



lonely planet

# Italy

**170**

**MAPS**  
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**INSPIRATIONAL ITINERARIES**  
COVERING EACH REGION'S BEST  
SIGHTS & SECRET PLACES

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# Destination Italy

'I am young and send texts (sms),' Italy's prime-minister-cum-media-tycoon Silvio Berlusconi remarked with his Cheshire-cat smile in a TV interview in early 2009. Born in 1936 and keen to promote his sense of eternal youth, Berlusconi is the image of the Italian self-made man who once made his living singing on cruise ships but became wealthy in construction and, from 1980, the media.

Elected three times as prime minister since 1994 (most recently in a landslide in 2008), Berlusconi's electoral fortunes slipped in mid-2009 in nationwide provincial and municipal polls as he was enveloped by scandal. After his wife, former actress Veronica Lario, announced she would file for divorce and claimed her husband consorted with minors, an investigation was opened into the presence of call girls at parties hosted by the prime minister.

Berlusconi declared the claims to be part of a plot orchestrated by the left and publications like *La Repubblica* and *Espresso* (both owned by a rival tycoon). The prime minister has, since the early 1990s, been involved in numerous court cases related to claimed wrong-doing in his business affairs. Nothing has ever stuck but, as head of the government, he promoted an immunity law, passed in July 2008, that protects him from prosecution while in office. It came in before his British lawyer, David Mills, was convicted in February 2009 of taking bribes from a Berlusconi company to hush up evidence in other trials against Berlusconi.

In a sense, 'twas ever thus. The land that gave us Roman efficiency and Renaissance aesthetics has a turbulent history. The peninsula remained hopelessly divided into bickering city-states and small warring kingdoms after the fall of Rome and eventually succumbed to foreign control. Italy only reunited and regained independence in the late 19th century. Since then, what is today Europe's fourth largest economy has been a country of enormous contradictions.

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## FAST FACTS

Population: 59.6 million

Area: 301,230 sq km

GDP: €1273 billion (€21,359 per head)

GDP growth: -1%

Tourism contribution to GDP: 11.5%

Inflation: 0.2%

Unemployment rate: 7.8% (10-13.5% in the south)

Average life expectancy: 77.6 years (men), 83.2 years (women)

Highest point: Mont Blanc (Monte Bianco) at 4807m

Coffee consumption: Italians drink 600 cups per head a year, according to one study!

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The *Belpaese* (Beautiful Country) is one of the single greatest repositories of sensorial pleasures on earth. From art to food, from stunning and varied countryside to flamboyant fashion, Italy has it all. This is the country that brought us Slow Food, devoted to the promotion of fresh products and fine traditional cooking. What started as a local protest against fast food has become a worldwide movement.

With 44 sites, Italy has more Unesco World Heritage sites than any other country on earth. Its great *città d'arte* (cities of art), like Rome, Venice and Florence, have been attracting visitors for centuries, and with good reason. At times, it seems like the country rests on its artistic laurels. This is not entirely true. Milan, the country's financial hub, has created one of Europe's biggest and most modern trade fairs and is planning a major residential development, the CityLife complex [Click here](#), in the heart of the city. Venice is possibly the city that has, in appearance, changed least down the decades but it has recently opened a sleek new bridge over the Grand Canal and a spectacular contemporary art space at the Punta della Dogana.

Nature occasionally strikes hard at Italy's artistic wealth. Flooding in 1966 caused incalculable damage to Venice and Florence. One of the positive results of those disasters was the emergence of a new class of expert art restorers. Such expertise will be in demand in Abruzzo, struck by an earthquake (6.3 on the Richter scale) on 6 April 2009. It left 295 dead and 55,000 homeless. The city of L'Aquila, at the epicentre, was hit especially hard. Stupor at the collapse of the general hospital in L'Aquila turned to anger when it was revealed that it had been operating without permits and had not been built to meet the seismic standards of the area.

Berlusconi promised €8 billion for reconstruction and an anti-Mafia watchdog to make sure organised crime didn't benefit from these funds. He also moved the July G8 world economic summit from Sardinia to L'Aquila, at a time when Italy's economy was looking especially fragile. The International Monetary Fund predicted a 2.1% drop in Italian GDP in 2009 and further losses in 2010.

The question of the Mafia remains an open sore. The publication in 2006 of *Gomorra*, a chilling and personal account of the Naples Camorra by journalist Roberto Saviano, showed just how deep the problem goes.

Although Sicily's Cosa Nostra grabs many of the headlines, the Camorra is Italy's biggest organised crime group (if this mix of warring clans can be considered a single entity). Known to its own members as The System, it is involved in everything from drugs and arms trafficking to illegal industrial waste disposal. Occasionally there is good news on the crime front. In early 2009, Salvatore Zazo, a key Camorra boss involved in drug trafficking between Colombia and Naples, was arrested in Barcelona, Spain.

Immigration is a hot potato. Immigrants have forever changed the face of Italian cities and towns, bringing cultural enrichment and social tension. Berlusconi's centre-right administration has made illegal immigration a major issue and, in 2009, signed a deal with Libya allowing Italian Navy vessels to force boat people back to Libya. The first three boatloads were sent back in May, raising eyebrows from the UN to Brussels and causing an outcry at home. Further protest came with a new, hardline security law

package passed in July. It makes illegal immigration a criminal offence and obliges doctors, among others, to report patients without legal papers to the police.

Berlusconi dropped another bombshell in February 2009 when he announced that Italy, which had turned its back on nuclear power in the 1980s, would build four reactors with the aid of the French EDF power giant.

Meanwhile, Pope Benedict XVI got himself into hot water after reinstating four arch-conservative bishops who had been under a papal ban since 1988. One of them, the British Bishop Richard Williamson had, only days before the Vatican's announcement, declared he did not believe in the Jewish Holocaust in WWII. Both the Pope and Williamson wound up making public apologies.

A feeling of apprehension pervades much of Italian society, but an irrepressible sense of humour allows Italians to poke fun at themselves and their leaders and get on with the good things in life. A lovely case in point is the 2008 film, *Il Divo* [Click here](#), about long-standing political eminence Giulio Andreotti.

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# Getting Started

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You could keep visiting Italy for the rest of your life and still not exhaust all it has to offer. It's a treasure chest of art, a living tableau of human history, a culinary delight, and a natural wonder with everything from craggy mountains and glistening glaciers to sparkling seas and golden beaches.

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## WHEN TO GO

The immediate response is 'any time'! On a more serious note, the best period is April to June. The weather then is sunny without being stifling, the countryside bursts with spring flowers, and the flood of summer tourism, largely dictated by school holidays, has yet to crash over the peninsula. Most Italians hit the road in July and August, so those two months — in which prices soar, tempers flare and the country broils — are best avoided.

The vision of Italy as the land of eternal Mediterranean sunshine is a trifle distorted. In the Alps, winters are long and severe. First snowfalls usually occur in November, and freak falls in June are not unusual. The ski season is high season in the Alps. Those mountains shield Lombardy from the extremes of the northern European winter, but cloud and rain are common — Milan comes close to being Italy's London.

Florence's position, nestled in a valley surrounded by hills, creates ovenlike conditions in summer. Rome experiences hot summers and mild winters. That tendency continues in the south: in Sicily and Sardinia you can expect very mild winters and long hot summers (a dip in the sea is possible from Easter to October).

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See Climate Charts [Click here](#) for more information.

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Italy's calendar of religious, local and national festivals, along with cultural events, is busy year-round but bulges with possibility from Easter to September; [Click here](#) for more information.

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## COSTS & MONEY

Italy isn't cheap, although compared with the UK and northern Europe the situation is not so bad. What you spend on accommodation (your single greatest expense) will depend on various factors, such as location (Turin is pricier than Taranto), season (August is crazy on the coast), the degree of comfort, and luck. At the bottom end you will pay €16 to €20 at youth hostels, where meals generally cost €10.

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## DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- Valid travel insurance [Click here](#)
  - Your ID card or passport and visa if required [Click here](#)
  - A driving licence and car documents if driving, along with appropriate car insurance [Click here](#)
  - A set of smart casual clothes: T-shirts, shorts and dusty sandals don't cut the mustard in bars and restaurants in fashion-conscious Italy.
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The cheapest *pensione* (small hotel) is unlikely to cost less than €25 for an extremely basic single or €40 for a double anywhere from Pisa to Palermo. You can stumble across comfortable rooms with their own bathroom from €50 to €80. Midrange hotels in the more expensive places such as Rome, Florence and Venice can easily cost from €80 to €150 for singles or €120 to €200 for doubles. In this guide, we provide (where appropriate) an approximate range of prices you can expect to pay for rooms at the upper price range in, where prices differ seasonally, low and high seasons.

Eating out is just as variable. In Venice, Milan and (believe it or not) Sardinia, you tend to pay a lot (and sometimes get little in return), while tourist magnets such as Florence and Rome offer surprisingly affordable options. On average you should reckon on at least €20 to €50 for a meal (two courses, dessert and house wine), although you can still find basic set-lunch menus for €10 to €15.

A backpacker sticking religiously to youth hostels, snacking at midday and travelling slowly could scrape by on around €50 per day. If staying in modest hotel accommodation, your average daily budget, including a sandwich for lunch and a simple dinner, as well as a couple of sights and some travel, might come to anything from €100 to €150 a day.

Public transport is reasonably priced but car hire [Click here](#) can be expensive (as is petrol) and is probably best arranged before leaving home. On trains [Click here](#) you can save money by travelling on the slower *regionale* (local) trains. Seniors, young people under 26 and families covering a lot of ground by train should consider asking for discount cards ([Click here](#)).

EU citizens should look out for discounts and free days at museums.

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## HOW MUCH?

Coffee at the bar €0.80-1

Bowl of pasta *al pesto* €6-10

Gelato €2-3

Local newspaper €1

Foreign newspaper €2-3

City bus/tram ride €1

10-minute taxi ride €8-10

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## TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

Lonely Planet has always encouraged readers to tread lightly, travel responsibly and enjoy the magic independent travel affords. At a time when international travel continues to grow fast, we still believe in the benefits it can bring. As always, we encourage you to consider the impact your visit will have on the global environment and local economies, cultures and ecosystems.

Most Mediterranean countries suffer from the overdevelopment of tourism to some degree, especially in coastal areas, and Italy is no exception.

What can you do to limit your environmental footprint? For a start, you might consider a low-emission form of transport. Train travel in Italy, especially between the major city centres, is easy and affordable. There are also numerous InterRail and Eurail passes available, and InterRail has a single-country ticket worth considering if you're planning a big itinerary. A comprehensive network of coaches runs the length and breadth of the country. For more information on train and bus travel see the Transport chapter [Click here](#).

On the ground look out for ecofriendly places to stay. Italy has a good network of *agriturismo* (farm-stay accommodation). Locally run tours, markets and courses are another good way to engage with the country and these are recommended throughout this guide.

## Carbon Offset Schemes

Aviation is the fastest growing contributor to climate change. Yet it's not exclusively bad; mile for mile, the amount of carbon dioxide emitted for one person driving a car is about as much as that per passenger on a plane. The problem with flying is not only the carbon (and other greenhouse gases, such as water vapour) emitted. At high altitude, these gases have a greater effect on climate change.

Most forms of transport emit carbon dioxide to some degree and carbon offset schemes enable you to calculate your emissions so that you can invest in renewable energy schemes and reforestation projects that will reduce the emission of an equivalent amount of carbon dioxide. Some schemes focus just on emissions caused by flights, while others help you work out emissions from specific train, car and ferry journeys to enable you to offset your journeys whatever mode of transport you used.

## Getting Around

Getting around on a local level can be a mixed experience in Italy. In cities such as Milan, Turin and, to a lesser extent, Rome, public transport is efficient and good value, although it can be terribly oversubscribed during peak hours. A number of city centres are closed to traffic and, in the south, restrictions on traffic apply during the summer months. This makes city centres a great deal more pleasant



and has had a noticeable affect on pollution.

Madly buzzing scooters, however, remain a firm fixture in Italian city centres and, although they don't have a particularly high carbon footprint (roughly half that of a Smartcar), the number of them and the noise do contribute to urban pollution. They're much less environmentally friendly than bicycles.

In a growing number of smaller cities, like Bergamo, Brescia, Bologna, Florence, Lecce and Ravenna, cycling is popular and cheap bicycle-rental outlets are legion. A growing number of hotels offer guests the use of bikes free of charge. For more information, see the Getting Around sections in the regional chapters.

## Accommodation

An increasing number of tourism businesses are now looking to cash in on the green euro, so it can be difficult to identify genuinely green options. Look out for some of the telltale signs of a genuine commitment to the environment. The eco-labelling scheme Legambiente Turismo ([www.legambienteturismo.it](http://www.legambienteturismo.it)) lists some 300 establishments, from camping grounds through hotels to resorts, that it judges positively on use of water and energy resources, reduced waste production, and whether they offer good local cuisine and organic breakfasts. There's also an increasing number of family-run B&Bs and *agriturismo* [Click here](#).

## Slow Food

One of the best ways to help local economies is to shop locally. In Italy this isn't difficult, given that it is the home of the Slow Food Movement ([www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)) and countless excellent markets, farm restaurants. Seasonal, organic food is available (and prized) throughout the country. The guidebook *Osterie d'Italia* is an excellent source of information and, in 2007, Slow Food opened its very first supermarket, Eataly (p227; [www.eatalytorino.it](http://www.eatalytorino.it)), in Turin, which gives local producers direct access to consumers for the first time.

## Responsible Travel Information

**Agriturismi** ([www.agriturismi.it](http://www.agriturismi.it)) Online guide to farm accommodation.

**Fondo Per l'Ambiente Italiano** ([www.fondoambiente.it](http://www.fondoambiente.it)) A rough Italian equivalent of the UK's National Trust, which restores historic houses and gardens and opens them up to the public.

**Legambiente Turismo** ([www.legambienteturismo.it](http://www.legambienteturismo.it)) Look for the 'Green Swan' eco-label that flags up genuinely ecofriendly places to stay.

**Travel Foundation** ([www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk)) The UK-based sustainable-tourism charity provides tips on how to travel more responsibly.

**World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms** ([www.wwoof.it](http://www.wwoof.it)) Learn about biodynamic and organic living in return for a few hours' work.

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## TRAVEL LITERATURE

Reams have been written on Italy and it seems like everyone's been at it, from DH Lawrence to Hermann Hesse, from Charles Dickens to Henry James. Much has also been penned in more recent times giving lucid insight into all aspects of the country.

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## MUST-SEE ITALIAN MOVIES

Before you start your real trip, why not embark on a celluloid adventure through Italy with some of the following classics, new and old? [Click here](#) for reviews.

- *Il Postino* (1994) Director: Michael Radford
- *La Dolce Vita* (1960) Director: Federico Fellini
- *Ladri di Biciclette* (1948) Director: Vittorio de Sica
- *La Vita è Bella* (1997) Director: Roberto Benigni
- *Roma Città Aperta* (1945) Director: Roberto Rossellini
- *Mamma Roma* (1962) Director: Pier Paolo Pasolini
- *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (1988) Director: Giuseppe Tornatore
- *Pane e Tulipani* (2000) Director: Silvio Sordani
- *Caro Diario* (1994) Director: Nanni Moretti
- *Il Divo* (2008) Director: Paolo Sorrentino

## TOP READS

Before the advent of cinema, writers conveyed the sights, feelings and sensibilities of Italians and their world in print. The following are just the tip of the literary iceberg. [Click here](#) for reviews.

- *Cristo si è Fermato a Eboli* (Christ Stopped at Eboli; 1947) Carlo Levi
- *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard; 1958) Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa
- *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed; 1827) Alessandro Manzoni
- *Il Barone Rampante* (The Baron in the Trees; 1957) Italo Calvino
- *Il Nome della Rosa* (The Name of the Rose; 1980) Umberto Eco
- *Il Giorno della Civetta* (The Day of the Owl; 1961) Leonardo Sciascia
- *La Storia* (History; 1974) Elsa Morante
- *Se Questo è Un Uomo* (If This Is a Man; 1947) Primo Levi
- *Il Ladro di Merendine* (The Snack Thief; 2000) by Andrea Camilleri
- *Gomorra* (Gomorra; 2006) by Roberto Saviano

## TOP STARS OF ITALIAN MUSIC

Italian pop and rock musicians have a loyal following and music radio stations play their latest singles day and night. Many successful musicians have had a big following down through several generations.

- Franco Battiato — Sicily-born Battiato composes a dreamy, often complex quality
- Pino Daniele — A bluesy, Neapolitan Bob Dylan
- Ivano Fossati — Popular singer-songwriter, also popular for his instrumental pieces
- Irene Grandi — Popular Florentine singer who, like many of her ilk, got started at the San Remo

music festival

- Litfiba — Florentine rock band going strong since the 1980s
  - Jovanotti (Lorenzo Cherubini) — Tuscan rapper with thoughtful lyrics. His 2009 single, ‘Punto’, was a hit
  - Laura Pausini — Internationally admired pop singer
  - Eros Ramazzotti — Exponent of soft pop whose 2009 hit, ‘Parla Con Me’, is typical
  - Vasco Rossi — The incarnation of Italian rock
  - Zucchero (Adelmo Fornaciari) — Another rock success
- 

**An Italian Education** (Tim Parks) Parks takes a witty and observant look at the society around him as he watches his children navigate the Italian school system. In an earlier work, *Italian Neighbours*, he viewed a wider panorama, observing everything from Catholicism to racism.

**The Dark Heart of Italy** (Tobias Jones) Jones criss-crosses the country and attempts to come to grips with everything from football corruption to Berlusconi. And while he certainly throws light on the darker sides of Italian public life, Jones cannot but admire the passion for life in this complex land.

**Heel to Toe: Encounter in the South of Italy** (Charles Lister) Lister explores the glory and sadness of the south in his trip aboard a clapped-out moped.

**Midnight in Sicily** (Peter Robb) As much a love ode to the wonders of Italian cooking and lifestyle, this book is also a fine introduction to the black mysteries of organised crime in Italy.

**Rambling on the Road to Rome** (Peter Francis Browne) Browne follows, on foot, the road taken a century ago by Hilaire Belloc from Toul (France) to Rome and recounted in Belloc’s *A Path to Rome*.

**When in Rome** (Robert J Hutchinson) A move to Rome to discover the Vatican led Hutchinson to research the seat of the Catholic church past and present. It is a fairly light-hearted affair, that some have labelled the Vatican version of *A Year in Provence*.

**The Stones of Florence & Venice Observed** (Mary McCarthy) With deceptive ease and flowing prose, McCarthy opens up all sorts of views on these two *città d’arte* (cities of art).

**The Story of San Michele** (Axel Munthe) A classic of travel writing of another era, Munthe’s tales from Capri predate modern tourism and provide a rare insight into what this island was once like.

**Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere** (Jan Morris) Acclaimed UK travel writer Jan Morris returns to a melancholy city she had known many years before and (re)discovers a timeless place with a rich and mixed heritage on the edge of Italy.

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## INTERNET RESOURCES

Apart from kicking off with the websites listed below, a little time surfing local blogs can sometimes turn up all sorts of local and quirky information.

**Delicious Italy** ([www.deliciousitaly.com](http://www.deliciousitaly.com)) Here’s where to find that cooking course in Venice, learn about *mozzarella di bufala* (buffalo-milk cheese) and immerse yourself in Italy’s fabulous food and wine.

**Ente Nazionale Italiano per il Turismo** ([www.enit.it](http://www.enit.it)) The Italian national tourist body’s website has everything from local tourist office addresses to gallery and museum details.

**Italia Mia** ([www.italiamia.com](http://www.italiamia.com)) The best thing about this site is its mass of links. Click on art and, as well as a list of artists' biographies, you get links to museums and galleries. Elsewhere you can explore everything from Italian cinema to genealogy.

**Italian Movie Trips** ([www.italian-movie-trips.com](http://www.italian-movie-trips.com)) Film buffs can check locations used across the country for a plethora of films.

**Italiansrus.com** ([www.italiansrus.com](http://www.italiansrus.com)) A mixed bag with anything from potted biographies (and links) of Old Masters and milestone architects to classic recipes.

**Life in Italy** ([www.lifeinitaly.com](http://www.lifeinitaly.com)) Want to get the latest in Italian news in English? This site offers a broad spectrum of ANSA national news agency reports on anything from current affairs to fashion.

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# Festivals & Events Calendar

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## FEBRUARY—APRIL

### FESTA DI SANT'AGATA 3-5 Feb

Hysterical celebrations [Click here](#) during which one million Catanians and tourists follow a silver reliquary bust of the saint covered in marvellous jewels.

### SAGRA DEL MANDORLO in Fiore 1st Sun in Feb

The Festival of the Almond Blossoms; a folk festival [Click here](#) in Agrigento with open-air drama and music performances.

## CARNEVALE

During the period before Ash Wednesday, many towns stage carnivals and enjoy their last opportunity to indulge before Lent. The carnival held in [Venice](#) is the most famous.

### SA SARTIGLIA Sun & Tue before Lent

The highlight of carnival celebrations [Click here](#) at Oristano. It involves a medieval tournament of horsemen in masquerade.

## SETTIMANA SANTA

Notable processions take place in Taranto ([Puglia](#)); Chieti ([Abruzzo](#)); [Sorrento](#) and Trapani ([Sicily](#)); during Holy Week. On Good Friday, the pope leads a candlelit procession to the Colosseum and on Easter Sunday he gives his blessing.

### SCOPPIO DEL CARRO Easter Sun

A cartful of fireworks is exploded in Piazza del Duomo in [Florence](#) — a tradition dating to the crusades.

## MAY

### FESTA DI SANT'EFISIO 1 May

An effigy of Sardinia's patron saint is paraded around Cagliari on a bullock-drawn carriage amid a colourful procession [Click here](#).

### FESTA DI SAN NICOLA Around 7-9 May

A procession in [Bari](#) follows a statue of the saint for a ceremony out at sea.

### PROCESSIONE DEI SERPARI 1st Thu in May

Held at [Cocullo](#), a statue of St Dominic is draped with live snakes and carried in the Snake-Charmer's Procession.

### FESTA DI SAN GENNARO 1st Sun in May, 19 Sep & 16 Dec

The faithful gather in Naples' cathedral to wait for the blood of San Gennaro to liquefy [Click here](#).

### CORSA DEI CERI 15 May

Three teams, each carrying a *cero* (massive wooden pillar, bearing the statue of a rival saint) race through Gubbio's streets in commemoration of Sant'Ubaldo, the city's patron saint [Click here](#).

### CAVALCATA SARDA 2nd-last Sun in May

Hundreds of Sardinians wearing colourful traditional costume gather at [Sassari](#) to mark a victory over the Saracens in the year 1000.

### PALIO DELLA BALESTRA last Sun in May

[The Crossbow Contest](#) is held in Gubbio. The men of Gubbio and neighbouring Sansepolcro dress in medieval costume and use antique weapons.

### CICLO DI SPETTACOLI Classici mid-May—mid-Jun

Ciclo di [Rappresentazioni Classiche](#), a Greek classical-theatre festival, brings the stones of Syracuse's ancient 5th-century-BC amphitheatre back to life.

## JUNE

### INFIORATA 21 Jun

To celebrate Corpus Domini, some towns (including Bolsena and Genzano near Rome, Spello in Umbria and Noto in Sicily, [Click here](#)) decorate a street with colourful designs made with flower petals.

### FESTA DI SAN GIOVANNI 24 Jun

Celebrated with the lively [Calcio Storico](#), a series of medieval football-style matches played on Florence's Piazza di Santa Croce.

### GIOCO DEL PONTE last Sun in Jun

Two groups in medieval costume contend for the Ponte di Mezzo in Pisa in the [Bridge Game](#).

## **FESTIVAL DEI DUE MONDI**     late Jun—mid-Jul

The Festival of the [Two Worlds](#) is an international arts event held in Spoleto, featuring music, theatre, dance and art.

## **PALIO DELLE QUATTRO ANTICHE REPUBBLICHE MARINARE**

The Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics is a procession and boat race between four maritime rivals: Pisa, Venice, Amalfi and Genoa. It rotates between the towns: Pisa in 2010, Venice in 2011, Genoa 2012 and Amalfi 2013. It's usually held in June but can be delayed as late as September.

## **JULY**

### **IL PALIO**     2 Jul

A chaotic bareback horse race [Click here](#) around the piazza in Siena, preceded by a parade in traditional costume.

### **ARDIA**     6 & 7 Jul

More dangerous than Il Palio, this rough-and-tumble horse race (accompanied by gunshots; [Click here](#)) at Sedilo celebrates the victory of the Roman Emperor Constantine over Maxentius in AD 312.

### **QUINTANA**     2nd Sat in Jul & 1st Sun in Aug

A parade [Click here](#) of hundreds of people in 15th-century costume, followed by a jousting tournament, is held at Ascoli Piceno.

### **FESTA DEL REDENTORE**     3rd weekend in Jul

One of Venice's most popular festivities [Click here](#), marked with a fireworks display over the Bacino di San Marco. A pontoon bridge is built to connect the Chiesa del Redentore on the Giudecca with the rest of Venice.

### **TAORMINA ARTE**     Jul & Aug

Films, theatre and concerts [Click here](#) from an impressive list of international names make Taormina the summer star of Sicily.

## **AUGUST**

### **I CANDELIERI**     14 Aug

Town representatives in Sassari dress in medieval costume and carry huge wooden 'candlesticks' through the town [Click here](#).

### **IL PALIO**     16 Aug

A repeat of the famous horse race [Click here](#) is held in Siena.

## **SAGRA DEL REDENTORE** 28 & 29 Aug

Held in Nuoro, this folk festival [Click here](#) is attended by thousands of people, dressed in traditional costume, from all over the island.

## **VENICE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL** late Aug or early Sep

The Mostra del Cinema di [Venezia](#) is held at the Lido and attracts the international film glitterati. Venetians grab the chance to gorge themselves on the latest films.

## **SEPTEMBER**

### **PALIO DELLA BALESTRA** 1st Sun in Sep

[Sansepolcro](#) in Tuscany hosts a rematch with crossbow sharpshooters from Gubbio.

### **REGATA STORICA** 1st Sun in Sep

A Historic Regatta (above) of boats in period dress followed by gondola and other boat races along the Grand Canal in Venice.

## **OCTOBER**

### **SALONE INTERNAZIONALE DEL GUSTO** biennially every Oct

The home-grown anti—fast food organisation, the Slow Food Movement, hosts this international sybarites' get-together [Click here](#) in Turin in even-numbered years.

## **NOVEMBER**

### **FESTA DELLA MADONNA DELLA SALUTE** 21 NOV

A procession [Click here](#) to the Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute in Venice gives thanks for the city's deliverance from plague in 1630.

### **FESTA DI SANTA CECILIA**

A series of concerts and exhibitions [Click here](#) in Siena to honour the patron saint of musicians.

## **DECEMBER**

## **NATALE**

The weeks preceding Christmas are studded with religious events. Many churches set up nativity scenes known as *presepi* — [Naples](#) is especially famous for these.

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# Itineraries

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## CLASSIC ROUTES

### CLASSIC CITIES

### FROM TOP TO TAIL: THE GRAND TOUR

## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

### NORTHERN NATURE

### A SOUTHERN SWING

## TAILORED TRIPS

### TASTEBUDS ON TOUR

### WORLD HERITAGE SITES

### THE GREAT OUTDOORS

### BEFORE THE ROMANS RULED

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## CLASSIC ROUTES

### CLASSIC CITIES Two Weeks / Rome to Milan

A two-week whistle-stop tour will allow you a good taste of the tried and tested, with a couple of hasty side tours thrown in.

Start with three days in **Rome**, home to St Peter's, the Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum and more. From there, push on north to the Renaissance jewel of **Florence** for a mind-blowing display of art in the Uffizi and around town. Squeeze in day trips to medieval **Siena** and pretty **Pisa**, with its leaning tower. After four days in Tuscany, you might stop briefly in **Bologna**, with its graceful monuments, bustling boulevards and great food, before proceeding to **Venice**. Spend three days exploring the city's picturesque waterways and absorbing centuries of artistic and architectural grandeur. Set off westward for a one-day stopover in historic **Verona**, home to the majestic Roman Arena and the fictitious Romeo and Juliet. From there proceed to **Milan**, the country's financial hub that's also blessed with Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, the chic Monte Napoleone shopping district and nightlife along the Navigli.

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**Rome to Milan, via Florence and Venice, is a breathtaking 935km trip that you can do in a couple of weeks, but easily merits as much time as you can give it.**

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## FROM TOP TO TAIL: THE GRAND TOUR One Month / Milan to Palermo

No longer the preserve of aristocratic young men, the Grand Tour is for anyone with time on their hands to make the most of a trip to Italy. Start in the north and work slowly south (or vice versa).

A good starting point is the financial metropolis and shopping capital of Italy, **Milan**, from where you can head north and east to the glittering **Lombard lakes**, then on to elegant **Verona** and the lagoon city of **Venice**. Sample the architectural and culinary delights of **Bologna** before progressing to **Florence** for an art infusion. From there you could loop west to explore the Romanesque wonders of walled-in **Lucca** and **Pisa**, of Leaning Tower fame. Swing southeast to experience the medieval splendour of **Siena** before continuing south to the equally enchanting Umbrian hill capital of **Perugia**. From Perugia, let all roads lead you straight to **Rome** and discover the ancient city in all its glory before scampering on to **Naples**, the chaotic metropolis of the south and one-time capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Don't miss the fascinating ruins of **Pompeii** and the precipitous cliff towns of the **Amalfi Coast** before setting off east across the bottom of the boot into Puglia to **Lecce**, with its extravagant baroque palaces, and the wild **Penisola Salentina** coast. Alternatively, opt for the road along the Calabrian coast and the ferry across to the sizzling island of **Sicily**, with its wealth of history, good food, stark landscapes, island hideaways, beautiful beaches and volcanic splendour. Wind up in **Palermo**, the southern island's fascinating capital.

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**To complete the Grand Tour you'll need at least a month, but you can extend it to as much time as you have available. Traverse a world of different cultures and a treasure chest of art along this 1720km trail from Milan to Palermo.**

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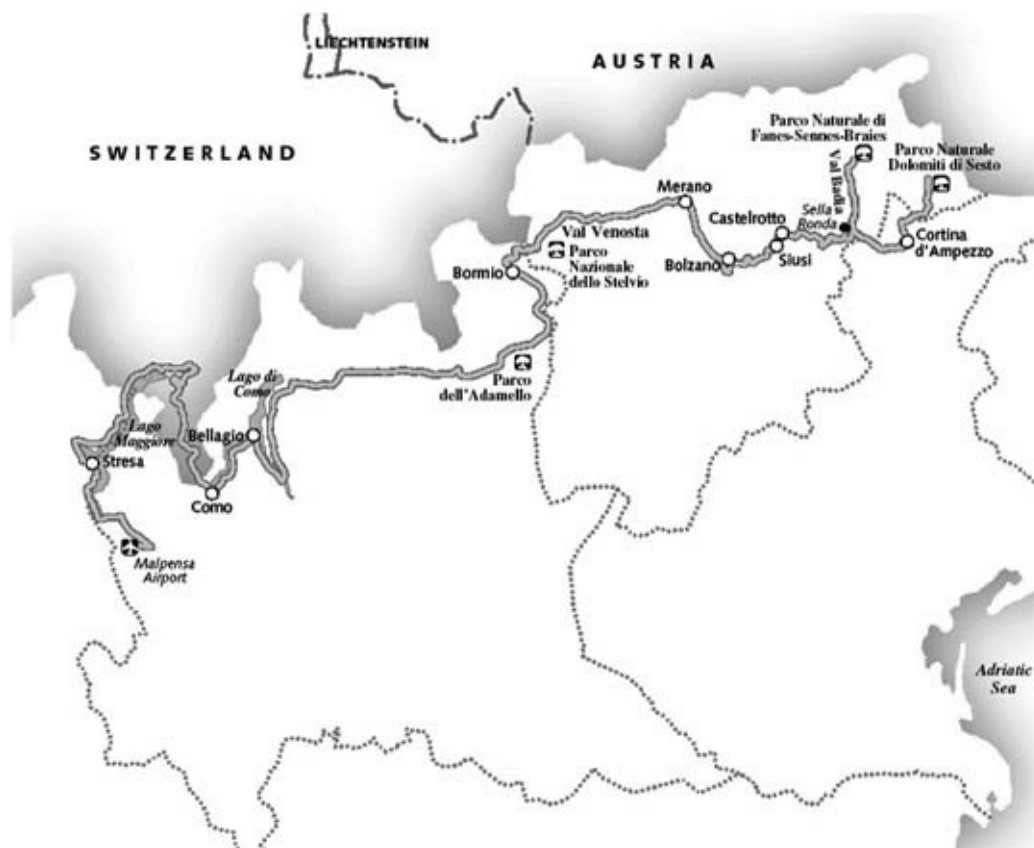
## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

### NORTHERN NATURE Two Weeks / The Lakes to the Dolomites

A short drive northwest of Milan's Malpensa Airport and you're on the edge of one of Italy's most serene scenes, **Lago Maggiore**. Embark on a trail that skirts Italy's main centres in favour of its stunning natural beauty. Cyclists need to factor in more road time. Skirting the west flank of the lake, the trip will take you briefly into Switzerland (keep an ID or passport with you) via **Stresa**, where you could stay a night. The road drops south again to **Como** on **Lago di Como**; sleep in **Bellagio**. From the northern tip of the lake, head east to the **Parco dell'Adamello** and **Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio**; both have plenty of walking trails, and the latter has great skiing at **Bormio**. You could follow the Val Venosta out of the park for a small town stop in **Merano**. Southeast, **Bolzano** is another worthwhile city stopover with an Austrian feel of much of the Alto Adige.

From there, mountain roads spread north and east deep into the Dolomites, a dream in summer or winter. Head for the pretty villages of **Castelrotto** or **Siusi** in the **Alpe di Siusi** area and use them as bases for some inspiring Alpine walks. Further northeast are the popular **Val Badia** and **Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies**. In the same area is the **Sella Ronda**, a challenging four-valley ski route. Walking opportunities abound here and, further east among the towering peaks of the **Parco Naturale delle Dolomiti di Sesto**, while **Cortina d'Ampezzo** is where the beautiful snow folk show off in their winter leisure time.

Just north of Milan lies one of northern Italy's glittering lakes, Lago Maggiore. From here you can start a 565km meandering jaunt eastward around the lakes and into the mountains to enjoy national parks, hiking or snowy slopes, cheerful Alpine towns and hearty cooking.



## A SOUTHERN SWING Two to Three Weeks / Round Trip From Naples

For the majority of visitors to Italy, a trip 'south' means bypassing Naples to have a look at Vesuvius and meander down the nearby Amalfi Coast before bolting back north to Rome. What a shame! A fascinating circuit would take you east from Naples on a tour through the heel and across the toe of the boot. Start by giving **Naples** a couple of days of your time. Head northeast to the Apennine town of **Benevento**, famous for Trajan's Arch and Strega liqueur. Cross the mountains to reach the Adriatic coast at pretty **Trani**, from where you can reach *trulli* (circular stone houses) country around **Alberobello**. Nearby, **Ostuni** is a popular summer-holiday base with great restaurants. Further southeast lies the baroque city of **Lecce**, around which you'll discover wild beaches along the Penisola Salentina. Make for pleasant **Gallipoli** and then edge around the coast to the once-proud naval city of **Taranto** before heading inland to **Matera**, famous for its *sassi* (former cave dwellings). Dip into the ancient Greek world at **Metaponto**, and from here, move down the coast into Calabria. You could greatly extend the tour by moving right around the long coast of this region, or cut across the **Parco Nazionale del Pollino**, which straddles Calabria and Basilicata. After exploring here, proceed to the rugged and beautiful coast around **Maratea**. After soaking in the views and taking a dip or two, begin the northward climb back into Campania, where you'll want to make a halt to view the extraordinary Greek temples of **Paestum**. The northward march then brings you to **Salerno** and the **Amalfi Coast**. From there, it's a busy coast promenade back to your starting point of Naples.

Beyond the chaos of Naples lies a fascinating and largely overlooked world. This 1180km loop leads across the Apennines, through pretty Puglia and across Basilicata before meandering back



## TAILORED TRIPS

### TASTEBUDS ON TOUR

When fast-food chains landed in Italy in the 1980s, indignant local foodies created **Slow Food** ([www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)). Now a worldwide organisation for the defence of good food and good practice using local products and tradition, Slow Food publishes an annual guide to Italy's eateries.

A trip to Italy's gastronomic heart — Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Umbria — is a must for sybarites.

Stock up your cupboards at Mercato delle Erbe in **Bologna** and complete your store with a bottle of the finest balsamic vinegar from **Modena**. Now it's time for antipasto in one of the most famous of foodie towns, **Parma**, home of Italy's best prosciutto and Parmesan.

For the *primo piatto* (first course) it's off to **Umbria** for some *umbricelli* pasta served with shaved truffles, or, if you're lucky, even the elusive *tartufo nero* (black truffle) from around **Norcia**.

For the *secondo piatto* (second course), sample *bistecca alla fiorentina* (T-bone steak) from **Florence**, or *porchetta*, suckling pig stuffed with its liver, wild fennel and rosemary, from **Perugia**.

Wash it down with a glass of **Chianti**. Finish off with *panforte* (a flat, hard cake with candied fruits and nuts) from **Siena**, or *cantucci e vin santo* (crisp almond biscuits dipped in dessert wine), another Tuscan favourite.



## WORLD HERITAGE SITES

With its vast historical legacy, it's no surprise that Italy is home to 44 Unesco World Heritage sites (the most in any one country). They are a grand mix of natural and built, but the latter are in the majority. You'll need plenty of time to get around them all (visit <http://whc.unesco.org> for a comprehensive list), but if you prefer the past in more manageable doses, you could try the following selection of Italy's World Heritage best.

Start at the Roman resort centre of **Tivoli** before pushing on to some of Tuscany's historic towns — take your pick from **Florence**, **Siena**, **San Gimignano**, **Pisa** and **Pienza**, as all their town centres are designated sites.

From Tuscany it's a short hop to the fine Romanesque cathedral in **Modena**, the stunning early-Christian and Byzantine mosaics in **Ravenna** and the splendid Renaissance city of **Ferrara**.



Then turn your attention to **Urbino**, one of Italy's best-preserved and most beautiful hill towns. Finally, finish in **Assisi**, the picturesque home of St Francis, which attracts millions of tourists and pilgrims each year.

## THE GREAT OUTDOORS

We may more readily associate Italy with fine art and pleasures of the palate, but the country offers a vast panoply of breathtaking settings for enjoying all sorts of sports.

In winter, mountain ranges the length of the country are draped in a pristine sheet of snow. In the Alps especially, this natural treasure is exploited to the full for a range of winter sports. Skiing opportunities abound, but top locations include **Courmayeur** and chic **Cortina d'Ampezzo**. **Madonna di Campiglio** caters especially to snowboarders. These and other magnificent mountain landscapes become excellent hiking territory in summer. The **Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso**, which straddles Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta, is a source of endless hiking challenges. To up the ante, combine climbing with hiking using the *vie ferrate* in the **Brenta Dolomites**. Serious climbers can scale the heights of **Mont Blanc**, **Monte Rosa** and the **Matterhorn**, frontier peaks separating Italy from France and Switzerland.

Want to get wet? Windsurf on Lago di Garda at **Nago-Torbole**, go white-water rafting in Piedmont's **Valsesia**, sailing in Sardinia's **Golfo di Orosei** or diving off the **Isole Tremiti**. If you fancy soaring above it all, **Castelluccio** makes a spectacular launch pad for hang-gliding in Umbria.



## BEFORE THE ROMANS RULED

Bronze Age tribes on the island of Sardinia, Etruscans in central Italy and Greeks in the south — the world into which Ancient Rome emerged already had centuries of history behind it.

You could spend weeks searching out the mysterious *nuraghi*, defensive towers made of hefty basalt stone slabs and raised by Bronze Age engineers from about 1800 BC across **Sardinia**. One of the most impressive is **Nuraghe Su Nuraxi**, near **Barumini** in the southern half of the island. Others well worth exploring are the **Nuraghe Losa** and **Nuraghe Santu Antine**.



On the central Italian mainland, the Etruscans lived in city-states like **Cerveteri** and **Tarquinia**. Both are outstanding places to explore the burial complexes left behind by this mysterious people. To admire the wonders of the Ancient Greeks in Italy, head further south for the mighty Doric temples of **Paestum**.

For still more impressive Greek remains, you need to cross the Messina strait for Sicily, where you'll find temples at **Segesta**, **Selinunte** and, with a whole valley of them, **Agrigento**. In the southeast of the island is **Syracuse**, with its grand ancient theatre, still in use today. On the mainland, the ruins of **Metaponto**, where Pythagorus lived, is worth discovering if you're in the deep south.

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# History

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[POPES & EMPERORS](#)  
[THE WONDER OF THE WORLD](#)  
[FLOURISHING CITY-STATES](#)  
[CAVOUR & THE BIRTH OF ITALY](#)  
[FROM THE TRENCHES TO FASCISM](#)  
[THE COLD WAR IN ITALY](#)  
[THE BERLUSCONI ERA](#)  
[TIMELINE](#)

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Few countries have been on such a roller-coaster ride as Italy. The Italian peninsula lay at the core of the Roman Empire; one of the world's great monotheistic religions, Catholicism, has its headquarters in Rome; and it was largely the dynamic city-states of Italy that set the modern era in motion with the Renaissance. But Italy has known chaos and deep suffering, too. The rise of Europe's nation-states from the 16th century left the divided Italian peninsula behind. Italian unity was won in blood, but many Italians have since lived in abject poverty, sparking great waves of migration. The economic miracle of the 1960s propelled Italy to the top league of wealthy Western countries but, since the mid-1990s, the country has wallowed in a mire of frustration. A sluggish economy (hit hard by the global slump that began in 2008), seemingly ineffective and squabbling government, widespread corruption and the continuing open sore of the Mafia continue to overshadow the country's otherwise sunny disposition.

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A wide-ranging general site with potted Italian history is [www.arcaini.com/italy/italyhistory/italyhistory.html](http://www.arcaini.com/italy/italyhistory/italyhistory.html). It covers everything from prehistory to the post-war period, and includes a brief chronology.

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## THE ETRUSCANS, GREEKS & MYTH

Of the many tribes that emerged from the millennia of the Stone Ages in ancient Italy, the Etruscans dominated the peninsula by the 7th century BC. Etruria was based on city-states mostly concentrated between the Arno and Tiber rivers. Among them were Caere (modern-day Cerveteri), Tarquinii (Tarquinia), Veii (Veio), Perugia (Perugia), Volaterrae (Volterra) and Arretium (Arezzo). The name of their homeland is preserved in the name Tuscany, where the bulk of their settlements were (and still are) located.

Most of what we know of the Etruscan people has been deduced from artefacts and paintings unearthed at their burial sights, especially at Tarquinia, near Rome. Argument persists over whether the Etruscans had migrated from Asia Minor. They spoke a language that today has barely been deciphered. An energetic people, the Etruscans were redoubtable warriors and seamen, but lacked cohesion and discipline.

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*Roman Sex*, by John Clarke, is the result of decades of investigation into Roman eroticism, sexual mores and social attitudes. It is at once a serious anthropological retrospective and an amusing look at a society whose attitudes to sex were very different from our own.

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At home, the Etruscans farmed and mined metals. Their gods were numerous and they were forever trying to second-guess them and predict future events through such rituals as examining the livers of sacrificed animals. They were also quick to learn from others. Much of their artistic tradition (which comes to us in the form of tomb frescoes, statuary and pottery) was influenced by the Greeks.

Indeed, while the Etruscans dominated the centre of the peninsula, Greek traders settled in the south in the 8th century BC, setting up a series of independent city-states along the coast and in Sicily that together were known as Magna Graecia. They flourished until the 3rd century BC and the ruins of magnificent Doric temples in Italy's south (at Paestum) and on Sicily (at Agrigento, Selinunte and Segesta) stand as testimony to the splendour of Greek civilisation in Italy.

Attempts by the Etruscans to conquer the Greek settlements failed and accelerated their decline. The death knell, however, would come from an unexpected source — the grubby but growing Latin town of Rome.

The origins of the town are shrouded in myth, which says it was founded by Romulus (who descended from Aeneas, a refugee from Troy whose mother was the goddess Venus) on 21 April 753 BC on the site where he and his brother, Remus, had been suckled by a she-wolf as orphan infants. Romulus later killed Remus and the settlement was named Rome after him. At some point, legend merges with history. Seven kings are said to have followed Romulus and at least three were historical Etruscan rulers. In 509 BC, disgruntled Latin nobles turfed the last of the Etruscan kings, Tarquinius Superbus, out of Rome after his predecessor, Servius Tullius, had stacked the Senate with his allies and introduced citizenship reforms that undermined the power of the aristocracy. Sick of monarchy, the nobles set up the republic. Over the following centuries, this piffling Latin town would grow to become Italy's major power, gradually sweeping aside the Etruscans, whose language and culture had disappeared by the 2nd century AD.

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*The Oxford History of the Roman World*, edited by John Boardman, Jasper Griffin and Oswyn Murray, is a succinct and clearly set out introduction to the history of ancient Rome.

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## THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

Under the republic, *imperium*, or regal power, was placed in the hands of two consuls who acted as political and military leaders and were elected for nonrenewable one-year terms by an assembly of the people. The Senate, whose members were appointed for life, advised the consuls.

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Explore the world of ancient Rome in virtual fashion at [www.vroma.org](http://www.vroma.org). Essentially a teaching tool, it can be used to discover all sorts of aspects of ancient Roman life.

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Although from the beginning monuments were emblazoned with the initials SPQR (Senatus Populusque Romanus, or the Senate and People of Rome), the ‘people’ initially had precious little say in affairs. (The initials are still used and many Romans would argue that little has changed.) Known as plebeians (literally ‘the many’), the disenfranchised majority slowly wrested concessions from the patrician class in the more than two centuries that followed the founding of the republic. Some plebs were even appointed as consuls and indeed by about 280 BC most of the distinctions between patricians and plebeians had disappeared. That said, the apparently democratic system was largely oligarchic, with a fairly narrow political class (whether patrician or plebeian) vying for positions of power in government and the Senate.

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Edward Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is the acknowledged classic work on the subject of the Empire’s darker days. Try the abridged single-volume version.

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The Romans were a rough-and-ready lot. Rome did not bother to mint coins until 269 BC, even though the neighbouring (and later conquered or allied) Etruscans and Greeks had long had their own currencies. The Etruscans and Greeks also brought writing to the attention of Romans, who found it useful for documents and technical affairs but hardly glowed in the literature department. Eventually the Greek pantheon of gods formed the bedrock of Roman worship. Society was patriarchal and its prime building block the household (*familia*). The head of the family (*pater familias*) had direct control over his wife, children and extended family. He was responsible for his children’s education. Devotion to household gods was as strong as to the increasingly Greek-influenced pantheon of state gods, led at first by the triad of Jupiter (the sky god and chief protector of the state), Juno (the female equivalent of Jupiter and patron goddess of women) and Minerva (patron goddess of craftsmen). Mars, the god of war, had been replaced by Juno in the triad.



Slowly at first, then with gathering pace, Roman armies conquered the Italian peninsula. Defeated city-

states were not taken over directly; rather they were obliged to become allies. They retained their government and lands but had to provide troops on demand to serve in the Roman army. This relatively light-handed touch was a key to success. Increasingly, the protection offered by Roman hegemony induced many cities to become allies voluntarily. Wars with rivals like Carthage and in the East led Rome to take control of Sardinia, Sicily, Corsica, mainland Greece, Spain, most of North Africa and part of Asia Minor by 133 BC.

By then, Rome was the most important city in the Mediterranean, with a population of 300,000. Most were lower-class freedmen or slaves living in often precarious conditions. Tenement housing blocks (mostly of brick and wood) were raised alongside vast monuments. One of the latter was the Circus Flaminius, stage of some of the spectacular games held each year. These became increasingly important events for the people of Rome, who flocked to see gladiators and wild beasts in combat.

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## **JULIUS CAESAR**

Born in 100 BC, Gaius Julius Caesar would prove to be one of Rome's most masterful generals, lenient conquerors and capable administrators. He was also avid for power and this was probably his undoing.

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For a detailed rundown of Roman emperors from Caesar to Caligula, check out [www.roman-emperors.org](http://www.roman-emperors.org).

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He was a supporter of the consul Pompey (later known as Pompey the Great), who since 78 BC had become a leading figure in Rome after putting down rebellions in Spain and eliminating piracy. Caesar himself had been in Spain for several years, dealing with border revolts, and on his return to Rome in 60 BC, formed an alliance with Pompey and another important commander and former consul, Crassus. They backed Caesar's candidacy as consul.

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*I, Claudius* and *Claudius the God*, by Robert Graves, delve into all sorts of aspects of imperial Rome at the time Claudius was in charge.

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To consolidate his position in the Roman power game, Caesar needed a major military command. This he received with a mandate to govern the province of Gallia Narbonensis, a southern swathe of modern France stretching from Italy to the Pyrenees, from 59 BC. Caesar raised troops and in the following year entered Gaul proper (modern France) to head off an invasion of Helvetic tribes from Switzerland and subsequently to bring other tribes to heel. What started as an essentially defensive effort soon became a full-blown campaign of conquest. In the next five years, he subdued Gaul and made forays into Britain and across the Rhine. In 52—51 BC he stamped out the last great revolt in Gaul, led by Vercingetorix. Caesar was generous to his defeated enemies and so won the Gauls over to him. Indeed, they became his staunchest supporters in coming years.

By now, Caesar also had a devoted veteran army behind him. Jealous of the growing power of his one-time protégé, Pompey severed his political alliance with him and joined like-minded factions in the Senate to outlaw Caesar in 49 BC. On 7 January, Caesar crossed the Rubicon river into Italy and civil war began. His three-year campaign in Italy, Spain and the Eastern Mediterranean proved a crushing victory. Upon his return to Rome in 46 BC, he assumed dictatorial powers.

The Roman Marcus Tullio Tiro invented shorthand in 63 BC.

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He launched a series of reforms, overhauled the Senate and embarked on a building programme (of which the Curia, [Click here](#), and Basilica Giulia, [Click here](#), remain).

By 44 BC, it was clear Caesar had no plans to restore the Republic, and dissent grew in the Senate, even among former supporters like Marcus Junius Brutus who thought he had gone too far. Unconcerned by rumours of a possible assassination attempt, Caesar had dismissed his bodyguard. A small band of conspirators led by Brutus finally stabbed him to death in a Senate meeting on the Ides of March (15 March) 44 BC, two years after he had been proclaimed dictator for life.

In the years following Caesar's death, his lieutenant, Mark Antony (Marcus Antonius), and nominated heir, great-nephew Octavian, plunged into civil war against Caesar's assassins. Things calmed down as Octavian took control of the western half of the empire and Antony headed to the east, but when Antony fell head over heels for Cleopatra VII in 31 BC, Octavian went to war and finally claimed victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, in Greece. The next year, Octavian invaded Egypt, Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide and Egypt became a province of Rome.

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The 22 gripping episodes of the joint BBC and HBO TV blockbuster, *Rome*, combine rich historical content with good old sex, blood and intrigue. The series covers the period from Caesar's campaign in Gaul to Augustus' victory over Cleopatra and Mark Anthony in Egypt. The drama is top class but the eye for historical detail is equally captivating.

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## AUGUSTUS & EMPIRE

Octavian was left as sole ruler of the Roman world and by 27 BC had been acclaimed Augustus (Your Eminence) and conceded virtually unlimited power by the Senate. In effect, he had become emperor.

Under him, the arts flourished. Augustus was lucky in having as his contemporaries the poets Virgil, Horace and Ovid, as well as the historian Livy. He encouraged the visual arts, restored existing buildings and constructed many new ones. During his reign the [Pantheon](#) was raised and he boasted that he had 'found Rome in brick and left it in marble'.

The long period of comparatively enlightened rule that he initiated brought unprecedented prosperity and security to the Mediterranean. The Empire was, in the main, wisely administered (although there were some kooky exceptions, such as the potty Caligula).

By AD 100, the city of Rome is said to have had more than 1.5 million inhabitants and all the trappings of the imperial capital — its wealth and prosperity were obvious in the rich mosaics, marble temples, public baths, theatres, circuses and libraries. People of all races and conditions converged on the capital. Poverty was rife among an often disgruntled lower class. Augustus had created Rome's first police force under a city prefect (*praefectus urbi*) to curb mob violence, which had long gone largely unchecked. He had also instituted a 7000-man fire brigade and night watchman service.

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Gaius Caligula, apart from engaging in incest with his sisters, is also said to have proposed making his horse a consul.

Augustus carried out other far-reaching reforms. He streamlined the army, which was kept at a standing total of around 300,000. Military service ranged from 16 to 25 years, but Augustus kept conscription to a minimum, making it a largely volunteer force. He consolidated Rome's three-tier class society. The richest and most influential class remained the Senators. Below them, the so-called Equestrians filled posts in public administration and supplied officers to the army (control of which was essential to keeping Augustus' position unchallenged). The bulk of the populace filled the ranks of the lower class. The system was by no means rigid and upward mobility was possible.

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## IMPERIAL ROLL-CALL

**31 BC—AD 14 Augustus (Octavian)** — Arguably the single greatest ruler Rome knew, Augustus ushered in a period of uncommon good administration and peace, known as the Pax Romana or Pax Augusta, as well as definitively burying the Republic.

**14—37 Tiberius** — A steady governing hand but prone to depression, Tiberius had a difficult relationship with the Senate and withdrew in his later years to [Capri](#), where, they say, he devoted himself to drinking (he was dubbed Biberius) and orgies.

**37—41 Gaius (Caligula)** — Tiberius looks sober beside grand-nephew Caligula. Sex, including with his sisters, and gratuitous, cruel violence were high on his activities list. He emptied the state's coffers and suggested making a horse consul before being assassinated.

**41—54 Claudius** — Apparently timid as a child, he proved ruthless with his enemies (among them 35 senators), whose executions he greatly enjoyed watching. A prudent ruler at home, he began the occupation of Britain in 43.

**54—68 Nero** — Nero loved playing the fiddle and chariot racing; he started the trend of public races. The people accused him of playing the fiddle while Rome burned to the ground in 64. He blamed the disaster on the Christians, executed the evangelists Peter and Paul and had others thrown to wild beasts in a grisly public spectacle. He later cleared prime real estate for his Domus Aurea complex [Click here](#).

**69—79 Vespasian** — A tough military man who occupied northern England and Wales, Vespasian also built the [Colosseum](#) and promoted public works. He is said to have quipped on his deathbed, 'I must be turning into a god'.

**81—96 Domitian** — A sound administrator, Domitian oversaw a massive rebuilding programme (including his enormous palace complex at Palatino, [Click here](#)) in Rome that few emperors matched before or after.

**98—117 Trajan** — Known as a 'civilian emperor' (as commemorated in his grand arch in Benevento — [Click here](#)), Trajan was no slouch in the battlefield either, taking territory north of the Danube river in the Dacian wars, absorbing Armenia and defeating the Parthian empire in the east.

**117—138 Hadrian** — A tireless traveller and commander, Hadrian consolidated the Empire, built a defensive wall in northern England, reformed the law code and was a fine architect. Among his creations were the Pantheon in [Rome](#), built over the original temple, and the [Villa Adriana](#) in Tivoli.

**161—180 Marcus Aurelius** — The opium-smoking philosopher emperor. A prudent administrator, he found himself at war in the north for much of his reign after barbarian tribes had invaded Italy — the first such raids in centuries.

**193—211 Septimius Severus** — After scatty Commodus (the son and successor of Marcus Aurelius), Severus brought some hard military sense to bear, embarking on a long campaign in Mesopotamia against the Parthians (a victory arch — the Arco di Settimio Severo — commemorates

this in Rome, [Click here](#)) and stabilising the Empire.

**284—305 Diocletian** — Diocletian introduced the *tetrarchy* (rule of four) with two senior emperors (*augustus*) in east and west, seconded by lieutenants (*caesar*). In 303 he launched an Empire-wide persecution of Christians.

**306—337 Constantine I** — He not only reversed policy on Christians, making Christianity the official religion of Rome, but established the New Rome, Constantinople, which would eventually become the capital of the Eastern Empire, later Byzantium.

**364—375 Valentinian I** — The last of the great warrior emperors, Valentinian spent most of his reign campaigning in Gaul and along the Danube to keep the Empire intact.

**378—395 Theodosius I the Great** — Although based in Constantinople and mostly busy dealing with rebellion and invasion in the Balkans, Theodosius can be thought of as the last ruler of a united empire, outlasting several co-rulers.

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A century after Augustus' death in AD 14 (aged 75), the Empire had reached its greatest extent. Under Hadrian (76—138), the Empire stretched from the Iberian peninsula, Gaul and Britain to a line that basically followed the Rhine and Danube rivers. All of the present-day Balkans and Greece, along with the areas known in those times as Dacia, Moesia and Thrace (considerable territories reaching to the Black Sea), were under Roman control. Most of modern-day Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Israel was occupied by Rome's legions and linked up with Egypt. From there a deep strip of Roman territory stretched along the length of North Africa to the Atlantic coast of what is today northern Morocco. The Mediterranean was a Roman lake.

This situation lasted until the 3rd century. By the time Diocletian (245—305) became emperor, attacks on the Empire from without and revolts within had become part and parcel of imperial existence. A new religious force, Christianity, was gaining popularity and under Diocletian persecution of Christians became common, a policy reversed in 313 under Constantine I, who granted freedom of worship.

The Empire was later divided in two, with the second capital in Constantinople (founded by Constantine in 330), on the Bosphorus in Byzantium. It was this, the eastern Empire, which survived as Italy and Rome were overrun. This rump empire stretched from parts of present-day Serbia and Montenegro across to Asia Minor, a coastal strip of what is now Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel down to Egypt and a sliver of North Africa as far west as modern Libya. Attempts by Justinian I (482—565) to recover Rome and the shattered western half of the Empire ultimately came to nothing.

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## POPES & EMPERORS

In an odd twist, the minority religion that Emperor Diocletian had tried so hard to stamp out saved the glory of the city of Rome. Through the chaos of invasion and counter-invasion that saw Italy succumb to Germanic tribes, the Byzantine reconquest and the Lombard occupation in the north, the papacy established itself in Rome as a spiritual and secular force.

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## SO JUST WHAT DID THE ROMANS DO FOR US?

It is often said that the Romans were not overly original, copying the Greeks in art, literature and science. But they were an ingenious lot who came up with some practical ideas that can only, however

grudgingly, have impressed the folk they went about conquering.

The Romans gave us the loo. Rome's Cloaca Maxima, or Big Sewer, was created in the 8th century BC and is still in use! Romans came up with flushing latrines and regular clean water supply via aqueducts. The Turks can't really claim a patent on Turkish baths, since the idea of steam rooms and hot tubs is Roman. Indeed, the Romans created public and private bath complexes throughout the Empire. Fourth-century-AD Rome had 11 public baths, some 900 private ones and more than 1000 public fountains.

The word 'plumbing' comes from the Latin word for lead, *plumbus*. Even today, old European plumbing uses lead pipes instead of 20th-century options such as PVC. Indeed, it took Europeans until well into the modern era to discover the benefits of regular bathing and proper sanitation.

The Romans were great civil engineers and another of their lasting brainwaves was...roads. As the Empire grew, so did its ancient system of 'motorways'. Road engineering was an incredible feat of accuracy when you consider that the Romans had no modern instruments. With the roads came other bright ideas — postal services and wayside inns. Messages could be shot around the Empire in a matter of days or weeks by sending despatch riders. At conveniently spaced locations (not unlike modern truck stops) the riders would change mounts, have a snack and continue on their way. This worked better than many modern postal systems in Europe. The Romans even devised a type of odometer, a cogwheel that engaged with the wheel of a chariot or other vehicle to count every Roman mile travelled.

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The popes were, even at this early stage, a canny crowd. The papacy invented the Donation of Constantine, a document in which Emperor Constantine I had supposedly granted the Church control of Rome and surrounding territory. What the popes needed was a guarantor with military clout. This they found in the Franks and a deal was done.

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To access a complete list of all the popes and biographies on each, check out the encyclopaedia page of New Advent ([www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org)). Click on 'popes', 'list of', and there they all are, from St Peter to Benedict XVI.

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In return for formal recognition of the popes' control of Rome and surrounding Byzantine-held territories henceforth to be known as the Papal States, the popes granted the Carolingian Franks a leading if ill-defined role in Italy and their king, Charlemagne, the title of Holy Roman Emperor. He was crowned by Leo III on Christmas Day 800. The bond between the papacy and the Byzantine Empire was thus broken and political power in what had been the Western Roman Empire shifted north of the Alps, where it would remain for more than 1000 years.

The stage was set for a future of seemingly endless struggles. Similarly, Rome's aristocratic families engaged in battle for the papacy. For centuries, the imperial crown would be fought over ruthlessly and Italy would frequently be the prime battleground. Holy Roman Emperors would seek time and again to impose their control on increasingly independent-minded Italian cities, and even on Rome itself. In riposte, the popes continually sought to exploit their spiritual position to bring the emperors to heel and further their own secular ends.

The clash between Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV over who had the right to appoint bishops (who were powerful political players and hence important friends or dangerous foes) in the last quarter of the 11th century showed just how bitter these struggles could become. They became a focal point of Italian politics in the late Middle Ages and across the cities and regions of the peninsula two camps



emerged: Guelphs (Guelfi, who backed the pope) and Ghibellines (Ghibellini, in support of the emperor).

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The Arabs introduced spaghetti to Sicily, where ‘strings of pasta’ were documented by the Arab geographer Al-Idrissi in Palermo in 1150.

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## THE WONDER OF THE WORLD

The Holy Roman Empire had barely touched southern Italy until Henry, son of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa), married Constance de Hauteville, heir to the Norman throne in Sicily. Of this match was born one of the most colourful figures of medieval Europe, Frederick II (1194—1250).

Crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1220, Frederick was a German with a difference. Having grown up in southern Italy, he considered Sicily his natural base and left the German states largely to their own devices. A warrior and scholar, Frederick was an enlightened ruler with an absolutist vocation. A man who allowed freedom of worship to Muslims and Jews, he was not to everyone’s liking, as his ambition was to finally bring all of Italy under the imperial yoke.

A poet, linguist, mathematician, philosopher and all-round fine fellow, Frederick founded a university in Naples and encouraged the spread of learning and translation of Arab treatises. From his early days at the imperial helm, he was known as Stupor Mundi (the Wonder of the World) for his extraordinary talents, energy and military prowess.

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For a range of topics on medieval Italy, see [www.medioevoitaliano.org](http://www.medioevoitaliano.org). The site contains links to many subjects, mostly in Italian but also in English. You can join special interest forums.

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Having reluctantly carried out a crusade (marked more by negotiation than the clash of arms) in the Holy Land in 1228—29 on pain of excommunication, Frederick returned to Italy to find Papal troops invading Neapolitan territory. Frederick soon had them on the run and turned his attention to gaining control of the complex web of city-states in central and northern Italy, where he found allies and many enemies, in particular the Lombard league. Years of inconclusive battles ensued, which even Frederick’s death in 1250 did not end. Several times he had been on the verge of taking Rome and victory had seemed assured more than once. Campaigning continued until 1268 under Frederick’s successors, Manfredi (who fell in the bloody Battle of Benevento in 1266) and Corradino (captured and executed two years later by French noble Charles of Anjou, who had by then taken over Sicily and southern Italy).

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## A WHIFF OF HELLFIRE

Politics in Italy’s mercurial city-states could take a radical turn. When Florence’s Medici clan rulers fell into disgrace (not for the last time) in 1494, the city’s fathers decided to restore an earlier republican model of government. This time there was a twist.

Since 1481, the fat-lipped Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola had been in Florence preaching repentance. His bloodcurdling warnings of horrors to come if Florentines did not renounce their evil ways somehow captured everyone’s imagination and the city now submitted to a fiery theocracy. He called on the government to act on the basis of his divine inspiration. Drinking, whoring, partying,

gambling, wearing flashy clothes and other signs of wrongdoing were pushed well underground. Books, clothes, jewellery, fancy furnishings and art were burned on 'bonfires of the vanities'. Bands of children marched around the city ferreting out adults still attached to their old habits and possessions.

Pleasure-loving Florentines soon began to tire of this fundamentalism, as did Pope Alexander VI (possibly the least religiously inclined pope of all time) and the rival Franciscan religious order. The local economy was stagnant and Savonarola seemed increasingly out to lunch with his claims of being God's special emissary. Finally the city government, or *signoria*, had the fiery friar arrested. After weeks at the hands of the city rackmaster, he was hanged and burned at the stake as a heretic, along with two supporters, on 22 May 1498.

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## FLOURISHING CITY-STATES

While the south of Italy tended to centralised rule, the north was heading the opposite way. Port cities such as Genoa, Pisa and especially Venice, along with internal centres such as Florence, Milan, Parma, Bologna, Padua, Verona and Modena, became increasingly insolent towards attempts by the Holy Roman Emperors to meddle in their affairs.

The cities' growing prosperity and independence also brought them into conflict with Rome, which found itself increasingly incapable of exercising influence over them. Indeed, at times Rome's control over some of its own Papal States was challenged. Caught between the papacy and the emperors, it was not surprising that these city-states were forever switching allegiances in an attempt to best serve their own interests.

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John Julius Norwich's *A History of Venice* is one of the all-time great works on the lagoon city in English and is highly readable. He has also published *Venice: Paradise of Cities*.

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Between the 12th and 14th centuries, they developed new forms of government. Venice adopted an oligarchic, 'parliamentary' system in an attempt at limited democracy. More commonly, the city-state created a *comune* (town council), a form of republican government dominated at first by aristocrats but then increasingly by the wealthy middle classes. The well-heeled families soon turned their attentions from business rivalry to political struggles, in which each aimed to gain control of the *signoria* (government).

In some cities, great dynasties, such as the Medici in Florence and the Visconti and Sforza in Milan, came to dominate their respective stages.

War between the city-states was a constant and eventually a few, notably Florence, Milan and Venice, emerged as regional powers and absorbed their neighbours. Their power was based on a mix of trade, industry and conquest. Constellations of power and alliances were in constant flux, making changes in the city-states' fortunes the rule rather than the exception. Easily the most stable and long the most successful of them was Venice.

In Florence, prosperity was based on the wool trade, finance and general commerce. Abroad, its coinage, the *fiorenze* (florin), was king.

In Milan, the noble Visconti family destroyed its rivals and extended Milanese control over Pavia and

Cremona, and later Genoa. Giangaleazzo Visconti (1351—1402) turned Milan from a city-state into a strong European power. The policies of the Visconti (up to 1450), followed by those of the Sforza family, allowed Milan to spread its power to the Ticino area of Switzerland and east to the Lago di Garda.

The Milanese sphere of influence butted up against that of Venice. By 1450 the lagoon city had reached the height of its territorial greatness. In addition to its possessions in Greece, Dalmatia and beyond, Venice had expanded inland. The banner of the Lion of St Mark flew across northeast Italy, from Gorizia to Bergamo.

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America was named after Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine navigator who, from 1497 to 1504, made several voyages of discovery in what would one day be known as South America.

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These dynamic, independent-minded cities proved fertile ground for the intellectual and artistic explosion that would take place across northern Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries. After centuries of Church-dominated obscurantism, the arrival of eastern scholars fleeing Constantinople in the wake of its fall to the Ottoman Turkish Muslims in 1453 (marking the end of what had once been the Roman Empire), prompted a reawakening of interest in classical learning (the importance of human reason, as opposed to divine order), especially the works of Aristotle and Plato. This coincided with a burst of new and original artistic activity that would soon snowball into the wonders of the Renaissance ([Click here](#)). Of them all, Florence was the cradle and launch pad for this fevered activity, in no small measure due to the generous patronage of the long-ruling Medici family.

## CAVOUR & THE BIRTH OF ITALY

The French Revolution at the end of the 18th century and the rise of Napoleon awakened hopes in Italy of independent nationhood. Since the glory days of the Renaissance, Italy's divided mini-states had gradually lost power and status on the European stage. By the late 18th century, the peninsula was little more than a tired, backward playground for the big powers.

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Swiss Henri Dunant created the Red Cross after witnessing the horrors of the Battle of Solferino during the Franco-Austrian War.

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Napoleon marched into Italy on several occasions, finishing off the Venetian republic in 1797 (ending 1000 years of Venetian independence) and creating the so-called Kingdom of Italy in 1804. That kingdom was in no way independent but the Napoleonic earthquake spurred many Italians to believe that a single Italian state could be created after the emperor's demise.

It was not to be so easy. The reactionary Congress of Vienna restored all the foreign rulers to their places in Italy.

Count Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810—61) of Turin, the prime minister of the Savoy monarchy, became the diplomatic brains behind the Italian unity movement. Through the pro-unity newspaper, *Il Risorgimento* (founded in 1847) and the publication of a parliamentary *Statuto* (Statute), Cavour and his colleagues laid the groundwork for unity.

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Alessandro Volta invented the electric battery in 1800 and gave his name to the measurement of electric power.

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Cavour conspired with the French and won British support for the creation of an independent Italian state. His 1858 treaty with France's Napoleon III foresaw French aid in the event of a war with Austria and the creation of a northern Italian kingdom, in exchange for parts of Savoy and Nice.

The bloody Franco-Austrian War (also known as the war for Italian independence; 1859—61), unleashed in northern Italy, led to the occupation of Lombardy and the retreat of the Austrians to their eastern possessions in the Veneto. In the meantime, a wild card in the form of professional revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi had created the real chance of full Italian unity. Garibaldi took Sicily and southern Italy in a military blitz in the name of Savoy king Vittorio Emanuele II in 1860. Spotting the chance, Cavour and the king moved to take parts of central Italy (including Umbria and Le Marche) and so were able to proclaim the creation of a single Italian state in 1861.

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*History of the Italian People*, by Giuliano Procacci, is one of the best general histories of the country in any language. It covers the period from the early Middle Ages until 1948.

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In the following nine years, Tuscany, the Veneto and Rome were all incorporated into the fledgling kingdom. Unity was complete and parliament was established in Rome in 1871.

The turbulent new state saw violent swings between socialists and the right. Giovanni Giolitti, one of Italy's longest-serving prime ministers (heading five governments between 1892 and 1921), managed to bridge the political extremes and institute male suffrage. Women were, however, denied the right to vote until after WWII.

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## **FROM THE TRENCHES TO FASCISM**

When war broke out in Europe in July 1914, Italy chose to remain neutral despite being a member of the Triple Alliance with Austria and Germany. Italy had territorial claims on Austrian-controlled Trento (Trentino), southern Tyrol, Trieste and even in Dalmatia (some of which it had tried and failed to take during the Austro-Prussian war of 1866). Under the terms of the Triple Alliance, Austria was due to hand over much of this territory in the event of occupying other land in the Balkans, but Austria refused to contemplate fulfilling this part of the bargain.

The Italian government was divided between a non-interventionist and war party. The latter, in view of Austria's intransigence, decided to deal with the Allies. In the London pact of April 1915, Italy was promised the territories it sought after victory. In May, Italy declared war on Austria and thus plunged into a 3½-year nightmare.

Italy and Austria engaged in a weary war of attrition. When the Austro-Hungarian forces collapsed in November 1918, the Italians marched into Trieste and Trento. The post-war Treaty of Versailles failed to award Rome the remaining territories it had sought.

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For more on the history of Fascist Italy, see [www.thecorner.org/home.htm](http://www.thecorner.org/home.htm). Here you can trace Mussolini's rise to power and the tumultuous years of his rule. Click on Totalitarianism.

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These were slim pickings after such a bloody and exhausting conflict. Italy lost 600,000 men and the war economy had produced a small concentration of powerful industrial barons while leaving the bulk of

the civilian populace in penury. This cocktail was made all the more explosive as hundreds of thousands of demobbed servicemen returned home or shifted around the country in search of work. The atmosphere was perfect for a demagogue. The demagogue was not long in coming forth.

One of the young war enthusiasts had been the socialist newspaper editor and one-time draft dodger, Benito Mussolini (1883—1945). This time he volunteered for the front and only returned, wounded, in 1917.

The experience of war and the frustration shared with many at the disappointing outcome in Versailles led him to form a right-wing militant political group that by 1921 had become the Fascist Party, with its black-shirted street brawlers and Roman salute. These were to become symbols of violent oppression and aggressive nationalism for the next 23 years. After his march on Rome in 1922 and victory in the 1924 elections, Mussolini (who called himself the Duce, or Leader) took full control of the country by 1926, banning other political parties, trade unions not affiliated to the party, and the free press.

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Claudia Cardinale starred in the 1984 Italian film *Claretta*, on the racy life and tragic end of Clara Petacci, Mussolini's lover. Given the chance to flee when they were captured, she instead tried in vain to shield the Duce from the partisan execution squad's bullets.

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By the 1930s, all aspects of Italian society were regulated by the party. The economy, banking, massive public works programmes, the conversion of coastal malarial swamps into arable land and an ambitious modernisation of the armed forces were all part of Mussolini's grand plan.

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Eugenio Corti's *Il Cavallo Rosso* (The Red Horse) is an extraordinary personal account of Corti's time in Russia in WWII and his return to Italy. Unabashedly on the Catholic right of Italy's political spectrum, this absorbing book provides an insightful, if at times 'politically incorrect', look at modern Italy at war and peace.

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On the international front, Mussolini at first showed a cautious hand, signing international cooperation pacts (including the 1928 Kellogg Pact solemnly renouncing war) and until 1935 moving close to France and the UK to contain the growing menace of Adolf Hitler's rapidly re-arming Germany.

That all changed when Mussolini decided to invade Abyssinia (Ethiopia) as the first big step to creating a 'new Roman empire'. This aggressive side of Mussolini's policy had already led to skirmishes with Greece over the island of Corfu and to military expeditions against nationalist forces in the Italian colony of Libya.

The League of Nations condemned the Abyssinian adventure (King Vittorio Emanuele III was declared Emperor of Abyssinia in 1936) and from then on Mussolini changed course, drawing closer to Nazi Germany. They backed the rebel General Franco in the three-year Spanish Civil War and in 1939 signed an alliance pact.

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## **MEDITERRANEAN MASSACRE**

When Italy's Marshall Badoglio announced the end of fighting between Italy and the Allies on 8 September 1943, partying broke out on the pretty Greek island of Cephalonia. It was occupied by the Italian Acqui division and a hodgepodge of other units (some 12,000 military in all), whose men were

only too pleased to swap rifles for wine bottles.

A much smaller contingent of German troops was rather less amused and, on 10 September, they demanded the Italians surrender. The Italian commander, General Gandin, tried to play for time but on 14 September, his men voted to resist. By then the Germans were landing reinforcements on the island. The ensuing battle lasted a week. Under constant bombardment by Ju87 Stuka dive-bombers, the Italians had no chance.

After surrendering on 22 September, summary executions went on for days and several thousand prisoners drowned when their transport ships bound for Germany were sunk. Some estimates put the death toll at around 9500. Of those, only some 1500 died in battle. Hitler himself had ordered the execution of all Italian prisoners on the island, considered traitors.

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WWII broke out in September 1939 with Hitler's invasion of Poland. Italy remained aloof until June 1940, by which time Germany had overrun Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries and much of France. It seemed too easy and so Mussolini entered on Germany's side in 1940, a move Hitler must have regretted later. Germany found itself pulling Italy's chestnuts out of the fire in campaigns in the Balkans and North Africa and could not prevent Allied landings in Sicily in 1943.

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Denis Mack Smith produced one of the most penetrating works on Italy's dictator with his book *Mussolini*. As well as tracing Mussolini's career it assesses his impact on the greater evil of the time, Hitler.

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By then, the Italians had had enough of Mussolini and his war and so the king had the dictator arrested. In September, Italy surrendered and the Germans, who had rescued Mussolini, occupied the northern two-thirds of the country and reinstalled the dictator.

The painfully slow Allied campaign up the peninsula and German repression led to the formation of the Resistance, which played a growing role in harassing German forces. Northern Italy was finally liberated in April 1945. Resistance fighters caught Mussolini as he fled north in the hope of reaching Switzerland. They shot him and his lover, Clara Petacci, before stringing up their corpses (along with others) in Milan's Piazzale Lotto.

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Roberto Rossellini's *Roma Città Aperta* (Rome Open City), starring Anna Magnani, aside from being a classic of Italian neo-realist cinema, is also a masterful look at wartime Rome. The film is the first in his Trilogy of War, followed by *Paisà* and *Germania Anno Zero* (Germany Year Zero).

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## THE COLD WAR IN ITALY

In the aftermath of war, the left-wing Resistance was disarmed and Italy's political forces scrambled to regroup. The USA, through the economic largesse of the Marshall Plan, wielded considerable political influence and used this to keep the left in check.

Immediately after the war, three coalition governments succeeded one another. The third, which came to power in December 1945, was dominated by the newly formed right-wing Democrazia Cristiana (DC; Christian Democrats), led by Alcide de Gasperi, who remained prime minister until 1953. Italy became a republic in 1946 and De Gasperi's DC won the first elections under the new constitution in 1948.

Until the 1980s, the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI; Communist Party), at first under Palmiro Togliatti and later the charismatic Enrico Berlinguer, played a crucial role in Italy's social and political development, in spite of being systematically kept out of government.

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Liposuction was first tried out by Dr Giorgio Fisher, a Roman gynaecologist, in 1974.

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The very popularity of the party led to a grey period in the country's history, the *anni di piombo* (years of lead) in the 1970s. Just as the Italian economy was booming, Europe-wide paranoia about the power of the Communists in Italy fuelled a secretive reaction that, it is said, was largely directed by the CIA and NATO. Even today, little is known about Operation Gladio, an underground paramilitary organisation supposedly behind various unexplained terror attacks in the country, apparently designed to create an atmosphere of fear in which, should the Communists come close to power, a right-wing coup could be quickly carried out.

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Although much has happened since it was written, Paul Ginsborg's *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943–1988* remains one of the single-most readable and insightful books on post-war Italy.

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The 1970s were thus dominated by the spectre of terrorism and considerable social unrest, especially in the universities. Neo-Fascist terrorists struck with a bomb blast in Milan in 1969. In 1978, the Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades, a group of young left-wing militants responsible for several bomb blasts and assassinations), claimed their most important victim — former DC prime minister Aldo Moro. His kidnap and (54 days later) murder (the subject of the 2004 film *Buongiorno Notte*) shook the country.

Despite the disquiet, the 1970s was also a time of positive change. In 1970, regional governments with limited powers were formed in 15 of the country's 20 regions (the other five, Sicily, Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia Giulia, already had strong autonomy statutes). In the same year, divorce became legal and eight years later abortion was also legalised, following anti-sexist legislation that allowed women to keep their own names after marriage.

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## THE BERLUSCONI ERA

A growth spurt in the 1980s saw Italy become one of the world's leading economies, but by the mid-1990s a new and prolonged period of crisis had set in. High unemployment and inflation, combined with a huge national debt and mercurial currency (the lira), led the government to introduce draconian measures to cut public spending, allowing Italy to join the single currency (euro) in 2001.

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Not long after WWII, Norman Lewis penned *The Honoured Society*, an intriguing study of Sicily, and in 2000 he returned to the subject, and especially the Mafia, with *In Sicily*.

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The old order seemed to crumble in the 1990s. The PCI split in two. The old guard minority, Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (PRC; Refounded Communist Party), was led by Fausto Bertinotti until crushing election defeat in 2008 (when it failed to reach the minimum 5% of the vote cut-off mark for entry to parliament). The bigger and moderate breakaway wing reformed itself as Democratici di Sinistra

(DS; Left Democrats) and, in 2007, merged with another centre-left group to create the Partito Democratico (PD).

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*Gomorra*, (published in English as *Gomorrhah: Italy's Other Mafia*), by Roberto Saviano, is an extraordinary look at how the organised crime gangs of Naples, together known as the Camorra, dominate the city, indulge in blood-curdling gang war violence and spread the tentacles of their illegal doings around the world. A fascinating read, it has also been brought to the screen in Matteo Garrone's *Gomorra*, shot mostly with non-professional actors. It won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 2008.

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The rest of the Italian political scene was rocked by the Tangentopoli ('kickback city') scandal, which broke in Milan in 1992. Led by a pool of Milanese magistrates, including the tough Antonio di Pietro, investigations known as Mani Pulite (Clean Hands) implicated thousands of politicians, public officials and businesspeople in scandals ranging from bribery and receiving kickbacks to blatant theft.

The old centre-right political parties collapsed in the wake of these trials and from the ashes rose what many Italians hoped might be a breath of fresh political air. Media magnate Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Go Italy) party swept to power in 2001 and, after an inconclusive two-year interlude of centre-left government under former European Commission head Romano Prodi from 2006, again in April 2008.

Together with the right-wing (one-time Fascist) Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance) under Gianfranco Fini and the polemical, separatist Lega Nord (Northern League), Berlusconi sits at the head of a coalition known as Popolo della Libertà (People of Liberty) with an unassailable majority.

Led by the former mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, the PD was unable to recover after winning only 38% of the vote in the 2008 elections. In quick succession, the PD was worsted in municipal elections around the country and regional polls in Friuli Venezia Giulia, Abruzzo and Sardinia. This latter defeat, in February 2009, led Veltroni to quit, leaving the chronically divided left in chaos.

From 2001 to 2006, Berlusconi's rule was marked by a series of laws that protected his extensive business interests (he controls as much as 90% of the country's free TV channels). He also spent considerable time hitting out against what he claimed to be the country's 'politicised' judges. The latter have been looking into his myriad business affairs since the beginning of the 1990s, but one trial after another has collapsed.

One of Berlusconi's first acts in 2008 was to resolve the long-standing garbage crisis in Naples. A complex issue dating to the early 1990s, garbage disposal bottlenecks have put Naples through several malodorous moments, with vast amounts of refuse piling up all over the city and its surrounding areas. Corruption, poor administration, overflowing rubbish dumps and controversy over where to locate incinerators have all contributed to the problem. No sooner in the chair as prime minister, Berlusconi made for Naples and later sent in the army to calm protests and get things moving again. By July, the PM had declared the crisis over.

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*The Dark Heart of Italy*, by Tobias Jones, is an engaging, personal look at contemporary Italy, plagued as it has been by (real or imagined) conspiracies, corruption and terrorism.

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Stinking garbage is not Naples' only problem. In recent years, more blood has flown in the streets of Naples than anywhere else in Italy as a result of Mafia violence. Since 2004, around 60 to 100 people a year have died in gang warfare as rival clans of the Camorra cut each other up.



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## TIMELINE

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- **c 700,000 BC** Evidence of early Stone Age settlements have been found in various locations around Italy. As long ago as 700,000 BC, primitive tribes lived in caves and hunted elephants, rhinoceros, hippopotamus and other hefty beasts.
- **2000 BC** The Bronze Age reaches Italy. By now, the hunter-gatherers have settled as farmers. The use of copper and bronze to fashion tools and arms marks a leap in sophistication accompanied by more complex social organisation.
- **474 BC** The power of the Etruscans in Italy is eclipsed after Greek forces from Syracuse and Cumae join to crush an invading Etruscan armada off the southern Italian coast in the naval Battle of Cumae.
- **396 BC** Romans conquer the key Etruscan town of Veio, north of Rome, after an 11-year siege. Celebrations are short-lived, as invading Celtic tribes sweep across Italy and sack Rome in 390 BC.
- **264—241 BC** War breaks out between Rome and the empire of Carthage, which stretches across North Africa and into Spain, Sicily and Sardinia. By war's end Rome has become the western Mediterranean's prime naval power.
- **218—202 BC** Carthage sends Hannibal to invade Italy overland from the north in the Second Punic War. He is cut off when Rome invades Spain. Carthage is finally destroyed in a third war in 149—146 BC.
- **79** A massive eruption of Mt Vesuvius showers molten rock and ash upon Pompeii and Herculaneum. Pliny the Younger later describes the devastating eruption in letters and the towns are only rediscovered in the 18th century.
- **476** German tribal leader Odovacar proclaims himself king in Rome, sealing the end of the western half of the Roman Empire. The peninsula sinks into chaos, and only the eastern half of the Empire survives intact.
- **568** Lombards invade and occupy northern Italy, leaving just Ravenna, Rome and southern Italy in the Empire's hands. Other tribes invade Balkan territories and cut the eastern Empire off from Italy.
- **754—56** Frankish king Pepin the Short enters Italy at the request of Pope Stephen II, defeats the Lombards and declares the creation of the Papal States in return for a controlling influence over the rest of the country.
- **902** Muslims from North Africa complete the occupation of Sicily, installing an enlightened regime that encourages learning of the Greek classics, mathematics and other sciences. Agriculture flourishes and Sicily lives in comparative peace for two centuries.
- **962** Saxon king Otto I is crowned Holy Roman Emperor in Rome, the first in a long line of Germanic rulers. His meddling in Italian affairs led to the first serious clashes between papacy and empire.
- **1130** Norman invader Roger II is crowned king of Sicily, a century after the Normans landed in southern Italy and so creating a united southern Italian kingdom. Norman culture and architecture fuse with Byzantine and Muslim styles.
- **1202—03** Venice leads Fourth Crusade to Holy Land on a detour to Constantinople in revenge for attacks on Venetian interests there. The Crusaders plunder Constantinople, topple the Byzantine emperor and install a puppet ruler.
- **1282** Charles of Anjou creates enemies in Sicily with heavy taxes on landowners, who rise in the Sicilian Vespers revolt. Having toppled Charles, they hand control of the island to Peter III, King of Aragón.

- **1309** Pope Clement V shifts the papacy to Avignon in France (for almost 70 years). Clement had been elected pope four years earlier but refused to rule in Rome, which was hostile and riven by factional infighting.
- **1348** The Black Death (bubonic plague) wreaks havoc across Italy and much of the rest of western Europe. Florence is said to have lost three-quarters of its populace.
- **1506** Work starts on St Peter's Basilica, to a design by Donato Bramante, over the site of an earlier basilica, in Rome. Work would continue on the most important church in Christendom until 1626.
- **1508—12** Pope Julius II commissions Michelangelo to paint the ceiling frescoes in the restored Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo requests complete artistic discretion to decide on context, and the central nine panels recount stories from Genesis.
- **1534** The accession of Pope Paul III marks the beginning of the Counter-Reformation. He establishes a militant Jesuit order in 1540 and the Holy Office of the Inquisition, whose task is the pursuit of heretics in 1542.
- **1582** Pope Gregory XIII replaces the Julian calendar (introduced by Julius Caesar) with the modern-day Gregorian calendar. The new calendar adds the leap year to keep it in line with the seasons.
- **1600** Giordano Bruno, Dominican monk, rebellious intellectual and proud philosopher who rejected much traditional Church teaching, is burned alive at the stake in Rome for heresy after eight years of trial and torture at the hands of the Inquisition.
- **1714** The end of the War of the Spanish Succession forces the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Lombardy, which comes under Austrian control. The Spanish Bourbon family establishes an independent Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.
- **1805** Having made himself emperor of France, Napoleon is proclaimed king of the newly constituted Kingdom of Italy, comprising most of the northern half of the country. A year later he takes the Kingdom of Naples.
- **1814—15** The Congress of Vienna, held after the fall of Napoleon, is held to re-establish the balance of power in Europe. The result for Italy is largely a return of the old occupying powers.
- **1848** Revolts across Europe spark rebellion in Italy, especially in Austrian-occupied Milan and Venice. King Carlo Alberto of Piedmont joins the fray against Austria, but within a year Austria recovers Lombardy and the Veneto.
- **1860** In the name of Italian unity and the Savoy king, Vittorio Emanuele II, Giuseppe Garibaldi lands with 1000 men, the Red Shirts, in Sicily. He takes the island and lands in southern Italy.
- **1861** By the end of the 1859—61 Franco-Austrian War, Vittorio Emanuele II has Lombardy, Sardinia, Sicily, southern and parts of central Italy under his control and is proclaimed king of a newly united Italy.
- **1870** The Prussian invasion of France forces Paris to withdraw its contingent from Rome. The pope now has no hope of resisting the assault by the Italian army. The following year, the national parliament moves to Rome.
- **1915** Italy enters WWI on the side of the Allies to win Italian territories still in Austrian hands. Austria had offered to cede some of the territories that Italy wanted, but Italy insists the offer is insufficient.
- **1919** Two years after returning wounded from WWI, former socialist journalist Benito Mussolini forms a right-wing militant group, the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento (Italian Combat Fasces), precursor to his Fascist Party.
- **1922** Mussolini and his Fascists stage a march on Rome in October. King Vittorio Emanuele III, fearful of the movement's growing popular power and doubting the army's loyalty, entrusts Mussolini with the formation of a government.
- **1929** Mussolini and Pope Pius XI sign the Lateran Pact, whereby Catholicism is declared the sole

Italian religion and the Vatican is recognised as an independent state. In return, the papacy acknowledges the Kingdom of Italy.

- **1935** Italy seeks a new colonial conquest through the invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) from Eritrea, but takes seven months to capture Addis Ababa. The League of Nations condemns the invasion and imposes limited sanctions on Italy.
  - **1940** Italy enters WWII on Nazi Germany's side and invades Greece, which quickly proves to be a mistake. Greek forces counter-attack and enter southern Albania. Germany saves Italy's bacon in 1941 by overrunning Yugoslavia and Greece.
  - **1943** Allies land in Sicily. King Vittorio Emanuele III sacks Mussolini. He is replaced by Marshall Badoglio, who surrenders after Allied landings in southern Italy. German forces free Mussolini and occupy most of the country.
  - **1946** Italians vote in a national referendum to abolish the monarchy and create a republic. King Umberto II, who had succeeded to the throne in May, leaves Italy and refuses to recognise the result.
  - **1957** Italy joins France, West Germany and the Benelux countries to sign the Treaty of Rome, which creates the European Economic Community (EEC), now known as the EU. The treaty takes effect on 1 January 1958.
  - **1970** Parliament approves the country's first ever divorce legislation, vociferously opposed by the Church. Unwilling to accept this 'defeat', the Christian Democrats call a referendum to annul the law in 1974. Italians vote against the referendum.
  - **1980** A bomb in Bologna kills 85 and injures hundreds more. The Red Brigades and a Fascist cell both claim responsibility. Analysis later points to possible para-state terrorism in Operation Gladio but nothing has been proved.
  - **1999** Italy becomes a primary base in NATO's air war on Yugoslavia. Air strikes are carried out from the Aviano airbase from 24 May until 8 June, when Serbia accepts international ground forces in Kosovo.
  - **2001** Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing Casa delle Libertà (Liberties House) coalition wins an absolute majority in national polls. He promises to run Italy like a corporation but the following five years are marked by economic stagnation.
  - **2005** Pope John Paul II dies aged 84. His death unleashes a wave of sorrow and crowds outside St Peter's chant *santo subito* (sainthood now). He is succeeded by Benedict XVI, the German Cardinal Ratzinger.
  - **2006** In April, Berlusconi narrowly loses general elections to a broad centre-left coalition led by the technocrat Romano Prodi, who immediately runs into trouble with the Telecom bugging scandal and the pension reform quagmire.
  - **2006** Juventus, AC Milan and three other top Serie A football teams lose points and receive hefty fines in a match-rigging scandal that also sees Juventus stripped of its 2005 and 2006 championship titles.
  - **2007** Former heir to the Italian throne, Vittorio Emanuele di Savoia, is cleared of corruption and fraud charges in connection with alleged illicit dealings, among others, involving the casino in Campione d'Italia, an Italian enclave in Swiss territory.
  - **2008** Italy's national airline, Alitalia, files for bankruptcy and is later resurrected, in reduced form with fewer routes, aircraft and staff, as a private airline.
  - **2009** Italy's Constitutional Court overturns a law giving Berlusconi immunity from prosecution while in office, opening the possibility that he could stand trial in several court cases. The prime minister refuses to resign.
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# Italian Art

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The history of Italian art is in many ways also the history of Western art. A browse through any text on the subject brings up the names of seminal movements and periods including classical, Renaissance, mannerist, baroque, futurist and Metaphysical — all of which were forged in Italy by a pantheon of artists including Giotto, Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Bernini, Botticelli and Caravaggio. The country itself is one huge art gallery, full of museums and churches housing a treasure trove of art that is unmatched anywhere in the world. There's no way the visitor can see it all, but one thing's for sure: no trip around the country can be complete without a fair few gallery, church and museum stops along the way.

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We regularly consulted EH Gombrich's seminal work *The Story of Art* when writing this chapter. First published in 1950, it gives a wonderful overview of the history of Italian art.

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## CLASSICAL & ANCIENT ART

In art, as in so many other realms, the ancient Romans looked to the Greeks for examples of best practice. They had plenty of opportunity to do so, as the Greeks had settled many parts of Sicily and southern Italy as early as the 8th century BC, naming it *Magna Graecia* and building great cities such as Syracuse and Taranto. These cities were famous for their magnificent temples, many of which were decorated with sculptures modelled on, or inspired by, masterpieces by Praxiteles, Lysippus and Phidias. The archaeological museums in [Naples](#), [Palermo](#) and [Syracuse](#) contain many such examples.

Sculpture continued to flourish in southern Italy into the Hellenistic period, and it also gained great popularity in central Italy, where the primitive art of the Etruscans (the people of ancient central Italy) was influenced and greatly refined by the contribution of Greek artisans, who came here through trade. A great example of this is the 6th-century terracotta *Apollo of Veio*, miraculously preserved and now on display at the Museo Nazionale Etrusco di [Villa Giulia](#) in Rome.

In Rome itself, sculpture, architecture and painting flourished under first the Republic and then the Empire. But the art that was produced in Rome during this period was different in many ways from the

Greek art that influenced it. Essentially secular, it focused less on harmony and form and more on accurate representation, mainly in the form of sculptural portraits. Anyone who spends time browsing the collections in the [Museo Palatino](#) and the Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle [Terme](#) in Rome cannot fail to be struck by how lifelike — and often deeply unattractive! — the marble busts of the emperors and their families are. Innumerable versions of Pompey, Titus and Augustus all show a similar visage, proving that the artists were seeking verisimilitude in their representations, and not just glorification.

Another way in which the art of ancient Rome differed from that of Greece is in its purpose. The Greeks saw art as being solely about harmony, beauty and dramatic expression, but starting with Augustus (63 BC—AD 14), the Roman emperors used art to promote propaganda messages that were strengthened through associations with classical Greece and the golden age of Athens. This form of narrative art often took the form of relief decoration recounting the story of great military victories — the Colonna di Traiano (Trajan's Column, [Click here](#)) and the Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Peace, [Click here](#)) are two excellent examples of this tradition. Both are magnificent, monumental examples of art as propaganda, exalting the emperor and Rome in a form that no-one, either then or now, can possibly ignore.

While the emperors commissioned these portraits and public monuments, wealthy members of Roman society also dabbled in the arts. They built palatial villas and decorated these with statues that were sometimes looted from the Greek world, and sometimes copied from Greek originals. Today, museums in Rome are bursting at the seams with such trophies. Some, such as the *Galata Morete* (Dying Gaul, c 240—200 BC) in the [Capitoline Museums](#) in Rome, were copies of Greek originals; others, such as the extraordinary *Laocoön and His Sons* (c 160—140 BC) in the collection of the [Vatican Museums](#), are original.

Roman villas were decorated with another form of art, too. While the Etruscans had used wall painting — most notably in their tombs at centres such as [Tarquinia](#) and [Cerveteri](#) — it was the Romans who refined the form and concentrated it on landscape scenes executed with startling naturalness. Wonderful, richly coloured examples of such paintings can today be appreciated at the Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle [Terme](#) in Rome.

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Italy has more World Heritage—listed sites than any other country in the world; many of its 44 listings are there in the guise of repositories of great art.

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## BYZANTINE ART

In 330, Emperor Constantine, a convert to Christianity, made the ancient city of Byzantium his capital and renamed it Constantinople. The city became the great cultural and artistic centre of Christianity and it remained so up to the time of the Renaissance, though its influence on the art of that period was never as fundamental as the art of ancient Rome.

The Byzantine period was notable for its sublime ecclesiastical and palace architecture, its extraordinary mosaic work and — to a lesser extent — its painting. Its art was influenced by the decoration of the Roman catacombs and the early Christian churches, as well as by the Oriental Greek style, with its love of rich decoration and luminous colour. Byzantine artworks de-emphasised the naturalistic aspects of the classical tradition and exalted the spirit over the body, so glorifying God rather

than man or the state.

In Italy, the Byzantine virtuosity with mosaics was showcased in Ravenna, the capital of the Byzantine Empire's western regions in the 6th century. Three churches were built or endowed by the Emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora. These churches, with the Chora Church (aka Kariye Müzesi) in Istanbul, are considered to house the very best of Byzantine mosaic art. The hand-cut glazed tiles (*tesserae*) in Ravenna's Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in [Classe](#), Basilica di [San Vitale](#) and Basilica di [Sant'Apollinare Nuovo](#) catch the light, and glint and gleam in the dark church surrounds. Though they depict biblical and other imagery with extraordinary naturalness, they also impart an enormous sense of grandeur and mystery, perhaps hinting that they depict stories and scenes that have an ecclesiastical power much greater than the simple worshipper could ever hope to fully appreciate.

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## ART IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The Italian Middle Ages have often been regarded as simply a 'dark' age between the Roman and Byzantine Empires and the Renaissance. However, to ignore this period would make it very difficult to understand all subsequent Italian history. This is because Italy as we know it was born in the Middle Ages. The barbarian invasions of the 5th and 6th centuries began a process that turned a unified empire into a land of small independent city-states, and it was these states — or rather the merchants, princes, clergy, corporations and guilds who lived within them — that started the craze in artistic patronage that was to underpin the great innovations in art and architecture that were to characterise the Renaissance.

Continuing the trend kick-started in the Byzantine period, ideas of clarity and simplicity of religious message began to outweigh ideals of faithful representation during this time. This is why, at first glance, many pictures of the period look rather stiff. There is nothing of the mastery of movement and expression that had been the pride of Greek art and that had been adopted by the Romans.

Painting and sculpture of this period played second fiddle to its architecture, which is commonly known as 'Romanesque'. Complementing this architectural style was the work of the Cosmati, a Roman guild of mosaic and marble workers who specialised in assembling fragments of coloured stones and glass mosaics and combining them with large stone disks and strips of white marble to create stunning intricate pavements, columns and church furnishings such as baldachins. There are good examples of Cosmati work in Rome's Chiesa di Santa Maria in [Cosmedin](#), the Basilica di [Santa Maria Maggiore](#) and the Chiesa di [Santa Maria Sopra Minerva](#).

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## THE GOTHIC STYLE

The Gothic style was much slower to take off in Italy than it had been in the rest of Europe. It marked the transition from the art of the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and saw artists once again joyously draw inspiration from life itself rather than solely from religion. Occurring at the same time as the development of court society and the rise of civic culture in the city-states, its art was both sophisticated and elegant, highlighting attention to detail, a luminous palette and an increasingly refined technique. The first innovations were made in Pisa by sculptor Nicola Pisano (c 1220—84), who emulated the example of the French Gothic masters and studied classical sculpture in order to represent nature more convincingly, but the major strides forward occurred in Florence and Siena.

Many Renaissance painters included self-portraits in their major works. Giotto didn't, possibly due to the fact that friends such as Giovanni Boccaccio described him as the ugliest man in Florence. With friends like those...

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## Giotto and the 'Rebirth' of Italian Art

The Byzantine painters in Italy knew how to make use of light and shade and had an understanding of the principles of foreshortening (how to convey an effect of perspective). It only required a genius to break the spell of their conservatism and to venture into a new world of naturalistic painting. And genius came in the form of Florentine painter Giotto di Bondone (c 1266—1337). Giotto's aims and outlook owed much to the great sculptors of the northern cathedrals, and his methods owed much to the Byzantine masters. But his painting was radically different, focusing on the creation of dramatic narrative and the accurate, or 'natural', representation of figures and landscape. The Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio wrote in his *Decameron* (1348—53) that Giotto was 'a genius so sublime that there was nothing produced by nature...that he could not depict to the life; his depiction looked not like a copy, but the real thing'.

Boccaccio wasn't the only prominent critic of the time to consider Giotto revolutionary — the first historian of Italian art, Giorgio Vasari (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)), said in his *Lives of the Artists* (1550) that Giotto initiated the 'rebirth' (*rinascità* or *renaissance*) in art. Giotto's most famous works are all in the medium of the fresco (where paint is applied on a wall while the plaster is still damp), and his supreme achievement is the cycle gracing the walls of the Cappella degli [Scrovegni](#) in Padua. It's impossible to overestimate Giotto's achievement with these frescoes, which illustrate the stories of the life of the Virgin and Christ. In them, he abandoned popular conventions such as the three-quarter view of head and body and presented his figures from behind, from the side or turning around, just as the story demanded. Giotto had no need for lashings of gold paint and elaborate ornamentation to impress the viewer with the significance of the subject. Instead, he enabled the viewer to feel the dramatic tension of the scene through a naturalistic rendition of figures and a radical composition that created the illusion of depth. They are works of enormous emotional power and stunning virtuosity.

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## FRA' FILIPPO LIPPI: THE RENEGADE MONK

Filippo Lippi (1406—69), one of the greatest Tuscan painters of his era, entered the Carmelite order as a monk aged only 14. Vasari writes in his *Lives of the Artists* that 'Instead of studying, he spent all of his time scrawling pictures on his own books and those of others'. It's perhaps not surprising, then, that Lippi eventually left the order. In fact, he abducted a novice who was sitting for the figure of the Madonna in a fresco he was painting for the Duomo in Prato, renounced his vows and married her. Their son, Filippino (1457—1504), followed in his father's artistic footsteps. History doesn't relate whether he shared his dad's peccadilloes.

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Giotto's oeuvre isn't limited to the frescoes in the Cappella degli Scrovegni. His Life of St Francis cycle in the Upper Church of the Basilica di [San Francesco](#) in Assisi is almost as extraordinary, and was to greatly influence his peers, many of whom worked in Assisi during the decoration of the church. One of the most prominent of these was the Dominican friar Fra' Angelico (c 1395—1455), a Florentine painter who was famed for his mastery of colour and light. His *Annunciation* (c 1450) in the convent of the Museo di [San Marco](#) in Florence is perhaps his most accomplished work.



# The Sienese School

Giotto wasn't the only painter of his time to experiment with form, colour and composition and create a radical new style. The great Sienese master Duccio di Buoninsegna (c 1255—1319) successfully breathed new life into the old Byzantine forms using light and shade. His preferred medium was panel painting rather than the fresco, and his major work is probably his *Maestà* (Virgin Mary in Majesty) in the Museo dell'[Opera Metropolitana](#) in Siena.

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Artistic genius, like madness and profligacy, often runs in the family. Italian artistic dynasties include the Bellinis (Jacopo, Gentile and Giovanni), Lorenzettis (Ambrogio and Pietro) and Pisanos (Nicola and Giovanni).

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It was in Siena, too, that two new trends took off: the introduction of court painters and the advent of secular art.

The first of many painters to be given ongoing commissions by one major patron or court, Simone Martini (c 1284—1344) was almost as famous as Giotto in his day. His best-known painting is the stylized *Maestà* (1315—16) in the [Museo Civico](#) in Siena, in which he pioneered his famous iridescent palette (one colour transformed into another within the same plane).

The Lorenzetti brothers, Pietro (c 1280—1348) and Ambrogio (c 1290—1348), were also working in Siena around this time. They can be said to be the greatest exponents of what, for a better term, can be referred to as secular painting. Ambrogio's *Allegories of Good and Bad Government* (1337—40) in the Museo Civico is a magnificent achievement, lauding the results that good government can have (in this case, of course, using the example of Siena) and warning of the gruesome results that bad government can lead to. In the frescoes, he applies the rules of perspective with an accuracy previously unseen, creating a deep and realistic pictorial space. The frescoes are also significant in the development of the Italian landscape tradition. In *Life in the Country*, one of the allegories, Ambrogio successfully depicts the time of day, the season, colour reflections and shadows — a naturalistic depiction of landscape that was quite unique at this time.

## THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

During the 15th century (Quattrocento), painting overtook its fellow disciplines of sculpture and architecture and became the pre-eminent art form for the first time in the history of Western art. Its great achievements built on many of the innovations introduced by Giotto and the painters of the Sienese school: the exploration of perspective and proportion, a new interest in realistic portraiture, and the beginnings of a new tradition of landscape painting. At the start of the Quattrocento, most of these were explored and refined in one city — Florence.

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In *M: The Man Who Became Caravaggio*, Peter Robb gives a passionate personal assessment of the artist's paintings and a colourful account of Caravaggio's life, arguing he was murdered for having sex with the pageboy of a high-ranking Maltese aristocrat.

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The first innovations of this period were in sculpture and architecture. Sculptors Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378—1455) and Donatello (c 1382—1466) replaced the demure drapery-clad statues of the Middle Ages with dynamic and anatomically accurate figures reminiscent of the great works of ancient Greece and Rome.

Architect Filippo Brunelleschi (1377—1446), the designer of the dome of Florence’s *Duomo*, was also heavily influenced by the achievements of the classical masters. But he was able to do something that they hadn’t been able to do themselves — discover and record the mathematical rules by which objects appear to diminish as they recede from us. In so doing, Brunelleschi gave artists a whole new visual perspective and a means to glorious artistic ends.

One of the first artworks created according to these rules was the *Trinity*, a wall painting in the Basilica di [Santa Maria Novella](#) in Florence. Painted around 1428 by Masaccio (1401—28), it is commonly considered to be one of the founding works of Renaissance painting. Even his peers acknowledged how important Masaccio’s works were — Leonardo da Vinci praised him for his faithful study of nature and adopted a similar mathematical ‘stage management’ in his famous *Last Supper* fresco, which graces a wall in the refectory of the Chiesa di Santa Maria delle [Grazie](#) in Milan.

Acknowledging the radical innovation of the work of Masaccio and of Giotto before him, the artists of this period were no longer content to repeat the old formulas handed down by medieval artists. Like the Greeks and Romans, they began to study the human body in their studios and workshops by asking models or fellow artists to pose for them. Their aim was to make the figures in their paintings look as realistic as possible, and then animate the figures themselves using the new rules of perspective. Andrea Mantegna (1431—1506), who was based in Padua and Mantua, was responsible for the painting that is the most virtuosic of all perspectival experiments that occurred during this period — his expressive and highly realistic *Dead Christ* (c 1480), with its figure of Jesus shown in dramatic foreshortening. When you see it in the collection of the Pinacoteca di [Brera](#) in Milan it’s easy to imagine how radical it must have seemed when it was first exhibited.

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During the Renaissance, the average artist earned about a third of the salary of a lawyer — today, it’s about a fifth.

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Sometimes innovation can lead to the creation of new problems, and this was something that the Florentine artists of this time soon had to face. Medieval painters had been unaware of the rules of perspective, but this had enabled them to distribute their figures over the picture in any way they liked in order to create a harmonious whole. But the painters of the Quattrocento found that the rigid new formulas they were experimenting with often made harmonious arrangements of figures difficult, resulting in groups that appeared artificial. This was particularly the case with large works such as altar paintings, which needed to be seen from afar and were required to fit into the architectural framework of the whole church. Artists such as Sandro Botticelli (c 1444—1510) led the way in pursuing a solution to this challenge, seeking to make a painting both perspectively accurate and harmonious in composition. His *Birth of Venus* (1485), now in the collection of the [Uffizi](#), was one of the most successful attempts to solve this problem. It’s not perfect — witness Venus’ unnaturally elongated neck — but it was certainly an impressive and incredibly beautiful attempt.

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## THE HIGH RENAISSANCE

There is a surfeit of highlights in the history of Italian art, but the beginning of the 16th century (the Cinquecento) tops them all. At this time the centres of artistic excellence and innovation shifted from Florence to Rome and Venice. This reflected the political and social realities of the period, namely the transfer of power in Florence from the Medicis to Savonarola, and the desire of the popes in Rome to

counter the influence of Martin Luther and his Reformation movement by making the Church's home in Rome so magnificent that it would cause any dissenters to be humbled — and brought back into line — as a result.

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For a readable, well-illustrated guide to Italian Renaissance art, have a look at Andrew Graham-Dixon's *Renaissance*, the companion book to the BBC TV series.

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The Cinquecento was the time of geniuses such as Leonardo da Vinci (1452—1519), Michelangelo Buonarotti (1475—1564) and Raphael Santi (1483—1520) — the archetypal 'Renaissance men'. All three were painters and architects of genius; Leonardo was also a self-trained scientist and mathematician of extraordinary vision, and Michelangelo was quite possibly the greatest sculptor in the history of art. Together, they were to unalterably change the face of Western art.

Leonardo, a Florentine, had so many talents that it is hard to isolate only a few for comment. In his painting, he took what some critics have described as the decisive step in the history of Western art — namely, abandoning the balance that had previously been maintained between colour and line and choosing to modulate his contours using colour. This technique is called *sfumato* and it is perfectly displayed in his *Mona Lisa* (now in the Louvre in Paris).

Michelangelo, another Florentine, saw himself first and foremost as a sculptor, and there's no doubt that his skill in this medium was unsurpassed then and even now. His mastery in accurately portraying the human body is evident in all of his sculptural work — most famously in his *David* in the Galleria dell'[Accademia](#) in Florence — but he is best known for his painted ceiling of the [Sistine Chapel](#) in Rome, with its extraordinary depictions of the human body. Here, Michelangelo took a different path from his peers — his figures are not just realistic, they are emotive visual representations of the human experience, animated by more than just a mastery of perspective and an accurate rendering of anatomy.

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One of the few wellknown female artists of the Italian Renaissance was Artemisia Gentileschi (1593—1652), whose style is reminiscent of Caravaggio's. See her work in [Florence's Uffizi](#) and [Palazzo Pitti](#).

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Raphael was from Urbino. His paintings demonstrate his skill in rising to that previously mentioned challenge faced by the painters of the Quattrocento — namely achieving harmonious and perspectively accurate arrangement of figures. The best examples of this are his paintings *The Nymph Galatea* (c 1514) in the Villa Farnesina in Rome and *La Scuola d'Atene* (The School of Athens) in the Stanza della [Segnatura](#) in the Vatican Museums. His many paintings of the Madonna and Child — all of which demonstrate his adoption of Leonardo's innovative *sfumato* — epitomise the Western model of 'ideal beauty' that was forged in this period and perseveres even today.

While Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael were perfecting their treatment of figure arrangement and form to achieve complete visual unity, the Venetian artists Giorgione (c 1477—1510) and Titian (c 1490—1576) followed a different path, seeking to unify their compositions through the use of colour and light. The best example of this is Giorgione's enigmatic *La Tempesta* (The Storm) in the Gallerie dell'[Accademia](#) in Venice, which is suffused with light and an impression of airiness.

## Mannerism

By 1520, artists such as Michelangelo and Raphael had pretty well achieved everything that former

generations had tried to do. No problem of draughtsmanship seemed too difficult for them, no subject matter too complicated. At this point, they and other artists began to demonstrate a distortion of natural image in favour of heightened expression; this movement was derided by later critics, who called it mannerism. Works such as Titian's *Assunta* (Assumption, 1516—18) in the Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei [Frari](#) in Venice and Raphael's *La Trasfigurazione* (1517—20) in the [Pinacoteca](#) of the Vatican Museums are good examples of this style.

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Carol Reed's 1965 film *The Agony and the Ecstasy* is based on the 1961 novel by Irving Stone. Charlton Heston's portrayal of Michelangelo is so bad that it's strangely compelling. His co-stars include Rex Harrison as Pope Julius II and Harry Andrews as Bramante.

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## BAROQUE ART

By the end of the century, two artists who had grown tired of mannerism took very different approaches to painting in an attempt to break the deadlock caused by the achievements of their predecessors.

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573—1610), the Milanese-born *enfant terrible* of the late-16th-century art world, had no liking for classical models or respect for 'ideal beauty'. Described by the writer Stendhal as a 'great painter [and] a wicked man', Caravaggio was as notorious for his work as he was for his behaviour. He was condemned by some contemporaries for seeking truth rather than ideal beauty in his art; they were shocked by his radical practice of copying nature faithfully regardless of whether it was beautiful or not. But even they were forced to admire his skill with the technique of chiaroscuro (the bold contrast of light and dark) and his employment of tenebrism, where dramatic chiaroscuro becomes a dominant and highly effective stylistic device.

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Over the centuries, Michelangelo's *David* [Click here](#) has been struck by lightning, attacked by rioters and had his toes bashed with a hammer. Despite all this, he's still looking trim and terrific.

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Annibale Caracci (1560—1609) was the major artist of the baroque Emilian, or Bolognese, school. With his painter brother Agostino he worked in Bologna, Parma and Venice before moving to Rome to work for Cardinal Odoardo Farnese. In works such as his magnificent frescoes of mythological subjects in the [Palazzo Farnese](#) in Rome, he employed innovative illusionistic elements that would prove inspirational to later baroque painters such as Cortona, Pozzo and Gaulli. However, Caracci never let the illusionism and energy of his works dominate the subject matter as these later painters did. Strongly influenced by the work of Michelangelo and Raphael, he continued the Renaissance penchant for idealising and 'beautifying' nature.

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## GIORGIO VASARI'S *Lives of the Artists*

Painter, architect and writer Giorgio Vasari (1511—1574) was one of those figures rightfully described as a 'Renaissance Man'. Born in Arezzo, he trained as a painter in Florence, working with artists including Andrea del Sarto and Michelangelo (he idolised the latter). As a painter, he is best remembered for his floor-to-ceiling frescoes in the Salone dei [Cinquecento](#) in Florence's Palazzo

Vecchio. As an architect, his most accomplished work was the elegant loggia of the Uffizi (he also designed the enclosed, elevated corridor that connected the Palazzo Vecchio with the Uffizi and Palazzo Pitti and was dubbed the ‘Corridoio Vasariano’ in his honour). But posterity remembers him predominantly for his work as an art historian. His *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects, from Cimabue to Our Time*, an encyclopaedia of artistic biographies published in 1550 and dedicated to Cosimo I de’ Medici, is still in print (as *The Lives of the Artists*) and is full of wonderful anecdotes and — dare we say it — gossip about his artistic contemporaries in 16th-century Florence. Memorable passages include his recollection of visiting Donatello’s studio one day only to find the great sculptor staring at his extremely lifelike statue of the *Prophet Habakkuk* and imploring it to talk (we can only assume that Donatello had been working too hard). Vasari also writes about a young Giotto (the painter whom he credits with ushering in the Renaissance) painting a fly on the surface of a work by Cimabue that the older master then tried to brush away. The book makes wonderful pre-departure reading for anyone planning to visit Florence and its museums.

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## WHO’S WHO IN RENAISSANCE & BAROQUE ART

**Nicola Pisano (c 1220—84)** The most important precursor of Renaissance sculpture; famous for his pulpit in the Baptistery (1259—60), Pisa.

**Cimabue, Cenni di Pepo (c 1240—1302)** Giotto’s master and the last great painter working in the Byzantine tradition; known for his *Maestà (Virgin in Majesty; 1280—85)* in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

**Giovanni Pisano (c 1250—315)** Nicola’s son, also known for a Pisan pulpit, this time in the Duomo (1302—10).

**Pietro Cavallini (c 1250—330)** Mosaic designer most famous for his *Last Judgement* (1293) in the Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome.

**Duccio di Buoninsegna (c 1255—1319)** Head honcho of the Siennese school; his masterwork is the *Maestà* in the Museo dell’Opera Metropolitana in Siena.

**Giotto di Bondone (c 1266—1337)** Said by Vasari to have ushered in the Renaissance; two masterworks: the Cappella degli Scrovegni (1304—1306) in Padua and the upper church (1306—11) in Assisi.

**Pietro Lorenzetti (c 1280—1348)** Died in the plague; his best works are the frescoes in the lower church of the Basilica di San Francesco in Assisi.

**Simone Martini (c 1284—1344)** Duccio’s pupil and one of the greatest Siennese painters; his best work is the *Maestà* (1315—16) in the Museo Civico in Siena.

**Ambrogio Lorenzetti (c 1290—1348)** Pietro’s younger brother also died of the plague; best known for his *Allegories of Good and Bad Government* (1337—40) in the Museo Civico, Siena.

**Sandro Botticelli (c 1444—1510)** *Primavera* (c 1482) and *The Birth of Venus* (c 1485) are among the best-loved of all Italian paintings; both are in the Uffizi.

**Perugino (Pietro di Cristoforo Vannucci; 1446—1524)** Another Umbrian (hence his name); search out his *Saint Sebastian* (after 1490) in the Museo e Galleria Borghese, Rome.

**Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449—94)** One of the greatest of all Tuscan masters; his fabulous frescoes include those in the Tornabuoni Chapel in the Basilica di Santa Maria Novella in Florence.

**Leonardo da Vinci (1452—1519)** A genius so flabbergasting that the term polymath (aka Renaissance Man) had to be coined to explain him; best known for his *Last Supper* in the Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan.

**Luca Signorelli (1455—1523)** Umbria's most famous artist; his masterwork is the *Last Judgement* in Orvieto Cathedral.

**Filippino Lippi (1457—1504)** Filippo's son; his best work is probably in the Chiesa di Santa Maria Sopra Minerva (c 1489—92) in Rome.

**Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475—1564)** The big daddy of them all; everyone knows *David* (1504) in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Florence and the Sistine Chapel ceiling (1508—12) in Rome's Vatican Museum.

**Giorgione (c 1477—1510)** Venetian painter of the High Renaissance; his *La Tempesta (The Storm)* in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice is the most enigmatic work of the Renaissance.

**Raphael Santi (1483—1520)** Originally from Urbino; painted luminous Madonnas and fell in love with a baker's daughter, immortalising her in his painting *La Fornarina*, now in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Rome.

**Andrea del Sarto (1486—1531)** Florentine painter who was admired by Michelangelo and who taught Vasari; his most oddly titled work is the *Madonna of the Harpies* (1517), now in the Uffizi.

**Lorenzo Ghiberti (1378—1455)** Followed his father into the goldsmith's trade; creator of the *Doors of Paradise* (1425—52) for the Baptistery in Florence.

**Donatello (c 1382—1466)** Florentine born and bred; his *David* (c 1430) in the collection of the Museo del Bargello in Florence was the first free-standing nude sculpture produced since the classical era.

**Fra' Angelico (1395—1455)** So good was his behaviour and so extraordinary his artistic talent that he was made a saint in 1982; his best-loved work is the *Annunciation* (c 1450) in the convent of the Museo di San Marco in Florence.

**Paolo Uccello (1397—1475)** Painter and mathematician who loved playing with perspective; best-known work is *The Battle of San Romano* (1450—1456), a part of which is in the Uffizi, Florence.

**Masaccio (1401—28)** Died tragically young; creator of *The Expulsion* (1426—27) in the Brancacci Chapel, Florence.

**Filippo Lippi (1406—69)** Renaissance Florence's bad boy (see the boxed text on [Click here](#)); everyone loves his *Madonna and Child* (c 1452) in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.

**Piero della Francesca (1412—92)** His double portrait of Federico Sforza and his wife Battista (c 1472) in the Uffizi is one of the most famous works of the Renaissance.

**Giovanni Bellini (1430—1516)** The best known of a family of Venetian painters and brother-in-law of Andrea Mantegna; known for his *San Giobbe Altarpiece* (1487) in the Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice.

**Andrea Mantegna (1431—1506)** Venetian-born, started a painter's apprenticeship aged only 11; his masterpiece is the *Dead Christ* (c 1480) in the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.

**Andrea della Robbia (1435—1525)** Ceramic sculptor; son of Marco, brother of Luca. Best known for his medallions on the exterior of the Spedale degli Innocenti in Florence.

**Titian (c 1490—1576)** Real name Tiziano Vecelli; seek out his *Assumption* (1516—18) in the Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari (I Frari), Venice.

**Bronzino (1503—1572)** Real name Agnolo di Cosimo but called Bronzino because of his dark complexion; Cosimo I de' Medici's favourite portrait painter — look for the family pictures in the Uffizi in Florence.

**Giorgio Vasari (1511—1574)** Artist, architect and art historian (see the boxed text on [Click here](#)).

**Tintoretto (1518—1594)** The last great painter of the Italian Renaissance, known as 'Il Furioso' because of the energy he put into his work; look for his *Last Supper* in the Chiesa di Santo Stefano, Venice.

**Paolo Veronese (1528—1588)** Born in Verona (hence his name) but worked in Venice; known for

his controversial *Feast in the House of Levi* (1573) in the collection of Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice.

**Annibale Caracci (1560—1609)** Born in Bologna, this baroque master is best known for his frescoes in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome.

**Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573—1610)** The bad boy of the baroque art scene; his most powerful work is the *St Matthew Cycle* in the Chiesa di San Luigi dei Francesi in Rome.

**Giuseppe de Ribera (1591—1652)** Though Spanish-born, most of this painter's mature work was created in southern Italy, including the Capella di San Gennaro in the Duomo in Naples.

**Artemesia Gentileschi (1593—1653)** The Renaissance's only high-profile female artist; best known for her gruesome *Judith Slaying Holfernes* (c 1610) in the Uffizi.

**Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598—1680)** The sculptor protégé of Cardinal Scipione Borghese; best known for his *Rape of Persephone* (1621—22) and *Apollo and Daphne* (1622—25) in Rome's Museo e Galleria Borghese.

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The roots of baroque art lay in religious spirituality and stringent aestheticism. Its artists and patrons aimed to use it to combat the rapidly spreading Protestant Reformation and, at the same time, emphasise the importance of the Catholic religion. Considering this aim, it seems somewhat strange that its style displayed worldly joy, rich decoration and uninhibited sensuality. The works of this period utilise stage-like settings, dramatic light, swirling draperies and vivid colour. It seems that the baroque artists cottoned on to something that the marketers of our age use as a mantra — if you make a product or message sexy you will be able to sell it effectively.

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In 1799, Napoleon seized one of the Vatican's most precious artworks, the Greek marble sculpture of *Laocoön and His Sons* [Click here](#), and installed it in the Louvre. It was returned to Rome in 1816, after his fall from power.

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Perhaps the best known of all baroque artists was the sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598—1680), who used works of religious art such as his *Vision of Saint Theresa* in the Chiesa della Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome to arouse feelings of exaltation and mystic transport in the viewer. In this and many other works he achieved an extraordinary intensity of facial expression and a totally radical handling of draperies. Instead of letting these fall in dignified folds in the approved classical manner, he made them writhe and whirl to add to the effect of excitement and movement. This trick was soon imitated all over Europe.

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The Italian equivalent of Impressionism was the Macchiaioli movement based in Florence. Its major artists were Telemaco Signorini (1835—1901) and Giovanni Fattori (1825—1908). See their work in the [Palazzo Pitti's Modern Art Gallery](#).

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## THE NEW ITALY

By the 18th century, Italy was beginning to rebel against years of foreign rule — first under the French in Napoleon's time and then under the Austrians. But although new ideas of political unity were forming, there was only one innovation in art — the painting and engraving of views, most notably in Venice, to

meet the demand of European travellers wanting souvenirs of their grand tours. The best-known painters of this school are Francesco Guardi (1712—93) and Giovanni Antonio Canaletto (1697—1768).

Despite the slow movement towards unity, the 19th-century Italian cities remained as they had been for centuries — highly individual centres of culture with sharply contrasting ways of life. Music was the supreme art of this period and the overwhelming theme in the visual arts was one of chaste refinement. The major artistic movement of the day — neoclassicism — was as popular here as it was elsewhere in Europe and its greatest local exponent was the sculptor Antonio Canova (1757—1822). Canova renounced movement in favour of stillness, emotion in favour of restraint and illusion in favour of simplicity. His most famous work is a daring sculpture of Pauline Bonaparte Borghese as a reclining *Venere Vincitrice* (Conquering Venus), in the Museo e [Galleria Borghese](#) in Rome.

Canova was the last Italian artist to win overwhelming international fame. Italian architecture, sculpture and painting had played a dominant role in the cultural life of Europe for some 400 years, but with Canova's death in 1822, this supremacy came to an end.

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Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published his *Manifesto of Futurism* on the front page of the *Le Figaro* newspaper in France, thus ensuring it would gain international attention.

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## MODERN MOVEMENTS

The two main developments in Italian art at the outbreak of WWI could not have been more different. Futurism, led by poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876—1944) and painter Umberto Boccioni (1882—1916), sought new ways to express the dynamism of the machine age. Metaphysical painting (*Pittura Metafisica*), in contrast, looked inwards and produced mysterious images from the subconscious world.

Futurism demanded a new art for a new world and denounced every attachment to the art of the past. It started with the publication of Marinetti's *Manifesto del Futurismo* (Manifesto of Futurism, 1909), and was backed up by the publication of a 1910 futurist painting manifesto by Boccioni, Giacomo Balla (1871—1958), Luigi Russolo (1885—1947) and Gino Severini (1883—1966). In their manifesto, the painters wrote that 'Everything is in movement, everything rushes forward, everything is in constant swift change'. An excellent example of their theory put into practice is Boccioni's *Rissa in Galleria* (Brawl in the Arcade, 1910) in the collection of the Pinacoteca di [Brera](#) in Milan. This was painted shortly after the manifesto was published and clearly demonstrates the movement's fascination with frantic movement and with modern technology and life. They weren't interested in the heritage of Italian art, and they saw war as a means of destroying the past and starting anew out of the chaos. The movement lost its impetus with the outbreak of WWI.

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The Italian countryside is home to a number of contemporary sculpture parks, including the Fattoria di Celle ([www.goricoll.it](http://www.goricoll.it)), Il Giardino dei Tarocchi ([www.nikidesaintphalle.com](http://www.nikidesaintphalle.com)), the Castello di Rivoili and [Villa Manin](#).

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Metaphysical painting also had a short life. Its most famous exponent, Giorgio de Chirico (1888—1978), lost interest in the style after the war, but his work held a powerful attraction for the surrealist movement that developed in France in the 1920s. In fact, De Chirico was part of the very first surrealist



exhibition at the Galerie Pierre in Paris in 1925. Stillness and a sense of foreboding are the haunting qualities of many of De Chirico's works of this period, which show disconnected images from the world of dreams in settings that usually embody memories of classical Italian architecture. A good example is *The Red Tower* (1913), which is in the [Peggy Guggenheim Collection](#) in Venice.

After the war, a number of the futurist painters began to flirt with Fascism. They believed that the new state offered opportunities for patronage and public art and that Italy could once again lead the world in its arts practice. This period was known as 'second futurism' and its main exponents were Mario Sironi (1885—1961) and Carlo Carrà (1881—1966).

The local art scene became more interesting in the 1950s, when artists such as Alberto Burri (1915—95) and the Argentine-Italian Lucio Fontana (1899—1968) experimented with abstract art. Fontana's punctured canvases were characterised by *spazialismo* (spatialism) and he also experimented with 'slash paintings', where he made actual holes or slashes in his canvases and dubbed them 'art for the space age'.

Burri's work was truly cutting-edge. His assemblages were made of burlap, wood, iron and plastic and were avowedly anti-traditional. *Grande Sacco* (Large Sack) of 1952, which is in the collection of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e [Contemporanea](#) in Rome, caused a major controversy when it was first exhibited.

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Italy's major contemporary art event is the world-famous Venice Biennale ([www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org); [Click here](#)), held every odd-numbered year. It's the most important survey show on the international art circuit.

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In the 1960s, a radical new movement called *Arte Povera* (Poor Art) took off. Its followers used simple materials to trigger off memories and associations. Major names include Mario Merz (1925—2003), Giovanni Anselmo (b 1934), Luciano Fabro (b 1936—2007), Giulio Paolini (b 1940) and Greek-born Jannis Kounellis (b 1936). All experimented with sculpture and installation work.

In the 1980s, there was a return to painting and sculpture in a traditional (primarily figurative) sense. Dubbed 'Transavanguardia', this movement broke with the prevailing international focus on conceptual art and was thought by some critics to signal the death of avant-garde. The artists who were part of this movement include Sandro Chia (b 1946), Mimmo Paladino (b 1948), Enzo Cucchi (b 1949) and Francesco Clemente (b 1952).

Contemporary artists of note currently working in Italy include Paolo Canevari, Angelo Filomeno, R&di Martino, Adrian Paci, Paola Pivi, Pietro Roccasalva and Francesco Vezzoli.

Those interested in viewing examples of 20th-century Italian art should visit the collection of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e [Contemporanea](#) in Rome, the [Peggy Guggenheim Collection](#) in Venice and the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)) and Pinacoteca di [Brera](#) in Milan.

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# The Culture

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Imagine you wake up tomorrow and discover you're Italian. How would life be different, and what could you discover about Italy in just one day as a local? Read on...

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## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ITALIAN

*Sveglia!* You're woken not by an alarm but by the burble and clatter of the *caffettiera*, the ubiquitous stovetop espresso maker. You're running late, so you bolt down your coffee scalding hot (an acquired Italian talent) and pause briefly to ensure your socks match before dashing out the door. Yet still you walk blocks out of your way to buy your morning paper from Eduardo, your favourite news vendor, and chat briefly about his new baby — you may be late, but at least you're not rude.

On your way to work you scan the headlines: a rebuttal of the pope's latest proclamation, yesterday's football results and today's match-fixing scandal, and an announcement of new EU regulations on cheese. Outrageous! The cheese regulations, that is; the rest is to be expected. At work, you're buried in paperwork until noon, when it's a relief to join friends for lunch and a glass of wine. Afterwards you toss back another scorching espresso at your favourite bar, and find out how your barista's latest audition went — turns out you went to school with the sister of the director of the play, so you promise to put in a good word.

Back at work by 2pm, you multitask Italian-style, chatting with co-workers as you dash off work emails, text your schoolmate about the barista on your *telefonino* (mobile phone), and surreptitiously check *l'Internet* for employment listings — your work contract is due to expire soon. After a busy day like this, *aperitivi* are definitely in order, so at 6.30pm you head directly to the latest happy-hour hot spot. Your friends arrive, the decor is *molto design*, the vibe *molto cool*, and the DJ *abbastanza hot*, until suddenly it's time for your English class — everyone's learning it these days, if only for the slang.

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Nice work, if you can get it: about 30% of Italians have landed a job through family connections, and in highly paid professions that number rises as high as 40% to 50%.

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By the time you finally get home, it's already 9.30pm and dinner will have to be reheated. *Peccato!*

(Shame!) You eat, absent-mindedly watching reality TV while recounting your day and complaining about cheese regulations to whoever's home — no sense giving reheated pasta your undivided attention. While brushing your teeth, you discuss the future of Italian theatre and dream vacations in Anguilla, though without a raise, it'll probably be Abruzzo again this year. Finally you make your way to bed and pull reading material at random out of your current bedside stack: art books, *gialli* (mysteries), a hard-hitting Mafia exposé or two, the odd classic, possibly a few *fumetti* (comics). You drift off wondering what tomorrow might hold... imagine if you woke up British or American. English would be easier, but how would you dress, and what would you be expected to eat? *Terribile!* You shrug off that nightmare, and settle into sleep. *Buona notte.*

## Social Ties

From your day as an Italian, this much you know already: Italy is no place for an introvert. It's not merely a matter of being polite — each social interaction adds meaning and genuine pleasure to daily routines. Conversation is far too important to be cut short by tardiness or a mouthful of toothpaste. All that chatter isn't entirely idle, either: in Europe's most ancient, entrenched bureaucracy, social networks are essential to get things done. Putting in a good word for your barista isn't just a nice gesture, but an essential career boost. As a Ministry of Labour study recently revealed, most people in Italy still find employment through personal connections.

If you're between the ages of 18 and 34, there's a 60% chance that's not a roommate in the kitchen making your morning coffee: it's mum or dad. This is not because Italy is a nation of pampered *mammoni* (mama's boys) and spoilt *figlie di papà* (daddy's girls) — at least, not entirely. According to the time-honoured Italian social contract, you'd probably live with your parents until you start a career and a family of your own. Then after a suitable grace period for success and romance — a couple of years should do the trick — your parents might move in with you to look after your kids, and be looked after in turn.

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Satirist Beppe Severignini's *La Bella Figura: A Field Guide to the Italian Mind* offers some practical insights for travellers, such as this tip on cappuccinos: 'After ten o'clock in the morning it is unethical, and possibly illegal, to order one'.

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Lately this contract has begun to break down. Official statistics reveal that most Italian women aged 29 to 34 now prefer careers and a home life without curfews or children. According to Italy's most recent census, Italian women represent 65% of college graduates, are more likely than men to pursue higher education (53% to 45%), and twice as likely to land responsible positions in public service — though Italy still has fewer women in parliament than other Western European nations, and Italian men enjoy 80 more minutes of leisure time daily than Italian women.

But while one in 10 Italian women still lives with her parents by age 35, twice as many men do. This adds some sitcom-worthy awkwardness to the dating scene, as in the reality dating show *La sposa perfetta* (The Perfect Wife), where women competed for an eligible bachelor's attention by performing domestic duties, and his mother chose the winner. After the show aired on the government-backed RAI channel, incensed Italian women threatened to withhold €200 of their taxes earmarked for public broadcasting, and the show was not renewed ([Click here](#)).

As desirable as living independently might be, it isn't always an option in the midst of Italy's current recession. Consider the skyrocketing rents and temptations of home cooking, and it's no wonder the number of adult Italians living with their parents has grown in recent years — hence the mobile-phone

chorus heard at evening rush hour in buses and trams across Italy: ‘*Mamma, butta la pasta!*’ (Mum, put the pasta in the water!).

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On average, Italians get six weeks of holidays a year, but spend the equivalent of two weeks annually on bureaucratic procedures required of working Italian citizens.

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## BETTER LIVING BY DESIGN

As an Italian, you actually did your co-workers a favour by being late to the office to give yourself a final once-over in the mirror. Unless you want your fellow employees to avert their gaze in dumbstruck horror, your socks had better match. The tram can wait as you *fa la bella figura* (cut a fine figure).

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Born an Assisi heiress, introduced to the joys of poverty by St Francis himself, and co-founder of the first Franciscan abbey, St Clare gained another claim to fame in 1958 as the patron saint of TV.

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Italians have strong opinions about aesthetics and aren’t afraid to share them. A common refrain is *Che brutta!* (How hideous!), which may strike visitors as tactless. But consider it from an Italian point of view — everyone is rooting for you to look good, and who are you to disappoint? The shop assistant who tells you with brutal honesty that yellow is not your colour is doing a public service, and will consider it a personal triumph to see you outfitted in orange instead.

If it’s a gift, though, you must allow 10 minutes for the sales clerk to *fa un bel pacchetto*, wrapping your purchase with string and an artfully placed sticker. This is the epitome of *la bella figura* — the sales clerk wants you to look good by giving a good gift. When you do, everyone basks in the glow of *la bella figura*: you as the gracious gift-giver and the sales clerk as savvy gift consultant, not to mention the flushed and duly honoured recipient.

As a national obsession, *la bella figura* gives Italy its undeniable edge in design, cuisine, art and architecture. Though the country could get by on its striking good looks, Italy is ever mindful of delightful details. They are everywhere you look, and many places you don’t: the intricately carved cathedral spire only the bell-ringer could fully appreciate, the toy duck hidden inside your chocolate *uova di pasqua* (Easter egg), the absinthe-green silk lining inside a sober grey suit sleeve. Attention to such details earns you instant admiration in Italy — and an admission that sometimes, non-Italians do have style.

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## ITALIAN TELEVISION: THE SOUND & THE FURY

As heretical as it sounds to foreigners accustomed to worshipping Italian cuisine in the reverent hush of expensive restaurants, many Italians bolt dinner in front of blaring televisions. On average, Italians watch four hours of TV per day, and the flickering parade of recycled reality stars, vacant-eyed *valette* (spokesmodels) and celebrity interviews induces what Italian sociologists have identified as a soporific state.

According to a 2008 poll, only 24% of Italians trust TV as a reliable source. Italians are more likely to trust online news sites like Corriere della Sera ([www.corriere.it/english](http://www.corriere.it/english)), La Repubblica ([www.repubblica.it](http://www.repubblica.it), in Italian), Il Manifesto ([www.ilmanifesto.it](http://www.ilmanifesto.it), in Italian) or L’Unità

([www.unita.it](http://www.unita.it), in Italian), perhaps with good reason: in 2008, Reporters Without Borders ranked Italy below Taiwan, Mali and Bosnia in freedom of the press, calling Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's TV empire a 'conflict of interest' that threatens democracy. Yet 80% of Italy's population relies on TV news as its prime information source, including three main channels run by the Berlusconi-backed Mediaset company.

Under duress to restore public trust and improve public TV programming, Romano Prodi purged reality shows from public RAI channels in 2008. But in 2009, on-again, off-again prime minister Berlusconi chose a *Grande Fratello* (Big Brother) contestant, a soap-opera starlet, a TV costume-drama actress and a recent Miss Italy contestant to represent Italy as members of the European Union parliament. Given impending Italian elections and a brewing scandal involving 'Papi' Berlusconi and a teenage starlet, this move was not the most media-savvy: the EU parliamentary selections were broadly denounced in Italy's press, and Berlusconi's party suffered significant losses at the polls.

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## THE PEOPLE

Who are the people you'd encounter every day as an Italian? On average, about half your co-workers will be women — quite a change from 10 years ago, when women represented just a quarter of the workforce. But a growing proportion of the people you'll meet are already retired. One out of five Italians is over 65, which explains the septuagenarians you'll notice on parade with dogs and grandchildren in parks, affably arguing about politics in cafes, and ruthlessly dominating bocce tournaments.

You might also notice a striking absence of children. Italy's birth rate is the lowest in Europe, at just under one child per woman. Dismayed by such incontrovertible evidence of contraception in an ostensibly Catholic culture, the pope recently called on Italian women to return to traditional roles as wives and mothers. The state is also concerned that a shrinking Italian workforce will mean fewer taxes to fund services for growing numbers of pensioners, and instituted an incentive of €1000 for any Italian woman to give birth. But neither Church nor State can cajole Italian women into motherhood, and Italy's birth rate remains below replacement level.

## Multiculturalism & National Identity

But wait, you say: during your day as an Italian, you chatted with a news vendor named Eduardo about his baby. Right you are: like a growing percentage of Italy's population, Eduardo is an immigrant. (His Spanish name would be spelled Edouardo in Italian.) Eduardo probably lives and works in a northern Italian city, like three-fifths of Italy's immigrants. But as a Peruvian, Eduardo is not representative of Italy's immigrants, the majority of whom are European — primarily Albanian, Ukrainian and especially Romanian ([Click here](#)).

## NORTH VS SOUTH

Immigration is the newest development in the century-old debate over Italian identity. From the Industrial Revolution through the 1960s, cultural frictions focused on internal migrants from Italy's largely rural southern 'Mezzogiorno' region (from Calabria to Abruzzo, plus Sicily), arriving in industrialised northern cities for factory jobs. Just as northern Italy was adjusting to these 'foreign' southerners, political and economic upheavals in the 1980s brought new arrivals from Central Europe, Latin America and North Africa, including Italy's former colonies in Tunisia, Somalia and Ethiopia.

## FROM EMIGRANTS TO IMMIGRANTS

From 1876 to 1976, Italy was a country of net emigration. With some 30 million Italian emigrants dispersed throughout Europe, the Americas and Australia, remittances from Italians abroad helped keep Italy's economy afloat during economic crises after Independence and WWII. Today, people of Italian origin account for more than 40% of the population in Argentina and Uruguay, more than 10% in Brazil, more than 5% in Switzerland and the US, and more than 4% in Australia, Venezuela and Canada.

By comparison, immigrants account for just 6.3% of Italy's own population today, though according to Caritas, the rate of immigration is growing faster in Italy than other European nations. Most Italians today choose to live and work within Italy, yet fewer are entering blue-collar agricultural and industrial fields — so without immigrant workers to fill the gaps, Italy would be sorely lacking in tomato sauce and shoes. As a visitor, you'll glimpse immigrant workers in restaurant kitchens and hotels, in low-paid service jobs that keep Italy's tourism economy afloat.

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Italians were the world's fastest *telefonino* (mobile phone) adopters in 2000 and, according to government estimates, within three years virtually every adult Italian had a *telefonino* — not to mention obsessive text-messaging teens.

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## ITALY'S IDENTITY CRISIS

As a founding member of the European Union in 1993, Italy became subject to EU regulations on everything from immigration to cheese-making, raising concerns that Italian identity would be lost. Many feared immigration would dilute Italian culture, and promises of immigration crackdowns helped Silvio Berlusconi win elections in 1994 and 2008. Right-wing group Lega Nord introduced 2002 'security laws' mandating detention and expulsion for immigrants suspected of crimes or lacking papers, raising Amnesty International's concern for asylum-seekers and law-abiding immigrants.

However, Italy's immigration policy also created an unlikely coalition among Catholics, leftists and capitalists. Catholic charities and leftist groups established centres across Italy to help immigrants acclimatise and seek citizenship. Supporters of this integrationist approach point out that 'foreigners' aren't the source of all of Italy's crime and terrorism — after all, the Camorra, Brigade Rosse (Red Brigades) and other underground Italian organisations terrorised the country for decades. Meanwhile, free-market economists emphasise that more taxpayers mean more funds for Italian social services, and immigrants are statistically more likely to start small businesses needed for Italy's economic recovery.

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## FRIENDS, ROMA, COUNTRYMEN...

Anti-immigrant rhetoric took an alarming turn in Italy in 2008. Romanians and Roma have been lumped together and targeted as unwelcome 'gypsies', though according to the *New York Times*, all Romanians in Italy and about three-quarters of Italy's Roma are now Italian or EU citizens. In 2008, a young Jewish-Romanian immigrant was beaten to death by neo-Nazi groups in Verona, and two Roma camps in Naples were torched by neo-Nazi gangs allegedly tied to Naples' Camorra crime syndicate. The same year, several rapes across Italy were swiftly (and mostly falsely) blamed on African immigrants, spurring calls for vigilante 'patrols' of African-immigrant neighbourhoods. Meanwhile in Rome, 20 masked men beat Indian, Bangladeshi and Chinese shopkeepers with baseball bats and lead pipes. Witnesses heard assailants curse, 'Get out, bastard foreigners!'

But not all Italians are willing to let extremists have the last word. In May 2009, a radical law to

punish undocumented immigrants — including potential refugees — with summary deportation and fines was denounced by Italian human rights groups, the Vatican, the UN and mass protests in Rome. Italy's Amnesty International office appealed to the EU to curb incendiary anti-immigrant rhetoric by Italian politicians, and ban anti-immigrant vigilantism. While many commentators saw echoes of 1930s Italy in 2008 vigilante attacks and inflammatory speech, Italian history also provides a basis for empathy and understanding. As writer Claudio Magris observed in *The Times*, recalling Italy's recent past as a nation of emigrants, 'We, above all, should know what it is like to be strangers in a strange land.'

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### Religion, Loosely Speaking

Although you read about the Church in the news headlines, you didn't actually attend Mass on your day as an Italian. The Church remains highly influential in Italy, and *La Famiglia Cristiana* (The Christian Family) is Italy's most popular weekly magazine. But you'll notice that except for tourists, Italian churches are often empty: according to a 2007 Church study, only 15% of Italy's population regularly attends Sunday mass.

As you'll notice in Italian headlines, Church doctrine is often the subject of popular debate. An Umbrian teacher's suspension for removing the crucifix from his public classroom in 2009 sparked arguments over Church symbols in public buildings, and fuelled ongoing debates over the appropriate division of Church and State in Italy. The pope's latest book shot to the top of Italian bestseller lists in 2007, as did the anticlerical tract *Perché non possiamo essere cristiani (e meno che mai cattolici)* (Why we can't be Christian (and even less, Catholics)) by mathematician Piergiorgio Odifreddi, who examines apparent contradictions in Church doctrine and posits an inverse relationship to the development of civil society.

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Although primarily set inside the Vatican, the 2009 blockbuster *Angels and Demons* (based on Dan Brown's bestselling sequel to *The Da Vinci Code*) was denied the right to film there. The Church took offence at misrepresentations of the Catholic group Opus Dei's devotional practices, which emphasize charity rather than mortification of the flesh as depicted in *The Da Vinci Code*.

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If the Church hasn't always been entirely consistent, neither have its critics. Many Italians who fiercely debate the Vatican's right to interfere in policy decisions regarding divorce, abortion, civil unions and condom use to prevent AIDS have welcomed the pope's foreign policy interventions and personal appeals to end war in the Middle East. The Vatican's move to initiate dialogue with Muslim leaders has been widely credited with easing social tensions for Italy's 1.2 million Muslims, and the Church's many charitable organisations lauded for providing essential support to those in need where the State leaves off. While the Church remains top of mind for many Italians, Italy remains officially secular, and its citizens variously Muslim, Jewish, atheist, Catholic, agnostic and ambivalent.

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## ECONOMICS & POLITICS: FIGHTING WORDS

Your day as an Italian may not seem like *la dolce vita*, but it's pretty ideal in today's Italy. You had a job to go to (albeit a contract gig), took a decent *pausa* (midday break), and left work promptly at the end of the day. In industrial cities like Milan, *la pausa* is no longer the traditional two-to-three-hour rest, and longer working hours help explain the previously unthinkable 15kg of *surgelati* (frozen foods) consumed

per capita each year (still well below the UK's 45kg). In these days of double-digit unemployment and opportunities limited to contract or part-time work, times are as tough as microwaved beef.

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Ignazio Silone's bestselling *Bread & Wine* is the story of a 1930s Communist leader on the run from the Fascists who goes into hiding disguised as a small-town priest, but ultimately must answer the question: is the mantle of faith just a costume, or his true self?

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The international financial market crisis is the latest harbinger of bad news for Italy's economy. In the 2002 conversion from lire to the euro, prices were typically rounded up while salaries were rounded down, and Italy's exports became less competitively priced in the global market. The past three years have brought governmental upheavals: bribery scandals implicating Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's cohorts helped Romano Prodi unseat Berlusconi, who then staged a comeback on a platform to end economic stagnation. Now that global downturn has diminished economic expectations, pundits speculate about whether Berlusconi will hang onto his hot seat for long.

Yet Italy remains strangely stable in its instability. Economists scratch their heads in wonder that a country that has witnessed the rise and fall of more than 50 governments since WWII keeps reinventing itself as a global contender. Pundits are confounded by the staying power of on-again, off-again Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, whose latest imbroglios involve compromising photos of a wild party at his private villa and an alleged affair with a teenager. Still, Italy's proportional representation system allows popular dissatisfaction to be counted in losses at the polls, and occasional bold prosecutions of official corruption ensure some turnover of ideas at every level of government.

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For Dante with a pop-culture twist, check out Sandow Birk and Marcus Sanders' satirical, slangy translation of *The Divine Comedy*, which sets *Inferno* in hellish Los Angeles traffic, *Purgatorio* in foggy San Francisco and *Paradiso* in New York.

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But perhaps the saving grace of Italian public policy is that Italians don't always wait for changes to happen from the top down. Ordinary Italians keep the powers that be in check and on task with highly coordinated strikes, mass street protests, outspoken newspapers and scathing political commentary that permeates popular culture. Political discussion inevitably involves much rolling of eyes and throwing up of hands, but these should not be taken as signs of resignation — in Italy, it's more of a fighting stance.

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## ARTS

Arriving late to work seems like an achievement in Italy, where temptations to play hooky abound: music venues hitting every sonic frequency from opera to punk rock; cinemas and theatres where you'll laugh and sob into your popcorn; bookshops brimming with this small country's preposterously outsized literary contributions; and museums, churches and palaces virtually wallpapered with priceless art. Roman ruins share city blocks with futuristic office buildings that seem poised for takeoff to Mars — for more on these, check out the special section on architecture.

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Sorry, Woody Allen: the world's most likable neurotic is the antihero of Italo Svevo's *Zeno's Conscience*, whose love life stumps his therapist and who smokes to have the satisfaction of quitting.



No wonder this is James Joyce's favourite comic novel.

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## Literature

Italy's readers are thoroughly spoiled for choice, with gripping *gialli* (mysteries), ancient classics, magic-realist fables, epic romps through history and, for those romantic occasions, some highly suggestive poetry.

### MYSTERY & SUSPENSE

The most popular genre in Italy today dominates Italy's bestseller list, especially Andrea Camilleri's cranky but savvy Sicilian inspector Montalbano in such capers as *Il ladro di merendine* (The Snack Thief). Sunny Sicily is also the scene of the crime in Leonardo Sciascia's *Il giorno della civetta* (The Day of the Owl), where a visiting police inspector from Parma witnesses a killing only to be told in no uncertain terms that the murder didn't happen, the Sicilian Mafia doesn't exist, and he'd be better off in Parma. Umberto Eco brought intellectual weight to the genre with *Il nome della rosa* (The Name of the Rose) and *Il pendolo di Foucault* (Foucault's Pendulum) — not to mention sheer bulk, at 600-plus pages of arcane detail and plot twists.

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## COMICS: NOT JUST FOR BAMBINI ANY MORE

You might be surprised to notice spiffy suited businessmen on trains thumbing through some familiar *fumetti* (comics). In 1931 local writers and comic artists began endowing Walt Disney's mascots with Italian attitude, scathing topical humour, and rollicking back-stories in *Topolino* (Mickey Mouse), the continuing Continental adventures of Donald, Mickey et al. But Italian comics have truly come into their own and of age with graphic novels such as Piero Macola's *Solo andata* (One Way), a WWII soldier's journey in the harrowing tradition of Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus*. See just how bold and biting satirical indie Italian *fumetti* can be at [www.sciacalloelettronico.it/webcomix/webcom.htm](http://www.sciacalloelettronico.it/webcomix/webcom.htm) (in Italian).

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### CLASSICS

Roman epic poet Virgil (aka Vergilius) decided Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* deserved a sequel, and spent 11 years and 12 books tracking the outbound adventures and inner turmoil of Aeneas, from the fall of Troy to the founding of Rome — and died in 19 BC with just 60 lines to go in his *Aeneid*. As he himself observed: 'Time flies'.

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The backdrop for Boccaccio's masterwork is illuminated at Decameron Web ([www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb)), which covers 14th-century society from power politics to magic tricks.

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Legend has it that fellow Roman Ovid (Ovidius) was a failed lawyer who married his daughter, but there's no question he told a ripping good tale. His *Metamorphose* chronicled civilisation from murky mythological beginnings to Julius Caesar, and his how-to seduction manual *Ars amatoria* (The Art of Love) inspired countless Casanovas. It also caused him no end of trouble: he was exiled for seducing the daughter of Emperor Augustus.

Any self-respecting Italian bookshelf also features one or more Roman rhetoricians. To *fare la bella*

*figura* among academics, trot out a phrase from Cicero or Horace (Horatio), such as ‘Where there is life there is hope’ or ‘Whatever advice you give, be brief’.

## HISTORICAL EPICS

Italian authors find illumination even in Italy’s darkest hours. Set during the dark days of the Black Death in Florence, Boccaccio’s *Decameron* has a visceral gallows humour that foreshadows Chaucer, Shakespeare and William S Burroughs. Italy’s 19th-century struggle for unification parallels the story of star-crossed lovers in Alessandro Manzoni’s *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed), and causes an identity crisis among Sicilian nobility in Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s *Il gattopardo* (The Leopard).

Wartime survival strategies are memorably chronicled in Elsa Morante’s *La storia* (History), and in Primo Levi’s harrowing autobiographical account of Auschwitz in *Se questo è un uomo* (If This Is a Man). World War II is the uninvited guest in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, Giorgio Bassani’s heartbreaking tale of a crush on a girl whose aristocratic Jewish family attempts to disregard the rising tide of anti-Semitism, much as socialites graciously ignore a breach in manners.

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‘Book curses’ in the margins of Italian medieval library books warned borrowers that failure to return a book was a grave offence, subject to fatal attacks of giant bookworms and eternal damnation.

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## SOCIAL REALISM

Italy has always been its own sharpest critic, and several 20th-century Italian authors captured their own troubling circumstances with unflinching accuracy. Grazia Deledda’s *Cosima* is her fictionalised memoir of coming of age and into her own as a writer in rural Sardinia, despite family circumstances clouded by death, alcoholism and deceit. Deledda became one of the first women to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, and set the tone for such bittersweet recollections of rural life as Carlo Levi’s *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Christ Stopped at Eboli). In the autobiographical epic, a dissident doctor is exiled under the Fascists to a malaria-afflicted southern Italian town ([Click here](#)) beyond the reach of medicine, missionaries, politicians, and all but the most forlorn hope.

Topics too excruciating to discuss or ignore — jealousy, divorce, parental failings — are addressed head-on by pseudonymous author Elena Ferrante in her brutally honest, bestselling *The Days of Abandonment*. But Italy’s most hush-hush subject is Naples’ Camorra crime syndicate, and the romantic whitewash usually applied to Mafioso machinations is stripped clean by Roberto Saviano’s sand-blasting prose in *Gomorra* ([Click here](#)). Though the book was listed as fiction in Italy, Saviano received death threats resulting in his relocation from Italy — and a bold 2008 public denunciation of the Camorra by six Italian Nobel laureates.

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Melania Mazzucco’s *Vita* is the story of two Italian children who journey from impoverished southern Italy to New York in an epic quest not for fame or meaning, but much more basic needs: food and life.

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## FABLES

Italian fables aren’t much like Aesop’s: they don’t end in a simple moral, but instead show how wisdom often seems like madness, and vice versa. The most universally beloved Italian fabulist is Italo Calvino, whose titular character in *Il barone rampante* (The Baron in the Trees) takes to the treetops in a seemingly capricious act of rebellion that makes others rethink their own earthbound conventions. In Dino Buzzati’s *Il deserto dei Tartari* (The Tartar Steppe), an ambitious officer posted to a mythical Italian

border is besieged by boredom, thwarted expectations and disappearing youth while waiting for enemy hordes to materialise — a parable drawn from Buzzati's own dead-end newspaper job.

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The original newspaper serial of Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio* ended with the puppet's gruesome death by hanging — but in the book, Pinocchio is granted a new life as a real boy, and tiny tots are spared a few nightmares.

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Over the centuries, Niccolò Machiavelli's *Il principe* (The Prince) has been referenced as a handy manual for budding autocrats, but also as a cautionary tale against unchecked 'Machiavellian' authority. Likewise 1934 Nobel Prize winner Luigi Pirandello won Mussolini's support to found a national theatre, only to be ostracised for staging an ambiguously critical fable about a changeling — that, and calling Il Duce 'a top hat that could not stand upright by itself'.

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Women authors aren't a novelty on the Italian literary scene — find essays, operas, philosophy, novels, poetry, theology and travel writing by Italian women dating from the 13th to the 20th century at [www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/IWW/](http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/IWW/).

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## POETRY

Some literature scholars claim Shakespeare stole his best lines and plot points from earlier Italian playwrights and poets. Debatable though this may be, the Bard certainly has stiff competition from 13th-century Dante Alighieri as the world's finest romancer. Dante broke with tradition in *Divina commedia* (The Divine Comedy) by using the familiar Italian, not the formal Latin, to describe travelling through the circles of hell in search of his beloved Beatrice. Petrarch (aka Francesco Petrarca) added wow to Italian woo with his eponymous sonnets, applying a strict structure of rhythm and rhyme to romance the idealised Laura. He might have tried chocolates instead: Laura never returned the sentiment.

If sonnets seem flowery to you, try 1975 Nobel laureate Eugenio Montale, who wrings poetry out of the creeping damp of everyday life, or Ungaretti, whose WWI poems hit home with a few searing syllables. His two-word poem seems an apt epitaph: *M'illumino d'immenso* (I illuminate myself with immensity). Poems by Pier Paolo Pasolini feature the same antiheroes as his films ([Click here](#)) — hustlers and prostitutes in postwar Italy, icons of a nation scraping by on its wits and looks. For the bawdiest poetry of all, head to an Italian *osteria*, where by night's end cheap wine may inspire raunchy rhymes sung in dialect.

## Music

Italy is known for achievements in opera and classical music, but it's also adapted international pop, punk and hip hop to local tastes. Jazz is another popular import that rings out in historic venues in Perugia during [Umbria Jazz](#), Orvieto in [Umbria Jazz Winter](#), Siena Jazz ([www.sienajazz.it](http://www.sienajazz.it)) and Vicenza Jazz ([www.comune.vicenza.it](http://www.comune.vicenza.it)).

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## ITALIAN CINEMA

### Nitty-Gritty Neorealism

Unflinching tales of postwar woe shot in gorgeous yet gritty black and white make *Citizen Kane* seem like

a rough cut, and Francois Truffaut like a latecomer.

- *Ladri di biciclette* (The Bicycle Thief), Vittorio de Sica, 1948. A special Oscar was awarded to this film about one father's doomed attempts to provide for his son without resorting to crime in war-ravaged Rome.
- *Mamma Roma*, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1962. Anna Magnani becomes an allegory for postwar Italy as an aging prostitute trying to make an honest living for herself and her delinquent son.
- *Roma, città aperta* (Rome, Open City), Roberto Rossellini, 1945. A story of love, betrayal, survival and resistance in Nazi-occupied Rome, shot and released while the memory of occupation was still raw.

## Crime & Punishment

Italy's acclaimed new dramas combine the truth-telling of classic neorealism, the taut suspense of Italian thrillers and the psychological revelations of Fellini.

- *Gomorra*, Matteo Garrone, 2008. Based on Roberto Saviano's exposé of the Camorra crime syndicate, Garrone shows mafia machinations minus Hollywood romanticism, revealing brutality in waste disposal and high fashion.
- *Il Divo*, Paolo Sorrentino, 2008. The Cannes Jury Prize winner explores the life and career of former prime minister Giulio Andreotti, from his migraines to his alleged mafia ties.
- *La bestia nel cuore* (Don't Tell), Cristina Comencini, 2005. A woman uncovering repressed memories of sexual abuse seeks answers, leaving a trail of still more secrets behind her.

## Romance, Italian Style

Italy's date movies merit a warning label: may induce delirious proposals and severe pangs of nostalgia.

- *Il postino* (The Postman), Michael Radford, 1994. Exiled poet Pablo Neruda brings poetry and passion to a drowsy Italian isle and a misfit postman, played with heartbreaking subtlety by the late, great Massimo Troisi.
- *Nuovo cinema paradiso* (Cinema Paradiso), Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988. A bittersweet Oscar winner about a director who returns to Sicily and rediscovers his true loves: the girl next door and the movies.
- *Pane e tulipani* (Bread and Tulips), Silvio Sordani, 2000. A housewife left behind at a tour-bus pit stop runs away to Venice, where she befriends an anarchist florist, an eccentric masseuse and a suicidal Icelandic waiter — until she's pursued by an amateur detective.

## Fellini: A Category of His Own

Italy's singular auteur creates surreal visions of men adrift in the shallows of their own lives and relationships, with plotlines prone to pirouettes — if it's easy, it's not Fellini.

- *La dolce vita* (The Good Life), Federico Fellini, 1960. This tale of hedonism, celebrity, and suicide features Anita Ekberg frolicking in the Trevi Fountain, Marcello Mastroianni as a reporter unprepared to witness human misery, and Jesus whisked away by helicopter.
- *La strada* (The Road), Federico Fellini, 1954. A naive girl is sold to a callous circus performer played by Anthony Quinn in this wrenching road movie.
- *8½*, Federico Fellini, 1963. A director under pressure to make a box-office hit retreats inward, only to rediscover his own demons and failed relationships.

## Spaghetti Westerns

Southern Italy doubles as the Wild West in high-noon showdowns featuring flinty characters and Ennio Morricone's terminally catchy whistled tunes (doodle-oodle-oooh, wah wah wah...)

- *C'era una volta il West* (Once Upon a Time in the West), Sergio Leone, 1968. A widow seeks revenge for her husband's murder with Henry Fonda's quick draw and high-tension storytelling by budding screenwriters Bernardo Bertolucci and Dario Argento (see below).
- *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly), Sergio Leone, 1966. Leone and Clint Eastwood team up for another payload of gunfights, booze, betrayal and pure box-office gold.
- *Per un pugno di dollari* (A Fistful of Dollars), Sergio Leone, 1964. A gunslinger played by a squinting Clint Eastwood plays factions in a tense standoff against one another for profit.

## Tragicomedies

Italy's best comedians pinpoint the exact spot where pathos intersects the funny bone — but without an appreciation for Italian slapstick and dialect, some hilarity is lost in translation.

- *Amici miei* (My Friends), Mario Monicelli, 1975. A group of aging pranksters turn on one another in this satire that reflects Italy's own postwar midlife crisis.
- *Caro diario* (Dear Diary), Nanni Moretti, 1994. Italy's answer to Woody Allen navigates a Vespa through Rome traffic while obsessing over the meaning of city life, insomnia, and Jennifer Beals' performance in *Flashdance*.
- *La vita è bella* (Life is Beautiful), Roberto Benigni, 1997. A father tries to protect his son from the brutal realities of a Jewish concentration camp by pretending it's all a game — an Oscar Award—winning turn for actor-director Benigni.

## Shock & Horror

Sunny Italy's darkest dramas deliver more style, suspense and falling bodies than ultrahigh Prada platform heels on a slippery Milan runway.

- *Blow-Up*, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966. Style trumps substance in this story of a swinging-'60s fashion photographer who spies dark deeds unfolding in a photo of an elusive young Vanessa Redgrave.
- *Suspiria*, Dario Argento, 1977. Gruesome deeds in a ballet school makes tutus seem incredibly sinister and Stephen King seem squeamish.
- *Un borghese piccolo piccolo* (An Average Little Man), Mario Monicelli, 1977. An ordinary man goes to extraordinary lengths for revenge, starring Alberto Sordi in a standout example of a comedian nailing a serious role.

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## OPERA

The art form originated here, and *fischi* (mocking whistles) still possess a mysterious power to blast singers right off stage. In December 2006, a substitute in street clothes had to step in for Sicilian-French star tenor Roberto Alagna when his off-night aria met with vocal disapproval at Milan's legendary La Scala. Best not to get them started about musicals and 'rock opera', eh?

The word 'diva' was invented for legendary sopranos like Parma's Renata Tebaldi and Italy's adopted Greek icon Maria Callas, whose rivalry peaked when *Time* quoted Callas saying that comparing her voice to Tebaldi's was like comparing 'champagne and Coca-Cola'. Both were fixtures at La Scala, along

with the wildly popular Italian tenor to which others are still compared, Enrico Caruso. Tenor Luciano Pavarotti (1935—2007) also remains beloved for attracting broader public attention to opera, while bestselling blind tenor Andrea Bocelli became a controversial crossover sensation with what critics claim are overproduced arias sung with a strained upper register.

Salvatore Licitra is poised to become Italian opera's next big tenor, having stepped in for Pavarotti on his final show at New York's Metropolitan Opera in 2002. Friuli-born soprano Fiorenze Cedolins is enjoying wide-ranging success, performing a requiem for the late Pope John Paul II, recording Tosca arias with Andrea Bocelli, and scoring encores in Puccini's *La Bohème* at the Arena di Verona Festival.

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Openings at La Scala regularly sell out faster than rock concerts — and when a Verdi opera's on the bill, you'd think the Beatles were getting back together. Book your tickets online pronto at [www.teatroallascala.org](http://www.teatroallascala.org).

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## CLASSICAL

Italy's classical contributions can be heard at music venues around the globe, including Vivaldi's ubiquitous *Four Seasons*, played on prized Stradivarius violins from Cremona. Within Italy, there's an ongoing revival of 'early music' from the medieval through Renaissance and baroque periods. Ensembles in Venice, Naples, Milan and Rome play historically accurate arrangements on period instruments like recorders and harpsichords, creating surprisingly funky Renaissance dance tunes and groovy late-medieval polyphonic vocals.

Many early music compositions can be heard today in the same venues where they would have been heard hundreds of years ago: Gregorian chants sung by monks at the frescoed St Francis of [Assisi](#); choral music in [Pisa's High Renaissance Duomo](#) during the annual Anima Mundi festival; and Venetian party music at [Carnavale](#). Classical-music buffs also plan trips around [Florence's Maggio Musicale Fiorentino](#), and enjoy international orchestras year-round in Ravello ([www.ravelloarts.org](http://www.ravelloarts.org)).

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*La vita è bella* (Life Is Beautiful) remains the most successful subtitled foreign-language film to date, winning two Academy Awards and raking in about \$280 million.

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## LEGGERA (POP)

Most of the music you'll hear booming out of Italian taxis and cafes to inspire sidewalk singalongs is Italian *musica leggera* (light music). This term covers homegrown rock, jazz, folk and hip-hop talents, as well as perpetrators of perniciously catchy dance tunes and pop ballads. The San Remo Music Festival (televised on RAI 1) annually honours Italy's best songs and mercifully weeds out the worst early on, unlike the wildly popular Italian version of *X Factor*.

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## OPTIMAL OPERA VENUES

- [Milan's Teatro alla Scala](#) Standards for modern opera were set by La Scala's great iron-willed conductor Arturo Toscanini, and are ruthlessly enforced by La Scala's feared *loggione*, opera's toughest and most vocal critics in the cheap seats upstairs.
- [Venice's La Fenice](#) Risen twice from the ashes of devastating fires, 'The Phoenix' features great

talents on its small stage.

- **Arena di Verona** Rising talents ring out here, thanks to forward-thinking organisers and the phenomenal acoustics of this Roman amphitheatre.
  - **Roman Baths of Caracalla** The dramatically decrepit summer venue for the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma was the site of the first concert by the Three Tenors (Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo and Jose Carreras), with a recording that sold an unprecedented 15 million copies.
  - **Teatro San Carlo in Naples** Europe's oldest opera house, a Unesco World Heritage site, and the former home of Italy's most famous *castrati* — male sopranos traditionally with surgically enhanced upper ranges.
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While Rome is a Bermuda Triangle for rockers with drug habits — Sid Vicious, Kurt Cobain and sundry Smashing Pumpkins overdosed there — Milan is out to prove punk's not dead with the annual indie-fest Rock in Idro and the city's crossover rap-punk sensation Articolo 31. On the south side, Neapolitan hip-hop acts like 99 Posse, La Famiglia and Bisca mix Italian sounds over heavy beats and Neapolitan dialect, while Puglia artists like Sud Sound System remix Jamaican dancehall and Italy's hyperactive *tarantella* folk music into a new genre: '*tarantamuffin*'. In the singer-songwriter category, scratchy-voiced troubadour Vinicio Capossela sounds like the long-lost Italian cousin of Tom Waits, and the late Fabrizio de André was Italy's answer to Bob Dylan, with thoughtful lyrics in a musing monotone.

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For a self-guided crash course in Italian music, surf the links provided on the Biblioteca Nazionale Music Research Office's Italian Music Homepage at <http://ospiti.cilea.it/music/entrance.htm>.

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## Theatre & Dance

Entertainment has been not a privilege but a right in Italy ever since Rome promised citizens 'bread and circus' (food and entertainment). Travelling Commedia dell'Arte troupes spread the antics of Pulcinella (aka Punch of Punch and Judy fame) and friends across Italy starting in the Renaissance, but after WWII left Italy's finest venues in ruins, the future of Italian performing arts was uncertain.

Instead of staging a grand comeback, Milan decided to start small in 1947 with the Piccolo Teatro (Little Theatre), featuring low ticket prices and risk-taking productions. The Piccolo staged Dario Fo's 1971 triumph *Morte accidentale di un anarchico* (Accidental Death of an Anarchist) and in 2006 overcame controversy to stage Fo's latest work, *L'anomalia bicefala* (The Two-Headed Anomaly), a satire about Berlusconi and his wife. The Piccolo proved too popular for its size, leading to other less *piccolo* Piccolo Teatros. Among the independent venues springing up in the 1970s was Rome's landmark all-women Teatro della Maddalena, staging daring works like Dacia Maraini's *Dialogo di una prostituta con un suo cliente* (Dialogue Between a Prostitute and Her Client).

Today Bologna, Naples, Milan and Rome boast the most vibrant theatre and dance scenes, though the Spoleto Festival and other summertime extravaganzas bring performing arts to smaller venues nationwide. Ballet in Italy dates from the Renaissance and can be seen nationwide, and several Italian opera companies incorporate *corps de ballet* into performances. Other dances range from folkloric forms like the *tarantella* to competitive *B-boying* (break dancing).

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## SPORT

Scandals continue to rock the world of football cycling, and water sports, and as you may have read in the papers, Italy is no exception. But let's be honest, sports fans: once the action starts, all eyes and some very good bets are on Italy.

Any bar or pizzeria with a TV is a good spot to catch the action among fellow sports fans, and even the smallest Italian hamlet has a football pitch, and many have arenas.

## Calcio (Football)

Even Italy's most hardcore *calcio* (football) fans admit certain shortcomings in Italy's game. Yes, Italians do play a bombastically offensive game, and Italy's best players frequently trade teams and nations for the right price. Yes, match-fixing 'Calciopoli' scandals resulted in revoked championship titles and temporary demotion of Serie A (top-tier national) teams, including the mighty Juventus. Italy defender Marco Materazzi possibly did whisper something highly impolite about the womenfolk of Zinedine Zidane's family, causing the French midfielder to lose his legendary cool and the 2006 World Cup final to Italy.

Yet when Italian footballers are in top form, no one in the stands can be bothered disputing footballers' salaries, egos or word choice. When the ball ricochets off the post and slips fatefully through the goalie's hands, roughly half the stadium is cursing someone's mother, while the other half is ecstatically shouting *Goooooooooooooooooool!* Hooliganism is less popular in Italy than more intimate victory celebrations — hospitals in northern Italy reported a baby boom nine months after Italy won the 2006 World Cup.

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## GOING THE DISTANCE FOR THE RESISTANCE: GINO BARTALI

In 1943—44, the Assisi Underground hid hundreds of Jewish Italians in Umbrian convents and monasteries, while the Tuscan Resistance forged travel documents for them — but the refugees needed those documents fast, before they were deported to concentration camps by Fascist officials. Enter the fastest man in Italy: Gino Bartali, world-famous Tuscan cyclist, Tour de France winner, and three-time champion of the Giro d'Italia. After his death in 2003, documents revealed that during his 'training rides' throughout the war years, Bartali had carried Resistance intelligence and falsified documents to transport Jewish refugees to safe locations. Bartali was interrogated at the dreaded Villa Triste in Florence, where suspected anti-Fascists were routinely tortured — but he revealed nothing. Until his death, the long-distance hero downplayed his efforts to rescue Jewish refugees even with his children, saying, 'One does these things, and then that's that.'

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## Ciclismo (Cycling)

Poor sports often complain that Italy's champion cyclists have all the advantages, and they're not wrong. Many cyclists covet signature *celeste*-hued Bianchis the way drivers dream of red Ferraris, and Bianchi's limited-edition *Reparto Corse* racing bicycles are still produced in bleeding-edge R&D labs in Bergamo. Then there's the training terrain: Italy's rugged mountain and coastal byways are some of the world's toughest and most scenic cycling routes, providing motivation for beginners and challenges for Olympians like Paolo Bettini.

Italian champions also have style, often sporting the Giro d'Italia's prized *maglia rosa*, or pink shirt, for fastest overall time, and the coveted *maglia verde*, or green shirt, for fastest hill climbs. In 2008, for



the first time in more than a decade, a non-Italian was greeted as the overall winner of Giro d'Italia in Milan. Yet Alberto Contador and other members of the Spanish team couldn't shake the taint of Operación Puerto blood-doping scandals, although most were cleared of wrongdoing by the Union Cycliste Internationale. Meanwhile, Italian 2006 Giro champion Ivan Basso and 2009 stage winner Michele Scarpo admitted to involvement in the doping scandals, and were suspended for two seasons.

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Italy's culture of corruption and *calcio* (football) is captured in *The Dark Heart of Italy*, where English expat author Tobias Jones wryly observes, 'Footballers or referees are forgiven nothing; politicians are forgiven everything.'

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## Water Sports

In a peninsula brimming with lakes, you might expect to find a few good swimmers — but Italy has more than its share. Italy's men's and women's water polo teams are consistently ranked among the top five worldwide; Italy's divers have been competing at Olympian standards since Klaus Dibiasi took home his first of three gold medals in 1968; and Italian women swimmers keep breaking world records, especially Federica Pelligrini in freestyle swimming. Free divers have been known to plummet to depths of 250m without oxygen in Lignano, and Gianluca Genoni set a new world record in 2008 in Mantova by remaining underwater without oxygen for 18 minutes and three seconds.

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# Food & Drink

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Let's be honest: you came for the food, right? Wise choice. Just don't go expecting meals in Italy to remind you of the swankiest five-star Italian restaurant back home. On the contrary: once you've had a hearty *farro* (spelt) soup warm you to the core in some tiny Tuscan *osteria* (rustic restaurant), or picnicked on fresh salami *panini* (crusty sandwiches featuring Italian cold cuts) in front of Milan's Duomo, you'll be struck with culinary amnesia. Has anything tasted this good, ever? Probably not. The Accademia della Cucina Italiana (Italian Academy of Cuisine) announced in 2008 that an average of six out of 10 dishes served at Italian restaurants outside Italy aren't prepared correctly. According to the organisation's London representative, Benito Fiore, out of 320 Italian restaurants in the UK, only 20 were of a high standard, and 200 received failing marks.

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Italy, a nation of efficiency experts? Believe it: the average Italian *casalinga* (homemaker) spent seven hours in the kitchen daily in 1950, but now she's got her routine down to 40 minutes.

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Blame it on the Italians — they make it look easy, but it's not. Each ingredient must be chosen for its scent, texture, ripeness and ability to play well with others. This means getting to the right market early and often, and remaining open to seasonal inspiration. To balance the right ingredients in exactly the right proportions, Italian cooks apply an intuitive Pythagorean theorem of flavours you won't find spelled out in any recipe — but you'll surely know the winning formula when you taste it.

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## TUTTI A TAVOLA

Everyone to the table!' Traffic lights are merely suggestions, queues fine ideas in theory, and governments destined to be overturned, but this is one command every Italian heeds without question. To disobey would be unthinkable — what, you're going to eat your pasta cold? And insult the cook? Even anarchists wouldn't dream of it.

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Eat well and prosper: Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini and legendary chef Alice Waters point the way forward in *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair* (2007).

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The Italian culture of food directly contradicts what we think we know of Italy. A nation prone to perpetual motion with Vespas, Ferraris and Bianchis pauses for lunch — hence the term *la pausa* to describe the midday break. Power-lunchers throw ties over their shoulders and prop sunglasses on foreheads to better take it all in, and supermodels endanger designer dresses with pasta *puttanesca* (with spicy tomato sauce). Big talk and bigger gestures have been Italian trademarks ever since Caesars and popes first started speechifying, but an eerie hush descends when food is placed on an Italian table. The Italian suffix *-issimo*, so often used to add emphasis to adjectives (*bellissimo*, *bravissimo*) is markedly absent at mealtime. High praise is a simple, unexaggerated *buono* (good) or *giusto* (correct), or appreciative silence punctuated with the sound of gently slurped noodles. The TV may be on ([Click here](#)), but when the pizza is good, TV will be ignored. Afterwards, feel free to give your *complimenti* to the chef — and in the right circumstances, a hearty handshake and cheek kisses may be in order.

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Less is more: most of the recipes in Ada Boni's classic *The Talisman Italian Cookbook* have fewer than 10 ingredients, yet the robust flavours of her osso bucco, polenta, and wild duck with lentils are anything but simple.

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You never really know Italians until you've broken a crusty loaf of *pagnotta* (bread) with them — and once you've arrived in Italy, you'll have several opportunities daily to do just that. Following are listings of what you can look forward to at each meal, with some latitude for regional variations. Good luck with your arduous sociological research, and here's hoping you have cause to kiss the cook.

## Collazione (Breakfast)

Breakfast in Italy is a perfectly good excuse to get out of bed, if not the most lavish meal of your day. Some B&Bs are restricted by licence to provide only packaged foods, so if breakfast is the most important meal of your day, ask what it entails. In general, think Continental, not eggs, pancakes, ham, sausage, toast and orange juice. Those menu offerings are only likely to appear at weekend *brrrunch* (pronounced with the rolled Italian *r*), an American import now appearing at trendy urban eateries in Italy. Expect to pay upwards of €20 to graze a buffet of hot dishes, cold cuts, pastries and fresh fruit, usually including your choice of coffee, juice or cocktail.

The mainstay of Italian breakfast is scalding hot espresso, cappuccino (espresso with a goodly dollop of foamed milk) or *caffè latte* — the hot, milky espresso beverage Starbucks mistakenly calls a *latte*, which will get you a glass of milk in Italy. An alternative beverage is *orzo*, a slightly nutty, noncaffeinated roasted-barley beverage that looks like cocoa.

The ideal accompaniment to your coffee is pastry, usually without adornments such as butter and jam; some especially promising options are below.

**Cornetto** The Italian take on the French croissant is usually smaller, lighter, less buttery and slightly sweet, with an orange-rind glaze brushed on top.

**Crostata** The Italian breakfast tart with a dense, buttery crust is filled with your choice of fruit jam, such as *amarena* (sour cherry), *albicocca* (apricot) or *frutti di bosco* (wild berry). You may have to buy an entire tart instead of a single slice, but you won't be sorry.

**Doughnuts** Homer Simpson would approve of the *ciambella* (also called by its German name, *krapfen*), the classic fried-dough treat rolled in granulated sugar, sometimes filled with jam or custard. Join the line at kiosks and street fairs for *fritole*, fried dough studded with golden raisins and sprinkled with confectioners' sugar, and *zeppole* (also called *bigné San Giuseppe*), chewy

doughnuts enriched with ricotta or *zucca* (pumpkin), rolled in confectioners' sugar, and handed over in a paper cone to be devoured dangerously hot.

**Viennoiserie** Italy's colonisation by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the 19th century had its upside: a vast selection of sweet buns and other rich baked goods. Standouts include cream-filled brioches and *strudel di mele*, an Italian adaptation of the traditional Viennese *apfelstrudel*.

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Fifty years ago, Italy's *Domus* magazine dispatched journalists nationwide to collect Italy's best regional recipes. The result is Italy's food bible, *The Silver Spoon*, now available in English from Phaidon (2005).

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## Pranzo (Lunch)

Many shops and businesses still close for *la pausa*, a two- to three-hour midday break to return home, enjoy lunch, rest up and come back to work wired on espresso and ready for action. But in major cities, commuters don't have time to make the trip home, and use their break to run errands, socialise and grab lunch on the go.

At some ruthlessly efficiency-minded workplaces, *la pausa* has been scaled back to a scandalous hour and a half — barely enough time to get through the lines at the bank to pay bills and bolt some *pizza al taglio* (pizza by the slice). A *rosticceria* (rotisserie) or *tavola calda* ('hot table') also serves hot items on the go, such as roast chicken and *supplì* (fried risotto balls with a molten mozzarella centre). Quick bites at bakeries and bars include *panini* and *tramezzini* (triangular, stacked sandwiches made with squishy white bread).

Some public-sector jobs still hold *pranzo* sacred, and allow enough time for a sit-down meal with wine and coffee; below is what's on the menu.

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According to recent figures, Italians spend €50 billion per year on eating out; Americans spend twice that amount.

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## ANTIPASTI (APPETISER)

Bread is deposited on the table as part of your €1 to €3 *pane e coperto* (bread and 'cover', or table service), along with oil and vinegar for dipping. You might also score some olives or *sott'aceti* (vegetables such as artichokes or red peppers in olive oil and vinegar), *grissini* (Turin-style breadsticks), or even a basket of salami or other cured meats. But tantalising offerings on the antipasti menu may include the house bruschetta (grilled bread with a variety of toppings, from chopped tomato and garlic to black-truffle spread) and seasonal treats such as *insalata caprese* (fresh mozzarella with ripe tomatoes and basil leaves) or *prosciutto e melone* (cured ham and cantaloupe).

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## REVOLUTION ON TAP

Still or sparkling aren't your only water choices in Italy, where 270 brands of bottled water add up to a €5 billion industry. But now that designer waters are hitting €5 per bottle and littering the countryside with discarded plastic containers, Italian diners are rebelling and demanding tap. As Italian comedian Beppe Grillo protests: 'It's putting rain in a bottle and then making you pay for it.' Join the revolt, or stick to your bubbly bottled Pellegrino with pride — just don't forget to recycle.

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## PRIMO (FIRST COURSE)

The highlights of this starch-based course are pasta, risotto, gnocchi and polenta. You may be surprised how generous the portions are — a *mezzo piatto* (half-portion) might do the trick for kids.

*Primi* menus usually include ostensibly vegetarian or vegan options, such as pasta *con pesto* — the classic Ligurian basil paste with *parmigiano reggiano* (Parmesan) and pine nuts — or *alla norma* (with eggplant and tomato, Sicilian style), *risotto ai porcini* (risotto with pungent, earthy porcini mushrooms) or the extravagant *risotto al Barolo* (risotto with high-end Barolo wine, though actually, any good dry red will do). But even if a dish sounds vegetarian in theory, before you order you may want to ask about the stock used in that risotto or polenta, or the ingredients in that suspiciously rich tomato sauce — there may be beef, ham or ground anchovies involved.

Meat eaters will rejoice in such legendary dishes as *pasta all'amatriciana* (Roman pasta with a spicy tomato sauce, *pecorino* cheese and *guanciale*, or baconlike pigs' cheeks), *osso bucco con risotto alla milanese* (Milanese veal shank and marrow melting into saffron risotto), *pappardelle alle cinghiale* (ribbon pasta with wild boar sauce, a Tuscan speciality) and *polenta col ragù* (polenta with meat sauce, a Northern favourite). Near the coasts, look for seafood variations like *risotto al nero* (risotto cooked with black squid ink), *spaghetti con le vongole* (spaghetti with clam sauce), or *pasta ai frutti di mare* (pasta with seafood).

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The Julia Child of Italian cuisine is Marcella Hazan, who inspired legions of traditionalist home chefs worldwide with *The Classic Italian Cook Book* (1973), later expanded into her encyclopaedic *The Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking* (1992).

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## SECONDO (SECOND COURSE)

Light lunchers usually call it a day after the *primo*, but foodies pace themselves for meat, fish or *contorni* (side dishes, such as cooked vegetables) in the second course. These options may range from the outrageous *bistecca alla fiorentina*, a 3in-thick steak served on the bone in a puddle of juice, to the more modest yet impressive *carciofi alla romana* (Roman artichokes stuffed with mint and garlic). A less inspiring option is *insalata mista* (mixed green salad), typically unadorned greens with vinegar and oil on the side — croutons, crumbled cheeses, nuts, dried fruit and other frou-frou ingredients have no business in a classic Italian salad.

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Pellegrino Artusi's 100-year-old *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well* covers tricks and quips: 'Let's leave to the English the taste for eating boiled vegetables without any seasoning... we southern types need our food to be a little more exciting.'

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## FRUTTI E DOLCI

'*Siamo arrivati alla frutta*' ('we've arrived at the fruit') is an idiom roughly meaning 'we've hit rock bottom' — but hey, not until you've had one last tasty morsel. Imported pineapple has been a trendy choice of late, but your best bets on the fruit menu are local and seasonal. *Formaggi* (cheeses) are another option, but only diabetics or the French would go that route when there's room for *dolci* (sweets). Think beyond dental-work-endangering *biscotti* (twice-baked biscuits) and consider *zabaglione* (egg and marsala custard), cream-stuffed profiteroles or Sicilian *cannoli*, the cream-stuffed shell pastry immortalised thus in *The Godfather*: 'Leave the gun. Take the *cannoli*.'

## APERITIVI: WINING & DINING FOR LESS

The hottest recession trend in Italy is *aperitivi*, often described as a ‘before-meal drink and light snack’. Don’t be fooled. Italian ‘happy hour’ is dinner disguised as a casual drink, accompanied by a buffet of antipasti, pasta salads, cold cuts and some hot dishes (this may include your fellow diners: *apertivi* is prime time for hungry singles). You can methodically pillage buffets in Rome and Milan from about 5pm to 8pm for the price of a single drink — which crafty diners nurse for the duration — while Venetians enjoy *ombre* (wine by the glass) and bargain seafood *cicheti* (Venetian tapas). *Aperitivi* are wildly popular among the many young Italians who can’t afford to eat dinner out, but still want a place to enjoy food with friends — leave it to Italy to find a way to make recession seem stylish.

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## Caffè (Coffee)

No amount of willpower or cajoling is going to move your feet into a museum after a three-course Italian lunch, so you must administer espresso immediately. Sometimes your barista will take pity and deliver your cappuccino with a *cioccolato* (a square of chocolate) or grant you a tiny stain of milk in a *caffè macchiato*. On the hottest days of summer, you may be allowed a *granita di caffè* (coffee with shaved ice and whipped cream). But usually you’ll be expected to take espresso as it comes, with scant sweetness and no apology, like a nasty breakup. The ‘what doesn’t kill you, makes you stronger’ principle applies to Italian coffee breaks: if you survive the scalding liquid tossed down your throat, well then, you’re ready to get on with your day.

## Merenda (Snack time)

Since a hearty appetite is necessary to soldier through a proper Italian meal, Italians aren’t generally big snackers. Kids are the exception. *La merenda*, a sweet treat midmorning or after school, gives indulgent grandparents an opportunity to bond with youngsters and adults reason to wax nostalgic about lost youth. If you suffered a childhood of healthy snacks, make up for lost time and join the kids for gelato (ice cream) or pastries with *caffè latte* or tea. Vegetables are not considered suitable — when a couple is a bad match, you can say they go together *come cavoli a merenda* (‘like cabbage at snacktime’).

