Prepare to enjoy Italy

It is probably good to start with the first thing you will buy when you land at the airport and there is at a Starbucks!

The World of Italian Coffee: Espresso, Cappuccino and More
Justin Demetri

It would be hard to think of Italy without coffee. After all it is the national breakfast and the home to coffee drinks that have taken the rest of the world by storm. Without Italy, Starbucks would not exist and without coffee, Italy would grind to a halt. No, coffee was not invented in Italy but coffee culture as we know it did originate here. Today Italy is a country of coffee aficionados who will not tolerate (or visit) an establishment that has bad coffee. Italians will even skip coffee in a restaurant to have one at a favorite bar, it is just that important.

Ordering and Drinking a Coffee in Italy

When ordering a coffee in a bar in Italy keep in mind the differences in price. In many of the nicest piazza in Italy a cappuccino can cost four times as much if you sit at a table than drinking it at the bar. Most Italians drink their coffee quickly at the bar before heading off to work, leaving the tables for the tourists. If you try to order a coffee by asking the bartender, be prepared to give him your receipt. In most places you have to pay for your drink first and then show proof of purchase by giving the bartender the receipt. It sounds silly, but it is an effective way to make sure everyone pays for their order. For ordering an espresso in Italy, you can simply ask for a "caffe" and remember to drink in quickly. Espresso is not made to sip casually, it is made to be

drunk in two or three sips at most. Coffee is not served by itself and is served after a meal, with the exception of breakfast. Any coffee after breakfast should not have milk in it and cappuccino orders after 11 am are often laughed at. However there are numerous varieties of coffee drinks that you can order and all are delicious. This is in no way a complete list as new versions are always being invented or adapted. Here are some of the more popular coffees that you will see ordered in Italy.

Espresso : known a Caffe in Italy, served in a 3 oz or demitasse cup. Strong in taste with a rich bronze froth known as a crema on top.

Doppio : Simply a double espresso.

Ristretto: More concentrated than a regular espresso that is made with less water.

Lungo or Caffe Americano: An Espresso made with more water - opposite a Ristretto.

Macchiato: Espresso that is "marked" with a dollop of steamed milk on top.

Corretto: Espresso that is "corrected" with grappa, cognac or sambuca.

Cappuccino: Espresso with foamed milk and containing equal parts espresso, steamed milk and foamed milk.

Cappuccino scuro: Cappuccino prepared with less milk and is a darker color.

Cappuccino chiaro: Cappuccino prepared with more milk (but less than a caffe latte) and is lighter in color.

Caffe' latte: Espresso made with more milk than a cappuccino but only a small amount of foam. In Italy it is usually a breakfast drink.

Latte macchiato: Steamed milk that is "marked" (sometimes ornately) with a shot of espresso coffee.

From Food to Families 10 Things You Might Expect to See in Italy, But Likely Won't
By Glauco Ferrari
Sunday, February 24th, 2013

1. Caesar Salad

The most famous salad served in almost every Italian restaurant in the U.S. is actually not Italian at all but very American. Until recently asking for parmesan cheese and croutons on a salad in Italy would have meant asking to be laughed at. In recent years with globalization and international menus offered in Italian restaurants, some places have begun to offer it. Don't be fooled if you see "Insalata Cesare" on your menu as it still remains an American dish.

2. Rolling Spaghetti with a Spoon

Italians NEVER roll their spaghetti using a spoon because those who do it are considered rude. The same thing applies to cutting long pasta with a knife. Regardless of what you might have seen or heard, don't do it. If you're having trouble rolling your pasta using your fork, just set the tines on your plate to help you.

3. Salad As Appetizer

In Italy a salad is served as a side dish with the second course and never before the first course. Asking for a salad as an appetizer is not common. Italians use salad to cleanse the palate after eating the majority of their meal.

4. Pasta and Meat on the Same Plate

Regardless of the type of restaurant or the simplicity of your host, Italians never put two courses on the same plate. Pasta is one thing, meat, chicken, and meatballs are another. You will never see them mixed. A good pasta dish doesn't have a juicy sauce, the pasta is supposed to be colored by the sauce and not immersed in it. Spaghetti and meatballs is one of the most popular Italian-American dishes today but it is almost extinct in Italy. The dish can only be found in some areas like tourist towns that celebrate the traditional dish during a festival. Anybody ordering the dish outside of the festivals will be immediately recognized as not being Italian.

An Italian Nono : Pasta and Meat on the same plate.

5. Cappuccino After a Meal

In Italy cappuccino is seen as a breakfast drink. After midday no true Italian would ever drink cappuccino, so if ordering a cappuccino after a full meal be prepared to receive a shocked look from your waiter. Italians prefer a straight espresso to help with digestion after dinner.

6. Oil and Butter with Bread in a Restaurant

Oil, butter, and bread are common and very Italian but it is not an Italian custom to eat them in a restaurant or at home during a formal meal. Restaurants will never put butter on the table or a bowl filled with olive oil to dip bread in. These are usually considered midday snacks, and requesting them at a restaurant would be a very American thing to do.

7. Italians Eat Pasta Every Day

While pasta is a popular dish many Italians prefer to replace it with rice, minestrone, and soup. The Italian diet is usually heavy in meat and fish.

8. Italians Eat Big Dinners

In most cases Italians eat more at lunch than at dinner, and dinner is typically eaten later in the evening rather than late afternoon.

9. Couples Sitting Side By Side

Eating in Italy is a social event so people prefer to be seated face to face. On a group outing or a double date a couple would rarely sit next to one another allowing for more mingling.

10. Italians Have Large Families

Italian families with six to eight children are a thing of the past. Italians not only get married later than most Americans, they also have the lowest birth rate in the world and as a result the population is shrinking. Divorce is on the rise and people often don't start families until they're well into their thirties. For a nation that has long based itself on traditions of home and family this is certainly a problem that has raised concerns.

History of pasta: Food Articles Italian Food

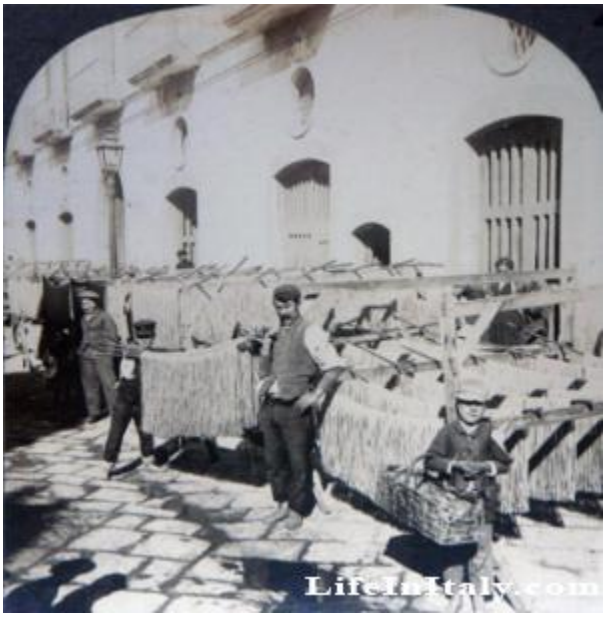
Italian Pasta Through the Ages By Justin Demetri

19th century Maccaronaro selling pasta.

Nothing says Italy like its food, and nothing says Italian food like pasta. Wherever Italians have immigrated they have brought their pasta and so today it is basically an international staple. Unlike other ubiquitous Italian foods like Pizza and tomato sauce, which have a fairly recent history pasta may indeed have a much older pedigree going back hundreds if not thousands of

years. To begin to unravel the long an often complex world of pasta we have to look at its origins and some of the myths surrounding this now worldwide food.

Many schoolchildren were taught that the Venetian merchant Marco Polo brought back pasta from his journeys in China. Another version states that Polo discovery was actually a rediscovery of a foodstuff that was once popular in Italy in Etruscan and Roman times. Well Marco Polo might have done amazing things on his journey but bringing pasta to Italy was not one of them, it was already there in Polo's time. There is some evidence of an Etrusco-Roman noodle made from the same durum wheat as modern pasta called "lagane" (origin of the modern word for lasagna). However this food, first mentioned in the 1st century AD was not boiled like pasta, it was cooked in an oven. Therefore ancient lagane had some similarities, but cannot be considered pasta. The next culinary leap in the history of pasta would take place a few centuries later.



Spaghetti (at the time called macaroni) drying in streets of Naples circa 1895

Like so much of southern Italian life, the Arab invasions of the 8th century heavily influenced the regional cuisine and is the most accepted theory for the introduction of pasta. The dried noodle-like product they introduced to Sicily is most likely the origins of dried pasta and was being produced in great quantities in Palermo at this time. The modern word "macaroni" derives from the Sicilian term for making dough forcefully, as early pasta making was often a laborious daylong process. How it was served is not truly known but many Sicilian pasta recipes still include other Arab gastronomic introductions such as raisins and spices like cinnamon. This early pasta was an ideal staple for Sicily and it easily spread to the mainland since durum wheat thrives in Italy's climate. Italy is still a major producer of this hard wheat, used to make the all-important semolina flour.

By the 1300's dried pasta was very popular for its nutrition and long shelf life, making it ideal for long ship voyages. Pasta made it around the globe during the voyages of discovery a century

later. By that time different shapes of pasta have appeared and new technology made pasta easier to make. With these innovations pasta truly became a part of Italian life. However the next big advancement in the history of pasta would not come until the 19th century when pasta met tomatoes.

Pasta Drying: Copyright Life In Italy

Although tomatoes were brought back to Europe shortly after their discovery in the New World, it took a long time for the plant to be considered edible. In fact tomatoes are a member of the nightshade family and rumors of tomatoes being poisonous continued in parts of Europe and its colonies until the mid 19th century. Therefore it was not until 1839 that the first pasta recipe with tomatoes was documented. However shortly thereafter tomatoes took hold, especially in the south of Italy. The rest of course is delicious history.

Pasta Today

It is estimated that Italians eat over sixty pounds of pasta per person, per year easily beating Americans, who eat about twenty pounds per person. This love of pasta in Italy far outstrips the large durum wheat production of the country; therefore Italy must import most of the wheat it uses for pasta. Today pasta is everywhere and can be found in dried (pasta secca) and fresh (pasta fresca) varieties depending on what the recipes call for. The main problem with pasta today is the use of mass production to fill a huge worldwide demand. And while pasta is made everywhere the product from Italy keeps to time-tested production methods that create a superior pasta.

Pasta History

There are roughly 350 different shapes and varieties of dried pasta in Italy, even more counting regional differences. Shapes range from simple tubes to bow ties (farfalle, which actually means "butterfly"), to unique shapes like tennis rackets (racchette). Many, but not all of these types are usually available wherever pasta is made. By Italian law dried pasta must be made with 100% durum semolina flour and water, a practice that all but the worst quality pasta makers worldwide have since adhered to. However there are two factors in dried pasta from Italy that make it typically better than most other products: extrusion and drying methods.

Dried pasta, especially the more complex shapes (such as radiatore) are designed for grabbing and holding onto sauces. Dried tube pasta (ziti or penne) often has ridges or slight abrasions on the surface to hold onto the pasta sauce as well. These ridges and bumps are created during the extrusion process, when the pasta is forced from a copper mold and cut to desired length before drying. These molds, while expensive and prone to wear are favored for making the best dried pasta. However most producers worldwide use steel molds that produce pasta that is too smooth to hold onto sauce. Fortunately more pasta makers outside of Italy are starting to use the older style copper molds.

After the pasta is cut it must be dried using a process of specific temperature and time. This is another area where mass produced pasta falls short of good Italian pasta made the correct way. The mass produced pastas are dried at very high temperatures for a shorter time than quality pasta. Traditional pasta is allowed to dry slower, up to 50 hours at a much lower temperature. It is after the pasta is fully dried that it is packaged. The result is a product with a much better mouth-feel, quicker cooking time, and superior sauce holding noodles.

Fresh Pasta

Essentially all pasta starts out as fresh pasta but some is made to be eaten "soft". Fresh pasta can be made with slightly different ingredients than the dried variety. Many northern regions of Italy use all-purpose flour and eggs while southern Italy usually makes theirs from semolina and water but it depends upon the recipe. Serving pasta that is made fresh that day shows a great deal of care in preparation and a high level of pride in the household's culinary skills. However fresh pasta is not inherently better than dried pasta, it is just different and is used in different situations. Some types of pasta are served only fresh, others only dried and some others can have fresh and dried versions. It is in this case that it can be argued that fresh is better than dried pasta. Fresh pasta has been made in households throughout Italy for generations but the region of Emilia-Romagna has the reputation of making the best. Here fresh pasta is often served with cream sauces or a simple sauce of butter and sage while light tomato sauces are reserved for the summer months. Following the simple but important rule of using fresh local ingredients, the Piedmontese serve their fresh pasta with a butter sauce covered with slices of decadent local black truffles. Wherever you are in Italy, being served fresh homemade pasta is a real treat as you can be assured that the pasta was made that day and will have a taste that will make you rethink notions of what good pasta is.

Buying and Cooking Pasta

When buying either fresh or dried pasta, look for a well made brand that uses the best ingredients such as only semolina flour for dried pasta. The pasta should have a rough surface and not too smooth, as smooth pasta will not hold onto sauce. The noodles should be compact and heavy for their size in order to stay together when cooking. Remember to stay away from mass-produced cheap pasta, you will just be disappointed come dinnertime. For fresh pasta look for the expiration date on the package and take a good look at the pasta. If it looks cheap then it probably is, if the pasta feels heavy in the package and has a nice color and texture it is worth buying. Many Italian bakeries and grocerias also make fresh pasta that will be better than anything you could find at a supermarket and you may even get a family sauce recipe as well. However remember not to overcook your pasta, the worlds greatest sauce cannot save mushy pasta.

It cannot be stressed enough; cook pasta until it is al dente, firm to the teeth yet tender. Many Americans cook pasta until it is too soft, a minute or two less of cooking time will give you authentic Italian pasta. Fresh pasta will take even less time to be cooked to perfection. Another key to perfect pasta is to use a large cooking pot and plenty of water; this will stop the pasta from sticking and will also ensure every inch of pasta will be cooked though. Don't forget to add plenty of salt to the cooking water before adding the pasta, good pasta is almost never has salt in it so this is the only time it can be seasoned. Some people add a little olive oil to the cooking water to stop the pasta from sticking and while that works for larger pasta like lasagna it is not necessary if you use a large pot, plenty of water and remember to stir the pasta. When draining the pasta remember to save about a cup of the water in the pot, this starchy water will add a little body to whatever sauce you choose. Never, ever rinse off the pasta after cooking unless you're making pasta salad. Washing off all that starch and salt will kill any flavor your pasta once had.

When it comes to sauce it is really up to personal preference unless you are trying to follow a traditional recipe. A good rule is to remember simple pasta works best with simple sauces while complex shaped pastas are ideal for thicker sauces. There is no shortage of great pasta and sauce combinations and each is worth trying. However it is important that you use high quality pasta cooked properly to ensure authentic flavor.

Precautions to avoid thieves and pickpockets in Italy, particularly Rome

Gypsies

In July 2000, the ex-Olympic sprinter Ben Johnson was relieved of his wallet and the $4000 cash it contained by a small group of gypsy girls who accosted him on the famous Via Veneto in Rome. He gave chase but they outran him!!

The lesson is clear - Watch Out! Not only are these innocent looking children on the streets of Rome cunning thieves, they are also agile, well-practised and extremely fleet of foot...

Fortunately, mugging and violent crime attacks are relatively rare in Rome. However, there are many pickpockets in Rome, as in any large city, so the risks and dangers of theft are there, and tourists, even if accompanied by the best guide money can buy, still have to be extremely careful to ensure that their valuables and documents are not stolen. Although you can be robbed at any time in many different ways, from our experience the following are the main ploys used by thieves in Rome. There's a sucker born every minute and ten thousand new suckers jetting into Rome every day, so the thieves and pickpockets don't need to change their methods much; they just practice them until they've got it perfect. If they successfully rob you, it will be because their method was new to you, but not to them:

In the train while still in the station - especially if you are in a compartment alone - someone comes in and asks you a question in Italian. You reply that you don't speak Italian and the person goes into the next carriage. Almost immediately another person comes along the platform to the window of your carriage and asks you for information or directions in English... You naturally go to the window to answer and while you are there, his or her accomplice sneaks into the compartment behind you and takes your bag, knowing already that as a non-Italian speaker you are likely to be a tourist with a bag of goodies, (rolls of cash in different currencies, passports, camera etc).

As in any city where you are a stranger, try to avoid looking and sounding like a tourist. This tactic can even save you money, as market-stall holders will often jack up the price of an item if they hear an English or American accent. And with the exchange rate as good as it is for Brits in Italy at the moment, they know you can afford to pay over the odds. Try to go shopping with an Italian friend and let them do the talking for you, while you keep a low profile. As a foreigner you will stick out like a sore thumb anyway and there is little you can do about that, but use discretion and try to make it less obvious, especially when you are alone and unsure of your directions.

Just like wolves, thieves and other ne'er-do-wells such as short con trick artists can smell their prey coming a mile off. They spend their entire day looking and listening for a vulnerable animal to pick off from the herd and make a meal of.

Try not to make a big show of getting a street-map out, or going through all your pockets looking for this roll of film or that bus ticket. It only serves to draw attention to you on the street and to better indicate to the pick-pocket which pocket your wallet is in.

