

ADVENTURE & TRAVEL



RISE & SHINE Left: Close to Piazza del Popolo (the People's Square) is Hotel de Russie. Above: a bronze statue at Victor Emmanuel II Monument.

The Eternal City Never Sleeps

Tap into Rome's rich and complex history by visiting its most storied hotels, each adjacent to must-see landmarks

By TONY PERROTTET

IN "CIVILIZATION and Its Discontents," Sigmund Freud used Rome as a metaphor for memory: specifically, the way the many layers of the past exist simultaneously and come to the fore when viewed from different angles. Among the most illuminating ways travelers can explore the Eternal City's kaleidoscopic

history is through its illustrious hotels. Each palatial structure is part of the modern city's fabric but also embodies a specific moment in time. And thanks to the welcoming Roman manner, even non-guests can stop in for a coffee or aperitif while taking in the old-world ambience. A brief sojourn to these grand getaways provides a peek into Rome's history and allows visitors to sample cultural riches along the way.

Ancient Rome

Fronting the Fountain of the Naiads, devoted to the water nymphs of Greek mythology, the **Anantara Palazzo Naiadi** has a storied past. Its fin-de-siècle lobby is as laden with marble and gilt as any imperial palace, and during construction in the 1890s, excavators unearthed parts of the Baths of Diocletian, a majestic third-century pool complex where Romans would swim naked under cathedral-like domes. Mosaics from the exedra, or changing hall, have been preserved, and history buffs can hire the hotel's archaeologist-guide for insights.

Historic Wonder In its heyday, **Via Appia Antica**, the Roman "Queen of Roads," ran to present-day Brindisi in Italy's heel. Walk or bike along the basalt blocks worn smooth by ancient cartwheels to spy the remains of early-Christian catacombs and emerald fields dotted with sheep.

Renaissance

The Middle Ages was a low point in Rome, with its few thousand residents adrift in the city's ruins. But its cultural life blossomed during the Renaissance, when Mi-



chaelangelo and Raphael rediscovered the genius of antiquity and wealthy Popes funded their ambitious creations. Rome was a part of the Papal State, not just the Vatican.

The venerable **Antico Albergo del Sole** by the Pantheon, home to impecunious artists and alchemists since 1467, has an impressive exterior and quaint interiors. In contrast, near another Roman marvel, stands the opulent **Palazzo Manfredi**, which welcomed pilgrims in

ery corner: Wander into **San Luigi dei Francesi**, the church near the Piazza Navona, and find a trio of Caravaggios depicting the life of St. Matthew in one chapel.

A Poet's Era

Located within view of the Spanish Steps, the **Hotel d'Inghilterra** is situated in a 16th-century guesthouse near Via Borgognona. Its heyday came in the early 1800s, when English travelers on their grand tour stayed, most notably Ro-

the 1600s, then became an aristocratic hunting lodge. Its hotel bar faces the remains of the Colosseum and a gladiatorial school. The view puts an onlooker both in the past and the present (where a Negroni comes with a \$25 tab). **Historic Wonder** The magic of Rome resides around ev-

mantic poets John Keats, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife Mary Shelley (author of "Frankenstein"). Later, the hotel's literary cachet attracted Ernest Hemingway, Henry James and Mark Twain; today, its old-world panache makes the sitting rooms off the lobby an elegant spot to take tea. **Historic Wonder** The **Protestant Cemetery**, where Keats and Shelley are buried, is a welcome refuge with shady trails leading through sculpted flower gardens.

Capital Time

The **Risorgimento** was a 19th-century movement for unification of Italy that resulted in Rome becoming the capital of the country in 1870. Among the era's new hotels was **Hotel de Russie** near the Piazza del Popolo. The former palazzo with multitiered gardens was named for its fin-de-siècle popularity with Russian aristocrats, including Romanov princes who liked to stay for an entire year at a time. Avant-garde artists arrived next, including Pablo Picasso and Jean Cocteau, who



Clockwise from left: Via Appia Antica is Rome's ancient "Queen of Roads"; the fin-de-siècle lobby of Anantara Palazzo Naiadi with its modern globe chandeliers; statues in the iconic Rationalist-style "Square Colosseum."



called the hotel "paradise on earth." Its restaurant is named **Le Jardin**; its "secret garden" features terraced beds planted with palm trees, yews and white roses. **Historic Wonder** It's hard to love the gaudy **Victor Emmanuel II Monument**, built to honor the first king of unified Italy. Romans mock

"the wedding cake" for its excesses, but inside, the **Central Museum of the Risorgimento** has informative exhibits, while the rooftop terrace offers soaring panoramic views.

Between Eras

Tucked away near the Termini train station, the fam-

La Dolce Vita Era

In the 1950s and '60s, the bar-lined **Via Veneto** that winds through the Ludovisi district was a favorite destination of film-world stars like Anna Magnani and Marcello Mastroianni. Many of the chic bars are gone, but the spiffed-up **Baglioni Hotel Regina** with its old-world foyer of mirrors and sparkling chandeliers has renewed interest in the area. **Historic Wonder** A bit removed from the environs of Via Veneto is **Pigneto**, a buzzy industrial district. **Necci dal 1924**, a bar frequented by the late director Pier Paolo Pasolini, draws hipsters in search of a good wine list and live music.

Rome Now

Last fall, **Unahotels Trastevere Roma** opened in one of the city's hippest neighborhoods: Trastevere is Latin for the district "across the Tiber." The hotel is housed in an elegant historic building dating back to the end of the 19th century. But its design is a giddy blend of eras, with geometric marble floors (ancient Rome), vaulted chambers painted with trompe l'oeil (the Renaissance), gilded lanterns and potted palm trees (the Risorgimento), and "new-vintage" plush furnishings in saturated primary colors (art deco).

Historic Wonder The creative blend of old and new can also be seen in **Centrale Montemartini**, a former electricity plant from 1912, where marble classical statues mix with giant metal turbines. The contrast turns out to be effective, forcing visitors to look at ancient images with fresh eyes.

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Hotel Mediterraneo's wood-paneled art deco bar on Via Cavour.