

East Rome

NEAR TERMINI TRAIN STATION

Most of these sights are within a 10-minute walk of the train station (except for the Baroque Surprises Stroll and art exhibitions, which are a bit farther).

▲▲▲National Museum of Rome (Museo Nazionale Romano Palazzo Massimo alle Terme)

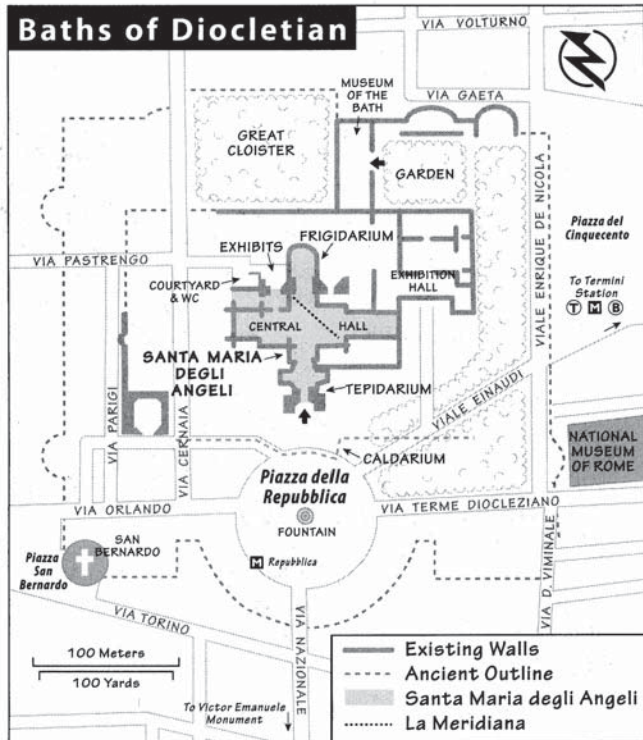
The National Museum's main branch, at Palazzo Massimo, houses the greatest collection of ancient Roman art anywhere, including busts of emperors and a Roman copy of the Greek Discus Thrower.

Cost and Hours: €10 combo-ticket covers three other branches—all skippable, Tue-Sun 9:00-19:45, closed Mon, last entry 45 minutes before closing, audioguide-€5, about 100 yards from train station, Metro: Repubblica or Termini, tel. 06-3996-7700, www.archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en.

✦ See the National Museum of Rome Tour chapter.

▲Baths of Diocletian (Terme di Diocleziano)

Of all the marvelous structures built by the Romans, their public baths were arguably the grandest, and the Baths of Diocletian were the granddaddy of them all. Built by Emperor Diocletian around A.D. 300 and sprawling over 30 acres—roughly five times the size of



the Colosseum—these baths could cleanse 3,000 Romans at once. Today, tourists can visit one grand section of the baths, the former main hall. This impressive remnant of the ancient complex was later transformed (with help from Michelangelo) into the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli.

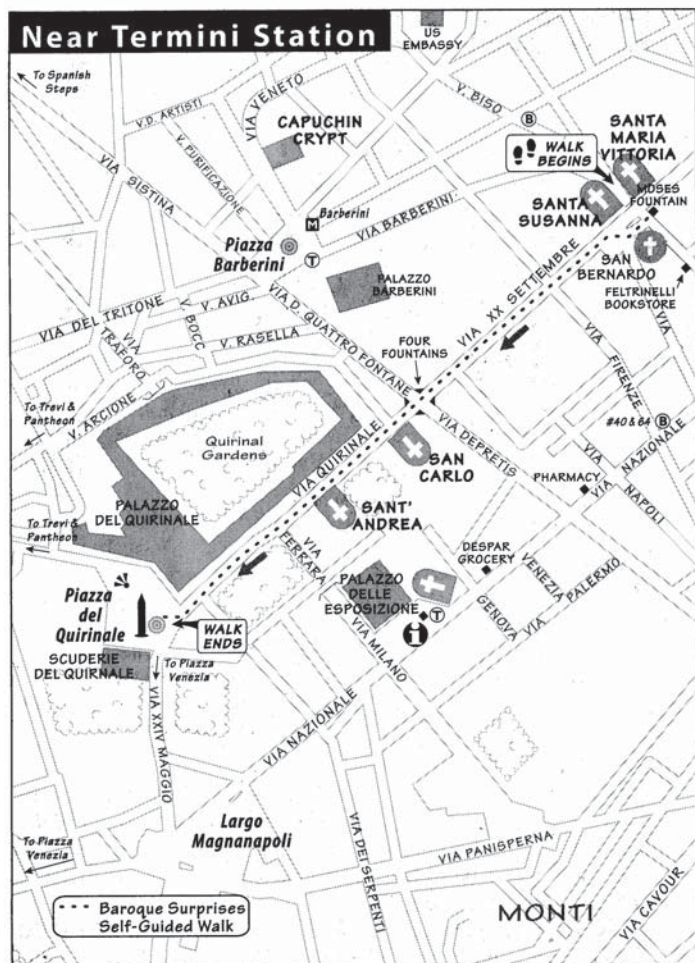
Cost and Hours: Free, Mon-Sat 7:00-18:30, Sun 7:00-19:30. The entrance is on Piazza della Repubblica (Metro: Repubblica or buses #40 and #64).

