

DISCOVER ITALIA!

# THE HISTORIC HOTELS OF ROME



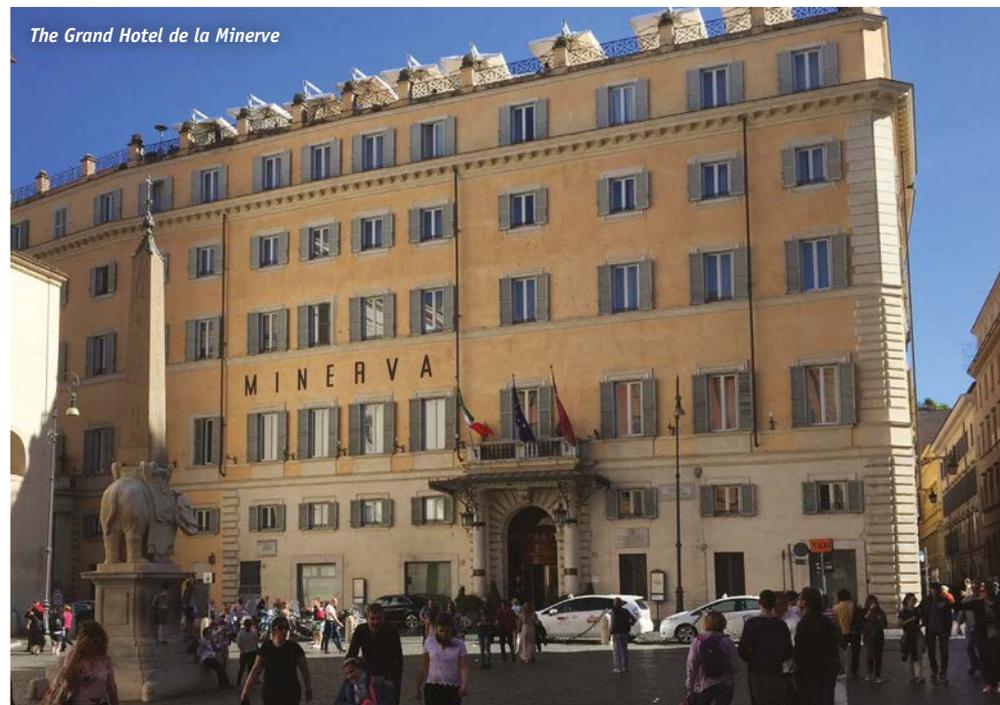
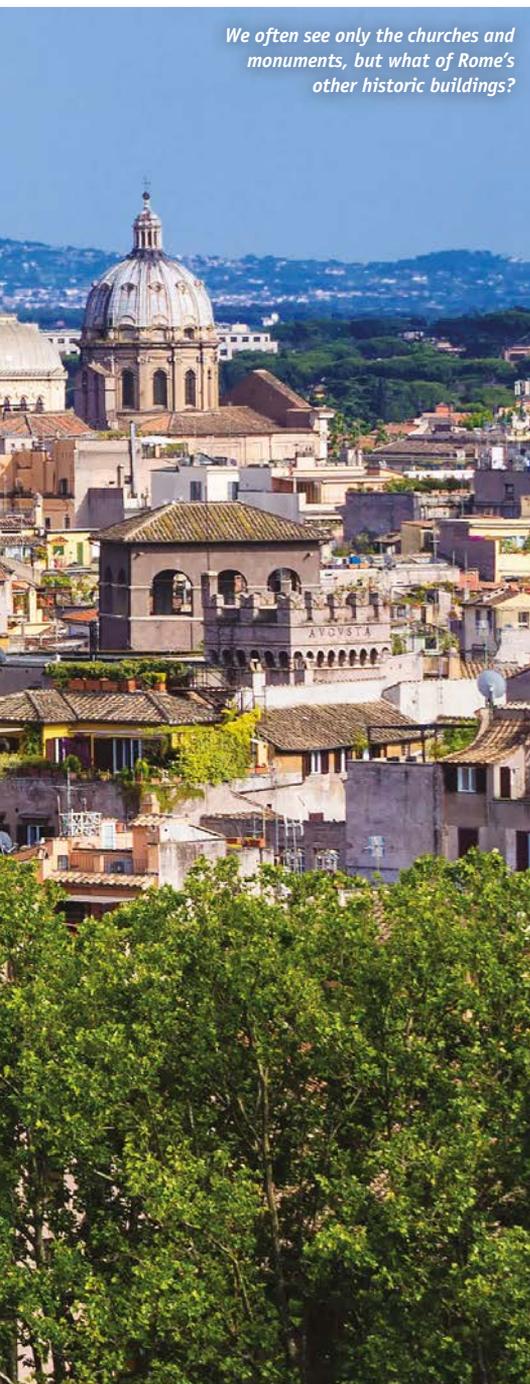
Image © iStock

