



How To Climb St. Peter's Dome

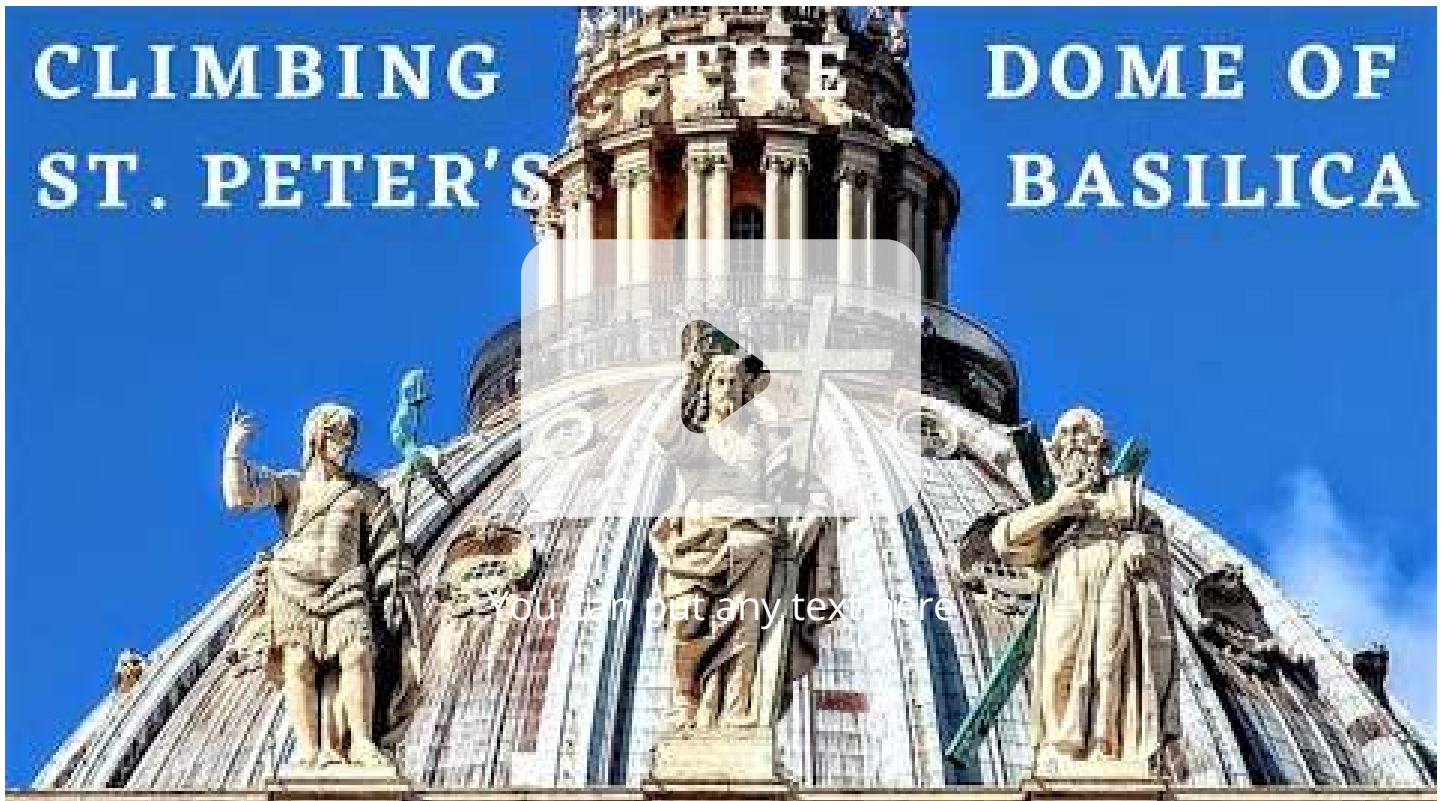


How To Climb St. Peter's Dome

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How To Climb St. Peter's Dome



St. Peter's Basilica is one of the most beautiful structures on the planet, and there are many reasons why it is definitely worth a visit! Aside from housing the beautiful *La Pietà*, one of Michelangelo's more famous marble sculptures, a host of the most exquisite and beautiful artworks carefully curated and preserved over time... ***But wait; while you're visiting the Basilica, did you know that you could also climb St. Peter's Dome too?*** I'm gonna show you just how to climb St Peter's Dome!

