Historical Roman Sites: A Visitor’s Guide

An Honors Thesis
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May 2005
Graduated: May 7, 2005
Abstract

In May of 2004, I traveled with a group of fellow classmates and our instructor to Rome, Italy. After studying the city in class during the semester, we went to the city for two weeks and visited all of the places we had learned about. As part of the class, we had to use our time and experience there to complete a creative project and a short tour guide of a place we visited. For my Senior Honors Thesis, I decide to expand on the short tour guide and apply it to a number of the sites that I studied during the semester. The sites that I picked were ones that I thought were interesting and would also be appealing to the general public. I used as many of my pictures as possible in the thesis, but I did have to supplement them with some from the Internet. These pictures were for times where I wasn’t able to get a certain shot of the site that would be beneficial to have in the guide. Each guide consists of a history, directions, pictures, and other information such as phone numbers and hours of operation. Then at the end of each guide, I have a personal review of the site. I might talk about the things such as what I liked or didn’t like, as well as discussing things like what type of people would want to go there and how long it takes to get there. I conclude most of the tours by giving some sort of recommendation as to whether or not I think it is a good place to visit. This final aspect, along with my pictures, helps to personalize the project and provide a means of showing what I learned and experience on the trip.

Acknowledgments

- Most of all, I would like to thank Dr. James Ruebel for giving us the chance to go on the trip. Because of his class, I was able to learn about the city during the semester and then have one of the most exciting experiences of my life in Italy.

- I would like to thank Dr. William Wycislo for being my advisor and providing his input, experience, and classical knowledge to the project.

- I would also like to thank Jennifer Roberts for her contributions on the creative decisions of the project, as well as revision of and proofreading the final draft.
Roman Forum

INFORMATION:
Open—9am to 1 hr before sunset
Closed—Jan 1, May 1, Dec 25
No Admission – 06-3996 7850

DIRECTIONS:
The Roman Forum is probably the best place to start a tour of Rome because it is an easy location to find and it’s near the center of the city. It was also the cultural center of Ancient Rome and thus a good starting point for exploring their Empire’s remains.

An asterisk (*) will denote any photographs in thesis obtained from the Internet and not taken during my trip.
The Roman Forum is located near the middle of the city in the valley between the Capitoline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Esquiline Hills. The Forum was the center of most Roman activities since it contained the most important political, judicial, and economic buildings in the city. However, in the beginning it was only a humid and marshy area covered with grass. In the 7th century, the Cloaca Maxima sewer system was created to naturally drain the land and allow settlements from the Palatine Hill to extend down into the valley.

During the reign of the historical kings of Rome, buildings were gradually built here and began to define the rectangular shape of the Forum. The Regia, the residence of the early kings of Rome and later of the religious officers, was constructed. The Curia was erected for the Roman Senate to meet in; and the cult and Temple of Vesta were created. Finally, around 600 BC Tarquinius Priscus had the Forum paved.

During the Republic, many buildings were added including the Basilica Aemilia and the Basilica Sempronia. Basilicas such as these were used for many of the commercial and judicial activities of the city. Temples were also added in honor of Saturn, Concord, and Castor and Pollux. This led to the time of Julius Caesar’s dictatorship, whereupon the layout of the Forum changed significantly. He replaced the Basilica Sempronia with the Basilica Julia, built a new Curia, and refurbished the Rostra platform used for public oration. After Caesar’s death, Augustus finished the rest of his plans, including the Temple of Divine Julius that was meant to honor Caesar.

The Imperial times saw less construction and more renovation as the political significance of the Forum lessened. Some of the few new additions were in the form of honorary monuments such as the Arch of Titus, the Arch of Augustus, and the Arch of Septimius Severus. The only new religious buildings were the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina and the Temple of Vespasian and Titus.

Since the Forum was the center of the city, many times it was subject to violence and fire from rivaling factions within the city. This destruction resulted in many parts being rebuilt throughout its history. It also suffered from the many invasions that Rome was subject to by the barbaric tribes. Alaric and the Visigoths invaded in 410 AD and destroyed many of the buildings in the Forum, and then in 455 Rome was sacked again by the invading Vandals.

Once Christianity was declared the official religion of Rome by 394 AD, many of the buildings were abandoned and fell into disrepair, while others were saved by being converted into churches. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the site was used as a stone quarry for other building projects and gradually the site was covered with 5-7 meters of dirt that had to be removed when excavation began in the 18th century.
Temple of Vesta
To the right is what remains of the circular Temple of Vesta. This is the building that housed the sacred flame of the hearth goddess that was always kept burning. The bottom picture shows the courtyard of the building that the Vestal Virgins lived in. This was the only prestigious position women could hold and even the only noble born were eligible.

Temple of Saturn
The left view is looking straight up from the base towards the pillared remains of the temple of the always-important god of agriculture. These remains are from the 42 BC version after the original from 498 BC was rebuilt.
Temple of Antoninus & Faustina
To the right is a temple constructed in 141 AD by Antoninus Pius in honor of his dead wife. The building is a good example of a Roman structure that was saved by the Christians, as it was converted to a church in the 11th century.

Curia
To the left is a view of the Roman Senate’s meeting place. It was traditionally founded in early times by Tullus Hostilius, but was moved to this current location by Caesar. It has gone through several restorations, one of which took the original doors to the Basilica di San Giovanni in 1660.
Nick’s Review:

The Forum is definitely a place that you should visit if you are in Rome since it is easy to find and in the middle of the city. It is also one of the most important places to visit if you want to get a sense of Roman culture because it is where much of their daily business was conducted. This would also make it a good place to start a tour since many Romans would pass through at least once during the day.

Besides being easy to find because of its location, unlike many other places there is no cost to get in and look at the ruins. It is also open almost all times of the day until around six or seven o’clock. The only exception to this while we were there was a day when it was closed along with many other national sites because of a public worker strike.

If you are specifically interested in seeing remaining ruins left behind from the Romans, then the Forum is probably not the best place to visit. This is because many of the structures’ remains have been reduced to only a base or a few columns by the repeated sacking of the city and plundering during the Middle Ages. Despite these unfortunate circumstances, I would still rate it as one of my favorite places just because of the ambiance of walking through it. Even without the complete structures being there, I immensely enjoyed just walking around and imagining what it was like when Caesar and Cicero walked these exact same steps over two thousand years ago.

Sources:

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http://www.capitolium.org/english.htm

http://home.surewest.net/ijfi/index50.html

http://itsa.ucsf.edu/~snlrc/encyclopaedia_roma/index.html
Trajan’s Markets

INFORMATION:
Open—9am to 5pm Tue-Sun
Closed—Jan 1, May 1, Dec 25
Adm. Charge 10 Euro – 06-6790048

DIRECTIONS:

To get to Trajan’s Markets from the Forum, first exit the forum near the Arch of Septimius Severus and get onto the Via di San Pietro in Carcare. Take this until you get to the main street Via Dei Fori Imperiali and turn left. Go on this road until you hit Via IV Novembre and turn left. Soon this road curves to the right and then straightens outs and a bit farther is the entrance.
Many of the sites that you will see in Rome are well-known places such as the Forum or the Coliseum. You will also see many majestic buildings built for a grand purpose such as the Victor Emmanuelle monument or the many different temples to the gods. One place that is different from all of these is the markets of the Emperor Trajan. Instead, this ancient tour able complex gives you a view of a common practice in everyday Roman life, shopping.

