

The Best of Rome

Rome is a city of vivid and unforgettable images: the view of the city's silhouette from Janiculum Hill at dawn, the array of broken marble columns and ruins of temples of the Roman Forum, St. Peter's dome against a pink-and-red sunset, capping a gloriously decorated basilica.

Rome is also a city of sounds, beginning early in the morning with the peal of church bells calling the faithful to Mass. As the city awakens and comes to life, the sounds multiply and merge into a kind of urban symphony. The streets fill with cars, taxis, and motor scooters, all blaring their horns as they weave in and out of traffic; the sidewalks become overrun with bleary-eyed office workers rushing to their desks after stealing into crowded cafes for the first cappuccino of the day. The shops lining the streets open for business by raising their protective metal grilles as loudly as possible, seeming to delight in their contribution to the general din. Before long, fruit and vegetable stands are abuzz with activity as homemakers, maids, cooks, and others arrive to purchase their day's supply of fresh produce, haggling over prices and clucking over quality.

By 10am the tourists are on the streets, battling crowds and traffic as they wind their way from Renaissance palaces and baroque buildings to the famous ruins of antiquity. Indeed, Rome often appears to have two populations: one of Romans and one of visitors. During the summer months especially, the city plays host to a horde of countless sightseers who converge on it with guidebooks and cameras in hand. To all—Americans, Europeans, Japanese—Rome extends a warm and friendly welcome, wining, dining, and entertaining them in its inimitable fashion. (Of course, if you visit in August, you might see only tourists, not Romans, because the locals flee the summer heat of the city. Or, as one Roman woman once told us, “Even if we're too poor to go on vacation, we close the shutters and pretend we're away so neighbors won't find out we couldn't afford to leave the city.”)

The traffic, unfortunately, is worse than ever. As the capital, Rome also remains at the center of the major political scandals and corruption known as *Tangentopoli* (bribe city), which sends hundreds of government bureaucrats to jail each year.

Despite all this chaos, Romans still know how to live the good life. After you've done your duty to culture by wandering through the Colosseum and being awed by the Pantheon, after you've traipsed through St. Peter's Basilica and thrown a coin in the Trevi Fountain, you can pause to experience the charm of the Roman evening. Find a cafe at summer twilight and watch the shades of pink turn to gold and copper before night finally falls. That's when another Rome comes alive; restaurants and cafes grow more animated, especially if you've found one on an ancient hidden piazza or along a narrow alley deep in Trastevere. After dinner, you can have a gelato (or an espresso in winter) or stroll by the fountains or through Piazza Navona, and the night is yours.

In chapter 7, we'll tell you all about the ancient monuments and basilicas. But monuments are only a piece of the

whole. Here we've tried to capture the special experiences that might well be the highlights of your visit.

1 Frommer's Favorite Rome Experiences

- **Walking Through Ancient Rome.** A vast, almost unified archaeological park cuts through the center of Rome. For those who want specific guidance, we have a walking tour in chapter 8 that will lead you through these haunting ruins. But it's fun to wander on your own and let yourself get lost on the very streets where Julius Caesar and Lucrezia Borgia once trod. A slice of history unfolds at every turn: an ancient fountain, a long-forgotten statue, a ruined temple dedicated to some long-faded cult. A narrow street suddenly opens to a view of a triumphal arch. The Roman Forum and the Palatine Hill are the highlights, but the glory of Rome is hardly confined to these dusty fields. If you wander long enough, you'll eventually emerge onto Piazza della Rotonda to stare in awe at one of Rome's most glorious sights, the Pantheon.
- **Hanging Out at the Pantheon.** The world's best-preserved ancient monument is now a hot spot—especially at night. Find a cafe table out on the square and take in the action, which all but awaits a young Fellini to record it. The Pantheon has become a symbol of Rome itself, and we owe our thanks to Hadrian for leaving it to the world. When you tire of people-watching and cappuccino, you can go inside to inspect the tomb of Raphael, who was buried here in 1520. (His mistress, “La Fornarina,” wasn't allowed to attend the services.) Nothing is more dramatic than being in the Pantheon during a rainstorm, watching the

sheets of water splatter on the colorful marble floor. It enters through the oculus on top, which provides the only light for the interior. See “The Pantheon & Attractions Near Piazza Navona & Campo de' Fiori” in chapter 7.

