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T City Guides: Milan

By JOHN WOGAN AUG. 7, 2015

Five leaders in creative fields share their favorite places to eat, drink, shop and play.

Photo



From left: Carla Sozzani; Massimo Bottura; Nina Yashar; Roberto Bolle; Vincenzo de Cotiis. Credit From left: Rosi di Stefano; Paolo Terzi; Ruy Teixeira; Andreas Larsson; Courtesy of Vincenzo de Cotiis

Milan gets a bad rap for being an all-work, no-play kind of town—especially from visitors who lament the lack of Instagram-ready Renaissance architecture

they'd find around every corner in other Italian cities. But as the country's center for design, fashion, finance, and publishing, Milan has an energy and sophistication you can't get anywhere else in Italy.

Photo



From left: inside Fondazione Prada; a room at Villa Nechi Campiglio; Man Ray's "On With the dance," 1940, at Fondazione Giorgio Marconi. Credit From left: Bas Princen; Giorgio Majno/FAI Archive; Man Ray Trust, via SIAE 2015

Carla Sozzani

Founder, 10 Corso Como and Galleria Carla Sozzani

Antica Trattoria La Pesa

Originally opened in 1880, this is Milanese dining at its most traditional — in both décor and cuisine, with terrazzo floors and 19th-century antiques lending an elegant backdrop to the simple (though delicious) menu of classics. “They serve the best risotto al salto and seasonal vegetable tortellini in the city,” says Sozzani. *Viale Pasubio 10*; anticatrattoriadellapesa.com.

San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore

“This is my secret spot,” Sozzani says about this 16th-century church, often overlooked in favor of the tourist-clogged Duomo. The Baroque structure is connected to a former Benedictine convent that's now an archaeological museum, with a stunning collection of frescoes by Bernardino Luini and Antonio Campi, among other 16th-century masters. *15 Corso Magenta*.

Fondazione Giorgio Marconi

“A visit to this gallery opens up a world of Italian and international contemporary art, where shows have ranged from Man Ray to Lucio Fontana,” says Sozzani of this complex, a nonprofit opened in 2004 that acts as an all-in-

one modern art hub for the city, with exhibits and cultural events throughout the year. *via Tadino 15*; fondazionemarconi.org

31st Floor of the Pirelli Tower

A modern highrise isn't the first place you'd expect to visit in Milan, but a stop on this skyscraper's 31st floor is a must for the spectacular views: "This building is architect Gio Ponti's vision from the ground up, displaying a distinct sense of harmony and style. The 31st floor viewing deck, with floor-to-ceiling windows, has the best views of the city." *Piazza Duca D'Aosta*.

Pasticceria Marchesi

Milan's finest pastries, chocolate and cappuccinos are served at this iconic institution, opened in 1820. "The panettone from Marchesi is legendary (and it makes very popular gifts at Christmas), and the atmosphere is very old world Milan. Having a coffee at the bar is a quintessential Milanese experience." *Via Santa Maria alla Porta 11/a*; pasticceriamarchesi.it.

Fondazione Prada

"A gift from Prada to the city of Milan," says Sozzani, of the Italian fashion company's permanent exhibition center, housed in a 1910 former distillery updated by Rem Koolhaas "with a gorgeous contemporary collection and an amazing cinema space. It's reason enough to visit Milan. Don't leave without having an espresso at its cafe, Bar Luce, designed by director Wes Anderson." *Largo Isarco 2*; fondazioneprada.org.

Villa Nechi Campiglio

Sozzani loves this Piero Portaluppi-designed, Rationalist mansion-turned-museum because "it feels like stepping into a movie from the 1930s." Indeed, the structure, completed in 1935, was beautifully shown off in the 2010 film "I Am Love," where Tilda Swinton played a matriarch presiding over an aristocratic clan, sparking renewed interest in the house. *Via Mozart, 14*; visitfai.it.

