

# Shopping

## HEART OF ROME

Although right in the tourist-clogged center, the streets near Piazza Navona and Campo de' Fiori are surprisingly less crowded—and the shops less tacky—than along the main thoroughfares connecting Rome's top squares (outlined in my ☉ Heart of Rome Walk). Heavy on antiques and home furnishings, this area may be better for window-shopping than buying, but I've noted some shops with take-home souvenirs as well. Everything mentioned here is within about a 15-minute walk of each other.

## Near Piazza Navona

The tangle of lanes just west of Piazza Navona can be fun to explore. But the main shopping street here—and one of the most charming streets in all of Rome, with cobblestones, leafy planters, and little to no traffic—is the straight-shot **Via dei Coronari**, between Piazza Navona and the bend in the river. To find it, pop out the north end of Piazza Navona and turn left. This is the place to browse antiques and daydream about furnishing a Roman apartment. Stampe Antiche “Trincia” Restauro (#15) is a fascinating shop that specializes in painstaking restoration of works of art, with antique prints that will fit in your suitcase. This street also boasts several fine clothing and shoe stores, such as Superga (#18), the classic Italian athletic shoe brand (which also makes designer heels). Made (#25) is a “creative bakery” with bagel sandwiches and delicate cupcakes.

After Piazzetta di San Simeone, there are fewer antiques and more clothes—stylish yet accessible. For example, tucked in the little square on the left, Spazio IF (#44a) features eye-catching Sicilian style—mostly women's fashion, including handbags and scarves. Dimorae Design (#57) sells trendy Italian home furnishings. If you need a snack, Gelateria del Teatro (#65) is a good choice. At Pastori Antichi (#110), an army of military miniatures from around the world stands watch. Lisa Corti Home Textile Emporium (#197, part of a small Italian chain) fills its showroom with colorful fabrics, while Le Tele di Carlotta (#228) is a charming spot with hand-embroidered towels and handkerchiefs.

At the end of Via dei Coronari, you could angle right one block to Castel Sant'Angelo (described on page 65). Or, to make your

walk a loop, hook left at the big square and Alimentari Coronari (gourmet sandwiches) onto **Via di Panico**. You'll pass a few more shops along here—including Kromatika Lab (#14), with striking design.

From here, turn right on Via degli Orisni; one block later, turn left onto **Via del Governo Vecchio**, another top shopping street. Passing the Penny Lane shop (#4, with youthful vintage wear), you'll be greeted by a street with fashion, home decor, textiles, and plenty of cute boutiques (casual wear and accessories—mostly women's, but some men's as well). The closer you get to Piazza Navona, the more crowded the street becomes, with souvenir stands and tourist-trap restaurants mixed in with boutiques. When the street opens up into a square, bear left up the narrow Via di Pasquino to reach Piazza Navona.

#### Near Campo de' Fiori

Two worthwhile parallel shopping streets run northwest (toward the river) from Piazza Farnese, just a block south of Campo de' Fiori: Via Monserrato/Via dei Banchi Vecchi and Via Giulia. (Streets in the opposite direction—to the southeast—are sleepier, with fewer shops.) While I've arranged these as a loop, you can pick and choose as you go.

Heading away from Piazza Farnese on low-key **Via Monserrato**, you'll see several antique, furniture, and home-decorating shops. But there are also some interesting clothing boutiques, as well as some unique shops. Hollywood (#107) is a cinephile's dream, with movie posters and rare DVDs; their sister store, at #110, sells movie-themed embroidered T-shirts. Between these two, at #108, is a fascinating old-time cobbler, with a crowded workbench crammed into a tiny shop. Estremi (#101) has some inspiring retro furniture, while Antichi Kimono (#43b-44) features Asian-themed dresses and fabrics.

Farther along, Via Monserrato becomes **Via dei Banchi Vecchi**, with even more antiques of varying aesthetics—from mothballed grannies to hipster vintage. Small and tasteful, Macoco (#138) sells colorful, artisanal toys for kids. Banchievecchi Pellami (#40) is an old-school leather shop, with belts and wallets. And Restore (#51) is packed with housewares, home furnishings, and kitchen gadgets.