- **Taking a Sunday Bike Ride.** Only a daredevil would try this on city streets on a weekday, but on a clear Sunday morning, while Romans are still asleep, you can rent a bike and discover Rome with your own two wheels. The Villa Borghese is the best place to bike. Its 6.5km (4-mile) borders contain a world unto itself, with museums and galleries, a riding school, an artificial lake, and a grassy amphitheater. Another choice place for Sunday biking is the Villa Doria Pamphilj, an extensive park lying above the Janiculum. Laid out in the mid-1600s, this is Rome's largest park, with numerous fountains and some summer houses.
- **Strolling at Sunset in the Pincio Gardens.** Above the landmark Piazza del Popolo, this terraced and lushly planted hillside is the most romantic place for a twilight walk. A dusty orange-rose glow often colors the sky, giving an otherworldly aura to the park's umbrella pines and broad avenues. The ancient Romans turned this hill into gardens, but today's look came from the design of Giuseppe Valadier in the 1800s. Pause at the main piazza, Napoleone I, for a spectacular view of the city stretching from the Janiculum to Monte Mario. The Egyptian-style obelisk here was erected by Emperor

Hadrian on the tomb of his great love, Antinous, a beautiful male slave who died prematurely. See “The Spanish Steps, the Trevi Fountain & Attractions Nearby” in chapter 7.

- **Enjoying Roma di Notte.** At night, ancient monuments such as the Forum are bathed in a theatrical white light; it’s thrilling to see the glow of the Colosseum with the moon rising behind its arches. Begin your evening with a Roman *passaggiata* (early evening stroll) along Via del Corso or Piazza Navona. There’s plenty of action going on inside the clubs, too, from Via Veneto to Piazza Navona. Club kids flock to the colorful narrow streets of Trastevere, the area around the Pantheon, and the even more remote Testaccio. The jazz scene is especially good, and big names often pop in. An English-language publication available at newsstands for .75€ (85¢), *Wanted in Rome*, will keep you abreast of what’s happening.
- **Exploring Campo de’ Fiori at Midmorning.** In an incomparable setting of medieval houses, this is the liveliest fruit and vegetable market in Rome, where peddlers offer their wares as they’ve done for centuries. The market is best visited after 9am any day but Sunday. By 1pm the stalls begin to close. Once the major site for the medieval inns of Rome (many of which were owned by Vanozza Catanei, the 15th-century courtesan and lover of Pope Alexander VI Borgia), this square maintains some of its old bohemian atmosphere. We often come here when we’re in Rome for a unique, lively view of local life. Often you’ll spot your favorite *trattoria* chef bargaining for the best and freshest produce, everything from fresh cherries to the perfect vine-ripened

tomato. See “The Pantheon & Attractions Near Piazza Navona & Campo de’ Fiori” in chapter 7.

- **Attending the Opera.** The Milanese claim that Roman opera pales in comparison with La Scala, but Roman opera buffs, of course, beg to differ. At Rome’s Teatro dell’Opera, the season runs between December and June, and programs concentrate on the classics: Bellini, Donizetti, Puccini, and Rossini. No one seems to touch the Romans’ operatic soul more than Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901), who became a national icon in his support for Italian unification. See “The Performing Arts” in chapter 10.
- **Climbing Janiculum Hill.** On the Trastevere side of the river, where Garibaldi held off the attacking French troops in 1849, the Janiculum Hill was always strategic in Rome’s defense. Today a walk in this park at the top of the hill can provide an escape from the hot, congested streets of Trastevere. Filled with monuments to Garibaldi and his brave men, the hill is no longer peppered with monasteries, as it was in the Middle Ages. A stroll will reveal monuments and fountains, plus panoramic views over Rome. The best vista is from Villa Lante, a Renaissance summer residence. The most serene section is the 1883 Botanical Gardens, with palm trees, orchids, bromeliads, and sequoias—more than 7,000 plant species from all over the world. See “More Attractions” in chapter 7.
- **Strolling Along the Tiber.** Without the Tiber River, there might have been no Rome at all. A key player in the city’s history for millennia, the river flooded the capital every winter until it was tamed in 1870. The massive *lungotevere*

embankments on both sides of the Tiber check the waters and make a perfect place for a memorable stroll. You can not only walk along the river from which Cleopatra made her grand entrance into Rome, but you'll also see the riverside life of Trastevere and the Jewish Ghetto. Start at Piazza della Bocca della Verità in the early evening; from there, you can go for some 3km (1¾ miles) or more. For a stroll that takes you to sites along the river, see the "Renaissance Rome" walking tour in chapter 8.