The simple looking complex of shops sits next to the Forum of Trajan and partially on the Quirinal Hill. From the Via dei Fori Imperiale, the markets appear as a two-story building in a semicircle shape. The buildings were designed for the Emperor Trajan in the second century AD by the architect Appollodoro of Damascus. At the approximately 150 shops, the common citizen could buy the everyday items they needed for their household such as wine, silk, jewelry, fish, fruits and vegetables, and even imported items such as spices. There was even a floor that catered to the refreshment needs of the shoppers as they bought their goods. It is considered the first covered trading center in history and is important for being the predecessor to our current shopping malls.

The idea of bringing many different types of shops together in one building so you can shop for everything at once is the same general idea of the strip malls of today. The aforementioned idea of having bars and refreshment places alongside is very similar to the McDonald’s and coffee shops that you will see today in shopping centers. Even though not very much remains, the remnants can still bring to life what was once a great wonder of the ancient world and what is still an enduring symbol in the present.

Main Hall
On the left is a view of the main vaulted hall connecting to the street. The arched ceilings can be seen as well as the rooms along the first floor level. Sometimes there are secondary exhibits such as photography displays in these rooms as an added attraction.

Main Hall-Second floor
To the right is a view showing the upper level of the main vaulted room that looks down over the first floor.
**Aerial Second Floor**
At the right is a view of the partially restored second floor that shows the foundation remains of the different shops around the semi circle.

**Inner Semicircle**
To the right is a shot from inside one of the levels of the semicircle of shops. You can see the different rooms recessed into the curved wall of the hallway where the goods would be sold. These rooms can also have secondary exhibits just like the main hall.

**Trajan’s Forum**
On the left is a view that shows how the bottom floor of the markets opens onto the floor of the remains of Trajan’s Forum. The rest of the Forum was destroyed when Mussolini built the Via dei Fori Imperiale. The column of Trajan can be seen in the far background in the middle.
Nick’s Review:

Trajan’s Markets are probably not going to be on the top of anyone’s list of places to see if they visit Rome. And if you only have a short time to stay in the city then there are definitely better things to see and do. But if you have time to see some of the smaller lesser-known places, then I think it can definitely be worth a short side trip.

It is easy to find since it is just off the main thoroughfare Via Dei Fori Imperiali and it is right around other main attractions such as the Forum and the Victor Emmanuelle Monument. The only minor drawback is that it does cost around nine or ten euros to get in, but you get to see a decent amount for that price. For this you get to see multiple levels, many rooms, what remains of Trajan’s Forum, and as in many places, a bunch of stray cats.

The Markets aren’t the most exciting or visually interesting place you will see, but that is the point. They are meant to show you an aspect of Roman daily life, which is exactly what it does by revealing how citizens shopped for many of their goods and products. This helps to contrast what most people have seen of the Romans in popular culture, which is the rich nobles dining and partying in luxury.

Sources:

DIRECTIONS:
To get to the Trevi Fountain from Trajan’s Markets, the most direct way would be to go from Via Novembre onto Via Dei Pilotta, which subsequently turns into Via Dei Lucchesi and finally Via San Vincenzo. This road ends in the Piazza de Trevi and the Trevi Fountain.

INFORMATION:
The Trevi Fountain is free and open twenty-four hours a day.
Located near the historic center of Rome, the Trevi Fountain is one of the most visited and photographed sites by tourists and natives alike. The popular gathering place can be found in the Trevi Square, which is within walking distance of most other attractions in the main part of the city. The fountain gets its name from “tre vie” which is Italian for three roads, referring to the intersection of roads at its location. The Trevi Fountain is regarded as probably the most popular and spectacular fountain in the world.

The fountain was designed by Nicola Salvi, and completed in the year 1762. Even though this is new compared to many sites in Rome, it uses a thousand year old water source at this location to supply the grand sculpture with fresh water from the Acqua Vergine aqueduct. The central figure in the display is the Roman god of the sea, Neptune, who is riding a winged chariot driven by sea horses. A pair of Tritons is leading the horses, one of which is wild and disobedient, while the other is quite tame. This is meant to represent the two contrasting moods of the sea. The two figures on the side represent good health and fertility, while the column-supported archway in the rear is meant to symbolize the palace of Neptune.

The legend surrounding the Trevi Fountain says that if you throw a coin into the water, then you are guaranteed to come back to visit Rome. After taking a drink from the fountain, the wisher is supposed to throw the coin over the left shoulder into the water. It is also said that if you throw two coins then you will return to Rome and find a significant other and if three coins are thrown, then you will return to Rome with the person to get married.
Nick’s Review:

I think the Trevi Fountain is definitely a place that everyone should see if they are going to spend time in Rome. This is mainly because it is a very cool place to visit and it is free and open all the time. It is probably one of the biggest fountains you will ever see and the sculptures are amazing works of art. Even if you are only visiting for a short time, it is something that you can just stop by for a while on your way to other bigger and more famous sites. It is within pretty good walking distance from the center of the city, and can be a good place to stop at if you have been walking all day in the hot sun. This is because you can stick your feet in the water and also get a drink of the fresh water that is being supplied to the fountain.

Though, if you go in the afternoon when it is hot like we did, there will probably be a large number of people there doing the same thing. You also want to make sure to have enough room to go down to the edge of the fountain so that you can toss the fabled coin over your shoulder into the water. I didn’t see it at night, but I bet it would also be an awesome sight with all the lights shining on the sculptures. So whether you are just stopping by on a short trip, or making multiples visits during a longer stay, you should have fun relaxing by one of the best gathering places in the city.

Sources:

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Spanish Steps

DIRECTIONS:
To reach the Spanish Steps from the Trevi Fountain, first take the Via Poli from the Trevi Square to the Via del Tritone. After turning right, follow this until you get to Via due Macelli and then take a left. This road will lead you to the plaza and the Spanish Steps.

INFORMATION:
Except for special occasions, the steps are free and open twenty-four hours.
The idea for the Spanish Steps began in the 17th century when the French owned Church Trinità dei Monti decided they wanted to connect to the popular Piazza de Spagna below them. They wanted to accomplish this with a beautiful set of decorated stairs. A problem arose, however, when they also wanted to place a statue of French King Louis XIV riding a horse at the top of the stairs. Pope Alexander VII obviously did not want the papal city to have a statue of a French king and thus the plans were not carried out.

The two sides squabbled over the problem until the 1720’s, when the Italian Architect Francesco de Sanctis produced a design for the steps that both sides could agree on. The magnificent steps were finally completed in 1726, and the final product displays a pattern of curving steps and terraces that has become one of Rome’s most recognizable attractions. The name “Spanish” was used for the plaza and the steps because of the Spanish Embassy that was and still is located in the surrounding square. In the 18th century, many models could be spotted on the steps trying to attract an artist’s attention. Today, the steps are one of the busiest places as tourists and natives alike come to take photos, enjoy the view from the top, or just relax. Although after new refinishing of the steps within the past decade, eating on them is now longer allowed by law.

The boat statue at the bottom of the steps is called the Barcaccia, which means roughly “ugly boat” in Italian. The fountain was completed earlier than the steps, in 1620 by Pietro Bernini. It is unique to Roman fountains because of its design, which is very low to the ground to utilize the low water pressure in that part of the city. The significance of the boat is unclear, but one theory says that it is derived from a boat that ran aground at the spot during one of the city’s many floods.

*Barcaccia*

To the right is a view of the boat fountain below the steps that was designed by Bernini. From this angle you can see how the sculpture is below street level.
Nick’s Review:

The Spanish Steps are similar to the Trevi Fountain in that they both can be visited fairly easily. They are both free and open twenty-four hours unless there is a special occasion. Also like the Trevi Fountain, the steps are close enough to the main part of the city that they can be reached by walking, or by a short ride on the city’s public transportation.

