


A wheelchair-accessible guide to Rome and Naples

Marcela Marañon tours two of Italy’s greatest cities with her wheelchair



By Tommie Ethington • May 2, 2023 • 5 minutes read

Sunrise with the Temple of Saturn in the foreground, in the Roman Forum, Rome, Italy • Image: PEC Photo/Getty Images

In our ***Where To*** series, we tag along as 12 fascinating travel influencers jaunt around the world in search of the best meals, experiences, and more, all inspired by our ***Travelers’ Choice Awards***. Browse all of the itineraries on our ***Where To hub***.

Through her travels, Texan Marcela Marañon (@thejourneyofabravewoman) aims to raise wheelchair-accessibility awareness and inspire others with disabilities to explore the world. This past spring, she and her daughter took on Rome and Naples—both Travelers’ Choice Best of the Best winners for both *overall popularity* and *for food*—with plenty of pit stops for pizza and gelato. Below, she shares just how much she managed to pack into six days.

Day one: Get settled



King Deluxe Park View room at Rome Cavalieri, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel • Image: Courtesy of Rome Cavalieri, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel

Kick off your trip in style with a stay at the wheelchair-friendly [Rome Cavalieri, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel](#). Set on 15 acres overlooking Italy’s capital city, the Travelers’ Choice Award winner boasts an impressive art collection, excellent service, and rooms fit for an emperor. Spend the day enjoying the amenities: Indulge in a spa treatment or hit the outdoor and indoor pools. The former borders a lush park, while the latter is outfitted with marble columns, fountains, a massive stone fireplace, and an accessible lift.

For dinner, there are several on-site options, but you’ll want to try and get a reservation at [La Pergola](#)—a Travelers’ Choice Award winner and the only three-Michelin-starred restaurant in Rome. Both the wine selection (the cellar has more than 53,000 bottles) and Italian olive oils are great, but what really stands out is the multi-page water menu with 29 choices. And that’s all before you get to your main course.

Day two: Take the train to Naples and Pompeii



Pompeii archaeological site (L), Bar at Habita79 Pompeii MGallery (R) • Image: Atlantide Phototravel/Getty Images (L), Courtesy of Habita79 Pompeii MGallery (R)

The Waldorf’s breakfast spread is equally over the top, with multiple stations and an entire table devoted to pastries. Get your fill, then head to the train station for a quick but scenic ride to Naples. ([Trenitalia](#) trains are very accommodating to wheelchair users, with lifts for transferring from the platform to the train car, and accessible restrooms.)

Once you arrive, drop your bags at the uber-modern [Habita79 Pompeii MGallery](#). You’ll be back later to experience the colorful lobby and rooftop bar, but first you’re visiting [Pompeii Archaeological Park](#), a Travelers’ Choice Award–winning historical site, the ancient city was buried in ash after nearby Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 A.D. Today, you can tour the area via the wheelchair-friendly *Pompeii per tutti* (Pompeii for all) path, which takes you past well-preserved buildings like one of the oldest surviving Roman amphitheaters in the world.

Call it an early night, but not before dining on steak and pistachio cheesecake at the Michelin-starred [Casa Gallo](#), which, by no coincidence, is also a Travelers’ Choice Award favorite.

Day three: Make (and eat) pizza



The Real Teatro di San Carlo (L), Pizzeria Loezza in Naples, Italy (R) • Image: vololibero/Getty Images (L), Management/Tripadvisor (R)

Some tourists come to Naples and only ever see Pompeii. Today is your opportunity to go deeper in Italy’s third-largest city. Ask the hotel to arrange a driver through [Napoli Limo Service](#) to take you into the heart of Naples for breakfast and a shot of espresso at [Gran Caffè Gambrinus](#). When you’re fueled up, continue on to yet another Travelers’ Choice awardee, [Palazzo Reale](#). Once home to royalty, the fully accessible former palace now houses a museum and Italy’s national library. Peak into the lavish rooms with neoclassical and Baroque furnishings and gawk at the stunning marble staircase. If it’s open, be sure to also pop into the opulent [Teatro di San Carlo](#) next door.

“Naples often gets overlooked, but if you spend some time touring the city, you won’t be disappointed. I can’t wait to go back to see an opera and the Galleria. Two days wasn’t enough.”

As for lunch, you’re in the birthplace of pizza—and Travelers’ Choice Award winner [Pizzeria Loezza](#) has some of the best pies. Fresh toppings abound, but you can’t go wrong with the classic three-cheese option.

Spend the rest of the afternoon shopping in [Via San Gregorio Armeno](#), a Travelers’ Choice Award–winning district known for its artisans and handmade nativity sets. Then, forgo dinner for a Neapolitan [pizza-making class](#). The two-hour event includes a culinary history lesson, wine, and enough pizza to tide you over for the rest of the evening, plus helpful staff to assist you with any necessary accommodations.

Day four: Return to Rome



Gelato at Gelateria Come Il Latte in Rome (L), Aerial view of Rome at sunset (R) • Image: Andrea Z/Tripadvisor (L), Gary Yeowell/Getty Images (R)

Sleep in and have a leisurely brunch before taking the train back to the capital and your home away from home: Rome Cavalieri. Unpack (you’ll be here for a few nights this time), then head off-property and grab an outdoor table at [Peppo al Cosimato](#) before the crowds descend for dinner. The Travelers’ Choice Award–winning restaurant is known for its fresh-from-the-sea fare, but the lemon spritz and special pizza with ricotta-stuffed crust are also memorable.

