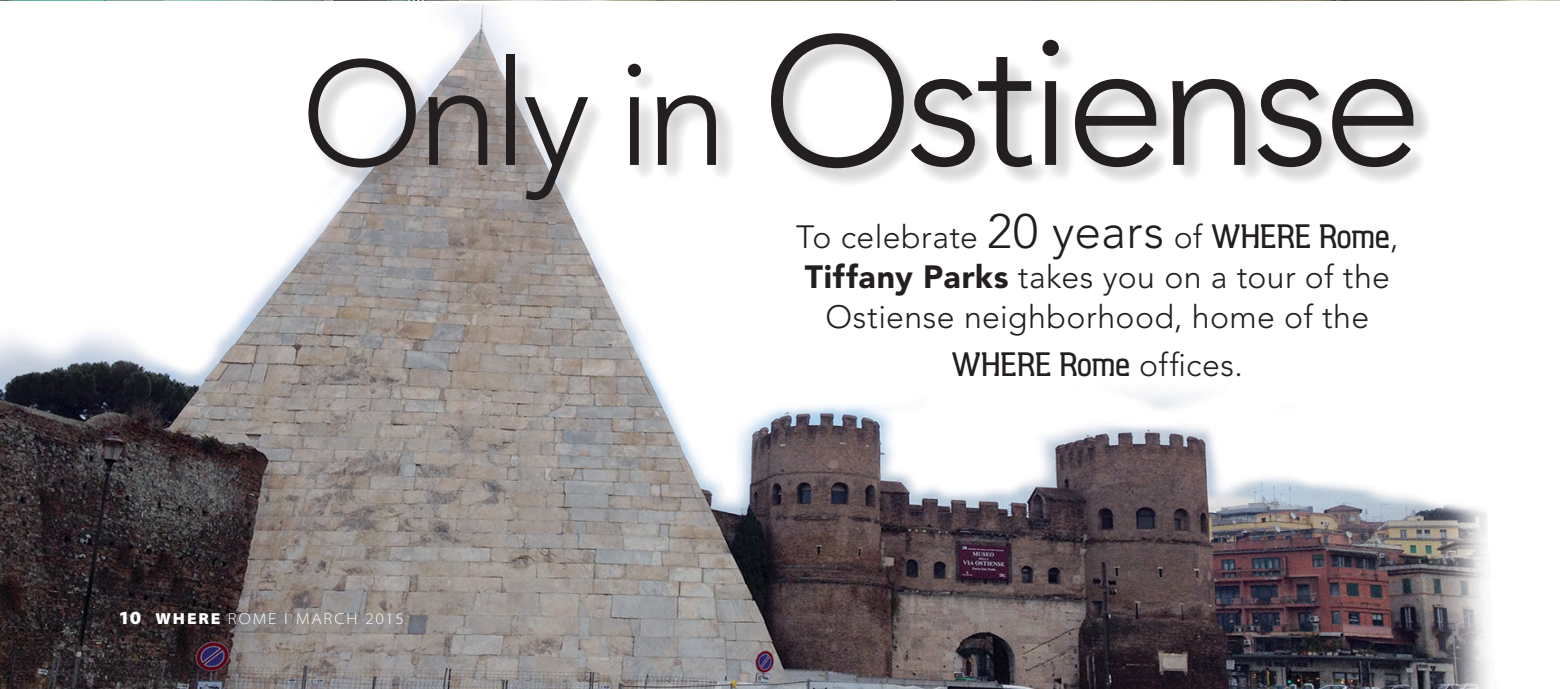


WHERE NOW | OSTIENSE



Only in Ostiense

To celebrate 20 years of **WHERE Rome**,
Tiffany Parks takes you on a tour of the
Ostiense neighborhood, home of the
WHERE Rome offices.





Ostiense may not be located in the historic center of the city, but don't assume that means it doesn't offer a plethora of attractions, whether artistic, cultural, gastronomic, or recreational. In fact, being off Rome's well-trodden tourist path guarantees unexpected sights, honest prices, and hardly any tourists.

The district of Ostiense takes its name from Via Ostiensis, once an ancient Roman road leading all the way from the city's cattle market to the bustling port town of Ostia (hence the name). The modern incarnation of Via Ostiensis is now a busy, trafficked thoroughfare connecting the Testaccio and EUR districts. Originally an industrial area in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, then a run-down working-class neighborhood, today Ostiense is in the midst of a cultural transformation, quickly becoming a magnet for the young and hip. The neighborhood is bookended by the arresting Pyramid of Cestius to the north and the enormous Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls to the south. In between, you'll find one of the city's most unusual (yet least visited) museums, a gourmet food emporium, eye-catching industrial-era gas towers, progressive street art, and some of the best new restaurants and hotspots in the city.