I think it is definitely worth visiting the Spanish Steps since they are one of the sites in Rome that is truly beautiful. This is especially true if you visit in a time when they have the steps covered with brightly colored flowers. The steps are similar to the fountains and gardens in Rome in that they can be appreciated for their beauty as well as the history and skill that went into making them. This is different from some of the sites, such as the Coliseum or the Roman Forum where the visitor can feel the historic importance, but may only see a “pile of rocks” instead of a formerly magnificent structure. Whereas people studying history, like me, probably would like the ruins better, I imagine other people would probably like places such as the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps better.

No matter which of these categories you fall under, make sure to climb the steps, as you get an amazing view from this position. I would also recommend stopping by the Barcaccia fountain at the bottom; and if it’s a hot day you can even fill up your water bottle with the fresh water. The surrounding area and streets are also a nice place to visit since they have many good places to eat and lots of small stores where you can go shopping. Whether you want to spend a large portion of your day in the area or just briefly stop by, I think anyone would enjoy the Spanish Steps.

Piazza de Spagna

Here is a view from atop the Spanish Steps that shows one of the terraces and then the Spanish Plaza below. You can also see the Via Condotti leading away from the square. Off of this road are many good shops and restaurants.

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http://www.teggelaar.com/romelimages/imagesub/imrome/R632.jpg
DIRECTIONS:
To reach Castel St. Angelo from the Spanish Steps, first get on the Via Condotti leading down straight across from the steps. This will turn into the Via Fontanella Borghese, then Via de Clementino, and finally Via di Monte Brianzo before merging into the Lungotevere Tor Di Nona. Follow this until you reach the Ponte St. Angelo Bridge that will lead you up to the castle.

INFORMATION:
Address--Lungotevere Castello 50
Open--9am to pm Tue-Sun
Closed--Jan 1, Dec 25
Phone--06-3996 Adm. charge
Construction on St. Angelo Castle began during the reign of Emperor Hadrian as a mausoleum for himself and his successors. It was completed in 139 AD, one year after his death, by his successor Antoninus Pius. The bridge, Pont St. Angelo, was built in the 2nd century to connect the castle to the Camp Marzio. In 271 AD, the Emperor Aurelius fortified the tomb and added it to his defensive perimeter known as the Aurelian Wall. This was the end of the castle’s position as a tomb and the beginning of its use as a fortress.

The castle got its modern name in the 6th century when Pope Gregory the Great saw a vision of Archangel Michael above the castle. This happened while he was leading a procession across the bridge, praying for the end of the Black Death. The castle was modified for another use in 1277 when Pope Nicholas added the Vatican Corridor to connect the Vatican Palace to Castel St. Angelo. This corridor could be used by the pope during times of danger to quickly reach the safety of the castle’s fortifications.

The castle underwent a series of construction projects during the medieval period. In 1390, Pope Boniface IX remodeled and refurbished the castle, and then in 1493 Pope Alexander XI restored the Vatican Corridor. These additions helped the castle withstand the siege and sack of Rome in 1527. From 1542 to 1549 the Sala Paolina and apartments were built for Pope Paul III, which included illusionist frescoes by Tibaldi and Perin del Vaga. Initial ramparts were built in 1557, and then during the 17th century additional pentagonal ramparts were added to help the fortress better withstand sieges. Also during the 17th century, Pope Clement IX contracted the famous sculptor Bernini to design ten angels that would be placed on the Pont St. Angelo leading up to the castle.

In the 18th and 19th century, the castle was used as a barracks and military prison. The prison cells, known as the Mouth of Hell, contained men such as Cellini, Giordano Bruno, and the alchemist Cagliostro, who were mainly imprisoned because their ideas went against the church. As the monument stands today, the first floor begins with the still standing 400-foot spiraling ramp constructed by the Romans. The second floor contains the historic prison cells, while the third floor consists of two large courtyards that could hold soldiers and cannons. The fourth floor contains the luxurious and highly decorated papal apartments such as the treasury and library. Finally, the highest level is an open-air terrace that contains the huge bronze statue of the Archangel Michael done by the 18th century Flemish sculptor Wersschaffelt.

Pont St. Angelo
To the left is a view of the “bridge of angels” that leads across the Tiber to Castel St. Angelo. The ten angel statues were carved by famous sculptor Bernini.
Artillery
Below is a picture of a piece of weaponry and ammunition pile that could have been positioned on the ramparts to defend the castle from a siege during the Middle Ages.

City View
To the right is a view of the Tiber River and the city beyond as seen from the highest level of the Castel St. Angelo.

Vatican Corridor and Turret
Above is a view of the Vatican corridor that allowed the pope to escape to the safety of the castle. One of the pentagonal ramparts can also be seen with the cannons used as protection.

St. Michael
To the left is a view of the bronze statue of the Archangel Michael that is seated at the top of Castel St. Angelo. It was created in the 18th century by the Flemish sculptor Werschaffelt on contract from the Vatican. The original model for the statue is housed within the Castle.
Nick’s Review:

Castel St. Angelo is a good place to visit if you want to see a good example of a building that has been adapted and used throughout the many different ages of Rome. It is easy to reach since it is near the center of the city and within easy walking distance. It does have a fee to get in since it is a national museum, but if you go on Sunday then you should be able to get in free since most national monuments have no charge on that day.

If you only have a short period to stay in Rome, then the castle is probably not going to be one of the things that you will try to squeeze into your schedule. Though if you are going to St. Peter’s, you could easily stop for a quick look since you will probably be passing right by it. If you have a longer stay, then it is probably worth going inside to check it out in its entirety. To get the best effect, you should stay long enough to visit each floor and room and also save enough time for enjoying the views of the city from the various exterior positions. You should also save enough time to walk across the Pont St. Angelo Bridge so you can check out the carved angels along the side, as well as get a good view of the castle.

The best thing about Castel St. Angelo is that you get to see a structure that has had various uses and additions through the ages. In ancient times, it was used as a tomb and part of the defensive wall. During the medieval period it was used as a papal fortress, and later in the 17th and 18th centuries it was used as a military barracks and prison. It is not one of the most exciting places to visit if you are looking for ruins that have important history like the coliseum, or beautiful sites such as the Spanish Steps and the Trevi Fountain. However, it is a fun place to visit that will give you a sense Rome’s varied past, as well as some great views of the city.

Sources:

http://www.pacesinfo.org/Pictures/rome/13%20castel%20st%20angelo/13-CASTEL-ST-ANGELO.htm
http://www.romeguide.it/MONUM/STORICI/castel/sopra.jpg
http://www.letterspace.com/POSTCARDS/11.htm
DIRECTIONS:
To get to the Pantheon from Castel St. Angelo, first walk across the Pont St. Angelo Bridge and then follow as it turns into Via Del Blanco San Spirito. This will eventually lead you to the main street of Corso Vittorio Emmanuelle II, which you should take all the way until you get to either Via Di Torre Argentina or Via Dei Cestari. Either one of these will take you directly to the Piazza Della Rotunda that surrounds the Pantheon.

INFORMATION:
Open--Mon-Sat 8:30am-7:30pm
Sun 9am-6pm
Close--Jan 1, May 1, & Dec 25
The Pantheon was first built from 27-25 BC near the end of the Roman Republic. It was constructed during the third consulship of Marcus Agrippa, and thus the inscription on the front of the building reads in Latin, “Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, Consul for the third time, built this.” However, in the year 80 AD a fire completely destroyed this building and it was later rebuilt in the year 125 AD during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian. The new building was an exact copy of the older one, including the Marcus Agrippa inscription on the front. The Pantheon, or temple to all gods, was probably meant for all the citizens of the Roman Empire since the reigning emperor Hadrian appreciated many other cultures, especially Greek.

