

# Untold Italy Episode 217: 5 Must Have Experiences in Rome

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 217.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

## Katy

Buongiorno everyone, here I am freshly back from a whirlwind trip to Italy where I spent some time in Rome, Bologna and Venice - checking in on what is happening that's new and exciting in those places, catching up with the Untold Italy team and meeting with some of our amazing partners.

In case you don't follow us on our social media, we had an exciting encounter on my last day in Rome. There we were with our friends from Liv Tours, casually wandering past the Pantheon then who should walk by but travel legend Rick Steves. Of course, we had to get a selfie! If you're not familiar with Rick, he's best known in the United States and has almost single-handedly changed the way Americans travel to Europe through his books, audioguides and tours. And of course, his multimedia approach to travel is an inspiration to me and what we're trying to do here at Untold Italy. So that was a bit of a thrill I have to say.

Bumping into celebrities is not something that regularly happens to me in Rome but it certainly added to an exciting couple of weeks.

On the way home to Australia I started reflecting on my trip and realized that while I've been to Rome countless times there are some experiences that I seek out every time I'm there that I wanted to share with you.

These are those quintessentially Roman things to do that you can only experience in the Eternal City and I can tell you that while some of them are ancient, they never get old. Not to me anyway. And lots of them are free or don't cost much money at all.

One - Walk in history. I don't know about you but it's incredible to me that I've walked in the footsteps of some of the greatest rulers our planet has ever seen and stood on the sites of world-changing events. I love to simply walk around in Rome and look at the buildings around me that have been adapted over centuries and absorbed into the modern city. Romans are

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pretty chill about this and don't seem to notice how over 2000 years of history is simply at their fingertips but I find it amazing.

One of my favorite places to wander around in Rome is the Jewish Ghetto district where ancient temples co-exist with renaissance palaces and fountains and medieval streets. Layers of history are everywhere in this area including somber and poignant reminders of the city's fascist past with brass stumbling stone markers outside the houses where victims of the holocaust once chose to live. Just a short stroll away you'll find Torre di Largo Argentina where Julius Caesar was assassinated on the 15th of March in 44 BC. This site has traditionally been a cat refuge but was recently reopened to the public after careful restoration.

Sometimes I do a walk around the major sites which can take between an hour and two hours depending on how many stops you make for photos and/or coffee and how close you want to get to the Colosseum. There's nothing that quite reminds you that you're in Rome than a stroll by the Trevi Fountain or admiring the view from the top of the Spanish Steps. All of this walking of course means you're bound to get hungry so the next item on my list is, of course, food-related.

Two - Devour Roman pasta. Next on my list of must-have Roman experiences is to order traditional Roman pasta. Nowhere in Italy or the world can you find a better carbonara, cacio e pepe, alla gricia or amatriciana so I'll always order a plate when in Rome. After all, this is a city where lives have been dedicated to making the perfect carbonara.

And you really won't get the real deal anywhere else in Italy as these are the traditional local pasta dishes from Rome. I did have some delicious ragu pasta in Bologna and an amazing squid ink pasta in Venice but when in Rome as they say, stick to the local dishes which are the ones they do best. More pecorino cheese, all the guanciale.. It really is incredibly delicious.

This time, artichokes were in season. Hooray. So I had a very tasty version of the alla gricia with artichokes. So good. Spring is an amazing time to visit Italy if you like artichokes. They were everywhere - on market stalls, menus and as decorations in shops and restaurants. They come fried or braised or added to pasta as I had them.

Now If you want to learn more about the traditional pasta dishes of Rome you can listen to our episodes on that very topic - they are episodes [181](#) and [182](#) with our good friend Nesim from Full Belly Tours. Definitely worth a listen if you want all the best tips on where to eat the best versions. I had artichoke alla gricia at Da Felice in Testaccio who are a solid pick for a good version of any of those pasta dishes.

Three - Enjoy the views. Next, I like to seek out some views of the Eternal City whenever I'm in town. There's nothing like gazing out over the rooftops of Rome to cement that wonderful feeling that you're in one of the world's most amazing cities. There's a certain shimmery haze that settles over the city in the sunlight, especially at dawn and dusk that gives it an ethereal glow. And then you really know you're in Roma.

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Some of the views I enjoyed this time were over the Tiber River and Trastevere from my hotel, a cheeky rooftop work lunch close to the Pantheon with a couple of spritzes, and a very special treat from the balcony at the Vatican Museums during a very special [early morning tour with Liv Tours](#).

There are so many beautiful and unique angles to enjoy the city that it would be a shame to keep your feet at ground level. Definitely makes sure you include some epic Roman views in your plans when you visit. Some of my favorite places that I didn't get to visit this time are the views from Piazza Venezia - you can go to the very top on an elevator for a fee and gaze all across the city. As this "wedding cake" as it is generally known, sits on the edge of the Roman Forum it's in a prime position to capture so many iconic sites including the Colosseum. If you're happy simply gazing over the Roman Forum towards the world's most famous Arena I can recommend the cafe at the back of the building. Perfect for a sunset aperitivo.

Four - A little bit of shopping. Now I know a lot of you like to travel light as instructed by our friend Rick Steves who I mentioned earlier however I am not one of those people and I'm not ashamed to admit it. There are too many fantastic treats to enjoy and bring home from Rome that often I am forced to purchase yet another hold-all to get it back home.

Some of the things I like to buy include handmade jewelry - unique pieces you won't find anywhere else. Of course, our family loves pistachio paste which is like Nutella but green per the nut and a little more complex in flavor. There's always an order for a big jar of that when I'm in Rome. You can get it at Eataly in Ostiense or the food court at Rinascente department store which incidentally also has an amazing rooftop view. Another luxury food item is truffle salt which is quite delicious sprinkled on an omelette

Five - Pay my respects to the Pantheon. Lastly, I always drop by the Pantheon to make sure it's still standing. I love this ancient building that's stood in place for 2000 years presiding over emperors, popes, invasions and celebrations. The Pantheon's dome has inspired countless buildings around the world from the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence to the Capitol Building in Washington DC. Of course, the Pantheon in Paris is also inspired by the ancient wonder of Rome. And it never fails to inspire me. Even if I take a casual stroll past, I'll stop for a few moments and soak up the beauty of this incredible monument in the very heart of the city because to me it represents Rome more than the Trevi Fountain or the Colosseum. It's my north star in Rome and no matter how big the crowd is in the Piazza della Rotonda outside its impressive portico the Pantheon stands serene among the hubbub waiting for the next installment of the city's story.

## **Katy**

And that, my friends, is how I know I've been in Rome. Walking through history, delicious pasta, views of the city rooftops, a spot of Roman shopping and a pass by the Pantheon.

Now there's not too many details from this short and sweet episode about Rome this week but if you'd like to learn more about the Vatican tour I was lucky to go on and the names of the restaurants and shops I mentioned, head on over to our website show notes at [untolditaly.com/217](https://untolditaly.com/217) for episode 217.

Thanks to all our wonderful listeners for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. I hope you enjoyed today's show. If you did then it would be amazing if you gave us a rating or review in your favorite podcast app. That way we can reach more Italy travel lovers just like you. If you listen on Spotify you can also leave comments on each episode and I really love reading all of those. Unfortunately, they haven't worked out a way for podcasters to reply to questions on that function but we're pushing for it.

Next week on Untold Italy, we'll delve into another aspect of traveling in beautiful Italy. But until then it's "ciao for now".