

# MILAN'S MIGHT

Europe's most discreet metropolis is impossible to ignore: long a beacon of good taste, it's now leading the way in fashion, design, art, cuisine and – increasingly – hospitality

By Ivan Carvalho



Restaurant Giacomo Arengario in the Museo del Novecento, overlooking Piazza Duomo



When Milan comes up in conversation, fashion is never far behind. Which is only fitting, given the surfeit of big-name designers based here, their plush boutiques and the semi-annual calendar of runway shows. Yet Italy's second city has made great strides in recent years beyond the hemlines. Following its successful hosting of the world's fair in 2015, a food-themed extravaganza that spurred officials to give the town a much-needed urban makeover, the city has seen new dining concepts opening at a steady clip. Culture, too, has had a boost with new and revamped venues from the world's leading architects as well as further burnishing of the city's design credentials – Milan is, after all, the city Gio Ponti called home, and his Pirelli skyscraper remains one of the city's most treasured landmarks and a constant reminder of the city's impeccable good taste.

#### A BED FOR THE NIGHT

The two hospitality stalwarts in Milan's centre remain wonderful establishments in all respects, deserving of all the plaudits they receive: **FOUR SEASONS** ([fourseasons.com](http://fourseasons.com)), with its prime location in the heart of the Quadrilatero della moda shopping district, and the stately **HOTEL PRINCIPE DI SAVOIA** ([dorchestercollection.com](http://dorchestercollection.com)) in nearby Piazza della Repubblica.

But there is a collection of newcomers worthy of attention as well, such as the 43-room **HOTEL SENATO** ([senatohotelmilano.it](http://senatohotelmilano.it)), the former residence of the Ranza industrial family, which exudes Milanese understatement in its sober, Carrara marble-inflected interiors. The bar – and its private terrace on warm evenings – is one of the best spots to unwind in the city. In Porta Volta, one of the city's up-and-coming neighbourhoods, designer Nicola Gallizia has injected the towering **HOTEL VIU MILAN** ([hotelviu.com](http://hotelviu.com)) with a dash of modernism. Gio Ponti-designed armchairs adorn the reception, matched with tasteful pieces from Molteni&C, while breakfast upstairs in the rooftop restaurant comes with stunning 360-degree views.

Farther afield in the Tortona Design district, near the Navigli and fashion showrooms, SAVONA 18 SUITES ([savona18suites.it](http://savona18suites.it)), which opened last year, shows off the talents of noted architect and designer Aldo Cibic in reinterpreting the traditional *ringhiera*-style housing common to Milan. Relax at the open-air courtyard lounge and admire his expansive mural.

Meanwhile, two other exceptional properties, the PARK HYATT MILAN ([hyatt.com](http://hyatt.com)) and BULGARI ([bulgarihotels.com](http://bulgarihotels.com)), have reinforced their culinary offerings. The former now benefits from two Michelin stars at its Vun dining room led by Neapolitan chef Andrea Aprea; the latter has recently added a dining room where three-starred chef Niko Romito experiments with recipes for veal lasagne and crowd favourite potato ravioli with red prawns and squid.

#### SUPPING AND SIPPING

To kick off the aperitivo cocktail hour, DRY ([drymilano.it](http://drymilano.it)) never disappoints. Revellers congregate around the brass bar to sample Prohibition era drinks in vintage stemware and nibble on delicious focaccia laced with prosciutto crudo and creamy buffalo mozzarella (pizza from the wood-fired oven is also a delectable option for those with an appetite). Fashion types head to CERESIO 7 ([ceresio7.com](http://ceresio7.com)), where the libations from award-winning barman Guglielmo Miriello are worth the visit, but they are wonderfully complemented by a panoramic rooftop terrace, pools and restaurant overlooking Cimitero

Monumentale. A more relaxed ambience is found in the Brera district at FIORAIO BIANCHI CAFFÈ ([fioraiobianchicaffe.it](http://fioraiobianchicaffe.it)) with its Parisian bohemian vibe and informal bistro that is perfect for people watching. Oenophiles will find comfort nearby at N'OMBRA DE VIN ([nombradevin.it](http://nombradevin.it)), whose cellar-dining room is set in a 14th-century refectory.

