

Six weeks in Rome

By MANNY GONZALEZ
 Plantation Bay Resort & Spa
 (Part 4 of 4: Amazing Facts About Rome that Guidebooks Won't Tell You)
AND THE SECOND COUNTRY IS TURKEY. (IF YOU want to know the meaning of this cryptic statement, you have to go all the way back to the first article in this series. Google it. NOW. Especially if you are female.)



On a Segway tour, you can get to a lot more places in Rome (such as this hilltop cloister overlooking the city), and sometimes even rub wheels with passably attractive women like Hannah and Gell. Though, of course, the author was solely motivated by the chance to absorb more culture.

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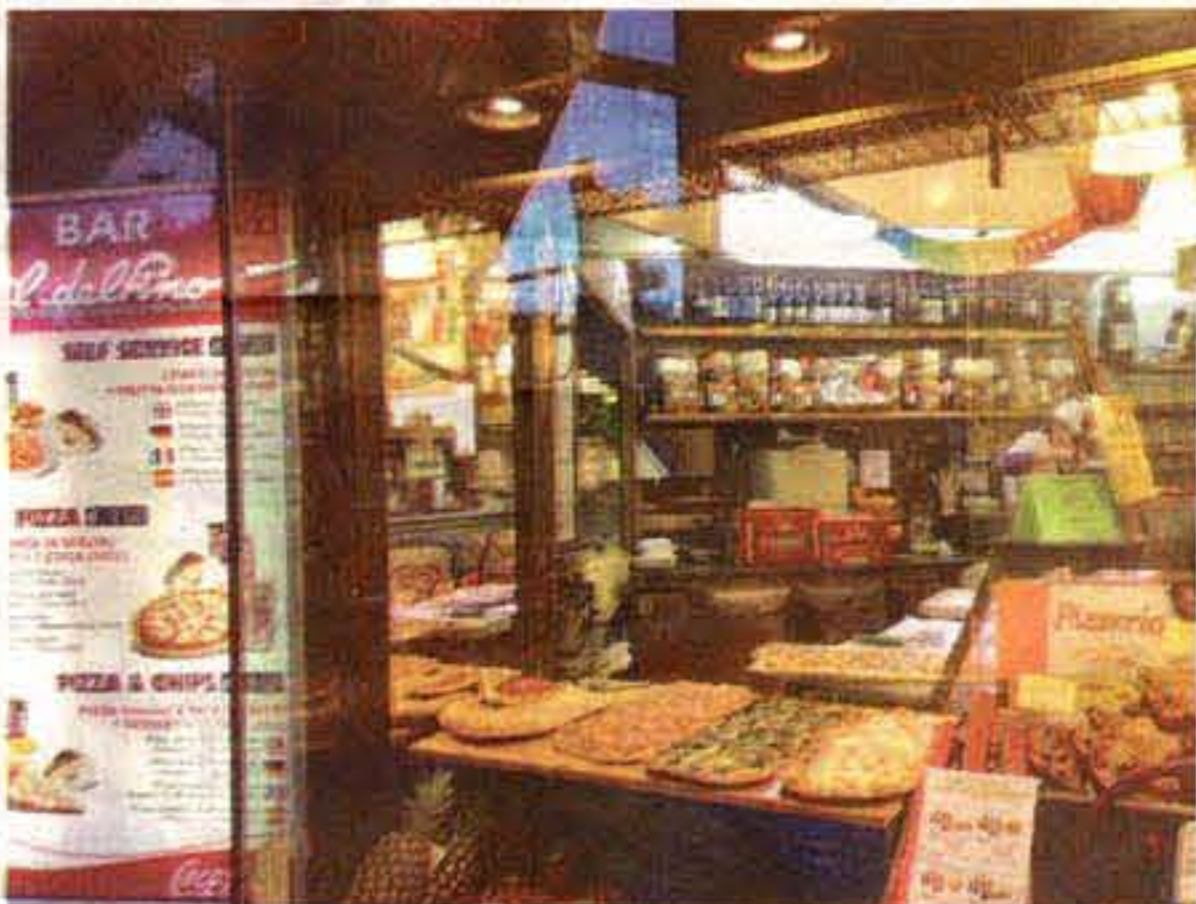
- **Termini Train Station.** Free. Rome's main terminal has toilets, some seating, and a roof. Close to the heart of town; has its own Metro stop.

