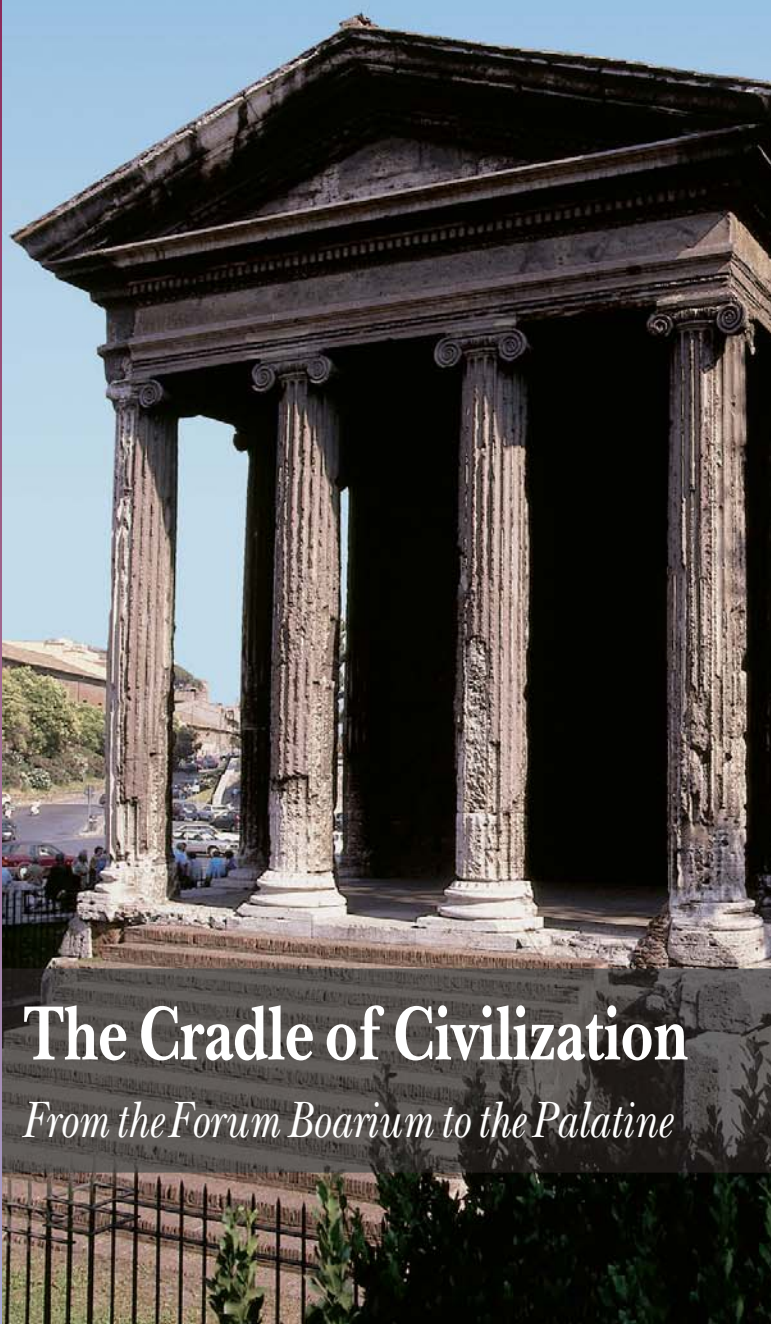




Comune di Roma  
Tourism

## *Walks in Rome*



## **The Cradle of Civilization**

*From the Forum Boarium to the Palatine*

## Rome for you

### *Information series on the City of Rome*

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*On the cover, the Temple of Portunus*

*On this page, the Arch of the Argentarii, panel in relief*





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## ***Walks in Rome***



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*Temple of Hercules Invictus, detail of a capital*

## **The Cradle of Civilization**

*From the Forum Boarium to the Palatine*



*The so-called Temple of Vesta and the church of S. Maria in Cosmedin seen from the Ponte Rotto in a 19th century illustration*



*The ruins of imperial palaces on the Palatine in a 19th century engraving by B. Pinelli*

## *Presentation*

**T**he Roman academic Silvio Negro maintained that in order to know Rome, a "lifetime was not enough".

When faced with a history that is as eventful as Rome's, it is difficult to appraise it even into brick thick guides, still we decided to offer a series of encompassing pocketbook volumes that any curious tourist may carry with them during their visit.

The "Walks in Rome" series offers routes within the city's great web of must-see sites and monuments. Each publication has chosen a guiding theme allowing you to follow a path through, to mention a few, "Monumental Rome" (via dei Fori Imperiali and the Colosseum) or "The Dawning of Christian Rome" (The Basilicas of St. Johns in the Lateran and the Holy Cross in Jerusalem) or even enjoy the most earthly Rome "A virtual film set" (via Veneto and surroundings).

So, even if a lifetime is not enough, you might as well start.

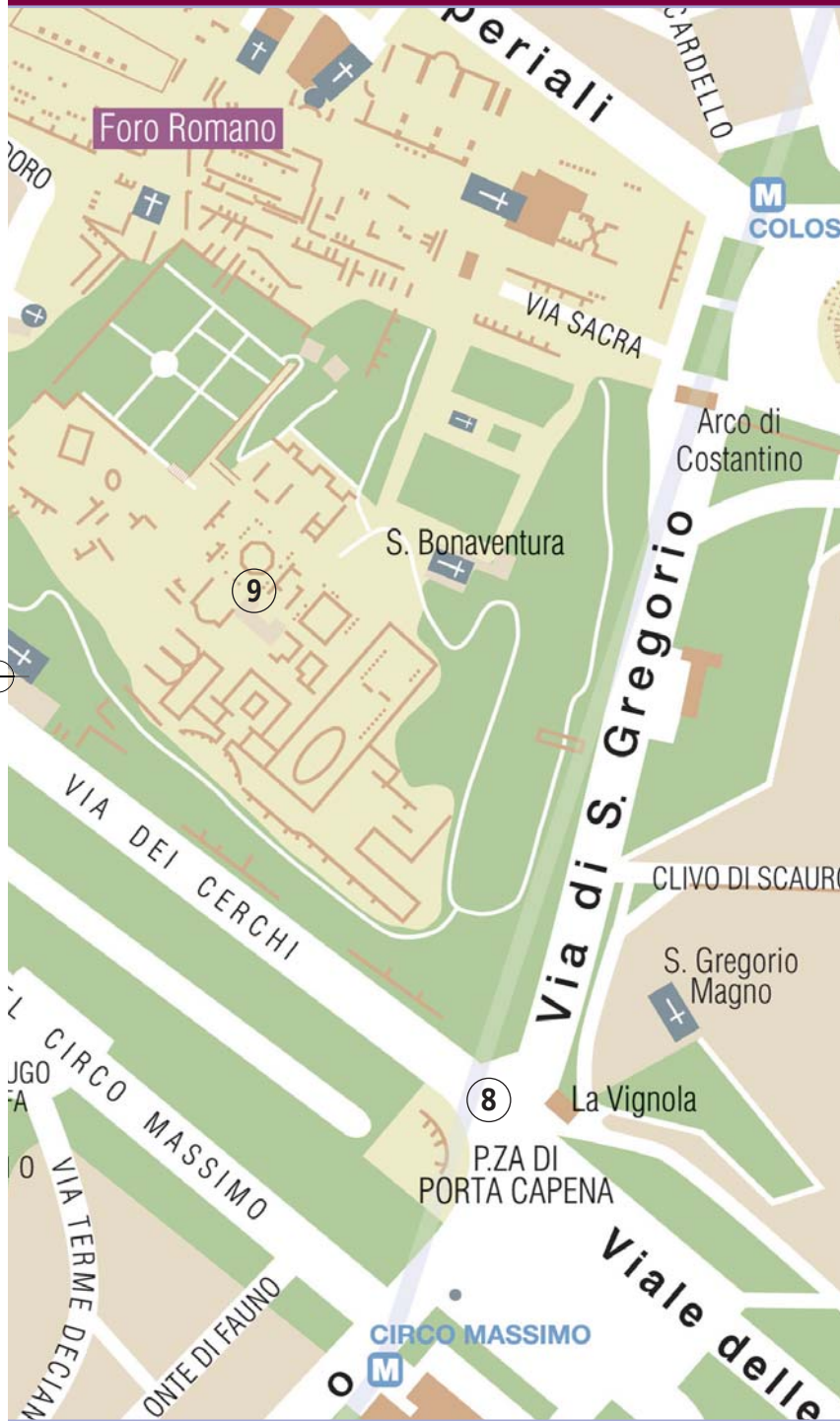
**Tourism Office  
Rome Municipal Council**

**Key**

1. Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Bocca della Verità and the Hercules's Great Altar
2. Walking, walking...
3. The Temple of Hercules Invictus and the Temple of Portunus
4. Walking, walking...
5. San Giorgio in Velabro
6. Walking, walking...
7. The Circus Maximus
8. Walking, walking...
9. Palatine

6





...the walk  
begins...

