

# The smallest state in the world

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If you ever go to Rome, make sure to visit **St. Peter's Basilica**, the largest church in the world. To get to the top, you ride a few floors in the elevator and then climb 320 steps up a narrow and winding staircase—phew, that will make you sweat! But the view is worth the effort: a sea of red roofs, a huge square surrounded by a colonnade, and beautiful gardens with pine trees and cypresses. Hang on, why is there a wall surrounding the basilica and the gardens beside it? In the past, walls used to mark the boundaries of cities. So what is one doing in the middle of the capital?

It's not a mistake. That's not Rome at all. It's **Vatican City**. Although within Italy, it is an independent country (officially known as the Vatican City State and familiarly known as the Vatican). It has its own post office,



There is another small country in Italy, San Marino, which is officially known as the **Republic of San Marino**. It's the oldest republic in the world. It was founded in 301 AD by a stonemason called St. Marinus, or in Italian, *San Marino*—hence its name. This republic is famous for its triangular postage stamps, which are highly valued by collectors.

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ST. PETER'S  
BASILICA

