



HISTORIC HABITAT

A former royal meeting ground, the Castello Sforzesco now houses museums.

ing for a panoramic view of Milan, 250 or so stairs – or the elevator – will take you to the rooftop, where you can walk among the ancient spires. On a clear day, you might even see the faint outline of the Alps rising in soft blue waves.

If the Duomo di Milano is the heart of Milan, Porta Nuova, just

over a mile walk away, is the city's modern core and main business district. Here, even the towers and skyscrapers are fashionable. The star among them is Milan's "Vertical Forest," the celebrated Bosco Verticale, where 800 trees, some as high as 30 feet, are anchored in specially designed containers, along with 20,000 plants and 4,500 shrubs, on a pair of high-rise apartment towers.

Next to the bustle of Porta Nuova is the neighborhood of Brera, where a slower, more artistic Milan takes shape. Painters linger over canvases in open studios, and small wine bars spill patrons onto cobblestone streets. Inside the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan's main public gallery, the city's artistic soul comes sharply into focus, with artwork dating back to the 13th century.

Just a short stroll away is the Castello Sforzesco, its red-brick towers rising like a sentinel at the edge of the city's grandest park, Parco Sempione. Once the host of dukes and revolutionaries, the medieval fortress is now home to museums that hold everything from Michelangelo's unfinished Rondanini Pietà to delicate Renaissance tapestries.

Farther south, the Navigli district offers an entirely different experience, where many in Milan come to whet their palate for dinner with an afterwork aperitivo, set among centuries-old canals that stretch between rows of boutiques, vintage shops and bars that come alive at twilight.

If you're looking to get on the ice yourself, Milan has a variety of outdoor skating rinks sprinkled throughout the city. Most only run until January, but a handful will trickle into February when the Games are on. Every year, a large outdoor rink, Piazza Duca d'Aosta – "Senstation Winter" – is installed at Milan Central Station, featuring stunning light displays and a festive ambiance. The scenic rink in Piazza Gae Aulenti, located in the Porta Nuova district, is surrounded by modern skyscrapers and the Bosco Verticale, while the rink at Piazza Citta di Lombardia is set under a large glass-and-metal vault that gives skaters the outdoor experience while being protected from the harsh winter elements. **H**

HIGHLIGHTS

Santa Maria delle Grazie

Home to da Vinci's 15th-century masterpiece *The Last Supper*.

Teatro alla Scala

Legendary opera house showcasing world-class performances.

Pinacoteca di Brera

Premier art museum highlighting Italian masters.

Arco della Pace

Neoclassical triumphal arch anchoring a stylish square.

Quadrilatero della Moda

Luxury fashion district beloved by global trendsetters.

Fondazione Prada

Contemporary art space housed in bold architecture.

San Siro Stadium

Iconic football temple hosting electrifying matches.

10 Corso Como

Chic concept store mixing art, fashion and lifestyle into one.

Cimitero Monumentale

Sculptural cemetery displaying extraordinary funerary art.

Triennale Milano

Design museum celebrating innovation and Italian craftsmanship.



ITALY

ART IN EVERY ACTION

Although hockey may not be as popular in Milan today, the city will be abuzz again with the Olympics in town. And for those who are looking to experience the magic of Italy, Milan has plenty to offer away from the rink **BY RONNIE SHUKER**

FASHION, FINANCE AND FOOTBALL. They are the soul of Milan, a city of banking, business and luxury brands that somehow calls itself Italy's "moral capital," despite the fact it has more banks than churches and the Vatican is in Rome. Here, even the names of the rinks sound romantic.

Although the Beautiful Game is the city's first sporting love, whether the red and black of AC Milan or the blue and black of Inter Milan, hockey has a history in the city that runs back more than a hundred years. The sport took hold in Milan in 1923, when the country's first indoor rink, the Palazzo del Ghiaccio (Ice Palace), opened. Clubs such as HC Milano and later HC Diavoli Rossoneri Milano dominated domestic competition for decades. HC Milano, in particular, was a powerhouse, winning 15 of 22 Italian titles from 1925 to 1955 (during wartime, several cham-

pionships weren't contested) and basically being the main supplier of players to the national team. Those were hockey's halcyon days in Milan, when games drew large crowds and rivalries flourished. But by the 1970s, hockey began to decline in Milan, as the game gradually shifted toward Italy's alpine regions, where most of the country's top pro teams are based today.

With no team in either the Italian League or the AlpsHL (which has teams in Austria, Croatia, Italy and Slovenia), Milan is no longer Italy's hub of hockey. But for 18 days in February, the game will once again take center stage in the city when the

STANDING TALL

An extravagant sight, the Duomo di Milano took almost 600 years to construct.

eyes of the world fixate on the best in both women's and men's hockey. The 10-team women's tournament kicks off February 5, while the 12-team men's competition gets going February 11. Although it is sharing the Olympic spotlight with the resort town of Cortina d'Ampezzo, Milan is the sole host of both tournaments. All games will be played at the new (and hastily constructed) 14,000-seat Milano Santagiulia Arena and the smaller 5,700-seat Milano Rho Arena. For Canadians and Americans making the trip, flights will be expensive, but at least many of the games won't break the bank, with more than 20 percent



One of the hosts for Olympic hockey, the Milano Santagiulia Arena can seat 14,000 people.

ARENA RENDERING BY ITINERA