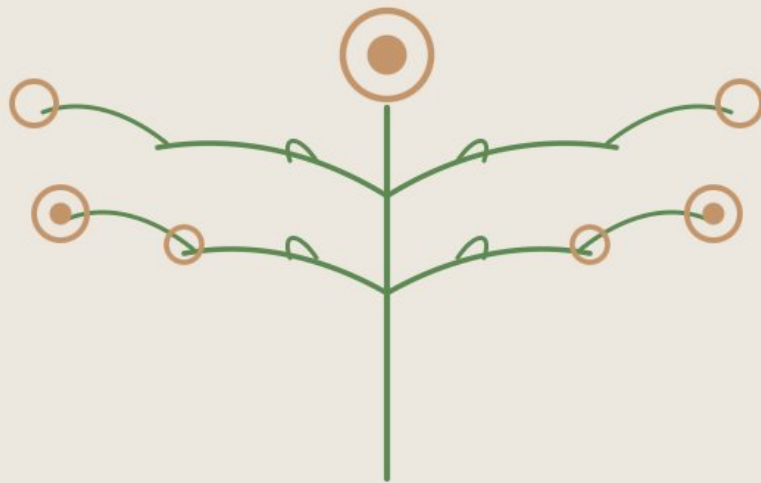




48 HOURS IN

Milan

BLOOM WHERE YOU WANDER

Welcome to Milan.

Milan doesn't ask you to like it immediately. It asks you to pay attention. The city that invented fashion and design operates quietly — the finest aperitivo bars are unmarked, the best restaurants have handwritten menus, and the Duomo's rooftop gives you a view that rewards the climb. Two days here, done right, open the city on its own terms: the neighbourhood that feels genuinely local, the gallery that stops you cold, the negroni sbagliato that changes your opinion of Campari. This guide gives you the precise, hour-by-hour sequence to make 48 hours in Milan feel like it was designed for you.

How to Use This Guide

- Read through once before you land — get the shape of both days in mind.
- Screenshot the daily pages for offline use. No data charges on the day.
- Follow Day 1's sequence closely. The route eliminates backtracking.
- Book Last Supper tickets before you land — they sell out weeks ahead.
- Aperitivo is an institution here. Take it seriously.

Essential Quick Facts

Currency	Euro (€). Cards widely accepted; carry cash for smaller bars and markets.
Transport	Metro (M1/M2/M3/M5) plus trams. 48h travel card €7. ATM app for real-time tram info.
Weather	Continental climate. Hot summers, cold winters. A layer and compact umbrella always.
Time Zone	CET (UTC+1) winter · CEST (UTC+2) summer. Check before departure.
Emergency	112 for all emergencies. Medical urgent line: 118.
Tipping	Round up or leave 10%. Cover charge (coperto) is standard at restaurants.

DAY ONE

Duomo · Navigli · Brera

Start in the centre and move outward. The Duomo and its rooftop anchor the morning; the afternoon belongs to the canals and the neighbourhood that feels most like Milan at street level. End the day where the city goes when it wants to be itself.

- 9:00 Duomo
- 11:00 Piazza
- 12:30 Lunch
- 2:00 Navigli
- 5:00 Rest
- 8:00 Brera

Morning 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

9:00 AM

The Duomo

Start here. The cathedral dominates the centre in a way that photographs don't convey — the density of spires and statuary visible only at street level. The interior is cooler and quieter than you expect. The rooftop is the main event: book the lift ticket in advance and arrive early. On a clear morning you can see the Alps. Allow ninety minutes including the climb.

Insider tip: Book rooftop access at duomomilano.it before you arrive. The first entry slot is the calmest. The combined Duomo + rooftop + museum ticket is the best-value option.

10:30 AM

Piazza del Duomo & Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II

The Galleria connects the cathedral square to La Scala and is the most beautiful shopping arcade in the world — a nineteenth-century glass-and-iron galleria with an octagonal dome above the central crossing. Walk through it. Stop in the centre of the crossing and look up. Prada, Gucci, and Louis Vuitton flank the passages, but the architecture is the point.

