

Untold Italy Episode 230: jubilee

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 230.

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, Ciao a tutti! Are you all doing well and keeping up with all your plans for Italy? I know many of you are planning trips for later this year and that's so exciting. The weeks will just fly by. Today's episode is going to be a short and sweet one in response to a lot of questions we've been getting about the Vatican and Catholic Church Jubilee year next year and how that will impact your travels in 2025.

But first, I'm back from two weeks there where I spent time in Rome, Umbria and Lake Como, and of course, it was absolutely magnificent. We had Olivia who's in our team, her wedding in Umbria, which was absolutely magical. Summer arrived a little later this year, and just in time for me. But, wow, the flowers and the greenery were out in Umbria and Lake Como, which was It's absolutely gorgeous, too.

Now Rome is Rome but I have to say I was a little shocked at some things I saw there and I need to forewarn those of you visiting in the coming months that it's likely to be a bit of a construction zone. Sadly all the fountains in Piazza Navona were covered for cleaning and it was the same in Piazza della Rotonda outside the Pantheon. There's ongoing work around Piazza Venezia and unfortunately, Michelangelo's Pieta in St Peters is also covered for cleaning and restoration.

I have to admit it is a bit frustrating and I really feel for those of you visiting Rome for the first time as these are some of the truly magical public monuments that make the city special.

So what's going on? Well, the city is preparing for the Vatican Jubilee of 2025 which starts on December 26th this year and continues on until January 6th in 2026. I'm going to dive deep into that later but for those of you who are traveling in 2024 unfortunately you need to expect a little chaos as the city prepares for this special event.

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And as it is Italy it's hard to know when the works will be finishing and new ones starting but we do know that the preparations have a deadline of around the end of December this year and the Pieta works are scheduled to complete in November.

But you know Rome is magnificent so in this situation I really encourage you to look for the beauty that is around every corner. I went for a huge 20-kilometer walk around the city on my last day and discovered so many amazing places and charming corners I'd never noticed before. It really is an incredible wonderland.

Ok so let's dive into the Jubilee 2025 and chat about what it means for your travels next year.

Katy

What is the Jubilee? A Jubilee year in Rome is a special event in the Catholic Church that occurs every 25 years. This is a time of celebration for Catholics and the city buzzes with religious and cultural events. Pilgrims visit Rome looking for personal spiritual renewal and a deeper connection with their faith. Special prayers, masses, and processions are organized for pilgrims who visit Rome to receive the Church's blessings.

Of most importance, pilgrims take part in the passing through the Holy Doors of the four Papal Basilicas in Rome and they are - St Peter's, St John the Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore and St Paul's Outside the Walls. These doors are only opened during the Jubilee years and symbolize the transition from sin to grace, and a special pathway to salvation or the granting of indulgences during the Jubilee year.

Now I am not Catholic or an expert in the religious aspects of this celebration. If you are interested in the services, prayers and events of the Jubilee I suggest you visit the Jubilee website and check in with your local archdiocese as they will have the most up-to-date information. Of course, we'll put relevant links in our episode show notes because in these matters it is always best to go to the experts.

But you don't need to be Catholic to understand that this is a very important celebration and one that will draw many visitors from all over the world. Some many millions more than usual in an already busy city.

Katy

Who are the pilgrims - Now these millions of visitors are not your average visitors or tourists, most are coming to Rome specifically to take part in the religious events. For many of them, this will likely be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel abroad. They will make huge sacrifices to be in Rome during this year and perhaps may use their life savings to do so. It is expected that these pilgrims will explore the city of Rome beyond the Vatican City - it would kind of be strange if they didn't - but their focus will likely be on religious events and sites in and around the Vatican and other churches rather than tourist activities. After all there are around 900 churches in Rome.

Katy

When will be the most busy times? The Vatican recently announced the calendar of events and from that we can see that the likely busiest times will be from the end of April to the end of June and the month of October. Of course, these are already some of the most popular times to visit Italy

The opening and closing of the holy doors around Christmas time this year and in 2025/26.

