

Milan

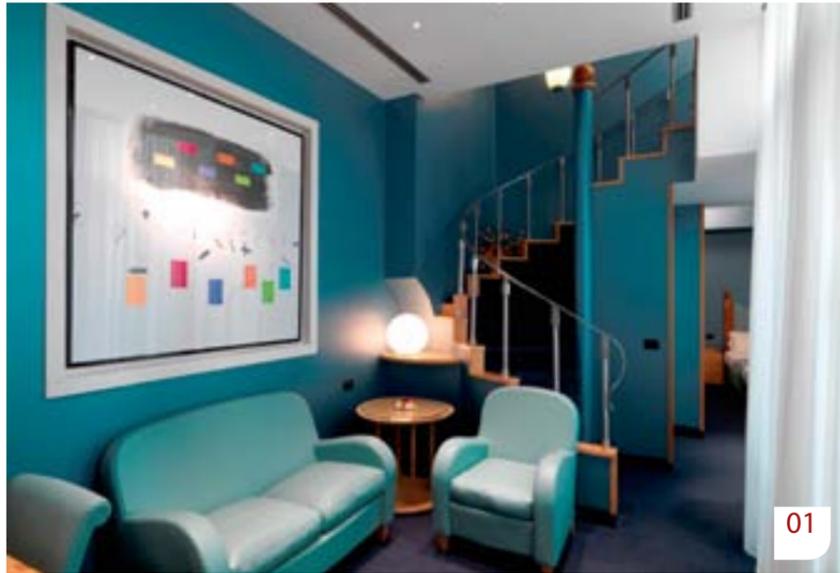
Italy's fashion capital is home to a decidedly haute-couture collection of hotels. Whether you want to bed down in a high-design apartment or a grande dame palace in view of La Scala, Milan does not stint on opulence. Rates are set to suit a supermodel's salary but the city also has a respectable quota of affordable accommodation that comes with impeccable Italian style

WORDS: Julia Buckley



DUOMO AND THE CENTRE

Milan's heart is the sweeping Piazza del Duomo, dominated by the Gothic spires and intricate marble statues of the cathedral. Elegant colonnades surround the piazza: to the south is the Palazzo Reale gallery, while to the north is the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, an elaborate, glass-topped 19th-century shopping mall, so popular that it's known as il salotto di Milano or Milan's living room. La Scala opera house is in the next square. This is a busy area but one of the easiest as many of the city's main sights, such as Da Vinci's Last Supper, are within walking distance, and there are plenty of trams and a major metro station in the piazza.



01

01 We recommend: SEVEN STARS GALLERIA

Beguiling as its seven-star status is (so it claims), the real draw for the Seven Stars Galleria is its location: inside the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, that sumptuous cross-shaped shopping mall beside the Duomo. Perched above Prada, and taking up nearly two wings of the first floor, the hotel houses seven high-ceilinged, quadruple-glazed duplex suites, each of which has jaw-dropping views of the gilded mall.

Now about those seven stars. Not only is each suite assigned a private butler, who'll do anything from unpacking your bags to whisking you off to Lake Como, the in-house chef will invent meals according to your preferences. Butlers can often source the impossible — think Fashion Week tickets or sold-out viewings for the Last Supper — plus, you can also pre-order your suite's mezzanine level to be arranged however you like it, the 'go to' choices include an office, crèche or gym.

Rooms: Doubles from €500 (£411), room only.
sevenstargalleria.com



02

02 Best for location: STRAF

On a quiet side street off the Piazza del Duomo — sixth floor suites have balconies to glimpse the intricate cathedral stonework — Straf was one of Milan's first design hotels and still flies the city's minimalist flag. Concrete walls, unfinished resin floors and burnished brass columns make up the public areas, while the 64 rooms are packed with hi-tech touches and calming modern art — the designer planned the building as a living installation. One glance of the clientele at the ultra-trendy bar and you can believe it. Rooms: Doubles from €250 (£206), B&B.
straf.it