Night owls in need of *spuntini di mezzanotte* (midnight snacks) are in luck: *pizza al taglio* and gelaterie in entertainment zones and university areas stay open late, many pubs offer *panini*, and most jazz clubs offer a full (if overpriced) dinner menu.

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Don’t believe the hype about espresso: one diminutive cup packs less of a caffeine wallop than a large cup of French-pressed or American-brewed coffee, and leaves drinkers less jittery.

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## Cena (Dinner)

‘Oh, I can hardly eat anything tonight’, you may hear Italian friends claim after a marathon weekend lunch. ‘Maybe just a bowl of pasta, a salad, some cheese and fruit...’ Bear this in mind when you’ve been invited to someone’s home, even for a ‘light dinner’ — wine and elastic-waist pants are always advisable. In restaurants, diners concerned with budgets and the ability to budge from their chairs will be relieved that there is no obligation to consume both a *primo* and *secondo*, and antipasti and dessert are strictly optional.

That said, you may want to organise your travels, finances and exercise regime around a lavish dinner

at one of Italy's fine-dining establishments, such as Cracco-Peck, the restaurant at Peck (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)), in Milan or [Open Colonna](#) in Rome. Many top-ranked restaurants open only for dinner, with a set-price meal that leaves the major menu decisions to your chef, and frees you up to concentrate on the noble quest to conquer four to six tasting courses. *Forza e coraggio!* (Strength and courage to you!)

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## WINES

A sit-down meal without wine in Italy is as unpalatable and forlorn as pasta without sauce. Not ordering wine at a restaurant can cause consternation — are you pregnant or a recovering alcoholic, or was it something the waiter said? Italian wines are considered among the most versatile and 'food-friendly' in the world, specifically cultivated over the centuries to elevate regional cuisine.

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*Gambero Rosso (Red Shrimp)* magazine delivers the inside scoop on authentic Italian cuisine, with in-depth regional features and tips on where to find the best value for price at restaurants nationwide. Check out its English website: [www.gamberorosso.it/portaleEng/Homepage/homepage](http://www.gamberorosso.it/portaleEng/Homepage/homepage).

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Wine isn't an afterthought to a meal in Italy, but a consideration as essential as your choice of dinner date. Some Italian wines will be as familiar to you as old flames, including pizza-and-a-movie Chianti or reliable summertime fling Pinot Grigio. But you'll also find some captivating Italian varietals and blends for which there is no translation (eg Brunello, Vermentino, Sclacchetrá), and intriguing Italian wines that have little in common with European and American cousins by the same name (eg Merlot, Pinot Nero aka Noir, Chardonnay).

Many visitors default to carafes of house reds or whites, which in Italy usually means young, fruit-forward reds to complement tomato sauces and chilled dry whites as seafood palate-cleansers. But with a little daring and the list below, you can pursue a wider range of options by the glass or half-bottle.

**Sparkling wines:** Franciacorta (Lombardy), Prosecco (Veneto), Asti (aka Asti Spumante; Piedmont), Lambrusco (Emilia-Romagna)

**Light, citrusy whites with grassy or floral notes:** Vermentino (Sardinia), Orvieto (Umbria), Soave (Veneto), Tocai (Friuli)

**Dry whites with aromatic herbal or mineral aspect:** Cinque Terre (Liguria), Gavi (Piedmont), Falanghina (Campania), Est! Est!! Est!!! (Lazio)

**Versatile, food-friendly reds with pleasant acidity:** Barbera d'Alba (Piedmont), Montepulciano d'Abruzzo (Abruzzo), Valpolicella (Veneto), Chianti Classico (Tuscany)

**Well-rounded reds, balancing fruit with earthy notes:** Brunello di Montalcino (Tuscany), Refosco dal Pedulunco Rosso (Friuli), Dolcetto (Piedmont), Morellino di Scansano (Tuscany)

**Big, structured reds with velvety tannins:** Amarone (Veneto), Barolo (Piedmont), Sagrantino di Montefalco secco (Umbria), Sassicaia and other 'super-Tuscan' blends (Tuscany)

**Fortified and dessert wines:** Sclacchetrá (Liguria), Colli Orientali del Friuli Picolit (Friuli), Vin Santo (Tuscany), Moscato d'Asti (Piedmont)

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Italy's oldest known wine is Chianti Classico, with favourable reviews dating from the 14th century and a growing region clearly defined by 1716.

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## OTHER DRINKS

Italy's perfectly quaffable pilsner beers and occasional red ale pair well with roast meats, pizza and other quick eats, but wine is considered appropriate for a proper Italian meal — and since many wines cost less than a pint in Italy, this is not a question of price, but a matter of flavour. A declaration that *acqua dal rubinetto* (tap water) will do instead of bottled is becoming less disconcerting in the age of environmental awareness ([Click here](#)), but failure to order a postprandial espresso may shock your server. You may yet save face by ordering a digestive, such as a *grappa* (a potent grape-derived alcohol), *amaro* (herbal bitters) or *limoncello* (sweet lemon-scented liqueur). Fair warning though: Italian digestives can be an acquired taste, and they pack a punch that might leave you snoring before *il conto* (the bill) arrives.

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Tap water is perfectly potable in Italy, but in 2006 the average Italian drank 178L of bottled water — four times as much as UK drinkers.

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## CELEBRATIONS & FESTIVALS

Perhaps you've heard of ancient Roman orgies with trips to the vomitorium to make room for the next course, or Medici family feasts with sugar sculptures worth their weight in gold? If you were hoping to party with Julius Caesar or get Michelangelo to sculpt you in sugar, you're a bit late — but you're still in time to enjoy a proper Italian feast. Anyone in Italy during major holidays can hardly avoid copious speciality foods. Christmas means stuffed pasta, seafood dishes and *panettone* (yeasty golden Christmas cake studded with raisins and dried fruit). Lent gives way to Easter bingeing with the obligatory lamb, *colomba* (dove-shaped cake) and *uove di pasqua* (foil-wrapped chocolate eggs with toy surprises inside).

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## A NATION OF AFICIONADOS

Not sure what to pair with your wild-boar pasta, and there's no sommelier in sight? Try canvassing your fellow diners: any self-respecting adult Italian has opinions about wine to spare. Though plenty picky about their pairings, Italian aficionados aren't snobbish — far from being dictated by critics, Italy's wine-steeped culture comes from sailors and monks.

During the Roman Empire, garum fish sauce with water was a favoured drink, and Rome waged naval campaigns to secure garum from Spain and North Africa. Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder waxed rhapsodic about garum, pepper and cinnamon c AD 77 in his *Natural History* — and in what was already an Italian national habit, complained bitterly about the prices. Because garum was costly, Roman legions often had to make do with fermented grape juice shipped to distant outposts in barrels. Pliny dedicated an entire *Natural History* volume to viticulture and ranking wines by growing region, conceding that wines from Campania weren't half bad.

In the Middle Ages, Venice built a maritime empire importing precious spices — and once ordinary Italians got a whiff of what was cooking in noble homes, they weren't about to settle for dubious meats and unsalted bread with mead, like certain northern Europeans. Communion wine



grown by monks was readily available throughout Italy, and far more affordable than spices to add flavour to a meal.

With maritime trade and bumper crops from the 11th to 13th century meeting basic food needs, Italians could afford to get creative, curing meats, cave-ageing cheeses and developing speciality wines to complement increasingly sophisticated local foods. By the 14th century, Italians were already extolling the virtues of Chianti — which, as your fellow diners will surely point out, is not a bad choice with boar pasta.

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Some Italian holidays dispense with the religious premise and are all about the food. During summer and early autumn, towns across Italy celebrate *sagre*, the festivals of local foods in season. You'll find a *sagra del tartufo* (truffles) in Umbria, *del pomodoro* (tomatoes) in Sicily and *del cipolle* (onions) in Puglia (wouldn't want to be downwind of that one).

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Here's to your health: Recent research shows that Sardinian red wines have two to four times the normal levels of procyanidins, grape-seed compounds associated with heart health in laboratory mice.

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## WINE & COOKERY COURSES

You can hardly throw a stone in Italy without hitting a culinary course in progress, but there are better ways of finding a cookery school. Here are a few, for starters:

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To find out what local food festivals are happening when in Italy, check out [www.sagrepaesane.it](http://www.sagrepaesane.it).

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**Città del Gusto** (☎06 551 12 21; [www.gamberorosso.it/portaleEng/cdg/homepage](http://www.gamberorosso.it/portaleEng/cdg/homepage); Via Fermi 161, Rome) Six floors of hot, nonstop gourmet-on-gourmet action, from live cooking demonstrations and TV-show tapings to wine courses in the 'Theatre of Wine'. All workshops and demos are run by *Gambero Rosso*, Italy's most esteemed food magazine.

**Culinary Adventures** ([www.peggymarkel.com](http://www.peggymarkel.com)) Indulge in and learn about cooking Italian dishes with local, sustainably sourced ingredients at decadent weeklong courses in Sicily, Elba, Amalfi and Tuscany.

**Eataly** ([www.eatalytorino.it](http://www.eatalytorino.it)) Turin's mall-sized monument to artisanal food offers samples, wine-tasting, and afternoon workshops on aphrodisiac dinners, becoming a chef and sommelier secrets. Workshops start at €60, but some are offered in Italian only.

**International Wine Academy of Roma** (☎06 699 08 78; [www.wineacademyroma.com](http://www.wineacademyroma.com); Vicolo del Bottino 8) Individual wine-tasting events cost about €30, a five-wine tasting followed by a four-course meal with wine pairing runs to €180 (minimum two people), and a tour of Lazio wineries guided by a Wine Academy oenologist ranges from €300 to €360.

**Italian Food Artisans** ([www.foodartisans.com/workshops](http://www.foodartisans.com/workshops)) Slip behind the scenes in restaurant kitchens and private homes, and discover Italy's best-kept food secrets in Cinque Terre, Sicily, and Tuscany on one-day workshops or five-day adventures with cookbook author Pamela Sheldon Johns.

**Tasting Places** ([www.tastingplaces.com](http://www.tastingplaces.com)) Recent offerings include excursions to regional Slow Food festivals, a 'White Truffle and Wine' weekend in Piedmont, and gourmet getaways in the Veneto and Tuscany.

# EAT YOUR WORDS

Get on speaking terms with your food. For more on useful phrases and pronunciation guidelines, [Click here](#).

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Although some producers find these official Italian classifications unduly costly and creatively constraining, the DOCG (Denominazione di origine controllata e garantita) and DOC (Denominazione di origine controllata) designations are awarded to wines that meet regional quality-control standards.

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## Food Glossary

### CONDIMENTS & FLAVOURINGS

<b>aceto</b>	<i>a-che-to</i>	vinegar
<b>aglio</b>	<i>a-lyo</i>	garlic
<b>miele</b>	<i>mye-le</i>	honey
<b>olio</b>	<i>o-lyo</i>	oil
<b>oliva</b>	<i>o-lee-va</i>	olive
<b>pepe</b>	<i>pe-pe</i>	pepper
<b>peperoncino</b>	<i>pe-pe-ron-chee-no</i>	chilli
<b>sale</b>	<i>sa-le</i>	salt
<b>tartufo</b>	<i>tar-too-fo</i>	truffle
<b>zucchero</b>	<i>tsoo-ke-ro</i>	sugar

### DAIRY & EGGS

<b>burro</b>	<i>boo-ro</i>	butter
<b>latte</b>	<i>la-te</i>	milk
<b>formaggio</b>	<i>for-ma-jo</i>	cheese
<b>panna</b>	<i>pa-na</i>	cream
<b>uovo/uova</b>	<i>wo-vo/wo-va</i>	egg/eggs

### DRINKS

<b>acqua</b>	<i>a-kwa</i>	water
<b>birra</b>	<i>bee-ra</i>	beer
<b>caffè</b>	<i>ka-fe</i>	coffee
<b>tè</b>	<i>te</i>	tea
<b>vino (rosso/bianco)</b>	<i>vee-no (ro-so/byan-ko)</i>	wine (red/white)

### FRUIT

<b>arancia</b>	<i>a-ran-cha</i>	orange
<b>ciliegia</b>	<i>chee-lee-e-ja</i>	cherry
<b>fragole</b>	<i>fra-go-le</i>	strawberries
<b>limone</b>	<i>lee-mo-ne</i>	lemon
<b>mela</b>	<i>me-la</i>	apple
<b>melone</b>	<i>me-lo-ne</i>	cantaloupe; musk melon; rockmelon
<b>pesca</b>	<i>pe-ska</i>	peach
<b>pera</b>	<i>pe-ra</i>	pear
<b>pomodori</b>	<i>po-mo-do-ree</i>	tomatoes
<b>uva</b>	<i>oo-va</i>	grapes

### MEATS

<b>agnello</b>	<i>a-nye-lo</i>	lamb
<b>bistecca</b>	<i>bees-te-ka</i>	steak

<b>capretto</b>	<i>ka-pre-to</i>	kid (goat)
<b>coniglio</b>	<i>ko-nee-lyo</i>	rabbit
<b>fegato</b>	<i>fe-ga-to</i>	liver
<b>manzo</b>	<i>man-zo</i>	beef
<b>pollo</b>	<i>po-lo</i>	chicken
<b>prosciutto cotto</b>	<i>pro-shoo-to ko-to</i>	cooked ham
<b>prosciutto crudo</b>	<i>pro-shoo-to kroo-do</i>	cured ham
<b>saliccia</b>	<i>sal-see-cha</i>	sausage
<b>trippa</b>	<i>tree-pa</i>	tripe
<b>vitello</b>	<i>vee-te-lo</i>	veal

## PREPARATIONS

<b>alla griglia</b>	<i>a-la gree-lya</i>	grilled (broiled)
<b>arrosto/a (m/f)</b>	<i>a-ro-sto/a</i>	roasted
<b>bollito/a (m/f)</b>	<i>bo-lee-to/a</i>	boiled
<b>cotto/a (m/f)</b>	<i>ko-to/a</i>	cooked
<b>crudo/a (m/f)</b>	<i>kroo-do/a</i>	raw
<b>fritto/a (m/f)</b>	<i>free-to/a</i>	fried

## SEAFOOD

<b>acciughe</b>	<i>a-choo-ge</i>	anchovies
<b>aragosta</b>	<i>a-ra-go-sta</i>	lobster
<b>calamari</b>	<i>ka-la-ma-ree</i>	squid
<b>cozze</b>	<i>ko-tse</i>	mussels
<b>frutti di mare</b>	<i>froo-te dee ma-re</i>	seafood
<b>gamberoni</b>	<i>gam-be-ro-nee</i>	prawns
<b>granchio</b>	<i>gran-kyo</i>	crab
<b>merluzzo</b>	<i>mer-loo-tso</i>	cod
<b>ostriche</b>	<i>os-tree-ke</i>	oysters
<b>pesce spada</b>	<i>pe-she spa-da</i>	swordfish
<b>polpi</b>	<i>pol-pee</i>	octopus
<b>sarde</b>	<i>sar-de</i>	sardines
<b>seppia</b>	<i>se-pya</i>	cuttlefish
<b>sgombro</b>	<i>sgom-bro</i>	mackerel
<b>tonno</b>	<i>to-no</i>	tuna
<b>vongole</b>	<i>von-go-le</i>	clams

## STARCHES

<b>pane</b>	<i>pa-ne</i>	bread
<b>patate</b>	<i>pa-ta-te</i>	potatoes
<b>riso</b>	<i>ree-zo</i>	rice

## VEGETABLES

<b>asparagi</b>	<i>as-pa-ra-jee</i>	asparagus
<b>carciofi</b>	<i>kar-cho-fee</i>	artichokes
<b>carota</b>	<i>ka-ro-ta</i>	carrot
<b>cavolo</b>	<i>ka-vo-lo</i>	cabbage
<b>cipolle</b>	<i>chee-po-le</i>	onions
<b>fagiolini</b>	<i>fa-jo-lee-nee</i>	green beans
<b>finocchio</b>	<i>fee-no-kyo</i>	fennel
<b>funghi</b>	<i>foon-gee</i>	mushrooms
<b>insalata</b>	<i>in-sa-la-ta</i>	salad
<b>melanzane</b>	<i>me-lan-dza-ne</i>	aubergine
<b>peperoni</b>	<i>pe-pe-ro-nee</i>	capsicum; peppers
<b>piselli</b>	<i>pee-ze-lee</i>	peas
<b>rucola</b>	<i>roo-ko-la</i>	rocket
<b>spinaci</b>	<i>spee-na-chee</i>	spinach

# Environment

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## THE LAND

Italy's distinctive shape makes it one of the most easily recognisable countries in the world. Its long bootlike mainland peninsula protrudes south into the Mediterranean, flanked by two major islands — Sicily (to the south) and Sardinia (to the west) — and a host of smaller ones.

Bound on three sides by four Mediterranean seas (the Adriatic, Ionian, Ligurian and Tyrrhenian), the country has more than 8000km of coastline. Coastal scenery ranges from the low-lying beaches of Sardinia to the dramatically precipitous cliffs of the Amalfi Coast.

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Italy's equivalent of the National Trust, the Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano (FAI), is dedicated to safeguarding Italy's artistic and environmental heritage. Read all about it at the easy-to-navigate website [www.fondoambiente.it](http://www.fondoambiente.it).

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More than 75% of Italy is mountainous and two ranges dominate the landscape. The Alps stretch 966km from east to west across the northern boundary of the country. The western sector is the highest with peaks rising above 4500m. The Valle d'Aosta includes Mont Blanc (Monte Bianco; 4807m), Monte Rosa (4633m), the Matterhorn (Monte Cervino; 4478m), and Gran Paradiso (4061m). The lower eastern sector features the spectacular saw-toothed peaks of the Dolomites. The Alpine foothills are bejewelled by a string of grand lakes, including Lago di Garda, Lago Maggiore and Lago di Como.

More than 1000 glaciers, all in a constant state of retreat, dot the Alps. The best known is the Marmolada glacier on the border of Trentino and Veneto, which is popular with skiers and snowboarders.

The second mountain chain, the Apennines (Appennini) stretches 1350km from Genoa to Calabria. The highest peak is the Corno Grande (2912m) in the Gran Sasso d'Italia group (Abruzzo).

Only a quarter of Italy's land mass can be described as lowland. One of the largest areas is the heavily populated and industrialised Po valley plain. Located at the foot of the Alps, it is bisected by Italy's longest river, the 628km Po.

Italy has a complex geological history characterised by marked environmental and climatic changes. The crucial moment in the formation of the peninsula came around 40 million years ago when the African continental plate butted up against the European land mass. The collision forced the edge of the European plate to fold under. Over the centuries the African continent then pushed sheets of the southern European

continental plate up to 1000km north over the folds. This process created the Alps and Apennines and explains why some of the higher strata of the Alps are actually older than lower levels.

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Aimed at amateur enthusiasts, Christopher Kilburn and Bill McGuire's *Italian Volcanoes* provides an in-depth account of Italy's key volcanic districts.

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By around two million years ago, after the landscape had been shaped and reshaped by the combined forces of continental plate movement and erosion, the Italian peninsula had almost arrived at its present form. The sea level continued to rise and fall with the alternation of ice ages and periods of warm weather, until the end of the last ice age around 10,000 to 12,000 years ago.

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## WILDLIFE

Italy is not renowned for its wildlife-watching, but you will be surprised by how many different species naturally dwell in the country, particularly in the national parks and nature reserves. Common mammals include deer, chamois (mountain goats), ibexes, wild boars, wildcats, hedgehogs, hares and rabbits.

### Animals

Bears roam central and northern Italy. Along with the 50 Marsican brown bears that prowl the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise, around 20 brown bears are at large in the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta, partly as a result of their reintroduction from Slovenia. Not everyone is happy. Farmers have seen their hen pens raided and some pasture land is now deemed off-limits.

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Try Paul Sterry's *Complete Mediterranean Wildlife* for a general guide to the flora and fauna of the region.

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The Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini, straddling Umbria and Le Marche, is home to more than 50 species of mammal, including the wolf, porcupine, wildcat, snow vole and roe deer. Up above, golden eagles, peregrine falcons and rock partridges are among the 150 types of bird inhabiting the park. There are also more than 20 types of reptile and invertebrate, including the Orsini viper and *Chirocephalus marchesoni* (a small, rare crustacean that lives exclusively in the Lago di Pilato).

Parco Nazionale Arcipelago Toscano occupies one of the main migratory corridors in the Mediterranean. The islands of Elba, Giglio, Capraia, Gorgona, Pianosa, Giannutri and Montecristo provide endless nesting possibilities for birds. Species include falcons, wall creepers, various types of swallow and the red partridge. Other unusual wildlife includes the tarantula gecko and the endemic viper of Montecristo. Swordfish, tuna and dolphins are common along the coastline.

The Parco Nazionale del Circeo in Lazio also coincides with the main migratory routes. The park is a good place to spot water birds such as the spoonbill and greater flamingo, as well as rare birds of prey like the peregrine.

White sharks are known to exist in the Mediterranean (particularly in its southern waters) but attacks are extremely rare.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES

Extensive changes in land use, combined with the Italians' passion for *la caccia* (hunting), have led to many native animals and birds becoming extinct, rare or endangered. There is still a powerful hunting lobby in Italy, which continues to play an important role in the country's environmental politics.

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## EARTHQUAKES & VOLCANOES

Italy is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries. A fault line runs through the entire peninsula — from eastern Sicily, up the Apennines and into the northeastern Alps. It corresponds to the collision point of the European and African continental plates and still subjects a good part of the country to seismic activity. Italy is usually hit by minor quakes several times a year and devastating earthquakes are not uncommon in central and southern Italy. The most recent, measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale, struck the central region of Abruzzo on 6 April 2009, killing 308 people and leaving up to 65,000 homeless.

In recent decades fatal quakes have been recorded in Molise (2002), Umbria and Le Marche (1997), Campania (1980) and Friuli (1976). Italy's worst 20th-century earthquake hit southern Italy in 1908, when Messina and Reggio di Calabria were destroyed by a seaquake registering seven on the Richter scale. Some 86,000 people were killed by the quake and subsequent tidal wave.

Italy also has six active volcanoes: Stromboli and Vulcano on the Aeolian Islands; Vesuvius, the Campi Flegrei and the island of Ischia near Naples; and Etna on Sicily. Stromboli and Etna are among the world's most active volcanoes, while Vesuvius has not erupted since 1944. This has become a source of concern for scientists, who estimate that it should erupt every 30 years. The longer before the next blast, the more destructive it is likely to be, and with some three million people living in the vicinity the consequences could be catastrophic.

On Sicily, Etna eruptions are fairly frequent, although rarely dangerous. In September 2007 an eruption blew lava 400m into the air and created a huge cloud of smoke and ash that forced the closure of nearby Catania airport. In May 2008, lava was sent spewing 5km into the nearby Valle del Bove.

Stromboli's last big blow came in spring 2003, when an eruption sent around 10 million cu metres of volcanic rock plunging into the sea, setting off an 8m tidal wave that affected areas more than 160km away. In February 2007 two new craters opened on the volcano's summit.

Related volcanic activity produces thermal and mud springs, notably at Viterbo in Lazio and on the Aeolian Islands. The Campi Flegrei, near Naples, is an area of intense volcanic activity, which includes hot springs, gas emissions and steam jets.

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## OUT OF THE BLUE

An 87,500-sq-km area of the Mediterranean between southeast France, northwest Italy and northern Sardinia (encompassing Corsica and the islands around Elba) was set aside in 2002 as a unique protected zone, the Pelagos Sanctuary, for Mediterranean marine mammals. Fin whales and striped dolphins make up 80% of sightings in the area but many other species also cruise through.

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In the 20th century 14 species became extinct in Italy, including the alpine lynx, sea eagle, black vulture and osprey (although there is an ongoing reintroduction project for ospreys in Parco Regionale della Maremma in Tuscany and in 2007 a pair bred in Sardinia). Under laws introduced progressively over the years, many animals and birds are now protected, but according to Legambiente 127 animal species and 11 plant species are still at risk of extinction.

Those species that are making a comeback after being reintroduced in the wild are the brown bear, which survives only in the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta in Trentino, and the lynx, which is extremely rare and found mainly in the mountains around Tarvisio in Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Wolves are now more common: over the last 20 years the population has naturally increased from 100 (in the 1970s) to 500 to 600 animals colonising the northern Apennines and the western Alps. But despite concerted conservation efforts, the endemic Marsican brown bear of Abruzzo has been less successful — there are probably no more than 50 individuals and its risk status is still critical.

Otters thrive in the Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano in Campania and a small population has been found in the Parco Nazionale del Pollino. Another extremely rare marine animal is the monk seal; the occasional sighting keeps hopes alive that a few survive in the sea caves on the east coast of Sardinia. The magnificent golden eagle was almost wiped out by hunters, but there are now about 500 pairs throughout Italy. A small colony of griffon vultures survives on the west coast of Sardinia, near Bosa, but reintroduction programs have begun at the Massiccio del Velino (Central Apennines) and have produced about 70 breeding pairs. The bearded vulture, known in Italy as the *gipeto*, was reintroduced in the Alps in 1978 and 60 to 70 individuals have now been recorded.

## Plants

The long-established human presence on the Italian peninsula has had a significant impact on the environment, resulting in the widespread destruction of forests and vegetation and their replacement with crops and orchards. Aesthetically the result is not always displeasing — much of the beauty of Tuscany, for instance, lies in the combination of olive groves, vineyards, fallow fields and stands of cypress and pine.

Italy's plant life is predominantly Mediterranean. Three broad classifications of evergreen tree dominate — ilex (or evergreen oak), cork and pine. The occasional virgin ilex and oak forest still survives in the more inaccessible reaches of Tuscany, Umbria, Calabria, Puglia and Sardinia. These ancient woods are made up of trees that can reach up to 15m high and whose thick canopies block out light to the forest floor, preventing most undergrowth. Most common are ilex stands that have been created, or at least interfered with, by humans. They tend to be sparser than the virgin forest, with smaller trees and abundant undergrowth.

After the ilex, the most common tree is the cork. Often it is mixed in with ilex and other oaks, although in Sicily and Sardinia it is possible to come across pure cork forests.

There are three types of pine: the Aleppo pine; the domestic pine, especially common in Tuscany and also known as the umbrella pine for the long, flattened appearance of its branches; and the maritime pine, which, in spite of its name, is generally found further inland than the other two.

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*Wild Flowers of the Mediterranean* by Marjorie Blamey and Christopher Grey-Wilson is a field guide to over 2500 species of flowers, trees, grasses and ferns found around the Mediterranean, including mainland Italy, Sardinia and Sicily.

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Ancient imports, which are an inevitable part of much of the Italian countryside (especially in southern Tuscany), include the olive and cypress. The former comes in many shapes and sizes, the most striking of which are the robust trees of Puglia.

Much of the country is covered by *macchia* (maquis), which is a broad term that covers all sorts of

vegetation ranging from 2m to as much as 6m in height. Typical *macchia* includes aromatic herbs such as lavender, rosemary and thyme, as well as shrubs of gorse, juniper and heather, and, if the soil is at all acidic, broom. Orchids, gladioli and irises flower beneath these shrubs and are colourful in spring.

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## NATIONAL PARKS

Italy has 24 national parks and well over 400 nature reserves, natural parks and wetlands. The national parks cover approximately 1.3 million hectares (5% of the country) and play a crucial part in the protection of the country's flora and fauna.

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## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Environmental awareness in Italy has improved in recent years, mainly in response to the effects of climate change, high levels of urban smog and the perennial problem of waste disposal.

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The official parks website ([www.parks.it](http://www.parks.it)) offers comprehensive information on Italy's national and regional parks, marine reserves and designated wetlands, as well as details of local wildlife and educational initiatives.

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Much of Italy's industrialised north and many of the country's main cities suffer from high levels of air pollution. While sulphur dioxide levels have been reduced in recent years, primarily by substituting natural gas for coal, much of the smog and poor air quality can be attributed to the fact that Italy has one of the highest per-capita levels of car ownership in the world. In an attempt to tackle this car-dependency, municipal authorities have introduced a series of initiatives. In January 2008, Milan introduced Italy's first congestion charge, while several cities including Milan and Rome have initiated bike-sharing schemes. On a national level, in 2009 the Italian government committed itself to building four nuclear power plants in an attempt to reduce dependence on oil and gas and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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The official parks website ([www.parks.it](http://www.parks.it)) offers comprehensive information on Italy's national and regional parks, marine reserves and designated wetlands, as well as details of local wildlife and educational initiatives.

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Inadequate treatment and disposal of industrial and domestic waste is another major cause of pollution, particularly in Campania where the sight of rubbish rotting on the streets of Naples has become sadly familiar. At the heart of the problem lies a chronic lack of facilities — there are insufficient incinerators to burn the refuse and the landfill sites that do exist are generally full, often with waste dumped illegally by the local Mafia, the Camorra.

## PEOPLE POWER

**Legambiente** ([www.legambiente.com](http://www.legambiente.com)) is a nonprofit organisation created in 1980 to safeguard Italy's environment and promote sustainability, based on the philosophy 'think globally, act locally'. It relies on



the work of local and regional environmental groups throughout Italy.

In coastal areas there are other environmental challenges. A 2008 report by Legambiente highlighted three major areas of concern: construction, pollution and illegal fishing. Of these, it stressed construction as the most insidious threat to the environment.

## NATIONAL PARKS

National park	Features	Activities	Best time to visit	Page
Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise	granite peaks, beech woods, bears, wolves	hiking, horse-riding	May-Oct	p626
Alta Murgia	rocky plateaus, canyons, forests	hiking, cycling, horse-riding	Apr-Oct	p713
Appennino Tosco-Emiliano	mountains, forests, lakes	skiing, cycling, hiking, horse-riding	Feb-Oct	p452
Appennino Lucano-Val d'Agri	hills, lakes, beech woods, wetlands	hiking, cycling	Apr-Oct	p739
Arcipelago di La Maddalena	rocky islets, beaches, uncontaminated seas, <i>macchia</i>	boating, diving, swimming	Jun-Sep	p861
Arcipelago Toscano	Elba, rocky islands, beaches, seabirds	hiking, diving, windsurfing	Apr-Sep	p531
Asinara	albino donkeys, former prison	cycling, boat tours	Jun-Sep	p860
Aspromonte	coniferous forests, high plains, vertiginous villages	hiking	May-Oct	p750
Cilento e Vallo di Diano	silent hills, Greek temples, dramatic coastline, caves	hiking, swimming, bird-watching	May-Oct	p693
Cinque Terre	colourful villages, terraced hillsides, olive groves	hiking	Apr-Oct	p208
Circeo	forests, sand dunes, wetlands	hiking, bird-watching	May-Oct	p190
Dolomiti Bellunesi	rock spires, highland meadows, chamois, deer	skiing, hiking, mountain biking	Dec-Oct	p399
Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna	rolling forest, monasteries, wolves, eagles	hiking	May-Oct	p557 boxed text
Gargano	ancient forests, limestone cliffs, grottoes	swimming, hiking, cycling	Jun-Sep	p696
Gennargentu e Golfo di Orosei	plunging coastline, remote peaks, prehistoric ruins	hiking, sailing, climbing	May-Sep	p868
Gran Paradiso	mountains, lush meadows, Alpine villages, ibexes	skiing, snowboarding, hiking, climbing, mountain biking	Dec-Oct	p254
Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga	ragged peaks, wolves, birds of prey	skiing, hiking, climbing	Dec-Mar, May-Sep	p620
Majella	mountains, deep valleys, wolves, bears	hiking, cycling	Jun-Sep	p624
Monti Sibillini	mysterious mountains, ancient hamlets, wolves, eagles	hiking, mountain biking	May-Oct	p616
Pollino	mountains, canyons, thick forest, orchids	rafting, canyoning, hiking	Jun-Sep	p743
Sila	wooded hills, lakes, remote villages, mushrooms	skiing, hiking, canyoning, horse-riding	Dec-Mar, May-Oct	p748
Stelvio	Alpine peaks, mountain huts, glaciers, forests	year-round skiing, hiking, cycling	Dec-Sep	p335
Val Grande	mountains, woods, highland wildernesses, Alpine refuges	skiing, hiking, horse-riding	Apr-Nov	p220
Vesuvio	active volcano, black lava, woods	hiking	Apr-Oct	p672

Since the boom in beachside tourism in the 1960s, Italy's coast has been heavily developed and while this has undoubtedly brought short-term advantages, it has also put a great strain on natural resources. Environmentally inspired opposition has been largely out-gunned by the powerful construction lobby, although it has not been without its moments. In July 2004 Sardinia's then—regional president Renato Soru outlawed all new building within 2km of the Sardinian coast, a move that the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) hailed as 'perhaps Italy's first "long-sighted policy" in the environmental protection sector'. When news of this ban broke, critics lost little time in decrying the negative effects it would have on tourism, a mainstay of the island economy. In the end, the opposition proved too much for Soru and he was defeated in regional elections by Ugo Cappellacci who has promised to do away with the controversial ban.

According to the environmental organisation Legambiente, turnover in the illegal waste disposal business topped €18.4 billion in 2007, making it one of the Mafia's most lucrative sidelines.

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But it's not all bad news and it is still possible to find clean beaches in Italy, particularly in southern Puglia, Calabria, Sardinia and Sicily.

The issue of construction — and the regulations that govern it — has long been a contentious subject in Italy, and in April 2009 it was brought into sharp focus by two very different events. The first was an announcement by PM Berlusconi that he intended to relax planning-permission rules for home extensions. This, he said, would promote spending and help kick-start the economy. Environmentalists and opposition MPs replied that it would more likely lead to an outbreak of uncontrolled construction. The second event was the devastating earthquake that struck Abruzzo, killing 308 people and leaving much of L'Aquila city centre uninhabitable. In the days following the tragedy, tough questions were raised as to why many modern buildings, which had supposedly been built in compliance with strict building regulations, had failed to withstand the 6.3 magnitude quake.

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## WORLD HERITAGE—LISTED SITES

Italy has 44 World Heritage sites, more than any other country. The Vatican City, technically a separate nation, is also Unesco-listed. The full list of Italian sites:

- Rock drawings in Valcamonica
- Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie and Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*
- Rome's historic centre, the properties of the Holy See in Rome enjoying extraterritorial rights, and the Basilica di San Paolo Fuori-le-Mura
- Florence's historic centre
- Piazza dei Miracoli, Pisa
- Venice and its lagoon
- San Gimignano's historic centre
- Matera's *sassi* and the *chiese rupestri* (cave churches)
- Vicenza and the Palladian villas of Veneto
- Crespi d'Adda
- Ferrara and the Po Delta
- Naples' historic centre
- Siena's historic centre
- Castel del Monte
- Ravenna's early Christian monuments
- Pienza's historic centre
- The *trulli* of Alberobello
- The Palazzo Reale and park at Caserta, the aqueduct of Vanvitelli, and the Complesso Monumentale Belvedere at San Leucio
- Archaeological area of Agrigento
- Archaeological areas of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata
- Padua's botanical garden
- Cathedral, Torre Ghirlandina and Piazza Grande, Modena
- Amalfi Coast
- Porto Venere, the Cinque Terre, and the islands of Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto

- Residences of the Royal House of Savoy
  - Su Nuraxi di Barumini, Sardinia
  - Villa Romana del Casale
  - Archaeological area and basilica of Aquileia
  - Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano with the archaeological sites of Paestum, Velio and the Certosa of Padula
  - Urbino's historic centre
  - Villa Adriana at Tivoli
  - The Basilica di San Francesco and other Franciscan sites in Assisi
  - Verona
  - Aeolian Islands
  - Villa d'Este at Tivoli
  - Baroque towns of the Val di Noto, Sicily
  - Sacri Monti (sacred mountains) of Piedmont and Lombardy
  - Etruscan *necropoli* of Cerveteri and Tarquinia
  - Val d'Orcia, Tuscany
  - Syracuse and necropolis of Pantalica
  - Le Strade Nuove in Genoa and Palazzo dei Rolli
  - Mantua and Sabbioneta
  - Rhaetian railway in the Albula/Bernina landscapes, Central Alps in Italy and Switzerland
  - The Dolomites
- 
- 

Fears of seismic activity are just one of the concerns surrounding the Messina Bridge project. Ever since it was unveiled in 2005, the project to build the world's longest single-span suspension bridge — some 4km long — between Reggio di Calabria and Messina in Sicily has courted controversy. Critics, including the WWF and Legambiente, argue that the money, an estimated €6 billion, would be much better spent improving the area's existing transport infrastructure. They also say that a bridge of such Pharaonic dimensions will spell disaster for local sea and bird life, whilst also enriching the local Mafia. However, Berlusconi's government is behind the project, believing that it will act as a motor for the regional economy, and in 2009 it was given the green light.

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In 2009, Italy could boast 226 beaches and 60 marinas with the coveted blue flag eco-label. Get details on [www.blueflag.org](http://www.blueflag.org).

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Learn how to reduce your footprint while holidaying in the Alps at [www.respectthemountains.com](http://www.respectthemountains.com). There are useful tips about everything from off-piste skiing to reducing waste in the resort.

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At the other end of the country, climate change is making itself felt in the Alps, which are experiencing their warmest period since records began. This is bad news not only for the environment but also for the local ski industry. Resorts at an altitude below 1400m are particularly at risk; fortunately, however, the Italian ski areas are at relatively high altitude where snowfall is more reliable.

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The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has an Italian chapter at [www.wwf.it](http://www.wwf.it). Alongside its conservation efforts, it works towards combating climate change and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

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On the world stage, Italy is committed to many international agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol, under which it agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6.5% below 1990 levels by 2012. It is also a participant, along with France, Germany and the UK, in the European Union Emissions Trading Scheme, an initiative with emission-reduction incentives.

In April 2009, Italy hosted the G8 environment summit in the Sicilian town of Syracuse. Environment ministers agreed that urgent action was required to combat climate change and to try to slow the rate of species loss, a result that the WWF met with muted praise. While welcoming agreement on species loss, it noted a failure ‘to advance on some key issues, including emission reduction targets’.

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# Rome & Lazio

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[ETRUSCAN SITES](#)  
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[CASTELLI ROMANI](#)  
[ALONG THE COAST](#)  
[SOLE PONTINE](#)

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In this country so blessed with exquisite cities, Rome is the daddy of them all. Italy's capital is as addictive as a charming, exasperating lover. It will steal your heart, yet try your patience.

There are just too many reasons to fall in love with Rome: the masterpieces around every corner – the Sistine Chapel, the Pantheon, the Colosseum, and countless Caravaggios, to name a few – the operatic piazzas; the shade-wearing, scooter-driving Romans; the cocktail of provinciality and sophistication; and

the colour palette of blue sky, ochre *palazzi* (mansions) and deep-green umbrella pines. Rome's sheer brilliance means that you can, most of the time, forgive its less endearing traits: the traffic, crazy parking and pickpockets.

Once *Caput Mundi* (capital of the world), Rome is where Brutus betrayed Caesar, and where countless saints died horrible deaths. It's where Michelangelo laid back and painted, and Bernini vied with Borromini in a battle of the baroque. Wagner, Goethe and Byron lingered here; Keats died here. In the 1950s and '60s Rome oozed cool; Audrey Hepburn dallied with Gregory Peck at the Bocca della Verità, and Anita Ekberg frolicked in the Trevi Fountain.

Rome is a focus of fervent faith as the capital of the Catholic world. It's the seat of Italy's government, with much of the population employed in paper-pushing state bureaucracy. It's a busy city with arts festivals and a surprisingly alternative underground scene. Contemporary Rome is pulsatingly alive. Yet there are few other cities where the past is so present.

To visit is to begin a love affair. But, to ensure it lasts, do as the Romans do: intersperse your days in the city with trips into the hills of Lazio, visiting the region's extraordinary riches, from the ancient Roman port of Ostia Antica to azure volcanic lakes. You'll discover a serene, green landscape that is as refreshing as fresh air.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Gape at the grandeur of [St Peter's Basilica](#) and the [Vatican Museums](#)
- Imagine the roar of the crowd at the [Colosseum](#)
- Peer at the heavens through the audacious oculus of the [Pantheon](#)
- Check out ancient Roman interior decor at the [Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme](#)
- Revel in ravishing Renaissance art at the [Museo e Galleria Borghese](#)



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POPULATION: LAZIO 5.3 MILLION  
ROME 3.8 MILLION

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# ROME

## HISTORY

According to myth, vestal virgin Rhea Silva and Mars, God of War, was the dysfunctional coupling that spawned Romulus and Remus. Set adrift on the Tiber to escape King Amulius' death warrant, the twins were found and suckled by a broody she-wolf. When Remus was captured by Amulius, Romulus killed the king and rescued his brother. They began to found a new town, but squabbles led to fratricide, and Romulus went on to take sole credit. Historians proffer a more prosaic version of events, involving Romulus becoming the first king of Rome (Roma) on 21 April 753 BC and an amalgamation of Etruscan, Latin and Sabine settlements on the Palatine, Esquiline and Quirinale Hills.

Following the deposition of the last Etruscan king, Tarquin the Proud, the Roman Republic was founded in 509 BC, establishing itself as the dominant Western superpower until internal rivalries led to civil war. Julius Caesar wrested power in 49 BC, and began to dramatically reform the Republic. He was assassinated five years later, leaving Mark Antony and Octavian to fight for the top job. Octavian prevailed and, with the blessing of the Senate, became Augustus, the first Roman emperor.

Augustus ruled well, and a period of political stability and unparalleled artistic achievement ensued, but his successors, rulers such as Tiberius, Caligula and Nero, were contrastingly corrupt and depraved. Their efforts, and events such as the Great Fire of AD 64, combined to leave Rome in tatters, yet the city bounced back. By AD 100, it had a population of 1.5 million and was the undisputed *Caput Mundi* (capital of the world). But it couldn't last and when, in 330, Constantine moved his power base to Byzantium, Rome's glory days were numbered. In 455 it was routed by the Vandals and in 476 the last emperor of the Western Roman Empire, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed.

By the 6th century, Rome's population had shrunk to a measly 80,000. However God was on the city's side. Christianity had been spreading since the 1st century AD thanks to the underground efforts of apostles Peter and Paul, and under Constantine it received official recognition. Pope Gregory I (590–604) did much to strengthen the Church's grip over the city and, in 774, Rome's place as centre of the Christian world was cemented when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor.

The medieval period was marked by continuous fighting by just about anyone capable of raising an army. In the thick of things, the Papal States fought for their corner as ruthlessly as anyone.

In 1309, however, Pope Clement V decided enough was enough and upped sticks to Avignon, leaving the powerful Colonna and Orsini families to contest control of the city. Once the waters had calmed, Pope Gregory XI returned to Rome in 1377 and, finding the city close to ruins, set up home in the fortified Vatican.

Out of the ruins grew the Rome of the Renaissance. At the behest of the great papal dynasties – the Barberini, Farnese and Pamphilj among others – the leading artists of the 15th and 16th centuries were summoned to work on projects such as the Sistine Chapel and St Peter's Basilica. But the enemy was never far away, and in 1527 Pope Clement VII took refuge in Castel Sant'Angelo as Charles V's Spanish forces ransacked Rome.

Another rebuild was in order, and it was to the 17th-century baroque masters Bernini and Borromini that Rome's patrons turned. Exuberant churches, fountains and *palazzi* sprouted all over the city, as these two bitter rivals competed to produce ever-more virtuoso masterpieces.

The next makeover followed the unification of Italy and the declaration of Rome as its capital. Mussolini, believing himself a modern-day Augustus, left an indelible stamp, bulldozing new imperial roads and commissioning ambitious building projects such as the monumental suburb of EUR.

Post-Fascism, the 1950s and '60s saw the glittering era of *la dolce vita* and hasty urban expansion, resulting in Rome's sometimes wretched suburbs. A cleanup in 2000 rendered the city in better shape than for decades, and in recent years some dramatic modernist building projects have given the Eternal City some edge, such as Richard Meier's Museo dell'[Ara Pacis](#) and Centro Congressi '[Nuvola](#)' by Massimiliano Fuksas.

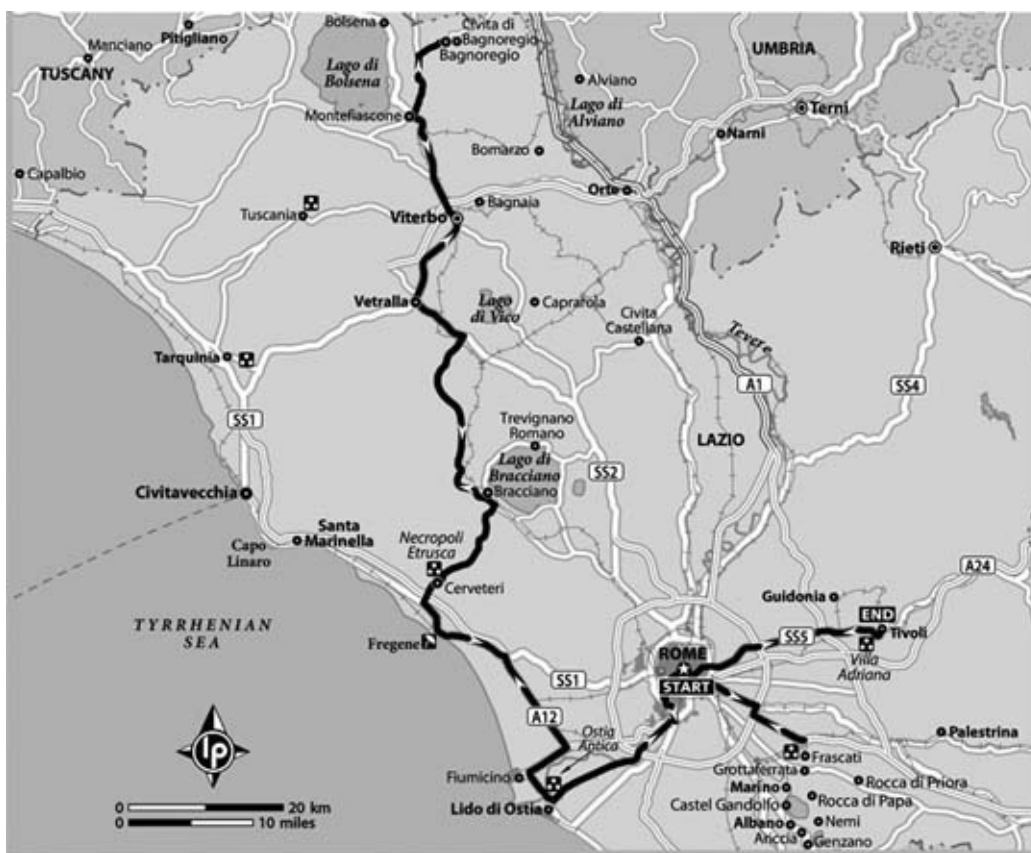
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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### ROMAN HOLIDAY      **One Week / Rome / Villa d'Este**

Start your Roman holiday with a look at some of the world's greatest works of art: perhaps start at the [Campidoglio](#) then walk down to the [Roman Forum](#), see the [Colosseum](#) and then spend the latter half of the day in the *centro storico* (historic city centre) around the [Pantheon](#) and [Piazza Navona](#). The next day you could amble around [Tridente](#), checking out the designer shops, the [Spanish Steps](#), [Piazza del Popolo](#) and the Caravaggios in the [Chiesa di Santa Maria del Popolo](#), before heading up to spend the afternoon in [Villa Borghese](#), visiting the astounding [Museo e Galleria Borghese](#). On day three take a break from Rome and visit [Ostia Antica](#) combining your trip with a visit to the town of Etruscan tombs at [Cerveteri](#) before going on to stay the night in or around [Viterbo](#). The next day, explore Viterbo then launch into the countryside around the town, perhaps visiting the thermal springs before heading north to the lovely town of [Bagnoregio](#). Returning to Rome, revived by your trip, you could spend day five at the [Vatican Museums](#) and [St Peter's Basilica](#) before heading out of town and dining in [Frascati](#). On day six visit the [Galleria Doria Pamphilj](#) or the [Palazzo Massimo alle Terme](#) and later meander around [Trastevere](#). On day seven, for a grand finale to your week, head out to [Tivoli](#) to see how rich Romans of the past kicked back at [Villa Adriana](#) and [Villa d'Este](#).





## Two Days

Visit **St Peter's Basilica**, the **Vatican Museums** and the **Sistine Chapel**. Lunch around **Piazza Navona**, before popping into the **Pantheon**, en route to the **Colosseum** and the **Roman Forum**. Make a night of it in vibrant **Trastevere**.

After a leisurely breakfast wander over to the **Trevi Fountain** and **Piazza di Spagna**, where the **Spanish Steps** provide excellent people-watching opportunities. In the nearby **Villa Borghese**, the **Museo e Galleria Borghese** is a highlight of any visit.

At night, make your way to the **Campo de' Fiori** for a drink, eat somewhere in the centre and then perhaps finish up with a drink in charming **Monti** district [Click here](#).

## Four Days

Visit the **Galleria Doria Pamphilj**, a mini-Versailles, or check out the fabulous **Palazzo Massimo alle Terme** before revelling in the quiet of the **Jewish Ghetto** and wandering some bijou backstreets such as **Via del Governo Vecchio** or **Via dei Coronari**

Back on the museum trail, visit the **Capitoline Museums**. After dark, join the student drinkers and fashionable diners in **San Lorenzo**.

## One Week

Venture out to **Via Appia Antica** and the **Catacombs of San Callisto**, or take a day trip: choose between **Ostia Antica**, **Tivoli** or the Etruscan treasures of **Cerveteri** or **Tarquinia**.

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## ORIENTATION

Rome is a sprawling city, but most sights lie within the *centro storico* (historical centre; comprising the areas around the Piazza Navona, Campo de' Fiori, Pantheon, Ghetto, Capitoline, Piazza Barberini, Trevi

and Tridente). Vatican City and Trastevere are over the water on the west bank of the Tiber. Distances are not huge and walking – with the occasional bus or metro hop – is the best way to get around the city.

The city's major transport hub, Stazione Termini (its full name is Stazione Centrale-Roma Termini) is a useful point of reference. The majority of the city's budget hotels and *pensioni* (small hotels or guest houses) are in this slightly sleazy area and the main city bus terminus is on Piazza Cinquecento, in front of the train station.

From Piazza Cinquecento, Via Cavour leads directly down to the Roman Forum, while from Piazza della Repubblica, a short walk to the west of Stazione Termini, Via Nazionale heads down towards Piazza Venezia. Running north from Piazza Venezia, Via del Corso leads up to Piazza del Popolo and the Villa Borghese. On the east side of Via del Corso you will find the Trevi Fountain and Piazza di Spagna; to the west lie the Pantheon, Piazza Navona and the Campo de' Fiori.

To reach the Vatican from Piazza Venezia head west to Largo di Torre Argentina and continue along Corso Vittorio Emanuele II. Cross the river Tiber, turn left into Via delle Conciliazione and you'll see St Peter's Basilica directly in front of you. The upmarket residential area of Prati is a short walk northeast of the basilica, very close to the Vatican Museums.

To get to the atmospheric quarter of Trastevere walk down Via Arenula (where the tram line is) to the Tiber and cross either the Ponte Sisto or the Ponte Garibaldi.

The student enclave of San Lorenzo is located southeast of Stazione Termini and the nightclub hub of Testaccio is south of the Aventine Hill, on the opposite side of the Tiber to Trastevere.

For travelling further afield, national and international trains terminate at Stazione Termini. Intercity buses, however, use Stazione Tiburtina to the east of the city centre. From Termini take Metro line B in the direction of Rebibbia. Regional buses serving towns in Lazio depart from various points throughout the city, usually corresponding with metro stops.

For further information on getting from Leonardo da Vinci Airport (commonly known as Fiumicino) to the city centre, [Click here](#).

## Maps

[The Rome Tourist Board](#) sells a useful Public Transport Map (€2.50), available at the tourist office in Termini station. Tourist information kiosks around town also hand out *Charta Roma*, an A3-sized stylised map with the major sights and their opening hours. Plenty of maps are also available at newsstands and bookshops.

**Editrice Lozzi** ([www.editricelozzi.it](http://www.editricelozzi.it)) publishes various city maps: the basic version, *Roma* (€2.50), lists all major streets and bus/tram routes; *Rome Today* (€5.50) comprises a city map, a map of the province of Rome and an enlarged plan of the city centre; and the *Roma Metro-Bus* (€6) map details the city's main transport routes.

For maps of ancient Rome try the *Lozzi Archaeo Map* (€4), which has a plan of the Roman Forum, Palatine and Colosseum.

The best road maps are the 1:12,500 *Roma* (€7) and *Lazio* (€7) published by the **Touring Club Italiano** ([www.touringclub.com](http://www.touringclub.com)).

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# INFORMATION

## Bookshops

**Almost Corner Bookshop** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 583 69 42; Via del Moro 45; 🕒 10am-1.30pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-1.30pm & 3.30-8pm Sun) A great range of English-language fiction (classics, literary fiction and contemporary bestsellers) and nonfiction.

**Anglo-American Book Co** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 52 22; [www.aab.it](http://www.aab.it); Via della Vite 102; 🕒 10am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 3.30-7.30pm Mon) Literature, travel guides and reference books in English. Also has a kids' section.

**Borri Books** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 482 84 22; Stazione Termini; 🕒 7am-11pm Mon-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) There's a good selection of English-language books (including kids' and travel books) on the upstairs floor of this glass-fronted shop on the concourse at Stazione Termini.

**Feltrinelli Bookstore** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 03 248; Via di Torre Argentina 11; 🕒 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) Centrally located store that stocks music, DVDs and a smallish collection of English-language novels and travel guides.

**Feltrinelli International** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 482 78 78; Via Orlando 84-86; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm & 4-8pm Sun, closed Sun in Aug) Mainly English-language stock, with a smattering of French, Spanish etc.

**Lion Bookshop** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 50 437; Via dei Greci 33-6; 🕒 3-7pm Mon, 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) Long-standing English-language bookshop with good kids' section.

## Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 118)

**Police** (☎ 113/112)

**Main police station** (Questura; [Map](#); ☎ 06 46 86; Via San Vitale 11)

**Ufficio Stranieri** (Foreigners' Bureau; [Map](#); ☎ 06 468 63 216; Via Genova 2; 🕒 24hr) Thefts can be reported here; also come here for a *permesso di soggiorno* (permit; [Click here](#)).

## Internet Access

Costs vary but are usually between €3 and €6 an hour. Several laundries (see below) offer internet access.

**Internet Café** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 445 49 53; Via dei Marrucini 12; per hr €3; 🕒 9am-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat, 2pm-midnight Sun) East of Termini.

**Pantheon Internet** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 692 00 501; Via Caterina da Siena 48; per hr €4; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) Overpriced but convenient.

**Yex Internet Point** ([Map](#); Piazza di Sant'Andrea della Valle 1; per hr €4.50; 🕒 10am-10pm) Near Piazza Navona. All terminals have web-cams.

## Internet Resources

The following websites are all in English:

**Enjoy Rome** ([www.enjoyrome.com](http://www.enjoyrome.com)) Useful advice from an independent tourist agency.

**In Rome Now** ([www.inromenow.com](http://www.inromenow.com)) Savvy internet magazine compiled by two American expats.

**Roma Turismo** ([www.romaturismo.it](http://www.romaturismo.it)) Rome Tourist Board's comprehensive website. Lists all official accommodation options, upcoming events and more.

**Rome Buddy** ([www.romebuddy.com](http://www.romebuddy.com)) An American site that provides down-to-earth advice with dry humour.

**Vatican** ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)) Official site of the Vatican.

## Laundry

There are several self-service laundries in the streets northeast of Stazione Termini ([Map](#)); a small load costs €7. They also offer internet access so you can surf while you wait, and **Bolle Blu** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 645 03 472; Via Milazzo 20b; 🕒 8am-10pm) and **Bolle Blu 2** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 58 04; Via Palestro 59-61; 🕒 8am-10pm) offer left-luggage facilities. There's also the Splashnet Laundry at Funny Palace Hostel (see [Sleeping](#)). *Lavasecco* (dry-cleaning) costs range from around €3 for a shirt to €6 for a jacket.

## Left Luggage

Near Stazione Termini several laundries provide luggage storage, including Bolle Blu and Bolle Blu 2. See above for details.

**Fiumicino airport** (24hr €6; 🕒 6.30am-11.30pm) In the international arrivals area on the ground floor.

**Stazione Termini** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 474 4777; 1st 5hr €4, 6-12hr per hr €0.60, 13hr & more per hr €0.20; 🕒 6am-midnight) Lower-ground floor under platform 24.

## Media

The following are all published in English, apart from Roma C'è, which has an English section.

**Osservatore Romano** ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)) Weekly editions of the Vatican's official daily newspaper are online.

**Roma C'è** ([www.romace.it](http://www.romace.it)) Comprehensive listings magazine with an English section (€1); published on Wednesday and sold at newsstands.

**Roman Forum** ([www.theromanforum.com](http://www.theromanforum.com)) News about Rome and a useful classifieds section. Costs €3 at newsstands around town.

**Wanted in Rome** ([www.wantedinrome.com](http://www.wantedinrome.com)) A free online version of this useful expat magazine (€1) is updated every alternate Wednesday and features classified ads, listings and reviews.

## Medical Services

Night pharmacies are listed in daily newspapers and in pharmacy windows.

**Pharmacy Piazza Cinquecento** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 00 19; Piazza Cinquecento 51; 🕒 24hr); **Stazione Termini** ([Map](#); 🕒 7.30am-10pm) There is a 24-hour pharmacy on the western flank of Piazza Cinquecento. The Stazione Termini pharmacy is on the lower-ground floor.

**Ospedale di Odontoiatria G Eastman** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 84 48 31; Viale Regina Elena 287b) For emergency dental treatment.

**Ospedale San Giacomo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 3 62 61; Via A Canova 29) Near Piazza del Popolo.

**Ospedale Santo Spirito** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 6 83 51; Lungotevere in Sassia 1) Near the Vatican.

**Policlinico Umberto I** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 4 99 71, first aid 06 499 79 501; Viale del Policlinico 155) Near Stazione Termini.

Rather than go to a *pronto soccorso* (Accident and Emergency) department, you can try calling the **Guardia Medica** (☎ 06 570600). You can also call a private doctor to come to your hotel or apartment. Call out/treatment fee will probably be around €130, but worth it if you have insurance. Try **Roma Medica** (24 hr; ☎ 338 622 4832).

## Money

There's a bank, ATMs and several currency-exchange booths at Stazione Termini ([Map](#)), Fiumicino airport and Ciampino airport. In town, there are loads of ATMs and numerous exchange booths, including: **American Express** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 6 76 41; Piazza di Spagna 38; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat).

## Post

There are post-office branches at Piazza dei Capretti 69, Via Terme di Diocleziane 30 ([Map](#)), Via della Scrofa 61/63 ([Map](#)), Stazione Termini (next to platform 24) and Via Arenula ([Map](#)).

**Main post office** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 37 213; Piazza di San Silvestro 20; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) Collect poste restante mail here.

**Vatican post office** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 698 83 406; St Peter's Square; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Letters can be posted in blue Vatican post boxes only if they carry Vatican stamps.

## Telephone & Fax

There are hundreds of public pay phones dotted about town. Major post offices offer fax services; otherwise, there are numerous private services, usually in *tabacchi* (tobacconist's shops) and stationery stores.

## Tourist Information

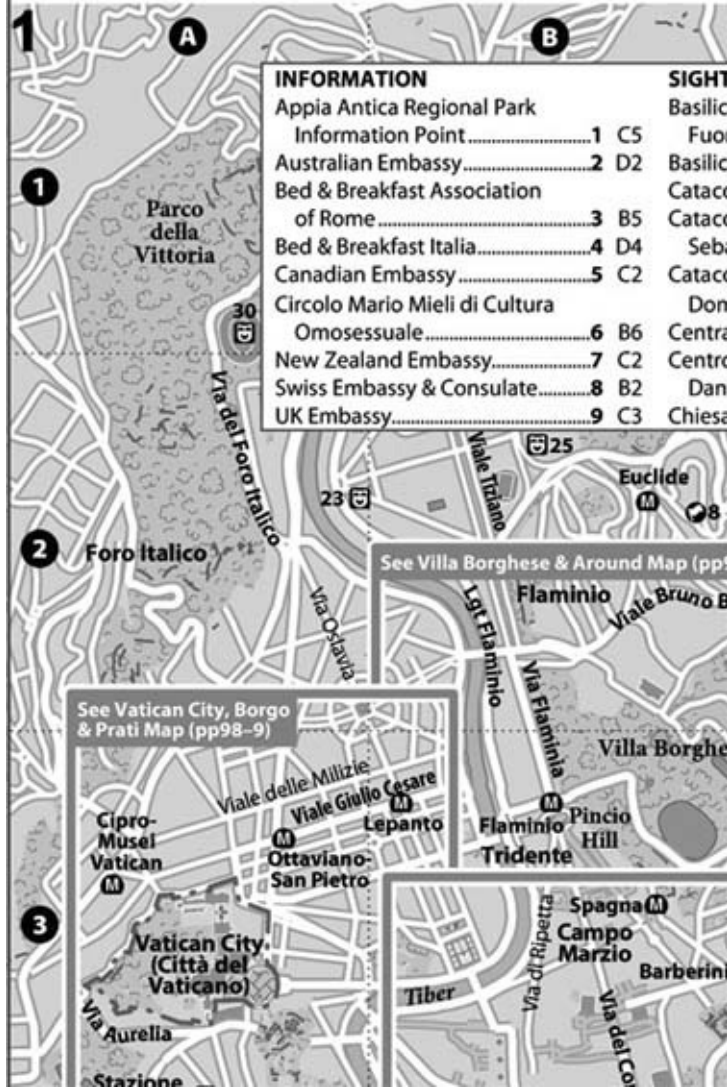
**Enjoy Rome** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 445 18 43; [www.enjoyrome.com](http://www.enjoyrome.com); Via Marghera 8a; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat Apr-Sep, 9am-5.30 Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat Oct-Mar) An excellent private tourist office that publishes the free and useful *Enjoy Rome* city guide.

**Rome Tourist Board** (APT; ☎ 06 06 08; [www.romaturismo.it](http://www.romaturismo.it); ☎ 9am-6pm) Has an office at Fiumicino airport in Terminal B, International Arrivals.

The Comune di Roma (city council) runs a free multilingual **tourist information line** (☎ 06 06 08; [www.060608.it](http://www.060608.it); ☎ 9am-9pm), providing information on culture, shows, hotels, transport etc; you can also book theatre, concert, exhibition and museum tickets on this number. If you need practical information, the city's free ☎ 06 06 06 number is incredibly useful. By calling it you reach a Comune di Roma call centre that's been set up to answer practical questions about anything to do with Comune-related services. The centre is staffed 24 hours and there are English-, French-, Arabic-, German-, Spanish-, Italian- and Chinese-speaking staff available from 4pm to 7pm. They can answer any question along the lines of :Where's the nearest hospital? Where am I allowed to park? When are the underground trains running? The Comune also publishes the useful monthly 'What's On' pamphlet: *L'Evento* as well as *Un Ospite a Roma* (A Guest in Rome; [www.unospitearoma.it](http://www.unospitearoma.it), [www.agnostinrome.com](http://www.agnostinrome.com)). These, and other information

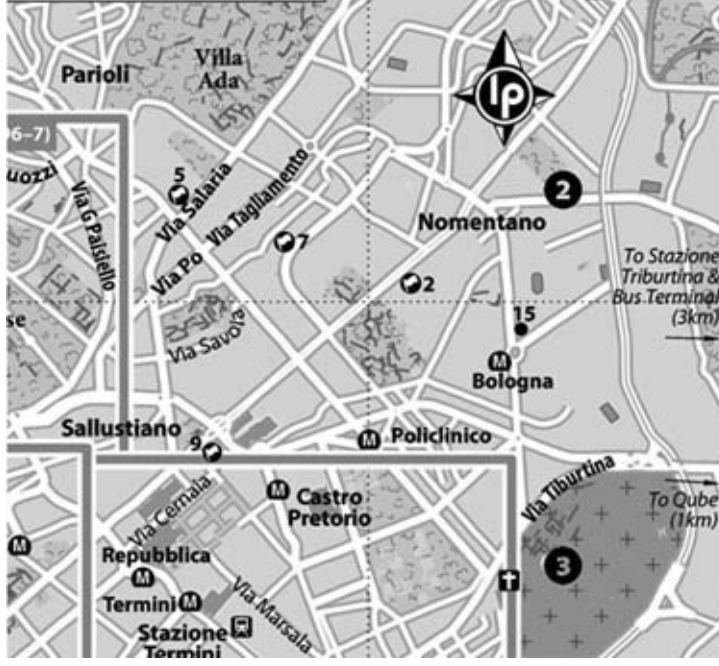


# GREATER ROME





S & ACTIVITIES		Chiesa di Santa Croce in	
Chiesa di San Paolo		Gerusalemme	17 D4
Chiese alle Mura	10 B6	Circo di Massenzio	18 D6
Chiesa di San Sebastiano	(see 12)	Gruppo Storico Romano	19 C5
Tombs of San Callisto	11 C6	Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella	20 D6
Tombs of San		Mausoleo di Romolo	(see 18)
San Sebastiano	12 D6	Villa di Massenzio	21 D6
Tombs of Santa		Villa Doria Pamphilj	22 A4
Chiesa di Santa			
Chiesa di Santa	13 C6		
Chiesa di Santa	14 B5		
Chiesa di Santa			
Chiesa di Santa	15 D3		
Chiesa di Santa	16 C5		







ENTERTAINMENT	
Accademia di Santa Cecilia.....	(see 25)
Accademia Filarmonica Romana.....	23 A2
Alpheus.....	24 B5
Auditorium Parco della Musica.....	25 B2
Circolo degli Artisti.....	26 D4
Goa.....	27 B5
Micca Club.....	28 C4
Rising Love.....	29 B5
Stadio Olimpico.....	30 A1
Teatro Olimpico.....	(see 23)





# VILLA BORGHESE & AROUND

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Netherlands Embassy & Consulate .....	2	F2
Ospedale San Giacomo .....	3	D6

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		
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Casa di Goethe .....	5	D6
Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Miracoli .....	6	D5
Chiesa di Santa Maria del Popolo .....	7	D5
Chiesa di Santa Maria in Montesanto .....	8	D5
Explora .....	9	C4

SLEEPING		
Casa Montani .....		

EATING		
Cacio e Pepe .....		
Il Margutta .....		
La Buca di Ripetta .....		

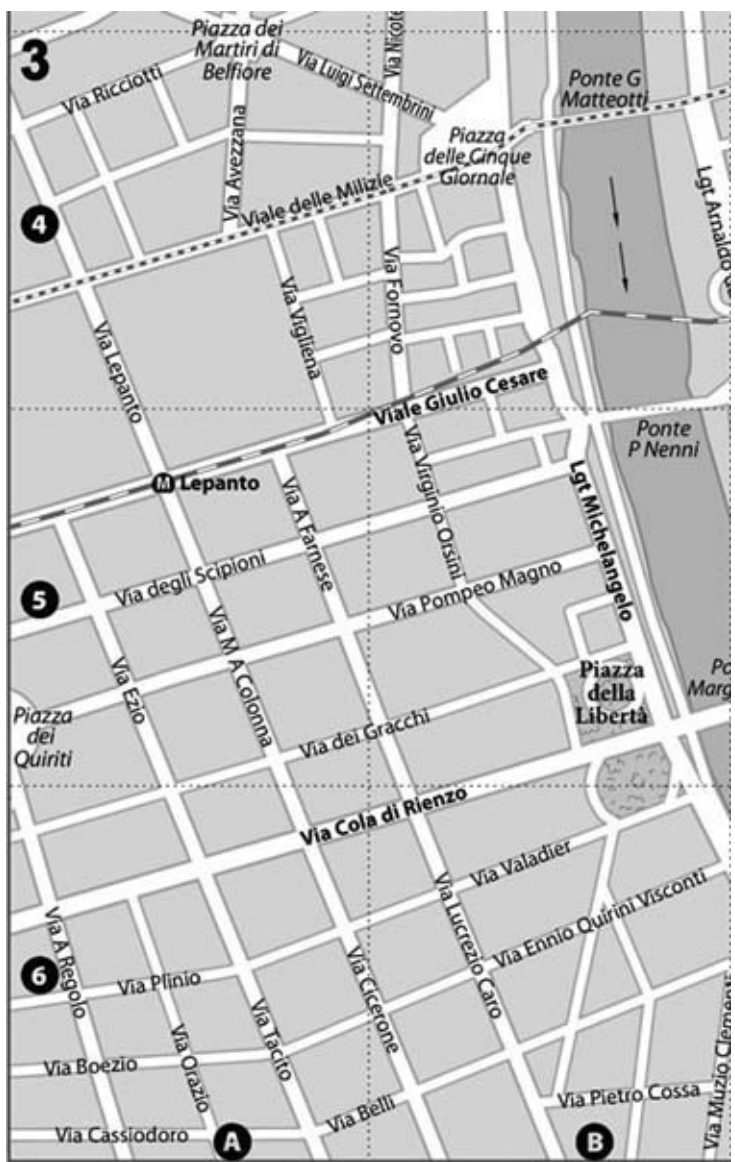
Via Para  
 Via Monte Zebio  
 Viale Mazzini  
 Via Prestinari  
 Piazza Monte Grappa  
 Via Piero Menotti  
 Ponte del Risorgimento  
 Piazza della Belle Arti  
 Tiber  
 16

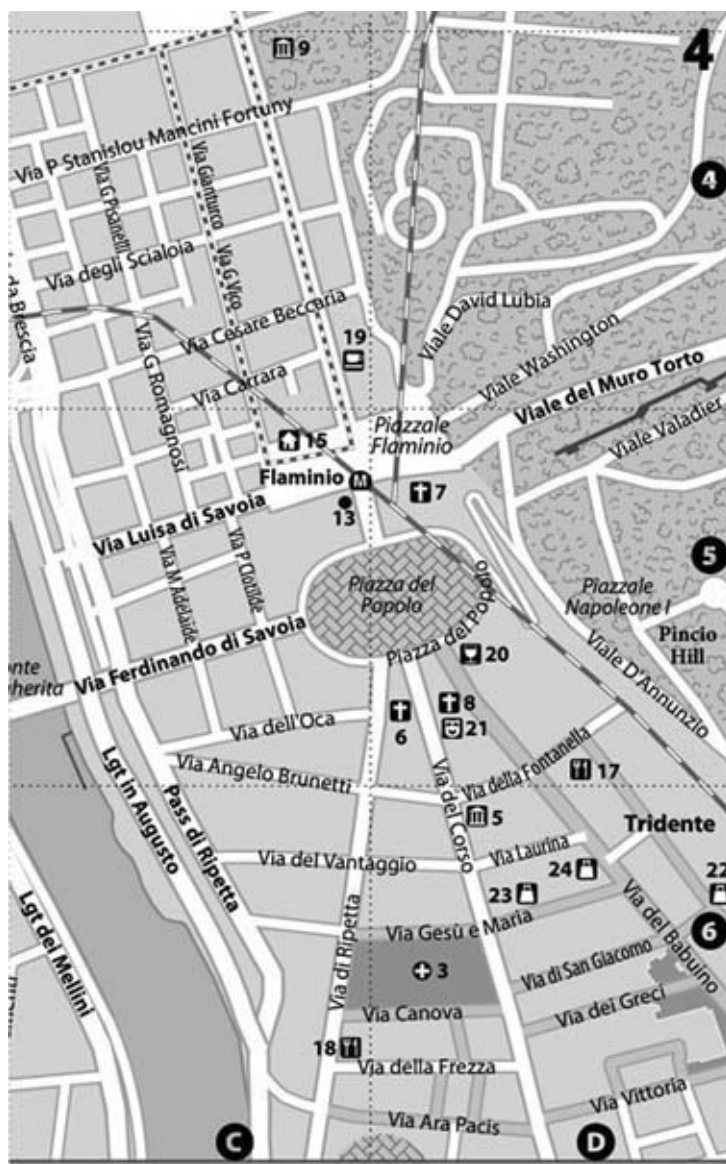
**C** **D** **2**

d'Arte		<b>DRINKING</b> ☒ ☒	
emporanea .....	10 E3	Castroni .....	19 C4
orghese .....	11 H4	Stravinskij Bar – Hotel de Russie .....	20 D5
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.....	12 D3	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> ☒	
.....	13 C5	Metropolitan .....	21 D5
.....	14 D3		
		<b>SHOPPING</b> ☒	
.....	15 C5	Borsalino .....	(see 20)
		Bottega di Marmoraro .....	22 D6
		Discount dell'Alta Moda .....	23 D6
		TAD .....	24 D6
.....	16 A3		
.....	17 D5	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
.....	18 C6	Car Park .....	25 G5

Via Fiaminina  
Viale delle Belle Arti  
Viale Buoizzi  
Via di Villa Giulia  
Piazzale di Villa Giulia  
Viale delle Belle Arti  
Piazza Monte Grappa  
12  
14

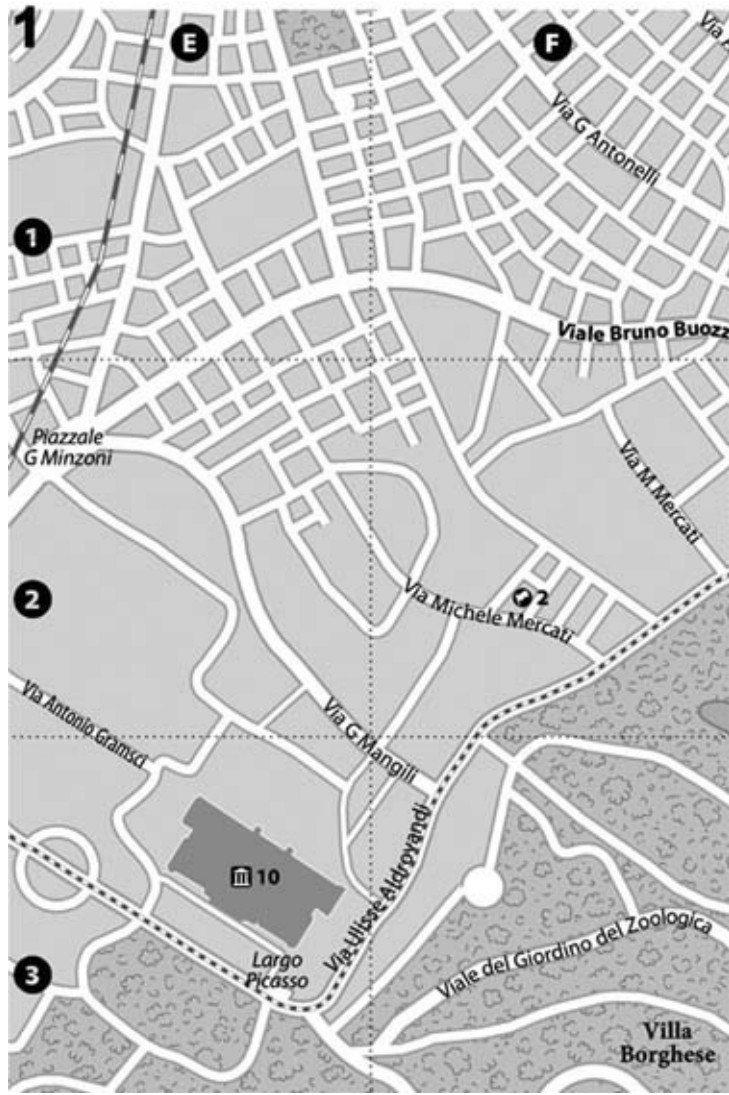
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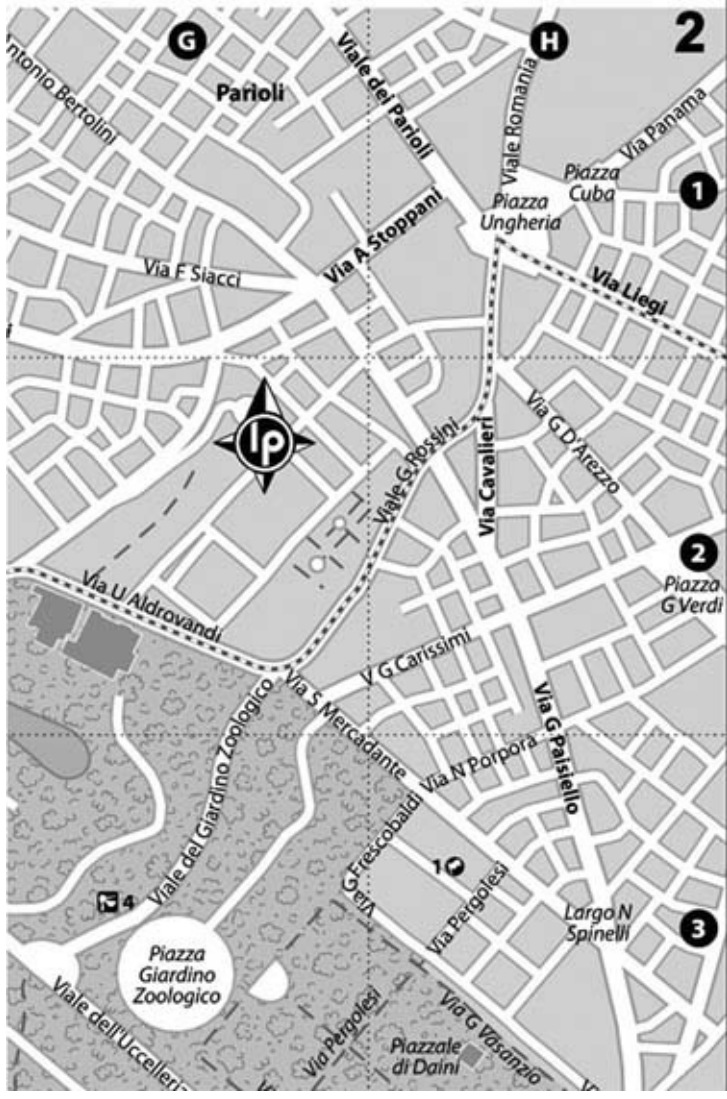


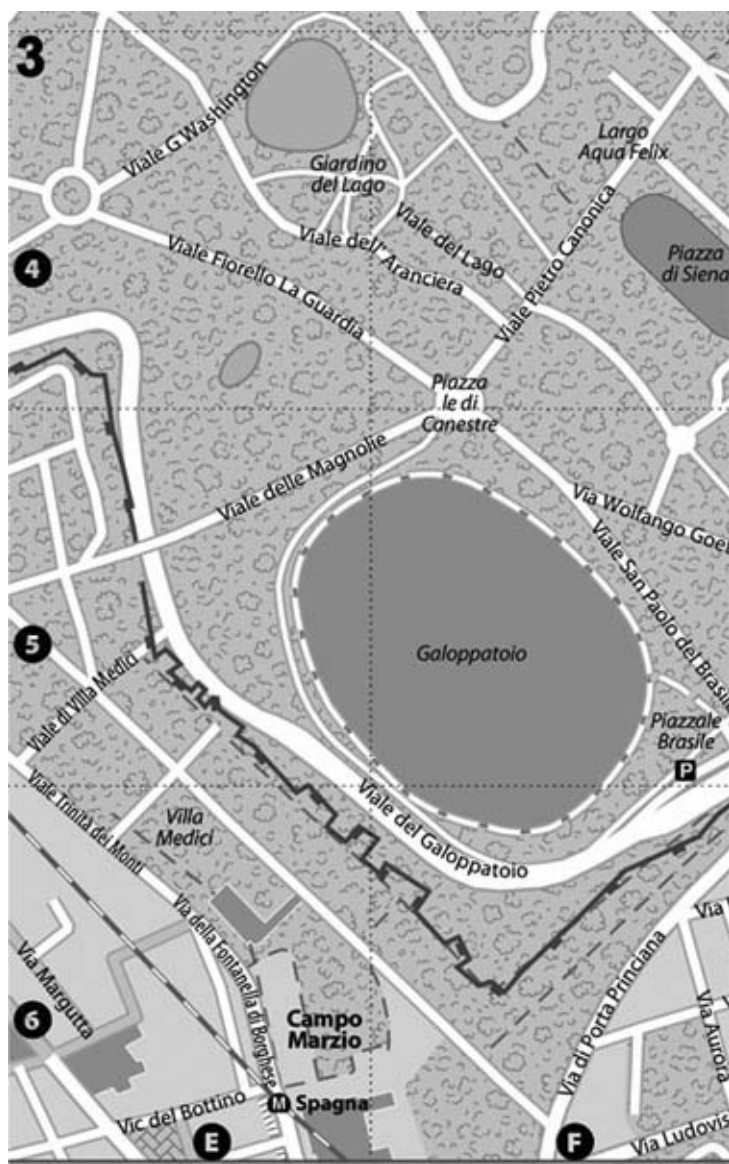














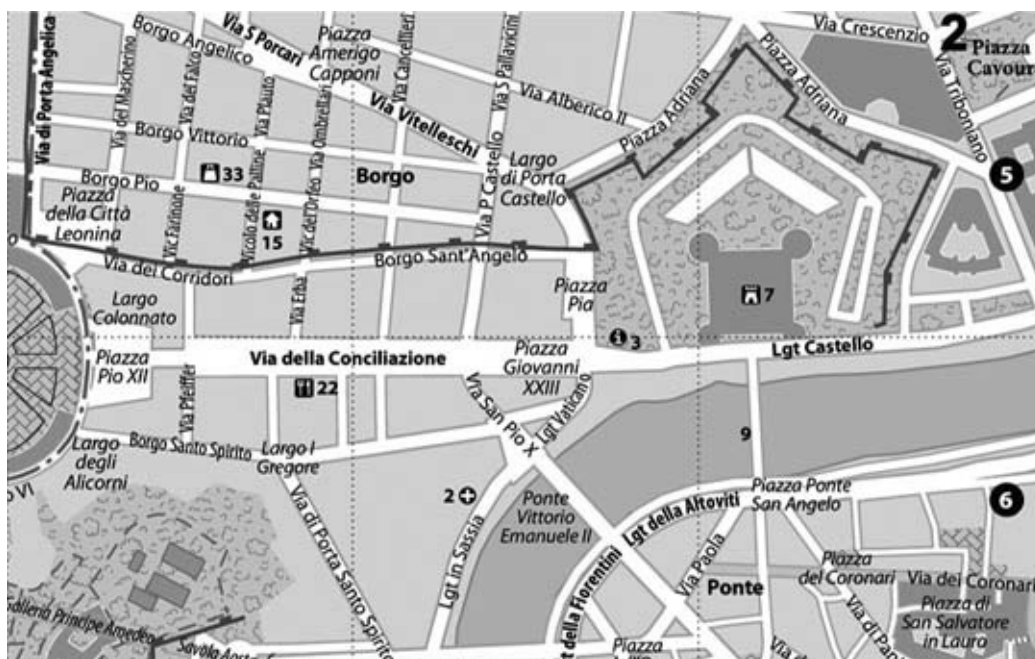
# VATICAN CITY, BORGO & PRATI

INFORMATION	
Coordinamento Lesbiche	
Italiano.....	1 E8
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Centro Russia Ecumenica il Messaggio dell'Icona.....	(see 33)
Piazza San Pietro.....	8 C6
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Prefettura della Casa Pontificia.....	(see 11)
Sistine Chapel.....	10 C5
St Peter's Basilica.....	11 C6
Ufficio Scavi.....	(see 11)
Vatican Grottoes.....	(see 11)

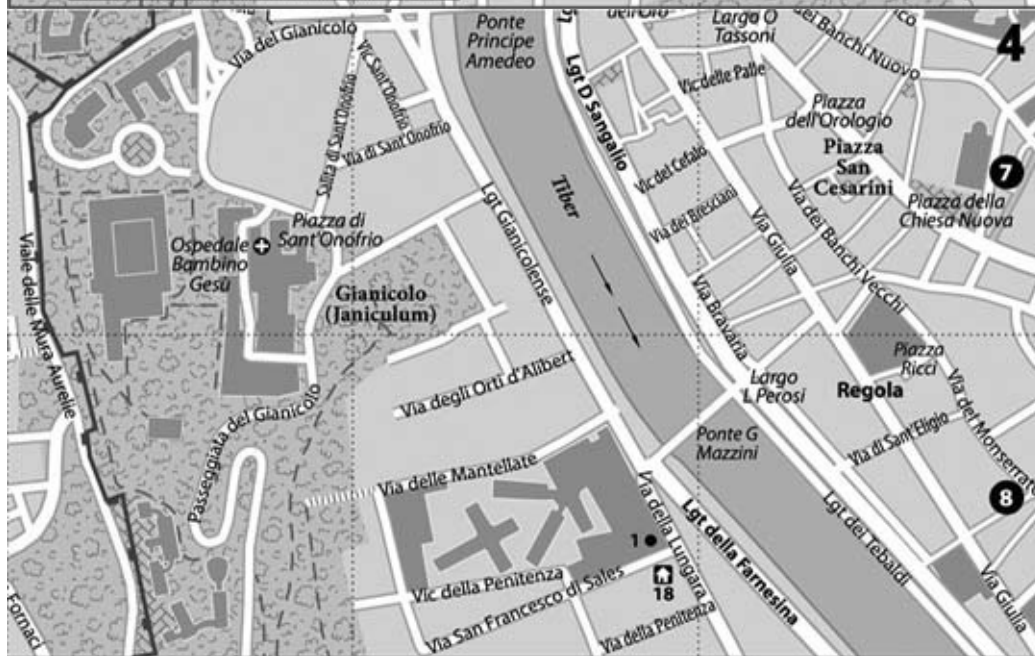


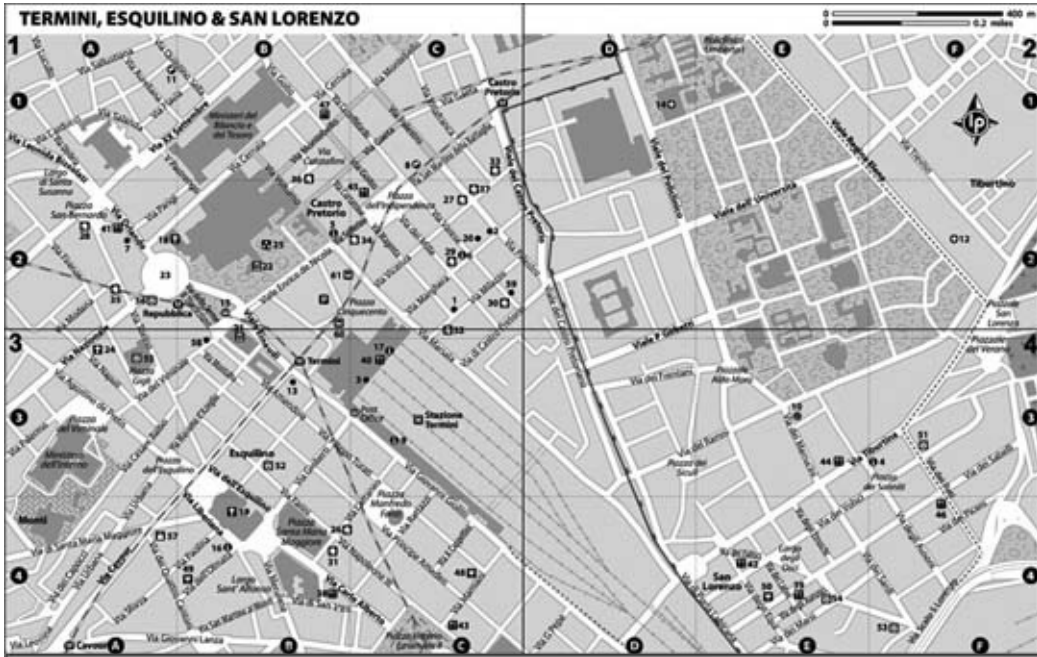
Vatican Museums.....	12 C5
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Casa di Accoglienza Paolo VI.....	13 B4
Colors Hotel & Hostel.....	14 E4
Hotel Bramante.....	15 D5
Hotel Lady.....	16 E3
Hotel San Pietrino.....	17 C2
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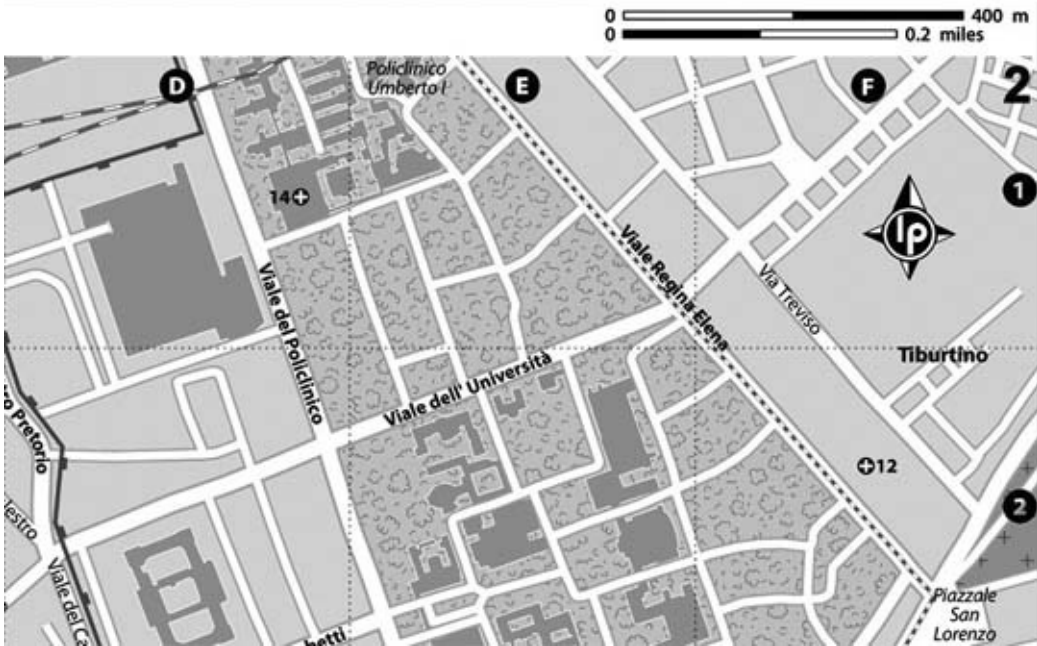
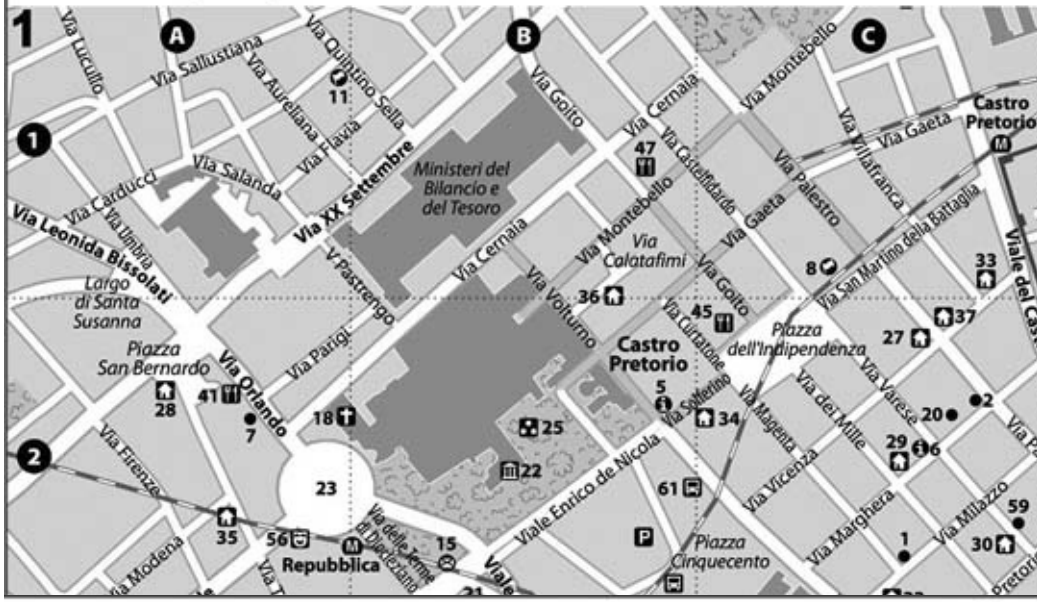


<b>3</b>	<b>EATING</b> 🍴		
	Dal Toscano .....	19	C4
	Dino e Tony .....	20	C3
	Dolce Maniera .....	21	D3
	La Veranda de l'Hotel Columbus .....	22	D6
<b>7</b>	Old Bridge .....	23	C4
	Osteria dell'Angelo .....	24	C2
	Pizzarium .....	25	A4
	Pizzeria Amalfi .....	26	D4
	Ristorante l'Arcangelo .....	27	F4
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	Castroni .....	29	E4
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	Alexanderplatz .....	32	C3
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	Centro Russia Ecumenica Il		
	Messaggio dell'Icona .....	33	D5
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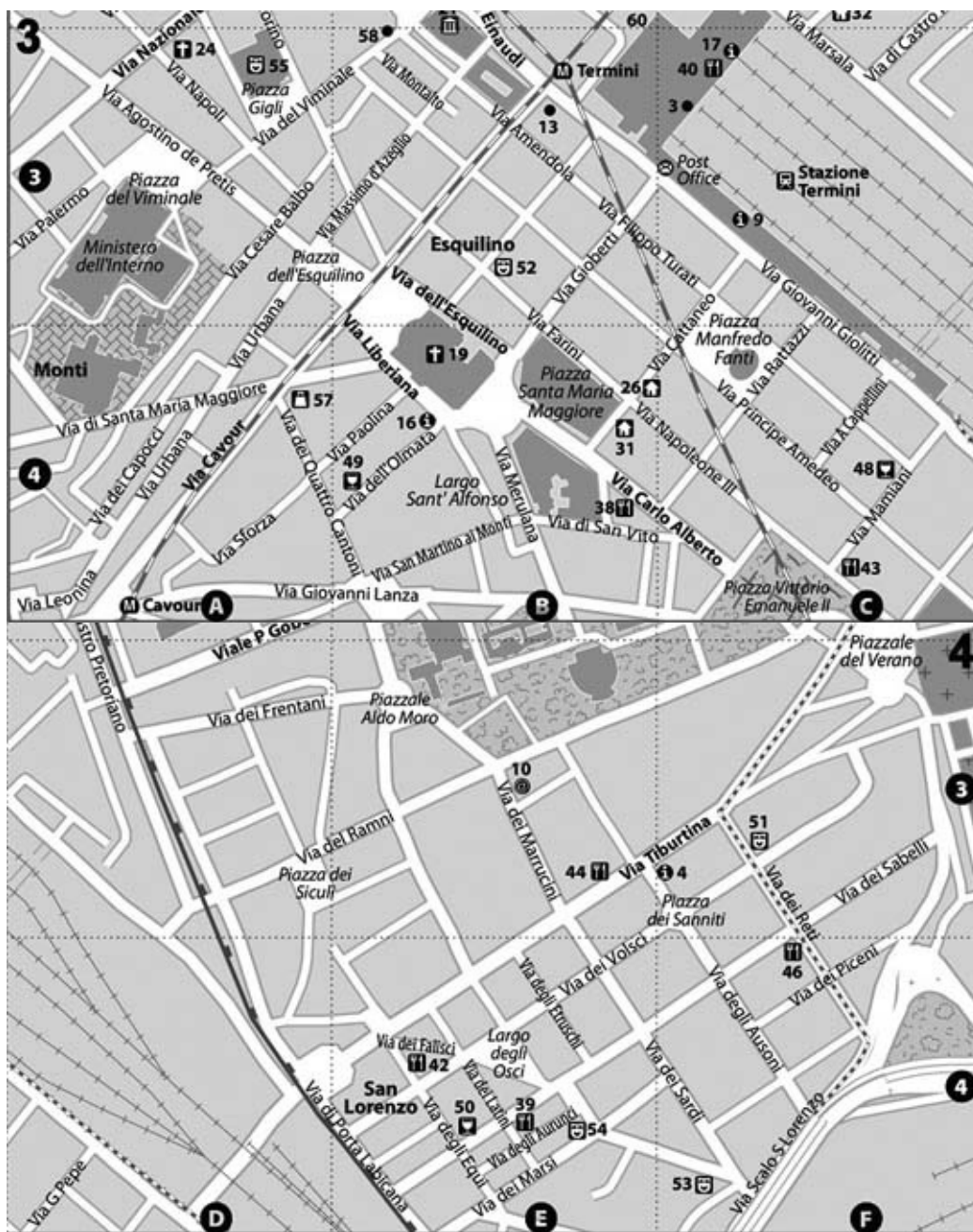




**TERMINI, ESQUILINO & SAN LORENZO**







# TERMINI, ESQUILINO & SAN LORENZO

## INFORMATION

Bolle Blu.....	1	C2
Bolle Blu 2.....	2	C2
Borri Books.....	3	C3
CTS.....	4	F3
CTS.....	5	B2
Enjoy Rome.....	6	C2
Feltrinelli International.....	7	A2
German Embassy & Consulate.....	8	C1
Hotel Reservation Service.....	9	C3
Internet Café.....	10	E3
Japanese Embassy.....	11	A1
Ospedale di Odontoiatria G Eastman.....	12	F2
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Polidinicco Umberto I.....	14	D1
Post Office.....	15	B2
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Tourist Information Point.....	16	B4
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San Paolo Entro le Mura.....	24	A3
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Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù.....	28	A2
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Fiddler's Elbow.....	49	B4
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Lazio Point.....	52	B3
Lian Club.....	53	F4
Locanda Atlantide.....	54	E4
Teatro dell'Opera di Roma.....	55	A3
Warner Village Moderno.....	56	A2

## SHOPPING

Giacomo Santini.....	57	A4
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## TRANSPORT

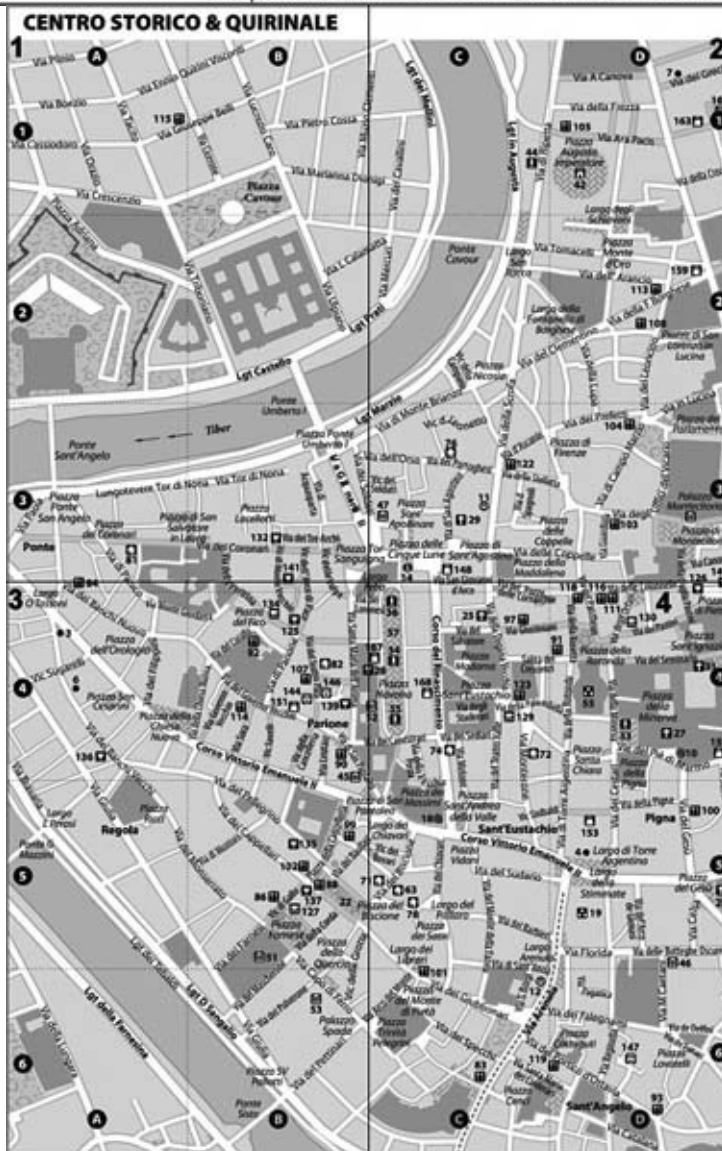
ATAAC Information Booth.....	(see 60)	
Avis.....	(see 17)	
Bici e Baci.....	58	B3
Eco Move Rent.....	59	C2
Europcar.....	(see 17)	
Hertz.....	(see 17)	
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Main Bus Station.....	60	B2
Terravision Shuttle & SIT Buses to Airport.....	61	B2
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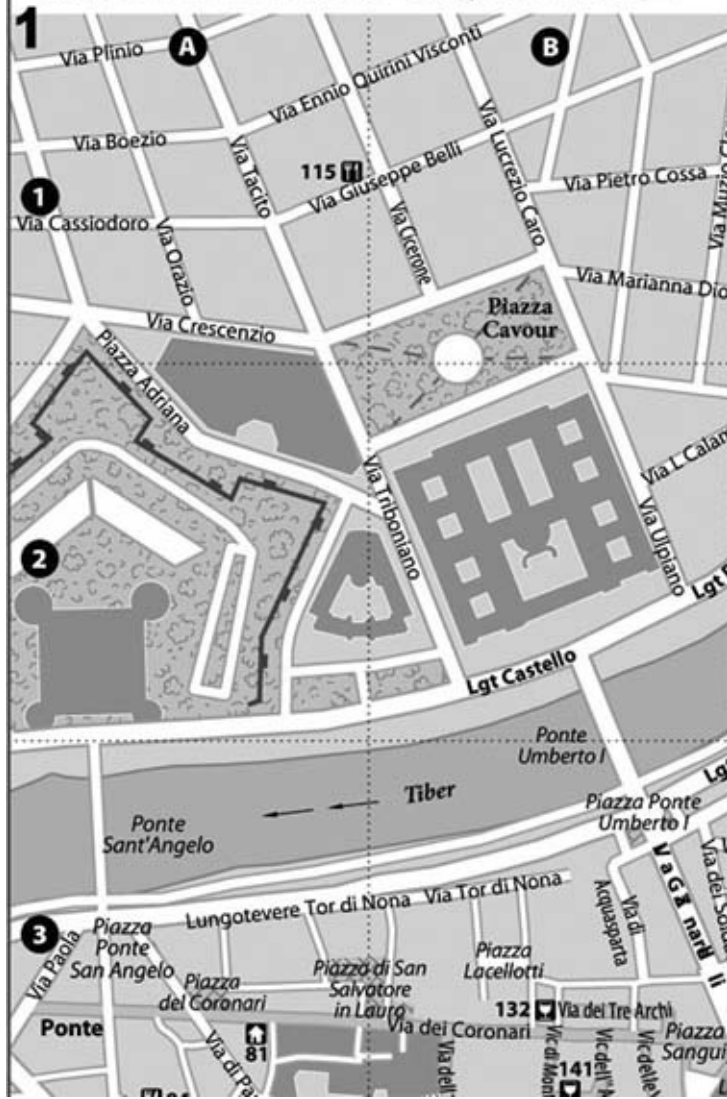
Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli.....	18	A2
Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore.....	19	B4
Divulgazione Lingua Italiana Soc.....	20	C2
Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme.....	21	B2

## EATING

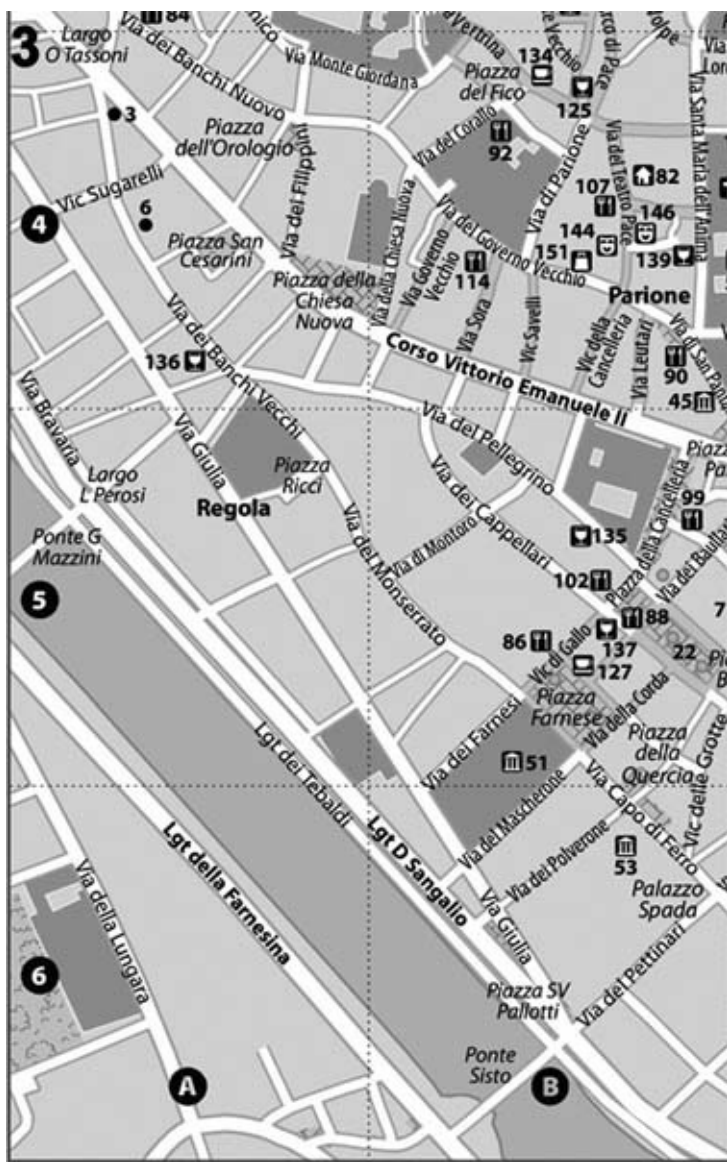
Agata e Romeo.....	38	B4
Arancia Blu.....	39	E4
Conad Supermarket.....	40	C3
Dagnino.....	41	A2
Formula 1.....	42	E4
Indian Fast Food.....	43	C4
Said.....	44	E3
Sir Supermarket.....	45	C2

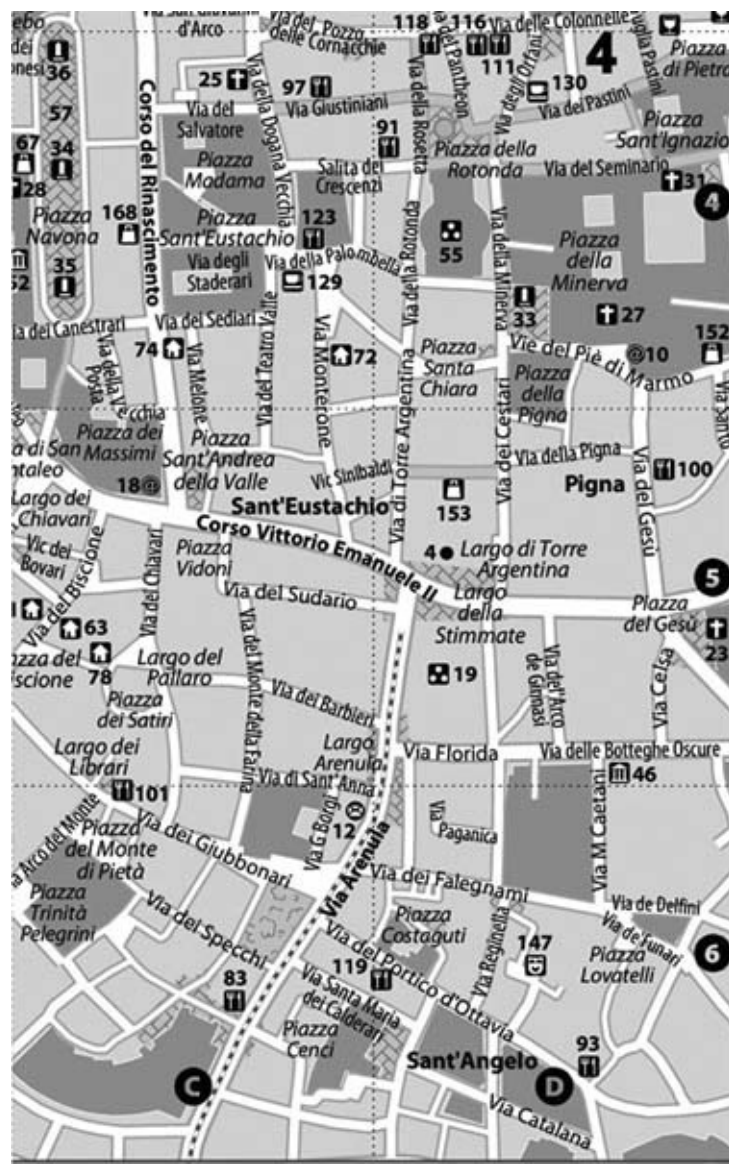


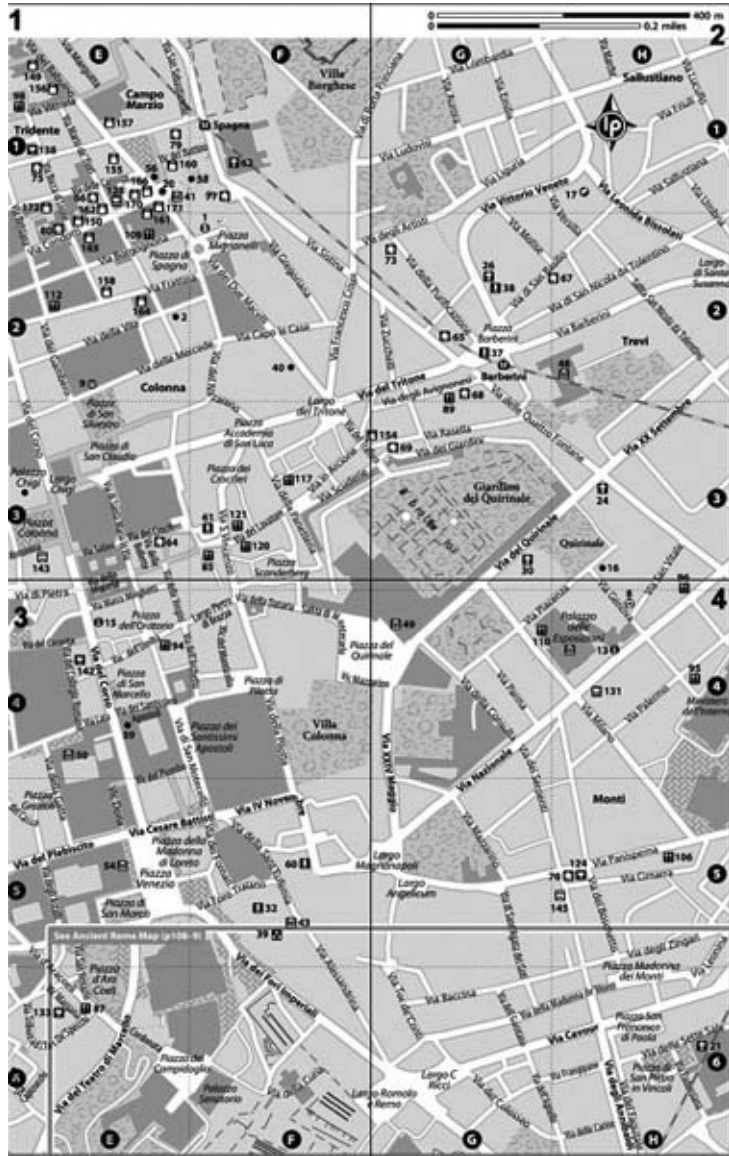
# CENTRO STORICO & QUIRINALE



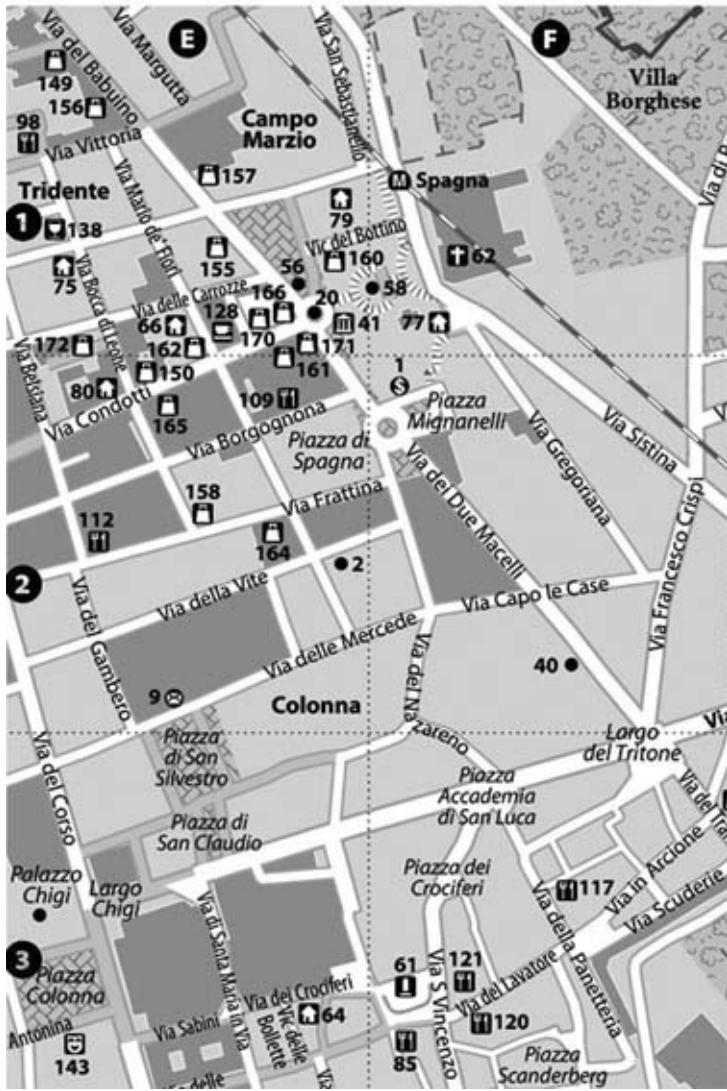




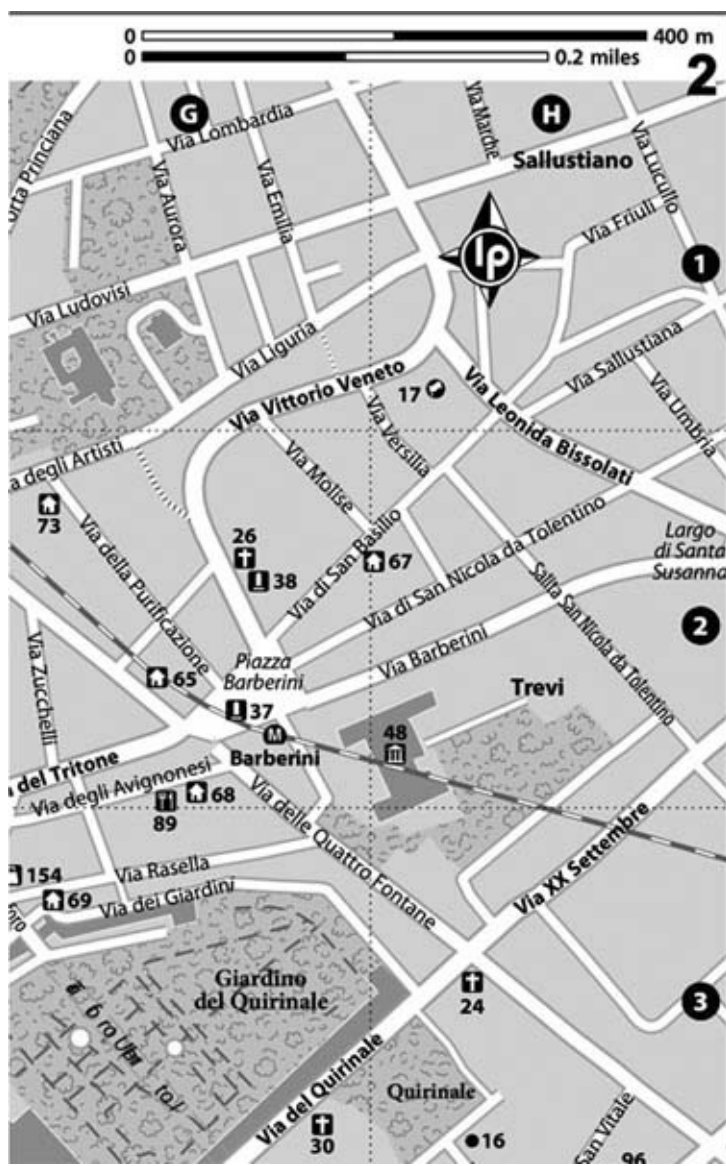


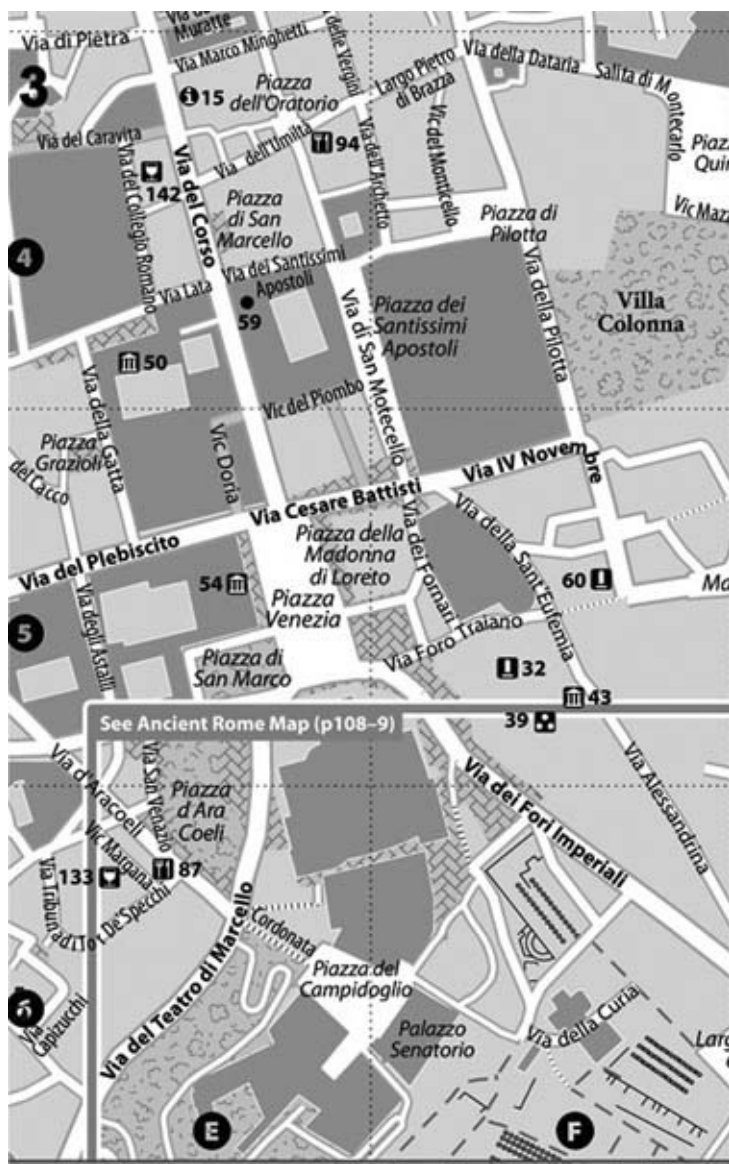


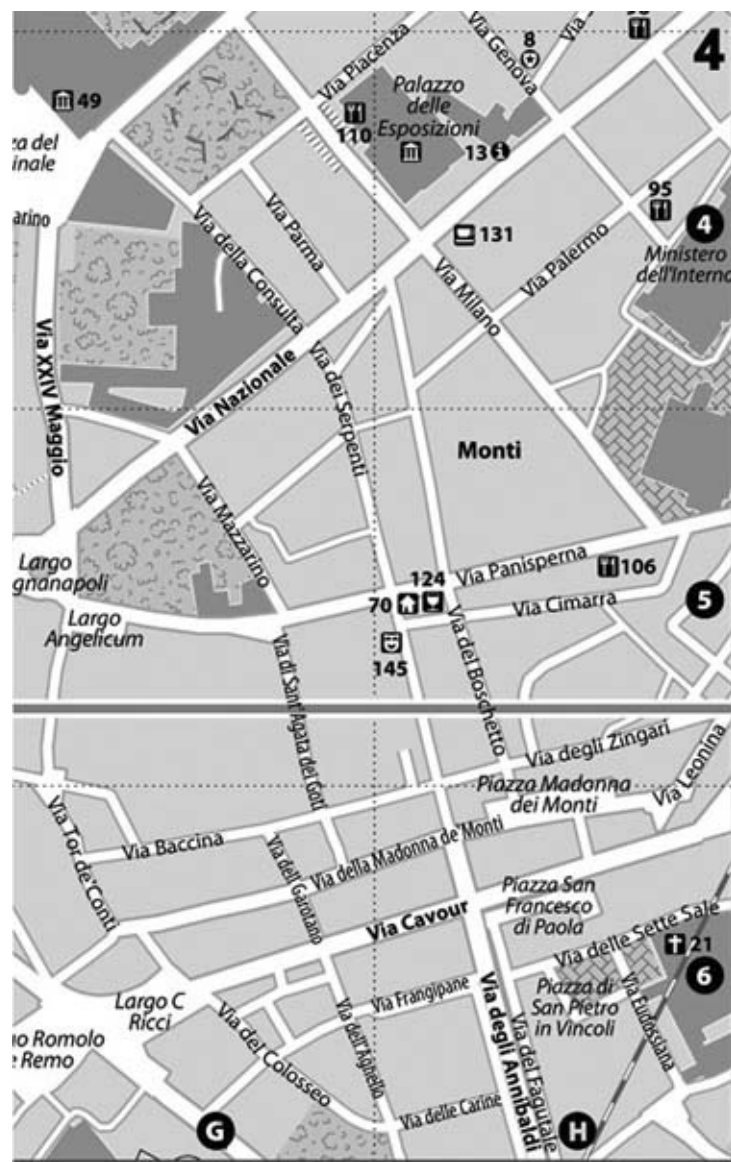
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## CENTRO STORICO & QUIRINALE (pp102-3)

### INFORMATION

American Express	1	F2
Anglo-American Book Co.	2	E2
CTS	3	A4
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Irish Embassy	5	E6
Libreria Babel	6	A4
Lion Bookshop	7	D1
Main Police Station	8	H4
Main Post Office	9	E2
Pantheon Internet	10	D4
Post Office	11	C3
Post Office	12	C6
Tourist Information Point	13	H4
Tourist Information Point	14	C3
Tourist Information Point	15	E4
Ufficio Stranieri	16	H3
US Embassy & Consulate	17	H1
Yex Internet Point	18	C5

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Area Sacra di Largo Argentina	19	D5
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Chiesa del Gesù	23	D5
Chiesa di San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane	24	H3
Chiesa di San Luigi dei Francesi	25	C4
Chiesa di Santa Maria della Concezione	26	G2
Chiesa di Santa Maria Sopra Minerva	27	D4

Chiesa di Sant'Agnese in Agone	28	B4
Chiesa di Sant'Agostino	29	C3
Chiesa di Sant'Andrea al Quirinale	30	G3
Chiesa di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola	31	D4
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Elefantino	33	D4
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Fontana del Moro	35	C4
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Palazzo Doria Pamphilj	50	E4
Palazzo Farnese	51	B5
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Palazzo Spada	53	B6
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Spanish Steps	58	F1
Time Elevator	59	E4
Torre delle Milizie	60	F5
Trevi Fountain	61	F3
Trinità dei Monti	62	F1

### SLEEPING

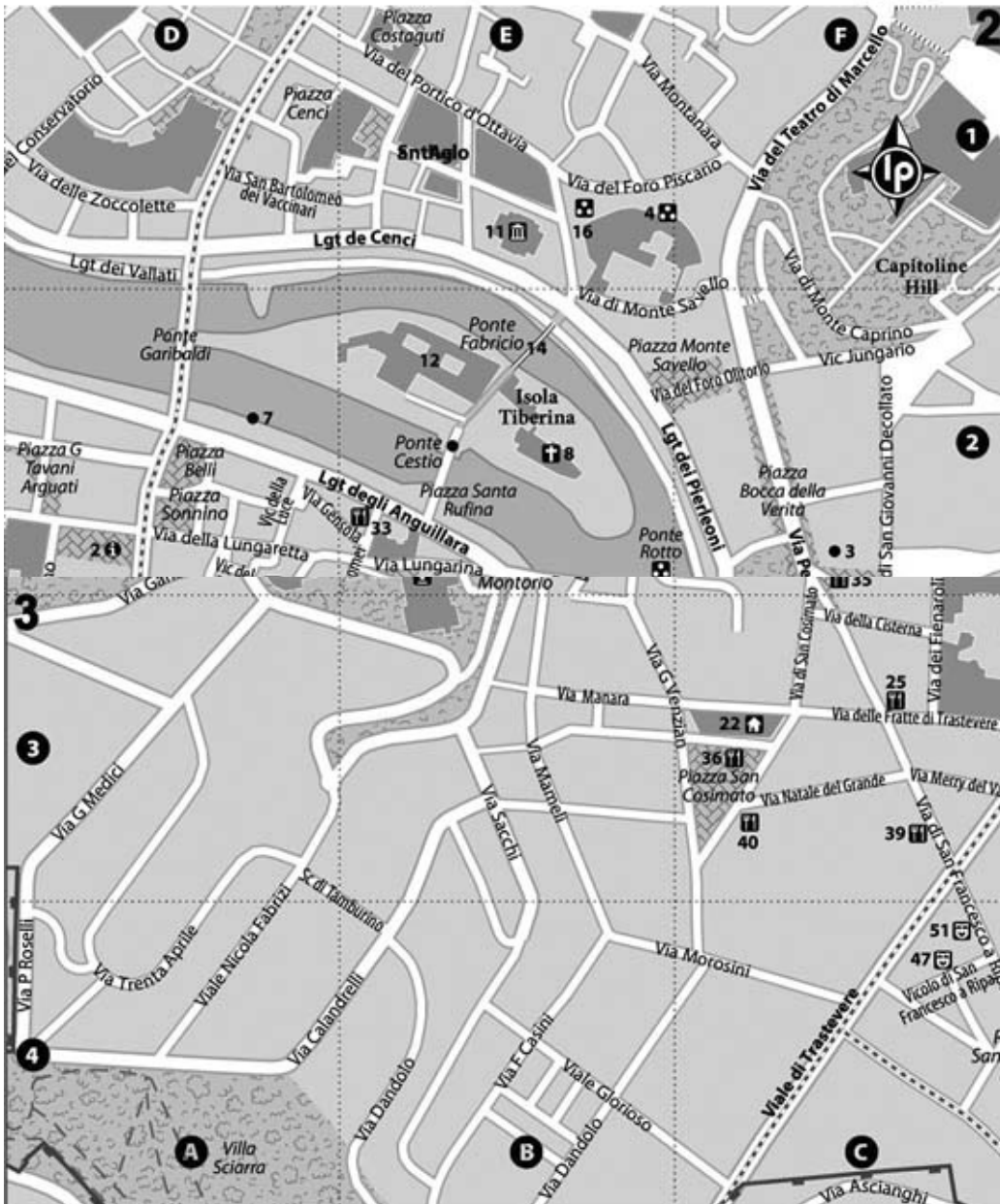
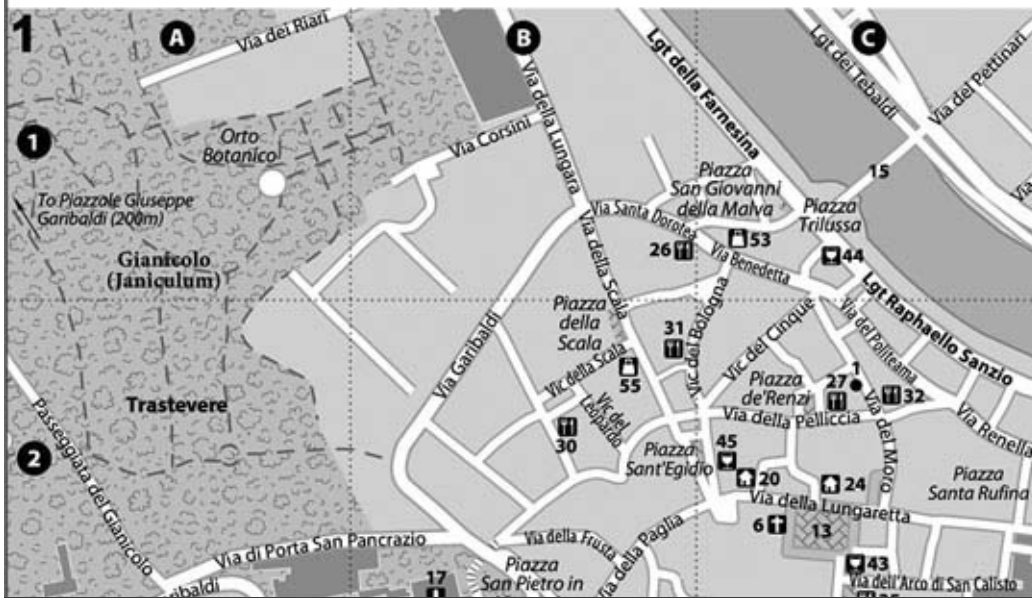
Albergo del Sole	63	C5
B&B 3 Coins	64	E3
Casa Howard	65	G2
Crossing Condotti	66	E1
Daphne B&B	67	H2
Daphne B&B	68	G2
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Hotel Antica Locanda	70	H5
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Hotel Mimosa	72	C4
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Hotel Teatro di Pompeo	78	C5
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Portrait Suites	80	E2

# CENTRO STORICO & QUIRINALE (pp102-3)

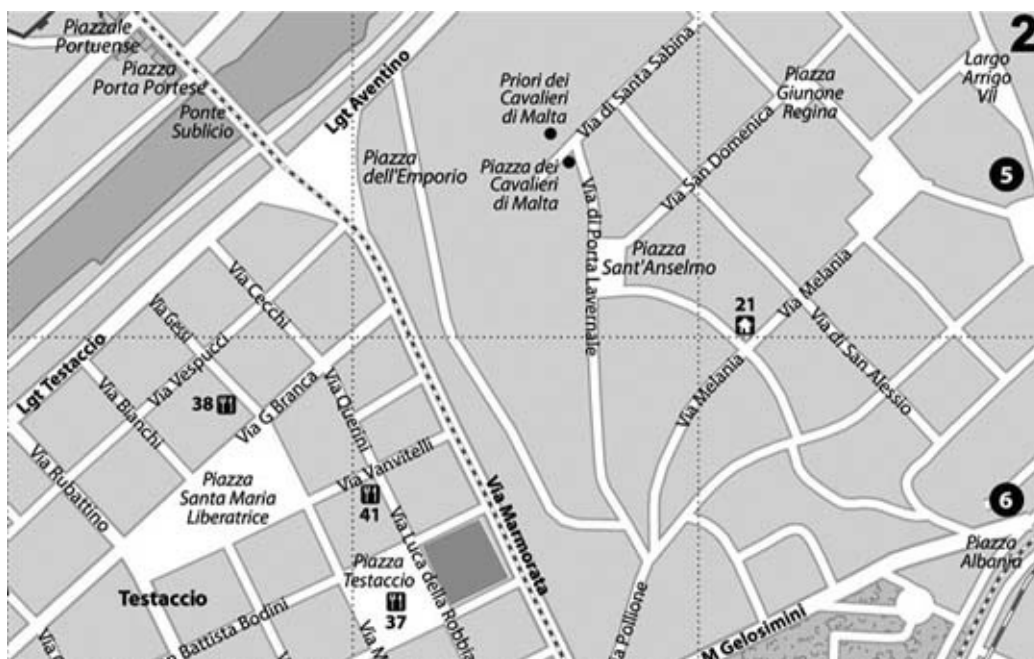
Relais Palazzo		Osteria Sostegno.....	111 D4	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> 🎭	
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Da Michele.....	94 E4	Caffè Fandango.....	126 D3	Fausto Santini.....	158 E2
Da Ricci.....	95 H4	Caffè Farnese.....	127 B5	Fendi.....	159 D2
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Enoteca Corsi.....	100 D5	Circus.....	132 B3	Max Mara.....	164 E2
Filetti di Baccalà.....	101 C6	Edoardo II.....	133 E6	Max Mara.....	165 E2
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Gino.....	104 D3	Il Nolano.....	137 B5	Farmaceutica di Santa	
'Gusto.....	105 D1	L'Antica Enoteca.....	138 E1	Maria Novella.....	168 C4
La Carbonara.....	106 H5	Les Affiches.....	139 B4	Outlet Point.....	169 D1
Lo Zozzone.....	107 B4	Salotto 42.....	140 D3	Prada.....	170 E1
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Nino.....	109 E2	Trinity College.....	142 E4	Versace.....	172 E1
Open Colonna.....	110 G4	Vineria Reggino.....	(see 137)		



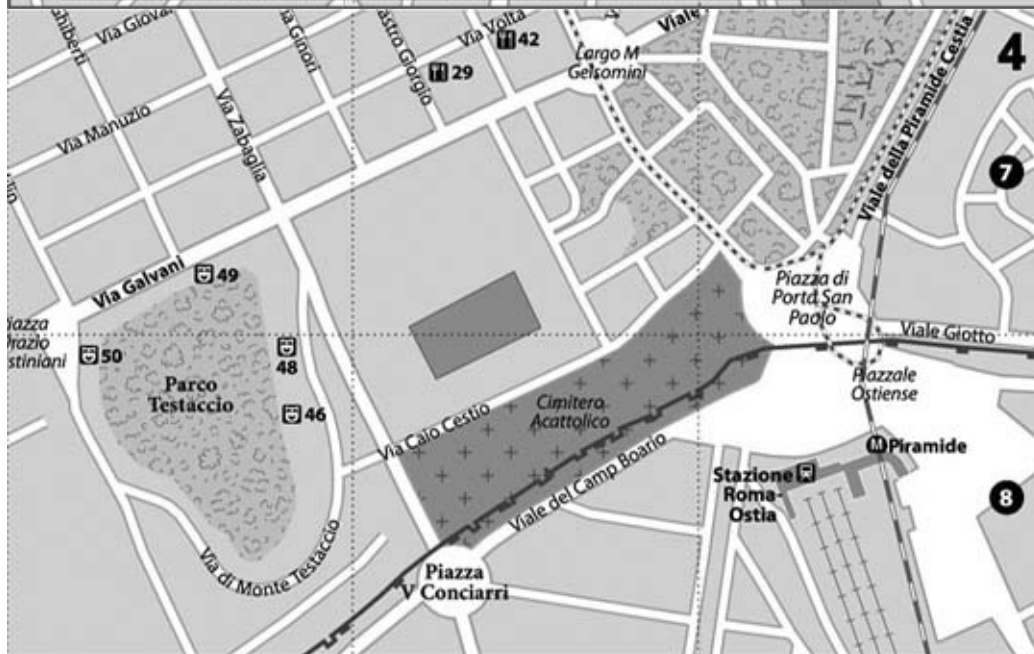
# TRASTEVERE & TESTACCIO

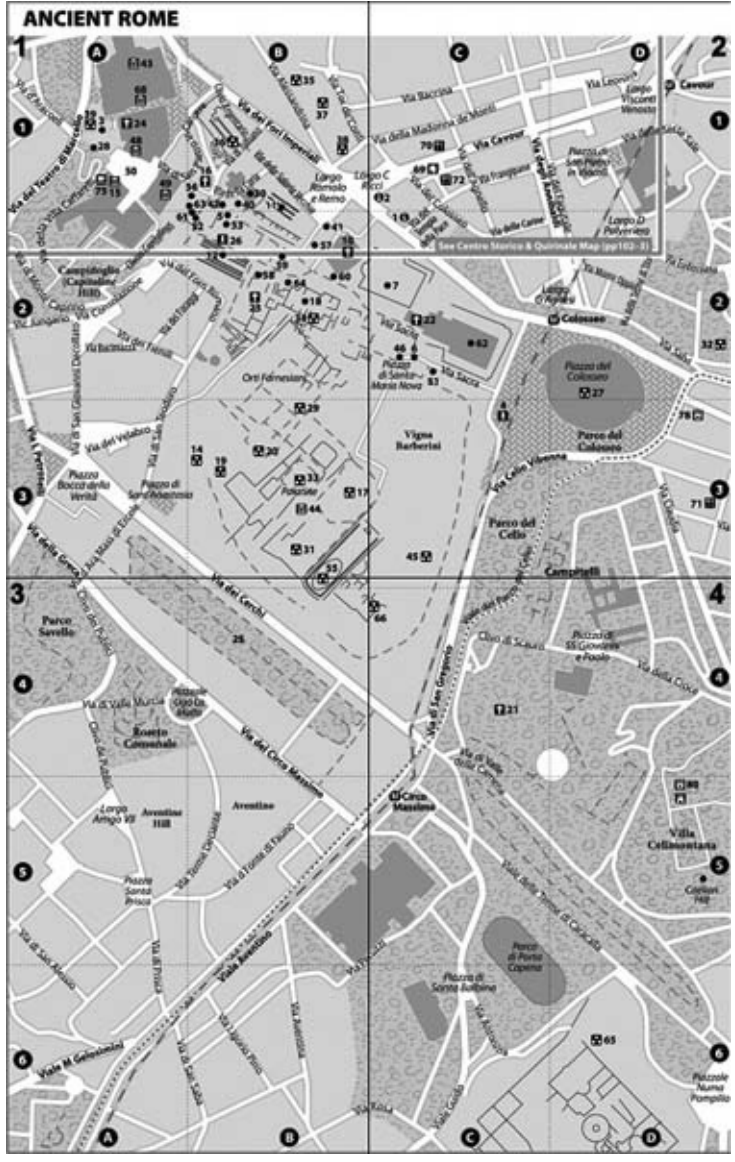






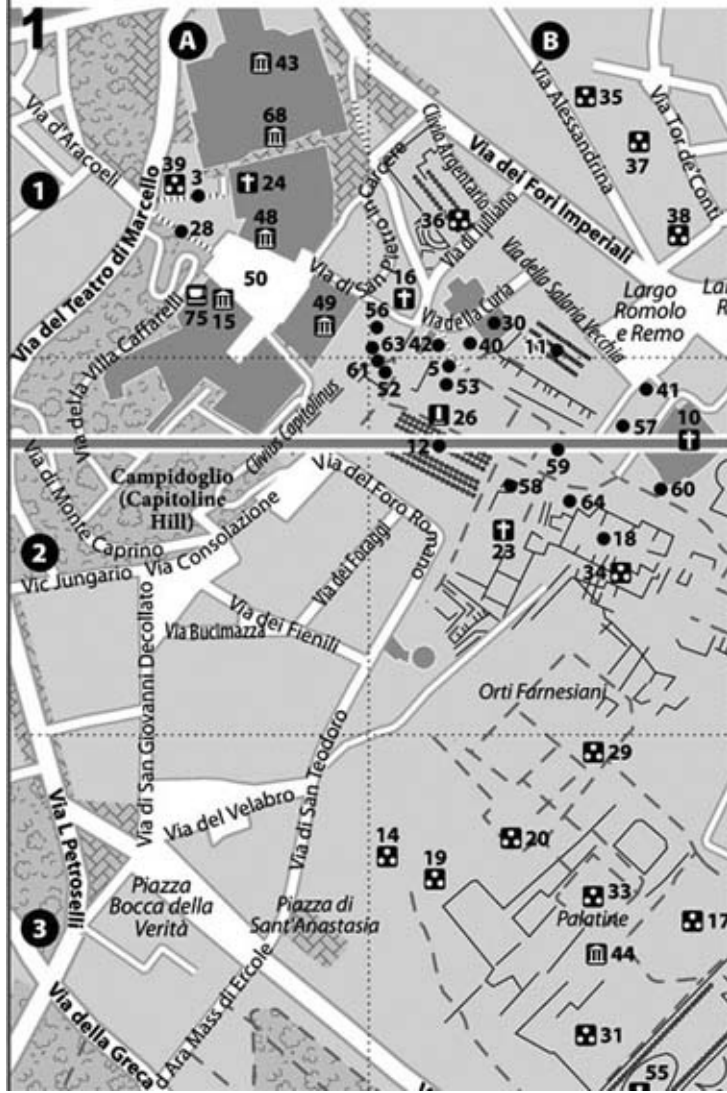
3	Battelli di Roma	7	D2	Piazza Testaccio Market	37	E6
	Chiesa di San Bartolomeo	8	E2	Pizzeria Remo	38	D6
	Chiesa di San Francesco a Ripa	9	D4	Sisini	39	C3
	Chiesa di Santa Maria in Cosmedin	10	F3	Todis Supermarket	40	C3
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	Portico d'Ottavia	16	E1	Freni e Frizioni	44	C1
	Tempietto	17	B2	Ombre Rosse	45	C2
	Tempio di Ercole Vincitore	18	F3			
	Tempio di Portunus	(see 18)		<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> ☑		
				AKAB	46	D8
	<b>SLEEPING</b> ☑			Big Mama	47	C4
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	Hotel Antico Borgo Trastevere	19	D2	ETO	49	D7
	Hotel Santa Maria	20	C2	L'Alibi	50	D8
8	Hotel Sant'Anselmo	21	F5	Lettere Caffè	51	C4
	Hotel Trastevere	22	C3	Villaggio Globale	52	C8
	Residenza Arco de'Tolomei	23	E3			
	Villa della Fonte	24	C2	<b>SHOPPING</b> ☑		
				Officina della Carta	53	C1
	<b>EATING</b> ☑			Porta Portese Flea Market	54	D4
	Alle Fratte di Trastevere	25	C3	Scala Quattorodici	55	B2



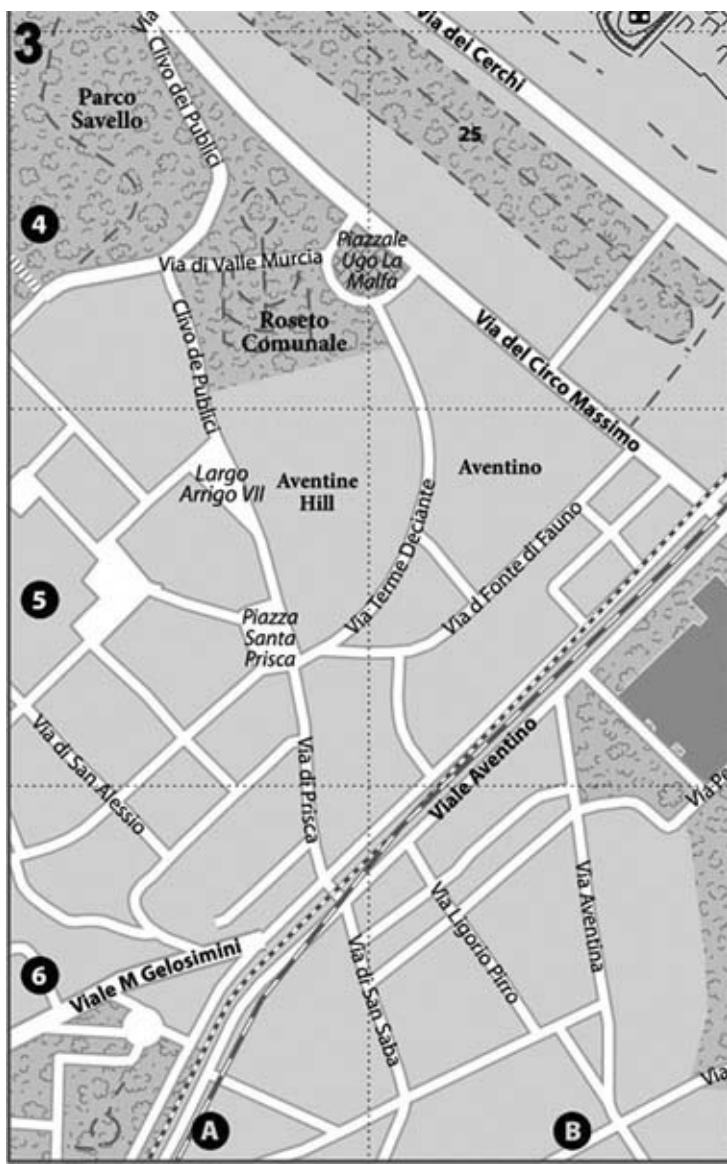


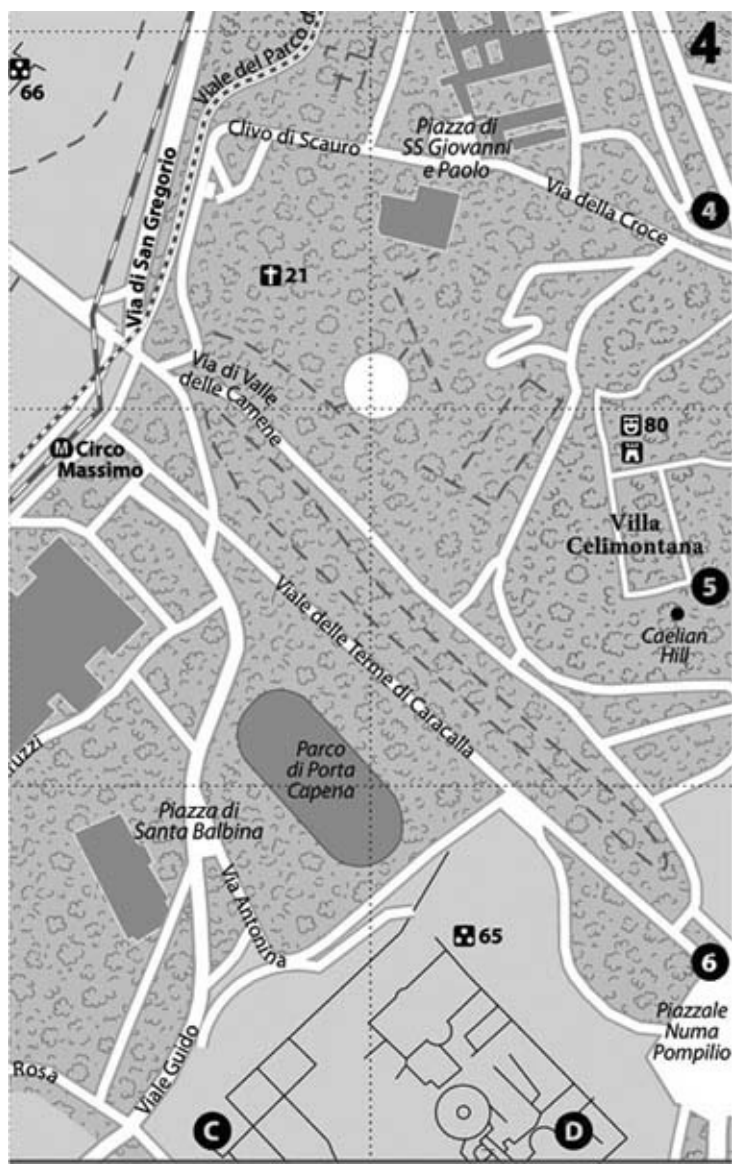


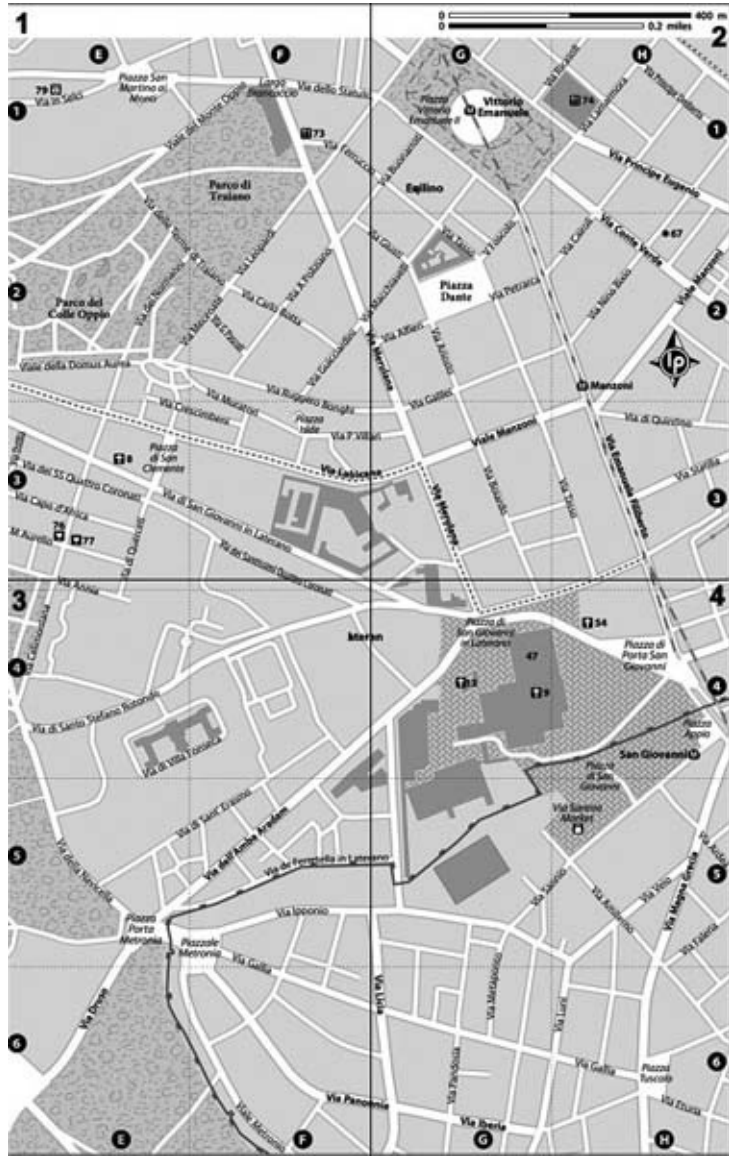
# ANCIENT ROME



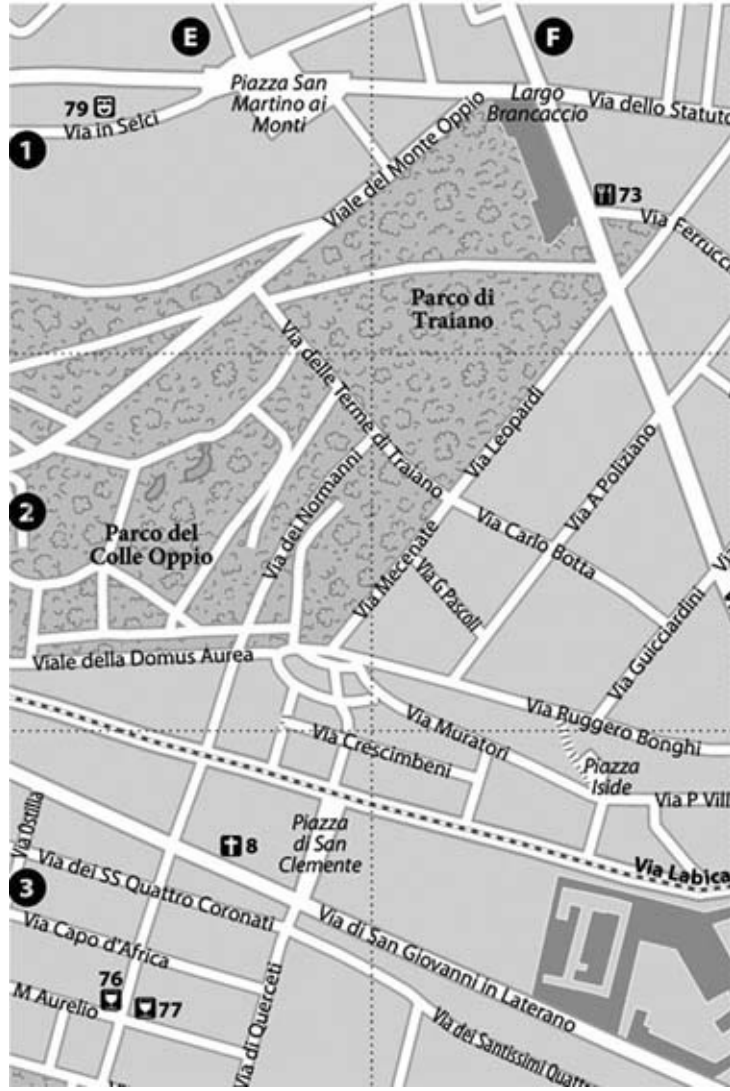




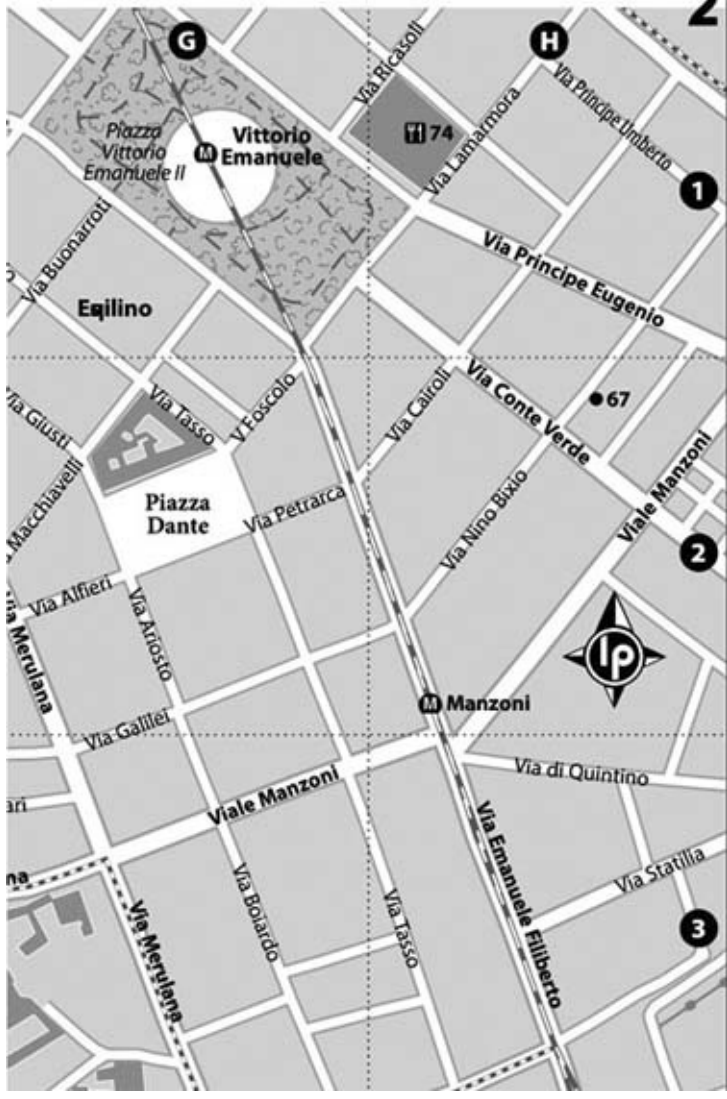


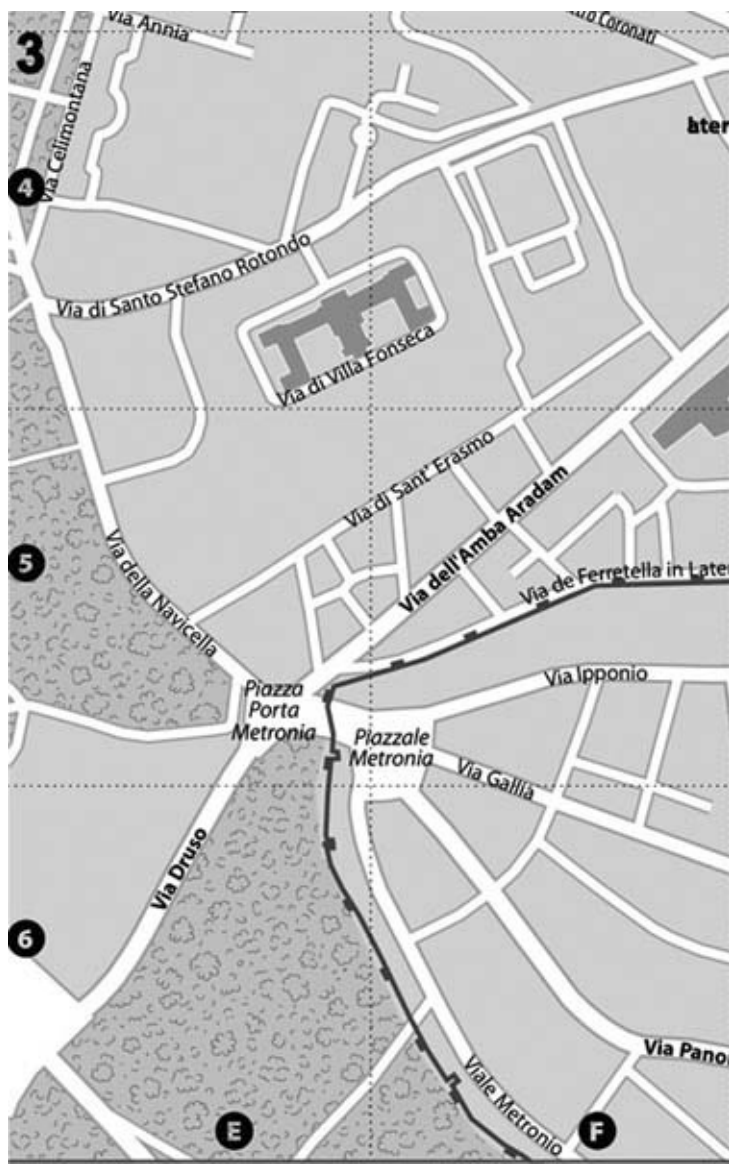


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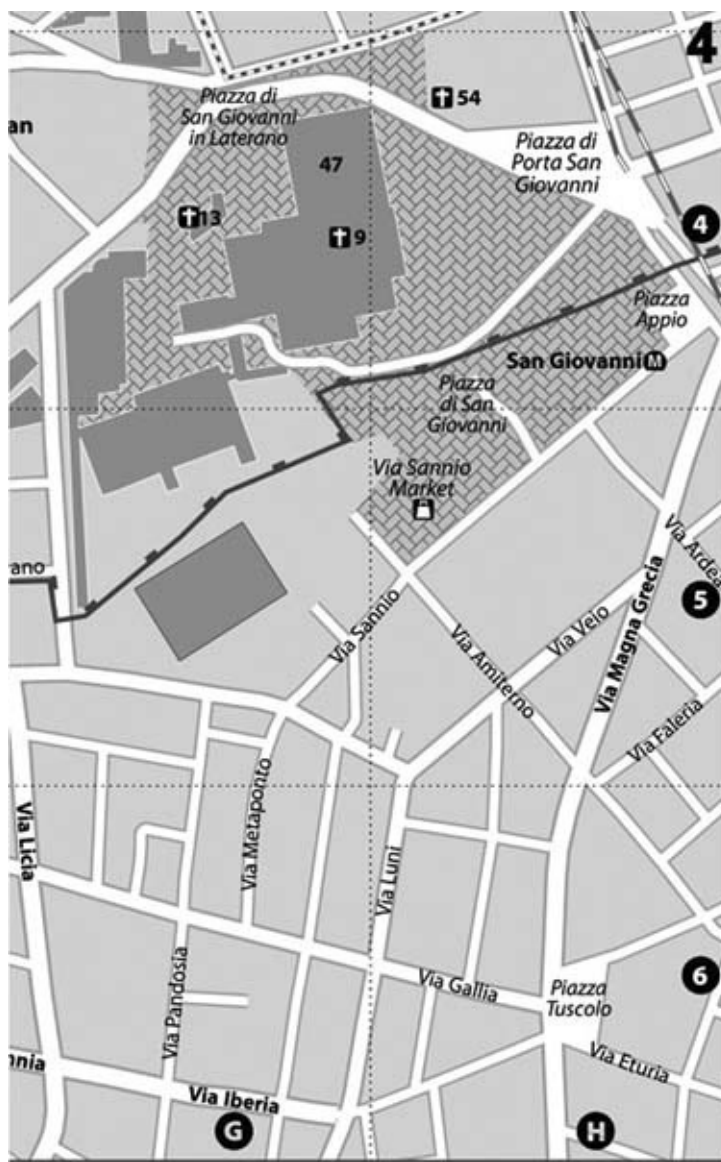


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ANCIENT ROME (pp108-9)			
<b>INFORMATION</b>			
Imperial Forums Visitor Centre	1 C2	Criptoportico	29 B3
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		Coming Out	78 D3
		Hangar	79 E1
		Villa Celimontana	80 D5

**Castel Sant'Angelo** ([Map](#); Piazza Pia; ☎ 9.30am-7pm)

**Ciampino airport** (International Arrivals, baggage reclaim area; ☎ 9am-6.30pm)

**Fiumicino airport** (Terminal C, International Arrivals; ☎ 9am-6.30pm)

**Piazza Navona** ([Map](#); ☎ 9.30am-7pm) Near Piazza delle Cinque Lune.

**Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore** ([Map](#); Via dell'Olmata; ☎ 9.30am-7pm)

**Piazza Sonnino** ([Map](#); ☎ 9.30am-7pm)

**Stazione Termini** ([Map](#); ☎ 8am-8.30pm) Next to platform 24.

**Trevi Fountain** ([Map](#); Via Marco Minghetti; ☎ 9.30am-7pm) This tourist point is nearer to Via del Corso than the fountain.

**Via dei Fori Imperiali** ([Map](#); Piazza del Tempio della Pace; ☎ 9.30am-7pm)

**Via Nazionale** ([Map](#); ☎ 9.30am-7pm)

## Travel Agencies

**CTS** ([www.cts.it](http://www.cts.it) in Italian) Corso Vittorio Emanuele II ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 26 72; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 297); Via degli Ausoni ([Map](#); ☎ 06 445 01 41; Via degli Ausoni 5) Near La Sapienza university; Termini ([Map](#); ☎ 06 462 0431; Via Solferino 6A) Italy's official student travel service offers discounted air, rail and bus tickets to students and travellers aged under 30, if you have a EURO<26 Youth Card or an International Student Identity Card (ISICs, which CTS also issue). Otherwise you need a CTS card, which costs €30 (€3 for under 14s) and is valid for 14 months.

**Enjoy Rome** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 445 18 43; [www.enjoyrome.com](http://www.enjoyrome.com); Via Marghera 8a; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat Apr-Sep, 9am-5.30 Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat Oct-Mar) As well as booking accommodation, selling bus and train tickets and operating walking tours, Enjoy Rome also runs a bus shuttle service to and from Pompeii (adult/under 26yr €60/40) twice a week in summer. This

leaves from the office at 7.30am and returns at 7pm on the same day. The trip takes three hours each way, meaning you get a decent 4½ hours at the site. Bookings are essential.

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## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Rome is a relatively safe city but petty crime is rife. Pickpockets are active in all touristy places – particularly around Stazione Termini, at major sights such as the Colosseum, and around Piazza di Spagna. Watch out on crowded public transport (bus 64, from Stazione Termini to St Peter’s, is notorious). Groups of children sometimes cause distractions to make separating you from your wallet easier. Always carry bags away from the street side, slung across your body, as scooter thieves can swipe and be gone in seconds. Similarly, never leave cameras or valuables unguarded, even for a second.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

There’s a range of discount cards available for those planning on some serious museum-going while in Rome. These include the following:

**Appia Antica Card** (€7.5, valid seven days) For the Terme di Caracalla, Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella and Villa Quintili.

**Archaeologia Card** (€23.5, valid seven days) For entrance to the Colosseum, Palatine, Terme di Caracalla, Palazzo Altemps, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Terme di Diocleziano, Crypta Balbi, Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella and Villa Quintili.

**Roma Pass** ([www.romapass.it](http://www.romapass.it), €23, valid three days) Includes free admission to two museums or sites (choose from a list of 38) as well as reduced entry to extra sites, unlimited public transport within Rome, access to the bike-sharing scheme and reduced price entry to other exhibitions and events. If you use this for more-expensive sights such as the Capitoline Museums and the Colosseum you’ll save a considerable amount of money.

You can buy the cards at any of the monuments or museums listed (or online at [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it)) and the Roma Pass is also available at Comune di Roma tourist information points.

Note that EU citizens between the ages of 18 and 24 and over the age of 65 are entitled to significant discounts at most museums and galleries in Rome. Unfortunately student discounts don’t usually apply for citizens of non-EU countries.

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Women travellers often experience unwanted attention, and groping on crowded buses is not unheard of. It’s best to ignore catcalls, but if you’re the victim of wandering hands, a loud ‘*che schifo!*’ (how disgusting) should work.

Italians obey road rules at their discretion so don’t take it for granted that cars and scooters will stop at red lights. Wait for a suitable gap in the traffic and then walk confidently and calmly across the road, ideally with a group of locals, best of all with nuns.

For more on dangers and annoyances, [Click here](#).

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# SIGHTS

They say that a lifetime's not long enough for Rome – *Roma, non basta una vita!* There's simply too much to see. So the best plan is to choose selectively what to see, and leave the rest for next time.

## Ancient Rome

### COLOSSEUM

The **Colosseum** (Colosseo; [Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); Piazza del Colosseo; incl Palatine adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €9/4.50/free, plus possible exhibition supplement €3, ticket valid 2 days; 🕒 8.30am-6.15pm Apr-Aug, 8.30am-6pm Sep, 8.30am-5.30pm Oct, 8.30am-4.30pm mid—end Mar, 8.30am-4pm mid-Feb—mid-Mar, 8.30am-3.30pm Nov—mid-Feb) is the most extraordinary of all Rome's monuments. It's not just the amazing completeness of the place, or its size, but the sense of its gory history that resonates: it was here that gladiators met in mortal combat and condemned prisoners fought off hungry lions. Two thousand or so years on, it's still hauling in the crowds. Don't let the lengthy queue put you off: just pop down to the Palatine ticket office, buy your combined ticket there, and on returning march straight in.

Built by the emperor Vespasian (r AD 69–79) in the grounds of Nero's palatial Domus Aurea complex, the Colosseum was inaugurated in AD 80. To mark the occasion, Vespasian's son and successor Titus (r 79–81) held games that lasted 100 days and nights, during which some 5000 animals were slaughtered. Trajan (r 98–117) later topped this, holding a marathon 117-day killing spree involving 9000 gladiators and 10,000 animals.

Originally known as the Flavian Amphitheatre, the 50,000-capacity stadium may have been ancient Rome's most fearful arena, but it wasn't the biggest – the Circo Massimo ([Click here](#)) could hold up to 200,000 people. The name Colosseum, when introduced in medieval times, was not a reference to its size but to the Colosso di Nerone, a giant statue of Nero that stood nearby.

The outer walls of the Colosseum have three levels of arches, articulated by columns topped by capitals of the Ionic (at the bottom), Doric and Corinthian (at the top) orders. The external walls were originally covered in travertine, and marble statues once filled the niches on the 2nd and 3rd storeys. The upper level, punctuated by windows and slender Corinthian pilasters, had supports for 240 masts that held up a canvas awning over the arena, shielding the spectators from sun and rain. The 80 entrance arches, known as *vomitoria*, allowed the spectators to enter and be seated in a matter of minutes.

The Colosseum's interior was divided into three parts: the arena, cavea and podium. The **arena** had a wooden floor covered in sand to prevent the combatants from slipping and to soak up the blood. Trap doors led down to the underground chambers and passageways beneath the arena floor. Animals in cages and sets for the various battles were hoisted onto the arena by a complicated system of pulleys. The **cavea**, for spectator seating, was divided into three tiers: knights sat in the lowest tier, wealthy citizens in the middle and the plebs in the highest tier. The **podium**, a broad terrace in front of the tiers of seats, was reserved for emperors, senators and VIPs.

With the fall of the empire in the 6th century, the Colosseum was abandoned. In the Middle Ages, it became a fortress occupied by two of the city's warrior families: the Frangipani and the Annibaldi.

Damaged several times by earthquakes, it was later used as a quarry for travertine and marble for Palazzo Venezia, Palazzo Barberini and Palazzo Cancelleria among other buildings. Pollution and vibrations caused by traffic and the metro have also taken their toll.

## ARCO DI COSTANTINO

On the western side of the Colosseum, the **Arco di Costantino** ([Map](#)) was built to honour Constantine following his victory over rival Maxentius at the battle of Ponte Milvio (Milvian bridge; northwest of Villa Borghese) in AD 312.

## THE PALATINE

Just down the road overlooking the Roman Forum, the **Palatine** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); Via di San Gregorio 30; incl Museo Palatino, Colosseum & Roman Forum adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €9/4.50/free, plus possible exhibition supplement €3, ticket valid 2 days, audioguide incl Roman Forum €4- €6; 🕒 8.30am-6.15pm Apr-Aug, 8.30am-6pm Sep, 8.30am-5.30pm Oct, 8.30am-4.30pm mid-end Mar, 8.30am-4pm mid-Feb—mid-Mar, 8.30am-3.30pm Nov—mid-Feb) was ancient Rome's Beverly Hills. Romulus killed his brother Remus and founded Rome here in 753 BC, and from 500 BC, Rome's most affluent citizens set up residence in the area. Successive emperors and attendant aristocrats built increasingly opulent palaces in the imperial city's most exclusive district. After Rome's fall, the Palatine decayed and in the Middle Ages churches and castles were built over the ruins. During the Renaissance, members of wealthy families, most notably that of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, established gardens on the hill.

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## OUR TOP FIVE ANCIENT WONDERS OF ROME

- **Colosseum** (opposite) Rome's most iconic ancient site – you can almost hear the roar of the crowd.
  - **Palatine** (opposite) A wonderful place to escape the crowds and dream about the lives of ancient emperors.
  - **Frescoes in Palazzo Massimo alle Terme** These undervisited wall paintings offer a rare peek at wealthy ancient Romans' interior decor.
  - **Pantheon** Hard to believe it has been standing for several millennia: the Pantheon is mind-blowingly and enduringly different.
  - **Mithraic temple beneath San Clemente** Mystical and mysterious, this is all the more wonderful because of the journey here, through layers of history.
- 

Today it's a dreamy place to escape the crowds and have a picnic, a moss-green hill shaded by umbrella palms and dotted by imperial ruins.

The largest part is covered by the remains of Emperor Domitian's vast complex, which served as the main imperial palace for 300 years. It was built by the architect Rabirius in the 1st century AD. To do so, Rabirius levelled a crest of land and buried many Republican-era houses; some have since been unearthed.

On entering the complex from Via di San Gregorio, head uphill until you come to the first recognisable construction, the **stadio** ([Map](#)), probably used by the emperors for private games and events. Adjoining the stadium, to the southeast, are the scant remains of the complex built by Septimius Severus, comprising baths (the Terme di Settimio Severo) and a palace (the Domus Severiana).

On the other side of the *stadio* are the ruins of the huge **Domus Augustana** ([Map](#)), the emperor's private residence. It was built on two levels, with rooms leading off a *peristilio* (peristyle or garden courtyard) on each floor. You can't get down to the lower level, but from above you can see the basin of a fountain and beyond it rooms that were paved with coloured marble.

In 2007 a mosaic-covered vaulted cavern was discovered beneath here, more than 15m underground. Some believe it to be the shrine of the **Lupercale**, thought to commemorate the sacred cave where Romulus and Remus were said to have been suckled by the wolf. However it has not yet been excavated.

The grey building near the Domus Augustana houses the **Museo Palatino** (📍 8am-4pm) and its collection of archaeological artefacts. Downstairs, you'll find cooking utensils from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Ages, and models of how the Iron Age huts and tombs might have appeared. Upstairs, highlights include cooking utensils from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Ages, a beautiful 1st-century bronze, the Erma di Canefora, and a beautiful, softly contoured bust of Giovane Principessa, daughter of Nero's successor Marcus Aurelius, considered to be a masterpiece of Antonine portraiture.

North of the museum is the **Domus Flavia** ([Map](#)), the public part of Domitian's huge palace complex. The Domus comprised three halls: one to the north; one in the centre, which was the emperor's throne room; and, to the south, a large banqueting hall, or triclinium, decorated in coloured marble. The triclinium looked out onto an oval fountain, the remains of which are still visible.

Among the best-preserved buildings on the Palatine is the **Casa di Livia**, northwest of the Domus Flavia. Home to Augustus' wife Livia, it was built around an atrium leading onto what were once reception rooms, decorated with frescoes of mythological scenes, landscapes, fruits and flowers. In front is the **Casa di Augusto** (entry in groups of 5; 📍 11am-3.30pm Mon, Wed, Sat & Sun), Augustus' separate residence. Opened to the public in 2008 after years of restoration, it contains superb frescoes in vivid reds, yellows and blues.

Next to the Casa di Augusto is the **Capanne di Romolo** (House of Romulus; [Map](#)), where it is thought Romulus and Remus were brought up after their discovery by the shepherd Faustulus. Excavations carried out in the 1940s revealed evidence of supports for wattle and daub huts dating from the 9th century BC.

Northeast of the Casa di Livia lies the **Criptoportico** (Cryptoporticus; [Map](#)), a 128m tunnel where Caligula was thought to have been murdered, and which Nero later used to connect his Domus Aurea with the Palatine. Lit by a series of windows, it was once decorated by elaborate stucco. Nowadays it's used to stage temporary exhibitions.

The area west of this was once Tiberius' palace, the Domus Tiberiana, but is now the site of the 16th-century **Orti Farnesiani**, one of Europe's earliest botanical gardens. Twin pavilions stand at the northern point of the garden, commanding breathtaking views over the Forum below.

Over the road from the Colosseum, the **Domus Aurea** (Golden House; [Map](#)) was Nero's great gift to himself, a vast palace spread over the Palatine, Oppian (Oppio) and Caelian (Celio) Hills. It's currently closed for renovations after suffering serious water damage. Built after the fire of AD 64 and named after the gold that, with mother-of-pearl, covered its facade, it included frescoed banqueting halls, *nymphaeums* (grottos or caves for recreation and worship, often with water features), baths and terraces. Its grounds, which covered up to a third of the city, included a large artificial lake. It's estimated only around 20% remains of the original complex – Nero's successors attempted to raze all trace of the megalomaniac. The baths and underlying ruins were abandoned by the 6th century. During the Renaissance, artists (including Ghirlandaio, Perugino and Raphael) lowered themselves into the ruins in order to study the frescoed grottoes and to doodle on the walls. All of them later used motifs from the Domus Aurea frescoes in their work.

## CIRCO MASSIMO

The emperors on the Palatine would have overlooked **Circo Massimo** ([Map](#)), Rome's largest stadium, now a grassy basin used mainly by joggers and dog walkers, and for the occasional concert. In its heyday

it was truly magnificent – a 250,000-seater capable of holding a quarter of the city’s population. The 600m racetrack circled a wooden dividing island with ornate lap indicators and Egyptian obelisks.

Chariot races were held here as far back as the 4th century BC, but it wasn’t until Trajan rebuilt it after the AD 64 fire that it reached its maximum grandeur.

The *circo* was also home to two obelisks from Heliopolis in Egypt; these are now in the Piazza del Popolo and the Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano.

## ROMAN FORUM

In ancient Rome, a forum was a covered market, civic centre and religious complex all rolled into one. The centre of public life, it was richly decorated and grandly scaled. Today a sprawl of underlabelled ruins, the **Roman Forum** (Foro Romano; [Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); entrances at Largo Romolo e Remo 5-6 & Via di San Gregorio 30; admission incl Colosseum & Palatine adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €9/4.50/free, plus possible exhibition supplement €3, ticket valid 2 days, audioguide incl Palatine €4-6; 🕒 8.30am-6.15pm Apr-Aug, 8.30am-6pm Sep, 8.30am-5.30pm Oct, 8.30am-4.30pm mid—end Mar, 8.30am-4pm mid-Feb—mid-Mar, 8.30am-3.30pm Nov—mid-Feb) is still impressive – overlook it from Palazzo Senatorio behind Piazza del Campidoglio to set your imagination in gear. The oldest and most famous of Rome’s forums, it was originally an Etruscan burial ground, first developed in the 7th century BC and expanding over 900 years to become the gleaming heart of the Roman Republic.

Its importance declined after the 4th century, and in the Middle Ages it was known as the *campo vaccino* (cow field) as it was used to graze livestock. It was extensively plundered for its stone and marble, but it was the Romans themselves, not invading barbarians, who dismantled the city in order to build their new palaces, churches and monuments.

During the Renaissance, with the renewed appreciation of all things classical, the Forum provided inspiration for artists and architects. The area was systematically excavated in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the excavations continue.

Entering the Forum from Via dei Fori Imperiali (Largo Romolo e Remo entrance), you’ll see the **Tempio di Antonino e Faustina** ([Map](#)), ahead to your left. Erected in AD 141 by the Senate and dedicated to the empress Faustina and later to the emperor Antoninus Pius, it was transformed into a church in the 8th century, so the soaring columns now frame the **Chiesa di San Lorenzo in Miranda** ([Map](#)). To your right the **Basilica Fulvia Aemilia** ([Map](#)), built in 179 BC, was a 100m-long public hall, with a two-storey porticoed facade lined by shops.

At the end of the short path you come to the **Via Sacra**, which traverses the Roman Forum from northwest to southeast. Opposite the basilica stands the **Tempio di Giulio Cesare** (Temple of Julius Caesar; [Map](#)), erected by Augustus in 29 BC on the site where Caesar’s body had been cremated 15 years before. Head right up Via Sacra and you reach the **Curia** ([Map](#)), the building on the right just after the Basilica Fulvia Aemilia. Once the meeting place of the Roman Senate, it was rebuilt successively by Julius Caesar, Augustus, Domitian and Diocletian, and was converted into a Christian church in the Middle Ages. What you see today is a 1937 reconstruction of Diocletian’s Curia. The bronze doors are copies – the originals were used by Borromini for the Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano ([Click here](#)).

In front of the Curia, and hidden by scaffolding at the time of research, is the **Lapis Niger** ([Map](#)), a large piece of black marble that covered a sacred area said to be the tomb of Romulus.

At the end of Via Sacra stands the **Arco di Settimio Severo** (Arch of Septimus Severus; [Map](#)).

Dedicated to the eponymous emperor and his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, it was built in AD 203 to celebrate the Roman victory over the Parthians. The centre panel depicts defeated Parthians being led away in chains. Nearby, at the foot of the Tempio di Saturno, is the **Millarium Aureum** ([Map](#)), which marked the centre of ancient Rome, from where distances to the city were measured. Built by Augustus in 20 BC, it was originally covered in gold.

On your left are the remains of the **Rostrum** ([Map](#)), an elaborate podium, from where Shakespeare had Mark Antony ask his ‘Friends, Romans, countrymen...’ to lend him their ears.

The eight granite columns that you see from here are all that remain of the **Tempio di Saturno** (Temple of Saturn; [Map](#)), one of Rome’s most important temples. Built in the early part of the 5th century, it was used as the state treasury and during Caesar’s rule contained 13 tonnes of gold, 114 tonnes of silver and 30 million silver coins. Behind the temple, backing onto the Capitoline, are (north to south) the ruins of **Tempio della Concordia** (Temple of Concord; [Map](#)), the remaining columns of **Tempio di Vespasiano** (Temple of Vespasian and Titus; [Map](#)) and the **Portico degli Dei Consenti** ([Map](#)).

Turning around, the **Colonna di Foca** (Column of Phocus; [Map](#)) marks the centre of the Piazza del Foro, the forum’s main market and meeting place. The last monument erected in the Roman Forum, it was built in AD 608 to honour Eastern Roman Emperor Phocus, who donated the Pantheon to the Church. South of the Colonna di Foca are the remains of the **Basilica Giulia** ([Map](#)), begun by Julius Caesar and finished by Augustus.

At the end of the basilica is the **Tempio di Castore e Polluce** (Temple of Castor and Pollux; [Map](#)), built in the beginning of the 5th century BC to mark the defeat of the Etruscan Tarquins in 489 BC. It was dedicated to the Dioscuri (or Heavenly Twins) who miraculously appeared to the Roman troops during an important battle. Look out for the three Corinthian columns. Further south of the temple and closed to the public is the **Chiesa di Santa Maria Antiqua** ([Map](#)), the oldest Christian church in the Forum.

Back towards Via Sacra is the **Casa delle Vestali** (House of the Vestal Virgins; [Map](#)), home of the virgins who tended the sacred flame in the adjoining **Tempio di Vesta** ([Map](#)). The six priestesses were selected from patrician families when aged between six and 10. They had to serve in the temple for 30 years and were bound by a vow of chastity during this time. If the flame in the temple went out the priestess responsible would be flogged. If a priestess lost her virginity she was buried alive, since her blood was not to be spilled, and the offending man was flogged to death.

Continuing up Via Sacra past the **Tempio di Romolo** (Temple of Romulus; [Map](#)), you come to the vast **Basilica di Massenzio** ([Map](#)). Emperor Maxentius initiated work on the basilica, and Constantine finished it in 315 (it’s also known as the Basilica di Costantino). The largest building in the forum, it originally covered an area of approximately 100m by 65m, and was used for business and the administration of justice. A colossal statue of Constantine was unearthed at the site in 1487. Pieces of this statue are on display in the courtyard of the Palazzo dei Conservatori in the Capitoline Museums (see opposite).

Continuing, you come to the **Arco di Tito** (Arch of Titus; [Map](#)), built in AD 81 to celebrate Vespasian and Titus’ victories against Jerusalem. In the past, Roman Jews would avoid passing under this arch, the historical symbol of the beginning of the Diaspora.

Accessible from outside the Forum, the 6th-century **Basilica di SS Cosma e Damiano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 15 40; Via dei Fori Imperiali; 🕒 8am-1pm & 3-7pm), incorporates parts of the **Foro di Vespasiano** and **Tempio di Romolo**, visible through the glass wall at the end of the nave. But it’s the sumptuous mosaics behind its altar that you’ve come to see, depicting Christ’s Second Coming. Also worth a glance, off the



tranquil 17th-century cloisters, is a lavish Neapolitan **presepio** (Nativity scene; admission €1; 📍 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Fri-Sun) dating to the 18th century.

## THE IMPERIAL FORUMS

The original Roman Forum got too small around 46 BC and successive emperors built new ones (the Imperial Forums) as demand and vanity required. Thus, on the other side of Via dei Fori Imperiali, lie the collection of forums known as the **Imperial Forums**. Constructed by Caesar, Augustus, Vespasian, Nerva and Trajan between 42 BC and AD 112, they were largely buried in 1933 when Mussolini bulldozed Via dei Fori Imperiali between the Colosseum and Piazza Venezia. Excavations have since unearthed much of them, but work continues and visits are limited to the **Foro di Traiano** (Trajan's Forum), accessible through the Museo dei Fori Imperiali (right).

To the southeast of Trajan's forum, three temple columns arise from the ruins of the **Foro di Augusto** (Augustus' Forum), now mostly under Via dei Fori Imperiali. The 30m-high wall behind the forum was built to protect it from the fires that frequently swept the area.

The **Foro di Nerva** (Nerva's Forum) was also buried by Mussolini's road-building, although part of a temple dedicated to Minerva still stands. Originally, it would have connected the Foro di Augusto to the 1st-century **Foro di Vespasiano** (Vespasian's Forum), also known as the Forum of Peace.

On the other side of Via dei Fori Imperiali, three columns on a raised platform are all that remain of the **Foro di Cesare** (Caesar's Forum), built by Julius Caesar at the foot of the Campidoglio.

**Mercati di Traiano & Museo dei Fori Imperiali** (Map; ☎ 06 820 59 127; [www.mercatiditraiano.it](http://www.mercatiditraiano.it); Via IV Novembre 94; adult/concession €6.50/4.50, audioguide €3.50; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun, last entry 6pm) is a striking new museum that brings to life Trajan's great 2nd-century market complex. It provides a fascinating introduction to the Imperial Forums with detailed explanatory panels and a smattering of archaeological artefacts. However, the museum's real highlight is the access it gives to Trajan's Forum. From the main hallway, a lift whisks you up to the **Torre delle Milizie** (Militia Tower; Map), a 13th-century red-brick tower, and the upper levels of the Mercati di Traiano (Trajan's Markets). These markets, housed in a three-storey semicircular construction, were Trajan's frenetic commercial precinct, with hundreds of traders selling everything from oil and vegetables to flowers, silks and spices.

Little recognisable remains of the forum except for some pillars from the **Basilica Ulpia** and the **Colonna di Traiano** (Trajan's Column), whose minutely detailed reliefs celebrate Trajan's military victories over the Dacians (from modern-day Romania).

## CAMPIDOGLIO

Rising above the Roman Forum, the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill) was one of the seven hills on which Rome was founded. An important political and spiritual site, it was considered the heart of the Roman Republic. At its summit were Rome's two most important temples: one dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus (a descendant of Jupiter, the Roman equivalent of Zeus) and another (which housed Rome's mint) to Juno Moneta. More than 2000 years on, the hill is still a powerhouse – it's the seat of Rome's municipal government.

