



20 Unconventional things to do in Rome

Bold, lavish, magnificent – Bvlgari's B.zero1 collection captures the essence of the Colosseum. To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the iconic design, we explore the ancient monument plus 19 other captivating ways to experience the Eternal City.





01. Get your caffeine fix

The gran caffè served at Sant' Eustachio il Caffè (santeustachioilcaffe.it) on the piazza of the same name is the last word in Italian coffee. Prepared to a secret recipe on machines that are shielded from prying eyes, the espresso here has fuelled generations of Romans. Spoon up the lush crema before you savour the brew.

02. Grab a gelato

You're sitting on a marble bench in a cobblestoned square surrounded by townhouses in ochre and pastel hues. In your hand is a passport to paradise – a tub of all-natural, no-additives ice-cream from Fatamorgana (gelateriafatamorgana.com), one of Rome's best gelaterie, with nine locations across the city. Our favourite flavour? Zesty pineapple and ginger sorbet.

03. Catch a concert

One sure way to see the jewel-case interior of the seldom-open Oratorio del Gonfalone (oratoriogonfalone.eu) – entirely decorated with frescoes commissioned by the art-loving cardinal Alessandro Farnese in the 16th century – is to book a ticket to one of the church's well-attended classical concerts on Thursdays or jazz performances on Fridays.

04. Meander in a museum

The apartment where 20th-century painter Giorgio de Chirico lived and worked for 30 years is now a museum (fondazionedechirico.com) and an intriguing diversion from the regular

tourist beat. Alongside several of the artist's haunting "metaphysical" canvases are plenty of interesting human touches, such as the good luck charms that hang behind the easels in his studio.

05. Tour the Vatican

There's a little-known world beyond the Vatican gates that includes a tranquil garden where turtles swim in cool green fountains and pine and cypress trees frame Saint Peter's dome. Not only is the official Vatican Gardens tour (museivaticani.va) something of a well-kept secret, it also includes entry to the Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel.

06. Fill up on pasta

Want to lunch like a true time-strapped Roman office worker? Dive into Antica Birreria Peroni (anticabirrieriaperoni.net), a venerable beer hall not far from the Trevi Fountain. Stand at the bar and order a plate of pasta and a glass of cold draught Peroni beer – you'll be in and out in 15 minutes flat.

07. Visit a department store

Can you really treasure a moment in a department store? You can if it's Rome's Rinascente (rinascete.it), a historic shopping palace reborn in stunning new premises on Via del Tritone after an 11-year hiatus. The panoramic views from the rooftop restaurant are a revelation but the real surprise is in the basement, which features a section of an ancient aqueduct, its history told on the weathered stones, thanks to an innovative video projection system.

08. Taste a cornetto

In the early morning hours, walking home after a night spent dancing or hanging out with friends, you start to feel a little peckish... and suddenly the air is filled with the aroma of freshly baked cornetti (sweet, croissant-like pastries). The once unofficial trade of selling these fragrant treats from a side door before the bakery opens has now become a regular business and even inspired a citywide chain. We prefer traditional joints such as Il Sorcchettaro (Via Cernaia 47) near Porta Pia or Dolce Maniera (Via Barletta 27) in the Vatican-Prati area.

10. Enjoy a laid-back lunch

Life doesn't get much better than alfresco lunch at Pierluigi (pierluigi.it) in pretty Piazza de' Ricci. With a light, seasonal seafood menu, this is the best kind of Roman restaurant – a historic trattoria that has moved upscale without betraying its roots. The food is still genuine, the welcome still warm.



09.

Head to a movie set

Rome's Cinecittà Studios (cinecittasimostra.it), where classics such as *Cleopatra*, starring Elizabeth Taylor (who was photographed on set wearing Bvlgari's famous Serpenti jewellery), were shot, is now open for guided tours. A highlight is a set from the mid-2000s HBO TV series *Rome* – a reconstruction of what the city would have looked like in its glory days.

B.zero1 "Design Legend" 18-carat rose-gold and white ceramic pendant with 18-carat rose-gold chain, \$4150



11. Wander the DOMVS

History is carefully preserved in Rome and it's no different at Bvlgari's Via Condotti flagship store, where the first floor has recently undergone a lavish conversion into a permanent gallery for the brand's Heritage collection. Dubbed the DOMVS – the Latin word for "home" – it's a treasure trove of more than 600 unique pieces, vintage photographs and sketches, where you can soak up the history (rare jewellery adorned with real artefacts) and the fashion (portraits and belongings of Bvlgari's favourite divas). "All the jewels on display are real works of art," says Bvlgari creative director Lucia Silvestri. "Some of my favourite pieces are from the Elizabeth Taylor collection because of the uniqueness of the stones, like the sapphire sautoir. It is impossible to find an equal one today."

12. Dine with a view

The beautiful terrace at Aroma (aromarestaurant.it), the Michelin-starred restaurant of Palazzo Manfredi hotel, offers an incredible view of the Colosseum. Chef Giuseppe di Iorio has both Roman and Calabrian roots, which influence dishes such as his *mezzi paccheri* pasta with monkfish, sun-dried tomato, sapphire and candied lemon.

13. Admire the artworks

A one-euro coin is all it costs to see two Caravaggio masterpieces in all their glory inside Santa Maria del Popolo (santamariadelpopolo.it) near Villa Borghese. Choose a quiet moment such as soon after the church's 7:30am opening.

14. Live like a royal

Once home to a noble Italian family and frequented by diplomats and aristocrats, the Palazzo Dama (palazzodama.com) is now a five-star hotel on the banks of the Tiber. With its oasis-like outdoor pool, world-class ceviche served at in-house restaurant Pacifico and round-the-clock concierge service, you'll feel like a noble yourself during your stay.

