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By Elizabeth Djinis - Photographs by Camillo Pasquarelli

5 Hidden Guesthouses in the Heart of Rome

Accommodations are simple, affordable and offer a glimpse of the city's religious culture. Just keep your voice down.

Rome has more than its share of enchanting, off-the-radar places, many tucked away in the city's most visited areas. The Casa di Santa Brigida, a religious guesthouse in the heart of Rome's historical center, is one.

Steps from the bustling Campo de' Fiori market, in a 15th-century palace near the Palazzo Farnese, the guesthouse is run by the sisters of the Order of the Most Holy Savior of St. Bridget, who live there and attend Mass in the church that abuts the structure.

For 120 euros a night, or about \$138, travelers can lodge in a simply furnished room with a private bathroom. There is no concierge or professional room-cleaning, and you'll probably see a crucifix above your bed. And you will be asked to be quiet.

What the sisters who run the guesthouse hope is that guests leave with a sense of tranquillity.

"When a guest feels this inner peace, we have reached our justification," said Mother Gertrude Panakal, the house's mother superior.

There are roughly 350 religious guesthouses belonging to the Catholic Church in Rome, said Fabio Rocchi, president of the [Italian Religious Hospitality Association](#). In the 1980s and '90s, during what Mr. Rocchi said was the decline of religious vocations, the city's religious orders began transforming some convents and monasteries into guest accommodations. At first they were offered to religious groups and pilgrims, Mr. Rocchi said, but they have since taken on a broader appeal.

One thing that makes the guesthouses distinctive is their low price. Mr. Rocchi's association estimates the average nightly cost of a double room in a guesthouse at 90 euros; a double in a Rome hotel averages 190 euros. Visitors should expect spartan rooms. The focus, Mr. Rocchi said, is on "simplicity, to make you feel at home," not a five-star experience.

Finding these guesthouses can be a challenge: An Italian law defines them as being “managed outside of the standard commercial channels.” Reservations are generally handled via email or phone call, as well as by databases like Mr. Rocchi’s and that of the booking site Monastery Stays.

For the traveler who wants an intimate glimpse of Rome, a religious guesthouse offers a secure and often central environment. Below are five possibilities.

Casa di Santa Brigida

Casa di Santa Brigida was originally the home of St. Bridget, who was born near Stockholm, and came to Rome in 1349. The room in which she died is now a chapel, open to both tourists and pilgrims.

While the palace has salons with brocade curtains and Oriental rugs, the guesthouse’s roughly 20 rooms, each with private bathroom, are sparsely furnished with a desk and bed. Visitors are served a simple breakfast at 8 a.m. and can come and go as they please.

Casa di Santa Brigida’s nearly unrivaled highlight is a sweeping terrace overlooking Rome’s historic center.

On a recent visit, a group of women from Stockholm sat in the breakfast room. “Sweden is not a very religious country,” said Karin Kalmerstrom, 58, explaining her curiosity about the guesthouse. “We wanted to understand a little bit more about what they do and how you can have a life like that.”

Rooms at Casa di Santa Brigida (Via di Monserrato 54, +39-06-688-92-596, casabrigidaroma@brigidine.org) cost 120 euros for a single and 200 euros for a double.

Casa per Ferie San Giuseppe alla Trinità dei Monti

For the traveler who sees the Spanish Steps as the pinnacle of Rome, the 20-room St. Joseph guesthouse is about as close as one can get. After all, it is part of the church and convent that is the Trinità dei Monti, giving the Scalinata di Trinità dei Monti steps their name in Italian.

The guesthouse is one of five French religious institutions in the city — so you’ll hear a lot of that language, though some volunteers and staff do speak Italian and English.

The rooms, each named for a saint, are off a long hall. All have private bathrooms and black-and-white floor tiles. If situated on the side of the building that faces St. Peter’s Basilica, one has only to throw open the blue window shutters to see an enchanting view of Rome. Guests can also enjoy a serene garden in one of the city’s busiest areas, just below Villa Borghese.

Breakfast, which is included, is bread, butter and jam — and, said Marie-Lys Mollet, the guesthouse’s director, “Nutella, because we’re in Italy.”

Rooms at Casa per Ferie San Giuseppe (Piazza Trinità dei Monti 2d, +39-06-679-74-36, info@sangiuseppetdm.it) start at 63 euros for a single and 86 euros for a double, including breakfast.

