

Ultimate Kid-friendly Itinerary to Spend 1, 2, 3 or 4 Days in Rome, Italy

Why do The 2 Idiots recommend Rome?

Rome is our favorite Italian city. It is basically an open-air museum – it was built so long ago that even if you didn't rush around to see the sights and just walked around, you are walking through so much history at every tour. But Rome is also a very modern, living, breathing city. Most of the cities we visited in Italy, especially Venice, are 95 percent tourists with the Venetians who live outside the city coming in to earn money from the tourists. In Rome, you have tourists, but you also have a thriving city -- the future of Italy is being built in Rome while the other cities were cities of the past. Rome feels authentic.

CREATING AN IDEAL ITINERARY

There is so much to see and do in Rome that is impossible to get a sense of place with only one day in the city. Many cruise operators offer Rome as an extension, which you should do if you are arriving to Italy by boat. You'll need a minimum of three days to see Rome's biggest attractions, which include massive museums with artwork dating as far back as the archaeological ruins you'll need ample time to explore. Vatican City requires its own full day to visit, and crowds are constant. We spent a week in Rome, but we took time to rest and just enjoy the city. Follow our itinerary to ensure you see the best of the attractions during your four-day visit. We highly recommend taking walking tours in Rome. There is so much history it is hard to capture it all unless you have read books on it and a tour guide can help acquaint you to the city and explain the history. Also, tour guides can help you skip the lines. It can take hours to get into some of the biggest attractions, but with a tour guide, you'll bypass the waits, which is especially good with a child.

Logistics

When staying in a large city such as Rome, we seek accommodations near parks so we can start and end our day with some playtime for our son. For us, we stayed in an AirBnB near Trastevere, which is a very hipster neighborhood large park near the Tiber River. Friends who know Rome well recommended the neighborhood to us and we loved it. There is a cool crowd, tons of restaurants and bars, small streets and all kinds of fun things. It also provided a more

local feel by staying here rather than in a bustling piazza. Much of your time in Rome will be on foot, with an occasional taxi to get to some attractions. With so much walking inside sites and museums, you may not want to spend long periods walking to those sites, so a taxi can help ward off fatigue. But be mindful of taxis trying to overcharge. We had some horrible experiences with taxis trying to rip us off, and they overcharge to take you to Vatican.

Vacation days	Itinerary	Estimated cost per person (only attractions)
Day 1	Visit Vatican City (10 a.m./2 p.m.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vatican Museums (we especially loved the map room) • Sistine Chapel • St. Pete's Basilica Walk around Vatican City and Prati <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a photo from across Tiber River of Supreme Court Stroll around Trastevere in the evening	Ticket to museum and Sistine chapel is €17 for adults and €8 for children. Audio guides are €7. Our suggestion is a 3-hour, skip-the-line-tour that is ~\$71 per adult Basilica has free admission
Day 2	Do a food and wine tour (10:30 a.m.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trastevere • Campo de Fiori • Jewish Ghetto Talk a walking tour of Rome (3:30 p.m.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spanish Steps • Trevi Fountain • Pantheon • Piazza Navano 	3.5-hour food tour is €77 per adult Rome walking tour is ~\$44 per adult
Day 3	Visit the Colosseum, Roman Forum and Palentine Hill (10 a.m. suggestion, several tour times) Grab lunch in Monti and then visit Basilica de Santa Maria Maggiore Stroll and enjoy Monti in the evening	€12 for adults, free for children. Tickets to the Colosseum include entry into the Roman Forum. We recommend the 3-hour Forum and Colosseum tour for ~\$61 per adult
Day 4	Visit Villa Borghese Enjoy Trastevere again in the evening	€15 for adults, €2 for children

Step into the Renaissance Period

Start your visit to Rome by visiting Vatican City, which *will* be crowded, no matter what time of day you visit. Vatican City is, in fact, its own independent city-state, entirely surrounded by Rome. (It is actually the world's smallest sovereign state!) The headquarters for the Roman Church, this is the home of the Pope, as well as the church's collection of artwork dating back to ancient Roman times and, of course, the Renaissance. During the Renaissance, Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, and it remains as awe-inspiring as the day he painted it. The chapel is located inside the Apostolic Palace, where the Pope lives. It was consecrated in 1483 and completed in 1508, throughout the highlight of the Italian Renaissance.