In the year 609 AD, the Pantheon was given to Pope Boniface IV by the Byzantine Emperor Phocas. The Vatican then had the building officially consecrated as a Christian church with the name it still holds today, Santa Maria ad Martyres (Church of Mary and Martyr Saints). This claiming by the church helped save much of the Pantheon from the pillaging and decay that many structures from ancient times suffered through. The magnificently patterned marble floors of the interior and the great bronze doors were among the elements that were preserved. One of the only major losses were the sculptures of the various Roman gods that adorned the exterior pediment and the compartments around the circumference of the inside. Pope Urban VIII also used the melted down bronze from the ceiling to build the canopy over the altar in St. Peter’s Basilica. Since the Renaissance, the Pantheon has also been used as a tomb, housing famous people such as the painter Raphael and Italian kings Emmanuelle II and Umberto I. Today it is still used as a church for performing masses, as well as being a popular site to host weddings.

The outside structure of the building consists of a three-tiered portico held up by eight Corinthian columns. The rotunda of the inner room is covered with a concrete dome that has an oculus, or eye, open to the sky in the middle. The concrete dome is the largest surviving from antiquity and in many ways is a mystery to modern physics. The concrete used during the Roman times must have contained different materials, as a dome made of modern day concrete would collapse under its own weight. Yet the Pantheon has stood for over two thousand years and was the largest dome in Western Europe until 1436. One reason for this is the coffered pattern around the dome that consists of rectangular patches where the concrete was taken out, which not only serves to lighten the weight load, but also as a decorative element. Other factors that could have contributed to the longevity of the Pantheon are the process of getting all the water and air bubbles out of the concrete to help strengthen it and using lighter aggregate at the top of the dome and gradually switch to a heavier one towards the bottom. The brilliant design of the Pantheon has been influential to plans all the way up to the present, including Thomas Jefferson’s famous rotunda at the University of Virginia.
Pantheon as a Church
To the right is a view of the Pantheon as you walk in through the large bronze doors. You can see the Christian altar and the other elements that were added to modify it into a church when the Vatican took control of it in 609 AD. This is where mass is held every week and many weddings are performed.

Oculus and Coffers
To the left is a view of the center portion of the dome that covers the Pantheon. You can see the open-air hole called the oculus, or “eye,” as well as the coffered decoration that also helps to sustain the dome by reducing the weight of the concrete.

Raphael’s Tomb
To the left is a view of the tomb of the famous painter and sculptor Raphael. He was buried here by his own request when he died in 1520. His tomb rests under a Madonna sculpture that was carved by his friend and collaborator Lorenzetto.
To the left is a picture of what the sun looks like coming in through the oculus at an angle. This is best viewed in the morning or afternoon when the sun isn’t directly overhead.

Nick’s Review:

The Pantheon is definitely a place that everyone should visit if they are lucky enough to have a trip to Rome. The main reason for this is because it is probably the best preserved building from ancient times. This is due to its excellent design, materials, and construction processes. I think it is very cool to see a building built by the Romans almost two thousand years that has survived all this time and is still in fairly good shape. Especially when you consider that engineers still don’t know exactly how the dome stays up without collapsing on itself, as one built with modern day concrete would.

The Pantheon is within easy walking distance from the rest of the important sites in the main part of the city, as well as having no entrance fee. There is also a nice plaza in front of the Pantheon with a fountain where you can sit down and rest after a day of walking. There are also many restaurants around the edge of the plaza that have pleasant outdoor eating areas. It was fun when our group ate there one night because the plaza had a good view of the Pantheon, but this also made it a little bit more expensive.

Besides the magnificent architecture, there are more things to see once you go inside the building. The most famous attraction is probably the tomb of the artist Raphael, which always has a long line. There are also the tombs of a few other famous people such as the first two kings of Italy. Another attraction is the beautiful marble floor that was restored to look exactly like the Roman original. It would also be very cool to see the original statues of the Roman gods that were around the upper wall. Unfortunately, those were taken out by the Vatican when it was converted to a church since they represented the paganism of the Romans. Despite this fact, it is still a good place to visit to see one of the best-preserved Roman buildings and a wonderful example of the Romans’ engineering and building genius.

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Victor Emmanuel Monument

INFORMATION:
Open--9am-5pm, Tue-Sun
Phone--066991718

DIRECTIONS:
To get to the monument from the Pantheon, take the Via Del Minerva out of the Pantheon Plaza to the Piazza Della Minerva. Continue on in this direction as it turns into the Via Dei Cestari, and eventually ends at the Corso Vittorio Emanuele. This street will eventually turn into Via Del Plebiscito right before it passes the Piazza Venezia. From here you should be able to see the large white building off to your right, and once you cross the plaza you will be right at the front entrance.
The large white marble structure in the Piazza Venezia known as Il Vittoriano was built in honor of Victor Emmanuel; the man who led the struggle to unify the country of Italy and eventually became its first king. During his time as king of Sardinia, Emmanuel had become a key figure in the push for a unified Italy. The forces opposing him were the Papal States and their army, which wanted to retain control of much of central Italy as a religious state. He joined forces with Giuseppe Garibaldi and defeated the papal army at Castelfidardo in 1860. Some of the Papal States, such as Naples and Sicily, favored joining with Sardinia and thus the kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in 1861 with Victor Emmanuel as the first king.

In 1865 the capital was moved from Turin to Florence. Then in 1866, Emmanuel gained the province of Venetia by siding with Prussia in the Austro-Prussian War. Napoleon III protected what was left of the Papal States until his fall in 1870, whereupon Italian troops claimed them and set up Rome as the capital of Italy in 1871. The successive popes disputed this claim until the Lateran Treaty was signed in 1929 solidifying the country of Italy. The rest of Emmanuel’s reign was taken up by consolidating the new state and bring the country together.

The construction of the monument began in 1885 based on a design by Giuseppe Sacconi. Existing roman ruins and medieval churches were cleared off of the northern slope of the Capitoline Hill in order to make room for the monument. After twenty years of construction, the structure was finally inaugurated in 1911, on the fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Italy. In the middle of the Altar of the Nation is the huge thirty-nine feet long gilt bronze equestrian statue of Victor Emmanuel. Located below this statue is the Italian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which is always guarded by two members of the Italian Army. Behind the statue is a long corridor held up by fifteen feet high columns. Atop either end of this corridor is a quadrigae, or two-wheeled chariot driven by four horses, being driven by the winged goddess Victory. The inside contains a museum of the Risorgimento, or history of the fight for Italian unification. This exhibit contains information on the struggles of Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, and their troops as they fought battles against the papal army.

The Victor Emmanuel Monument is not the most well liked structure in Rome, and has garnered such derogatory nicknames as “The Typewriter” and “The Wedding Cake.” Many people feel the building’s extremely large presence and bright stone make it stand out among the rest of the city’s more modestly sized and colored buildings. In the modern era, the monument has also become one of the best-known examples of self-important and insensitive architecture, despite the fact that Italians still love and honor Victor Emmanuel.
Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
Above is a picture of the tomb taken from inside the monument. You can see the inscription that says “Soldato Ignoto” meaning “unknown soldier” in Italian. To the right is a view of the tomb from outside on the lower level of the monument. The wreath covers the tomb, while the two Italian soldiers stand guard. If you visit at the right time like I did, you can see the ceremony that the changing guards perform.