On the street - the 'mess on the back' trick: Someone draws your attention to a mark on the back of your jacket (usually ketchup or mayonnaise squirted on, or cold water squirted on the back of your shirt in hot weather) and offers you a tissue to wipe it off.
While he is helping, he is also helping himself to your wallet. (This happened to me, but I was ready for it and asked him to do the wiping, which he declined! I walked off, but he was most insistent that I really did have something on my back, and followed me to 'assist' me further. I still ignored him, and when I got home and checked, sure enough there was absolutely nothing there, except his damp palm print on my shirt which had remained in the intense humidity!) Both here and on the train, the thieves are usually well dressed. Our advice is to trust no-one who accosts you out of the blue. In our modern society, where no-one gets involved with strangers if they can help it, ask yourself what possible reason a stranger could have for getting into a conversation with you on the street..?

Interestingly we can also observe a trace of the Italian sense of humour here, bound up in their culture and even expressed in the craft of the pickpocket. It's almost a slapstick routine which you'd be less likely to come across in England. Likewise the next trick:

A group of gypsy children approach you holding pieces of card or newspaper which they hold under your chin. While you are reading it one of their number nips underneath and clears your pockets or bags. It's the absurdity of these routines which catches the staid Brit or American off guard! We are just not expecting such a zany, impudent way of being ripped off...

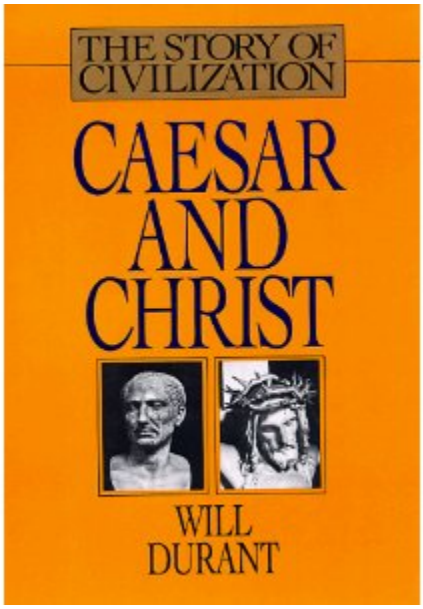
In summer 2003, a new gypsy scam was reported to us by tourists in Rome - 'Baby Tossing'!
A young gypsy girl, woman or man will appear to accidentally drop her baby, or even throw it into your arms... While you reach out to save the baby from falling, you'll probably drop your camera or wallet, allowing other gypsies to quickly move in underneath you to pick up what you've dropped or rifle through your pockets like lightening while you hold the baby. They then obviously run off with your possessions, leaving you holding the baby - which you'll then realise is only a plastic doll. Cute, eh?

Some gypsies may even start attempting this with a real baby - They'd sooner have the cash... The real baby may be one they've actually kidnapped from another tourist, something else they're adept at.

So watch out. These people will stoop to any depths to fleece you. As tourist figures drop in the low, off-peak, winter seasons, and as word of the gypsy's filthy criminal ways gets around more via websites like Romebuddy, it's probable that we'll start to see more and more new examples of these extreme varieties of gypsy street-crime in Rome.

Also, we note this year that teenage gypsy girls in central Rome have smartened up a lot. A lot of them have shed their traditional shawls and headscarves, and now dress in the latest fashions, and instead of hanging around their usual areas such as the Colosseum and Termini Station, these girls can now be found on upmarket fashion-shopping streets such as Via Nazionale,Via del Corso and Via Condotti, posing as normal Roman office girls. No, prostitution is not their aim - That would be too obvious and the police would pick them up straight away. Instead, it's just business as usual - they will simply be trying to distract you with momentary eye-contact to manoeuver you into a suitable position in the pedestrian traffic for an unseen accomplice to pick your pockets.

Books to consider:



All roads lead to Rome, but this is the scenic route October 19, 2003

By Rick Darby
Format:Hardcover
Only 40 years ago, Will Durant (whose wife, Ariel, was co-author of the later books) was among the most celebrated popular historians for the multi-volume Story of Civilization. Today, he is all but obscure. (I "Googled" his name and found only a single web site where he is mentioned -- and that's the site of the foundation administered by his estate).

Wherefore has his reputation dimmed so suddenly? I imagine that even when he was alive and publishing, academic historians dismissed him with their favorite put-down, that he was a mere "synthesizer." As if that wasn't bad enough, he was widely read by non-historians!

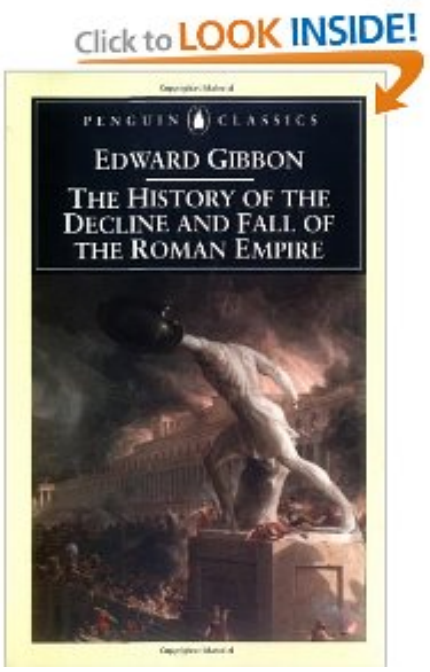
In today's academic Dark Ages, he is no doubt beneath contempt, since he doesn't see history as defined by economic, class and gender issues (although in fact he has plenty to say about all those -- he just doesn't focus on them as though they are the beginning and end of what makes the past important). Moreover, Durant assumes the currently unthinkable on our politically correct campuses: that western civilization and Dead White Males actually have given us a great deal that has timeless value.

But, if you have shaken off (or not been subjected to) the ideology of the PC drones of academia, Durant is just the writer to make history what it was meant to be: colorful, literate, mind-stretching. This is no sugar-coated account; he discusses the ugly, cruel and unjust aspects of the Roman Republic and Empire, but balances that by examining what was good and enduring.

Of the Story of Civilization books, I have read completely only this volume on the Roman world (I'm currently reading the previous volume on Greece), but have no hesitation in saying that Caesar and Christ is the best piece of historical writing I have ever encountered, and I suspect that the whole series has many of its virtues. Although he may be a "synthesist," Durant has obviously read deeply in the ancient writers, and has seen and pondered the art and artifacts of the Roman era.

The result is prose that sings, and encompasses both the "big picture" and fascinating, out-of-the-way detail. Durant gives you a survey of the personalities, the politics, the social world, the ideas, the literature and the arts of this period that shaped the western world. Far from being a piece of bone-dry "historiography," Caesar and Christ is a grand essay in the great tradition of Gibbon. The elegance and wisdom of the writing are something to marvel at.

If you are interested in the Roman era, you will find Caesar and Christ to be enormously rewarding

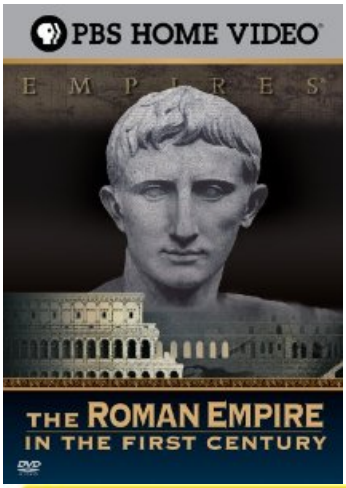


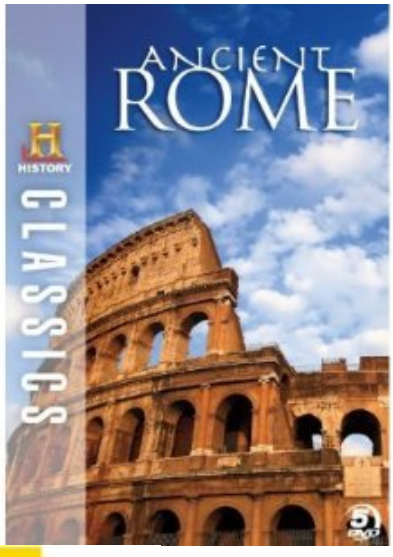
Stands with the Greatest Literature of All-Time September 27, 2000
By Ben Kilpela
Format:Hardcover

Obviously, if you're already here at this page considering Gibbon's great history, the greatest work of its kind in world literature, then you probably know quite a bit about it. What you're wondering is: Is it really worth reading? Will I enjoy reading it? Will it be worth the time I spend reading it? Will I learn anything vital for living my life? Damn good questions! The classics are tough to review, since there are thousands of reviews in all sorts of books and venues, and Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" has received its share of coverage. So here's what you need to know, in my opinion. First, Gibbon is a chore to read. The heavily stylized writing, each sentence constructed like a lovely portico in a magnificent Roman temple, is daunting, even for people who read classics all the time. But give yourself about two weeks of steady reading, and it will begin to click for you, and then you'll really start to love the style if you have any taste or discernment at all. Those elegantly multifarious sentences and paragraphs will begin to read like graceful passages of poetry in an expansive Homeric epic. Second, Gibbon has a mountain of interesting things to say, once you get accustomed to his periodic style. The best way to read this stuff is to read it like a collection of short stories or essays. Don't plunk yourself down one lonely night brave intending to read this overwhelmingly massive tome from start to finish in 6 months or a year. Your ship of Good Hope will soon founder on the rocks of the "Decline's" sheer volume and the unrelenting, exhausting high seriousness of Gibbon. Pick one emperor's story, a section, a few paragraphs even, and just enjoy that one passage, as though you were gazing on a little stained-glass window in some dim corner of a giant cathedral. Later, to get a first taste of the full depth and breadth of Gibbon's approach, take up the deservedly famous chapters on the origins of Christianity, Chapters 15 and 16 in Volume I. That will give you the feel for the mighty swell of his thought and the powerful turn of his ideas. Third, the break-up of the empire

is just one of those topics it pays, in many ways and throughout your life of thought and inquiry, to know well. And Gibbon is the best guide, by far, because he has a knack for plot. As scholarly as his work is, Gibbon tells a mean story. It helps a great deal to have a neat summary of Roman imperial history at hand, perhaps one of those excellent books on Rome by Michael Grant, or the Encyclopedia Britannica articles on the Roman Empire, to get the overview you need to keep the narrative straight, so you can concentrate on Gibbon's lofty evaluation of the action and the social and political movements that sway it first one way and then another. So, you see, once you get the style down and you start to enjoy Gibbon's voice and his approach to concepts and argument, then you will really start to profit from knowing this history and Gibbon's presentation of it. It will greatly increase the depth of your understanding of politics, power, social movements, law, religion, ambition, evil, cruelty, human folly, and more. It is one of our greatest treatises, in my view, on human "sin" and misery, leavened with just a pinch, a sadly slight pinch, of sweet human loving-kindness. After all, the Roman Empire was the greatest experiment in the history of humankind in putting an end to our collective misery, with the creation and enforcement of the Pax Romana, the worldwide peace Rome sought to impose on its world for the supposed good of all who fell under her sway. O, the arrogance! Seeing how this great mission half succeeded for a time and then failed is highly instructive. Gibbon really makes you appreciate what the founders of the American Republic achieved, and the great thinkers and doers of American history knew all this stuff backwards. For them and their world, this history was one colossal cautionary tale comprising dozens of lesser cautionary tales. Surely, you can tell by now that I am urging you to read as much of the "Decline and Fall" as you can. It is great history, great writing, great story. It is one of our greatest pieces of literature, in that lofty league with Shakespeare and Dante and Milton and Goethe. It might be a smidgen greater even than their masterpieces, in my eyes. Gibbon's work is at the summit of what you must know to be a civilized and well-educated human being, to know deeply what it means to strive for a good world. But don't be hard on yourself if it takes a long time to get going and to start enjoying Gibbon. You're not alone in that. But the pay-off will almost surely be very satisfying.

Video series: There are many video series providing an in depth history of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire. Check out your Netflix or Amazon Prime to see if you can access one of them.


PBS HOME VIDEO
EMPIRES
THE ROMAN EMPIRE
IN THE FIRST CENTURY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Rome

October 6, 2010

36 Hours in Rome

By RACHEL DONADIO

ROME is the city that oversleeps. Unlike other European cultural capitals, this glorious jumble of history and art changes slowly. But lately, Rome has welcomed some new sparkle. A futuristic

museum in the historic center has added color to the city's architectural scene. Around town young chefs are experimenting with local ingredients to create new tastes. Even old palazzos have been given makeovers. After years of hitting snooze, this ancient city might just be waking up.

Friday

4 p.m.
1) MODERN CURVES

The Maxxi (Via Guido Reni, 4; 39-06-3996-7350; fondazionemaxxi.it), opened in April, is still the talk of Rome. Designed by Zaha Hadid, it is the city's most ambitious contemporary art museum, and offers playful views with its odd-angled ramps, hidden corners and oblique windows. And although still young, its permanent collection features works by a respectable range of contemporary artists, including Francesco Clemente, William Kentridge and Gerhard Richter.

7 p.m.
2) ARCHITECTURAL APERITIVO

For a modern aperitivo, glide over to ReD (Via Pietro de Coubertin, 12, 16; 39-06-8069-1630; www.redrestaurant.roma.it), a trendy restaurant with a lively lounge bar that draws concertgoers and musicians alike. The lounge is situated on the sidewalk outside the Auditorium (auditorium.com), a multifunction complex, designed by Renzo Piano, which has become a cultural hub since opening in 2002. If it's fall, check out the Roma Europa Festival (romaeuropa.net), which brings music, dance and theater from around the world.

8:30 p.m.
3) PASTA NOUVELLE

For a change from the usual spaghetti all'amatriciana that dominate Roman menus, head to the residential neighborhood of Prati where Settembrini (Via Settembrini, 27; 39-06-323-2617; ristorantesettembrini.it), a chic new restaurant, uses classic ingredients in novel ways. Mullet on a bed of vegetables (16 euros, about $22 at $1.33 to the euro), tender rabbit (12 euros) and a risotto with the deconstructed ingredients of eggplant Parmesan (14 euros) are standouts. Décor is minimal but warm and the outside tables on a broad boulevard are roomy.

11 p.m.
4) FRUIT SCOOPS

Skip dessert and grab a cone at the Gelateria dei Gracchi (Via dei Gracchi, 272; 39-06-3216668) or Al Settimo Gelo (Via Vodice, 21a; 39-06-372-5567; alsettimogelo.it), two of the city's best

gelaterias, in a city full of them. At Gracchi, the fruit and nut flavors taste fresh off the tree, and might just be worth the price of the plane ticket.

Saturday

10 a.m.
5) RESTING PLACES

Like Père Lachaise in Paris, the Protestant Cemetery (Via Caio Cestio, 6; 39-06-574-1900; cemeteryrome.it) is one of Rome's most meditative and overlooked spots. The final resting spot of non-Catholics for centuries, the cemetery counts John Keats among its permanent residents — his tomb reads "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." Besides romantics, there's often a steady stream of graying lefties, who pay tribute to Antonio Gramsci, the founder of the Italian Communist Party.

2 p.m.
6) PROVINCIAL MARKET

For great food, friendly service and low prices — and priceless views of Trajan's Column — head to the Enoteca "Provincia Romana" (Largo del Foro Traiano, 82-84; 39-06-6766-2424). The sleek new wine bar was started by Rome's province of Lazio to promote local products and wines. The meats and cheeses are excellent, as are its salads. Sit and enjoy the scene, or take a delicious pressed sandwich of spicy grilled eggplant with fresh mozzarella and basil (about 3.50 euros) for a picnic in the nearby Roman Forum.

4 p.m.
7) MADE IN ROME

Not all of Rome is set in stone. For a dose of neo-realism, stroll around San Lorenzo (madeinsanlorenzo.it), a former working-class district near the Termini station that's come alive with chic boutiques and workshops. Find handmade women's clothing and jewelry at Myriam B. (Via dei Volsci, 75; 39-06-4436-1305; myriamb.it). Claudio Sanò (Largo degli Osci 67/A; 39-06-4469-284; claudiosano.it) makes custom bags and other leather goods, and Candle's Store (Via dei Campani, 49; 39-06-446-4849; candlestore.it) has artisanal candles.

8:30 p.m.
8) CREATIVE KITCHEN

A handful of restaurants specialize in what Italians call "creative cuisine," new takes on old standards. One of the newest is Pastificio San Lorenzo (Via Tiburtina, 196; 39-06-9727-3519; pastificiocerere.com), an upscale yet informal restaurant and wine bar that opened last year in a former pasta factory. Favorites include a breaded poached egg in a delicate Mornay sauce (10

euros), grilled tuna with a yogurt sauce (20 euros) and a roasted suckling pig with sugar-coated figs and blanched French beans (18 euros).

11 p.m.
9) STREET LIFE

No night on the town would be complete without a stop in the once gritty, now hopping neighborhood of Trastevere. Cool bars include Freni e Frizioni (Via del Politeama, 4-6; 39-06-4549-7499; freniefrizioni.com), where you can drink while looking out on the Tiber. Or you can grab an artisanal beer at the pub around the corner, Ma Che Siete Venuti a Fa' (Via di Benedetta, 25; 39-380-507-4938; football-pub.com). If you prefer to stay in San Lorenzo instead, follow the party to Aurunci 42 (Via degli Aurunci, 46; 39-06-445-4425; arcoaurunci.it), a friendly bar in the Piazza dell'Immacolata, which becomes an open-air lounge on weekend nights.

