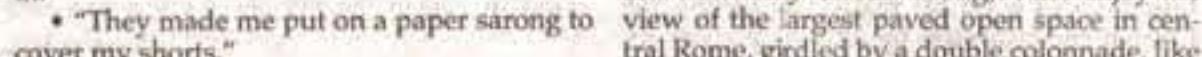
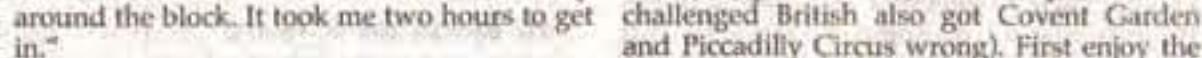
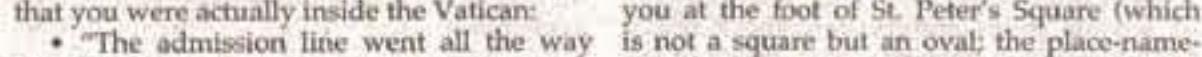
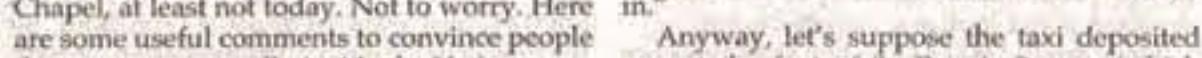
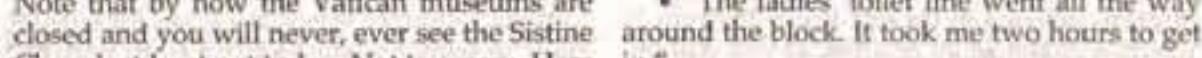
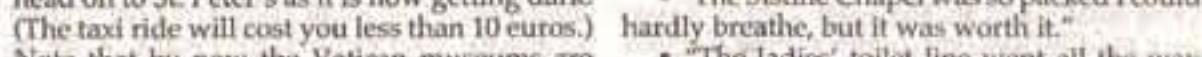
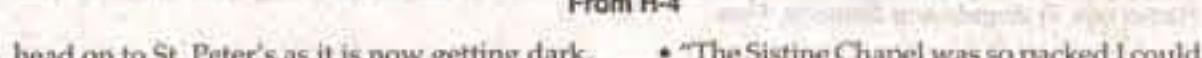
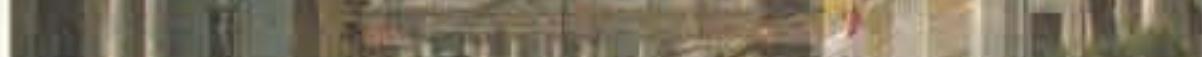
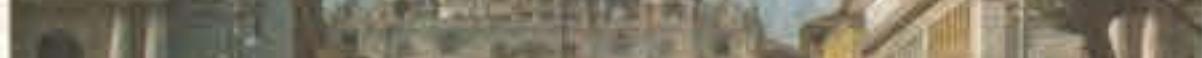
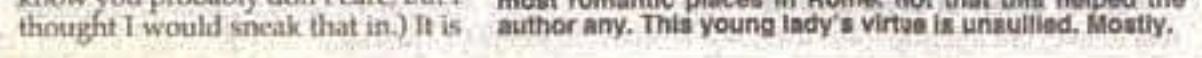
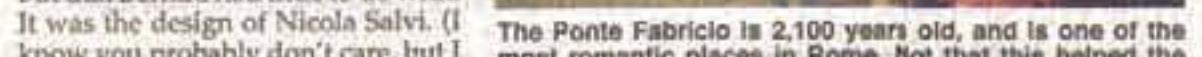
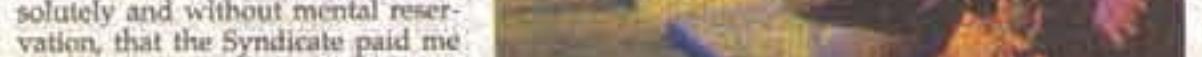
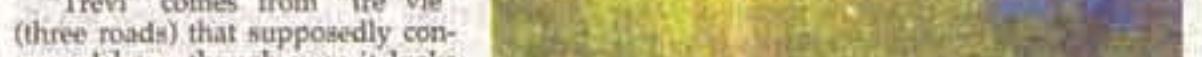
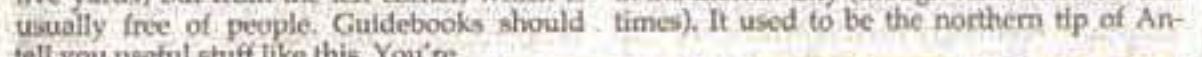
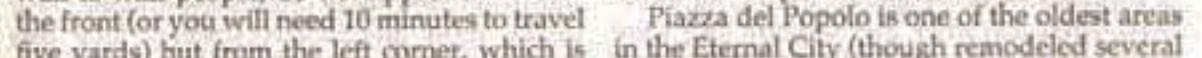
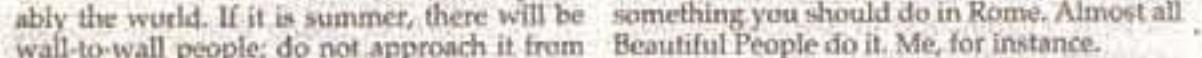