03 Best for extras: SPADARI AL DUOMO

Two blocks from the Piazza del Duomo, the Spadari's 40 pleasant, sky-blue rooms are spacious and well equipped with flatscreen TVs, art deco-style furniture and modern art from the owner's collection. But it's the extras that make it stand out: not just free wi-fi, but soft drinks from the mini-bar, a generous buffet breakfast, flexible check-in and out times, and cappuccinos on arrival from the friendly staff. Seventh floor rooms even have glimpses of the Duomo. Rooms: Doubles from €220 (£181), B&B.
spadarihotel.com ➤



03



GARIBALDI AND THE NORTH

North of the central Brera district is Garibaldi, a former working-class neighbourhood that's been transformed. First in the 1990s by the laid-back fashion hub that's grown up around the pedestrianised Corso Como, thanks to former Vogue editor Carla Sozzani; and then by the glass skyscrapers of the new business district; and now by the new metro line 5, which extended to Garibaldi earlier this year. All in all, it's an interesting cultural mix, and is well connected to the city centre. East of Garibaldi is the Stazione Centrale; beyond that are residential areas such as Udine, where the Nu Hotel is located.

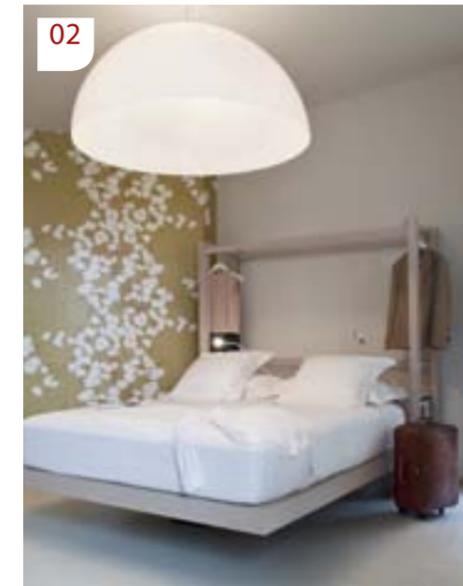


01

IMAGE: GETTY



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02 We recommend: NU HOTEL

A 10-minute metro ride east of the Stazione Centrale in residential Udine, the Nu may be out of the action, but it's the reason why this fabulous design-orientated hotel charges a fraction of the price of its more central rivals. From the centrally-hinged front door to the vertiginous atrium, where light bulbs spiral down six storeys, everything at the Nu is a little off-beam. Down concrete-walled corridors and through carbonised-wood doors, the 38 rooms feature 'floating' beds, 'hanging' shelves and unusual angles (no 90-degree corners here). Yet there's substance to its style: virtually all the fittings were especially designed for the hotel, the sweeping, ceiling-to-hip-height windows are soundproofed, and the beds are by Simmons and dressed with Rivolta Carmignani sheets. There's no gym, but anti-gravity yoga and boot camp sessions are available in a nearby park. Rooms: Doubles from €103 (£85), B&B. nu-hotel.com

01 Best for shoppers: MAISON MOSCHINO

Behind the grand façade (it was Milan's first railway station) lies this high fashion property, where everything — from sheets to shampoo — is Moschino. The 65 rooms revolve around 12 themes, with beds surrounded by groves of paper trees and Miss Havisham-like dresses acting as headboards-cum-bedspreads. Guests get 10% off at Milan's Moschino boutique — so really, the room will part-pay for itself. Rooms: Doubles from €189 (£156), B&B. maisonmoschino.com

03 Best for style: 3 ROOMS

Part of Carla Sozzani's legendary boutique-café-gallery complex, 3 Rooms is really three large apartments overlooking the courtyard at 10 Corso Como. Curated by Sozzani, they're full of design touches like Saarinen chairs and Jacobsen taps, with pieces especially designed by Sozzani's partner artist Kris Ruhs. It's supremely laid-back, from the in-room breakfast to the rates, which stay stable year-round. Rooms: Doubles from €320 (£264), B&B. 3rooms-10corsocomo.com ➤



MONTENAPOLEONE AND THE QUADRILATERO DELLA MODA

It's not for nothing the Quadrilatero della Moda, or 'fashion rectangle', is also known as the Quadrilatero d'Oro or 'golden rectangle': the six-block area east of the Duomo, between Via Montenapoleone and Via della Spiga, is an astonishing catwalk of designer shops. Needless to say, it's ideal for people-watching, whatever the lining of your pockets. It's also one of the quieter areas of the city — Via della Spiga is pedestrianised. Note though, that Via Senato and Via Manzoni are noisy thoroughfares — so always ask for rooms facing the other way.