Tickets into the museum and Sistine Chapel also include admission into St. Peter's Cathedral, where the Pope heads over the church and its services. Michelangelo had a hand in designing this gorgeous church, as well, which began construction in 1506 and was completed more than 100 years later.

It is best to pre-purchase a [tour to the Vatican](#), as the lines for tickets are very long – you could end up waiting two to three hours to get inside! You will still stand in line to enter with your tickets, however, as security is tight and everyone has to be screened. During the height of summer, you could find crowds so large that you are elbow to elbow when you enter the Sistine Chapel. We joined a tour guide for our visit to help us through lines and to give us the history of the buildings and the church. She was very knowledgeable, telling us if we looked at every piece of art in the museum for one minute, it would take a lifetime to see it all.

Expect to spend four hours here, taking in as much artwork as you can. Bring your stroller; we cannot emphasize this enough, even if a guide tells you it is not allowed or not recommended. They *are* allowed and we managed through the crowds. Although there are paintings and sculptures dating back centuries, in between is modern art. Natasha harkens looking at the modern art as a way to cleanse your palette like you would take in the scent of a coffee bean after sampling perfumes. Take a mental break from the ancient works with the modern art.

AJ's favorite room was the Map Room. You walk into this room and it is filled entirely with maps and incredible ceilings. For Natasha, the Sistine Chapel was the highlight – the intricacy, the details, the way he painted on his back for years all capture your attention. You are supposed to be quiet in the chapel and the guards spend much time shushing you and trying to prohibit photographs. They take their job *very* seriously. (We did use our phone to capture an unnoticed photo.)

When visiting St. Peter's, strollers are not allowed inside. Our son was sleeping when we visiting so we took turns going inside. As a Catholic Church, they will require your shoulders to be covered and your skirt or short length to be on the long side. If not, they will turn you away, so be sure you dress appropriately.

When you have seen it all, take a side street toward the river to find a lunch spot that is not filled with tourists and overpriced pizzas. Walk towards the upscale Prati neighborhood, where you'll discover beautiful homes, charming B&Bs and tree-lined streets. Situated along the Tiber River, the neighborhood is flanked by the Trastevere park, where your child can stretch his legs

after spending so many hours in the crowds at Vatican. (Be sure to cross the Tiber to take a photo from the river, as the setting is picture-perfect!) Also, in the Prati neighborhood is the Via Cola di Rienzo, which is a great shopping street with restaurants and boutique shops. This is a perfect place to grab dinner at the end of your first day in Rome.

Tour Rome Together

On your second day, a fantastic way to explore the city is by joining a couple of tours. Again, there is so much to take in that a tour guide can help you make sense of it all. You may be surprised we are touting tours so much but Rome can be completely overwhelming and it will help you get your bearings. We love doing tours of cities because they are free and led by passionate locals often who study art and history. Start your day at Trastevere, where you child can run and play before you join a 10:30 a.m. [food and wine tour](#). Our tour walked us around different parts of the city like the Jewish Quarter and the Campo di Fiori public market where you will sample cheese, prosciutto, pasta, pizza, wine and beer. You'll be eating so much, this will be your lunch for the day.

Then in the afternoon, join a second [walking tour of Rome](#) (around 3:30 p.m.). The best way to experience Rome is to walk through it, and you'll see the Spanish Steps, dating back to 1725; Trevi Fountain, dating back to 1762; the Pantheon, a former temple dedicated in 126 A.D.; and popular piazzas such as Navano, built on the site of the Stadium of Domitian. By time you finish, you'll be exhausted, so head back to Trastevere for dinner and an early night.

Explore Ancient Rome

On your third day in Rome, now you'll go back to see the city's biggies: the Colosseum, the Forum and Palentine Hill. The size, the scale and the architecture of these buildings you've seen in photographs are breathtaking! The iconic round ruin of the Colosseum, which dates back to 70 A.D., is one of the most famous landmarks in the world – one of the New Seven Wonders of the World, in fact. Once upon a time, it used to hold up to 80,000 people for gladiator events and today sees more than 4 million visitors per year. With that many visitors, you will definitely encounter lines. [Tour groups](#) will offer tickets and jump-the-line opportunities; with kids, the extra fee is worth it – do it!

Along with tickets to the [Colosseum](#), you receive tickets to the Roman Forum, just across the street. If you first climb up Palentine Hill, you will get an incredible view of the Forum before you walk down to the rectangular outdoor area that is great because your kids can run around. Take in the amazing ruins of what was formerly the city's main marketplace and meeting spot for day-to-day activities, news, elections and more. The remains of temples, churches, arches and staircases date back to 7th century BC.