Sunday

11 a.m.
10) CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE

From the Galleria Borghese to the Palazzo Massimo, Rome has a daunting array of boutique museums in varying degrees of repair. Just reopened after an extensive renovation is the National Gallery of Ancient Art of Barberini Palace (Via delle Quattro Fontane, 13; 39-06-482-4184; galleriaborghese.it). Its formidable collection, now reorganized on freshly painted walls, includes Caravaggio's "Judith and Holofernes," in which the biblical heroine winces slightly as she draws her blade.

1 p.m.
11) PIZZA BY THE SLICE

Last year, two ambitious young chefs, Stefano Callegari and Gabriele Gatti, took over a hole-in-the-wall in the Testaccio neighborhood and opened Pizzeria 00100 (Via Giovanni Branca, 88; 39-06-4341-9624; 00100pizza.com), named for the grade of semolina flour. The popular pizzeria specializes in "trappizzini" — triangular pieces of thick pizza bianca, which they fill with pillowy meatballs, tripe and other savory stuffings (from 3 euros).

2 p.m.
12) KEY TO THE CITY

Amid the general chaos, the city has wonderful pockets of calm. Stroll up the quiet Aventine Hill to find the city's best Baroque joke: a keyhole at the headquarters of the Sovereign Order of the Knights of Malta (Piazza Cavalieri di Malta) that perfectly frames a view of St. Peter's Basilica.

In the orange garden down the street, the view of the city stretching out beneath you is breathtaking. That is, after all, why you came.

A great way to see Rome is to take in all the sights shown in *Roman Holiday*:

Filming Locations: Bocca della Verita "Mouth of Truth", Church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Piazza Bocca della Verita, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Cafe Rocca, Piazza della Rotonda, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Castel Sant' Angelo, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Cinecittà Studios, Cinecittà, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Fontana di Trevi, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Piazza Venezia, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Piazza del Pantheon, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Piazza di Spagna, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Rome, Lazio, Italy | Spanish Steps, Chiesa di Trinità dei Monti, Rome, Lazio, Italy | The Colosseum, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Tiber River, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Via Margutta 51, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Via Margutta, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Via dei Fori Imperiali, Rome, Lazio, Italy | Via della Stamperia 85, Rome, Lazio, Italy

Perhaps the most romantic movie ever made May 16, 2004

By Dennis Littrell HALL OF FAMETOP 500 REVIEWERVINE™ VOICE
Format:VHS Tape

This was Audrey Hepburn's debut in a starring role. She was 24-years-old and had appeared in two or three other movies but just in bit parts. Here she plays a reigning European princess visiting Rome who would like an escape from her daily regime of official duties, thus the title and theme of the movie, a Roman holiday.
Gregory Peck plays an American newspaper reporter living in the Eternal City. We first see him playing poker with his cronies, and losing. His relative "poverty" and Princess Ann's fabulous wealth and station present a formidable barrier to their ever finding true love and marital happiness. Part of the fun of the script is in seeing how this will play out and how their differences are resolved in the end. I will give you a small hint: very carefully!

The script comes from a story by Dalton Trumbo who is perhaps best known as the author of the anti-war novel, Johnny Got His Gun. Trumbo was one of the "Hollywood Ten" who were blacklisted from working in the industry during the excesses of the McCarthy era. He went to Mexico and continued working on film scripts but under assumed names or had his scripts presented by "fronts." In this case Ian McLellan Hunter fronted for Trumbo and won an Academy Award for the story. Later the Academy awarded Trumbo a posthumous Oscar for his work.

Long time Hollywood studio director William Wyler directed the film entirely on location in Rome. He has a formidable list of credits going well back into the silent film era including such outstanding films as Wuthering Heights (1939), The Letter (1940), The Little Foxes (1941), etc. His clear directorial style and his attention to detail work well here. The sets in Rome are charming, especially Peck's bachelor apartment. The bit players, especially Peck's landlord are excellent and the events are dreamy in just the way a romantic meeting in Rome ought to be. Wyler is especially effective in presenting Audrey Hepburn in the most flattering light and getting the audience to identify with her.

Gregory Peck's character should be a bit of an adventurous rake who finds that love is more important than money or fame, but it is impossible for Peck to play a morally compromised character, and so even as he appears to be using Princess Ann for his own ends, his behavior is always correct. I was somewhat amused to notice that at all times Peck appears wearing a tie! Eddie Albert plays Peck's friend, a photographer/artist. It is interesting to note how Hollywood's perception of the paparazzi has changed over the years. Here blood-sucking, intrusive greed does not exist. Instead we have noble self-sacrifice!

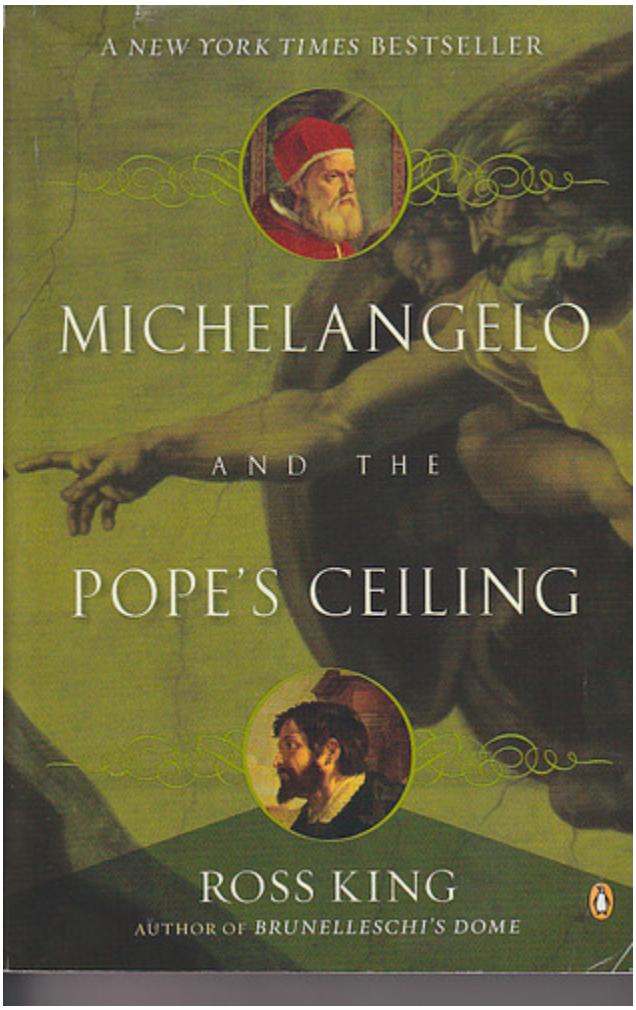
I have seen most of Miss Hepburn's movies and I can say that she was never more enchanting than she is here. She is gorgeous and cute at the same time, charming and impish, sweet, regal and very winning. In a sense she started at the top with this film, garnering her only Oscar as Best Actress in 1953; but as her fans know she never came down off that pedestal. Even playing poor Eliza Doolittle in My Fair Lady (1964), there was never any doubt about the quality of her style and character.

This is the most romantic film I have ever seen, perhaps partly because Miss Hepburn is so wonderful, but also because the script in a sense turns the usual woman's romantic fantasy upside

down. Instead of the woman finding that the man she is in love with has fabulous wealth and position, it is the other way around!

The ending manages to be realistic yet romantic. There is a hint of something almost spiritual beyond what happens. So convincing are Hepburn and Peck that one can almost believe the story is true; and indeed I am sure that Trumbo lifted the essentials of the plot from some ancient tale.

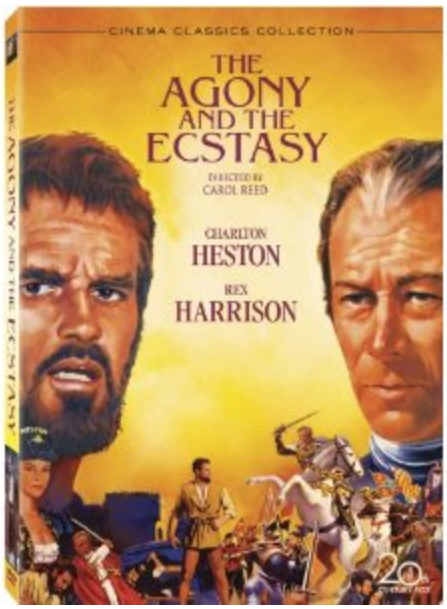
I have a weakness for movies about unrequited love, or love that goes on forever, or love that is caught at some perfect moment and lives eternally in that moment. Roman Holiday is one of those near perfect movies that plays beautifully upon one of these themes.



In 1508, despite strong advice to the contrary, the powerful Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the newly restored Sistine Chapel. With little experience as a painter (though famed for his sculpture *David*), Michelangelo was reluctant to begin the massive

project.

Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling recounts the four extraordinary years Michelangelo spent laboring over the vast ceiling while the power politics and personal rivalries that abounded in Rome swirled around him. Battling against ill health, financial difficulties, domestic problems, the pope's impatience, and a bitter rivalry with the brilliant young painter Raphael, Michelangelo created scenes so beautiful that they are considered one of the greatest masterpieces of all time. A panorama of illustrious figures converged around the creation of this great work-from the great Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus to the young Martin Luther-and Ross King skillfully weaves them through his compelling historical narrative, offering uncommon insight into the intersection of art and history.



"I planned a ceiling, he planned a miracle" May 15, 2004

By Alejandra Vernon **HALL OF FAMETOP 500 REVIEWERVINE™ VOICE**

There is no other film on the subject of art that is better than this one in my opinion. Irving Stone's best-seller was a great read, but in this case the film is better than the book. It centers on the creation of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, and the contentious but invigorating relationship between Michelangelo and Pope Julius II; one drove the other "to complete his work", and even their verbal battles were productive. It is about the courage of putting one's vision into reality, the hard work, and the faith in one's self and in God.

The script by Irving Stone and Philip Dunne is fabulous; the words flow like sweet wine and there is not a single unnecessary scene, or rarely one that is not meaningful. The direction by Carol Reed is meticulous, the cinematography by Leon Shamroy a marvel, and the score by Alex North adds much to the film. The costuming and sets are lavish for the papal quarters and the Medici household, and give one a sense of 16th century Rome, and the depictions of the fresco painting technique is interesting and educational.

Charlton Heston, gaunt and bearded, is brilliant as Michelangelo, as is Rex Harrison as the warrior pope. The interactions of these two actors is riveting, and the dialogue between them worth hearing repeatedly. Others of note in the cast include Diane Cilento as the Contessina de Medici, Harry Andrews as Bramante, and Tomas Milian as Raphael (the most famous papal portrait I know of is by Raphael, of Pope Julian II).

Though Stone's book and script take much artistic license, there is also a good deal of accuracy. This period of 16th century Italy was one of the most fascinating in all world history, and Pope

Julius II was not only one of its greatest art patrons, but also an extraordinary man.
This is a film that moves me to tears with its beauty, and brightens my mind with its words. If you are interested in the artistic process, don't miss this magnificent film.

The film includes a Prologue, a mini-documentary of modern-day Rome and Florence, which traces Michelangelo's life, from his birth in Tuscany in 1475, showing his many wondrous works, including an early sculpture he did at the age of 15, through his death in 1564. Total running time is 139 minutes.

The Circus Maximus was the largest stadium in ancient Rome. Popular chariot races were held here for almost a millennium. At one point the Circus could seat 250.000 people, one quarter of Rome's population.

Early History

Circus Maximus Today

Chariot races were one of the Roman's most popular forms of entertainment. Romulus, the first of Rome's seven kings, is said to have held chariot races.

The origins of the Circus Maximus go back to the 6th century BC when Tarquinius Priscus, the fifth king of Rome, created a track between the Palatine and Aventine hills. The first permanent starting gates were created in 329 BC. In 174 BC the gates were rebuilt and seven wooden eggs were placed on top of the spina, the central wall in the arena. The eggs were used to count the number of laps; after each lap one egg was removed. In 33 BC seven bronze dolphins were added to the spina for the same purpose.

The Last Race

The last race at the Circus Maximus was held in AD 549, almost a millennium after the first races were held at this location. Today only the layout of the original circus can be seen in what is now a large grassland. Most of the original structure has been used as building material for medieval and Renaissance constructions.

A Biblical masterpiece December 4, 2005
By Stephen H. Wood
Format:DVD
William Wyler's Oscar-winning BEN-HUR (1959), produced by Sam Zimbalist (who died of a heart attack near the end of filming) and based on a best-selling late 19th Century novel by Lew Wallace, is one hell of a movie experience. Watching a brand-new, pristine camera negative copy, I could not believe that the opening Nativity scene and the Resurrection finale were the

same movie. There is just so much here. This remake of the 1925 silent epic, runs 3 hours and 45 minutes, including powerful roadshow bookend music by Miklos Rozsa. It takes its leisurely time in telling the story of a Jew (Charlton Heston) and a Roman (Stephen Boyd), raised as best friends, who become bitter enemies in the Holy Land of Jesus Christ's life. Director Wyler was always known as a painstaking perfectionist who would exhaust cast and crew by doing take after take after take of every scene. But the result for the audience is enthralling.

Wyler had never made a Biblical epic before and wanted to work in every genre; his BEN-HUR is the one with a literate brain. It is hard to believe it had major writing problems, multiple writers, and scenes written the night before they would be filmed. It flows beautifully and is continually engrossing, despite its near four hour length. The cast is impeccable, including Martha Scott, Cathy O'Donnell, Jack Hawkins, lovely Haya Harareet, and Oscar winner Hugh Griffith.

If you are looking for the sea battle (directed by Andrew Marton), it is about 70 minutes into part one. If you are seeking out the greatest chariot race in movie history (choreographed and directed by Yakima Canutt), it is about ten minutes after the intermission. The Christ scenes are handled with taste and subtlety; we see only his back or his hand and never hear his voice. In fact, non-Christians might have a difficult time understanding what is going on in those scenes with Jesus, including an impressive Sermon on the Mount near the movie's end. The art direction and costumes are absolutely gorgeous, and Robert Surtees' use of ultra wide-screen Camera 65 is masterful. Most of all, Miklos Rozsa contributes the music score of a lifetime. Everyone won Oscars for their distinguished work. No wonder this BEN-HUR won eleven Oscars the same year as SOME LIKE IT HOT, NORTH BY NORTHWEST, and ANATOMY OF A MURDER. It is a masterpiece. The audio commentary, by scholar and author Gene Hatcher and Mr. Heston, is thoughtful and insightful

Christianity Versus The Decadence of Nero's Rome April 4, 2004
By Simon Davis
Format:VHS Tape
"Quo Vadis", based on the novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz would have to be near the top of my list of favourite 1950's religious epic productions. Indeed "Epic" is the word to fittingly describe this mammoth MGM production that cost an amazing 7 million dollars to make in 1950 and was the studio's biggest money maker since "Gone With The Wind". It has everything an epic movie lover could desire, the already stated fine literary source, breathtaking sets (no computer generated effects here!), meticulously researched historical costumes, enormous crowds scenes and a stunning recreation of Pagan Rome at it's height. The film boasts an extraordinary cast but towering over all of them is the late Peter Ustinov in his unforgettable performance as the deranged Nero. His interpretation of this infamous Emperor who began the first concentrated persecution of the early Christians is still the visual image for a lot of people, myself included,that first comes to mind when Nero's name is mentioned. Already having been filmed a number of times in the silent era and once again since this 1951 film, this is still the definitive version of the story of the early Christian Church struggling to survive in Nero's Rome after the great fire.
With the advent of television in the early 1950's Hollywood fought back with splashy, lavish productions that could not be matched by the flickering black and white image of television in it's infancy. "Quo Vadis", lent itself perfectly for this purpose and an already shaky MGM put all of it's resources into the filming of this elaborate production. The story centres around cocky Roman soldier Marcus Vinicius (Robert Taylor) who after three years of successful campaigning returns to savour the delights of Nero's Rome. Detained at the villa of a retired Roman general

Marcus falls for the simple charms of the general's adapted daughter Lygia (Deborah Kerr) who unbeknown to Marcus is secretly a Christian. Seeing her love for him but not understanding the families belief in the love of a single god and in loving your fellow man despite their background or race Marcus has Lygia taken to Rome and placed in Nero's "House of Women" and seeks to make her is own. Lygia escapes and is taken in by other believers but in the meanwhile Marcus finds himself the focus of the unwelcome and quite dangerous affections of the Empress Poppaea (Patricia Laffan). Meanwhile Nero's meglomania continues to grow and he develops a wild scheme to rebuild Rome to his own glory and secretly sets the city on fire. The backlash from this act however sets Nero to find a scapegoat and thus begins the persecution of the Christian sect that are, to the amazement of the Romans, the disciples of a simple young carpenter from Galilee who was executed for his beliefs. Marcus finds Lygia however both are imprisoned together as Christian believers to become the sport of Nero's festivities in the arena. The appearance of the Apostle Peter who has been called to Rome by Christ's message gives the Christians the strength to endure their ordeals and Marcus and Lygia are married by him just prior to his own matrydom on Vatican Hill. Nero however goes too far in his persecution and the mob turns on him resulting in his fall from power and suicide and the reins of power being taken over by the more level headed General Galba.