The most dramatic approach is via the **Cordonata** (Map), Michelangelo's graceful staircase that leads up from Piazza d'Aracoeli. It's guarded at the bottom by two ancient Egyptian granite lions and at the top by statues of Castor and Pollux, salvaged from the nearby Jewish Ghetto in the 16th century.

Designed by Michelangelo in 1538, the beautiful **Piazza del Campidoglio** is bordered by three *palazzi*: Palazzo Nuovo to the left, Palazzo Senatorio straight ahead and Palazzo dei Conservatori on the

right. Together, Palazzo Nuovo and Palazzo dei Conservatori house the Capitoline Museums (right), while Palazzo Senatorio houses Rome's city council.

In the centre of the square, the bronze equestrian **statue of Marcus Aurelius** ([Map](#)) is a copy. The original, which dates from the 2nd century AD, was in the piazza from 1538 until 1981, when it was moved to a glass annexe within Palazzo Nuovo to protect it from erosion. The fountain at the base of Palazzo Senatorio's double staircase contains a 1st-century **statue of Minerva** in a central niche. On either side of her are statues of two laid-back men representing, on the right, the Tiber and, on the left, the Nile.

Marking the highest point of the Campidoglio is the 6th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria in Aracoeli** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 81 55; Piazza Santa Maria in Aracoeli; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm). According to legend it was here that the Tiburtine Sybil told Augustus of the coming birth of Christ, and still today the church has a strong association with the nativity, housing a venerated statue of Jesus. The so-called *santo bambino* (holy baby) is, however, a copy, as the original, said to have healing powers and to have been carved of wood from the Garden of Gethsemane, was pinched in 1994 and never recovered.

The church has a rich interior, with a Cosmatesque floor and, in the first chapel of the southern aisle, an important 15th-century fresco by Pinturicchio. Local (footballing) hero Francesco Totti was married in this church.

The ruins you see to the left of the Aracoeli staircase as you ascend are the remains of a Roman apartment block, or **insula** ([Map](#)), typically used to house the poor. The unexcavated ground-floor shops of this building are now 9m below the current road level.

To the left of the Palazzo Senatorio is Via di San Pietro in Carcere and, down the stairs, the **Carcere Mamertino** (Mamertine Prison; [Map](#); ☎ 06 679 29 02; donation requested; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar) where prisoners were put through a hole in the floor to starve to death. St Peter was believed to have been imprisoned here and to have created a miraculous stream of water to baptise his jailers. It's now a church.

The world's oldest national museums, the **Capitoline Museums** (Musei Capitolini; [Map](#); ☎ 06 820 59 127; [www.museicapitolini.org](http://www.museicapitolini.org); Piazza del Campidoglio 1; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €6.50/4.50/free, incl exhibition €9/7/free, incl Centrale Montemartini & exhibition €11/9/free, audioguide €5; 🕒 9am-8pm Tue-Sun, last admission 7pm) were founded in 1471 when Pope Sixtus IV donated a few bronze sculptures to the city, forming the nucleus of what is now one of Italy's finest collections of classical art.

The main entrance to the museums is in **Palazzo dei Conservatori** ([Map](#)), where you'll find the original core of the sculptural collection. On the 2nd floor is a masterpiece-packed art gallery.

Before you head upstairs, though, take a moment to admire the ancient masonry littered around the ground-floor courtyard, most notably a mammoth head, hand and foot. These all come from a 12m-high statue of Constantine that originally stood in the Basilica di Massenzio in the Roman Forum.

Of the sculpture on the 1st floor, the Etruscan *Lupa Capitolina* is the most famous. Standing in the Sala Della Lupe (Sala IV), the 5th-century BC bronze wolf stands over her suckling wards, Romulus and Remus. The statue was given to the Roman people in 1471 by Sixtus IV, which was when the twins were added. Look out also for the *Spinario* in Sala III, a delicate 1st-century-BC bronze of a boy removing a thorn from his foot, and Gianlorenzo Bernini's head of Medusa in a salon off Sala V.

On the 2nd floor the pinacoteca contains paintings by Titian, Tintoretto, Reni, Van Dyck and Rubens.

Highlights include Giovanni Bellini's *Ritratto di Giovane* (1500), Garofalo's *Annunciation* (1528) and Titian's *Baptism of Christ* (1512). The Hall of Saint Petronella has a number of large canvases, including Caravaggio's *La buona ventura* (The Fortune Teller; 1595), which shows a gypsy pretending to read a young man's hand but stealing his ring, and *San Giovanni Battista* (John the Baptist; 1602), a sensual and unusual depiction of the New Testament saint.

A tunnel links Palazzo dei Conservatori to Palazzo Nuovo on the other side of the square via the **Tabularium**, ancient Rome's central archive, beneath Palazzo Senatorio.

**Palazzo Nuovo** ([Map](#)) is crammed to its elegant rafters with classical sculpture. Don't miss the Sala dei Filosofi, with its ID parade of philosophers, poets and politicians; and, in the Sala del Gladiatore, the *Galata Morente* (Dying Gaul), a Roman copy of a 3rd-century-BC Greek original that movingly depicts the anguish of a dying Frenchman; the 5th-century-BC *Wounded Amazon*, created for a competition between the most famous sculptors of the time for the Sanctuary of Ephesus; and the red-marble *Satiro in Riposo* (resting satyr), originally in Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli and which Nathaniel Hawthorne used for his novel *The Marble Faun*. Also from Hadrian's Villa is the exquisite *Mosaic of the Doves*, made from tiny polychrome tesserae.

## Centro Storico

### PIAZZA VENEZIA

Traffic and people-thronged Piazza Venezia is dominated by a garish lapse of taste, the mammoth, white marble **Vittoriano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 17 18; [www.ambienterm.arti.beniculturali.it/vittoriano/index.htm](http://www.ambienterm.arti.beniculturali.it/vittoriano/index.htm); Piazza Venezia; admission free; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sun), nicknamed 'the typewriter'. Almost endearingly monstrous, it's official name is the Altare della Patria (Altar of the Fatherland). It was begun in 1885 to commemorate Italian unification and honour Vittorio Emanuele II, Italy's first king and the subject of the gargantuan equestrian statue. It also hosts the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which means that you can't sit anywhere on the monument, a rule the hawk-eyed guardians strictly enforce.

Climb up to the top though, and the 360-degree views are stunning, especially at night when the entire city is lit up beneath you. To get to the top, take the glass lift, **Roma del Cielo** (adult/concession €7/3.50; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-7.30pm Fri-Sun) from the back of the building.

Inside the body of the structure, the **Museo Centrale del Risorgimento** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 35 98; Via di San Pietro in Carcere; admission free; 🕒 9.30am-6pm), often referred to as the Complesso del Vittoriano, hosts temporary art exhibitions and a small collection of military knick-knacks documenting the history of Italian unification.

On the western side of the piazza is the Renaissance **Palazzo Venezia** ([Map](#)), where Mussolini had his official residence – he used to make speeches from the balcony. To see inside, visit the sprawling, undervisited **Museo Nazionale del Palazzo Venezia** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 94 318; entrance at Via del Plebiscito 118; adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) with its superb Byzantine and early Renaissance paintings and eclectic collection of jewellery, tapestries, ceramics, bronze figurines, arms and armour. Look out for the early-15th-century *Madonna con Bambino angeli e santi* by Mariotto di Cristofano and the *Ritratto dei figli di Virginio Orsini*, a 16th-century work (artist unknown) that depicts the five sons of the Orsini family.

Facing onto Piazza di San Marco, the **Basilica di San Marco** ([Map](#); Piazza di San Marco; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 4-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Sun) dates to the early 4th century. Built over the house where St Mark the Evangelist is said to have stayed while in Rome, it has undergone several facelifts

over the centuries. It has a Renaissance facade, an 11th-century Romanesque bell tower and a largely baroque mid-18th-century interior. The main attraction is the shimmering 9th-century apse mosaic, which depicts Christ with saints and Pope Gregory IV.

Just north of Piazza Venezia is the **Palazzo Doria Pamphilj** ([Map](#); cnr Via del Corso & Via del Plebiscito), home to the **Galleria Doria Pamphilj** ([☎](#) 06 679 73 23; [www.doriapamphilj.it](http://www.doriapamphilj.it); Via del Corso 305; adult/concession €9/6; [🕒](#) 10am-5pm daily, ticket office closes 6.15pm). You wouldn't know it from the grimy exterior but this *palazzo* houses one of Rome's richest private art collections, with works by Raphael, Tintoretto, Brueghel, Titian, Caravaggio, Bernini and Velázquez.

Palazzo Doria Pamphilj dates to the mid-15th century but the interior resembles a mini-Versailles, the work of the Doria Pamphilj family, who acquired it in the 18th century. The Pamphilj's golden age, during which the family collection was started, came during the papacy of one of their own, Innocent X (r 1644–55), whose generosity to himself and his family was legendary.

Masterpieces abound but look out for Titian's powerful *Salomè con la testa del Battista* (Salome with the Head of John the Baptist) and two early works by Caravaggio, *Riposo durante la fuga in Egitto* (Rest During the Flight into Egypt) and *Maddalene Penitente* (Penitent Magdalen). The collection's undisputed star is the Velázquez portrait of Pope Innocent X, who grumbled that the depiction was 'too real'. In the same room, the *Gabinetto di Velázquez* is Bernini's interpretation of the same subject.

The excellent audioguide (free with your ticket), narrated by Jonathan Pamphilj, brings the place alive with family anecdotes and background information.

It's deeply cheesy, but great entertainment: the **Time Elevator** ([Map](#); [☎](#) 06 977 46 243; [www.time-elevator.it](http://www.time-elevator.it); Via dei Santissimi Apostoli 20; adult/child under 12yr €12/9; [🕒](#) 10.30am-7.30pm) will whisk you around Rome from the comfort of your armchair. There are three programs, but the one to see is Time Elevator Rome, a 45-minute virtual journey through 3000 years of Roman history. Shows kick off every hour, and children and adults alike love the panoramic screens, flight-simulator technology and surround-sound system. Note that children under five aren't admitted and anyone who suffers motion sickness should probably give it a miss.

## PANTHEON & AROUND

Competition is fierce, but the **Pantheon** ([Map](#); [☎](#) 06 683 00 230; Piazza della Rotonda; admission free, audioguide €4; [🕒](#) 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun) is surely ancient Rome's most astonishing building. This Roman temple has been standing for almost 2000 years, and it's a unique, unparalleled experience to enter its great doors and have your vision directed upwards, just as it would have been for the ancient Romans. Its current form dates to around AD 120, when the emperor Hadrian built the Pantheon over Marcus Agrippa's original temple (27 BC). For centuries, historians read the name Agrippa in the inscription on the pediment and thought that Hadrian's version was the 1st-century-BC original. When excavations in the 19th century revealed traces of the earlier temple, they realised their mistake.

Hadrian's temple was dedicated to the classical gods – hence the name Pantheon, a derivation of the Greek words *pan* (all) and *theos* (god) – but in AD 608 it was consecrated as a Christian church. Today you'll find the tombs of kings Vittorio Emanuele II and Umberto I alongside the tomb of the artist Raphael.

But the real fascination of the Pantheon lies in its massive dimensions and extraordinary dome. Considered the Romans' most important architectural achievement, it was the largest dome in the world until the 15th century and is still the largest unreinforced concrete dome ever built. Its harmonious appearance is due to a precisely calibrated symmetry – its diameter is exactly equal to the Pantheon's

interior height of 43.3m. Light enters through the oculi, an 8.7m opening in the dome that also served as a symbolic connection between the temple and the gods. Rainwater enters but drains away through 22 almost-invisible holes in the sloping marble floor.

Somewhat the worse for wear, the exterior is still imposing, with 16 Corinthian columns (each a single block of stone) supporting a triangular pediment. Rivets and holes in the brickwork indicate where the original marble-veneer panels were removed.

Thanks to its consecration as a church in the 7th century, the building was spared the Christian neglect that left other structures to crumble, although it wasn't entirely safe from plundering hands. The gilded-bronze roof tiles were removed and, in the 17th century, Pope Urban VIII allowed Bernini to melt down the bronze ceiling of the portico for the baldachin over the main altar of St Peter's (plus 80 cannons for Castel Sant'Angelo). Thankfully, they left the original Roman bronze doors.

South of the Pantheon, the Piazza della Minerva is home to Bernini's **Elefantino** ([Map](#)), a curious, endearing sculpture of an elephant supporting a 6th-century-BC Egyptian obelisk. On the eastern flank of the square is the 13th-century Dominican **Chiesa di Santa Maria Sopra Minerva** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 39 26; Piazza della Minerva; 🕒 8am-7pm). Built on the site of an ancient temple to Minerva, this is Rome's only Gothic church. Initially, it was modelled on the Basilica di Santa Maria in Florence, but it later underwent various transformations and little remains of the original 13th-century design. Inside, in the Cappella Carafa (also called the Cappella della Annunciazione), you'll find two superb 15th-century frescoes by Filippino Lippi and the majestic tomb of Pope Paul IV, alias Cardinal Olivieri Carafa.

Left of the high altar is one of Michelangelo's lesser-known sculptures, *Cristo Risorto* (Christ Bearing the Cross; 1520), to which blush-saving bronze drapery was later added. An altarpiece of the Madonna and Child in the second chapel in the northern transept is attributed to Fra Angelico, the Dominican friar and painter, who is also buried in the church.

The body of St Catherine of Siena, minus her head (which is in Siena), lies under the high altar, and the tombs of two Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, are in the apse.

An imposing, much-copied example of Counter-Reformation architecture, the **Chiesa del Gesù** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 69 70 01; [www.chiesadelgesu.org](http://www.chiesadelgesu.org); Piazza del Gesù; 🕒 7am-12.30pm & 4-7.45pm), is Rome's most important Jesuit church. It was built between 1551 and 1584 with money donated by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, who was subsequently said to own the three most beautiful things in Rome: his family *palazzo*, his daughter and the Church of Gesù.

Although the facade by Giacomo della Porta is impressive, it is the awesome, bling-packed interior that is the real attraction. Designed by Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, a pupil of Michelangelo, it's a shimmering ensemble of gold and marble built to attract worshippers, magpie-like, to the Jesuit fold. Of the art on display, the most astounding is the *Trionfo del Nome di Gesù* (Triumph of the Name of Jesus), the swirling, hypnotic vault fresco by Giovanni Battista Gaulli (aka Il Baciccio). Baciccio also painted the cupola frescoes and designed the stucco decoration.

The Cappella di San Francesco Saverio, to the right of the main altar, was designed by the Tuscan master Pietro da Cortona. A silver gilt reliquary above the gold altar holds the saint's right forearm (with which he is said to have blessed, baptised and healed many).

Baroque master Andrea Pozzo designed the Cappella di Sant'Ignazio in the northern transept. Here you'll find the tomb of Ignatius Loyola, the Spanish soldier and saint who founded the Jesuits in 1540. The altar-tomb is an opulent marble-and-bronze affair with columns encrusted with lapis lazuli. On top, the terrestrial globe, representing the Trinity, is the largest solid piece of lapis lazuli in the world. On either

side are a couple of sculptures whose titles neatly encapsulate the Jesuit ethos: to the left, *Fede che vince l'Idolatria* (Faith Defeats Idolatry); on the right, *Religione che flagella l'Eresia* (Religion Lashing Heresy).

The Spanish saint lived in this church from 1544 until his death in 1556. On the eastern side of the church you can visit **Loyola's rooms** (☎ 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun), which contain a masterful trompe l'œil perspective by Pozzo.

Nearby, the **Museo Nazionale Romano: Crypta Balbi** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); Via delle Botteghe Oscure 31; adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €7/3.50/free, plus possible exhibition supplement €3; ☎ 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun) provides a fascinating insight into Rome's multilayered past. It's built around the ruins of medieval and Renaissance structures, themselves set on top of a grand Roman portico and theatre, the Teatro di Balbus (13 BC). You can duck down into the underground excavations, then examine artefacts taken from the Crypta, and found in the forums and on the Oppio and Celio Hills.

## PIAZZA NAVONA & AROUND

With its baroque *palazzi* and extravagant fountains, pavement cafes, hawkers, and ebbing, flowing crowds, stadium-sized **Piazza Navona** ([Map](#)) is Rome's most iconic public square. Laid out on the ruins of an arena built by Domitian in AD 86, it was paved over in the 15th century and for almost 300 years was the city's main market.

Of the piazza's three fountains, Bernini's high-camp **Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi** (Fountain of the Four Rivers; [Map](#)) dominates. Symbolising Catholic might, it depicts the Nile, Ganges, Danube and Plate, is festooned with a palm tree, lion and horse, and topped by an obelisk. Legend has it that the figure of the Nile is shielding his eyes from the **Chiesa di Sant'Agnese in Agone** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 681 92 134; [www.santagneseinagone.com](http://www.santagneseinagone.com); ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Sun), designed by Bernini's bitter rival, Borromini. The truth, more boringly, is that Bernini completed his fountain two years before his contemporary started work on the facade. The gesture indicates that the source of the Nile was unknown at the time.

At the northern end of the piazza is the 19th-century **Fontana del Nettuno** ([Map](#)), while the **Fontana del Moro** ([Map](#)) to the south was designed in 1576. Bernini added the Moor holding a dolphin in the mid-17th century, and the surrounding Tritons are 19th-century copies. Piazza Navona's largest building is the 17th-century **Palazzo Pamphilj** ([Map](#)), built for Pope Innocent X and now home to the Brazilian embassy.

North of Piazza Navona, the **Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Altemps** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 683 35 66; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); Piazza Sant'Apollinare 44; adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €7/3.50/free, plus possible exhibition supplement €3, audioguide €4; ☎ 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun) feels surprisingly off the beaten track, and houses the best of the Museo Nazionale Romano's formidable collection of classical sculpture, beautifully lit.

Many of the pieces come from the celebrated Ludovisi collection, amassed by Cardinal Ludovico Ludovisi during the 17th century. As was the fashion, Ludovisi employed leading sculptors – including Bernini and Alessandro Algardi – to 'enhance' the ancient sculpture by replacing missing limbs and sticking new heads onto headless torsos.

Prize (unenhanced) exhibits include the beautiful 5th-century Trono Ludovisi (Ludovisi Throne), a carved marble throne depicting Aphrodite being plucked from the sea as a newborn babe. It shares a room with two colossal heads, one of which is the goddess Juno and dates from around 600 BC. The wall frieze (about half of which remains) depicts the 10 plagues of Egypt and the Exodus.

The building's baroque frescoes provide an exquisite decorative backdrop. The walls of the Sala delle Prospettive Dipinte are decorated with landscapes and hunting scenes seen through trompe l'œil windows. These frescoes were painted for Cardinal Altemps, the rich nephew of Pope Pius IV (r 1560–65) who bought the *palazzo* in the late 16th century.

The Egyptian collection from the Museo Nazionale Romano is also housed here, along with the Mattei collection, formerly at Villa Celimontana (the 16th-century estate of the powerful Mattei family).

A short walk away are two churches that no art-lover should miss. The **Chiesa di Sant'Agostino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 01 962; Piazza di Sant'Agostino; 🕒 7.45am-noon & 4-7.30pm) contains two outstanding works of art: Raphael's 1512 fresco of Isaiah, and the *Madonna of the Pilgrims* (1604) by Caravaggio. Nearby, Caravaggio dominates the baroque **Chiesa di San Luigi dei Francesi** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 68 82 71; Piazza di San Luigi dei Francesi; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 4-7pm, closed Thu afternoon), church to Rome's French community since 1589. His three canvases make up the St Matthew cycle: *La Vocazione di San Matteo* (The Calling of Saint Matthew), *Il Martiro di San Matteo* (The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew) and *San Matteo e l'Angelo* (Saint Matthew and the Angel). These were among Caravaggio's earliest religious works, painted between 1600 and 1602, but are inescapably his, featuring down-to-earth realism and stunning use of chiaroscuro. Here Jesus seems truly to be coming out of the darkness.

To the south of Piazza Navona, the impressive baroque Palazzo Braschi houses the **Museo di Roma** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 820 59 127; [www.museodiroma.it](http://www.museodiroma.it); Piazza di San Pantaleo 10; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €6.50/4.50/free, audioguide €3.50; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), an eclectic collection of paintings, photographs, etchings, clothes and furniture, charting the history of Rome from the Middle Ages to the early 20th century. The *palazzo* itself contains some beautiful frescoed halls, including the extravagant Sala Cinese and the Egyptian-themed Sala Egiziana. Among the paintings, look out for Raphael's 1511 portrait of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, the future Pope Paul III.

## CAMPO DE' FIORI & AROUND

Noisy, colourful **Campo de' Fiori** (Il Campo; [Map](#)) is a major focus of Roman life: by day it hosts a much-loved market, while at night it morphs into a raucous open-air pub. Towering over the square is the Obi-Wan-like form of Giordano Bruno, a monk who was burned at the stake for heresy in 1600.

Overlooking the adjoining, more tranquil Piazza Farnese, the **Palazzo Farnese** ([Map](#)) is a magnificent Renaissance building. Started in 1514 by Antonio da Sangallo, continued by Michelangelo and finished by Giacomo della Porta, it is now the French embassy. The twin fountains in the square are enormous granite baths taken from the Terme di Caracalla.

South of Campo de' Fiori and Piazza Farnese, the 16th-century **Palazzo Spada** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 683 24 09; Piazza Capo di Ferro 13; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €5/2.50/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) contains Borromini's famous optical illusion (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)). Upstairs the small art gallery houses the Spada family art collection (acquired by the state in 1926), with works by Andrea del Sarto, Guido Reni, Guercino and Titian.

Between Campo de' Fiori and the Jewish Ghetto is the **Area Sacra di Largo Argentina** ([Map](#)). The ruins in the sunken centre of this busy traffic junction were uncovered in 1926; four temples are visible, all of which front onto a paved square. They date from the 4th century BC to the 2nd century BC. It was on this site (on the tram side) that Julius Caesar was assassinated on 15 March (The Ides of March) in 44 BC.

## JEWISH GHETTO & ISOLA TIBERINA

Jews have lived in Rome since the 2nd century BC. In 1555 Pope Paul IV issued a papal bull ordering that they be confined to the Jewish Ghetto, a situation that lasted until the end of the 19th century and was reinstated by the Nazis during WWII. Via del Portico d'Ottavia is the centre of the Ghetto, a tranquil tangle of streets.

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## ROME'S OPTICAL ILLUSIONS

To see Rome at its most magically theatrical, seek out its amazing optical tricks.

At **Palazzo Spada** ([Click here](#)) Borromini's corridor appears to stretch out 25m, lined by columns leading to a life-sized statue. But, in reality, it's only 10m long. The sculpture, a later addition, is only hip height and the columns diminish in size, which is what creates the illusion of increased distance. And look closer at that perfect-looking hedge. Borromini didn't trust the gardeners to clip a real hedge precisely enough so he made one of stone.

If Borromini has whetted your appetite for trickery, try the beautiful **Chiesa di Sant'Ignazio di Loyola** ([Map](#); Piazza di Sant'Ignazio; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 3-7.15pm). Enter and gaze up at the cupola. Do you notice anything odd about it? It doesn't exist. The ceiling is completely flat, decorated by a trompe l'œil painting by Andrea Pozzo. At first glance, the ceiling seems to rise up to a magnificent dome. Walk a little further into the church and the carefully created perspective stops working and the deception becomes clear. The planned dome was never built due to technical problems.

The other two optical wonders are both viewpoints. In Aventino, visit the **Piazza dei Cavalieri di Malta** ([Map](#)) designed by 18th-century Venetian artist Piranesi, better known for his amazing engravings. Peep through the keyhole of the great doorway on the square – it's that of the **Priori dei Cavalieri di Malta**. You will see an extraordinary sight of surreal perfection: the dome of St Peter's perfectly aligned at the end of a hedge-lined avenue.

Finally, close to the beautiful park of Villa Pamphilj ([Map](#)) in southeastern Rome, stop off on **Via Piccolomini**. You have a wonderful view of St Peter's Dome from here – better than from Piazza San Pietro Piazza where it's hard to see because the facade juts out so far. Here the dome looms, filling the space at the end of the road, framed by trees. What is most curious is that as you move towards it, the cupola seems to get smaller as the view widens.

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Housed in Europe's second largest synagogue, built in 1904, the **Museo Ebraico di Roma** (Jewish Museum of Rome; [Map](#); ☎ 06 684 00 661; [www.museoebraico.roma.it](http://www.museoebraico.roma.it); Via Catalana; adult/student/under 10yr €7.50/4/free; ☎ 10am-6.15pm Sun-Thu, 10am-3.15pm Fri mid-Jun—mid-Sep, 10am-4.15pm Sun-Thu, 9am-1.15pm Fri mid-Sep—mid-Jun) chronicles the engrossing historical, cultural and artistic heritage of Rome's Jewish community. You can also book a one-hour guided walking tour of the Ghetto (adult/student €8/5) at the museum.

To the east of the Ghetto is the archaeological area of the **Portico d'Ottavia** ([Map](#); Via del Teatro di Marcello; ☎ 9am-7pm summer, 9am-6pm winter), the oldest *quadriporto* (four-sided porch) in Rome. The columns and fragmented pediment once formed part of a vast rectangular portico, supported by 300 columns, that measured 132m by 119m. Erected by a builder called Octavius in 146 BC, it was rebuilt in 23 BC by Augustus, who kept the name in honour of his sister Octavia. From the Middle Ages until the late 19th century, the portico housed the city's fish market.

Most imposing is the **Teatro di Marcello**, akin to a smaller Colosseum with later buildings tacked on top. The 20,000-seat theatre was planned by Julius Caesar and built by Augustus around 13 BC. In the



16th century, a *palazzo* was built onto the original building; today this houses some exclusive apartments lived in by some lucky Romans.

Follow Via del Teatro di Marcello onward as it becomes Via Petroselli and you eventually come to Piazza Bocca della Verità ([Map](#)), where you'll find a queue of tourists waiting to put their hands in one of Rome's most famous curiosities: the **Bocca della Verità** (Mouth of Truth; [Map](#); ☎ 06 678 14 19; Piazza Bocca della Verità 18; 🕒 9.30am-5pm). It's said if you put your right hand in the mouth of this mask-shaped disk while telling a lie, the mouth will bite your hand off.

The mouth lives in the portico of the beautiful, medieval **Chiesa di Santa Maria in Cosmedin**. Originally built in the 8th century, the church was given a major revamp in the 12th century, when the seven-storey bell tower and portico were added and the floor, high altar and *schola cantorum* (choir) were decorated with Cosmati inlaid marble. There's not much left of the original structure but you can still see a fragment of 8th-century mosaic in the souvenir shop.

Opposite the church are two small Roman temples: the round **Tempio di Ercole Vincitore** ([Map](#)) and the **Tempio di Portunus** ([Map](#)). Just off the piazza, the **Arco di Giano** (Arch of Janus; [Map](#)) is a four-sided Roman arch that once covered a crossroads.

To reach the **Isola Tiberina** ([Map](#)), the world's smallest inhabited island, double back up the river to the **Ponte Fabricio** ([Map](#)), itself a record-breaker: it dates to 62 BC and is Rome's oldest-standing bridge. The Isola Tiberina has been associated with healing since the 3rd century BC, when the Romans adopted Aesculapius, the Greek god of healing, as their own and erected a temple to him on the island. Today it's the site of the **Ospedale Fatebenefratelli** ([Map](#)), a public hospital famous for its maternity facilities. The **Chiesa di San Bartolomeo** ([Map](#); 🕒 10.30am-1pm & 3-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 6.30-8pm Sun) was built on the island in the 10th century on the ruins of the Roman temple. It has a Romanesque bell tower and a marble wellhead, believed to have been built over the same spring that provided healing waters for the temple. The **Ponte Cestio** ([Map](#)), built in 46 BC, connects the island with Trastevere to the south. It was rebuilt in the late 19th century. Also to the south of the island are the remains of the **Ponte Rotto** (Broken Bridge; [Map](#)), ancient Rome's first stone bridge.

## TREVI FOUNTAIN TO THE QUIRINAL

The **Trevi Fountain** (Fontana di Trevi; [Map](#)), almost fills an entire piazza, and is Rome's most famous fountain, its iconic status sealed when Anita Ekberg splashed here in *La Dolce Vita*. The baroque bonanza was designed by Nicola Salvi in 1732 and depicts Neptune's chariot being led by Tritons with sea horses – one wild, one docile – representing the moods of the sea. The water comes from one of the city's earliest aqueducts and the name 'Trevi' refers to the '*tre vie*' (three roads) that converge at the fountain. It's traditional to throw a coin into the fountain, to ensure your return to the Eternal City. Around €300 or so is thrown away on an average day – no wonder Rome seems so crowded. It's regularly hoovered up and given to charity.

At the top of the Quirinal (Quirinale) Hill, the immense **Palazzo del Quirinale** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 4 69 91; [www.quirinale.it](http://www.quirinale.it); Piazza del Quirinale; adult/over 65yr €5/free; 🕒 8.30am-noon Sun mid-Sep—mid-Jun) served as the papal summer residence for almost three centuries until the keys were handed over, begrudgingly and staring down the barrel of a gun, to Italy's new king in 1870. It was passed on to the president of the republic in 1948.

Along Via del Quirinale are two masterpiece churches, designed by the baroque era's great rivals: Bernini's **Chiesa di Sant'Andrea al Quirinale** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 474 08 07; Via del Quirinale 29; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon & 4-7pm Sun), and Borromini's **Chiesa di San Carlo alle Quattro**

**Fontane** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 31 09; Via del Quirinale 23; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, noon-1pm Sun).

## PIAZZA BARBERINI & AROUND

Seventeenth-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Concezione** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 487 11 85; Via Vittorio Veneto 27; admission by donation; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm Fri-Wed) is nothing special, but descend into the Capuchin cemetery below and you'll be gobsmacked. Between 1528 and 1870 the Capuchin monks used the bones of 4000 of their departed brothers in a most macabre take on interior decoration. There's an arch crafted from skulls, vertebrae used as fleurs-de-lis, and femur light fixtures. The message in the last crypt reads: 'What you are now we used to be; what we are now you will be'. Happy holidays!

In the centre of noisy, traffic-busy Piazza Barberini is Bernini's spectacular **Fontana del Tritone** (Fountain of the Triton; [Map](#)), created in 1643 for Pope Urban VIII, patriarch of the Barberini family. Bernini also sculpted the **Fontana delle Api** (Fountain of the Bees; [Map](#)), in the northeastern corner, for the powerful Barberini family, whose crest features three bees.

The spectacular 17th-century **Palazzo Barberini** ([Map](#)) was commissioned by Urban VIII to celebrate the Barberini family's rise to papal power. Many high-profile baroque architects worked on it, including Bernini and Borromini – check out their rival staircases within the building. Today it houses part of the **Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 225 82 493; [www.galleriaborghese.it](http://www.galleriaborghese.it); Via delle Quattro Fontane 13; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €5/2.50/free, plus reservation fee €1; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, ticket office closes 7pm), a Renaissance and baroque art feast. Besides works by Raphael, Caravaggio, Guido Reni, Bernini, Filippo Lippi and Holbein, there is the wonderful ceiling of the main salon, entitled the *Triumph of Divine Providence* (1632–39) by Pietro da Cortona. Don't miss Hans Holbein's famous portrait of Henry VIII (c 1540) and Filippo Lippi's luminous *Annunciazione e due devoti*. Caravaggio fans will delight in his *St Francis in Meditation*, *Judith Beheading Holophernes* (c 1597–1600) and *Narcissus* (c 1571–1610). Another must-see is Raphael's lovely *La Fornarina* (The Baker's Girl), a portrait of his mistress Margherita Luti, who worked in a bakery on Via di Santa Dorotea in Trastevere.

## Tridente

This upmarket district is packed with glittering designer boutiques catering to high-rolling shoppers, and encompasses the Spanish Steps, Piazza di Spagna and Piazza del Popolo. The latter marks the convergence of the three roads – Via di Ripetta, Via del Corso and Via del Babuino – forming a trident, hence the name.

## PIAZZA DI SPAGNA & THE SPANISH STEPS

The **Spanish Steps** (Scalinata della Trinità dei Monti; [Map](#)), a perfect auditorium for people-watching, have acted as magnets for visitors since the 18th century. The **Piazza di Spagna** ([Map](#)) was named after the Spanish Embassy to the Holy See, although the staircase, built with a legacy from the French in 1725, leads to the French church **Trinità dei Monti** ([Map](#)). At the foot of the steps, the 'sinking boat' fountain, the **Barcaccia** ([Map](#)), is believed to be by Pietro Bernini, father of the famous Gianlorenzo.

Overlooking the steps, the **Keats-Shelley Memorial House** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 42 35; [www.keats-shelley-house.org](http://www.keats-shelley-house.org); Piazza di Spagna 26; adult/under 18yr & over 65yr/under 6yr €4/3/free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm & 3-6pm Sat) is where Keats died in 1821, while on an obviously unsuccessful holiday to improve his health. The cramped apartments now form an evocative museum, housing poems, letters and memorabilia from Keats' fatal visit, including his death mask.

## ARA PACIS

From Piazza di Spagna, if you walk to the end of Via Condotti, cross Via del Corso and continue down Via della F Borghese, turning right at Via di Ripetta, you'll come upon the **Museo dell'Ara Pacis** (Altar of Peace; [Map](#); ☎ 06 820 59 127; [www.arapacis.it](http://www.arapacis.it); Lungotevere in Augusta; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €6.50/4.50/free; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), Richard Meier's glass-and-marble pavilion. Many Romans detest the first modern construction in Rome's historic centre since WWII, and Rome Mayor Gianni Alemanno even made an election promise to tear it down. Highs have included Valentino's stunning retrospective here in 2008; lows are Julian Schnabel calling it an 'air-conditioning unit', and a paint-ball attack by vandals in 2009.

Inside is the less-controversial Ara Pacis Augustae (Altar of Peace), Augustus' great monument to peace. One of the most important works of ancient Roman sculpture, the vast marble altar (it measures 11.6m by 10.6m by 3.6m) was completed in 13 BC and positioned near Piazza San Lorenzo in Lucina, slightly to the southeast of its current site. The location was calculated so that on Augustus' birthday the shadow of a huge sundial on Campus Martius would fall directly on it.

Over the centuries the altar fell victim to Rome's avid art collectors, and panels ended up in the Medici collection, the Vatican and the Louvre. However in 1936 Mussolini unearthed the remaining parts and decided to reassemble them in the present location.

Of the reliefs, the most important depicts Augustus at the head of a procession, followed by priests, the general Marcus Agrippa and the entire imperial family.

Next to the Ara Pacis is the forlorn-looking **Mausoleo di Augusto** (Mausoleum of Augustus; [Map](#)). What was once one of the most imposing monuments in ancient Rome is now an unkempt mound of earth, overgrown with weeds. Plans for a major revamp by architect Francesco Cellini are apparently afoot for completion in 2011, but as yet there's no sign of activity on the ground.

The mausoleum, which was built in 28 BC and originally measured 87m in diameter, is the last resting place of Augustus, who was buried here in AD 14, and his favourite nephew and heir Marcellus.

During the Middle Ages the mausoleum served as a fortress and was later used as a vineyard, a private garden and a travertine quarry. Mussolini had it restored in 1936 with an eye to being buried here himself.

## PIAZZA DEL POPOLO

For centuries the site of public executions, this elegant ellipse of a **piazza** ([Map](#)) was laid out in 1538 to provide a suitably grandiose entrance to what was then the main northern gateway into the city.

Guarding its southern end are Carlo Rainaldi's twin 17th-century baroque churches, **Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Miracoli** ([Map](#)) and **Chiesa di Santa Maria in Montesanto** ([Map](#)), while over on the northern flank is the **Porta del Popolo**, created by Bernini in 1655 to celebrate Queen Christina of Sweden's defection to Catholicism. In the centre, the 36m-high **obelisk** was brought by Augustus from Heliopolis, in ancient Egypt, and moved here from the Circo Massimo in the mid-16th century. To the east are the **Pincio Hill Gardens**.

The **Chiesa di Santa Maria del Popolo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 361 08 36; Piazza del Popolo; 🕒 7am-noon & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Sun), next to the Porta del Popolo, is one of Rome's earliest, richest Renaissance churches. The first chapel was built here in 1099 to exorcise the ghost of Nero, who was buried on this spot and whose ghost was said to haunt the area. It was overhauled in 1462, after which Pinturicchio painted his beautiful frescoes. In Raphael's Cappella Chigi (most of which was completed by Bernini some 100 years later) you'll find a famous mosaic of a kneeling skeleton. In the

Cappella Cerasi, to the left of the altar, are two unforgettable Caravaggio masterpieces: the *Conversion of St Paul* and the *Crucifixion of St Peter* (both 1600–01).

Close to the Piazza del Popolo is the modest, lovingly maintained **Casa di Goethe** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 50 412; [www.casadigoethe.it](http://www.casadigoethe.it); Via del Corso 18; adult/student & over 65yr €4/3; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), where the German writer had a whale of a time between 1786 and 1788. Its collection includes his drawings and etchings from the period as well as interesting souvenirs of his stay.

## Villa Borghese & Around

Locals, lovers, tourists, joggers – no one can help heeding the call of the Villa Borghese, the ravishing baroque **park** ([Map](#)) just north of Rome's historic centre. Cardinal Scipione Borghese, top dog in one of Rome's most powerful families, created these grounds in the 17th century, and they're perfect for sun-dappled picnics, a pastoral hiatus, and a chance for kids to run about and shout.

You can enter from Piazzale Flaminio, from the top of Pincio Hill above the Spanish Steps or from the top of Via Vittorio Veneto. Bike hire is available at five different points throughout the park, including Viale Goethe and on Pincio Hill. Bank on about €5/10 per hour/day. There's also a motorised train you can take on a tour around the park.

Cardinal Scipione Borghese (1579–1633) was the most knowledgeable and ruthless art collector of his day, and his collection, in the **Museo e Galleria Borghese** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 3 28 10; [www.galleriaborghese.it](http://www.galleriaborghese.it); Piazzale Scipione Borghese 5; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €8.50/5.25/2, audioguides €5; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, prebooking necessary) is as dazzling as his park. If you only have time (or inclination) for one art gallery in Rome, make it this one, which is not only exquisite, but also provides the perfect introduction to Renaissance and baroque art without being overwhelming. It's housed in the Casino Borghese, whose neoclassical look is the result of a 17th-century revamp. To limit numbers, visitors are admitted at two-hourly intervals, so you'll need to call to prebook, and enter at an allotted entry time, but trust us, it's worth it.

The villa is divided into two parts: the ground-floor museum, with its superb sculptures, intricate Roman floor mosaics and over-the-top frescoes; and the upstairs picture gallery.

Things get off to a cracking start in the entrance hall, decorated with 4th-century floor mosaics of fighting gladiators and a *Satiro Combattente* (*Fighting Satyr*) from the 2nd century.

Sala I is centred on Antonio Canova's daring depiction of Napoleon's sister, Paolina Bonaparte Borghese, reclining topless as *Venere Vincitrice* (Victorious Venus; 1805–08). Yet it's Gianlorenzo Bernini's spectacular sculptures – flamboyant depictions of pagan myths – that really steal the show. Just look at Daphne's hands morphing into leaves in the swirling *Apollo e Dafne* (1622–25) in Sala III, or Pluto's hand pressing into the seemingly soft flesh of Persephone's thigh in the *Ratto di Proserpina* (Rape of Persephone; 1621–22) in Sala IV.

Caravaggio, one of Cardinal Scipione's favourite artists, dominates Sala VIII. There's a dissipated-looking *Bacchus* (1592–95); the strangely beautiful *La Madonna dei Palafenieri* (Madonna with Serpent; 1605–06); and *San Giovanni Battista* (St John the Baptist; 1609–10), probably Caravaggio's last work. Then there's the much-loved *Ragazzo col Canestro di Frutta* (Boy with a Basket of Fruit; 1593–95); and the dramatic *Davide con la Testa di Golia* (David with the Head of Goliath; 1609–10) – Goliath's severed head is said to be a self-portrait.

Upstairs, with works representing the best of the Tuscan, Venetian, Umbrian and northern European schools, the pinacoteca offers a wonderful snapshot of European Renaissance art.

In Sala IX don't miss Raphael's extraordinary *La Deposizione di Cristo* (Christ Being Taken Down from the Cross; 1507), and his *Dama con Liocorno* (Young Woman with Unicorn; 1506). In the same room is the superb *Adorazione del Bambino* (Adoration of the Christ Child; 1495) by Fra Bartolomeo and Perugino's *Madonna con Bambino* (Madonna and Child; first quarter of the 16th century).

Next door, Correggio's erotic *Danae* (1530–31) shares wall space with a willowy Venus, as portrayed by Cranach in his *Venere e Amore che Reca Il Favo do Miele* (Venus and Cupid with Honeycomb; 1531).

In Sala XIV there are two self-portraits of Bernini – one as a young man in 1623 and one painted in 1635. While Sala XVIII contains two significant works by Reubens: *Pianto sul Cristo Morto* (Lamentation over the Dead Christ; 1602) and *Susanna e I Vecchioni* (Susanna and the Elders; 1605–07). However the highlight is Titian's early masterpiece, *Amor Sacro e Amor Profano* (Sacred and Profane Love; 1514) in Sala XX.

Nearby, the oft-overlooked **Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 322 98 221; [www.gnam.arti.beniculturali.it](http://www.gnam.arti.beniculturali.it); Viale delle Belle Arti 131, entrance for visitors with disabilities at Via Antonio Gramsci 73; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €10/8/free; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) is definitely worth a visit. Set in a vast belle époque palace are works by some of the most important exponents of modern Italian art. There are canvases by the *macchiaioli* (the Italian Impressionists) and futurists Boccioni and Balla, as well as several impressive sculptures by Canova and major works by Modigliani and De Chirico. International artists are also represented, with works by Degas, Cezanne, Kandinsky, Klimt, Mondrian, Pollock and Henry Moore.

The gallery's charming terrace cafe is the perfect place for a languorous breather.

A short walk down Viale delle Belle Arti leads to the **Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia** ([Map](#); ☎ bookings 06 322 65 71; [www.ticketeria.it](http://www.ticketeria.it); Piazzale di Villa Giulia 9; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €4/27/free; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun). Italy's finest collection of pre-Roman treasures is considerately presented in Pope Julius III's 16th-century pleasure palace. The villa was built between 1551 and 1555, and Vasari, Vignola and Michelangelo were all advisors on its construction. It originally had private access to and from the Tiber via a special path through surrounding gardens and vineyards.

If you're planning on visiting Etruscan sites in Lazio ([Click here](#)), this is the ideal place to bone up on the subject before you go. Many of the exhibits came from Lazio's Etruscan burial tombs, and range from bronze figurines and black bucchero tableware to temple decorations, terracotta vases and a dazzling display of sophisticated jewellery.

Must-sees include a polychrome terracotta statue of Apollo, the 6th-century-BC *Sarcofago degli Sposi* (Sarcophagus of the Betrothed), and the Euphronios Krater, a celebrated Greek vase that was returned to Italy in 2008 after a 30-year tug of war between the Italian government and New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## Termini & Esquilino

The hugest of Rome's seven hills, the **Esquilino** (Esquiline; [Map](#)) extends from the Colosseum to Stazione Termini, encompassing Via Cavour (a broad traffic-heavy avenue between Termini and Via dei Fori Imperiali), the mosaic-lined Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, and the charming, bohemian area of **Monti**. Much of Esquilino was covered with vineyards and gardens until the late 19th century, when they were dug up to make way for grandiose apartment blocks. Head to Monti to browse around bijou boutiques, restaurants and bars. This was one of Rome's oldest areas, notoriously the red-light district at the time of the Republic.

Pilgrims and art-lovers flock to the **Basilica di San Pietro in Vincoli** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 28 65; Piazza di San Pietro in Vincoli 4a; 🕒 8am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm Apr-Sep, 8am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Oct-Mar) for two reasons: to see St Peter's chains and to see Michelangelo's tomb of Pope Julius II. The church was built in the 5th century specially to house the chains that bound St Peter when he was imprisoned in the Carcere Mamertino ([Click here](#)). Some time after St Peter's death, the chains were sent to Constantinople for a period before returning to Rome as relics. They arrived in two pieces and legend has it that when they were reunited they miraculously joined together. They are now displayed under the altar.

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## ROME, CINEMA CITY

One way to prepare for a holiday in Rome is through an orgy of film watching.

Masterpieces of locally shot, gritty neorealism include Roberto Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*; 1945) and Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (*The Bicycle Thieves*; 1948) and *Umberto D* (1952). Pierpaolo Pasolini unmasked Rome's rougher side in his painfully realistic films, largely focussing on the village-like suburb of Pigneto, such as in his seminal film about Roman low life *Acattonne!* (1961). The wonderful Anna Magnani stars in his film *Mamma Roma* (*Mother Rome*; 1962), partly set in Trastevere.

To cheer yourself up, and for a complete contrast, watch the iconic comedy *Un americano a Roma* (1947), in which Alberto Sordi stars as Mericoni Nando, a simple-minded lad from Trastevere who longs to be American (the ubiquitous film-still of Sordi eating spaghetti hails from this movie).

In the 1960s the style of local cinema became less gritty and more stylised, with films shot largely at the local Cinecittà studios at the cutting edge of contemporary film. The king of this movement was Federico Fellini, whose *La dolce vita* (*The Sweet Life*; 1960) is synonymous with the city and whose *Le notti di Cabiria* (*Nights of Cabiria*; 1957) has scenes set in the Via Veneto, Aventino and Terme di Caracalla. Fellini even made a film tribute to his adored city (*Roma*; 1972). Other directors working in Rome at this time included Michelangelo Antonioni, whose *L'eclisse* (*The Eclipse*; 1962) is set in the *centro storico* (historic centre) and EUR among other locations; and Bernardo Bertolucci, who ended *Il conformista* (*The Conformist*; 1970) at the Colosseum and used the Terme di Caracalla for the final scenes in the oedipal *La luna* (1979).

In more recent years, director Nanni Moretti's idiosyncratic *Caro diario* (*Dear Diary*; 1993) shows him riding via scooter through an empty Rome. Paolo Sorrentino's superb *Il Divo* (2008), about politician Giulio Andreotti, Italy's seven-time former prime minister, tried for Mafia ties and then acquitted, will give you a picture of the city as a seat of (mis)government.

Foreign directors have also fallen in love with Rome as a backdrop. The most famous overseas films set here are William Wyler's films *Roman Holiday* (1953; see Walking Tour, [Click here](#)) and *Ben Hur* (1959), but there are many others worth watching, including Jean Negulesco's froth-and-bubble confection *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954), Vincent Minelli's *Two Weeks in Another Town* (1962), Jean-Luc Godard's *Contempt* (1963), Jane Campion's *Portrait of a Lady* (1996), Peter Greenaway's *The Belly of an Architect* (1987), Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999), and Ron Howard's *Angels & Demons* (2009). The Vatican refused permission to film this Dan Brown story in any church interiors (they'd taken issue with his *Da Vinci Code*), so the filmmakers used reconstructions for the many interior shots. After the film came out, however, the Vatican deemed it 'harmless entertainment which hardly affects the genius and mystery of Christianity'.

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To the right of the altar is Julius' monumental tomb. At the centre of the work is Michelangelo's buff *Moses*, with magnificent beard and two small horns sticking out of his head. Subject of much curiosity, the

horns were inspired by a mistranslation of a biblical passage: where the original said that rays of light issued from Moses' face, the translator wrote 'horns'. Michelangelo was aware of the mistake, but he gave Moses horns anyway. The statues of Leah and Rachel flanking Moses were probably completed by Michelangelo's students. Despite its imposing scale, the tomb was never finished – Michelangelo had originally envisaged 40 statues but got sidetracked with the [Sistine Chapel](#), and Pope Julius II was buried in St Peter's Basilica.

Access to the church is via a flight of steps through a low arch that leads up from Via Cavour.

One of Rome's four patriarchal basilicas (the others being St Peter's, San Giovanni in Laterano and San Paolo Fuori-le-Mura), the **Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 698 86 800; Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore; 🕒 7am-7pm) was built on the summit of the Esquilino in the 5th century.

While the great interior retains its original 5th-century structure, the basilica has been much altered over the centuries: the 75m belfry, the highest in Rome, is 14th-century Romanesque; Ferdinand Fuga's 1741 facade is baroque, as is much of the sumptuous interior; and the nave floor is a fine example of 12th-century Cosmati paving. The main draw, however, are the 5th-century mosaics in the triumphal arch and nave, depicting Old Testament scenes. Binoculars will come in handy. The central image in the apse, signed by Jacopo Torriti, dates from the 13th century and represents the coronation of the Virgin Mary.

The baldachin over the high altar is elaborately decorated with gilt cherubs; the altar itself is a porphyry sarcophagus, which is said to contain the relics of St Matthew and other martyrs. Note the plaque to the right of the altar marking the spot where Gianlorenzo Bernini and his father Pietro are buried. Steps lead down to the *confessio* (a crypt in which relics are placed), where a statue of Pope Pius IX kneels before a reliquary containing a fragment of Jesus' manger.

The sumptuously decorated Cappella Sistina, last on the right, was built by Domenico Fontana in the 16th century and contains the tombs of Popes Sixtus V and Pius V.

Through the souvenir shop on the right-hand side of the church is a **museum** (adult/child €4/2; 🕒 9am-6pm) with a motley collection of religious artefacts. More interesting is the upper **loggia** (☎ 06 698 86 802; admission €5; 🕒 guided tours by reservation only), where you'll find some iridescent 13th-century mosaics.

## PIAZZA DELLA REPUBBLICA & AROUND

Flanked by grand neoclassical colonnades, the landmark **Piazza della Repubblica** ([Map](#)) was laid out as part of Rome's post-unification makeover. Scattered around this huge roundabout you will find the bulk of the Museo Nazionale Romano's world-famous archaeological collection.

The complex of baths, libraries, concert halls and gardens that made up the **Terme di Diocleziano** (Diocletian's Baths; [Map](#)) was the largest in ancient Rome, covering about 13 hectares, with a capacity to hold 3000 people. Completed in the early 4th century, it fell into disrepair after the aqueduct that fed the baths was destroyed by invaders in about AD 536.

Outside, Michelangelo's elegant cloister is lined with classical sarcophagi, headless statues, and huge sculptured animal heads, thought to have come from the Foro di [Traiano](#).

To the north, the **Aula Ottagona** (Piazza della Repubblica; admission free; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun), often closed due to staff shortages, houses more Roman sculpture.

Today the bath complex ruins constitute part of the **Museo Nazionale Romano: Terme di Diocleziano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); Viale Enrico de Nicola 78; adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €7/3.50/free, plus possible exhibition supplement €3, audioguide €4; 🕒 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun).

The ground- and 1st-floor galleries contain a large collection of vases, amphorae and household objects in terracotta and bronze. Among the highlights are three stunning terracotta statues of seated female figures that were found in Ariccia, southeast of Rome. The extensive 2nd-floor galleries contain artefacts (mainly burial objects such as jewellery and domestic items) dating to the 11th to 6th centuries BC.

The hulking **Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 08 12; [www.santamariadegliangeliroma.it](http://www.santamariadegliangeliroma.it); Piazza della Repubblica; 🕒 7am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 7am-7.30pm Sun) occupies what was once the central hall of Diocletian's baths complex. It was originally designed by Michelangelo but only the great vaulted ceiling remains from his plans.

A treasure trove of classical art, the light-filled **Museo Nazionale Romano: Palazzo Massimo alle Terme** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); Largo di Villa Peretti 1; adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €7/3.50/free, plus possible exhibition supplement €3, audioguide €4; 🕒 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun) is one of Rome's finest museums, yet receives only a smattering of visitors.

The ground and 1st floors are devoted to sculpture from the 2nd century BC to the 5th century AD. This is all about glorification: ancient artists presented emperors in various vainglorious poses – check out the depiction of Augustus as Pontifex Maximus in Sala V on the ground floor. In the same room, don't miss the marble frieze from the Roman Forum, which came from the entablature of the first interior order of the Basilica Fulvia Aemilia – it depicts scenes of the origin of Rome. In Sala VI next door, there is a sculpture known as the *Niobide dagli Horti Sallustiani*, which dates from the 5th century BC. It depicts one of the 14 children of Niobe. Niobe insulted Leto, the mother of Apollo and Artemis, leading to Apollo and Artemis killing all of Niobe's children with arrows.

More gems, including a ravaged, voluptuous Aphrodite from [Villa Adriana](#) at Tivoli, are found on the 1st floor, but the sensational mosaics and frescoes on the 2nd floor blow everything else away. These include richly coloured frescoes from an Augustan-era villa, such as the *cubicula* (bedrooms) with religious, erotic and theatre subjects, and landscape paintings from the *triclinium* (dining room).

But the best is still to come: the garden paintings (dating from 20BC to 10 BC) from Villa Livia, one of the homes of Augustus' wife Livia Drusilla. Excavated in the 19th century and displayed here in 1951, these stunning frescoes depict an illusionary garden with all the plants in full bloom. The room in which they were originally painted was probably a summer triclinium, a large living and dining area built half underground to provide protection from the heat.

## San Giovanni & Celio

For a thousand years, the **Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 698 73 112; Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano 4; 🕒 7am-6.30pm) was the most important church in Christendom. Founded by Constantine in AD 324, it was the first Christian basilica built in the city. It is still Rome's cathedral and the pope's seat as bishop of Rome.

Surmounted by 15 colossal statues – Christ with St John the Baptist, John the Evangelist and the 12 Apostles – Alessandro Galilei's huge white facade is a mid-18th-century example of late-baroque classicism, designed to convey the infinite authority of the Church. The **bronze doors** were moved here from the Curia in the Roman Forum, while to their right is the Holy Door, which is only opened in jubilee years.

The interior has been revamped on numerous occasions, although it owes much of its present look to Francesco Borromini, who was called in by Pope Innocent X to redecorate it for the 1650 Jubilee. Among other things, Borromini added the sculptural frames around the funerary monuments in the aisles and,



above them, his trademark oval windows.

But elements of earlier interiors survive, including the delightful 15th-century mosaic floor and the Gothic baldachin over the papal altar. At the top of the baldachin is a reliquary that supposedly contains the heads of St Peter and St Paul. Below, a double staircase leads to the *confessio*, which houses pieces of what's thought to be St Peter's wooden altar table, used by 1st- to 4th-century popes.

The fresco behind the first pillar of the right-hand aisle is an original, if incomplete, Giotto. While admiring it, cock your ear towards the next pillar, where a monument to Pope Sylvester II (r 999–1003) is said to sweat and creak when the death of a pope is imminent.

To the left of the altar, the beautiful **cloister** (admission €2; 📍 9am-6pm) was built by the Vassalietto family in the 13th century. The twisted columns were once completely covered with inlaid marble mosaics, remnants of which can still be seen.

Flanking Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano, itself dominated by Rome's oldest and tallest obelisk, is Domenico Fontana's 16th-century **Palazzo Laterano**. Part of the original 4th-century basilica complex, it was the official papal residence until the popes moved to the Vatican in 1377, and today houses the diocese of Rome.

Just around the corner is the fascinating octagonal **battistero** (baptistry). Built by Constantine in the 4th century, this domed building served as the prototype for later Christian churches and bell towers. Inside, some of the decorative mosaics date back to the 5th century.

At the opposite end of Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano is the **Scala Santa** (Holy Staircase; [Map](#); 📞 06 772 66 41; Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano 14; Scala/Sancta €3.50/free, Sancta & Cappella San Silvestro €5; 📍 Scala 6.15am-noon & 3.30-6.45pm Apr-Sep, 6.15am-noon & 3-6.15pm Oct-Mar, Sancta Sanctorum 10.30-11.30am & 3-4.30pm Apr-Sep, 10.30-11.30am & 3-4pm Oct-Mar, closed Wed am & Sun year-round) and the **Sancta Sanctorum** (Holy of Holies). The Scala Santa is said to be the staircase that Jesus walked up in Pontius Pilate's palace in Jerusalem. Consequently you can only climb it on your knees. As believers slowly make their way up the staircase, you could cut the spiritual atmosphere with a knife – it's a remarkable place. At the top of the stairs, the Sancta Sanctorum was the popes' private chapel and contains spectacular 13th-century frescoes.

Architectural time travel awaits at the **Basilica di San Clemente** ([Map](#); 📞 06 774 00 21; [www.basilicasanclemente.com](http://www.basilicasanclemente.com); Via di San Giovanni in Laterano; admission church/excavations free/€5; 📍 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun), which lies between San Giovanni and the Colosseum. The 12th-century church contains a stunning medieval mosaic in its apse, the *Triumph of the Cross*, with 12 doves symbolising the apostles. Figures around the cross include the Madonna and St John, as well as St John the Baptist and other saints. Though stunning, it's eclipsed by the Renaissance frescoes in the Chapel of St Catherine, to the left of the entrance.

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## SUBTERRANEAN CULT

Mithraism was a cult that was hugely popular with the ancient Roman military. According to its mythology, Mithras, a young, handsome god, was ordered to slay a wild bull by the Sun. As the bull died, it gave life, as its blood flow caused wheat and other plants to grow. In Mithraic iconography, a serpent and dog are usually shown attacking the bull to try to prevent this, while a scorpion attacks its testicles. Mithraic temples are always deep and dark, but the cult's fascination with dank, dark caves doesn't reflect a sinister undercurrent. Rather, its cave-temples represented the cosmos, because it was created from the earth. Here devotees underwent complex processes of initiation, rising through

ranks such as ‘soldier’ and ‘raven’. They also ate bread and water as a representation of the body and the blood of the bull. Sounds familiar? The early Christians thought so too, and were fervently against the cult, feeling its practises were too close to their own. It’s ironic that Rome’s best-preserved Mithraic temple lies beneath the beautiful Christian Basilica di [San Clemente](#).

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Afterwards take steps down to a 4th-century church, mostly destroyed by Norman invaders in 1084, but with some faded 11th-century frescoes illustrating the life of San Clement. Follow the steps down another level and you’ll walk along an ancient lane to a 1st-century Roman house that also contains a dark, 2nd-century temple to Mithras (see the boxed text above), with an altar showing the god slaying a bull. Beneath it all, you can hear the eerie sound of a subterranean river, running through a Roman Republic—era drain.

To the southwest, Rome’s most monumentally huge ruins, the **Terme di Caracalla** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; Viale delle Terme di Caracalla 52; admission incl Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella & Villa dei Quintili adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €6/3/free, audioguide €4; 🕒 9am-7.15pm Tue-Sun Apr-Aug, 9am-7pm Sep, 9am-6.30pm Oct, 9am-5.30pm mid—end Mar, 9am-5pm mid-Feb—mid-Mar, 9am-4.30pm Nov—mid-Feb, 9am-2pm Mon year-round) show that size certainly mattered to the Roman emperors. Covering 10 hectares, this ancient leisure centre complex could hold 1600 people and included richly decorated *caldaria* (hot rooms), a lukewarm tepidarium, a swimming pool, gymnasiums, libraries, shops and gardens. Between 6000 and 8000 people were thought to have used them every day. Underground, slaves sweated in 9.5km of tunnels, attending to the centre’s complex plumbing systems. Begun by Antonius Caracalla and inaugurated in 217, the baths were used until 537, when the Visigoths smashed their way into Rome. Excavations in the 16th and 17th centuries unearthed important sculptures, many of which found their way into the Farnese family art collection.

## Trastevere

With its network of cobbled lanes, flapping washing hung between 17th-century ivy-draped facades, and crumbling ochre buildings, Trastevere is made for idle wandering. Besides its bewitching prettiness, it has a powerful local character – it’s said to be the heartland of the real Romans – but its working-class roots are being gradually obscured via colonisation by wealthy foreigners. It’s over the river from the *centro storico*, hence the name *trasevere* – across the Tiber. Packed with bars and restaurants, it’s everyone’s favourite summer-evening hang out.

Trastevere’s glittering heart is the beautiful **Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere** ([Map](#)), a prime people-watching spot. The central fountain is a 17th-century restoration of the Roman original.

It’s overlooked by the ravishing **Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 581 48 02; [www.santamariaintrastevere.org](http://www.santamariaintrastevere.org); Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere; 🕒 7.30am-8pm), said to be the oldest church dedicated to the Virgin Mary in Rome. Begun in AD 337, a major overhaul in 1138 saw the addition of the Romanesque bell tower and glittering mosaicked facade. The portico came later, added by Carlo Fontana in 1702.

Inside, the shimmering 12th-century mosaics star. In the apse, look out for Christ and his mother flanked by various saints and, on the far left, Pope Innocent II holding a model of the church. Beneath this is a series of six mosaics by Pietro Cavallini illustrating the life of the Virgin (c 1291).

The building itself incorporates 21 ancient Roman columns, some taken from the Terme di Caracalla, and its wooden ceiling dates to the 17th century.

From Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere it’s a short walk to Piazza Trilussa and the picturesque

pedestrian bridge of **Ponte Sisto** ([Map](#)), which leads back across the Tiber to Via Giulia and Campo de' Fiori.

On the other side of Trastevere, to the east of Viale di Trastevere (the large road on which tram 8 drops you off if coming from Largo di Torre Argentina), two churches are worth a visit. The last resting place of Saint Cecilia (the patron saint of music), the **Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 589 92 89; Piazza di Santa Cecilia 22; admission basilica/Cavallini fresco/crypt free/€2.50/2.50 📧 basilica & crypt 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm, Cavallini fresco 10.15-noon Mon-Sat, 11.15-12.15 Sun) features a stunning 13th-century fresco by Pietro Cavallini in the nuns' choir. Below the altar, Stefano Moderno's delicate sculpture shows exactly how Saint Cecilia's miraculously preserved body was found when it was unearthed in the Catacombe di San Callisto in 1599. Beneath the church you can visit the **excavations** of several Roman houses, one of which might have belonged to Saint Cecilia.

Nearby, towards the end of Via della Luce, the **Chiesa di San Francesco a Ripa** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 581 90 20; Piazza San Francesco d'Assisi 88; 📧 7am-noon & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 7am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Sun) is home to Bernini's *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*, in which her religious ecstasy ripples with sexuality.

St Francis of Assisi is said to have stayed in the church for a period in the 13th century and you can still see the rock that he used as a pillow.

## Gianicolo

Rising up behind Trastevere, the summit of **Gianicolo** (Janiculum; [Map](#)) offers sweeping, bird's-eye views of Rome. It also hosts regular puppet shows, and has a small cafe.

Around halfway up lies what is considered the first great building of the High Renaissance, Bramante's sublime **Tempietto** (Little Temple; [Map](#); ☎ 06 581 39 40; [www.sanpietroinmontorio.it](http://www.sanpietroinmontorio.it); Piazza San Pietro in Montorio 2; 📧 church 8am-noon & 3-4pm Mon-Fri, tempietto 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), built in the courtyard of the Chiesa di San Pietro in Montorio, on the spot where St Peter is supposed to have been crucified. More than a century later, in 1628, Bernini added a staircase, and also contributed a chapel to the adjacent church.

To reach the top of the hill is quite a climb, but you're rewarded by the views. To cheat, take bus 870 from Via Paola just off Corso Vittorio Emanuele II near the Tiber.

The bus will also take you within easy walking distance of the nearby **Villa Doria Pamphilj** ([Map](#); Via Aurelia Antica; 📧 sunrise-sunset), Rome's largest park and a lovely spot for a walk and a picnic. The park was laid out in the 17th century for Prince Camillo Pamphilj, cousin of Pope Innocent X.

## Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

The world's smallest sovereign state, the **Vatican City** (Città del Vaticano; [Map](#)) might cover an area of less than 1 sq km but it packs quite a punch. When the pope speaks, the world's one billion Catholics listen. And what the Vatican City lacks in size it makes up for in wealth – the opulence of St Peter's and the vast collections of the Vatican Museums have to be seen to be believed.

The Vatican regained its independence in 1929 after 68 years as part of the Kingdom of Italy. Under the terms of the Lateran Treaty, signed by Mussolini and Pius XI, the pope was also given sovereignty over the basilicas of San Giovanni in Laterano (as well as the Palazzo Laterano), Santa Maria Maggiore and San Paolo Fuori-le-Mura.

As an independent state, the Vatican has its own postal service, currency, newspaper, radio station and army. The nattily dressed (think billowing stripes) Swiss Guards, all practising Catholics from

Switzerland, were first used by Julius II in 1506 to defend the Papal States against invading armies and are today still responsible for the pope's personal security.

The first pope to establish a fixed papal residence in the Vatican was Symmachus (498–514), although it wasn't until 1377 that the Vatican palace became the official residence of the pope. Before that pontiffs had lived at the Palazzo Laterano, adjacent to the Basilica di San Giovanni, and, for a short time in the 14th century, in Avignon (France).

The current look of the Vatican is the culmination of more than 1000 years of chipping and changing. The Leonine walls date to 846 when Leo IV had them put up after a series of Saracen raids, while the Vatican palace, now home to the Vatican Museums, was originally constructed by Eugenius III in the 12th century. Subsequent popes extended it, fortified it and decorated it according to their political and artistic needs.

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## PAPAL AUDIENCES

At 11am on Wednesdays, the pope meets his flock at the Vatican (in July and August he does so in Castel Gandolfo, [Click here](#)). For free tickets go to the ticket office of the Prefettura della Casa Pontificia through the bronze doors under the colonnade to the right of St Peter's. You can apply on the Tuesday before the audience or, at a push, on the Wednesday morning. Alternatively, download the application form (valid also for liturgical ceremonies) from the Vatican website ([www.vatican.va/various/prefettura/en/biglietti\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/various/prefettura/en/biglietti_en.html)) and send it by fax or post to the **Prefettura della Casa Pontificia** (fax 06 698 85 863; Prefecture of the Papal Household, 00120 Vatican City State). Give your Rome contact details (eg your hotel or apartment address), so that an arrangement can be made regarding delivery or collection of your tickets.

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Between the Vatican and the river lies the cobbled, medieval district of the Borgo (before Mussolini bulldozed through Via della Conciliazione, all the streets around St Peter's were like this), while north of the Vatican is Prati, a graceful residential area that's popular with media types (RAI has its headquarters here), and has some good accommodation and restaurants.

## ST PETER'S SQUARE

One of the world's great public spaces, Bernini's massive **Piazza San Pietro** ([Map](#)) is a breathtaking work of baroque town planning. At its largest, it measures 340m by 240m; there are 284 columns and, on top of the colonnades, 140 saints.

Seen from above, it resembles a giant keyhole with two semicircular colonnades, each consisting of four rows of Doric columns, encircling a giant ellipse that straightens out to funnel believers into the basilica. The effect was deliberate – Bernini described the colonnades as representing 'the motherly arms of the church'. He designed the square to open up before visitors as they escaped the jumble of narrow streets that originally surrounded the area, but Mussolini vanquished Bernini's effect when he built the long, straight approach road, Via della Conciliazione. The 25m obelisk in the centre was brought to Rome by Caligula from Heliopolis in Egypt and later used by Nero as a turning post for the chariot races in his circus.

In the midst of all this the pope seems very small as he delivers his weekly address at noon on Sunday.

## ST PETER'S BASILICA

In this city of astounding churches, **St Peter's Basilica** (Basilica di San Pietro; [Map](#); ☎ 06 698 83 731;

[www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va); Piazza San Pietro; admission free, audioguides €5; ☎ 7am-7pm Apr-Sep, 7am-6pm Oct-Mar) outdazzles them all. Awe-inspiringly huge, rich and spectacular, it's a monument to centuries of artistic genius. On a busy day, around 20,000 visitors pass through here. If you want to be one of them, remember to dress appropriately – no shorts, miniskirts or bare shoulders. If you want to hire an audioguide (€5), they're available at a desk in the cloakroom to the right of the entrance. Free English-language guided tours of the basilica are run from the Vatican tourist office, the Centro Servizi Pellegrini e Turisti, at 9.45am on Tuesday and Thursday and at 2.15pm every afternoon between Monday and Friday.

The first basilica was built here by Rome's first Christian emperor, Constantine, in the 4th century. Standing on the site of Nero's stadium, the Ager Vaticanus, where St Peter is said to have been buried between AD 64 and 67, it was consecrated in AD 326.

Like many early churches, it eventually fell into disrepair, and it wasn't until the mid-15th century that efforts were made to restore it, first by Pope Nicholas V and then, rather more successfully, by Julius II. In 1506 Bramante came up with a design for a basilica based on a Greek-cross plan, with a central dome and four smaller domes. In the ensuing construction, Bramante attracted great criticism for destroying the old basilica and, with it, many precious Byzantine mosaics and frescoes.

It took more than 150 years to complete the new basilica, now the second biggest in the world (the largest is in Yamoussoukro on the Côte d'Ivoire). Bramante, Raphael, Antonio da Sangallo, Giacomo della Porta and Carlo Maderno all contributed, but it is generally held that St Peter's owes most to Michelangelo, who took over the project in 1547 at the age of 72 and was responsible for the design of the dome.

The facade and portico were designed by Maderno, who took over the project after Michelangelo's death. He was also instructed to lengthen the nave towards the piazza, effectively altering Bramante's original Greek cross plan to a Latin cross.

The interior is 187m long and covers more than 15,000 sq metres. Decorated by Bernini and Giacomo della Porta, it can hold up to 60,000 people and contains spectacular works of art. Chief among them is Michelangelo's haunting **Pietà**, at the beginning of the right aisle. Sculpted when he was only 25 years old, this is the only work to carry his signature (on the sash across the Madonna's breast).

Nearby, the **red porphyry disk** just inside the main door marks the spot where Charlemagne and later Holy Roman emperors were crowned by the pope.

Dominating the centre of the church is Bernini's 29m-high baroque **baldachin**. Supported by four spiral columns and made with bronze taken from the Pantheon, it stands over the high altar, which itself sits on the site of St Peter's grave. The pope is the only priest permitted to serve at the high altar.

To the right as you face the high altar is a famous bronze **statue of St Peter**, believed to be a 13th-century work by Arnolfo di Cambio. The statue's right foot has been worn down by the kisses and touches of many pilgrims.

Michelangelo's **dome** (with/without lift €7/5; ☎ 8am-6pm Apr-Sep, 8am-5pm Oct-Mar) soars 119m above the high altar. Based on Brunelleschi's design for the Duomo in Florence, the towering cupola is supported by four solid stone piers, named after the saints whose statues adorn their Bernini-designed niches – Longinus, Helena, Veronica and Andrew – and decorated with reliefs depicting the Reliquie Maggiori (Major Relics): the lance of St Longinus, which he used to pierce Christ's side; the cloth of St Veronica, which bears a miraculous image of Christ; and a piece of the True Cross, collected by St Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine.

Entry to the dome is to the far right of the basilica. A small lift takes you halfway up but it's still a long climb to the top (320 steps). Press on though and you'll be rewarded with stunning views. It's well worth the effort, but bear in mind it's steep, long and narrow: not recommended for those who suffer from claustrophobia or vertigo.

Accessed from the left nave of the basilica, the **Museo Storico Artistico** (Treasury; adult/child & student €6/4; 🕒 9am-6.15pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5.15pm Oct-Mar) sparkles with sacred relics and priceless artefacts, including a tabernacle by Donatello and the 6th-century Crux Vaticana, a cross studded with jewels that was a gift of the emperor Justinian II.

The **Vatican Grottoes** (Sacre Grotte Vaticane; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Mar) contain the tombs of numerous popes, including John Paul II, whose simple sepulchre contrasts starkly with many of the flamboyant monuments in the basilica above. You can also see several huge columns from the original 4th-century basilica. The entrance is through the right side of the portico.

Excavations beneath the basilica, which began in 1940, have uncovered part of the original church and what archaeologists believe is the **Tomb of St Peter** (admission €10, booking obligatory, over 15s only). In 1942, the bones of an elderly, strongly built man were found in a box hidden behind a wall covered by pilgrims' graffiti. After more than 30 years of forensic examination, in 1976, Pope Paul VI declared the bones to be those of St Peter.

The excavations can only be visited on a 90-minute guided tour. To book a spot you'll need to email the **Ufficio Scavi** (Excavations Office; 📞 06 698 85 318; [scavi@fsp.va](mailto:scavi@fsp.va)), as far in advance as possible.

## VATICAN MUSEUMS

Visiting the **Vatican Museums** (Musei Vaticani; [Map](#); 📞 06 698 84 947; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va); Viale Vaticano; adult/6yr-18yr & student/under 6yr €14/8/free, last Sun of the month free; 🕒 entry 9am-4pm Mon-Sat, closing time 6pm, 9am-12.30pm, closing time 2pm last Sun of month) is an thrilling experience, but one that will require reserves of stamina and patience. Queues are inevitable. If you book online at the Vatican's online ticket office (<http://biglietteriamusei.vatican.va/musei/tickets/do?weblang=en&do>), you will avoid some of the queues, though you will still have to pass through security checks, and make sure you bring valid ID as well as the printout email confirmation.

Founded by Pope Julius II in the early 16th century and enlarged by successive pontiffs, the museums are housed in what is known collectively as the Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano. This massive 5.5-hectare complex consists of two palaces – the Vatican palace nearest St Peter's and the Belvedere Palace – joined by two long galleries. On the inside are three courtyards: the Cortile della Pigna, the Cortile della Biblioteca, and, to the south, the Cortile del Belvedere.

You'll never manage to explore the whole complex in one go – you'd need several hours just for the highlights – so selectivity is the way to go. There are several suggested itineraries from the Quattro Cancelli area near the entrance, or you can go it alone and make up your own route. Each gallery contains priceless treasures, but for a whistle-stop tour get to the Pinacoteca, the Museo Pio-Clementino, Galleria delle Carte Geografiche, Stanze di Raffaello (Raphael Rooms) and the Sistine Chapel.

On the whole exhibits are not well labelled so you might find it useful to hire an audioguide (€7) or buy the *Guide to the Vatican Museums and City* (€10). There are also authorised guided tours (adult/concession €30/25), which you can book at the Vatican's online ticket office.

The museums are well equipped for visitors with disabilities: there are four suggested itineraries, lifts and specially fitted toilets. Wheelchairs can also be reserved in advance (fax 06 698 85 433). Parents

with young children can take prams into the museums.

What follows is a brief description of some of the museums' major features and highlights.

In the **Pinacoteca** you'll find Raphael's last work, *La Trasfigurazione* (1517–20), and paintings by Giotto, Bellini, Caravaggio, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Guido Reni, Van Dyck, Pietro da Cortona and Leonardo da Vinci, whose *San Gerolamo* (St Jerome; c 1480) was never finished.

Founded by Gregory XVI in 1839, the **Museo Gregoriano Egizio** (Egyptian Museum) contains pieces taken from Egypt in Roman times. The collection is small but there are fascinating exhibits including the *Trono di Rameses II*, part of a statue of the seated king, vividly painted sarcophagi dating from around 1000 BC, and some macabre mummies.

The **Museo Chiaramonti** is effectively the long corridor that runs down the lower east side of the Belvedere Palace. Its walls are lined with thousands of statues representing everything from immortal gods to playful cherubs and ugly Roman patricians. Near the end of the hall, off to the right, is the Braccio Nuovo (New Wing), which contains a famous sculpture of Augustus and a statue depicting the Nile as a reclining god covered by 16 babies (supposedly representing the number of cubits the Nile rose when it flooded).

Housed in the 15th-century Belvedere Palace, **Museo Pio-Clementino** is packed with spectacular classical statuary, including the peerless *Apollo Belvedere* and the 1st-century *Laocoön*, both in the Cortile Ottagono (Octagonal Courtyard).

To the left as you enter the courtyard, the *Apollo Belvedere* is a 2nd-century Roman copy of a 4th-century-BC Greek bronze. A beautifully proportioned representation of the sun god Apollo, it's considered one of the great masterpieces of classical sculpture. Nearby, the *Laocoön* depicts a muscular Trojan priest and his two sons in mortal struggle with two sea serpents. According to legend, the snakes had been sent to slay the priest as punishment for his warning Troy about the dangers of the Trojan Horse. When the statue was unearthed on the Esquilino in 1506, Michelangelo and Giuliano da Sangallo confirmed that it was the same sculpture that had been cited by Pliny the Elder some 1500 years earlier.

In the **Sala delle Muse** (Room of Muses) is the fantastic *Torso Belvedere*, a Greek sculpture from the 1st century BC, discovered in the Campo de' Fiori around the same time as the *Laocoön* was unearthed. Back inside the Belvedere Palace the **Sala Rotonda** (Round Room) contains a number of colossal statues, including the gilded-bronze figure of Ercole (Hercules), and an exquisite floor mosaic featuring sea monsters and battles between Greeks and centaurs. The enormous basin in the centre of the room was found at the site of [Nero's Domus Aurea](#) and is made out of a single piece of red porphyry stone.

On the upper level of the Belvedere (off the 18th-century Simonetti staircase), the Museo Gregoriano Etrusco contains artefacts unearthed in the Etruscan tombs of southern Etruria (now northern Lazio), as well as a collection of Greek vases and Roman antiquities. Of particular interest is the *Marte di Todi* (Mars of Todi), a full-length bronze statue of a warrior dating from the 4th century BC, in the Sala dei Bronzi.

Magnificent views of Rome can be had from the last room at the end of this wing (through the Sala delle Terracotte). From here you can also get a glimpse down the full drop of Bramante's 16th-century spiral staircase, which was designed so that horses could be ridden up it.

Through the 175m-long **Galleria delle Carte Geografiche** (Map Gallery), hung with 16th-century maps, and the tapestry-hung **Appartamento di San Pio V**, are the magnificent **Stanze di Raffaello**, the private apartments of Pope Julius II. Raphael himself painted the Stanza della Segnatura (1508–11) and

the Stanza d'Eliodoro (1512–14), while the Stanza dell'Incendio (1514–17) was painted by his students to his designs and the ceiling was painted by his master, Perugino.

In the **Stanza della Segnatura** you'll find Raphael's earliest frescoes and his masterpiece, *La Scuola d'Atene* (The School of Athens), featuring philosophers and scholars gathered around Plato and Aristotle. The lone figure in front of the steps is believed to be Michelangelo, while the figure of Plato is said to be a portrait of Leonardo da Vinci, and Euclide (in the lower right) is Bramante. Raphael also included a self-portrait in the lower right corner (he's the second figure from the right). Opposite is *La Disputa del Sacramento* (Disputation on the Sacrament), also by Raphael.

In the **Stanza d'Eliodoro**, which was used for private audiences, is another Raphael masterpiece, *Cacciata d'Eliodoro* (Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple), which symbolises Julius' military victory over foreign powers. To the left is *Mass of Bolsena*, showing Julius II paying homage to a relic from a 13th-century miracle in the lakeside town of Bolsena, near Viterbo. Next is *Leone X ferma l'invasione di Attila* (Leo X Repulsing Attila) by Raphael and his students. On the fourth wall is *Liberazione di San Pietro* (Liberation of St Peter), which depicts the saint being freed from prison, but is an allusion to Pope Leo's imprisonment after the battle of Ravenna (also the real subject of the Attila fresco).

## Sistine Chapel

The one place in the Vatican Museums that not one of the 4.5 million annual visitors wants to miss is the **Sistine Chapel** (Capella Sistina; [Map](#)). Home to two of the world's most famous works of art – Michelangelo's *Genesis* (Creation) on the barrel-vaulted ceiling and the *Giudizio Universale* (Last Judgment) on the end wall – this 15th-century chapel is where the papal conclave is locked to elect the pope.

The chapel was originally built in 1484 for Pope Sixtus IV, after whom it is named, but it was Julius II who commissioned Michelangelo to decorate it in 1508. The great artist was reluctant to take on the job – he considered himself a sculptor not a painter. But Julius prevailed and over the course of the next four years (1508–12) Michelangelo decorated the entire 800-sq-metre ceiling. To do so he designed a curved scaffolding system that allowed him to work standing up, albeit in an awkward backward-leaning position, and employed a steady stream of assistants to help with the plaster work (producing frescoes involves painting directly onto wet plaster).

The frescoes down the middle represent nine scenes from the book of Genesis: *God Separating Light from Darkness*; *Creation of the Sun, Moon and Planets*; *Separation of Land from Sea*; *Creation of Adam*; *Creation of Eve*; *Temptation and Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden*; *Noah's Sacrifice*; *The Flood*; and the *Drunkenness of Noah*.

Michelangelo painted these in reverse order, providing critics with a remarkable illustration of his artistic development: the first, the *Drunkenness of Noah* (nearest the *Giudizio Universale*) is much more formal than his later works at the other end of the ceiling.

The main scenes are framed by pulsating, muscular *ignudi*, athletic male nudes.

The walls of the chapel were also painted by important Renaissance artists, including Botticelli, Domenico Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio and Luca Signorelli. Anywhere else these frescoes would be the stars of the show: they are magnificent late-15th-century works, depicting events in the lives of Moses and Christ, but here they are overshadowed by Michelangelo's magnificence. However Botticelli's *Temptation of Christ* and the *Cleansing of the Leper* (the second fresco on the right) are particularly



beautiful. The first frescoes in each cycle, the *Finding of Moses* and the *Birth of Christ* by Perugino, were destroyed to make way for *The Last Judgement* – a great controversy at the time.

*The Last Judgement* depicts the souls of the dead being torn from their graves to face the wrath of God. The subject was chosen by Pope Paul III as a warning to Catholics to toe the line during the Reformation, which was then sweeping Europe. A work of highly charged emotion, it is said to reflect Michelangelo's tormented faith. When it was unveiled, in 1541, its dramatic, swirling mass of predominantly naked bodies caused controversy, and Pope Pius IV later had Daniele da Volterra, one of Michelangelo's students, add blush-sparing fig leaves and loincloths.

## BORGO

The area between the Vatican and the Tiber is known as the Borgo, with its monumental landmark being **Castel Sant'Angelo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 681 91 11; Lungotevere Castello 50; adult/EU 18-25yr €5/3; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun). Built as a mausoleum for the emperor Hadrian, it was converted into a papal fortress in the 6th century and named after an angelic vision that Pope Gregory the Great had in 590. Thanks to a secret 13th-century passageway to the Vatican palaces, the Passetta di Borgo, it provided sanctuary to many popes in times of danger. During the 16th-century sack of Rome by Emperor Charles V, hundreds of people lived in the fortress for months.

Its upper floors are filled with lavishly decorated Renaissance interiors, including, on the 4th floor, the beautifully frescoed Sala Paolina. Two stories farther up, the terrace, immortalised by Puccini in his opera *Tosca*, offers great views over Rome.

Opposite the castle, the **Ponte Sant'Angelo** ([Map](#)) was built by Hadrian in AD 134 to provide an approach to his mausoleum. In the 17th century, Bernini and his pupils sculpted the figures of angels that line the pedestrian walkway, supplying intense drama. The three central arches of the bridge are part of the original structure; the end arches were restored and enlarged between 1892 and 1894 during the construction of the Lungotevere embankments.

## Via Appia Antica & the Catacombs

Heading southeast from Porta San Sebastiano, **Via Appia Antica** (the Appian Way; [Map](#)), one of the world's oldest roads, was known to the Romans as the *regina viarum* (queen of roads). Named after Appius Claudius Caecus, who laid the first 90km section in 312 BC, it was extended in 190 BC to reach Brindisi, some 540km away on the southern Adriatic coast.

Flanked by some of the city's most exclusive private villas, as well as Roman tombs, the long cobbled road is a great place for a walk or cycle. It runs as straight as a die through jewel-green countryside, and is rich in ruins and history – this is where Spartacus and 6000 of his slave rebels were crucified in 71 BC. But the road is best known for its catacombs, around 300km of underground tunnels used as burial chambers by the early Christians. You can't visit all 300km, but three major catacombs (San Callisto, San Sebastiano and Santa Domitilla) are open for guided exploration.

To get to Via Appia Antica and the catacombs, catch one of the following buses: bus 218 from Piazza di San Giovanni in Laterano; bus 660 from the Colli Albani stop on metro A; or bus 118 from the Piramide stop on metro B. Alternatively, the Archeobus (€15) departs from Termini every hour, followed by a stop at Piazza Venezia and then the Colosseum, before going on to the Terme di Caracalla. It's best to visit the road on a Sunday, when a long section is closed to traffic.

If you're planning on really doing the sights, think about buying the Appia Antica Card (see boxed text, [Click here](#)). There are several information points in the area, including the **Appia Antica Regional Park**

**Information Point** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 513 53 16; [www.parcoappiaantica.org](http://www.parcoappiaantica.org); Via Appia Antica 58-60; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 2-5.30pm or 4.30pm in winter Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5.30pm or 4.30pm in winter Sun). You can also buy a map of the park here and hire bikes (per hour/day €3/10). The park authorities organise a series of free guided tours, on foot and by bike, on Sunday mornings – see the website for the latest programme. In addition, a number of local nature and archaeological associations run tours, including the **Darwin Cooperative** ([www.cooperativedarwin.it](http://www.cooperativedarwin.it)) which leads group tours (€8 on foot, €12 by bike) in English, French, Spanish and German.

Near the information office, the **Chiesa del Domine Quo Vadis** ([Map](#); Via Appia Antica 51; ☎ 8am-6pm) is built at the point where St Peter, while fleeing Rome, is said to have met a vision of Jesus. Peter asked: *‘Domine, quo vadis?’* (‘Lord, where are you going?’) When Jesus replied, *‘Venio Roman iterum crucifigi’* (‘I am coming to Rome to be crucified again’), Peter decided to join him and on his return to the city was immediately arrested and executed. In the centre of the church’s aisle there are two footprints that supposedly belong to Christ; the originals are up the road in the Basilica di San Sebastiano (opposite).

The main attractions along Via Appia Antica are the catacombs – an endless-seeming warren of narrow tunnels carved out of the soft tufa rock (see boxed text, below). Corpses were wrapped in simple white sheets and usually placed in rectangular niches carved into the walls, which were then closed with marble or terracotta slabs.

The largest, most famous and busiest tunnels are the **Catacombs of San Callisto** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 513 01 580; Via Appia Antica 110 & 126; [www.catacombe.roma.it](http://www.catacombe.roma.it); adult/6-15yr/under 6yr €6/3/free; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Thu-Tue, closed Feb). Founded at the end of the 2nd century and named after Pope Calixtus I, they became the official cemetery of the newly established Roman Church. In the 20km of tunnels explored to date, archaeologists have found the tombs of some 500,000 people and seven popes who were martyred in the 3rd century. The patron saint of music, St Cecilia, was also buried here, although her body was later moved to the Basilica di Santa Cecilia in [Trastevere](#). When her body was exhumed in 1599, over 1000 years after her death, it was apparently perfectly preserved, as depicted in Stefano Moderno’s softly contoured sculpture, a replica of which is here.

The **Catacombs of San Sebastiano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 785 03 50; [www.catacombe.org](http://www.catacombe.org); Via Appia Antica 136; catacombs adult/7-15yr/under 7yr €6/3/free; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, closed mid-Nov—mid-Dec) were a safe haven for the remains of St Peter and St Paul during the reign of Vespasian. The first level is now almost completely destroyed but frescoes, stucco work, epigraphs and three immaculate mausoleums can be seen on the second level.

The **Basilica di San Sebastiano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 780 00 47; Via Appia Antica 136; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-5.30pm daily) above the catacombs dates from the 4th century and preserves one of the arrows used to kill St Sebastian, and the column to which he was tied. On the other side of the church you’ll find a marble slab with the imprints of Jesus’ footprints. (see Chiesa del Domine Quo Vadis, opposite).

Among Rome’s largest and oldest, the **Catacombs of San Domitilla** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 511 03 42; Via delle Sette Chiese 283; adult/6-15yr/under 6yr €6/3/free; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Wed-Mon, closed Jan) stretch for about 17km. They were established on the private burial ground of Flavia Domitilla, niece of Emperor Domitian and a member of the wealthy Flavian family. They contain Christian wall paintings and the underground Chiesa di SS Nereus e Achilleus, a 4th-century church dedicated to two Roman soldiers who were martyred by Diocletian.

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# TOMBS & CATACOMBS

Rome's persecuted Christian community built an extensive network of communal subterranean burial grounds outside the city walls, as the laws of the time decreed.

During periods of persecution, martyrs were often buried in catacombs beside the fathers of the Church and the first popes. However, space was limited and became increasingly sought-after. A trade in tomb real estate developed, becoming increasingly cut-throat until Pope Gregory I abolished the sale of graves in 597. Christians had already started to abandon the catacombs as early as 313, however, when Constantine issued the Milan decree of religious tolerance.

Following the decree, Christians opted to bury their dead in catacombs near the churches and basilicas that were being built within the city walls (often above pagan temples). This became common practice under Theodosius, who made Christianity the state religion in 394.

In about 800, after frequent incursions by invaders, the bodies of the martyrs and first popes were transferred to the basilicas inside the city walls. The catacombs were abandoned and eventually many were forgotten. In the Middle Ages only three catacombs were known. Those of San Sebastiano were the most frequented as a place of pilgrimage, since they had earlier been the burial place of St Peter and St Paul.

From the mid-19th century onwards, scholars of Christian archaeology began a programme of scientific research and more than 30 catacombs in the Rome area have since been uncovered. Many have graves with touching inscriptions such as one in the Catacombs of Domitilla, erected by Aurelius Ampliatus and his son Gordianus to their wife and mother, Aurelia: 'An incomparable spouse, a truly chaste woman who lived 25 years, two months, three days and six hours'.

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Around 1km southeast of here, the outstanding feature of the 4th-century **Villa di Massenzio** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 780 13 24; [www.villadimassenzio.it](http://www.villadimassenzio.it); Via Appia Antica 153; adult/EU 18-25yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €3/1.50/free; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Sat) is the Circo di Massenzio, Rome's best-preserved ancient racetrack – you can still make out the starting stalls used for chariot races. The 10,000-seat arena was built by Maxentius around 309, but he died before ever seeing a race here.

Above the arena are the now-weed-covered ruins of Maxentius' imperial residence. Near the racetrack, the **Mausoleo di Romolo** (or Tombo di Romolo; [Map](#)) was built by Maxentius for his son Romulus. The huge mausoleum was originally crowned with a large dome and surrounded by an imposing colonnade, in part still visible.

A short hop to the south brings you to the 1st-century-BC **Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 399 67 700; Via Appia Antica 161; admission incl Terme di Caracalla & Villa dei Quintili adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €6/3/free; 🕒 9am-7.15pm Apr-Aug, 9am-7pm Sep, 9am-6.30pm Oct, 9am-5.30pm mid—end Mar, 9am-5pm mid-Feb—mid-Mar, 9am-4.30pm Nov—mid-Feb, closed Mon year-round), a great drum of a mausoleum that encloses a burial chamber (built for the daughter of the consul Quintus Metellus Creticus), now roofless. The walls are made of travertine and the rather sorry-looking interior is decorated with a sculpted frieze featuring Gaelic shields, ox skulls and festoons. In the 14th century it was converted into a fort by the Caetani family, who used to threaten passing traffic into paying a toll.

Further along the road, in lush green fields between Via Appia Antica and Via Appia Nuova, is the **Villa Quintili** (☎ 06 399 67 700; [www.pierreci.it](http://www.pierreci.it); Via Appia Nuova 1092, also access from opposite Via Appia Antica 292 Sat & Sun Apr-Oct; admission incl Terme di Caracalla adult/EU 18-24yr/EU under 18yr & over 65yr €6/3/free; 🕒 9am-7.15pm Apr-Aug, 9am-7pm Sep, 9am-6.30pm Oct, 9am-5.30pm mid—end Mar, 9am-5pm mid-Feb—mid-Mar, 9am-4.30pm Nov—mid-Feb, closed Mon year-round). This



numbers are no coincidence, rather a homage to the project's Fascist patron – Benito (six letters) Mussolini (nine letters). The *palazzo* is currently undergoing restoration and will house a new multimedia museum, the Museo Nazionale dell' Audiovisivo, when it reopens.

Close by is the Palazzo degli Uffici complex, designed by Gaetano Minnucci. Its most famous building is the **Salone delle Fontane** (Showroom of the Fountains; [Map](#)), designed between 1937 and 1939 as the ticket office for the exhibition. The building is home to **Caffè Palombini** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 591 17 00; Piazza Adenauer Konrad 12), a popular cafe with original fittings from between 1939 and 1942, and 1960s furniture. Favoured by EUR bourgeoisie, this is a great spot for coffee or an *aperitivo*.

Other buildings of note at EUR are the brutalist **post office** ([Map](#)) dating from 1940 and designed by Studio BBPR; Arnaldo Foschini's monumental **Chiesa Santi Pietro e Paolo**, built from 1938 to 1955; and Nervi and Vitellozzi's futuristic **Palazzetto de Sport**, built in 1958 and now functioning as the PalaLottomatica, a venue for concerts and sport. The wonderful **Palazzo dei Congressi** ([Map](#)), was built between 1938 and 1954 and designed by Adalberto Libera. It's another must-see, and in summer occasionally hosts club nights on the terrace.

The 21st-century congress centre will soon be another feature on EUR's curious landscape, the **Centro Congressi 'Nuvola'** (the 'Cloud' Congress Centre; [Map](#)), due for completion in 2011, designed by superstar Roman architect Massimiliano Fuksas. A steel and Teflon cloud is suspended by steel cables in a glass box – the design came to the architect during a cloud-gazing daydream.

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## MAX'S ROME

### An interview with Max Handsaker, age eight

There's good stuff in Rome, but there's a lot of boring stuff, too. Like way too many churches and museums. Mum and Dad were driving me crazy because they wanted to go into churches all of the time. Most of them are dark and have gross pictures of people being tortured; some of them really freaked me out. The catacombs were a bit scary, too. The museums were OK if you like that type of thing, but I preferred places like the [Colosseum](#). That's where the gladiators fought. There are guys outside there who dress as gladiators and want you to pay them money to have a photo taken with them. They're sort of cool and sort of dumb, too.

I really liked going to the [Borghese Gardens](#); you can go on rowing boats on the lake and you can also ride around in a little train or on a bike. There's a zoo there called **Bioparco** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 360 82 11; [www.bioparco.it](#) in Italian; Viale del Giardino Zoologico 1; adult/child over 1m & under 12yr/child under 1m €10/8/free, incl reptile house €12.50/10.50/free; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Mar), but it wasn't great.

The best thing I did in Rome was go to the [Time Elevator](#) and see the film on the history of Rome. You have to wear 3-D goggles and it was awesome, especially when I felt the rats at my feet and when we got wet from the fountains. That place **Explora** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 361 37 76; [www.mdb.it](#); Via Flaminia 82; adult/child €6/7; ☎ tours depart 10am, noon, 3pm & 5pm Tue-Sun, noon, 3pm & 5pm Aug, bookings advised, essential at weekends) was pretty good too. You could play with lots of cool stuff there, like pretend you were working in a bank and stamp people's cheques. We went on a weekend, but it wasn't too busy, as they only sell a fixed amount of tickets for each session. It was really good for little kids too.

Before we went to Rome I watched some films about gladiators and things. One (*Ben Hur*) had a good chariot race. And Mum made me watch a really embarrassing film about Rome called *The Lizzie*

*McGuire Movie*. Girls would love it but it was gross for boys. There was kissing and stuff. I got some books about Rome from the shops at the museums there. They're pretty good stories about kids going back in time to when people like Julius Caesar were alive. And I read some good books about kids in those times (Caroline Lawrence's *Roman Mysteries* series).

Food-wise Rome was the best. I liked the *pizza rosso* the most; it's just plain tomato. And the gelato was much better than at home; vanilla is my favourite.

We had to queue for about two hours to get into the museum so it was lucky I could listen to my iPod while we waited.

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## WALKING TOUR

When discussing William Wyler's much-loved 1953 film *Roman Holiday*, noted film critic Molly Haskell suggested that it had three main characters: Joe Bradley (Gregory Peck), Princess Ann (Audrey Hepburn) and Rome itself. To relive the magic when you're in town, we've put together this full-day homage.

Start in **St Peter's Square** (1; [Click here](#)), which featured in the film's opening sequence. After popping into **St Peter's Basilica** (2; [Click here](#)), walk down Via della Conciliazione until you get to **Castel Sant'Angelo** (3; [Click here](#)). The river barge where Ann and Joe go dancing and get into a fight with the not-so-secret secret agents was moored just below here in the film. Cross the pedestrian-only **Ponte Sant'Angelo** (4; [Click here](#)), turn left and follow the river until you reach the Ponte Cavour. Cross the road and walk down Via Tomacelli until you get to Via del Corso; if you cross the road you'll see Rome's most famous shopping street, Via Condotti, at the top of which are the **Spanish Steps** (5; [Click here](#)). This is where Joe pretends to bump into a gelato-eating Ann by chance. With your back to the steps, turn right and walk down Via del Babuino until you come to Via Margutta on your right. Joe lived at **No 51** (6); you can enter the courtyard, but the entrance doesn't look anything like it did in the film. Grab lunch at one of the chic eateries in the area and then backtrack to the Spanish Steps. Walk up the steps to Piazza Trinità dei Monti before turning right into Via Sistina. Follow this until you reach **Piazza Barberini** (7; [Click here](#)); if you cross to the opposite side and then walk up Via delle Quattro Fontane you will reach **Palazzo Barberini** (8; [Click here](#)). In the film this was the embassy that Ann sneaks out of late at night; it's now the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica. Cross Via delle Quattro Fontane and walk down Via Rasella (opposite the entrance to the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica); cross busy Via del Traforo near the tunnel entrance and walk down Via Scuderi until you reach the wonderful **Trevi Fountain** (9; [Click here](#)). These days there are no barbers where you can have a fetching and cheap haircut as Ann did, and we strongly recommend against trying to nick a camera from a tourist, as Joe attempted to do. Next, take Via dei Crociferi and Via Sabini down to busy Via del Corso. Cross the road to Piazza Colonna and you enter the political core of the capital. Pass Palazzo Chigi, the official residence of the prime minister, on your right as you make for Piazza Montecitorio and the impressive seat of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, Palazzo Montecitorio. From the *palazzo* duck down Via della Guglia and veer right into Via dei Pastini until you emerge in the busy Piazza della Rotonda, where the **Pantheon** (10; [Click here](#)) needs no introduction. In the film, the cafe where Joe and Ann meet up with Irving (Eddie Albert) was called Roca's – unfortunately this was a stage set and never existed. Instead, you can enjoy a coffee or *granita di caffè* (coffee with shaved ice and whipped cream) at one of Rome's most famous coffee stops, **La Tazza d'Oro** (11; [Click here](#)). After your caffeine hit, walk back to the Pantheon and take the street to its left, Via dei Cestari, passing by Bernini's cute-as-a-button **Elefantino** (12; [Click here](#)), until you reach the major thoroughfare of Corso Vittorio Emanuele II. Turn left into Corso Vittorio

Emanuele II and you'll eventually get to **Piazza Venezia (13; [Click here](#))**, where Ann's downright dangerous Vespa-riding technique was forged. Down Via dei Fori Imperiali you'll see the Colosseum – on the way is the spot where Joe first comes across Ann, who is asleep on a bench in front of the Forum's **Arco di Settimio Severo (14; [Click here](#))**. Finally, backtrack and follow Via del Teatro di Marcello southwards from the right side of the massive **Vittoriano (15; [Click here](#))**. Follow the road, which changes its name to Via le Petroselli, for about 700m, and you will reach the Chiesa di Santa Maria in Cosmedin, home to the **Bocca della Verità (16; [Click here](#))**. This place, where the most famous scene of the film was filmed, is the perfect spot to end your tour.

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## WALK FACTS

**Start** St Peter's Square

**Finish** Bocca della Verità

**Duration** Six hours

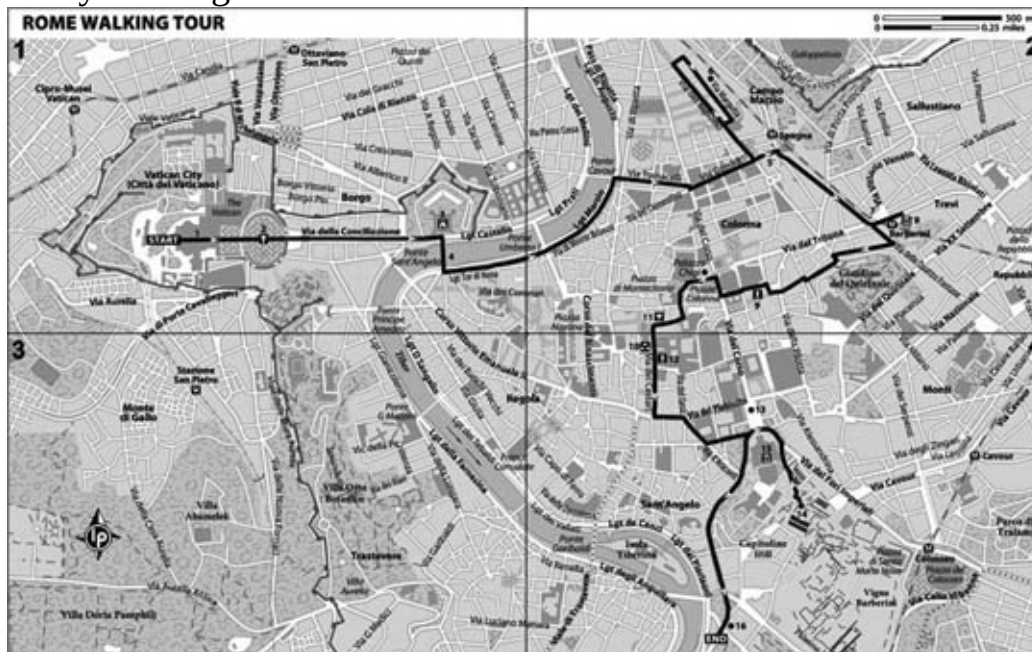
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## COURSES

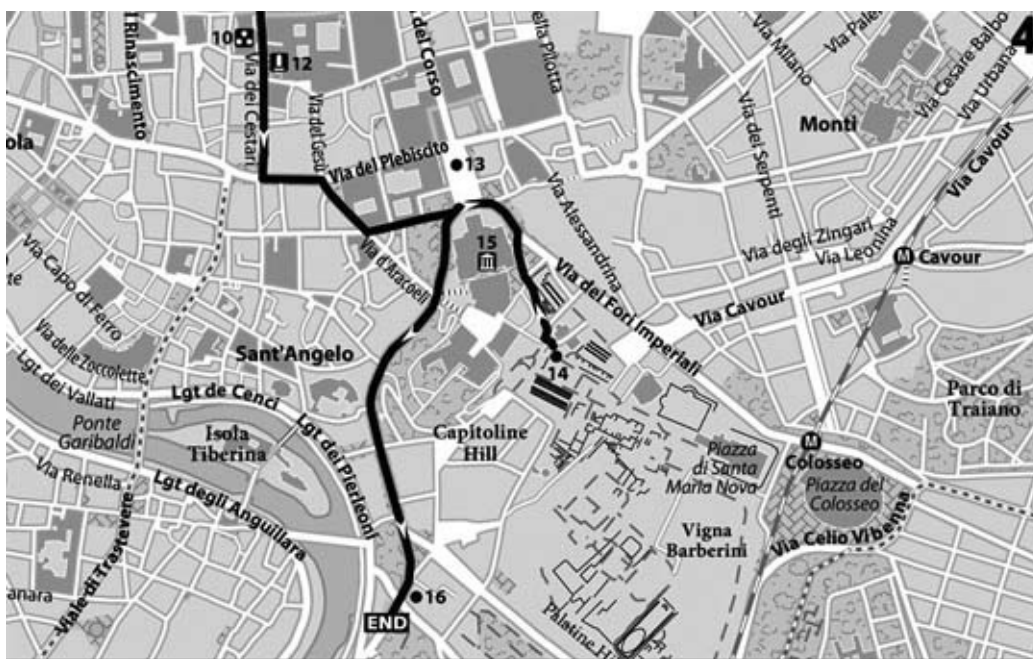
### Cooking

Cookery-writer Diane Seed (*The Top One Hundred Pasta Sauces*) runs her **Roman Kitchen** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 5759; [www.italiangourmet.com](http://www.italiangourmet.com)) several times a year from her kitchen in the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj. There are one-day, two-day, three-day and weeklong courses costing €200 per day and €1000 per week, and a combined Tuesday morning market visit and class for €180.









## Gladiator School

If you've always fancied yourself a bit like Russell Crowe, you can hone your gladiatorial skills at **Gruppo Storico Romano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 516 07 951; [www.gsr-roma.com](http://www.gsr-roma.com); Via Appia Antica 18). An association of history enthusiasts, it has established Rome's first gladiator school. Workshops, open to men and women, are in English and last two hours. The cost is between €25 and €75 per person, depending on the size of the group (one to one costs €100).

## Icon Painting

The extraordinary array of religious art in Rome may well inspire you to create something in a similar vein. If so, why not book into an icon-painting workshop at the **Centro Russia Ecumenica il Messaggio dell'Icona** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 68 96 637; [www.russiaecumenica.it](http://www.russiaecumenica.it); Borgo Pio 141) These small classes (maximum 15 participants) are run by master iconographers, and by the end of the six-day course (€550), you will have created your own original icon using materials such as gold leaf.

## Language

There are hundreds of schools offering language courses in Rome. Costs vary from around €390 for a 40-hour, two-week course to around €9950 for a one-year course, including cultural background courses (20 hours tuition per week) and accommodation. Some schools also offer accommodation packages for shorter courses. Reputable schools include the following:

**Arco di Druso** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 397 50 984; [www.arcodidruso.com](http://www.arcodidruso.com); Via Tunisi 4)

**Centro Linguistico Italiano Dante Alighieri** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 442 31 400; [www.clidante.it](http://www.clidante.it); Piazza Bologna 1)

**Divulgazione Lingua Italiana Soc (DILIT)** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 25 93; [www.dilit.it](http://www.dilit.it); Via Marghera 22)

**Italiaidea** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 41 314; [www.italiaidea.com](http://www.italiaidea.com); 1st fl, Via dei Due Macelli 47)

**Torre di Babele Centro di Lingua e Cultura Italiana** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 44 252 578; [www.torredibabele.com](http://www.torredibabele.com); Via Cosenza 7)

## Mosaic Making

The Romans have been practising the art of mosaics for over two millennia, so they should know a thing

or two about it. **Art Studio Café** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 09104; [www.artstudiocafe.it](http://www.artstudiocafe.it); Via dei Gracchi 187a) is a cafe, an exhibition space and mosaic school, offering a range of classes in mosaic work to help participants to create their own special piece to take home. One-day classes cost €50, two-day classes €80 and an intensive six-day course costs €200.

## Wine Tasting

Refine your palate on one of the courses run by the **International Wine Academy of Roma** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 08 78; [www.wineacademyroma.com](http://www.wineacademyroma.com); Vicolo del Bottino 8). Learn about Italy's wine regions and tone up your tasting skills with their €155 half-day (two-hour) course, which includes lunch or dinner. To dive even deeper into the glass, go for one of the day-long courses (from €300), which includes a vineyard visit. There are also regular tastings (€25) on Thursdays and Saturdays. Bookings are essential.

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## TOURS

### Boat

**Battelli di Roma** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 93 61; [www.battellidiroma.it](http://www.battellidiroma.it)) offers hour-long cruises on the Tiber (tickets €12). Trips depart at 10am from Isola Tiberina, and then every half-hour till 7pm.

### Bus

**Trambus Open** (☎ 800 281 281; [www.trambusopen.com](http://www.trambusopen.com); Piazza Cinquecento in front of Stazione Termini main entrance) operates two tour buses: the 110open and the Archeobus.

The **110open** (tickets €20; 🚌 tours every 20min 8.30am-8.30pm) is an open-top, double-decker bus, equipped with an audioguide in eight languages that departs from the bus terminus outside Termini (platform C), and stops at all the major sites, including the Quirinal, Colosseum, Bocca della Verità, Piazza Venezia, Piazza Navona, St Peter's, Piazza Cavour, Ara Pacis, Trevi Fountain and Via Veneto. The entire tour lasts two hours, but the tickets, available on board, from the info boxes on Piazza Cinquecento or at Colosseum or from authorised Trambus Open dealers, are valid for 24 hours and allow you to hop off and on as you please.

The **Archeobus** (tickets €15; 🚌 tours half-hourly 8.30am-4.30pm) is another stop-and-go bus. It takes sightseers down Via Appia Antica, stopping at 16 points of archaeological interest along the way. These include the Terme di Caracalla, Porta di San Sebastiano, the Catacombs of San Callisto and San Sebastiano, the Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella, the Villa dei Quintili, the Bocca della Verità and Circo Massimo. Buses are single deck and open, equipped with an audioguide in eight languages. The bus departs from Termini bus station, Piazza Venezia, and the Colosseum. Buy your ticket online, on board, at Piazza Cinquecento or Colosseum info boxes and at Trambus Open authorised dealers.

You can buy a joint ticket to both the 110open and Archeobus for €30 (valid 48 hours). If you have a Roma Pass (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)) you receive a €5 discount on each of the bus tours.

**Roma Cristiana** (☎ 06 698 961; [www.romacristiana.orpnet.it](http://www.romacristiana.orpnet.it); adult/child 7-12yr tour €12/7.5, 24hr-ticket for both tours €15/7.5; 🚌 tours every 15min 8am-7pm), run by the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi, offers hop-on, hop-off open buses on two routes, 'San Paolo' (2¼ hours, 22 stops) and 'San Pietro' (1¾ hours, 19 stops), both leaving from next to San Pietro Piazza and ending at Termini, they stop for 30 to 40 minutes at each point of interest. See the website for route information. There's a multilingual commentary

and tickets are available online or on board.

**Rome Open Tour** (☎ 06 977 45 499; [www.romeopentour.com](http://www.romeopentour.com); 24hr ticket adult/child €18/8, 48hr ticket €23/10; 🕒 tours every 15min from 9am-7pm) has nine stops: Stazione Termini, Piazza Venezia, the Colosseum, Circo Massimo, Isola Tiberina, St Peter's, Castel Sant'Angelo, Via Veneto and Piazza Barberini. The bus stops for 25 minutes at each stop and there's a multilingual audioguide commentary. You can catch the bus from any stop and buy tickets on board.

**ArCult** (☎ 339 650 3172; [www.arcult.it](http://www.arcult.it)) offers excellent tours focusing on Rome's contemporary architecture and urban planning. Run by architects, the customisable tours visit sites such as EUR, the Auditorium Parco della Musica, the Chiesa Dives in Misericordia and the Ara Pacis. A half-day tour starts at €200, for two to 10 people, so it makes sense to get a like-minded group together.

## Scooter

**HR Incentives** ([www.happyrent.com](http://www.happyrent.com)) offers tours of Rome on vintage Vespas and Lambrettas – the best and most authentic way to travel in the city. Particularly beguiling is the Rome by Night tour, from 9pm to midnight. You'll be on the road with experienced riders who will help you negotiate Rome's streets.

## Walking

For some parts of the city, specifically the Vatican and ancient Rome, you may find it more satisfying (and cheaper) to navigate yourself using the maps in this book and to hire audioguides at sites to provide commentary. However walking tours can make sightseeing easier. Just be warned that Rome is a noisy city, so it can sometimes be difficult to hear commentary by guides on walking tours in the centre.

**Enjoy Rome** (Map; ☎ 06 445 68 90; [www.enjoyrome.com](http://www.enjoyrome.com); Via Marghera 8a) offers a number of choices. Its three-hour walking tours (under/over 26 years €22/27, reduced rates for children aged 12 and under) include ancient Rome (by day or night – April to October), the Vatican, and Trastevere and the Ghetto. A tour to the catacombs and Via Appia Antica costs €40. Note that the Vatican tour does not cover entrance charges and the ancient Rome tour does not enter the Colosseum. All guides are native or fluent English speakers who hold degrees in archaeology or related areas.

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# FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Rome's calendar bursts with events, ranging from colourful traditional celebrations with a religious and/or historical flavour to festivals of the performing arts – including opera, music and theatre – particularly from June to September, when there are loads of outdoor events, such as cinema under the stars and riverside gigs. Check local tourist information sources [Click here](#) for further details.

## January

**New Year** (1 Jan) A candlelit procession in the catacombs.

## March & April

**Festa di San Giuseppe** (Feast of St Joseph; 19 Mar) Celebrated in the Trionfale neighbourhood, between the Vatican and Monte Mario. Little stalls are set up to serve *fritelle* (fried pastries) and there's usually a special market set up near the church of San Giuseppe.

**Settimana dei Beni Culturale** (Mar/May) Public museums and galleries open free of charge during culture week.

**Procession of the Cross** (Easter) A candlelit procession to the Colosseum on Good Friday evening is led by the pope. At noon on Easter Sunday he gives his traditional blessing from the balcony in St Peter's Square.

**Mostra delle Azalee** (Exhibition of Azaleas; late Mar/Apr) The Spanish Steps are decorated with masses of pink azaleas.

**Rome's Birthday** (21 Apr) To celebrate its birthday, the City of Rome provides processions, fireworks and free entry to lots of museums.

## May

**Primo Maggio** (1 May) Rome's May Day rock festival attracts huge crowds and international performers to an open-air concert outside the Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano.

**Festa di Primavera** (end May—Jun) A festival of art, sport, music and theatre; for more information, check out [www.provincia.roma.it](http://www.provincia.roma.it).

## June

**Feast of San Pietro e Paolo** (Feast of Sts Peter & Paul; 29 Jun) This feast, for the patron saints of the city, includes major celebrations at St Peter's.

**Birth of John the Baptist** (23–24 Jun) Many celebrate the birth of St John the Baptist, particularly around the Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano, where special market stalls are set up, and there's lots of lovely *porchetta* (pork roasted with herbs) to eat.

**Estate Romana** (Jun—Oct) The big event in summer, this is a series of outdoor cultural events and activities for the few people who have remained in the capital – see [www.romeguide.it/estate\\_romana](http://www.romeguide.it/estate_romana) for more info.

## July

**Festa de'Noantri** (3rd week in Jul) The festival 'of we others' in Trastevere is a traditional working-class festival celebrating the district's otherness, with food, wine and dancing.

## August

**Festa della Madonna della Neve** (5 Aug) To celebrate the legendary snowfall that fell on 5 August 352, rose petals are showered on celebrants in the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore.

## September

**RomaEuropa** ([www.romaeuropa.net](http://www.romaeuropa.net) in Italian; Sep—Nov) Top international artists take to the stage in Rome's autumn festival of theatre, opera and dance.

## December

**Christmas Market** (1st Dec–6th Jan) Christmas time in Rome sees a toy fair, with lots of handmade *presepi* (nativity scenes), buskers, bright lights and fun in Piazza Navona.

**Feast of San Silvestro** (31 Dec) The pope visits the Chiesa del Gesù and sings the Te Deum, while the mayor presents a chalice to the presiding priest.

**Capodanno** (31 Dec) Open-air concerts and fireworks mark the New Year.

## SLEEPING

Hotel rooms in Rome tend to be expensive. While midrange choices abound in and around the *centro storico*, there's only a smattering of good budget options. However, if you can afford it, you should aim to stay in the centre, as you'll be perfectly placed for sightseeing, eating and drinking. There's also a lot to be said for bunking down somewhere in peaceful Prati, which harbours some excellent restaurants, is near the Vatican and on metro A. Trastevere is drop-dead gorgeous and a great place to spend summer evenings, but can be noisy, especially in summer.

If you're travelling on a tight budget, the cheapest places are scattered around Stazione Termini. Although it has greatly improved in recent years, this is one of Rome's less salubrious neighbourhoods, and some of the streets to the west of the station, particularly Via Giovanni Giolitti, can be unsafe at night. Women in particular should be careful. That said, it is still possible to walk into the *centro storico* from Termini, and most other sights are only a convenient metro ride away.

Although Rome doesn't have a low season as such, the majority of hotels offer discounts from November to March (excluding the Christmas and New Year period). Expect to pay top whack in spring and autumn and over the main holiday periods (Christmas, New Year and Easter). You should always book ahead if at all possible.

Arrive without a reservation, however, and all's not lost. There's a free **hotel reservation service** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 10 00; Stazione Termini; 🕒 7am-10.30pm) at the main train station (opposite platform 21) and the nearby Enjoy Rome tourist office [Click here](#) can also book a room for you. Don't follow the people hanging around at the train station who claim to be tourism officials and offer to find you a room. Chances are they'll lead you to an overpriced dump.

Unless otherwise indicated, prices quoted include breakfast and all taxes.

## Accommodation Options

### BED & BREAKFASTS

B&B is becoming increasingly popular in Rome. Many of the newer places are effectively *pensioni*,

meaning that you get your own keys and can come and go as you like. [The Rome Tourist Board](#) publishes a full list.

The following are agencies specialising in B&B accommodation and offer online booking services:

**Bed & Breakfast Association of Rome** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 553 02 248; [www.b-b.rm.it](http://www.b-b.rm.it); Via Pacinotti 73; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri) Offers both rooms in B&Bs and short-term rentals of fully furnished flats.

**Bed & Breakfast Italia** (☎ 08 171 41 533; [www.bbitalia.com](http://www.bbitalia.com); Via Casoria 47) Rome's longest-established B&B network.

**Cross Pollinate** ([www.cross-pollinate.com](http://www.cross-pollinate.com)) An online agency.

**Sleeping Rome** ([www.sleepingrome.com](http://www.sleepingrome.com)) Offers B&B and has good short-term flat rentals.

## HOSTELS

**Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù** (AIG; [Map](#); ☎ 06 487 11 52; [www.ostellionline.org](http://www.ostellionline.org); Piazza San Bernardo 107; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri) is an Italian youth hostel association that has information about all the youth hostels in Italy. It will assist with bookings to stay at universities during summer, and you can also join [Hostelling International \(HI\)](#) here.

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Unsurprisingly Rome is well furnished with religious institutions, many of which offer cheap(ish) rooms for the night. Bear in mind, though, that most religious institutions have strict curfews and the accommodation, while clean, tends to be the basic, no-frills variety. It's always wise to book well in advance. For a list of institutions, check out [www.santasusanna.org/comingtorome](http://www.santasusanna.org/comingtorome).

## RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

You can usually find a small apartment near the centre of Rome for around €900 per month for a studio flat or one-bedroom place. Often renting an apartment will work out cheaper than an extended hotel sojourn, as well as giving you more space and self-catering facilities. For a mini-apartment in a hotel block, go online at [www.060608.it](http://www.060608.it) and check out the 'Sleeping' section. It's also worth checking the following websites:

**Accommodations Rome** ([www.accomodationsrome.com](http://www.accomodationsrome.com))

**Flat in Rome** ([www.flatinrome.it](http://www.flatinrome.it))

**Flats in Italy** ([www.flatsinitaly.com](http://www.flatsinitaly.com))

**Italy Accom** ([www.italy-accom.com](http://www.italy-accom.com))

**Leisure in Rome** ([www.leisureinrome.com](http://www.leisureinrome.com))

**Rental in Rome** ([www.rentalinrome.com](http://www.rentalinrome.com))

**Sleep in Italy** ([www.sleepinitaly.com](http://www.sleepinitaly.com))

Several of the English-language bookshops in Rome have notice boards where people looking for accommodation or offering a room on a short- or long-term basis place their messages. Another good option is to check the classified ads in *Wanted in Rome* (published online fortnightly on Wednesday; [www.wantedinrome.com](http://www.wantedinrome.com)).

## Ancient Rome

**Caesar House** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 26 74; [www.caesarhouse.com](http://www.caesarhouse.com); Via Cavour 310; d €140-220; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Quiet, friendly, yet in the thick of it on busy thoroughfare Via Cavour, this has 11 sunny rooms, terracotta

floors, wi-fi, internet in the lounge, and even a tiny gym. The suite has a view over the forum. Rooms have a warm, peachy decor, small bathrooms, and are sparklingly clean.

## Centro Storico

### BUDGET & MIDRANGE

**B&B 3 Coins** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 06 34; [www.3coinsbb.com](http://www.3coinsbb.com); Via dei Crociferi 26; s with/without bathroom €70-130/€60-90, d with/without bathroom €90-150/€80-100; 🚽) A coin's lob from the Trevi Fountain, this modest B&B is snug and quaint. A steep climb up to the 3rd floor and you'll find a warm, characterful apartment full of family knick-knacks. No two of the seven rooms are exactly alike – some are tiny, some bigger, some are carpeted and two have external bathrooms, but all are clean and cosy.

**Hotel Antica Locanda** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 478 81 729; [www.antica-locanda.com](http://www.antica-locanda.com); Via del Boschetto 84; s €70-140, d €90-160; 🚽 🚿 📺) In the hip Monti district, this little hotel has characterful rooms of different shapes and sizes, all named after great composers. They're decorated with antiques and wooden furniture, with some carved wooden headboards and wood beams. Windows overlook the cobbled street.

**Fellini B&B** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 427 42 732; [www.fellinibnb.com](http://www.fellinibnb.com); Via Rasella 55; s €70-180, d €90-200, apt €200-370; 🚽 🚿) A multistorey warren of bright, plain rooms, cheery, efficient Fellini is named for Italy's great director, who made an icon of the nearby Trevi fountain. Film posters along the hallways fit the theme. All the spick-and-span rooms have satellite TV, good beds and well-equipped bathrooms. The standout option here is the knockout top-floor five-person apartment, which has a huge terrace with a view. It's always worth asking for discounts.

**Relais Palazzo Taverna** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 203 98 064; [www.relaispalazzotaverna.com](http://www.relaispalazzotaverna.com); Via dei Gabrielli 92; s €80-150, d €100-210; 🚽 📺) A boutique hotel in a sensational location, the Relais Palazzo Taverna has 11 contemporary rooms that set a modernist aesthetic (funky wallpaper, bright block colour) against an ancient building. Amenities such as plasma-screen satellite TVs, and tea- and coffee-making facilities ice the cake. Breakfast is served in your room.

**Hotel Mimosa** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 427 42 732; [www.hotelmimosa.net](http://www.hotelmimosa.net); Via di Santa Chiara 61, 2nd fl; s/d/tr/q €88/118/158/178, without bathroom €50/70/90/105; 🚽 🚿) Imagine hard, and you'll experience a faint air of impecunious romance, but remove rose-tinted specs and you'll see basic accommodation in spartan rooms, some of which are cramped but all of which are clean. Anyway, it's all about location: this is one of the scarce budget choices in the historic centre. To book a room you'll need to leave a credit-card number, though the hotel accepts payment in cash only.

**Albergo del Sole** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 94 46; [www.solealbiscione.it](http://www.solealbiscione.it); Via del Biscione 76; s with/without bathroom €100-130/€75, d with/without bathroom €125-160/€100-110; 📺 📶) The oldest hotel in Rome, this place dates to 1462, and the complex warren of corridors and low wood-beamed ceilings give credence to its medieval architecture, though the decor is standard hotel fare. Rooms are basic; some have more character than others. The 2nd-floor roof terrace is a definite plus, there's wi-fi, and the almost-on-the-Campo location is a lively spot. No credit cards.

**Daphne B&B** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 478 23 529; [www.daphne-rome.com](http://www.daphne-rome.com); Via di San Basilio 55; d with/without bathroom €130-220/€90-160; 🚽 🚿 📺 📶) Boutique B&B Daphne is a gem, run by an American-Italian couple, with chic, sleek, comfortable rooms, extremely helpful English-speaking staff, and top-notch breakfasts. There are 15 rooms in two locations: this one off Via Veneto (the pick, and every room is en suite) and a second one at Via degli Avignonesi 20, towards the Trevi Fountain. Wi-fi is available.

**Hotel Navona** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 42 03; [www.hotelnavona.com](http://www.hotelnavona.com); Via dei Sediari 8; s €100-125, d €135-

155; ☒) Spread over several floors of a 15th-century *palazzo*, and set around a courtyard, Navona's rooms vary in quality: some are big and bright, others are small, and decor is largely ad hoc, with an antique desk here and a plastic lamp there. But what you're really paying for is the location, a skip and a jump from Piazza Navona.

**Hotel Modigliani** (Map; ☎ 06 428 15 226; [www.hotelmodigliani.com](http://www.hotelmodigliani.com); Via della Purificazione 42; s €120-160, d €110-188, superior €180-280; ☒ 📶) Run by an artistic couple, the Modigliani is all about attention to detail and customer service. The 23 dove-grey rooms are spacious and light, with red and gold bedspreads, and the best have views and balconies, either outside, or over the quiet internal courtyard garden that's a lovely place for a drink. There's wi-fi.

**Teatropace 33** (Map; ☎ 06 687 90 75; [www.hotelteatropace.com](http://www.hotelteatropace.com); Via del Teatro Pace 33; s €120-160, d €150-250; ☒ ☒) Sublimely central, tucked in a lane beside Piazza Navona, this discreet, classy three-star is a top choice. In a former cardinal's residence, it has 23 beautifully appointed rooms decorated with parquet flooring, damask curtains and exposed wooden beams. There's no lift, just a monumental 17th-century stone staircase.

**Hotel Portughesi** (Map; ☎ 06 686 42 31; [www.hotelportoghesiroma.com](http://www.hotelportoghesiroma.com); Via dei Portughesi 1; s €130-160, d €160-200; ☒ ☒ 📶) This cosy, low-key hotel has a fabulous location on a picturesque street near Piazza Navona. Rooms are comfortable and have satellite TV and wi-fi, though some (particularly the singles) are small, with equally bijou bathrooms. Staff are pleasant and the peaceful roof terrace is a bonus.

**Hotel Teatro di Pompeo** (Map; ☎ 06 687 28 12; [www.hotelteatrodipompeo.it](http://www.hotelteatrodipompeo.it); Largo del Pallaro 8; s €140-160, d €180-210; ☒) Built on top of a theatre that Pompey constructed in 55 BC (now the breakfast room), this family-run hotel is tucked away behind the Campo de' Fiori. Rooms here are comfortable, with a charmingly old-fashioned feel – the best are on the 3rd floor, with sloping wood-beamed ceilings.

## TOP END

**Hotel Campo de' Fiori** (Map; ☎ 06 687 48 86; [www.hotelcampodefiori.com](http://www.hotelcampodefiori.com); Via del Biscione 6; s €170-220, d €200-270, 2-person apt €130-150, 4-person apt €180; ☒ ☒ 📶) Here, red flock walls are hung with gilt mirrors and restored bric-a-brac, and facilities include swish bathrooms, flat-screen satellite TVs and wi-fi. They'll even loan you a laptop if you need one. It's close as can be to the happening Campo, but double-glazing sorts out the noise, and there is a wonderful roof terrace with wicker sofas. The hotel also offers 13 comfortable nearby apartments.

## Tridente

### BUDGET & MIDRANGE

**Hotel Panda** (Map; ☎ 06 678 01 79; [www.hotelpanda.it](http://www.hotelpanda.it); Via della Croce 35; s with/without bathroom €80/68, d with/without bathroom 108/78; 📶) Only 50m from the Spanish Steps, in an area where a bargain is a Bulgari watch bought in the sales, the friendly, efficient Panda is an anomaly, a budget pension, and a splendid one. The extremely clean rooms are smallish but nicely, if simply, furnished, and the beds are comfortable. Air-con costs €6 extra per night and there's wi-fi.

**Hotel Scalinata di Spagna** (Map; ☎ 06 699 40896; [www.hotelscalinata.com](http://www.hotelscalinata.com); Piazza della Trinità dei Monti 17; d €130-370; ☒) Given its location – perched alongside the Spanish Steps – the Scalinata is surprisingly modestly priced. An informal and friendly place, it's something of a warren, with a great roof terrace, and low corridors leading off to smallish, old-fashioned, yet romantic rooms (think plush furnishings and gilt-edged mirrors), the best with balconies. Book early for a room with a view.



**Casa Montani** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 00 421; [www.casamontani.it](http://www.casamontani.it); Piazzale Flaminio 9; d €140-240) Run by an Italian-French couple, this is a lovely, upmarket guest house with just five rooms. Fixtures and fittings are top quality, with rooms featuring custom-made furniture and contemporary art, yet prices are low considering the level of comfort and the position, overlooking the Porta del Popolo. It's an especially good deal if you book for three nights in low season (€120 for a deluxe room).

## TOP END

**Casa Howard** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 24 555; [www.casahoward.com](http://www.casahoward.com); Via Sistina 149 & Via Capo le Case 18; s €140-220, d €190-250; ☒ ☑) This richly decorated boutique hotel, split between two nearby houses, has a great location and only 10 rooms, ranging from the funky Zebra room to the chinzastic Flower room. The Via Sistina rooms were designed by Tommaso Ziffer, who was also responsible for hot celebrity favourite Hotel de Russie. Three of the rooms have private, not en suite bathrooms. Both properties have Turkish hammams, which cost a cheeky €25/50 (Capo le Case/Sistina) to use. Continental breakfast, served in the rooms, costs an extra €10 per person.

**Crossing Condotti** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 20633; [www.crossingcondotti.com](http://www.crossingcondotti.com); Via Mario de' Fiori; r €180-280) A five-room place, this is one of Rome's new breed of upmarket guest houses, where all the fittings, linen, and comforts are top-of-the-range, but prices are kept lower than equivalently furnished hotels because there is no restaurant, concierge etc. Smack bang in designer heaven, Crossing Condotti doesn't serve breakfast, but has a well-stocked kitchen with drinks and a Nespresso machine. Rooms are pretty, with lots of character, antiques and exquisite furnishings.

**Portrait Suites** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 68 28 31; [www.portraitsuites.com](http://www.portraitsuites.com); Via Bocca di Leone, 23; r €300-690; ☒ ☒ ☑) Owned by the Salvatore Ferragamo family – designer royalty – this is a discreet, exclusive boutique residence, designed by Florentine wonder-architect Michele Bonan. There are 14 exquisitely styled suites and studios across six floors in a townhouse overlooking Via Condotti, plus a dreamy 360-degree roof terrace and made-in-heaven staff. There's no restaurant, but you can have meals delivered. Breakfast is served in your room or on the terrace.

## Termini & Esquilino

### BUDGET

**Hotel Beautiful** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 447 03 927; [www.solomonhotels.com](http://www.solomonhotels.com); 4th fl, Via Milazzo 8; dm €16-27, s €25-40, d €45.50-80; ☒ ☒ ☑) A cross between a hostel and a hotel, this two-star place has 14 comfortable, clean, unexciting but bright rooms. There are doubles, triples and dorms, all with high ceilings and their own bathrooms. Reception is 24 hours.

**Funny Palace** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 447 03 523; [www.hostelfunny.com](http://www.hostelfunny.com); 5th fl, Via Varese 31; dm €15-25, s without bathroom €30-70, d without bathroom €55-100; ☒ ☑ ☒) Run by a friendly international crew, with the Splashnet Laundry as their office-laundry-internet cafe, this great little backpackers' hostel has doubles, triples and quads, with a comfortable, homey feel. Thoughtful touches such as clean towels, a bottle of wine on arrival and vouchers for breakfast in a nearby cafe make it an excellent choice. Wi-fi is available, as is Skype. No credit cards. They also run the similar Amazing Place around the corner.

**M&J Hostel** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 28 02; [www.mejplacehostel.com](http://www.mejplacehostel.com); Via Solferino 9; dm €10-35, s €50-70, d €60-100; ☒ ☒ ☒) The long-established M&J is a hotel-hostel run by two well-travelled brothers. There are a number of brightly painted dorms (up to 10 people), one of which is female-only and some of which have their own bathrooms. The doubles are more upmarket, decorated in a chic, Zen style and have air-con (dorms don't). There's 24-hour reception and a kitchen. The owners operate the Living Room bar

downstairs, where breakfast is served as well as cheap meals (open till 2am). You can get deals if you book online, and there's wi-fi.

**Yellow** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 493 82 682; [www.the-yellow.com](http://www.the-yellow.com); Via Palestro 44; dm €18-35; ☒ ☑ ☎) Popular Yellow caters to a youthful, party-loving crowd (there's even an age limit – 18 to 40). Decor is bright, clean and funky, featuring Starsky-and-Hutch stencils on the walls. Mixed dorms sleep between four and 12 people in basic bunks, with barracks-style showers and toilets (bigger dorms have bathrooms down the hall). Internet is free, there's wi-fi, and the bar downstairs (where you can buy breakfast), open till 2am, has outdoor tables where you can enjoy an afternoon beer or coffee. Reception is 24 hours.

**Alessandro Palace Hostel** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 19 58; [www.hostelalessandro.com](http://www.hostelalessandro.com); Via Vicenza 42; dm €18-35, d €70-110; ☒ ☒ ☑ ☎) This long-standing favourite appeals to both budgeting families and backpackers, and offers spick-and-span, terracotta-floored doubles, triples and quads, as well as dorms sleeping from four to eight, all with cheery bedspreads. Every room has its own bathroom plus hairdryer. In some you can't open the windows. There's a bar downstairs, which has satellite TV. Internet and wi-fi are available, and there's 24-hour reception and no curfew. The same owners also run the slightly less palatial, and thus cheaper, Alessandro Downtown Hostel ([Map](#); ☎ 06 443 40 147; Via Cattaneo 23).

**our pick Beehive** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 447 04 553; [www.the-beehive.com](http://www.the-beehive.com); Via Marghera 8; dm €20-30, d without bathroom €70-95, tr €95-120) More boutique chic than backpacker crash pad, the Beehive is one of the best hostels in town. Run by a southern Californian couple, it's an oasis of style with original artworks on the walls, funky modular furniture, a vegetarian cafe and a yoga studio. Beds are in a spotless, eight-person mixed dorm or in one of six private double rooms. Needless to say, it's very popular, so make sure you book ahead. There's an on-site internet lounge, a book exchange and vegan and vegetarian cafe (breakfast €5, dinner dish of the day €6.50), garden courtyard and yoga studio. Massage costs €35.

## MIDRANGE

**Welrome Hotel** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 478 24 343; [www.welrome.it](http://www.welrome.it); Via Calatafimi 15-19; s €40-100, d €50-110, tr €105-148, q €120-187) The chatty owner of the Welrome has a personal mission to look after her guests: not only does she take huge pride in her small, spotless hotel but she enthusiastically points out the cheapest places to eat, tells you where not to waste your time and what's good to do. Families should go for the huge room named after Piazza di Spagna.

**Hotel des Artistes** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 445 43 65; [www.hoteldesartistes.com](http://www.hoteldesartistes.com); Via Villafranca 20; r without bathroom €55-95, r with bathroom €95-210; ☒ ☒ ☑) The rooms here are decked out in wood and gold with faux-antique furniture and rich reds, and pink high-sheen bedspreads and curtains. They have satellite TV and decent bathrooms. Offers discounts for longer stays and/or cash payment.

**Suite Dreams** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 489 13 907; [www.suitedreams.it](http://www.suitedreams.it); Via Modena 5; s €110-130, d €130-180, ste €200-250; ☒ ☒ ☑) This popular, hip-looking place offers 15 rooms styled with neutrals, slate greys, chocolate-browns and contemporary art. Each has parquet floors, Frette linen and big wardrobes, and there's an impressive suite with a big round jacuzzi. Check the website for special offers.

**Residenza Cellini** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 478 25 204; [www.residenzacellini.it](http://www.residenzacellini.it); Via Modena 5; d €145-240, ste €165-280; ☒ ☎) With grown-up furnishings featuring potted palms, polished wood, pale yellow walls, oil paintings, and a hint of chintz, this charming hotel offers 11 spacious, elegant rooms, all with satellite TV and jacuzzi or hydro-massage showers. There's wi-fi, too, and a sunny flower-surrounded terrace for summer breakfasts.

## Trastevere

## BUDGET & MIDRANGE

**La Foresteria Orsa Maggiore** (Map; ☎ 06 689 37 53; [www.casainternazionaledelledonne.org](http://www.casainternazionaledelledonne.org) in Italian; 2nd fl, Via San Francesco di Sales 1a; dm €26, s/d without bathroom €52/72, s/d with bathroom €75/110; 🗺️) This lesbian-friendly, predominantly women-only guest house (boys aged 12 or younger are welcome to accompany their mums) is housed in a restored 16th-century convent. It is run by the Casa Internazionale delle Donne (International Women's House) and offers safe and well-priced accommodation in a quiet corner of Trastevere. The 13 simple rooms sleep two, four, five or eight, and some have views onto the attractive internal garden. Those not en suite share institutional-style bathrooms. There's a 3am curfew. Wheelchair accessible.

**Hotel Antico Borgo Trastevere** (Map; ☎ 06 588 39 24; [www.hotelanticoborgo.it](http://www.hotelanticoborgo.it); Vicolo del Buco 7; s €45-100, d €65-150; 🗺️ 🚻) Tucked away in a quiet corner of Trastevere, this quaint hotel is housed in a small *palazzo* dating from 1800. It has pretty, well-maintained rooms with comfortable beds, but they're tiny – claustrophobics should steer clear. Breakfast is served in your room.

**Arco del Lauro** (Map; ☎ 9am-2pm 06 97840350, 346 244 3212; Via Arco de' Tolomei, 27; s €75-125, d €95-145, tr €120-165, q €135-180; 🗺️) With only six rooms, this fab B&B in an ancient *palazzo* is a find, through a large stone arch and on a narrow cobbled street, with gleaming white rooms which combine rustic charm with minimalist simplicity. The largest room has a high wood-beamed ceiling.

**Hotel Trastevere** (Map; ☎ 06 581 47 13; [www.hoteltrastevere.net](http://www.hoteltrastevere.net); Via Manara 24a-25; s €80, d €103-105; 🗺️ 🚻) Overlooking the market square of San Cosimato (noisy in the evening), this is a reasonable, cheap, Trastevere option, with basic, no-frills rooms. There's a bit of a run-down feel about the place but the rooms are large, clean, fine for the money, and it's completely unpretentious.

**Villa della Fonte** (Map; ☎ 06 580 37 97; [www.villafonte.com](http://www.villafonte.com); Via della Fonte dell'Olio 8; s €110-130, d €135-150; 🗺️ 🚻) A lovely terracotta-hued, ivy-shrouded gem, Villa della Fonte occupies a 17th-century building in a street off Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere. It only has five rooms, all of which are simply decorated but have pretty outlooks, good bathrooms and comfortable beds covered with lovely linen. The sunny garden terrace (for breakfast in warm weather) is a plus.

**Residenza Arco de' Tolomei** (Map; ☎ 06 583 20 819; [www.bbarcodeitolomei.com](http://www.bbarcodeitolomei.com); Via Arco de' Tolomei 27; d €160-220; 🗺️ 🚻 📶) Upstairs from Arco del Lauro, this gorgeous place has a completely different feel from its neighbour, decorated with polished antiques and rich chintz. It's also a lovely place to stay, and the owners are friendly and helpful. Wi-fi is available.

**Hotel Santa Maria** (Map; ☎ 06 589 46 26; [www.hotelsantamaria.info](http://www.hotelsantamaria.info); Vicolo del Piede 2; s €160-190, d €175-230; 🗺️ 🚻 🚼 📶) Walk along the ivy-lined approach and you'll enter a tranquil haven. Housed in a spacious modern cloister (a former convent site), the Santa Maria has 19 rooms around a orange-tree-shaded courtyard garden. Rooms are cool and comfortable, with slightly fussy decor and terracotta floors. There are some much larger family rooms. Staff are helpful and professional, and it's wheelchair-friendly. Nearby is the more intimate, prettily rustic Residenza Santa Maria, under the same management.

## Aventino

**Hotel Sant'Anselmo** (Map; ☎ 06 574 52 31; [www.aventinohotels.com](http://www.aventinohotels.com); Via Melania 19; s €160-220, d €180-270; 🗺️ 🚻 🚼) Enchanting, peaceful Aventine Hill, all terracotta walls and umbrella pines, is one of Rome's most sought-after residential areas. This 34-room hotel is wonderfully romantic and fantastically over the top, with modern twists giving the design a sassy edge. Rooms have carved beds or four-posters, and many have frescoed walls and chandeliers. There are either claw-foot or jacuzzi baths or showers, and some rooms have terraces with dreamy views.

# Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

## BUDGET & MIDRANGE

**Casa di Accoglienza Paolo VI** (Piccolo Suore della Sacra Famiglia; [Map](#); ☎ 06 390 9141; casapaolovi@tiscalinet.it; Viale Vaticano 92; s/d/tr/q €35/60/78/90; ☒ ☒) A lovely, palm-shaded convent, right opposite the entrance to the Vatican Museums, where the welcoming sisters offer small, sunny rooms, which are so clean they gleam. Book way ahead. There's no breakfast, but you get a discount if you stay more than one night. There's a midnight curfew.

**Hotel Lady** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 324 21 12; [www.hoteladyroma.it](http://www.hoteladyroma.it); 4th fl, Via Germanico 198; s without bathroom €50-65, d with/without bathroom €100-130/€70-95; ☒) A homey old-school *pensione* on one floor of an apartment block, the Hotel Lady is a quiet and inviting place. The eight rooms are snug, comfortable, spotless, and 4 and 6 have wood-beamed ceilings. The owner and his wife don't speak English, but will merrily chat to you in Italian and serve you breakfast (€10) in their attractive salon.

**Hotel San Pietro** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 370 01 32; [www.sanpietrino.it](http://www.sanpietrino.it); Via Bettolo 43; s without bathroom €60-85, d with/without bathroom €75-118/60-85; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) In peaceful Prati, not far from Ottaviano San Pietro metro station, San Pietro is a fabulous choice. Its 16 rooms are characterful and prettily decorated, with terracotta floors, some with statuary, and carvings in the hallways. Added extras are the comfortable beds, wi-fi and helpful staff.

**Colors Hostel & Hotel** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 40 30; [www.colorshotel.com](http://www.colorshotel.com); Via Boezio 31; dm €23-27, s €50-90, d €100-135; ☒ ☒ ☒) This hostel-hotel is a relaxed place, with seven sunny, brightly painted dorms that can be noisy when windows are left open. It has a fully equipped kitchen, spotlessly clean shared bathrooms and a small roof terrace. The doubles are simple, bright and attractive, with comfortable beds, high ceilings and modern bathrooms. Note there's an age limit for the dorms: 18 to 35. There are singles and doubles with shared bathrooms that are around €10 to €15 cheaper.

**Hotel Bramante** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 06 426; [www.hotelbramante.com](http://www.hotelbramante.com); Vicolo delle Palline 24-25; s €100-160, d €150-220; ☒) Borgo-set Bramante feels like a country house in the city, full of rustic elegance, oriental rugs, beams and antiques. It's housed in the 16th-century building that was home to architect Domenico Fontana before Pope Sixtus V banished him from Rome, and has just 16 characterful rooms.

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## EATING

Romans love to eat out, and the city bulges with *trattorie*, *ristoranti*, pizzerias and *enoteche* (wine bars serving food). Excellent places dot the *centro storico*, Trastevere, Prati, Testaccio (the heartland of Roman cuisine, featuring lots of offal) and San Lorenzo. Be warned that the area around Termini has lots of substandard restaurants, and also choose carefully around the Vatican, which is packed with tourist traps.

Many restaurants close down for several weeks during the traditional summer holiday month of August, although council laws state that they must consult with local colleagues to ensure that a similar business is open no more than 300m away.

Rome has masses of *alimentari* (grocery stores) or bars where you can get a *panino* (sandwich) made up for you for about €3, or buy *tramezzini* (premade refrigerated sandwiches; about €4). In a cafe or bar

it will cost more if you sit down to eat or drink. Alternatively, there are hundreds of *pizza al taglio* outlets for a takeaway slice of pizza (about €3 depending on the size and topping).

## Ancient Rome

**Cavour 313** (Map; ☎ 06 678 54 96; Via Cavour 313; ☎ 10am-2.30pm & 7.30pm-12.30am, closed Aug; dishes €7-14) Close to the Colosseum and Forum, wood-panelled, intimate wine-bar Cavour 313 attracts everyone from actors to politicians to tourists. Sink into its public cosiness and while away hours over some sensational wine (over 1200 labels), cold cuts, cheeses, carpacci, or daily specials.

**La Piazzetta** (Map; ☎ 06 699 16 40; Vicolo del Buon Consiglio 23a; meals €35) *Molto simpatico*, on a tiny medieval lane, this tucked-away, informal yet classy restaurant has a fabulous antipasti buffet and equally impressive *primi* and *secondi* – try the yolky carbonara. The dessert-sampler buffet means you don't have to face a difficult decision between puddings.

## Centro Storico

### BUDGET

**Antico Forno** (Map; ☎ 06 679 28 66; Via delle Muratte 8; ☎ 7am-9pm) Near the Trevi Fountain, Antico Forno is one of Rome's oldest bakery shops, and its well-stocked deli counter has a grand array of freshly baked *panini*, focaccia and pizza.

**Forno di Campo de' Fiori** (Map; ☎ 06 688 06 662; Campo de' Fiori 22; ☎ 7am-1.30pm & 5.30-8.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat) Obscenely good, crispy, direct-from-the-oven *pizza a taglio* keeps this place permanently packed. The *pizza bianca* – white pizza with olive oil, rosemary and salt – is divine, the *pizza rossa* ('red' pizza, with olive oil, tomato and oregano) sublime, and the *pizza patata* (with potato and rosemary) and *pizza pommidorini* (with cherry tomatoes) are heavenly.

**Lo Zozzone** (Map; ☎ 06 688 085 75; Via del Teatro Pace 32; regular/large pizza €3/5; ☎ Mon-Sat) The affectionally named 'dirty one' is sparkingly clean, and is growing smarter by the year, with a few tables inside and out. It also has some of Rome's best *panini*. Pay at the register for a regular/large *pizza bianca*, then ask for it to be stuffed with your belly's desire at the bar.

**Volpetti alla Scrofa** (Map; ☎ 06 688 06 335; Via della Scrofa 31-32; meals under €10; ☎ Mon-Sat) This place is an Aladdin's cave of delicacies, including Belgian beer, French champagne, Italian truffles, sausage and cheese. It's also a *tavola calda* ('hot table') where you can enjoy a fast lunch of pasta, salad and fruit for under €10.

**Zazá** (Map; ☎ 06 688 01 357; Piazza San'Eustachio 49 ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat) Handily set between Piazza Navona and the Pantheon, this hole-in-the-wall, organic *pizza a taglio* place will hit the spot with its highly digestible pizza – the base is made using extra-virgin olive oil and is risen for up to 60 hours. Try the potato pizza or the margherita.

**our pick Pizzeria da Baffetto** (Map; ☎ 06 686 16 17; Via del Governo Vecchio 114; pizzas €6-9; ☎ 6.30pm-midnight) Da Baffetto offers the full-on wham-bam Roman pizza experience and some of the best pizzas in the city. To partake, join the queue and wait for the bustling waiters to squeeze you in – don't be surprised if you have to share a table. To start try the tasty fried things – zucchini flowers, *olive ascolane* and so on. Paper-thin, and served bubbling hot from the wood-fired oven, the scrumptious pizzas are as Roman as it gets.

# GELATO A GO GO

Rome's almost perpetual sunshine might go some way to explaining the local gelato habit. Ice cream is a natural, delectable part of Roman life, and the city is dotted with superb *gelaterie artigianale* (handmade ice cream). The best sell their creations on the day they make them; most give the customer an option of a crown of fresh *panna* (cream) on top. If going off-guidebook, a handy tip is to look at the pistachio flavour. Pale olive equals good, bright green is bad. When it gets really hot, every Roman's favourite cooling pursuit is to eat *grattachecca* (crushed ice drowned in fruit syrup) by the river. There are several riverside stands around Rome's central bridges.

Here's our road-tested guide to the best gelateria in the city:

- **Alberto Pica** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 84 05; Via della Seggiola 12; 🕒 8.30am-2am Mon-Sat year-round, 4pm-2am Sun, closed 2 weeks Aug) The original Mr Pica worked for Giolitti (see below), and this is a historic Roman gelateria, open since 1960. In summer, it offers flavours such as *fragolini de bosco* (wild strawberry) and *petali di rosa* (rose petal), but rice flavours are specialities whatever the season.
- **Ara Coeli** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 50 85; Piazza d'Aracoeli 9; 📍Piazza Venezia) Close to the base of the Campidoglio, Ara Coeli is handily located and offers more than 40 flavours of excellent organic ice cream, semicold varieties, Sicilian granita and yoghurt.
- **Gelateria Giolitti** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 12 43; Via degli Uffici del Vicario 40) This started as a dairy in 1900 and still keeps the hoards happy with succulent sorbets and creamy chocolates. Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn swung by in *Roman Holiday* and it used to deliver marron glacé to Pope John Paul II.
- **Old Bridge** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 397 23 026; Viale dei Bastioni di Michelangelo 5; 🕒 9am-2am) Conveniently set near the wall of the Vatican, this tiny parlour has been cheerfully dishing up generous portions of homemade ice cream for over 20 years. Try the chocolate or pistachio, and, go on, have a dollop of cream on top.
- **San Crispino** (☎ 06 679 39 24) Via della Panetteria ([Map](#); Via della Panetteria 42; 🕒 noon-12.30am Mon, Wed, Thu & Sun, noon-1.30am Fri & Sat); Piazza della Maddalena ([Map](#); Piazza della Maddalena 3; 🕒 noon-12.30am Mon, Wed, Thu & Sun, noon-1.30am Fri & Sat) This is possibly the world's best gelato. What! You want a cone? The delicate, strictly natural and seasonal flavours are served only in tubs (cones would detract from the taste).

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**Filetti di Baccalà** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 40 18; Largo dei Librari 88; meals €20; 🕒 dinner Mon-Sat) On a pretty, scooter-strewn piazza, this tiny stuck-in-time institution serves classic cod and chips, without the chips (the name means 'fillet of cod'). You can have the crispy battered vegies instead, such as *puntarella* – chicory – salad or crisp-fried zucchini flowers.

**Enoteca Corsi** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 08 21; Via del Gesù 88; meals €20; 🕒 lunch Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Merrily worse for wear, family-run Corsi is a genuine old-style Roman *osteria*-wine shop. The look is rustic – wine-bottle-lined, bare wooden tables, paper tablecloths – and the atmosphere one of cheery organised chaos. On offer are homely dishes using good, fresh ingredients, and the menu follows the culinary calendar, so if it's gnocchi, it's Thursday.

**Da Ricci** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 11 07; Via Genova 32; pizzas €8; 🕒 7pm-midnight Tue-Sun) In a tranquil, cobbled cul-de-sac a step away from smoggy Via Nazionale, Rome's oldest pizzeria started life as an *enoteca* (wine bar) in 1905, and its wood-panelled interior feels like it hasn't changed much since. The sign says Est! Est!! Est!!! – Da Ricci's other name – named after its white wine from the north of Lazio.

Pizzas are thick-based Neapolitan-style (though you can get thin-based if you like), and work best with lots of toppings.

**Alfredo e Ada** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 88 42; Via dei Banchi Nuovo 14; meals €20; 🕒 Mon-Fri) Once you've found a seat at this time-machine trattoria, all you need to do is wait. Never mind newfangled stuff like menus. You'll get whatever blue-rinse Ada puts in front of you – simple, hearty and tasty stuff such as sausage and lentils. Dessert comes from Ada's legendary biscuit tin. No credit cards.

## MIDRANGE

**Da Francesco** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 40 09; Piazza del Fico 29; pizzas €6-9, meals €24; 🕒 11.50am-2.50pm & 7pm-12.45am) Gingham, paper tablecloths, frazzled, jovial waiters, groaning plateloads of pasta, tasty pizza: this quintessential Roman kitchen has character coming out of its ears, and tables and chairs spilling out onto the pretty piazza. Rock up early or queue. No credit cards.

**Sora Margherita** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 42 16; Piazza delle Cinque Scole 30; meals €25; 🕒 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Fri & Sat winter, lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Fri summer, closed Aug) No-frills Sora Margherita started as a cheap kitchen for hungry locals, but word has spread. Expect dog-eat-dog queues; cheap, hearty pasta and moreish gnocchi; Roman Jewish dishes (such as ricotta tart); and a rowdy Roman atmosphere. Service is prompt and you're expected to be likewise. It's closed weekends in summer as, according to the sign, '*tutti al mare*' (everyone's at the beach).

**Cul de Sac** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 01 094; Piazza Pasquino 73; meals €30; 🕒 noon-4pm & 6pm-12.30am Mon-Sat) A fabulous little *enoteca*, just off Piazza Navona, with a tiny terrace and narrow, pine and bottle-lined interior. The knowledgeable, swift waiters pass about delicious cold meats and cheeses, and moreish mains: try the surprisingly delicate *involtini* (beef rolls). There's a phone-directory-sized wine list. Book ahead in the evening.

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## OUR TOP FIVE ASTOUNDINGLY GOOD-VALUE ROME EATS

- **Pizzeria da Baffetto** Rome's best pizza, served in unforgettable wham-bam style.
- **Forno di Campo de' Fiori** If angels made *pizza a taglio* (pizza by the slice), it would taste something like this.
- **Cacio e Pepe** Three courses of fine food without breaking into a €20 note.
- **Sora Margherita** (above) Superb value in the Ghetto, robust, rip-roaring Roman-Jewish cooking at pocket-friendly prices.
- **La Veranda de l'Hotel Columbus** Set lunch in a frescoed Renaissance palace, almost on St Peter's doorstep, for €35, including wine? Yes, please!

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**our pick** **Gino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 34 34; Vicolo Rosini 4; meals €30; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Oh, Gino! This is surely the perfect trattoria: quaint, busy and buzzing, dishing out well-executed staples such as *rigotoni alla gricia* (pasta with cured pig's cheek) and meatballs under gaudily painted vines. It's hidden away down a narrow lane close to parliament, and perennially packed by gossiping politicians. No credit cards.

**Ar Galletto** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 17 14; Piazza Farnese 102; meals €35; 🕒 daily) You wouldn't expect there to be anywhere reasonably priced on Piazza Farnese, one of Rome's loveliest outdoor rooms, but this long-running *osteria* is the real thing, with good, honest Roman food, a warm local atmosphere and dazzlingly set exterior tables. Roasted chicken is the house speciality (*galletto* means little rooster), but the roasted lamb in season is just as fine.

**Vineria Chianti** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 75 50; Via del Lavatore 81-82; meals €35) Many restaurants around the Trevi Fountain dish up overpriced tourist fare, but this pretty ivy-clad wine bar is one of the exceptions, bottle-lined inside, and with watch-the-world-go-by outside seating in summer. Cuisine is Tuscan, so the beef is particularly good, but it also serves up imaginative salads, and pizza in the evenings.

**Ditirambo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 16 26; Piazza della Cancelleria 74-75; meals €35; 🍴 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner daily) Just off Campo de' Fiori, Ditirambo has a rustic, gingham-clad look, excellent wine list and innovative, sophisticated, seasonally driven cuisine. The menu changes according to what's fresh at the market, the chef uses organic artisan products whenever possible, and there's a good choice for vegetarians. Finish up with a divine tiramisu. It's unpretentious and popular, so make sure you book ahead. Across the road is sister restaurant Grappolo D'Oro, sleeker and more modern in style, but another great choice.

**Da Armando al Pantheon** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 03 034; Salita dei Crescenzi 31; meals €40; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat, closed Aug) A family-run trattoria that is wood-panelled, inviting and authentic, barely a step from the Pantheon, and always busy. Armando's son Claudio continues the tradition of cooking Roman fare to perfection. Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and footballer Pelé have both eaten here. To finish try the home-made cakes. Booking is advisable.

**Matricianella** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 683 21 00; Via del Leone 2/4; meals €40; 🍴 Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Tucked near Piazza di San Lorenzo in Lucina, this popular, chic trattoria, with gingham tablecloths and chintzy murals, also has some streetside seating on the quiet cobbled lane. The cooking is simple, delicious and in the Roman-Jewish tradition. Romans go crazy for the delectable fried antipasti, the *carciofi alla giudia* (Jewish-style artichokes), the meatballs and also the Jewish-style stew. Booking is essential.

**Da Giggetto** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 11 05; Via del Portico d'Ottavia 21-22; meals €40; 🍴 Tue-Sun) The atmospheric Ghetto, rustic interiors, white-jacketed waiters, *fabuloso* Roman-Jewish cooking – who needs more? Celebrate all things fried by tucking into the marvellous *carciofi alla giudia*, *fiore di zucca* (zucchini or squash flowers) and *baccalà* (cod) and follow on with a *zuppa di pesce* (fish soup) or *rigatoni alla gricia*. In the warmer months, sit outside under the shadow of the Portico d'Ottavia ruins. For those on a budget, there's Giggetto 2 (☎ 06 64760369; Via Angelo in Pescheria 13-14), a simple cafe behind its parent restaurant.

## TOP END

**Colline Emiliane** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 481 75 38; Via degli Avignonesi 22; meals €45; 🍴 Tue-Sat, Sun lunch, closed Aug) This welcoming, tucked-away trattoria off Piazza Barberini flies the flag for Emilia-Romagna, the well-fed Italian province that has gifted the world Parmesan, balsamic vinegar, bolognese sauce and Parma ham. On offer here are delicious meats, home-made pasta, rich *ragù*, and desserts worthy of a moment's silence.

**Osteria Sostegno** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 38 42; Via delle Colonnelle 5; meals €45) Here you have stumbled on a well-kept secret. It's intimate, a favourite of journalists and politicians, with simple yet excellent dishes such as *caprese* (tomato and mozzarella salad) or *lasagnetto al forno con punte di asparagi* (little lasagne with asparagus heads). There's a charming small terrace between the steep walls of a narrow alley. Nearby is the similarly splendid Ristorante Settimio (☎ 06 678 96 51; Via delle Colonnelle 14; meals €45), run by the same family.

## Monti



**La Carbonara** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 482 5176; Via Panisperna 214; meals €25) On the go since 1906, this busy restaurant was favoured by the infamous Ragazzi di Panisperna, a group of young physicists, including Enrico Fermi, who constructed the first nuclear reactor and atomic bomb. He was probably inspired by the delicious fried potato, an explosion of taste. Another speciality is the eponymous carbonara, though the restaurant is actually so-named because the first owner was hitched to a coal seller. The waiters are brusque, it crackles with energy and the interior is covered in graffiti – tradition dictates that diners should leave their mark in a message on the wall.

## Tridente

### BUDGET

**Da Michele** ([Map](#); ☎ 349 252 5347; Via dell'Umiltà 31; ☎ 8am-5am Mon-Fri, to 8pm summer) A handy address in Spagna district: buy your fresh, light and crispy *pizza a taglio* and you'll not only have a delicious lunch on the move, but also save your cents so you can – perhaps – afford that dashing designer outfit.

**Pizzeria al Leoncino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 77 57; Via del Leoncino 28; pizzas €6-8.50; ☎ Thu-Tue, dinner only Sat & Sun) It can be difficult to source a cheap meal in upmarket Tridente, which is why the existence of Leoncino should be wholeheartedly celebrated. A boisterous neighbourhood pizzeria with a wood-fired oven, it has two small rooms, cheerful decor and gruff but efficient waiters who will serve you an excellent Roman-style pizza and ice-cold beer faster than you can say *'delizioso'*.

**'Gusto** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 322 62 73; Piazza Augusto Imperatore 9; pizzas €7-11) If Terence Conran were Italian, he might have dreamed up 'Gusto, once-upon-a-time a mould-breaking warehouse-style gastronomic complex, all exposed brickwork and industrial chic. It's still buzzing, and is a great place to sit on the terrace and eye up the new Richard Meier—designed Ara Pacis museum [Click here](#). Go for the Neapolitan-style pizzas rather than the upmarket restaurant fare, which receives mixed reports.

### MIDRANGE

**La Buca di Ripetta** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 321 93 91; Via di Ripetta 36; meals €40) Popular with actors and directors from the district, who know a good thing when they see it, this value-for-money foodie destination offers robust Roman cuisine. Try the *zuppa rustica con crostini di pane aromatizzati* (country-style soup with rosemary-scented bread) or the *matolino di latte al forno alle erbe con patate* (baked suckling pork with potatoes) and you'll be fuelled either for more sightseeing or for a serious snooze.

**Palatium** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 692 02 132; Via Frattina 94; meals €40; ☎ Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Conceived as a showcase of Lazio's bounty, this sleek *enoteca* close to the Spanish Steps serves excellent local specialities, such as *porchetta* (pork roasted with herbs), artisan cheese, and delicious salami, as well as an impressive array of Lazio wines (try lesser-known drops such as Aleatico). *Aperitivo* is a good bet too.

**Il Margutta** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 50 577; Via Margutta 118; meals €40) Vegetarian restaurants in Rome are rarer than parking spaces, and this art gallery/restaurant is an unusually chic way to eat your greens. As well as an epicurean array of dishes, there's an impressive wine list and staff are friendly and bilingual. Best value is the Saturday/Sunday buffet brunch (€15/25), with over 50 dishes on Sunday. It also offers a four-course vegan menu (€30).

### TOP END

**Nino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 5676; Via Borgognona 11; meals €50; 🕒 12.30-3pm & 7.30-11pm Mon-Sat) TomKat (Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes) had a pre-nuptial dinner here, and this old-style Tuscan trattoria close to the Spanish Steps is enduringly popular with the rich and famous. Waiters can be brusque if you're not on the A-list, but the food is good hearty fare served in an old-school (polished dark wood and white tablecloths) atmosphere. The Tuscan bean soup is particularly memorable.

**Open Colonna** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 478 22 641; Via Milano 9a; meals €55; 🕒 noon-midnight) Spectacularly set at the back of Palazzo delle Esposizioni, superchef Antonello Colonna's superb restaurant is tucked on a mezzanine floor under an extraordinary glass roof – wow factor before you've tasted a bite. The cuisine is new Roman: innovative takes on traditional dishes, cooked with wit and flair. The best thing of all? There's a more basic but still delectable fixed two-course lunch for €15, and Saturday and Sunday brunch at €28, served in the larger downstairs room, so you can live the life without splashing the cash.

## Termini & Esquilino

### BUDGET

**Panella l'Arte del Pane** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 487 24 35; Via Merulana 54; 🕒 8am-2pm & 5-8pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 8am-2pm Thu, 8am-2pm & 4.30-8pm Sat, 8.30am-2pm Sun) With a sumptuous array of *pizza a taglio*, *supplì* (fried rice balls), focaccia, and fried croquettes, this is a great lunch stop, where you can sip a glass of chilled prosecco while eyeing up gastronomic souvenirs from the deli.

**Indian Fast Food** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 07 92; Via Mamiani 11; curries €5.50-7.50; 🕒 11am-4pm & 5-11.30pm) Basic, formica tables, Hindi hits, neon lights, chapatti and naan, lip-smacking samosas and bhajis, and a choice of main curry dishes: you could almost imagine yourself in India in this authentic joint.

### MIDRANGE

**Trimani Wine Bar** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 96 30; Via Cernaia 37b; meals €35; 🕒 Mon-Sat, closed 2 weeks Aug) The best place around Termini for a quality lunch, this is a top-of-the-range wine bar, with a delectable range of dishes – from oysters to lentil soup to salami and cheeses served with mustard and jam – plus a choice of over 4500 international wines (be steered by the seriously knowledgeable waiters), and delicious bread and olive oil.

### TOP END

**Agata e Romeo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 61 15; Via Carlo Alberto 45; meals €120; 🕒 Mon-Fri) This elegant, restrained place was one of Rome's gastronomic pioneers, and still holds its own as one of the city's most gourmet takes on Roman cuisine. Chef Agata Parisella designs and cooks menus, offering creative uses of Roman traditions; husband Romeo curates the wine cellar; and daughter Maria Antonietta chooses the cheeses. Bookings essential.

## San Lorenzo

### BUDGET

**Formula 1** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 445 38 66; Via degli Equi 13; pizzas from €5; 🕒 6.30pm-1.30am Mon-Sat) As adrenalin-fueled as its name. At this basic, historic San Lorenzo pizzeria, waiters zoom around under whirring fans delivering tomato-loaded bruschetta, fried zucchini flowers, *supplì al telefono* and bubbling thin-crust pizza to eternal crowds of feasting students.

## MIDRANGE

**Said** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 9204; Via Tiburtina 135; meals €35; 🕒 Mon-Sat) To experience San Lorenzo at its most chic, head to Said, housed in a 1920s chocolate factory. It's now a glorious chocolate shop, selling delights such as Japanese pink-tea pralines – and a chic restaurant-bar that specialises in chocolate-tinged dishes – such as *sformatino B-Said di cavolfiore e cioccolato* (cauliflower mousse with chocolate) – great talking points, if not always entirely successful. There's *aperitivo* from 7pm to 9pm.

**Tram Tram** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 49 04 16; Via dei Reti 44; meals €40; 🕒 Tue-Sun) This trendy yet old-style, lace-curtained trattoria takes its name from the trams that rattle past outside. It offers traditional dishes, such as *baccalà* on Friday, with a focus on rustic southern specialities such as *orecchiette alla Norma* (ear-shaped pasta with aubergine, tomato, basil and ricotta) and the pure comfort food of *riso cozze patate* (rice, mussels and potatoes).

## Trastevere

### BUDGET

**Sisini** ([Map](#); Via di San Francesco a Ripa 137; 🕒 9am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Locals love this *pizza a taglio* joint (the sign outside says 'Suppli'), and you'll need to jostle with them to make it to the counter. Simple styles reign supreme – try the margherita or marinara. It's also worth sampling the *suppli* and roast chicken.

**Forno la Renella** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 581 72 65; Via del Moro 15-16; 🕒 9am-9pm) The wood-fired ovens at this historic Trastevere bakery have been firing for decades, producing a delicious daily batch of pizza, bread and biscuits. Piled-high toppings (and fillings) vary seasonally. It's popular with everyone from skinheads with big dogs to elderly ladies with little dogs.

**Panattoni** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 580 09 19; Viale di Trastevere 53; pizzas €6-8.80; 🕒 6.30pm-1am Thu-Tue) Panattoni is nicknamed *l'obitorio* (the morgue) because of its marble-slab tabletops, but thankfully the similarity stops there. This is one of Trastevere's liveliest pizzerias, with paper-thin pizzas, a clattering buzz, testy waiters, streetside seating and fine fried starters (specialities are *suppli* and *baccalà*).

**Dar Poeta** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 588 05 16; Vicolo del Bologna 46; pizzas from €7; 🕒 from 6.30pm) Tucked away in an atmospheric side street, with a few outside tables, always-busy Dar Poeta is *fabuloso*. Its pizzas are a cross between the crisp Roman variety and the more doughy Neapolitan variety, and the slow-risen dough apparently makes them supremely digestible. Those with room left over can try the decadent Nutella-and-ricotta calzone.

**Da Augusto** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 580 37 98; Piazza de'Renzi 15; meals €20; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat Sep-Jul) For a true Trastevere feast, plonk yourself at one of Augusto's rickety tables and prepare to enjoy some mamma-style cooking. The hard-working waiters dish out hearty platefuls of *rigatoni all'amatriciana* and *stracciatella* (clear broth with egg and Parmesan) among a host of Roman classics.

**our pick Da Lucia** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 580 36 01; Vicolo del Mattonato 2; meals €20; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Eat beneath the fluttering knickers of the neighbourhood at this terrific trattoria, frequented by hungry locals and tourists, and packed with locals for Sunday lunch. On a cobbled backstreet that is classic Trastevere, it serves up a cavalcade of Roman specialities including *trippa all'romana* (tripe with tomato sauce) and *pollo con peperoni* (chicken with peppers), as well as bountiful antipasti and possibly Rome's best tiramisu.

## MIDRANGE

**Beer & Fud** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 58940 16; Via Benedetta 23; meals €25; 🕒 6.30pm-12.30am, to 2am Fri & Sat, closed Aug) This orange-and-terracotta, vaulted pizzeria, with a tented room at the back, wins plaudits for its amazingly good pizzas, *crostini* and delicious fried things (potato, pumpkin etc) and has a microbrewery on site. Save room for dessert too. Book ahead.

**Alle Fratte di Trastevere** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 583 57 75; Via delle Fratte di Trastevere 49-50; meals €30; 🕒 Thu-Tue, closed Aug) A warm, welcoming trattoria with chirpy paintings, frothy curtains, delicious food and outside seating, Alle Fratte is a big hit with savvy priests, busy businesspeople and grateful tourists, enjoying substantial, tasty platefuls of Roman classics washed down with the very quaffable house wine.

**Da Enzo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 581 83 55; Via dei Vascellari 29; meals €30; 🕒 Mon-Sat) This snug dining room with rough yellow walls and lots of character serves up great, seasonally based Roman meals, such as spaghetti with clams and mussels or grilled lamb cutlets. There's a tiny terrace on the quintessential Trastevere cobbled street.

## TOP END

**Osteria della Gensola** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 581 63 12; Piazza della Gensola 15; meals €45; 🕒 closed Sun in summer) Tucked away in Trastevere, this tranquil, classy, yet unpretentious trattoria thrills foodies with delicious food that has a Sicilian slant and emphasis on seafood, including an excellent tuna tartare, linguine with fresh anchovies and divine *zuccherini* (tiny fish) with fresh mint.

**Paris** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 581 53 78; Piazza San Calisto 7a; meals €45; 🕒 Tue-Sat, lunch Sun, closed 3 weeks Aug) An old-school Roman restaurant set in a 17th-century building, Paris is the best place outside the Ghetto to sample Roman-Jewish cuisine, such as delicate *fritto misto con baccalà* (deep-fried vegetables with salt cod) and *carciofi alla giudia*, as well as Roman staples such as just-right *rigatoni alla carbonara*. There's a sunshaded terrace.

## Testaccio

**Pizzeria Remo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 574 62 70; Piazza Santa Maria Liberatrice 44; pizzas from €6; 🕒 dinner Mon-Sat) Not a place for a romantic tête-à-tête, Pizzeria Remo is one of the city's most popular pizzerias, busy with noisy hordes of young Romans. The pizzas are among Rome's biggest and thinnest, sizzling with toppings on the crisp, charred base. Place your order by ticking your choices on a sheet of paper slapped down by an overstretched waiter. Expect to queue.

**Volpetti Più** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 574 43 06; Via Volta 8; meals under €15) One of the few places in town where you can sit down and eat well for less than €15, Volpetti Più is a sumptuous *tavola calda*, offering an opulent choice of pizza, pasta, soup, meat, vegetables and fried nibbles. It adjoins Volpetti's to-die-for deli.

**Trattoria da Bucatino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 574 68 86; Via Luca della Robbia 84; meals €25; 🕒 Tue-Sun) This intimate, neighbourhood place is hugely popular. Ask for a table upstairs (with wood panels, Chianti bottles and a mounted boar's head) or outside, as downstairs has less atmosphere. The *bucatini all'amatriciana* is a must, the meat-filled cannelloni is another winner, and meaty *secondi* are also excellent, but do try to save room for a home-cooked dessert.

**Da Felice** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 574 68 00; Via Mastro Giorgio 29; meals €30; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Cantankerous former owner Felice used to vet every client on sight, but nowadays you can book ahead without worrying about whether your face will fit at this Testaccio institution. A makeover has seen it turn post-industrial chic, but the menu remains typically Roman. Try the glorious *tonnarelli cacio e pepe* (square-shaped pasta with pecorino Romano cheese and black pepper), mixed at the table, and the steaks. For those who love offal,

there's also some buttery Roman soul food. The tiramisu gets top marks.

## Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

### BUDGET

**Dolce Maniera** ([Map](#); Via Barletta 27) This 24-hour bakery in a basement next to the British School supplies much of the neighbourhood with breakfast. Head here for cheap-as-chips, delicious *cornetti*, slabs of pizza, *panini* and an indulgent array of cakes.

**Pizzeria Amalfi** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 397 33 165; Via dei Gracchi 12; pizzas €5-9.50) With a yolk-yellow interior featuring murals of the Bay of Naples, you could imagine yourself in Campania, while digging into the house pizzas – of course the Neapolitan, thick-crust variety. They're justly popular, and it's always busy, with some sunny streetside tables too. Finish with a creamy *crème brûlée*.

**Pizzarium** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 397 45 416; Via della Meloria 43; pizza slice €2-3) Another contender for Rome's best *pizza a taglio*, this unassuming place offers a fluffy base and crisp crust topped by intensely flavoursome toppings. Eat standing up, and wash it down with a chilled beer.

**Cacio e Pepe** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 321 72 68; Via Avezzana 11; meals €20; 🗓 Mon-Sat) Romans flock for the home cooking at this humble trattoria, with gingham-clad tables spreading across the pavement in all directions. They'll even put up with freezing winter temperatures to sit outside and dig into great steaming bowls of *cacio e pepe* – this-morning-fresh *bucatini* slicked with buttery cheese and pepper – and other classics such as spaghetti carbonara.

**Osteria dell'Angelo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 372 94 70; Via Bettolo 24; meals €20, menus €25-30; 🗓 lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat, closed 2 weeks Aug) Having hung up his boots, former rugby player Angelo runs a neighbourhood trattoria that's hugely popular (reservations are a must), with paper cloths on solid wooden tables, fresh-from-the-scrum waiters, photos of Angelo's sporting heroes and a sociable atmosphere. The huge set menu features a mixed antipasti, a robust Roman-style pasta, salad and a choice of hearty main courses. To finish, you're offered lightly spiced biscuits to dunk in sweet dessert wine.

### MIDRANGE

**Zigaetana** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 3212342; Via Cola di Rienzo 263; pizza €7.50-10, meals €30; 🗓 12.30pm-11pm Sun-Thur, 12.30pm-midnight Fri & Sat) A huge, arched cellar, this has a funky contemporary feel, but has been family run since early last century. The paintings on the walls and inscription around the fireplace were painted by impecunious artists in exchange for food during the recession of the '30s, and the owner possesses poems written by Trilussa that were given as payment for meals. And you can see why, as the food is tip top, including great antipasti, pizzas and pastas.

**Dal Toscano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 397 25 717; Via Germanico 58-60; meals €35; 🗓 Tue-Sun, closed Aug) Carnivores will adore Dal Toscano, an old-fashioned Italian *ristorante* that serves top-notch Tuscan food, with an emphasis on superb cuts of meat. Start with the hand-cut Tuscan prosciutto, then try the melt-in-your-mouth *piccata di vitello* (veal scaloppini with lemon sauce) or *bistecche alla Fiorentina* (Florentine-style steak). You'll need to book.

**Dino e Tony** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 397 33 284; Via Leone IV; meals €35; 🗓 Tue-Sun, closed Aug) Tony stirs the pots; Dino delivers the songs, punch lines and mammoth portions of Roman soul food. It's famous for its *amatriciana* and *pasta alla gricia*, if you get past the mighty antipasti. Belt loosened, you might be able to finish with their signature *granita di caffè* (coffee with crushed ice and loads of whipped cream). No credit cards.

## TOP END

**Ristorante l’Arcangelo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 321 09 92; Via Belli 59-61; meals €55; 📅 closed Sun & lunch Sat) Prati harbours some of Rome’s best *ristoranti*, and l’Arcangelo is a jewel in its gastronomic crown. It has a traditional air, wood panelling, and is usually dotted by famous or almost-famous politicians and celebrities. The cuisine (surprisingly innovative) offers twists on classics, using fabulously fresh ingredients: the *amatriciana*, *cacio e pepe*, *carbonara* and *baccalá* are all contenders for the best in town.

**La Veranda de l’Hotel Columbus** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 2973; Borgo Santo Spirito; meals €70) It’s worth eating here if only for the setting, in a wonderful hall frescoed by Pinturicchio or outside in the Renaissance courtyard. But the food is spectacular too – creative takes on Italian ingredients by the Italo-Argentinean chef. It’s an ideal place for an extravagant lunch (think beef fillet with foie gras) between all that high-calibre sightseeing, especially as they offer a lunch menu (*primo*, *secondo*, half-bottle mineral water, a glass of wine and coffee) for €35.

## San Giovanni & Celio

**Il Bocconcino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 770 791 75; Via Ostilia 23; meals €30; 📅 Thu-Tue, closed Aug) Visited the Colosseum and *need* lunch in a local trattoria? Try ‘the little mouthful’. Its gingham tablecloths, outdoor seating and cosy interior look like all the others in the area, but it serves excellent traditional pasta and other dishes, such as *insalata di finocchi arance e olive* (fennel, orange and olive salad) and *saltimbocca alla romana* (‘leap in the mouth’ veal with sage).

## Self-Catering

For deli supplies and wine, shop at *alimentari*, which generally open 7am to 1.30pm and 5pm to 8pm daily, except Thursday afternoons and Sundays (during the summer months they’ll often close on Saturday afternoons instead of Thursdays).

For fresh fruit and vegetables, there are hundreds of outdoor markets, open from 7.30am to 1pm Monday to Saturday:

**Campo de’ Fiori** ([Map](#))

**Piazza San Cosimato Market** ([Map](#)) Trastevere.

**Piazza Testaccio** ([Map](#))

**Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II** ([Map](#))

**Via del Lavatore** ([Map](#)) Near Trevi Fountain.

You can stock up at the small supermarkets dotted around town:

**Conad** ([Map](#); Stazione Termini)

**DeSpar** ([Map](#); Via Giustiniani 18b-21) Near the Pantheon.

**DeSpar** ([Map](#); Via Nazionale 212-213)

**Di per Di** ([Map](#); Via Vittoria) Near Spanish Steps.

**Sir** ([Map](#); Piazza dell’Indipendenza 28)

**Todis** ([Map](#); Via Natale del Grande 24) Trastevere.

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# DRINKING

Bars and cafes are an essential part of Roman life. Most Romans breakfast in a cafe (a slurp of a cappuccino and a sugary bun) and pop back at least once for a pick-me-up espresso later in the afternoon. For drinks other than coffee, there are traditional *enoteche*, a few pubs –trendy by virtue of their novelty – super-sleek designer bars, and some alternative counter-culture hang-outs.

Much of the action is in the *centro storico*. Campo de' Fiori is popular with a younger crowd, and is fun, though can be a bit rowdy and trashy. For a more upmarket scene, check out the bars in the alleyways around Piazza Navona. Trastevere is another bar-filled area where locals and tourists mingle merrily. San Lorenzo is the student area and is another great place to bar crawl. It's dotted by bars, restaurants and clubs and is packed, grungy, a little more crazy than the centre, and proffers cheaper drinks.

Recent clampdowns on drinking after 2am have cooled the city-centre scene somewhat.

## Cafes

### ANCIENT ROME

**Caffè Capitolino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 51 236; Capitoline Museums, Piazza del Campidoglio 19) This well-kept-secret of a cafe is a lovely spot to take a break from the wonders of the Capitoline Museums and relax with a drink or a snack (*panini*, salads and pizza), but best are the incredible views from the rooftop terrace. You don't even need a museum ticket; you can enter from the street entrance to the right of the Palazzo dei Conservatori.

### CENTRO STORICO

**Caffè Sant'Eustachio** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 13 09; Piazza Sant'Eustachio 82) A small stand-up place with some of Rome's best coffee, this is always three deep at the bar. The famous *gran caffè* is created by beating the first drops of espresso and several teaspoons of sugar into a frothy paste, then adding the rest of the coffee on top. It's superbly smooth and guaranteed to put some zing into your sightseeing. Specify if you want it *amaro* (bitter) or *poco zucchero* (with a little sugar).

**Caffè Tazza d'Oro** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 97 92; Via degli Orfani 84; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) A busy, stand-up bar with burnished fittings dating from the 1940s and some of the best coffee in the capital, which means it's spectacularly good. A speciality is the *granita di caffè*, a crushed-ice, sugared coffee served with a generous dollop of cream, top and bottom.

**Caffè Farnese** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 395 61 03; Via dei Baullari 106) We're with Goethe, who thought Piazza Farnese one of the world's most beautiful squares. Judge for yourself from the vantage of this unassuming cafe. On a street between Campo de' Fiori and Piazza Farnese, it's ideally placed for whiling away the early afternoon hours. Try the *caffè alla casa* (house coffee) – made to a secret recipe.

### TRIDENTE

**Caffè Greco** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 17 00; Via Condotti 86) Keats and Casanova were among the early regulars at this historic gilt-and-velvet-lined cafe. It opened in 1760 and although still going strong, it's of more interest for its history than anything it serves. A coffee at the bar is the go here, or take out a mortgage for table service.

### TERMINI, ESQUILINO & SAN LORENZO

**Dagnino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 481 86 60; Galleria Esedra, Via Orlando 75) In a marble-floored arcade off Via Orlando, this funky 1950s cafe serves delicious Sicilian treats such as *cannoli Siciliana* (ricotta-filled

pastries) and moreish *arancini* (rice balls), though other morsels are a bit hit and miss.

## VATICAN CITY, BORGO & PRATI

**Castroni** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 43 83; Via Cola di Rienzo 196; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Near the Vatican, this Aladdin's Cave of a gourmet food shop (it sells marrons glacés, sweets, and so on, as well as Vegemite and baked beans for homesick expats) has a bar where you can scoff a quick *cornetto* and coffee. There are other branches at Via Ottaviano 55 ([Map](#)), Via Flaminia 38 ([Map](#)), and Via Nazionale 71 ([Map](#)).

## Bars

### CENTRO STORICO

**Société Lutèce** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 683 01 472; Piazza di Montevercchio 17; 🕒 6.30pm-2am Tue-Sat, closed 2 weeks Aug) A group of Turin trendsters opened Société Lutèce and it's among Rome's hippest bars – grungy and art-school (expect Joy Division and hair-raising bass) rather than dressed-up and glitzy – like their other venture in Trastevere, Freni e [Frizioni](#). The music's genuinely funky, *aperitivo* lavish, and the crowds spill out onto the piazza outside.

**Les Affiches** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 89 86; Via Santa Maria dell'Anima 52; 🕒 8pm-2am Mon-Sat) Once boho-favourite 'Stardust', a name and management change doesn't seem to have made much difference. The hep cats in cool hats are postcard-home handsome and artistically dishevelled, and hang out in the cobbled street as well as in the cramped red-and-black rooms inside, and there's occasional live music at *aperitivo* o'clock (ie early evening).

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## APERITIVO, ANYONE?

Young Romans love the *aperitivo* (happy hour). A fashion that started in Milan, it sees bars offering a snack buffet from around 6pm to 9pm – usually with a special charge for a drink and food of around €7 to €10. If the buffet is lavish enough, sometimes the city's bright young things can skip dinner altogether. Great places to drink up and chow down include **Freni e Frizioni** ([Click here](#)) **Femme** (see opposite) and **Il Pentagrappolo** ([Click here](#)).

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**Il Gocetto** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 42 68; Via dei Banchi Vecchi 14; 🕒 11.30am-2pm & 5.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Join the cast of regulars at the bar at this old-style *vino e olio* shop, and imbibe delicious drops by the glass, accompanied by a tasty assortment of snacks (cheeses, salamis, crostini etc) and large servings of neighbourhood banter.

**Salotto 42** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 58 04; Piazza di Pietra 42; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Facing the weathered splendour of the Temple of Hadrian, this is a slinky, glamorous little bar, attracting a slinky, glamorous crowd. Run by an Italian-Swedish couple, it's as close as you'll get to a sitting-room experience in the city centre – think armchairs, sofas and coffee-table books.

**Bar della Pace** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 12 16; Via della Pace 5; 🕒 8.30am-2am) Inside it's gilded baroque and mismatched wooden tables; outside locals and tourists striking poses over their Camparis against a backdrop of ivy. The perfect people-watching spot.

**Vineria Reggio** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 03 268; Campo de' Fiori 15; 🕒 8.30am-2.30am) The coolest bar on Il Campo, this has a small, bottle-lined, cosy interior and outside tables as well, and attracts *fighi* (cool) Romans like bees to a honey pot.



**Caffè Fandango** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 454 72919; Piazza di Pietra 32; 🕒 11am-2am) Owned by the Fandango film company, this is a buzzing, arty little labyrinth in black, white and red. There's live music from Tuesday to Thursday (classical and pop) and frequent film showings. A beer costs €5, and *aperitivo* (6.30pm to 9pm) €12.

**Circus** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 976 19 258; [www.circusroma.com](http://www.circusroma.com); Via della Vetrina 8; 🕒 10am-2am Tue-Sun) A great little new cafe-bar, tucked around the corner from Piazza Navona, this is a funky, informal place to lounge and chat, with DJs on Fridays, art exhibitions and lots of books to browse through. Popular with American students from the nearby school.

**Etablì** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 97 616 694; Vicolo delle Vacche 9a; 🕒 6pm-2am Tue-Sun) Chilean-Italian brothers Massimo and Alessandro Aureli are the smiling hosts of this rustic-chic bar-cafe-restaurant in a 16th-century building. It's a laid-back place, with an eclectic soundtrack that's rich in 1960s cool. Roman lovelies float in to have a drink or coffee, read the paper, indulge in *aperitivo* and use the wi-fi.

**Femme** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 48 62; Via del Pellegrino 14; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Full of Rome's gilded youth: entering this silver-seated modernist bar, with its funky sounds, is rather like wandering into a Calvin Klein advert, with ubercool lovelies everywhere you look, ready to preen, see and be seen, doubtless following dinner at home with *mamma*. The splendid *aperitivo*, from 7pm to 9pm, is almost worth losing one's cool over.

**Trinity College** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 64 72; Via del Collegio Romano 6; 🕒 noon-2.30am) A big lively pub just off busy Via del Corso, Trinity College has a good selection of imported beers and bar food and a few outdoor tables. It gets packed to overflowing at weekends, when men might have trouble getting past the bouncers.

## TRIDENTE

**Bar at Il Palazzetto** ([Map](#); Piazza della Trinità dei Monti; 🕒 noon-3pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sun) Accessed from near the top of the Spanish Steps, this suntrap, summer-only terrace bar is a great spot to enjoy a glass of Prosecco before dinner.