Photo

From left: a view of Milan from the tables at Alice; cured meats at Mercato Metropolitano; endless design products at Rossana Orlandi. Credit From left: Azzurra Primavera; Sara Montali; Courtesy of Rossana Orlandi

Massimo Bottura

Chef, Osteria Francescana; author, "Never Trust a Skinny Italian Chef"

Joia

"Back when my wife, Lara, was a vegetarian, this was one of the only options in Milan, says Bottura. "Luckily, it's very good. Probably one of the best vegetarian restaurants in Italy." Chef Pietro Leeman's dishes — smoked eggplant pâté with buckwheat crepes, tapioca and ratatouille aspic with melon sorbet — are so good that they're just as popular with meat-eaters. *Via Panfilo Castaldi 18; joia.it.*

Massimo de Carlo Gallery

Near the Lambrate railway station, this contemporary art gallery (which also has a branch in London) puts on cutting-edge shows from artists like Nate Lowman, Liu Xiaodong and Dan Colen. "The most recent exhibition by Elmgreen & Dragset was the highlight of the Milan gallery summer scene," says Bottura. *Via Giovanni Ventura; massimodecarlo.com.*

Carlo e Camilla

Bottura loves the "excellent food among the most beautiful people in the city" at Carlo e Camilla, which had one of the buzziest recent restaurant openings in Milan. Located in a renovated former sawmill, the industrial setting adds a cool factor not easily found elsewhere in Milan, attracting a big fashion and art crowd following. And the drinks — like the Not Ordinary Mule, made with gin, turmeric and ginger — are just as much reason to come as the food. *Via Giuseppe Meda 24; carloecamillainseghera.it.*

Rossana Orlandi

“It’s less a shop than a magical labyrinth,” Bottura says of this design emporium. “Orlandi has been curating design objects for decades and seeks out the most marvelous and unexpected vintage and modern furniture pieces. It also has an adorable restaurant next door, Marta, named after the chef, Marta Pulini.” *Via Matteo Bandello 14-16*; rossanaorlandi.com.

Ratana

The setting here is unique, situated in a freestanding Art Nouveau building among the high-rises of the Porto Garibaldi neighborhood. “Chef Cesare Battisti, a Milan native, prepares authentic Milanese risottos and veal tongue with mashed potatoes. It’s always busy and buzzing, and the outdoor seating area is especially popular.” *Via Gaetano de Castillia 26*; ratana.it.

Mercato Metropolitano

“This farmer’s market in Navigli not only sells some of the best produce, cheese and meat in Milan, but has an amazing selection of Italian street food to try. Mulino Qualia sells their exceptional sourdough bread, for example, made with only organic flour. Shop, drink or eat on the spot and take a walk around the renovated Darsena, Milan’s central canal.” *Via Valenza 2*; mercatometropolitano.it.

Alice Ristorante

On the top floor of the vast food hall Eataly (which is similar to the outposts in New York and Chicago), Alice is, according to Bottura, “a clean and bright Italian kitchen, with a gorgeous view of the neighboring piazza.” The menu is heavy on seafood pasta dishes, and it can be hard to snag a table. “Luckily,” he says, “the casual cocktail bar Dry is just a five-minute walk away on Via Solferno,” making the wait that much easier. *Piazza 25 Aprile 10*; aliceristorante.it.

Photo

From left: food and flowers together at Potafiori; artworks at Poldi Pezzoli; a bedroom at Palazzo Segreti. Credit From left: Giandomenico Frassi; Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milano; Courtesy of Palazzo Segreti

Nina Yashar

Gallerist, Nilufar

Potafiori

A meal at Potafiori is almost like dining in an indoor nursery, with flowers and greenery occupying every corner — though chances are you've never seen a nursery like this, all clean lines of hyper-modern slate and concrete. "Potafiori is special for its fresh and sophisticated identity," says Yashar. The floral arrangements can be purchased and taken with you, and the space also doubles as a live-music venue, where jazz bands perform while diners eat their quinoa salads. *Via Salasco 17; potafiori.com.*

Pinacoteca di Brera

"A timeless, incredible collection" is how Yashar characterizes this under-the-radar museum with one of the greatest selections of Classical Italian art in the world, including Bellini's "Madonna and Child," Mantegna's "Lamentation of Christ" and an assortment of Caravaggios and Tintoretts. *Via Brera 28; brera.beniculturali.it.*