There are many ways to see Rome and learn about its history, each offering a new perspective. **Adrian Mourby** takes us on a walk through the city, tracing its history through the development of its hotels over 600 years...

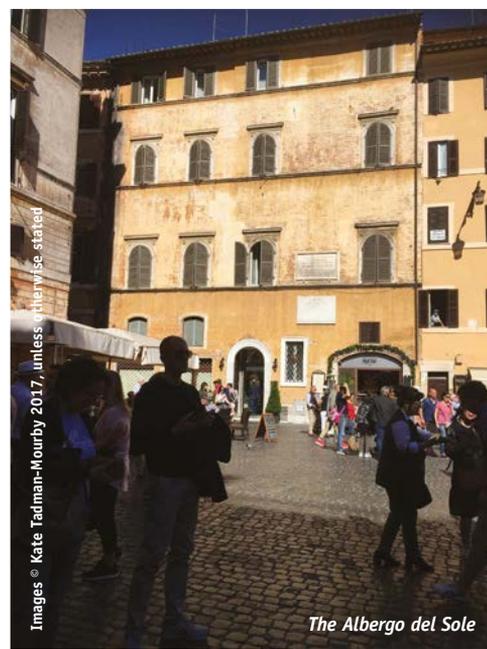
In 1855, when Cavalier Rufini took his census of Roman hotels for Pope Pius IX, he found that the city offered many small inns, some dating back to medieval times. There were an increasing number of large hotels too, including the imposing **Hotel de la Minerve** next to the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. This had been converted from an old palazzo by a French hotelier called Joseph Sauve in 1810. It is still there today, albeit with an extra floor or two up top.

One of the earliest surviving Roman hotels is on the other side of Pantheon from the Grand Hotel de la Minerve (as it is known today). Just a three-minute walk away, the **Hotel del Sole** looks like an ordinary townhouse facing onto the Fountain of the Pantheon. Today it is called **Albergo del Sole** and a plaque on the wall tells us that the poet Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) stayed here in 1513 when he was on a mission to the new Pope, Leo X, with whom he had dinner. It was a much warmer reception than he'd received

*We often see only the churches and monuments, but what of Rome's other historic buildings?*



*The Grand Hotel de la Minerve*



*The Albergo del Sole*

*Images © Kate Tadmam-Mourby 2017, unless otherwise stated*

from Leo's predecessor, Pope Julius II who'd tried to have him killed as a representative of the troublesome Duke of Ferrara.

Other celebrated guests included the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III and Count Cagliostro, a magician, alchemist and swindler who was later arrested and lived out the rest of his life imprisoned in the fortress of San Leo. After World War II, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir made this hotel their Roman home.

One source dates the hotel back to 1497, when it was called the Ram, but it is probably older still. Over the centuries it has been owned variously by the Alberini family, by a family of Turks and by the Benedictine convent of Santa Maria in Campo Marzio. On 17 May 1890 it was the temporary home of Pietro Mascagni, who celebrated the first night of *Cavalleria rusticana*, a piece that changed the course of Italian opera, right here in this very hotel. ➤



The De Russie as it used to look



Plaque outside the De Russie



The d'Inghilterra

*To attract English guests it was named the d'Inghilterra*

Piazza del Popolo was the main northern entrance into Rome and pilgrims and tourists flooded in daily. One of these was the British artist William Turner, who in 1819 sketched work in progress on L'hôtel des Isles Britannique, as it was soon to be known. A guide published in 1833 referred to the hotel as "an excellent Inn which furnishes 150 beds". They must have been very small bedrooms as these days with two extra floors and two garden wings Hotel de Russie offers only 121.

