

# From Domine Quo Vadis to the Via Latina Tombs

## Caffarella Valley / Park of the Via Latina

This itinerary across the evocative Caffarella Valley links the church of *Domine Quo Vadis* to the Via Latina archaeological area. It begins at the church of *Domine Quo Vadis*, near the junction with Via Ardeatina, opposite the tomb of Priscilla. A little further on Via della Caffarella branches off the Via Appia and crosses the Caffarelli Valley and its incomparably beautiful landscape, once inhabited by the nymphs, as exemplified by the Nymphaeum of Egeria and the Sacred Grove, and still dotted with ancient monuments, such as the Tomb of Annia Regilla and the Temple of Ceres and Faustina, and the Medieval Valca Tower. The last section of the itinerary, along Via dell'Almone, leads to the Via Latina Park and several Roman tombs that still preserve the magnificent decoration of the burial chambers. From here follow the map for other itineraries in the Park.



POI

14



Distance

5.46 Km

### Poi

- 1 Via Appia Antica - Domine Quo Vadis
- 2 The tomb of Priscilla
- 3 Church of Domine Quo Vadis
- 4 Chapel of Reginald Pole
- 5 Tomb of Annia Regilla
- 6 River Almone (North)
- 7 Casale della Vaccareccia
- 8 The Nymphaeum of Egeria
- 9 Temple of Ceres and Faustine - Church of Sant'Urbano
- 10 Roman cistern
- 11 The Sacred Grove
- 12 The Valca Tower
- 13 Costantine's Colombarium
- 14 The Archeological park of the Tombs of the Via Latina



Scan the QRCode to access the navigable mobile version of the itinerary

# Poi 1

## Via Appia Antica - Domine Quo Vadis

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### Roma / Other places - Other Places

This point, at the 2nd mile of the Via Appia Antica, is of strategic importance for reaching any of the areas in the Park. Slightly to the south, in fact, at the church of *Domine Quo Vadis*, is the important junction between the Via Appia and the Via Ardeatina. This is the place where, according to Christian tradition, Christ appeared to Peter as he was fleeing Rome to escape persecution. From here you may continue along the Appian Way either northwards or southwards, otherwise you may decide to proceed westwards along the Via Ardeatina to the Tenuta di Tor Marancia estate, or explore the evocative Caffarella Valley, from where you may then reach the Tombs on the Via Latina, Tor Fiscale and the Aqueducts.



#### 📍 Address

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Via Appia Antica 46 - Roma (RM)

#### 🚗 How to get

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From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to DOMINE QUO VADIS stop.

# Poi 2

## The tomb of Priscilla

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### Roma / Place to visit - Tombs

Almost opposite the church of *Domine Quo Vadis*, on the other side of the Via Appia, is a cylindrical 11th century tower, built on top of a monumental Roman tomb. The tomb itself was built by Titus Flavius Abascantus, a freedman of the emperor Domitian, for his wife Priscilla, who died prematurely in the middle of the 1st century AD. The huge square podium is hidden behind the surrounding Medieval buildings.



#### 📍 Address

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Via Appia Antica 76 - Roma (RM)

#### 🚗 How to get

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From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to DOMINE QUO VADIS stop.

# Poi 3

## Church of Domine Quo Vadis

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### Roma / Place to visit - Churches

Located where the modern Via Ardeatina branches off the Via Appia, the small church of *Domine Quo Vadis* has been a pilgrimage attraction for centuries. Tradition has it that this is the site where Jesus appeared to Peter, who was fleeing Nero's persecution in Rome; when Peter asked him "Lord, where are you going?" (*Domine quo vadis?*), he replied "I am going to Rome to be crucified again".

A shrine was built on this spot in the ninth century, although the current church dates to the 16th and 17th centuries. The church is also known as St. Mary "of the footprints", because of a marble slab with two footprints kept there, said to be those of Jesus Christ (actually, a pagan Roman "ex voto", the original of which is preserved in the Basilica of San Sebastiano).



