

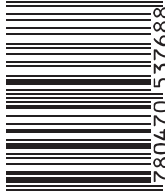
a **Frommer's** book

*Suzy Gershman's*  
born to shop  
**italy**

The ultimate guide  
for people who  
love to shop



ISBN 978-0-470-53768-8  
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# Rome

*Via Condotti = the Rodeo Drive of Rome*

*antiques, boutiques, galleries... oh my*

*tween heaven: cheap, hot & loud*

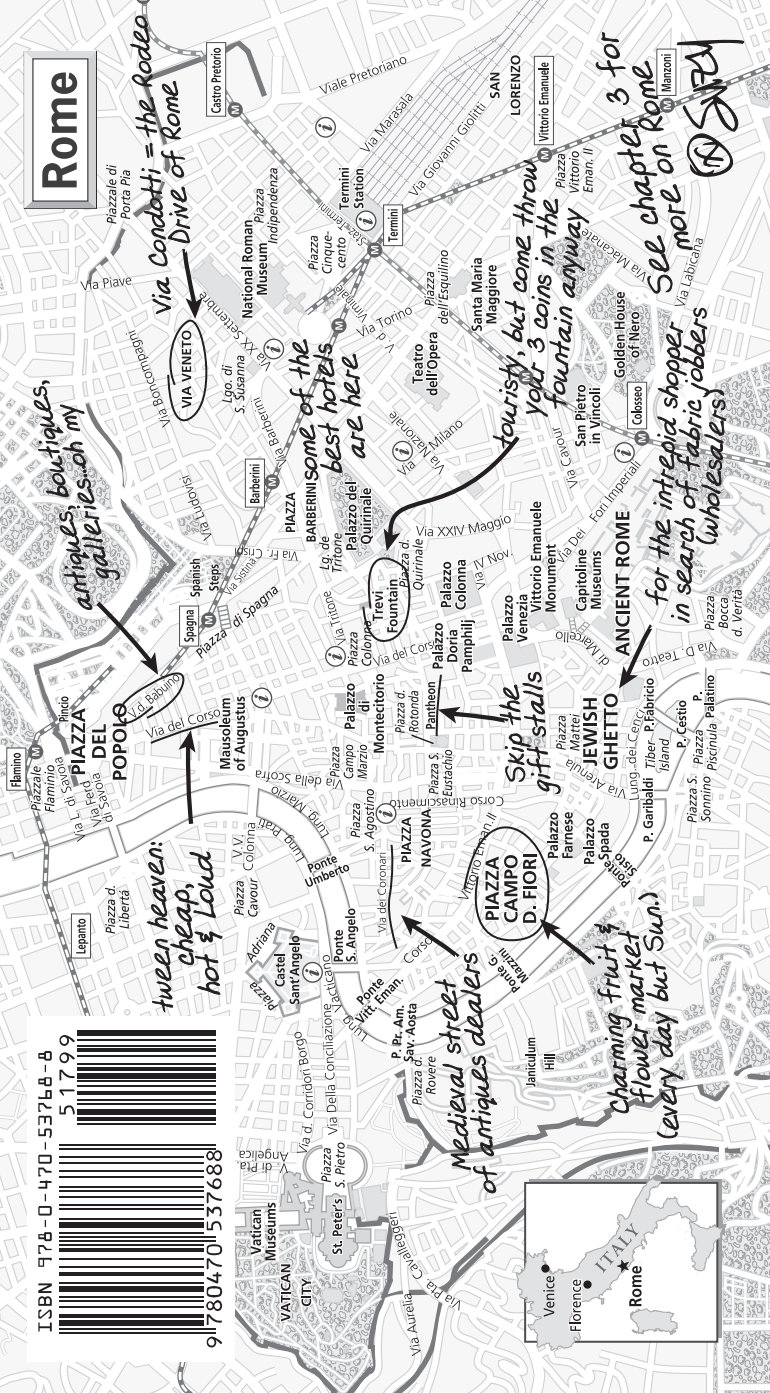
*Medieval street of antiques dealers*

*Charming fruit & flower market (every day but Sun.)*

*Skip the gift stalls*

*Touristy, but come throw your 3 coins in the fountain anyway*

*See chapter 3 for more on Rome*  
*for the intrepid shopper in search of fabric jobbers (wholesalers)*



*Suzy Gershman's*  
**born to shop**  
**italy**

The ultimate guide  
for people who love to shop

13th Edition



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

*For Maria Teresa Berdondini, who gave her heart and soul to this book*

*In loving memory*

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# About the Authors

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**Suzy Gershman** is a journalist, author, and global-shopping goddess who has worked in the fashion and fiber industries for more than 25 years. Her essays on retailing have been used by the Harvard School of Business; her reportage on travel and retail has appeared in *Travel + Leisure*, *Travel Holiday*, *Travel Weekly*, and most of the major women's magazines. Suzy is also the author of *C'est La Vie* (Penguin Paperback), the story of her first year as a widow living in Paris, and *Where to Buy the Best of Everything: The Outspoken Guide for World Travelers & Online Shoppers*. She and her two long-haired dachshunds, Toffee and Junior Mint, divide their time between San Antonio, Texas (Suzy's childhood home); a small house in Provence; and the airport.

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**Sarah Lahey** is editorial director of the *Born to Shop* series. Sarah lives with her husband, Tom, and two dogs, Bentley and Beckham, in Tiburon, California, when she isn't traveling to research and rewrite *Born to Shop* editions.

# To Start With

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This is a horrible confession, but as confessions go, it is probably important for my soul and maybe for your sole. I find Italy more and more expensive and some items (such as handbags) less and less attractive. There's fun to be had while shopping in Italy, don't get me wrong, but if you want a handbag at a great price, go to [www.ashniel.com](http://www.ashniel.com)—not the Leather School in Florence.

I think more and more people are interested in outlets and local sources, as well as mass-market fashions when they really are hip. If they're savvy, they're also into Hidden Italy. I found Florence so filled with tourists that I can't imagine anyone thinking this would be fun.

For years, we've wanted to break this Italy book into two books: north and south. We decided to concentrate on northern Italy in this edition and have taken the book as far south as Rome, with a little bit about Naples. North of Rome, we found lots of new products, new shops, great buys, and many Hidden Italy delights. We are working on an electronic version for southern Italy—stay tuned.

In order to make this book as accurate, up-to-date, and fresh as possible, we leaned on many friends, Italian and American-Italian. Special thanks to Manuela Rampado and Vanessa Zanaboni at Baglioni Hotels, who helped us organize most of our stays. I would also like to thank Karen Preston and the guys at Leading Hotels of the World in New York.

## *Chapter One*

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# *The Best of Italy in an Instant*

If you're in a hurry, you may want to breeze through what I consider some of the highlights of the whole country, crammed into these pages up front, so when you stop by these places, you can worship and shop and feel like you've indulged in a tiny taste of Italy. By no means is my list comprehensive; it will take years for me to perfect it, so bear with me while I shop, shop, shop. And eat, eat, eat.

### **THE BEST STORE IN ITALY**

#### *10 Corso Como*

Corso Como 10, Milan.

There's much more written about this store in the Milan chapter (see chapter 6), but suffice it to say that this is a bazaar, a magic act created by one of Italy's most famous fashion editors and stylists who turned to retail and hasn't looked back.

The store is well bought, but for people who shop a lot, there are no surprises in terms of merchandise. What's yummy is the way it's laid out and presented and served on your platter. You can gawk and enjoy and not buy a thing, but don't miss it. Note the cafe, the furniture in the garden, and the upstairs hotel and bookstore. There's also an outlet around the corner. © 02/2900-2674. [www.10corsocomo.com](http://www.10corsocomo.com).

## THE SECOND-BEST STORE IN ITALY

### *Venetia Studium*

Multiple locations in Venice.

Fortuny-inspired pleated silks made into wraps, bags, flowers, tassels, and treasures . . . a wonderland of fairy tales and dreams in colors that will make you swoon. There are several shops in Venice and one in London (go figure). Studium sells clothing and Fortuny chandeliers as well. © 041/523-6953 or 041/522-7353. [www.venetiastudium.com](http://www.venetiastudium.com).

## THE THIRD-BEST STORE IN ITALY

### *Indoroman*

Via Gregoriana 36, Rome.

Textiles, clothing, and ceramics are all featured in style maven Gaia Franchetti's enchanting shop, located in a centuries-old palazzo near the top of the Spanish Steps. As the name implies, goods are produced mainly in India, but often incorporate Italian linen and silk into the designs. Colors are vibrant, styles are contemporary, and the bed and table linens are worthy of a spread in *Architectural Digest*. © 06/6919-0908. [www.indoroman.com](http://www.indoroman.com).

## THE BEST SHOPPING CITY

### *Milan*

Milan may not be adorable or overwhelmingly charming or flashy, but the shopping is divine. One reason is that Milan offers high-quality goods in many different price ranges. The city has excellent alternative retail—street markets, jobbers who sell discounted designer clothing, and more—all of which help you to make do with less. Less is always more, as Mother used to say.

### **Suzy's Five Best Buys in Italy**

- Gran Soleil frozen dessert treats, 1.50€ for a two-pack at any grocery store.
- Purple suede mocs, from Le Sabot in Bologna, 70€.
- Eye shadow in a tube, from Madina in Milan, 10€.
- Tablecloth, from Lisa Corti in Florence, 70€.
- Crystal drop earrings, from Gloria Astolfo in Venice, 48€.

## **THE BEST SHOE-SHOPPING CITY**

### *Bologna*

There are many shoe factories in the villages around Bologna, which means you'll find shoe stores on every street in town. The outlets, chains, and indies are all well stocked and very competitive in price. Best buys from our last trip include two pairs of suede mocs, each under 70€.

## **THE MOST CREATIVE LINES WITH AN UNKNOWN & UNCOMMON LOOK**

### *Cult*

Available in shoe stores throughout Italy.

It's a brand of sneakers, trainers, running shoes—whatever you call them, they are so inventive you will freak. How about patent leather and canvas and zips and laces, all in one shoe? [www.cultshoes.it](http://www.cultshoes.it).

### *Lisa Corti Home Textile Emporium*

Locations in Rome, Florence, and Milan.

Textiles and clothing and bed linens, plus tabletop and accessories—all in hot, bright colors of staggering charm. I can't say enough about this designer. [www.lisacorti.com](http://www.lisacorti.com).

## THE BEST PORT CITY FOR A QUICK SPREE

### *Venice*

Venice is not included on every Mediterranean cruise, but if you can get here, even if only for a day, do—it is magic. The shopping isn't bad, either.

## THE BEST RIDE IN TOWN

For 6.50€, you can board the *vaporetto* (water bus) and ride Venice's Grand Canal for up to an hour. The trip not only gives you a great orientation of the city, but also provides views of the fabulous palazzos you don't get from the walkways. Venice's "main drag" is best seen from the rear deck, looking backward as you make your way down the canal.

## THE SECOND-BEST RIDE

Forget about Hertz and instead rent a Ferrari, vintage car, or Vespa to zip through the Italian countryside. Packages including backup vehicles and preprogrammed cellphones are available for anywhere from 1 day to 1 week to a month or more. See "Shoppers, Start Your Engines" (p. 56), "Italy by Vintage Car" (p. 92), and "Italy by Scooter" (p. 151) for details.

## THE BEST FACTORY OUTLET: NORTH

### *Factory Store (Armani)*

Via Provinciale per Bregnano 13, Vertemate.

There are Armani outlets dotted all over Italy, but this one is the best. It's a tad hard to find, situated near Bregnano (which is between Milan and Como), and upon arrival all you will see is a building marked only with the words factory store (seriously), but once inside you are talking clothes for men, women, and children, plus lingerie and home style and accessories—all at very affordable prices. © 031/887-373.

## THE BEST FACTORY OUTLET: SOUTH

### *The Mall*

Via Europa 8, Leccio.

About 45 minutes outside Florence and not far from the Prada outlet, you get an outlet mall with the unfortunate name of the Mall. But it's got big-name designer outlets such as Gucci, Pucci, Burberry, Yohji, Ferragamo, and Tod's—to name just a few. ☎ 055/865-7775. [www.themall.it](http://www.themall.it).

## THE BEST OUTLET MALLS

Eeeny, meeny, miney, moe . . . I'm going with **Barberino Designer Outlet**, Via Meucci, Barberino di Mugello (☎ 055/842-161; [www.mcarthurglen.com](http://www.mcarthurglen.com)), because it knocked my socks off. Also, it's not far north of Florence—it's actually midway between Florence and Bologna—so you are well situated for all sorts of bargains in a number of different outlets and malls.

As runner-up, I have to name **Serravalle Designer Outlet**, Via della Moda 1, Serravalle Scrivia (☎ 0143/609-000; [www.mcarthurglen.com](http://www.mcarthurglen.com)), the mother of all Italian outlets. This large village-style mall is between Milan and Genoa.

### **Sarah's Five Best Buys in Italy**

- Flower pin made of heavy wool felt with crystal beading, from Florence's San Lorenzo market (stall no. 53), 6€.
- Aceto Balsamico (aged 12 years), from A. Ceccarelli in Bologna, 17€.
- Magnifying glass with Murano glass handle, from Rivoaltus in Venice, 12€.
- Black linen drawstring trousers, from the street market on Viale Trastevere in (duh) Trastevere, Rome, 4€.
- King-size bed cover in jewel tones, from Indoroman in Rome, 90€.

## THE BEST AIRPORT SHOPPING

### *Leonardo da Vinci International Airport*

Rome.

It's a virtual shopping mall, with all major designers represented. Furthermore, a guide to its shops, which lists prices, is made available once a year. Use it to comparison-shop. Not everything is a bargain, but you'll have a great time finding out which items are well priced.

## THE BEST DEPARTMENT STORE

### *La Rinascente*

Piazza del Duomo, Milan.

In response to competition, La Rina has redone its image and redone its interior. The store is a lot like an American department store and may not impress you at first. But wait until you experience the details—that's where its greatness lies. There's a tax-free office upstairs, as well as a travel agency, hair salon, and full-service bank. The cafe overlooks the Duomo and will drench you in magic and memories. © 02/88-521. [www.rinascente.it](http://www.rinascente.it).

## THE BEST HISTORIC SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

### *Antico Setificio Fiorentino*

Via Lorenzo Bartolini 4, Florence.

You will step back in time when you enter this 18th-century silk factory that was renovated by the Pucci family. It still produces damasks, silks, and cottons on looms that have hummed for hundreds of years. © 055/213-861. [www.anticosetificiofiorentino.it](http://www.anticosetificiofiorentino.it).

## THE BEST STREET MARKET

### *Mercato di Viale Papiniano (San Agostino Market)*

Tuesday and Saturday on Viale Papiniano, Milan.

Fun? It just doesn't get much better than this! Two days a week, you have a chance to enjoy this fabulous street market, which sells fruits and vegetables in one part and designer goods in the other. Arrange your visit to Milan so that you're in town for one of the market days!

## THE BEST WEEKLY MARKET (RUNNER-UP TO BEST STREET MARKET)

### *Siena Market*

Wednesday in Siena.

I have been to a fair number of markets in my life, and celebrated market day in a large number of cities all over the world, so when I say this is one of the best, I really mean it.

It helps if the sky is blue, the sun is shining, the temperature is not too high, and the crowds aren't too bad. Yeah, sure. If you come by car, get an early start, as parking fills up quickly.

But anyway you slice it, this is a market for locals, filled to overflowing with everything from shoes to tractors. It takes up a half-moon area at the top of town and is thoughtfully organized by category of goods, with foodstuffs to one side and dry goods on the other. Sometimes you find name-brand closeouts for low prices. But you go for the glory, not the shoes. Hours are 8am to 1pm, but I've found that some vendors start packing up before noon.

## THE BEST NEW GOTTA-HAVE-IT

### *Dolce & Gabbana The Make Up*

Available in locations throughout Italy, including La Rinascente in Milan.

Makeup artist Pat McGrath stole my heart when she created the Armani cosmetics line for L'Oréal. Her new baby is a line for D&G. Although it's made by Proctor & Gamble, it is as wild and bold as the fashion designers themselves. Not to worry: There's no leopard-spotted lipsticks, simply catwalk-worthy chic. Test the Perfect Finish Powder Foundation.

## THE MOST DESIRED GOTTA-HAVE-IT

### *Nomination*

Flagship at Corso Venezia 6, Milan; multiple locations in cities throughout Italy.

This isn't a new item, but suddenly I am obsessed with it and wonder if I can survive much longer without a custom-made link-up bracelet with inserts of my choice—like a French flag, my son's initials, and charms representative of my Born to Shop travels. They call this the world's only "composable bracelet," with truly thousands of choices; you begin with a base set of links for 14€ and then add on the charms. These are popular with men as well as women in Italy. Yes, you can wear it nonstop, even in the shower. © 02/7600-1136. [www.nomination.com](http://www.nomination.com).

## THE BEST AFFORDABLE CLOTHES

### *Oviesse/OVS Industry*

Multiple locations in cities throughout Italy.

Owned by the department store Coin, Oviesse—or OVS Industry, as the newer stores are called—is the Italian fashion version of Target, with clothes and accessories for all members of the family. There's a good plus-size department for women, too. On the last visit, I bought one of my best dresses of the summer here, in purple linen for 49€. [www.oviesse.it](http://www.oviesse.it).

## THE BEST HOTEL GIFT SHOP

### *Villa d'Este*

Via Regina 40, Cernobbio (near Como).

It's rare for a gift shop to so perfectly sum up both the clients and their aspirations, but the shops at Villa d'Este do that, with their own branded merchandise as well as a store of men's and women's clothing from nearby mills such as Lora Piana. © 031/3481. [www.villadeste.it](http://www.villadeste.it).

## THE BEST GIFTS FOR 10€ OR LESS

- **Designer pasta in fashion colors:** Find it in all sorts of brand names, in all Italian cities, in grocery stores, *enotecas* (wine/food shops), and TTs (tourist traps); 4€ to 8€ a package.
- **Regional pasta:** As an alternative to designer pasta, look for regional specialties of pastas. Barilla, which is the largest maker of pasta in Italy, creates specific “designs” for specific markets. (See p. 291 for Rhona’s report on the Barilla cooking school, “Spaghetti School? Per favore!”) In Venice, I bought Casarecce, a style only available there. Go figure. For less than 1.50€, I look like a genius to a foodie.
- **Chocolate postcards:** I wouldn’t try mailing these as I suspect they will crumble, but they are darn cute gifties. Caf-farel, a mass maker of chocolates, does a series of postcards called “Italy’s Treasures” that depicts famous historic sites. I found a selection of “cards” representing five different cities, all for sale in the main Milan train station.
- **Balsamic vinegar:** You’ll need to wrap these gifts securely and pack them in your checked luggage, but your foodie friends will be thrilled to get aged balsamico that they can’t buy in the U.S. A small bottle of 10- to 12-year-old balsamico is about 10€.
- **Bellini mix:** Sold in delis, wine shops, and street-market stalls, this peach purée mixes with champagne or prosecco to make classic Bellini cocktails. Available in two sizes, the small 20cl bottle costs 6€ (less than half the price of a Bellini at Harry’s Bar) and makes four cocktails.
- **Foodstuffs:** Just go to the grocery store and load up—risotto mixes, spices, soup cubes, and don’t forget Gran Soleil—a dessert that comes in a tiny tub that goes in the freezer and turns into gelato! Now in five flavors and under 1€ per serving. It’s made by the same company that invented Nutella.

- **Murano glass accessories:** We bought wine stoppers, magnifying glasses, and letter openers in Venice—all featuring layers of swirly colorful glass. Prices are better on the San Polo side of the Rialto Bridge; they range from 5€ for a simple wine plug to 12€ for a magnifying glass.
- **Milk-frothing machine:** This battery-operated job looks like a small wand and makes the milk in your cappuccino stand up and smile. I found the old-fashioned ones in a market in Rome for 7€, and in an appliance store in Florence for 10€. Then I found a new, modern, and well-designed one for 13€ in Siena. Seek and ye shall froth.
- **Soap:** Try Weekend Soap from the Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella stores in Florence and Rome. The 9€ package consists of three bars of soap, one each for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Or pick up any of Rancé's soaps sold from its free-standing store in Rome at Piazza Navona. Rancé sounds French because the firm was started in France 100 years ago, but it's now Italian (although it does specialize in Marseille process soaps).

You can also buy Italian soaps in grocery stores or at any *erborista* (herbalist).

- **Lush gifties:** Yes, Lush is a British firm famous for its bath and beauty products, and yes, there are now Lush stores in the U.S., but the Italian Lush products are made with local ingredients, so you can buy limoncello soap or shampoo. There are branch locations all over Italy, often in mainstream tourist areas.
- **Cardinal's socks:** Sold only in Rome, at about 8€ a pair. Fine cotton knit, they come only in red. Of course.

## THE BEST EXTRAVAGANT GIFTS

- **Important art glass:** Venice or Murano. Expect to pay 350€ for a hefty vase. Shipping will be 40€ to 80€ more.
- **Jewelry from any of the new Venetian bead maidens:** Look for something in the 75€-to-150€ range.

- **Gucci dog collar:** Hmm, Gucci anything. Gucci outlet, anyone? It's outside Florence.
- **Suede mocs in an oddball but divine color:** I've bought chrome-yellow and lime-green in past years, but this time, I found bright purple mocs in Bologna. The odder the color, the better they go with everything. Try to buy at an outlet for 100€ to 115€ unless you are forced to go the distance and pay 230€ at regular retail.
- **Missoni wearable art:** The socks, scarves, headbands, and jewelry are timeless gifts and easy to pack.
- **Etro paisleys:** Silk or cashmere; in all Etro stores, in most major cities . . . but then, maybe you can find them at the Etro outlet in beautiful downtown Milano.

## BUYER BEWARE

When giving extravagant gifts of love, be sure that the recipient recognizes the value of the gift. We spent almost \$100 on a bottle of balsamic vinegar for a business contact, and I swear, despite the fact that he's Italian and should know better, his weak "thank you" seemed to say that he didn't know the grocery-store stuff from the blue-blooded stuff. A gift only works when the recipient appreciates it.

## THE GREATEST GIFT OF LOVE

This was just too important to me to let common sense take over, so I bought three tall bottles of olive oil for my son, Aaron, and his wife, Jenny. Not any three, mind you, but samples of the Ligurian, Umbrian, and Tuscan oils so they could taste the difference.

Then I had to wrap each bottle in masking tape and then bubble wrap and then bag each in plastic and then wrap each in clothes that could be washed, just in case. I won't mention how much room they took up in the suitcase or what they weighed. No greater love hath a foodie mother for her son who likes to cook.

# Chapter Two

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## Details

### Welcome to Italy

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We've got some angels and we've got some demons. *Madonna mia*, everything's expensive! That doesn't mean we didn't find 5€ pants, 7€ gifts, and designer clothes to drool for; it just means sticker shock and many disappointments.

Thank heavens, the dollar has gained some strength against the euro and spaghetti is still cheap, so even with high prices, careful shoppers will rejoice. Bring on the cheap shoes! Did someone say 70€ purple suede mocs? Bring it on!

### Getting There

---

#### FROM THE U.S.

You'll find the best fares for direct flights from the U.S. to Italy if you latch on to a new gate or a promotional rate, or even the launch of a code share . . . so watch local papers closely.

It may even pay to make a domestic hop to a nearby city if direct flights to Italy have just begun to be offered from there. Ask your travel agent.

You can always go via New York, Chicago, Dallas, or another major hub; explore other options if you are looking

for a price break. Note that deregulation of intra-European flights has brought on all sorts of choices and that many low-cost European carriers specialize in getting folks to Italy.

You might also want to remember that Italians still have a tendency to declare a strike—or even threaten a strike—every time someone gets PMS. Backup plans (and planes) are a good idea; also stay away from those carriers that are more prone to strikes than others. Always check your trains before you go to the station. Strikes are usually posted in the *International Herald Tribune*.

**Alitalia** ([www.alitalia.com](http://www.alitalia.com)), the Italian national carrier, has merged with Air One and operates various flights and connections from the U.S. to Italy, but doesn't offer the same promotions as U.S. carriers, so watch for competitive prices when other carriers don't have fare wars. Alitalia's baggage allowance is two bags at 23 kilos (51 lb.) each, which means you may need to watch your weight. Alitalia serves Naples from New York and recently added a flight from Los Angeles to Rome.

I used to take **Delta Air Lines** ([www.delta.com](http://www.delta.com)), flying into Milan and coming out of Rome. Delta has now merged with Northwest and also has code shares with several other airlines—thus allowing me to use Paris as a hub (traveling onward with Air France). You may also want to use Nice as your entry point to Italy (it's a great trick—see p. 16 as well as chapter 7 for details). Delta also offers direct flights from Atlanta, Cincinnati, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake City. Note that Delta has just imposed a \$50 fee for checking a second bag on international flights.

**American Airlines** ([www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com)) has service from Chicago to Milan and from New York to Rome. Note that American still has three classes of service.

**United Airlines** ([www.united.com](http://www.united.com)) offers daily nonstops to Rome from Dulles in Washington, D.C.

**US Airways** ([www.usairways.com](http://www.usairways.com)) has service from Philly to Rome and Milan. In fact, most carriers, in conjunction with their code-share partners, have a way to get you to Italy with minimum stress.

## Best Deals

- Book online. Or at least check it out. Look at regular carriers as well as brokers for discount tickets. I was amazed (maybe because I am unsophisticated in these things) to learn that many airlines have different sites with different deals. So if you check out [www.alitaliausa.com](http://www.alitaliausa.com), you get deals created just for the American market; there's another site (in another language) for other deals.
- Compare deals on the airlines' sites to the discount offerings. Although many airlines claim their sites offer the best deals, in researching this book I found regular sites offering summer fares from JFK to Rome for \$2,000+, while the discount sites had fares ranging from \$780 to \$1,036. All of the discounted flights were on well-known carriers; many required a change of planes in London—but to save that much money, I'd willingly change planes on the moon. I found good fares on [www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com), [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com), [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com), and [www.cheapflights.com](http://www.cheapflights.com).
- Book off season.
- Book summer travel in the early spring. Most airlines offer discounts for tickets booked before May 1.
- Look at packages and promotional rates that have inclusive perks. Breakfast these days is very expensive; get it included.
- Book hotel rooms and tours in dollars; prepay if needed. If the euro starts to gain strength again, you don't want any nasty surprises.
- Use up your miles. You can usually get the awards you want by booking 9 months in advance.
- Consider low-cost carriers. Some of them have long-haul service from the U.S., while others have service from cities in Europe. It may pay to fly one carrier into London and then connect to a low-cost carrier. Just be sure you match airports and luggage weight requirements, as many low-cost carriers allow less weight and are strict on these rules.

## FROM LONDON & CONTINENTAL EUROPE

Low-cost airlines have made a huge dent in the Italian tourism business, especially flights from the United Kingdom. Sometimes **British Airways** ([www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)) and **Air France** ([www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com)) get so annoyed at these discounters that they go to war with low, low fares.

BA offers special promotions to customers who are registered on its website. You don't need to book a flight to be eligible, but you must be registered to claim these special deals. Recent fares included Gatwick to Rome at £59—for an American traveler, that's less than \$100. The price includes all taxes and fees.

There are also train and plane wars, since the rail companies want to make sure those who fly the low-cost carriers know there are other alternatives, especially for short journeys. Check out **SNCF** ([www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)), the French national train system, as well as **Trenitalia** ([www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)), the Italian national train system (look for "Smart Price" bargains on its website).

Sometimes you'll save money by flying into a European city and getting a low-cost flight from there. Do make sure you know which airport you are using, however—many low-cost airlines use alternative airports. This can be especially important when you think you are flying to Venice, since the regular airport (Marco Polo) is slightly out of town and the alternative airport is significantly out of town.

Some thoughts: **Air One** ([www.flyairone.it](http://www.flyairone.it)) has just partnered with **Alitalia** and plans to add service connecting Rome with Rio de Janeiro, Seoul, Shanghai, Paris, Zurich, Berlin, Vienna, Prague, and Málaga, Spain. **Air Berlin** ([www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com)) flies to Milan from many German cities, so try flights from the U.S. to Frankfurt or Munich, where you can pick up your connection. From Paris, take **Vueling** ([www.vueling.com](http://www.vueling.com)) to Rome's FCO. **Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) flies from London's Stansted to Bologna, Milan, Trieste, Rimini, Genoa, Pisa, Parma, and Rome, with additional service from

Brussels and Frankfurt to a handful of Italian cities. Meanwhile, **easyJet** ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) flies from London's Gatwick to assorted cities including Pisa, Milan, Rome, Venice, and Palermo.

**Meridiana** ([www.meridiana.it](http://www.meridiana.it)) is an Italian carrier with small planes that serve a remarkable number of cities. Its online "shopping calendar" feature leads you to the best of the fares—for example, Rome (FCO) to Palermo for 48€. It's terrific for intra-Italian flights.

If you don't know where some of the aforementioned cities are, look at a map. Also check to see if new destinations or airports are available.

## SECRET CITIES

If you are coming from another European country via train, try combining your U.S.-bought train passes. A complete Eurailpass may be a wasted value, especially if you are just visiting two countries (say, France and Italy). Nowadays, however, there are so many different types of rail passes that it pays to figure out which kind is best for you.

If you are flying between connecting European cities, price your tickets carefully. I needed to go to Rome and priced the airfare from both Zurich and Nice, and found Nice offered me a \$500 savings.

For Americans, the various air-pass systems offered by different carriers can be a lifesaver—surely a fare saver. But they do have restrictions and must be bought in the U.S. before you depart.

Keep in mind: The city of Nice (in France) is only 314km (195 miles) from Milan and a little more than a 1-hour drive from the Italian border. To depart from Italy through Nice, you can take the train from Milan to Nice, or even from Venice to Nice (this is an overnight journey and saves on a hotel room), or you can fly (a 1-hr. flight).

Also note that since Nice is the turnaround point on the train lines, you may want to simply hop on the overnight

train to Rome, or points south. This involves a transfer from the Nice airport to the Nice train station.

## Getting Around in Italy

### BY PLANE

Most intra-European flights are outrageously expensive. However, as European skies deregulate, new local services are popping up. There are now air wars over business travelers flying between Rome and Milan, a 20-minute trip. **Alitalia/Air One** is a good bet; also check out **Meridiana**, mentioned above. Check with your travel agent for details.

Note that prices may vary based on the time of day. Usually, flights between 11am and 3pm are 40% cheaper than early-morning and late-afternoon flights, and all airlines offer advance-purchase deals.

### BY TRAIN

I just can't imagine driving around Italy when you can take a train to the big cities and then rent a car to explore the countryside for a day or two. Or stay in cities where you don't even need a car. This edition was researched by car and train; we drove around northern Italy and Tuscany, but for Rome, we left the car parked in Florence and hopped on the train.

While train fares from city to city are not expensive, your best buy is still an Italian rail pass, bought through a travel agent or **Rail Europe** in the U.S. before you leave home. Call © 800/662-8600 or go to [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com).

The price of the rail pass, which comes in a variety of flavors, depends on many factors, including the class you choose and the number of days you actually want to travel within a given 2-month period.

**Insider's tip:** Our second-class Eurostar ride from Florence to Rome found us at a table for four with a couple who passed

their 2-year-old back and forth while screaming on their cell-phones. We decided to return in first-class seats, well worth the \$30 extra. Also, people often take seats not assigned to them, which can be a problem. Keep your ticket stub handy.

**Additional tips:** If you're not using a pass, be sure to validate your ticket in the yellow machine at the entrance to the track before you board the train. Once on board, you'll find luggage racks located at the end of each car. It's a no-no to place heavy bags on the open overhead racks.

Ultra-high-speed train service has been launched by **Trenitalia** ([www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)), Italy's national railway, from Milan to Bologna and from Milan to Naples; service to Florence and Rome should be in place by the time this edition is published.

### Insider's Tip

Note that some trains are called **Eurostar Italia**. These do not go through the Chunnel, but they are fast and deluxe—and expensive. Such trains are marked "ES" on the schedule or the big board in the station.

Beginning in 2011, a competitor will introduce 25 new candy-apple-red high-speed trains on the Naples–Turin route. This new service, called **Italo**, will cut the trip from Milan to Rome to about 3 hours. Italo's fares will be competitive with those of Trenitalia.

**WEB TIPS** 📖 You can buy tickets at discount prices online via the Eurostar website at [www.ferroviedellostato.it](http://www.ferroviedellostato.it). There's an English link at the top of the page.

## BY CAR

If you want to drive around Italy, reserve your car in the U.S. before departure, using a prepaid plan. It will be half the price you'd be charged in Italy—even if you reserve through an American rental agency such as **Avis** (☎ 800/230-4898; [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com)) or **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3001; [www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com)). The Italian division of Thrifty, **Thrifty by Car** (☎ 800/847-4389; [www.thrifty.com](http://www.thrifty.com)), has beefed up promotions with fair daily rates and special weekend prices.

Fly-drive packages may offer the best deal; check to see if your airline has a fly-drive affiliation with a particular car-rental agency.

The best rental deal I've ever had came from **Kemwel** (© 800/678-0678; [www.kemwel.com](http://www.kemwel.com)); our car rental went both smoothly and inexpensively. For our 5-week research trip, we booked a five-door Toyota Yaris and received an 8% discount for booking by April 30 for our May/June trip. Total price including insurance was \$1,428, or about \$35 a day. When we picked up the car at CDG, we were upgraded to a small Mercedes—no charge, *mille grazie!*

We also checked out **AutoEurope.com** and found its online prices to be about 10% higher than Kemwel's. When Sarah called for more info, it turns out AutoEurope and Kemwel are one and the same. Go figure.

I have not used this source personally so I cannot vouch for it, but I was very impressed with the offerings at **Rental Car Group** (© 866/735-1715; [www.rentalcargroup.com](http://www.rentalcargroup.com)). Prices are quoted in euros (for a 1-week period), so do the math realistically. I priced cars in Florence, Rome, Venice, and Milan, all at 135€ for a week.

When you are renting a car, consider how many people will be with you and how much luggage you will be hauling, since European cars tend to be smaller. Do not accept free upgrades to larger models unless you really need the space. The smaller the car, the less gas you will use, and the easier it will be to get into parking spots and to maneuver medieval streets and alleys.

Let me also remind you that because of the crime rate in Italy, car rentals there are far more expensive than in other European countries, and various insurance plans are mandatory. You have no choice.

Furthermore, American Express and credit- and bank-card firms that offer car insurance automatically with your membership have now waived coverage in Italy. *Do not assume you are covered by your credit card.*

## U.S. VS. EURO RENTALS

European rental rates are usually more expensive than those offered in the U.S. for use in Europe, although a package plan will always be less expensive than a daily rate. Avis in Italy offers a 3-day weekend package for 84€—this includes unlimited mileage—so if you can read Italian, go online to [www.avisautonoleggio.it](http://www.avisautonoleggio.it).

**Shopper's trick:** If you are already in Italy and want a car at the last minute, you can reserve by making a long-distance call to the U.S. and paying by phone. You'll receive a faxed prepaid voucher with U.S. prices.

## DRIVING AROUND

You can now reserve a GPS device when you make your rental-car reservation. Some companies, including Kemwel, will throw it in for free during seasonal promotions. It helps if you understand Italian, but even if you don't, the graphics will be a godsend for maneuvering the back roads and cities.

For up-to-date information on road construction, detours, gas prices, and more, go to [www.autostrada.it](http://www.autostrada.it).

### I Have Gas

The cost of gas in Europe is three times what you are paying in the U.S.; you will also pay high fees for the use of highways. Gas in Italy is slightly less expensive than in France, so if you are driving to or from France, plan accordingly.

Highways and gas stations in Italy do take credit cards, but automatic tellers at tollbooths and in gas stations only accept CB, the European version of Visa. If you have a U.S.-issued Visa card, it will work in Italy, but probably not in these situations.

# Sleeping in Italy

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While there is specific hotel information in each of the following city chapters, for those who like to make all or most of their reservations with one hotel chain or one phone call, there are a few firms that can help you out. Ask each if it has promotional deals.

**BAGLIONI HOTELS** If you are into chic, fabulous, and easy all at the same time, make one phone call to book all of Italy with Baglioni. This is a small chain with four- and five-star hotels in major cities. The top of the line is the one in Milan (the Carlton, a member of Leading Hotels of the World), but my faves are Florence's Relais Santa Croce and Verona's Due Torri Hotel Baglioni. Women traveling alone will appreciate Baglioni's Women Travellers package, which includes a gift box of Carita products, in-room check-in, and no extra charge for room service. If you plan to visit several cities, the Discover Italy with Baglioni package includes 6 or more nights with a minimum of three hotels. The package includes breakfast, as well as food and beverage credits. There is no toll-free reservations number in the U.S. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

**BEST WESTERN** We've found great three-star properties throughout Italy by booking on [www.bestwestern.com](http://www.bestwestern.com). Since the hotels are individually owned, they differ in style and quality, but most are in great locations. Seniors and AAA members can save up to 20%. © 800/780-7234 in the U.S.

**BOSCOLO HOTELS** This chain has more than a dozen properties in Italy. Some are normal four-star hotels that are good finds; a few are to-die-for palaces. © 888/626-7265 in the U.S. [www.boscolohotels.com](http://www.boscolohotels.com).

**HILTON HOTELS** Exhibiting a recent burst of energy, Hilton now has several new hotels dotted across Italy. In some cases, the hotels are not in the downtown area—such as the one in

Florence. In Venice, the Hilton is located on an island near San Marco. © 800/HILTONS in the U.S. [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com).

**JOLLY HOTELS** Jolly is a leading four-star chain in Italy, with properties in other European cities and some spas, too. Many of the hotels are modern and, from the outside, may look like they're stuck in the 1960s—but on the inside they're great. Some are re-habbed grande dames. Trust me on this; Jolly is a great find and lets you make all your Italian bookings with one chain. © 800/726-0528 in the U.S. [www.jollyhotels.com](http://www.jollyhotels.com).

**LEADING HOTELS OF THE WORLD** Leading Hotels of the World also represents Leading Small Hotels of the World, with a wide selection of the fanciest accommodations anywhere—sometimes multiple choices in the same city. © 800/745-8883 in the U.S. [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com).

Note that most of the hotels have their own websites as well. Also check out [www.luxury-alliance.com](http://www.luxury-alliance.com), which is the combined website for Leading Hotels and Relais & Châteaux.

**RELAIS & CHÂTEAUX** With some 30 properties all over Italy, Relais & Châteaux guarantees that you'll rest in a luxury property and eat awfully well to boot. © 800/735-2478 in the U.S. [www.relaischateaux.com](http://www.relaischateaux.com).

**SINA HOTELS** It's a sina (sorry) if you overlook this Italian chain of luxury hotels, with four- and five-star properties in all the key Italian cities. It offers promotional deals in most destinations as well as some packages that include meals, late checkout, and more. Single nights tend to be pricey, but when you buy a 5-night package, you can save big time. There is no toll-free reservations number in the U.S. [www.sinahotels.com](http://www.sinahotels.com).

**SOFITEL** Part of France's Accor Group, Sofitel has properties in Venice, Rome, and Florence. Most of its European hotels offer 1 night free with a 4-night booking. In winter, there's sometimes a dollar/euro-at-parity promotion, requiring a 3-night minimum stay. © 800/763-4835 in the U.S. [www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com).

### **Electronically Yours**

Here are some unusual websites you may want to check out before you begin your Italian adventures:

- **Autostrade per l'Italia** ([www.autostrade.it](http://www.autostrade.it)): Check this highway's website for info on detours, routes, and the price of gas.
- **Berlitz** ([www.berlitzbooks.com](http://www.berlitzbooks.com)): If your Italian isn't passable, you may want to buy iPhrase Italian from the Berlitz site or download it via iTunes. For a cost of about \$10, your iPod will be conveniently loaded with hundreds of helpful phrases, road signs, pictures, and audio for your trip.
- **Design Centro Italia** ([www.italydesign.com](http://www.italydesign.com)): This California firm can help you price Italian furniture and design, which may actually be cheaper in the U.S.
- **Faith Heller Willinger** ([www.faithwillinger.com](http://www.faithwillinger.com)): Browse all sorts of food, restaurant, and recipe info. Faith also does cooking classes in her home.
- **Italian Government Tourist Board** ([www.italian-tourism.com](http://www.italian-tourism.com) and [www.enit.it](http://www.enit.it)): Use these sites to find a hotel, look up train schedules, or research arts events.
- **The Vatican** ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)): Dial a prayer.

## HOME SUITE HOME

If you'd rather rent an apartment or even a villa, there are several services that will assist you. For something very high-end, tour masters **Abercrombie & Kent** (© 800/323-7308; [www.abercrombiekent.com](http://www.abercrombiekent.com)) has a rental division, but a castle may well cost you \$30,000 a week. The **Best in Italy** ([www.thebestinitaly.com](http://www.thebestinitaly.com)) handles properties that begin at around \$10,000 a week. **Villas International** © 800/221-2260; [www.villasintl.com](http://www.villasintl.com)) features properties all over Europe, so you can compare prices and locations. **Dream & Charme** (© 39/02-8050-3457; [www.dreamcharme.com](http://www.dreamcharme.com)), based in Milan, rents luxury villas throughout Italy. The "Dream" division is pretty

pricey, but “Charme” options are more reasonably priced. Also consider trading houses (try [www.intervac.com](http://www.intervac.com)) or renting an apartment through [www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com).

## Phone Home

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- International calls made from the U.S. to Europe are far less expensive than those made from Europe to the U.S. If you are in Italy and want to talk to the U.S., call home and ask family or friends to call you back.
- An international call from Italy to the U.S. on your cellphone may be less expensive than calling from a hotel—especially if you have a cellphone with an international calling plan.
- We never travel without our international cellphones—you can buy a basic mobile phone for \$40 to \$50 and it will include a few call minutes. We then buy SIM cards (a tiny computer chip with a number for the country we’re visiting) for around \$20, and e-mail our local numbers to friends and business associates at home. Additional minutes are easy to load (especially when you have a good hotel concierge). This not only makes it convenient for people to reach us, but we can also call each other when we’re lost in the markets. International calls are also easy. **Note:** Our French-based phones beeped as we drove into Italy from France, advising us that our calls would be more expensive; there’s surcharges for using French minutes in Italy.
- **Cellular Abroad** ([www.cellularabroad.com](http://www.cellularabroad.com)) has a plan that lets you rent a cellphone or buy a SIM card for less than the cost of your wireless company’s roaming charges.
- Phone cards can be an economical solution, if you don’t mind making calls from a public phone. I buy a SIPS card at any *tabacchi* (tobacco shop) in Italy and use it at pay phones. You can also use a phone card from your hotel.

- Considering how inexpensive a phone card can be (I just bought 800 min. to the U.S. for \$6.50), you may be willing to pay local charges from your hotel room. Ask at the front desk—sometimes local calls are free.
- USA Direct is a marvelous gimmick and is often a lifesaver, but it doesn't necessarily give the best rate possible. If you prefer to use your American long-distance carrier, the access codes for the major carriers in Italy are: **USA Direct** (AT&T), ☎ 800-172-444; and **MCI Direct**, ☎ 800-905-825. Each carrier charges a flat fee for providing this service; it will appear on your monthly phone bill.
- The ultimate deal is using an Internet service like **Skype** ([www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) or **Google Talk** ([www.google.com/talk](http://www.google.com/talk)). You'll need a good Internet connection to do this, as well as a clear understanding of appropriate time changes.

## PHONE CODES

To call Italy from abroad, the **country code** is 39. The access codes (area codes) for the major cities are: **Florence**, 055; **Milan**, 02; **Venice**, 041; **Rome**, 06; and **Naples**, 081.

To call Rome from the U.S., for example, you would dial 011 + 39 + 06 (the access code for Rome) + the number. All calls, both local and long distance, include the "0" (zero).

## Shopping Hours

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Shops open at 9 or 9:30am and usually close at 1 or 1:30pm for lunch. They reopen at 3 or 3:30pm (or even 4pm) and stay open until 7:30pm. In the south, they may not reopen until 5pm.

Some stores close on Saturday from 1 to 4pm. Stores are open on Saturday afternoons in winter, but are closed on Saturday afternoons in summer.

Some stores do whatever they please.

The notion of staying open all day is catching on in big cities, but not the countryside. You never find shops open all day in the south, where it is too hot to think in the afternoon, let alone shop.

Stores that do not close for lunch usually write their hours as “nonstop.” In all cities, major department stores stay open at lunchtime . . . unless it’s Monday, which has its own rules—see below.

## SURVIVING MONDAY

Monday mornings used to be a total write-off for most retail shopping in Italy, but with a down economy, some shops are hungry for business and are opening earlier on Mondays. Traditionally, most stores open at 3:30pm on Monday.

But wait, that’s why God invented factories. Because factories are open on Monday mornings, most factory stores are also open. Not all, just most. Call and ask, or have your hotel’s concierge call for you. Grocery stores are usually open as well, but mom-and-pop minimarts may not be.

## SUNDAY SHOPPING

Laws have changed, and most of Italy’s big cities have Sunday shopping now. Big department stores are open; we found lots of mom-and-pop stores doing business, too. If you want to shop on a Sunday in a town that has no regular retail, try a flea market.

### **Buyer Beware**

We found a couple of stores in Venice that couldn’t make change for our purchases on a Sunday afternoon due to low cash reserves. Be prepared.

## EXCEPTIONAL HOURS

**SUMMER HOURS** Summers in Italy have two problems: It can be too hot to shop, and stores can be closed. Summer

hours begin in the middle of July for many retail businesses; August is a total loss from a shopping point of view because it is the official summer vacation season in northern Italy.

Sophisticated people wouldn't be caught dead in Milan in August; shoppers, beware. Most shops in Milan and many in Rome close between August 1 and September 1. When stores are open in August, they close at lunch on Saturday and do not reopen until 3:30 or 4pm on Monday.

**HOLIDAYS** The period between Christmas and New Year's Day can be tricky. Stores will close early a few days before a major holiday and use any excuse to stay closed during a holiday. Sales begin in the first week of January (usually after Epiphany), but store hours are erratic before then. But then, the entire first half of January can be erratic (see below). Note that there are weekend candy markets around the Duomo in the weeks before Lent.

Also keep track of local holidays, since shops will be closed. (When you check into a hotel, always ask the concierge if there are any holidays approaching and how they will affect the banks and stores!) Cities celebrate religious holidays with differing amounts of piety. Shops that are closed in Rome may be open in Milan. For instance, December 8 is a big holiday in some towns, a medium holiday in others. All stores are closed on August 15, a major religious holiday (one of the feasts of the Virgin).

**EARLY JANUARY** The first week to 10 days of January are slow to slower—all factories are closed until after Epiphany, as are many stores. Others decide to close for inventory. Do not assume that shopping life returns to normal on the first day of business after New Year's Day.

**NIGHT HOURS** Stores usually close between 7:30 and 8pm. Should you need an all-night pharmacy, there is usually one at the train station in a large city.

## It's a Crime

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I don't want to put a damper on your shopping spree before you even start out, but I do feel compelled to point out that the hard times in Italy have brought more and more criminal elements to the front. They are in front of, and behind, your handbag. And your rental car.

## Sending It Home

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If you plan to ship large items from Italy, start your homework before you leave home. Contact a shipper in your hometown, or in New York, London, or your chosen port of entry for your goods, and work with them to make sure all your shipping days are pleasant ones. The shipper should be able to act as your agent to connect you with his counterpart in Italy.

Small items should be shipped via FedEx, DHL, or another courier service you know and trust. Italy does have a service called "express mail," but don't trust it. Your hotel concierge will ship small boxes for you, but be prepared to pay big time.

## Italian City Planning

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If you are going to a variety of Italian cities, you're probably wondering which one offers the best prices, the best selection, and the best value. There are no firm rules, but I do have a couple of loose rules to guide you.

**THE CITY OF ORIGIN AXIOM** An item is usually least expensive in the city where it's made or where the firm's headquarters are located. That's because the trucking and distribution costs are lower. Following this rule, Pratesi linens should

be bought at the factory store in Pistoia; Fendi goodies should come from the mother store in Rome; and Etro should come from the factory near Como (or, at least, the outlet store in Milan).

**THE MILAN RULE OF SUPPLY & DEMAND** If you don't know the city of origin for an item, or want to be safe, use the Milan Rule of Supply and Demand. Because Milan is the center of the fashion and furnishings businesses, it should have the best selection of big-name merchandise. If you're shopping in only one city or creating a schedule that allows only a 1-day spree, Milan is the city for you.

Milan is far more industrial than the other big cities. Its entire psychology is one of moving and selling goods and services. Furthermore, while in Milan, you have the opportunity to shop at factories that are just outside of town, or at flea markets that sell leftovers from factories (you mean those ties didn't just fall off a truck?), or you can luck into very good sales that are created to move merchandise.

## Shopping for Fakes

You will no longer see anything that resembles a reasonable copy at the markets in Italy. The Senegalese teams that prowl the streets of Venice and other cities with their blankets and bags do have fairly decent copies. But knowing what to pay is a frightening question. The bigger question is, why buy a fake when you can have the real thing through an outlet store or at a sale? Fendi key chains were going for 12€ at the sale in Rome. I mean, *really* . . . get real, buy real.

### Buyer Beware

You will see large signs posted in cities like Venice and at markets throughout Italy, warning tourists that it's illegal to buy fake goods. In fact, buyers of counterfeit goods may be subject to fines of 500€ to 10,000€.

## Brands You May Not Know

**Coccinelle** This mass-market firm makes jazzy handbags at affordable prices; there are free-standing stores in most large Italian cities. Not considered a status range, but who cares? [www.coccinelle.com](http://www.coccinelle.com).

**Diego Della Valle** The man who created Tod's and Hogan (shoes) is also responsible for Acqua di Parma fragrance. Along with his recent acquisition of 6% of Saks Fifth Avenue stock, Della Valle has partnered with the president of Ferrari to launch a new privately owned high-speed train service that will compete with the Italian state-run network beginning in 2010. [Vavavavroom](http://Vavavavroom.com).

**Fabrizio** It's a paper-goods firm with excellent graphic design and format. Free-standing stores are opening in all major Italian cities. Look for fabulous gift items for less than \$10. [www.fabrianoboutique.com](http://www.fabrianoboutique.com).

**FNAC** The French multimedia chain is expanding in Italy—it's a good source for books, CDs, small electronics, and supplies. [www.fnac.it](http://www.fnac.it).

**Gran Soleil** If food is fashion, then this is the new trend. Despite the French-sounding name, this dessert product is made by the same guys who spin out Nutella. It's a gelato that you buy off the shelf and take home to freeze. Fabulous gift item; five flavors available at grocery stores everywhere.

**Kiton** It's the trade name for Ciro Paone, Neapolitan men's tailor . . . although he himself is not the tailor. In fact, there are over 200 tailors working for this menswear line. [www.kiton.it](http://www.kiton.it).

## To Market, To Market

### MARKET VS. FLEA MARKET

Each village—or community within a large city—has a specific market day. Markets may be oriented toward fresh foods

**Les Copains** Despite the Frenchified name, this firm is an Italian sportswear company, something on the order of an American bridge designer. Its specialty is knitwear, now designed by two young men from southern Italy. It's this southern slant that makes the line hot, they claim. [www.lescopains.it](http://www.lescopains.it).

**Luciano Barbera** A brand so fancy that most people have never heard of it, this men's haberdashery line is carried at Bergdorf Goodman and Neiman Marcus in the U.S. The clothes are created in the family mills near Biella. Expect to pay over \$1,000 for a cashmere sweater. In Italy, there is also a women's line and a golf line. Check out the factory outlet in Gaglianico, between Milan and Turin. [www.lucianobarbera.it](http://www.lucianobarbera.it).

**Patrizia Pepe** This line from Prato (north of Florence) has become so successful, there are now free-standing stores in the best shopping areas of all major Italian cities. It's a bridge line, somewhat hip without being totally over-the-top. Note: Sarah discovered the sizes run very, very small—at least two sizes smaller than marked. [www.patriziapepe.com](http://www.patriziapepe.com).

**Ratti** Founded in 1945, Italian printmaker and silk weaver Antonio Ratti is the secret weapon of designers including Dries Van Noten, Prada, Ralph Lauren, Dolce & Gabbana, and J. Crew. The Como-based mill is now under the direction of daughter Donatella Ratti; its creations range from couture fabrics to silk scarves to organza.

**Roberta di Camerino** The Venetian handbag makers who offered cult luxury products in the 1970s are now reissuing some designs that are hard to find and considered very "in." Vintage versions are also popular. Look for the free-standing store in Venice. [www.robetadicamerino.com](http://www.robetadicamerino.com).

and veggies or toward dry goods. Some sell both in two different parts of the same street. New merchandise, even designer items that fell off a truck, may be sold at market. There are good markets for this sort of thing in Florence and in Milan, so see those chapters for specific details.

A flea market sells only antiques and used merchandise. In most cities, the flea market is held in the historic center of

town, but there are exceptions. In very large cities, such as Milan and Rome, there may be several different flea markets on a variety of different dates. If I am planning my route according to flea markets, I only go to those with 100+ vendors. Actually, I like 400 vendors better. See below.

## RULES OF THE MARKETPLACE

One of the difficulties of shopping in Italy is deciding which markets to visit and which to pass up. Italy is crawling with good markets, for food and for fleas. There are dozens of them, and it's impossible to get to them all unless you spend a month doing little else. Maybe a year . . . or two.

Remember:

- Dress simply; the richer you look, the higher the price. If you have an engagement ring or one of those wedding bands that spells out “Rich American” in pavé diamonds, leave it in the hotel safe. Do not carry a \$1,000 designer handbag.
- Check with your hotel's concierge about the neighborhood where the market is located. It may not be considered safe to go there alone, or after dark. Beware Rome. Beware the Ides of March.
- Have a lot of change with you. It's difficult to bargain and then offer a large bill and ask for change. As a bargaining point, be able to say you have only so much cash on hand.
- You do not need to speak any specific language to make a good deal. Bargaining is an international language of emotion, hand signs, facial expressions, and so on. If you feel like you are being taken, walk away.
- Branded merchandise sold on the street may be hot or counterfeit. If the deal seems an exceptionally fine one, suspect fraud.
- Go early if you expect the best selection. Go late if you want to make the best deals, price-wise.

- Never trust anyone (except a qualified shipping agent) to mail anything for you.
- If you're driving, arrive early; you don't want to waste precious shopping time looking for a parking place.
- In Florence and Rome, most market areas are so famous that they have no specific street address. Usually it's enough to give the cabbie the name of the market; ask your concierge if you need more in the way of directions. Buses typically serve market areas as well. Expect markets to be closed on Monday morning.

## FLEA MARKETS OF NOTE

I've rarely met a flea market I didn't like, but some are worth planning your travel dates around just so you find yourself in the right place at the right time. Consider some of these:

City	No. of Vendors	Date	Phone
Arezzo	450+	1st Sun of month	05/7537-7993
Bologna	400	every Fri-Sat	
Lucca	250	1st Sat-Sun of month	05/8344-2155
Milano	400	last Sun of month	02/8940-9971
Naples	300	varies	08/122-9613
Padova	160	3rd Sun of month	04/9820-5881
Piazzola	700	last Sun of month	329/237-2475
Roma Pza Verdi	160	4th Sun of month	06/907-7312
Torino	200	2nd Sun of month	01/1436-9741

# Outlet Shopping

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Italian factories have had outlet shops for their employees or the local community for years; these addresses used to be secret. Not anymore. They say the second-most-visited sight in Florence, after the Uffizi, is the Prada outlet store.

## OUTLET LITERATURE

Outlets are so popular with locals and visitors alike that there are now locally published guides to them. I used to use a book called *Lo Scopri Occasioni*, but it seems to be out of print. Another option is *Shopping & Outlet*, also in Italian. This guide lists outlets by region, by category, and by name. A road-map section is helpful for driving.

## OUTLET MALLS

There are a number of new American-style factory-outlet villages that are, frankly, amazing. The outlet malls are in the middle of nowhere, but not far from big cities. We went to 10 outlet malls on our drive across Italy—and these were all chosen because they were right off major highways between cities we were going to visit anyway. More malls are being built as I type.

Do understand that these malls were created primarily for the local market, so you'll see names and brands you can get at home for less money. On the other hand, these same brands may have styles or colors not available in the U.S.

Choosing an outlet mall will depend on where you are, what mode of transportation you're using, and how motivated you are. Below is a list of the big malls in easy-to-get-to locations; some have shuttle-bus service or tours or can be reached by public transportation.

If you are driving, get good directions and use your GPS. There are no billboards on the highway to alert you to the malls, as you would see in the U.S. And once you take the

proper exit, you may be hard-pressed to see the small (usually brown) signs that may say only outlet. At least parking is free and plentiful.

Outlet malls are open on Sundays. Note that Monday hours may be unusual.

- **Castel Romano Designer Outlet** (☎ 06/505-0050), owned by McArthur Glen ([www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it)), is south of Rome. This mall is built like an antique Roman village. See p. 85 for more. **Warning:** Do not get this place mixed up with the mall called Castel Guelfo Outlet City, which I find rather small and disappointing.
- **Fashion District** (☎ 06/959-9491; [www.fashiondistrict.it](http://www.fashiondistrict.it)) is not a fabulous outlet mall, but it's worth a stop if you're on the highway heading south from Rome to Naples. See p. 86 for details.
- **La Reggia Designer Outlet**, outside Naples, is in the works as we go to press. Yes, McArthur Glen is set to open yet another outlet center with more than 120 stores, just off the A1 between Rome and Naples. Check out [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it) for the latest details.
- **Soratte Outlet Shopping** (☎ 07/615-6541; [www.soratteoutlet.it](http://www.soratteoutlet.it)) makes a convenient shopping stop if you're driving north from Rome. It has a Max Mara outlet, too. See p. 86 for more.
- **Barberino Designer Outlet**, also from McArthur Glen (☎ 055/842-161; [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it)), is north of Florence and accessible from both Florence and Bologna. It's a stunning mall, designed in the village format with a nice sprawl that makes you want to move in. You'll find a Max Mara outlet and many other designer names here. Note that hours are irregular; see p. 142 for details.
- **The Mall** (☎ 055/865-7775; [www.themall.it](http://www.themall.it)) is certainly the most visited of all the outlet malls in Italy, and it's conveniently located near the Prada outlet outside Florence. Tenants include big names like Burberry, Gucci, Pucci, and Yohji. See p. 142 for details.

- **Veneto Designer Outlet** (☎ 0421/5741; [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it)), another McArthur Glen production, is located outside Noventa di Piave in Calvecchia–San Donato, 40km (25 miles) from Venice, 30km (19 miles) from Treviso, and 70km (43 miles) from Padua. See p. 195 for details.
- **Franciacorta Outlet Village** (☎ 030/681-0364; [www.franciacortaoutlet.it](http://www.franciacortaoutlet.it)) is probably the closest outlet mall to Milan. If you're driving from Milan (or Como) toward Venice, you can easily pop in; although it isn't the best outlet mall in Italy, it does have a number of interesting shops. See p. 247 for details. If you stay off the highway to the next town, you can shop at the hypermarché Auchan, which to me is a great treat.
- **Serravalle Designer Outlet** (☎ 0143/609-000; [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it)), also with a fake village atmosphere in the style most Americans adore, is between Genoa and Milan and is usually listed under Milan shopping resources; see p. 247 for details. If you're headed to Turin, you can also get here without going much out of your way. It's probably the largest outlet mall in Italy, the oldest, and the best known. It has every store—and designer brand—you can imagine.
- **Vicolungo Outlets** (☎ 03/2183-5032; [www.vicolungooutlets.com](http://www.vicolungooutlets.com)) is also outside Milan, with regular shuttle service available. It has over 130 stores and is open every day of the year. See p. 248 for more.
- **FoxTown** (☎ 410/848-828-888; [www.foxtown.ch](http://www.foxtown.ch)), one of the older outlet malls, is technically in Switzerland—it's 5km (3 miles) from the Italian border and right near Como. Because it's in Switzerland, and Switzerland does not use the euro, you must change money to CHF (Swiss Francs)—which may or may not be worth it to you. Prices in Switzerland tend to be high (even on bargains). See p. 260 for more.