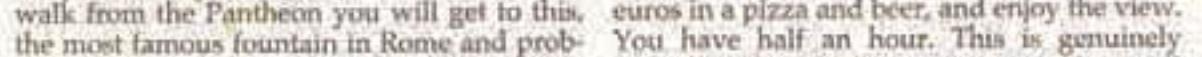
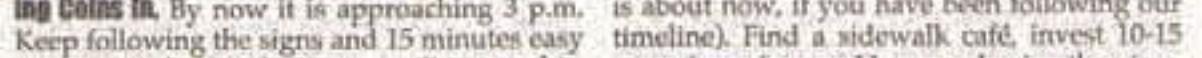
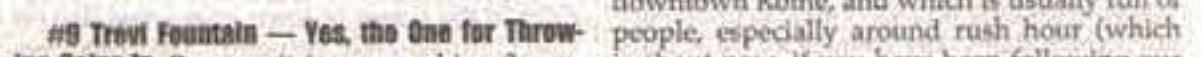
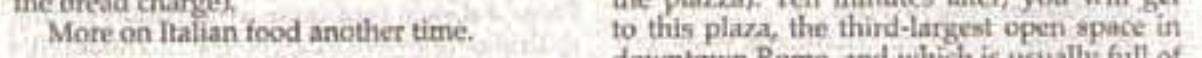
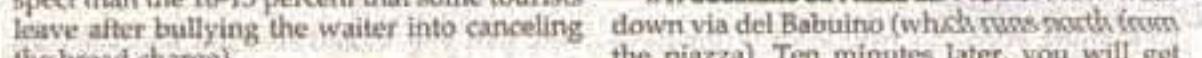
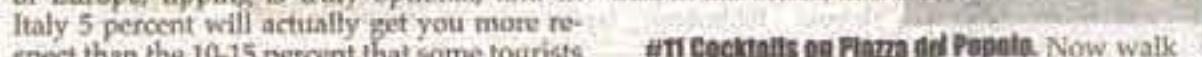
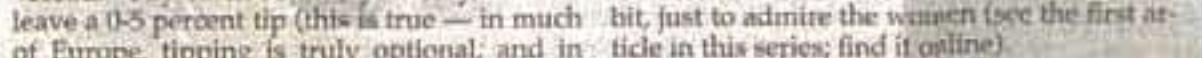
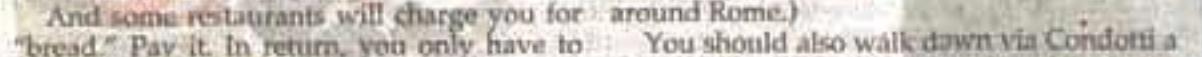
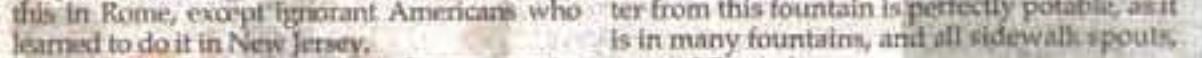
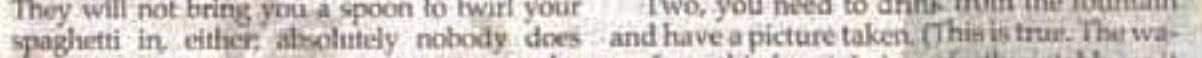
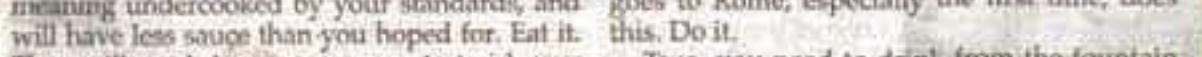
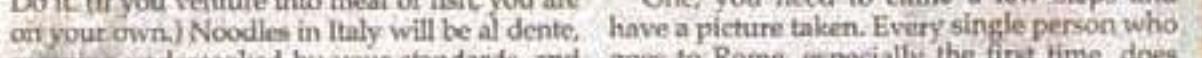
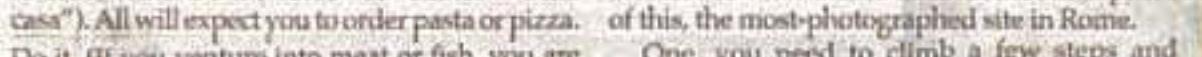
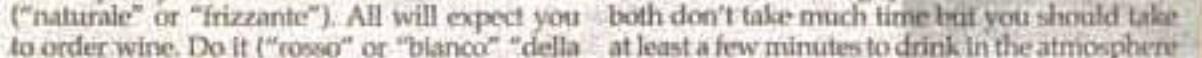
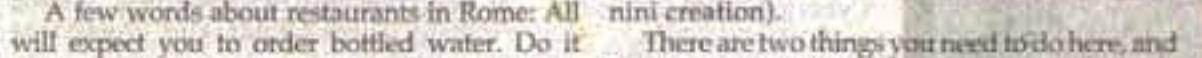
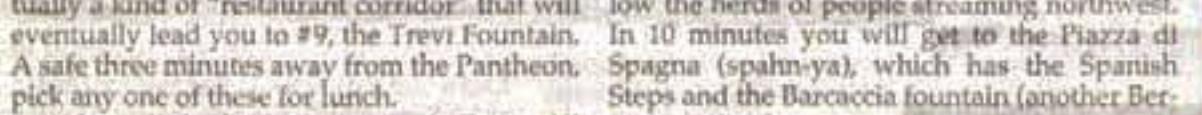


