

Darius Arya

Hidden Rome *with Darius Arya*

Rome has been written about, photographed, and visited by millions. This is not that Rome.

Led by archaeologist and Ancient Rome Live founder Darius Arya with special guest journalist Erica Firpo, this private seven-day experience is designed for a small group of ten who want to go further: underground, behind closed doors, and off the beaten path entirely. From an intact Mithraic temple beneath the Circus Maximus to a Roman necropolis discovered under a Vatican parking structure, this itinerary moves through layers of the city that most visitors never reach. Every site visit comes with expert context. Every meal is a destination in itself.

DATES DURATION GROUP SIZE FORMAT

14 – 20 February 2027 7 nights / 8 days 10 guests Private, fully accompanied

THE ITINERARY

DAY 1 · Arrival

Rome begins tonight. After private transfers and time to settle in, the week opens with a welcome dinner of Roman classics at La Matriciana — one of the city's great old-guard trattorias, just steps from the ancient Aurelian Walls.

— Private arrival transfers

— Welcome dinner — La Matriciana, Via del Viminale

DAY 2 · Built on Broken Jars

Most hills are made of earth. Monte Testaccio is made of ancient amphorae — roughly

53 million of them, smashed and stacked over centuries by workers at the river port that once supplied the city. We begin here, then move through the Testaccio Market for a tasting with an artisan cheesemonger before lunch inside the hill itself at Checchino dal 1887, one of Rome's most storied family restaurants.

- Monte Testaccio — site visit
- Testaccio Market — artisan cheese tasting at Taste'Acio
- Lunch at Checchino dal 1887
- Dinner in Testaccio

DAY 3 · Temples Beneath Churches

The Pantheon has been standing for nearly two thousand years, first as a temple to all the gods, now as a church; we go beneath it, into the Grottoni, where the original pagan structure is still visible. At San Clemente, three distinct layers of Roman history stack vertically — a twelfth-century basilica above a fourth-century church above a first-century house with its own Mithraic shrine. Lunch is in the Jewish Ghetto, one of Rome's oldest and most distinctive culinary traditions.

- Grottoni del Pantheon — beneath the pagan temple
- Basilica of San Clemente — three stacked centuries
- Roman-Jewish lunch in the Ghetto
- Dinner — Settimio All'Arancio

DAY 4 · Bread, Circuses & the Cult Below

The Romans invented mass entertainment, and this is where it happened. We visit the Ludus Magnus — the gladiatorial training school adjacent to the Colosseum — and the Circus Maximus, the great chariot racing track that once held a quarter of a million people. Then we go underground: special access to the Mithraeum of the Circus Maximus, an intact mystery cult temple discovered by accident in the 1930s and rarely visited.

- Ludus Magnus — the gladiators' training school
- Circus Maximus and archaeological area
- Mithraeum of the Circus Maximus — special access
- Lunch on Viale Aventino
- Dinner — Roman pizza at Baffetto

DAY 5 · **The Mouth of the Empire**

Rome couldn't feed itself. Everything it consumed arrived by sea and made its way upriver — through Ostia, the port city at the mouth of the Tiber that is now one of the best-preserved Roman towns in the world. We pass through EUR, Mussolini's rationalist marble district with its uncanny "Square Colosseum," before spending the heart of the day walking Ostia's streets, warehouses, baths, and taverns. Lunch is at Quarantunododici, one of the finest restaurants in greater Rome.

- EUR — Rome's rationalist quarter and Square Colosseum
- Ostia Antica — Rome's preserved port city
- Isola Sacra necropolis, Portus (access-dependent)
- Lunch at Quarantunododici — Lele Usai's restaurant

DAY 6 · **A Cemetery Under the Car Park**

In 2003, workers digging a Vatican parking structure broke through into something unexpected: an intact Roman necropolis, undisturbed for nearly two thousand years. The Via Triumphalis burial ground is now visited on suspended catwalks, under the theme "life and death in the Rome of the Caesars." Special access. Not open to the general public. The day continues with a private visit to the Vatican Museums.

- Via Triumphalis necropolis, Santa Rosa — special access
- Vatican Museums — private visit
- Lunch and dinner in Rome

DAY 7 · Cinema, Aqueducts & Wine on the Appia

The week ends on Rome's quieter southeastern edge. A morning at Cinecittà — the legendary studios where Fellini worked and where Rome has played itself on film since Ben-Hur — is followed by a private picnic lunch at Fattoria di Fiorano, the Antinori family's organic estate on the Appia Antica, with wine from their own vines. The afternoon takes in the golden arches of the Parco degli Acquedotti and a special-access visit to the Villa dei Sette Bassi — one of the largest and least-visited imperial villas in Rome — before a farewell dinner.

- Cinecittà film studios — private half-day visit
- Private picnic lunch at Fattoria di Fiorano — L'Orto di Alberico
- Parco degli Acquedotti — the great aqueduct arches
- Villa dei Sette Bassi — special access
- Farewell dinner

DAY 8 · Departure

Private transfers for onward travel. Rome will be hard to leave.

- Private departure transfers

WHAT IS INCLUDED

- All site visits, entrance fees, and special access permissions
- Welcome and farewell dinners, all lunches, and most dinners throughout the week
- Seven nights hotel accommodation with daily breakfast
- Private airport transfers on arrival and departure
- A dedicated private guide accompanying the group for the full seven days
- Full logistical support and on-the-ground coordination

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

- International flights
- Travel insurance (strongly recommended)
- Personal expenses and incidentals
- Beverages beyond those specified per meal