

Marie lived in Rome during her third year at the Rhode Island School of Design. She returned for a second year as a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome. <http://www.aarome.org/>  
She mapped out each of the spots listed below [here](#).

### **1) THE TRASTEVERE CHURCHES**

*These churches are only a 15 minute walk from Campo de Fiori and a bit off the tourist path, so they present a rare opportunity to sit quietly with some of the most beautiful artwork in Rome, for free!*

#### **San Francesco a Ripa**

[Piazza di S. Francesco d'Assisi, 88, 00153 Roma](#)

This early Franciscan convent holds Bernini's masterpiece, Beata Ludovica Albertoni. "The sculpture and surrounding chapel honors a Roman noble woman who entered the Order of St. Francis following the death of her husband. The day before her own death from fever, Ludovica received the eucharist and then ordered everyone out of her room. When her servants were finally recalled, "they found her face aflame, but so cheerful that she seemed to have returned from Paradise." (paraphrased from wikipedia) By representing this decisive moment, and like many of his other sculptures, Bernini seems to mingle the idea of physical ecstasy and religious martyrdom. In its day, this sculpture would have scandalized the recently reformed protestant church which considered any representation of a divine figure blasphemous. Bernini finished the sculpture in 1674 when he was seventy one years old.

#### **Santa Cecilia in Trastevere**

[Piazza di Santa Cecilia, 22, 00153 Roma](#)

5th-century church devoted to the Roman martyr Saint Cecilia. Tradition holds that the church was built over the house of the saint.

"Among the most remarkable works is the graphic altar sculpture of St. Cecilia (1600) by the late-Renaissance sculptor Stefano Maderno. The pavement in front of the statue encloses a marble slab with Maderno's sworn statement that he has recorded the body as he saw it when the tomb was opened in 1599. The statue depicts the three axe strokes described in the 5th-century account of her martyrdom. It also is meant to underscore the incorruptibility of her cadaver (an attribute of some saints), which miraculously still had congealed blood after centuries. This statue could be conceived as proto-Baroque, since it depicts no idealized moment or person, but a theatric scene, a naturalistic representation of a dead or dying saint. It is striking, because it precedes by decades the similar high-Baroque sculptures of Gian Lorenzo Bernini."(wikipedia)

### **2) CHURCH OF THE MARTYRS**

*This church is a little further afield, but worth the trip for interested folk. Combine it with a visit to the Colosseum, or San Clemente!*

#### **Santo Stefano Rotondo**

Basilica di Santo Stefano al [Monte Celio](#)

[Via Santo Stefano Rotondo, 7, 00184 Roma](#)

Set atop of the remains of a 2nd-century Mithraic temple, the church was built in the fifth century A.D. to hold the body of Saint Stephen. The church itself is unique, a rotunda more like the Pantheon than St. Peter's, but the interesting thing about Santo Stephano are the paintings. Spiraling around the circular walls, 34 frescoes depict martyrs of the Catholic faith. Each fresco is like it's own little horror movie, or heavy metal album cover. In some cases there were so many gruesome activities to depict that the horrors can be hard to spot, like 'Where's Waldo' cartoons of dying saints.

### **3) SAN CLEMENTE**

*This is a great place to witness Rome's layered history, from a Mithraic temple to Byzantine mosaics, all in one place!*

#### **Basilica of San Clemente al Laterano**

[Via Labicana, 95, 00184 Roma](#)

"Archaeologically speaking, the structure is a three-tiered complex of buildings: (1) the present basilica built just before the year 1100 during the height of the Middle Ages; (2) beneath the present basilica is a 4th-century basilica that had been converted out of the home of a Roman nobleman, part of which had in the 1st century briefly served as an early church, and the basement of which had in the 2nd century briefly served as a mithraeum; (3) the home of the Roman nobleman had been built on the foundations of republican era villa and warehouse that had been destroyed in the Great Fire of 64 AD."(wikipedia) My favorite thing to do here is

descend slowly, feel yourself sinking back in time. Look for the changes in structure and material like brickwork and pillars stacked one on top of the next.

#### **4) THE CARAVAGGIO CHURCHES**

*These churches are on most tourists agenda, but popular for a reason. The sites are about 1.5 miles apart, so take a walk along the Tiber or enjoy a gelato in between!*

##### **The Church of San Luigi dei Francesi**

Piazza di S. Luigi de' Francesi, 00186 Roma

The Contarelli Chapel here contains a cycle of 3 paintings by the Baroque master Caravaggio about the life of St. Matthew. The Calling of St Matthew (on the left wall), The Inspiration of Saint Matthew (above the altar), and The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew (on the right wall). Unlike seeing artwork in a museum, these paintings were made to be viewed in this very chapel, where they have been admired for over 400 years. Some say that the perfect way to view the The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew is to kneel at the entrance to the chapel. From this vantage point you are looking up, along with St. Matthew, into the eye of his assassin. Also, look for Caravaggio himself above the assassin's left shoulder. You might begin to recognize his self portrait hidden in many of paintings from this era!

##### **Santa Maria del Popolo**

[Piazza del Popolo, 12, 00187 Roma](#)

The location of this church would have made it the first stop in Rome for travelers up through the 18th century. Piazza del Popolo marks one of the gates in the Aurelian Wall as well as the starting point of the ancient Via Flaminia. The church contains works by many great artists, but look out for two more canvases by Caravaggio in the Cerasi Chapel, the Conversion of Saint Paul and the Crucifixion of Saint Peter. They are amazing. Also look for two Bernini sculptures in the Chigi Chapel, Daniel and the Lion + Habakkuk and the Angel.

#### **5) CLOACA MAXIMA AND THE ISOLA TIBURINA**

*Rather than typical destinations, these are interesting things to spot when you cross the river into Trastevere!*

##### **Cloaca Maxima**

If you cross the Palatino Bridge, look down to your left to see a double archway right down next to the water. The inner archway (made of marble and sometimes COVERED in graffiti) is the Cloaca Maxima - an original Roman sewer, and one of the oldest sewers in the world. It might not be as impressive as the colosseum, but this ancient drainage system made Rome possible. Gross stuff has been coming out of this drain for almost three thousand years!

##### **The Isola Tiburna**

If you cross at the Ponte Fabricio you are traveling one of the earliest pathways in the city. The bridge itself was built in 62BC, the oldest Roman bridge to exist in its original state, but people crossed the Tiber here even earlier. Some historians think that an ancient salt trading route crossed the river using the Isola Tiburina, and this area was the origin of the very first settlement of Rome.

#### **6) ROMAN GHETTO AND THE GREEN DOOR**

*There are many things to explore in this great neighborhood right across the street from the Campo, but here is an interesting start:*

"The Roman Ghetto was a Jewish neighborhood established by Pope Paul IV in 1555. He required the Jews of Rome, which had existed as a community since before Christian times and which numbered about 2,000 at the time, to live in a walled quarter with its gates locked at night." (paraphrased from wikipedia) The walls were torn down in 1888 but after hundreds of years of isolation, the Roman Ghetto had developed its own Italian dialect and culture.

##### **Sora Margherita (The Green Door)**

I'm always hesitant to give a restaurant recommendation because there are so many good ones in Rome, but this is the best place to have fried artichoke. Ask for the *carciofi alla giudia*, an edible piece of history!

Thanks to Marie for providing this.

We hope everyone takes the opportunity to enjoy Rome in their own way

F M Lorenz, December 2017.