

VISIT GUIDE 2026

St. Peter's Basilica

Rome · From 13€

https://basilicasanpietro.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-line tickets & rates



History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Two centuries of architectural genius

GOOGLE 4.8 ★★★★★ 186 158 reviews

TIQETS 3.3 ★★★☆☆ 2 039 reviews

The history of St. Peter's Basilica is that of a titanic construction which shaped the face of the Vatican. Work began on **April 18, 1506**, on the remains of the old Constantinian basilica and the Circus of Caligula, where tradition places the martyrdom of the apostle Peter. This monumental project spanned over a century, until its completion in 1626, testifying to the spiritual and artistic power of the Roman Renaissance.

The initial project was entrusted to Donato Bramante, but it was Michelangelo who gave the building its definitive architectural grandeur, notably with the design of the massive dome. After his death, the work was continued by Carlo Maderno, who lengthened the nave, and then by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who sculpted the monumental columns framing St. Peter's Square. This succession of geniuses allowed for a fluid stylistic evolution, ranging from pure Renaissance style to exuberant Baroque.

Beneath the high altar lies the supposed tomb of Saint Peter, discovered during archaeological excavations led by Cardinal Ludwig Kaas in the 1940s. This central location makes the basilica not only an architectural masterpiece but also the most sacred site of Catholicism. The current structure, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, is the fruit of this unique historical collaboration between faith, art, and engineering.

Today, the building remains the beating heart of the papacy. Its record capacity of over 60,000 people allows it to welcome the faithful for major celebrations, such as the Sunday Angelus, which gathers hundreds of thousands of pilgrims every week. It is a living place where millennia-old history meets contemporary spirituality.

THE EXPERIENCE

As soon as you cross the monumental doors, the colossal scale of the space strikes you. Zenithal light filters through the stained glass windows, illuminating the frescoes and white marble sculptures. The air is cool and silent, offering a striking contrast with the bustle of the surrounding city. One immediately feels the historical presence of the place, carried by centuries of prayers and papal ceremonies.

The ascent to the dome offers an intense physical and visual experience. As you climb the narrow steps, you discover hidden architectural details and a panoramic view of Rome from the summit. It is a moment of absolute contemplation, where one measures the grandeur of Michelangelo's work and the beauty of the Italian capital at their feet.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS
Vatican City State · Metro: Ottaviano (Line A) or Piazza del Popolo (Line B), 10-15 min walk.

OPENING HOURS
Possible closures during major papal celebrations (Angelus, audiences). Check the liturgical calendar before visiting.

FEES
Nave is free. Paid options (Dome/Petrus eni) from €13. {promo}.

VISIT DURATION
Allow 1 to 2 hours for the nave. Add 45 minutes to 1 hour for the climb to the dome depending on your fitness level. The elevator does not go all the way to the

PHOTOS
Photography is allowed without flash in the nave and dome. It is prohibited in certain areas of the Petrus eni exhibition. Please observe liturgical silence.

AUDIENCE
Ideal for families and architecture enthusiasts. Climbing the dome is not recommended for people suffering from severe dizziness.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

Metro
: Cavalleggeri/S. Pietro — 3 min à pied
Rome Termini station (15 min) · Leonardo da Vinci Rome Fiumicino Airport (54 min)

Bus
: Aurelia/Bonifacio VIII — 3 min à pied
Rome Termini station (24 min) · Leonardo da Vinci Rome Fiumicino Airport (88 min)

Car
Rome Termini station (16 min) · Leonardo da Vinci Rome Fiumicino Airport (70 min)

Bike
Rome Termini station (20 min) · Leonardo da Vinci Rome Fiumicino Airport (94 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve St. Peter's Basilica ?



📍 Piazza San Pietro — 00120 Rome

🌐 41°54.130′ N, 12°27.236′ E



ORGANIZATION

Understanding the visit structure

Main Nave (Ground Floor)

This is the heart of the basilica, characterized by its immense central nave and side chapels. You will find the tomb of Saint Peter beneath Bernini's baldachin, as well as numerous works of sacred art. The space is vast, allowing visitors to move freely while respecting liturgical silence.

