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SPECIAL ISSUE

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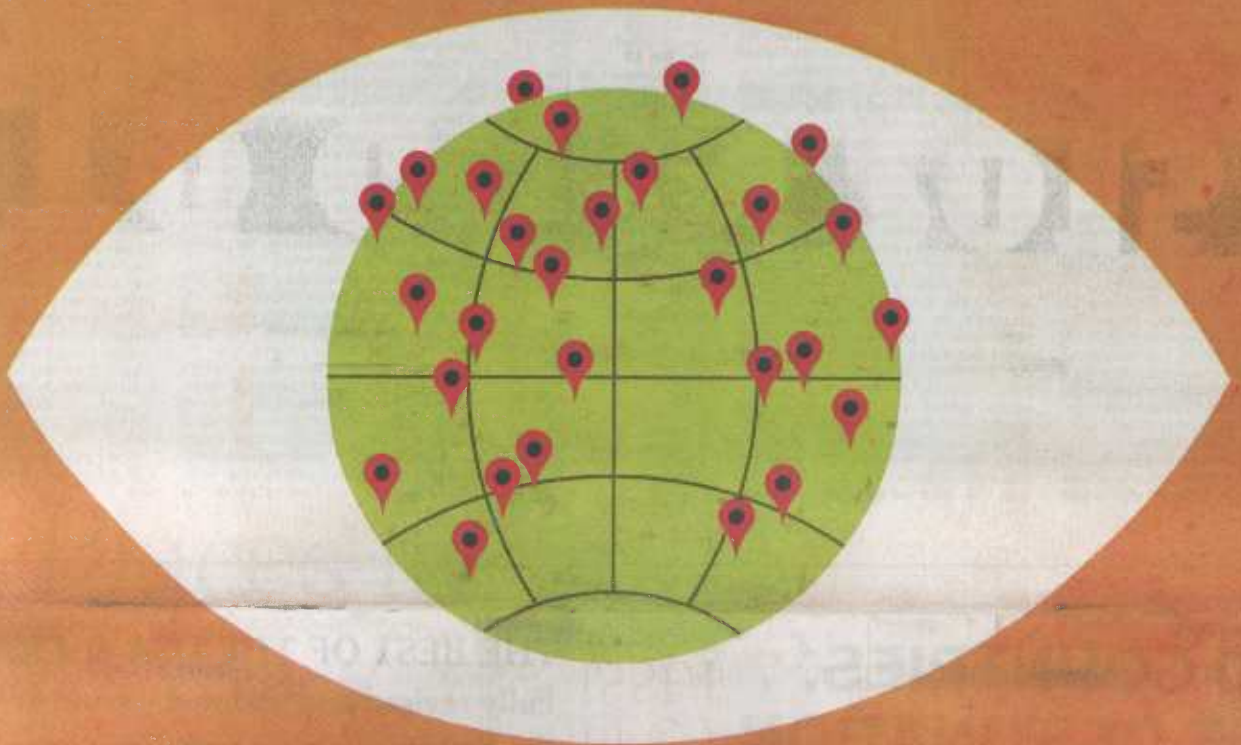
DISCOVERY | ADVENTURE | ESCAPE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2015

Travel

The New York Times

52 PLACES



TO GO IN 2015

36 Hours

MILAN

Repurposed buildings from foundries to banks are infusing the city with new life that should last long after this year's Expo.

By INGRID K. WILLIAMS

If it's been a few years since you last visited Milan, you're in for a pleasant shock. Yes, the preparations for the World Expo being held here this year (May through October) turned large swaths of the city into construction zones, many of which are still in progress. But alongside these urban development projects, a more organic wave of rejuvenation has swept through the city. Old structures of various stripes — among them a sawmill, a foundry, a bank and a farmhouse — have recently been repurposed as bars, shops, restaurants and cultural centers worthy of this most international of Italian cities. Put simply, there's new energy coursing through cosmopolitan Milan, and it's likely to last long after the Expo.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS CARMICHAEL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

without a grand Gothic facade or masterpiece by da Vinci. Start at the Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio, where the skeletal remains of Milan's patron saint can be seen (fittingly, in exquisite dress) in the crypt. A few blocks away is Chiesa di San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore, a church attached to a former Benedictine convent (now an archaeological museum) that contains a cycle of glorious 16th-century frescoes. Don't miss the area once reserved for nuns on the other side of the center partition, where paintings include a depiction of Noah's Ark with unicorns ascending the gangplank. Finish at the Chiesa di Santa Maria Presso di San Satiro, an architectural gem hidden amid chain stores. Inside, marvel at the illusory apse of Donato Bramante, a spectacular example of forced perspective.

