

Milan

ON THE MOVE

FASHION CONSCIOUS,
FORWARD THINKING AND AT
THE FOREFRONT OF EUROPEAN
ART AND ARCHITECTURE,
COSMOPOLITAN MILAN
IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING



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UNTIL FIVE YEARS AGO I was an espresso-chugging, Vespa-riding *Milanese*. Love lured me away from the city, and in my mind, Milan stayed the same: the Gothic Duomo cathedral, Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* and week upon week of catwalk shows.

But in Italy's economic capital, changes are afoot. Fine architecture, art and aesthetics will never be far from Milan's eye for anything beautiful, and a volley of new museums, renovations and fashion-inspired openings are swinging their doors open. On the distant horizon, Milan is the World EXPO's next stop in 2015 (expo2015.org). And when friends informed me that the city has begun to lay some serious foundations, adding world-class infrastructure to its trendy swagger, I had to see it for myself.

Piazza Duomo is the city's nerve centre. On the cold blue morning I visit it's packed with tourists snapping the newly polished Duomo, one of the world's biggest cathedrals. (In true Italian style it took 500 years to finish and another seven to clean, but it looks superb.) This throng of visitors normally drifts north to Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Milan's elegant 19th-century shopping mall replete with Prada and Gucci. But as of last month, all eyes have been drawn south to the piazza's southern edge, where the much-anticipated Museo del Novecento (museum of 20th-century art; museodelnovecento.org) opened on 6 December. On its walls

hang canvases by Picasso, de Chirico and Modigliani, some emerging from decades of storage. The opening was delayed – no surprise there – but with a host of far-out features including a funky spiral ramp that twists its way up to a panoramic terrace overlooking the city's main square, it's been well worth the wait.

WITH MY TRUSTY *abbonamento giornaliero* (24-hour public transport pass, €3) in hand, I'm keen to check out two other places of arty pilgrimage. The Chiesa di San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore (free entrance, open Tuesday–Saturday; [15 Corso Magenta](http://15CorsoMagenta)) is covered top-to-toe in brilliant frescoes, their restoration completed this past June. During the 16th century, Bernardino Luini decorated the church with an almost overwhelming cornucopia of religious images. Behind the altar, accessed via a small doorway, the inky blue ceilings of the Convent Hall are dotted with vivid gold stars.

Past Cimitero Monumentale, Milan's gloriously imposing cemetery where the fabulously wealthy rest in peace in designer tombs in a largely residential neighbourhood, Galleria Lia Rumma (free entrance, open Tuesday–Saturday; [19 Via Stilicone, liarumma.it](http://19ViaStilicone.liarumma.it)) inaugurated a brand-new space this summer. This five-floor glass and concrete industrial cube >



PHOTO © VANNI BURKHART



Left, Galleria Carla Sozzani is just one of the contemporary venues re-shaping Milan



Clockwise from below, Hangar Bicocca; Zaha Hadid's CityLife; Marc Jacobs' lounge bar; Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II; Museo del Novecento



showcases ultra-contemporary art, and claims to be the largest private art gallery in Europe. The ground floor will hum with Joseph Kosuth's white neon wordplay, *'Texts for Nothing'*, *Samuel Beckett, in Play* until the end of this month, while the upper levels explore more than 40 years of Kosuth's groundbreaking artworks.

On art overload, I'm ready to shop and head south to the city's famous shopping street, Corso Buenos Aires. The Milanese are notorious fashion snobs and would rather go naked than be seen in last year's Prada, so this boulevard lined with outlet stores is where year-old labels go to find their buyer. It's a particularly fantastic stomping ground for this month's sales, which start on 6 January. Interspersed among the boutiques are new additions to Milan's dining scene: lunchtime-only restaurants that woo shoppers with knockdown Milanese specials. Mains such as pumpkin risotto or breaded veal are dished up for €3-5 a pop.

From Corso Buenos Aires' northern end, Piazza Loreto, I wander over to Milan's landmark train station, the shimmery white Stazione Centrale. Its impressively chunky façade, completed in 1931 under Mussolini (and hardly touched for the following seven decades) has just emerged from a serious

spring clean. It's now peppered with moving walkways and a myriad of shops, including Feltrinelli Express, a new outpost for Italy's biggest bookstore; its top floor is crowned with a brand-new exhibition space, Sala Giorgio Gaber.

A CENTURY AGO Brera was known for its brothels, but now it's Marc Jacobs' new flagship store (6 *Piazza del Carmine*) that draws the visitors. The shop shares an open space with Marc Jacobs' lounge bar: stop in any day between 6pm and 9pm for a Cocktail Marc (knock-your-socks-off tequila and mandarin with a lychee twist for €10) and you can delve into the freebie nibbles (spinach frittata, salami focaccia) stacked in pyramids on the bar.

Strolling straight up Via Mercato and Corso Garibaldi, there's time to stop into

Galleria Carla Sozzani (10 *Corso Como*, galleriacarlasozzani.org). Don't miss Robert Pollidori's *Versailles* exhibition, which runs from 15 January and showcases his Palace of Versailles shots spanning 25 years.

Along Viale Monte Grappa to my final destination of the day, the newly opened fashion-industry favourite Clandestino Milano (12 *Viale Monte Grappa*, maisonmoschino.com), on the ground floor of Maison Moschino. Here head chef Moreno Cedroni dishes up not sushi (how last year) but "sushi" tasters; sushi-shaped bites using fresh Italian veggies instead of seaweed, and olive oil rather than soy. The seats are skirted with flouncy Moschino outfits, and wine is chilled in a sleek Moschino handbag cooler.

And in the future? To the west of the city centre, the futuristic towers of the CityLife (city-life.it) skyscraper project are rising each day. This cluster of residences, offices and park space will include the new Museo di Arte Contemporanea by Daniel Libeskind and a high-rise by Zaha Hadid. It's set for completion in time for the EXPO; a deadline the Milanese simply can't be late for.

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