

SECRET ROME

FOUR STEPS THAT GRANT YOU UNRESTRICTED ACCESS TO LA DOLCE VITA IN THE ETERNAL CITY

Romans. They know a thing or two about luxury. Always have done, always will do. They brought us the sharp elegance of Italian tailoring, the effortless cool of La Dolce Vita and the sexiness of Monica Bellucci.

However, the challenge that faces us today is the same one that's greeted every single visitor to Rome since approximately 753 BC: how to make this most sumptuous of cities your very own? Here are four easy steps to ensure that Secret Luxury Rome is yours.

Choose the right hotel

Where you stay in a city really sets the tone for the whole experience. And take my word for it, JK Roma is the only hotel that the discerning, high-end luxury traveller chooses to stay in these days. And with reason.

The latest offering from the uber chic architect Michele Bonan, this is a hotel that stands apart and proud from the crowd of faux neo-classical hotels. It is a beacon of elegant, strong modernism in a sea of pastiche and comes highly recommended.

It is located a cocktail olive's throw from The Spanish Steps and the luxury brands that line the Via Del Corso and the Piazza di Spagna, it is a boutique hotel in the true sense of the word with only 30 rooms and suites all impeccably, and individually fitted out. It is the insiders place to stay. Not surprisingly JK Roma has been an instant hit with the city's film and fashion set along with a constant dusting of European Royalty keen on staying in new, intimate spaces.

Friendly tip Book now to be ahead of the crowds.

<http://jkrroma.com/> Rooms from Euros 700-2,000 per night

Eat and Drink Like a Roman

Eating in Rome is an art form and you need to make smart choices. The secret is that Romans don't like fancy food, so to eat well you don't have to go expensive. In fact, it is said, 'The more you spend, the worse you eat.' This attitude is encapsulated in Taverna Trilussa in the hipster neighbourhood of Trastevere. This family run Roman taverna is the place that upper class Italians go to eat real Italian food. It has retained its status as the best place to sample traditional Roman food because of its expertise in Rome's national dish—Bucatini all'Amatriciana.

<http://www.tavernatrilussa.it>

Shop Bespoke

A great big delicious fashion truth is that there is nothing like buying a brand in its home city. Fendi, Armani, Valentino and Bulgari, are all headquartered in Rome. The secret though is that you can actually get these flagship stores to keep everyone else out and organise a private shopping experience that's exclusive.

How about being treated to breakfast at Fendi? Here the store is opened early exclusively for you. This can be followed up by a visit to their legendary Salleria where you can join in with the master craftsmen and choose the leathers and materials you want used for your personalised bag, belt or shoes.



JESSICA HINES
Travel & Film Writer



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: SEE THE CITY FROM PRIVATE ROOF TOP TERRACES; FRESH SEASONAL INGREDIENTS MAKE UP THE BEST ROMAN DISHES; MASTER CRAFTSMEN AT WORK



A CAREFULLY CURATED MIXTURE OF MODERNIST ART CROWNS THE LIGHT FILLED LOBBY IN THIS 19TH CENTURY PALAZZO

It doesn't stop there because knowing who to ask can also get you access to the Bulgari store. You can enjoy a viewing session away from prying eyes as you marvel at their vintage and carefully-curated jewels. If you want some personalised jewellery made up, then this can be arranged. Go and spend time with the master craftsmen in the goldsmith's workshops and discuss your specifications for that coveted piece. (www.iflm.it)

Another luxury Rome insider's secret is that the city is blessed with a plethora of independent luxury stores. Arte Profumi is a new perfume shop not far from the Spanish Steps. This quaint store takes the art of producing the extraordinary very seriously. Some of the fragrances, such as Fumoir, a rich mixture of wood, cigar smoke, leather and whiskey, or the delicately exotic naughtiness of the absinthe-inspired Bohemien are startlingly original. Prices start at Euro 245 a bottle www.arteprofumi.it

Also, Federico Polidori's tiny leather workshop where he personally hand-makes bags and luggage, is a Roman legend. Much sought after by the Roman aristocrats, especially for his hand-made monogrammed ruffle cases, and among Hollywood stars such as Julia Roberts for his handmade luggage. Polidori is a refreshing reminder among the clamour of 'masstige' why it takes time and considerable skill to create real luxury pieces. As just about everything

is made to order, prices are on demand. <http://www.federicopolidori.com>

VIP Sight Seeing

Everyone in Rome is a sightseer. History in Rome is not just on every street corner but it is every street corner. Such an abundance of great art, architecture and history is in itself a luxury. The secret though is that you can see history that no one else can.

If Rome is a concierge company set up by husband and wife duo Filippo and Daniela Cosmelli. This dynamic couple makes the impossible possible. Hollywood actors like Ben Stiller and business tycoons like Microsoft's Steve Ballmer come to them to get the VIP access they expect. For example, one well kept secret is that the wonders of the Vatican can be revealed just to you and an art historian can be arranged to take you on your own private nighttime tour of the Sistine Chapel and Raphael's Rooms. It's all a bit Dan Brown and quite exciting (f.cosmelli@iflm.it www.iflm.it Prices for bespoke tours from Euros 1500 - 5000).

So how to make Rome your own secret luxury wonderland? Stay in the best new hotel; eat simply, eat a lot; shop bespoke, find the secret independent shops; be looked after by Filippo and Daniela Cosmelli, and indulge in personalised private sightseeing.

The author was advised on her trip by luxury travel experts www.notabeneglobal.com

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