How To Climb St. Peter's Dome



Most people simply don't get to do it. Perhaps because they lacked time, many probably did not know the option was there. For some, there is the fear of attempting a task too strenuous.

I advise you to make time. And to at least go up the dome to the first level, something almost anyone can do:

If you have made up your mind on mounting St. Peter's Dome, then let this article be your virtual guide. We'll start with a quick, step-by-step, guide on how to climb St Peter's Dome, and then explain with more insights.

Climbing to the top of St Peter's dome is one of the highlights of a trip to the Eternal City, Rome. Here's how to climb the dome of St Peter's :

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People viewing from the Dome of St. Peter's Basilica

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Where Is St. Peter's Dome And Who Built It?

Where is St. Peter's Dome?

St. Peter's Dome is easy to find. Just head to the famous St. Peter's Basilica and you have arrived. After crossing the security gates, you will want to orient yourself towards the Church. Facing the Church, there are a number of entrances you can go through. To the right is an entrance with a green sign saying, "Dome Entrance." This is your target: follow the arrows directing you to the ticketing kiosk.

Who Built St. Peter's Dome?

The Short Answer? Michelangelo! Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni to be respectful!

In 1546, would be the final yet most splendid commission he would be awarded, it was granted to the famous sculptor by the reigning pope, Pope Paul II. The St. Peter's Basilica was intended to be the final resting place of the Popes, and for this glorious commission, only the best could be sought after. At 71, the old architect was inheriting the contributions of past masters, from Bramante who began the planning of the Dome of St. Peter in 1506, to Sangallo, who brought the innovation of introducing arched openings at the base that would support the massive weight of the structure.

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By the time Michelangelo took over in 1547, he was incorporating the minds and designs of architects from Paris to the West, Florence to the North, and Istanbul to the East. His own personal touch was the object of our interest: the hemispherical dome. His death in 1564 would see the Dome's drum completed, save for a few details. The new pope, Pope Pius V, so loved and respected Michelangelo's design and planning that subsequent architects were directed to strictly follow the plan.

The Dome was a generations-long initiative that begun in 1506 under Pope Julius and Bramante and was completed decades later in 1590 under the leadership of Giacomo della Porta and Pope Sixtus VI. Looking at the contributions, inclusions, and impressions of so many people across so much time, what do you think about this project and its result?

From me, **MERAVIGLIOSA!**

The Nitty Gritty : location, cost, opening hours, and other minor details for your convenience...

Location:

As you enter St. Peter's square, on your right you will find a queue; almost always, lol... the queue will be your cue ... ***pun intended!***

Step 1: The Jedi Knights and their security wands!

Once you enter the Basilica, you will find the security team at the right-hand side of the colonnades on the square. There is fencing and metal detectors. On a good day, Obi-wan is hanging around to make sure everything is okay.

Step 2: The Entrance to the Dome:

How To Climb St. Peter's Dome

Walk up the stairs and into the Basilica. There, head towards the largest archway you can see. It should be distinctive. Look straight ahead there is a space to the right of the Basilica with fences. Some signs will be pointing out that this is the place you want to be headed if you want to climb the Dome.

Hours of operation:

The Dome should be open all day long. On the other hand, closing times shift with the seasons. Remember, safety first; you might not want to be up there on the Dome when darkness closes in. There should be lights around, still, keep an eye on the clock. The general rule is:

- **1st April – 30th September:** 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.
- **1st October – 31st March:** 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

When to visit St Peter's dome

Best times are in the morning. Remember, genius is 99% effort so the earliest bird rubs shoulders with the least crowds. Especially with these days. The queues are very small thereabouts 8:00 A.M. though, genius aside. Aim at this hour and you just might escape the hordes.

