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'Oh the People You Meet!

The Stories They'll Tell, The Sights You Will See, And Just Plain Eating Well

Michaela's Map, Milano, Italy: Money Can Buy Access



Shopping with personal stylist, Melanie Payge in fashion's capital- at handbag designer, Corto Moltedo's Milan shop.

Story & photos by: Michaela Guzy

I am always on the search for insider experiences—especially in better-known destinations. Recently I was introduced to the founder of [Mr. Aristotle](#), which features over 300 unique insider things to do in over 20 countries. No fee, just the cost of the experience. They range from a night in a heated igloo in the Swiss Alps to a personal stylist with access to local designer's showrooms in [Milan](#), in the Lombardy region of Italy. I was thrilled when Mr. Aristotle introduced me to [Melanie Payge](#), personal stylist and shopping extraordinaire, who has worked with everyone from the Royal Family of Monaco, Cartier and even as the Managing Editor of GQ Italia.

The first step was to send a full-length photo of myself and a description of what I did for work, define my style and share anything I may be looking for to Melanie. Admittedly, other than sending her the photo, I didn't give her much to work with.

When I arrived in Milan, she met me at the [Armani Hotel](#) to share a few ideas she had to personalize my styling experience. Melanie took me to designer Italian staples like [Armani](#) and [Prada](#) to trend forecast, but then to local showrooms that don't always have a storefront.



Armani Hotel Milano lobby.

We started at an atelier called [Federico Sangalli](#), which started in the 1950's and ranges from ready-to-wear to couture. Melanie chose pieces and colors that worked with my skin tone, hair color and body type. While there were garments that weren't necessarily my style in the trying-on pile, she had a real knack for knowing what would fit me well. There were also five adorable little Italian women at Singer sewing

machines making sure that every item fit me to a "t". The actually sew the couture pieces by hand—a craft that is sadly disappearing in most other parts of the world. I walked out with a little forest green mod-dress and a black blazer (about the 9th one I own) but it has a leather collar and was fitted to my waistline- so clearly it was an essential purchase.



Black blazer with leather collar being fitted for me by a seamstress at Federico Sangalli.



A seamstress hard at work in front of her Singer sewing machine, Federico Sangalli showroom.

The pret-a-porter line is manufactured, but still tailored for each customer. The average price point ranges between 500-600 euros. The haute couture line starts at 1,500 euros and bridal at 3,000 euros. To demonstrate their craftsmanship, the seamstresses showed me a one-of-a-kind, hand-made black jacket that took 6.5 yards of fabric and one month to complete. The stylish owner paid 5,000 euros for this handcrafted piece. *By appointment, women's clothing and cash only.*



Some of the ready-to-wear pieces at Federico Sangalli.



The jacket that took 6.5 yards of fabric and one month to complete by hand.

It's always a bad sign for the wallet when I start a day of shopping with two purchases for myself. Rightfully nervous, we headed to the [Anna Sammarone](#) showroom, hidden down a narrow alley and on the third floor of a seemingly private building. Anna left her former life as a lawyer to pursue her passion as a designer in 2006 and the world is a better dressed for it. Currently, Anna only has a showroom in Milan, but some of her pieces are sold in multi-brand stores throughout Italy, Holland and Saudi-Arabia and the occasional private sale in NYC.



At Anna Sammarone's showroom, designer center and Melanie Payne far right.

I knew I was going to like Anna's pieces when I saw she had over 15 different selections of blazers and jackets, each stitched with an adorable balloon design in the lining. While I loved her frack borchie jacket with a studded collar, Melanie and I agreed taupe wasn't my best hue. Much to my wallet's dismay, Anna offers the jacket (and her other garments) in over 100 color choices—you pick your swatch, get measured and they will have your pieces to you in no time.



Melanie showing me better colors for my coloring at the Anna Sammarone showroom.



The inside of all of Anna's jackets, blazers and coats feature her signature hand-stitched balloon design.

The starting point for Anna's winter collection ranges from 350-1,250 euros (cashmere coats being at the upper end), her summer collection is from 300-800 euros. All pieces are handmade and pure (no polyester or nylon).