SIX WEEKS IN ROME

By MANNY GONZALEZ
Plantation Bay Resort & Spa

Part 3 of 4: How to Do Rome in a Day (Continued)

LAST WEEK WE STARTED AT THE COLOSSEUM and worked our way through the via dei Fori Imperiali, the Victor Emmanuel II complex, the Campidoglio, Piazza Navona, morning coffee, and the Pantheon. And now, in our hypothetical one-day whirlwind tour of Rome, it's time for . . .



Six Weeks in Rome. Part Three of Four: How to Do Rome in a Day (continued)

By Manny Gonzalez, Plantation Bay Resort & Spa

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#8 Lunch. Do not have lunch in front of the Pantheon, unless you are rich. More than in most other areas, the restaurants directly facing the Pantheon will try to skin you. Instead, head northeast and follow the continuous line of restaurants with outdoor tables. This is actually a kind of “restaurant corridor” that will eventually lead you to #9, the Trevi Fountain. A safe 3 minutes away from the Pantheon, pick any one of these for lunch.

A few words about restaurants in Rome: All will expect you to order bottled water. Do it (“naturale” or “frizzante”). All will expect you to order wine. Do it (“rosso” or “bianco” “della casa”). All will expect you to order pasta or pizza. Do it. (If you venture into meat or fish, you are on your own.) Noodles in Italy will be *al dente*, meaning undercooked by your standards, and will have less sauce than you hoped for. Eat it. They will not bring you a spoon to twirl your spaghetti in, either; absolutely nobody does this in Rome, except ignorant Americans who learned to do it in New Jersey.

