

ART & POLITICS ON VIA DEL CORSO

On Via del Corso, the arrow-straight road that links Piazza Venezia to Piazza del Popolo, you'll find one of Rome's finest private art galleries. You wouldn't know it from the grimy exterior but the **Galleria Doria Pamphilj** (Map p80; ☎06 679 73 23; www.dopart.it; Via del Corso 305; adult/reduced €11/7.50; ☀9am-7pm, last admission 6pm; 🚶 Piazza Venezia) houses an extraordinary collection of works by Raphael, Tintoretto, Brueghel, Titian, Caravaggio, Bernini and Velázquez. Masterpieces abound but the undisputed star is Velázquez' portrait of Pope Innocent X, who grumbled that the depiction was 'too real'.

A short walk to the north of the gallery, the 30m-high **Colonna di Marco Aurelio** (Map p80) on Piazza Colonna heralds the presence of **Palazzo Chigi** (Map p80; www.governo.it; Piazza Colonna 370; ☀guided visits 9am-1pm Sat Oct-May, booking obligatory) **FREE**, the official residence of the Italian prime minister. Next door, on Piazza di Montecitorio, the Bernini-designed **Palazzo di Montecitorio** (Map p80; ☎800 012955; www.camera.it; Piazza di Montecitorio; ☀guided visits 10.30am-3.30pm, 1st Sun of month; 🚶 Via del Corso) **FREE** is home to Italy's Chamber of Deputies.

La Fornarina (The Baker's Girl), a portrait of his mistress who worked in a bakery in Trastevere. Works by Caravaggio include *San Francesco d'Assisi in meditazione* (St Francis in Meditation), *Narciso* (Narcissus; 1571-1610) and the mesmerisingly horrific *Giuditta e Oloferne* (Judith Beheading Holofernes; c 1597-1600).

Convento dei Cappuccini

MUSEUM

(Map p86; ☎06 487 11 85; Via Vittorio Veneto 27; adult/reduced €6/4; ☀9am-7pm daily; 🚶 Barberini) This church and convent complex has an interesting multimedia museum telling the story of the Capuchin order of monks. The main attraction, however, is the extraordinary **Capuchin cemetery** that lies below, where everything from the picture frames to the light fittings is made of human bones.

Between 1528 and 1870 the resident Capuchin monks used the bones of 4000 of their departed brothers to create this mesmerising, macabre memento mori (reminder of death). There's an arch crafted from hundreds of skulls, vertebrae used as fleure-de-lis and light fixtures made of femurs.

Palazzo del Quirinale

PALACE

(Map p86; ☎06 4 69 91; www.quirinale.it; Piazza del Quirinale; admission €5; ☀8am-noon Sun mid-Sep-Jun; 🚶 Barberini) Overlooking **Piazza del Quirinale**, this immense palace is the official residence of Italy's head of state, the Presidente della Repubblica. For almost three centuries it was the pope's summer residence but in 1870 Pope Pius IX begrudgingly handed the keys over to Italy's new king. Later, in 1948, it was given to the Italian state.

It's open to the public on Sundays, and at the end of visiting time (at around 12.30pm to 1pm) there's a free concert in the chapel.

On the other side of the piazza, the palace's former stables, the **Scuderie Papali al Quirinale** (Map p86; ☎06 3996 7500; www.scuderiequirinale.it; Via XXIV Maggio 16; tickets around €12; ☀depends on exhibition), host excellent art exhibitions.

Chiesa di Sant'Andrea al Quirinale

CHURCH

(Map p86; Via del Quirinale 29; ☀8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm winter, 9am-noon & 3-6pm summer; 🚶 Via Nazionale) It's said that in his old age Bernini liked to enjoy the peace of this late-17th-century church, regarded by many as one of his greatest. Faced with severe space limitations, he managed to produce a sense of grandeur by designing an elliptical floor plan with a series of chapels opening onto the central area.

Chiesa di San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane

CHURCH

(Map p86; Via del Quirinale 23; ☀10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, noon-1pm Sun; 🚶 Via Nazionale) A masterpiece of baroque architecture (albeit a grubby one), this was Borromini's first church and bears all the hallmarks of his genius. The elegant curves of the facade, the play of convex and concave surfaces, and the dome illuminated by hidden windows, all combine to transform a minuscule space into a light, airy interior.

The church, completed in 1641, stands at a road intersection known as the Quattro Fontane, after the late-16th-century fountains on its four corners, representing Fidelity, Strength and the rivers Arno and Tiber.