

# How to Spend the Perfect Weekend in Rome



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Only have 48 hours in the Eternal City?  
DEPARTURES has your dream itinerary planned.

By Laura Feinstein on July 05, 2018

There's never been a better time to visit the [Eternal City](#). With a slew of new bars, restaurants, and hotels [opening throughout the dazzling Italian capital](#), it's easy to be overwhelmed by the possibilities. But if you plan carefully, and do your research, you can seamlessly experience the best of old and new, the super-luxe and the quietly understated. For business travelers on a short trip or those who can spare only a few days during a grand Italian holiday, it's still possible to experience a taste of La Dolce Vita within a brief 48-hour window. The key is to mix essential tourist destinations with the new and intriguing, the relaxing and secluded nooks with the experiences that put you right in the vibrant heart of the city. Luckily, we've taken all the legwork out of planning the perfect weekend in Rome.



*Courtesy Hotel Raphaël*

## Hotel Raphael

If you're looking for a spot that offers quiet, elegance, great design and plenty of vegetarian options, the [Hotel Raphael](#), in the Centro Storico near the Piazza Navona, is perhaps the only boutique hotel in Rome to check all the boxes.

A [Relais & Châteaux](#) property, this romantic hideaway, in the shade of leafy vines and bougainvillea, offers a full range of veg/vegan options—not an easy feat in a city that loves its prosciutto—in its own luxe-casual restaurant [Mater Terrae](#). The hotel itself, conceptualized in 1963 by [Spartaco Vannoni](#), has the look and feel of a great collector's home, boasting Picasso ceramics, paintings by Mirò, Morandi and De Chirico, and several historic Mayan works displayed throughout the lobby. Design lovers will also delight at the two new executive floors, created by American architect Richard Meier. Unwind from a long flight with an afternoon coffee at the Bramante Terrace as you gaze over the city's famed terracotta roofs. *Largo Febo 2*






*Courtesy Rome Cavalieri, a Waldorf Astoria Resort*

## [Rome Cavalieri](#), A Waldorf Astoria Resort

If you're on a honeymoon, traveling with a larger group, or looking for a taste of luxury far from the crush of the city's bustling crowds, The [Rome Cavalieri](#) offers a palatial sanctuary off the beaten path near Vatican City. Here, you can catch stunning hillside views from the spacious luxe suites or secure access to late-night cocktails and dining options at the private [Imperial Club](#). After a long day of walking Rome's legendary cobblestone streets, relax at the salon or the [Cavalieri Grand Spa Club](#), stocked with La Prairie beauty products and offering chocolate, caviar, and spice massages along with Swiss facial treatments. Later, dip into one of the hotel's three on-premise pools, two outdoor, one indoor, the latter of which is a candle-lit blue grotto modeled after a luxe Turkish bath. The Cavalieri also contains Rome's only three-star Michelin restaurant, [La Pergola](#), where chef Heinz reigns supreme, cooking new takes on Roman classics. For more informal late-night dining, sample the sumptuous, full-plate Burrata at L'Uliveto, or grab a sunset aperitif at the Tiepolo Lounge and Terrace. *Via Alberto Cadlolo, 101*

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## Aroma

After exploring Rome's most popular and historic (re: most crowded) sights, including the Colosseum, Palatine Hill, Domus Aurea, and [all the museums](#) and attractions of Piazza del Popolo, stop nearby for an exquisite and relaxing dinner at [Aroma](#), the Michelin-starred restaurant on the [Palazzo Manfredi](#)'s open rooftop terrace. At night, it offers the city's best views of the Colosseum, and an astounding culinary treat in Roman-born Chef Di Lorio's tasting menu, which boasts a blend of traditional Italian classics cooked with inspired preparations of sustainably-caught seafood. Delicacies include the Tagliolini with black cuttlefish, pea purée, and mullet bottarga (fish eggs), or the Salmon balik with vanilla cream of potatoes, black bread and Tropea onion in cress. *Palazzo Manfredi, Via Labicana, 125*



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## Antico Caffè Greco

Widely considered the oldest bar in Rome, Greco sits on one of the city's poshest streets, and today is as beloved by locals as it is by curious tourists. Decorated in gilt and red velvet, Greco once hosted Lord Byron and Goethe, who enjoyed a coffee in these resplendent walls, and it's rumored that Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt once met here for pastries. Other famous past imbibers have include Henrik Ibsen, Hans Christian Andersen, and British rock star and professional brooder, Morrissey. *Via dei Condorri, 86*

## Zuma Bar

High above the iconic Palazzo Fendi, [this award-winning restaurant](#) first opened in March 2016 and has stayed a popular mainstay ever since. With an entrance in via Della Fontanella di Borghese, Zuma's rooftop terrace, designed by Noriyoshi Muramatsu, overlooks inspiring views and a singular menu of modern Japanese fusion cuisine. Meanwhile, the fifth-floor bar, lounge, and terrace offers an impressive selection of sake, wine, and signature cocktails, like the "shiso and juniper" (shiso, juniper berries, elderflower, and prosecco) or their "black fig Manhattan." *Via Della Fontanella di Borghese, 48*





