

Baths of Caracalla

In ancient Rome there were more than 170 public baths, the *Balnea*, Greek name (just like *thermae*) associated to the idea of warm, used also to name the spa built by Agrippa close to the Pantheon in 25-19 BC. The imposing construction of the *Thermae of Caracalla* began in 212 AD with Emperor Marco Aurelio Severo Antonino Bassiano (Caracalla) and finished in 216 AD, but under the reigns of Eliogabalo and Alessandro Severo they were even enlarged with a long arcade fence. The outer barrier measured 337 meters by 328, over an area of 11 hectares: they could host 2.000 bathers and there were also a Gymnasium, two libraries (a Latin one and a Greek one), an Art Gallery and Gardens. The huge rooms, with alternations of niches and *exedras*, were richly decorated with coloured marbles, statues and mosaics and were covered with vaulted roofs.

The *Calidarium* had a peculiar structure, with circular plan and an imposing dome (34 meters of diameter) resting on eight huge columns, four of which are still visible. The *Calidarium* has always been a model for the construction of mausoleums and early Christian sacred buildings. The cistern was fed by the *Acqua Marcia* aqueduct, with a flow of 80.000 cubic meters. The *thermae* went on functioning for 300 years, until the Goths, during their occupation, cut off the aqueducts ruining the whole structure.

A great number of the rich decorations of the *Thermae of Caracalla* were taken away in order to decorate the Church of St. Maria in Trastevere; since the 16th century some architectural elements have been decorating Palazzo Farnese, while since 1612 two big monolithic basins of Egyptian granite, 5,50 meters long, were moved in the place in front of Palazzo Farnese itself. Finally some floor mosaics are kept in the Museo Gregoriano Profano in the Vatican City.

From 1938 to 2000 the *Calidarium* area has been a charming seat for summer concerts and performances by the Opera House.

Address:	Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 52	Tel:	+39 0639967700 / 060608
Cost:	General Admission € 6,00 ; Reduced € 3,00 for EU citizens between 18 and 24 years old. ; Free entrance for EU citizens under 18 and over 65 years old.		
Open:	Last Sunday of October - February	Tues - Sun	h9.00 - h16.30 (Last entrance @ h15.00)
		Mon	h9.00 - h14.00 (Last entrance @ h13.00)
	16 February - 15 March	Tues - Sun	h9.00 - h17.00 (Last entrance @ h16.00)
		Mon	h9.00 - h14.00 (Last entrance @ h13.00)
	16 March - Last Saturday of March	Tues - Sun	h9.00 - h17.30 (Last entrance @ h16.30)
		Mon	h9.00 - h14.00 (Last entrance @ h13.00)
	Last Sunday of March - 31 August	Tues - Sun	h9.00 - h19.15 (Last entrance @ h18.15)
		Mon	h9.00 - h14.00 (Last entrance @ h13.00)
	1 September - 30 September	Tues - Sun	h9.00 - h19.00 (Last entrance @ h18.00)
		Mon	h9.00 - h14.00 (Last entrance @ h13.00)
	1 October - Last Saturday of October	Tues - Sun	h9.00 - h18.30 (Last entrance @ h17.30)
		Mon	h9.00 - h14.00 (Last entrance @ h13.00)
Closed:	1 January, 25 December		
Metro:	Line B: Circo Massimo	Bus:	3,16,81,85,87,117,186,218,590,650,714,810,850

Church of St. Sisto

The little Church of St. Sisto Vecchio was donated by Pope Onorio III to St. Domenico in 1219: it became the first convent for Dominican nuns. Its bell tower dates back to 13th century.

Tel: +39 06 775174 **Open:** h9.00 - h11.00; Closed August

Church of SS. Nereo and Achilleo

Legend has it that St. Peter, leaving Rome after his escape from prison, lost one of the bandages dressing his wounds; by the place where the bandage fell a church was erected. That church, in 4th century, was then dedicated to the Saints Nereo and Achilleo (1st century Martyrs) and it was rebuilt in 8th century and restored in 16th century.

On the inside you can admire the 9th-century triumphal arch and its mosaics, a Bishops throne, the ambo and the candlestick dating back to the 15th century and the pulpit on porphyry base coming from the Thermae of Caracalla. The walls of the side aisles are decorated with frescoes by Niccolò

Pomarancio, showing terrifying details about tortures sustained by martyrized apostles.

Tel: +39 06 5757996 **Open:** h10.00 / h12.00; h16.00 / h18.00 Saturday - Thursday

Church of St. Balbina

This 4th-century-church is one of the most ancient in Rome; it overlooks the Thermae of Caracalla and it is dedicated to the virgin and Martyr who lived in 2nd century. On the inside there is the magnificent cardinal tomb engraved by Giovanni Di Cosma in 1303.

Tel: +39 06 5780207 **Open:** h8.00 - h18.00