



**V**atican City is the world's smallest fully independent sovereign state by both area (110 acres) and population (618) and is enclosed by a 2-mile border within Rome, Italy. It is one-eighth the size of New York's Central Park. The term "Vatican" derives from the hill, Mons Vaticanus, on which the Vatican is located. Its name came from the Latin "vaticinari" (to prophesy), which referred to the fortune-tellers and soothsayers who frequented the area in Roman times.

The city's official Italian name is Città del Vaticano or, more formally, Stato della Città del Vaticano, meaning "Vatican City State." Vatican City is situated on the west bank of the Tiber River. Its medieval and Renaissance walls form its boundaries except on the southeast at St. Peter's Square (Piazza San Pietro).

Of the six entrances, only three; the piazza, the Arco delle Campane (Arch of the Bells) in the facade of St. Peter's Basilica, and the entrance to the Vatican Museums and Galleries in the north wall are open to the public. The Vatican jurisdiction extends to some areas of Rome and outside Rome, which enjoy the right of extraterritoriality.

Since the foundation of Saint Peter's Basilica was started by Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, the Vatican has been tangibly linked with Christianity's history. The Basilica hosts the tomb of the Apostle Saint Peter, the first Roman Pontiff. The Vatican later became the permanent home of the Popes. It is also an important archaeological site of the Roman world and a significant cultural reference point for Christians and non-Christians, attracting thousands of tourists annually.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

In Roman times, the area outside the city of Rome was reclaimed and occupied by villas, by the gardens of Agrippina, mother of the emperor Caligula (37-41 AD), and by vast cemeteries arranged along the main arteries. In his mother's gardens, Caligula built a race-track at Vatican Hill's base where charioteers trained. To crown the amphitheater's center, Caligula had his forces transport a tower from Egypt that had originally stood in Heliopolis.

The obelisk, made of a single piece of red granite weighing more than 350 tons, was erected for an Egyptian pharaoh more than 3,000 years ago. In 1586, it was moved to its present location in St. Peter's Square, where it does double duty as a giant sundial. A Roman cemetery stood on Vatican Hill in pagan times. When a great fire leveled much of Rome in 64 A.D., Emperor



# CITY



Nero, seeking to shift blame from himself, accused the Christians of starting the blaze. He executed them by burning them at the stake, tearing them apart with wild beasts, and crucifying them. Among those crucified was St. Peter, a disciple of Jesus Christ, leader of the Apostles, and the first bishop of Rome, who was supposedly buried in a shallow grave on Vatican Hill.

Having embraced Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313, Emperor Constantine I began construction of the original Basilica atop the ancient burial ground with what was believed to be the tomb of St. Peter at its center.

St. Peter's Basilica became a spiritual center for Christian pilgrims, leading to the development of housing for clergymen and the forming of a marketplace that became the thriving commercial district of Borgo.

Following an attack by Saracen pirates that damaged St. Peter's in 846, Pope Leo IV ordered the construction of a wall to protect the holy Basilica and its associated precincts. The wall was completed in 852; the 39-foot-tall wall enclosed Leonine City, an area covering the current Vatican territory and the Borgo district. The walls were continually expanded and modified until the reign of Pope Urban VIII in the 1640s.

Popes did not live at the Vatican until the 14th century. Even after the construction of the original St. Peter's Basilica, popes lived principally at the Lateran Palace across Rome. Pope Symmachus built a residence adjacent to St. Peter's in the early 6th century. It was expanded hundreds of years later by both Eugene III and Innocent III. In 1277, a half-mile-long elevated



covered passageway, the Passetto di Borgo, was constructed to link the Vatican with the fortified Castel Sant'Angelo on the banks of the Tiber River. It served as an escape route for popes, most notably in 1527 when it likely saved Pope Clement VII's life during the sack of Rome. As the forces of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V rampaged through the city and murdered priests and nuns, the Swiss Guard held back the enemy long enough to allow Clement to reach the Castel Sant'Angelo safely, but 147 of the Pope's forces lost their lives in the battle. After this invasion, much repair work needed to be done. The Vatican fell into such disrepair that wolves dug for bodies in the cemetery, and cows even wandered the Basilica.

The Popes left the city altogether in 1309 when the papal court moved to Avignon, France, after King Philip IV arranged for a French cardinal to be elected Pope. Rome and St. Peter's Basilica remained abandoned for over a century. Seven popes, all French, ruled from Avignon.

The papacy did not return to Rome until 1377. The Lateran Palace had burned, so the Vatican became the new papal residence. It took about 50 years from 1377 to restore prestige to Rome. In the mid-1400s, the problem of the interior reconstruction of San Pietro/St. Peter's was tackled for the first time.

Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) commenced construction of the Apostolic Palace; eventually, his successors' permanent home. Pope Nicholas' collection of books became the Vatican Library's foundation. A few years later, the advance of the Turks and the fall of Constantinople led to the project being abandoned.

Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) began work on the famed Sistine Chapel featuring frescoes created by such leading Renaissance artists as Botticelli and Perugino. In 1475, Sixtus IV expanded the Vatican Library and, for the first time, opened it to the public. These manuscripts and books, prints, drawings, coins, and decorative arts continuously increased through the centuries, making it an invaluable repository of human culture.

Innocenzo VIII (1484-1492) called for more buildings to be built to the south. He also called Raphael and Michelangelo to Rome to fresco the papal apartments and the Sistine Chapel, respectively.

Significant changes were made by Pope Julius II (1503-1513), who radically transformed the site. The pontiff decided to tear down the 1,200 year-old St. Peter's Basilica and commissioned Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling in 1508. He also tapped architect Donato Bramante to design the Belvedere Courtyard. Under Julius II's patronage in 1506, an extraordinary artistic era was inaugurated. Pope Julius commissioned Raphael's sculpture Stanze, Sistine Chapel frescoes by Michelangelo, and built a new Basilica. The Basilica was completed in 1626, the fruit of the combined genius of Bramante, Raphael, Michelangelo, Bernini, Maderno, and Della Porta.

## The Sistine Chapel

The death of Julius in 1513 and Bramante the following year led to a decades-long dispute over how to continue the project until Michelangelo ended the deadlock in 1547 with his choice to follow Bramante's original design. Giacomo della Porta completed St. Peter's famous dome in 1590, and work on the grand structure finally finished



in 1626. Measuring 452 feet tall and encompassing 5.7 acres, the new St. Peter's stood as the world's biggest church. (Note: This was true until the completion of the Ivory Coast's Basilica of Our Lady of Peace of Yamoussoukro in 1989.)

The Vatican Museums originated from the sculpture collection of Julius II. Its earliest gallery was opened to the public by Pope Clement XIV in 1773 and expanded by Pope Pius VI. From the mid-18th century, the popes' efforts were also directed towards expanding the private collections of antiquities dating back to the Renaissance. Their transformation into public museums accessible to scholars and connoisseurs marked the origin of the Vatican Museums. New buildings, such as the Pio-Clementine Museum, were built specifically to house the classical sculptures. Subsequent popes continued to bolster the renowned collections over the years, with the Gregorian Egyptian Museum, the Ethnological Museum, and Modern and Contemporary Religious Art among the additions.

The Vatican Palace is the result of a long series of additions and modifications by which, from the Middle Ages, the Popes rivaled each other in magnificence. The original building of Nicholas III (1277-1280) was enlarged in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries.

## GOVERNMENT

Vatican City is an ecclesiastical /monarchical state (a type of theocracy) ruled by the Supreme Pontiff (Pope/Bishop of Rome), who has total legislative, executive, and judicial powers as the head of the Catholic Church. In their secular role, popes ruled portions of the Italian peninsula for more than a thousand years until the mid-19th century, when many of the Papal States were seized during Italian unification. In 1870, the Pope's holdings were further circumscribed when Rome itself was annexed. A standoff between the church and secular government ensued for the next 60 years until an agreement was reached with the Lateran Pacts in February 1929. Benito Mussolini signed it on behalf of King Victor



Emmanuel III and Pope Pius XI. This agreement established Vatican City as a sovereign entity distinct from the Holy See (rule over the Roman Catholic Church) and granted the church \$92 million as compensation for the Papal States' loss. The Pope has absolute executive, legislative, and judicial powers within Vatican City, which is recognized as a sovereign nation-state under international public law. The Vatican is the home of the Pope and the Roman Curia and the spiritual center for some 1.2 billion followers of the Catholic Church.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The term "Holy See" is derived from the Greek word "hera" meaning sacred and the Latin word "sedes" meaning seat and is the name given to the government of the Roman Catholic Church, which the Pope leads as the Bishop of Rome. As such, the Holy See's authority extends over Catholics throughout the world. The Holy See dates to early Christianity and is the primate episcopal see of the Catholic Church, with 1.3 billion Catholic Christians distributed in the Latin Church and 23 Eastern Catholic Churches.

These powers, during the period of vacancy, are delegated to the College of Cardinals. The highest state functionaries are all Catholic clergy of various national origins. In addition to the Supreme Pontiff, legislative power is exercised in His name by a Commission made up of a Cardinal President and other Cardinals, appointed for a five-year term.

The President of the Commission has executive power and is assisted by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General. The departments and central offices are dependent on this complex of bodies through which management is carried out. Judicial power is exercised on behalf of the Supreme Pontiff.

The Vatican City State has its own flag, consisting of two vertical bands, one of gold or yellow (hoist side) and one of white with the crossed keys of Saint Peter and the Papal Tiara centered in the white



band. The Vatican mints euros, prints stamps, issues passports, license plates, and operates media outlets. One government function it lacks is taxation. Museum admission fees, stamp and souvenir sales, and contributions generate the Vatican's revenue. The Holy See is supported financially by various sources, including investments, real estate income, and donations from Catholic individuals, dioceses, and institutions; these fund the Roman Curia (Vatican bureaucracy), diplomatic missions, and media outlets.