- **Also Free: St. Peter's Square Sottopassaggio.** (Don't pronounce it, sleep in it!) Left of the Piazza (and a few hundred meters outside the Colonnade) you will find this underground passage, finished in brick, with a ramp for rolling luggage. It leads pretty much nowhere, so foot-traffic is light. Dry, lit. For bathroom facilities, hop back to St. Peter's (see below).

- **Rental apartment.** Prices from Moderate to Heart-Stopping. Staying a few days? Try renting an apartment. For about 400-500 euros a night, you can get an apartment with a rooftop terrace, views of Rome, and occasional hot running water (recommended). Or, for about 80 euros, you can get a one-bedroom with kitchen.

- **Hotel, Heart-Stopping.** The Hotel de Russie is commonly cited as the best hotel in Rome because of the Hollywood stars who reportedly stay there, but I thought the breakfast buffet was drab, and the room even drabber. The Hassler used to be commonly cited as the best hotel in Rome because of its location at the top of the Spanish Steps, but the rooms are seriously space-challenged, even for Europe. As for me, the hotel I personally like best in Rome is in the Via Veneto-Villa Borghese area; it's just a bit farther walk from the tourist attractions, but has bright, sophisticated, spacious rooms, a very nice breakfast buffet, and a rooftop with stunning views. And it's a few euros cheaper than the Russie and the Hassler. *Ma naturalmente*, you don't expect to get such valuable information for free.

Scoring a Toilet in Rome.



Real pizzerias in Rome will have their products already cooked and on display.

There are only a few public toilets in Rome (which is nonetheless a few more than there are in New York City, where there are only two public toilets for all of Central Park and virtually none for the rest of Manhattan). One of them is on the left side of St. Peter's Square, though there is often a bit of a line. Another one is underground in the Piazza di Spagna; look for the stairway beside the newsstand. Other public toilets are rumored to exist, but this has not been independently verified (meaning: I followed the street signs several blocks, but eventually the trail ran cold).

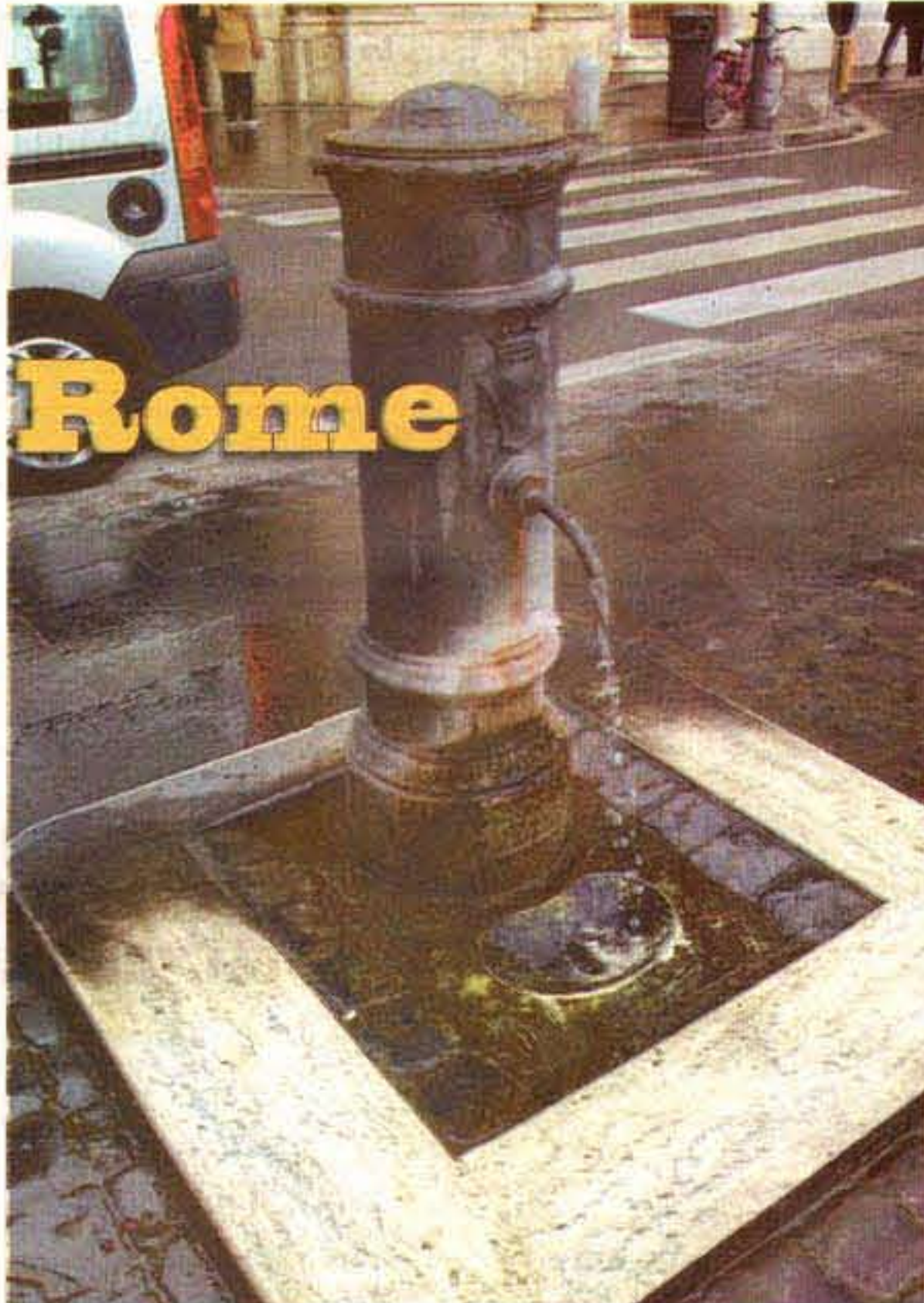
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restaurant-café bathrooms in Rome are located. This is useful advice. It worked for me. (*Ma, certo; io capisco un po' d'italiano...*) You're welcome.

