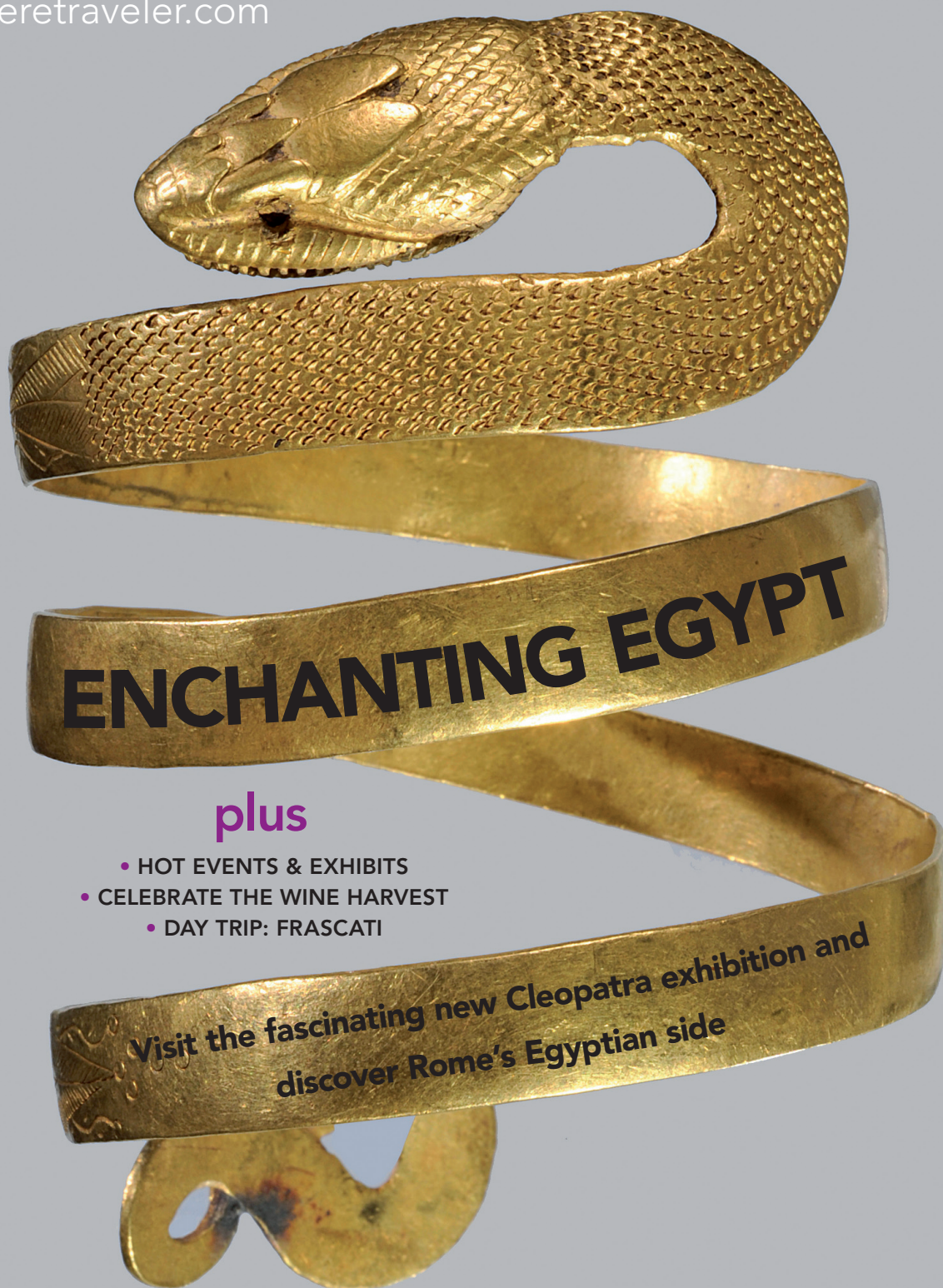


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The month's top
entertainment, art
and attractions



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Egypt in Rome

By Tiffany Parks



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The Roman Empire conquered Egypt in 30 BC and, in the process, ignited a love affair with Egyptian art and culture. This fascination lasted from ancient times to the Renaissance and beyond, and to this day Rome is bursting with art and artifacts from or inspired by the land of the Pharaohs. Discover all the ways you can soak up Egyptian culture without leaving the Eternal City.

Obelisks in Abundance

Carved to represent petrified sunrays, these granite monoliths were once placed in pairs at the entrance of temples dedicated to Amun-Ra, the Egyptian sun god. Today, there are more obelisks in Rome than in the entire country of Egypt, collected by the Roman emperors like so many trophies to celebrate their subjugation of the once-great empire. The most impressive of Rome's 13 obelisks can be found in front of St. Peter's Basilica, St. John in Lateran Basilica, and Palazzo Montecitorio—the

latter was once used as the needle of a vast sundial commissioned by Emperor Augustus. Rome's tiniest obelisk sits on the back of a baby elephant designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in Piazza Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and



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perhaps the most scenographic adorns the Fountain of the Four Rivers in Piazza Navona, also by Bernini.

Lions, Mummies, and a Giant Foot

Obelisks aren't the only artifacts the Romans "borrowed" from Egypt. Two Egyptian basalt lions spout water at the base of the Capitoline Hill, and two more, complete with hieroglyphics and dating to the 4th century BC, adorn the Pinecone Courtyard of the Vatican Museums. A cat from a temple dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis can be spotted on a building ledge on the aptly named Via della Gatta, and an enormous marble foot of Isis's colossal statue is not far away on Via del Pie' di Marmo. Find more ancient treasures, including a 3000-year-old mummy, at the Vatican's Gregorian Egyptian Museum.

Nile Mosaic in Palestrina

If Rome's many Egyptian monuments have whet your appetite for more, take a day trip to nearby Palestrina. This unassuming town possesses one of the



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most extraordinary mosaics in the world; dating to 100 BC, it's one of the earliest Roman representations of Egypt. The mosaic depicts the flooding of the Nile, an annual phenomenon that contributed to the rich fertility of the area, and as a result, the prosperity of the empire. Twenty separate scenes feature hunters, fisherman, boaters, swimmers, soldiers, reclining maidens, washerwomen, numerous varieties of plant life, and dozens of different animals, including camels, pythons, hyenas, turtles, otters, monkeys, hippos, crabs, peacocks, crocodiles, giraffes, lions, lizards, bears, cheetahs, and even mythical creatures. Museo Archeologico Nazionale Prenestino. Piazza della Cortina (Palestrina).

QUEEN OF THE NILE

If ancient Egypt could be represented by one person, no doubt it would be Cleopatra. Arguably the most fascinating woman who ever lived, Cleopatra and her beauty, charisma, and sex appeal are the stuff of legends. Even more extraordinary was her ability to captivate the two most powerful men of her time: Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. One of the hottest new exhibits to hit the city this fall follows the life of this political powerhouse and femme fatale from her ambitious beginnings as co-monarch to her suicide by asp bite. The exhibition also explores the Egyptian queen's influence on Roman fashions, customs, and religion, and the relationship between Rome and Egypt in the 1st century. More than 200 pieces from some of the most important Egyptian collections around the globe, including mosaics, frescoes, gold and silver jewelry, glazed earthenware, and sculptures in granite, alabaster, basalt, and bronze, are on display at the lovely Chiostro del Bramante. Arco della Pace, 5.



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