Dome Terrace

Accessible after taking the elevator or stairs, these intermediate levels offer a first view of the dome's internal structure. It is here that one can appreciate the complexity of the vaults and painted decorations before continuing the final ascent.

Dome Summit

At the highest point, the panoramic view of Rome and St. Peter's Square is exceptional. The floor features a complex geometric mosaic, and the air is often cooler here. It is the ideal spot to photograph the entire city from the heights of the Vatican.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Disabled Access**

Facilities available for the nave; dome access to be assessed based on condition.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Family-friendly, but mind the dress code and children's fatigue for the dome.

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish, Italian, German



Must-sees

SELECTION

The absolute treasures of the basilica

01 GIAN LORENZO BERNINI Crossing of the transept

Bernini's Baldachin

This monumental gilded bronze structure towers over the tomb of Saint Peter. Its twisted columns and impressive height make it the central visual symbol of the basilica. One must look up to grasp the full scale of this majestic Baroque masterpiece.

> 💡 Bernini used bronze salvaged from the facade of the Pantheon, which earned his successor a famous critique: "What the Romans did not do, Bernini did."

02 MICHEL-ANGE Brancacci Chapel

The Pietà

Carved in Carrara marble, this depiction of Mary holding the body of Christ is unmatched in its tenderness and technical finesse. It is one of the few works signed by the master, dated 1498. The acrylic glass protection allows visitors to admire the details without the risk of degradation.

> 💡 At the age of 24, Michelangelo created this work so perfect that he reportedly refused to sign other sculptures out of humility.

03 Beneath the high altar

The Tomb of Saint Peter

Accessible only during specific guided tours, this crypt houses the supposed remains of the apostle. Its central position underscores his role as the first bishop of Rome. It is the spiritual focal point of the entire edifice.

> 💡 Archaeological excavations in the 1940s confirmed the presence of an ancient burial site beneath the high altar, validating the Catholic tradition.

04 MICHEL-ANGE Interior of the dome

Michelangelo's Dome

From the top, one can admire the internal structure and the frescoes depicting the apostles. The view over the city offers an exceptional panorama, while the descent reveals the architectural complexity of the building. It is the ultimate testament to Michelangelo's genius.

> 💡 The dome is so wide that it contains two entire churches within its structure.

05 St. Peter's Square

The Vatican Obelisk

Standing in the center of the square, this Egyptian obelisk, over 3,000 years old, is a remnant of the Circus Vaticanus. It symbolically marks the site of Saint Peter's martyrdom. Its presence anchors the basilica in Rome's ancient history.

> 💡 It was erected without deep foundations, resting simply on the ground, which is technically remarkable for its size.

06 St. Peter's Square

Bernini's Fountains

The two monumental fountains flanking the entrance to the basilica are masterpieces of Baroque hydrodynamics. They add a dynamic sonic and visual dimension to the square. The gushing water creates a cool and soothing environment in summer.

> 💡 Bernini designed these fountains to contrast with the architectural rigidity of the square, bringing movement and life.

07 GIAN LORENZO BERNINI Sanctuary

The Papal Throne

This throne, crafted from marble and precious wood, is used by the pope for preaching. Its elaborate design reflects the spiritual and temporal authority of the pontiff. It is located near the tomb of Saint Peter, creating a direct link between the present and the origins of the Church.

> 💡 The throne is adorned with biblical scenes sculpted with extreme precision, visible even from a distance thanks to natural light.

08 GIAN LORENZO BERNINI St. Peter's Square

The Columns of the Square

The two rows of Corinthian columns frame the elliptical square, symbolizing the arms of the Church opening to the faithful. This urban architecture is unique in the world. It visually guides pilgrims toward the entrance of the basilica.

> 💡 Bernini designed this square so that the pope, from the loggia, could see all the gathered faithful, creating a sacred urban theater.