Trireme
To the right is a replica cast of a trireme warship that was used during ancient naval battles. The ship would use the pointed bronze head to ram the other ship and sink it. The Romans were not natural sailors and thus had to copy this design from Carthage.
Nick’s Review:

Regardless of whether you plan on seeing the Victor Emmanuel Monument when you visit Rome, you will see it nonetheless. This is because it is easily the biggest structure that is located in the city and thus it is hard to miss. Whenever you venture near the city to see other important sites, you will walk near it or be able to see it out of your car window. This does make it seem a little out of place as it overpowers the surrounding structures, but I think it can also be a benefit for tourists. Because of its extreme size and ability to be seen from far away, I often used it as a guide to figure out which direction I was heading and to figure out how to get back to your hotel.

Since you will be passing by it quite often, you might as well stop in for a while to walk around the statue. You can see the Italian Tomb of the Unknown Soldier located in the middle of the structure and if you time it right then you can see the changing of the guard that watches over it. Inside is a museum exhibit that portrays the history of the fight for Italian unification as well as a look at the Italian Army’s participation in conflicts all the way up to the present. These exhibits contain artifacts such as weapons that were used by Emmanuel and Garibaldi during the unification process as well as uniforms of the modern day Italian Army.

Probably the best reason for visiting the monument however is the opportunity to see some of the most spectacular views of the city. Since the monument is so tall, if you make it all the way to the top level then you will be able to see extensively in almost all the directions of the city. You can see the entire complex of Trajan’s Markets, you can see all the way across the Tiber River, and it’s even the one place where you can look down upon the Coliseum. The back of the monument also connects to the Campidoglio and the Captioline Museum so that visitors don’t have to walk back up the hill again. Overall, the monument is not the most exhilarating place to visit, but since you will probably see it many times while in the city, you might as well stop by and see some of the spectacular views it offers.

Sources:

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http://www.johnandnat.net/italy/Rome/Victor_Emmanuel_Monument_Fountain_2.jpg
http://www.aviewoncities.com/rome/victoremmanuelmonument.htm
Circus Maximus

DIRECTIONS:
To get to the Circus Maximus from the entrance to the Victor Emmanuel Monument, first get onto the Via Dei Teatro Di Marcello. This will eventually turn into the Via Petroselli before leading into the Piazza Bocca Di Verita. From here, take either the Via Dei Cerchi or the Via Del Circo Massimo, both of which lead along the sides of the Circus Maximus.

INFORMATION:
The Circus Maximus is open twenty-four hours and is free.
The Circus Maximus is located in the valley between the Aventine and Palatine hills. Though all that remains today is a long grassy plain, it was once the largest stadium ever constructed in Rome. It was mostly used for horse and chariot racing, though occasional hunts and mock battles were also performed there. The structure was built sometime around the 4th century BC during the time of the Tarquin kings. Over the course of time, the structure was partially destroyed by fire twice and the stands also collapsed several times killing spectators.

The Circus Maximus facility was about six hundred meters long and almost two hundred and twenty five meters across. The estimated capacity is around 150,000 to 250,000, with nearly 300,000 being able to fit if crowding, standing, and surrounding hill seating are taken into account. Unlike most of the other stadiums, male and female spectators could sit together in the Circus Maximus. Important people such as the emperor, senators, and financial backers had their own special seating away from rest of the crowd. In the beginning it was built mainly out of wood, but improvements after fire damage made it mostly stone and masonry.

In the center of the long stretch of track was a barrier known as the *spina* that contained fountains, columns, temples, statues, and an obelisk that was later moved to the Piazza del Popolo. The two temples contained seven eggs and seven dolphins that would be removed once for each lap so that the spectators and competitors would know how many laps had been completed. A *meta* turning post was located at each end for the chariots to turn around, though one end was significantly larger to allow for the chariots to start the race. The starting gates, or *carceres*, allowed for twelve chariots to start the race at a staggered position so that each would travel the same distance to the first turn.

The last races were held in the Circus Maximus in 549 AD, almost a thousand years after it was first built. Like many of the structures of ancient Rome, the Circus Maximus was pillaged in the Middle Ages for stone that was used to construct cathedrals and other buildings. Today, all that is left of the Circus Maximus is the grassy plain that was once the track and a few small ruins of the starting gates. Similar to many other ruins, the grassy plain is far below the street level of modern Rome due to the aging process and the buildup of soil. The open grassy plain is still used in modern times for things such as outdoor festivals, concerts, and other gatherings.

**Circus Maximus Remains**
The view to the right is looking lengthwise down the grassy plain that used to be the racing track. Especially from the left side, you can see how the plain is much lower than the current street (the tree line). In the foreground you can also see some of the few stone remains from the structure.
Nick’s Review:

The Circus Maximus is probably the worst place to visit if you want to see something that still survives from the Roman days, such as buildings or monuments. This is because it is mostly just a large grassy field that is sunken below the street level. There are a few ruins down at one end, but nothing that is very exciting. However, you might want to at least stop by for a short look at the area just to get an idea of how big the scale of the structure would have been and imagine the grand events that would have taken place. It is fairly easy to get to since it is near many of the other famous sites in the center of the city. If you do much walking or bus touring around the city then you will probably pass by it several times. There is also a metro stop that gets off near the Circus Maximus, and any of these will give you an opportunity to catch a quick view of the area.

For most people, this is all their trip to the Circus Maximus will consist of. However, when our group visited there was a huge international concert that took place on one of the weekends. It was a free performance put on to benefit children in war-torn and disaster stricken countries. There were performers from almost every region of the globe that came to help raise money in the charity event. It was very cool to experience all the different types of music and to be a part of the almost 150,000 people in attendance. Even though it was long and we had to sit on the side of one of the steep hills, I am glad we went and experienced it. If you visit, you might want to check out and see if there are going to be any events that you can have a great time experiencing too.

Sources:
http://itsa.ucsf.edu/~snlrc/encyclopaedia_romana/circus maximus/circus.jpg
http://www.romeguide.it/MONUM/ARCHEOL/ccircus_maximus/circus.htm
INFORMATION:
Open—9am-7pm daily
(4pm in winter) -- 06-6996 7700
Closed Jan 1, May 1, Dec 25
Admission charge--8 Euro

DIRECTIONS:
To get to the Colosseum from the Circus Maximus is very easy. Whether you are on Via Del Cerchi or Via Del Circo Massimo, just go southeast until you hit Via Di San Gregorio. Take this north until to reach the plaza area around the Colosseum.
Construction on the Colosseum began in 72 AD during the reign of the emperor Vespasian. The amphitheater was located on the site of a marshy lake near the grounds of Nero’s Palace. The structure was dedicated in the year 80 AD by his son Titus, who held an inaugural festival that lasted 100 days. It was finally completed during the years of the next reigning emperor, Domitian. For the next two hundred years, the Colosseum was one of the biggest sites in Rome as it held events and activities from gladiatorial fights to wild animal fights for the people of Rome.

In the year 230 AD, the emperor Alexander Severus restored the structure from a fire/lightning strike in 217 AD, which enabled it to hold the thousandth anniversary of the founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus in 248 AD. By the year 404 AD, the gladiatorial fights were banned by the emperor Theodosius because of their violence, and by 523 AD the wild animal fights were also banned. After many centuries of neglect, the site was used during the Middle Ages as a fortress for various wealthy Italians such as the Frangipane family. In 1244, Pope Innocent IV declared the Colosseum as the property of the church and passion plays began to be performed by 1490 AD.