Background: Large building projects like the baths were political security: They provided employment and fed the masses.



Diocletian (ruled A.D. 285-305) struggled to find a system to rule his unwieldy empire. He broke it into zones ruled by four "tetrarchs." During Diocletian's "tetrarchs" period, architecture and art were grandiose, but almost a caricature of greatness—

This Page Intentionally Left Blank



meant to proclaim to Romans that their city was still the power it had once been.

The baths were one of the last great structures built before Rome's 200-year fall. They functioned until A.D. 537, when barbarians attacked and the city's aqueducts fell into disuse, plunging Rome into a thousand years of poverty, darkness, and B.O.

➡ **Self-Guided Tour:** Start outside the church. The curved brick facade of today's church was once part of the *caldarium*, or steam room, of the ancient baths. Romans loved to sweat out last night's indulgences. After entering the main lobby (located where

moved here around 1585 from a spot near the Baths of Constantine. The obelisk, which formerly stood in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus, was erected here in the late 1700s. Take in the views—there's a fine vista of St. Peter's Basilica in the distance. From here, a set of stairs (in the direction of the dome) leads down to the Trevi Fountain. The big road continues on to Piazza Venezia.

Art Exhibitions

Two temporary exhibition spaces, near Palazzo del Quirinale and just a few blocks from each another, show top-notch art on a rotating basis. Scuderie del Quirinale typically focuses on the great masters (Titian, Vermeer, Caravaggio), while Palazzo delle Esposizioni favors contemporary artworks and photography.

Cost and Hours: €12 for each, can be more with some exhibits, €20 combo-ticket covers both for three days; both open Sun-Thu 10:00-20:00, Fri-Sat 10:00-22:30 except the Palazzo is closed Mon; both may open—and stay open—much later in summer; last entry one hour before closing; Scuderie—Via XXIV Maggio 16, tel. 06-696-271, www.scuderiequirinale.it; Palazzo—Via Nazionale 194, tel. 06-3996-7500, www.palazzoexposizioni.it.

SIGHTS

uses every artistic device to tell Andrew's story. The apostle (depicted in the altar painting) is being crucified on his X-shaped cross. He gazes up toward the light. His soul seems to follow the bronze angels above him, up through a light-filled shaft. Then he reappears—now as a marble statue—above the altar. He bursts through the pediment, ascending on a cloud, into the golden light where he joins his fellow saints in the dome of heaven.

Bernini makes all these elements come together. The pink marble columns color-coordinate with the pink frame of the painting. A bronze angel rests his hand on the painting's marble frame. The delightfully backlit cherubs at the base of the shaft playfully look down on the action. And the suffused light filtering in from the dome brings all the colors together. Bernini combines sculpture, painting, and architecture into "*un bel composto*"—a beautiful whole.

