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The Best Well-Kept Secrets Of Italy's Fashion Capital

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By **Alessia Algani** for [Fathom](#) | Milan is a strange place. Considered the ugly duckling among the more famous Italian art cities, it is usually considered no more than a starting point for the Grand Tour to Venice, Florence, Rome, and Lake Como, or as a pit stop for luxury shopping. But that's not fair. Milan — the Italian capital of fashion, design, music, and publishing — is actually full of surprises and well kept secrets.

While I have lived here for more than twenty years, I was not born in Milan, which may be why I am still amazed by it. I am curious by nature, and the city app I created, [Milanochemipiace](#) (“The Milan that I like”), allows me to do what I love the most: walk, look, listen, and share. (The newest version comes out September 22, 2014.) I fall in love with my city a hundred times over every week. These places, restaurants, and sites are just a few of the reasons why.



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Factory-turned-modern art museum HangarBicocca. Photo courtesy of HangarBicocca.




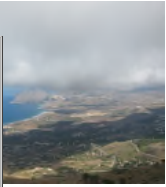
Sunny courtyard of the Triennale Design Museum. Photo courtesy of La Triennale.

WHAT TO SEE

[Villa Necchi Campiglio](#)

Via Mozart, 14, Porta Venezia; +39-02-7634-0121

Time stands still in the former home of the Necchi Campiglio family, leading

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lived here. The family recently donated the villa to [FAI](#), the Italian Fund for the Environment, and is part of the circuit of [Historic House Museums of Milan](#).

HangarBicocca

Via Chiese, 2, Bicocca; +39-02-6611-1573

The old steel manufacturing factory is now a contemporary art museum managed by the former Tate Modern director Vicente Todoli. Exhibitions and installations by international stars round out the permanent collection, which includes Anselm Kiefer's yearningly beautiful *Seven Heavenly Palaces*, produced for the 2004 opening.

Triennale

Viale Emilio Alemagna, 6, Cadorna-Castello; +39-02-724-341

An amazing 1930s building that hosts dozens of exhibitions and projects annually in the field of architecture, fashion, and the audio-visual arts. Also here are Triennale Design Museum, a dynamic institution that explores the history of Italian design through ever-evolving displays, a wonderful bookstore, a café facing the park, and a garden for dreaming in the sunshine.



Cinderella For A Night In Venice

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Ravello: The Best View On The Amalfi Coast



Piazza Castello, 27, Cadorna-Castello; +39-02-805-3606

The former studio where influential industrial designer Achille Castiglioni worked for decades on pieces that made their mark on the history of Italian creativity. This is a special place, the rooms packed with drawings, photographs, models, prototypes, books, instruments, and objects he collected in his lifetime. The visit takes an hour and is limited to no more than 20 at a time. Tours are led by his wife Irma and daughter Giovanna, who regale visitors with terrific and inspiring stories about the man, his life, and his work.

The Architectural Marvels of Milan

Milan was the most damaged Italian city during the World War II bombings. Entire areas were destroyed, a tragic loss that had a silver lining: Milan became the perfect training arena for the brilliant architects of the era. Vico Magistretti, Gio Ponti, Luigi Caccia Dominioni, Asnago & Venders, BBPR Studio, and Franco Albini all did some of their best and most innovative work here. For architecture lovers, discovering the jewels they scattered everywhere is pure pleasure, an outstanding way to see the city. A tour of local 20th-century architectural icons would include stops at [Acquario Civico](#), [Stazione Centrale](#), [Grattacielo Pirelli](#), [Torre Velasca](#), [Torre al Parco on Via Revere Giuseppe](#), [Torre Branca](#), and [Torre Rasini](#).

Among the more recent beauties, don't miss the [L.O.V.E. sculpture](#) by artist Maurizio Cattelan in front of the Palazzo della Borsa and [Università Bocconi](#) (Via Roberto Sarfatti, 25; +39-02-5836-3434) by Grafton Architects.



