

My Rome



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Gioia Reali

[Art Historian and Tour Guide]

Gioia Reali is an art historian and tour guide in the Eternal City. She's also the mind behind "Michelangelo for a Day," a program in which she leads mosaic, painting, and terracotta workshops.

Her favorite place in the world is her art and restoration studio. When she's not working, she loves to seek out secret corners of Rome by bike and introduce her two children to the city's beauty.



Which three words best describe Rome?

Breathtaking, creative, stimulating.

Describe your relationship with the city?

I adore it. I could spend hours talking about its infinite beauty to newcomers to the city. I find new, enchanting corners every day. Every morning I bike down the Janiculum Hill into the center, drawing energy for my work day from the route's sheer beauty. I also love Rome's parks, Villa Pamphilj in particular. I spend all of my free afternoons with my kids there.

Is there a place in Rome that you're particularly attached to?

Without a doubt the Renaissance Villa Farnesina in Trastevere. I remember being around 20 years old, enchanted as I observed an art restorer tending to Raphael's magnificent ceiling fresco. That moment inside the Loggia di Amore e Psiche [pictured lower left] changed the course of my life, making art my profession.

What are some of the most photogenic parts of the city?

The terrace to the right of the Campidoglio with an unexpected view of the Roman Forum, the inside of the Pantheon, and the terrace of the Janiculum Hill. Rome's best-kept secret is the Appia Antica [pictured top left], where archeological beauty and nature collide. You can see a fox traipse past as you're studying ancient column capitals; in the summertime, there are hundreds of fireflies.

What does a visitor to Rome have to do before going home?

Try to wake up in time to experience Rome at dawn. It's the only truly calm and serene time of the day. Get breakfast at a coffee bar in the center and then stroll the streets that lead to Campo de' Fiori.

Where are your favorite places to go shopping?

Via dei Giubbonari, Via del Governo Vecchio, and Via del Pellegrino. You can find lots of little stores and boutiques worth exploring.

Is there a Roman dish that you can't say no to?

I'm a sucker for pasta, especially *cacio e pepe* [pictured lower right]. The recipe is deceptively simple: pecorino cheese, black pepper, and *tonnarelli* pasta, but it never comes out well when I make it myself at home! It's more complicated than it appears.

Where do you like to go out in the evening?

I like to go with my husband and friends to a new restaurant-enoteca in Prati (near St. Peter's Basilica) called Magazzini Scipioni [Via degli Scipioni, 30] [pictured top right]. The menu features revisited Roman cuisine, and the wine is excellent. Or, I'll treat myself to a tea at the café inside Chostro del Bramante [Arco della Pace, 5], the coziest and most hidden tea room in the city.

Lastly, Rome is most beautiful when....

It's illuminated by the sun in the earliest moments of the morning.