



SAINT PETER'S TOMB

Emperor Constantine became the first Christian emperor of Rome. He decided to erect a basilica on Vatican Hill at the supposed location of *St. Peter's tomb*.

Construction started in 319 AD and it was completed around 349 AD. The construction involved moving a million tonnes of earth in order to create a platform to support the structure. The basilica stood for over 1,000 years, however it had started to deteriorate and due to serious concerns which it may collapse, Pope Julius II concluded that it was beyond repaired and which it would have to be demolished and rebuilt.

THE NEW BASILICA

The new basilica took 120 years to complete and many Roman Renaissance and Baroque architects were consulted, however the main contributors to the creation of St Peter's Basilica were Bramante, Raphael, Michelangelo, Donato, Giacomo della Porta and Maderno. Bramante produced the original design for the Basilica in 1506. After Bramante's death in 1514, Raphael took over as the main architect and when Raphael died in 1520, Michelangelo took his place. Michelangelo's pupil, Giacomo della Porta, continued building it after Michelangelo's death in 1564. Carlo Maderno was later asked by Pope Paul V to extend the church. St Peter's Basilica was finally completed on the 18th November 1626, and it was consecrated by Pope Urban VIII.



FACTS ABOUT ST PETER'S BASILICA IN ROME

- 1. There are two levels below St Peter's Basilica; the first level is known as the Vatican Grottoes, and it is a large underground graveyard where the tombs of 91 Popes are buried. The level below is the Vatican Necropolis and houses St Peter's Tomb.**
- 2. There are only three women entombed in the Vatican Grottoes; Queen Christina of Sweden, Agnesina Colonna Caetani and Queen Charlotte of Cyprus.**
- 3. The holy door in St Peter's Basilica is only opened for Jubilee Years, which is once every 25 years. They are usually cemented shut to prevent them accidentally being opened.**
- 4. Michelangelo's famous carving of the Pieta is housed in St Peter's Basilica and it is protected by bulletproof glass. It was carved from a single slab of marble and it was the only work he ever signed.**
- 5. In the courtyard outside St Peter's Cathedral in Rome there are 140 statues of saints, which stand upon the colonnades. Each statue is 3.10 metres tall and they have been standing since 1670.**
- 6. The Swiss Guard, the world's smallest army, was formed in 1506 and still exists to protect the Pope, the Vatican and St Peter's Basilica.**



SAINT PETER'S FACADE



SAINT PETER'S SQUARE



SAINT PETER'S INTERIOR

