

TRAVEL / CITY

## Massimo Alba's perfect weekend in Milan

The fashion designer's calm, casual yet refined sensibility and finely crafted fabrics have made his name a byword for understated Italian elegance and ease



Massimo Alba in the Giardino degli Atellani | Image: Valentina Sommariva



## WHERE TO FIND ^

Basilica di Santa Maria delle Grazie, Piazza di Santa Maria delle Grazie, 20123. Cavalli e Nastri, Via Gian Giacomo Mora 3, 20123 (+3902-8940 9452; [cavallienastri.com](http://cavallienastri.com)). Church of Santa Maria Presso San Satiro, Via Torino 17-19, 20123. Dischivolanti, Ripa di Porta Ticinese 47, 20413 (+3902-8940 1623). EE Ercolessi, Corso Magenta 25, 20123 (+3902-8645 2444; [ercolessi.gpa.it](http://ercolessi.gpa.it)). Elita Bar, Via Corsico 5, 20144 (+3902-3679 8710). Giardino degli Atellani, Corso Magenta 65, 20123 ([vignadileonardo.com](http://vignadileonardo.com)). L'Altra Isola, Via Edoardo Porro 8, 20158 (+3902-6083 0205). L'Arabesque, Largo Augusto 10, 20122 (+3902-7645 1477; [larabesque.net](http://larabesque.net)). Orto Botanico di Brera, Via Brera 28, 20121 (+3902-5031 4683). Pasticceria Ranieri, Via della Moscova 7, 20121 (+3901-659 5308). Pinacoteca di Brera, Via Brera 28, 20121 (+3902-7226 3264; [pinacotecabrera.org](http://pinacotecabrera.org)). Pizzeria Biagio, Via Vincenzo Monti 28, 20123 (+3902-498 7166). Ristorante Carminio, Via Del Carmine 3, 320121 (+3902-7202 2992; [carminiocucina.com](http://carminiocucina.com)).

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My home in the Magenta district, where I live with my wife Mari and son Nicolò, is opposite the 15th-century church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, a World Heritage Site. Even though we can see it from our windows, I seek out another view when I take our dog Jasper out on a Saturday morning. I'll walk to the back of the church, past the gate that leads to Bramante's Cloister – and the fountain with its four bronze frogs – to the bottom of Via Giuseppe Antonio Sassi, a little street with a dead end. From this spot, you can see a special part of the church that is hidden; it is like a star gate.

I've lived in [Milan](#) for 20 years, but it's still a city of secrets. The Giardino degli Atellani, a regular stop on my walks, was mysterious for years until it was opened to visitors. I also love the church of Santa Maria presso San Satiro: Bramante transformed this tiny space using a perspective that was unknown at the time, and it continues to amaze.

For lunch, I'll head to Biagio for excellent pizza and a choice of artisanal [beers](#). Then I like to get lost in the classic Renaissance art at Pinacoteca di Brera, close to my store on Via Brera, or stroll through the botanical [gardens](#) where I had my first exhibition, featuring a collection of dressed scarecrows, in 2011. I have a thing about fountain [pens](#), so EE Ercolessi, which sells beautiful writing instruments, is another likely stop.

For all its history, Milan reflects the modern world. It's open, free and informal and I'm totally at ease here. I like clothes to convey that same ease; if you feel comfortable, you engage with others in the best possible way. My inspiration often comes from chance encounters with people as well as places. But I also enjoy rummaging through the [jackets](#), [shirts](#) and curiosities at [vintage](#) shops. Cavalli e Nastri has an interesting selection on Via Brera – I often buy vintage [Hermès](#) scarves there – but the branch on Via Gian Giacomo Mora is best for [menswear](#).

I'll drop into L'Arabesque, a concept store with a vintage book department run by my friend Alessandro Andrei. I love the smell paper gets over time. I recently bought a stunning [Saint Laurent](#) monograph; a Biba monograph from the '70s; and a collection of images from an important Japanese [textiles](#) archive that influenced my next menswear collection.

In the colder months, I round off the day with **Milanese cuisine**. L'Altra Isola has the best riso al salto [refried risotto] and cotoletta alla Milanese [breaded veal chop]. Or I go for spaghetti at Ristorante Carminio, a place with a spellbinding interior, owned by an elegant lady called Ada – an artist and a true signora Milanese.

The city has so many **cafés** and pâtisseries, but Ranieri is one of the most historic – a lovely place to stop on Sunday morning to buy cakes or pastries if we are visiting friends. It's also a good day to visit Navigli, Milan's canal district – particularly on the last Sunday of the month to wander in the **antiques** market. I recently came across the most exciting **records** from my youth, all waiting in the same place: David Sylvian, David Bowie, Lou Reed, Chet Baker... It was as if we'd bumped into each other by chance, so I bought them all again and decided to play them at the presentation of my next men's collection. I love to give records as gifts, too, and I often find what I'm looking for at Dischivolanti.

Later, I might drop into Elita, the **bar** by my studio, for an aperitif and a paper cone of fried anchovies, a local delicacy. In the evening, we'll have a glass of wine in the kitchen with friends while Mari and Nicolò cook pasta. The perfect night ends with me washing the dishes – I find it extremely relaxing.