

International New York Times

International New York Times | <http://nyti.ms/1CwEubv>

TRAVEL

What to Do in Rome

MARCH 4, 2015

36 Hours

By INGRID K. WILLIAMS

Paolo Sorrentino's mesmerizing film "La Grande Bellezza" ("The Great Beauty"), which won an Oscar for best foreign-language film in 2014, sparked controversy and endless conversation about the current state of the Italian capital. But one fact was indisputable: Rome, as the film's seductive backdrop, was gorgeous. This is true in every season, but especially in colder months when the summer flood of tourists ebbs. From outlying neighborhoods that beckon with new restaurants and bars, to the historic center, where Mr. Sorrentino's protagonist, Jep, wandered through so many scenes, Rome remains poised to prove that its beauty runs deep.

Friday

1. Bathing Beauty | 3 p.m.

One of the most poignant scenes in "La Grande Bellezza" transpires at the ruins of the Terme di Caracalla, colossal Roman baths that date from the third century. Jep's twilight encounter with an illusory giraffe amid the spectacular ruins is memorable, but no tricks are needed to make this often-overlooked site unforgettable in the light of day either. The soaring walls of the complex, remarkably well-preserved in parts, are a terra-cotta-hued skeleton providing clues to the lost grandeur of this glorified gym, where amenities ranged from mosaic floors to thermal pools flanked by museum-worthy marble sculptures. Admission, 6 euros, or \$6.70 at \$1.11 to the euro.

2. Gallery Hunting | 5:30 p.m.

Fast-forward nearly two millennia for a glimpse of what constitutes art in contemporary Rome by visiting a cluster of galleries near Campo de' Fiori. Start at Galleria Varsi, a two-year-old space dedicated to graffiti and street art that also organizes wall paintings across the city. Around the corner at Dorothy Circus Gallery, the blood-red walls showcase surrealist Pop Art. And nearby, a cobblestone courtyard and carved-stone fountain flank the entrance to the prestigious Galleria Lorcan O'Neill, which moved to this spacious location last year; until April 4, look for works by the emerging British artist Eddie Peake.

3. Centocelle Chow | 8 p.m.

Rome's traditional guanciale-laced pasta dishes — carbonara, amatriciana, gricia — are in no danger of extinction, but if more creative restaurants like Mazzo start opening, they might be. This tiny spot in the far-flung Centocelle neighborhood was opened in 2013 by a pair of talented young chefs intent on spinning Roman cuisine into delicious new territory. A highlight of a recent meal was rösti with Romanesco broccoli and pecorino, a dish overshadowed only by three succulent meatballs smothered in sweet caramelized onions. The snug space seats only about a dozen, between one rough-hewed communal table and a small counter, so reservations are essential. Dinner for two, about 60 euros.

4. Pigneto Party | 11 p.m.

From Centocelle, the tram back toward the city center stops in the night-life neighborhood of Pigneto, so finish your night there. Beer-drinkers should head to Birra Più, a bottle shop and pub with craft beers from Brewfist and Birrificio Emiliano on tap. For something stronger, seek out Co. So. Cocktails & Social, a relatively new bar that pours creative concoctions like the Carbonara Sour, made with pork-fat-infused vodka, egg, black pepper, lemon juice and simple syrup. Or for music, swing by Yeah! Pigneto, an unpretentious cafe where local bands and D.J.s often perform amid the cool vintage décor on weekends.

Saturday

5. Market Choices | 10:30 a.m.

There were groans when the Mercato di Testaccio — one of the city's oldest markets — was moved to a newly built complex in 2012, and for good reason: The bright, sanitized space feels more like an anonymous mall than a Roman market. For a more satisfying market experience, head to MercatoMonti, where about two dozen vendors — an upstart collective of young designers, artisans and vintage dealers — sell everything from felt fedoras and vintage sunglasses to striped sweaters and one-of-a-kind dresses made by local designers.

6. Prime Panini | 12:30 p.m.

The labyrinthine lanes of Trastevere west of the Tiber River are lined with dubious dining options, but hidden among them is a refreshing new exception, the closet-size cafe Pianostrada Laboratorio di Cucina. Opened last May by four women — a mother, two daughters and a friend — this piccolissimo spot serves homemade dishes and outstanding panini using the region's best ingredients. For lunch, try the Pane Alici, prepared with creamy stracciatella cheese, truffled anchovies and arugula on a black, seppia-ink bun made in-house (9 euros).

7. Macro Arts | 3 p.m.

The Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, or Macro, housed in a former Peroni brewery, is often overshadowed by the city's other contemporary art museum, the Maxxi — an impressive, modern structure designed by the architect Zaha Hadid. But don't judge a museum by its facade. Macro presents more substantive exhibitions, from provocative portraiture photography to large-scale installations, like a multicolored crocheted work by the artist Toshiko Horiuchi MacAdam that served as an ersatz jungle gym for neighborhood children in 2014. The museum also expanded a few years ago with a spacious new wing. Admission, 13.50 euros.