Poldi Pezzoli

"It's one of the wonderful house museums of Milan, along with Villa Necchi Campiglio," says Yashar of this 17th-century Neoclassical palace, which houses masterpieces like Piero Del Pollaiuolo's "Portrait of a Young Woman," Botticelli's "The Virgin and the Child" and Guardi's "Gondolas on the Lagoon." There are also fine collections of jewelry, ceramics and furnishings. *Via Manzoni 12; museopoldipezzoli.it.*

Mercado dei Fiori

If you happen to find yourself in Milan in April, this celebration of flowers along the Naviglio Grande is the perfect way to spend a spring day, providing “the most sublime scented walk,” says Yashar, as florists from hundreds of nurseries around Italy convene to sell their colorful bouquets. navigliogrande.mi.it.

Altalen

Yashar finds the most exquisite hats at this boutique, one of her favorite haunts in Milan. The owners, Antonina De Luca, Said Nafi and Elena Todros have collective backgrounds in theater design, fashion magazines and graphic design, and produce small collections of only about 100 hats each season, ranging from turbans to pillboxes. *Via Benvenuto Cellini 21*; altalen.com.

Palazzo Segreti

Yashar recommends this 18-room hotel to friends for “the beautiful antique charm” mixed with striking modern interior elements, like the contemporary photography on the walls. And the location — between the Duomo and Sforzesco Castle and a short walk to Via Montenapoleone — is conveniently located near most activities around the city. *Via San Tomaso 8*; palazzosegreti.com.

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II Milan-based Prada and Versace recently joined forces on a major restoration project of this historic glass and cast iron plaza built in 1865, “an iconic symbol of Milan that’s now showing its true splendor” as Yashar puts it. The yearlong enterprise (which included a thorough cleaning of the facade) was finished just in time for this year’s expo. *Piazza del Duomo*; 39-02-7740-4343.

Photo

From left: raw foods at Mantra; chocolate gelato by Chocolat; design shopping at 10 Corso Como. Credit From left: Valerio Gavana; Chiara Albanesi; Courtesy of

10 Corso Como

Roberto Bolle

Ballet dancer, La Scala and American Ballet Theatre

Iyo

In a town not exactly known for remarkable sushi, Iyo is an exception. “It’s the first non-Italian restaurant in Milan to receive a Michelin star,” says Bolle. “It’s not downtown, so it’s a bit out of the way, but it’s worth it.” The fusion menu offers traditional nigiri and uramaki, but also langoustines marinated with a passion fruit emulsion and tuna belly sashimi with grated foie gras. *Via Piero della Francesca 74; iyo.it.*

Dolce & Gabbana Bar Martini

“This is a chic, easy spot for lunch or a drink in the evening,” Bolle says of the highly lacquered (and mostly black) space next door to the Dolce & Gabbana men’s shop. A collaboration between the fashion label and the Martini brand, you can guess what the specialty drink is here, but the food (sea urchin spaghetti, gnocchi with lobster) is worth a visit in itself. *Corso Venezia 15; dolcegabbana.com.*

Chocolat

“Chocolat serves only artisanal chocolate gelato, and it is simply the best ice cream in town, without a doubt,” says Bolle, who orders the dark chocolate flavor, handmade daily on the premises. It’s also a good spot for breakfast before a day of sightseeing or shopping; get a chocolate croissant. *Via Giovanni Boccaccio 9; chocolatmilano.it.*

La Scala Shop

Located inside La Scala itself — the iconic late-18th-century opera house and home to the city’s ballet company — the shop carries original posters and photographs of performances, composer biographies, CD and DVD recordings of past operas held at the theater and vintage playbills. “It allows for total immersion in La Scala, and to take a piece of it back home with you,” Bolle says. *Piazza della Scala; lascalashop.it.*

Mantra

“This is the first raw, vegan restaurant to open in Milan,” says Bolle, who stops in for healthy lunches — there’s an assortment of entrees from the daikon and asparagus salad to zucchini “spaghetti” with tomato and pesto. There’s also a market that sells all manner of raw nuts, seeds, cold-pressed juices and herbal teas. *Via Panfilo Castaldi 21; mantrarawvegan.com.*

