

## MINI TRIPS overview

Mini Trips last 2 ½ days, starting in the afternoon on day one, and ending in the early evening on the third day. At the heart of each trip is a series of four or five walking seminars led by a variety of docents from the Context network of scholars. Although there is a chaperone responsible for the trip, each seminar is led by a different expert depending on the topic. So, in an art museum the group is paired with an art historian; in an archaeological site with an archaeologist; for a meal with a culinary historian; and so forth.

Group sizes are strictly limited to no more than 8 people, which allows us to create an intimate atmosphere for learning and experiencing the local culture. It also allows us to adhere to some of the precepts of sustainable tourism and have a lighter impact on the monuments and museums that we're visiting.

In addition to site visits and walking tours, each trip features several meals, some of which are "annotated" by chefs or culinary historians to elucidate local culinary traditions. As a result, these trips take a complete view of cultural travel, assuming that food is as valid a lens for understanding a place as its art, architecture, and history. Although we've programmed most of the 60 hours we'll spend together, there's a certain independent element to these trips. Participants are free to arrange their own accommodations (we can help), flights, and breakfasts. We'll handle everything else.

## 2009 Rome Mini Trip

Group Trips: 8 people max, €885 per person, on the following dates:

April 15-17, 2009  
April 22-24, 2009  
May 6-8, 2009  
May 13-15, 2009  
May 20-22, 2009  
June 10-12, 2009  
June 17-19, 2009  
September 9-11, 2009  
October 7-9, 2009

Private Trips: By arrangement. €2220 base cost + €445 per person

Itinerary:

### Day 1

We meet the first day in the early evening for a brief "Orientation Chat" with our chaperone, who will introduce the itinerary, provide an overview of the trip, and answer any questions. Then we will set out on a brief orientation walk of the area around the hotel followed by a guided wine tasting of Italian wines led by a Context sommelier.

### Day 2

The first full day will begin with a walking seminar in the archaeological center of the city with an archaeologist, focusing on the history and development of Rome during the Imperial period. We will start our discussion with one of the most impressive monuments from antiquity, the Colosseum. After visiting the amphitheater and discussing its role in Rome, we will make a special visit to the Ludus Magnus, the Empire's largest gladiator school, normally closed to the public. Then, we will follow the Via dei Fori Imperiali, studying the five Imperial Fora trapped beneath that massive avenue,

concentrating most on the emperor Trajan and his development of the city, with his forum, the adjacent markets and the monumental column of Trajan. From Trajan's markets we will backtrack to La Piazzetta in the Monti district for an authentic Roman meal rich in seasonal vegetables and homemade pasta before setting off on the Fall and Rise of Rome walk, a thematic exploration of the changes that gripped Rome during and after the fall of the Empire. We begin at the church of San Clemente, a medieval complex built on the remains of a 1st century Mithraic temple and Roman structure (perhaps a warehouse, though there is a theory that this is the Roman mint reputed to be located in this area). After exploring the two churches that sit on top of these ruins, one of which contains one of the oldest instances of written Italian in the world, we wind through the streets of the Celian neighborhood to SS. Quattro Coronati. This amazing church, regarded by many as the most beautiful medieval structure in Rome, was constructed in the 11th century and houses spectacular artistic treasures including a chapel with frescos of Saint Sylvester and the Emperor Constantine. To conclude, we will make our way up the hill to the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, beneath which we find a series of middle-class 3rd century houses. Here we will look at how average people lived—and decorated their houses, as the wall decorations here are extremely well-preserved—during the fall of Rome, and then how these ancient sites were transformed during the Middle Ages. In the evening we will have dinner at a local *trattoria* to partake of seasonal specialties in a convivial environment.

### Day 3

Today we will join an art historian and turn our attention to the artists and patrons of Papal Rome, beginning with the Caravaggio Seminar. We will deeply examine the artist's work, his innovation and the controversy surrounding him. We begin with Caravaggio's work in-situ, visiting three prominent churches, starting with Santa Maria del Popolo, where two of Caravaggio's works are juxtaposed in the same chapel with that of his stylistic rival Annibale Carracci. After a leisurely stroll through the historic center, where the artist worked and sought inspiration, we will come upon Sant' Agostino, which contains a late work. Reversing the chronology, we end at San Luigi dei Francesi, which contains Caravaggio's first public altarpieces, a cycle showing scenes from the life of St. Matthew. After a lunch break at a local *trattoria*, we will venture to the Villa Borghese, a vast public park laid out for Pope Paul V's nephew Cardinal Scipione Borghese, to visit the Borghese Gallery. This museum contains commissions and acquisitions of works by the likes of Titian, Caravaggio, Raphael and Bernini, pieces that made the Borghese the premier collectors of their day. Our docent will unfold for the layers of meaning—social, political, and artistic—of one of the greatest private art collections in the world. In the evening, we will dine in the Trastevere neighborhood at Il Comparone, known for its excellent Roman cuisine and fierce loyalty to seasonal and local ingredients.