).

Off the Library, stairs lead up to a suite of rooms known as the **Cagliostro**, where the Sicilian alchemist 'Count Cagliostro' was held prisoner in the 18th century. They are decorated with painted *grotesche*, again the work of Luzi.

Back in the Library, a door (with 'Magazzini de polvere e farina' legible over the lintel ('Store-rooms for powder and flour')) leads to the central **Room of the Treasury** (11), at the heart of the castle, where the walnut cupboards were used for the archives inaugurated by Paul III. In the centre are some large chests in which Julius II, Leo X and Sixtus V kept the Vatican treasury.

Narrow stairs wind up from here to the **roof terrace**, scene of the last act of Puccini's opera *Tosca*. Above the terrace towers the huge **bronze Angel** (4m high, by Peter Anton Verschaffelt; 1747), shown in the act of sheathing his sword. This commemorates the vision of Gregory the Great after which the castle is named (see p. 433). The bell



behind the Angel, known as the **Campana della Misericordia**, used to announce the execution of capital sentences. The view from the battlements is superb.

Coming down precipitous stairs from the roof terrace, the itinerary brings you abruptly into the magnificent **Sala Paolina** (12), large and very lavish, and the continuation of Paul III's suite of apartments. There are stuccoes by Girolamo da Sermoneta and Baccio da Montelupo. The ceiling bears the motto *Festina lente* (favourite adage of the emperor Augustus) and another, in Greek, *Dikis Krinon* ('Lily of Justice'), referring to Pope Paul, who was a member of the Farnese family, whose emblem is a lily. Here the pagan (temporal) world meets the Christian (spiritual). The patrons of the castle are represented on the two short walls: on one side the emperor for whom it served as a mausoleum, Hadrian (by Perino del Vaga and Girolamo da Sermoneta) and opposite him the Archangel Michael by Pellegrino Tibaldi: lest the symbolism escape you, inscriptions explain that Paul III has turned a collapsed pagan shrine into a godly and comfortable abode. To the left of St Michael, a female figure holds a three-faced head surmounted by a triangle, symbolising the Holy Trinity. Below St Michael, two baboons (commemorating gifts to the pope from a foreign ambassador) are seen feasting on grapes. In the centre of the floor is the coat of arms of Innocent XIII, who restored the room in the 18th century.



## A WALK ALONG VIA GIULIA, A 16<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY STREET

Via Giulia, a long, straight street running parallel to the Tiber, was laid out by Pope Julius II (and named after him). For long the most beautiful of the city's 16th-century streets, it still has a number of fine palaces with lovely courtyards, many churches (although most of them are kept closed) and pretty though dilapidated street lamps.

## An impression of Via Giulia

Quiet like some noble street in a provincial town; quiet like a corridor between rooms which were the courtyards of palaces, or like the nave of a church with chapels on either hand: and when one went into these courtyards one was filled with astonished reverence on account of their secret silence broken only by the gentle sound of a fountain.

Mario Praz, *The House of Life*, 1958.

FROM PIAZZA FARNESE, VIA DEL **Mascherone** leads down towards the Tiber, skirting the magnificent side façade of Palazzo Farnese past the church of **Santi Giovanni e Petronio dei Bolognesi**, built by Ottaviano Mascherino in 1601. The pretty centrally-planned interior was decorated in the 17th and 18th century by Bolognese artists. The road opens into Via Giulia opposite the eponymous **Mascherone**, a fountain in a pretty wall niche, erected by the Farnese (note the Farnese lily on the top); both the colossal mask of a girl with long hair and the porphyry basin are ancient Roman, although the mouth was enlarged when it was adapted as a fountain. A little way along the street, there is a view through a gate of the upper part of the rear façade of Palazzo Farnese and its garden, with palm trees and cypresses. A picturesque **arch** adorned with stone Farnese lilies (and usually festooned with strands of Virginia creeper) spans

the road. This was the only arch of a viaduct planned, but never realised, by Michelangelo to connect this palace with the Villa Farnesina across the river.

Immediately beyond the arch to the left is the church of **Santa Maria dell'Orazione e Morte**, rebuilt in 1733–7 by Ferdinando Fuga. Skulls flank the entrance. The right-hand alms box, dating from 1694, shows Death claiming a victim and asking passers-by for alms for sufferers from malaria contracted in the Roman Campagna. Malaria remained a serious threat up until the end of the 19th century: as late as 1883, Augustus Hare in his *Walks in Rome* was warning visitors about this mysterious and dangerous illness, which struck from June to November when certain areas of the city, including the gardens of the Villa Borghese, the Caelian and Aventine, were 'a constant prey to fever'.

**Palazzo Falconieri** next to the church, enlarged by Borromini (who also designed the Falconieri family crypt

in San Giovanni dei Fiorentini; *see p.* 246), has extraordinary side pilasters with female breasts topped by giant falcons' heads. It has been the seat of the Hungarian Academy since 1928. Several rooms inside have fine ceilings decorated in stucco by Borromini—alas, not on view, but the little courtyard can be seen, with its fountain grotto. Cardinal Fesch, Napoleon I's uncle, lived here in the early 19th century and amassed a splendid collection of paintings. Dispersed after

his death, some of it ended up in the Palais Fesch in Ajaccio, Corsica.

Turn right into Via di San Girolamo della Carità, which leads to **Piazza Santa Caterina della Rota**, with three churches. **San Girolamo della Carità** (usually open Tues–Fri 5–7, Sun 10–12), rebuilt in the 17th century, has a façade by Carlo Rainaldi. The Cappella Spada (first right), formerly attributed to Borromini, is now thought to be by Cosimo Fanzago, who worked mostly