The main enemies of the Colosseum have been neglect, vandalism, and earthquakes. Much of the Travertine blocks from the Colosseum were taken away during the Middle Ages for use in building cathedrals, monuments, and even parts of St. Peter’s Basilica. The structure has also taken major damage from earthquakes in 442, 470, 1349, and 1703 AD. These greatly weakened the integrity of the building and have caused the collapse of several of the outer rings. The first excavations of the site went from 1790-1812 and were led by Lucangeli. From 1805 to 1820, the Caelium brick wall was built by Pope Pius VII to help stabilize the outer ring. This is followed by restorations starting in 1828 on the north and west arches by Valadier. Finally in 1938, the interior of the arena and the underground corridors were fully excavated. The most recent restorations on the Colosseum were made during the 90’s and were funded by a private bank in Rome.

The building itself is elliptical shaped with many tiers of seating around the floor of the arena. These tiers are estimated to hold between 50,000 and 60,000 spectators at one time. The floor consisted of wooden planks below with sand covering them. Below this wooden floor was a series of hidden rooms and corridors that allowed for the surprise entrance of wild animals, gladiators, and scenery. The passages, stairways, and seating areas are all supported by rows of massive arched vaults that help distribute the weight evenly. This allowed the four-story structure to rise to over 160 feet and have eighty entrances. The first story is
designed in the Doric style, the second in the Ionic style, and then the third is in the Corinthian style. The top layer contains brackets and sockets that were to hold masts in place that suspended a giant cloth canopy over the top of the Colosseum to protect the spectators from the harsh Mediterranean sun. The Colosseum is a good example of the Romans’ excellent engineering skills as each area is built with different materials for a different purpose. Concrete was used for the foundations, travertine was used for the piers and arcades, tufa infill between the piers on the lower two levels, and brick faced concrete for the upper levels and most of the vaults. With all the repairs and restorations, the Colosseum will be able to stick around for a while, barring more major earthquakes, as one of the best examples of Roman architecture and one of the biggest attractions in Rome.

Colosseum Tiers
To the left is a view of the different tiers of the Colosseum. You can see some of the sloped areas were the seats were and the vaulted archways that supported them. In the upper left hand corner you can also just make out a few of the brackets that held up the canopy.

Gladiator Barracks
Below is a picture of the remains of the biggest gladiator barracks in the city. These buildings housed and trained the competitors in what was similar to a prison. This one is located right across the street from the Colosseum so that a passage going underground could allow the gladiators to arrive and rise up from the arena floor in triumphant surprise.

Arena Floor
Above is a view looking down on where the arena floor was placed. You can see the hidden passages and rooms that were used to house the competitors and animals. Also visible is the portion of the floor that has been reconstructed over the ruins and since been used as a stage for performing ancient plays such as Oedipus.
Nick’s Review:

The Colosseum is probably the most well known attraction in the city of Rome. Because of this most people will already have it on their list of places to visit no matter the length of their stay. But I would say that it is definitely worth the visit to be able to go inside and see the interior of the structure. The Colosseum is located very near the center of the city and is only a five-minute walk from the Forum. While you can get to site fairly quickly, it might take a little while to get in, as there is usually a decent sized line outside. We got to pass most of the line because we were in a group and we had our tickets in advance, but if not then you should expect a little bit of a wait.

One of the things I noticed when first walking into the Colosseum is the sheer scale of it. It helps provide an idea of what great engineers and builders the Romans were when you see what they could accomplish two thousand years ago with such little technology. I also thought it was cool to see under the arena floor where all the hidden rooms and passages were. While you can’t walk out on the reconstructed part of the floor, you can still see a decent amount from further away. You can’t see very much of the seating area since most of it has fallen into ruins now, but you can get an idea of the tiered levels and the columns and arches that hold them up. Similar to the Forum, one of the neat things about the Colosseum is that you can just sit and imagine what it was like back in ancient Rome, when there were 50,000 screaming fans in the building while there were gladiators fighting down below. So whether you love the Colosseum as a fan of classical history or just admire a great work of humanity as an ordinary tourist, the Colosseum is definitely a place that everyone should visit.

Restoration and Repairs

To the right you can see part of the concrete wall that has been put up to hold in place the crumbling tufa and brick that had started falling down. Most of this damage has been caused by past earthquakes. Modern day traffic that passes by also creates vibrations that are probably weakening the foundation.

Sources:

http://www.the-colosseum.net/idx-en.htm
http://goitaly.about.com/od/romea/coliseum.htm
http://www.union.edu/PUBLIC/AVADEPT/ogawad/slide2udy/ch_6/7.jpg
http://www.engineering.com/content/ContentDisplay?contentId=41007009
Villa d’Este

INFORMATION:
Open—Tues-Sun 830-sunset
Closed—Jan 1, May 1, Dec 25
and Mondays – 0774-31
Adm. charge--6.20 Euro

DIRECTIONS:
Villa d’Este is located about 34 km east of Rome near the town of Tivoli. To get there, take the S5 road out of Rome until you reach Tivoli. A quick walk to the western side of the town on their cobbled streets will take you to the Villa d’Este. The trip can be made in half a day, but most people also stop by Hadrian’s Villa.
Villa d’Este was commissioned and built in the 16th century by the Cardinal Ippolito d’Este on the site of an old Benedictine convent. D’Este was the son of Lucrezia Borgia and the grandson of Pope Alexander VI. After failing in an attempt to become Pope, he became the governor of Tivoli in 1550 and decided to build a relaxing garden for future clergymen. Finally, the design of the garden was completed by architect Pirro Ligorio after seventeen years of work. What was created was a magnificent complex of terraced gardens and fountains that exemplified the grandeur of the Renaissance. In 1605, Cardinal Alessandro d’Este started a series of projects not only to repair and refurbish the plants and fountains, but also to add new improvements to the design and layout of the gardens. From 1660 to 1670, several new sculptures and fountains were added by the famous artist Gianlorenzo Bernini.

* During the 18th century, the villa fell into ruin and disrepair with the ownership moving over to the House of Hapsburg. The lack of maintenance and upkeep led to the decay of much of the gardens and gradually it was abandoned. The intricate system of gravity driven water pipes were no longer used and fell into poor condition. The large collection of ancient stone statues became scattered and began crumbling. The conditions continued to decline until the middle of the 18th century when Gustav von Hohelohe acquired the villa from the Dukes of Modena in 1851. Hohelohe initiated programs to help restore the gardens and try to bring them back to their former glory. From 1867 to 1882, Villa d’Este had regained enough splendor and prestige for the Cardinal to be able to host dignitaries such as the pianist Franz Liszt, who composed a song for the Cardinal while he was a guest there.

While the First World War was raging, the estate became a property of the Italian state, and then afterwards it was refurbished and opened to the public. Another restoration was performed after World War II to repair the damage caused by Allied bombing. Today, the maintenance at the gardens continues pretty much year round because of the environmental conditions. Much of the gardens do not have the splendor and quality of their original condition, but they still are a good example of the luxury and comfort that the clergymen of the Renaissance enjoyed.

**Fountain of Arethusa**
Here is a view of the Fountain of Arethusa, which is at the end of the row of The Hundred Fountains. It is a symbolic representation of the simple life that is practiced in the hills of Tivoli. Visitors can walk behind the fountain on the semi-circular path that helps to form the grotto cove around the fountain.
**Terraced Gardens**

The picture above is taken from the entrance at the top level of the terrace and looks down the main parallel of the villa. From this viewpoint, you can see the dramatic elevation change and how that affects the terracing of the garden.

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**Fertility Goddess**

To the left is a statue of the Roman goddess Diana, who represented nature, fertility, and productivity. It was originally part of the larger Water Organ Fountain, but was moved to a less noticeable area by the Christians because it represented a pagan deity. It was probably accepted because it was meant to represent the natural wealth of Italy, which was a common theme during the Renaissance.

