

DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

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There's no city with better backdrops for a drink. You can sip a cocktail overlooking the Roman Forum or crack open the Campari watching the light bounce off baroque fountains. Often the best way to enjoy nightlife in Rome is to wander from restaurant to bar, getting happily lost down picturesque cobbled streets and being awestruck by ancient splendour.

Rome, like most cities, is a collection of districts, all with their particular character. For more on Rome's different areas, see the boxed text, p224. In cutting-edge club terms, the city's no Berlin or London, but there's still plenty of after-dark fun to be had.

Most people dress up to go out – the *bella figura* (looking good) is important. The majority of locals spend evenings looking beautiful, checking each other out, partaking of the odd ice cream, and not getting drunk – that would be most unseemly. However, this is changing and certain areas – particularly those popular with a younger crowd – can get rowdy with tipsy teens (for example, around Campo de' Fiori and parts of Trastevere).

And smart isn't the only way to go. Rome's flip side is a surprising alternative underbelly, centred on left-wing *centri sociali* (organised squats; see the boxed text, p226), grungy squatter arts centres that often have live music, and where dressed-down is the look.

Up-for-it Romans tend to eat late, then drink at bars before heading off to a club at around 1am. It can be difficult to get around, as some places are far-flung – despite drink-and-drive rules, most locals drive, hence the alarming road-accident statistics.

For a drink you can choose from myriad charming bars, *enoteche* (wine bars) and pubs. Bars range from spit-and-sawdust (no décor but the beer is cheap) to designer places for the exquisitely dressed. The *enoteca* was where the old boys from the neighbourhood used to drink rough local wine poured straight from the barrel. Times have changed: nowadays they tend to be sophisticated if still atmospheric places, offering Italian and international vintages, delicious cheeses and cold cuts. Pubs are based on the Irish or British model and look almost like the real thing, but populated with better-groomed people.

Some of the more popular nightclubs have a whimsical door policy, and men will often find themselves turned away. At many clubs both men and women will have to dress up to get in or fit in. Often admission is free, but drinks are expensive. Cocktails can cost from €10 to €15, but you can drink much more cheaply in the studenty clubs of San Lorenzo, Pigneto and the *centri sociali*.

For listings check *Trovaroma* (an insert in daily newspaper *La Repubblica*) on Thursday and *Roma C'è* on Wednesday, both of which have a short English section, or the English-language *Wanted in Rome* magazine, published every second Wednesday. Also, in bars and cafés look out for the free nightlife listings in monthly *Zero* (www.zero.eu). For alternative and techno events try <http://romastyle.info/>, while www.musicaroma.it lists concerts in Rome. To book live-music tickets see the local listings publications, try *Comune di Roma* (www.060608.it), or contact the ticketing agency *Orbis* (Map pp106–7; ☎ 06 482 74 03; Piazza dell'Esquilino 37).

Major concerts are held indoors or outdoors at the Auditorium della Musica (p234), with an incredible programme of pop, world and jazz music stars. Large concerts also take place at Rome's sports stadiums, *Stadio Flaminio* (Map pp150–1; www.federugby.it; ☎ 06 368 57 309; Viale Maresciallo Pilsudski) and *Stadio Olimpico* (p243). For smaller venues, see the listings in this chapter.

Friends in Rome (www.friendsinrome.com) is a social organisation that offers a chance to mingle with an international crowd – a mix of expats, locals and out-of-towners – and find out about the local social scene. The friendly organisers arrange regular social events, including *aperitivo* evenings and film showings.

ANCIENT ROME

In Ancient Rome there are several places in which to drink in the fabulous views. You can't beat a cocktail as the sun goes down on the empire.

CAFFÈ CAPITOLINO Map pp64–5 Café

☎ 06 326 51 236; Capitoline Museums, Piazza del Campidoglio 19; ☎ 9am-midnight Tue-Sat, to 8.30pm Sun, to 5pm Mon; 🚶 Piazza Venezia; ☎ This well-kept secret of a café is a lovely spot to take a break from the wonders of