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Getting personal in Milan

Get to grips with the city's dazzling array of boutiques, stores and shops with your very own personal shopper

Words **Sarah Lane** Photos **Adam Scott**

● "I look like a monster if I wear yellow," claims Anna Maria Lamanna, personal shopper, fashion expert and image consultant. Quite honestly it's hard to believe that this tall, slim blonde could ever appear anything other than glamorous and chic – she certainly wouldn't be out of place on a catwalk.

Born in such a style capital as Milan, Anna Maria has always been surrounded by fashion and for her it's an intrinsic part of life. She never misses the seasonal fashion shows and in-store previews of new collections. "I'd go anyway just to keep up-to-date but it's also vital for my work to know all about the latest trends and what the various stores are selling."

Quick to banish the image of an obsessive airhead, she actually comes over as incredibly practical and professional. "I certainly don't follow fashion blindly," she says. "As I tell my clients, you have to be objective about yourself and interpret fashion to suit your physique and style. We're all made differently and nobody can look good in everything." Wise words indeed.

"Sometimes people – both men and women – show me a picture of how they'd like to dress that's just unrealistic," she says. "I have to tell them, in the nicest possible way, that it's simply not going to work for them and then steer them onto something they'll look good in."





→After graduating in Public Relations, Anna Maria worked for 12 years as a fashion co-ordinator, advising fashion companies on what's most likely to sell and how best to market new products. "It was fascinating work but the hours were incredibly long," she recalls and in 2003, married and with a young family, she realised that she needed a career with more flexibility.

Having come across personal shoppers in the USA, Anna Maria decided to import the profession into Italy and opened her own agency. Working from home she's now able to dedicate more time to her husband and two children but she's never had any regrets about leaving her former career. "I adore this job," she says. "I meet so many interesting people and it's amazing when I can make a real difference to their lives. Lots of people, particularly women, are full of insecurities and part of my job lies in making them feel more confident about the way they look."

If you feel the need to refresh your image but aren't sure how or if you just don't have time to scour the stores for the right clothes or accessories, then the services of a personal shopper such as Anna Maria can be invaluable. She'll meet you at your hotel or pick you up from the airport or station. "A minimum of time together before we hit the shops is essential – it allows me to quiz my client about what they want to buy and find out their budget. It also gives me the chance to gauge their style and decide where best to take them," she explains. Often



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● It's all big names and the famous brand icon of the city, the Golden Quad, when you're looking for labels and style

she'll call ahead to ensure a peek at the top stores and prime shops they're looking for.

"You should have a clear idea when you set out on a shopping trip anywhere really, and avoid impulse buying," Anna Maria, who's met plenty of clients, explains. "When I'm at someone's house for a consultation we'll go through their wardrobe together and decide what works and what to get rid of," she explains. "I've seen a lot of unworn purchases, bought on impulse."

This phenomenon is portrayed in the film *Confessions of a Shopaholic*. Kinsella's series of novels, the *Shopaholic*, is due out in September. Anna Maria was invited to the show last year to comment on the film but unfortunately she didn't enjoy the truth in it," she smiles wryly.

A good place to start an expedition is the multitude of shopping options in the perpetually buzzing square, Piazza del Duomo, by the city's stunning Gothic cathedral. Anna Maria explains, the best medium for shopping is to be found between the cathedral and Babila; from here take Via Montenapoleone. If you're in the Golden Quad,

Almost like a parallel universe





● Left: Fancy footwear dominates plenty of Milan's retail space. Below: Moschino's award-winning shop window display turns heads

→ network of streets is a haven for fashion fiends with its dense concentration of top designer stores such as Prada, Versace, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana and many more. Even if it's out of your range, come just to feast your eyes on the elaborate window displays and mingle with the beautiful, immaculately dressed shoppers gliding from shop to shop with clutches of exclusive shopping bags.

"Not everyone can afford to shop in the Golden Quad of course and I'm more than happy to go to ordinary high-street stores," says Anna Maria. "In fact, my advice to anyone is to spend less on what I call throwaway items, such as t-shirts that you'll wear for just one season, but invest more in important purchases like suits, bags and coats that'll last longer."

If cutting-edge style is your thing, head for the areas around Corso Garibaldi and Corso Como and for quality hand-made items try the village district of Brera just beyond the La Scala opera house. Navigli, on the other hand, is the place to go for vintage styles to create a look that's truly individual and there are lots of arts and crafts studios to browse round here too.

Brera and the Navigli canal district are also great for an evening out. "I love the Brera district best," says Anna Maria. "Now that spring is here and the chilly winter weather has finally gone you can eat at outside tables and the shops start staying open late in the evenings – fantastic! Remember too that spring is the right moment to start revamping your wardrobe for the coming summer season," she adds.

So, what should we be wearing this season? According to Anna Maria "bright colours are back – electric blue and emerald green in particular, but also shocking pink and acid lemons and limes." She advises just a touch of such startling colours, for accessories perhaps,



"If all that shopping makes you hungry, take a well-earned break and refuel. A great place for lunch is the seventh floor of the vast La Rinascente department store in Corso Vittorio Emanuele on the corner of Piazza Duomo. It has fabulous views over the cathedral!"

WIZZ writer Sarah Lane

teamed up with something more neutral.

And as for shapes? "Go for straight, closer fitting trousers and skirts with softer lines for tops." Mini skirts and shorts are still around, too, but as Anna Maria points out, you should only wear these if you have the right figure – and with all the Pilates, running and gym workouts she does, Anna Maria herself can wear them with ease.

Men too will have to keep themselves in shape this season if they want to flaunt the latest fitted jackets. "Luckily my husband, who I buy everything for, has a perfect physique," she grins. ●

Anna Maria accompanies individuals and small groups on shopping trips in and around Milan (£60 per hour). Other services include shopping on commission, tracing particular items and image consultation. Any language can be catered for.

www.personalshoppermilano.com





● Anna Maria can tailor her personal shopping for the big brands or the budget bargains