

EUROPE · SACRED SITES · ARCHITECTURE · HISTORY · CULTURE



Vatican City

The world's smallest state holds an outsized share of Western art and faith: Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling and Last Judgement, Raphael's frescoed rooms, and St Peter's Basilica, raised over what is venerated as the apostle's tomb and crowned by Michelangelo's dome. It is a half-day or full-day add-on to Rome, best tackled early with tickets booked well ahead.

 Before you go, read the UK government's travel advice for Vatican City (covered under Italy) and entry requirements (visas, passport validity). Last updated by FCDO 21 October 2026.

 CAPITAL Vatican City	 CURRENCY Euro (EUR) £1 ≈ €1.19	 LANGUAGE Italian, Latin	 BEST TIME Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct
 DAILY BUDGET £70–£350 £££ Expensive	 PLUGS Type C, F, L 230V · adapter needed	 FLIGHT FROM LONDON 2h 30m direct to FCO ~£70–£280 return	 TIME ZONE UTC+1 standard time

Vatican City covers just 44 hectares inside Rome, walled except where St Peter's Square opens onto Via della Conciliazione. A visit has two distinct halves. The Vatican Museums, entered from Viale Vaticano on the north side, lead through classical sculpture galleries, the Gallery of Maps and the Raphael Rooms to the Sistine Chapel. St Peter's Basilica, on the east side, is entered separately from St Peter's Square through security, and its dome can be climbed. Most visitors do one in the morning and the other after lunch, staying in Rome's neighbouring Prati or Borgo districts. The Vatican Gardens and the Scavi necropolis need separate advance bookings.

Crowds define the experience. The Museums can receive more than 20,000 visitors a day in peak season, and the Sistine Chapel is often shoulder to shoulder, so timed tickets, early-entry slots or late-afternoon visits make a real difference. Costs are those of Rome, with museum tickets the main extra expense; entry to the basilica itself is free. It suits art lovers and pilgrims, though even the unreligious find St Peter's overwhelming. Many people are surprised by how much walking is involved, by the strict dress code and enforced hush in the chapel, and by the small trappings of statehood: Swiss Guards, Vatican stamps and its own post office.

Top 5 highlights

1

CULTURE

Sistine Chapel

Michelangelo painted the ceiling between 1508 and 1512 and returned in the 1530s to paint the Last Judgement on the altar wall. Photography is banned and silence requested; this is also where conclaves elect new popes.

2

SACRED SITE

St Peter's Basilica

The Renaissance and Baroque masterpiece of Bramante, Michelangelo, Maderno and Bernini, home to Michelangelo's Pietà and Bernini's bronze baldacchino. Entry is free but involves airport-style security queues, so arrive at opening time.

3

CULTURE

Raphael Rooms

Four rooms in the papal apartments frescoed by Raphael and his workshop for Pope Julius II and his successor, including The School of Athens. They sit on the one-way Museums route towards the Sistine Chapel.

4

ARCHITECTURE

St Peter's dome

Climb Michelangelo's dome, by lift and then about 320 steps or 551 steps on foot, through narrowing, slanted passages to the lantern gallery for the finest view over St Peter's Square and Rome.

5

HISTORY

Vatican Necropolis (Scavi)

Small-group tours run by the Excavations Office descend beneath the basilica to a Roman street of tombs and the site venerated as St Peter's grave. Places are very limited, so apply months ahead.

Biggest cities

LARGEST CITY

Vatican City

≈ 800 people

The entire state is one walled precinct of palaces, courtyards and gardens; most residents are clergy and Swiss Guards, and visitors see only the museums, basilica and square.

