

THE THRIVING CULTURE OF TRASTEVERE IN ROME

Stevie McDaniel February 2026



THE SPOTS YOU CAN'T MISS IN TRASTEVERE !

putting spotlight upon some of the must see hotspots within Trastevere, a neighborhood nestled in the heart of rome!

Porta portese

Janiculum Hill

Piazza Di Santa Maria In Trastevere

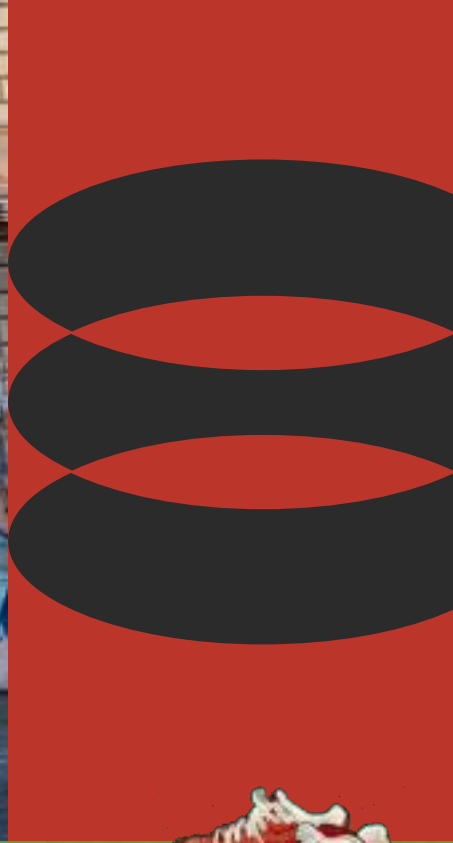
Zalib

Fontana dell'Acqua Paola

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WELCOME TO TRASTEVERE

On January 13th 2026, I stepped foot in Italy for the very first time, and by extension Europe for the first time. Having lived in the United States for the entirety of my twenty years alive, and never leaving the continent, I was faced with an immediate feeling of immense culture shock. Especially considering I only speak English, the entirety of Europe felt like an alien landscape, foreign and unrecognizable to my gaze. Streets filled with people speaking Italian, English, and a multitude of other languages. Signs on stores looked like something out of a fever dream, and something as simple as grocery shopping was now an almost inconceivable task for me. As a 20-year-old black American, growing up it was really easy to feel like I didn't have a strong culture. "My first week in Italy quickly showed me I do indeed have a culture, and I miss it very much. "



However, this homesickness was relieved the longer I explored the neighbourhood of Trastevere. Trastevere, derived from the Latin phrase "trans Tiberim", meaning "beyond the Tiber" is the largest neighbourhood within Rome. Its location on the West side of the Tiber creates a tight knit community filled with beautiful architecture, and wonderfully kind people. Ultimately my time exploring Trastevere acted as a wonderful introduction to living in Italy.

"My first week in Italy quickly showed me I do indeed have a culture, and I miss it very much. "





The exterior of Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere on January 20th, 2026.

Piazza di Santa Maria in Trastevere

My time in Trastevere started at one of the most popular places within the neighbourhood, the Piazza di Santa Maria in Trastevere.





I observed the surrounding area for some time, taking notice of all the people within the square. Compared to other Piazzas across Rome, at first glance it seemed rather underwhelming, however I was extremely mistaken. The first thing I noticed within the Piazza was the fountain of **Santa Maria in Trastevere**, one of the oldest still functioning fountains within the city. My next observation was the large building with beautiful architecture; I would soon discover this was the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere, the most important church within Trastevere. Built for the first time in the 4th century, I was particularly impressed with features of the exterior of the structure, like the belltower and the marvellous statues alongside the roof. After going inside, I discovered the interior of the Basilica is filled with equally beautiful works of art and architecture. There are many 12th and late 13th-century mosaics in the basilica, my personal favorites being the Stories of The Virgin series by Pietro Cavallini. There are six murals within the series depicting the life of the virgin Mary that I think most travelers shouldn't avoid.



The clocktower of Basilica of Santa Maria within Piazza di Santa Maria on January 20th, 2026.