The best holiday excursions are those planned for. When you get to St. Peter's square, go for the Dome first before trying for the Basilica. Going down the Dome gets you to the nave for the rest of your trip's viewing.

Another idea is going for the Dome towards the evening just before it closes.

Why?

The sunset.

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The Dome was intended to be a unique building and, just like its contemporaries in Florence and other cities, no competing structures were allowed to block its majesty. The view of Rome from the Dome just as the sun sets will give you a view of Rome like nothing you have experienced before. Especially during winter, with the night sky lit up with a humongous Christmas tree right in the center of St. Peter's Square.

Best avoid the Dome in summer when the day is hottest. Enjoying the view when you are all sweaty, uncomfortable, and annoyed at the heat does not make for a good experience.

How To Get Tickets To Climb St. Peter's Dome:

There are guided tours for those trying for such a thing. Comes with something of a downside: crowds, not having the Dome all to yourself... kinda like being in a slow-moving elevator...

The ticket kiosk doesn't require you to be in a crowd or guided. You can purchase a ticket and make your way by yourself. Simply follow the arrows and you are there.

You have two choices with different prices:

The Great Trek:

For the sum of **€8**, you get to enjoy the experience on foot. For this cheaper option, you get to climb all **551 steps** to get up the Dome. No Despair! Remember that Michelangelo was 71 when he did this. Even Sixtus VI had to do this when the construction was complete. You would be on a path that hundreds of great leaders had once attempted. Imagine the experience: walking in the footsteps of all those popes, standing on the shoulders of all those architects...

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The Space Elevator:

€10 , there doesn't seem to be much difference in pricing. This gets you a quick transit right to the 1st Level or rooftop via a capsule. There are no restrictions on who can board the elevator. This is a good way for those unwilling or unable to walk up all the 551 steps to heaven. The lift tho saves you 231 steps, the remaining 320 steps, you're on your own!

PS:

No Cards Allowed. Seems backward, but the ticket kiosks don't accept cards. Please be sure to bring cold hard cash with you. Please don't get mad at the ticketing agents: it's also hard on them having to tell you to go back all the way out when they know that it is your money that contributes to the upkeep of the place. Without cash, you will have to move past the exit gates and security to withdraw or get cash somehow, then , make the queue all over again! **CASH PLEASE!**

Inside St Peter's dome ; CLIMBING ST. PETER'S DOME TO THE 1ST LEVEL (ROOFTOP):