Day five: Zoom around the city



Saint Peter’s Square in Rome • Image: Nikoda/Getty Images

Make a return visit to the hotel breakfast buffet before settling into a sidecar for a three-hour [Vespa tour of the Eternal City](#). An experienced guide will do the driving, so all you have to do is sit back and snap pictures. The itinerary changes depending on the day, but typically includes a mix of attractions like the [Colosseum](#), [Circus Maximus](#), the [Trevi Fountain](#), and the bohemian Trastevere neighborhood (all of which are Travelers’ Choice Award winners).

You’ll finish at the [Vatican](#), where you can line up to see the famous [Sistine Chapel](#) and [St. Peter’s Basilica](#). The latter is a Travelers’ Choice Award winner, but both are popular, so advanced tickets are recommended. Afterward, relax at the hotel before taking part in a two-hour [pasta class](#). The cost, which includes dinner with wine, is \$60. Gaining the skills necessary to make fresh fettuccine at home? Priceless.

Day six: Explore the Colosseum

When in Rome, there are no rules against eating dessert for breakfast, so treat yourself to some decadent pastries at [Casa Manfredi](#). Pair a cappuccino with a croissant, and grab a few bite-size tarts to go. You can eat them on your way to the Colosseum, just a few blocks away.

“In general, Rome is not very good with accessibility, but at the Colosseum, you get in free if you’re in a wheelchair and there’s also a hidden accessible restroom. Just ask if you can’t find it.”

Unlike on the Vespa tour, when you only saw the structure from afar, the [Colosseum Arena Floor Tour with Roman Forum](#) gets you inside and close to where the gladiator games unfolded. See tales of the ancient amphitheater that are normally off limits to visitors and hear parts directly from a local.

Afterward, explore two Travelers’ Choice Award–winning sites: the [Roman Forum](#) and [Palatine Hill](#). While they’re not as wheelchair-friendly as many other sites in Rome, there are elevators and select pathways that still allow you to explore some of Ancient Rome’s most important buildings, including the Senate House, the Temple of Julius Caesar, and the [Arch of Titus](#).

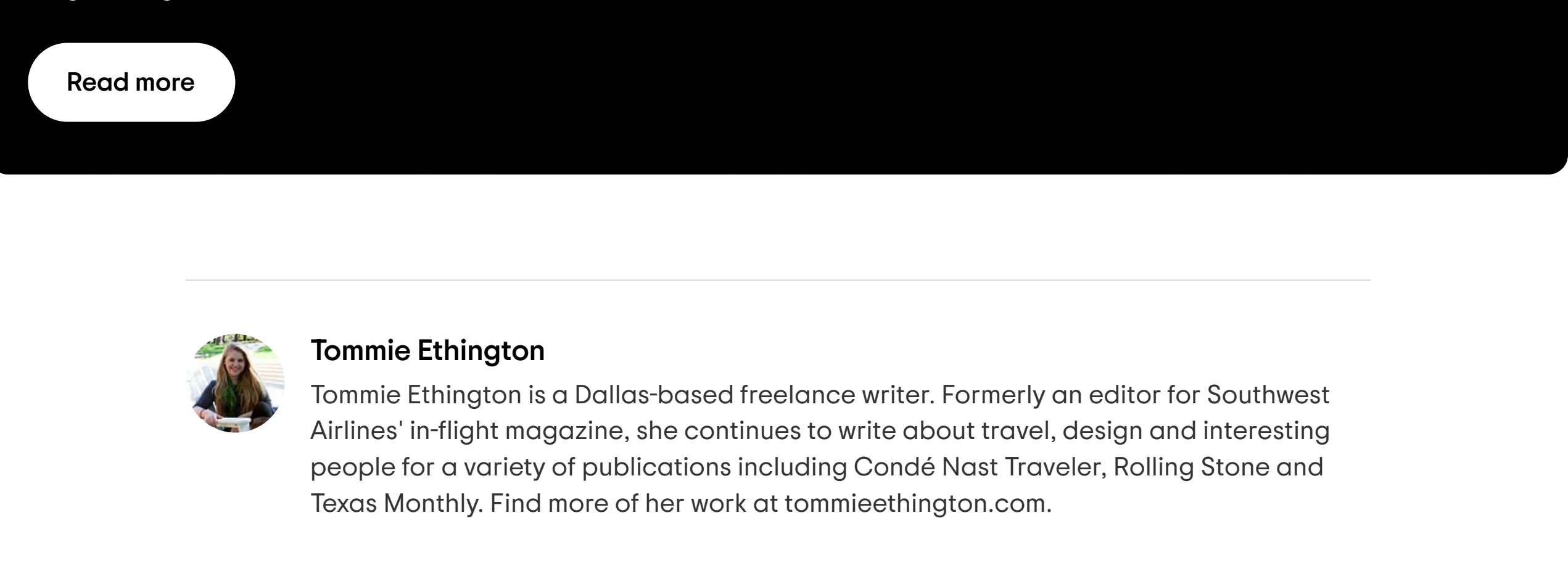
End the day on a high note with a delicious meal at [Da Augusto](#). Order the puntarelle salad and cacio e pepe and savor every last moment in Italy.

Marcela’s picks:

Most useful piece of gear: “I was so glad I brought my power assist wheels for navigating the cobblestone streets, and I wish I’d brought more than one jacket as the weather was chillier than expected in March.”

Biggest surprise: “I was surprised by how well-preserved Pompeii is, even after going through a giant earthquake and a volcanic eruption. And also how accessible the archeological site is—they’ve done an amazing job with all the ramps and pathways.”


Most photogenic place: “It’s hard to pick just one, but I really loved all of the things I saw on my tour of Naples. Our driver, Salvatore, took us through streets with colorful houses like the ones you see on postcards of the Amalfi Coast and to this spot on the top of a hill where you could look out over the Gulf of Naples. It was breathtaking.”



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Tommie Ethington

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