**L'Antica Enoteca** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 08 96; Via della Croce 76; meals €25) Tridente bars are often overpriced and overgilded, but this old favourite bucks the trend. Locals and tourists alike prop at the 19th-century wooden bar to sample the 60 wines by the glass, snack on antipasti, and generally have a good time. If antipasti won't cut it, dive into the back room and order well-priced soul food such as pasta or polenta.

**Stravinskij Bar – Hotel de Russie** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 328 88 70; Via del Babuino 9) Can't afford to stay at celeb-magnet Hotel de Russie? Then splash out on a drink in its enchanting bar, set in the courtyard, with sunshaded tables overlooked by terraced gardens. Impossibly romantic in the best kind of 19th-century-traveller, *dolce vita* way, it's perfect for a cocktail.

## MONTI

**Ai Tre Scalini** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 489 07 495; Via Panisperna 251; 🕒 noon-1am Mon-Fri, 6pm-1am Sat & Sun) It's almost obligatory to visit everyone's favourite *enoteca* before or after dining at La Carbonara ([Click here](#)). 'The Three Steps' is always packed, with crowds spilling out onto the street. Apart from a tasty choice of wines, they also sell the damn fine Menabrea beer, brewed in Northern Italy. If you've missed out on dinner you can tuck into a heart-warming array of cheeses, salami and dishes such as *porchetta di Ariccia con patate al forno* (roasted Ariccia pork with roast potatoes).

## TERMINI, ESQUILINO & SAN LORENZO

**Solea Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 328 9252925; Via dei Latini 51; 🕒 9pm-2am) With lots of vintage sofas, chairs, and cushions on the floor, this has the look of a chill-out room in a decadent baroque mansion. It's full of San Lorenzo hipsters lounging all over the floor, drinking the so-mean-they-snarl mojitos. Fun.

**Fiddler's Elbow** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 487 21 10; Via dell'Olmata 43; 🕒 5pm-2am) Near the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, the granddaddy of Rome's Irish pubs sticks to the formula that has served it so well over the last 25 years: Guinness, darts, crisps, and football and rugby, attracting a mix of Romans, expats and tourists.

**Bar Zest at the Radisson SAS** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 44 48 41; Via Filippo Turati 171; 🕒 10.30am-1am) The Radisson hotel is not ideally located as a base, but to pop by for a cocktail (€13) at the 7th-floor bar is another matter. Waiters are cute, chairs are by Jasper Morrison, there are views, plate-glass windows and a sexy rooftop pool.

## SAN GIOVANNI & CELIO

**Il Pentagrappolo** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 709 63 01; Via Celimontana 21b; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6pm-1am Tue-Sun) A few blocks from the Colosseo, these star-vaulted rooms offer 250 labels to choose from and about 15 wines by the glass. There's live jazz or soul from about 10pm and tasty *aperitivo* (6pm to 8.30pm). Equally good is the *enoteca* opposite, Kottabus (☎ 06 772 01 145; Via Celimontana 32; open 7pm to 1am).

## TRASTEVERE

**Bar San Calisto** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 589 56 78; Piazza San Calisto 3-5; 🕒 6-2.30am Mon-Sat) Those in the know head to the down-at-heel 'Sanca' for its basic, stuck-in-time atmosphere and cheap prices (a large beer costs €2.50). It attracts everyone from drug dealers, intellectuals, and pseudo-intellectuals, to keeping-it-real Romans, alcoholics and American students. It's famous for its chocolate – drunk hot with cream in winter, eaten as ice cream in summer. We're reliably told that unless you have drunk a post-dinner coffee here, or a Sambuca con la Mosca ('with flies', with two or three raw coffee beans dropped in the drink), you will not truly know Trastevere.

**our pick Freni e Frizoni** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 583 34 210; Via del Politeama 4-6) Everyone's favourite cool Trastevere bar: in a former life, this hip bar-cafe was a garage, hence its name ('brakes and clutches'). The arty crowd flocks here to slurp well-priced drinks (especially mojitos) and spill into the piazza out front. You can eat breakfast here, have lunch, munch brunch at the weekend, and feast on the good-value *aperitivo*. Hell, you could even move in here.

**Ombre Rosse** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 588 41 55; Piazza Sant'Egidio 12; 🕒 8am-2am) Another seminal Trastevere hang out; grab a table on the terrace and watch the world go by. The cosmopolitan clientele ranges from elderly Italian wide boys to chic city slickers. Tunes are slinky and there's live music (jazz, blues, world) on Thursday and Sunday evenings from October to May.

## VATICAN CITY, BORGO & PRATI

**Passaguai** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 874 513 58; Via Leto 1; 🕒 10am-2am Mon-Sat) A small, cavelike wine bar, Passaguai has a few outdoor tables and feels pleasingly off the beaten track. There's a good wine list and range of artisanal beers, and the food – such as cheeses and cold cuts – is tasty too.

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## CLUBBING

Rome is no nightlife nirvana, though there's plenty of fun to be had if you seek it out. An evening out here

starts late and goes on till early morning, a good night finishing with a cappuccino and *cornetto* in one of the many early-opening cafes. Concerts are typically listed for 10pm, but don't kick off till around 11pm, and nightclubs usually don't warm up until well after 1am.

Some of the more popular nightclubs can be tricky to get into: men (whether alone or in groups) will often find themselves turned away. Drinks can also be expensive and of indifferent quality whether *mojito* or beer; €10 per drink is usual, but many places charge €15.

## CENTRO STORICO

**Rialtosantambrogio** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 68133 640; [www.rialto.roma.it](http://www.rialto.roma.it); Via di San'Ambrogio 4; 📍 various) In the Ghetto, this ancient courtyard-centred building is Rome's most central *centro sociale* (social centre), with an art-school vibe. Its edgy programme is open to all, with gigs, central Rome's best club nights, exhibitions and art-house cinema.

**La Maison** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 683 33 12; [www.lamaisonroma.it](http://www.lamaisonroma.it); Vicolo dei Granari 3; 📍 11pm-4am Wed-Sat, Oct-May) Chandeliers and velvet banquettes provide a sexy backdrop for a see-and-be-seen crowd, who flirt and frolic to a soundtrack of poppy tunes and commercial house. It's smooth, mainstream and exclusive, yet La Maison is more fun than you might expect. Entrance is free, if you can get past the door-police, but drinks are €10 to €15 a throw. It gets busy by 2am.

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## GAY & LESBIAN ROME

Rome's gay scene is out of the closet, but remains much smaller than other European capitals. Rome is essential conservative: the merest mention of same-sex unions would have most politicians spluttering into their cappuccini. Intolerance seems to have become more prevalent in recent years: in 2007 two gay men were arrested for kissing in front of the Colosseum, and there have been several minor arson attacks on gay venues. However the Gay Pride march that takes place every June, the annual summer Gay Village, and regular gay nights at local clubs are signals of a thriving, if somewhat underground, scene.

Rome's main cultural and political gay organisation is the **Circolo Mario Mieli di Cultura Omosessuale** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 541 39 85; [www.mariomieli.it](http://www.mariomieli.it) in Italian; Via Efeso 2a), off Via Ostiense near the Basilica di San Paolo Fuori-le-Mura. It organises social and political events, including Rome Pride, which takes place every year in June. Mario Mieli also publishes a free monthly magazine *AUT*, which includes listings, available from gay bookshops and organisations.

The national organisation for lesbians is **Coordinamento Lesbiche Italiano** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 42 01; [www.clrbp.it](http://www.clrbp.it) in Italian; Via San Francesco di Sales 1b, Trastevere). The centre has a women-only hostel, [La Foresteria Orsa Maggiore](#).

An excellent source of information is the **Libreria Babele** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 66 28; Via dei Banchi Vecchi 116), a gay and lesbian bookshop.

Other useful listings guides are the free monthly *AUT*, *Clubbing* and *Guide Magazine*, and the international gay guide, *Spartacus*, available at gay and lesbian organisations and in bookshops. You can also go online at [www.gayrome.com](http://www.gayrome.com) or [www.gayrome.it](http://www.gayrome.it) (in Italian). In summer there is a Gay Village ([www.gayvillage.it](http://www.gayvillage.it)), with various clubs and special events – the location changes from year to year.

The city has a small gay and lesbian nightclub and bar scene, though numerous clubs have gay nights – see the Clubbing listings for details. Check out the following:

- **Coming Out** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 700 98 71; [www.comingout.it](http://www.comingout.it); Via di San Giovanni in Laterano 8; 🕒 10.30am-2am) Spot this easy-going bar in the shadow of the Colosseum by the rainbow sign and the mixed, convivial crowds spilling out into the street. There are regular drag acts, DJs and live acts.
- **Edoardo II** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 42 419; [www.edoardosecondo.it](http://www.edoardosecondo.it); Vicolo Margana 13-14; 🕒 8pm-1am Wed-Sun) Restaurant-bar that feels like a private members' club.
- **Hangar** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 13 971; Via in Selci 69a; 🕒 10.30pm-2.30am, closed Tue & 3 weeks Aug) Veteran men-only club. Porn-night Mondays and Striptease Thursdays are popular.
- **L'Alibi** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 574 34 48; [www.lalibi.it](http://www.lalibi.it); Via di Monte Testaccio 44; 🕒 midnight-5am Thu-Sun) Sultry, cavernous gay club, playing soulful house.

**Bloom** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 02 029; Via del Teatro Pace 30; 🕒 11.30pm-5am Wed-Mon Oct-May) A self-consciously stylish bar-club in a converted 14th-century chapel, Bloom has Philippe Stark lighting and minimalist look that attracts an easy-on-the-eye, label-loving crowd checking each other out.

## MONTI

**Galleria dei Serpenti** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 487 22 12; Via dei Serpenti 32; admission around €5. 🕒 various) A kooky, hidden-away gallery-club in Monti, this hip place offers some nights to remember, from the monthly mod mashup, the Right Track (vinyltastic, featuring northern soul and boogaloo), to in-the-know electronica.

## SAN LORENZO

**Dimmidisí** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 446 18 55; [www.dimmidisi.it](http://www.dimmidisi.it); Via dei Volsci 126B) This intimate, small-scale white-walled loft of a club is devoted to new music, including jazz, soul, dub, electronica and breakbeat. There are regular DJs and it's a good place to see live bands.

**Lian Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 347 650 72 44; Via degli Enotri 6; 🕒 8pm-2am Oct—mid-Jun) Little, vaulted Lian Club is an intimate place to see up-and-coming local bands, set in San Lorenzo, the student district. Entrance is usually €5 (free if you've eaten here) and drinks are cheap too.

**Locanda Atlantide** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 447 04 540; [www.locandatlantide.it](http://www.locandatlantide.it); Via dei Lucani 22b; 🕒 usually 9pm-2am, Oct-Jun) Enter this back-street, graffiti-covered door to tickle Rome's grungy underbelly: you'll descend into a cavernous place decked with retro junk to see poetry, alternative music, experimental theatre and performance art. It's good to know that punk is not dead.

## TRASTEVERE

**Lettere Caffè** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 972 70 991; [www.letterecaffè.org](http://www.letterecaffè.org); Via di San Francesco a Ripa 100-01; 🕒 10am-2am winter 6pm-2am summer, closed mid-Aug—mid-Sep) You like books? You like blues and jazz? Then you'll love this place – a clutter of barstools and books, where there are regular live gigs, poetry readings and comedy nights, followed by DJ sets playing indie and new wave.

**Big Mama** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 581 25 51; [www.bigmama.it](http://www.bigmama.it); Vicolo di San Francesco a Ripa 18; annual membership €13; 🕒 9.30pm-1.30am Wed-Sat, closed Jun-Sep) To wallow in the Eternal City blues, there's only one place to go – this cramped Trastevere basement, which also hosts jazz, funk, soul and R&B.

## TESTACCIO

Get down to Testaccio at midnight and saunter to the end of Via Galvani – in the square mile of the Monte Testaccio, a small hill – you'll find more clubs than at a Captain Caveman fancy-dress ball. Some of these are loud, boozy meat markets, but there's an undeniable buzz about it all, and there are a few havens of

hip serving up cutting-edge tunes.

**Villaggio Globale** ([Map](#); ☎ 334 1790006; [www.vglobale.biz](http://www.vglobale.biz); Via di Monte Testaccio 22; 🕒 various, gigs usually at 11pm, mid-Sep—Jun) For an illegal-warehouse-party vibe, head to Rome's best-known *centro sociale*, originally a squat, but now part of the establishment after 30 years in the city's former slaughterhouse. Entrance is usually around €5, beer is cheap, and dreadlocks are the look; the live music and DJs focus on dancehall, reggae, dubstep, and drum 'n' bass. Cut-price gigs play the circus tent in the yard (recent big names include Massive Attack).

**Conte Staccio** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 572 89 712; [www.myspace.com/contestaccio](http://www.myspace.com/contestaccio); Via di Monte Testaccio 65b; 🕒 8pm-4am Tue-Sat, mid-Sep—Jun) With an under-the-stars terrace, Conte Staccio is a laid-back cocktail bar with an arched white interior that hosts DJs and regular live gigs. Admission is usually free during the week.

**AKAB** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 572 50 585; [www.akabcave.com](http://www.akabcave.com); Via di Monte Testaccio 68-69; 🕒 11pm-4am Tue-Sat, closed end Jun—mid-Sep) This eclectic former workshop has an underground cellar, an upper floor, a garden and a whimsical door policy. On Tuesdays it's electronica L'Etrika ([www.lektrica.it](http://www.lektrica.it)), with some big names, while it goes retro on Wednesday and R&B on Thursday. Expect local live (often cover) bands on Friday, R&B and house on Saturday. Entrance is €15, including a complimentary drink.

## OSTIENSE

Ostiense is where serious clubbers head. It has an eclectic range of post-industrial and warehouse venues catering to tastes from tango to electrobeat.

**Alpheus** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 574 78 26; [www.alpheus.it](http://www.alpheus.it), in Italian; Via del Commercio 36; 🕒 11pm-4.30am Tue-Sun Oct-May) Alpheus has four halls hosting an eclectic array of sounds – from Argentine tango to Goldie – with plenty of live gigs. Saturday is the popular 'Gorgeous, I am' gay night, with lots of go-go dancers and guest DJs.

**Goa** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 574 82 77; Via Libetta 13; 🕒 11pm-4.30am Tue-Sun Oct-May) Goa is Rome's serious super-club, with international names (recent guests include 2ManyDJs), a fashion-forward crowd, podium dancers and heavies on the door. The night to head here, though, is Thursday, when top Italian DJ Claudio Coccoluto showcases the best of Europe's electronic music DJs. Lesbian night, Venus Rising ([www.venusrising.it](http://www.venusrising.it)), hits Goa the last Sunday of the month.

**Rising Love** ([Map](#); ☎ 335 879 0428; [www.risingrepublic.com](http://www.risingrepublic.com); Via delle Conce 14; 🕒 11pm-4am Tue-Sun Oct-May) For those who like their electronica, techno, funky groove and house, this white, industrial space will tick all your boxes. Guest DJs such as DJ Falcon (Daft Punk), plus local talent, get the crowd rocking, and there are regular special nights.

## ELSEWHERE

**Circolo degli Artisti** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 703 05 684; [www.circoloartisti.it](http://www.circoloartisti.it); Via Casilina Vecchia 42; 🕒 7pm-2am Tue-Thu, to 4.30am Fri-Sun) One of Rome's nightlife venues that hits the spot, Circolo is *the* place for alternative music gigs (think Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, Glasvegas and Cornershop). Friday night cracks open the electronica and house for gay night – Omogenic – and Saturday sees the fun-packed Screamadefica (punk-funk, ska and new wave), usually also featuring a live band. There's even a cool garden bar and admission is either free or a snip.

**Micca Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 874 40 079; [www.miccaclub.com](http://www.miccaclub.com); Via Pietra Micca 7a; 🕒 10pm-2am Mon, Tue & Thu, 10pm-4am Fri & Sat, 6pm-1am Sun Sep-May) At eclectic Micca, pop art and jelly-bright lighting fills ancient arched cellars. The program features everything from burlesque and doo-wop to glam

rock and swing, with loads of live gigs. There's an admission fee if a gig's on and at the weekend. Register online for discounts.

**Alexanderplatz** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 397 42 171; [www.alexanderplatz.it](http://www.alexanderplatz.it); Via Ostia 9; 🕒 8pm-2am Sep-Jun) The daddy of all jazz clubs in a city that loves jazz, Alexanderplatz attracts a passionate crowd and some huge international names. You'll need to book a table if you want dinner, and the music starts around 10pm. From July to September, the club moves outside to the grounds of Villa Celimontana ([www.villacelimontanajazz.com](http://www.villacelimontanajazz.com)) for an enchanting jazz festival under the stars.

**Qube** (☎ 06 438 54 45; [www.qubedisco.com](http://www.qubedisco.com); Via di Portonaccio 212; 🕒 11.30pm-5.30am Thu-Sat Oct-May) In Rome's eastern suburbs, the city's hugest disco offers Radio Rock night on Thursday and the superb gay night Muccassassina ([www.muccassina.com](http://www.muccassina.com)) on Friday, which attracts a mixed crowd. Saturday is Babylon, with regular international guest DJs.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

To entertain yourself in Rome it's often enough to park yourself at a streetside table and watch the world go by. But there's a big cultural scene here too, particularly in summer when the Estate Romana (Roman Summer; [Click here](#)) festival sponsors hundreds of theatre, cinema, opera and music events. Many performances take place in parks, gardens and church courtyards, with classical ruins and Renaissance villas providing atmospheric backdrops. Autumn is also full of cultural activity, with specialised festivals dedicated to dance, drama and jazz.

*Romac'è* ([www.romace.it](http://www.romace.it), in Italian; €1) is Rome's most comprehensive listings guide, and comes complete with a small English-language section; it's published every Wednesday. Another useful guide is *Trova Roma*, which comes as a free insert with *La Repubblica* every Thursday. The English-language magazine *Wanted in Rome* ([www.wantedinrome.com](http://www.wantedinrome.com); €1) also contains listings of festivals, exhibitions, dance shows, classical-music events, operas and cinema releases. It's published every second Wednesday. Useful websites include [www.romaturismo.it](http://www.romaturismo.it) and [www.comune.roma.it](http://www.comune.roma.it).

## Classical Music

The city's abundance of spectacular settings makes Rome a superb place to catch a concert. The Auditorium Parco della Musica (below) is a state-of-the-art, modernist complex that combines architectural innovation with perfect acoustics. Free concerts are often held in many of Rome's churches, especially at Easter and around Christmas and New Year. Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis and the programmes are generally excellent. Check newspapers and listings for programmes.

Rome's two major classical music organisations are the **Accademia di Santa Cecilia** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 808 20 58; [www.santacecilia.it](http://www.santacecilia.it); Viale Pietro de Coubertin 34) and the **Accademia Filarmonica Romana** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 320 17 52; [www.filarmonicaromana.org](http://www.filarmonicaromana.org), in Italian; Piazza Gentile da Fabriano 17). The former is often joined by world-class international performers for concerts at the Auditorium Parco della Musica, while the latter also attracts big stars and performs a varied programme at the Teatro Olimpico.

**Auditorium Parco della Musica** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 802 41 281; [www.auditorium.com](http://www.auditorium.com); Viale Pietro de Coubertin 10; 🕒 11am-8pm) Architect Renzo Piano's Auditorium is just as audacious as his Pompidou centre in Paris. Three scarab-shaped buildings squat around a 3000-capacity amphitheatre, looking like alien spaceships landed in a northern Rome suburb. An amazing 2.5 million spectators flocked here in 2008, making it Europe's most popular arts centre. It's supersleek and uberchic, yet the excited throng is

as wide a cross section as you'd see on the metro, a reflection of the democratic pricing (tickets cost from €5), and the programme, which encompasses anything from PJ Harvey to Puccini. Entering any of the halls (the largest is Sala Santa Cecilia, with 2800 seats), with their lipstick-red seating and billowing wooden interiors, you're sold before anyone plays a note. The acoustics are so good that you can feel the soundwaves ripple across your skin – Piano studied the interiors of lutes and violins as part of his design process. To get to the auditorium take tram 2 from Piazzale Flaminio or bus M from Stazione Termini, which departs every 15 minutes between 5pm and the end of the last performance.

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## SUMMER NIGHTS IN ROME

From mid-June to mid-September, most of the city's clubs and music joints close. Some of the clubs move to Fregene or Ostia for a summer's dancing on the sand. In town, the Estate Romana supplies ample after-dark entertainment. It's a huge umbrella festival encompassing concerts, exhibitions, theatre, open-air cinema and temporary markets and bars. Check [www.estateromana.comune.roma.it](http://www.estateromana.comune.roma.it) for listings. Some guaranteed events include Roma Incontra il Mondo (Rome Meets the World; [www.villaada.org](http://www.villaada.org)) in Villa Ada, featuring world music and local reggae in a wonderful outdoor, lakeside setting; Fiesta Club ([www.fiesta.it](http://www.fiesta.it)), a Latin-American dance feast in a 7000-sq-metre venue close to Via Appia Nuova, beyond Cinecittà; and the RomaEstate ([www.romaestate.net](http://www.romaestate.net)), a busy programme of live music in September and October at the Imperial Forums near the Olympic football stadium.

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**Teatro Olimpico** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 59 91; [www.teatrolimpico.it](http://www.teatrolimpico.it), in Italian; Piazza Gentile da Fabriano 17) The Accademia Filarmonica Romana holds its season here, and the programme features anything from classical soloists to opera performances, with some contemporary concerts and multimedia events, as well as regular ballet performances.

## Opera

Rome's indoor opera season runs from December to June, then moves outside in summer, to the spectacular setting of the Terme di Caracalla ([Click here](#)).

**Teatro dell'Opera di Roma** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 480 78 400; [www.operaroma.it](http://www.operaroma.it), in Italian; Piazza Gigli; ☎ box office 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun) After the functional and Fascist-era outside, the interior of Rome's premier opera house – all plush red-and-gilt – is a stunning surprise. This theatre has an impressive history: it premiered Puccini's *Tosca*, and Maria Callas sang here. Built in 1880, it was given a Fascist makeover in the 1920s. Contemporary productions don't always match the splendour of the setting, but you may get lucky. Tickets for the ballet cost anywhere between €13 and €65; for the opera you'll be forking out between €30 and €140. First-night performances cost more.

## Cinemas

Of Rome's 80-odd cinemas only a handful show films in the original language (marked VO or *versione originale* in listings). Expect to pay around €8, with many cinemas offering discounts on Wednesdays. The following cinemas always show some VO films:

**Warner Village Moderno** ([Map](#); ☎ 892 111; Piazza della Repubblica 45) Film premieres are often held at this multiplex, which screens Hollywood blockbusters (both in English and Italian) and major-release Italian films.

**Metropolitan** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 320 09 33; Via del Corso 7) Near Piazza del Popolo.

## Sport

A trip to Rome's impressive football stadium, the **Stadio Olimpico** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 3 68 51; Foro Italico, Viale dei Gladiatori 2), is an unforgettable insight into Rome's sporting heart. Throughout the season (September to May) there's a game on most Sundays involving one of the city's two teams: AS Roma, known as the *giallorossi* (yellow and reds; [www.asromacalcio.it](http://www.asromacalcio.it), in Italian), or Lazio, the *biancazzurri* (white and blues; [www.sslazio.it](http://www.sslazio.it), in Italian). Tickets cost from €10 to €100 depending on the match and can be bought at Lottomatica (lottery centres), the stadium, ticket agencies, [www.listicket.it](http://www.listicket.it) or one of the many Roma or Lazio stores around the city. Try **AS Roma Store** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 692 00 642; Piazza Colonna 360) or **Lazio Point** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 482 6688; Via Farini 34).

To get to the stadium take metro line A to Ottaviano and then bus 32.

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## SHOPPING

For designers galore, head for the area around Piazza di Spagna ([Map](#)). Vintage shops and smaller designer boutiques dot the wonderful Via del Governo Vecchio ([Map](#)). If you're looking for antiques or unusual gifts, try Via dei Coronari ([Map](#)), or Via dei Banchi Vecchi ([Map](#)). Via Margutta ([Map](#)) is lined by upmarket art galleries and antique shops.

Time your visit to coincide with the *saldi* (sales), and you'll pick up some great bargains, although you'll need to be up for some bare-knuckle shopping. Winter sales run from early January to mid-February and summer sales from July to early September.

## Decorative Arts & Prints

**Centro Russia Ecumenica il Messaggio dell'Icona** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 689 66 37; Borgo Pio 141) Join the queue of nuns and priests from around the world who pop into this serene store to buy prints, postcards and prayer cards with religious themes, as well as original painted icons, some glinting with real gold leaf.

**Nardecchia** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 93 18; Piazza Navona 25) Check out Nardecchia for antique prints, including 18th-century etchings of Rome by Giovanni Battista Piranesi that have been reproduced from 19th-century glass-plate negatives by the Alinari brothers.

**Bottega di Marmoraro** ([Map](#); Via Margutta 53b) A particularly charismatic hole-in-the-wall shop, lined in marble carvings, where you can get marble tablets engraved with any inscription you like (€15). Peer inside at lunchtime and you might see the *marmoraro* (marble artisan) cooking a pot of tripe for his lunch on the open log fire.

## Clothing & Jewellery

The big designer names are here in force – [Map](#): Armani, Gucci and La Perla are on Via Condotti; Dolce & Gabbana and Missoni are on Piazza di Spagna; Emporio Armani and Etro are on Via del Babuino; Max Mara is on both Via Frattina and Via Condotti; Prada is on both Via Condotti and Via del Babuino; Versace is on Via Bocca di Leone; and Fendi has a glittering art-deco mothership at Largo Goldoni 419.

More off-the-wall designer boutiques and vintage shops line the lovely Via del Governo Vecchio near



Piazza Navona. Via del Corso and Via Cola di Rienzo (near the Vatican) are home to lots of mainstream high-street labels, as well as some smaller speciality shops.

**Angelo di Nepi** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 360 42 99; Via del Babuino 147) Roman designer Nepi creates richly coloured, beautifully cut clothes with lots of ethnic influences, Indian silks, African cottons and so on, and prices are not stratospheric.

**Arsenale** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 1360; Via del Governo Vecchio 64) A watchword with chic young Roman women, this warehouse-like shop is very NYC. Patrizia Pieroni's designs are structuralist, in sumptuous fabrics – perfect for that art-gallery opening.

**Borsalino** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 50 838; Piazza del Popolo 20; 🕒 10am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-7.30pm Sun) Romans really cut a dash in a hat, but don't fret, you can learn. Borsalino is *the* Italian hatmaker, favoured by 1920s criminal Al Capone, Japanese Emperor Hirohito and Humphrey Bogart. Think fedoras, pork-pie styles, felt cloches and woven straw caps.

**Scala Quattorodici** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 588 35 80; Via della Scala 13-14) Make yourself over a la Audrey Hepburn with these classically tailored clothes in beautiful fabrics – either made-to-measure or off-the-peg. Pricey (a frock will set you back €600 or so) but oh so worth it.

**Mario Pelle** ([Map](#); Via Vittoria 15; 🕒 Mon-Fri) Ring the bell at this unassuming doorway and hurry up flights of stairs to a family-run leather workshop that feels like it hasn't changed for decades. The elderly artisans create belts (€70 to €100), watch straps (€40 to €90), bags, picture frames, travel cases and other such elegant stuff. You can take along a buckle or watch to which you want a belt or strap fitted.

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## DISCOUNT DESIGN

Discount designer outlets are big business here – helping to achieve the all-important *bella figura* (beautiful look). **Discount dell'Alta Moda** Tridente ([Map](#); ☎ 06 361 37 96; Via Gesù e Maria 14); Barberini ([Map](#) ☎ 06 482 7790; Via dei Serviti 27) sells big names at knock-down prices (around 50% off) and is well worth a rummage. **Outlet Point** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 325 04 661; Via Vittoria 11), in Spagna, sells De Carlis, a typical Roman high-fashion label, with prices at 50% to 60% off, including cashmere and cocktail dresses. You can also buy discount brands such as Chloe, Prada, Marni and Jill Sander at **Gente Outlet** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 689 26 72; Via Cola di Rienzo 246) the less-expensive relation to Gente's main store in Via del Babuino. Fashion fiends on a budget might want to schlep out to **Castel Romano Designer Outlet** (☎ 06 50 50 050), around 20km south of Rome, which has over 100 shops selling names such as Dolce & Gabbana, Salvatore Ferragamo and Valentino, with prices reduced from 30% to 70%. You can book a shuttle bus (☎ 06 373 50810) from your hotel (€23 return).

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## Designer Goods & Homewares

**TAD** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 326 95 131; Via del Babuino 155a) TAD is a conceptual department store that sells an entire lifestyle. Here you can get kitted out in Chloe or Balenciaga, have a haircut, buy scent and flowers, and furnish your apartment with wooden daybeds and Perspex dining chairs. Don't forget to pick up hip soundtracks to your perfect life from the CD rack. The serene Italian-Asian cafe is the perfect ladies-who-lunch pit stop.

## Shoes & Leather Goods

**Fausto Santini** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 678 41 14; Via Frattina 120) Style mavens adore Roman designer Fausto

Santini for his simple, architectural shoe designs. Colours are beautiful, quality impeccable. For bargains and previous seasons' designs, check out the outlet store, Giacomo Santini ([Map](#); Via Cavour 106), where stock from previous seasons is discounted up to half-price. Both stores sell bags, too.

**Furla** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 692 00 363; Piazza di Spagna 22) Popular local chain Furla offers well-priced, well-made bags, wallets, umbrellas and belts in candy-bright colours. Other branches are dotted all over town.

**Sermoneta** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 679 19 60; Piazza di Spagna 61; 🕒 9.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-7pm Sun) Buying leather gloves in Rome is a rite-of-passage for some, and this is *the* shop to do it. At Rome's most famous glove-sellers, choose from a kaleidoscopic range of top-quality leather and suede gloves with linings in silk and cashmere. Expert assistants will size up your hand in a glance. Just don't expect them to smile.

**Crepida** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 686 17 33; Via Arco della Ciambella 7; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm) Join the queues of Romans-in-the-know at this tiny shop tucked behind Largo Argentina. Here you can get custom-made shoes at off-the-peg prices, that is, €250 for a pair of boots, €135 for a pair of shoes. They take about 10 days to make.

## Markets

**Porta Portese flea market** ([Map](#); Piazza Porta Portese) To see another side of Rome head to this mammoth flea market. With thousands of stalls selling everything from rare books to spare bike parts, from Peruvian shawls to MP3 players, it's crazily busy and a lot of fun. Keep your valuables safe and wear your haggling hat.

## Specialist Shops

**Ai Monasteri** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 688 02 783; Corso del Rinascimento 72; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Mon-Sat) This apothecary-like shop stocks all-natural cosmetics, sweets, honeys, jams and wines, all made by monks. Boost your love life with the Elixir of Love, though why monks are expert at this is anyone's guess.

**Officina Profumo Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 687 96 08; Corso del Rinascimento 47; 🕒 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) This historic perfumery was established in Florence by Dominican friars in 1221 and has been concocting seductive scents and unguents ever since. Like Ai Monasteri, it sells all-natural perfumes, cosmetics, herbal infusions, teas and pot pourri.

**Confetteria Moriondo & Gariglio** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 699 08 56; Via del Piè di Marmo 21-22; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) Roman poet Trilussa dedicated several sonnets to this place. It's no ordinary sweetshop, but a bygone temple of bonbons. Rows of handmade chocolates and sweets (more than 80 varieties, many made to historic recipes) lie in ceremonial splendour in old-fashioned glass cabinets.

## Stationery

**Officina della Carta** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 589 55 57; Via Benedetta 26b; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat) A tiny workshop that produces delicately hand-painted paper-bound boxes, photo albums, recipe books, notepads, photo frames, diaries, and charming marionette theatres.

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# GETTING THERE & AWAY

## Air

Rome's main airport is **Leonardo da Vinci** (FCO; [Map](#); ☎ 06 6 59 51; [www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it)), commonly known as Fiumicino. The second smaller airport, **Ciampino** (CIA; [Map](#); ☎ 06 6 59 51; [www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it)), is used by many low-cost airlines and charter flights. For details on getting to and from the airports, see opposite.

## Bus

Long-distance national and international buses use the bus terminus on Piazzale Tiburtina, in front of Stazione Tiburtina. Take metro line B from Stazione Termini to Tiburtina and turn right when you exit the station. The long-haul buses are beyond the overpass. From here, regular buses travel south to destinations such as Palermo (€43, 12 hours) and Lecce (€41, seven hours).

**Cotral buses** (☎ 800 174 471; [www.cotralspa.it](http://www.cotralspa.it)) serve the Lazio region and depart from numerous points throughout the city, depending on their destination. The company is linked with Rome's public transport system, which means that you can buy one *biglietto integrato regionale giornaliero* (BIRG) ticket that covers city buses, trams, metro and train lines, as well as regional buses and trains (see boxed text, [Click here](#)).

## Car & Motorcycle

Driving to the centre of Rome is challenging, even for the locals. There are traffic restrictions, one-way systems, serious parking shortages and a huge number of manic drivers.

Rome is circled by the Grande Raccordo Anulare (GRA) to which all major autostradas (motorways) and *strade statali* (SS; major state roads) connect. Approaching Rome from the north on the A1 autostrada, get off at the Roma Nord exit; from the south use Roma Sud. After a few kilometres, you'll find yourself nearing the GRA. From the GRA the most important roads are the following:

**Via Aurelia (SS1)** Heads northeast from the Vatican, following the Tyrrhenian coast to Pisa, Genoa and France.

**Via Cassia (SS2)** From Ponte Milvio this runs northwest to Viterbo, Siena and Florence.

**Via Flaminia (SS3)** Parallels Via Cassia before forking off northeast to Terni, Foligno and over the Apennines into Le Marche, ending on the Adriatic coast at Fano.

**Via Salaria (SS4)** Heads north from near Porta Pia in central Rome to Rieti and into Le Marche, ending at Porto d'Ascoli on the Adriatic coast.

**Via Tiburtina (SS5)** Links Rome with Tivoli and Pescara, on the coast of Abruzzo.

**Via Casilina (SS6)** Heads southeast to Anagni and into Campania, terminating at Capua near Naples.

**Via Appia Nuova (SS7)** Heads south, via Ciampino airport and the Castelli Romani, into Campania, then crosses the Apennines into Basilicata, through Potenza and Matera to Taranto in Puglia and finally on to Brindisi.

**Via Cristoforo Colombo** Runs from near Porta San Sebastiano (the start of Via Appia Antica) south to EUR and then Ostia.

**Via del Mare/Via Ostiense (SS8)** Via del Mare heads southwest to Ostia; it becomes Via Ostiense on the city side of the GRA.

From the GRA, take the autostrada Roma-Fiumicino for Leonardo da Vinci (Fiumicino) airport and the A24 autostrada for the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio, Molise and Pescara.

# Train

Almost all trains arrive at and depart from Stazione Termini ([Map](#)). There are regular connections to other European countries, all the major cities in Italy and many smaller towns.

The **train information office** ([Map](#); ☎ 24hr) at Stazione Termini is helpful, though it's often crowded and you have to take a ticket and wait your turn (English is spoken). It cannot, however, make reservations. These must be made at the main ticket and reservation windows in the front hall. Alternatively, go online at [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com) or find one of the many travel agencies that has an FS or *biglietti treni* (train tickets) sign in the window. Another way to reserve or buy tickets is to use the automatic ticket machines, where you can pay with cash, credit or ATM card.

Note that at Stazione Termini, platforms 25 to 29 are a good 10-minute walk from the main concourse.

Remember to validate your train ticket in the yellow machines on the station platforms before you get on your train. If you don't, you may be fined. Be aware that claiming ignorance rarely works.

Rome's other principal train stations are Stazione Tiburtina, Stazione Roma-Ostiense ([Map](#)) and Stazione Trastevere ([Map](#)).

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## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

Fiumicino is about 30km southwest of the city centre and is well connected to it. Getting to and from Ciampino airport is more time-consuming by public transport, despite it being only 15km southeast of the centre.

### BUS

At night, from 12.30am to 6am you can catch take an N2 night bus to Tiburtina metro station from where you can take a Cotral bus to Fiumicino (€4.50, 40 minutes). Buy your ticket on the bus.

Buses to Ciampino leave from Anagnina, which is accessible via metro line A. The service runs every 40 minutes from 6.30am until 10.40pm and costs €1.20 (you can buy a ticket on the bus).

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## TRAIN SERVICES TO MAJOR CITIES

From Stazione Termini you can catch trains to the following cities and many others. All fares quoted are 2nd class.

Destination	Fare	Duration
Florence	€40 (fast train), €16 (slow train)	1hr 40min (fast train), 3hr 40min (slow train)
Milan	€75 (fast), €45 (medium)	3½hr (fast), 6hr (medium)
Naples	€40 (fast), €10.10 (slow)	1½hr (fast), 2hr 40min (slow)
Palermo	€58 (day train), €45 (night train)	11hr
Venice	€62 (fast), €37 (medium)	4½hr (fast), 6hr (medium)

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Another Ciampino option is the **SIT shuttle bus service** (☎ 06 591 6826; [www.sitbusshuttle.com](http://www.sitbusshuttle.com)). This travels between Stazione Termini and Ciampino from 4.30am to 9.45pm (from Termini) and 7.45am to 11.45pm (from Ciampino) daily. Tickets costs €6/5 from Termini/Ciampino. The buses leave Rome

from a stop on Via Marsala, and you can buy tickets on board.

## CAR

If you've decided to hire a car (see opposite) and pick it up at Fiumicino, follow the signs for Rome out of the airport and onto the autostrada. Exit the autostrada at EUR, then follow the *centro* signs (they look like a bull's-eye) to reach Via Cristoforo Colombo, which will take you directly into the centre of Rome.

From Ciampino, it is easier: exit the airport, turn right onto Via Appia Nuova and follow it to the centre.

## TAXI & SHUTTLE SERVICE

Official taxis registered by the Comune di Roma leave from outside the arrivals halls at Fiumicino and Ciampino. They are white and have a TAXI sign on their roof, as well as an identifying number on their doors. There are fixed rates between each airport and destinations within the Aurelian Walls in central Rome: €40/30 Fiumicino/Ciampino. These rates are inclusive of luggage and apply to fares coming from and going to the airports. For destinations outside the walls, taxis use their meters and will include a surcharge for luggage (€1.04 per bag). Note that taxis registered in Fiumicino charge a set fare of €60 to travel to the centre – make sure you catch a Comune di Roma taxi instead.

Several private companies run shuttle services. **Terravision** ([www.terravision.eu](http://www.terravision.eu)) has a service from Fiumicino to Stazione Termini costing €7 one way and €12 return. It leaves about every two hours between 8.30am and 8.30pm; for tickets go to the desk in the arrivals hall. **Airport Shuttle** (☎ 06 420 13 469; [www.airportshuttle.it](http://www.airportshuttle.it)) offers transfers to your hotel in Rome from Fiumicino in a minivan for €35 for one person, then €6 for each additional passenger up to a maximum of eight. From Rome to Fiumicino the price is €28. To/from Ciampino costs €42, with €6 for each additional person. A 30% surcharge is added between 9pm and 7am. You need to book in advance.

## TRAIN

The airport at Fiumicino is easy to reach via train. The efficient Leonardo Express leaves from platform 24 at Stazione Termini and travels direct to the airport every 30 minutes from 5.52am until 10.52pm. It costs €11 (children under 12 years free) and takes about 30 minutes. Don't take the trains marked Orte or Fara Sabina if you want to reach Termini from the airport. These slower trains stop at Rome's Trastevere, Ostiense and Tiburtina stations only. They run every 15 minutes (hourly on Sunday) from 5.57am to 11.27pm, and from Tiburtina from 5.06am to 10.36pm. Tickets cost €4.50.

From Fiumicino, trains start at 6.36am and run half-hourly until 11.36pm. Tickets for the Leonardo Express are available at Termini from *tabacchi* and newsstands in the station, at vending machines or at the ticket desk on the platform. At Fiumicino, get tickets from the vending machines or the ticket desks at the rail terminus.

## Car & Motorcycle

Roman traffic is notorious and driving or riding here requires skills that aren't often taught in driving lessons. A cool head, nerves of steel and a primordial sense of survival help. As a general rule, worry about what's in front of you, leaving those behind you to think about your rear!

Most of the *centro storico* is closed to normal traffic. You're not allowed to drive in the centre from 6.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 2pm to 6pm Saturday unless you're a resident or have special permission. You'll also need to watch out for the increasing number of no-traffic Sundays and days when circulation is limited to vehicles with odd/even number plates.

All 22 streets accessing the 'Limited Traffic Zone' (ZTL) have been equipped with electronic-access detection devices. If you're staying in this zone, contact your hotel, which will fax the authorities with your number plate, thus saving you a fine. For further information, check [www.atac.roma.it](http://www.atac.roma.it) or call ☎ 06 57 003 (between 8am and 8pm).

Parking in the city is no fun. Blue lines denote pay-and-display spaces, with tickets available from meters (coins only) and *tabacchi*. Costs vary but in the centre expect to pay €1 per hour between 8am and 8pm (11pm in some parts). Traffic wardens are vigilant and fines are common. If you're really unlucky you could find your car's been clamped or towed away. If so, call the **traffic police** (☎ 06 6 76 91) who can tell you where to go to collect it. You'll have to pay about €100 to get it back, plus a hefty fine.

The city's most convenient car park is at Villa Borghese ([Map](#)); entry is from Piazzale Brasile at the top of Via Vittorio Veneto. Between Monday and Saturday there are supervised car parks at metro and train stations including Stazione Ostiense ([Map](#)) and Stazione Tiburtina. These operate between 5.15am and 12.15am (to 1.15am on Saturday) and cost €1.50 per 12 hours.

## CAR HIRE

The major car-rental companies all have representatives in Rome and at the airport arrivals halls.

**Avis** (☎ 06 452 108 391; [www.avisautono.leggio.it](http://www.avisautono.leggio.it), in Italian) Ciampino airport (☎ 06 793 40 195); Fiumicino airport (☎ 06 650 11 531); Stazione Termini ([Map](#); ☎ 06 481 43 73)

**Europcar** (☎ 199 307 030; [www.europcar.com](http://www.europcar.com)) Ciampino airport (☎ 06 793 40 387); Fiumicino airport (☎ 06 657 61 211); Stazione Termini ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 28 54)

**Hertz** (☎ 02 694 30 006; [www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com)) Ciampino airport (☎ 06 650 10 256); Fiumicino airport (☎ 06 592 27 42); Stazione Termini ([Map](#); ☎ 06 474 03 89)

**Maggiore National** (☎ 199 151 120, 06 224 56 060; [www.maggiore.it](http://www.maggiore.it)) Ciampino airport (☎ 06 793 40 368); Fiumicino airport (☎ 06 650 11508); Stazione Termini ([Map](#); ☎ 06 488 00 49)

## Public Transport

Rome's public transport system includes buses, trams, metro and a suburban train network. Tickets are valid for all forms of transport and come in various forms. The simplest is the *biglietto integrato a tempo* (BIT), which costs €1 and is valid for 75 minutes. In that time you can use as many buses or trams as you like but can take only one trip on the metro. Daily tickets (BIG) cost €4 (ask for a *biglietto giornaliero*) and give you unlimited trips; three-day tickets (BTI, *biglietto turistico integrato*) cost €11; and weekly tickets (CIS, *carta integrata settimanale*) cost €16. Children up to 1m tall, or under four years, travel free. Note that tickets do not include routes to Fiumicino airport.

You can buy tickets at *tabacchi*, at newsstands and at *biglietterie* (ticket offices) at metro, bus and train stations. They must be purchased before you get on the bus or train and then validated in the yellow machine once on board, or validated at the entrance gates for the metro. You risk a hefty fine if you're caught without a validated ticket.

## BUS & TRAM

Rome's buses and trams are run by **ATAC** (☎ 06 57003; [www.atac.roma.it](http://www.atac.roma.it)). The **main bus station** ([Map](#); Piazza Cinquecento) is in front of Stazione Termini, where there's an **ATAC information booth** (☎ 8am-8pm) on the stand in the centre of the piazza. Largo di Torre Argentina, Piazza Venezia and Piazza San Silvestro are other important hubs. Buses generally run from about 5.30am until midnight, with limited services throughout the night on some routes. Useful routes:

**Bus H** Stazione Termini, Via Nazionale, Piazza Venezia, Largo di Torre Argentina, Ponte Garibaldi, Viale Trastevere and into the western suburbs.

**Bus 3** Stazione Trastevere, Testaccio, Circo Massimo, Colosseo, San Giovanni, Porta Maggiore, Policlinico, Villa Borghese (Bioparco and Galleria D'Arte Moderna)

**Bus 23** Piazzale Clodio, Piazza Risorgimento, Ponte Vittorio Emanuele II, Lungotevere, Ponte Garibaldi, Via Marmorata (Testaccio), Piazzale Ostiense and Basilica di San Paolo.

**Bus 40** Express Stazione Termini, Via Nazionale, Piazza Venezia, Largo di Torre Argentina, Chiesa Nuova, Piazza Pia (for Castel Sant'Angelo) and St Peter's Square.

**Bus 64** Stazione Termini to St Peter's Square. It takes the same route as the 40 Express but is more crowded and has more stops.

**Bus 170** Stazione Termini, Via Nazionale, Piazza Venezia, Via del Teatro Marcello and Bocca della Verità (then south to Testaccio and EUR).

**Bus 175** Stazione Termini, Piazza Barberini, Via del Corso, Teatro di Marcello, Aventine Hill and Stazione Ostiense.

**Bus 492** Stazione Tiburtina, San Lorenzo, Stazione Termini, Piazza Barberini, Piazza Venezia, Corso Rinascimento, Piazza Cavour, Piazza Risorgimento and Cipro-Musei Vaticani (metro line A).

**Bus 590** Follows the route of metro line A and has special facilities for disabled passengers.

**Bus 660** Largo Colli Albani, Via Appia Nuova and Via Appia Antica (near Mausoleo di Cecilia Metella).

**Bus 714** Stazione Termini, Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano and Viale della Terme di Caracalla (then south to EUR).

**Bus 910** Stazione Termini, Piazza della Repubblica, Via Piemonte, Via Pincians (Villa Borghese), Piazza Euclide, Palazzetto de Sport and Piazza Mancini.

**Tram 8** Largo di Torre Argentina, Trastevere, Stazione Trastevere and Monteverde Nuovo.

## METRO & TRAIN

Rome's two **metro** (☎ 06 57531, available in English 8.30am-6.30pm; [www.metroroma.it](http://www.metroroma.it)) lines, A and B, cross at Termini, the only point at which you can change from one line to the other. Trains run approximately every five to 10 minutes between 5.30am and 11.30pm (one hour later on Saturday).

All the metro stations on line B have wheelchair access, except for Circo Massimo, Colosseo and Cavour (direction Laurentina), while on line A Cipro-Musei Vaticani station is one of the few stations equipped with lifts. Note that Manzoni station on line A is currently closed for works.

Construction of line C is ongoing. It will eventually serve the city centre passing from Ottaviano (close to the Vatican), with stops at Piazza Venezia and Chiesa Nuova, and run out southeastwards to the suburbs. It is likely to open in stages after 2012.

In addition to the metro, Rome has an overground rail network. It is useful only if you are heading out of town to the [Castelli Romani](#), the beaches at Lido di Ostia or the ruins at Ostia Antica (opposite).

## NIGHT BUS

Rome's night buses include more than 20 lines, most of which pass Termini and/or Piazza Venezia. Buses are marked with an N after the number. Night-bus stops have a blue owl symbol. Departures usually occur every 30 minutes, but can be much slower.

## Scooter & Bicycle

Flying round Rome on a scooter is a memorable, if hair-raising, experience. If you'd prefer to cycle, be

careful – Romans are not used to seeing bicycles on the roads. It's worth bearing in mind that traffic is lighter on a Sunday, when much of central Rome is closed to motorised vehicles. For a traffic-free pedal try the pleasant cycle path along the Tiber.

The new **ATAC bike-sharing scheme** (☎ 06 57003; [www.atacbikesharing.com](http://www.atacbikesharing.com), in Italian) offers 150 bicycles for use at 19 stands across Rome. You can see their locations online, and even check how many bikes are currently available at each stop. To use the bikes you need to register at **ATAC ticket offices** (☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-8pm Sun) at metro stations Lepanto, Spagna or Termini (€5). You'll receive a Smartcard that you can then charge as much as you wish (rental costs €0.50 per hour). You can use the bike for up to 24 hours and leave it at any of the stations.

To hire a scooter you'll need a credit card and photo ID; for a bike, ID is usually sufficient. You may also have to leave a cash deposit. Reliable operators include:

**Bici e Baci** (Map; ☎ 06 482 84 43; [www.bicibaci.com](http://www.bicibaci.com); Via del Viminale 5; bikes per day €11, scooters from €19, 250cc motorbikes €80)

**Eco Move Rent** (Map; ☎ 06 447 04 518; [www.ecomoverent.com](http://www.ecomoverent.com); Via Varese 48-50; bikes per day €11, scooters from €50) In the hostel enclave near Stazione Termini. May give a 10% discount if prompted.

## Taxi

Rome's taxi drivers are no better or worse than in any other city. Some will try to fleece you, others won't. To minimise the risk, make sure your taxi is licensed and metered, and always go with the metered fare, never an arranged price (the set fares to and from the airports are an exception to this rule). In town (within the ring road) flag fall is €2.33 (€3.36/4.91 Sundays/10pm to 7am), then it's €0.78 per km.

If you have a problem, get the driver's name and licence number from the plaque on the inside of the rear door and call the **Comune di Roma** (☎ 06 06 06) or the **central taxi office** (☎ 06 671 070 844).

You can hail a cab in Rome, but it's often easier to wait at a taxi rank or telephone for one. In the *centro storico* you can find taxi ranks at Largo di Torre Argentina, the Pantheon, Corso del Rinascimento and Piazza Navona, Piazza di Spagna, Largo Goldoni, Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Venezia, the Colosseum, at Piazza Belli in Trastevere and near the Vatican at Piazza del Pio XII and Piazza Risorgimento. When you call for a cab, the meter is switched on straight away and you pay for the cost of the journey from wherever the driver receives the call. To phone a taxi, try these:

**La Capitale** (☎ 06 49 94)

**Radio Taxi** (☎ 06 35 70)

**Samarcanda** (☎ 06 55 51)

## LAZIO

With a capital like Rome, it's unsurprising that the rest of Lazio gets overlooked. But when Rome feels starts to feel like the Eternal City for all the wrong reasons, do as the Romans do and leave the city behind. You'll discover a region that's not only beautiful – verdant and hilly in the north, parched and rugged in the south – but also a historical and cultural feast.

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## OSTIA ANTICA



With preservation in places matching that of Pompeii, the ancient Roman port of Ostia Antica deserves more visitors than it gets. But its relatively undiscovered feel can only work to your advantage: you'll get the site largely to yourself.

Founded in the 4th century BC, Ostia (referring to the mouth or *ostium* of the Tiber) became a great port and later a strategic centre for defence and trade. Decline arrived in the 5th century AD when barbarian invasions and the outbreak of malaria led to the abandonment of the city, and then its slow burial – up to 2nd-floor level – in river silt, hence its survival. Pope Gregory IV re-established the town in the 9th century.

## Sights

Providing a vivid picture of everyday Roman life, the **ruins** (Scavi Archeologici di Ostia Antica; 📍 06 563 52 830; [www.ostiantica.info](http://www.ostiantica.info) in Italian; Viale dei Romagnoli 717; adult/child €4/free, car park €2.50; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 6pm Mar, to 5pm Nov-Feb, last admission 1hr before closing) are spread out and you'll need a few hours to do them justice. You can buy a handy map of the site from the ticket office for €2.

Ostia was a busy working port until 42 AD, and the town is made up of restaurants, laundries, shops, houses and public meeting places, giving a good impression of what life must have been like when it was at its busiest. The main thoroughfare, the **Decumanus Maximus**, runs over 1km from the city's entrance (the Porta Romana) to the Porta Marina, which originally led to the sea.

At one stage, Ostia had 20 baths complexes, including the Terme di Foro – these were equipped with a roomful of stone toilets (the *forica*) that remain largely intact.

The most impressive mosaics on-site are at the huge **Terme di Nettuno**, which occupied a whole block and date from Hadrian's renovation of the port. Make sure you climb the elevated platform and look at the three enormous mosaics here, including the stunning one of Neptune driving his sea-horse chariot, surrounded by sea monsters, mermaids and mermen. In the centre of the baths complex you'll find the remains of a large arcaded courtyard called the Palaestra, in which athletes used to train. There's an impressive mosaic here of four athletes engaged in boxing and wrestling.

Next to the baths is a good-sized **amphitheatre**, built by Agrippa and later enlarged to hold 3000 people. By climbing to its top and looking over the site, you'll get a good idea of the original layout of the port and how it would have functioned.

Behind the amphitheatre is the **Piazzale delle Corporazioni** (Forum of the Corporations), the offices of Ostia's merchant guilds, which sport well-preserved mosaics depicting the different interests of each business.

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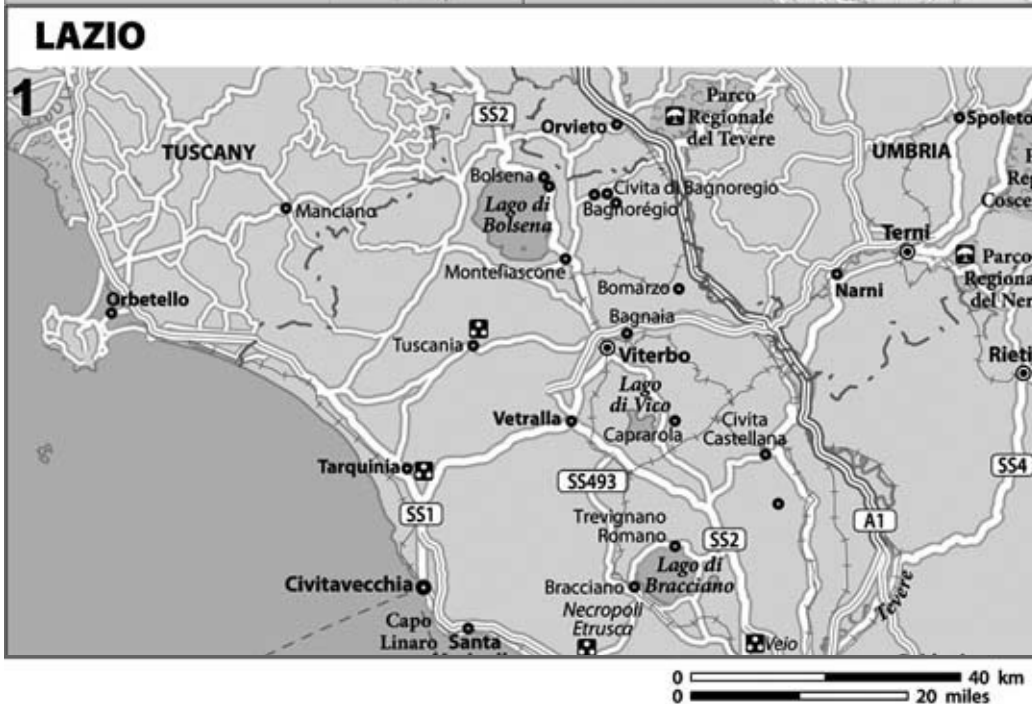
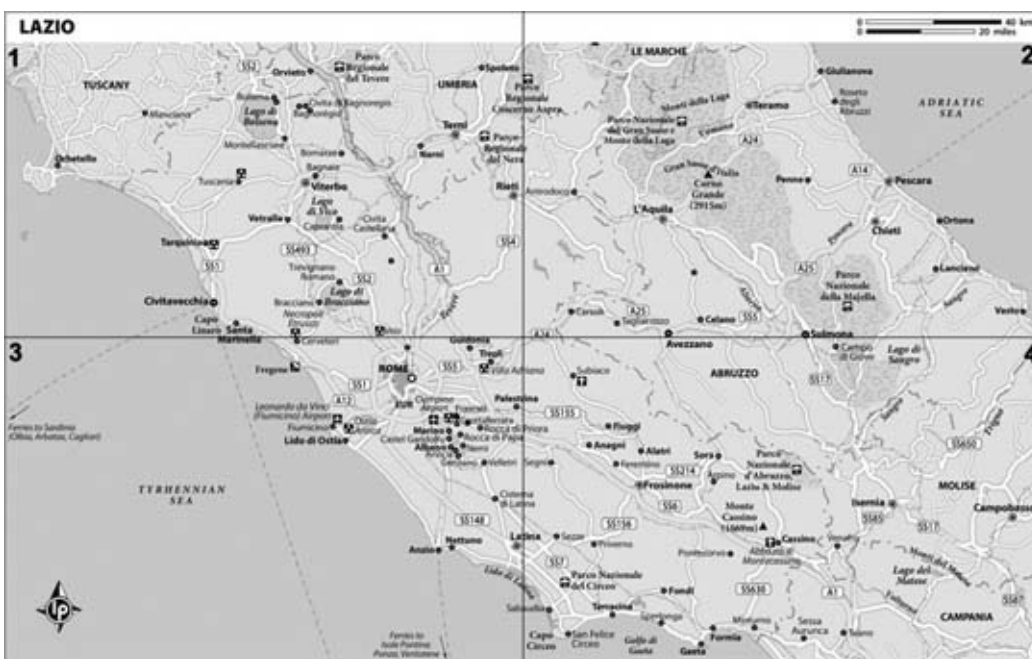
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## CHEAP BUS & TRAIN TICKETS

The best way to travel by public transport in Lazio is to arm yourself with a daily *biglietto integrato regionale giornaliero* (BIRG) ticket. These tickets allow unlimited travel on all city and regional transport, including buses, trams, the metro and trains (but not including Fiumicino airport services). They're priced according to zones: the most expensive, zone 7, costs €10.50; the cheapest, zone 1, costs €2.50. Tickets are available from *tabacchi*, some newsstands and *biglietterie* (ticket offices) at metro stations.

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Further towards the Porta Marina is one of the highlights of the site: the **Thermopolium** (the equivalent in contemporary Rome is the *tavola calda* – ‘hot table’), an ancient cafe that’s breathtakingly similar to our modern-day versions. Check out the central bar counter, the kitchen to the right and the small courtyard at the rear, where customers would have sat next to the fountain and relaxed over a drink. Above the bar is a fresco advertising the bill of fare.

The site has a complex comprising a cafeteria/bar (but a picnic is always a good idea), toilets, gift shop and **museum**, which houses statues and sarcophagi excavated on-site.

Near the entrance to the excavations is the imposing **Castello di Giulio II** (☎ 06 563 58 024; Piazza della Rocca; 📧 free guided tours 10am & noon Tue-Sun, plus 3pm Tue & Thu), an impressive example of 15th-century military architecture.

## Getting There & Away

From Rome, take metro line B to Piramide, then the Ostia Lido train from Stazione Porta San Paolo (next to the metro station), getting off at Ostia Antica. Trains leave about every half-hour and the trip takes approximately 25 minutes. It is covered by the standard BIT tickets ([Click here](#)). On arrival, exit Ostia Antica station and walk over the pedestrian bridge. Go straight ahead and you’ll see the castle to your

right and the ruins straight ahead.

The ruins are also easy to reach by car. Take Via del Mare, which runs parallel to Via Ostiense, or the A12 in the direction of Fiumicino, and follow the signs for the *scavi* (ruins).

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## TIVOLI

**pop 51,900 / elev 225m**

For millennia, the hilltop town of Tivoli has been a summer escape for rich Romans, a status amply demonstrated by its two Unesco World Heritage sites, Villa Adriana and Villa d'Este, both incredible hedonistic playgrounds.

Villa Adriana was the country estate of Emperor Hadrian, more like a town than a villa, and the 16th-century Villa d'Este is a wonder of the High Renaissance. You can visit both in a day, though you'll have to start early.

Information is available from the **tourist information point** (☎ 07 743 13 536; 🕒 10am-1pm 4pm-6.30pm, shorter hr in winter) on Piazza Garibaldi, where the bus arrives.

## Sights

### VILLA ADRIANA

Emperor Hadrian's summer residence **Villa Adriana** (☎ 06 399 67 900; adult/child €6.50/3.25, plus for exhibition €3.50, car park €2; 🕒 9am-1hr before sunset), 5km outside Tivoli, set new standards of luxury when it was built between AD 118 and 134, even given the excess of the Roman Empire. A model near the entrance gives you an idea of the scale of the original complex, which you'll need several hours to explore. Consider hiring an audioguide (€4), which gives a helpful overview. There's a small cafeteria next to the ticket office, but nicer would be to bring a picnic lunch or eat in Tivoli.

A great traveller and enthusiastic architect, Hadrian personally designed much of the complex, taking inspiration from buildings he'd seen around the world. The **pecile**, a large porticoed pool area where the emperor used to stroll after lunch, was a reproduction of a building in Athens. Similarly, the **canopo** is a copy of the sanctuary of Serapis near Alexandria, with a long canal of water, originally surrounded by Egyptian statues, representing the Nile.

To the east of the *pecile* is one of the highlights, Hadrian's private retreat, the **Teatro Marittimo**. Built on an island in an artificial pool, it was originally a minivilla accessible only by swing bridges, which the emperor would have raised when he felt like a dip. Nearby, the fish pond is encircled by an underground gallery where Hadrian liked to wander. There are also nymphaeums, temples and barracks, and a museum with the latest discoveries from ongoing excavations (often closed).

### VILLA D'ESTE

In Tivoli's hill-top centre, the gardens of **Villa d'Este** (☎ 199 766 166, 0445 230310; [www.villadestetivoli.info](http://www.villadestetivoli.info); Piazza Trento; adult/child €6.50/free; 🕒 8.30am-1hr before sunset Tue-Sun) have an Alice in Wonderland magic, and are a unique and superlative example of the High Renaissance garden. The villa was once a Benedictine convent, converted by Lucrezia Borgia's son, Cardinal Ippolito d'Este into a sumptuous pleasure palace in 1550. From 1865 to 1886 it was home to Franz Liszt and inspired his compositions 'To the Cypresses of the Villa d'Este', and 'The Fountains of the Villa d'Este'.

The rich Mannerist frescoes of the villa interior merit a glance, but it's the garden that you're here for: terraces with water-spouting gargoyles, spectacular fountains powered by gravitational force and elaborate avenues lined by deep-green, knotty cypresses. One fountain (designed by Gianlorenzo Bernini) used its water pressure to play an organ concealed in the top part of its structure, another imitated the call of birds. One of the highlights is the 130m-long path of the Hundred Fountains, which joins the Fountain of Tivoli to the Fountain of Rome.

The villa is a two-minute walk north from Largo Garibaldi. Picnics are forbidden, but there's a stylish cafe.

## Getting There & Around

Tivoli is 30km east of Rome and is accessible by Cotral bus from outside the Ponte Mammolo station on metro line B.

Buses depart at least every 20 minutes and the one-hour journey costs €1.60 (€3.20 return). However, it's best to buy a Zone 3 BIRG ticket (€6), which will cover you for the whole day.

The easiest way to visit both sites is to visit the Villa D'Este first, as it is close to Tivoli town centre. Then take the CAT bus 4 or 4X ([www.cattivoli.com](http://www.cattivoli.com); €1, 10 minutes, half-hourly Monday to Saturday, every 70 minutes Sunday) from Largo Garibaldi, asking the driver to stop at the entrance to Villa Adriana. After visiting the villa, you can then take a bus (€2, 50 minutes) to metro stop Tiburtina from outside the site.

By car you can either take Via Tiburtina or, to save yourself some time, the Rome-L'Aquila autostrada (A24).

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## ETRUSCAN SITES

The highly cultured ancient Etruscans had some of their most powerful strongholds in the north of Lazio. Dating to around 800 BC, the Etruscans used sophisticated architectural and artistic techniques that the Romans later adapted and claimed as their own. They were a major thorn in Roman flanks until the 3rd and 4th centuries BC, when successive waves of legionnaires swept aside the last Etruscan defences.

For the best Etruscan treasures, head to Tarquinia and Cerveteri, two of the major city-states in the Etruscan League; together they form a Unesco World Heritage site.

### Cerveteri

**pop 33,400 / elev 81m**

Outside Rome lies an extraordinary, mysterious Etruscan burial complex. This Unesco-listed site is a haunting town of tombs.

Cerveteri, or Kysry to the Etruscans and Caere to Latin-speakers, was one of the most important commercial centres in the Mediterranean from the 7th to the 5th centuries BC. As Roman power grew, however, so Cerveteri's fortunes faded, and in 358 BC the city was annexed by Rome.

The first half of the 19th century saw the first tentative archaeological explorations in the area, and in 1911 systematic excavations began in earnest.

For information about the site, visit the helpful **tourist information point** (☎ 06 995 52 637; Piazza

Aldo Moro; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm). From here you can get an hourly shuttle bus to the **Necropoli di Banditaccia** (☎ 06 399 67 150; [www.pierrici.it](http://www.pierrici.it); Via del Necropoli; admission €6, incl museum €8; 🕒 8.30am-1hr before sunset), the tomb complex 2km out of town. The bus leaves seven to nine times per day starting at 8.20am and finishing at 6pm (earlier in winter). The trip takes five minutes and costs €1. Alternatively, follow the well-signposted road – it's a pleasant 15-minute walk.

The 10-hectare necropolis is laid out as an afterlife townscape, with streets, squares and terraces of 'houses'. The most common type of tomb is the tumulus, a circular structure cut into the earth and topped by a cumulus – a topping of turf. Signs indicate the path to follow and some of the major tombs, including the 6th-century-BC **Tomba dei Rilievi**, are decorated with painted reliefs of figures from the underworld, cooking implements and other household items.

In Cerveteri's medieval town centre is the splendid **Museo Nazionale di Cerveteri** (Piazza Santa Maria; admission €6, incl necropolis €8; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), where treasures taken from the tombs help to bring the dead to life.

On the same square is the **Antica Locanda le Ginestre** (☎ 06 994 06 72; Piazza Santa Maria 5; meals €45; 🕒 Tue-Sun), a highly recommended, top-notch family-run restaurant. The delicious food is prepared with organically grown local produce and is served in the elegant dining room or flower-filled courtyard garden. Book ahead. For a cheaper alternative, try **Cavallino Bianco** (☎ 06 9943693; Piazza Risorgimento; 🕒 Wed-Sun).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Cerveteri is easily accessible from Rome by Cotral bus (€3.50, 65 minutes, 19 daily from 6.25am) from outside the Cornelia metro stop on metro line A. When you arrive at Cornelia, go up the escalators and onto the main road – the stop is on the same side of the street a little way from the metro entrance (look for the Cotral sign). Buses leave Cerveteri for Rome from the main square, at the bottom of the staircase coming from the museum. The last return bus is at 8.05pm.

By car, take either Via Aurelia (SS1) or the Civitavecchia autostrada (A12) and exit at Cerveteri—Ladispoli. The journey should take approximately 40 minutes.

## Tarquinia

**pop 16,200 / elev 169m**

A long day trip from Rome, Tarquinia is nevertheless well worth the effort, with beautiful, painted tombs, a wonderful Etruscan museum and an evocative medieval quarter. Legend suggests that the town was founded towards the end of the Bronze Age in the 12th century BC. Later home to the Tarquin kings of Rome before the creation of the Roman Republic, it reached its prime in the 4th century BC, before a century of struggle ended with surrender to Rome in 204 BC.

For information about the town and its sights, pop into the **tourist information office** (☎ 0766 84 92 82; [info@tarquinia@apt.it](mailto:info@tarquinia@apt.it); Piazza Cavour 1; 🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Sat), on your left as you walk through the town's medieval gate (Barriera San Giusto).

Close by is the exquisite 15th-century Palazzo Vitelleschi, which houses the **Museo Nazionale Tarquiniese** (☎ 06 399 67 150; Piazza Cavour; adult/child €6/3, incl necropolis €8/4; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun). Highlights of its collection are a breathtaking terracotta frieze of winged horses (the Cavalli Alati); a room full of painted friezes from tombs; displays of sarcophagi, jewellery and amphorae; and some remarkably saucy ceramics in Sala VI on the ground floor. Also on the ground floor, in Sala IX, the *Sarcofogo con cerbiatto* is a model of 4th-century BC workmanship, showing a half-naked reclining

woman holding a plate from which a long-necked dog (the *cerbiatto*) is drinking.

To see the famous painted tombs *in situ*, head for the **necropolis** (☎ 06 399 67 150; adult/child €6/3, incl museum adult/child €8/4; 🕒 8.30am-1hr before sunset Tue-Sun), 2km from town. Almost 6000 tombs, of which 60 are painted, have been excavated since the first digs in 1489 – only a tiny section of the original area used for burying the dead, which stretched to the coast. Now protected by Unesco, the tombs have suffered centuries of exposure and are maintained at constant temperatures, and are visible only through glass partitions. There are some beautiful hunting and fishing scenes in the Tomba della Caccia e della Pesca; scenes featuring dancers, she-lions and dolphins in the Tomba delle Leonesse; and a surprising S&M scene of a man whipping a woman in the Tomba della Fustigazione (Tomb of the Flogging), as well as hetero and homosexual scenes on the Tomb of the Bulls. Erotica was a common artistic theme for the open-minded Etruscans.

To get to the necropolis from the tourist office, walk up Corso Vittorio Emanuele and turn right at Piazza Nazionale into Via di Porta Tarquinia. Continue past the Chiesa di San Francesco and then down Via Ripagretta until you see the necropolis on your left. Alternatively, a shuttle bus (€0.60) leaves from outside the tourist office every 30 to 45 minutes from 9am to 11.45am and from 3pm to 6.15pm, returning to town five minutes after it arrives at the necropolis.

The town harbours a number of decent lunch spots, including **Il Cavatappi** (☎ 07 668 42 303; Via dei Granari 19; 🕒 Wed-Mon), which specialises in dishes made with local products, and the highly regarded **Re Tarquinio** (☎ 07 668 42 125; Alberata Dante Alighieri 10; 🕒 Wed-Mon), located in an ancient frescoed cellar in the medieval centre.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Rome, take a Cotral bus from Cornelia metro A station. You'll have to change at Civitavecchia (€4.50, 1½ hours, about hourly) for a bus to Tarquinia (€2, 25 minutes). The last bus leaves Tarquinia for Rome at 8.45pm.

By train, catch the Pisa Centrale train from Termini (€6.20, 1¼ to 1½ hours, every one to two hours). Buy a return ticket as the ticket office in Tarquinia only operates in the morning. After getting off at Tarquinia station, you'll need to catch the line BC shuttle bus to the centre of town.

By car, take the autostrada for Civitavecchia and then the Via Aurelia (SS1). Tarquinia is about 90km northwest of Rome.

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## CIVITAVECCHIA

**pop 51,400**

There's no compelling reason to come to Civitavecchia, other than to take a ferry to Sardinia, though you could make a stop long enough to eat at good fish restaurants in the pleasant town. Established by Emperor Trajan in AD 106, it was later conquered by the Saracens, but regained importance as a papal stronghold in the 16th century. The medieval town was almost completely destroyed by bombing during WWII.

The port is about a 400m walk from the train station. As you leave the station, turn right into Viale Garibaldi and follow the road along the seafront. If you're stopping for a meal, try upmarket **La Scaletta** (☎ 0766 24334; Lungoportò Gramsci Antonio 65).

# Getting There & Away

## TO/FROM ROME

Trains run regularly between Stazione Termini in Rome and Civitavecchia (€4.50 regional service, 1¼ hours), with fewer services on Sunday. Intercity services take 50 minutes, but cost €14.30. In Civitavecchia, the station is close to the port.

Cotral buses from Rome to Civitavecchia leave from outside the Cornelia station on metro line A approximately every hour or so (€4.50, 1½ hours). When you arrive at Cornelia, go up the escalators and onto the main road – the stop is on the same side of the street, a little way from the metro entrance (look for the Cotral sign). The bus stop in Civitavecchia is on Viale Guido Baccelli.

Civitavecchia is covered by a Zone 5 BIRG ticket (€9).

By car, take the A12 autostrada from Rome.

## FERRIES TO/FROM SARDINIA

From Civitavecchia, ferries sail for Olbia (eight hours), Arbatax (10 hours) and Cagliari (14 to 17 hours) in Sardinia. Departure times and prices change every year, so you should always check ahead. All fares quoted are for a one-way ticket (seat only).

**Tirrenia** (☎ 02 263 02 803, within Italy 892.123; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it)) sails to Olbia (low/high season €30/35), Arbatax (low/high season €34/45) and Cagliari (low/high season €30/45).

**Moby** (☎ 199 30 30 40; [www.moby.it](http://www.moby.it)) has services to Olbia (€30 to €70 one way) between May and September.

Buy tickets at travel agencies and at the ferry terminal in Civitavecchia. If travelling in high season, book well in advance.

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## VITERBO

**pop 60,500 / elev 327m**

Viterbo is a medieval gem, despite having sustained WWII bomb damage. It makes a good base for exploring Lazio's rugged north, or can be visited on a day trip from Rome.

Founded by the Etruscans and eventually taken over by Rome, Viterbo developed into an important medieval centre, and in the 13th century became the residence of the popes. Papal elections were held in the Gothic Palazzo dei Papi where, in 1271, the entire college of cardinals was briefly imprisoned. The story goes that after three years of deliberation the cardinals still hadn't elected a new pope. Mad with frustration, the Viterbesi locked the dithering priests in a turreted hall and starved them into electing Pope Gregory X.

Apart from its historical appeal, Viterbo is famous for its therapeutic hot springs. The best known is the sulphurous Bulicame pool, mentioned by Dante in the *Divine Comedy*.

## Orientation

Viterbo's walled *centro storico* is small and best covered on foot. From Stazione Porta Roma it's a short walk along Viale Armando Diaz to Porta Romana, one of the city's medieval gates. Go through the gate



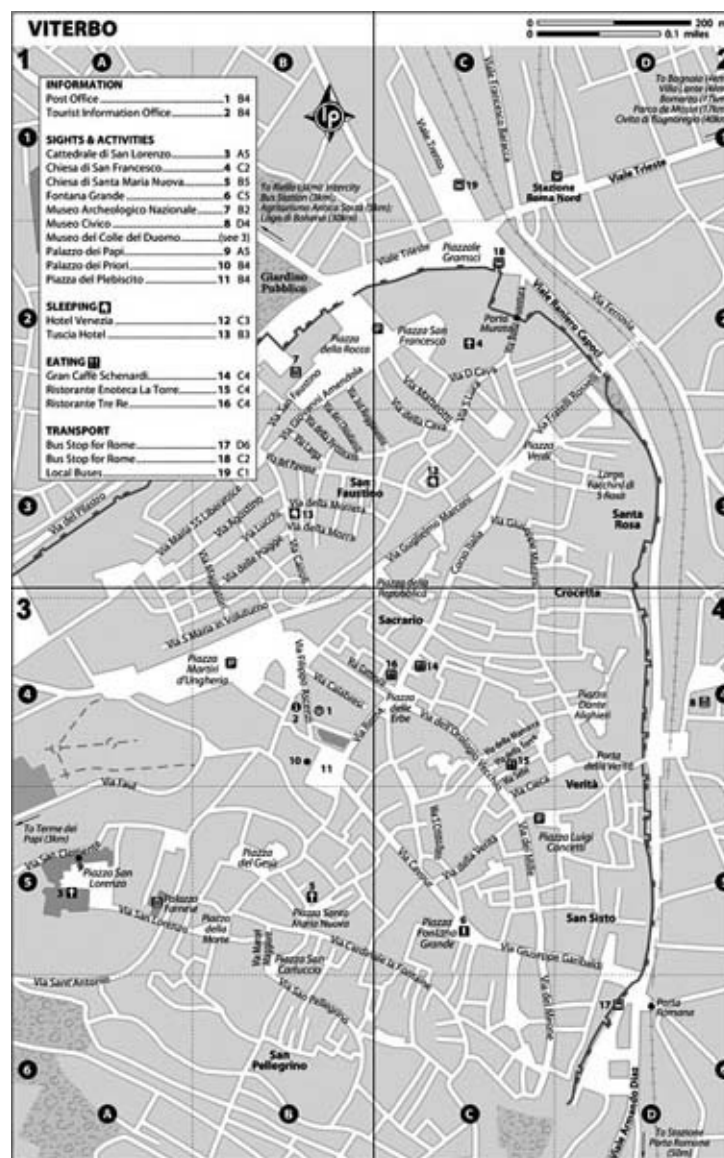
and follow Via Giuseppe Garibaldi down to Piazza Fontana Grande. Keep going along Via Cavour and you arrive at Piazza del Plebiscito, the core of the historic centre. Here you have three choices: turn right into Via Roma and its extension Corso Italia, an elegant shopping street; take Via San Lorenzo for the cathedral and Palazzo dei Papi; or continue down Via Filippo Ascenzi to Piazza Martiri d'Ungheria – most of the hotels are in the area northeast of this huge and unlovely square.

The intercity bus station is located at Riello, a few kilometres out of town.

## Information

**Post office** (☎ 0761 30 48 06; Via Filippo Ascenzi) Opposite the tourist office.

**Tourist information office** (☎ 0761 32 59 92; [www.provincia.vt.it](http://www.provincia.vt.it), in Italian; Via Filippo Ascenzi; ☒ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun)



# VITERBO

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Giardino Pubblico

Piazza della Rocca

Via San Faustino

Via Giovanni Amendola

Via Jap. Beggio

Via dei Clodovei

Via della Pettinato

Via Larga

Via del Pavone

San Faustino

Via della Morreta

Via della Morra

Via Maria SS. Liberatrice

Via Agostino

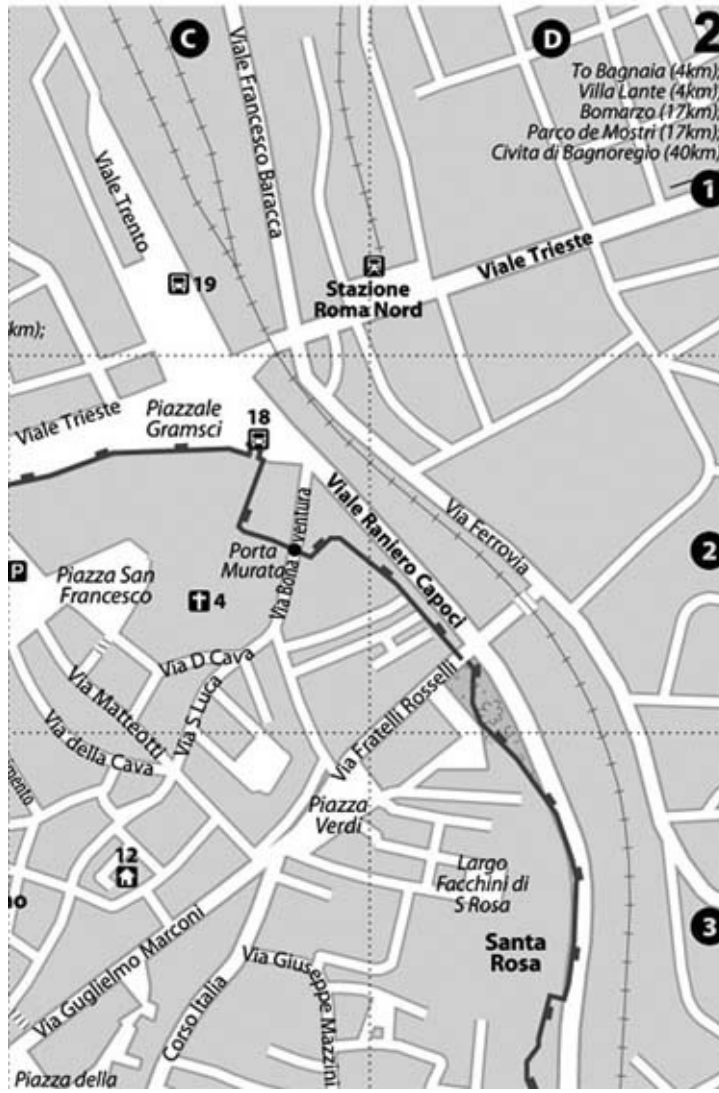
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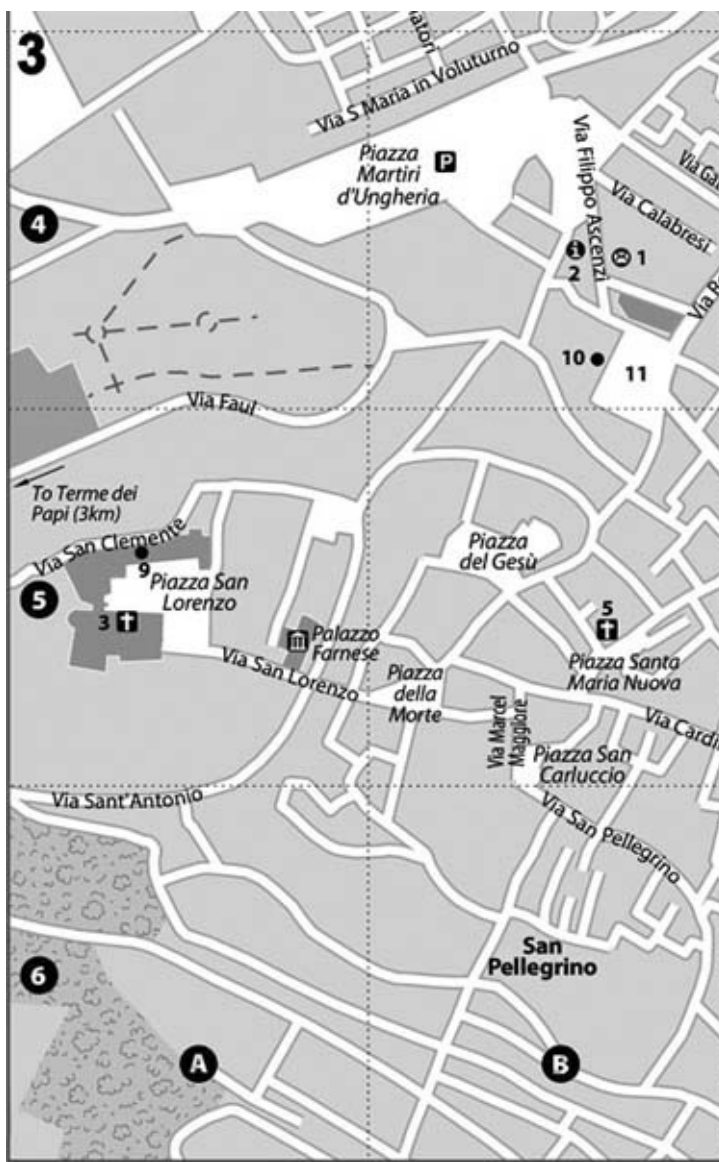
Via Magi

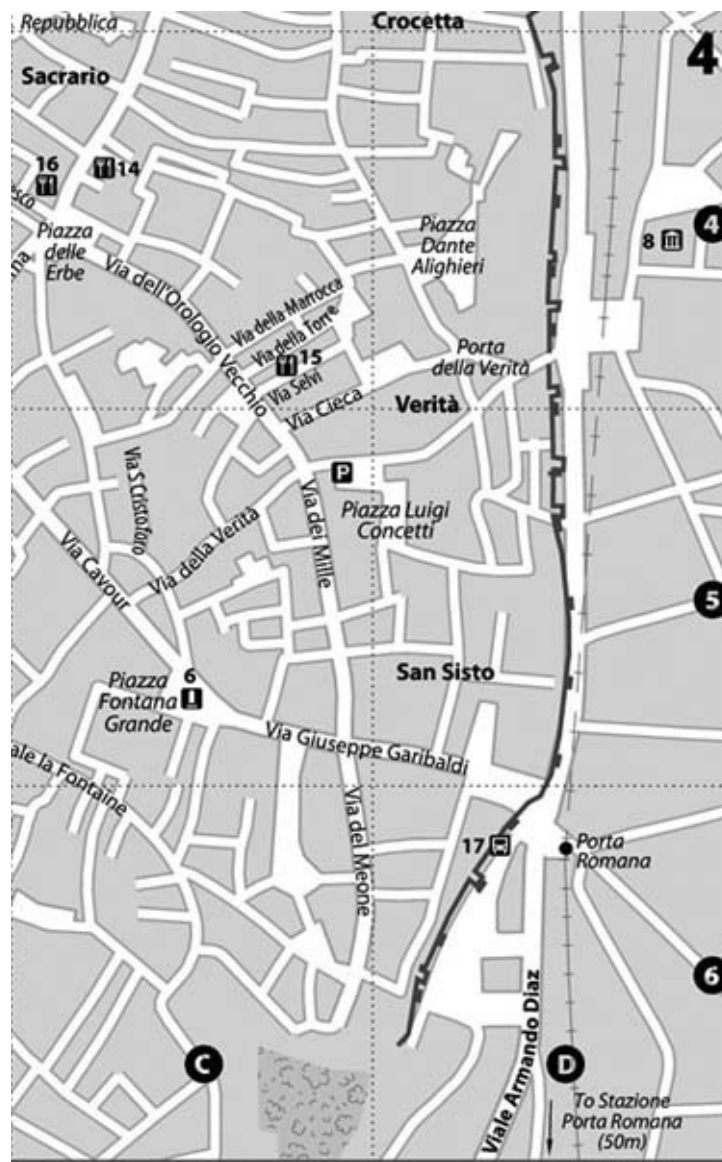
Via delle Piagge

Via Cairoli

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## Sights

### PIAZZA DEL PLEBISCITO

This elegant Renaissance piazza is dominated by the imposing **Palazzo dei Priori** (Piazza del Plebiscito; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm). Now home to the town council, it's worth venturing inside for the 16th-century frescoes that colourfully depict Viterbo's ancient origins – the finest are in the Sala Regia on the 1st floor. Outside, the elegant courtyard and fountain were added two centuries after the *palazzo* was built in 1460.

### PIAZZA SAN LORENZO

For an idea of how rich Viterbo once was, head to Piazza San Lorenzo, the religious heart of the medieval city. It was here that the cardinals came to vote for their popes and pray in the 12th-century **Cattedrale di San Lorenzo** (Piazza San Lorenzo). Built originally to a simple Romanesque design, it owes its current Gothic look to a 14th-century makeover; damage by Allied bombs meant the roof and nave had to be rebuilt. Next door, the **Museo del Colle del Duomo** (admission incl Sala del Conclave in Palazzo dei Papi, incl guided visit to Palazzo dei Papi €3 or €5, Loggia €5; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-8pm Tue-Sun, to 6pm winter) displays a small collection of religious artefacts, including a reliquary said to contain the chin of John the Baptist.

On the northern side of the square, the 13th-century **Palazzo dei Papi** (☎ 0761 34 17 16) was built to

entice the papacy away from Rome. Head up the stairs to the graceful Gothic *loggia* (colonnade) to peer into the **Sala del Conclave**, the hall where five popes were elected.

## CHIESA DI SANTA MARIA NUOVA

The oldest church in Viterbo, the 11th-century Romanesque **Chiesa di Santa Maria Nuova** (Piazza Santa Maria Nuova; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-5pm) was restored to its original form after bomb damage in WWII. The cloisters are particularly lovely, and are believed to date from an earlier period.

## OTHER SIGHTS

For a shot of Etruscan culture, head to the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0761 32 59 29; Piazza della Rocca; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), housed in an attractive *palazzo* by the northern entrance to the town. It's small, but has an interesting collection of Etruscan artefacts found locally, and, on the 1st floor, an impressive series of statues dedicated to the Muses.

A short walk away from the museum is the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 0761 34 16 96; Piazza San Francesco; ☎ 8am-6.30pm), a Gothic church containing the tombs of two popes: Clement IV (d 1268) and Adrian V (d 1276). Both are attractively decorated, notably that of Adrian, which features Cosmati work (multicoloured marble and glass mosaics set into stone and white marble).

On the other side of town, the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0761 34 82 75; Piazza Crispi; admission €3.10; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun summer, to 6pm winter) features more Etruscan goodies, as well as curious fake antiquities created in the 15th century by Annius of Viterbo, a monk and forger trying to give Viterbo extra kudos. There's also a small art gallery, the highlight of which is Sebastiano del Piombo's *Pietà*.

In the piazza of the same name, the **Fontana Grande** (Big Fountain) lives up to its name, and is also the oldest of Viterbo's Gothic fountains.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Venezia** (☎ 07 613 03356; [www.hotelveneziarididence.it](http://www.hotelveneziarididence.it); Via del Pavone 23; s/d €45/70; 📞 📺) Go for one of the bright, spacious front rooms of this well-located hotel – you'll find the rear rooms are small and dark, though all are clean, with bright bedspreads. The price includes free parking.

**Tuscia Hotel** (☎ 07 613 44 400; [www.tusciahotel.com](http://www.tusciahotel.com); Via Cairoli 41; s €44-50, d €68-76; 📞 📺) The best of the city's midrange options, this central, spick-and-span three-star place is leagues ahead of the competition in cleanliness and comfort. The rooms here are large, light and kitted out with satellite TV; nine rooms have air-con. There's a sunny roof terrace.

**Gran Caffè Schenardi** (☎ 07 613 45 860; Corso Italia 11-13) The Schenardi has been operating since 1818, and the wonderfully ornate interior looks like it hasn't changed much since, though the coffee and cakes are nothing out of the ordinary.

**our pick Ristorante Tre Re** (☎ 0761 30 46 19; Via Gattesco 3; meals €25; ☎ Fri-Wed) Tre Re reigns as a historic trattoria, dishing up steaming plates of tasty local specialities and seasonally driven dishes. None is more typical than the *pollo alla Viterbese*, excellent roast chicken stuffed with spiced potato and green olives. Heartwarming cheap and palate-pleasingly fantastic.

**Ristorante Enoteca La Torre** (☎ 0761 22 64 67; Via della Torre 5; meals €55; ☎ lunch Thu-Tue, dinner Thu-Wed) Viterbo's best restaurant is a dream date for foodies: the Japanese chef combines precision and delicacy of presentation with innovative uses of fresh seasonal produce, and the sommelier here really knows his stuff.

Five kilometres from Viterbo, on SS Cassia Nord, is **Agriturismo Antica Sosta** (☎ 0761 251 369; meals €25, s/d €50/75), a mansion set in pea-green countryside, with spacious, simple rooms and a delicious restaurant, serving scrumptious dishes such as *strozzapreti al radicchio gorgonzola e noci* ('priest-strangler' pasta served with red chicory, gorgonzola cheese and nuts).

## Getting There & Away

From Rome, Cotral buses (€4.80, 1½ to two hours, every 30 minutes) depart from the Saxa Rubra station on the Ferrovia Roma—Nord train line. Catch the train (standard BIT) to Saxa Rubra from Piazzale Flaminio (just north of Piazza del Popolo). Viterbo is covered by a Zone 5 BIRG ticket (€9).

In Viterbo, ensure you get off at Porta Romana, not the intercity bus station at Riello, which is a few kilometres northwest of the town. If this happens, you can catch a bus into town (€1). Returning to Rome, take the bus from the Porta Romana or Piazzale Gramsci stops.

Trains depart hourly from Monday to Saturday and every two hours on Sunday from Rome's Ostiense station (get off at Viterbo Porta Romana). The journey takes nearly two hours and costs €4.50 one way.

By car, Viterbo is about a 1½-hour drive up Via Cassia (SS2). Enter the old town through the Porta Romana onto Via Giuseppe Garibaldi, which becomes Via Cavour. The best bet for parking is either Piazza Martiri d'Ungheria or Piazza della Rocca.

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## AROUND VITERBO

The main reason Romans go to Viterbo is for the thermal springs, about 3km west of town. The easiest to get to are the **Terme dei Papi** (☎ 07 61 35 01; [www.termedeipapi.it](http://www.termedeipapi.it); Strada Bagni 12; pool €12, Sun €25; ☎ 9am-7pm Wed-Mon, plus 9.30pm-1am Sat), where you can take a dip in the sulphurous pool, have an invigorating massage (from €55 for 50 minutes) or treat yourself to a gloopy mud bath (from €10). Take the bus from Viterbo's Viale Trento (€1).

For less mud and more High Renaissance spectacle, head to the wonderful **Villa Lante**, 4km northeast of Viterbo at Bagnaia. This Mannerist drama of a garden, with terraces, water cascades and gaily waving statues forms part of the large, bucolic **park** (☎ 07 612 88 008; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-1hr before sunset Tue-Sun) that surrounds the 16th-century villa. To get to Bagnaia from Viterbo, take the bus from Viale Trieste (€1).

Nearby, another Renaissance wonder is the pentagonal **Palazzo Farnese** (☎ 07 616 46 052; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun), with its internal circular courtyard. It's at Caprarola, 20km southeast of Viterbo. The walls were started by a great military engineer, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, then adapted by Vignola. The extraordinary interior contains painting by some of the finest Mannerist artists of the day. Don't miss the frescoes by Taddeo and Federico Zuccari in the Sala del Concilio di Trento. Around six buses daily leave from the Riello bus station just outside Viterbo for Caprarola; tickets cost €2.

At Bomarzo, 17km northeast of Viterbo, is a 16th-century pocket of weirdness that will entertain children and adults alike, the **Parco dei Mostri** (Monster Park; ☎ 07 619 24 029; [www.parcodemostri.com](http://www.parcodemostri.com); admission €9; ☎ 8am-sunset). The gardens of the Palazzo Orsini is peopled by ancient gigantic sculptures, including an ogre, giant and a dragon. From Viterbo, catch the Cotral bus from near Viale Trieste to Bomarzo (€0.60, 30 minutes), then follow the signs to Palazzo Orsini.

Around 32km north of Viterbo, in beautiful, emerald-green countryside, lies handsome **Bagnoregio**, from where you can visit *il paese che muore* (the dying town) of the **Civita di Bagnoregio** that it has replaced. This dramatically scenic hilltop town is accessible via a long bridge. Already on the decline, its future was assured after a serious 17th-century earthquake. Set on a piece of volcanic tuff that is slowly crumbling, its buildings are gradually collapsing around the edges. The permanent population numbers around 12, though it multiplies in summer. For info, check [www.civitadibagnoregio.it](http://www.civitadibagnoregio.it). Bagnoregio is accessible via regular Cotral buses from Viterbo (€2.50, 40 minutes), then the old town is around a 2km walk.

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## CASTELLI ROMANI

About 20km south of Rome, the Colli Albani (Alban Hills) and their 13 towns are collectively known as the Castelli Romani. Since early Roman days they've provided a green refuge from the city and today Romans still flock to the area on hot summer weekends. The most famous towns are Castel Gandolfo, where the pope has his summer residence, and Frascati, famous for its delicate white wine.

### Frascati

An easy bus or train ride from Rome, pretty Frascati makes for a refreshing day trip, with hazy views over Rome and delicious food and wine.

At **Frascati Point** (☎ 06 940 15 378; 🕒 10am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-3pm Thu, 10am-7pm Sat), you can access information about local wines, vineyards and *cantinas* (wine cellars). The building is the former stables of the Villa Aldobrandini and owes its makeover to Italy's hippest architect, Massimiliano Fuksas.

The imposing villa that rises from gardens above the square is the 16th-century **Villa Aldobrandini**, designed by Giacomo della Porta and built by Carlo Maderno.

If you've got a car, head up to the ruins of ancient **Tusculum**. All that remains of this once imposing town is a small amphitheatre, a crumbling villa and a small stretch of road leading up to the city. The grassy hilltop, however, is a popular spot to do some walking and it commands some fine views.

However, the reasons people really come to Frascati are to eat and drink, and for a breath of fresh air in the dog days of summer (it's a few degrees cooler up here). The area is famous for its white wine and there are plenty of places where you can try it and other local varieties. The town's best restaurant is **Cacciani** (☎ 06 942 03 78; Via Al Diaz; meals €50; 🕒 Tue-Sat, closed 1 week Aug), with fine food and a graceful terrace, but most fun are the town's famous rough-and-ready *cantinas*, which usually sell *porchetta*, olives, salami and cheeses, to go with jugs of the fresh young white wine. You can also pick up a *porchetta panini* from one of the stands that do a brisk weekend trade around Piazza del Mercato. For wine-bar grub worthy of effusive toasts, head to the charismatic **Le Vie dei Canti** (☎ 06 940 10 413; Via D'Estouteville 3; 🕒 7.30pm-midnight), a rustic *enoteca*, softly lit and wood lined, tucked down a cobbled alleyway (off Piazza Paolo III) that serves up plates of delicious cheeses, salami, carpacci (thin slices of raw meat or fish) and *crostone* (toasted bread) – perfect with a glug of local wine.

### Castel Gandolfo & Around

A short drive away in elegant **Grottaferrata** there's a **15th-century abbey** (☎ 06 945 93 09; Viale San Nilo; 🕒 7am-12.30pm & 3.30pm-1hr before sunset), founded in 1004. It's now home to a congregation of



Greek monks who sport tall black hats, and has a decidedly mystic atmosphere, the elaborate interior thick with incense.

Continuing southwest brings you to **Castel Gandolfo**, a smart hilltop *borgo* (village). Dominating the town is the pope's summer residence, a 17th-century confection, where he holds audiences in July and August.

The town overlooks the great azure expanse of **Lago di Albano**, where you can swim, and there are places to rent sunloungers and pedalos around its banks, as well as cafes. The lake makes a great escape from Rome on a hot day.

The smaller of the two volcanic lakes in the Castelli Romani, **Lago di Nemi** was the centre of a cult to the goddess Diana in ancient times, and favourite holiday spot of the emperor Caligula. The **Museo delle Navi Romani** (☎ 06 939 80 40; Via Diana; admission €2; 🕒 9am-7pm) on the shore of the lake was built by Mussolini to house two Roman boats salvaged from the lake in 1932. These dated from Caligula's time but were tragically destroyed by fire in 1944 – what you see now are scale models of the originals. You can grab a bite to eat at the clifftop **Trattoria la Sirena del Lago** (☎ 06 936 80 20; Via del Plebiscito 26; meals €25; 🕒 Tue-Sun), where the local game and trout are excellent and the local wine refreshing. Nemi is also famous for its wild strawberries – sprinkled over almost everything (especially ice cream) in season.

## Getting There & Around

To get to Frascati you can catch a bus (€2, 25 minutes, 35 per day weekdays, fewer on weekends) from the Anagnina station on metro line A. Alternatively, catch a train from Stazione Termini (€1.90, 30 minutes, about hourly Monday to Saturday, every two hours Sunday).

To get from Frascati to Grottaferrata (€1, 15 minutes, every 30 to 40 minutes), catch a Cotral bus from Piazza Marconi. To get to Lago di Nemi, catch a Velletri-headed bus and get off at Genzano di Roma (€1, 30 minutes, infrequent); from here you'll need to catch another bus to the lake (€1, 10 minutes, infrequent). To get to Castel Gandolfo (€1, 30 minutes, hourly) catch the Pomezia bus from Piazza Marconi. You can catch a train from Rome's Stazione Termini to Castel Gandolfo (€1.90, 40 minutes), but it's not possible to catch a train between Frascati and Castel Gandolfo.

## PALESTRINA

**pop 18,700**

The pretty town of Palestrina stands on the slopes of Monte Ginestro, one of the foothills of the Apennines. In imperial times it was an important getaway, favoured by wealthy Romans during the stifling summer.

It was dominated by the **Santuario della Fortuna Primigenia**, a massive sanctuary dating to the 2nd century BC, which had six terraced levels and was dedicated to the goddess of Fortune. It would have covered much of what is now the town's *centro storico*, but was largely built over. In the 17th century the **Palazzo Colonna Barberini** was built on its uppermost terrace, and today houses the fantastic **Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Palestrina** (☎ 06 953 81 00; Piazza della Cortina; admission €3; 🕒 9am-7pm). Inside you can see some of the former structure through Perspex floor tiles. Highlights of its collection include the wonderful sculpture of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva with an owl, peacock and eagle at their feet; and the spectacular 2nd-century-BC Nile mosaic, an incredibly rich depiction of daily life in ancient Egypt. The remains of the sanctuary can be visited on the museum ticket and are open from 9am until one hour before sunset.

## ST BENEDICT, CAVEMAN

Founder of the Benedictine order, St Benedict is generally regarded as the father of Western monasticism. He is also the patron saint of engineers and speleologists, an accolade that he owes to three years he spent holed up in a cave. Fleeing the vice that had so disgusted him as a student in Rome, he sought the gloom of the grotto to meditate and pray. During this time he attracted a large local following that eventually provoked the ire of his fellow friars and forced him onto the road.

Remote-feeling and dramatic, Subiaco is well worth the trip to see its wonderful monasteries and impressive abbey, with breathtaking cross-country views. The **Monastery of St Benedict** (☎ 07 748 50 39; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm) is carved into the rock over the saint's former cave. Apart from its stunning setting, described by Petrarch as 'the edge of Paradise', it's adorned with rich 13th- to 15th-century frescoes. Halfway down the hill from St Benedict is the **Monastery of St Scholastica** (☎ 07 748 55 25; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm), the only one of the 13 monasteries built by St Benedict still standing in the Valley of the Amiene. It has a restaurant offering set menus for €18 and €26. If you decide to stay the night, its **Foresteria** (☎ 07 748 55 69; [www.benedettini-subiaco.it](http://www.benedettini-subiaco.it); per person B&B €36, half-board €49, full board €55) is a great place to spend a comfortable and contemplative night. But book ahead, as Benedictine clergy from around the world often make the pilgrimage here to work in the monastery's famous **library** and **archive** (☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat).

From Subiaco, St Benedict headed south until, it's said, three ravens led him to the top of Monte Cassino. Here, in 529 AD, he founded the abbey that was to be his home until he died in 547. One of the medieval world's most important Christian centres, the monumental **abbey** (☎ 07 763 11 529; parking €2; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm) has been destroyed and rebuilt several times throughout its history, most recently in 1953. During WWII the abbey was central to German efforts to stop the Allied push north. After almost six months of bitter fighting, the Allies finally bombed the abbey in May 1944 in a desperate attempt to break through. In Cassino, there's a helpful **tourist office** (☎ 07 762 12 92; Via Di Biasio; [www.apf.frosinone.it](http://www.apf.frosinone.it); ☎ 8.30-1.30 & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

To get to the monasteries in Subiaco from Rome by public transport, take a Cotral bus to the Subiaco bus station (€6.30, 50 minutes to 1¼ hours, every 15 to 30 minutes Monday to Friday from 5.55am to 10.45pm, less frequently at weekends) from Ponte Mammolo on metro line B. The shorter trip takes the A24; the longer trip is via Tivoli. The bus stops a little way from the Monastery of St Scholastica – it's a 3km scenic, if demanding, uphill walk.

For Cassino, take one of the regular trains from Stazione Termini (€7.40, 2¼ hours). Some trains take around 1¾ hours and cost a little more. Then take one of the shuttle buses (€2 return) from Piazza San Benedetto up to the abbey. These leave at 9.45am (return at noon) and at 3.30pm (return 5pm). If you walk, it'll take around two hours to get up the hill and 1½ hours to walk back down!

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The best spot for lunch is **Ristorante Stella** (☎ 06 953 81 72; Piazza della Liberazione 3; meals €20) in the 1960s hotel of the same name just down from the cathedral. It serves delicious dishes such as *pappardelle alla lepre* (egg-noodle pasta with hare and tomato sauce) and *risotto al tartufo* (risotto with truffles).

Palestrina is accessible from Rome by Cotral bus (€2.50, one hour, half-hourly) from the Anagnina stop on metro line A. It is covered by a Zone 3 BIRG ticket (€6). When you arrive in Palestrina, get off at the second stop along the main street and walk up the *very* steep stairs and narrow roads to reach the museum, which is high on the hill above the cathedral.

By car it's a straightforward 39km along Via Prenestina (SS155).

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## ALONG THE COAST

Fregene and the Lido di Ostia, the two beaches nearest Rome, are all about Roman socialising in summer (when they're especially fun in the evening, if you have your own transport, as many clubs move out here), but they are afflicted by bumper-to-bumper traffic jams, polluted water and crowds of poseurs on the pull. For a serener, cleaner experience, it's best to head for the coast further south.

### Sabaudia

Developed on reclaimed land by sun-worshipping Fascists, Sabaudia, 120km southeast of Rome, is a stark 1930s curiosity rather than a looker, but is nevertheless the centre of the **Parco Nazionale del Circeo** ([www.parcocirceo.it](http://www.parcocirceo.it); Via Carlo Alberto 107; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm), a lovely 800-hectare area of sand dunes, rocky coastline, forest and wetlands. The **visitor centre** (☎ 07 735 11 385) can provide details on activities available in the area including fishing, bird-watching, walking and cycling.

Cotral buses leave from outside the Laurentina station on metro line B heading for Terracina and pass by Sabaudia en route (€5.50, two to three hours depending on traffic).

### Sperlonga

Fashionable coastal town Sperlonga is all about tourism. Its whitewashed *centro storico* is a buzzing spot (in summer, at least) and there are two inviting, sandy beaches either side of a rocky promontory.

Other than the beach, the town's main attraction is the **Museo Archeologico di Sperlonga** (☎ 07 715 48 028; Via Flacca, km1.6; admission €4; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm), home to sculptures and masks dating from the 2nd century BC, and a cave with a circular pool used by the emperor Tiberius. The remains of his villa are in front of the cave.

**Hotel Mayor** (☎ 07 715 49 245; Via 1 Romita 4; [www.hotelmayor.it](http://www.hotelmayor.it); s €65-140, d €80-140; 📞 📺), just off the main seafront road into town, has plain, fairly smart, clean rooms, some with balconies, and excellent facilities for beach bunnies: tone up on your tan in the solarium before heading to the hotel's private beach area. In high season you have to book for three nights or more.

To treat yourself to seafood so fresh it virtually wriggles off the plate, head to rustic **Gli Archi** (☎ 07 715 43 00; Via Ottaviano 17; meals €35), up in the medieval quarter. Signature dishes include a tantalising *linguine agli scampi* (long pasta with scampi) and *zuppa di cozze* (mussel soup). It's worth eating fresh buffalo mozzarella in town – it's super fresh because there are many producers in the area.

To get to Sperlonga from Rome, take a regional train (not the intercity) from Stazione Termini to Fondi (€6.20, 1¼ hours, about 20 daily). From the Fondi train station, you can catch the connecting **Piazzoli Giorgio** (☎ 07 715 19 067) bus to Sperlonga (€1, 15 minutes, hourly). Returning from Sperlonga, the bus to Fondi leaves from the main road in the lower town.

Sperlonga is 120km from Rome by car. Take the Via Pontina (SS148) and follow signs to Terracina and then Sperlonga.

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# ISOLE PONTINE

This group of small islands between Rome and Naples serves as an Italian Hamptons. Roman weekenders descend in droves to eat shellfish at little terrace restaurants, swim in emerald coves and take boat trips around the craggy coast. Few foreigners have discovered this idyllic archipelago, though this is slowly changing. Be warned that Ponza and – the only two inhabited islands – get packed out during holiday periods, and it's not cheap. It's best to visit in spring or autumn.

They've long been a favoured getaway. Homer refers to Ponza in the *Odyssey*, while in Roman times emperors and courtiers came here for some downtime. But as the Roman Empire declined, the islands were left vulnerable to violent attacks by the Saracens and by groups from mainland Italy and the nearby Aeolian Islands. During this period the island's main visitors were exiled outcasts from society: unfaithful wives, promiscuous daughters and persecuted Christians.

A golden age came in the 18th century, but commerce flourished at the expense of the natural habitat, which was largely destroyed in the locals' rush to build and cultivate. Today Ponza is ecologically still in poor shape: there's a lot of erosion caused by terraced farming, and migrating birds would do better to find a different route between Europe and Africa, as hunting is hugely popular. Fortunately, the islands are now under national park protection.

For online information about Ponza, check [www.ponza.it](http://www.ponza.it) (in Italian).

## Sleeping

Many of the locals rent out individual rooms to tourists; you'll find them touting at the port. Otherwise, the **Pro Loco tourist office** (☎ 0771 80031; [www.prolocodiponza.it](http://www.prolocodiponza.it)) will help you out. The following places are on Ponza.

**Villa Ersilia** (☎ 0771 800 97; [www.villaersilia.it](http://www.villaersilia.it)) This company rents out a variety of simple rooms, studios and apartments. Prices range from €35 to €100 per person per night.

**Villa Laetitia** (☎ 0771 9851003; [www.villalaetitia.com](http://www.villalaetitia.com); Salita Scotti; d €150-230) Book ahead for this haven of chic, a residence owned by the Fendi family, with just three rooms, exquisitely decorated with fabulous artefacts, plus with amazing sea views.

**Grand Hotel Santa Domitilla** (☎ 0771 80 99 51; [www.santadomitilla.com](http://www.santadomitilla.com); Via Panoramica; d €280-390; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Divinely light bright rooms, space, tranquillity and chic rooms: make like the beautiful people and book up this swish four star, with three pools (one an ancient Roman saltwater pool).

## Getting There & Around

Ponza and Ventotene are accessible by car ferry or hydrofoil from Anzio, Terracina, Naples and Formia. Some services run year-round but others run only from late June to the start of September. The major companies are **SNAP** ([www.snapnavigazione.it](http://www.snapnavigazione.it), in Italian), **Caremar** ([www.caremar.it](http://www.caremar.it), in Italian) and **Vetor** ([www.vetor.it](http://www.vetor.it)). Timetable information is available from the websites, from most travel agents and, in summer, from the Rome section of *Il Messaggero* and *Il Tempo* newspapers. Prices vary according to the point of departure and whether you're on a hydrofoil or ferry (journey time varies from one hour 10 minutes to 2½ hours) – from Terracina to Ponza the 2½-hour daily ferry crossing costs from €25 (return).

Cars and large motorbikes are forbidden on Ponza in summer, but there's a good local bus service (tickets €1). Otherwise, you can rent a scooter or even a golf buggy to get around.





# Liguria, Piedmont & Valle d'Aosta

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LIGURIA  
GENOA  
AROUND GENOA  
RIVIERA DI LEVANTE  
RIVIERA DI PONENTE  
PIEDMONT  
TURIN  
THE MILKY WAY  
SOUTHERN & EASTERN PIEDMONT  
NORTHERN PIEDMONT  
VALLE D'AOSTA  
AOSTA  
AOSTA VALLEY CASTLES  
PARCO NAZIONALE DEL GRAN PARADISO  
VALTOURNENCHE  
VALLE D'AYAS, VAL DI GRESSONEY & VALSESIA

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Cathedral-like mountains, Fiat cars, ritzy Mediterranean resorts and artistic football – Liguria, Piedmont and the Valle d'Aosta are the country in microcosm: three culture-defining northwestern enclaves that also generously provided the nation with its first king (Vittorio Emanuele II) and its first capital (Turin).

But, fresh from kick-starting the Risorgimento (Italian unification), the northwest didn't just turn around and retreat back into its shell. On top of its valuable historical relics, Liguria-Piedmont has also ignited many of Italy's gastronomic traditions. The fertile plains of the Po river valley harvest culinary delicacies that are an intrinsic part of any Italian dinner plate – arborio rice, grapes for Barolo wine, basil for earthy pesto and wheat for aromatic focaccia, while its seas are awash with anchovies, octopuses and prawns.

Through the annals of history, erstwhile northwestern movers and shakers include Christopher Columbus, the Count of Cavour, Giovanni Agnelli and Giuseppe Mazzini. It's an illustrious list which, along with some cerebral museums and fine architecture, puts Piedmont-Liguria at the forefront of Italian culture. Yet it fails to explain why the region consistently plays second fiddle to other limelight-hogging highlights such as Tuscany, Venice and Rome.

The upside is there's more elbow room here, and more serendipity. Who knew that the Aosta Valley has a German-speaking Walser minority, or that Cuneo's main square outsizes San Marco, or that in Turin

you're more likely to bump into a Torino supporter than a Juventus fan?

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Have a religious experience at the [Stadio Olimpico di Torino](#) in Turin watching Juventus or Torino play football
- Run to the hills with only ibexes for company on the untrammelled trails of the [Maritime Alps](#)
- Compare the merits of Barolo over Barbaresco with the wine-quaffers of [Alba](#)
- Find simple serendipity at a scenic hostel in [Savona](#)
- Work out who's French, Italian and German-speaking Walser in the multicultural [Valle d'Aosta](#)
- Ski in the tracks of Olympians through the [Milky Way](#)



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POPULATION: LIGURIA 1.6 MILLION; PIEDMONT 4.4 MILLION; VALLE D'AOSTA 127,000

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AREA: LIGURIA 5413 SQ KM; PIEDMONT 25,399 SQ KM; VALLE D'AOSTA 3262 SQ KM

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## LIGURIA

A sinuous arc of land wedged between Piedmont and the sea, Liguria is where the Alps and Apennines cascade precipitously into the Mediterranean. The result is as striking as it is unique, with ancient settlements clinging precariously to granite cliffs, a spectacle that reaches its apex in Cinque Terre: five quintessential Ligurian fishing villages that dangle like crazily perched medieval colonies above the foaming ocean.

Only 7km wide at its narrowest point, Liguria is dominated by Genoa, Italy's largest port. To the west

stretches the Riviera di Ponente, a sun-flecked coastal Shangri La that continues as far as the border with France. To the east is the Riviera di Levante, a swankier, more precipitous holiday strip where busy resorts mingle with plusher palm-fringed retreats such as Portofino and Porto Venere, crammed with expensive yachts and Prada-wearing prima donnas.

Despite its diminutive size, Liguria has played a major role in Italian culture. Genoa was once a powerful independent city-state with possessions as far away as the Middle East, while the ingeniously terraced terrain around Cinque Terre remains a showcase for high-quality local produce.

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## GENOA

**pop 604,800**

Contrasting sharply with the elegance of Turin, Genoa is a gargantuan port with a seedy underbelly; its narrow, twisting streets (*caruggi*) are more reminiscent of a Moroccan medina than a romantic Venetian cityscape. The birthplace of such groundbreaking Italians as Columbus and Mazzini, Genoa has a markedly cosmopolitan air, with remnants of a once-great empire evident in its concealed doorways and arty museums.

Deep in the maze of the gritty old town, beauty and the beast sit side-by-side in streets that glimmer like a film noir movie set. Old men smoke languidly outside noisy bars and prostitutes stand like sentries in dark doorways, while on the periphery the quintessential Italy awaits – a glistening fountain, a piazza packed with pigeons and tourists, and one of the most spectacular cathedrals (San Lorenzo) on the whole peninsula.

The Most Serene Republic of Genoa ruled the Mediterranean waves during the 12th to the 13th centuries before deferring to the superior power of Piedmont. Its crusading noblemen once established colonies in the Middle East and North Africa, and its emblematic flag, the red cross of St George, was greedily hijacked by the English.

Since hosting Expo 1992 and being championed as 2004's European City of Culture, Genoa has undergone some radical renovations with its once-tatty port area now boasting Italy's largest aquarium and the Biosfera, a dome-shaped greenhouse crammed with contrasting ecosystems.

## History

Genoa's name is thought to come from the Latin *ianua*, meaning 'door'. Founded in the 4th century BC, it was an important Roman port and later occupied by Franks, Saracens and the Milanese. The first ring of Genoa's defensive walls was constructed in the 12th century. (The only remaining section of these walls, Porta Soprana, was built in 1155, although what you see today is a restored version.)

A victory over Venice in 1298 led to a period of growth, but bickering between the Grimaldis, Dorias, Spinolas and other dynasties caused internal chaos. The Grimaldis headed west, establishing the principality of Monaco – hence the similarity of Monaco's language, Monegasque, to the Genoese dialect.

In the 16th century, under the rule of Imperial Admiral Andrea Doria, Genoa benefited from financing Spanish exploration. Its coffers swelled further in the 17th century, which saw an outer ring of walls added as the city expanded, and its newly built palaces filled with art, in turn attracting masters such as Rubens. Celebrated architect Galeazzo Alessi (1512–72) designed many of the city's splendid buildings.

The end of the Age of Exploration came as a blow and as the Mediterranean's mercantile importance



declined, so did Genoa's. The city languished for centuries.

Genoa was the first northern city to rise against Nazi occupation and the Italian Fascists during WWII, liberating itself before the arrival of Allied troops. After the war the city developed rapidly along the coast, although, by the 1970s, decline had set in once more as big industries folded.

Christopher Columbus is Genoa's most famous son (if indeed he was – see the boxed text, [Click here](#)). In 1992 the 500th anniversary of his seminal voyage to America transformed Genoa's ancient harbour from a decaying backwater into a showpiece for the city. Renzo Piano orchestrated the overhaul, adding a number of striking permanent attractions. Two years later, Genoa was named a European City of Culture, spurring on further renovations and additions to the cityscape, including several new museums and a much-needed metro system. But for all its sprucing up, Genoa retains a rough-and-tumble charm.

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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

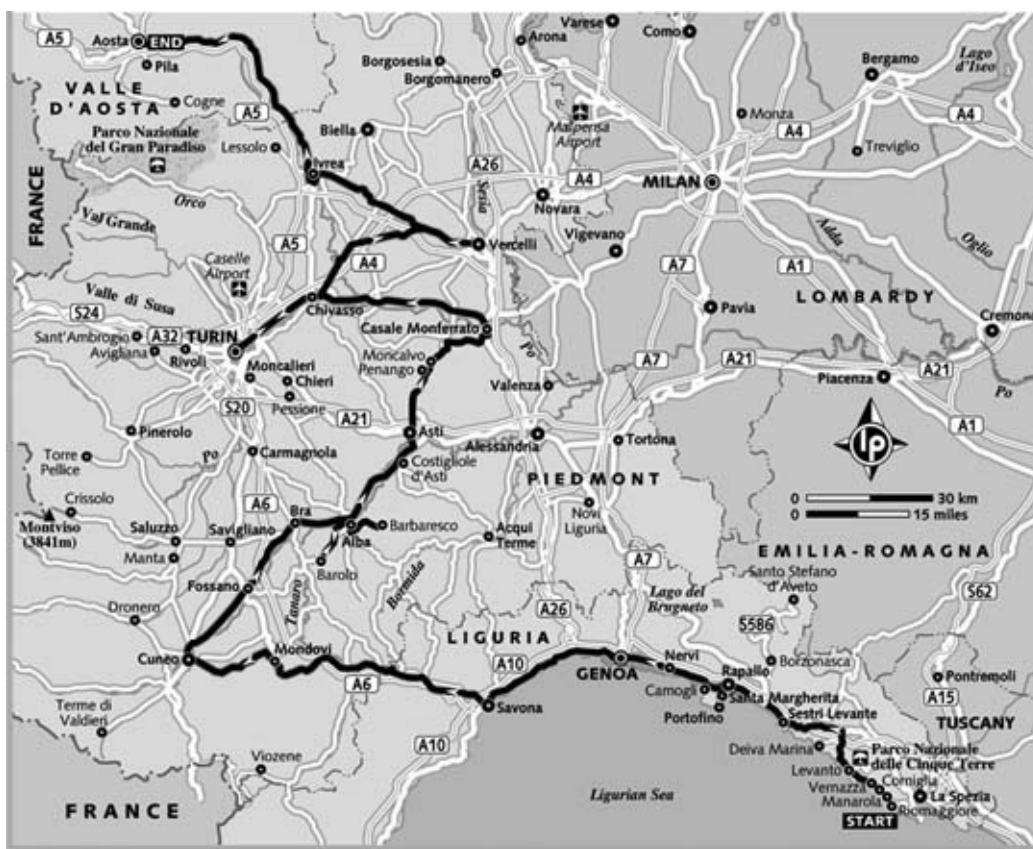
### NORTHWESTERN FOOD FORAY      **Two Weeks / Riomaggiore / Aosta**

While Catholicism is Italy's state religion, the alternative 'faith' of foodism ranks a close second. Never far from the high altar of the national *cucina* (kitchen), the northwest's gastronomic flavours and traditions are globally revered – and there's nothing better than tasting them on their home turf. Start in the Cinque Terre, where fertile clifftops and equally fertile seas have been farmed for centuries. Hit [Riomaggiore](#) for its delicious seafood and [Manarola](#) for its sweet Sclacchetrà wine. Focaccia is kneaded all over Italy, but Liguria proudly claims historical ownership.

You can ply the coast sampling the regional variations, though the crunchy herb bread of [Camogli](#) is hard to beat. Go green in [Genoa](#), where basil, garlic, cheese, pine nuts and olive oil are blended into a fragrant earthy sauce known as pesto, best served *alla genovese* over *trofie* pasta. *Farinata* is another Ligurian speciality, and you can see the chickpea-flour pancakes being deftly made at the [Vino e Farinata](#) in Savona.

Veering inland in time for dessert, you'll fall upon vastly underrated [Cuneo](#), famous for its rum-flavoured chocolates. Remember to leave room for [Bra](#), birthplace of the Slow Food Movement, before raising a glass to [Barolo](#), where robust Nebbiolo grapes are used to concoct the 'king of wines'. [Alba](#) is a veritable food heaven plunked in the middle of truffle-land, while [Barbaresco](#) is where smoother, younger reds play queen to Barolo's king. [Asti](#) holds an annual September food festival, the Delle Sagre, and the area around [Casale Monferrato](#) offers a wine-tasting landscape extraordinaire and turreted castles.

Venerated for a Shroud, a football team and one of history's most durable cars, [Turin](#) also hosts some of the most evocative coffee bars in the nation. For risotto, head to the rice-growing region of [Vercelli](#), before having all your Italian food preconceptions blown out of the water in mountainous [Aosta](#), home of polenta, spicy sausages and tangy *fontina* cheese.



## OUR TOP FIVE RESTAURANTS IN LIGURIA, PIEDMONT & VALLE D'AOSTA

- La Lanterna – [Riomaggiore](#)
- Locanda da Peiu – [Cuneo](#)
- L'Ostu dij Baloss – [Saluzzo](#)
- Ristorante Rabayà – [Barbaresco](#)
- Vecchia Aosta – [Aosta](#)

## Orientation

Genoa sprawls along the coast for 30km and is served by an impressive 15 train stations. The city centre stretches between the two main stations, Stazione Principe (to the west) and Stazione Brignole (to the east). Via XX Settembre, the elegant main shopping strip, starts just southwest of Stazione Brignole and spills into the city's focal point, Piazza de Ferrari. The old town winds west of the piazza towards the port and around the waterfront towards Stazione Principe.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**La Feltrinelli** (☎ 010 54 08 30; Via XX Settembre 231-233r) English-language novels on the 1st floor.

**Libreria Porto Antico** (☎ 010 251 84 22; Palazzina Milo, Porto Antico) Limited selection of

English-language novels, tourist books on Genoa, maps and Lonely Planet titles.

## EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 010 5 36 61; Via Armando Diaz 2)

## INTERNET ACCESS

There's a handful of small internet cafes in and around Via Balbi near Stazione Principe. Others regularly pop up (and close down) in the city centre – check with the city's tourist information kiosk for updates. Online access costs around €3 to €5 per hour.

**Internet Cafe** (☎ 011 868 89 79; Via Balbi 110; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 2-8pm Sat) Near Stazione Principe.

## LAUNDRY

**Ondablu** (Via Antonio Gramsci 181r; ☎ 8am-10pm) Self-service laundromat.

## LEFT LUGGAGE

Expect to pay around €3 for 24 hours at **station offices** (Stazione Brignole; Piazza Giuseppe Verdi; ☎ 7am-9pm; Stazione Principe; Piazza Acquaverde; ☎ 6am-midnight).

## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Ospedale San Martino** (☎ 010 55 51; Largo Rosanna Benci 10) Hospital.

## POST

**Post office** Main post office (Via Dante; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat); Stazione Principe (☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

## TOURIST INFORMATION

There are tourist offices at the airport, ferry terminal and Stazione Principe. There's also a **kiosk** (Genova Informa; ☎ 010 24 87 11; [www.apr.genova.it](http://www.apr.genova.it); Piazza Giacomo Matteotti; ☎ 9.30am-7.45pm) in the city centre adjacent to Piazza de Ferrari.

## Sights

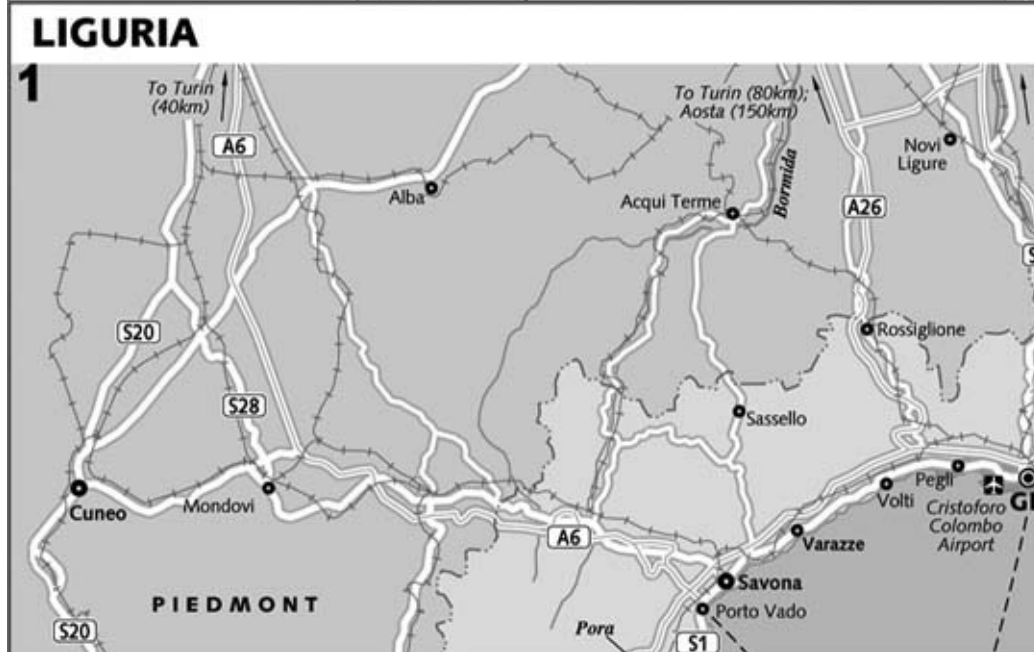
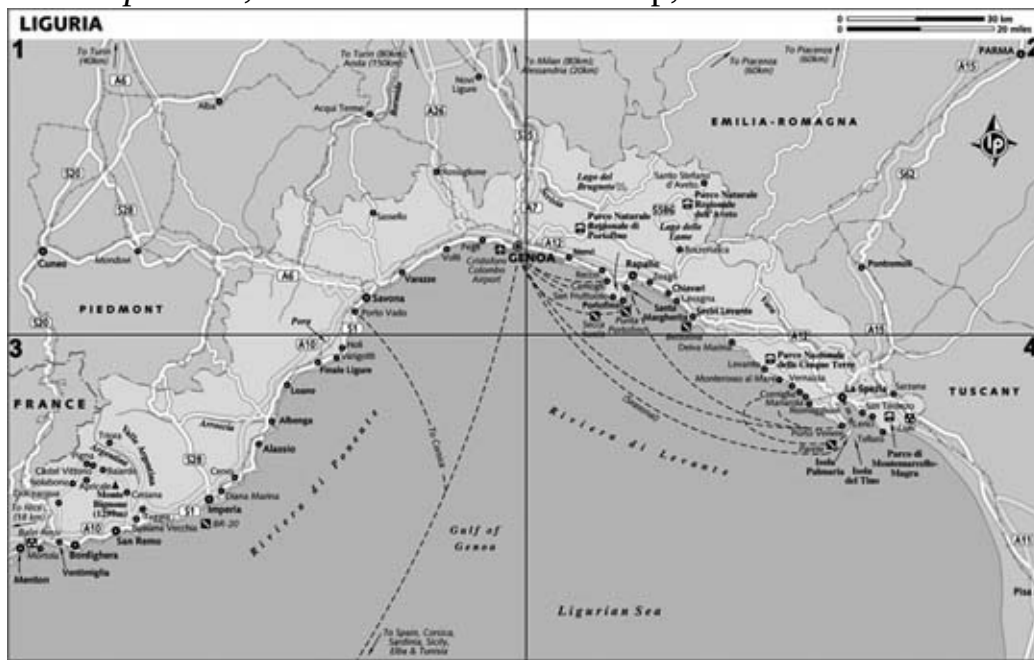
Dozens of Genoa's palaces built between 1576 and 1664 were placed on the Unesco World Heritage list in 2006; the website [www.irolli.it](http://www.irolli.it) maps their locations.

## PIAZZA DE FERRARI

After the asphyxiation of the *caruggi*, this fountain-embellished main piazza ringed by magnificent buildings feels as if you've just come up for air. Showcase architecture includes the art nouveau **Palazzo della Borsa** (closed to the public), which was once the country's stock exchange; and the neoclassical **Teatro Carlo Felice**.

Also on the square is the **Palazzo Ducale** (☎ 010 557 40 00; [www.palazzoducale.genova.it](http://www.palazzoducale.genova.it), in Italian; Piazza Giacomo Matteotti 9; €5-10; ☎ exhibitions 9am-9pm Tue-Sun), accessed via Piazza Giacomo Matteotti. Once the seat of the city's rulers, it hosts a few small specialist museums and archives,

including the **Museo del Jazz** (☎ 010 58 52 41; [www.italianjazzinstitute.com](http://www.italianjazzinstitute.com), in Italian; admission free; 🕒 4-7pm Mon-Sat, by reservation), with a collection of original recordings. High-profile temporary art exhibitions are held in the *palazzo*, which also has a bookshop, cafe and restaurants.





# MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

Serial museum-goers should pick up the **Card Musei** (Museum Card; [www.museigenova.it](http://www.museigenova.it); card €16). The card gives free admission to around 20 of Genoa's museums and discounted access to several more over a period of 48 hours. You can buy it at various museums, information booths or online at [www.happyticket.it](http://www.happyticket.it).

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## CATTEDRALE DI SAN LORENZO

A stunner even by Italian standards, Genoa's black-and-white-striped **cathedral** (Piazza San Lorenzo; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm) owes its continued existence to the poor quality of a British WWII bomb that failed to ignite here in 1941. Fronted by twisting columns and crouching lions, it was first consecrated in 1118. The two bell towers and cupola were added in the 16th century.

Inside, above the central doorway, there's a great lunette with a painting of the Last Judgment, the work of an anonymous Byzantine painter of the early 14th century. In the sacristy, the **Museo del Tesoro** (☎ 010 247 18 31; adult/child €5.50/4.50; ☎ tours 9am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Sat) preserves various dubious holy relics, including the medieval Sacro Catino, a glass vessel once thought to be the Holy Grail. Other artefacts include the polished quartz platter upon which Salome is said to have received John the Baptist's head, and a fragment of the True Cross.

## CHIESA DEL GESÙ

The highlight of the **Chiesa del Gesù** (Piazza Giacomo Matteotti; ☎ 4.30-7pm), built in 1597 on the foundations of a medieval church, are two works by Rubens. *Circoncisione* hangs over the main altar, and *Miracoli di San Ignazio* is displayed in a side chapel.

## VIA GARIBALDI & AROUND

Skirting the northern edge of what was once the city limits, pedestrianised Via Garibaldi (formerly called the Strada Nuova; [www.stradanuova.it](http://www.stradanuova.it)) was planned by Galeazzo Alessi in the 16th century. It quickly became the city's most sought-after quarter, lined with the palaces of Genoa's wealthiest citizens.

The most elaborate facade belongs to the 1563 **Palazzo Lomellino** (☎ 010 595 70 60; [www.palazzolomellino.org](http://www.palazzolomellino.org); Via Garibaldi 7; admission varies depending on exhibit; ☎ vary). The grey blue exterior is festooned with stucco adornments, while the internal courtyard is dominated by an 18th-century *nymphaeum* (monument to the nymphs). Upstairs, the remarkably preserved 17th-century frescoes by Bernardo Strozzi were only uncovered in 2002, after languishing for almost 300 years above a false ceiling. They depict allegories of the New World, in homage to the palace's one-time owners, the Centurione family, who financed Columbus' voyages.

Just east of Via Garibaldi, a path from Piazza Corvetto twists through terraced gardens to the **Museo d'Arte Orientale** (☎ 010 54 22 85; Piazzale Mazzini 1; adult/child €4/2.80; ☎ 9am-1pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun). With some 20,000 items, including porcelain, bronzes, costumes and musical instruments, it brings together one of Europe's largest collections of Japanese art. Heading southwest, elegant **Via Roma**, with its art nouveau boutiques, and adjacent glass-covered **Galleria Mazzini**, is Genoa's most exclusive designer-shopping street. It links Piazza Corvetto with Piazza de Ferrari.

## Musei di Strada Nuova

Three of Via Garibaldi's grand palaces, Rosso, Bianco and Doria-Tursi, comprise the **Musei di Strada Nuova** (☎ 010 246 77 86; combined ticket adult/child €8/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun). Between them, they hold the city's finest collection of old masters.

Tickets must be purchased at the bookshop inside **Palazzo Doria-Tursi** (☎ 010 247 63 51; Via Garibaldi 9). The palace's Sala Paganiniana has a small but absorbing collection of legendary violinist Niccolò Paganini's personal effects. Pride of place goes to his 'Canone' violin, made in Cremona in 1743. One lucky musician gets to play the maestro's violin during October's Paganiniana festival. Other artefacts on show include letters, musical scores and his travelling chess set. The palace has housed Genoa's town hall since 1848.

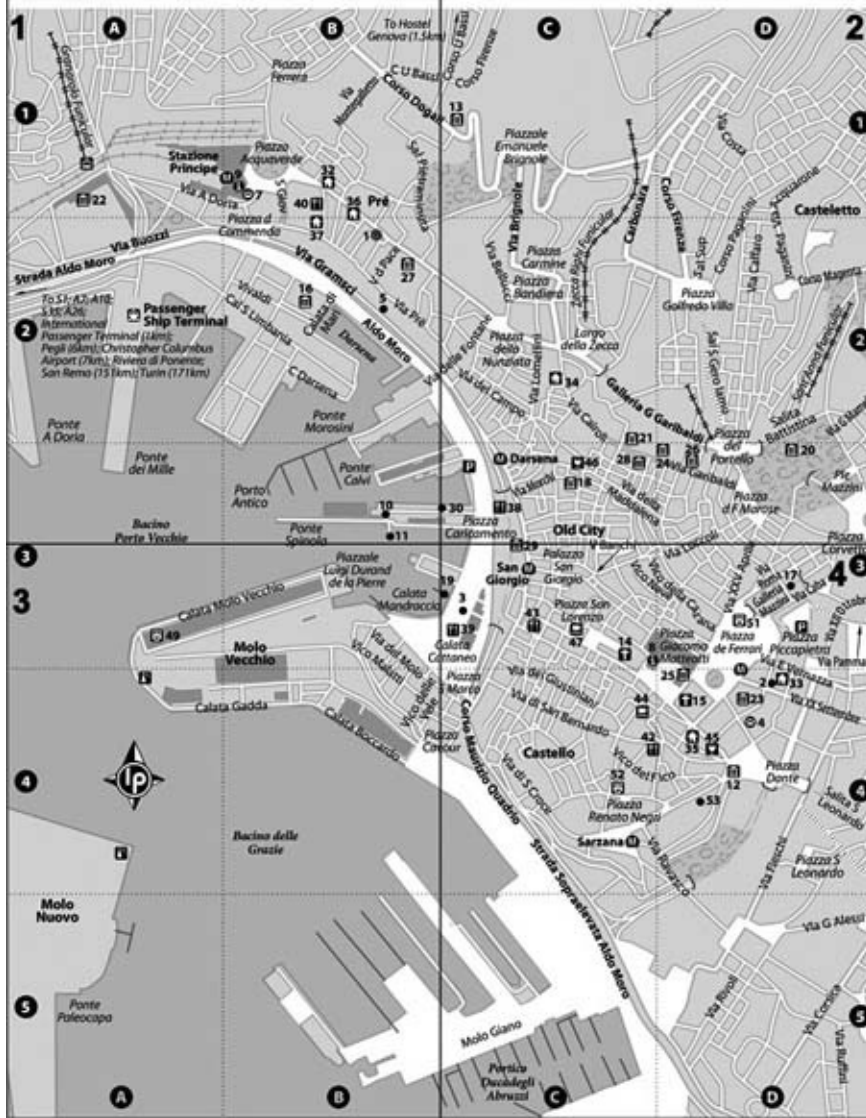
Lavishly frescoed rooms in **Palazzo Rosso** (☎ 010 247 63 51; [www.museopalazzorosso.it](http://www.museopalazzorosso.it); Via Garibaldi 18) are the backdrop for several portraits by Van Dyck of the local Brignole-Sale family. Other standouts include Guido Reni's *San Sebastiano* and Guercino's *La morte di Cleopatra*, as well as works by Veronese, Dürer and Bernardo Strozzi.

Flemish, Spanish and Italian artists feature at **Palazzo Bianco** (☎ 010 247 63 51; [www.museopalazzobianco.it](http://www.museopalazzobianco.it); Via Garibaldi 11). Rubens' *Venere e Marte* and Van Dyck's *Vertumna e Pomona* are among the highlights, which also include works by Hans Memling, Filippino Lippi and Murillo, as well as 15th-century religious icons.

## OLD CITY

The heart of medieval Genoa – bounded by Porta dei Vacca, the waterfront streets Via Cairoli, Via Garibaldi and Via XXV Aprile, and the Porta Soprana – is its maze of *caruggi*. As evidenced by the washing pegged on lines strung outside the buildings, these dark, almost cavelike laneways and dank, odoriferous blind alleys are largely residential, with a sprinkling of bars, shops and cafes. Particularly after dark, parts of the *caruggi* can feel somewhat unnerving. Although it's not overly dangerous (especially compared with a decade ago), take care in the zone west of Via San Luca and south to Piazza Banchi, where most of the old city's lowlife (prostitution, drugs and so on) concentrates. East of the piazza is Via Orefici, where you'll find **market** stalls.

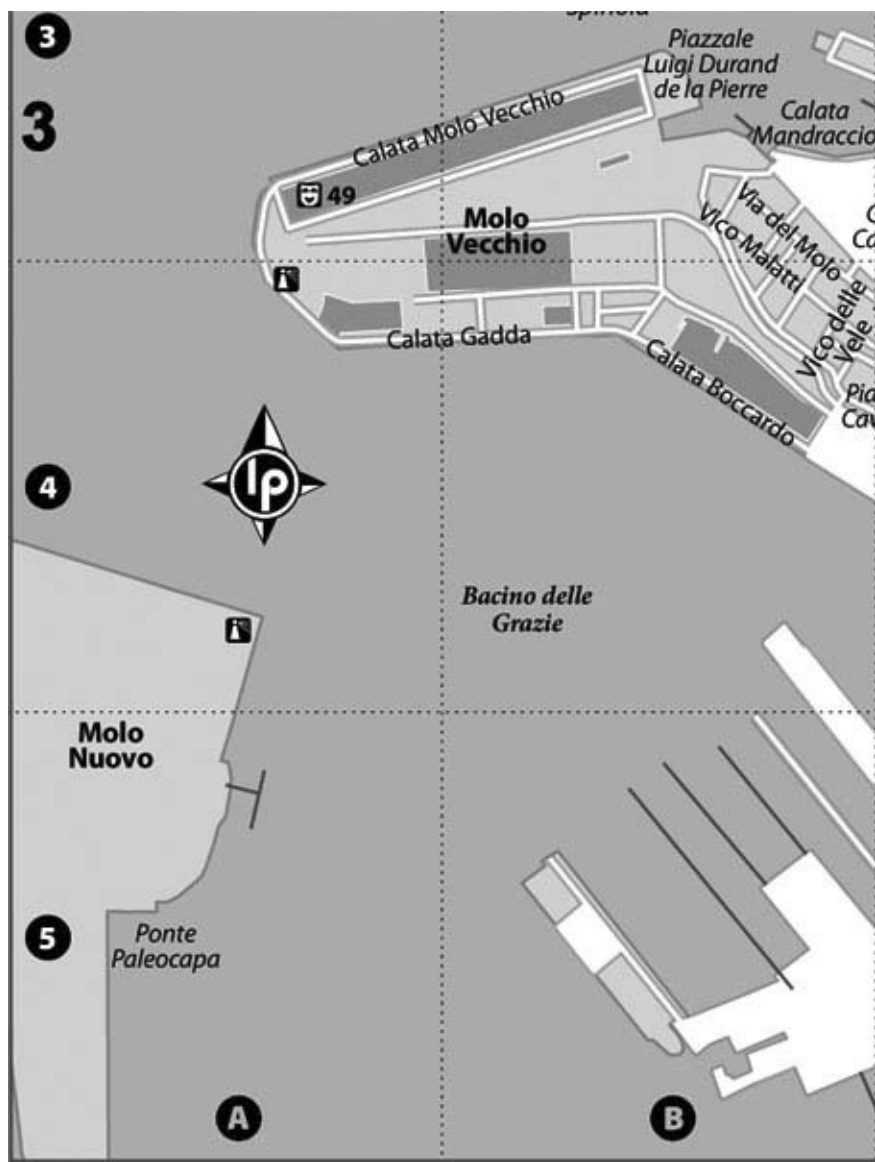
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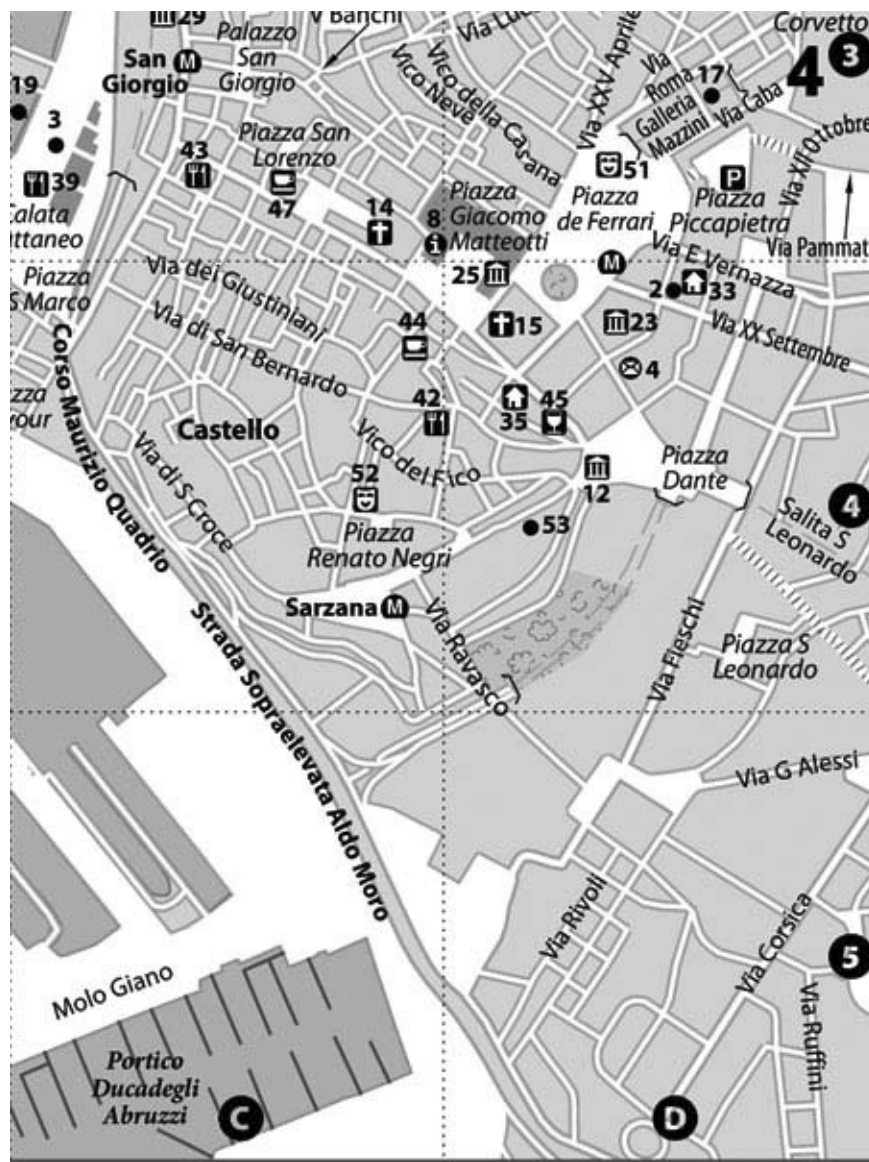




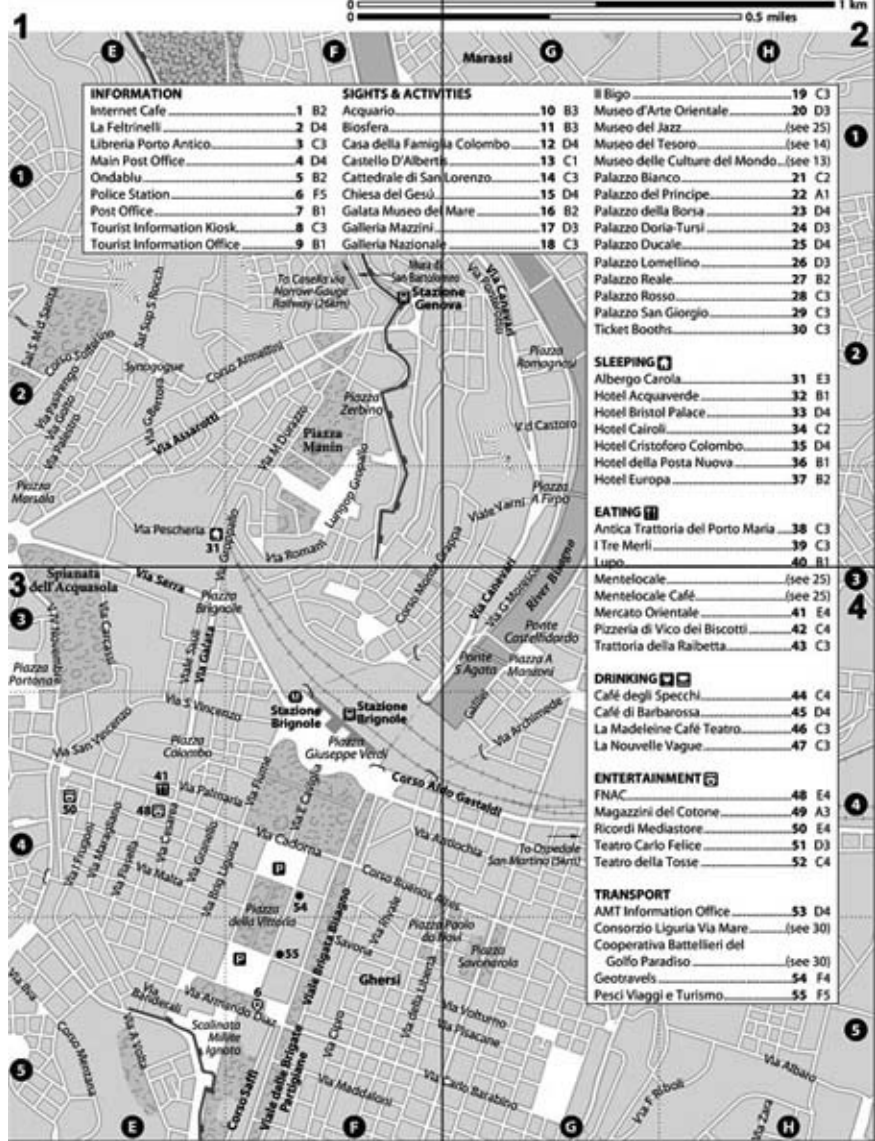








Terraced gardens surround **Palazzo Reale** (☎ 010 27 1 01; [www.palazzorealegenova.it](http://www.palazzorealegenova.it), in Italian; Via Balbi 10; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 9am-7pm Thu-Sun, to 1.30pm Tue & Wed), which has a fine collection of Renaissance works. A combined ticket costing €7 also covers admission to the **Galleria Nazionale** (☎ 010 270 53 00; [www.palazzospinola.it](http://www.palazzospinola.it); Piazza Superiore di Pellicceria 1; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 9am-8pm Tue-Sat, 2-8pm Sun). The latter, a 16th-century mansion, was owned by the Spinolas, one of the Republic's most formidable dynasties. Their ancestral home displays Italian and Flemish Renaissance art, but is also worth visiting to gape at the awesome architecture.



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**SLEEPING**

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Hotel Cairoli.....34 C2

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Hotel della Posta Nuova.....36 B1

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**EATING**

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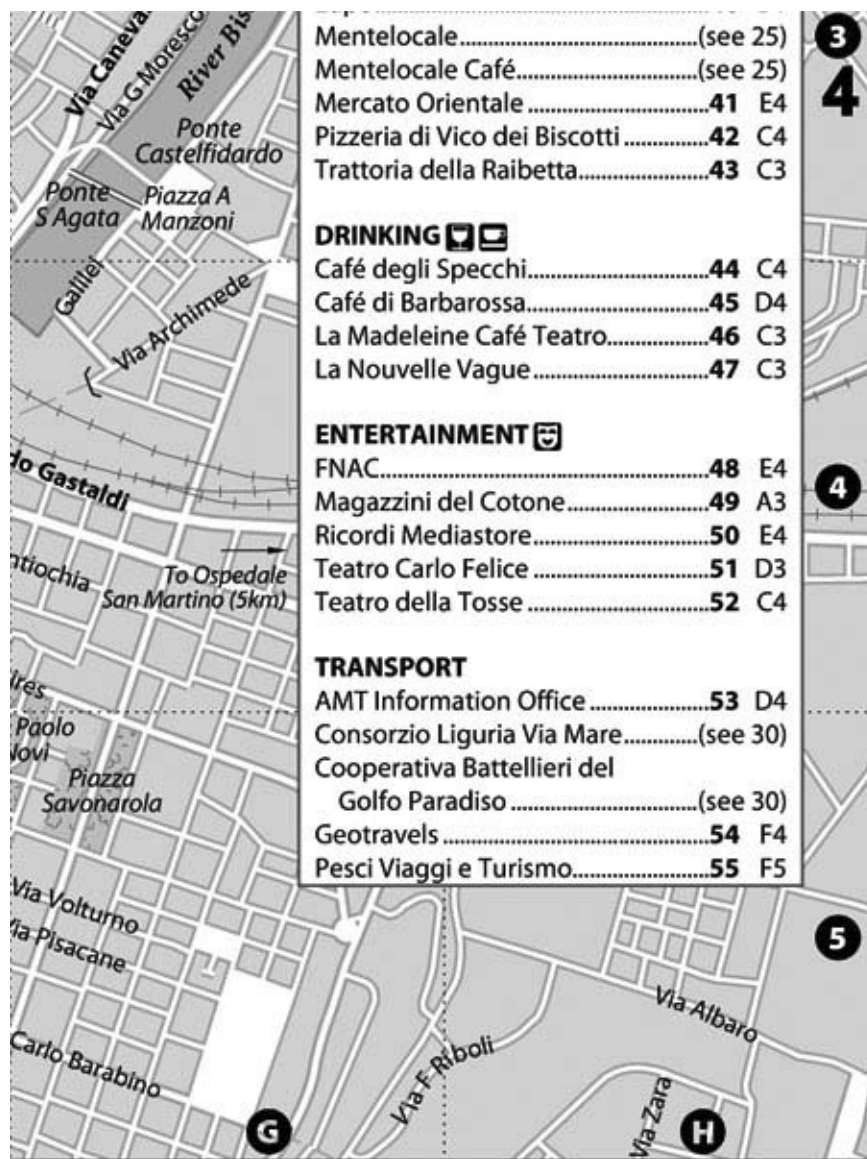
Lupo.....40 B1

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## HOME OF COLUMBUS?

Genoa is heralded as the birthplace of Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), but some believe he may have actually been born in Calvi, on the island of Corsica (then under Genoese rule and now part of France), which is a ferry ride to Genoa's south.

So the theory goes, when Columbus went looking for underwriting at the Spanish court, he could not very well admit to being of Calvian origin because the Calvians had massacred a Spanish garrison, putting an end to Spanish ambitions there. Certainly numerous Calvians figured in his crews and there's a plaque marking the house in Calvi's citadel where the navigator was supposedly born.

You can make up your own mind during a visit to his alleged Genoa birthplace, **Casa della Famiglia Colombo** (☎ 010 246 53 46; Piazza Dante; admission free; ☏ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sat & Sun).

Towering over the western end of town, **Castello D'Albertis** houses the eclectic **Museo delle Culture del Mondo** (Museum of World Cultures; ☎ 010 272 38 20; [www.castellodalbertisgenova.it](http://www.castellodalbertisgenova.it); Corso Dogali 18; adult/child €6/4.50; ☏ 10am-5pm Oct-Mar, to 6pm Apr-Sep). The neo-Gothic edifice was built in 1892 on the ruins of a much older castle for the globetrotting Capitano Enrico D'Albertis, who hauled back all manner of 'curiosities' from his extensive sea voyages. Where else could you find a stuffed platypus, a fragment of the Great Wall of China and a handful of sand from San Salvador (Columbus' first

disembarkation point) in the same cabinet? If you don't fancy the climb up to Corso Dogali, there's a lift from Via Balbi (€0.70) to the castle gates.

Further west, on the waterfront, is the beautiful **Palazzo del Principe** (☎ 010 25 55 09; [www.palazzodelprincipe.it](http://www.palazzodelprincipe.it); Via Adua 6; adult/child €9/6.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), once home of the 16th-century admiral Andrea Doria. The sumptuous Renaissance interiors, with frescoes, tapestries, furniture and paintings, have been painstakingly restored, and the formal gardens provide a calm respite from the frenetic city.

## PORTO ANTICO

Since its recent facelift, Genoa's **historic port** ([www.portoantico.it](http://www.portoantico.it)) gets packed with locals and visitors enjoying a *passeggiata* (stroll). The city centre information kiosk ([Click here](#)) has details about all of the old port's attractions and events, including various activities here for kids.

Jutting out over the water, Genoa's bright blue **Acquario** (Aquarium; ☎ 010 234 56 78; [www.acquariodigenova.it](http://www.acquariodigenova.it); Ponte Spinola; adult/child €17/11; 🕒 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 10pm Thu, to 8.30pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, to 11pm Jul & Aug) has more than 5000 sea creatures, including sharks, swimming in six million litres of water. The adjoining floating barge takes visitors on a voyage through the Age of Discovery and into a Madagascan rainforest. The aquarium has disabled access.

Two of Renzo Piano's most distinctive new additions to the port are the **Biosfera** (Biosphere; ☎ 335 599 01 87; Ponte Spinola; adult/child €5/3.50; 🕒 10am-sunset Tue-Sun), a giant glass ball housing a humid mini-ecosystem with tropical plants, butterflies and birds; and a panoramic lift, **Il Bigo** (Calata Cattaneo; adult/child €4/3; 🕒 2-6pm Mon, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which hoists a cylindrical viewing cabin 200m into the air. The lift has access for disabled visitors.

The best place to gain an appreciation for Genoa's relationship with the sea is the excellent **Galata Museo del Mare** (☎ 010 234 56 55; [www.galatamuseodelmare.it](http://www.galatamuseodelmare.it), in Italian; Calata di Mari 1; adult/child €10/5; 🕒 10am-7.30pm Mar-Jul, Sep & Oct, 10am-7.30pm Sat-Thu, to 10pm Fri Aug, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb), which traces the history of seafaring from earliest times through the ages of sail and steam to the present via high-tech exhibits.

Marco Polo was once an inmate of the frescoed **Palazzo San Giorgio** (Piazza Caricamento). Built in 1260, it became a prison in 1298; Polo worked on *Il Milione* here. These days it hosts occasional exhibitions; the city centre info kiosk has information.

## GENOA-CASELLA RAILWAY

Spectacular views of Genoa's forts can be seen from the 1929 narrow-gauge railway, which snakes 25km north from the **Stazione Genova** (☎ 010 83 73 21; [www.ferroviagenovacasella.it](http://www.ferroviagenovacasella.it), in Italian; Via alla Stazione per Casella 15) to the village of **Casella** (one-way/return €2/3.20, one hour, eight to 12 daily) in the Scrivia Valley.

## Tours

Information and tickets for boat trips around the port and destinations further afield are available from the **ticket booths** (☎ 010 25 67 75; Ponte Spinola; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Sep-Jun, 9am-8pm Jul & Aug) beside the aquarium at Porto Antico.

Five-hour springtime **whale-watching expeditions** (☎ 010 26 57 12; [www.whalewatchliguria.it](http://www.whalewatchliguria.it); adult/child €32/15; 🕒 depart 1pm Sat Apr-Oct), run in consultation with the World Wide Fund for Nature, include fascinating background on the world's largest mammals provided by an onboard biologist.

**Genova Tours** (☎ 010 275 93 18, 010 59 16 25; adult/child €10/7) runs three or four open-topped bus tours daily, with headphone commentary in five languages. It's best to confirm the departure point for your specific trip; tourist offices can provide departure details. Tickets are sold on the bus.

## Festivals & Events

**Slow Fish** ([www.slowfish.it](http://www.slowfish.it)) Every odd-numbered year in early May, Genoa hosts the Slow Food Movement—affiliated festival, celebrating seafood with a fish market and tastings. It also runs free workshops focusing on climate change, water pollution, good fishing practices, protected marine areas, and aquaculture, and fills in fish shoppers and diners on how to help look after fishy environments through better-informed consumer practices.

**Palio delle Quattro Antiche Repubbliche Marinare** In June, Genoa is one of four historical maritime cities (along with Pisa, Amalfi and Venice) that race in this regatta. The next event in Genoa is in 2012.

**Premio Paganini** In homage to Genoese violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782–1849), this is an international violin competition held in September.

**Paganiniana** More musical events take place during this October festival. Exact dates and venues change each year.

## Sleeping

Dozens of hotels are spread around town. The greatest concentration is near Stazione Principe on and around Via Balbi.

### BUDGET

**Hostel Genova** (☎ 010 242 24 57; [hostelge@iol.it](mailto:hostelge@iol.it); Via G Costanzi 120; dm/s/d incl breakfast from €16/23.50/44; ☎ reception 9am–3.30pm & midnight–7am Feb—mid-Dec; ♿) A steep 2km north of the centre, Genoa's only hostel has rules that won't endear it to free-spirited backpackers: its eight-bed dorms are single-sex, there's a lockout from 9am to 3.30pm, a 1am curfew, and Hostelling International (HI) cards are mandatory. Catch bus 40 from Stazione Brignole to the end of the line. Has access for disabled guests.

**Albergo Carola** (☎ 010 839 13 40; Via Groppallo 4; s/d from €28/50, with bathroom from €35/60) Albergo Carola's well-kept rooms can be found on the 3rd floor of a lovely old building near Stazione Brignole. Staff is charming, though if you don't speak Italian you may want to have your phrasebook handy.

**Hotel Acquaverde** (☎ 010 26 54 27; [www.hotelacqua-verde.it](http://www.hotelacqua-verde.it); Via Balbi 29; s/d from €30/50, with bathroom from €40/70; ♿) On the top three floors of a restored 17th-century town house (accessed by a lift), the Acquaverde's rooms are simple but comfortable. If you're self-catering, four rooms have their own kitchen facilities. Ask about the hotel's parking arrangements nearby when booking. Has access for disabled travellers.

**Hotel Della Posta Nuova** (☎ 010 25 29 29; Via Balbi 24; s/d from €70/100; ♿ ♿) No real surprises at this journeyman hotel 150m from Stazione Principe, though it's clean, safe and relatively friendly for such a transient quarter. Rooms are smallish and simple but admit plenty of natural light. The ones on the top floor have a terrace overlooking Via Balbi.

### MIDRANGE

**ourpick** **Hotel Cairoli** (☎ 010 246 14 54; [www.hotelcairoligenova.com](http://www.hotelcairoligenova.com); Via Cairoli 14/4; s €65-90, d €85-105; 🍷 🍴 📺) Mondrian lurks three flights up in this Genoa *palazzo*. Themed around various modern artists, the rooms at the funky Cairoli all exhibit different colourful personalities. Then there's the communal library, chill-out area, internet room, fully equipped gym, free newspapers, terrace and informative maps on the wall. The whole package is centrally located and a snip at the price.

**Hotel Cristoforo Colombo** (☎ 010 251 36 43; [www.hotelcolombo.it](http://www.hotelcolombo.it); Via di Porta Soprana 27; s €55-90, d €85-110) Recently overhauled (with bathrooms for all 16 rooms), this charming family-run hotel is ideally situated in the old town. On balmy nights, take in the twinkling city lights from the rooftop terrace.

**Hotel Europa** (☎ 010 25 69 55; [www.hoteleuropa-genova.com](http://www.hoteleuropa-genova.com); Via delle Monachette 8; s €60-118, d €80-185; 🍷 🍴 📺 📶) Tucked down a little laneway a few footsteps from Stazione Principe, Hotel Europa's rooms aren't large but they come with elegant peach-toned decor and amenities such as flat-screen satellite TV and mini-bar. Wi-fi costs €10 per 24 hours.

## TOP END

**Hotel Bristol Palace** (☎ 010 59 25 41; [www.hotelbristolpalace.com](http://www.hotelbristolpalace.com); Via XX Settembre 35; s €130-300, d €160-420; 🍷 🍴 📺 📶) Under the huge portales of Via XX Settembre lies one of Genoa's fanciest pads, a belle époque masterpiece exhibiting atmospheric, airy rooms with geometric parquet flooring and original antiques (as well as mod cons). Enter the domain via a sweeping staircase with an ornamental glass roof visible at the top.

## Eating

It's practically impossible to leave town without tasting *pesto genovese* (the famous sauce that appears on menus everywhere). Other local specialities are focaccia (especially topped with cheese), *farinata* (a thin pancake made from chickpea flour), *torta pasqualina* (spinach, ricotta cheese and egg tart), *pansotti* (spinach-filled ravioli with a thick, creamy hazelnut sauce) and freshly caught seafood.

There are numerous cheap eateries around the Old Port area.

**Pizzeria di Vico dei Biscotti** (☎ 010 251 89 90; Vico dei Biscotti 4; pizzas €6-8; 🍷) This cavernous place with marine blue decor and mezzanine seating fills to the brim with locals tucking into a *quattro stagione* (four seasons) pizza and a beer or two.

**Antica Trattoria del Porto Maria** (☎ 010 246 18 45; Piazza Caricamento 22; meals €20-30; 🍷 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Fri & Sat) Classic Genoese cuisine such as seafood risotto, scampi in brandy, and pasta of all shapes and sizes doused with pesto is dished up at this atmospheric little old-port trattoria. Its green-and-white-checked tables are down a flight of steps in an old storeroom with low, vaulted ceilings.

**Mentelocale** (☎ 010 595 96 48; Palazzo Ducale, Piazza de Ferrari; meals €20-26; 🍷 restaurant lunch & dinner, cafe 8am-10pm Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri, 10am-1am Sat & Sun; 🍷) Tuna with sesame and lime, tempura prawns and red chicken curry with apples feature at this fusion restaurant inside the Palazzo Ducale. Mentelocale's salads easily constitute a meal and come in a creative range of combinations using fresh local produce. The adjacent cafe, with funky designer furnishings, is a chic spot for a drink.

**Trattoria delle Raibetta** (☎ 010 246 88 77; Vico Caprettari 10-12; meals €20-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Family-run, authentic Genoese joint in the warren of streets near the cathedral. The food here is unfussy and fish-biased. Try the seafood with *riso venere* (a local black rice) or the signature homemade *trofiette al pesto*. The octopus salad makes a good overture while the wine is a toss-up between 200 different vintages.

**I Tre Merli** (☎ 010 246 44 16; Palazzina Millo, Porto Antico; snacks €7-12, meals €20-25) Grander than some of its portside counterparts, this well-positioned restaurant is flanked by towering black-and-white-striped columns. Excellent Ligurian cuisine includes salted cod fritters, and veal stuffed with porcini mushrooms and potatoes. Otherwise, you can just have a glass of wine with wood-fired snacks such as *focaccia col formaggio* (Liguria's answer to cheese-on-toast).

**ourpick Lupo** (☎ 010 26 70 36; Via delle Monachette 20; meals €25-30; ☎ 12.30-3pm & 7.30pm-midnight) Inviting aromas of home cooking – cuttlefish in tomato sauce, ravioli in walnut sauce and homemade desserts – greet you at the door, as do owners who welcome you like they've known you forever. Lupo's wine list is outstanding, and its antiques and *objets d'art*, such as cast-iron candelabras, a grandfather clock and black-and-white photographs suspended on wire strings create a refined yet relaxed ambience.

## Drinking

The revamped Porto Antico buzzes with bars. You'll also find sophisticated new drinking spots intermingled with old-time favourites throughout the city, particularly in the streets just northwest of Piazza de Ferrari. Piazza della Erbe is clad with cafe terraces where you can linger over a coffee or something stronger.

**La Nouvelle Vague** (☎ 010 25 62 72; Vico de Gradi 4r; ☎ to 1am Sun-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) A bohemian crowd hangs out in this subterranean bookshop and bar. You can sip Italian wine while leafing through a book, or just savour the surroundings over a cocktail.

**La Madeleine Café Teatro** (☎ 010 246 53 12; Via della Maddalena 103) Live bands blast their stuff from 10pm most nights at this energetic cafetheatre-music bar.

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## TO MARKET, TO MARKET...

Shop for everything from fresh fruit and vegetables to cheese, meat and a plentiful assortment of fish at Genoa's ornate **Mercato Orientale** (covered market; entrances at Via XX Settembre 75r & Via Galata; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat). Flower stalls are grouped in front of the market hall on Via XX Settembre.

In the old town, fruit and veg stalls are set up on Piazza Banchi and Via degli Orefici, immediately east of the Mercato Orientale.

Works by local artists and second-hand books can be picked up from the open-air stalls beneath the arcades on Piazza Colombo, a pretty square at the southern foot of Via Galata. On the first Saturday and Sunday of the month from October to July, an antique market fills the interior courtyards of Palazzo Ducale.

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**ourpick Café degli Specchi** (☎ 010 246 81 93; Via Salita Pollaiuoli 43r; mains €7-10; ☎ Mon-Sat) A bit of Turin disconnected and relocated 150km to the south, this roaring-'20s, tiled art deco showpiece was (is) a favourite hang-out of the literati. You can sink your espresso at street level or disappear upstairs amid the velvet seats and mirrors for coffee, cake and an *aperitivo* (happy hour) buffet.

**Café di Barbarossa** (☎ 010 246 50 97; Piano di Sant'Andrea 21-3r; mains €10; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon, to 2.30am Tue-Fri, 5pm-2.30am Sat & Sun) A life-size statue of Elvis rocking out on his guitar greets you at the entrance of this good-time bar set in a medieval red-brick cellar below the towering 12th-century Porta Soprana. Outside there's a leafy deck.

# Entertainment

At the western end of the Porto Antico, the Magazzini del Cotone, one-time cotton warehouses, have been converted into an entertainment area with a multiplex cinema, games arcade and shops.

Tickets for cultural and sporting events are sold at box offices inside **Ricordi Mediastore** (☎ 010 54 33 31; Via alla Porta degli Archi 88-94) and **FNAC** (☎ 010 29 01 11; Via XX Settembre 58).

Take in a play or opera at **Teatro Carlo Felice** (☎ 010 5 38 11; [www.carlofelice.it](http://www.carlofelice.it), in Italian; Passo Eugenio Montale 4), Genoa's stunning four-stage opera house. Casanova trod the boards of **Teatro della Tosse** (☎ 010 247 07 93; [www.teatrodellatosse.it](http://www.teatrodellatosse.it), in Italian; Piazza Renato Negri 4), the city's oldest theatre, which dates from 1702.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Regular domestic and international services, including Ryanair flights, use **Christopher Columbus airport** (Aeroporto Internazionale di Cristoforo Colombo; GOA; ☎ 010 601 54 10; [www.airport.genova.it](http://www.airport.genova.it)), 6km west of the city, in Sestri Ponente.

### BOAT

Ferries sail to/from Spain, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Tunisia from the **international passenger terminal** (terminal traghetti; ☎ 24hr information 166 15239393; [www.porto.genova.it](http://www.porto.genova.it); Via Milano 51). Only cruise ships use the 1930s passenger ship terminal on Ponte dei Mille.

Fares listed following are for one-way, low-/high-season deck-class tickets. Ferry operators based at the international passenger terminal include the following:

**Grandi Navi Veloci** (☎ 800 466510, 010 2 54 65; [www.gnv.it](http://www.gnv.it)) Ferries to/from Sardinia (Porto Torres year-round €34/75, Olbia June to September €38/77) and year-round to/from Sicily (Palermo €70/110).

**Moby Lines** (☎ 010 254 15 13; [www.mobylines.it](http://www.mobylines.it)) Ferries year-round to/from Corsica (Bastia €17/32) and Sardinia (Olbia €35/65).

**Tirrenia** (☎ 800 824079; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it)) Ferries and high-speed boats year-round to/from Sardinia (Porto Torres €25/50, Olbia €28/38, Cagliari July to September €45), with connections to Sicily.

From June to September, **Cooperativa Battellieri del Golfo Paradiso** (☎ 018 577 20 91; [www.golfoparadiso.it](http://www.golfoparadiso.it)) operates boats from the Porto Antico to Camogli (one-way/return €10/15), Portofino (€10/15), and the Cinque Terre/Porto Venere (€20/30).

**Consorzio Liguria Via Mare** (☎ 010 26 57 12; [www.liguriaviamare.it](http://www.liguriaviamare.it)) runs a range of seasonal trips from here to Camogli, San Fruttuoso and Portofino, Monterosso in the Cinque Terre, and Porto Venere.

### BUS

Buses to international cities depart from Piazza della Vittoria, as do buses to/from Milan's Malpensa airport (€16, two hours, twice daily at 6am and 3pm) and other inter-regional services. Tickets are sold at **Geotravels** (☎ 010 59 28 37; [geotravels@statcasale.com](mailto:geotravels@statcasale.com); Piazza della Vittoria 30r) and **Pesci Viaggi e Turismo** (☎ 010 56 49 36; [pesciros@tin.it](mailto:pesciros@tin.it); Piazza della Vittoria 94r).

### TRAIN

Genoa's Stazione Principe and Stazione Brignole are linked by train to Turin (€15, 1¾ hours, seven to 10 daily), Milan (€15.50, 1½ hours, up to eight daily), Pisa (€15, two hours, up to eight daily) and Rome (€36.50, 5¼ hours, six daily). Stazione Principe tends to have more trains, particularly going west to San Remo (€13, two hours, five daily) and Ventimiglia (€15, 2¼ hours, six daily).

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**AMT** (☎ 010 5582414) line 100 runs between Stazione Principe and the airport at least every hour from 5.30am to 11pm (€4, 30 minutes). Tickets can be bought from the driver.

A taxi to or from the airport will cost around €15.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

**AMT** (☎ 800 08 53 52, 010 599 74 14; [www.amt.genova.it](http://www.amt.genova.it), in Italian) operates buses throughout the city and there is an **AMT information office** (Via d'Annunzio; ☎ 7.15am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat & Sun) at the bus terminal. Bus line 383 links Stazione Brignole with Piazza de Ferrari and Stazione Principe. A ticket valid for 90 minutes costs €1.20 (single ride €0.70) and an all-day ticket costs €3.50. Tickets can be used on main-line trains within the city limits, as well as on the new wheelchair-accessible **metro** ([www.genovametro.com](http://www.genovametro.com)), which has numerous stations across the city.

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## AROUND GENOA

### Nervi

A former fishing village engulfed by Genoa's urban sprawl, modern Nervi classifies itself as a 'resort'. Though, with plenty of ritzier Riviera competition, it's rarely top of anyone's vacation list. Its saving graces are its bounty of museums – four in total – and its 2km cliffside promenade, the Passeggiata Anita Garibaldi.

The most celebrated museum is the **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** (☎ 010 372 60 25; Via Capolungo 3; adult/child €6/5; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sun), displaying works by 19th- and 20th-century artists such as Filippo De Pisis, Arturo Martini and Rubaldo Merello.

More 19th- and early-20th-century Italian art, including Eduardo Rubino's sensual marble nude, *Il Risveglio*, is displayed at the **Raccolte Frugone** (☎ 010 32 23 96; Via Capolungo 9; adult/child €4/2.80; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun), which is housed in the Villa Grimaldi Fassio, overlooking the leafy, squirrel-filled Parchi di Nervi.

Some 18,000 items of a similar period are displayed at the **Wolfsoniana** (☎ 010 323 13 29; [www.wolfsoniana.it](http://www.wolfsoniana.it); Via Serra Gropallo 4; adult/child €5/2.80; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sun). On show are items documenting this turbulent time in Italy's history, including advertising and propaganda posters, along with architectural drawings, paintings and furnishings.

Going back earlier in time, the **Museo Giannettino Luxoro** (☎ 010 32 26 73; Via Mafalda di Savoia 3; adult/child €4/2.80; ☎ 9am-1pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) has a rich collection of 18th-century clocks, silverware, ceramics and furniture, displayed in a splendidly restored villa.

All four museums can be accessed in a combined ticket (€10) or they're included on the Genoa

## Museum Card.

On the seafront, live music is often performed at the **Chandra Bar** (☎ 010 860 36 40; Passeggiata Garibaldi 26r; meals €18-25; 🕒 3pm-2am Tue-Sat, 11.30am-2am Sun), which serves up pasta and daily specials of freshly caught fish, and occasionally spices things up with Thai and Brazilian dishes.

Nervi is 7km east of Genoa and best reached by frequent trains from Stazione Brignole and Stazione Principe (€1.20, 20 to 25 minutes).

## Pegli

Flower-filled parks make Pegli a peaceful spot to retreat from Genoa's urban tumult. Like Nervi, this former seafront village now lies within the city boundaries of Genoa; it is roughly 9km west of the centre. And, like Nervi, it has yet more museums. A combined ticket for all of the following sights costs €8.

The **Museo di Archeologia Ligure** (☎ 010 698 10 48; [www.museoarcheologicogenova.it](http://www.museoarcheologicogenova.it); Via Pallavicini 11; adult/child €4/2.80; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun), in the striking Villa Pallavicini, holds displays of locally excavated artefacts from the prehistoric through to the Roman period, as well as a collection of Egyptian antiquities.

Maritime matters are covered in the **Museo Navale** (☎ 010 696 98 85; [www.museonavale.it](http://www.museonavale.it); Villa Doria, Piazza Bonavino 7; adult/child €4/2.80; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun), with an exhibition of models, photographs and other reminders of the days of sail.

Also worth a wander is the **Parco Villa Pallavicini** (☎ 010 66 68 64; Via Pallavicini; admission €3.50; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar), with its formal lawns, lakes and glasshouse, and the neighbouring **Giardino Botanico** (☎ 010 66 68 64; admission €3.50; 🕒 9am-12.30pm Tue-Sun), home to a small collection of exotic plants.

Frequent trains from Genoa's Stazione Brignole and Stazione Principe (€1.20, 20 to 25 minutes) travel to Pegli.

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## RIVIERA DI LEVANTE

Running claustrophobically from Genoa's eastern sprawl, you're quickly apprehended by the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean fringed by some of Italy's most elite resorts, including jet-set favourite Portofino. Anything but off the beaten track, this glittering stretch of coast is hugely popular, but never tacky. Heading further east, swanky resorts battle bravely with increasingly precipitous topography. You can drop the martinis and escape the crowds on some exhilarating walks on the Portofino promontory or along the cliffs of the Unesco-protected Cinque Terre.

## Camogli

**pop 5750**

This still-colourful fishing village, located 25km east of Genoa, has trompe l'œil decorating the alleys and cobbled streets, beneath a canopy of umbrella pines and voluptuous olive groves.

Camogli's name means 'house of wives', hailing from the days when the women ran the village while their husbands were at sea. Fishing traditions continue here, especially during the second weekend in May when fishermen celebrate the **Sagra del Pesce** (Fish Festival) with a big fry-up – hundreds of fish are cooked in 3m-wide pans along the busy waterfront.



From the main esplanade, Via Garibaldi, boats sail to the **Punta Chiappa**, a rocky outcrop on the Portofino promontory where you can swim and sunbathe. The **tourist office** (☎ 0185 77 10 66; [www.camogli.it](http://www.camogli.it), in Italian; Via XX Settembre 33; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) has a list of diving schools and boat-rental operators.

If you'd like to stay overnight, the 16th-century villa **Hotel Cenobio dei Dogi** (☎ 0185 72 41; [www.cenobio.com](http://www.cenobio.com); Via Cuneo 34; s €111-155, d €153-208; ♿ ☎ ☎) has more than 100 refined rooms yet still manages to feel intimate.

Delve down the lanes away from the water to escape the lunchtime crowd and search for some of the town's extra-crunchy focaccia.

**ATP Tigullio** (☎ 0185 28 88 34) runs buses to/from Rapallo and Santa Margherita at least every hour, leaving from the bus stop just past the tourist office on Via XX Settembre.

Camogli (€2.40, 40 minutes, hourly) is on the Genoa—La Spezia train line.

The Cooperativa Battellieri del **Golfo Paradiso** runs boats year-round to and from Punta Chiappa (one-way/return €5/7.50) and San Fruttuoso (€7/10); and boats between June and September to Genoa's Porto Antico (€10/15), Portofino (€9/15), and the Cinque Terre and Porto Venere (€18/25).

## San Fruttuoso

The yin to Portofino's yang, San Fruttuoso is a slice of ancient tranquillity preserved amid some of Italy's ritziest coastal resorts. There are no roads here – thank heavens! Access is either by boat or on foot.

The hamlet's extraordinary Benedictine **abbey** (Abbazia di San Fruttuoso di Capodimonte; ☎ 0185 77 27 03; adult/child €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, to 4pm Mar, Apr & Oct, also to 4pm public holidays & day prior to public holidays only Dec-Feb) was built as a final resting place for Bishop St Fructuosus of Tarragona (martyred in Spain in AD 259). It was rebuilt in the mid-13th century with the assistance of the Doria family. The abbey fell into decay with the decline of the religious community, and in the 19th century it was divided into small living quarters by local fishermen.

In 1954 a bronze **statue** of Christ was lowered 15m to the seabed, offshore from the abbey, to bless the waters. Dive to see it or view it from a boat if the waters are calm – the Cooperativa Battellieri del Golfo Paradiso, [Click here](#), can provide details. Replicas were lowered in St George's harbour, Grenada, in 1961, and off Key Largo in Florida in 1966.

San Fruttuoso's isolation is maintained by its lack of road access. You can walk in on foot from Camogli (a tricky, rocky hike with metal hand supports) or Portofino, a steep but easier 5km-long cliffside walk. Both hikes take about 2½ hours one-way. Alternatively you can catch a boat from Camogli or Punta Chiappa (one-way/return €5/6.50).

## Portofino

### pop 550

A byword for refined luxury, stately Portofino is beyond the wallet-stretching capabilities of most budget-minded travellers. That's not to say you can't linger over an expensive cappuccino next to its yacht-filled harbour logging the ubiquity of Gucci handbags and Prada sunglasses.

Backed by shapely cypress trees and characterised by an extravagant array of pastel-shaded villas, Portofino sits on a small promontory of protected land that juts out into the azure Mediterranean. Unbeknownst to the plethora of soft-top-sports-car drivers who zoom in via the sinuous road from Santa

Margherita, the promontory is criss-crossed with copious trails, many of them surprisingly remote and all of them refreshingly free.

## INFORMATION

Portofino's **tourist office** (☎ 0185 26 90 24; [www.apptigullio.liguria.it](http://www.apptigullio.liguria.it); Via Roma 35; ☹ 10am-1pm & 1.30-4.30pm Tue-Sun) has free trail maps for the Parco Naturale Regionale di Portofino (opposite) and information on mountain-bike rental, as well as seasonal sail and motorboat rental.

## SIGHTS

From the sublime harbour, a flight of stairs signposted 'Salita San Giorgio' leads past the **Chiesa di San Giorgio to Castello Brown** (☎ 0185 26 71 01; [www.portofinoevents.com](http://www.portofinoevents.com); Via alla Penisola 13a; adult/child €3.50/free; ☹ vary), a 10-minute walk altogether (confirm the opening times with the tourist office prior to setting out, as the castle often hosts private events). The Genoese-built castle saw action against the Venetians, Savoyards, Sardinians and Austrians and later fell to Napoleon. In 1867 it was transformed by the British diplomat Montague Yeats Brown into a private mansion. The fabulous tiled staircase is one of the showpieces of the neo-Gothic interior, while there are great views from the garden. For a better outlook continue for another 300m or so along the same track to the **lighthouse**.

Heading 2km north along the coastal road is the **Abbazia della Cervara** (Abbazia di San Girolamo; ☎ 800 652110; [www.cervara.it](http://www.cervara.it); Lungomare Rossetti, Via Cervara 10; ☹ guided tours by reservation), built in 1361 and surrounded by formal gardens. Over the centuries, the abbey has hosted Benedictine monks, three popes and a saint (Catherine of Siena), and the French king, François I, who spent a less convivial time here as a prisoner after the 1525 Battle of Pavia. Tours take in the gardens, 15th-century chapterhouse, 16th-century cloister and the Saracen Tower.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Portofino favours Serie A footballers and lottery winners, though the average traveller can usually rustle up sufficient cash (€5) for a harbourside cappuccino. The least expensive accommodation options include **Eden** (☎ 0185 26 90 91; [www.hoteledenportofino.com](http://www.hoteledenportofino.com); Vico Dritto 18; d €140-270; ☹ ☹), on a quiet cobbled side street not far from the harbour front; and **Hotel Argentina** (☎ 0185 28 67 08; [www.argentinaportofino.it](http://www.argentinaportofino.it); Via Paraggi a Monte 56; d from €160; ☹ ☹) on the coast road towards Santa Margherita. Both are intrinsically posh without being too pretentious. If you're intent on blowing your life's savings, check into **Hotel Splendido** ([www.splendido.orient-express.com](http://www.splendido.orient-express.com); Salita Baratta 16) and follow in the footsteps of the Duke of Windsor, Frank Sinatra and countless other zillionaires.

Fashionable eateries overlook the port; **Magazin** (☎ 0185 26 91 78; Calata Marconi 34; meals €28-35; ☹ Fri-Wed), decked out like the cabin of a boat, serves authentic Ligurian luxuries. **Caffè Excelsior** (☎ 0185 26 90 05; Piazza Martiri dell'Olivetta 54; meals €30) is another good perch with romantic outdoor booths – where Greta Garbo used to hide behind dark glasses – serving up octopuses and prawns.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

Regular buses run between Portofino and Santa Margherita (see opposite for details) but by far the best way is to walk. A designated path tracks the gorgeous coastline for 3km.

From April to October, Servizio Marittimo del Tigullio (opposite) runs daily ferries from Portofino to/from San Fruttuoso (€7.50/10.50), Rapallo (€7/10.50) and Santa Margherita (€5.50/8.50).

Motorists must park at the village entrance with obligatory parking fees starting from €4.50 per hour (cash only).

# Santa Margherita

**pop 10,600**

Elegant hotels with Liberty facades overlook million-dollar yachts in this fishing-village-turned-wealthy-retirement-spot that looks like a museum to art nouveau. The good news is you don't have to be a millionaire to stay here.

## INFORMATION

The **tourist office** (☎ 0185 28 74 85; [www.apptigullio.liguria.it](http://www.apptigullio.liguria.it); Via XXV Aprile 2b; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat) has a raft of information about water sports along the gulf.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Santa Margherita's idyllic position in a sheltered bay on the turquoise Golfo di Tigullio makes it a good base for **sailing**, **water-skiing** and **scuba diving**. Those feeling less active can simply stretch out on its popular **beach**.

Pop into the headquarters of the **Parco Naturale Regionale di Portofino** (☎ 0185 28 94 79; [www.parks.it/parco.portofino](http://www.parks.it/parco.portofino); Viale Rainusso 1) to pick up maps and information on **walking**. Alternatively, you can take an aromatic stroll among lemon trees, hydrangea and camellia hedges, and other flora typical of Santa Margherita's hot climate, in the lavish gardens surrounding the 17th-century **Villa Durazzo** (☎ 0185 29 31 35; entrances at Piazzale San Giacomo 3, Via San Francesco d'Assisi 3 & Via Principe Centurione; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mar-Oct, 9.40am-4.30pm Nov-Feb), a favourite wedding spot.

## SLEEPING

**Fasce** (☎ 0185 28 64 35; [www.hotelfasce.it](http://www.hotelfasce.it); Via Luigi Bozzo 3; s/d €98/108; ☎ ☑) This is one of Santa Margherita's cheaper options, with a rooftop sun deck, 16 decent-size rooms (though bathrooms are teensy) and a limited breakfast. Parking costs an extra €18.

**Lido Palace Hotel** (☎ 0185 28 58 21; [www.lidopalacehotel.com](http://www.lidopalacehotel.com); Via Doria 3; s €105-187, d €130-210; ☎ ☎) Right on the waterfront in the centre of town, this Liberty-style grande dame offers the quintessential Santa Margherita experience. Rooms are generously proportioned, the breakfast buffet is bountiful. The restaurant has an outdoor terrace with elevated views and there are half- and full-board options.

