

Client: Portrait Roma
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ULTRACITY

THE HOTELS

Some of the most desirable boutique hotels cluster in a small city-centre triangle of shopping streets and cobbled lanes around Via del Corso. Though **J.K. Place Roma** (jkroma.com) has lost its long-standing general manager Samuel Porreca to the new Mandarin Oriental, Lake Como, it's still the default option for sheer style and panache with its suave retro-modern interiors.

Close on its heels is **Portrait Roma** (hungarocollection.com), a 14-suite Ferragamo property that doesn't feel remotely branded. The guest-only roof terrace is aperitivo heaven, and with its personal concierge guest service, the whole place feels like a private club.

Two more recent openings in the area both have secret weapons. Next door to J.K. Place, **Hotel Vilón** (hotelvilon.com) looks on to the private Renaissance courtyard of Palazzo Borghese, while guests at **Margutta 19** (romeluxurysuites.com), which nestles in the artsy cobbled lane where Federico Fellini once lived, get hot-ticket Assaggia as their hotel restaurant.

THE LUNCH STOPS

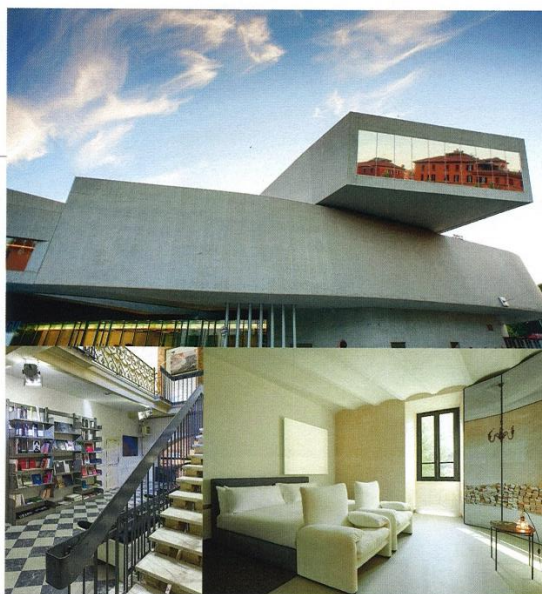
Can pralines make a meal? They can at **Mercerie** (mercerie.eu), a gourmet street food bistro in central Largo di Torre Argentina, where chef Igles Corelli serves up savoury morsels disguised as sweets – bite-sized versions of classics such as coniglio in porchetta (rabbit-stuffed pork roll). Also on the menu: mini pasta parcels and tiny panini, called *bottomi* ('buttons').

Between trains, head for classy food court **Mercato Centrale** (mercatocentrale.com) down the south side of Roma Termini, where among other stalls, Pier Daniele Seu serves some of the city's best pizza, featuring special flour mixes, slow rising times and toppings including pine nuts and balsamic vinegar. Or, for a romantic lunch in a pretty cobbled square, seafood-oriented **Pierluigi** (pierluigi.it), Piazza de' Ricci, is an ever-reliable classic.

THE DINNER VENUES

Suave maître d' and arbiter of taste Alessandro Pipero is the soul of **Pipero Roma** (piperoroma.it), the smart, artsy Michelin-starred restaurant near Piazza Navona that bears his name. But young chef Ciro Scamardella is no slouch: an amuse-bouche in the form of a cracker made from pig's ear sauce, served on a vinyl record with his name on the label, sets the tone of playful foodie excellence.

An even younger culinary alchemist, Andrea Antonini, arrived last month at the hotel Hassler's rooftop restaurant **Imàgo** (hotelhasslerroma.com), taking over from Francesco Aprea, who is inaugurating Idyllo, the restaurant of the new **Pantheon Iconic Rome Hotel** (thepantheonhotel.com). If fancy doesn't float your boat, head for one of the city's great family-run trattorias, **Armando al Pantheon** (armandoalpantheon.it), which does assured traditional Roman cuisine in an intimate old-school setting.