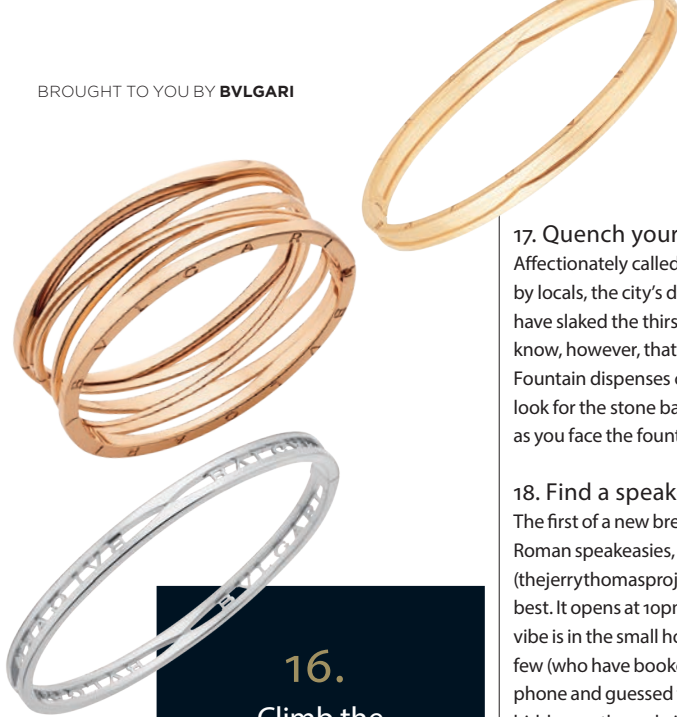


15. Explore the Colosseum

When Bvlgari's B.zero1 collection was first released in 1999, it made a proclamation: be unconventional. The architecture of Rome's most famous monument, the Colosseum, was the inspiration. "The circular form is the symbol for eternal renewal and brings to mind the circularity of classic Roman architectural masterpieces," says Lucia Silvestri. To celebrate the collection's anniversary, Bvlgari is reissuing an extraordinary special edition of the original five-band ring: a white-gold spiral encrusted in pavé diamonds, as well as versions in yellow-gold, solid white-gold and, for the first time, rose-gold, all engraved with "XX Anniversary". "The ring is a truly universal piece, considering its various editions in materials such as yellow-gold and ceramic," says Silvestri. The collection also includes an update of Design Legend, a collaboration with late architect Zaha Hadid from 2017. The inner core of black or white ceramic is crisscrossed by her dynamic lines in rose-gold and can be worn as a ring or pendant. Classic and contemporary materials meet in bold designs, reflecting the magnificent Italian city and the enduring legend of B.zero1.



(Above, from top) B.zero1 "Design Legend" four-band ring in 18-carat rose-gold and white ceramic, \$3580, and 18-carat rose-gold and white ceramic pendant with 18-carat rose-gold chain, \$4150; (cover, from top) B.zero1 "XXth Anniversary" five-band ring in 18-carat yellow-gold, \$3150, white-gold, \$3330, and rose-gold, \$3150



16.

Climb the Spanish Steps

The Spanish Steps are a stunning example of Italian Baroque style and look over the Piazza di Spagna, one of the city's most famous areas. "For Romans, the landmark *is* Rome, it's summer," says Lucia Silvestri. It was fitting that Bvlgari, a maison synonymous with the Italian capital, donated €1.5 million for the restoration of the iconic steps in 2016. "When I was not yet creative director [of Bvlgari], I would walk from our office to the [flagship] shop on Via dei Condotti and look at Piazza di Spagna," says Silvestri. "When the azaleas that decorate the steps in spring bloomed, I imagined a necklace with pink sapphires and the steps as two earrings. When I was asked to design a necklace for the inauguration of the Piazza di Spagna restoration, I was able to fulfil my dream."

(Clockwise from top) B.zero1 bracelet in 18-carat yellow-gold, \$6850, and white-gold, \$5950; B.zero1 "Design Legend" bracelet in 18-carat rose-gold, \$21,500

17. Quench your thirst
Affectionately called *nasoni* (big noses) by locals, the city's drinking fountains have slaked the thirst of millions. Few know, however, that even the Trevi Fountain dispenses cool, fresh water: look for the stone basin on the right as you face the fountain.

18. Find a speakeasy
The first of a new breed of late-opening Roman speakeasies, Jerry Thomas (thejerrythomasproject.it) is still the best. It opens at 10pm but the buzziest vibe is in the small hours, when the lucky few (who have booked in advance by phone and guessed the password hidden on the website) get to admire the cocktail-mixing panache of the old-school bar's moustachioed crew.

19. Return to the ruins
Ostia Antica (ostiaantica.beniculturali.it) is Rome's very own Pompeii – the once-thriving port town suffered no volcanic apocalypse but was gradually abandoned and buried by river mud. A great place for a summer picnic, it still feels oddly lived-in – nowhere more so than in the *thermopolium*, an ancient Roman restaurant complete with marble counter and a mural illustrating some of the daily dishes on the menu.



20. Discover history

There's something astonishingly lovely about the fourth-century mosaics in the Mausoleum of Santa Costanza (santagnese.org) in the city's north-east. With their vine tendrils and Dionysiac scenes of cherubs treading grapes, they are rare documents of a world on the cusp, a devout early Christian faith still in touch with the gods and the nature worship of pagan Rome.