Melanie was a delight to work with—confident, opinionated and inquisitive. She shared trends about color palettes and the shapes of heels, which prior to my day of shopping with her I hadn't given much thought to. She asked questions about how I dressed and if there were pieces I couldn't figure out how to wear. While there are many in my closet, one gold sequence skirt has given me plenty of issues—it just takes up room in my over-stuffed Manhattan apartment. As we shopped, she would point out pieces that would work well with the un-wearable skirt. Happy to report, that thanks to Melanie, it's back in rotation.

My day with Melanie may have left my wallet lighter, but I am better styled and on-trend for it. Beyond Prada, Armani, Federico Sangalli and Anna Sammarone, we blanketed the stores and showrooms off the famous Corso Como, the most frequented street in Europe per square inch, to develop the below list of favorite shops, hotels and a stand-out restaurant below.

EAT:



One of the dining rooms of Il Salumaio.

After a tiring day of shopping, eat at [Il Salumaio](#). My favorite was the traditional tortellini con ricotta e rucola al pomodoro. One of my lunch dates enjoyed his dish so much, he went across the street to their shop and purchased some pork (packaged, sealed and delivered to his hotel for no additional charge)—*it really was that delicious.*



Il Salumaio's shop.

STAY: *favorite places to stay, eat or toast new purchases in fashion's capital*

[Armani Hotel Milano](#)

[Bulgari Hotel](#)

[Four Seasons](#)

[Hotel Principe De Savoia Milano](#)

[Park Hyatt](#)

[Town House 8](#)

SHOP: *Other hard to find, must not miss shops*



The Caledonia Stone ring and python clutch in purple at J&J.

J&J: The best store for gifts for loved ones and yourself. Leather wallets, business cardholders, passport covers and bags in every color and texture imaginable. My favorite was a python clutch in either cobalt blue or hot pink. You have your choice between 10 color selections and either python or ostrich (200-250 euros). The jewelry selection is exquisitely unique, a favorite was the Caledonia Stone with pave diamonds and 18k white gold– I am still waiting for an Italian charmer to purchase it for me (2,600 euros).

G. Lorenzi: Opened in 1929 and manufactures exclusive items such as the famous, “G. Lorenzi” corkscrew (100 euros). Their products are not carried by other agents or catalogs.



A few of Michaela Bruni Reichlin's colorful pieces.

Michaela Bruni Reichlin: Shares the same showroom as Anna. She creates some of the most colorful pieces —her jade and onyx drop earrings were my favorite.

The Twos: Designer, Lada Coric Cantoni, also shares a space with Anna and Michaela. Great clutches and handbags in four different shapes and five different colors. I am guilty of purchasing the hunter green crocodile envelope clutch (200 euros). She even makes a piece of luggage to travel with your designer shoes.



Designer Corto Molto's signature clutches.

Corto Molto: A much higher price point than the twos, but that is because the designer, hand makes each bag in his Florence studio.

TeaRose: Everything from perfume, flowers and women's clothing. Focus is more on international designers.

Old America: For antiques for the home. Definitely geared towards ole Americana. So old they don't seem to have a website: 02.76006019-02.794691.



Gianni Tolentino's magical gold sequance pants won't even make their debut until the winter collection is unveiled. I would just need to be cast in Mama Mia or have a costume party to justify rocking these pants.

Gianni Tolento Showroom: Admittedly, this designer wasn't my style per se. If you are going to a ball, prom or a fancy dress party—this is your store. The designer, Gianni creates costumes for the Venetian Carnival (for Americans, this is the equivalent of Mardi Gras Balls in New Orleans). They have a tailor in-store to custom fit your pieces. I did however find these sequance pants, which are a part of next winter's collection. They won't even be unveiled until January 2013. If I am ever invited to a Mama Mia dress up party, they are so mine. Couture gowns range from 1,500-5,000 euros and ready-to-wear, 500-1,500 euros.

Check out [Mr. Aristotle](#) for other insider experiences around the globe.

This entry was posted in Europe, Hotels, Italy, Luxury, Michaela's Map, Milan, Shopping and tagged insider experiences, italy, luxury hotels, Milan, shopping on January 2, 2013

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About MichaelaSGuzy

Michaela Guzy is the founder of OhThePeopleYouMeet.com. She writes, paints, shoots (photography and videos, not guns), produces, consults for travel partners, volunteers and adores having her passport stamped. Michaela grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, went to college in Mobile, Alabama and lives in NYC when she isn't on a plane. Read more on the "About the Author" page.

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