## EATING & DRINKING

**Trattoria dei Pescatori** (☎ 0185 28 67 47; Via Bottaro 43-44; meals around €35; ☎ Wed-Mon Sep-Jun, daily Jul & Aug) *Moscardini affogati* (spicy stewed baby octopus) is the summertime speciality of Santa Margherita's first-ever restaurant, opened in 1910. Autumn brings wild mushrooms to the table, while year-round Pescatori serves a delicious regional fish soup, oven-baked fish with olives and pine nuts, and handmade pastas in all shapes and sizes.

**our pick Bar Colombo** (☎ 0185 28 70 58; Via Pescino 13; ☎ until late Tue-Sun) A celebration of art nouveau, this resplendent coffee bar—restaurant on the seafront is the former hang-out of silver-screen stars such as Burton and Taylor.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

**ATP Tigullio Trasporti** (☎ 0185 28 88 34; [www.tigulliotrasporti.it](http://www.tigulliotrasporti.it), in Italian) runs buses to/from Portofino (every 20 minutes) and Camogli (every 30 minutes).

By train, there are hourly services to/from Genoa (€2.40, 35 minutes) and La Spezia (€4.40, 1½ hours).

**Servizio Marittimo del Tigullio** (☎ 0185 28 46 70; [www.traghettiportofino.it](http://www.traghettiportofino.it); Via Palestro 8/1b) runs seasonal ferries to/from Cinque Terre (one-way/return €17/24.50), Porto Venere (€21/32), San Fruttuoso (€9.50/14.50), Portofino (€5.50/8.50) and Rapallo (€3.50/4.50).

## Rapallo

**pop 30,300**

WB Yeats, Max Beerbohm and Ezra Pound all garnered inspiration in Rapallo and it's not difficult to see why. With its bright blue changing cabins, palm-fringed beach and diminutive 16th-century castle perched above the sea (hosting temporary art exhibitions), the town has a refined and nostalgic air. That's not to say it isn't friendly. Rapallo's compactness gives it a less elite atmosphere than its jet-set neighbours. It's at its busiest on Thursdays, when colourful market stalls fill central Piazza Cile.

Since 1934 a **cable car** (☎ 0185 5 23 41; Piazzale Solari 2; one-way/return €5.50/7.75; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm) has threaded its way up to **Santuario Basilica di Montallegro** (612m), a sanctuary built on the spot where, on 2 July 1557, the Virgin Mary was reportedly sighted. Walkers and mountain bikers can follow an old mule track (5km, 1½ hours) to the hilltop site. The **tourist office** (☎ 0185 23 03 46; [www.apptigullio.liguria.it](http://www.apptigullio.liguria.it); Lungo Vittorio Veneto 7; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat) has details of other walks in the area and stocks walking maps.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Hotel Miro** (☎ 0185 23 41 00; [www.hotelmiro.net](http://www.hotelmiro.net); Lungomare Vittorio Veneto 32; s €70-125, d €90-145; 🍷 🍷) Right on the seafront, this charming boutique hotel is ensconced in a 19th-century town house, and has retained much of its historical character, with canopied beds and floral-print wallpaper. Ask about horse-riding lessons and boat rental, which can be booked through the hotel.

**Hotel L'Approdo** (☎ 0185 23 45 45; [www.approdohotel.it](http://www.approdohotel.it); Via San Michele di Pagana 160; d €98-156; 🍷) Set on the hillside, L'Approdo has some great sea views, but if you're willing to forego them and look out onto the garden instead you can negotiate a lower rate. Rooms are shiny and modern, and some are wheelchair accessible. Parking (€10 per day) needs to be booked ahead.

Behind rows of parked scooters, the waterfront has plenty of places to eat, drink and snack.

Handmade pastas at **Antica Cucina Genovese** (☎ 0185 20 60 36; Via Santa Maria del Campo 133; meals €18-30; 🕒 Tue-Sun; 🍷) include a huge variety of designated vegetarian options such as chestnut ravioli with pesto, as well as vegan fare such as potato and mushroom stew. The open kitchen also prepares meat and fish dishes, and there's a great range of Ligurian wines.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Trains run along the coast to Genoa (€2.40, 40 minutes) and La Spezia (€4.40, one hour).

Servizio Marittimo del **Tigullio** runs boats to/from Santa Margherita (one-way/return €3.50/4.50), Portofino (€7/10.50), San Fruttuoso (€10/15.50), Genoa (€13.50/19), the Cinque Terre (€17/24.50) and Porto Venere (€21/32). Not all operate daily, and many are seasonal – the website posts updated schedules.

## Chiavari to Levanto

The stretch of coast between the Portofino promontory and the Cinque Terre has some of the Riviera di Levante's best beaches, but the area's rash of resorts gets jam-packed in summer.

Inland from Chiavari (which is located 12km east of Santa Margherita) you can lose the crowds and breathe fresh mountain air in the **Parco Naturale Regionale dell'Aveto** (☎ park office 0185 34 03 11; [www.parks.it/parco.aveto](http://www.parks.it/parco.aveto); Via Marrè 75a, Borzonasca; ☎ 2.30-5.30pm Thu & Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat & Sun), a nature reserve at the northern end of the **Val d'Aveto**. The tranquil valley starts 12km north of the coast in **Borzonasca**.

Heading north, **Santo Stefano d'Aveto** (population 1280) is a small cross-country skiing centre and the main village in the valley. Between the two is **Lago delle Lame**, a glacial lake whose shallow waters have preserved fir-tree stumps from 2500 years ago.

## Cinque Terre

A film director aiming to shoot an authentic period drama set in 17th-century Italy need look no further than Cinque Terre. Bar an overabundance of ogling tourists and a busy 19th-century railway line that burrows through a series of coastal tunnels, barely anything about these five crazily constructed Ligurian villages has changed in over three centuries. Even cars – those most ubiquitous of modern interferences – are missing, thanks to a 1997 Unesco ban.

Rooted in antiquity, Cinque Terre's five towns date from the early medieval period. Monterosso, the oldest, was founded in AD 643 when beleaguered hill dwellers moved down to the coast to escape from invading barbarians. Riomaggiore, the next oldest, was purportedly established in the 8th century by Greek settlers fleeing persecution in Byzantium. Much of what remains in the towns today dates from the late Middle Ages, including several castles and a quintet of architecturally eclectic parish churches.

Buildings aside, Cinque Terre's most unique historical feature is the steeply terraced cliffs bisected by a complicated system of fields and gardens that has been hacked, chiselled, shaped and layered over the course of nearly two millennia. So marked are these man-made contours that some scholars have compared the extensive *muretti* (low stone walls), to the Great Wall of China in their grandeur and scope.

Inseparable from the sea, the history of Cinque Terre is also intrinsically linked to the story of the Italian kitchen. Aside from the ubiquitous prawns, octopuses and anchovies, numerous land-reared products are also nurtured on these lovingly farmed cliff terraces. Notable gastronomic gifts that have originated in Cinque Terre include focaccia bread, pesto sauce and the celebrated Sciacchetra white dessert wine.

Hugging the coast, the 12km Sentiero Azzurro (Blue Trail) consists of a one-time mule path that linked all five oceanside villages by foot. Today's protected trail dates back to the early days of the Republic of Genoa in the 12th and 13th centuries and, until the opening of the railway line in 1874, it was the most practical means of getting from village to village. For thousands of visitors, it still is.

## INFORMATION

Online information is available at [www.cinqueterre.it](http://www.cinqueterre.it) and [www.cinqueterre.com](http://www.cinqueterre.com).

**Parco Nazionale offices** ([www.parconazionale5terre.it](http://www.parconazionale5terre.it), in Italian; Corniglia ☎ 0187 81 25 23; ☎ 7am-8pm; La Spezia ☎ 0187 74 35 00; internet access per 10min €0.80; ☎ 7am-8pm; Manarola (☎ 0187 76 05 11; ☎ 7am-8pm; Monterosso ☎ 0187 81 70 59; ☎ 7am-8pm; Riomaggiore ☎ 0187 92 06 33;; Piazza Rio Finale 26; internet access per 10min €0.80; ☎ 6.30am-8pm Oct-May, to 10pm Jun-Sep; Vernazza ☎ 0187 81 25 33; ☎ 7am-8pm) The Riomaggiore office is the main office for the park, located outside Riomaggiore train station.

## MONTEROSSO

## pop 1580

The most accessible village by car and the only Cinque Terre settlement to sport a tourist **beach**, Monterosso is the furthest west and least quintessential of the quintet (it was briefly ditched from the group in the 1940s). Noted for its lemon trees, the village's old and new quarters are linked by an underground tunnel.

Footsteps from the sea, **Carla** (☎ 0187 82 90 39; Via IV Novembre 75; d €60-70) has charming *affittacamere* (rooms for rent). Monterosso also has a handful of hotels, including good value for money at the four-star **Hotel Palme** (☎ 0187 82 90 13; [www.hotelpalme.it](http://www.hotelpalme.it); Via IV Novembre 18; d from €140; ☎ Apr-Oct; 📍 📺), where you can laze in the palm-filled gardens.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

Easily the best way to get around the Cinque Terre is with a **Cinque Terre card**.

Two versions of the card are available: with or without train travel. Both include unlimited use of walking paths (which otherwise cost €5) and electric village buses, as well as the elevator in Riomaggiore and cultural exhibitions. Without train travel, a basic one-two-/three-/seven-day card for everyone over the age of four costs €5/8/10/20. A card that also includes unlimited train trips between the towns costs €8.50/14.70/19.50/36.50.

Both versions of the card are sold at all Cinque Terre park information offices.

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Along the seafront, restaurants dish up local anchovies straight out of the sea, served fried, raw with lemon juice, pickled in brine or in a *tian* (baked with potatoes and tomatoes). To wash them down, stop in at one of several wine bars throughout the village.

To pack an authentic Ligurian beach picnic, head to **Focacceria Enoteca Antonia** (☎ 0187 82 90 39; Via Fegina 124; focaccia per slice around €2.20; ☎ 9am-8pm Fri-Wed Mar-Oct) where Paola and her husband Giuseppe make 15 kinds of piping-hot focaccia from scratch and also stock well-priced local wines.

## VERNAZZA

### pop 1100

Guarding the only secure landing point on the Cinque Terre coast, Vernazza is the quaintest of the five villages. Its tiny harbour is framed by the 1318-built **Chiesa di Santa Margherita**, while the ruins of an 11th-century castle look out to sea.

Lined with little cafes, Vernazza's main cobbled street, Via Roma, links seaside Piazza Marconi with the train station.

To spend a romantic night here try **L'Eremo sul Mare** (☎ 339 268 56 17; Via Gerai; d €90; ☎ mid-Mar—mid-Oct; 📍), a charming cliffside villa with just three rooms and a lovely sun terrace, a 10-minute hike up the hillside.

Traditional Cinque Terre seafood is served up at **Trattoria Gianni Franzi** (☎ 0187 82 10 03; Piazza Matteotti 5; meals €22-30; ☎ mid-Mar-early Jan); and in the cosy stone-and-wood dining rooms of **Trattoria da Sandro** (☎ 0187 81 22 23; Via Roma 69; meals €20), whose specialities include baked stuffed mussels, and swordfish with tomatoes, capers, olives and pine nuts.

## CORNIGLIA

## pop 600

Corniglia, the middle village, sits atop a rocky promontory surrounded by vineyards and is the only Cinque Terre settlement with no direct sea access. Narrow alleys and colourfully painted four-storey houses characterise the ancient core, a timeless streetscape that was namechecked in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

The best panoramas unfold from **La Torre**, a medieval lookout reached by narrow lanes and stairways. From Corniglia's central square, Via Fieschi leads through the village heart to **Belvedere Santa Maria**, another lookout with sweeping sea views.

If you're stopping for the night, **Dai Fera'** (☎ 0187 81 23 23; Via alla Marina 39; d €60-80) offers clean and simple rooms close to the seafront.

As elsewhere in the Cinque Terre, fish is the mainstay of Corniglia's restaurants – you can't go wrong by asking for whatever's fresh.

## MANAROLA

### pop 850

Bequeathed with more grapevines than any other Cinque Terre village, Manarola is famous for its Sciacchetra wine and awash with priceless medieval relics supporting claims that it is the oldest of the five. Despite its proximity to Riomaggiore, the village remains unhurried and distinct, with locals speaking a local dialect known as Manarolese.

At the northern end of Via Discovolo, you'll come upon **Piazzale Papa Innocenzo IV**, dominated by a bell tower used as a defensive lookout. Opposite, the **Chiesa di San Lorenzo** dates from 1338 and houses a 15th-century polyptych. If you're geared up for a steep walk, from nearby Via Rollandi you can follow a path that leads through vineyards to the top of the mountain.

The Cinque Terre's only hostel, **Ostello 5 Terre** (☎ 0187 92 02 15; [www.cinqueterre.net/ostello](http://www.cinqueterre.net/ostello); Via Riccobaldi 21; dm €20-23, d €55-65; 📧 reception 7am-1pm, 4pm-midnight Feb-Jun & Sep-Nov, 7am-1pm & 5pm-1am Jun-Aug, hostel open Mar-Dec; 🚰), rents out mountain bikes, kayaks, Nordic walking poles and snorkelling gear. Its single-sex, six-bed dorms come with their own bathrooms, and there's English-language satellite TV, Playstation and a book exchange. Lockout times are 10am to 4pm, or 5pm (June to August).

A shoal of fish dishes and the house speciality *zuppa di datteri* (date soup) are served up at **Marina Piccola** (☎ 0187 92 01 03; [www.hotelinapiccola.com](http://www.hotelinapiccola.com); Via Lo Scalo 16; s/d from €87/115, meals €22-30) along with sea views. If you want to stay, the 'little marina' has good deals for half- and full-board.

## RIOMAGGIORE

### pop 1800

Cinque Terre's easternmost village, Riomaggiore, is the largest of the five, and acts as its unofficial HQ (the main park office is based here). Its peeling pastel buildings tumble like faded chocolate boxes down a steep ravine to a tiny harbour – the region's favourite postcard view – and glow romantically at sunset. The famous Sentiero Azzurro coastal path starts here.

Outside the train station near the water's edge, **murals** depict the backbreaking work of Cinque Terre farmers who, over the centuries, built the Cinque Terre with their bare hands.

Bird life and local flora can be seen from the **Torre Guardiola** (☎ 0187 76 00 52; admission free; 📧 9am-1pm Aug, 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Feb-Jul, Sep & Oct), a nature observation and bird-watching centre located on **Fossola Beach**, immediately southeast of Riomaggiore marina. From the centre a botanical

walking trail leads along the coast. To dive or snorkel in the translucent waters, contact **Cooperative Sub 5 Terre** (☎ 0187 92 05 96; Via San Giacomo; ☹ vary seasonally), which also rents canoes and kayaks.

B&Bs and a handful of hotels are situated in the village, as well as room and apartment rental agencies such as **Edi** (☎ 0187 92 03 25; Via Colombo 111) and **La Dolce Vita** (☎ 0187 76 00 44; Via Colombo 120). Some of the cheapest harbourside rooms are with **La Casa di Venere** (☎ 349 075 31 40; [www.lacasadivenere.com](http://www.lacasadivenere.com); Via Sant'Antonio 114; s without bathroom €30-50, d without bathroom €40-60, d with bathroom €50-70), just off the upper stretch of the main street.

Places to eat and drink line arterial Via Colombo including **Bar Centrale** (☎ 0187 76 00 75; Via Colombo 144; snacks from €5; ☹ 7.30am-midnight), the liveliest late-night and early-morning spot, and **La Lampara** (☎ 0187 92 01 20; Via Malborghetto 2; meals €25; ☹ 7am-midnight), with pizza and pasta *al pesto*.

**La Lanterna** (☎ 0187 92 05 89; Via San Giacomo, Loc Marina; meals €25-33) is perched within pebble-lobbing distance of Riomaggiore's snug harbour that's crammed with fishing nets and overturned boats. You can sit on the charming terrace and choose from recently caught fish chalked up on a blackboard. Leave room for a dessert, such as *babà al limoncello* (brioche drenched in sweet lemon-scented liqueur). Across the laneway, local wine is served by the glass at **Dau Cila** (☎ 0187 76 00 32; Via San Giacomo, Loc Marina; wine & snacks €10; ☹ 8am-2am Mar-Oct), accompanied by cold plates such as smoked tuna with apples and lemon or lemon-marinated anchovies with pears and parmesan. To reach the harbour, follow the flight of steps leading down from the south end of Via Colombo.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

### Boat

In summer Cooperativa Battellieri del [Golfo Paradiso](#) runs boats to the Cinque Terre from Genoa.

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## CINQUE TERRE WALKS

There's a reason why the **Sentiero Azzurro** is one of Italy's most crowded trails, and one of the few you have to pay to enter. Arguably the most drop-dead-gorgeous coastal hike in the country, the route follows an ancient network of walking paths that has linked the five Cinque Terre villages for over a millennium. Studded with panoramic vistas, it traverses windswept olive groves and seemingly impregnable vineyards, dipping serendipitously into each of the flavourful maritime villages where a bundle of historical distractions can quickly turn this moderate 12km hike into an elongated all-day marathon.

Far from flat, the Azzurro is a narrow, precipitous hike, though people of all shapes and sizes complete it every day. The most popular direction of traffic is east—west, beginning in Riomaggiore and finishing in Monterosso, starting on the famed Via dell'Amore. If you're not up to going the full distance, try hiking as far as the middle village, Corniglia, and getting a train back.

Just a few kilometres shy of a full-blown marathon, the 38km **Sentiero Rosso** – which runs from Porto Venere to Levanto – dangles a tempting challenge to energetic hikers who aim to complete it in nine to 12 hours. It's an accomplishment you won't forget, especially when you hit the swanky beach resort of Levanto and settle down for that long-dreamt-about gelato and/or glass of cold beer.

The other benefit is (relative) solitude. For every 100 people you see on the Sentiero Azzurro, there are less than a dozen up here plying their way along a route that is mainly flat, tree-covered and punctuated with plenty of shortcuts. An early start is assured by an efficient train and bus connection



to Porto Venere (via La Spezia), while refreshments en route are possible in a liberal smattering of welcoming bars and restaurants.

Labelled as Trail No 1 on maps, the Sentiero Rosso is well signposted throughout, making it difficult to get lost.

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Seasonal boat services to/from Santa Margherita (one-way/return €14/24.50) are handled by Servizio Marittimo del [Tigullio](#).

From late March to October, La Spezia—based Consorzio Marittimo Turistico Cinque Terre Golfo dei [Poeti](#) runs daily shuttle boats between all of the Cinque Terre villages, except Corniglia, costing €16 one-way including all stops, €21 return on weekdays and €23 on weekends.

## Car & Motorcycle

Private vehicles are not allowed beyond village entrances. If you're arriving by car or motorcycle, you'll need to pay to park in designated car parks (€2.30 per hour or €19 per 24 hours). Getting from the car parks to the villages involves a steep hike of 1km or more, although in some villages, minibus shuttles depart from the car parks (one-way/return €1.50/2.50) – park offices have seasonal schedules.

## Train

Between 6.30am and 10pm, one to three trains an hour trundle along the coast between Genoa and La Spezia, stopping at each of the Cinque Terre's villages. Unlimited 2nd-class rail travel between Levanto and La Spezia is covered by the Cinque Terre Treno Card (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

## La Spezia

**pop 94,200**

To nonresidents, the hardworking port town of La Spezia is little more than a gateway to Cinque Terre. But, though not as attractive as its famous Unesco-honoured neighbour, Italy's largest naval base has its architectural merits. Echoes of Genoa ring through the narrow winding streets of the Old Town capped by the medieval Castello di San Giorgio and demarcated by pedestrianised Via Prione. In keeping with lip-smacking northwestern gastronomy, there's a handful of slow-food restaurants scattered around the main drag along with a small network of cosy trattorias showcasing the standard Ligurian delicacies of wine, bread and pesto sauce.

La Spezia's bustle peaks on 19 March, the **feast day** of the city's patron saint, San Giuseppe (St Joseph). Celebrations see a giant market fill the port and surrounding streets, and the naval base (off-limits the rest of the year) opens to the public for the day.

## INFORMATION

**Cinque Terre Park Office** (☎ 0187 74 35 00; internet access per 10min €0.80; 🕒 7am-8pm) Inside La Spezia's train station. [Click here](#) for other park offices.

**Police station** (☎ 0187 56 71; Viale Italia 497) East of the centre.

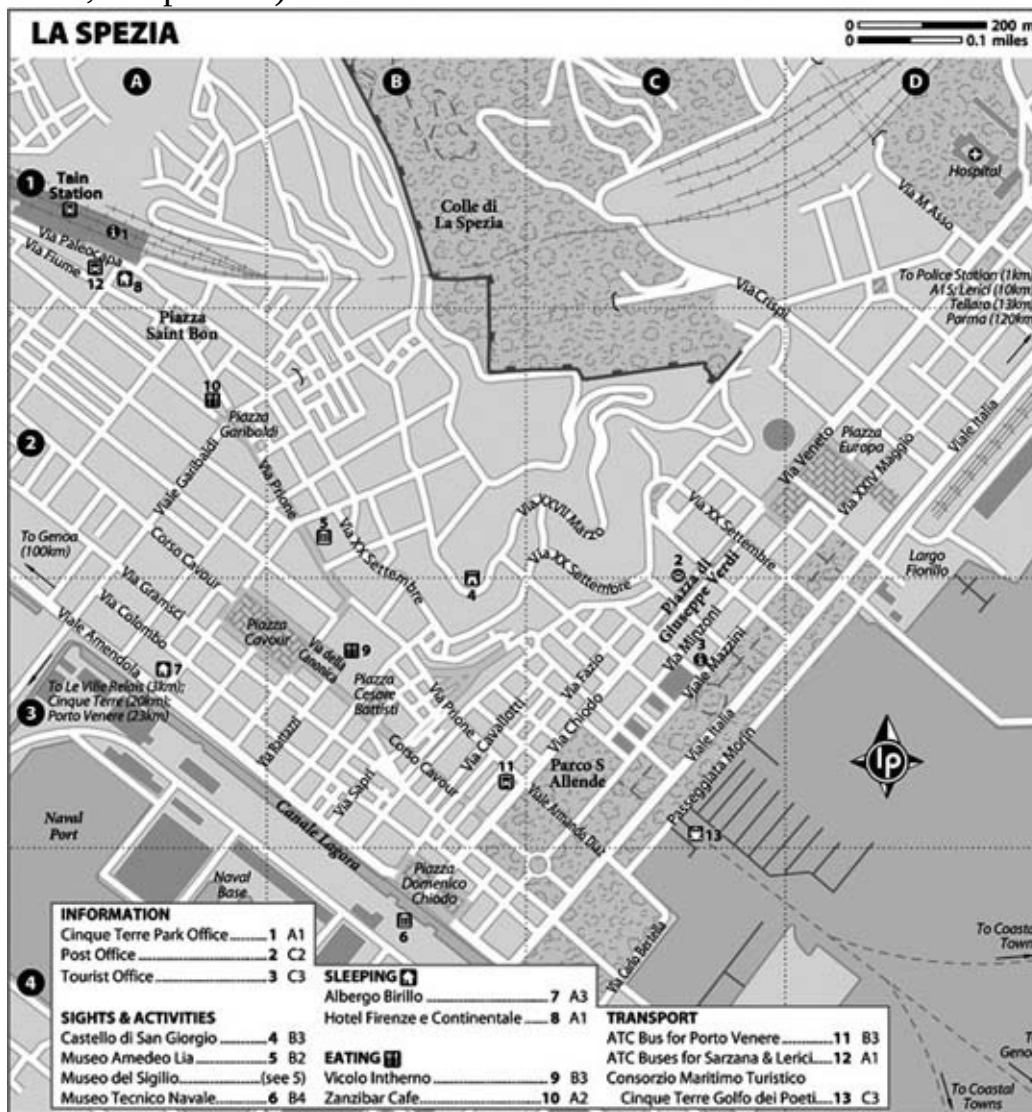
**Post office** (☎ 0187 79 61; Piazza Giuseppe Verdi; 🕒 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0187 25 43 11; [www.aptcinqueterre.sp.it](http://www.aptcinqueterre.sp.it); Viale Giuseppe Mazzini 47; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun)

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

La Spezia's star attraction is the **Museo Amedeo Lia** (☎ 0187 73 11 00; [www.castagna.it/mal](http://www.castagna.it/mal); Via Prione 234; adult/child €6/3; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), a fine-arts museum in a restored 17th-century friary. The collection covers the 13th to 18th centuries and includes paintings by masters such as Tintoretto, Montagna, Titian and Pietro Lorenzetti. Also on show are Roman bronzes and ecclesiastical treasures such as Limoges crucifixes and illuminated musical manuscripts. Next door, pop into the **Museo del Sigillo** (☎ 0187 77 85 44; Via Prione 236; admission €3; 🕒 4-7pm Tue, 10am-noon & 4-7pm Wed-Sun) to see some 1500 seals dating from the 4th millennium BC to the present day.

Other highlights on La Spezia's museum circuit include an assortment of local archaeological artefacts from prehistoric to medieval times at the **Castello di San Giorgio** (☎ 0187 75 11 42; [www.castagna.it/sangiorgio](http://www.castagna.it/sangiorgio); Via XXVII Marzo; adult/child €5/4; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Wed-Mon May & Sep-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 5-8pm Wed-Mon Jun-Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Nov-Apr), and model ships and *polene* (statuettes that graced the prows of vessels) at the 1870-founded naval museum, **Museo Tecnico Navale** (Naval Museum; ☎ 0187 78 30 16; Viale Amendola 1; admission €1.55; 🕒 8am-6.45pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun).



Contact La Spezia-based dive organisation **CNA** (☎ 347 490 90 66; [www.consorzioliguriadiving.it](http://www.consorzioliguriadiving.it), in Italian) for a list of dive operators in the gulf.

## SLEEPING & EATING

There are a number of cheap hotels around the train station, but many tend to be scruffy. The waterfront has plenty of relaxed places to wine and dine.

**Albergo Birillo** (☎ 0187 73 26 66; Via Dei Mille 11/13; s €30-50, d €55-75) A homey haven where

rather tight-fitting rooms are made up for by the ultrafriendly owners who'll fill you in on the town's hidden attractions and even offer you a lift to the station. Situated a few blocks from Via Prione and near plenty of good eateries, it makes an economical alternative to digs in Cinque Terre.

**Hotel Firenze e Continentale** (☎ 0187 71 32 00; [www.hotelfirenzecontinentale.it](http://www.hotelfirenzecontinentale.it); Via Paleocapa 7; s €50-94, d €68-134; 🏠) Retaining some of its early-1900s atmosphere, with high ceilings, heavy drapes and wall-mounted lamps in many rooms, the three-star Florence is one of the best options near the train station.

**Le Ville Relais** (☎ 0187 73 52 99; [www.levillereais.it](http://www.levillereais.it); Salita al Piano 18/19; s €80-100, d €100-120; 🏠 📶 🚰 🚰) In a rarefied hillside location 3km from the city centre, this chic new villa has sublime views over the Gulf of Poets, with eye-level views from the swimming pool. Light, airy rooms have sophisticated beachy furnishings and free broadband. In addition to the homemade cakes served at breakfast, a new on-site restaurant is due to open by the time you're reading this.

**Vicolo Intherno** (☎ 0187 2 39 98; Via della Canonica 22; meals around €20; 🕒 Tue-Sat) Take a seat around chunky wooden tables beneath beamed ceilings at this Slow Fish—affiliated restaurant and wash down the *torte di verdure* (Ligurian vegetable pie) or stockfish with local vintages.

**Zanzibar Cafe** (☎ 334 804 59 41; Via Prione 289; snacks €5-10; 🕒 6.30am-8.30pm Tue-Thu, till 1am Fri & Sat) Via Prione is full of cafes and eateries. Toss a coin and you might end up at the rarely empty Zanzibar, where zebra-striped seats and mood lighting suggest delusions of trendiness. Wear your best sunglasses and sit down for frappé, antipasti, *panini* and desserts.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses run by **Azienda Trasporti Consortile** (ATC; ☎ 800 322322; [www.atclaspezia.it](http://www.atclaspezia.it), in Italian) are the only way to reach nearby towns, including Porto Venere (€1.45, approximately every 30 minutes) from Via Domenico Chiodo, Lerici (€1.45, approximately every 15 minutes) and Sarzana (€1.60, two or three daily), both from the train station. Fewer buses operate on Sunday.

La Spezia is on the Genoa—Rome railway line and is also connected to Milan (€21, three hours, four daily), Turin (€24, three hours, several daily) and Pisa (€5, 50 minutes, almost hourly). The Cinque Terre and other coastal towns are easily accessible by train – [Click here](#).

**Consorzio Maritimo Turistico Cinque Terre Golfo dei Poeti** (☎ 0187 96 76 76; [www.navigazionegolfodeipoeti.it](http://www.navigazionegolfodeipoeti.it); Passeggiata Constantino Morin) runs boat services to Genoa and Lerici, as well as coastal towns including all Cinque Terre towns except Camogli.

## Porto Venere

### pop 4000

Perched on the Gulf of Poets' western promontory, Porto Venere has a riddle of little lanes and staircases, a petite harbour and no small amount of history. The Romans built Portus Veneris as a base en route from Gaul to Spain, and in later years, Byzantines, Lombards, the Genovese and Napoleon all passed through here. Cinque Terre's marathon-length Red Trail to Levanto starts here, just behind the castle. Hikers, take a deep breath...

The **tourist office** (☎ 0187 79 06 91; [www.portovenere.it](http://www.portovenere.it); Piazza Bastreri 7; 🕒 10am-noon & 3-6pm Thu-Tue Sep-May, 10am-noon & 3-8pm daily Jun-Aug) sells a couple of useful maps and walking guides in English. Outside the hectic summer season, Porto Venere is something of a ghost town.

## SIGHTS

From the waterfront, narrow steps and cobbled paths lead uphill to the **Chiesa di San Lorenzo**, built in 1130. In the church's shadow is the 16th-century **Castello Doria** (adult/child €2.20/1.20; ☎ 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6pm daily Apr-Aug, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sat & Sun Sep-Mar), a formidable example of the Genoese military architecture offering magnificent views from its ornate terraced gardens.

At the end of the quay a Cinque Terre panorama unfolds from the rocky terraces of **Grotta Arpaia**, a former haunt of Byron, who once swam across the gulf from Porto Venere to Lerici to visit his mate, Shelley. Traces of a pagan temple have been uncovered on the quay, inside the black-and-white-marble **Chiesa di San Pietro**, which was built in 1277. Just off the promontory lie the tiny islands of **Palmaria**, **Tino** and **Tinetto**.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Albergo Genio** (☎ 0187 79 06 11; [www.hotelgenioportovenere.com](http://www.hotelgenioportovenere.com); Piazza Bastreri 8; s €75-90, d €95-120; ☎ mid-Feb—mid-Jan; 📄 ☎) From Piazza Bastreri, scale the spiral stairs in the round tower to reach this charming seven-room hotel. In summer breakfast is served alfresco beneath the vines, and some rooms are equipped with air-conditioning.

**La Lanterna** (☎ 0187 79 22 91; [www.lalanterna-portovenere.it](http://www.lalanterna-portovenere.it); Via Capellini 109; d €75-85; ☎) Down by Porto Venere's picturesque harbourfront, this little guesthouse has just two airy rooms (there's also an option of a four-person apartment on request). Breakfast isn't included, but can be arranged; otherwise stroll to a nearby cafe.

**Locanda Lorena** (☎ 0187 79 23 70; Via Cavour 4) Situated on the island of Palmaria, this place has a delightful restaurant and rooms – call for more information, and for them to send their boat over.

A half-dozen or so restaurants line Calata Doria, by the sea. A block inland, Porto Venere's main old-town street, Via Cappellini, has several tasty choices.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Porto Venere is served by daily buses from La Spezia – [Click here](#).

From late March to October, La Spezia—based Consorzio Maritimo Turistico Cinque Terre Golfo dei **Poeti** sails from Porto Venere to/from the Cinque Terre (one-way with all stops €15, return €20 to €22) and runs boat excursions to the islands of Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto (€9), as well as services to La Spezia and Lerici (call for seasonal information).

## Lerici & Around

### pop 11,200

Magnolia, yew and cedar trees grow in the 1930s public **gardens** at Lerici, an exclusive retreat of pool-equipped villas clinging to the cliffs along its beach.

For outstanding views make your way on foot or by public lift to the 12th-century **Castello di Lerici** (Piazza San Giorgio 1). Lerici's **tourist office** (☎ 0187 96 73 46; [info@aptcinqueterre.sp.it](mailto:info@aptcinqueterre.sp.it); Via Biaggini 6; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) can advise on walking and cycling in the area, as well as accommodation.

From Lerici a scenic 3km coastal stroll leads north to **San Terenzo**, a seaside village with a sandy beach and Genoese castle. The Shelleys stayed at the waterfront Villa Magni (closed to visitors) in the early 1820s and Percy drowned here when his boat sank off the coast in 1822 on a return trip from Livorno.

Another coastal stroll, 4km south, takes you past magnificent little bays to **Tellaro**, a fishing hamlet with pink-and-orange houses cluttered about narrow lanes and tiny squares. Sit on the rocks at the **Chiesa San Giorgio** and imagine an octopus ringing the church bells – which, according to legend, it did to warn the villagers of a Saracen attack. Tellaro is home to the gourmards' hideaway, **Locanda Miranda** (☎ 0187 96 40 12; [www.locandamiranda.com](http://www.locandamiranda.com); Via Fiascherina 92; d €120, d with half-board €180, set menus €40-60, mains €20; 🍴), an exquisite seven-room inn with art- and antiques-decorated rooms, and a Michelin-starred restaurant specialising exclusively in seafood (not for vegetarians or carnivores!).

## Val di Magra

On the Tuscan border, the Magra Valley's main town, **Sarzana** (population 20,120), was an important outpost of the Genoese republic. In its **cathedral** you can see the world's oldest crucifix painted on wood. Before embarking on nature walks in this pretty region's protected park, the **Parco di Montemarcello-Magra**, pop into its **information centre** (☎ 0187 69 10 71; [www.parcomagra.it](http://www.parcomagra.it), in Italian; Via Paci 2) in Sarzana.

The centre also has information on the Val di Magra's archaeological sites, including **Luni** (☎ 0187 6 68 11; adult/child €2/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), 6km southeast of Sarzana. Established as a Roman colony in 177 BC, it thrived as a wealthy trading centre until the Middle Ages, when the port began to silt up, making it a breeding ground for malaria. The town was abandoned in 1204. Today you can see remains of an amphitheatre, forum, temples and houses, along with some remarkable mosaic floors and frescoes.

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## RIVIERA DI PONENTE

Curving west from Genoa to the French border, the Ponente stretch of the Ligurian coast is flatter and more down-to-earth than the flashy Riviera di Levante. As a result it shelters some unlikely escape-hatches, particularly along the stretch of coast from Noli to Finale Ligure.

The coast's chalky cliffs draw free climbers from far and wide; above the cliffs, the mountains hide a warren of hilltop villages.

## Savona

**pop 62,000**

Behind Savona's sprawling port facilities, the city's unexpectedly graceful medieval centre is well worth getting off the train for. Among the old-town treasures to survive destruction by Genoese forces in the 16th century are the baroque **Cattedrale di Nostra Signora Assunta** (Piazza Cattedrale) and the lumbering **Fortezza del Priamàr** (Piazza Priamar). This imposing fortress guards a couple of sculpture museums and the **Civico Museo Storico Archeologico** (☎ 019 82 27 08; Piazza Priamar; adult/child €2.50/1.50; 🕒 10am-noon & 3-5pm Tue-Sat, 3-5pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 3-5pm Sat, 3-5pm Sun Oct-May), which displays archaeological finds.

Art aficionados won't want to miss the **Pinacoteca Civica Savona** (☎ 019 81 15 20; Piazza Chabrol 1/2; adult/child €4/2; 🕒 8.30am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 2-9pm Wed & Fri, 8.30am-1pm & 8-11pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug, 8.30am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 2-9pm Wed & Fri, 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Sep-Jun), which has an important collection of religious paintings, including a Madonna and child by Taddeo di Bartolo, dating from the 14th to 15th centuries, and two Picassos.

The **tourist office** (☎ 019 840 23 21; [iatsavona@infocomm.it](mailto:iatsavona@infocomm.it); Corso Italia 157r; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat Jan-Mar, Oct & Nov) is a short stroll from Savona's sandy **beach**.

Six- to seven-hour **whale-watching trips** (☎ 010 26 57 12; [www.whalewatchliguria.it](http://www.whalewatchliguria.it); adult/child €35/23) depart Savona at 10am from July to September.

## SLEEPING & EATING

The tourist office can help book accommodation, both in the city and the coastal towns to the west.

Savona also has one of Liguria's few hostels, **Villa de' Franceschini** (☎ 019 26 32 22; [www.ostellionline.org](http://www.ostellionline.org); Via alla Strà 'Conca Verde' 29; dm/d €13/32; 🕒 mid-Mar—Oct; 📍 📷), situated 3km from the train station in a sprawling park. Another cheap sleep is **Albergo Savona** (☎ 019 82 18 20; Piazza del Popolo 53; s €30-40, d €45-62), a no-frills affair wedged between the train station and the old town.

To enter **Vino e Farinata** (Via Pia 15; meals €17-20; 🕒 Tue-Sat) in the cobbled centre, you'll have to walk past the two ancient chefs: one shovelling fish into a wood-fired oven and the other mixing up batter in a barrel-sized whisking machine. The result: Ligurian *farinata*, the menu staple in this very local restaurant that also hordes some excellent wines.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

**SAR** (☎ 0182 2 15 44) and **ACTS** (☎ 019 2 20 11) buses, departing from Piazza del Popolo and the train station, are the best options for reaching points inland. Bus 2 links the train station and the fortress. On foot, Via Collodi and Via Don Minzoni lead from the station across the Letimbro river towards Piazza del Popolo, from where Via Paleocapa runs to the marina.

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## LIGURIA'S TOP FIVE DIVE SITES

Protected marine reserves, wrecks and underwater caves and crevices offer scuba divers of all levels of experience fascinating underwater explorations. Dive operators are listed in the Sights & Activities sections of this chapter.

- **BR-20** This Italian Fiat BR-20 fighter bomber crashed in 1940 near Ventimiglia, but wasn't damaged on impact and remains structurally intact. Difficult.
- **Secca Isuela** In a protected conservation area, this rocky peak rising from the seabed near Camogli sees a frenzy of fish feeding on a blizzard of anchovies. Average level.
- **Parete** On the western side of the tiny island of Tino, near Porto Venere, the fissured Parete rock face shelters scorpion fish and conger eels. Easy.
- **Punta Portofino** Boulders big enough to hide groupers lie just off Portofino, but currents here can be treacherous. Difficult.
- **Bettolina** A 10-minute boat ride from Sestri Levante, this upright WWII German barge has rare jewel anemones on its stern ladder. Average level.

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Trains run along the coast to Genoa's Stazione Brignole (€3.30, 45 minutes, almost hourly) and San Remo (€5.70, 1¼ hours, eight daily).

**Corsica Ferries** (☎ 019 21 55 11; [www.corsicaferries.com](http://www.corsicaferries.com)) runs up to three boats daily between Savona's Porto Vado and Corsica.

# Noli

## pop 3000

West of Savona, Noli is one of Liguria's coastal jewels and a welcome lifeline for beleaguered tourist-phobes. From its historic centre, an astonishingly intact medieval battlement zigzags up **Monte Ursino** (120m); it is topped by a ruined 11th-century castle. Following the wall to the castle gives you a spectacular panorama of the village's eight remaining **Genoese towers**.

The existing Romanesque form of Noli's most historic church, **San Paragorio**, was built in AD 1000, and the original structure has long been thought to date back to AD 800. However, in late 2006 new archaeological finds suggested that the church may in fact be much older – watch this space.

Fishing boats sell their unloaded catches to villagers each morning on Noli's pretty **beach**, from where views extend to Tuscany.

Noli's little **tourist office** (☎ 019 749 90 03; Corso Italia 8; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Apr—mid-Sep, 9am-noon & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat mid-Sep—Mar) has information about sleeping and eating options, as well as water sports including **windsurfing**.

**SAR** (☎ 0182 2 15 44) buses travel every 30 minutes along the coast to/from Savona (€2.20, 30 minutes), continuing to Finale Ligure and Finalborgo (€1.30, 20 minutes).

# Finale Ligure

## pop 12,300

Set amid lush Mediterranean vegetation, this township actually comprises several districts. **Finale Ligure** has a wide, fine-sand beach; the walled medieval centre, known as **Finalborgo**, is a knot of twisting alleys set 1km back from the coast on the Pora river. **Finale Marina** sits on the waterfront, while the more residential **Finale Pia** runs along the Sciusa river in the direction of Genoa.

Each year in March, Finalborgo's cloisters are home to the **Salone dell'Agroalimentare Ligure**, where local farmers and artisan producers display delicacies and vintages.

**our pick Hotel Florenz** (☎ 019 69 56 67; [www.florenz.it](http://www.florenz.it); Via Celesia 1; s €52-75, d €74-120; ☎ closed Nov & Feb; ♿ ♿ ♿), a rambling 18th-century former convent just outside Finalborgo's village walls (800m from the sea), is one of the most atmospheric spots to sleep. Offering stiff competition is **Castello Vuillermin** (☎ 019 69 05 15; Via Generale Caviglia 46; dm/d €15.50/44), a youth hostel in a castle, no less, with stunning views from its terrace. It's 1km from the station and up 300-plus steps. It accepts nonmembers for a small supplement.

Delicious Ligurian cuisine is cooked up at the rustic **Osteria ai Cuatru Canti** (☎ 019 68 05 40; set menus €20; ☎ Tue-Sun) in Finalborgo's historic centre.

From the train station on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, at Finale Marina's western end, walk down Via Saccone to the sea and the **tourist office** (☎ 019 68 10 19; [finaleligure@inforiviera.it](mailto:finaleligure@inforiviera.it); Via San Pietro 14; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat & 9am-noon Sun Jul & Aug). The promenade along Via San Pietro and Via Concezione is crammed with eateries.

**SAR** (☎ 0182 2 15 44) buses yo-yo every 30 minutes to/from Finale Ligure and Savona (€2.20, 50 minutes), stopping en route in Finalborgo (€1, five minutes) and Noli (€1.30, 20 minutes).

# Albenga to Imperia

Some of Liguria's only flat land stretches out along this section of coastline, making it ripe for growing

fruit, vegetables and garden plants. The area is well served by trains and SAR buses (€3.40 to Savona).

**Albenga** (population 22,760) is the most interesting stop. Settled as far back as the 5th century BC, Albenga grew from its Roman roots to become an independent maritime republic during the Middle Ages, and retains a preserved medieval centre today. Albenga's **tourist office** (☎ 0182 55 84 44; albenga@inforiviera.it; Lungocenta Croce Bianca 12; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sat) has plenty of useful information on the town's sights. Highlights include the **Museo Diocesano di Arte Sacra** (Via Episcopio 5; adult/child €3/1; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun), featuring a painting by Caravaggio. It is located near a 5th-century **baptistry** and Romanesque **cathedral**. A collection of 1st-century amphorae, recovered in 1950 from the wreck of a Roman cargo vessel 4km offshore, is at the **Museo Navale Romano** (Roman Naval Museum; ☎ 0182 5 12 15; Piazza San Michele 12; adult/child €3/1; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-Jun).

More touristy (and more expensive) is **Alassio** (population 11,365). The town's 3km of white, sandy beaches have made it a long-time favourite with visiting luminaries such as Hemingway, who have left their mark on its autograph-engraved **Muretto di Alassio**. This wall of fame runs between the sea and the art nouveau train station. While in town, be sure to try Alassio's version of Baci – two biscuit whirls sandwiched together with chocolate cream.

Busy **Imperia** (population 39,518) was created in 1923 by Mussolini when he bridged the Impero river and unified the towns of Oneglia (east) and Porto Maurizio (west). The latter is dominated by a large neoclassical cathedral and merits an afternoon stroll.

Savona's tourist office [Click here](#) can provide information about the area.

## San Remo

### pop 50,900

Fifty kilometres east of Europe's premier gambling capital lies San Remo, Italy's wannabe Monte Carlo, a sun-dappled Mediterranean resort with a casino, a clutch of ostentatious villas, and lashings of Riviera-style grandeur. Known colloquially as the City of Flowers for its colourful summer blooms, San Remo also stages an annual music festival (the supposed inspiration for the Eurovision Song Contest) and the world's longest professional one-day cycling race, the 298km Milan—Sanremo Classic.

During the mid-19th century the city became a magnet for regal European exiles such as Empress Elizabeth of Austria and Czar Nicola of Russia, who favoured the town's balmy winters. Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel maintained a villa here and an onion-domed Russian Orthodox church reminiscent of Moscow's St Basil's Cathedral still turns heads down by the seafront.

Beyond the manicured lawns and belle époque hotels, San Remo hides a little-visited old town, a labyrinth of twisting lanes that cascade down the Ligurian hillside. Curling around the base is a new 25km bike and walking path that tracks the coast as far as Imperia, following the course of a former railway line and passing through the town's two character-filled harbours.

### INFORMATION

Pick up a copy of *Rivieri dei Fiori News*, a free monthly newspaper available at the tourist office. For more information about the area, check out [www.sanremoguide.com](http://www.sanremoguide.com), [www.sanremonet.com](http://www.sanremonet.com) and [www.sanremomani.festazioni.it](http://www.sanremomani.festazioni.it) (in Italian).

**Hospital** (☎ 0184 53 61; Via Giovanni Borea 56)

**Police station** (☎ 0184 5 23 71; Corso Felice Cavallotti 16)





original stones from the rubble. After successfully standing up to authorities who wanted to remove them, a thriving community of international artists remains in residence today.

In a spirit befitting a city that hosts professional cycling's greatest Spring Classic, San Remo is in the process of building a 25km walking and cycling path known as the **Italian Cycling Riviera**. Much of the path – which runs along the route of a former railway line – is now open and offers bike hire en route. Inquire at the tourist office [Click here](#). **Polo Sub Dive Centre** (☎ 0184 53 53 35; Via Lungomare, Arma di Taggia) offers diving for €35 per immersion from the Darsena Porto in Taggia, 5km to the east.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Corso Fiorito** (Flower Parade) This colourful parade, held over the last weekend in January, kicks off the town's annual festivities.

**Festival di San Remo** ([www.festivaldisanremo.com](http://www.festivaldisanremo.com), in Italian) Celebrating Italian music, this has been going since 1951, and attracts top Italian and international talent each March.

**Rally Storico** In April, San Remo's famous car rallies ([www.sanremorally.it](http://www.sanremorally.it)) rev up for cars made between 1931 and 1981.

**Rally Classic** Follows in May.

**Rally e San Remo** The big one; first held in 1926, it's run every September.

## SLEEPING

San Remo has no shortage of hotels, although summer and festival times can be busy and a few places shut from September until just before Christmas.

**Albergo Ambrosiano** (☎ 0184 57 71 89; [www.hotelambrosiano.it](http://www.hotelambrosiano.it); Via Roma 36; d €60-100; ☎) This friendly hotel has eight immaculate rooms with plenty of space to stretch out, although those with lots of luggage may find the miniature lift a challenge.

**Hotel Eletto** (☎ 0184 53 15 48; [www.elettohotel.it](http://www.elettohotel.it); Via G Matteotti 44; s €50-95, d €60-125; ☎) Get lured in by the Parisian art nouveau entrance canopy to a friendly reception desk where they'll direct you upstairs to clean, refurbished soundproofed rooms in a central location.

**Hotel Liberty** (Rondò Garibaldi 2; s €45-55, d €70-90) Equipped with new, young owners and a new name, this 10-room hotel is set in a Liberty-style villa off a small traffic circle about 100m from the train station. The small but clean rooms are quiet and infused with faded elegance, while most sights of note are only footsteps away.

**Hotel Marinella** (☎ 0184 50 59 00; [www.hotelmarinella.it](http://www.hotelmarinella.it), in Italian; Via Ruffini 21; s €55-72, d €70-105; ☎) Across the road from the waterfront, most of Marinella's sun-splashed, tiled rooms have balconies, and all are spotless and spacious. The hotel's attached glass restaurant (mains around €15) is a bit like dining in a goldfish bowl, but the sea views are worth it.

## EATING & DRINKING

Cheap trattorias fill the old-town alleys around Piazza Eroi Sanremesi and open-air snack bars stud the length of Corso Nazario Sauro, the promenade overlooking the old port.

**our pick** **Cantine Sanremesi** (☎ 0184 57 20 63; Via Palazzo 7; mains €7-12; ☎ Tue-Sun) Meet the locals at this time-worn tavern over *trofie al pesto* or a delicious *stoccafisso alla sanremasa* (stockfish with tomato and potatoes).

**Cuvea** (☎ 0184 50 34 98; Corso Giuseppe Garibaldi 110; set menus €15-20, mains €8-9; ☎ lunch Mon-

Sat & dinner daily Jul & Aug, lunch daily & dinner Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) This cosy, brightly lit place lined with wine bottles overflows with locals tucking into its homemade traditional dishes such as pesto-doused pasta.

**Victory Morgana Bay** (☎ 0184 59 16 20; Corso Trento e Trieste 16; mains €8-16; 🕒 11am-3pm Tue, to 2am Wed-Mon) Situated right on the waterfront as if it's about to set sail, this sophisticated yachting cafe-restaurant serves up a varied menu of salads, fish and grilled meats, with occasional live music.

**Caffè Ducale** (☎ 0184 195 52 02; Via Matteotti 145; lunch menus €18-22; 🕒 7:30am-midnight) Italian panache with an added dash of San Remo swankiness make this elegant cafe—*enoteca*—*salon de the* one of the most refined joints east of the Côte d'Azur. Enjoy a few *aperitivi* under the weighty chandeliers before heading off to the casino to blow what's left of your holiday budget.

**Solentiname** (☎ 0184 66 44 77; Lungomare Vittorio Emanuele 9; 🕒 7pm-late Tue-Sun) DJ sets and live music draw crowds to this fun pizzeria-pub; you can also have lunch here in July and August.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Riviera Trasporti** (☎ 0184 59 27 06; Piazza Colombo 42) buses leave regularly from the bus station for the French border, east along the coast and inland destinations.

From San Remo's underground train station there are trains to/from Genoa (€8.10, three hours, hourly), Ventimiglia (€1.90, 15 minutes, hourly) and stations in between.

## Ventimiglia

**pop 26,800**

Long before the French—Italian border bore any significance, Ventimiglia harboured a stoic Roman town known as Albintimulium that survived until the 5th century AD when it was besieged by the Goths.

Sandwiched between the road and the railway line on the eastern edge of town, the **Area Archeologica** (Roman ruins; admission free; 🕒 3-5.30pm Sat & Sun) bears testimony to Ventimiglia's Roman romance and includes the remains of an amphitheatre and baths dating from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD.



These days Ventimiglia is better known as a border with a huge Friday **market** (🕒 8am-3pm or 4pm), when hundreds of stalls sell food, clothes, homewares, baskets and everything else under the sun. The market concentrates around Piazza della Liberta, near the river, and is popular with French day-trippers.

Corso Genova is the main eastern exit from the city; its continuation to the west is Via Cavour. The **tourist office** (☎ 0184 35 11 83; Via T Hanbury 3a; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) is just steps from the train station.

On a hill on the western bank of the Roia river, Ventimiglia's medieval town is crowned with a 12th-century **cathedral** (Via del Capo). The town itself is largely residential.

Flora from five continents flourishes at the **Giardini Botanici Hanbury** (☎ 0184 22 95 07; Corso Montecarlo 43, La Mortola; adult/child €7.50/4; 🕒 9.30am-6pm mid-Jun—mid-Sep, to 5pm mid-Sep—mid-Oct & Mar—mid-Jun, to 4pm mid-Oct—Feb). Established in 1867 by English businessman Sir Thomas Hanbury, the 18-hectare Villa Hanbury estate is planted with 5800 botanical species, including cacti, palm groves and citrus orchards. Today it's a protected area, under the care of the University of Genoa. Take bus 1a from Via Cavour in Ventimiglia; the bus continues on to the Ponte San Lodovico frontier post, from where you can walk down to the Balzi Rossi on the French border.

A 10-minute stroll along the seafront from Ventimiglia's town centre, the family-run **Hotel Seagull** (☎

0184 35 17 26; [www.seagullhotel.it](http://www.seagullhotel.it); Passeggiata Marconi 24; s/d from €55/75;  ) has simple but appealing sky-blue-and-white rooms, a fragrant garden and a breezy terrace. Both half- and full-board options are available.

Cheap, cheerful eateries congregate around Via Cavour.

From the **train station** (Via della Stazione), Corso della Repubblica leads to the beach. Trains connect Ventimiglia with Genoa (€9.30, two to 3½ hours, hourly), Nice (50 minutes, hourly) and other destinations in France.

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# PIEDMONT

Piedmont has got ‘Made in Italy’ stamped all over it. Emerging from the chaos of the Austrian wars, the unification movement first exploded here in the 1850s when this spatially challenged but boldly ambitious European kingdom provided the nascent nation with its first prime minister, the Count of Cavour, and its dynastic royal family, the noble House of Savoy.

Bisected by the Po river and overshadowed by the snowcapped Alps, capital city Turin has unquestionable importance with its grand Napoleonic centre and solid industrial base dominated by automobile manufacturer Fiat. Beyond the car factories, Piedmont is notable for its food – everything from arborio rice to white truffles – a lucrative yield that is produced in pastoral, verdant fields that are often likened to those in nearby Tuscany – but without the tourists.

Piedmont’s smaller towns were once feuding fiefdoms that bickered over trade and religion. Today the biggest skirmishes are over who produces the best wine or which valley showcases the finest cheese. Traditionally, Asti and Alba stand tallest in the culinary stakes while understated Cuneo uses its longstanding chocolate obsession to help fuel outdoor adventures in the nearby Maritime Alps.

## Activities

Piedmont is a jumping-off point for Italy’s largest wilderness area, the **Parco Nazionale della Val Grande** ([www.parcovalgrande.it](http://www.parcovalgrande.it)).

Serious walkers can tackle the two-week **Grande Traversata delle Alpi** (GTA), starting in southern Piedmont and following a network of Alpine *rifugi* (mountain huts) north through the alpine province of Cuneo, the Valle di Susa and into Aosta (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

**Horse riding** is plentiful in summer; contact **Agriturismo Piemonte** (☎ 011 53 49 18; [www.agriturismopiemonte.it](http://www.agriturismopiemonte.it), in Italian; Via Lagrange 2) in Turin for a list of farms that offer a range of activities including riding, as well as accommodation and dining.

Some of Europe’s most fashionable **skiing** pistes are within easy striking distance of Turin.

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## TURIN

**pop 901,000 / elevation 240m**

Turin: where do you start? The list is daunting. Here is a metropolis that harbours one of the world’s biggest car companies (Fiat), a globally iconic football team (Juventus), two of Italy’s finest museums (the Museo Egizio and the Mole Antonelliana), and one of history’s most controversial and perplexing mysteries (the Holy Shroud). Probably the best place to mull over the highlights is in one of the lavishly gilded cafe-patisseries that embellish this so-called ‘Capital of the Alps’ with its swanky shopfronts and endless covered walkways.

Fiercely Italian with tinges of French influence, Turin has long acted as a gateway between northern and southern Europe and in many ways the city retains classic elements of both. Though lacking the ancient monuments of Rome, the bustle of Naples, the jaw-dropping vistas of Venice or the fashion swank of Milan, Turin has confidence and grandiosity in spades. As Italy’s fourth-largest city it hosted the 2006 Winter Olympics and, with the majestic Po river flowing through its centre, its seductive capabilities are



# PIEDMONT











What Turin doesn't have is crowds. For new arrivals it's a mystery as puzzling as the Shroud itself. But real Torino-philes keep mum. Theirs is a secret worth keeping.

## History

Whether the ancient city of Taurisia began as a Celtic or Ligurian settlement is unknown: it was destroyed by Hannibal in 218 BC. The Roman colony of Augusta Taurinorum was established here almost two centuries later. In succeeding years, Goths, Lombards and Franks tramped through the city. In 1563 the Savoys abandoned their old capital of Chambéry (now in France) to set up court in Turin, which shared the dynasty's fortunes thereafter. The Savoys annexed Sardinia in 1720, but Napoleon virtually put an end to their power when he occupied Turin in 1798. Turin was occupied by Austria and Russia before Vittorio Emanuele I restored the House of Savoy and re-entered Turin in 1814. Nevertheless, Austria remained the true power throughout northern Italy until the Risorgimento (literally 'the Resurgence', referring to Italian unification) in 1861, when Turin became the nation's inaugural capital. Its capital status lasted only until 1864, and the parliament had already moved to Florence by the time full-size chambers were completed.

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## TURIN IN...

### One Day

Arise before the traffic and head off for an early morning walk/jog/bike ride along the Po river. Shower, change and grab a leisurely breakfast in the **Caffè San Carlo** while watching the animated morning caffeine rush. Flip a coin and choose between one of two world-class museums – the **Museo Egizio** or the **Museo Nazionale del Cinema** – either of which should keep you occupied until lunchtime. Enjoy a *panini* while browsing the books in **Mood** before hitting the cobbles around Via Garibaldi and gawping at the artistic shop-window displays. For more art hit the temporary exhibitions in the **Palazzo Bricherasio** before sipping an aperitif in **Fiorio** and heading off for dinner in **8¾**.

## Two Days

On day two start early again and head up to the **Basilica di Superga** in the tram before the crowds. Soak up the view and dip your finger in the holy water before descending for a picnic lunch at the **Porta Palazzo market**. In the afternoon complete the second half of the Mole-Egizio museum visit (whichever you missed yesterday) and go for a boat trip along the **river Po**. Sample the chocolate in **Al Bicerin** before picking up your **opera ticket** and Torinese date for a night full of quintessential Italian music. Linger over a late-night meal in the legendary **Restaurant del Cambio** and blow the rest of your holiday budget in **Hiroshima Mon Amour**.

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Turin adapted quickly to its loss of political significance, becoming a centre for industrial production during the early 20th century. Giants such as Fiat lured hundreds of thousands of impoverished southern Italians to Turin and housed them in vast company-built and -owned suburbs. Fiat's owners, the Agnelli family (who also happen to own the champion Juventus football club, Turin's local newspaper and a large chunk of the national daily *Corriere della Sera*), remain one of Italy's most powerful establishment forces. Fiat's fortunes declined later in the 20th century, however, and only revived around a decade ago.

The highly successful 2006 Winter Olympics were a turning point for the city. The Olympics not only ushered in a building boom, including a brand-new metro system, but transformed Turin from a staid industrial centre into a vibrant metropolis. Turin was scheduled to again step into the spotlight in 2008, as the European Capital of Design, hosting conferences and exhibitions. Preparations are now underway for 2011, when it will be the focus of the nation while hosting the 150th anniversary of the Risorgimento.

## Orientation

Via Roma, Turin's main shopping thoroughfare since 1615, runs northeast from Stazione Porta Nuova to the central square, Piazza Castello. Stazione Porta Nuova is currently the main point of arrival, although the revamped Stazione Porta Susa will ultimately become the city's main station, and an increasing number of trains will use it in the coming years.

Busy Corso Vittorio Emanuele II is the main tram and bus route, running southeast to northwest. Piazza Carlo Felice, the square in front of Stazione Porta Nuova, and Via Nizza, which continues southwest past the station, are the main axes of Turin's seedier side.

The Mole Antonelliana's metallic spire dominates the horizon to the east, beyond which lies the Po and much of the city's nightlife. Just to the west of Piazza Castello, bars and bookshops fill the Quadrilatero Romano (Turin's 'Latin Quarter').

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**Libreria Luxemburg** (☎ 011 561 38 96; Via Battisti 7) Anglo-American bookshop.

**Touring Club Italiano** (☎ 011 562 72 07; Via San Francesco d'Assisi 3) Map and guidebook heaven.

## EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 011 5 58 81; Corso Vinzaglio 10)

## INTERNET ACCESS

**1PC4YOU** (☎ 011 83 59 08; Via G Verdi 20g; per hr €6; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun)

## LAUNDRY

**Lav@sciuga** ([www.lavasciuga.torino.it](http://www.lavasciuga.torino.it); ☎ 8am-10pm) Branches at Piazza della Repubblica 5, Via Sant'Anselmo 9 and Via Vanchiglia 10 provide free internet access for customers.

## LEFT LUGGAGE

**Stazione Porta Nuova** (opposite platform No 16; 1st/next 12hr €3/2; ☎ 6am-midnight)

## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Farmacia Boniscontro** (☎ 011 53 82 71; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 66; ☎ 3pm-12.30am) Night pharmacy.

**Ospedale Mauriziano Umberto I** (☎ 011 5 08 01; Largo Turati 62) Hospital.

**Pharmacy** (☎ 011 518 64 67; Stazione Porta Nuova; ☎ 7am-7.30pm)

## MONEY

A bank, ATM and exchange booth can all be found within Stazione Porta Nuova; others are dotted throughout the city. A 24-hour automatic banknote-change machine can be found outside **Unicredit Banca** (Piazza CLN).

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

Serious sightseers will save a bundle with a **Torino + Piemonte Card** (2/3/5/7 days €19/22/31/35, junior 2 days €10). It covers admission to most of Turin's monuments and museums, a ride up the Mole Antonelliana panoramic lift, a return trip on the Sassi-Superga cable car, and all public transport costs including GTT boats on the Po river and the Turismo Bus Torino ([Click here](#)). It also offers discounts for some guided tours and theatres. You can buy the card at the tourist office.

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## POST

**Post office** (Via Alfieri 10; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The tourist board's **call centre** (☎ 011 53 51 81; [www.turismotorino.org](http://www.turismotorino.org); ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm) can provide

updated information and assistance for visitors.

**Circolo Culturale Maurice** (☎ 011 521 11 16; [www.mauricegbt.org](http://www.mauricegbt.org), in Italian; Via della Basilica 3-5) Gay and lesbian information.

**Tourist office** (☎ 011 53 51 81; 🕒 9.30am-7pm) At Stazione Porta Nuova; offers a free accommodation and restaurant booking service.

**Tourist office** (☎ 011 53 51 81; 🕒 8am-11pm) At the airport.

## Sights

Turin's boulevards and beautiful piazzas are lined with some outstanding museums.

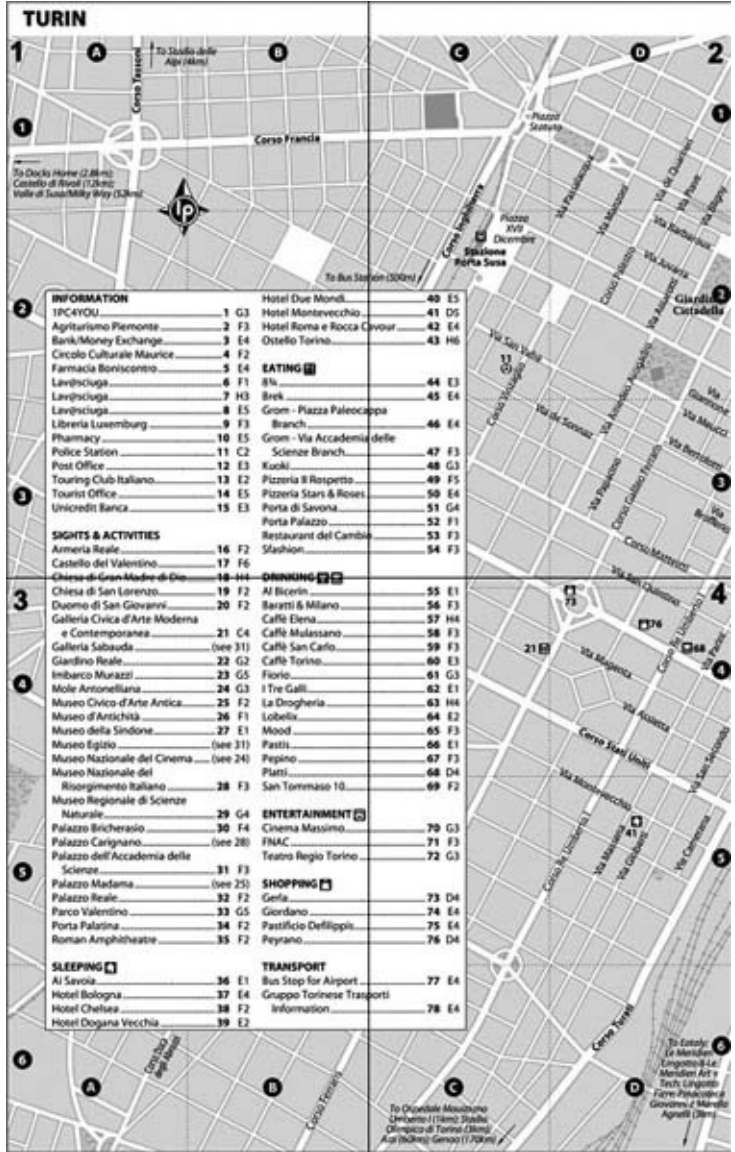
### PIAZZA CASTELLO

Turin's central square shelters a wealth of museums, theatres and cafes. Essentially baroque, the grand piazza was laid out from the 14th century to serve as the seat of dynastic power for the House of Savoy.

The piazza is dominated by **Palazzo Madama**, a part-medieval, part-baroque castle built in the 13th century on the site of the old Roman gate. It was named after Madama Reale Maria Cristina, the widow of Vittorio Amedeo I, who lived here in the 17th century. Today, part of the palace houses the **Museo Civico d'Arte Antica** (☎ 011 443 35 01; Piazza Castello; adult/child €7.50/6; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri & Sun, to 8pm Sat), containing a sumptuous collection of works that document the city's artistic movements post-Italian unification.

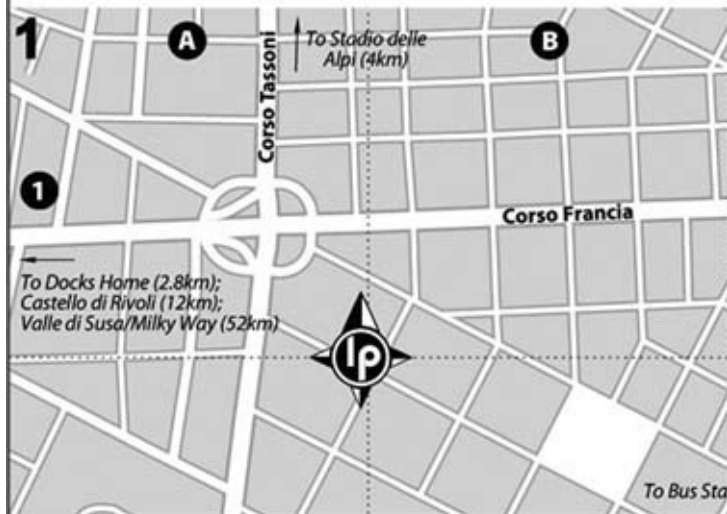
In the northwestern corner of the square is the baroque **Chiesa di San Lorenzo**, designed by Guarino Guarini. The church's richly complex interior compensates for the spare facade.

Statues of the mythical twins Castor and Pollux guard the entrance to the **Palazzo Reale** (☎ 011 436 14 55; Piazza Castello; adult/child €6.50/3.25; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) and, according to local legend, also watch over the border between the sacred ('white magic') and diabolical ('black magic') halves of the city. Built for Carlo Emanuele II around 1646, its lavishly decorated rooms house an assortment of furnishings, porcelain and other knick-knacks. The surrounding **Giardino Reale** (Royal Garden; admission free; 🕒 9am-1hr before sunset), east of the palace, was designed in 1697 by André le Nôtre, who also created the gardens at Versailles.



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1PC4YOU	1 G3	Hotel Due Monni	40 E5
Agriturismo Piemonte	2 F3	Hotel Montevocchio	41 D5
Bank/Money Exchange	3 E4	Hotel Roma e Rocca Cavour	42 E4
Circolo Culturale Maurice	4 F2	Ostello Torino	43 H6
Farmacia Boniscontro	5 E4	<b>DRINKING</b>	
Laviniacqua	6 F1	8fa	44 E3
Laviniacqua	7 H3	Brek	45 E4
Laviniacqua	8 E5	Grom - Piazza Paleocappa	
Libreria Luxemburg	9 F3	Branch	46 E4
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Police Station	11 C2	Scienze Branch	47 F3
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Touring Club Italiano	13 E2	Pizzeria B Rospetto	49 F5
Tourist Office	14 E5	Pizzeria Stars & Roses	50 E4
Unicredit Banca	15 E3	Porta di Savona	51 G4
		Porta Palazzo	52 F1
		Restaurant del Cambio	53 F3
		Station	54 F3
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		<b>DRINKING</b>	
Armeria Reale	16 F2	Al Bicerin	55 E1
Castello del Valentino	17 F6	Baratti & Milano	56 F3
Chiesa di Gran Madre di Dio	18 H4	Caffe Elena	57 H4
Chiesa di San Lorenzo	19 F2	Caffe Mulassano	58 F3
Duomo di San Giovanni	20 F2	Caffe San Carlo	59 F3
Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea	21 C4	Caffe Torino	60 E3
Galleria Sabauda (see 31)		Fiorio	61 G3
Giardino Reale	22 G2	I Tre Galli	62 E1
Imbarco Murazzi	23 G5	La Drogheria	63 H4
Mole Antonelliana	24 G3	Lobelix	64 E2
Museo Civico d'Arte Antica	25 F2	Mood	65 F3
Museo d'Antichità	26 F1	Pastri	66 E1
Museo della Sindone	27 E1	Pagine	67 F3
Museo Egizio (see 31)		Platti	68 D4
Museo Nazionale del Cinema (see 24)		San Tommaso 10	69 F2
Museo Nazionale del Risorgimento Italiano	28 F3	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>	
Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali	29 G4	Cinema Massimo	70 G3
Palazzo Bricherasio	30 F4	FNAC	71 F3
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Roman Amphitheatre	35 F2	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
<b>SLEEPING</b>		Bus Stop for Airport	77 E4
Al Savoia	36 E1	Gruppo Torinese Trasporti	
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Hotel Chelsea	38 F2		
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# TURIN



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## INFORMATION

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Farmacia Boniscontro.....	5	E4
Lav@sciuga.....	6	F1
Lav@sciuga.....	7	H3
Lav@sciuga.....	8	E5
Libreria Luxemburg.....	9	F3
Pharmacy.....	10	E5
Police Station.....	11	C2
Post Office.....	12	E3
Touring Club Italiano.....	13	E2
Tourist Office.....	14	E5
Unicredit Banca.....	15	E3

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Armeria Reale.....	16	F2
Castello del Valentino.....	17	F6
Chiesa di San Maddo di Dio.....	18	H4

Hotel Due Mondi.....
Hotel Montevecchio.....
Hotel Roma e Rocca C.....
Ostello Torino.....

## EATING

8¾.....
Brek.....
Grom - Piazza Paleoca Branch.....
Grom - Via Accademia Scienze Branch.....
Kuoki.....
Pizzeria Il Rospetto.....
Pizzeria Stars & Roses.....
Porta di Savona.....
Porta Palazzo.....
Restaurant del Cambi.....
Sfashion.....

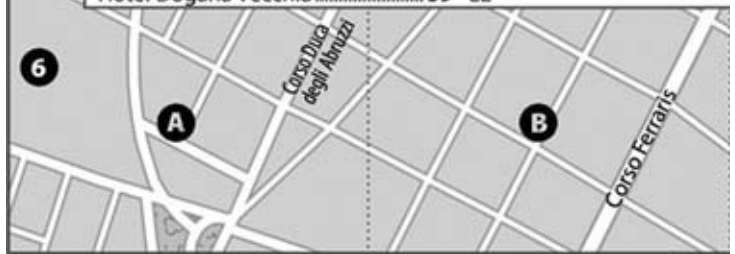
## DRINKING

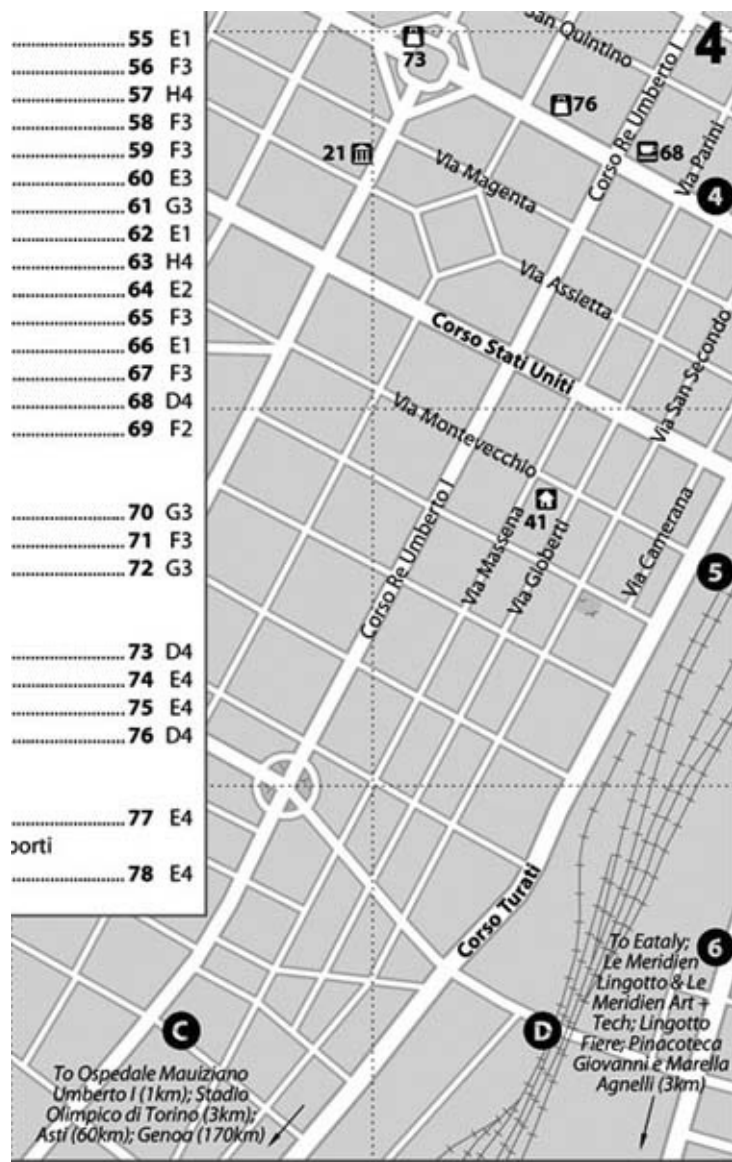


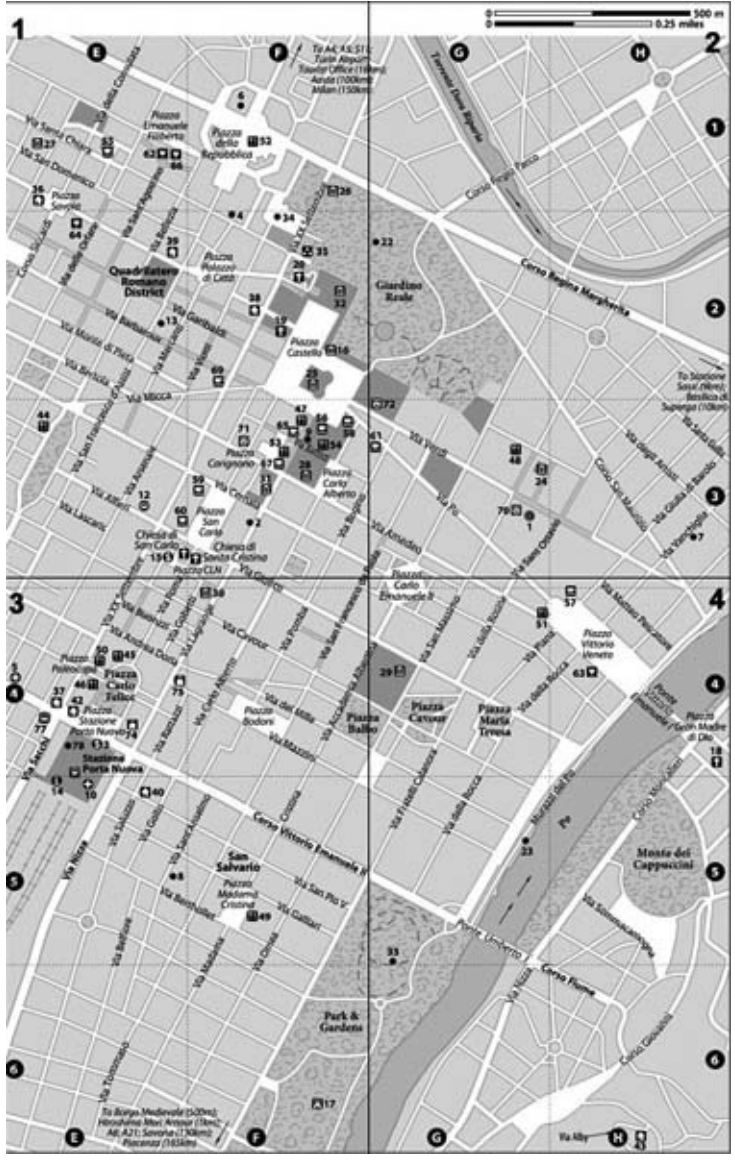
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- ..... 43 H6
- ..... 44 E3
- ..... 45 E4
- ppa ..... 46 E4
- delle ..... 47 F3
- ..... 48 G3
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- ..... 51 G4
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3	Chiesa di San Lorenzo.....	19	F2	Al Bicerin .....	
	Duomo di San Giovanni.....	20	F2	Baratti & Milano .....	
	Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea .....	21	C4	Caffè Elena.....	
	Galleria Sabauda .....	(see 31)		Caffè Mulassano .....	
	Giardino Reale.....	22	G2	Caffè San Carlo.....	
	Imbarco Murazzi .....	23	G5	Caffè Torino.....	
	Mole Antonelliana .....	24	G3	Fiorio.....	
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	Museo d'Antichità .....	26	F1	La Drogheria .....	
	Museo della Sindone.....	27	E1	Lobelix.....	
	Museo Egizio .....	(see 31)		Mood .....	
	Museo Nazionale del Cinema .....	(see 24)		Pastis.....	
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	Palazzo Bricherasio .....	30	F4	San Tommaso 10.....	
Palazzo Carignano.....	(see 28)				
Palazzo dell'Accademia delle Scienze.....	31	F3	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> 🎬		
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Parco Valentino .....	33	G5	Teatro Regio Torino ...		
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Roman Amphitheatre .....	35	F2	Gerla.....		
			Giordano .....		
			Pasticcio Defilippis....		
			Peyrano.....		
			<b>SLEEPING</b> 🛏️		
			<b>TRANSPORT</b>		
			Bus Stop for Airport ....		
			Gruppo Torinese Trasporti		
			Information.....		
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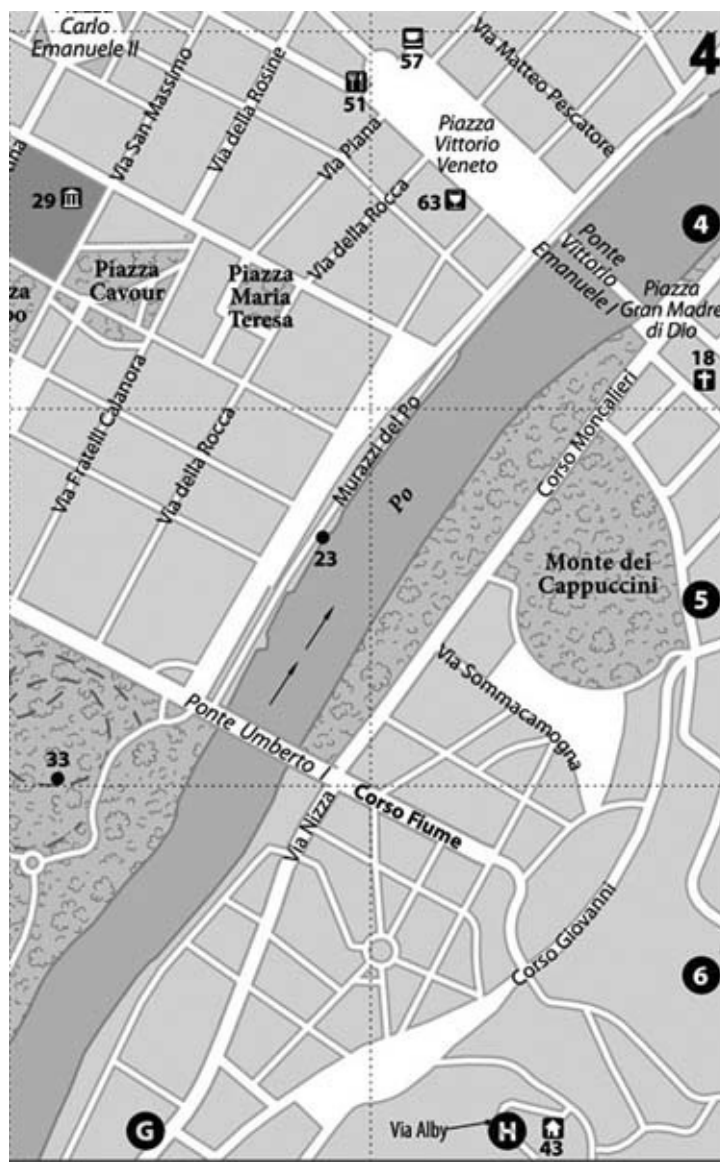












The entrance to the Savoy **Armeria Reale** (Royal Armoury; ☎ 011 54 38 89; [www.artito.arti.beniculturali.it](http://www.artito.arti.beniculturali.it); Piazza Castello; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 9am-2pm Tue-Fri, 1-7pm Sat & Sun) is under the porticoes just right of the palace gates and safeguards one of Europe's best collections of arms.

## DUOMO DI SAN GIOVANNI

Turin's **cathedral** (Piazza San Giovanni), built between 1491 and 1498 on the site of three 14th-century basilicas, is the home of the famous Shroud of Turin (purported to be the burial cloth in which Jesus' body was wrapped). A copy of the cloth is on permanent display in front of the cathedral altar.

The Romanesque **bell tower**, which stands alone to the left of the cathedral, was designed by Juvarra and built in 1723. Just to the north lie the remains of a 1st-century **Roman amphitheatre**, while a little further to the northwest lies **Porta Palatina**, the redbrick remains of a Roman-era gate.

Across the road is the **Museo d'Antichità** (Museum of Antiquity; ☎ 011 521 11 06; Via XX Settembre 88c; adult/child €4/2; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), displaying antiquities amassed by the Savoy dynasty, including Etruscan urns, Roman bronzes and Greek vases, alongside assorted locally excavated archaeological finds.

## MUSEO NAZIONALE DEL RISORGIMENTO ITALIANO

Baroque **Palazzo Carignano** was the birthplace of Carlo Alberto and Vittorio Emanuele II, and the seat of united Italy's first parliament from 1861 to 1864. You can normally see the parliament as part of the

**Museo Nazionale del Risorgimento Italiano** (☎ 011 562 11 47; Via Accademia delle Scienze 5), though the museum was closed for renovations at the time of writing, and was due to reopen at the end of 2009.

## **PALAZZO DELL'ACCADEMIA DELLE SCIENZE**

The immense **Palazzo dell'Accademia delle Scienze** (Via Accademia delle Scienze 6) houses two outstanding museums: the 18th-century-established **Museo Egizio** (Egyptian Museum; ☎ 011 561 77 76; adult/child €7.50/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), with some of Europe's most important ancient Egyptian treasures; and the **Galleria Sabauda** (☎ 011 54 74 40; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 8.30am-2pm Tue, Fri, Sat & Sun, 2-7.30pm Wed, 10am-7.30pm Thu), containing the Savoy family's incredible collection of art, which includes works by Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Poussin, Tintoretto and Jan Brueghel. A combination ticket for both museums costs €8 for adults (free for children).

## **MUSEO REGIONALE DI SCIENZE NATURALI**

Your average menagerie of stuffed animals (brown bears and so on) is on show at the **Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali** (Natural Science Museum; ☎ 011 432 63 65; Via Giovanni Giolitti 36; adult/child €5/free; 🕒 10am-7pm Wed-Mon), but what sets this natural science museum apart is its setting: a monumental 17th-century hospital with four inner courtyards and a chapel.

## **MODERN & CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUMS**

Turin is famed for its ground-breaking contemporary art. Its origins, according to Valentina Marocco, of the Museum for Contemporary Art, Castello di Rivoli (below), come from Turin's role as 'the hometown of the Arte Povera, a revolutionary art movement that developed at the end of the 1960s. The movement had an enormous impact on an international level with artists like Mario Merz, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Gilberto Zorio, Giuseppe Penone.' Valentina says this inspired 'a visionary generation of art collectors, critics and gallerists'.

The **Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** (GAM; ☎ 011 562 99 11; [www.gamtorino.it](http://www.gamtorino.it); Via Magenta 31; adult/child €7.50/4; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) is dedicated to 19th- and 20th-century artists, including de Chirico, Otto Dix and Klee.

Temporary exhibitions are held in **Palazzo Bricherasio** (☎ 011 517 18 11; [www.palazzobricherasio.it](http://www.palazzobricherasio.it), in Italian; Via Lagrange 20; adult/child €7.50/free, audioguide 1/2 people €3.50/5; 🕒 2-8pm Mon, 9am-8pm Tue & Wed, to 11pm Thu-Sun). In its time, the gallery, in a 17th-century palace, has hosted surrealist Dali and been 'wrapped' by Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

At Lingotto, the Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli (opposite) has a world-class collection of masters.

A worthwhile trip further afield, the star of Turin's contemporary art scene is the 17th-century **Castello di Rivoli** (☎ 011 956 52 22; [www.castellodirivoli.org](http://www.castellodirivoli.org); Piazza Mafalda di Savoia, Rivoli; adult/child €6.50/4.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Thu, to 9pm Fri-Sun, free guided tours 3.30pm & 6pm Sat, 11am, 3pm & 6pm Sun). It's a striking contrast to the contemporary art housed inside at the **Museo d'Arte Contemporanea**. Works by Franz Ackermann, Gilbert and George, and Frank Gehry would have been beyond the wildest imagination of the Savoy family, who resided at this site from the 14th century onwards. The castle is outside central Turin in the town of Rivoli (not to be confused with the city's metro station named Rivoli). Take GTT bus 36 from Piazza Statuto to Rivoli bus station, then bus 36n or any 36 marked 'Castello' up the hill. Journey time is about one hour. Otherwise, take the metro to the Fermi stop, from where there's a free daily shuttle – the museum has shuttle schedules.

For an artistic stroll around the city centre, pick up the free brochure *L'Arte Contemporanea* from the



tourist office, which maps out Turin's striking public art installations.

## VIA PO & AROUND

Trendy cafes are strung out along and around Via Po, which connects Piazza Castello with Italy's mightiest river by way of Piazza Vittorio Veneto.

Walking southwest along the Po river brings you to **Castello del Valentino** (closed to the public), a mock chateau built in the 17th century. The 550,000 sq-metre French-style **Parco Valentino** (admission free; ☎ 24hr) surrounding the chateau opened in 1856 and is filled with joggers, promenaders and cafes night and day (though take care on your own here late at night).

A little further southwest is **Borgo Medievale**, which includes the faux medieval **Rocca** (Castle; ☎ 011 443 17 01; Viale Virgilio 107; adult/child €5/4; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Sun Apr-Sep, to 4pm Tue-Sat, to 5pm Sun Oct-Mar) and **village** (Borgo; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Apr-Sep, to 7pm Oct-Mar). They were built for the Italian General Exhibition in 1884.

Southeast of the Piazza Vittorio Veneto, across the Po, is the **Chiesa di Gran Madre di Dio** (closed to the public), built from 1818 to 1831 to commemorate the return of Vittorio Emanuele I from exile. Some claim it's yet another secret repository for the Holy Grail.

## Mole Antonelliana

The symbol of Turin is the **Mole Antonelliana** (Via Montebello 20). This 167m tower, with its distinctive aluminium spire, appears on the Italian two-cent coin. It was originally intended as a synagogue when construction began in 1862, but was never used as a place of worship.

A decade ago, the tower became home to the multifloored **Museo Nazionale del Cinema** (☎ 011 813 85 60; [www.museonazionaledelcinema.org](http://www.museonazionaledelcinema.org); adult/child €6.50/free; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Fri & Sun, to 11pm Sat), which takes you on a fantastic tour through cinematic history – from the earliest magic lanterns, stereoscopes and other optical toys to the present day. Movie memorabilia on display includes Marilyn Monroe's black lace bustier, Peter O'Toole's robe from *Lawrence of Arabia* and the coffin used by Bela Lugosi's Dracula. At the heart of the museum, the vast Temple Hall is surrounded by 10 interactive 'chapels' devoted to various film genres.

The Mole's glass **panoramic lift** (lift & museum ticket €8) whisks you 85m up through the centre of the museum to the Mole's roof terrace in 59 seconds. Fair warning if you're even slightly prone to vertigo: it's suspended only by cables, so when you look out it's as if you're free-floating in space. The 360-degree views from the outdoor viewing deck are dazzling by day or night.

## LINGOTTO

Around 3km south of the city centre is the **Lingotto Fiere** (☎ 011 664 41 11; [www.lingottofiere.it](http://www.lingottofiere.it); Via Nizza 294), Turin's former Fiat factory, which was redesigned by architect Renzo Piano into a congress and exhibition centre. In addition to two striking Le Meridien hotels ([Click here](#)), it houses the precariously perched 'treasure chest' rooftop gallery **Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli** (☎ 011 006 27 13; Via Nizza 230; adult/child €4/2.50; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sun), with masterpieces by Canaletto, Renoir, Manet, Matisse and Picasso, among others.

Adjacent to the congress centre is the Slow Food Movement's 'supermarket', **Eataly** (☎ 011 1950 6811; [www.eatalytorino.it](http://www.eatalytorino.it); Via Nizza 230; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun). This vast converted factory now houses a staggering array of Slow Food—affiliated food and beverages, with a separate area for each, including cheeses, breads, meats, fish, pasta, chocolate and much more. The best time to visit is around

12.30pm to 2.30pm, when each area has its own little restaurant serving lunch. There's also a high-end restaurant here, for which you'll need to book ahead.

Some trains stop in Lingotto, but the easiest way to get here from the city centre is to take bus 1 or 35 from Stazione Porto Nuova.

## BASILICA DI SUPERGA

In 1706 Vittorio Amedeo II promised to build a basilica to honour the Virgin Mary if Turin was saved from besieging French and Spanish armies. The city was indeed saved, and architect Filippo Juvarra built the church on a hill across the Po river. **Basilica di Superga** (☎ 011 899 74 56; [www.basilicadisuperga.com](http://www.basilicadisuperga.com); Strada della Basilica di Superga 73) became the final resting place of the Savoys, whose lavish tombs make for interesting viewing, as does the dome here. In 1949 a plane carrying the entire Turin football team crashed into the basilica in thick fog, killing all on board. Their tomb rests at the rear of the church.

To get here take tram 15 from Piazza Vittorio Veneto to the Sassi-Superga stop on Corso Casale, then walk 20m to **Stazione Sassi** (☎ 011 576 47 33; Strada Comunale di Superga 4), from where an original 1934 **tram** (one-way/return Mon-Fri Sat & Sun €2/4 €3.50/5.50; 🕒 from Sassi 9am-noon & 2-8pm Mon, Wed, Thu & Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-8.30pm Sat & Sun, 30min later from Superga, closed Tue) rattles the 3.1km up the hillside in 18 minutes.

## Tours

**Guided walking tours** (€6.50-8) following changing themes, such as Literary Turin, Tasty Turin and so on, depart on Saturday at 6pm. General city tours leave at 10am on Saturdays. Tours generally last around 1½ hours. Contact the tourist board call centre [Click here](#) to confirm departure points, and to ask about various factory tours that are also available.

**Turismo Bus Torino** (1-day ticket adult/child €5/3; 🕒 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Jan-Jun & mid-Sep—mid-Dec, 10am-6pm daily Jul—mid-Sep & holiday-festival periods) is a hop-on, hop-off bus service with an on-board staff member providing information, and serves over a dozen different points around central Turin. Tickets are sold onboard; information is available from Gruppo Torinese Trasporti (GTT).

GTT also operates **Navigazione sul Po** (adult return €3.10) boat trips on the Po. Boats to the Borgo Medievale in Parco Valentino and on to Moncalieri depart from **Imbarco Murazzi** (Murazzi del Po 65) four times a day from Tuesday to Saturday and seven times a day on Sundays from May to September, with fewer departures at other times of the year.

Turin's 'black and white magic' is illuminated on quirky walking tours with **Somewhere** (☎ 011 668 05 80; [www.somewhere.it](http://www.somewhere.it)). The company also runs other tours on lesser-known aspects of the city, such as 'Underground Turin'. Tours cost around €25; confirm departure points when booking.

## Festivals & Events

The tourist office has details of these and other events.

**CiocolaTÒ** Turin's famous chocolate is the focus of celebrations during March – see the boxed text, [Click here](#).

**Festival Internazionale di Film con Tematiche Omosessuali** ([www.turingfilmfestival.com](http://www.turingfilmfestival.com)) Held in April, this is a five-day international gay and lesbian film festival.

**Book fair** Held every May, Turin's is one of the most important in Europe.

**Salone Internazionale del Gusto** Every October in even-numbered years, foodies roll into town for this festival organised by Slow Food, with traditional producers from around the world showcasing their wares in a huge market at Lingotto Fiere. A day's entry costs €20, after which tastings cost between €1 and €5.

**Turin Film Festival** Headed up by Palme d'Or winner Nanni Moretti; takes place in November.

## Sleeping

Lonely Planet's accommodation booking service ([lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://lonelyplanet.com/hotels)) reviews properties in all price ranges that can be booked online.

If you're here over the weekend, you can get some good discounted rates at various three- to five-star hotels with a 'Torino Weekend' package ([www.turismotorino.org](http://www.turismotorino.org)), which includes a free two-day Torino + Piemonte Card (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)) and an added freebie, such as a bottle of wine. It's available year-round except during special events.

## BUDGET

**Ostello Torino** (☎ 011 660 29 39; [www.ostellotorino.it](http://www.ostellotorino.it); Via Alby 1; dm/s/tw without bathroom €15/22/42; 📅 mid-Jan—mid-Dec; 🚻 📺) Turin's 76-bed HI hostel, 1.8km from the train station, can be reached by bus 52 (bus 64 on Sunday) from Stazione Porta Nuova. Facilities are good (including online computers, wi-fi, and dinner Monday to Saturday for €10) and breakfast's included, but there's an afternoon lock-out.

**Halldis** (☎ 02 89 82 71; [www.halldis.com](http://www.halldis.com); apartments per week from €800; 📺 🚻 📺) This Italian-based estate agency offers some good short-term apartments with prices that can work out as cheap as €30 to €40 per person per day. There are numerous city-centre options and they come with minimal paperwork and quick and easy key pick-up.

**Hotel Bologna** (☎ 011 562 01 93; [www.hotelbolognasrl.it](http://www.hotelbolognasrl.it), in Italian; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 60; s/d €75/95) Right across from Stazione Porta Nuova and just off Via Roma, this handily located two-star hotel is a good bet. Rooms come with extra-big showers, although those overlooking the neighbouring restaurant can be noisy.

**Hotel Due Mondi** (☎ 011 650 50 84; [www.hotelduemondi.it](http://www.hotelduemondi.it); Via Saluzzo 3; s/d €55/69; 🚻 📺 📶) A close-to-the-station bargain, the Due Mondi equips its small rooms with bright laminate floors, comfortable furnishings and ingenious shower-sauna cubicles. Most rooms have wi-fi, there's a cosy sitting area downstairs and a classy restaurant next door lures you in with tasty-looking food trolleys. With such elegant diversions, the slightly seedy surroundings barely register.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Montevecchio** (☎ 011 562 00 23; [www.hotelmontevecchio.com](http://www.hotelmontevecchio.com); Via Montevecchio 13; s €40-85, d €60-100; 📺) In a quiet residential area yet just 300m from Stazione Porta Nuova, this two-star hotel has colourful, stencilled rooms in sunset shades, an above-average buffet breakfast and a handy guest laundry.

**Ai Savoia** (☎ 339 1257711; [www.aisavoia.it](http://www.aisavoia.it); Via del Cazmine 1b; s €75, d €85-115; 📺) Occupying an 18th-century townhouse, this little treasure overlooks pretty Piazza Savoia. The classical decor of each of its three rooms is ornate without being overwrought, and staff is friendly and obliging.

**Hotel Roma e Rocca Cavour** (☎ 011 561 27 72; [www.romarocca.it](http://www.romarocca.it); Piazza Carlo Felice 60; s €62.50-95.50, d €91-124; 📺 🚻) If you've stayed in too many cramped hotel rooms, you'll love this 1854-established hotel opposite the Porta Nuova train station. Hallways are wide, ceilings are high and

antiques-furnished rooms are sumptuously proportioned, especially the flowing ‘comfort’ rooms.

**Hotel Dogana Vecchia** (☎ 011 436 67 52; [www.hoteldoganavecchia.com](http://www.hoteldoganavecchia.com); Via Corte d’Appello 4; s/d €90/110; 📍) Mozart, Verdi and Napoleon are among those who have stayed at this historic three-star inn. Recent renovations have fortunately preserved its old-world charm, and its location in the Quadrilatero Romano is hard to beat.

**Hotel Chelsea** (☎ 011 436 01 00; [www.hotelchelsea.it](http://www.hotelchelsea.it); Via XX Settembre 79e; s €85-120, d €110-160; 📍 📺) A stone’s throw from Turin’s main square, Piazza Castello, the Chelsea has modern, softly lit rooms with coordinated bedspreads and drapes. Parents can use a baby monitor while dining at its romantic downstairs restaurant, La Campana, which serves Pugliese cuisine (restaurant menus €20).

## TOP END

**Le Meridien Lingotto & Le Meridien Art + Tech** (☎ 011 664 20 00; [www.lemeridienlingotto.it](http://www.lemeridienlingotto.it); Via Nizza 262; Le Meridien Lingotto d €270-300, Le Meridien Art + Tech d €390-410; 📍 📺 📶) These twin hotels are both situated within the historic Fiat car factory, which was built in the 1920s and renovated by Renzo Piano in the late 1980s. The factory’s original full-length windows have been retained, allowing light to flood the large, luxurious four-star rooms of Le Meridien Lingotto and those of its five-star annexe, Le Meridien Art + Tech. Guests can jog around the former car-testing circuit on the roof, which was featured in the classic 1969 film *The Italian Job*.

## Eating

Turin’s cuisine has been influenced by everyone from the French to the Sicilians, but the bulk of the inspiration comes from its own hinterland – Piedmont. Specialities include *risotto alla Piemontese* (risotto with butter and cheese), *finanziera* (sweetbreads, mushrooms and chicken livers in a creamy sauce) and *panna cotta* (like an Italian crème caramel).

The San Salvario neighbourhood, in the southeastern part of the city, has a host of multicultural eateries, particularly around Piazza Madama Cristina, as well as some of the city’s best pizzerias and pubs.

## BUDGET

**ourpick** 8¾ (Ottoetre Quarti; ☎ 011 517 63 67; Piazza Solferino 8c; pizzas €3.80-10, mains €8-18; 📍 Mon-Fri; 📺) Ignore the clever-clogs name. There’s nothing particularly Fellini-esque about this...restaurant – but come expecting great food. Twin dining rooms with French-washed blue and pink walls, striped tablecloths, and bread served in white paper bags. Try *bistecca di vitello alla grissinopoli* (steak or veal crumbed with crunchy breadsticks), huge salads and excellent Piedmontese wines by the bottle.

**Pizzeria Il Rospetto** (☎ 011 669 82 21; Piazza Madama Cristina 5; pizzas €5-12; 📍) There are hundreds of pizzerias in Turin and the nuances of each are never the same, but if you took a poll, the hole-in-the-wall Il Rospetto (little toad) in San Salvario would definitely be competing for top honours. Fast, crowded and insanely popular, it has over 30 tasty thin-crust flavours to sink your teeth into here – including the dessert-style Nutella pizza!

**Kuoki** (☎ 011 839 78 65; Via Gaudenzio Ferrari 2h; set menus €9-25, mains €6-10; 📍 11am-3pm & 6.30-11pm Mon-Sat; 📺) Head around the corner from the Mole Antonelliana to this intriguing spot run by Giorgio Armani’s former personal chef, Toni Vitiello. At high communal tables, you can dine on Italian blackboard specials, or sushi bar twists such as a Kuoki roll (salmon or tuna with ricotta, olive oil and basil). Toni’s other fusion creations include chicken in Coca-Cola with orange peel.

**Pizzeria Stars & Roses** (☎ 011 516 20 52; Piazza Paleocapa 2; pizzas €7-9; 📅 Tue-Sat) The list of pizzas on offer at this stylish place is lengthy and adventurous, with toppings including salmon and whisky, or caviar and vodka. Each of its rooms is themed according to colour (red, white, silver, pink, blue and black), so you can choose to suit the occasion. Police mugshots of erstwhile arrested movie stars (Hugh Grant, Al Pacino, et al) line the walls.

## MIDRANGE

**Porta di Savona** (☎ 011 817 35 00; Piazza Vittoria Veneto 2; meals €16-24; 📅 lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner only Tue) An economical, low-on-pretension trattoria with a deserved reputation for superb *agnolotti al sugo arrosto* (Piedmontese ravioli in a meat gravy), and *gnocchi di patate al gorgonzola*. The mains – including *bollito misto alla Piemontese* (boiled meat and vegetable stew) – are equally memorable. Be patient: the food takes a while to arrive, probably because it's 100% homemade and 100% Piedmontese.

**Sfashion** (☎ 011 516 00 85; Via Cesare Battisti 13; set menu €21, mains €7.50-14.50) Turinese comic TV presenter Piero Chiamretti's latest culinary offering is this funky postmodern set-up with retro toys adorning its outlandish interior, and dishes such as mussels in tomato sauce or *penne* with zucchini.

## TOP END

**Restaurant del Cambio** (☎ 011 54 66 90; Piazza Carignano 2; set menus from €60; 📅 Mon-Sat) Crimson velvet, glittering chandeliers, baroque mirrors and a timeless air greet you at this grande dame of the Turin dining scene, regularly patronised by Count Cavour in his day. It first opened its doors in 1757, and classic Piedmont cuisine still dominates the menu. Bookings and smart dress are advised.

## SELF-CATERING

**Porta Palazzo** (Piazza della Repubblica; 📅 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, to 6.30pm Sat) Europe's largest open-air food market has literally hundreds of food stalls. Pick up a picnic.

**Brek** (Piazza Carlo Felice 18; buffets from €10; 📅 8.30am-11pm) Only Italians could take 'fast food' and make it credible and edible. Brek is a small self-service restaurant chain where you can pick up fresh pasta, pizza, sausages, salads and desserts. Inside, the ambience is far from plastic. Indeed you might even be inclined to linger awhile in the plant-bedecked outdoor courtyard.

**Grom** ([www.grom.it](http://www.grom.it); Piazza Paleocapa 1d; 📅 noon-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri & Sat, 11am-11pm Sun) The first-ever outlet of this Slow Food—affiliated ice cream, renowned for organic flavours such as green tea, was started here in Turin. There's another branch at Via Accademia delle Scienze 4, which keeps the same hours.

## Drinking

*Aperitivi* is a Turinese institution. As in Milan (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)), if you're on a budget, you can fill up on a generous buffet of bar snacks for the cost of a drink.

The main drinking spots are the riverside area around Piazza Vittoria Veneto, and the Quadrilatero Romano district.

**Pastis** (☎ 011 521 10 85; Piazza Emanuele Filiberto 9; 📅 9am-3.30pm & 6pm-2am) This boldly painted cafe-bar is where chic Torinese office workers go for a two-hour lunch break – spicy meatballs with an obligatory glass of wine.

**Mood** (☎ 011 566 08 09; Via Battisti 3e; 📅 cafe 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, bookshop 10am-9pm Mon-Sat) An

addictive coffee shop—cocktail bar—bookshop combo that you'll struggle to escape from. Flick through the design hardbacks or Dante classics while sipping a cappuccino or a €7 *aperitivo*. The interior's slavishly hip, all polished concrete and shiny laminate.

**I Tre Galli** (☎ 011 521 60 27; Via Sant'Agostino 25; ☎ noon-midnight) Spacious and rustic, this is a fabulous spot for a drink any time, but most people come for the gourmet *aperitivi* snacks served on a buzzing pavement terrace. Meals cost about €15.

**La Drogheria** (☎ 011 812 24 14; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 18; ☎ 11am-2am) La Drogheria's sofas are coveted by a fun, unpretentious studenty crowd enjoying cheap drinks and *aperitivi* fare.

**Lobelix** (☎ 011 436 72 06; Via Corte d'Appello 15f; ☎ 7pm-3am Mon-Sat) Beneath the trees on Piazza Savoia, the terrace here is a favourite place for an *aperitivo* – its buffet banquet is one of Turin's most extravagant.

## HISTORIC CAFES

Turin's cafes have their rivals – Trieste and Rome to name but two – but it's splitting hairs really. These are evocative places full of literary legend, architectural excellence, aromatic coffee and the city's best gossip – and gossipers. Then there's the chocolate, either liquid or solid (see the boxed text, below), a speciality unto itself.

**ourpick Caffè San Carlo** (☎ 011 53 25 86; Piazza San Carlo 156; ☎ 8am-1am) Perhaps the most gilded of the gilded, this sumptuous cafe dates from 1822. You'll get neck ache admiring the chandeliers.

**Caffè Mulassano** (☎ 011 54 79 90; Piazza Castello 15; ☎ 7.30am-10.30pm) With dozens of customers and only four tables, the art nouveau Mulassano is where regulars sink white-hot espressos *a piedi* while discussing yesterday's football scores with the bow-tied barista.

**Platti** (☎ 011 506 90 56; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 72; ☎ 7.30am-9pm) Sweet-laden coffee, cake and liquor shop with gilded 1870 interior.

**Caffè Torino** (☎ 011 54 51 18; Piazza San Carlo 204; ☎ 7.30am-1am) This chandelier-lit showpiece opened in 1903. A brass plaque of the city's emblem, a bull (Torino in Italian means 'little bull'), is embedded in the pavement out the front; rub your shoe across it for good luck.

**Caffè Elena** (☎ 011 812 33 41; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 5; ☎ 8.30am-midnight Mon, Tue, Thu & Sun, to 1am Fri & Sat) Wood-panelled cafe once patronised by Nietzsche, these days with Starck-designed chairs.

**San Tommaso 10** (☎ 011 53 42 01; Via San Tommaso 10; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Sat) The Lavazza family started roasting coffee here in 1900. Now modernised, the cafe offers a staggering variety of flavours as well as an excellent restaurant; you can also buy espresso machines here.

**Fiorio** (☎ 011 817 32 25; Via Po 8; ☎ 8.30am-1am Tue-Sun) There's something evocative about inhabiting Mark Twain's old window seat as you contemplate the gilded interior of a cafe where 19th-century students once plotted revolutions and the Count of Cavour deftly played whist. And all this before your coffee has even arrived.

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## LA DOLCE VITA: TURINESE CHOCOLATE

Chocoholics the world over can thank Madama Reale (Madame Royale), queen of the Savoy State, for the introduction of chocolate – previously only available to nobility – to the masses. In 1678 Reale granted the first licence to Turinese chocolate-maker Giò Antonio Ari – and solid chocolate was born.

Chocolate production quickly became big business in Turin and remained so until Napoleon arrived, when trade restrictions were placed on cocoa-bean imports. But chocolate-makers Isidore Caffarel and Michele Prochet came up with a novel solution, using naturally sweet hazelnuts from Piedmont's groves to stretch the beans further. In 1865, they launched their chocolate made from hazelnuts and cocoa (at that time without milk – the Swiss learnt chocolate-making in Turin and later became the first to add it). Caffarel and Prochet christened their new chocolate Gianduiotto, after the Carnival mask character, Gianduja. In a savvy marketing move, Gianduja handed out samples to delighted Turinese carnivalgoers. These elongated triangular chocolates were the first ever to be wrapped in paper.

A century on, the chocolate-hazelnut Gianduiotto flavour inspired the creation of Nutella, which is manufactured by Piedmontese company Ferrero Rocher in Alba.

Turin celebrates all things cocoa-related for two weeks every March during **CiocolaTÒ** ([www.ciocola-to.com](http://www.ciocola-to.com)), with tastings, chocolate-making demonstrations, sculptures and dozens of creators selling their chocolates at stalls. The festival's exact location changes each year.

Year-round, you can pick up a ChocoPass from Turin's tourist office. The pass includes 10 tastings at specified stores and cafes over 24 hours (€10), or 15 tastings over 48 hours (€15).

The city's most famous chocolate house is **Peyrano** (☎ 011 53 87 65; [www.peyrano.com](http://www.peyrano.com); Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 76), creator of *Dolci Momenti a Torino* (Sweet Moments in Turin) and *grappini* (chocolates filled with grappa). Other famed chocolate-makers include **Gerla** (Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 88) and **Giordano** (Piazza Carlo Felice 69).

Among the historic cafes where you can taste chocolate in all its guises are **Baratti & Milano** (☎ 011 561 30 60; Piazza Castello 27; mains about €10-15; ☎ 8am-9pm Tue-Sun), with a stunning interior dating back to 1858; and **Pepino** (☎ 011 54 20 09; Piazza Carignano 8; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Sun-Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat, longer hr in summer), which invented ice cream dipped in chocolate on a stick here in 1937. The 1763-established **Al Bicerin** (☎ 011 436 93 25; Piazza della Consolata 5; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, to 1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sat & Sun), beneath a 14th-century bell tower, takes its name from *bicerin*, a caffeine-charged hot drink of chocolate, coffee and cream. It also serves snacks such as chocolate on toast. See above for more historic cafes.

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## Entertainment

Entertainment listings are included in 'Torino Sette', the Friday insert of the newspaper **La Stampa** ([www.lastampa.it](http://www.lastampa.it), in Italian). Cinema, theatre and exhibition listings are also included in its daily 'Spettacoli Cronaca' section. Also worth picking up at the tourist office and in many bars around town is the free 80-page **News Spettacolo** ([www.newspettacolo.com](http://www.newspettacolo.com), in Italian), a weekly booklet listing several hundred entertainment venues. **Extra Torino** ([www.extratorino.it](http://www.extratorino.it)) contains comprehensive, up-to-date listings in English.

Tickets for rock concerts are sold at **FNAC** (☎ 011 551 67 11; Via Roma 56). For other events, the tourist office has information and sells tickets.

## NIGHTCLUBS & LIVE MUSIC

Most clubs open from 9pm to late and cover charges vary depending on the night. Turin's clubbing district centres on Murazzi del Po (also called Lungo Po Murazzi), the arcaded riverside area stretching between Pontes Vittorio Emanuele I and Umberto I – follow the crowds (and the music).

Away from the city centre, head to **Docks Home** (☎ 011 28 02 51; Via Valprato 68), set in a converted 1912 warehouse, for house music and exhibitions, and shake your booty at legendary dance club

**Hiroshima Mon Amour** (HMA; ☎ 011 317 66 36; Via Bossoli 83; admission free-€15), playing everything from folk and punk to tango and techno.

## CINEMAS

**Cinema Massimo** (☎ 011 812 56 58; Via Giuseppe Verdi 18; admission €7) Near the Mole Antonelliana, the cinema offers an eclectic mix of films, mainly in English or with subtitles. One of its three screens only shows classic films.

## THEATRE

**Teatro Regio Torino** (☎ 011 881 52 41; [www.teatroregio.torino.it](http://www.teatroregio.torino.it), in Italian; Piazza Castello 215; ☎ ticket office 10.30am-6pm Tue-Fri, to 4pm Sat & 1hr before performances) Sold-out performances can sometimes be watched for free on live TV in the adjoining Teatro Piccolo Regio (☎ 011 881 52 41), where Puccini premiered *La Bohème* in 1896.

## SPORT

Turin has two football teams, **Torino Football Club** ([www.torinofc.it](http://www.torinofc.it), in Italian), and the *Vecchia Signora* aka **Juventus** ([www.juventus.it](http://www.juventus.it)). Most Torinese favour the former, while the rest of the world leans heavily towards the latter. Watching either is a quasi-religious experience. They both currently play at the **Stadio Olimpico di Torino** (☎ 011 327 79 88; Corso Sebastopoli 123) on the southwestern edge of town, served by buses on match days. Tickets are hard to come by; check the websites for info, or ask at the tourist office.

## Shopping

Via Roma's arcaded walkways shelter the city's most expensive fashion boutiques, while those along Via Garibaldi are more affordable. Via Po has some great secondhand record shops and vintage and alternative clothes.

Peek through the open doorway of 1872-established **Pastificio Defilippis** (☎ 011 54 21 37; Via Lagrange 39; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Sat) to watch the family making dozens of varieties of pasta; you can buy it here fresh or dried.

Excellent wine shops are splashed around the city. Turin's famous chocolates (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)) make sweet souvenirs.

A giant **antiques market** (Gran Balôn; [www.balon.it](http://www.balon.it); Piazza Borgo Dora; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) takes place on the second Sunday of every month in Borgo, while a smaller version (Balôn) is held every Saturday in the same location.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Turin airport** (TRN; ☎ 011 567 63 61; [www.turin-airport.com](http://www.turin-airport.com)), 16km northwest of the city centre in Caselle, has connections to European and national destinations. Several budget airlines fly here, including Easyjet and Ryanair.

### BUS

Most international, national and regional buses terminate at the **bus station** (☎ 011 433 25 25; Corso Castelfidardo). You can also get to Milan's Malpensa airport from here.



## TRAIN

Regular daily trains connect Turin's **Stazione Porta Nuova** (Piazza Carlo Felice) with Milan (€9.20, 1¾ hours), Aosta (€7.55, two hours), Venice (€35, five hours), Genoa (€15, 1¾ hours) and Rome (from €46.50, seven hours). Most also stop at **Stazione Porta Susa** (Corso Inghilterra), which will gradually take over as the main station in the next few years. Some trains also stop at **Stazione Torino Lingotto** (Via Pannunzio 1), though it's generally more convenient to travel between the city centre and Lingotto by bus.

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## THE OLD LADY & THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

In Italy no pastime ignites as much passion as *calcio* (football) and no football team fires the public imagination like the mighty *Vecchia Signora* (Old Lady) from Turin, better known to the world and history as Juventus.

With 27 Serie A titles (10 clear of its nearest rivals) and 11 European crowns to its name, Juventus is one of the most successful teams in football history. Iconic players who have donned the famous black-and-white *bianconeri* shirt (adopted after they once 'borrowed' a strip from British team Notts County) include Renato Cesarini, John Charles, Zinedine Zidane, Paolo Rossi, Alessandro del Piero and Michel Platini. With a popularity that extends way beyond Turin and Italy, Juventus is said to have one of the biggest fan bases in the world – an estimated 170 million – and you'll spot well-worn *bianconeri* shirts on everyone from Mozambican market traders to túk-túk drivers in Bangkok.

Juventus, in common with most Italian teams, plays football like its players don fashion, with an instinctive panache. In a nation that spawned Michelangelo, beauty is everything. There's no crude hoofing the ball into the air á la British Premier League here. Instead it is manoeuvred skilfully across the playing surface waiting for that all-important moment of divine inspiration which lights up so many Italian games. Ironically, the genius is countered by another distinctly Italian football tactic – guile. Serie A games are renowned for their fake play acting and theatrical attempts to curry favour with the referee, and it isn't always pretty.

The guile went a step too far in May 2006 when Juventus, along with four other Italian clubs, was implicated in a match-fixing scandal that shook Italian football to its foundations. At the centre of the affair – known as *Calciopoli* in Italy – was Juventus general manager Luciano Moggi, who was accused by the Italian Football Federation of rigging games by selecting favourable referees. Found guilty as charged, Juventus was docked nine points, banned for a year from Europe, stripped of its 2005 and 2006 Serie A championship titles and – worst of all – automatically relegated to Serie B for the first time in its history.

With true Torinese aplomb it didn't take long for the *Vecchia Signora* to stage a Sinatra-like comeback. Led by inspirational captain Alessandro del Piero, Juventus – older, wiser and seemingly contrite – was promoted back into Serie A within a year and the Italian national team, with a side that included five Juventus players, won the World Cup. It was a barely believable twist of irony.

Juventus' biggest rivals are its fellow citizens from Torino FC. Paradoxically Torino counts on a far greater number of fans in Turin itself, while Juventus' massive haul is drawn from around the world. Hotly contested (and sometimes violent) matches between the two sides are known as the *Derby della Mole*.

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## Getting Around

## TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**Sadem** (☎ 011 300 01 66; [www.sadem.it](http://www.sadem.it), in Italian) runs buses to the airport from Stazione Porta Nuova (40 minutes), also stopping at Stazione Porta Susa (30 minutes). Buses depart every 30 minutes between 5.15am and 10.30pm (6.30am and 11.30pm from the airport). Single tickets cost €5 from **Confetteria Avvignano** (Piazza Carlo Felice 50), opposite where the bus stops, or €5.50 if bought on the bus.

A taxi between the airport and the city centre will cost around €35 to €40.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Major car-rental agencies have offices at Stazione Porta Nuova and the airport.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The city boasts a dense network of buses, trams and a cable car run by **Gruppo Torinese Trasporti** (GTT; ☎ 800 01 91 52; [www.gtt.to.it](http://www.gtt.to.it), in Italian), which has an **information office** (☎ 7am-9pm) at Stazione Porta Nuova. Buses and trams run from 6am to midnight and tickets cost €0.90 (€12.50 for a 15-ticket carnet, €3 for a one-day pass).

Turin's single-line metro runs from suburban Collegno to Stazione Porta Susa. Work is underway to extend it to Stazione Porta Nuova and Lingotto. This section should open in 2010. See [www.metrotorino.it](http://www.metrotorino.it) for progress reports.

## TAXI

**Centrale Radio** (☎ 011 57 37)

**Radio Taxi** (☎ 011 57 30)

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## THE MILKY WAY

Neither a chocolate bar nor a galaxy of stars, Piedmont's Milky Way (Via Lattea) consists of two parallel valleys just west of Turin that offer top-notch skiing facilities. The more northern of the two, **Valle di Susa**, meanders past a moody abbey, the old Celtic town of Susa and pretty mountain villages. Its southern counterpart, the **Valle di Chisone**, is pure ski-resort territory. The valleys hosted many events at the 2006 Winter Olympics – including alpine skiing, freestyle skiing and bobsleigh – and the facilities and infrastructure are state-of-the-art.

## Information

Larger tourist offices in the valleys include the following; hours may be shorter outside peak season:

**Avigliana** (☎ 011 936 60 37; Piazza del Popolo 2; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri)

**Bardonecchia** (☎ 0122 9 90 32; [www.montagnedoc.it](http://www.montagnedoc.it); Piazza de Gasperi 1; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm)

**Cesana Torinese** (☎ 0122 8 92 02; [cesana@montagnedoc.it](mailto:cesana@montagnedoc.it); Piazza Vittorio Amedeo 3; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm)

**Sestriere** (☎ 0122 75 54 44; [www.sestriere.it](http://www.sestriere.it); Via Louset; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm)

**Susa** (☎ 0122 62 24 47; Corso Inghilterra 39; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm)

# Sights

Brooding above the road 14km from Turin is the **Sacra di San Michele** (☎ 011 93 91 30; adult/child €4/3; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-noon & 2.40-6pm Sat & Sun, to 5pm Oct-Mar), a Gothic-Romanesque abbey that has kept sentry atop Monte Pirchiriano (962m) since the 10th century. Look out for the whimsical ‘Zodiac Door’, a 12th-century doorway sculpted with *putti* (cherubs) pulling each other’s hair. To get to the abbey get off at **Sant’Ambrogio** station and hike up a steep path for 1½ hours. Alternatively, there’s a special bus from Avigliana train station six times a day from May to September. Concerts are held on Saturday evenings in summer; ask for details at the tourist office in **Avigliana** (population 10,500), 12km west.

A Druid well remains as testimony to the Celtic origins of **Susa** (population 6580; elevation 503m) before it fell under the Roman Empire’s sway. Susa’s Roman ruins make for an interesting stop on the way to the western ski resorts. In addition to the remains of a Roman **aqueduct**, a still-used **amphitheatre** and the triumphal **Arco d’Augusto**, dating from 9 BC, you can visit the town’s early-11th-century **cathedral**.

Also worth a brief stop is the forbidding **Forte di Exilles** (☎ 0122 5 82 70; adult/child €6/2; 🕒 10am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, to 2pm Oct-Mar), overlooking the quiet village of Exilles, 15km west of Susa. Its military role only ended in 1943.

# Activities

The prestigious Milky Way ski domain embraces 400km of pistes and five interlinked ski resorts: Sestriere (2035m), Sauze d’Oulx (1509m), Sansicario (1700m), Cesana Torinese (1350m) and Claviere (1760m) in Italy; and Montgenèvre (1850m) in neighbouring France. Its enormous range of slopes and generally reliable snow conditions provide for skiers and boarders of all abilities. A single daily ski pass costing €34 covers the entire Milky Way, including the French slopes of Montgenèvre. More information is available online at [www.vialattea.it](http://www.vialattea.it).

Built in the 1930s by the Agnelli clan of Fiat, **Sestriere** (population 885) ranks among Europe’s most glamorous ski resorts due to its enviable location in the eastern realms of the vast Milky Way ski domain.

The tourist offices have mountains of information on every conceivable summer and winter sport, including **heli-skiing**, **bobsledding**, **golfing** on Europe’s highest golf course, **walking**, **free climbing** and **mountain biking**.

Cross-country skiing in the area is centred on **Bardonecchia** (population 3084; elevation 1312m), the last stop in Italy before the Fréjus Tunnel.

Avigliana’s tourist office also has route maps and information on summertime walking and mountain biking, including the protected lakes and marshlands in the **Parco Naturale dei Laghi di Avigliana** ([www.parks.it/parco.laghi.avigliana](http://www.parks.it/parco.laghi.avigliana)), located on the town’s western fringe. From Avigliana, experienced walkers can tackle a strenuous climb or take a 30km circular bike trail to the Sacra di San Michele abbey.

Rafting and kayaking trips from Cesana Torinese are organised through **OK Adventure** (☎ 335 628 27 28; [www.okadventure.it](http://www.okadventure.it); 3hr trips €40-50).

# Sleeping & Eating

Many hotels shut outside winter and summer. Exact closing dates can vary from year to year, depending on snowfalls and conditions. The area’s tourist offices can make hotel reservations.

**Casa Cesana** (☎ 0122 8 94 62; Viale Bouvier, Cesana Torinese; s/d from €42/84; 📍 🚗) Right across

from Cesana's ski lift, this timber chalet was built for the 2006 Olympics. Its rooms are light-filled and spotless, there's a well-patronised restaurant open to nonguests (set menus around €18), and its bar is one of the area's liveliest.

**Hotel Susa & Stazione** (☎ 0122 62 22 26; [www.hotelsusa.it](http://www.hotelsusa.it); Corso Stati Uniti 4/6, Susa; s/d €60/83; 📍) Handy all-round base for the area and located directly opposite Susa's train station, this cycle-friendly hotel has 12 uniform rooms with private bathrooms and a restaurant (set menu €20). The staff gives out maps and itinerary proposals.

**Grand Hotel Principi di Piemonte** (☎ 0122 79 41; [www.gh-principipiemonte.it](http://www.gh-principipiemonte.it); Via Sauze 3, Sestriere; d from €180; 📍 🚗 🚗 🚗) Built in 1932 for the Agnelli family and frequented by famous faces over the years, this iconic curved building topped by turrets and spires has sleek rooms, gastronomic dining (with half-board deals available) and a decadent spa.

Sestriere's central square, Piazza Fraiteve, is loaded with places to eat and drink, including the perennially popular pizzeria **Pinky** (☎ 0122 7 64 41; Piazza Fraiteve 5n; pizzas €4-6) and the trendier **Napapijri** (☎ 0122 7 71 06; Piazza Agnelli 1; meals €17-18).

## Getting There & Away

The main Italy—France motorway and railway line roar along the Valle di Susa, making the area easily accessible by both public transport and car (though motorists should keep change on hand for the numerous tolls).

**Sapav buses** (☎ 800 801901, 0122 62 20 15; [www.sapav.it](http://www.sapav.it), in Italian) link Susa with Avigliana (35 minutes), Oulx (45 minutes), Turin (1¼ hours) and the Milky Way resorts. From Sestriere, buses serve Cesana (25 minutes), Oulx (45 minutes) and Turin (two to three hours) up to five times daily.

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## SOUTHERN & EASTERN PIEDMONT

Gourmands on the rebound from an Emilia Romagna foodie tour (fattened up with balsamic vinegar and Parmesan) might think it couldn't get any better. But it can and it does. The bucolic hills, valleys and townships of southern and eastern Piedmont are northern Italy's giant pantry, stuffed with sweet hazelnuts, rare white truffles, arborio rice, delicate veal, subtle cheeses and grapes that metamorphose into Barolo and Barbaresco wines. Out here in the damp Po river basin they give out Michelin stars like overzealous schoolteachers give out house points, and with good reason. The food is sublime, doused in traditions as old as the towns that fostered them. There's Bra, home of the Slow Food Movement; Pollenzo, host to a University of Gastronomic Sciences; Asti replete with truffles and wine; and Alba, where it's almost impossible to have a bad lunch, let alone dinner.

Many trace the gourmet routes in a car but, to compensate for the calorific overload, there are also excellent walking and cycling opportunities.

South of Cuneo, and forgotten by most, are the Maritime Alps, a one-time hunting ground for Savoy kings, and now given over to nature and hikers.

## Cuneo & Around

pop 54,700 / elev 543m

Arriving in Cuneo's gargantuan **Piazza Galimberti**, you'd think you just touched down in a capital city.

Yet diminutive Cuneo is a veritable mystery to anyone outside northern Italy (except perhaps for lovers of its signature rum-flavoured chocolates). Bursting with bold Napoleonic splendour, the outsize square was finished in 1884 and sits aside an older portico-embellished town founded in 1198. To the southwest lie the Maritime Alps (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)), a rugged outdoor adventure playground, while beyond the mountaintops sits France.

Cuneo's **tourist office** (☎ 0171 69 32 58; [www.comune.cuneo.it](http://www.comune.cuneo.it); Via Roma 28; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat) has information on the town. Region-wide information is provided by **Azienda Turistica Locale del Cuneese** (ATL; ☎ 0171 69 02 17; [www.cuneoholiday.com](http://www.cuneoholiday.com); Via Vittorio Amedeo II 8a; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri), which also stocks excellent free hiking-biking booklets with maps.

The city's history is interpreted at the **Museo Civico di Cuneo** (☎ 0171 63 41 75; adult/child €2.60/1.55; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Tue & Sat, 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sun), set around the cloisters of the deconsecrated San Francesco convent and church.

From Cuneo you can head out into the valleys radiating towards the southern French Alps. When snowfalls are good, you can **ski** and **snowboard** here.

## SLEEPING

**Hotel Ligure** (☎ 0171 63 45 45; [www.ligurehotel.com](http://www.ligurehotel.com); Via Savigliano 11; s €55-65, d €70-80, apt long stays €40; 📶 🚰 🚿) In the heart of the old town, this two-star hotel has a handful of apartments with their own kitchens (minimum seven-night stay; no breakfast). If you're just passing through, its freshly spruced-up hotel rooms (with breakfast) are simple but spotless. Call ahead to reserve a parking space.

**our pick Hotel Royal Superga** (☎ 0171 69 32 23; [www.hotelroyalsuperga.com](http://www.hotelroyalsuperga.com); Via Pascal 3; s €55-70, d €75-95; 📶 🚰 🚿) For Superga read superb. This appealing, old-fashioned hotel in a corner of Piazza Galimberti has all mod cons, including a free internet point (still all too rare in Italy), free DVDs to watch in your room, free *aperitivo* if you linger in the lobby between 5pm and 9pm, and free city bikes for guests. Breakfast (included) is a delicious spread made from organic produce.

**Castello Rosso** (☎ 0175 23 00 30; [www.castellorosso.com](http://www.castellorosso.com); Via Ammiraglio Reynaudi 5; s €75-140, d €105-165; 📶 🚰 🚿 🚿) Prince and princess fantasies can be lived out at this 15th-century castle set in gazebo-dotted parklands. Take time out from the regal restaurant and the wellness centre to check out the original frescoes on the 2nd floor. The castle is 10km north of Cuneo; pick-up can be arranged.

## EATING & DRINKING

Typically for Piedmont, Cuneo has some standout places to wine and dine.

**Lo Schiaccianoci** (☎ 0171 60 36 28; Via Peveragno 4; meals €14-20; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Mon) A tiny but affordable place (if you can bag a seat) just off Via Roma that is ideal for small lunchtime taster plates or something more substantial if you're so inclined. The original wood ceilings and magnolia curtains add intimacy. Try the risotto marinara or the ratatouille.

**Locanda da Peiu** (☎ 0171 41 21 74; [www.locandadapeiu.com](http://www.locandadapeiu.com); set menus €35; ☎ Tue-Sun) Only the best and freshest local ingredients are used at Locanda da Peiu, located 3km from the town centre, but within an easy five-minute bus ride (ask for schedules when you book). The €35 set menus are outstanding value, including antipasti, first and second plates, dessert *and* wine. Quality dishes include gnocchi with Castelmagno cheese, served in a hard-baked bread basket.

**our pick Osteria della Chiocciola** (☎ 0171 6 62 77; Via Fossano 1; lunch menu €17.20, dinner €28-33; ☎ Mon-Sat) You can stop by for a glass of wine (from €6) with cheese and salami on the ground floor of this

acclaimed Slow Food restaurant. Upstairs, in a buttercup dining room, choose from the handwritten menu's alchemy of flavours.

Historic chocolatiers include the 1864-established **Bruno** (☎ 0171 68 19 50; [www.localistorici.it](http://www.localistorici.it); Via Roma 28) and the 1920s **Arione** (☎ 0171 69 25 39; [www.arione-cuneo.com](http://www.arione-cuneo.com); Piazza Galimberti 14; ☎ 8am-8pm Tue-Sat, to 1pm & 3.30-8pm Sun), which invented the *Cuneesi al Rhum* – a large, rum-laced praline wrapped in cellophane. The chocolates came to the attention of Hemingway, who made a detour from Milan en route to Nice in 1954 to try them – there's a photograph of his visit in the window.

**Bar Corso** (☎ 0171 60 20 14; Corso Nizza 16; ☎ 7am-1am Thu-Tue) makes Cuneo's best gelati, and is a popular spot for a drink.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Regular trains run from Cuneo's central train station, at Piazzale Libertà, to Saluzzo (€2.70, 35 minutes, up to six daily), Turin (€5.30, 1¼ hours, up to eight daily), San Remo (€6.50, 2¼ hours, three daily) and Ventimiglia (€5.40, two hours, around four daily), as well as Nice (2¾ hours, at least six daily) in France. A second train station for the Cuneo—Gesso line serves the small town of Mondovì, from where there are connections to Savona and Genoa.

## Saluzzo

pop 16,500 / elev 395m

Like Asti and Alba, Saluzzo was once a powerful city-state and its historical importance – while now diminished – means it still merits a visit. Indeed the town is something of a forgotten gem usually missed by gourmand tourists heading east for Barolo and the Langhe. Their loss could be your gain.

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## DETOUR: THE MARITIME ALPS

Northern Italy, crowded? Not if you bring your hiking boots. Shoehorned between the rice-growing plains of Piedmont and the sparkling coastline of Liguria lie the brooding Maritime Alps – a small pocket of dramatically sculpted mountains that rise like stony-faced border guards along the frontier of Italy and France. Smaller, yet no less majestic than their Alpine cousins to the north, the Maritimes are speckled with mirrorlike lakes, foraging ibexes and a hybrid cultural heritage that is as much Southern French as Northern Italian.

Despite their diminutive size, there's a palpable wilderness feel to be found among these glowering peaks. Get out of the populated valleys and onto the imposing central massif and you'll quickly be projected into a high-altitude Shangri La. Whistling marmots scurry under rocky crags doused in mist above a well-marked network of mountain trails where the sight of another hiker – even in peak season – is about as rare as an empty piazza in Rome. This is Italy at its most serene and serendipitous. Not 20km to the south lie the swanky resort towns of Portofino and San Remo, where martini-sipping celebrities wouldn't be seen dead without their expensive handbags and private yachts. Yet up here in the high country that straddles the invisible border between Italy and France all you need is a map, a decent pair of shoes, and enough cheese and ciabatta to keep you going until dinnertime.

The main trailheads lie to the south of the city of Cuneo in a couple of recently inaugurated regional parks: the **Parco Naturale delle Alpi Marittime** and the **Parco Naturale dell'Alta Valle Pesio e Tamaro**. The Lago di Valscura Circuit (21km) starts in the airy spa of Terme di Valdieri and follows an old military road via the Piano del Valasco to an icy lake near the French border. It loops

back past the Rifugio Questa before descending via the same route. For a two-day hike try the Marguareis Circuit (35km) that begins in the small ski centre of Limone Piemonte and tracks up across cols and ridges to the **Rifugio Garelli** (☎ 0171 73 80 78; dm €36; ☒ Jun-Sep). Day two involves looping back through a small segment of France to your starting point in Limone. For more information on both hikes check out Lonely Planet's *Hiking in Italy* guide or consult the APT offices in either Terme or Limone.

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The town is divided into 'old' and 'new' quarters, deceptive terms given that the new town is older than most North American cities. The two sections are a short walk apart. Once a medieval stronghold, the town maintained its independence until the Savoys won it in a 1601 treaty with France. One of its better-known sons was the Italian writer Silvio Pellico (1788–1854). Imprisoned for his patriotism against the Austrian occupation, he wrote parts of his novel *Le Mie Prigioni* (My Prisons) by cutting himself and using his blood as ink. A second well-known local is General Carlo dalla Chiesa (1920–82), whose implacable pursuit of the Mafia led to his assassination.

## SIGHTS

The burnt red—tiled rooftops of Saluzzo's old town make a timeless picture from the loggia beneath the 15th-century belfry of the **Torre Civica** (☎ 0175 4 14 55; Via San Giovanni; admission €1.30, incl Museo Civico di Casa Cavassa €5; ☒ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Thu-Sun Mar-Sep, & Sat & Sun Oct-Feb), reached by a steep flight of steps. Saluzzo's medieval rulers meted out justice from **La Castiglia** (Piazza Castello), the 13th-century castle atop Saluzzo. At the time of writing it was scheduled to reopen shortly to the public – ask the **tourist office** (☎ 0175 4 67 10; [www.comune.saluzzo.it](http://www.comune.saluzzo.it); Piazza Risorgimento; ☒ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon & 3-7pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sun Oct-Mar) for updates.

The **Museo Civico di Casa Cavassa** (☎ 0175 4 14 55; Via San Giovanni 5; adult/child €4/2, incl Torre Civica €5; ☒ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Thu-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue & Wed Oct-Mar) is a fine example of a 16th-century noble residence, and contains a valuable 1499 gold-leaved painting, *Nostra Signora dell Grazie* (Our Lady of Mercy) by Hans Klemmer.

Steps lead from cobbled Via San Giovanni to the beautiful 14th-century **San Giovanni church**, one of many churches in town.

A few kilometres south of Saluzzo, the creaking medieval **castle** (☎ 0175 8 78 22; [www.findoambiente.it](http://www.findoambiente.it); Viale Coni Zugna 5, Manta; adult/child incl audioguide €5/2.50; ☒ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Oct—mid-Dec, to 6pm Tue-Sun Feb-Sep, closed mid-Dec—Jan) in the village of Manta is one of the finest examples of its kind, and carefully guards Europe's most important cycle of late-Gothic secular frescoes. Its large park remains open throughout the day.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Albergo Ristorante Persico** (☎ 0175 4 12 13; [www.albergopersico.net](http://www.albergopersico.net); Vicolo Mercati 10; s/d €43/63; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) This simple but comfy hotel is tucked just off Piazza Cavour in Saluzzo's new town. Discounted half-board options are available at the restaurant (closed Monday), which has regional menus ranging from €15 to €25 for nonguests. Free wi-fi is available in the lobby.

**Perpoin** (☎ 0175 4 23 83; [www.hotelsaluzzo.com](http://www.hotelsaluzzo.com); Via Spielberg 19-27; s €40-70, d €70-100, set menus €12-25; ☒) Enjoy hearty home cooking (and fresh-from-the-oven Nutella-filled croissants at breakfast) at this family-run hotel-restaurant in the new town's centre. There is no hotel reception (the building is a maze of corridors); call ahead to confirm your arrival.

**L'Ostu dij Baloss** (☎ 0175 24 86 18; [www.ostudijbaloss.it](http://www.ostudijbaloss.it); Via Gualtieri 38; bistro menus €16, restaurant menus €34-40; 🍴 lunch Tue-Sat, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷) Spring lamb cooked three ways (grilled, in red wine, and baked) and homemade *tjarin* pasta (finely cut strands, similar to tagliatelle) are among the local specialities served at Baloss' damask-clothed upstairs restaurant in Saluzzo's old town. At street level, its casual bistro with funky contemporary decor serves lighter seasonal dishes.

**Le Quattro Stagioni** (☎ 0175 4 74 70; Via Volta 21; 🍴 lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) As the name implies, the food changes with the season at this bodega-cum-restaurant situated in a street of dark porticos and obscure arcades. The smell of fruity wine through the doorway provides the initial temptation but wait till you get inside for crusty pizza, al dente pasta and the rest. There's a pleasant *giardino* (garden) attached.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

There are **buses** (☎ 0175 4 37 44) from Saluzzo to/from Turin (€3.50, 1½ hours, hourly). Otherwise, take a train to Savigliano (€1.70, 30 minutes, up to six daily), from where there are connections for Turin.

## Alba

**pop 32,000 / elev 172m**

In the gastronomic heaven that is Italy, Alba is an all-time highlight. Eschewing the modern penchant for junk food, this once-powerful-city-state has redirected its energy into showcasing the fine art of *real* cooking, with fresh ingredients plucked from within spear-throwing distance of your restaurant table. Gastronomically, the town is famous for its Ferrero Rocher chocolate factory (Kinder Surprises and Nutella), white truffles and aged wines – including the incomparable Barolo, the Ferrari of reds. All becomes clearer at the annual truffle fair and the equally ecstatic *vendemia* (grape harvest).

Alba's fertile larder, the vine-striped Langhe Hills, radiate out from the town like undulating vegetable gardens replete with grapes, hazelnut groves and fine wineries. Exploring them on foot or with two wheels is a rare pleasure.

## INFORMATION

From the train station walk left along Corso Bandiera and its continuation, Corso Matteotti, to reach the tourist office.

In the town's historic centre, Alba's **tourist office** (☎ 0173 3 58 33; [www.langheroero.it](http://www.langheroero.it); Piazza Risorgimento 2; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun mid-Nov—Mar, 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sat & Sun Apr—mid-Sep, 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat, to 7pm Sun mid-Sep—mid-Nov) sells walking maps and has internet access.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

A historical heavyweight, Alba enjoyed prosperity that reached its apex in the Middle Ages and lasted until 1628 when Savoy took control. At its peak Alba sported more than 100 towers. A sturdy four remain along with the imposing 12th-century **Cattedrale di San Lorenzo** (Piazza Duomo). Also worth a peep is the **Museo Civico Archeologico 'Federico Eusebio'** (Via Vittorio Emanuele II; admission free; 🕒 3-6pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun)

The surrounding cobbled streets are lined with chic boutiques, bars and restaurants.

## TOURS

Alba's tourist office (above) can organise an astounding number of Langhe/Roero valley excursions. Highlights include a 10km **walk** (2½hr walks €15) through the chestnut groves of Roero, **winery tours**



(3½hr tours €80-100) in an air-conditioned minibus, **cooking courses** (half-/full-day courses €70/100), a **truffle-hunting excursion** (two hours; price depends on group size), **horse-riding** (per day €80) in the Upper Langhe, **rafting** (3hr from adult/child €20/12) on the River Tanaro, and – for the ultimate view of the vineyards – a **hot-air balloon flight** (incl transfers, wine & breakfast €220-250). Sunrise balloon flights last one hour, but you'll need to allow four hours in total.

Most activities and tours need to be booked at least two days ahead (tours may be cancelled if there aren't sufficient numbers).

## SLEEPING

The Langhe hills shelter some serene sleeping and eating options – see the Around Alba section (right), or contact the tourist office's **accommodation-booking service** (Conzorzio Turistico Langhe Monferrato Roero; ☎ 0173 36 25 62; [www.turismodoc.it](http://www.turismodoc.it)), through which you can also make restaurant reservations.

**Hotel Savona** (☎ 0173 44 04 40; [www.hotelsavona.com](http://www.hotelsavona.com); Via Roma 1; s/d €72/110; 📞 📺 📺) A businesslike three-star that will put you close to all of Alba's amenities (culinary or otherwise), the Savona springs no surprises but hits the spot with clean comfortable rooms and knowledgeable English-speaking staff.

**Hotel San Lorenzo** (☎ 0173 36 24 06; [www.albergo-sanlorenzo.it](http://www.albergo-sanlorenzo.it); Piazza Rossetti 6; s €65-75, d €95-100; 📺 closed 2 weeks Jan & 2 weeks Aug; 📞) It's very simple. Take 11 rooms in a refurbished 18th-century house, stick it footsteps from the cathedral, call it a boutique hotel and add a unique downstairs pastry shop selling 'healthy' butter/egg/dairy-free confectionery. The result is one of those only-in-Alba moments. Enjoy it while you can.

## EATING & DRINKING

**Vincafé** (☎ 0173 36 46 03; Via Vittorio Emanuele II 12; set menus €10-25) It's hip, but by no means exclusive. Anyone can sup on a glass of wine here, as long as you can squeeze through the door (it's small and popular) and have got the time and/or expertise to sift through a list of over 350 varieties. If in doubt, choose Barolo. Downstairs, in a cool vaulted stone cellar, the restaurant serves up huge healthy salads and pastas.

**our pick Osteria dei Sognatori** (☎ 0173 3 40 43; Via Macrino 8b; meals €12-20; 📺 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Menu? What menu? You get whatever's in the pot at this rustic beneath-the-radar place and it's always delicious. Bank on homemade pasta in a nutty pestolike sauce and the best breadsticks in Italy. Walls are bedecked with football memorabilia and B&W snaps of bearded wartime partisans.

**Piazza Duomo-La Piola** (☎ 0173 44 28 00; Piazza Risorgimento 4; meals €20-30, set menu €60-80; 📺 lunch & dinner, closed Mon & dinner Sun) The best of both worlds are bivouacked in this two-in-one, suit-all-budgets culinary extravaganza in Alba's main square. Downstairs, La Piola sports local blackboard specials, such as *vitello tonnato*, that change daily and allow diners to create their own plates. Upstairs, the theme goes more international in chef Enrico Crippa's Michelin-starred Piazza Duomo, where you can eat creative food beneath colourful wall frescoes painted by contemporary artist Francesco Clemente.

Via Vittorio Emanuele II, Alba's main pedestrian street, is lined with cafes and delicatessens selling fresh truffles in season, and *crutina al tartufo* (hard cheese with flecks of black truffle). Market stalls in the town centre sell fresh produce and local delicacies every Saturday morning.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

From the **bus station** (☎ 800 019152; Corso Matteotti 10) there are frequent buses to/from Turin (€3.70,

1½ hours, up to 10 daily) and sporadic buses to/from Barolo (€1.60, 25 minutes, two daily) and other surrounding villages.

From Alba's **train station** (Piazza Trento e Trieste) there are regular trains to/from Turin (€4.80 via Bra/Asti, 50 minutes, hourly).

Irregularity of buses makes touring the Langhe better by car or bike. For bike hire try **Cicli Gagliardini** (☎ 0173 44 07 26; Via Ospedale 7) or ask at the tourist office. Prices hover at around €15 per day. Cars go from €23 per day or the tourist office can hook you up with a driver (prices vary). Even better – hire a Vespa!

## Around Alba

Alba vs Asti, Barolo vs Barbaresco: sometimes it seems as if southeastern Piedmont is hiding a whole alphabet's worth of historical rivalries. The castle-crowned Langhe hills produce some of Italy's best reds. Hire a bike and wobble freely between tasting rooms.

### CHERASCO

**pop 7200 / elev 288m**

Located 23km west of Alba, within the Langhe's lush wine country, Cherasco is actually best known for *lumache* (snails). The town is home to the **Istituto Internazionale di Elicoltura** (International Institute for Heliciculture; ☎ 0172 48 92 18; [www.lumache-elici.com](http://www.lumache-elici.com); Via Vittorio Emanuele 55), which provides technical advice for snail breeders (heliciculture is edible-snail breeding). Snails in this neck of the woods are dished up *nudo* (shell-less). They can be panfried, roasted, dressed in an artichoke sauce or minced inside ravioli. Piedmont dishes made with snails include *lumache al barbera* (snails simmered in Barbera red wine and ground nuts) and *lumache alla Piemontese* (snails stewed with onions, nuts, anchovies and parsley in a tomato sauce).

Traditional trattorias serving such dishes include **Osteria della Rosa Rossa** (☎ 0172 48 81 33; Via San Pietro 31; set menus €30-35; ☎ 12.30-2pm & 8-9pm Fri-Tue). Advance reservations are required.

Wine is not forgotten in Cherasco, though. The **Scuola di Degustazione Enoteca Patrino** (☎ 0172 48 96 75; [www.enotecapatrino.it](http://www.enotecapatrino.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 78; courses per 2 people 2hr/day €80/210) runs detailed wine-tasting courses in several languages (cheaper for larger groups, as pricey bottles are opened especially for participants).

Typically for Piedmont, chocolate is not forgotten, either. The beautiful confectioner **Pasticceria Barbero** (☎ 0172 48 83 73; [www.pasticceriabarbero.com](http://www.pasticceriabarbero.com); Via Vittorio Emanuele 74; ☎ Thu-Tue) is a Heritage-listed monument of wood, white marble and brass. Since opening in 1881 it has handmade *Baci di Cherasco* ('Cherasco's kisses', made with 60% chocolate and toasted local hazelnuts), along with other treats such as grappa-filled sweets, chocolate truffles and, of course, snails (made from chocolate, honey and hazelnut paste).

**Al Cardinal Mazzarino** (☎ 0172 48 83 64; [www.cardinalmazzarino.com](http://www.cardinalmazzarino.com); Via Pietro 48; s €150-200, d €180-220; ☎) is one of Cherasco's most atmospheric sleeping options. This former cardinal's residence, situated in the town centre, has just three antiques-filled rooms, as well as a high-quality regional restaurant (also open to nonguests).

### BAROLO & LA MORRA

Made from Nebbiolo grapes, and aged in oak barrels for three to four years, the velvety, truffle-scented reds produced around Barolo (population 680) and its 10 adjoining villages (including La Morra,

Cherasco and Serralunga) are revered by critics as the ‘king of wines’.

Situated at the heart of these esteemed vineyards, the diminutive village of Barolo is lorded over by its castle, the **Castello Falletti** (☎ 0173 5 62 77; [www.baroloworld.it](http://www.baroloworld.it); admission €3.50; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Fri-Wed), which can be toured during a visit to its **Enoteca Regionale del Barolo**. Right inside the castle, the *enoteca* (wine bar) has three Barolo wines available for tasting each day, costing each/all three €2/5.

If you want to visit some of the Barolo vineyards (and taste-test some of their produce), contact **L’Insieme** (☎ 0173 50 92 12; [www.linsieme.org](http://www.linsieme.org); Cascina Nuova 51, La Morra) in La Morra (population 2670). L’Insieme is an association of nine small, independent winemakers who have banded together to create premium wines, ploughing back some of the profits into international charities. Members such as **Mauro Veglio** (☎ 3336 72 49 68; [www.mauroveglio.com](http://www.mauroveglio.com); Frazione Annunziata, Cascina Nuova 50, La Morra) will be happy to give you a tour and free tasting. More economical bottles of Nebbiolo (using the same grapes as Barolo but aged in oak for just one year before they’re ready to drink) are also for sale. Phone ahead for reservations and directions.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Barolo** (☎ 0173 5 63 54; [www.hotelbarolo.it](http://www.hotelbarolo.it); Via Lomondo 2, Barolo; s/d €65/90; 📞 📺 📺) In the small town of Barolo overlooked by the famous *enoteca*-masquerading-as-a-castle, Hotel Barolo is a fine place to sit back on the terrace with a glass of you-know-what, contemplating the 18th-century Piedmontese architecture that guards its shimmering swimming pool. You don’t have to go far for a good meal – the on-site Ristorante Brezza has been serving up truffles and the like for nigh on a century.

**Villa Carita B&B** (☎ 0173 50 96 33; [www.villacarita.it](http://www.villacarita.it); Via Roma 105, La Morra; s/d/ste €90/120/150; 📞) When you dream of Italy, chances are somewhere in that dream is a room with a view across sun-dappled vineyards. This B&B not only has blink-to-be-sure-you’re-not-still-dreaming daytime views from every room (and its panoramic terrace), but romantic nighttime views of La Morra’s village lights. Tucked below the main building, one room and one suite are hidden in the hillside with their own private terraces.

**Belvedere** (☎ 0173 5 01 90; Piazza Castello 5, La Morra; set menus €42; 🕒 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat Mar-Dec, closed last week in Jul) ‘Beautiful view’ is no arbitrary name – it’s adjacent to La Morra’s lookout point. But Gian Bovio’s *risotto al Barolo*, Barbera-cooked steak and triple-pyramid of chocolate all do their best to distract you from the vistas; as does the bewildering decision of choosing among more than 1000 wines.

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## KING BAROLO & QUEEN BARBARESCO

In a country that produces more *vino* than anywhere else on the planet (including France), it’s perhaps fitting that the precocious Piedmontese have christened their prized home-produced Barolo and Barbaresco the ‘king and queen of wines’. Red, full-bodied and lauded worldwide, these royal oenological lineages are both formulated from 100% Nebbiolo grapes grown less than 3km apart in a triangle of land that lies between the two medieval fiefdoms of Alba and Asti. In Piedmontese dialect *nebbia* means ‘little fog’, an allusion, not to the state of your brain after six glasses, but to the early autumn mists that hang like a Holy Shroud over the Langhe hills during the October grape harvest.

While both wines exhibit classic Piedmontese aromas of roses, truffles and tar, there are some subtle but key differences. Situated slightly to the east, the Barbaresco zone’s balmier climate allows

for an earlier harvest and maceration process, meaning smoother, more elegant flavours (hence the ‘queen’ tag) and less aged vintages. Furthermore, Barbaresco’s growing area is significantly smaller than Barolo’s, leading to a lower grape output but – in the minds of many aficionados – a higher level of consistency.

Nurtured to the west, Barolo’s heritage is much older than that of its royal partner. Its initial formula was perfected by such historic luminaries as the Comte di Cavour, who fed it to his regal friends in the House of Savoy leading it to be dubbed the ‘wine of kings’. Old-fashioned Barolo was tannic, aged and often rather sweet, but following a reinvention in the 1970s and ’80s – in an episode known rather dramatically as the ‘Barolo wars’ – fruitier and more youthful varieties have emerged.

Both wines make an excellent accompaniment to grilled meats, stews, veal and even truffles.

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## SERRALUNGA D’ALBA

### pop 500

On the highest point of Serralunga d’Alba, 15km south of Alba, the **Castello di Serralunga d’Alba** (☎ 0173 61 33 58; admission free; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-5pm Tue-Sun winter, to 6pm Tue-Sun summer) is the Langhe’s most absorbing castle, due to its intact but completely unrenovated, shell-like interior.

Wandering around its echoing rooms, you’d swear you can hear the footsteps of the armoured sentry who once guarded it. The former fortress was built in the 11th century, but most of what you see today was reconstructed in the 14th century, including a then-state-of-the-art defence system (you can still see the remains of the drawbridge). If no one’s around during opening hours, knock on the castle-keeper’s door to be let in.

Beneath the castle, this untouched little village has a handful of simple restaurants, including **Ristorante di Anselma** (☎ 0173 61 31 24; Piazza Cappellano 3a; mains around €10; 🕒 Tue-Sun), where you can enjoy a plateful of Langhe cuisine or just a glass of local wine.

### BARBARESCO & NEIVE

Same grape, different flavour! Only a few kilometres separate Barolo from Barbaresco (population 660), the home of the renowned wine of the same name, but a rainier microclimate and fewer ageing requirements have made the latter into a softer, more delicate red that plays ‘queen’ to Barolo’s ‘king’. You can worship Barbaresco wines at the intimate **Enoteca Regionale del Barbaresco** (☎ 0173 63 52 51; Piazza del Municipio 7, Barbaresco; 🕒 9.20am-6.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Sun), housed inside a deconsecrated church, with wines lined up where the altar once stood. It costs €1.50 per individual tasting; six Barbaresco wines are available to try each day.

**our pick** **Ristorante Rabayà** (☎ 0173 63 52 23; Via Rabayà 9, Barbaresco; set menus €28-40; 🕒 Fri-Wed, closed mid-Feb—early Mar), on the fringe of town, is one of Barbaresco’s first-rate restaurants. It has the ambience of dining at a private home. Its antiques-furnished dining room has a roaring fire, but when the sun’s shining, there’s no better spot than its terrace set high above the vineyards. Try Rabayà’s signature rabbit in Barbaresco, followed by a platter of local cheese.

If you haven’t had your fill of wine yet, head a further 4km east to the pin-drop-quiet village of Neive (population 2930), where you’ll find the **Bottega dei Quattro Vini** (☎ 0173 67 70 14; Piazza Italia 2, Neive; 🕒 vary). This two-room shop was set up by the local community to showcase the so-titled four DOC wines (Dolcetto d’Alba, Barbaresco, Moscato and Barbera d’Alba) produced on Neive’s hills. (Neive was the first village in Italy to lay claim to four DOCs.) Inside, sample wines by the glass (€1.80 to €4.50), accompanied by cold local specialities (€3.50 to €10) such as anchovies in green sauce, Langhe cheese served with *cugnà* (jam made from pressed grape residue) and *torta di nocciole* (flourless

hazelnut cake, best paired with late-harvest Passito wine). The shop is a showroom for just 34 local producers, and sells bottles at cellar-door prices.

## Bra & Pollenzo

pop 28,300

Bra – the name barely registers outside the northwest. But it was in this small, unassuming Piedmontese town in 1987 that the audacious Slow Food Movement first took root. The brainchild of a group of disenchanted local journalists, the initial manifesto (see the boxed text, opposite) ignited a global crusade against the encroaching fast-food juggernaut whose plastic tentacles were threatening to engulf Italy's centuries-old gastronomic traditions. The backlash worked and Bra happily broadcasts its success. There are no cars and no supermarkets in this refreshingly laidback town's historic centre where small, family-run shops (which shut religiously for a 'slowdown' twice a week) are replete with organic sausages, handcrafted chocolates and fresh local farm produce.

### INFORMATION

Bra's **tourist office** (☎ 0172 43 01 84; [www.comune.bra.cn.it](http://www.comune.bra.cn.it), in Italian; Via Moffa di Lisio 14; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun Mar-Nov) has information on both towns and the region.

### SIGHTS

The town remains home to the **Slow Food headquarters** (☎ 0172 41 96 11; [www.slowfood.it](http://www.slowfood.it); Via della Mendicità Istruita 14), though there's not a lot to see apart from an office (dispensing leaflets) and a small bookshop, plus an affiliated restaurant, Osteria del Boccondivino (opposite).

Bra's history began long before its 1987 Slow Food epiphany. The sloping main square contains some stately baroque architecture best exemplified in the **Chiesa di San Andrea** (Piazza Caduti), designed by Bernini. The **Santuario della Madonna dei Fiori** (Viale Madonna dei Fiori) mixes baroque with neoclassical and is devoted to the Madonna, who supposedly appeared here in 1336, while the elegantly domed **Chiesa di Santa Chiara** (Via Craveri) is a jewel of Piedmontese Rococo.

The town's history is exhibited in the Palazzo Traversa, aka the **Museo Civico Artistico-Storico** (☎ 0172 42 38 80; Palazzo Traversa, Via Parpera 4; admission free; ☎ 3-6pm Tue-Thu, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Sat & Sun 2nd week of month) and includes Roman artefacts, 18th-century paintings and medieval weaponry, while the **Museo Civico di Storia Naturale** (☎ 0172 41 20 10; Via Craveri 15; admission free; ☎ 3-6pm Tue-Sun) features fossils, minerals and stuffed birds.

Around 4km southeast of Bra is the village of Pollenzo, once an important Roman settlement and since 2004 the equally important home of the **Università di Scienze Gastronomiche** (University of Gastronomic Sciences; ☎ 0172 45 84 19; [www.unisg.it](http://www.unisg.it); Piazza Vittorio Emanuele 9), another creation of Carlo Petrini, founder of the Slow Food Movement. The campus occupies a former royal palace, and offers three-year courses in gastronomy and food management. Also here is the acclaimed **Guido Ristorante** (Guido Ristorante; ☎ 0172 45 84 22; [www.guidoristorante.it](http://www.guidoristorante.it); set menus €75; ☎ Tue-Sat, closed Jan & Aug) that people have been known to cross borders to visit, especially for the veal. Next door is the Albergo Dell'Agenzia (below), and the **Banca del Vino** (☎ 0172 45 84 18; [www.bancadelvino.it](http://www.bancadelvino.it), in Italian), and a wine-cellar-'library' of Italian wines. Free guided tastings are available by reservation. The university also has a campus in Colorno, in the province of Parma.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**ourpick** **Albergo Cantine Ascheri** (☎ 0172 43 03 12; [www.ascherihotel.it](http://www.ascherihotel.it); Via Piumati 25, Bra; s/d €80/120; 📞 📧 📱) Built around the Ascheri family's 1880-established winery, incorporating wood, steel

mesh and glass, this ultracontemporary hotel includes a mezzanine library, 27 sun-drenched rooms, and a vine-lined terrace overlooking the rooftops. From the lobby you can see straight down to the vats in the cellar (guests get a free tour). It's just one block south of Bra's train station.

**Albergo Dell'Agenzia** (☎ 0172 45 86 00; [www.albergoagenzia.it](http://www.albergoagenzia.it); Via Fossano 21, Pollenzo-Bra; s €155, d €195-240; 📄 📄) Prince Charles, among others, has stayed at the unique Albergo Dell'Agenzia, part of the same complex that houses the Università di Scienze Gastronomiche in Pollenzo. The rooms are spacious and elegantly furnished with huge beds, walk-in wardrobes and sparkling-clean bathrooms. With a restaurant run by people who really know their business, a well-stocked wine cellar and a park, what more could you ask for?

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## THE BIG FORK MANIFESTO *Alison Bing*

Remember lunch? Not the stuff you bolt down at your desk one-handed as you type, text or telephone, but a proper Italian *pranzo* – the kind that makes you wait and salivate with fork in hand, knowing your day is about to take a turn for the better. Can't recall? Neither could a handful of dejected Italian journalists in the small town of Bra, Piedmont back in 1987. McDonald's had just begun expansion into Italy, and lunch outside the bun seemed to be fading into fond memory. But rather than wallow in Proustian melancholy, Carlo Petrini and his fellow *neoforchettoni* ('big forks', or foodies) decided to do something about it. In a manifesto published in the like-minded culinary magazine *Gambero Rosso*, they declared that a meal should be judged not by its speed, but by its pure pleasure. The organisation they founded would soon become known worldwide as **Slow Food** ([www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)), and its mission to reconnect artisanal producers with enthusiastic, educated consumers has taken root with more than 80,000 members in 50 countries – not to mention Slow Food *agriturismi*, restaurants, farms, wineries, cheesemakers and revitalised farmers' markets across Italy.

Far more than a pack of picky eaters, Slow Food is a political dynamo, promoting biodiversity, sustainability and shared food resources worldwide. A former Fiat factory in Turin becomes a vast salon with the world's best finger food at the biennial **Salone del Gusto & Terre Madre**, the global Slow Food symposia featuring Slow Food producers, chefs, activists, restaurateurs, farmers, scholars, environmentalists and epicureans from 131 countries. These Olympian foodie events are held in even-numbered years; odd years feature speciality events such as **Slow Fish** ([www.slowfish.it](http://www.slowfish.it)) in Genoa and **Cheese** ([www.cheese.slowfood.com](http://www.cheese.slowfood.com)) and **Slow Food on Film** ([www.slowfoodonfilm.it](http://www.slowfoodonfilm.it)) in Bra. Paradoxically, Slow Food is now growing faster than McDonald's in Piedmont: there may be 28 outlets of the American fast-food chain in the region, but there are twice as many acclaimed Slow Food restaurants. At this slow but steady rate, perhaps future generations will remember how to use a fork, and wield it wisely.

*Alison Bing has been a Slow Food San Francisco member since 2004.*

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**Osteria del Boccondivino** (☎ 0172 42 56 74; [www.boccondivinoslow.it](http://www.boccondivinoslow.it), in Italian; Via Mendicità Istruita 14, Bra; set menus €26-28; 📄 Tue-Sat) Up on the 1st floor of the recessed courtyard of the Slow Food Movement's headquarters, this homey little eatery lined with wine bottles was the first to be opened by the emerging organisation back in the 1980s. The food is predictably fresh and excellent, and the local Langhe menu changes daily.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From the train station on Piazza Roma, trains link Bra with Turin (€3.50, one hour), via Carmagnola, while buses connect Bra with Pollenzo (€1, 15 minutes, Monday to Saturday morning).

# Asti

**pop 73,400 / elev 123m**

Situated just 30km apart, Asti and Alba were fierce rivals in medieval times when they faced off against each other as feisty independent strongholds ruled over by feuding royal families. The rivalry is still recalled in the annual **Palio d'Asti**, a bareback horse race on the third Sunday of September that commemorates a victorious battle against Alba during the Middle Ages and draws over a quarter of a million spectators from villages around. (Alba answers with a more tongue-in-cheek donkey race on the first Sunday in October.) These days the two towns are united by viticulture rather than divided by factionalism. Asti – by far the bigger town – produces the sparkling white Asti Spumante wine made from white Muscat grapes, while Alba concocts Barolo and Barbaresco.

The 10-day **Douja d'Or** festival (a *douja* being a terracotta wine jug unique to Asti), in the first or second week in September, is complemented by the **Delle Sagre** food festival on the second Sunday of September.

Like Alba, the countryside around Asti contains precious black and white truffles. Asti's **truffle fair** is in November.

Asti's largely pedestrianised centre is attractive, though less intimate than Alba's. The town became a Roman colony in 89 BC, and after existing as an independent city-state in the 13th and 14th centuries, it was passed around between Spain, Austria, France and finally the Savoy, prior to unification.

## INFORMATION

The town's two **tourist offices** (☎ 0141 53 03 57; [www.astiturismo.it](http://www.astiturismo.it)) Piazza Alfieri 29 (🕒 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm); Corso Alfieri 328 (🕒 10am-1pm & 3-6pm) have details of September's flurry of wine festivals.

## SIGHTS

During the late 13th century the region became one of Italy's wealthiest, with 150-odd towers springing up in Asti alone. Of the 12 that remain today, one, the 38m-tall **Torre Troyana o Dell'Orologio** (☎ 0141 39 94 60; Piazza Medici; admission free; 🕒 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun Oct), can be climbed. Also rising above Asti's historic core is the enormous belfry of the 13th-century Romanesque-Gothic **Cattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta** (Piazza Cattedrale). Its grandly painted interior merits a peek.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Outside the town centre, there are some lovely spots to sleep in the nearby Monferrato vineyards – see right or ask Asti's tourist offices for a list of properties, including *agriturismi*.

**Hotel Cavour** (☎ 0141 53 02 22; [www.hotelcavour-asti.com](http://www.hotelcavour-asti.com), in Italian; Piazza Marconi; s €45-50, d €65-73; 📞 🚰 🚿) Asti's budget option is a small, cheap place, next to the railway station, where bright colours enliven otherwise drab, dark rooms. Everything is clean, though the extrasensitive may detect the faint smell of cigarette smoke. There's a small restaurant downstairs and disabled access.

**Hotel Palio** (☎ 0141 3 43 71; [www.hotelpalio.com](http://www.hotelpalio.com); Via Cavour 106; d €75-107; 📞 🚰 🚿 🛎️ 📶) Wedged between the train station and the old town, the Palio's utilitarian exterior belies plusher facilities inside. Reflecting Asti's juxtaposition of old and new, the hotel broadcasts chic, smart rooms with satellite TVs and wi-fi along with an atmospherically decorated inner sanctum. The owners also run the Ristorante Falcon Vecchia, one of Asti's oldest, which opened in 1607.

**Pompa Magna** (☎ 0141 32 44 02; Via Aliberti 65; set menus €20-30; ☒ Tue-Sun; ☒) This split-level brasserie-style restaurant is a great spot for a bruschetta and glass of very good wine (the Pompa Magna also owns an *enoteca* in town at Corso Alfieri 332; closed Mondays). But it's worth coming hungry for its chef-prepared menus and especially its *bônnet* (an elaborate chocolate pudding) for dessert.

**Osteria La Vecchia Carrozza** (☎ 0141 53 86 57; Via Caducci 41; meals €18-25; ☒ Tue-Sun) You could be sharing the room with a quartet of nuns or a birthday party of celebrating college graduates at this local spot bedecked with white tablecloths and polished wine glasses, but characterised by plenty of down-to-earth Piedmontese ambience. This being Asti, the food is infused with truffles, Barolo wine and a formidable *agnolotti di astigiana*.

Fresh food, along with clothes and all sorts of household paraphernalia, is sold at Asti's Wednesday and Saturday morning markets on Piazza Alfieri and Piazza Campo del Palio.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Asti is on the Turin—Genoa railway line and is served by hourly trains in both directions. Journey time is 30 to 55 minutes to/from Turin (€3.90), and 1¼ hours to/from Genoa (€6.50), stopping at Alba (€2.70, 40 minutes).

## Around Asti

Vineyards fan out around Asti, interspersed with castles and celebrated restaurants. Buses run from Asti to many of the villages; Asti's tourist offices can provide schedules.

## MONFERRATO

A land of literary giants (contemporary novelist Umberto Eco and 18th-century dramatist Vittorio Alfieri hail from here) and yet another classic wine (the intense Barbera del Monferrato), the Monferrato area occupies a fertile triangle of terrain between Asti, Alessandria and its historic capital, **Casale Monferrato** (population 38,500).

The tiny hamlet of **Moncalvo** (population 3320), 15km north of Asti along the S457, makes a perfect photo stop, with a lookout above its **castle**, where you'll also find an **information office** (Piazza Antico Castello; ☒ Sat & Sun, specific hr vary) and wine tasting.

Many producers, such as Tenuta Castello di Razzano (opposite) conduct cellar tours; the **Consorzio Operatori Turistici Asti e Monferrato** (☎ 0141 59 46 98; [www.terredasti.it](http://www.terredasti.it); Piazza Alfieri 29) in Asti has a detailed list of tours and can provide directions.

Dating from 1550, **Tenuta del Barone** (☎ 0141 91 01 61; [www.tenutadelbarone.com](http://www.tenutadelbarone.com); Via Barone 18, Penango; s €45-50, d €70-75, dinner incl wine €25; ☒ ☒) is a family farm that has been converted into a cheery B&B. Sleep in the old stables and feast on huge amounts of homemade food. Medieval-cooking courses and wine tasting are often available. Penango, 2km from Moncalvo, is signposted from Moncalvo's southern end.

**our pick** **Tenuta Castello di Razzano** (☎ 0141 92 21 24; [www.castellodirazzano.it](http://www.castellodirazzano.it); Frazione Casarello 2, Alfiano Natta; d/ste €110/200; ☒ ☒ ☒) is a rambling castle, which is possible to visit just to tour its working winery, and take part in a personal, seated wine tasting (from €6 for five wines, an aromatic wine and Barbera grappa plus local raw and cooked salami, bread, focaccia and pizzas; up to €15 for eight wines and a veritable feast of snacks). But to soak up the antiques-filled castle's atmosphere, you'll want to stay in one of its rooms the size of small apartments (some the size of large apartments) and roam its historic halls or curl up in its book-lined reading room. Alfiano Natta is 6km west of Moncalvo.



For Piedmontese pampering, head to **Locanda del Sant'Uffizio** (☎ 0141 91 62 92; Strada Sant'Uffizio 1, Cioccaro di Penango; s €128-175, d €171-240; 📄 📷 📺 📺), a restored 17th-century convent (and sleek new wing and wellness centre) set in 4 hectares of vineyards. Many of the convent's rooms – some with original frescoes – reflect the colour of the flowers after which they are named. Bike rental is free, and a pick-up service from Asti can be arranged. Sant'Uffizio has a small, elegant **restaurant** (lunch/dinner menus €23/55), which is open to nonguests, though you'll need to book ahead.

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## NORTHERN PIEDMONT

The land around **Vercelli** (population 480,010), on the west bank of the Sesia river, is so flat and soggy that some 100 varieties of rice are grown here. The most famous style comes from tiny **Arborio** (population 1035) about 20km north of Vercelli, a settlement whose name has become synonymous with risotto.

Following the Sesia river north past Varallo to Monte Rosa, straddling the Valle d'Aosta, Alpine slopes climb sharply. Skiing, walking, biking and white-water rafting are among the possibilities for exploring this mountainous terrain.

In Piedmont's northeast are the captivating lakes of Lago d'Orta, and the western shore (and Borromean Islands) of Lago Maggiore; both are covered in the Lombardy & the Lakes chapter [Click here](#).

**Ivrea** is worth a quick stop. Going quietly about its business most of the year, the town, 55km northeast of Turin en route to the Valle d'Aosta, explodes during its chaotic **Battaglia delle Arance**. Starting the Sunday before Shrove Tuesday, this three-day 'battle of the oranges' sees more than 3500 people pound each other with 400,000kg of oranges, re-enacting the townspeople's 12th-century uprising against the aristocracy. (Napoleon demanded oranges replace the stones originally used.)

Ivrea's **tourist office** (☎ 0125 61 81 31; [www.canavese-vallilanzo.it](http://www.canavese-vallilanzo.it), in Italian; Corso Vercelli 1; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Sat) has information on visiting the old town's medieval **castle** and 11th-century **cathedral**.

Typewriter manufacturer Olivetti was founded in Ivrea by local entrepreneur Camillo Olivetti (1868–1943) in 1896. Today its Bauhaus-inspired factory and giant glass office facades form part of **MAAM** (Museo a Cielo Aperto dell'Architettura Moderna; ☎ 0125 64 18 15; Via Jervis 26; admission free; 🕒 museum 24hr, info centre 9am-1pm Tue-Sat), an open-air museum of modern architecture. Seven numbered information panels in English lead visitors on a tour of the Olivetti buildings' exterior (all are still in use).

From Ivrea's train station on the corner of Corso Jervis and Corso Nigra in the new town, there are direct trains to/from Aosta (€3.50, one hour, hourly) and Turin (€3.90, one hour, up to eight daily). Both the historic centre and MAAM are an easy walk from here.

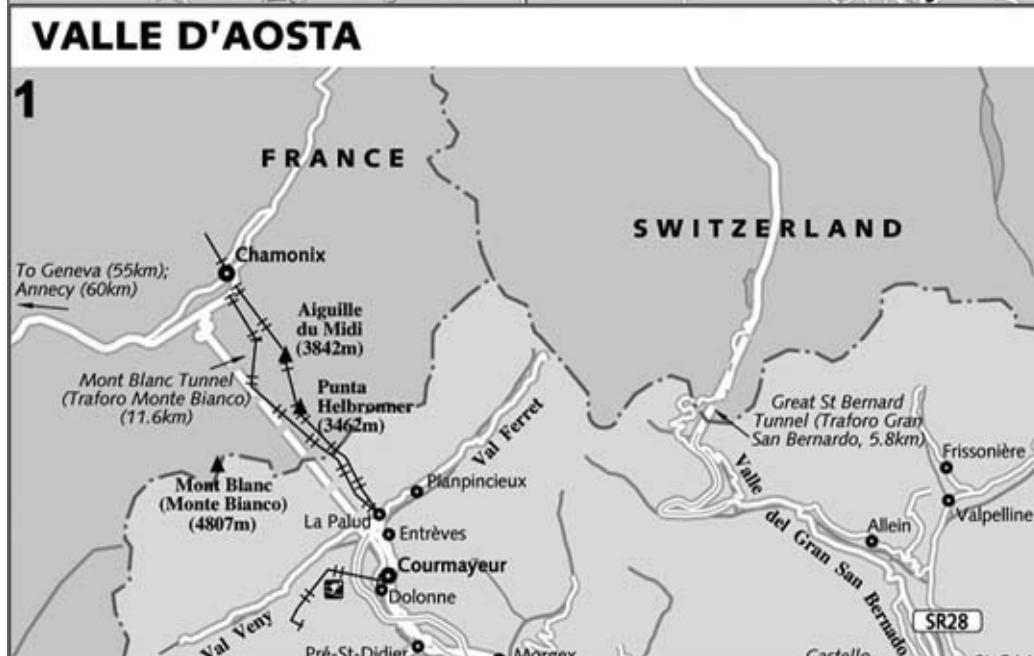
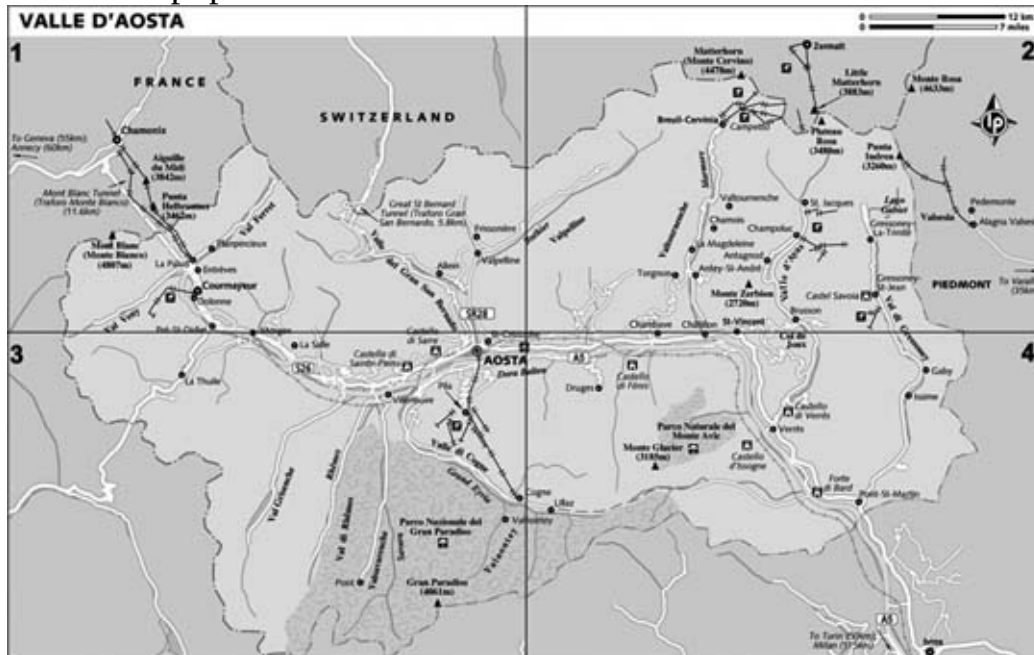
Northern Piedmont is also home to the Valsesia valley, which together with the Valle d'Aosta's Valle d'Ayas and Val di Gressoney forms the Monte Rosa ski area ([Click here](#)).

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## VALLE D'AOSTA

## pop 120,600

The semiautonomous Val d'Aosta is the smallest and least populous of Italy's regions and remained a virtual cul de sac until the opening of the Mount Blanc tunnel in 1965. While its Dolomite cousins exhibit notable German tendencies and Friuli Venezia Giulia leans subtly towards the east, Aosta's nuances are French. The result is a curious hybrid culture known as Valdostan, a historical mix of French-Provençal and northern Italian that has infiltrated the food (polenta, spicy sausages and the famous *fontina* cheese) and ensured the survival of an esoteric local language, Franco-Provençal or Valdôtain, a dialect still used by approximately 55% of the population.





Monte Rosa and Gran Paradiso. Not surprisingly the region offers some of the best snow facilities on the continent with opportunities for skiers to descend hair-raisingly into France and Switzerland over lofty glaciers or traverse them in equally spectacular cable cars.

When the snow melts, the hiking is even more sublime, with access to the 165km Tour du Mont Blanc, the Gran Paradiso National Park, and Aosta's two Blue Riband high-altitude trails, the Alte Vie 1 and 2.

Aosta's roots are Roman – the eponymous town boasts some significant ruins – while annexation by the House of Savoy in the 11th century led to the building of numerous medieval castles. In the 12th and 13th centuries German-speaking Walsers from Switzerland migrated into the Val di Gressoney and a handful of villages still preserve the vernacular language and architecture.

With the opening of the Mont Blanc tunnel in 1965, life in the Val d'Aosta changed exponentially, with tourists flocking in to ski the high Alps in the two popular resort towns of Courmayeur and Breuil-Cervinia. Transformed from rural backwater to 21st-century success story, the Aostan economy now revolves around tourism and high-quality cheese and wine production. The region also boasts some of the highest living standards in Italy and reports the nation's (and world's) lowest birth rate.

## Activities

Thundering off-piste opportunities abound in the Valle d'Aosta's mountains, which also offer groomed runs for **downhill skiing**. Courmayeur (adjacent to Mont Blanc) and Breuil-Cervinia (from where you can ski to Zermatt, Switzerland) are the best-known resorts, but smaller spots such as Pila (immediately south of Aosta) and the Monte Rosa ski areas also have scenic skiing for all levels. The Valle di Cogne, in Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso, and the Val di Gressoney, at the southern foot of Monte Rosa, are leading **cross-country skiing** centres.

A three-/six-day lift pass covering the entire Valle d'Aosta, Alagna Valsesia (Piedmont) and Zermatt (Switzerland) costs €104/195. A six-day Mont Blanc Snow Safari pass (€231) is valid in the Four Valleys skiing area (Switzerland), Chamonix (France) and Valle d'Aosta. Various other passes are available; see [www.skivallee.it](http://www.skivallee.it).

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## AOSTA

**pop 34,200 / elev 565m**

Jagged Alpine peaks rise like wizened white sentinels above sprawling Aosta, looking down on a settlement that has honoured them since Roman times. Bounced around between Burgundy (France) and Savoy (Italy) in the Middle Ages, the modern town remains bilingual with a culture that claims to be Valdostan, a factor best reflected in its musical local dialect and simple but hearty cuisine.

An important Roman settlement, Aosta's geometric street layout and 2000-year-old walls have successfully survived a 21st-century invasion of cars and tourists, although these days skiers easily outnumber archaeologists (a ski lift departs from the town centre). An added bonus is Aosta's proximity to Gran Paradiso, Italy's oldest national park, a veritable paradise for summertime hikers and mountaineers.

## Information

Banks abound on and around the Piazza Chanoux.

**Aosta tourist office** (☎ 0165 23 66 27; [www.regione.vda.it/turismo](http://www.regione.vda.it/turismo); Piazza Chanoux 2; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-8pm Jun-Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Oct-May) Region-wide information including accommodation lists.

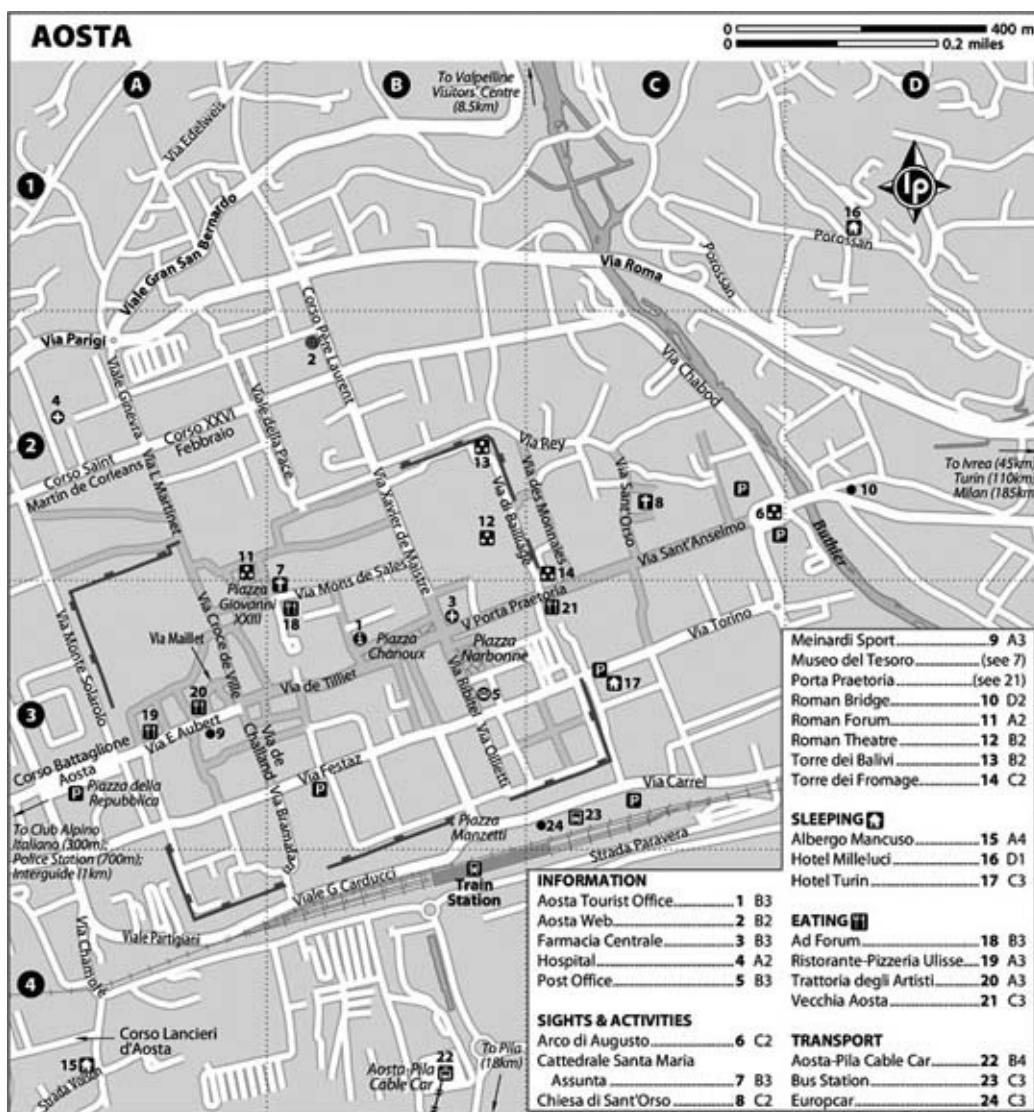
**Aosta Web** (☎ 0165 06 00 15; Ave Pere Laurent cnr XXVI Febbraio; per hr €2; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm, 2.30-8.30pm, closed Sun am) Internet.

**Farmacia Centrale** (☎ 0165 26 22 05; Piazza Chanoux 35) Pharmacy.

**Hospital** (☎ 0165 30 41; Viale Ginevra 3)

**Police station** (☎ 0165 26 21 69; Corso Battaglione Aosta 169) West of the town centre.

**Post office** (Piazza Narbonne; ☎ 8.15am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)



## Sights

### ROMAN RUINS

While Aosta's splayed suburbs can be a little hard on the eye, its 2000-year-old central district is awash with Roman ruins. The grand triumphal arch, **Arco di Augusto** (Piazza Arco di Augusto) has been strung with a crucifix in its centre since medieval times. From the arch, head east across the Buthier river bridge to view the cobbled **Roman bridge** – still in use since the 1st century. Afterwards, backtracking west 300m along Via Sant'Anselmo brings you to **Porta Praetoria**, the main gate to the Roman city.

Continuing north along Via di Bailliage and down a dust track brings you to Aosta's **Roman theatre** (Via Porta Praetoria; admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm Sep-Jun, to 8pm Jul & Aug). Part of its 22m-high facade

is still intact. In summer, performances are held in the better-preserved lower section. All that remains of the **Roman forum**, another couple of blocks west, beneath Piazza Giovanni XXIII, is a colonnaded walkway known as **Criptoportico**. The foreboding **Torre dei Balivi**, a former prison, marks one corner of the Roman wall and peers down on the smaller **Torre dei Fromage** (☎ vary depending on exhibition) – named after a family rather than a cheese. It's closed to the public except during temporary art exhibitions – the tourist office has a program.

### CATTEDRALE SANTA MARIA ASSUNTA

The neoclassical facade of Aosta's **cathedral** (Piazza Giovanni XXIII; ☎ 6.30am-noon & 3-7pm) belies the impressive Gothic interior. Inside, the carved 15th-century walnut-wood choir stalls are particularly beautiful. Two mosaics on the floor, dating from the 12th to the 13th centuries, are also worth studying, as are the religious art treasures displayed in the **Museo del Tesoro** (☎ 0165 4 04 13; adult/child €2.10/0.75; ☎ 9-11.30am & 3-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30-10am & 10.45-11.30am Sun Apr-Sep, 8.30-10am, 10.45-11.30am & 3-5.30pm Sun Oct-Feb).

