

## SHOPPING

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# SHOPPING

Fiercely unique, Rome's shops, studios and boutiques make retail therapy diverting enough to distract you from the incredible cityscape. Wander the backstreets and you'll find yourself glancing into dusty workshops: you'll see framers, ironmongers, furniture restorers and basket weavers. Meandering down medieval streets, jewel-like boutiques and tempting wine shops and delicatessens will lure you into overfilling your luggage. It's not to say that there are no chain stores in Rome, but the city is still dominated by the individual shop: the family-run bakery, and tiny stores specialising in a single item, such as gloves, hats or tights. There's also an attractive lack of malls – because of the difficulties in constructing new buildings in the city centre, shopping centres tend to be on the edge of town.

Italy's reputation for quality is deserved, and Rome is a splendid place to shop for designer clothes, shoes and leather goods. Long viewed as secondary to Milan, Rome is nevertheless no fashion slouch. Valentino chose to show his 45th-anniversary *haute couture* collection here, and local heroes Fendi opened their seven-storey, neoclassical flagship store in the glorious Palazzo Fendi in 2005. The grid of streets around Via dei Condotti and Piazza di Spagna is high-fashion central: even if you can't afford to buy, it's worth a gape.

There is also a wonderful array of small designers selling one-off, hand-made outfits, places to buy made-to-measure shoes, and work-of-art jewellery and leather goods. Foodstuffs are, of course, the tops, and heavenly temples to food abound – delis, bakeries, *pasticerie* and chocolate shops. Designer homewares are another Italian speciality, and many shops focus on covetable stainless-steel kitchenware, glass baubles and super-sleek interior design.

While prices here are not as steep as they are in, say, London or Paris, they're still not cheap. To grab a bargain, you should try to time your visit to coincide with the *saldi* (sales). Winter sales run from early January to mid-February and summer sales from July to early September.

Most shops accept credit cards and many accept travellers cheques. Note that you're required by Italian law to have a *ricevuta* (receipt) for your purchases (see p298).

## SHOPPING AREAS

Big-name designer boutiques glitter and gleam in the grid of streets between Piazza di Spagna and Via del Corso (Map p172). The great Italian and international names are represented, as well as many more off-centre designers, selling clothes, shoes, accessories and dreams. The immaculately clad high-fashion spine is Via dei Condotti, but there's also lots of high fashion in Via Borgognona, Via Frattina, Via della Vite and Via del Babuino.

Downsizing a euro or two, Via Nazionale (Map pp106–7), Via del Corso (Map p172), Via dei Giubbonari (Map pp74–5) and Via Cola di Rienzo (Map pp138–9) are good for midrange clothing stores, with some interesting small boutiques set amid the chains.

Best for cutting-edge designer boutiques and vintage clothes is the wonderful Via del Governo Vecchio (Map pp74–5), a central yet bohemian street that runs from a small square just off Piazza Navona towards the river. Other great places to discover one-off boutiques are Via del Pellegrino and around Campo de' Fiori (Map pp74–5). Via del Boschetto and Via dei Sol-

dati (Map pp106–7) in the Monti area are great for browsing unique designers and jewellery makers, antique sellers and artists. Head to San Lorenzo for edgy, unique arts and crafts, with little boutiques turning out some stunning works of art. You can look up some of these at [Made in San Lorenzo](http://www.madeinsanlorenzo.it) (www.madeinsanlorenzo.it in Italian).

For antiques shopping, Via dei Coronari (Map pp74–5), Via Margutta (Map p172), Via Giulia (Map pp74–5) and Via dei Banchi Vecchi (Map pp74–5) are the best places to look. The prices are high but so is the quality.

## OPENING HOURS

Many larger shops now open 9am to 7.30pm (or 9.30am to 8pm) Monday to Saturday; some also open on Sundays, typically 11am to 1pm and 4pm to 7pm. However, traditional opening hours – 9am to 1pm and 3.30pm to 7.30pm (or 4pm to 8pm) Monday to Saturday – are still adhered to by many family-run places. Small boutiques might not open until 10am and afternoon hours might also be shortened. Many shops are closed on Monday mornings and for at least two weeks in August. Hours often