

Rome's Best Kept Secret **sight**

- T.P.

One of Rome's hidden treasures, **Palazzo Corsini**

in Trastevere is a 16th century palace that has passed from family to powerful family throughout the centuries. Extensively rebuilt in the 1700s by Ferdinando Fuga for the Corsini family in graceful late-Baroque style, the palace now boasts a branch of the impressive National Gallery of Ancient Art on the piano nobile.

The collection is surprisingly vast for the unassuming quality of the museum. With works by Peter Paul Rubens, Fra Angelico, Guido Reni, Agostino Carracci, Nicholas Poussin and –most proudly– Caravaggio, the gallery contends with some of the most celebrated in Rome, with the added bonus that you often have entire rooms to yourself.



The palace is akin to a mini-Versailles, having been designed in the same style as the noted French palace. The essential difference in this case is the feeling one gets when walking down its majestic corridors, all but empty save for the marvelous works of art. Without the congestion of large numbers of other visitors, the palace seems to belong to another time, and it becomes easy to imagine daily life in a powerful 18th century family. This is exactly the impression the museum's curators are hoping to create, particularly with their new exhibition of original clothes from the 1700s.

This special exhibit displays 300-year-old garments throughout the gallery, giving you the sense of stepping back



in time. Satin gowns, richly embroidered riding costumes, livery, velvet coats and more are arranged around the palace on wooden mannequins near enough to touch (not that you would!) Several are accompanied by paintings from the same period, depicting characters in similar costumes. Along with the fabulous clothes is a collection of silk and ivory fans, hand painted with romantic courting scenes. All items on exhibit come from the archives of Palazzo Barberini and the decorative arts section of the Artistic Industrial Museum of Rome. **Invitation to Palazzo Corsini: 18th century clothes and fans. Via della Lungara, 10. Open Tues – Sun 8:30am-7:30pm. €4**

Golden oldies **sound**

Palazzo Corsini's magnificent art, stunning architecture and sumptuous garments still not enough to transport you back in time? How about a concert of 18th-century music played on period instruments such as the viola da gamba and harpsichord, featuring Baroque vocalists? The musical group, *Insieme Vocale e Strumentale Chiaroscuro*, will perform works by Handel, Couperin and Arbeau, among others, in one of the enchanting salons of the palace. **Palazzo Corsini. Sunday, 17 April, 5pm. Free admission.**



Secret Garden **sight, smell**

Hidden behind the imposing palace you will find Rome's Botanical Gardens, formerly the private property of the Corsini family. With over 3500 plant species in total, the gardens boast a bamboo forest, greenhouses with orchids and bonsai, a Japanese garden as well as a medicinal plant garden. The crumbling fountains and overgrown paths add to its other-worldly charm, making it the perfect spot to wile away a few lazy hours with a good book, all the while inhaling the glorious scents of spring. **Largo Cristina di Svezia, 24. Open Tuesday – Saturday 9:30am-6:30pm. €3**