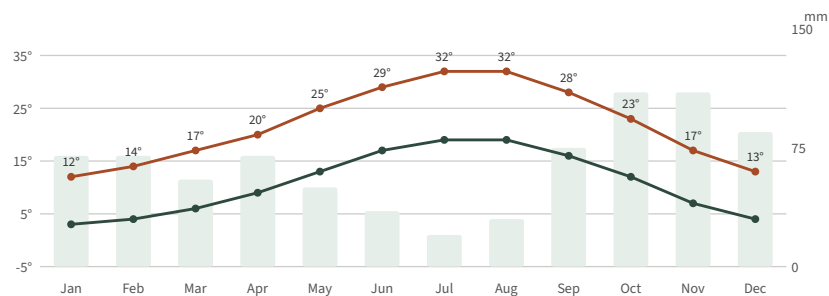
Vatican City is a single city-state of about 44 hectares with no separate towns; visitors stay in neighbouring Rome, usually in the Prati or Borgo districts.

When to go to Vatican City

Best time: **Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct.**

**Average climate in Rome**

— High °C
 — Low °C
 ■ Rain (mm)



Festivals & events

Mar–Apr	Easter Holy Week brings the Pope's Palm Sunday Mass, the Good Friday Way of the Cross at the Colosseum, and Easter Sunday Mass with the Urbi et Orbi blessing in St Peter's Square.
Jun	Feast of Saints Peter and Paul On 29 June, Rome's patronal feast, the Pope celebrates Mass in St Peter's and blesses the pallia of newly appointed metropolitan archbishops; it is also a public holiday in Rome.
Dec	Christmas Christmas Eve Mass in St Peter's Basilica, a giant tree and nativity scene in the square, and the Pope's Urbi et Orbi blessing from the loggia at noon on Christmas Day.

How much does Vatican City cost?

SHOESTRING £70 per person / day ≈ €83.33 hostels, street food, buses	MID-RANGE £160 per person / day ≈ €190 3-star hotels, restaurants, some taxis	COMFORTABLE £350 per person / day ≈ €417 4-star+, guided trips, private transfers
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Estimates per person per day, excluding flights. Prices vary by season and city.

Food to try

Spaghetti alla carbonara

Rome's signature pasta: guanciale, egg yolk, pecorino romano and black pepper, never cream. Try it in the trattorias of Borgo and Prati beside the Vatican.

Pizza al taglio

Rectangular pizza sold by weight and cut with scissors; the streets north of the Museums' entrance, around Cipro metro, have some of Rome's most celebrated.

Supplì

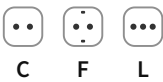
Fried rice croquettes with tomato and a molten mozzarella centre, Rome's favourite snack and ideal fuel before the Museums queue.

Getting around

Vatican City is entirely walkable, and most visitors arrive on foot from Rome. Metro line A stops at Ottaviano and Cipro, both a short walk from the Museums entrance; buses 40 and 64 run from Termini towards St Peter's, and tram 19 serves the Museums side. Rome's taxis are metered, and Roma San Pietro railway station sits just south of the square.

Practical information

PLUGS & VOLTAGE



230V — bring a UK-to-C/F/L adapter

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Ambulance: **118**

Fire: **115**

Police: **112**

You can also download the **112** Where Are U app

Source: FCDO “Getting help”

DIALLING CODE

+39

TIME ZONE

UTC+1 (standard time)

TAP WATER

Generally safe to drink

DRIVING

On the right

TIPPING

Not expected; Roman restaurants may charge a per-person coperto (cover). Rounding up or leaving a few euros for good service is plenty.

ETIQUETTE

Cover shoulders and knees in St Peter's and the Sistine Chapel, where staff turn away anyone who doesn't. Keep your voice down in the chapel, and don't take photographs there.

MAIN AIRPORTS

Leonardo da Vinci–Fiumicino Airport (FCO), Rome — across the border; Rome Ciampino Airport (CIA), Rome — across the border

Visas & entry for Vatican City

Shown for a British passport.

No visa needed

You can travel without a visa to the Schengen area, which includes Italy, for up to 90 days in any 180-day period. This applies if you travel: as a tourist; to visit family or friends; to attend business meetings, cultural or sports events; for short-term studies or training.