And some restaurants will charge you for “bread”. Pay it. In return, you only have to leave a 0-5% tip (this is true – in much of Europe, tipping is truly optional, and in Italy 5% will actually get you more respect than the 10-15% that some tourists leave after bullying the waiter into canceling the bread charge).

More on Italian food another time.

#9 Trevi Fountain – Yes, the One for Throwing Coins In. By now it is approaching 3 pm. Keep following the signs and 15 minutes easy walk from the Pantheon you will get to this, the most famous fountain in Rome and probably the world. If it is summer, there will be wall-to-wall people; do not approach it from the front (or you will need 10 minutes to travel 5 yards) but from the left corner, which is usually free of people. Guidebooks should tell you useful stuff like this. You’re welcome.

“Trevi” comes from “tre vie” (3 roads) that supposedly converged here, though now it looks like 5 or 6 roads. Anyway, this is the fountain you are supposed to throw a coin in to ensure that someday you return. This myth was invented by a Syndicate that collects the coins every night, but as a tourist you should just do it, because you never know.

But do it right. Find a 10-cent coin and, facing away, throw it with your right hand over your left shoulder. If you miss, get a heftier coin, say 1 euro. If you throw a Philippine coin you will have bad luck for 28 years. If you don’t believe me, do it and see what happens. (I deny, absolutely and without mental reservation, that the Syndicate paid me to say this.)

The Trevi fountain is one of the few things in Rome that is Baroque but that Bernini had little to do with. It was the design of Nicola Salvi. (I know you probably don’t care, but I thought I would sneak that in.) It is actually pretty splendid, and represents “the capricious sea” plus some other stuff which I didn’t understand, considering that this is 30 miles from the coast; sorry.

#10 The Spanish Steps. From Trevi, just follow the herds of people streaming northwest. In 10 minutes you will get to the Piazza di Spagna (spahn-ya), which has the Spanish Steps and the Barcaccia fountain (another Bernini creation).

There are two things you need to do here, and both don’t take much time but you should take at least a few minutes to drink in the atmosphere of this, the most-photographed site in Rome.

One, you need to climb a few steps and have a picture taken. Every single person who goes to Rome, especially the first time, does this. Do it.

Two, you need to drink from the fountain and have a picture taken. (This is true. The water from this fountain is perfectly potable, as it is in many fountains, and all sidewalk spouts, around Rome.)

You should also walk down via Condotti a bit, just to admire the women (see the first article in this series; find it online).

#11 Cocktails on Piazza del Popolo. Now walk down via del Babuino (which runs north from the piazza). 10 minutes later, you will get to this plaza, the third-largest open space in downtown Rome, and which is usually full of people, especially around rush hour (which is about now, if you have been following our timeline). Find a sidewalk café, invest 10-15 euros in a pizza and beer, and enjoy the view. You have half

an hour. This is genuinely something you should do in Rome. Almost all Beautiful People do it. Me, for instance.

Piazza del Popolo is one of the oldest areas in the Eternal City (though remodeled several times). It used to be the northern tip of Ancient Rome, and in Medieval days it served as a kind of welcome center for the Catholic pilgrims arriving in the city from the north – which was almost all of them, as you will understand if you look at a map of Europe.

Since around 900 AD, owing to the absence of anyone more enterprising, the Catholic Church came to govern a large chunk of Italy, including all of Rome. Recognizing that tourism was good for real estate values, the Church encouraged it by offering plenary indulgences (“Get out of Purgatory Free” cards) to anyone who came to St. Peter’s. A lot of Catholics thought this was a good idea, especially in winter when no crops were growing anyway, and wars were usually on hold. So the Piazza del Popolo must have been a pretty lively place.

#12 Vatican and St. Peter’s. There is a taxi stand in Piazza del Popolo. Grab a cab and head on to St. Peter’s as it is now getting dark. (The taxi ride will cost you less than 10 euro.) Note that by now the Vatican museums are closed and you will never, ever see the Sistine Chapel, at least not today. Not to worry. Here are some useful comments to convince people that you were actually inside the Vatican:

- “The admission line went all the way around the block. It took me two hours to get in.”
- “They made me put on a paper sarong to cover my shorts.”
- “The Sistine Chapel was so packed I could hardly breathe, but it was worth it.”
- “The Ladies’ toilet line went all the way around the block. It took me two hours to get in.”

