



## SERMONETA GLOVES

Mild winters allow for stylish accessorizing sans Gortex and goose down, and the gloves that most people wear tend to serve no functional purpose whatsoever. Lest a fashionista leave a style stone unturned, Sermoneta's precision-cut gloves are available in all imaginable hues, affirming Rome's penchant for artisanship with pizzazz.

www.sermonetagloves.com

## FENDI

When the five Fendi daughters joined forces with Karl Lagerfeld in the 1960s, they melded the family tradition of fine craftsmanship with cutting-edge flair. Their fur coats in shocking pinks and pastels helped define a decade of fashion flamboyance. Today, Fendi continues to set the standard for superior quality accessories with standout appeal.

www.fendi.com

## TAD

A tri-level concept store selling the hottest labels in clothing, accessories and home furnishings, Romans in the know (and in the dough) visit TAD for regular style sprees. Spenders fuel up at the Thai-Italian fusion restaurant, and exit in style thanks to the on-site hair salon. The mega boutique rubs shoulders with big shots like Gucci, Valentino, Armani, Prada, Costume National and Missoni in the exclusive shopping hub of Piazza di Spagna.

www.taditaly.com

## JOIA AND SIENA ART CAFÉ

Call it subtle exhibitionism or vanity in its purest form, but dressing up is but a morsel of Roman style. Joia, three floors of restaurant-piano bar-discotheque, hails your arrival at the Testaccio club district. Hundreds of would-be partiers and a team of tanned and black-tied bouncers protect the most sought-after entrance on this side of town. On the north side of the city, Siena Art Café breaks the silence of the Villa Borghese Gardens with DJ sets till dawn and fashion shows attended by catwalker wannabes, flailing in all directions.

www.mercuriusrelocations.com

# ROME



» **CAPUT MUNDI: CAPITAL OF THE WORLD. THE HEART OF HUMAN HISTORY'S GREATEST CIVILIZATION. A COUPLE THOUSAND YEARS LATER, THE CITY OF ROME IS NOT HALF AS HUGE AS ITS EGO. GROWING UP WITH SOUL STIRRING VISTAS IN ALL DIRECTIONS AND THE COLOSSEUM AT THE CENTER OF JUST ANOTHER TRAFFIC-SWOLLEN INTERSECTION HAS BESTOWED AN AIR OF NATURAL-BORN GREATNESS UPON THE CITIZENS OF THE ETERNAL CITY, YET THESE DAYS MILAN PRESENTS A NOBLE (AND WELL-DRESSED) ADVERSARY IN THE QUEST FOR THE BEST.**

★★★ It's a case of first-born jealousy, a refusal to be forgotten. While clinging to the past as their saving grace and selling point, Romans are kicking, screaming and flailing their arms in the shadow of thoroughly modern Milan, desperate to show the world that they've got their Fendi-clad feet in the door of the 21st century...or at least they can dress the part.

The "hey-look-at-me" approach to daily living results in a larger-than-life look. Catwalk creations designed for leggy models meant to shock and sensationalize, creep their way into popular prêt-à-porter chain shops around town. Suddenly, three-tiered, ruffled skirts and jockey pants (tucked-in carefully or straight up jammed inside their boots) are appearing in Rome's bottom half, while glittery screen-tees, corsets and miniature jackets cover scandalously little up top.

In a city of genuine, working class and warm-hearted people, the idea is to make the most of what you've got. And the more – or less, depending on the tightness of the jeans or the profundity of the plunge – you've got, the more you're expected to flaunt. Roman cooking, for example, is hearty, flavorful and filling. No Frills. Haute cuisine abounds in the capital, yet true Romans scoff at unnecessary flair and exaggerated prices. Of course, they want to be seen at the restaurants of the moment, and exceptions are made for occasions requiring a smashing impression. Luxe dining establishments make a *bella figura*, and trendy Romans wouldn't miss out on the flash bulbs and (free) prosecco at the latest restaurant openings. Arty ambiance aside, however, Romans consider a good deal to be a good meal.

The same goes for fashion. Fussy and avant-garde just don't play here. While a girl may choose which styles to replicate, inventive ensembles will get her disapproving if not pitiable stares. The idea is not to look expensive either, but up-to-date and style-savvy. This often results in the throwing together of flimsy runway knockoffs that attempt to incorporate virtually every trend of the season into a cyclone of would-be chic.

That is not to say that shelling out a little extra cash for the real thing is a fashion misdemeanor. But with designer imitations on every corner, a lady can't depend on a Gucci bag or Prada heels to make or break her fashion plate. Choice fabrics, genuine leather and gemstones demand attention in a sea of synthetic label likenesses. Unscuffed heels win style stripes as well – considering the wholly gratuitous sporting of stilettos on cobblestone. A city obsessed with quality craftsmanship awards high points for a polished (and put-together) look.

While it is generally a city of fashion followers, Rome boasts its fair share of innovation. Valentino – best known for his flashy, feminine evening gowns and red carpet couture – got his start here. His signature hues of brazen red-oranges have earned many a starlet front-page coverage.

All dressed up and nowhere to go? The city is busting at the seams with nightclubs and bars, all vying for address-of-the-moment. The Roman social scene travels in packs, so expect long lines and the scrutiny of beefy bouncers at the door. In the Testaccio club district, Joia sees crowds numbering in the hundreds well after 2 a.m. Nearby Ketum Sushi Bar opens its doors in the early evening for

the *aperitivo* – a trendy Milanese import, consisting of after-work cocktails, buffet-style appetizers and steady schmoozing.

Dressing for success ensures nothing close to a rung-up on the career ladder unless you are aiming for a career in show business – which appears to be the order of the day. Over 30 years ago, Fran Lebowitz concluded, "Rome is a very loony city in every respect. One needs but spend an hour or two there to realize that Fellini makes documentaries." In fact, Romans flagrantly express themselves with every inch of their bodies and a full range of vocal decibels. Be it hot Latin blood or a repressive Catholic Church, one thing is certain: melodrama is just another Tuesday. ★★★