- **Picnicking on Isola Tiberina.** In ancient times, this boat-shape island stood across from the port of Rome and from 293 B.C. was home to a temple dedicated to Aesculapius, the god of healing. A church was constructed in the 10th century on the ruins of this ancient temple. You can reach the island from the Jewish Ghetto by the Ponte Fabricio footbridge, which dates from 62 B.C. and is the Tiber's oldest original bridge. Romans come here to sunbathe, sitting along the river's banks, and to escape the traffic and the crowds. Arrive with the makings of a picnic, and the day is yours. See the "Trastevere" walking tour in chapter 8.

- **Following in the Footsteps of Bernini.** One of the most enjoyable ways to see Rome is to follow the trail of Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), who left a greater mark on the city than even Michelangelo. Under the patronage of three different popes, Bernini "baroqued" Rome. Start at Largo di Santa Susanna, north of the Stazione Termini, at the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, which houses one of Bernini's most controversial sculptures, the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, from 1646. Walk from here along Via Barberini to Piazza

Barberini, in the center of which stands Bernini's second most dramatic fountain, the Fontana del Tritone. From the piazza, go along Via delle Quattro Fontane, bypassing (on your left) the Palazzo Barberini, designed by Bernini and others for Pope Urban VIII. At the famous crossroads of Rome, Le Quattro Fontane, take Via del Quirinale to see the facade of Sant'Andrea, one of the artist's greatest churches. Continue west, bypassing the Pantheon, to arrive eventually at Piazza Navona, which Bernini remodeled for Pope Innocent X. The central fountain, the Fontana dei Fiumi, is Bernini's masterpiece, although the figures representing the four rivers were sculpted by others following his plans.

- **Spending a Day on the Appian Way.** Dating from 312 B.C., the Appian Way (Via Appia) once traversed the whole peninsula of Italy and was the road on which Roman legions marched to Brindisi and their conquests in the East. One of its darkest moments was the crucifixion in 71 B.C. of the rebellious slave army of Spartacus, whose bodies lined the road from Rome to Capua. Fashionable Romans were buried here, and early Christians dug catacombs through which to flee their persecutors. Begin at the Tomb of Cecilia Metella and proceed up Via Appia Antica past a series of tombs and monuments (including a monument to Seneca, the great moralist who committed suicide on the orders of Nero, and another to Pope St. Urban, who reigned A.D. 222–230). The sights along Via Appia Antica are some of Rome's most fascinating. You can go all the way to the Church of Domine Quo Vadis. See "The Appian Way & the Catacombs" in chapter 7.

- **Enjoying a Taste of the Grape.**

While in Rome, do as the Romans do and indulge in a carafe of dry white wine from the warm climate of Lazio. In restaurants and *trattorie* you'll find the most popular brand, Frascati, but try some of the other wines from the Castelli Romani, too, including Colli Albani, Velletri, and Marino. All these wines come from one grape: trebbiano. Sometimes a dash of malvasia is added for greater flavor and an aromatic bouquet. Of course, you don't have to wait until dinner to sip wine; you can sample it at any of hundreds of wine bars throughout Rome, which offer a selection of all the great reds and whites of Italy.

- **Savoring Gelato on a Summer Afternoon.**

Having a gelato on a hot summer day is worth the wait through the long winter. Tubs of homemade ice cream await you in a dazzling array of flavors: everything from candied orange peels with chocolate to watermelon, to rice. *Gelaterie* offer *semifreddi* concoctions (made with cream instead of milk) in such flavors as almond, *marengo* (a type of meringue), and zabaione (or *zabaglione*) (eggnog). Seasonal fresh fruits are made into ice creams of blueberry, cherry, and peach. *Granite* (crushed ice) flavored with sweet fruit is another cool delight on a sultry night. The Scalini at Piazza Navona is the most fabled spot for enjoying *divino tartufo*, a chocolate concoction with a taste to match its name.