- **Fidenza Village** (☎ 0524/335-51; [www.fidenzavillage.com](http://www.fidenzavillage.com)), between Milan and Bologna, is also in the village format. It's not as large as most of the other malls, but it has the benefit of being around the corner from the Big Cheese, aka Agrinascente (see p. 290 for details on both). The mall is pleasant, has an unusually good restaurant, and provides a fun break on your drive.

## STOCK IT TO ME

Italy has a system of jobbers (usually called *stochistas*) and also of free-standing outlet stores, often in the heart of a big city and easily on the tourist path. Some are as fancy as regular boutiques. Wait until you shop at the Max Mara and Etro outlets in Milan—you won't believe they're outlets until you see the price tags. Information on these stores is included in the destination chapters of this book.

### About Max Mara

Since we're all interested in the Max Mara line—and its subsidiaries—this is a good time to let you in on the secret: Some outlet stores are called **DF/Diffusione Tessile**, while others have been renamed **DT Intrend**. To add to the confusion, there are special labels put into the clothes. Even the Marina Rinaldi (plus-size) clothes bear this unusual label. However, if you ask a salesperson, she will readily admit that the stock is from MM and even help you discern which lines are which.

According to their card, there are 11 outlets dotted around Italy. Some outlets are free-standing—like the one in the center of Milan that's in a shopping arcade near San Babila—and some are in outlet malls. The very best one I have been to was in the Barberino Designer Outlet mall.

## MILLS & THRILLS

Outlets can offer truly great bargains—if they are the real thing. Sometimes outlet villages are so upscale that their prices are actually closer to regular retail. And sometimes the merchandise sold at such outlets was made specifically for sale at outlets; true stock is almost always from a previous season. Even if the store says it's an outlet, pay attention to what's on offer.

There is a small business in hustling big-city locals through warehouses in industrial suburbs that sell fakes . . . or are just normal businesses that market themselves as outlets.

Know your stuff, know your regular retail prices, and know a few other rules of the road:

- Most outlets in factories close for lunch.
- Sales help in out-of-the-way communities may not speak English. It's not a bad idea to bring an Italian-English dictionary with you.
- Be sure you have a size conversion chart (p. 319) or know the sizes you want in the continental sizing system.
- Many mills are open Monday morning but close in the afternoon; others are closed the entire day. Remember the Monday rule of shopping—anything goes. Call first.
- Mills are never open on Sunday; not all are open on Saturday. Most outlet malls are open on Sunday, however. In fact, in outlet malls, stores are usually open 7 days a week, although there may be modifications to the hours on Sundays and Mondays. Welcome to the new Italy.
- Few mills will take credit cards, although Pratesi does. Outlets will accept credit cards.
- If you have chosen a day trip with specific outlets and/or mills in mind, do yourself (and me) a favor—call first. Actually, have your hotel's concierge call in case your Italian isn't as good as his. Get hours, credit card information, and directions. If you're driving, use your GPS and print out a map with directions; specify that you want the directions in English if that is important to you. If not, know right and left in Italian.

## Buying Boutique Lines

If you crave the designer name, but don't want to blow too much money, consider one of the lesser lines by the designer—most of the designers have at least one range of clothing or accessories that's more mass-market.

The tricky part? Big-name designers have boutique lines that may not have their names on them. You'll often find these lesser lines in department stores like La Rinascente or even in the airport duty-free shops. In some cases, these lines end up with their own stores—such as **Armani Jeans**, **Emporio Armani**, **D&G** (from Dolce & Gabbana), and so on.

If you see a name you don't know, ask about it. The **Flexa** line happens to be the young-style division of Fratelli Rossetti. **Marina Rinaldi** is the large-size version of Max Mara. A. Testoni is rather traditional, but the **Duckling** line is anything but. **Malizia** is a lower-priced lingerie line from La Perla, which has its own advertising so that people don't know the brands are actually competitive.

# Money Issues

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## CURRENCY EXCHANGE

Prices throughout this book are quoted in the local currency, the **euro** (€). At press time, the exchange rate was around 1€ = US\$1.45, C\$1.55, and £0.90. However, rates do fluctuate, so before departing consult a currency-exchange website such as [www.oanda.com/convert/classic](http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic) to check up-to-the-minute rates.

The best way to change dollars to euros is through an ATM. If you want a human transaction, bear in mind that while hotels give a less favorable rate of exchange than banks, they don't charge a fee to guests, are convenient, and rarely make you wait. Your time may be worth the difference.

## ATMS “R” US

The single best way to exchange money is to simply withdraw it from a wall—via an ATM. Bring along your bank card: All Italian cities have banks with ATMs.

There are two caveats here:

- There are a few different types of bank machines that look similar but offer different functions—only a bank machine/ATM (usually marked *bancomat*) will give you a good rate. Those machines that exchange your dollars for foreign currency will cheat you, so don’t be fooled.
- There is usually a fee of \$2.50 to \$5 for using an international ATM, but you do get a good rate of exchange. However, if your bank charges a high fee, you don’t want to keep going to the wall for 100€; you want to do it all at once. Ask your bank at home about its international fees; some do allow free withdrawals worldwide. **Citibank** and **Bank of America** impose a 3% fee, while **Capital One** allows free withdrawals.

ATMs are usually located alongside a bank, so that you need not enter the building. If you need cash for a big purchase in a specific store, ask the sales clerk where the nearest ATM is located. There will almost certainly be bank fees.

## Tips on Tipping

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The euro makes tipping a murky matter because it’s a lot more expensive to be a good sport. **Note:** Do not tip in U.S. dollars.

- **For bellhops:** Figure 1€ per suitcase at a moderate hotel and 2€ per suitcase at a luxury hotel. Or give 5€ for a small group of suitcases and totes.
- **For the doorman:** Tip 1€ for calling a taxi.

- **For the concierge:** If the concierge has been helpful, leave 10€ to 20€ depending on *how* helpful. I give the biggest tips to the guys who print out directions for me.
- **For taxi drivers:** Round up the taxi bill, but don't tip if you feel you were cheated. Do tip for extra help—like if he gets you a trolley for your baggage.

## Taxing Matters

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One of the reasons that prices are so high in Italy (and all of Europe) is that tax is already added to the final price tag. As a visitor, however, you may be entitled to a refund.

### ITALIAN TAX REFUNDS

Let's start at the beginning so you understand the system, and then I'll explain the tricky parts. The big picture is that on big-ticket items (roughly speaking, over \$200), you can get a 12% rebate.

If you do not carry an E.U. passport, if you reside outside the E.U., and if you will be departing within 3 months of your purchase, you can qualify for a tax refund if you spend 154.94€ in the same day in the same store.

You must show your purchases when you leave the E.U. in order to get your refund. You must also have the paperwork processed at that time. Expect long lines during the summer season.

### REFUNDS 101: THE EASY PART

You only claim the refund when you depart the E.U.—this means the E.U., not Italy. So if you are driving from Italy into France, you are still in the E.U. and can't claim the refund until you leave the E.U. for the U.S. If you go into Croatia, a non-E.U. country, you get the paperwork stamped at the Italian border, before you enter Croatia.

When you depart from an E.U. airport for a non-E.U. country, remember the following:

- Go see the Customs officer at the airport *before* you check your luggage.
- Mail the papers from the airport if you want a credit card refund.
- If you want an immediate refund in cash, find the cash-refund desk. Look for the desk bearing a red, white, and green logo and the sign tax free for tourists.

## REFUND ME, YOU FOOL

Please note that there are several ways for you to receive a refund. This is where it begins to get complicated.

There's the tax-free check, which you can cash or deposit at any bank; or a voucher, which can only be redeemed in currency. The voucher can be tricky because you will lose money on the conversion and have no chance to get a credit card refund. Whenever possible, have the refund applied to your credit card so you won't pay two exchange rates.

The cash-in-town methods still mean that you have to show the goods at Customs when you depart the E.U. (an imprint is made for the tax refund, and if they don't get the paperwork back, you are charged the difference). There are multiple in-town refund locations throughout Italy; addresses are printed on the envelope containing your refund papers.

If you are leaving Italy via train or car, there are refund desks at the borders. Remember that you only do tax-free declarations at your final point of exit from the E.U.

The company that runs most of the refund business is called **Global Refund** (☎ 800/3211-1111 toll-free in Italy; [www.globalrefund.com](http://www.globalrefund.com)).

## DÉTAXE SCAM

Many designer shops say to you, after you inquire as to the price of a high-ticket item, "but you get a 15% discount from the tax." The implication is that the item will automatically

be about 20% less . . . and this fact is meant to tip your judgment in favor of the sale.

There's just one problem. You don't get the full 15% back; you usually get 12% because there are various fees involved.

## U.S. Customs & Duties

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- You are currently allowed to bring in \$800 worth of duty-free merchandise per person. Each member of the family is entitled to the deduction; this includes infants.
- You pay a flat 10% duty on the next \$1,000 worth of merchandise. It's worth doing—we're talking about paying the very small sum of \$100 and being legal.
- Duties thereafter are based on the type of product. They vary tremendously per item, so ask storekeepers about U.S. duties. They will know, especially in specialty stores. Note that the duty on leather goods is only 8%.
- The head of the family can make a joint declaration for all family members and should take responsibility for answering any questions that the Customs officers may ask. Have receipts ready, and make sure they match the information on the landing card. If you tell a little lie, you'll be labeled as a fibber, and they'll tear your luggage apart.
- You count against your \$800 per person everything you obtain while abroad—this includes toothpaste (if you bring the unfinished tube back with you), items bought in duty-free shops, gifts for others, the items that other people asked you to bring home for them, and—get this—even alterations to clothing.
- Have the Customs registration slips for things you already own in your wallet or someplace easily accessible. If you wear a Cartier watch, you should be able to produce the registration slip. If you cannot prove that you brought a foreign-made item out of the U.S. with you, you may be forced to pay duty on it when you return.

- The unsolicited gifts you mailed from abroad do not count in the \$800-per-person rate. If the value of the gift is more than \$50, you pay duty when the package comes into the U.S. Remember, only one unsolicited gift per person.
- Do not attempt to bring in any illegal foodstuffs—dairy products, meats, fruits, or vegetables (coffee is okay). Generally speaking, if it's alive, it's *verboten*. Dried mushrooms happen to be okay. Aged cheese is, too.
- Antiques must be at least 100 years old to be duty-free. Provenance papers will help (so will permission to actually export the antiquity, since it could be an item of national cultural significance). Any bona fide work of art is duty-free whether it was painted 50 years ago or just yesterday.
- Thinking of “running” one of those new Italian handbags? Forget it. New handbags shout to Customs officers.

## Final Philosophical Note

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To paraphrase my fellow Texan Lance Armstrong, please remember that your trip to Italy is not about the handbag. On eBay and discount websites, there are sources that sell Italian brands for lower than U.S. retail. I buy my handbags (non-fake!) in Hong Kong or from [www.ashneil.com](http://www.ashneil.com).

We travel to see another world and taste another lifestyle. If you get a good deal, that's extra luck.

# *Chapter Three*

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## *Rome*

### Welcome to Rome

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Rome has always had a great designer, upscale shopping neighborhood, but the arrival of eBay and Internet shopping have brought new opportunities to shop without travel.

Therefore, you may want to get spiritual. You don't have to be in a church or Vatican City to get spiritual—just wander the little streets and alleys, nosh on ice cream, look through store windows, and pop into the places that really interest you. Another pair of shoes? Sure, why not! Spaghetti at that touristy joint on the Via Veneto, eaten outside while the world passes by? Why not! You don't have to buy a lot to get the gist.

Rome is mostly for selection, or for the big brands at discount stores, or for really cheapie fun clothes that will be over in a season but will give you no end of pleasure until then. Part of the glory that is Rome is that while there are heaps of designer shops, there are also heaps of everything else, too. Even the magazine stands are fabulous to drool over.

## About Oviesse & OVS Industry

If you are on a budget, this is going to be your favorite store in Italy. By all means, look for **Oviesse** wherever you are. While UPIIM remains a dime store/general store and sometimes has nice clothes or lingerie, Oviesse has a far more fashion-forward look. It sells clothing for men, women, and children, with an emphasis on a range of sizes for women. There are plus sizes and petites, junior styles, and everyday looks. You'll also find accessories and some shoes and even pieces of luggage. It's a total-lifestyle store.

The average price of a complete outfit at Oviesse is under 70€; my new purple linen dress cost about 49€. Are you running with me, team? The styles are the latest fashions, so you can be chic and glam for small amounts of bread. And the large-size fashions are so good-looking that you can continue to eat bread—or pizza.

About the size system: Tags usually have two size numbers printed on them, one the Italian size (these tend to run small, so you probably wear a larger-than-usual size—don't freak) and the other the continental size, usually marked with a D (for Germany/Deutschland) or CH (for Switzerland).

The eight branches in Rome are not in tourist shopping districts, unlike the stores in other Italian cities, but are accessible via the Metro. One location is at Viale Trastevere 62/64 (☎ **06/5833-3633**; [www.oviesse.it](http://www.oviesse.it)). Ask your hotel's concierge to find the closest location and provide exact directions.

## Shop Talk

Note that the new branches are called **OVS Industry**. You'll find the same merchandise inside, so don't let the name throw you off. The "OVS" looks like the DVF logo.

# Arriving in Rome

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## BY PLANE

You can fly into Rome's airport from anyplace in the world. Just allow yourself plenty of time before you are actually in the city of Rome for its stores and shopping.

The airport (Leonardo da Vinci) is quite a bit out of town, and a taxi will easily set you back 50€ to 70€. A private car and driver costs about the same as a taxi, by the way (or a little more, but usually not much). As a result, many people book a car and driver to meet them or ask their hotel to provide this service. I also use one of the many shuttle services from the airport, which generally cost 50€ to 60€.

### **Insider's Tip**

On my last trip, I discovered Lorenzo, a driver who speaks excellent English and does flat-rate airport trips. Call him at ☎ **39/333-230-4331**.

If you can manage your luggage on your own, you may want to take the shuttle train (Leonardo Express) from the airport right to the central train station (Termini) in beautiful downtown Rome. It costs about 10€, takes 30 minutes, and is a total breeze. Trains run every 30 minutes from 6:37am until 9:37pm daily.

For the thrifty, the Metro Line B serves Rome Tiburtina and Ostiense stations from Termini. You can also take a bus, operated by ATAC Azienda Tramvie, with service from 5:30am until 11:30pm.

If you arrive in Rome's airport from another E.U. country, there are no formalities. The color of your luggage tag is coded so that you don't even go through Immigration or Customs. You will simply end up in the luggage-retrieval area, watching fashion shows and car videos on large-screen TV monitors while waiting for your bags.

Trolleys are free. There's both a *cambio*, for changing money, and a bank machine (better rates than the *cambio*), although the lines can be long. Still, since you have to wait for your bags to arrive, you may as well stock up on cash and be ready for the spree to come.

If you are headed to the taxi line, be aware that you may be assaulted by taxi drivers: gypsy drivers who may even have official taxis with medallions and may convince you that they are legit. Watch out!

There is an official taxi stand, but you must find it, which I had trouble doing over a period of many years (slow learner). If you end up on the curb wondering what to do—look right and then walk right, and you will find the taxi stand. I promise.

## BY TRAIN

All rail tracks do indeed lead to Rome, be it intra-Italian trains or any of the fancy intra-European trains, including Eurostar (Italian Eurostar, not the Chunnel version). **Termini**, the main station in Rome, is in the middle of a major renovation and looks far better than you may remember it. There's a huge mall, **Forum Termini**, on the lower level, where you can browse more than 50 stores, including **Sephora** and **Sisley**. Don't miss the newly expanded **Conad** supermarket; it's open 24/7. The station has a giant **Nike** shop in the front and a huge **UPIM** with fancy vaulted ceilings to one side. **Borri Books** stocks a lot of travel books, and you'll also find **Satch** for cheapie clothing and, of course, **McDonald's** for your train picnic. A series of electronic kiosks for e-tickets should give you a hint that this is the *new* Italy.

As you emerge from the main train station, you'll see taxis everywhere; you may even be approached by some drivers offering their services. Again, there is an official taxi stand with a very long line right in front of the station. Why does everyone wait in a queue for up to 20 minutes instead of

simply hopping into one of the waiting cabs? Because they don't want to overpay, be cheated, or come to blows with aggressive taxi drivers.

### **Buyer Beware**

We waited in line and climbed into a legal taxi, but forgot to check if the driver had engaged the meter. He had not—and tried to charge us 20€ for the 5-minute ride to our hotel on the Via Veneto, which should have been less than 10€. We enlisted the help of our hotel doorman and a compromise was reached. Moral of the story: Always check the meter and keep your brain turned on.

## **BY SHIP**

If by chance you are coming to Rome via ship, the port is Civitavecchia (say “chee-veat-a-*veck*-ee-ahhhh”); it lies along the coast north and west of Rome. It can take up to 2 hours to get into downtown Rome from here, although 1 hour is the no-traffic estimate. If you are going directly from your ship to the Rome airport, it will take 1 hour on a superhighway, and you will not actually go into Rome at all. (*Arrivederci, Roma.*)

One final ship-to-shore report: On Saturdays during summer, most stores close for the day at 1:30pm. This isn't really a problem for you, however, because you'll arrive in port at 7am and make it to Rome by 9:30am, when the stores open. You then have the whole morning to shop.

Go to lunch at 1:30pm, when the stores close, and slowly savor a glorious Roman midday feast. Head back to the ship around 4pm and arrive in time for cocktails. Or stop off in Tarquinia, a sneeze away from the port, with its cutie-pie retail and—I thought you'd never ask—a few pottery shops.

There is a train station at the port, but you have to get from the boat to the train in order to connect (you can walk, but it can be a hike, depending on your ship's berth).

## Getting Around

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The city of Rome is divided into 33 zones, working in circular rounds, much like the arrondissements of Paris. The oldest part of the city is 1, Centro Storico. Note that I have divided Rome into my own areas or neighborhoods (see “Shopping Neighborhoods,” later in this chapter).

(Technically speaking, Vatican City is a different city from Rome; that’s why it has its own guards, its own postal service, and its own euro coins.)

While in Rome, walk as much as possible. Okay, so it’s too hot to walk that much, and the city’s too spread out. So, the best time investment you can make is to organize your days so that you *can* do lots of walking; this keeps you out of crazy Roman traffic and on the streets where you can count the fountains.

### BY TAXI

Roman taxi drivers are known to be difficult, especially to tourists, especially to Americans who can’t speak Italian, and most especially to women traveling without men. Be prepared to argue with the driver and know when you should pay a supplement—for extra baggage and for rides after 9pm and on Sundays and holidays.

Legitimate taxis carry a shield with a number. Cars for hire are black with a shield. Taking any other car can be dangerous.

Most of the legit taxis in Rome (and other cities, too) now have meters with LCD screens. These screens are sometimes hidden in the rearview mirror and are always hard to see (especially from the back seat), so pay attention and look closely to make sure that the driver engages the meter.

### BY METRO

The Metropolitana, or Metro for short, is nice and gets you to most tourist attractions, but it does not blanket the city. You

may find the walk from your hotel to the nearest stop (look for the big red m sign) worthy of a taxi in itself. When booking a hotel, I now make certain there is a Metro stop nearby.

To ride the Metro, have change to put into the ticket machine, or look around for a machine that produces change. You must get your ticket from one of the machines; there is no booth selling tickets. (The newsstand will not give you change without a purchase.) The Metro is both easy to ride and safe. For 1€, you'll get a ticket good for 75 minutes of travel. A Metrobus card, which costs about 4€ per day, 11€ for 3 days, or 16€ for a week, allows unlimited use of both the Metro and buses. All are sold in train stations and at newsstands.

### **Toffee & Junior's Tip**

My two long-haired dachshunds would like to report that dogs can travel on the Metro and buses if they are held in their owner's arms or kept in a tote.

## **BY BUS**

The bus system in Rome is similar to those in other Italian cities: You must purchase your ticket at a tobacco stand or newsstand ahead of time (the bus driver does not sell tickets or take money); you enter from the rear and cancel your own ticket in the box; and you exit from the center of the bus. Instructions in English and Italian are inside the bus.

### **About Addresses**

Addresses seem to bounce around from street to street; some alternate in a sensible way and some make no sense at all. Frequently, all the stores in a block have the same street number and are designated by letters. It's not unusual for a store to be listed according to its piazza or its street corner, either.

**Vatican City**

**PRATI**

**PIAZZA DEL POPOLO**

**PIAZZA NAVONA**

**PANtheon**

**JANICULUM HILL**

**PZA. CAMPO D. FIORI**

**JEWISH GHETTO**

**Tiber Island**

**TRASTEVERE**

**TESTACCIO**

**VILLA DORIA PAMPHILJ**

**National Etruscan Museum**

**Mausoleum of Augustus**

**Palazzo di Montecitorio**

**Palazzo Spada**

**Sunday flea Market at Porta Portese—big but on the junky side**

**Vintage shops, cutting-edge boutiques, fewer tourists**

**Chalice, robes & socks—the perfect gift for those who have everything**

**Campo dei Fiori 3**

**The Ghetto 8**

**Spanish Steps/Via Condotti 9**

**Trevi Fountain 11**

**Via dei Cestari 7**

**Via dei Coronari 1**

**Via del Babuino 4**

**Via del Corso 5**

**Via del Governo Vecchio 2**

**Via del Tritone 10**

**Via Fontanella Borghese 6**

**Via Nazionale 13**

**Via Veneto 12**

- Campo dei Fiori **3**  
The Ghetto **8**  
Spanish Steps/Via Condotti **9**  
Trevi Fountain **11**  
Via dei Cestari **7**  
Via dei Coronari **1**  
Via del Babuino **4**  
Via del Corso **5**  
Via del Governo Vecchio **2**  
Via del Tritone **10**  
Via Fontanella Borghese **6**  
Via Nazionale **13**  
Via Veneto **12**



My favorite bus is the no. 80, which you can get at the beginning of the line at the bus island at San Silvestro. You can take this bus directly to a very good **Oviesse** store and enjoy air-conditioning, with door-to-door service.

And yes, *il canino* can ride on the bus in your arms or carrier bag.

## Sleeping in Rome

### LUXURY HOTEL CHAINS

Note that the U.S.-based hotel chains have made a comfortable dent in the Roman scene; they often offer deals (in dollars, no less) that are too good to pass up.

#### *Inter-Continental de la Ville Roma*

Via Sistina 67–69 (Metro: Spagna).

The Inter-Continental de la Ville Roma has the best location of any of the U.S. chains for shopping—the top of the Spanish Steps. It recently underwent a major renovation and added a spa. The hotel is divinely swank, as well as service-oriented.

#### **Insider's Tip**

Ask for a room overlooking the inner courtyard.

Rates begin at 260€, which is a great price for a five-star hotel in this area. © 888/424-6835 in the U.S. Local phone © 06/67-331. [www.intercontinental.com](http://www.intercontinental.com).

#### *Regina Hotel Baglioni*

Via Vittorio Veneto 72 (Metro: Veneto).

One of Baglioni's 14 properties, the Regina is breathtakingly swank and yet still intimate. The building is a small palace that has been renovated in modern style—I could barely

swallow breakfast because I was gaping at the wonderful combination of rococo decor with raspberry walls and gray silk-velvet upholstery. The hotel is also home to one of the Baglioni branches of Brunello, a restaurant of North African style with good food and mesmerizing music.

The 83 rooms are spacious and newly decorated in Art Deco style. The hotel offers various promotions depending on the season, but figure 350€ a night for a deluxe room for two with full breakfast buffet. That includes free Wi-Fi, too. The hotel's Kelly Spa uses Carita products and offers a 20% discount on treatments to hotel guests when booked a day in advance. ☎ 06/421-111. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

### Sleeping the Via Veneto

The Via Veneto and neighboring streets are home to many of Rome's best hotels. The area is also well located for the Metro and bus lines, so you can get around town without taking taxis. It's an easy walk downhill to the Spanish Steps shopping zone and a good 15-minute workout if you're "inclined" to schlep your bags back to your hotel.

There's a **Despar** supermarket on Via Toscano at Via Boncompagni, 2 blocks behind the Excelsior—a good place to stock up on snacks, water, and picnic supplies.

All of these choices are four- and five-star properties:

- **Aleph**, Via di San Basilio 15 ([www.aleph.boscolo-hotels.com](http://www.aleph.boscolo-hotels.com))
- **Hotel Eden**, Via Ludovisi 49 ([www.lemeridien.com/eden](http://www.lemeridien.com/eden))
- **Hotel Majestic**, Via Veneto 50 ([www.rome-hotels-majestic.com](http://www.rome-hotels-majestic.com))
- **Hotel Savoy**, Via Ludovisi 15 ([www.savoy.it](http://www.savoy.it))
- **Marriott Grand Hotel Flora**, Via Veneto 191 ([www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com))
- **Regina Hotel Baglioni**, Via Veneto 72 ([www.baglioni-hotels.com](http://www.baglioni-hotels.com))
- **Westin Excelsior**, Via Veneto 125 ([www.westin.com](http://www.westin.com))

## Shoppers, Start Your Engines

Baglioni Hotels has put together the ultimate road trip: 6 days of driving the back roads of Italy in a bright-red Ferrari. You'll start in Rome, drive through Tuscany to Chianti, and continue on to Maranello, where you'll visit the Ferrari Gallery. Then it's a short hop to Milan for your final 2 nights. The trip can also be done in reverse, beginning in Milan. For rates and dates, contact Baglioni Hotels at ☎ **02/773-331**, or go to [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

## DESIGN HOTELS

Sometimes you want a hotel because of its design features alone. The following are all in good locations and offer a little something extra to stare at.

### *Aleph*

Via di San Basilio 15 (Metro: Barberini).

Adam Tihany designed this cozy, artsy boutique hotel, a member of the Boscolo chain, for those who want luxury on the sly. It's got a spa, a Moroccan-style restaurant, and a location nestled not far from the Spanish Steps and Via Veneto. This place is so hot that it has been photographed for various design magazines, travel guides, and books on Roman style. Rates are about 200€ a night. ☎ 888/626-7265 in the U.S. Local phone ☎ 06/422-901. [www.aleph.boscolohotels.com](http://www.aleph.boscolohotels.com).

### *Exedra*

Piazza della Repubblica 47 (Metro: Repubblica).

You may want to stay here, or you may just want to have a look out of curiosity. The hotel is built over ruins that you can see through glass floors on the lower level (head for the business center). You can also walk here from the train station, eat downstairs at McDonald's, and pop into a Metro station. It's a brilliant choice. Rates begin at 300€. ☎ 888/626-7265

in the U.S. Local phone ☎ 06/489-381. [www.exedra.boscolo.hotels.com](http://www.exedra.boscolo.hotels.com).

### *Portrait Suites*

Via Bocca di Leone 23 (Metro: Spagna).

Ferragamo has brought its hotel chain to Rome and opened doors—and beds—above the men's store, right on the Via Condotti. There are only 14 units, which is in keeping with the new trend in luxe hotels—small, chic, and yet cozy. Rooms begin at 270€. ☎ 06/6938-0742. [www.lungarnohotels.com](http://www.lungarnohotels.com).

## FOUR-STAR FINDS

### *Hotel Piranesi*

Via del Babuino 196 (Metro: Spagna).

The Piranesi is directly across from the Hotel de Russie, one of Rome's grandest addresses. It's at the Popolo end of town, so there are taxis waiting, and you are right on what I call Baboon Street, which is shopping HQ and leads right to the Spanish Steps. In short, few locations are better. This hotel is a gem—trust me. Rates vary with the season; you may find something good online. A double lists at 270€ in peak season, 220€ in winter. ☎ 06/328-041. [www.hotelpiranesi.com](http://www.hotelpiranesi.com).

### *Villa Laetitia*

Lungotevere delle Armi 22–23 (Metro: Lepanto).

Anna Fendi (of the famous fashion family) bought an Art Nouveau palazzo along the Tiber River with a guest villa behind it, then transformed the latter into Villa Laetitia, a 15-room hotel. Plans are underway to expand the property by adding seven additional suites. This hotel is a bit out-of-the-way, which gives you more of a feel for actually living in Rome. It is also classified as a residence, so there's a kitchenette in each unit. Doubles start at 175€, which includes Wi-Fi. ☎ 06/322-6776. [www.villalaetitia.com](http://www.villalaetitia.com).

# Snack & Shop

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## *La Carbonara*

Piazza Campo dei Fiori 23 (no nearby Metro).

This is one of the few places in Rome where it is as pleasant to eat inside as outside, where your experience is as special in winter as in spring. Located right on the Campo dei Fiori, it seems to be the nicest of the surrounding cafes. The interior is done in a rustic country style, with some tables overlooking the piazza. It is one of the few restaurants in the area that is open on Sunday (although it's closed on Tues). For reservations, call ☎ 06/9727-4086.

### **Shopping Adventure**

Campo dei Fiori's fruit and flower market adds to the charm of the location and makes this place a must. The market is held every day except Sunday.

## *McDonald's*

Piazza di Spagna, near the Spanish Steps (Metro: Spagna).

Stop laughing. I love this McDonald's, and not just because my son does. The architecture (it's in a fake villa) is astounding, the location is sublime, it's a good place to rest between stores, and the food is inexpensive for Rome. You can get the usual burgers and McNuggets, or load up at the salad bar, which has tomatoes and mozzarella. You have to see this place—the crowd it attracts is amazing. Sit downstairs where it's less noisy; you can also buy Baci (the chocolates), and there's even an ice-cream counter.

## *Nino*

Via Borgognona 11 (Metro: Spagna).

My favorite restaurant in Rome, Nino is a small bistro with dark-wood walls, located right in the heart of the Spanish

Steps shopping area. It attracts a nice, fashionable crowd without being chichi. Prices are moderate by Rome standards, which to me is incredibly inexpensive, especially for this location and style. My last lunch at Nino, an admittedly simple affair consisting of bottled water, one Coca-Cola, spaghetti, and a coffee, was 20€. Tip included.

The waiters are friendly; I often eat here solo and feel comfortable doing so. If you get here early (by local standards) for lunch, you don't need a reservation. Closed Sunday. © 06/679-5676.

## The Shopping Scene

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Shopping is something you do in Rome while you are doing Rome—or in between meals. Aside from a frontal attack on Via Condotti and the fancy stores in that area, you will find shopping opportunities as you explore Rome, not vice versa.

The globalization of money and designer franchises means that Italian designers sell their lines all over their own country, most certainly in Rome, and in just about every other country as well. The line may be most fully shown in stores in Milan, but you can find an excellent selection of these designer clothes in Rome. In a few cases, the Rome store will be better than the Milan store.

### THE BEST BUYS IN ROME

**DESIGNER FASHIONS** You won't find too many designer bargains unless you hit a sale, but if you do, things can really go your way. If you are bargain conscious, the best deals in Rome are at a few outlet shops (see "Outlets," later in this chapter) or at the airport, which has a gigantic duty-free shopping area. If you are status-conscious, the best buys are due to the fact that Rome has a selection of styles in any given designer brand that goes beyond those of other cities in the world.

**HANDBAGS** Although I usually buy my handbags in Hong Kong and have long ago sworn off \$2,000 purses, I found a store in Rome that not only tickled my fancy (I bought three bags), but also might have the best bags in Italy: **Francesco Rogani** (Via Condotti 47; ☎ 06/678-4036). See p. 81 for the lowdown.

**HOME STYLE** From Tad to Lisa Corti to Indoroman, the hot Mediterranean colors and the mix of imported looks with Italian chic have arrived. This is mondo home style, from Asia to India to the subcontinent and beyond, shaken up with the Italian touch. Lisa Corti is sold at Saks Fifth Avenue, but Italian prices—even in euros—are better than U.S. prices.

**TIES** I got caught up in the number of status ties for sale in various shops in Rome. Prices are lower than in the U.S. and the U.K. In fact, prices can be so low you may giggle. The average price of a power tie in New York, without New York state sales tax, is close to \$200. The same ties in Rome cost half that. I kid you knot.

## THE FIVE BEST STORES IN ROME

### *Forum Termini*

In the central train station (Metro: Termini).

Perhaps you can never take the love of a mall out of the American heart. This is truly an American-style mall located beneath Termini, the main train station, but it has French and Italian stores—and places to eat—and is great fun. There's a Sephora, the beauty supermarket. There's a real supermarket. There's even a shop devoted to merchandise for race-car drivers and wannabes. Aboveground, on the main level, there's a tease of what's below—a Nike store, a Benetton, a bookstore, and UPIM. If you haven't seen the brand Bottega Verde, this is a place to check it out—it's sort of the local version of the Body Shop.

*Indoroman*

Via Gregoriana 36 (Metro: Spagna).

You may have trouble finding this shop, as it isn't well marked on the street. It's located in an old palazzo; you'll know you've arrived when you look up to see the colorful painted parrot banners hanging on the shop's shutters. As you enter the building, signs will guide you to a fantasy experience of whimsy, color, and all the clothing and linens you've always wanted to own. These Italian textiles, printed in India, range from saris, dresses, and coats to bed and table linens; there's ceramic art, too. © 06/6919-0908. [www.indoroman.com](http://www.indoroman.com).

*Lisa Corti Home Textile Emporium*

Via di Pallacorda 14 (Metro: Spagna).

I am a huge Lisa Corti fan, so I send you here with delight. It's right near the Piazza Fontanella Borghese, not too far from the Spanish Steps. The Lisa Corti collection includes home style, tabletop, and home fashions. Look for the merchandise in the Saks Fifth Avenue catalog and then compare prices in person. © 06/6819-3216. [www.lisacorti.com](http://www.lisacorti.com).

*Luna & L'Altra*

Via del Governo Vecchio 105 (no nearby Metro).

This store isn't much bigger than a walk-in closet, but it carries an international cadre of funky-chic names, such as Issey Miyake and Dries Van Noten, and puts it all together in a look that is both comfortable and fabulous. © 06/6880-4995.

*Sole*

Via Gregoriana 34 (Metro: Spagna).

Sole stands for Soledad Twombly, an artist and the daughter-in-law of the famous artist Cy Twombly. Her husband, Alessandro, is also a well-known artist. Her studio features clothing such as sweaters and knits, along with shoes, jewelry, and all

the pieces you need for a complete look. She does only two seasons; the fabrics all work together, so you can add on pieces and change around the outfits.

Prices are dear, but lower than in stores since you buy directly from the designer. You can order by your size or have items made to your measurements. © 06/6992-4512. [www.soledadtwombly.com](http://www.soledadtwombly.com).

## SHOPPING HOURS

Hours in Rome are the same as in all of Italy, but Sundays are really loosening up. In fact, the department store **La Rinascente** is open on Sundays from 10am to 9pm. Wonders never cease. Furthermore, the mall **Piazza Colonna** is open until 10pm during the week and from noon to 5pm on Sundays. Note that stores that open for Sunday shopping may close for lunch and then reopen from 4 to 7pm.

On normal retail days (Tues–Fri), shops open at 9:30am and close at 1 or 1:30pm for lunch. They reopen at 3:30pm in winter and at 4pm in summer. In summer, stores stay open until 8pm. Because Romans (like all Europeans) dine late, many people are out shopping until midnight. Do not let any hotel concierge or signpost lead you to believe that stores in Rome open at 9am—even if it says so on the door. This is Rome, remember?

If you don't like to give up shopping for lunch, keep in mind that the department stores and mass merchandisers stay open during these hours, and a growing number of high-end merchants are following suit. Fendi is open through lunch, as are many other stores on Via Borgognona and in the Spanish Steps area.

The odd days are Monday, Saturday, and Sunday. Some stores are closed Monday morning; in summer, they are often closed Saturday afternoon as well. But that's not a rule. On a recent Monday in Rome, we found that mass-market stores and chains were open by 10am that day. Designer shops open at 3:30pm on Monday.

## PERSONAL NEEDS

You will find neither grocery stores nor real-people department stores in the middle of the usual tourist shopping haunts, although there are branches of **La Rinascente** and **UPIM** just near San Silvestro, close to the main tourist areas, such as the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps.

The city has dozens of all-night pharmacies, including one at the airport. The pharmacy at the Termini train station is open until 11:30pm daily. The station also has a fabulous mall that can meet most needs; its stores are open on Sundays.

Rome is more spread out than some other cities you may visit; you might need to take a walk around your hotel to find a local minimart for buying water, snack foods, and all those things that cost too much from your minibar.

Ask your concierge where to find the nearest pharmacy or grocery store. Condoms are sold from machines in public places, as well as at pharmacies and grocery stores.

## Shopping Neighborhoods

**SPANISH STEPS/VIA CONDOTTI/VIA BORGOGNONA** No matter what season of the year, the Spanish Steps are so gorgeous that you can't help but be drawn to them. They are particularly magical because they lead to all the best big-name stores. Don't forget that there's an **American Express** office at the Steps, so when you run out of money on a shopping spree, you can get more without missing a beat, and then get right back to spending it. There are also several ATMs on the Via Condotti.

The Via Condotti is the leading shopping street of the high-rent Spanish Steps neighborhood—but it is not the only game in town, or even on the block. The area between the Spanish Steps and the Via del Corso is a grid system of streets, all packed with designer shops. Via Condotti has the most famous big names and is the equivalent of Rodeo Drive, but

you'll miss a lot if you don't shop the side streets, including Via Borgognona, which runs parallel to Condotti.

**Note:** There is one street that leads away from the Spanish Steps, the Via del Babuino (yes, it's the baboon street), which appears to be an equal spoke from the Steps but actually has a very different neighborhood feel to it; so, I have separated it from the rest (see below).

**VIA FONTANELLA BORGHESE** This area is an extension of the Via Condotti on the other side of the Via del Corso. The street is quiet, unvisited by tourists, and home to several branches of big-name designer shops, such as the **Palazzo Fendi**, which just about takes up a city block. You'll also find the **Lisa Corti** store in this same quiet area.

### Shop Talk

Fendi is a sisterhood of five women—and now their children—who run the family business. Come gawk at their **Palazzo Fendi**, which is like an art gallery of creativity. Even the handles on the front door are works of art.

**VIA DEL BABUINO** Remember when I told you that Spanish Steps/Condotti had another part to it that was the same but different? Well, this is it. It's one of the antiques neighborhoods of Rome, and boasts some snazzy designer shops, too. Look for **Chanel** (no. 98–101), **Etro** (no. 102), and **Hogan** (no. 45–46) alongside local faves **Fabiano** (no. 173), **Feltrinelli** (no. 39–49), **Tad** (no. 155), and **Save the Queen** (no. 70a). It's a fun neighborhood, especially if you're looking for furniture, paintings, or the hottest items in Europe these days: Art Deco tabletop accessories. I take it back—this is more than a fun neighborhood. This is a must-do that you should combine with a secondary back street, **Via Maguta**, that has art galleries and more and more stores. The new **Pratesi** (no. 41) store in Rome is back here. The pedestrian-only medieval alley will take your breath away.

**VIA VENETO** Every American in Rome has heard of the Via Veneto, if only from the movies. While I invariably stay at a hotel in this area, the shopping here is nothing to write home

about or to go out of your way to visit. The large bookstalls on the street corners are handy for a vast selection of magazines (all languages), postcards, videos (yes, even dirty movies), and paperback bestsellers in English. There are some shoe shops and several glitzy cafes, too. It's a pleasant street to wander, but not exceptional. If you are staying in the area, you will probably enjoy the side streets more. Don't miss **Aston** (Via Boncompagni 27), the queen of Italian and European textiles, and the **Despar** supermarket (on Via Toscano at Via Boncompagni).

**VIA NAZIONALE** This is a very long street, but its best parts are between Repubblica and Termini, where there are a slew of fashion shops for young women, plus a few big names such as **Max Mara** (no. 28–31) and **Frette** (no. 80).

**TREVI & TRITONE** From the Spanish Steps, you can walk to the Trevi Fountain and segue into several real-people Rome neighborhoods. Of course you'll want to throw three coins in the fountain, and then have an ice cream.

The shopping is touristy, but the atmosphere is real. Be sure to hit **Via del Tritone**, which is on the way to or from Trevi; both sides of the street have good offerings. You will also find that this niche of shopping and ice-cream heaven is located right near the San Silvestro bus terminal, so you can travel onward to other shopping destinations from here.

**VIA DEL TRITONE** This big, real-people shopping street connects the Via del Corso and Spanish Steps areas to the Via Veneto and Piazza Barberini areas; it is also an extension of the Trevi neighborhood. At the top is the **Piazza Barberini**, with the Bernini Bristol Hotel and a Metro stop.

Downhill, the street dead-ends into Via del Corso, where you have a lot of regular shops with more moderate prices than the big-name designer stores 3 blocks away. A large **La Rinascente** department store is on the corner.

**VIA DEL CORSO** Via del Corso is a very long street; the part that you will be most interested in begins where Via del Tritone intersects it and extends all the way to Piazza del Popolo. Both sides of the street are lined with stores; many are branches of

famous names and many are stores that I just like for local color. A lot of the retailers in this stretch are devoted to younger shoppers: teens, tweens, and 20-somethings.

The really hot part of Via del Corso is right below the Spanish Steps, in the area from Via Condotti to Piazza del Popolo, where you'll find all the fancy designer shops, a zillion teen shops (rock music blaring), and the cheapie fashion and shoe stores; check out **Marco** (no. 43) for good styles and even better prices. Prices and quality go down as you get closer to the Piazza del Popolo.

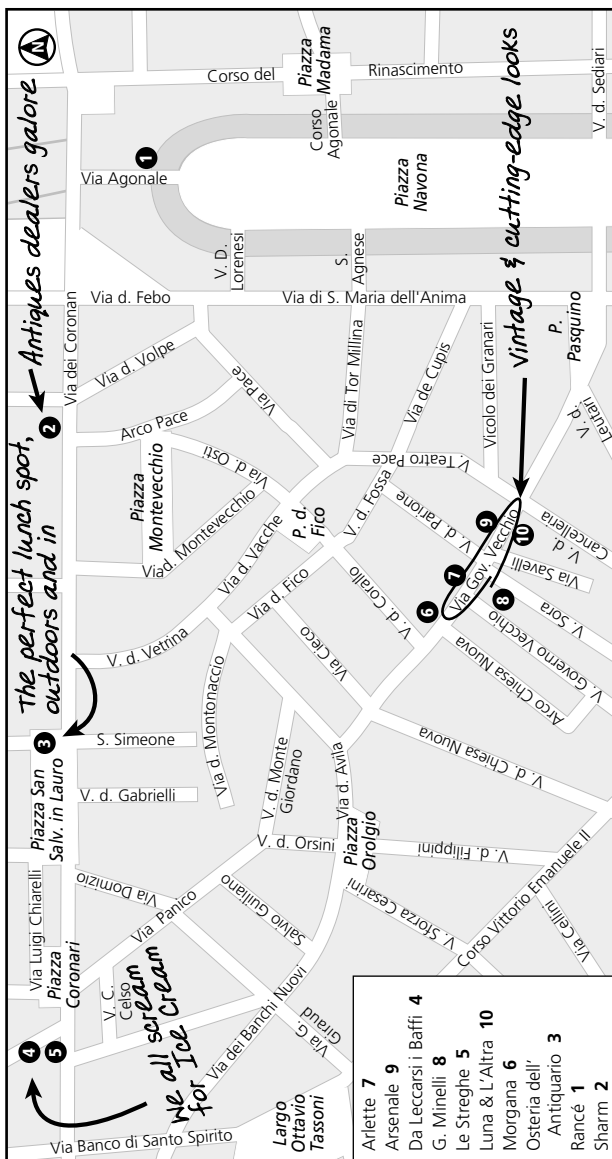
**VIA DEI CESTARI** If you're looking for a unique shopping experience, a one-of-a-kind gift, or just something special and different after you visit the Pantheon (bad gift stalls), check out the Via dei Cestari, which is filled with ecclesiastical shops selling ribbons, robes, socks, and all sorts of fascinating supplies. Start at **De Ritis** (no. 48) and check out the surrounding stores. Many also sell chalices and religious souvenirs.

**VIA DEI CORONARI** You say you like to stroll down medieval streets and look at antiques shops? Hmm. Well, have I got a street for you. This particular street takes you back to a previous century and has the best antiques stores in Rome. Located right around the corner from the Piazza Navona, the Via dei Coronari is very small and difficult to find; study your map carefully. The shop numbers will go to the middle 200s before you've seen it all; there are possibly 100 dealers here.

The dealers are very community-minded and have their own block association that holds various parties and promotions for the public. They've organized a few nights in May when the stores stay open late, plus a party in October, also for late-night strolling and shopping (officially called the local **Antiques Fair**). Candles and torches light the way.

For a super place to grab a bite in the midst of the antiques stores, try **Osteria dell'Antiquario** (Piazzetta di San Simeone; ☎ 06/687-9694). You can eat outdoors or in at this simple but elegant place that's also quite "in." Lunch for two costs about 64€. Don't let the address throw you; it's right on the Via dei Coronari. Or try **Le Streghe** (Vicolo del Curato 13;

## Via dei Coronari



© 06/6861-381) if you want to spend less; I eat here—often outside—for about 20€. For a sweet treat, **Da Leccarsi i Baffi** (Via de Panico 31) makes great gelato and chocolate. It's also a good place to buy balsamic vinegar, limoncello, honey, and other foodstuffs.

**CAMPO DEI FIORI** Campo dei Fiori is one of those neighborhoods that is beginning to attract tourists and will certainly be ruined in no time at all; right now it is a genuine daily fruit and flower market that packs up by about 1pm.

Aside from the market, you are in the midst of an old Roman neighborhood, where rents are lower and fun shops are opening up. A number of food and cookware stores surround the Campo dei Fiori; the Piazza Navona is just a few blocks away, which gets you to the **Rancé** soap shop and a stroll around the piazza, of course. Note that there is no market at Campo dei Fiori on Sundays.

**VIA DEL GOVERNO VECCHIO** This is sort of a hidden street, between the Piazza Navona and the Campo dei Fiori. Before you attempt to find it on foot, first try to locate it on a map. The street is dark, narrow, medieval, and blessed with a few vintage-clothing shops. Some are the army-navy type; others sell serious vintage. Aside from the vintage stores, there are some cutting-edge fashion boutiques. I like **Morgana** (no. 20) and **Arsenale** (no. 64); both are hot and happening. This neighborhood is easy to reach, is fun to shop, and gives you a less touristy perspective on Rome.

**THE GHETTO** Take the Via delle Botteghe Oscure for 2 short blocks, note all the fabric jobbers (wholesalers), and then turn left at the Piazza Paganica. You'll now enter a small neighborhood that seems very residential. Wander the streets and look for the shops that interest you. This is the kind of adventure that is welcomed by a true *garmento*, someone who likes to see bolts of fabric piled up in store windows and doesn't care about fancy architecture or salespeople in matching uniforms. The area is charming, crumbling, and undiscovered by tourists. All of these stores are jobbers; you'll find

jeans and underwear and sweats and even a few jewelry shops. Don't miss the discounter **Leone Limentani** (Via Portico d'Ottavia 47), which has mounds of dishes and china—even Richard Ginori patterns.

**TRASTEVERE** You won't find designer or upscale shops in the Trastevere quarter (named for its location across the Tiber River), but you'll have a good time exploring the winding lanes around the Piazza di Santa Maria and off the main drag, the Viale Trastevere. There's an **Oviesse** (Viale Trastevere 62–64) with a **Standa** supermarket in the basement, and the street vendors under the umbrellas in front of the store have some good buys. I found linen trousers for 4€ and identical leather wallets for 5€ and 10€ at neighboring booths; the more expensive vendor claimed that his goods were made in Italy while the wallets next door were from China. Yeah, right. Other finds included a big canvas Disney tote for 10€, good T-shirts for 5€, and a bin of cheap handbags for 5€. Chocoholics won't want to miss **Valzani** (Via del Moro 37), which has been satisfying chocolate fantasies for more than 80 years.

The **Porta Portese** flea market is held on Sundays from 6:30am to 2pm off Viale Trastevere, beginning at Via Portuense; it's junky.

Added bonus: The taxi ride from Via Veneto to Trastevere passes all the important sights and monuments you want to see, plus . . . you're in air-conditioning!

## Rome Resources A to Z

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### ACCESSORIES & BEADS

#### *Accessorize*

Via del Corso 405 (Metro: Spagna); Forum Termini, in the central train station (Metro: Termini); other locations around town.

Inexpensive trendy bags and jewelry are the specialty of this U.K. chain. The designs vary in price and quality, and while these pieces may not last through next season, you'll at least get through your vacation in adorable, affordable style. We found a 10% off coupon in several Italian fashion magazines. © 06/6813-6764. [www.accessorize.it](http://www.accessorize.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Viewing the website is almost as much fun as visiting the stores. Current collections, with prices, are shown online, though you can't place an order. Promotional coupons are sometimes available to print.

### *G. Minelli*

Via Sora 17a (no nearby Metro).

Bead lovers, step this way—right into the shop of your dreams. You'll find two rooms with boxes stacked floor to ceiling, packed with beads and faux gemstones waiting to be made into jewelry, either by you or the shop staff. The selection of chains, clasps, gems, beads, and baubles is amazing. When I was here, I saw a woman with a magazine clipping of an intricate necklace with several layers of cabochon gems cascading from gold chains. The shop clerk had copied and laid out the design with faux stones on a velvet mat, and the two ladies were comparing gold chains to complete the necklace. © 06/686-8685.

**BEST BETS** The custom designs.

### *Sharm*

Via della Scala 70 (Trastevere; no nearby Metro); Via dei Coronari 224 (near Piazza Navona; no nearby Metro).

The colorful jewelry and accessories on display here are inspired by vintage or ethnic designs, and all are embellished with beads and charms. © 06/5833-4477 (Trastevere), © 06/6821-0706 (Piazza Navona).

**BEST BETS** I loved the silk and velvet scarves in jewel tones, with peacock designs made of colored crystals.

## ANTIQUES

While I can't go so far as to suggest you actually buy antiques here, Rome is the Italian center of fancy antiques shops. There are several streets where such stores abound, including **Via del Babuino**, **Via Maguta**, and **Via dei Coronari** (see "Shopping Neighborhoods," earlier in this chapter). If you're shopping for serious antiques and looking for a dealer to trust, look for the gold seal representing the *Associazione Romana Antiquari*. Note that the shops on **Via dei Coronari** are usually open at night for short periods in May and in the fall; there's an antiques market at **Palaparioli**.

## BATH & BEAUTY

### *Beauty Planet*

Grand Hotel Palace, **Via Veneto** 66–70 (Metro: Veneto).

A full-service spa and beauty center, this is not one of the new, low-rent rip-offs of Sephora, but rather a very fancy, high-end shop with expensive brands and some pricey accessories, such as hair clips and bands. You need not be a guest at the hotel to shop here. Closed Sunday. © 06/4201-0865.

### *Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella*

Corso Rinascimento 47 (no nearby Metro).

Yes, this is a branch of the famous Florentine address (p. 122). It has expanded enormously in recent years, with stores in many European capital cities. This one, small and new, is a block from **Piazza Navona**. The salespeople do not speak English, but if you give it some time and some mime, you'll sample everything and figure it all out. © 06/687-2446. [www.smnovella.it](http://www.smnovella.it).

**BEST BETS** The Weekend Soap, for 9€, is one of my favorite gifts to give because it's a unique three-part bar.

*Rancé*

Piazza Navona 53 (no nearby Metro).

This firm was from the south of France, where its ingredients originate, but it is now Italian. Rancé is most famous for its soap, although there is now a full line of bath and beauty products as well as scents. The brand is sold mostly through catalogs in the U.S., but you can save 50% if you shop the boutiques in Rome and Milan. © 06/6880-9705. [www.ranceusa.com](http://www.ranceusa.com).

*Sephora*

Forum Termini, in the central train station (Metro: Termini).

Constantly crowded but always well stocked, this branch will not disappoint. Look for the brands you can't find at home. Open daily from 8am to 10pm. © 06/4782-3445. [www.sephora.com](http://www.sephora.com).

**BOOKS**

The large news kiosks on the Via Veneto sell paperback books in many languages, including English.

*Feltrinelli*

Via Vittorio Emanuele Orlando 79–87 (Metro: Repubblica).

This famous chain has stores here and there in busy shopping districts. This location is divided into a few stores in a row; the international shop, with books in English, is at no. 87. There's also a ton of guidebooks and a wide selection of videos and DVDs of famous Italian movies. Each branch has English-speaking staff and excellent service. Also open Sundays from 10am to 1:30pm and 4 to 8pm. © 06/482-7878. [www.lafeltrinelli.it](http://www.lafeltrinelli.it).

*Lion Bookshop*

Via dei Greci 33 (Metro: Spagna).

The oldest bookshop in Rome, Lion is a haven for those seeking books printed in English. Stock includes guidebooks,

literature, history, and, of course, the latest novels. A small cafe caters to the expat crowd. Open Monday from 3:30 to 7:30pm, Tuesday through Sunday from 10am to 7:30pm. © 06/3265-4007. [www.thelionbookshop.com](http://www.thelionbookshop.com).

**BEST BETS** There's lotsa paperback bestsellers here.

### *Rizzoli Roma*

Largo Chigi 15 (Metro: Spagna); Via Tomacelli 156 (Metro: Spagna).

This is Italy's best bookstore with books in all languages. Tomacelli is the larger of the two shops; both are open on Sundays from 10:30am to 1:30pm and 4 to 8pm. During the week, hours are nonstop. © 06/679-6641 (Largo Chigi), © 06/6882-8513 (Tomacelli).

## CASHMERE

### *Amina Rubinacci*

Via Bocca di Leone 51 (Metro: Spagna).

Visitors to Capri will know the name of this famed Neapolitan source, which has recently opened a small shop in Rome. It specializes in cashmeres, but also sells cottons and cashmere blends. To die for. © 06/679-5354. [www.aminarubinacci.it](http://www.aminarubinacci.it).

### *Malo*

Via Borgognona 5 (Metro: Spagna).

The flagship of the famed brand has home style, gift items, accessories, and more cashmere than you can dream of. © 06/679-1331. [www.malo.it](http://www.malo.it).

### **Shop & Save**

Malo fanatics will want to visit the outlet store outside Florence; see p. 143 for details.

*Penny Lane*

Via di Capo le Case 55a (Metro: Barberini or Spagna).

This is a great source for classic cashmere sweaters in yummy colors, and the prices are fair, even at full retail. I was here in May and found sale racks with many styles marked down 50% to 70%. **Note:** This cashmere label is not related to the Max Mara line.

**BEST BETS** There's a good selection of children's items here: Booties, sweaters, and caps, all under 50€, make great gifts.

**DEPARTMENT STORES**

Italy doesn't have great department stores, and I don't suggest you go out of your way to shop in one. In Rome, two are somewhat convenient to mainstream tourist shopping: a branch of **La Rinascente**, at Via del Corso 189; and a branch of **Coin**, at Piazzale Appio 7, which is across the street from the Via Sannio flea market, and may be on your itinerary (if you can't stand to look at another fountain).

**UPIM**, the dime-store version of an Italian department store (which may be a contradiction in terms), has stores at Via del Tritone 172 and at Termini rail station. The **Standa** on Viale Trastevere 60 (inside the Oviessse department store) has a supermarket downstairs. And the Japanese purveyor of all things beige, **Muji**, has opened at Via del Tritone 99.

**DESIGNER BOUTIQUES**

The best Metro stop for all these addresses is Spagna.

**CONTINENTAL & U.K. BIG NAMES***Burberry*

Via Condotti 59–61.

*Cartier*

Via Condotti 83.

*Celine*

Via Condotti 20a.

*Chanel*

Via del Babuino 98–101.

*Dior*

Via Condotti 1–4.

*Escada*

Piazza di Spagna 7.

*Hermès*

Via Condotti 67.

*Kenzo*

Via del Babuino 124.

*Louis Vuitton*

Via Condotti 13.

*Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche*

Via Bocca di Leone 35.

**ITALIAN BIG NAMES**

*Alberta Ferretti*

Via Condotti 34.

*Benetton*

Corso Vittorio Emanuele 79.

*Bottega Veneta*

Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina 9.

### *Brioni*

Via Barberini 79–81.

#### **Shop Talk**

Brioni is synonymous with men's style and elegance. James Bond (the Pierce Brosnan version, anyway) wore Brioni suits. The Rome store is the original flagship.

### *D&G*

Piazza di Spagna 93.

### *Dolce & Gabbana*

Via Borgognona 7d; Via Condotti 51.

### *Emporio Armani*

Via del Babuino 140.

### *Ermenegildo Zegna*

Via Borgognona 7.

### *Etro*

Via del Babuino 102.

### *Fendi*

Largo Goldoni near Via Condotti.

### *Frette*

Piazza di Spagna 11.

### *GF Ferré*

Piazza di Spagna 70.

### *Gianfranco Ferré*

Via Borgognona 6.

***Giorgio Armani***

Via Condotti 77.

***Gucci***

Via Condotti 8.

***Hogan***

Via Borgognona 45–46.

***Just Cavalli***

Piazza di Spagna 82–83.

***La Perla***

Via Condotti 79.

***Laura Biagiotti***

Via Borgognona 43–44.

**Shop Talk**

Many Biagiotti styles are loose (they make stunning maternity dresses!) and fit nicely on women with imperfect figures. Her cashmeres are expensive but sought-after.

***Les Copains***

Piazza di Spagna 32–35.

***Max & Co.***

Via Condotti 46.

***Max Mara***

Via Condotti 17–19; Via Frattina 28.

***Missoni***

Piazza di Spagna 78.

*Prada*

Via Condotti 92–95.

*Pratesi*

Via de Babuino 65.

*Roberto Cavalli*

Via Borgognona 7a.

*Salvatore Ferragamo*

Via Condotti 73–74, 65.

*Tod's*

Via Condotti 52–53a (women's only).

*Trussardi*

Via Frattina 42–43.

*Valentino*

Via Condotti 15.

## DISCOUNTERS & STOCK SHOPS

See “Outlets” (p. 85) for more bargain-hunting destinations.

*Discount System*

Via Viminale 35 (Metro: Repubblica).

This store is possibly owned by the same people who own Il Discount dell'Alta Moda (see below), or else it is just patterned after it. It has a very similar brochure and the same pricing system, which means that, to get the accurate price, you must deduct 50% from the marked amount on the tag (so don't let the price tags throw you).

Discount System is a larger store and has a much, much, much greater selection. I spent an hour here touching everything and trying to buy something, but I left empty-handed. You'll see menswear, women's wear, shoes, handbags, luggage, belts, ties, dressy dresses, and every big-name Italian designer. The clothes are at least a year old.

The location is convenient—around the corner from the Grand Hotel and down the street from the main train station; you can take the Metro to Repubblica and walk. The same Metro will also take you to Piazza di Spagna and the Spanish Steps. © 06/474-6545.

### *Il Discount dell'Alta Moda*

Via di Gesù e Maria 16 and 14 (Metro: Spagna).

This shop can be iffy, but the last time I visited, I found good stock and friendly service; the problems are lack of sizes and sometimes-high prices (even at a discount, some of these prices will make you wince). **Important note:** The price is half of what's marked on the ticket. So if you're going to wince, at least do so accurately.

Now for the good news: There are plenty of big names. I found lots of **Chloé** and **Gucci** clothing. And the men's store, two doors down at no. 14, is huge and well stocked. The styles, colors, and sophistication of the men's suits are beyond compare. © 06/361-3796.

**BEST BETS** The handbags are probably the best deal—I found a good selection by **Marc Jacobs**.

## GIFTS

### *Fabrizio*

Via del Babuino 173 (Metro: Spagna).

