This is what the interior of the Colosseum looks like. So, if the lines are too long, just remember this picture.

SIX WEEKS IN ROME

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(Part 2 of 4: How to Do Rome in a Day)

YOU CAN'T, OF COURSE, DO ROME IN A DAY. But most visitors to Rome being somewhat time-challenged, and also because I like you, here are some pieces of really valuable advice on what to spend time on in this city.

Manny's Lazy-Thinker's Guide to Roman Architecture (98 Percent Reliable!). The first thing to keep in mind is that central Rome (as you visit it today) is really four cities, built one on top of the other (or in between). Pay attention, and you will be able to seriously impress your friends with your architectural and historical expertise.

First, of course, is Ancient Rome (500 BC to, say, 400 AD). There is not much of Ancient Rome left, but there is some. Does it have marble columns, some of them sideways on the ground? Is the roof missing? Then what you are looking at is probably Ancient Rome.

Then there is Medieval Rome (1000 AD to about 1500 AD). Fifty percent of what Italians call Rome's Centro Storico (chen-tro STO-rih-ko, the part of interest to tourists) is Medieval. Is it occupied but looks like it will fall down any minute? Then it is probably medieval.

Third is Baroque Rome (1600 AD to about 1700 AD), which is most of what we associate with the Catholic Church, and most of the open spaces. Is it a plaza or a fountain? Is it St. Peter's Basilica? Then it probably dates from the Baroque period.

Finally, we have Mussolini's Rome (1925 to 1940). Is it white? Then Benito Mussolini did it (also some important roads).

#1: The Colosseum. With only a hypothetical day to spend in Rome, you cannot afford to stop and smell the flowers. You have to get up at the crack of dawn, say 8 a.m., and hightail it to the Colosseum, the most famous relic of Ancient Rome. It will not yet be open at that time, but the early-morning sun will hit it from the side, making for dramatic photo-ops.

The Victor Emmanuel complex, whose roofdeck offers terrific views all around Rome. Almost everything Mussolini built is white, like this.

Anyway, the exterior of the Colosseum is more interesting. For those with deviant, perverted minds, the stain on the author's pants is egg yolk.

People think it is called the Colosseum because of its size, but the name really refers to a giant statue of Nero which stood beside it (and which long ago was melted down as scrap). Its correct name is the Flavian Amphitheater. I could tell you lots more about this structure, but you are unlikely to remember any of it, so let's not waste each other's time. Instead, just take a slow walk around it, at dawn as stipulated herein, and exult in the experience of being beside a structure that is 2,000 years old. (And if you insist, go inside when it opens; but you'll get 90 percent of the thrill from the outside.)

#2: The Via dei Fori Imperiali. Adjacent to the Colosseum is the Roman Forum, the downtown of Ancient Rome. Do not enter it. Doing the Roman Forum properly could consume all day (not to mention months of advance study so you can understand what you're seeing; and by the way, Julius Caesar did not get killed here). As a casual tourist, you will do almost as well by just walking up the via dei Fori Imperiali (don't pronounce it, just walk on it!), which is one of the few broad avenues in central Rome.

In case you have no time to actually visit the Campidoglio museums, you can pretend you did by gushing about this, the real Marcus Aurelius equestrian statue. The figure on the left is a gilded Hercules. Maybe.

Walk slowly. On the left you will see some parts of the Roman Forum, and on the right you will see Trajan's Market, which for the average tourist looks like a reasonable representation of what an Ancient Roman ruin looks like. You can take a picture, or instead look at the one I am thoughtfully providing. By the way, we owe this avenue to Mussolini, who bulldozed a bunch of 2,000-year-old Roman ruins to clear a path for it. (But don't blame him — they were indeed already ruins. After the Roman Empire fell, everybody from the barbarians to the Catholic Church stole or destroyed marble, brick, bronze, structural columns, mosaics, statues, etc., etc., from Ancient Roman structures, leaving behind ruins or empty holes. A number of the older churches in Rome, for example, have mismatched columns — each one was swiped from a different temple. Imagine what a used-column showroom looked like!)

#3: The Victor Emmanuel Complex. At the end of #2, you will get to the Piazza Venezia and this building (see picture), which Mussolini also was responsible for. Romans claim to be aghast at the structure, which is variously referred to as The Typewriter or The Wedding Cake, but it is really not so bad-looking. Compared to the Lincoln Memorial or the Colorado State Capitol, it is downright elegant.