Insider tip: The mosaic bull at the central crossing: Milanese tradition holds that spinning on its testicles brings good luck. The floor is worn smooth. Try it.

Afternoon 12:30 PM - 5:00 PM

12:30 PM

Lunch in the Centro

The streets around the Duomo are predictably tourist-heavy. Walk five to ten minutes south toward Porta Ticinese for a noticeably better range of options at reasonable prices. The area around Corso di Porta Ticinese has small trattorias, sandwich bars, and aperitivo spots that serve lunch. Look for handwritten boards and tables that are actually full.

Insider tip: In Milan, lunch is the main meal. A sit-down lunch with wine, primo, and secondo is normal. Don't rush it. The afternoon will slow down around you.

2:00 PM

Navigli — Milan's Canal District

Walk south to the Navigli. Milan's remaining canals — the Naviglio Grande and Naviglio Pavese — were once the city's working waterways; now they're the most lively part of town in the afternoon. The narrow streets along the water are lined with bars, vintage shops, antique dealers, and studios. Walk both banks. Dip into the Mercatone dell'Antiquariato if the Sunday market is running.

Insider tip: The Navigli is at its best on Sunday morning when the antique market fills the canal banks. On weekday afternoons it's calm and genuinely local. After 6pm the aperitivo bars overflow.

4:30 PM

Rest & Aperitivo Reset

Milan invented aperitivo. Between 6pm and 9pm, most bars offer complimentary food with the purchase of a drink — a spread of cured meats, cheese, bruschetta, and pasta that constitutes a genuine pre-dinner meal. This hour was designed for exactly this: find a canal-side bar, order a negroni sbagliato or Aperol spritz, eat as much as you like, and let the evening take its shape.

Insider tip: Negroni sbagliato is a Milan original — a negroni made with prosecco instead of gin, accidentally discovered at Bar Basso in the 1970s. It's the correct aperitivo order.

Evening 8:00 PM - Late

8:00 PM

Dinner in Brera

Walk north to Brera for the evening. This is Milan's most elegant neighbourhood — cobbled streets, art galleries, the Pinacoteca di Brera, and a concentration of serious restaurants. Brera operates at a slower pace than the Navigli, and the restaurants here are worth the step up in price. Trattoria della Pesa on Viale Pasubio is the benchmark Milanese trattoria: ossobuco, risotto alla Milanese, cotoletta alla Milanese done properly. Book ahead.

Insider tip: After dinner, walk Brera's streets — Via Fiori Chiari and Via Madonnina are the most beautiful in the neighbourhood. The galleries are lit, the streets are quiet, and the city feels entirely different from the daytime version.

DAY TWO

Last Supper · Castello · Isola

The second day moves between one of the most significant paintings in the world, a fifteenth-century fortress that anchors the city's western edge, and the neighbourhood that quietly became Milan's most interesting. Start early — the Last Supper requires it.

Morning 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Santa Maria delle Grazie — The Last Supper

Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper is painted directly onto the refectory wall of Santa Maria delle Grazie and has been deteriorating for five hundred years. The painting is in a separate building beside the church; entry is timed, ticketed, and limited to fifteen minutes in groups of thirty. It is one of the most controlled viewing experiences in the world — and still worth it. The scale, the condition, and the presence of the original are not replicated anywhere.

Insider tip: Book tickets at vivaticket.it before you arrive — weeks ahead in peak season. Walk-up is functionally impossible. Allow thirty minutes at the church itself before your timed entry slot.

10:30 AM

Castello Sforzesco

The Sforza Castle sits a short walk east of Santa Maria delle Grazie — a fifteenth-century fortress housing ten separate museums including Michelangelo's final sculpture, the Rondanini Pieta. The Pieta alone is worth the museum entry: an unfinished work of remarkable power, radically different from his earlier work. The castle courtyard is free to enter and one of the better outdoor spaces in the city.