A find from Milan, this store sells pens, writing goods, bound notebooks, and papers. There are some great gifts with tons of style for not much money. © 06/3260-0361. [www.fabrizio.com](http://www.fabrizio.com).

**BEST BETS** The pinwheels made of swirled paper with crystal beading were so gorgeous, I wanted to buy them all; at 35€ each, I settled for one.

## GLOVES

### *Merola*

Largo Goldoni 47, off Via del Corso (Metro: Spagna).

This is the oldest glove shop in Rome and a far cry from much of the rest of the fare on Via del Corso, which nowadays seems to cater to teens. ☎ 06/679-1961. [www.merolagloves.it](http://www.merolagloves.it).

#### **Shop Talk**

Yes, Audrey Hepburn's gloves in *Roman Holiday* came from Merola.

### *Sermoneta*

Piazza di Spagna 61 (Metro: Spagna).

Local divas make this their first stop for beautifully crafted gloves. There are millions of styles and patterns—all in contemporary colors. Prices are in line with those at Merola. ☎ 06/679-1960. [www.sermonetagloves.com](http://www.sermonetagloves.com).

**BEST BETS** The butter-soft gloves in a Bottega weave are worth the splurge at 60€.

## HANDBAGS

What's a trip to Italy without a touchy-feely session with 1,001 handbags? There may be better buys north of Rome, but Rome is a good place to start to look. The best bagger is here!

### *Carpisa*

Via del Corso 164 (Metro: Spagna).

This is a chain that began in Naples and now has stores all over Rome and most of Italy—it is hugely popular due to low

prices and lots of great colors, though it appeals more to the younger set. Most of the summer bags are canvas; fabrics are also used in fall and winter—this, of course, helps keep prices down. Indeed, where else can you find a great bag for 20€? ☎ 800/777-155 toll-free in Italy. [www.carpisa.it](http://www.carpisa.it).

### *Francesco Biasia*

Via di Torre Argentina 7 (Bus: Largo Argentina); Via dei Due Macelli 62 (Metro: Spagna).

This brand is well known for its *ooh la la* interpretation of southern Italy. It's sold in many department stores throughout the country. Shoppers often seek out this brand at discount sources because it tends to be a little pricey. The Largo Argentina location, by the way, is within walking distance of the Trevi Fountain and the area around San Silvestro, and the Spanish Steps shop is next door to McDonald's. ☎ 06/679-2727. [www.biasia.com](http://www.biasia.com).

### *Francesco Rogani*

Via Condotti 47 (Metro: Spagna).

This is a very fancy tourist trap (TT) and may not be your cup of Hermès copy, with many versions of both Kelly and Birkin styles and even a Bugatti or two. Prices are fair.

The store locks the doors when it thinks there are too many shoppers inside, its attitude can run hot or cold, and it offers sales that may or may not be real. That said, I found great stuff and am thrilled with my buys, but I don't know if I believe that the marked-down price isn't the goods' original price. The bags I bought were great because of the ratio of quality to price; at twice the price (as marked on the tags), I would not have pounced.

#### **Shop & Save**

Francesco Rogani's back room has a sale section where everything is discounted 50% to 70%.

Rogani uses a pebble-grain leather, which is good for travel because it doesn't mark up that easily and wears well. You can also buy the croc-stamped leather that comes in yummy colors—this is the latest trickledown trend from the Lana Marks bags. You'll pay about 185€ for a medium-size Birkin-style bag, or 285€ for a new style with shoulder straps, perfect for carrying your laptop. © 06/678-4036.

### *Furla*

Piazza di Spagna 22 (Metro: Spagna).

This Italian chain with stores all over the world—including a dozen in Rome—is known to offer high style and some glamour at realistic prices. Sort of the poor man's Prada, with bags that sell for under 160€. There are outlet stores in various malls covered in this book. © 06/6920-0363. [www.furla.com](http://www.furla.com).

## HOME STYLE & FABRICS

For details on the fabulous **Lisa Corti** and **Tad**, see “The Five Best Stores in Rome” (p. 60).

### *Aston*

Via Boncompagni 37 (Metro: Barberini).

Italian and European fabrics are sold by the meter off bolts that line the floor and perimeter of this store. A favorite of brides and local designers, it has everything from upholstery textiles to dressy silks, cashmere, and velvet. All fabrics are top of the line. © 06/4282-6647. [www.astontessuti.com](http://www.astontessuti.com).

### *Lisio*

Via Sistina 120 (Metro: Barberini or Spagna).

If you missed the fabric scene in Venice and are looking for Fortuny velvets, you'll find them, along with many other top-notch designer textiles, in this shop. Some fabrics are available off the bolt, and custom orders can usually be filled in 4 days. These goods are pricey, but still less expensive than at designer showrooms in the U.S. © 06/488-0518.

## LOCAL HEROES

### *Arkeos*

Via 4 Novembre 99 (no nearby Metro).

This shop's for the guys. It's near the Imperial Rome Museum and has more "relics" than the Ben Hur exhibit. Trick or treat? ☎ 06/726-50470.

### *Arlette*

Via del Governo Vecchio 49 (no nearby Metro).

Hmmm . . . should this shop be listed or not? I was treated rudely when I visited, but I don't know if the clerk was "Arlette" herself, so I'm giving the owner the benefit of the doubt because her clothing is so gorgeous. Arlette designs a line of Armani-inspired separates in natural fabrics and muted tones. Her dresses, tunics, wide-leg pants, and jackets all mix and match to creating stunning ensembles. Great store, great clothing, bad attitude. ☎ 06/6880-6837.

**BEST BETS** The uni-size clothing has a loose fit, which is a unique find in slim-fitting, va-va-va-voom Rome.

### *Indoroman*

Via Gregoriana 36 (Metro: Spagna).

Owner Gaia Franchetti imports hand-woven and -embroidered linens from India and also sells quilts, bedcovers, tablecloths, clothing, and accessories made by Italian artisans. Franchetti mixes bright colors with Roman taste to create fabulous designs: Indian saris serve as curtains, bamboo mats become window blinds, and bed covers dress up dining tables.

The ethno-chic clothing and one-of-a-kind accessories are all well priced. I found a great sale underway when I visited in May, with all bedding and tabletop marked down by at least 40%. The shop is inside an old palazzo; look for the brightly painted shutters on the upper windows and follow signs that will direct you inside. ☎ 06/6919-0908. [www.indoroman.com](http://www.indoroman.com).

## MALLS

Especially if you arrive by rail, your first mall stop may just be the very fine **Forum Termini**, in the central train station (see “The Five Best Stores in Rome,” p. 60).

### *Piazza Colonna*

Galleria Alberto Sordi (Metro: Spagna).

This V-shaped mall has an ideal location near the Spanish Steps and the San Silvestro bus stop, stays open on Sundays (and until 10pm most nights), and has cafes and some fun stores. What’s not to like? The anchor is a large **Zara**. The bookstore, **Feltrinelli**, has books in English.

## MARKETS

Although Rome’s main flea market at Porta Portese is famous, I’ve never found it that good—except when I needed to buy extra luggage because I’d gone wild at Fendi. The biggie is held on Sundays from 6:30am to 2pm. You can get here at 8am and do fine; in Rome, don’t go to flea markets too early.

The big flea market is officially called the **Mercato di Porta Portese** ([www.portaportesemarket.it](http://www.portaportesemarket.it)); it stretches for about a mile along the Tiber River, where around 1,000 vendors sell everything imaginable—a lot of which is fake or hot (or both). Enter the market about halfway down Viale Trastevere, where the old clothes are. This way you avoid miles of auto accessories, which, as far as I am concerned, you can give a miss.

The **Mercatino dei Partigiani** is held at the Piazza dei Partigiani the first Sunday of every month, except August. It’s a small flea market specializing in objects from the 1940s and 1950s.

Another small market is the **Underground**, Via Francesco Crispi 96. This relatively new flea market is held in a huge four-door garage between Piazza del Popolo and Via Veneto. It’s open mornings on the second Saturday and Sunday of every month.

A new flea market, which most people call the **Ponte Milvio Market**, is held monthly. It begins on Saturday afternoon (3–7pm) and runs all day on Sunday, starting at 9am, on the banks of the Tiber between Ponte Milvio and Ponte Duca d'Aosta.

**Via Sannio** is a busy real-people market area with all kinds of fabulous junk. Everything is cheap in price and quality. The goods are all new, no antiques. Many of the vendors who sell on Sunday at Porta Portese end up here during the week, so if you miss Sunday in Rome, don't fret. Just c'mon over here. Pickpockets seem fewer during the week as well. There's a **Coin** department store on the corner. You can get here by bus or Metro (the stop is Sannio); because it's in a corner of central Rome, the taxi fare can be steep.

**Piazza Fontanella Borghese**, not far from the Spanish Steps, has 24 stalls selling prints, maps, books, coins, and some antiques. Good fun; a class act. Open Monday through Saturday from 9am to 6pm, possibly later on summer evenings.

The big news in Rome, though, is that "private" flea markets are popping up—real people just rent a table and sell off last year's fashions or whatever turns up in Grandma's palazzo. Often the sellers are aristos or celebs. Check the Friday edition of the local newspaper, *La Repubblica*, for the weekend market schedule, listed under a heading called *Mercatini* (Markets) on the weekend events page.

Typically, these events are held on Sunday, may cost 3€ to 10€ to attend, and have a few hundred vendors. They do not start super early, but rather struggle to open around 10am, and are hottest from noon to 1pm; most are in areas off the beaten track and may require a bit of a taxi ride.

## OUTLETS

### *Castel Romano Designer Outlet*

Via del Ponte di Piscina Cupa 51, Castel Romano.

Also called Pontina (a nearby location), this is the Rome area's grandmother of outlet malls. More and more outlets

are coming on board, although outlet malls to the north are still larger. This one is owned by McArthur Glen, which also built Serravalle Designer Outlet (btw. Milan and Genoa), though it's not nearly as large, with fewer than 100 stores. It's located some 19km (12 miles) south of Rome, accessible via various tours. Of the two malls south of Rome (see below for the second), McArthur Glen has the more upscale names. ☎ 06/505-0050. [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 All of the MacArthur Glen malls are described in detail on the website, with clear driving directions and maps. Rude Italian drivers, optional.

### *Fashion District*

Via della Pace, Pascolaro, Valmontone.

The good news about this mall is that you pass right by it while heading south on the highway that connects Rome and Naples. There really isn't any bad news, though the mall is not a great one. It's worth a stop and should improve in years to come, as it was built to handle more than 200 stores. There's a 5€ shuttle service from Termini station on weekends; buses leave at 10am and return at 5pm. ☎ 06/959-9491. [www.fashiondistrict.it](http://www.fashiondistrict.it).

#### **Shop Talk**

As we go to press, McArthur Glen is set to open **La Reggia Designer Outlet** outside Naples, just off the A1 between Rome and Naples. Check [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it) for the latest news.

### *Soratte Outlet Shopping*

Piazza Felice Abballe 1, Sant'Oreste (from Rome, take the A1 to exit Ponzano Romano-Soratte).

If you're driving north from Rome, this may be worth a stop. There's a Max Mara outlet, a Basile store, a branch of Nike, and, yes, even Burger King. ☎ 07/615-6541. [www.soratteoutlet.it](http://www.soratteoutlet.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Make sure you check out the website for new stores before you go.

## Papal Shopping

Papal merchandise ranges from the serious to the kitsch. The shopping falls into three categories: There are a number of gift stands and shops scattered throughout the Vatican; there is a string of stores in Vatican City; and there are vendors who sell from card tables on the sidewalks as you walk from the entrance/exit of the Vatican Museum (this way to the Sistine Chapel) to the front of St. Peter's.

If you are on a quest for religious items (of the non-antique variety), a dozen shops surrounding St. Peter's Square offer everything you've been looking for. Bottle openers with a bas-relief portrait of the pope, anyone? Most of the shops will send out your purchase to be blessed by the pope. Allow 24 hours for this service. Some of the stores will then deliver the items to your hotel; others ask you to return for them. If you are having items blessed, be sure to find out how you will be getting your merchandise back.

## PLUS SIZES

### *Elena Mirò*

Via Frattina 11–12 (Metro: Spagna).

This Italian line begins at size 46 (about a size 14). The chain's stores are popping up all over Europe, selling chic and stylish work and play fashions for less money than Marina Rinaldi. It also has a presence in many of the new outlet malls around Italy. © 06/678-4367. [www.elenamiro.com](http://www.elenamiro.com).

### *Marina Rinaldi*

Via Borgognona 5 (Metro: Spagna).

A division of Max Mara, Marina Rinaldi is now a global brand with chic fashions for the large-size woman. © 06/6920-0487. [www.marinarinaldi.com](http://www.marinarinaldi.com).

**Buyer Beware**

Marina Rinaldi's sizing system is strange, so please try on before you buy. Even if you use the chart that compares its sizes to American sizes, you may be in for a surprise.

**SHOES**

There are scads of little shops selling leather goods all over Rome, and all over every other major Italian city, for that matter. Note that there is also a section of this chapter called "Handbags" (p. 80), although most shoe stores sell handbags, too.

*Bottega Veneta*

Piazza San Lorenzo 9 (Metro: Spagna).

Creative director Tomas Maier has his own eponymous collection, with shops in Miami and Palm Beach and the Hamptons, but what he is doing for BV is incredibly chic and inventive. There's still plenty of woven leather (in throw pillows) and thousand-dollar handbags, but you'll also find shoes and clothes and cashmeres.

This gorgeous Bottega shop is across the way from the newer Louis Vuitton that has since become luxe headquarters of the Spanish Steps shopping district; it is hard to find unless you know where to look. Is the store worth finding? Well, yes. Prices are lower than in the U.S., but there are no bargains here. That won't shock anyone, as Bottega has never had inexpensive merchandise. The store has two levels, many collections, and merchandise to drool for. Actually, the prices are so high you could drool, then faint. ☎ 06/6821-0024. [www.bottegaveneta.com](http://www.bottegaveneta.com).

*Dominique Garden*

Via del Corso 20 (Metro: Spagna).

The designer-inspired shoes sold at this busy boutique may fool your friends. You'll want to buy several pairs when you see the colors and styles. ☎ 06/3600-1807.

**BEST BETS** Chanel-like ballerina slippers for 39€ and suede Tod's wannabes for 42€.

### *Fausto Santini*

Via Frattina 120 (Metro: Spagna).

A limited number of handmade leather shoes per size and style are made at this shop. They're pricey but very comfortable; originality and style are the marks of the gallery-like boutique. ☎ 06/678-4114. [www.faustosantini.it](http://www.faustosantini.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 The collection is shown online, but because it is produced in limited quantities, your best bet is to visit in person to see what's new and what's available.

### *Fratelli Rossetti*

Via Borgognona 5a (Metro: Spagna).

The Rossetti brothers are at it again—shoes, shoes, shoes, and now at somewhat affordable prices. There are men's and women's shoes, as well as belts and even some clothes. ☎ 06/678-2676. [www.rossetti.it](http://www.rossetti.it).

## Sole Saving

In a city where cobblestone streets are the norm, you may need a quick shoe fix, and I'm not talking about a shopping spree at Tod's. Rome's calzolai (cobblers) can do jobs ranging from replacing soles and heels to stretching those my-feet-are-swollen-and-they-no-longer-fit Ferragamos. The cobblers' charges are reasonable and, in most cases, they'll have you comfortably back on your feet in a matter of minutes. Try **Calzolaio**, Via della Lungaretta 26, in Trastevere (☎ 340/762-5463); **Cucchiaroni Maurizio**, Vicolo della Volpe 14, in the Pantheon/Navona district (☎ 06/687-5962); or **Giancimino Giuseppe**, Via Vespasiano 79-81, in the Vatican/Prati district (☎ 06/3903-0057).

*Hogan*

Via del Babuino 110 (Metro: Spagna).

Here we have the Hogan line of sport shoes, high heels from the Tod's line, and very fancy (and expensive) leather handbags. Shoes begin at around 160€. [www.todsgroup.com](http://www.todsgroup.com).

*Tod's*

Via Condotti 52–53a (Metro: Spagna).

The original driving shoe, Tod's has become part of an international uniform of casual chic—it's even knocked off by the makers of fake brands. The new Via Condotti shop carries women's shoes and handbags exclusively. ☎ 06/678-68-28. [www.todsgroup.com](http://www.todsgroup.com).

**TEENS & TWEENS***Diesel*

Via del Corso 186 (Metro: Spagna).

This has nothing to do with cars or trains but might inflame the engine of any teen or tween—clothing and denim lines that are pricey, tight, and very hot. Stores can be found all over the world but especially in every major Italian city. The flagship in Rome has a tailor who will customize those jeans to snug up your bum (go upstairs for your fitting). The store is in the main retail district and handy to other teen and tween shopping ops. There's another branch at Via del Babuino 94–95 (☎ 06/6938-0053). Note that prices may be lower in the U.S. ☎ 06/678-3933.

*Promod*

Via Marconi 179 (Metro: Trastevere); other locations around town.

Well-priced trendy clothing from a French chain. Most items, including dresses and coats, are under 35€. There's a great selection of casual wear—T-shirts, jeans, beachwear, and the like. ☎ 06/558-0892. [www.promod.com](http://www.promod.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 This is one of the best websites I've used. You can put a wardrobe together searching by category, style, color, and size. There's even a "virtual fitting room" so you can see if the outfit you put together works.

## Beyond Rome

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### NAPLES

Welcome to Naples, where I had the best pizza of my life and where I fell madly in love with the scarves at Rubinacci. Welcome to Naples, where the clerks at Ferragamo not only were rude, but also refused to redo my tax-refund papers when I decided to buy *more*. Welcome to Naples, where some shopkeepers told me to take off my watches (yes, I do wear two), lest I attract a thief . . . or two.

### GETTING THERE

From Rome, you can hire a car and driver or rent a car for the 2-hour trip south to Naples; this option gives you a car for driving along the Amalfi Coast as well. If you drive from Rome, note that you will pass some outlet malls along the way, such as the **Castel Romano Designer Outlet** (p. 85). By the time this edition is published, a new McArthur Glen outlet mall should be open near Naples, just off the A1 north of the city. If you're driving, check [www.mcarthurglen.com](http://www.mcarthurglen.com) for information and directions. If you drive within Naples, also note that you are crazy.

You can also take the train from Rome. The trip takes less than 2 hours, and the Naples train station is clean, modern, and not frightening. But just for the hell of it, watch your valuables.

## Italy by Vintage Car

If zipping through the Italian countryside courtesy of Hertz isn't what you have in mind, consider taking the wheel of a vintage Alfa, Fiat, or Lancia. No Chryslers for you! You can choose a custom itinerary ranging from 3 days on the Amalfi Coast (for the brave) to 7 or more days cruising the back roads of Tuscany.

At the beginning of your trip, you'll be given a map book with suggested routes, detailed driving instructions, and an Italian cellphone with the vintage-car manager's number on speed dial. Car choices are listed on the website. ☎ **781/275-1188**. [www.italybyvintagecar.com](http://www.italybyvintagecar.com).

## GETTING AROUND

All hotels can get you a taxi, and there are also taxi stands, usually at big squares. Remember that traffic is fierce during rush hour and can run up the tab on the meter. Taxis were regulated by the government several years ago, so the drivers are sometimes honest. But don't count on it. Remind your driver to put the meter on and round up the tab as a tip.

There is a Metro, but it's of better use to residents or sightseers, not shoppers, so I don't refer you to Metro stops in this section. Also, when it's hot, you do not want to go into a hole in the ground.

You may also want to book a car and driver for the day; your hotel can do this for you. If you rent a car, don't try to drive in town. And remember, when driving the Amalfi Coast: No limoncello for you, *cara*.

## THE LAY OF THE LAND

Naples is an enormous city. On a day trip, you will probably only want to visit the nice shopping areas and then have a look at the museums, the palm trees, the castle fortress jutting out into the sea, and the sea itself. Watch your handbag.

## Naples



## Crime Con-trol

To discourage ex-cons from returning to a life of crime in the Mafia, local Campania authorities have recruited about 70 of them to help tourists negotiate the streets and alleys of Naples. Seriously, folks. They wear yellow jackets, caps, and ID cards and are posted around the city, including the port and train station. Some local hoteliers aren't crazy about the program, but officials claim that no one knows the city's crime scene better than ex-convicts.

**Warning:** Please study a map of Naples before you go off on your own; learn where everything is in relationship to the main icons. If you think of the Castel dell'Ovo as the heart of the world, then the various areas to visit can be read as you tell time: The castle is at 6 o'clock, the Maritime Station is at 5 o'clock, the Via Constantinopoli and the National Museum are at 1 o'clock, the historic old town and street of angels are at 2 o'clock, and the fancy shopping is at 10 o'clock.

## THE SHOPPING SCENE

Walking up and down and around the fancy shopping district in Naples is a treat. There are gorgeous antiques stores and great places for a gelato. It makes a nice half-day shopping excursion, after which you can eat, quit, or move to secret sources or even museums (all with good gift shops). Note that it takes more than a weekend to have a custom-made suit made.

**SHOPPING HOURS** Stores are normally open from around 9am to 1:30pm and 4:30 to 8pm. Nothing is open on Sunday. On Monday, nothing is open in the morning, and some things will open around 4 or 4:30pm. Even street markets get going late here: Don't go to a flea market before 9:30am.

On Saturday in summer, stores will close for the day at 1:30pm, but in winter they reopen in the afternoon. If you need a pharmacy during off hours, ask your concierge or check the listing in the newspaper for the open stores.

Most stores are closed the first 3 weeks of August, or longer. Only mad dogs and tourists go out in the midday sun.

## SHOPPING NEIGHBORHOODS

**CASTEL DELL'OVO** Located directly across from the Hotel Vesuvio, right near the Maritime Station, the Castel is on a small island, which also houses several adorable alleys for exploring (no shops, sorry) and many bars, seafood restaurants, and pizza places. It's great fun. There's a tourist info stand here, too.

**LUXURY SHOPPING** The main upscale shopping district is a few blocks from the strip of luxury hotels on the waterfront. Just walk along the water (with the castle to your rear) until you come to a clump of palm trees that represents the Piazza Vittorio, turn right, and head "up."

Now it gets slightly tricky, as this is a district, and you don't want to miss all the parts—you can, and will, miss part of it if you don't look at a map. The Via Calabritto is one of the main tony shopping streets, with many of the big-name designers (**Prada** is at no. 7), but not all. It stretches from the Piazza Vittorio to the Piazza dei Martiri and the large **Ferragamo** shop (no. 56–60).

There are a few side streets off the Piazza dei Martiri that will remind you that you really *are* in Italy; some antiques shops are located down the Via Domenico Morelli. The area is not without charm, and you can easily segue to the Via dei Mille and Via Gaetano Filangieri, which have the rest of the luxury shops—**Bulgari**, **Zegna**, **Hermès**, **Frette**, and more.

**VIA CHIAIA** This is a real-people shopping street that's between the luxury district and Via Roma. Use it to cross over from one neighborhood to the other or to get to Via dei Mille—it's all an easy walk. Shopping-wise, there's very little to distract you. Italy-wise, it's great fun.

**VIA ROMA** Via Roma is the commercial heart of town; it is called Via Toledo lower down and becomes Via Roma near Piazza Dante. This street stretches for 3km (2 miles) from the

Piazza del Plebiscito, right near the Maritime Station, through the center of town, passing the Piazza Carita on its way to the Piazza Dante and then ending near the National Museum.

**LA PIGNASECCA** This is foodie land: Just follow Via Pignasecca and Via Portamedina up and down, checking out all the tiny specialty shops. This is a central area in the real-people part of town.

**CENTRO ANTICO** The core of the old town (*centro antico*) includes the famous Via San Gregorio Armend, the street of angels, where all the miniatures and *presepios* (crèches) are made. But don't look for Via San Gregorio Armend on your map, as it's a small area around the church of the same name. Instead, you want to find the rectangular area between the Piazza Gesù and Piazza Dante, reaching over to the Duomo as its other border. The main streets for shopping, gawking, sightseeing, and absorbing the soul of Naples are Via Croce and Via Tribunali. Via Croce will change its name a few times, so fret not.

### Shopping Adventure

The Centro Antico area is part of a living-history, outdoor-museum program that labels the buildings and tells you the path to walk (and shop).

**PORT ALBA** Adjacent to the old town is Port Alba, a medieval doorway that leads to a million bookstores. Just beyond this is Via Constantinopoli, filled with antiques shops. Every month except August, there's an outdoor weekend flea market.

**CAPRI** Just take the ferry.

## ANTIQUES & FLEA MARKETS

### *Fiera Antiquaria Napoletana*

Via Caracciolo.

Getting to this antiques fair is a little tricky, as there is often confusion about the dates; the listing in *Dove* magazine is also unclear. Luckily, you can call the market offices directly

at ☎ 081/621-951 and get the dates for the year. A weekend event, the fair is considered the best in southern Italy; it runs from 8am to 2pm. [www.fieraantiquarianapoletana.it](http://www.fieraantiquarianapoletana.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 The site's in Italian, but it's not difficult to figure out the dates, times, and so on.

### *Mostra Mercato Constantinopoli*

Via Constantinopoli.

A weekend fair never held on the same weekend as the other fair (Via Caracciolo, above), this is a more casual event in the street of antiques shops, with dealers set up on sidewalks and under tents. Don't bother going if the weather is bad. ☎ 0347/486-3715.

## LOCAL HEROES

### *Mariano Rubinacci*

Via Filangieri 26.

This shop offers a sort of Ralph Lauren local-preppy look, complete with silk scarves that would make Mr. Dumas-Hermès weep with envy. The scarves depict various scenes in Neapolitan history, geography, or iconography; they're sold in some hotel and museum gift shops as well. Prices range from 120€ to 200€. The best luxury souvenir in town. ☎ 081/415-793. [www.marianorubinacci.it](http://www.marianorubinacci.it).

### *Marinella*

Riviera di Chiaia 287.

This itty-bitty tie shop is one of the most famous addresses in Naples. Come holiday season, lines stretch down the street, there are no ties in stock, and shoppers are issued chits, which they gift-wrap to present. ☎ 081/764-4214.

#### **Insider's Tip**

Marinella can create custom ties, as long, short, wide, or thin as you want or need.

*Maxi Ho*

Via Nisco 23–25; Riviera di Chiaia 95; other locations around town.

Despite its silly-sounding name, this is one of the best stores in Naples. The various addresses are mostly in the luxury district and are not branches of the same store, but rather extensions of the store that feature different looks. Each sells a different group of designer brands geared for a certain look or demographic. © 081/414-721 or 081/247-0072.

# *Chapter Four*

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## *Florence*

### Welcome to Florence

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If you haven't been to this part of Italy recently, note that Florence has changed enormously. I'm not bad-mouthing Florence; I'm just warning you. And asking you to note that I am reporting in these pages on several different faces of Florence, as I search for hidden values and hidden finds. There is much in Florence to enjoy, so step this way. I'm gonna take you around back.

### Arriving in Florence

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#### **BY PLANE**

Before small intra-European airlines were fashionable, you had to fly into Pisa to fly to Florence. While you still have that option, and the Pisa airport is larger, you can now fly directly into Florence. Pisa is now served by some low-cost carriers as well as by the major E.U. airlines.

The Florence airport is lovely (good shopping for such a small airport) and only about 15 minutes by taxi from the heart of town, but there are often weather problems. You can't count on a timely arrival or departure here.

Many travelers still use the Rome airport because you get your long-haul flights there and can easily connect to Florence by train, although there is no longer a train from the Rome airport straight to Florence. Still, you can connect through Rome's central station quite easily.

The real trick is to take one of the many low-cost carriers into Bologna and then catch one of the hour-long trains to Florence.

## BY TRAIN

If you are coming to town by train, do pay attention: You want the **Santa Maria Novella** (often written as S.M.N.) rail station. The train may stop at another local station; do not panic. Wait until you get to S.M.N.

The Florence train station is smaller than the one in Milan and less intimidating. To get a taxi, follow signs to the left side of the station (left, that is, if you are arriving and walking toward the front of the station). There are a few stores (and a McDonald's) in the arrivals area; there's a small mall beneath the station. We found good prices at the TT at the front of the tracks, including a variety of books in English for 5€ to 10€, plus adorable postcard bookmarks for .50€. Wooden trays with gold gilding were 15€, which was the best price we saw in Florence.

The train ride from Rome takes about 2 hours; from Milan, about 4 hours. Bologna is slightly more than an hour away.

Note that there are both Eurostar trains and IC (InterCity) trains to Florence; the IC from Rome takes a half-hour longer but may be less expensive or included without a supplement in your rail pass. Helpful video monitors, located on the tracks, will tell you where your car will stop when the train comes in.

## BY CAR

Driving into Florence is relatively easy, but made better if you have a computer printout with exact directions. If your hotel

is in the heart of the historic center, call before you arrive to provide your license plate and car information so the staff can inform the police. Cars without special permits are not allowed in the city center.

Once you are at your hotel, you will park the car and leave it—you are not allowed to drive around downtown. You can, of course, use your car to get out of town and travel to the outlets . . . and beyond.

## Getting Around

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It's a good thing you can walk just about everywhere in central Florence, because more and more bans are being put on vehicular traffic. This is true not only in Florence but also in Siena, Lucca, and other nearby towns.

### BY TAXI

You can get a taxi at the train station; taxis have stickers that allow them to drive anywhere in town. There are no free-roaming taxis driving around town—you don't just hail a cab. You must call ahead.

If you need a taxi to pick you up somewhere, call ☎ 055/43-90 or 055/42-42. Your hotel probably has a direct hot line that will summon a taxi in a matter of minutes. Note that with a radio taxi, the meter starts running when the driver gets the call to fetch you, so he may arrive with 6€ to 8€ already on the meter. There are surcharges for extra luggage, Sundays, holidays, and traveling at night.

### BY BUS

For your day trip to the Mall (p. 142), or to the towns of Siena (p. 151) or Lucca (p. 155), you may want to take the **SITA bus**. The SITA station (☎ 055/217-838; [www.sita-on-line.it](http://www.sita-on-line.it)) is across from the Santa Maria Novella train station, an easy walk from most hotels.

For your day trip to Forte dei Marmi (p. 155), you'll need the **LAZZI bus** (☎ 055/363-041; [www.lazzi.it](http://www.lazzi.it)), which you can also pick up near the Santa Maria Novella station.

## Sleeping in Florence

### *Four Seasons Hotel Firenze*

Borgo Pinti 99.

If money's no object and you want to stay in a magnificent Renaissance palazzo, this is it. This new Four Seasons hotel is actually a former papal residence, located in the middle of Florence's largest private garden. Fifteenth-century frescoes complement the ornate Italian silks and velvets featured throughout the rooms and suites. This is as close as you can get to sleeping in a museum. Rates begin at 500€. ☎ 800/332-3442 in the U.S. Local phone ☎ 055/262-61. [www.fourseasons.com/florence](http://www.fourseasons.com/florence).

#### **Shop Talk**

The spa at the Four Seasons is the only one in the world to use products from local hero Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella.

### *Grand Hotel Villa Medici*

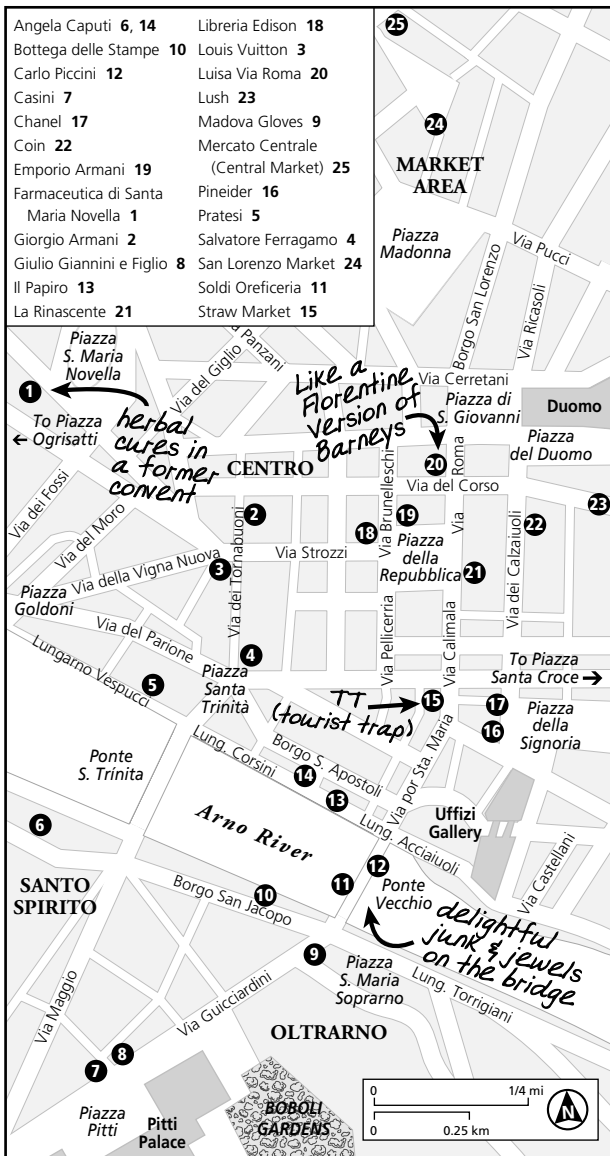
Via Il Prato 42.

This is the place to pick if you want to travel outside Florence, if you are headed to the outlets or to the countryside. It's also near the Tuesday Cascine open-air market and a 10-minute taxi ride from the airport. Traffic problems in Florence cannot be underestimated, thus location becomes one of this hotel's major selling points.

The Grand Hotel Villa Medici has been renovated and features old-fashioned villa architecture with new modern interiors and lots of high-tech amenities, including flatscreen TVs. On a recent visit, I stayed in what's called an apartment, which

## Florence

Angela Caputi <b>6, 14</b>	Libreria Edison <b>18</b>
Bottega delle Stampe <b>10</b>	Louis Vuitton <b>3</b>
Carlo Piccini <b>12</b>	Luisa Via Roma <b>20</b>
Casini <b>7</b>	Lush <b>23</b>
Chanel <b>17</b>	Madova Gloves <b>9</b>
Coin <b>22</b>	Mercato Centrale (Central Market) <b>25</b>
Emporio Armani <b>19</b>	Pineider <b>16</b>
Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella <b>1</b>	Pratesi <b>5</b>
Giorgio Armani <b>2</b>	Salvatore Ferragamo <b>4</b>
Giulio Giannini e Figlio <b>8</b>	San Lorenzo Market <b>24</b>
Il Papiro <b>13</b>	Soldi Oreficeria <b>11</b>
La Rinascente <b>21</b>	Straw Market <b>15</b>



is sort of a suite, with two bathrooms and a sofa bed in the living room—great for those traveling with kids.

The property has numerous rates and promotions based on the season; doubles are about 300€ regularly, but go down to about 130€ a night if you buy the 5-night package. Book through the Leading Hotels of the World (© 800/233-6800 in the U.S.; [www.lhw.com/ghvmedici](http://www.lhw.com/ghvmedici)), call the hotel directly (© 055/277-171), or log on to [www.villamedicihotel.com](http://www.villamedicihotel.com).

### *Hotel Bernini Palace*

Piazza San Firenze 29.

Totally redecorated in Oriental modern chic, the Bernini Palace, a member of the Baglioni chain, is the poshest thing in town: not too big, not too small, and very dark, Venetian, dramatic, and bold. You will find a warm welcome at the imposing gold-leaf front desk and fall in love with the lobby's dark-wood floors and Fortuny-style lighting. If you want digs in the historic center of town, you cannot find a place with a better location or a more you-ain't-seen-nuthin'-yet style.

Rates vary between 200€ and 300€ depending on the season; look for various promotional offers and online deals. ©055/288-621. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

### *Hotel La Residenza*

Via dei Tornabuoni 8.

We haven't stayed in this hotel, but we did an inspection on our last trip and will definitely give it a try next time. Right across the street from Prada on the Via Tornabuoni, this three-star inn couldn't be better located. You won't have the frills and services of a five-star property, but the 24 rooms are tastefully decorated, there's a rooftop terrace, amenities include buffet breakfast and air-conditioning, and the front-desk staff is friendly. Rates vary by season, but a double in high season averages 120€ to 140€. © 055/284-197. [www.laresidenzahotel.com](http://www.laresidenzahotel.com).

## Staying in Touch

Hotel Internet connections can be very expensive, so we rely on fast, cheap Internet cafes to check e-mail. Most have Wi-Fi hotspots if you want to bring your own laptop; otherwise, you can use the computers provided. **Internet Train** ([www.internettrain.it](http://www.internettrain.it)) has locations all over Florence, including Via Guelfa 54–56 (near the train station), Via dell’Oriuolo 40r (near the Duomo), Borgo San Jacopo 30r (near the Ponte Vecchio), Via de’ Benci 36 (close to San Croce), and several others. We also like **Cyber Link Plus**, Via del Giglio 29r, which offers shipping, baggage storage, cellphone rentals, and computer accessories, as well as Internet access.

### *Relais Santa Croce*

Via Ghibellina 87.

This new addition to the Baglioni group is one of the most fabulous hotels we’ve seen—and we visit lots of hotels! It’s not far from the Duomo and San Croce, but you’ll think you’re miles away from the crowds when you soak up the five-star luxe at this former 18th-century palazzo. The stunning lounge and adjacent music room have soaring frescoed ceilings. Guest rooms vary in size, but all are in minimalist-chic style with wood floors, leather furniture and antiques, and stone bathrooms. This place is one of our best finds. © 055/234-2230. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

## The Shopping Scene

If you’re in Florence for the first time, you may be overwhelmed—or just plain faint. It’s the heat! It’s the crowds! It’s the handbags! If you are combining art, culture, and shopping on a short time schedule, you will most certainly be dizzy.

If this is a repeat trip and you have a discerning eye, you may want to take shortcuts. Certainly the shopping scene is changing quickly, which may not please sophisticated travelers. Fret not; just follow me. We're counting our dollars, our euros, and the number of shoes in the closet.

This city does not offer as many of the classic, big-name, big-ticket Italian designer stores as Rome or Milan, although Florence does have a street of dream shops and a side street of fashionable names. Not to worry, though: You won't go naked if you hit town without a dress or handbag to your name. **Chanel** has arrived, and our faves are still here: **Zara** (two big stores), **H&M**, **Oviesse**, **La Rina**, and **Coin**.

In many ways, you must expect your shopping finds to reflect the geopolitical situation. Florence is the unofficial beginning of the south of Italy. Few people here wear black; there is no hard-edged fashion. In fact, you are more likely to find that the locals with money and pedigree wear English-influenced country styles.

This is not a case of keeping Italy for Italians or keeping out northern, big-city style. It's cultural. Strangely enough, you will find that many French chains have invaded not only the tourist shopping areas but also the real-world parts of town, and you'll also see Blockbuster stores—an American contribution—in residential areas.

Best of all, Florence serves as the gateway to some superlative factory outlets and the wonders of everything else under the Tuscan sun. The bargains and buys are just outside Florence; the city is a good jumping-off point for many adventures. Rent a car; get outta town. Get lost; get found.

## THE BEST BUYS IN FLORENCE

**JUNK** We love junk; we love \$5-to-\$25 gift items. But we don't want it to look cheap or tacky or end up at someone's yard sale next summer.

Junk that doesn't look like junk? How about those silk ties I found in San Lorenzo for 3€ each? Not only are the same ties sold elsewhere in Italy for 15€ to 20€, but these ties

also compete with 30€ ties. And yes, I do tie my hair back with a men's tie. The fashionable ties are textured solids in gelati colors; yes, they come from Asia.

**SMALLS** This is what I call small stylish items with low prices that are easy to pack. The markets are a good source if you have a discerning eye. Grocery stores are filled with choices. Florence provides better high-quality, easier-to-get-to smalls than any other major Italian city.

**CERAMICS & FAIENCE** If you get into the hill towns and pottery towns, you will save on Florence prices. If you don't have the opportunity to get out of town, you'll find plenty to choose from in Florence—from huge jardinières to little rooster jugs. I am horrified by how expensive these items have become (40€ for a plate to hang on the wall), but you can still get a salad serving set for 4€ to 6€. Some items are sold in the two town markets; better-quality items are available in specialty shops around town. But prices for ceramics are lower in Siena (p. 151), just an hour away. And they are even better in Deruta (p. 156), 2 hours away.

**OLIVE OIL** Olive oil is much like wine, with olives very much like grapes. Often, vineyards that make wine also make olive oil, and have wine shops (*enoteca*) that sell it. The airport in Florence has an excellent selection; otherwise, you can try a wine shop, a grocery store, or even some of the specialty sources directly. The selection at **Baroni** at the Mercato Centrale (Central Market) is excellent.

Remember, the good stuff isn't cheap; it usually comes in a glass bottle and is heavy and fragile. Expect to pay 15€ to 40€ per bottle. **Note:** When you pack olive oil in your suitcase, tape the bottle at the neck, wrap it in bubble wrap, and then roll it in plastic bags and washable clothes.

**PAPER GOODS** If you didn't get your fill of Italian-style papers in Venice, you can buy more in Florence. The assorted merchandise is so classy-looking that it makes a marvelous gift; pencils cost less than 1€ each. There are about half a dozen stores in central Florence that specialize in Florentine

paper works; items of lower quality are sold at souvenir stands and in the markets.

**DESIGNER BRANDS AT THE OUTLETS** It takes some time and trouble, but it's worth it. Buy clothes, shoes, cashmeres, handbags, and bed linens from a variety of nearby sources. See p. 142.

## SHOPPERS BEWARE

Be careful when buying the following items:

**GOLD** There are plenty of jewelers on the Ponte Vecchio, but prices are competitive to those in jewelry marts in the U.S. I can't tell you why you should buy from them unless you have romance in mind and are willing to pay for it. But wait; if you're looking for 18k gold as opposed to 14k, this is the place to find it. Yes, the prices are high, but most merchants will deduct the VAT and give you an additional discount for a cash sale.

**LEATHER GOODS** I know, I know—Italy, especially Florence, is famous for its leather goods. I'm not telling you to refrain from a leather purchase. I merely ask that you purchase slowly and carefully. There are so many fake-leather factories in Florence and so many handbags from Asia for sale in the markets and so many that are made locally but are very, very expensive that, well, it's a headache.

Do note, however, that there is a huge territory of no-man's land: no-name, no-brand handbags and leather goods that are not inexpensive (150€ and up) but offer great value if bought properly. Buying and bargaining for them is tricky.

**SILK** For affordable silks that won't embarrass you, avoid fake designer scarves; instead, check out the ties. **Warning:** While you may associate silk with this part of Italy (as well as to the north), most of the market stock comes from Asia, even though the tags say "Made in Italy." Check edges to see if they are hand-stitched, and make sure it's silk and not polyester—unless you want polyester, which is less expensive.

## LOCAL HEROES

If you are offended by all the tourist junk in Florence, fear not. There are a handful of hidden places that are yummy and worth the slight trouble it takes to find them.

### *Alessandro Dari*

Via San Niccolò 115r.

I found my visit to this shop to be a religious experience—or at least a very spiritual one. I don't mean because it carries religious merchandise, but because I felt myself surrounded by the work of a master, perhaps the Michelangelo of our time; I felt as if Dari's work came straight from the angels or even God.

This is basically a jewelry shop with a workshop, so you can commission a piece or buy from the display cases. Prices start at 400€ and go up, but for less than 1,000€ you can have some serious work. The shop is away from central Florence but within easy walking distance of the Ponte Vecchio. © 055/244-747. [www.alessandrodari.com](http://www.alessandrodari.com).

**BEST BETS** Rings that are buildings, rings that do tricks, and pieces with hidden mechanisms and secrets.

### *Chianti Cashmere Company*

Radda in Chianti, midway between Florence and Siena.

American Nora Kravis breeds cashmere goats in the hills outside Florence; she uses the milk from these goats to make soap and skincare products. © 0577/738-633. [www.chianticashmere.com](http://www.chianticashmere.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Check it all out on the website and arrange your visit ahead of time—and while you're at it, coo at the darling Bolognese pups.

### *Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella*

Via della Scala 16.

This is by no means a new source or much of a secret, but it is a little hard to find and fits with the mood of most of the

other shops in this list. Entering the former convent, which looks like a museum, feels like a step back in time. The usual soaps and skin creams are sold in the front rooms; in the rear, a newly opened room features herbal cures. See the listing on p. 122 for more. © 055/216-276. [www.smnovella.it](http://www.smnovella.it).

### *Grevi*

Via della Spada 11–13r.

This centuries-old family business makes hats outside town and sells from a small shop in the heart of Florence. There are a wide variety of styles, with some exotics and many plain old useful items. The packable hat is good for travel. Expect to pay about 65€. © 055/264-139. [www.grevi.com](http://www.grevi.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 You'll find dates for trunk shows (called "fairs" on the website) at stores worldwide.

### *Lorenzo Villoresi*

Via dei Bardi 14.

This place is as hidden and private as they get, and you must telephone for an appointment at least a day in advance. Mr. Villoresi has a nose for some big-time scents, and he's created them for some big-time firms, but he will allow you a private workshop with him. It costs 250€ and takes as long as it takes because the two of you are creating your own fragrance from scratch. Heaven scent. © 055/234-1187.

## COMPARISON SHOPPING

Many designer big names keep coming to town to stake a share of the crowds; existing stores are constantly renovating. Best plan: Do your serious fashion shopping in other cities and save Florence for specialty goods, unique items, and retail experiences you simply can't get elsewhere. And keep in mind the following:

- Rome and Milan have more designer stores.
- Florence and the surrounding area are good destinations for buying under-\$10 gifts that don't look junky.

- Museums all have gift shops, most of which offer unique items at reasonable prices. Crowds may be thinner here, too.
- The Straw Market and the San Lorenzo market are both wonderful fun, but they have very, very similar merchandise—and, let's face it, it's mostly junky, touristy, and made in Asia. If your time is truly limited, choose one. It won't hurt you to miss them both. Foodies should pick San Lorenzo; in fact, I'd pick San Lorenzo no matter what.

## SHOPPING HOURS

Shops are basically closed Sunday and Monday, or at least on Monday until 3:30pm. In summer, they also close on Saturday afternoon at 1pm. Sunday, even in the morning, is now livelier than Monday morning, so don't stay home making false assumptions—get out there and shop.

Sunday hours for those stores that stay open are 10am to 4pm or 11am to 5pm. Outlets are open on Sunday but hours vary, so call for exact info and you can plan your schedule with finesse.

Nearby outlets may be closed Mondays until late afternoon. Don't venture out of town on a Monday without checking it out first.

Also note that the last Sunday of the month is a special day in retail, so more stores are open than on the first Sunday of the month (there's also a cute flea market that day); the suburban American-style shopping mall is open as well.

Markets always close for holidays but do not necessarily close for lunch. The San Lorenzo market and the Straw Market are both open 7 days a week, but Mondays are weak.

Food stores are open Monday morning. In winter, food stores are also open on Saturday afternoon but are closed on Wednesday afternoon. In June, the pattern switches, and the food stores close on Saturday afternoon and stay open on Wednesday afternoon.

Speaking of summer hours, everything except major tourist traps (TTs) is closed from mid-August through the rest of the month.

## SUNDAY SHOPPING

While Sunday isn't a big shopping day in most of Italy, if the weather is nice, or if the tourists are in season, you'd be surprised at just how much business goes on in Florence. Here's how you can spend your day:

The **Straw Market** (p. 140) has sellers who open up their carts, as do some at the **San Lorenzo** market (p. 139). A big bookstore, **Libreria Edison** (p. 123), stays open every Sunday. And many smaller shops in the central area of the city are open as well.

In town, there is action on the **Ponte Vecchio**. The usual shops are indeed shuttered, but on the walkway over the bridge, standing shoulder to shoulder on both sides of the walk, is an incredible array of vendors—from hippies with poorly made jewelry to real artisans with crafts pieces. Much of what you will see here is delightful junk—the exact kind of thing you want to see on a Sunday. But there are a few buys as well.

There's also a vast amount of Sunday shopping available in the so-called in-town factory outlets and TTs that stretch from the Duomo to Santa Croce. I think the single-best store for Sunday shopping (if you have to pick one) is **Ducci** (Lungarno Corsini 24r; [www.duccishop.com](http://www.duccishop.com)), a dressed-up version of a TT that's more like an art gallery.

But the real factory outlets—outside of town—are also open, usually in the afternoon only on Sundays. Some open at 2pm, others at 3pm, so check before you drive or hire a car service. Don't be surprised if there are lines out front before the outlets open. At **Prada**, you take a number, but the cafe is open before the shop, so you can either queue up or sip a coffee.

If you like upscale, tony shopping rather than touristy stuff, there's magnificent shopping in **Forte dei Marmi** on Sunday. For the uninitiated, Forte dei Marmi is sort of the

Palm Beach of Italy. It's a 1-hour drive from Florence; you can also take the bus.

Alternatively, you can go to **Montecatini**, where stores are also open; this is a town famous for its spa, but it is also adorable and real and very lush Italian. It's about an hour away and easily reached by train.

## SENDING IT HOME

If you don't feel like schlepping your purchases with you, a giant post office in the heart of town—right near the Straw Market—offers what's called Express Mail. Italian mail makes me nervous, though; you can use FedEx if you prefer or if cost is no object.

There are in-town branches of **Mail Boxes Etc.** ([www.mbe.com](http://www.mbe.com)) at Via della Scala 13r (☎ 055/268-173), Via San Gallo 26r (☎ 055/463-0418), and Corso dei Tintori 39 (☎ 055/246-6660). All do shipping, packing, money grams, and more. Hours vary by location, but most are open Monday through Friday from 9am to 1pm and 3:30 to 6:30pm.

On the Pitti side of the Ponte Vecchio, Via Barbadori is home to both a post office and the **Shipping Company** (at the corner of Via de Ramaglianti). Just out of curiosity, I priced the cost of sending six bottles of olive oil from Florence to San Antonio, Texas—the answer was 115€. The Shipping Company is open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 1pm and 3:30 to 7pm.

# Shopping Neighborhoods

**TORNABUONI** The Via dei Tornabuoni is the whoop-dee-doo, big-time street for the mainline tourist shopping of the gold-coast variety. This is where most of the big-name designers have their shops, and where the cute little specialty stores and leather-goods makers cluster. This is where you'll find everyone from **Gucci** (no. 73r) to the **Ferragamo** flagship

(no. 4–14r), as well as **Pomellato** (no. 83–91), **Roberto Cavalli** (no. 83), and **Max Mara** (no. 66–68r). If you have only an hour to shop, you'll want to stroll this street.

The Tornabuoni area begins (or ends) at the Piazza di San Trinità, which is a small plaza with a very tall, skinny obelisk. Although most of the hotsy-totsy names are right on Tornabuoni, some are on nearby side streets, especially on **Via della Vigna Nuova**, where you'll find **Furla** (no. 28r), **Baldini** (no. 32r), **Loro Piana** (no. 37r), **Brooks Brothers** (no. 51), and **Paolo Sacchi** (no. 5r) for antique books. The Via dei Tornabuoni itself leads easily into Via della Vigna Nuova, but don't think it ends there. Stay with the street as the numbers climb because **Profumeria Inglese** (no. 97r) is well past the thick of things, but it's a great place for perfumes and beauty supplies (assuming you are not going to France).

For big-name jewelers, also check out **Via degli Strozzi**, the connector between Tornabuoni and the Piazza della Repubblica. **Emporio Armani** (Piazza Strozzi 16r) and **Bottega Veneta** (Piazza Strozzi 6) are here, as well as the new **Cartier** (Via degli Strozzi 36r) in the historic Tornabuoni Corsi building. At the Piazza degli Antinori end of Tornabuoni, **Via de' Rondinelli** branches off and is home to sparklers **Swarovski** (no. 8) and **Richard Ginori** (no. 7), where I found many china patterns discounted 50%.

**EXCELSIOR/GRAND** This neighborhood, home to the Westin Excelsior and Grand hotels, backs up to Tornabuoni, where the famed hotels are located. Many good stores are actually on **Piazza Ognissanti**; the rest line **Borgo Ognissanti** until it hits Piazza Goldoni and becomes Via della Vigna Nuova. If all this sounds confusing, don't panic.

The neighborhoods are close to each other and could even be considered one neighborhood, which is why staying at either of these hotels makes good sense if you love shopping, want to walk, and need a luxury property.

**GRAND/MEDICI** You can walk from the luxury hotels at Borgo Ognissanti all the way to the Grand Hotel Villa Medici,

another luxury hotel only 2 blocks away. In doing so, you will pass several local resources and a discount shop as well as two major American car-rental agencies, Avis and Europcar (National).

If you want discount shopping, check out **One Price** (Borgo Ognissanti 74r), where the lamb's-wool sweaters come in dreamy colors and sell for about 20€—if you get lucky, of course (this is how you hit it shopping). I scored on my last trip at **Il Giglio** (Borgo Ognissanti 86r) with a pair of Tod's wannabes (mustardy suede!) for 39€.

**EXCELSIOR/GRAND ANTIQUES** There are two main antiques areas in Florence, one near the Pitti Palace and the other right beside the Excelsior/Grand area at **Piazza Ognissanti**. If you're facing the Excelsior Hotel (with the Grand Hotel to your rear, the Arno River to your right, and a church to your left) and start walking, you'll pass a small street called *Via del Porcellana*. From there, look across Borgo Ognissanti to **Fioretto Giampaolo** (no. 43r). Stop in, and then walk a block toward Tornabuoni until you get to the **Piazza Goldoni**.

At the **Piazza Goldoni**, you'll discover the **Via dei Fossi**, which is crammed with antiques dealers. In fact, the area between the two streets and including the **Via del Moro**, which runs next to the *Via dei Fossi*, is host to nearly two dozen dealers. Most of these stores sell larger pieces of furniture and medium-to-important antiques; there's not too much junk.

There are some businesses that are geared to the design trade without being in the antiques business. One Sunday each fall (ask your concierge for the exact day, as it varies from year to year), all the dealers in the area have open houses.

**ARNO ALLEY** The Arno is a river, not a neighborhood; the main street along each bank of the river changes its name every few blocks. On the Duomo side of the river, the portion of the street named **Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci**, which becomes **Lungarno Corsini**, is crammed with shops, hotels, and the famous Harry's Bar.

Some of these shops sell antiques; several of them sell statues and reproductions of major works; some sell shoes, clothes, and/or handbags; and one or two are just fancy TTs. **Note:** Several of these shops are open on Sunday.

**DUOMO CENTER** As in Milan, there is excellent shopping around the Duomo. Naturally, this is an older, more traditional area. Locals as well as tourists shop here. Because this area has gotten so built up and is filled with an overwhelming number of stores, I now divide it into directions.

There are stores around all four sides of the church (there's even shopping in the church, in a little museum store downstairs) and in the little side streets stretching from the church as well. This is where **Pegna** (Via della Studio 8) is located.

**CROSSTOWN** To me, Crosstown heads from the Duomo to the Arno and over the river (or vice versa). The main shopping street of this part of town is called **Via dei Calzaiuoli**, and it's directly behind the Duomo and runs right smack into the Uffizi. It is closed to street traffic, so pedestrians can wander freely from the Duomo to **Piazza della Signoria**, another large piazza filled with pigeons, postcards, incredible fountains and statues, visitors and locals, charm and glamour, and everything you think Florence should have. The new **Chanel** is located here (Piazza della Signoria 10). You can't rave about a neighborhood too much more than that, can you?

A second main shopping street, **Via Roma**, connects the Duomo and the Ponte Vecchio and runs past **Piazza della Repubblica**, where many traditional stores are located. This street runs parallel to the Via dei Calzaiuoli, and you could mistake it for the main shopping street of town unless you know better. The Savoy Hotel is on Via Roma.

Just before it reaches the Ponte Vecchio, the Via Roma becomes the **Via Por Santa Maria**.

### Shop Talk

Don't miss **Luisa Via Roma** (Via Roma 19–21r), which is sort of the local version of Barneys New York.

**DEEP TOWN** Streets that run from the Duomo in the direction of Santa Croce in the city center are chockablock with cute stores. The best ones are **Via del Corso** (which becomes Borgo Albizi) and **Via Tavolini**, which will change its name each block and runs exactly parallel to Via del Corso. Be sure to take some time to look at the old houses here and to smell the coffee. You'll find **Lush** (Via del Corso 23r) in this part of town; many of the branches of French stores are here, as are a few discounters.

**PONTE VECCHIO** If you keep walking a few hundred meters from the Piazza della Signoria right to the banks of the Arno River, you'll see the Ponte Vecchio. You'll zig to the right a few yards, and then walk left to get across the bridge. Or you can connect by continuing straight along Via Roma, which will change its name each block and become the Ponte Vecchio 3 blocks after you pass the Duomo. By my definition, the Ponte Vecchio neighborhood includes the bridge and the retailers on the Duomo side of the bridge. Once you cross the bridge, you're in another neighborhood: Pitti.

The Ponte Vecchio is a distinct area, however, because the entire bridge is populated by jewelry shops. With gold at an all-time high, most of these dealers are willing to negotiate on price, and will offer a hefty discount if you pay in cash. Sarah bought a classic 18k gold Fope necklace from **Carlo Piccini** (Ponte Vecchio 31r) for about two-thirds of what she'd pay in San Francisco. **Gioielleria Callai** (Ponte Vecchio 17) has a good selection of earrings, bracelets, and gold chains. For classic, heavy gold jewelry, go to **Soldi Oreficeria** (Ponte Vecchio 50r).

**OVER THE BRIDGE (PITTI & SANTO SPIRITO)** Once you cross over the Ponte Vecchio, you reach a different retailing climate. You are now on the Pitti side of the bridge. The stores are smaller but no less touristy; you get the feeling that real people also shop here. You can wander, discovering your own personal finds; you can stop and get the makings of a picnic or grab a slice of pizza. The shopping goes in two directions: toward the Pitti Palace or uptown along the Arno. (If your

back is to the Duomo, turn left along the Arno to head uptown.) Explore both areas, browsing the shops on **Via Guicciardini** and **Borgo San Jacopo**. On the latter street, I bought beautiful 17th-century lithos at **Bottega delle Stampe** (no. 56r) and well-priced decorative tassels at **Cafissi** (no. 47r). Take time to explore the small streets in between, including **Via Barbadori**, where you'll find a post office with ATM, a photo lab (**Studio Luce**, no. 18r), a small grocery store (**Primirie Market**, no. 34), and the **Shipping Company** (at the corner of Via de Ramaglianti).

If you are headed to the once-a-month flea market or looking for antiques shops and crafts vendors, the Santo Spirito neighborhood—actually part of Pitti—is where you want to be. Santo Spirito may not be on the tiny freebie maps handed out all over town, but it is truly convenient and easy to find: If you are standing in front of the Pitti with the Pitti behind you, walk straight for 1 block.

**Note:** If you're looking for **Lisa Corti**, formerly on Via Bardi at the end of the bridge, it has moved to the Piazza Ghiberti area (see below).

**SANTA CROCE & BERNINI BACK ALLEY** A sneeze behind the Piazza della Signoria is the Hotel Bernini Palace and the Borgo dei Greci, which leads to Santa Croce. Shoppers know this area mostly because of the famous Leather School (p. 136), located inside the Santa Croce church. It's nice to wander around this area because it feels a little off the beaten track and seems more natural than the parts of town where tourists swarm (yet this is still a major tourist area with many, many TTs). Face it—it's all tourist shops. There are also some cafes and pizza eats, more so-called leather factory outlets than you ever care to see in your lifetime, one or two fun antiques-cum-junk stores (the best kind), and a good bit of Sunday retail.

**PIAZZA Ghiberti & Piazza dei Ciompi** We went to this area to check out **Lisa Corti** (Piazza Ghiberti 33r), which happens to be across the street from **Cibrèo** (Via Andrea del Verrocchio 8r), one of the best restaurants in Florence. We also

found a Max Mara stock shop, **Lo Stock di Max** (Via Pietrapiana 15), around the corner.

