



Situated between the Capitoline Hill—one of Rome’s “Seven Hills”—and Piazza Venezia, the monument to King Victor Emmanuel II is one of Rome’s distinctive landmarks.

Made of marble, the gigantic structure stands-out in Italy’s capital. In a place where most of the buildings are earth-tone brown, the gleaming white of the monument’s marble makes it particularly distinctive.

What is its history? Why was it built?

The people of Italy wanted to honor the first King of their unified country. Victor Emmanuel II was that King, and he had always desired the entire Italian peninsula to be free of any foreign control.

That goal was mostly accomplished in 1861, when all regions in Italy except for Rome were united into one Kingdom, with Victor Emmanuel II as King. By 1870, the Italians had also driven French forces out of Rome and, in 1871, Rome became the newly united country’s capital city.

After his death, in 1878, Victor Emmanuel II was buried in Rome’s Pantheon. People in the country wanted to commemorate his life and all that he done to make Italy a single country. The government announced a contest, to design a monument.

Giuseppe Sacconi, from Le Marche, won the contest. Not everyone thought that his grandiose design was appropriate, but construction began in 1895. It took many years to complete.

Among other issues, the place was built over ancient grounds. Not everyone agreed it was a good idea to disrupt whatever was beneath those grounds.

Indeed ... when workers began to excavate the “dead grounds,” they found ancient ruins and rare archaeological artifacts. Despite these concerns and issues, workers completed the structure.

The monument’s focal point is the statue of a horseman. This symbolizes Victor Emmanuel II.

As the project continued, however, it expanded from being a commemoration of Italy’s first king into something more. An unknown soldier, who died in World War I, is buried at the *Altare della Patria* (the Altar of the Fatherland).

The monument, thus, honors all those who have sacrificed their lives on behalf of their country.

In addition, at the monument’s base is the Museum of Italian Reunification. The entire structure is filled with symbols, such as:

- Palm trees (symbolizing victory);
- Laurel (symbolizing peace);
- Oak (symbolizing strength);
- Olives (symbolizing harmony); and
- Myrtle (symbolizing sacrifice).

Tourists, also, have come to view this monument as a great place to visit. Among other reasons—such as learning the history of Italy’s reunification—it provides wonderful views of Rome and its environs.

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