## The Forum Boarium

The area of the Forum Boarium is of great interest due to its associations with the city's earliest beginnings, and even more important is the stretch of the Tiber now marked by the ruins of the 16th century Ponte Rotto (Aemilian Bridge). There is archeological evidence of the formation of small settlements of hut-dwellers on the Palatine and on the other hills in the Tiber plain in around 1000 BC. These became united in the 8th century BC, giving rise to the city of Rome. The growth of these primitive settlements, inhabited by Latins, Sabines and Etruscans, was encouraged by the possibility of expanding trade along the river. Salt, a most precious commodity because of its use in rearing livestock and preserving meat, was panned at the mouth of the Tiber near Ostia and thence transported inland, along the route which was to become the Via Salaria. But there was one principal factor which made vicinity to the river fundamental in the destinies of the groups living on the site of the Palatine and the other hills at the time: this was the ford located immediately downstream of the Tiber Island. Later replaced by the famous Pons Sublicius, this ford joined the two main routes traversed by livestock farmers: the route which led to the Etruscan

North and that leading to the Greek South, later to become known as the Via Aurelia and the Via Appia respectively. By controlling this stretch of the river close to the Tiber Island, the first Romans were able to benefit from the intense trade between the two areas and rapidly attained a position of prestige. It is no coincidence that the river bank overlooking this point was referred to as the Forum Boarium, or cattle market, right up to Imperial times. Over the next new centuries the place acquired a river port, located where the Anagrafe (Public Records Office) currently stands in Via Petroselli, and temples celebrating the exploits of Hercules, who was regarded as a protector of the place and of traders in general. This was because it was here, as myth has it, that the demi-god defeated the evil giant Cacus, who had stolen from him the oxen won from Geryon: the tale perhaps reflects the role the first Romans must actually have played in ensuring safe commerce. The area was devoted mainly to trade throughout the Republican and Imperial periods, and in the Early Medieval period it hosted a large Byzantine settlement, due to its closeness to the Imperial palaces on the Palatine, thus becoming known as the Greek stretch of the river bank (*nipa graeca*).

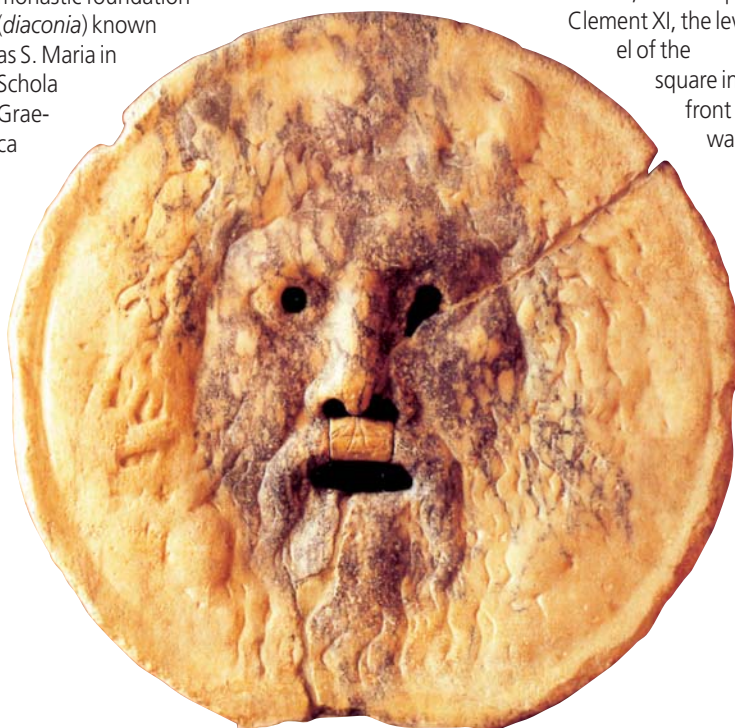


## 1. Santa Maria in Cosmedin, the *Bocca della Verità* and the Great Altar of Hercules

The church of S. Maria in Cosmedin, in Piazza Bocca della Verità, stands on top of the site of the Great Altar of Hercules. The archaic cult of Hercules was one of the most deeply rooted among the Romans, and there are many religious and mythological references to the god in the area. Many centuries later the Byzantine Greek community from Constantinople was to establish its first abode in the area of these ancient temples (Ara Maxima, Hercules Invictus, Aedes Aemiliana Herculis). Indeed, it was Eastern monks who built the monastic foundation (*diaconia*) known as S. Maria in Schola Graeca

in the 6th century AD. And in 782 Pope Hadrian I had the ruins of the Great Altar of Hercules demolished in order to expand it, as a sign of solidarity towards Greek monks taking refuge from the persecution of Emperor Constantine V. A monastery was added to the church at the end of the first millennium, and it became known as the *Kosmidion*, in memory of a building of the same name in Byzantium. During the intervention of the Normans in 1078 in defence of Pope Gregory VII, the church was heavily sacked and later restored between 1118-19 and

1124. In 1715, under Pope Clement XI, the level of the square in front was

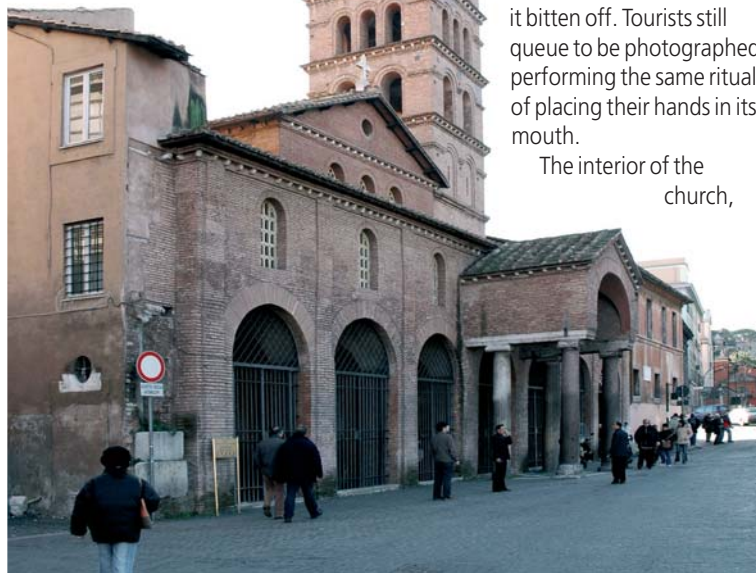


*Bocca della Verità*

lowered to bring it down to that of the interior of the church, and three years later the architect Giuseppe Sardi was commissioned to redesign both the interior and the exterior of the church. The elegant baroque façade, undertaken at this time by Sardi, was unfortunately destroyed between 1894 and 1899 during attempts by G.B. Giovenale to restore the church to its presumed appearance in Medieval times. The current façade is in brick, preceded by a portico on piers, with latticed single-leaved windows on the upper storey. The upper part of the façade is slightly set back, with a seven-storey Romanesque belltower on the left, decorated with convex mouldings and polychrome marble disks and containing elegant three-leaved windows with slender columns. The portico is preceded by a porch supported by four Ionic columns, and contains various inscriptions, two ancient weights in basan-

ite, the remains of a fresco depicting the Annunciation and the Nativity and, on the right, the funerary monument of the 12th century prelate Alphanus. The architrave of the entrance, signed by Johannes de Venetia, depicts the hand of God in the act of blessing with the thumb and ring finger united, according to Greek custom. On the left, at the end of the portico is the church's most famous monument: the great mask known as the Bocca della Verità (Mouth of Truth). This is an ancient Roman mask which probably served as the cover of a water drain, and the presence of two dolphins, the profiles of which can just be made out, suggest it may have depicted the god Oceanus, or at least some river god. The mask was set up in the portico in 1632, and with it is associated a famous Roman tradition, a kind of ordeal or judgment by God, whereby any liar who introduced their hand into its mouth would have it bitten off. Tourists still queue to be photographed performing the same ritual of placing their hands in its mouth.