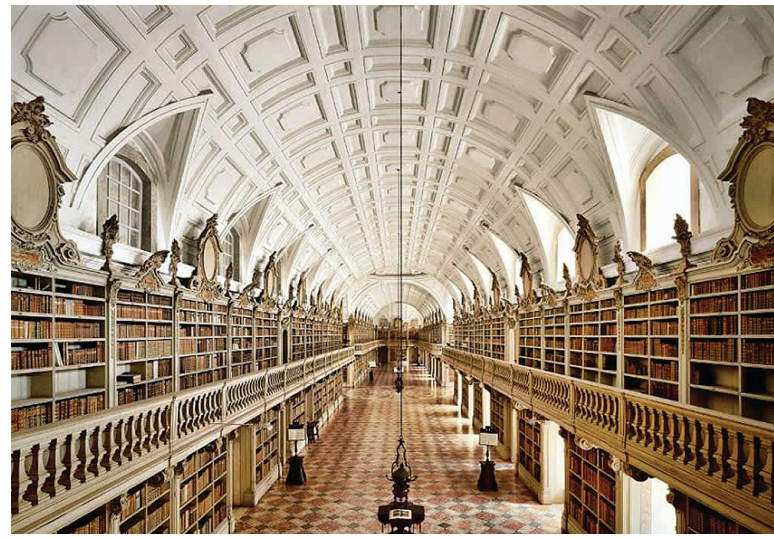
Moreover, an annual collection taken up in dioceses and direct donations goes to a non-budgetary fund, known as Peter's Pence, which is used directly by the Pope for charity, disaster relief, and aid to churches in developing nations.

The separate Vatican City State budget includes the Vatican museums and post office. It is supported financially by selling stamps, coins, medals, and tourist souvenirs and fees for admission to museums and publication sales.

Vatican City has its own telephone system, post office, gardens, astronomical observatory, banking system, and pharmacy, as well as a contingent of Swiss Guards responsible for the personal safety of the Pope.



The Swiss Guard was hired as a mercenary force, founded in 1506, strictly to protect the Pope's safety. Members wear a uniform that Michelangelo designed. Although the world's smallest standing army appears to be purely ceremonial, its soldiers are extensively trained and highly skilled marksmen. The requirements for being a Swiss guard are; 19-30 years of age, Roman Catholic, single male, and a Swiss citizen with a secondary education. The Gendarmerie Corps of Vatican City is a police force that helps augment the Pontifical Swiss Guard during the Pope's appearances and provides general security, traffic direction, and investigative duties for the Vatican City State. Vatican City's military defense is the responsibility of Italy.



**Vatican Apostolic Library**

The Vatican Apostolic Library contains a priceless collection of 150,000 manuscripts and 1.6 million printed books, many from pre-Christian and early Christian times. It derives its income from the voluntary contributions of more than one billion Roman Catholics worldwide and interest on investments and the sale of stamps, coins, and publications. The Vatican publishes its own influential daily newspaper, **L'Osservatore Romano**. Its press can print Vatican Library books and pamphlets in 30 languages, from old Ecclesiastical Georgian to Indian Tamil.

Since 1983, the Vatican has produced its own television programming. Its radio broadcasts (since 1931) are heard in some 40 languages in many parts of the world. Almost all supplies, including food, water, electricity, and gas, must be imported. There is no income tax and no restriction on the import or export of funds. Vatican City was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984.

The inhabitants of Vatican City, the majority of whom are priests and nuns, also include several hundred laypersons engaged in secretarial, domestic, trade, and service occupations.

The majority of Vatican City's actual 600 citizens live abroad. That number includes 71 cardinals, 109 members of the Swiss Guard, 51 members of the clergy, and one nun inside the Vatican walls. However, the largest group of citizens is the 307 members of the clergy in diplomatic positions worldwide.

Special extraterritorial privileges are extended to more than ten other Rome buildings and Castel Gandolfo, the Pope's summer residence in the Alban Hills. In addition, Vatican City maintains embassies in numerous foreign nations.

Vatican cultural life has much declined since the Renaissance, when the popes were among Italy's foremost patrons of the arts. The Vatican Museums and Galleries, Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, the frescoes by Pinturicchio in the Borgia Apartment, and Raphael's Stanze ("Rooms") nevertheless attract critics, artists, and flocks of tourists from throughout the world.

The Vatican Observatory owns a telescope in Arizona. As Rome expanded, light pollution from the city made it increasingly difficult for astronomers at the Vatican Observatory, located 15 miles from the town at the papal summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, to view the night skies. So, in 1981 the observatory opened a second research center in Tucson, Arizona. The Vatican conducts astronomical research with a state-of-the-art telescope that sits atop Mount Graham in southeast Arizona.

The Catholic Church's mission of proclaiming the truth of the Gospel, the salvation of souls, and promoting peace and justice for all peoples is done through various organizations and local Churches scattered throughout the world.