*Atlantide Phototravel/Corbis/Getty Images*

## The Vatican & Vatican City

A trip to the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel is a must-see for any visitor to Rome. For something special, however, try one of [Access Italy](#)'s exclusive experiences, like their "[Vatican Treasures Tour](#)," which offers access to rooms hidden as well as the Vatican Galleries—including the "Raphael Rooms" that feature little-seen frescos by the master himself. Other treats include a peek at the lavish gifts past Popes have received, the current pope's vestments, and the "Room of Tears"—where new Popes are celebrated, often collapsing into a tearful fit of joy, according to our guide. Access Italy also offers after-hours tours of the Sistine Chapel to better commune with Michaelangelo's most celebrated masterpieces (minus the crush of the crowds), and the chance to wander the Pope's official mosaic studio, where visiting presidents and dignitaries have been gifted their own tile masterpieces. *Prices vary.*

## La Casa Del Cinema at the Villa Borghese

A lush Italian garden patterned on a grand English manor, the Villa Borghese's grand and romantic gardens were first designed by the architect Flaminio Ponzio, based on sketches by Scipione Borghese, who used the grounds to house his impressive art collection. Today, the gardens are much as they were in the early 19th century, but with the addition of a wine bar, charming gelato trucks, art galleries, and [La Casa Del Cinema](#). Located inside the renovated and transformed XVII century Casina Delle Rose, the complex is a must-see for movie lovers, featuring three movie theaters, photo gallery, shopping complex, bookshop, café, and bistro-style restaurant. *Largo Marcello Mastroianni, 1*



*View Pictures/UIG via Getty Images*

## Maxxi Rome

While Rome boasts some of the world's greatest museums and galleries, one striking new addition, Zaha Hadid's Modernist masterpiece the [MAXXI](#), is not to be missed. Located in the [Flaminio neighborhood](#), this ambitious museum is housed in a former military compound, the Caserma Montello, and contains two museums within its grounds—"MAXXI Art" and "MAXXI Architecture." Maxxi Art displays

works by Anish Kapoor, Kiki Smith, Ed Ruscha, Kara Walker, and many other luminaries of contemporary creativity; Maxxi Architecture, meanwhile, showcases Italian architectural stars like Carlo Scarpa, Pier Luigi Nervi and Paolo Soleri (of [Arcosanti fame](#)). MAXXI also offers a bookshop, cafe, and restaurant if you need to sit and reflect on the day's aesthetic treats. *Via Guido Reni, 4/a*

## Fondazione Pastificio Cerere

Another unique treasure in a city that's constantly reinventing itself, San Lorenzo district's [Fondazione Pastificio Cerere](#), part art-incubator, part gallery space, is housed inside a former pasta factory and named after the Roman corn goddess, Cerere. In 2004, the building was renovated and transformed into a mega-artist space, with a fully-operational art foundation, multiple artist workshops, galleries, and a chic courtyard for lounging. One of the best places to experience authentic creative culture in the city, linger for a while after your studio visits to dine on Italian fusion cuisine and fine cocktails at Pastificio, the on-premise restaurant. In Rome this summer? Be sure to check out *Inventory. The Fountains of Za'atari*, by artist Margherita Moscardini, launching July 11th. This series of haunting photographic and multimedia works were developed inside Camp Za'atari in Jordan, the world's second-largest refugee camp, and curated by Marcello Smarrelli, Artistic Director of Fondazione Pastificio Cerere. *Via degliAusoni, 7*



*maroznc/Getty Images*



## Gelato at Della Palma

At 150 flavors, ranging from Sicilian lemon to “Pepi Pinguino”, named after the anthropomorphized cartoon penguin beloved by Italian school children, [Della Palma](#) has the most comprehensive collection of gelato flavors in all of Rome. With locations throughout Italy, including one conveniently located near the [Pantheon](#), it’s understandably a major tourist destination; but it’s also delicious and well worth the wait. Grab one of their ample waffle cones filled with creme-y goodness before heading out for a late night stroll by the Trevi Fountain.



*Peter Ptschelinzew/Getty Images*

## The Morning Markets

Rome’s sprawling outdoor markets are legendary, and no perfect weekend in Rome is complete without a visit to at least one. Open Sundays, the [Porta Portese market](#) is Rome’s most popular flea market, and each Sunday offers every kind of knick knack imaginable: from antique toys and vintage ceramics to war medals and old movie posters. One of the largest [produce markets is in Piazza Vittorio](#), near the Stazione Termini, which offers a vision of technicolor vegetables and fruits culled from across the region. But our favorite is the [flower market in Campo de’ Fiori](#), or

“field of flowers.” One of the oldest continuous markets in Rome, it has offered Romans the chance to buy fresh roses and wild poppies, daily, since 1869.

## Ostia Antica

Even with just a weekend in Rome you may find yourself craving an afternoon of quiet reflecting. We recommend taking the commuter train from Piramide Station to [Ostia Antica](#), the ancient Roman holiday port, former military colony, and ancient commercial center, whose ruins now hold a museum, nature preserve, and open archeological site. Housed between the Tiber River and the Tyrrhenian Sea, we recommend lingering around the area and taking in the gentle breezes while wandering the nearby town, which feels like a taste of Tuscany right in the suburbs. (Pro-tip: the grounds are closed on Mondays, so plan accordingly.) *Viale dei Romagnoli, 717*