• *Continue down Via del Quirinale, walking along the loooong extent of Palazzo del Quirinale (on your right). The building looks somewhat bigger than it is, because the side we're walking along is actually just a long, skinny building enclosing the formal Quirinale Gardens (for a glimpse of them, peek past the guards when you get to the square). Keep walking toward the main entrance on Piazza di Quirinale.*

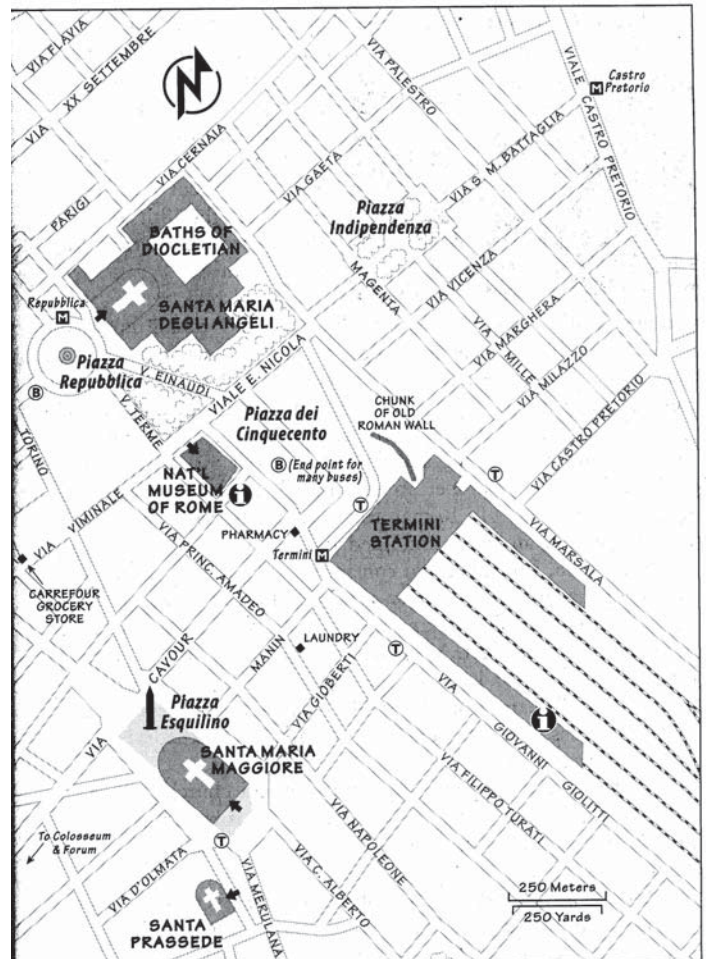
Palazzo del Quirinale: The building (by Maderno and Signor Fountain) dates from 1583, but this site has housed Rome's ruling elite for 2,000 years. Ancient Roman aristocrats, Baroque-era popes, the kings of reunited Italy (after XX Settembre, 1870), and today's presidents of Italy have all resided here—it feels like a combination White House/Palace of Versailles. The current president is Giorgio Napolitano (the president is elected by parliament and serves a seven-year term). While less powerful than the prime minister, Napolitano is very well respected, acting as a stabilizing influence in Italy's chaotic political landscape. Notice the three flags above the entrance: Europe, Italy, and—if he's currently at home in the palace—the personal flag of the president. The palace is occasionally open and tourable—in Italian—on Sunday mornings (see www.quirinale.it for details).



Piazza del Quirinale: The square in front of the palace marks the summit of Quirinal Hill, the highest of Rome's fabled seven hills. The fountain in the middle of the square has colossal statues of horses and men (probably Castor and Pollux, third century); as part of his reordering of the city, Pope Sixtus V had the figures

stripped in the locker rooms, then enter the steam room. The *caldarium* had wood furnaces under the raised floors. Stoked by slaves, these furnaces were used to heat the floors and hot tubs. The low ceiling helped keep the room steamy.

Entry Hall: Step into the vast and cool church. This round-domed room with an oculus (open skylight, now with modern stained glass) was once the *tepidarium*—the cooling-off room of the baths, where medium, "tepid" temperatures were maintained. This is where masseuses would rub you down and scrape you off with a stick (Romans didn't use soap).





Large Transept: Step into the biggest part of the church and stand under the towering vault on the inlaid marble cross. In ancient times, from the *tepidarium*, Romans would have continued on to this space, the **central hall** of the baths. While the decor around you dates from the 18th century, the structure dates from the fourth century.

This hall retains the grandeur of the ancient baths. It's the size of a football field and seven stories high—once even higher, since the original ancient floor was about 15 feet below its present level. The ceiling's criss-cross arches were an architectural feat unmatched for a thousand years. The eight red granite columns are original, from ancient Rome—stand next to one and feel its five-foot girth. (Only the eight in the transept proper are original. The others are made of plastered-over brick.) In Roman times, this hall was covered with mosaics, marble, and gold, and lined with statues.