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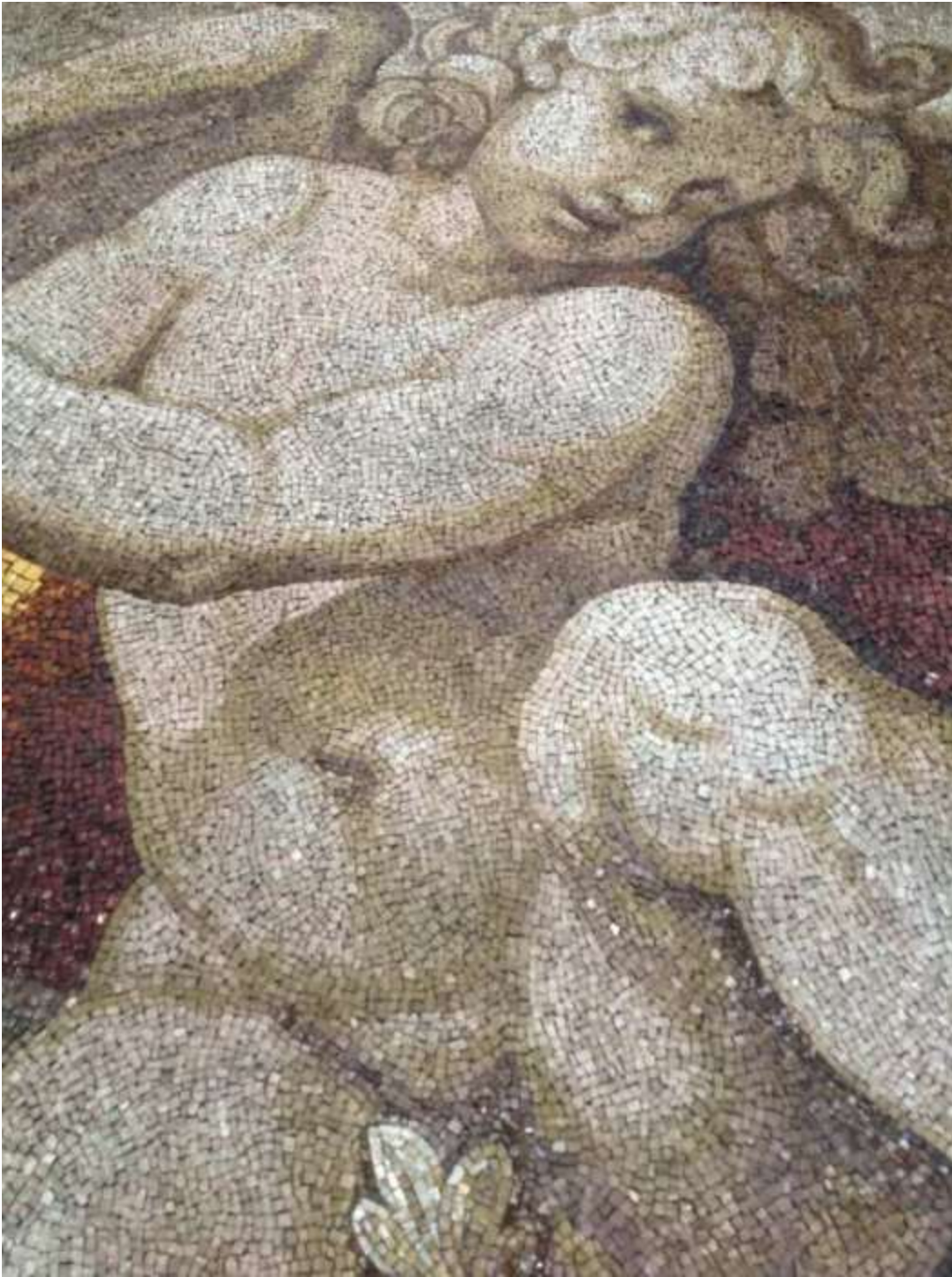


Once you are up and inside the dome you can see the beautiful mosaics that line the walls – up close!

We are talking about a massive structure that measures 135m by 42 m. This is 450ft by 139ft for those that only speak American. When the architects were commissioned to take part in the construction of the structure, it was the buildings of the Ancient Romans, the Pantheon, that primed their creative juices.

According to legend, Michelangelo deliberately intended to make the Dome 1.5m shorter across – that means 5ft for you barbarians! Asked about this, the great sculptor and architect is believed to have responded with, ***“I could build one bigger, but not more beautiful than that of the Pantheon.”***

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The stairs become increasingly narrow. The effect appears worse with the sloping; it is easy to develop life-long claustrophobia...okay, kidding...

Still, doing this climb in summer, in a large crowd, can be a poor experience. Remember to review the part on good timing.

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The good thing is that there are “slits” interspaced along the passageway to let in air. With the sunlight during daylight hours, the passage is well lit.



Mosaics at St. Peter's Dome

A plus about the climb?

The mosaics are really close to you at this point. The detail can be stunning and with my limited capacity, indescribable. Okay, I could describe it, but that would be spoiling.

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Inside St Peter's dome

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You can look down on the inside of St Peter's basilica from the dome. There is a little grate but you can still see the grandeur very well!

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Christ the Redeemer flanked by St John the Baptist & St Andrew

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If you climb the dome to the first level, you can go out onto the roof of Saint Peter's basilica and see the apostles!

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Also, it is at this level that you have the option of walking out and onto the roof of the Basilica. To the front are the statues of Jesus and the Apostles. Again, it is an experience those who never make the climb get to share in. Looking up at these statues from the Square is nothing like getting up close and communal. I mean, **LOOK AT THAT!!!**



Gift Shop on the rooftop.

Hey, is that a *bathroom* I see over there? A *snack-shop*? *Gift shop* too?!

