

Hi everyone,

I am Eileen Houston. My husband, two children (ages 12 and 14) and I took a trip to Rome in April 2008. We also included a day trip to Pompeii during our stay. We stayed at the Ludovisi Palace Hotel which I booked through <http://www.booking.com/>. The hotel was nice and had the advantage of a 4 person room. The room was good sized by European standards with a large modern bathroom and air conditioning. Breakfast was also included. The breakfast was okay--- typical European fair of pastries, fruit, yogurt, etc. The location was great as it was close to the Spanish Steps in the Via Veneto area. The staff was very helpful in arranging transportation and communicating with our tour company. They also provide transportation by van to and from the airport (about 70 euros each way).

I strongly recommend booking a tour of the Vatican Museums before you leave for Rome (some tours require a few weeks prior), otherwise you can spend HOURS waiting in line. If you arrange a tour, you can go straight in the museum to meet your guide at the allotted time. We used the site: <http://goporta.com/> to arrange our tour. We took a FREE tour of Saint Peter's Basilica give by seminarians of the North American College. All you need to do is meet outside of the Vatican Information office around 2:15pm. Note: there is a dress code for St. Peter's. Check this website for more information: <http://www.saintpetersbasilica.org/touristinfo.htm>. I would not miss either tour. St Peter's is just beautiful! Another tour I took a few years ago was the Scavi tour. This is the underground necropolis which includes the tomb of St Peter. This tour has to be booked well in advance and you can get information from the website as well (Note: no children under 11). It is a really interesting tour but not for anyone that is claustrophobic!!

There is so much to do and see. It is very easy to walk in Rome. I have heard their public transportation system is good, but we didn't use it. We did take a cab from the hotel to the Vatican as it is a bit far away. We were able to walk the Colosseum. We were not able to take a tour there since the day we went was a holiday. We were so disappointed! I found a few books about Rome to help us plan our daily outings. I found that the "Dummies Guide to Rome" was the most useful.

We took a day trip to Pompeii with a bus tour group (arranged for us by the concierge). It included a short stop at a cameo factory (which we could have done without) and a stop in Naples. We spent very little time in Naples—we were basically there long enough to pick-up the tour guide—which was good because Naples was not a pretty city, although I did not see any of the "garbage problems" that has plagued the city in recent years. We had lunch in the "new" city of Pompeii which was just okay. After lunch, we had a guided tour (be prepared to walk on cobblestones!) of ancient Pompeii. My family found it fascinating and much bigger than we thought it would be.

What can I say about the food? It was great everywhere we went (except the aforementioned Pompeii tour lunch). I regret that I don't have names of the restaurant but we were able to just browse and pick each evening. Of course we had our daily dose of Gelato too!!

Our only regret is that we didn't have just one more day in Rome (we stayed four nights). Oh well, maybe next time we'll get inside the Colosseum!!