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Though they're found pretty much all over town, the most useful pizzeria I identified was the Pizza Florida in Largo Argentina, which is a kind of plaza where the center is occupied by sunken Roman ruins. The Largo isn't a major tourist destination but is fairly central, an easy walk from the Pantheon, Piazza Navona, Campo dei Fiori, and the Victor Emmanuel complex. Pizza Florida doesn't look like much from the outside, but has a pizza crust that's crunchy yet moist, and the toppings are imaginative and



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How to Eat Even Cheaper in Rome. There are "super-markets" everywhere, and all of them will sell you a Coke and 100 grams of good prosciutto (ham) for a total of about 2.50 euros. 100 grams is called "un etto", and prosciutto is called "prosciutto" (pross-CHOO-toh), one of the better ones being San Daniele. Deli-section attendants in Rome mostly don't speak English; better practice: con EH-toh dih pross-CHOO-toh suhn duhn-YELL-eh, pehr fuh-VOH-reh. If you skip the Coke, you save another 50 cents. For water, find a public faucet — there are hundreds, and most look like this (see picture); the water is supplied by some of the original Roman aqueducts, and is quite drinkable, though in the interest of full disclosure I need to tell you that some Ancient Romans went sterile from lead poisoning.

Good Things to Spend Money On in Rome. Since you will have saved so much money with my tips on restaurants and super-markets, and free accommodations in the train



'The Ecstasy of St. Theresa.' You have only to study the rapturous expression on her face to understand what kind of ecstasy the sculptor was really trying to depict. The angel doesn't exactly look angelic, either.

station, sooner or later it will occur to you to spend money. Here are good ways to blow your wad:

- 50 cents for a candle in most churches. Say a prayer for a friend, an enemy, or a relative. (I quickly went through 50 euros this way, there being many churches in Rome — over 800, and six weeks is a long visit. I ran out of friends after three churches, but have lots of, ummm — aunts.) The churches I liked best were Santa Maria in Trastevere (colorful) and San Andrea della Valle (celestially luminous at mid-afternoon, go at exactly 3 p.m. when it opens). If you decide to visit either, write down the name and street address, as most taxi drivers recognize only four or five church names in Rome and San Andrea isn't one of them. And half the churches in Rome are named Santa Maria Something, so practice saying Trastevere just right, or write it down.

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the same magnets for just one euro. Because I like you, here's a tip: keep your eyes open as you walk from Trevi Fountain to the Spanish Steps.

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Turn to F-3

Six weeks

From F-4

you will miss — The Pines.

Though much of central Rome is pretty bare, there are many pockets of greenery, heavily planted with Rome's favorite tree, the Italian Stone Pine, also known as the Umbrella Pine. They grow to 80 feet and spread wide at the top, casting a dense and welcome shade. Sooner or later you will see some; and I earnestly recommend to you to stop a moment and drink in the beauty of these trees.

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