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If you climb the dome to the first level, you can go out onto the roof of Saint Peter's basilica and see the apostles!

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Christ the Redeemer by Cristoforo Stati

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St John the Baptist, Christ & St Andrew

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St John the Baptist, Christ & St Andrew

DISABILITIES ...

How To Climb St. Peter's Dome

I wish I could, but I'm in a Wheelchair...

First off, there's an elevator to the roof so no worries. It is easy to get to the First Level so while you might miss out on the fun trek, you still get to look Jesus and his Apostles right in the eye and ask those questions you've been carrying for so long. 😊

General Notice 1:

Sweaty armpits during Summer. Worse with deodorant in play. See opening hours to schedule optimum times for viewing! We know you are hard core, so just ignore this message.

General Notice 2:

While the elevator gets you to the first level, there is a small staircase you have to get over to reach the inside of the Dome. If you are on a wheelchair and alone, then those sweaty armpits you suffered can come in handy at this point... Still, climber beware, hazards ahead.

DONT FRET if on a wheelchair...

GETTING TO HEAVEN...I mean the very top of the Dome

If you took the elevator, you managed to bypass some 231 steps. This is as far as the elevator takes you. Beware!

Beyond there be dragons!

...

...

How To Climb St. Peter's Dome



These are the corkscrew stairs you will use to begin your descent.



It's NOT strenuous, exhausting or claustrophobic... I SWEAR!

They just look like more stairs...

320 stairs...

Narrow...

Single-file...

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Spirally...like a corkscrew!

Yes, as you get closer to the top, the path is hard. The stairs turn increasingly narrow, and the claustrophobic feel grows as the Dome curves in on you. Remember, the stairs are corkscrew in design, so the experience itself is something to write home about!

The good thing is that where Heaven narrows the stairs, window slits along the way open up. Moreover, St. Peter frowns on traffic jams even if this is Rome, so there is a different set of stairs for those going down!



Yep. It is definitely **claustrophobic**.



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What is the View like from the Dome?

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... the Sistine chapel and the Vatican museums...

How To Climb St. Peter's Dome

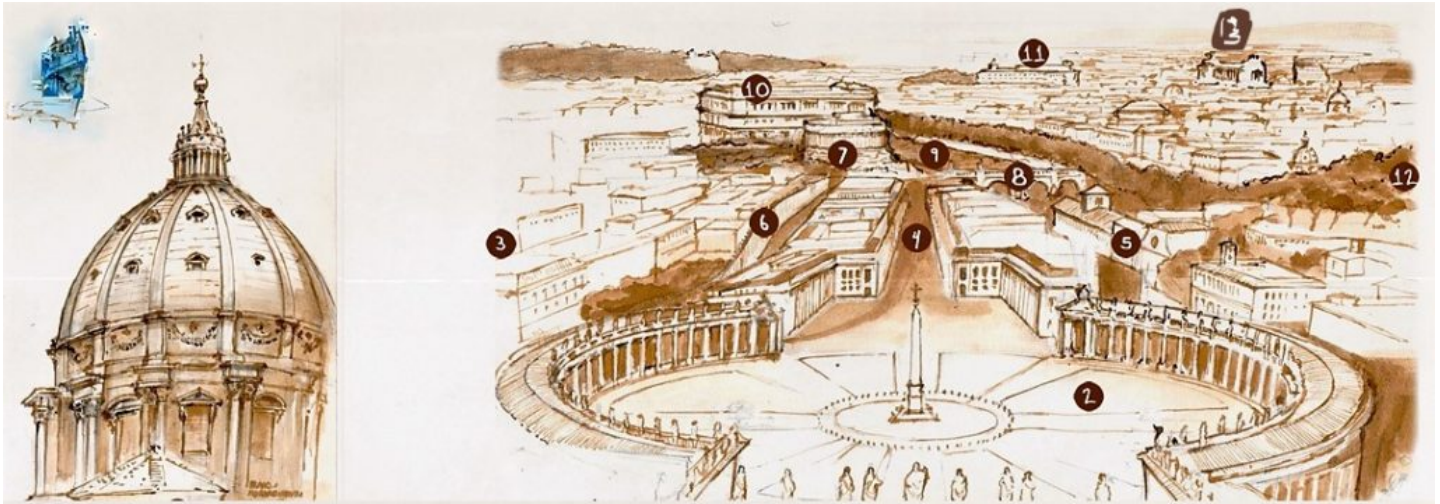


... the Vatican gardens

What do you see from the dome of St. Peter's Basilica?