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**Rome Fountain**

Above is a picture of the west end of the villa, which contains the Rome Fountain. It was meant to symbolize the complexity and variety of the urban centers of ancient Rome. This expression of history contrasts very well with the tranquil life at the villa.
**Water Organ Fountain**

Above is a picture of me in front of the Water Organ Fountain, the largest of the fountains in the garden, which is located near the bottom of the terraces. The fountain used to be able to play music by rushing water through the pipes, but hasn’t been operable for some time. To the right is a view from the top of the fountain looking down. The three pools in the middle of the picture are filled with Koi fish.

**Villa d’Este Plan**

To the left is a site plan of the entire estate at Villa d’Este. You can see the differently designed terraces of the garden as well as the parallels that were used to diagram out the major attractions.
Nick’s Review:

Villa d’Este is not a place that is going to be on everyone’s list of places to visit. The biggest reason for this is because it takes awhile to reach the town of Tivoli where it is located. It takes a little over an hour on the bus and then a short walk to get from Rome to the country estate. It is a good place to go if you have an extended stay in Rome and want to find places farther out that you can spend a day trip on. Most people also visit Hadrian’s Villa while they are in Tivoli since it is just a bit further down the bus route. Part of our group went on to Hadrian’s Villa, which has some great examples of ancient Roman architecture. The only problem with our trip was that the constant drizzle while we were at Villa d’Este turned into a huge thunderstorm and everyone and everything got soaking wet. Still, I would definitely suggest going to Hadrian’s Villa if you have the chance since you get to see a great example of the extravagance that the Roman emperors enjoyed.

The gardens at Villa d’Este are an excellent place to see some beautiful landscape architecture from the Renaissance. It is also the by far the most colorful and lively place that we visited, as opposed to the old ruins and museums. While those historical places can be fun, if you want a change of pace it is one of the best places where you can get outside and walk around a natural site with fountains and vegetation. There are many different types of trees, shrubs, and flowers to enjoy throughout the many different terraces. There is also plenty of water as there are many fountains on the grounds, as well as three small pools in the center that contain Koi fish. I imagine it would be even better to witness on a nice sunny day, so if you have time to take a small trip out of Rome, then this would be the first place I recommend.

Villa d’Este Flowers
These two pictures show some of the many brightly colored flowerbeds that are planted among the terraced gardens at Villa d’Este. Above is near the fertility goddess, while to the right is by the Water Organ.
Hadrian’s Villa

To the right and below are two pictures from my trip to Hadrian’s Villa, near Villa d’Este. To the right is a view of Hadrian’s Maritime Theater, where he would go to relax by himself in the quiet center of the circle. Below is a view of the remains of the Temple of Venus, with the remains of her statue in the center.

View from Tivoli

To the right is a picture taken from the side of Villa d’Este near the Rome Fountain. The high elevation of the terraces provides a good view of the city spreading out below.

Sources:

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http://goeurope.about.com/cs/italy/p/villa_deste.htm
http://www.romeguide.it/IMAGE/MAPS/LAZIO1.gif
http://www.agnr.umd.edu/users/hort/sullivan/17monitor/13/sld007.htm
Pompeii

INFORMATION:
Open—Nov to March, 830-5 daily
Apr to Oct, 830-730 daily
Closed—Jan 1, May 1, Dec 25
Adm. Charge—10 Euro

DIRECTIONS:
To get to Pompeii from Rome, you first need to take the train from Stazione Termini to the city of Naples. There you will board a local train that will take you farther south to Pompeii. Unless you have a tour bus, you need to walk north from the train station for about fifteen minutes to reach the ruins of the city. Overall, the trip takes close to three hours.
The city of Pompeii was once an active and wealthy city that rested on the coast of the Bay of Naples. Many wealthy Roman citizens, as well as various emperors, had large houses and estates that they vacationed at during the hot summers in Rome. Then on August 20, AD 79, Pompeii suffered through minor earthquakes and other signs of a coming volcanic eruption. Oblivious to these, the townspeople went about their daily lives until August 24, AD 79, when Mount Vesuvius erupted around noon with a giant cloud of ash, rock, and smoke. Due to the wind, this was all blown towards the towns of Herculaneum and Pompeii, catching the citizens completely off guard. The ash and pumice raining down produced total darkness and began to pile up on the buildings and rooftops. This phase of the eruption continued throughout the rest of the day as people searched around in the dark and ash for a place to escape or hide.

Just after midnight, pyroclastic flows of magma, volcanic mud and toxic gases spewed forth from Vesuvius and rushed toward the base at over one hundred kilometers per hour. The city of Herculaneum, which was closer to the base than Pompeii, was instantly covered in a huge mass of volcanic mud. A pyroclastic flow finally came over the wall at Pompeii around 8am and instantly killed all the people remaining with its surge of searing hot air. By the time the eruption finally stopped late on August 25, many thousands of people had died within the city or while fleeing to the surrounding countryside. All but a couple of the largest buildings such as the amphitheater were completely covered and unrecognizable.

Pompeii remained buried this way for almost 2,000 years, as the area was forgotten for the rest of the ancient and medieval periods. Except for a brief tunnel dug around 1600, excavations didn’t begin until Herculaneum was investigated in 1709. Then in 1748, a surveying engineer named Rocco Gioacchino de Alcubiere was sent by King Charles III of Spain to find valuable ancient artifacts to put in the Spanish court. Alcubiere inspected the water channel dug years earlier after learning that precious ancient objects had been found there, and thus began the excavation of the city. In the 1980’s a special entity was created to oversee the research and excavation at the cities destroyed by Vesuvius, called the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompeii. A special law has recently been passed that allows the income from visitors to be used by the group, which has helped them better preserve the site and make it available to the public.

**Poppy Field**

This is a field of poppies that were blooming on the side of the town closest to Mount Vesuvius.
Cave Canem
To the right is a picture of a mosaic that was on the floor outside a resident’s house. Some Roman houses had these pictures with the inscription “Cave Canem” meaning “Beware of Dog.” This is an example of one of the many things modern society has gotten from the ancient Romans, as it is very similar to the signs many people have today that are meant to ward off intruders.

Streetside Eatery
To the right is a picture of a building along side one of the main roads in downtown Pompeii. You can see the holes that probably contained some sort of soup or drink. These probably identify this structure as some sort of ancient coffee shop or fast food place where passersby could have a quick snack.

City Road
To the left is a view of one of the main roads that went through downtown Pompeii. You can see the original Roman paving stones, complete with the ruts worn into the rock from many passing carts. Most of the roads also periodically had two larger stones that stuck up above the rest. These were used to cross the street without having to step in the mud and feces that was usually lying along the street.
**Wealthy Estate**
To the right is a view of the back yard of one of the estates that was well preserved. It was probably used by a wealthy citizen or politician as a place to go during the summer to escape the Roman sun. It contained a beautiful interior with detailed frescoes, as well as this extensive outdoor garden complete with running fountains.

**Roman Fresco**
To the left is one of the frescoes that was fairly well preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius. These types of paintings were usually in the wealthier homes that could afford aesthetic decorations. Many of the best-preserved frescoes and mosaics were moved from the site to the museum in Naples.

**Gladiator Barracks**
To the left is a picture of the gladiator barracks that were used in Pompeii. The area around the perimeter contained cells that held the prisoners when not fighting. The open area in the middle was used for strength and weapons training that allowed the fighter to perform well for the fans.
Victim Casts
These are a few of the casts that were left behind at the Pompeii site. Most of them were taken along with the preserved frescoes and mosaics to the museum in Naples. These casts were taken exactly as the victim’s body had fallen, thus you can get a real sense of the fear and hopelessness that the people, and their pets, faced before death.
Mount Vesuvius
Here is a hazy picture of the volcano that erupted on August 24, 79 AD and covered the city of Pompeii for nearly 1500 years. Seeing how close it is in person gives you an idea of how quickly the eruption could be upon the city, not giving anyone time to escape.