A couple of blocks away, the **Piazza dei Ciompi** is home to lots of antiques and restoration shops and holds a flea/antiques market daily in the square (see “Antiques,” below). Walk back toward the river along **Borgo Allegri**, which has more antiques and jewelry shops; it offers a charming back-street shopping experience without tourists (until it ends at the famous Leather School).

## Florence Resources A to Z

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### ANTIQUES

As an antiques center, Florence gets pieces from the entire Tuscan area. The problem of fakes, which is so severe in Rome, is not as great here. Anyone can get taken—that’s well known—but the chances are lower in Florence than in Rome.

Please note that the laws defining what is and is not an antique are different in Italy than in many other countries, so items made from old wood or from older items may be classified as antiques even if they were made yesterday! The craft-people in the area are gifted at making repros that are so good you can’t tell how old they are.

- Antiques are available at a flea market at the **Piazza dei Ciompi**, but this is mainly fun grandmother’s-attic stuff. We’re talking car-boot or tag-sale quality here, but you may uncover a find every now and then (or absolutely nothing). Note that there are two parts to this market: the regulars, who are open every day in the center aisles in little huts, and the people who set up on tables in the open air on the last Sunday of each month.
- For more serious stuff, check out any of the following streets: Via Guicciardini, Via Maggio, Via dei Tornabuoni, Via della Vigna Nuova, Via del Porcellana, Borgo Santi Apostoli, Via dei Fossi, Via del Moro, Via di Santo Spirito,

or Via della Spada. There's a string of fun shops for everything from old postcards to 1950s jewelry on the Borgo San Jacopo right over the bridge. I happen to like Via dei Fossi for medium-range antiques—possibly affordable.

- Affordable antiques are best bought at flea markets that are regular events, most often held once a month. Better yet, they are best bought at markets that are out of town. Many locals like to go to **Viterbo**, a city about 45 minutes away, because it has a fairly decent Sunday flea market for antiques. Viterbo also gets a less touristy crowd. The best flea market in Florence proper is held at **Santo Spirito** on the second Sunday of every month.
- There's a flea market in **Pistoia**, a half-hour away, on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7am until early afternoon. Pistoia also has an antiques market on the second Sunday of the month and the Saturday before; head for the Via Ciliegiole. This market is covered and houses about 130 stalls. There is no market in July and August.
- There's a market in **Pisa** on the second Sunday of each month and the Saturday that precedes it. This market, which has about 150 dealers, is known for its furniture, which can be bought at a low price and then restored. The market is not held in July and August. It's located on Via XX Settembre.
- The town of **Siena** has a flea market on the third Sunday of each month. There are only about 60 dealers, but the market does get a lot of smalls (the trade term for small objets d'art) and locals selling off estate pieces, so buyers can hope to get lucky here. There's no market in August. Head for the Piazza del Mercato.
- The biggest (and best) antiques fair in Italy is held in **Arezzo**, about an hour south of Florence by train. It takes place the first Sunday of each month and the Saturday that precedes it. There are more than 600 dealers at this event, and it does not close in the summer months. Head to the Piazza Vasari and work the area to the Piazza San Francesco.

## BATH, BEAUTY & ERBORISTERIE

If you can help it, don't buy makeup in Florence—it's expensive, and the choices are pretty average. If you're desperate, go to department stores such as **Coin** or **La Rinascente**.

The following are not the kind of pharmacy you go to when you need an *aspirina*; rather, these pharmacies, herbalists, and beauty shops are a specialty of Florence—old-fashioned, fancy-dancy places where you can buy creams and goos and various homeopathic treatments as well as European brands and local homemade potions for all sorts of things. There are tons of these places in Florence. One or two will be all you need for great gifts and, possibly, dinner-table conversation.

### *Antica Officina del Farmacista*

Borgo la Croce 44r.

Alec Lobrano, European correspondent for *Gourmet* magazine, told us about the good Dr. Vranjes and how his shop had become the “in” scent destination for the local cognoscenti. His laboratorio is full of aromatherapy fragrances crafted from natural ingredients. You'll also find home, bath, and body products. © 055/241-748. [www.drvrnjes.it](http://www.drvrnjes.it).

### *Chianti Cashmere Company*

Radda in Chianti, midway between Florence and Siena.

Discover soap made from cashmere goats on a Tuscan farm. For more details, see the listing under “Local Heroes” (p. 109). © 0577/738-633. [www.chianticashmere.com](http://www.chianticashmere.com).

**WEB TIPS** 🐕 I don't know anything about Bolognese dogs, but they're adorable and available at Chianti Cashmere Company. How much is that doggie on the website?

### *De Herbore*

Via del Proconsolo 43r.

A local *erboristeria* and source for great-looking (and great-smelling) gift items and cures. This is on the way to Santa Croce. © 055/211-706.

*Erboristeria Palazzo Vecchio*

Via Vacchereccia 9r.

This is an herbalist, not a pharmacist—puh-lease! Buy hair tonic, bosom tonics, and much more here. It's right in the thick of the shopping in central downtown. The packaging is good and the opportunity for fun gifts is strong. © 055/239-6055.

*Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella*

Via della Scala 16r.

Yep. This is the one—the one you've read about in every American and English fashion and beauty magazine; the one where you buy the almond cream. At least, that's what I buy here. Go nuts. (Almonds are nuts, so go nuts.) Fabulous gift items, fabulous fun. It's located near the train station and downtown—go out of your way to get here. I had to ask three times just to find it; I was even stumped when I was standing outside the front door. Never mind—walk in! It looks unusual because it's a convent, not a storefront. All the more yummy. © 055/216-276. [www.smnovella.it](http://www.smnovella.it).

**BEST BETS** The Weekend Soap, for 9€, which breaks into three parts for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. A perfect gift.

*Lush*

Via del Corso 23r.

This is the British bath firm that makes an effort to produce its Italian products with local ingredients, so they are different from offerings in other Lush shops. While prices are hefty (about 6€ for a bath bomb), this is the only international division of Lush that custom-makes products from indigenous ingredients. © 055/210-265. [www.lush.com](http://www.lush.com).

**BEST BETS** I am addicted to the limoncello soap and shampoo, available only in Italy.

## BOOKS

### *ArtStore Mandragora*

Piazza del Duomo 50r.

This appears to be a museum shop but has a separate entrance from the museum next door. It offers mostly books—art books as well as guides and children's books—plus the usual souvenirs and gifts with an artistic bent. ☎ 055/292-559. [www.artstoremandragora.com](http://www.artstoremandragora.com).

### *BM Book Shop*

Borgo Ognissanti 4r.

This English-language bookshop, right smack in the heart of everything, specializes in American and British books; it's a great place to hang out and ask questions or touch base with the owners. It's located near the Westin Excelsior in a shopping district you will pass every day. ☎ 055/294-575. [www.bmbookshop.com](http://www.bmbookshop.com).

### *Libreria Edison*

Piazza della Repubblica 27r.

This is sort of the local version of Barnes & Noble. Although most of the books are in Italian, there are also foreign-language books, plus everything from postcards to CDs. It's open on Sunday from 10am to 1:30pm and 3:30 to 8pm. Other days of the week—including Monday—it's open nonstop from 9am to 8pm. ☎ 055/213-110. [www.libreriaedison.it](http://www.libreriaedison.it).

## BOUTIQUES

### *Casini*

Piazza Pitti 30–31r.

This is a three-part store: One part is leather goods, while the others are designer clothes—some of them made especially for the boutique.

The leather goods include shoes, handbags, briefcases, and accessories, but also the most extraordinary leather clothes for men and women. Prices are quite fair considering the quality and the ability to stitch butter into leather—under \$1,000 for a reversible jacket.

The owner is American and therefore everyone on hand speaks English and understands the American need to blend Italian style with real life. Custom work can be sent to you in the U.S. without duties—it will take about 2 weeks for your order to arrive. © 055/210-430. [www.casinifirenze.it/boutiques.asp](http://www.casinifirenze.it/boutiques.asp).

**BEST BETS** I saw a black leather doctor's bag for around 500€ that was killer chic and surely the same quality as Bottega Veneta. Women's shoes are available in large sizes (to U.S. 11); the ballerina slippers are well priced at 75€.

### *Flow*

Via Vecchietti.

Twenty-somethings will love this store, which should have a branch on Prince Street in Manhattan. Very SoHo-boho chic, the look includes separates and dresses for women, sportswear for guys, accessories (love the handbags), and shoes (good selection of ballet flats and sneakers). © 055/215-504. [www.flow-store.it](http://www.flow-store.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 There's an English-language link, but you need to be quick with the clicker in order to maneuver the scrolling site.

### *Luisa Via Roma*

Via Roma 19–21r.

It's one of the best stores in town—maybe the world—when it comes to fashion, style, whimsy, and the look we crave, but usually can't achieve or afford. © 055/217-826. [www.luisaviaroma.com](http://www.luisaviaroma.com).

*Mrs Macis*

Borgo Pinti 38r.

Just down the street from the new Four Seasons hotel, this boutique is the creation of a young designer who dyes her own fabrics and then transforms them into avant-garde clothing and accessories. Prints feature flowers, polka dots, stripes, and more. © 055/247-6700.

*Raspini*

Via Por Santa Maria 72r.

This firm owns several boutiques featuring designer brands. It carries some of the world's best-known labels—mostly Italian, but also some international makers. This is also a good resource for kids' wear. © 055/215-796. [www.raspini.com](http://www.raspini.com).

**Shop Talk**

Be sure to check out the vintage shop, **Raspini Vintage**, at Via Calimaruzza 17r.

**COOKING CLASSES***Cucina Toscana (Faith Heller Willinger)*

Every Wednesday, Faith Willinger, famous for her books and articles and importance in the world of Italian food and wine, gives private group “Lessons in Lunch” in her home in the heart of town near the Pitti Palace. You’ll start with a lesson in making the perfect espresso, followed by lunch and a few life lessons from Faith. Sometimes a guest chef makes an appearance.

I do not give her address because, after all, this is Faith’s home and the woman does deserve a little privacy. Once you have booked, you will get directions; her flat is in central Florence and easily reached from all parts of town. [www.faithwillinger.com](http://www.faithwillinger.com).

*Culinary Vacations, Inc.*

Chef John Wilson has a business that offers wine tastings and cooking tours; a 1-week package tour includes 5 nights' lodging, all meals and wine, and excursions. The price (without air) is about \$3,000 per person. ☎ 888/636-2073 in the U.S. [www.culinaryvacationsinc.com](http://www.culinaryvacationsinc.com).

*Villa San Michele School of Cookery*

Via Doccia 4, Fiesole.

That's not Michelle ma belle; it's "mick-ell-i," got it? This is one of the most famous, drop-dead-gorgeous villa hotels in the area. It conducts cooking classes along with lessons in the arts of entertaining, often taught by royalty. There are options for all skill levels, from children to epicures; most can be booked a day or two in advance. ☎ 055/567-8200. [www.villa-sanmichele.com](http://www.villa-sanmichele.com).

## DEPARTMENT STORES

*Coin*

Via dei Calzaiuoli 56r.

A small department store concentrating on ready-to-wear, Coin—pronounced "co-*een*"—exhibits a little of everything for men, women, and children. It's a good place to sniff out next season's fashion direction. Prices aren't at the bargain level, but they are moderate for Italy. The biggest news here is that the store has totally eliminated makeup and perfume; it now has only a MAC boutique on the ground floor right at the front door. **Remember:** When the elevator says t, you are at street level; s stands for second floor. ☎ 055/280-531. [www.coin.it](http://www.coin.it).

*La Rinascente*

Piazza Repubblica.

La Rina is right in the heart of town, obviously put there to compete with the lovely Coin. The store is moderately priced,

light, modern, fun to shop, and open on Sunday. It is not a great store, though, so don't be too disappointed. ☎ 055/219-113. [www.rinascente.it](http://www.rinascente.it).

## DESIGNER BOUTIQUES

### CONTINENTAL & U.K. BIG NAMES

#### *Burberry*

Via dei Tornabuoni 27r.

#### *Cartier*

Via degli Strozzi 36r.

#### *Chanel*

Piazza della Signoria 10.

#### *Escada*

Via degli Strozzi 32r.

#### *Hermès*

Piazza degli Antinori 6r.

#### *Louis Vuitton*

Piazza degli Strozzi 1.

### ITALIAN BIG NAMES

#### *Benetton*

Via Por Santa Maria 68r.

#### *Bottega Veneta*

Via degli Strozzi 6.

#### *Brioni*

Via de' Rondinelli 7r.

*Emilio Pucci*

Via dei Tornabuoni 20r.

*Emporio Armani*

Piazza degli Strozzi 16r.

*Ermenegildo Zegna*

Via dei Tornabuoni 3r.

*Etro*

Via della Vigna Nuova 50r.

*Fendi*

Via degli Strozzi 21r.

*Frette*

Via Cavour 2.

*Gianfranco Ferré*

Via della Vigna Nuova 2.

*Giorgio Armani*

Via dei Tornabuoni 48r.

*Gucci*

Via dei Tornabuoni 73r; Via Roma 32r.

*La Perla*

Via degli Strozzi 24r.

*Loro Piana*

Via della Vigna Nuova 37r.

***Marina Rinaldi***

Via Panzani 1.

***Max & Co.***

Via dei Calzaiuoli 89r.

***Max Mara***

Via dei Tornabuoni 66–70r.

***Miu Miu***

Via Roma 8.

***Prada***

Via dei Tornabuoni 53r (women), 67r (men).

***Pratesi***

Lungarno Corsini 32/34r–38/40r.

***Salvatore Ferragamo***

Via dei Tornabuoni 14r.

***Save the Queen***

Via dei Tornabuoni 49.

***Tod's***

Via dei Tornabuoni 103r.

***Valentino***

Via dei Tosinghi 52r.

***Versace***

Via dei Tornabuoni 13r.

## DISCOUNTERS & STOCK SHOPS

See “Outlets” (p. 142) for out-of-town factory outlets.

### *Il Giglio*

Via Borgo Ognissanti 64.

This is a stock shop, selling whatever it can get its hands on—and sometimes it’s fabulous. There’s usually a mix of shoes and clothes for men and women. You’ll see some handbags and accessories, but not that many. There is also a store in Prato at Viale del Serraglio 72 (☎ 0574/317-02).

On my last visit, the men’s clothing in the rear was exceptional, with designer sports jackets and suits in the 75€-to-150€ range. I thought I’d died and gone to heaven. ☎ 055/217-596.

**BEST BETS** I bought a pair of suede Tod’s wannabe driving shoes for 39€ here.

### *Mariposa Boutique*

Lungarno Corsini 18–20r.

This boutique stocks several Italian designers including Krizia, Ungaro, and Valentino. If you’re a Missoni fan, you can grab Missoni and Missoni Sport at 20% to 40% off. ☎ 055/284-259.

## FOODSTUFFS

### *Baroni Alimentari*

Mercato Centrale, Via Galluzzo.

The entire indoor Mercato Centrale is a fabulous source for foods, souvenirs, and memories. Of the many stalls, this is one of the more famous, specializing in 30-year-old cheeses that are not exported, designer olive oils, and much, much more. The staff speaks English. ☎ 055/289-576. [www.baroni.alimentari.it](http://www.baroni.alimentari.it).

### *Pegna*

Via dello Studio 8.

Oh boy, have I got a store for you. Despite the fact that this is a few feet from the Duomo, I needed a local friend to find it for me—it is hidden in plain sight and could be the most exciting stop in town (if you're a foodie, anyway). This old-fashioned grocery store sells everything, including English brands of cleaning products. There are foods to take home, foods for picnics, and even gift items of soaps and foodstuffs. Don't miss it. © 055/282-702. [www.pegna.it](http://www.pegna.it).

### *Toscanamia*

Via Guicciardini 57r.

I do know a TT when I see one, but am not above shopping at them, especially one as charming as this one. Although the store sells all sorts of souvenirs, its specialty is food souvenirs—pasta in fashion colors, shrink-wrapped risotto, oil and vinegar sets, excellent-quality chocolate (from Stainer), and more. This shop is right near the Pitti. © 055/239-9218.

## HOME STYLE & FABRICS

### *Antico Setificio Fiorentino*

Via Lorenzo Bartolini 4.

Within easy walking distance of the center of downtown, this factory is truly hidden in an industrial neighborhood, behind a high fence. Once through the gate, you will step back in time to the 18th century. The compound includes a private house, a factory (hear the hum of the shuttles?), and a showroom laden with fabric and ribbons. The showroom is organized by price and by type of silk and cotton: Prices are not low. To visit this factory is an experience all its own. If you don't intend to buy \$100-a-yard (or more) goods, don't worry—you can still afford a small bag of potpourri.

You may want your concierge to phone ahead, as you need an appointment; you may be asked to pay for the right to visit. © 055/213-861. [www.anticosetificiofiorentino.it](http://www.anticosetificiofiorentino.it).

*Arte Creta*

Via del Proconsolo 63r.

This tiny workshop and boutique is owned by Elisabetta di Costanzo, who designs fabulous ceramics, many with floral or fruit patterns. There are plates and bowls, pitchers and platters, desk accessories, and great gift items. © 055/284-341.

**BEST BETS** Maybe it's because Sarah lives in California, but she loves the poppy pattern.

*Ditta Luca Della Robbia*

Via del Proconsolo 19r, between Piazza della Signoria and Santa Croce.

This place is a little bit off the beaten path (though not enough to count) and is one of the best pottery shops in town. I dare you not to buy. It does shipping—although that may double the price of your goods. It carries plates, tiles, religious souvenirs, and more. © 055/283-532.

*Galleria Machiavelli*

Via Por Santa Maria 39r.

Despite the stupid name for a shop, this is one of the best resources in town for country wares and ceramics. It's located right in the center of downtown, so you can easily pop in. It ships. © 055/239-8586. [www.machiavelli.it](http://www.machiavelli.it).

*Lisa Corti Home Textile Emporium*

Piazza Ghiberti 33r.

Lisa Corti is from Milan and sells in the U.S. through Saks Fifth Avenue. Her shop in Milan is off the beaten path but wonderful; her textiles are also sold in Positano at Emporio Sirenuse, which is where I discovered this brand.

Corti designs fabrics in bright swirls of color with a southern Italian flair and feel. The store sells mostly home style, although there are some clothes and even pieces of pottery.

Because the goods are printed in India, some locals tend to dismiss this brand, which is silly. Very silly.

At the shop in Florence, it takes real patience in order to fully explore the merchandise, which is mostly put away. © 055/2001-860. [www.lisacorti.com](http://www.lisacorti.com).

**BEST BETS** The table linens, which begin at around 100€.

### *Passamaneria Toscana*

Piazza San Lorenzo 12r.

Maybe you don't plan your travels around your ability to find trim or tassels, but when you luck into a source that makes the best in the world, it's time to celebrate. You'll find pillowcases, embroideries, brocades, assorted trims, and fabrics—expensive, but chic. © 055/214-670. [www.passamaneriatoscana.com](http://www.passamaneriatoscana.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 The website's catalog is current in terms of inventory, but no prices are listed and you can't order online.

### *Passamaneria Valmar*

Via Porta Rossa 53r.

This shop is right in the heart of Florence; just look at your map for easy access to one of the best sources in town for tassels, tiebacks, trims, cushions, and more. © 055/284-493. [www.valmar-florence.com](http://www.valmar-florence.com).

### *Valli*

Via della Vigna Nuova 81r.

Plan to spend several hours in this store if you're looking for haute couture fabrics. There's a wide range of laces, embroideries, tulles and chiffons, silks in every color imaginable, linens, voiles and cottons, and wools with labels including Ermenegildo Zegna and Loro Piana. © 055/282-485.

#### **Shop Talk**

Valli is the source for Valentino, Ungaro, and Armani.

## JEWELRY

Make sure you seek out **Alessandro Dari**, described under “Local Heroes” (p. 109).

### *Angela Caputi*

Via di Santo Spirito 58r; Borgo Santi Apostoli 44–46r.

Caputi is famous for her look—sort of an ethnic big-and-bold statement made with enormous style. Prices are amazingly affordable; 100€ can buy you a stunning piece.

Caputi’s original shop is on the Pitti side of the river; the newer, larger shop is on the Trinità side and is right near a cute little hidden courtyard where an olive-oil dealer has a store. ☎ 055/212-972 (Spirito), ☎ 055/292-993 (Apostoli). [www.angelacaputi.com](http://www.angelacaputi.com).

**BEST BETS** Dynamite, creative costume jewelry, often made with bright-colored plastics and topped with inventive twists and turns.

### *Blue Spirit*

Via Cerretani 5r.

There’s an excellent selection of Nomination bracelets and charms at this traditional jewelry shop. ☎ 055/213-060.

## LEATHER GOODS

Also see “Shoes” (p. 147) and the listing for **Casini** (p. 123).

### *Desmo*

Via Matteotti 22b.

Desmo is one of my best Italian secrets for reasons of pride and pocketbook—excuse the double-entendre. It makes a top-of-the-line, high-quality, equal-to-the-best-of-them handbag at a less than top-of-the-line price. Years ago it made its name as a maker of leather clothing, shoes, and accessories, copying Bottega Veneta creations; now it has its own style and plenty of winners. Colors are always fashionable and up-to-date; the

prices are pretty good, too—few items in the house top 150€, and you can get much for considerably less. © 055/865-2311. [www.desmo.it](http://www.desmo.it).

### *Gherardini*

Via della Vigna Nuova 57r.

One of the biggest leather-goods names in Italy and Asia but little known otherwise, Gherardini offers a specific look in luggage, shoes for men and women, tote bags, belts, and accessories. I find its conservative designs drop-dead elegant with old-money style. The Florence location is in the heart of the central downtown shopping district. [www.gherardini.it](http://www.gherardini.it).

**BEST BETS** A printed canvas/vinyl line that is status-y as well as practical.

### *Il Bussetto*

Via Palazzuolo 136r.

Il Bussetto features leather desktop boxes, writing portfolios, and other objects unusual enough to bring home with pride. © 055/290-697. [www.ilbussettofirenze.com](http://www.ilbussettofirenze.com).

### *Madova Gloves*

Via Guicciardini 1r.

Gloves are back in style, so stock up. I'll take the yellow, cashmere-lined, butter-soft leather ones . . . or should I think pink? Maybe both? Unlined gloves are about 30€ and come in a million colors. There's everything here, from the kind of white kid gloves we used to wear in the 1960s to men's driving gloves to very ornately designed, superbly made, high-button gloves. © 055/239-6526. [www.madova.com](http://www.madova.com).

#### **Buyer Beware**

Merchants at the San Lorenzo market sell knockoffs of many Madova styles for about 50% less, but consider the quality: You get what you pay for.

### *Peruzzi*

Borgo dei Greci 8-20r.

One of the better-quality local leather shops, Peruzzi is well stocked with traditional styles of handbags, jackets, and accessories. © 055/238-2760. [www.peruzzispa.com](http://www.peruzzispa.com).

### *Roberta*

Borgo San Jacopo 74-78r; Via dei Banchi.

Great selection of gloves in many styles and colors, beginning at 19€ for an unlined wrist-length model. Roberta also carries other accessories, including ties and scarves. © 055/284-017. [www.robertafirenze.com](http://www.robertafirenze.com).

### *Scuola del Cuoio (Leather School)*

Via di San Giuseppe 5r (Piazza Santa Croce).

If you insist on shopping in one of the many leather factories in Florence, you may as well go to the best known—it's actually inside the Santa Croce church and is a leather school with a factory on the premises. Open Monday through Saturday year-round, plus Sundays from April 15 to November 15. You enter through the church, except on Sunday, when you enter through the garden. Be prepared for high prices: A Bottega-like woven leather wallet is 172€. © 055/244-533. [www.leatherschool.com](http://www.leatherschool.com).

## LINENS & LACE

### *Brunetto Pratesi*

Via Montalbano 41r, Pistoia.

Brunetto Pratesi founded the firm named after him; his grandson was my friend Athos Pratesi, who passed away a few years before my husband. Now the company is run by Athos's son, Federico. This is one of the last merchant-prince Italian manufacturing families. © 0573/526-462. [www.pratesi.com](http://www.pratesi.com).

### Shopping Adventure

See "Pistoia" (p. 153), under "Beyond Florence," for how to visit the Pratesi factory store, which is just a half-hour train ride from Florence.

### *Loretta Caponi*

Piazza degli Antinori 4r.

If you've ever dreamed of being either a Lady Who Lunches or a Lady Who Sleeps Late, this lingerie store is for you. Here you'll find the dreamiest silks in underwear, negligees, and more, as well as some cottons and table linens. This is what having money is all about. ☎ 055/211-074. [www.loretta-caponi.com](http://www.loretta-caponi.com).

### *Pratesi*

Lungarno Corsini 32/34r–38/40r.

This is a new shop, although old-timers who remember the old store will know this store is nearby. Business has been so great that Pratesi has expanded into the space next door, hence the two street numbers. Once you waltz inside, you'll know why business is booming and you'll swoon from wanting to touch, or snuggle up into, the gorgeous linens. There's nothing old-fashioned here: The store not only has the full line of Pratesi merchandise but also custom-makes whatever you need.

And for the tacky people who want to know the same things I do—yes, there are many (if not most) prints here that are not at the outlet. While the quality is the same, the selection in the store is larger and broader, and they will make anything you need in any size in any prints or fabrics you select.

There's also a beach line, a baby line, and a cashmere collection. Oh Athos, you did good, my friend. ☎ 055/289-488. [www.pratesi.com](http://www.pratesi.com).

## MARKETS

### *Mercato delle Cascine*

Piazzale Vittorio Veneto.

Held once a week, on Tuesdays only, this market is famous with locals because it serves them in the same way a department store might. I found the market fabulous from an academic standpoint, but not actually the kind of place with much to buy.

Granted, a lot of that depends on luck and taste, but I just didn't need new pots, pans, dishes, tires, or baby clothes. I was wildly interested in the heaps of designer handbags that must have been fake—the prices started at 5€. I liked the local fabrics, tablecloths, and dish towels; I loved the few food vendors. I did work my way through mounds of used clothes and linens in hopes of finding something I had to have. Sarah bought linen trousers and a cotton sweater for 10€ each.

The market opens at 7am; I got here at 9am and it was just getting going. The hordes had not yet arrived and the vendors were still setting up. Even if you arrive by 11am, you should be just fine. To get here, take a bus to the Jolly Hotel or stroll along the Arno—it's a bit of a walk from the center of town, considering that once you get to the market you are going to walk even more, but you can do it.

### *Mercato delle Pulci*

Piazza dei Ciompi.

This is the local flea market that sells everything from furniture to pictures, coins, and jewelry; it's great fun, especially if the weather is fair. It's held the last Sunday of each month. Meanwhile, every week from Tuesday through Saturday, the regular dealers in a small strip of stalls are open (not at all the same as the once-a-month affair); possibly not worth the trip.

The Sunday market is an all-day job beginning around 9am; the daily market closes for lunch and follows more

traditional business hours. To get here, walk out the back end of the Duomo onto Via dell' Oriuolo, pass the Piazza Salvemini, and hit Via del Popolo, which in 1 block takes you to the flea market. It's an easy walk. On Sunday, the nearby Standa is open, too.

### *San Lorenzo*

Piazza del Mercato Centrale.

I'm sad to report that a visit to San Lorenzo is much like a trip to Hong Kong. Insiders say that more than 80% of the merchandise for sale comes from Asia.

Nonetheless, the market is a popular shopping venue, and even if you go only for the ties (starting at 2.50€), well, it's worth the visit. But then, wait, the Central Market is part of the market itself, so you can go for the food, too. The market has a few pushcart dealers, and then several rows of stalls that lead around a bend. The stalls are very well organized; this is a legal fair, and stallholders pay taxes to the city. Many of the stalls give you shopping bags with their numbers printed on them. Now, there's class.

With the recent crackdown on phony merchandise, few of the pushcarts now sell imitations. Still, do not get so excited by the bargains that you don't cast an eagle eye over the goods. Look for defects; look for details. We've seen faux Nomination bracelets for 3€ that come with up to eight charms—but are they standard size? Can links be added? And we have yet to find a faux designer scarf here that really looks good enough to pass for its evil twin sister.

The market is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9am to 7pm. Closed Sunday and Monday. Most stall owners take plastic.

**BEST BETS** Don't miss **Roberto Ballerini**, stall no. 53. The owners' daughter, Tosca, who lives in the U.S., makes beautiful necklaces and pins from heavy wool felt in vibrant and contemporary colors. They're well priced at 6€ to 10€ each.

**Buyer Beware**

Signs posted throughout San Lorenzo warn (in English) that buyers of counterfeit goods will be subject to fines of 500€ to 10,000€.

*Straw Market*

Via Por Santa Maria.

The only good thing about the Straw Market is that it doesn't close during lunchtime. It's also within walking distance of the Ponte Vecchio, the Duomo, and all the other parts of Florence you want to see, so you can make your day's itinerary and get it all in. Locals call this market *Porcellino*, in honor of the boar statue that stands here.

We've been bored with this TT for years, but heard from a reader that it had improved and that she'd found great buys, so we went back—ugh! We saw far more overpriced junk and much more in the way of souvenirs than at the other markets. It also gets more crowded than the others. Still, it's maybe worth a visit, if only to fill a lunchtime void. The merchandise varies with the season, as it should. Good luck.

The market is open daily, from 9am to 5pm in winter, and from 9am to 7pm in summer. Closed tight on Sunday.

*Train Station*

Santa Maria Novella.

Technically speaking, the main train station is a train station and not a market. But it functions as a marketplace. There's a McDonald's, stores, and plenty of people and action. You'll find a good TT at the front of the tracks and a mall underneath, with an excellent—although often crowded—Internet cafe.

**MULTIPLES***H&M*

Via Por Santa Maria.

H&M is full of just-off-the-catwalk disposable fashion for ladies of all ages. Limited-edition designer lines come and go, but the prices stay low—most items are under 60€. ☎ 055/210-169. [www.hm.com](http://www.hm.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 There's lots of clutter on the website, and you may have trouble opening links. No online orders, alas.

### *Oviesse/OVS Industry*

Via Panzani 31.

While Oviesse is one of my favorite Italian brands, and I buy huge amounts there, my visit to the Florence store was so disappointing that if this were the first Oviesse I'd ever visited, I might shrug, go on my way, and never even tell you about this large chain of low-cost fashion.

There are five stores in Florence and one on the outskirts (the suburban branch is at CC I Gigli, listed on p. 150), but I'm writing about the one that is in the main tourist shopping zone, essentially a block from the train station. This location is so disorganized and jammed with merchandise that it's basically hard to find what's even there.

That said, Oviesse makes a great plus-size line as well as men's, women's, and junior clothes. The average linen dress costs 49€. This branch has a division of Limoni, a beauty supermarket that's not as good as Sephora, attached to the ground floor. Some Oviesse stores have Limoni branches and others do not. ☎ 055/239-8963. [www.oviesse.it](http://www.oviesse.it).

#### **Shop Talk**

While this location still bears the Oviesse name, new branches are called OVS Industry.

### *Zara*

Piazza della Repubblica 1; Via Calimala 17.

Zara took its time opening in Florence, as there were concerns that the local population would not take to the Spanish brand famous for designer looks at midrange prices. There's

now a second large branch, crammed with locals and visitors alike. While Zara does a wide variety of products, the two stores in Florence proper sell just men's and women's clothing. © 055/210-773. [www.zara.com](http://www.zara.com).

### Shop Talk

For a larger selection of Zara products as well as children's clothes, go to the suburban store at CC I Gigli (p. 150).

## OUTLETS

### *Barberino Designer Outlet*

Via Meucci, Barberino di Mugello.

Be still, my bargain-loving heart. This new mall just about had me reaching for the Epi gun. Handily located between Florence and Bologna (that means north of Florence), the mall is a giant village of cute proportions that sprawls on and on and will leave you (and your dog) panting. The parking lot alone is vast. Luckily, I was able to find one of the best Max Mara outlets I have ever visited. After that, breathless over the 40€ Marina Rinaldi quilted jacket that didn't fit me, I managed to shop every other major Italian and European designer.

When driving on the A1 from Florence, take the exit marked barberino di mugello. You may look around and think you're going in the wrong direction. Not so; just loop-de-loop and drive around in a big U. Then follow the outlet barberino signs. The mall keeps crazy hours: It's open Tuesday through Friday from 10am to 8pm, Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 9pm, but it's closed Mondays in February, March, April, May, October, and November, and open Mondays from 2 to 8pm in January, June, July, August, September, and December. © 055/842-161. [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it).

### *The Mall*

Via Europa 8, Leccio.

Take back your Leaning Tower of Pisa and also your pizza pie; in fact, leave me alone when it comes to landmarks, museums,

and even palaces and pizzas. Give me the bargains. Show me the designer stuff at a real price. Show me the Mall.

Truly named the Mall, this outlet mall is very chic and modern, stark and well designed, up to the standards of any Gucci store. Ignore the busloads of tourists who are pushing about you.

There are many shops—and new ones come on board each year. I have been given permission to list these names: Armani, Armani Jeans, Balenciaga, Bottega Veneta, Burberry, Emilio Pucci, Ermenegildo Zegna, Fendi, Gucci, Hogan, La Perla, Loro Piana, Marni, Salvatore Ferragamo, Sergio Rossi, Tod's, and Yohji Yamamoto. If that is not enough to get your inner engines revved up, nothing is.

The Mall is about a half-hour from the Prada outlet (see the listing for Space Outlet, below). It is right off the A1 in the Rome direction. It's a pleasant enough drive (once you get out of Florence); you will also pass the D&G outlet, which I now forego. Hotels sell tours to the Mall and the Prada outlet for about 30€; for information, call ☎ 338/862-3129 or e-mail [transfer@centroin.it](mailto:transfer@centroin.it).

It's open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 7pm. Sunday hours are in question, as I have several reliable sources with different information (call ahead). Closed on major holidays, which summer shoppers should note includes August 15. ☎ 055/865-7775. [www.themall.it](http://www.themall.it).

### *Malo (MAC)*

Via di Limite 164, Campi Bisenzio.

As soon as I gave away all my cashmeres because they gave me hot flashes, I discovered the Malo outlet, where I almost wept with contempt for the insults of middle age. I was forced to buy cashmeres for others, but did get some suede shoes for myself.

Many Americans are not familiar with the Malo brand because it has only a few stores in the U.S. This is one of the top Italian cashmere lines, and we are talking about sweaters that would retail from \$300 to \$600—on sale here for a pittance.

I could barely breathe, I was having so much fun. You could faint from the glory of all the colors, let alone the stunningly low prices. Two-ply cashmere sweaters were in the 75€ price range; four-ply were 115€. I don't know if I was there for a sale, or if this is the regular drill, but you take half off the price on the tag. Ask!

By the way, Malo does make a few other things besides sweaters. Years ago, my late husband bought the world's most chic bathing suit at a Malo store. I also saw hats and handbags, fabulous little suede slip-on shoes, and some fashions a la Donna Karan in cotton and silk. I was there in winter, so I would guess seasonal stuff turns up toward summer.

**Note:** The sign outside not only says MAC but also uses the same typeface as MAC Cosmetics, so it's confusing. Cope. This store is right at the edge of Florence, so you do not get on the autostrada unless you are coming from elsewhere. If you are driving, take the Firenze Nord exit off the A1; the outlet is next to the Autostrada church. Hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 3 to 6pm, Saturday from 9am to 1pm. © 055/873-171.

### *Nannini Factory Outlet*

Via Faentina 77.

Fans of these handbags and totes will want to find this outlet. Most of the stock is past-season, but the selection is good and prices are slashed 30% to 50%. © 055/463-9452. [www.nannini.it](http://www.nannini.it).

### *Space Outlet (I Pellettieri d'Italia)*

Località Levanella, SR 69, Montevarchi.

I have listed the official name of this factory, although everyone just calls this "the Prada outlet." Yes dear, you heard right.

Montevarchi is an industrial area outside of Arezzo. How far is Arezzo, you ask? Well, about an hour or so by train from Rome and Florence—it's mid-distance between the two, actually, and right on the main train line. It's about a half-hour drive from the Mall.

This situation is a little more formal, and you may feel like you are going to prison. You go behind wire and are given an ID number. The store is large and beautifully arranged and organized. There are other brands here besides Prada and Miu Miu (I found Helmut Lang), and there are shoes as well as sunglasses, clothes, handbags, totes, and so on. It's hit-or-miss, but worth the adventure if you are nearby.

Take the A1 south to the Valdarno exit and then follow signs for Montevarchi; look for the parking lot filled with luxury cars. Hours are Monday through Friday from 10am to 7pm, Saturday from 9:30am to 7pm, and Sunday from 2:30 to 7:30pm. The store now accepts credit cards. © 055/91-901.

## PAPER GOODS

Florentine papers are one of Florence's greatest contributions to bookbinding and gift-giving. There are two styles: marbled and block-printed. The marbled style is readily found in Venice; neither style is handily found in Milan or Rome.

Scads of stores in Florence sell paper goods; such items are even sold from souvenir stands, in markets, and at the train station. Prices are generally modest, although they can get up there with larger items.

### *Bottega Artigiana del Libro*

Lungarno Corsini 38–40r.

This small shop next to the Arno has beautiful things that can solve many a gift quandary. You'll see photo albums, blank books, and all sorts of other items. Note the business cards printed on the back of marbled paper swatches. © 055/289-488.

**BEST BETS** Gifts for under 15€. Small address books are in the 6€ range; pencils are stunning and inexpensive; picture frames range from 4€ to 12€. (These frames have plastic fronts, not glass.)

*Cartoleria Parione*

Via del Parione 10r.

A few years ago, I got a letter from a reader, a professional photographer, who was looking for marbled photo albums that she could use to show her work. She said she could find them in the U.S., but they cost about \$100, and could I find some in Italy for less? Well, it took me a year, but yes, Virginia, here you go—this store, which sells many of the usual paper goods, also has the photo albums. They come in various sizes, and prices begin at 20€! The store accepts fax orders and does shipping. It's located right in the heart of the Tornabuoni shopping district. © 055/215-684.

*Fantasie Fiorentine*

Borgo San Jacopo 50r.

The owner of this tiny shop in the Oltrarno district handcrafts everything she sells—intricate bookmarks, notebooks, frames, and gift wrap in classic Florentine designs. While you'll find items here similar to those in other shops, Fantasie Fiorentine's quality is far superior to most. This little gem is located next to the Hotel Lungarno.

*Giulio Giannini e Figlio*

Piazza Pitti 37r.

Known for the marbled type of Florentine paper, this shop has been in business for centuries. It makes bookplates, calling cards, and items for all other paper needs. Sarah picked up some block-print notebooks with leather ties for 15€ each. There are many good paper shops in Florence, but this is the single most famous. © 055/212-621. [www.giulioiannini.it](http://www.giulioiannini.it).

**BEST BETS** Several paper-wrapped pencils tied with a bow make a great gift; you can easily put together a beautiful 10€ package.

*Il Papiro*

Lungarno Acciaiuoli 112r.

This is the most commercially successful of the marbleized-paper stores, with branches all over Italy and in the U.S. © 055/264-5613. [www.ilpapirofirenze.it](http://www.ilpapirofirenze.it).

*Pineider*

Piazza della Signoria 13–14r.

Do you love to send handwritten notes in the mail? Thick formal notecards that smell of old money and inseparable style? At this flagship store, you'll find very conservative, old-time stationery as well as small leather goods. American designer Rebecca Moses has been recruited to expand the line into chic gift items. Prices are steep. This is a serious international status symbol. © 055/284-655. [www.pineider.com](http://www.pineider.com).

## PERFUME

*Profumeria Inglese*

Via dei Tornabuoni 97r.

The Profumeria Inglese is a temple to good taste, fine goods, and every imaginable brand, right in the heart of the shopping district. There are no bargains here. © 055/289-748. [www.profumeriainglese.it](http://www.profumeriainglese.it).

**Shopping Adventure**

While you're splurging anyway, consider booking a private workshop with the fragrance master **Lorenzo Villoresi**, described on p. 109 under "Local Heroes."

## SHOES

See "Leather Goods" (p. 134) for more shoe-shopping options.

*Mantelassi*

Piazza della Repubblica 25r.

If made-to-measure shoes are what you have in mind, step this way with your instep. Men and women can design their own, bring a shoe to be copied, or choose from the many styles on display. © 055/217-521.

### *Salvatore Ferragamo*

Via dei Tornabuoni 14–16r.

Yes, there are Ferragamo shops all over Italy and all over the world. But none of them comes close to the parent store in Florence, which is in a building erected in 1215, complete with vaulted ceilings, stained-glass windows, and enough ambience to make you bring out your camera. The shop has several connecting antechambers with an incredible selection of shoes, boots, and ready-to-wear . . . as well as a research library for designers and a playroom for kiddies.

#### **Shop Talk**

Upstairs is the Ferragamo museum, which is fab-u-lous. It is not open to the public every day, so call ahead to make an appointment. There is also a small museum gift shop with great merchandise, but very high prices. The postcards cost three times what they should. Save up for shoes instead.

Every January and July there's a clear-it-all-out sale, but I confess that I left brokenhearted last January (there is a limited selection for bigger feet). Clothing provided better deals than the shoes. The sale is held in the basement, which has an entrance at the side door; there are guards and usually lines to get in. © 055/292-123. [www.salvatoreferragamo.it](http://www.salvatoreferragamo.it).

### *Sergio Rossi*

Via dei Tornabuoni 35–37r.

Even though this brand is part of one of the French luxury conglomerates, it offers true Italian style in its high heels and luxe leathers. © 055/284-631. [www.sergiorossi.com](http://www.sergiorossi.com).

*Tanino Crisci*

Via dei Tornabuoni 43–45r.

Tanino Crisci is a big name in Italian shoes and leather goods with an international reputation, but there are not many stores in the U.S., so Americans may not be familiar with the brand. This is a chain of moderate to expensive shoes in sort of sporty, conservative styles. The product line includes men's and women's shoes, both dress and casual models, plus belts and small leather goods. It's a very specific look that is either your style or not—but it wears forever and gets better every year. Very preppy. The quality is well known; prices range from about 100€ to over 150€. © 055/214-692. [www.taninocrisci.it](http://www.taninocrisci.it).

**Shop & Save**

There's a Tanino Crisci outlet at Via Garibaldi 9, Casteggio, Pavia.

**VINTAGE**

While most Italian fashionistas aren't interested in second-hand clothing, when it's presented as "vintage," more and more are grasping the cast-off concept. Maybe it's the sluggish economy, or maybe it's the Hollywood craze for vintage Valentino and Chanel, but the trend has invaded Florence, which now has several good shopping ops. In addition, Florence hosts the biggest vintage fair in Italy; it's held in February and July at the Stazione Leopolda (© 055/246-6198).

*Boutique Nadine*

Lungarno degli Acciaiuoli 22r.

Step this way for vintage stock from the 1940s and 1950s, including Vuitton bags and trunks, Gucci and Pucci, and lots of costume jewelry. © 055/287-851. [www.boutiquenadine.it](http://www.boutiquenadine.it).

*Ceri Vintage*

Via dei Serragli 26r.

Collectors of prints, posters, and postcards will want to browse this shop, which also carries some luggage and dressy clothing. © 055/217-978.

*Elio Ferraro*

Via del Parione 47r.

Here's a top choice for vintage designer clothing by Chanel, Dior, Schiaparelli. There's also an eclectic mix of furniture from the 1950s and 1960s. © 055/290-425. [www.elioferraro.com](http://www.elioferraro.com).

## Beyond Florence

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**CC I GIGLI**

Huh? You are probably saying to yourself as you read this, whooooaaa, Suze. Gigli is a popular name, and I am now going to tell you about a mall.

If you have a car, you will want to know about this large suburban mall at Via San Quirico 165, in Campi Bisenzio, about 8km (5 miles) outside Florence and right off the highway from Florence toward the sea, near the Malo outlet (p. 143) and near the entrance to the autostrada. There's a branch of every big store you may want to shop—take special note of the good branches of **Oviesse** and **Zara**—plus a large supermarket called **PAM**.

CC, by the way, stands for Centro Commerciale, which is Italian for mall. You do not come here for charm; you come to load up on groceries or knock off your big-box shopping in record time . . . and eat at McDonald's. © 055/896-250. [www.igigli.it](http://www.igigli.it).

## Italy by Scooter

Here's your chance to whip around Italy on a bright-red Vespa. You can choose from several packages, ranging from a couple of days to a "Two Vespas and a Private Tuscan Villa" option, which includes accommodations in a 14th-century villa and two Vespas for a week. You can also opt for a longer itinerary and put your own group together. A van will accompany you to carry your shopping bags and luggage. © **0720/209-2017**. [www.italybyvespa.com](http://www.italybyvespa.com).

## SIENA

Siena is not very far from Florence, but it takes some advance planning should you decide to go, unless you have your trusty rental car and are totally free and independent. It's a very pleasant day trip, especially nice for a Monday morning, when most of the stores in Florence are closed, or a Wednesday morning, when the market is in full thrall. (Beware—it's mobbed, so arrive early to find a parking spot.)

There are prepackaged day trips just to Siena or to Siena and medieval San Gimignano, which is not a shopping town but rather one of those incredible hilltop villages. Do note that if you buy a tour, you will pay about 40€ per person for the day trip, whereas if you do it all by yourself, it will cost less than 15€.

The train ride, which is free if you have a rail pass, is very long—over 2 hours—and often involves changing trains. It's a better use of your time to pay an additional 12€ round-trip and buy a bus ticket via SITA; the *corse rapide* to Siena, which is direct, takes 1 hour and 20 minutes. It drops you on the edge of town, next to the market and within walking distance of everything. There is basically a bus at least every hour, with more buses running during peak travel times, often every 15 minutes or so.

The **SITA station**, Via Santa Caterina da Siena 15 (© 055/214-721), is about a block from the Santa Maria Novella train station in Florence. A sign outdoors directs you to where to buy tickets (*biglietteria*); there's an information booth outside the ticket area. After you buy your tickets, you then must find out which lane your bus will be loading from; there is a large sign high up on the wall near the ticket office.

If you take the bus, it may make local stops as you approach Siena. Don't panic: Your stop is the end of the line, San Domenico church. When you get off the bus, note the public bathrooms (very clean, pay toilets) and the tourist information office, which sells a map of the city. If you are standing with your back to the church facing the tourist information office, you'll see that there are two streets to your right. One bears off slightly, and the other turns more dramatically and goes down.

If you are doing this on a Monday morning, most of the stores in downtown Siena will be closed. However, if you take the low road, you'll see many touristy stores that are open, even on Monday. While some open at 9am, many more will open at 11am. In fact, the best time to be in Siena is on a Monday morning between 9 and 11am because you'll have it almost to yourself and you'll still get to go shopping.

The main shopping street is **Via Banchi di Sopra**, which leads right to the Campo and then goes up the hill as the **Via di Città**. Take this to the Duomo (well marked) and then follow the signs back down and up the Via della Sapienza, which will bring you back to the bus stop at San Domenico.

**Via della Sapienza** has a good number of wine (this is chianti country) and tourist shops, especially close to the bus stop, that remain open during lunchtime, too.

As you approach the **Campo**, you'll notice various alleys that lead into the square. Some have steps; others are ramps for horses. Each entryway seems to be named for a saint. Many of the alleyways that lead from the shopping street to the Campo are filled with booths or touristy stands. There are more free-standing booths on the Campo itself.

The Campo is surrounded by shops, many of which specialize in pottery, hand-painted in dusty shades and following centuries-old patterns. Some of them are even branches of other stores you will find up the hill, closer to the Duomo.

The best shops are clustered up the **Via di Città**, close to the Duomo—you will automatically pass them as you walk around and up.

## PISTOIA

Okay, okay, so you weren't planning on a side trip to Pistoia, which is about a half-hour from Florence by train. In fact, you've never even heard of it and perhaps think you can survive without it. Wrong.

Pistoia is an adorable little gem worth visiting on its own and doubly worth visiting since it is the home of the **Brunetto Pratesi** factory. At the factory, there is a little shop that sells—you guessed it—seconds. If you show your copy of this book, or say you are a friend of the family, you will be allowed to shop there.

Pratesi, as you probably know, is a family business that makes sheets for the royalty of Europe and the movie stars of Hollywood. They are sticklers for perfection: A computer counts the number of stitches in each quilt. If there are five stitches too many, the quilt is a reject! What do they do with this poor, unfortunate, deformed quilt? It will never see the light of day in Beverly Hills, Manhattan, Palm Beach, or even Rome. No, because it has all of five stitches too many, it will be considered a reject, a defect, a second. It will be sold, at a fraction of its *wholesale* price, in the company shop. It's your lucky day.

The store is in the factory, a low-lying modern building, located at Via Montalbano 41r (© 0573/526-462). It is set off the street on your left as you come off the highway, and distinguished only by the discreet signs that say *brunetto pratesi*. Not to worry—because it's the most famous factory in the area, everyone knows where it is. Show the printed address to anyone at a nearby gas station or inn, and you will get directions. Don't be intimidated; it's not that hard.

If all this truly makes you nervous, ask your concierge to call ahead and get very specific directions for you: He or she can even arrange a person for you to call in case you get lost.

Like all factory outlets, the store sells what it has; you may be lucky or you may not. Last time I was here, the showroom was filled with quilts, nightgowns, and gift items, but low on matched sets. There were blanket covers in various sizes, but you could not put together a whole queen-size bed set. The one total set I priced was no bargain.

The price on an item varies depending on the defect; some items are visibly damaged, some are not. Prices are essentially half of what you would pay at regular retail—a blanket cover that retails for 600€ costs 270€ here. If you were expecting giveaway prices, think twice. Then look at the beach totes for 15€ and faint from their chic and your need to own everything in the line.

Pratesi is one of the leading linen makers in the world, and its goods compete with Porthault as the most sought-after by the rich and famous. Considering the quality, these are bargain prices. Do note, however, that Pratesi has sales once a year, in January, at its stores in Italy (and twice a year in some other cities around the world). In January in Italy, the prices are marked down 30% off retail, and you have the whole store to choose from.

Factory-store hours are Monday from 2 to 7pm, Tuesday through Friday from 9am to noon and 2 to 7pm, Saturday from 9am to 1pm, and Sunday from 3 to 7pm.

The scenery on the way to Pistoia is not gorgeous, but you drive on a highway (the A11), so you don't need to worry about getting lost on winding country roads. You can also go by rail—get the train to Pistoia at Florence's Santa Maria Novella station. From the Pistoia station, you can catch a taxi to the Pratesi factory; ask the driver to wait for you.

## PRATO

Prato is almost a suburb of Florence—it's just on the other side of Pistoia or about a half-hour from Florence. It's not on

the tourist bill because it is a mostly industrial town and is the home of many fabric mills and *garmento* makers. For those looking for deals and jobbers, this could be your kind of place.

My basic off-pricer here is **Lo Scorpione**, Viale della Repubblica 278 (© 0574/572-608), a jobber offering designer clothing at 50% off regular retail. Yes, big names in sportswear and men's suits.

## FORTE DEI MARMI

This is a small beach town, west of Florence on the, uh, coast. It's about an hour from Florence, yet a million miles away in that it is a chic little perfect town with wonderful shopping. Stores are open on Sundays; the crowd is old money. There is a small branch of the **Santa Maria Novella** pharmacy at Via Carducci 59 (© 0584/898-73). In fact, all the big stores are on Via Carducci.

## LUCCA

The good news: Lucca is worth the trouble. The bad news: This is another one of those towns with restricted vehicular traffic, so you have to park outside the walls and walk. Or rent a bike. Lucca is a small town, though, so you can easily prowl all over by foot. It's a well-known food town, so you can buy oil and balsamic, but it's also enough of a real-people town that you can enjoy the local **UPIM**. The main shopping street is **Via Fillungo**, and you'll find more boutiques (and shoe shops) on **Via Vittorio Veneto** (off Piazza San Michele) and **Via Santa Croce**.

Lucca is also home to a couple of good markets. The **antiques market** is held on the third weekend of the month, while the **crafts market** is on the fourth weekend. Every Wednesday and Saturday, the **City Market** sells clothing, antiques, food, and electronics; it's like a giant car-boot sale. Finally, the **Lucca Comics & Games** fair takes place once a year, drawing fans from all over the world (© 0583/485-22; [www.luccacomicsandgames.com](http://www.luccacomicsandgames.com)).

## Parla Italiano?

We all know the basics—*saldi* (sale), *lo prendo* (I'll take it), *prendete carte di credito?* (do you take credit cards?)—but if you want to expand your Italian skills, Lucca's the perfect place. You can stay in a delightful Tuscan village and still be a quick hop from the Mediterranean, Pisa, Florence, and Siena.

The language schools in the area offer a variety of programs, themes, intensity levels, and prices. For individual instruction, try **Languages in Action** ([www.languagesinaction.com](http://www.languagesinaction.com)), which will arrange homestays as well as short-term courses. The **Koinè Center** (☎ 0583/493-040) offers a *Pane, Vino e Lingua* 2-week program combining morning language classes with afternoon cooking lessons and culinary excursions to vineyards and wineries.

## DERUTA

This is in Umbria, not Tuscany, and is a bit of a drive—a little over 2 hours from Florence—but worth it if you are a ceramics freak. The entire town is store after store next to workshop and studio selling nothing but faience, which some locals also call *majolica*.

Among the most famous of the artisans here is Carol LeWitt, an American, who makes large decorative pieces for **Fratelli Mari**, Viale Circonvallazione Nord 1 (☎ 075/971-0400). Her work is also sold in the U.S. through a firm she owns called *Ceramica*, which has six stores.

Most stores in Deruta will ship. Be sure to check out **Via Tiberina** and **Via Mancini** for some great shops.

When you arrive in Deruta, note that there are two shopping parts: the city center, which is the medieval old town, and the lower-city strip centers on the highway approaching town. It's easier to walk from place to place in the upper city.

## Searching for (Black) Gold

We all agree that a perfect handbag is the ultimate find, but if you're visiting Umbria, you may want to search for something different: truffles! With **Love Umbria Tours**, you can join a truffle hunter and his dogs for a couple hours in the morning and then return to his village to enjoy lunch, prepared with the truffles you've found. Depending on the season, you'll search for black or white truffles. For more information, go to [www.love-umbria.com/custom-tours.html](http://www.love-umbria.com/custom-tours.html).

In the northern Piedmont area, contact Natale Romagnolo at **La Casa del Trifulau** (☎ **347/299-1832**). He will take you hunting with his dogs, Birba and Diana, in the local woods outside nearby Costiglione.

## *Chapter Five*

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# *Venice*

## Welcome to Venice

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Venice and shopping are made for each other; you're going to have the time of your life—even in the crowded high season. In winter, the city can be a little chilly and damp, but the town is yours, and you will more than fill your senses—and your shopping bags. Bellini, please. Oh Signor!

Prices here are higher than in other towns; this is not the city for bargains or for fulfilling your dreams of designer clothes. Of course, you can find designer clothes, but you will pay dearly for them. Venice is better for local artisans who will stun you with their creativity. A new generation of young designers is using traditional techniques to make jewelry and accessories with contemporary flair. Venice continues to reinvent itself.

## Arriving in Venice

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### **BY PLANE**

Although the Venice airport is a tad inconvenient, it's not that difficult to use. The airport makes European flight connections a breeze and lands you at the edge of the lagoon.

Note that if you take a water taxi between Marco Polo International Airport and Venice proper, it will cost about 64€. I take the public water bus for 6.50€. It's crowded but not a problem. Just follow signs from the terminal to the pier.

An ability to handle your luggage will make the difference in whether or not you are in a good mood when you arrive at your hotel. If possible, travel with just one rolling suitcase.

## BY TRAIN

Do learn how to read an Italian rail schedule, and allow yourself plenty of time for the asking of many, many questions. I once found an intercity train (fast train) on my timetable that appeared perfect—it was outbound from Venice and was stopping in Milan but was marked for Geneva. There was no way I could have known that was my train merely from reading the board in the station. If I'd taken the train marked milano, I would have wasted 2 hours.

Upon arrival at Venezia Centrale, if you have heavy bags, you'll want to avoid the tiered steps at the front of the station. As you're making your way (and pulling your bags) toward the front exit, walk to the far left side of the terminal as soon as you're off the train platform. There's a ramp just outside the station building. There are no trolleys!

You have two transportation choices to get from the train station to your hotel: water taxi or water bus (vaporetto). The water-taxi stand is located in front of the station to the left (near the ramp) as you exit. Go straight to the official stand and ignore the illegal hawkers who will try to lure you into their boats. It's important to agree on the fare before you get into the taxi; it should be 60€ to 70€ to most locations. From the station to our hotel at San Zaccaria, we paid 70€ total: 65€ to the pier and an extra 5€ to have our bags carried to the hotel, a 3-minute walk. For the return trip, we had our bags waiting at the pier and we were charged 65€. The vaporetto stop is also directly in front of the station; for information on the vaporetto, see p. 161.

Upon departure from Venice, we were very excited to find a uniformed and official-looking porter with a little luggage truck. He charged 5€ per bag (!! ) but promised that they would be loaded onto the luggage racks in our train car. Ha. Our porter first tried to put us on the wrong train, then shrugged and handed us and our suitcases off to another genius. He knew zippo. We couldn't find a train to Bologna listed anywhere on the big digital board in the station, so after verifying the train number on our tickets, we schlepped our heavy suitcases and boarded a train with the right number, departing at the right time, and prayed. Yes, we arrived in Bologna on schedule, but that was a sorry waste of euros.

On another trip, when we were driving across Italy, we left the car in Florence at the hotel where we had stayed. We took the train to Venice and back with just our overnight rolly-rollers and the dogs. This was far easier than worrying about luggage left in the trunk of the car or schlepping all that baggage with us. You can also do this from Verona or Padua, which are even closer to Venice. (Verona is 1 hr. from Venice; Padua is 30 min. from Venice.)

## BY BUS

If you are staying in Mestre or Treviso or in the 'burbs, you can take the bus or train into town. The buses do not run that frequently and can be more confusing than you'd like to think.

## BY CAR

Believe it or not, I have driven to Venice. Or, to be more precise, as close to Venice as one can get in a car.

Because I would be leaving my car—with luggage and shopping trophies—in a parking lot for a few days, I decided to leave it at the Venice airport rather than in a parking lot in Mestre, as I thought the airport offered more security and easier connections into Venice.

It was a tad confusing and time-consuming, but it worked fine—patience pays off, I kept telling myself—and a 3-night stay in Venice cost me only 20€ total in parking. Since it costs

the same per day in the lots in Mestre, I thought this was worth the trouble.

There was no shuttle bus from the parking lot to the air terminal or to the pier, so I had to roll myself and the bag and the dog some distance. Of course, I was able to leave most of my stuff locked in the car, so this was actually easy. The terminal and adjacent lots were undergoing work, so perhaps the situation will be different when you visit.

## BY SHIP

Venice has been a favored cruise destination for, uh, centuries. The number of people who have come to Venice by ship has increased enormously in the last 10 years: Some one million people a year are expected, just from cruises.

Ships disembark at VTP (Venezia Terminal Passeggeri), which is being renovated to handle the mob scene. The terminal has access for both ferries and cruise ships, and each area is color coordinated so that passengers can easily find the right check-in zones. For details, you can always call ☎ 041/240-3000 or check out [www.vtp.it](http://www.vtp.it).

# Getting Around

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The best way to explore Venice—and the best value—is by vaporetto (water bus). You'll pay 6.50€ for a 1-hour, one-direction ticket. It's the most reasonable approach to local transportation and you'll see all the sights as you glide along the water. The water buses go around town in two different directions: one via the Grand Canal, the other via the Adriatic to San Marco. There are additional routes to various islands and specialty destinations. If you get on (or off) the water bus at the train station, you are at Ferrovia; the bus station is Piazzale Roma. The lines (and routes) are clearly marked; some lines offer express service with fewer stops. The ACTV runs the vaporetto system; you can get a schedule at the Centro Informazioni ACTV at Piazzale Roma.