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1. La Cupola

2. La Piazza

3. Il Palazzo Apostolico

4. Via della Conciliazione

5. Borgo Santo Spirito, Santo Spirito in Sassia

6. Il Passetto di Borgo

7. Castel Sant'Angelo

8. Il Ponte Elio o Ponte Sant'Angelo

9. Il Tevere

10. Il Palazzo di Giustizia

11. Il Palazzo del Quirinale

12. Il Gianicolo

13. Il Vittoriano

1. The Dome

It is the tallest dome in the world, the dome of St. Peter's rises to a total height of 136.57 metres (448.1 ft) from the floor of the basilica to the top of the external cross.

2. The square At the centre of the square is an ancient Egyptian obelisk, erected at the current site in 1586. Gian Lorenzo Bernini designed the square almost 100 years later, including the massive Tuscan colonnades, four columns deep, which embrace visitors in "the maternal arms of Mother Church". A granite fountain constructed by Bernini in 1675 matches another fountain designed by Carlo Maderno in 1613.

3. Apostolic Palace

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The building contains the Papal Apartments, various offices of the Catholic Church and the Holy See, private and public chapels, Vatican Museums, and the Vatican Library, including the Sistine Chapel, Raphael Rooms, and Borgia Apartment.

4. Via della Conciliazione Roughly 500 metres in length, it connects Saint Peter's Square to the Castel Sant'Angelo on the western bank of the Tiber River.

5. Borgo Santo Spirito,

Santo Spirito in Sassia Church of the Holy Spirit in the Saxon District is a 12th-century titular church in *Borgo Santo Spirito*, a street which got its name from the church, placed in the southern part of Rione Borgo.

6. Passetto di Borgo It's an elevated passage that links the Vatican City with the Castel Sant'Angelo. It is an approximately 800 metres long corridor, located in the rione of Borgo.

7. Castel Sant'Angelo:

The Mausoleum of Hadrian, usually known as Castel Sant'Angelo, is a towering cylindrical building in Parco Adriano. It was initially commissioned by the Roman Emperor Hadrian as a mausoleum for himself and his family.

8. Ponte Elio or Ponte Sant'Angelo Completed in 134 AD by Roman Emperor Hadrian, to span the Tiber from the city center to his newly constructed mausoleum, now the towering Castel Sant'Angelo. The bridge is faced with travertine marble and spans the Tiber with five arches, three of which are Roman; it was approached by means of ramp from the river.

9. The Tiber

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It's the third-longest river in Italy, rising in the Apennine Mountains in Emilia-Romagna and flowing 406 kilometres through Tuscany, Umbria and Lazio, where it is joined by the river Aniene, to the Tyrrhenian Sea, between Ostia and Fiumicino.



ISOLA TIBERINA (TIBER ISLAND)

10. The Palace of Justice It's the seat of the Supreme Court of Cassation and the Judicial Public Library, is located in the Prati district of Rome. It fronts onto the *Piazza dei Tribunali*, the *Via Triboniano*, the *Piazza Cavour*, and the *Via Ulpiano*. The huge building is popularly called in Italian the *Palazzaccio* (*the bad Palace*).

11. The Quirinal Palace

It's one of the three current official residences of the President of the Italian Republic. It is located on the Quirinal Hill, the highest of the seven hills of Rome. It has housed thirty Popes, four Kings of Italy and twelve presidents of the Italian Republic.

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12. The Janiculum It's the second-tallest hill (the tallest being Monte Mario) in the contemporary city of Rome, but does not figure among the proverbial Seven Hills of Rome, being west of the Tiber and outside the boundaries of the ancient city.