The interior of the church,



which was also deprived of its 18th century elements in Giovenale's restoration, consists of three aisles divided by four piers and eighteen ancient columns of various origin. Five of the ancient capitals were sculpted in the 12th century and represent one of the best examples of Romanesque architectural decoration. The ceiling and Cosmatesque floor have undergone recent restoration, while the women's gallery (*matroneum*) on the first floor has been restored to its original form. Ten Roman columns may be noted running from the left aisle and across the counter-facade of the church to the opposite side. In antiquity these supported a series of small arches and are all that now remains of a shrine which was annexed to the Great Altar of Hercules and may have contained his sacred remains. In the upper part of the nave and triumphal arch there are some fragments of frescoes depicting Christ and the saints, dating from the 8th to the 12th centuries AD. The nave also contains the restored 12th-century *schola cantorum*, with its Paschal Candlestick resting on a heraldic lion. The Cosmatesque paving inside the *schola* is original, as is the Gothic-style canopy (*ciborium*), the work of Deodatus in 1294, which covers the monolithic red-granite altar. The date 5 May 1123 is carved on the altar, and the bishop's throne with its arm-rests in the shape



*Carta lapidaria (stone tablet)  
hanging in the portico of the church*

of lions stands on three steps in the apse.

The apse is decorated with modern frescoes based on the original mosaics, which have been lost. A door in the right aisle leads to the sacristy, which contains an extremely precious fragment of mosaic depicting the Epiphany. Transferred here in 1639, this dates back to the 8th century and was originally located in the early Basilica of Saint Peter's built under Constantine. It is then worth visiting the choir's winter chapel, which contains the two Roman columns to which the apostles Peter and Paul are said to have been chained in the Mamertine Prison: these actually belonged to the Roman shrine mentioned above. Above the altar is an image of the Madonna *Theotokos*,

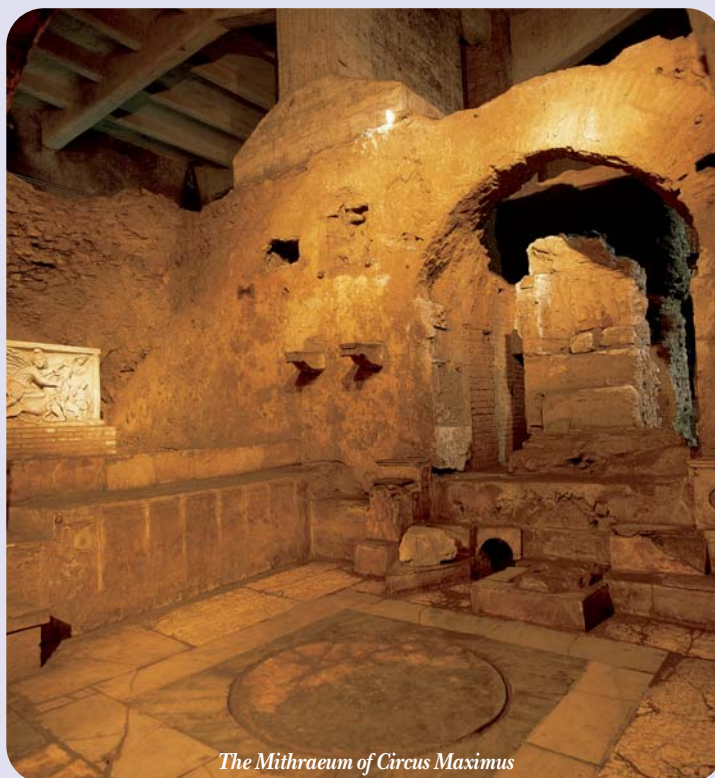
Mother of God (13th century), which once occupied the main apse prior to the 19th-century restoration work. The niches of the chapel are decorated with statues depicting the Virtues by C. Maratta (1625-1713). A stairway leads down to the crypt, which Pope Hadrian I had carved out of the base of the Great Altar of Hercules. Evidence of the latter remains in the form of rows of blocks of Anio tufa faced in ashlar masonry. The crypt's altar, mounted on small columns, contains the relics of various martyrs, including the head of Saint Valentine, and every 14 February this is presented to the faithful crowned with roses.



## 2. Walking, walking...

Exiting from the portico of S. Maria in Cosmedin we come to a gate on the right which precedes a long, narrow courtyard. A mithraeum, now known as the Mithraeum of Circus Maximus, was discovered here, installed in the 3rd century AD in some of the rooms of an older building. Mithraea were sanctuaries for the worship of the god Mithras, a sun god of Persian origin, symbol of light and purification from sin, representing the path of initiation towards moral perfection, whose birthday fell on the winter solstice, the same day later chosen by the Christians to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Christ. It is possible to obtain permission from the local authorities to visit the atrium, which contained the statues of the genii of light (Cautes) and darkness (Cautopates), and the hall where the initiated met, taking their places along the seating at the side, which was arranged to reflect the seven ranks of their hierarchy, in order to partake of the sacred meal, the *agape fraterna*. In the initiation ceremony the neophyte, dressed in white, was bathed in the sacrificial blood of a bull or a cock. The room contains the bases of some of the statues and the original relief of Mithras sacrificing a bull still.

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The Mithraeum of Circus Maximus



*The Fountain of the Tritons*

The relief bears an inscription of the name of its patron: Clodius Hermes.

Going back out of the gate into Piazza della Bocca della Verità, we face the Fountain of the Tritons on the other side of the road, a work which was designed by C.F. Bizzaccheri and executed in 1717 by F. Moratti on behalf of Clement XI, Albani. In the middle of the basin, which is in the form of an eight-pointed star, the emblem of the papal family, is a

group of sturdy rocks decorated with aquatic plants, sculpted by Filippo Bai. On the rock are two tritons by Francesco Moratti, of Berninian inspiration. Bizzaccheri placed a large oblong water trough next to the fountain, with a lion's half bust on one of its short sides. When the Tiber embankments were built, the trough was moved to the other side of the crossroads on the left, into the gardens running along the Lungotevere Aventino.



*Mithraeum of Circus Maximus, relief of Mithras sacrificing the bull*

### 3. The Temple of Hercules Invictus and the Temple of Portunus

The circular temple in the Forum Boarium, known incorrectly as the Temple of Vesta, is the most ancient in marble to survive in Rome. Sources suggest, that it must actually have been the Temple of Hercules Invictus (the invincible Hercules). Its structure, which is similar to that of the Temple of the Goddess Vesta in the Roman Forum, resulted in it being considered a shrine of the goddess of hearth and home. In the 12th century the temple was converted into a church by the Savelli family, acquiring the name of S. Stefano delle Carrozze after the street nearby which led to S. Galla, which was called Via delle Carrozze al Fiume. In 1560, there was a remarkable event: an image of the Virgin painted on papyrus was found in the waters of the

Tiber. The image was closed in a casket, but after a few days a light as bright as the sun was seen to be breaking out from within. The whole of Rome came to know of this prodigy and the image, which acquired the name of the Virgin of the Sun, was carried into the Savelli church, which thence became known as S. Maria del Sole (Saint Mary of the Sun). All that now remains inside the ancient church is a 15th century fresco depicting a Madonna and Child and some saints. The present remains indicate a peripteral temple on 20 fluted columns bearing Corinthian capitals dating back to the age of Tiberius. Only 19 of the columns remain, as one was removed in the Middle Ages before the building became a Christian church. There is evi-





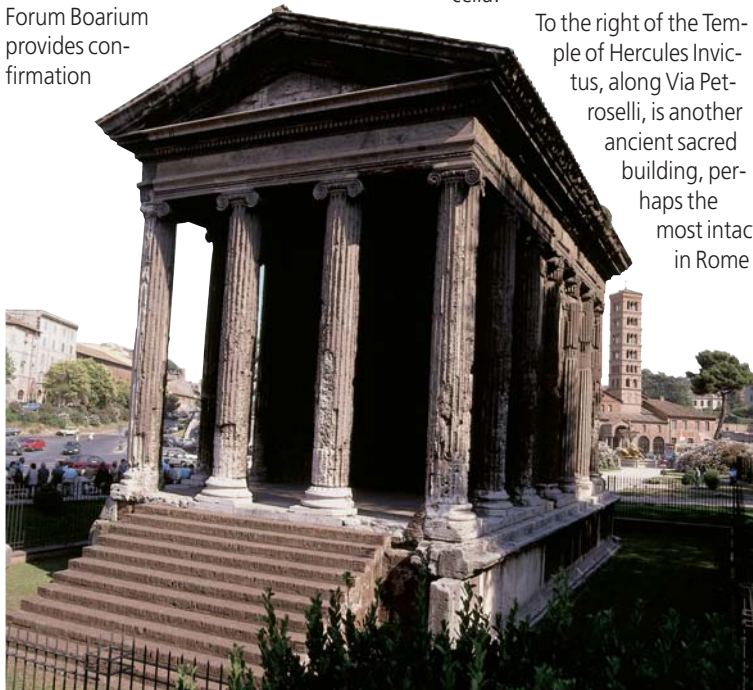
dence of an attempt to demolish the temple, a fate which befell the majority of ancient buildings, in the presence on the columns of grooves into which ropes were fitted in order to drag them down. The reconstruction of the roof, which is low and tiled, does not reflect the height of the original covering, now missing, which is thought to have been conical. Archeological assays have shown that the foundations of the temple and its *cella* may date back to the end of the 2nd century BC, when the neo-Attic style was becoming fashionable in Rome due to the presence of Hermodoros of Salamis, to whom some scholars attribute the design of this building. The *cella* was found to contain the base of a statue of Hercules Olivarius by Skopas the Younger. This votive offering from the oil merchants of Ancient Rome and the fact of being in a centre of intense trade like the Forum Boarium provides confirmation



*Temple of Hercules Invictus, detail of columns*

that the patron of the temple was indeed Marcus Octavius Herrenus, one of the most important oil producers at the time, as cited in sources. The evocative underground part of the sacred building may be reached via an opening in the floor of the cylindrical *cella*.