#### 📍 Address

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Via Appia Antica 47 - Roma (RM)

#### 🚗 How to get

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From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take BUS 118 to APPIA ANTICA/DOMINE QUO VADIS stop.

# Poi 4



#### **A Address**

Via della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

#### **How to get**

From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA ANTICA/CAFFARELLA stop.

## Chapel of Reginald Pole

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### Roma / Place to visit - Churches

At the junction of Via Appia Antica and Via della Caffarella there is a small round chapel built, in 1539, by the English cardinal Reginald Pole, in thanksgiving for the failure of an attempted ambush by assassins at the orders of King Henry VIII.

The cardinal, in fact, had opposed the king's decision to separate the English Church from Rome and the Pope. After Mary I was crowned Queen of England, he became one of her most trusted advisers and was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.

The cylindrical building is modelled on an ancient Roman tomb. The outside wall features eight pilasters in yellow brick, with granite plinths and capitals, which divide the wall into eight equally sized areas and support an entablature above topped by a domed roof, which fits onto the projecting cornice. The building shares some architectural features with the little church of San Giovanni in Oleo, on Via di Porta Latina, especially in having two doorways, probably associated with pilgrimage rites. The interior, which is currently closed, preserves some 16th century frescoes.

## Poi 5



#### **A Address**

Via della Caffarella 23 - Roma (RM)

#### **How to get**

From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA ANTICA/CAFFARELLA stop and then walk for 15 minutes along Via della Caffarella.

## Tomb of Annia Regilla

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### Roma / Place to visit - Tombs

In the Caffarella Valley, on a path branching off northwards, after the Casale della Vaccareccia farmhouse, there is a building which, according to a 17th and 18th century legend, was the Temple of Rediculus, the Roman divinity who protected travellers leaving and returning to the city.

Instead, it is a temple-shaped bicoloured brick tomb, which is now generally thought to be the tomb of Annia Regilla, wife of Herodes Atticus, who died prematurely in AD 160. A nearby former farmhouse with a mill has been refurbished as an info point.

## Poi 6



#### **A Address**

Via della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

#### **How to get**

From METRO A station COLLI ALBANI walk for 11 minutes along Via Marco Menghini towards Largo Tacchi Venturi.

## River Almone (North)

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### Roma / Place to visit - Natural area

In Roman times, the stream crossing the entire length of the Caffarella Valley was called *Almo flumen* (river Almo) and was the third most important waterway of the ancient city. Its headsprings being located in the Alban Hills, near the modern-day town of Marino, and it crossed the Roman countryside before reaching the city.

In this area, near the Tenuta della Caffarella estate, the river was fed by the Fonte Egeria springs, after which it crossed the Aventino Valley and then flowed into the Tiber. Ovid mentions a solemn festival linked to the river and held every year on 27 March, since 205 BC, called the *lavatio Matris deum*, during which the black stone symbolising the goddess Cybele (Magna Mater) and the sacred ritual objects used in her temple on the Palatine hill were washed at the point of confluence of the Almone and the Tiber. Almo, Virgil recounts in Book VII of his Aeneid, was also the name of a young woman at the court of the Latin king, associated with the legend of the arrival, on the coast of Latium, of the Trojan Aeneas, fleeing from the destruction of Troy, the first to die in the clash between the Latins and the Trojans. Since the 16th century the river

has also been called Acquataccio (Bad Water), from which marrana dell'Acquataccio or marrana della Caffarella, marrana meaning ditch in the Roman dialect. In 1939, the river, after the point where it is crossed by the Via Appia, was covered over and channelled into an underground pipe to the wastewater treatment facility of Roma Sud. At the Casale della Vaccareccia farmhouse the river is crossed by a small brick and tufa bridge.