When Via dei Banchi Vecchi dead-ends at the big cross street, loop left around the block to stroll more atmospheric **Via Giulia**—narrower, cobbled, and mostly traffic-free. Here you'll find fewer shops and more real-estate offices and architecture firms. House Kitchen & Design, near the start of the street at #101, is a cramped hole-in-the-wall with cooking gadgets; farther down, Magie di Casa (#140c) has a nice selection of linens, from tea towels to aprons.

prints, antique books, and curios. Shops in the surrounding streets have a similar flavor.

#### Via Margutta

Hiding parallel to Via del Corso and Via del Babuino is one of the most chic addresses in town, **Via Margutta**. (To find it, go down Via della Fontanella, near the top of Via del Corso; or head up from the Spanish Steps.) Here you'll find exclusive-feeling designer boutiques, big-ticket antique shops, home-decorating galleries, day spas, fashion eyewear shops, jewelers, wedding planners, and other places where you have to ring the bell to be let inside (assuming your hem meets their standards). One shop—called Flair—sums up this whole street. Lelli (at #5) has colorful home furnishings and textiles; Saddlers Union (#11) has very expensive leather goods; and Grossi Maurizio (across the street at #109) has marble sculptures and mosaics. Artemide (#107) is one of this street's many intriguing suppliers of mod, upscale home furnishings. Tucked along here, however, is one holdover from simpler times: La Bottega del Marmoraro (#153), where Sandro busily carves marble in a cramped hole-in-the-wall slathered with carved marble signs.

### Department Stores, Souvenirs, and Markets

If all you need are souvenirs, a surgical strike at any gift shop will do. Otherwise, stop at a department store, scout near the Vatican or in the Jewish Ghetto for religious items, hit the flea market and produce markets, or—if you're in a pinch—pick up some mementos at the airport on your way out of town.

#### DEPARTMENT STORES

To conveniently peruse clothes, bags, shoes, and perfume at several major Italian chain stores, wander the shopping complex under Termini train station (most stores open daily 8:00-22:00).

Large department stores offer relatively painless one-stop shopping. A good upscale department store is **La Rinascente** (like Nordstrom or Macy's). Its main branch is on Piazza Fiume (east of Borghese Gallery near the old city walls), and a smaller store is on Via del Corso in the **Galleria Alberto Sordi**, an elegant 19th-century "mall" (across from Piazza Colonna). **UPIM** is a popular mid-range department store (many branches, including inside Termini train station, Via Nazionale 111, and Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore). **Oviessse/OVS**, a cheap clothing outlet, is near the Vatican Museum (on the corner of Via Candia and Via Mocenigo, Metro: Cipro) and also near Piazza Barberini (Via del Tritone 172, Metro: Barberini).

so on). See the “Dolce Vita Stroll” map in the Nightlife in Rome chapter for specific locations of these streets.

**Via Fontanella** isn’t interesting in its own right, but it does lead to the very chichi Via Margutta—described later.

**Via Laurina** has some funkier shops, including several with youth fashions; halfway down at #10 is the recommended Fatamorgana *gelateria*, and classier galleries and antiques sit at the far end.

**Via di Gesù e Maria**, running along its namesake church, has fewer stores. Discount dell’Alta Moda (at #16a, literally “Discount on Old Fashion,” where last year’s big-name designer duds are marked down by half) is a hit with bargain shoppers, while sports fans peruse the store with merchandise promoting the local Lazio soccer team. **Via di San Giacomo**, on the other side of the church, is also fairly sleepy—though it’s fun to peek in the windows of the art school to see the artisans and craftspeople of the 21st century hard at work.

**Via del Greci** has a sheet music store, antiques, fashion boutiques, and a fragrant flower stall.

**Via Vittoria** and **Via della Croce** are major thoroughfares for reaching the Spanish Steps, so they have less interesting shops and more touristy crowds; however, Via della Croce is a great place to browse for a meal (see suggestions on page 398). The recommended Pastificio (near the end of the street, at #8) is, true to its name, a pasta factory, where you can buy dry pasta as an edible souvenir.

Some of the streets that run parallel to Via del Corso along here are also fun to wander. For example, **Via Mario de’ Fiori** is crammed with upscale boutiques, but tucked amidst the glitz is the appealing c.u.c.i.n.a. shop (at #65), where you can stock up on Italian-style kitchen gadgets, utensils, and crockery.