While "Quo Vadis", in some areas is not always accurate historically the faults are not glaring ones and it does give a vivid picture of the growth of the early Christian movement and the persecution it endured which of course went on long after Nero's death. First and foremost it is inspiring and dramatic viewing and is the classic example of old style movie making at its most lavish. The film is filled with unforgettable images, for example the huge crowd scenes during Marcus' triumpiant entry into Rome, and the burning of the city by Nero which incredibly was done on both full sized and miniature sets. The cold blooded destruction of the Christians in Nero's Circus of course is probably the most vivid image in the film and is riverting in it's horror and accurate depiction of people being eaten by lions or being used as human torches. These scenes in "Quo Vadis", have I believe never been bettered in depicting the insanity and brutality of Nero and his regime. Performances are uniformily fine here. As the two lovers Robert Taylor and Deborah Kerr are just perfect as the two illmatched lovers from different worlds. Finlay Currie does a most inspirational piece of work as Peter and special mention must go to Patricia Laffan who is perfect in a chilling performance as the evil Empress Poppaea. Directed by MGM veteran Mervyn LeRoy, who was responsible for such diverse MGM productions as "Waterloo Bridge", and "Blossoms in the Dust", here he is still just as at home with this super scale type of film and his directoral integrity is evident in every frame of this film. "Quo Vadis", ended up being nominated for 8 Oscars including Best Picture and Best Supporting Actor for Peter Ustinov.

I always find "Quo Vadis", a moving viewing experience generally around Easter time when my thoughts often go back to the earliest years of my religion. Liking the older style of movie making I can also appreciate the film on its superb technical achievements and massive historical recreation. This however never submerges my appreciation of its very simple message that all

people need to love each other despite their differences for the world to be a happier place. Take time soon to view this epic production of "Quo Vadis", you wont regret it.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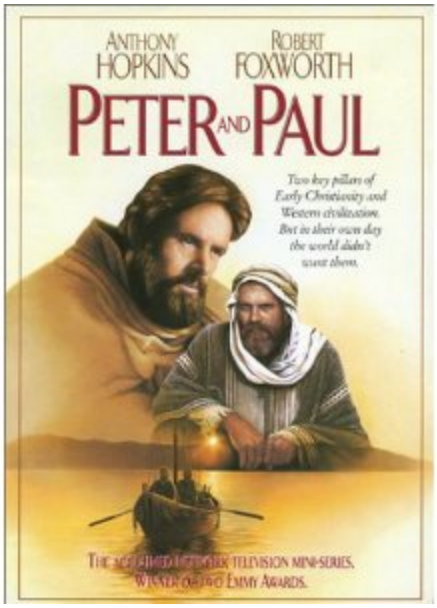

ANTHONY HOPKINS
ROBERT FOXWORTH
PETER AND PAUL
Two key pillars of Early Christianity and Western civilization. But in their own day the world didn't want them.

The Book of Acts made interesting and understandable! May 12, 2006
By Michael Ziegler
Format:DVD
First, I agree with other reviewers here that the portrayal of Paul the Apostle by Anthony Hopkins is a standout performance worthy of an emmy nomination. Robert Foxworth's Peter is also interestingly done but our information is lacking about his ministry when he disappears after Chapter 7 in the book of Acts. Therefore the movie focuses on Paul's attempt to unite Jew,Greek and Roman in a trinity of new Christian faith and this film delivers on that concept, even though it is somewhat romanticized. Some very effective scenes remind you of "Jesus of Nazareth". One suprise is when Paul is being confronted by his "thorn in the flesh" while consulting with Barnabas and Mark, you hear a mysterious sound that is tough to catch but Mark inquires what it is to which Paul replies "just an animal". (Actually it is a devil). Also there is a great confrontation with the woman who throws her voice into statues and animals to ridicule Paul's ministry. When Paul tells her that she won't have the power to do that again it is effective enough to put a fear of the Lord into you! We get to see the journeys of Paul and Barnabas (you will notice a gradual decline in the richness of Barnabas shown in his clothing) , we meet Luke, Timothy, Silas, Mark and get a basic grip on what the spread of Christianity was all about in the ancient world. Nero's fay behavior will get on your nerves especially when he is engaged in conversations about Paul with his jailer. Paul's triumphant entry as a prisoner into Rome will remind you of Jesus and his entry into Jerusalem so much so that it can bring a tear to your eye. The original scene of Paul forgiving the Axeman when he is beheaded has been removed for some reason on this DVD. Well recommended to anyone who wants some insight into the early development of the Church and to understand persecution of the apostles!

Mamertine Prison
by brendareed Updated Jun 18, 2012 1148 reviews

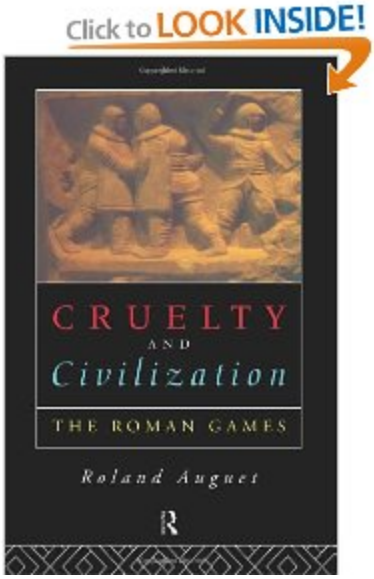

PRIGIONE DEI SS APOSTOLI PIETRO E PAOLO
MAMERTINUM


2:06PM

The Mamertine Prison is where it is believed that both apostles Peter and Paul were held as prisoners as well as others such as Jugurtha, king of Numidia in 2nd century. While there is no definitive proof that this is the location, circumstantial evidence makes a strong case for each of the men being held here at separate times. The name of the prison seems to come from the 5th century and is not recorded in the writings of Peter and Paul. However, the prison located next to the Capitoline Hill and the arch of Septimius Severus was where higher profile prisoners would have been kept after being lowered down into the cell through a hole in the ceiling.

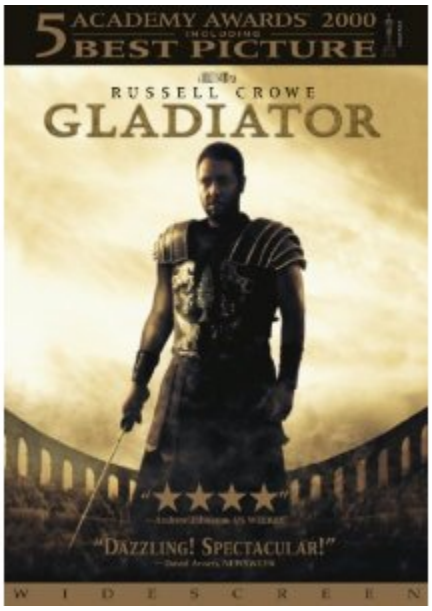
Today the Mamertine Prison is a site visited by many who know the stories of Paul and Peter. Inside there is a small altar in the low ceilinged cell and a well, believed to be the spring from which Peter baptized his captors. Visitors can get to the cell from a small staircase, rather than being lowered through the hole.

The prison is located below the Chapel of the Crucifix. The entrance is at the bottom of the steps between the Capitoline Museum and the arch of Septimius Severus (near one of the exits from the Roman Forum). We got there from the Capitoline Museum, walking around the left side of the building and then down the steps



Roland Auguet examines the Roman taste for blood and considers what the games, that strange combination of *Cruelty and Civilization*, reveal about the Roman mentality. He shows how the great spectacles became a part of city life - they were awaited with impatience, everyone discussed them, some applauded the action in the arena, while others booed frantically.

This book provides an exciting history of gladiators, chariot racing and other games as well as an investigation of their function and significance within society. It is essential reading for anyone who is interested in the Romans' violent form of entertainment.



The Movie "Gladiator" in Historical Perspective

by Allen Ward, University of Connecticut

A more extensive version of this paper with documentation can be found in the May 2001 issue of the NEW ENGLAND CLASSICAL NEWSLETTER, edited by William Wyatt, Jr.necj@brown.edu.

What can a Roman historian say about the movie "Gladiator"? It was the best of films. It was the worst of films. One of the best things about this movie is that it is part of a long line of books, plays, films, and works of art that keep alive interest in the Ancient World among the general public, something at which artists and writers have been far more successful over the centuries than professional historians. Unfortunately, the creative minds who do the most to shape popular views of the past often have little regard for the level of accuracy that preoccupies professional practitioners of Clio's craft. Artists and writers mine the past for raw materials that support their own creative agenda. Few writers other than the most scrupulous of historical novelists will ever let the facts that concern professional historians get between them and paying customers.

As the worst of films, "Gladiator" provides a perfect example. Right from the opening scene, the inaccuracies are legion. First, there was no last great battle with the Germanic tribes on the eve of Marcus Aurelius' death. There was a great daylong battle late in the campaigning season of A.D. 179, but Marcus died on March 17 of 180, just as he was about to launch another great military campaign. One could say that the scriptwriters needed to foreshorten the chronology here to save time in a long movie, but they certainly played fast and loose with some other aspects of the battle. I have found no attested parallel to the war dog of the Roman commander Maximus, the movie's hero, and if there were one, it would not have been a German shepherd, a breed that did not exist in Antiquity. The use of fire-hurling catapults and mechanical dart launchers against the oncoming barbarians was certainly dramatic but probably unhistorical. By and large such weapons were too cumbersome for use on the open battlefield and were confined to more static siege warfare.

The whole movie has radically compressed the chronology of the Emperor Commodus' reign. He became sole emperor upon his father's death in March of 180 and was assassinated almost thirteen years later on December 31, 192.Although the time encompassed by "Gladiator" is not precisely indicated, it would appear that no more than two years could have elapsed before Commodus was killed. Within that time-frame, however, the script does utilize some historical facts: Commodus was fascinated with shows of beast hunting, chariot racing, and gladiatorial combat; he did train himself in those skills; and eventually, to the ultimate scandal of all classes, he fought in the public arena as the kind of light-armed gladiator known as a secutor (pursuer). In an inscription, he even boasted of his 620 victories in gladiatorial combat.

In real life, Commodus' eldest living sister, Lucilla, did plot with a number of senators to kill him within the first two years of his reign. As the movie indicates, she had been married to Marcus' former co-emperor, Lucius Verus. After that, however, specific historical details and the movie part company. Only fourteen when she married Verus in 164, Lucilla had borne him three children before she was widowed in 169. Obviously, the character identified as their eight-year-old son named Lucius Verus in the movie is unhistorical. In fact, their only son and one of their two daughters had died as infants. Their other daughter (of unknown name) survived to be

engaged to Claudius Pompeianus Quintianus, either a nephew or son by a previous marriage of Lucilla's second husband, Tiberius Claudius Pompeianus. Both this daughter and Quintianus participated in the plot of 182 but appear nowhere in the movie.

Interestingly, Lucilla did have a young son by Pompeianus at the time in which the movie takes place. About six years old in 182, he was Aurelius Commodus Pompeianus, who lived to become a consul in 209. He had survived because his father had never opposed Commodus.

Lucilla had nothing in common with her son's father. Both she and her mother, the Empress Faustina, bitterly resented the marriage that Marcus had hastily arranged between her and Claudius Pompeianus. It had taken place only nine or ten months after Verus' death, before the proper mourning period had ended. Lucilla was unhappy with the extreme difference in their ages: She was only nineteen and a half, and he may have been over fifty. Both she and her mother found him socially beneath their dignity. He was the son of a provincial Equestrian from Antioch in Syria. This marriage was the source of the cold relations between Lucilla and Marcus that the movie never adequately explains.

Having been an Augusta as the wife of Verus, Lucilla undoubtedly wanted to be one again. Marcus, however, had chosen Pompeianus as her second husband precisely because he was a loyal and valuable military officer who could protect the Imperial family but whose social station foreclosed any ambitions of his own for the throne. Even though his son or nephew Quintianus, his wife, and his stepdaughter were at the center of the plot in 182, he was completely uninvolved. That was fortunate for him. Unlike in the movie, the unsuccessful conspirators were executed, even Lucilla after she was briefly exiled on the Isle of Capri.

Except for a love of the games, there is not much that is historical about "Gladiator's" version of Commodus. In the movie he appears to be in his mid-to-late twenties, is of average build, has dark hair, and fights with his right hand. In reality, he was only eighteen and a half when Marcus died, had a very strong physique, sported golden blond hair, and fought with his left hand. Moreover, he was not single, as the movie represents him. In 178, at the age of sixteen, he had been married to Bruttia Crispina, and it was not until after the conspiracy of 182 that he divorced her for adultery and executed her.

The picture of Commodus as a man starved for paternal affection, lusting after his sister, and finally murdering his father to avoid the ultimate rejection of being passed over for as his father's successor has some support in the often tendentious and sensationalistic sources. The Life of Commodus in the notorious pastiche of fact and fiction known as the Historia Augusta takes pornographic delight in depicting the drunkenness and sexual excesses that every ancient rhetorical hack stereotypically ascribed to a tyrannical ruler. Ironically, Lucilla is the only sister with whom he is not accused of incestuous relations, but the filmmakers are to be commended for not focusing on the biographer's unreliable charges to make "Gladiator" into another cheap sexploitation epic of Roman Imperial orgies.

One might argue that the serious nature evident since boyhood and the self-control of a Stoic philosopher, which was clearly demonstrated at the death of Commodus' twin brother, would not have made Marcus Aurelius a very warm or demonstrative parent. Nevertheless, the picture that

emerges from his correspondence with his beloved teacher Cornelius Fronto and from his own Meditations is one of a kind, sympathetic, and affectionate man. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that he had at least fourteen children with his wife of thirty years simply out of a grim sense of Stoic duty.

The idea presented in the movie that Marcus had decided to pass over Commodus and restore the old free Republic is ludicrous. Nobody, not even the real senators who plotted against Commodus, wanted to restore what people today think of as the Republic. The office of emperor was a recognized necessity. The main source of friction between the emperors and a number of senators was the question of how that office should be filled. Leading senators wanted to be able to choose a mature man of experience and proven merit from their ranks. The soldiers, however, always favored hereditary succession by birth or adoption, and without dynastic loyalty, it was too easy for an ambitious general to use his soldiers to contest the choice of a new emperor other than himself.

The ancient reports of Marcus Aurelius fearing that Commodus was an unsuitable candidate for emperor and that Commodus brought about his death are fictions designed to discredit Commodus and justify his overthrow. Contrary to the picture presented in "Gladiator," Commodus was in fact joint ruler with his father from the beginning of 177, when Commodus became the youngest of Roman consuls up to that time. From August of 178, they jointly commanded the war on the Danube until Marcus' death.

Marcus was not quite 59 when he died, perhaps of plague. "Gladiator" does capture his kindly and philosophical nature, but his decrepit frailty, thin beard, and wispy fly-away hair in the movie bear little resemblance to his statues, busts, and portraits on coins, even one depicting him at age 56. They show him as a fairly vigorous man with a full beard and a thick head of curly hair. Of course, official portraiture tends to improve on nature, and Aurelius himself complained of poor health. He also endured war and two winters along the Danube, and if he did contract plague in the second winter, he might even have looked preternaturally aged just before he died and as he appears in "Gladiator."

Unfortunately, there are no portraits with which to compare the Hero of "Gladiator", the Spanish general Maximus. He never existed at all. He is a pastiche, a composite portrait of the kind of able men from the provinces who were tangible proof of Marcus Aurelius' insistence on promoting men because of merit wherever he found them. Like Marcus himself, Trajan, and Hadrian, the character Maximus came from a provincial family in Spain. His longing for home and family in the movie echo sentiments that Herodian attributes to Claudius Pompeianus, whose career as a military officer from the provinces resembled his in many ways. The man who most likely held the supreme field command in the great battle of 179 on which the opening scene is probably based was Taruttienus Paternus, senior prefect of the Praetorian Guard, who was later executed for supposed involvement in the plot of 182.

One wishes that the late Oliver Reed's last character, the lanista or gladiatorial impresario Proximo were an historical character, but, of course, if he were, his name would be the Latin "Proximus" and not the Italian "Proximo". Symbolically, perhaps, Latin gets butchered even more when Proximo brings his troop of gladiators to Rome where they enter a building labeled

LUDUS MAGNUS GLADIATORES, instead of LUDUS MAGNUS GLADIATORUM. Finally, Proximo wrongly claims that Marcus Aurelius had banned gladiatorial contests and thereby forced him to leave Rome to scratch out a living in hick towns like North African Zucchabar, which, mirabile dictu, really was a Roman colony in Mauretania. In fact, Aurelius had enacted legislation to guarantee the continuance of gladiatorial games in hard economic times.

The depiction of gladiatorial armor, weapons, and combat in "Gladiator" is riddled with errors. By the second century A.D., gladiators had been divided into strict categories according to their arms, armor, and style of fighting. In most cases, gladiators of different types were paired in certain standard combinations. For example, since Commodus always fought as a secutor, Maximus should have faced him as a retiarius, a man who fought with a circular net, a trident, and a short sword (gladius) and whose only protection was on his sword arm. Moreover, true gladiatorial combats were not the kind of mass melees often shown in the movie but individual duels fought under strict rules enforced by referees.

