

The Multicultural neighborhood filled with History: Esquilino



CHINESE LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

A mosaic of cultures, both old and new within rome.

THE
MULTICULTURAL
HUB OF ROME!

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APPasseggio



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Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II on February 24th

INTRODUCING *the* NEIGHBORHOOD

“ Esquilino offers many unique displays of Roman beauty, both ancient, and modern”

Esquilino, A neighborhood within Rome just outside of Termini Station is one of the four regions of Rome set up by Servius Tullius. Existing as one of the “entry points” of Rome, Esquilino offers many unique displays of Roman beauty, both ancient, and modern. However, in my opinion one of the most interesting parts of Esquilino is its diverse blend of cultures. Esquilino has a large population of African and East-Asian immigrants, and this demographic has transformed the neighborhood into a melting pot of cultures unlike any other neighborhood in Rome

Named after Esquilino Hill, one of the Seven Great Hills in Rome. Esquilino is not only an example of cultures existing alongside each other, but also a showcase of Rome’s evolution. Throughout the city’s architecture, if you pay attention you notice a cross between modern improvements, and its classical history.



Nuovo Mercato Esquilino on February 24th

PIAZZA VITTORIO EMANUELLE

Starting at one of the central hubs of the neighborhood, introducing Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II; the biggest Piazza in Rome. Filled with greenery, people strolling through, and members of the neighborhood simply just enjoying the Piazza, Vittorio Emanuele II is an essential pillar of the Esquilino community. Built by Gaetano Koch in 1870 after the unification of Italy, the Piazza gets its name from Vittorio Emanuele II, Italy's first king.



Trophies of Marius on February 24th



Piazza Vittorio Emanuele on February 24th

In the center of the Piazza lies the Nicola Calipari gardens, within the gardens lies The Trophies of Marius. A large, ancient structure once known as the Nymphaeum of Alexander Severus built in 226 AD, now in a state of decay. As I stroll through the piazza, I take an extra long moment examining the old Aqueduct. Initially, I felt a sense of confusion, my American mind unable to understand why such a large structure rested here of all places. However, after learning the history, I felt a newfound level of appreciation for the community's ability to preserve its history.

FRITTO MISTO



Close to this decayed building lies a marble fountain built around 1910 by Mario Rutelli, dubbed the “Fritto Misto”. Despite its negative reception, I found the statue to be quite the beauty accessory for the piazza. Not too far from the gardens, there are benches often adorned with guests enjoying the ambience. As I stroll through I notice these guests, evidence of the Piazza’s role of the heart of community within Esquilino.

CHINESE *Lunar* NEW YEAR FESTIVAL



On Sunday, February 22nd the Italian Chinese Lunar New Year Festival took place in Esquilino, and it only makes sense that the main events were held here considering the large population of Chinese Immigrants within.

As I approach the festival, I see hundreds, possibly thousands of people cramming into the gates of the piazza like sardines. Outside of the piazza I see crowds of guests rushing down the street to follow the last moments of the lion dance parade.

Instantly upon arrival I'm hit with the smells of dishes I have not tasted since moving to Rome. Despite my yearning for a cuisine other than Roman, I ignore the overcrowded food stalls and make my way to the main stage. I watch the Chinese Ambassadors begin the opening ceremony, speaking to the crowd consisting of myself, and a diverse selection of onlookers. After anxiously waiting for what felt like an eternity, eventually performers boarded the stage. A team of puppeteers do an intricate lion dance, a man dressed as Sun-Wukong, the Chinese monkey king does an intricate flip and dance routine, people dressed in traditional Chinese garbs play music, all while the ambassadors pass out Lunar New Year gifts. All I can think, is how lucky I am to witness such a beautiful display of Roman Community.



Various shots from the Italian Chinese Lunar New Year Festival on February 22nd

NUOVO MERCATO ESQUILINO



The Nuovo Mercato Esquilino on February 24th

The multicultural influence within Esquilino is not limited to just the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II. Just a short walk away lies the **Nuovo Mercato Esquilino**, a covered market nestled within the neighborhood. As I stroll through the market stalls, I'm presented with an immediate sensory experience. I hear bits of conversation unlike the rest of the ambience found in the cities within Rome, as these conversations were spoken in languages other than Italian or English.

My nose is filled with the scent of Chinese food, and foreign spices. I examine the signs found around, and just like the conversations, I notice languages other than English. In this moment, I think to myself, "How does a neighborhood filled with such diverse and authentic examples of culture like this exist in Rome?" In the last 50 days, my time in Rome has shown me a very distinct cultural identity unique to only Rome. So I was quite glad and surprised seeing an area where people seamlessly melt and share bits of their cultural identities. From that alone, I knew that Esquilino was a special neighborhood. What makes the Nuovo Mercato unique in comparison to other covered markets in Rome is its unique selection of goods from immigrants of many unique cultures. Throughout the stalls of the market, one can find clothing, fabrics, Asian and African foods, fresh meat and produce, alongside many other things. For anyone growing bored of strictly Italian food, the Nuovo Mercato acts as a refreshing change of pace. If the Mercato didn't have anything impressive to you, on the streets outside of the walls of the market lies dozens of local immigrant stores and restaurants worth a visit.



While Esquilino is riddled with numerous multicultural gems, I wanted to highlight some of the more traditionally Roman aspects of the neighborhood. As I wandered aimlessly throughout the streets, I couldn't help but notice the style of architecture I felt was exclusive to Esquilino. The streets are adorned with mansions both old and new and construction. One of the buildings that I noticed was the **Metropolitano - Urban Center di Roma (Viale Manzoni, 34, 00185 Rome RM)**.