To the right of the Temple of Hercules Invictus, along Via Petroselli, is another ancient sacred building, perhaps the most intact in Rome



*The Temple of Portunus*

along with the Pantheon.

This is the Temple of Portunus, and not the Temple of Fortuna Virilis as it was previously and mistakenly known. Indeed, this building, like the previous one, was victim of another long-standing case of mistaken identity. In depth studies now allow us to confirm that the temple was sacred to the god Portunus, patron of the Tiber river port and of sailors. The building was transformed into a church in 872 and dedicated to S. Maria Egiziaca, the Anachoretian saint of Egypt, a former courtesan who crossed the Jordan while it miraculously parted its waters before her. The relationship between the saint and the river – in this case, the Tiber – is evident in the name of the church, which was placed under the jurisdiction of Stefano Stefaneschi in the 9th century. Pope Pius V Ghislieri (1566-72) granted it to the Armenians, who had had to abandon their church because it fell within the boundaries of the ghetto established in 1555 by Paul IV Carafa. Under Pope Clement XI a hospice for Armen-

ian pilgrims was added to the church, and the building belonged to this nation until 1921.

The hospice was demolished in 1930 to make way for the new Via del Mare (now Via del Teatro Marcello and Via Petroselli) and the ancient temple was restored. According to Roman custom, the temple stood on a high podium clad in slabs of travertine. It is pseudo-peripteral and tetrastyle, ie it features four free-standing columns across the front and four semi-columns engaged in the walls of each of the other three sides. The marble columns support Ionic capitals, while the semi-columns are, like the rest of the building, in Anio tufa, covered in mock-marble plaster-work. The frieze features candlesticks joined by garlands, and the cornice featured drip-mouldings with lions' heads. The façade culminates in an elegant gabled pediment. Near the back left corner of the temple is a fragment of wall, which is all that remains of the sacred precinct. The building still hosts a canvas by F. Zuccari depicting S. Maria Egiziaca, remains of medieval frescoes and the wooden model of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.



With our backs to the façade

of the Temple of Portunus, looking across the road, we come to a building which is architecturally unusual because its structures have been embellished by a large quantity of pieces of ancient marble. The building, the House of the Crescenzi, was believed to have been the house of Cola di Rienzo, but it is also known as the House of Pilate, because it

1.  
*walking,  
walking...*

played this role in the sacred representations which took place during Holy Week.

As recorded in the Latin inscription on the curved Roman cornice used as an architrave of the doorway of the building itself, the house actually belonged to the Crescenzi family. The tower built to fortify the house was demolished in 1312, and in the 16th century the house was used as a stable.



*House of the Crescenzi*



*Palazzo dell'Anagrafe (Public Record Office)*

Restoration work in 1868 restored it to its original form and it is now a conference hall. On either side of the main inscription there are also groups of isolated letters which are still of uncertain interpretation. To the right of the doorway is a window crowned with an arched Roman lintel.

We continue along Via Petroselli, past the long Palazzo dell'Anagrafe

(Public Records Office), designed by C. Valle (1936-37). We cross at the traffic lights and take the Vico Jugario on the right. On our right are visible the excavations of the S.

Omobono Sacred Precinct. In 1937, during the construction of public offices in the area to the right of the church of S. Omobono, there emerged archeological evidence of such importance that the site was

*S. Omobono Sacred Precinct*

placed under protection and left available for further scientific investigation.

When excavations were resumed after the war in 1959, four successive digs led to a series of findings which made it possible to provide a virtually complete history of the site. The area had initially hosted an ancient votive pit dating back to somewhere between the 16th and 12th centuries BC and containing material belonging to the Apennine culture and fragments of Greek pottery from the 8th to the 6th centuries BC. There is evidence that the site was used for worship prior to the construction of the actual temple: this includes a hut dating back to the 7th century BC and a pit for sacrifices with an inscription in Archaic Latin, dating back to the early 6th century BC. The most ancient nucleus of the Temple of Mater Matuta, the goddess of dawn and of births, on the other hand, dates



back to the time of Servius Tullius (578-534 BC). Destroyed at the end of the 6th century BC, this was rebuilt at the beginning of the 5th century, along with its twin, the Temple of Fortuna, on a single base. Mater Matuta received the sacrifices of pregnant or newborn animals, or of women's possessions. The re-

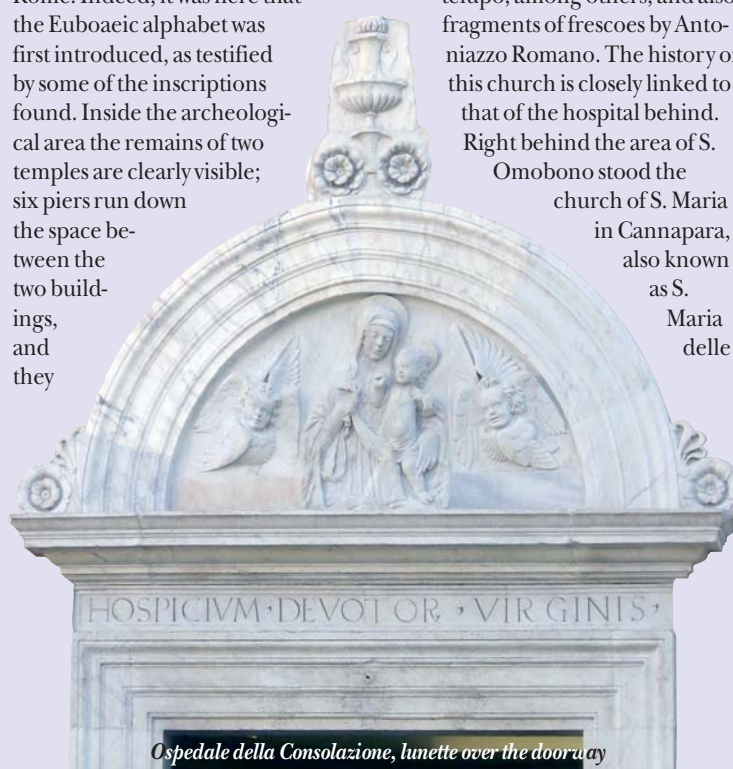
*S. Maria della Consolazione*



mains of the twin temples of Fortuna and Mater Matuta point to the presence of foreign clans in this area of the trading port. Indeed, twin temples have been recorded in other cities along the Tyrrhenian coast influenced by Punic settlement, such as Pyrgi, and we may draw a parallel between the couple-worship of the Phoenician Hercules Melqart and the goddess Astarte and the simultaneous presence in the Tiber port area of the temples of Hercules and Mater Matuta. All of this confirms the presence in the port of Punic traders suggested by the finding of Phoenician and Egyptian objects in the same S. Omobono area, which must have been a veritable international emporium in the heart of Archaic Rome. Indeed, it was here that the Euboeaic alphabet was first introduced, as testified by some of the inscriptions found. Inside the archeological area the remains of two temples are clearly visible; six piers run down the space between the two buildings, and they

have been partly identified as the remains of the four-fronted triumphal arch of Stertinius, erected in 196 BC, the first triumphal arch to be built in Rome. In front of the two temples is the circular votive altar decorated with an egg-and-dart motif and the remains of another rectangular one. The early Christian church, which rose in the 6th century on the site of the two temples under the name of S. Salvatore in Portico, was finally consecrated to SS Omobono and Antonio in 1575. At the bottom of Vico Jugario stands the church of S. Maria della Consolazione, with its late 16th century façade, the work of Martino Longhi the Elder. This contains works by T. Zuccari, L. Agresti, G. Baglione, Pomarancio and Raffaello di Montelupo, among others, and also fragments of frescoes by Antoniazio Romano. The history of this church is closely linked to that of the hospital behind. Right behind the area of S.