The Institute of the Ursulines of Mary Immaculate

The guesthouse at the Institute of the Ursulines of Mary Immaculate is on one of central Rome’s most elegant residential streets — Via Dandolo — linking tranquil Monteverde to vibrant Trastevere.

Run by Sister Anna Luisa, who gives the “final touch” to every room, the palatial house, which could be mistaken for an elegant apartment building, has 20 rooms and an 11 p.m. curfew. The rooms are simply furnished, and most have private bathrooms. Breakfast is not included, but a common eating area has vending machines with snacks and coffee.

Institute of the Ursulines of Mary Immaculate Casa (Via Dandolo 46, +39-065-812-150, romacpf@orsolinemi.it). The sisters ask that guests contact them directly about rates, but indicated that prices often run less than the 90-euro average cited by Mr. Rocchi of the Italian Religious Hospitality Association.

Casa per Ferie Maria Schininà

Named after a Sicilian noblewoman who dedicated her life to the poor when she was called to the church, the Maria Schininà religious guesthouse is run by the sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Ragusa. The order’s Roman home is off Corso Trieste in an upscale neighborhood.

The house is tucked back on a private residential street, and guests have access to a communal kitchen with assigned lockers named after books of the Bible. There is a curfew of 10:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, and midnight on weekends.

The 14 guest rooms (all with private bathrooms), many brightly decorated, offer a bit of “hospitality through colors,” said Sister Rita De Bonis, who notes that “One of the things in this house that is very precious is silence, so much so that the guests that are here choose to return because they say they feel a great sense of silence.”

Rooms at Casa per Ferie Maria Schininà (Via Malta 16, info@casaperferiesuorediragusa.com) generally range from 60 euros for a single, to 100 euros for a double.

Casa per Ferie Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Mother of the Divine Shepherd

It’s only natural for a pilgrim — and many nonreligious tourists — to want to stay within a convenient distance from St. Peter’s Basilica. The guesthouse of the order of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Mother of the Divine Shepherd is less than a 30-minute walk from the Vatican, close to Rome’s Valle Aurelia regional train and metro station.

With a nondescript brick exterior, the guesthouse offers humble accommodations with private bathrooms. Breakfast is included, and guests must adhere to an 11 p.m. curfew.

But it is the warm atmosphere that draws guests. In 2022, after the coronavirus pandemic, the sisters decided to turn over the guesthouse’s operation to Leonor Salazar de D’Amico, 59, and Angelo D’Amico Ferretti, 61, who moved to Italy from Venezuela. While the couple had little experience with hospitality, they were aided by Mr. D’Amico Ferretti’s Abruzzo roots and the fact that Ms. Salazar de D’Amico was a member of a lay association affiliated with the religious order.

The couple credits in part their nationality for the guesthouse’s warmth. “Venezuelans are like that: They want to get to know you, they talk, they are open,” Mr. D’Amico Ferretti said.

Rooms at Casa per Ferie Franciscan Missionary (Via Pio VIII 16 06-393-665-82, fdproma@tiscali.it) are 55 euros for a single and 90 for a double, breakfast included.



The garden at Casa per Ferie Maria Schininà, one of about 350 guesthouses connected to the Catholic Church in Rome.



The Casa di Santa Brigida is in a 15th-century palace near the Palazzo Farnese in the historic center of Rome.



From left, Sister Maria Concetta Guidi, Mother M. Fabia Kattakayam and Mother Gertrude Panakal at Casa di Santa Brigida.



The view from the terrace of Casa per Ferie San Giuseppe alla Trinità dei Monti.



The terrace at Casa di Santa Brigida.



The guesthouse also has a simple dining area.



Casa di Santa Brigida was originally the home of St. Bridget, who was born near Stockholm and moved to Rome in 1349. The room in which she died is now a chapel.



The entrance, next to the Spanish Steps, of Casa per Ferie San Giuseppe alla Trinità dei Monti.



Rooms are simple; views are glorious.



The garden at Casa per Ferie San Giuseppe alla Trinità dei Monti.



The courtyard and cloister near the entrance to the guesthouse.



Casa per Ferie Maria Schinina is tucked away on a quiet residential street off Corso Trieste.



Sister Rita De Bonis, who helps oversee the guesthouse, said that many guests “choose to return because they say they feel a great sense of silence.”



Many of the guesthouse’s 14 rooms have vivid color schemes.



The garden at Casa per Ferie Maria Schinina.