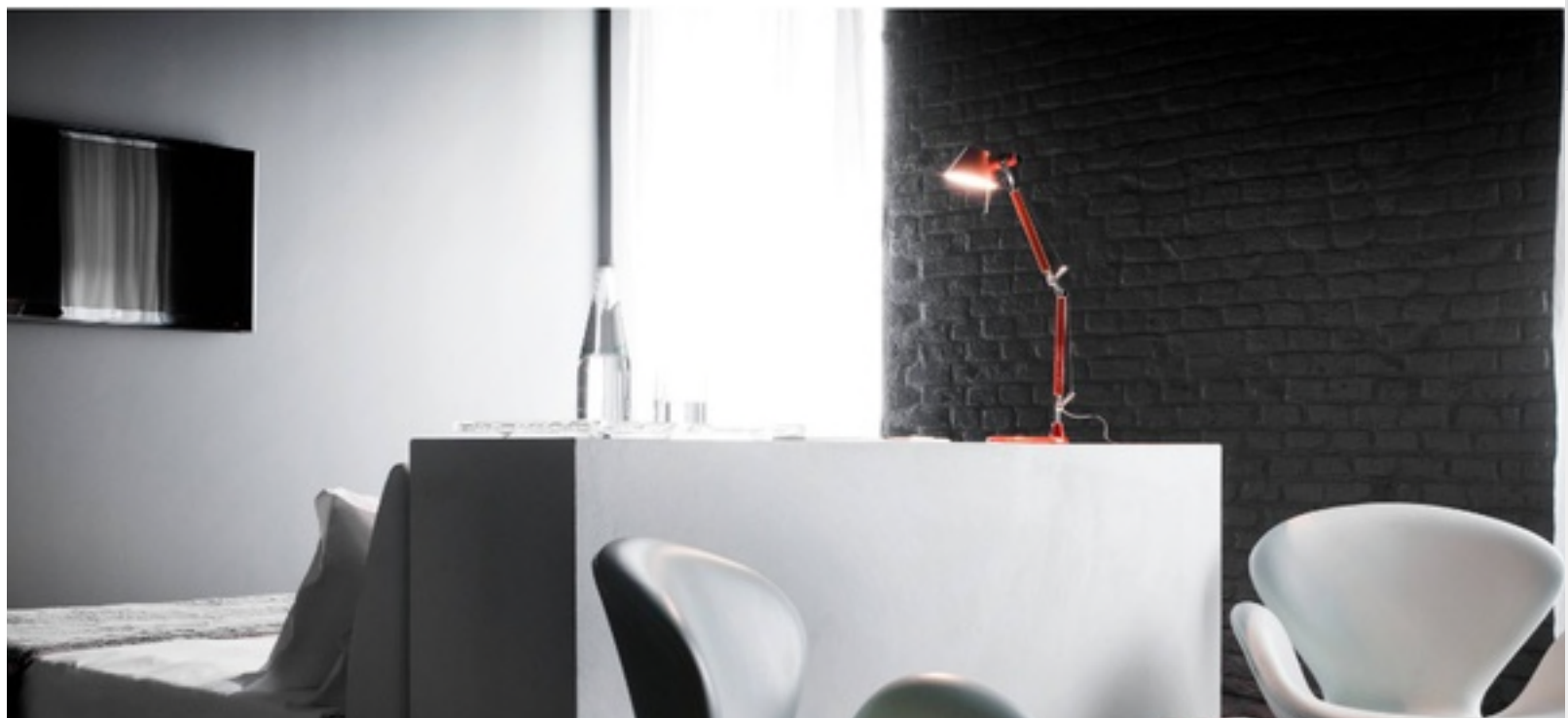
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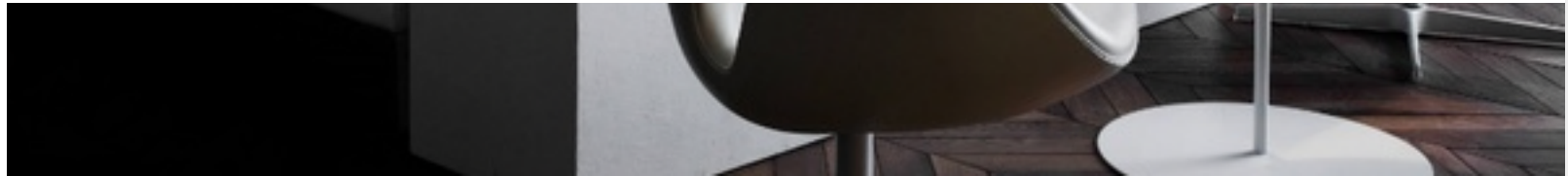


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Be Alone At Spain's Best Restaurants





Sleek and modern rooms at Palazzo Segreti. Photo courtesy of Palazzo Segreti.

WHERE TO SLEEP

[Palazzo Segreti](#)

Via San Tomaso, 8; Duomo; +39-02-4952-9250

Halfway between La Scala and the Castello Sforzesco, the atmosphere at this hotel is both cozy and exclusive. The historic building has been restored by Studio Brizzi+Riefenstahl, transformed into a charming residence of great aesthetic impact. Contemporary art works from [Galleria Lia Rumma](#) are showcased in the common areas on the ground floor.

[Arjumand's Home](#)

Villa Santa Marta, 11; Duomo; +39-02-869-2077

An amazing apartment inside an ancient building in Milan's most beautiful and hidden area. The furnishings are a perfect mix of family heirloom, textiles from Arjumand's collections, and carpets from [Alberto Levi Gallery](#). Among the services for guests are fresh bread and newspapers in the breakfast basket. Adorable.

[Ostello Bello](#)

Villa Medici, 4, Porta Ticinese; +39-02-3658-2720

A hostel managed with a homely atmosphere between the Duomo and Navigli, where hostel guests and local Milanese with an international flare converge in the ground floor hall to have breakfast, lunch, drinks, read a book, and work on their laptops. This is a great place to meet new people.

[Rosso Segnale](#)

Via Antonio Sacchini, 18, Centrale-Loreto; +39-02-2952-7453

Near the Stazione Centrale on a quiet lane of early 20th-century buildings stands a lovely B&B whose name, "Road Sign Red," refers to the color of the lift connecting the floors. The three rooms are decorated with secondhand pieces. Among the common areas are a breathtaking terrace and a charming garden, where the landlords Raoul and Alberto have placed two lovely cabanas — a reading room and a micro gym.



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