### CHIESA DI SANT'ORSO

Aosta's most intriguing sight is this **church** (Via Sant'Orso; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Sun Oct-Feb, 9am-7pm Mar-Jun & Sep, 9am-8pm Jul & Aug), which is part of a still-operating monastery. The church dates back to the 10th century but was altered on several occasions, notably in the 15th century when Giorgio di Challant of the ruling family ordered the original **frescoes** painted over and a new, lower roof installed. All was not lost: the renovations left the upper levels of the frescoes intact above the new roofline. You can ask the warden to unlock the door, letting you clamber up a narrow flight of wooden steps into the cavity between the original and 15th-century ceilings to view the well-preserved remnants.

The interior and the magnificently carved choir stalls are Gothic, but excavations have unearthed the remains of an earlier church. Beneath the altar, protected by glass, is a 12th-century mosaic, which was only discovered in 1999 when the church's heating system underwent maintenance.

The monastery's beautiful Romanesque **cloister**, with ornately carved capitals representing biblical scenes, is to the right of the church.

## Activities

### SKIING

The 1800m-high resort of **Pila** (☎ 0165 36 36 15; [www.pila.it](http://www.pila.it); half-/full-day pass €21.50/30; ☎ mid-Dec—mid-Apr), accessible by the Aosta—Pila cable car from Aosta or an 18km drive south, is quick and easy to reach from the town. Its 70km of runs, served by 13 lifts, form one of the valley's largest ski areas. Its highest slope, in the shadow of Gran Paradiso, reaches 2700m and sports an ace snow park with a half-pipe, jump and slide and freestyle area for boarders and freestyle skiers. The ski station is a village of sorts, but services such as the tourist office, police and medical services are handled from Aosta. For details on ski passes covering here and other resorts in the Valle d'Aosta, [Click here](#).

### WALKING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

The lower slopes leading down from Pila into the Dora Baltea valley provide picturesque walks and rides. Mountain bikes can be transported for free on the **Aosta—Pila cable car** (adult one-way/return €3/5; ☎ 8am-12.15pm & 2-5pm or 6pm Jun-Aug) and mountain bikers can buy a one-day pass (transport only; €13), allowing unlimited use of the cable car and chairlifts. The tourist office gives advice on

mountain-biking itineraries and walking trails and has lists of Alpine guides and mountain accommodation.

Recommended walking clubs that organise treks and provide guides include the following:

**Club Alpino Italiano** (CAI; ☎ 0165 4 01 94; [www.caivda.it](http://www.caivda.it), in Italian; Corso Battaglione Aosta 81; ☎ 6.30-8pm Tue, 8-10pm Fri) West of the city centre.

**Interguide** (☎ 0165 4 09 39; [www.interguide.it](http://www.interguide.it), in Italian; Via Monte Emilius 13; ☎ 6.30-8pm Tue, 8-10pm Fri) West of the city centre.

**Meinardi Sport** (☎ 0165 4 06 78; Via E Aubert; ☎ 3-7.30pm Mon, 9am-12.30pm & 3-7.30pm Tue-Sat) A well-stocked sports shop with walking supplies and maps.

## WINE & CHEESE TASTING

The Valle d'Aosta is home to vineyards producing sought-after wines that are rarely available outside the region, including those from Europe's highest vineyard, **Morgex et La Salle** ([www.caveduvinbland.com](http://www.caveduvinbland.com)), named for the two villages strung together by its vines. Aosta's tourist office has a free, comprehensive booklet in English with information on cellars you can tour and taste.

Local cheeses can be tasted at the Valpelline Visitors' Centre – see the boxed text, [Click here](#). You'll need your own wheels for both.

## Festivals & Events

For over 1000 years, the **Fiera di Sant'Orso**, the annual wood fair, has been held on 30 and 31 January around Porta Praetoria, in honour of the town's patron saint who made wooden shoes for the poor (hence you'll see many wooden shoes in craft shops around town). Woodcarvers from all over the valley gather to display their works and present an item to the saint at the Chiesa di Sant'Orso.

## Sleeping

Aside from Aosta's stash of business hotels, the valley harbours numerous cheaper (and often more charming) lodgings in the surrounding area. Ask at the tourist office.

**Hotel Turin** (☎ 0165 4 45 93; [www.hotelturin.it](http://www.hotelturin.it); Via Torino 14; s €34-60, d €58-84; Ⓟ 📺) A modern, boxy glass-and-steel affair, the three-star Turin is a handy suitcase drag from the train station and a short distance to carry your skis or snowboard to ride the cable car up to Pila.

**Albergo Mancuso** (☎ 0165 3 45 26; [www.albergomancuso.com](http://www.albergomancuso.com); Via Voison 32; s/d €45/55; Ⓟ) This budget place is a little old-fashioned (check out the old 1970s concert photos on the stairway) and certainly not luxury but, to its credit, the Mancuso is friendly, family-run and incredibly cheap. The rooms are all different so ask for a preview before you decide (some are small). It also offers discounts in a couple of local restaurants including the Ulisse (see right).

**our pick Hotel Milleluci** (☎ 0165 4 42 74; [www.hotelmilleluci.com](http://www.hotelmilleluci.com); Loc Porossan 15; s €110-130, d €130-240; Ⓟ 📺 📺 📺) Old wooden skis, traditionally carved wooden shoes, clawfoot baths, indoor and outdoor pools, a Jacuzzi, sauna and gym, and sumptuous skiers' breakfasts make this large, family-run converted farmhouse seem more like a palace. Set on a hillside above town, its balconied rooms look out to the so-titled 'thousand lights' twinkling from Aosta below.

## Eating & Drinking

Traditional dishes include *seupa valpellinentze* (thick soup of cabbage, bread, beef broth and *fontina*)

and *carbonada con polenta* (soup traditionally made with chamois, though these days usually beef).

Open-air cafe terraces spring up on Piazza Chanoux in summer.

**Trattoria degli Artisti** (☎ 0165 4 09 60; Via Maillet 5-7; meals €18-28; 📅 Tue-Sat) Fabulous Valdostan cuisine is dished up at this dark, cosy little trattoria, tucked down an alleyway off Via Aubert. Antipasti such as puff pastry filled with Valdostan fondue, cured ham and regional salami are followed by dishes such as roe venison with polenta, and beef braised in Morgex et La Salle white wine.

**Ristorante-Pizzeria Ulisse** (☎ 0165 4 11 80; Via E Aubert 58; meals €15-18; 📅 lunch Mon-Sun, dinner Thu-Mon) Ulisse is the sort of place where the food is often brought to your table personally by the hardworking chef and the cooked-to-perfection €5 pizza Margheritas are better than anything you'll ever taste in fancy faux Italian chains.

**Ad Forum** (☎ 0165 4 00 11; Via Mons de Sales 11; meals €22-30; 📅 Tue-Sun; 🍷) Another fantastic Aosta restaurant setting, this time in a stylish garden (and interior rooms) built on part of the remains of the Roman forum. Conceptual dishes such as risotto with strawberries and spumante, or Lasagnetta with pear and blue cheese, come in generous portions, and you get an equally tasty complimentary aperitif while you wait. The attached *enoteca* has an excellent line-up of wines.

**our pick Vecchia Aosta** (☎ 0165 36 11 86; Piazza Porte Pretoriane 4; set menus €27; 📅 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat; 🍷) Maybe it's the French influence, but Aosta restaurants such as the Vecchia score consistently highly when it comes to culinary creativity. Grafted onto a section of the old Roman wall, the setting is sublime and the waiters highly knowledgeable (and congenial). Take their advice and go for the lamb – a real vacation highlight.

## Shopping

Craft shops in town sell traditional Valdostan objects made by certified local artisans. Unique items to look out for include a *grolla* – a large wooden goblet whose name is derived from the word 'grail' in reference to the Holy Grail, which is said to have passed through the village and been copied by local craftsmen. Another Valdostan tradition is the *coppa dell'amicizia* (friendship cup) – a wooden bowl filled with coffee laced with citrus rind and strong grappa and set alight. The 'cup' has anything from two to 15 mouthpieces, out of which friends take turns drinking as it's passed around.

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## VALDOSTAN CHEESE

Something like a cross between gouda and brie, *fontina* is preserved under its own DOP (designation of protected origin). It must be made from the full-cream, unpasteurised milk of Valdostan cows that have grazed on pastures up to 2700m above sea level. During a period of three months it matures in underground rock tunnels, and is turned daily and brushed and salted on alternate days. Learn more about these and other local cheese-making traditions at the **Valpelline Visitors' Centre** (☎ 0165 7 33 09; [www.fontinacoop.it](http://www.fontinacoop.it); Frissonière; admission free; 📅 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun—mid-Sep, 9am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep—mid-Jun). You'll need wheels to get to the centre from Aosta. Follow the SR28 for 7km north to Valpelline, turn east towards Ollomont and after 1.5km turn west along a mountain road to Frissonière.

In Aosta, shops stock local cheeses, including Stravecchio di Montagna, an extremely strong, salty and potent hard cheese – eat it *before* asking how it is made.

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## Getting There & Away

Buses operated by **Savda** ([www.savda.it](http://www.savda.it)) run to Milan (1½ to 3½ hours, two daily), Turin (two hours, up to 10 daily) and Courmayeur (€3.20, one hour, up to eight daily), as well as French destinations including Chamonix. Services leave from Aosta's **bus station** (☎ 0165 26 20 27; Via Giorgio Carrel), virtually opposite the train station. To get to Breuil-Cervinia, take a Turin-bound bus to Châtillon (30 minutes, eight daily), then a connecting bus (one hour, seven daily) to the resort.

Aosta's train station, on Piazza Manzetti, is served by trains from most parts of Italy via Turin (€7.55, two to 2½ hours, more than 10 daily).

Aosta is on the A5, which connects Turin with the Mont Blanc tunnel and France. Another exit road north of the city leads to the Great St Bernard tunnel and on to Switzerland.

## Getting Around

Aosta's walled centre is closed to private cars. Shuttle buses run through town from the train station. Book a **taxi** (☎ 0165 3 18 31) or hire your own wheels from **Europcar** (☎ 0165 4 14 32) at the train station.

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## AOSTA VALLEY CASTLES

Gothic castles loom above the Valle d'Aosta. Each castle is within view of the next, and messages used to be transferred along the valley by flag signals. If you're driving, you can take in several on a single trip, although note that closing days differ in some cases. From Aosta follow the scenic S26, which runs parallel to the busy A5. The castles are all clearly signposted (and in any case, they're impossible to miss).

East from Aosta is the magnificently restored **Castello di Fénis** (☎ 0165 76 42 63; admission €5; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Jun & Sep, to 8pm Jul & Aug, 10-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Sun Oct-Feb). Formerly owned by the Challant family, it features rich frescoes. It was never really used as a defensive post but served as a plush residence.

Past St-Vincent is the sober **Castello di Verrès** (☎ 0125 92 90 67; admission €3; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Jun & Sep, to 8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Fri, Sat & Mon-Wed, 10am-12.30pm & 1-6pm Sun Oct-Feb), a late-Gothic monolith that stands on the ancient Via Francigena, a pilgrims' path between Canterbury in England and Rome.

Around 1km southwest of the Dora Baltea river, below the town of Verrès, is the 15th-century **Castello d'Issogne** (☎ 0125 92 93 73; admission €5; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Jun & Sep, to 8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Thu-Sat & Mon & Tue, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Sun Oct-Feb). This building was a castle, although you would hardly know it – it looks more like a stately home.

Further down the valley still, towards Pont-St-Martin, the hulking **Forte di Bard** (☎ 0125 83 38 11; adult/child €8/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun) was a no-nonsense military outpost given short shrift by Napoleon on his first campaign into Italy. Today it contains **Il Museo delle Alpi** and mounts archaeological and science-oriented exhibitions, which cost an additional €3 for adults and €2 for children. From Pont-St-Martin, you could strike north to Castel Savoia in Gressoney-St-Jean; [Click here](#).

Heading west from Aosta towards Mont Blanc, you'll quickly come across **Castello di Sarre** (☎ 0165

25 75 39; admission €5/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Jun & Sep, to 8pm Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Sun Oct-Feb). Built in 1710 on the remains of a 13th-century fort, it was then bought by King Vittorio Emanuele II in 1869 to use as a hunting residence. The Savoys sold the castle in 1972 and it now serves as a museum of the royal presence in the region.

Continuing west, **Castello di Sainte-Pierre** (☎ 0165 90 34 85; adult/child €3/free; ☎ 10am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 10am-noon & 1.30-6.30pm Sun Mar-Sep, 10am-noon & 1.30-4.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 10am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Sun Oct-Feb) is home to a natural history museum with changing exhibitions.

## COURMAYEUR

**pop 3000 / elev 1224m**

Flush up against France and linked by a dramatic cable-car ride to its cross-border cousin in Chamonix, Courmayeur is an activity-orientated Aosta village that has grafted upmarket ski facilities onto an ancient Roman base. Its *pièce de résistance* is lofty Mont Blanc, western Europe's highest mountain, 4807m of solid rock and ice that rises like an impregnable wall above the narrow valleys of northwestern Italy, igniting awe in all who pass.

In winter Courmayeur is a nexus for skiers bound for the high slopes above town that glisten with plenty of late-season snow. In summer it wears a distinctly different hat; the Società delle Guide Alpine di Courmayeur is bivouacked here and the town has developed into an important staging post on the Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB), one of Europe's most iconic long-distance hiking trails.

## Information

**Ambulance** (☎ 0165 84 46 84)

**Centro Traumatologico** (☎ 0165 84 46 84; Strada dell Volpi 3) Medical clinic; open shop business hours. The nearest hospital is in Aosta.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0165 84 20 60; [www.courmayeur.net](http://www.courmayeur.net), in Italian; Piazzale Monte Bianco 13; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm)

## Activities

The **Società delle Guide Alpine di Courmayeur** (☎ 0165 84 20 64; [www.guidecourmayeur.com](http://www.guidecourmayeur.com); Strada del Villair), founded in 1859, is Italy's oldest guiding association. In winter its guides lead adventure seekers off-piste, up frozen waterfalls and on heli-skiing expeditions. In summer, rock climbing, canyoning, canoeing, kayaking and hiking are among its many outdoor activities. The association's dramatic history unfolds in the **Museo Alpino Duca degli Abruzzi** (☎ 0165 84 20 64; Piazza Henry 2; admission €3; ☎ 9am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Thu-Tue, 3.30-6.30pm Wed).

For lower-altitude walks with a nature guide, contact **Sirdar** (☎ 347 2632466; [www.sirdar-montagne.com](http://www.sirdar-montagne.com), in Italian).

## SKIING

Courmayeur's network of cable cars, gondolas and numerous drag lifts is run by **Funivie Courmayeur Mont Blanc** (☎ 0165 84 66 58; [www.courmayeur-montblanc.com](http://www.courmayeur-montblanc.com); Strada Regionale 47).

Skiing lessons starting at around €30 an hour are available from the **Scuola di Sci Monte Bianco** (☎ 0165 84 24 77; [www.scuolascimontebianco.com](http://www.scuolascimontebianco.com), in Italian; Strada Regionale 51), founded in 1922.

The **Vallee Blanche** offers an exhilarating off-piste descent from Punta Helbronner (see opposite) across the Mer de Glace glacier into Chamonix, France. The route itself is not difficult (anyone of intermediate ability can do it), but an experienced guide is essential to steer you safely around the hidden crevasses. All up, the 24km Vallee Blanche takes around four to five hours, allowing time to stop and take in the view. Highly experienced hardcore skiers can tackle the **Toula Glacier** descent, which also takes off from Punta Helbronner and drops for six sheer kilometres to La Palud. Again, a guide is essential. In both cases it's usually easy to join in with a guide-led group.

## WALKING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

In July and August the Courmayeur and Val Veny **cable cars** (☎ 0165 84 66 58; one-way/return €6/10) and the Maison Vieille **chairlift** (☎ 0165 84 66 58; one-way/return €4/5) whisk walkers and mountain bikers up into the mountains; transporting a bike is free. All three run from around 9.15am to 1pm and 2.15pm to 5.15pm from June to August.

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## KINGS OF THE WILD FRONTIER

Most sane people complete the famous 165km hiking circuit of Mont Blanc in seven to 10 days; but for a few resolute loons – around 2000 of them annually, to be more precise – mere walking is not enough. Since 2003 a significant contingent of willowy-framed ultrarunners has been competing in an event known as the Ultra Trail Tour du Mont Blanc, or UTMB. Considered one of the most arduous single-stage foot races in the world, this masochistic mountain romp starts in Chamonix, France, and follows the traditional Tour du Mont Blanc hiking route in an anticlockwise circuit through Italy and Switzerland. Aside from the crippling distance, runners must also cross approximately 15 alpine passes and log a total elevation gain of nearly 9000m (that's nine vertical kilometres!). The top competitors usually complete the course in a mind-boggling 21 hours, though times of 30 to 45 hours are more normal. The nexus for the race in Italy is the Valle d'Aosta town of Courmayeur.

If none of the above fazes you, check out the official race website at [www.ultratrailmb.com](http://www.ultratrailmb.com). But beware, race qualification rules are stringent.

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The vertigo-inducing **La Palud—Punta Helbronner cable car** (☎ 0165 8 99 25; [www.montebianco.com](http://www.montebianco.com), in Italian; return trip €36; ☎ 8.30am-12.40pm & 2-4.30pm) departs every 20 minutes in each direction. At the 2173m-high midstation **Pavillon du Mt Fréty** (return €15.50), you can take a summertime stroll through the flower-filled Alpine garden, **Giardino Alpino Saussurea** (☎ 0165 8 99 25; adult/child €2/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Jul-Sep), which is blanketed by snow in winter. Walking trails around here are numerous and many fall within the **Pavillon du Mt Fréty Nature Oasis**, a protected zone of 1200 hectares tucked between glaciers, where you have a good chance of spotting ibexes, marmots and deer.

Even in midsummer, temperatures plummet as low as -10°C at **Punta Helbronner** (3462m). Take heavy winter clothes and sunglasses for the blinding snow, and head up early in the morning to avoid the heavy weather that often descends here in the early afternoon. At Punta Helbronner a small, free **museum** displays crystals found in the mountains. From Punta Helbronner another cable car (from late May to late September, depending on the weather conditions) takes you on a breathtaking 5km transglacial ride across the Italian border to the Aiguille du Midi (3842m) in France (one-way/return €18/34), from where the world's highest cable car transports you into Chamonix, France (€46).

For many walkers (some 30,000 each summer), the trophy hike is the **Tour du Mont Blanc** (TMB).

This 169km trek cuts across Italy, France and Switzerland, stopping at nine villages en route. Snow makes it impassable for much of the year. The average duration is anything from one week to 12 days; smaller sections are also possible. It's possible to undertake the hike without a guide, but if you're unfamiliar with the area, hooking up with a local guide is a good idea as the route traverses glacial landscapes.

Mountain bikes can be hired for around €10 per day at **Noleggio Courmayeur** (☎ 0165 84 22 55), in front of the Courmayeur chairlift.

## THERMAL SPA

Bubbling a natural 37°C from the mountains' depths, the thermal water at Pré-St-Didier has long been a source of therapeutic treatments. A beautiful 1920s building is the newly renovated location for this soothing **spa** (Terme di Pré-St-Didier; ☎ 0165 86 72 72; [www.termedipre.it](http://www.termedipre.it); Allée des Thermes; daily admission Mon-Fri €36, Sat & Sun €45; 🕒 10am-9pm Sun-Fri, to 11pm Sat). Admission includes use of a bathrobe, towel and slippers, plus fresh-squeezed juices, fruit and herbal teas. In addition to saunas, whirlpools and toning waterfalls there's an indoor-outdoor thermal pool. It's lit by candles and torches on Saturday nights, when it is spectacular amid the snow and stars.

Before leaving the spa, head 50-odd metres beyond the car park in the opposite direction to the village, where a little **Roman bridge** arcs over the trout-filled river.

## Sleeping & Eating

Ask the tourist office for a list of *rifugi* (mountain huts), usually open from late June to mid-September. Quality food shops and restaurants line Via Roma.

**Camping Arc en Ciel** (☎ 0165 80 92 57; [www.campingarcenciel.it](http://www.campingarcenciel.it); Strada Feysoulles 20, Morgex; per person/tent & car €5.20/7; 🕒 year-round) This peaceful leafy camping ground sprawls over 1020 sq metres, with shady, well-spaced sites and its own bar-restaurant. It is 9km east of Courmayeur.

**Hotel Triolet** (☎ 0165 84 68 22; [www.hoteltriolet.com](http://www.hoteltriolet.com); Strada Regionale 63; s €70-100, d €100-150; 📶 📺 📺 📺) Triolet is a tad more elegant than your average ski digs; and it's smaller too with only 20 rooms, allowing service to remain personal as well as affable. Aside from the usual tick-list, there's a pleasant spa (Jacuzzi, steam room, sauna), ski lockers and a vista-laden breakfast room. The *funivia* (cable car) is a two-minute walk away. It's closed in the off-season – check ahead.

**our pick Hotel Bouton d'Or** (☎ 0165 84 67 29; [www.hotelboutondor.com](http://www.hotelboutondor.com); Strada Statale 26/10, Courmayeur; s €70-80, d €95-125; 📶 📺) Is it a dream? You open your eyes and there before you is the imposing hulk of Mont Blanc. There can't be many hotels where the view is this good, or the rooms this clean, or the service this attentive. To top it all, Bouton d'Or is situated in the centre of Courmayeur and sports a sauna, a decent breakfast, a shuttle to the cable car, and a lounge full of interesting alpine paraphernalia.

**Mont Blanc Hotel Village** (☎ 0165 86 41 11; [www.hotelmontblanc.it](http://www.hotelmontblanc.it); La Croisette 36; s €173-240, d €198-265; 📶 📺 📺 📺) On the hillside of La Salle, 10km east of Courmayeur, this haven of luxury has beautiful stone-and-wood rooms, many with enormous balconies with views across the valley. A series of cavelike nooks conceals spa treatment rooms and steaming saunas. Half-board is available at the hotel's standard restaurant. To truly dine in style, guests and nonguests can head to the hotel's second, gastronomic restaurant (following).

**La Terraza** (☎ 0165 84 33 30; Via Circonvalazione 73; set menus €19; 🕒 lunch & dinner) A lively, central bar-restaurant-pizzeria with the full gamut of pizzas, steaks and hearty après-ski fare. True to the local spirit there are also plenty of Valdostan dishes, including polenta, spicy sausage, fondue and pasta

with the celebrated *fontina* cheese.

**Rifugio Pavillon** (☎ 0165 84 40 90; Pavillon du Mt Fréty; meals €25; 🕒 10am-5pm Dec-Oct) Perched at the first midstation on the Punta Helbronner cable car at a heady height of 2173m, with a deckchair-lined sun terrace, this bar-cafe-restaurant cooks up mountain feasts including Savoy cabbage rolls with chestnuts, and wheat pasta in deer sauce.

## Getting There & Away

Three trains a day from Aosta terminate at Pré-St-Didier, with bus connections (20 to 30 minutes, eight to 10 daily) to **Courmayeur bus station** (☎ 0166 84 13 97; Piazzale Monte Bianco) outside the tourist office. There are up to eight direct Aosta—Courmayeur buses daily (€3.20, one hour) and long-haul buses serve Milan (€15.50, 4½ hours, three to five daily) and Turin (€9, 3½ to 4½ hours, two to four daily).

Immediately north of Courmayeur, the 11.6km-long Mont Blanc tunnel leads to Chamonix (France). At the Italian entrance, a plaque commemorates Pierlucio Tinazzi, a security employee who died while saving at least a dozen lives during the 1999 disaster when a freight truck caught fire in the tunnel.

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## PARCO NAZIONALE DEL GRAN PARADISO

Italy's oldest national park is also one of its most diverse – and aptly named. Gran Paradiso, formed in 1922 after Vittorio Emanuele II gave his hunting reserve to the state (ostensibly to protect the endangered ibex) is a veritable ‘grand paradise’. What makes it special is a tangible wilderness feel (rare in Italy). The park's early establishment preceded the rise of the modern ski resort and, as a result, the area has, so far, resisted the lucrative lure of the tourist trade with all its chairlifts, dodgy architecture and après-ski clubs.

Gran Paradiso incorporates the valleys around the eponymous 4061m peak (Italy's 7th highest), three of which are in the Valle d'Aosta: the Valsavarenche, Val di Rhêmes and the beautiful Valle di Cogne. On the Piedmont side of the mountain, the park includes the valleys of Soana and Orco.

The main stepping stone into the park is tranquil **Cogne** (population 1474; elevation 1534m), a refreshing antidote to overdeveloped Cervinia on the opposite side of the Val d'Aosta. Aside from its plethora of outdoor opportunities, Cogne is known for its lace-making; you can buy the local fabrics at the charming craft and antique shop, **Le Marché Aux Puces** (☎ 0165 74 96 66; Rue Grand Paradis 4; 🕒 closed Wed).

## Information

Cogne's **tourist office** (☎ 0165 7 40 40; [www.cogne.org](http://www.cogne.org); Piazza Chanoux 36; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat) has stacks of information on the park and a list of emergency contact numbers. The **Consorzio Gran Paradiso Natura** (☎ 0165 92 06 09; [www.granparadisonatura.it](http://www.granparadisonatura.it); Loc Trépont 91, Villeneuve) also has tourist information.

## Activities

Gran Paradiso is one of Italy's best hiking areas, with over 700km worth of trails linked by a recuperative network of *rifugi*.

Despite a (welcome) dearth of downhill-ski facilities, 80km of well-marked **cross-country skiing**

**trails** (admission per day €4) line the unspoilt Valle di Cogne. Alas, there is still 9km of downhill slopes. A one-day ski pass covering the use of Cogne's single cable car, chairlift, and drag lift costs €22. Skiing lessons are offered by the **Scuola Italian Sci Gran Paradiso ski** (☎ 0165 7 43 00; Piazza Chanoux 38, Cogne). For something more esoteric, try an **ice-climbing** expedition on the Lillaz waterfall with Cogne's Società Guide Alpine (see opposite).

From Cogne an easy walking trail (3km) leads southeast through forest to this waterfall. **Swimming** is popular here, but take care as the water can be dangerously cold, even in high summer.

The park's amazing biodiversity, including butterflies and Alpine flora, can be seen in summer at the fascinating **Giardino Alpino Paradisia** (☎ 0165 7 41 47; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Jun—mid-Sep, to 6:30pm Jul & Aug), an Alpine botanical garden in the tiny hamlet of Valnontey (1700m), 3km south of Cogne. Guided nature walks from July to September are organised by the **Associazione Guide della Nature** (☎ 0165 7 42 82; Piazza Chanoux 36, Cogne; ☎ 9am-noon Mon, Wed & Sat).

A classic, moderately strenuous hike from Valnontey is to the **Rifugio Sella** (☎ 0165 7 43 10; dm €17) a former hunting lodge of King Vittorio Emanuele II. From the town bridge follow the Alta Via 2 uphill for two to 2½ hours. More adventurous hikers can continue along the exhilarating Sella-Herbetet Traverse (15km), a seven-hour loop that will drop you back in Valnontey. You'll need a head for heights and a good map. The main point of departure for the Gran Paradiso peak is Pont in the Valsavarenche. Technically it's no Mont Blanc and can be completed in a day, but you'll need a guide. Contact the **Società Guide Alpine di Cogne** (☎ 0165 7 48 35; Via Bourgeois 33, Cogne).

**Horse riding** (per hr €25) and 45-minute **horse-and-carriage rides** (per carriage of up to 4 people €40) through the mountain meadows are run by **Pianta Cavalli** (☎ 3333 14 72 48) in Valnontey.

## Sleeping & Eating

Wilderness camping is forbidden in the park, but there are 11 *rifugi*; the tourist office has a list.

**Camping Lo Stambecco** (☎ 0165 7 41 52; [www.campinglostambecco.com](http://www.campinglostambecco.com); Valnontey; per person/tent/car €7/3/6; ☎ May-Sep; 📍) Pitch up under the pine trees in the heart of the park at this well-run and friendly site. Its sister hotel, La Barme, rents bikes to explore the mountains.

**Hotel Sant'Orso** (☎ 0165 7 48 21; Via Bourgeois 2, Cogne; s/d €46/92, half-board €71/142; ☎ spring & autumn closures vary; 📍 ☒) Cogne personified – ie tranquil, courteous, and understated – the Sant'Orso is nonetheless equipped with plenty of hidden extras. Check out the restaurant, small cinema, sauna, kids room and terrace. Further kudos is gained by the fact that you can start your cross-country skiing pretty much from the front door. The owners also run the Hotel du Gran Paradis nearby.

**Hotel Ristorante Petit Dahu** (☎ 0165 7 41 46; [www.hotelpetitdahu.com](http://www.hotelpetitdahu.com); Valnontey; s €36-50, d €72-100, restaurant menus €35; ☎ closed May & Oct; 📍) Straddling two traditional stone-and-wood buildings, this friendly, family-run spot has a wonderful restaurant (also open to nonguests; advance bookings essential) preparing rustic mountain cooking using wild Alpine herbs.

**our pick Hotel Bellevue** (☎ 0165 7 48 25; [www.hotelbellevue.it](http://www.hotelbellevue.it); Rue Grand Paradis 22, Cogne; d €170-240, 2-person chalet €250-320; ☎ mid-Dec—mid-Oct; 📍 ☒) Overlooking meadows, this green-shuttered mountain hideaway evokes its 1920s origins with romantic canopied timber 'cabin beds', weighty cowbells strung from old beams and clawfoot baths. There are open fireplaces (stacked with a woodpile of logs) in some rooms. Afternoon tea is included in the price as well as use of the health spa, and you can also rent mountain bikes and snowshoes. Its four restaurants include a Michelin-starred gourmet affair, a cheese restaurant (closed Tuesday) with cheese from the family's own cellar, a lunchtime terrace

restaurant and a brasserie (closed Monday) on the village's main square a few moments' stroll away.

## Getting There & Around

There are up to seven buses daily to/from Cogne and Aosta (50 minutes). Cogne can also be reached by cable car from Pila.

Valley buses (up to 10 daily) link Cogne with Valnontey (€0.90, five minutes) and Lillaz (€0.90, five minutes).

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## VALTOURNENCHE

Take one of Europe's most dramatic mountains – the Matterhorn (4478m) – and stick an ugly amalgam of concrete buildings in front of it. The result: Breuil-Cervinia, one of Italy's oldest ski resorts, but also one of its least attractive. Byron once stood here and marvelled at 'Europe's noble rock'. One wonders what he would have made of the modern circus. The upside is that Cervinia's ski facilities are second to none; you can hit the snow year-round up here and even zoom across into Zermatt, Switzerland. The downside is the incongruity of it all. Messy resort or splendiferous mountain; take your pick. Smaller skiing areas include **Antey-St-André** (1080m), **La Magdeleine** (1644m) and **Valtournenche** (1524m), 9km south of Breuil-Cervinia.

## Information

The valley's tourist offices can help with accommodation:

**Breuil-Cervinia** (☎ 0166 94 91 36; [www.cervinia.it](http://www.cervinia.it); Via Carrel 29; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6.30pm)

**Valtournenche** (☎ 0166 9 20 29; [valtournenche@montecervino.it](mailto:valtournenche@montecervino.it); Via Roma 45; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6.30pm)

## Activities

Plateau Rosa (3480m) and the Little Matterhorn (3883m) in the Breuil-Cervinia ski area offer some of Europe's highest skiing, while the Campetto area has introduced the Valle d'Aosta to night skiing. A couple of dozen cable cars, four of which originate in Breuil-Cervinia, serve the 200km of downhill pistes. A one-day ski pass covering Breuil-Cervinia and Valtournenche costs €36.

Contact Breuil-Cervinia's **Scuola di Sci del Breuil Cervinia** (☎ 0166 94 09 60; [www.scuolascibreuil.com](http://www.scuolascibreuil.com)) or **Scuola Sci del Cervino** (☎ 0166 94 87 44; [www.scuolacervino.com](http://www.scuolacervino.com)) for skiing and snowboarding lessons, and its mountain-guide association **Società Guide del Cervino** (☎ 0166 94 81 69; [www.guidedelcervino.com](http://www.guidedelcervino.com); Via J Antoine Carrel 20) to make the most of the Matterhorn's wild off-piste opportunities.

Between July and September several cableways and lifts to **Plateau Rosa** continue to operate, allowing year-round skiing on the Swiss side of the mountain. A one-day international ski pass costs €50.

Basic maps are available for **walking** at the information offices. Two classic long-distance hikes include the **Giro del Cervino**, a tough eight-to-10-day romp around the base of the Matterhorn, and the equally challenging **Tour Monte Rosa** ([www.tourmonterosa.com](http://www.tourmonterosa.com)). Ascents of Matterhorn are for serious climbers only. Società Guide del Cervino (above) organises five-day trips from €1200.

## Sleeping & Eating

There are stacks of hotels in Breuil-Cervinia. If you want a quieter scene, try nearby Valtournenche, a village that shares its name with the wider valley.

**Hotel Punta Maquignaz** (☎ 0166 94 91 45; [www.puntamaquignaz.com](http://www.puntamaquignaz.com); Breuil-Cervinia; d half-board €144-270; 📅 spring & autumn closures vary) With stacked logs in the hallway, cowbells and bearskins, this timber chalet has a consistent reputation for excellent food as part of its half-board deals.

**Rifugio Guide del Cervino** (☎ 0166 9 21 01; [giorgio.carrel@galactica.it](mailto:giorgio.carrel@galactica.it); 📅 Dec—mid-May & late Jun—mid-Sep) Ride the Plateau Rosa cable car to this mountain hut, breathtakingly nestled at the height of 3480m on Plateau Rosa. At full moon it hosts dinners, followed by a torchlit ski descent down into Breuil-Cervinia.

## Getting There & Away

**Savda** (☎ 0165 36 12 44) operates buses from Breuil-Cervinia to Châtillon (one hour, seven daily), from where there are connecting buses to/from Aosta and trains to other destinations in Italy. Longer-haul seasonal bus services from Breuil-Cervinia include to/from Turin, Milan and Genoa.

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## VALLE D'AYAS, VAL DI GRESSONEY & VALSESIA

The beauty of the Alps is that, despite pockets of overdevelopment, many of the valleys have held onto their ancient traditions. While the rest of the Valle d'Aosta leans culturally towards France, the three valleys of Ayas, Gressoney and Sesia (the latter is in Piedmont) that snake north to the feet of majestic **Monte Rosa** (4633m) hide an 800-year-old Walser tradition. The German-descended Walsers migrated from Switzerland's Valais region in the 13th century, and their community has survived intact; many of the people who live in this rugged region still speak German (and Tich dialect) as a mother tongue and inhabit traditional Walser wood-slatted houses built on short stilts.

You can find out more about the community's history at the excellent **Museo Walser** (☎ 0163 92 29 35; admission €2; 📅 2-6pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, 2-6pm daily Jul & Aug) in Pedemonte just north of Alagna Valsesia (1191m), a small ski resort at the head of Valsesia. At the other end of the valley, **Varallo** (population 7795; elevation 451m) guards the amazing **Sacro Monte di Varallo** (☎ 0163 5 39 38; [www.parks.it/riserva.sacro.monte.varallo](http://www.parks.it/riserva.sacro.monte.varallo); admission free), a series of 50 chapels and 800 life-sized religious statues dating back to the 15th century that depict the Passion of Christ. The Monte is accessed via a walking path from Piazza Ferrari in town.

To the west the Valle d'Ayas harbours its own ski resort, **Champoluc** (population 500; elevation 1560m), a storybook spot saved from tourism overload by the difficult road twisting from the A5 exit at Verrès around some tortuous hairpin bends.

The main villages in the Val di Gressoney are pretty lakeside **Gressoney-St-Jean** (population 816; elevation 1385m), and **Gressoney-La-Trinité** (population 306; elevation 1637m), a few kilometres north – both Walser strongholds. Queen Margherita picked Gressoney-St-Jean as the location for **Castel Savoia** (☎ 0125 35 53 96; adult/child €3/2; 📅 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, to 7pm Sun Mar-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 1.30-6pm Sun, closed Thu Oct-Feb) in 1894, a dreamlike mansion enjoyed by the Italian royals well into the 1900s.



# Information

Tourist offices in the valleys include the following:

**Alagna Valsesia** (☎ 0163 92 29 88; [www.alagna.it](http://www.alagna.it); Piazza Grober 1) The Valsesia's main information source for mountain activities.

**Champoluc** (☎ 0125 30 71 13; [www.ariatmonterosa.com](http://www.ariatmonterosa.com); Via Varasc 16; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Jan-Apr, 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm May-Dec)

**Gressoney-St-Jean** (☎ 0125 35 51 85; [www.ariatmonterosawalser.it](http://www.ariatmonterosawalser.it); Villa Deslex; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sun)

**Varallo** (☎ 0163 56 44 04; [www.turismovalsesiavercelli.it](http://www.turismovalsesiavercelli.it); Corso Roma 38; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-7pm Sat)

# Activities

**Monterosa Ski** ([www.monterosa-ski.com](http://www.monterosa-ski.com)) sports 180km of downhill runs (best suited to intermediate skiers) and 38 ski lifts. From **Alagna Valsesia** a cable car climbs to Punta Indren (3260m). Its 25km-long Gressoney-St-Jean piste takes skiers past Castel Savoia and dozens of traditional Walser houses.

White-water rafting, canoeing and kayaking take place in the Sesia's wild rapids from May to September; contact Varallo's **Accadueo Scuola di Sport Fluviali** (☎ 347 583 68 88; [www.accadueo-sesia.it](http://www.accadueo-sesia.it), in Italian; Crevola Varallo).

From Alagna, the **Corpo Guide Alagna** (☎ 0163 9 12 10; [www.guidealagna.com](http://www.guidealagna.com); Piazza Grober) organises a smorgasbord of winter and summer activities. A highlight is its summer two-day trip up to the highest *rifugio* in Europe, the **Capanna Regina Margherita** (☎ 0163 9 10 39; dm €80) perched atop Punta Gnifetti on the Swiss—Italian border at an astounding 4554m. Guided ascents cost from €180 per person depending on group size (including a night in the refuge).

The valleys are interconnected by many long-distance trails, including the **Alta Via 1** and the interpretive **Grande Sentiero Walser**. You can tackle a bite-sized chunk of the Alta Via by walking from **Valtournenche** to St Jacques at the head of the Valle d' Ayas (15km, 5½ to 6.5 hours). From here the Grande Sentiero Walser heads south and then southeast across the Col di Pinter (2777m) to Gressoney-St-Jean (17km, eight hours). From Gressoney-La-Trinité (4km north of St Jean) you can ride the cable car up to Lago Gabiet, an Alpine lake (elevation 2357m), from where numerous shorter trails can be picked up.

# Sleeping & Eating

**Rifugio Gabiet** (☎ 0125 36 62 58; [www.rifugiogabiet.it](http://www.rifugiogabiet.it); Lago Gabiet; d half-board €80; ☎ mid-Dec—mid-Apr & mid-Jun—mid-Sep) Peering down on Lago Gabiet from a height of 2880m, this heady spot has 25 rooms with Walser furniture, a cosy lounge room with a toasty open fire, and a sundeck. It can be reached by cable car from Gressoney-La-Trinité.

**Hotel Lyskamm** (☎ 0125 35 54 36; [www.lyskammhotel.com](http://www.lyskammhotel.com); Gressoney-St-Jean; s €40-60, d €80-120; ☎ ☎ ☎) Of 1887 vintage, the Lyskamm still wears its 'Grande Albergo' badge with pride. Being situated in picturesque Gressoney-St-Jean obviously helps, as do clean rooms, sharp service, a good restaurant and plenty of games for stormy, snowy nights. Two ski lifts are nearby.

**Hotel Genzianella** (☎ 0125 30 71 56; [www.hotelgenzianella.it](http://www.hotelgenzianella.it); Place de la Grotte 5; s/d €52/104; ☎ ☎) A simple 20-room mountain hotel in the tiny village of St Jacques in the Valle d' Ayas 3km north of the Champoluc ski shenanigans. There's a ski bus and cross-country opportunities in the winter. In summer

you can sit out in the garden and contemplate whether to hike west (Alta Via 1) or east (Grande Sentiero Walser).

**Hotel Breithorn** (☎ 0125 30 87 34; [www.breithornhotel.com](http://www.breithornhotel.com); Route Ramey 27, Champoluc; s/d €60/120, restaurant mains €15-20; 🍷 🍴) Built early last century, this dreamy hotel in Champoluc's village centre has timber-panelled rooms dressed in crisp white cotton, an excellent on-site restaurant and its own mountain guide organising a weekly program of free excursions for guests. For the ultimate mountain retreat, ask about the hotel's remote chalet (double half-board from €230; mains €20), which can only be reached by jeep in summer or Skidoo in winter.

**La Grange** (☎ 0125 30 78 35; St Jacques; mains €7-16; 🎵 noon-2am Thu-Tue) Fab music bar at the base of St Jacques' ski lift serving Alpine classics such as stewed sausages with polenta, roast wild pig and potatoes and, of course, fondue.

**Atelier Gourmand** (☎ 0125 30 78 88; Rte Ramey 69, Champoluc; lunch menus €15-21, mains €6.50-17) Romantic village restaurant with a candlelit stone dining room warmed by an open fire, a mountain-inspired menu and over 300 wines.

## Getting There & Away

Trains running through Aosta stop in St-Vincent and Verrès, from where you can catch a bus to the Ayas or Gressoney valleys. **Valdostana Impresa Trasporti Automobilistici** (☎ 0125 96 65 46) operates buses from Verrès train station to St Jacques (€3.20) via Champoluc (€3, one hour, up to nine daily).

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## LONG-DISTANCE PATHS IN VALLE D'AOSTA

Energetic walkers will have a field day in the Valle d'Aosta, where long-distance hiking trails criss-cross the high country like interconnecting blood vessels. As elsewhere in Italy, a comprehensive network of *rifugi* (mountain huts) makes multiday trekking easy – or you can just join segments of the paths for shorter day hikes. Here's a run-down of the highlights:

- **Alta Via 1** – the 13-stage 'path of the giants' traverses the north side of the Valle d'Aosta from Gressoney to Courmayeur and passes in the shadow of Europe's highest peaks.
- **Alta Via 2** – this 12-stage high-altitude nature trail traverses the valley's southern flanks from Champorcher to Courmayeur and takes in large swathes of Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso. Its high point is 3300m Col Lauson.
- **Grande Sentiero Walser** – a heritage trail that follows the ancient Walser migration route across the Valtournenche, Valle d'Ayas and Val di Gressoney. The historic path is waymarked with fascinating interpretive panels.
- **Tour Monte Rosa** – a nine-day, 150km extravaganza around the base of 4633m Monte Rosa, this trek also encompasses parts of Switzerland. It enters Valle d'Aosta at Olen Pass near the Valsesia and exits at Colle Teodulo north of Valtournenche.
- **Tour du Mont Blanc** – this marathon 165km, seven-to-10-day romp through Italy, France and Switzerland around western Europe's highest mountain is one of the continent's most iconic walks and incorporates some truly breathtaking scenery. The nexus for the hike in Italy is Courmayeur.
- **Tour de Cervino** – a spectacular 145km circumnavigation of the Matterhorn that traverses three different cultures (Walser, Francophone and Italian) and crosses two glaciers. For experienced hikers only.
- **Via Francigena** – a medieval pilgrims' route running between Canterbury in England and Rome that

has been partially restored. Its path through the Valle d' Aosta descends from the St Bernards Pass, cuts through the town of Aosta and then follows the main valley via Châtillon and Verrès into Piedmont.

- **Grande Traversata delle Alpi (GTA)** – second only to the peninsula-spanning Sentiero Italia, the 200km GTA runs the length of the Italian Alps, from the Dolomites to the Maritimes. The trail kisses the southeast corner of the Valle d' Aosta in and around the Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso.

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**Autoservizi Novarese** (☎ 011 903 10 03) operates buses from Varallo to Turin (2¼ hours, two daily).

For information on buses to/from Alagna Valsesia (one hour, up to five daily) contact **ATAP** (☎ 0158 40 81 17).

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# Lombardy & the Lakes

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## MILAN

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GETTING AROUND

## SOUTH OF MILAN

PAVIA

## EAST OF MILAN

BERGAMO

VALTELLINA

BRESCIA

CREMONA

MANTUA (MANTOVA)

AROUND MANTUA

## THE LAKES

LAGO D'ORTA

LAGO MAGGIORE

LAGO DI COMO

LAGO D'ISEO

LAGO DI GARDA

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Sprawling between the Alps and the river Po's plains, Lombardy (Lombardia) has one of Italy's most varied landscapes. Industrious cities, medieval hill towns and lakeside resorts are interspersed with powdered slopes, lemon groves, crop fields, vineyards and rice paddies.

Dominating it all is Lombardy's capital and Italy's economic powerhouse, Milan. Home to the nation's prime stock exchange, one of Europe's biggest trade-fair grounds and international fashion hub, it is Italy's second-largest metropolis after Rome.

Sparkling lakes are strung along the north of the region like a glittering necklace. Wedding-cake villas set in tiered gardens adorn elegant towns and coquettish villages along the shores. Further north still, the Valtellina and the wall of Alpine mountains abutting Switzerland are home to national parks and good skiing around Bormio.

South of the main chain of lakes, cities steeped in history include medieval Bergamo, Roman Brescia, the age-old violin-making centre of Cremona and the Renaissance city of Mantua.

Fresh lake fish grace Lombardy's tables, along with risotto and polenta from the plains. Alpine butter, cream and cheese from the Valtellina are prized, as are the dry Valtellina red wines and fizzy Franciacorta, produced using the same double-fermentation method as Champagne.

The catch? Lombardy's style comes at a price. Milan could be loosely compared with London. It's a frenetic place that 'enjoys' a climate reminiscent of London. The region's industry and agriculture make it one of the most affluent parts of Italy and one of the most expensive. There are ways to keep the costs down – but this region rewards you when you splash out.

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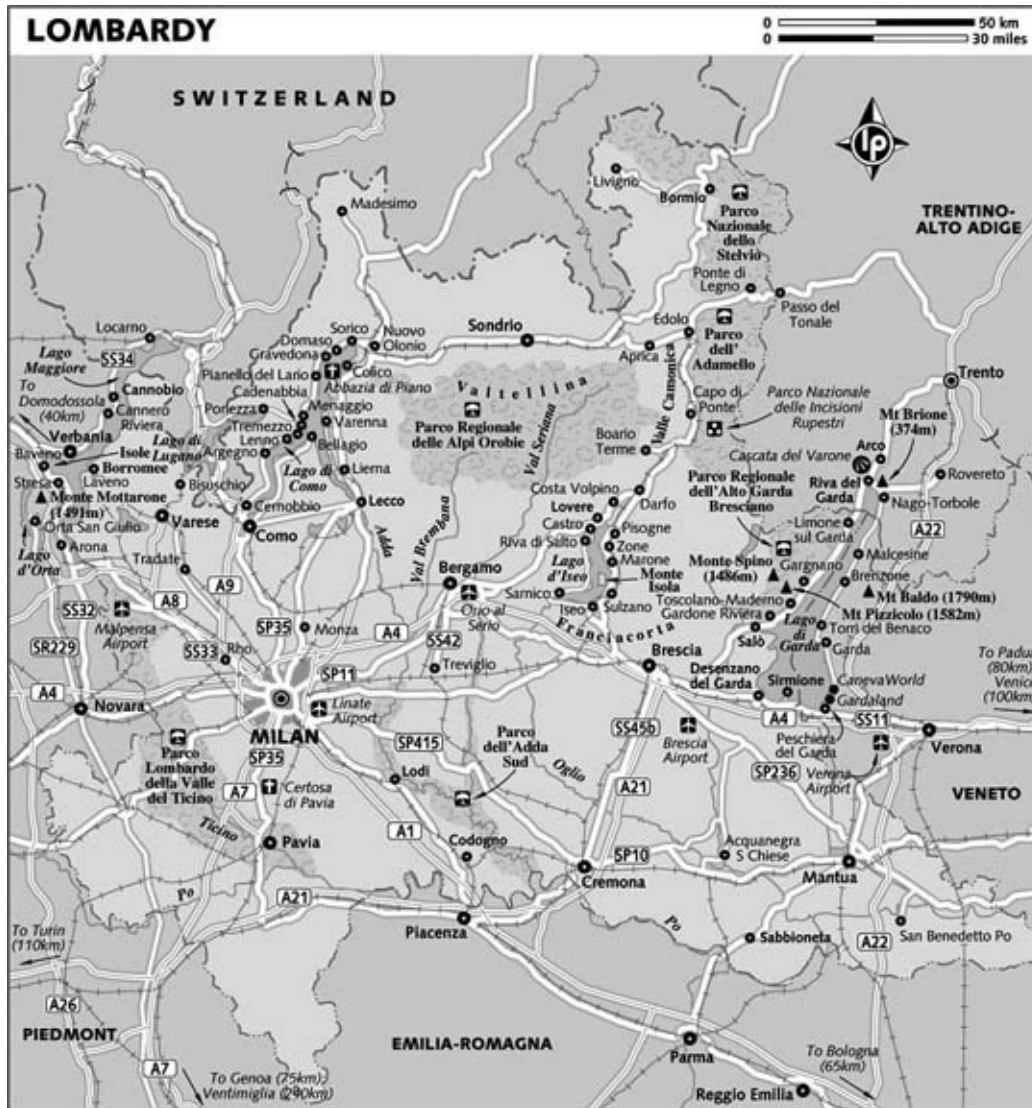
## HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a ferry at twilight for mesmerising views of [Lago di Como](#)
- Try to control overtly salivating over the gourmet treasures at Milan's 19th-century food emporium, **Peck** (see boxed text, [Click here](#))
- Go back centuries amid the medieval beauty of Bergamo's [Piazza Vecchia](#)
- Spend 15 minutes face to face with Leonardo's famous mural, [The Last Supper](#)
- Stroll among the peacocks in the palace gardens on Lago Maggiore's prettiest island, [Isola Bella](#)
- Ride Lago di Garda's winds at the home of the World Windsurf Championships, [Nago-Torbole](#)



Population: 9.64 million

Area: 23,835 sq km



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## MILAN

pop 1.3 million

At first glance, Milan (Milano) can appear like one of the models gracing its catwalks: great bone structure (in the shape of historic and striking new architecture), extravagant taste and no obvious soul. But Milan's style and, yes, substance, are more than skin deep.

Milan is the engine room of the country's economy. Treasures that survived damage from Allied bombing during WWII include its elaborate cathedral, Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* and the Castello Sforzesco. The La Scala opera house also scraped through. What really sets Milan apart, however, is its creative streak and high-speed cosmopolitan feel.

Armani, Versace, Prada, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci and many more took off on Milan's runways (although many, like Gucci, first came to the world's attention in Florence). Fashionistas make a pilgrimage here to shop at the designers' flagship stores in the Quadrilatero d'Oro (Golden Quad).

By night, the Milanese know how to enjoy themselves. They start with the *aperitivo*, a kind of extended happy hour in which the city's best bars offer a cornucopia of free bar food to go with wine and cocktails. Some head later for the many bars lining canals in the Navigli area.

Fashion and finance aside, Milan's other religion is *calcio* (football). The city is home to both AC Milan and Inter, two of Italy's top teams (the latter won the national championship in 2009), and passionate crowds pack San Siro stadium every Sunday (the teams alternate) in season.

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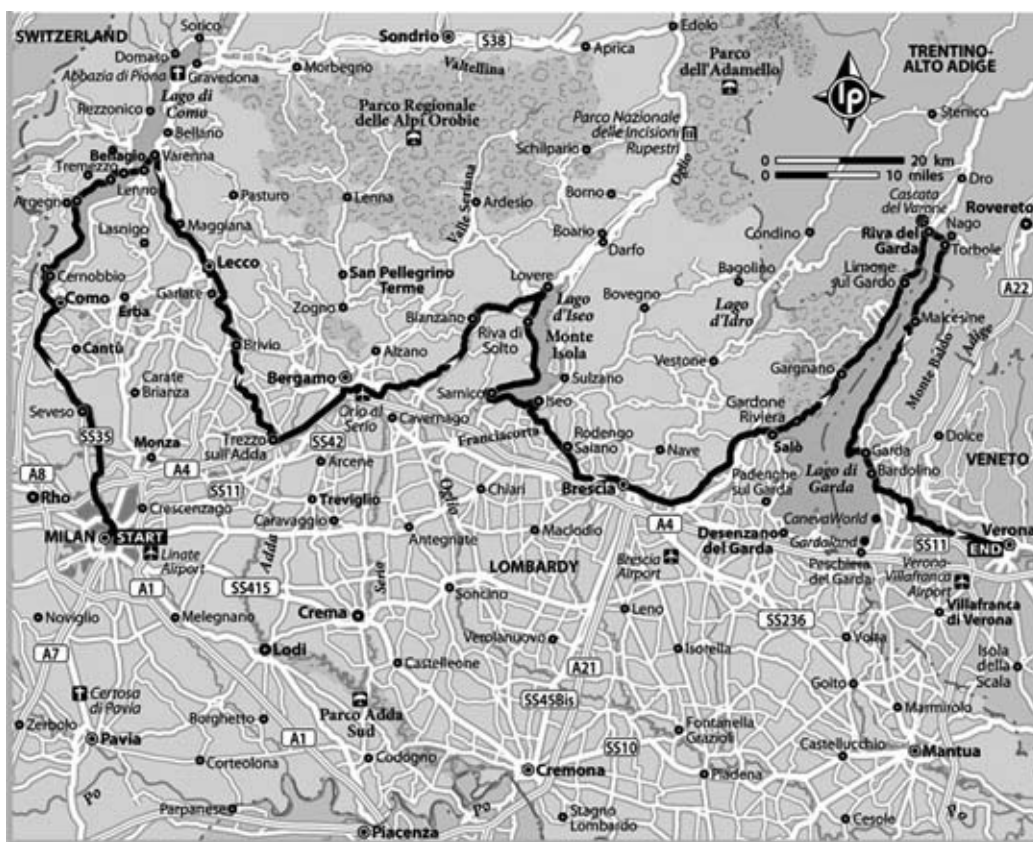
## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### A LOMBARD LAKE JAUNT      **Eight Days / Milan / Verona**

Fast trains and a motorway make travelling from Milan east to Verona a speedy affair. But you could follow a different route, taking in some of the breathtaking beauty of Lombardy's lakes en route. From **Milan** (opposite), head north to **Como**, where you could stop to admire the **Duomo** and **Basilica di Sant'Abbondio**, and head up to **Brunate** for the views [Click here](#). Head along the villa-lined west bank of the lake to **Lenno**, where you can explore Villa Balbianello, and then **Tremezzo** for Villa Carlotta and its gardens.

A car ferry leads east from nearby Cadenabbia to beautiful **Bellagio**, with more villas, and then on to equally engaging **Varenna** on the east bank. From here, you could head south via Lecco and pick up the A4 autostrada (or side roads) for **Bergamo**, where a day can be spent exploring the *città alta* (upper town).

The SS42 road winds northeast past the tranquil Lago d'Endine to the north end of Lago d'Iseo at **Lovere**. There are some great views over the lake from several towns high up above Lovere. South of Lovere is pretty **Sarnico**, overlooking the lake and the Oglio river. A short trip brings you east to **Iseo**, with an attractive waterfront, a beach and ferries to **Monte Isola**, a soaring hill-island in the middle of the lake. From Iseo, roads penetrate southeast through the rolling countryside of **Franciacorta**, a wine-growing region, to reach **Brescia**. From Brescia, the SP11 and SS45Bis roads bring you to **Salò**, on the lower west bank of Lago di Garda; it's a pretty stop before reaching **Gardone Riviera**, dominated by the exuberant **Vittoriale degli Italiani** villa and gardens. **Riva del Garda** makes a good base for windsurfing and some fine walks. Heading south along the east bank, **Malcesine** is dominated by a castle and offers a cable-car ride to **Monte Baldo**. From there, a pleasant drive south leads to the lakeside wine town of **Bardolino**, a short drive from **Verona**.



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## OUR TOP FIVE MOST BEAUTIFUL SPOTS IN LOMBARDY

- [Orta San Giulio, Lago d'Orta](#)
- [Villa Balbianello, Lenno, Lago di Como](#)
- [Città alta, Bergamo](#)
- [Isola Bella, Lago Maggiore](#)
- [Gardone Riviera, Lago di Garda](#)

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If you take the time to get under Milan's skin, chances are it will get under yours too.

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## HISTORY

Celtic tribes settled along the river Po in the 7th century BC, and the area encompassing modern-day Milan has remained inhabited since. In AD 313, Emperor Constantine made his momentous edict granting Christians freedom of worship here. The city had already replaced Rome as the capital of the empire in 286, a role it kept until 402.

A *comune* (town council) was formed by all social classes in the 11th century, and, from the mid-13th century, government passed to a succession of dynasties – the Torrianis, Viscontis and, finally, the Sforzas. It fell under Spanish rule in 1525 and Austrian in 1713. Milan became part of the nascent Kingdom of Italy in 1860.

Benito Mussolini, one-time editor of the socialist newspaper *Avanti!*, founded the Fascist Party in Milan in 1919. He was eventually strung up here by partisans after he sought to escape to Switzerland in



1945. Mussolini had dragged Italy into WWII on Hitler's side in 1940. By early 1945, Allied bombings during WWII had destroyed much of central Milan.

In 1992, the *Tangentopoli* scandal broke, implicating thousands of Italian (and many Milanese) politicians, officials and businesspeople, fashion designers Gianni Versace and Giorgio Armani among them.

Milan's self-made big shot and media mogul, Silvio Berlusconi, made the move into politics in the 1990s and has since been elected prime minister three times, most recently in 2008.

The city's next big date with destiny is Expo2015, a world exhibition.

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## ORIENTATION

Central Milan's spider's web of streets radiates from the city's geographical and spiritual heart, the Duomo (Cathedral).

North of the Duomo is the Quadrilatero d'Oro (Golden Quad), Milan's designer shopping precinct. Northwest is the gentrified, former bohemian quarter of Brera, with narrow cobblestone streets, upmarket antique shops and alfresco cafés. The city's best nightlife is on and around Corso Como, further northwest, beyond which is the edgy Isola design district. Northeast of the Duomo is the Stazione Centrale. To the Duomo's south lies the Navigli canal district, while the Castello Sforzesco stands in the Parco Sempione to the west.

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## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**American Bookstore** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 87 89 20; Via M Camperio 16; 🕒 1-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) English-language novels and nonfiction.

**Panton's English Bookshop** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 469 44 68; [www.englishbookshop.it](http://www.englishbookshop.it); Via Mascheroni 12) New and second-hand English-language titles.

**Rizzoli** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8646 1071; Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II) Unbeatable range of translated works by Italian writers, and Italy-inspired travel literature.

**Touring Club Italiano** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 852 63 04; Corso Italia 10) Outstanding range of guidebooks and walking maps.

### Emergency

**Foreigners police office** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 6 22 61; Via Montebello 26) For immigration matters.

**Police station** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 6 22 61; Via Fatebenefratelli 11)

### Internet Access

**Internetpoint** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7209 5780; Cairoli metro; per hr €4; 🕒 10am-9pm) A cute, well-run

internet cafe inside the Via Dante entrance of the metro.

## Laundry

**Allwash** ([Map](#); Via Savona 1; wash per 7kg €3.50, dryer per 20min €3.50; ☎ 8am-10pm)

## Left Luggage

**Stazione Centrale** ([Map](#); 1st 5 hrs €4, per hr for next 7 hrs €0.60, then per hr €0.20; ☎ 6am-11.50pm) Five-day maximum.

## Medical Services

**24-hour pharmacy** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 669 09 35; Stazione Centrale)

**Farmacia Carlo Erba** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 87 86 68; Piazza del Duomo 21; ☎ 3-7pm & 8pm-8.30am Mon, 9.30am-7pm & 8pm-8.30am Tue-Sat, 8pm-8.30am Sun)

**Milan Clinic** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7601 6047; [www.milanclinic.com](http://www.milanclinic.com); Via Cerva 25) English-speaking doctors.

**Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 5 50 31, English speakers 02 5503 3137; [www.policlinico.mi.it](http://www.policlinico.mi.it); Via Francesco Sforza 35) Hospital.

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## MILAN IN ...

### Two Days

With two days, you can whip around the essentials. Item number one will be the Duomo, Milan's cathedral, followed by the nearby Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II and La Scala theatre. Round off with the Castello Sforzesco and down time in Parco Sempione behind it. Make sure you are booked to view Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* on the morning of day two. Inspired by such beauty, you might want to take a trip to the Monte Napoleone area (aka Quadrilatero d'Oro) for high-fashion shopping. Head down to the Navigli area for a bite and drinks in the evening.

### Four Days

With two extra days, you can get to know the city a little better. For art, choose the Pinacoteca di Brera and Museo Poldi-Pezzoli. Make more time for hanging out, especially at *aperitivo* time, for instance along Corso Como. Lovers of architecture and history should hunt out the city's oldest basilicas: the Basilica di Sant'Ambrogio and Basilica di San Lorenzo.

### One Week

With a week, you can mix it up with short trips outside Milan. Bergamo, Brescia, Crema, Pavia and Vigevano are all doable as day trips; the last two can be combined in one day. Using high-speed trains, you could even go as far afield as Verona, Bologna or Turin for the day.

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## Money

There are currency-exchange offices at both airports and a couple on the western side of Piazza del Duomo.

**American Express** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7210 4006; Via Larga 4; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

**Banca Cesare Ponti** ([Map](#); Piazza del Duomo 19) Good rates and a 24-hour automatic banknote-exchange machine.

**Banca Intesa San Paolo** ([Map](#); Piazza della Scala) A 24-hour booth with currency-exchange machine and ATMs.

## Post

**Central post office** ([Map](#); Piazza Cordusio 1)

**Stazione Centrale** ([Map](#); Piazza Duca d'Aosta; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Sat)

## Tourist Information

**Central tourist office** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7740 4343; [www.provincia.milano.it/turismo](http://www.provincia.milano.it/turismo); lower level, Piazza del Duomo 19a; 🕒 8.45am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun)

**Welcome Desk Meeting Milano** Linate airport (off [Map](#); ☎ 02 7020 0443; 🕒 7.30am-11.30pm); Malpensa airport (off [Map](#); ☎ 02 5858 0080; Terminal 1; 🕒 8am-8pm)

**Tourist Office** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7740 4318; Stazione Centrale; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun & holidays) In front of platform 13.

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

For those with limited mobility, Milan's public transport system, ATM, has low-floor buses on many of its routes, and some metro stations are equipped with lifts. See the dual-language **Milano Per Tutti** ([www.milanopertutti.it](http://www.milanopertutti.it)) for details as well as itineraries of accessible sights.

## Travel Agencies

**Agenzie 365** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 6749 3147; Piazza Luigi di Savoia, Stazione Centrale) At the airport-shuttle bus stop.

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## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Pickpockets (including young children) prey on Milan's main shopping areas, train stations and busiest public transport routes.

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## SIGHTS

Many visitors hit Milan for its shopping rather than sights, but there's plenty to see beyond the boutiques.

## Duomo & Around

### DUOMO

A frenzy of flying buttresses, 135 spires and a staggering 3200 statues, Milan's Gothic **Duomo** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7202 2656; [www.duomomilano.it](http://www.duomomilano.it); Piazza del Duomo) is the world's largest of its kind, and third largest

in any style in Europe. This vision of pink-tinged Candoglia marble was commissioned in 1386 by Gian Galeazzo Visconti and has a capacity for a congregation of 40,000 (Milan's population at the time).

Centuries of construction (from east to west) finally saw it largely completed in 1812 (although various bits and bobs would not be attached until the 1960s). Crowning this Gothic splendour is a gilded copper statue of the **Madonnina** (Little Madonna), the city's traditional protector. Curiously, there's no bell tower.

The cathedral's echoing interior is equally awe-inspiring, with 146 stained-glass windows, and intricately carved pillars. Although the ceiling also appears carved, it's a trompe l'œil. High above the altar is a **nail** said to have been the one that impaled Christ's right hand on the cross. Predating the cathedral is the early Christian baptistry, the **Battistero di San Giovanni** (admission €2; ☎ 9.30-5.15pm Tue-Sun), accessed via a stairwell next to the main entrance. The **crypt** (admission free) displays the remains of San Carlo Borromeo, who died in 1584, in a glass casket, while off to the side, the **treasury** (admission €1; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1.30pm & 2-5pm Sat, 1.30-3.30pm Sun) has a small collection of liturgical vessels (interesting only to the truly dedicated).

For a close-up of the forest of spires, statuary and pinnacles – and views as far as Switzerland on a clear day – you can climb 165 steps to the **cathedral roof** (admission €5; ☎ 9am-5.45pm). Alternatively, it's a quick zip up in the **lift** (admission €8; ☎ 9am-5.30pm) to the top. Entrances to both are outside the cathedral on the northern side.

The Duomo's surrounding plaza, the **Piazza del Duomo**, is the hub for the city's celebrations and festivities.

To learn more about the cathedral, you could, until 2005, pop into the **Museo del Duomo** ([Map](#); [www.duomomilano.it](http://www.duomomilano.it); Piazza del Duomo 14). It's now closed and in need of refurbishment, but when this might happen is anyone's guess.

Looking on to Piazza del Duomo (and now covered by scaffolding) is Mussolini's **Arengario** ([Map](#)) from where he would harangue huge crowds in the glory days of his regime. It will one day house the **Museo del Novecento** ([www.museodelnovecento.org](http://www.museodelnovecento.org)), a museum of 20th-century history and society.

## GALLERIA VITTORIO EMANUELE II

Framed by an immense archway, the **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II** ([Map](#)) opens off the Piazza del Duomo's northern flank. This glass-and-steel-roofed shopping arcade is shaped like a crucifix, and is home to elegant boutiques, cafes, and, unfortunately, a McDonald's. More fittingly, it's also home to a seven-star (!) hotel, the **Townhouse Galleria** ([www.townhousegalleria.it](http://www.townhousegalleria.it)).

Giuseppe Mengoni designed the Galleria as a showplace for modern Milan. Tragically, he plummeted to his death from scaffolding just weeks before his 14-year tour de force was completed in 1877. Long-standing Milanese tradition claims you can avoid Mengoni's bad luck by grinding your heel into the testicles of the mosaic bull on the floor (just to the left of the central cross when you're facing north).

## PINACOTECA AMBROSIANA

Within Europe's first public library, the 1609 Biblioteca Ambrosiana, is its outstanding art gallery, the **Pinacoteca Ambrosiana** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 80 69 21; [www.ambrosiana.it](http://www.ambrosiana.it); Piazza Pio XI 2; adult/child €8/5; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun). Priceless works include Italy's first real still life, Caravaggio's *Canestro di frutta* (Fruit Basket) and Leonardo da Vinci's *Musico* (Musician).

## La Scala

The austere facade of Milan's legendary opera house, **Teatro alla Scala** (La Scala) seems at odds with its sumptuous six-tiered interior, all chandeliers and scarlet-silk-lined private boxes. The disparity came about because at the time it was built in 1778, it was on a narrow street blocked by houses, making it impossible to admire the facade in any case. These have since been demolished to create the square out front, Piazza della Scala, revealing the underwhelming frontage.

Attending a performance is incredible; [Click here](#) for ticket details. Otherwise, you can peek inside as part of a visit to the in-house **Museo Teatrale alla Scala** (La Scala Museum; [Map](#); ☎ 02 4335 3521; [www.teatroallascala.org](http://www.teatroallascala.org); Piazza della Scala; adult/child €5/4; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm), provided there are no performances or rehearsals in progress. On the museum's ground floor is a chronologically arranged collection of opera-related items, including original advertising posters and the death mask and hand cast of Giuseppe Verdi, who premiered numerous operas here.

## Around La Scala

Between Piazza della Scala and Piazza San Fedele, Galeazzo Alessi's **Palazzo Marino** ([Map](#)) is a masterpiece of 16th-century residential architecture. Milan's municipal council has sat here since 1859. You can join **tours** (☎ 02 8845 6617; [www.comune.milano.it](http://www.comune.milano.it); admission free; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, booking obligatory).

Botticelli's *Madonna and Child* is the star attraction at the nearby **Museo Poldi-Pezzoli** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 79 48 89; [www.museopoldipezzoli.it](http://www.museopoldipezzoli.it); Via Alessandro Manzoni 12; adult/child €8/5.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Home to the city's most important private collection, it also displays some superb porcelain, jewellery, tapestries, antique furniture and paintings.

## The Last Supper (Il Cenacolo Vinciano)

Leonardo Da Vinci's depiction of Christ and his dinner companions is one of the world's most iconic images. You need to book anything from two weeks to a couple of months ahead or take a somewhat pricey city tour ([Click here](#)) to see it. If you get lucky, you might find vacancies if you just turn up, but don't bank on it. Once in, you get just 15 minutes' viewing time.

The **mural** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8942 1146; [www.cenacolovinciano.org](http://www.cenacolovinciano.org); adult/EU citizens 18-25 yr/EU citizens under 18 yr & over 65 yr €6.50/3.25/free, plus booking fee €1.50; 🕒 8.15am-7pm Tue-Sun) is hidden away on one wall of the Cenacolo Vinciano, the refectory adjoining the **Chiesa di Santa Maria delle Grazie** ([Map](#); Corso Magenta; 🕒 8.15am-7pm Tue-Sun). Restoration of *The Last Supper* was completed in 1999 after more than 22 years' work. Despite the painstaking restoration effort, 80% of the original colour has been lost. Da Vinci was partly responsible for all this trouble. Because he worked on a dry wall over three years (1495-98), rather than on wet plaster over a week, it is not really a fresco. And it began to deteriorate within a few years of completion.

Reservations must be made by phone. You'll be allotted a visiting time and reservation number, which you present 30 minutes before your visit at the refectory ticket desk. If you turn up late, your ticket will be resold.

English-language guided tours (€3.25) take place at 9.30am and 3.30pm Tuesday to Sunday – again you'll need to reserve ahead.

## Castello Sforzesco & Parco Sempione

Originally a Visconti fortress, this immense red-brick **castle** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8846 3700; [www.milanocastello.it](http://www.milanocastello.it); Piazza Castello; adult/senior/child under 18yr €3/1.50/free, after 2pm Fri free; 🕒

castle grounds 7am-6pm or 7pm Tue-Sun, museums 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) was later home to the mighty Sforza dynasty that ruled Renaissance Milan. The castle's defences were designed by Leonardo da Vinci; Napoleon later drained the moat and removed the drawbridges. Today, it shelters a series of specialised museums, accessible on the same ticket.

Among the standouts is the **Museo d'Arte Antica** ([Map](#)), containing Michelangelo's last, unfinished work, *Pietà Rondanini* (in the Sala degli Scarlioni). Paintings by Bellini, Tiepolo, Mantegna, Correggio, Titian and van Dyck take pride of place in the **Pinacoteca e Raccolte d'Arte** ([Map](#)). Milan's distant past is unearthed at the **Museo della Preistoria** ([Map](#)), which displays local archaeological finds from the Palaeolithic era to the Iron Age. Vintage instruments, including some of the world's earliest violins, are a must-see for music lovers at the **Museo degli Strumenti Musicali** ([Map](#)).

Sprawling over 47 hectares, the castle's leafy **Parco Sempione** ([Map](#)) is graced by a neoclassical arch and the **Torre Branca** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 331 41 20; [www.branca.it](http://www.branca.it); admission €3; 🕒 9.30pm-midnight Tue & Thu, 10.30am-12.30pm, 4-6.30pm & 9.30pm-midnight Wed, 2.30-6pm & 9.30pm-midnight Fri, 10.30am-2pm, 2.30-7.30pm & 9.30pm-midnight Sat & Sun mid-Apr—mid-Oct, 10.30am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm Wed, 10.30am-1pm, 3-6.30pm & 8.30pm-midnight Sat, 10.30am-2pm & 2.30-7pm Sun mid-Oct—mid-Apr), a 108m-tall steel tower raised in 1933, from the top of which you have a wonderful, bird's-eye view of the city. Also here is the ageing **Acquario Civico** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8646 2051; Viale Gadio 2; [www.verdeacqua.eu](http://www.verdeacqua.eu); admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun) and the **Triennale di Milano** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7243 4212; [www.triennaledesignmuseum.it](http://www.triennaledesignmuseum.it); Viale Emilio Alemanga 6; adult/senior & student €8/6; 🕒 10.30am-8.30pm Tue-Sun). Regular shows in the Triennale building have championed design practice since it opened in the 1930s, but its permanent museum dedicated to Italian design was only launched late in 2007.

## Around Castello Sforzesco

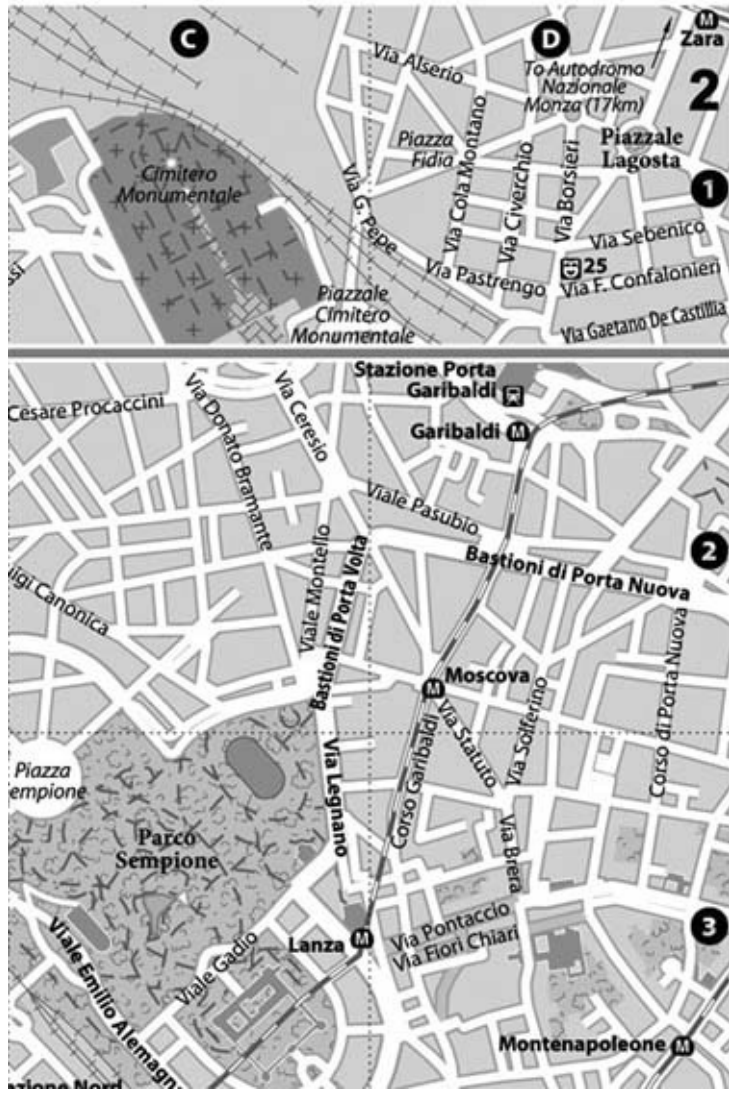
A trio of interesting sights spanning the ancient to the futuristic are just south of the castle.

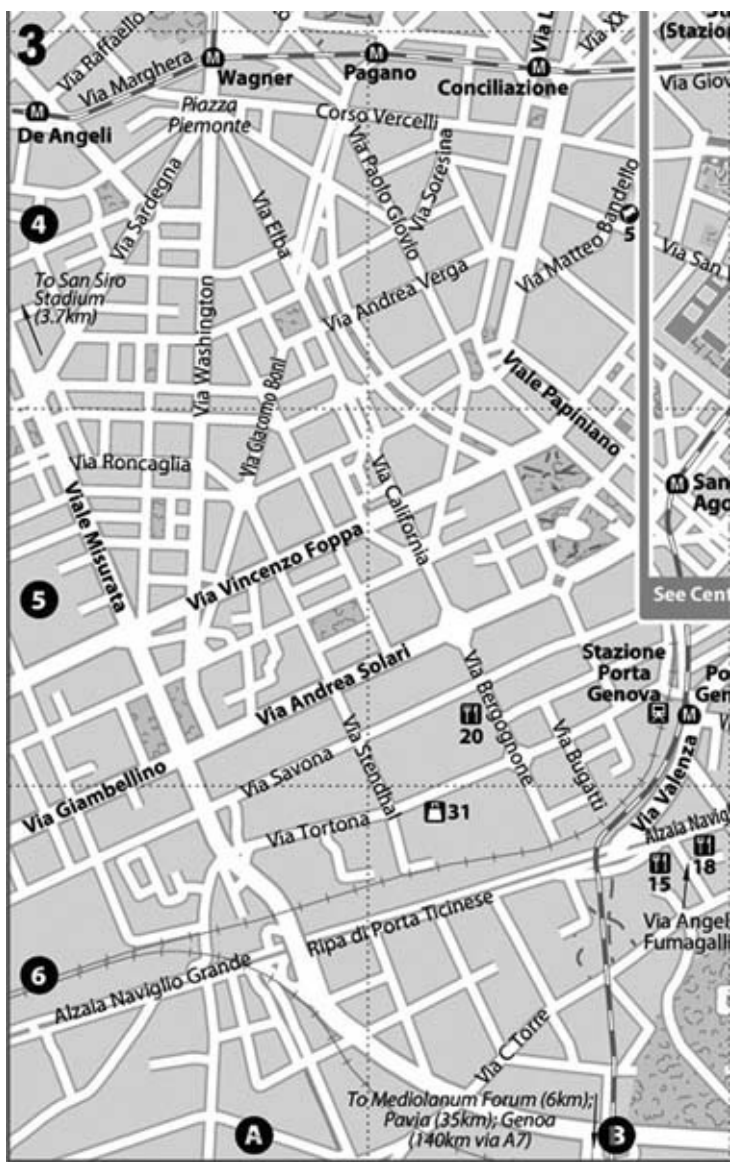
The Monastero Maggiore, a 9th-century Benedictine convent rebuilt in the 1500s, is a dramatic backdrop for the extensive collections of Roman, Greek and Etruscan artefacts housed in the **Civico Museo Archeologico** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8645 0011; Corso Magenta 15; adult/child €2/1, after 2pm Fri free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun).















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Taxi Rank	34 E2



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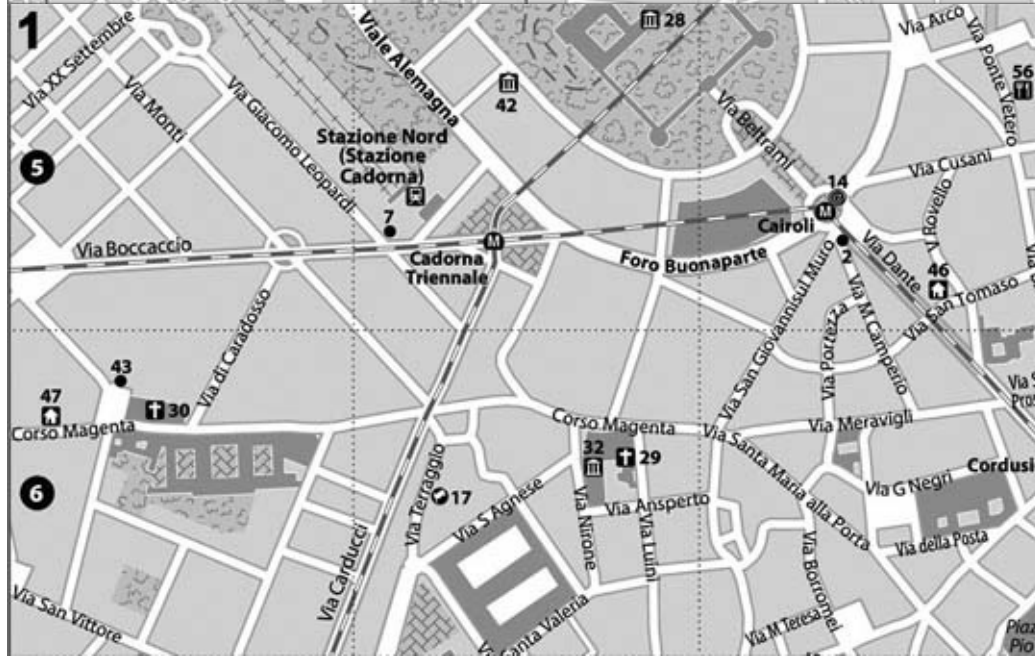
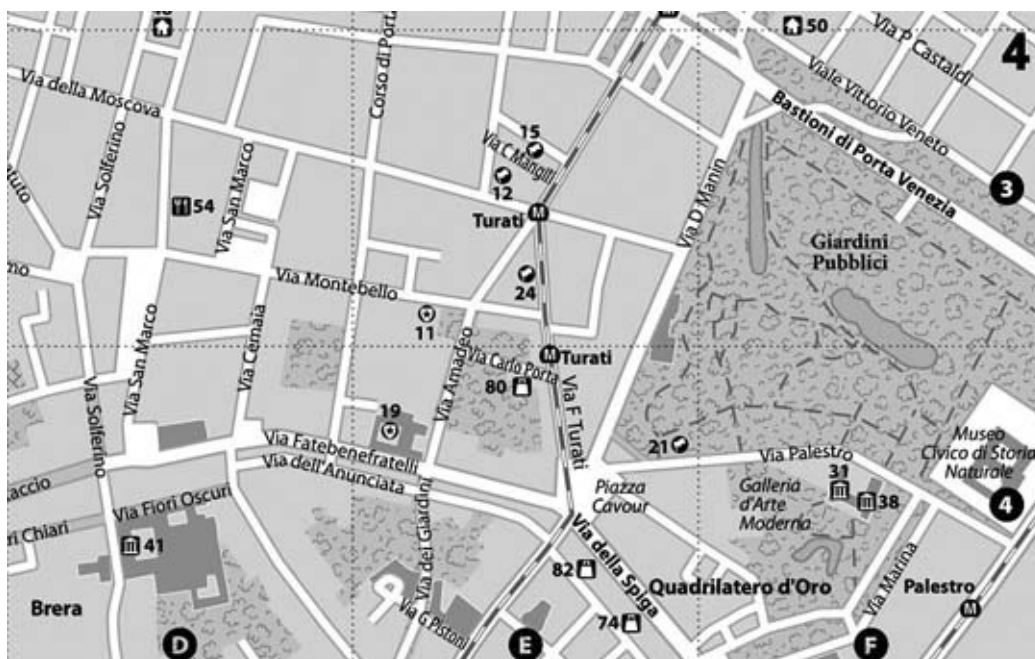
INFORMATION		
24-Hour Pharmacy .....	1	E1
Agenzie 365 .....	2	E1
Centro d'Iniziativa		
Gay-ArciGay Milano .....	3	F4
Left Luggage .....	4	E1
Netherlands Consulate .....	5	B4
Panton's English		
Bookshop .....	6	B3
Stazione Central Post		
Office .....	7	E1
Tourist Office .....	8	F1

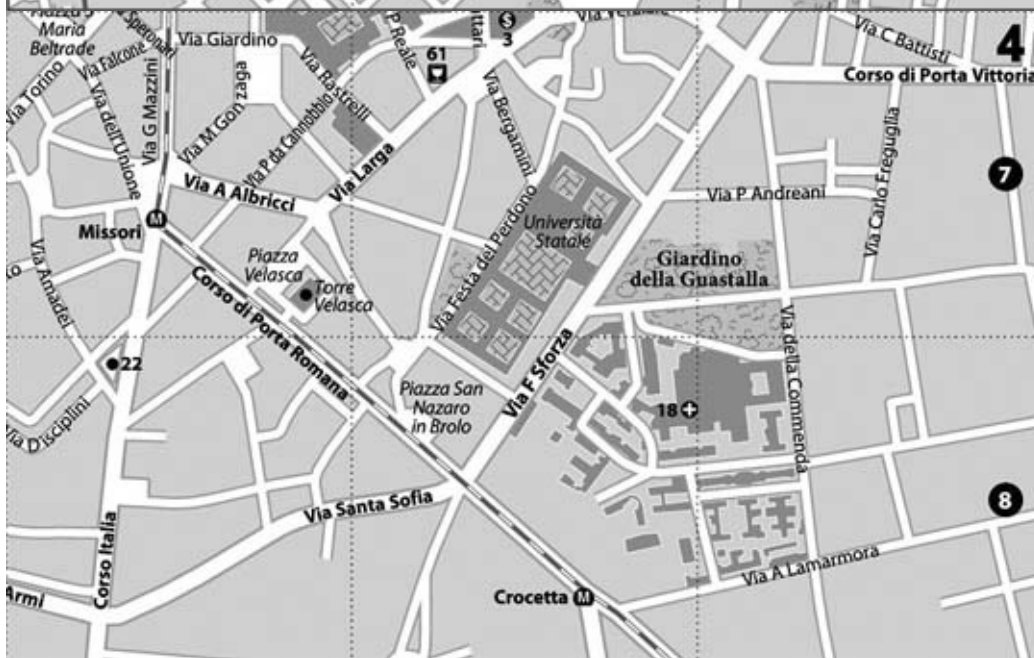
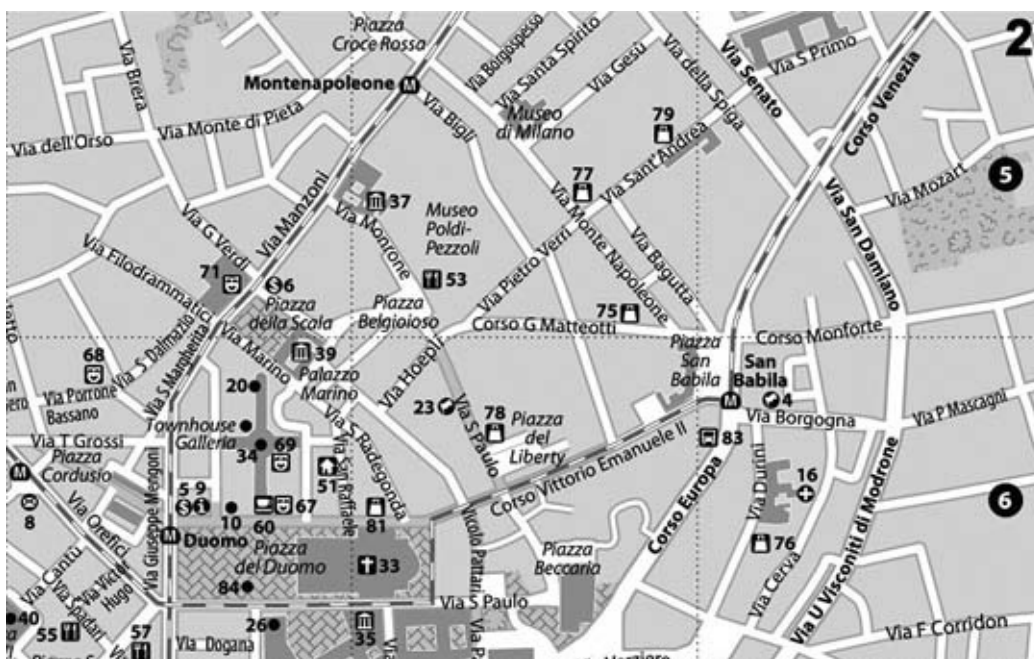














## TOURS

The tourist office sells tickets for Autostradale's three-hour city bus tours (€55 including admission to *The Last Supper*, Castello Sforzesco and La Scala's museum). Although they whiz you through the city's main sights, your entry tickets to the Castello and La Scala are good for the rest of the day, allowing you to go back at leisure. Tours depart from the taxi rank on the western side of Piazza del Duomo at 9.30am Tuesday to Sunday (except for a couple of weeks during August). From April to October, there are also day trips to Lago di Como (€60).

**Zani Viaggi** (☎ 02 86 71 31; [www.zaniviaggi.it](http://www.zaniviaggi.it)) runs a variety of guided tours in and around the city (€25 to €55), some including admission to *The Last Supper*. Tours depart from Piazza Castello and Stazione Centrale.

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## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

La Scala's opera season opens on Milan's biggest feast day, the **Festa di Sant'Ambrogio**, on 7 December.

Milan has two linked trade fairgrounds, collectively known as **Fiera Milano** ([www.fieramilano.it](http://www.fieramilano.it)). The older of the two, **Fieramilanocity** ([Map](#)), is close to the centre (metro line 2, Lotto Fieramilanocity stop), while the main grounds, **Fieramilano**, are west of town in the satellite town of Rho (metro line 2, Rho Fiera stop). See the boxed text, [Click here](#), for information on the international fashion shows here and elsewhere.

Other festivals to look out for:

**Carnevale Ambrosiano** The world's longest carnival, this event culminates with a procession to the Duomo; held in February.

**Cortili Aperti** ([www.italiamultimedia.com/cortiliaperti](http://www.italiamultimedia.com/cortiliaperti)) For one May Sunday, the gates to some of the city's most beautiful private courtyards are flung open. Print out a map and make your own itinerary.

**Festa del Naviglio** Parades, music and performances take place during the first 10 days of June.

**La Bella Estate** ([www.comune.milano.it](http://www.comune.milano.it)) Concerts in and beyond town from June to August. Check the town hall website.

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## SLEEPING

Finding a room in Milan (let alone a cheap one) isn't easy, particularly during the fashion weeks, furniture fair and other exhibitions, when rates skyrocket.

The tourist office distributes *Milano Hotels*, a free annual listings guide to Milan's more than 350 hotels. Lonely Planet's online booking service (<http://hotels.lonelyplanet.com>) reviews standout properties that can be booked online.

## Budget

The area around the Stazione Centrale can be seedy but has some of the city's least expensive accommodation.

## HOSTELS & CAMPING

**Campeggio Città di Milano** (off [Map](#); ☎ 02 4820 7017; [www.campingmilano.it](http://www.campingmilano.it); Via G Airaghi 61; camping 2 people, car & tent €28.50, 2-/3-/4-person bungalow from €90/105/120) Facilities at this four-star 'camping village' west of the centre include a bar, restaurant, laundry and bike rental, as well as an aqua park (with a 40% discount for campers). From the De Angeli metro station, take bus 72 from Piazza de Angeli to the Di Vittorio stop, from where it is a 400m walk. By car, leave the Tangenziale Ovest at San Siro-Via Novara.

**La Cordata** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 5831 4675; [www.ostellimilano.it](http://www.ostellimilano.it); Via Burigozzo 11; dm/s/d €21/70/90; 📶 🚰) Handy for the canal district, these glass-and-brick premises have Spartan but spotless tiled rooms and a self-catering kitchen. Check-in is from 2pm to 10pm, and there's 24-hour access.

## HOTELS

**Hotel Etrusco** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 236 38 52; [www.hoteletrusco.it](http://www.hoteletrusco.it); Via Porpora 56; s/d €60/80; 📶) This elegant little three-star features a lovely garden and pleasant rooms and is certainly the pick of the bunch around Piazza Aspromonte. Six rooms with terraces overlook the garden area.

**Hotel Casa Mia** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 657 52 49; [www.casamiahotel.it](http://www.casamiahotel.it); Viale Vittorio Veneto 30; s/d €62/85; 📶) Cosying up to Piazza della Repubblica, 'My House' is a straightforward digs that is handily placed about halfway between Stazione Centrale and the Duomo, just over the road from the Giardini Pubblici gardens.

## Midrange

**Hotel Del Sole** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 2951 2971; [www.delsolehotel.com](http://www.delsolehotel.com); Via G Spontini 6; s/d €50/95; 📶) One of the best options near Stazione Centrale, this cheerful hotel has unadorned but acceptable rooms, some with balconies. Rooms with shared bathroom go cheaper.

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## HOME CHIC HOME

Milan is the world's capital of fashion for the home. The latest innovations are unveiled each April at the five-day **Salone Internazionale del Mobile** (International Furniture Fair; [www.cosmit.it](http://www.cosmit.it)) at the **Fieramilano fairground** ([www.fieramilano.it](http://www.fieramilano.it)) in Rho. It has been wowing interior design aficionados since 1961.

Design showrooms, galleries and shops abound. A Ron Arad Bookworm bookshelf, produced by Milanese pioneer of plastic **Kartell** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 659 79 16; [www.kartell.it](http://www.kartell.it); Via Carlo Porta 1), can be yours at its flagship store.

Minimalist-chic homewares are the hallmark of **B&B Italia Store** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 76 44 41; [www.milano.bebitalia.com](http://www.milano.bebitalia.com); Via Durini 14). And where would any design fiend worth their salt be without a kitchen appliance from **Alessi** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 79 57 26; [www.alessi.it](http://www.alessi.it); Corso Matteotti 9)?

Half-price Flos desk lamps and Bugatti espresso-makers can be picked up at Milan's first discount outlet for designer furnishings, **Emporio 31** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 422 25 77; [www.emporio31.com](http://www.emporio31.com); Via Tortona 31). It's located inside the left courtyard.

Art and design intertwine at the city's ground-breaking contemporary galleries. Leading the pack is **Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea** (PAC; [Map](#); ☎ 02 7600 9085; [www.comune.milano.it/pac](http://www.comune.milano.it/pac); Via Palestro 14; adult/senior & student €5/3; 🕒 2.30-7.30pm Mon, 9.30am-7.30pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun,

9.30am-10.30pm Thu, to 7.30pm Sun), which mounts experimental exhibitions in all media. Retro items at **Studio Museo Achille Castiglioni** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7243 4231; Piazza Castello 27; 🕒 tours 10am, 11am & noon Tue-Sun) range from the streetlight-turned-pendulum Arco floor lamp to early examples of Alessi's gadget wizardry. Tours are free with prepurchased Triennale di Milano tickets ([Click here](#)), but booking is required.

At newsstands, look out for the magazines *Domus* ([www.domusweb.it](http://www.domusweb.it)) and *Casabella*, both founded in 1928 by Gio Ponti, considered the architect of Italian design.

Milan itself is getting a design overhaul with a flurry of construction projects around town. Biggest and most controversial of them all is the CityLife complex ([Map](#)). Architecture all-stars Zaha Hadid, Arata Isozaki, Daniel Libeskind and Pier Paolo Maggiora are reinventing the old trade-fair site just west of central Milan, which by 2014 will include three office towers, a 20-storey residential tower and parkland – if angry protest groups fail to halt the project in the courts, that is.

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**Vietnamonamour** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7063 4614; [www.vietnamonamour.com](http://www.vietnamonamour.com); Via Alessandro Pestalozza 7; s/d from €80/120; 🕒 📶) Beautiful timber floor and Vietnamese furnishings set the tone in this 1903 residence-turned-B&B, with four romantic rooms. Downstairs, the Paris-born Vietnamese owner offers an equally welcoming Vietnamese restaurant.

**Foresteria Monforte** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7631 8516; [www.foresteriamonforte.it](http://www.foresteriamonforte.it); Piazza del Tricolore 2; d €150-190) With Philippe Starck chairs, flat-screen TVs and a communal kitchen, the three classy rooms in this upmarket B&B are a short walk from the Duomo. Breakfast is served in your room.

**Hotel Ariston** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7200 0556; [www.aristonhotel.com](http://www.aristonhotel.com); Largo Carrobbio 2; s incl breakfast €110-200, d incl breakfast €160-290; 🕒 📶 🚰 🗺) This ecological hotel offers such touches as herbal tea made with purified water, organic breakfast, natural fibre-filled mattresses, soaps and shampoos made with all-natural ingredients, and to top it all off, a freely loaned bicycle at the door.

**our pick Antica Locanda Leonardo** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 4801 4197; [www.anticolocandaleonardo.com](http://www.anticolocandaleonardo.com); Corso Magenta 78; s €120, d €165-245; 🕒 📶) Rooms here ooze homey comfort, from the timber beds and parquet floors in some, to the antique furniture and plush drapes in others. Take breakfast in the quiet, scented, interior garden of this 19th-century residence.

**Alle Meraviglie** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 805 10 23; [www.allemeraviglie.it](http://www.allemeraviglie.it); Via San Tomaso 8; d €180-247; 🕒 📶 🗺) There are just six soothing rooms at this boutique hotel in a pretty side street in the city centre. Each is uniquely decorated with beautiful fabrics and fresh flowers, and there are no TVs.

## Top End

**3Rooms** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 62 61 63; [www.3rooms-10Corsocomo.com](http://www.3rooms-10Corsocomo.com); Corso Como 10; d €270-310; 🕒 📶 🗺) You can't drag yourself and your shopping bags away from concept shop Corso Como? You don't have to: the villa's three guest rooms let you sleep amid Eames bedspreads, Arne Jacobsen chairs and Saarinen leather.

**Straf** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 80 50 81; [www.straf.it](http://www.straf.it); Via San Raffaele 3; s/d from €295/320; 🕒 🗺) Too cool for anything much, let alone school, this ultra-designer address is a shout from the Duomo. Some rooms have massage chairs and aromatherapy, and all share some extreme decor ideas. Cement, black stone and scratched glass are common features. The bar downstairs hosts art installations, and there's a gym for guests.

**Antica Locanda Solferino** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 657 01 29; [www.anticolocandasolferino.it](http://www.anticolocandasolferino.it); Via Castelfidardo 2; s €140-270, d €180-400; 🕒 📶) A genuinely charming hideway with 11 rooms, decorated in a bygone

style with some nice paintings and prints, this understated Brera boutique beauty attracts artists, writers and other layabouts, so booking is essential. They have a quite decent-sized single.

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## EATING

Like its fashions, meals in Milan range from classics to fusion and imports. Various fashion houses (Gucci, Armani and others) have exclusive cafe-restaurants attached to their stores.

Milan's provincial specialities include polenta and the first course of choice, *risotto alla milanese* (saffron-infused risotto made with bone-marrow stock). Milanese mains include *fritto misto alla milanese* (fried slices of bone marrow, liver and lung), *busecca* (sliced tripe boiled with beans) and *costoletta alla milanese* (breaded veal). Milan is also the home of *panettone* (a yeast-risen sweet bread) and *colomba* (a dry, dove-shaped cake first baked in the 6th century and traditionally accompanied by sweet dessert wine).

## Restaurants

Smart business eateries congregate around the cathedral. In the Brera area, pavement terraces open up along hip Via Fiori Chiari in summer. The canal district has a host of appealing spots.

Reservations are generally a good idea and essential for top-end establishments.

**Piccola Ischia** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 204 76 13; Via Giovanni Battista Morgagni 7; pizzas €8-15, meals €30; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, dinner only Sat & Sun) The Campanian potato croquettes, *arancini* (rice-stuffed pastries) and zucchini blossoms do nicely for starters, but the main attraction is the pizzas.

**Latteria** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 659 76 53; Via San Marco 24; meals €25-30; 🍴 Mon-Fri) If you can snare a seat in this tiny and ever-popular restaurant, you'll find old favourites like *spaghetti alla carbonara* mixed in with chef Arturo's own creations, such as *polpettine al limone* (little meatballs with lemon) or *riso al salto* (risotto fritters) on the ever-changing, mostly organic menu.

**our pick Osteria Le Vigne** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 837 56 17; Ripa di Porta Ticinese 61; meals €25-30; 🍴 Mon-Sat) A perennially popular Navigli eatery, this place is hard to beat for value. Perusal of the menu will reveal such options as *straccetti di pasta fresca con pollo* (strips of fresh pasta with chicken).

**Pescheria Da Claudio** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 805 68 57; Via Ponte Vetro 16; meals €25-30; 🍴 11am-8pm Mon, 9am-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Join the savvy suits for a power lunch or early dinner of *pesce crudo* (raw fish). Plates loaded with marinated tuna, mixed salmon, tuna and whitefish with pistachios or lightly blanched octopus 'carpaccio' are consumed standing around the horseshoe bar.

**Piquenique** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 4229 7225; Via Bergognone 24; meals €30; 🍴 lunch only Mon, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, brunch noon-3pm Sun) All the tables, chairs and linen are different, in a deliberately higgledy-piggledy way, floors are of exposed timber, and linen ranges from gingham to chintzy. Veggie options include couscous dishes, but there's something for everyone, made largely with organic products.

**Acquasala** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8942 3983; meals €30-35; Ripa di Porta Ticinese 71; 🍴 Tue-Sun) The nostalgic and mostly Puglian dishes here include *orecchiette* ('little ears' pasta) with various accompaniments, including a horse-meat sauce. Meat dishes dominate the mains, anything from horse-meat sausages to big Tuscan T-bone steaks.

**El Brellin** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 5810 1351; cnr Vicolo dei Lavandai 14 & Alzaia Naviglio Grande 14; meals



€40-45; ☎ 7pm-2am Mon-Sat, 12.30-3pm Sun) Set around a 1700s public laundry that used water siphoned off from the Naviglio Grande canal, El Brellin's candlelit garden is a romantic spot for home-made pasta and classic Milanese specialities like *cazzoela* (pork rib chops, skin and sausage stew).

**L'Antico Ristorante Boeucc** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 760 20 224; Piazza Belgioioso 2; meals €60-80; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch only Sun) Milan's oldest restaurant (since 1696) serves up works of Lombard culinary art, from *crepelle al prosciutto* (a kind of cross between pasta and crepe with ham) to a *trancio di salmone al pepe verde* (a slice of salmon with green pepper) or Florentine steak.

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## EAT, DRINK & BE MERRY: MILAN'S APERITIVO SCENE

Happy hour elsewhere in the world might mean downing cut-price pints, but not in oh-so-stylish Milan. Its nightly *aperitivi* is a two- or three-hour ritual, starting around 6pm, where for €6 to €12, a cocktail, glass of wine, or beer comes with an unlimited buffet of antipasti, bruschetta, cured meats, salads, and even seafood and pasta. (Occasionally you'll pay a cover charge up front that includes a drink and buffet fare, which generally works out the same.) Take a plate and help yourself; snacks are also sometimes brought to your table. Most of the city's bars offer *aperitivi*, including those listed on right.

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## Cafes & Quick Eats

**Gelateria le Colonne** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 837 22 92; Corso di Porta Ticinese 75; gelati €2-3; ☎ 12.30pm-1.30am Mon-Thu, 12.30pm-2am Fri & Sat, 3pm-1am Sun) Come here for artisanal ice cream in wild flavours such as rice, amaretto, orange blossom and specials like Huehuetenango coffee flavour from Guatemala.

**Princi** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 87 47 97; Via Speronari 6; meals €10; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat) Equally delicious for an early-morning *cornetto* (Italian-type croissant) or *stracchino* (Lombard cows-milk cheese)-filled focaccia on the way home at midnight, Princi is perfect for a filling bite on the run.

**Pizzeria Spontini** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 204 74 44; Via Spontini 2; meals €10-15; ☎ Tue-Sun) Munch standing up at this busy little joint, which has cooked the best pizza in the Stazione Centrale area since 1953.

## Self-Catering

Stock up on supermarket produce at **Standa** ([Map](#); Via della Palla 2a), which has branches all over town, and fresh fruit, veg and fish at the covered market, **Mercato Comunale** ([Map](#); Piazza XXIV Maggio; ☎ 8.30am-1pm Mon, 8.30am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sat).

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## DRINKING

Milanese bars are generally open until 2am or 3am, and virtually all serve *aperitivi* (see the boxed text, left).

The Navigli canal district, the cobbled backstreets of Brera, and swish Corso Como and its surrounds are all great areas for a drink, Milan-style.

**Bar Basso** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 2940 0580; Via Plinio 39; ☎ 9am-2am Wed-Mon) This elegant corner bar is home of the *sbagliato*, the Negroni made with Prosecco instead of gin, as well as the brilliant concept of

*mangia e bevi* (eat and drink), involving a supersized goblet of strawberries, cream and *nocciola* (hazelnut) ice cream and a large slug of some kind of booze.

**Bhangra Bar** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 3493 4469; Corso Sempione 1; admission free-€6; 🕒 7pm-midnight Wed & Thu, 7pm-2am Fri, 10pm-2am Sat, 7-10pm Sun) Bhangra Bar is famous for its cushions and couscous-and-curry *aperitivo* buffet, served with a side of African percussion on Friday.

**Caffè Zucca** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8646 4435; Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II 21; 🕒 daily) The city's most historic cafe overlooks Piazza del Duomo, with a mosaic interior dating from 1867. Sip coffee but skip the meals.

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## FEELING PECKISH

Forget *The Last Supper*: gourmands head to the food and wine emporium, **Peck** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 802 31 61; [www.peck.it](http://www.peck.it); Via Spadari 7-9; 🕒 3-7.30pm Mon, 8.45am-7.30pm Tue-Sat). This Milanese institution opened its doors as a deli in 1883. Since then, it's expanded to a dining room—bar upstairs and an *enoteca* (wine bar). The Aladdin's Cave—like food hall is smaller than its reputation suggests, but what it lacks in space it makes up for in variety, with some 3200 variations of *parmigiano reggiano* (Parmesan) at its cheese counter, just for starters. Other treasures include an exquisite array of chocolates, pralines and pastries; freshly made gelato; seafood; caviar; pâtés; a butcher; fruit and vegetables; truffle products; olive oils and balsamic vinegar.

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**G-Lounge** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 805 30 42; Via Larga 8; 🕒 7.30am-9.30pm Mon, 7.30am-2am Tue-Sun) It's *caipirinhas* (Brazilian cachaça-and-lime based cocktail) and chill-out in this fashionable corner bar with red backlit shelves laden with bottles.

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## WHERE TO SCORE TICKETS

Tickets for concerts, sporting events and the theatre can be booked online through **Ticket One** (☎ 892101; [www.ticketone.it](http://www.ticketone.it)) or **Ticket Web** (☎ 199 158158; [www.ticketweb.it](http://www.ticketweb.it)). **Milano Concerti** (☎ 02 4870 2726) only handles ticketing for international rock concerts. **Box Tickets** (☎ 02 8470 9750; [www.boxtickets.it](http://www.boxtickets.it), in Italian) sells tickets for musicals at Teatro Smeraldo and other shows around town.

In person, you can get tickets for concerts at **Ricordi Mediastore** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8646 0272; [www.ricordimediastores.it](http://www.ricordimediastores.it), in Italian; Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II) and **FNAC** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 72 08 21; [fnac@ticketweb.it](mailto:fnac@ticketweb.it); Via della Palla 2). The entrance to FNAC is on Via Torino.

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**Le Biciclette** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 5810 4325; Via Torti 4; 🕒 6pm-2am Mon-Sat, 12.30pm-2am Sun) Once a bike warehouse and now one of the best *aperitivo* bars in Milan. Evidence of its former life includes glassed-in bicycle memorabilia.

**L'Elephante** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 2951 8768; Via Melzo 22; 🕒 6pm-2am Tue-Sun) The arty-alternative crowd here is as mixed as its killer cocktails: gay, lesbian and straight, locals and visitors. The setting is equally eclectic: no two chairs are alike and the dominating colours are black, metallic grey and shades of deep purple.

**Living** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 331 00 84; Piazza Sempione 2; 🕒 8-2am Mon-Fri, 9-2am Sat & Sun) Living has one of the city's prettiest settings, with a corner position and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Arco

della Pace. The bounteous *aperitivo* spread and expertly mixed cocktails draw crowds of smart-casual 20- and 30-somethings.

**Radetzky** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 657 26 45; Corso Garibaldi 105; 🕒 8pm-1am) Fabulous banquette and window seating make this one of the most popular places on this stylish, largely pedestrianised strip for an *aperitivo* or long Sunday sessions (well, it started with brunch...).

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## ENTERTAINMENT

Milan has some of Italy's top clubs and a lavish cultural calendar capped off by La Scala's opera season. The main theatre and concert season opens in October.

The tourist office stocks several entertainment guides in English: *Milano Mese*, *Hello Milano* ([www.hellomilano.it](http://www.hellomilano.it)) and *Easy Milano* ([www.easymilano.it](http://www.easymilano.it)). The free Italian newspapers distributed on the metro are also handy for what's-on listings.

For club listings, check out *ViviMilano* (<http://milano.corriere.it>, in Italian) which comes out with the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper on Wednesday, or the paper's Milan pages (<http://milano.corriere.it>, in Italian); *La Repubblica* ([www.repubblica.it](http://www.repubblica.it), in Italian) is also good on Thursday. Another source of inspiration is *Milano2night* ([www.milanotonight.it](http://www.milanotonight.it)). Check out *Milanodabere* ([www.milanodabere.it](http://www.milanodabere.it)) too.

## Live Music

**Blue Note** ([Map](#); ☎ 899 700022; [www.bluenotemilano.com](http://www.bluenotemilano.com); Via Borsieri 37; tickets €23-30; 🕒 concerts 9pm & 11pm Tue-Fri, 9pm & 11.30pm Sat, 9pm Sun) Top-class jazz acts from around the world. Tickets by phone, online or at the door from 7.30pm. They also do a popular easy-listening Sunday brunch (€35 or €55 for two adults and two children).

**Magazzini Generali** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 539 39 48; [www.magazzinigenerali.it](http://www.magazzinigenerali.it); Via Pietrasanta 14; 🕒 10pm-4am Wed-Sun) When this former warehouse is full of people working up a sweat to an international indie act, there's no better place to be in Milan. Most gigs are under €20, and there's free entry on other nights when DJs get the party started.

**Scimmie** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8940 2874; [www.scimmie.it](http://www.scimmie.it); Via Cardinale Ascanio Sforza 49; admission €8-15; 🕒 8pm-3am Mon-Sat) Jazz, alternative rock, and blues are the stock in trade of the emerging talents who play to overflowing crowds inside, in the garden and on its summertime jazz barge. Concerts start at 10pm.

Most big names that play Milan do so at major venues outside the city centre, which run shuttle buses for concerts. They include **Mediolanum Forum** (off [Map](#); ☎ 199 128800; [www.forumnet.it](http://www.forumnet.it); Via di Vittorio 6, Assago; 🚇Romolo/Famagosto, then shuttle bus), **Palasharp** (off [Map](#); ☎ 02 3340 0551; Viale Sant'Elia 33; 🚇Lampugnano) and the **San Siro Stadium** (off [Map](#); Via Piccolomini; 🚇Lotto).

## Clubs

Clubs generally stay open until 3am or 4am Tuesday to Sunday; cover charges vary from €10 to upwards of €20. Door policies can be formidable as the night wears on.

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# GAY & LESBIAN MILAN

Like that other queen of the catwalk, Paris, Milan confounds visitors trying to figure out the city's gay scene – because, as one baffled traveller put it, 'everyone's so stylish and sexy'. Added to that, virtually all of Milan's venues attract a mixed gay/lesbian/straight crowd – even on allocated 'gay nights'.

It's no Oxford St, Soho or West Village, but a small dedicated club strip is located in Via Sammartini, on the western side of Stazione Centrale.

**Centro d'Iniziativa Gay – ArciGay Milano** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 5412 2225; [www.arcigaymilano.org](http://www.arcigaymilano.org), in Italian; Via Bezzacca 3) can provide information for gay and lesbian visitors.

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**Gattopardo** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 3453 7699; [www.ilgattopardocafe.it](http://www.ilgattopardocafe.it); Via Piero della Francesca 47; ☎ 6pm-4am Tue-Sun) This gorgeous Champagne-coloured space in a deconsecrated church is filled with flickering candles and baroque-style furniture. Gattopardo's clientele is equally aesthetically blessed.

**Le Banque** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8699 6565; [www.lebanque.it](http://www.lebanque.it); Via Porrone Bassano 6; ☎ from 6pm Tue-Sun) Centrally located, this former bank has decent beats, a languid lounge bar and a mood-lit restaurant.

**Plastic** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 73 39 96; [www.thisisplastic.com](http://www.thisisplastic.com); Viale Umbria 120; ☎ 10pm-4am Tue-Sun) Friday's London Loves takes no prisoners with an edgy, transgressive indie mix and Milan's coolest kids. If you're looking fab, club art director Nicola Guiducci's private Match à Paris on Sunday mashes French pop, indie and avant-garde sounds.

**Shocking Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 6269 0045; [www.shockingclub.net](http://www.shockingclub.net); Bastioni di Porta Nuova 12; ☎ 11.30pm-4am Tue-Sat) A huge, popular club that hosts various nights; DJs spin everything from '80s schlock to commercial house to hip hop.

**Gasoline** ([Map](#); ☎ 339 7745797; [www.discogasoline.it](http://www.discogasoline.it); Via Bonnet 11A; admission around €20; ☎ 11pm-4am Thu & Sat, midnight-4am Fri, 6-11pm Sun, closed Aug) Nights include Thursday's electro grunge Popstartz, Friday's techno/house Queen and Saturday's disorderly Disorder.

## Opera & Theatre

The opera season at Teatro alla Scala ([Map](#)) runs from November through July, but you can see theatre, ballet and concerts here year-round, with the exception of August.

You'll need perseverance and luck to secure opera tickets at La Scala (€10 to €180; up to €2000 for opening night). About two months before the first performance, tickets can be bought by telephone – ☎ 02 86 07 75 (24 hours) – and online; these carry a 20% surcharge. One month before the first performance, remaining tickets are sold (with a 10% surcharge) at the **box office** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7200 3744; [www.teatroallascala.org](http://www.teatroallascala.org); Galleria Vittorio Emanuele; ☎ noon-6pm). On performance days, 140 tickets for the gallery are sold two hours before the show (one ticket per customer). Queue early.

Musicals are staged at **Teatro Smeraldo** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 2900 6767; [www.smeraldo.it](http://www.smeraldo.it), in Italian; Piazza XXV Aprile 10; ☎ box office 10am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, noon-4.30pm Sun).

Classical concerts are held at the **Auditorium di Milano** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8338 9401; [www.laverdi.org](http://www.laverdi.org), in Italian; Largo Gustav Mahler, Corso San Gottardo 42a; ☎ box office 2.30-7pm Tue-Sun).

## Sport

### FOOTBALL

The city's two clubs, the 1899-established AC Milan and the 1908-established FC Internazionale Milano (aka 'Inter') play on alternate Sundays in season at the **San Siro stadium** (Stadio Giuseppe Meazza; off [Map](#); ☎ 02 404 24 32; [www.sansirotour.com](http://www.sansirotour.com); Via Piccolomini 5, museum & tours Gate 14; museum adult/child €7/5, incl guided tour €12.50/10; 📧 nonmatch days 10am-5pm).

Guided tours of the stadium, built in the 1920s, take you behind the scenes to the players' locker rooms and include a visit to the Museo Inter e Milan museum, a shrine of memorabilia, papier-mâché caricatures of players, and film footage.

Take tram 24, bus 95, 49 or 72, or the metro to the Lotto stop, from where a free bus shuttles to the stadium. Buy tickets at the stadium or, for **AC Milan** ([www.acmilan.com](http://www.acmilan.com)) matches, from **New Milan Point** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 8942 2711; Corso San Gottardo 2) and Banca Intesa Sanpaolo d'Italia branches. For **Inter** (☎ 02 5 49 14; [www.inter.it](http://www.inter.it)) matches, try Banca Popolare di Milano branches or Ticket One (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

## FORMULA ONE

Italy's Grand Prix tears around the **Autodromo Nazionale Monza** (off [Map](#); ☎ 039 248 22 12; [www.monzanet.it](http://www.monzanet.it); Parco di Monza, Via Vedano 5) in September. The track is 20km north of central Milan.

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## SHOPPING

Milan is a shopper's paradise for fashion (see the boxed text, below) and homewares (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

**Ferrari Store** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7631 6077; [www.ferraristore.com](http://www.ferraristore.com); Piazza Liberty 8) Formula One fans can make a pit stop here at the largest of Italy's outlets, spanning three floors of cool toys, accessories and racing wear. There are two Ferrari stores at Malpensa airport too.

## Markets

Markets fill the canalside Viale Papiniano in the southwest of the city on Tuesday (7.30am to 1pm) and Saturday (7.30am to 5pm). There is an antique market in Brera on Via Fiori Chiari and nearby streets every third Sunday of the month. On the second Sunday of every month, an old and antique book fair is held on Piazza Diaz.

Old gramophones and turntables, lava lamps, Bakelite telephones, tailors' mannequins, crockery, furniture, vintage clothes, shoes, jewellery and more are laid out along both banks of the city's main canal, spilling over into the surrounding streets, during the antique market held on the last Sunday of each month on the Alzaia Naviglio Grande and Ripa di Porta Ticinese.

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Most European and other international flights use **Malpensa airport** ([www.sea-aeroportimilano.it](http://www.sea-aeroportimilano.it)), 50km northwest of the city. The majority of domestic and a handful of European flights use the more convenient **Linate airport** ([www.sea-aeroportimilano.it](http://www.sea-aeroportimilano.it)), 7km east of the city centre. For flight information, call ☎

## FASHION CAPITAL

Milan outflanked Florence (and Rome) to become the country's haute-couture capital in the late 1960s. Nowadays, the world's top designers unveil their women's collections in February/March and September/October, while men's fashion hits the runways in January and June/July.

Where there are fashion shows, there is shopping. Gucci moved to town from Florence in the 1960s, and its flagship store ushered in what is now known as the **Quadrilatero d'Oro** (Golden Quad; [Map](#)), a quadrangle of pedestrian streets bordered by Via della Spiga, Via Sant'Andrea, Via Monte Napoleone and Via Alessandro Manzoni. The quad's narrow streets are crammed with Italian designers such as **Giorgio Armani** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7600 3234; [www.giorgioarmani.com](http://www.giorgioarmani.com); Via Sant'Andrea 9), who revolutionised the industry with his prêt-à-porter (ready to wear) collection in the early 1980s. Among the numerous other flagship stores you'll find here are Prada, Versace, Dolce & Gabbana and Moschino. The tourist office has a free map, but the ultimate way to browse is simply meandering the streets.

To accessorise in style, head to Italy's leading diamond house, **Damiani** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7602 8088; [www.damiani.com](http://www.damiani.com); Via Monte Napoleone 10); snazzy glove-maker **Sermoneta** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7631 8303; [www.sermonetagloves.com](http://www.sermonetagloves.com); Via della Spiga); and milliner **Alan Journo** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7600 1309; [www.alanjourn.com](http://www.alanjourn.com); Via della Spiga 36). The word 'milliner' derives from 'Milan', dating back to the 16th century, when the city's residents were known for their head-turning caps and bonnets.

Fashion shopping isn't confined to the Golden Quad. Giorgio Armani started out as a window dresser at the city's main department store **La Rinascente** ([Map](#); [www.rinascente.it](http://www.rinascente.it); Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 9.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun). All the major labels are represented here; you can take time out from shopping to sit on the terrace of the 7th-floor bar-restaurant overlooking the Duomo's spires.

Ultra-exclusive concept shop **10 Corso Como** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 2900 2674; [www.10corsocomo.com](http://www.10corsocomo.com); Corso Como 10) was set up by former Italian *Vogue* contributor Carla Sozzani and is secluded in a vine-draped and plant-filled townhouse courtyard.

Pick up bargain-priced designer seconds, samples and remaindered cast-offs at discount fashion-outlets around the city – the tourist office has a free map. It's worth having a stroll along Corso Buenos Aires too.

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An increasing number of budget airlines also use Orio al Serio airport (☎ 035 32 63 23; [www.sacbo.it](http://www.sacbo.it)), near Bergamo.

## Bus

Most national and international buses use the new Lampugnano bus terminal by the Lampugnano metro station (line 1 – the red line), west of the city centre. The bulk of national services are run by **Autostradale** (☎ 02 7200 1304; [www.autostradale.it](http://www.autostradale.it)), which has a ticket office at the main tourist office ([Click here](#)).

## Train

You can catch a train from the grand **Stazione Centrale** (Piazza Duca d'Aosta; [Map](#)) to all major cities in

Italy.

Many daily trains (fares quoted here are for the fastest available services) run to and from Venice (€25.20, 2½ hours), Florence (€39.90, two hours, 10 minutes), Genoa (€15.50, 1¾ hours), Turin (€21.90, one hour 20 minutes), Rome (€67.50, 3½ hours) and also Naples (€75.10, four hours, 50 minutes). This is also a good point to pick up international connections to/from Switzerland and France.

Ferrovie Nord Milano (FNM) trains from **Stazione Nord** (Stazione Cadorna; [Map](#); [www.ferrovienord.it](http://www.ferrovienord.it), in Italian; Piazza Luigi Cadorna) connect Milan with Como (€3.60, one hour, half hourly). Regional services to many towns northwest of Milan are more frequent from **Stazione Porta Garibaldi** (Piazza Sigmund Freud; [Map](#)).

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## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airports

#### LINATE AIRPORT

From Milan's Piazza Luigi di Savoia, next to Stazione Centrale, **Starfly** ([Map](#); ☎ 02 5858 7237) runs buses to Linate airport (adult/child €4.50/2.50, 25 minutes, half-hourly between 5.40am and 9.35pm). Tickets are sold on board, at newsstands and at a ticket office on the ground floor of the station.

Local ATM bus 73 (€1, 20 minutes, every 10 to 15 minutes from 5.35am to 12.35am) from Piazza San Babila ([Map](#)) also does the run comfortably.

#### MALPENSA AIRPORT

The **Malpensa Express** (☎ 199 151152; [www.malpensaexpress.it](http://www.malpensaexpress.it); ☎ ticket office 7am-8pm) train links Stazione Nord with Malpensa airport (adult/child €11/5.50, 40 minutes, every 30 minutes). This is the best way out, as traffic can make bus times less reliable.

**Malpensa Shuttle** (☎ 02 5858 3185; [www.malpensa-shuttle.com](http://www.malpensa-shuttle.com); ☎ ticket office 7am-9pm) coaches depart from Piazza Luigi di Savoia (adult/child €7/3.50, 50 minutes, every 20 minutes between 5am and 10.30pm). Tickets are available in the same places as for Linate.

Autostradale also runs buses roughly every 20 minutes between 4.30am and 11pm from Piazza Luigi di Savoia (adult/child €7.50/3.75, 50 minutes).

A taxi from Malpensa into Milan will cost at least €65 (much more during peak hour).

#### ORIO AL SERIO AIRPORT

Autostradale runs buses approximately every 30 minutes between 4am and 11.30pm from Piazza Luigi di Savoia to Orio al Serio airport, near Bergamo (adult/child €8.90/4.45, one hour). Another service is run by **Orio Shuttle** ([www.orioshuttle.com](http://www.orioshuttle.com); adult/child €8/3). Shuttles (one hour) depart Piazza Luigi di Savoia every 30 to 60 minutes from 4am to 11.15pm.

### Bicycle

Milan's public bicycle network, **BikeMi** ([www.bikemi.it](http://www.bikemi.it)), has stops across the city. By taking a daily, weekly or annual pass, you can use the bikes to get around town, picking up and dropping them off at whatever station you choose. You can get passes online, by calling the city's public transport body, **ATM**

(☎ 800 808181), or by dropping by the ATM info points (see below).

## Car & Motorcycle

Street parking costs €1.50 per hour in the city centre (€2 per five hours after 7pm). To pay, buy a SostaMilano card from a tobacconist, scratch off the date and hour, and display it on your dashboard. Underground car parks charge €2.50 for the first half-hour and between €1 and €3 per hour after that, depending on length of stay. Entry to the old centre is restricted to those who acquire an **Ecopass** (☎ 02 02 02; [www.comune.milano.it/ecopass](http://www.comune.milano.it/ecopass)) in advance. You are better off parking outside the centre and using public transport.

Rental-car companies have offices at Stazione Centrale and both airports.

## Public Transport

Milan's efficient public transport system is run by **ATM** (☎ 800 808181; [www.atm-mi.it](http://www.atm-mi.it)). The metro consists of four underground lines (red MM1, green MM2, yellow MM3 and blue Passante Ferroviario), which run from 6am to midnight.

A ticket costs €1 and is valid for one metro ride or up to 75 minutes' travel on ATM buses and trams. You can buy a 10-ride pass for €9.20 or unlimited one-/two-day tickets for bus, tram and metro for €3/5.50. Tickets are sold at metro stations, tobacconists and newspaper stands around town. Tickets must be validated on trams and buses.

Free transport maps are available from the **ATM Info Point** ([Map](#); ☎ 7.45am-7.15pm Mon-Sat) inside the Duomo metro station.

## Taxi

As elsewhere in Italy, hailing taxis is futile – they don't stop. Head for a taxi rank or call ☎ 02 40 40, ☎ 02 69 69 or ☎ 02 85 85. The average short city ride will cost €10.

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# SOUTH OF MILAN

## PAVIA

**pop 70,200**

First impressions of Pavia are deceiving, as its pretty old town is encircled by an industrial-agricultural belt. Pavia's cobbled streets and piazzas buzz with students from the ancient university and are a refreshing change of pace from the hubbub of Milan, 30km north. Half a day is ample.

Until the 11th century, Roman Pavia rivalled Milan as the capital of the Lombard kings, who left behind a Romanesque basilica. Legacies of the battle-plagued years that ensued include medieval watchtowers, a domed cathedral, and the 15th-century castle, the Castello Visconteo.

The area's real highlight is the Carthusian monastery, Certosa di Pavia, one of northern Italy's most lavish buildings, a 10-minute trip from Pavia by bus or car.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 0382 59 70 01; [www.turismo.provincia.pv.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.pv.it), in Italian; Piazza Petrarca 4; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri).

## Sights

### OLD TOWN

Much of Pavia's medieval centre has restricted traffic, making it pleasant for a stroll.

Looming over the old town is the forbidding **Castello Visconteo**, built in 1360 for Galeazzo II Visconti. It now houses the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0382 30 48 16; [www.museicivici.pavia.it](http://www.museicivici.pavia.it); Viale XI Febbraio 35; adult/EU senior & child to 18yr €6/free; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Tue-Sun Dec-Feb, Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, Mar-Jun & Sep-Nov). Intriguing collections include archaeological, ethnographic and art collections, plus displays on medieval Pavia, the Renaissance, the Risorgimento (the Italian reunification period) and, in the east tower, a section on Somalia (once an Italian colony).

Christopher Columbus and inventor of the electric battery, Alessandro Volta, are two illustrious graduates of the **Università degli Studi di Pavia** (University of Pavia; ☎ 0382 98 11; [www.unipv.it](http://www.unipv.it); Corso Strada Nuova 65). Founded as a school in the 9th century, it became a university in 1361. You can wander around the grounds and courtyards when the university is open. The stately campus houses the small **Museo per la Storia dell'Università di Pavia** (☎ 0382 98 47 09; Corso Strada Nuova 65; admission free; ☎ 2-5pm Mon, 9am-noon Wed & Fri), with exhibits on its history. Other university collections can only be seen, if at all, by appointment.

Crowning the town centre is the immense dome of Pavia's red-brick **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm), which is Italy's third largest. Da Vinci and Bramante contributed to the design of the cathedral, which was begun in 1488 but not completed until the 19th century. In 1989, its bell tower collapsed, killing four people.

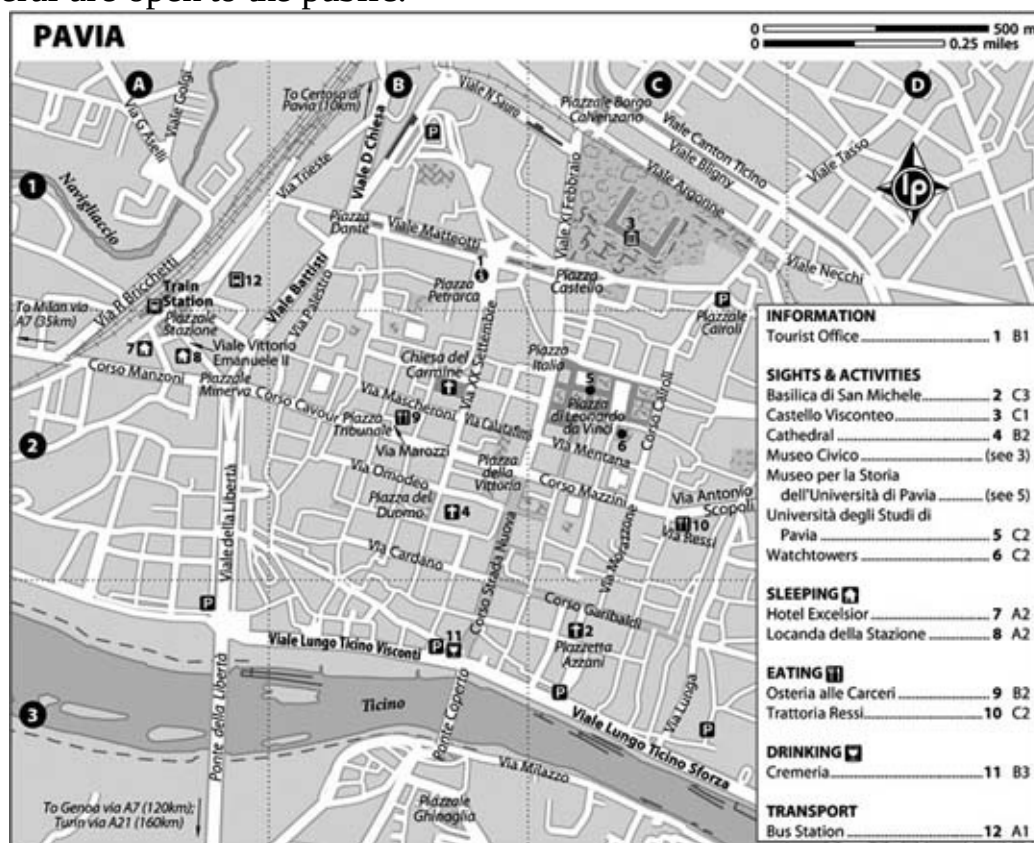
Barbarossa was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1155 at the **Basilica di San Michele** (Piazzetta Azzani 1), built in the Romanesque style in 1090.

More than 100 medieval watchtowers once dotted the old town; the trio of **watchtowers** on Piazza di Leonardo da Vinci and a couple scattered elsewhere in the city are all that remain.

## CERTOSA DI PAVIA

One of the Italian Renaissance's most notable buildings is the splendid **Certosa di Pavia** (Pavia Charterhouse; ☎ 0382 92 56 13; [www.certosadipavia.com](http://www.certosadipavia.com); Viale Monumento; admission by donation; 🕒 9-11.30am & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun). Gian Galeazzo Visconti of Milan founded the monastery, 10km north of Pavia, in 1396 as a private chapel for the Visconti family and a home for 12 monks.

The interior is Gothic, although some Renaissance decoration is evident. In the former sacristy is a giant sculpture, dating from 1409 and made from hippopotamus teeth, including 66 small bas-reliefs and 94 statuettes. Behind the 122 arches of the larger cloisters are 24 cells, each a self-contained living area for one monk. Several are open to the public.



To reach the charterhouse (about a 10-minute walk) from the bus stop, turn right at the traffic lights and continue straight ahead. See right for bus details.

## Sleeping

**Locanda della Stazione** (☎ 0382 2 93 21; [www.locandadellastazione.it](http://www.locandadellastazione.it); Viale Vittorio Emanuele 14; s/d with shared bathroom €30/40, d €60; 🕒) With parquet or mosaic floors, stucco ceiling ornament and early-20th-century decor, this is something of a history time-warp as well as pleasant, well-priced digs.

**Hotel Excelsior** (☎ 0382 2 85 96; [www.excelsiorpavia.com](http://www.excelsiorpavia.com); Piazzale Stazione 25; s/d €60/86; 🕒 📞 🚰) The value-for-money ratio here is high. Prints of old-town Pavia line the walls of spacious rooms, which have timber furnishings and floating floors.

## Eating & Drinking

**Osteria alle Carceri** (☎ 0382 30 14 43; Via Marozzi 7; meals €30; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner only Sat) This inviting *osteria* (wine bar serving food) offers tables stamped with prison numbers, grilled

meats and such openers as *linguine Cocco con guanciale, carciofi, semi di pappavero e ricotta di pecora* (pasta with cheek meat, artichokes, poppy seeds and sheep's-milk ricotta).

**our pick** **Trattoria Ressi** (☎ 0382 2 01 84; Via Ressi 8-10; meals €30; 📞 closed Sun) Follow the red-brick wall down a lane to find this haven of Lombard cooking. Try the *pizzocheri valtelinesi* (a fresh buckwheat ribbon pasta served with vegetables).

**Cremeria** (☎ 0382 53 94 07; Piazzale Ponte Ticino 4; 📞 11am-3pm & 6pm-2am Tue-Sat, 8.30am-2am Sun) Posers practise their art on the front terrace of this retro-glam bar overlooking the river.

## Getting There & Away

**Sila** (☎ 199 153155; [www.sila.it](http://www.sila.it), in Italian) bus 175 (Pavia—Binasco—Milano) links **Pavia bus station** (Via Trieste) and Certosa di Pavia (15 minutes, at least seven daily). **Migliavacca** (☎ 0382 525858; [www.migliavaccabus.it](http://www.migliavaccabus.it), in Italian) buses serve Milan's Linate airport (€11, one hour) up to six times daily via Certosa di Pavia.

Plenty of direct trains link Pavia train station with Milan (from €3.05, 25 to 40 minutes), and a good number run south to Genoa (from €6.75, one hour 10 minutes to 1½ hours) and beyond.

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## EAST OF MILAN

Heading east of Milan brings you to the historic cities of Bergamo, Brescia, Cremona and Mantua. To their north are Italy's dazzling lakes. Lago di Como is north of Milan, while Lago d'Iseo is northeast of Bergamo and northwest of Brescia, and vast Lago di Garda is a short journey north from Mantua.

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## BERGAMO

**pop 115,800**

With its wealth of medieval, Renaissance and baroque architecture, Bergamo is one of northern Italy's most intriguing cities.

Actually, Bergamo comprises what are essentially two separate towns. The most interesting, by far, is its hilltop *città alta* (upper town), protected by more than 5km of heavy-duty walls. A funicular carries you from the western edge of the upper town up to the quaint quarter of San Vigilio. The walk to San Vigilio offers some stunning views. Down on the plain, the sprawling *città bassa* (lower town) is a mishmash of modern buildings and wide, traffic-filled streets.

Although Milan's skyscrapers to the southwest are visible on a clear day, historically Bergamo was more closely associated with Venice, which was in control of the city for 350 years until Napoleon arrived.

The nearby Bergamo Alps have a handful of small ski resorts, as well as ice- and rock-climbing opportunities.

## Information

**Lower town tourist office** (☎ 035 21 02 04; [www.turismo.bergamo.it](http://www.turismo.bergamo.it); Piazzale Marconi; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri) Province-wide information, including Alpine activities. Check out [www.ap.t.bergamo.it](http://www.ap.t.bergamo.it), too.

**Ospedali Riuniti** (☎ 035 26 91 11; Largo Barozzi 1) Hospital.

**Police station** (☎ 035 27 61 11; Via Noli 26)

**Upper town tourist office** (☎ 035 24 22 26; Via Gombito 13; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm) Housed in a soaring, 12th-century family watchtower at the crossroads of what were once the imperial Roman roads to Milan, Brescia and Como.

## Sights

### PIAZZA VECCHIA

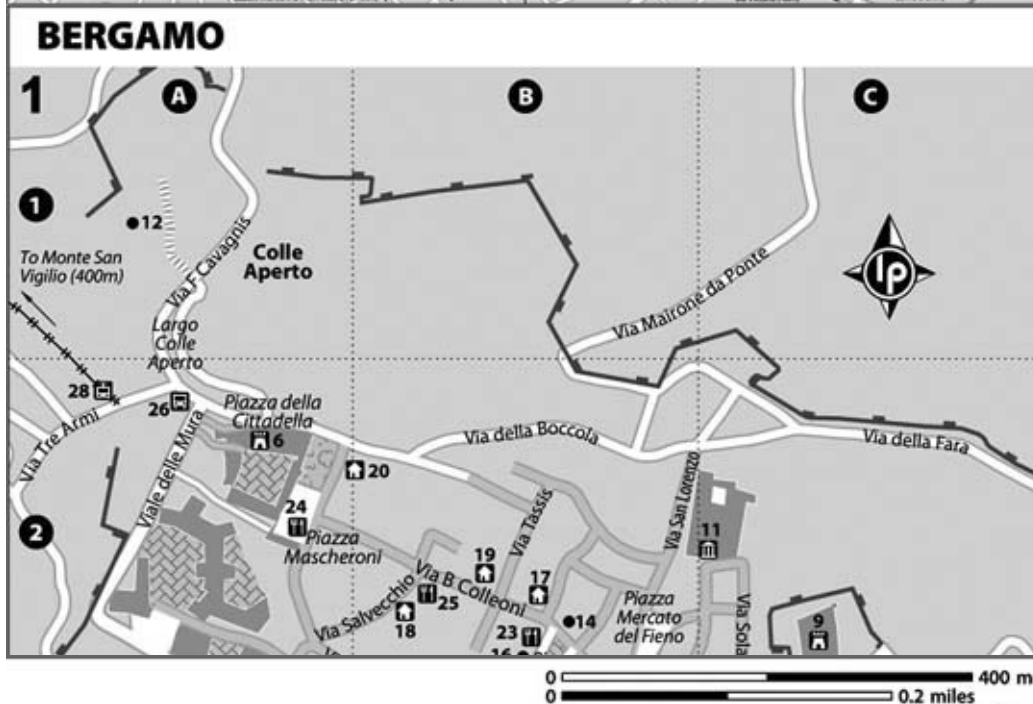
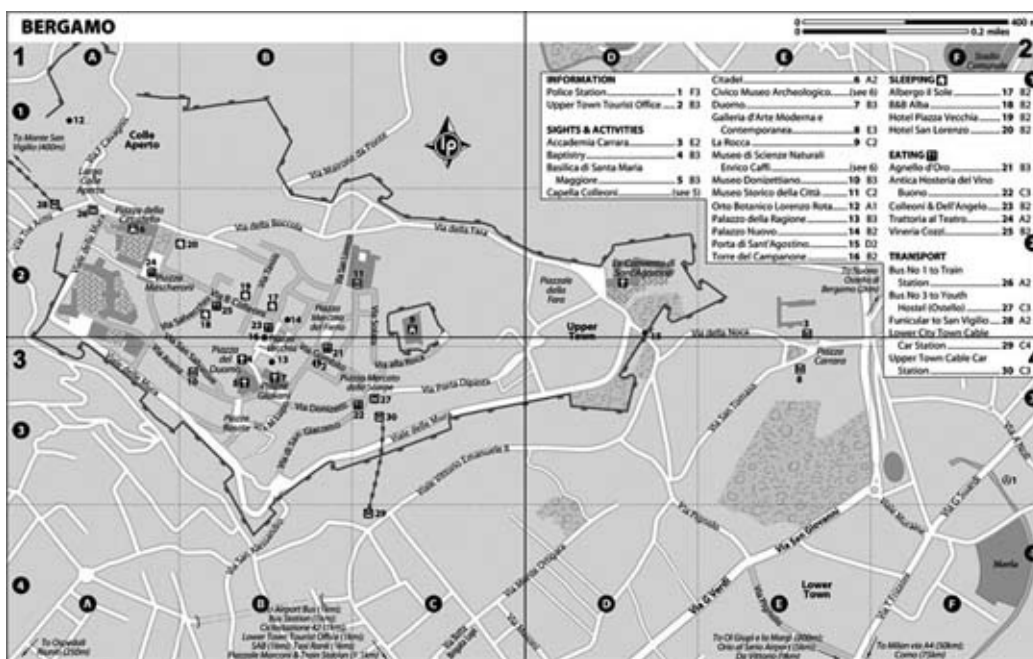
The upper town's beating heart is this cafe-clad piazza, lined by elegant architecture that is a testament in stone to Bergamo's long and colourful history. Le Corbusier apparently found it 'the most beautiful square in Europe' – good thing they didn't try out any of his ideas on it!

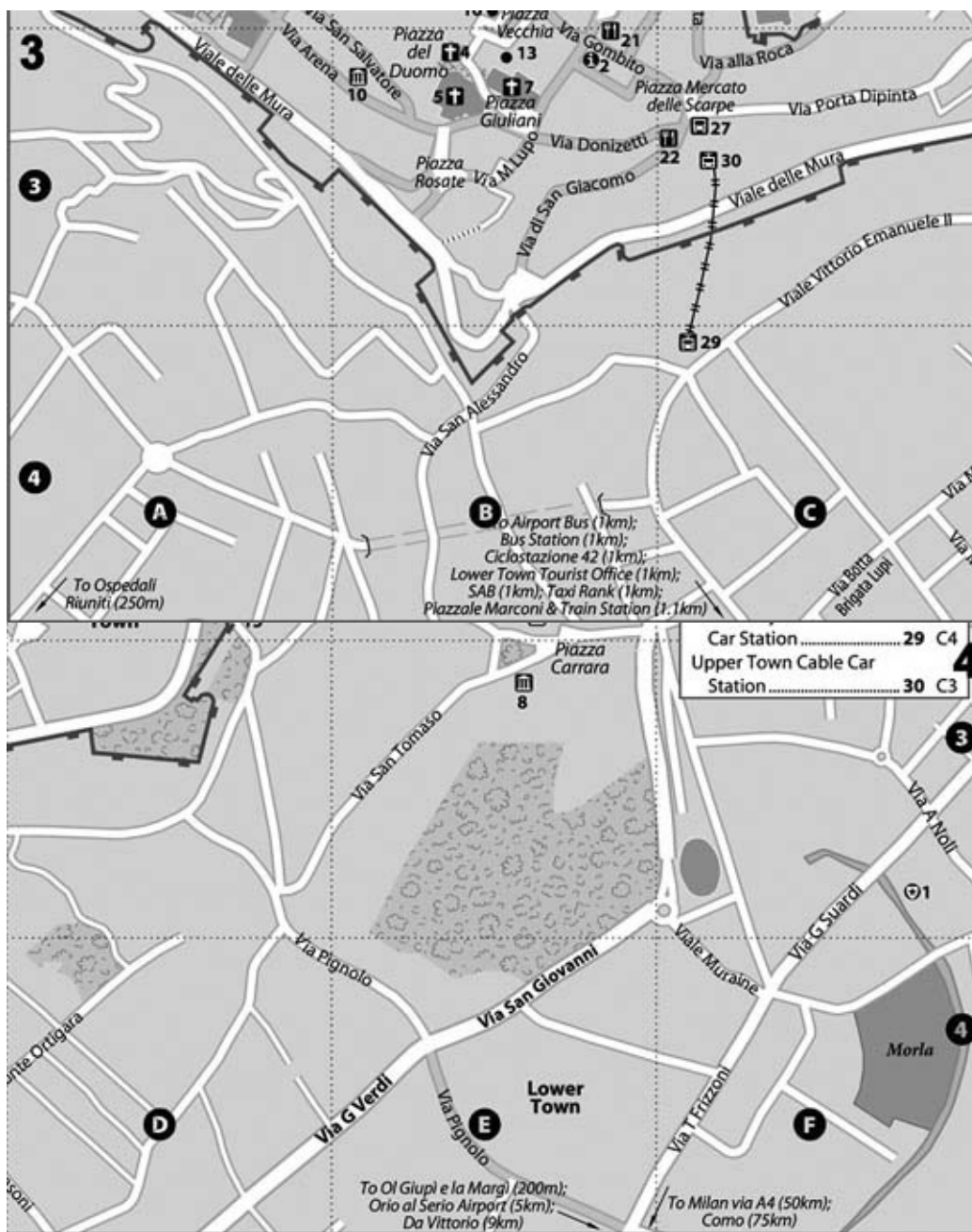
The white porticoed building on Via Bartolomeo Colleoni, which forms the northern side of the piazza, is the 17th-century **Palazzo Nuovo**, now a library. Turn south and you face the imposing arches and columns of the **Palazzo della Ragione**, built in the 12th century. The lion of St Mark is a reminder of Venice's long reign here. Across the square from the palace, the colossal, square-based **Torre del Campanone** (Piazza Vecchia; admission €3; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-1pm & 2-7.30pm Sat & Sun mid-Mar—Oct, Mon-Sat by reservation Nov—mid-Mar) tolls the old 10pm curfew. There's a wheelchair-accessible lift to the top of the tower. For €5 you get entry to the tower and other sights around the city, including La Rocca and the Museo Donizettiano ([Click here](#)).

Tucked in behind these secular buildings is the core of Bergamo's spiritual life, the Piazza del Duomo. Roman remains were discovered during renovations of the modest baroque **Duomo** (cathedral; ☎ 035 21 02 23; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 7.30-11.45am & 3-6.30pm). A rather squat maroon building, it has a brilliant white facade. A great deal more intriguing is the Romanesque **Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore** (☎ 035 22 33 27; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Apr-Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sat, 9am-12.45pm & 3-6pm Sun Nov-Mar) next door. Begun in 1137, it is quite a mishmash. To its whirl of Romanesque apses (on which some external frescoes remain visible), Gothic additions were slapped on. A more obvious addition is the busy Renaissance **Cappella Colleoni** (☎ 035 21 00 61; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Mar-Oct), on the side facing the square. Detached from the church is the octagonal **baptistry**.

### CITADEL

Taking up the western corner of the upper town is the defensive hulk of Bergamo's citadel, occupied today by two mildly interesting museums, the **Museo di Scienze Naturali Enrico Caffi** and **Civico Museo Archeologico**.





## MUSEO STORICO DELLA CITTÀ & MUSEO DONIZETTIANO

In the former Convento di San Francesco (founded in the 13th century), this **history museum** (☎ 035 24 71 16; <http://fondazione.bergamoestoria.it>; Piazza Mercato del Fieno 6a; adult/child €3/free; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-7pm Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Fri Oct-May) emphasises the town planning that took place in the years leading up to Italian unification.

The history museum's 19th-century section is located in the fortress **La Rocca** (☎ 035 24 71 16; Piazzale Brigata Legnano), whose round tower dates from Bergamo's days as a Venetian outpost. La Rocca keeps the same hours as the main museum. The same ticket covers entry here and also to La Rocca's surrounding **park**, with sweeping views over Bergamo.

History museum tickets are also good for the **Museo Donizettiano** (☎ 035 39 92 69; Via Arena 9; adult/child €3/free; 🕒 10am-1pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Sat & Sun), an ornate hall housing the piano and manuscripts of Bergamo's favourite musical son, Gaetano Donizetti (1797–1848).

## ORTO BOTANICO LORENZO ROTA

For more spectacular views, trudge uphill along Colle Aperto and bear left up a signposted flight of stone steps to Bergamo's **botanic garden** (Orto Botanico Lorenzo Rota; ☎ 035 39 94 66;

[www.ortobotanicodibergamo.it](http://www.ortobotanicodibergamo.it); Scaletta di Colle Aperto; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Mar & Oct), planted with some 1200 species in a small but enchanting area carved out of the old Venetian defensive walls.

## ART GALLERIES

Just east of the walls is one of Italy's great art repositories, **Accademia Carrara** (☎ 035 39 96 40; [www.accademiacarrara.bergamo.it](http://www.accademiacarrara.bergamo.it); Piazza Carrara 82a; adult/child €2.60/free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun). Founded in 1780, it contains an exceptional range of Italian masters. Raphael's *San Sebastiano* is a highlight, but other artists represented include Botticelli, Canaletto, Mantegna and Titian.

To get here on foot from the upper town, pass through **Porta di Sant'Agostino** and down Via della Noca. At the time of writing it was closed for restoration, but a selection of its masterpieces was on show in the Palazzo della Ragione.

On the opposite side of the square is the **Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** (GAMEC; ☎ 035 27 02 72; [www.gamec.it](http://www.gamec.it); Via San Tomaso 53; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun), which displays the academy's small permanent collection of modern works by Italian artists such as Giacomo Balla, Giorgio Morandi, Giorgio de Chirico and Filippo de Pisis.

## Sleeping

Bergamo's proximity to the airport means hotels tend to fill up quickly – advance bookings are recommended any time of year and especially on weekends.

## LOWER TOWN

**Nuovo Ostello di Bergamo** (☎ 035 36 17 24; [www.ostellodibergamo.it](http://www.ostellodibergamo.it); Via Galileo Ferraris 1, Monterosso; dm/s/d €18/35/50; ☎ 24hr; 📄 📄) Bergamo's state-of-the-art HI hostel is about 4km north of the train station. Its 27 rooms offer views over Bergamo's *città alta* old centre. Take bus 6 from Largo Porta Nuova near the train station (get off at Leonardi da Vinci stop) or the No 3 bus for Ostello from the *città alta*.

## UPPER TOWN

The most charming accommodation is on Bergamo's hilltop.

**Albergo Il Sole** (☎ 035 21 82 38; [www.ilsolebergamo.com](http://www.ilsolebergamo.com); Via Colleoni 1; s/d €65/85) The picture windows and colourful bedspreads at Il Sole lend its rooms a countrified air, which extends to its restaurant (meals €30; open Friday to Wednesday, March to October), set in a cool, leafy garden. Located just off Piazza Vecchia.

**B&B Alba** (☎ 349 5752596; [www.bbalbachiarara.info](http://www.bbalbachiarara.info); Via Salvecchio 2; d/tr €100/120) Three spacious rooms are available in this rambling old townhouse. Mosaic and terracotta floors, high, frescoed ceilings, the odd item of antique furniture, and loads of atmosphere make this B&B attractive.

**Hotel San Lorenzo** (☎ 035 23 73 83; [www.hotelsanlorenzobg.it](http://www.hotelsanlorenzobg.it); Piazza Mascheroni 9a; s €75-110, d €100-170; 📄 📄) San Lorenzo offers 25 quiet and comfortable (if somewhat plain) rooms in a thoughtfully renovated old building overlooking Piazza Mascheroni. Try for a room on the upper level with a mountain-facing balcony.

**Hotel Piazza Vecchia** (☎ 035 428 42 11; [www.hotelpiazzavecchia.it](http://www.hotelpiazzavecchia.it); Via Colleoni 3; s €135-170, d €150-190; 📄 📄) Carved out of a 13th-century building a few steps off Piazza Vecchia, this hotel's 13 rooms are all quite different. All have parquet floors and baths in stone, but details vary: some have

exposed beams while others have a balcony, or king-size bed.

## Eating

The Bergamaschi like their polenta as much as many other northerners and even named a classic sweet after it: *polenta e osei* are pudding-shape cakes filled with jam and cream, topped with icing and chocolate birds. The final product looks like, but isn't, polenta. Bergamo also contributed *casonsèi* (aka *casoncelli*), a kind of ravioli stuffed with meat, to the Italian table, and the area is noted for its fine red wines, including Valcalepio.

### LOWER TOWN

**Ol Giupì e la Margi** (☎ 035 24 23 66; Via Borgo Palazzo 25; meals €30; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun, closed Aug) Sample authentic Bergamo delicacies in this authentic brick-vaulted restaurant. You can choose from fried sausages, risotto, and roast rabbit with grappa and polenta. They offer a set lunch menu at €28 and set dinner tasting menu for €40.

**Da Vittorio** (☎ 035 68 10 24; Via Cantalupa 17, Brusaporto; set menus €70-140; 🍴 Thu-Tue, closed 3 weeks Aug) Bergamo's acclaimed Vittorio is set in a country house 9km east of town and is up there with the best restaurants in Italy, not the least on account of its truffle dishes (a special truffle menu can cost €280). They also have some rooms (single/double €200/250).

### UPPER TOWN

Picnickers can pick up steaming-hot pizza slices, focaccias and desserts at high-quality bakeries along the upper town's main street.

**Agnello d'Oro** (☎ 035 24 98 83; Via Gombito 22; set menus €20; 🍴 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) With the incredible clutter of objects adorning every wall, this 17th-century spot could easily pass for an eccentric antique shop. Rooms here (singles/doubles €55/92) are attractive, and you can dine alfresco in summer.

**Antica Hosteria del Vino Buono** (☎ 035 24 79 93; Piazza Mercato delle Scarpe; meals €25; 🍴 dinner Tue, lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) Feast on typical dishes like cheese-sprinkled *casoncelli* (home-made pasta cushions filled with a spicy sausage meat and laced with a buttery sage sauce) followed by a plate of *stinco al forno con polenta* (baked beef shank with polenta).

**Trattoria al Teatro** (☎ 035 23 88 62; Piazza Mascheroni 3; meals €30-35; 🍴 Tue-Sun) Located in a centuries-old building at the west end of the *città alta*, this family-run spot has a limited but constantly changing menu of down-home local dishes. Choose from a handful of *primi* and *secondi*, with such local classics as *casoncelli alla bergamasca*, followed perhaps by a *filetto ai ferri* (a grilled beef filet).

**Vineria Cozzi** (☎ 035 23 88 36; [www.vineriacozzi.it](http://www.vineriacozzi.it); Via Colleoni 22; meals €35-45; 🍴 Thu-Tue) Sample the extensive wine list by the glass and dine inside or in the tiny courtyard. Several pasta and rice options lead the way, and you might follow with a rabbit done in local Valcalepio red wine. The desserts, with a slightly modern touch, are all homemade.

**Colleoni & Dell'Angelo** (☎ 035 23 25 96; [www.colleonidellangelo.com](http://www.colleonidellangelo.com); Piazza Vecchia 7; meals €50-60, tasting menus €75; 🍴 Tue-Sun) Piazza Vecchia provides the ideal backdrop to savour inventive local cuisine in an extraordinary setting. First courses include *ravioloni ripieni di Bagoss alle foglie di basilico fritto e vitello glassato* (big dumplings filled with local Bagoss cheese with fried basil leaves and veal glazing).



# Getting There & Away

## AIR

Bergamo's airport, **Orio al Serio** (☎ 035 32 63 23; [www.sacbo.it](http://www.sacbo.it)), is 4km southeast of the train station. Served by regular and budget airlines, there are daily flights to/from the UK and other European destinations.

## BUS

From Bergamo's **bus station** (☎ 800 139392, 035 28 90 00; [www.bergamotrasporti.it](http://www.bergamotrasporti.it)), just off Piazzale Marconi, **SAB** (☎ 035 28 90 00; [www.sab-autoservizi.it](http://www.sab-autoservizi.it), in Italian) operates services to the lakes and mountains.

## TRAIN

From the Piazzale Marconi train station, there are one or two trains an hour to/from Milan, although not all call at Stazione Centrale (€4.20, 50 to 65 minutes). Every 30 to 60 minutes a train runs to/from Brescia (€3.60, one to 1½ hours).

# Getting Around

## TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

**ATB** (☎ 035 23 60 26) buses to/from Orio al Serio airport depart every 20 minutes from Bergamo bus and train stations (€1.70, 15 minutes). Direct buses also connect the airport with Milan and Brescia.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

ATB's bus 1 connects the train station with the funicular to the upper city and Colle Aperto (going the other way, some buses stop only at the Porta Nuova stop). From Colle Aperto, either bus 21 or a funicular continues uphill to San Vigilio. Buy tickets, valid for 75 minutes' travel on buses, for €1 from machines at the train and funicular stations or at newspaper stands. Funicular tickets cost €1.50.

## BICYCLE

You can hire bikes just outside the train station at **Ciclostazione 42** (☎ 389 5137313; [www.pedalopolis.org](http://www.pedalopolis.org); Piazzale Marconi; per day €10; ☎ 7.30-11.30am & 4-7.30pm Mon-Fri).

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# VALTELLINA

Nestled at the foot of the Alps that sit astride the border between Lombardy and Switzerland, the Valtellina valley offers some great off-the-beaten-track exploration and, up in the mountains, skiing and walking options.

The **Valtellina tourist board** ([www.valtellina.it](http://www.valtellina.it)) has several information points throughout the region, including the main **tourist office** (☎ 0342 45 11 50; Piazzale Bertacchi 77, Sondrio; ☎ 9am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) in the transport hub of Sondrio. The tourist office has information for hikers. For information on the Alpine ski resort of Bormio, in Valtellina's far eastern reaches, see Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio, [Click here](#).

Trains link Milan with Sondrio (€7.80, two hours, every two hours) and terminate further east at Tirano. From Sondrio, buses connect the Valtellina's resorts and towns.

# BRESCIA

**pop 189,700**

Urban sprawl, a seedy bus and train station area, and the odd skyscraper don't hint at Brescia's fascinating old town, which serves as a reminder of its substantial history.

Brescia already had centuries of (now- obscure) history behind it when the Romans conquered the Gallic town in 225 BC. The Carolingians took over in the 9th century, and were followed by a millennium's worth of outside rulers, including the Venetians. As revolutionary fervour swept Europe in 1848–49, Brescia was dubbed 'The Lioness' for its 10-day attempted uprising against Austria in a prelude to its participation in the movement towards Italian unification a decade later.

Legacies of Brescia's past include significant Roman ruins, two cathedrals and a vast medieval castle. As a result, the town is filled with gaggles of kids on school excursions (if you're here during term time, you're bound to encounter them).

## Information

**Infopoint** (☎ 030 240 03 57; [www.provincia.brescia.it/turismo](http://www.provincia.brescia.it/turismo); Piazza Loggia 6; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays)

**Police station** (☎ 030 3 74 41; Via Botticelli 2) Southeast of the centre.

**Post office** (Piazza della Vittoria)

**Spedali Civili** (☎ 030 3 99 51; Piazzale Spedali Civili) Hospital, located north of the centre.

## Sights

Audioguides (€5) covering the central sights are available from the tourist office.

### CASTELLO

Brescia's historic centre is dominated by a hill, **Colle Cidneo**, crowned with the rambling **Castello** (Castle; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm), which for centuries was at the core of the city defences. **Torre Mirabella**, the main round tower, was built by the Viscontis in the 13th century.

The castle hosts two mildly diverting **museums** (dual admission €5; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep), the **Museo delle Armi Antiche** (☎ 030 29 32 92; [www.bresciamusei.it](http://www.bresciamusei.it)), with its extensive collection of vintage weaponry, and the **Civico Museo del Risorgimento** (☎ 030 4 41 76), dedicated to the history of Italian unification.

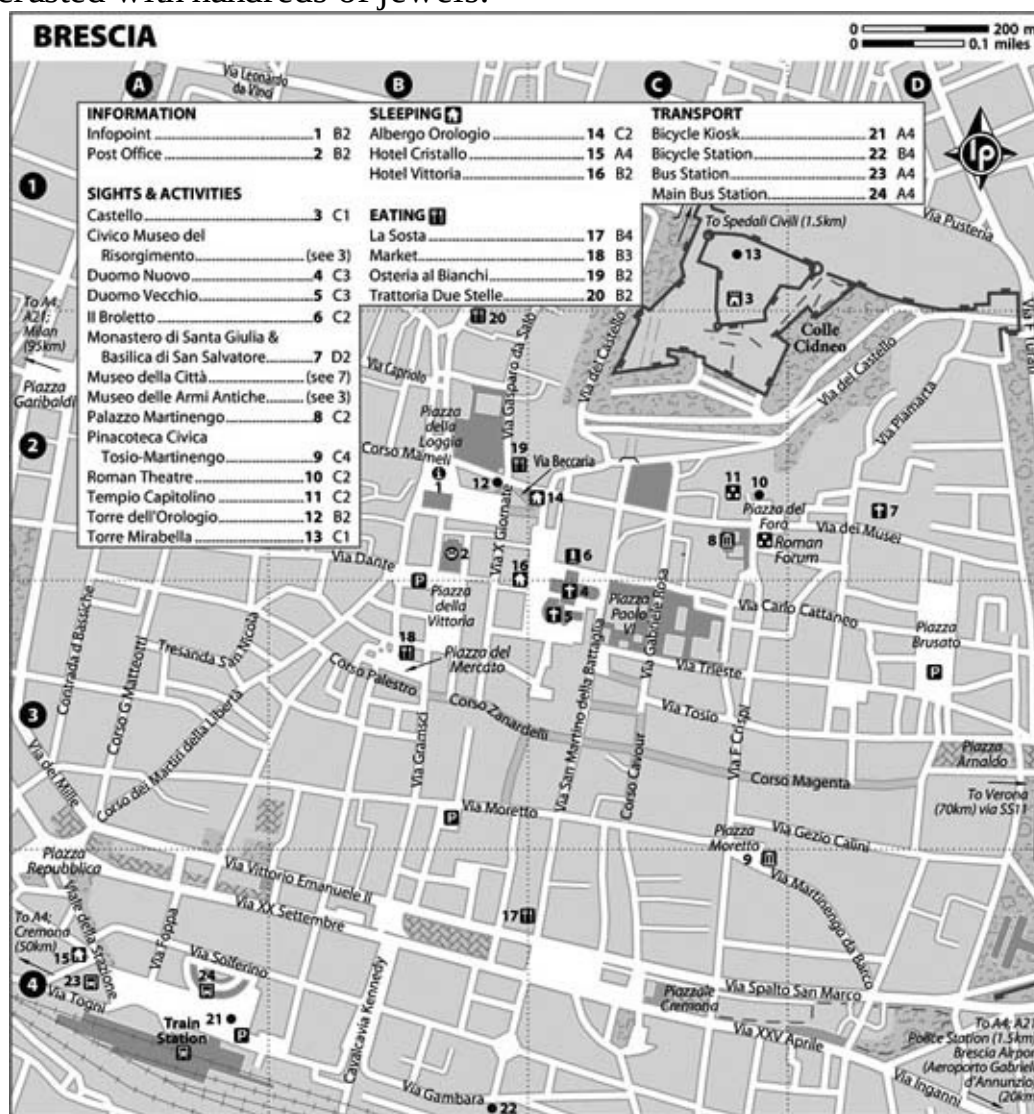
### ROMAN SIGHTS

The most impressive of Brescia's Roman relics are the remains of the **Tempio Capitolino** (Via dei Musei; admission free; ☎ 11am-4pm), a Roman temple built by the Emperor Vespasian in AD 73. The **Palazzo Martinengo** (☎ 030 280 79 34; Via dei Musei 28; admission varies; ☎ 9.15am-1pm Mon-Fri) provides a lavish backdrop for temporary art exhibitions.

About 50m east of the Tempio Capitolino along Via dei Musei, cobbled Vicolo del Fontanon leads to the well-preserved ruins of a **Roman theatre**. Limited remains of the ancient town's **forum** stand on Piazza del Foro.

Continuing east you'll reach Brescia's most intriguing sight – the jumbled **Monastero di Santa Giulia**

**& Basilica di San Salvatore.** Inside this rambling church and convent complex is the **Museo della Città** (☎ 030 297 78 34; Via dei Musei 81b; adult/student 14-18yr/child €8/6/free, temporary exhibitions extra; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 9am-8pm Fri & Sat), where artefacts from the Roman town are on show, including some intricate mosaics. The star piece of the collection is the 8th-century Croce di Desiderio, a Lombard cross encrusted with hundreds of jewels.



## CATHEDRALS

The most compelling of all Brescia's religious monuments is the 11th-century **Duomo Vecchio** (Old Cathedral; Piazza Paolo VI; 🕒 9am-noon & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), a rare example of a circular-plan Romanesque basilica, built over a 6th-century church. Interesting features include fragmentary floor mosaics and the elaborate 14th-century sarcophagus of Bishop Berado Maggi. Next door, the **Duomo Nuovo** (New Cathedral; Piazza Paolo VI; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm & 4-7pm Sun), dating from 1604, dwarfs its ancient neighbour but is of less interest. Also on the square is **Il Broletto**, the medieval town hall with an 11th-century tower.

## OTHER SIGHTS

**Pinacoteca Civica Tosio-Martinengo** (☎ 030 377 49 99; Via Martinengo da Barco 1; admission €3; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-May, 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) features works by artists of the Brescian school, as well as some by Raphael, Lorenzo Lotto and Luca Giordano. It is closed for restoration until 2011.

The **Torre dell'Orologio** (clock tower), with its exquisite astrological timepiece, is modelled on the one in Venice's Piazza San Marco.

# Sleeping

**Hotel Cristallo** (☎ 030 377 24 68; [www.hotelcristallobrescia.com](http://www.hotelcristallobrescia.com); Viale della Stazione 12a; s/d €62/103; 🚰 🚿 📶) A short suitcase drag from the station, the straightforward Cristallo has dated veneer furniture, floral bedspreads and generous bathrooms. It's ideal for those with an early morning train.

**Albergo Orologio** (☎ 030 375 54 11; [www.albergoorologio.it](http://www.albergoorologio.it); Via Beccaria 17; s/d €115/130; 🚰 🚿) Fine art and artefacts, and soft gold, brown and olive furnishings and terracotta floors make this boutique hotel a gem. It's right by its namesake clock tower in the pedestrianised old town,

**Hotel Vittoria** (☎ 030 28 00 61; [www.hotelvittoria.com](http://www.hotelvittoria.com); Via X Giornate 20; s/d €166/274; 🚰 🚿) With its chandeliers, grand ballrooms and classically appointed guest rooms, this 1938 hotel is a good value.

# Eating

Risotto, beef dishes and *lumache alla bresciana* (snails cooked with Parmesan cheese and fresh spinach) are common in Brescia. The surrounding countryside produces good wines, including those from Botticino, Lugana and Riviera del Garda.

**Osteria al Bianchi** (☎ 030 29 23 28; Via Gasparo da Salò 32; meals €20-25; 🍷 Thu-Mon) Crowd inside this late-19th-century classic for wine and snacks at the bar or a full meal at one of the timber tables out back. You might be tempted by the *pappardelle al Taleggio e zucca* (broad ribbon pasta with Taleggio cheese and pumpkin).

**our pick Trattoria Due Stelle** (☎ 030 375 81 98; Via San Faustino 46; meals €30; 🍷 Wed-Mon) Timber-panelled walls, sturdy dark-wood dining tables (each with candle) and great grub entice locals and outsiders alike to sit down for a feast. They do some excellent risottos (try *agli scampi mantecato alla citronette* – a creamy risotto loaded with crayfish and touched with citronette dressing).

**La Sosta** (☎ 030 29 25 89; Via Martino della Battaglia 20; meals €50-60; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun, closed Aug) Set partly in the stables of a 1610 palace, La Sosta excels at finely tuned gastronomic creations. The *filetto di vitello alla scamorza affumicata* (a veal filet cooked in smoked cheese) melts in the mouth.

For fresh fruit and vegies head for Brescia's colourful **market** (Piazza del Mercato; 🍷 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat).

# Getting There & Around

Brescia's underused **airport** (Aeroporto Gabriele d'Annunzio; ☎ 030 204 15 99; [www.aeroporto Brescia.it](http://www.aeroporto Brescia.it)) is 20km east of Brescia. Buses connect the airport with Brescia's bus station (to airport €11, from airport €7.50, 25 minutes).

From the **bus station** (☎ 030 4 49 15; Via Solferino) buses operated by **SAIA Trasporti** (☎ 800 883999; [www.saiatrasporti.it](http://www.saiatrasporti.it), in Italian) serve destinations all over Brescia province. Some leave from another station off Via della Stazione.

There are regular trains to and from Milan (€5.55 to €13.30, 45 minutes to 1½ hours) and Verona (€3.95, 40 minutes).

Usually, from June to September you can pick up a bicycle (€1 for two hours, €10 a day) from the **bicycle kiosk** (🍷 7.30am-8.30pm) in front of the train station on Piazzale Stazione or from another bicycle station just off Via Gambara.

# CREMONA

**pop 72,000**

A wealthy, independent city-state for centuries, Cremona boasts some fine architecture. The city is best known around the world, however, for its violin-making traditions (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

Cremona's medieval heart, with its magnificent cathedral, is a beauty. On the main square, the **tourist office** (☎ 0372 2 32 33; <http://turismo.comune.cremona.it>; Piazza del Comune 5; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sep-Jun, 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug) can give you information on the town.

## Sights

Cremona was an independent *comune* until the 14th century, when the Viscontis of Milan added it to their growing collection. To maintain the difference between the secular and spiritual, buildings connected with the Church were erected on the eastern side of **Piazza del Comune**, and those concerned with secular affairs were constructed across the way. On the second Sunday of every month, the piazza is filled with antiques stalls.

Cremona's stately **Cattedrale** (Cathedral; ☎ 0372 2 73 86; [www.cattedraledicremona.it](http://www.cattedraledicremona.it), in Italian; Piazza del Comune; ☎ 8am-noon & 3.30-7pm) started out as a Romanesque basilica, but by the time it was finished in 1190, it was heavily overtaken by Gothic modishness. The main facade also bears some distinct Renaissance touches, in keeping with paintings of the same period by such masters as Boccaccio Boccaccino, Giulio Campi and Gian Francesco Bembo. For some, the remnants of earlier frescoes, uncovered during work in the early 1990s, will be more intriguing. They include a vast scene of the Crucifixion above the central doorway.

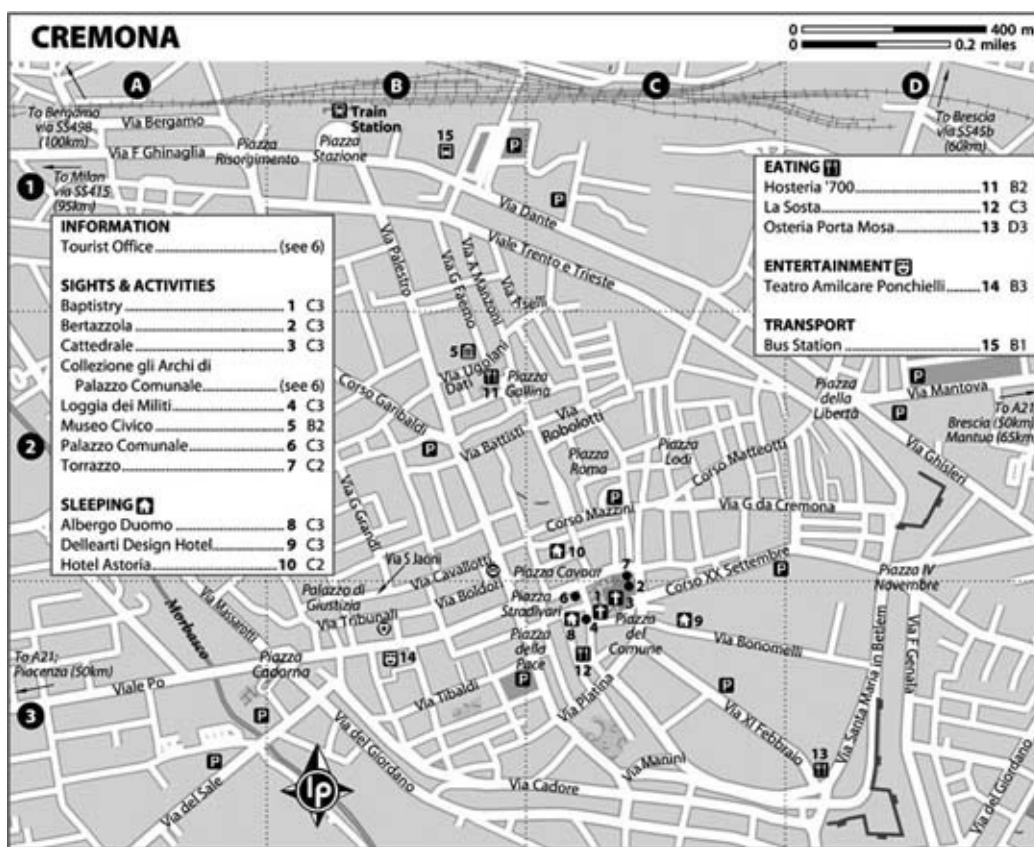
The cathedral's most prized possession is the 'Holy Thorn', allegedly from the Crown of Thorns worn by Jesus Christ, which was donated to the church by Cremona-born Pope Gregory XIV in 1591. It's kept behind bars in the Capella delle Reliquie. In the crypt, the robed and masked body of Cremona's 12th-century patron saint, Sant'Omobono Tucenghi, is on show in a glass casket.

The adjoining 111m-tall **torrazzo** (bell tower; adult/child €4/3, incl baptistry €5/4; ☎ 10am-1pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Sat & Sun), which translates appropriately to something like 'great, fat tower', sports a giant zodiacal clock and is connected to the cathedral by a Renaissance loggia, the **Bertazzola**. On the other side of the cathedral is the tall, octagonal, 12th-century **baptistry** (adult/child €2/1, incl torrazzo €5/4; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sun), which houses some architectural fragments, including a 12th-century figure of the Archangel Gabriel that once perched on the roof of the baptistry.

Across the square is **Palazzo Comunale** and, to its south, the smaller porticoed **Loggia dei Militi**; both date to the 13th century. The former was, and remains, the town hall; the latter housed the town's militia.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Albergo Duomo** (☎ 0372 3 52 96/42; fax 0372 45 83 92; Via Gonfalonieri 13; s/d €45/65; 📞 ☎) Just a few steps from Cremona's cathedral and ablaze with flowers in wrought-iron boxes in spring, Albergo Duomo offers decent rooms with basic furniture and all-white decor



**Hotel Astoria** (☎ 0372 46 16 16; [www.astoriahotel-cremona.it](http://www.astoriahotel-cremona.it); Via Bordigallo 19; s/d €60/90; 🚗) Down a quiet, narrow lane near Piazza Cavour, this is a charming spot with French-washed corridors and immaculate rooms (including some with separate bedrooms that are handy if you're travelling with kids).

## CREMONA'S VIOLINS

It was in Cremona that Antonio Stradivari lovingly put together his first Stradivarius violins, helping establish a tradition that continues today. Other great violin-making dynasties that started here include the Amati and Guarneri families.

Some 100 violin-making workshops in the streets around Piazza del Comune can be visited. The tourist office has a list, and can advise on those where English is spoken. You can also find information at [www.cremonaliuteria.it](http://www.cremonaliuteria.it).

Various events dedicated to violin-making take place each year, while the **Triennale Internazionale degli Strumenti ad Arco** (International Stringed Instrument Expo; [www.entetriennale.com](http://www.entetriennale.com)) is held in Cremona every third year in September/October; the next will be in 2012.

Year-round you can visit the **Collezione gli Archi di Palazzo Comunale** (☎ 0372 2 05 02; Piazza del Comune 8; adult/child €6/3.50, incl Museo Civico €10/5; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), featuring instruments from the Stradivari workshop. The **Museo Civico** (☎ 0372 3 12 22; Via Ugolani Dati 4; adult/child €7/4, incl Civica Collezione di Violini €10/5; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) has drawings and tools as well as instruments by Amati and Guarneri (plus art and archaeological finds).

To hear Cremona's violins in action, the season at the 19th-century **Teatro Amilcare Ponchielli** (☎ 0372 02 20 01; [www.teatroponchielli.it](http://www.teatroponchielli.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 52) runs from October to June; programs and ticket information are posted on its website.

**Dellearti Design Hotel** (☎ 0372 2 31 31; [www.dellearti.com](http://www.dellearti.com); Via Bonomelli 8; s/d €119/169; 🚗 📺 📶)

This rather self-consciously hi-tech vision of glass, concrete and steel has rotating displays of

contemporary paintings and photographs, a Turkish bath and a gym, and suitably chic rooms with clean lines, bold colours and artistic lighting. For those who want to feel like they never left the fashion crowd in Milan, this could be the place.

**our pick** **Hosteria '700** (☎ 0372 3 61 75; Piazza Gallina 1; meals €25-30; 🍴 lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, lunch Mon) Behind the dilapidated facade and a row of parked cars lurks a sparkling gem. A series of vaulted rooms set a romantic scene for hearty Lombard cooking. Try the *marubini al brodo o al burro fuso* (meat- and cheese-stuffed disks of pasta in broth or melted butter), a Cremona speciality.

**Osteria Porta Mosa** (☎ 0372 41 18 03; Via Santa Maria in Betlem 11; meals €25-30; 🍴 Mon-Sat) Dark, polished wood tables are offset by aquamarine decor and art hanging on the walls. The almost sugar-sweet *ravioli di zucca* (pumpkin ravioli) are especially good.

**La Sosta** (☎ 0372 45 66 56; Via Vescovo Sicardo 9; meals €30-35; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun Sep-Jun) Surrounded by violin-makers' workshops, this is a beautiful place to feast on regional delicacies, such as *bollito* (boiled meats) and *cotechino* (boiled pork sausage) with polenta and *mostarda* (fruit in a sweet mustard sauce).

## Getting There & Away

The city can be reached by train from Milan (€5.55, one hour and 10 minutes to 1¼ hours, several daily), Mantua (€4.60, 45 minutes to 1½ hours, hourly) and Brescia (€4.20, one hour, hourly), or from the south by changing at Piacenza. Buses serve the local area.

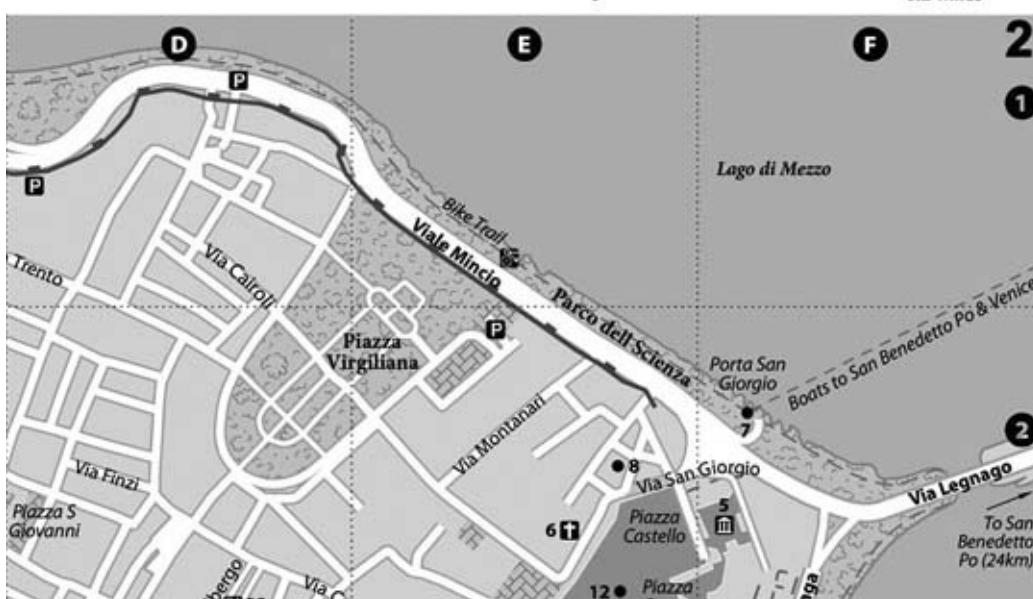
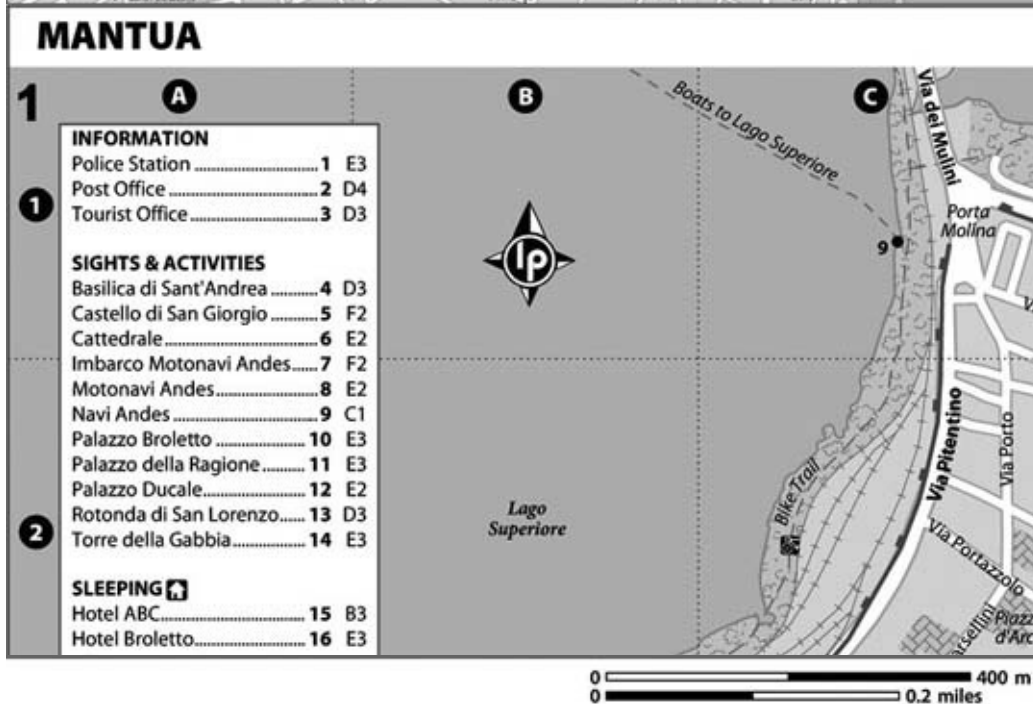
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## MANTUA (MANTOVA)

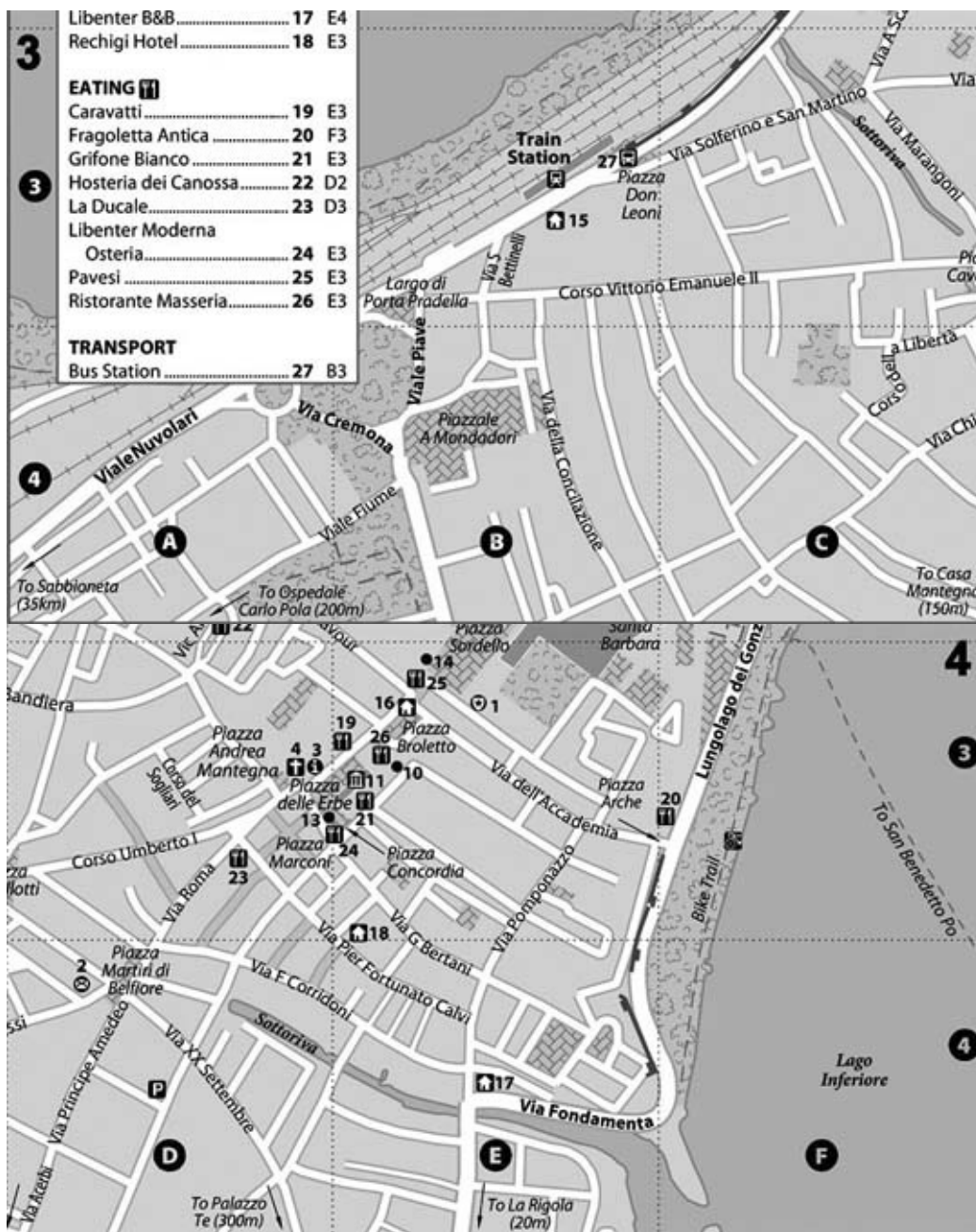
**pop 47,650**

Serene and beautiful, Mantua lies on the shores of Lago Superiore, Lago di Mezzo and Lago Inferiore. Unlike the pre-Alpine and Alpine Lombard lakes further north, Mantua is on the open plain, and its trio of lakes is actually a glorified widening of the river Mincio. Parts of its waters are protected by the Parco del Mincio, but petrochemical-industry sprawl has scarred the surrounding countryside.

Mantua was settled by the Etruscans in the 10th century BC and prospered under Roman rule. Latin poet Virgil was born just outside the modern town in 70 BC. The city fell into the hands of the Gonzaga dynasty in 1328, under whose rule it flourished, attracting the likes of Petrarch and Rubens. Shakespeare's Romeo found his fateful poison in a Mantuan apothecary. The golden days of 'La Gloriosa' ceased when Austria took control in 1708. Habsburg troops were in control (aside from the Napoleonic interlude at the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries) until 1866, when Mantua joined a newly united Italy.







Superb architecture bears witness to the city's rich history, particularly around its four interconnected, cobbled old town squares. It so impressed Unesco that, along with nearby Sabbioneta ([Click here](#)), it became Italy's 42nd World Heritage site in 2008.

## Information

The Mantova Card (€5), valid for five days, gets you reduced admission prices to various museums, free public transport and discounts in some hotels and restaurants. Ask at the tourist office.