Insider tip: The Rondanini Pieta is housed in the castle's Sala delle Asse. Allow forty-five minutes in that room alone. It was Michelangelo's last work, left unfinished at his death at 89.

12:00 PM

Parco Sempione

Behind the castle, Parco Sempione is Milan's answer to central park — 47 hectares of lawns, paths, and the Torre Branca observation tower at its centre. Walk through it rather than around it. The Arco della Pace at the park's northern exit is a nineteenth-century triumphal arch worth a brief stop before lunch.

Insider tip: The Torre Branca is a 1933 steel tower with an elevator to a viewing platform 108 metres above the park. Open weekends and select weekday evenings. Views over the full city. Worth the short wait.

Afternoon 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM**1:00 PM****Lunch in Isola**

Take the metro to Isola — a single stop on the M5 from Garibaldi. Isola is the neighbourhood that resisted the Porta Nuova development next door and, in doing so, remained genuinely local. Via Borsieri and Via Thaon di Revel are lined with coffee bars, small restaurants, and independent food spots that have no interest in tourists. Eat anywhere that looks full and local.

Insider tip: Isola is the best argument for leaving the centre. The neighbourhood has been resisting gentrification since the Porta Nuova towers went up next door. The food is better and the prices are lower.

2:30 PM**Pinacoteca di Brera**

Milan's principal art museum houses one of the finest collections in Italy — Mantegna's Dead Christ, Caravaggio's Supper at Emmaus, Raphael's Marriage of the Virgin. The gallery is housed in a seventeenth-century palazzo in the heart of Brera; the courtyard contains a bronze Napoleon. Allow two hours minimum. The Mantegna Dead Christ is the single painting that makes the visit essential.

Insider tip: The Mantegna Dead Christ is in Room VI. Go directly there first, then work outward. The perspective foreshortening is one of the most studied technical achievements in Western painting. It is more affecting in person than in reproduction.

5:00 PM**Via della Spiga & Quadrilatero della Moda**

Milan's fashion district — Via della Spiga, Via Montenapoleone, Via Sant'Andrea, Corso Venezia — is four streets forming a rectangle in the heart of the city. You don't need to buy anything. The window displays, the architecture, the pedestrian energy of the streets at late afternoon are worth the walk regardless of budget. Via della Spiga is the most beautiful of the four.

Insider tip: Via della Spiga is pedestrianised and at its best around 5pm when the light is warm and the shops are open. The street was designed as a luxury promenade and still operates as one.

Evening 7:30 PM - Late**7:30 PM****Final Aperitivo & Dinner**

End the trip where you want the city to feel like itself. The Navigli for a final aperitivo — Bar Basso on Via Plinio in Porta Venezia for the original negroni sbagliato in the bar that invented it. Dinner at Ratana in Porta Nuova for modern Milanese cooking in a beautiful room, or Trippa in Porta Romana for the best tripe and seasonal offal menu in the city — book ahead for both.

Insider tip: Bar Basso is open until 2am. The original negroni sbagliato is still on the menu. The bar hasn't changed. Order the oversized version served in a large wine glass — the house standard since the 1970s.

WHERE TO EAT

The No-Tourist-Trap Food Guide

Organised by meal type. Prices per person, excluding drinks.

BREAKFAST & COFFEE

Pasticceria Marchesi

€3–8

Via Santa Maria alla Porta, Centro

One of the oldest pastry shops in Milan, founded in 1824. The cornetto and cappuccino standing at the bar is the correct Milan breakfast. The Via Montenapoleone branch is beautiful but the original is better.

Orsonero Coffee

€3–6

Via Tortona, Navigli area

Milan's benchmark for specialty coffee. Small, serious, no seats — drink standing and leave. The most precise espresso in the city.

Bar Basso

€4–8

Via Plinio, Porta Venezia

Coffee in the morning, aperitivo in the evening. The same bar for both. The original negroni sbagliato was invented here in the 1970s.

