



Hidden Neighborhood

Discover an area of Rome that no longer exists. **Tiffany Parks** fills you in.

It may be called the Eternal City, but in reality, since its inception well over 2000 years ago, Rome has been in constant flux. Every building was built upon the foundations of an older one; every street has changed its course at least once. Like the tip of an iceberg, for all the ancient ruins and medieval houses that you can see, there are myriad more hidden from view, either buried underground or incorporated into more recent buildings. In many cases, historic sites have been purposely destroyed, all in the name of modern city planning.

Such is the case for the so-called *Spina del Borgo*, literally the “backbone” of the Borgo. A neighborhood of densely packed medieval buildings clustered around St. Peter’s Square, the Borgo is one of the most charming and characteristic areas in the city. But a big chunk of it is missing. If you’re wondering how an entire section of the city disappeared, take a gander at Via della Conciliazione, the monumental

boulevard that leads from Castel Sant’Angelo to St. Peter’s Basilica. On this site, until well into the 20th century, stood a narrow ridge or “spine” of medieval homes and shops, a continuation of the Borgo. In the 1930s, Mussolini decided to raze this area to make way for the wide thoroughfare we have today. Rome gained a glorious approach to the basilica, facilitating the access for the millions of tourists and pilgrims that visit it each year, but at the same time, hundreds of residents were displaced and a historic slice of the city disappeared.

On occasion of this year’s jubilee, the **Capitoline Museums** is hosting an exhibit that explores this missing piece of the urban fabric of Rome. Period photographs, video installations, historical maps, archeological and architectural materials, fragments of frescoes, paintings, prints, and scale models come together to take visitors back in time where they can explore a part of Rome that no longer exists.