Across town CARLO E CAMILLA ([carloecamillainsegheria.it](http://carloecamillainsegheria.it)) exudes an insider's vibe with its digs inside a former sawmill that boasts soaring ceilings with crystal chandeliers and 30m-long communal tables. Owned by Michelin-starred chef Carlo Cracco, who last year opened his high-end eatery CRACCO ([ristorantecracco.it](http://ristorantecracco.it)) in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II shopping arcade, dishes at Carlo e Camilla include smoked poached egg in provola and meat ravioli in a saffron ragu. To sample staple Milanese dishes, two standout locales are worth booking: the kitchen at RATANÀ ([ratana.it](http://ratana.it)) is in a former railway depot and manned by Cesare Battisti, who dazzles with his array of risotto recipes and beef carpaccio drizzled in balsamic vinegar, and in Viale Umbria, family-run MASUELLI ([masuellirattoria.com](http://masuellirattoria.com)) is an old-school establishment where ossobuco and risotto Milanese command a diner's undivided attention.

Far East influences are best savoured at IYO ([iyo.it](http://iyo.it)), which delivers Michelin-starred entrees featuring langoustines marinated with a passion fruit emulsion and shredded calamari with quail's egg and soba dashi

In Quadrilatero della moda,  
clothing brands play musical chairs



**ENRICO BUONOCORE**  
Restaurateur

**YOU'VE RECENTLY REOPENED YOUR LANGOSTERIA BISTROT – WHAT'S NEW?** An expanded space where guests now have a separate cocktail bar in which they can enjoy oysters and other appetisers. The decor features beautiful chairs inspired by the Superleggera model designed by Gio Ponti in the 1950s. Langosteria is a play on the words osteria, a more informal type of eatery than the trattoria, and langoustine, to denote the seafood we serve at our establishments and also because this species is very sought-after and needs to be delivered ASAP to customers to ensure you can fully enjoy the taste.

**WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND YOUR CULINARY EMPIRE?** I run three Langosteria eateries in Milan, plus a seasonal spot at a beach club near Portofino. I started in 2007 with a concept that is starting to become popular again. I'm not interested in the star system of well-known chefs that exploded in the recent past. Restaurateurs forgot about delivering customers a well-rounded experience where the professionalism of the service staff was as important as the fresh ingredients and food prep. The interiors were too cold and the focus was on trying to "wow" customers with lots of fads. People love the mix of intimacy and hospitality when they dine with us. It's a luxurious experience with incredibly fresh seafood prepared impeccably and not served in tiny portions.  
[langosteria.com](http://langosteria.com)



At Iyo, Asado is a dish featuring Italian beef, soy sauce, toasted corn cream and cardoncelli mushrooms; above: the refined lobby of Hotel Senato



**MASSIMO ALBA**  
Fashion Designer

**HOW HAS MILAN'S FASHION SCENE CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED WORKING IN THE MID-1980S?** The city is more cosmopolitan today, more multi-ethnic. On the metro you now hear lots of languages spoken. You come into contact with more cultures and it provides inspiration.

**WHAT'S THE ADVANTAGE OF WORKING IN FASHION HERE?**

You are close to the textile producers so you can visit often and collaborate more closely on projects. For me, the feel of the garment in your hand is very important. It has to be comfortable, relaxed and have a lived-in look. We work, for example, with people in Biella to make a supersoft linen for our shirts. We use a special watercolour-dye technique for cashmere that gives the clothes real character.

**WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE SPOTS IN THE CITY?**

I have three. First, the area with the Santa Maria delle Grazie church and Casa Degli Atellani. There's incredible architecture and peaceful gardens. I love the Navigli district where I work. The water and canals are an integral part of the story of Milan. Then there is Brera, where I opened my first boutique close to the Pinacoteca museum, which is a cultural treasure.  
[massimoalba.com](http://massimoalba.com)



The convivial, fully stocked bar at Giacomo Bistrot



sauce. For a dressed-down evening, KANPAI ([kanpaimilano.it](http://kanpaimilano.it)) in Porta Venezia exudes an underground vibe and izakaya-style tapas paired with Japanese beer and whiskies, while GIACOMO BISTROT ([giacomobistrot.com](http://giacomobistrot.com)) takes cues from a French bistro

In the Navigli neighbourhood, drop in at 28 POSTI ([28posti.org](http://28posti.org)) for experimental Mediterranean cuisine – tagliolini with leek and candied lemon, mantis shrimp with sea urchin, marine pine and cabbage. Finally, for a respite from the city, venture down the canal to ERBA BRUSCA ([erbabrusca.it](http://erbabrusca.it)), where the always pleasant Alice Delcourt entertains diners with her Slow Food-style menu relying on herbs and vegetables from her own garden.

#### RETAIL THERAPY

In Milan's Quadrilatero della moda shopping district, clothing brands play musical chairs, moving addresses at regular intervals. In January, cult brand ASPESI ([aspesi.com](http://aspesi.com)) beloved by northern Italians for its no-logo, understated casual pieces for men and women, unveiled an impressive 600sq m boutique in Via San Pietro all'Orto to ring in its 50th anniversary. For a slightly more formal look, BOGLIOLI ([boglioli.it](http://boglioli.it)) is across the street, where its collection of jackets crafted with a more natural shoulder are a must-add to one's wardrobe. Given the storied past in suiting of third-generation Neapolitan tailor CESARE ATTOLINI ([cesareattolini.com](http://cesareattolini.com)), the owners sought out a place for its new Milanese showroom that befitted its heritage. Last summer they inaugurated the former premises of the famed Bagutta restaurant, preserving the space's elegant granite columns and Venetian Terrazzo flooring. On Via Montenapoleone, the Ricci brothers, Valentino and Nicola, specialise in soft flowing jackets that look to modernise formal menswear at their label SCIAMÀT ([sciamat.com](http://sciamat.com)), which offers bespoke and ready-to-wear suits, shirts, overcoats and ties created by their team of artisans in Puglia.

Over in Via Brera, fans of stylish rainwear will find a wealth of chic models at SEALUP ([sealup.net](http://sealup.net)) for ladies and gents in need of staying dry in a drizzle. A few doors down in this boho precinct there is MASSIMO ALBA ([massimoalba.com](http://massimoalba.com)), known for his soft knitwear. Around the corner from the classic paintings exhibited at the Pinacoteca di Brera

museum, travellers may peruse masterpieces from premium outerwear label SEASE ([sease.it](http://sease.it)). Started by the Loro Piana family, the brand's two-floor boutique opened its doors last year. Downstairs are technical garments for sailing, skiing and hiking that blend premier cashmere and wool fibres with cutting-edge fabrics; upstairs, patrons can unwind in a lounge and listen to vinyl while sipping on a gin and tonic.

To accessorise an outfit, swing by Via Solferino and select one of the imaginative scarves at the bijou boutique of Tuscan label FALIERO SARTI ([falierosarti.com](http://falierosarti.com)). Given its title as fashion capital, it's no surprise Milan boasts two top-quality homegrown leather goods producers with deep roots: VALEXTRA ([valextra.com](http://valextra.com)) and SERAPIAN ([serapian.com](http://serapian.com)), which both dabble in elegant handbags and briefcases for a discerning clientele. To ensure a perfect fit in leather, RIVOLTA ([calzoleriarivolta.com](http://calzoleriarivolta.com)), in Via della Spiga, crafts its line of loafers, Oxfords and boots by hand using Goodyear, Norwegian and Blake construction.