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01 We recommend: CARLTON BAGLIONI

Cast aside your preconceptions about Baglioni. The chain known for its overt ostentation has significantly overhauled its look over the past three years — and the Milan property is the latest to receive its face-lift, with all 87 rooms being completely refurbished earlier this year. Carpets have given way to swish black and tan parquet floors, heavy drapes to curtains and gauze woven with imperceptible animal print. Even the mini-bars have stitched leather doors.

Bathrooms are luxurious with marble walls, dinner-plate shower heads and Ortigia toiletries, plus there's the inevitable pillow menu. The exclusive, 'secret' back entrance opens on to Via della Spiga — ask for a room facing this way if you're sensitive to noise.

Rooms: Doubles from €290 (£240), room only. baglionihotels.com



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02 Best for couples: FOUR SEASONS MILANO

Occupying a 15th-century convent in the heart of the Quadrilatero d'Oro, the hotel is centred round a beautiful cloister, with granite columns, vaulted ceilings, and original frescos. Rooms are understated and there's a subterranean spa. Rooms: Doubles from €630 (£525), room only. fourseasons.com/milan

03 Best for singles: HOTEL ARMANI

Look past the austere building, the forbidding reputation, and the black-shrouded employees; this is actually a welcoming place with exceptional views of the Milan skyline. Designed by Giorgio Armani himself, the 95 rooms are almost cosy. Rooms: Doubles from €500 (£412), room only. armanihotels.com ►

SLEEP



BRERA

North of the Duomo, Brera, with its pedestrianised core, has historically been Milan's arts district; it's now a trendy but friendly area lined with one-off boutiques and restaurants among the palazzi and apartment buildings. It's home to Milan's most famous art gallery, the Pinacoteca di Brera, and is also the gateway to the Castello Sforzesco — the 15th-century castle of the Sforza family, for whom Leonardo da Vinci did much of his work — and the oasis of the Sempione Park, beyond. These properties are all on quiet, residential streets outside the pedestrianised heart, making Brera a good area for families.



01 We recommend: PALAZZO PARIGI
Milan's latest luxury hotel — it had its soft opening last September — pits two fashion capitals against each other with its Paris v Milan theme, designed by architect owner Paola Giambelli and Pierre-Yves Rochon, of Four Seasons and Ritz Carlton fame. Homages to Milan — elaborately patterned parquet à la Villa Reale, a glass atrium like Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II — square off against Parisian touches, like classical

busts and a sweeping marble staircase in the lobby.

The 98 cream and butter-coloured rooms are either 'Milanese' or 'Parisian'. In both, daylight is the main feature with floor-to-ceiling windows and balconies. Note that rates will shoot up when the hotel is officially finished at the end of this year. But there's no disturbance if you go now, you'll just miss the forthcoming spa and roof garden. Rooms: Doubles from €395 (£325), room only. palazzoparigi.com

02 Best for green travellers: MILANO SCALA HOTEL
It's near La Scala but it's the eco credentials that really make this place stand out. Thanks to an ingenious underground plant, converting soil water into energy, it's a zero emissions structure. And from the herb garden on the roof terrace to a 'zero-kilometre' kitchen policy — its green policies are as customer-friendly as its outgoing staff. Rooms: Doubles from €210 (£173), B&B. hotelmilanoscala.it ■

03 Best for budget: BRERA APARTMENTS
Brera Apartments is at the forefront of stylish self-catering in Milan, with 20 apartments scattered around the neighbourhood. All are well equipped with flatscreen TVs, wi-fi, and Nespresso machines in modern kitchens. Apartment sizes and styles vary (the website has photos of each flat) but you can choose chic touches like floor-to-ceiling windows and a freestanding bathtub (in the San Marco apartment) or bright duplexes under the eaves (in the Garibaldi Suites, just off trendy Via Garibaldi). Phenomenal value. Rooms: Doubles from €110 (£90), room only. T: 00 39 340 9596 030. brerapartments.com