- **Dining on a Hidden Piazza.**

If you're in Rome with that special someone, you'll appreciate the romance of discovering your own little neighborhood trattoria that opens onto some forgotten square deep in the heart of ancient Rome. And if your evening dinner extends for 3 or 4 hours, who's

counting? The waiters won't rush you out the door even when you've overstayed your time at the table. This is a special experience, and Rome has dozens of these little restaurants. Two, in particular, come to mind: **Montevecchio**, Piazza Montevecchio 22A (☎ **06-6861319**), on the square near Piazza Navona where both Raphael and Bramante had studios and Lucrezia Borgia was a frequent visitor. Try the pasta of the day or the roebuck with polenta. Or sample the menu at **Vecchia Roma**, Via della Tribuna di Campitella 18 (☎ **06-6864604**), with a theatrical setting on a lovely square. Order spaghetti with double-horned clams and enjoy the old-fashioned ambience while you rub elbows with savvy local foodies.

- **Hearing Music in the Churches.**

Artists such as Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti have performed around Rome in halls ranging from churches to ancient ruins. Churches often host concerts, although by decree of Pope John Paul II, it must be sacred music—no hip-grinding, body-slammng stuff. When church concerts are performed, programs appear not only outside the church, but also on various announcements posted throughout Rome. The top professionals play at the “big-name” churches, but don't overlook those smaller, hard-to-find churches on hidden squares. Some of the best music we've ever heard has been by up-and-coming musicians getting their start in these little-known churches. The biggest event is the RAI (national broadcasting company) concert on December 5 at St. Peter's—even the pope attends. Other favorite locations for church music include Sant'Ignazio di Loyola, on Piazza di Sant'Ignazio,

and San Paolo Fuori le Mura, at Via Ostiense 186.

- **Walking from Fountain to Fountain.** On summer nights you'll find Romans—especially those who live in crowded ghetto apartments without air-conditioning—out walking from fountain to cooling fountain. Every visitor makes at least one trip to Bernini's fountain on Piazza Navona, after stopping off at the Trevi Fountain to toss in a coin (thus ensuring their return to Rome), but there are hundreds more. One hidden gem is the Fontana delle Tararughe, in tiny Piazza Mattei. It has stood there since 1581, a jewel of Renaissance sculpture showing youths helping tortoises into a basin. Our favorite Bernini fountain is at Piazza Barberini; his Fontana del Tritone is a magnificent work of art from 1642 showing the sea god blowing through a shell. Unfortunately, it's now against the law to jump into these fountains and paddle around as Anita Ekberg did in *La Dolce Vita*.
- **Hanging Out in the Campidoglio at Night.** There is no more splendid place to be at night than Piazza del Campidoglio, where Michelangelo designed both the geometric paving and the facades of the buildings. A broad flight of steps, the Cordonata, takes you up to this panoramic site, a citadel of ancient Rome from which traitors to the empire were once tossed to

their deaths. Home during the day to the Capitoline Museums, it takes on a different aura at night, when it's dramatically lit, the measured Renaissance facades glowing like jewel boxes. The evening views of the brilliantly lit Forum and Palatine are also worth the long trek up those stairs. There's no more stunning cityscape view at night than from this hill. See "The Colosseum, the Roman Forum & Highlights of Ancient Rome" in chapter 7.

- **Shopping in the Flea Markets.** We've never discovered an original Raphael at Rome's Porta Portese flea market (which locals call *mercato delle pulci*). But we've picked up some interesting souvenirs over the years. The market, the largest in Europe, began after World War II when black marketers needed an outlet for illegal wares. Today the authentic art and antiques once sold here have given way to reproductions, but the selection remains enormous: World War II cameras, caviar from immigrant Russians, luggage (fake Gucci), spare parts, Mussolini busts, and so on. Near Porta Sublicio in Trastevere, the market has some 4,000 stalls, but it's estimated that only 10% of them have a license. Sunday from 5am to 2pm is the best time to visit, but beware of pickpockets at all times. See "Shopping A to Z" in chapter 9.