Culture Quarter

What do you get when you combine works of ancient Greek, Roman, and Egyptian art with the turn-of-the-century turbines and engines of an industrial-age power plant? One of the most fascinating and yet somehow undiscovered museums on the planet. **Centrale Montemartini** (p57) (below, right) displays the excess antiquities collection of the Capitoline Museums, and resides in the former ACEA thermoelectric power plant. Glorious Roman mosaics, fragments of enormous acrolithic sculptures, Egyptian idols, Etruscan artifacts, and Greek statuary are just a fraction of the treasures you'll find at Rome's best-kept secret. Somehow the contrast of the graceful gods and goddesses, nymphs and animals, sculpted in pure white marble, with the behemo-

moth black machinery of another era, makes the works even more stunning. The museum's appeal also lies in its location: just far enough from the center of the city for a few lucky art lovers to have the place entirely to themselves.

Visitors to Rome who skip the Ostiense neighborhood will never discover one of the most unexpected sights in the city. Every Eternal City tourist expects to see ruins, frescoes, and churches, but how many anticipate stumbling upon an ancient pyramid? At the northern end of Via Ostiensis, the **Pyramid of Cestius** (Via Raffaele Persichetti) (opposite page, below), commissioned in 20 B.C. by Roman general Gaius Cestius, turns many a head with its white Carrara marble blocks pointing resolutely heavenwards. And even more so lately, as a three-year, multi-million-euro restoration project has just succeeded in scrubbing those blocks to their original gleaming splendor. After lengthy military campaigns in Egypt, Cestius opted to forgo the traditional Roman-style mausoleum for the kinds of monuments he had seen during his travels. Standing nearly 120 feet tall, and 95 feet wide at its base, it is steeper than the pyramids of Giza or Cairo, similar instead to those of Nubia (today located in northern Sudan), where the general was stationed. If staring up at the imposing pyramid doesn't satisfy your curiosity, you can visit the interior burial cell by reservation only. (Visit www.coopculture.it or call 0639967700.)

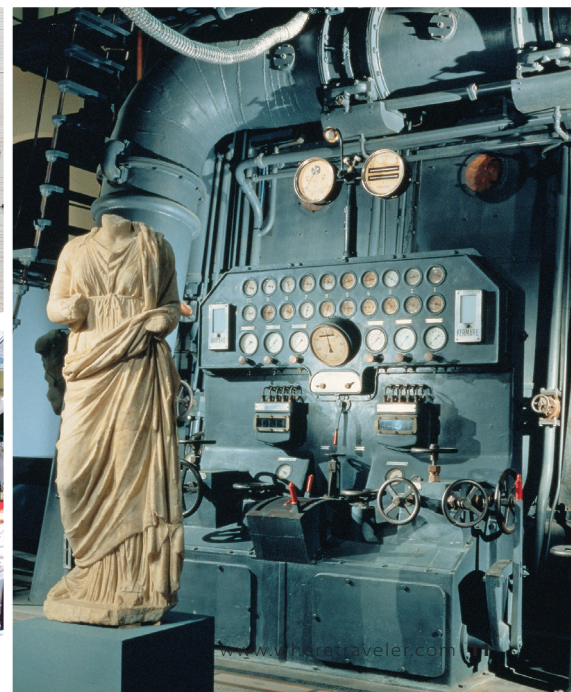
Ostiense's most famous draw is probably the **Basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls** (Piazzale San Paolo, 1). One of Rome's four ancient patriarchal basilicas, and the second largest after St. Peter's, the massive church was built in the 4th century over the traditional burial site of St. Paul. Unlike Rome's three other major basilicas, St. Paul's remained little changed from its medieval state for nearly a millennium and a half, until 1823 when a workman repairing the roof accidentally set the basilica on fire. The fire burned unchecked until all that remained was the cloister, the apse, and the triumphal arch,



THE NEIGHBORHOOD THAT DOESN'T SLEEP

If you just start to get going when the sun goes down, try out one of these nighttime locales for a glass of wine, a funky cocktail, or a spot of dancing.

- T Bar – Via Ostiense, 182
- Café Letterario – Via Ostiense, 83
- DoppioZeroo – Via Ostiense, 48
- La Badia – Via del Gazometro, 13
- La Saponeria – Via degli Argonauti, 20
- Alpheus – Via del Commercio, 36
- Mastro Titta – Via del Porto Fluviale, 5d
- Absinthe – Via Francesco Negri, 39/41
- Retro – Via Enrico del Pozzo, 5



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miraculously sparing the magnificent 5th- and 13th-century mosaics. A few other notable treasures untouched by the fire include the 13th-century ciborium by Arnolfo di Cambio, located at the high altar, and the 12th-century 18-foot candelabrum by Vassalletto.