8 6 P.M. > SECONDHAND SHOPPING

When Milan's fashionable denizens clean out closets, their gently used designer treasures turn up in the best vintage shops, like Cavalli e Nastri. The refined selection at this vintage emporium, which is spread over three locations, includes only pristine pieces from the 1920s to last season. Browse the men's store to find wool topcoats, dapper hats and loads of leather briefcases. Then cross the street to the women's shop, where a recent visit unearthed a silk Christian Dior skirt and a cool, neo-grunge Marni jacket. For the newest fashions, try your luck at the boutique in Brera, where dresses from Kenzo and Pucci share space with silk scarves from Hermès and Gucci.

8 30 P.M. > NAVIGLI NIGHT

The Navigli district surrounding the city's historic canals is a prime one-stop destination for evening entertainment. Start the night with dinner at Taglio, a casual restaurant, bar and food shop that opened in 2013. The menu changes often, but the light tempura zucchini flowers stuffed with ricotta that arrive atop broccoli gazpacho (14 euros) ought to be a permanent fixture. Then sample the risotto alla Milanese, a traditional saffron-infused dish that gets a delicious update with the addition of rich roasted marrow and crunchy toasted almonds and pine nuts (4 euros). Afterward head to Mag Café, a classy cocktail bar pouring expertly prepared concoctions, like 10 Gennaio, named after a historic date and made with Hendrick's gin, basil syrup, lemon peel, biters and vermouth (9 euros).

Sunday

10 10 A.M. > BREAKFAST BREADS

When a cafe greets its customers with a prominent sign proclaiming "Bread or Death," you know you can expect breakfast to include some high-quality gluten. So it is at Pavè, a Pinterest-perfect cafe and pasticceria with glass cases filled with a remarkable range of freshly baked goods, like apple-and-almond frangipane tartlets, raisin-studded slices of panettone, brioche filled with hazelnut cream. Devour your chosen treat at a cozy communal table while your hip Milanese neighbors recap their nights over extra-large cappuccini.

11 NOON > GREAT EXHIBITIONS

No other museum or institution in Italy has lately packed its calendar with as many world-class art exhibitions as the Palazzo Reale, a sprawling palace on the main Piazza Duomo. Two shows currently winding down are "Segantini. Il Ritorno a Milano" with more than 100 works from the 19th-century Italian painter (through Jan. 18), and an expansive Marc Chagall retrospective featuring more than 200 works by the artist (through Feb. 1). But you'll also find a van Gogh exhibition packed with paintings from private collections typically inaccessible to the public (through March 8). And in April, the palazzo will mount a Leonardo da Vinci exhibition that promises to be the largest ever in Italy. Take it slow, see it all, and when you're done, you'll find the resplendent Duomo waiting mere steps away.

Friday

4 P.M. > FUTURE OF FASHION

Beyond the flashy downtown fashion district, a new hub of creative shops has sprouted in and around Zona Tortona, a former industrial district southwest of the city center. The area's compelling coolness is best exemplified by Nonostante Marras, the spellbinding shop of the Sardinian designer Antonio Marras. Hidden from the street behind a residential building, past a locked gate and through an overgrown courtyard, the airy boutique has a mesmerizing interior: trees strung with fairy lights, artworks and antique furniture, a cylindrical wooden bookshelf with unusual titles, and a cluster of hanging lamps inside long white dresses painted with geometric patterns. Equally captivating is the clothing for sale, ranging from pleated lace skirts and prim pastel coats to statement-making runway dresses printed with howling wolves.



6 30 P.M. > POOLSIDE APERITIVO

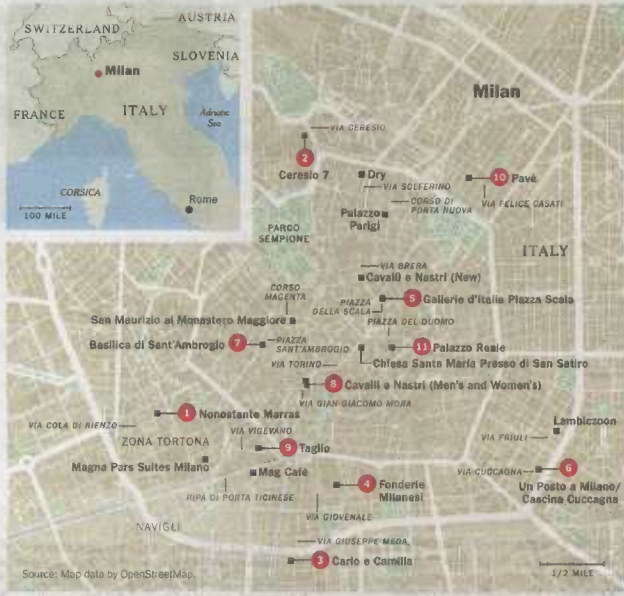
Aperitivo is a sacred rite in Milan, and there's no finer place to carry on the tradition than around the rooftop pool of Ceresio 7, a new bar and restaurant that oozes sophistication. The elegant spot opened in the fall of 2013 on the top floor of a Fascist-era office building that's the headquarters of the fashion house D'squared2. The glamorous interior (blood-red lacquered tables, peacock-blue lounge chairs, Art Deco brass bar) is the work of the local Dimore Studio design firm. But there's also substance beneath this beauty. For proof, order the Ceresio Spritz (sparkling wine, soda and Solerno, a Sicilian blood-orange liqueur; 15 euros, or about \$18, at \$1.20 to the euro), which will arrive with a series of snacks from flatbread stuffed with mortadella to a salad of prosciutto and pickled beets. Savor the spread from a poolside perch, where the dazzling view of blinking-light skyscrapers feels more like Tokyo than Italy.