**Web Tips**

A new online reservations system at **[www.veniceconnected.it](http://www.veniceconnected.it)** lets you buy public-transportation passes as well as tickets to museums and other attractions. Discounts are given for some purchases made 7 days in advance. There's an English-language link on the site.

You should buy tickets before you board. You can also buy a pass for a timed interval—12 hours for 16€, 24 hours for 18€, 36 hours for 23€, and so on—that is good for your entire stay. You're allowed one piece of luggage per person on the water bus. Ha.

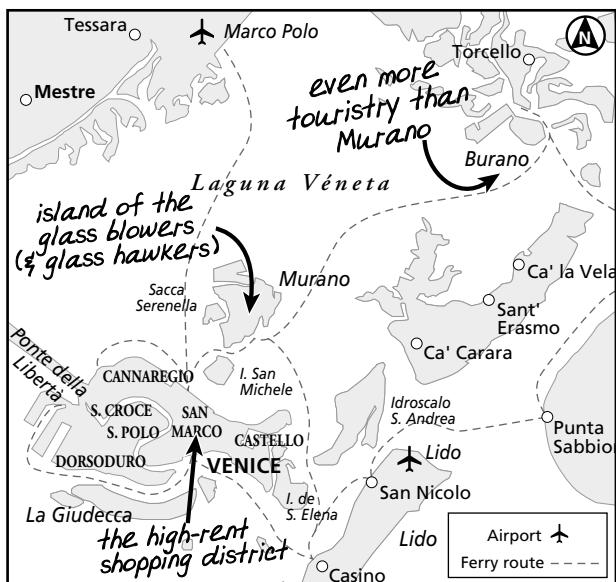
The water bus may be a little confusing at first, since there are different little floating stations for the different lines—read the destinations listed. Buy your ticket accordingly and give it to the ticket taker when he comes around to ask for it. Sometimes he doesn't ask. Dogs do not need tickets.

## The Venice Card

For a stay of several days, you may want to purchase a Venice Card, available in two colors, for 1, 3, or 7 days. The **Venice Card Blu** offers unlimited transportation on water buses and auto buses. It also provides free use of public toilets (not a perk, believe me; instead go the nearest hotel and politely find the facilities), free admission to the Casino di Venezia, discounts at some shops and restaurants, and limited medical insurance and legal assistance. In addition, you'll get a parking discount at the Tronchetto Parking Garage. The **Venice Card Orange** includes all of the above, plus free admission to Venice municipal museums and historic churches.

The Venice Card is sold in two versions: **Senior**, for those over 30, and **Junior**, for ages 5 to 29. Prices range from 18€ to 119€, depending on color, age, and duration. If you're between the ages of 14 and 29, you can buy a 3-day **Rolling Venice Card** for 18€. For more information and to order discounted cards online, log on to [www.venicecard.com](http://www.venicecard.com).

# Venice Orientation



Then walk. Get lost. Enjoy it. Take the vaporetto (*vaporetti* is plural). And yes, take a ride in a gondola at least once in your life.

## ABOUT PORTERS

The key to smooth sailing, in all senses of the word, is to pack lightly and know that you can check baggage at the stations—even overnight or over many nights. In these days of international terrorism, it's not easy to find somewhere to leave unaccompanied baggage.

Some hotels will arrange to meet you and will handle luggage for you; many hotels have their own boats to take you back and forth from the airport. Put your Vuitton right here, madame. Fax or e-mail your hotel in advance of your trip to arrange to be met. You'll pay for the service, but it may make your trip a lot more pleasant.

### About Addresses

No city in Italy has a more screwy system for writing addresses; they are virtually impossible to decipher or to use because there is one address for mail and another for the actual building. My advice? Forget addresses. Walk, enjoy.

If you must get to a specific resource and haven't found it using your general lost-and-found, search-and-shop technique, ask your hotel's concierge to mark it for you on a map. Also take business cards that have maps on them so that you can get back to a specific place.

## Sleeping in Venice

My best money-saving trick? Don't sleep in Venice. Come in for a day trip instead. Padua is only 40km (25 miles) from Venice, an easy commute; Verona is about an hour away (see chapter 8).

For something like Carnevale, where you want to be part of the action and then get out as fast as you can before you have a screaming breakdown (some 250,000 people jam San Marco each day during Carnevale), this is an ideal ploy. Even Milan is a reasonable place to spend the night during Carnevale.

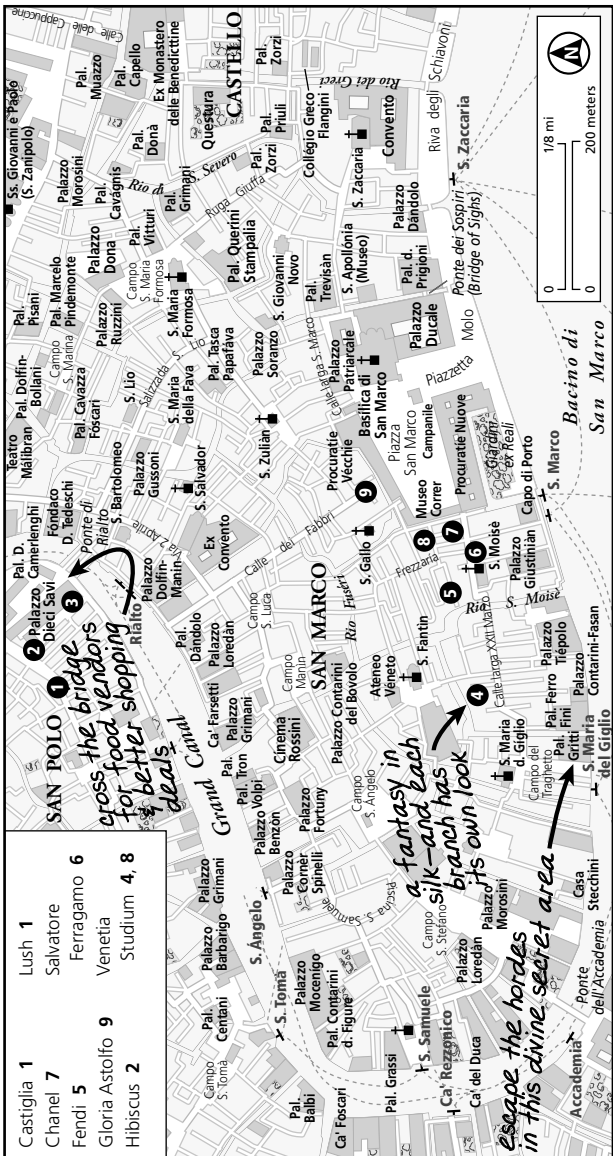
But since you've probably come to stay for a night or two or three, then just about any hotel will do. Some happen to be a little more magical than others. In Venice, you really pay for location. Since I tend to be here for only a short period of time and since every moment is precious to me, I splurge on accommodations.

### *Hotel Bisanzio*

Calle della Pietà, Castello 3651 (ACTV: San Zaccaria).

This is one of the best finds of my career, a hotel I return to again and again and one that makes me feel smarter just for knowing it and telling you about it. It's set back from Riva

## Central Venice



degli Schiavoni, but it's brilliantly located and charming and real and funky and affordable. There's free Wi-Fi and air-conditioning, too. It's actually a Best Western hotel with only 40 units; some rooms have balconies and courtyard views. © 041/520-3100. [www.bisanzio.com](http://www.bisanzio.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Check the website for Internet-only deals: We found a special rate of about 165€ (and no extra charge for the dogs).

### *Luna Hotel Baglioni*

San Marco 1243 (ACTV: San Marco).

This is one of my top picks thanks to the combination of location, luxury, and price. On my last trip to Italy, I stayed mostly in Baglioni hotels, so I was able to do one-stop shopping for room reservations.

Located right off San Marco, on the fanciest little retail alley in town, the Luna is an old villa transformed into a palace hotel. Even if you're not staying here, try to stop by for lunch at Canova, where the specialty is local seafood.

It's not inexpensive; expect to pay 400€ to 600€ in season, lower in winter. This hotel is a member of Leading Hotels of the World (© 800/745-8883 in the U.S.; [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)). © 041/528-9840. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

## SARAH'S THREE-STAR FIND

### *Hotel Ala*

San Marco 2494 (ACTV: San Giglio).

Sarah found this place, and I was mightily impressed with it. A member of the Best Western group, the recently remodeled hotel is just a few feet away from the Gritti Palace. While its style is less formal than the Gritti's, the place is still filled with antiques, beautifully painted walls, high ceilings, and Venetian charm. Rooms start at 170€. "Ala be praised," I said with delight. © 041/520-8333. [www.hotelala.it](http://www.hotelala.it).

# Snack & Shop

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## *Al Covo*

Campiello della Pescaria, Castello (ACTV: Arsenale).

Okay, so this isn't on your ordinary list of legends and landmarks, but it's part of mine because Diane is from Texas and comes to me through my official foodie friends. Also note that this is on the list of the 10 best restaurants in Italy.

Diane's husband has retired from chef duties but still oversees the restaurant, which is on the far side of the Danieli, far enough away from the tourists to be pure and family-oriented. The food is fabulous (try Diane's *torta nonna*, served in winter months), and you will get the special treatment you crave from a great team. There's a prix-fixe dinner menu for 47€, which may be the best deal in Venice, and the new lunch menu offers quicker fare—including a burger, the “Mac-Covo.” ☎ 041/52-23-812.

### **Shop Talk**

On the back of your menu, you'll see an order form for food-stuffs. You can take away olive oil, balsamic vinegar, pasta, and polenta. Ask Diane for details; also ask if you can stay in their guest cottage.

## *Met Restaurant*

Metropole Hotel, Riva degli Schiavoni, Castello 4149 (ACTV: San Zaccaria).

As we walked from the Hotel Bisanzio toward the canal on Calle de la Pietà, we stumbled upon this gem. We were starving (as always) and saw a sign at the entrance to the garden restaurant of the Metropole Hotel offering a pasta lunch for 18€. It was so good, we returned the following day for a repeat performance. The setting is quiet and tranquil, and the restaurant makes a perfect escape from the crowds and madness of San Marco, a 5-minute walk away. The main entrance

to the hotel is on the Riva degli Schiavoni, but you can walk right into the Met Restaurant from the side street. A find. © 041/524-0034. [www.hotelmetropole.com](http://www.hotelmetropole.com).

## The Shopping Scene

Please understand the most basic law of shopping in Venice: Because of transportation, essentially everything is imported. That translates to higher prices than anywhere else in Italy. It means you'll pay top dollar for a Coca-Cola or a pair of Italian designer shoes. Also, this isn't really a city for designer shopping, although you can buy most everything here.

Your best buys will always be locally made souvenir items, which are quite moderately priced. Also note that the tourist junk here is far more attractive than in any other major Italian city.

There's also more than the usual number of hidden resources because this is the kind of town where the best stuff is definitely put away. Ask.

### THE BEST BUYS IN VENICE

I have been known to go nuts for glass, handbags, paper goods, and local crafts—all can be best buys in Venice. More important: Even if you've seen these items for less money elsewhere, they offer good value as items bought in Venice to be remembered as such and cherished. You don't want to buy your Carnevale mask in Rome just because you might get it cheaper, do you? Marbleized paper goods cost less in Florence, but only slightly less.

**EYEGLOSS FRAMES** Have your prescription put in back at home, but don't miss the chance to buy chic and/or exotic frames in Venice. Note that there are scads of factories in the Veneto nearby, so you can also go discount shopping for glasses frames if you have a car and the time.

**GLASS** Murano is the glass capital of Italy, and Venice is the front door to the glass candy store. Even when it's expensive, glass usually costs less here than if bought in the U.S. Also in the glass category are mirrors and chandeliers. Art glass, a sub category, is very expensive but more readily available than in any other city. If you buy, be sure you spring for shipping and insurance and know what to do if anything goes wrong. You do not want to hand-carry a one-of-a-kind glass masterpiece, no matter how stable you think your hands are. As for souvenirs and gift items, try Murano glass jewelry (rings, earrings, and necklaces) at prices beginning as low as 5€. We also bought wine bottle stoppers and magnifying glasses.

#### **Buyer Beware**

Much of the glass now comes from Poland and China. Do you care?

**MASKS** Carnevale has its own rituals, mask-wearing among them. The city now sells scads of masks in every format, from cheap plastic ones to incredibly crafted versions made of leathers or feathers. For the best ones, get to the back streets and alleys and away from the TTs (tourist traps).

**SILK** When you see the incredibly pleated, teeny-tiny Fortuny silk baggies for jewelry or potpourri for 30€ at Venetia Studium, you'll know why Marco Polo came home. If you don't want a little baggie, don't pout—just get a look at the silk or velvet flowers to pin on your suit or dress. We also found perfectly good silk ties for 13€ in several shops, but those same ties were between 3€ and 5€ in Florence.

## **THE WORST BUYS IN VENICE**

If you can help it, don't buy the following:

- **Clothing:** Not a good buy in Venice, unless you need it or hit a sale or bargain.

- **Designer items:** Hermès is more expensive in Venice than in Milan. But wait, to be fair, I must say that not all designers raise prices. The Tod's I bought here were the same price as in other cities. I just finally broke down and admitted I couldn't live without them when I got to Venice.
- **Fake designer handbags:** Give me a break.

## BUYING VENETIAN GLASS

What a muddle this is—buyer beware. Unless you are buying important art glass, the products you are fondling in Venice were probably not made in Italy. Look to the designs made from the early 1920s right through the 1950s—all highly collectible works of art when they are signed by a big-name glass house. Even post-1950s glass is collectible: What you buy today will be happily inherited by your children.

The strings of glass swirled into clear, white, or colored glass are called threads; the value of a piece—aside from the signature—is based on the composition of form, color, and threads or patterns. The way the piece reflects light should also be taken into account, although this is easy to look for in a vase and impossible to consider in a piece of candy. Smoked glass is hot now, as is Deco glass and glass matted with ash. Crizzled glass is crickly-crackled glass with a nice effect, but it won't last over the centuries and makes a bad investment.

The important names to remember are **Venini, Seguso, Brandolini, Poli, Barovier, Toso, and Pauly**. A vase from the 1940s went for \$125,000 at auction at Christie's in Geneva; prices continue to rise. New pieces are not inexpensive, as they are considered serious artwork.

Famous designers create styles for glass houses, just as they do for furniture firms. The designer's name associated with a famous glass house can make a piece even more valuable. Do check for signatures, labels, or accompanying materials that uphold the provenance of your piece. If you are buying older pieces of glass—even from the 1950s or so—check the condition carefully.

I must take some time here to warn you about the hawkers who offer free trips to Murano and act as guides. They are dangerous, emotionally and physically, and should be avoided. They not only get a percentage of what you buy, but they also make their living by preying off visitors and telling half-truths or lies that may convince you to buy something you weren't certain about.

If you want the free boat ride, ask your hotel's concierge to book it. If you can afford to get there on your own, do so, and buy only from the houses of good repute. If you ship, be prepared to wait a very, very long time.

### **Buyer Beware**

I got a note from a reader who asked a glass shop about a specific address in Murano and was wrongly told that the shop had closed and was encouraged to do business where she was asking. They lied to her.

## **THE SAN MARCO RULE OF SHOPPING**

If you are looking for the best prices on the average tourist items—from souvenirs to snacks—my rule is simple: Avoid San Marco.

San Marco is the center of the tourist universe and, therefore, the center of the highest prices. The farther you go from San Marco, the more the prices drop. Shop on the island where the train station is or way back away from tourists.

## **THE GONDOLIERS**

I don't care how touristy you think it is—riding in a gondola is part of the Venetian experience and something you must do at least once. And please note that Venice now has female gondoliers.

While you can be hustled by a gondolier, know that there are fixed prices for their services that vary by season. When there aren't as many rich tourists around, prices can drop. The winter price may be 75€; the spring price for the same

service is 80€, but you can try to bargain. Night service, any time of the year, is 100€ beginning at 7pm. These are the prices for 40 minutes of sailing time with up to six persons in the boat. For each additional 20-minute period after your first 50 minutes, the flat rate is 40€ during the day, 50€ at night. You are also expected to tip.

Here's where they really get you—it's the time, not the cash. Gondoliers usually do 30 to 35 minutes, not the 40 minutes you paid for. They also want far more than the guidelines say they should get; they are particularly unfriendly when there are lots of tourists around. Their idea of a great fare is a chump who says yes to the quoted price—and then lays a tip on top.

The gondolier will sing to you—it's part of the deal—but if you ask him to stop the boat en route so that you can get out for a look-see while he waits, or to provide extra services (other than posing in your family snapshot), he will expect more money.

All things are negotiable, but try to have a handle on costs before you get in—nothing spoils the magic more than a fight about money after the fact.

### **Insider's Tip**

Take your gondola ride at high tide—at low tide, you'll have a view of the scummy exposed sides of the canals.

## **SHOPPING HOURS**

High season is March through October, when shops are open from 9am until 12:30 or 1pm and reopen from about 3 or 3:30pm to 7:30pm. If lunchtime closings bore you, remember that the shops on the nearby island of Murano do not close.

During the off season, most Venice shops are closed on Monday until 3pm. During Carnevale, the 10-day party that runs up until Ash Wednesday, many things are open no matter what time of the day or day of the week. For Sunday shopping tips, see below.

While Venice does have the most liberal of all the holiday hours, stores do close up early on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Some stores are actually open on New Year's Day—but late in the day, after noon. If there are tourists, some stores will be open.

## SUNDAY SHOPPING

*Si, si*, just about all the stores—including designer boutiques—are open on Sundays. Emporio Armani, Trussardi, Versace, and the like are open on Sunday afternoons. Just about everyone is open on Sundays—but closed on Mondays. They may or may not open Monday later in the afternoon, but Sunday is a day of shopping in Venice.

Note that if you plan to buy with cash on Sunday, some shopkeepers won't be able to make change. We had to make an ATM run and dig in our wallets for coins. ATMs are available all over town; there are two next to Tod's on Via XXII Marzo and more on Campo San Bartolomeo and Campo San Salvador, both near the Rialto Bridge.

Sunday is also a good day to visit the islands; shops are open on both Murano and Burano. Check with your hotel's concierge for exact opening and closing times, but plan a day trip to Murano as early as you like—the fires are crackling at 9am, and shops are open nonstop until 4 or 5pm. On Burano, Sunday hours tend to be from 10am to 1:30pm.

Also note that stores stay open on Sundays in Verona—a popular Sunday destination for Italians. See chapter 8.

## STREET VENDORS

One of the glories of Venice is the street action—not just the throngs of tourists but the zillions of street vendors who make it possible for you to do very thorough shopping in Venice without ever setting foot inside a store.

The street vendors stay open until the light begins to fade, which in the height of summer can be quite late. There are illegal salespeople hawking wares from blankets all over town. Louis Vuitton, anyone? Cartier, perhaps? Ray-Bans?

“This is real Chanel, lady,” a vendor tells me with pride. Yeah, sure it is. We saw lots of warning signs, right next to the vendors’ blankets, claiming bad bag business.

Like other retailers, street vendors and cart dealers rig their prices to the needs of the crowd. Therefore, the farther you walk from San Marco, the better the prices at kiosks and carts.

I priced a “Bottega” bag just to do my job; I really wasn’t going to buy it, I swear. The asking price went from 125€ to 20€ just because I kept saying no. I never did buy it, but I admit I was shocked at how low the vendor would go. “I give you liquidation, lady,” he kept shouting at me.

## FAIRS & MERCATINI

San Moisè is the location of many outdoor fairs, from antiques markets to the regular Christmas market. Vendors set up booths and sell from 9am to 8pm.

## SENDING IT HOME

Anyone seriously considering glass, or mirrors, or chandeliers is also thinking about shipping. Almost all the stores, even the TTs, will volunteer to ship for you. I am not big on shipping, especially expensive items, but I have noticed that things shipped from Venice do tend to reach their destination—eventually. I have had several nervous letters from readers who have waited many months in a state of panic. My basic advice is simple: Don’t fall in love with anything you cannot carry yourself. Always buy from a reputable dealer, and pay with a credit card that has a protection plan on it.

# Shopping Neighborhoods

Most of the shops are found in the historic and artistic center, between the **Ponte di Rialto** (Rialto Bridge) and **Piazza San Marco**. Another area of mostly designer shops is located at **San Moisè**, across from the Hotel Bauer.

Looking at a map can be very confusing because of the cobweb of interconnecting streets, bridges, and canals. Finding an address can be equally difficult, as many streets and shops show no numbers—or the numbers are clear, but the street they are on is not clear.

**MERCERIE** One main street will carry you from Piazza San Marco to the Rialto Bridge: Mercerie. It hosts hundreds of shops. Many of the shopping streets branch off this one thoroughfare, or are very close. Mercerie is not a water-bus stop (San Marco is), but if you get yourself to Piazza San Marco and stand at the clock tower with your back to the water, Mercerie will be the little street jutting off the arcade right in front of you. If you still can't find it, walk into any shop and ask. You need not speak Italian.

**PIAZZA SAN MARCO** The four rows of arcades that frame Piazza San Marco can be considered a neighborhood unto itself. Three of the arcades create a U shape around the square; the fourth is at a right angle to one of the ends of the U. There are easily a hundred shops here—a few are showrooms for glass firms and a few sell touristy knickknacks, but most are jewelry or glass shops (or cafes). Although many of these shops have been in business for years, and some of them have extremely famous names, this is the high-rent part of Venice and isn't very funky. I was quite shocked at the high turnover I noticed on my last visit: Many old firms have packed up.

**BEHIND SAN MARCO** Now, here's the tricky part. "Behind San Marco" is my name for the area that includes **San Moisè** and **San Giglio** (this way to the Hotel Bauer) and is best represented by the big-time shopping drag called **Via XXII Marzo**. This street comes off Piazza San Marco from behind and forms an L with the square and Mercerie, and is where you'll find **Tod's**, **Sermoneta**, and **Venetia Studium**.

**FREZZERIA** This is the main shopping street also behind San Marco, but, if your back is to San Marco and you're facing the road to the Hotel Bauer and American Express, it goes off to your right. It's a small alley of a street that twists and

turns more than most, and it's packed with small businesses, many of which are artisan or crafts shops. There are also some designer boutiques woven into the landscape.

**GIGLIO** This is a secret part of town tucked back and away from the tourist areas. It's also the home of the **Gritti Palace** and **Hotel Ala**. Unless a shop is actually on the piazza, it probably will have a San Moisè address, so you may get confused. Not to worry. Aside from the antiques shops, there's a good paper store and a little market for food for the train ride or a picnic. It's very civilized and quite divine back here.

**RIALTO BRIDGE** They might just as well have named it the "Retailo" Bridge—not only are there pushcarts and vendors in the walkway before the bridge, but there are also shops going all the way up and down the bridge itself. These are not like the crumbling, charming old shops that line the Ponte Vecchio in Florence; they are teeny-bopper shops, leather-goods stores, and even sporting-goods outfitters. Despite the huge number of street vendors from Piazza San Marco to Campo San Zaccaria, the ones here sell things I've never seen before. Most of it is touristy junk, but Sarah found a beautiful magnifying glass with a Murano glass handle at **Rivoaltus** (San Polo 11, Rialto Bridge). Similar products are available elsewhere.

**OVER THE BRIDGE** Once across the Rialto, you'll hit a two-pronged trading area. In the arcades behind the street vendors to the left are established shops; in the streets and to your right are greengrocers, food vendors, cheese stalls, and, in summer, little men selling little pieces of melon. You can have a walking feast for lunch in any season.

Remember the shopper's basic rule once you cross over to the other side: Prices are usually lower on the far side of the Rialto. Once you make it past the immediate arcades, bear left and follow the shops and crowds toward **San Polo**. The shops here are a little more of the real-people nature and a little less expensive. We love **Serena Vianello** (Campo San Aponal 1226) for hats and accessories, as well as **Castiglia** (San Polo 2102) and **Hibiscus** (San Polo 1060) for clothing with an ethnic flair.

## SHOPPING MURANO

Two different experiences are to be had here on the island of glass blowers—so watch out, and don't blame me if you hate it. It can be very touristy or very special—it depends on how you organize your time, as well as what season you visit. Go by vaporetto in high season, and it can be a zoo. Instead, go by private boat, tour a glass factory, wander town, and then take the vaporetto back: It's easy, it's inexpensive, and it's fun. Depending on the weather, the crowds, and your appetite for colored glass, it can even be glorious.

Sunday on Murano can be heaven. Take the no. 5 at San Zaccaria, in front of the Danieli. The visit to Murano can be combined with a trip to Burano (take the no. 12), or you can turn around and come back home. It's a long day if you combine both islands.

Murano is also the perfect lunchtime adventure when stores in Venice might be closed. But do not bring small children or strollers with you.

If you want to take a private boat to the island, call one of the glass factories to come get you. Yes, you are obligated to tour the factory, but you aren't obligated to buy. Besides, the tour is fabulous. It's a perfect Sunday adventure: Sunday is a big day on Murano because they cannot close down the furnaces, as the temperature must stay constant, but the workers don't work. Expect demonstrations and tours.

If you go by public transportation, you will arrive in the heart of Murano. When you get off the boat at Murano, you'll know it by the giant signs that say *fornace* (furnace). You have two choices, really: to work the area, or to realize quickly that this is one of the biggest tourist traps known to humankind. Walk briskly toward the museum, and then head for the lighthouse.

By the way, you can also get a free ride to the island by private boat if you go with a hawker, but you *don't* want to do this! He gets 30% of what you spend in a secret kickback, and you get a lot of pressure to buy (see "Buying Venetian Glass," earlier in this chapter). If you can take the heat, you

will be escorted to the *fornace*. But it may be hell, so beware! Hawkers will automatically gravitate to you; you need not even look for them. It's better to ask your hotel's concierge to contact someone from a proper factory for you.

On Sundays, most showrooms, such as those listed below (and their adjoining shops), are open from 9am to 4pm. TTs are open midday.

- **Archimidi Seguso** (Fondamenta Serenella, Murano)
- **Barovier & Toso** (Fondamenta Vetrai 28, Murano)
- **Manin 56** (Fondamenta Manin 56, Murano)
- **Sent** (Fondamenta Serenella, Murano): Not to be confused with Marina e Susanna Sent, who are family members but have their own jewelry shop in San Marco (p. 181).

For good, traditional showrooms that have it all, try the resources below. To find these shops, walk from the main drag toward the lighthouse, and you'll wander into a far less touristy world and a hidden street (**Viale Garibaldi**) of more glass blowers and shops. Once at the lighthouse, round the turn following the water (there's a sidewalk) to find several more glass showrooms, which have boat service and will pick you up at your hotel in town and return you when you are ready to go back.

### *Colonna Fornace*

Fondamenta Vetrai 10–11, Murano.

This is a huge firm that picks you up at your hotel and lets you tour its scads of rooms of stuff. I don't mean to give this place short shrift, as I have enjoyed hours of shopping here, but at a certain point, it can be confused with several other competitors (although this one is the first you come to on some approaches).

### *Vetreria Foscari*

Fondamenta dei Battuti 5, Murano.

I asked the concierge at the Bauer-Grünwald to pick a source for me, curious to see what he would suggest, and was pleased

to find that this was his choice. They sent a boat for me and picked me up at my hotel, then returned me there when I was ready to go home. I even got a Coke along the way. A true delight. I keep going back, even though the source has passed on to another family member, and I don't always stay at the Bauer anymore.

The showroom is made up of a series of salons, organized by category of goods and by price. One room is devoted to chandeliers, other rooms to glassware. You'll also find beads and just about anything else you can imagine. To arrange a pickup, call at least a day in advance. © 041/739-540.

## Venice Resources A to Z

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### ANTIQUES

The few antiques shops in Venice are charming and dear and sweet and—should I tell you, or can you guess?—outrageously expensive.

But wait, should you luck into the **Mercatino dell' Antiquariato**, held each April, September, and the week before Christmas, you'll have the giggle of your lifetime. This market is not large, but it's sweet and simple and the kind I like: heaps of stuff on tables laid out in a piazza, the very convenient Campo San Maurizio. The dates are established well in advance and set for each year, so you can call for the exact times (© 041/454-176). This 3-day event is held on a Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; there is no admission charge.

### BATH & BEAUTY

#### *Coin Beauty*

Campo San Luca.

A free-standing store that's trying to be the local version of Sephora; it's also the beauty department of the department store of the same name, which is several blocks away and has no other beauty department in its regular store. This is not at

all a great store nor does it even have a great selection of brands, but if you need something, it is one of the few places to find it. I suffered a nail crisis and turned the town upside down until I found nail-polish remover, glue, and nail polish. © 041/523-8444.

### *Lush*

San Polo 89 (Ponte di Rialto, San Polo side); Strada Nuova, Cannaregio 3822 (Santa Felice).

The British cult fave for deli-style cosmetics, bath bombs, and more. The location right near the Rialto Bridge is most convenient for travelers. The goodies are not inexpensive, but they offer high novelty. © 041/522-1549 (San Polo), © 041/241-1200 (Cannaregio). [www.lush.com](http://www.lush.com).

**BEST BETS** The products that are specifically Italian—and differ from what's on hand in Lush stores in other countries. I love the limoncello soap and shampoo.

## BEADS & BAUBLES

### *Accessorize*

San Marco 4044.

We loved everything we saw in these U.K. import shops scattered across Italy. The jewelry and handbags are trendy, colorful, and inexpensive. © 041/724-1113. [www.accessorize.it](http://www.accessorize.it).

**BEST BETS** Sarah's new 10€ "diamond" eternity ring looks great next to the real one Tom gave her for their anniversary.

### *Genninger Studio*

Calle del Traghetto (Piazza Contarini-Michel, near Ca'Rezzonico Museum), Dorsoduro 2793a.

Talk about living out your best dreams: Leslie Ann Genninger is American, lives in Venice, makes beads, and sells them from a fabulous little shop where you can buy either ready-made jewelry or individual beads. The beads are made according to medieval (and secret) recipes but are inlaid with silver, which sparkles

through. To get here, take vaporetto no. 1 to Ca'Rezzonico, turn right, and *voilà*—it's on the corner. © 041/522-5565. [www.genningerstudio.com](http://www.genningerstudio.com).

### *Gloria Astolfo*

San Marco 1581.

I first discovered Gloria Astolfo in another location—now she is working with her daughter and making even more wonderful things. Note the new address if you are a regular.

Local glass beads are made into jewelry here, but the style is based on the use of tiny beads and charms and fantasy bijoux. You'll pay about 200€ for a heavily beaded necklace. There are also handbags most useful for evening because of the beaded clasps. © 041/520-6827. [www.gloriastolfo.com](http://www.gloriastolfo.com).

**BEST BETS** I got a pair of earrings with an antique feel for 48€; Sarah got a pin for 112€. We now consider ourselves stunning.

### *Le Perle*

San Marco 1231; San Marco 706.

Le Perle offers new-wave jewelry using the same old glass and beads in totally different ways, so that what you see is very moderne, or trendy, in style. Look for collars of golden glass beads, ropes of charms hanging from gold chains, and more. © 041/528-5614. [www.le-perle.com](http://www.le-perle.com).

### *Marina e Susanna Sent*

Ponte San Moisè, San Marco 2090; Dorsoduro 669.

Each piece in this innovative jewelry line is handcrafted in the Murano studios of sisters Susanna and Marina Sent. Descended from generations of Venetian glassmakers, these gals put a contemporary twist on their designs, which are different from anything else you'll find in Venice. They mix materials including wood, coral, paper, and rubber with modern glass to create stunningly unique pieces. © 041/520-4014 (San Marco), © 041/520-8136 (Dorsoduro). [www.marinaesusannasent.com](http://www.marinaesusannasent.com).

**BEST BETS** I went crazy over the soap-bubble-inspired necklaces and earrings.

### *Perle e Dintorni*

Calle della Mandola 3740, San Marco.

Although it does sell its own jewelry designs, this is a great source for do-it-yourselfers. Murano glass, Chinese ceramic, and African bone beads are sold individually. © 041/520-5068. [www.perle-e-dintorni.it](http://www.perle-e-dintorni.it).

### *Rialta Bijoux*

Sottoportici de Rialto 56.

We were tempted by the gorgeous semiprecious stone earrings in this shop. Some dangled, some were clusters, and all were beautiful; they were in the 60€ price range. © 041/528-5710.

**BEST BETS** Why didn't I go back for those cascading blue-topaz stunners for 62€?

## BOUTIQUES

### *Araba Fenice*

Calle dei Barcaroli, San Marco 1822.

This beautiful shop, located near La Fenice theater, is a good alternative to the designer boutiques nearby. The elegant high-end clothing, in natural linens and wools, is made exclusively for Araba Fenice. © 041/522-0664.

### *Arbor*

Gran Viale Santa Maria Elisabetta 10, Lido.

There are several branches of this boutique on the big island as well as this one at the Lido beach. Arbor carries the hot names, such as Byblos and Genny. The men's shop sells the stylish Italian look that thin men love to wear. © 041/526-1032.

*Castiglia*

San Polo 2102.

Great linen separates in neutral colors; often in drapery, tenting styles—think Armani meets CP Shades plus Eileen Fisher. Around the 150€ range, but these are classic clothes to wear everywhere. © 041/522-3372.

*Hibiscus*

Calle de l'Ogio, San Polo 1060.

Sarah found this place a few years ago; it is nothing like the designer-laden stores that make up the rest of the listings in this section. Instead, it's a small, well-bought boutique that goes for a funky boho look. © 041/520-8989.

**BEST BETS** There are some designer T-shirts, but I went for the raw-silk shirts that are cut wide and have good drape and are priced at 100€ each.

*Margerie*

Campiello della Feltrina, San Marco 2511b.

Tucked away in a corner campiello off the San Marco tourist track, Margerie is the brainchild of Margherita, the young artisan and designer of all the goodies inside. She'll show you her quirky leather and fabric bags with metal studs, padded felt and gingham pins, big chunky flower necklaces, and more. © 041/5236-393. [www.margerie.it](http://www.margerie.it).

**BEST BETS** I bought flower pins for 30€ here.

*Serena Vianello*

Campo Sant' Aponal, San Polo 1226.

Serena Vianello is a former jewelry designer who expanded her line to include adorable, well-priced accessories, most made from hand-screened silks, velvets, and linens. You'll find jackets, scarves, handbags, shoes, and millinery, all available in many colors. Custom work is available, too. © 041/533-3351. [www.serenavianello.com](http://www.serenavianello.com).

## CRAFTS

### *La Bottega dei Mascareri*

Ponte di Rialto, San Polo 80; Calle dei Saoneri, San Polo 2720.

This shop offers papier-mâché masks that are a notch above the average fare. One branch is located at the foot of the Rialto. ☎ 041/522-3857 (Rialto), ☎ 041/524-2887 (Calle dei Saoneri). [www.mascarer.com](http://www.mascarer.com).

### *La Venexiana*

Ponte Canonica, Castello 4322; Frezzeria, San Marco 1135.

You'll find masks and other Carnevale items here as well as some of the most incredible crafts work I have ever seen. Don't miss it. ☎ 041/523-3558 (Castello), ☎ 041/528-6888 (San Marco). [www.lavenexiana.it](http://www.lavenexiana.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Don't accidentally log on to [lavenexiana.net](http://lavenexiana.net)—it's home to an Italian madrigal group.

### *Max Art Shop*

Frezzeria, San Marco 1232.

This store is right around the corner from the Hotel Bauer and the San Moisè designer shopping area at the start of Frezzeria; it will beckon to you from its velvet-hung windows. Inside, choose from velvet pillows, clothes, Carnevale-inspired wonder, and old-world charm. ☎ 041/523-3851. [www.ballodeldoge.com](http://www.ballodeldoge.com).

## DESIGNER BOUTIQUES

### CONTINENTAL BIG NAMES

#### *Cartier*

San Marco 606.

*Celine*

Calle Vallaresso 1307.

*Chanel*

San Marco 1254–1300.

*Hermès*

San Marco 1292.

*Lacoste*

San Marco 218.

*Louis Vuitton*

Calle larga de l'Ascension 1255–1256.

**ITALIAN BIG NAMES***Bottega Veneta*

Calle Vallaresso 1337.

*Bulgari*

Calle larga XXII Marzo, San Marco 2281.

*Dolce & Gabbana*

San Marco 223–226.

*Ermenegildo Zegna*

San Marco 1241.

*Etro*

San Marco 1349.

*Fendi*

Salizzada San Moisè, San Marco 1474.

*Frette*

Calle Larga XXII Marzo, San Marco 2070a.

*Giorgio Armani*

Calle Goldoni, San Marco 4412.

*Gucci*

San Marco 1317, 258.

*Hogan*

San Marco 1461.

*La Perla*

Campo San Salvador, San Marco 4828.

*Laura Biagiotti*

Via XXII Marzo, San Marco 2400.

*Loro Piana*

Ascensione, San Marco 1290–1301.

*Malo*

San Marco 2359.

*Marina Rinaldi*

San Marco 269a.

*Max & Co.*

San Marco 5028.

*Max Mara*

Mercerie, San Marco 268.

*Missoni*

Calle Vallaresso 1312.

*Prada*

San Marco 1464–1469.

*Roberta di Camerino*

Calle della Testa 6359.

*Roberto Cavalli*

Calle Vallaresso 1314.

*Salvatore Ferragamo*

Calle Larga XXII Marzo, San Marco 2093.

*Tod's*

Calle XXII Marzo, San Marco 2251.

*Valentino*

Salizzada San Moisè, San Marco 1473.

**EYEGLOSS FRAMES**

I do not list these under “Optical” because I feel strongly that you want the optics done where you know what’s going on and have a handle on the price. Venice and the nearby Veneto area are *the* places to buy the frames, however.

*Ottica Carraro*

Calle della Mandola, San Marco 3706.

These folks are local makers of chic and fabulous frames that retail for about 80€ to 120€ per pair, in all sorts of colors and many types of tortoise-y patterns. They also do a hot fashion color for a season and then never do it again. ☎ 041/520-4258. [www.otticacarraro.it](http://www.otticacarraro.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Best of all, you can now shop for glasses frames online!

### *Ottica Urbani*

San Marco 1280.

After I had laser treatment (LASIK) so that I no longer have to wear eyeglasses, I threw away all my scads of pairs of frames—except the ones from this store in Venice. While it makes myriad styles, the store is most famous for a transparent resin (in fashion colors) in square or round shapes that ensure you look like a cross between a movie star and T. S. Eliot. © 041/522-4140. [www.otticaurbani.com](http://www.otticaurbani.com).

**BEST BETS** Fabulous reading glasses; even some frames that fold.

## FOODSTUFFS

### *Drogheria Mascari*

Calle degli Spezieri, San Polo 381.

This is not a drugstore, as you might guess from the name, but rather the last remaining spice merchant in Venice. It is located in a real-people part of town, which you can get to by walking over the Rialto Bridge and going on to San Polo. © 041/522-9762. [www.imascari.com](http://www.imascari.com).

### *Giacomo Rizzo*

Cannaregio 5778.

This is a tiny pasta-maker shop with gourmet pasta in assorted strange colors and tastes—great gift items. Yes, it has blueberry pasta. On the other hand, there are plenty of flavors that you will want to try—I like artichoke. It's right near the Coin department store. Closed Sundays. © 041/522-2824.

## GLASS

You'll recognize the difference between quality glass and touristy junk in a matter of seconds. If your eye needs a little

training, make a trip to the glass museum on Murano (see “Shopping Murano,” p. 177). These days, just about all the stores have signs in their windows swearing that their product does not come from Asia. Ha. This section represents big glass; jewelry is listed separately under “Beads & Baubles” (p. 180).

### *L'Isola*

Campo San Moisè, San Marco 1468.

There are a few branches of this contemporary gallery around town. It's the best source in Venice for the newer names in big glassworks. This location is across from the Hotel Bauer. © 041/523-1973. [www.lisola.com](http://www.lisola.com).

### *Pauly & C.*

Ponte dei Consorzi, San Marco 4392.

They don't come much more famous than this house, which was established in 1866. Pauly & C. has worked for most of the royal houses of Europe. It will paint your custom-blown glass to match your china (but not while you wait). It ships, too. © 041/520-9899. [www.pauly.it](http://www.pauly.it).

### *Salviati*

Calle Frezzerie, San Marco 1586–1588.

Salviati is among the most famous master glassmakers in Venice. © 041/523-1191. [www.salviati.com](http://www.salviati.com).

### *Seguso*

San Marco 143.

You'll find bright colors and outstanding contemporary works here. © 041/739-048. [www.seguso.it](http://www.seguso.it).

### *Venini*

Piazzetta Leoncini, San Marco 314; Via XXII Marzo, San Marco 2088.

Credited with beginning the second renaissance of glass blowers in Venice (1920–60), Venini is among the best. Buy anything you can afford, and hang onto it for dear life. © 041/522-4045. [www.venini.it](http://www.venini.it).

### *Zora*

Calle larga XXII Marzo, San Marco 2407.

This shop is very close to the main branch of Venetia Studium, so you will be here anyway. While Zora makes glass, its specialty is glass picture frames, which are sophisticated and stunning and 320€ each. There are also tassels, beaded flowers, and golden grape clusters. Even if you buy nothing, don't miss it. You go through a little gate into what looks like a private house, so push on. © 041/277-0895. [www.zoradavenezia.com](http://www.zoradavenezia.com).

## HOME STYLE & FABRICS

### *Antichità e Oggetti d'Arte*

Frezzzeria, San Marco 1691.

Ignore the word *antique* here and concentrate on glam home style, cushions of gilded velvet, velvet devore, painted velvet, and velvet dreams with fringe and beads. Fabrics from centuries past will make you weep with their glory. © 041/523-5666.

### *Colorcasa*

San Polo 1989–1991; Castello 5640.

Everything in this store—tapestries, silk-velvet pillow shams, curtain panels, tablecloths, tassels, scarves, ties—flaunts the vibrant colors and finesse that other merchants attempt unsuccessfully to copy. © 041/523-6071 (San Polo), © 041/521-2640 (Castello). [www.colorcasavenezia.it](http://www.colorcasavenezia.it).

**BEST BETS** Sarah spotted a gorgeous Fortuny-style velvet picture frame in the window of this tiny shop. Very expensive, though, at 104€.

## *Gaggio*

San Stefano, San Marco 3541.

Traditional silks, velvets, pleats, block prints, and the to-die-for local look that is part costume and part local treasure. It also has fabrics by the meter, plus clothes and styles for the home. © 041/522-8574. [www.gaggio.it](http://www.gaggio.it).

### **Shop Talk**

Legendary Gaggio clients have included Yves Saint Laurent, Christian Dior, Givenchy, and Valentino.

## *Mario e Paola Bevilacqua*

Fondamenta della Canonica, San Marco 337b; Santa Maria del Giglio, San Marco 2520.

The shop is the size of a large closet and is filled with velvets, pillows, tapestries, and tassels. Even if you live in the Sunbelt, you will be tempted to do your home over in dark velvets. © 041/528-7581 (Fondamenta della Canonica), © 041/241-0662 (Santa Maria del Giglio). [www.bevilacquatessuti.com](http://www.bevilacquatessuti.com).

**BEST BETS** Simple pillowcases for 120€ each.

## *Rigattieri*

Calle dei Frati, San Marco 3532–3536.

Located near San Stefano, Rigattieri specializes in faience. It's a two-part shop: One part offers country dishes, and the other more traditional ceramics. A faience plate will cost about 20€ and can be packed for travel. © 041/523-1081. [www.rigattieri-venice.com](http://www.rigattieri-venice.com).

## *Rubelli*

Campo San Gallo, San Marco 3877.

This Italian house is actually a source to the trade for reproductions of stunningly exquisite silken brocades and formal fabrics of museum quality. They have swatches, and they

work with individuals, even if your last name is not Rothschild. © 041/523-6110. [www.rubelli.com](http://www.rubelli.com).

### *Valli*

San Marco 783.

Valli is a chain of fabric stores with locations in all major cities, plus factories in Como; this shop in Venice happens to be right along your path, so it's a good place to stop in. The specialty of the house is designer fabrics, straight from the factory as supplied to the design houses, so you can buy that special fabric in the same season. It's not cheap, but you can save money. No phone.

**BEST BETS** I spent 80€ on some Gianni Versace silk and made a sarong skirt that I could never afford to buy from Versace ready-made.

### *Venetia*

Frezzeria, San Marco 1268.

Antonia Sautter is a local gal who founded Il Ballo del Doge, one of the most prestigious events on the Venetian Carnevale calendar. She also created this shop, which must be one of the most beautiful stores in the world. We rushed in after we saw the Kelly-style bags in the window—and found much more. She offers only handcrafted goods, including dolls, marionettes, intricate costumes (think ball gowns), fabrics, masks, home furnishings, and accessories. All are made from hand-printed silk velvets and are trimmed with embroidery, beading, and leather. © 041/522-4426. [www.ballodeldoge.com](http://www.ballodeldoge.com).

**BEST BETS** The Kelly bags, beginning at 300€.

**WEB TIPS** 📶 The website is a disservice to the shop and designer—it's dark with tiny graphics and blaring music (click the upper right corner to disengage the noise).

### *Venetia Studium*

Calle Larga XXII Marzo, San Marco 2425; Mercerie, San Marco 723; and other locations around town.

Come to Venetia Studium (written *venetia stvdivm*) for the Fortuny-style wrinkled fabric (mostly silks) in medieval colors that are pure artistry. The company is expanding, so look for stores wherever you wander. It also does velvets. And a big business in Fortuny chandeliers.

The look is fantasy meets fashion with a Fortuny twist—there are long Isadora Duncan–like scarves and little draw-string purses that make the perfect evening bag. Most prices begin around 150€, but there are many accessories in the 30€ range. Throw pillows begin at 125€ and can be shrink-wrapped in a magic scrunch machine for packing; my pillows popped back to original size when I unwrapped them at home.

Note that the two main stores are near San Moisè, but there are other branches, and each one promotes a different look. A store around the corner from San Moisè sells just home style. Locations in less-touristy parts of town tend to be more home-decor oriented. ☎ 041/523-6953. [www.venetia-studium.com](http://www.venetia-studium.com).

**BEST BETS** The Fortuny silk flower pins with Murano glass accents, priced at 25€.

**WEB TIPS** 📱 You can now order from the online catalog.

## LINENS & LACE

### *Jesurum*

Via Bellotto 30, Mestre.

Yo, they moved—again. Jesurum is the best linen shop in the Veneto and a must-see if you go to Mestre. It has upheld and continued the tradition of Venetian lace making, which was all but lost in the early 1800s. Just before the art would have died out, two Venetians undertook to restore it. One of the two was Michelangelo Jesurum, who—along with restoring the industry and putting hundreds of lace makers to work—also started a school so that the art would live on. ☎ 041/713-300. [www.jesurum.it](http://www.jesurum.it).

***Maria Mazzaron***

Fondamenta Osmarin, Castello 4970.

This is a private dealer; you must phone to make an appointment to see her museum-quality treasures. Serious collectors only, please. © 041/522-1392.

***Martinuzzi***

Piazza San Marco, San Marco 67a.

This lace shop is almost as good as Jesurum, and it's located right on the piazza. This is the real thing: embroidered goods, appliquéed linens, very drop-dead-fancy Italian bed gear. The atmosphere is more old-lady lace shop than church-goes-retail, but the goods are high quality. © 041/522-5068.

***Ricami Veronica***

Cannaregio 1465.

The custom personalized aprons, bibs, towels, and more from this shop are top quality and make great gifts. Depending on the order, your linens can be embroidered in anywhere from 15 minutes to 24 hours. © 041/241-1649. [www.ricami-veronica.es](http://www.ricami-veronica.es).

**MASKS**

If you saw the movie or play *Amadeus*, you are familiar with the type of mask worn at Carnevale time in Venice. Carnevale here got so out of hand that it was outlawed in 1797. But it's back again, and with it a renewed interest in masks. One of the most popular styles is a mask covered with bookbinding paper that you can find at a *legatoria*, or paper-goods store (see below). But there are also masks made of leather, papier-mâché, fabric, and more.

If all this is more than you had in mind, not to worry—there are masks in plastic for 3€ that will satisfy your need to participate. After 3 days in Venice, you'll swear you'll die if you see another mask, so make your selection carefully—many of them seem like trite tourist items.

For a more special item, try one of these famous mask makers:

### *Laboratorio Artigiano Maschiere*

Barbaria delle Tole, Castello 6657.

### *Ma Boutique*

Calle Larga San Marco, San Marco 282.

## OUTLETS

### *Veneto Designer Outlet*

Via Marco Polo 1, Noventa di Piave.

This McArthur Glen outlet village is located 40km (25 miles) from Venice. Stores here include Armani, Benetton, Bikkembergs, Burberry, Elena Mirò, Ferragamo, Frette, Les Copains, Marni, Sergio Rossi, and Valentino, with new branches of Blumarine, Iceberg, and Paul Smith coming soon. © 0421/5741. [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it).

## PAPER GOODS

*Legatoria* means bookbinding in Italian, and the famous designs are copies of bookbinding papers from hundreds of years ago. The best makers use the same old-fashioned methods that have been in the house for centuries. Many of the shops will make something to order for you, but ask upfront whether they will mail it for you; most won't. These papers have become so popular in the U.S. that the paper-goods business is now divided between those who are staying old-fashioned and those who are counting the tourist bucks and loving it. When you walk into the various shops, you can feel the difference.

### **Best Bets**

There are many 8€ gift items in these paper-goods stores. A calendar-diary of the fanciest sort costs 40€.

**Il Pavone** (San Polo 1478, btw. the Rialto Bridge and San Polo) is one of the best. In addition to paper goods, check out the stamps and pads, available from 20€. A custom set can be made within a couple of hours.

**Legatoria Piazzesi** (Campiello della Feltrina, San Marco 2511c; © 041/522-1202; [www.legatoriapiazzesi.it](http://www.legatoriapiazzesi.it)) and **Il Papiro** (Calle del Piovan, San Marco 2764; © 041/522-3055; [www.ilpapirofirenze.it](http://www.ilpapirofirenze.it)), the two most famous paper shops in Venice, are almost across the way from each other, right near San Stefano at Ponte San Maurizio. Legatoria Piazzesi also sells old prints. Don't let the street address throw you; just keep walking and you'll see these two beauties. They are past the main tourist shopping but in a gorgeous part of town not far from the Gritti.

There's a relatively new chain of shops around town called **In Folio** that sells paper goods, books, and gift items, as well as sealing wax and wax seals. When I was a teenager, sealing wax was the rage in America; now it's got a nice medieval bent to it that tourists are scarfing up. There are five or six of these shops scattered around town: San Marco 55; San Marco 739; San Marco 2431; San Marco 4852; and Castello 4615.

## SHOES

### *Rolando Segalin*

Calle dei Fuseri, San Marco 4365.

He is an old-fashioned shoemaker who creates everything by hand and made to measure. Unbelievable stuff—ranging from the type of creative and crazy things you might expect Elton John to wear (shoes shaped like gondolas) to very simple, elegant court shoes. He'll create or copy anything, although the price is about 400€ a pair. Closed Saturdays. © 041/522-2115.

### *Sonnenblume*

Ponte di Rialto, San Polo 496.

This source makes old-fashioned espadrilles, sells them from the Rialto Bridge, and makes a fashion statement to boot—excuse the expression. Sizes go up to 43. Technically speaking,

these are not espadrilles (a French shoe) but a creation made by Italians after World War II when supplies were scarce. The original shoe soles were made from tires. The uppers are offered in silk, velvet, and linen in the yummiest fashion colors of the rainbow. Prices are about 30€ per pair. You can custom order. [www.sonnenblume.it](http://www.sonnenblume.it).

## Chapter Six

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# Milan

## Welcome to Milan

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Milan is not a one-night stand. Milan is not the kind of place you fall in love with at a glance (unless you've been driving for days). Milan is not very pretty on the surface. Nonetheless, there's more style per mile here than in just about any other city in the world. And the surrounding area is filled with factories and outlets and bargains galore.

Milan's real strength is in the inspiration it provides—not only to the fashion world, but also to visual and creative types of all sorts. Walk down the streets, pressing your nose to the windows, and you'll get *ideas*. There's no doubt that Milan is the real capital of Italian fashion.

It's no secret that international *garmentos* comb the streets and markets to find the goods they will tote to Hong Kong to reproduce in inexpensive copies. A day on the prowl in Milan makes my heart beat faster, my pocketbook grow lighter, and my shoulder grow weary from all those shopping bags.

In anticipation of the 2015 Milan Expo, work is underway to welcome the crowds with improved infrastructure and improved retail. New designer flagships, including Diesel, Escada, Max Mara, and Dirk Bikkembergs, are popping up all around town, and there will be five or six new five-star hotels.

# Arriving in Milan

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## BY PLANE

Because Milan is the hub of the northern Italian area, there are plenty of ways to get in and out of town. There are two big airports, **Malpensa** and **Linate**. Long-haul flights have always used Malpensa; Linate is often the point of arrival for those who come into Milan from another E.U. city.

Linate is only 15 minutes and 26€ away from downtown; in contrast, Malpensa is 1 hour away, and the taxi or limo ride costs around 80€ to 100€ . . . or more.

If you do arrive at Malpensa International Airport, you'd better have a rich sugar daddy, or be prepared to wait for the bus. Of course, you may want to spring for a car and driver, which will cost about 120€, including tip. Do not drive into Milan in your rental car unless you are crazy and/or you like paying 60€ a night for parking. (There's crazy, and then there's insane.) Use Malpensa to see the world, but take public transportation if you are headed into Milan.

### Shopping Adventure

One good thing about Malpensa: It's so far from downtown Milan that you can use it as a gateway to enjoy the real Italy and never even venture into the city. From the airport, you can drive directly to Como (p. 252) or any of the towns in any direction.

There is an airport train, the **Malpensa Express** ([www.malpensaexpress.it](http://www.malpensaexpress.it)), for those who can manage their own luggage. Naturally, I've never taken it. The train takes 40 minutes and can require a change of station that may be a huge pain, especially after a 10-hour long-haul flight.

The **Malpensa Bus Express** pulls up outside the terminal near baggage claim and drops you right at the Centrale train station in the heart of Milan, where you can hop on the Metro or get a taxi to your hotel. The fare is about 11€; buses run regularly on the half-hour.

## BY TRAIN

If you arrive in Milan by train, you will probably come into the **Stazione Centrale**, the station in the heart of downtown. Pay attention because the station has been completely renovated and the configuration has changed. Yes, the shops are still here, but take time to look around at the beautiful frescoes and stone arches that make this one of the most beautiful stations in Europe. The station is now much easier to maneuver, with flat escalators to help you move your bags. If you want to leave bags at the station for a few hours or a few days, there's a baggage consignment desk, open daily from 6am to midnight, on the platform level at the end of tracks 6 and 7.

Arrivals and departures are from the front of the station; once outside, it's easy to get a taxi. If you can manage your luggage and prefer using public transportation, Centrale is connected to the Metro's red, green, and yellow lines.

### Insider's Tip

Upon leaving Milan, if you plan to catch the bus to either airport, take a cab to the Stazione Centrale for the bus pickup. Do not enter the main part of the station. Rather, the bus ticket window is to the side, right where you caught the taxi when you arrived. Beware the beggars and drivers of gypsy cabs who may annoy you while you wait for the next bus.

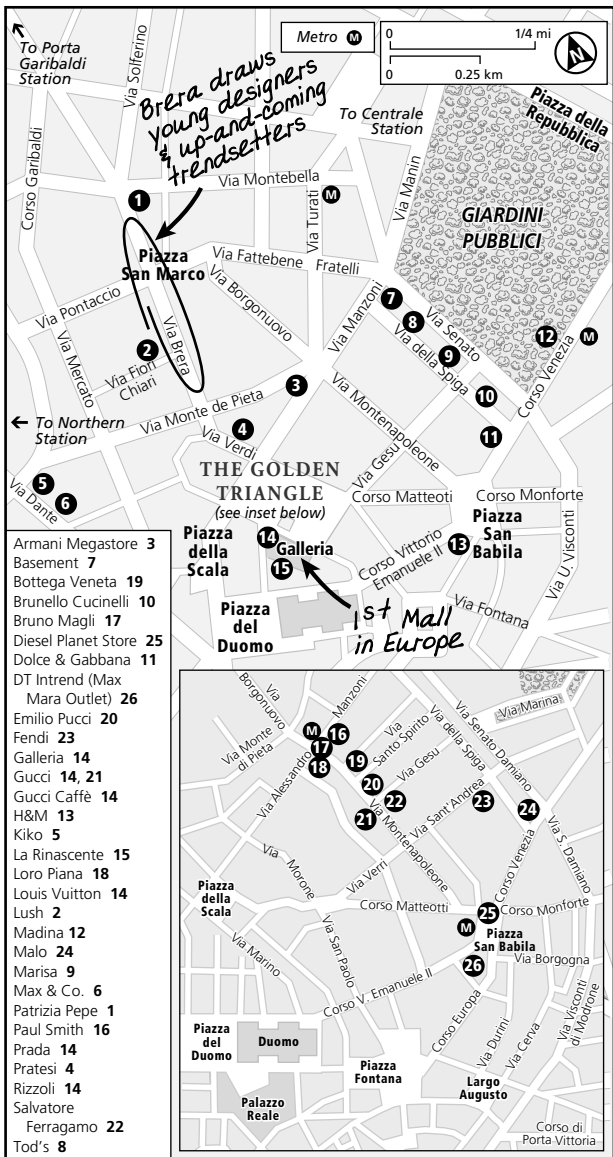
## Getting Around

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Milan happens to be a good walking city. Once you get yourself to a specific neighborhood, most of the shops, museums, and other attractions are in areas that you can easily navigate on foot. This is why it pays to pick a hotel in the center of the action and near a Metro stop.

Taxis can be found at stands, hailed in the street, or called. Note that when you call a taxi, the meter starts once the driver heads toward your pickup location. For a radio taxi, call ☎ 02/6969. Taxis in Milan are very expensive.

# Milan



## Bike Me, Baby

Milan has just introduced **BikeMi**, a public bike rental system similar to Paris's Vélib', allowing you to pick up a bicycle at a street stand in one part of town and return it to another location. The first 30 minutes are free; you'll pay .50€ for each subsequent half-hour; with a maximum usage time of 2 hours. In order to use this service, you must first register online at [www.bikemi.it](http://www.bikemi.it); you'll then receive a user code and password via e-mail.

Milan's Metropolitana has three main lines, each color-coded. Visitors will probably find the red line most convenient, as it goes to some of the major shopping areas and also stops at the Duomo. The Metro is great but does not take you everywhere you want to go. However, it does get you to and from your hotel and the best shopping districts. Most of the luxury hotels are within a block of a Metro station. Look for the giant red m that indicates a station.

Metro tickets can be purchased in the station; you will need coins to operate the ticket machines, but there are change machines available. Magazine vendors inside stations will not give you change unless you buy something.

Milan's tram and bus systems are also very good. Buy tram or bus tickets at a tobacco stand (marked with a t sign out front) before you get on the vehicle. Enter from the rear, and place your ticket in the little box to get it stamped. Keep it; you can use it again if you reboard within 75 minutes.

You can take a regular train to nearby communities, such as Como or Bergamo, or even to Venice, for a day trip. There's a large commuter population that goes to Turin, mostly for business, but you can go there to shop or to see the Shroud.

If you are using a train pass, do not blow a day of travel on a local commuter ticket. The same ticket can get you all the way to Paris. Save the rail pass for the important stuff. A first-class, round-trip train ticket to Como costs about 26€.