2 Best Hotel Bets

- **Best Historic Hotel:** The truly grand **St. Regis Grand**, Via Vittorio Emanuele Orlando 3 (☎ 06-47091; www.stregis.com/grandrome), was created by César Ritz in 1894, with the great chef Escoffier presiding over a lavish banquet. It was the first hotel in

town to offer "a private bathroom and two electric lights in every room." Its roster of guests has included some of the greatest names in European history, including royalty, naturally, but also such New World moguls as Henry Ford and J. P. Morgan.

This lavish hotel is within walking distance of many of Rome's major sights. See p. 68.

- **Best Recycled Hotels:** A real discovery and a charmer, **The Inn at the Spanish Steps**, Via dei Condotti 85 (☎ 06-69925657), is the former Roman residence of Hans Christian Andersen. It has been transformed into one of the most desirable little upscale inns of Rome, with each bedroom furnished in gorgeous, authentic period decor. Not far away, the brilliantly restored **Hotel de Russie**, Via del Babuino 9 (☎ 800/323-7500 in North America, or 06/328-881; www.rfhotels.com), was a retreat for artists, including Picasso and Stravinsky. Reclaiming its 1890s style, it's been remade as a stunning little boutique hotel with a fabulous location right off the Piazza del Popolo and excellent service. See p. 84.
- **Best for Business Travelers:** The restored neoclassical palace, **Exedra**, Piazza della Repubblica (☎ 06-489381; www.boscolo-hotels.com), stands right in the heart of Rome near the Termini. A government-rated five-star hotel, it is equipped with all the amenities, including a well-run business center. Executives will also find a helpful, multilingual staff ready to help ease their adjustment to the Eternal City. See p. 68.
- **Best for a Romantic Getaway:** A private villa in the exclusive Parioli residential area, the **Hotel Lord Byron**, Via G. de Notaris 5 (☎ 06-3220404), is a chic hideaway. It has a clubby ambience, and everybody is oh-so-very-discreet here. You get personal attention in subdued opulence, and the staff definitely respects that DO NOT DISTURB sign on the door. You don't even have to leave the premises for dinner; the hotel's Relais Le Jardin is one of the finest and most romantic restaurants in Rome. See p. 93.
- **Best Classic Choice:** Ernest Hemingway and Ingrid Bergman don't hang out here anymore, but the **Hotel Eden**, Via Ludovisi 49 (☎ 800/225-5843 in the U.S., or 06-478121; www.hotel-eden.it), remains grand and glamorous. Views over the city are stunning, the hotel restaurant (La Terraza) is one of the city's best, and everything looks as if it's waiting for photographers from *Architectural Digest* to arrive. See p. 74.
- **Best for Families:** Families gravitate to the **Hotel Ponte Sisto**, Via dei Petinari 64 (☎ 06-6863100), near the Piazza Navona and the Campo de' Fiori in the heart of Rome. It's a restored Renaissance palazzo offering reasonably priced family suites on its top floor with terraces overlooking the rooftops of the ancient city. See p. 79.
- **Best Moderately Priced Hotel:** So you don't have a bottomless expense account? We've got a couple of wonderful values for you. Consider the **Hotel Columbia**, Via del Viminale 15 (☎ 06-4744289 or 06-4883509; www.venere.it/roma/columbia), one of the newest properties in the neighborhoods surrounding Stazione Termini; everything is well-maintained and comfortable. We also like **La Residenza**, Via Emilia 22-24 (☎ 06-4880789; www.italyhotel.com/roma/la_residenza), with a convenient location near the Villa Borghese and Piazza Barberini. Here you'll get a good price on a homey, spacious guest room. See p. 70 and p. 76, respectively.
- **Best Service:** Both management and staff at the **Hotel de la Ville Inter-Continental Roma**, Via Sistina 67-69 (☎ 800/327-0200

in the U.S. and Canada, or 06-67331; www.interconti.com), are highly professional and exceedingly hospitable. The staff is particularly adept at taking messages, giving you helpful hints about what to see and do in Rome, and fulfilling any special room-service requests. Their general attentiveness to your needs, quick problem solving, good manners, and friendly helpfulness make this place exceptional. Room service is available 24 hours daily. See p. 83.

