

A few recommendations for

Rome

- Stroll around **Trastevere**.
- Take a **golf cart tour** by My Best Tour.
- If you want to get out of the hubbub, go to **Borghese Park** and hang with locals. You can rent bikes or trolleys. There's a nice art museum and a beautiful restaurant as well.
- If you are only in Rome a short time, I recommend skipping going into Vatican City. However, next to Vatican City is **Saint Peter's Basilica**, which is definitely worth an hour or two of your time. Arrive after 2PM for shorter lines and no buses. (This is my tip for all European sites.). Saint Peter's hours vary throughout the year, but I suggest arriving about 2:30 or 3PM. Get in line on the right of courtyard as you face the church. The line usually moves quickly. After you get through security, go straight to the ticket line for the **duomo** (dome). The church is free (as are all churches in

Italy), but the dome requires a paid ticket. Go up in the dome first as it closes earlier than the sanctuary. No shorts or bare shoulders are allowed.

- **Underneath San Crisogono Church** in Rome is my favorite little "secret" adventure. Underneath this church in Trastevere is a spectacular underground and you might be the only people down there! Try to arrive by 6PM or earlier as the church closes around 7PM. Walk into the front doors of the church, walk to the back left side (near the pulpit) and make a left. On your left you will see an information desk and hopefully someone sitting there. Pay them (2 or 3 euro?) and go into the door and down the stairs to explore ancient Rome at your own pace! There isn't much information down there, so I'm putting some here for you:

A little history of the place: Remember that much of ancient Rome is 45 feet lower than the streets today. If you go to the Pantheon (try to go!), you will notice it is a little below street level. It used to be up a bunch of stairs! Today you get to go into ancient Rome at street level! From a website with notes from me: "However, the most spectacular feature of the church lies underground where the remains of a Roman domus and the early Christian basilica can be found. The domus probably dates from the 3rd century AD, when Christians were still persecuted by Roman emperors and were forced to pray in secret. This house was used by a very early Christian community and part of its brick masonry still survives. You are standing in one of the oldest churches in the world! Later, the domus was consecrated as a church and during the 5th century a basilica was built here. Its unusual structure, typical of Eastern architecture, reminds us that Trastevere was an immigrant area where different religions and cultures mingled. The excavations cannot be completed because the foundation of the upper

church still obstructs the ancient structure, thus preserving the mystery of the many remains. They include the apse and the walls of the crypt, built to give access to the martyrs' shrine; the frescoes dating to the 8th and 10th century; (make sure to see the frescoes... see the one of Jesus healing a leper?!?) the baptismal font and the numerous Roman fragments; and a 6th century altar and marble sarcophagi since parts of the basilica were used as a burial site."

- After visiting the underground of Saint Crisogono, walk into Trastevere for a little shopping if you like at a leather shop I recommend for purses and shoes, **Carlo Cecchini**. The shop is open until midnight. They have two locations within a short distance of each other. Make sure you go to both.