### More Information, Please

The guidebook *Time Out Milan* comes in both Italian and English versions. Look for it at news kiosks and bookstores in town. The national newspaper, *Repubblica*, has a Milan section toward the rear of the daily paper that includes local listings, weekend happenings, and some flea markets and specialty shopping events. *Shopping Milano* is a new bimonthly magazine, written in both Italian and English. It covers fashion, home design, health and beauty, outlets, and specialty events in both Milan and the Como area.

## METRO MILAN AREA

Milan must be accepted as a total destination. From Milan, you can easily get in and out of Venice and into other northern Italian cities. Milan is less than an hour from Como and not much farther from Turin. From Milan, you can get to Switzerland—or anywhere! Venice is 3 hours away, and Verona . . . well, friends . . . Verona is a miracle unto itself (see chapter 8) and just a 2-hour drive away.

If you are in a car, you must also learn the various suburbs and cities and highways that serve the great metro area. There are truly thousands of small manufacturers, factories, artisans, and showrooms located out on the spider web of highways. Should you be interested in discovering some of these, create a careful assault plan with a map before you attempt to shop.

## Sleeping in Milan

In recent years, a number of designers have entered the hotel business—among them, the Versaces in Australia, the Ferragamos in Florence and Rome, and one of the Fendi girls also in Rome. Now Milan has the **Bulgari Hotel**, Via Privata Fratelli Gabba 7/b (☎ 02/805-8051; [www.bulgarihotels.com](http://www.bulgarihotels.com)); to be

followed in 2010 by the **Armani Hotel**, Via Manzoni 31 ([www.armanihotels.com](http://www.armanihotels.com)), right in the heart of designer shopping.

## LUXURY SHOPPING HOTELS

### *Carlton Hotel Baglioni*

Via Senato 5 (Metro: San Babila).

This is a very small, chic hotel that is a member of Leading Hotels of the World as well as part of the Baglioni chain, giving it a double pedigree. On our most recent research trip to Italy, we did one-stop shopping and booked all Baglioni hotels.

The Carlton is perfect—not only is it fancy and welcoming, but there’s also a private door leading out the rear of the building right onto the Via della Spiga, the pedestrian shopping street. The hotel is located in the center of all the stores, offers a shopping program that includes a car and driver to take you to Fidenza Village in Parma (p. 289), and has a concierge who will guide you to various venues. (This is the same concierge who supplied computer printouts for our drives to factories and even to Verona and Venice.)

The hotel has several styles of decor to suit its fashion-oriented guests. It’s plush but sleek, with an emphasis on dark colors and handcrafted built-ins. Some rooms are all Art Deco with original pieces, while other rooms are done in basic luxury-hotel chic. The restaurant is one of the “in” places in town and good for lunch if you’re doing a look-see.

Rates are about 300€ to 400€, although off-season promotions are available. You can reserve through Leading Hotels of the World (☎ 800/223-6800 in the U.S.; [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)). ☎ 02/77-077. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Check the website for Internet-only last-minute deals—sometimes 30% lower than the standard rate.

### *Four Seasons Hotel Milano*

Via Gesù 6–8 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

What would happen if the fashion angel came to Milan and decided to go into the hotel business? The Four Seasons, of

course. You'll find this grand hotel discreetly located in the heart of the Montenapo shopping district. With up-to-date amenities and a posh atmosphere, it has a modern feel without seeming too rococo. For an extra advantage, hit up the concierge desk for its slick magazine on shopping in Milan. Rooms start at 550€ in low season. ☎ 800/332-3442 in the U.S. Local phone ☎ 02/77-088. [www.fourseasons.com/milan](http://www.fourseasons.com/milan).

## FOUR-STAR BIGGIES

### *Hilton Milan*

Via Luigi Galvani 12 (Metro: Centrale).

This Hilton is located near the Centrale train station—it's a bit of a schlep to the nearest Metro, but you can walk to many places or hop into taxis. It's not glam, but it does have various promo rates, and the hotel has just been renovated. Watch it, though: The rates are often per person. Still, an off-season deal of 175€ advance purchase for a double room, which includes breakfast, isn't bad. ☎ 800/HILTONS in the U.S. Local phone ☎ 02/69-831. [www.milan.hilton.com](http://www.milan.hilton.com).

### *Jolly Hotel President*

Largo Augusto 10 (Metro: Duomo).

### *Jolly Hotel Touring*

Via Ugo Tarchetti 2 (Metro: Repubblica).

You'll be jolly, too, when you learn about this hotel chain, with two locations in downtown Milan. The Jolly President (☎ 02/77-461) is a business traveler's hotel, with small rooms of modern neo-Italian design. It's a great find thanks to its location. Largo Augusto is next door to Via Durini, and a block from the Duomo, which can be seen from your window.

The Jolly Touring (☎ 02/63-351) is located near the Principe and the Palace and shares the same Metro with them, but it's a block closer to the shopping action. The rooms are much nicer than at the Jolly President. The hotel does cater to groups, but I was quite happy here.

Rates, if you can get a deal, are in the 150€ range, including full breakfast—but they do go higher, especially when there are fairs in town. © 800/247-1277 in the U.S. [www.jollyhotels.com](http://www.jollyhotels.com).

## INTIMATE FINDS

### *The Gray*

Via San Raffaele 6 (Metro: Duomo).

The Gray is one of those small, newfangled design hotels. It does various shopping promotions and has rates that begin at 378€. **Note:** This hotel is closed the first 3 weeks in August. © 02/720-8951. [www.sinahotels.com](http://www.sinahotels.com).

### *Hotel Manin*

Via Manin 7 (Metro: Turati).

This is a tiny hotel decorated like an ocean liner from the 1930s. Right near the gardens and the fashion district, it is considered a find by fashion editors and those looking for a good location and an affordable price. Room rates are around 175€ and can be as low as 140€ off season. © 02/659-6511. [www.hotelmanin.it](http://www.hotelmanin.it).

### *Hotel Manzoni*

Via Santo Spirito 20 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

I found this three-star hotel by accident—it's small and well priced and in a great location near all the most expensive stores. There are only about 50 rooms, which rent for between 275€ and 325€ per night, including breakfast. © 02/7600-5700. [www.hotelmanzoni.com](http://www.hotelmanzoni.com).

## Snack & Shop

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### *Brek*

Piazza Giordano 1 (Metro: San Babila).

We were heartsick to discover that our beloved Brek cafeteria, down the street from the Baglioni, was closed; fortunately, we stumbled upon this new branch just behind the Galleria San Babila. Brek is perfect for lunch—there are entrees, pastas, salads, and desserts—and the fixed combo of pasta, dessert, and drink for 5€ can't be beat. The same menu is served all day, so it can be slim pickin's by dinnertime. **Note:** To get here from the Galleria, walk between Florsheim and Guess, go past Nespresso, and continue straight ahead to Brek. © 02/7602-3379. [www.brek.com](http://www.brek.com).

### *Cova*

Via Montenapoleone 8 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

A lot like Sant Ambroeus (see below), but more formal and touristy. It's a local legend and an "in" place for tea—come at 5pm if you want to make the scene. Make your selection at the counter, pay at the front desk, and return to the counter to pick up your choice. © 02/7600-5599. [www.pasticceriacova.it](http://www.pasticceriacova.it).

**BEST BETS** The chocolates are a status-symbol hostess gift in fall, the jellied fruit squares in summer.

### *Gucci Caffè*

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: Duomo).

Yes, friends, Gucci has a cafe and it's right in the Galleria, so you can't miss it and won't want to—even if you just stop for a coffee and a Gucci chocolate. Also open Sundays from 2 to 7pm. © 02/859-7991. [www.gucci.com](http://www.gucci.com).

**BEST BETS** The cafe serves mostly sweets and snacks, but the real draw is the crowd: It's to die for.

### *Peck*

Via Spadari 9 (Metro: Duomo).

This is possibly the most famous food store in Milan. The main shop is on a side street on the far side of the Duomo, away from the Montenapo area but still convenient enough to be worthwhile. © 02/802-3161. [www.peck.it](http://www.peck.it).

**BEST BETS** I always buy a picnic here to take back on the plane.

### *Pizzeria del Drago*

Via Agnello 16 (Metro: Duomo).

We had great pizza here 2 nights in a row. Look for it on a side street a couple of blocks from the Duomo. © 02/8646-4502.

### *Sant Ambroeus*

Corso Matteotti 7 (Metro: San Babila).

Sort of the Italian version of tea at the Ritz. It opens at 8am if you prefer to breakfast here. I can eat the little *prosciutto crudo* sandwiches all day long. © 02/7600-0540. [www.santambroeus.org](http://www.santambroeus.org).

### *10 Corso Como Caffè*

Corso Como 10 (Metro: Garibaldi).

It's pricey (about 58€ per person) but much fun to be part of the scene at 10 Corso Como. © 02/2901-3581. [www.10corsocomo.com](http://www.10corsocomo.com).

#### **Shop & Save**

After you've blown your wad on the meal, you can walk it off by going around the corner to 10 Corso Como outlet, where markdowns offer a savings.

## The Shopping Scene

Because Milan is the home of the fashion, fur, and furnishings industries, you'll quickly find that it's a city that sells style and image. Milan is a city of big business: The souvenir stands are overflowing with an abundance of international magazines, not kitschy plastics.

Although this was once a medieval trading city, in its modern, post-World War II incarnation, Milan has sizzled and made its mark. The city hosts the international furniture salon every other year. There are fashion shows twice a year, bringing a cadre of fashion reporters from all over the world to tell the fashion mavens just what Italy has to offer. Besides these, there are a zillion fairs and conventions and other business happenings, meaning Milan is always happening. Hmmmm, except in August.

Even if you aren't a fashion editor and don't plan your life around what comes trotting down the catwalk, you'll find that Milan's high-fashion stores offer a peek at what's to come. You'll also find that the markets and real-people shopping reflect the proximity of nearby factories. You'd be amazed at what can fall off a truck.

The best shopping in Milan is at these designer shops and showrooms, or at the discount houses, jobbers, and factory-outlet stores that sell designer clothing, overruns, and samples. If you really care about high fashion at an affordable price, you'll plan to spend January of each year prowling the sales in Milan—not London.

## THE BEST BUYS IN MILAN

**ALTERNATIVE RETAIL** Mavens will give me the evil eye for mentioning this, but Milan is a good place for a bargain. There are good flea markets and street markets, and the buys in Como cannot be underestimated. It's more than just a resort town; it's heaven for bargain shoppers who want high-quality silks and outlet deals—Armani, anyone? Have the words "Factory Store" written over a door ever been more beautiful?

**DESIGNER HOME DESIGN** Again, maybe not a best buy in terms of price, but a best in terms of selection and unique opportunity. The hottest trend in Milan of late has been that all the big designers are doing home furnishings, from dishes and ashtrays to sheets and then some. Dolce & Gabbana, Missoni,

and Ferragamo are all into home design. It's luxe, it's expensive, and it's gorgeous. Just press your nose to the **D&G Home** store, take one look at the dark-red silk brocade, leopard prints, and *majolica*, and know that when it works, it works! But wait, I now also shop for home design at the outlet store that **Lisa Corti** has in her workrooms—fabulous stuff at half the price of Saks.

**DESIGNER SELECTIONS** While designer merchandise is expensive, the selection and the possibilities of a markdown or discovery of a small, reasonably priced item are greater in Milan. **Etro** isn't a bargain resource and is available in other Italian cities, but it will please you to no end to buy here and to soak up the atmosphere of class, elegance, and northern Italian chic. The Etro outlet, right in town, will also please you to no end.

**YOUNG FASHIONS** There are specific parts of town that cater to the young look and the young wallet (see "Shopping Neighborhoods," below). Don't forget my fave, **Oviesse** (p. 227), and don't miss the new **Diesel Planet Store** (p. 251), right in the heart of town near San Babila.

## THE FIVE BEST STORES IN MILAN

### *DT Intrend (Max Mara Outlet)*

Galleria San Carlo 6 (Metro: San Babila).

The official name of this store has changed (it used to be *Difusione Tessile*), but the location hasn't; it is still indeed the Max Mara outlet, conveniently located and easy to shop. Because Max Mara makes the best wool coats in the world, the store offers better shopping when fall and winter merchandise is in stock. Summer pickings can be slim, although I did get some accessories, sleeveless silk tops, and other smalls on my last springtime visit. Don't be confused by the Penny Lane labels or other brands you don't recognize; it's all made by MM. See the listing on p. 227, too. © 02/7600-0829.

### *Lisa Corti Home Textile Emporium*

Via Lecco 2 (Metro: Porta Venezia).

You will spend a lot on the taxi ride here, but it's worth it. Corti has shops in other Italian cities, but this is also the showroom and has the best prices. She makes home style and women's clothing in colorful prints; they're sold for double the price at Saks Fifth Avenue. For fans, this will be the highlight of your trip to Milan. See p. 238 for more details. © 02/5810-0031. [www.lisacorti.com](http://www.lisacorti.com).

### *Marisa*

Via della Spiga 52 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

We can't afford the clothes here, but this is one of the best shops in town. The linen dresses by Daniel & Gregis are pricey, but they're so chic you'll want to consider taking out a second mortgage. Stores like this are the very reason we travel—even if you can't afford to buy, you can be inspired. You may find a low-priced copy elsewhere, or go home to your sewing machine. Also see p. 242. © 02/7600-2082.

### *Spaccio Etro*

Via Spartaco 3 (no nearby Metro).

This outlet store offers great prices on quality items—accessories, yard goods, and clothes for men and women. You will go mad. See p. 246 for the scoop. © 02/5502-0218. [www.etro.it](http://www.etro.it).

### *10 Corso Como*

Corso Como 10 (Metro: Garibaldi).

This is one of the best stores in the world because of the way the product is bought and the way it constantly changes. It's owned by a woman who is a member of one of the most important fashion families in Italy. See p. 242 for the store, p. 247 for the outlet, and p. 208 for the cafe. © 02/2900-2674. [www.10corsocomo.com](http://www.10corsocomo.com).

## TWO MORE FAVES

### *Lush*

Via Fiori Chiari 6 (Metro: Montenapoleone or Duomo).

If you haven't been to a Lush store in Italy, this is your chance. The store is on the way to the Brera district and offers the famous British bath products with an Italian twist. I find Lush expensive, but I am still impressed by the Italian branches because of their use of Italian ingredients. ☎ 02/7201-1442. [www.lush.com](http://www.lush.com).

### *Oviesse/OVS Industry*

Galleria Passarella 2 (Metro: San Babila).

There are several Oviesse stores in easy-to-reach places in Milan; this new showcase is a must-do. See p. 227.

## SHOPPING HOURS

Milan now has stores that are open on Sunday!

Many of the big-name designer shops are open "nonstop," which means that they do not close for lunch. If you don't want to take a lunch break, shop the Montenapo area. Dime stores such as **Standa** and **UPIM** have always been open non-stop; **La Rinascente**, Milan's most complete department store, has always been open during lunch as well. During the week, stores usually close between 7:30 and 8pm.

Most stores in Milan are closed on Monday until after the lunch hour (they open around 3:30 or 4pm). Most of Italy is dead from a retail perspective on Monday morning. But wait! Food shops are open, and factory stores are frequently open, too. If you are heading out to a certain factory or two, call ahead. Make no assumptions.

## SUNDAY SHOPPING

Laws have changed, and all of Italy's big cities now have Sunday shopping; it started with the big department stores and has spread to small shops as well. If you want to shop on a

Sunday, there are also flea markets. Or go to Venice, which is wide, wide, wide open on Sunday.

Milan used to be more dead on Sunday than other communities, but that's changing—maybe it's due to the slow economy, but things are now popping on Sunday, and yes, the department store **La Rinascente** is open, from 9:30am to 10pm. Sunday hours are most often noon to 5pm, but I am seeing a trend of big-name designers opening their doors from 3 or 4pm until 8pm.

During fashion weeks, stores in the Montenapo district often open on Sunday; they're also open on specific Sundays from October until Christmas. Some stores in the Navigli area stay open on Sunday as well.

## PERSONAL NEEDS

The **American Express** travel office is at Via Brera 3 at the corner of Via dell'Orso. This is in the thick of the shopping district, so you need not go out of your way to get here. If you use traveler's checks, cash them at your hotel—even if they are in euros, they are hard to use in normal stores. ATMs are easy to find and are your best bet.

To find a pharmacy, look for the neon-green cross. Should you need an all-night pharmacy, there is one at Piazza Duomo. There's also a very good all-night pharmacy, where the staff speaks English, at the Centrale train station.

# Shopping Neighborhoods

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**GOLDEN TRIANGLE/MONTENAPO** All the big designers have gorgeous and prestigious shops here. You can easily explore it in a day or two, or even an hour or two, depending on how much money and how much curiosity you have. Although the main shopping street is **Via Montenapoleone**, sometimes this area is referred to as simply Montenapo.

This is the chic part of town, where traditional European design flourishes along with Euro-Japanese styles and wild, hot Italian New Wave looks. This area is where you'll find **Armani**, **Ferragamo**, **Gucci**, **Tod's**, the many **D&G** shops, and more. It includes a couple of smaller streets that veer off the Via Montenapoleone in a beautiful little web of shopping heaven; note that Via della Spiga is just plain yummy with charm.

The outermost borders of the neighborhood are **Via Manzoni** and **Corso Venezia**, two major commercial streets. Use them mostly for finding your way, although keep in mind that Corso Venezia has recently become a hot address for lines such as **Armani Collezioni** and **Henry Cotton's**, while **Patrizia Pepe** has opened on Via Manzoni.

Your real shopping destinations will be **Via della Spiga** (design a custom handbag at **Tod's**), **Via Sant'Andrea** (where you'll find the newly remodeled **Hermès** at no. 21), and, of course, **Via Montenapoleone**. But don't miss the back streets of this little enclave—like **Via Gesù** (lotsa art galleries), **Via Borgospesso**, and also **Via Manzoni** (which is not a back street but a major artery).

For anyone with limited time who wants to absorb a lot of the scene in just a few hours, this is the top-priority shopping district. You may not buy your souvenirs here, but you'll see the stuff that dreams are made of.

**DUOMO** The Duomo is the main landmark of Milan. It's an incredibly detailed and gorgeous cathedral, not a store. It is on the Piazza del Duomo and is happily surrounded by stores, however. Italy's leading department store, **La Rinascente**, is located here and has been recently renovated.

Via Montenapoleone angles away from Corso Vittorio Emanuele II as you move away from the Duomo, so the Golden Triangle and Duomo neighborhoods sort of back up on each other. This makes it very easy to shop these two areas in the same afternoon. When you are finished with them, there are two other shopping neighborhoods, Brera and Largo Augusto, which you can connect with on the other side of the Duomo. You did come to Milan to shop, didn't you?

**CORSO VITTORIO EMANUELE II** Home to the new Max Mara flagship store in the middle of the stretch and the new Diesel at the far end, this neighborhood is filled with big stores, little stores, and half a dozen galleries and minimalls that house even more stores. The most maddening part about this area is that you can hardly find an address. Just wander in and out and around from the Duomo to **Piazza San Babila**.

At San Babila, turn left and you'll end up at Via Montenapoleone for entry into the Golden Triangle. Or you can do this in the reverse, of course. But don't forget to check out the San Babila area—you'll find everything from designers to plastics-mongers and fashion mavens for teens and tweens.

At the front end of the Duomo, off the piazza, is a shopping center of historic and architectural-landmark proportions, the **Galleria**. This is one of the most famous landmarks in Milan, and some tout it as the first mall in Europe. Other galleries in Europe also make the same claim, but who cares? Take one look at the ceiling and you'll marvel. Then visit **Prada**.

The Galleria has a vaulted ceiling and looks like a train station from another, grander era. Inside, there are restaurants and bistros where you can get coffee and sit and watch the parade of passersby. Several big-time shops are here besides Prada—don't miss **Rizzoli** for books in English, the newish **Gucci**, and **Louis Vuitton**, too. If you go out the back end, you will be at La Scala, the famous opera house. Behind La Scala is the Brera area.

**DURINI** The Via Durini is only 2 blocks long and runs parallel to the Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, ending right at the far side of the Duomo. Because of its perfect location, this should be a strong street for retail, but because it's also hidden in plain sight, the street has had many personalities. These days, there are some home-style showrooms and some interesting new stores that use the location as a jumping-off point to test the retail waters.

**BRERA** Brera is one of the most famous shopping districts in Milan thanks to its slightly less expensive rents. It's home

to many young families and a retail scene that serves their needs with upscale children's stores, including **Cyrus** (Via Brera 2), and **Meroni Si** (Via Madonnina 10). Expectant moms shop for Cannes-appropriate maternity fashions at **Pietro Brunelli** (Via Fiori Chiari 5). This is also the part of town where young designers can break into retailing and high style; thus, it has both designer shops and up-and-coming trendsetters. Check out the footstool-size carved candles at **Antichita e Candle** (Via Fiori Chiari, btw. Brera and Madonnina); yes, they'll ship.

Brera is a fair (but not difficult) walk from the Duomo. The main stretch is rather commercial, with shops oriented toward teens, quite a few jeans stores, and very obvious branches of famous international retailers such as **Shu Uemura** (Via Brera 2) and **Patrizia Pepe** (Via Brera at Via Pontaccio). Behind all this, there are narrow and bewitching back streets, closed to vehicular traffic, that call out to you to explore them. Many host the most expensive antiques dealers in the city; some have the ateliers of new, hot designers.

Boutiques here include **Angela Caputi** (Via Madonnina 11) and local hero **Babele** (Via Brera 11). And while you're in this neck of the woods, don't forget that U.K.'s line **Lush**—that deli of bath bombs, face masks, and homemade soaps and suds—is at Via Fiori Chiari 6. **MAC** cosmetics is located right next door.

### Shopping Adventure

The best way to see Brera is during the antiques fair on the third Saturday of each month, when vendors put out tables in the narrow streets and a well-heeled crowd browses.

Carry on from Brera to Solferino (the street just changes names) and then over one to Garibaldi. There's a market, **Rossi & Grassi** (Via Solferino 12), where you can find good-quality balsamic vinegars.

**LARGO AUGUSTO/DURINI** Another option is to move from the other side of the Duomo to Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, and

then over to Via Durini. Please note that you can catch a bus to **Il Salvagente**, the discounter, at Largo Augusto, or walk via the **Corso Porta Vittoria**, and be there in 10 minutes. I usually walk and window-shop along the way.

**TRAIN STATION/INGROSSO** In the area between the Centrale train station and the Repubblica Metro station, there's a grid system of flat streets that makes up the *garmento* wholesale (*ingrosso*) and discount district of Milan. You can browse the scads of stores here and just go in and out—about half of them are closed for lunch, and all of them are closed on Saturday and Sunday. You need both time and patience.

**BUENOS AIRES** Don't cry for me, Buenos Aires; I've got my credit cards. This street is more for teens and tweens and may not appeal to designer shoppers at all. The street is almost a mile long and features more than 300 shops, including **Fossil** (no. 5), **Muji** (no. 36), **Promod** (no. 41), **Aerosole** (no. 42), **Pimkie** (no. 43), and **Puma** (no. 47): It is one of the most concentrated shopping areas in continental Europe. The best stores are located around the Lima station of the Metro. Did I mention there is an **Oviesse** store here? In case you haven't been reading very carefully, I am having a love affair with Oviesse/OVS Industry and its low-cost fashions. See p. 227 for details.

Many of the shops here have no numbers; often the number by a store represents the block rather than the store address (so many shops may be called "3"), but it's all easy once you're here. Just wander and enjoy—you can't miss the good stuff.

You can get here easily by taking the no. 65 streetcar from the Centrale train station and getting off at Corso Buenos Aires (about three stops). Or take the Metro to Loreto and walk toward Venezia, or vice versa.

**MAGENTA** For the opposite type of experience, get to the Corso Magenta, a rich residential thoroughfare where the best bakeries, cafes, and shopping brands are located to serve those who live in this area; it's the equal to Paris's 16th or

17th arrondissement. From October to May, do remember to wear your fur.

**DANTE** As an extension of the Magenta neighborhood (it is adjacent) but accessible for tourists visiting the castle or using the red-line Metro, this area is heaven, not hell. It is a wide pedestrian avenue that stretches from the Piazza Cairoli (take the Metro to Cairoli), filled with branches of many big names—but they're international big names, so it's not exactly like the same old mall back home. In good weather, scads of people eat or sip coffee at outdoor cafes.

**NAVIGLI** South of the Porta Ticinese is the canal area of Milan. The canals have been mostly built over, so don't spend too much time looking for a lot of water (wait for Venice): There's just the one canal. Yet the Navigli is becoming a funky shopping neighborhood. Wander here for an hour or two if you like colorful junk, secondhand shops, artists' studios, and the feel of getting in on the ground floor of up-and-coming Italian style. Cash only; no one speaks English.

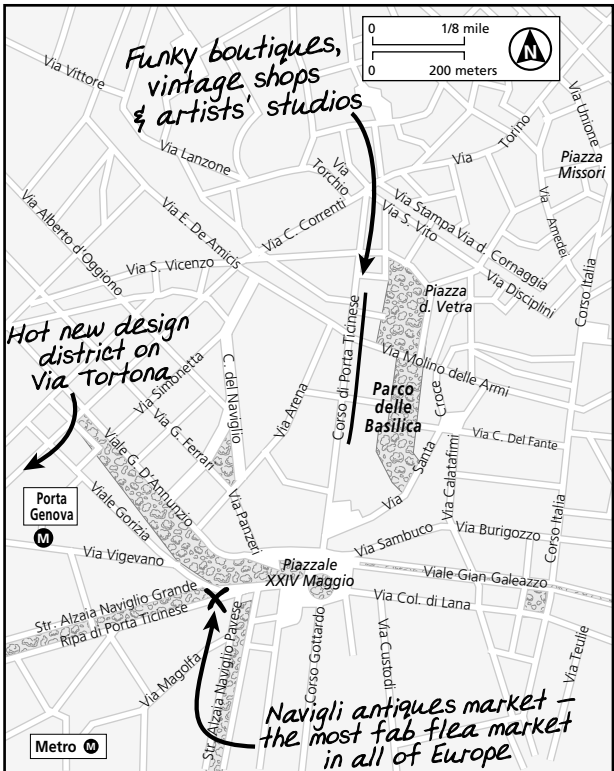
### Shopping Adventure

An antiques market is held on the last Sunday of each month on both sides of the Naviglio Grande. Tell your taxi driver that you want either *mercato dell'antiquariato* or *Ripa Ticinese*, which is the name of one of the two streets hosting the market along the canal.

The two streets running along the canal are called **Alzaia Naviglio Grande** and **Ripa di Porta Ticinese**. You can walk down one, cross a bridge, and walk back on the other side. There are some cute restaurants, and you can make an afternoon out of it if this is your kind of thing.

**PAPINIANO** Every Tuesday and Saturday, there is a regular street market along the Viale Papiniano. This is a great place for designer clothing that has fallen off trucks as well as all sorts of fun fashions and accessories. Plan to be here early—9 to 10am is fine. In addition to two lanes of stalls selling clothing and dry goods, part of the market comprises fruit

# Navigli



and food. *Tip:* To save money, so you can spend more at the street market, forget the taxi and hop on the red line of the Metro; get off at San Agostino.

**PORTA VITTORIA** The Corso di Porta Vittoria begins shortly after the Duomo and changes its name to Corso XXII Marzo; it stretches from the side of the Duomo that is opposite to the La Scala side (look for Largo Augusto on your map) and turns into a nice residential area. Just use your feet. I like this walk because it takes you to a famous discount store and enables you to see something of upper-middle-class Milan along the way.

You'll pass many favorites, such as **Bassetti**, plus a nice branch of the department store **Coin**. This is where well-off locals shop and it's very non-touristy, not unlike the Corso Vercelli. After the street name changes to Corso XXII Marzo, turn left on Via Fratelli Bronzetti to get to **Il Salvagente**, the discounter. Hail a taxi to get back to your hotel if you have too much loot.

**TORTONA** Take the green line to Porta Genova and get out for a walk around what is becoming a hot new design district called Tortona. Via Tortona is parallel to Via Savona and is filling up with showrooms and design studios. This is more for those in the trade than the average consumer. See the map for Navigli on p. 219.

**APRILE & BEYOND** Not for the average visitor, Aprile stands for the piazza of the same name: XXV Aprile. It is an up-and-coming neighborhood that attracts design mavens and fashion editors thanks to a handful of important shops, including **10 Corso Como**. The few retailers who have set up shop here are inventive, creative, and exciting, so take a look if you want to be in with the in-crowd. If you are more interested in sightseeing, and don't have much time in Milan, this area may not be for you. Piazza XXV Aprile is between the Moscova and Garibaldi stops on the green line. After this plaza, Corso Garibaldi changes its name and becomes Corso Como.

## Milan Resources A to Z

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### ANTIQUES

Milan's antiques markets are great fun, but don't be afraid to get out of town to explore a few more. In Pavia and Brescia, there are antiques markets on the second Sunday of each month. On the third Sunday, there's a flea market in Carimate (Como). Bergamo Alta also celebrates on the third Sunday, in Piazza Angelini. Many villages have antiques markets on certain Sundays in April and October only; ask your hotel's

conciierge for details. For markets in Milan proper, see the “Flea Markets” section, later in this chapter.

Antiques stores are mostly located in the Brera area, on or off Via Madonnina, with a few fancier ones in the Montenapo area. The Montenapo shops do not offer affordable items for mere mortals.

Serious dealers include **Legatoria Conti Borboni** (Corso Magenta 31), for antique books, and **Mauro Brucoli** (Via della Spiga 46), for furniture. There’s a tiny gallery of about eight or nine shops right near a couple of luxury hotels, the Westin Palace and the Principe di Savoia (and the Jolly Hotel Touring). Take the Metro to Repubblica and walk or taxi to **La Piazzetta degli Antiquari** (Via Turati 6).

## BATH & BEAUTY

Don’t look now, but there is a color war in Italy, centered in Milan, where everyone is suddenly doing makeup. This was probably instigated by the success of the Versace cosmetics line, which was actually launched a few months after the Versace murder and was obviously created before he died. That line didn’t survive, but do get a look at the Armani makeup.

### *Diego Dalla Palma*

Via Madonnina 13 (Metro: Duomo).

Dalla Palma is an artist with connections to the Italian couture houses. He has a small shop for his makeup line, or you can make a private appointment for lessons and a makeover. The location is adjacent to the Brera district on a great shopping street. ☎ 02/876-818. [www.diegodallapalma.it](http://www.diegodallapalma.it).

### *Giorgio Armani*

Armani Megastore, Via Manzoni 31 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

You can see the cosmetics line and play with it all at the Armani flagship; the line is also sold in Milan’s La Rinascente. The last time I bought a blush, it was presented to me in its

own little Armani canvas tote bag. © 02/7231-8600. [www.armani-viamanzoni31.it](http://www.armani-viamanzoni31.it).

**BEST BETS** I have tested many of the products and adore the pearlized liquid foundation, which really does add light to the face.

### *Kiko*

Via Dante 2, at Piazza Cordusio (Metro: Dante Cordusio).

This is a phenom—the store is always filled with eager shoppers. The products are getting raves from local fashion editors, and the prices are so dramatically low that you'll find many items for the teens and tweens on your gift list. The Kiko line offers some of the best value in all of Italy. © 02/8050-4199.

### *Madina*

Corso Venezia 23 (Metro: San Babila).

With more than 300 shades of lipstick, 160 different eye shadows, 100 foundations, and 40 blushes—all reasonably priced—Madina is a feast for the eyes as well as a delight to the touch. The makeup is created using innovative techniques that strictly forbid animal testing. Testing on yourself, however, is encouraged—and you'll want to spend all day in the boutique playing, touching, and experimenting. © 02/7601-1692. [www.madina.it](http://www.madina.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 The website is almost as much fun as visiting the store; it's in English, but unfortunately you can't order online.

### *Perlier/Kelemata (Armonie Naturali)*

Corso Buenos Aires 25 (Metro: Loreto).

You may remember Perlier as a French bath line; it was bought by the Italian Kelemata family, which now has a chain of very spiffy stores all over Italy (and several other shops around Milan). Recently, the company joined the color wars and added a makeup line under the Perlier name; it is sold

only in its own stores, which are named *Armonie Naturali*.  
 ☎ 02/2951-8261. [www.perlier.com](http://www.perlier.com).

### *Shu Uemura*

Via Brera 2 (Metro: Duomo).

Uemura is the king of color and the man who started it all more than 20 years ago in Japan, where he brought professional makeup to the public. His products have a cult following, and he is clearly in a league above all others; so are his prices. ☎ 02/875-371. [www.shuuemura.com](http://www.shuuemura.com).

## BOOKS

There's a small international bookstore upstairs at the **Armani Megastore** (Via Manzoni 31) and another, larger one upstairs at 10 Corso Como.

### *Feltrinelli*

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: Duomo); numerous other locations around town.

This Italian mega-chain has a good selection of titles in English, as well as DVDs, international magazines, and other media. There's always an extremely polite and helpful English-speaking staff member in the store. ☎ 02/8646-0272. [www.lafeltrinelli.it](http://www.lafeltrinelli.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 The website is in Italian with no English-language link; however, its graphics make it easy to navigate.

### *Mondadori*

Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: Duomo or San Babila).

Mondadori is a big, modern bookstore with an enormous selection in every category and a very good travel department. It offers some books in foreign languages, including English. There's also electronics (we bought memory cards for our cameras), Wi-Fi access, and some gift items. ☎ 02/760-551.

*Rizzoli*

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II 79 (Metro: Duomo).

This iconic store, with books in several languages, is part of the must-do Galleria. **Note:** It may not have the latest editions of travel guides. Open evenings and on Sundays, too. ☎ 02/8646-1071. [www.libreriarizzoli.it](http://www.libreriarizzoli.it).

**CASHMERE***Brunello Cucinelli*

Via della Spiga 5 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

Cucinelli is considered the king of luxe cashmere, with a line that includes ready-to-wear for men and women, accessories, and even luggage. The colors are sumptuous, the cuts are perfect, the designs are classic, the quality is high. So are the prices. Sales can bring drastic price reductions—up to 60% off. If you're a Cucinelli fan, don't miss the factory outlet in Perugia, on the main square in Solomeo, Cucinelli's hometown. Otherwise, you may spend \$1,000 for a sweater. ☎ 02/7601-4448. [www.brunellocucinelli.com](http://www.brunellocucinelli.com).

**Shop Talk**

If you need a Cucinelli fix back home in the U.S., there's also a boutique at Bergdorf's in New York.

*Doriani*

Via Sant'Andrea 2 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

It's more of a men's than women's source, more of an English than a cutting-edge look—but luxe beyond belief. ☎ 02/7600-8012.

*Loro Piana*

Via Montenapoleone 27 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

Although most people associate this name with cashmere, the truth is the factories produce technologically advanced wools for men's suiting and other fabrics of all kinds. The firm's

fascination with technology is evidenced in outerwear products as well as sweaters that are water-repellent. But back to the cashmere: The reason it is considered unique is because it's Italian, not foreign.

This three-story temple to luxe sells not only men's and women's clothing, but also handbags, shoes, and items for the home. Interactive displays here include videos and tests you can perform to see how the fabrics hold up, proving this is an art *and* a science. ☎ 02/777-2901. [www.loropiana.it](http://www.loropiana.it).

### *Malo*

Via della Spiga 7 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

One of the most famous names in Italian quality cashmere, Malo has opened a shop that sells both men's and women's lines; in summer, you'll find non-cashmere items, too. ☎ 02/7601-6109. [www.malo.it](http://www.malo.it).

#### **Shop & Save**

Malo devotees will want to check out the outlet in Campi Bisenzio, outside Florence. See p. 143 for details.

### *Myself*

Via Giuseppe Verdi 2 (Metro: Duomo).

This small cashmere shop, right across from La Scala, specializes in lightweight cashmeres. There's another branch at Corso Magenta 29, if you're in that neighborhood. ☎ 02/8050-6712.

## DEPARTMENT STORES

### *Armani Megastore*

Via Manzoni 31 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

I don't know what to call this except a department store, although the word "showroom" comes to mind, as does "showcase" . . . as does "ohmigod."

The store is almost a city block long and has three levels, some of which bleed through from one to the next to add

height and drama. The giant video screen says it all—this is a store for people who don't know how to read (although there is a small bookstore upstairs).

You'll also find a cafe, a branch of Nobu, a florist, and several of the Armani lines (many of which have goods that are not sold elsewhere, such as the home furnishings, which look like something designed by Terence Conran). Casa Armani is going fancy on that look, so stay tuned—bespoke furniture will be next. ☎ 02/7231-8600. [www.armani-viamanzoni31.it](http://www.armani-viamanzoni31.it).

### Shop Talk

Note that the more prestigious Armani lines are not sold here. Giorgio Armani (Black Label) is located at Via Sant'Andrea 9, while the Armani Collezioni boutique is on Corso Venezia.

### *Coin*

Piazza Giornate 1a; Corso Vercelli 30–32; Piazzale Cantore; Piazzale Loreta.

Pronounced “co-*een*,” this department store is not quite as convenient or as much fun as La Rinascente. That said, if you find yourself near one of the four locations, by all means check it out. I feel like Coin has more energy than La Rina and is more likely to have hot styles and designer copies. In fact, Coin specializes in designer-inspired looks at moderate prices; it has completely re-created itself in the last couple years and is far more upscale than ever before. ☎ 02/5519-2083 for the Piazza Giornate location. [www.coin.it](http://www.coin.it).

### *La Rinascente*

Piazza del Duomo (Metro: Duomo).

The mother of all Milanese department stores has shed its chrysalis and emerged a social butterfly.

There's a ton of merchandise here, making it a good place to see a lot and absorb trends and makers quickly. The style of the store is in the American-Anglo model, so don't expect all goods to be Italian, and don't expect to feel very Italian

while shopping here. Things are organized by brand; there's also a mezzanine level of big-name accessories.

Note that this is a full-service department store; along with the cafe, there are hairdresser and beauty facilities, free alterations (except on sale goods), banking facilities with an ATM, customer service, and more.

The store does not close for lunch during the week. The hours are extraordinary, especially for Italy: Monday through Saturday from 9:30am to 10pm, Sunday from 10am to 10pm. You can go to church at the Duomo and then go shopping! ☎ 02/88-521. [www.rinascente.it](http://www.rinascente.it).

### *Max Mara*

Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: San Babila).

Spilling over four floors, the new flagship Max Mara store is worth a visit, if only to admire the architecture. Frameless floor-to-ceiling windows flood the space with light and provide a dramatic showcase for the clothes and accessories. All Max Mara lines, including Wedding, are displayed on open racks. ☎ 02/7600-8849. [www.maxmaragroup.com](http://www.maxmaragroup.com).

**BEST BETS** You won't want to miss the Basement, which is home to the Denim and Weekend collections, as well as a new selection of home furnishings.

### *Muji*

Corso Buenos Aires 36 (Metro: Porta Venezia).

With housewares, notebooks, jackets, backpacks, and accessories in various shades of beige, this is Japanese minimalist design at its best—and it's new to Italy. ☎ 02/7428-1169. [www.muji.com](http://www.muji.com).

### *Oviesse/OVS Industry*

Corso Buenos Aires 35 (Metro: Porta Venezia); Galleria Passarella 2 (Metro: San Babila).

Technically, this might constitute a lifestyle store, not a department store; it is the antithesis of the Armani Megastore. It is a

temple to cheap thrills—the most exciting copies of fashions for the least amount of money you have ever seen. It is the Italian version of H&M and then some. I went nuts here and dream of going to all the other branches. On my most recent visit, I found a purple linen dress for 49€. You get my drift. Sizes go up to 52, although they do run a little small. ☎ 02/2040-4801 (Corso Buenos Aires), 02/7628-1622 (Galleria Passarella). [www.oviesse.it](http://www.oviesse.it).

### Shop Talk

Note the name change: The new marketing team is renaming the chain. Some stores still bear the old Ovesse name, while others are now called OVS Industry.

### UPIM

Corso Buenos Aires 21 (Metro: Porta Venezia); numerous other locations around town.

UPIM, sort of a dime store for fashion and real people, is not as cutting edge as it used to be. Still, this store is useful partly because it doesn't close for lunch, and partly because it has a supermarket in the basement. It's worth exploring. ☎ 800/824-040 in Italy. [www.upim.it](http://www.upim.it).

**BEST BETS** If you're here during the winter, look for inexpensive cashmere sweaters.

## DESIGNER BOUTIQUES

### CONTINENTAL & U.K. BIG NAMES

Use the Montenapoleone Metro stop for all listings below, unless otherwise noted.

#### *Burberry*

Via Pietro Verri 7.

#### *Cartier*

Corso Vercelli 2.

*Celine*

Via Montenapoleone 25.

*Chanel*

Via Sant'Andrea 10.

*Christian Dior*

Via Montenapoleone 12.

*Escada*

Corso Matteotti 22 (Metro: San Babila).

*Gaultier*

Via della Spiga 20.

*Gieves & Hawkes*

Via Manzoni 12.

*Hermès*

Via Sant'Andrea 21.

*Hugo Boss*

Corso Matteotti 11 (Metro: San Babila).

*Kenzo*

Via Sant'Andrea 11.

*Laura Ashley*

Via Brera 4 (Metro: Duomo).

*Louis Vuitton*

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: Duomo); Via Montenapoleone 2.

*Paul Smith*

Via Manzoni 20.

*Sonia Rykiel*

Corso Matteotti 3 (Metro: San Babila).

*Ventilo*

Via Manzoni 25.

*Viktor & Rolf*

Via Sant'Andrea 14.

*Yves Saint Laurent*

Via Montenapoleone 27.

*Wolford*

Via Manzoni 16b; Corso Venezia 8.

**ITALIAN BIG NAMES**

Use the Montenapoleone Metro stop for all listings below, unless otherwise noted.

*Alberta Ferretti*

Via Montenapoleone 21.

*Antonio Fusco*

Via Sant'Andrea 11.

*Armani Collezioni*

Corso Venezia.

*Bottega Veneta*

Via Montenapoleone 5.

***Brioni***

Via Gesù 2a, 3, 4.

**Shop Talk**

James Bond still wears Brioni, of course. There are stores all over the world, but the Milan shop is the temple for service.

***D&G Uomo***

Corso Venezia 15 (Metro: San Babila).

***Dolce & Gabbana***

Via della Spiga 2, 26.

***Emilio Pucci***

Via Montenapoleone 14.

***Ermenegildo Zegna***

Via Montenapoleoni 27e.

***Etro***

Via Montenapoleone 5.

**Shop & Save**

Wait—there's an outlet right in town. See p. 246 for the scoop on Spaccio Etro.

***Fendi***

Via Sant'Andrea 16.

***Gianfranco Ferré***

Via Sant'Andrea 15.

*Giorgio Armani*

Armani Megastore, Via Manzoni 31.

*Giorgio Armani (Black Label)*

Via Sant'Andrea 9.

*Gucci*

Via Montenapoleone 5–7.

*Just Cavalli*

Via della Spiga 42.

*Kiton*

Via Gesù 11.

*Krizia*

Via della Spiga 23.

**Shop Talk**

No, Krizia isn't the designer's name—it's a character from Plato. The designer behind it all is Mariuccia Mandelli. Imaginative, with a good sense of humor, she still manages to produce drop-dead-elegant clothes that rich women want to wear.

*La Perla*

Via Montenapoleone 1.

*La Perla Uomo*

Via Manzoni 17.

*Laura Biagiotti*

Via Borgospesso 19.

*Les Copains*

Via Manzoni 21.

***Mariella Burani***

Via Montenapoleone 3.

***Marina Rinaldi***

Corso Vittorio Emanuele II at Galleria Passarella 2 (Metro: San Babila).

***Max & Co.***

Via Dante 7.

***Max Mara***

Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: San Babila).

***Missoni***

Via Montenapoleone 8.

***Miu Miu***

Via Sant'Andrea 21.

***Moschino***

Via della Spiga 30.

***Nazareno Gabrielli***

Via Montenapoleone 23.

***Philosophy di Alberta Ferretti***

Via Montenapoleone 19.

***Prada***

Via Montenapoleone 8.

***Roberto Cavalli***

Via della Spiga 42.

*Salvatore Ferragamo*

Via Montenapoleone 3.

*Tod's*

Via della Spiga 22.

*Valentino*

Via Montenapoleone 20.

## DISCOUNTERS

See “Outlets (In Town),” on p. 245, for more good deals.

*Basement*

Via Senato 15 (Metro: San Babila).

True to its name, this store is in a basement. You must be looking for it in order to spot the stairs that lead to the door. The small space contains neat racks of designer clothes, plus a few accessories, all discounted by 60% to 75%. The selection was limited when we visited, but because the location is so handy, you might want to stop in. Yes, Armani, Gucci, Prada . . . . © 02/7631-7913.

*Dmagazine*

Via Montenapoleone 26 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

Considering the address and convenience factor, this one is a must-do: a discounter selling high-end names right in the heart of the biggest fashion stores in town and not far from a Metro stop. Last visit, I was drooling over the racks of Dries Van Noten and didn't want to let go. There were Lagerfeld shoes, Miu Miu separates, Prada and Stella McCartney dresses, and more. The names were in place; the prices were fair considering the brands. © 02/7600-6027.

## *Il Salvagente*

Via Fratelli Bronzetti 16 (no nearby Metro).

Il Salvagente is a famous off-price shop located in a tony residential area. There is no sign out front and no indication that you are to enter through the gate, walk down the driveway, and continue toward the courtyard, where you will eventually find a sign that marks the entrance.

American and European styles from big-name designers, even in larger sizes, are sold from two floors of retail space. While the labels are still in the clothes, the merchandise is not well organized, so you must be feeling very strong to go through it all. There's so much here that you'll have a good chance of finding something worthwhile, but you could strike out. Some items have been seen on runways or are more than a season old; not everything is new or in perfect condition.

### **Shop & Save**

If you stumble upon the January sale, prices at the register may be 30% off the lowest ticketed amount.

On various visits, however, I've spotted Krizia, Armani, Valentino, Guy Laroche, Trussardi, made-in-Italy Lacroix handbags, and designer sunglasses for 50€. On my most recent visit, I was truly dizzy from all the choices.

This place is for the strong and the hungry: The atmosphere is drab, the display zero. Dressing rooms are available, though. Pay attention to the hours: The store is closed Monday until 3pm. From Tuesday through Saturday, it is open nonstop from 10am to 7pm. © 02/7611-0328. [www.salvagentemilano.it](http://www.salvagentemilano.it).

## *Il Salvagente Bimbi*

Via Giuseppe Balzaretti 28 (no nearby Metro).

This is a separate shop from Il Salvagente, specifically for children's clothing, but it's harder to find—ask for a map at Il Salvagente and you can walk from there. It's hard to find a

taxi to get home, so you may want to ask an employee to call you a cab. “Taxi” in Italian is *taxi*. **Note:** I used a car and driver to get here, and my Milanese driver got lost. Still, if you’re looking for expensive kids’ clothing at affordable prices, this is the place. © 02/5961-0562. [www.salvagente.milano.it](http://www.salvagente.milano.it).

### *Vestistock*

Via Ramazzini 11 (Metro: Porta Venezia).

Vestistock is a chain of discount shops in various neighborhoods. If you hit it lucky, you might find labels such as Les Copains, Moschino, Versace, and Montana. When I visited, I saw Tod’s boots and plenty of men’s clothing in large sizes. There are men’s, women’s, and kids’ clothes as well as accessories, so go and have a ball.

The Via Ramazzini store is open nonstop, Monday through Friday from 10am to 7pm, Saturday from 10am to 7:30pm, and Sunday from 10am to 1:30pm and 3:30 to 7:30pm. © 02/2951-4497. [www.vestistock.it](http://www.vestistock.it).

## FLEA MARKETS

### *Bollate Antiques Market*

Piazza Vittorio Veneto, Bollate.

Take the train or a taxi to this suburb on the north side of Milan, where there is a Sunday *mercato dell’usato*, or antiques market, with around 300 dealers. Unlike most Sunday markets, which are held once a month, this one takes place weekly. Take the no. 90 or 91 bus to the Piazza della Libertà in Bollate. It’s open from 8am to 6pm.

**BEST BETS** Most dealers sell English antiques, if you can believe that; silver is especially hot, as are old prints. There’s not much in the way of bed linens, but there are some old hats and a fair amount of furniture.

### *Brera Antiques Market (Mercatone dell'Antiquariato)*

Via Brera (Metro: Duomo).

This flea market, held on the third Sunday of each month, is a local favorite. Because it takes place right in the heart of downtown Milan—in the shadow of La Scala, in fact—this is a drop-dead-chic market in which to be seen prowling. About 50 antiques dealers set up stalls, and many artists and designers turn out. To find it, just head for Via Brera. Do wear your fur and walk your dog if at all possible.

### *Navigli Antiques Market*

Grand Navigli (Metro: Porta Genova).

If flea markets are your thing, plan to be in Milan on the last Sunday of the month. Then you can spend midmorning at this fabulous flea market, which stretches all the way from Porta Ticinese to Porta Genova and the Viale Papiniano. Some say it's the most stylish flea market in all of Europe, attracting approximately 400 dealers. You'll find the usual antiques and wonderful junk, and the crowd is one of Milan's top see-and-be-seen.

While the market is open from 8am to 2pm, do remember this is Italy, not New York—things are most lively from 10am to noon. The area has lots of cafes, so you can shop until 2pm and then eat lunch—a perfect Sunday in Milano. To get here, take the no. 19 tram to Ripa di Porta Ticinese or the green line to the Porta Genova Metro stop. See the map on p. 219.

## FOODSTUFFS

### *Armandola*

Via della Spiga 50 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

This is a teeny-weeny, itty-bitty deli with fresh foods, dried mushrooms, tuna in jars, and all sorts of fancy, expensive, and yummy things. You can't beat the location for convenience. © 02/7602-1657. [www.armandola.com](http://www.armandola.com).

**BEST BETS** I paid 12€ for a jar of tuna; the recipient said it was worth the price. Sometimes I buy a ready-made picnic here.

### *Enoteca Cotti*

Via Solferino 42 (Metro: Duomo).

Considered one of the best wine stores in Milano, it also has serious olive oil, as is the custom at a good *enoteca*. © 02/657-2995. [www.enotecacotti.it](http://www.enotecacotti.it).

## HOME STYLE

Also see the “Tabletop & Gifts” section, on p. 250.

### *Lisa Corti Home Textile Emporium*

Via Lecco 2 (Metro: Porta Venezia).

I don’t even know how to describe this space or shopping experience. First off, you should understand who Lisa Corti is—an artist and magician with color and textiles, whose work is sold at Saks Fifth Avenue. She is best known for her home design for table and bed and sofa, but she also makes clothes for women and children, accessories, and, at one time, dishes and ceramics. She is an artist and does it all; her work is her signature. Even her postcards are glorious (and free).

The showroom is a real workroom; the shopping op is sort of like being in the factory outlet. The prices are not low, but they’re still just a fraction of what you’d see in the U.S. The store does tax refunds, and someone here does speak English. © 02/2024-1483. [www.lisacorti.com](http://www.lisacorti.com).

**BEST BETS** I paid about 120€ for a quilt that cost 200€ in the south of Italy and 280€ at Saks.

## JEWELRY

### *Angela Pintaldi*

Piazza Sant’Erasmus 9 (Metro: Duomo).

This is very serious costume jewelry. Pintaldi’s work is similar to Bulgari, but funkier. For the last decade, she has ruled as

the “in” creator of creative and expressive jewels, frequently made with semiprecious stones. She also works with ivory and other materials, based on color and texture—pure magic meets pure art. © 02/781-778.

### *Nomination*

Corso Venezia 6 (Metro: San Babila).

The modular Nomination bracelet, available in several widths, has a series of links that can be filled or replaced with decorative designs and gemstones. Options include all-steel or 18k gold combo designs, dangling charms, and more creativity than any traditional charm bracelet can offer. This is considered a very hip item by many—and it costs much less in Italy. © 02/7600-1136. [www.nomination.com](http://www.nomination.com).

**BEST BETS** The new designs feature links with cabochon jewels and pavé diamond initials.

## LINENS & LACE

### *Bassetti*

Corso Vercelli 25; Corso Garibaldi 20; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 15 (Metro: Duomo).

A famous name for years, Bassetti makes the kind of linens that fall between ready-to-wear and couture—they’re more affordable than the big-time expensive stuff and far nicer than anything you’d find at the low end. There are branch locations in every major Italian city. © 800/820-129 in Italy. [www.bassetti.com](http://www.bassetti.com).

**BEST BETS** Although Bassetti does sell colors, its hot look is paisley fabrics in the Etro vein.

### *Bellora*

Via Manzoni 43 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

This more-than-a-century-old Italian firm is famous for its bed linens and pajamas. It does nursery sets for infants and a kids’ line of sheets as well. Styles range from old-fashioned

solid linens (which you must have embroidered, *cara*) to lively colors in the current mode. There's also a made-to-measure department. © 02/659-6361. [www.bellora.it](http://www.bellora.it).

### *Frette*

Via Montenapoleone 21 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

This company specializes in Italian bed and table linens, with both consumer and professional (that is, hotel) lines. The brand actually began in the French Alps and then moved into Italy in the late 19th century. It has rejuvenated its look in recent years, going so far upscale that it now calls itself “home couture.” The line includes items such as pajamas and robes and leisure clothing, as well as bedding. Naturally there is a business in custom-created bed linens as well. © 02/7600-3791. [www.frette.com](http://www.frette.com).

### *Pratesi*

Via Verdi 6 (Metro: Duomo).

This shop is somewhat hidden in the courtyard of a palazzo. It's the Milan retail location for this family-held linen and luxe group. The store is long and narrow and fits around one side of the light-filled courtyard, with various parts of the showroom devoted to pajamas, toiletries, towels, and so on.

#### **Shopping Adventure**

If you're hitting this shop, I am assuming you can't make it to the Pratesi outlet in Pistoia, just a half-hour train ride from Florence. See p. 153 for details.

If it makes you feel any better, sheets sold at regular retail go for about \$1,000 each, but they will last for well over 25 years—and you'll pay less here than you would back in the U.S. © 02/8058-3058. [www.pratesi.com](http://www.pratesi.com).

**BEST BETS** Pratesi is most famous for bed linens, but you'll also find baby clothes, beachwear, and bathrobes—and quality like you've never seen.

*Tezenis*

Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: Duomo).

A hot brand, mostly for teens and tweens. Shop for pajamas and underwear in solids or cutie-pie prints; there are stores all over the country. It's a good source for gifts to bring home, as the line is virtually unknown outside of Italy. [www.tezenis.com](http://www.tezenis.com).

**LOCAL HEROES***Alberto Aspesi*

Via Montenapoleone 13 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

This is a large gallery/boutique with the same concept as Colette in Paris and Dover Street Market in London. It is so large, in fact, that you can enter from Montenapo or from Via Bigli. © 02/861-792. [www.albertoaspesi.com](http://www.albertoaspesi.com).

*Fontana*

Via della Spiga 33 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

This is modern Italian design of the most expensive and highest order. The interior is swank and very Milan, with lots of marble and sleek woods. The counters are suspended from thin wires and seem to hang in midair. © 02/7600-5372.

*Luisa Cevese*

Via San Maurilio 3 (Metro: Duomo).

This textile designer creates true works of art. She does some clothes and handbags and whatever amuses her—all bold and exciting and very individual. © 02/801-099. [www.riedizioni.com](http://www.riedizioni.com).

**Shop Talk**

Luisa Cevese's work is often sold through museum stores around the world—including the MoMA in NYC.

*Malloni*

Via Santo Spirito 18 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

Fabio Malloni and Floriana Orsetto create stunning pieces that are both wearable and timeless, with an emphasis on luxurious fabrics, flowing lines, and a neutral palette. This is what you call investment clothing. © 02/7600-5649. [www.malloni.com](http://www.malloni.com).

*Marisa*

Via della Spiga 52 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

This is it; this is the reason we shop or stare. This is the store that makes sense out of \$1,000 little linen dresses—and that's saying a lot. It's all about the cut here, where several designer lines are chosen to demonstrate that philosophy—among them, Eskandar. © 02/7600-2082.

*10 Corso Como*

Corso Como 10 (Metro: Garibaldi).

Like I said in chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter under “The Five Best Stores in Milan,” I'll repeat myself: 10 Corso Como is one of the best stores in the world. It sells a little of everything, but all of it seemingly unique. Please also see p. 247 for the outlet and p. 208 for the cafe. © 02/2900-2674. [www.10corsocomo.com](http://www.10corsocomo.com).

**MARKETS***Mercato di Viale Papiniano (San Agostino Market)*

Viale Papiniano (Metro: San Agostino).

First, I must admit that no other guidebook calls this the San Agostino Market. I call it that because San Agostino is the name of the closest Metro stop, and it helps me remember where this market is located on the Viale Papiniano.

This is a T-shaped market. The horizontal cross of the T is the fruit, food, and vegetable market; the long stroke is the

dry-goods market. The dry-goods portion goes on for 2 blocks, so don't quit after the first block. Everything in the world is sold here, including a few designer items that seem to have fallen off the backs of trucks (but are carefully mixed in with less valuable items). For example, one dealer in the dry-goods market seems to specialize in bath articles but also has a small selection of Missoni bathrobes.

You'll find everything from the latest teen fashions to CDs, kitchen supplies, car supplies, pet supplies, aprons, and housedresses. There are also socks, towels, batteries, luggage, underwear, sewing thread, running shoes, designer shoes, lace curtains, and fabrics by the bolt. I saw the best cashmeres at the best prices here.

The market is open on Tuesday and Saturday.

### **Shop Talk**

Markets sell fruits and vegetables and dry goods, while flea markets sell old junk. See "Flea Markets" (p. 236) for more on the other kind of market.

## **MENSWEAR**

### *Boggi*

Piazza San Babila 3 (Metro: San Babila).

Boggi specializes in the English look, the preppy look; whatever you call it, you'll find cable-knit sweaters and plaid hunting trousers here. There are several shops, but the main store is near Via Montenapoleone. It's not cheap, but the quality is very high. © 02/7600-0366. [www.boggi.it](http://www.boggi.it).

### *Cashmere, Cotton & Silk*

Via Madonnina 19 (Metro: Duomo).

This is one of those fancy stores on the little side streets of Brera that is worth looking at, if only for its charm. It's modern with an old-fashioned feel. Inside, you'll find Milanese yuppies scurrying around, choosing among the shirts, sweaters, and suits made from only the three fibers in the store's

name. Prices are very, very high, but the shopping experience makes you feel like royalty. © 02/805-7426.

### *Dior Homme*

Via Montenapoleone 14 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

I am not sure which is more gorgeous, the architecture or the slim young things who shop here—all worth staring at in this new store. It's very stainless-steel and art-gallery minimal; the dressing-room mirrors are created by sensors that relay your image onto the wall. © 02/7631-7801. [www.diorhomme.com](http://www.diorhomme.com).

### *Dirk Bikkembergs*

Via Manzoni 47 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

This is the flagship lifestyle store of the Dirk Bikkembergs empire. If you don't know about him, Bikkembergs launched his career in the early 1980s as a member of the "Antwerp Six," a group of influential avant-garde designers who put Belgium on the map as a fashion destination. The three labels of the house (Dirk Bikkembergs Sport Couture, Bikkembergs, and Bikkembergs Sport) are all intended for the active guy; the line includes clothing, shoes, eyewear, underwear, and accessories. © 02/366-38250. [www.bikkembergs.com](http://www.bikkembergs.com).

#### **Shop Talk**

You can finally identify with the jock crowd by wandering the store's built-in apartment, which is occupied from time to time by Bikkembergs and local football (soccer) players. It's an immersion gimmick, meant to tempt shoppers into buying what they find in the closets and cupboards.

### *Eddy Monetti*

Piazza San Babila 4 (Metro: San Babila).