Despite its many specific inaccuracies, "Gladiator" is the best of films because it does vividly and convincingly portray some important general truths about the late second-century-A.D. Roman World. Many people find the movie offensively violent, bloody, and gory. Unfortunately, life in the ancient world in general was much more violent and gruesomely bloody than life in modern industrial democracies. Marcus Aurelius spent most of his reign in fighting wars. Despite the misplaced fire-hurling catapults, the brutal hand-to-hand butchery of the opening battle gives a good idea of the ugly face of legionary combat and the gruesome ways in which one could be killed or wounded. Indeed, such scenes are graphically depicted on the famous column that commemorates Aurelius' Northern Wars.

Not just on the battlefield but everywhere people constantly confronted sudden violent or painful death. People were acutely aware that we are, as the character Proximo, misquoting Horace (Odes, 4.7.6), more than once said, "shadows and dust." Murder was frequent in crowded, poorly policed cities, and the countryside was constantly being raided by brigands and invaders. After the abortive plot of 182, the senatorial class again faced the kind of murderous purge such as had occurred earlier under Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. The brutal murders of Maximus' wife and son in "Gladiator" mirror that reality. Marcus avoided such extremes in dealing with his domestic opponents, but those who were loyal to him did not scruple to cut off the head of the hapless Avidius Cassius and send it to him. Plague had ravaged the Roman Empire since the return of Lucius Verus' army from Parthia in 166, and the lack of modern medicines rendered all diseases more deadly than now. Death rates were very high. Marcus himself had buried his wife and eight of their fourteen known children.

With the rictus of the Grim Reaper visible at every turn, people of all classes were preoccupied with the prospect of imminent death. That preoccupation permeates Marcus Aurelius' own Meditations, and it is summed up in the words that Maximus ascribes to Marcus in the movie: "Death smiles at us all. All a man can do is smile back."

The pressing perception of death lurking everywhere helps to explain the popularity of gladiatorial shows all over the Empire. As the fictional senator Gracchus in the movie said of

Commodus and his attempt to win the hearts of the masses: “He will bring them death, and they will love him for it.” While gladiatorial shows and related games like beast hunts and chariot races were religiously charged spectacles of Roman power used to maintain political and social control, the great popular enthusiasm that they generated had nothing to do with any popular love for Roman rituals and expressions of power. It had everything to do with the ancient warrior code that stressed overcoming death by achieving honor and undying fame through killing others in battle or at least meeting a glorious death. Gladiatorial combat replicated the daily struggle with death faced by everyone and provided the model for how to confront it heroically. As the Black gladiator Juba, who healed Maximus’ wound, said to him when at first he refused to play his new role as a gladiator, “Why don’t you fight? We all have to fight!” Through heroically facing death, one might actually overcome it for the present by defeating one’s foe or, by fighting courageously even in the face of overwhelming odds, one could obtain a degree of heroic honor in defeat that transcended death. Proximo said it all when he said, “Ultimately, we are all dead men …. We have to decide how to meet death in order to be remembered as men.”

The lesson taught in the arena was that by not giving up without a fight, even someone who had suffered the all-too-common misfortune of enslavement could become a noble hero. Again, to quote Proximo, “You will die to the sound of ‘clap, clap.’ Gladiators, I salute you.” Maximus overcame his reversal of fortune and accomplished one of the deeds that brought the greatest heroic honor and fame: vengeance on his enemy. When death finally claimed his own battered body, Lucilla said, “He was a soldier of Rome. Honor him!” and many willing hands bore him off in triumph.

It was a powerful end to an exciting film that has sparked enormous interest in the history behind it. Perhaps Roman historians should be grateful for its valid general insights and overlook its many factual errors. The artiste will say that concern with such details merely reflects the overly punctilious quibbles of pettifogging pedants who cannot appreciate the forest for the trees. Certainly creative artists need to be granted some poetic license, but that should not be a permit for the wholesale disregard of facts in historical fiction and costume dramas. In most cases, the easily determined factual details would not have made “Gladiator” less interesting or exciting, and the record of Commodus’ reign contains characters and events that could easily make what is now a good story even better history.

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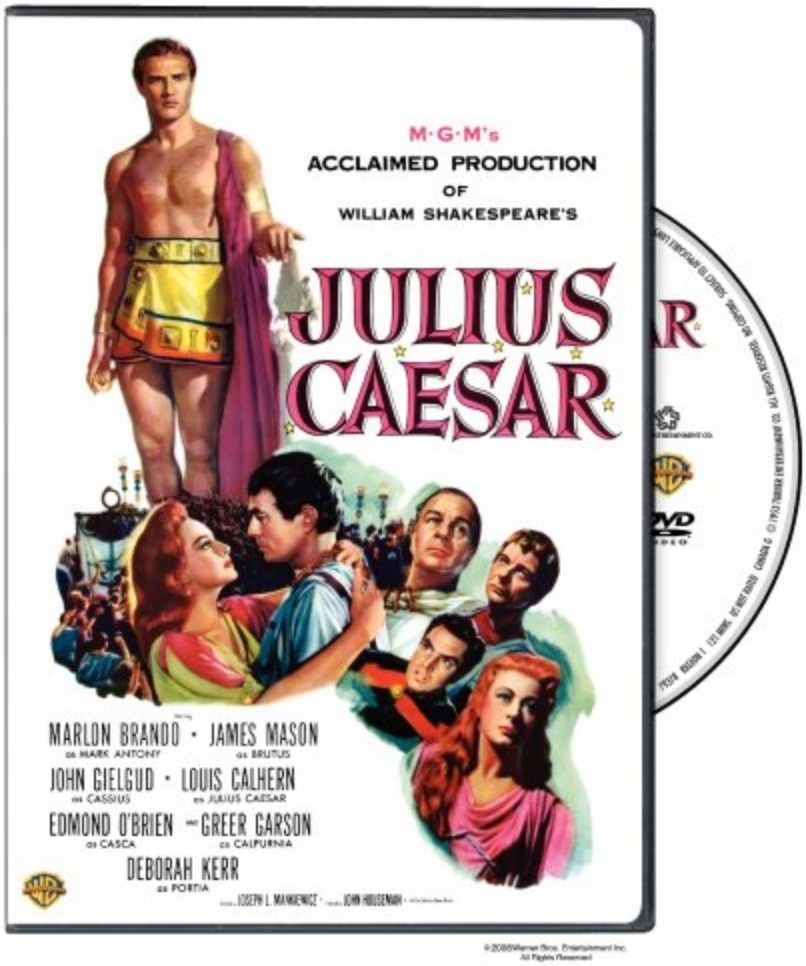


Riveting production of Shakespeare's Great Roman Tragedy... Fine DVD transfer from Warner November 26, 2006

By dooby

Format:DVD

This is a thoroughly riveting production of Shakespeare's tragedy. It boasts a stellar cast and excellent production values. I found it strange that it is touted as a Marlon Brando film when Brando doesn't actually play the central role. That honour belongs to James Mason who provides a brilliant portrait of the tormented Brutus, the one truly noble man in this whole sad affair. Sir John Gielgud is also outstanding as the envious, conniving but weak Cassius. Brando's performance, great as it is, should be seen in the context of the equally great performances of those around him. In Robert Osborne's introduction, we are told how Brando sought Gielgud's help in preparing for his role; recording Gielgud's delivery of Antony's lines, and assiduously listening to and studying from them. The final effect is electrifying. This is not the boring Shakespeare dreaded by schoolkids the world over. This is gripping, searing stuff that, as Laurence Fishburne says in the accompanying documentary, made Shakespeare "the Aaron Spelling of his day." The one sore spot was Louis Calhern's Caesar who looks more like Hollywood's caricature of a Roman Patrician than Shakespeare's intended character. But that's a

minor quibble for Caesar is really just a minor figure, even though the play does bear his name.

I was delighted by the reviewer who pointed out the interpretational possibilities regarding Brutus' character and motivations. However I disagree with him when he says that the film failed in its depiction of Brutus. The reviewer's preference for a darker, more self-aware Brutus is fascinating to explore but this is a Hollywood film from the early 1950s and we should see it in that context. The beauty of Shakespeare is that it can be interpreted in so many different ways. However, in the end, it is the producer who has to decide how he wants to depict the character on stage. The producers in this case, chose this particular interpretation; a relatively straightforward, clearcut view of Brutus; that of the essentially good, noble, but naive hero. It is as valid an interpretation as the one proposed by the reviewer. I agree that the darker view could make the film even more fascinating to watch. But it does not mean that the present interpretation is a failure. It is a perfectly valid interpretation in an altogther fine film. If this wonderful production can spark interest in viewers to find out more and to question further the original play, then it will have done far more than anyone could hope for.

Florence

July 22, 2010

36 Hours in Florence

By ONDINE COHANE

WITH its Renaissance treasures and centuries-old stately palazzi, Florence is sometimes treated like a living museum rather than a vibrant city with contemporary culture. That myth is harder to

sustain these days, thanks in part to Matteo Renzi, the city's 35-year-old mayor, who was elected last year with promises to stir up the Tuscan capital. Evidence of a more youthful and revitalized Florence is everywhere. Dilapidated piazzas have been refreshed, contemporary art galleries have sprung up, and old-school palazzi have been turned into trendy restaurants. Traffic has also improved, making the city even more pleasant to navigate.

Friday

4 p.m.
1) DECONGESTED DUOMO

Yes, that Duomo. As one of Mr. Renzi's first moves as mayor, Florence's symbolic heart is now a pedestrian-only piazza. Without buses, taxis and cars jamming up the street, it is a pleasant and totally new experience, even as it remains one of the city's most popular attractions. Don't miss the stunningly detailed bronze doors of the Baptistery. Another landmark that's received the car-free touch is the piazza of Santa Maria Novella. With the scaffolding down and parked vehicles replaced by strolling Italian families, the restored black-and-white marble facade of the basilica is all the more striking, as is the thriving neighborhood around it.

5 p.m.
2) MODERN MAESTROS

Florence may be known for old masters, but its contemporary art scene is heating up. For Gallery (Via dei Fossi, 45r; 39-055-094-6444; forgallery.it) is a sleek space that specializes in photography including portraits and cityscapes. Biagiotti Arte Contemporanea (Via delle Belle Donne 39r; 39-055-214-757; artbiagiotti.com) focuses principally on young Italian artists. And the new outpost of Galleria Alessandro Bagnai (Via del Sole 15r; 39-055-680-2066; galleriabagnai.it) represents better-known names like Sandro Chia and Mario Schifano. Photo buffs will also want to check out the Museo Nazionale Alinari della Fotografia (Piazza Santa Maria Novella 14a; 39-055-216-310; www.mnaf.it), when it is expected to reopen on Sept. 8, and Palazzo Strozzi (Piazza Strozzi; 39-055-277-6461; palazzostrozzi.org; tickets: 10 euros, about $12 at $1.24 to the euro) for major retrospectives.

8 p.m.
3) A TUSCAN SUPPER

Florence cherishes its classics, and new restaurants are few and far between. That may explain the instant popularity of Osteria Tornabuoni (Via dei Corsi 5r; 39-055-277-3502; osteriatornabuoni.it). Opened last May by Silvio Ursini (who also owns the stylish Obikà mozzarella bars that are popping up globally), the Tuscan-centric restaurant occupies a historic palazzo on a fashionable shopping street. Unpretentious dishes include bread maccheroni with

lamb ragù and risotto with purple artichokes. It also features a well-priced selection of Tuscan wines, including a 2007 Montevertine Super Tuscan. The knowledgeable sommelier (and influential wine blogger) Andrea Gori will happily lead you through the offerings. Entrees run from 17 euros, pastas from 11.

Saturday

11 a.m.
4) PRETTY PLEASE

Making a bella figura (a good impression) is an important Italian custom, both in terms of how you look and how you act. Do your part with a facial at the new spa at the Four Seasons Hotel Firenze (Borgo Pinti 99; 39-055-26-261; fourseasons.com/florence). It's one of the only places in town that features Officina Profumo-Farmacia di Santa Maria Novella, the apothecary potions concocted by monks in the 13th century. And the small white marble spa also looks onto one of the city's largest private gardens with peaceful green lawns, towering trees and winding pathways that lead past tucked away statues. It's a great way to enjoy the city's luxurious new arrival without the price tag of a room — a 20-minute back and neck massage costs 80 euros, room rates from 500 euros.

1 p.m.
5) PASS THE PANINO

Custom-made panini sandwiches were once the norm in Italy, until the generic, plastic-wrapped variety took over. A new deli and wine bar near the Ponte Vecchio called 'Ino (Via dei Georgofili 3r-7r; 39-055-219-208; ino-firenze.com) is seeking to bring that lunchtime pleasure back, one fresh focaccia at a time. Choose from 20-plus cheeses including pecorino and gorgonzola, and add some mortadella and salami. Paninis from 5 euros.

3 p.m.
6) LEFT BANK

Cross the Arno River to the less-traveled left bank for authentic Florentine treasures. Busatti (Lungarno Torrigiani, 11-R; 39-055-263-8516; busattifirenze.com) is a small family-owned shop that carries delicate striped linens and embroidered duvets that have been hand-woven in the Tuscan town of Anghiari since 1842 (from 10 euros for a kitchen towel). Britta in Bicicletta (Lungarno Torrigiani 5/r; 39-055-246-6703; brittainbicicletta.com) is a jewel box of a children's clothing shop, with its own line of cotton dresses in pretty fabrics and soft-as-butter infant essentials (from 25 euros). Meanwhile, Lorenzo Villoresi does a line of Florentine perfumes (from 65 euros) and candles (from 18 euros) that make good presents — and the view from the shop is lovely, too (Via de Bardi, 14; 39-055-234-1187; www.lorenzovilloresi.it).

4 p.m.
7) A FRESH VIEW

After a half-century of neglect, the 10-acre Villa Bardini Gardens (Via de Bardi 1r; 39-055-294-883,.bardinipeyron.it) reopened in 2005, and well-heeled Florentines now stroll its terraced flower and vegetable gardens. The sweeping hilltop views offer spectacular views of the Duomo, Santa Croce and Fiesole. If there's time to linger, pop into the Roberto Capucci Museum in the 17th-century Villa Bardini, which recently opened as the impressive fashion archive of the Roman designer (Villa Bardini, 2, Costa San Giorgio; 39-055-200-662-09; www.fondazionerobertocapucci.com).

8 p.m.
8) PRIZED BEEF

Let the rest of the world have their grass-fed, organic burgers. At Lungarno 23 (Lungarno Torrigiani, 23; 39-055-234-5957; lungarno23.it), a stylish restaurant that opened this spring, the owners have their own cattle farm in the Tuscan town of Sinalunga, where they raise Chianina — an ancient Italian breed known for its white hair, long limbs and marbled meat. The Chianina burgers (12 euros) are served on a sesame bun with lettuce, onions, tomatoes and ketchup. Purists may prefer the steak at Trattoria Sostanza (Via del Porcellana 25r; 39-055-212-691), a century-old institution known for its succulent Chianina T-bones (24 euros for a half kilo).

10 p.m.
9) LOUNGE FEVER

Summer night life in Florence is centered around small aperitivo bars that come alive after dinner, spilling into the street. A new hot spot is Volume (Piazza Santo Spirito, 5r; 39-055-238-1460), a bar that opened in April in a former wood workshop. On balmy nights the bar is filled with a varied yet beautiful crowd, from fashion editors to exchange students, who anchor one corner of the festive Piazza Santo Spirito.

Sunday

10 a.m.
10) PARADISE FOUND

In a town of blockbuster art shows, seek out smaller gems. Among the unsung works is Benozzo Gozzoli's "Procession of the Magi," which was recently restored to its Technicolor glory at the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi (Via Camillo Cavour, 1; 39-055-2760-340; www.palazzo-medici.it; 7 euros). Commissioned by Cosimo de' Medici in 1459, the fresco turned the chapel into a vision

of paradise, with cheetahs and birds, as imagined by the newly emerging merchant class. Book ahead — the intimate space is open only to small groups.

Noon
11) URBAN TAN

Taking a page from Paris and Berlin, an urban beach has washed up on the Arno River by San Niccolò, a wide swath of sand studded with beach umbrellas, deck chairs and bikini-clad Florentines. Unlike the beaches in those other cities, however, the sand here is a natural phenomenon, an ideal spot for a sun-drenched espresso while watching the city's younger set take their city back.

IF YOU GO

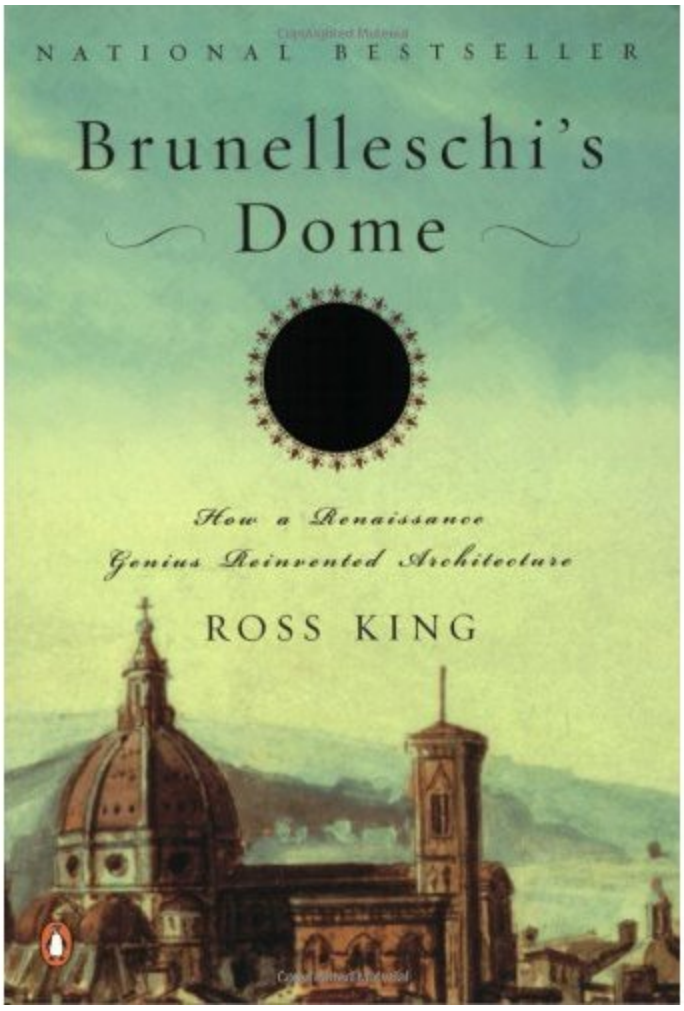
Flights to Florence from New York require a connecting flight. According to a recent Web search, Alitalia flies from Kennedy Airport to Florence, connecting through Rome, starting at $1,590, for travel in August. Or you can fly to Rome and take the Eurostar (raileurope.com) to Florence. Make your way around town by foot or cab.

