

36 Hours

ROME

Early spring in the Eternal City means few crowds at its magnificent museums, co

By INGRID K. WILLIAMS

Paolo Sorrentino's mesmerizing film "La Grande Bellezza" ("The Great Beauty"), which won an Oscar for best foreign-language film in 2014, sparked controversy and endless conversation about the current state of the Italian capital. But one fact was indisputable: Rome, as the film's seductive backdrop, was gorgeous. This is true in every season, but especially in colder months when the summer flood of tourists ebbs. From outlying neighborhoods that beckon with new restaurants and bars, to the historic center, where Mr. Sorrentino's protagonist, Jep, wandered through so many scenes, Rome remains poised to prove that its beauty runs deep.

Friday

1 3 P.M. > BATHING BEAUTY

One of the most poignant scenes in "La Grande Bellezza" transpires at the ruins of the Terme di Caracalla, colossal Roman baths that date from the third century. Jep's twilight encounter with an illusory giraffe amid the spectacular ruins is memorable, but no tricks are needed to make this often-overlooked site unforgettable in the light of day either. The soaring walls of the complex, remarkably well-preserved in parts, are a terra-cotta-hued skeleton providing clues to the lost grandeur of this glorified gym, where amenities ranged from mosaic floors to thermal pools flanked by museum-worthy marble sculptures. Admission, 6 euros, or \$6.70 at \$1.11 to the euro.

2 5:30 P.M. > GALLERY HUNTING

Fast-forward nearly two millennia for a glimpse of what constitutes art in contemporary Rome by visiting a cluster of galleries near Campo de' Fiori. Start at Galleria Varsi, a two-year-old space dedicated to graffiti and street art that also organizes wall paintings across the city. Around the corner at Dorothy Circus Gallery, the blood-red walls showcase surrealist Pop Art. And nearby, a cobblestone courtyard and carved-stone fountain flank the entrance to the prestigious Galleria Lorcan O'Neill, which moved to this spacious location last year; until April 4, look for works by the emerging British artist Eddie Peake.

3 8 P.M. > CENTOCELLE CHOW

Rome's traditional guanciale-laced pasta dishes — carbonara, amatriciana, gricia — are in no danger of extinction, but if more creative restaurants like Mazzo start opening, they might be. This tiny spot in the far-flung Centocelle neighborhood was opened in 2013 by a pair of talented young chefs intent on spinning Roman cuisine into deli-



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS CARMICHAEL



The domes of St. Peter's Basilica. Left, sharing a drink at Pigneto, where many D.J.s often play. Right, at Come il Latte.

IF YOU GO

1 Terme di Caracalla (Terme di Caracalla), Via delle Terme di Caracalla 10, 00147 Rome, Italy. **2 Galleria Varsi** (Galleria Varsi), Via Varsi 10, 00187 Rome, Italy. **3 Mazzo** (Mazzo), Via dei Catinari 3, 00147 Rome, Italy. **4 Birra Più** (Birra Più), Via Pretestina 105, 00187 Rome, Italy. **5 Mercato Monti** (Mercato Monti), Via dei Condottieri 46/48, 00187 Rome, Italy.