

Sections

Close

VOTO ESTERO

Travel

Commenta per primoShared: 2      

Discovering "Roma Maxima": Stories and Secrets of an Eternal City

This guidebook of La Repubblica is "not a spasmodic research for opulence, but rather for beauty, for the unique, a research of fantasy"

Italian Hours

by Lucy Gordan

Utilizziamo i cookie per offrirti servizi e informazioni in linea con le tue preferenze. Continuando a scorrere e a navigare ne consenti

l'uso.

OK

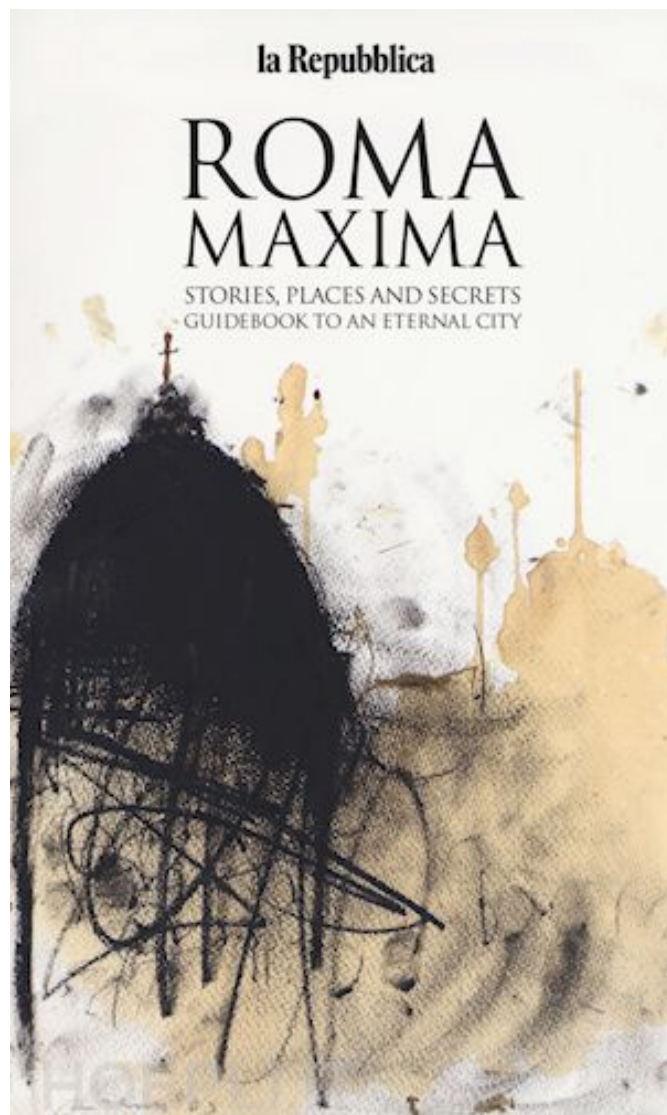
Maggiori informazioni



Rome, the Eternal City

Mar 23 2018

A guidebook that is "like a golden treasure chest, jealously enshrining the most exclusive keys of Rome and then offering them to the reader", Giuseppe Cerasa, Editorial Director of all La Repubblica's guidebook, said. Besides "Roma Maxima", La Repubblica also published in January 2018 its first guide by region dedicated to a food product, La cioccolata. A second concerning beer is forthcoming shortly.



The cover of "Roma Maxima: Stories, Places and Secrets, Guidebook to an Eternal City"

The first guidebooks to Rome, written for the use of pilgrims, date to the Middle Ages. The website [History of Information](#) reports:

The *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* maintained by the British Library cites over 100 different printed editions of the medieval guide known as *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* issued before 1501. *Opusculum de mirabilibus novae & veteris Urbis Romae* first issued in 1510 by Francesco Albertini, a pupil of the painter Domenico Ghirlandaio, who became canon of the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence and chaplain of Cardinal Fazio Santoro in Rome, was the first guidebook to both ancient and modern Rome. It was well designed as a guidebook with a detailed table of contents of its three parts in the beginning and running heads to each section, making it easy to find specific sections of the guide. [For example,] besides an

account of ancient Rome, with information about excavations and archeological discoveries, Albertini discussed the churches and buildings commissioned by Julius II and the artists who decorated them.”

Further research on the internet led me to discover that [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) devotes 88 pages to guidebooks of the Eternal City. So yes, all roads still lead to Rome, but why would anyone need a new guide with so many already to choose from?

On the back cover of *Roma Maxima: Stories, Places and Secrets, Guidebook to an Eternal City* (14,90 euros), Giuseppe Cerasa, Editorial Director of all *La Repubblica*’s (Italy’s only national newspaper’s) guidebooks, explains: “*Roma Maxima* is not a spasmodic research for opulence, but rather for beauty, for the unique, a research of fantasy and contemporaneity, without forgetting the pearls of the past, the myriad of gems which can be found in a city like Rome. This guidebook is like a golden treasure chest, jealously enshrining the most exclusive keys of Rome and then offering them to the reader...We overlook the most banal suggestions, already regarded as universal heritage, to search, instead, among the alleys of the capital, as in the chicest quarters, the human and symbolic icons which are eventually the reason of being of each journey.”

I’ve lived in Rome for almost half a century so at first was skeptical that in *Roma Maxima* I could discover information I didn’t know already or couldn’t find in the several shelves of books about Rome I already own. At first glance it’s divided into neighborhoods like the *DK Eyewitness Guides* with photographs of each entry, but several of its 13 neighborhoods are residential, like Ponte Milvio/Flaminio/Foro Italico and Coppedé/Torlonia/Villa Ada/Nomentana or off-the beaten-track like Quadraro/Cinecittà, their cultural sites, shops, and restaurants not described in other guides. Like the *NY Times* articles “36 Hours in “ it divides each neighborhood by the hours of the day, but because the chapters are neighborhoods, not a whole city, they can go into much more detail. Moreover, its chapter on “Day Trips” outside of Rome includes places not in any of my other guidebooks like “Paul Getty’s Oasis-Palo Laziale”, “Celebrities and Magic Sabaudia/Circeo”, and “The Best Fresh Fish-Fiumicino/Anzio/Ponza”. Other uniquenesses are interviews about Rome with foreign correspondents based in Rome, Roman nobles on their family history and family recipes, or VIP residents like Sophia Loren’s son Edoardo Ponti and composer Nicola Piovani as is its final chapter called “Timeless Artisans” which covers artisanal jewelers, fashion and furniture

designers, bookbinders, make-up artists, and *gelatai*. So rest assured that you won't find the contents of *Roma Maxima* in other guides.

From 1970 to 1976 I lived in *Monteverde Vecchio* on the top of the Janiculum hill near the American Academy in Rome and since then downhill, a ten-minute walk from St. Peter's.

Roma Maxima covers this whole area in a chapter entitled “Pamphili/Aurelio/Gregorio VII”, subtitled “The Villa of the Lakes and Moretti's Route”. I've eaten at several of the restaurants it recommends: elegant and imaginative “*Antico Arco*”, “*Cesare al Casaletto*” for traditional Roman dishes, “*Lumie di Sicilia*” especially for the unforgettable typically Sicilian desserts: *canoli*, pistachio cake or the “*bomba dell'Etna*”, and “*Gatta Mangiona*” for unbeatable pizza or its menu of the day. All are truly delicious as are the omitted family-run and usually-packed “*Il Cortile*” and “*Il Focolare*”, the best *trattorie* in Monteverde Vecchio. Needless to say, I look forward to enjoying for the first time the *tonno carbonara* and *tonarelli* with mussels at another *Roma Maxima* recommendation: picturesque Antonello Pelliccioni's “*Ristopescheria*” off Via Gregorio VII, which is both a fishmonger and restaurant.

I too would recommend its two choices of hotels, the reasonably-priced “*Il Cantico*”, owned by the Franciscan Order, only a short walk or two stops on any Via Gregorio VII bus to St. Peter's, and “*Grand Hotel Gianicolo*” for its swimming pool and its restaurant, “*La Corte degli Archi*”. However, for the same reasons I definitely would have praised “*Gran Melia Rome*” on the slope of the Janiculum built on the site of an ancient Roman villa and only a five-minute walk to St. Peter's. Don Alfonso Iaccarino, awardee of three Michelin stars, is the consultant/chef of the restaurant “*Viva Voce*”.

Instead, to get away from it all, I couldn't agree more with the choice of “St. Peter's Spa” in the “*Hotel Crowne Plaza*” Rome at Via Aurelia Antica 415, “a paradise of 900 square meters devoted exclusively to relaxation.”

Another recommended spa I know is at the “*Parco dei Principi Grand Hotel*” in Parioli as our other nearby favorites of mine: chef Claudio Mengoni's oxtail *tortelli* at “*Assaye*” in the charming “*Aldobrandi Palace Hotel*”, Stefano Marzetti's risotto with foie gras and liquorice powder at rooftop “*Mirabelle*” overlooking Rome's legendary park, the *Villa Borghese*, in Roberto Naldi's five-star “*Hotel Splendide Royal*”, and Fabio Cervi's iconic *cacio e pepe* spaghetti with Madagascar red pepper and rose blossoms at rooftop “*La Terrazza*” at the newly-

redesigned luxurious in “*Eden Hotel*”. However, I would have to live in Rome at least another 50 years to explore all the still unfamiliar recommendations in *Roma Maxima*, many in neighborhoods I thought I knew well.

La Repubblica has been publishing guides since 2003. Its first title was “*Ristoranti di Roma*”. After that it published annual guides in a series called “*sapori e piaceri*” by region first for Latium (available also in Chinese and in Spanish), Umbria, Tuscany, and Abruzzo. For the past seven years it has published such guides for every region except one. The Valle d’Aosta guide will be published in 2018 for the first time.

The only other city besides Rome to have its own guide, published in October 2017, is Trieste. Trieste, available only in Italian, and *Roma Maxima*, *La Repubblica*’s only guide also in English, will be the first in a new *La Repubblica* is dedicating to Italian cities.

Besides *Roma Maxima*, *La Repubblica* also published in January 2018 its first guide by region dedicated to a food product, *La cioccolata*. A second concerning beer is forthcoming shortly.

Another splendid *La Repubblica* initiative, in collaboration with ANAS, is the guide published for the first time in 2017 and recently updated: *Autostrade Gourmet* with some 3000 addresses on where to sleep and eat and what to buy within a 15-mile radius of each of Italy’s *autostrade* exits. *Buon viaggio!*

[Lucy Gordan](#)

Lucy Gordan

Italian Hours

Former editor at the American Academy in Rome and at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, with journalistic accreditation in Italy and the Vatican, I'm culture editor of the US monthly *Inside the Vatican*; European... [\[More\]](#)

Column

ABOUT MORE

[arts in rome](#)

[guidebook](#)

[living in Rome](#)

[Rome](#)

[travelling](#)