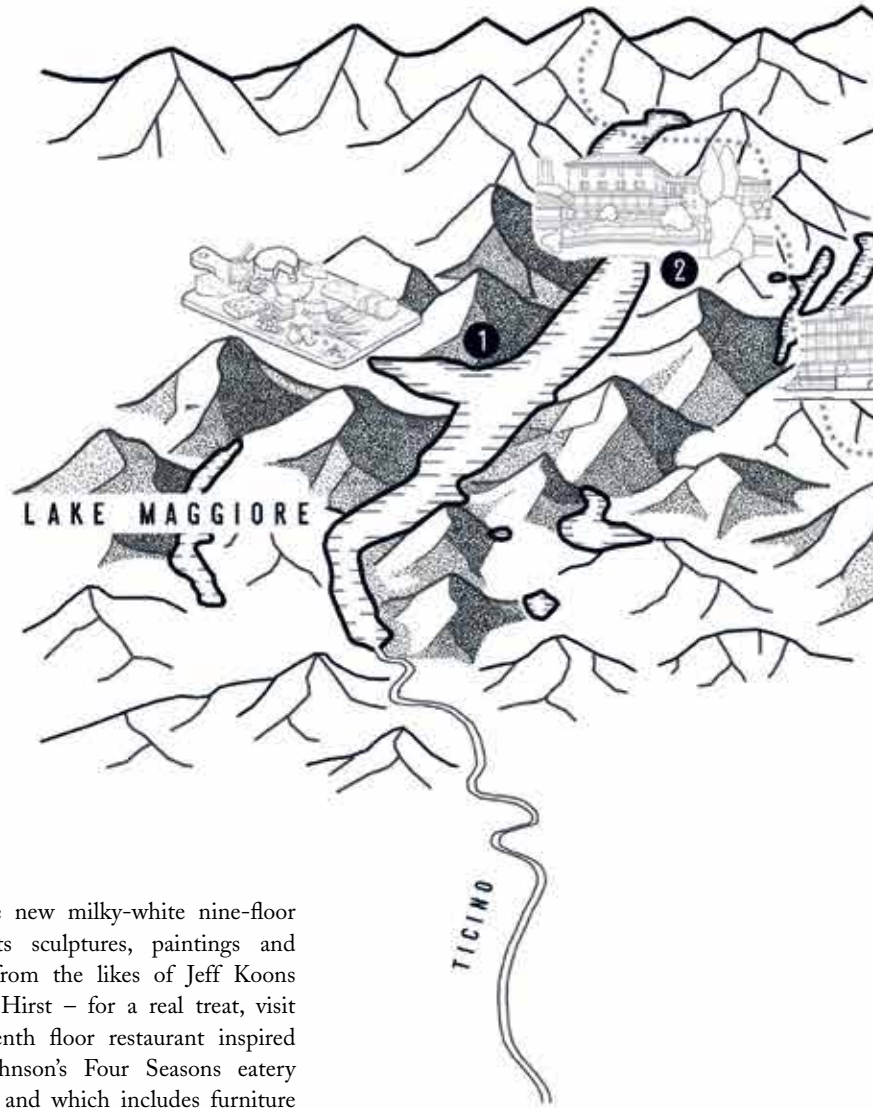
Beyond fashion, Milan is home to great finds for those looking to stock up the home, from the cellar to the sitting room. At BICERIN ([bicerinmilano.com](http://bicerinmilano.com)), connoisseurs are able to browse a selection of 800 small-scale vintners from Italy and neighbouring countries, while the liquids on offer at Argentinian perfume maker FUEGUIA 1833 ([fueguia.eu](http://fueguia.eu)), opened in 2018 in the ground floor of the Park Hyatt Milan, offer a different kind of mystique. The striking dark-panelled boutique is a treat for the senses, with ingredients sourced from Patagonia and prepared in its Milan lab. Design aficionados will enjoy the eclectic offerings on display at the city's emporia, among the best in Europe. Three highlights to search out are ROSSANA ORLANDI ([rossanaorlandi.com](http://rossanaorlandi.com)), SIX GALLERY ([six-gallery.com](http://six-gallery.com)) and NILUFAR ([nilufar.com](http://nilufar.com)), run by design maven Nina Yashar, who also runs the incredible NILUFAR DEPOT, a three-floor treasure trove of mid-century gems and contemporary pieces.