The Metropolitano is a building that exists to serve the residents of Esquilino. Within the building, there's four floors accessible by patrons. Each floor acts as a place where people of the neighborhood can exist or hang out. Throughout my time within the Esquilino, I passed this building many times, without actually stopping inside.

When I had eventually entered the building, I was greeted with modern interior design, giving the building a futuristic feeling. Initially, I spent some time on the second floor, referred to as the Piazza. This acted as a nice hidden place within Esquilino in which I could work on assignments, although I found myself to be most impressed by the Ground Floor of the Metropolitano, sporting a beautiful terrace and garden.

Not too far from the Metropolitano Urban Centre is the Church of Saint Mary Immaculate in Esquilino (via Emanuele Filiberto 129) . An orange Neo-gothic 19th Century building found on a street corner, the building looks unassuming from the outside, however the inside is anything but.

CHURCH OF SAINT MARY IMMACULATE IN ESQUILINO

Almost instantly upon entering, I notice the star-studded dark blue ceilings. A rather unique design choice for a chiesa. Built in Honor of The Virgin Mary and the Immaculate Conception.

Construction of the church began in 1896 and later finished in 1914 for the Friars of Charity, also known as the Bigi Fathers. The church was consecrated by Cardinal Luigi Traglia on April 21st, 1942.

Founded by the Blessed Ludovico da Casoria in 1859, the congregation was disbanded in 1973. Continuing my examination of the interior of the church, I'm greeted with beautiful frescos lining the walls and blue ceilings. Filled with depictions of Mary, Jesus, and many other important Christian faces. As I'm sitting in the quiet and intimate place that is the chiesa, I'm filled with gratitude that I can be in such a place by myself. Often overlooked and overshadowed by the other churches within the neighborhood, The chiesa is definitely worth a visit if you have the time.



The exterior of the Church of Saint Mary Immaculate in Esquilino on February 24th

CHURCH OF SAINT ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI



The exterior of the Church of Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori on February 24th

Continuing my exploration of the churches within the neighborhood, I took some time to stop by the **Church of Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori (Via di S. Vito, 10-1, 00185 Rome RM)**. A titular church dedicated to St. Alphonsus Liguori, the founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, also known as the Redemptorists. Another Neo-Gothic building, Construction began in 1855, and was designed by the Redemptorist George Wigley. Throughout the entire construction process of the church, many different Redemptorists contributed to its creation. The church is filled with small details only appreciated by those who pay attention. Upon the main door of the church is an intricate mural depicting the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Within the interior of the church, it is just as beautiful housing work by the Redemptorist artist Max Schmalzl. Similar to the Church of Saint Mary Immaculate in Esquilino, this is also a less busy church within Rome, and visitors should take advantage of the privacy within.

PAPAL BASILICA OF SAINT MARY MAJOR



The exterior of the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major on February 24th

While Esquilino had dozens of impressive sights to take in, it was most impossible to ignore the **Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major**.

Probably the main reason why the other churches within the Esquiline often remain overlooked, in my opinion, it is one of the most impressive religious buildings in Rome. From the moment I stepped foot in Esquilino, I noticed the towering Basilica, and instantly wondered what was housed within.

One of the four major basilicas in Rome, and one of the Seven Pilgrim Churches of Rome, construction was finished in 1743, making it the first Marian sanctuary in the Western world. The basilica was built in response to a winter miracle, which is celebrated every year on August 5th.

According to the legend of the miracle in the fourth century, a wealthy man named John and his wife prayed to Mary and vowed to dedicate all of their possessions to the church.

Mary appeared to them in a dream and told them that she would tell them a location to build a church. After running into Pope Liberius, they discover that they had shared the same vision. Later on August 5th, the peak of Roman Summer it snowed on the location that would later become the location of the Basilica.



Scene from the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major on February 24th



The statue of Pope Pius IX found within the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major captured February 24th

As I finally make my way to the exterior of the Basilica, I see crowds of people lining up to go inside. Upon Arrival, I'm greeted with beautiful marble columns, and unique gold patterns covering the ceiling. While the gilded wood itself is already impressive, what's even more impressive is the origin of the gold used. The gold was a gift from Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to Pope Alexander VI, and believed to be the very first shipment of gold from the new world.

I'm filled with a feeling of awe and reverence I haven't felt in any other Roman church. Due to its large scale the interior is filled with intricate detail, even for a traditional Roman church. In the front section of the nave, I notice a small staircase leading downwards, towards a large statue of Pope Pius IX kneeling in prayer. The massive statue almost distracted me from the equally beautiful sight of the Holy Crib directly in front of the statue, which was built by Virginio Vespignani. After admiring the beautiful scene found within the main nave, I took some time to acknowledge the Pauline Chapel. Filled with even more gold, and equally marvelous marble constructions. I then examine the Cesi Chapel, although slightly smaller than the Pauline Chapel, it's still adorned with glorious paintings.

Overall my favorite room of the basilica was the Baptistry. The centre of the Baptistry's ceiling is adorned with a beautiful mosaic, depicting angels singing alongside more golden decoration. The real star of the baptistry, though, is not the baptismal chamber, but rather the Antichamber filled with frescoes by Il Passignano depicting a wonderful scene of the Immaculate Conception. I pause for a moment, simply just admiring the scenery. After examining the church and it's history, all I can think about is how Esquilino is a mosaic of all the eras of Roman history.



The gold gilded ceilings found within the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major on February 24th



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