



From Vicolo di Sant'Urbano to the Via Latina Tombs

Caffarella Valley / Park of the Via Latina

This itinerary explores the green heart of the Archaeological Park of the Appia Antica, where nature, art and archaeology come together to delight visitors in amazing ways.

The itinerary begins at Vicolo di Sant'Urbano, which leads into the Caffarella Valley, an oasis of uncontaminated nature enclosed by some of Rome's most densely populated neighbourhoods. Scattered among the thick vegetation visitors can admire some very interesting archaeological remains from ancient Roman times, such as the Temple of Ceres and Faustina, the Nymphaeum of Egeria, the Roman Cistern and the so-called Constantinian Colombarium, or from the Middle Ages, such as the Valca Tower.

The Valley is crossed with waterways, such as the river Almone and many natural springs, which, after centuries, still feed the modern-day Fonte Egeria mineral water bottling plant. Continuing along Via dell'Almone towards Via Appia Nuova you come to the Via Latina Park, which features several Roman tombs with magnificent decorations. From here, follow the map for other itineraries across the Park.



POI



Distance

7

2.45 Km

Poi

- 1 The Caffarella Valley – Vicolo di Sant'Urbano
- 2 Temple of Ceres and Faustine - Church of Sant'Urbano
- 3 The Nymphaeum of Egeria
- 4 The Valca Tower
- 5 Costantine's Colombarium
- 6 River Almone (South)
- 7 The Archeological park of the Tombs of the Via Latina



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

Poi 1

The Caffarella Valley – Vicolo di Sant’Urbano

Roma / Place to visit - Natural area

The Vicolo di Sant’Urbano is an alley on the southern edge of the Caffarella Valley, a huge expanse of public land, covering an area of 190 hectares, bounded by the Aurelian Walls, Via Latina and Via dell’Almone. Its name comes from an estate owned by the noble Caffarelli family, who built a farmhouse here, in the 16th century, known as “Vaccareccia”, and which can still be seen in the Park.

The area was listed as public parkland in the 1965 Zoning Plan, and today visitors may enter and appreciate its natural beauty and archaeological remains via a number of gates in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This green valley, crossed by the river Almone, features many archaeological remains, tombs, villas, towers and waterworks, having been inhabited since the 6th century BC. Initially consisting entirely of farmland, in the Imperial age it became a highly prized residential area. In particular, we know from the ancient sources that, at the time, Herodes Atticus, a prominent Athenian orator and politician, who lived in Rome in the 2nd century AD, owned a vast estate and built a huge villa here (known as the *Pagus Triopius*), the core of which, having passed into the hands of the emperor, later became the Villa of Maxentius.

Evocative buildings here are the so-called “*nymphaeum* of Egeria”, the church of Sant’Urbano, originally dedicated to Ceres and Faustina, the tomb of Annia Regilla, the deceased wife of Herodes Atticus. Also of interest is the “Valca Tower”, built as a mill in around the 11th century, on the shores of the river, as part of a fulling mill for manufacturing cloth.



Info

Free admission.

Address

Vicolo di S. Urbano - Roma (RM)

How to get

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

Poi 2

Temple of Ceres and Faustine - Church of Sant’Urbano

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.

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

Vicolo S. Urbano, Roma - Roma (RM)

How to get

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

Poi 3

The Nymphaeum of Egeria

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



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.



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



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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.

Poi 4

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.

Poi 5

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.

Poi 6

River Almone (South)



Address

Valle della Caffarella - Roma (RM)

How to get

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

Roma / Naturalistic Area - Rivers

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



Opening Hours

09:00 - 19:00	On weekends mandatory reservation at least one day in advance by calling 067886254 during opening hours.
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Closing Days

Monday

Info

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

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

How to get

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

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 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.