#### SIGHTS TO SEE

Milan's cultural cred is inescapably linked to the Old Masters, most notably Leonardo da Vinci's THE LAST SUPPER ([cenacolovinciano](http://cenacolovinciano)).



Argentinian perfume maker Fueguia 1833



net), on display at the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, along with a host of other exhibitions across the city this year in commemoration of 500 years since the artist's death. There are also, of course, the vivid operatic performances that enthrall audiences at LA SCALA ([teatroallascala.org](http://teatroallascala.org)), one of Europe's leading opera houses. Yet the buzz around contemporary art is unmissably loud, led by fashion house Prada, which has completed its 19,000sq m FONDAZIONE PRADA ([fondazioneprada.org](http://fondazioneprada.org)) arts complex that sits on the site of a former gin distillery. Developed by Dutch architect Rem

Koolhaas, the new milky-white nine-floor tower exhibits sculptures, paintings and installations from the likes of Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst – for a real treat, visit the sixth/seventh floor restaurant inspired by Philip Johnson's Four Seasons eatery in New York and which includes furniture by Eero Saarinen. Fans of modernism are encouraged to venture over to the MUSEO DEL NOVECENTO ([museodelnovecento.org](http://museodelnovecento.org)), which provides breathtaking views of the city's cathedral alongside works from 20th-century masters such as Lucio Fontana, Amedeo Modigliani and Umberto Boccioni.

The buzz around contemporary art is unmissably loud, led by Prada

# THE LAKE ESCAPES

A trio of nearby lakes offer the perfect weekend getaway, Milanese style



## LAKE MAGGIORE

Epicurean food emporium LA CASERA ([1 formaggiadieros.it](http://1formaggiadieros.it)) on the west shore is headed up by Eros Buratti, a noted affineur. Sample cheeses from local Alpine producers, which are aged in his cellar, before sitting at the bistro to sip one of wide range of vintages.

On the east shore, the CAMIN HOTEL ([2 caminhotel.com](http://2caminhotel.com)) and its restaurant Tiffany sit in the grounds of a 19th-century villa surrounded by a lush park. The ambience is exceptional, as is the Med-focused cuisine, which pairs zero-kilometre ingredients with delightful originality.

✈ Milan Linate to city centre: 6miles/10km

## LAKE COMO

The opulent VILLA D'ESTE ([3 villadeste.com](http://3villadeste.com)) remains the gold standard of accommodation lakeside. Dine at water's edge in the Veranda restaurant then wander the expansive grounds with its impressive gardens.

The sharp rationalist lines of IL SERENO HOTEL ([4 serenohotels.com](http://4serenohotels.com)) are the work of designer Patricia Urquiola. The 30 suites incorporate local stone and wood detailing, while the mouthwatering Berton Al Lago restaurant by Michelin-star chef Andrea Berton rounds out the experience.

## LAKE ISEO

In the birthplace of the sleek Riva motor yachts and the Franciacorta appellation, Italy's premier sparkling wine, take lunch at OSTERIA DELLA VILLETTA ([5 osteriadellavilletta.it](http://5osteriadellavilletta.it)), a fourth-generation family establishment with menus written on the chalkboard – order lasagne and beef cheek in green sauce.

There's nowhere better to lodge than L'ALBERETA ([6 albereta.it](http://6albereta.it)), a majestic property with an Henri Chenot spa, adjacent to the BELLAVISTA ([bellavistawine.it](http://bellavistawine.it)) winery. Also toast new vintages at rival vintner CA' DEL BOSCO ([7 cadelbosco.com](http://7cadelbosco.com)).