Opened in 2003, **J.K. Place Firenze** (Piazza di Santa Maria Novella 7; 39-055-264-5181; jkplace.com) has 20 small but stylish rooms on Santa Maria Novella piazza, with the Duomo and the Ponte Vecchio five minutes away on foot. Rooms start at 250 euros ($314) including soft drinks, Wi-Fi, breakfast and taxes.

Il Salviatino (Via del Salviatino 21, 39-055-904-11; salviatino.com) opened in fall 2009 with 45 rooms in a restored villa with an 11-acre garden, spa and terrace overlooking the city. Rooms from 440 euros.

For a more affordable option, **Residence Hilda** (Via dei Servi, 40; 39-055-288-021; www.residencehilda.com), behind the Duomo, has 12 recently refurbished suites, all with kitchens. Rates start at 230 euros.

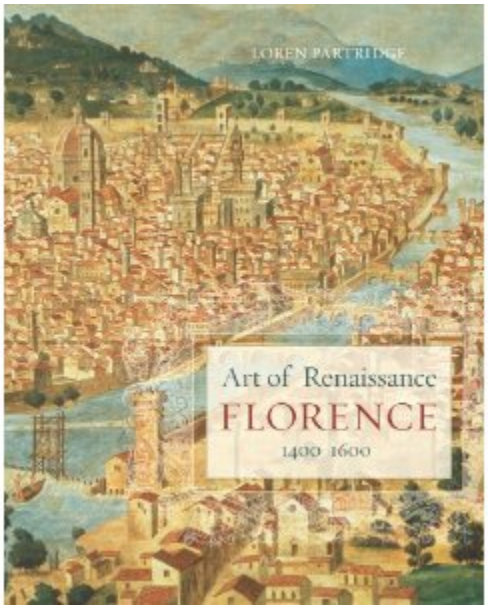

Florence
To Il Salviatino
Train Station
PIAZZA DELLA STAZIONE
VIA SAN GALLO
VIA CAMILLO CAVOUR
VIA DEI SERVI
Four Seasons Hotel Firenze
4
BORGO PINTI
Palazzo Medici-Riccardi
10
VIA DELLA SCALA
Museo Nazionale Alinari della Fotografia
Battistero di San Giovanni
Residence Hilda
PIAZZA SANTA MARIA NOVELLA
For Gallery
2
JK Place
Duomo
1
VIA DEI CORSI
Trattoria Sostanza
3
Osteria Tornabuoni
Galleria Alessandro Bagnai
VIA DEL CORSO
Palazzo Strozzi
Biagiotti Arte Contemporanea
VIA DELLE TERME
'Ino
5
Galleria degli Uffizi
PONTE VECCHIO
VIA DEI GEORGOFILI
PIAZZA SANTO SPIRITO
Lungarno 23
8
LUNGARNO TORRIGIANI
Britta in Bicicletta
11
Arno River
9
Volume
Busatti
6
Palazzo Pitti
VIA DE BARDI
Lorenzo Villoresi
7
Villa Bardini Gardens
Roberto Capucci Museum
Porta San Niccolò
COSTA SAN GIORGIO
Venice
Milan
Florence
ITALY
Adriatic Sea
Rome
Tyrrhenian Sea
SARDINIA
Miles
200



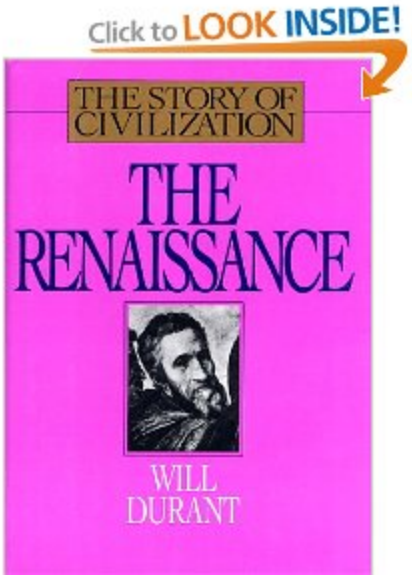
Filippo Brunelleschi's design for the dome of the cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence remains one of the most towering achievements of Renaissance architecture. Completed in 1436, the dome remains a remarkable feat of design and engineering. Its span of more than 140 feet exceeds St Paul's in London and St Peter's in Rome, and even outdoes the Capitol in Washington, D.C., making it the largest dome ever constructed using bricks and mortar. The story of its creation and its brilliant but "hot-tempered" creator is told in Ross King's delightful *Brunelleschi's Dome*.

Both dome and architect offer King plenty of rich material. The story of the dome goes back to 1296, when work began on the cathedral, but it was only in 1420, when Brunelleschi won a competition over his bitter rival Lorenzo Ghiberti to design the daunting cupola, that work began in earnest. King weaves an engrossing tale from the political intrigue, personal jealousies, dramatic setbacks, and sheer inventive brilliance that led to the paranoid Filippo, "who was so proud of his inventions and so fearful of plagiarism," finally seeing his dome completed only months before his death. King argues

that it was Brunelleschi's improvised brilliance in solving the problem of suspending the enormous cupola in bricks and mortar (painstakingly detailed with precise illustrations) that led him to "succeed in performing an engineering feat whose structural daring was without parallel." He tells a compelling, informed story, ranging from discussions of the construction of the bricks, mortar, and marble that made up the dome, to its subsequent use as a scientific instrument by the Florentine astronomer Paolo Toscanelli. *--Jerry Brotton, Amazon.co.uk*



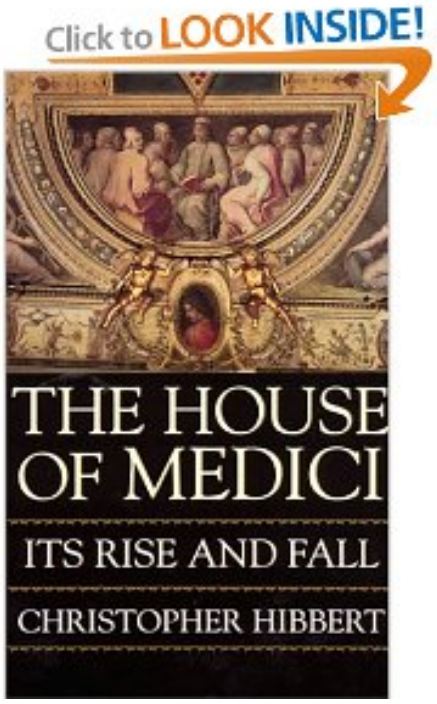
In this absorbing illustrated history, Loren Partridge takes the reader on an insightful tour of Renaissance Florence and sheds new light on its celebrated art and culture by examining the city's great architectural and artistic achievements in their political, intellectual, and religious contexts. This essential and accessible text, the only up-to-date volume on Renaissance Florence currently available, incorporates insights from recent scholarship, including gender studies, while emphasizing the artists' social status, rivalries, and innovations. The result is a multilevel exploration of how the celebrated Florentine culture formally registers in specific works of art or architecture and how these works interactively informed and often shaped the culture.



The Fifth Volume of The Story of Civilization! August 30, 2004

By Jeffrey Peter A. Hauck VINE™ VOICE
Format:Hardcover
In this, the fifth volume in the series "The Story of Civilization," Dr. Will & Ariel Durant have compiled a magnificent treatise covering the Italian Renaissance.

At over >720 pages, the reader will discover: The magnificent cities of Renaissance Italy (sovereign Florence, Pisa, Venice, etc.). The Great Artists such as Leonardo, Michelangelo, and more. The Great Medici family. Cesare Boria, the model for Machiavelli's master work "The Prince." Rome, briefly resurgent as the "capital of the world," until sacked by French and German mercenaries. And much, much more including plates and maps



At its height Renaissance Florence was a centre of enormous wealth, power and influence. A republican city-state funded by trade and banking, its often bloody political scene was dominated by rich mercantile families, the most famous of which were the Medici. This enthralling book charts the family's huge influence on the political, economic and cultural history of Florence. Beginning in the early 1430s with the rise of the dynasty under the near-legendary Cosimo de Medici, it moves through their golden era as patrons of some of the most remarkable artists and architects of the Renaissance, to the era of the Medici Popes and Grand Dukes, Florence's slide into decay and bankruptcy, and the end, in 1737, of the Medici line.

Venice

October 27, 2010

36 Hours in Venice

By ONDINE COHANE

WITH its picture-perfect canals and waterside palazzi, Venice is a romantic idyll. No wonder 18 million tourists pile onto the floating city each year. But what is surprising is that the embattled residents still manage to carve out a hometown for themselves — a pastiche of in-the-know restaurants, underground bars, quiet piazzas and calmer, outlying islands. And that's not counting all the cultural offerings that Venetians take full advantage of. The cool art scene now goes beyond the Biennale. And instead of sinking, architectural icons have re-emerged as new landmarks.

Friday

4 p.m.
1) MODERN INSTALLATION

Venice's artsy side is on display at the new Punta della Dogana (Dorsoduro 2; 39-041-523-1680; palazzograssi.it), the city's former customs house that was transformed into a museum to hold part of the sizable art collection of the luxury goods magnate François Pinault. Completed last year, it was designed by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, who left the bones of the stunning

landmark intact but created light and airy galleries for the heavyweight contemporary work. The view from the sidewalk is just as impressive, looking back onto the Grand Canal and across to Giudecca — keep an eye out for Charles Ray's sculpture "Boy With Frog," his first outdoor installation.

8 p.m.
2) LAGOON TO TABLE

Dismayed by the city's reputation for high prices and mediocre food, a consortium of restaurants formed Ristoranti della Buona Accoglienza (veneziaristoranti.it), or the Restaurants of Good Welcome, with a pledge to offer transparent pricing, full disclosure of ingredients and a commitment to culinary traditions. Among the outstanding members is Alle Testiere (Castello 5801; 39-041-522-7220; www.osterialletestiere.it), a nine-table establishment owned by a group of young Venetians that serves seasonal and local seafood like gnocchi with calamaretti and fresh grilled sea bass. Pair with a regional wine like Orto, a grassy white made in Sant' Erasmo, an island in the Venetian Lagoon. Entrees run from 25 euros, or $34 at $1.36 to the euro, pastas from 19 ($26). Be sure to make a reservation.

10 p.m.
3) BAR SCENE

New hotel bars have woken up the city's once-sleepy night life. Among the current hot spots is the PG, a restaurant and bar at the recently opened Palazzina Grassi (San Marco 3247; 39-041-528-4644; palazzinagrassi.it), a 16th-century palazzo that was transformed by Philippe Starck into a design hotel. Johnny Depp held court there when filming "The Tourist," and a pop-up of Amy Sacco's Bungalow 8 relocated to the lobby during the Venice Film Festival this year.

Saturday

10 a.m.
4) MODERN NOOK

Carlo Scarpa, the architectural godfather of Venetian modernists, is back in vogue. See why at the Fondazione Scientifica Querini Stampalia (Santa Maria Formosa Castello 5252; 39-041-271-1411; querinistampalia.it; 10 euros), where he transformed the garden and ground floor into a modernist haven in the early 1960s. Upstairs a quiet library is a great spot to read a newspaper with locals on the weekends or to see the painting "Presentation of Jesus in the Temple" by Giovanni Bellini, one of the city's underappreciated masterpieces.

11:30 a.m.
5) SET IN STONE

In another example of the city's new artistic drive, the Ca' Pesaro International Gallery of Modern Art (Santa Croce 2076; 39-041-524-0695; museicivicivenezianiit), housed in a white marble palazzo from the 17th century, is showcasing 40 works in steel, glass and stone by Tony Cragg, a sculptor from Liverpool. The contrast between the 21st-century work and the Baroque interiors is striking, and a recently restored second-floor gallery showcases Mr. Cragg's pieces alongside those of Rodin. Afterward take a walk on the winding streets behind the museum, a residential enclave away from the tourist fray.

1 p.m.
6) NOTHING FISHY

Seafood doesn't get much fresher than at Pronto Pesce (Pescheria Rialto, San Polo 319; 39-041-822-0298; prontopesce.it), a tiny street-front bar that sits next to the city's fish market. Specials change daily, but seafood couscous, tangy anchovies under olive oil and marinated mackerel make regular appearances, along with more substantial primi like gnocchi with squid ink. Glasses of house white or bottles like Brigaldara's Garda Garganega round out a delightful meal. Grab a stool and watch the market close up shop for the day. Appetizers from 1.50 euros, pastas from 15.

4 p.m.
7) HANDSOME ATELIERS

Forget kitschy masks and imitation Murano glass. The streets radiating off bustling Campo Santo Stefano as far as the Grand Canal are lined with one-of-a-kind galleries and small boutiques. Galleria Marina Barovier (San Marco 3202; 39-041-523-6748; barovier.it; by appointment) carries hard-to-find vintage glass pieces and items by contemporary artists that end up in museum collections. Chiarastella Cattana (San Marco 3357; 39-041-522-4369) makes tablecloths, cushion covers and duvets from luscious fabrics of her own design. Nearby, Cristina Linassi (San Marco 3537; 39-041-523-0578; cristinalinassi.it) has silk lingerie and gossamer nighties that look straight out of Sophia Loren's closet circa 1950.

7 p.m.
8) CICCHETTI CIRCUIT

The debate over the city's best cicchetti, or old-style tapas, is as fiery for Venetians as is politics or religion. The good news is you don't have to choose just one. A tour might start at the bar of Trattoria da Fiori (San Marco 3461; 39-041-523-5310), where artists and residents nibble on polpette di carne (meatballs) and sip glasses of tocai. At the sleeker Naranzaria (San Polo 130; 39-041-724-1035; naranzaria.it), try the light spinach pie with a glass of wine (many of the wines offered come from the owner Count Brandolini's own vineyards). Nearby, Cantina do Mori (San Polo 429; 39-041-522-5401) is an atmospheric old-school spot that attracts a well-heeled crowd.

And Al Merca (San Polo 213; 39-346-834-0660) is the preferred choice for a Venetian spritz — prosecco, Aperol or Campari, sparkling water and a slice of lemon or orange. Cicchetti rarely exceed 2 euros a piece.

10 p.m.
9) PARTY AL FRESCO

After dinner, the large Campo Santa Margherita becomes the city's meeting point where students grab a spritz or beer at Il Caffè (Campo Santa Margherita 2963; 39-041-528-7998), and an older, fashionable crowd meets at Osteria alla Bifora (Dorsoduro 2930; 39-041-523-6119). On warm nights the piazza becomes one big multigenerational party.

Sunday

10 a.m.
10) ITALIAN DOUGH

Join residents at Pasticceria Tonolo (Dorsoduro 3764, Calle San Pantalon; 39-041-523-7209) for the cream-filled fresh doughnuts known as krapfen. You may have to jostle Italian-style for the beloved pastry (1 euro) that sells out by noon, but it's worth the wait.

1 p.m.
11) ISLAND IDYLL

If you're planning a spring trip, do as the Venetians do and head to the outlying islands that dot the lagoon. Among the gems is Mazzorbo and its six-room inn and restaurant, Venissa (Fondamente di Santa Caterina, 3; 39-041-527-2281; venissa.it), which is open from March to November. Opened this year by Bisol, an Italian prosecco company, the resort has given new life to a walled vineyard dating from the 1800s. Paola Budel, the chef, who used to run the restaurant at Milan's Principe di Savoia, serves fish from the lagoon and upper Adriatic, vegetables from the restaurant's own orchard or adjacent islands; and wines from the nearby regions of Friuli, Veneto and Trentino. Recent dishes included figs from a nearby tree and snapper caught in the lagoon that morning. Lunch, about 70 euros. Afterward wander the main pathway along the waterfront, where a bridge connects to the more-visited island of Burano, with its vibrant pastel-colored buildings. The two islands capture what Venetians know well: you can escape the crowds in the blink of an eye if you are willing to cross the water.