Omobono stood the church of S. Maria in Cannapara, also known as S. Maria delle



*Ospedale della Consolazione, lunette over the doorway*



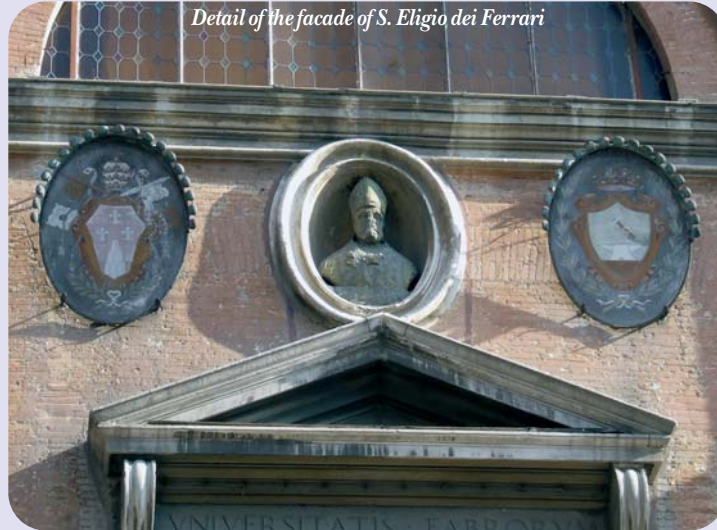
Grazie, where the confraternity of the guild of rope-makers (*canapai*) held their own liturgical ceremonies.

A hospital was soon built next to the church: there are already traces of it in the 15th century. The church was demolished in 1876 and its objects transferred to a chapel of S. Maria della Consolazione. Meanwhile, in the 16th century, the hospitals of S. Maria in Portico, S. Maria delle Grazie and S. Maria della Consolazione were merged into the Arch-Hospital of S. Maria de Vita Aeterna, which later became known as Ospedale della Consolazione. So it was that those years saw the merging of the three churches and the three hospitals with their respective confraternities into a single arch-confraternity and a single arch-hospital.

The hospital, which now serves as a fire station, had fifty beds for men and ten for women. In the 17th cen-

tury it acquired a pharmacy (*spezieria*) and a health school with an anatomic theatre for the dissection of cadavers. The hospital was often used as a hospice for the terminally ill, and the adjacent cemetery had to be sanitized in 1848 due to the foul smell which emanated from it. Although the hospital was famous in the city for its school of surgery, it was closed in 1936. Its patients had received voluntary care from S. Ignazio di Loyola, S. Giuseppe Calasanzio, S. Vincenzo Pallotti and S. Camillo de Lellis. S. Luigi Gonzaga died there in 1591 aged 23, having caught the plague while looking after patients. The part of the hospital which faces onto Via della Consolazione constitutes its oldest ward, and still features a 15th century door with a lunette containing a relief depicting a Madonna and Child with Seraphs. There are two inscriptions in the



*Detail of the facade of S. Eligio dei Ferrari*

wall along the side of the hospital: one commemorates the death of Luigi Gonzaga and the other prohibits the passage of night traffic by order of Alexander VIII, so as not to disturb the patients' sleep.

We skirt round the hospital until we come to a marvelous view of the Roman Forum from the side, where it is possible to enter by way of a gate a little further on. Further on to the left, at the foot of the Palatine, is the ancient church of S. Teodoro. According to tradition, this stands on the site of the Lupercal, the cave where the she-wolf is supposed to have suckled the twins Romulus and Remus. The church dates back to at least the 6th century and, like other buildings in the area, which was strongly influenced by the Byzantine presence, was consecrated to Saint Theodore, a native of Galatia. Saint Theodore was a famous martyr-soldier of the East, with a sanctuary in Pontus, but he was also worshipped in Rome, as well as in Venice, Ferrara and the Monferrato area. Accused of burning down a pa-

gan temple, he was tortured to death under the principate of Maximian. The church is circular in plan and is preceded by a brick porch. In front is a wide open courtyard reached from Via di S. Teodoro down a double flight of steps. The building is topped by a dome, designed in the 15th century by Bernardo Rossellino, and represents the first example in Rome of a dome with ribs and sail-vaults. At the level beneath that of the current building are the remains of the older church, with its apse decorated by a 6th century mosaic depicting Christ with Saints Peter, Paul, Theodore and Cleonicus. Until a short while ago, meetings were held in this church by the Arch-Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, known as the Whitesacks, whose members included popes, cardinals and aristocrats. The headquarters of the Arch-Confraternity is now at S. Tommaso in Parione. The church is now officiated by Greek monks of the Orthodox faith.

On the other side of Via di S.

Teodoro we take Via dei Fienili. Back in Piazza della Consolazione and enter Via di S. Giovanni Decollato on our left. Soon we come to the church of S. Eligio dei Ferrari, on our left. Having changed names various times over the centuries, the church was finally entrusted to the smiths' guild by Pope Nicholas V in 1453, a corporation which included knife-grinders, locksmiths, cauldronmakers, blacksmiths and swordsmiths. The guild dedicated the place to its patron saint, Saint Eligius of Noyon, who lived in the 6th century and was an artisan. Actually, the church is dedicated to at least three saints: James, Martin and Eligius. The place of worship was built over the remains of a previous building devoted to Saint James, and at the same time another nearby church, that of Saint Martin, was deconsecrated and converted into a granary. The church of S. Eligio has a brick façade featuring double pilasters on travertine bases at regular intervals. Above the doorway is the bust of the

titular saint. The broad window was originally circular: now it is surmounted by an elegant tympanum. The interior consists of a single aisle with decorations in plasterwork and marble. The emblem of the smiths' guild stands out in the coffered ceiling, and over the 1640 altar is a canvas depicting the Madonna and baby Jesus crowned by angels, with Saints Martin, James and Eligius, a 16th century work by Girolamo Siciolante. The hall of reliquiaries contains one donated by the Cathedral of Noyon, containing the remains of Saint Eligius's arm. A little further on to the right is the church of S. Giovanni Decollato (St. John the Beheaded), built by the *Arciconfraternità della Misericordia di S. Giovanni Decollato* towards the end of the 15th century. In 1490 Pope Innocence VIII gave permission for this Florentine arch-confraternity, to which Michelangelo also belonged, to carry out its good works in Rome as well. This consisted of giving support to those condemned to be beheaded and burying their bodies.



S. Giovanni Decollato



Every 29 August, the date associated with the finding in Syria of the head of John the Baptist, the arch-confraternity was allowed to free someone on the death list, who would then head a procession of thanksgiving, flanked by the festive crowds. The confraternity still exists: now it provides assistance to the families of those serving prison sentences, and the church is officiated by Franciscan tertiaries. The other tympanum on the façade, in brick, stands upon four Doric pilasters, which separate the 16th century doorway with a semicircular window over it and two simple niches. The church is built on a higher level than the present street, and it is entered up two flights of steps. Inside there is a single nave, divided at equal intervals by Doric pilasters decorated with grotesques and niches. The cloister

was built between 1535 and 1555 and reworked under Pope Clement VIII. Today, three porticoed sides remain, containing tombstones, the covers of the tombs of those executed, two 14th century column-bearing lions and two wooden altars from the 16th century containing statues of Saint Sebastian. It is worth recording the fact that the first exhibitions in Rome of works of art, which were organized by this arch-confraternity and were open to the public, took place in this very cloister, and it was on one of these occasions that the artistic talent of Salvator Rosa became known. The portico leads to the famous *camera storica*, a room - actually a small museum - documenting the history of papal justice. This contains: the basket which collected the head of Beatrice Cenci; the hood of Giordano