## Poi 7

### Casale della Vaccareccia

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#### Roma / Place to visit - Casali

The Casale della Vaccareccia farmhouse is one of the many farmhouses built in the Caffarella Valley and incorporates a Medieval watchtower built to defend the Roman countryside. It was erected in 1547 by the Caffarelli family, and important family of the Roman nobility, who had started purchasing land in the area since 1529 and eventually built up an estate covering almost the entire valley. The Caffarelli sold the estate in 1695 to the Pallavicini, who, about a century later, in 1816, sold it to the Torlonia.



#### 📍 Address

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Via della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

#### 🚶 How to get

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From METRO LINE A station COLLI ALBANI walk for 11 minutes along Via Marco Menghini towards Largo Tacchi Venturi.

## Poi 8

### The Nymphaeum of Egeria

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#### Roma / Place to visit - Nymphaeum

The nymphaeum owes its name to a Renaissance antiquarian tradition, according to which, based on the interpretation of several ancient texts, this was the location of the legendary grotto of the water nymph Egeria, trusted advisor and lover of king Numa Pompilius. However, the actual water springs and grove sacred to Egeria were probably located close to the Porta Capena gate, at the beginning of the Via Appia, while the so-called Nymphaeum of Egeria we see here is a brick structure dating to the 2nd century AD, belonging to the huge estate of the wealthy Athenian orator Herodes Atticus, one of many buildings the remains of which still dot the Caffarella Valley today. Rather than being a monumental fountain archaeological investigations have shown that it was a recreational building, designed to host banquets and other leisurely activities in the summer months, of a type commonly found in the wealthy countryside villas built on the edges of the ancient city, fashioned to look like a natural cave set in a rural landscape. The building consists of two rectangular chambers arranged to form a T shape; the first chamber is barrel vaulted and has three niches on each longer side and a large niche at the end, which, today, hosts a marble statue of a river god, probably the god Almo. The floor was paved with slabs of green serpentine marble, while the walls were clad with verde antique marble and the niches faced with white marble. The grotto was also decorated with colourful glass-paste mosaics, sea shells and pumice stones in imitation of a natural cavern.



#### 📍 Address

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Valle della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

#### 🚶 How to get

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From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA PIGNATELLI/S.URBANO stop, alternatively, from METRO LINE A station ARCO DI TRAVERTINO take the BUS 660 to ALMONE stop.

## Poi 9

### Temple of Ceres and Faustine - Church of Sant'Urbano

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#### Roma / Place to visit - Churches

Easily accessible from Vicolo Sant'Urbano, which branches off Via Appia Pignatelli on the left, at about 800 metres from the Catacombs of Pretestato, there is a Roman temple which, in the 9th century, was modified and consecrated as a church dedicated to St. Urban.



### Address

Vicolo S. Urbano, Roma - Roma (RM)

### How to get

From METRO B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA PIGNATELLI/SANT'URBANO stop.

The original temple, erected in the 2nd century AD by Herodes Atticus as a “prostyle” temple with a colonnaded porch, on a low podium and with the cell in the centre, is believed to have been dedicated to Ceres and Faustina, as a memorial to his deceased wife Annia Regilla. Its appearance was radically altered in 1634, during the restoration work commissioned by Pope Urban VIII, who had the spaces between the columns bricked in and a bell tower added on the roof.



### Address

Valle della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

### How to get

From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA PIGNATELLI/S.URBANO stop.

## Roman cistern

### Roma / Place to visit - Cistern

The Caffarella Valley, thanks to the lay of the land and abundance of water, being crossed by the river Almone, was much exploited in Roman times for farming, while at a later date it also became much appreciated as a setting for a number of wealthy villas, with large rooms, baths, gardens and fountains. This explains the presence of the many large cisterns here, such as this one, located between the church of S. Urbano and Via dell'Almone. The structure, about 21 metres long and almost 7 metres tall, was originally dug into the earth, to better support the enormous pressure of the water stored inside, and was brought to the light only after the large-scale excavation works in this area in the Late Imperial period (4th-5th centuries AD). Today, all that remains of the original structure is its concrete core containing flint gravel aggregates. The lower part of the outer walls feature traces of brickwork added much later, probably to strengthen the structure after the excavation. Inside, there is a *cocciopesto* (broken pottery beaten to powder) floor, while the walls were plastered. The short walls are semi-circular in shape, while the vault has an acute angle. Its date is uncertain, but it was probably built in the 1st century AD. Over the centuries, after being abandoned, the cistern was used as a warehouse or even a house, as well as a watchtower, as suggested by the crenellations at the top.

