

La dolce vita

It's the city of art, romance and, our favourite... gelato!
What more do you want? Take a peek at Rome's best hotels

WORDS BELINDA JACKSON



St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City is just one of the architectural highlights of Rome.



ancient art

< CAPO D'AFRICA, VIA CAPO D'AFRICA, 54

It's not hard to find this hotel. It's the elegant 19th-century building with the palm trees out front and the view of the Colosseum from the sun loungers on the roof. The 65-room hotel is close to the ancient action, but away from the hum of the city's traffic.

Room service High ceilings, marble bathrooms and two roof terraces with views that span 3000 years – what's not to love? The palette is soft: linen and ochre hues with honey-toned timbers. It's just the place to wind down after a day of legwork.

You really must... name-drop furiously that the Roman Forum is in the neighbourhood. Or take a walk to the Bocca della Verità, the mouth of truth, and put your hand in between the statue's lips and say, honestly, that you didn't mean to flex the plastic so hard... A brief amble across the Ponte Palatino will take you into arty Trastevere, with its tiny bars, bakeries and trattoria, all begging to be discovered.

Check in From A\$173/person per night with Creative Holidays. Book through travel agents or visit www.creativeholidays.com

industrial design

RADISSON SAS HOTEL (FORMERLY ES HOTEL), VIA FILIPPO TURATI, 171 >

This place was designed with the word 'slick' in mind. Perched on one of the seven hills of Rome, it's beloved by design gurus and Rome's fashionistas for its spacey white couches, heated rooftop pool and bar overlooking the Rome skyline. Two wings housing the 235 rooms face each other with an internal courtyard in between.

Room service The hotel is designed to resemble the deck of a ship. In the Robinson Crusoe-themed standard rooms, the bed, wardrobe and shower are moulded together on a mahogany floating floor.

You really must... head down to the bars and gelateria in vibrant Piazza Faranese to soak up the atmosphere of young Rome at play.

Check in From A\$320/person per night. Call 1800 333 333 or visit www.radissonsas.com





venetian style

EMPIRE PALACE HOTEL,
VIA AURELIANA, 39

Garden lovers will adore this hotel's location – it's an easy step to the Borghese Gardens, an oasis in the midst of Rome's bustle. In a previous life, the building was home to a Venetian nobleman's family, today it has 114 rooms and suites.

Room service The Empire Palace lives up to its name with sumptuous gold and white drapes and linen. Even the bathrooms are white marble flecked with gold. In contrast, the stables have been converted into the uber-modern American Bar.

You really must... take a stroll down to the Spanish Steps and Trevi Fountain, or to Via Margutta, for romantic cafes and ancient cobbled streets.

Check in From A\$417/double per night including breakfast. Call Small Luxury Hotels on 1800 251 958 or visit www.slh.com





classic italiana

EXEDRA, PIAZZA DELLA REPUBBLICA, 47

With more than a whiff of romance and plenty of classical styling, the Exedra is a stage set with porticoes, vaults and marble everywhere. Grab a drink and unwind in the rooftop pool for a view of the city. Favoured by the *Ocean's 12* cast when in town... Brad? George? Darlings, is that you?

Room service Choose your view – rooms overlook either the piazza and Michelangelo's Santa Maria degli Angeli Basilica, or a slice of Roman life out over the ancient Monti neighbourhood. The rooms' colour schemes are classically neutral, offset by a black-and-red champagne bar below and, in the basement, are the ruins of the 3rd-century BC Diocletian baths. Viewings exclusively for guests.

You really must... throw diet to the wind and visit the home of fettuccine alfredo, invented at the Alfredo restaurant on Via della Scrofa, 104a. Check in A\$400/night per room. Discounts for advance bookings. Call (0011) 61 800 267 265 65 or visit www.boscolohotels.com





homing instinct

CASA HOWARD, VIA CAPO LE CASE, 18,
AND VIA SISTINA, 149

Ten rooms, ten personalities. This hotel is spread out over two adjacent palazzis just off the Spanish Steps at Piazza di Spagna. It prides itself on its homey touches of handmade jams from the owners' Tuscan farm and breakfast served in your room.

Room service The Via Sistina property has five wild designer rooms: Tommy, Indian, American, Flower and Zebra. A few steps away on Capo le Case, 18, are five rooms decorated in a quieter, more English, style.

You really must... shop the homewares stores. Check out the fabulous TAD concept store at Via del Babuino, 155. Do the streets around the Piazza di Spagna for the big names – Valentino, Fendi, etc.

Check in From A\$270/double per night, and book well in advance. Call (0011) 61 39 669 924 555 or visit www.casahoward.com ■