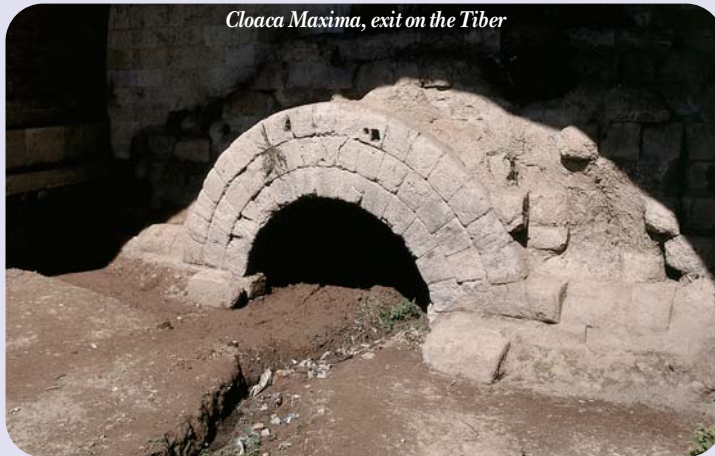
*The Arch of Janus*



Bruno; the tablets bearing the sacred images which the condemned were given to kiss prior to their execution; the red cowl worn by those who were to be executed; the lanterns which lit their last night; the paper, pens and ink-wells which were used to write up their wills. At the end of Via di S. Giovanni Decollato we take Via del Velabro on our left and follow it to the Arch of Janus. As recorded in the fragmentary inscription kept in the portico of the nearby church of S. Giorgio in Velabro, this monumental four-fronted arch, traditionally known as the Arch of Janus, was put up by Constantine at a point where the ancient Triumphal Way passed close to the Sacred Way, in order to celebrate his great victory at the Milvian Bridge. The work was undertaken in travertine and Luna marble and rests on four robust piers which support the cross-vault. Hollow *amphorae* (earthenware vessels) were used to lighten the load in the middle, a standard late-Imperial building technique. The piers were decorated on the outside by a series of shell-shaped niches, originally flanked by slender columns. The

keystones of the archways contain the figures of Rome and Juno seated and Minerva and Ceres standing. In the Middle Ages the arch was used as one of the bastions of the extensive Frangipane fortification, and was renamed the Tower of Boetius. It was re-separated in the 14th century, but in 1827 the original brickwork on the attic, which had been clad in marble in antiquity, was demolished by mistake, along with the medieval structures on top. Next to the arch is a house from which it is possible, by request, to visit the Cloaca Maxima, Rome's most ancient drain. This was built in the 6th century BC, by Tarquinius Priscus, according to tradition, during Rome's "Etruscan" phase. Its roof is vaulted in blocks of tufa, and it started at the church of SS. Quirico e Giulitta, carried on into the area of the forums of Augustus and Nerva, passed under the Roman Forum at the level of the Basilica Aemilia, descended into the Forum Boarium, ran past the Temple of Hercules Invictus and came out near the Aemilian Bridge - known as the Ponte Rotto, or Broken Bridge - where its exit can still be seen.

*Cloaca Maxima, exit on the Tiber*



## 5. San Giorgio in Velabro

Continuing past the Arch of Janus, we come to the church of S. Giorgio in Velabro. Mentioned in Leo II's *Liber Pontificalis* (682-683), this was originally consecrated to Saint Sebastian. Pope Zacharias (741-752), who was of Greek origin, dedicated it to Saint George, who was much venerated in Constantinople and in the Greek East, and to whom the Byzantine soldiers present in the Greek community in this area were much devoted. Pope Gregory IV (827-

844) was responsible for the portico, and rebuilt the apse and sacristy. In the 19th century,

Popes Pius VII and Gregory XVI initiated the first research into the origins of the church, and it was restored to its most ancient form by Antonio Muñoz in 1926. This involved lowering the floor, re-opening the walled-in windows and demolishing the Baroque façade. The current façade, with its severe simplicity, therefore dates back to this restoration. The portico stands between two brick piers, the upper parts of which are decorated with lozenge friezes. It is further divided by four ancient columns with Ionic capitals, and it is closed off behind railings.

This portico was completely rebuilt after it was totally destroyed by a bomb in 1994. The upper part of the façade, which is crowned with a pediment, features a central roundel. On the left stands the Romanesque bell-tower, which starts in one of the church's side aisles and dates back to the 12th cen-







*Fresco in apse featuring Christ, the Madonna and Saints George, Peter and Sebastian*



*Arch of the Argentarii, scene of ritual sacrifice by the emperor Septimius Severus and the empress Julia Domna, his wife*



*Arch of the Argentarii*

tury. The main doorway consists of splendid cornices dating back to the Roman Age, and the beautiful marble threshold is also ancient. The interior features three aisles and is irregular in plan because it rests on pre-existing Roman structures. The aisles are divided by eight granite and Phrygian purple columns of Roman origin, with Ionic and Corinthian capitals dating back to the Medieval period. The altar consists of an 11th century marble slab. The presbytery is raised, as was usual in Romanesque architecture. Beneath the altar, in the *confessio*, is the head of Saint George, his sword and a piece of his standard. The basin of the apse contains a late 18th century fresco depicting Christ, the Madonna and Saints George, Peter and Sebastian, which is attributed to Pietro Cavallini.

Next to the church on the left is the so-called Arch of the Argentarii, which was one of the entrances to the Forum Boarium. The arch consists of two concrete piers covered in marble and travertine which support a marble architrave. Its building was sponsored by the Ancient Roman bankers (*argentarii*) and by the local cattle traders, who dedicated it to the emperor Septimius Severus, his wife Julia Domna and their children Caracalla and Geta. Indeed, the inscription commemorates the patrons and the emperor, his wife and the young Caracalla. The name of Geta was obliterated when his brother Caracalla had him killed and all trace of his memory was cancelled from all the monuments in the Empire, according to the custom of *damnatio memoriae*.

## 6. Walking, walking...

Leaving the church behind us, we turn left into Via di S. Teodoro and right into Piazza S. Anastasia to find ourselves in front of the church of S. Anastasia. This saint was venerated in Rome from the 5th century onwards. Martyred in Sirmium and her remains were brought to Constantinople. S. Anastasia is the patron saint of weavers, and her symbol is the pyre upon which she was burnt. The church, the site of which was already consecrated to Anastasia, was built as an official place of worship for Byzantine dignitaries residing in the Imperial palaces on the Palatine. Restructured and restored on many occasions, it now features a two-storey brick façade built in 1636 under Urban VIII, with regularly spaced pilasters with travertine cornices and capitals. On top of the pediment, on either side of the cross, are two groups of flaming candlesticks in marble. In the centre of

the pediment is the emblem of Urban VIII Barberini, decorated with garlands.

The door is nicely aligned with the upper window, and two bell-towers with elegant bases rise up from either side of the façade. The interior, which still contains its endonarthex, is divided into three

*Tomb of Cardinal Angelo Maj*



*S. Anastasia*







*Statue of Saint Anastasia beneath the main altar*

aisles by piers which reinforce the columns of the older church. These columns, in Carystian green marble, Phrygian purple and granite were, as was often the case, recycled from ancient pagan monuments. The statue of Saint Anastasia over the altar is to be admired: it was sculpted in 1667 by Ercole Ferrata, of the Berninian school. Set in the altar in the left transept is the tomb of Cardinal Angelo Maj, the Vatican Library prefect who discovered Cicero's *De Republica*.

In the subterranean parts of the church is a stretch of paved road and interesting remains of ancient buildings. These may be attributed in part to the nearby Circus Maximus and in part to a large building with several rooms and a portico, with features which can be dated to the period of Theodoric: this forms part of the Palatine complex. Exiting from S. Anastasia we take Via dei Cerchi on the left and come to the long grassy hollow where the Circus Maximus once rose in antiquity.

## 7. The Circus Maximus

The biggest monument for public spectacles of all time, this was built in the ancient Murcia Valley where, according to legend, the first Romans raped the womenfolk of the Sabines, their guests, while equestrian games were underway in honour of the god Consus. These games were part of the great festivities linked to the

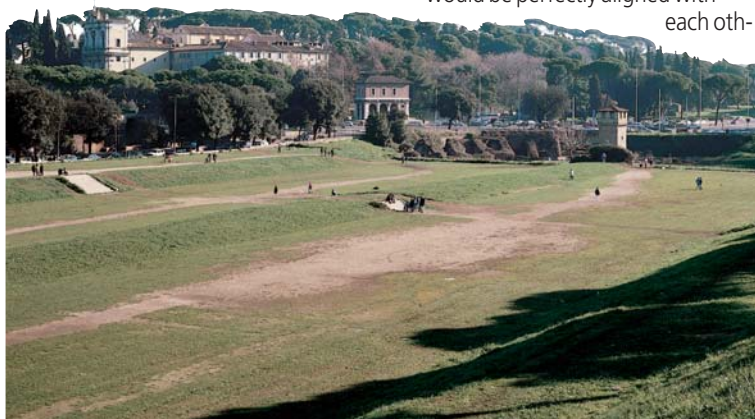
agricultural cycles of the ancient farming populations of Latium. According to tradition, the Circus Maximus was built by the Etruscan kings, as part of the extensive building project of what has been defined as "the Great Rome of the Tarquins". The first circus was probably built in wood. It was subsequently rebuilt and embellished on



*Circus Maximus, radial walls of the East part of the hemicycle*

many occasions, in both Republican and Imperial times, with projects sponsored by Augustus, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Domitian, Antoninus Pius, Caracalla, Aurelian, Diocletian, Constantine and last of all, Constantius. The circus consisted of two long sides and two

short ends, of which one was curved and one straight. The *carceres*, ie the chariots' starting gates, were opened from the straight end. On either side of these were two tall towers. These starting posts pointed in an oblique direction so that the racing chariots would be perfectly aligned with each other.