A collection of disparate museums, the Victor Emmanuel is as close as Rome gets to having a town center. But do not visit the Victor Emmanuel museums (if on our hypothetical one-day whirlwind tour) or you will get stuck for half a day. Instead, walk around, passing the front at ground level and continuing to your left, until you see a very long open-air stone stairway leading up to a church. Even if you have no interest in the church, go up anyway. At the top you will reach a very big roofdeck

Turn to G-3

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From G-6

which goes around the top level of the Victor Emmanuel (but which you cannot get to *through* the Victor Emmanuel without spending four hours in the museums).

From this deck you will see a glorious 360-degree view of Rome, and there are helpful signs that identify what you are looking at. It is just about the most magnificent view you can get in Rome, where by law no building may be taller than St. Peter's.

#4 The Campidoglio (kam-pih-DOH-lyo) Museums. Now go back down the same church steps. Turn left, and go up the next set of steps you see, just 10 meters away (sorry, there is no way to just cross over). This will bring you to the top of the Capitoline Hill (one of the original Seven Hills of Rome), where there is a big equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius, and two museums. Other than the Vatican, these are the most "must-visit" museums in Rome.

But do not visit the museums. (Or you will wind up spending the rest of the day there.) If you want to sound like you entered the museums, just say that the bronze statue of Romulus and Remus suckling from a she-wolf was "just like the pictures," and the real original Marcus Aurelius equestrian statue (which is indoors now, see picture) is even more impressive than its outdoor copy. Guidebooks should teach you useful shortcuts like this. You're welcome.

The Roman Forum, and if you look carefully you can see the via dei Fori Imperiali (flanked by the lower line of umbrella-like pine trees).

#5 Piazza Navona. By now, if you have been following this itinerary, it is almost time for mid-morning coffee. Head for Piazza Navona in a taxi. Do not try to save money by walking or taking a bus, because you will never in a million years find it, even with a map, and even though it is the fourth largest open space in central Rome. (During my six weeks in Rome, I regularly had to lead tourists to it, even though they were just two blocks away.) Roman taxi drivers are generally courteous and honest (but never, ever tell one to slow down, or you will be sorry), so cough up the six-euro fare from Piazza Venezia.

Piazza Navona is a Baroque confection, built over the outline of a very long Ancient Roman chariot-racing track (thus, shaped like a long bullet, with a flat bottom and a rounded top). Elbow your way to the center, where there is a complicated statue with four muscular guys around an obelisk, all in a shallow fountain — the Fontana dei Quatro Fiumi (Four Rivers). This is the second most-famous fountain in Rome (but not the one you throw coins in). It was designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who did a lot of stuff around Rome. I could tell you which river it is supposed to represent, but I forgot. And so would you.

In case you are tempted to buy something from the sidewalk painters in Navona or anywhere in Rome, make sure it is a real painting, and not a mass-produced paper print which a "painter" is pretending to apply paint to.

#6 Mid-morning Coffee. Pick a café in the piazza. Any café. Have a four-euro coffee. Do it. By the way, this is the latest time in the day that you may order a cappuccino, if you want any respect from an Italian. Take my word for it.

The Pantheon was erected as a temple to all the gods. It used to have bronze fittings, but some pope stole them to build the altar canopy at St. Peter's.

#7 The Pantheon. On the east side of the piazza there is a little street. Head out that way and keep going, crossing a busy thoroughfare, doing a little dog-leg to the left, and continuing eastward along a little alley. Keep going, no matter how unpromising it looks, and after 10 minutes' walk you will get to the Pantheon, a temple to "all the gods" (the Ancient Romans liked to play it safe). This is about as old as the Colosseum but it is still more or less intact.

This one, you can enter. *Angels and Demons* shot some big scenes here. See picture. Despite the inscription outside saying "Marcus Agrippa built this," he didn't. Agrippa built an earlier, more modest Pantheon which burned down in 80 AD. Some years later, Emperor Hadrian built a bigger and more impressive building, the Pantheon which still stands today. The engineering which went into it influenced just about every dome (e.g., most churches and mosques) built since then, and it was the largest domed structure on earth for a thousand years.

It merits a little reverence.

(Next: #8)