- **Best Location:** Everybody knows about the astronomically expensive **The Hassler**, Piazza Trinità dei Monti 6 (☎ **800/223-6800** in the U.S., or 06-699340; www.hotelhasslerroma.com), a grand old hotel set right at the top of the Spanish Steps. But given its high prices and the fact that it's gotten a bit dowdy, we'll send you instead to the **Hotel Scalinata di Spagna** (☎ **06-6793006**; www.hotel.scalinata.com), which is across the street at no. 17 on the same piazza and isn't so breathtakingly pricey. This intimate, upscale inn has a roof garden with a sweeping view of the dome of St. Peter's across the Tiber. When you step out your door, the heart of Rome, including its best shopping streets, is at your feet. See p. 86.
- **Best Views:** A great place to book a room with a view is the **Albergo Del Sole al Pantheon**, Piazza della Rotonda 63 (☎ **06-6780441**; www.hotelsolealpantheon.com), where you can gaze out at the Pantheon from your bedroom window. See p. 81.
- **Best for Understated Elegance:** Of course, it's not as elegant or as grand as the Excelsior, the Eden, or The Hassler, but the **Hotel d'Inghilterra**, Via Bocca di Leone 14 (☎ **06-699811**; www.hotelinghilterraroman.it), has its own

unique brand of low-key opulence. Plus, it's just 2 blocks west of the Spanish Steps. The hotel's public rooms feature black-and-white checkerboard marble floors, and its upholstered lounges are filled with antiques. The fifth floor has some of the loveliest terraces in Rome, and the romantic restaurant below has trompe l'oeil clouds that give the impression of a courtyard terrace open to the sky. See p. 84.

- **Best in a Real Roman Neighborhood:** You can't get more Roman than the **Hotel Teatro di Pompeo**, Largo del Pallaro 8 (☎ **06-68300170**; www.hotelteatrodi.pompeo.it), which offers rooms with charming touches such as hand-painted tiles and beamed ceilings. The hotel is actually built on top of the ruins of the Theater of Pompey, where Caesar met his fate. It's on a quiet piazzetta near the Palazzo Farnese and Campo de' Fiori, whose open-air market makes this one of Rome's most colorful neighborhoods. Shopping and nightlife abound in this fascinating section of Renaissance Rome, and restaurants and pizzerie keep the area lively at all hours. See p. 80.
- **Best Value:** Rated three stars by the government, the **Hotel delle Muse**, Via Tommaso Salvini 18 (☎ **06-8088333**), lies .5km (½ mile) north of the Villa Borghese. It's run by the efficient, English-speaking Giorgio Lazar. The furnishings are modern and come in a wide range of splashy colors. In summer, Mr. Lazar operates a garden restaurant serving a reasonably priced fixed-price menu, and the bar is open 24 hours a day. This is one of Rome's best bargains, and you should consider checking in before he wises up and raises his rates. See p. 93.