*View of the Circus Maximus with the Caelian Hill in the background*

er at the start of the first long lap. The chariots exited from the *carceres* and raced off at the departure signal, which was provided by a magistrate who would drop a white handkerchief onto the track. A dividing line known as the *spina* ran lengthwise down the centre of the track. Augustus had the Egyptian obelisk of Ramses II set up in the middle of the *spina*, and this was moved to Piazza del Popolo by Pope Sixtus V in the 16th century. Constantius, the son of Constantine, added another Egyptian obelisk, that of Thutmosis IV, in the 4th century, and this was also removed by Sixtus V, this one to Piazza di S. Giovanni in Laterano. The chariots were divided into four teams marked by different colours, and were required to complete seven circuits of the track around the *spina*, which was marked at either end by two cylindrical elements tapering off at the top, known as *metae*.

The *spina* was also littered with small temples, shrines, buildings and statues of

gods, including one of the goddess Cybele. There were also seven bronze eggs and dolphins in bronze fitted on to horizontal bars. After every circuit completed by the chariots, one egg and one dolphin were counted off to indicate to the public the number of circuits left to the end of each race. On the Palatine side, the circus was topped by a monumental podium, the *pulvinar*, upon which were set the images of the gods previously exhibited during the inaugural parade. Indeed, the spectacle was dedicated to these gods. The deified emperor and his retinue also took their places upon the same podium. The races were almost always offered to the people by the monarch and by public officials or patricians with political ambitions who would thereby obtain the electorate's favour. There were a large number of passionate followers of this event in the city, and they divided up into fan-clubs sporting the colours of the favourite team. The circus, which had a capacity of up to 350,000, was the





scene of a number of accidents throughout its history, such as the collapse of some of the stands, which resulted in a large number of deaths on several occasions. And this was the starting point of the most violent of the fires with which Rome was afflicted in 64 AD under Nero's principate. Abandoned in the centuries following the end of the Empire, it was transformed – like other monuments – into a quarry for building materials. It was surrounded by Medieval structures, churches and convents, and convert-

ed into cultivated land. In 1852 it became the site of Rome's first gas-works, demolished in 1943. Excavations conducted in the 1930s and 1980s have uncovered evidence of the radial walls which supported the rows of steps on the curved side towards the headquarters of the UN's FAO. The foundations of the triumphal arch put up by Vespasian and Tito to celebrate the conquest of Judaea have also been uncovered: this served as a monumental entrance to this side of the circus.

### 8. Walking, walking...

The little Torre dei Frangipane still stands at the end of the valley. It was built near the Medieval Fosso dell'Acqua Mariana, the earliest channeling of which has been discovered. Indeed, it was in order to exploit the current of this channel that the tower was converted into a watermill and renamed

Torre della Moletta. Here lived Iacopa dei Normanni, alias dei Settesoli (perhaps due to the nearby ruins of the Septizonium), the first Roman follower of Saint Frances of Assisi. The saint stayed with Iacopa – to whom he referred as "sister Iacopa" – in the tower during his last visit to Rome.



*The little Torre dei Frangipane renamed Torre della Moletta*

...continuing  
the walk...

## The Palatine

To the left of the remains of the Circus Maximus rises the south side of the Palatine Hill, with its spectacular remains of Imperial palaces. For a more detailed exploration of the hill, where the many complex archeological ruins also include the remains of the Farnese gardens, it is necessary to enter via the monumental entrance on Via di S. Gregorio, or to ascend the ramp which starts from the Arch of Titus, and buy a ticket. For the purposes of this walk, it will suffice to



Entrance to the Palatine on Via di S. Gregorio

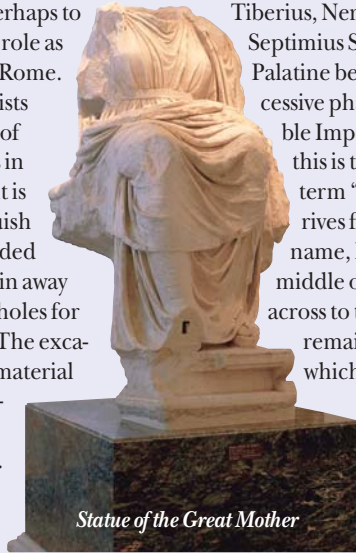
continue along Via dei Cerchi in the direction of Piazza di Porta Capena, at the foot of the hill, to obtain a general overview of the site. The Palatine Hill rises to about 50 metres above sea-level. In antiquity, it had a very different appearance. One of its ridges, known as the Germalus, sloped down to the Forum Boarium and the Tiber bank, and it was linked by another ridge, which culminated in the plateau of the Velia, to the Esquiline Hill. The hill took its name from the ancient cult of the goddess Pales, protectress of flocks, whose feast day, the Palilia, was on 21 April, which was also celebrated as Rome's birthday. At the foot of the Palatine, in the south-west corner of the Germalus, was the Lupercal cave where Romulus and Remus were supposed to have been found by the shepherd Faustulus while being suckled by a she-wolf. Romulus founded Rome in 753 BC, scratching the rectangular boundaries of the city onto the hill, as recorded by Varro. Recent excavations have identified a section of embankment dating back to the 8th century, which has been identified as the remains of an archaic circle of walls. The Romans identified a hut in the south-west corner of the hill as the ancient house of Romulus, and preserved and continually restored it as a precious relic. The emperor Au-

gustus chose his own dwelling nearby, perhaps to emphasize his own role as second founder of Rome. In 1948, archeologists found the remains of three iron-age huts in this area, of which it is possible to distinguish the floors, surrounded by a channel to drain away rainwater, and the holes for the support poles. The excavation has yielded material from the 8th century BC, and also a 10th century tomb. In the Republican Age, the Palatine became the quar-

ter of the Roman aristocracy, and upon it rose temples to the Great Mother, to Cybele and to Apollo. This all changed when Augustus established his own residence there, which was followed by the increasingly monumental

tal constructions commissioned by Tiberius, Nero, the Flavians and Septimius Severus. Thus the Palatine became the site of successive phases of splendid marble Imperial buildings, and this is the origin of the very term "palace", which derives from the hill's Latin name, Palatium. In the middle of the slope facing across to the Aventine are the remains of a large exedra which looked over the Circus Maximus. Beneath the exedra, half way up the slope, are traces of a small construction

which in antiquity was joined to the great palace. This has been identified as the *paedagogium*, ie a school for the instruction of the slaves employed in the imperial residence. One famous example of the large quantity of graffiti found inside features a crucified donkey, accompanied by the inscription "Alexamenos worships his God". Lower down, towards the Circus Maximus, is another building with a courtyard and arcades with square columns, where the splendid mosaics and pictures



*Statue of the Great Mother*



*The Palatine Antiquarium*





*Peristyle with octagonal fountain in the Domus Flavia*



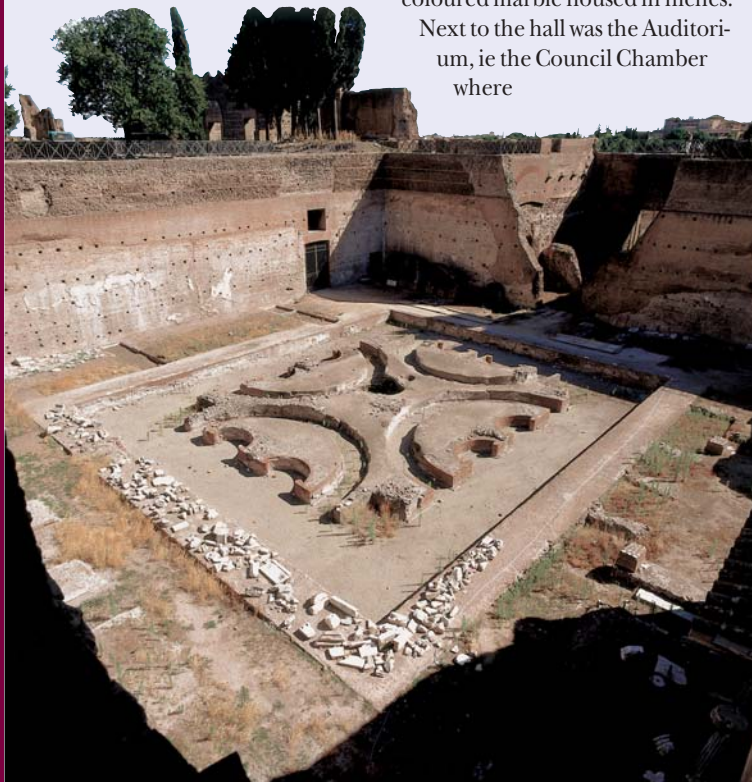
*Oval fountain in the Domus Flavia*

now kept in the Palatine Antiquarium were found.

