

Alex Bourke of Vegetarian Guides roams the eternal city.

ROME

Rome is a visual feast of history, from the ancient ruined forum and Colosseum to the Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, St Peter's and the Sistine Chapel. Walk, hop on a scooter or take an open-top bus tour, head further out for an olive oil or wine visit, and thrill the kids with a trip to gladiator school. Savour the aroma of bread and pizza at a morning food market, fashion shop in cobble-stoned side streets around the Pantheon, and kick back in a rooftop bar. Roman specialities include globe artichokes, broad beans, thin-crust pizza from a wood-fired oven, chickpea and pasta soup, and *gelato* parlours often have vegan flavours.

For that special anniversary, five-star **Hotel Raphaël** has its own museum and art gallery and a rooftop vegetarian restaurant, **Mater Terrae**, with magnificent views from the terrace. Starters and mains (€20-€24) include asparagus with fennel sauce, farinata almond vegetable



tart with hot salad, roasted aubergine terrine, buckwheat blinis, or strawberry and green bean salad. It's also open to non-residents if you show your passport. Alternatively, **The Beehive** budget boutique hotel and hostel has a vegetarian café, while at **Vegan Quo Vadis?** English-speaking vegan Alfredo Gagliardi rents out self-catering apartment rooms.

The best vegan restaurant in town is **Ops!**, near Villa Borghese, which does light breakfasts such as croissants, and a monster pay-by-weight buffet (€28/kilo). Dozens of dishes feature creative combinations like artichoke with almonds, polenta with spinach mousse, beetroot and orange, even pineapple with radishes. Desserts include dark chocolate pie, chocolate cake, and pear and pistachio tart. Wednesday is gluten-free day.

Grezzo is a sweet-toothed fantasy, a *pasticcERIA* or Italian pastries café-shop north of the Colosseum. It's raw vegan,

Also recommended...

- **Universo Vegano** has Italian vegan fast food near the Campo de' Fiori food market. Try the big smoky burger, pasta, soup and tiramisu.
- **Orto** Italian vegetarian restaurant is behind Castel Sant'Angelo. Buffet weekday lunch and weekends, or à la carte.
- **Ecru** is a sumptuous new raw restaurant with a buffet and wine, just across the river from the Vatican.
- **Passione Vegana**, by Ciampino airport, does a



specialising in chocolate and gluten-free, and open until a decadent 11pm. Think chocolate brownie with hazelnut, almond tiramisu, Sacher cake, cashew fruit cheesecake, mousses, truffles and chocolates. There are almond ice creams, almond 'rawpuccino', and you can restore the balance with a green shake or pina colada.



fixed price buffet with pastas, risottos, tempeh, seitan and soya dishes.

- **Rifugio Romano** pizzeria, while not vegetarian, has three vegan staff and pizzas with vegan cheese, calzone and seitan ravioli.

NEED TO KNOW

Hotel Raphaël and Mater Terrae
www.raphaelhotel.com

The Beehive
www.the-beehive.com

Vegan Quo Vadis?
www.veganquovadis.com

Ops!
www.opsveg.com

Grezzo
www.grezzoitalia.it

Universo Vegano
www.universovegano.it

Orto
www.ristoranteorto.it

Ecru
www.facebook.com/ecrurawfood

Passione Vegana
www.passionevvegana.com

Rifugio Romano
Facebook: Rifugio Romano

ABOUT ALEX

Alex is the founder of Vegetarian Guides, publisher of guidebooks to London, Britain and Paris at www.vegetarian.travel. He will be giving a workshop at London VegFest on 23 October with top tips for travelling as a vegan, including how to guarantee a vegan meal, how to find and choose between veggie restaurants, and a rundown of his favourite destinations in the UK.