**Via delle Carrozze** is fun to browse, with shops carrying specialties from other parts of Italy (handy if Rome is your only destination): The Santa Maria Novella perfume shop (#87) stocks scents from that famous church-run perfume works in Florence; Il Cerichio dei Goloso (#19) serves delicate pastries—and sells colorful plates—from Sicily; and La Peonia (#85) specializes in products from Sardinia. Also along this stretch, look in the window of the old-time tailor, Attilio Roncaccia (#12), and pick up some stylish fashions for Junior at Gocco (#18).

From **Via dei Condotti**, you can see the Spanish Steps hovering in the distance. This busy, glamorous strip has the same type of high-roller international shops found on Via del Babuino.

For one more taste of a simpler side of this area, find your way a few blocks west (on Via dei Condotti *away* from the Spanish Steps—toward the river, just south of Ara Pacis) to **Piazza Borghese**. This sleepy little square is filled with green kiosks selling

One more street near Campo de’ Fiori may be worth exploring: **Via Giubbonari**, which stretches southeast from the square. More heavily trafficked (and more touristy), it has dozens of stores selling affordable apparel aimed mainly at a younger crowd.

## JEWISH GHETTO

In addition to its gorgeous synagogue, evocative history, and bustling Jewish restaurants, Rome’s ghetto is also a great place to browse. My ♣ Jewish Ghetto Walk provides a natural spine for shopping explorations.

Near the start of that walk, just around the corner from the synagogue, the Leone Limentani housewares and dishware shop feels like a well-stocked mini-warehouse—this is where Roman couples register for wedding gifts (walk away from the river, and turn left at the ruins onto Via del Portico d’Ottavia; it’s at the corner on the left). If you head across the street to the ruins and cross the little bridge, you’ll find the showroom where customers’ chosen place settings are laid out to review (shop and showroom both open Mon-Fri 9:00-13:00 & 15:30-19:30, Sat 10:00-19:30, closed Sun, Via del Portico d’Ottavia 47).

Farther along Via del Portico d’Ottavia, turn right up **Via della Reginella**, lined with cute boutiques: L’Officinaturale (at #3), a natural-products shop with oils, soaps, perfumes, and health foods; takeawaygallery, which is a mod art boutique (#10-11); Giuseppe Casetti’s funky shops (#25-28)—one branch with vintage black-and-white photos, and the other with stacks of antique, yellowing books; and, at the end of the street (#30), Peperita, run by sisters—one of whom makes olive oil, and the other, all manner of hot peppers. Their products—powders, pastes, and infused oils—are ranked on a spiciness scale of 1 to 16; generous samples let you test your limits.

Back on the main drag, Mondo di Laura (#6) sells artisan cookies. And beyond that is a long row of Judaica shops, as well as kosher butchers and food stands. Less than a 10-minute walk straight ahead is the Campo de’ Fiori shopping zone described earlier.

## MONTI, NEAR THE ROMAN FORUM

Located between Via Cavour and Via Nazionale, across the street from the Roman Forum, the Monti neighborhood is a delight for exploring, dining, and shopping. Rather than designer fashions, Monti has Rome’s closest thing to a hipster aesthetic: gourmet foodie shops and funky boutiques alongside very traditional neighborhood stores. Get oriented from the main square, Piazza della Madonna dei Monti (see page 58 for an orientation to this neighborhood). Then take off, strolling each of these areas.

### Via del Boschetto and Via dei Serpenti

This little loop takes you up and down the parallel main drags of Monti. First, from the top of the square, head left down **Via del Boschetto**. You'll pass several little boutiques and jewelry shops. Along the way, watch for the recommended Gaudeo sandwich shop (#112); the fragrant Il Giardino di Tè tea house (#107); King Size vintage shop (#94); a cute kids' clothing store (#96); Gallina Smilza, selling colorful plastic dishes and housewares (#129); and Pulp, featuring women's casual fashion (#140).