10 Corso Como

Carla Sozzani (see above) founded this retail mecca in 1990, and there’s nothing quite like the multilayered mix of art, fashion, food and energy found here. Think of it as the chicest mini-mall in the world. “Being at 10 Corso Como is almost like visiting a separate neighborhood of Milan,” says Bolle. “It’s lively, young and exciting. Not a typical shopping experience.” *Corso Como 10; 10corsocomo.com.*

Giacomo Arengario

Located in the Museo del Novecento, Giacomo Arengario is virtually next door to the Duomo, overlooking the cathedral spires on the museum's third floor, making for "amazing views," Bolle says. "But the food is fantastic, as well." There's a near-perfect veal Milanese, along with an outstanding Italian wine list. Go at lunch, when it's less crowded and the views are in full effect. *Via Marconi 1*; giacomoarengario.com.

Photo

From left: flowers and perfume at Tearose; Italian pantry staples at Peck in Cinque Via; seating at Langosteria Bistrot. Credit From left: Marco Pittaluga; Courtesy of Peck; Michele Bella

Vincenzo De Cotiis

Architect

Langosteria Bistrot

De Cotiis comes to this packed-with-locals restaurant for "amazingly fresh seafood and lovely ambience." Chef Enrico Buonocore serves just-caught rock lobster and giant langoustines in various forms, but regulars swear by the crudi, which changes daily depending on the day's catch. For something a bit more formal, try the bistro's sister restaurant, Langosteria 10, a five-minute walk away. *Via Privata Bobbio 2*; langosteria10bistrot.it

T'a Milano

This family-owned cafe is known for its gourmet chocolates, but it's also the ideal spot for lunch, according to De Cotiis (order the excellent club sandwich or risotto alla Milanese) — the location is right in the middle of the city, within walking distance to the Duomo, La Scala and Galleria Emanuele II. The sleek dining room (marble floors; velvet banquettes) gives this traditional cafe a posh twist. *Via Clerici 1*; tamilano.it.

Antonia

In the Brera district, this boutique (a favorite of fashion editors) is housed in a renovated 19th-century palazzo, the interiors of which were conceived by De Cotiis using polished brass tables and conceptual light fixtures that give the space an almost gallery-like atmosphere for the well-edited apparel and accessories on display from a large range of designers like Balmain, Maison Martin Margiela and Raf Simons. *Via Cusani 5*; antonia.it.

Tearose

De Cotiis picks up innovative, modern floral arrangements from this style world favorite (which regularly provides flowers for virtually all of the Milan-based fashion houses). It also sells wonderful gifts, including fragrances, clothing and accessories from the likes of Alexander Wang and Phillip Lim. *Via Croce Rossa 2*; tearose.it.

Armani Libri

People usually head to Via Montenapoleone for a fashion fix, but De Cotiis comes to Milan's most famous shopping street for art books, specifically at Armani Libri, located in the huge Armani complex that takes up an entire city block (it includes an Armani-branded florist, hotel, and the company's flagship store). The architecture and graphic design titles are especially well-curated. *Via Manzoni 31*; 39-02-7231-8675.

Santa Maria della Grazie

"I love coming here because it is so unique," De Cotiis says of this Gothic Renaissance church, a UNESCO World Heritage site built in 1465 and home to da Vinci's "The Last Supper." "My favorite is the small cloister just behind it, Chiostro delle Rane," which has a garden courtyard and fountain. "It's small but so peaceful." *Piazza di Santa Maria delle Grazie*; legraziemilano.it.

Cinque Via

"This district is my favorite area of the city for a stroll," says De Cotiis, who suggests simply wandering its ancient streets, ducking into whichever shop looks interesting. "You can still find old craftsmen, workshops and small, traditional Milanese trattoria." But wherever your wandering takes you, don't miss Peck, a temple to Italian provisions, including all manner of cheeses, olive oil and cured meats. *Via Spadari 9*; peck.it.

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