

14. Hotel Locarno, Rome

In the early 1960s [owner] was looking for properties to spruce up and sell (in the side streets of Piazza del Popolo) when she was struck by the potential of the Hotel Locarno. Run into the ground by its Swiss owners, the tiny hotel was little more than a two-star knocking shop. So [owner] snapped up the property, eliminated all traces of its wartime occupants, that included Nazis, American liberators and boisterous bohemian types, and added her own style of exquisite shabby chic. The addition of neighbouring apartments and a brand-new wing which was built two years ago have bolstered the room-count to 66, each individually designed in a true boutique style. Charming details like the original rickety lift and the sunny breakfast terrazza, coupled with delicious breakfasts and friendly staff have secured it as the hotel of choice for visiting dignitaries and starry-eyed honeymooners indulging in a bit of *Roman Holiday* romance. When in Rome, we wouldn't stay anywhere else. *Hotel Locarno, Via Della Penna 22, Rome, tel: 39.06 361 0841. www.hotellocarno.com*



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15. Hotel Fortino Napoleonico, Portonovo

If these walls could talk, they'd probably tell you about the time this fortress conversion housed imperial troops or, in more recent times, of the dalliances of hotel guests enjoying themselves among the original oil paintings and intricate tiling in its maze of 30 rooms.

Hotel Fortino Napoleonico, Via Poggio, Portonovo, tel: 39.071 801 450

Gourmet gelati

1. Gelateria di San Crispino, Via della Panetteria 42, Rome, tel: 39.06 70 45 0412
2. Gelateria Pepino, Piazza Carignano 8, Turin, tel: 39.011 542 009
3. Gelateria Davide, Via P.R. Giuliani 39, Sorrento, tel: 39.08 1878 1337
4. Caffè Defilla, Corso Garibaldi 4, Chiavari, Genoa, tel: 39.01 8530 9829
5. Il Caffè Sicilia, Corso Vittorio Emanuele 125, Noto - Siracusa, tel: 39.09 318 35 013

16. Ca' Pisani Hotel, Venice

Even if the playful interiors, over-designed bathrooms and quartz tiles of the Ca' Pisani Hotel aren't your thing, you can't help but admire the off-off San Marco Square location and the impeccable craftsmanship. Less lavish than Hotel Danieli but with just as many Americans, Ca' Pisani's high ceilings and burnished rosewood beds are the perfect retreat when the crowds become too onerous. Were it not for the small rooftop solarium - a sanctuary reserved exclusively for guests - we'd have a difficult time forgiving the establishment for the automatic coffee machine in the cantina. *Ca' Pisani Hotel, Dorsoduro 979/A, Venice, tel: 39.041 240 1411. www.capisanihotel.it*

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