Charles Dickens stayed at the hotel in 1853, arriving on 13 November and departing six days later for Florence, a coach journey that took three and a half days. Another British novelist, Wilkie Collins stayed at the hotel on 2 November 1862, complaining that Rome's damp climate was bad for his sciatica. He was advised that the weather in Naples would suit him better and duly went in search of it, but by 4 December he was back, having not liked Naples either.

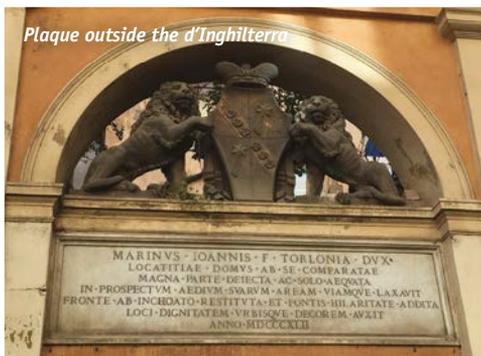
After Italian Unification in 1871 the hotel was patriotically renamed Albergo dei Re. As its popularity grew among the Russian nobility, however, it took a new hybrid name, Hôtel de Russie et des Iles Britanniques.

### THE INGHILTERRA

By this time the enterprising Torlonia princes had created another hotel. Walk now towards the Spanish Steps and the Torlonias' main

family home, Palazzo Núñez-Torlonia on Via Bocca di Leone. Opposite it stands the Hotel d'Inghilterra. In 1845, realising that Rome was still short of hotels, Prince Giovanni opened up the family's guest wing, an auberge opposite Palazzo Núñez-Torlonia. In order that this hotel might also attract English guests it was named Albergo d'Inghilterra (and that name is still picked out in large letters over the entrance).

In the 1880s both the Inghilterra and the Russie were managed by Francesco Nistelweck, a Munich-born hotelier (taken for Swiss in Rome – in the 19th century it was assumed that all great hoteliers were Swiss). In 1889 Nistelwick branched out, creating a new hotel at the top of the Spanish Steps. Far from levelling off, the number of hotels being created in Rome soared towards the end of the 19th century. ➤



Plaque outside the d'Inghilterra

### WHERE TO STAY

#### GRAND ALBERGO DEL SOLE

Piazza della Rotonda, 63

☎ +39 06 678 0441

hotelsolealpantheon.com

Apart from a wonderful location, this small hotel offers an Imperial Suite 'Aristo' under the rafters named after the 16th-century poet and a Royal Suite Mascagni' to commemorate the composer's most successful stay in Rome.

#### HOTEL DE RUSSIE

Via del Babuino, 9

☎ +39 06 328881

roccofortehotels.com

Since 2000 part of the Rocco Forte Group and decorated with great aplomb by his sister Olga Polizzi, the Russie has a bar named after Stravinsky and a suite named after Picasso, who stayed in the hotel in 1917. In summer breakfast is served in the delightful Jardin du Russie.

#### HOTEL D'INGHILTERRA

Via Bocca di Leone, 14

☎ +39 06 699811

hoteldinghilterra.com

This former annex of Palazzo Torlonia occupies an excellent position halfway between the Spanish Steps and Ara Pacis and is ideal for those who want to shop on Via dei Condotti. Its 1950s-style Bond Bar claims to make the best martinis in Rome.

#### REGINA BAGLIONI

Via Vittorio Veneto, 72

☎ +39 06 421111

baglionihotels.com

There are some lovely Art Deco suites in this stately hotel opposite the American embassy. As with all Baglioni hotels across Italy, the decoration is richly splendid and the rooftop Roman Penthouse has one of the best hotel views in the city.

#### PORTRAIT ROMA

Via Bocca di Leone, 23

☎ +39 06 6938 0742

lungarnocollection.com

A recent creation of 14 suites with their own kitchenettes, rooftop lounge and communal bar above Rome's most fashionable shopping streets. Lungarno, who opened some excellent properties in Florence, have now moved to Rome.

#### JK PLACE

Via di Monte d'Oro, 30

☎ +39 06 982634

jkroma.com

Just a four-minute walk west of the Corso stands this is the latest venture by the JK group, who have opened high-end boutique hotels in Capri and Florence, always with an emphasis on friendly service and striking design values.