Despite the beauty found within Piazza di Santa Maria in Trastevere, I personally enjoyed the **Chiesa di San Cosimato** more. Found within the Nuovo Regina Margherita hospital, the chiesa was originally built in the 10th century.. The church's location causes it to be often-overlooked, making it a true hidden gem within Trastevere. If you visit the Chiesa, often times you will find it completely empty, which is a rare occurrence for any church within Rome. Initially, on my first visit to the chiesa I admired it with a mentor, but upon later visits to the neighbourhood I decided to take advantage of the solace found within the chiesa on my own. Filled with beautiful architecture, and an amazing mural across the ceiling, it was hard to not appreciate the beauty of the building. Despite the many restorations the building has undergone, it still houses the 15th-century fresco "Our Lady between St Francis and St Clare" by Antonio del Massaro, a breathtaking example of Renaissance-era beauty.

The Ceiling of the Church of San Cosimato on January 20th, 2026.

GIANICOLOR HILL

January 22, 2026



Street signs seen on Gianicolo Hill on January 22nd, 2026.

The next place I decided to visit during my time within Trastevere was Gianicolo Hill. The second tallest hill in Rome, Gianicolo overlooks the entire neighbourhood of Trastevere.

Anyone who decides to make the hike up the hill is rewarded with a beautiful scene depicting the entirety of the neighborhood. The hill provides a jaw-dropping glimpse into the many intricate rooftops, and unique Roman architecture. Those with exceptionally good vision can even see glimpses of the Vatican City, and the many beautiful buildings within. In my experience walking through Gianicolo, I quickly noticed the beautiful nooks and crannies found within the streets of Trastevere. Something about the buildings and paths have a unique identity not similar to any other neighbourhood within Rome.

At the top of Gianicolo I was faced with a prime example of the sense of community Trastevere possesses. I alongside many others enjoyed a beautiful view of the city, while stopping within a small park on the hill.

After a short break admiring the view of the city from such an elevation, I continued onwards through Gianicolo, eventually passing the **Gianicolo Lighthouse (Faro del Gianicolo)**. A rather beautiful monument found at a location most wouldn't go out of their way to notice. A 20-meter-high lighthouse constructed in 1911 by Manfredo Manfredi. The lighthouse was a gift to Rome courtesy of the Italian community within Argentina in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Italian unification.



Gianicolo Lighthouse January, 22nd, 2026.

I was really impressed seeing such a structure at such an obscure location; however, I didn't have the time to admire it for as long as I would have had wanted to. This afternoon in particular, I was in a rush to catch the **Cannone del Mezzogiorno**. Every day, at 12:00 in the afternoon, a blank round is loaded into a cannon and then fired out of a field gun stored within the hill. The tradition was started in 1847 by Pope Pius IX, so churches within the city have a uniformed signal that it's time to ring the midday bells. Whatever the reason may be, I was just really excited to have the opportunity to see a cannon fire.



Upon arriving at the field cannon at 11:50, I was greeted by dozens of people eagerly waiting for the same reasons I was. Within Piazza Gianicolo lies the **Monument to Giuseppe Garibaldi**, a beautiful equestrian statue within the centre of the area, standing at the highest point within Gianicolo Hill. Giuseppe Garibaldi, considered one of Italy's "Fathers of the fatherland" and one of Italy's national heroes, was a general who contributed largely to the unification of Italy.

Monument to Giuseppe Garibaldi. January, 22, 2026.

"I felt like I was now a part of this community"