LUNCH

Luini

€4–9

Via Santa Radegonda, near Duomo

Milan's most celebrated street food — the panzerotto, a deep-fried folded pizza pocket filled with tomato and mozzarella. Queue always present; queue always moves. Eat it standing outside.

Ratana

€20–35

Via Gaetano de Castillia, Porta Nuova

Modern Milanese cooking in a beautifully restored railway building. The lunch menu is excellent value. Book ahead; the room is small and the tables fill fast.

DINNER

Trattoria della Pesa

€35–60

Viale Pasubio, Brera

The benchmark Milanese trattoria. Ossobuco, risotto alla Milanese, cotoletta alla Milanese. Open since 1880. Book ahead for dinner. The cotoletta is the order — bone-in veal cutlet, bread-crumbed, fried in butter.

Trippa

€30–50

Via Giorgio Vasari, Porta Romana

The finest offal and seasonal menu in the city. The name refers to tripe, which appears on the menu in at least one form, but the kitchen runs much further. Difficult to book; try at least two weeks ahead.

Contraste

€80–120

Via Meda, Porta Romana

Milan's most interesting tasting menu — a single table format run by Matias Perdomo. The menu is a running conversation between traditional Italian cooking and something more lateral. Book well ahead.

Osteria dell'Acquabella

€25–40

Via San Rocco, Porta Romana

Neighbourhood trattoria with no tourist presence whatsoever. Handwritten menu, daily specials, proper pasta. Go without booking or call ahead. Exactly the kind of place the guides consistently miss.

CAFÉS & APERITIVO

Camparino in Galleria

€10–18

Piazza del Duomo, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II

The Campari flagship bar inside the Galleria. Aperol Spritz and Campari Soda in the most beautiful room in Milan. Expensive by Milan standards; worth it once.

Mag Café

€8–14

Ripa di Porta Ticinese, Navigli

Canal-side aperitivo bar with a serious cocktail program. Quieter than the main Naviglio Grande strip. The bar staff know what they're doing.

Gelateria Artico

€3–6

Corso di Porta Ticinese

Milan's finest gelato. The pistachio and the nocciola are the benchmarks. Small, no seats, constantly busy.

A Note on Eating in Milan

Coperto (cover charge) is standard. Lunch is the main meal. Dinner is rarely before 8pm. Cappuccino is a morning drink only.

NAVIGATING MILAN

Metro, Trams & Getting Around

Milan's public transport is one of the best in Italy. The metro is fast and covers the key visitor areas; the trams are slower but more atmospheric and useful for the Navigli and Brera. A 48-hour travel card covers everything and is the right choice for this itinerary.

Metro Lines You Will Actually Use

M1 (Red)

Duomo to Cadorna to Cairoli (Castello). The main tourist spine. Most useful single line.

M2 (Green)

Garibaldi to Porta Genova (Navigli). Essential for Day 1 afternoon.

M3 (Yellow)

Duomo to Centrale FS (main station). Airport connection via Malpensa Express.

M5 (Lilac)

Garibaldi to Isola and beyond. Essential for Day 2 Isola lunch stop.

Travel Passes

The 48h ATM travel card (€7) covers unlimited metro, tram, and bus within the city. Buy at any metro station or the ATM Point at Duomo. Validate once and it runs for 48 continuous hours. Individual BIT tickets (€2.20) cover 90 minutes from first validation — but for two days, the 48h card is simpler and cheaper.

Practical Transport Tips

- Validate your ticket before boarding. Inspectors are regular and fines are €100.
- The ATM app gives real-time tram tracking — download before you arrive.
- Trams are slower than metro but more pleasant for short hops through Brera and Navigli.
- Avoid rush hour (8–9:30am and 5:30–7:30pm) on the M1 and M3.
- Milan is increasingly cyclable. BikeMi (city bike share) is useful for the flat centre.
- Taxis must be booked or found at stands. Use the itTaxi app. Don't hail them on the street.

