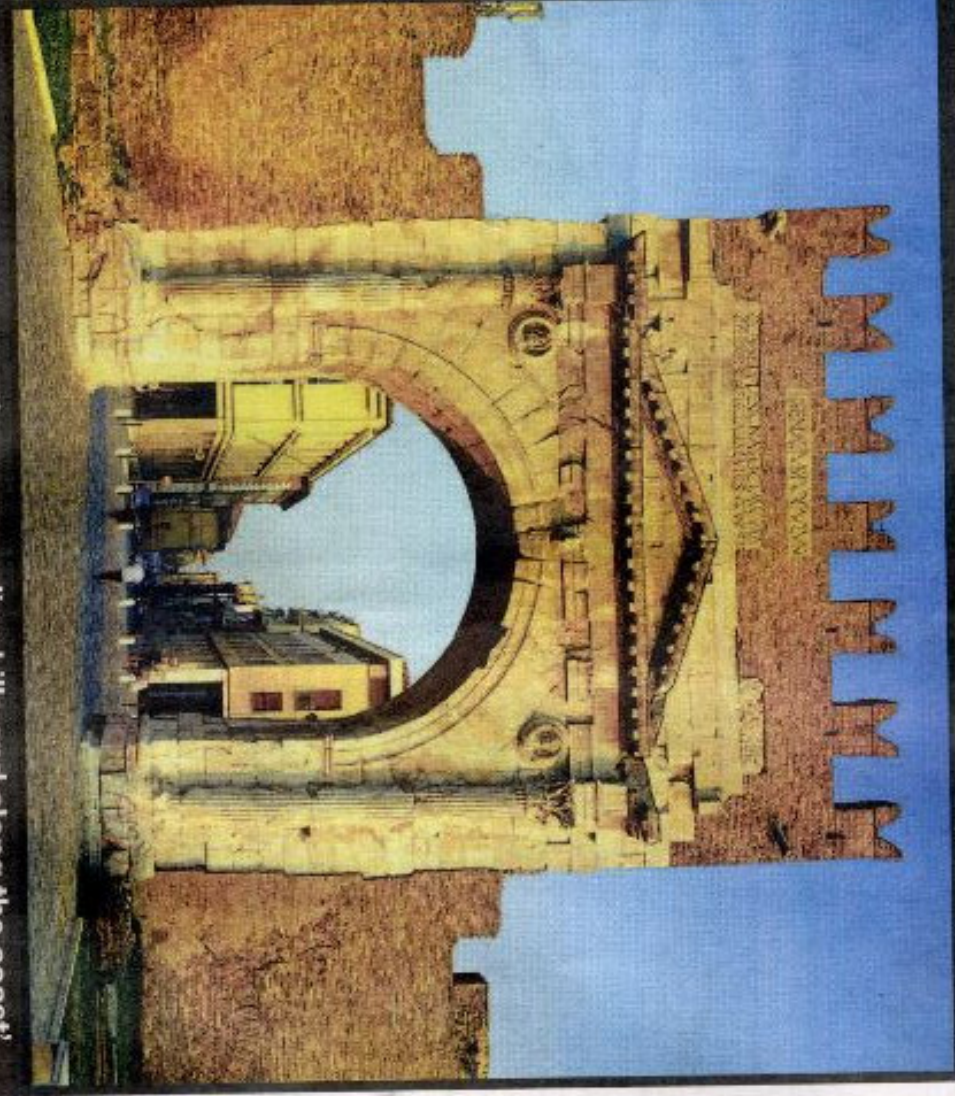


MY KIND OF TOWN

RIMINI



When the air is clear there are superb views to the surrounding hills and along the coast'



Writer and journalist James Owen spends his summers in Rimini. His new book, *A Serpent in Eden*, is published by Abacus (£6.99)

Why Rimini? My wife is from Rimini and we come to the Adriatic so that she can get her annual fix of sand, sea and watermelon. I like it for its relaxed feel and the tactile associations with the past – this was Italy's summer capital of pleasure for much of the 20th century. It's a beach town, but more like 1950s England than Miami. It must be about the only place south of Venice where you can play crazy golf.