9 P.M. > SUPPER AT THE SAWMILL

Arrive early to Carlo e Camilla, a restaurant that opened last year in a former sawmill, and you may think you have entered a large-scale art installation. That's how dramatic the atmosphere is within the cavernous space, where spotlights illuminate ornate crystal chandeliers and one long white table arranged in the shape of a cross. This vivid attention to detail extends to the kitchen, as it should, given that one owner is the well-regarded Italian chef Carlo Cracco. Highlights of a recent meal included an artful plate of tartare adorned with edible flowers, and an inventive pasta dish of paccheri tossed with turnip greens, mussels and smoked pig's trotters. Dinner for two, about 100 euros.

4 MIDNIGHT > DRINK DECISIONS

Three excellent new night spots, all opened in 2013, mean that diverse drinking options await the eager night owl. At the end of a dark alley in an old foundry is Fonderie Milanesi, a lively bar filled with Negroni-sipping, in-the-know locals. Craft-beer drinkers searching for rare Italian microbrews



Source: Map data by OpenStreetMap.

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should try the friendly pub Lambiczoan, specializing in sour ales and lambics. Looking for a scene suited to showing off sparkly skin-tight pants? Then slip into Dry, a dimly lit bar with a concept (cocktails and pizza) that attracts crowds of aspiring fashionistas late into the night.

Saturday

10 A.M. > BANK HOLDINGS

Italian banks apparently have diversified holdings that extend far beyond euros. The evidence is on display at the Gallerie d'Italia Piazza Scala, a trio of grand palazzi that is now an exhibition space for artworks held by the Intesa Sanpaolo banking group. A wing that opened in 2012 displays masterpieces from 20th-century Italian artists like Emilio Vedova and Lucio Fontana in opulent halls that once served as the seat of the Banca Commerciale Italiana. And two adjoining palazzi contain beautiful bas-reliefs by Antonio Canova and dreamy paintings

by Giorgio Belloni, among many others. Free admission.

12 30 P.M. > LUNCH ON THE FARM

For a break from the bustle without leaving the city, head to Cascina Cuccagna, a formerly abandoned 17th-century farmhouse that has been transformed into a lively cultural center hosting everything from creative writing courses and yoga classes to film nights and farmers' markets. In 2012, the project expanded to include a restaurant, Un Posto a Milano, that's ideal for lunch. The seasonal menu places "Portlandia"-level emphasis on carefully sourced ingredients; an autumnal meal included pumpkin-stuffed tortelli in a sage-and-butter sauce (15 euros) and a slow-cooked egg in potato cream with black truffles (9 euros).

7 3 P.M. > BEYOND THE DUOMO

Spend the afternoon touring some fascinating yet often overlooked churches, the ones

Above, the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, one of the world's oldest shopping malls. Left, raspberry tart at Pavè, a cafe and pasticceria, and patrons chat over drinks at Fonderie Milanesi, at the end of an alley in a renovated foundry.

IF YOU GO

- 1 Nonostante Marras, Via Cola di Rienzo 8; nonostantemarras.it.
- 2 Ceresio 7, Via Ceresio 7; www.ceresio7.com.
- 3 Carlo e Camilla, Via Giuseppe Meda 24; carloecamillainsegheira.it.
- 4 Fonderie Milanesi, Via Giovenale 7; fonderiemilanesi.it. Lambiczoan, Via Friuli 46; lambiczoan.com. Dry, Via Solferino 33; drymilano.it.
- 5 Gallerie d'Italia Piazza Scala, Piazza della Scala 6; gallerieditalia.com.
- 6 Un Posto a Milano, Via Cuccagna 2; unpostoa milano.it.
- 7 Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio, Piazza Sant'Ambrogio; basilicasantambrogio.it. Chiesa di San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore, Corso Magenta 15. Chiesa di Santa Maria Presso di San Satiro, Via Torino 17-19; 39-02-874683.
- 8 Cavalli e Nastri, Via Gian Giacomo Mora 3, Via Gian Giacomo Mora 12, Via Brera 2; cavallienastri.com.
- 9 Taglio, Via Vigevano 10; taglio.me. Mag Café, Ripa di Porta Ticinese 43; 39-340-098-4023.
- 10 Pavè, Via Felice Casati 27; pavemilano.com.
- 11 Palazzo Reale, Piazza del Duomo 12; comune.milano.it /palazzoreale.

ONLINE: MAP AND VIDEO

▶ Tour Milan in a 36 Hours video and check out our interactive map at nytimes.com/travel