



# Hemispheres

January 30, 2023



Rome / Photo: Courtesy of Dario Garofalo

## *Three Perfect Days*

# *Rome*

DAY  
ONE

DAY  
TWO

DAY  
THREE

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January 30, 2023

Rome is known as the Eternal City, and for good reason. Whether judged using myth (the legend of Romulus and Remus has it that the former founded Rome around 3,000 years ago, after killing his twin brother) or science (archaeologists have unearthed evidence of human occupation going back more than 10,000 years), few cities on the planet have deeper roots. What makes it truly special is that over the millennia the Romans have continually layered present civilizations on top of previous ones—from the Republic to the Renaissance and all the way to the 21st century—giving birth to another nickname: the Big Lasagna. No matter what you call it, whether you go to taste the carbonara or take in the Sistine Chapel, to walk in the footsteps of Julius Caesar or look through the lens of Federico Fellini, the city will live eternal in your memory.

After lunch, we retrieve our bags and head over to the Villa Agrippina Gran Meliá, a lavish resort in the shadow of the Vatican City walls. Kati needs a bit of downtime, but I'm in an exploratory mood, so I leave her to soak up the sun by the picturesque pool while I stroll down Gianicolo Hill, along the river, and into Trastevere, a traditionally working-class neighborhood that's now widely considered the hippest part of town.



Wandering the narrow alleys and admiring the graffiti (let's just say that contemporary Italian artists revere the female form as much as the Renaissance masters did), I soon bumble onto the Piazza di Santa Maria in Trastevere, where tourists sit and eat gelato on the fountain in front of the Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere. I poke my head inside to check out the 12th- and 13th-century mosaics, then continue on, making my way to the Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere. I gaze up at the ornate goldwork, the paintings and sculptures of angels, and think that the reverence with which this landmark church is regarded is truly justified... only, upon leaving, I realize that I was actually in the Chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Orto. Rome, man. (The Santa Cecilia, which I ultimately find just around the corner, and which features a Baroque sculpture of its namesake, is pretty snazzy in its own right.)



The bar at the Villa Agrippina Gran Meliá / Photo: Courtesy of Dario Garofalo

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Retracing my steps toward the Villa Agrippina, I notice a bar called 404 Name Not Found with a chalkboard outside that issues a challenge: “Come try the worst cocktail one guy on TripAdvisor ever had in his life.” I step inside and ask the bartender what it is. “I can’t tell you,” he replies. “Are you up for the challenge?” Never one to turn down a stupid dare, I order the drink, which turns out to be something in the neighborhood of a whiskey or pisco sour. (Even after I’m done, the barkeep won’t tell me what’s in it.) Regardless, forget TripAdvisor; this *aperitivo* is *Hemispheres*-approved!

### **VILLA AGRIPPINA GRAN MELIÁ**

The only five-star hotel within walking distance of the Vatican, this 2-plus-acre urban estate on Gianicolo Hill boasts landscaped gardens, a showstopping pool, 110 luxurious rooms and suites, and a summertime kids club. The hotel, which celebrated its 10th anniversary last year, recently opened a new fine-dining restaurant, Follie, helmed by chef Luciano Monosilio, aka the King of Carbonara.

From \$590, [melia.com](http://melia.com)