

Vatican tour of restored catacombs with Google Maps

ROME, ITALY: The Vatican unveiled a series of catacombs used by early Christians in Rome after a major restoration, including an online virtual tour by Google Maps offering a glimpse into the underground wonders.



A virtual tour of the Priscilla catacombs is possible via Google's Street View . Image: [The Vatican](#)

The Priscilla catacombs where Christians worshipped and buried their own are re-opening to the public after five years of work in which restorers used lasers to clean up the religious frescoes on the walls.

The Vatican's culture minister, Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, said the catacombs were a living and breathing symbol of the first Christians, and their daily lives, as he took guests through the subterranean passages.

"This is where our roots are," Ravasi said.

A new function on Google Maps allows users to take a limited tour of the vast complex under Rome's Villa Ada park and gaze at the interiors with a 360-degree view like the one used above-ground for Street View.

A new museum on the site is also opening to the public and brings together about 700 fragments of finely-sculpted sarcophaguses found in the catacombs, which combine pagan and Christian burial traditions.

The Priscilla catacombs, which date back nearly 2,000 years and were built inside what used to be a quarry, are considered the most interesting in Rome and include a basilica where Pope Sylvester (314-335) is buried.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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