FUN FACTS about St. Peter's Dome:



1. It Is Also The Tallest Dome On Earth

The dome of Saint Peters bears the distinction of being the tallest dome in the world. Its presence stands out amidst Rome's skyline.

The dome is so tall, that you could fit the statue of liberty inside. Remember that this was built over 400 years ago.

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The exact dimensions of St. Peter's Dome are 448.1 feet tall (136.5m).

St. Peter's Basilica's dome was inspired by that of the *Pantheon*. Its structure was also inspired by Brunelleschi's Duomo di Firenze.

The dome of St Peter's basilica is the **tallest dome in the world** at 136.57 meters (448.1 ft).

The cross that crowns Michelangelos dome is 136.6m tall ;

the dome is 92 m high

3. the interior of the dome was decorated by Cavalier d'Arpino

4. the diameter of the dome is 42 m

2. Designed by Michelangelo

While quite a few masters including *Bramante*, **Bernini**, and **Raphael** contributed to the beauty of **Saint Peter's Basilica**, it was only **Michelangelo** who designed the magnificent dome. Remarkably, he started this project at the age of 71 years old. But when Michelangelo died in 1564, his student successfully continued Michelangelo's vision, finishing the dome in 1590.

A model for numerous other domes, including the United States Capitol Building, St. Peter's Dome has a height of 136 meters and an internal diameter of 42 meters, making it one of the **largest domes** in the world.

Michelangelo took over as chief architect of St Peter's basilica in 1547. He was 71.

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- The original Saint Peter's Basilica was built in the 4th century under the emperor Constantine, and by the 1400's it was leaning to one side and in danger of collapsing. So Pope Julius II began to think about rebuilding it. Some of the best architects of the day were called to present designs, including **Bramante**, **Raphael**, and others. But in the end, it was **Michelangelo who came up with the final design**, combining elements of his colleagues' designs, and improving them as only he could.
- One **model for the dome** was the Roman **Pantheon**. When Michelangelo first saw the pantheon, he said it seemed more like the work of angels, not humans.
- **Michelangelo** made his dome 1.5m (5 feet), **narrower in diameter than the Pantheon**. He said "I could build one bigger, but not more beautiful, than that of the Pantheon."
- Michelangelo died in 1564, and at that point the dome was only completed up to the drum. So **he never got to see his design realized**.
- In 1585, Pope Sixtus V ordered **Giacomo della Porta** (one of Michelangelo's pupils, and himself a prominent architect) and **Domenico Fontana** to complete the dome to Michelangelo's exact specifications. They finished it in 1590. Later, **Domenico Fontana added the lantern** on the tippy top.
- In the early 1600's, **Carlo Maderno** (the nephew of Domenico Fontana), was ordered by Pope Paul V to add a **nave** and **facade**. This is what you see when you stand in **St Peter's Square** looking at the basilica. As a result, Michelangelo's dome is barely visible from St. Peter's Square, and is best seen from a distance.

3) Great Inspiration

St. Peter's Dome and **Michelangelo** was undoubtedly inspired by the **Pantheon**. Although the Pantheon was built centuries earlier, in 125 AD, St. Peter's is located only a few kilometers away in Rome's historical center.

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Not only did the magnificent Pantheon greatly influence the design of the dome in St. Peter's, there is also speculation that much of the bronze used to create the canopy within St. Peter's Basilica came directly from the Pantheon's roof. What do you think?

4) St Peter's Square isn't actually a square

St Peter's Square isn't actually a square, it is oval in shape and designed to heighten the theatrical effect for visitors. 4 rows of colonnades surround the Piazza, enclosing the visitor with the "maternal arms of the Church" in sculptor-designer Gian Lorenzo Bernini's words. 90 statues of saints were originally situated on top of the colonnades in 1657 acting as a "choir." A further 50 were added in 1703 making 140 in total and an awful lot of carving for the various artists involved!

5) A Magical Illusion

Looking for magic in the Eternal City? On top of a residential hillside lies a street with truly spectacular views of **Saint Peter's Basilica**, including its famous dome. From this street, **Via Niccolò Piccolomini**, enjoy the magical illusion of seeing the dome appear closer as you move farther away and appear further away as you move closer. An **illusion of perspective**, this view of the dome is a perfect way to begin a day touring Rome.

