



digenova.it). Hour-long cruises (battellierigenova.it) get you out into the formidable bustle of Genoa's port and give you a close-up view of La Lanterna, the 108-metre-tall lighthouse built as a testament to the city's medieval maritime might.



Soho

This new restaurant and "fish works" makes the fashionable best of Genoa's seafood: a fancy fishmonger's decorated in black, white and chrome, with tables at which you can sit and sample the best of the day's catch. Champagne, oysters and sushi are the local favourite for evening "aperitivi" (the place stocks 300 different wines), or there is a full menu served in the venue's low-lit basement, featuring modern takes on old Genovese favourites such as baccala (salted white fish) with potatoes and tiny Ligurian olives. **Details:** Via Al Ponte Calvi 20r.



What's new

Porto Antico

Genoa's previously "no-go" waterfront, Porto Antico, has undergone major change. Its reign as European City of Culture in 2004, and the 1992 celebrations for the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage to the Americas, saw the dockside spruced up through several regenerative building programmes. The gentrification has continued, though it's pretty rough round the edges. The redesigning of Porto Antico (old port) is largely down to architect Renzo Piano, a Genoa native. Don't miss La Bolla (The Bubble) a huge, glass, spherical greenhouse encasing a miniature rainforest, floating on a platform beside the aquarium (acquario-



Bentley Hotel

As you might expect in a port city, Genoa is not famed for its lavish hotels. Until, that is, the opening of the Bentley Hotel. Genoa's first five-star.



Insider's secret

Bobby Federici, manager of albergo La Pineta dell'Iguana

"Look out for the flag of St George flying from the city's rooftops. This sight has its heritage in the tough Genovese sailors who helped escort armies to and from the Holy Land during the Crusades. The Genovese later sold their flag to the English who flew it to scare off would-be attackers."

The Italian job: Colin Firth co-stars with the atmospheric location in 'Genova', out shortly REUTERS



Located in the former headquarters of Ilva, Italy's biggest iron and steel manufacturer, this imposing 1920s building comes with 99 slick, modern rooms, a restaurant serving regional Ligurian dishes, and decorative trimmings by contemporary Italian artists. Rooms cost from €245 (£194) per night. **Details:** bentley.thi-hotels.com.



Sea of Gardens

Visit the terraced gardens of Genoa's splendid Pallavicino delle Peschiere, at via S Bartolomeo degli Armeni 5, the 16th-century villa that was once the winter home of Charles Dickens. This is just one of the 26 villa estates in the Genoa region that have recently been grouped together as part of an initiative entitled "A Sea of Gardens". Liguria's tourist board decided to celebrate the province's rich coastal garden heritage by putting together this circuit of historical and modern, public and private gardens open to visitors. **Details:** liguria-giardini.it.

M Café

The Palazzo Rosso (a "Strade Nuove" flagship museum) finally gets the fancy-pants café and restaurant it deserves, M Café. A simple, modern glass addition to the 17th-century palazzo is the venue for eats, overlooking the gorgeous internal courtyard. The café serves fresh fruit smoothies, neat espressi and panini, while the restaurant



offers up refined pastas as well as local fish dishes and a pretty decent selection of wine. **Details:** Via Garibaldi 18.



Opera season

Genoa's opera and ballet season opens this year with a crowd-pleaser: Bellini's "I Capuleti e i Montecchi" takes to the stage on 24 October, under the theatrical direction of Scotsman Robert Carson. Juliet and Romeo are respectively Mariella Devia and Sonia Ganassi, two of the most admired Italian female voices. This season, Genoa's lovely neo-classical style opera house also welcomes the Paris Opéra Bastille performing "La Bohème", and the Kiev Opera Ballet Company with "The Nutcracker". **Details:** carlofelice.it

COMPACT FACTS

HOW TO GET THERE

British Airways (0844 493 0787; ba.com) and Ryanair (0871 246 0000; ryanair.com) fly to Genoa.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Italian Government Tourist Board (020-7408 1254; italiantouristboard.co.uk).