**Ospedale Carlo Pola** (☎ 0376 20 11; Via Albertoni 1) Hospital

**Police station** (☎ 0376 20 51; Piazza Sordello 46)

**Post office** (Piazza Martiri di Belfiore 15)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0376 43 24 32; [www.turismo.mantova.it](http://www.turismo.mantova.it); Piazza Mantegna 6; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm)

## Sights

### PALAZZO DUCALE

Occupying a whopping chunk of the city's northeastern corner, the imposing walls of **Palazzo Ducale** (☎

0376 35 21 00; [www.mantovaduale.it](http://www.mantovaduale.it); Piazza Sordello 40; adult/student 18-25yr/EU senior & child €6.50/3.25/free; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) hide three squares, 15 courtyards, a park and 500-odd rooms. The centrepiece is **Castello di San Giorgio**, overflowing with works of art collected by the Gonzaga family, Mantua's long-time rulers. Don't miss Andrea Mantegna's **Camera degli Sposi**, a wonderful series of frescoes executed by the master between 1465 and 1474 in one of the castle's towers. The trompe l'œil oculus adds a playful touch to the more formal family scenes. You may find it necessary to book entry to this for an extra €1. Other rooms worth pausing over include the **Sala del Pisanello**, decorated with unfinished 15th-century frescoes of Arthurian legends by Pisanello, the heavily frescoed **Sala di Troia** and the **Camera dello Zodiaco**, with its magnificent deep-blue ceiling festooned with figures from the zodiac. Equally bizarre is the 18th-century **Sala dei Fiumi**, a Habsburg-era folly with artificial grottoes covered in shells and mosaic. No photography is allowed.

## CHURCHES

The elaborate baroque cupola of **Basilica di Sant'Andrea** (☎ 0376 32 85 04; Piazza Andrea Mantegna; admission free; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-noon & 3-6pm Sat, 11.45am-12.15pm & 3-6pm Sun) lords it over the city. Designed by Leon Battista Alberti in 1472, it safeguards a much-disputed relic: golden vessels said to hold earth soaked by the blood of Christ. Longinus, the Roman soldier who speared Christ on the cross, is said to have scooped up the earth and buried it in Mantua after leaving Palestine. Today, these containers rest beneath a marble octagon in front of the altar and are paraded around the town in a grand procession on Good Friday. There is no dispute about the tomb of Andrea Mantegna, also inside the basilica.

South of the basilica, across 15th-century colonnaded Piazza delle Erbe, is the 11th-century Romanesque **Rotonda di San Lorenzo** (☎ 0376 32 22 97; Piazza delle Erbe; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), sunk below the level of the square and believed to stand on the site of a Roman temple dedicated to Venus. In the **Palazzo della Ragione**, (☎ 0376 22 00 97; Piazza delle Erbe; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun during temporary exhibitions), which runs the length of the square from the Rotonda and was once the seat of secular power in the city, you can see exhibitions of varying interest (usually free).

The **Cattedrale** (Cathedral; Piazza Sordello 16) pales before the magnificence of the basilica. The facade was erected in the mid-18th century, while the decoration inside was completed by Giulio Romano after a fire in 1545.

## PALAZZO TE

The main reason to visit Mantua's other Gonzaga palace, **Palazzo Te** (☎ 0376 32 32 66, 199 199111; [www.centropalazzote.it](http://www.centropalazzote.it); Viale Te; adult/student/senior/child €8/2.50/5/free; ☎ 1-6pm Mon, 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) isn't its modern art and Egyptian displays, but the fanciful 16th-century palace itself. Built by Giulio Romano, over-the-top rooms include the Camera dei Giganti, one of the most fantastic and frightening creations of the Renaissance, adorned with dramatic frescoes depicting Jupiter's destruction of the Titans.

## OTHER SIGHTS

Past the 13th-century Palazzo della Ragione is **Palazzo Broletto**, which dominates neighbouring Piazza Broletto. In a niche on the facade is a seated figure wearing a doctor's cap said to represent Virgil.

Enter Piazza Sordello from the south, and on your left you have the grand house of the Gonzagas' predecessors, the Bonacolsi clan. Hapless prisoners used to be dangled in a cage from the tower, aptly

called the **Torre della Gabbia** (Cage Tower).

In 1476, the ruling Gonzaga family gave Andrea Mantegna land on which to build himself a house. You can see the results, now used as exhibition space in the **Casa Mantegna** (☎ 0376 36 05 06; [www.provincia.mantova.it/casadelmantegna](http://www.provincia.mantova.it/casadelmantegna), in Italian; Via G Acerbi 47; admission €2-5; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun). The sobre facade gives way to a series of rooms built around a unique, cylindrical courtyard.

## Activities

### BOAT TOURS

**Motonavi Andes** (☎ 0376 36 08 70; [www.motonaviandes.it](http://www.motonaviandes.it), in Italian; Via San Giorgio 2) organises boat tours of the lakes (starting from €8 for 1½ hours), five-hour excursions to San Benedetto Po (one-way Monday to Saturday €13.50, Sunday €15.50) and day trips to Venice (€77 Monday to Saturday, €84 Sunday). Boats arrive/depart from the **Imbarco Motonavi Andes**, behind Castello di San Giorgio on Lago di Mezzo's shore.

The separate company **Navi Andes** (☎ 0376 32 45 06; [www.naviandes.com](http://www.naviandes.com); Lago di Mezzo jetty) runs similarly priced tours. **Local boat owners** (Barcaoli del Mincio; ☎ 0376 34 92 92; [www.fiumemincio.it](http://www.fiumemincio.it)) arrange eco-themed trips on less-explored waterways. Ask at the tourist office.

### CYCLING

The tourist office stocks an excellent booklet in English detailing cycling itineraries along the Po river, in the **Parco del Mincio** (☎ 0376 22 83 20; [www.parcodelmincio.it](http://www.parcodelmincio.it); Piazza Porta Giulia 10, Cittadella) and around the lakes. One 48km route takes cyclists around Lago Superiore to the Santuario di Santa Maria delle Grazie and back to Mantua. Rent bikes from **La Rigola** (☎ 0376 36 66 77; Via Trieste 7; per day from €10).

### PARCO DELL SCIENZA

A riverside promenade with an informative twist, the **Parco della Scienza** stretches along the shore of Lago di Mezzo from Porta San Giorgio to Porta Molina. Information panels and gadgets illustrate various physical and scientific phenomena in a kid-friendly fashion.

## Festivals & Events

For five days each September, central Mantua is taken over by the **Festivaletteratura** (Literature Festival; [www.festivaletteratura.it](http://www.festivaletteratura.it)), with open-air bookstalls, and readings and author discussions (some in English).

The city's jazz festival, **Mantova Jazz** ([www.mantovajazz.it](http://www.mantovajazz.it), in Italian) swings from late March through early May.

## Sleeping

**Hotel ABC** (☎ 0376 32 23 29; [www.hotelabcmantova.it](http://www.hotelabcmantova.it); Piazza Don Leoni 25; s/d €65/95; 📞 📺 📶) Opposite the train station, this hotel is a reasonable and convenient option, with clean, comfortable rooms. Some have wooden beams in the ceiling.

**Hotel Broletto** (☎ 0376 22 36 78; [www.hotelbroletto.com](http://www.hotelbroletto.com); Via dell'Accademia 1; s/d €75/120; 📞 📺 📶) The location of this hotel – just off Piazza Broletto and 100m from the lake – can't be beat. Rooms are somewhat old-fashioned (built-in wood-grain furniture, lino floors) but come with contemporary

comforts, including satellite TV.

**Libenter B&B** (☎ 334 791 0912; [www.libenter.org](http://www.libenter.org); Via Pomponazzo 15; apt incl breakfast €70-150; ☎) This artistically decorated house overlooking a courtyard has two one-room apartments and a two-room apartment, offering independence in a central location. Apartments sleep up to four. Breakfast is served at Libenter Moderna Osteria, the owners' trendy little eatery nearby at Piazza Concordia 18.

**Rechigi Hotel** (☎ 0376 32 07 81; [www.rechigi.com](http://www.rechigi.com); Via Pier Fortunato Calvi 30; s/d €140/190; ☎ ☎ ☎) A stark marble interior provides a fabulous backdrop for the Le Corbusier designer chairs and contemporary art at Mantua's unique art hotel. Less elaborate than the lobby, rooms are cool, calm and sophisticated. Out back is a relaxing courtyard.

## Eating

More than a million pigs a year are reared in the province of Mantua. Try pancetta, *prosciutto crudo* (cured ham, aka Parma ham) and risotto with the locally grown *vialone nano* rice. *Tortelli di zucca* (sweet pumpkin-stuffed cushions of square pasta) is the city's most venerable dish, while *risotto alla pilota* (risotto with minced pork) and *luccio* (pike) also appear on most menus. Mantua is also renowned for its sweet specialities, including *torta di tagliatelle* (an unusual slice made from crunchy tagliatelle pasta baked with sugar and almonds) and *torta sbrisolona* (a hard, biscuitlike 'cupcake' with almonds).

Open-air cafes abound on Piazzas Sordello, Broletto and Erbe.

**Fragoletta Antica** (☎ 0376 32 33 00; Piazza Arche 5; meals €35; ☎ Tue-Sun) Set just back from the waterfront, this rustic place serves *risotto alla pilota*, and gnocchi with ricotta, burnt butter and *parmigiano reggiano*. The dining room is warm and cosy, filled with heavy wood and lined with bottles of wine.

**Ristorante Masseria** (☎ 0376 36 53 03; Piazza Broletto 7; meals €36; ☎ lunch Fri-Tue, dinner Thu-Tue) Masseria's supremely sweet *tortelli di zucca* is among the best in town; other house specialities include Mantuan beef stew with Lambrusco and polenta, and platters piled with local cheeses and dollops of mustard. Choose to eat in the cobbled square, or in a 13th-century dining room overlooked by a 15th-century fresco – the oldest depiction of the city in existence.

**Hosteria dei Canossa** (☎ 0376 22 17 50; Vicolo Albergo 3; meals €40-45; ☎ Wed-Mon) Hidden away on a tiny side street, this local gem dishes up regional risotto, pasta and meat dishes teamed with hard-to-find Lombard wines from between its red-brick walls.

**Grifone Bianco** (☎ 0376 36 54 23; [www.grifonebianco.it](http://www.grifonebianco.it); Piazza delle Erbe 6; meals €45-50; ☎ Thu-Mon) For gastronomic cuisine par excellence, Grifone's damask tablecloths and heavy silverware – not to mention the plates of local salami and pike with salsa and polenta – make it stand out.

Pick up sweet local treats from **Caravatti** (Piazza delle Erbe 18); **La Ducale** (Via Pier Fortunato Calvi 25), both dating from 1865; or the friendly **Pavesi** (cnr Via dell'Accademia & Via Broletto).

## Getting There & Around

**APAM** (☎ 0376 23 01; [www.apam.it](http://www.apam.it), in Italian) operates buses to/from Sabbioneta (return tickets only) and San Benedetto Po. Azienda Provinciale Trasporti Verona (ARV) buses head to Lago di Garda ([Click here](#)).

From the **train station** (Piazza Don Leoni), there are direct trains to/from Cremona (€4.60, 45 to 90 minutes, one to two an hour), Milan (€7.85, two to 2½ hours, one every one to two hours) and Verona

(€2.55, 45 to 50 minutes, once every hour or so – but none from 7.51am to 12.21pm!). Connect in Verona for Venice.

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## AROUND MANTUA

### Sabbioneta

**pop 4370**

Some 30km southwest of Mantua, the surreal settlement of Sabbioneta was created in the 16th century by Vespasiano Gonzaga Colonna in an attempt to build a Utopian city.

Within the walls are four 16th-century monuments. Sabbioneta's **ticket office** (☎ 0375 5 20 39; [www.sabbioneta.org](http://www.sabbioneta.org); Piazza d'Armi 1; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, closes 1hr earlier Nov-Mar), inside Palazzo Giardino, sells tickets to all (adult/student/child €10/5/free).

The **Teatro all'Antica** (Antique Theatre, completed 1590) has statues of Olympic gods topping a loggia held up by Corinthian pillars, and the frescoed walls and painted-wood ceiling of the 90m-long **Galleria degli Antichi** (Gallery of the Ancients). The duke of Sabbioneta resided in **Palazzo Giardino** (Garden Palace) and ruled the dukedom from the 1554 **Palazzo Ducale**. Also within the walls are a 19th-century **synagogue** (separate ticket available for those who wish to visit only the synagogue, €4) and the **Museo di Arte Sacre**, with a treasury containing a Golden Fleece medallion found in the tomb of Vespasiano Gonzaga.

A handful of simple cafe-restaurants are scattered along Sabbioneta's streets.

**APAM** (☎ 0376 23 01; [www.apam.it](http://www.apam.it)) buses link Sabbioneta with Mantua.

### San Benedetto Po

**pop 7640**

The highlight of this otherwise sleepy Po valley town, 21km southeast of Mantua, is its Benedictine **abbey** (☎ 0376 62 00 25; Piazza Matteotti; church free, museum €2; ☎ church 7.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm, cloisters 8am-7pm). Founded in 1007, little remains of the original buildings, although the Chiesa di Santa Maria still sports a 12th-century mosaic. Don't miss the Correggio fresco, which was discovered in the refectory in 1984.

Buses and trains both serve San Benedetto Po from Mantua, but the most scenic way to arrive is by boat (see opposite).

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## THE LAKES

Writers from Goethe and Stendhal to DH Lawrence and Hemingway have all lavished praise on the Italian lakes, but even their words scarcely express the lakes' beauty.

Elaborate villas attest to the roll call of celebrity visitors and residents that the lakes, which are ringed by snow-powdered mountains, have attracted over the centuries. Tourism, though, isn't as prevalent

around the lakes as you might expect. Many northern Italians visit for the day or weekend, and summer generally sees northerners head for the Ligurian seaside, meaning it's possible to find relative peace in many parts of the lakes even in Italy's peak holiday month of August.

The lakes fan out across Italy's north. In this guide, we've covered the main lakes from west to east. Sprinkled between them are several smaller lakes.

The westernmost of the main lakes, Lago d'Orta, is entirely within Piedmont and possibly the most romantic. The three big ones are, west to east, Lago Maggiore, with its spectacular Borromean Islands; Lago di Como, closed in by densely wooded mountains and sprinkled with dazzling villas and gardens; and Lago di Garda, the biggest and the busiest. Its southeast corner (in the Veneto region) has Disney-style family amusement parks, including Italy's largest, Gardaland. The northern reaches of Lago di Garda extend into the Alpine region of Trentino-Alto Adige.

Trains serve many of the lakes' main towns, while passenger and car ferries ply the waters. If you're travelling by car, there are some twisty but stunning lakeside drives. Heavy traffic and narrow roads make cycling along many stretches of the lakes less than ideal.

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## LAGO D'ORTA

Shrouded by thick, dark-green woodlands, little Lago d'Orta measures 13.4km long and just 2.5km wide. It's separated from its bigger and better-known eastern neighbour, Lago Maggiore, by Monte Mottarone.

The focal point of the lake is the medieval village of **Orta San Giulio** (population 1170), often referred to simply as Orta. Just across from the town's web of squares and cobbled lanes sits **Isola San Giulio**. The island is dominated at its south end by the 12th-century **Basilica di San Giulio** (🕒 9.30am-6.45pm Tue-Sun, noon-6.45pm Mon Apr-Sep, 9.30am-noon & 2-5pm, 2-5pm Mon Oct-Mar), full of vibrant frescoes that alone make a trip to the island worthwhile. The church, island and mainland town are named after a Greek evangelist, Giulio, who's said to have rid the island of snakes, dragons and assorted monsters in the late 4th century. The footpath encircling the island makes for a peaceful stroll, hence its popular name of Via del Silenzio. You may find the island's only snack restaurant open on busy weekends. Regular ferries (€2.50 return) and private boats (€4 return) make the five-minute crossing.

For more serenity, head up to **Sacro Monte**, a hillside dotted with some 20 small chapels dedicated to St Francis of Assisi. The parklands here are a great spot for a picnic: pick up picnic fare at Orta San Giulio's Wednesday market.

Orta San Giulio's **main tourist office** (📞 0322 90 51 63; [www.comune.ortasangiulio.no.it](http://www.comune.ortasangiulio.no.it); Via Panoramica; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Wed-Fri, 8am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) has information on the lake and its green surrounds. The local **Pro Loco tourist office** (📞 0322 9 01 55; Via Bossi 10; 🕒 11am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat & Sun) in the town hall is also useful.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Orta** (📞 0322 9 02 67; [www.campingorta.it](http://www.campingorta.it); Via Domodossola 28, Orta San Giulio; camping 2 people, car & tent €27.50-31.50; 📶 🚰 🛖) Open year-round, with heated facilities in winter, this family-run camping ground is by the lake just 1.5km northeast of Orta San Giulio's medieval centre. The bulk of the sites are on the inland side of the main road. For a few euros extra, you can have a spot across the

road on the lake.

**Piccolo Hotel Olina** (☎ 0322 90 56 56; [www.orta.net/olina](http://www.orta.net/olina); Via Olina 40, Orta San Giulio; s/d €75/100; 🍷) Artistically decorated with contemporary prints, bright colours and light-wood furniture, this ecofriendly hotel right in Orta San Giulio's medieval heart is a gem. They have home-baked breakfasts, and their avant-garde restaurant, Ristoro Olina (see opposite) is open to nonguests.

**Villa Crespi** (☎ 0322 91 19 02; [www.slh.com/crespi](http://www.slh.com/crespi); Orta San Giulio; s/d from €220/280; 🏠 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) Staying at this 19th-century Moorish caprice, which is topped with an aqua onion-dome spire, is to give oneself over to opulence. Grand interiors sport 19th-century furniture, and gardens sprawl out from the main property.

**Enoteca Al Boeuc** (☎ 339 584 00 39; Orta San Giulio 28; dishes €6-13; 🕒 6.30pm-1am) This candlelit old-town treasure is excellent for wine by the glass, cheese and meat platters and Piedmontese favourite, *bagna cauda* (a hot dip made of butter, olive oil, garlic and anchovies in which you dip vegetables).

**Agriturismo Il Cucchiaino di Legno** (☎ 0322 90 52 80; Via Prisciola 10 Località Legro; set menus €25; 🍷 dinner Thu-Sun) A 500m stroll beyond the train station, this honest-to-goodness *agriturismo* restaurant (no guest rooms) cooks up delicious local dishes including risotto, fish straight out of the lake, and salami and cheese from the surrounding valleys. Dine alfresco on the vine-draped patio overlooking the herb-planted garden.

**our pick Ristoro Olina** (meals €30-35; 🕒 Thu-Tue) The restaurant at Piccolo Hotel Olina does imaginative takes on Italian cooking and has immaculate service. You might start with the slightly sweet and sour *gnocchi di castagne e zucca con crema di radicchio scottato* (chestnut and pumpkin gnocchi in a radish cream).

## Getting There & Away

Orta Miasino train station is a 3km walk from the centre of Orta San Giulio. Between March and October, a little **tourist train** (one-way/return €2.50/4; 🕒 Thu-Tue) shuttles between the town centre and the train station approximately every half-hour. From Milan there are trains from Stazione Centrale (change at Novara; 5.40, two hours).

**Navigazione Lago d'Orta** (☎ 0322 84 48 62) runs boats to numerous lakeside spots from its landing stage on Piazza Motta, including Isola San Giulio (one-way/return €1.80/2.50), Omegna (€4/6), Pella (€2.20/4) and Ronco (€2.80/4). A day ticket for unlimited travel anywhere on the lake costs €7.50.

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## LAGO MAGGIORE

If you're arriving from Switzerland by train, once you emerge from the Alpine tunnels into the bright Italian sunlight, the views of the flower-filled Borromean Islands studding the dazzling blue lake are unforgettable.

The train line shadows the lake's western shore, which is its prettiest side; sprinkled with picturesque villages and towns, including the main town, Stresa.

### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Buses leave from the waterfront at Stresa for destinations around the lake and elsewhere, including Milan, Novara and Lago d'Orta. The daily Verbania Intra-Milan bus service operated by **SAF** (☎ 0323 55 21 72;

[www.safduemila.com](http://www.safduemila.com), in Italian) links Stresa with Arona (€2, 20 minutes), Verbania Pallanza (€2, 20 minutes), Verbania Intra (€2, 25 minutes) and Milan (€6.70, 1½ hours).

Stresa is on the Domodossola—Milan train line (see opposite). Domodossola (€3 to €7.60), 30 minutes northwest, is on the Swiss border, from where the train line leads to Brig and on to Geneva.

Ferries and hydrofoils around the lake are operated by **Navigazione Lago Maggiore** (☎ 800 551801; [www.navigazione.laghi.it](http://www.navigazione.laghi.it), in Italian), which has its main ticket office in Arona. Boats connect Stresa with Arona (one-way adult/child €7.40/4, 40 minutes), Angera (€7.40/4, 35 minutes), Baveno (€4.90/2.80, 20 minutes) and Verbania Pallanza (€6.30/3.50, 35 minutes).

Various one-day passes are also available: departing from Stresa, a ticket covering Isola Superiore (aka dei Pescatori), Isola Bella and Isola Madre costs €12; and an unlimited day ticket covering Isola Superiore and Isola Bella costs €9.80. More-expensive one-day passes also include admission to the various villas.

Services are drastically reduced in autumn and winter.

The only car ferry connecting the western and eastern shores for motorists sails between Verbania Intra and Laveno. Ferries run every 20 minutes; one-way transport costs between €6.90 and €11.50 for a car and driver or €4.30 for a bicycle and cyclist.

## Stresa

### pop 5180

Facing due east across the lake, Stresa has a ringside view of the fiery orange sun rising up over the water. The town's easy access from Milan has made it a favourite for artists and writers seeking inspiration. Hemingway was one of many; he arrived in Stresa in 1918 to convalesce from a war wound. A couple of pivotal scenes towards the end of his novel *A Farewell to Arms* are set at the Grand Hotel des Iles Borromees, the most palatial of the hotels garlanding the lake. Stresa still has something of a nostalgic air from this era.

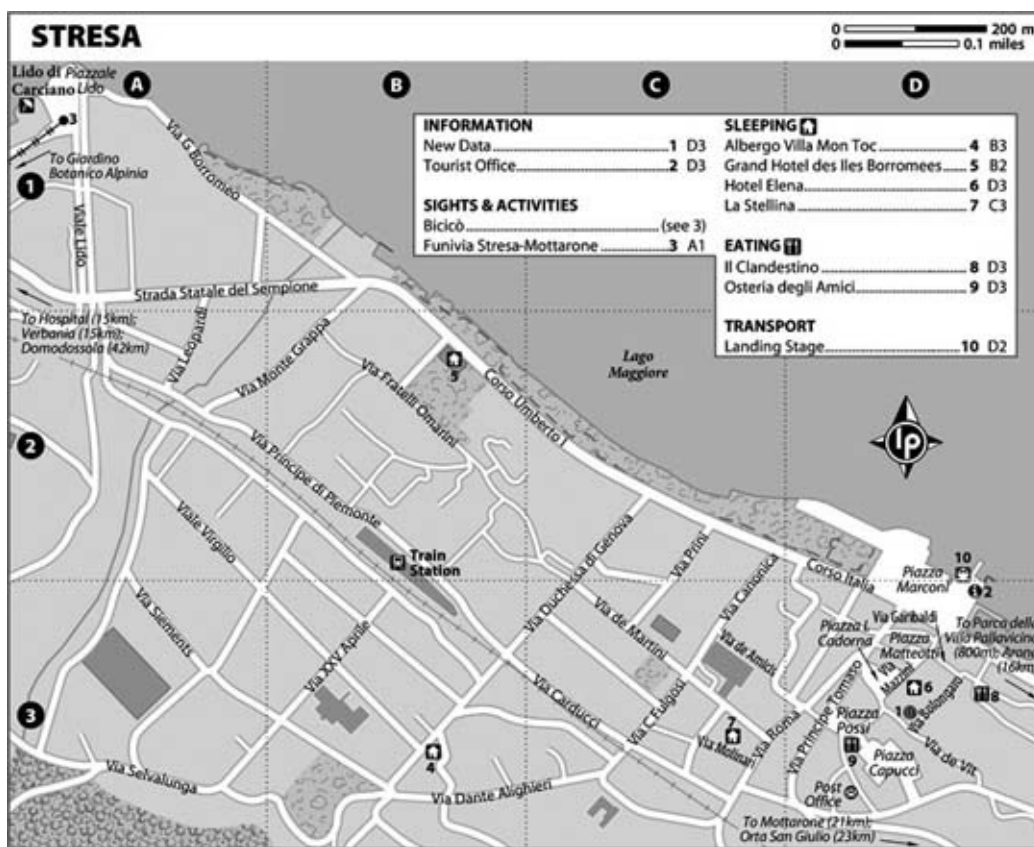
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## LAGO MAGGIORE EXPRESS

**Lago Maggiore Express** ([www.lagomaggioreexpress.com](http://www.lagomaggioreexpress.com); adult/child €30/15) is a picturesque day trip under your own steam (no guide) that includes train travel from Arona or Stresa to Domodossola, from where you get a charming little train to Locarno in Switzerland and a ferry back from Locarno to Stresa. The two-day version is perhaps better value if you have the time, costing €36/18. Tickets are available from Navigazione Lago Maggiore (above).

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Offshore, the Borromean Islands make an ideal ferry excursion from Stresa.

## INFORMATION

Banks and ATMs abound on Corso Italia, Stresa's waterfront promenade. Check out [www.visitstresa.com](http://www.visitstresa.com) for more info on the town.

**New Data** (☎ 0323 83 03 23; Via De Vit 15a; per 30min €3; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm) Internet access.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0323 3 13 08; <http://distrettolaghi.eu>; Piazza Marconi 16; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm mid-Mar—mid-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm Sat mid-Oct—mid-Mar).

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Captivating views of the lake unfold during a 20-minute cable-car journey on the **Funivia Stresa-Mottarone** (☎ 0323 3 02 95; [www.stresa-mottarone.it](http://www.stresa-mottarone.it); Piazzale della Funivia; adult/child return €17.50/11; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) to the top of 1491m-high Monte Mottarone. Cars depart every 20 minutes in summer. On a clear day you can see Lago Maggiore, Lago d'Orta, several other smaller lakes and Monte Rosa, on the Alpine border with Switzerland.

At the Alpino midstation (803m), more than 1000 Alpine and sub-Alpine species flourish in the **Giardino Botanico Alpina** (☎ 0323 3 02 95; [www.giardinoalpina.it](http://www.giardinoalpina.it); adult/child €2/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Apr-Oct), a botanical garden dating from 1934.

The mountain itself offers good **biking trails** as well as **walking** opportunities (it takes about four hours to walk from Stresa to the top). **Bicicò** (☎ 0323 3 03 99; [www.bicico.it](http://www.bicico.it)) rents out mountain bikes at the lower Stresa cable-car station. Rates include a helmet and road book detailing a 25km panoramic descent (about three hours, of which only about 30 minutes require slight ascents, thus making it accessible to pretty much anyone who can ride a bike) from the top of Mottarone back to Stresa. A one-way trip with a bike on the cable car to Alpino/Mottarone costs €7/10.

Skiing down Mottarone's gentle slopes is limited to five green and two blue slopes, making it good for beginners. Gear can be hired from the station at the top of Mottarone. The **ski pass** ([www.mottaroneski.it](http://www.mottaroneski.it); adult/child return €23/17.50) includes the cost of the cable car; you can hire gear at the top.

Exotic birds and animals roam relatively freely at the kid-friendly **Parco della Villa Pallavicino** (☎ 0323 3 15 33; [www.parcozoopallavicino.it](http://www.parcozoopallavicino.it); adult/child €9/6; 🕒 9am-6pm Mar-Oct), at the southern end of Stresa.

## SLEEPING & EATING

There are some 40 camping grounds up and down the lake's western shore; the tourist office has a list. Seasonal closings are generally November to February, but this can vary, so it's always best to check ahead. Beware that quite a few hotels close from late November to February too.

**Hotel Elena** (☎ 0323 3 10 43; [www.hotelelena.com](http://www.hotelelena.com); Piazza Cadorna 15; s/d €55/80; 🚿) Adjoining a cafe, the old-fashioned Elena is slap-bang on Stresa's pedestrian central square. Wheelchair access is possible, and all of Elena's comfortable rooms, with parquet floors, have a balcony, many overlooking the square.

**La Stellina** (☎ 0323 3 24 43; [www.lastellina.com](http://www.lastellina.com); Via Molinari 10; s/d €70/80) A couple of blocks' stroll from the main square, an early-19th-century building makes a beautiful backdrop for this charming little B&B. One of its three floral-themed rooms, the 'rose room', has a wooden spiral staircase leading to an attic sitting room.

**Albergo Villa Mon Toc** (☎ 0323 3 02 82; [www.hotelmontoc.com](http://www.hotelmontoc.com); Viale Duchessa di Genova 67-69; s/d €55/85; 🚿 🚿) A cheerful, three-storey, orange residence, this is a comfortable spot just back from the railway. Rooms have a pleasingly old-fashioned air, with dark wooden furniture, big beds and throw rugs on the tile floors. A big plus is the lovely garden out the back.

**Osteria degli Amici** (☎ 0323 3 04 53; Via Anna Maria Bolongaro 33; pizzas €4.50-9, meals €25) You may need to queue (it's always packed) but it's worth it to dine under vines on one of Stresa's most delightful terraces in the centre of town.

**our pick Il Clandestino** (☎ 0323 3 03 99; Via Rosmini 5; meals €30; 🕒 Wed-Mon) An elegant corner dining room, Il Clandestino serves up great lake fish and seafood, with some of the ingredients and ideas coming from Sicily. Try the *scampi e gamberi di Sicilia nel raviolo di farro biologico* (Sicilian prawns and scampi in a big organic pasta raviolo).

## Borromean Islands

Forming Lago Maggiore's most beautiful corner, Isole Borromeo can be reached from various points around the lake, but Stresa and Baveno offer the best access. Three of the four islands – Bella, Madre and Pescatori (also called Superiore) – can all be visited, but San Giovanni is off limits to the public.

### ISOLA BELLA

Isola Bella took the name of Carlo III's wife, the *bella* Isabella, in the 17th century, when its centrepiece, **Palazzo Borromeo** (☎ 0323 3 05 56; [www.borromeoturismo.it](http://www.borromeoturismo.it); adult/child €12/5; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Apr—mid-Oct), was built for the Borromeo family. Presiding over 10 tiers of terraced gardens, the baroque palace contains works by Tiepolo and van Dyck (to see the bulk of the art you have to buy a €16 ticket granting access to the Galleria dei Quadri), as well as Flemish tapestries and sculptures by Canova. Well-known guests have included Napoleon and Josephine in 1797 (you can see the bed they slept in), and Prince Charles and Princess Di in 1985. The Borromeo family still use it as their summer residence,

occupying the 2nd floor during August and September (although the grounds and lower floors remain open to visitors). Beneath a 23m-high ceiling in the former concert room is a 200-year-old wooden model of the palace and island. A combined ticket covering admission to the Borromeo and Madre palaces costs €16.50/7.50 per adult/child.

What's left of the island swarms with stalls selling gelati, pizzas and souvenirs.

**Elvezia** (☎ 0323 3 00 43; Isola Bella; meals €30-35; 📅 Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, Fri-Sun Nov-Feb) is the place for authentic family cooking. It serves pastas, including ravioli stuffed with ricotta and a chunky lasagna, as well as lake fish such as perch baked in foil. Booking ahead is essential for dinner in winter.

## ISOLA MADRE

All of Isola Madre is taken up by the fabulous 16th- to 18th-century **Palazzo Madre** (☎ 0323 3 05 56; adult/child €10/5; 📅 9am-5.30pm Mar-Oct). White peacocks whose fanned feathers resemble bridal gowns strut around English-style gardens that rival those of Isola Bella. Palace highlights include a neoclassical puppet theatre designed by a scenographer from Milan's La Scala, and 'horror' theatre with a cast of devilish marionettes.

See above for combined tickets for Isola Madre and Isola Bella.

## ISOLA SUPERIORE (PESCATORI)

Tiny 'Fishermen's Island, in the absence of souvenir stalls, retains much of its original fishing-village atmosphere. Apart from an 11th-century apse and a 16th-century fresco hanging in the **Chiesa di San Vittore**, there are no real sights; hence many visitors make it their port of call for lunch. Restaurants cluster around the boat landing, all serving grilled fish fresh from the lake from around €15.

If you want to stay on the island, the romantic **Albergo Verbano** (☎ 0323 3 04 08; [www.hotelverbano.it](http://www.hotelverbano.it); s/d €120/185; 📅 Mar-Dec) has a dozen rooms with wrought-iron bedsteads, and half- and full-board options. The hotel will send its own boat out free for guests once the ferries have stopped running.

## South of Stresa

It was in **Arona** (population 14,370), 20km south of Stresa, that the son of the Count of Arona and Margherita de' Medici, who would go on to become San Carlo Borromeo (1538–84), was born. His birthplace, the Rocca Borromea castle, was later destroyed by Napoleon. But Arona's saint is far from forgotten: in addition to a church and several chapels, the hill dedicated to him bears the revered religious monument, **Sancarlone** (admission €4; 📅 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.15pm Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-6.15pm Sat & Sun Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm Sat & Sun Mar, Nov & Dec). Erected between 1614 and 1698, the 35m bronze-and-copper statue can be climbed, affording a spectacular view from the top.

Across the water, the imposing medieval hilltop fortress, the **Rocca di Angera**, houses the 12-room **Museo della Bambola** (Doll Museum; ☎ 0331 93 13 00; adult/child €7.50/4.50; 📅 9am-5.30pm Apr—mid-Oct), displaying the Borromeo family's priceless collection of dolls. Combined tickets with Isola Bella and Isola Madre are €20/10 for adult/child.

Various waterside cafes offer magnificent views of the castle, but for a culinary treat, head just outside the centre of town to **Hotel Lido Angera** (☎ 0331 93 02 32; [www.hotellido.it](http://www.hotellido.it); Viale Libertà 11; meals €45; 📅 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun, dinner Mon) for fresh lake fish. Set on the lake and surrounded by greenery, this hotel-restaurant serves up an original sushi platter of Lake Maggiore fish as a starter. The rooms (singles/doubles €78/110) are also tempting.

The **Monastery of Santa Caterina del Sasso** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm) is one of the most spectacularly located places in northern Italy. Clinging to the high rocky face of this southeast shore of Lake Maggiore, about 13km north of Angera, it is reached by a spiralling stairway (a lift is being built too) from 60m above. The church is actually the cobbling together of a series of 13th- and 14th-century chapels to form an oddly shaped whole, and is filled with a carnival of frescoes.

## North of Stresa

Heading 4km north of Stresa brings you to **Baveno** (population 4860), which has good ferry links to the Borromean Islands, and a fistful of hotels. If you've got energy to burn (or kids who do), stop off at **Lake Maggiore Adventure Park** (☎ 0323 91 97 99; [www.sport-fun.info](http://www.sport-fun.info); Strada Cavalli 18, Baveno; adult/child €22/15; ☎ 10am-7pm Mar-Nov). Thrills and spills include suspension courses, an artificial climbing wall, a trampoline 'acro-jump', and a cycling course with jumps. Its cafe has stunning lake views from its patio.

Further north towards Switzerland, **Verbania** (population 30,940), the biggest town on the lake, is split into three districts. Verbania Pallanza is the most interesting district, with a tight web of lanes in its old centre and, the city's highlight, the grounds of the late-19th-century **Villa Taranto** (☎ 0323 40 45 55; [www.villataranto.it](http://www.villataranto.it); Via Vittorio Veneto; adult/child €9/5.50; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mar-Sep, to 5pm Oct). In 1931, royal archer and Scottish captain Neil McEacharn bought the villa from the Savoy family. He planted some 20,000 species over 30 years, and today it is considered one of Europe's finest botanical gardens. Boats stop at Pallanza and at the landing stage in front of the villa.

Verbania's **tourist office** (☎ 0323 50 32 49; [www.verbania-turismo.it](http://www.verbania-turismo.it); Corso Zanitello 6-8; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) is on the waterfront in Verbania Pallanza and has accommodation details. Backpackers will want to make a beeline for the lake's only hostel, **Ostello Verbania** (☎ 0323 50 16 48; [prenotazioni@ostelloverbania.it](mailto:prenotazioni@ostelloverbania.it); Via alle Rose 7; dm incl breakfast €16, s/d €25/€50; ☎ reception 9am-noon & 4-10pm Mar-Oct & Christmas; 📄). It has lake glimpses for its privileged spot high up back from the old centre of Verbania Pallanza. **Caffè Bolongaro** (☎ 0323 50 32 54; Piazza Garibaldi 9; pizzas €4.50-8), on the waterfront in Pallanza, is the perfect place for pizza: they have an interminable and tasty selection.

Five kilometres short of the Swiss border is **Cannobio** (population 5120). The **tourist office** (☎ 0323 7 12 12; [www.procannobio.it](http://www.procannobio.it); Via Giovanola 25; ☎ 9am-noon & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun & holidays) is just inland off the main lakeside road, which here runs through the centre of town. Between that road and the lake, the tiny toy town's spotless cobblestoned streets are impossibly quaint and the pastel waterfront a dream location for the *passeggiata* and a bite at one of several eateries.

Cannobio has an active sailing and windsurfing school, **Tomaso Surf & Sail** (☎ 0323 7 22 14; [www.tomaso.com](http://www.tomaso.com); Via Nazionale 7), next to a patch of gritty beach at the village's northern end. Mountain bikes can be hired per hour/day for €4/14 from **Cicli Prezan** (☎ 0323 7 12 30; [www.cicliprezan.it](http://www.cicliprezan.it); Viale Vittorio Veneto 9).

**Hotel Pironi** (☎ 0323 7 06 24; [www.pironihotel.it](http://www.pironihotel.it); Via Marconi 35; s €120, d €130-170), in a 15th-century *palazzo* amid Cannobio's cobbled maze, is one of several charming hotels in the village. It also has a restaurant, with tables under the portico. Waterfront Piazza Vittorio Emanuele III is also lined by eateries.

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# LAGO DI COMO

In the shadow of the snow-covered Rhaetian Alps, Lago di Como (also known as Lago Lario) is the most spectacular of the lakes. Shaped like an upside-down letter Y, its squiggly shoreline is scattered with villages, including exquisite Bellagio, in the centre of the inverted V on the lake's southern shore. Where the southern and western shores converge is the lake's main town, Como. Lecco, the other large town on the lake, sits where the southern shore meets the less-explored eastern shore.

Lombard kings once took refuge from invaders on Isola Comacina, the sole island in this beguiling 146-sq-km body of water.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

The Como-based **ASF Autolinee** (☎ 031 24 72 47; [www.sptlinea.it](http://www.sptlinea.it), in Italian) operates regular buses around the lake, which depart from the bus station. Key routes include Como—Colico (€5.10, 1½ hours, three to five daily), via all the villages on the western shore mentioned in this section; and Como—Bellagio (€2.75, one hour, 10 minutes, hourly).

Trains from Milan's Stazione Centrale and Porta Garibaldi station (€3.60 to €8.50, 40 minutes to one hour, hourly) use Como's main train station (Como San Giovanni), and some continue on into Switzerland. Trains from Milan's Stazione Nord (€3.60, one hour, hourly) use Como's lakeside Stazione FNM (listed on timetables as Como Nord Lago). Trains from Milan to Lecco continue north along the eastern shore.

**Navigazione Lago di Como** (☎ 800 551801; [www.navigazionealaghi.it](http://www.navigazionealaghi.it); Piazza Cavour) ferries and hydrofoils criss-cross the lake, departing year-round from the jetty at the northern end of Piazza Cavour. One-way fares range from €1.90 (Como—Cernobbio) to €10 (Como—Lecco). Return tickets are double.

Car ferries link Cadenabbia on the west shore with Varenna on the eastern shore and Bellagio.

## Como

pop 83,170

Elegant Como is the main access town to the lake. Its twin claims to fame are the lake with which it shares its name, and its silk industry. Como's mulberry trees died out in the early 1900s from a combination of disease and the Industrial Revolution, but although the yarn is now imported, silk is still woven and designed here.

## INFORMATION

**L'Arco del Sole** (031 449 18 91; Via Garibaldi 59; per hr €3 ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) A cheerful cafe with internet terminals and wi-fi.

**Ospedale Sant'Anna** (☎ 031 58 51; Via Napoleona 60) Hospital.

**Police station** (☎ 031 31 71; Viale Roosevelt 7)

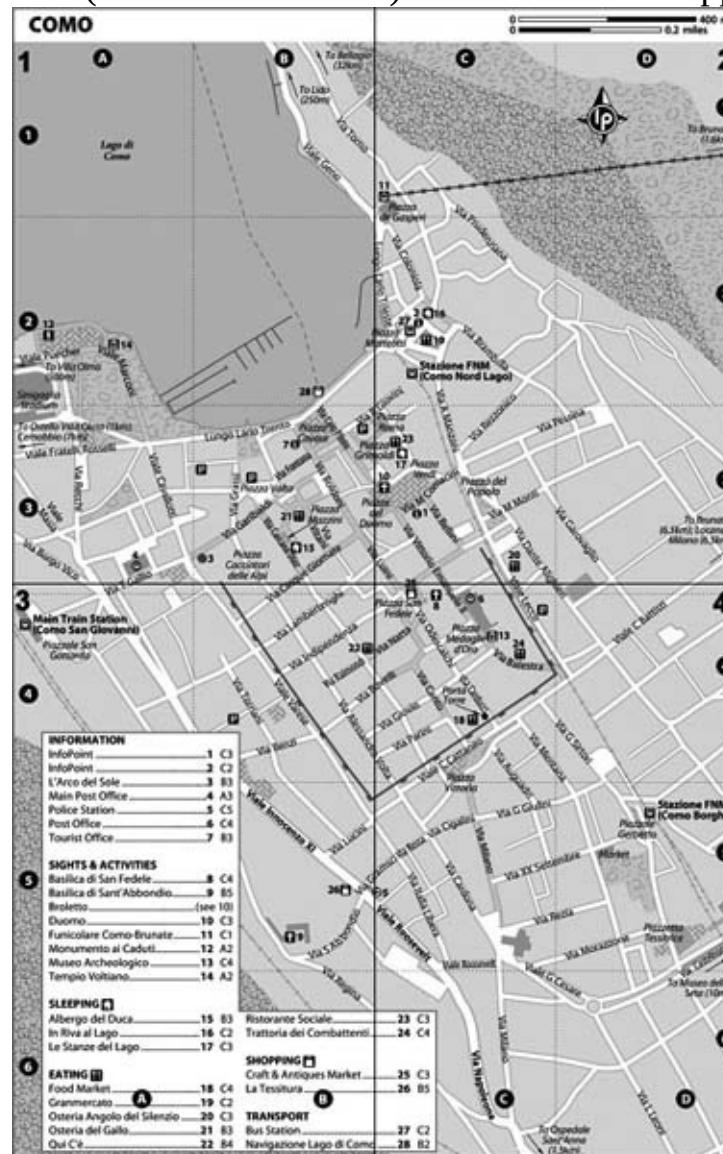
**Post office** (☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) Main branch (Via T Gallio 6); Old Town (Via Vittorio Emanuele II 113) The main branch also has currency exchange.

**Tourist office** (☎ 031 26 97 12; [www.lakecomo.org](http://www.lakecomo.org); Piazza Cavour 17; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, plus 9.30am-1pm Sun Jun-Sep); InfoPoint (Bus station; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat, Sun & holidays); InfoPoint (Via Maestri Comacini; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat, Sun & holidays).

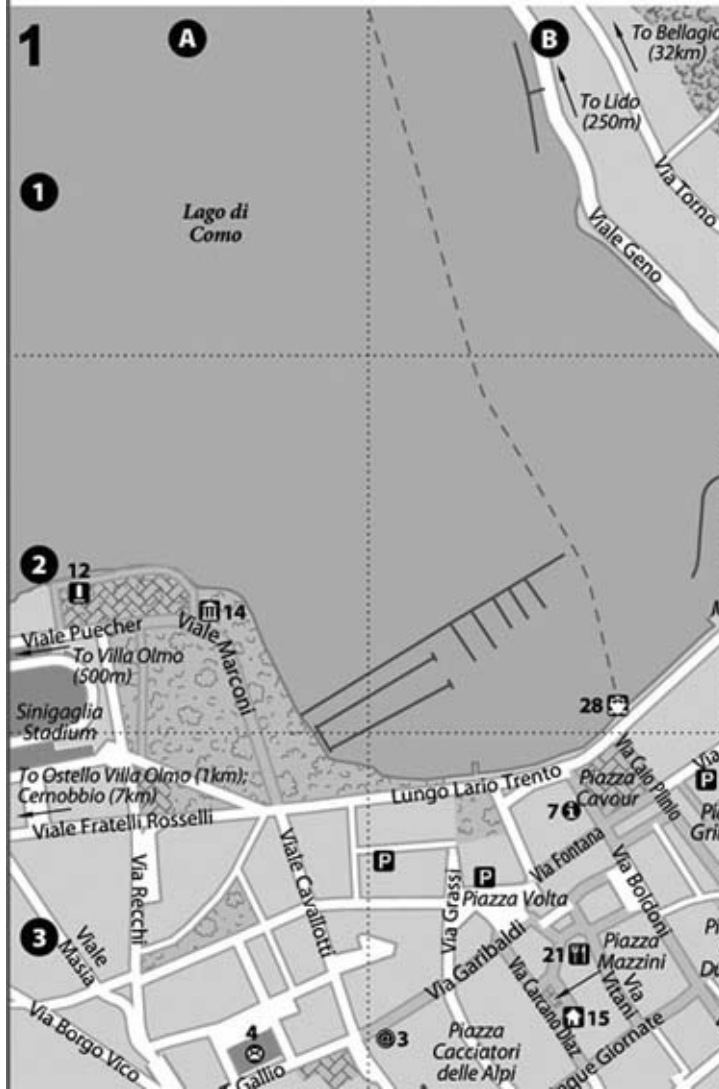
## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Como's lakeside location is stunning, and its narrow pedestrian lanes are a pleasure to explore, with

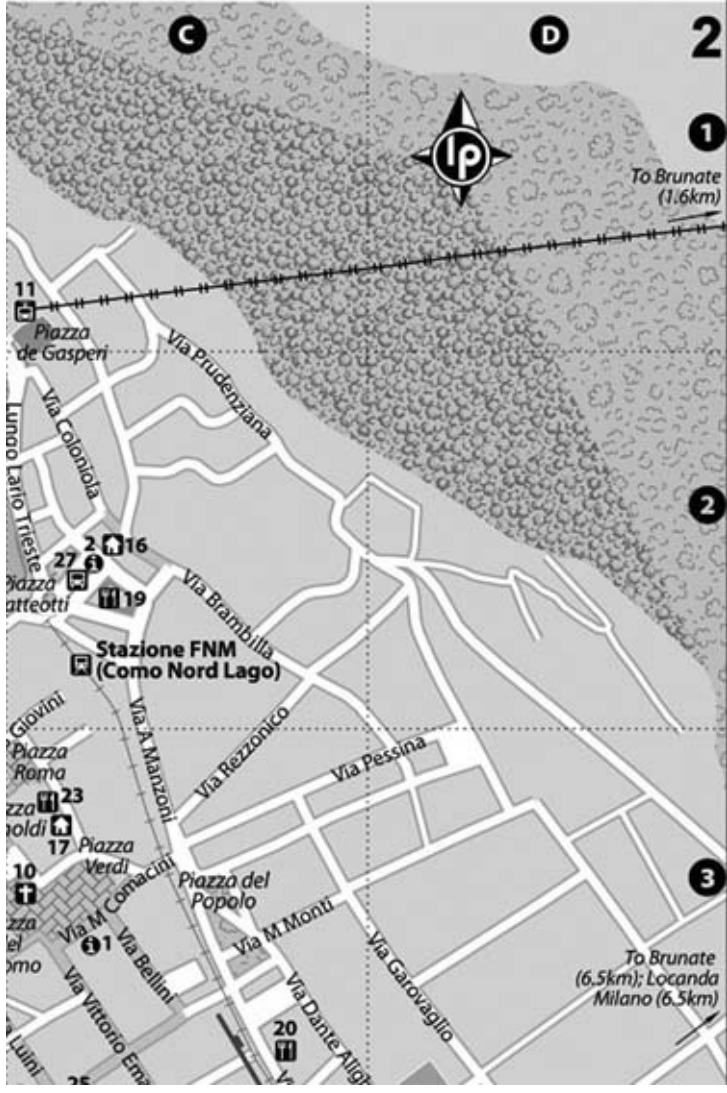
some notable sights along the way. Elements of baroque, Gothic, Romanesque and Renaissance styles can be seen in Como's marble-clad **Duomo** (cathedral; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 7am-noon & 3-7pm). The cathedral was built between the 14th and 18th centuries, and is crowned by a high octagonal dome. Next door, the polychromatic **Broletto** (medieval town hall) looks like a mere appendage of the church.



# COMO



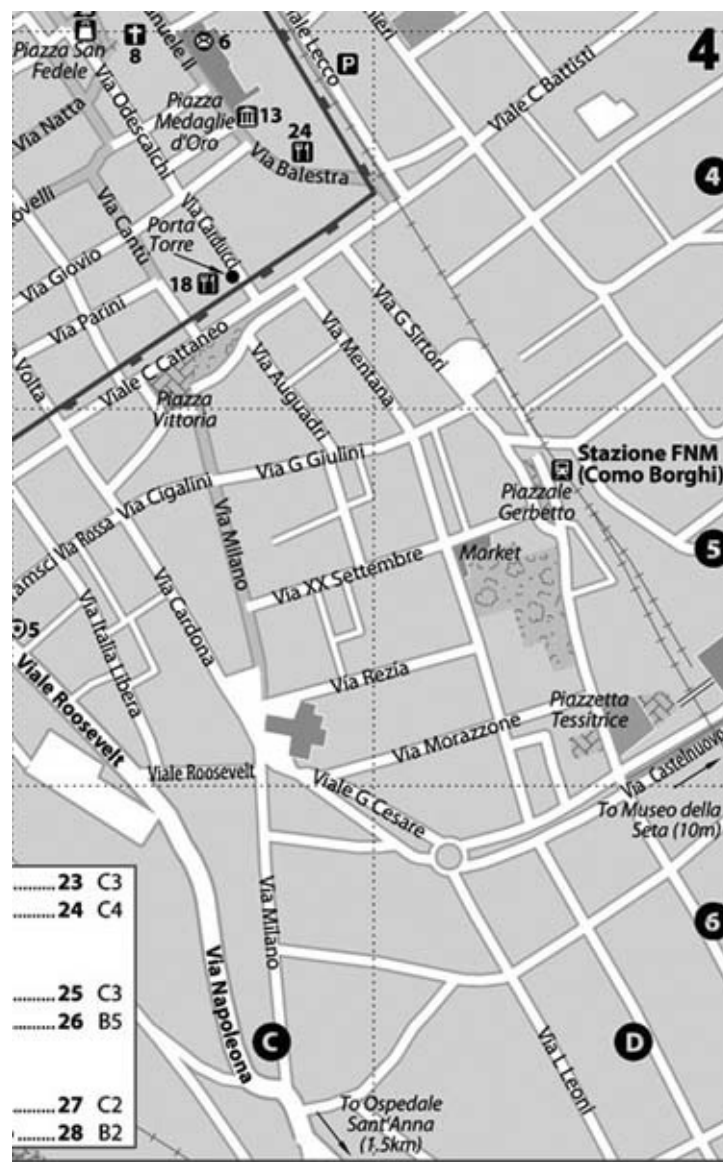
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InfoPoint .....	2	C2
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The circular layout of the original 6th-century **Basilica di San Fedele** (Piazza San Fedele; ☎ 8am-noon & 3.30-7pm), with three naves and three apses, has been likened to a clover leaf. Its 16th-century rose window and precious 16th- and 17th-century frescoes add to its charm. The facade is the result of a 1914 remake, but the apses are the real McCoy, featuring some eye-catching sculpture on the east side.

About 500m south of the city walls and just beyond the busy and rather ugly Viale Innocenzo XI is the remarkable 11th-century Romanesque **Basilica di Sant'Abbondio** (Via Regina; ☎ 8am-6pm). In addition to its proud, high structure and impressive apse with beautiful geometric relief decoration around the exterior windows, there are remarkable frescoes depicting scenes from the life of Christ on the inside of the apse.

Significant remains from prehistoric and Roman times are displayed at the **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 031 25 25 50; Piazza Medaglie d'Oro 1; adult/senior/child €3/1.50/free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun). A block south, Como's **city walls** were rebuilt in 1162 following their demolition by the Milanese in 1127; They had forced Como to surrender, destroy all its buildings (save its churches) and walls, and become dependent on Milan until Barbarossa came along in 1152.

The lakeside **Tempio Voltiano** (☎ 031 57 47 05; Viale Marconi; adult/senior/child €3/1.50/free; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Nov-Mar) was built in 1927. This neoclassical temple is now a museum devoted to Como-born electric-battery inventor Alessandro Volta (1745–1827). The **Monumento ai Caduti** (War Memorial; Viale Puecher 9), nearby, is a classic example of Fascist-era architecture and dates to 1931.

South of the old town, the **Museo della Seta** (Silk Museum; ☎ 031 30 31 80; [www.museosetacomo.com](http://www.museosetacomo.com); Via Castelnovo 9; adult/child €8/2.60; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Fri) unravels the town's silk history, with early dyeing and printing equipment on display.

Northeast along the waterfront, past Piazza Matteotti and the train station, is the **Funicolare Como—Brunate** (☎ 031 30 36 08; [www.funicolarecomo.it](http://www.funicolarecomo.it); Piazza de Gasperi 4; adult/child one-way €2.50/1.65, return €4.35/2.75; ☎ 6am-midnight mid-Apr—mid-Sep, to 10.30pm mid-Sep—mid-Apr), a cable car built in 1894. It takes seven minutes to reach hill top **Brunate** (720m), a quiet village offering splendid views. In **San Maurizio**, about a 30-minute, rather steep walk (mostly along a stone, former mule path) from Brunate's funicular stop, there are 143 steps leading to the top of the lighthouse, built in 1927 to mark the centenary of Alessandro Volta's death.

The tourist office has ample walking and cycling information.

## SLEEPING

**Ostello Villa Olmo** (☎ 031 57 38 00; [ostellocomo@tin.it](mailto:ostellocomo@tin.it); Via di Bellinzona 6; dm incl breakfast €15; ☎ reception 7-10am & 4pm-midnight, closed Dec-Feb; 📄) In a rambling garden right on the lakefront, Como's HI hostel is two doors up from the heritage-listed villa of the same name. There's a midnight curfew but a fun night-time bar (alcohol service ceases at 10pm). Meals cost €10. The hostel is 1km from the main train station and 20m from the closest bus stop. Take bus 1, 6 or 11.

**In Riva al Lago** (☎ 031 30 23 33; [www.inrivaallago.com](http://www.inrivaallago.com); Piazza Matteotti 4; s/d without bathroom €38/47, s/d with bathroom €45/63, 2-person apt from €70; 📄) Don't be deceived by the unassuming exterior of this hotel, situated right behind the bus station. Simple but pleasing rooms with tile floors are tastefully furnished, some with original wood beams, and there are a handful of apartments for up to five people.

**Le Stanze del Lago** (☎ 339 544 65 15; [www.lestanzedellago.com](http://www.lestanzedellago.com); Via Rodari 6; 2-/4-person apt from €70/90; 📄) Five cosy apartments, nicely decked out in modern but understated fashion, make for a good deal in the heart of Como. For stays of five days or longer you can use the kitchen too. They all feature double bed, sofa-bed, timber ceilings and tiled floor.

**Albergo del Duca** (☎ 031 26 48 59; [www.albergodelduca.it](http://www.albergodelduca.it); Piazza Mazzini 12; s/d €75/120; 📄 ☎ 📄) Set on a peaceful square in central Como, the hotel occupies a renovated 17th-century building with a pleasant internal courtyard. Rooms, which exude the warmth that comes from hardwood floors, look either on to the square or the courtyard.

**Locanda Milano** (☎ 031 336 50 69; [www.locandamilano.it](http://www.locandamilano.it), in Italian; Via Volta 62, Brunate; s/d €80/100; 📄) Get away from it all in the hilltop village of Brunate, where Locanda Milano offers restful rooms in pretty yellow and blue hues, perched above its well-regarded restaurant (meals €45).

## EATING

**Trattoria dei Combattenti** (☎ 031 270574; Via Balestra 5/9; meals €20; ☎ Wed-Mon) Set in the building of the Italian retired servicemen's association, this popular trattoria offers seating inside or in a sunny gravel yard at the front. Simple but irresistible cooking is the name of the game. Opt for an *insalatone* (€9) if you want a 'big salad', or the €14 set lunch.

**Osteria del Gallo** (☎ 031 27 25 91; Via Vitani 16; meals €25; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat) This ageless *osteria* is a lunchtime must. The menu is recited and might include a first of giant ravioli stuffed with mozzarella and topped with tomatoes, followed by lightly fried fillets of agone, a local lake fish.

**Ristorante Sociale** (☎ 031 26 40 42; Via Rodari 6; meals €25; ☎ Wed-Mon) The Sociale is a local

institution. The upstairs dining room has an outsized baroque fireplace and frescoes. The server will announce a constantly changing series of dishes of the day. Cooking is no-nonsense, ranging from *risotto trevisana* (with chicory) to huge Milanese *scaloppine* (veal escalopes).

**Osteria Angolo del Silenzio** (☎ 031 337 21 57; Viale Lecco 25; meals €35-40; 🕒 lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Tue) The Corner of Silence is loved by locals for dishes like *tagliatelle nere con gamberi e seppie* (black tagliatelle with shrimps and cuttlefish) or a succulent, fancily presented *petto d'anatra al pepe rosa* (duck breast cooked with pink pepper).

Self-caterers can stock up on supplies at **Granmercato** (Piazza Matteotti 3; 🕒 8.30am-1pm Sun-Mon, 8.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 8am-7.30pm Sat) and **Qui C'è** (Via Natta 43; 🕒 8am-1.30pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun). Fresh fruit, vegetables and delicacies abound at Como's **food market** (🕒 8.30am-1pm Tue & Thu, 8.30am-7pm Sat) outside Porta Torre.

## SHOPPING

**La Tessitura** (☎ 031 32 16 66; Viale Roosevelt 2; 🕒 11am-9pm Tue-Sat) Mantero, one of the biggest names in Como silk, runs this large-scale outlet-style store on the site of their former factory (which has been moved out of town). If you can print and weave it, you'll find it here.

A **craft and antiques market** (Piazza di San Fedele; 🕒 9am-7pm Sat) fills the piazza out the front of the basilica.

## Southern Shore

Locals say that if you've driven from Como to Bellagio, you can drive anywhere around the lake. The 32km western branch of the southern shore is a narrow, twisting, hillside drive, with a steady stream of traffic. Those with time could stop off in various villages along the way, but the 'pearl' of the lake is Bellagio itself, suspended like a pendant on the promontory where the lake's western and eastern arms split and head south.

The mountains between the lake's two arms (in the triangle formed by the water and the towns of Como and Lecco) afford sweeping views, and shelter some quaint, little-visited villages.

Another option for travelling between Como and Bellagio is to hike along a waymarked trail that follows old mule and cart tracks through this triangle. This scenic walk takes two days, with *rifugi* (mountain huts) and restaurants along the way. Como's tourist office can provide a free detailed route description.

## BELLAGIO

### pop 3020

The place that inspired the Las Vegas casino (the same one involved in a heist in *Ocean's 11*) lives up to its fabled reputation. Bellagio's sapphire-blue harbour, maze of stone staircases and colourful shuttered buildings are truly enchanting. Although summers and weekends teem with visitors, if you turn up on a weekday outside high season, you'll have the little village almost to yourself.

Bellagio's **tourist office** (☎ 031 95 02 04; Piazza Mazzini; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 9am-1pm Wed, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Fri & Sat), next to the boat landing stage, has information on water sports, mountain biking and other lake activities. Otherwise, **PromoBellagio** (☎ 031 95 15 55; [www.bellagiolakecomo.com](http://www.bellagiolakecomo.com); Piazza della Chiesa 14; 🕒 9.30am-1pm Mon, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-4pm Wed-Fri), in the basement of an 11th-century watchtower, also has information.

Internet access (terminals and wi-fi) is available at **bellagiopoint.com** (☎ 031 95 04 37; Salita Plinio

8-12; per 15min/hr €2/6; ☎ 10am-10pm). The place doubles as a cool little *aperitivo* bar in the evenings – the bar is laden to breaking point with snacks.

The lavish gardens of **Villa Serbelloni** (☎ 031 95 15 55; Via Garibaldi 8; adult/child €6.50/3; ☎ tours 11am & 4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) cover much of the promontory on which Bellagio sits. Visits are by guided tour only and numbers are limited; tickets are sold 10 minutes in advance at PromoBellagio.

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## MORITZ MANTERO & HIS SILK ROAD

Moritz Mantero (born 1946) is the third generation of one of Como's largest silk producers, Mantero. We spoke to him in a reception room of the company's historic 1923 headquarters in central Como's Via Volta.

### **How did Como become a major silk producer?**

Como had been a centre of wool production, and the spinning mills had tried silk, too, and fallen on hard times. Empress Maria Teresa [1717–80], seeing the plight of the Lago di Como area, declared all textile production there to be duty-free throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In essence, that's how the modern Como silk industry got started.

### **There were other major silk centres in Europe. Why has Como survived?**

In Krefeld [Germany] there is little left. Lyon [France] was the best known, but the French, shut in their ivory tower, said: 'we're French, we know best'. The Italians are more flexible, and our costs were lower.

### **Are costs still lower?**

No, Como keeps the flag flying through innovation and flexibility.

### **How important is the silk industry?**

Of all the natural and non-natural fibres consumed throughout the world, silk makes up just 0.2%. It's a niche. But in Como it's an important niche – a third of the workforce in Como province (27,000 people) is involved in the silk business.

### **How have those numbers changed over the years?**

Ten years ago, the number was about 40,000.

### **What happened?**

The first shock came from the WTO [World Trade Organisation] with the liberalisation of trade in all types of textiles.

### **Is China the main source of competition?**

All our raw or partly finished silk has long come from China. For finished products, the Chinese concentrate on large-scale production of items of medium to low quality. Italian companies in that sector have had to close. We concentrate on top quality on a small scale.

### **You sell your products to the big-name fashion companies, but only their labels appear. So Como silk is top of the range?**

We will never be a university canteen, churning out food, rather a top-quality restaurant serving meals as they are ordered. We don't do TV dinners.

### **Mantero recently fused with one of the other big four Como silk firms. That stunned a few people.**

It stunned everyone.

### **Why?**

We had always been competitors. The alliance has been likened to a fusion of AC Milan and Inter [Milan's arch-rival football teams]. We have found integration relatively easy, and this will reduce our combined fixed costs.

### **Will the big silk companies one day fuse to be one?**

That would be science fiction, but I can see Ratti [until now the biggest firm] buying some smaller companies.

### **Are there many of those?**

Hundreds! Como has the greatest concentration of textile-design studios in the world, some of them run by only one person.

### **Is the worst of the industry's crisis over? How do you see the future?**

That's hard to say, but the Chinese character for crisis has two meanings: risk and opportunity. I am positive. Manufacturing in the West will increasingly be in high-performance sectors. Companies able to renew themselves constantly in order to be the first to meet changes in the market will do well.

*Moritz Mantero is President of Mantero.*

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Garden-lovers can also stroll the grounds of neoclassical **Villa Melzi D'Eril** (☎ 339 4573838; [www.giardinidivillamelzi.it](http://www.giardinidivillamelzi.it); Lungo Lario Manzoni; adult/child €6/4; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct), built in 1808 for one of Napoleon's associates and coloured by flowering azaleas and rhododendrons in spring.

## **Sleeping & Eating**

For such an exquisite spot, there are a surprising number of affordable places to sleep and eat (and plenty of luxurious places where you can spoil yourself, too).

**Bellagio Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 031 95 16 80; [www.bellagiobedandbreakfast.com](http://www.bellagiobedandbreakfast.com); Salita Mella 38; s/d €50/60; ☎ ☑ ☑ ☑) Two snappy little apartments at the top end of one Bellagio's narrow stone stairway streets make for a very good deal. They can hold up to six people at a pinch. They are self-contained, with kitchen and lounge area, and prices include cleaning and linen.

**Residence La Limonera** (☎ 031 95 21 24; [www.residencelalimonera.com](http://www.residencelalimonera.com); Via Bellosio 2; 2-person apt €70-100; ☑) This elegant villa in an old lemon grove has been divided into 11 spacious and thoughtfully furnished self-catering apartments. Apartments for three and four people are also available.

**Albergo Silvio** (☎ 031 95 03 22; [www.bellagiosilvio.com](http://www.bellagiosilvio.com); Via Carcano 12; s/d from €65/85; ☎ Mar—mid-Nov & Christmas week; ☎ ☎ ☑ ☑) The high position over the western arm of Lago di Como is enough to recommend this spot, 1km short of the centre of Bellagio. It is worth shelling out the €15 extra for a room with lake views. The restaurant downstairs, with a balmy outdoor section, is one of Bellagio's badly kept secrets. People flock here for well-prepared lake fish and the views (meals €25 to €30).

**Hotel Bellagio** (☎ 031 95 22 02; [www.hotelbellagio.it](http://www.hotelbellagio.it); Salita Grandi 6; s/d €120/160; ☎) This two-star boutique hotel is tucked off a stair-lined street in the village centre. Views of the lake unfold from most of the artfully decorated, contemporary rooms, which have timber floors. It has a small gym and sun roof too.

## **Western Shore**

Without the mountains blocking the light, the western shore gets the most sunshine on the lake. For this reason, it's lined with the most lavish villas, where high-fliers from football players to film stars reside. The shore stretches 80km from Como north to Sorico at the lake's tip; from here you can continue north into Switzerland or east into Trentino-Alto Adige.

## **CERNOBBIO TO LENNO**

*Ocean's 11* may have been shot at Bellagio's Vegas namesake, but scenes from *Ocean's 12* were filmed in the Lago di Como village of **Cernobbio**, at the 19th-century Villa Erba (Largo Luchino Visconti; closed to

the public). Cernobbio is also home to the lake's most magnificent hotel, **Villa d'Este** ([www.villadeste.it](http://www.villadeste.it)). But if you don't have a cool €800 to €950 to spend a night, try the cosy, wood-shuttered **Albergo Centrale** (☎ 031 51 14 11; [www.albergo-centrale.com](http://www.albergo-centrale.com); Via Regina 39, Cernobbio; s/d €85/150; 📞 📺 📶). Situated away from the water on Cernobbio's main street, it has a flowery terrace, a red-brick cellar and a tavern serving pizzas baked in a wood-fired oven. Rooms are pleasant, with parquet floors, muted pastel colours and high ceilings.

If you're driving, follow the lower lakeside road (Via Regina Vecchia) north from Cernobbio, which skirts the lake shore past a fabulous row of 19th-century villas around **Moltrasio**. Fashion designer Gianni Versace, who was murdered in Miami Beach, Florida, in 1997, is buried in the village cemetery; his former villa is still owned by the Versace family.

A few kilometres north is the charming hamlet of **Laglio**, home to *Ocean's* star, George Clooney. North again, **Argegno** is the departure point into the mountains on the **Funivia Argegno—Pigra** (☎ 0318 108 44; one-way/return €2.50/3.40; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm). The cable car makes the five-minute climb to the 860m-high village of **Pigra** every 30 minutes. The views from there are marvellous. It runs for fewer hours in winter. Argegno's **Locanda Sant'Anna** (☎ 031 82 17 38; [www.locandasantanna.it](http://www.locandasantanna.it); Via Sant'Anna 152; d €100-160; 📞 📺 📶) has a handful of beautiful lamp-lit guest rooms and a rustic restaurant.

In **Lenno**, scenes from *Star Wars: Episode II* and 2006's James Bond remake, *Casino Royale*, were shot at **Villa Balbianello** (☎ 0344 5 61 10; [www.fondoambiente.it](http://www.fondoambiente.it); Via Comoedia 5, Località Balbianello; villa & gardens adult/child €11/6, gardens only adult/child €5/2.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue & Thu-Sun mid-Mar—mid-Nov), a villa built by Cardinal Angelo Durini in 1787 and used for a while by Allied commanders at the tail end of WWII. It is one of the most extraordinary locations on Lake Como, with magnificent gardens tumbling down the sides of the promontory and a curious collector's museum of all sorts of items in the villa itself. If you want to see the villa, you must join a guided tour (generally in Italian) by 4.15pm. Visitors are only allowed to walk the 1km from the Lenno landing stage to the estate on Tuesday and at weekends; other days, you have to take a **taxi boat** (☎ 333 410 38 54; return €6) from Lenno or Sala Comacina (a few kilometres south).

## TREMEZZO

### pop 1300

At the 17th-century **Villa Carlotta** (☎ 0344 4 04 05; [www.villacarlotta.it](http://www.villacarlotta.it); Riva Garibaldi; adult/senior & student/child €8/4/free; 🕒 9am-6pm Easter-Sep, 9am-5pm mid-Mar—Easter & Oct—mid-Nov), the botanical gardens are filled with colour in spring from orange trees knitted into pergolas and from some of Europe's finest rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias. The villa, which is strung with paintings, sculptures (especially by Antonio Canova) and tapestries, takes its name from the Prussian princess who was given the place in 1847 as a wedding present from her mother. The extensive gardens have everything from Japanese camellias to American sequoias.

Tremezzo's **tourist office** (☎ 0344 4 04 93; [infotremezzo@tiscalinet.it](mailto:infotremezzo@tiscalinet.it); Via Statale Regina; 🕒 9am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct) adjoins the boat jetty.

A short stroll south, the 19th-century villa **Hotel Villa Marie** (☎ 0344 4 04 27; [www.hotelvillamarie.com](http://www.hotelvillamarie.com); Via Regina 30, Tremezzo; d €95-140; 📞 📺 📶) has a charming lakeside terrace and spacious, light-filled rooms. The two Liberty-style suites could be part of a museum.

## CADENABBIA & MENAGGIO

Motorists can cross the lake by car ferry in Cadenabbia. You could decide to sleep over for the night at **Alberghetto della Marianna** (☎ 0344 4 30 95; [www.la-marianna.com](http://www.la-marianna.com); Via Regina 57, Cadenabbia di

Griante; s/d €65/95; ☎ Wed-Mon; ☎). They also have a welcoming restaurant, **La Cucina di Marianna** (☎ 0344 4 31 11; menus €30-45, children's menu €12; ☎ Wed-Sun), where you can dine on original set meals whose theme changes daily.

A further 3km north is Menaggio (population 3260). The **tourist office** (☎ 0344 3 29 24; [www.menaggio.com](http://www.menaggio.com); Piazza Garibaldi 3; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat Nov-Mar) has several excellent brochures on walking and biking in the area. Just 100m uphill from Menaggio's ferry wharf, its hostel, **Ostello La Primula** (☎ 0344 3 23 56; [www.lakecomohostel.com](http://www.lakecomohostel.com); Via IV Novembre 106; dm incl breakfast €16; ☎ reception 8-10am & 4pm-midnight mid-Mar—early Nov; ☎), has lake views from rooms housing 35 beds, and meals (including vegetarian options) for €13. You can rent bikes and kayaks (€14.50 per day) or chill on the pebbled terrace.

## LAGO DI PIANO & LAGO DI LUGANO

Menaggio is the jumping-off point for Lago di Piano in the Val Menaggio, a remote valley connecting Lago di Como with Lago di Lugano, which straddles the Italian/Swiss border to the west. Tiny Lago di Piano is protected by the **Riserva Naturale Lago di Piano**. Three marked nature trails, 4km to 5.3km long, encircle the lake, and the **visitors centre** (☎ 0344 7 49 61; [www.riservalagodipiano.it](http://www.riservalagodipiano.it); Via Statale 117, Piano di Porlezza; ☎ 9am-noon Mon, Tue & Sat, 2-4pm Wed May-Oct), on the lake's northern shore, rents mountain bikes (€2.50 per hour), row boats (€7 per hour) and arranges guided visits on foot (€5/8 per person per half/full day).

A few kilometres east of Lago di Piano is Lago di Lugano. The main town on the Italian side is **Porlezza** (population 4470), from where ferries sail to Lugano in Switzerland.

You'll find a couple of camping grounds just east of the reserve, signposted just off the Menaggio—Porlezza—Lugano road.

## ALTO LARIO

North of Menaggio, the road hugging Lago di Como's western shore flattens and widens (in relative terms), affording some spectacular views and an easier drive during which to appreciate them. This northern stretch of the lake is known as the Alto Lario ('upper Lario'; Lario being Lago di Como's alternate name).

An essential stop for water-sports enthusiasts is **Gravedona** (population 2750). Of the town's several hotels, **Hotel Regina** (☎ 0344 8 94 46; [www.reginahotels.it](http://www.reginahotels.it); Via Regina Levante 18; s €65-100, d €100-140; ☎ ☎ ☎) fronts the beach and has a full range of facilities, including a gym and mountain bikes for exploring the surrounding mountains. They have a sunbathing area and a courtesy shower for those leaving late in the day.

Tourist offices around the lake have a list of camping grounds in the area and loads of info about sailing, windsurfing, kite-surfing and waterskiing.

## Eastern Shore

Lago di Como's eastern shore is the least visited, but it shelters some really lovely villages. If driving, skip the motorway, and stick to the lakeside SS36 from **Colico** south to Lecco.

About 3km south of Colico, the **Abbazia di Piona** (☎ 0341 94 03 31; [www.cistercensi.info/piona](http://www.cistercensi.info/piona); ☎ 7am-7pm), a Cistercian abbey, is a pocket of peace. From the lakeside, SS36, follow the narrow road for 2km; the last stretch is cobbled.



## VARENNA

### pop 850

Villa-studded Varenna, 13km south of the Abbazia di Piona, has a web of cobbled streets crowned by a castle.

Varenna's **tourist office** (☎ 0341 83 03 67; [www.varennaitaly.com](http://www.varennaitaly.com); Via del IV Novembre 7; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Sat Oct-Mar) offers information on the lake's entire eastern shore.

The gardens of **Villa Monastero** (☎ 0341 29 54 50; [www.villamonastero.eu](http://www.villamonastero.eu); Via IV Novembre; adult/senior/child 7-13yr/child under 7yr €4/2/1/free; ☎ gardens 9am-6pm daily, house 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat, Sun & holidays Mar-Oct), a former-convent-turned-private-residence in the 17th century, and **Villa Cipressi** (☎ 0341 83 01 13; Via IV Novembre 22; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Oct) can both be visited. Magnolias, camellias and yucca trees are among their floral wonders. To get to both villas from Piazzale Martiri della Libertà, the square next to the boat jetty, follow the narrow **lakeside promenade** around the shore then bear left (inland) up the steps to Piazza San Giorgio, the village square. Both villas are signposted from here. Make the effort to walk (a steep half-hour hike) or drive (3km) up to **Vežio**, where the views from the ruins of **Castello di Vežio** (☎ 348 824 25 04; [www.castellodivezio.it](http://www.castellodivezio.it); admission €4; ☎ 10am-6pm) down over Varenna are vertigo-inducing.

At the blue-shuttered **Albergo del Sole** (☎ 0341 81 52 18; [www.albergodelsole.lc.it](http://www.albergodelsole.lc.it); Piazza San Giorgio 21; s/d €85/120; ☎), the half-dozen whitewashed rooms with polished wood floors are inspired by the lake's steamboats, and there's a good on-site restaurant. At the lakeside **Vecchia Varenna** (☎ 0341 83 07 93; [www.vecchiavarenna.it](http://www.vecchiavarenna.it); Contrada Scoscesa 10, Varenna; meals €40-45; ☎ Tue-Sun Feb-Dec), you can dine on risotto prepared with pears and Taleggio cheese, or choose from mains of lake fish, duck breast or, say, a *tagliata di struzzo con radicchio e noci* (ostrich steak with chicory and nuts).

## LECCO & AROUND

### pop 47,330

Lecco's attractive lakefront leads to a series of piazzas (but few specific sights), and in winter you can **ski** the adjacent mountains. Lecco's **tourist office** (☎ 0341 29 57 20; [www.turismo.provincia.lecco.it](http://www.turismo.provincia.lecco.it); Via Nazario Sauro 6; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm mid-Mar—mid-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat mid-Oct—mid-Mar) has details. A day's lift ticket costs €28.

From Lecco, it's an easy train ride (€2.75, 45 minutes) southeast to Bergamo.

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## LAGO D'ISEO

Less than 100km from both Bergamo and Brescia, Lake Iseo (aka Sebino) is one of the least known of the Lombard lakes. Shut in by soaring mountains, it is a magnificent sight. About halfway along the lake another mountain soars right out of the water to form an island.

With the exception of the south shore and a series of tunnels at the northeast end of the lake, the road closely hugs the water on its circuit around Lake Iseo and is especially dramatic south of Lovere. For information, check out [www.lagodiseo.org](http://www.lagodiseo.org).

Approaching Lago d'Iseo from the southwest brings you to **Sarnico** (population 6230), with its lovely Liberty villas and a smattering of hotels and restaurants. It is placed delightfully on the north bank of the Oglio river, where it meets the lake. For information, head for **Pro Loco Sarnico** (☎ 035 4 20 80;

[www.prolocosarnico.it](http://www.prolocosarnico.it); Via Lantieri 6; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun). You'll find four B&Bs along Via Lantieri, a few minutes' walk from the river. **B&B Borgo dei Lantieri** (☎ 035 91 40 76; [www.borgodeilantieri.it](http://www.borgodeilantieri.it); Via Lantieri 31; s/d €35/65) has a handful of rooms, a lovely plant-filled courtyard and a sundeck. For tasty cheese (like Lombard mountain Bagoss cheese) and meat platters, bruschetta and other snacks, as well as some great local wines, head downstairs to the **Taverna Enoteca Lantieri** (☎ 035 91 44 77; Via Lantieri 53; meals €10-15; ☎ Wed-Mon).

A 12km drive east along the camping ground—dotted south shore of the lake brings you to the main town, **Iseo** (population 9060). It's a pleasant enough spot, with a lovely waterside promenade and a public beach where you can hire canoes and pedaloes. To the south stretches a 2-sq-km protected wetland, the **Riserva Naturale Torbiere del Sebino** ([www.torbiere.it](http://www.torbiere.it)), formed from 18th-century peat beds. In late spring, the pools are smothered in water lilies. Getting in is hit-or-miss, although there is a walking path around it.

Iseo's **tourist office** (☎ 030 98 02 09; Lungolago Marconi 2; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Easter-Sep, 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm Sat Oct-Easter) stocks information about the numerous walking opportunities around the lake and hinterland, and has a list of camping grounds.

**Hotel Milano** (☎ 030 98 04 49; [www.hotelmilano.info](http://www.hotelmilano.info); Lungolago Marconi 4; s/d €50/90; ☎ ☎ ☎) is one of only two hotels in the centre of Iseo. It is right on the lakefront, and prices quoted are for rooms with lake views, giving you a front-row seat for sunset behind the mountains over the lake. It has its own restaurant.

**Monte Isola** ([www.monteisola.com](http://www.monteisola.com)) is Europe's largest lake island, at 4.28 sq km. Only the doctor, police and the priest are allowed to drive on the island, making its little fishing village a peaceful retreat. Walk or bike the 15km-long trail that encircles the island, and pitch up at its simple camping ground, **Campeggio Monte Isola** (☎ 030 982 52 21; Via Croce 144; per person with own tent €10), which is open year-round. Boats converge on the island from several points, including Iseo, but the most frequent and quickest crossings are to Carzano from Sale Marasino, or to Peschiera from Sulzano, both on the east shore (€3.10 return, 10 minutes, every half-hour).

The **Franciacorta** – a patch of rolling countryside synonymous with its renowned wines – spreads south of the lake and east to Brescia. The Iseo tourist office has several brochures on the area; it makes for beautiful back country driving or cycling amid vineyards and villages, with the occasional manor, castle, Romanesque church and some fine restaurants.

Perched on the lake's northwest tip, the port town of **Lovere** (population 5410) is a working harbour with a higgledy-piggledy old centre and a wealth of walking trails in the hills behind it. Its cobbled old town curves around the harbour, shadowed by a leafy lakefront promenade. On the hill at the western end of the harbour is the lake's hostel, **Ostello del Porto** (☎ 035 983 52 90; <http://ostellodelporto.interfree.it>; Via Paglia 70; dm/s/d €17/35/42; ☎ mid-Mar—Oct; ☎ ☎). Housed in a former workers' meeting house, it is part of Lovere's one-time steelworks (accessed by a narrow pedestrian ramp from the road). En suite rooms all have lake views. Short drives out of Lovere to nearby villages like **Bossico** and **Esmate** bring you to marvellous lookout points high above the lake.

North of Lago d'Iseo, the **Valle Camonica** weaves its way to the vast **Parco dell'Adamello** and, further north, to the **Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio**. The area borders Trentino-Alto Adige and takes in the better parts of the Lombard Alps. The two national parks offer many walks and are dotted with Alpine huts where you can rest up.

About halfway between Darfo and Edolo, the **Parco Nazionale delle Incisioni Rupestri** (☎ 0364 4 21

40; [www.arterupestre.it](http://www.arterupestre.it); Località Naquane; adult/child/senior €4/2/free; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9am to 1 hr before sunset Oct-Apr), at Capo di Ponte, is a 30-hectare open-air museum containing a representative array of rock engravings going as far back as the Bronze Age. Perched high on a rocky ledge over the Oglio river stands a grand Romanesque church, the 11th- to 12th-century **Pieve di San Siro** (☎ 3-6pm Sat-Mon).

The area north of Edolo offers some reasonable winter **skiing**, particularly near Ponte di Legno, at the northern end of the valley, and the nearby Passo del Tonale. Brescia's tourist office ([Click here](#)) stocks plenty of walking, camping and mountain-hut information.

In the valley there are several tourist offices, including the helpful **Pro Loco** (☎ 0364 4 20 80; [www.proloco.capo-di-ponte.bs.it](http://www.proloco.capo-di-ponte.bs.it); Via Briscioli 42; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-4.30pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun, Mon & holidays) at Capo di Ponte.

## Getting There & Around

Frequent **SAB** (☎ 035 28 90 00; [www.sab-autoservizi.it](http://www.sab-autoservizi.it), in Italian) buses trundle between Sarnico and Bergamo (€2.80, 50 minutes). Trains link Iseo train station with Brescia (€2.85, 30 minutes, hourly), where you can connect to Bergamo.

**Navigazione sul Lago d'Iseo** (☎ 035 97 14 83; [www.navigazione lagoiseo.it](http://www.navigazione lagoiseo.it)) operates up to eight ferries daily between (south to north) Sarnico, Iseo, Monte Isola, Lovere and Pisogne (and some other smaller stops). Single fares range from €1.90 to €5.75. In winter there are substantially fewer sailings.

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## LAGO DI GARDA

A playground for Italians of all ages, Lago di Garda encompasses an immense 370 sq km. In the southwest corner, **Desenzano del Garda** is known as the *porta del lago* (gateway to the lake), with good transport connections around the lake and beyond. In the centre of the southern shore, on a sliverlike peninsula, is the impossibly quaint village of **Sirmione**. If you have kids to entertain, the lake's southeast corner is home to two amusement parks.

Particularly as you head north, Lago di Garda's Ora (southerly) and Peler (northerly) winds make it a windsurfer's haven. Once you've hit flower-filled **Gardone Riviera**, the lake rapidly narrows as the altitude climbs. Across from Gardone on the eastern shore, a cable car glides from the windsurfers' hang-out of **Malcesine** to **Monte Baldo** (2200m), where there's wintertime skiing and year-round mountain biking. By the time you reach the hiking haven **Riva del Garda**, at the northern tip, craggy mountains tower over the lake, lending it a fjordlike air.

Garda is the most (over)developed of the lakes and, despite a plethora of accommodation, booking ahead is advised.

### GETTING THERE & AROUND

Buses run by **APT** (☎ 045 805 79 11; [www.aptv.it](http://www.aptv.it)) connect Desenzano del Garda train station with Riva del Garda (two hours, up to six daily) along the western shore. Peschiera del Garda train station (10km southeast of Sirmione) is on the Riva del Garda—Malcesine—Garda—Verona APTV bus route, with hourly buses to both Riva (€3.80, one hour 40 minutes) and Verona (€2.80, 30 minutes). Buses also run to/from Mantua (1¼ hours, up to eight daily) from Peschiera del Garda train station. The Riva del Garda—Milan (3¾ hours, three daily) bus route operated by **Società Italiana Autoservizi** (SIA; ☎ 030

377 42 37; [www.sia-autoservizi.it](http://www.sia-autoservizi.it), in Italian) also connects the western shore with Brescia. **Trentino Trasporti** (☎ 0461 821 000; [www.ttesercizio.it](http://www.ttesercizio.it), in Italian) runs hourly buses between Riva del Garda and Arco (20 minutes), Rovereto (45 minutes) and Trento (1¾ hours).

The two train stations serving the lake, Desenzano del Garda and Peschiera del Garda, are on the Milan—Venice train line. Most trains in either direction stop at one or the other.

**Navigazione sul Lago di Garda** (☎ 800 551801; [www.navigazionealaghi.it](http://www.navigazionealaghi.it), in Italian; Piazza Matteotti 2, Desenzano del Garda) operates numerous passenger ferries year-round. Motorists can cross the lake using the car ferry that yo-yos between Toscolano-Maderno (on the western shore) and Torri del Benaco (on the eastern shore), or seasonally between Limone (11km south of Riva del Garda on the western shore) and Malcesine (15km south of Riva on the eastern side). One-way tickets (including change of ferry where necessary) can cost up to €11.30/6.50 (adult/child), eg from Peschiera to Riva del Garda. A one-day ticket allowing unlimited travel costs €25.80/13.40 (adult/child).

## Desenzano del Garda

### pop 26,610

The lake's main transport hub, Desenzano del Garda, is more residential than its lakeside counterparts, and many tourists pass straight through with barely a backward glance. But while Desenzano is not as quaint as some other spots, it's also not as touristy and buzzes with activity year-round. Hidden amid its urban sprawl is an attractive old port and historic centre. You can get information on the town here from the **tourist office** (☎ 030 374 99 90; Via Porto Vecchio 34; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm Sat).

Right on the lakefront by Desenzano's main beach, **Hotel Europa** (☎ 030 914 23 33; [www.desenzano.com](http://www.desenzano.com); Lungolago Battisti 71; s/d €62/104; ☎ ☎) is a breezy modern place with a good restaurant.

Desenzano is also a hub for nightlife in high summer, with bars and discos scattered around town.

## Sirmione

### pop 7830

Situated 9km northeast of Desenzano, quaint Sirmione sits on an islet at the end of a slender peninsula on Garda's southern shore. Even the tourists who pour into the village in their thousands don't detract from the village's charm or its wraparound lake views. At the gateway to the islet, its square-cut **castle** (Castello Scaligero; ☎ 030 91 64 68; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) was built by Verona's ruling family, the Scaligeri, in 1250. There's not a lot inside, but the views from the tower are spectacular.

The **tourist office** (☎ 030 91 61 14; Viale Marconi 6; ☎ 9am-9pm Easter-Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat Nov-Easter) adjoins a bank and the bus station. Motorised vehicles are banned beyond this point, except for those with a hotel booking on the islet. (Driving even the smallest car along the miniature, pedestrian-clogged main street isn't fun, anyway.)

From the **jetty** near the castle, all sorts of vessels will make any manner of trip around the lake – at a price – and an array of water activities can be arranged.

North of the main cluster of shops and restaurants are the open-air and indoor pools of the **Terme di Sirmione** (☎ 030 990 49 22; [www.termedisirmione.com](http://www.termedisirmione.com); Piazza Virgilio 1; admission Mon-Fri for up to 5hr €29, all-day passes from €36; ☎ 2-10pm Mon, 10am-10pm Tue-Sun, to midnight Thur). The source of

the lake's hot springs, offshore from Sirmione, were discovered in the late 1800s, and the pools are a natural 37°C. The pools are accessible for wheelchair-users; massage and other treatments are also available. You must make a reservation. Night-time admission (4pm to midnight) is €39 and includes a cocktail.

At the northern tip of the peninsula is the maze of Roman ruins known as **Grotte di Catullo** (☎ 030 91 61 57; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 5pm Sun Mar-Sep, 8.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Feb). In fact it's not a cave as the name suggests but was called this by explorers who saw the ruins overgrown with foliage on top and mistook them for grottoes. It's actually the largest domestic Roman villa uncovered in northern Italy, dating to the late 1st century BC.

## SLEEPING & EATING

An inordinate number of hotels are crammed into Sirmione, many of which close from the end of October to March. Four camping grounds lie near the town, and the tourist office can advise on others around the lake.

Pizzerias, gelaterie and restaurants crowd around Piazza Carducci and along the main street; you'll also find atmospheric spots in the side streets leading to the lakefront on both sides of the peninsula.

**Camping Sirmione** (☎ 030 91 90 45; [www.camping-sirmione.com](http://www.camping-sirmione.com); Via Sirmioncino 9, Colombane; camping 2 people, car & tent €36; 🕒 late Mar-early Oct; 📄 📱) This attractive, well-kept site at the base of the peninsula (2.5km from the castle) has smart, modern bungalows (€113 for up to four people) for those without tents and a restaurant, shop and waterskiing school.

**our pick Hotel Marconi** (☎ 030 91 60 07; [www.hotelmarconi.info](http://www.hotelmarconi.info); Via Vittorio Emanuele II 51; s €40-65, d €65-110; 📄 📱) Even if you're someone who takes nothing more than coffee for breakfast, the incredible spread of cakes, tarts and pies, made by hand by the family that runs this elegant hotel, is a feast for the eyes. Rooms are streamlined and spotless, and you can lounge beneath blue-and-white-striped umbrellas on a timber sundeck extending over the lake.

**Hotel Catullo** (☎ 030 990 58 11; [www.hotelcatullo.it](http://www.hotelcatullo.it); Piazza Flaminia 7; d up to €140; 📄) One of Sirmione's oldest hotels, dating to 1888, Catullo (named for the Roman poet who lived in the area) occupies a prime lakeside location and has a lovely garden and smart, contemporary rooms. Half- and full board are available, and lake-view rooms with a more old-world decorative finish cost just €10 extra.

**Antica Trattoria La Speranzina** (☎ 030 990 62 92; Via Dante 16; meals €60-65; 🕒 Tue-Sun) This authentic little trattoria is tucked well away from the waterfront circus: dine in peace on a quiet lakeside terrace beneath the olive trees.

## Lago di Garda Amusement Parks

The lake's lower eastern shore is home to larger-than-life dinosaurs, pirate ships, roller coasters and a dolphinarium at the kid-oriented **Gardaland** (☎ 045 644 97 77; [www.gardaland.it](http://www.gardaland.it); adult/child €35/29; 🕒 9am-11pm mid-Jun—mid-Sep, 10am-6pm Apr—mid-Jun & last 2 wks of Sep, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Oct, late Dec, and early Jan).

To its north, **CanevaWorld** (☎ 045 696 99 00; [www.canevaworld.it](http://www.canevaworld.it); Via Fossalta 1) has two theme parks. **Aquaparadise** (adult/child €23/18; 🕒 10am-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm mid-May—Jun & Sep) has lots of exhilarating water slides, while **Movieland** (adult/child €23/18; 🕒 10am-7pm Sun-Fri, to 11pm Sat Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm daily Easter-Jun & Sep, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Oct) has stunt-packed action shows. Exact opening times may vary slightly throughout the year, so check the website for details. You can take on an evening **medieval show** (dinner & show adult/child €28/20; 🕒 Apr-Sep) and banquet (of sorts).

Free buses shuttle visitors the 2km to both parks to/from the Peschiera del Garda train station.

## Gardone Riviera & Around

### pop 2710

Heading north from Desenzano del Garda on Garda's western shore brings you to **Salò** (population 10,420), a pretty village on the gulf which gave its name to Mussolini's puppet republic in 1943, after the dictator was rescued from the south by the Nazis.

Further north, at the head of a small inlet, is Gardone Riviera, once one of the lake's most elegant holiday spots. Mountains rise up around the village, whose gardens are filled with palms, magnolias, jasmine blossoms and age-old cedar and cypress trees. The **tourist office** (☎ 0365 374 87 36; Corso della Repubblica 8; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2.15-6pm Mon-Sat) stocks a wealth of information on lake activities and accommodation.

Its heyday is recalled at the fabulous estate **Il Vittoriale degli Italiani** (☎ 0365 29 65 11; [www.vittoriale.it](http://www.vittoriale.it); Piazza Vittoriale; adult/child Il Vittoriale grounds €7/5, Il Vittoriale & Museo della Guerra €12/8, Il Vittoriale, Museo della Guerra & Casa di d'Annunzio €16/12; 🕒 Casa di D'Annunzio 9.30-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Oct-Mar, closed Mon, Museo della Guerra 9.30-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Oct-Mar, closed Wed, grounds 8.30am-8pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Mar). Italy's controversial poet and ultranationalist, Gabriele d'Annunzio (1863–1938) retreated here in 1922 because, he claimed, he wanted to escape the world that made him ill. Visits to d'Annunzio's house are by guided 25-minute tour only (in Italian, every 10 minutes). The **Museo della Guerra** (War Museum) records d'Annunzio's WWI antics – one of his most triumphant and more bizarre feats was to capture a battleship from the fledgling Yugoslavia shortly after WWI, when Italy's territorial claims had been partly frustrated in postwar peace talks. In July and August, classical concerts, ballets, plays and operas are staged in the **open-air theatre** (☎ 0365 29 65 19) in the villa's lush grounds.

More plant life can be admired at **Giardino Botanico Fondazione André Heller** (☎ 336 41 08 77; [www.hellergarden.com](http://www.hellergarden.com); Via Roma 2; adult/child €9/5; 🕒 9am-7pm Mar-Oct). The botanic gardens were laid out in 1900 and redesigned in the late 1990s by multimedia artist André Heller. Sculptures by Keith Haring and Roy Lichtenstein sit among some 8000 plant species.

**Locanda Agli Angeli** (☎ 0365 2 09 91; [www.agliangeli.com](http://www.agliangeli.com); Via Dosso 7; s €70, d €90-150; 🍷), a rambling house no more than a five-minute stroll from Il Vittoriale, has a variety of rooms, some with exposed-timber ceilings and air-con.

About 12km north of Gardone, just past the car ferry port at Toscolano-Maderno, is **Gargnano** (population 3070), a charming harbour where Mussolini based himself during the short life of his Repubblica Sociale Italiana (or Repubblica di Salò). The lake's most prized sailing regatta, the **Centomiglia**, starts near here each September.

## Malcesine

### pop 3640

On the lake's eastern shore, the windsurfing centre of Malcesine has a pretty, cobbled village centre crowned by the **Castello e Museo Scaligero** (☎ 045 740 08 37; Via Castello; adult/child €5/1; 🕒 9.30am-7pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Sat, Sun & holidays Nov-Mar). Inside there are a couple of natural-history museums and a collection of books by Goethe, who immortalised the castle. The top of the tower has fabulous views.

More eagle-eye views of the lake unfold during the 10-minute ride on the **Funivia Malcesine—Monte**

**Baldo** (☎ 045 740 02 06; [www.funiviedelbaldo.it](http://www.funiviedelbaldo.it); adult return €17, ski pass adult/child €18/14; 🕒 8am-6.45pm mid-Mar—Nov, 8am-4.45pm Dec-Feb), a cable car with rotating glass cabins. It departs every 30 minutes. Pick up trail information and maps from Malcesine's **tourist office** (☎ 045 740 00 44; [www.malcesinepiu.it](http://www.malcesinepiu.it); Via Capitanato 6; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat 9.30am-12.30pm Sun). In winter you can ski on Monte Baldo's slopes.

Olives harvested around Malcesine are milled into extra-virgin olive oil by the **Consorzio Olivicoltori di Malcesine** (☎ 045 740 12 86; [www.oliomalcesine.com](http://www.oliomalcesine.com); Via Navene).

The peach-coloured **Albergo Aurora** (☎ 045 740 01 14; [www.aurora-malcesine.com](http://www.aurora-malcesine.com); Piazza Matteotti 10; d €50; 🍷) is a one-star family-run inn in the village heart. Rooms are neat, with parquet floors. For €7 per person extra, throw in breakfast. Tasty home cooking makes half-board an astonishing value at €43 per person.

## Nago-Torbole

### pop 2650

Goethe described the *comune* of Nago-Torbole, 15km north of Malcesine, as 'a wonder of nature, an enchanting sight', and its little township of Torbole still retains much of its original fishing-village charm.

Torbole's **tourist office** (☎ 0464 50 51 77; [www.gardatrentino.it](http://www.gardatrentino.it); Via Lungolago Verona 19; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat Apr, Oct & Nov) has a list of windsurfing schools, distributes free mountain-bike and walking maps, and has accommodation information.

Picturesque strolls aside, most people come here to ride the wind. Throughout the summer, Torbole hosts various windsurfing and sailing competitions.

Beginners and pros alike can hook up with the **Marco Segnana Surf Center** (☎ 0464 50 59 63; [www.surfsegnana.it](http://www.surfsegnana.it); Foci del Sarca), which has bases at lakeside Lido di Torbole in Torbole and on Porfina beach in Riva del Garda. Three-hour lessons for beginners/advanced surfers are €59/68, excluding board hire (€18/42 per hour/day). It also rents catamarans (€39/89 per hour/half-day), kayaks and bikes.

One of the best-value lodging options is **Residence Garnì Torbole** (☎ 0464 50 52 16; [www.hoteltorbole.it](http://www.hoteltorbole.it); Via Lungolago Verona 47; d €84-100; 🍷), with spacious rooms as well as apartments. Most have balconies with lake views.

The most atmospheric place to eat is **Ristorante Al Forte Alto** (☎ 0464 50 55 66; Via Castel Pedede 16, Nago; 5 courses €30; 🕒 dinner daily, lunch Sat & Sun), serving top-notch typical Trentino cuisine in an 1860s-era former defensive fort just near Torbole's centre.

## Riva del Garda

### pop 15,610

Wedged between the towering rock face and the lake's narrow northern rim, Riva del Garda lies across the border from Lombardy in the Alpine region of Trentino-Alto Adige.

Like its neighbours Malcesine and Torbole, Riva is a well-known windsurfing spot and has several schools that also hire out equipment. The main **tourist office** (☎ 0464 55 44 44; [www.gardatrentino.it](http://www.gardatrentino.it); Largo Medaglie d'Oro; 🕒 9am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Apr) and its **kiosk** (☎ 0464 55 07 76; Lungolago d'Annunzio 4c; 🕒 10am- 5.30pm Fri-Wed Apr-Oct), which overlooks Piazza Catena where the boats dock, have a list. They can also advise on everything from climbing and paragliding to wine-tasting

and flea markets.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The main reason to visit the local-history exhibits at the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0464 57 38 69; Piazza Cesare Battisti 3; adult/child €2/1.50; 🕒 10.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Nov) is the waterfront castle, Rocca di Riva, dating from 1124, in which it's housed. You can scale the adjoining 34m-tall **Torre Apponale** (adult/child €1/free) for a stunning panorama of the lake and mountains. The 13th-century square tower is topped by an angel-shaped weather vane.

About 3km north of town – a pleasant 45-minute stroll – is **Cascata del Varone** (☎ 0464 52 14 21; [www.cascata-varone.com](http://www.cascata-varone.com); admission €5; 🕒 9am-7pm May-Aug, to 6pm Apr & Sep, to 5pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Sun & holidays Nov). The cascading 100m waterfall is fed by the Lago di Tenno, a tiny lake northwest of Lago di Garda.

Riva makes a natural starting point for walks and bike rides, including trails around **Monte Rocchetta** (1575m), which looms over the northern end of the lake. Immediately south of the town, the shore's long shingle beach is framed by a wide green park.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Campeggio Bavaria** (☎ 0464 55 25 24; [www.bavarianet.it](http://www.bavarianet.it); Viale Rovereto 100; camping 2 people, car & tent €34; 📍) One of four camping grounds dotting Riva's lakeside, this one is part of the Marco Segnana Surf Center (see opposite) and is a meeting place for windsurfers and mountain bikers.

**Ostello Benacus** (☎ 0464 55 49 11; [www.ostelloriva.com](http://www.ostelloriva.com); Piazza Cavour 10; dm/d €16/40; 🕒 reception 7-9am & 3-11pm Apr-Oct; 📍 📶) Riva's HI hostel has a central location just off the main town square, a few moments' stroll from the waterfront, with its own parking and meals for €10. Reception hours are hit-and-miss, so it's a good idea to let them know in advance that you're coming or you may be in for a wait.

**Hotel Giardino Verdi** (☎ 0464 55 25 16; [www.giardinoverdi.com](http://www.giardinoverdi.com); Piazza Giardino Verdi 4; s/d €66/122; 📍 📶 📺 🛁) With balconies overlooking a quiet square, the bright, white rooms in this three-star hotel are small (and bathrooms tiny), but they're streamlined and contemporary. The terrace out front is a coveted spot for regional cuisine; inside there's a chic, damask-draped dining room (meals €35 to €40). They also cater well to children.

**Hotel Sole** (☎ 0464 55 26 86; [www.hotelsole.net](http://www.hotelsole.net); Piazza 3 Novembre 35; d €106-160; 🕒 Mar-Oct; 📍 📶 📺) This grand, golden-hued hotel, once patronised by Nietzsche, is a landmark on Riva's lakefront. Many of its somewhat faded but perfectly pleasant rooms have balconies.

Riva has dozens of takeaway places and delicatessens for picnic supplies, in addition to lakeside cafes, pastry shops and gelaterie galore.

## North of Riva del Garda

From the medieval village of **Arco** (population 16,160), 5km north of Riva, a 20-minute stroll through olive groves to **Castello di Arco** (☎ 0464 51 01 56; adult/senior & child under 18yr €2/1.50; 🕒 10am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct, Nov, Feb & Mar, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Dec & Jan) limbers up the muscles for the more strenuous terrain awaiting walkers a few kilometres north.

Anyone looking to experience this outdoor-lover's paradise should hook up with **Friends of Arco** (☎ 0464 53 28 28; [www.friendsofarco.it](http://www.friendsofarco.it); Via Segantini 64, Arco; 🕒 5-10pm Mon-Fri, by appointment Sat & Sun, phone service from 9am), a mountain-guide service offering a huge range of courses and excursions,



from gentle day trips taking in the local botany to multiday adventure courses, including canyoning, trekking, climbing and ski mountaineering. The Friends can also help you book accommodation. Arco's **tourist office** (☎ 0464 53 22 55; Viale delle Palme 1; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat Oct-Apr) can also help.

**Hotel L'Olivo** (☎ 0464 51 64 30; [www.hotelolivo.it](http://www.hotelolivo.it); Via Roma 2; s/d €75/100; 📍 🚗 🚶) is an appealing three-star option with comfortable rooms in Arco's town centre. It has a small spa, which will come in handy after a vigorous day of mountain biking. Prices are valid for stays of three days or more, otherwise you may find yourself paying more in July and August.

[Return to beginning of chapter](#)



# Trentino-Alto Adige

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## TRENTINO

ROVERETO

BRENTA DOLOMITES

VAL DI NON, VAL DI SOLE & VAL DI RABBI

VAL DI Fiemme

PALE DI SAN MARTINO

VAL DI FASSA

GRUPPO DEL SELLA

## ALTO ADIGE

MERANO

PARCO NAZIONALE DELLO STELVIO

VAL GARDENA

ALPE DI SIUSI & PARCO NATURALE SCILIAR-CATINACCIO

VAL BADIA & ALPE DI FANES

VAL PUSTERIA

THE SESTO DOLOMITES

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The blurred lines of Europe's porous borders have never been greyer than they are in Italy's extreme north. Here in the two semi-autonomous provinces of Trentino and Alto Adige, Tyrolean traditions are laced with a whiff of the Mediterranean in one of the continent's most improbable cultural juxtapositions. Imagine Austro-German efficiency blended with Italian panache, the rationalism of Kant married with the spontaneous passion of the Renaissance. Baffled? You will be.

Until 1919 Trentino-Alto Adige was part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Embedded in the cultural DNA, Austro-German influences are ubiquitous, permeating everything from the food (sausages and strudel), the architecture (gabled roofs) and the collective personality (fewer hand gesticulations and more head nodding).

The region is dominated by the Dolomites and protected by seven natural parks, including northern Italy's largest, Stelvio. While not the Alps' tallest mountains, these red-hued pinnacles are their most spectacular and they've produced some of the world's greatest climbers, including Tyrolean legend Reinhold Messner.

Both regions are crisscrossed by valleys and, though few are remote these days, most retain esoteric cultural quirks, be they Austrian, Italian or – even more confusing – Ladin.

Southerly Trentino is the most Italian enclave. Heading north along the Adige river, *alberghi* advertising *camere* (rooms) are gradually replaced by *Gasthofs* advertising *Zimmer* until, by the time you reach Merano in the South Tyrol, you're culturally closer to Vienna than Venice.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Mix snow sports with celebrity-spotting in the ritzy ski village of **Madonna di Campiglio**
- Get a head for heights on a vertiginous *via ferrata* in the brooding **Brenta Dolomites**
- Round off your fettuccine with apple strudel in the harmonious yet culturally diverse city of **Trento**
- Hike up historic 2457m Rifugio Bolzano in the **Parco Naturale Sciliar-Catinaccio**
- Contemplate man's eternal relationship with the mountains at Bolzano's **Messner Mountain Museum**
- Soothe your sore hiking feet at the recently renovated Terme in balmy **Merano**



POPULATION: 1 million

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AREA: 13,613 sq km

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## Information

Tourist offices in Trentino's capital, Trento, and Alto Adige's capital, Bolzano, each have province-wide information, including updated lists of *rifugi* (mountain huts) and B&B farmhouses.

## Activities

### SKIING IN THE DOLOMITES

Ski resorts abound in the areas encompassing the Dolomite peaks, including fashionable Cortina d'Ampezzo, the Brenta Dolomites and the Val di Fassa, as well as the Val Gardena's championship runs.

Good accommodation and ski facilities are plentiful, offering access to downhill and cross-country

skiing, as well as *sci alpinismo*, which combines skiing and mountaineering skills on longer excursions. Snowboarding and most other winter sports are also equally well catered for.

High season runs from mid-December to early January and then February to mid-March.

On the eastern side of the region, the **Dolomiti Superski** ([www.dolomitisuperski.com](http://www.dolomitisuperski.com)) pass allows access to 464 lifts and some 1220km of ski runs. It costs €102 for a three-day pass and €180 for a six-day pass (in high season €128 and €225 respectively). Alternatively, the **Super Skirama** ([www.funiviecampiglio.it](http://www.funiviecampiglio.it)) pass covers the western side, known as the Brenta Dolomites, including Madonna di Campiglio and Andalo-Fai della Paganella. Super Skirama passes start at €100 and €177 for three or six days (in high season €109 and €188). Cheaper passes covering individual resorts and areas are available for localised skiing, but these two passes provide the best flexibility.

Ski schools at every resort offer boarding lessons and classic downhill-skiing lessons. A six-day course (three hours of group tuition per day) costs around €130, and private lessons average around €40 per hour.

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## OUR TOP FIVE SKI EXPERIENCES IN TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE

- **Sella Ronda – Val di Fassa**
- **Marcialonga cross-country skiing race – Val di Fassa**
- **Plan de Corones – Val Pusteria**
- **Passo della Stelvio – Parco Nazionale del Stelvio**
- **Madonna di Campiglio – Brenta Dolomites**

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### WALKING IN THE DOLOMITES

The fact that some of the world's greatest walkers and mountaineers have come from the Dolomites (including the incomparable Reinhold Messner; see box [Click here](#)) is no accident; the region's hiking terrain is superb.

Numbered trails are generally well marked in the area with red-and-white bands painted on trees and rocks along the route, or inside different coloured triangles for the *alte vie* (high routes). Italians don't really go in for back-country camping; instead a comprehensive network of *rifugi* offers youth hostel—style lodging and meals located within approximately a day's easy walk from each other.

Excellent maps with clearly marked trails are available in most bookshops and newsagents. Touring Club Italiano's 1:200,000 *Trento-Alto Adige* gives a good overview of the area. For greater detail use the various 1:25,000 scale maps produced by Kompass and Tabacco.

Those wanting to undertake guided walks or tackle more difficult trails that combine mountaineering skills with walking (with or without a guide) can seek information at Guide Alpine offices in the region (listed under the relevant town sections).

The walking season extends from the end of June to the end of September (sometimes into October, depending on the weather). Note that most mountain huts close from mid-September.

The best areas for walking in the Dolomites:

**Alpe di Siusi, Sciliar and Catinaccio group** All accessible from Siusi, Castelrotto and surrounding

villages, as well as the Val Gardena.

**Brenta Dolomites** Accessible from the Altipiano della Paganella or Madonna di Campiglio.

**Cortina** This area straddles Alto Adige and the Veneto, incorporating the Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies and, to the south, Monte Pelmo, Monte Civetta and the Val di Zoldo area.

**Gruppo del Sella** Accessible from the Val Gardena, Val Badia, Pieve di Livinallongo and the Val di Fassa.

**Pale di San Martino** Accessible from San Martino di Castrozza and Fiera di Primiero.

**Sesto Dolomites** North of Cortina towards Austria, accessible from San Candido or Sesto in Val Pusteria.

**Val di Genova and Adamello group** Both accessible from Madonna di Campiglio (the Brenta and Adamello groups form the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta).

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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

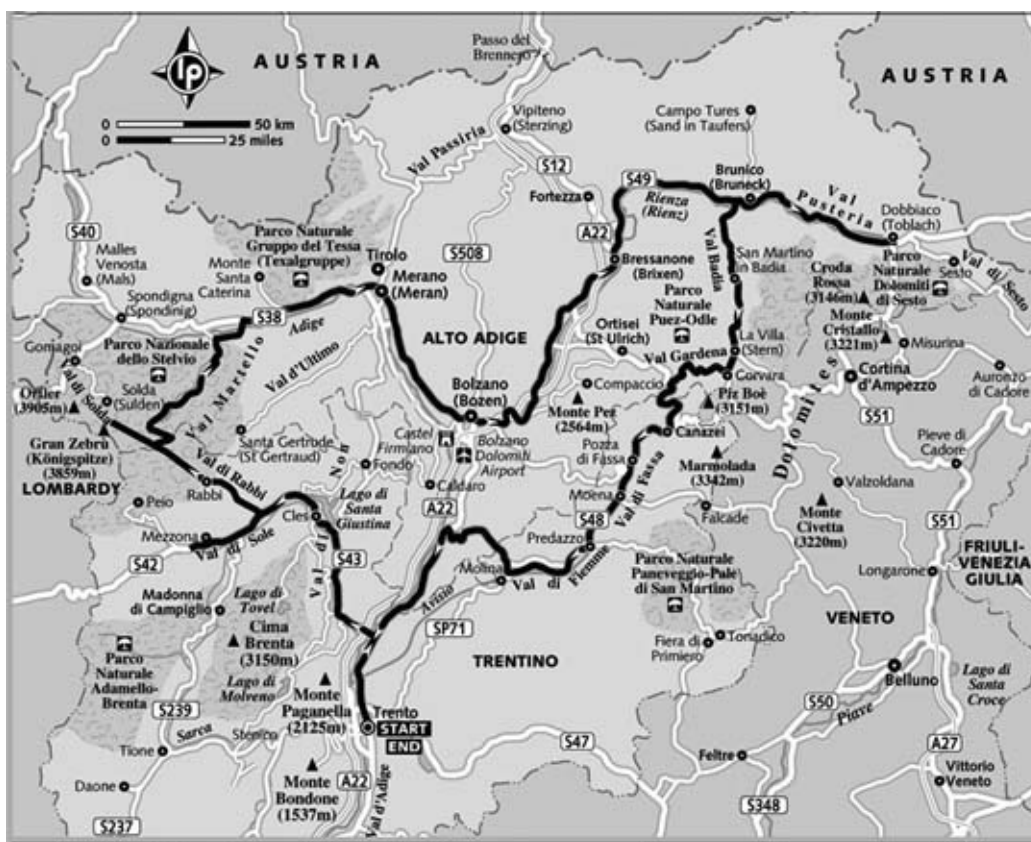
### INTO THE VALLEYS    **One Week / Trento**

In Trentino-Alto Adige different valleys don't just demarcate different drainage basins; they support radically different cultures, a fact manifested not only in the pasta recipes or the way of concocting cheese, but in the crafts, the local customs and, more often than not, the language.

To understand the nuances of northern Italian valley politics, catch a train in **Trento** in the vine-flecked **Val d'Adige** and head north into the Italian-speaking **Val di Non**, famous for its apple orchards and storybook castles. Rail and road tunnels connect to the adjacent **Val di Sole**, where outdoor activities such as rafting and cycling are complemented by access to numerous winter ski areas. A side valley of the Sole, the **Val di Rabbi** harbours a much-lauded spa and provides foot access to the magnificent Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio. Hikers can mark a path over to the German-speaking **Val Martello**, renowned for its strawberries, or ply further west to the unhurried **Val di Solda**, a low-key ski resort that also harbours one in a quintet of resplendent mountain museums conceived by Tyrolean climbing legend Reinhold Messner.

Skimming Merano and Bolzano, head east next to the verdant **Val Pusteria**, where the turreted Sesto Dolomites lure hikers with challenging *vie ferrate* trails and historians with outdoor WWI memorabilia. **Val Badia** is the most mysterious and spiritual of the region's five Ladin-speaking valleys and allows easy access to the Alta Via 1 hiking trail (summer) and Sella Ronda ski circuit (winter). If you head anticlockwise on the Ronda circuit you'll drop serendipitously into the **Val Gardena**, celebrated for its woodcarvers and esoteric Ladin museum, and the similarly ethereal **Val di Fassa**, a white-hot cross-country skiing centre and host to the annual Marcialonga race. Revert briefly to *Guten Morgens* in the German-speaking **Val de Fiemme**, an erstwhile quasi-republic that still fosters a strong community spirit, before tracking back to Italian-speaking Trento.

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There are four Alte Vie through the Dolomites, each taking up to two weeks. Routes link existing trails and incorporate new trails, which make difficult sections easier to traverse.

Each route links a chain of *rifugi*, and you can opt to only walk certain sections.

**Alta Via No 1** Crosses the Dolomites from north to south, from Lago di Braies to Belluno.

**Alta Via No 2** Extends from Bressanone to Feltre and is known as the ‘High Route of Legends’ because it passes through Odle, the mythical kingdom of ancient Ladin fairytales.

**Alta Via No 3** Links Villabassa and Longarone.

**Alta Via No 4** Goes from San Candido to Pieve di Cadore.

The Alte Vie are marked by numbers inside triangles – blue for No 1, red for No 2 and orange-brown for No 3; No 4 is marked by numbers on red-and-white bands. Booklets with the routes in detail are available at most tourist offices in the region.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

Summer pastimes include rafting, mountain biking, hang-gliding and rock climbing. Trentino alone has some 400km of paved cycling roads away from the traffic, as well as more than 4500km of mountain bike trails. Tourist offices keep updated details of trails, bike-rental outlets and hang-gliding schools.

## Getting There & Around

Bolzano airport [Click here](#) is only served by a couple of European flights. Otherwise the nearest airports are Verona, Bergamo and Innsbruck (Austria), from where trains run south to Bolzano.

Public transport is managed by two main companies: **Trentino Trasporti** (☎ 0461 82 10 00; [www.ttspa.it](http://www.ttspa.it), in Italian) in Trentino and **Servizi Autobus Dolomiti** (SAD; ☎ 0471 45 01 11; [www.sad.it](http://www.sad.it)) in Alto Adige. The main towns and many ski resorts can be reached directly from major Italian cities, including Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan and Genoa.

Most of the major urban centres and some of the smaller valleys are on the national rail network:

# TRENTINO

## TRENTO

**pop 110,200 / elev 194m**

In a country bedizened with more beauty than a Caravaggio canvas, understated Trento often gets rudely ignored. Set in a wide glacial valley guarded by the crenellated peaks of the Brenta Dolomites, this left-leaning but proudly Catholic regional capital has long stood at an important geographical and historical crossroads. During the tumultuous years of the Counter-Reformation (1548–63), the powerful Council of Trent convened here, dishing out condemnations to uppity Protestants and reaffirming the power of the Catholic Church.

These days Trento is more down-to-earth and less preachy. Bike tyres glide around cobbled piazzas, cappuccino-quaffing students cavort next to Renaissance fountains, and a dozen historical eras intermingle seamlessly amid a grab bag of stone castles, shady porticos and the city's signature medieval frescoes.

Set amid a patchwork of vineyards and apple orchards, Trento impresses visitors consistently with its spotless streets that fan out like bicycle spokes from its atmospheric main square. While not as Teutonic as Bolzano or Merano, Trentino has notable German influences at play (taste the apple strudel) and most residents are bilingual, if not trilingual.

Trento's proximity to the Brenta Dolomites has cemented its popularity as an outdoor-activity centre and explains why most of its willowy-framed undergraduates are able to gorge nightly on gelati and never get fat. When they're not riding their city bikes, sporty Trentinos like to take to the hills on their off-roaders, skis, snowboards or two feet.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**Libreria Ancora** (Via Santa Croce 35) Stocks quality walking maps.

**Libreria Ubik** (Corso III Novembre 10) Has English-language novels.

**Libreria Viaggeria** (Via Vigilio 20) Excellent travel bookshop.

### EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 0461 89 95 11; Piazza della Mostra 3)

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Wireless Internet Café Olimpia** (☎ 0461 98 24 45; Via Belenzani 33/1; per hr €5; 📧 7am-9pm Mon & Tue, to midnight Wed-Sat)

### LEFT LUGGAGE

**Main train station** (per hr €1; ☎ 8.30am-12.15pm & 1.30-5.30pm)

## MEDICAL SERVICES

**Guardia Medica** (☎ 0461 91 58 09) Emergency doctor.

**Hospital** (☎ 0461 90 31 11; Largo Medaglie d'Oro 9) Southeast of the centre.

## POST

**Post office** (Piazza Vittoria; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 0461 21 60 00; [www.ap.trento.it](http://www.ap.trento.it); Via Mancini 2; ☎ 9am-7pm) Information on the city and surrounds.

**Trentino Agritur** (☎ 0461 23 53 23; Via Aconcio 13; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Info point for *agriturismi* (farm-stay accommodation), places to eat and activities in the Trentino countryside.

## Sights

You could linger for days in Trento just counting frescoes (it's not nicknamed 'the Painted City' for nothing) but, in many ways, the best attractions are visceral – the romantic piazzas, the purr of conversation outside a bar, the subtle Austro-Italian interchange. Sit down, grab a gelato and become an observer; it's a highly satisfying experience.

Trento's centrepiece is the busy yet intimate Piazza del Duomo, dominated by its stalwart Romanesque **cathedral** (☎ 6.40am-12.15pm & 2.30-8pm). Once host to the Council of Trent, the dimly lit church displays fragments of medieval frescoes inside its transepts. Two colonnaded staircases flank its nave, and the foundations of an early Romanesque-Gothic church form part of an archaeological area that also has some extraordinary Roman remains dating from prior to the first church. The town's bishops are buried in the adjacent mausoleum.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

To get the most out of your visit to Trento, the **Trento Card** (per 24/48hr €10/15) includes free access to city museums, city tours, bicycle use, unlimited public transport, a ride on the Funivia Trento-Sardagna, guided tours and wine tastings, plus various other discounts. Cards are sold at the tourist office and some of the participating museums.

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On the opposite side of the square is the former bishop's residence of **Palazzo Pretorio**, dating from the 11th century. Here, illuminated manuscripts, paintings depicting the Council of Trent and liturgical vestments form part of the outstanding collection in the **Museo Diocesano** (☎ 0461 23 44 19; Piazza del Duomo 18; adult/child €4/1; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Wed-Mon). Admission to the museum also includes entry to the cathedral's archaeological zone and treasury.

Frescoes decorate the facades of two Renaissance houses known as the **Casa Cazuffi-Rella**, on the piazza's northern side. Centre-stage is the beguiling **Fontana di Nettuno**, a magnificent 18th-century fountain dedicated to the trident-wielding Neptune.



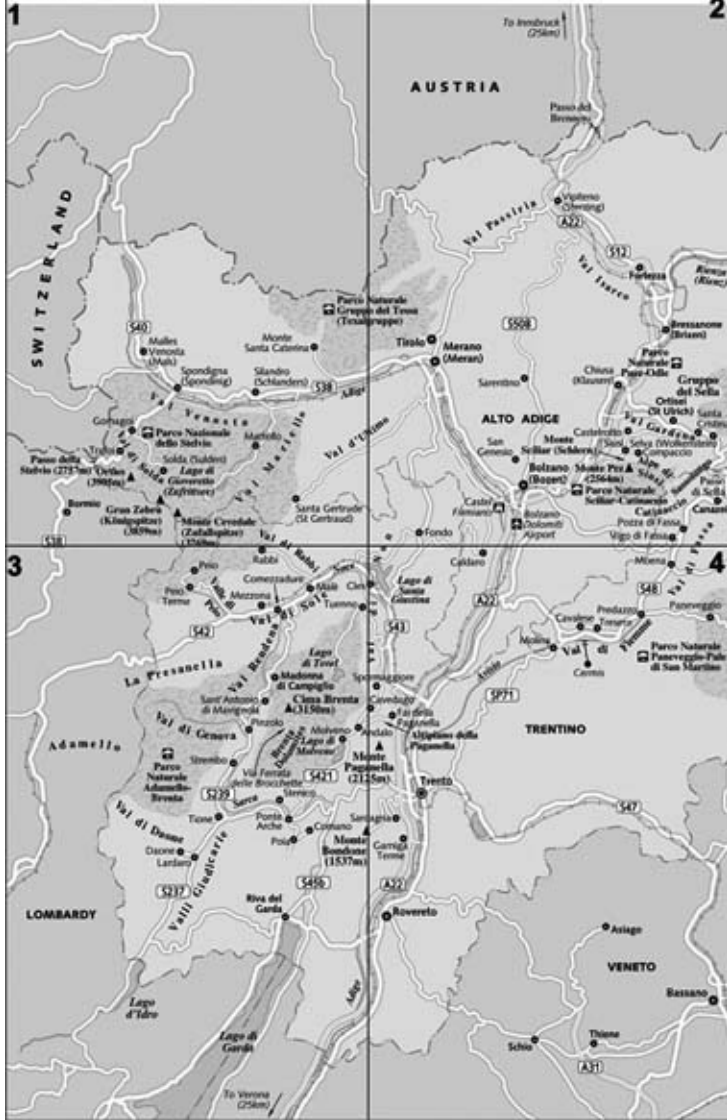
Subterranean Trento can be explored at the fascinating **Tridentum La Città Sotterranea** (☎ 0461 23 01 71; Piazza Battisti; adult/child €2/1; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Tue-Sun Sep-May, 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Jun-Sep). The extensive remains were discovered less than two decades ago during restoration works on the piazza's theatre, and include sections of paved streets and the city walls, a tower, a house with mosaics, and a workshop.

Guarded by hulking fortifications, **Castello del Buonconsiglio** (☎ 0461 23 37 70; [www.buonconsiglio.it](http://www.buonconsiglio.it); Via Bernardo Clesio 5; adult/child €7/4; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-May) was home to Trento's bishop-princes until Napoleon's arrival in 1801. Behind the walls are the original 13th-century castle, the **Castelvecchio**, and the Renaissance residence **Magno Palazzo**, which provides an atmospheric backdrop for a varied collection of art and antiques and hosts regular temporary exhibitions.

Near the main train station, the 12th-century **Badia di San Lorenzo** (Via Andrea Pozzo 2; 🕒 6.30am-noon & 3-7pm), once attached to a long-gone monastery, is worth a look for its cross-vaulting festooned with red stars and its bronze statue of Padre Pio. The abbey was badly damaged by WWII bombing and again during the 1966 floods, but has now been faithfully restored.

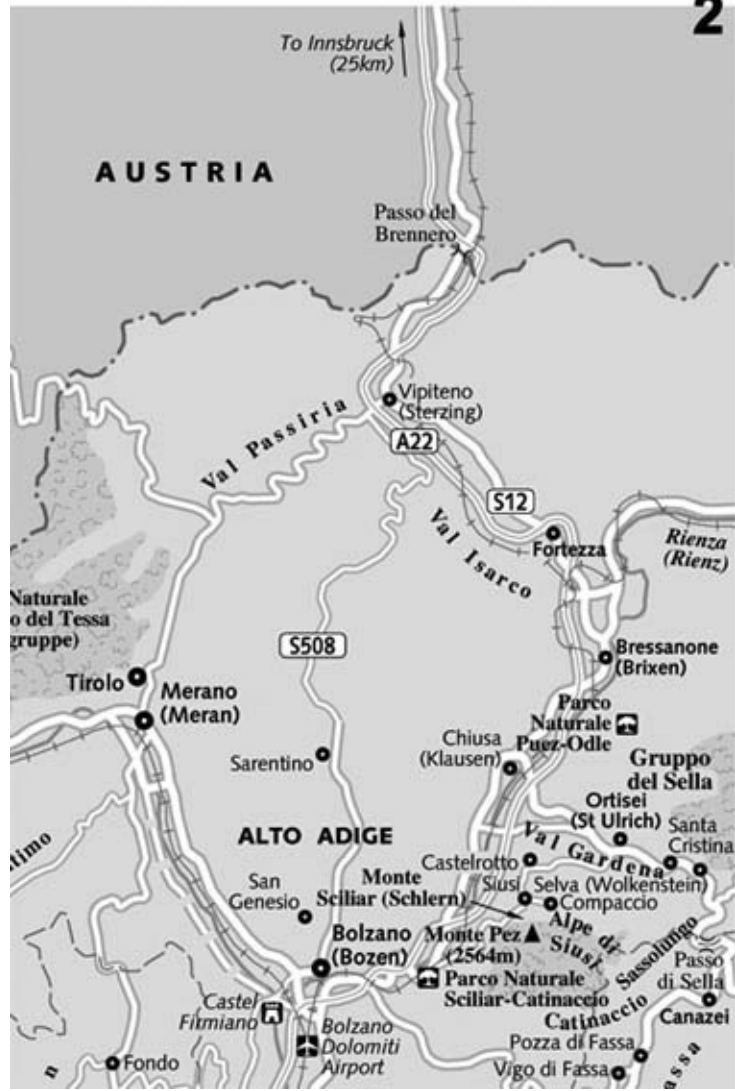
Housed in the regal Palazzo delle Albere is Trento's small **Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** (MART; ☎ 0461 23 48 60; Via Roberto da Sanseverino 45; adult/child €6/4, incl MART in Rovereto €10/7; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), part of MART in Rovereto ([Click here](#)). Works displayed inside the museum include 19th- and early-20th-century impressionist and symbolist paintings by Trentino artists, the most impressive being Luigi Bonazza's huge triptych, *La leggenda di Orfeo* (1905). Look out for the colourful fragmentary frescoes on the walls, too.

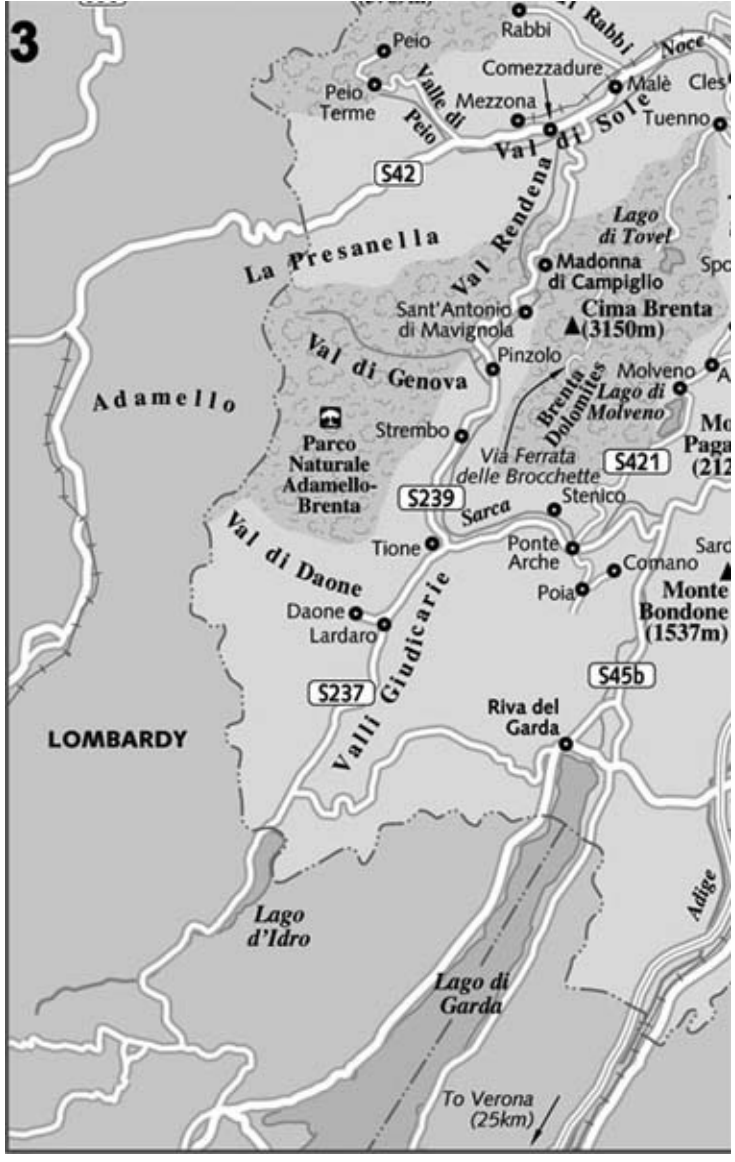
# TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE



# TRENTINO-ALTO ADIGE





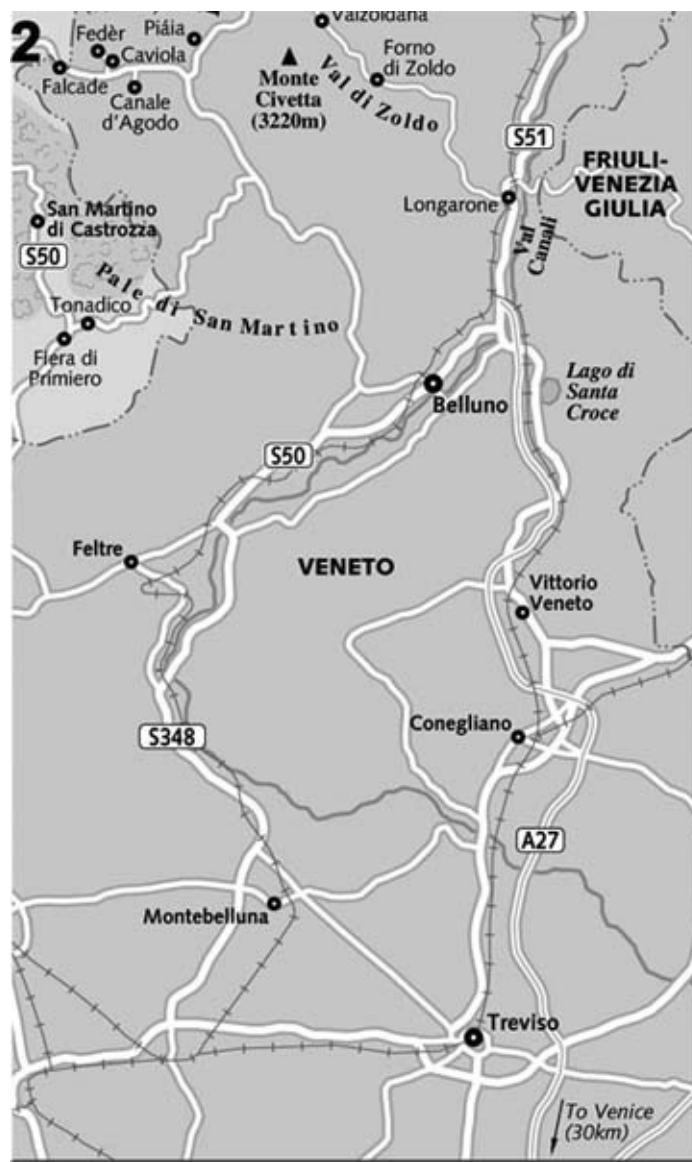












## Activities

A scenic cable-car ride from Trento on the **Funivia Trento-Sardagna** (☎ 0461 23 21 54; Via Montegrappa 1; one-way €0.90) brings you to Sardagna. From here 15km of winding road (you'll need a car; there's no public transport available) brings you to the small ski station of **Vaneze di Monte** (1350m), connected by cable car to its higher counterpart, **Vasòn** – where most ski schools and ski-hire shops are located – and the gentle slopes of 1537m-high **Monte Bondone** ([www.montebondone.it](http://www.montebondone.it)).

Crisscrossed by 37km of cross-country ski trails and nine downhill runs in winter, Monte Bondone's pristine slopes are home during the summer months to the **Giardino Alpine Botanico** (☎ 0461 94 80 50; Viote de Monte Bondone; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Jul & Aug).

On weekends between December and March, Skibus Monte Bondone, run by Trentino Trasporti, wends its way from Trento to Vaneze (€0.90 one-way).

For walking information, including itineraries and *rifugi* in Trentino, contact the local **Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini** (SAT; ☎ 0461 98 18 71; Via Mancini 57; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri).

## Tours

The tourist office runs informative guided walking tours of the city centre and tours of the Castello del Buonconsiglio (both tours adult/child €3/free). Tours (usually around two hours) generally take place on

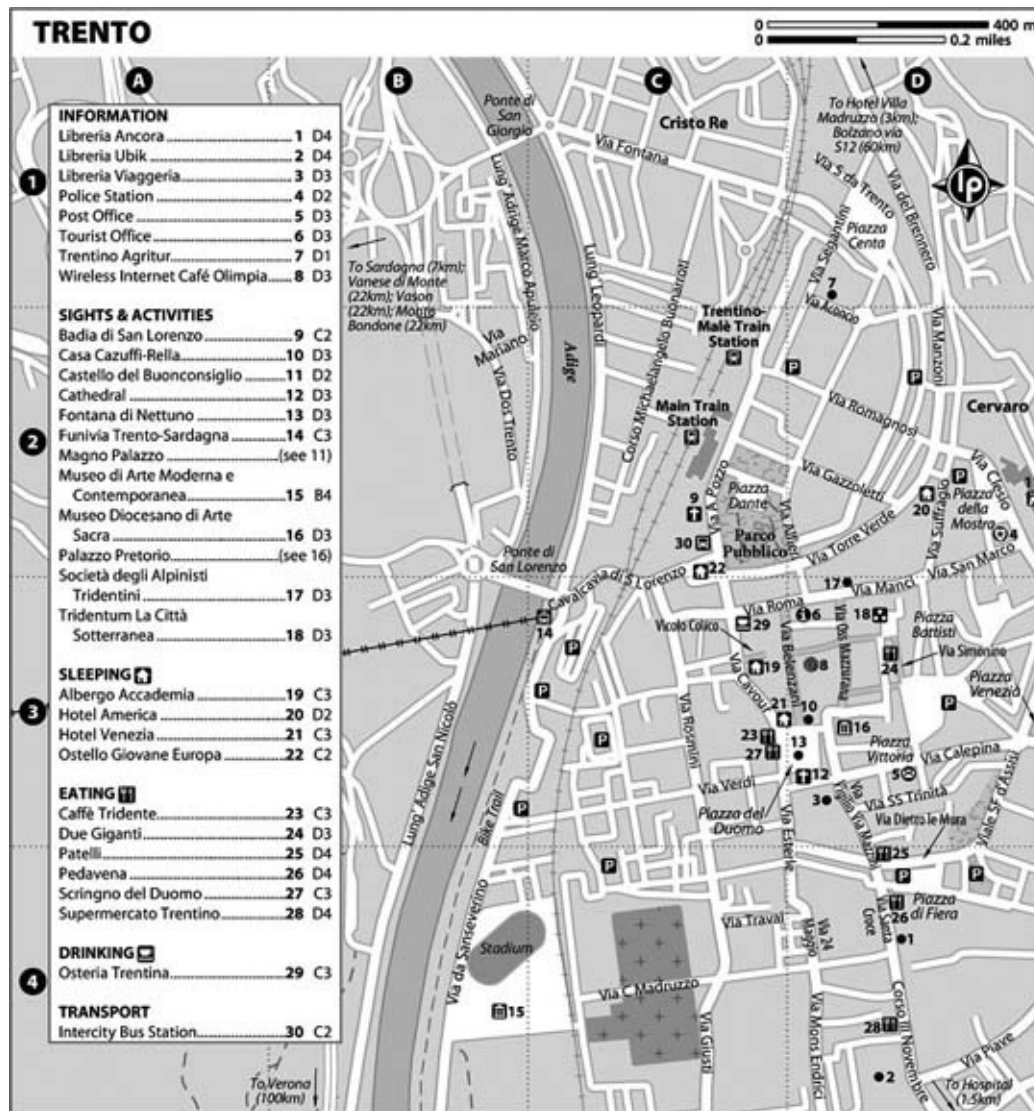
Saturday morning. Otherwise, ask at the tourist office about arranging a private guided tour. All tours are in Italian, German and English.

## Festivals & Events

**Feste Vigiliane** Costumed parades, craft and produce fairs, raft races, historical re-enactments, music and fireworks entertain during this exuberant week-long festival celebrating the feast of Trento's patron saint, St Vigil, in mid-June.

**Polenta Festival** On the last weekend of September, Trento celebrates its most traditional culinary dish.

**Christmas Market** Takes over Piazza di Fiera from the end of November till Christmas Eve.



## Sleeping

Trentino Agritur's office [Click here](#) has reams of information on B&Bs located on farms and in other idyllic rural settings outside of town, if you're travelling with wheels.

**Ostello Giovane Europa** (☎ 0461 26 34 84; info@gayaproject.org; Via Torre Vanga 9; all incl breakfast dm €16-20, s/d €28/50; 📧 reception 7.30am-11am & 3-11pm) Spelling out the word 'Welcome' in 32 different languages, this squeaky-clean place pretty much guarantees you a warm one, bang in the middle of town and just a few minutes' walk from the main train station. It's a welcome sight for backpackers, considering Italy's dearth of decent hostels. Some rooms have balconies and mountain

views.

**our pick Hotel Venezia** (☎ 0461 23 41 14; [www.hotelveneziatn.it](http://www.hotelveneziatn.it); Piazza del Duomo 45; all incl breakfast s/d €49/69, without bathroom €38/55) The Venezia is a comfortable two-star with a gorgeous location right in happening Piazza del Duomo. Rooms with whitewashed walls and dark timber furniture are plain but not without character, while the breakfast is more substantial and Teutonic than the Roman coffee and croissant.

**Hotel America** (☎ 0461 98 30 10; [www.hotelamerica.it](http://www.hotelamerica.it); Via Torre Verde 50; s €68-88, d €102-110, apt per week €350; 🅇 🅈 🅉 🅊 🅋) Your best bet if you're driving and need somewhere to park is this bright, contemporary, colourful spot situated near the main train station. Stylish guest rooms have loads of space to stretch out, and for longer stays there's also a clutch of neat, self-contained apartments (minimum stay one week). Wi-fi's available in the hotel and its public areas, but not inside the apartments. Breakfast is a generous buffet served at the onsite restaurant. Set menus cost €20 to €28.

**Albergo Accademia** (☎ 0461 23 36 00; [www.accademiahotel.it](http://www.accademiahotel.it); Vicolo Colico 4/6; s €102-118, d €160-180; 🅇 🅈 🅉 🅊 🅋) An elegant choice bivouacked in a historic medieval house that has been restored enough to merit wi-fi, flat-screen TVs and bright, airy rooms. If you're feeling flush (and flash) the top-floor suite (€224) is huge, including a roof terrace and a dining table crying out for a private dinner party.

## Eating & Drinking

It's a pleasure to eat in Trento and there are some atmospheric spots to choose from. Wines to look out for include Trento DOC, a sparkling white made from chardonnay grapes; and the so-called 'prince of wines', Teroldego Rotaliano DOC, a smooth, extremely drinkable red.

**Caffè Tridente** (☎ 0461 98 52 65; Piazza del Duomo 35; snacks €3-3.50, lunch dishes €5-7) Look out for this unmissable joint in the main square (there's no sign) open all hours to anyone with a student textbook and a penchant for cappuccino alternated with German beer. Later on, romantic types can be seen cavorting next to the grand central fountain, or pausing in the dark shadows beneath the church to exchange *ti amos*.

**Due Giganti** (☎ 0461 23 75 15; Via Simonino 14; buffets from €7) It sounds like an oxymoron, but it isn't. At last, a 'fast-food' restaurant that's tasty and not conducive to heart attacks. American-style fast-food franchisers would do well to send their researchers to Due Giganti to sample the fresh pizzas, buffet salads and regularly topped-up pastas. A height measure invites children under 1m tall to eat for free.

**Patelli** (☎ 0461 23 52 36; Via Dietro le Mura 45; set menus €20-28, mains €8-12; 🕒 noon-2.15pm, 7-10.30pm) A long, cavernous restaurant with waiters in waistcoats, and delicately folded napkins, Patelli still feels like the kind of place where you can wear Umbro shorts and get away with it. Traditional trattoria fare includes a memorably fresh gnocchi with chestnuts and pistachios accompanied by fruity red wines.

**Pedavena** (☎ 0461 98 62 55; Piazza di Fiera 13; set menus €20-28, mains €8-12; 🕒 Wed-Mon) Bratwurst, tripe and hearty pasta dishes fill the menu of this Germanic 1920s beer hall adorned with wall-mounted stag heads.

**our pick Scringno del Duomo** (☎ 0461 22 00 30; Piazza del Duomo 29; upstairs mains €8.50-20, downstairs set menus €50-70; 🕒 upstairs lunch & dinner daily, downstairs lunch Tue-Fri & Sun, dinner Tue-Sun) Skip the set menus and you can actually dine in this refined establishment – Trento's oldest building, dating back to the 1200s – for a good price. Tables in Scringno's gastronomic downstairs restaurant look into a glassed-in Roman cellar that holds more than 1000 different wines. The rustic

upstairs restaurant serves local specialities such as *canederli di pomi con fonduta di taleggio* (oven-baked dumplings with cheese) and lake-caught *salmerino* fish. *Delizioso* without exception.

If you're hitting the hills, pick up picnic supplies at **Supermercato Trentino** (Corso III Novembre 4-6).

## Getting There & Away

The town is well connected. Regular trains leave the **main train station** (Piazza Dante) for Verona (€5.40, one hour, every 30 minutes), Venice (€8.40, 2½ hours, hourly), Bologna (€11.30, 3¼ hours, every two hours) and Bolzano (€3.35, 30 minutes, four per hour). Next door to the main station, the Trento—Malè train line connects the city with Cles in the Val di Non.

From the **intercity bus station** (Via Andrea Pozzo), local bus company **Trentino Trasporti** (☎ 0461 82 10 00; [www.ttspa.it](http://www.ttspa.it), in Italian) runs buses to and from various destinations, including Madonna di Campiglio, San Martino di Castrozza, Molveno, Canazei and Rovereto.

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## ROVERETO

**pop 35,200**

Vineyards string along the pretty road from Trento 15km south to Rovereto. The trip is a must, not only for wine buffs but for contemporary-art lovers.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0464 43 03 63; [www.apr.roverso.tn.it](http://www.apr.roverso.tn.it); Corso Rosmini 6a; ☎ 8.30am-12.15pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri) has lots of information on the town.

Rovereto's acclaimed **Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** (MART; ☎ 0464 43 88 87; [www.mart.trento.it](http://www.mart.trento.it), in Italian; Corso Bertini 43; adult/child €8/5, incl MART in Trento €10/7; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 10am-9pm Fri) is in a building that is itself a work of art, with a monumental glass dome designed by Swiss-born architect Mario Botta. Inside are dozens of priceless pieces from the early 20th century to the present day, including Andy Warhol's *Four Marilyns* (1962), Tom Wesselman's *Seascape* (1966), several Picassos and various wrapped creations by Christo.

The **Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra** (Italian War History Museum; ☎ 0464 43 81 00; Via Castelbarco 7; adult/child €5.50/2; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-6.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-Jun, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jul-Sep) is worth a peek, as is the world's largest ringing bell, **Campana della Pace** (Bell of Peace; adult/child €1/0.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm Mar & Oct, 9am-4.30pm Nov-Feb), which was cast in 1924 from bronze cannons from the 19 countries that fought in WWI. The 3.36m-tall bell tolls every evening around 9pm from its perch atop Miravalle Hill on Rovereto's eastern fringe. To get here, follow the signs in town from Via Santa Maria.

In the medieval heart of old Rovereto, **Scala della Torre** (☎ 0464 43 71 00; Via Scala della Torre 7; mains around €10) is a cosy decades-old trattoria and *birreria* (pub) dishing up typical mountain fare.

Regular buses connect Rovereto with Trento (30 minutes, 10 daily).

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## BRENTA DOLOMITES

The Brenta group lies like a rocky island to the west of the main Dolomite range. Protected by the **Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta**, these sharp, majestic peaks are well known among mountaineers for their sheer cliffs and tricky ascents; consequently they are home to some of the most famous *vie ferrate* (climbing trails with permanent steel cords; [Click here](#)) routes ever constructed. Harnesses and ropes are essential for most of the high-altitude trails, including one of the group's (and world's) most famous, the **Via Ferrata delle Bocchette** pioneered by British climbing trailblazer, Francis Fox Tuckett in the 1860s.

On the eastern side of the Brenta group is the **Altipiano della Paganella**, a high plateau home to five small villages offering a huge range of activities between them. On the western side is **Madonna di Campiglio**, one of Europe's most glamorous ski resorts. Both make good bases for winter skiing and summer walking, though they tend to shut down in spring and autumn. The wiggly S421, S237 and S239 linking the two is a scenic, if perilous, drive. Otherwise there are regular bus connections with Trento.

## Altipiano della Paganella

### pop 5000

Less than an hour's drive northwest of Trento, this balconylike plateau looks out onto the towering Brenta Dolomites. The Altipiano incorporates five small villages: the ski resorts of **Fai della Paganella**, touristy **Andalo**, lakeside **Molveno**, little **Cavedago**, and **Spormaggiore**, which is home to the mountains' reintroduced brown bears.

### INFORMATION

Information for all of the Altipiano della Paganella is coordinated through a website, [www.esperienzatrentino.it](http://www.esperienzatrentino.it).

**Andalo tourist office** (☎ 0461 58 58 36; Piazza Dolomiti 1; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) The main tourist office, with stacks of information on summer and winter activities throughout the plateau.

**Fai della Paganella tourist office** (☎ 0461 58 31 30; Via Villa; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun)

**Guardia Medica** (☎ 0461 58 56 37; ☎ 8pm-8am) Nighttime medical call-out service.

**Molveno tourist office** (☎ 0461 58 69 24; Piazza Marconi 5; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat, 9am-12.30pm Tue & Thu, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun)

**Tourist medical service** (☎ 0461 58 60 45) Daytime medical aid.

### ACTIVITIES

Alpine guide **Dolomiti di Brenta-Paganella** (☎ 329 582 41 46; [guidealpine@esperienzatrentino.it](mailto:guidealpine@esperienzatrentino.it); ☎ seasonal, vary) Andalo (Sports Centre); Molveno (Piazza Marconi) organises rock climbing and guided walks in summer and ski-mountaineering, frozen-waterfall climbing and snowshoeing excursions in the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta in winter. Scheduled activities cost from €6 for walking to €10 for snowshoeing, and €30 for dinner in a mountain hut reached via snowmobile. You can also organise private expeditions with the association's guides.

The Paganella ski area is accessible from Andalo (by cable car) and Fai della Paganella (by chairlift). It has two cross-country skiing trails and 50km of downhill-ski slopes, ranging from beginner-friendly green runs to heart-lurching black runs. Plenty of sports shops in Andalo and Fai della Paganella rent gear. [Click here](#) for ski-pass details.

From the top of Molveno village, a two-seater **cable car** (☎ 0461 58 69 81; one-way/return €3.50/6.50) transports you in two stages up to Pradel (1400m), from where trail No 340, which is a

pleasant and easy one-hour walk, leads to the **Rifugio Croz dell'Altissimo** (☎ 0368 98 92 42; ☒ Jun-Sep) at 1430m. Several other trails, of varying difficulty, start off from here. Tourist offices have complete lists of mountain huts; always check the status of huts before heading out to be sure what facilities are available.

**Riding Center Andalo** (☎ 0461 58 59 00; Andalo Sports Centre; ☒ 9.30-noon & 3-7pm mid-Jun—Aug) offers 50-minute horseback rides or lessons for €22. For a gentler pace, hour-long horse-drawn carriage rides are €15.

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## PARCO NATURALE ADAMELLO-BRENTA & ITS BEARS

This wild and beautiful area – encompassing more than 80 lakes and the vast Adamello glacier – was once home to the Alps' only brown bears. It became a protected area in 1967 and a provincial park in 1988. By that time, bear numbers had dwindled to just three, partly because their habitat had been destroyed, and partly because they'd been shot by farmers clinging onto making a living from dairy farming.

Beginning in 1999, park authorities set about reintroducing the bears, bringing 10 Alpine brown bears over from Slovenia. The first cubs were born in the park in 2002, and there have been cubs born every winter since, with a total of 20 bears inhabiting the park at the time of writing.

The brown bears measure 1.2m when on all four paws, and over 2m when standing; they weigh anywhere from 100kg to 250kg, depending on the season. They're closely monitored by park authorities via radio collars, and some can be viewed at the enclosure outside the **Centro Visitatori Spormaggiore** (☎ 0461 65 36 22; Via Alt Spaur 6; bear enclosure €2 Jun-Sep, free Oct-May; ☒ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sat & Sun) in Spormaggiore, 15km northeast of Molveno. The centre has some excellent exhibits about the bears' reintroduction, including some cute displays for kids. It's hoped that in 50 to 100 years there will once again be bears all over the Alps.

Of course, happy bears often mean unhappy farmers, but Trentino's provincial government pays for farmers to install electric fences and for any damage the bears cause.

Bears aside, the 620-sq-km park – Trentino's largest protected area – is also home to ibexes, red deer, marmots and chamois and 82 bird species, along with 1200 different species of mountain flowers, including two (*Nigritella luschnannii* and *Erythronium aurantiacum*) that are unique to the area.

Wildlife is prevalent around the banks of **Lago di Tovel**, set deep in a forest some 30km north of Spormaggiore in the park's heart. Until the 1960s the lake was blood red, due to a rare alga, but inexplicably turned clear and has never gone back, even though the alga is still present. An easy one-hour walking trail encircles the lake. The lakeside **visitors centre** (☎ 0463 45 10 33; ☒ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat & Sun Sep) has extensive information on other walks in the park.

More information on the park, including mountain huts, Alpine guides, maps and itineraries, as well as ecofriendly accommodation adhering to strict environmental guidelines, can be obtained in Sant'Antonio di Mavignola, 7km south of Madonna di Campiglio, from the helpful **visitors centre** (☒ 9am-noon & 4-8pm Apr-Sep) or from the **park headquarters** (☎ 0465 80 66 66; [www.pnab.it](http://www.pnab.it), in Italian; Via Nazionale 12; ☒ 8.30am-noon & 2-7pm Jul & Aug, 8.30am-noon & 4-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) a few kilometres south in Strembo (population 440).

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One of the highlights of the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta is the home of its reintroduced brown

bears, Spormaggiore – see the boxed text, below.

## SLEEPING & EATING

The plateau's five villages have 120 hotels between them. Many close in the off-season (April, May, October, November). There are also numerous farmhouses and self-catering apartments, if you have your own wheels –tourist offices can help with details.

**Camping Spiaggia** (☎ 0461 58 69 78; [www.campingmolveno.it](http://www.campingmolveno.it); Via Lungolago 25; 2 adults & car €20-44; 📧 reception 9am-noon & 2-7pm year-round; 📍 🚗) A site at Spiaggia, on the shores of Lago di Molveno, gets you free admission to the neighbouring outdoor swimming pool, tennis court and table-tennis tables. It's an easy stroll into Molveno's buzzing little village centre, and onsite entertainment and watersports are on tap here in high summer.

**our pick Hotel Alexander Cima Tosa** (☎ 0461 58 69 28; [www.alexandermolveno.com](http://www.alexandermolveno.com); Piazza Scuole 7, Molveno; per person r €39, half-board €54-100, full board €58-104; 📧 closed Nov; 📍 🚗 🚙 🚘) Molveno's oldest hotel once hosted early British and German Brenta skiers and climbers, and it's still owned by the same family. These days things have gone a bit more upmarket with 40 well-equipped rooms (with balconies), gym, indoor pool, kids playroom, mountain bikes and the obligatory wellness centre. The multifunctional restaurant is handy if you're on half- or full-board rates. Open year-round, except November.

**Hotel Corona** (☎ 0461 58 58 72; Via Dossi 6, Andalo; per person full board €55-84; 📍 🚗 🚙 🚘) There's a weathervane atop a turreted tower, frescoes on the bay windows, a steeply gabled roof, and wrought-iron balconies. Sound enticing? Then pull over in the ski resort of Andalo for some 'home sweet home' treatment in the peach-coloured Corona, where full-board rates include some lavish meals. Wood furnishings and modern finishes add a sleek yet laidback feel.

**Alp & Wellness Sport Hotel Panorama** (☎ 0461 58 31 34; [www.sporthotelpanorama.it](http://www.sporthotelpanorama.it); Via Carletti 6, Fai della Paganella; d €100-200; 📍 🚗 🚙 🚘) With namesake panoramic views, rooms in this multicoloured modern edifice indeed have clean lines and pared-down furnishings, and some have lofts. Also, as the name suggests, there's every kind of wellness facility here you could wish for, including indoor and outdoor pools.

**Al Penny** (☎ 0461 58 52 51; Viale Trento 23, Andalo; meals €22-25; 📍 11am-3pm & 5pm-2am) Sink into a big, comfy booth at this relaxed restaurant on the edge of Andalo to feast on traditional Trentino specialities such as spinach dumplings, and both lake and ocean fish. All the bread here is homemade – if you can't decide, try a mixed basket that includes wholegrain bread, crusty white-flour bread and delicious still-warm potato bread. Al Penny also has a handful of rooms and apartments with prices available on request.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Trentino Trasporti** (☎ 0461 82 10 00; [www.ttspa.it](http://www.ttspa.it), in Italian) runs buses between all five villages and Trento (€2.90 to €3.30, 3½ hours, up to nine daily) and services to Madonna di Campiglio (€8.60) and Riva del Garda (€5.60) on Lago di Garda. Tourist offices give away schedules in clearly marked booklets.

Free ski buses serve the area in winter.

## Madonna di Campiglio & Pinzolo

This small village (population 600 without the tourists) is the Dolomites' 'Gucci resort' where the rich

and glamorous come to compare expensive ski-wear and hit some formidable downhill runs. Austrian emperor Franz Joseph and his wife set the tone in the 19th century – an era relived in late February when fireworks blaze and costumed pageants waltz through town during the annual Habsburg Carnival.

Fortunately Madonna di Campiglio has retained its essence, enshrined in a pretty village square overlooked by the castlelike battlements of the Brenta Dolomites. In summer this is an ideal base for hikers and *via ferrata* enthusiasts.

Less-expensive Pinzolo (population 2000, elevation 800m), 16km south, has a lively centre populated by residents year-round.

## INFORMATION

**Guardia Medica** (☎ 0465 44 05 38, 0465 80 16 00) Emergency doctor.

**Madonna tourist office** (☎ 0465 44 75 01; [www.campiglio.to](http://www.campiglio.to); Via Pradalago 4; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun)

**Pinzolo tourist office** (☎ 0465 50 10 07; [www.pinzolo.to](http://www.pinzolo.to); Piazzale Ciciamimo; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun)

**Tourist medical service** (☎ 0465 44 30 73; ☎ early Dec-Easter & mid-Jun—mid-Sep)

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

A network of chairlifts and several **cable cars** (☎ 0465 44 77 44) take skiers and boarders from Madonna to its numerous ski runs and a snowboarding park (with half-pipe, slide park and boarder cross) in winter, and to walking and mountain-biking trails in summer. In Pinzolo there is just one **cable car** (☎ 0465 50 12 56; [www.funiviepinzolo.it](http://www.funiviepinzolo.it), in Italian; Via Nepomuceno Bolognini 84; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm mid-Dec—Apr & Jun—mid-Sep), which climbs the mountain to 2100m-high Doss del Sabion (one-way/return €5/8, 20 minutes), stopping at midstation Pra Rodont (1530m; one-way/return €5/6, 10 minutes) en route. Mountain bikes can be hired at this cable-car station in summer.

In winter, a one-/three-/six-day **ski pass** for Madonna di Campiglio costs €34/98/173 (high season €37/105/183). The Super Skirama Dolomiti Adamello-Brenta pass covers both resorts, as well as others in the valley including the Altipiano della Paganella area; for three/seven days it costs €102/196 (high season €114/223), but there are numerous pass options available.

Opportunities for independent walkers are infinite. Madonna's tourist office teams up with the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta to run particularly lovely guided walks (€15) to a traditional Alpine pasture hut in the national park on Wednesday from mid-July to September. The tourist office also arranges a number of other summertime walks and cultural and artistic events under the banner 'Mystery of the Mountains', providing an insight into the geology of the Dolomite peaks and their relationship with the surrounding mountains.

In Campo Carlo Magno, 2km north of Madonna, the **Cabinovia Grostè** (one-way/return €10/15; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm mid-Dec—Apr & Jun—mid-Sep) cable car takes walkers up, in two stages, to the Passo Grostè (2440m), from where you can set off into the Brenta Dolomites. The Via Bocchetta di Tuckett (trail No 305) – the *via ferrata* for which the Brenta group is famous – also leaves from the cable-car station. Only experienced mountaineers with the correct equipment should attempt it. Otherwise, take trail No 316 to **Rifugio del Tuckett** (☎ 0464 44 12 26; ☎ mid-Jun—mid-Sep) and Q Sella (2271m). From there take trail No 328 and then No 318 to the **Rifugio Brentei** (☎ 0465 44 12 44) at 2182m. All trails heading higher into the group from this point cross glaciers and need special equipment.

Pinzolo's 16th-century **Chiesa di San Vigilio** merits a visit for its external mural *La danza macabra*



(The Dance of Death). North of Pinzolo is the entrance to the **Val di Genova**, often described as one of the Alps' most beautiful valleys. A series of spectacular waterfalls along the way enhances its reputation as great walking country. Four mountain huts strung out along the valley floor make overnight stays an option – Pinzolo's tourist office has details.

## SLEEPING & EATING

There are few budget options in Madonna and most insist on full- or half-board, and there may be a minimum stay during peak times.

Most hotels located in the area (including residential Pinzolo) open from early or mid-December to Easter, and mid-June to mid-September.

**Camping Parco Adamello** (☎ 0465 50 17 93; [www.campingparcoadamello.it](http://www.campingparcoadamello.it); Carisolo; per person €8-9, tent & car €12-18; 📅 year-round; 📍) Beautifully situated within the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta, 1km north of Pinzolo, this camping ground is a natural starting point for outdoor adventures such as skiing, snowshoeing, walking and biking, while you breathe in the pure mountain air.

**Hotel Bellavista** (☎ 0465 50 11 64; [www.bellavistanet.com](http://www.bellavistanet.com), in Italian; Pinzolo; half-board per person per day €55-80, per week €273-406; 📅 year-round; 📍) Pinzolo's 57-room 'beautiful view' hotel – one of the few hotels to open all year – is a modern place with plain but clean and comfortable rooms done out with a *lot* of brown wood. The hearty local fare dished up at its restaurant will sustain you on the slopes.

**Hotel Crozzon** (☎ 0465 44 22 22; [www.hotelcrozzon.com](http://www.hotelcrozzon.com); Viale Dolomiti di Brenta 96, Madonna; per person half-board €55-90; 📍) This friendly hotel offers bright, clean rooms (some with mountain views). Full board at the onsite restaurant costs just an extra €10 per person. Dinner is served by candlelight in winter; in summer, guests can dine at the hotel's little chalet in the mountains.

**Oberosler Design Hotel** (☎ 0465 44 11 36; [www.hoteloberosler.it](http://www.hoteloberosler.it); Via Monte Spinale 27, Madonna; d half-board €150-240; 📍 📺 📶) Madonna's uberhip hotel sits right at the bottom of the Spinale ski lift, and blends the traditional charm of a mountain hideaway with cutting-edge decor, a decadent wellness centre and restaurant meals presented like works of art. Even if you're not staying here, drop by the retro-space-age chalet-bar, **Ober 1** (🕒 10am-2am), which looks like the Jetsons just landed in Madonna. Live music plays on Friday night, DJs spin on Saturday, and there's a sushi bar, as well as a thumping sound system.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Madonna di Campiglio and Pinzolo are accessible year-round by bus from Trento (€8, 1½ hours, five daily) and Milan (€12, 3¾ hours, one daily), as well as Brescia.

From mid-December to mid-April **ski-shuttle buses** run to and from Madonna and Pinzolo once a week from Milan's Malpensa and Linate airports via Bergamo's airport (one-way €36), and Verona's Villafranca airport via Brescia's airport (one-way €30).

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## VAL DI NON, VAL DI SOLE & VAL DI RABBI

Sandwiched between the Brenta group and Parco Nazionale dello [Stelvio](#) and easily accessed by train from Trento, this triumvirate of Italian-speaking valleys is worth a visit in its own right. The main hub is Malè in the Val di Sole.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

**Ferrovìa Trento-Malè** (☎ 0463 90 11 50) buses connect Rabbi, Madonna di Campiglio and Malè. Cles (€2.90, 45 minutes) and Malè (€5, 1½ hours, eight daily) are on the Trento—Comezzadure train line. A **cable car** (one-way €5) ferries skiers and walkers up the mountainside from the train station.

Free ski buses loop around the area in winter; tourist offices have schedules.

## Val di Non

The first thing you notice about **Val di Non** is the apple trees; they're everywhere, though the gnarly, well-pruned branches are at their best in spring when they sprout a fragrant white blossom. The second eye-catcher is the castles that materialise over the orchards like prints from a Hans Christian Anderson fairytale. The valley is centred on its main settlement, **Cles**, whose **tourist office** (☎ 0463 42 13 76; Corso Dante 30; 🕒 9am-noon Mon, to noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sat) is just off the main road through town.

On the town's southern limits, you can watch videos, taste apples, take cooking lessons and tour the apple-processing plant of **Melinda Mondo** (☎ 0463 46 92 99; Cles; mondomelinda@melinda.it; tour prices on request; 🕒 office 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sat), famed for its golden delicious apples. In summer you can also take a guided cycling trip through the orchards on Melinda's mountain bikes, and if you're here in September or October, you can help with the harvest. Next door to Melinda Mondo is **Trentingrana** (☎ 0463 46 94 56; [www.trentingrana.it](http://www.trentingrana.it); Cles; tour prices & hr on request), where 'Parmesan-style' Grana cheese is made; its factory can also be toured.

## Val di Sole

Leaving Cles in the rear-view mirror, the apple orchards draw you west into the aptly named **Val di Sole**, tracing the course of the foaming river Noce.

This valley is renowned for its accessibility (there's a train line from Trento) and outdoor pursuits aside from the usual skiing and hiking staples. Rafting on the Noce is perennially popular. **Centro Rafting Val di Sole** (☎ 0463 97 32 78; [www.raftingcenter.it](http://www.raftingcenter.it); Via Gole 105, Dimaro; 🕒 Jun-Sep) runs rafting trips (from €39), as well as kayaking, canyoning, Nordic walking and other adventures. Sole also guards a flattish 35km section of the Brenta Dolomite Bike Loop and runs a special bike train June to September, allowing cyclists to step on and alight when they get tired. Of nine different bike-hire places, **Cicli Andreis Specialized** (☎ 0463 90 28 22; Via Conci, Malè) is the most handily located. Day rental plus unlimited train use costs €20.

The Malè **tourist office** (☎ 0463 90 12 80; [www.valdisole.net](http://www.valdisole.net); Piazza Regina Elena 19; 🕒 9am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun) has extensive information on the entire valley, and can advise you on ski facilities and walking trails in nearby Stelvio National Park.

**Dolomiti Camping Village** (☎ 0463 97 43 32; [www.campingdolomiti.com](http://www.campingdolomiti.com); Via Gole 105; 2 adults, tent & car €21-29, 2-person bungalow €45-65; 🕒 mid-May—mid-Oct & Dec-Easter; 📶 🚰 🚿 🚻), riverside and adjacent to the rafting centre, is surely the camping ground that has everything. In addition to campsites (wi-fi'd, no less), there are 20 gleaming, new bungalows along with apartments in a timber chalet. Among a plethora of onsite facilities are a wellness centre, indoor and outdoor pools, volleyball courts and trampolines. Guests and nonguests can recharge at the Dolomiti's excellent **restaurant** (meals €15-20), which has mountainous portions of food, including pizzas topped with smoked trout and walnuts. The camping ground is 1km east of the train station and cable car at Comezzadure.

For a more bucolic experience, **Agritur Fior di Bosco** (☎ 0462 91 00 02; Valfloriana; prices & dates by arrangement; 📞) is a delightful *agriturismo* (farm-stay accommodation) serving organic farm products, including cheese from its own dairy (you can even have a hand in processing the milk). You'll need your

own wheels to get here.

## Val di Rabbi

Val di Rabbi is a refreshingly tranquil alpine valley, bereft of ski resorts, which provides the best southern entry into Stelvio National Park. It is also known for its Antica Fonte spring waters ‘discovered’ in 1650 by a venerable pastor and revered ever since for their supposed capacity to ‘cure’ nasty illnesses. The **Terme di Rabbi** (📞 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat May-Sep, 8am-noon Sun Jul & Aug) in the eponymous village 12km up the valley from Malè offers a wide range of recuperative treatments. It is served by the rather businesslike **Grand Hotel Rabbi** (📞 0463 98 30 50; [www.grandhotelrabbi.it](http://www.grandhotelrabbi.it); Fonti di Rabbi 153; d half-board €100-160; 📄 📱). Next door is a small **visitors centre** (📞 0463 98 51 90; 📞 8am-1pm & 3-7pm Jun-Sep, 8am-noon & 2-6pm Oct-May) and the starting point for a network of paths into Stelvio, some of which connect to Val Martello in [Alto Adige](#).

Regular buses head up the valley from outside Malè train station.

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## VAL DI FIEMME

In a region where few valleys speak the same dialect (let alone agree on the same cheese recipe), the Val di Fiemme stands out. In the 12th century, independently minded local noblemen set up their own quasi-republic here, the Magnificent Community of Fiemme, and the ethos and spirit of the founders lives on.

Cavalese’s **tourist office** (📞 0462 24 11 11; [www.aptfiemme.tn.it](http://www.aptfiemme.tn.it); Via Bronzetti 60; 📞 9am-noon & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat) acts as a contact point for local Alpine guide groups which organise, among other things, mountaineering ascents on Pale di San Martino, Cima della Madonna and Sass Maor, a 120km-long high-altitude skiing excursion.

Today the slightly less bolshie ‘Community’ is headquartered in the wonderfully frescoed **Palazzo Vescovile** (Piazza Battisti) in the valley’s main town of **Cavalese** (population 3600; elevation 1000m). The building is well worth an admiring look. A few doors down you can seek solace at the **Centro Arte Contemporanea Cavalese** (📞 0462 23 54 16; [www.artecavalese.it](http://www.artecavalese.it); Palazzo Firmian, Piazzetta Rizzoli 1; admission free; 📞 3.30-7.30pm Fri-Sun), a striking exposition of mountain art.

From Cavalese, skiers can take a cable car up to the Cermis ski area (2229m), part of the extensive Superski Dolomiti region.

There are plenty of places to eat and sleep in town.

Check out **Hotel Garni Laurino** (📞 0462 34 01 51; [www.hotelgarnilaurino.it](http://www.hotelgarnilaurino.it); Via Antoniazzi 14; d €76-120; 📄 📱), a perfect little nook exquisitely decorated with floral fabrics and timber furniture in a 17th-century building. The price is a steal when you consider that most of the rooms are minisuites, and free add-ons include a garden, scenic balcony, mountain bikes and a visit to the wellness centre. It’s right in the middle of town.

Something of a legend in the valley and recent recipient of a Michelin star (meaning it ain’t cheap), **El Molin** (📞 0462 34 00 74; Piazza Battisti 11; meals upstairs €12-18, downstairs €40-50; 📞 lunch & dinner, closed lunch Tue & Wed) is housed in an old mill; at street level you can sit at small tables on high stools and dine on delicious fish, meat and pasta dishes. Downstairs, next to the old waterwheels, it’s a wonderland of stone nooks and crannies, candlelight and the concoctions of chef Alessandro Gilmozzi. Think local, seasonal ingredients embellished with a quirky, playful twist.

## PALE DI SAN MARTINO

Pink blends seamlessly with green in the Pale di San Martino (elevation 1467m), where the luminous Dolomite mountains rise like ghosts above the ancient forest of Paneveggio, whose wood is made into prized violins. The mountains are embraced by the **Parco Naturale Paneveggio-Pale di San Martino** (☎ 0439 76 88 59; <http://parcopan.org>; Via Laghetto, San Martino), home to roe deer, chamois, marmots, wildfowl and birds of prey such as the golden eagle. At the park's impressive headquarters in the 1853-built **Villa Welsperg** (☎ 0439 64 851; Via Castelpietra 2; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm) in Val Canali, suspended aquariums illustrate the park's water life and exhibitions are dedicated to the flora and fauna. To get to the villa, follow the southbound S50 from San Martino di Castrozza for 14km and at the village of Fiera di Primiero bear east along a narrow road for a couple of kilometres. After the hamlet of Tonadico, bear left (north) to the villa.

At the park's feet huddles **San Martino di Castrozza**, a small but popular Trentino skiing resort and walking spot which is accessible via **Trentino Trasporti** ([www.ttspa.it](http://www.ttspa.it), in Italian) buses from Trento. From here local buses service the valleys.

The **San Martino tourist office** (☎ 0439 76 88 67; [www.sanmartino.com](http://www.sanmartino.com); Via Passo Rolle 165; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) is a mine of information. In summer, a chairlift and cable car from San Martino whisks walkers to the Rifugio Rosetta (2600m), from where several trails (some easy, some requiring mountaineering skills) can be picked up.

Free ski buses shuttle around the valleys in winter. In summer, the Parco Naturale Paneveggio-Pale di San Martino runs buses around the park.

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## VAL DI FASSA

Val di Fassa is Trentino's only Ladin-speaking valley (there are four more in Alto Adige) yet, even here, the language has two distinct dialects – Cazét and Brach. Framed by the stirring peaks of the Gruppo del Sella to the north, the Catinaccio to the west and the Marmolada (3342m) to the southeast, the valley spins on two hubs: the buzzing ski town of **Canazei** (population 1810; elevation 1465m) and the no less attractive settlement of **Moena** (population 2660; elevation 1114m). Fassa is the nexus of Italy's cross-country skiing scene. Italian cross-country champ Christian Zorzi hails from Moena, and the town also plays host to the sport's most illustrious mass-participation race, the annual **Marcialonga** ([www.marcialonga.it](http://www.marcialonga.it)), a 70km march through the snow to Canazei and back through Cavalese in the adjoining Val di Fiemme. Over 6000 competitors took part in 2009.

## Information

**Canazei tourist office** (☎ 0462 60 11 13; [www.fassa.com](http://www.fassa.com); Piazza Marconi 5; ☎ 8.30am-12.15pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun)

**Val di Fassa tourist office** (☎ 0462 60 95 00; [www.fassa.com](http://www.fassa.com); Strèda de Dolèda 10, Canazei; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) Information on the whole valley.

## Sights & Activities

Variety is the spice of life for skiers in the Val di Fassa with 120km of downhill and cross-country runs, as well as challenging Alpine tours and the Sella Ronda ski circuit (opposite). Dolomiti Superski passes are valid, alongside cheaper passes specific to the Val di Fassa, which cost €80/141 for three/six days. The Tre Valli ski pass (from €88/155 for a three-/six-day pass) covers the Fassa, Biois and San Pellegrino valleys. In summer, you can ski down the Marmolada glacier.

Walkers and skiers can approach the Gruppo del Sella from **Passo Pordoi**, where a cable car travels to almost 3000m. The best approach to the Catinaccio group is from Vigo di Fassa, 11km southwest of Canazei near Pozza di Fassa. Here, a cable car climbs to an elevation of 2000m, dropping you off near the mountain hut **Baita Checco** (☎ 0462 76 35 81; Vigo di Fassa; mains €7-12; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Dec-Mar & Jul—mid-Sep), where staff in red-and-white gingham serve Alpine specialities such as Gorgonzola-drizzled *canederli* (bread dumplings) in the split-level stone interior or on a wind-protected sun terrace.

For gentler rambles, ask at the tourist office for a copy of the English-language brochure *Low-level Walks in the Fassa Valley*, which outlines 29 walks (1.5km to 8km long) in the valley. Of particular interest are those incorporating visits to old Ladin landmarks such as the **Botega da Pinter** (☎ 0462 57 35 74; Via Dolomiti 4, Canazei; ☎ 10am-noon & 4-7pm Mon-Sat mid-Jun—mid-Sep), an authentic reconstruction of a cooper's workshop, and 16th-century sawmill **La Sia** (☎ 0462 60 23 23; Via Pian Trevisan, Penia; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri mid-Mar—mid-Dec), 3km east of Canazei along the narrow S641.

**Detomas Fiorenzo** (☎ 0462 60 24 47; Via Pareda 31, Canazei) is one of several sports shops renting mountain bikes, as well as snowboards. Ski-rental outlets in the area are plentiful.

In Canazei's village centre, take time to pop into the workshop of traditional sculptor and toymaker **Andrea Soraperra** (☎ 0462 60 24 27; Via Dolomites 109), where you can watch him make the enchanting toys and evocative sculptures displayed in his attached shop. Among his creations are typical wooden character masks worn in the **Carnevale Fassano** that takes place in the valley in February or March each year.

## Sleeping, Eating & Drinking

Beware, many hotels and restaurants close down in the off-season, ie April, May, October and November.

### CANAZEI

**our pick** **Garni Stella Alpina** (☎ 0462 60 11 27; [www.stella-alpina.net](http://www.stella-alpina.net); Via Antermont 6; d €68-128; 📞) Like nowhere else you'll ever stay (unless you happen to have a Ladin aunt), this quaint but high-quality B&B has seven cosy rooms and spadeloads of traditional Ladin character. Factor in a soothing sauna-Jacuzzi, memorable hospitality and a quirky downstairs shop and wine cellar, and you're looking at a veritable bargain.

**Hotel Rita** (☎ 0462 60 12 19; [www.hotelrita.com](http://www.hotelrita.com); Streda de Pareda 16; d half-board from €98; 📞 📺 📶) Looking like the gingerbread house your son/daughter made last Christmas, the sugary Rita lies 50m from the main square and not much further from the base of the ski lift. Pine furniture fills all 21 wi-fi-equipped rooms. As well as a cocktail piano bar, there's an in-house masseuse. In winter there's a minimum stay; the length varies depending on the season.

**Café Antermont** (☎ 0462 60 10 40; Piazza Marconi 15; cakes around €3.10; ☎ 7am-midnight year-round) Handily situated next to the main bus stop, this woodcarved cafe is an authority on homebaked sponge cake with Alpine cream and a shot of espresso. Nearby, a fork-wielding Ladino cooks up German sausages at a roadside stall.

**El Paél** (☎ 0462 60 14 33; Streda Roma 54; set menus €27, meals €25-35; 🕒 Tue-Sun) An unfancy place with a reputation, this Osteria Tipica Trentina has a traditional Ladin kitchen cooking up specialities of the valley such as nettle dumplings with spinach and Vezzena cheese, asparagus with liquorice sauce, and venison with steamed pumpkin.

**Husky Pub** (☎ 0462 60 11 11; [www.huskypub.com](http://www.huskypub.com); 🕒 8.30am-1.30am Tue-Sun Dec-Easter; 🍷) Set in the basement of the Hotel Croce Bianca and run by a young, hip team, Husky's booths overflow with après-skiers sipping Husky Roska cocktails made from forest-fruit liqueur with vodka and crushed ice. Live-music performances (mostly contemporary covers) every night.

## MOENA

**our pick Central Hotel** (☎ 0462 57 32 28; [www.centralhotel.it](http://www.centralhotel.it); Strada L Heilmann 4; s/d €50/100; 🍷 🍷) The elegant building in the centre of town with the conical tower is the Central Hotel, a veritable palace with small boutique-style rooms embellished with flat-screen TVs and window seats in the alcoves. The Vienna lounge has a wonderful woodcarved ceiling, and there's an inviting cafe—wine bar on the ground floor along with a moodily lit Germanic spa.

**Kusk La Locanda** (☎ 0462 57 46 27; Via dei Colli 7; dishes from €7; 🕒 8am-2am Wed-Mon, closed May) Billing itself as *Il locale piú trendy delle Dolomiti*, Kusk is legendary throughout the Val di Fassa for its après-ski scene. This four-way split between a pizzeria, American bar, disco and Italian restaurant is where you can spend the whole evening, chomping on wood-fired pizza while dancing to upbeat Latin and jazz.

## Getting There & Away

The Val di Fassa can be reached by bus from Trento year-round, and by SAD bus from Bolzano and the Val Gardena from June to mid-September, with free ski buses also serving the region in winter.

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## GRUPPO DEL SELLA

For winter skiers, the Sella group (highest point Piz Boé at 3151m) is synonymous with the **Sella Ronda**, a ski-based circumnavigation of the mountain range – linked by various cable cars and chairlifts – that is considered one of the Alps' most iconic ski routes. The tour takes in four passes as well as the four surrounding valleys – the Val Gardena, Val Badia, Arabba (in Veneto) and Val di Fassa – all of them definitively Ladin.

Experienced skiers can bank on completing the 40km Sella Ronda in a single day (26km covered by runs and 13.5km by ski lifts). Tourist offices provide leaflets describing the clockwise (orange) and anticlockwise (green) routes, kicking off from Selva (1565m) in the Val Gardena no later than 10am. Portavescovo, at 2495m, is the highest point. You'll need a Dolomiti Superski pass [Click here](#). In summer, a hop-on hop-off bus circles the Sella Ronda, picking up and dropping off walkers. The same trails are utilised by mountain bikers.

Both the Sella and Sassolungo walking trails can be reached from Canazei or the Val Gardena resorts by bus to Passo di Sella or Passo di Pordoi. Passo di Sella (2244m) is a mountain pass laced with hairpin bends. From the equally hair-raising Passo di Pordoi (2239m), a cable car takes you to Sasso Pordoi (2950m). Take in the breathtaking views from the cafe terrace of the **Rifugio Maria** (☎ 0462 60 11 78), then pick up the Alta Via No 2 trail, which crosses the group, heads down to the Passo Gardena and

continues into the Parco Naturale Puez-Odle.

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## ALTO ADIGE

### BOLZANO

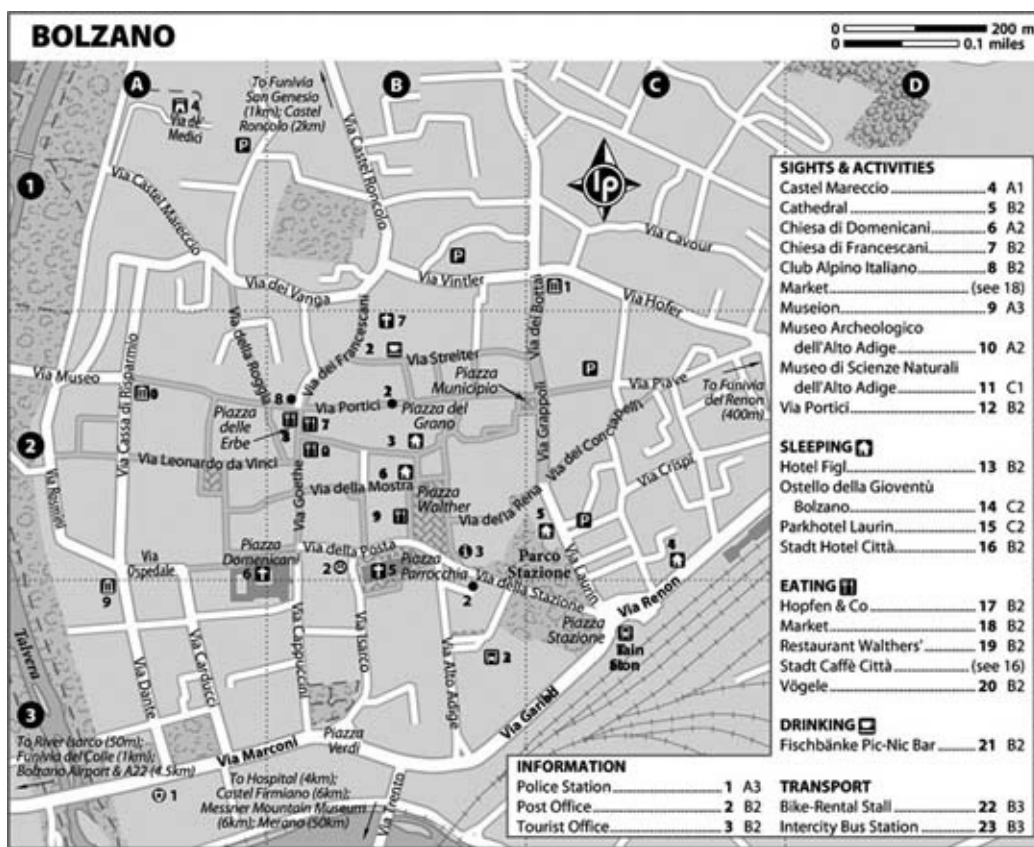
**pop 97,300 / elev 265m**

*Biergartens*, pizzerias, hearty *guten Morgens* and flirtatious *ciao bellas*; where the heck are you? It doesn't take long to decipher that cultural generalisations don't apply in Bolzano, a prosperous Alpine settlement of South Tyroleans hemmed in by the steep-sided Dolomites, which often feels more like a small town than a provincial capital. More German than Trento yet more Italian than Merano, the historical city centre is a melting pot replete with Prada-wearing cyclists and strangely polite motorists who – defying standard Italian protocol – actually stop at crossings.

The spiritual capital of Italy's South Tyrol region, Bolzano's quality of life – one of the highest in Italy – is reflected in the city's all-pervading 'greenness'. Rows of mature horse-chestnut trees guide you from the busy train station into central Piazza Walther, where the aroma of Middle Europe lingers around the smart Viennese cafes and the wooden market stalls laid out with fresh produce, cheese and speck (cured ham).

Surrounded by a plethora of fairy-tale castles, Bolzano's most emblematic building is its splendid Gothic cathedral, an imposing structure backed by the equally gothic peaks of the not-so-distant Dolomites. Cycle and walking trails emanate from here, paralleling the Adige River on its course west and south and offering tantalising gateways into the surrounding mountains.

Essentially Austrian until the end of WWI, Bolzano's Italianisation was initiated by Mussolini in the 1920s. Today the city's Italian-speaking majority (73%) belies a history linked intrinsically with the Austrian Tyrol and ingrained in the legend of Tyrolean national hero Andreas Hofer.



## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

Serious sightseers to Bolzano can pick up a **MuseumCard** (€2.50). Valid for an entire year, the card offers discounted access at various museums, plus city tours. It is available at the tourist office and from participating museums.

## Information

**Hospital** (☎ 0471 90 81 11; Via Lorenz Böhler) Out of the centre towards Merano.

**Police station** (☎ 0471 94 76 11, 0471 94 76 80; Via Marconi 33)

**Post office** (Piazza Parrocchia 1; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0471 30 70 00; [www.bolzano-bozen.it](http://www.bolzano-bozen.it); Piazza Walther 8; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

## Sights & Activities

Just off Bolzano's main square, Piazza Walther, is the city's Gothic **cathedral** (Piazza Parrocchia; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat). Nearby, the cloisters and chapel of **Chiesa dei Domenicani** (Piazza Domenicani; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) feature 14th-century frescoes by the Giotto school. Take a walk along arcaded **Via Portici**, through the charming Piazza delle Erbe, the daily fresh-produce **market**, to reach the 14th-century **Chiesa di Francescani** (Via dei Francescani). This church features beautiful cloisters and a magnificent Gothic altarpiece, carved in 1500 by Hans Klocker, in the Cappella della Beata Vergine (Chapel of the Blessed Virgin).



# ÖTZI – THE WORLD’S FIRST HIGH-ALTITUDE HIKER?

When two Austrian students stumbled upon a human corpse wedged into a melting glacier on Hauslabjoch Pass in 1991, they assumed they had found the remains of an unfortunate fellow hiker caught in a killer winter storm. But, when the mummified body was removed and taken to a morgue in Innsbruck a few days later, it was discovered to be over 5300 years old. The male corpse – subsequently nicknamed Ötzi, or the Iceman – is the oldest mummified remains ever found in Europe, dating from an ancient Copper Age civilisation that lived in the Dolomites 150 years before the founding of Ancient Egypt.

