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FREE GUIDE · ROME

# Borghese Gallery

Bernini, Caravaggio, Raphael, Titian, Canova — the 7 must-see works of the Borghese Gallery, explained one by one

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## Your visit at a glance

**T**he Borghese Gallery is the whim-turned-museum of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, nephew of Pope Paul V and the greatest collector of his time. In its rooms —those of a pleasure villa surrounded by gardens— live Bernini's impossible marbles, six Caravaggios and canvases by Titian and Raphael, with Canova's Pauline Bonaparte as the Neoclassical finishing touch. It's a small, intense museum, one of those you can see in one go, but with one condition: you can only enter with a booking and in two-hour slots, so there's no room for improvising. This tour brings together the seven must-see works —the ones you really can't miss—, with the context to understand why they're brilliant and 45-minute, 1-hour and 2-hour routes so you can make the most of your slot.

### At a glance

#### PRICE

~€18 (€16 + €2 booking)

#### HOURS

Tue–Sun 9am–7pm

#### WORKS HERE

The 7 must-sees

#### FREE ENTRY

1st Sunday of month (booking required)

#### TIME

2 h (your slot; 1 h for the essentials)

#### BOOKING

Compulsory · fixed time



### Part of Tickets Visit

tickets-visit.com is part of Tickets Visit, the network of tickets and guides to monuments.

*With this free guide you already do a great visit: the essentials, with a route. If you want to make the most of it, at the end I'll show you the complete version.*

## Before you go in: book your skip-the-line ticket

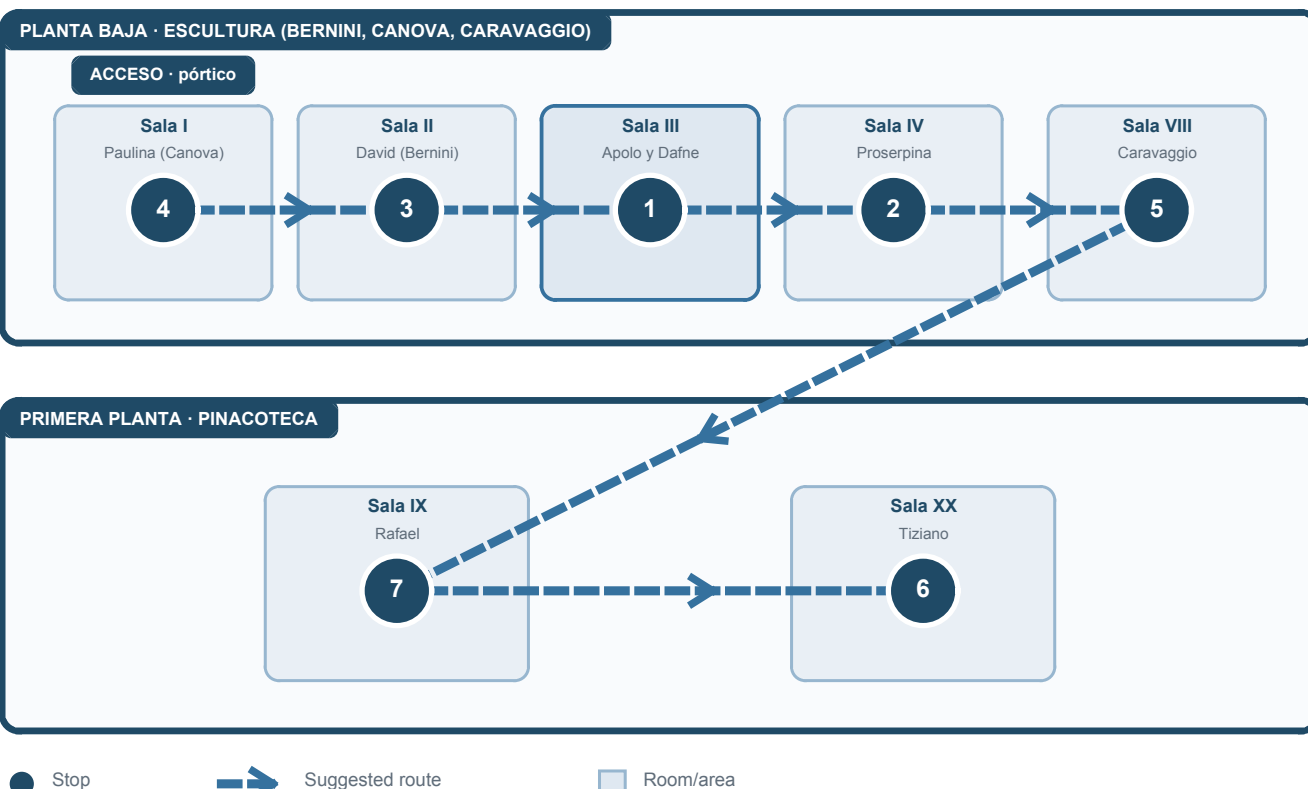
On Civitatis, with free cancellation. Skip the ticket-office queue.