8. Sweet Stroll | 5 p.m.

A short walk from Macro are the milk-bottle-lined walls of Come il Latte, an adorable gelateria scooping some of the creamiest gelato in Rome. In contrast to many of the city's top gelato shops, like Fatamorgana and Claudio Torcè's Il Gelato, this artisanal gelateria, which opened in 2012, doesn't serve scores of unusual flavors. Instead, the owner Nicoletta Chiacchiari uses top-notch ingredients to improve familiar favorites, resulting in caramel seasoned with pink Himalayan salt and pistachio studded with bright-green Sicilian nuts. After indulging in a cone, walk off some of the calories on a stroll north to Quartiere Coppedè, a curious quarter marked by beautiful Art Nouveau palazzi whose whimsical towers and ornate facades look plucked from a fairy tale.

9. Monteverde Meal | 8:30 p.m.

To get to the heart of modern Roman cuisine, get out of the heart of the city. On a quiet lane in the residential neighborhood of Monteverde, L'Osteria di Monteverde is a casual restaurant whose unremarkable exterior gives no hint of the outstanding food served inside. At a recent meal, beef tartare was a gustatory revelation after the addition of an eggy Parmigiano cream, porcini mushrooms and fried quail egg. Roasted octopus resting atop rosemary-scented borlotti beans got a boost from fresh stracciatella cheese. And spaghetti smothered with sheep's cheese and baccalà was set aflame by a dollop of fiery 'nduja (spicy Calabrian sausage). Dinner for two, about 60 euros.

10. Twilight Tipples | 11 p.m.

For a nightcap, cross Monteverde to Vineria Litro, a relaxed wine bar that opened in late 2013. The mirrored bar is lined with rare mezcals, so try a cocktail like the Mezsoni, which modifies the classic Negroni by swapping out gin for the smoky spirit. Or take the tram back to the center, where squirreled away on a small piazza is No. Au, a laid-back cafe serving natural wines and craft beers. Pull a wooden stool up to the bar and order a glass of Sicilian red from Occhipinti or an IPA from Birra del Borgo.

Sunday

11. Holy House | 10 a.m.

On Sunday mornings, masses gather at St. Peter's Basilica to angle for a glimpse of the popular Pope Francis. But far fewer congregate at the second-largest basilica, San Paolo Fuori le Mura, making this sacred site ideal for unhurried contemplation. The nave's soaring ceilings and gilded frescoes are impressive, but hidden beyond one transept is an even finer feature: the cloister (admission, 4 euros), a tranquil courtyard with beautiful mosaics, a trickling fountain and blooming roses for much of the year.

12. Power Couple | Noon

For a lesson in adaptive reuse, walk north on the main drag of the industrial Ostiense neighborhood to Centrale Montemartini. There, a former thermoelectric power plant is now a museum housing ancient sculptures and artifacts from the Capitoline Museums. Most striking are the main exhibition spaces where milky-white marble sculptures stand in stark contrast to the hulking black equipment — engines, boiler and steam turbines that helped power the city in the past, repurposed as foils for art in the present. Admission, 7.50 euros.

13. Pizza, Pizza | 2 p.m.

No weekend in Rome would be complete without pizza. For the thin-crust Roman style, go to Emma, a chic pizzeria that opened in the historic center in 2014. The pizzas, so thin and light they're nearly translucent, are made with dough from the celebrated baker Pierluigi Roscioli and with toppings from the family-owned Salumeria Roscioli nearby. For pizza al taglio (by the slice), go to Pizzarium, a take-away shop owned by the master pizzaiolo Gabriele Bonci that is scheduled to reopen March 8 after a much-needed expansion. Choices skew toward the unconventional, like roasted zucchini with ricotta, but they're all delicious. Either meal will end as every Roman holiday should: with a full belly.

Hotels

In a 17th-century palazzo in the historic center, **D. O. M** (Via Giulia 131; domhotelroma.com; from 240 euros) is a luxurious hotel with 24 rooms and suites that opened in late 2013. The richly textured décor is an appealing mix of old and new — think artworks ranging from Renaissance-era marble inscriptions to Andy Warhol silk-screens — and the clubby rooftop terrace is a new hot spot for aperitivi in warmer months.

Midcentury furniture mingles with marble sculptures at the **J.K. Place Roma** (Via di Monte d'Oro 30; jkroma.com; from 500 euros), a 30-room hotel that opened in 2013. The eye-catching design by the architect Michele Bönan features colorful palettes, stately four-poster beds and common spaces adorned with Berber rugs and a futuristic chandelier.

A version of this article appears in print on March 8, 2015, on page TR6 of the New York edition with the headline: What to Do in Rome.