So what I'd like to discuss with you today is what you can expect if you do decide to visit and how you can manage your plans accordingly. Because let's face it, you also may not have another chance to visit the Eternal City and, thanks to all those public works I mentioned before, Rome is going to be looking at its very best.

Katy

What to expect in the Jubilee Year. Now I haven't visited Italy during a Jubilee Year but I do know someone who has. Shout out to my sister-in-law Jo who managed to be in Italy 3 times during the last main Jubilee in 2000. And she did confirm she felt it was very busy on those occasions but you know the crowds have only increased since then and she was back in Rome last year in September - the absolute peak month for travel - and didn't think it was too bad.

Busy is in the eye of the beholder so I think if we prepare you for crowds like Disneyland on a weekend and you're pleasantly surprised then that can only be a good thing.

Katy

Should you travel to Rome and Italy in the Jubilee Year? I know many people are put off by what is expected to be a very busy year ahead and to that I say a few things.

Rome is always busy and chaotic - it's part of the vibe of the place and no doubt it's been that way for the past 2000+ years. If you lean in to that and accept it then you'll have a truly exhilarating experience and one you'll never forget.

If you go there expecting to have the Trevi Fountain to yourself you'll probably be disappointed.

You don't need to spend too much time in Rome, if any - if you don't want to. Rome isn't going anywhere and there are so many places to explore in Italy you can go instead. Want to see the Colosseum? Head to Verona where they have an extremely well-preserved amphitheater - you could make a wonderful northern Italian itinerary including Venice, Verona, Milan and the Lakes for 2025.

Cutting down and adjusting itineraries and focusing them is what we do best in our trip planning consultations and we're yet to hear people disappointed that they miss out on a particular place - they just get excited to plan future adventures in Italy. So if you're really

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concerned, skip Rome on this occasion and save it for when you explore southern Italy. They both deserve at least 2 weeks each anyway in my opinion.

Do's:

Get organised and book flights accommodation and activities early and where possible internal transport like car rental and trains as clearly demand is likely to outstrip supply.

Budget accommodation in particular is going to be in hot demand. Lots of places haven't added their availability for 2025 yet so keep an eye on things.

Check your plans against the Jubilee website and adjust accordingly. For example, there are likely to be huge crowds at the Vatican and St Peter's on certain days - that sounds like a good time to visit the Colosseum!

Don'ts:

Leave things to the last minute. Commit now and plan for the city to be busy.

I think if it was my first trip to Rome and Italy and I desperately wanted to visit Rome but wasn't so interested in the religious events I'd plan to spend three days in there. We have a useful itinerary on our website you can adapt for that - and then you could head out of the city and away from the crowds.

For those on your second, third or more visits and you've been to Rome at least once, take this as a sign from the Pope to head out into the Italian regions and explore beyond the major tourist areas - the untold areas if you will. Having just been in Umbria, they say tourist numbers have doubled but you just can't tell. It's absolutely delightful. Perhaps Assisi will be busy next year but it's a large region with so many wonderful corners to explore - you won't be disappointed if you spend time in Umbria.

In the same vein, Puglia, Sicily, the Dolomites, Liguria, Piedmont, Calabria, Marche, Abruzzo and around Emilia Romagna are all also a world away from Rome and you need a flight or long train journey to get there and therefore they probably don't appeal too much to the pilgrims. While others are enjoying the Jubilee events you can explore these amazing places and get a taste of the regional Italy we love.

So would I visit Rome and Italy in 2025 - absolutely yes I would and of course I am. I'll probably go twice actually. You can't keep me away. I know it might sound a little daunting but really if you are organized and plan carefully your travels in Italy in 2025 will be some of the most memorable ever.

And I do understand it could be a bit daunting for some and if that's the case why not book in for a trip consultation with our expert Italy trip planners? They can assist you to build a plan

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that makes the most of the time you have available and help you have all the glorious Italian experiences you've dreamed of.

You can find the link to those services and the Jubilee website over to our website show notes at untolditaly.com/230 for episode 230. We also have a huge library of podcast episodes and blog posts that are regularly updated that you can access. Just use the search icon on the website.

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're talking about Roman pizza with one of your favorite podcast regulars. But until then it's "ciao for now".