» **Buy your ticket**

## The map and the route

The visit fits snugly into the two hours of your slot, so organise it floor by floor to avoid wasting time. Come in on the GROUND FLOOR, devoted to sculpture: here are the Berninis that will leave you speechless (Apollo and Daphne, The Rape of Proserpina, David), Canova's Pauline and the room with the Caravaggios. Once you've squeezed everything from the marble, head up to the FIRST FLOOR, the picture gallery, where the Titian and the Raphael await you. Let the rooms guide you more than the number of each work —the most comfortable order is in «The tour»— and don't cross any room without looking up at the painted ceilings. And leave a little time on the way out to take a peek at the gardens of Villa Borghese.

### GALLERIA BORGHESI · DOS PLANTAS (ESQUEMA, NO A ESCALA)



La planta baja reúne la escultura y la primera planta la pinacoteca; se sube por escalera. Distribución orientativa por número de sala, no es el plano oficial ni está a escala.

**Visiting order: GROUND FLOOR: 4 Canova's Pauline Bonaparte (Room I) › 3 Bernini's David (Room II) › 1 Bernini's Apollo and Daphne (Room III) › 2 Bernini's The Rape of Proserpina (Room IV) › 5 The Caravaggios (Room VIII) — UP TO THE FIRST FLOOR — 7 Raphael's The Deposition (Room IX) › 6 Titian's Sacred and Profane Love (Room XX). On the way out, the gardens of Villa Borghese.**

Schematic layout by area; the number shows the visiting order. Not to scale: follow the museum's own floor plans and signs on the day.

## THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

1

**Apollo and Daphne — Gian Lorenzo Bernini**

Room III (ground floor) · 12 min

Bernini freezes in marble the second when Daphne turns into a laurel to flee Apollo. The leaves and interlaced fingers are incredibly fine for stone. The sculpture transforms depending on the angle you look at it from.



*Apollo and Daphne (c. 1622-1625), Gian Lorenzo Bernini*

Photo: Architas · CC BY-SA 4.0 ·  
Wikimedia Commons

**DON'T MISS THIS**

Look at the tips of Daphne's fingers turning into laurel leaves, so thin they seem to vibrate.

**» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE**

Carved on the base is a Latin phrase that served as a 'moral alibi' for displaying so much sensuality in a cardinal's home. In the premium guide: what it says, why it was needed and the incredible age at which Bernini carved this marvel.

## THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

2

## The Rape of Proserpina — Gian Lorenzo Bernini

Room IV (ground floor) · 12 min

Bernini sculpts the rape of Proserpina by Pluto with brutal drama. The star detail is the god's fingers sinking into the young woman's thigh as if the marble were flesh. Cerberus, the tears and the struggle complete a Baroque whirlwind.



*The Rape of Proserpina*  
(1621-1622), Gian Lorenzo  
Bernini

Photo: Alvesgaspar · CC BY-SA 4.0 ·  
Wikimedia Commons



### THE DETAIL

Get close to Pluto's hand on the thigh: the fingers seem to genuinely sink into the stone skin.

### » IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE

This masterpiece left the villa almost as soon as it was finished: Scipione parted with it out of pure political calculation. In the premium guide: who he gave it to, what he wanted in return and how long it took to come home.

## THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

3

**David — Gian Lorenzo Bernini**

Room II (ground floor) · 10 min

Bernini's David captures the instant just before he fires the sling at Goliath, his body taut and his face tensed with effort. Bernini is said to have sculpted his own face. The viewer is placed in the giant's position.



*David (1623-1624), Gian Lorenzo Bernini*

Photo: Sailko · CC BY 3.0 · Wikimedia Commons

**LOOK AT IT LIKE THIS**

Look at the expression on the face, lips pressed and brow furrowed: it's said to be a self-portrait of Bernini himself.

**» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE**

Behind that tensed expression there's a mirror and a very illustrious hand holding it, and behind the whole statue, an execution time that seems impossible. In the premium guide: who helped Bernini achieve that face and in how many months he knocked out the work.

## THE STOPS, ONE BY ONE

5

**David with the Head of Goliath and other Caravaggios**

Room VIII (ground floor) · 15 min

This room brings together several of Cardinal Scipione's Caravaggios. In *David with the Head of Goliath*, the painter portrayed himself in the giant's severed head. There are also the *Boy with a Basket of Fruit* and the *Saint Jerome*, with his characteristic dramatic chiaroscuro.



*David with the Head of Goliath (c. 1609-1610), Caravaggio*

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**LOOK FOR THIS**

Look for Goliath's face: that decapitated head is the self-portrait of a tormented, fugitive Caravaggio.

**» IN THE PREMIUM GUIDE**

The full story of this stop (twice the text), its «ONE FACT» box and all 7 stops of the route, one by one.