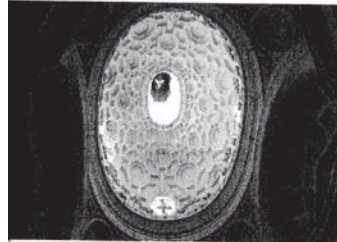
From here, Romans could continue (through what is now the apse, near the altar) into an open-air courtyard to take a dip in the vast 32,000-square-foot swimming pool (in the *frigidarium*) that paralleled this huge hall. Many other rooms, gardens, and courtyards extended beyond what we see here. The huge complex was built in only 10 years (around A.D. 300)—amazing when you think of the centuries it took builders of puny medieval cathedrals, such as Paris' Notre-Dame.

Mentally undress your fellow tourists and churchgoers, and imagine hundreds of naked or toga-clad Romans wrestling, doing jumping jacks, singing in the baths, networking, or just milling about.

The baths were more than washrooms. They were health clubs with exercising areas, equipment, and swimming pools. They had gardens for socializing. Libraries, shops, bars, fast-food vendors, pedicurists, depilatories, and brothels catered to every Roman need. Most important, perhaps, the baths offered a spacious, cool-in-summer/warm-in-winter place for Romans to get out of their stuffy apartments and schmooze or simply hang out.

Admission was virtually free, requiring only the smallest coin. Baths were open to men and women—and during Nero's reign, coed bathing was popular—but generally there were either separate rooms or separate entry times. Most Romans went daily.

Michelangelo's Church: The church we see today was (at least partly) designed by Michelangelo (1561), who used the baths' main hall as the nave. Later, when Piazza della Repubblica became an



the distinct curves of Baroque have now evolved into undulating waves, rippling the surface of this watershed church. And the medallion on top introduces another Baroque element—the oval.

The church was designed by Francesco Borromini (c. 1640),

who had served his apprenticeship at St. Peter's, carving putti for his cousin Maderno and building the altar canopy (*baldacchino*) for the famous Bernini. He and Bernini split on bad terms. Now Bernini's competitor, Borromini used this church as a chance to finally go solo and show his stuff.

Step inside (Mon-Fri 10:00-13:00 & 15:00-18:00, Sat 10:00-13:00, Sun 12:00-13:00). The tiny interior is oval-shaped, topped with an oval dome, which is itself topped with a tiny oval lantern. The whole upper story is a riot of wavy lines—ovals, arches, circles—that defy classical notions of symmetry. The dome is coffered with a complex mix of polygons and crosses. The dome seems to float, with no visible support, and is lit by no obvious light source.

The church looks rich. But Borromini's patrons—an order of poor monks—had little money. So the church is small and made of simple materials—brick, concrete, and plaster—but manipulated with lots of 3-D tricks. Borromini's design is brilliant: light, soft, and as if in a cloud. Light, a symbol of God, pours in from the holy dove in the cupola above (which seems higher than it is). Borromini designed everything for the tight space—notice the tidy little confessionals. And the cherubs are ever so huggable.

With this church, Borromini shocked the critics. But over the centuries, it's become classically Roman—locals fondly call it San Carlino. Borromini, who went on to contribute much to Rome's architecture, committed suicide by stabbing himself in the chest.

• *Head one block farther down the street (which is now called Via del Quirinale). On the left is the...*

Church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale: Often called the "Pearl of the Baroque," this exquisite church sums up the Baroque style (1661). It was designed by the most famous Baroque artist, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, as a chapel for the pope's entourage at the Palazzo del Quirinale. As it was actually used by popes, Bernini had plenty of money for the work—there's lots of marble and gold—but he needed to be pretty conventional. This feels more solid, stable, and classical than the Borromini church.

Inside, the focus is on the altar, dedicated to St. Andrew, or Sant'Andrea (Tue-Sat 8:30-12:00 & 14:30-18:00, Sun 9:00-12:00 & 15:00-18:00, closed Mon). Bernini—the master of multi-media—

ruins. Besides being decorative, the fountain was functional, designed to quench the thirst of visiting pilgrims and their horses.