Soon you'll reach the intersection with **Via Panisperna**; several pioneers in the early study of radiation, including Enrico Fermi, lived or worked along here, earning them the nickname "the Panisperna boys." From this intersection, you can turn right up Panisperna for more shopping (boutiques, antiques, and the Monti Bio organic shop at #225), or continue straight ahead for a few more shops (and the highly recommended L'Asino d'Oro restaurant, with a great lunch special—see page 400). Otherwise, loop left (downhill on Panisperna), noticing—on the corner—Macelleria Stecchiotti, a classic Roman butcher (where, reportedly, VIPs from the prime minister to the pope get their meat). Continuing downhill on Panisperna, you'll spot the neighborhood's favorite hangout—the recommended Ai Tre Scalini bar—and (at the corner) the recommended Antico Forno ai Serpenti bakery.

Turning left on **Via dei Serpenti**, on the left just past the bakery entrance, peek in the window to see the bakers at work. Continuing down Serpenti, watch for a funky collection of shops, including Podere Vecciano (at #33)—"a farm in the city" selling enticing Tuscan (not Roman) goods, including wines, olive oils, other gifty edibles, and wood-carved items. Then you'll reach Oic-FiFna Gioielli jewelry store (#25); a tempting *alimentari* (grocery); Faces, a boutique selling T-shirts with...faces (#138); the Pifebo vintage shop next door (#141); and on the right, at #4, a neighborhood fixture dating to the days when vintage wasn't yet vintage: the aptly named Di Tutto di Più ("Everything and More"), a general store stuffed to the gills with everything you could possibly need. Near the end of the street is American Apparel—which incited minor outrage in this extremely provincial and proud corner of Rome when it opened a few years back. And just beyond that, you've circled back to the main square.

### Via Leonina/Via Urbana

To explore another set of streets with similar shops, leave the top of the main square and jog right (on Via dell'Angeletto, passing some fun little galleries), then left at the T-intersection (where you'll find a local chocolatier, La Bottega del Cioccolato). This puts you on **Via Leonina**, the first few blocks of which are a bit more crowded and

urban, with lots of little hole-in-the-wall eateries. The big garage on the right opens its doors on weekends to host the lively MercatoMonti (see "Department Stores, Souvenirs, and Markets" near the end of this chapter).

After passing the entrance to Cavour Metro station, the street swings left, becomes **Via Urbana**, and gets a bit more charming, as it runs through the bottom of a narrow valley between Via Cavour and Santa Maria Maggiore. At the gap with the parking lot, look high on the left to spot the recommended Fatamorgana *gelateria* (see page 400). Farther along, watch on the left for the Studio Cassio mosaics workshop (#98), then a fascinating *orologeria* (clock shop, #103a). Continuing along Via Urbana, window-shop local designers' boutiques. Aromaticus, at #134, sells nothing but fresh herbs, as if to emphasize the Italian obsession with seasonal cooking. As the street climbs uphill, you can either go back the way you came, or turn left at Via Panisperna to return to Via del Boschetto, Via dei Serpenti, and the heart of Monti.

### Via Baccina and Via della Madonna dei Monti

Via Baccina and Via della Madonna dei Monti have a lower concentration of shops, but they're even more atmospheric than the main drags. From the main square, head down **Via Baccina**, noticing Sotto Bosco at #40, selling colorful, minimalist jewelry and hats. Farther along, this street has a range of art galleries, boutiques, and jewelry shops. Better yet, turn left down vine-strewn Via dei Neofiti (across from Sotto Bosco), then right on **Via della Madonna dei Monti**. While there are more bars and restaurants than shops along here, it's worth a browse.

### THE SHOPPING TRIANGLE, NEAR VIA DEL CORSO AND THE SPANISH STEPS

Via del Corso runs south, from Piazza del Popolo to the heart of Rome, and the little streets that poke east off the main drag—toward the Spanish Steps—form an area nicknamed the "shopping triangle." This zone has big international chains to suit every budget—from Dolce & Gabbana to the Gap—along with some very famous designers...all of which makes it less funky and colorful than the neighborhoods described previously. Nevertheless, a few quirky shops hide out here as well.

### Streets Between Via del Corso and Via del Babuino

I've described the streets branching off of Via del Corso from north to south, starting at Piazza del Popolo. These are to the left as you walk; the streets to the right have fewer shops. Also note that **Via del Babuino** angles off parallel to Via del Corso, with mostly pricey international chains (Tiffany, Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, and