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## ROME'S OMNIA PASS, KEY TO THE ETERNAL CITY

Story by Anne Z. Cooke, photos by SteveHaggerty/ColorWorld

For first-timers exploring Rome, the historic byways of the Eternal City can seem as crowded and helter skelter as they must have been when Roman centurions strolled through the Forum and ragged street vendors hawked everything from slaves to vegetables.



Restoration at the Roman Forum is a never-ending project that continues to reveal ancient structures. Rome, Italy. italy2015\_9303--©Steve Haggerty - All Rights Reserved

But you don't have to waste precious vacation hours coping with today's crowds, or standing in block-long lines to see the Vatican Museum, St. Peter's Cathedral, the Coliseum and the Roman Forum. Invest in an Omnia & Roma Pass, the two-for-one city pass that guarantees priority entrance at most of Rome's attractions and you'll zip up to the head of the line and through the gate in minutes.

Without the Omnia Pass, you're likely to find yourself hip deep behind the five million travelers that visit Rome every year: school kids on tour, nuns in habits, amateur historians, cruise ship groups, retirees on holiday and movie fans weaned on gladiator sagas.

When I was there recently, the streets were so crowded and the sidewalk cafes so full that I wasted most of my first day waiting in one line after another. That is, until a good Samaritan showed me his Omnia & Roma Pass, (ORP), two passes sold together for 98 euros.

Before you could say "great Caesar" I'd gone to the Omnia office next to St. Peter's Cathedral and bought the package. It was just two cards, a guidebook and a map but it proved to be the keys to the kingdom. I made an appointment to see the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel that same morning. And from there on I zipped past ticket offices, around long lines and through dedicated turnstiles.

The ORP is pricey but it costs less than you'd pay to buy the same tickets separately. You don't have to carry a wallet full of cash or make change. And the two passes complement each other.

The Roma Pass is your transportation card, good on city buses and the subway. You swipe it on the electronic reader in the bus or in the subway station and you're good to go. You can get on and off on a whim, take as many rides as you want, go anywhere within the city and not incur an extra fare. As a



The Fountain of Four Rivers (1651) by sculptor Bernini in the Piazza Navona, is popular spot for people watching. Rome, Italy. italy2015\_00288--©Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld

bonus, the Rome Pass also includes free entry to two most of Rome's most significant monuments, museums and palaces.

But the Roma Pass doesn't get you into Rome's "Big Three," the Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica. That's the job of the Omnia Pass which does and even more significantly, let's you choose a specific time. The ORP office near St. Peter's issues the tickets and makes appointments, an arrangement that saves hours wasted standing in line and makes it easier to plan your day.

The Omnia Pass also provide an entry to the much older and equally historic Basilica of St. John in the Lateran and to St. Peter's Prison. And it includes free or discounted entries to most of Rome's other major attractions: monuments, museums, Renaissance palaces, archaeological sites and current exhibitions.

Additional benefits include a detailed street and tour map and as many hop-on hop-off hours riding on Omnia's "Roma Cristiana" double-decker sightseeing buses as you want.

The pocket-sized guidebook and maps are also a bonus. Besides explaining how to use both passes to best advantage, it lists every possible attraction, including the street address, opening hours, phone number, nearby bus and subway stops and the website. The guide is keyed to the map, a quality production that shows streets, neighborhoods, a subway map, numbered attractions (keyed to the list), and route maps of four, neighborhood-themed, self-guided walking tours.

If there's any downside at all, to fast-tracking Rome, it's that you might forget to slow down and smell the spaghetti and soak up the ambiance, from the ancient architecture and the grand piazzas to the sculpture and the fountains. So when in Rome, do what the Romans do: kick back early, find a chair at a sidewalk café, order a plate of pasta with a glass of wine and watch the world go by.

To buy the Omnia & Roma Pass on the internet go to [www.omniavaticanrome.org](http://www.omniavaticanrome.org)

Or buy it in Rome at the ORP St. Peter's Office, Piazza Pio XII, 9, Rome. Buy the Roma Pass separately at [www.romapass.it](http://www.romapass.it). For more about Rome, go to [www.turismoroma.it](http://www.turismoroma.it).



*The Vittorio Emmanuel Monument (The Altare della Patria - Altar of the Fatherland), in the Piazza Venezia, is a stop on the Omnia Pass's Cristiana Sightseeing bus. Rome, Italy. italy2015\_9024--©Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld*



*An hour at the Spanish Steps, adorned with potted plants, is a rite of passage for every tourist. Rome, Italy. italy2015\_9229--©Steve Haggerty/ColorWorld*