## Practical tips

### Buy your ticket in advance

At the Borghese, booking is **COMPULSORY** and with a fixed entry time: you can't get in without it. The slots for each session sell out fast, especially at weekends and in high season, so get yours from the official website well in advance. Arrive 15-20 minutes before your time to go through the cloakroom, which is also compulsory, and so make the most of the full two hours inside the rooms.

### Best times

The sessions run every hour, from 9:00 to the last one at 17:45, with a maximum stay of two hours. The first of the morning is usually the quietest; the mid-morning ones, the busiest. Since your time is limited, go in knowing what you want to see: go first to the Bernini rooms and the Caravaggio room on the ground floor, then head up to the picture gallery.

### Getting in free

On the first Sunday of each month admission is free, but **WATCH OUT**: you still need to book your slot all the same, and those days sell out almost instantly. If the date works for you, go to the official website as soon as bookings open. If not, no worries: the normal price is reasonable for what you're going to see.

### With children

The visit is short (two hours) and intense, perfect for not wearing out the little ones. Turn it into a detective game: have them look for the hand sinking into Proserpina's thigh, the leaves sprouting from Daphne, or the severed head that hides a face. And to finish, the gardens of Villa Borghese, with their lake and rowing boats, are the perfect reward on the way out.

### Accessibility and services

The museum has a lift between the two floors and adapted wheelchair access, and offers reduced or free rates in certain cases (check on the official website). The cloakroom is compulsory for backpacks, large bags and umbrellas, and is included in the ticket; there are also toilets and a café. Have your booking confirmation to hand when you enter.

### Combine it

Make the most of being in the park and stroll through the gardens of Villa Borghese to the Pincio terrace, with its spectacular views. From there you go straight down to the Piazza del Popolo, one of the loveliest squares in Rome, and you're perfectly placed to keep exploring the historic centre on foot.

### Practical info

Address: Piazzale Scipione Borghese 5, inside the park of Villa Borghese (Rome). Guide price: around €18 (€16 admission + €2 compulsory booking fee); free on the first Sunday of the month and some special days (booking still required). Entry only with **COMPULSORY** booking: fixed entry time (sessions every hour, from 9:00 to 17:45) and a maximum stay of 2 hours. Hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 9:00 to 19:00. Cloakroom compulsory for backpacks and large bags. Closed on Mondays, 1 January and 25 December. All details are approximate: check the price, hours and available slots at [galleriaborghese.cultura.gov.it](http://galleriaborghese.cultura.gov.it) before you go.

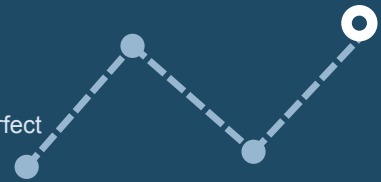
**Official website:** [galleriaborghese.cultura.gov.it](http://galleriaborghese.cultura.gov.it)

PLAN YOUR TRIP · FREE

## The Tickets Visit Planner

Build your day-by-day route, discover what to see nearby and plan the perfect itinerary around the city. Free, no sign-up.

» [Open it at planner.tickets-visit.com](https://planner.tickets-visit.com)



## Before you go in: book your skip-the-line ticket

On Civitatis, with free cancellation. Skip the ticket-office queue.

» [Buy your ticket](#)

## THE COMPLETE VERSION

## Take the complete visit

With this free guide you already cover the essentials. The PREMIUM is your complete visit to Borghese Gallery: every work with its story, a 3-step looking guide for every painting, the cheat-sheet for your phone and the tips to skip the queues. For less than the price of a coffee.

**In the free guide you miss out on:**

- 4 Pauline Bonaparte as Venus Victrix — Antonio Canova**  
Room I (ground floor) · 10 min
- 6 Sacred and Profane Love — Titian**  
Room XX (first floor) · 10 min
- 7 The Deposition (Pala Baglioni) — Raphael**  
Room IX (first floor) · 10 min

### PREMIUM Guide · Borghese Gallery

**€4.99**

one-off payment · yours forever

- ✓ All 7 works (the free guide has only 4), each with its story.
- ✓ «What it represents» and «How to look at it» in 3 steps: a looking guide for every painting.
- ✓ The «Route on one page» cheat-sheet for your phone, plus 1-, 2- and 3-hour routes.
- ✓ The timeline, the keys, the artist bios and a glossary to understand it all.
- ✓ As a PDF and offline: use it inside the museum without spending data.

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#### RISK-FREE GUARANTEE

If the guide doesn't help on your visit, write to us and we'll refund the €4.99. No questions asked.

*For comparison: a guided tour costs €30-60 per person. This guide walks you through with the same detail, everyone travelling with you can use it, and it's yours forever.*

### Still no ticket? Book skip-the-line

On Civitatis, with free cancellation. Skip the ticket-office queue.

» **Check availability and prices**

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