The requirements for working in Italy are different.

From the UK government's FCDO entry requirements for British passport holders — read the full page for passport validity, permits and exceptions.

Health & vaccinations



See a travel health nurse, GP or travel clinic **6–8 weeks before you go**. Make sure routine UK vaccinations (such as MMR and diphtheria-tetanus-polio) are up to date.

RECOMMENDED FOR MOST TRAVELLERS

Tetanus

SOMETIMES ADVISED — DEPENDS ON YOUR TRIP, ACTIVITIES AND HEALTH

Bat Lyssavirus

Tick-borne encephalitis

YELLOW FEVER CERTIFICATE

No yellow fever certificate is required to enter.

MALARIA

No malaria risk

Source: TravelHealthPro (National Travel Health Network and Centre), checked 21 October 2026. This is a summary, not medical advice.

Public holidays in Vatican City

The next 12 months. Banks, offices and some sights may close, and transport and hotels get busy around these dates.

Sun 1 Nov 2026

All Saints' Day

Mon 2 Nov 2026	All Souls' Day
Tue 8 Dec 2026	Immaculate Conception
Thu 24 Dec 2026	Christmas Eve
Fri 25 Dec 2026	Christmas Day
Sat 26 Dec 2026	Saint Stephen's Day
Sun 27 Dec 2026	Saint John the Evangelist's Day
Thu 31 Dec 2026	Last Day of the Year
Fri 1 Jan 2027	Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Wed 6 Jan 2027	Epiphany
Thu 11 Feb 2027	Anniversary of the Foundation of Vatican City
Fri 19 Mar 2027	Saint Joseph's Day
Thu 25 Mar 2027	Maundy Thursday
Fri 26 Mar 2027	Good Friday
Sat 27 Mar 2027	Holy Saturday
Sun 28 Mar 2027	Easter Sunday
Mon 29 Mar 2027	Easter Monday
Tue 30 Mar 2027	Easter Tuesday
Sat 1 May 2027	Saint Joseph the Worker's Day
Thu 6 May 2027	Ascension Day
Sat 8 May 2027	Anniversary of the Election of the Holy Father
Sun 16 May 2027	Solemnity of Pentecost
Sun 23 May 2027	Solemnity of Holy Trinity
Thu 27 May 2027	Corpus Domini
Tue 29 Jun 2027	Saints Peter and Paul's Day
Sat 14 Aug 2027	Day Before Assumption of Mary
Sun 15 Aug 2027	Assumption of Mary Day
Mon 16 Aug 2027	Day After Assumption of Mary
Fri 17 Sep 2027	Name Day of the Holy Father

National holidays only. Dates based on lunar calendars can move by a day or two depending on official announcements.

Useful phrases in Italian

ENGLISH	ITALIAN	SAY IT
Hello	Buongiorno	<i>bwon-JOR-noh</i>
Thank you	Grazie	<i>GRAHT-see-eh</i>
Please	Per favore	<i>pehr fah-VOH-reh</i>
Excuse me	Mi scusi	<i>mee SKOO-zee</i>
How much is this?	Quanto costa?	<i>KWAN-toh KOS-tah</i>

Know before you go

Buy Vatican Museums tickets on the official [museivaticani.va](https://www.museivaticani.va) website or through reputable tour firms; touts outside the walls resell tickets and 'skip-the-line' tours at a big markup.

The Museums close on Sundays except the last Sunday of the month, when entry is free and queues are enormous. On Wednesday mornings the papal audience usually fills St Peter's Square.

Free tickets for the Wednesday papal audience are issued by the Prefecture of the Papal Household; request them in advance, then collect them from the Swiss Guards at the Bronze Door.

Visa, health and safety rules change. Before you book or travel, check the FCDO travel advice (gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and TravelHealthPro (travelhealthpro.org.uk). Costs are estimates. © 2026 Pick My Trip.