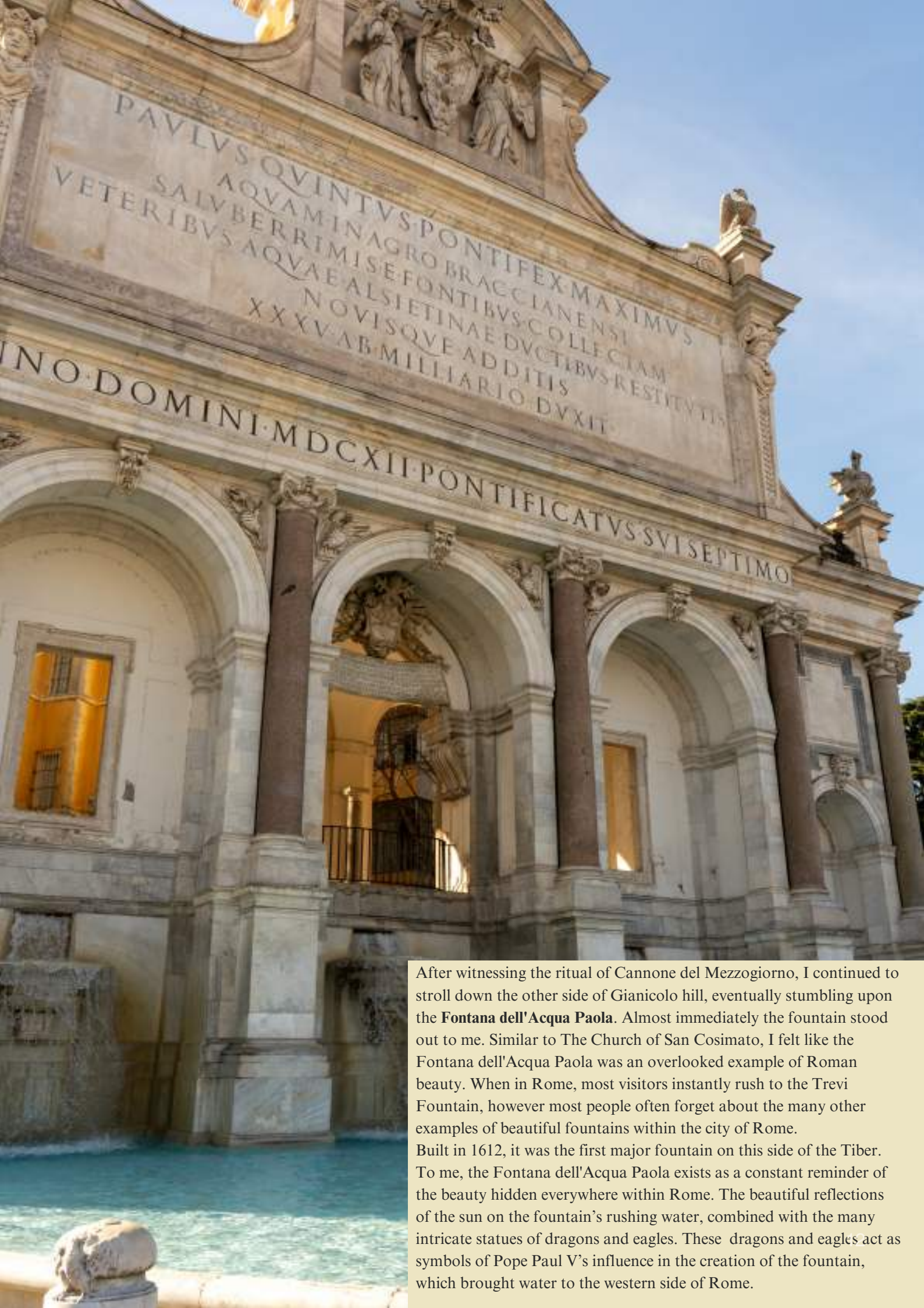
In front of the statue stands a man with a microphone and a guitar, regaling patrons with songs he performs. Alongside his performance, I hear the cheers of the audience, and the chatter of various onlookers.

I'm filled with a sense of appreciation for the privilege to be able to witness such an interesting example of some of the traditions that cause Trastevere to stand out amongst other communities within Rome, but more important than just witnessing, I felt like I was now a part of this community of onlookers.

As 12:00 drew closer, eventually the piazza grew to be silent. All of us were anxiously watching the firing squad's ritual before finally a loud boom disrupts it all, followed by cheers at the completion of the daily tradition.



Cannone del Mezzogiorno on Gianicolo Hill on January 22nd, 2026.



After witnessing the ritual of Cannone del Mezzogiorno, I continued to stroll down the other side of Gianicolo hill, eventually stumbling upon the **Fontana dell'Acqua Paola**. Almost immediately the fountain stood out to me. Similar to The Church of San Cosimato, I felt like the Fontana dell'Acqua Paola was an overlooked example of Roman beauty. When in Rome, most visitors instantly rush to the Trevi Fountain, however most people often forget about the many other examples of beautiful fountains within the city of Rome. Built in 1612, it was the first major fountain on this side of the Tiber. To me, the Fontana dell'Acqua Paola exists as a constant reminder of the beauty hidden everywhere within Rome. The beautiful reflections of the sun on the fountain's rushing water, combined with the many intricate statues of dragons and eagles. These dragons and eagles act as symbols of Pope Paul V's influence in the creation of the fountain, which brought water to the western side of Rome.



Continuing my trek alongside this side of Gianicolo Hill, I passed the **Museum of Ossario Garibaldino**. A beautiful structure and mausoleum built in memorial of soldiers who died in battles for Rome against the French army in 1849, while also acting as their burial ground. So far, exploring Trastevere I've gotten a taste of the wonderful communities within Rome, however both of these places emphasized to me just how much beauty lies within these communities, waiting to be observed.