3 Best Dining Bets

- **Best for Romance:** A great place to pop the question or just enjoy a romantic evening is **Sapori del Lord Byron**, in the Hotel Lord Byron, Via G. de Notaris 5 (☎ 06-3613041), a stunner of a place that also just happens to serve the best Italian cuisine in town. The decor is as romantic as the atmosphere; it's all white lattice and bold Italian colors highlighted by masses of fresh flowers. The setting is in a Relais & Châteaux–member hotel, an Art Deco villa set on a residential hilltop in Parioli, an area of embassies and exclusive town houses at the edge of the Villa Borghese. See p. 126.
- **Best of the Best:** Food critics can never agree on the best restaurant in Rome. But the more discerning cite **La Pergola**, in the Cavalieri Hilton, Via Cadolo 101 (☎ 06-3509221), opening onto a panoramic view at night from its perch atop Monte Mario. The talented chef's take on Mediterranean cuisine is sublime. See p. 127.
- **Best Seasonal Menus:** Market-fresh ingredients await you at **Il Convivio**, Vicolo dei Soldati 31 (☎ 06-6869432), one of Rome's most acclaimed restaurants. The Troiano brothers are truly inspired, shopping the markets for the best in any season and adjusting their menus accordingly. The location is in walking distance of Piazza di Spagna. See p. 112.
- **Best Offbeat Choice:** A lay sisterhood of missionary Christians from five continents operates **L'Eau Vive**, Via Monterone 85 (☎ 06-68801095), where various popes have dined. A fine French and international cuisine is served in a subdued, refined atmosphere under frescoed ceilings. You never know what will be on the menu. See p. 114.
- **Best for a Celebration:** Romans have been flocking to **Checchino dal 1887**, Via di Monte Testaccio 30 (☎ 06-5746318), since the early 19th century for fun and hearty food. With a bountiful array of wine and foodstuffs, every meal seems like a party. The tables are packed nightly, and the place is a local legend. You'll have fun while still enjoying some of the best cuisine in town. See p. 126.
- **Best Decor:** By night, chic Romans and savvy foreign visitors alike show up at **El Toulà (The Hayloft)**, Via della Lupa 29B (☎ 06-6873498), an elegant establishment set near the fabled Caffè Greco and some of the most upscale boutiques in Rome. It's no bargain, but once you see the sumptuous setting and, more important, enjoy the cuisine, you'll think you've gotten your money's worth. Haute cuisine is served in a subdued, tasteful setting of antiques, paintings, ever-so-discreet lighting, and to-die-for flower arrangements. See p. 118.
- **Best View:** The stars really do come out at night at **Les Etoiles (The Stars)**, in the Hotel Atlante Star (☎ 06-6873233), which has been called “the most beautiful rooftop in Italy.” This restaurant is a virtual garden in the sky, with a 360-degree view of Roman landmarks, including the floodlit dome of St. Peter's. Try for an alfresco table in summer, but even in winter, the same incredible view can be seen through picture windows. Fortunately, the food—delicately prepared Mediterranean cuisine using the freshest of ingredients—lives up to the setting. See p. 122.
- **Best Pizzeria:** Even the hardest-to-please Roman pizza lovers head for **Pizzeria Baffetto**, Via del

Governo Vecchio 114 (☎ 06-6861617). This is a popular and fun place, drawing a young crowd. The crusts are delightfully thin. See p. 117.

- **Best Wine List:** The food is secondary to the fabulous wine list at the **Trimani Wine Bar**, Via Cernaia 37B (☎ 06-4469630). One of the best tasting centers in Rome for both French and Italian vintages, this elegant wine bar offers a dazzling array of wines at reasonable prices. The Trimani family has had a prestigious name in the wine business since 1821; just sit down and let the pouring begin. See p. 102.
- **Best Value:** Twenty dollars gets you one of the finest fixed-price menus in Rome at the **Ristorante del Pallaro**, Largo del Pallaro 15 (☎ 06-68801488). Each dish is prepared by the chef-owner, Paola Fazi, who sternly urges her diners to “*Mangia! Mangia!*” The moment you’re seated at the table, the dishes start to arrive—first a selection of antipasto; then the homemade, succulent pastas of the day; followed by such meat courses as tender roast veal. Everything’s included, even a carafe of the house wine. See p. 110.
- **Best for the Kids:** After their tour of the Vatican or St. Peter’s, many savvy Roman families head for the **Ristorante Il Matriciano**, Via dei Gracchi 55 (☎ 06-3212327). It’s not fancy, but the price is right, and in summer you can opt for a sidewalk table. Let your kids feast on good, reasonably priced homemade fare that includes such crowd pleasers as ricotta-stuffed ravioli. At the next table you’re likely to see some priests from the Vatican dining. See p. 123.
- **Best Continental Cuisine:** The city’s finest restaurant is now **La Terrazza**, in the Hotel Eden, Via Ludovisi 49 (☎ 06-478121), edging out a position long held by Sans Souci. In the newly and fabulously restored Hotel Eden, you can dine on Continental cuisine that is both bold and innovative. The seasonal menu offers the most polished, sophisticated cuisine in Rome; perhaps you’ll choose a “symphony” of seafood or a warm salad of grilled vegetables. See p. 104.
- **Best Emilia-Romagna Cuisine:** The area around Bologna has long been celebrated for serving the finest cuisine in Italy, and the little trattoria **Colline Emiliane**, Via Avignonesi 22 (☎ 06-4817538), maintains that stellar reputation among Romans. The pastas here are among the best in Rome, especially the handmade *tortellini alla panna* (with cream sauce) with truffles. You can order less expensive pastas as well, all of them good. The prosciutto comes from a small town near Parma and is considered by many the best in the world. See p. 105.
- **Best Roman Cuisine:** The tempting selection of antipasti alone is enough to lure you to **Al Ceppo (The Log)**, Via Panama 2 (☎ 06-8419696). Try such appetizers as stuffed yellow or red peppers, or finely minced cold spinach blended with ricotta. Only 2 blocks from the Villa Borghese, this is a dining address jealously guarded by Romans, who often bring friends from out of town here. They feast on the succulent lamb chops, charcoal-grilled to perfection, or other grilled meats, such as quail, liver, and bacon. See p. 127.
- **Best Seafood:** In the heart of ancient Rome, **Quinzi & Gabrieli**, Via delle Coppelle 5–6 (☎ 06-6879389), serves the city’s finest and freshest seafood from a