Where would you meet friends for a drink? If they're posers, at Mulino Maschio at Via Vespadici 12 (23825), close to the seafront. Otherwise in one of the bars around central Piazza Cavour and the former fish market or pescateria. I like La Cantarella in tiny Piazzetta Gregorio da Rimini (54499).

Where are your favourite places for lunch? Rimini's marina has recently had a much-needed makeover, and the stylish Moio 22 at Via Ortigara 78 (29937; www.moio22.it) is a great place for fish

to tuck into Romagna's traditionally heavy but never heavy cuisine

And for dinner? Like L'Asoro Rosso (53577; www.asorosso.it), at Viale Trento 11, as much for its setting as its superlative (if pricey) cooking. It's sited among the fishermen's cottages of the Borgo San Giuliano, and is next to a Roman bridge where a lame paracok lives. When it gets really hot at night, we go up to the city's fresher, hipper suburbs and eat wellington under the stars on terrace tables at L'Assessorio, Via Covignano 221.

What would you tell them to avoid? It's probably sensible to steer clear of the beach and parks after dark.

Public transport or taxi? Taxis are expensive. Most distances are walkable, or you can rent a bicycle. Buses are infrequent, but cheap. And no-one checks your ticket.

Handbag or moneybelt? Rimini is fairly safe, although bag-snatchers come here on holiday, too.

What should I take home? Olive oil, San Giovanni wine and romagnolo di fossa cheese. The locally printed lapidotte with rustic motifs make good presents.

And if I've only time for one shop? The Cain department store at Corso D'Augusto 58 has everything you might need, from non-slip-soles to sun cream.

Where's the best place to stay?

All offers are subject to availability. Prices are per person and based on two sharing, unless otherwise stated.

Just go!

THIS WEEK'S DEALS

UNDER £250

Budapest 3 nights £139

Includes b&b at the three-star Kings Hotel with departures from Gatwick between September 1 and 30. Book through Expobooks (0800 082 3100; www.expobooks.com/deals).

Rome 3 nights £215

Room-only accommodation at the three-star Casaria Palace, departing from Bristol on Saturdays, through Expedia (0870 050 0808; www.expedia.co.uk). Depart Bristol on August 12.

Spain 7 nights £240

Based on 10 sharing a self-catering villa, El Pòrtico, at La Heradura, from August 17, through CV Travel (0870 605 0802; www.cvtravel.co.uk). The offer excludes flights.

UNDER £500

Egypt 7 nights £299

All-inclusive accommodation at the five-star La Meridien Mahad Bay Resort, Hurghada, departing from Gatwick on August 25, through Lastminute (0870 443 9902; www.lastminute.com).

Dominican Rep 7 nights £478

An all-inclusive package at the five-star Tropical Casa Laguna Hotel, Cabarete, departing from Gatwick on September 8, through Co-op Travel Shop (0870 514 3301; www.cooprivetravelshop.co.uk/deals).

Dubai 3 nights £479

B & b at the four-star Rimal Rotana Suites plus return flight on Virgin Atlantic, from Heathrow, departing before August 20. Book through Virgin Holidays (0871 222 1203; www.virginholidays.co.uk).

Tunisia 7 nights £489

Half board at the four-star Hotel Karim, Port El Kantaoui, including return flight from Gatwick or Manchester, departing on August 9, 16 or 23. Book through Tunisia First (01276 600100; www.tunisiadirect.co.uk).

UK BREAKS

Brighton 1 night £45

Deal is for b&b at the four-diamond White Horse Hotel (01273 626286; www.whitehorsedirect.com). Book direct.

Torquay 2 nights £199

Deal is for b&b at the five-star Paramount Imperial Hotel (0870 168 8833; www.paramount-hotels.co.uk) through Tour Authority. Book direct.

Norfolk 2 nights £265

Half board at the three-star Coningham Hall, near Kings Lynn, until September 30 (price includes two tickets to the Royal Sandringham Estate). Book through Friends of Britain Hotels (0800 069 3829; www.friendsofbrithotels.com).

Fort William 7 nights £324

Half board at the three-star Cairnshorn Hotel, Loch Linnhe, to be booked by Friday for the week beginning August 27. Book through WA Shearings (01542 524824; www.wahearings.com) quoting ref PL4631.

SOPHIE ROBINSON