

Ciao, fellow traveler!

January is here, and Italy is buzzing with excitement. From the transformative celebrations of the Jubilee Year in Rome to fiery traditions in southern Italy, there's no shortage of experiences to inspire your travel dreams. Let's dive into the highlights this month!

Rome has transformed this January, pulsing with the energy of the 2025 Jubilee Year. Picture yourself among the 32 million pilgrims and travelers flowing through the city's ancient streets, each seeking their own meaningful connection to this extraordinary moment.

A Magnificent New Addition: Rome's Piazza Pia

A newly opened pedestrian area called **Piazza Pia** has become a central highlight in front of St. Peter's Basilica, offering a more immersive and tranquil space to admire Bernini's grand colonnade. Piazza Pia is not just a pedestrian zone; it's a stunning urban project that showcases Rome's commitment to improving visitor experiences. This area was a major undertaking for the city, designed to accommodate up to 150,000 people, featuring beautiful fountains, grand staircases, and tree-lined promenades.

The creation of Piazza Pia represents a significant improvement for both Jubilee participants and all those visiting Rome. Imagine standing in the heart of this historic city, surrounded by pilgrims, soaking in centuries of faith and art, while enjoying the serene atmosphere of this beautifully designed space.

Enhancing Your Jubilee Experience

While the Holy Doors of St. Peter's Basilica may have a line a mile long, my friend Annalisa, a Rome local, mentioned she walked over to the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore on a Thursday afternoon and found no one waiting to enter the Holy Doors and very few people outside. This is a reminder that the

Holy Doors at St. Peter, St. Paul Outside the Walls, Santa Maria Maggiore, and St. John Lateran are all open. These churches are magnificent, and you should absolutely include the four papal basilicas in your planning.

Don't forget to visit the Jubilee information centers, which are dotted around the city, for guided tours, event schedules, and helpful resources to enhance your trip.

Sweet Moments Near Campo de' Fiori: Roscioli Pasticceria

Rome isn't just about spiritual journeys—it's also about indulging in life's sweeter pleasures. One of my favorite stops is Roscioli Pasticceria, located near the vibrant Campo de' Fiori. This bakery is a local treasure, known for its Maritozzo—a soft, slightly sweet brioche bun generously filled with velvety whipped cream.

Pair it with a perfectly brewed coffee, and you have a quintessential Roman breakfast. Stand at the bar, like the locals do, sipping your coffee and savoring your Maritozzo as the day begins. In Italy, coffee isn't rushed—it's a moment to pause and enjoy. When they look your way just say "Vorrei un cappuccino e due maritozzi per favore."

 Roscioli Pasticceria Via dei Chiavari, 34, Rome

More Jubilee Highlights

- **Events to Watch:** Daily Masses, special evening vespers, and musical performances are scheduled at key basilicas across Rome, including St. John Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore.
- **Pilgrim Paths:** Follow the spiritual walking routes around the city, designed to connect travelers with Rome's rich history and Jubilee celebrations.

Celebrate Sant'Antonio (St. Anthony) and Sant'Agata (St. Agatha) Beyond Rome, Italy's festivals continue to light up January/February.

Fòcara di Novoli (Jan 16–17): In this ancient celebration honoring Saint Anthony Abate, the patron saint of animals and farmers, locals construct a

massive 25-meter-high bonfire in Puglia. The tradition dates back centuries when fires were lit to purify livestock and ensure a prosperous farming year.

Saint Anthony, a 3rd-century Egyptian monk, is often depicted with a pig and a staff with bells, symbolizing his role as protector of domestic animals. I love seeing all of the animals and families in line for blessings. I have seen turtles in a shoebox, roosters in their cage, dogs, cats, and many horses arrive at church for this event.

The evening culminates in a spectacular display as the bonfire illuminates the winter sky, accompanied by traditional music and local delicacies. Check my instagram to see this years Focara.

Sant'Agata Festival (Feb 3–5): Catania's heartfelt celebration of its patron saint is one of Italy's largest and most emotional events. The festival commemorates the life and martyrdom of Saint Agatha, a young Christian woman who lived in the 3rd century. Highlights include:

- **Grand Processions:** The silver carriage carrying the statue of Saint Agatha makes its way through the city, starting on February 3rd and continuing for three days.
- **Candelore:** Eleven intricately decorated large candles, representing the medieval guilds, are carried through the streets.
- **Spectacular Fireworks:** Especially on the night of February 5th.
- **Traditional Costumes:** Devotees wear traditional white tunics and black headdresses.
- **Street Food:** Enjoy Sicilian treats like arancini and beccafico. This vibrant mix of faith, tradition, and folklore attracts up to a million people, offering a unique cultural experience.

Important Travel Update for UK Transit If your Italy journey includes a connection through the United Kingdom, take note: As of January 8th, 2025, all non-UK nationals, including Commonwealth citizens, must obtain an Electronic Visa Waiver (EVW) – even for brief airport transits. This new requirement applies whether you're visiting the UK or simply changing planes at any UK airport.

While the process is straightforward – a quick online application costing £10 (about US\$13) with rapid approval – many travelers have been caught off guard. To avoid last-minute complications, secure your EVW well before travel, even for brief layovers.

Live the Festivals with Me! Follow me on Instagram @katerinaferraraauthor to catch live moments from Rome's Jubilee and other Italian festivals this month. I'll share videos, tips, and stories to bring these incredible experiences right to your screen.

👉 **Ready to start your journey?**

[Click here to dive into the blog and explore](#)

Let's make your next Italian getaway the trip of a lifetime! 🌍🍷🎉

Grazie mille for being part of this amazing journey.

Arrivederci e buon viaggio, Katerina

Immersion Travel Italy Newsletter

Katerina Ferrara Author

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