TIPS

Our tips to avoid the crowds

TIMING

Arrive 30 minutes before the official opening to enjoy the morning light and avoid organized groups. The quietest hours are generally between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.

TICKET

Be sure to book online for the Dome and the Pétros ení exhibition. The nave is free, but a named ticket with a QR code is required for the paid areas.

TOUR

Start with the nave to appreciate the overall scale, then head up to the Dome as fatigue sets in. End with the exit leading to St. Peter's Square for the final view.

PHOTO

Natural zenithal light is ideal in the morning. Avoid using flash in the main nave. For the Dome, the view of the city offers an exceptional panorama, but beware of backlighting.

BREAK

There are no cafés inside the basilique. Plan a break outside, in St. Peter's Square or in the nearby museums, before starting the physical climb to the dome.

CHILDREN

Climbing the dome is not recommended for very young children or people suffering from severe dizziness. Use the digital audioguide to engage them in the history of the construction site.

AUDIOGUIDE

The digital audioguide included with paid tickets is essential for understanding the architects' history and hidden details. Check your spam folder 24 hours in advance to activate the link.

COMFORT

Wear comfortable shoes for the 533 steps to the dome. Observe the strict dress code: shoulders and knees must be covered. Pack a scarf or light trousers in your bag.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book to enter the basilica?

No, the nave is free and open access. Yes, it is recommended or even mandatory to book online via the official website to access the Dome or the Petrus eni exhibition. This allows you to avoid long separate queues and gu

How does ticket cancellation work?

This ticket is neither cancellable nor refundable once the booking is confirmed. Carefully check the date, time slot, and number of participants before paying, as no changes can be made afterwards.

Will I receive a QR code for my booking?

Yes, after your purchase, you will receive an email containing a voucher with a personal QR code for each participant. This code is essential for access to the basilica, dome, or exhibition. If you do not receive it with

Can I change my visit date after purchasing?

No, bookings cannot be modified once confirmed on the official website. In case of unforeseen circumstances, you will need to cancel according to your ticket conditions and make a new booking if spots are still available

How long does the full visit take?

Allow 1 to 2 hours to visit the basilica's nave. If you include the climb to the dome, add 45 minutes to 1 hour extra depending on your pace. For the Petrus eni exhibition, plan for about 45 minutes. A full day is recomm

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The secret of the 533 steps

Climbing the dome involves 533 narrow steps. The elevator only goes halfway up, leaving about 320 steps to climb. It is a real physical challenge, but the view is worth it. The stairs are narrow, so be mindful of other visitors.

A record capacity

With an area of 2.3 hectares, the basilica can accommodate more than 60,000 people simultaneously. It is the largest Catholic church in the world. This capacity was designed to absorb the massive flows of pilgrims during major religious holidays.

The Millennial Obelisk

The obelisk in St. Peter's Square is over 3,000 years old. It is one of the few remaining vestiges of the Circus Vaticanus, the private circus built by Caligula. It marks the exact spot where, according to tradition, Saint Peter was crucified.

Four legendary architects

The work is the fruit of the collaboration of four major architects: Bramante, Michelangelo, Maderno, and Bernini. This brilliant succession allowed the evolution from pure Renaissance style to exuberant Baroque. Each architect left an indelible mark on the building.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Right next door, the **Vatican Museums** offer a complementary immersion with the Sistine Chapel and the Raphael Rooms. For a peaceful break away from the crowds, the **Vatican Gardens** provide a discreet haven of peace accessible via the Jesuit Fathers' corridor. If you wish to extend your exploration of Baroque art, the nearby **Borghese Gallery** houses masterpieces by Bernini. Finally, Piazza Navona offers a convivial atmosphere ideal for a light lunch before heading back to the historic center.



Visiting St. Peter's Basilica is like touching the history of Christianity with your own hands and admiring the pinnacle of Western art. Whether for its spirituality or its architecture, this experience remains etched in memory. Take the time to contemplate every detail, for here, every stone tells a story that spans millennia.