6) A Picturesque Keyhole View

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Along with its stunning homes, lush roses, and vibrant **orange garden**, **Aventine Hill** also boasts a truly unique keyhole view of St. Peter's Dome. **Villa del Priorato di Malta** and its expansive estate lies at the top of Aventine Hill.

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A typically locked doorway leading to the Villa's gardens has an **ancient keyhole**, from which exists an absolutely **picturesque view** of the Dome. Experiencing this extraordinary keyhole view is essential for anyone looking for a "bella vista" and can be done through our **Secret Rome** tour.

Check out my Youtube video on this:

7) The Paintings Are Actually Mosaic!



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I will let you in on a little secret about the paintings in St. Peter's Basilica. There are no paintings! They are actually all glass or ceramic mosaics. In the 19th century the many paintings that were in the church were beginning to deteriorate due to the humid conditions inside the Basilica.



This is why when you are in the Basilica you can take photos with a flash because you are taking a picture of glass and not of a painting so no damage will be done. You have to get up very close to the picture in order to see the glare of light on it and the little squares of glass and ceramic. A great surprise to show your friends when you are there.

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Around the inside of the dome is written, in letters 1.4 metres (4.6 ft) high:

*TV ES PETRVS ET SVPER HANC PETRAM AEDIFICABO ECCLESIAM MEAM ET TIBI
DABO CLAVES REGNI CAELORVM*

("... you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church. ... and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven ..." Matthew 16:18-19.)

Beneath the lantern is the inscription:

S. PETRI GLORIAE SIXTVS PP. V. A. M. D. XC. PONTIF. V.

(To the glory of St Peter; Sixtus V, pope, in the year 1590, the fifth of his pontificate.)

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WHAT YOU NEED/WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT BRING TO CLIMB ST PETERS DOME

To climb St Peters dome make sure you are dressed properly. And by dressed properly I mean two things:

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- **Dress appropriately!** – When entering a holy site, this means **covered knees and covered shoulders**. You will not be allowed into either Saint Peters Basilica or the Vatican Museums if you are not properly covered. (And this means you must be properly dressed to enter the dome too.) Both **the basilica and the Sistine Chapel are holy places** and they take the modesty dress code seriously. If you are not sure if your shorts or dress are long enough, wear something else. Sometimes they are a little lax but I'd err on the side of caution. Did you come all the way to Rome, and make your way over to the Vatican, only to be turned away?
- **Be comfortable!** – I cannot stress enough how important it is to be comfortable when you sight-see in Rome. And by this I mean really **comfortable shoes** (and socks if applicable).

A few more things to bring/not bring:

- **Don't bring large bags or backpacks.** You will need to check them and anyway, it would be difficult to climb St Peters dome with something heavy.
- Bring a **camera** but not a tripod (not allowed.)
- Bring a bottle of water.
- If you're like me, and you easily get low blood sugar, some kind of **snack or protein bar**.

LETS STAY IN TOUCH

First of all, thank you very much for reading this guide. Your support means a lot to me. It also allows me to spend all my energy and time on filming more travel content for you to enjoy on [YouTube channel](#), as well as create informative city guides. Please subscribe to my channel, I'd really appreciate it and it will encourage me to keep producing more Italian travel contents.

This guide has been fully researched and designed by me. All the pictures have been captured and edited by me, which I'm very proud of. If you are looking for visuals to go together with this guide, my [St. Peter's Dome video](#) will give you more context.

More city guides are coming out this year. I'm currently working on the [Venice](#), [Rome](#) and [Florence](#) city guides and I honestly can't wait to share them with you.

Also, if you want to share your favourite stories, finds and experiences from Italy, feel free to email them to contactglobaltravelergirl@gmail.com. These short vignettes can be about your favourite Airbnbs, a rooftop bar you liked or a great food place to note. Thank you and I'm already excited to read all your travel notes.

Mucho Love,
Lucia.