One of the leading sources for Anglo style in Milan, Monetti deals with rich gentlemen who want to look even richer. It hand-stitches suits and shirts, but also sells off the rack. The Monetti customer likes special service and hates to shop; he

wants to come here and be pampered and know that he'll walk out looking like a million dollars. © 02/7600-0940. [www.eddymonetti.it](http://www.eddymonetti.it).

### *Ermenegildo Zegna Global Store*

Via Montenapoleone 27e (Metro: Montenapoleone).

For centuries, the Zegna family has excelled in the quality wool business. Until recently, the ready-to-wear was a small sideline, but now, in a smattering of free-standing boutiques, the world's richest men can buy the best suits ready-made in Italy. There's one in Paris, one in Florence, and this new store in Milan, which is the closest to the mill in Biella, and serves as the family flagship. The shop is large and modern and sells classic tailoring to discriminating men. © 02/7600-6437. [www.zegna.com](http://www.zegna.com).

### *Tincati*

Piazza Oberdan 2 (Metro: Porta Venezia); numerous other locations around town.

Tincati is an old-fashioned men's store, or haberdashery (as they used to be called), with a very good old-world reputation—not for hotshots who want the Euro-Japanese look. © 02/2940-4326. [www.tincati.mi.it](http://www.tincati.mi.it).

**BEST BETS** Its shirts are famous because they come with a tab that passes between the legs (trust me on this) and an extra collar and two cuffs.

## OUTLETS (IN TOWN)

### *DT Intrend (Max Mara Outlet)*

Galleria San Carlo 6 (Metro: San Babila).

I can't stop to sing about this outlet, as I am too busy getting there. And I often get lost while searching for it because it is inside one of the many gallerias on the main drag. The store is large, it's clean, it looks like a normal retailer, it has two levels, it takes plastic, it carries all of the Max Mara lines—including Marina Rinaldi (large sizes)—and it has coats for

36€. Don't ignore the Penny Black label; it's Max Mara, too. Handbags go for about 165€. For a lunch break, try **Brek** (p. 206) or the **Fratelli la Bufala** cafe across the street. © 02/7600-0829.

### *Marni*

Via Filippo Tajani 1 (no nearby Metro).

Based in Forte dei Marmi, the Palm Beach of Florence, the Marni family (actually named Castiglioni) has become well known in the U.S. only recently. Marni does a cross between whimsy and silly; it makes clothes that people talk about, not the average bland garments—that's for sure.

The outlet, located in a residential area, is tricky to find, but you'll know you're here when you see the small bronze marni plaque on the gate outside. Ring the bell, the gate will open, and you're on the way to clothing, handbags, shoes, and necklaces marked down 50% or more. It's best to go by taxi; be sure to specify Via Filippo Tajani, not Via Tajani. © 02/7104-0332. [www.marni.com](http://www.marni.com).

### *Spaccio Etro*

Via Spartaco 3 (no nearby Metro).

The Etro family has been in the paisley business with some of Italy's most famous mills in the Lake Como area for centuries. The fashions for men and women are so chic and whimsical, you could swoon.

This outlet began life as an employee store in the firm's offices, but it's open to the public and is the kind of secret that every smart shopper in Milan knows about. Now then, did I have fun? I get sweaty just reminiscing. The tiny shop has two levels; the clothes are downstairs. There are bins filled with things: I got men's pocket squares for 20€ each, silk suspenders for 12€. You'll also find fabric by the meter and everything else. Ask your hotel's concierge for bus directions. © 02/5502-0216. [www.etro.it](http://www.etro.it).

### *10 Corso Como Outlet*

Via Tazzoli 3 (Metro: Garibaldi).

Considering the fashion-forward fashion sold at 10 Corso Como (see “The Five Best Stores in Milan,” p. 210), it’s not a surprise that some looks might not sell. When the clothes go off the floor in the main store, they are taken around the corner to the outlet. Prices range from reasonable to low; in many cases, the marked-down price is what you would have wanted to pay in the first place (240€ instead of 480€), so it doesn’t seem like a real bargain. There are some accessories, as well as menswear.

The outlet is a little hard to find, though it’s not much more than a block from the main store. Turn right from the store, then left at the corner, pass the ATA Hotel, and turn onto Via Tazzoli—which is an oblique left, so pay attention. © 02/2901-5130. [www.10corsocomo.com](http://www.10corsocomo.com).

## OUTLETS (OUT OF TOWN)

### *Franciacorta Outlet Village*

Piazza Cascina Moie, Rodengo Saiano, Brescia.

This is probably the closest outlet mall to Milan, situated between Milan and Verona. There are two different outlet villages in the Brescia area; the other is on the way to Mantua, which is in a different direction. Of the two, I like this one better. Stores include everything from Benetton and Boggi to Frette. The mall is located 5km (3 miles) off the A4 and is easy to find—take the Ospitaletto exit and follow the brown outlet village signs. © 030/681-0364. [www.franciacortaoutlet.it](http://www.franciacortaoutlet.it).

### *Serravalle Designer Outlet*

Via della Moda 1, Serravalle Scrivia, Alessandria.

This is the oldest of the American-style outlet malls in Italy, meaning it’s about 10 years old. It’s closer to Genoa than Milan, although it’s only a 90-minute drive from Milan.

The center has a village atmosphere and just about every store—and designer boutique—you can imagine, including Brioni, Bruno Magli, Bulgari, Diesel, Diesel Kids, Dolce & Gabbana, Etro, Frette, La Perla, Moncler, Roberto Cavalli, Salvatore Ferragamo, Versace, and more.

Don't try to do this on public transportation from Milan. I spent over an hour with my hotel's concierge and his computer trying to route this, and with changing trains and all that stuff, it was a nightmare not worth attempting. The outlet center is open daily from 10am to 8pm. ☎ 0143/609-000. [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it).

### *Vicolungo Outlets*

Piazza Santa Caterina, Via Papa Giovanni XXIII, Vicolungo, Novara.

Located in the province of Novara, Vicolungo has more than 130 stores and is open every day of the year. Brands include Baldinini, Benetton, Bruno Magli, Cerruti, Frette, Henry Cotton's, Les Copains, Nike, and Puma. ☎ 03/2183-5032. [www.vicolungooutlets.com](http://www.vicolungooutlets.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 The site has an English-language link, so you can search the store list to see if this outlet center is worth your time. There's also info on a shuttle service from Milan.

## PAPER GOODS

### *Fabriano*

Via Ponte Vetro 17 (Metro: Montenapoleone or Dante Cordusio).

This Milan firm sells everything from bound notebooks to pens and papers. You can pick up some fabulous gift items for not much money here. ☎ 02/7631-8754. [www.fabrianoboutique.com](http://www.fabrianoboutique.com).

### *Pineider*

Corso Europa 13 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

Italy's most famous name in old-fashioned, heavy-duty, richer-than-thou stationery is Pineider, with stores in every major city (and a few locations in Milan). The real news is that this old-time brand has decided to perk itself up, as other companies have done, and has expanded beyond paper goods to gift items that are chic, sublime, and very expensive. © 02/7602-2353. [www.pineider.com](http://www.pineider.com).

### Shop Talk

American designer Rebecca Moses, who lives in Milan, is behind the new look at Pineider.

## PERFUMES

For the most part, perfume is expensive in Italy, and you must be smart to catch a bargain, so buy at the airport duty-free shop or in **La Rinascente**, where you get a 10% discount at the checkout counter if you show your passport.

There are several branches of the enormous German chain **Douglas** dotted around the main shopping districts. You may want to ask about its Douglas Card, which will bring you extra perks and which you can use in any of its stores worldwide.

If you are a fan of the scent **Acqua di Parma**, note there is a free-standing store at Via Gesù 3. **Etro** also sells its line of perfumes from its shops.

If money is no object, pop into **Profumo** (Via Brera 6), where American and English imports are sold at higher prices than you are used to.

## SHOES & LEATHER GOODS

Shoe shops obviously abound, with selection in just about all price ranges. The greatest problem with cheap shoes is that they wear out more quickly than well-made shoes. You can stick to brand-name shoes in Milan, or explore some of the low-cost no-names—it's all here. No-name shoes start at about 24€ a pair. Better no-name shoes cost 40€ a pair. Just wander the middle-class neighborhoods where real people shop.

Please note that I have listed several of the big-name leather-goods firms under “Designer Boutiques: Italian Big Names” (p. 230) because they are more or less icons in the business and most of them also have clothing lines. The following brands are not as famous in the U.S., but they deserve attention while you are studying the scene in Milan.

### *Bottega Veneta*

Via Montenapoleone 5 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

### *Bruno Magli*

Via Montenapoleone at Via Manzoni (Metro: Montenapoleone).

### *Casadei*

Via Sant’Andrea 17 (Metro: San Babila).

### *Coccinelle*

Via Manzoni at Via Bigli (Metro: San Babila).

### *Hogan*

Via Montenapoleone 23 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

## TABLETOP & GIFTS

Don’t miss **Lisa Corti Home Textile Emporium** (p. 211).

### *High Tech*

Piazza XXV Aprile 12 (Metro: Garibaldi).

By Milan standards, High Tech is an enormous place. The second floor is completely devoted to home furnishings, all with the look we’ve come to associate with the city of Milan. Begun by Aldo Cibic, formerly of Memphis Milano fame. © 02/624-1101. [www.high-techmilano.com](http://www.high-techmilano.com).

*Lorenzi*

Via Montenapoleone 9 (Metro: Montenapoleone).

Milan's leading cutlery store, where you can buy all kinds of knives—not just for the table—as well as pipes and other gifts and gadgets for men. © 02/7602-2848. [www.lorenzi.it](http://www.lorenzi.it).

*Moronigomma*

Corso Matteotti 14 (Metro: San Babila).

This store has plastics from all over the world, so don't buy any of the expensive American stuff. Instead, get a load of the Italian designer vinyl, the car products, and the household items. With its affordable prices, this may be the only store in Milan where you can go wild and not be sorry the next day. It's conveniently located at the start of Via Montenapoleone, on the far side of the Piazza San Babila; there are many other wonderful design hangouts in the area, too. © 02/796-220. [www.moronigomma.it](http://www.moronigomma.it).

**TEENS & TWEENS**

Teens need no specific addresses; just plop them onto Corso Buenos Aires. Or try the following specialty-label stops.

*Diesel Planet Store*

Piazza San Babila (Metro: San Babila).

This new shopping destination is the biggest Diesel Planet Store in the world. Diesel fans are welcomed by a gigantic “denim wall” that displays 5,000 pairs of jeans, including more than 150 different models, each with a different wash treatment. There are perfumed essences in the air, Wi-Fi stations, a DJ, a vintage area, and on and on. All the Diesel products (way beyond jeans) and designer limited-edition collections are here, as well as a Diesel Style Lab and the Diesel Home Collection. Teen heaven. © 02/7639-0583. [www.diesel.com](http://www.diesel.com).

**H&M**

Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: San Babila); Corso Buenos Aires 56 (Metro: Lima).

The Swedish low-cost retailer continues to expand in Milan, which shows that it's the newest international brand to move in on Italian expertise in low-cost fashion. © 02/7601-7222. [www.hm.com](http://www.hm.com).

**Zara**

Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Metro: San Babila or Duomo); Corso Buenos Aires 54 (Metro: Lima); Via Torino 2 (Metro: Duomo).

The Spanish retailer is opening shops as fast as I can type and is making a big dent on Italian fashions, which it somewhat emulates. Collections rotate weekly. © 02/7639-8177. [www.zara.com](http://www.zara.com).

## Beyond Milan

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**LAKE COMO AREA**

Once upon a time, silk was made in Como and the area around the lakes. There were wonderful outlet stores that you could visit on a Monday morning, when stores in Milan were closed, and you could shop your heart out. Those days are gone.

I won't get into an economic or geopolitical discussion, but as you know, most everything we buy these days is made in Asia. As a result, most of the factory stores in Como and surrounds have closed. Some of the outlets that do exist are professionally in the outlet business or even sell goods from Asia.

If you have a car, you will want to explore this entire area. If you want a fun adventure, you'll come to Como for a taste of the real Italy by way of much luxury and delight.

## GETTING THERE

If you have a rail pass, don't use it: It's a waste of money to use one of your travel days on the trip to Como. I got myself a round-trip, first-class ticket for about 26€. I bought it at the ticket counter in Milan's Centrale train station; the transaction was in Italian, so I didn't get too much of what was happening. The ticket was marked "via Monza," and I panicked that I would have to make a connection in Monza—but I did not. The ride was a simple 20 minutes on a commuter train, nothing to it.

On another trip, I booked a car and driver from Milan for a half-day and 150km (93 miles). The cost was about 160€, which I thought was okay except the driver kept getting lost and I was paying by the hour. Instead, consider arriving by train and then hiring a local taxi to drive and wait for you.

Last trip, I drove. Driving to Como is wonderful and easy, especially if you don't go in or out of Milan. Driving to the Armani outlet, however, was a nightmare—basically because the road was not properly marked, the woman I kept calling at Armani got annoyed with me, and I quit after a few very frustrating hours. Once I drove into town, got directions, and headed out again, everything was very simple (specific directions below).

## ARRIVING IN COMO

The train station, **Como San Giovanni**, has a tourist office window, many free brochures, a newsstand, and a bar. Out front, you'll find a line of taxis and vans with, finally, some English-speaking help. You can hire a taxi for the morning to take you around and wait while you shop.

The town proper is located below the train station, within walking distance. However, if you've come on a Monday, most of the town will be closed in the morning, so you might as well head first to your hotel (if you are staying for a while) or the outlets.

**SLEEPING IN COMO***Hotel Metropole Suisse*

Piazza Cavour 19, Como.

I kind of hate to tell you about this hotel because I'd like it to remain my personal secret and hideaway. Sarah found this place online; it seemed like a good price and a good location, so we booked it. It turns out to be the dream three-star you've always wanted, right on the main square at the lake-front. You can walk everywhere in town or take ferries; you will need a car (which the hotel will garage for you) to get to outlets or other villages without ferry service. Rates vary with the season, but start at 154€. © 031/269-444. [www.hotelmetropolesuisse.com](http://www.hotelmetropolesuisse.com).

*Hotel Miralago*

Piazza Risorgimento, Cernobbio.

If you love the area but can't handle the landmark Villa d'Este (see below), this small, *intime* hotel is right in downtown Cernobbio (which is all of 2 blocks long) and also faces the lake. You can walk to the Villa d'Este from here for a look-see, or vice versa. This is not the Ritz, or anything like the Villa d'Este, but if you want charm on a three-star level and this location, you will thank me forever. The rooms have been recently renovated and, best of all, prices are reasonable. A double room ranges from 120€ out of season to 150€ in high season. © 031/510-125. [www.hotelmiralago.it](http://www.hotelmiralago.it).

*Villa d'Este*

Via Regina 40, Cernobbio.

This is the dream hotel of a lifetime: the wedding hotel, the honeymoon hotel, the romantic hotel, the escape-from-reality hotel, the George-Clooney-is-your-neighbor hotel. Set in parklike surroundings, the grand hotel has gardens, some stores, fine dining, and long halls where your dachshund can run at full speed with his ears flopping. (Well, mine did.) The

so-called villa is really more of a palace (and was once a private home). You can sit outside on the terrace overlooking the lake, sip a coffee, and feel royal. There's a spa, nearby golf, cooking classes—it's a world of luxury that removes you from that other world of cares, woes, worries, and realities. Rates vary, but start at around 600€. You can book through Leading Hotels of the World (☎ 800/223-6800; [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)) or contact the hotel directly. ☎ 031/3481. [www.villadeste.it](http://www.villadeste.it).

### Shop Talk

The hotel has royal connections going back to Caroline, Princess of Wales, and it publishes a guide to the history of the villa so you can get all the glam firsthand.

## THE SHOPPING SCENE

Como lies at the southern end of Lake Como, about 50km (31 miles) north of Milan, and offers all the charm you want in a teeny, old-fashioned village on the edge of a lake surrounded by forest and Switzerland.

The town caters to the wealthy landowners who live in the villas surrounding the lake, as well as to the merely rich and/or fashionable who stop by for the weekend (as Gianni Versace used to do). There are also loads of day-trippers and visitors, many of whom are coming from Switzerland.

Best buys in the village shops include clothes, silk scarves, and leather goods. While you'll find lots of antiques, most of them are fakes or reproductions. The downtown also has few big designer names, which is part of its charm. One of my favorite stores is the local branch of **Standa**, because I love dime stores and because there is a supermarket on the lower level. There's also a regular food-and-clothing market in Como, held on Saturdays at the Piazza Vittoria.

You come to Como and the area to absorb a piece of the real Italy, to shop like a local, to look out at the lake, and to be spirited away to romance and cashmere, with the last remaining rustle of silk. You come here because if you don't, you will have missed one of the most magical places on earth.

Sarah came looking for George Clooney. No luck. The shopping is just part of the magic.

If you are making a return to this area after a few years, note that the most wonderful stores are all closed now. Yes, even Ratti. While *La Tessitura* (p. 257) is owned by Mantero, it is nothing like the old Mantero shop in downtown Como. R.I.P. There is fun shopping, but the serious shopping is out of town and only accessible to those with a car.

Okay, wait a second—there is still a **Ratti** outlet, which I have written about below. But the gorgeous outlet in the palazzo overlooking the lake that was easy to get to and had incredible designer goods—that one is gone forever. Just like my waist.

## ABOUT MONDAY

While several outlets are open on Monday morning, most of the stores in Como are not. And the **Silk Museum** (Via Castelnovo 9; ☎ 031/303-180; [www.museosetacomo.com](http://www.museosetacomo.com)) is open only Tuesday through Friday, from 9am to noon and 3 to 6pm.

## THE LAST OF THE COMO OUTLETS

### *Diffusione Seta*

Via Pasquale Paoli 3, Como.

This is one of the oddest outlets I have ever been to. It's large, it's easy to shop, and it has designer merchandise at half price. It also has a lot of silks from Asia. Hours are 9am to 12:30pm and 3 to 6pm. ☎ 031/523-800.

**BEST BETS** Sarah bought a white linen shirt here for 12€ that was one of the best buys of our trip. Go figure.

### *Emporio della Setta*

Via Canturina 190, Como.

The Emporium of Silk sounds pretty good, huh? Many big designer names are represented in this clearinghouse for silk from the local mills. Discounts are in the 40% range. To add

to your savings, there are seasonal sales in January and July. © 031/591-420.

### *La Tessitura*

Viale Franklin Delano Roosevelt 2a, Como.

This is a large warehouse-cum-showroom that is so chic it even has a cafe. Better still—it has its own parking lot. And the parking is free. The space is filled with merchandise; note that the home style toward the rear is much better than the fashion here. © 031/321-666. [www.latessitura.com](http://www.latessitura.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 This is a fab website; it's available in English and it previews what's new and what's available in the store.

### *Seterie Martinetti*

Via Torriani 41, Como.

By now you surely know that *seterie* means silk maker in Italian. This is rumored to be one of the best silk resources in the area, although there are so many good ones that it is hard to quantify them all. You'll find the usual scarves, ties, robes, and yummy items from the usual cast of international big-name designers. Closed on Monday morning. © 031/269-053.

## AROUND COMO

Let me now mention the words Fino Mornasco and Lomazzo, which are names of towns where there are zillions of factories and some outlets. Etro is located here (no outlet, though). I could drive this area blindfolded because of the number of streets I have been up and down while looking for the Armani outlet. If you are on your honeymoon, I do not suggest this adventure. But if you can afford the gas, if you like the spirit of the chase more than the actual bargain, and if you think this sort of thing is fun—off you go. And don't tell me about the Loris Abate outlet store. I know it's there. Believe me, I've passed it about a hundred times and each time I always say, "The best bathrobe my husband ever owned was from Loris Abate."

**Insider's Tip**

Use GPS and/or have your hotel's concierge do a Michelin printout for each address, with directions in Italian, so when you are lost (as you will be, I promise), you can ask people for help.

***Diesel Outlet***

Via Odescalchi 2, Vertemate (Fino Mornasco exit).

This outlet is not far from Armani on the SS35 highway; together they could be the shopping spree of your life. Prices are basically half off regular retail. It's open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 12:30pm and 3 to 7:30pm. ☎ 031/901-573. [www.diesel.com](http://www.diesel.com).

***Emporio Lario***

Via Vittorio Veneta 52, Cirimido (Lomazzo exit).

Lario is a very exclusive brand of fancy and expensive shoes that most Americans do not know about. Never mind. This factory also makes shoes for many other designers—I think it made the best shoes of my life, bought at Bob Ellis in Charleston. Open Monday through Friday from 9:30am to 7pm. ☎ 031/352-3111.

***Factory Store (Armani)***

Via Provinciale per Bregnano 13, Vertemate (Fino Mornasco exit).

For those with cars and a spirit of adventure, head over to the new Armani outlet at the Intai factory, near Bregnano (which is btw. Milan and Como and no, I don't mean Bregamo and this isn't a typo).

Take the A9 north from Milan to the Fino Mornasco exit, and head for Bregnano (which isn't marked and will make you screaming crazy). Turn right at this unmarked junction; keep driving and driving and praying; look for the factory at the crossroad of SS35. Final tip—the outlet is marked only

with the words factory store on the front. Honest. For more specific directions, call ☎ 031/887-373.

Once you've arrived, you can do more than celebrate. This is a large, two-level outlet that sells everything from lingerie to kids' clothing to home style. I find the men's selection better than the women's, but it does depend how you hit it. I bought the most wonderful trouser suit here for about 400€. The store is open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 1pm and 2 to 7pm. Credit cards are accepted.

### *Ratti*

Via Vivaldi 6, Cadorago.

Perhaps my feelings about this outlet are colored by the fact that we were really looking for the Armani outlet; or the fact that when we drove in and were asked to surrender our passports, I discovered I'd lost my passport. Either way, the old Ratti will always have a space in my heart. This one is hit-or-miss, if you can find it. Open Tuesday through Friday from 9:30am to 6:30pm, Monday from 3 to 7pm. ☎ 031/886-6280.

## PAST COMO: BIELLA

Biella is a mill town in northern Italy, famous because it is the headquarters of the **Zegna** woolen mills. It's also known for other nearby outlets.

### *CC Gli Orsi*

Strada Trossi, SS230, Biella.

This is a new Centro Commerciale—that's Italian for mall—anchored by a mega-**UPIM**. There's a hypermarket, **Ipercoop**, if you need food supplies. Among the more than 100 tenants, you'll also find Adidas, Kiko, Primigi, Swarovski, and Tezenis. ☎ 015/253-401. [www.gliorsi.it](http://www.gliorsi.it).

**WEB TIPS** 📖 The good news is that the website offers lots of information, including directions. The bad news is that it's all in Italian.

*Fila*

Strada Trossi 12, Verrone, Biella.

Needless to say, Fila is an enormously famous name internationally. It is most famous in the U.S. for tennis gear, but it makes clothing and gear for all sports; the ski stuff is sublime. There are bargains for all members of the family, and the store is conveniently located near the cute part of the old city. Hours are 9:30am to 12:30pm and 2:30 to 7:30pm daily. © 015/582-1541. [www.fila.com](http://www.fila.com).

*Fratelli Piacenza Lanificio*

Biella.

This place is a mill for cashmere, wools, and mohair, which is big this year. There are bargains, but you are still looking at price tags over 520€ for a cashmere coat. Call for an appointment and directions. © 015/619-1733. [www.piacenza1733.it](http://www.piacenza1733.it).

**Shop Talk**

Rumor has it that Escada gets its goods at Fratelli Piacenza Lanificio.

*Maglificio della Artema*

Strada Trossi 31, Verrone, Biella.

Located right outside Biella, this is yet another cashmere resource from the famous mills; watch for artema signs. It sells the Zegna line as well as other Italian labels, including some designers from the big-name circuit—rotating according to availability, of course. It stocks everything from underwear to outerwear. © 015/255-8382.

**SWITZERLAND***FoxTown*

Via Angelo Maspoli 18, Mendrisio, Switzerland.

Not far from Como, you find yourself in Switzerland, headed toward Lugano. But don't panic; you're also on the way to

FoxTown, which is a 5-minute drive into Switzerland across the Italian border.

FoxTown is an outlet village with around 160 stores (250 brands), a casino (for husbands, no doubt), restaurants, and bars. There's quite a large number of big-name designer outlets here, including Armani, Burberry, Cerruti, Dolce & Gabbana, Etro, Fendi, Gucci, Jil Sander, Loro Piana, Missoni, Prada, Tod's, Valentino, Versace, and Yves Saint Laurent.

The mall is open 7 days a week, from 11am to 7pm non-stop. If you are driving, you want the Mendrisio exit, which is 7km (4½ miles) from the Swiss-Italian border. Call if you need specific directions. If you prefer shuttle-bus service, which costs 20€ round-trip from Milan and Bergamo, check out [www.zaniviaggi.it](http://www.zaniviaggi.it). ☎ 410/848-828-888. [www.foxtown.ch](http://www.foxtown.ch).

**Insider's Tip**

Remember, Switzerland is not in the euro zone, so prices are not in euros but in Swiss Francs. If the U.S. dollar is weak, you may save money by shopping with CHF.

## Chapter Seven

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# The Riviera

## Mediterranean Dreams

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Technically speaking, there really is an Italian Riviera; it is divided into two parts. The first part, called the Riviera di Ponente, begins at the French border and stretches east to Genoa. The second part, the Riviera di Levante, reaches from Genoa to La Spezia. (Note that the Amalfi Coast—much farther south—is not part of the Italian Riviera.)

If you are driving this route as a way to get to Florence, shortly after La Spezia you will get to Livorno, the port city for Florence. Note that directional signs are marked to Livorno and not Firenze. You don't really see the signs for Florence until you take a turnoff *before* you get to Livorno.

Combining the Italian Riviera with the Tuscan hill towns is a great way to taste a lot of olive oil and see a lot of Italy. Did someone say "road trip"? We flew into Nice, packed up the car, the bags, and the dogs, and began in Monte Carlo, then sped into the hills—the foothills of the Alps (which make up the Italian Riviera) and then the hills of Tuscany.

The fun of it all is that the Riviera offers a totally different style and way of life. Most of the time during your visit here, you will be in the state of Liguria (this comes before bliss and

after France), which because of its shape and its coastal layout is very unique. Even the olive oil has a specific taste to it.

Forget your experiences in St. Tropez or Cannes; there's no hustle here—except maybe in Portofino. There's just sunshine, boats, and lunch. The pace of life is slow; the people are friendly. You can stay in glam palace hotels overlooking the sea or tiny little three-stars right next to the sea. You can drive the hills or walk out at night and just prowl the piazza. The lights twinkle, the gas is less expensive, and you can shop at night. This part of Italy is known for its flowers, its olive oil, its seafood, and, to me, the very casual chic and warmth of the lifestyle, the people, and the things you will buy.

*Andiamo.*

## Getting There

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This part of Italy is readily accessible and is served by a number of autostrada highways. Like many jet-set locations, this one takes a little organization to get to. It also doesn't hurt to study a map when you make your plans. I had a lot of trouble figuring out whether towns I wanted to see were before or after Genoa; this happens to make a big difference in your routing.

### BY PLANE

This region is accessible via several airports. **Nice** (in France) has the largest international airport in the area, with service to most parts of the globe. It also welcomes some 22 low-cost carriers, such as easyJet. You are only a half-hour from Monte Carlo and about an hour from the Italian border. It's 2 hours to Genoa (without traffic) if you drive like an Italian.

If you choose to fly into **Genoa**—the next largest international airport in the area—then you will either be backtracking toward France and then coming back, or up and around

and then down, or just going forward through the second part of the Italian Riviera. Again, you need that map!

The other way to do this is the reverse: Fly into **Pisa** or **Florence**, pursue your dreams there, and then drive up, up, and away across the Riviera in the western direction toward France. In this case, you might want to return the car in Genoa or Nice, depending on drop-off charges.

Alternatively, if you want to fly round-trip to **Milan**, you can rent your car at the Malpensa International Airport and never even go into the city of Milan (which you don't want to do with a car, anyway). Just head down the highway south, cut over toward La Spezia, work your way up the Riviera to Genoa, and then circle back up north from Genoa, eventually getting back to Milan and making a very nice tour through the center of Italy. You'll hit several outlet malls if you take this route, by the way. There are two routes of the autostrada that can serve you well, since most roads in Italy lead north-south. With that map in hand, check the Milan-Genoa route and the Milan-Parma route that brings you to La Spezia.

## BY TRAIN

Again, you have more or less the same approaches as above. If you have a rail pass, you can easily hop on and off the train in various cities. Or you can take the train to where you want to be, rent a car, and then head toward the beaches and the buys.

## BY SHIP

Cruises of the Mediterranean often have ports of call on the Italian Riviera. This is perhaps the best-ever way to see Genoa, because driving in Genoa is a nightmare. Ships often anchor off the coast and tender to Portofino; from there you can take a public bus to Santa Margherita Ligure. Ships may also come into ports that allow you to tour the Cinque Terre—far easier by boat than by car. If you are not familiar with **easyCruise** ([www.easycruise.com](http://www.easycruise.com)), take a look at its website—this is a

casual, low-cost cruise line by the same folks who brought you easyJet; it serves several Italian Riviera ports.

## BY CAR

Italy is not as big as it looks. Italian drivers are aggressive, and the roads—yes, even the highways—are often curvy and dark (you go through hundreds of tunnels), but a car gives you the freedom to pop on or off the highway, to drive through small villages, to look at houses, to check out hotels, and to be part of the passing parade.

Note that the parade is often at a standstill in July and August, when traffic jams may make you curse the choice to drive. We did this trip in May—it was gorgeous weather and there were no traffic problems, except on one sunny Sunday on the roads leading past beaches.

Using Nice as your port of entry, figure on 5 to 6 hours to get to Florence. If you've been on a long-haul flight, lay over in Nice or Monte Carlo for a few days to cut the jet lag, and then head out. You just may want to do your car rentals from France rather than Italy for price and insurance reasons.

Note that even in low season and even on the autostrada, you will hit congestion around Genoa. Pretend you are Italian: Wave your arms and shout a lot.

## Getting Around

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I'd say the basic purpose of this trip is to be in a car and be free to drive around by day and to walk around at night. However, you can do the trip rather easily by staying in one city as your base camp and using trains, buses, and ferries to visit all the towns. Once in the towns, having a car is more of a pain than a pleasure—especially if you don't have a hotel with parking.

## Stopping for Wine & Outlets

Don't drink and drive, but if you are driving a roundabout route and not sticking strictly to the coast, in nearby Piedmont you can pop into vineyards, wine shops, and the salt-therapy spa (La Via del Sale) at the **Relais San Maurizio** (☎ 0141/841-900; [www.relaissanmaurizio.it](http://www.relaissanmaurizio.it)).

If you'd prefer to take your side trip to an outlet mall, you can leave the autostrada at Genoa and head north toward Milan. The **Serravalle Designer Outlet** (☎ 0143/609-000; [www.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.mcarthurglen.it)), a village-style outlet mall that might be the largest in Italy, is less than an hour's drive from that junction; see p. 247 for details.

Parking in July and August can be so impossible that it will ruin your vacation. Parking in the off season is usually not too bad, although do know the local rules, since in most cases you must park, go to the little p machine, buy a ticket for the amount of time you want, go back to the car and put the ticket inside the car by the windshield on the driver's side, lock the car, and do your thing. (You know not to leave any luggage or attractive packages in the car.)

If you are driving, remember that you will pay 20€ to 30€ per night in garage fees at your hotel, so budget accordingly.

## Sleeping on the Riviera

We first stayed over in Monte Carlo and then continued on to the Italian Riviera, which is small enough that you can stay in one city and go all about on day trips. The only city that requires a whole other kind of planning is Genoa, which is huge (population almost a million) and has all the big-city hang-ups (traffic, traffic, traffic). But if you want to get a feel for the whole area, you could spend a few nights in Genoa and then move on to a smaller town. For Genoa, you don't want a car; for the rest of the Riviera, you do.

**Tip:** Several members of **Leading Hotels of the World** ([www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)) can be found in this area, and most of the Riviera towns are served by **Best Western** ([www.bestwestern.com](http://www.bestwestern.com)) as well. There is usually a three- or four-star Best Western in the heart of town, often overlooking the sea, just where you want to be. We did not stay in any BW hotels, but the ones we inspected looked just fine, thank you.

### *Excelsior Palace Hotel*

Via San Michele di Pagana 8, Rapallo.

During the 1950s and 1960s, this palace hotel was the “in” place to stay on the Italian Riviera; it was frequented by royalty and celebrities including the Duke of Windsor, King Hussein, Rita Hayworth, and Ernest Hemingway. The hotel fell on hard times and closed in 1974, not to reopen for more than 20 years. During that time, the property was gutted from top to bottom and has now been restored to its former elegant life, offering luxe rooms with marble bathrooms and sea views, a beach club, and a superb restaurant. It’s a short walk into town. Bonus: Toffee and Junior were welcome here. © 0185/230-666. [www.thi-hotels.com](http://www.thi-hotels.com).

**WEB TIPS** 📱 Online deals are sometimes available—we found a great rate of 200€ on [www.hotels.com](http://www.hotels.com).

### *Grand Hotel Miramare*

Via Milite Ignoto, Santa Margherita Ligure.

This is one of those grand old hotels, overlooking the sea, with gardens in the rear and the entire town stretched out below. The rooms are large and very grandmother’s-resorty, Palm Beachy in style—this is neither a palace nor a modern high-rise. Rates are usually 225€ to 300€ (but can be lower), depending on the time of year. You can book through Leading Hotels of the World (© 800/223-6800 in the U.S.; [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)) or call the hotel directly. © 0185/287-013. [www.grandhotelmiramare.it](http://www.grandhotelmiramare.it).

## The Shopping Scene

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Except for Portofino and the outlet malls, the retail emphasis in this area is neither designer shopping nor status names. Many towns have a few designer shops (in fact, Portofino has only designer shops), but the more likely retail style is the local boutique that carries several designer lines, which will probably be touted in the window of the store. There's also an emphasis on beachwear, resort clothing, board shorts, swimming gear, and boating needs. Beach and sand toys can easily be found everywhere.

This is also a food area. Wines and olives are grown on the hillside, thus you can spend much time buying assorted wines and specialty oils. Genoa is the home of pesto—and while it's illegal to bring fresh basil back to the U.S., you can purchase prepared pesto or buy a mortar and pestle to make your own once you get back home.

If you really want to do heavy-duty, big-name designer shopping, head to Monte Carlo, described below.

To me, the charm of the shopping here is the small shops, the food and fish markets, the chance to browse merchandise you haven't seen at the mall back home—it's the pace of life, the way back to the earth and the sea and the Tod's.

## Monaco

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Monaco is a very strange, glam, and unique beast. It is a principality currently surrounded by France, but throughout time has been part of Italy. It's as good a place as any to start your trip to Italy, especially if you arrive at the Nice airport.

Despite the glam, you'll also find affordable eats, real-people grocery stores, and plenty to buy. The hot new store in town is Zara, so you can see this is a very human place. Monaco is a delightful mix of charm and sophistication—and

fine dining. Don't forget the cultural scene and the tourist treasures—like a museum of vintage autos and a world-class aquarium. The city is famous for its relationship with the circus, too, which comes here regularly. Numerous international sporting events are held here as well as musical and rock concerts. Rock at “The Rock,” man.

## GETTING THERE

There is no international airport in Monaco, but you are a mere half-hour from the airport in Nice, France, which is the gateway to the region. From Nice, you can take a bus, train, or taxi to Monaco, or do what I do: fly. I used to be terrified of helicopters until I became a regular on this route—it's a treat. Flights from Nice to Monaco leave every 30 minutes, and the fares start at 210€ round-trip. Call **Heli Air Monaco** (☎ 377/92-050-050; [www.helairmonaco.com](http://www.helairmonaco.com)), which can transfer you between airports and also take you to other places—it even has programs coordinated with all the famous chefs in the area, so you can fly and dine and return to Monte Carlo on your own sked.

## SLEEPING IN MONACO

When assessing hotels here, it's sometimes hard to know if you are in France or Monaco—unless you are in downtown Monte Carlo or on the beach portion of Monte Carlo, right below the town. Note that Monte Carlo has a number of sporting and glam events—ranging from the circus to the Red Cross Ball to the Grand Prix and more. These events cause rooms to be scarce and rates to be high. The Grand Prix Meal (lunch on the *terrasse* of the Hôtel de Paris as you watch the race) will set you back 1,350€—and that's if you can score a table. Other restaurants along the race route are equally *cher*.

**SBM** (Société des Bains de Mer), the group held by the Grimaldi family (as in Prince Albert, Princess Caroline, and so on), owns hotels and casinos as well as **Les Thermes Marins de Monte-Carlo**—one of the best spas in the world.

There are several hotels in the SBM group, with a slight variety in style and price. I sometimes stay at the **Hôtel Hermitage**, which is a little more relaxed than the **Hôtel de Paris**, the crown jewel of the group and the fanciest of the lot (it's where I bumped into Prince Albert in the lobby). Many of the SBM hotels are also members of Leading Hotels of the World. For info, check out [www.montecarloresort.com](http://www.montecarloresort.com).

### *Hôtel Métropole*

4 av. de la Madone, Monte Carlo.

How can you not book a hotel that is drop-dead chic, gorgeous, overlooks the sea, was designed by my hero Jacques Garcia, has one of the best tables on the Riviera right in the lobby, and stands atop a shopping mall? Be still my heart, I feel a swoon coming on.

This newly renovated deluxe hotel offers rooms and suites that come with state-of-the-art amenities, plus Joël Robuchon's new Japanese restaurant (Yoshi), plus the ESPA's individual treatment rooms and private spa suites.

The hotel offers many packages, including one geared for the guys. If your beau wants to fish while you shop, the concierge can arrange for him to leave for the Nice harbor at dawn and go net trawling in the blue seas until midafternoon (equipment and VIP lunch provided, *bien sur*). At the end of the day, the chef will prepare his catch for dinner.

Prices vary with the season; expect to pay 300€ and up. You can book through Leading Hotels of the World (☎ 800/223-6800 in the U.S.; [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)), Yellin Hotels ([www.yellinhotels.com](http://www.yellinhotels.com)), or the hotel directly. ☎ 377/93-151-515. [www.metropole.com](http://www.metropole.com).

## SNACK & SHOP

I don't need to tell you that this is a major foodie town. It's home base for Alain Ducasse, who has two restaurants here (**Louis XV** and **Bar & Boeuf**). The famous Joël Robuchon now has a restaurant in Monaco as well.

If you're not doing the stars-on-your-plate thing, consider **Le Train Bleu**, at the Casino de Monte-Carlo (☎ 377/98-062-424). This is touristy and hokey (and expensive), but great fun if you want to get dressed up, go into the casino itself, eat Italian, and pretend that James Bond is over yonder.

Also note that famed Parisian pâtisserie **Ladurée** (☎ 377/97-703-913; [www.laduree.fr](http://www.laduree.fr)) is located in the Galerie du Métropole shopping center.

## SHOPPING NEIGHBORHOODS

As small as the principality of Monaco is, it has various towns and parts, so Monte Carlo is merely one part of the whole. Since Monte Carlo gets most of the press, you have probably been confused about the difference between Monaco and Monte Carlo. I am therefore dividing this up into two sections, Monaco neighborhoods and downtown Monte Carlo neighborhoods.

### IN MONACO

**FONTVIEILLE** Home to the Columbus Hotel and also the CC de Fontvieille (Centre Commercial de Fontvieille, as in shopping mall), which has a very good French supermarket named **Carrefour**.

**LA CONDAMINE** This is the port, where if you arrive by cruise ship you will come right up alongside some palm trees and a giant staircase that leads into downtown. There's not too much shopping down here, but it's a nice place to stroll at night.

**BEACHY MONTE CARLO** Located below the area I call Métropole—and (sort of) within walking distance of it—is the beachside, which is mostly hotels, resorts, and restaurants. There are a number of art galleries along the way. The Fairmont Monte Carlo has a lot of retail spread throughout its lobby.

**OLD CITY** Welcome to “The Rock,” Le Rocher, where the palace is located and assorted TTs still sell postcards of Princess Grace.

## IN DOWNTOWN MONTE CARLO

**MÉTROPOLE** The center of downtown alongside the main park. With the casino to your right (if you are facing the Hôtel Métropole) and the Hôtel de Paris behind you, the Métropole comprises a swank hotel and a spa and a mall—who could want for anything more? The Métropole shopping center has 80 boutiques as well as a grocery store hidden in the basement (ask someone how to get there, as you will never find it on your own). I will not list all the stores, but trust me, there’s everything from big-name designer boutiques to mass-market chains (like **FNAC** and **Sephora**) to gourmet-food shops (like **Ladurée** and **Fauchon**) to places for hair and nails.

We loaded up on gifts and souvenirs at **Boutique SBM** (☎ 377/9806-7503), Monaco’s official TT. It’s located on the place du Casino, across the street from the Hôtel de Paris.

**AVENUE DES BEAUX ARTS** This small street, on the other side of the park from Métropole, is home to major names in design and jewelry such as **Bulgari**, **Dior**, **Fred**, **Louis Vuitton**, **Yves Saint Laurent**, and more. **Hermès** is around the corner at avenue de Monte Carlo. **Chanel** is at the place du Casino. Other designer boutiques dot hotel lobbies in this part of town. Don’t miss the new **Zara**, which takes up an entire block at 6 Square Beaumarchais (☎ 377/9797-4080).

**PARK PLACE** This is a building at the top of the park, a residence with a mall on the street level where you’ll see several fancy designer shops such as **Escada**. Note that there is also a resale shop for designer clothing at this little mall.

**BOULEVARD DES MOULINS** This is the real-people shopping part, where multiples that aren’t in the Métropole mall can be found. These include **Blanc Bleu**, **Chloé**, **Façonnable**, **Guess**, and the like; pharmacies, hairdressers, and nail salons are also located here. It is a little higher up the hill, but within walking distance from the heart of downtown Monte Carlo.

## Let's Make a Deal

The **Casino de Monte-Carlo** ([www.montecarlocasinos.com](http://www.montecarlocasinos.com)) is the most elegant and famous gambling destination in the world. With a few days' advance notice, your hotel's concierge can arrange for the casino's pros to give you private gambling lessons and/or instruction in becoming a croupier. You'll sharpen your skills and learn a complete range of European games and gambling styles used throughout the best casinos in the world. We're not in Vegas anymore, Toto. Private lessons are by special arrangement only; for gaming information, call ☎ **377/9806-2121**.

## Genoa

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Beyond the high-rises that look a lot like those in Beijing, and the traffic that looks a lot like that in Shanghai, beyond the arena of real people and closer down near the sea, lies the Genoa you want to see. Named European City of Culture in 2004 and protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Genoa has been going after the cruise and tourism business since 1992, the 500th anniversary of you-know-what. Much has been rebuilt; much has been left untouched over several centuries.

The Slow Food movement began in this city, which functions on Mediterranean time—everything goes slowly. Nonetheless, there's more pesto than you can imagine, not to mention the old harbor that was revitalized by the wonderful architect Renzo Piano, plus an aquarium, an antiques district, markets, winding streets that are more like alleys, and all sorts of coffee shops that sell sweets to make you swoon. Just why was it that Columbus was so anxious to leave town?

## GETTING THERE

You may arrive in Genoa by cruise ship—obviously one of the most famous cruise ports in the world—or by train, plane,

or car. The international airport is not as large as Nice's, but it is served by mainstream carriers (British Air, Air France, Alitalia). Should you drive, you are about 2 hours from the French border.

### Insider's Tip

Getting to Genoa by car is no big deal, but driving around Genoa is a nightmare. I strongly advise you not to drive in Genoa itself. Walk, take a bus, or try the limited but new subway instead. Do not drive. Repeat: Do not drive.

## THE LAY OF THE LAND

Via Garibaldi is where the rich folks lived, the home of palazzos to visit and museums galore . . . and from there you can wander to historic quarters, see the famous cathedral, and ponder the Holy Grail, which may or may not be located there.

The Columbus family (you remember their boy Chris) lived nearby—that's the really old part of town, dating from the 12th century, that leads to the water's edge. The harbor has been renovated by none other than architect Renzo Piano. If you brought along the kids, check out the famous aquarium.

The main shopping parts of town radiate from the **Piazza de Ferrari** and include **Via XX Settembre** and **Via Roma**. Via Roma is the main street for big names; then you hit **Via Garibaldi**. Note that by big names, I mean you will recognize some of the names but not all, since, after all, this is a town that has an H&M but no Gucci.

If you like hunting for old junk, **Piazza Campetto** has antiques shops housed in palazzos.

If you consider the Bay of Naples as the center of the world (many once did), then the western part of the bay (toward France) is called **Sampierdarena**, while the eastern portion is **Sottoripa**, which includes the old port and all of the spice shops, crooked alleys, and medieval streets you've dreamed of.

Because the city climbs away from the sea, there are assorted elevators and routes up, up, and away.

## FINDS

### *Coin*

Via XX Settembre 16a.

It's the big department store, less designer-oriented than La Rina (see below). ☎ 010/570-5821. [www.coin.it](http://www.coin.it).

### *Galleria Mazzini*

Piazza Ferrari.

This may remind you of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele in Milan; it's one of those large glass-and-metal covered shopping malls with stunning arcades and much charm.

### *La Rinascente*

Via Vernazza 1.

The leading department-store chain in Italy; it carries designer clothing and big beauty brands. ☎ 010/586-995. [www.rinascente.it](http://www.rinascente.it).

### *Mercato Orientale*

Via Galata and Via XX Settembre.

This covered market is open Monday through Saturday. It's odd that anything in Italy stays open on a Monday, so you are in luck here. **Note:** It's closed on Sundays.

### *Standa*

Via Cesarea 2.

A dime store/department store for real people, it has a grocery store, affordable clothes, home style, and everyday needs. ☎ 010/583-625. [www.standa.it](http://www.standa.it).

### *UPIM*

Via XX Settembre 2.

Similar to Standa, but without the grocery store. ☎ 010/580-696. [www.upim.it](http://www.upim.it).

## Santa Margherita Ligure & Rapallo

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Few places in the world are as seductive as this small piece of real estate on the far side of Genoa, nestled into Italy right where the shape of the land begins to dip down into the boot. Santa Margherita and Rapallo are almost twin cities, like Buda and Pest. Rapallo is a mere 3km (2 miles) beyond Santa Margherita, so if the weather isn't too hot you can actually walk. But then, why walk when you can take the local bus?

Santa Margherita does have a Dolce & Gabbana shop and a few other designer boutiques, but that's not what we come for. This is where you simply walk around and look and shop and stare and enjoy. We found Kérastase shampoo here for 13€—it's 14€ to 18€ in France and \$30 in the U.S.—and we bought bottles of Ligurian olive oil (a little more bitter and tart than Umbrian); Sarah even spied a leopard-print motorcycle helmet for me. It's that kind of place: low-key and yummy.

Like all the cities here, this one also reaches around a bay. At the farthest end is a point where Portofino is located, while at the easternmost part of the bay is the city of Rapallo. In between lies Santa Margherita, more casual than San Remo and more exciting and real than Portofino. Santa Margherita strings along the beach, so you get a nice walk into town as you pass various shops and stalls, licking your ice-cream cone and wishing you had a Starbucks franchise. At night, the day-trippers have left and you'll feel very elegant, sophisticated, and, uh, Italian.

## The Cinque Terre

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This portion of Italy is high on the cliffs and so hard to get to that it's considered easiest to walk from town to town. La Spezia is the main transportation gateway—this is the big town in the center of the little bay, the city that also connects

to highways in the north-south or east-west directions. Most of the towns are separated by a 2- to 3-hour walk. This is more difficult if you are carrying a lot of shopping bags, so consider the train—you can get to all of the towns by rail. Note that Monterosso is the most touristy of the towns but has the best shopping.

## SLEEPING IN THE CINQUE TERRE

### *Grand Hotel*

Via Garibaldi 5, Portovenere.

Stay in a 17th-century convent turned hotel. Portovenere is the main hub of the Cinque Terre (although not one of the five towns) . . . but very hard to get to. By car it's fearsome, so take a boat or even a bus. I like buses around here. Just wear deodorant and pray others do, too. This hotel has a total of 54 rooms; 10 of those are suites. Remember that since this was once a convent, rooms are spare. Prices are about 150€ a night. © 0187/792-610.

### *Jolly Hotel La Spezia*

Via XX Settembre 2, La Spezia.

Jolly is a great chain to know about for several reasons: It's Italian, it has a hotel in every city you want to visit, it has four- and five-star properties, and few Americans know about it. Jolly has “the” hotel in La Spezia, so if you require the best address and the fanciest hotel, this is the one. In low season, a double room starts at around 130€ a night. © 800/247-1277 in the U.S. Local phone © 0187/739-555. [www.jollyhotels.com](http://www.jollyhotels.com).

## *Chapter Eight*

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# *Hidden Italy*

## All Will Be Revealed

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I must warn you that driving in Italy can be stressful. Italian drivers are very aggressive. But it can also offer opportunities that are otherwise unavailable.

Just keep this in mind: The reason you want to go to northern Italy and drive all around to the factory outlets is that the area is filled with factories. So far, so good. But wait. Remember this part: Where there are factories, there are trucks. Yes, the autostrada is filled with trucks, always. And they're big.

Hidden Italy is somewhat hidden from the crazies as well, so I suggest that this chapter might be your guide and your bible if you want to get out there to find the soul of Italy and escape the swarms of tourists.

If you are doing some of the Hidden Cities and driving a little in between and hitting a favorite outlet or two, you should be fine. But if you are in a new relationship or on your honeymoon, think twice about how much driving you commit to. Just remember this last warning: A French driver will tell you that you're beautiful before he screws you. Not so an Italian driver.

# Bologna

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Located about an hour north of Florence, and about 2 hours south of Milan, Bologna is the most perfect Italian city—not just in Italy, but in the world—because it has the infrastructure to work as a tourist town, but is not so overwhelmed with visitors that the charm has been choked away. Hmmm, well, maybe Verona is the most perfect city in Italy. Let me think about that for a little bit. (See p. 293 for more on Verona.) Then there's Modena . . . .

Bologna is far larger than Verona; even the historic part of the city is larger than Verona's. Bologna has good shopping in terms of all the big brands you may want to buy. It has a good market on Fridays and Saturdays, and enough well-located luxury hotels to offer choice at a price, as well as delights for those who need them. There's food forever. And shoes, did you know that shoes are made in the nearby villages?

There's plenty in the stores for teens and tweens and those on a low budget. The number of accessible mass-market retailers offering low-cost fashion is staggering. There are plenty of stores that sell to plus sizes as well. After all, Bologna is one of the most famous food towns in all of Italy. Think little rustic restaurants everywhere and gelato to die for.

## GETTING THERE

The Bologna Marconi Airport is served by several low-cost carriers from the U.K. and continental Europe.

By car, the drive north from Florence is relatively easy—slightly more than an hour of good highway. Note, however, that this highway becomes one big parking lot on certain travel days and during rush hour. If you plan to drive, do so with much organization.

There are several Bologna exits off the A1. We took Fiera and followed the centro storico signs (they look like the Target chain's bull's-eye logo); once in the old city, signs for the

Baglioni hotel were well marked. This was one of the few big cities where we actually slipped right into town and parked in front of the hotel with a minimum of stress. The driving-directions printout from our previous hotel was good; the streets were well marked—we got lucky. We also knew to call ahead and give our license-plate number to the hotel (see “Getting Around,” below).

If you arrive by train, be prepared to schlep and drag; there are no carts at the station, and Toffee and Junior had to be carried in their totes.

## GETTING AROUND

You really can walk just about everywhere in the historic center. The train station is not far from the heart of town, but you will probably need a taxi between there and your hotel.

If you have a car, note that you are not allowed to drive in the city center without a pass from your hotel. If you are stopped by a police officer, tell him (or mime) which hotel you are headed to and ask the best directions. Once you arrive at the hotel, have the staff call the police with your license-plate number so that you are not given a ticket. Even if police do not stop you on entering the city center, still ask the hotel desk to give the police your plate number.

### Booking It in Bologna

Any good tour operator or travel agent will advise you of the fair dates in Bologna. The city has a very active trade-fair schedule, during which times the best hotel rooms (sometimes all the hotel rooms) are taken. The fairs are booked years in advance and can be discovered in various ways, including contacting **Bologna Fiere** (☎ 05/128-2111; [www.bolognafiere.it](http://www.bolognafiere.it)).

There's also the **CST**, or **Centro Servizi per Turisti** (☎ 800/856-065 in Italy, or 051/648-7607; [www.cst.bo.it](http://www.cst.bo.it)), a visitor organization that helps with dates, hotels, and more.

# Bologna



Should you need a taxi, call ☎ 051/372-727. This is a radio taxi service, so the meter will start when the driver heads out to fetch you.

If you are out at the fairgrounds or merely in town for a day but with a car, you can park and ride—there is a shuttle bus that will get you into the historic center of town in 8 minutes. The shuttle ticket entitles you to free parking in the adjoining lot.

## Insider's Tip

Bologna makes a great base for exploring Italy—you can go to Florence on the train as a day trip and not have to worry about parking, traffic, or hotels. In fact, Bologna is just about equidistant from both Florence and Verona.

## SLEEPING IN BOLOGNA

### *Art Hotels*

Hotel Orologio, Via IV Novembre 10.

Hotel Corona d'Oro, Via Oberdan 12.

Hotel Novecento, Piazza Galileo 4-3.

Hotel Commercianti, Via de'Pignattari 11.

The four hotels in this chain all provide parking for guests, which is no small task in this city.

I stayed at the **Orologio**, the exact three-star hotel we all want to find; the only thing wrong with it was the noisy Americans one table over at breakfast. There are 50 guest rooms; mine had beams and a window with a view out to the main square. Indeed, the hotel is right off the main square and a few steps from one of the central shopping streets. There's a free e-mail station in the lobby, too. Rates are about 225€ per night, depending on the season and the kind of room. Comparison shoppers may want to note that a suite here costs less than a room at the deluxe Grand Hotel Baglioni.

If you want a fancier hotel, the four-star **Corona d'Oro** is heaven—a luxe renovated palace dating back to 1890. Its location is closer to the town's famed towers, on the other side of the square from the Orologio, and it's also in a key position for shopping. Some of the rooms are more modern; junior suites are available as well. Rates begin at 245€ per night.

There are two other properties in the family. A short block from Orologio, the four-star **Novocento** is a modern, Zen-style boutique hotel with a good location. The **Commercianti** is a three-star hotel and the least charming of the bunch. © 051/745-7335. [www.bolognaarthotels.it](http://www.bolognaarthotels.it).

### *Grand Hotel Baglioni*

Via dell'Indipendenza 8.

This is the luxury hotel of the city, where rock stars, celebrities, business honchos, and diplomats stay. My first time here, there was a crowd out front awaiting Bruce Springsteen.

The place is quite grand, and the location is smack-dab in the middle of the main commercial shopping street. You can walk everywhere, even to the big market on Friday and Saturday. While the Grand caters to businessmen, and is always full during fairs, the hotel is the “in” place for anyone who needs or appreciates grand in all senses of the word.

We were given room no. 412, one of the best in the house. It has a private terrace, dressing room, and separate office (with free Internet access)—the perfect size and layout for a dream *pied-à-terre*. The hotel rooms and suites are all newly decorated in rococo and Beaux Arts style with Venetian chandeliers and sconces.

This hotel offers a very large and varied number of packages, many including food tastings and/or cooking classes and visits to the Ferrari and Lamborghini museums. Rates include free Wi-Fi in all rooms. You can book through Leading Hotels of the World (☎ 800/223-6800; [www.lhw.com](http://www.lhw.com)) or contact the hotel directly. ☎ 051/225-445. [www.baglioni-hotels.com](http://www.baglioni-hotels.com).

## SNACK & SHOP

Bologna is an eaters’ paradise; you will have no trouble finding cafes with tiny sandwiches, pizza, pasta, and, yes, spaghetti Bolognese. **Montegrappa da Nello** (Via Montegrappa 2, just off Via Indipendenza; ☎ 051/236-331) is a small and charming trattoria. **Franco Rossi** (Via Goito 3, also off Via Indipendenza; ☎ 051/238-818) is another good choice. John Grisham’s novel *The Broker* is set in Bologna and finds an exiled Washington power broker dining at Rossi as various government agencies plot to kill him.

There is also gelato literally everywhere. Your job is to go to the following places, find the best *gianduia* (hazelnut-chocolate) gelato, and then compare it with the *aceto balsamico* flavor.

*Gelateria Grom*

Via d'Azeglio 13.

*Gelateria Stefino*

Via Galliera 49b.

*La Sorbetteria*

Via Castiglione 44.

*Oreficeria del Gelato*

Via degli Orefici 5f.

**THE SHOPPING SCENE**

Take a few centuries' worth of history, add universities, toss in a large arena for business fairs, and what do you get? This town is a great place to shop, with branches of all the big Italian multiples and even a few fancy-schmancy boutiques. Throw into the mix the food markets and stalls, the little mom-and-pop shops, and the chance to get to nearby outlet malls, and perhaps you have the very definition of heaven.

Oops, I forgot to mention the architecture that is so astonishingly medieval that you will feel like a character in one of Shakespeare's plays. Hmmm, did people in Shakespeare's plays carry shopping bags?

Do not underestimate the number of young people in town as a large influence for retailers. The stores that specialize in well-priced clothing are large, well stocked, and often have many branches in different parts of town.

As a final note, there is a large market that sells a little of everything. Because the shoe-making regions are nearby, the market has especially good deals on shoes. I bought sandals for 12€, and I have enormous American feet—so if I can get a fit, anyone can. The next trip, I found a vendor selling Frette matrimonial sets—two sheets, two pillowcases in one plastic envelope—for 100€ a set. I loaded up on them as wedding

gifts. La Piazzola Market takes place Fridays and Saturdays from 6:30am to 8pm.

### Insider's Tip

The market vendors work on a rotation, so if you are not in town on market day, find out which city has a market when you are around. Aim for the market in Modena if at all possible.

## SHOPPING NEIGHBORHOODS

**MAIN SQUARE** With a large statue of Neptune in the center, the main square (Piazza Maggiore) is not so much a shopping square as it is a directional point from which most things begin or end. The tourist office is on this square and, with it, an excellent shop for souvenirs. While you're shopping the arcade surrounding the square, do take time to appreciate the setting—look into doorways, up at the ceilings, and through the arches. Stores here include **Sergio Rossi** (no. 4b), **Max & Co.** (Via dell'Archiginnasio 4a/b), and **Max Mara** (Via dell'Archiginnasio 4l). Try **Zanarini**, a block away on Piazza Galvani, for lunch; it's a tearoom with outside tables.

**VIA INDIPENDENZA** This is the main commercial drag in terms of flagships of the big brands. The street also leads to the market, is home to the Grand Hotel Baglioni, and goes in and out of town and/or toward the train station. There are plenty of cafes, restaurants, perfumeries, gelati stands, and stores selling cheap thrills. Among some of the finds: **Armonie Naturali** (no. 58c), which sells the Perlier and Kelemata line of bath and beauty products; **Tezenis** (no. 34), for adorable and low-cost pajamas and underwear for young women; and **Oltre** (nos. 24b/d), a large-sizes brand. I bought gray suede loafers at **Cinti** (no. 12), a mid-price shoe chain, for around 75€. There's also **H&M** (no. 4) and **Zara** (no. 6), one of the best Zara stores in Italy. **Promod** (no. 8d), a French brand, has good inventory and the best quality in the "cheapie clothes" category. Other choices include **Capisa** (no. 23) and **Almaplena** (no. 2), for handbags and jewelry, and **Limoni** (no. 56), a chain

similar to Sephora. Most of these shops are open until 9:30pm. And don't forget **Kiko**, king of makeup for teens.

