



ROME



With its infrastructure modernized and many monuments having been renovated for the Holy Year in 1999, Rome is in better shape than it's been in for years. Romans have regained their normal good humor, too, now that the pilgrim masses are gone.

The spectacular new **Hotel de Russie**, off the Piazza del Popolo, is the hotel of the moment, with stunning rooms and exquisite service (39-06-328-881; rfhotels.com; doubles, \$388-\$535; Ⓟ). The charming, rapidly gentrifying Trastevere neighborhood has one of the city's best new restaurants, **Asinocotto**, where chef Giuliano Brenna does earthy but sophisticated dishes like swordfish with pesto and tiny Pachino tomatoes (48 Via dei Vascellari; 39-06-589-8985; entrées, \$7-\$12). The intimate **Montevecchio**, a cozy high-ceilinged room lit by sconces, has nine popular tables and superb food (Piazza di Montevecchio; 39-06-686-1319; entrées, \$27-\$40). The best catch of the day is at **La Rosetta**, which does a heavenly *gran zuppa di pesce* (8 Via della Rosetta; 39-06-686-1002; entrées, \$30-\$50). For sublime all-natural ice-cream flavors, like wild Sardinian honey, pistachio, and black cherry, go to **Gelateria San Crispino** (42 Via della Panetteria; 39-06-679-3924).

Tickets are required to visit two of the most spectacular sights in Rome: The magnificent **Borghese Gallery**, which reopened in 1997 after a 14-year renovation (Piazzale Scipione Borghese; 39-06-854-577), and Emperor Nero's **Domus Aurea**, or "Golden House," renovated two years ago and now open to a limited number of visitors daily