The building became known as the *Domus Praeconum*, ie the House of the Heralds, because one of the mosaics found there depicts a procession of heralds. A recently found inscription confirms that this was indeed the headquarters of the Circus's College of Messengers, who were used in the processions that were held at the inauguration of the races. Also on Via dei Cerchi is a building of unmistakably Baroque appearance which may be regarded as one of the service buildings of the Farnese Gardens. Immediately after the area of the *exedra*, though not visible from this vantage point, there

extends a vast quadriporticus with a large fountain in the middle decorated with shield shapes called *pelts*, off which are the various interior rooms of the imperial palace. In the north-western part of the *domus*, around the remains of another vast peristyle which surrounds an octagonal fountain decorated with labyrinthine meanders, are the rooms of the official reception wing, which was known as the *Domus Flavia*. Behind this peristyle, in the direction of the Roman Forum, was a vast hall, more than 30 metres wide, with a throne in the centre of an apse, where the emperor held his public audiences. The room was decorated with gigantic statues in coloured marble housed in niches.

Next to the hall was the *Auditorium*, ie the Council Chamber where



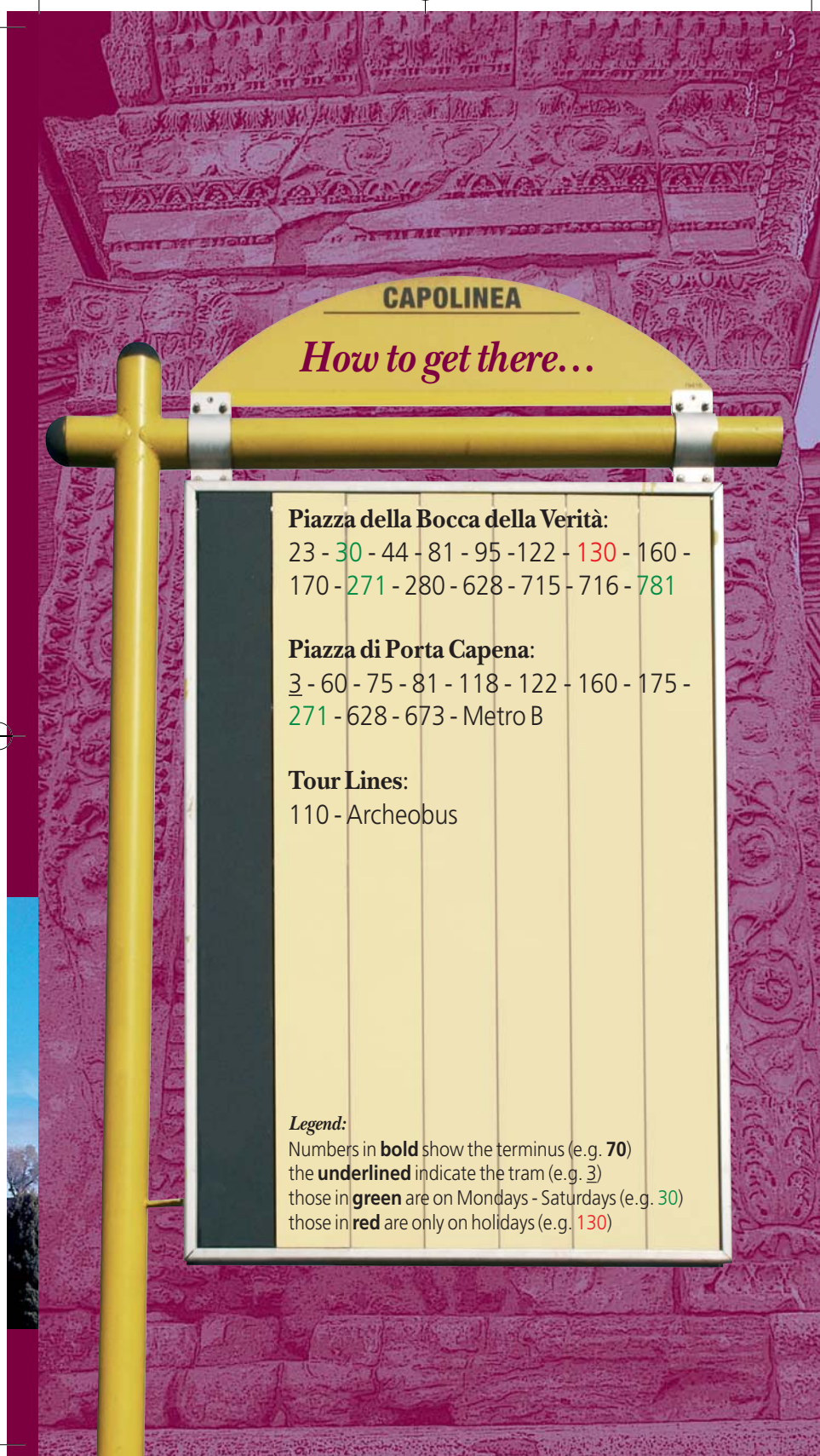
*Fountain with figures of Amazons' shields in the Domus Augustana*

state affairs were decided, and a large room where the Praetorian Guard was probably stationed. Retracing our steps back across the courtyard with the octagonal fountain and returning in the direction of the Circus Maximus, we come to another grand hall which retains some of its original paving in marble. This was a hypocaust, ie a system of double flooring through which hot air was circulated in order to heat the room above. The room is now thought to be the so called Coenatio Iovis, where imperial parties were held. Here began the private sector of the imperial residence, which was called the Domus Augustana. This wing also developed around a vast peristyle, built on the same axis as the Fontana delle Pelte. This featured a large exedra with a fountain and a wide pool. In the middle of the pool was an artificial island, upon which stood a little temple which could be reached by crossing a small bridge. To the East, towards Via di San Gregorio, this complex also fea-

tures a vast circus-shaped construction with a two-storey portico along its sides. The track originally contained a little *spina*, just like the ones in the larger circuses, and until the period of Domitian this must have been a garden and stables, a typical feature of the great patrician villas. All that can be seen from our vantage point in Via dei Cerchi is a series of substantial brick foundations which allowed Septimius Severus to create an artificial terrace upon which to build a series of extensions to the Domus Augustana. At the foot of these supporting structures, on the side of Via di S. Gregorio al Celio, recent excavations have identified the foundations of the famous Septizonium, a monumental *nymphaeum* measuring over 70 metres tall, the remains of which were finally demolished under the papacy of Sixtus V. A little further on, on the same road, the arches of a branch of the Claudian Aqueduct may be seen, which fed baths somewhere in the palace, about which little is so far known.







## CAPOLINEA

### *How to get there...*

#### **Piazza della Bocca della Verità:**

23 - 30 - 44 - 81 - 95 - 122 - **130** - 160 -  
170 - 271 - 280 - 628 - 715 - 716 - 781

#### **Piazza di Porta Capena:**

3 - 60 - 75 - 81 - 118 - 122 - 160 - 175 -  
271 - 628 - 673 - Metro B

#### **Tour Lines:**

110 - Archeobus

#### **Legend:**

Numbers in **bold** show the terminus (e.g. **70**)

the **underlined** indicate the tram (e.g. 3)

those in **green** are on Mondays - Saturdays (e.g. 30)

those in **red** are only on holidays (e.g. **130**)



Comune di Roma  
Turismo

3

## Tourist Information Points

*mon-sun 9.30am-7.00pm*

- Castel Sant'Angelo Piazza Pia
- Santa Maria Maggiore Via dell'Olmata
- Piazza Sonnino Trastevere
- Via Nazionale near Palazzo Esposizioni
- Piazza Cinque Lune - Navona
- Via Minghetti - Fontana di Trevi
- Visitor Centre Via dei Fori Imperiali *mon-sun 9.30am-6.00pm*

- Fiumicino Leonardo da Vinci Airport - International Arrivals - Terminal C

*mon-sun 9.00am-6.30pm*

- Termini Station Via Giolitti 34 - Inside of building F/track 24

*mon-sun 8.00am-8.30pm*

- Ciampino "G.B. Pastine" Airport of Rome

*mon-sun 9.00am-6.30pm*

- Lungomare P. Toscanelli - corner Piazza A. Marzio (Ostia Lido)

*mon-sun 9.30am-7.00pm*

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