## Poi 10



### Address

Valle della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

### How to get

From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA PIGNATELLI/SANT'URBANO stop, alternatively from METRO LINE A station ARCO DI TRAVERTINO take the BUS 660 to ALMONE stop.

## The Sacred Grove

### Roma / Place to visit - Natural area

Not far from the nymphaeum of Egeria is a wood which, according to a Renaissance tradition, was used by the water nymph Egeria and the second king of Rome Numa Pompilius as a meeting place for their trysts, although historians have recently moved this spot to closer to the ancient Porta Capena gate. This is probably all that remains of an ancient *lucus*, the sacred groves often planted near suburban villas, in ancient times, and in this case the sacred grove on the estate of the villa built by Herodes Atticus in the 2nd century AD, where he lived with his wife Annia Regilla. This was also a favourite spot for landscape painters in the 18th century. The wood, located on the top of a hill overlooking the entire valley, has been preserved, in part, from Roman times. From 1999, another 50 holm oak trees (*Quercus ilex*) have been planted around the only 3 remaining oak trees of the original grove, in an attempt to recreate its appearance.

## Poi 11

# Poi 12

## The Valca Tower

### Roma / Place to visit - Towers

This tower was built between the 12th and 13th centuries over a previous Roman building, to control a bridge across the river Almone and a road. It was probably used by the Counts of Tusculum, and then the Caetani, to control the surrounding area and the access to Rome, after having acquired the Tomb of Caecilia Metella and the neighbouring land.

The tower has a square ground plan and is two storeys tall, originally divided by a wooden floor, which no longer exists although the holes in the walls for the beams can still be seen. The entrance to the tower is on the side opposite to the river and is framed by a short porch with Roman brickwork decoration. There are several rectangular windows for sighting and the entire building is made of blocks of peperino and yellow tufa blocks.

The name “*valca*” refers to a type of mill used, in the Middle Ages, to wash wool for making cloth, and is probably of Longobard origin, a theory regarding the purpose of this tower which seems to be supported by the presence, nearby, of several tanks. Based on the results of archaeological excavations, it has been surmised that the mill stopped operating in the 16th century. After the excavation work, carried out in 1999, the heavily damaged tower was restored to prevent its collapse.



#### Address

Valle della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

#### How to get

From METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA  
PIGNATELLI/S.URBANO stop, alternatively from METRO LINE A station ARCO DI TRAVERTINO take the BUS 660 to ALMONE stop.

# Poi 13

## Costantine's Colombarium

### Roma / Place to visit - Tombs

This is the name given to the remains of a temple tomb, dated to the 2nd century AD. The red and yellow brick rectangular building, elevated on a podium, featured a portico with two columns, which have since disappeared. The monument was two storeys tall, with a burial chamber below, accessed via a door on the longer side, and an upper chamber used for the funeral rituals.

Inside there are traces of frescoes and the marks left by the marble slabs that covered the walls. In the middle of the far wall was an arched recess – called an *arcosolium* – with a barrel vault, where the deceased was laid to rest. The building has been heavily altered over the centuries. For example, several windows have been bricked in, with tuff blocks or bricks, and a niche cut into the wall to house a sink. In the Middle Ages the building became a mill, used until the Renaissance, when it was partially buried; then, in the 17th century, it was converted into a house.

The monument has recently been accurately restored. The Columbarium is a short distance from the Egeria Source, which can be reached via an underpass or by crossing Via dell'Almone.



