



SHOPPING IN ROME

We won't confuse you with the names of lots of shops, but there are several main shopping areas and some things are good buys, others not.

How good the values are depends a lot on the exchange rate, and since the Euro was introduced at the beginning of 2002 the dollar has lost over 30% of its value. After the lira was replaced by the Euro, in theory, the prices should have been half as many Euros as thousands of lire, i.e., what cost L10,000 should now cost €5. It seems that Italian merchants took advantage the currency switch to jack up prices. Alas, Italy is not the bargain now that it was in 2000-2002, but it's still not bad, and the good news for the US traveler is that while the dollar has declined badly, it looks like it will get much worse before long.

Given the current exchange rate, less things are good buys now in Italy. There are several main shopping areas in Rome:

1. The Center- The elegant center of town extends from Piazza del Popolo between via del Babuino and via del Corso to via del Tritone. Here you'll find via Condotti with Gucci for bags and shoes, Bulgari for silver and jewels, Knoll Gavina for furniture. Most of these places are ridiculously expensive but still, not as expensive as their NYC branches. On via del Babuino and via Margutta just behind via Condotti, you'll find art galleries, modern furniture and lamp stores, antiques dealers and fabrics (Cesari). Via Frattina and via Borgognona are almost as chic as via Condotti. This whole area is a gold mine and has everything you could ever want if only you had the money.
2. Via Nazionale- This is a sort of main shopping street of Rome. It's central so English is spoken in most shops. The street is full of clothing and shoe shops with prices distinctly lower than those you'll find in via Condotti.
3. Prati-If via Condotti is the Fifth Avenue of Rome, via Cola di Rienzo, is its 34th St. This is a big shopping area where Romans more than tourists do their shopping. From Piazza Cavour to via Andrea Doria the streets are all full of shops selling just

about everything. This is on the right bank of the Tiber, just north of St. Peters, and easy to reach by subway, but very nearly impossible to park in.

4. Piazza Fiume- La Rinascente, Rome's best department store, is on Piazza Fiume (as well as on via del Corso) and the streets nearby, particularly via Salaria and via Po, are full of little shops.
5. Porta Portese- On Sunday mornings from very early until 12:30 or 1:00 the flea market holds sway, from the Porta Portese extending south on via Portuense about a kilometer. You can find everything from car radios to statues from Neopolitan churches; used clothing to antiques. Don't miss it. Just watch out for pickpockets and remember to bargain.
6. Via Sannio- Just outside the wall at Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano there is a smaller flea market on Saturday morning, with many of the same merchants that work Porta Portese on Sunday mornings. However, there are stalls open every day. This is a good place to find cheap clothing and leather and suede jackets and bags. Here too, haggle over the prices.