Airport Connections

Malpensa (MXP)

Malpensa Express from Milano Centrale or Cadorna — 40–50 minutes, €13. The most reliable option.

Linate (LIN)

Bus ATM Line 73 from Piazza San Babila — 25 minutes, standard travel card. Closest airport to centre.

Bergamo Orio al Serio

Bus from Centrale FS — 1 hour. Budget airlines hub. Allow extra time.

CONTINGENCY

Backup Plans

The Rainy Day Plan — Milan works in any weather

Pinacoteca Ambrosiana

The private library and gallery founded by Cardinal Federico Borromeo in 1618 — home to Leonardo's Codex Atlanticus (the largest collection of Leonardo drawings in the world) and Raphael's cartoon for the School of Athens. One of the most under-visited serious galleries in Milan. Allow ninety minutes.

Museo del Novecento

Twentieth-century Italian art in a building attached to the Palazzo dell'Arengario on Piazza del Duomo. The Futurist collection is exceptional; the view from the spiral ramp back toward the Duomo is one of the better free moments in the city. Free on the first and third Tuesday of the month after 2pm.

Fondazione Prada

One of the most architecturally ambitious cultural spaces in Europe — Rem Koolhaas's conversion of a 1910 distillery in the Largo Isarco area. Permanent collection by Prada's foundation alongside consistently strong temporary exhibitions. Allow a half-day.

Triennale di Milano

Design museum in Parco Sempione. The permanent collection covers Italian design from the postwar era to the present; temporary exhibitions are usually excellent. The cafe is one of the better coffee stops near the park.

Museo della Scienza e della Tecnologia Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo models and original manuscripts alongside a full history of Italian technology and industry. Housed in a sixteenth-century monastery. One of the largest science museums in Europe and consistently underrated. Allow two to three hours.

Queue-Beating Strategies

- Last Supper: Book at vivaticket.it as early as possible. Same-day is not realistic in peak season.
- Duomo rooftop: Book online at duomomilano.it. First slot of the day is the quietest.
- Castello Sforzesco: No booking required. Tuesday mornings are the least crowded.
- Luini panzerotti: Queue moves fast. Go before 12:30pm to avoid the lunch peak.
- Brera gallery: No booking required. Weekday mornings before 10am are the calmest.

KNOW YOUR CITY

Know Your Quartieri

Milan is organised into distinct neighbourhoods. Here are the eight that matter for your 48 hours.

Centro Storico

DUOMO & THE GALLERIA

The commercial and tourist core. The Duomo, the Galleria, Piazza Mercanti, and the department stores. Dense, loud, and necessary for orientation. Move through it efficiently and use it as a base rather than a destination.

Navigli

CANALS & APERITIVO

Milan's surviving canal district. Best in the evening when the aperitivo bars fill and the streets alongside the water come alive. The Mercatone antique market runs on the last Sunday of the month.

Porta Venezia

DIVERSE & LIVELY

East of the centre — a mixed, lively neighbourhood with strong North African and Middle Eastern communities. Bar Basso is here. The Corso Buenos Aires shopping strip runs through it.

Quadrilatero della Moda

FASHION DISTRICT

Four streets of luxury retail — Via Montenapoleone, Via della Spiga, Via Sant'Andrea, Corso Venezia. Walk it in the late afternoon. You don't need to buy anything.

Brera

ART & ELEGANCE

The most beautiful neighbourhood in Milan — cobbled streets, galleries, the Pinacoteca di Brera, and a concentration of serious restaurants. Slower-paced than the centre and worth an evening.

Isola

LOCAL & INDEPENDENT

The neighbourhood that resisted the Porta Nuova development next door and remained genuinely local. Via Borsieri for coffee and lunch. The best argument for leaving the centre.

Porta Romana

FOOD & QUIETER

South of the centre, less touristy, with a concentration of serious restaurants including Trippa and Contraste. Worth the short metro or tram ride for dinner.