Although the basilica was almost entirely rebuilt in the 19th century, the medieval floor plan was retained. With its three long naves separated by rows of towering columns, the basilica has an open, airy feel, and windows of thinly cut alabaster allow a warm golden light to filter inside. But perhaps the loveliest spot of all is the basilica's 13th-century cloister (right), an oasis of tranquility in a chaotic city. Pairs of gracefully spiraling columns and original Cosmatesque decorations surround a rose garden originally designed as a place for monks to meditate and pray. Today it makes the perfect spot for an over-stimulated tourist to take a brain break during a hectic day of sightseeing. The basilica is open to visitors every day from 7am to 6:30pm free of charge.

Industrial Chic

To go with its revamped hipster identity, Ostiense can now boast some of the most talked about street art in the city. Progressive artists are turning the walls of abandoned buildings, train underpasses, and apartment blocks into canvases for spectacular murals. To take your own street art tour, start at the Via Ostiense underpass (near the corner of Via Giovanni da Empoli) where you'll find a collaboration of a veritable dream team of artists: Ozmo, Martina Merlini, Andreco, Tellas, Gaia, Moneyless, and 2501. The work features portraits of Percy Shelley, pen poised, and Antonio Gramsci (both are buried just around the corner in the Non-Catholic Cemetery), as well as a recreation of a Michelangelo sibyl, a Tarot card character, and an ominous black helicopter.



Next turn right onto Via Porto Fluviale, where you'll encounter a military warehouse-turned-low-income apartment building, now transformed into a work of art by Blu. Myriad monster-like heads, each in a different color and rich with detail, gaze out at pedestrians through their enormous window-eyes. A few blocks further, Agostino Iacurci's *The Swimmer* (below, left) livens up the wall of Ostiense's former fish market (now a trendy seafood restaurant), and just a block away, on Via dei Magazzini Generali, some of the world's most recognizable faces, from Dante to Obama to Zorro, stare out of JB Rock's 200-foot *Wall of Fame*, all in alphabetical order. Passing back under the train tracks onto Via delle Conce, you'll find the fantastical murals of Brazilian artist Herbert Baglione.

While exploring this area, be sure not to overlook the stark majesty of the nearby **Gazometro** (below, right). This massive cylindrical gas tower and its smaller neighbors

were once an integral part of the early-20th century power works of the city. The Gazometro is no longer in use today, but its industrial-age mystique has made it an icon of the regenerated Ostiense neighborhood. It's now a beacon for Roman nightlife, and many of the area's buzzing hotspots are located in its vicinity.

Foodie Delight

If food is Italy's unofficial religion, then **Eataly** (Piazzale XXII Ottobre 1492) (previous page) is its high temple. Opened in 2012 in the former air terminal of Ostiense Station, Eataly is a multi-level gastronomic mega-store that boasts not only a vast market for purchasing the finest local Italian products, but also several restaurants and eateries—23 to be exact. Whether you have a passion for pasta, pizza, cheese, cured meats, *fritti* (fried street food), wine, craft beer, espresso, gelato, dessert, or all of the above, you're virtually guaranteed to find whatever your heart desires. With 40 teaching stations and eight open production areas to watch the masters at work, as well as regular themed tasting events, you might even discover your new favorite dish.

With the inauguration of Eataly and the revitalization of the neighborhood, it's no surprise that Ostiense has become Rome's latest culinary mecca. New restaurants are popping up left and right, tempting food-loving Romans from all areas of the city, as well as in-the-know tourists.

Seacook (Via del Porto Fluviale, 7d/e) is one of the most exciting new options, doing double duty as fish market and seafood restaurant. Their philosophy, "easy fish, slow taste," is exemplified by their devotion to high-quality fresh ingredients and simple but exceptionally tasty recipes. Sprawling **Porto Fluviale** (Via del Porto Fluviale, 22) occupies a former warehouse and offers myriad eating options, from a daily brunch buffet to *cicchetti* (a sampling of mini-portions), from street food to pizza to top-notch pasta. **Cacio e Cocci** (Via del Gazometro, 36) is a traditional trattoria serving well-priced dishes from classic Roman cuisine, and **Secchio e l'Olivaro** (Via del Porto Fluviale, 3) is a casual and popular pizzeria, perfect for a quick meal during a busy day of exploring.

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