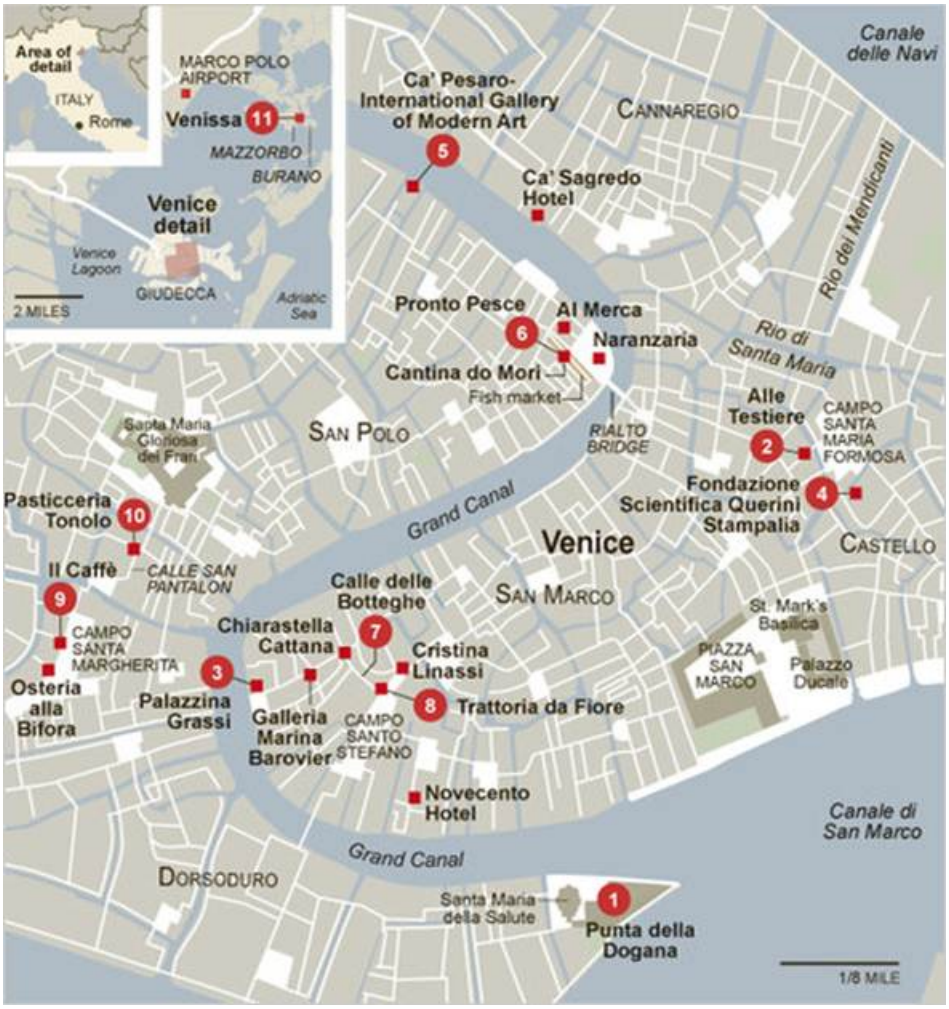
IF YOU GO

Delta and Alitalia are among the airlines that fly to Venice from New York, from $663 in November. You can make your way around town by foot or vaporetto.

Opened in 2007 near the Rialto Bridge, **Ca' Sagredo** (4198 Campo Santa Sofia; 39-041-241-3111; casagredohotel.com) is housed in a restored 15th-century palazzo, with 42 luxurious rooms starting at 300 euros, $408 at $1.36 to the euro.

The **Novecento** (San Marco 2683; 39-041-241-3765; novecento.biz) in San Marco has nine small rooms but also a fine staff, a charming garden and an excellent breakfast that's included in the price; from 160 euros.

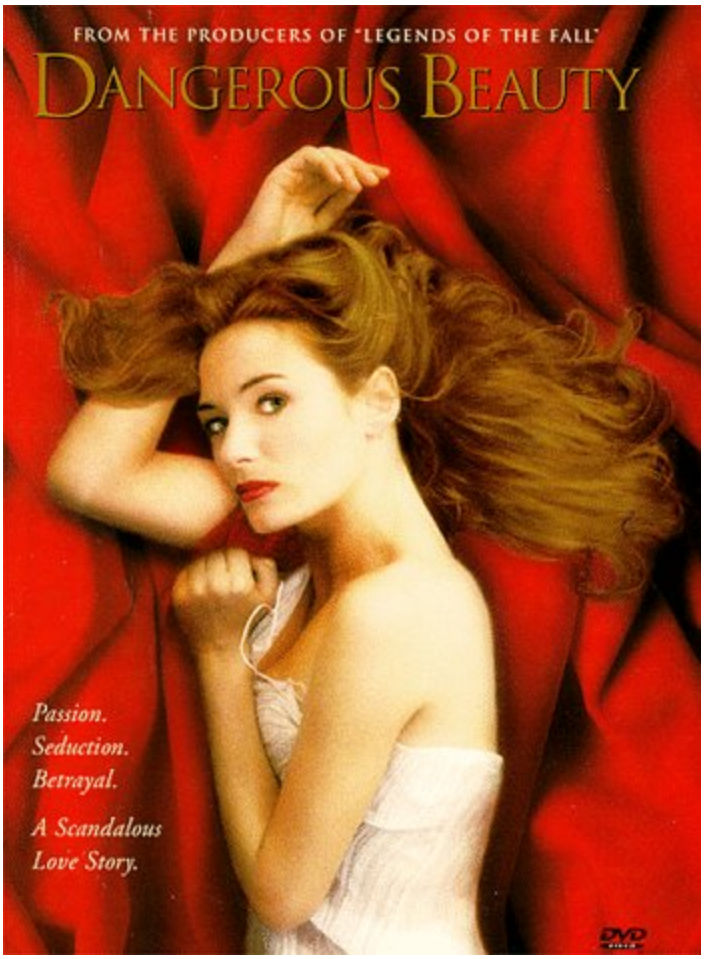
Outside the main island's fray, the new **Venissa** (Fondamente di Santa Caterina, 3; 39-041-527-2281; venissa.it) on Mazzorbo has six nicely furnished rooms and makes a great base for exploring the lagoon. It closes Nov. 7 for the season but will continue taking reservations for spring. Rooms from 110 euros.



Rarely has *The Merchant of Venice*, one of Shakespeare's most complex plays, looked as ravishingly sumptuous as in this adaptation, directed by Michael Radford (*Il Postino*). In a decadent version of renaissance Venice, a young nobleman named Bassanio (Joseph Fiennes, *Shakespeare in Love*) seeks to woo the lovely Portia (newcomer Lynn Collins), but lacks the money to travel to her estate. He seeks support from his friend, the merchant Antonio (Jeremy Irons, *Reversal of Fortune*); Antonio's fortune is tied up in sea ventures, so the merchant offers to borrow money from a Jewish moneylender, Shylock (Al Pacino, *Dog Day Afternoon*). But Shylock holds a grudge against Antonio, who has routinely treated the Jew with contempt, and demands that if the debt is not repaid in three months, the price will be a pound of Antonio's flesh.

The Merchant of Venice is famous as a "problem play"--the gritty matters of moneylending and anti-Semitism sit uncomfortably beside the fairy tale elements of Portia and Bassanio's romance, and some twists of the plot can seem arbitrary or even cruel. The strength of Radford's intelligent and passionate interpretation is that he and the excellent cast invest the play's opposing facets with full emotional weight, thus making every question the play raises acute and inescapable. Irons is particularly compelling; kindness and blind prejudice sit side by side in his breast, rendering the clashes in his character as vivid as those in the play itself. --*Bret Fetzer*

A light farce dressed up as a lush 18th century costume drama, *Casanova* gives a fictional spin to the exploits of history's most rakish seducer of women. As played by Heath Ledger, this Casanova bears no resemblance to Donald Sutherland's unrepentant portrayal in *Fellini's Casanova*, filmed 30 years earlier. Instead, the great ladies' man of Venice is just biding time by bedding women, waiting for true love (and the return his long-absent mother) to settle down into blissful monogamy. He finds true love in Francesca (Sienna Miller), a feminist who initially resists Casanova's affections while director Lasse Hallström serves up a variety of lightweight subplots including Casanova's flight from the Vatican's inquisitor (Jeremy Irons); a host of mistaken identities involving, among others, the portly "Lard King of Genoa" (played with scene-stealing perfection by Oliver Platt in a blubbery fat suit); and the romantic negotiations of Francesca's mother (played by Hallström's wife, Lena Olin) and a young bumbler named Giovanni with his own promising future as a lover of women. It all adds up to a good-looking and harmless diversion that barely warrants an R-rating, and it makes a fine double-bill with the more enjoyable *Dangerous Beauty*, another Venetian lover's tale that was also blessed by the presence of Platt, who gives this *Casanova* the majority of its entertainment value. --*Jeff Shannon*



TIMELESS MESSAGES WRAPPED IN A SUPERB ROMANTIC PIECE April 10, 2004

By Shashank Tripathi **VINE™ VOICE**
Format:DVD
Imagine an *intelligent* romantic comedy with a beautiful female lead, set in Venice, with a wafer-crisp and witty script, plus some brilliant doses of worldly wisdom!
Veronica (Catherine McCormack) is the kind of woman every man dreams of: a stunning beauty who's also literate and has a great sense of humor. But you see, it's 16th Century Venice, and Veronica has been pressed into service by her mother to work as a courtesan. If you're out of touch with that era's terminology, a courtesan was a prostitute with wealthy, upper class clients. So she's available to some men for some things, for a price. And she's permitted perks not available to other women, such as access to books.

The love of her life, a man of position and stature, does not quite go in the sweet, sentimental manner she had hoped. After a time, she becomes accustomed to her job and uses it to her advantage and that of Venice, by entertaining the King of France sufficiently to convince him to provide much-needed ships at a time of war.

However, her love for Marco just won't go away, even after he succumbs to family pressures and marries an appropriately positioned woman. That unhappiness is multiplied many times over when the plague strikes Venice, followed closely by the church's Inquisition. That's when we reach the film's climax.

Yes, we'd like to have a deeper understanding of what makes Veronica tick; how she reconciled herself deep down to her un-chosen life situation. And it's sentimental, which might turn some off, but really isn't out of proportion to the story and its other strengths.

The film presents a couple of very beautiful nuggets of wisdom:

(1) There's a consistent moral thread that runs through every society from age to age and generation to generation, the tenets of which are established within parameters, and therefore subject to change; or more specifically, subject to a change in perspective. And that change can come very quickly -- veritably over night in some instances.

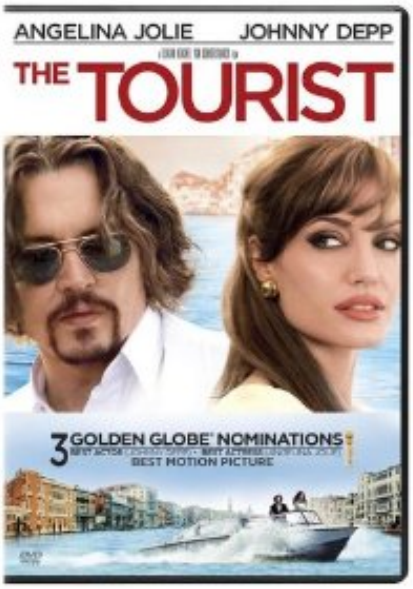
(2) That there is also another constant that defines the human condition in any era -- that we will do whatever is necessary to survive. It is simply an undeniable, irrefutable basic instinct of the human animal. Moral tenets and survival, however, taken as properties are something akin to oil and water, and will mix accordingly. Being more often than not polar opposites, conflict is inherent and will ultimately surface at some point or other, the outcome of which is determined by the strength of whichever perspective is prevalent at the moment. And it is at such moments that we discover that life, like politics, can be a sordid, unpleasant affair; or at the other end of the spectrum, the greatest gift of all.

This is a rare film, a smart love story that isn't saddled with an overly-predictable outcome. For that and its other assets such as dialog and captivating visuals of Venice, it comes highly recommended from me

Only because the Crusaders left from Venice and the Venetians got rich off transporting the knights and their supplies - It's hard to believe Ridley Scott's handsome epic won't become the cinematic touchstone of the Crusades for years to come. *Kingdom of Heaven* is greater than the sum of its parts, delivering a vital, mostly engrossing tale following Balian (Orlando Bloom), a lonely French blacksmith who discovers he's a noble heir and takes his father's (Liam Neeson) place in the center of the universe circa 1184: Jerusalem. Here, grand battles and backdoor politics are key as Scott and first-time screenwriter William Monahan fashion an excellent storyline to tackle the centuries-long conflict. Two forward-thinking kings, Baldwin (Edward Norton in an uncredited yet substantial role) and Saladin (Ghassan Massoud), hold an uneasy truce between Christians (who hold the city) and Muslims while factions champ at the bit for blood. There are good and evildoers on both sides, with the Knights Templar taking the brunt of the blame; Balian plans to find his soul while protecting Baldwin and the people. The look of the film, as nearly everything is from Scott, is impressive: his CGI-infused battle scenes rival the *LOTR* series and, with cinematographer John Mathieson, create postcard beauty with snowy French forests and the vast desert (filmed in Morocco and Spain). An excellent supporting cast, including Jeremy Irons, Brendan Gleeson, and David Thewlis, also help make the head and heart

of the film work. Many critics pointed out that Bloom doesn't have the gravitas of Russell Crowe in the lead (then again, who does?), but it's the underdeveloped character and not the actor that hurts the film and impacts its power. Balian isn't given much more to do than be sullen and give an occasional big speech, alongside his perplexing abilities for warfare tactics and his wandering moral compass (whose sole purpose seems to be to put a love scene in the movie). Note: all the major characters except Neeson's are based on fact, but many are heavily fictionalized. --*Doug Thomas*

Movies with great scenes from Venice:



Milan

May 19, 2011

36 Hours in Milan

By INGRID K. WILLIAMS

APPEARANCES matter in Milan. For proof, just stroll past the sights: the majestic Gothic cathedral, the stately Teatro alla Scala opera house, the smartly dressed Milanese (yes, they're an attraction, too). But the true charm of Italy's most cosmopolitan city is its refusal to coast on these beautiful treasures. A few blocks from Leonardo da Vinci's 15th-century masterpiece "The Last Supper," an ambitious project is inching toward completion: CityLife, a new center-city neighborhood featuring a trio of dazzling, futuristic skyscrapers. And in advance of hosting the 2015 Expo, the city is already blossoming with new museums and restaurants. In Milan, Italy's future is already on display.

Friday

4:30 p.m.
1) DESIGN SHRINE

Design is a religion in Milan, so start by paying your respects at the high altar that is the Triennale Design Museum (Viale Alemagna, 6; 39-02-724-341; triennale.org). The museum, on the edge of the leafy Parco Sempione, is the first dedicated solely to Italian design. Where else could you expect to find a supersize Campari bottle beside a Brobdingnagian replica of a rainbow-hued Ferragamo sandal? A special admission rate on Thursday and Friday evenings lets you embrace another of Milan's sacred rites, the predinner aperitivo, at the new ground-floor DesignCafe.

8:30 p.m.
2) THE FIRST SUPPER

Zucca e Melone (Via Gian Giacomo Mora, 3; 39-02-8945-5850; ristorantezuccaemelone.it) is a delightful restaurant that opened last year with a fresh farmhouse feel and charmingly absurd décor (think lime green and violet walls with chairs painted bright orange, yellow and purple). And the menu is as creative as the color scheme. Traditional strudel is reimagined as a savory appetizer with caramelized onions and taleggio cream (12.50 euros, or $17.60 at $1.41 to the euro), while tortelli stuffed with pumpkin is topped with sage butter, pecorino and a cookie crumble (14.50 euros).

11 p.m.
3) A MAN, A PLAN, NAVIGLI

Take a postprandial passeggiata — it's required — past Porta Ticinese to the glowing canals and waterside drinking dens of the Navigli neighborhood. Designed in part by Leonardo, the narrow canals were neglected for decades, but recent preservation efforts have spurred the area's emergence as one of the city's hottest night-life destinations. Seek out Spritz (Ripa di Porta Ticinese 9; 39-02-8339-0192; spritz-navigli.it) for the lounge's namesake drink, an Italian classic. Then hop over to El Brellin (Alzaia Naviglio Grande, 14; 39-02-5810-1351; brellin.it) for a glass of vino in the garden, or to the cozy beer pub Al Coccio (Alzaia Naviglio Pavese, 2; no phone) for a Baladin beer. After that, it's your call.

Saturday

10 a.m.
4) NEW KID ON THE PIAZZA

After years of restoration, the resplendent white marble facade of Milan's soaring Gothic cathedral, the Duomo, gleams anew. But lately, all eyes have been on its neighbor on the piazza, the Museo del Novecento (Piazza Duomo; 39-02-8844-4061; museodelnovecento.org), which opened in December in the renovated Palazzo dell'Arengario. A strikingly modern interior features a spiral ramp that whisks visitors up to the galleries, where an extensive collection of 20th-century Italian art includes works by Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà and many others. The museum's showpiece, however, is the view from the top floor, where floor-to-ceiling windows frame a stunning panorama of the Piazza Duomo.

12:30 p.m.
5) A SICILIAN LUNCH HIT

The views are also superb from the museum's buzzy new third-floor restaurant, Giacomo Arengario (Via Marconi, 1; 39-02-7209-3814; giacomoarengario.com) — provided you can score a table on the terrace. If not, console yourself with a cannolo at nearby Antica Focacceria San Francesco (Via San Paolo, 15; 39-02-4507-1057; afsf.it), a family-friendly cafeteria-style spot that serves up Sicilian specialties like ragù-stuffed arancine, caper-dotted caponata and thick slices of sfincione. This location, which opened in 2009, was the first outpost of the 176-year-old original in Palermo, an establishment famous for its refusal to pay pizzo (Mafia protection money).

