



Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



When in Rome...

by Amaru & Suzanne, Sept 2nd 2007

A classical saying is that all roads lead to Rome... and here we are!

Suz has been to Rome before, but that was a good 8 years ago so she was looking forward to revisiting sites, and seeing new ones... I've never been here, so it was all definitely new to me!

We arrived by train to Rome Termini, I had heard and read that the area surrounding the train station was a bit "dodgy" with lots of pickpockets and gypsies all over the place. Well... I saw a few gypsies here and there but nothing out of the ordinary really!

We had booked accommodation at a place called "The Beehive", it's a hostel nicely located just two blocks away from the train station, great when you are lugging a backpack. The deal was that we were going to stay 1 night at the main house and then the remaining 3 nights at one of their apartments south of the Termini.



The Trevi Fountain
A very well known fountain in Rome



Suz
throwing in a coin

South of the Termini? This area is supposed to be a bad area as well.... I'm just letting you all know what we thought we were expecting about the area before we arrived. We had read quite a few reviews about this area telling us that it's badly lit and spooky at night etc... But, we never had a single problem. Sure, it might not be the most attractive area of Rome, but anyone that has spent a bit of time in any urban area will feel safe!

Ok, now that we managed to get that out of the way let's continue with our time in Rome shall we?

After checking in to our room (which was lovely by the way) we headed out to see what we could catch on our first afternoon in the city.

Our walk took us past the Piazza della Repubblica, on towards the Quirinale where we got to watch the guard change parade and sing a few songs (amongst others, the Italian national anthem twice) before we ended up at our goal, the Trevi Fountain.

Of all the sights in Rome, this is one of the most famous ones, and it's easy to see why. The fountain is a stunning piece of work and no matter how many times you walk past and see it (and believe us, we did) it will still amaze you.

At the fountain it's tradition to toss a coin over your shoulder, tossing one coin will have you return to Italy, two coins will make you fall in love with an Italian and three coins will have you marry an Italian. Both Suz and I made sure we didn't toss more than one coin each (even when we came back we didn't toss any more coins, just in case).



I felt like I had to throw
a coin in as well



Piazza di Spagna
The Spanish Steps

After spending a bit of time at the fountain we moved on towards Piazza Spagna and the Spanish Steps, another of Rome's famous sights.

Not very sure what makes them so famous though.... We just saw a few simple steps, nothing more, nothing less...

We finished that day by strolling along the fashion street of Via Condotti and later on ended up at Piazza del Popolo.

The next morning after a good Italian breakfast (Croissant and Cappuccino) we made our way down to the Colosseum, which must be the most famous of all sights in Rome. Gladiators and games, I was looking forward to seeing it and I wasn't disappointed.

We didn't bother walking inside it though, first of all the queues all very long (and yes, we know we can buy a combined ticket for the Palantine and Colosseum further up the road) and secondly we prefer to see some of these sights from outside.... after all, there is nothing but ruins on the inside as well.

So, instead we continued on and walked through the Roman Forum, which in ancient Rome would have been among other things a shopping mall.... it's all about going to the mall!

Walking through the Roman Forums gives you an incling of an idea of what it might have been like back then, of course it's all just ruins now, but with a lot of imagination you can almost see it in front of you.



Piazza del Popolo
at sunset



The Colosseum
...maybe the best well known site

We walked around the Forums up until that time that we figured that we had enough of it and then left via the Vittorio, walking past the Trevi Fountain and the Palazzo Montecitorio and eventually found ourselves staring up at the Pantheon, another of Rome's buildings that has been standing for more than 2000 years.

This was originally a church devoted to the classical gods before the Catholics stole it...(like everthing else). When you walk into the Pantheon you can't really imagine what you will find inside. It's just not very easy to see the dome that's waiting for you. But when you walk in it hits you straight away, and it's quite impressive. At the very top of the dome there is an opening to let sunlight in and it also contains a few small holes on the marble floor that allows the rain water to drain away. Quite ingeneously built!

Just a short distance from the Pantheon we found the Elefantino, a statue by Bernini of an elephant supporting an Egyptian Obelisk on it's back, we're not sure why but it was a cute little statue though.

Moving on from here we found a gelato place along the way that had a sign that said "Gelateria Artigianale", which pretty much means made-in-house. These are the ones we've been told to look out for so we decided to give it a go.

Suz decided to sample their flavours, the Pink Grapefruit, and she was sold, she had to have a cup! I had a Mango flavour and it was by far the best Gelato that we've had in Italy yet! Absolutely wonderful! Until now we've been a bit disapointed since we knew a place back in Sydney (Bar Italia) that served better gelato than most places we've found in Italy. But not this place!



An impressive building
that's been here for almost 2000 years



A bit fragile
...but what else to expect

It was actually so good that we went back the next day to the same place and tried the Pistachio flavour, and it was even better than we could have imagined, it was deliciously creamy and with a great flavour of Pistachio. The name of the place is "La Fonte della Salute" and it's located at Piazza Sant Eustachio if anyone would like to try them out.... we would recommend them to anyone!!