Anyway, let’s suppose the taxi deposited you at the foot of St. Peter’s Square (which is not a square but an oval; the place-name-challenged British also got Covent Garden and Piccadilly Circus wrong). First enjoy the view of the largest paved open space in central Rome, girdled by a double colonnade, like welcoming arms. As with a lot of things in Rome, Bernini designed this.

Now look backward. That long, wide avenue you just took is called via della Conciliazione, which dates only from 1936. Here, Mussolini did not do so good. For its first 400 years of existence, there was no clear path leading to St. Peter’s. Coming from anywhere else in Rome, there were just lots of narrow lanes like cobwebs. Pilgrims had to navigate the maze of sunless streets, frequently asking for directions.

Then, just when they thought they were hopelessly lost, they would turn a corner and, magically, seemingly from nowhere, the vast expanse and awesome majesty of St. Peter's Square would reveal itself. It must have felt like you had just gotten to paradise. Now, you can see the front of St. Peter's from 1 kilometer away, and there is no more thrill of discovery.

Anyway, enter St. Peter's. At this time of day, there will be no waiting line. There is lots to see inside, including a brass canopy by Bernini over the main altar, Michaelangelo's Pieta, and much else.

#13 Dinner in Trastevere. Exiting St. Peter's, again get a cab. Tell the driver "Santa Maria in Trastevere". That's pronounced truss-TEH-veh-reh, and it means "across the Tiber", which used to be a pretty wild area, along with the Vatican. If you practice pronouncing the word correctly, the driver will be amazed at your Italian, and whisk you in about 5 breathtaking minutes to your destination, a picturesque plaza with a church and lots of restaurants facing it. The church is about 1600 years old, and though not very much ever happened in this area, it is a good place to walk around what feels like a movie set, see yet more tourists, and have dinner.

#14 The Bridge of Sweet Regrets. I just said that to get your attention. But there is a bridge here that you should see see, and it's called the Ponte Fabricio (not quite as attention-getting as Bridge of Sweet Regrets, is it?). Though it's right in the center of town, many taxi drivers won't immediately recognize the name, because it's a pedestrian bridge. Jog your driver's memory by saying "Isola Tiberina" (ih-ZO-luh tih-beh-REE-nuh), which is the only island in the Tiber river.

To be perfectly honest with those who are mostly interested in impressing friends back home, most guidebooks scarcely give this bridge a mention, and it won't earn you any bragging rights. But that's where my humble expertise comes in.

First, the Ponte Fabricio could be the oldest bridge in the world (these superlatives are always a matter of scale; there might be a slab of granite crossing a 2-meter stream somewhere, that is older). It was built in 62 BC during Julius Caesar's time by one Lucius Fabricius ("superintendent of roads", according to the plaques he had mounted in 4 different places on the bridge, just to be sure posterity would remember him) and has been in continuous use ever since, i.e., for 2100 years. So Lucius deserves his 4 plaques, and all of those are still there, too.

Second, from Ponte Fabricio you have a splendid view of the Tiber rushing below you. This is no sissy bridge like the Pont Neuf in Paris, spanning the docile Seine. It's a tall, massive bridge soaring over scary-looking rapids on the roaring Tiber.

And third, it is the bridge where Richard Downey, Jr., danced with Marisa Tomei in *Only You*, with a saxophonist playing "Some Enchanted Evening". It's a very romantic movie scene.

And the saxophonist is often still there.

Next Week: Amazing Facts About Rome That Guidebooks Won't Tell You



These people were no longer smiling once they saw the bill. But do go inside the Pantheon; Tom Hanks did, in *Angels and Demons*. Free.



The Trevi Fountain Syndicate will gladly accept any Euro coins you want to throw in.



For hundreds of years, most pilgrims to Rome first arrived here, at the Piazza del Popolo. It is still an excellent place to people-watch.



You can now see St. Peter's from a kilometer away. Approaching it was more fun before. Read article to learn why.



The Ponte Fabricio is 2100 years old, and is one of the most romantic places in Rome. Not that this helped the author any. This young lady's virtue is unsullied. Mostly.