Fondazione Prada Area

CREATIVE SOUTH

The Rem Koolhaas-designed Fondazione Prada anchors this emerging area in the Largo Isarco district. Worth the trip for serious contemporary art and architecture.

ESSENTIAL TIPS

What Nobody Tells You About Milan

Eight things that actually matter.

Milan is not a beach city

Milanese style is dark, layered, and not particularly colourful. Shorts and sandals mark you as a tourist in most of the city. A light linen jacket elevates everything.

The duomo is bigger than you expect

No photograph conveys the density of spires and statuary at street level. Stand in Piazza del Duomo and look up before you go inside.

The city shuts down in August

Many restaurants, galleries, and shops close for ferragosto in the first two weeks of August. Check before you visit if your trip falls in that window.

Milan is the departure city for Italian lakes

Lago di Como, Lago Maggiore, and Lago d'Orta are all within one to two hours by train. A half-day to Como from Stazione Centrale requires no planning beyond a train ticket.

Aperitivo is a meal

Between 6pm and 9pm, bars offer free food with drinks. This is not a snack — it is dinner. Order one drink, eat as much as the spread allows, and move on.

Book the Last Supper well in advance

There is no queue. There is no walk-up. There is only a timed ticket booked weeks ahead at [vivaticket.it](https://www.vivaticket.it). Nothing else will work.

Coffee culture is strict

Cappuccino is a morning drink. After 11am you order espresso, macchiato, or nothing. Sitting down costs significantly more than standing. The bar counter is the correct place to drink coffee.

The fashion district operates normally

Via Montenapoleone and Via della Spiga are not red-roped or exclusive — they are pedestrian streets. Walk them at any hour. The window displays are free. The architecture is worth seeing.

CONNECTIONS

Rail & River Gateway

Lakes, High-Speed Rail & European Connections

Italian Lakes — Day Trip & Multi-Day Options

Milan is the natural departure city for the Italian lakes. Lago di Como is one hour by train from Stazione Centrale or Stazione Cadorna; Lago Maggiore is seventy minutes from Centrale; Lago d'Orta is ninety minutes with a change at Novara. If your cruise begins or ends in Civitavecchia or Genoa, Milan works well as a pre- or post-cruise city with a lake day built in.

By High-Speed Train

Milan → Venice 2h 30 min

Italo or Trenitalia Frecciarossa. Direct service from Centrale. From €20 booked ahead.

Milan → Florence 1h 45 min

Frecciarossa direct. From €20 booked ahead. The fastest intercity connection in Italy.

Milan → Rome 3h

Frecciarossa direct from Centrale. From €35 booked ahead. Competitive with flying once transfers are included.

Milan → Geneva 3h 30 min

TGV Lyria via Lausanne. Useful Swiss connection. Book at tgv-lyria.com.

Milan → Paris 7 hours

Direct TGV via Turin. One of the great train journeys in Europe. Book early at sncf-connect.com.

Pre- or Post-Cruise Stay

Genoa is the closest Mediterranean cruise port to Milan — 1h 30 min by Frecciabianca from Centrale. Civitavecchia (Rome's port) is three hours to Rome by Frecciarossa. If your cruise departs from Venice, a Milan pre-stay of two days followed by a high-speed train to Venice Mestre on embarkation morning is the most efficient itinerary available in northern Italy.

Milan awaits.

You have the plan. You know when to be at the Duomo,
where to eat without getting taken, and which canal
to sit beside when the city finally slows down.
The rest is just showing up and letting it do its thing.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- Screenshot Day 1 and Day 2 schedules for offline use
- Book Last Supper tickets at vivaticket.it — do this first
- Pre-book Duomo rooftop at duomomilano.it
- Download Google Maps Milan offline (Settings → Offline Maps)
- Buy a 48h ATM travel card on arrival at Duomo metro station
- Book dinner reservations for Trattoria della Pesa or Trippa
- Check Fondazione Prada current exhibition at fondazioneprada.org

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.



goingsolo.life/maps/milan

GoingSolo.Life

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.