The Forum is a small valley between the Circus Maximus and Palatine Hill, the later the centermost of Rome's ancient seven hills. This is where the ancient imperial palaces stood, beginning with Augustus.

After your head stops spinning from seeing the remains of the most powerful empire in history, enjoy lunch in the neighborhood, which is known as Monti. Be careful not to eat at a tourist trap by making your way down side streets and finding more local restaurant options. If a restaurant offers pineapple pizza, run, don't walk away and find another option. Italians would never put pineapple on a pizza (although AJ loves it).

By time you end this day, you should be pretty tired from walking about in the heat, so take it easy and enjoy a casual evening exploring the Monti neighborhood piazzas.

See the Masters and Gardens at Borghese

With a fourth day in Rome, you can leave the city behind a little by visiting the Villa Borghese, home to the Galleria Borghese. The Villa was built on what was once the edge of Rome and today is near the Tiber River and Vatican City. The large park area, where your child is free to run, houses grand gardens, a zoo and a museum. Within the interior of the museum are paintings, sculptures and antiquities dating back to the Renaissance originally collected by Cardinal Scipione Borghese, Pope Paul V's nephew. He collected many works by Caravaggio and Bellini, and a day spent in Borghese is both relaxing and beautiful.

KID-FRIENDLY TIPS

- Take a tour in the biggest tourist places. Often, tour groups are hovering around outside and near the lines enticing you to sign up for the tours, but you can book it online with the provided links. These can be great simply because you can skip the lines, which can save you hours of waiting. It's slightly pricier, but totally worth it, and then you also have a tour guide pointing out what you are seeing.
- DO NOT listen to any tour guides telling you not to bring stroller. We learned the hard way by leaving our stroller behind for the Colosseum tour; don't make the same mistake. Both the Colosseum and Vatican allow strollers and you should always bring a [good stroller](#), as there is a lot of walking around Rome and the sites are large. St. Peter's Basilica does not allow strollers insider, but you can leave your stroller outside while you explore.
- The Vatican is difficult to do with a child. First of all, the lines are huge, no matter if you have a timed ticket or not. Take a stroller so your child can hopefully fall asleep, but know that St. Peter's Basilica will not allow a stroller outside. If your child's naptime is upon you, visit the museum while he naps, and visit the Basilica while he is awake and can get out of the stroller.
- Neighborhood parks can be found all over town, so make the most of them. They weren't as prevalent as they were in Barcelona, but there are definitely plenty to find and enjoy.

- Our AirBnB was in a building where the owner also lived and her daughter was a babysitter so we used a sitter for the first time on our travels and had a chance to enjoy a date night in Rome.

OTHER TIPS

- Vatican City is the holy city for Catholics and the Vatican Museum is not open on Sundays, so be sure to plan for this when creating your own itinerary. You'll need to have covered shoulders and longer skirts or shorts to enter, or they will turn you away.
- Rome is a very large cosmopolitan city filled at every turn with archaeological ruins, museums and sites. It can be very overwhelming and you may feel you have to cram in all of the sites. Be sure to take some time to relax and truly enjoy the city; visit a local park and let your child play, stroll down side streets and sample restaurants and shops off the beaten path.
- Be careful of pickpockets, especially around the Trevi Fountain. It's very crowded here and around the Spanish Steps; keep your valuables on you, and never leave them in a stroller that you may step away from for a photo op.
- Rome is a large city and you can walk around the tourist spots and perhaps use taxis or Uber to get to places that may be further from your hotel. Note: Only Uber Black is available, so you'll pay extra but will have a more comfortable ride.
- Don't take a taxi from Vatican City, and be mindful of taxis trying to overcharge. We had some horrible experiences with taxis trying to rip us off, and they overcharge when you leave the Vatican. Find a place outside Vatican City that you can walk to, if you really need a taxi to get you closer, and be sure to use taxis that use a meter, so they cannot jack the price.
- When it comes to dining, avoid the tourist trap restaurants that will overcharge you and won't provide you with authentic or quality foods. Italians don't eat pineapple on their pizza so if you see that on the menu – run!
- Foods we enjoyed: La Boccaccia is a great little pizza place near the river as well as the Trastevere neighborhood, which also has a large park of the same name where your kids can play following a meal. Pizza is a must in Italy, as well as fresh gelato, and, if you can, get truffle pasta of any kind.