Also on the square is the **Church of Santa Susanna**. You're looking at what was considered the first Baroque facade—see the date: MDCIII (1603). It was designed by Carlo Maderno at the same time he was working on the facade of St. Peter's. As this is Baroque rather than Renaissance, the columns are in higher relief. The structure seems to pop out at you from the center with an energy that enlivens the entire building. The architect added a new Baroque element—curves—seen in the scrollwork “shoulders.” We'll see curves in spades later in this walk. (This church usually offers a daily Mass in English but may be closed for renovation—see page 85, and can also help you get tickets for a papal audience—see page 206).

Turn 180 degrees. Opposite the Church of Santa Susanna is the circular **Church of San Bernardo** (built 1598). Why is the church round? Because it was incorporated into one of the corner towers of the Baths of Diocletian. Think of how far away the baths' central hall is (see map on page 80), and appreciate how vast that ancient health club was.

• *Now, with the Fountain of Moses at your back, walk down...*

Via XX Settembre: This is an ancient road. Pope Sixtus knew it as Via Pia, but its name now memorializes a modern military victory—the capture of Rome by Italian nationalists in 1870 on the “20th of September.” As you walk, you'll pass the local “Pentagon” (on the left, with the stony bottom and pink top) and other governmental buildings marked by uniforms, tight security, barriers against car bombs, and Italian and European flags.

• *At a very pedestrian unfriendly spot, you reach...*

Via delle Quattro Fontane: This sooty intersection, named for its four fountains, was a big deal for 16th-century pilgrims, as two main roads crossed here. Imagine poor and haggard wayfarers trudging into town with little money and bereft of a Rick Steves guidebook. They navigated by sighting the obelisks and domes that Sixtus' plan had planted around the city. Entering from the north (as most Northern European visitors did), they'd pause here to drink from their choice of fountains. They could then either continue straight to the famous pilgrimage church of Santa Maria Maggiore—whose spire is visible to the left—or (spotting the obelisk down the road), head for Palazzo del Quirinale, then the residence of the pope. The intersection's fountains depict river gods relaxing in the shade. They were designed by a familiar name—Domenico Fontana, or Signor “Fountain.”

• *Just past the fountain on the left side of the street (best viewed from the right side, to take in the full facade) is the...*

Church of San Carlo alla Quattro Fontane: On the facade,

important Roman intersection, another architect renovated the church. To allow people to enter from the grand new piazza, he spun it 90 degrees, turning Michelangelo's nave into a long transept. The four large paintings flanking the main altar were originally in St. Peter's (they were replaced there with mosaics).

La Meridiana (1702): Embedded in the floor of the right transept (roped off) is a brass rod, pointing due north. It acts as a sundial. As the sun arcs across the southern sky, a ray of light beams into the church through a tiny hole high in the wall and a cut in the cornice of the right transept. (To find the hole, follow the rod to the right to the wall and look up 65 feet.) The sunbeam sweeps across the church floor, crossing the meridian rod at exactly noon (before modern innovations like Daylight Saving Time).



This celestial clock is also a calendar. In summer, when the sun is high overhead, the sunbeam strikes the southern end of the rod.

With each passing day, the sun travels up the rod (toward the apse), passing through the signs of the zodiac (the 28-day months of the moon's phases) marked alongside the rod. Many of the meridian's markings were intended for its other use, charting the movement of the stars. However, the tiny window that once let in light from the North Star (originally above the archway of the entrance to the apse) has been filled in.

La Meridiana was Rome's official city timekeeper until 1846, when it was replaced by the cannon atop Gianicolo Hill (which is still fired every day at exactly noon).

Exhibits: The small room to the left of the main altar, the **Sacrestia**, now houses temporary exhibits, often illuminating the church's rich architectural history. Admire both the immensity and height of the ancient Roman brickwork in this room. Step outside into the courtyard and re-create the grand architecture. Notice the *exedra* (semicircular recess in a wall or building)—a motif Romans used for decoration and as a kind of stage for philosophers and orators. See the niches that once housed statues, the rectangular holes that could be used to hold wood-beam scaffolding, and the small pockmarks where iron pegs once secured the marble paneling.