2 p.m.
6) HIGH STREET ART

You may not be in the mood to try on couture after lunch, but there's still reason to visit Via Montenapoleone, the main avenue of Milan's haute fashion district. Tomorrow's trendsetters strut past the glittering windows of Gucci, Pucci and Prada, but for the best street style, look underfoot. In a project called "Sopra il Sotto," five of the world's top street artists, including Shepard Fairey and Space Invader, designed 20 eye-popping manhole covers that were recently installed along the fashionable street. The colorful mosaics and cartoons smiling up from below will remain until December 2011, so watch your step.

3:30 p.m.
7) NOUVEAU GELATO

Dinner is still hours away, so swing by Il Gelato Centogusti (Piazzale Lagosta; 39-02-6900-9770; centogusti.it) for a sweet treat to tide you over. This spacious gelateria has 100 flavors to choose from, including unconventional concoctions like cream of celery and black sesame. Feeling overwhelmed? Try the newest scoop in town, Officine del Gelato (Viale Montenero, 46; 39-02-5990-4118; officinedelgelato.com), a bright little shop, opened in June, serving gelati made with natural ingredients.

4:30 p.m.
8) ART AND DESIGN

Ikea this is not. At Spazio Rossana Orlandi (Via Matteo Bandello 14/16; 39-02-467-4471; rossanaorlandi.com), every nook of the sprawling compound — a retail store, showroom and gallery — is packed with fantastical pieces of designy art and arty design. The proprietor, Ms. Orlandi, a fervent supporter of emerging designers from around the world, has curated an eclectic mix of lively pieces. Fancy an electric-blue pig statue for the front lawn (1,200 euros)? Or an embroidered deer head (8,000 euros) to hang above the fireplace?

8 p.m.
9) RISOTTO ROULETTE

In the Lombardy region (of which Milan is the capital), rice has traditionally trumped pasta as the preferred primo, and risotto is the sumptuous specialty. For an authentic taste, take the M1 (red) metro to the Pasteur stop and head to Da Abele (Via Temperanza, 5; 39-02-261-3855), an unassuming trattoria northeast of the city center. Only three risotti are offered each night, but with the options changing daily, the dark wood tables of this locals' favorite stay crowded. On a recent evening, the menu pitted a fragrant spinach, pear and Gorgonzola risotto against a creamy version with celeriac, bottarga and Montasio cheese (9 euros each).

10:30 p.m.
10) LIQUID ARTS

Since you're already far outside the ring, make an evening of it and head to Birrificio Lambrate (Via Adelchi, 5; 39-02-7063-8678; birrificiolambrate.com), Milan's first craft brewery. You'll know you've arrived when you spot an inked and pierced crowd on a narrow side street using parked cars as ersatz coasters. If you can (politely) elbow your way to the bar, order a pint of Domm, a Bavarian-style weizen, or a pale, hoppy Montestella (5 euros each). Prefer not to struggle for your tipple? The scene at the nearby Gusto Arte Vino, or GAV (Via Accademia, 56; 39-02-2890-1370; gustoartevino.it), a chic wine bar with walls adorned with art, is decidedly more subdued.

Sunday

9 a.m.
11) BODY POLISH

Immerse yourself in emerald and gold at the serene subterranean spa in the Bulgari Hotel (Via Privata Fratelli Gabba 7b; 39-02-805-8051; bulgarihotels.com). Arrive early for a solitary dip in the shimmering pool and an undisturbed steam in the sultry hammam, before submitting to an aromatherapy massage (120 euros). You will emerge refreshed and as polished as one of the haute jeweler's precious gems.

Noon
12) SPACEY SPACE

Head north to the city limits where a former factory has been transformed into HangarBicocca (Via Privata Chiese 2; 39-02-6611-1573; hangarbicocca.it), a cavernous space bursting with mesmerizing, large-scale art installations. It's a bit of a trek, but one worth making. The main exhibition area is a dark, hauntingly lunar-like scene dominated by Anselm Kiefer's monumental work "The Seven Heavenly Palaces." Around Mr. Kiefer's seven colossal, spotlighted towers, an ever-changing exhibition has sprouted with innovative works like a melting wax sculpture, inverted scaffolding, and an enormous image of an old woman made of photosensitive grass. When you've reached your daily quota for wide-eyed wonderment, rehash the experience over brunch (20 euros) at HB Bistrot, the on-site cafe.

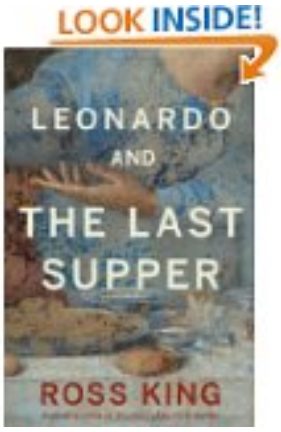
IF YOU GO

Opened in 2010, **Hotel Milano Scala** (via dell'Orso, 7; 39-02-870-961; hotelmilanoscala.it) riffs on an opera theme, but the modern hotel's eco-conscious efforts are no act. Doubles from 170 euros ($240).

Near the Duomo and next door to the food-and-wine emporium Peck, the art-filled **Hotel Spadari al Duomo** (Via Spadari, 11; 39-02-7200-2371; spadarihotel.com) may have the best location in town. Doubles from 230 euros.

For understated luxury, nothing tops the **Bulgari Hotel Milan** (Via Privata Fratelli Gabba 7b; 39-02-805-8051; bulgarihotels.com). On a private street beside a botanical garden, the hotel is a calm jewel set in a bustling city. Doubles from 520 euros.


SWITZ
AUS.
FRANCE
Venice
Milan
ITALY
Rome
200 MILES
VIA PRIVATA CHIESE
12
HangarBicocca
VIALE MONZA
VIA MELCHIORRE GIOIA
7
Il Gelato Centogusti
Milan
Detail at right
Detail below
1 MILE
Pasteur Stop M1 Metro
Da Abele
9
VIA TEMPERANZA
VIALE MONZA
VIA LUIGI MANCINELLI
VIA CASORETTO
Gusto Arte Vino
VIA ADOLFO WILDT
VIA PADOVA
VIA ANDREA COSTA
VIALE LOMBARDIA
VIA ACCADEMIA
Birrificio Lambrate
10
VIA NICOLA ANTONIO PORPORA
VIA ADELCHI
1/4 MILE
PARCO SEMPIONE
1
Triennale Design Museum/ Design Cafe
Castello Sforzesco
VIA 20 SETTEMBRE
Bulgari Hotel/Spa
11
VIA PRIVATA FRATELLI GABBA
Hotel Milano Scala
VIA MONTENAPOLEON
6
Sopra il Sotto
VIA DELL'ORSO
Antica Focacceria San Francesco
Milan
VIA SAN PAOLO
8
Spazio Rossana Orlandi
Piazza Duomo
Duomo
Hotel Spadari al Duomo
Palazzo dell'Arengario
VIA MATTEO BANDELLO
Museo del Novecento
4
5
Giacomo Arengario
CORSO DI PORTA VITTORIA
Zucca e Melone
2
VIA GIAN GIACOMO MORA
VIALE PAPINIANO
Officine del Gelato
PARCO DELLE BASILICHE
CORSO DI PORTA ROMANA
VIALE EMILIO CALDARA
VIALE MONTENERO
NAVIGLI
Spritz
3
Al Coccio
ALZAIA NAVIGLIO GRANDE
El Brellin
Porta Ticinese
RIPA DI PORTA TICINESE



Early in 1495, Leonardo da Vinci began work in Milan on what would become one of history's most influential and beloved works of art-*The Last Supper*. After a dozen years at the court of Lodovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan, Leonardo was at a low point personally and professionally: at forty-three, in an era when he had almost reached the average life expectancy, he had failed, despite a number of prestigious commissions, to complete anything that truly fulfilled his astonishing promise. His latest failure was a giant bronze horse to honor Sforza's father: His 75 tons of bronze had been expropriated to be turned into cannons to help repel a French invasion of Italy. The commission to paint *The Last Supper* in the refectory of a Dominican convent was a small compensation, and his odds of completing it were not promising: Not only had he never worked on a painting of such a large size-15' high x 30' wide-but he had no experience in the extremely difficult medium of fresco. In his compelling new book, Ross King explores how-amid war and the political and religious turmoil around him, and beset by his own insecurities and frustrations-Leonardo created the masterpiece that would forever define him. King unveils dozens of stories that are embedded in the painting. Examining who served as the models for the Apostles, he makes a unique claim: that Leonardo modeled two of them on himself. Reviewing Leonardo's religious beliefs, King paints a much more complex picture than the received wisdom that he was a heretic. The food that Leonardo, a famous vegetarian, placed on the table reveals as much as do the numerous hand gestures of those at Christ's banquet. As King explains, many of the myths that have grown up around *The Last Supper* are wrong, but its true story is ever more interesting. Bringing to life a fascinating period in European history, Ross King presents an original portrait of one of the world's greatest geniuses through the lens of his most famous work.

Siena

October 11, 2012

36 Hours in Siena, Italy

By ONDINE COHANE

In many ways Siena hasn't changed much in 800 years. And that's a good thing. The town's gorgeous 13th-century main square, the Piazza del Campo, is still the city's symbolic and physical heart. The twice-a-summer bareback horse race, Il Palio, is still the most anticipated event, and the contrade, or neighborhood associations, still inspire a loyalty as deep as they did in medieval times. At the same time the ancient university here continues to deliver important research while imbuing the town with a youthful spirit. Florence, Siena's biggest rival to the north, may have won the battle in terms of historical significance and blockbuster art over the centuries, but Siena is decidedly less touristy and more livable. In the past few years, new boutiques and wine bars (not to mention updated restaurants) have been sprinkled in among some newly restored treasures.

Friday

4 p.m.
1. HISTORY LESSON

Siena has always held itself up as a model city. Nowhere is that sense of identity more on display than at the city's Museo Civico (Piazza del Campo, 1; 39-0577-292-615; comune.siena.it; 8 euros admission for the museum, or $10 at $1.26 to the euro; 13 with the tower) in the Piazza del Campo. Here you'll find beautiful frescoes, like the collection painted by Simone Martini, but of special note is Ambrogio Lorenzetti's Sala della Pace and his Allegory of Good and Bad Government. Commissioned by the city council in the 14th century, at the height of the city-state's power, the frescoes depict on one side a city at peace, and on the other a tyrant-ruled Siena in ruins, with armies descending on one another. If you climb to the top of the adjacent tower, the Torre Mangia, you can see that even today the countryside runs straight up to the city walls. That coexistence of rural with metropolis, without sprawl, is one of this area's main attractions.

8 p.m.
2. TUSCAN TREATS

Few dishes are more Tuscan than bistecca Fiorentina, the succulent grilled steak from the prized Chianina breed. At Enoteca I Terzi (Via dei Termini, 7; 39-0577-443-29; enotecaiterzi.it; entrees from 9 euros), the juicy meat is carved on the restaurant's marble counter before being taken to the table with daily pastas. The wine list is also a huge draw with classics from Tuscany as well as an excellent selection from all over the world. Housed in a former pharmacy (with a beautiful open kitchen), Osteria le Logge (Via del Porrione, 33; 39-0577-480-13; giannibrunelli.it; entrees from 22 euros) sits just off the campo and epitomizes a seasonal and local approach, with daily specials like porcini mushroom salad, taglierini al tartufo and pumpkin-stuffed ravioli among the autumnal treats. Be sure to ask for a table in the ground-floor sala with its painted ceilings and armoires lined with wine bottles.

10 p.m.
3. CENTER STAGE

Piazza del Campo is the ideal Italian piazza, a huge, gorgeous space reached by winding streets that suddenly converge in front of the city's exquisite town hall. The tables at Bar Il Palio (Piazza del Campo, 47; 39-0577-282-055) have one of the best views of the piazza; try an after-dinner drink like a grappa or vin santo.

Saturday

10 a.m.
4. SWEET START

Sienese sweets are not particularly well known, but you can't leave before trying the two staples — panforte and ricciarelli. The former, with its spices and dry fruit, is reminiscent of a slightly

hard Christmas cake. The ricciarelli are a crowd pleaser: soft almond-based cookies with a crunchy top and hints of honey and vanilla. At Nannini (Via Banchi di Sopra, 24; 39-0577-303-080; grupponannini.it) sample a couple at the stand-up bar with a cappuccino.

11 a.m.
5. NEW AND OLD

One of the city's draws is its recent push to restore older structures with modern elements. At the Santa Maria della Scala (Piazza Duomo, 1; 39-0577-534-571; santamariadellascala.com; admission 3.50 euros), for example, a remarkable structure built as a hospital in the 11th century has been transformed into an extraordinary complex, which includes the painstakingly restored pilgrims' halls and chapel of the Madonna, alongside new additions like an archaeological museum, a children's museum, a modern bar and a bookshop. The Museo dell'Opera del Duomo (Piazza Duomo, 8; 39-0577-286-300; operaduomo.siena.it; museum admission, 6 euros) occupies part of Siena's unfinished cathedral, in what would have been its nave, and showcases some of the centerpieces for the proposed building. These include the Maestà, a spectacular two-sided altarpiece designed by the great Sienese artist Duccio, a work considered by many scholars as the world's most important late medieval artwork in existence.

1 p.m.
6. QUICK BITES

Osteria-style lunches tend to be simple affairs with tables crammed with friends, and plates that don't stop coming. Da Trombicche (Via del Terme; 39-0577-288-089; trombicche.it; small plates from 6 euros) exemplifies the type, a seven-table spot run by two brothers where sausage, local meats like prosciutto and salami, panzanella, meatballs and different types of fresh frittata are accompanied by carafes of house wine. Vinyl album covers from the likes of Lou Reed, David Bowie and the Rolling Stones are mounted alongside posters of palios past (there is even a stuffed porcupine to represent their contrada). If you don't make it for lunch, stop by for aperitivo time — the 1-euro spritzes are one of the best deals in town.

3 p.m.
7. FASHION HUBS

Unfortunately Siena's clothing store choices have mostly been taken over by big brands that you can find almost anywhere in the world. But two shops have a more carefully curated selection. Dolci Trame (Via del Moro, 4; 39-0577-461-68; dolcitrame.it) has a wonderful, if pricey, collection including Roberto del Carlo shoes, Golden Goose coats and featherweight cashmere sweaters from Luna Bi, in a jewel box of a space. Mag (Via dei Termini, 49; 39-0577-410-43; magboutique.it) is another fashion lover's must, with Marni, Maria Calderara and Pucci among the pickings.

8 p.m.
8. FISH, PLEASE

Though the culinary scene here may be better known for its meaty fare, Tre Cristi (Vicolo di Provenzano, 1/7; 39-0577-280-608; trecristi.com; entrees from 12 euros) is a fantastic seafood find thanks to its fresh selection from the Tuscan coast, about 45 minutes away. The restaurant has been around since 1830, but the younger owners have made it more inventive. The "calamari eggplant Parmesan" has crispy strips of calamari battered with cheese sitting on chunks of aubergine, and the catch of the day includes options like amberjack baked with potatoes, zucchini and olives.

10 p.m.
9. MAKING MUSIC

Siena isn't particularly well known for its night life, which is why locals are excited about the arrival of Un Tubo (Via del Luparello, 2; 39-0577-271-312; untubo.it), a club with live music that ranges from classical to rock. It also has a showpiece of a wine cantina, with the original tufo, to keep the bottles cool. The spot is a members' club but visitors can gain access with a 12-euro entrance fee.

Sunday

11 a.m.
10. THE FIXINGS

Sunday is the day when locals like to head to a quaint hill town or crumbling abbey for a secluded picnic. Follow this lead and pick out some essentials before you head out. Tucked into Palazzo della Chigiana, Antica Pizzicheria (Via di Citta, 93/95; 39-0577-289-164) is an atmospheric deli with prosciutto haunches, sausages and hot peppers hanging from the ceiling. Local wines, fresh bread, wild boar sausages and pecorino are among the offerings.

Noon
11. IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

San Galgano is a Benedictine abbey about 40 minutes' drive away. Now roofless, the effect of looking up at a bright sky from inside the remaining walls is an evocative experience. If a hill town is more your speed, the medieval town of Monteriggioni is a beautifully preserved village, with a series of watchtowers, and is home to excellent restaurants like Bar dell'Orso (Via Cassia Nord, 23; 39-0577-305-074; bardellorso.com) where you can get delicious panini to go for 2 euros, or Il Pozzo (Piazza Roma, 20; 39-0577-304-127; entrees from 16 euros), a more formal affair in Monteriggioni's main square.

IF YOU GO

Campo Regio Relais (Via della Sapienza, 25; 39-0577-222-073; camporegio.com; doubles from 150 euros, or $190) has an excellent location outside the main tourist fray but is within walking distance of the major sites. The panorama of the Duomo is matched by the friendly service.

Less than 10 miles away, **Borgo Scopeto** (Strada Comunale 14; 39-0577-320-001; borgoscopetorelais.it; double rooms from 240 euros) has a rural feel with two pools, a spa and tennis courts. The view of Siena in the distance, especially at night, is lovely.