Just off Indipendenza, and impossible to find if you don't know to look for it, is an enormous branch of **Oviesse**, one of my favorite brands for low-cost Italian fashions. (For why I love Oviesse, see p. 46.) Ask for directions to Via dei Mille 18. If you're walking from Indipendenza, you'll pass **Acqua & Sapone** (Water & Soap) at Via Dei Mille 10a, a great place to stock up on shampoo and personal items. There's a grocery store next door to Oviesse, called **Coop** (Piazza Martiri), where we found Parmesan cheese for an excellent price. You'll also find several pharmacies on the street.

**UGO BASSI** Forgive me, this is confusing and not very funny, but I keep thinking the name of this street is Hugo Boss. It intersects with Via Indipendenza, forming the two main arteries of town. Ugo Bassi changes its name to Via Rizzoli early on; this, too, is a main shopping drag. **Coin** (Via Rizzoli 7) is open Sundays from 10am to 7:30pm. **Valli** (Via Rizzoli 3c) is a high-end fabric store offering tailoring and custom clothing design.

When you OD on spaghetti Bolognese, try McDonald's on Via Indipendenza, at the corner of Via Ugo Bassi.

**BOLOGNA FOOD TOWN** The street of the old fishermen (Via Pescherie Vecchie) is the heart of the food district, and a fun place for an evening stroll just as all the locals come out to buy dinner. It leads away from the main square and is located between Via Orefici and Via Clavature, right alongside Via Drapperie. Aside from the central market, there are scads of food shops and boutiques in this area. **Agnoletto & Bignami** (Via Pescherie Vecchie 18b-10a), **Drogheria Gilberto** (Via Pescherie 18 and Via Drapperie 5), and **A. Ceccarelli** (Via Pescherie Vecchie 8) are all good bets for gourmet foodstuffs such as balsamic vinegar, Bolognese pasta sauce, and chocolate. You'll find a big selection of pasta (in all

shapes and colors, suitable for gifts) at **Nannini** (Via Clavature 22) and **Paolo Atti & Figli** (Via Drapperie 6). **Roccati** (Via Clavature 17a) is a famous chocolatier, while **La Baita Formaggi** (Via Percherie Vecchie 3a) is a cheese shop and deli with all the fixings for a perfect picnic. Don't miss the **Libreria.Coop/Ambasciatori/Eataly** (Via Orefici 19), a back-to-back bookshop/cafe that hosts wine tastings and author events.

Note that this is just the core of a neighborhood of several streets. Locals call this area the Mercato di Mezzo; it is truly a medieval warren of little alleys. You'll see many boutiques, including **Chanel/Ratti** (Via Clavature 15). Suzy found the best buy of our trip at the shoe outlet **Le Sabot** (Via Clavature 17): purple suede Tod's wannabes for 70€. Don't miss **Majani** (Via Carbonesi), an old-fashioned chocolate maker that is, naturally, closed in the summer.

Via Orefici becomes **Via Caprarie**, where you'll find several delis including **Atti** (no. 7) and **Bottega del Caffè** (no. 1).

**THE GHETTO** Like most medieval towns, Bologna has a Jewish ghetto that is still a vibrant part of the commercial zone. While you might not find any designer boutiques, you will find olive oil and food stores. The ghetto is located near the Two Towers and Via Rizzoli.

## Foodie Tour

For a 4- to 5-hour cooking class right in town, contact **Cook Italy** (☎ 0349/007-8298; [www.cookitaly.com](http://www.cookitaly.com)). You'll get to visit the Mercato Centrale to shop for ingredients; then you cook lunch. It costs 300€ for one person, 200€ per person for a group of two to four. Three-night cooking vacations, including accommodations, are also available—check out the website for more information.

**"QUADRILATERO"/TWO TOWERS** Enclosed by Via Rizzoli, Via D'Azeglio, Via Farini, and Via Castiglione, this area is home to **Galleria Cavour**, a new, very glamorous mall where most of the upscale designers are located, including **Bulgari**, **Burberry**, **Bruno Magli**, **Cartier**, **Fendi**, **La Perla** (Suzy's daughter-in-law, Jenny, scored big here), **Loro Piana**, and **Tod's**. Also in this area are **Hermès** (Via Farini 16c/d), **Armani** (Via Farini 11), **Dolce & Gabbana** (Via Farini 14f), and **Jacadi** (Via Castiglione 2e). Teens and moms will want to stop by **IKKS** (Via Farini 2) for trendy midpriced French clothing. We passed on doggie passport holders at **Pets and the City** (Via Castiglione 2c).

## Modena

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I mention Modena here for several reasons. It is not very far from Bologna and is a good market town. It's also Foodie Heaven Plus. It feels very different from Bologna (less Shakespeare, more France).

Modena is the cradle of balsamic vinegar. It's also old and charming and feels like "real Italy," far away from real tourists. It also observes "real Italy" shopping hours: Everything closes up tight in the afternoon and does not reopen until 5pm!

Modena is in the eastern part of northwestern Italy and serves as the easternmost anchor to the shopping one can do on a north-south access between Genoa and Milan or Turin and Como. There are plenty of outlets in the area.

However, it is extremely frustrating to drive in this area. The roads are badly marked, there are crazy drivers, and if you don't speak Italian, forget about asking for directions. The best advice: Take the Modena Sud exit and follow the bull's-eye signs (amazingly similar to the Target stores' logo!) for centro.

We drove into town early in the afternoon, our balsamic taste buds on alert; we couldn't wait to visit **Giusti** (Via Quattro Ville 155), the gourmet food shop. Unfortunately, it was

closed, so we were forced to delay our balsamic buying until we got to Bologna. On the way home, we drove through various suburbs and found several vinegar factories with outlet stores—all closed during the afternoon.

In fact, most everything in town was closed, in true Italian form. We did buy gas and snacks at a station and Autogrill right outside town, where we found Nutella sold in a huge glass pitcher for 6.75€.

There are also antiques, markets, stores, and food sources in Modena. The antiques market, held at Novi Sad Park on the fourth Saturday and Sunday of the month, is one of the largest in the region, with more than 300 vendors; there's no event in July or December. The Mercato Coperto (covered market), Via Albinelli 13, is open Monday through Saturday from 6:30am to 2pm. This food market draws chefs from surrounding areas.

## Parma

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When I mentioned to friends that I planned to explore it, they all mentioned either Parma ham or Parmesan cheese. No fools, these friends. Parma isn't where you go if you were born to shop—it's for those who were born to eat, or born to shop for foodstuffs.

Also note that Parma has a unique location in Italy, as it stands at the crossroads to two highways: the main north-south route as well as an autostrada that leads to the sea and brings you to La Spezia (see chapter 7 for more on the Italian Riviera).

I ended up in Parma on a Sunday after a half-day at the nearby Fidenza Village outlet mall. Only the local department store was open, so it was not a day for shoppers, and frankly, it's not a city for shoppers. Rather, this is a city for dreamers, for those who worship the miracles that humans make in the name of religion, and for those who want to go to markets, to

nearby villages, and to cheese houses. This is a city for those who believe in magic.

Oh, yes, once a year there is a very large antiques fair, an international dealers' affair that is worth coming to visit. Bring business cards. There's also an annual Forum on Lace and Embroidery, held in May, where you can attend workshops.

Or you may want to go to spaghetti school—see below for the listing about Barilla pasta, which is located on the edge of Parma.

### *Academia Barilla*

Largo Piero Calamandrei 3a, Parma.

Foodies, please note that while Italy is crawling with designer pasta brands, good old Barilla—king of supermarket pasta—has its own cooking school, offering a range of courses that last from 1 to 10 days. It's located on the A1, Parma exit. © 866/772-2233 in the U.S. Local phone © 0521/264-060. [www.academiabarilla.com](http://www.academiabarilla.com).

#### **Shop Talk**

There's an IKEA next to the Barilla factory, so you can buy your spaghetti and then serve it in a brand-new pasta bowl.

### *Agrinascente*

Via San Michele Campagna 22b, Fidenza.

We used to call this store the Big Cheese, based on the giant triangular cheese-wedge trade sign out front. On our last trip, however, we thought our eyes were playing tricks on us after dealing with the Italian truck drivers on the autostrada. That big ol' wedge had shrunk to a nibble.

Not only was the sign smaller, but unfortunately, so was the selection inside. There's still plenty of aged parmigiano, but it's now wrapped in wax paper instead of plastic, so we were worried about bringing it back to the U.S. Speaking of which, to answer your next question: Yes, it is legal to bring cheese into the U.S. if it has been aged more than 60 days.

## **Spaghetti School?** **Per favore!**

Well, no, grazie. Thanks to the last edition of this guide, my husband and I booked into the Academia Barilla, near Parma (see above). Parma ham, yup; Parma cheese, why not? And Parma for charma—absolutely.

This institute of culinary arts can be found on the original land once used for the Barilla factory, where pasta had been made for decades to be sent around the world as little goodwill ambassadors for Italian cooking. This is also where you can find a most fascinating library of recipes of regional Italian dishes, dating back to the 17th century.

We signed up for the half-day class with one of the executive chefs. Coursework: three types of pasta, along with three different sauces.

First we were taught how to slice and dice all the vegetables that were needed as part of the recipes. The chef was very patient with me and suggested that this skill was one I needed to practice at home.

Everything turned out great, and after our pastas were plated and photographed, we sat down with the chef himself in one of the Academia's elegant dining rooms. Accompanied by a terrific bottle of wine, we happily dug into our homework.

If you have a whole day, you can sign up for a class that takes you to nearby farms, where you can see the famous cheese being made or the ham being cured. Barilla's pasta school is so detail-oriented, they will even take you grocery shopping to teach you what and how to buy the ingredients you will need for preparing your meal.

Now here's some people who were born to shop . . . and eat.

—Rhona and Alan Glube

You can buy prepacked or ask to have it cut for you. Samples are available, but I declined after the sumo wrestler in front of me sneezed all over the cheese board. The price is based on the age; the expensive stuff is the oldest and is not

exported to the U.S. There was also a good selection of prosciutto and pasta, but the vinegar shelves were disappointing. No good balsamic at any price.

### Shop Talk

There's a new beer-tasting place right next door to Agrinascente, with an adjacent picnic area.

If you are attracted to this kind of shopping experience, I am going to assume that you are used to cheese that costs 20€ a kilo. For heaven's sake, don't shell out for the expensive stuff to give as gifts to people who have no idea what it is, how much it costs, or how to use it. Remember, with a lot of these products, a little dab will do ya.

This store stays open on Sundays until 3pm. ☎ 0524/522-334. [www.agrinascente.it](http://www.agrinascente.it).

### *Fidenza Village*

Via San Michele Campagna, Fidenza.

I know I write about stores, not food, but in this part of Italy it's hard not to think about food. So it's with pleasure that I report that the best restaurant I have ever enjoyed in an outlet mall is at Fidenza Village. **Barlumeria** bills itself as a cheese bar, but it also has restaurant service, takeout, a deli, and even

### Gianduia Alert

Gianduia (also spelled gianduja) is a chocolate-and-hazelnut bonbon specific to Italy that is made by many, many chocolatiers. It is invariably a triangular-shaped log wrapped in gold foil. I am bonkers for these candies. They vary in taste from brand to brand, and even come in dark- or white-chocolate versions. I like plain old original. Of all the gianduia I have tested, I think the best is actually made by the Swiss company Lindt, which has an outlet store in Fidenza Village, outside Parma, called Chocolate Town. They are not cheap, but they are heavenly.

some tastings. Plan your shopping trip so that you can eat lunch here. Also note that Italians tend to think about lunch around 1pm or later. If you go around 12:30pm, the crowds shouldn't be too bad.

Now then, about the mall. It's been expanded to include many new shops and more parking. Created in the style of a fake Italian village populated by Verdi's operas, the mall lacks only blaring music—say, the “Grand March” from *Aida*—and perhaps a herd of elephants.

Stores here include **Le Creuset**, the French cookware brand; **Sapò**, the Italian copycat version of Lush; **Elena Mirò**, an Italian firm that makes large-size clothing (the poor woman's Marina Rinaldi); **Simonetta**, an Italian children's brand; **Vilebrequin**, a French line of cult swimwear for men and boys; **Bassetti** and **Frette**, for linens; **Camper**, a Spanish brand of casual shoes for men and women; **Furla** and **Bruno Magli**, for Italian handbags and shoes; **Madina**, for makeup; and apparel designers **Bikkembergs**, **D&G**, **Diesel**, **La Perla**, **Les Copains**, **Missoni**, **Patrizia Pepe**, **Trussardi Jeans**, **Valentino**, and **Versace**. Finally, there's **Samsonite**, where I found a high-quality suitcase for 52€ to take all my new clothes home.

The drive from Bologna city center takes at least an hour. Stay on the A1 until you exit for Fidenza (this is after Parma); then follow the signs for fashion village outlet shopping. The signs aren't huge, as you would expect in America, but you aren't in America, and for Italy, it's a miracle there are signs at all. The mall is more or less equidistant from Milan and Bologna. If you take the train, a shuttle runs between the mall and the Fidenza rail station every half-hour. The mall is open daily from 10am to 8pm. © 0524/335-51. [www.fidenzavillage.com](http://www.fidenzavillage.com).

## Verona

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As I have gotten into a Shakespeare thing with the discovery of my Hidden Italy, it will come as no surprise that I am smitten with Verona, home of those Two Gentlemen as well as

Romeo and Juliet. Juliet's house is a major tourist attraction—right off the main shopping street, thank you very much—and is filled with graffiti and love notes. Perhaps there are shopping tips there, too.

**Web Tips**

Verona makes shopping so easy for visitors, it even has an online shopping guide: Check out [www.veronashopping.it](http://www.veronashopping.it).

## GETTING THERE

If you think of the boot shape of Italy as a capital letter T, then Verona lies just east of where the T crosses. This means it's north of Bologna and between Milan and Venice on the east-west axis.

You can get here by train, car, or plane. In fact, the airport is one of the new keys to low-cost Italy—it's served by Ryanair.

## GETTING AROUND

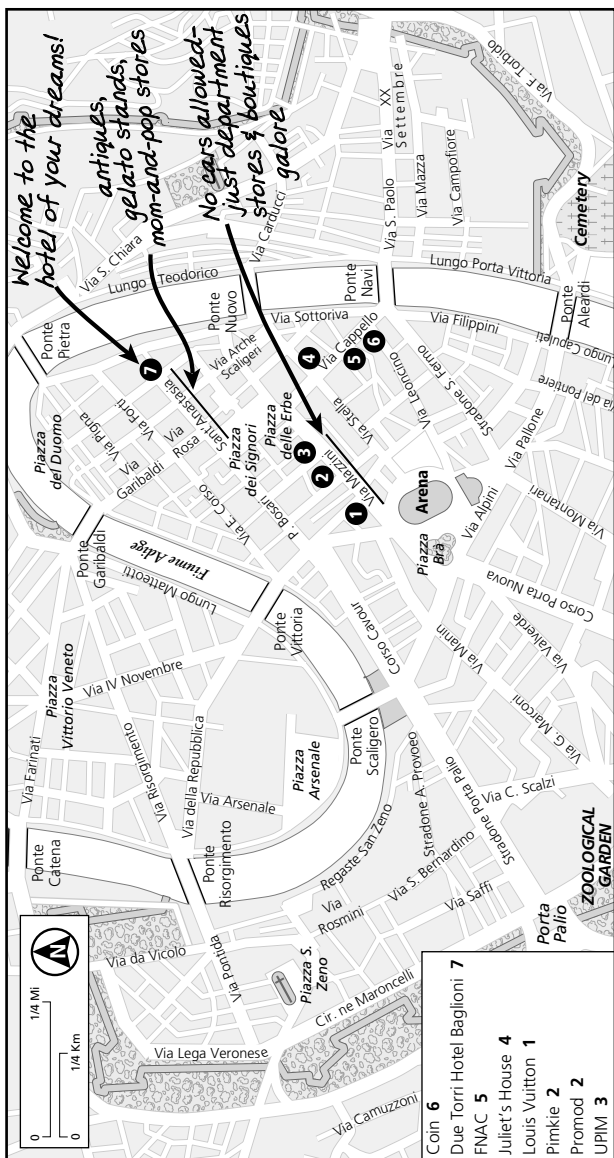
If you are limiting your visit to beautiful downtown metro Verona, you can walk—driving is to be avoided.

If your travels include other nearby big cities—even places such as Padua—you can also visit by train. Venice is best reached on the train, too, due to the parking difficulties.

Should you want to strike out for the area rich in factories and, therefore, outlets, or the nearby wine country, you will need a car. In case you aren't that into it, far be it for me to mention that you are in the gorgeous Lake Garda district, that tons of vineyards are all around you, or that the towns stretching from Verona to Venice are filled with factories—you can shop your way right into Marco Polo International Airport outside Venice if you so please. The area specializes in shoes and eyeglasses, but I visited the Bottega Veneta outlet store inside the factory in Vicenza and a Giorgio Armani outlet store in the middle of nowhere but not far at all. Read on.

Please note that I drove to Verona from Venice—an easy and pleasant drive on a good highway—but was lost in

# Verona



Verona for a full hour because of one-way streets, Roman city planning, pedestrian-only thoroughfares, and stern, but handsome, policemen who were quite insistent that the shortest route between two places was not a straight line. “You can’t get there from here unless you are on foot” should be written on every T-shirt.

## SLEEPING IN VERONA

### *Due Torri Hotel Baglioni*

Piazza Sant’Anastasia 4.

Oh my, I have died and gone to heaven. Oh my, remind me to have my next honeymoon in this hotel. Oh my, don’t wake me if I am dreaming.

What can I say about a slightly hidden hotel in a slightly hidden city in the middle of heaven? Built into an ancient palazzo, the place is furnished in grand style—my room was small but draped in velvets and silks and charm, complete with a sleigh bed and view out to, yep, the two towers. On my next visit, I had a very large room filled with antiques and sunshine. Bathrooms are huge and modern.

This is one of the Baglioni hotels that has a branch of **Brunello**, so plan to have at least one meal at this fine restaurant. Don’t forget **Pam Pam Pizzeria**, across the street at Corso Sant’Anastasia 42 (☎ 045/803-0363), or **Enoteca S. Anastasia**, at Via Massalongo 3b (☎ 045/801-4448), for wines. The hotel is located on the far side of the town center, but is within easy walking distance of all shopping. It is perched at the edge of the Corso Santa Anastasia, where you can stroll in delight.

The hotel is hard to book during opera season, but fabulous in winter and off season; you can get a 2-night holiday package for about 225€, which includes many extras for two. ☎ 045/595-044. [www.baglionihotels.com](http://www.baglionihotels.com).

### *Hotel Accademia*

Via Scala 12.

I found this hotel by accident when I was lost downtown; the Accademia is in the center of everything and is seemingly the most perfect four-star hotel in town. Alas, I didn't get to spend the night because it was sold out—friends later told me it's a well-known secret address and needs to be booked in advance.

This palace hotel has been modernized and now has air-conditioning as well as parking. The location is in the thick of the shopping district, a short walk from the Roman arena. Rates vary depending on season: A double goes for 160€ in low season, 250€ in midseason, and 280€ in high season. This rate includes tax and breakfast, making Verona look better every minute. © 045/596-222. [www.accademiavr.it](http://www.accademiavr.it).

## THE SHOPPING SCENE

We're talking about a medieval town that has a moderate number of visitors (okay, I was here out of season), the house where Shakespeare's Juliet lived, and a large UPIM store. While there aren't nearly as many stores as in Bologna, and the shopping may not be as great as in other towns, what's here is fun and not your average tourist trap (TT). Come to think of it, that market in the center of town is pretty touristy; but hey, the rest is great.

### Booking It in Verona

Just like Bologna, Verona is a big fair town—hotel rooms simply don't exist when you want them, or just because you want them. If your travel agent doesn't have the fair schedule (which is set up years in advance), call your hotel of choice and ask about fairs before you begin to dream of setting head on pillow.

Fairs tend to be held from March through May and September through early November; opera season begins in mid-June and runs to the end of August. When it comes to the opera season, many visitors book a year in advance.

Some of the reasons shopping here is so much fun: The community is wealthy, it attracts well-off shoppers, and the city invests time and money in making shopping easy for others.

Also remember that Verona is in northern Italy, not that far from Switzerland (bankers need to shop, too), and in a geopolitical area that is influenced by the nearby factories. Fashion and fur talk here. And shoes don't walk, they smile. Believe me; the shoemaker's children do not go barefoot.

### Insider's Tip

One reason so many locals shop here is that prices, especially on designer goods, are slightly less expensive than in nearby Venice. Venetians shop in Verona, giving you all the more reason to do so as well.

## SHOPPING HOURS

Stores in Verona are open on Sundays, making this a popular shopping destination and day out for the upper-middle classes from Venice and the Veneto district. You will love the people-watching. Basic Sunday hours are 11am to 7:30pm. Needless to say, Mondays are dead.

Assorted TTs and stores catering to real-people needs are open late during opera season.

## SHOPPING NEIGHBORHOODS

**CORSO SANT'ANASTASIA** This small road leads to the Due Torri Hotel Baglioni and the main shopping districts. In its own right, it is all that makes Verona wonderful—a near-alley of a street lined with mom-and-pop stores, and not a chain to be found. There are antiques shops, food stores, bookshops, and more. Oh yes, did I mention all the gelati stands?

**PIAZZA DELLE ERBE** If you hadn't detected the tourist era was beginning by spying the first of the designer boutiques (see **Lacoste** at no. 40), the ricky-ticky-tacky street market set up in the square—selling fresh fruit, limoncello, olive oil, chi-anti, penis-shaped pasta, and Romeo-and-Juliet key chains—is a dead giveaway.

**VIA MAZZINI** This pedestrian walkway and main shopping thoroughfare is where you'll see most of the designer stores and fancy boutiques. If the stores aren't representatives of major Italian brands you see everywhere, they may be branches of upmarket Venetian merchants. You will find **Max & Co.** (no. 1); **Penny Black** (no. 13), a division of Max Mara; **Mandarina Duck** (no. 28), the luggage line that's made nearby; **Elena Mirò** (no. 62), for large sizes; and old faithfuls such as **Versace** (no. 5), **Geox** (no. 23), **Max Mara** and **Marina Rinaldi** (no. 30), **Gucci** (no. 34), **Benetton** (no. 36), **Tod's** and **Hogan** (no. 38), **Loro Piana** (no. 54a), and more. And not to be outdone, **Louis Vuitton** (no. 82) has a huge and impressive store situated where Via Mazzini ends across from the arena.

If you think it's all for rich yuppies, you're wrong—the **Fiorucci** (no. 4) is enormous, the **UPIM** (no. 6) is one of the largest I have ever seen, and there are branches of chains such as **Bershka** (no. 46a) that specialize in low-cost hot styles. **Oltre**, by the way, is low-cost high fashion in large sizes. There are also many low-end French chains such as **Pimkie** (no. 42) and **Promod** (no. 40).

Luckily, this street is filled with banks and ATMs.

**ARENA** Mazzini ends at the Roman theater, which is surrounded by cafes and TTs, as can be expected. Gelato? Did someone say gelato?

**VIA CAPPELLO** Quick, what was Juliet's last name? Well, that's the clue (the answer is Capulet) for finding this shopping street as well as Juliet's house. Via Cappello is narrow and can be crowded, especially when a tour group falls on Juliet's pad. Stores are mostly Italian chains for mid- to low-end fashion rather than designer brands. But wait, that's not totally true—there are branches of **Armani Jeans** (no. 25) and **Emporio Armani** (no. 14). At the far end of the street is a **FNAC** (no. 34) as well as the **Coin** (no. 23) department store. Capulet, oops, Cappello leads away from Piazza Erbe and forms a junction with the beginning of Via Mazzini. **Note:** Juliet is, of course, spelled in Italian, making it *Giulietta*.

# *Molto Italiano*

## *Useful Terms & Phrases*

### IL BASICS

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Thank you	<b>Grazie</b>	<i>graht-tzee-yey</i>
You're welcome	<b>Prego</b>	<i>prey-go</i>
Please	<b>Per favore</b>	<i>pehr fah-vohr-eh</i>
Yes	<b>Si</b>	<i>see</i>
No	<b>No</b>	<i>noh</i>
Good morning or Good day	<b>Buongiorno</b>	<i>bwohn-djor-noh</i>
Good evening	<b>Buona sera</b>	<i>bwohn-ah say-rah</i>
Good night	<b>Buona notte</b>	<i>bwohn-ah noht-tay</i>
It's a pleasure to meet you.	<b>Piacere di con- oscerla.</b>	<i>pyah-cheh-reh dee koh-nohshehr-lah</i>
My name is ____.	<b>Mi chiamo ____.</b>	<i>mee kyah-moh</i>
And yours?	<b>E lei?</b>	<i>eh lay</i>
Do you speak English?	<b>Parla inglese?</b>	<i>pahr-lah een-gleh- seh</i>
How are you?	<b>Come sta?</b>	<i>koh-may stah</i>
Very well	<b>Molto bene</b>	<i>mohl-toh behn-ney</i>

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Goodbye	<b>Arrivederci</b>	ahr-ree-vah-dehr-chee
Excuse me (to get attention)	<b>Scusi</b>	skoo-zee
Excuse me (to get past someone)	<b>Permesso</b>	pehr-mehs-soh

## GETTING AROUND

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Where is . . . ?	<b>Dovè . . . ?</b>	doh-vey
the station	<b>la stazione</b>	lah stat-tzee-oh-neh
a hotel	<b>un albergo</b>	oon ahl-behr-goh
a restaurant	<b>un ristorante</b>	oon reest-ohr-ahnt-eh
the bathroom	<b>il bagno</b>	eel bahn-nyoh
I am looking for . . .	<b>Cerco . . .</b>	chehr-koh
a porter	<b>un facchino</b>	oon fahk-kee-noh
the check-in counter	<b>il check-in</b>	eel check-in
the ticket counter	<b>la biglietteria</b>	lah beel-lyeht-teh-ree-ah
arrivals	<b>l'area arrivi</b>	lah-reh-ah ahr-ree-vee
departures	<b>l'area partenze</b>	lah-reh-ah pahr-tehn-tseh
gate number	<b>l'uscita numero</b>	loo-shee-tah noo-meh-roh
the waiting area	<b>l'area d'attesa</b>	lah-reh-ah daht-teh-zah
the men's restroom	<b>la toilette uomini</b>	lah twa-leht woh-mee-nee

English	Italian	Pronunciation
the women's restroom	<b>la toilette donne</b>	lah twa-leht dohn-neh
the police station	<b>la stazione di polizia</b>	lah stah-tsyoh-neh dee poh-lee-tsee-ah
a security guard	<b>una guardia di sicurezza</b>	ooh-nah gwahr- dyah dee see-koo- ret-sah
the smoking area	<b>l'area fumatori</b>	lah-reh-ah foo-mah- toh-ree
the information booth	<b>l'ufficio informazioni</b>	loof-fee-choh een- fohr-mah-tsyoh-nee
a public telephone	<b>un telefono pubblico</b>	oon teh-leh-foh-noh poob-blee-koh
an ATM/cashpoint	<b>un bancomat</b>	oon bahn-koh-maht
baggage claim	<b>il ritiro bagagli</b>	eel ree-tee-roh bah- gahl-lyee
a luggage cart	<b>un carrello portabagagli</b>	oon kahr-reh-loh pohr-tah-bah-gahl- lyee
a currency exchange	<b>un cambia-valute</b>	oon kahm-byah- vah-loo-teh
a cafe	<b>un caffè</b>	oon kahf-feh
a restaurant	<b>un ristorante</b>	oon ree-stoh-rahn- teh
a bar	<b>un bar</b>	oon bar
a bookstore	<b>una libreria</b>	oo-nah lee-breh-ree- ah
a duty-free shop	<b>un duty-free</b>	oon duty-free
To the left.	<b>A sinistra.</b>	ah see-nees-tra
To the right.	<b>A destra.</b>	ah dehy-stra
Straight ahead.	<b>Avanti (or sempre diritto).</b>	ahv-vahn-tee (seh-m- pray dee-reet-toh)

## DINING

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Breakfast	<b>Prima colazione</b>	<i>pree-mah coh-laht-tzee-ohn-ay</i>
Lunch	<b>Pranzo</b>	<i>prahn-zoh</i>
Dinner	<b>Cena</b>	<i>chay-nah</i>
How much is it?	<b>Quanto costa?</b>	<i>kwan-toh coh-sta</i>
The check, please.	<b>Il conto, per favore.</b>	<i>eel kon-toh pehr fah-vohr-eh</i>

## A MATTER OF TIME

English	Italian	Pronunciation
When?	<b>Quando?</b>	<i>kwan-doh</i>
Yesterday	<b>Ieri</b>	<i>ee-yehr-ree</i>
Today	<b>Oggi</b>	<i>oh-jee</i>
Tomorrow	<b>Domani</b>	<i>doh-mah-nee</i>
What time is it?	<b>Che ore sono?</b>	<i>kay or-ay soh-noh</i>
It's one o'clock.	<b>È l'una.</b>	<i>eh loo-nah</i>
It's two o'clock.	<b>Sono le due.</b>	<i>soh-noh leh doo-eh</i>
It's two thirty.	<b>Sono le due e mezzo.</b>	<i>soh-noh leh doo-eh eh mehd-dzoh</i>
It's noon.	<b>È mezzogiorno.</b>	<i>eh mehd-dzoh-johr-noh</i>
It's midnight.	<b>È mezzanotte.</b>	<i>eh mehd-dzah-noht-teh</i>
It's early.	<b>È presto.</b>	<i>eh prehs-toh</i>
It's late.	<b>È tardi.</b>	<i>eh tahr-dee</i>
in the morning	<b>al mattino</b>	<i>ahl maht-tee-noh</i>
in the afternoon	<b>al pomeriggio</b>	<i>ahl poh-meh-reed-joh</i>
at night	<b>di notte</b>	<i>dee noht-the</i>

## DAYS OF THE WEEK

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Monday	<b>Lunedì</b>	loo-nay-dee
Tuesday	<b>Martedì</b>	mart-ay-dee
Wednesday	<b>Mercoledì</b>	mehr-cohl-ay-dee
Thursday	<b>Giovedì</b>	joh-vay-dee
Friday	<b>Venerdì</b>	ven-nehr-dee
Saturday	<b>Sabato</b>	sah-bah-toh
Sunday	<b>Domenica</b>	doh-mehn-nee-kah

## MONTHS &amp; SEASONS

English	Italian	Pronunciation
January	<b>gennaio</b>	jehn-nah-yoh
February	<b>febbraio</b>	feh-brah-yoh
March	<b>marzo</b>	mahr-tso
April	<b>aprile</b>	ah-pree-leh
May	<b>maggio</b>	mahd-joh
June	<b>giugno</b>	jewn-nyo
July	<b>luglio</b>	loo-lyo
August	<b>agosto</b>	ah-gohs-toh
September	<b>settembre</b>	seht-tehm-breh
October	<b>ottobre</b>	oht-toh-breh
November	<b>novembre</b>	noh-vehm-breh
December	<b>dicembre</b>	dee-chehm-breh
spring	<b>la primavera</b>	lah pree-mah-veh-rah
summer	<b>l'estate</b>	lehs-tah-teh
autumn	<b>l'autunno</b>	low-toon-noh
winter	<b>l'inverno</b>	leen-vehr-noh

## NUMBERS

English	Italian	Pronunciation
1	<b>uno</b>	oo-noh
2	<b>due</b>	doo-ay
3	<b>tre</b>	tray
4	<b>quattro</b>	kwah-troh
5	<b>cinque</b>	cheen-kway
6	<b>sei</b>	say
7	<b>sette</b>	set-tay
8	<b>otto</b>	oh-toh
9	<b>nove</b>	noh-vay
10	<b>dieci</b>	dee-ay-chee
11	<b>undici</b>	oon-dee-chee
20	<b>venti</b>	vehn-tee
21	<b>ventuno</b>	vehn-toon-oh
22	<b>venti due</b>	vehn-tee doo-ay
30	<b>trenta</b>	trayn-tah
40	<b>quaranta</b>	kwah-rahn-tah
50	<b>cinquanta</b>	cheen-kwan-tah
60	<b>sessanta</b>	sehs-sahn-tah
70	<b>settanta</b>	seht-tahn-tah
80	<b>ottanta</b>	oht-tahn-tah
90	<b>novanta</b>	noh-vahnt-tah
100	<b>cento</b>	chen-toh
1,000	<b>mille</b>	mee-lay
5,000	<b>cinque milla</b>	cheen-kway mee-lah
10,000	<b>dieci milla</b>	dee-ay-chee mee-lah

## A SHOPPER'S PHRASEFINDER

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Please tell me . . .	<b>Può dirmi per favore . . .</b>	<i>pwoh deer-mee pehr fah-voh-reh</i>
how to get to a mall	<b>come si arriva ad un centro commerciale</b>	<i>koh-meh see ahr-ree-vah ahd oon chehn-troh kohm-mehr-chah-leh</i>
the best place for shopping	<b>il posto migliore per fare compere</b>	<i>eel pohs-toh meel-lyoh-reh pehr fah-reh kohm-peh-reh</i>
how to get downtown	<b>come si arriva in centro</b>	<i>koh-meh see ahr-ree-vah een chehn-troh</i>
Where can I find . . .	<b>Dove trovo . . .</b>	<i>doh-veh troh-voh</i>
an antiques shop	<b>un negozio di antichità</b>	<i>oon neh-goh-tsyoh dee ahn-tee-kee-tah</i>
a bookstore	<b>una libreria</b>	<i>oo-nah lee-breh-ree-ah</i>
a cigar shop	<b>un tabaccaio</b>	<i>oon tah-bahk-kah-yoh</i>
a clothing store for men/women/children	<b>un negozio di abbigliamento per uomo/donna/bambini</b>	<i>oon neh-goh-tsyoh dee ahb-beel-lyah-mehn-toh pehr woh-moh/dohn-nah/bahm-bee-nee</i>
a designer fashion shop	<b>una boutique di moda fermata</b>	<i>oo-nah boutique dee moh-dah feer-mah-tah</i>
a jewelry store	<b>una gioielleria</b>	<i>oo-nah joh-yehl-leh-ree-ah</i>
a shoe store	<b>un negozio di scarpe</b>	<i>oon neh-goh-tsyoh dee skahr-peh</i>
a souvenir shop	<b>un negozio di souvenir</b>	<i>oon neh-goh-tsyoh dee souvenir</i>
a stationery store	<b>una cartoleria</b>	<i>oo-nah kahr-toh-leh-ree-ah</i>

English	Italian	Pronunciation
a toy store	<b>un negozio di giocattoli</b>	oon neh-goh-tsyoh dee joh-kaht-toh-lee
a vintage clothing store	<b>un negozio di abiti usati</b>	oon neh-goh-tsyoh dee ah-bee-tee oo-zah-tee
a flea market	<b>un mercatino delle pulci</b>	oon mehrkah-tee- noh dehl-leh pool-chee
I'm looking for a size . . .	<b>Cerco una taglia . . .</b>	chehr-koh oo-nah tahh-lyah
extra-small	<b>molto piccolo</b>	mohl-toh peek-koh-lah
small	<b>piccolo</b>	peek-koh-lah
medium	<b>media</b>	meh-dyah
large	<b>grande</b>	grahn-deh
extra-large	<b>molto grande</b>	mohl-toh grahn-deh
I'm looking for . . .	<b>Cerco . . .</b>	chehr-koh
cashmere	<b>qualcosa in cashmere</b>	kwahl-koh-zah een cashmere
a coat	<b>una giacca</b>	oo-nah jahk-kah
cotton pants	<b>dei pantaloni di cotone</b>	day pahn-tah-loh-nee dee koh-toh-neh
a hat	<b>un cappello/berretto</b>	oon kahp-pehl-loh/ behr-reht-toh
a silk blouse	<b>una camicia di seta</b>	oo-nah kah-mee-chah dee seh-tah
socks	<b>dei calzini</b>	day kahl-tsee-nee
sunglasses	<b>degli occhiali da sole</b>	dehl-lyee ohk-kyah-lee dah soh-leh
sweaters	<b>delle maglie</b>	dehl-leh mahl-lyeh
a swimsuit	<b>un costume da bagno</b>	oon kohs-too-meh dah bahn-nyoh

English	Italian	Pronunciation
underwear	<b>della biancheria intima</b>	dehl-lah byahn-keh-ree-ah een-tee-mah
May I try it on?	<b>Posso provarlo?</b>	pohs-soh proh-vahr-loh
Where can I try this on?	<b>Dove posso provarlo?</b>	doh-veh pohs-soh proh-vahr-loh
This is . . .	<b>Questo è . . .</b>	kwehs-toh eh
too tight	<b>troppo stretto</b>	trohp-poh streht-toh
too loose	<b>troppo largo</b>	trohp-poh lahr-goh
too long	<b>troppo lungo</b>	trohp-poh loon-goh
too short	<b>troppo corto</b>	trohp-poh kohr-toh
This fits great!	<b>È perfetto!</b>	eh pehr-feht-toh
Thanks, I'll take it.	<b>Grazie, lo prendo.</b>	grah-tsyeH loh prehn-doh
Do you have that in . . .	<b>Ce l'ha in . . .</b>	cheh lah een
a smaller/larger size	<b>una taglia più piccola/grande</b>	oo-nah tahl-lyah pyoo peek-koh-lah/grahn-deh
a different color	<b>un altro colore</b>	oon ahl-troh koh-loh-reh
How much is it?	<b>Quanto costa?</b>	kwahn-toh kohs-tah
Is there a craft/artisan market?	<b>C'è un mercato di artigianato?</b>	ch-eh oon mehr-kah-toh dee ahr-tee-jah-nah-toh
That's beautiful. May I look at it?	<b>Che bello. Posso vederlo?</b>	keh behl-loh pohs-soh veh-dehr-loh
When is the farmers' market open?	<b>Quando apre il mercato di frutta e verdura?</b>	kwahn-doh ah-preh eel mehr-kah-toh dee froot-tah eh vehr-doo-rah

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Is that open every day of the week?	<b>È aperto tutti i giorni della settimana?</b>	<i>eh ah-pehr-toh toot-tee ee johr-nee dehl-lah seht-tee-mah-nah</i>
How much does that cost?	<b>Quanto costa?</b>	<i>kwahn-toh kohs-tah</i>
That's too expensive.	<b>È troppo caro.</b>	<i>eh trohp-poh kah-roh</i>
How much for two?	<b>Quanto per due?</b>	<i>kwahn-toh pehr doo-eh</i>
Do I get a discount if I buy two or more?	<b>Mi fa lo sconto se ne compro due o più?</b>	<i>mee fah loh skohn-toh seh neh kohm-proh doo-eh oh pyoo</i>
Do I get a discount if I pay in cash?	<b>Mi fa lo sconto se pago in contanti?</b>	<i>mee fah loh skohn-toh she pah-goh een kohn-tahn-tee</i>
No thanks. Maybe I'll come back.	<b>No grazie. Magari torno.</b>	<i>noh grah-tsye mah-gah-ree tohr-noh</i>
Would you take euros?	<b>Vanno bene euro?</b>	<i>vahn-noh beh-neh eh-oo-roh</i>
That's a deal!	<b>Affare fatto!</b>	<i>ahf-fah-reh fahht-toh</i>
Do you have a less expensive one?	<b>Ne ha uno meno caro?</b>	<i>neh ah oo-noh meh-no kah-roh</i>
Is there tax?	<b>C'è l'IVA?</b>	<i>ch-eh lee-vah</i>
May I have the VAT forms? (Europe only)	<b>Posso avere un modulo per il rimborso dell'IVA?</b>	<i>pohs-soh ah-veh-reh oon moh-doo-loh pehr eel reem-bohr-soh dehl-lee-vah</i>
Is there ____ nearby?	<b>C'è ____ qui vicino?</b>	<i>ch-eh ____ kwee vee-chee-noh</i>
a bookstore	<b>una libreria</b>	<i>oo-nah lee-breh-ree-ah</i>
a newsstand	<b>un'edicola</b>	<i>oon-eh-dee-koh-lah</i>

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Do you have ____ in English?	<b>Avete ____ in inglese?</b>	ah-veh-teh ____ een een-gleh-seh
books	<b>libri</b>	lee-bree
books about local history	<b>libri di storia locale</b>	lee-bree dee stoh-ryah loh-kah-leh
magazines	<b>riviste</b>	ree-vees-teh
maps	<b>cartine</b>	kahr-tee-neh
newspapers	<b>giornali</b>	johr-nah-lee
picture books	<b>libri illustrate</b>	lee-bree eel-loos-trah-tee
travel guides	<b>guide turistiche</b>	gwee-deh too-rees-tee-keh
Can I play this in the U.S.?	<b>Funziona questo negli Stati Uniti?</b>	foon-tsyoh-nah kwehs-toh nehlyee stah-tee oo-nee-tee
Will this game work on my game console in the U.S.?	<b>Questo gioco funziona su una console americana?</b>	kwehs-toh joh-koh foon-tsyoh-nah soo oo-nah kohn-sohl ah-meh-ree-kah-nah
Do you have this in a U.S. market format?	<b>C'è questo in formato americano?</b>	ch-eh kwehs-toh een fohr-mah-toh ah-meh-ree-kah-noh
Can you convert this to a U.S. market format?	<b>Si può convertire questo in formato americano?</b>	see pwoh kohn-vehr-tee-reh kwehs-toh een fohr-mah-toh ah-meh-ree-kah-noh
Will this work with a 110V AC adaptor?	<b>Questo funziona con un adattatore da 110 volts?</b>	kwehs-toh foon-tsyoh-nah kohn oon ah-daht-tah-toh-reh dah chehn-toh-dyeh-chee volts
Do you have an adaptor plug for 110 to 220 volts?	<b>Avete un adattatore da 110 a 220 volts?</b>	ah-veh-teh oon ah-daht-tah-toh-reh dah chehn-toh-dyeh-chee ah doo-eh-chehn-toh-vehn-tee volts

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Do you sell electronic adaptors here?	<b>Vendete adattatori per sistemi elettronici?</b>	vehn-deh-teh ah-daht-tah-toh-ree pehr sees-teh-mee eh-leht-troh-nee-chee
Is it safe to use my laptop with this adaptor?	<b>Posso usare il computer portatile con questo adattatore?</b>	pohs-soh oo-zah-reh eel com puter pohr-tah-tee-leh kohn kwehs-toh ah-daht-tah-toh-reh
If it doesn't work, may I return it?	<b>Se non funziona, posso portarlo indietro?</b>	seh nohn foon-tsyoh-nah pohs-soh pohr-tahr-loh een-dyeh-troh
May I try it here in the store?	<b>Posso provarlo qui in negozio?</b>	pohs-soh proh-vahr-loh kwee een neh-goh-tsyoh

## AT THE BARBER / HAIRDRESSER

English	Italian	Pronunciation
Do you have a style guide?	<b>Ha un catalogo dei vari stili?</b>	ah oon kah-tah-loh-goh day vah-ree stee-lee
A trim, please.	<b>Una spuntatina, per favore.</b>	oo-nah spoon-tah-tee-nah pehr fah-voh-reh
I'd like it bleached.	<b>Vorrei ossigenarli.</b>	vohr-ray ohs-see-jeh-nahr-lee
Would you change the color ____	<b>Mi fa il colore</b>	mee fah eel koh-loh-reh
darker?	<b>più scuro?</b>	pyoo skoo-roh
lighter?	<b>più chiaro?</b>	pyoo kyah-roh
Would you just touch it up a little?	<b>Me li sistema un po'?</b>	meh lee see-steh-mah oon poh

English	Italian	Pronunciation
I'd like it curled.	<b>Li vorrei arricciati.</b>	lee vohr-ray ahr-reet- <i>chah</i> -tee
Do I need an appointment?	<b>Ci vuole un appuntamento?</b>	chee vwoh-leh oon ahp-poon-tah- <i>mehn</i> -toh
May I make an appointment?	<b>Posso prendere un appuntamento?</b>	<i>pohs</i> -soh <i>prehn</i> -deh-reh oon ahp-poon-tah- <i>mehn</i> -toh
Wash, dry, and set.	<b>Lavaggio, asciugatura, e messa in piega.</b>	lah- <i>vahd</i> -joh ah-shoo-gah- <i>toorah</i> eh <i>mehs</i> -sah een <i>pyeh</i> -gah
Do you do permanents?	<b>Fate permanenti?</b>	<i>fah</i> -teh pehr-mah- <i>nehn</i> -tee
Please use low heat.	<b>Lo usi tiepido, per favore.</b>	loh oo-zee <i>tyeh</i> -pee-doh pehr fah- <i>voh</i> -reh
Please don't blow dry it.	<b>Non li asciughi col phon, per favore.</b>	nohn lee ah- <i>shoog</i> -ee kohl fohn pehr fah- <i>voh</i> -reh
Please dry it curly / straight	<b>Li asciughi arricciandoli / stirandoli, per favore.</b>	lee ah- <i>shoog</i> -y ahr-reet- <i>chahndoh</i> -lee / <i>stee</i> - <i>rahn</i> -doh-lee pehr fah- <i>voh</i> -reh
Would you fix my braids?	<b>Mi fa le trecce?</b>	mee fah leh <i>treht</i> -cheh
Would you fix my highlights?	<b>Mi fa i colpi di sole?</b>	mee fah ee <i>kohl</i> -pee dee <i>soh</i> -leh
Do you wax?	<b>Fate la ceretta?</b>	<i>fah</i> -teh lah cheh- <i>reht</i> -tah
Please wax my ____.	<b>Mi faccia la ceretta ____ per favore.</b>	mee <i>fah</i> t- <i>chah</i> lah cheh- <i>reht</i> -tah ____ pehr fah- <i>voh</i> -reh
legs	<b>alle gambe</b>	<i>ahl</i> -leh <i>gahm</i> -beh

English	Italian	Pronunciation
bikini line	<b>alla zona bikini</b>	<i>ahl-lah dzoh-nah bikini</i>
eyebrows	<b>alle sopracciglia</b>	<i>ahl-leh soh-praht-cheel-lyah</i>
upper lip (under the nose)	<b>sotto il naso</b>	<i>soht-toh eel nah-zoh</i>
Please trim my beard.	<b>Mi spunti la barba, per favore.</b>	<i>mee spoon-tee lah bahr-bah pehr fah-voh-reh</i>
A shave, please.	<b>Mi faccia la barba, per favore.</b>	<i>mee faht-chah lah bahr-bah pehr fah-voh-reh</i>
Use a fresh blade, please.	<b>Usi una lametta nuova, per favore.</b>	<i>oo-zee oo-nah lah-meht-tah nwoh-vah pehr fah-voh-reh</i>
Sure, cut it all off.	<b>Certo, la tagli tutta.</b>	<i>chehr-toh lah tahl-lyee too-tah</i>

## ITALIAN MENU TERMS

**Abbacchio** Roast haunch or shoulder of lamb baked and served in a casserole and sometimes flavored with anchovies.

**Agnolotti** A crescent-shaped pasta shell stuffed with a mix of chopped meat, spices, vegetables, and cheese; when prepared in rectangular versions, the same combination of ingredients is identified as ravioli.

**Amaretti** Crunchy, sweet almond-flavored macaroons.

**Anguilla alla veneziana** Eel cooked in a sauce made from tuna and lemon.

**Antipasti** Succulent tidbits served at the beginning of a meal (before the pasta), whose ingredients might include slices of cured meats, seafood (especially shellfish), and cooked and seasoned vegetables.

**Aragosta** Lobster.

**Arrosto** Roasted meat.

**Baccalà** Dried and salted codfish.

**Bagna cauda** Hot and well-seasoned sauce, heavily flavored with anchovies, designed for dipping raw vegetables; literally translated as “hot bath.”

**Bistecca alla fiorentina** Florentine-style steaks, coated before grilling with olive oil, pepper, lemon juice, salt, and parsley.

**Bocconcini** Veal layered with ham and cheese, and then fried.

**Bollito misto** Assorted boiled meats served on a single platter.

**Braciola** Pork chop.

**Bresaola** Air-dried spiced beef.

**Bruschetta** Toasted bread, heavily slathered with olive oil and garlic and often topped with tomatoes.

**Bucatini** Coarsely textured hollow spaghetti.

**Busecca alla Milanese** Tripe (beef stomach) flavored with herbs and vegetables.

**Cacciucco ali livornese** Seafood stew.

**Calzone** Pizza dough rolled with the chef's choice of sausage, tomatoes, cheese, and so on and then baked into a kind of savory turnover.

**Cannelloni** Tubular dough stuffed with meat, cheese, or vegetables and then baked in a creamy white sauce.

**Cappellacci alla ferrarese** Pasta stuffed with pumpkin.

**Cappelletti** Small ravioli (“little hats”) stuffed with meat or cheese.

**Carciofi** Artichokes.

**Carpaccio** Thin slices of raw cured beef, sometimes in a piquant sauce.

**Cassatta alla siciliana** A richly caloric dessert that combines layers of sponge cake, sweetened ricotta cheese, and candied fruit, bound together with chocolate butter-cream icing.

**Cervello al burro nero** Brains in black-butter sauce.

**Cima alla genovese** Baked filet of veal rolled into a tube-shaped package containing eggs, mushrooms, and sausage.

**Coppa** Cured morsels of pork filet encased in sausage skins, served in slices.

**Costoletta alla milanese** Veal cutlet dredged in bread crumbs, fried, and sometimes flavored with cheese.

**Cozze** Mussels.

**Fagioli** White beans.

**Fave** Fava beans.

**Fegato alla veneziana** Thinly sliced calves' liver fried with salt, pepper, and onions.

**Focaccia** Ideally, concocted from potato-based dough left to rise slowly for several hours and then garnished with tomato sauce, garlic, basil, salt, and pepper and drizzled with olive oil; similar to a deep-dish pizza most popular in the deep south, especially Bari.

**Fontina** Rich cow's-milk cheese.

**Frittata** Italian omelet.

**Fritto misto** A deep-fried medley of whatever small fish, shellfish, and squid are available in the marketplace that day.

**Fusilli** Spiral-shaped pasta.

**Gelato (produzione propria)** Ice cream (homemade).

**Gnocchi** Dumplings usually made from potatoes (*gnocchi alla patate*) or from semolina (*gnocchi alla romana*), often stuffed with combinations of cheese, spinach, vegetables, or whatever combinations strike the chef's fancy.

**Gorgonzola** One of the most famous blue-veined cheeses of Europe—strong, creamy, and aromatic.

**Granità** Flavored ice, usually with lemon or coffee.

**Insalata di frutti di mare** Seafood salad (usually including shrimp and squid) garnished with pickles, lemon, olives, and spices.

**Involtini** Thinly sliced beef, veal, or pork, rolled, stuffed, and fried.

**Minestrone** A rich and savory vegetable soup usually sprinkled with grated parmigiano and studded with noodles.

**Mortadella** Mild pork sausage, fashioned into large cylinders and served sliced; the original lunchmeat bologna (because its most famous center of production is Bologna).

**Mozzarella** A nonfermented cheese, made from the fresh milk of a buffalo (or, if unavailable, from a cow), boiled, and then kneaded into a rounded ball, served fresh.

**Mozzarella con pomodori (also caprese)** Fresh tomatoes with fresh mozzarella, basil, pepper, and olive oil.

**Nervetti** A northern Italian antipasto made from chewy pieces of calves' foot or shin.

**Osso buco** Beef or veal knuckle slowly braised until the cartilage is tender and then served with a highly flavored sauce.

**Pancetta** Herb-flavored pork belly, rolled into a cylinder and sliced—the Italian bacon.

**Panettone** Sweet yellow-colored bread baked in the form of a brioche.

**Panna** Heavy cream.

**Pansotti** Pasta stuffed with greens, herbs, and cheeses, usually served with a walnut sauce.

**Pappardelle alle lepre** Pasta with rabbit sauce.

**Parmigiano** Parmesan, a hard and salty yellow cheese usually grated over pastas and soups but also eaten alone; also known as *granna*. The best is *Parmigiano-Reggiano*.

**Peperoni** Green, yellow, or red sweet peppers (not to be confused with pepperoni).

**Pesci al cartoccio** Fish baked in a parchment envelope with onions, parsley, and herbs.

**Pesto** A flavorful green sauce made from basil leaves, cheese, garlic, marjoram, and (if available) pine nuts.

**Piccata al Marsala** Thin escalope of veal braised in a pungent sauce flavored with Marsala wine.

**Piselli al prosciutto** Peas with strips of ham.

**Pizza** Specific varieties include *capricciosa* (its ingredients can vary widely, depending on the chef's culinary vision and the ingredients at hand), *margherita* (with tomato sauce, cheese, fresh basil, and memories of the first queen of Italy, Marguerite di Savoia, in whose honor it was first made by a Neapolitan chef), *napoletana* (with ham, capers, tomatoes, oregano, cheese, and the distinctive taste of anchovies), *quattro stagione* (translated as "four seasons" because of the array

of fresh vegetables in it; it also contains ham and bacon), and *siciliana* (with black olives, capers, and cheese).

**Pizzaiola** A process in which something (usually a beefsteak) is covered in a tomato-and-oregano sauce.

**Polenta** Thick porridge or mush made from cornmeal flour.

**Polenta de uccelli** Assorted small birds roasted on a spit and served with polenta.

**Polenta e coniglio** Rabbit stew served with polenta.

**Polla alla cacciatore** Chicken with tomatoes and mushrooms cooked in wine.

**Pollo all diavola** Highly spiced grilled chicken.

**Ragù** Meat sauce.

**Ricotta** A soft bland cheese made from cow's or sheep's milk.

**Risotto** Italian rice.

**Risotto alla milanese** Rice with saffron and wine.

**Salsa verde** "Green sauce," made from capers, anchovies, lemon juice and/or vinegar, and parsley.

**Saltimbocca** Veal scallop layered with prosciutto and sage; its name literally translates as "jump in your mouth," a reference to its tart and savory flavor.

**Salvia** Sage.

**Scaloppina alla Valdostana** Escalope of veal stuffed with cheese and ham.

**Scaloppine** Thin slices of veal coated in flour and sautéed in butter.

**Semifreddo** A frozen dessert; usually ice cream with sponge cake.

**Seppia** Cuttlefish (a kind of squid); its black ink is used for flavoring in certain sauces for pasta and also in risotto dishes.

**Sogliola** Sole.

**Spaghetti** A long, round, thin pasta, variously served: *alla bolognese* (with ground meat, mushrooms, peppers, and so on), *alla carbonara* (with bacon, black pepper, and eggs), *al pomodoro* (with tomato sauce), *al sugo/ragù* (with meat sauce), and *alle vongole* (with clam sauce).

**Spiedini** Pieces of meat grilled on a skewer over an open flame.

**Strangolaprete** Small nuggets of pasta, usually served with sauce; the name is literally translated as “priest-choker.”

**Stufato** Beef braised in white wine with vegetables.

**Tagliatelle** Flat egg noodles.

**Tonno** Tuna.

**Tortelli** Pasta dumplings stuffed with ricotta and greens.

**Tortellini** Rings of dough stuffed with minced and seasoned meat, and served either in soups or as a full-fledged pasta covered with sauce.

**Trenette** Thin noodles served with pesto sauce and potatoes.

**Trippe alla fiorentina** Beef tripe (stomach).

**Vermicelli** Very thin spaghetti.

**Vitello tonnato** Cold sliced veal covered with tuna-fish sauce.

**Zabaglione/zabaione** Egg yolks whipped into the consistency of a custard, flavored with Marsala, and served warm as a dessert.

**Zampone** Pigs' feet stuffed with spicy seasoned port, boiled and sliced.

**Zuccotto** A liqueur-soaked sponge cake, molded into a dome and layered with chocolate, nuts, and whipped cream.

**Zuppa inglese** Sponge cake soaked in custard.

Size Conversion Chart									
Women's Clothing									
American	8	10	12	14	16	18			
Continental	38	40	42	44	46	48			
British	10	12	14	16	18	20			
Women's Shoes									
American	5	6	7	8	9	10			
Continental	36	37	38	39	40	41			
British	4	5	6	7	8	9			
Children's Clothing									
American	3	4	5	6	6X				
Continental	98	104	110	116	122				
British	18	20	22	24	26				
Children's Shoes									
American	8	9	10	11	12	13	1	2	3
Continental	24	25	27	28	29	30	32	33	34
British	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	1	2
Men's Suits									
American	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	
Continental	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	
British	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	
Men's Shirts									
American	14½	15	15½	16	16½	17	17½	18	
Continental	37	38	39	41	42	43	44	45	
British	14½	15	15½	16	16½	17	17½	18	
Men's Shoes									
American	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
Continental	39½	41	42	43	44½	46	47		
British	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		

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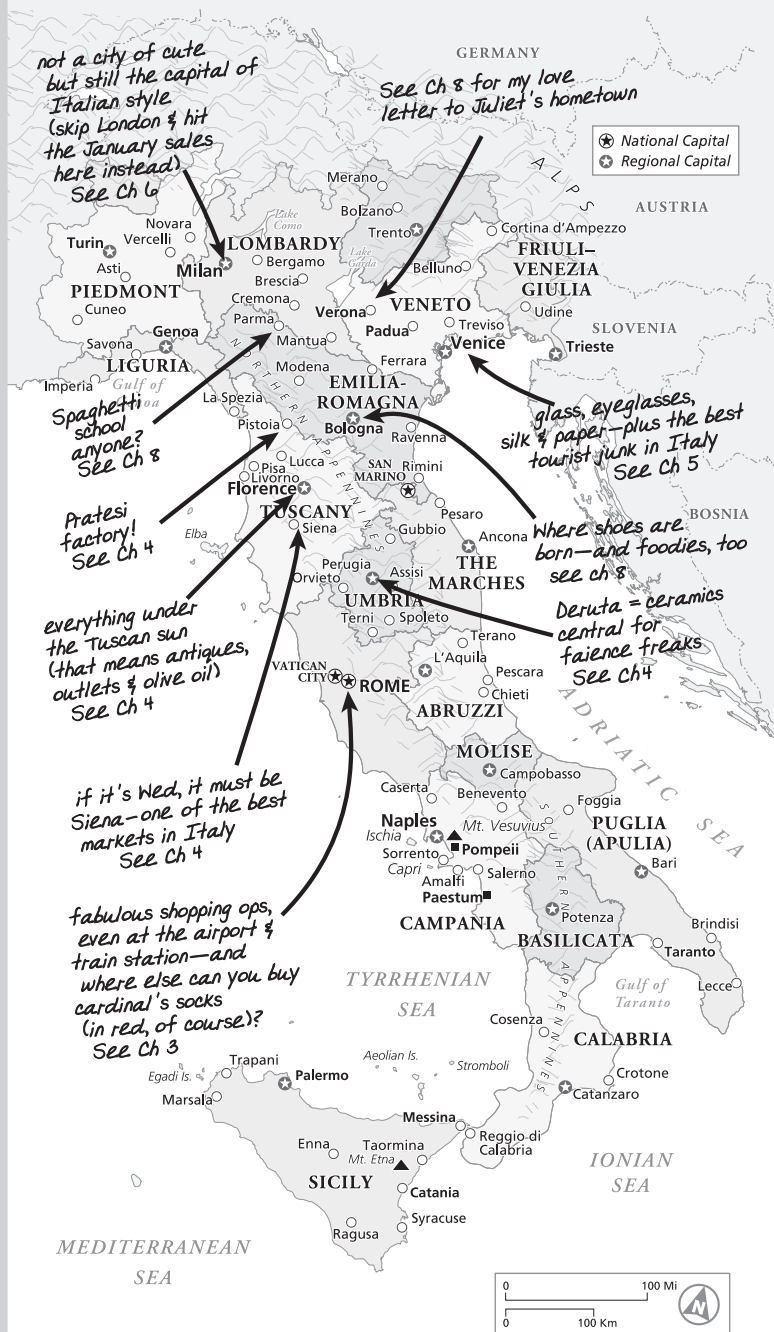
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