Nearby: Piazza della Repubblica, in front of the baths, was once a garden at the center of the vast, ancient complex. It was called Piazza Esedra until Italian unification (and is still called that by many Romans). The building wrapping around it is a monumental office block, typical of Italian-unification architecture of the late 19th century. The thundering Via Nazionale starts on the far side at what was an ancient door. Look down it (past the erotic nymphs

of the Naiad fountain) to the Victor Emmanuel Monument. The Art Nouveau fountain of the four water nymphs created quite a stir when unveiled in 1911. The nymphs were modeled after a set of twins, who kept coming to visit as late as the 1960s to remind themselves of their nubile youth. Here at the site of the ancient *Thermae*, the statues bathe eternally.

▲Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria

This church houses Bernini's best-known statue, the swooning *Sz. Teresa in Ecstasy*.

Cost and Hours: Free, pay €0.50 for light, Mon-Sat 8:30-12:00 & 15:30-18:00, Sun 15:30-18:00, about 5 blocks northwest of Termini train station at Via XX Settembre 17, Metro: Repubblica.

Visiting the Church: Inside the church, you'll find St. Teresa to the left of the altar. Teresa has just been stabbed with God's arrow of fire. Now, the angel pulls it out and watches her reaction. Teresa swoons, her eyes roll up, her hand goes limp, she parts her lips...and moans. The smiling, cherubic angel understands just how she feels. Teresa, a 16th-century Spanish nun, later talked of the "sweetness" of "this intense pain," describing her oneness with God in ecstatic, even erotic, terms.

Bernini, the master of multimedia, pulls out all the stops to make this mystical vision real. Actual sunlight pours through the alabaster windows, bronze sunbeams shine on a marble angel holding a golden arrow. Teresa leans back on a cloud and her robe ripples from within, charged with her spiritual arousal. Bernini has created a little stage-setting of heaven. And watching from the "theater boxes" on either side are members of the family who commissioned the work.

The church, originally a poor Carmelite church, was slathered with Baroque richness in the 17th century. (It grew popular in modern times for its part in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*, something that serious historians scoff at.) At the altar, in the center of the starburst, is an icon of the Virgin Mary, considered miraculous for the military victories attributed to it during the Thirty Years' War (early 1600s). And, as the 17th century was a time when the Roman Catholic Church was threatened by Protestants, the ceiling shows Mary defeating (Protestant) snakes, who grasp scriptures translated from the pope's Latin into the evil vernacular.



Santa Susanna Church

The home of the American Catholic Church in Rome, Santa Susanna may be closed for renovation during your visit. When open, they hold Mass in English Monday through Saturday at 18:00, and on Sunday at 9:00 and 10:30; if they're closed, check their website for the temporary location and time. They arrange papal audience tickets (see page 206), and their excellent website contains tips for travelers and a list of convents that rent out rooms. You'll find a description of the church's facade next, in my Baroque Surprises Stroll.



Cost and Hours: Free, Mon-Sat 9:00-12:00 & 16:00-19:00, open Sun only for Mass, Via XX Settembre 15, near recommended Via Firenze hotels, Metro: Repubblica, tel. 06-4201-4554, www.santasusanna.org.

blica, tel. 06-4201-4554, www.santasusanna.org.

Baroque Surprises Stroll on Via XX Settembre

When Pope Sixtus V developed an ambitious plan to reorganize Rome around key landmarks (c. 1580s), he transformed this formerly sleepy neighborhood near the Baths of Diocletian. Within three generations, it was a major traffic hub and the center of a new city water system. The streets were lined with grand fountains, obelisks, and churches, all decorated in the new style of the 1600s—Baroque.

➔ **Self-Guided Walk:** This half-mile walk starts in Piazza di San Bernardo (near the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, with Bernini's famous statue of St. Teresa, described earlier), travels down Via XX Settembre, and ends at the Palazzo del Quirinale, where you can see a distant obelisk (see map on page 80 for route). The churches we'll look at are free to enter; the hours are listed for each one, but keep in mind that they close for an early afternoon break (from 12:00 or 13:00 until 15:30 or 16:00).

• Start at the wide square known as...

Piazza di San Bernardo: At the end of the square is the imposing **Fountain of Moses**. After a thousand years of living on well water, the citizens of this neighborhood finally got fresh running water with the opening of this public fountain (1585-1588). It was built by Pope Sixtus V as the end point for a newly restored, 15-mile-long ancient aqueduct. From here, water was distributed to dozens of other nearby fountains. The vast undertaking was celebrated with statues by Domenico Fontana, starring Moses—renowned for miraculously bringing forth water in the desert. Take a look at the fountain's four huge columns, recycled from ancient