ROMA · TOURIST FIELD GUIDE

SCAM ALERT

DON'T GET PLAYED IN ROME

Rome is a safe city; its street tricks are just predictable. Know the script, smile, walk on.

1 Nothing on the street is free

2 Never hold out your hand

3 Never bet on a street game

4 Never stop for a clipboard

5 Bag in front, phone away

01 THE "FREE" BRACELET

Spanish Steps · Colosseum

A string is knotted onto your wrist "for free, for luck". Then €10–20 is demanded.

DO: Hands in pockets, "No, grazie", walk on. Never pay.

02 THE "GIFT" ROSE

Trevi · Trastevere terraces

A rose lands in your hand or on your table: "Regalo!" Then €10–15, please.

DO: Don't take it. Hand it straight back.

03 THE SHELL GAME

Piazza di Spagna · Colosseum

Balletje-balletje: three cups, one ball. The cheering "winners" are the gang. Bets from €20 vanish.

DO: Don't play, don't watch. Pickpockets work the crowd.

04 PICKPOCKETS

Bus 64 · Metro · Termini

Teams use the crush, a bump or a question. Phones on café tables go first.

DO: Bag zipped and in front, wallet in a front pocket.

05 THE PETITION CLIPBOARD

Vatican · Colosseum · Trevi

"Sign for deaf children?" Then a "donation" is demanded, while a partner opens your bag.

DO: Never stop for a clipboard.

06 PHOTO "GLADIATORS"

Colosseum · Fori Imperiali

Costumed centurions jump into your photo, then want cash. Banned since 2023, still there.

DO: Don't pose. Unasked photo? You owe nothing.

07 FAKE POLICE

Termini · Via Nazionale · ATMs

"Officers" flash a badge to check your banknotes for fakes. Your cash vanishes.

DO: Real police never search wallets in the street. Call 112.

08 TAXI TRICKS

Fiumicino arrivals · Termini

"Taxi? Taxi?" touts drive unlicensed cars at several times the real fare.

DO: White cab, official rank. Airport to centre: fixed €55.

09 TICKET TOUTS

Colosseum · Vatican Museums

"Officials" with lanyards sell overpriced or fake skip-the-line tickets.

DO: Book ahead on the official websites only.

10 THE MACHINE "HELPER"

Termini · metro ticket machines

A stranger "helps" you buy a ticket, then wants a tip, or watches your PIN.

DO: "No, grazie". Tap contactless at the metro gate.

11 TOURIST-TRAP TABLES

Trevi · Pantheon · Navona

Door touts, picture menus without prices, surprise extras on the bill.

DO: See prices first. A listed coperto is normal.

12 THE CURRENCY SWITCH

Card terminals · ATMs

"Pay in your own currency?" sounds kind, but means a bad rate plus fees.

DO: Always choose EUR. Use bank ATMs.

SAY IT LIKE A ROMAN

No, grazie
No, thank you

Quanto costa?
How much is it?

Lasciami in pace
Leave me alone

Chiamo la polizia
I'm calling the police

112 EMERGENCY

Free from any phone. Robbed? Report it to the police; insurers need the report.

Sources: Wanted in Rome, The Local Italy, Carpe Diem Tours, An American in Rome (2023–2026). Fares change; check the sign in the taxi.