But enough ranting about the gelato (Gelato.....Mmmmmm). We moved along and walked into Piazza Navona, supposedly one of the Rome's most captivating public places. Well, to be totally honest we didn't think too much of it, it looks like any other plaza to us. We had a quick look at their statues, fountains, buildings and not too long after we had arrived, we moved on.

We eventually got to cross the Tiber river that runs through town, we crossed it through the pedestrian bridge Ponte Sant' Angelo and ended up in front of Castel Sant' Angelo. This used to be an old fortress for the popes and it even has a secret passageway linking it to the Vatican (has anyone here read Angels and Demons?).

And yes, we could now see the Vatican City right in front of us.... and that is all you will get to read about that place for now, we've decided to separate it to its own blog so you'll have to wait until then =)

On our last full day of Rome we decided just to take it a bit easy and just strolled around the city. We re-visited a few locations that we had already seen and we saw some others that we hadn't. One of the funniest (and cheesiest) ones must be the "Bocca della Verita"



Want to pose with Gladiators?
Well, then be prepared to pay for it



Suz and I
In front of the Colosseum

This is originally an old manhole cover that now is placed in front of the church; Chiesa di Santa Maria in Cosmedin. Legend says that if you insert your right hand in its mouth and tell a lie it will bite it off!

Well, I can tell you all that both Suz and I still have both of our hands, so either we told the truth or the myth doesn't work ;)

We've read in books and on the Internet people saying that you can't cover Rome in 2-3 days, there are just too many things to see and not enough time to see it in.... Well, I guess it kind of depends on what you want to see... like we've mentioned before, we really prefer to just walk and see the sights, if there are no lines and no costs, then we can enter the buildings as well. Otherwise, we'll pass and move on to the next sight.

What we mean to say is that we managed to cover most of Rome and its sights during the 3½ days that we spent here (and remember, one of these days was dedicated to the Vatican). We definitely feel like we've done the city and it's sights! And we liked Rome, it has some amazing sights, it's easy to walk around from place to place and when you get tired of walking, you just catch the metro home.

People say that Rome is a city you keep coming back to over and over again....well, we DID like the city and we might come back in the future, but for now we feel that we've experienced what it has to offer!



Arco di Tito
The entrance to the Roman Forum



A bit like walking
around ancient Rome



Still among the ruins
of the Roman Forum



Some impressive pillars
aren't they?



An old sign...
or maybe just a replica?



This whole area
is filled with these statues



The Vittoriano
Another grand monument



Back at the Trevi Fountain
We just can't help ourselves



The Pantheon
Original dedicated to the classical gods



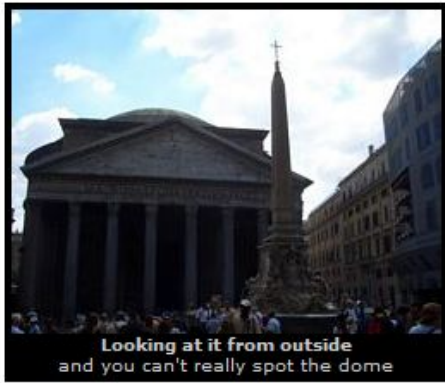
Inside the Pantheon
Looking up at the opening



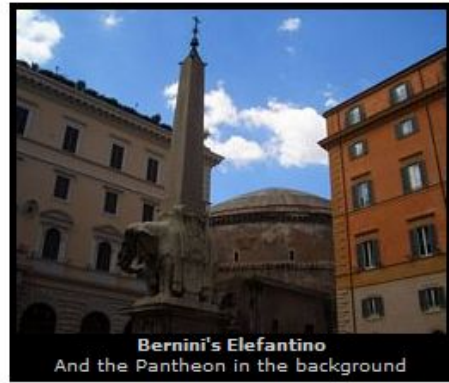
Still inside the Pantheon
Admiring its walls



Looking out
from inside the Pantheon



Looking at it from outside
and you can't really spot the dome



Bernini's Elefantino
And the Pantheon in the background



And once more...
it's gelato time



Suz is sampling
some of the different flavours



The best Gelato in Italy!!
This time it's Mango and Pink Grapefruit



One of the many
water fountains in town



We have arrived at
Piazza Navona



One of the fountains
at the plaza



Looking out over
the Tiber river



Castel Sant' Angelo
It had a secret path to the Vatican



Inside our elevator
We could barely fit...



Santa Maria Maggiore
Located just around the corner from us



The Colosseum
by night



It's very nicely lit
It's just as impressive at night



Looking down
from the Spanish Steps



The boat fountain
at the foot of the steps



Having lunch
at the Trevi Fountain.....again!



Another sculpture by Michelangelo
"Christ bearing the Cross"



Area Sacra
There are plenty of ruins all over Rome



Bocca della Verita
The Mouth of Truth



If you tell a lie while your hand is in its
mouth, it will bite your hand off



Looking out over
Campidoglio



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