Various shots from the
Museum of Ossario
Garibaldino. January 22,
2026.





SHOPPING IN TRASTEVERE

Later that week, I would then explore Trastevere again, this time starting with the Porta Portese market.

The market happens every Sunday, where vendors set up shop in stalls spanning across a long section of Trastevere. The streets are crowded with tourists, alongside locals who have incorporated the market into their weekly routines. During my time at the market, I witnessed an intricate fusion of many different cultures. Bright coloured fabrics, intricate jewellery, and beautiful clothing, all for cheap prices. Something especially that had caught my eye was a display of various sweatshirts, all displaying various insignias of Rome.

Something about this display reminded me of home, and for just a moment, I felt like Rome wasn't so different from the world that I know after all.

After enjoying all of the goods for sale and strolling the length of the market, I had conjured quite an appetite. I decided to spend the rest of my Sunday exploring some of the food options within Trastevere. I figured this could also be another opportunity to further immerse myself within the rich community in the neighbourhood.

The first place I decided to visit would be Trastevere's **Trapizzino** (Piazza Trilussa 46) after hearing nothing but praise for their Trapizzini. I went with the classic chicken option, and honestly was a little disappointed, but for five euro I wasn't too upset.

This period of my time in Trastevere was rather uneventful, but still pleasant nonetheless. I strolled through the neighborhood admiring the unique character found on these streets, unlike anything else in Rome



The exterior of Trapizzina restaurant in Trastevere on February 3, 2026.



Alessandro standing proudly in front of the menu of Donkey Punch, his restaurant within the neighbourhood of Trastevere on February 3rd, 2026.

After doing some more exploring, I stumbled into **Donkey Punch** (Via della Scala 33); a sandwich shop with a rather charming interior. After a quick chat with the kind staff, I asked for “whatever is most recommended”. They answered me with a smile and soon presented me with one of the most delicious sandwiches I have ever consumed. As well as making delicious food, the owner, Alessandro treated me with an amount of hospitality that I hadn’t experienced otherwise in Italy yet. In this moment I started to realize, that I am not just a tourist, but rather now a person residing within this community. Upon making this realization, I only continued to further connect with the neighborhood.



Villa Farnesina

January 29, 2026.



Various shots from Villa Farnesina January 29, 2026.

Continuing my exploration of Trastevere, I later visited the renowned **Villa Farnesina** on Via Della Lungara. Built from 1506 until 1512, Villa Farnesina is a beautiful historic building nestled within Trastevere. The villa houses multiple buildings, alongside a large, beautiful garden. Within the main building, the ceilings are coated in complex murals, intricate and beautiful pieces of art line the rooms of the villa. Some of these murals can be credited to the Renaissance painter Raffaello Sanzio. The most famous of Raffaello's frescos within the villa is the Triumph of Galatea. The fresco depicts a beautiful scene of the nymph Galatea riding a chariot, while angels fly around her. The beauty of the villa isn't exclusively found inside the buildings either; the backyard houses a charming garden filled with wild oranges, and beautiful foliage. The exterior of the villa is free access as well, while the interior building cost seven euros, very worth it considering how beautiful it is within.

Liberia Zalib

January 29, 2026



Various shots from Zalib cultural center captured on January 29th , 2026.

Given all the wonderful places within Trastevere, my favourite spot within the neighbourhood that I visited may seem underwhelming in comparison. However, I can assure you there's a reason I return day after day. If there's one place in Trastevere I believe you must visit, it's the **Zalib cultural centre** in Trastevere (Via della Penitenza 35). Zalib is a members-only library, offering discounted textbooks, and other resources for students within the area. While also providing a space for students and artists to exchange cultures, do some homework, connect, or just to relax with a drink. In the many times I've been to Zalib in the last two weeks, I've witnessed a wonderful fusion of many different customs. Between chatting with the staff, or making friends with the patrons, Zalib has exposed me to some of stories of individuals within Rome. Most importantly though, Zalib presented me with a feeling of belonging into the beautiful neighbourhood that is Trastevere. Ultimately, Trastevere has proven itself to be an extremely welcoming neighbourhood with hidden gems all around, gems that will reveal themselves to those that search for them.



The intricate back streets of the neighborhood of . Trastevere on January 22nd, 2026.