#### Address

Valle della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

#### How to get

Da METRO LINE B station COLOSSEO take the BUS 118 to APPIA  
PIGNATELLI/S.URBANO stop, alternatively METRO LINE A station ARCO DI TRAVERTINO take the BUS 660 to ALMONE stop

# Poi 14

## The Archeological park of the Tombs of the Via Latina

### Roma / Place to visit - Archaeological areas

A section of the 3rd mile of the ancient Roman road called the Via Latina has been preserved, practically intact, on the outskirts of Rome, between the modern-day Via Appia and Via Tuscolana. The road has very remote origins, being the natural prehistoric route used by the Etruscans to colonise Campania in the 8th to 6th century BC.

The paved road was built by the Romans in the 4th-3rd century BC linking Rome to Capua and crossing the Lepini, Ausoni and Aurunci mountains and the valleys of the Sacco and Liri rivers, playing an important role throughout antiquity. Even in the Middle Ages, in fact, it was the preferred road for Naples, because it was in a better condition than the Via Appia and due to



#### Opening Hours

On weekends mandatory reservation at least one day in

09:00 - 19:00 advance by calling 067886254 during opening hours.

### Closing Days

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Monday

### Info

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#### Opening hours:

From Tuesday to Sunday from 9.00 to 19.00 with last admission half an hour before closing.

Visits on weekends must be booked by phone at least one day in advance.

Reservations for the weekend by calling 067886254 during opening hours.

#### Closing day:

Monday.

### Address

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Via dell'Arco di Travertino, 151 - Roma (RM)

### How to get

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METRO LINE A station ARCO DI TRAVERTINO, then walk 7 minutes.

the presence of many Christian monuments along the way.

A section with the original paving of the road can still be seen in the Archaeological Park of the Tombs of the Via Latina, which makes for a pleasant stroll to admire the tombs, dated to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, which flank the road and still feature perfectly preserved multicoloured decorations, both inside and outside: vaulted ceilings that are plastered, stuccoed and painted, walls covered with frescoes with funerary subjects and mosaic floors have all been perfectly preserved and look today as they must have looked centuries ago. The road also leads to the Basilica of S. Stefano, a rare example of Early Christian building erected under Pope Leo the Great in the 5th century.

The Archaeological Park of the Tombs of the Via Latina was created in 1879, following the purchase, by the State, of a vast area where a number of Roman remains had been unearthed. Today, it can be visited free of charge and, thanks to the recent restoration work by the Archaeological Park authorities, it is also possible to admire several of the most spectacular Roman tombs:

The so-called **Barberini or Corneli tomb**. This funerary monument, dated to the 2nd century AD, consists of two floors above and an underground burial chamber in excellent condition. The uppermost chamber is cross-vaulted and entirely covered with frescoes with a red background, as well as stucco decorations. The frescoes depict groups of people, winged victories riding on chariots, cupids, birds, marine animals, mythological subjects and architectural elements.

The **Tomb of the Valerii**. The richly decorated underground burial chambers have been preserved, dated to the 2nd century AD, while the part above ground is a hypothetical reconstruction made in the 19th century. The underground chambers feature elaborate white stucco work decorations, with 35 medallions and squares, lunettes and a vaulted ceiling. The medallions depict Dionysian themes, female figures and marine animals, while the central roundel features a delicate veiled figure riding on the back of a griffin, which represents the deceased being taken to the underworld.

**The Tomb of the Pancratii**. Most of the visible structure is a modern building that protects the underground part of the monument, built on top of the original walls dating to the 1st-2nd century AD, which have been preserved up to a height of about 1.5 metres. Inside, the tomb has several underground chambers marvellously decorated with mosaics on the floor and frescoed walls and vaulted ceilings, painted with brilliant colours and featuring excellently preserved stucco work, all of which depict mythological scenes, natural and architectural landscapes, female figures and animals. In the middle of one of the underground chambers is a large sarcophagus of Greek marble large enough for two bodies.

Given the beauty and exceptional nature of the decorations inside the tombs, the Archaeological Park limits access to the tombs to guided groups, to enable the public to enjoy these wonderful, albeit delicate, monuments, without causing any damage.