Nick's Review:

Pompeii is definitely one of the most well-known and recognizable places in Italy. This makes it one of the more popular places to go to if people visit the country. This is the reason why most of the people from our group wanted to go there. However, the trip to get there is neither short nor cheap. You must take at least two different trains and it will pretty much take up a whole day by the time you visit the ruins and have a round trip train ride. It also costs some money since the train ticket is about sixty Euros and then the entrance fee to the site is ten more.

As for the site itself, some of us that went were a little disappointed at what we found there. Many of the buildings and rooms are blocked off by gates that don't allow the visitors to get in and look at the site close up. There are still areas where you can go, but not nearly as many as the site at ancient Ostia, which is one of the reasons that I liked Ostia better. Ostia also had most of its frescoes and mosaics still at the site for the visitor to see, while much of the better-preserved art at Pompeii was taken to the museum in Naples. We didn't know this until halfway through our visit there and therefore were unable to make the trip over to the museum. If you go to Pompeii, I would definitely recommend visiting the Naples museum as well since it would greatly increase the value of the trip. Another smaller annoyance was the fact that we had to walk about twenty minutes along the road to reach the site from the train station. Pompeii still gives a good feel of what an ancient Roman city was like since it was instantly preserved compared to the gradual preservation of Ostia. However, in my opinion, if you want to see an example of an ancient Roman city, then I would recommend Ostia because it is closer, cheaper, and you can walk anywhere you want to.

City Forum
To the right is a picture of me in front of the town forum. This is similar to the one in Rome, except on a smaller scale. You can vaguely see Mt. Vesuvius in the background.

Sources:

http://www.umich.edu/~kelseydb/Maps/italy.gif
http://www.archaeology.org/interactive/pompeii/history.html
Ancient Ostia

DIRECTIONS:

The best way to reach Ostia from Rome is by using the metro. Get off the regular metro at Piramide, go up the escalator, and turn immediately left and down the steps into the Roma-Lido station. A normal metro ticket will suffice for the entire journey. Get out at the stop Ostia Antica. Next, cross the highway using the pedestrian bridge. From the pedestrian bridge, keep walking straight ahead; cross a street and after 100 meters turn left to get to the entrance.

INFORMATION:

Tel: +39 06/32810 from Monday to Friday
Tel: +39 06 5748030 or 06 56352830 Saturday and Sunday
Booking fee: - Euro 1.03

PRICES:

Entrance: - Euro 4.14
Reduced: - Euro 2.70
Free for European Union citizens under 18 and over 65 years of age
OPENING HOURS:

Jan/Feb: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. --- March 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Starting last Sunday in March: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. --- June-Sept: 8.30 a.m. - 6 p.m.
October 1st to last Saturday of October: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Nov/Dec: 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.

Closed every Monday, and on Jan/May 1st and Dec 25th

According to sources such as Cicero, the fourth king of Rome, Ancus Marcius, founded the city of Ostia around 620 BC. However, there is no archaeological evidence that dates back this far as the earliest find is suspected to be from around 300 BC. This is the remains of a military fortress called the Castrum that was probably built as a naval base to protect against pirates and later the Carthaginians. This was a good location to protect the city of Rome because it was located at the mouth of the Tiber River that flowed up to the city from the Mediterranean.

As the size and population of Rome grew in the second century, the port gradually moved from being a military port to a commercial one. It imported grain from places such as Sicily and Sardinia to support the expansion of military success. As the harbor grew, buildings such as shops and places to eat and lodge began to appear to provide for the people that traveled to and from the seaport. By the first century, Ostia had grown large enough that Rome decided they should relinquish control of the city and let Ostia form its own governing body.

**Theater Decoration**

To the right is a replica of a drama mask that adorned the wall of the theater. The design is based on Ancient Greek masks, complete with a wide mouth to act as a megaphone.
Ostia was quickly becoming the main port supplying the city of Rome and the Emperor. However, there were some problems with this natural port at the mouth of the Tiber. As it was very shallow, only small ships could sail up the river to Rome, while larger ships had to be unloaded farther out to sea onto the smaller ships. This could be dangerous since there was no protection for the ships from the sea while they were unloading and/or docking. To solve the problem, Claudius started the construction of an artificial harbor a few miles north of Ostia in 42 AD. The work was completed in 64 AD during reign of Nero with a large basin, two moles and a lighthouse for protection, and two channels connecting it to the Tiber River. Even though it was already in use, the wide and shallow basin was still vulnerable and this led Trajan to construct another hexagonal basin behind Claudius' from 106-113 AD.

With Rome's new sturdy port complete, building continued in the city of Ostia during this period. This is evident because most of the remains found appear to be from around this time period in the first half of the 2nd century AD. Temples, baths, fire fighters, police, and warships were added by Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, while later years saw additions to the theater by Commodus and road repairs by Septimius Severus. During these peak years, Ostia became a densely populated city with a large variety of buildings and an international population that included many slaves.

In the third century, Rome began having serious political problems as emperors were made and then assassinated in a matter of years or even months. This combined with Rome's crumbling economy caused the city of Ostia to begin to decline rapidly. Construction was reduced to almost nothing, the population greatly decreased and by the second half of the 3rd century the problems worsened when collapsed buildings were just left lying in shambles. At this time, Rome once again took over the government of Ostia, but they gave more support to the district of Portus where the artificial harbors were constructed. As Portus remained a thriving harbor city, Ostia became an average residential Italian city and then later slowly slipped into ruins with the barbarian invasions.

**Public Latrine**
Below is a picture of me on one of the remaining seats in a public restroom. These open-air shared bathrooms were probably located in the lower class section of the city due to the constant smell.

**Street Perspective**
The view above shows the length of a typical main street, with paving stones down the middle and various buildings on the sides.
**Views of Theater**
Here are two different views of the theater near the center of town. Also visible in the back is a court with a small temple in the middle. At the bottom is a view of what they look like today, taken from the top of the seating area. To the right is a computer reconstruction of what they looked like during the city’s peak.

**Architectural Elements**
The column to the left reveals how the Romans would make the columns out of cheap brick and façade to look expensive. The picture above shows a hollow wall that illustrates how the warm air from slave-built fires below would travel up and warm the master’s room above.
Nick’s Review:

Ostia can be a little hard to reach since it is so far outside the city of Rome, but I think it is well worth it. Once there, the cost is not too bad considering what all you get to see, which is probably the most complete and best-preserved Roman cities along with Pompeii. In my opinion, Ostia Antica turned out to be even better than its more famous cousin for several reasons. First of all, it is easier to get to since it is a shorter distance and you only have to walk for a short ways to get there. Pompeii on the other hand, takes several hours even on the fast commuter trains, and then requires a walk of around thirty minutes from the train station to the site.

There are also several on-site reasons that I like the city of Ostia better than Pompeii. While they both have ruins such as houses, shops, and theaters, the sites are much more accessible at Ostia. Visitors can go into buildings and check out the individual rooms, and even go up stairs to see the remaining second floors when possible. In Pompeii, most of the individual areas are closed off by metal gates that keep you from walking around. You can walk on main thoroughfares, but I didn’t like the lack of intimate access to many areas. Another thing that I was disappointed with at Pompeii was the lack of original material that still remained at the site. Ostia still had most of its mosaics and frescoes in the buildings, and since you could enter most of the buildings, you could get a pretty good look at them. Even though both give you a good idea of what a Roman city would have looked like, I would recommend Ostia over Pompeii because it is closer and has better access to the site.

Sources: