Romancing Rome

The Eternal City is one of the most exhilarating and romantic destinations in the world. Here's why it should feature at the top of any honeymooner's list

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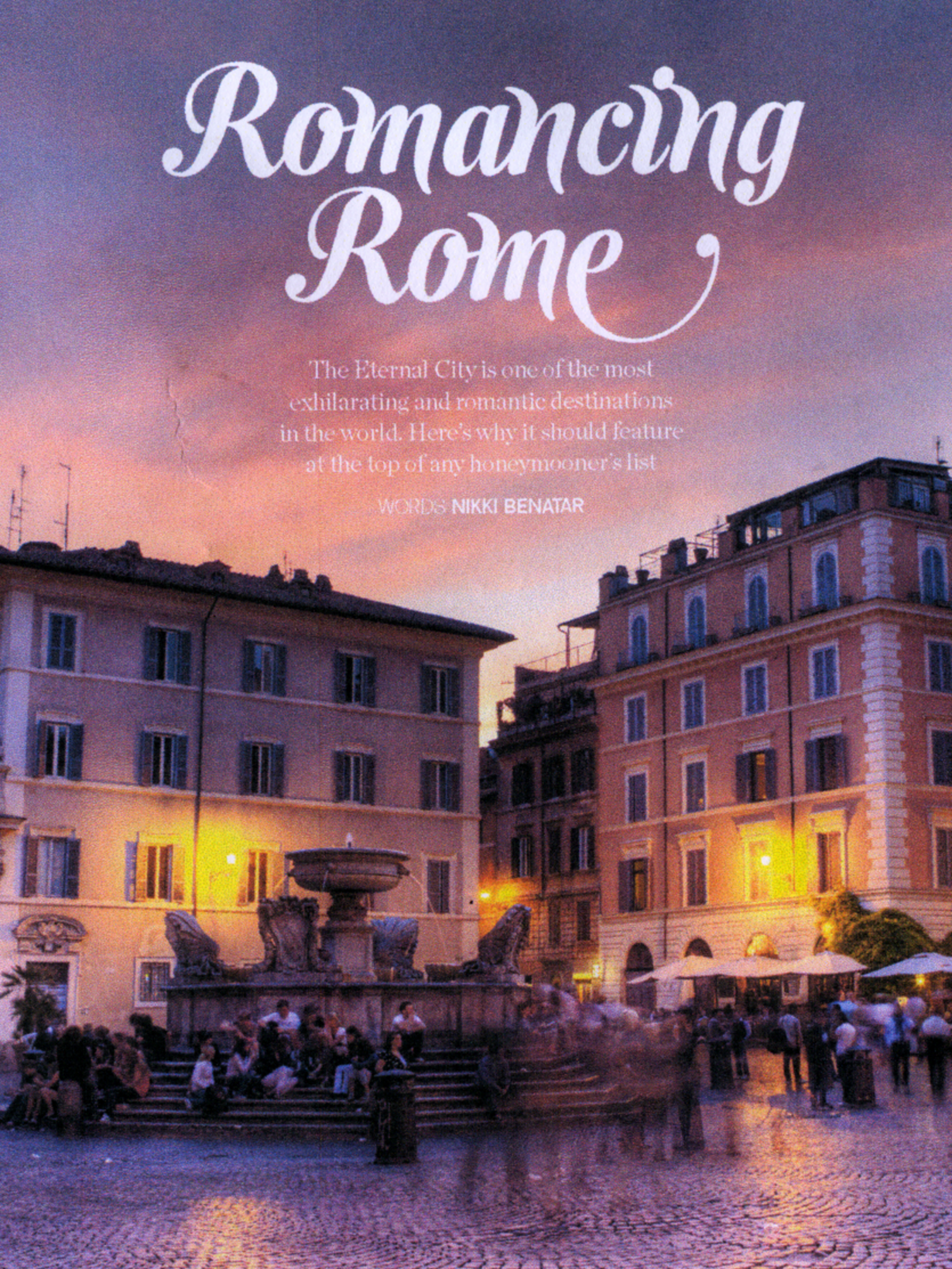


SHOP

Rome is an Aladdin's cave for shoppers. For mid-range international favourites, such as Zara, Camper and Banana Republic, head to Via del Corso, Rome's high street. For quirky and vintage fashion finds, take a sartorial stroll around the sloping streets of Monti, which is also dotted with jewellery workshops, decor showrooms, art galleries and speciality food stores, where you can stock up on organic olive oil, artisanal chocolate, just-baked bread and fresh-from-the-farm cheese.

Trastevere is ground zero for hip street fashion, cool boutiques and art shops. If it's Prada, Fendi and Balenciaga you're looking for, the back streets around the Spanish Steps (Via Condotti, Frattina, Borgognona and Della Croce) are lined with designer stores. The bourgeois district of Prati is, surprisingly, home to some cool clothing stores. Do your research and know what you're looking for, or you'll run yourself ragged trying to do it all.

SLEEP

Built in the 1920s, Hotel Locarno brims with art deco character and Agatha Christie-era charm. Think Thonet bentwood furniture and an original birdcage lift. Rooms in the new wing have been beautifully refurbished in stylish silks and antique furnishings, and bear original parquet floors.

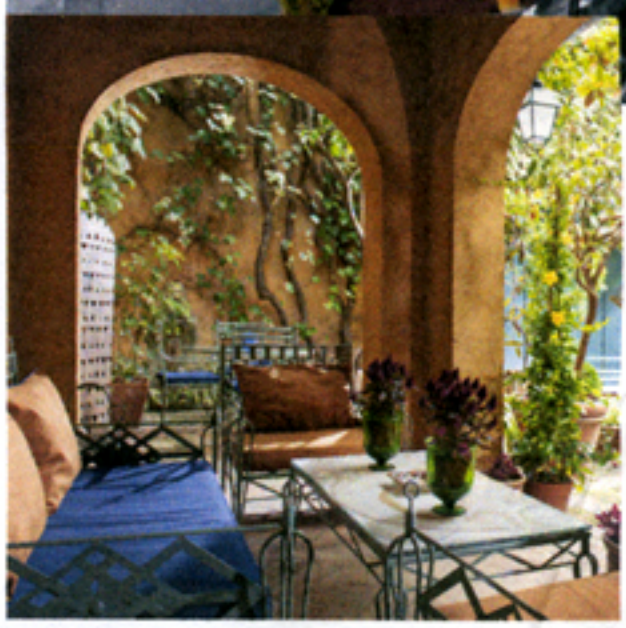
Although it's moments away from Piazza del Popolo, the hotel is intimate, discreet and the furthest thing from a tourist trap. Plus, it's located at the top of Via del Corso, so shopping is within striking distance.

The aptly named Scene Bar in the hotel's wisteria-clad courtyard is popular among movie and media types, who flock here after work for the aperitivo snacks – free with a drink. The sixth-floor roof garden has arresting views of the Tiber and church domes in the nearby piazza.

POCKET FRIENDLY

Buonanotte Garibaldi is a three-roomed guest house in artsy Trastevere, owned by a local artist whose beautiful works deck the walls. This boho-chic bolthole is ideal for honeymooners seeking privacy, style and personalised service (no request is too big or small for charming concierge David). The light and airy individually themed rooms are furnished with antique furniture and hand-painted fabrics. Several of the rooms open out on to the terracotta-paved front courtyard, with its orange trees, where you can sip evening drinks under the orange trees. Classical music fills the open-plan lounge, with its lofty French windows, oversized sofas, plush carpets and well-stocked bookshelves. There's a piano too, should you feel like tinkling the ivories.

Breakfast in the all-white dining room is a home-baked affair of tarts (Italians do cake for breakfast!), pastries and ciabatta, with an array of cheeses, jams, prosciutto, fruit and filter coffee or tea. Close to the sights, but away from the crowds, this is one of Rome's hidden gems. ❤



GETTING THERE AND AROUND

A return flight from Johannesburg to Rome, via London, on British Airways will cost in the region of R14 800. Fiumicino is Rome's main airport and an express train can connect you to Stazione Termini (the main train station) in about 30 minutes. Rome has an extensive bus network but the metro is usually easier for first-time visitors to navigate

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