restored and elegant building dating from the 1400s. The fish is simply cooked and presented, and it's heavenly. Expect everything from deep-sea shrimp to sea urchins and octopus. See p. 111.

- **Best Nuova Cucina:** Near the Vittorio Emanuele monument, **Agata e Romeo**, Via Carlo Alberto 45 (☎ 06-4466115), serves one of Rome's most inventive and creative cuisines in a striking dining room done in Liberty style. If you'd like a sampling of the best selections of the day, you can order one of the fixed-price menus, available with or without wine. The menu reflects the agrarian bounty of Italy, with ample choices for everyone: meat eaters, fish fanciers, and vegetarians. See p. 101.
- **Best in the Jewish Ghetto:** For centuries, Romans have flocked to the Jewish Ghetto to sample Jerusalem artichokes. No one prepares them better than **Piperno**, Via Monte de' Cenci 9 (☎ 06-68806629), which serves savory (though nonkosher) Roman food. Of course, you can order more than these deep-fried artichokes here. A full array of delights includes everything from stuffed squash blossoms to succulent pastas. See p. 110.
- **Best Alfresco Dining:** In Trastevere, Piazza Santa Maria comes alive at night. If you reserve a sidewalk table at **Sabatini**, Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere 13 (☎ 06-5812026), you'll have a view of all the action, including the floodlit golden mosaics of the church on the piazza, Santa Maria in Trastevere. At the next table you're likely to see . . . well, just about anybody (on our most recent visit, Roman Polanski). In addition to the view, you can

enjoy terrific grilled fish and Florentine steaks here. See p. 124.

- **Best for People-Watching:** Join the beautiful people—young actors, models, and artists from nearby Via Margutta—who descend at night on Piazza del Popolo. Young men with their silk shirts unbuttoned alight from sports cars to go on the prowl. At **Dal Bolognese**, Piazza del Popolo 1–2 (☎ 06-3611426), not only can you take in this fascinating scene, but you'll also enjoy fine Bolognese cuisine as enticing as the people-watching; see p. 120. In the 1950s, Via Veneto was the place to be for Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Sinatra, and other Hollywood types. Today the celebs are long gone, and Via Veneto is more about overpriced tourist traps than genuine hip. But lots of folks like to stroll this strip anyway, or enjoy the passing parade from a table at the **Caffé de Paris**, Via Vittorio Veneto 90 (☎ 06-4815631). See p. 224.
- **Best for a Cappuccino with a View:** The best-located café in Rome is **Di Rienzo**, Piazza della Rotonda 8–9 (☎ 06-6869097), which stands directly on Piazza della Rotonda, fronting the Pantheon. On a summer night, there's no better place to be than “the living room” of Rome, as the square before you has been dubbed, as you sit and slowly sip your cappuccino. See p. 226.
- **Best Picnic Fare:** When the weather is cool and the day is sunny, it's time for an alfresco meal, and there's no better place to purchase the makings of a picnic than the **Campo de' Fiori** open-air market, between Corso Vittorio Emanuele II and the Tiber. The luscious produce of Lazio is on display here right in the heart of the old city. If you wish, you

can purchase vegetables already chopped and ready to be dropped into the minestrone pot. There are also several excellent delicatessen shops on the square. Visit one of the shops selling freshly baked Roman bread, pick up a bottle of wine and a companion—and off you go. See p. 214.

- **Best for Celebrity-Spotting:** A chic choice is **Café Riccioli**, Piazza delle Coppelle 10A (☎ **06-68210313**), where you'll often spot models and other beautiful people having a light dinner of sashimi. See p. 113.