

Medieval Rome

The **Grand Hotel Plaza in Rome** wishes to guide you to the discovery of an area rich of history, we will walk you through the alleys and the curvy streets, under hidden porches, towers and churches, homicide chronicles, fights and miserable virgins to be saved. If you wish to dive into the past, this is the right occasion: we have planned a tour guided by professional historians capable to make you revive the magical atmospheres of a **unique Medieval Rome**.

The Arab geographer Al-Idrisi, in the XI century wrote: the greatness and the magnificence of Rome are so that it is impossible to describe them appropriately”.

Magnificent during the Medieval Age, Rome was no longer the capital of the Empire, but the symbol of the papal power.

Basilicas, churches, towers and porches were used to protect and highlight the house-fortresses and palaces of the aristocratic families, while craftsmen and merchants' shops characterized the urban landscape.

Rome was a city that grew on itself, often re-using the structures and the materials of its glorious and rich past. Renovating and adapting each time to its different role.

Among the many testimonies of this changing and renaissance époque, there's a district which has preserved the characteristics of the medieval city, with the signs of the porches then embedded in the newer buildings, the churches, the alleys, the streets that merge one into the other, the roman columns used to protect the buildings against trucks bumps, still visible on the walls of the palaces.

In the past, Rome was also a violent city, marked by wild fights between the factions represented by the noble families who fought for the power and political supremacy. The visitors will walk through the alleys and small streets between **Via delle Botteghe Oscure**, Via dei Ginnasi, Via dei Polacchi, Santa Rita dei Funari, Via dei Delfini, Piazza Margana and Piazza Mattei Paganica.

Now the visitor is in the **Heart of Rome** at the feet of the **Campidoglio**, between the Colle and the Tevere river. Here was where the merchant's shops were located, close to the palaces of the most influential and powerful families, like the Mattei family, the Caetani, the Ginnasi, the Margani. This was the block chosen by Ignazio da Loyola for the construction of the Jesuit House, the new religious order which depended from the Pope directly and from the House of Jesus, material testimonies of a new rising power.

You might also admire the **Margani's** House and Tower, whose owners belonged to a rich family of merchants, which faces on a Piazza surrounded by buildings that preserve the unaltered charm of the time.

You will have the opportunity to make an exclusive visit to the "**Sala Margana**", with its gate showing architectural decorative elements coming from the Terme di Caracalla, the private garden of Palazzetto dei Margani, together with the remains of the porch which delimited a courtyard, later embedded in the building. It was exactly in this piazza that, in 1840, Pietro Margani, a rich and influential man, on his way home, was stabbed by Prospero Santacroce. He was one of the many victims of the fights between the families Colonna and Orsini for the political control of Rome.

Moving towards Via delle Botteghe Oscure, you can visit **Palazzo dei Ginnasi**, prestigious family that counted among its members two cardinals and which had established a boarding school for

youngsters destined to the religious life. By the Arch, which unified the family properties, you will see traces of a medieval porch, with re-used ancient columns, later embedded in the façade of a seventeenth-century palace.

You will also see the **Torre del Papito**: built in the XII century, it has survived the demolitions that occurred in the Thirties of last century, which have completely razed to the ground an entire district for the construction of Corso Vittorio Emanuele. This is one of the 400 towers which characterized the landscape of the Medieval Rome, and which represented a symbol of power, richness, social superiority as well as efficient defence tools in case of fights between factions

The tour will then continue with the visit to the **Museo della Crypta Balbi**, which preserves and maintains the extraordinary urban stratigraphy, from the contemporary age to the ancient times. This avantgarde museum bases its work on the archeological research made on the entire district between via delle Botteghe Oscure, via Caetani, Via dei Delfini and via dei Polacchi.

The exhibition tour makes it possible to follow the historical and urbanistic development of this part of the city, from the late republican age to the beginning of the '900, also thanks to the exceptional finds that came to the light during the excavations.

You will visit the ruins of the **Balbo theatre**, inaugurated in the 13 b.C and of the **Crypta**, which is the large portico built behind the scene. You will see the cistern and the latrine dating back to the Adrian age; the area built on the east side after the great fire of the year 80 a. C and occupied till the sixth century a.C.

You will walk along the ancient road, sided by brick buildings and you will admire an antique "snack bar", a kitchen open to the public with its marble counter and the fireplace, you will see a cattle shed with a waterhole and the trough for the animals, a workshop with a furnace for the metalworks and the "fullonica", - the ancient art of washing the fabrics – with the wash tubs and the ruins of the "washing lines" for the fabrics to dry.

During the Medieval age, a new district raised on the ruins of the abandoned Roman palaces. This area was characterized by the presence of the craftsmen shops and fabric dealers. These shops, are even now characterizing the zone, like a perpetual historical continuity. Starting from the XIV century, the street on which these shops raised took the name of "**Via delle Botteghe Oscure**", an important arterial road connecting the Campidoglio, headquarter of the Townhall and the Vatican, the Papal Authority site.

The area of the museum, also preserves the ruins of San Lorenzo and Santa Maria Domine Rose churches. In the XVI century, through the dedication of Ignazio di Loyola, a large part of the district was occupied by the Church of Santa Caterina dei Funari and by the Conservatory of the Miserable Virgins. This place gave hospitality to poor girls, often prostitutes' daughters, whom the Pope gave every year at the end of a solemn procession, a dowry which allowed them to get married and to live "with honesty". Daily life objects like plates, jugs, glasses and others on which the girls often engraved their names can still be seen.

You will have the chance to be "thrown" in the typical ancient Roman atmospheres, in a fascinating historical context.

Once again, our team at **Grand Hotel Plaza in Rome** is ready to satisfy every single desire you might have.

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