(theroomsofrome.com). But what really got Romans excited was its top-floor restaurant **Caviar Kaspia** (caviarkaspia.com), the only Italian avatar of this venerable Parisian institution. The night views over Rome's lit ancient ruins are spectacular.

THE PLACES TO SEE

In a city with as much history as Rome, major new museums and galleries are slow to emerge – the last was the Zaha Hadid-designed **MAXXI** (maxxi.art) in 2010, worth a visit as much for the audacious building as for the contemporary art and architecture shows it hosts. But the city's *centro storico* art scene is quietly booming, thanks to the arrival of a flock of *stranieri* who have made gallery-nests in historic buildings – **Lorcan O'Neill** (lorcanoneill.com) in the stables of 17th-century Palazzo Santacroce, **Gavin Brown's Enterprise** (gavinbrown.biz) in the ancient deconsecrated church of Sant'Andrea de Scaphis, and the **Gagosian Gallery** (gagosian.com) located in a converted 1920s bank.

THE PLACES TO SHOP

Concept stores are Rome's new thing – places such as **Contemporary Cluster** (contemporarycluster.com), an art gallery, studio space, fashion boutique, bookshop, vinyl store and cocktail bar near Campo de' Fiori. Not far away, **Libera + soon** (Via del Teatro Pace 41, tel +39 06 6880 3363) is a café, exhibition space and homeware design boutique. It's the kind of place you stop off for a salad and leave with a cool mirror. There's also more traditional department stores, including **Rinascente** (rinascen.it), reborn after an 11-year closure in new premises on Via del Tritone. All the big Italian brands are here, but the real surprise is what awaits above and below: an elegant rooftop bar-restaurant and, in the basement, an entire section of ancient aqueduct.

THE EVENT

Roma Summer Fest (auditorium.com) brings rock and pop to the open-air arena of the Renzo Piano-designed Auditorium between late June and early August. This season's highlights include Tears for Fears (July 9) and Thom Yorke (July 21).

GETTING THERE

British Airways (britishairways.com) flies direct from London Heathrow, Gatwick and City to the city's main Roma Fiumicino airport from £70 return, inclusive of all taxes, while Ryanair (ryanair.com) fly from London Stansted and Edinburgh to Rome Ciampino. Alitalia (alitalia.com), easyJet (easyjet.com), and Vueling (vueling.com) also connect Rome with London airports, with easyJet also operating a Bristol route. Jet2 (jet2.com) connects Rome Fiumicino with Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds Bradford and Newcastle.

MORE INFORMATION

enit.it; turismoroma.it

ROME:
THE ULTRACITY GUIDE

By Lee MARSHALL



LIVING THE DOLCE VITA

Clockwise from top: the Zaha Hadid-designed MAXXI; a short-stay apartment at Rooms of Rome; a courtyard at Hotel Vilón; the book shop at Contemporary Cluster

THE BARS AND CAFÉS

Roman coffee aficionados (ie most Romans) argue about which of two venerable coffee roaster cafés near the Pantheon does the best brew. Our advice? Have it all: order a Gran Caffè (a miraculously creamy espresso) at **Sant'Eustachio Il Caffè** (santeustachioilcaffe.it), then zip over to **La Tazza d'Oro** (tazzadorocoffeehop.com) for a granita con panna (coffee ice with whipped cream). The caffeine hit should see you through the crowds at the Colosseum.

On the street leading to St Peter's, temptation lies in wait at **Chorus**

(choruscafe.it), where master mixologist Massimo D'Addezio serves up seductive liquid creations. In summer, head for **Achilli al D.O.M.** (domhotelroma.com), a hidden wine bar on a hotel rooftop.

THE PLACES TO BE SEEN

Fashion heiress Alda Fendi took over an 17th-century palazzo and asked French architect Jean Nouvel to transform it into **Rhinoceros**, a home for her art foundation (fondazionealdafendi-esperimenti.it). It's also host to 24 short-stay apartments under the moniker **Rooms of Rome**