Though initially claimed by the Austrian government, it was later ascertained that Ötzi had been unearthed 100m inside the Italian border on the Schnalstal glacier. After a brief diplomatic dispute, the mummy was returned to Italy where it has been on display in the Museo Archeologico dell’Alto Adige in Bolzano since 1998.

What Ötzi was actually doing 3200m up a glaciated mountainside, 52 centuries before alpinism became a serious sport, is still a matter of some debate. Some maintain he was a wandering shepherd killed in a violent confrontation; others prefer to merely think of him as the world’s first high-altitude hiker.

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The star of the **Museo Archeologico dell’Alto Adige** (☎ 0471 32 01 00; [www.iceman.it](http://www.iceman.it); Via Museo 43; adult/child under 6yr €8/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is Ötzi, the Iceman (see the boxed text, above). The so-called Iceman’s clothing and equipment is on display, while his still-frozen body is kept in a separate, temperature-controlled room and can be viewed through a tiny window. Ötzi aside, the museum also has an important collection of archaeological finds.

Alto Adige’s wondrous flora, fauna and geology can be discovered at the **Museo di Scienze Naturali dell’Alto Adige** (☎ 0471 41 29 64; [www.museonatura.it](http://www.museonatura.it); Via dei Bottai 1; adult/child €5/3.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). The centrepiece is its gigantic saltwater aquarium.

Bolzano’s newest architectural masterpiece is the **Museion** (Via Dante 2; adult/child €6/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 10pm Thu), a funky glass cubelike building on the river that houses the museum of contemporary art. Strangely the modernist design works, both inside and out. There’s a cafe, bookshop and library onsite.

A 20km-long bike path running mostly along the river connects Bolzano’s castles: the 12th-century **Castel Mareccio** (Schloss Maretsch; ☎ 0471 97 66 15; [mareccio@comune.bolzano.it](mailto:mareccio@comune.bolzano.it); Via C de’ Medici 12; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri); the 1237-built **Castel Roncolo** (Schloss Runkelstein; ☎ 0471 32 98 08; [roncolo@comune.bolzano.it](mailto:roncolo@comune.bolzano.it); Via Castel Ried; adult/child €8/5.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) – renowned for its rare 14th-century frescoes depicting scenes from secular literature such as the tale of Tristan and Isolde – and the highlight, **Castel Firmiano**, dating back to AD 945.

This rambling castle and its grounds are home to the **Messner Mountain Museum** (MMM; ☎ 0471 63 31 45; [www.messner-mountain-museum.it](http://www.messner-mountain-museum.it), in Italian; adult/student €8/6; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Nov) created by mountaineer Reinhold Messner as the centrepiece of his five mountain museums. Based around man’s relationship with the mountains across all cultures, this insightful museum is configured so that you climb literally hundreds of stairs, giving you the experience of shifting altitudes. You’ll need to wear sturdy shoes for the uneven terrain and mesh walkways; wheelchair access is not possible. The tourist office has details of shuttle services to the castles.

Bolzano’s three cable cars include the world’s longest (Renon, 4556m) and oldest (Colle, 1908):

**Funivia del Colle** (☎ 0471 97 85 45; Via Campiglio; one-way/return €3/4)

**Funivia del Renon** (☎ 0471 97 84 79; Via Renon; one-way/return €2.50/3.50) It's 500m east of the train station.

**Funivia San Genesio** (☎ 0471 97 84 36; Via Sarentino; one-way/return €3/3.20)

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## REINHOLD MESSNER

While Germans make up the lion's share of hikers in the Dolomites, the man invariably venerated as the greatest hiker of them all, the distinctly Teutonic-sounding Reinhold Messner, was actually an *Italian* (albeit a German-speaking one) from the Alto Adige town of Bressanone (Brixen).

Born in 1944 at the end of WWII, Messner grew up surrounded by the sharp, crenellated peaks of the Dolomites. Scaling his first alpine summit at the age of five, he quickly took the Alps by storm and, by his early 20s, was recognized as a rising star in the tough world of mountaineering. Derisive of the siege tactics employed by traditional Himalayan expeditions in the 1960s, Messner advocated a simpler alpine-style approach to climbing that emphasised fast ascents with minimal equipment. By the '70s he had set his sights on Everest, confidently announcing his ambition to climb the mountain 'by fair means', without the use of supplementary oxygen.

The prophecy was heroically fulfilled in 1978 when Messner, and Austrian Peter Habeler, became the first men to summit the world's tallest peak without oxygen – a feat that was considered physically impossible, if not suicidal, at the time. Unsatisfied with his team effort, Messner returned two years later, and hacked his way up the mountain's north face to the summit, alone, again without oxygen – a superhuman achievement that many have put on a par with the moon landing.

Messner's position as the Tiger Woods of mountaineering has long intrigued his fellow climbers. Not only is his aerobic capacity relatively average for a man of his age, but he also spent the bulk of his climbing career hampered by the loss of three fingers and seven toes following an ill-fated Himalayan expedition in 1970 (that also tragically claimed the life of his younger brother Günter).

Undaunted by the ageing process, the iron-willed Messner logged another record in 1986 when he became the first person to scale all Eight-thousanders (the 14 mountains in the world over 8000m). Shunning a well-earned retirement, he also partook in the first unassisted crossing of Antarctica.

These days Messner treks at a gentler pace, mainly in the Dolomites. Recently retired as a Euro MP for the Italian Green Party, he tends to his quintet of Messner Mountain Museums, the centrepiece of which is located in Firmian, 6km south of Bolzano ([Click here](#)).

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## Tours

The tourist office organises guided expeditions of a gentle nature around Bolzano from April to early November. A half-/full-day walk costs €8/20 and places must be reserved in advance. For information on more serious hikes in Alto Adige, contact local walking association **Club Alpino Italiano** (☎ 0471 97 81 72; Piazza delle Erbe 46; ☎ 11am-1pm & 5-7pm Tue-Fri) or call the **Alpine Information Office** (Alpenverein Südtirol; ☎ 0471 99 99 55).

## Sleeping

**Ostello della Gioventù Bolzano** (☎ 0471 30 08 65; [www.jugendherberge.it](http://www.jugendherberge.it); Via Renon 23; all incl breakfast dm €19.50-21.50, s €22-24; 🚻) Close to the train station, the three- and four-bed dorms in this new independent hostel are configured so that bunks are set at different angles and they're partly screened by timber lockers for added privacy. And, best of all, there's no daytime lockout here.

**Hotel Figl** (☎ 0471 97 84 12; [www.figl.net](http://www.figl.net); Piazza del Grano 9; s €80-100, d €100-110; 🍷 🍴) This is a well-priced and really stylish hotel with a streamlined ground-floor bar and chic, contemporary rooms with glass-partitioned bathrooms, chocolate, caramel and white tones, and geometric furniture. It's tucked away on a pretty piazza, just footsteps from Piazza Walther. An 'Italian breakfast' (espresso and brioche) costs €3; a hot-and-cold buffet costs €11. Pick up a permit from reception for free street parking, or arrange discounted garaged parking nearby.

**our pick Stadt Hotel Città** (☎ 0471 97 52 21; [www.hotelcitta.info](http://www.hotelcitta.info); Piazza Walther 21; s €94-110, d €135-180; 🍷 🍴 🚰) Taking price, location, ambience and facilities into account, the Stadt Città is the best hotel in town – no contest. Mixing Italian dynamism with German efficiency, the rooms blend funky with traditional, while the onsite cafe materialises like a dreamy Viennese apparition. Then there's the basement spa (free to guests), an oasis of Teutonic charm.

**Parkhotel Laurin** (☎ 0471 31 10 00; [www.laurin.it](http://www.laurin.it); Via Laurin 4; s €112-172, d €170-240; 🍷 🍴 🚰 🚰) Set in its own lush gardens in the centre of town, the Laurin has been Bolzano's choicest hotel since 1910. Spacious rooms are individually styled, with large marble bathrooms and original artworks. Jazz swings in the piano bar on Friday evening, and the Laurin's restaurant is also one of Bolzano's best – mains cost €23 to €24.

## Eating & Drinking

Local specialities include *Speckknödelsuppe* (bacon-dumpling soup), complemented with a red St Magdalener or Lagrein wine.

For nightlife, follow the locals heading for Piazza delle Erbe.

**our pick Fischbänke Pic-Nic Bar** (☎ 0471 97 17 14; Via Dott Streiter 26a; dishes €5-10; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) A sign next to the speakers that reads 'This is not McDonald's' says it all. Run by artist-host-*bon vivant* Cobo on the site of the old fish market, the Fischbänke has the market's original white-marble tables that you can pull up a stool at for a glass of Tyrolean wine, and quite possibly northern Italy's most beautiful bruschetta, while Cobo shows you his artwork, which includes a series of charismatic cartoon birds. Hours can vary if Cobo feels like shutting up early or (more likely) staying open late.

**Hopfen & Co** (☎ 0471 30 07 88; Piazza delle Erbe 17; meals €15-20; 🕒 9.30am-1am Mon-Sat) Step back into the Habsburg era at this venerable 800-year-old inn that serves up hearty portions of traditional dishes, including sauerkraut and sausages cooked in beer. The bar is a dark wood-panelled affair, fine for sampling the cloudy, unfiltered beer that's brewed on the premises in a couple of gleaming copper vats.

**Vögele** (☎ 0471 97 39 38; Via Goethe 3; meals €19-24; 🕒 9am-1am) Dating back to 1277 and owned by the same family since 1840, this antiques-filled pub and restaurant serves hearty Tyrolean fare, such as schnitzels, in candlelight surrounds; otherwise you can just come by for a drink.

**Restaurant Walthers'** (☎ 0471 32 40 22; Piazza Walther 6; meals €20-25; 🕒 8am-1am Mon-Sat, to 7pm Sun; 🍷) Take a seat on the terrace spilling onto Bolzano's main square, or head into the cool, dark interior to dine on Asian- and Mediterranean-influenced dishes such as wok-fried tagliatelle with prawns, grilled tuna with vegetables, sesame seeds and wasabi, or spit-roasted veal. Don't miss Walthers' espresso mousse, served in a classic espresso cup and topped with fresh cream and coffee beans.

**our pick Stadt Caffè Città** (☎ 0471 97 52 51; Piazza Walther 21; snacks €7-15; 🕒 8am-1am Mon-Sat, 8am-7pm Sun; 🍷) Ah, grand Viennese hospitality transplanted to within spitting distance of the dreamy Dolomites. Where do you start? The glittering *fin-de-siècle* decor, the well-groomed but cheerful waiters,

the creamy coffee, the ‘free’ buffet snacks or – wait for it – the choice of 32 different daily newspapers in over a dozen languages. Now that’s service!

Pick up fruit, vegetables, bread, cheese and meats from the morning **market** (Piazza delle Erbe; ☎ Mon-Sat).

## Getting There & Around

**Bolzano airport** (Aeroporto di Bolzano; ☎ 0471 25 52 55; [www.abd-airport.it](http://www.abd-airport.it)) is served by flights to Rome, Olbia and Cagliari. Cheap airport transfers are available through **Locus Coach** ([www.locuscoach.com](http://www.locuscoach.com)).

Buses run by **SAD** ([www.sad.it](http://www.sad.it)) leave from the **bus station** (☎ 840 00 04 71; Via Perathoner) for destinations throughout the province, including Val Gardena (up to 12 daily), Brunico (up to 20 connections daily) and Merano (55 minutes, hourly). SAD buses also head for resorts outside the province, including Cortina d’Ampezzo. Updated timetables are on the SAD website.

Bolzano **train station** (Piazza Stazione) is connected by hourly trains with Merano (€2.40, 40 minutes), Trento (€3.35, 30 minutes) and Verona (€8, 2½ hours), with less frequent connections to Brunico (1½ hours, six daily) in the Val Pusteria.

Bicycles can be picked up at the open-air **bike-rental stall** (☎ 0471 99 75 78; Via della Stazione 2; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Easter-Oct) near the train station. Bikes cost a giveaway €1 for six hours, but must be returned overnight; have money for a deposit and bring some ID. The tourist office also rents bikes for €5 per day (plus deposit). Bolzano is up there with Amsterdam in terms of bike-friendliness and you can exit the city without touching a road on countless willow-lined bike paths.

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## MERANO

**pop 34,300 / elev 323m**

Leafy boulevards, exotic palm trees and the sound of birds singing in the town centre – Merano is where Middle Europe meets the Mediterranean over spaghetti, strudel and a *contorno* (side dish) of Dante and Nietzsche. Long lauded for its balmy climate, the town evolved into a spa in the 19th century, when wealthy pre—Jane Fonda era health freaks filled the burgeoning suburbs with regal parks and palatial villas, including the grandiose Castel Trauttmansdorff. Positioned in the town centre, the Terme Merano still draws visitors to its modern pool complex overlooking a classic riverside promenade.

Having spent 90% of the last millennium under Viennese influence, Merano is a long way from Sicily and other traditional Italian destinations. German is often more useful than Italian here (although everyone is bilingual) and the locals are usually more at home tucking into beer and sausages than tackling wine and fettuccine.

## Orientation & Information

The train and bus stations are a 10-minute stroll from the centre. Exit the train station, turn right into Via Europa and at Piazza Mazzini take Corso Libertà – past the tourist office and several banks with ATMs – to reach the historic centre. Pedestrianised Via dei Portici is the main shopping street.

**Ospedale Civile Tappeiner** (☎ 0473 26 33 33; Via Rossini 5) For medical emergencies.

**Post office** (Via Roma 2) On the other side of the Passirio river from the old town.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0473 23 52 23; [www.meraninfo.it](http://www.meraninfo.it); Corso Libertà 35; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat)

## Sights

The historic centre of town surrounds arcaded Via dei Portici and Piazza del Duomo – take any of the streets off Corso Libertà near the tourist office (leading away from the river).

Exhibits chronicle 200 years of female fashions at the **Museo della Donna** (☎ 0473 23 12 16; Via dei Portici 68; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm Sat Jan-Oct, to 6pm Sat Mon Nov & Dec), with plenty of period costumes and accessories. The small but intriguing **Museo Ebraico** (☎ 0473 23 61 27; Via Schiller 14; admission free; ☎ 3-6pm Tue & Wed, 9am-noon Thu, 3-5pm Fri) is housed in Merano's synagogue, built in 1901, and recounts the history of the town's Jewish population from the early 19th century through to WWII.

Just outside the town of Tirolo, **Castel Tirolo** (Schlosstirol; ☎ 0473 22 02 21; [www.schlosstirol.it](http://www.schlosstirol.it); adult/child €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar—Oct, to 6pm Aug) is the new home of the Castel Tirolo Museum, which spans the history of the entire Tyrol. In the keep you'll find exhibits interpreting the turbulent history of South Tyrol during the 20th century. Many of the displays are rotated on a regular basis. The castle can be reached by taking the chairlift from Merano to Tirolo (opposite); trains and buses also serve the village.

Exotic plants, an aviary and a rainbow of 100,000-odd tulips (in season) surround **Castel Trauttmansdorff** ([www.trauttmansdorff.it](http://www.trauttmansdorff.it); Via San Valentino 51a), a mid-19th-century castle where Empress Sissi stayed while taking the waters at Merano. Inside the castle, the **Touriseum** (Tourism Museum; ☎ 0473 27 01 72; [www.touriseum.it](http://www.touriseum.it); garden & museum adult/child €10.20/7.50; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Mar—Apr & Oct—mid-Nov, to 9pm May-Sep) charts the last two centuries of Alpine tourism, from Baedeker-wielding aristocrats to woolly-hatted snowboarding junkies. A garden-set restaurant and a cafe by the waterlily pond both offer a chance to soak up the lush surrounds.

Beer lovers should book in for a tour of the **Forst Brewery** (☎ 0473 26 01 11; Forst), just outside Merano. The tourist office has details; tours are by advance reservation only.

## Activities

For centuries **Terme Merano** (Therme Meran; ☎ 0473 25 20 00; [www.kurbadmeran.it](http://www.kurbadmeran.it); Piazza Terme 1; swimming pools per 2hr adult/child €10.50/7, all day €15/10; ☎ 9am-10pm) has been Merano's main draw. The spa was recently renovated and now revolves around a futuristic glass cube. There's a staggering 13 indoor and 12 outdoor pools (including a seawater pool with underwater music), though only a couple of them use the town's actual thermal waters. The range of treatments on offer is equally lengthy, with everything from a South Tyrolean sheep's-wool bath (€29, 20 minutes) to multiday detox packages. The spa complex is also home to a restaurant and a four-star hotel. Though it has a staff of 100, treatment bookings need to be made at least one month in advance.

Some 6km east of town, the **Funivia Val di Nova** (adult half-/full-day ski pass €16/25; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.15-5pm) cable car, operated by **Funivie Monte Ivigna** (☎ 0473 23 48 21; [www.meran2000.com](http://www.meran2000.com), in Italian; Via Val di Nova 37), carries winter-sports enthusiasts up to Piffling in **Merano 2000**, a small ski station at 2000m, with 30km of slopes served by five chairlifts, a gondola and a couple of drag lifts. Skiing on the mountain is limited and is best suited to beginners. Bus 1B links Merano train station with the Val di Nova cable car.

The tourist office runs guided walks between July and September, and distributes a free map, marked up with various parks and walks, including the popular *Passeggiata Tappeiner*, which kicks off on Via Laurin and meanders for 4km around Monte Benedetto (514m) before dropping down to the banks of the Passirio. The **chairlift** (☎ 0473 92 31 05; Via Laurin; 🕒 9am-6pm Sep-Jun, to 7pm Jul & Aug), next to the start of the footpath, links Merano with the village of **Tirolo**, from where a **cable car** (☎ 0473 92 34 80) carries on up the mountain to **Muta**. Another itinerary, the *Passeggiata Gilf*, makes for a pleasant riverside stroll – a different poem is carved on each of the 24 wooden benches lining the footpath.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Ostello della Gioventù Merano** (☎ 0473 20 71 54; [www.jugendherberge.it](http://www.jugendherberge.it); Via Carducci 77; dm €19.50, s €22; 📍 📺) An easy stroll from the train station and less than a block from the riverside promenade, this spotless independent hostel has a pool table, table football (for rainy days), a laundry, as well as 59 beds in ensuite dorms sleeping a maximum of four.

**Hotel Graf von Meran** (☎ 0473 23 21 81; [www.contedimerano.com](http://www.contedimerano.com); Via delle Corse 78; s €48-60, d €76-100; 📍) Near Merano's elegant shopping strip Via dei Portici, rooms at this choice hotel are done out in elegant yet sparing decor. Half-/full-board at the timber-panelled restaurant costs an extra €11/18 per person.

**Vigilius Mountain Resort** (☎ 0473 55 66 00; [www.vigilius.it](http://www.vigilius.it); Lana; s €225-235, d €310-345; 📍 📺) Sick of driving? Dump the car in Vigilius' private garage in the valley and take a seven-minute cable-car ride – the only way to reach this eco-spa resort above Merano. Built from natural materials (clay walls, slatted timber), this mountain haven has spa treatments that will destress the weariest traveller, including pine-cone reflexology, polenta peels, a glassed-in Jacuzzi overlooking the peaks, and two restaurants (one traditional, one gourmet). Prices include cable-car tickets and activities such as yoga and Nordic walking.

**Café König** (☎ 0473 23 71 62; Corso della Libertà 168) Merano's best *pasticceria* (pastry shop) is an old-fashioned local gathering spot, with a tempting takeaway counter up front, and comfy tables down the back. Great for an espresso and slice of strudel or something more filling. Snacks cost from €3.50.

**Vinoteca Pizzeria Relax** (☎ 0473 23 67 35; Via Cavour 31; pizzas around €7-9; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 6pm-12.30am) This bottle-lined bar-restaurant is a great place to try a glass or two of Alto Adige's fine wines, as well as steaming hot pizzas.

**our pick Forsterbräu** (☎ 0473 23 65 35; Corso della Libertà 90; meals around €20; 🕒 Wed-Mon) Set around an atmospheric courtyard, this typically Tyrolean restaurant cooks up a lovely *Gulaschsuppe* (goulash soup) and a choice of fresh trout dishes. The place is actually part of the Forst brewery concern, making a pint of Forst beer a must.

## Getting There & Around

SAD buses connect Merano **bus station** (Piazza Stazione) with Monte Santa Caterina and other villages that give access to the Gruppo del Tessa, as well as to Silandro and the valleys leading into the Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio and the Ortles range.

The train ride to Bolzano (€2.40, almost hourly) is an easy 40-minute journey from Merano **train station** (Piazza Stazione). At **Bici Val Venosta** (☎ 0473 20 15 00; 🕒 8am-8pm Apr-Nov), next door to the station, you can buy an **Event Card** (adult/child €16/8) allowing a day's bike hire (plus helmet) along with unlimited train travel between Bolzano—Merano—Malles. Bike trails track the whole 65km route.

## PARCO NAZIONALE DELLO STELVIO

It's not quite Yellowstone, but 1346 sq km **Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio** (☎ 0469 0 30 46; [www.parks.it/parco.nazionale.stelvio](http://www.parks.it/parco.nazionale.stelvio)) is northern Italy's (and the Alps') largest national park, spilling into the next-door region of Lombardy and bordering with the Parco Nazionale Svizzero in neighbouring Switzerland.

The park is primarily the preserve of walkers who come here to enjoy the extensive network of well-organised *rifugi* and marked trails which, while often challenging, don't require the mountaineering know-how necessary elsewhere in the Dolomites. Stelvio's central massif is guarded over by Monte Cevedale (3769m) and Ortles (3905m) protecting glaciers, forests, numerous wildlife species and myriad cultural traditions, both Italian and South Tyrolean. Less than 100 years ago, this majestic land served as the frontline in WWI and remnants of old defences along with a small museum bear testament to the slaughter.

Although less blemished with ski facilities than other regions, Stelvio has a couple of well-serviced runs at Solda and the **Passo della Stelvio** (2757m), both of which offer the novelty of year-round skiing. The latter is the second-highest pass in the Alps and is approached from the north from the hamlet of Trafoi (1543m) on one of Europe's most spectacular roads, a series of tight switchbacks covering 15km, with some *very* steep gradients. The road is also famous among cyclists, who train all winter to prepare for its gut-wrenching ascent (it has often featured in the *Giro d'Italia*).

Stelvio can be approached from Merano (from where you have easy access to the Val d'Ultimo, Val Martello, Val di Solda and the Passo Stelvio), or from the Val di Sole in Trentino.

## Bormio

elev 1125m

Lying immediately south of Passo della Stelvio, the small medieval town of Bormio is technically in Lombardy but acts as an unofficial northern HQ for Stelvio National Park. Its curative springs have been famous since Roman times.

Bormio is an active ski resort thanks to its proximity to some of Italy's highest runs. Cima Bianca rises just above the town, while nearby the emblematic year-round Pista Stelvio drops 1800m over 8km and hosts the annual Downhill World Cup.

The **Bormio tourist office** (☎ 0342 90 33 00; [www.bormioonline.com](http://www.bormioonline.com); Via Roma 131b, Bormio; ☎ seasonal, vary) is a good source of park information. Nearby is the **park headquarters** (☎ 0342 91 91 99; Via Roma 26) with maps, weather forecasts and trekking advice.

Aquatic harmony can still be sought at the **Bormio Terme** (☎ 0342 90 13 25; [www.bormioterme.it](http://www.bormioterme.it); Via Stelvio 10; admission 1hr €8-11; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon & Wed, to midnight Fri, to 8pm Thu, Sat & Sun, closed May), which offers numerous pools along with scads of spa treatments (inhalations, mud therapies and so on).

For a higher level of hedonism, stay at the **Hotel Bagni Vecchi** (☎ 0342 91 01 31; [www.bagnidibormio.it](http://www.bagnidibormio.it); Via Statale Stelvio; d €208-268; ☎ ☎), a luxurious spa complex on the old Roman bathing site, with 30 hot springs, 11 outdoor pools and a host of interesting treatments. The rather steep hotel rates include unlimited spa access, or you can arrive independently. Leonardo da Vinci took a (much cheaper) dip here in 1493.

## Val di Solda

The village of **Solda** (1906m), at the head of the Val di Solda, is a low-key ski resort that acts as a base for walkers and climbers in summer. Challenging trails lead quickly to high altitudes, including trail No 28, which crosses the Passo di Madriccio (3123m) into the Val Martello. Solda's **tourist office** (☎ 0473 61 30 15; Solda; 🕒 seasonal, vary) has information on summer and winter activities.

Located – quite literally – inside a hill, the unique **Messner Mountain Museum – Ortles** (☎ 0473 61 32 66; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 2-6pm Wed-Mon, closed May & Nov) articulates the theme of ‘ice’ with artistically displayed exhibits on glaciers, ice-climbing and pole expeditions. Nearby stands the **Yak & Yeti** (Località Solda 55), a 17th-century farmhouse that Messner has transformed into a restaurant.

For reasonably priced and easily accessible digs try the family-run **Hotel Post** (☎ 0473 61 30 24; Via Principale 24; d from €80; 🍷 🍴 📺 🚿), an extension of a 100-year-old inn amplified to include a full quota of ‘wellness’ facilities.

SAD buses connect Solda with Merano Monday to Friday during the summer only; you need to change at Spondigna.

## Val Martello

Every Alto Adige valley has its speciality. In Martello it's strawberries; there's even an annual **Strawberry Festival** held here each June, inaugurated with a giant cake.

**Martello** is a convenient gateway to Stelvio National Park, with gentle rambles and more hard-core hiking adventures available. Trail No 20 up into the Val di Peder is an easy walk, with some lovely picnic spots along the way; look out for chamois and deer. Alternatively you can cobble together a three-day hike over to Val di Rabbia (and through the German/Italian language divide) heading out on trail No 4/No 142 towards Lago Fontana Bianca and ultimately Paso di Rabbi. Overnight accommodation is available in the Canziani and Stella Alpine *rifugi*.

Unspoiled by ski lifts and downhill ski runs, Martello specialises instead in cross-country skiing in the winter. Climbers can attempt the valley's frozen waterfalls from January to March.

The self-styled ‘berry-accommodation’ is **Hotel Bergfrieden** (☎ 0473 74 45 16; Meiern 84, Martell; d €70-90; 🍷 🍴 📺 🚿).

The road into the valley is open year-round, and SAD bus 107 runs to Martello village from Silandro.

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## VAL GARDENA

Despite its proximity to Bolzano, Val Gardena's historical isolation amid the castlelike turrets of Gruppo del Sella and Sassolungo has left it harbouring many staunch pre—tourist era traditions. This is one of only five valleys in the Dolomites where Ladin is a majority tongue. The cultural idiosyncrasies also extend to its world-famous woodcarvers. Scour the shops of Ortisei or Santa Cristina and you'll find plenty of deftly sculpted wooden toys – an archetypal Gardena souvenir. In more recent times, the valley has become an ‘everyman’ ski area, less preoccupied with celebrity-spotting and more concerned with classic runs and fine powder.

The valley's main trilingual towns, **Ortisei** (population 5700; elevation 1236m), **Santa Cristina** (population 1840; elevation 1428m) and **Selva** (population 2580; elevation 1563m), all have good



facilities.

## Information

The valley is covered by [www.valgardena.it](http://www.valgardena.it).

**Ortisei tourist office** (☎ 0471 77 76 00; Via Rezia 1; 🕒 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am or 10am-noon & 5-6.30pm Sun)

**Santa Cristina tourist office** (☎ 0471 77 78 00; Via Chemun 9; 🕒 8am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am or 9.30am-noon Sun)

**Selva tourist office** (☎ 0471 77 79 00; Via Mëisules 213; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am or 9am-noon & 4.30pm or 5-6.30pm Sun)

**Tourist medical service** Ortisei (☎ 0471 79 77 85); Selva (☎ 0471 79 42 66)

## Activities

In addition to its own fine downhill ski runs, the valley forms part of the [Sella Ronda](#), for which you will need a Dolomiti Superski pass. Ski passes covering the Val Gardena and Alpe di Siusi are marginally cheaper – €36/102/180 for one/three/six days (high season €40/113/198).

Vallunga, near Selva, is one of the best spots for cross-country skiing. There are stunning trails around Forcella Pordoi and Val Lasties in the Gruppo del Sella, and on the Sassolungo.

This is also a walkers' paradise with endless possibilities, from the challenging Alte Vie of the Gruppo del Sella and the magnificent Parco Naturale Puez-Odle, to picturesque strolls for walkers of all abilities in spots such as the Vallunga. Those seeking guidance can contact the nearest office of the **Scuola di Alpinismo Catores** (☎ 0471 79 82 23; [www.catores.com](http://www.catores.com); Piazza Stettenect 1, Ortisei; 🕒 5.30-7pm) or the **cultural centre** (☎ 0471 78 41 33; Selva; 🕒 5.30-7pm). Both Alpine guide schools can organise botanical walks, as well as climbing courses, glacier excursions and treks.

In summer cable cars carry walkers into the mountains from all three towns in the valley. From Ortisei you can ride a cable car to Seceda which, at 2518m, offers an unforgettable view of the Gruppo di Odle, a cathedral-like series of mountain spires. From Seceda, trail No 2A passes through a typical Alpine environment – impossibly green, sloping pastures dotted with wooden *malghe* (Alpine huts) used by herders as summer shelters.

## Sleeping & Eating

Tourist offices have full lists of sleeping and eating options in the valley; Ortisei in particular has plenty for anyone seeking a bit of luxury.

**Hotel am Stetteneck** (☎ 0471 79 65 63; [www.stetteneck.com](http://www.stetteneck.com); Via Rezia 14, Ortisei; d from €78; 📍 📞) A short walk from both cable cars, this historic hotel dates from 1913. During WWI Italian troops were bivouacked here and in WWII it served as a military hospital. These days it presents a more benign face with cheery rooms, big bay windows and a Tyrol-meets-Mediterranean restaurant.

**Hotel Posta Al Cervo** (☎ 0471 79 51 74; [www.hotelpostaalcervo.com](http://www.hotelpostaalcervo.com); Via Meisules 116, Selva; d half-board €80-100; 📍 📞) Right in Selva's village centre, the Posta al Cervo is a friendly and reasonably priced little place with cosy, woody rooms and a fine restaurant serving Ladin and Italian cuisine. Full board costs an extra €11 per person.

**Charme Hotel Uridl** (☎ 0471 79 32 15; [www.uridl.it](http://www.uridl.it); Via Chemun 43, Santa Cristina; d half-board

€98-190; ☎) This Santa Cristina hotel looks an absolute picture on chilly nights when it's covered with snow and its lights are glowing inside. A free ski bus from the hotel drops you at the slopes, and in summer there's a sun-drenched garden to loll about in. Dinner at the sweet little restaurant is served by candlelight.

**Ristorante Concordia** (☎ 0471 79 62 76; Via Roma 41, Ortisei; meals €20-24) You're sure of getting the real deal here: all the pasta served in Concordia's wood-panelled dining room is made by hand, as are the breads, including olive, vegetable and nut varieties; the ham, too, is smoked on the premises and the wines come from the surrounding vineyards.

## Getting There & Around

The Val Gardena is accessible from Bolzano and Bressonone by SAD buses year-round, and the neighbouring valleys in summer. In summer the hop-on, hop-off Sella Ronda bus, travelling around the circuit, costs €10/5 per adult/child; the Val Gardena card gets you a week's unlimited transport for €64. Regular buses connect the towns along the valley and you can reach the Alpe di Siusi by either bus or cable car. Full timetables are available at the tourist offices.

In winter the Val Gardena Ski Express shuttle bus service links the various villages and lifts in the valley; a €5 ticket covers a week's unlimited travel.

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## ALPE DI SIUSI & PARCO NATURALE SCILIAR-CATINACCIO

In mainland Europe, there are few more jarring or beautiful juxtapositions than the undulating green pastures of the Alpe di Siusi –the continent's largest plateau – ending dramatically at the base of the towering Sciliar Mountains. To the southeast lies the more jagged Catinaccio range, best described by its German name 'Rosengarten' for the eerie pink hue given off by the mountain's dolomite rock at sunset. The two areas are protected in the **Parco Naturale Sciliar-Catinaccio**, established in 1974. Other quirks include the region's distinctive onion-domed churches and curative hay baths (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

Village **tourist offices** (☎ 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Compaccio (☎ 0471 72 79 04); Castelrotto (☎ 0471 70 63 33; Piazza Kraus 1); Fiè allo Sciliar (☎ 0471 72 50 27; Via Bolzano 4); Siusi (☎ 0471 70 70 24; Via Sciliar 16) have reams of information on winter activities such as downhill skiing, ski-mountaineering, cross-country skiing and walking trails (with snowshoes) in the area, which is part of the Dolomiti Superski network.

Hiking is a joy here, and you don't need to be a mountaineer to reach great heights. The gentle slopes of the Alpe di Siusi are perfect for families with kids, and average stamina will get you to the **Rifugio Bolzano** (☎ 0471 61 20 24; dm/d €18/30), one of the Alps' oldest mountain huts, which rests at 2457m, just under Monte Pez (2564m), the Sciliar's summit. Take the Panorama **chairlift** (one-way/return €3.50/5) from Compaccio to the Alpenhotel, followed by paths S, No 5 and No 1 to the *rifugio*; from here it's an easy walk to Monte Pez (three hours total). The more jagged peaks of the Catinaccio group and the Sassolungo are nearby. These mountains are revered among climbers worldwide, and harbour several *vie ferrate* ([Click here](#)) and loads of good trails for mountain bikers. They're usually accessed from Vigo in Val di Fiemme.

The Alpe di Siusi is accessible by SAD bus from Bolzano, the Val Gardena and Bressanone. By car, exit the Brenner motorway (A22) at Bolzano Nord or Chiusa. The world's longest **aerial cableway**

([www.seiseralmbahn.it](http://www.seiseralmbahn.it); one-way/return €9/12; ☎ 8am-7pm mid-Dec—Mar & mid-May—Oct) is a dizzying 15-minute, 4300m trip (800m ascent) from Siusi to Compaccio. The road linking the two is closed to normal traffic when the cableway is open; visitors with a hotel booking in the zone can obtain a permit from Compaccio's tourist office, allowing them to drive between 4pm and 10am. Organise your pass before arriving in the area. Regular buses operated by **Silbernagl** (☎ 0471 70 74 00; [www.silbernagl.it](http://www.silbernagl.it)) serve the area from Castelrotto and Siusi.

**Hotel Alla Torre/Gasthof Zum Turm** (☎ 0471 70 63 49; [www.zumturm.com](http://www.zumturm.com); Kofelgasse 8, Castelrotto; s/d €42/88; 📄) has two names, hinting at a split personality, but this place, within bell-ringing distance of Castelrotto's onion-domed church, is anything but schizophrenic. With its neat rooms, apple strudel—friendly garden cafe and eclectic Tyrolean artefacts, your biggest dilemma will probably be choosing which superlatives to write in the guestbook when you leave.

**our pick Hotel Heubad** (Hotel Hay Bath; ☎ 0471 72 50 20; [www.hotelheubad.com](http://www.hotelheubad.com), in Italian; Via Sciliar 12, Fiè allo Sciliar; d half-board €122-190; ☎ closed Nov; 📄 ✂ 📺 📺 📺) is the area's most charming spot to sleep. Beautifully renovated, the hotel is a haven for Tyrolean hay baths (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)). Spacious rooms blending light timber and splashes of bright colour open out onto balconies with views of the Alpe di Siusi. The carved-timber restaurant serves mountains of traditional Tyrolean fare.

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## THE LADIN TRADITION

At one point the entire Tyrol was Ladin but today five remote valleys – Val Gardena and Val Badia in Alto Adige, Val di Fassa in Trentino, and the Arabba and Ampezzo areas near Cortina in the Veneto – safeguard ancient Ladin traditions.

Ladin language and culture can be traced back to around 15 BC, when the people of the Central Alps were forcibly united into the Roman province of Rhaetia. The original inhabitants modified the Romans' Latin language to such an extent that by the 5th century it had evolved into an independent Romance language, known as Rhaeto-Romanic.

Ironically, it's partly because of the split between Italian and German in the region that Ladin has endured, with a total of 20,000 first-language speakers today, of which 9000 live in the Val Gardena. It is not only older folk who speak it: alongside German and Italian, 50% of the local schooling is in Ladin, and the survival of the Ladin cultural and linguistic identity is protected by law. According to one Val Gardena local in her 20s, to be Ladin is 'a way of feeling. I've grown up speaking the language; I don't feel Italian, or South Tyrolean, I feel Ladin.'

Ladin, which has completely different dialects across its five strongholds, remains a small but thriving language. Contemporary media includes the newspaper **La Usc di Ladins** (The Voice; [www.lauscdiladins.com](http://www.lauscdiladins.com), in Ladin & Italian), a five-minute daily TV news bulletin on national broadcaster **RAI** in Ladin (alternating between the different dialects each day), and the radio station **Radio Gherdëina** (94.2 FM), which is broadcast from the Val Gardena, and is great to tune into while you're here (and plays better music than your average Italian radio station, too).

The following are some excellent places to discover the culture's vibrant poetry and legends; peopled by fairies, elves, giants and heroes:

**Institut Cultural Ladin** (☎ 0462 76 42 67; [www.istladin.net](http://www.istladin.net); Via della Chiesa 6, Vigo di Fassa, Val di Fassa) Extensive library and film archive; also runs Ladin-language courses.

**Museo Ladin di Fascia** (☎ 0462 76 01 82; [museo@istladin.net](mailto:museo@istladin.net); Via Milano 5, Pozza di Fassa, Val di Fassa; admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-7pm Jul & Aug, 3-7pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jun)

**Museo Ladin (Ortisei)** (☎ 0471 79 75 54; Piazza San Antonio, Ortisei, Val Gardena; admission free; 🕒 10am-noon & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 3-6.30pm Tue-Fri Jun, Sep & Oct, 3-6.30pm Tue & Fri Nov-Apr) Ask here or at the tourist office for information on woodcarving courses during July and August.

**Museo Ladin (San Martino)** (☎ 0474 52 40 20; [www.museumladin.it](http://www.museumladin.it); Via Tor 72, San Martino, Val Badia; adult/child €6/4.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 2-6pm Sun mid-Mar—Oct, 2-6pm Wed-Fri end Dec—mid-Mar) Atmospherically set in a castle 15km south of Brunico.

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## VAL BADIA & ALPE DI FANES

British writer JRR Tolkien was so overawed by Val Badia and the Alpe di Fanes that he is said to have used them for inspiration in *Lord of the Rings*. He wasn't the first or only mystic. For centuries potent Ladin legends have resonated across this lush and magical land, which since 1980 has been protected by the **Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies**. Not surprisingly, the valley and the adjoining high plains of Fanes are often touted as one of the most evocative places in the Dolomites. You can access the latter either on foot or by cable car from Passo Falzarego.

Villages in the valley – Colfosco (1645m), Pedraces (1324m), La Villa (1433m), San Cassiano (1537m) and Corvara (1568m) – together form the Alta Badia ski area, which is part of the Dolomiti Superski domain. Of the Alta Badia's 130km of slopes, it is the Gran Risa ski slope, 4.5km north of Corvara in La Villa, that is undoubtedly the most legendary.

### Information

All villages have tourist offices; the largest are in Corvara and La Villa. The closest public hospital is in Brunico.

**Associazione Guide Alpine Val Badia** (☎ 0471 83 68 98; [guide.valbadia@rolmail.net](mailto:guide.valbadia@rolmail.net); Via Burje, Corvara) Advice on skiing, heli-skiing, ice climbing and advanced walking trails. Phone lines are only staffed between 6pm and 7pm.

**Corvara tourist office** (☎ 0471 83 61 76; [www.altabadia.org](http://www.altabadia.org); Via Col Alt 36; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Sat, 10.30am-12.30pm Sun) A good source of information.

**Helicopter mountain rescue** (☎ 0471 79 71 71)

**La Villa tourist office** (☎ 0471 84 70 37; [www.altabadia.org](http://www.altabadia.org); Via Colz 75; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 4-6pm Sun Dec-Mar & mid-Jun—mid-Sep) Has reduced hours outside these months.

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## TO HEAVEN IN A HAY BATH

The diametric opposite of going to hell in a handcart is surely a soak in the hay.

Hay baths originate from farmers taking a quick, refreshing snooze on their freshly cut hay. The mountain meadows of the Alpe di Siusi's lower slopes – with their aromatic cocktail of grasses, plants and medicinal herbs, such as lavender and thyme – have the best grass. It's cut when damp and left to ferment for several days.

When it's bath time, you strip off your gear (yep, all of it), then lie directly on a mattress strewn

with warm, wet hay, which is suspended over a bathtub. More wet hay is massed on top of you, covering everything but your face. The mattress is then lowered into the tub, and as you lie cocooned in the hay, it heats up until you're sweating profusely. Just when you think that you'd rather be out of it (around 15 minutes or so), the mattress is lifted up out of the bath and you're given a towel to wipe off the hay. Then you lie down on a regular bed and are wrapped Egyptian mummy—like in blankets. And even though you're no longer in contact with the warm hay, your body heats up a second time, and you find yourself sweating all over again. Despite residual hay invariably still sticking to your skin, it's best not to take a shower for several hours to let the herbs work their magic. Taking a hay bath (or ideally, a program of seven) is said to cure all sorts of ailments, but sheer relaxation is reason enough: afterwards, the sensation is almost like floating.

You'll find hay baths in many of the province's spas, but you can't do better – for price or atmosphere – than its first-ever hay-bathing station, **Hotel Heubad**. Opened in 1903, today the hotel is run by its founder's great- and great-great-grandchildren. Even if you're not staying here, you can drop by the hotel for a heavenly hay bath (€30, around 45 minutes all up), provided you book in advance.

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## Activities

The Alta Badia is located on the **Sella Ronda**, with the best access from Corvara, and forms part of the Dolomiti Superski network ([Click here](#)). A cheaper pass for Alta Badia slopes costs €36/104/160 for one/three/five days; passes are sold at the **ski pass office** (☎ 0471 83 63 66; Via Col Alt 88c). Ski schools are listed online at [www.altabadiaski.com](http://www.altabadiaski.com).

From the Passo Falzarego (2105m), 20km east of Corvara, a **cable car** ascends into the Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies. Alternatively, pick up trail No 12 from near La Villa or trail No 11, which joins Alta Via No 1 at the Capanna Alpina, a few kilometres off the main road between Passo Valparola and San Cassiano. Either trail takes you up to the Alpe di Fanes and the two *rifugi*, Lavarella and Fanes.

A combination of cable car and chairlift will take you from Corvara up the Gruppo del Sella at Vallon (2550m), where you'll get a spectacular view across to the Marmolada glacier.

Horseback riding, mountain biking and hang-gliding are other popular valley activities. Tandem flights with paragliding school **Centro Volo Libero Alta Badia** (☎ 0471 84 75 92; [www.cvl-altabadia.com](http://www.cvl-altabadia.com), in Italian; Via Bosc da Plan 46, La Villa) start at €65. Tourist offices have a list of places where you can hire mountain bikes; hotels often have bikes for guests.

## Sleeping & Eating

Most hotels and restaurants open from early December to early April and mid-June to early October. Tourist offices have more information.

**Hotel La Villa** (☎ 0471 84 70 35; [www.hotel-lavilla.it](http://www.hotel-lavilla.it); Boscdaplan 176, La Villa; d €70-130, half-board d €86-152; 📞 📺 📺) Fully renovated in 2006, La Villa (in the village of La Villa) sports larch-wood furniture and a cosy Ladin ambience. There's a wellness centre, kids playroom and onsite restaurant serving traditional Ladin cuisine. Altogether a good bang for your buck.

**Posta Zirm Hotel** (☎ 0471 83 61 75; [www.postazirm.com](http://www.postazirm.com); Via Col Alt 95, Corvara; s half-board €99-145, d half-board €178-270; 📞 📺) Dating back to 1808, this landmark hotel is situated at the top of the street next to Corvara's Sport Kostner shopping complex. The restaurant is highly regarded, and the tavern has the best après-ski scene in town.

**St Hubertus** (☎ 0471 84 95 00; [www.rosalpina.it](http://www.rosalpina.it); Strada Micura de Ru 20, San Cassiano; set menus

from €80, mains €27-35; ☎ dinner Wed-Mon) Set in the superluxurious Rosa Alpina Hotel & Spa (don't even look at the rates here unless you're planning on re-mortgaging your house), the two-Michelin-star St Hubertus offers the kind of 'event' meal that you've been scrimping your whole trip to afford. If you're going to invest your under-the-bed savings in one romantic blow-out, this could be the place. Try the local beef wrapped in mountain hay.

## Getting There & Away

Hourly **SAD buses** (☎ 800 846047; [www.sad.it](http://www.sad.it)) link Alta Badia's villages with Bolzano (2½ hours) and Brunico (1¼ hours) in winter and summer, with fewer in spring and autumn. Less-frequent services link Corvara with the Val Gardena, Passo Sella and Passo Pordoi, Canazei and the Passo Falzarego. Buses re-route in winter to avoid crossing high mountain passes.

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## VAL PUSTERIA

The narrow, verdant Val Pusteria – also known as the 'green valley' – appears more pastoral and less crowded than its southern counterparts. Running from Bressanone (Brixen) east to San Candido (Innichen), the region is profoundly German-speaking and some of the dual German-Italian town names don't sound remotely alike. The area's *pièce de résistance* is the ethereal **Parco Naturale delle Dolomiti di Sesto**, harbourer of some of the most famous Dolomite peaks – among them the much-photographed Tre Cime di Lavaredo.

The valley's main centre, **Brunico** (Bruneck in German; population 13,700; elevation 835m), is a busy if unremarkable market town linked by cable car to the **Plan de Corones** ski area 4km to the south. Ample green and blue runs make this nexus ideal for beginners. The Dolomiti Superski pass can be used here, and gear can be hired in Brunico and Plan de Corones. Brunico's **tourist office** (☎ 0474 55 57 22; [www.bruneck.com](http://www.bruneck.com); Piazza Municipio 7; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is the main point of contact for the region, and has detailed information on sleeping and eating options in the town and its surrounding villages and countryside. In the town centre, try **Hotel Blitzburg** (☎ 0474 55 57 23; [www.blitzburg.it](http://www.blitzburg.it); Via Europa 10; d half-board €90-148; ☎), an atmospheric old place offering big, bright rooms and a sauna.

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## VIE FERRATE – THE IRON WAYS

During WWI, while the British and French were drowning in the mud of Flanders, their Italian allies were engaged in an equally terrifying conflict against their Austrian foes along a battlefield that cut across the Dolomites from Passo di Monte Croce in the east to Marmolada in the west. But, hidden in the swirling mountain mist, two far more foreboding enemies awaited: the freezing winter weather and the precipitous terrain.

The scars of this brutal and lengthy WWI campaign are still evident in the Dolomites today, etched indelibly over a mountain landscape littered with ingeniously sculpted tunnels, trenches and emplacements. But it is the high-altitude trails that have left the most lasting legacy.

In order to maximise ease of movement in the rugged peaks, the two armies attached ropes and ladders across seemingly impregnable crags in a series of fixed-protection climbing paths known as *vie ferrate* (iron ways). Renovated with steel rungs, bridges and heavy-duty wires after the war, *vie ferrate* evolved into a cross between standard hiking and full-blown rock-climbing that allowed

nonmountaineers access to areas otherwise out of bounds.

To tackle one of these exhilarating trails you'll first need to don basic climbing equipment (helmet, pads and gloves) and carry a special Y-shaped harness fitted with two karabiners (coupling link with safety closure). Due to technical difficulties and high levels of exposure on many *vie ferrate*, hikers must first lock themselves onto the metal supports with the karabiners in order to arrest potential falls and assure high standards of safety.

*Vie ferrate* exist all over the Dolomites and you don't have to be a Himalayan Sherpa to enjoy them (routes are graded 1 to 5 according to difficulty). Madonna di Campiglio and Cortina d'Ampezzo are the gateways to some of the more spectacular routes. Aside from offering a vertigo-inducing adrenaline rush, the trails also have an important historical value and remain closely associated to their WWI origins. Visit the large open-air museums at Lagazuoi and Cinque Torri (in Veneto and on the Alta Via 1) that showcase various tunnels, emplacements and the restored forts.

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Easy to reach from the Val Pusteria, Lago di Braies is a peaceful spot for a lakeside stroll. More serious walkers might like to tackle part of the Alta Via No 1, which starts here. Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies is more easily approached from the Val Badia or from Passo Falzarego.

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## THE SESTO DOLOMITES

At the other end of the valley, towards Austria, are the Sesto Dolomites, where there are some spectacular trails. The Valle Campo di Dentro, near San Candido, and the Val Fiscalina, near Sesto, are both crisscrossed with walking and cross-country skiing trails. From the Val Fiscalina it's a long but easy walk along trail No 102 to Rifugio Locatelli (2405m), from where you will be able to get a great view of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. Most trails around the Tre Cime are easy enough for inexperienced walkers and families, although they get very crowded in July and August with walkers on the tourist trail. Rafting and mountain biking are on tap in the warmer months.

### Getting There & Away

SAD buses travel to Brunico (45 minutes, hourly) and Cortina (one hour, four daily) from San Candido. From Bolzano, there are buses to and from Merano, Val Badia, San Vigilio di Marebbe and Val Gardena (on the Innsbruck bus). From either town sporadic buses and trains go to Dobbiaco, from where buses run to Lago di Braies.

The Val Pusteria is reached by train from Bolzano with a change at Fortezza (40 minutes from Fortezza).

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# The Veneto

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- [VERONA'S WINE COUNTRY](#)
- [DOLOMITES](#)

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From the look of it, you'd think Venice spent all its time primping. The Grand Canal's Gothic palaces generously allow visitors to bask in their reflected glory and San Marco's glittering mosaics entice the sunset to linger in Piazza San Marco. Gorgeous though it is, make no mistake: this city is a cultural powerhouse. At the height of its maritime trading empire, Venice's dominion stretched from Constantinople to Croatia, and inland to Lombardy. From Brenta river villas to fortified hill towns across the Veneto, you'll spot Venice's emblem, the winged lion of St Mark, resting on an open book.

Yet despite its fame and influence, the Veneto isn't quite an open book. With so many masterpieces, the Veneto's splendours are constantly being revealed from under the veil of restoration: Palladios in



Vicenza, Giotto's in Padua, Mantegnas in Verona. Some private villas and palaces are now open to the public, offering tantalising glimpses of heaven in Tiepolo ceilings and Veronese frescoes around Vicenza and Venice.

No matter how well you know Italian food and wine, the Veneto offers unexpected delights. Several of Italy's most prized wines are available only at small wineries in the Valpolicella and Soave regions, and there's only one way to settle age-old debates over who does local seafood, wild duck, *bigoli* (wheat pasta) and *risi e bisi* (risotto with peas) best: eat your way across the Venetian countryside. Once you do, you'll be back – it may not always be visible, but the Veneto has a way of leaving its mark on you.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Join the collective gasp at the golden mosaic domes of Venice's **Basilica di San Marco**
- Shout 'Brava!' for opera diva encores at Verona's **Roman Arena** and Venice's **La Fenice**
- See the Renaissance coming through the tears in Giotto's moving **Scrovegni Chapel frescoes**
- Let the spirits move you from white to red in Verona's legendary **wine country**
- Compare Titian's radiant colours and Tintoretto's lightning-strike brushstrokes in **I Frari** and **Scuola Grande di San Rocco**
- Villa-hop like a 1600s Venetian socialite along the **Brenta Riviera**
- Walk through Alpine wildflower meadows and craggy peaks in the **Dolomites**



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AREA : 18,378 SQ KM

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POPULATION : 4.83 MILION

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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

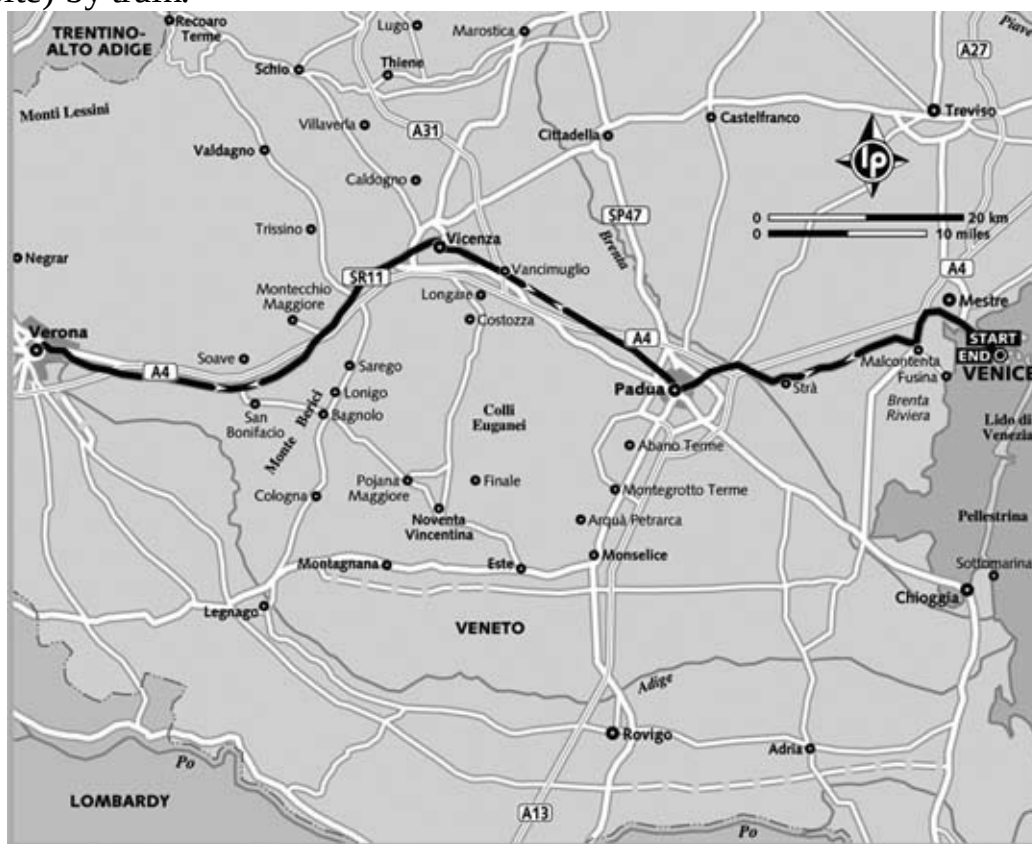
## Villas & Vino Three days / Brenta Riviera / Venice

Drift along the **Brenta Riviera** on an easy bike ride or in a *burchiello* (flat-bottomed boat), stopping by the grand Veneto villas along the riverbanks like a Venetian socialite c 1600. Don't miss Palladio's '**La Malcontenta**' (**Villa Foscari**); the Tiepolo frescoes of **Villa Pisani Nazionale** and the Shoemakers' Museum at 18th-century **Villa Foscari Rossi**.

Boat trips end in **Padua**, where you can spend the night in a **hotel** overlooking the shrine of **St Anthony** (**Sant'Antonio**); patron saint of miracle cures and lost and found objects. But don't miss the small wonders next door in honour of St George: the frescoed **Oratorio di San Giorgio** and the Titian-filled **Scoletta del Santo**. With advance booking, you can see Padua's crowning glory: Giotto's frescoed **Cappella degli Scrovegni**, or head for the historic centre to linger at a cafe in Padua's arcaded twin piazzas or tour its ground-breaking **university**, including Galileo's lecture hall and the six-tiered anatomy theatre.

Hop the 15 to 30 minute train to **Vicenza** and spend the afternoon watching sunlight ripple across the soaring facades of Palladio's *palazzi* and illuminate the storybook **Villa Valmarana 'ai Nani'**, covered floor to ceiling with frescoes by Giambattista and Giandomenico Tiepolo. Enjoy happy hour in the long shadow of Palladio at 12th-century wine bar **Antica Casa della Malvasia** and spend the night in the designer-chic palace **Relais Santa Corona**.

Next day head to **Verona**, where mornings mean Mantegnas at **Basilica di San Zeno Maggiore**, afternoons call for window-shopping on Via Mazzini and coffee breaks in the **Piazza delle Erbe**, and summer evenings bring opera to the ancient **Roman Arena**. *Romeo and Juliet* was set on Verona's romantic balconied backstreets and you shouldn't leave town without trying the local love potion Amarone at a **bar**. Bunk in for the night at nearby **Anfiteatro** if you're here for opera or head back to **Venice** (opposite) by train.



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# VENICE

**pop 61,500 (city), 268,700 (total including mainland)**

Imagine the audacity of people deciding to build a city of marble palaces on a lagoon. Instead of surrendering to *acqua alta* (high water), like reasonable folk might do, Venetians flooded the world with vivid painting in Venetian reds, baroque music and modern opera, spice-route-crossroads cuisine, bohemian-chic fashions and a Grand Canal's worth of *spritz*, the signature Prosecco-Aperol cocktail.

Finally, with the world's most artistic masterpieces per square kilometre, you'd think Venetians would finally rest on their laurels for the next millennium or so. Yet in narrow *calli* (lanes) off the thoroughfares to San Marco, you'll glimpse artisans hammering out shoes that look like fanciful birds, cooks whipping up four-star dishes on single-burner hotplates and musicians lugging 18th-century cellos to riveting baroque concerts with punk-rock bravado. Along the Grand Canal, cutting-edge architects and billionaire benefactors are transforming dreamy *palazzi* into eye-opening showcases for contemporary art. Your timing couldn't be better: the people who made walking on water look easy are already well into their next act.

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## HISTORY

A malarial swamp seems like a strange place to found an empire, unless you consider the circumstances: from the 5th to 8th century AD, Huns, Goths and sundry barbarians repeatedly sacked Roman towns along Veneto's Adriatic coast. Crafty settlers rose above their swampy circumstances, establishing *terra semi-firma* with wood pylons driven into some 100ft of silt. The lagoon islands formed a loose federation, with each community electing representatives to a central Byzantine authority in Ravenna. When the Byzantine grip slipped, Venice seized the moment: in AD 726 the people of Venice elected their first *doge* (duke), whose successors would lead the city for more than 1000 years.

Next Venice shored up its business interests. The city accepted a Frankish commission of 84,000 silver marks to join the Crusades, even as it continued trading with Muslim leaders from Syria to Spain. When the balance wasn't forthcoming from the Franks, Venice claimed Constantinople 'for Christendom' – but sent ships loaded with booty home, instead of onward to Jerusalem. After Venice was decimated by plague, Genoa tried to take over the city in 1380. But Venice prevailed, controlling the Adriatic and a backyard that stretched from Dalmatia to Bergamo.

Like its signature landmark, the Basilica di San Marco, the Venetian empire was dazzlingly cosmopolitan. Armenians, Turks, Greeks and Germans were neighbours along the Grand Canal, and Jewish communities and other groups persecuted elsewhere in Europe found refuge and work here. By the mid-15th century, Venice was swathed in golden mosaics, imported silks and clouds of incense to cover the belching, sulphuric smells that were the downsides of a lagoon empire.

But events beyond Venice's control took their toll. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the Venetian territory of Morea (in Greece) in 1499 gave the Turks control over Adriatic Sea access. The Genovese gained the upper hand with Columbus' discovery of the Americas in 1492, calling dibs on New World trade routes. Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama rounded Africa's Cape of Good Hope in 1498, opening up new trade routes that bypassed the Mediterranean – and Venetian taxes and duties.

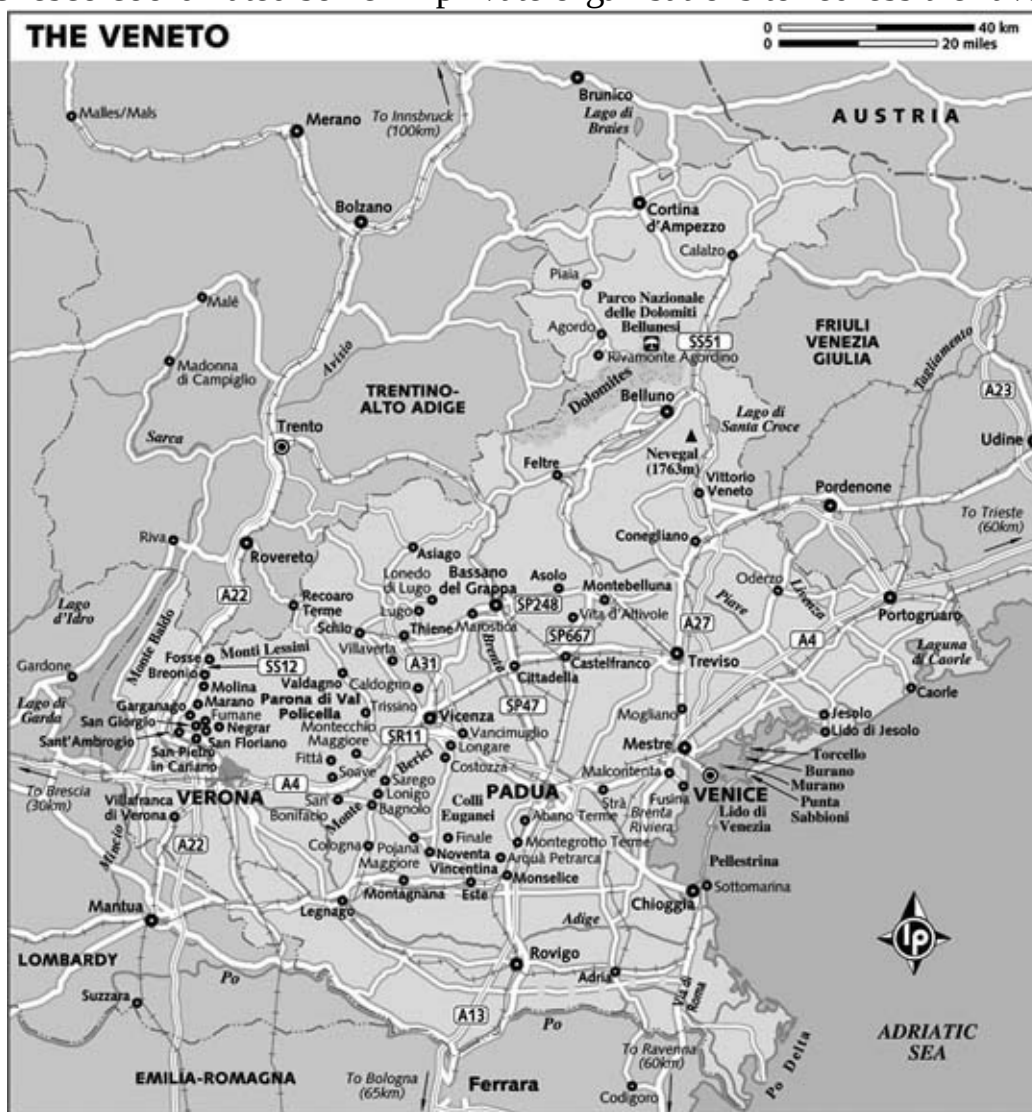
As it lost its dominion over the seas, Venice changed tack and began conquering Europe by charm. Venetian art was incredibly daring, bringing sensuous colour and sly social commentary even to religious

subjects. The city became a playground for Europe's upper crust; nunneries in Venice held soirées rivalling those in *ridotti* (casinos) and Carnevale lasted three months. Venetian nobles' illegitimate daughters were trained as musicians in *ospedaletti* (orphanages) by the likes of Vivaldi, and Venetian courtesans were widely admired tastemakers. By the end of the 16th century, Venice was known across Europe for its irresistibly catchy music and 12,000 registered prostitutes.

But when Napoleon arrived in 1797, Venice had been reduced by plague and circumstances to less than 100,000 people, and Venetian reputations as fierce partiers did nothing to prevent the French and Austrians from handing the city back and forth as a war trophy. By 1817, one-quarter of Venice's population was destitute. When Venice rallied to resist the Austrians in 1848–9, a blockade left it wracked by cholera and short on food. The indignity would fester until Venice joined the independent kingdom of Italy in 1866.

The glamorous empire gradually took on a workaday aspect, with factories springing up on Giudecca and a roadway from the mainland built by Mussolini. Italian partisans joined Allied troops to wrest Veneto from Fascist control, but the tragedy of war and the shock of mass deportation of Venice's historic Jewish population in 1943–44 shook Venice to its very moorings and many Venetians left for Milan and other postwar economic centres.

On 4 November 1966, disaster struck: record floods poured into 16,000 Venetian homes, stranding residents in the wreckage of 1400 years of civilisation. But once again, Venice's cosmopolitan nature was a saving grace: assistance from admirers poured in – from Mexico to Australia, millionaires to pensioners – and Unesco coordinated some 27 private organisations to redress the ravages of the flood.



Today, with 60,000 official residents easily outnumbered by day-trippers, Venetians may seem scarce in their own city. Yet despite dire predictions, Venice has not yet become a Carnevale-masked parody of itself or a lost Atlantis. The city remains relevant and realistic, continuing to produce new music, art and crafts even as it seeks sustainable solutions to rising water levels. Venice remains anchored not merely by ancient pylons, but by the people who put them there: the Venetians.

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## VENICE IN...

### Two Days

Adopt a Venetian pace and do the [walking tour](#) in two days instead of one, leaving more time for dining, chatting and stumbling upon hidden wonders. Stop sightseeing the first day after Punta della Dogana, spend the afternoon lolling on the sunny [Zattere](#), then hop the *vaporetto* (small passenger ferry) to Giudecca for a romantic dinner with waterfront views of San Marco at [I Figli delle Stelle](#). On day two, start at San Sebastiano, enjoy a leisurely coffee in [Campo Santa Margarita](#), and leave yourself time after all those Titian and Tintoretto masterpieces to explore artisans' studios in [Santa Croce](#), before happy hour. End the night with a *vaporetto* ride down the Grand Canal, and watch the lights turn to frenzied Tintoretto brushstrokes on the water.

### Four Days

Veer off the tourist trail and devote a third day to divine [Cannaregio](#) and [Castello](#). Tour the ghetto synagogues, then wander the *fondamente* (canalbanks) to Tintoretto's home church of [Chiesa della Madonna dell'Orto](#), Renaissance gem [Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Miracoli](#), many-splendored [Zanipolo](#), and serene [San Francesco della Vigna](#). Stop for lunch at an authentic Cannaregio *osteria* (bistro; [Click here](#)), and pause at [Palazzo Querini Stampalia](#), for an *ombra* (glass of wine) in the Carlo Scarpa—designed garden before your Interpreti Veneziani concert. Island-hop your fourth day away, with blown-glass shopping in [Murano](#), lunch in [Burano](#) and mosaics and bucolic splendour in [Torcello](#).

### One Week

Now you'll get to be a regular at your favourite cafes and *osterie*, recognise the local specialities at the [Rialto Market](#) and find yourself striking up conversations in Venice's sociable *campi* (squares). Sign up for a [course](#), plan your days around a theme – Tiepolo ceilings, Lido beaches, *cicheti* (bar snacks), opera – or close your map and follow your instincts through Venice's labyrinthine *calli* (lanes). Escape for a day to the [Veneto countryside](#), villa-hopping or wine-tasting like a Venetian on vacation.

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## ORIENTATION

Impossible though it seems, Venice is built on 117 small islands connected by 400 bridges over 150 canals. Across the expanse of shallow waters of the Laguna Veneta to the north are Murano, Burano and Torcello. To the east, the 10km Lido di Venezia serves as a breakwater for Venice, and to the south Palladio's white marble edifices gleam from San Giorgio Maggiore and Giudecca.

Since 1171, Venice has been divided into six *sestieri* (districts): Cannaregio, Castello, San Marco, San

Polo, Dorsoduro and Santa Croce. Although you can take a train or bus into Venice and a car ferry to the Lido, the only ways to navigate Venice are on foot or by boat ([Click here](#)). Directions to Piazza San Marco, the Rialto and Accademia are signposted on yellow signs – but the best adventures begin by ignoring those signs and wandering Venice’s backstreets.

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## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Giunti al Punto** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 275 01 52; Campo San Geremia, Cannaregio 282; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Wed, to 10pm Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Guidebooks and some novels in English, plus bestsellers in Italian.

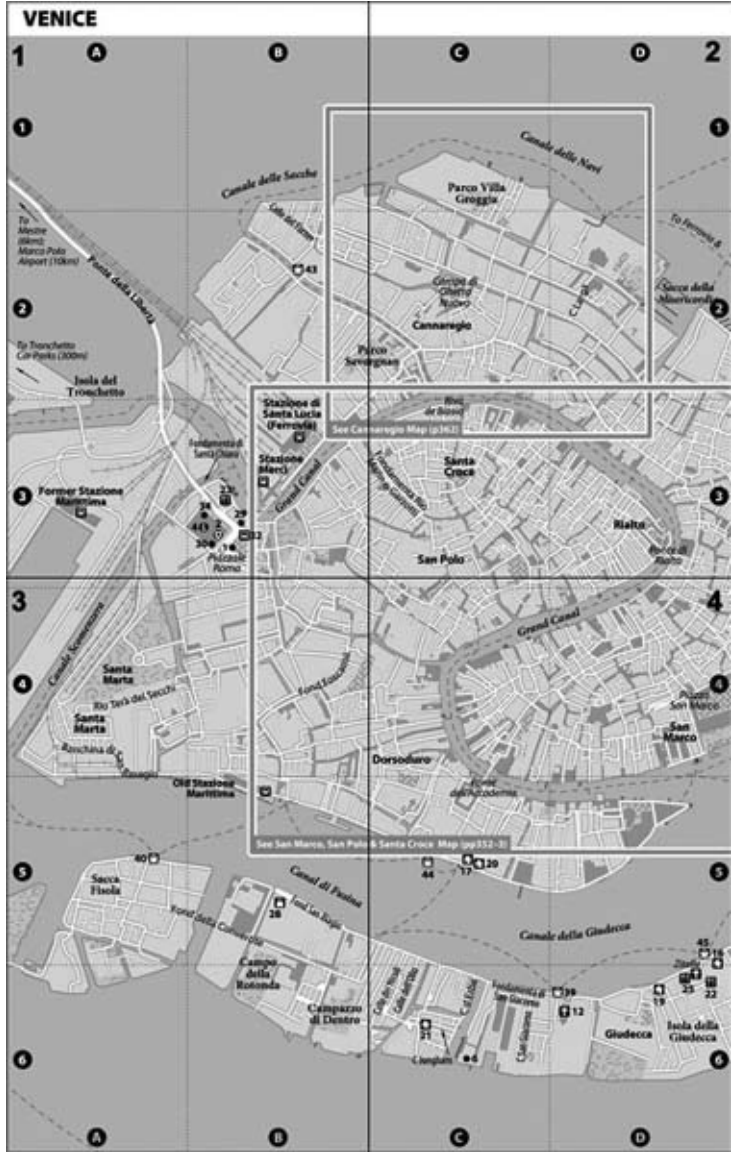
**Mondadori** ([Map](#)352; ☎ 041 522 21 93; Salizada San Moisè 1345; 🕒 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 3-8pm Sun) Come for the books, stay for the CDs, mags, DVDs and literary events in this snazzy media emporium.

**Studium** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 23 82; Calle della Canonica 337a; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun) Consult bibliophile staff for worthy vacation reads, page-turning history and guidebooks in English and Italian.

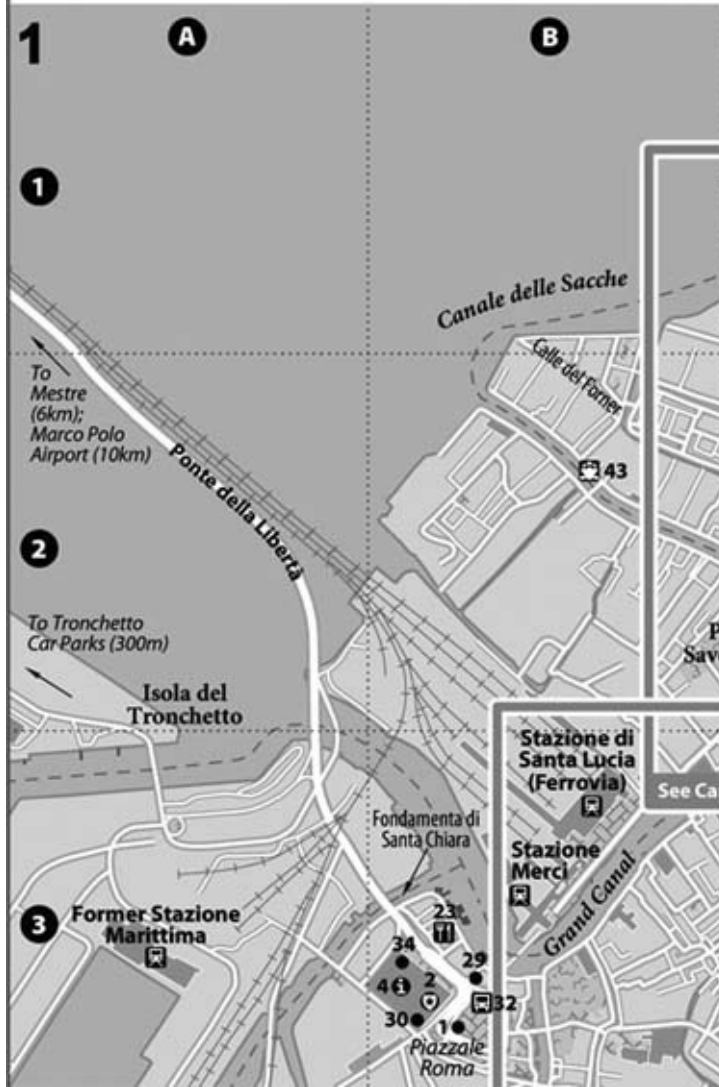
### Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 041 118)

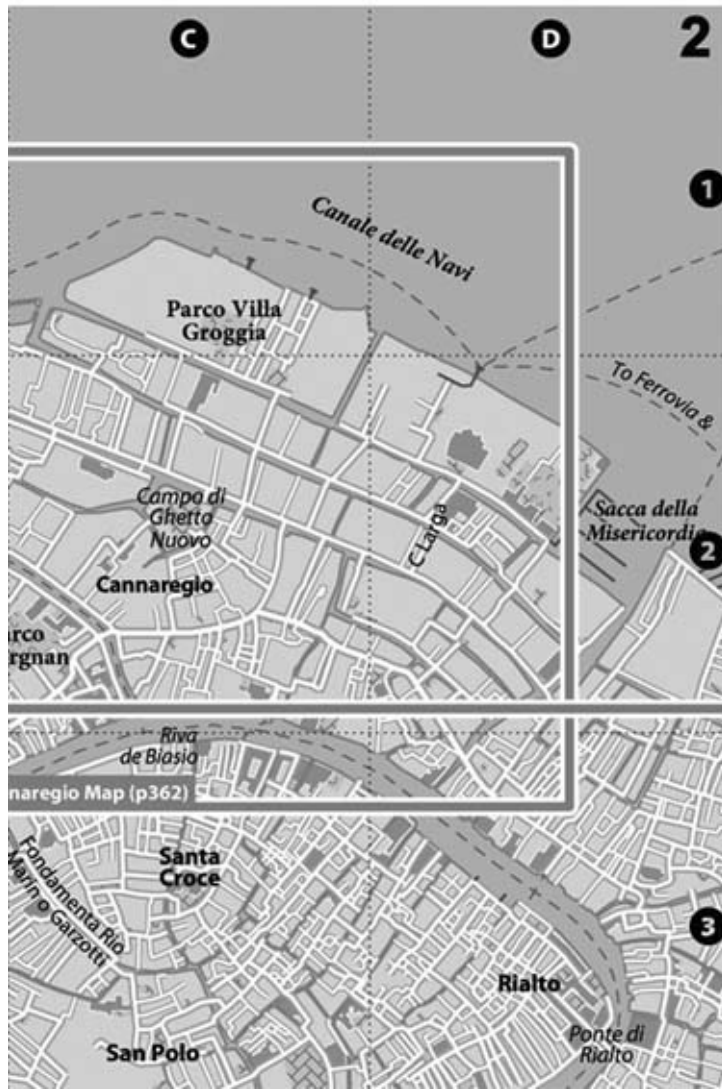
**Police station** (☎ 041 112/113) Castello ([Map](#), Fondamenta di San Lorenzo, Castello 5053); Piazza San Marco ([Map](#); Piazza San Marco 67)

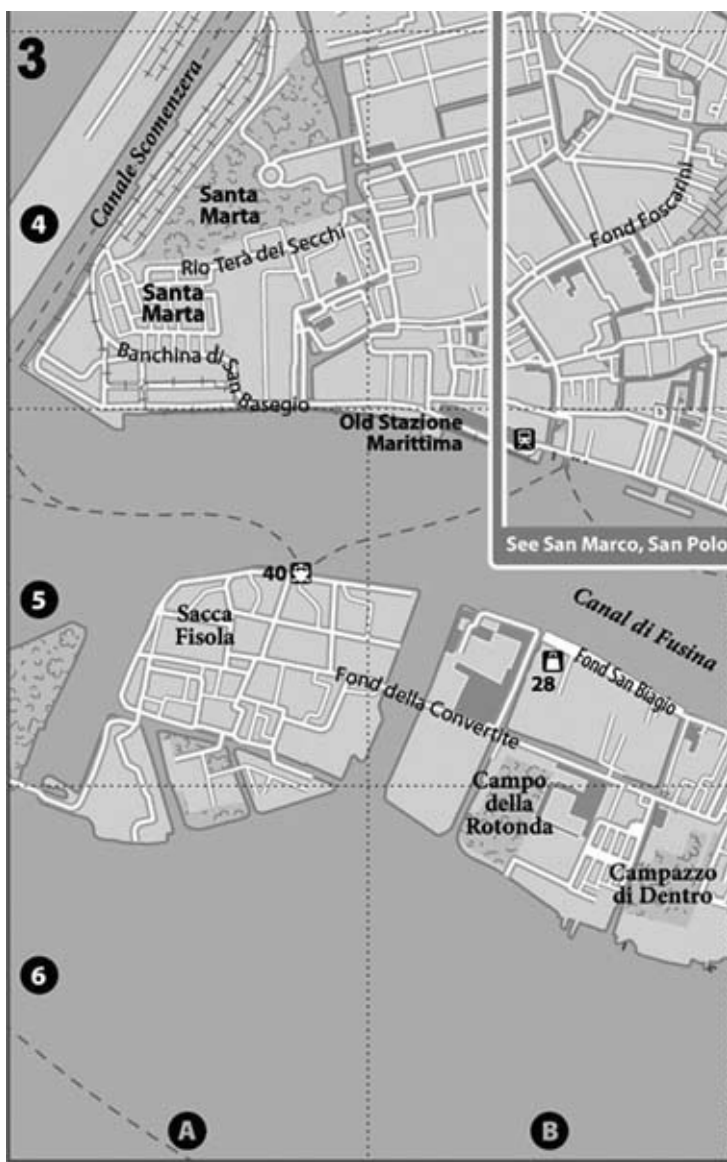


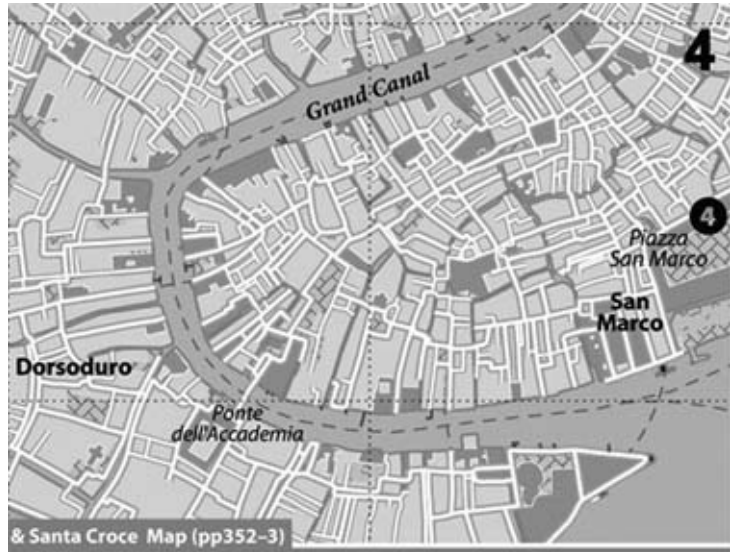
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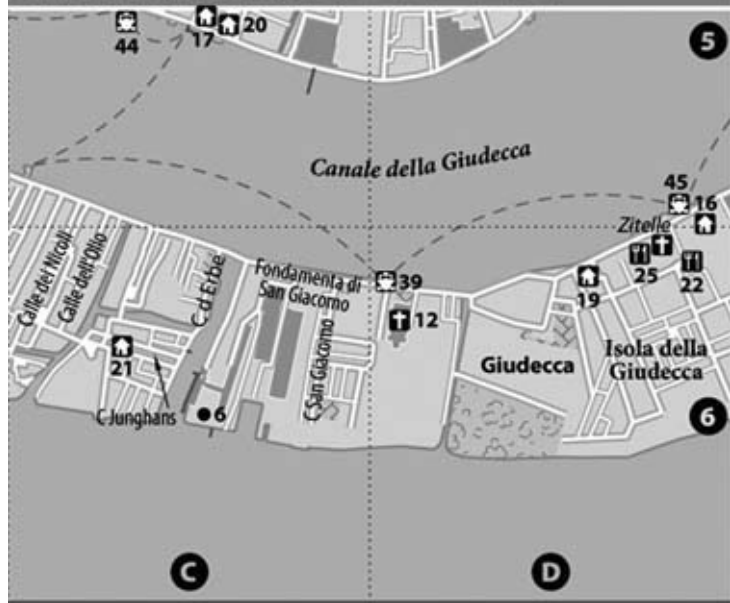


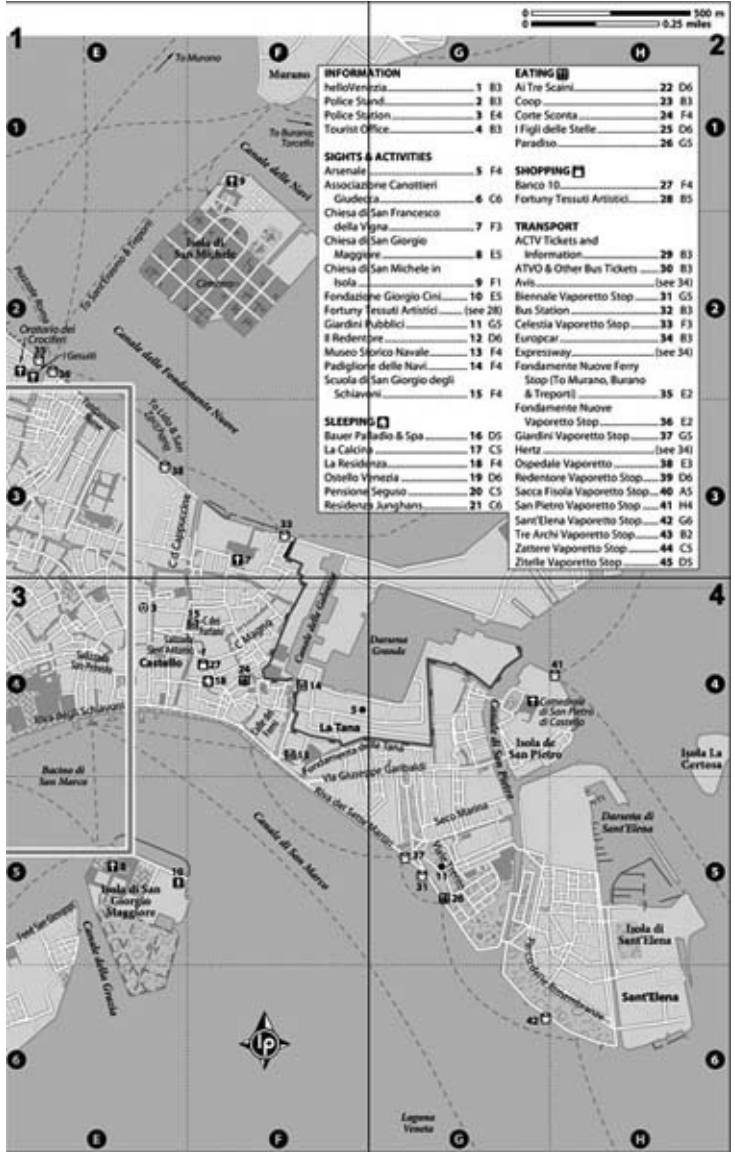






& Santa Croce Map (pp352-3)





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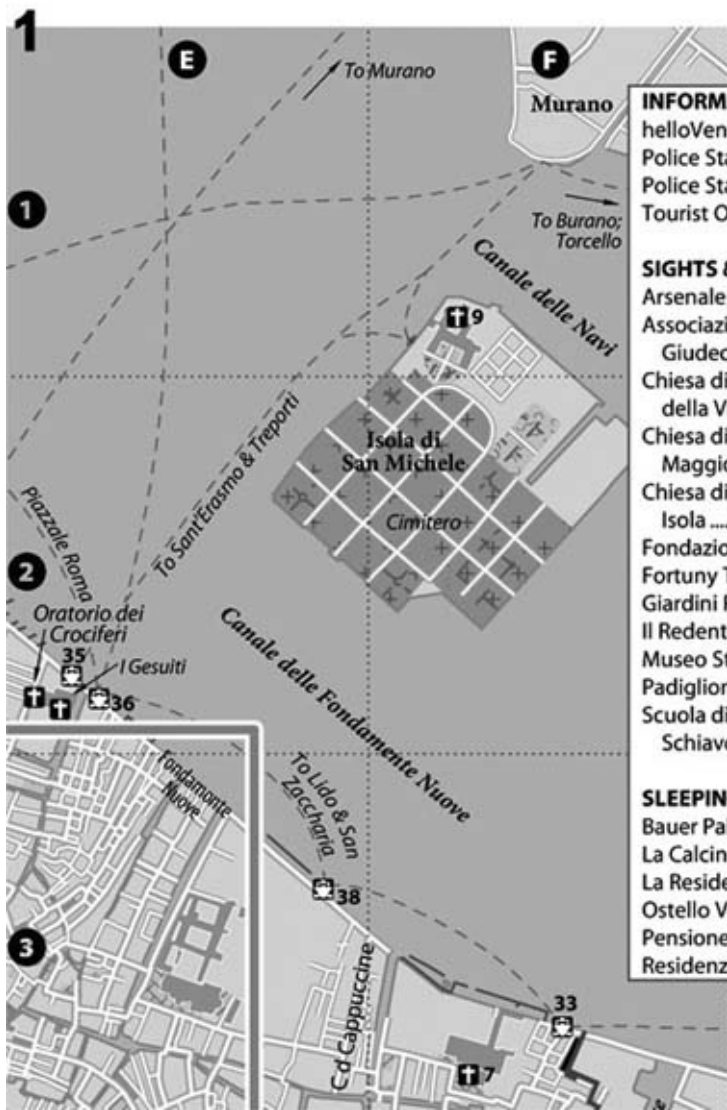
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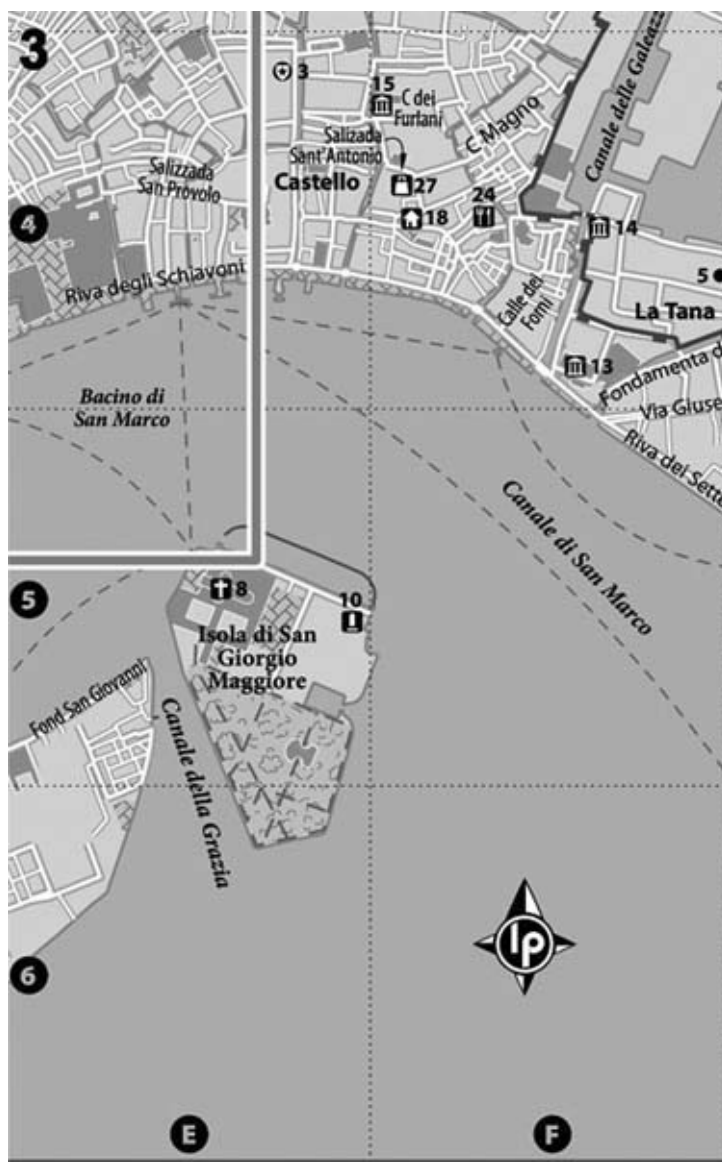
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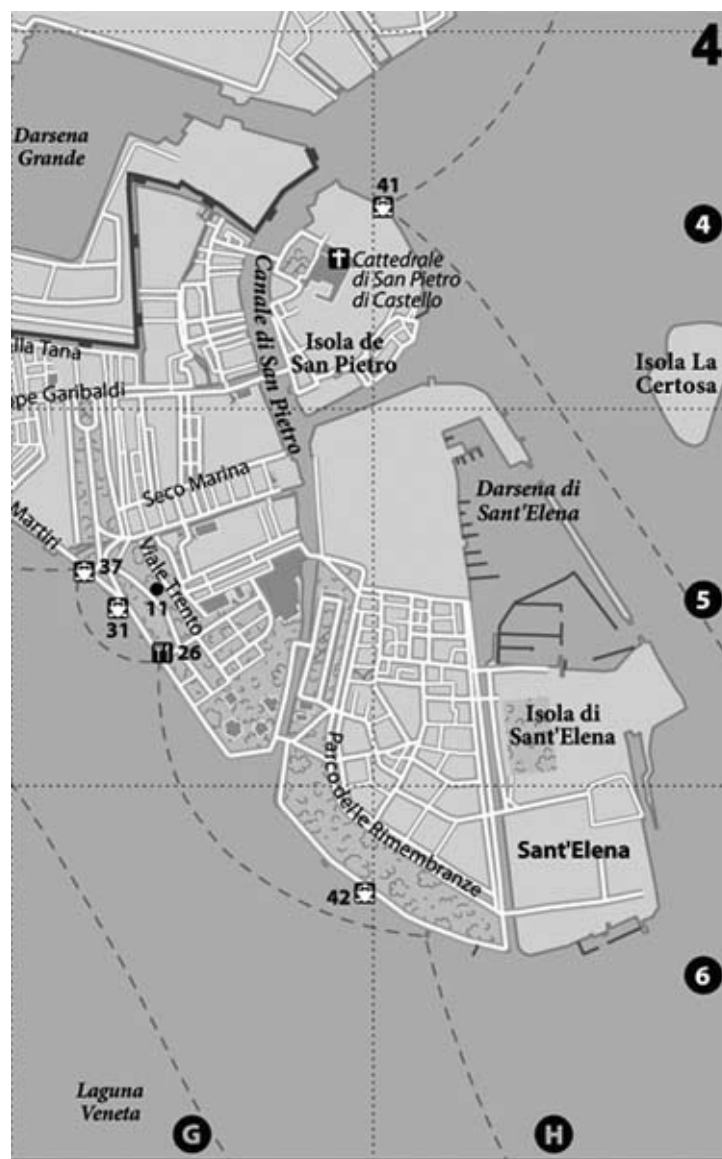
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## Internet Access

**NetGate** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 244 02 13; Crosera S Pantalon; per hr €6; 📧 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Good rates, a helpful staff, and mobile phone SIM cards.

**World House** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 48 71; [www.world-house.org](http://www.world-house.org); Calle della Chiesa, Castello 4502; per hr €8; 📧 10am-11pm) Steps from San Marco; open late.

## Laundry

**Orange Laundry** ([Map](#); Calle Chioverette, Santa Croce 665b; 8kg wash €4, 12kg dry €4; 📧 7.30am-10.30pm)

**Speedy Wash** ([Map](#); Rio Terà San Leonardo, Cannaregio 1520; 8kg wash €5, 15min dry €3; 📧 8am-10pm)

## Medical Services

Information on rotating late-night pharmacies is posted in pharmacy windows and listed in the free magazine *Un Ospite di Venezia*, available at the tourist office (see below).

**Ospedale Civile** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 529 41 11; Campo SS Giovanni e Paolo 6777) Venice's main



hospital; for emergency care and dental treatment, ask for the *pronto soccorso* (ER).

**Ospedale Umberto I** (☎ 041 260 71 11; Via Circonvallazione 50, Mestre) Vast modern hospital on the mainland.

## Money

Several bank branches with ATMs cluster around the Rialto and Piazza San Marco; several exchanges are located by the train station and San Marco.

**American Express** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 520 08 44; Salizada San Moisè, San Marco 1471; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) The ATM works with Amex cards.

**Travellex** Piazza San Marco ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 73 58; Piazza San Marco 142; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun); Rialto ([Map](#); Riva del Ferro 5126) To reclaim VAT from purchases over €200, bring completed forms and local receipts here.

## Post

**Post office** ([Map](#); Salizada del Fondaco dei Tedeschi, near Rialto; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Pick up stamps in this former trading centre, where German merchants once traded downstairs and struck deals upstairs in their living quarters.

## Tourist Information

Pick up *La Rivista di Venezia*, a free monthly bilingual magazine with a handy *Shows & Events* listings insert.

**Azienda di Promozione Turistica** (APT; ☎ central information line 041 529 87 11; [www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)) Infopoint Giardini ([Map](#); Venice Pavilion; ☎ 10am-6pm); Lido (Gran Viale Santa Maria Elisabetta 6a; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Jun-Sep); Marco Polo airport (arrivals hall; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm); Piazzale Roma ([Map](#); ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 1.30-4.30pm Nov-Mar, 9.30am-6.30pm Apr-Oct); Piazza San Marco ([Map](#); Piazza San Marco 71f; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Sat); Stazione di Santa Lucia ([Map](#); ☎ 8am-6.30pm) Has several branches that can provide information on day trips, transport and events, shows and exhibits in the city.

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## SIGHTS

### Grand Canal

Public transport has never seemed so glamorous as the *vaporetto* No 1 route down the shimmering 3.5km stretch of the Grand Canal from the Piazzale Roma ([Map](#)) to San Marco. On the 45-minute commute, you'll pass some 50 *palazzi*, six churches, four bridges, two open-air markets and other landmarks recognisable from scene-stealing cameos in four James Bond films.

The Grand Canal starts with controversy: the **Ponte di Calatrava** ([Map](#)), a luminous glass-and-steel bridge designed by modern Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava. The Calatrava Bridge is the first to be built over the Grand Canal in 75 years, and its starkly streamlined fish-fin shape is the most visually pleasing aspect of the otherwise inelegant Piazzale Roma transit depot. But with a cost estimated at triple

the original €4 million estimate, ongoing work to correct a 4cm tolerance and questions about wheelchair accessibility, some Venetians are grudging in their admiration.

Past the train station is the less controversial (and less lovely) 1934 **Ponte dei Scalzi** ([Map](#)). Just after the Riva di Biasio stop to the right is the **Fondaco dei Turchi**, the former Turkish trading centre, with a splendid double colonnade in polychrome marble topped by 13th-century Byzantine capitols and framed by watchtowers.

On the left past the Rio di San Marcuola is **Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi** ([Map](#)), the stately Renaissance palace that now houses the city's casino ([Click here](#)). To the right after San Stae stop, the *palazzo* with a deep double arcade atop a faceted marble base is the 1623 **Ca' Pesaro**, which houses the Galleria d'Arte Moderna and Museo d'Arte Orientale. On your left is **Ca' d'Oro** ([Golden House](#)), a 1430 Venetian Gothic marvel with filigreed rooftop crenellation that looks like a tiara.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

These passes can save you money on admissions to major Venice sights:

- **helloVenezia** ([☎](tel) 041 24 24; [www.hellovenezia.com](http://www.hellovenezia.com); [☎](#) call centre 8am-7.30pm) offers a VENICEcard Transport & Culture Pass (junior/senior per 3 days €66/73, per 7 days €87/96) for unlimited use of APTV *vaporetti* and buses during the given period, plus free entry to Venice's 11 civic museums (excluding the Accademia, Guggenheim, Grassi and Punta della Dogana) and 16 churches, plus reduced-price tickets to cultural events and special exhibitions.
  - **Rolling VENICEcard** allows visitors aged 14 to 29 (identification required) to buy a 72-hour public transit pass for €18 and provides discounted access to monuments and cultural events for €4. VENICEcards can be purchased at the San Marco tourist office, at helloVenezia ticket booths at the Piazzale Roma and Ferrovia *vaporetto* stops, or in advance at a 15% discount online.
  - **Chorus Pass** ([☎](tel) 041 275 04 62; [www.chorusvenezia.org](http://www.chorusvenezia.org); adult/child/family €9/6/18; [☎](#) visits 10am-5pm Mon-Fri) offers single entry to 16 Venice churches any time within one year, for sale at church ticket booths.
  - **Civic Museum Pass** ([www.museicivici veneziani.it](http://www.museicivici veneziani.it); adult/child €18/12) is valid for single entry to 11 civic museums for six months, or the four museums around St Mark's Square plus one more (adult/child €13/7), and can be bought at the tourist office.
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Next on the left is a particular point of Venetian pride: the **Pescaria** (fish market; [Map](#); [☎](#) 7am-2pm), built in 1907 on the site where fishmongers have been slinging lagoon crab for 600 years. At the neighbouring **Rialto Market** ([Map](#); [☎](#) 7am-3.30pm), Venetian vendors brag shamelessly about their *castraure* (baby artichokes), *radicchio di Treviso* (feathery red rocket), *asparagi di Bassano* (Bassano white asparagus) and other local, seasonal delights.

Tourists hang off the side of the **Ponte di Rialto** ([Map](#)) like gargoyles to get the best photo of the 1592 engineering marvel reflected in the waters below. Antonio da Ponte beat out Palladio for the Rialto commission, and though construction costs spiralled to 250,000 Venetian ducats – some 19 million euros in today's terms – this elegant marble arc has a glow rivalling gold around sunset.

The next two bends in the Grand Canal could cause architectural whiplash. On your left are two Renaissance beauties: the **Palazzo Grimani**, designed by Sanmicheli, followed by Mauro Cordussi's **Palazzo Corner-Spinelli**. When the canal swings left, look to your right at late-Gothic **Ca' Foscari**, the

seat of Foscari University, famed for (naturally) its architecture program. On the left around the next bend, you'll spot avant-garde sculpture installations on the dock of 18th-century [Palazzo Grassi](#), which French magnate François Pinault transformed into a cutting-edge art museum. Opposite, [Baldassare Longhena's Ca' Rezzonico](#) is a baroque jewel box filled with gems of 18th-century art and Tiepolo ceilings.

The wooden **Ponte dell'Accademia** was built in 1930 as a temporary replacement for a 19th-century metal bridge, but with a high arch like a cat's back, it's a beloved landmark. Past the Accademia on the right, stone lions flank the **Palazzo Venier dei Leoni**, where American heiress Peggy Guggenheim collected ideas, lovers and art with gusto, establishing the [Peggy Guggenheim Collection](#). Two buildings down, the multicoloured marble facade of the 1487 **Palazzo Dario** is shadowed by an urban legend that anyone who lives here is destined for a terrible death – which local gossips say dissuaded Woody Allen from buying the place.

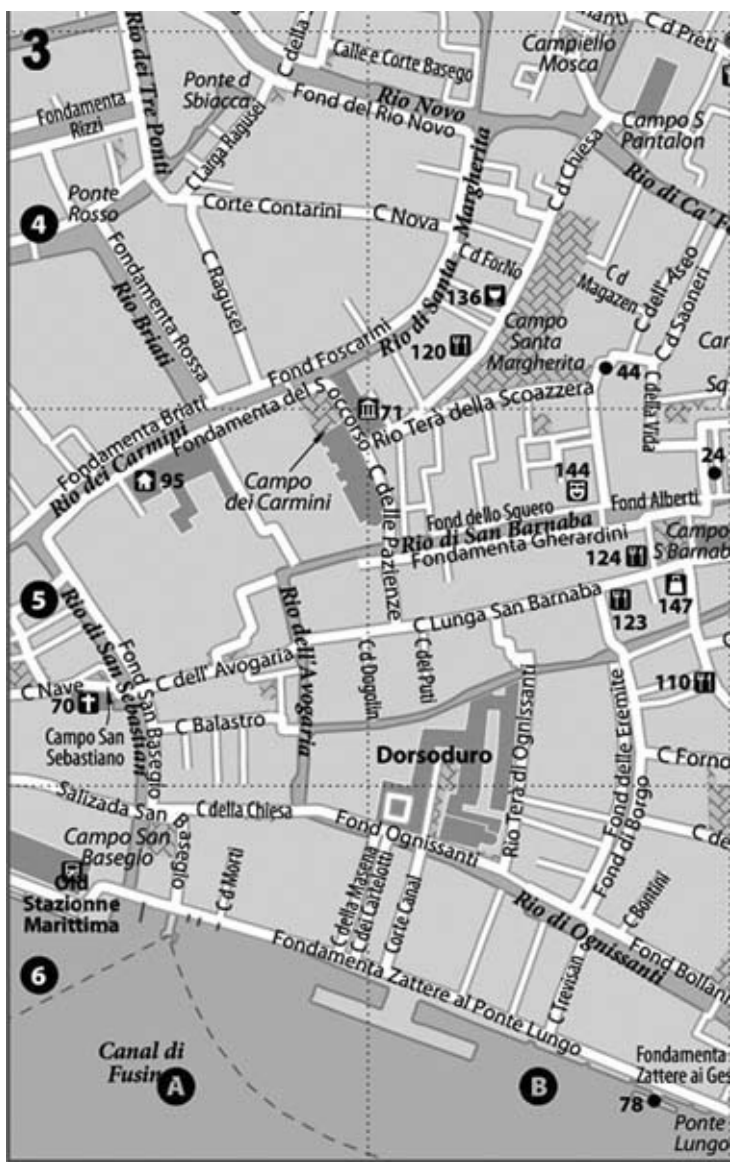
On your right, you can't miss Baldassare Longhena's Chiesa di Santa Maria della [Salute](#), with its dramatic dome and octagonal layout. The last landmark on the right is the [Punta della Dogana](#), a historic customs warehouse that architect Tadao Ando reinvented as a public showcase for François Pinault's contemporary art collection.

The grand finale is ahead on your left: the pink [Gothic Palazzo Ducale](#) and its adjoining **Bridge of Sighs**. Venice's historic preservation rules have prevented chain stores from taking over the waterfront, but the city has recently allowed corporate sponsors to drape palaces undergoing restoration with publicity banners. Given the wide-ranging outcry from residents and the British Committee for the Preservation of Venice, by the time you read this, the Bridge of Sighs may have emerged from under wraparound Lancia car ads and the Palazzo Ducale should be retired from its brief, inglorious career shilling Swatches.



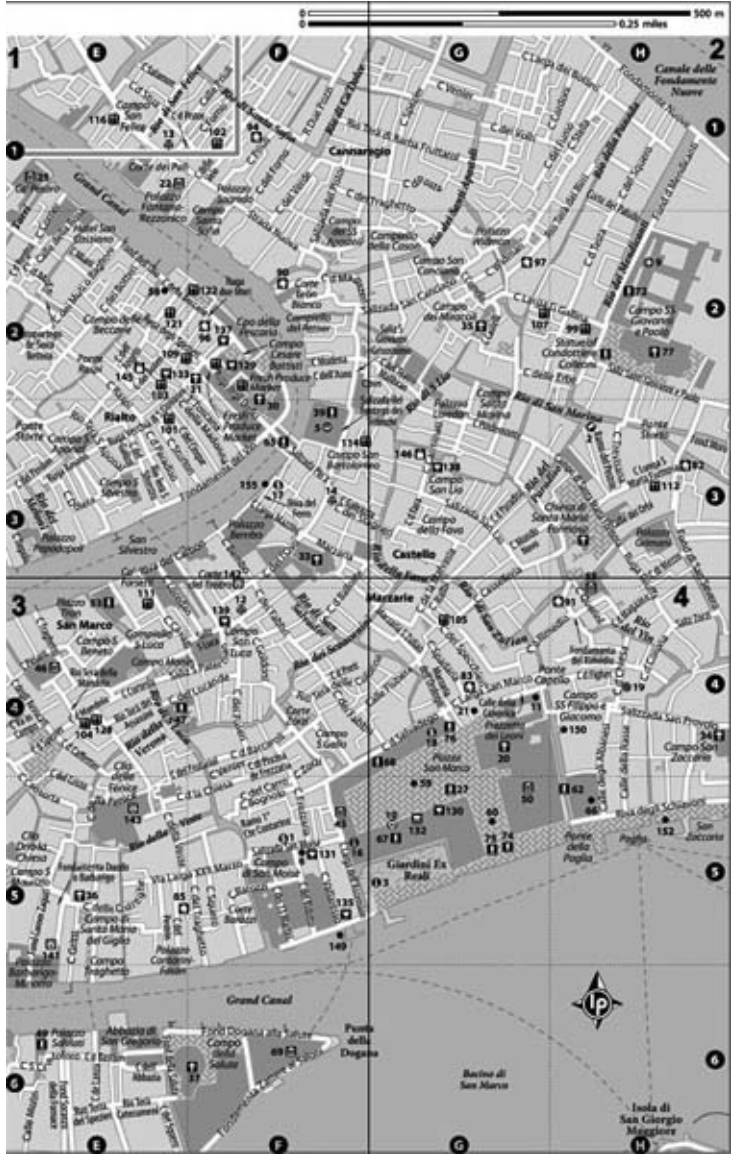






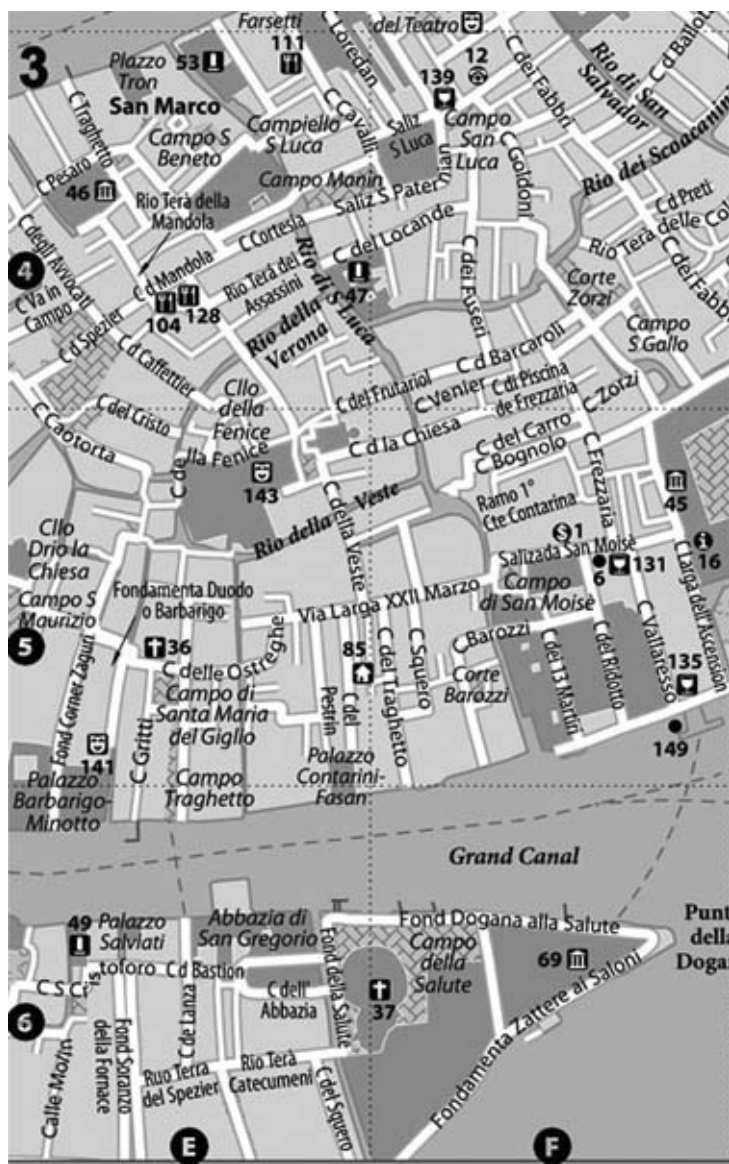


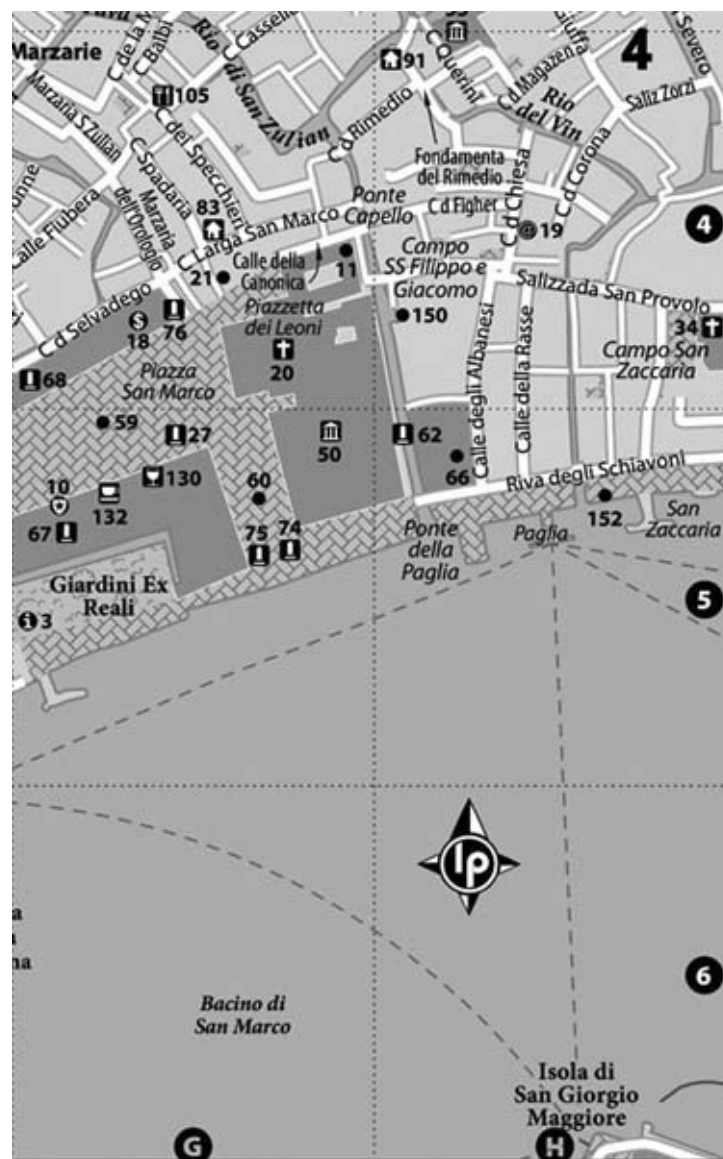












<b>INFORMATION</b>		Palazzo Dario.....	49 E6	All'Arco.....	103 E2
American Express & ATM.....	1 F5	Palazzo Ducale.....	50 G5	Caffè Mandola.....	104 E4
French Consulate.....	2 H3	Palazzo Franchetti.....	51 D5	Cavatappi.....	105 G4
HelloVenezia Ticket Point.....	(see 153)	Palazzo Grassi.....	52 C5	Coop.....	106 C2
HelloVenezia Ticket Point.....	(see 154)	Palazzo Grimani.....	53 E4	Da Alberto.....	107 G2
Infopoint Giardini.....	3 G5	Palazzo Mocenigo.....	54 D2	Da Nico.....	108 C6
Laundry.....	4 B2	Palazzo Querini-Stampalia.....	55 H3	Drogheria Mascari.....	109 E2
Main Post Office.....	5 F3	Palazzo		Enoteca Ai Artisti.....	110 B5
Mondadori.....	6 F5	Vendramin-Calergi.....	56 D1	Enoteca al Volto.....	111 E4
NetGate.....	7 C4	Palazzo Venier dei Leoni.....	(see 57)	Enoteca Mascareta.....	112 H3
Orange Laundry.....	8 B2	Peggy Guggenheim		Gelateria San Stae.....	113 D2
Ospedale Civile.....	9 H2	Collection.....	57 D6	I Rusteghi.....	114 F3
Police Station.....	10 G5	Pescaria.....	58 E2	Impronta Café.....	115 C4
Studium.....	11 G4	Piazza San Marco.....	59 G5	La Cantina.....	116 E1
Telecom Office.....	12 F4	Piazzetta di San Marco.....	60 G5	Osteria ae Cravate.....	117 B3
Telecom Office.....	13 E1	Ponte dei Scalzi.....	61 B1	Osteria La Zucca.....	118 D1
Telephones.....	14 F3	Ponte dei Sospiri (Bridge		Pasticceria Rizzardini.....	119 D3
Tourist Office.....	15 A1	of Sighs).....	62 H5	Pizza al Volo.....	120 B4
Tourist Office.....	16 F5	Ponte dell'Accademia.....	63 D5	Pronto Pesce Pronto.....	121 E2
Travellex.....	17 F3	Ponte di Calatrava.....	64 A2	Rialto Market.....	122 F2
Travellex.....	18 G4	Ponte di Rialto.....	65 F3	Ristorante La Bitta.....	123 B5
World House.....	19 H4	Priggione Nove.....	66 H5	Ristorante Oniga.....	124 B5
		Procuratie Nuove.....	67 G5	Snack Bar Al Nomboli.....	125 D3
		Procuratie Vecchie.....	68 G4	Trattoria da Ignacio.....	126 D3
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		Punta della Dogana.....	69 F6	Vecio Fritolin.....	127 D2
Basilica di San Marco.....	20 G4	Rialto Market.....	(see 122)	Vini da Arturo.....	128 E4
Basilica di San Marco		San Sebastiano.....	70 A5		
Baggage Storage.....	21 G4	Scuola Grande dei Carmini.....	71 B5	<b>DRINKING ☑☑</b>	
Ca' d'Oro.....	22 E1	Scuola Grande di San		Al Mercà.....	129 F2
Ca' Foscari.....	23 C4	Marco.....	72 H2	Aurora.....	130 G5
Ca' Macana.....	24 B5	Scuola Grande di San		Bacaro.....	131 F5
Ca' Pesaro.....	25 E1	Rocco.....	73 C3	Caffè Florian.....	132 G5
Ca' Rezzonico.....	26 C5	Statue of Lion of St Mark.....	74 G5	Cantina do Mori.....	133 E2
Campanile.....	27 G5	Statue of St Theodore.....	75 G5	Cantinone 'Gia Schiav'.....	134 C6
Casa di Goldoni.....	28 D4	Teatro La Fenice.....	(see 143)	Harry's Bar.....	135 F5
Chiesa di San Giacomo		Torre dell'Orologio.....	76 G4	Il Caffè Rosso.....	136 B4
dell'Orlo.....	29 C2	Zanipolo.....	77 H2	Muro Vino e Cucina.....	137 F2
Chiesa di San Giacomo di		Zattere.....	78 B6		
Rialto.....	30 F3				

Chiesa di San Giovanni			Volante.....	138	G3
Elmosinario.....	31	F2	Torino@Night.....	139	F4
Chiesa di San Polo.....	32	D3	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> 📺		
Chiesa di San Salvador.....	33	F3	HelloVenezia Ticket Outlet.....	(see 154)	
Chiesa di San Zaccaria.....	34	H4	HelloVenezia Ticket Outlet.....	(see 153)	
Chiesa di Santa Maria dei			Interpreti Veneziani.....	140	D5
Miracoli.....	35	G2	Musica a Palazzo.....	141	E5
Chiesa di Santa Maria del			Teatro Goldoni.....	142	F3
Giglio.....	36	E5	Teatro La Fenice.....	143	E5
Chiesa di Santa Maria della			Venice Jazz Club.....	144	B5
Salute.....	37	F6	<b>SHOPPING</b> 🛍️		
Chiesa di Santo Stefano.....	38	D5	Carté.....	145	E2
Fondaco dei Tedeschi.....	39	F3	Giovanna Zanella.....	146	G3
Fondaco dei Turchi.....	40	D1	Madera.....	147	B5
Galleria Franchetti.....	(see 22)		Marina & Susanna Sent.....	148	D6
Gallerie d'Arte Moderna.....	(see 25)		<b>TRANSPORT</b>		
Gallerie dell'Accademia.....	41	C6	Gondola Service.....	149	F5
Gesuati.....	42	C6	Gondola Service.....	150	H4
I Frari.....	43	C3	Gondola Service.....	151	A3
Istituto Venezia.....	44	B4	Gondola Service.....	152	H5
Museo Correr.....	45	F5	HelloVenezia Ticket Point.....	153	B1
Museo d'Arte Orientale.....	(see 25)		HelloVenezia Ticket Point.....	154	A1
Museo della Fondazione			Water Taxi.....	155	F3
Querini-Stampalia.....	(see 55)		Water Taxi.....	156	A3
Museo Fortuny.....	46	E4	Water Taxi.....	157	B1
Palazzo Contarini del			<b>EATING</b> 🍴		
Bovolo.....	47	E4	Ae Oche.....	98	C2
Palazzo Corner-Spinelli.....	48	D4	Al Ponte.....	99	H2
			Alaska.....	100	B1
			Alliani.....	101	E3
			Alla Vedova.....	102	F1

## Piazza San Marco

Not usually known for his powers of understatement, Napoleon was lowballing when he proclaimed Piazza San Marco ([Map](#)) the ‘finest drawing room in Europe’. Your entrance to Piazza San Marco is heralded by live orchestras at 18th-century cafes under Napoleonic porticos flanking the square – but no amount of pomp, circumstance and decadent hot chocolate can prepare you for the otherworldly spectacle of the **Basilica di San Marco** (St Mark’s Basilica; [Map](#); ☎ 041 522 56 97; [www.basilicasanmarco.it](http://www.basilicasanmarco.it); Piazza San Marco; basilica entry free, access to Pala d’Oro/Loggia dei Cavalli & Galleria/Tesoro €2/4/3; 🕒 9.45am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun & holidays).

Luminous angels trumpet the way into San Marco in glittering mosaics above vast portals. Inside, the soaring stone structure still sets standards for razzle-dazzle, from the intricate geometry of 12th-century polychrome marble floors to 11th-to-15th-century mosaic domes glittering with millions of gilt-glass *tesserae* (tiles).

This showstopper took a brains trust of Mediterranean artisans almost 800 years and grand larceny to complete. Legend has it that Venetian merchants smuggled the corpse of St Mark out of Egypt in AD 828; the arrival of St Mark’s body in Venice is depicted in mosaics dating from 1270 on the left of the facade. Riots and fires thrice destroyed exterior mosaics and weakened the basilica’s underlying structure, so Jacopo Sansovino and other church architects grafted on supports and every precious marble available by purchase or pillage. Occasionally higher purpose got clouded over in construction dust: St Mark’s bones were misplaced twice. Church authorities in Rome took a dim view of Venice’s tendency to glorify itself and God in the same breath, but Venice finished San Marco in its own East-meets-West style: Eastern onion-bulb domes, a Greek cross layout, Gothic arches and Egyptian marble walls.

## CHEAP THRILLS ON THE GRAND CANAL: TRAGHETTI

A *traghetto* is the gondola service locals use to cross the Grand Canal where there is no nearby bridge. It costs just €1, but be prepared for a balancing act: all passengers are expected to stand for the duration of the gondola ride across the canal. *Traghetti* typically operate from 9am to 6pm, although some routes finish by noon; for major *traghetto* crossings, consult maps on [Click here](#) and [Click here](#).

The roped-off circuit of the church is free and takes about 15 minutes. In niches flanking the main door as you enter the narthex (vestibule) are the glittering **Apostles with the Madonna**, who looks stunning for her age: at more than 950 years old, these are the oldest mosaics in the basilica. Another medieval masterpiece is the **Dome of Genesis**, which depicts the separation of sky and water and angels with surprisingly abstract, conceptual motifs that anticipate modern art by 650 years. The golden central dome is the 13th-century **Cupola of the Ascension**, where you'll note angels swirling overhead and dreamy-eyed St Mark on the pendentive (dome support).

Alabaster chalices, icons and other Crusades booty in the **Tesoro** (Treasury; admission €3; ☎ 9.45am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, to 4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar, 2-4pm Sun & holidays) can't quite compare to the bejewelled **Pala d'Oro** altarpiece (admission €2; ☎ 9.45am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct). Tucked behind the high altar that towers above St Mark's sarcophagus, this hidden treasure contains almost 2000 emeralds, amethysts, sapphires, rubies, pearls and other gemstones. More impressive still are the miniscule saints' portraits and lively biblical scenes in vibrant cloisonné, begun in Constantinople in AD 976 and elaborated by Venetian goldsmiths in 1209.

San Marco was officially the doge's chapel until 1807, and the doge's far-reaching influence is highlighted by gilt bronze horses upstairs in the **Galleria** (Museo di San Marco; admission €4; ☎ 9.45am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun & holidays). Through the Galleria you can access the **Loggia dei Cavalli**, where reproductions of the bronze horses gallop off the balcony over Piazza San Marco.

Note that you'll need to be dressed modestly (ie knees and shoulders covered) to enter the basilica, and large bags must be left around the corner off Piazzetta San dei Leoni at Ateneo di San Basso, where you'll find free one-hour **baggage storage** ([Map](#); ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm).

The basilica's 99m-tall **Campanile** (Bell Tower; [Map](#); ☎ 041 522 52 05; [www.basilicasanmarco.it](http://www.basilicasanmarco.it); admission €8; ☎ 9am-9pm Jul-Sep, to 7pm Apr-Jun & Oct, 9.30am-3.45pm Nov-Mar) has been rebuilt twice since its initial construction in AD 888. Critics have called the tower ungainly, but when it suddenly collapsed in 1902, Venetians rebuilt the tower exactly as it was, brick by brick. Due to ongoing stabilisation efforts, the Campanile may not be accessible on your visit.

Next door to the basilica, the splendour and intrigue of the Venetian Republic are captured in the **Palazzo Ducale** (Ducal Palace; [Map](#); ☎ 041 271 59 11; [www.museiciviciveneziani.it](http://www.museiciviciveneziani.it); Piazzetta di San Marco 52; adult/child incl Museo Correr & 1 civic museum of choice €13/8; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar). Don't be fooled by its Gothic elegance: this building was all business, from medieval carved stone capitals depicting key Venetian guilds along the arcade to Giovanni and Bartolomeo Bon's 15th-century **Porta della Carta** (Paper Door), the bulletin board for government decrees facing the piazza. The building was damaged by fire in 1577, but Antonio da Ponte (who designed the Ponte di Rialto) restored it.

Entering through the colonnaded courtyard, you'll spot Sansovino's **statues of Mars and Neptune** flanking the **Scala dei Giganti** (Giants' Staircase), which Antonio Rizzo built as a suitably grand entrance for Venice's dignitaries and is currently undergoing restoration. Climb the **Scala dei Censori** (Stairs of the Censors) and Sansovino's lavish gilt stuccowork **Scala d'Oro** (Golden Staircase), and emerge into 3rd-floor rooms covered with gorgeous propaganda.

In **Sala delle Quattro Porte** (Hall of the Four Doors), ambassadors awaited ducal audiences under a Palladio-designed ceiling frescoed by Tintoretto, showing Justice presenting sword and scales to Venice's Doge Girolamo Priuli. Other convincing shows of Venetian superiority include Titian's 1576 *Doge Antonio Grimani Kneeling before Faith* and Tiepolo's 1740s *Venice Receiving Gifts of the Sea*

from Neptune, where Venice is a gorgeous blonde casually leaning on a lion. Special delegations waited in the **Anticollegio** (College Antechamber), where Tintoretto drew not-so-subtle parallels between Roman gods and Venetian government: *Vulcan and Cyclops Forging Weapons for Venice*, *Mercury and the Three Graces* rewarding Venice's industriousness with beauty, and *Minerva Dismissing Mars* in a Venetian triumph of savvy over brute force. Also in the room is a vivid reminder of diplomatic behaviour to avoid: Veronese's *Rape of Europe*.

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## STATE SECRETS REVEALED: ITINERARI SEGRETI

The Ducal Palace's darkest secrets can be found through a passageway disguised as a filing cabinet in the **Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci** (Chamber of the Council of 10), festooned with happy cherubim and Veronese's optimistic *Triumph of Virtue over Vice*. Fascinating 1½-hour **Itinerari Segreti** (Secret Tours; ☎ 041 520 90 70; adult/student/child under 6yr €16/7/free; 📧 tours in English 9.55am, 10.45am & 11.35am, Italian 9.30am & 11.10am, French 10.20am, noon & 12.25pm) guide visitors into the cramped, unadorned Council of 10 headquarters, upstairs to a trial chamber lined with top-secret files, and into a windowless room with a single rope, used in perversely imaginative ways to extract information. To Venice's credit, the room was largely disused by the 17th century – but the same cannot be said for the studded cells of the **Piombi**, Venice's notorious attic prison. In 1756, Casanova was condemned to five years' confinement here on charges of corrupting nuns and a more serious suspicion of spreading Freemasonry – but after a few months, he slipped past the guards.

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Few were granted audience in the Palladio-designed **Collegio** (Council Room), with Veronese's quintessentially rosy view of Venice in his 1578–82 *Virtues of the Republic* ceiling panels. Tintoretto attempted similar flattery in *The Triumph of Venice* on the ceiling of the adjoining **Senato** (Senate Hall), but his dark palette hints at the shadowy side of Venetian politics. The **Trial Chambers of the Council of 10** featuring Veronese's ceiling panel of *Juno Bestowing her Gifts on Venice* is positively glowing, while in the dark, carved-wood corner is the slot where accusations of treason were slipped to Venice's dreaded secret service.

On the 2nd floor, the cavernous 1419 **Sala del Maggior Consiglio** (Grand Council Hall) features the doge's throne with a 22m by 7m backdrop of *Paradise* by Tintoretto's son Domenico that's more politically correct than pretty: heaven is crammed with 500 prominent Venetians, including several Tintoretto patrons. Veronese's political posturing is more elegant in his oval ceiling panel *The Apotheosis of Venice*, where gods marvel at Venice's coronation by angels, with foreign dignitaries and Venetian blondes rubbernecking from the balcony below. In the wall frieze depicting the first 76 doges of Venice, note the black space: Doge Marin Falier would have appeared there had he not lost his head for treason in 1355.

Only the Itinerari Segreti access the Council of 10 headquarters and Piombi attic prison (see the boxed text, opposite), but visitors can take a detour on the doges' dark side from the Sala del Maggior Consiglio. Stop by the chamber featuring ominous scenes by the master of apocalyptic visions, Hieronymus Bosch, then follow the path of condemned prisoners across the covered **Ponte dei Sospiri** (Bridge of Sighs; [Map](#)) to Venice's 16th-century **Prigione Nove** (New Prisons), its dank cells covered with graffitied protestations of innocence. Exiting through the arcade, you'll spot two freestanding columns by the waterfront bearing **statues** of the Lion of St Mark and St Theodore that serve no apparent purpose: these were once used in public executions.

Napoleon was determined to bring a lighter note to Piazza San Marco, razing the church of San



Geminiano on the west end of the piazza to make room for a ballroom. To extend his royal palace, Napoleon incorporated the **Procuratie Nuove** ([Map](#)), the building along the south end of the piazza planned by Jacopo Sansovino and completed by Vincenzo Scamozzi and Baldassare Longhena – but the job wasn't finished until the 19th century, just in time for the Habsburgs to move in.

The **Museo Correr** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 240 52 11; [www.museiciviviceneziiani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziiani.it); Piazza San Marco 52; adult/child incl Palazzo Ducale & 1 civic museum of choice €13/8; 🕒 10am-7pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar) has since taken over the royal digs with all its trophies, including ancient maps, Greco-Roman statuary and splendid medieval paintings. Stride through these salons towards the Palazzo Ducale and at the end you'll reach Jacopo Sansovino's spectacular 16th-century **Libreria Nazionale Marciana**, with representations of wisdom by Veronese and Titian. Temporary shows in the **Neoclassical Ballroom** on such themes as futurism and Italian architecture are hit-and-miss, but Antonio Canova's 1777 statues of star-crossed lovers *Orpheus and Eurydice* are permanent scene-stealers. Museum entry grants access to the Correr's **Caffé dell'Art**, which offers €5 DOC Veneto merlot in an anteroom frescoed with splendid grotesques, with an emperor's view of Basilica di San Marco.

The north side of the piazza is the **Procuratie Vecchie** ([Map](#)), the former residence of the caretakers of St Mark and the basilica, designed by Mauro Codussi. The standout feature here is the recently renovated 1497 **Torre dell'Orologio** (Clock Tower; ☎ 041 520 90 70; [www.museiciviviceneziiani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziiani.it); Piazza San Marco; adult/VENICEcard-holders €12/7; child 6yr & up only; 🕒 visit by prebooked tour only, in English 10am, 11am & 1pm Mon-Wed, 1pm, 2pm & 3pm daily, in Italian noon & 4pm daily, in French 1pm, 2pm & 3pm Mon-Wed). Legend has it that the inventors of the gold-leafed timepiece tracking lunar phases and astrological shifts were assassinated, so that no other city could boast a similar engineering marvel. Tours head up the tower's steep, claustrophobia-triggering spiral staircase to the terrace, where the **Two Moors statues** strike the hour on a bell. Three kings and an angel emerge on Epiphany and the Feast of the [Ascension](#).

## Around San Marco

While day-trippers settle for photographic binges in Piazza San Marco, overnight visitors sing Venice's praises to the skies after a performance at **Teatro La Fenice** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 37 80, reservations 041 24 24; [www.teatrolafenice.it](http://www.teatrolafenice.it); Campo San Fantin 1965; tours adult/student & senior €7/5; 🕒 vary). Venice ushered in the age of opera in the 17th century, hiring as San Marco choirmaster Claudio Monteverdi, the father of modern opera, and opening La Fenice ('The Phoenix') opera house to much fanfare in 1792. Rossini and Bellini had staged operas at the house, which was the talk of Europe when the building went up in flames in 1836.

Venice without opera was unthinkable and within a year, the opera house was rebuilt in grand form. Verdi premiered *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata* at La Fenice, and international greats Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Britten composed for the house. But La Fenice was again reduced to ashes in 1996; two electricians found guilty of the arson were apparently behind on their repair work. A painstaking €90 million replica of the 19th-century opera house reopened in late 2003, and though architectural reviews were mixed – some critics had lobbied for a more avant-garde design – the reprise performance of *La Traviata* was a sensation. The house remains packed in opera season; book ahead online for performances and tours. [Click here](#).

For avant-garde architecture, don't miss **Palazzo Grassi** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 16 80; [www.palazzograssi.it](http://www.palazzograssi.it); Campo San Samuele 3231; adult/student €15/6; 🕒 10am-7pm), a baroque palace that since 2005 has been home to the world-class contemporary art collection of French billionaire François Pinault. Giorgio Masari's 1749 neoclassical palace became a glorious anachronism in the hands

of minimalist architect Tadao Ando, whose movable panels and strategic pools of light allow viewers to focus on modern art without eclipsing frescoed ceilings and marble arcades. Expect sublime curation and shameless namedropping: Pinault parks sculpture by art stars like Jeff Koons on a dock out front, and in 2009 celebrated his marriage with Salma Hayek at the Grassi among A-list guests Bono, Charlize Theron, Ed Norton and Javier Bardem.

San Marco isn't the only church of note in the neighbourhood. Gothic **Chiesa di Santo Stefano** ([Map](#); ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun) has a bell tower that leans disconcertingly, and a vast wood-ribbed *carena di nave* (ship's keel) ceiling that looks like an upturned Noah's Ark. Enter the cloisters **museum** (admission €3 or Chorus Pass ticket) to see Canova's 1808 funerary stela featuring gorgeous women dabbing their eyes with their cloaks, Tullio Lombardo's wide-eyed 1505 saint whom Titian is said to have referenced for his Madonna at I Frari, and three brooding Tintoretto canvases: *Last Supper*, with a ghostly dog begging for bread; the gathering gloom of *Agony in the Garden*; and the abstract, mostly black *Washing of the Feet*.

Another church offering awe through the ages is **Chiesa di Santa Maria del Giglio** ([Map](#); Campo di Santa Maria del Giglio; admission €3 or Chorus ticket; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), with a 10th-century Byzantine layout, a baroque facade featuring maps of European cities c 1678 and three intriguing masterpieces. Hiding behind the altar is Veronese's *Madonna with Child*, with Tintoretto's four evangelists flanking the organ and a small painting of Mary with St John and a charmingly chubby baby Jesus in the Molin Chapel by Northern Renaissance master Peter Paul Rubens.

Romantics swarm the Piazza San Marco at sunset, but if you can't wait for a snog until then, head to **Palazzo Contarini del Bovolo** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 532 29 20; Calle Contarini del Bovolo 4299; entry to open courtyard free; ☎ 10am-6pm). This 15th-century *palazzo* is a hidden jewel of Renaissance architecture with an external spiral *bovolo* (snail-shell) staircase that's closed for restoration and a shady courtyard that offers privacy and stirring views of the staircase.

Fashionistas get happily lost in the **Marzarie** ([Map](#)), a maze of boutique-lined byways connecting Piazza San Marco to the Rialto. For a high-fashion detour, visit **Museo Fortuny** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 520 90 70; [www.museiciviviceneziiani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziiani.it); Campo San Beneto 3958; adult/VENICEcard-holder €8/5; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon), the not-so-humble home studio of outrageous art nouveau Spanish-Venetian designer Mariano Fortuny y Madrazo. Salons swagged with Fortuny's printed textiles host rotating exhibits by modern artisans, who are inevitably upstaged by Fortuny's 1910 sketches of bohemian goddess frocks that could rule red carpets today.

## Dorsoduro

Minds blown by San Marco require a bracing espresso, restorative gelato and possibly a Hail Mary before taking on the **Gallerie dell'Accademia** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 22 47, bookings 041 520 03 45; [www.gallerieaccademia.org](http://www.gallerieaccademia.org); Campo della Carità 1050; adult/EU citizen 18-25yr/child under 12yr & EU citizen under 18yr or over 65yr €6.50/3.25/free, video/audio guide €6/4; ☎ 8.15am-2pm Mon, to 7.15pm Tue-Sun; last entry 45min before closing). Behind the serene walls of the former Santa Maria della Carità convent expanded by Palladio, these galleries contain more murderous intrigue, forbidden romance, shameless politicking and near-riots than the most outrageous Venetian parties.

To guide you through the ocular onslaught, visits are loosely organised by style, theme and painter from the 14th to 18th centuries, beginning with Paolo Veneziano's c 1350 *Coronation of Mary*, which shows Jesus bestowing the crown on his mother with a gentle pat on the head as an angelic orchestra performs overhead. For sheer, shimmering gore, there's no topping Carpaccio's *Crucifixion and Glorification of*

*the Ten Thousand Martyrs of Mount Ararat* in room 2 – Harry’s Bar was quite correct in naming its bloody raw-beef dish after this painter.

Andrea Mantegna’s 1466 haughtily handsome *St George* and Giovanni Bellini’s sweet-faced *Madonna and Child* haloed by neon-red cherubs highlight Venice’s twin artistic tendencies: high drama and glowing colour. Rooms 6 to 10 include such Renaissance masterpieces as Tintoretto’s *Creation of the Animals*, a fantastical bestiary that suggests that God put forth his best efforts inventing Venetian seafood (no arguments here), and one of Titian’s last efforts possibly finished posthumously by Palma il Giovane: a 1576 *Pietà* where form is secondary to emotion, with smears of paint Titian applied with bare hands.

Accademia’s scene-stealer dominates room 10: Paolo Veronese’s controversial *Feast in the House of Levi*, originally called *Last Supper* until church Inquisition leaders condemned Veronese for showing drunkards, dwarfs, dogs and Reformation-minded Germans cavorting amid the apostles. Veronese refused to change a thing about his painting besides the title, and Venice stood by this act of artistic defiance against Rome. Follow the exchanges, gestures and eye contact among the characters here, and you’ll concede that not one Moorish trader, stumbling servant, gambler or bright-eyed lapdog could have been painted over without losing an essential piece of the Venetian puzzle.

At this point you’re only halfway through Venice’s contributions to art history – but don’t skip rooms 16 to 18, which feature Canaletto’s sweeping views of Venice and Giorgione’s 1508 *The Storm*, a highly charged scenario involving a nursing mother, a passing soldier and a bolt of summer lightning. Adjoining portrait galleries can scarcely contain larger-than-life Venetian characters, including Giorgione’s decidedly un-Botoxed *Old Woman*, Lorenzo Lotto’s 1525 soul-searching *Portrait of a Young Scholar*, Rosalba Carriera’s brutally honest self-portrait c 1730, and Giambattista Piazzetta’s saucy socialite in his 1740 *Fortune-Teller*. Room 20 reprises Gentile Bellini and Vittore Carpaccio, with multicultural crowds of Venetian merchants embedded in Venetian versions of *Miracles of the True Cross*, before the grand finale: Titian’s 1534–9 *Presentation of the Virgin*, with the young Madonna dutifully trudging up an intimidating staircase as onlookers point to her example.

For a refreshingly modern take on Venice, head to **Peggy Guggenheim Collection** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 240 54 11; [www.guggenheim-venice.it](http://www.guggenheim-venice.it); Palazzo Venier dei Leoni 701; adult/senior over 65yr/student with ID to 26yr/child under 10yr €10/8/5/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon). After tragically losing her father on the *Titanic*, heiress Peggy Guggenheim befriended Dadaists, dodged Nazis and amassed avant-garde works by 200 modern artists at her palatial home on the Grand Canal. Peggy’s Palazzo Venier dei Leoni became a modernist shrine, chronicling surrealism, Italian futurism and abstract expressionism, with a subtext of Peggy’s romantic pursuits – the collection includes key works by Peggy’s ex-husband Max Ernst as well as Jackson Pollock, among Peggy’s many rumoured lovers. Peggy collected according to her own convictions rather than for prestige or style, so her collection includes inspired folk art and lesser-known local artists alongside Kandinsky, Picasso, Brancusi, Mondrian and Dali. Wander around works by Moore, Giacometti and Ernst in the **sculpture garden**, where the city of Venice granted Peggy honorary dispensation to be buried alongside her pet dogs in 1979.

Dominating the entrance to the Grand Canal is Venice’s monumental sigh of relief: **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 55 58; [www.marcianum.it/salute](http://www.marcianum.it/salute), in Italian; Campo della Salute 1b; sacristy admission €1.50; 🕒 9am-noon & 3-5.30pm), built by survivors of Venice’s 1630 plague atop at least 100,000 pylons as thanks for salvation. Baldassare Longhena’s unusual octagonal church is an inspired design that architectural scholars have compared to Greco-Roman temples and Jewish Kabbala diagrams, and is the site of Venetians’ annual pilgrimage to pray for health ([Click here](#)). Inside, you’ll spot Tintoretto’s surprisingly upbeat *The Wedding Feast of Cana* en route to the **sacristy**, which features no less than 12 Titians, including a vivid self-portrait in the guise of St Matthew and his earliest known

work, the precocious vermilion *Saint Mark on the Throne* from 1510.

At the tip of Dorsoduro, Venice's old customs house has just undergone a three-year reinvention by architect Tadao Ando as Venice's splashiest contemporary art space: the **Punta della Dogana** (📍 199 13 91 39; [www.palazzograssi.it](http://www.palazzograssi.it); admission adult/12-18yr, senior or disabled/under 11yr €15/10/free, or with ticket to Peggy Guggenheim within 3 days of visit/combined ticket with Palazzo Grassi €12/20; 🕒 10am-7pm Wed-Mon). **Fortuna**, the weather vane atop Punta Dogana, swung Venice's way when bureaucratic hassles in Paris convinced billionaire art collector François Pinault to transfer his world-class collection to the Palazzo **Grassi** and create a gallery extension at the Punta della Dogana. The inaugural show traced the creative process of Takashi Murakami, Jeff Koons, Cindy Sherman and other contemporary artists, from rough drafts to end products, installed in converted warehouses flooded with light through polished-concrete channels and water gates – astute homages to Carlo Scarpa's designs for **Palazzo Querini Stampalia**.

The sunny side of Dorsoduro is the **Zattere** (Map), a promenade that runs along the Canale della Giudecca from Punta della Dogana to the old Stazione Marittima (ferry terminal). Stop for ice cream and a gasp at **Gesuati** (Map; 📍 041 523 06 25; Fondamenta delle Zattere 918; admission €3 or Chorus Pass ticket; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat), a high-baroque church designed by Giorgio Massari and crowned with Tiepolo's 1737–39 ceiling frescoes of St Dominic amid sunny skies so convincing you'll wonder whether you're wearing enough sunscreen. On the right side of the nave, Venetian virtuoso of luminosity Sebastiano Ricci's 1730–33 *Saints Peter and Thomas with Pope Pius V* provides a contrast to Tintoretto's 1565 *Crucifixion*, with deep reds and greens amid the gathering gloom.

At the end of the Zattere is a hidden jewel of Venetian art: **San Sebastiano** (Map; 📍 041 528 24 87; Campo San Sebastiano 1687; admission €3 or Chorus Pass ticket; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat), with floor-to-ceiling masterpieces by Paolo Veronese completed over three decades. Veronese's horses rear over the frames of the coffered ceiling; the organ doors are covered with vivid Veronese masterworks; and in Veronese's *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* near the altar, the bound saint defiantly stares down his tormentors amid a Venetian crowd of socialites, turbaned traders and Veronese's signature frisky spaniel.

Two baroque beauties wait in the wings off Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro's happy-hour hot spot. Baldassare Longhena's **Ca' Rezzonico** (Museum of the 18th Century; Map; 📍 041 241 01 00; [www.museicivici veneziani.it](http://www.museicivici veneziani.it); Fondamenta Rezzonico 3136; adult/student & child €6.50/4.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct, to 5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Mar) palace showcases 18th-century arts in lavish music salons, sumptuous boudoirs, even a **pharmacy** with medicinal scorpions. The **Throne Room** ceiling highlights Tiepolo's sensuous beauty and shameless flattery, showing gorgeous Merit ascending to the Temple of Glory clutching the Golden Book of Venetian nobles' names – including Tiepolo's patrons, the Rezzonico family. Other collection highlights include the **Pietro Longhi Salon** of socialite satires, Rosalba Carriera's wry society portraits and Emma Ciardi's moody canal views; check the schedule downstairs for Venice Chamber Music Orchestra concerts in the **ballroom**. Last entry is an hour before closing.

Tiepolo and Longhena unleashed star power on the **Scuola Grande dei Carmini** (Map; 📍 041 528 94 20; Campo Santa Margherita 2617; adult/senior & student €5/4; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar), a shelter run by Carmelite nuns. Longhena designed the stairway to heaven, glimpsed in Tiepolo's nine-panel ceiling of a resplendent Virgin in Glory upstairs; ask downstairs about occasional performances by the **Venice Opera** ([www.venice-opera.com](http://www.venice-opera.com)) staged here.

## San Polo & Santa Croce

Art historians are torn between two Venetian loves: Titian's colour and Tintoretto's drama. You can see why in San Polo, which features legendary masterpieces by Venice's Renaissance titans on the same block. **I Frari** ([Map](#); Campo dei Frari, San Polo 3004; admission €3 or Chorus Pass ticket; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun) is a soaring, sombre Italian-brick Gothic church featuring puzzlework marquetry **choir stalls**, Canova's vast **pyramid mausoleum** in the nave and Bellini's achingly sweet *Madonna with Child* triptych in the **sacristy** – yet visitors are drawn to the small altarpiece like moths to an eternal flame. This is Titian's 1518 *Madonna of the Ascension*, capturing the moment the radiant Madonna reaches heavenward, finds her footing on a cloud and escapes this mortal coil in a swirl of Titian red cloak. Both inside and outside the painting, onlookers below gasp and point out the ascending Madonna to one another. Titian was lost to the plague at 90 in 1576, but legend has it that in light of his immortal contribution to I Frari, strict rules of quarantine were bent to allow his burial here.

Just around the corner, you'll swear the paint is still fresh on the 50 action-packed Tintoretto's painted from 1575 to 1587 for the **Scuola Grande di San Rocco** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 48 64; [www.scuolagrandisanrocco.it](http://www.scuolagrandisanrocco.it); Campo San Rocco, San Polo 3052; adult/18-26yr/under 18yr €7/5/free; 🕒 9am-5.30pm from Easter-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Easter). Everyone wanted the commission to paint this building dedicated to the patron saint of the plague-stricken, so Tintoretto cheated a little: instead of producing sketches like his rival Veronese, he painted a splendid ceiling panel and dedicated it to the saint, knowing such a gift couldn't be refused or matched by other artists. Tintoretto covered the ceilings upstairs in the **Sala Grande Superiore** with Old Testament scenes that read like a modern graphic novel – you can almost hear the swoop! overhead as an angel dives down to feed an ailing Elijah. Unlike Venetian colourists, Tintoretto concentrated on dynamic lines for his New Testament wall scenes: against the shadowy backdrop of the Black Death, Tintoretto highlights his subjects in lightning streaks of hope. Downstairs, the assembly hall illuminates the story of the Virgin Mary, starting on the left wall with the *Annunciation* and ending with the *Ascension* opposite – dark and cataclysmic, compared to Titian's glowing version at I Frari.

Along the well-beaten path between I Frari and the Rialto is a brick 9th-century Byzantine church many travellers speed past without noticing. In **Chiesa di San Polo** (Campo San Polo 2118; admission €3 or Chorus Pass ticket; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) Tintoretto's *Last Supper* captures apostles alarmed at Jesus' announcement that one of them will betray him, and Giandominico Tiepolo (son of baroque ceiling maestro Giambattista) shows Jesus tormented by jeering onlookers in his disturbing *Stations of the Cross*. Outside is a cheerier view of humanity in vast **Campo San Polo**, where kids play tag, lovers smooch on benches and outdoor theatre and movies are held in summer.

West of Campo San Polo is **Campo San Giacomo dell'Orio**, where Venetian grandparents enjoy happy hour unfazed as children careen towards canals on tricycles (Venetian kids learn to swim early). In the centre of the action is 13th-century Romanesque **Chiesa di San Giacomo dell'Orio** ([Map](#); Campo San Giacomo dell'Orio, Santa Croce 1457; admission €2.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), with a couple of artistic oddities: a wooden crucifix by Veronese and a rare work by Lorenzo Lotto, *Madonna with Child and Saints*.

Through the warren of alleyways lined with artisans' workshops north of Campo San Polo lies Renaissance **Ca' Pesaro** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 72 11 27; [www.museiciviviceneziiani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziiani.it); Fondamenta de Ca' Pesaro, Santa Croce 2076; adult/senior, student & child €5.50/3; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), an eccentric museum featuring modern art and Asian antiques in a Longhena-designed 1710 *palazzo*. The **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** begins with the flag-waving early days of the Biennale, showcasing Venetian landscapes, Venetian painters (notably Giacomo Favretto) and Venetian socialites embodying mythological virtues. But savvy Biennale collectors soon diversified, snapping up pivotal

works such as Gustav Klimt's 1909 *Judith II (Salome)* and Marc Chagall's *Rabbi of Vitebsk* (1914–22). The De Lisi Bequest in 1961 added Kandinskys and Morandis to the modernist mix of de Chiricos, Mirós, Kandinskys and Moores. Upstairs, step back in time through the phalanx of samurai warriors at the quirky **Museo d'Arte Orientale**, an 1887–89 souvenir-shopping spree across Asia that Prince Enricodi Borbone preserved for posterity. The prince reached Japan when Edo art was discounted in favour of modern Meiji, and Edo-era swords, netsukes and a lacquerware palanquin are standouts in this collection of 30,000 *objets d'art*.

Costume dramas unfold in nearby **Palazzo Mocenigo** (☎ 041 72 17 98; [www.museiciviviceneziani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziani.it); Salizada di San Stae 1992; admission €2.50-4; 📧 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), a swanky Grand Canal palace with displays of original baroque costumes: necklines plunge in the **Red Living Room**, lethal corsets come undone in the **Contessa's Bedroom** and deep red procurators' robes hide deep pockets and expanding waistlines in the **Dining Room**.

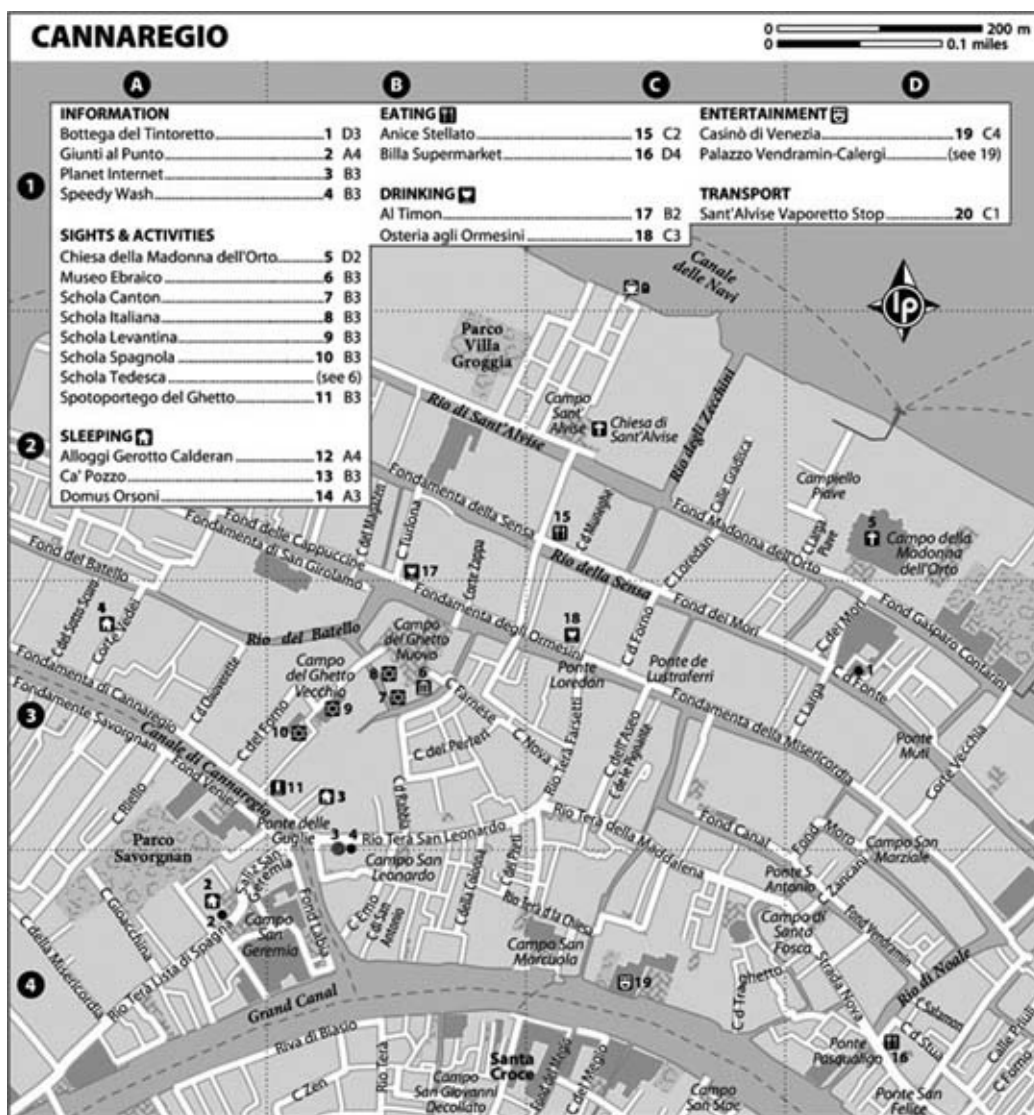
For foodies, the star attractions of San Polo are the Rialto Market and **Pescaria** –but tempting bars and boutiques line the way to the Ponte di Rialto ([Map](#)) along the Grand Canal.

Comedians, writers and theatre buffs pay their respects at 15th-century **Casa di Goldoni** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 275 93 25; [www.museiciviviceneziani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziani.it); Calle dei Nomboli, San Polo 2794; adult/senior, student & child €2.50/1.50; 📧 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, to 4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar), where Venice's greatest playwright and master of delicious social satire, Carlo Goldoni, was born in 1707. Highlights are 18th-century marionettes and chronicles of Goldoni's madcap career shifts from doctor's apprentice to lawyer to comedian – but don't miss chamber-music concerts held here (see the website for the schedule).

## Cannaregio

To see what a pedestrian rush hour looks like, join the crowds speed-walking along the thoroughfare connecting Piazzale Roma to Piazza San Marco via the Ponte di **Calatrava** around 9.30am or 6.30pm – but to see how Venice lives out of the fast lane, duck into the narrow back lanes off this boulevard. Behind the shopfront scenes in Cannaregio are sunny *fondamente* (canal banks), authentic *osterie* (bistros) and the unofficial heart of Venice's maritime empire: the **Ghetto** ([Map](#)). This area in Venice was once a *getto* (foundry), but its role as the designated Jewish quarter from the 16th to 18th centuries gave the word a whole new meaning.

In accordance with the Venetian Republic's 1516 decree, Jewish artisans and lenders stocked and funded Venice's commercial enterprises by day, while at night and on Christian holidays they were restricted to the gated island of the **Ghetto Novo**. When Jewish merchants fled the Spanish Inquisition for Venice in 1541, there was no place to go but up: around the **Campo del Ghetto Nuovo** ([Map](#)), additional storeys atop existing buildings housed new arrivals, synagogues and publishers. After Napoleon lifted restrictions in 1797, Ghetto residents gained standing as Venetian citizens. However Mussolini's 1938 race laws were throwbacks to the 16th century, and in 1943 most of the 1670 Jews in Venice were rounded up and sent to concentration camps; only 37 returned. Today Venice's Jewish community numbers around 400, including a few families living in the Ghetto.



A starting point to explore this pivotal community in Venetian arts, architecture, commerce and history is the **Museo Ebraico** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 71 53 59; [www.museoebraico.it](http://www.museoebraico.it); Campo del Ghetto Nuovo, Cannaregio 2902b; adult/student €3/2, tours incl admission €8.50/7; 📧 10am-7pm Sun-Fri except Jewish holidays Jun-Sep, to 6pm Sun-Fri Oct-May). English-language tours leave every half-hour starting at 10.30am, and take you inside three of the seven tiny synagogues in the Ghetto, including the **Schola Canton** ([Map](#)), **Schola Italiana** ([Map](#)) and either the **Schola Levantina** ([Map](#)) during the summer or the **Schola Spagnola** ([Map](#)) in winter.

Across the iron bridge from the Campo del Ghetto Nuovo is the **Fondamenta degli Ormesini**, sleepy by day and lively at night with authentic *osterie*. A short stroll away is one of Venice's best-kept secrets: the 14th-century **Chiesa della Madonna dell'Orto** ([Map](#); Campo della Madonna dell'Orto 3520; admission €3 or Chorus Pass ticket; 📧 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), the elegantly spare 1365 brick Gothic cathedral that was Tintoretto's parish church. The Renaissance master is buried here in the corner chapel and saved some of his best work for the apse: *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, with throngs of starstruck angels and mortals vying for a glimpse of Mary, and his 1546 *Last Judgment*, where lost souls attempt to hold back a teal tidal wave while an angel rescues one last person from the ultimate *acqua alta*.

Another hidden gem is the multicoloured marble **Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Miracoli** ([Map](#); Campo dei Miracoli 6074; admission €2.50; 📧 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), built by the neighbourhood to house Niccolò di Pietro's Madonna icon when it miraculously started weeping c 1480. Pietro Lombardo's early Renaissance design was ahead of its time, dropping trendy Gothic grandiosity for relatable, human-

scale architecture. Completing this monument to Venetian community and ingenuity, Pier Maria Pennacchi filled 50 wooden ceiling panels with portraits of saints and prophets dressed as Venetians.

Along the Grand Canal, you can't miss the stunning 15th-century **Ca' d'Oro** (Golden House, House of Gold; [Map](#); ☎ 041 522 23 49; [www.cadoro.org](http://www.cadoro.org), in Italian; Calle di Ca' d'Oro 3932; adult/EU student under 26yr/EU citizen under 18yr or over 65 €5/2.50/free; 🕒 8.15am-2pm Mon, to 7.15pm Tue-Sun), its lacy Gothic facade resplendent even without original gold-leaf details that gave the palace its name. Ca' d'Oro was donated to Venice to house the **Galleria Franchetti** ([Map](#)), Baron Franchetti's art collection, plus a jackpot of bronzes, tapestries and paintings plundered from Veneto churches by Napoleon and reclaimed by Venice. Collection highlights include Andrea Mantegna's teeth-bearing, arrow-riddled Saint Sebastian altarpiece; Pietro Lombardo's tender *Madonna and Child* in glistening Carrara marble; pieces of Titian frescoes saved from the outside of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi (home to the main post office; [Click here](#)); and a faded but still-sensuous nude fresco fragment by Giorgione.

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## LOCAL VOICE: ROSANNA CORRÓ

**Cannaregio calm** I find design inspiration right at my doorstep [in Cannaregio]: ancient walls with peeling plaster, the reflection of light on the water, Madonna dell'Orto (above). The ratio is about five Venetians for every three tourists, and it's peaceful and sunny along the *fondamente* (canal banks).

**Travel papers** The tradition of *carta marmorizzata* (paper marbling) was brought to Venice from Japan via Turkey and Florence, and it evolved every step of the way. I started out as a book restorer and I had access to private collections of ancient books with incredible marbled end papers. When I studied these ancient methods, I saw new possibilities too, things I could bring to the tradition as a Brazilian and Venetian with a modern sensibility.

**Capturing Venice's mood** No two sheets turn out the same, because each depends on the temperature of the water, the humidity of the air, the mood of that day. If I can capture that moment on paper, I'm happy.

*Rosanna Corró is the avant-garde Venetian paper artisan at [Cartè](#)*

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## Castello

You'll know you've crossed from Cannaregio into Castello when you spot Bartolomeo Colleoni galloping out to meet you. The bronze equestrian statue commemorates one of Venice's more loyal mercenary mainland commanders, and marks the entrance to the supersize Gothic **Zanipolo** (Chiesa dei SS Giovanni e Paolo; [Map](#); ☎ 041 523 59 13; Campo SS Giovanni e Paolo; admission €2.50; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun), built by the Dominicans from 1333 to 1430 to rival the Franciscans' I **Frari**. I Frari may nudge past Zanipolo with soaring grace, but Zanipolo makes up the difference with the sheer scale and variety of its masterpieces. In the **Cappella del Rosario**, off the north arm of the transept, Paolo Veronese's ceiling depicts the rosy Virgin ascending a staggering staircase to be crowned by cherubs, while angels flip with the joy of it all. The chapel dome on the southwest end of the nave boasts Giambattista Lorenzetti's *Jesus the Navigator*, where Jesus scans the skies like a Venetian sea captain. Nearby is Guido Reni's baroque painting *San Giuseppe*, showing Joseph exchanging tender, adoring looks with baby Jesus. Zanipolo contains 25 **doges' tombs** by such notable sculptors as Nicolo Pisano and Tullio Lombardo, and the vast 15th-century Murano **stained-glass window** is currently undergoing restoration to illuminate designs by Bartolomeo Vivarini and Girolamo Mocetto.

Zanipolo's austere brick facade is almost overwhelmed by the neighbouring lavish Renaissance



polychrome marble facade by Pietro Lombardo that once fronted the **Scuola Grande di San Marco** ([Map](#)), confraternity of Venice's patron saint, and is now the grand entry to Venice's hospital. **Campo SS Giovanni e Paolo** is a prime spot for a coffee or to kick off a *giro d'ombra*, a roving happy hour.

One Prosecco here leads to another in nearby **Campo Santa Maria Formosa**, almost directly south of here via narrow lanes. Savvy locals take their drinks with a twist of high modernism in the Carlo Scarpa—designed garden or Mario Botta—designed cafe of 16th-century **Palazzo Querini Stampalia** ([Map](#)). Enter through the Botta-designed bookshop to get a free pass to the cafe, or buy a ticket to wander through the upstairs **Museo della Fondazione Querini Stampalia** (☎ 041 271 14 11; [www.querinistampalia.it](http://www.querinistampalia.it), in Italian; Campiello Querini Stampalia 5252; adult/student & senior €8/6; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue-Thu, to 10pm Fri & Sat, to 7pm Sun). Contemporary-art installations add an element of the unexpected to silk-draped salons preserved in period splendour since 1868, and concerts and lectures held in the baroque music room on Fridays and Saturdays draw Venetian hipsters and old-timers alike.

East of Campo SS Giovanni e Paolo you'll spot the bell tower of the **Chiesa di San Francesco della Vigna** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 520 61 02; Campo San Francesco della Vigna 2787; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 3-7pm). Designed and built by Jacopo Sansovino with a facade by Palladio, this enchanting Franciscan church is one of Venice's most underrated attractions. Madonna positively glows in Bellini's 1507 *Madonna and Saints* in the Capella Santa off the cloisters; swimming angels and strutting birds steal the scene in Antonio da Negroponte's c 1460–70 *Virgin Enthroned*; and Pietro Lombardo's lifelike lions seem ready to pounce right out of the 15th-century marble reliefs in the Capella Giustiniani left of the altar.

The **Arsenale** ([Map](#)) was founded in 1104 and soon became the greatest medieval shipyard in Europe, home to 300 shipping companies employing up to 16,000 people, and capable of turning out a new galley in a day. Venice's navy remained unbeatable for centuries, but now arty types invade the shipyards during Venice's art and architecture **Biennales**. **Giardini Pubblici** ([Map](#)) is the main site of the art Biennale, with curators and curiosity-seekers swarming national showcases ranging from Carlo Scarpa's daring 1954 raw-concrete-and-glass **Venezuelan Pavilion** to Peter Cox's awkward 1988 **Australian Pavilion**, frequently mistaken for a construction trailer. In even years between art Biennales, you can wander the gardens and admire the facades of the Secessionist-era **Austro-Hungarian Pavilion**, glittering with mosaics; the timber-beamed, retro-'70s ski lodge **Canadian Pavilion**; and the postmodern **Korean Pavilion**, in an ingeniously converted electrical plant.

**Museo Storico Navale** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 520 02 76; Riva San Biagio 2148; admission €3; ☎ 8.45am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) is a four-storey, 42-room monument to Venice's maritime history, featuring full-scale boats including the ducal barge, Peggy Guggenheim's not-so-minimalist gondola, ocean liners and WWII battleships. Museum admission includes the **Padiglione delle Navi** (Ships Pavilion; [Map](#)) on Fondamenta della Madonna, near the Arsenale entrance.

When 15th-century Venetian Paris Hiltons showed more interest in sailors than saints, they might have been sent for a stint at the convent adjoining **Chiesa di San Zaccaria** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 12 57; Campo San Zaccaria 4693; ☎ 10am-noon & 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 4-6pm Sun). Here Venice's wayward daughters passed their time in prayer, with breaks for concerts and scandalous masked balls. The wealth showered on this church is evident: note the gilt polyptych in the Golden Chapel downstairs and the Gothic facade by Antonio Gambello with Codussi's Renaissance embellishments. The treasury of art includes Bellini's melancholy *Virgin Enthroned with Jesus, an Angel Musician and Saints*, Tiepolo's version of the flight into Egypt in a Venetian boat, and Antonio Vivarini's 1443 painting of St Sabina, keeping her cool as angels buzz around her head like lagoon mosquitoes.

Venice's religious tolerance and cosmopolitan nature shows in Castello, where Turkish merchants,

Armenian clerics and diverse Balkan and Slavic residents mingled and were considered essential contributors to Venetian commerce and society. The 15th-century **Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 88 28; Calle dei Furlani 3259a; admission €3; 🕒 2.45-6pm Mon; 9am-1pm & 2.45-6pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) is dedicated to patron saints George, Tryphone and Jerome of Dalmatia, and its Slavic confraternity so influential that Vittore Carpaccio painted the lives of the saints on the ground floor.

## Giudecca

Originally known as the *spina longa* (long fishbone) because of its shape, Giudecca has survived many trials without losing its spirit. Venice's Jewish community lived here prior to the creation of the Ghetto, but Giudecca isn't related to the word 'Jewish' (*hebrei* in Italian). Giudecca is likely derived from *Zudega*, from *giudicato*, or 'the judged,' the name given to rebellious Venetian nobles banished to Giudecca.

The banishments backfired: Giudecca became fashionable, and Venetians built weekend garden villas on the island. Many were abandoned during times of plague and war, and were eventually displaced by 19th-century industry. But Giudecca never lost its fashion sense: at **Fortuny Tessuti Artistici** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 40 78; [www.fortuny.com](http://www.fortuny.com); Fondamenta San Biagio 805; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9-11am & 2-6pm Sat & Sun), Marcel Proust waxed poetic over silken cottons printed with boho-chic art nouveau patterns. Visitors can browse 260 textile designs in the gated showroom, but fabrication methods have been jealously guarded in the garden studio for a century.

Today Giudecca is entering its third act, with brick factories converted into artists' lofts, galleries taking over the **Fondamenta San Biagio**, and the convent-orphanage designed by Palladio around his classical white-marble **Zitelle** church is now the high-end Bauer Palladio spa hotel [Click here](#). Giudecca's restaurants are among Venice's most reasonable, and vaporetto 41, 42, 82 and N (night) make Giudecca an easy stop between San Marco and Dorsoduro.

Even from afar, you can't miss Palladio's 1577 **Il Redentore** (Chiesa del SS Redentore; [Map](#); Campo del SS Redentore 194; admission €3 or Chorus Pass ticket; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), a triumph of white marble along the Grand Canal celebrating the city's deliverance from the Black Death. Inside over the portal, Paolo Piazza's strikingly modern 1619 *Gratitude of Venice for Liberation from the Plague* shows the city held aloft by angels in sobering shades of grey. Survival is never taken for granted by Venetians, who walk across the Giudecca Canal on a shaky pontoon bridge from the Zattere to give thanks during the **Festa del Redentore** (Feast of the [Redeemer](#)).

## San Giorgio Maggiore

Solar eclipses are only marginally more dazzling than Palladio's white Istrian marble marvel, the 1565–80 **Chiesa di San Giorgio Maggiore** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 78 27; Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Oct-Apr). Sunglasses are advisable upon approach of *vaporetto* 82 to the gleaming classical facade, with massive columns supporting a triangular tympanum that owes more to ancient Roman temples than the bombastic baroque trendy in Palladio's day. Inside, ceilings billow over a generous nave, with high windows distributing filtered sunshine and easy grace. The black, white and red inlaid stone floor draws the eye towards the altar, flanked by two Tintoretto masterworks: *Collecting the Manna* and *Last Supper*. Take the lift (€3) to the top of the 60m-high bell tower for a stirring panorama that takes in Giudecca, San Marco and the lagoon beyond.

Behind the church alongside the marina, a defunct naval academy has been converted into a shipshape

gallery for the **Fondazione Giorgio Cini** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 271 02 80; [www.cini.it](http://www.cini.it); Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore; adult/senior & student/student 7-12yr/child under 7yr €12/10/8/free; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Sat). After escaping the Dachau internment camp with his son Giorgio, Vittorio Cini returned to Venice on a mission to save San Giorgio Maggiore, which was a ramshackle mess in 1949. Cini's foundation bought and restored the island into a cultural centre, and the gallery hosts noteworthy shows ranging from Peter Greenaway video art inspired by Veronese paintings to avant-garde Japanese typography.

## The Lido

When Karl Lagerfeld was looking for an appropriate location for Chanel's 2009 resort couture collection, the choice was obvious: the Lido. Only 15 minutes by *vaporetti* 1, 51, 52, 61, 62, 82 and N from San Marco, this island has brought glamour to beaches since the late 19th century, when Venice's upper crust escaped hot, crowded Venetian summers for the Lido's breezy **Liberty villas**. Thomas Mann's melancholy novel *Death in Venice* was set in turn-of-the-century Lido, and you'll spot wrought-iron balconies and seaside resorts that date from those elegantly decadent days.

**Lido beaches** (deposit/chair/umbrella & chair/hut €5/6/11/17; ☎ most beaches 9.30am-7pm May-Sep) remain a major draw, especially on the Adriatic side, where cleaner water makes for maximum sun-umbrella density on sunny days. The tanning crowd thins out and rates drop a couple of euros after 2pm, but to avoid amenities fees and throngs of weekenders, rent a bicycle by the *vaporetto* stop at **Lido on Bike** (☎ 041 526 80 19; [www.lidoonbike.it](http://www.lidoonbike.it); Gran Viale 21b; single/double/family bikes per hr €3/7/14, tandem €6-18, per day single/tandem €9/8; ☎ 9am-7pm, weather permitting) and head south to **Alberoni** and other pristine, windswept beaches. Mind the traffic – after a few days in Venice, cars brought here via ferry from Tronchetto may come as a shock.

The biggest event on the Lido social calendar arrives each September, when starlets and socialites attempt to blind paparazzi with Italian couture at the **Venice International Film Festival** ([Click here](#)). Events are held at the 1930s **Palazzo del Cinema**, which looks like a Fascist airport and when stripped of its red carpet, C+S Associates' 2003 'Wave' entrance begs for a skateboard.

## San Michele

En route to Murano from the Fondamente Nuove, *vaporetti* 41 and 42 stop at Venice's **city cemetery**, established on Isola di San Michele under Napoleon. Until then, Venetians had been buried in parish plots across town – not the most salubrious solution, as Napoleon's inspectors realised. Today goths, incorrigible romantics and music lovers pause here to pay respects to Ezra Pound, Sergei Diaghilev and Igor Stravinsky. Architecture buffs stop by to see the Renaissance **Chiesa di San Michele in Isola** ([Map](#)) begun by Codussi in 1469, and cemetery extensions in the works by David Chipperfield Architects, based on the firm's completed **Courtyard of the Four Evangelists**: a rather gloomy bunker, with a concrete colonnade and basalt-clad walls engraved with the Gospels.

## Murano

Venetians have been working in crystal and glass since the 10th century, but due to the fire hazards of glass-blowing, the industry was moved to the island of Murano (off [Map](#)) in the 13th century. Woe betide the glass-blower with wanderlust: trade secrets were so jealously guarded that any glass-worker who left the city was guilty of treason and subject to assassination. Today they ply their trade at workshops along Murano's **Fondamenta dei Vetrai** marked by 'Fornace' (Furnace) signs, secure in the knowledge that their wares set a standard that can't be replicated elsewhere. To ensure glass you buy in Venice is handmade in Murano and not factory-fabricated elsewhere, look for the heart-shaped seal guarantee.

Since 1861, Murano has displayed its glass-making prowess at the **Museum of Glass** (Museo del Vetro; ☎ 041 73 95 86; [www.museiciviviceneziani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziani.it); Fondamenta Giustinian 8; adult/EU senior & student 6-14yr/with Civic Museum Pass or VENICEcard & child under 6yr €5.50/3/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Thu-Tue Apr-Oct, to 4pm Thu-Tue Nov-Mar). Downstairs, 3rd-century iridescent Roman glass is featured alongside Maria Grazia Rosin's 1992 postmodern detergent jug in impeccably blown glass. Upstairs, technical explanations detail the process for mosaics and Venetian trade beads, while displays range from 17th-century winged goblets to Carlo Scarpa's 1930 octopus.

Murano's glass-making is also showcased in the 12th-century Virgin Mary apse mosaic at **Chiesa dei SS Maria e Donato** (☎ 041 73 90 56; Campo San Donato; 🕒 9am-noon & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 3.30-7pm Sun). The church was rededicated to San Donato after his bones were brought here from Cephalonia, along with four bones from a dragon he supposedly killed behind the altar. Save the church visit until after the museum and shops close around 5pm to 6pm, before hopping *vaporetto* 41 or 42 back to Venice – Murano is deserted at night.

## Burano

After you binge on Venice's Gothic ornament, Burano (off [Map](#)) brings you back to your senses with a shock of colour. The 40-minute LN ferry ride from the Fondamenta Nuove is packed with photographers who bound into Burano's backstreets, snapping away at green stockings hung to dry between pink and orange houses. Either some secret colour-theory ordinance requires locals to choose skivvies to complement their home decor schemes, or Burano is naturally the most artistically inclined fishing village in the Mediterranean basin.

Burano is traditionally famed for its lace, but at this writing the **Museo del Merletto** (Lace Museum; ☎ 041 73 00 34; [www.museiciviviceneziani.it](http://www.museiciviviceneziani.it); Piazza Galuppi 187) remained closed for restoration, and much of the stock for sale in Buranelli boutiques was imported – be sure to ask for a guarantee of authenticity.

## Torcello

On the pastoral island of Torcello (off [Map](#)), a three-minute T line ferry-hop from Burano, sheep outnumber the 20 or so human residents. But this bucolic backwater was once a Byzantine metropolis of 20,000 and has the stunning mosaics to prove it inside **Santa Maria Assunta** (☎ 041 296 06 30; Piazza Torcello; cathedral/bell tower €4/2, incl both & museum across piazza €6; 🕒 10.30am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb), founded in the 7th century and rebuilt in the 11th. The Madonna rises like the sun in an eastern apse shimmering with gold mosaics, while on the western wall, a mosaic Last Judgment shows the Adriatic as a sea nymph ushering souls lost at sea towards St Peter, who's jangling the keys to Paradise like God's own bouncer. Climb the **bell tower** for a long view over the lagoon and animals that no longer have to fear Ernest Hemingway's hunting parties. Last entry to the church/bell tower is half an hour before closing.

Time permitting before the last T ferry departure, head across the piazza to take a peek at bronzes and stone relics from Torcello's Byzantine heyday at the quirky **Torcello museum**.

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## VENEXIANÁRSE (BECOME VENETIAN)

High praise is reserved for those who weren't born Venetian, yet make a brave (or at least entertaining) attempt to blend in. Pick up a few Venetian tricks of your own and while you're at it, buy

a round of drinks. Look at that: you're an honorary Venetian.

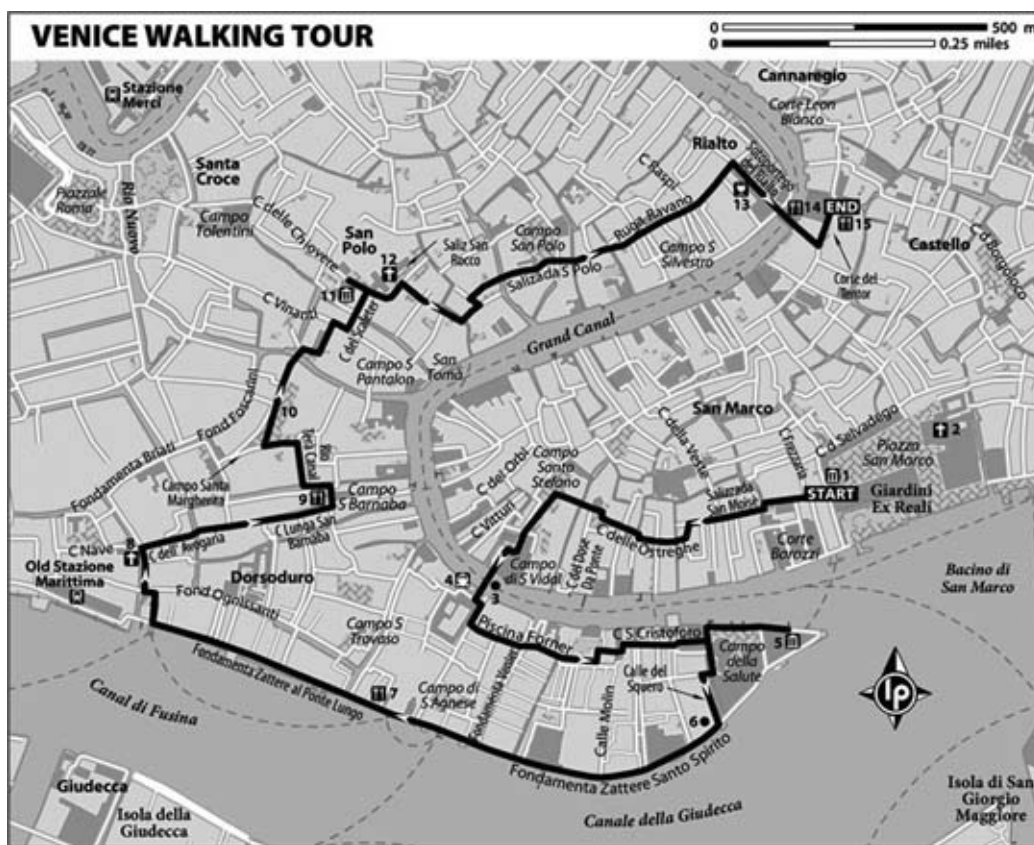
- Cook a seafood feast fresh from the [Pescaria](#) with sommelier Sara Sossiga's wine pairings at **Venice Table** ([www.venicevenetogourmet.com](http://www.venicevenetogourmet.com); per 2-8 people incl meal & wine €130).
  - Learn Italian and pick up a few choice words in Venetian at **Istituto Venezia** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 43 31; [www.istitutovenezia.com](http://www.istitutovenezia.com); Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 3116a; 4hr per day 1-week intensive €160).
  - Make your own masterpiece with painting, etching and sculpture courses at Tintoretto's original studio: **Bottega del Tintoretto** (☎ 041 72 20 81; [www.tintorettovenezia.it](http://www.tintorettovenezia.it); Fondamenta dei Mori 3400; 5-day 30hr course incl lunches & materials €360).
  - Become an opera diva or perform a benefit concert with **Friends of Venice** (☎ 079 7696 9804; [www.friendsofveniceclub.com](http://www.friendsofveniceclub.com); 7-day course UK£250).
  - Row across the Giudecca Canal standing up, Venetian style, with instructors from **Associazione Canottieri Giudecca** ([www.canottierigiudecca.com](http://www.canottierigiudecca.com); Fondamente del Ponte Lungo, Giudecca 259; per hr €10).
  - Create Carnevale masks in a 2½-hour workshop at **Ca' Macana** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 97 49; [www.camacana.com](http://www.camacana.com); Calle delle Botteghe, Dorsoduro 3172; workshop depending on class size about €60; ✉ workshops 3pm Wed & Fri).
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## ACTIVITIES

A gondola ride offers a view of Venice that is anything but pedestrian, with glimpses through water gates into *palazzi* courtyards. Official daytime rates are €80 for 40 minutes or €100 from 7pm to 8am, not including songs (negotiated separately) or tips. Additional time is charged in 20-minute increments (day/night €40/50). You may negotiate a price break in overcast weather or around midday, when other travellers get hot and hungry. Agree on a price, time limit and singing in advance to avoid surcharges.

Gondole cluster at *stazi* (stops) along the Grand Canal, at the train station (☎ 041 71 85 43), the Rialto (☎ 041 522 49 04) and near major monuments (eg I Frari, Ponte Sospiri and Accademia), but you can also book a pickup at a canal near you (☎ 041 528 50 75).



## WALK FACTS

**Start** Museo Correr

**Finish** I Rusteghi (Rialto)

**Distance** 7km

**Duration** over six hours, excluding lunch, drinks and artistic inspiration

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## WALKING TOUR

Yours truly, Venetian *bea vita* (good life) begins with cappuccino overlooking the Piazza San Marco in the company of griffons at the frescoed cafe of the **Museo Correr** (1; [Click here](#)). Duck into Napoleon's ballroom to pay respects to Canova's star-crossed lovers Orpheus and Eurydice, then cross the square to join the crowds in a collective gasp under the gold domes of the **Basilica di San Marco** (2; [Click here](#)). Brave the boutiques lining your 15-minute walk west from the piazza to the **Ponte dell'Accademia** (3; [Click here](#)), clearly marked by yellow signs and designer shopping bags. Across the bridge is the **Gallerie dell'Accademia** (4; [Click here](#)) where you must choose a point of focus – Titian reds, self-portraits, Veronese spaniels – or lose entire days. Emerge from the past and drift into the future amid contemporary art stars at the new **Punta della Dogana** (5; [Click here](#)). Wander up the **Zattere** (6; [Click here](#)) for gelato at **Da Nico** (7; [Click here](#)), then binge on Veronese at **San Sebastiano** (8; [Click here](#)). Follow Calle Lunga San Barnaba to a leisurely lunch of Venetian seafood classics at **Ristorante Oniga** (9; [Click here](#)), then pass artists, fishmongers and arguing philosophy students as you cross **Campo Santa Margarita** (10; [Click here](#)) towards Crosera San Pantalon, where signs point the way to **Scuola Grande di San Rocco** (11; [Click here](#)). If you weren't awake before, Tintoretto's stormy scenes upstairs should do the trick – and just down the block, Titian jolts the senses with his red-hot Madonna altarpiece at **I Frari**

(12; [Click here](#)). After all that heart-racing artistic action, it's time for a drink: follow the signs for the Rialto for Prosecco and artichoke-prosciutto *crostini* along the Grand Canal at **Al Mercà** (13; [Click here](#)), and cross the **Rialto** (14; [Click here](#)) as the sun sets for boar salami and big reds at **I Rusteghi** (15; [Click here](#)). *Sanacapána!* (Cheers!)

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## VENICE FOR CHILDREN

Adults think Venice is meant for them; kids know better. This is where every fairy tale comes to life, with attic prisons inside pink palaces [Click here](#), dragon bones hidden in church walls [Click here](#), glass-blowers breathing life into pocket-sized sea monsters [Click here](#), and fish balancing on their tails as though spellbound [Click here](#): top that, JK Rowling.

To wear out hyperactive parents, ruthless kids make them climb the **Torre dell'Orologio** or the **Chiesa di San Giorgio Maggiore bell tower**. Kids might occasionally indulge their adults with a **gelato**, a push on the swings at the **Giardini Pubblici**, or a nap on a **Lido beach**. But if parents are very good, they might be allowed a Prosecco in the **Campo San Giacomo dell'Orto** or **Campo San Polo**, and the chance to learn how tag is played in Venice.

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## TOURS

APT tourist offices ([Click here](#)) offer guided tours ranging from the classic gondola circuit (€39 per person) to a 'spicy tour' with tales of Casanova dalliances and society scandal in the Rialto's former red-light district (€20 per person).

**Laguna Eco Adventures** (☎ 329 722 62 89; [www.lagunaecoventures.com](http://www.lagunaecoventures.com); 2.5-8hr trips per person €40-150) Sail away in a Venetian *sampierota*, a narrow twin-sailed boat that skims along the blue lagoon to Lido beaches, desert islands or Venice's canals at sunset. Reserve ahead and check forecasts: trips are subject to weather conditions.

**Terra e Acqua** (☎ 347 420 50 04; [www.terraeacqua.com](http://www.terraeacqua.com); 4-9hr trips per person incl lunch €70-120) Take a wild ride through the lagoon with skipper Cristina della Toffola, spotting rare lagoon wildlife, admiring architectural gems of Burano and Torcello, and mooring for a tasty fish-stew lunch and generous cocktails. Customised trips accommodate up to 10 people on a sunny, sturdy *bragosso* (Venetian barge), making trips sociable and easygoing for landlubbers.

**Venicescapes** ([www.venicescapes.org](http://www.venicescapes.org); 4-6hr tours incl book 2 adults/additional adult/under 18yr US\$150-275/50/25) Intriguing walking tours run by a nonprofit historical society (proceeds support Venetian historical research) include 'A City of Nations', exploring multiethnic Venice through the ages, and 'A Most Serene Republic', revealing how Venice kept the peace through politics and espionage.

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## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Carnevale** ([www.carnevale.venezia.it](http://www.carnevale.venezia.it)) Ten days and nights of masquerade madness in February

before Lent, or until your liver twitches and wig itches. Don't miss the Grand Canal flotilla, *fritelle* (rum-raisin doughnuts) or the Calcio Storico fancy-dress football match in Piazza San Marco. Join costume parties in the streets or at La Fenice's Masked Ball (tickets start at €200).

**Festa di San Marco** ([www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)) Join the celebration of Venice's patron saint on April 25, when Venetian men carry roses in processions through Piazza San Marco, then bestow them on the women they love.

**Vogalonga** ([www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)) A show of endurance each May, this 32km 'long row' starts with 1000 boats launching outside the Palazzo Ducale, loops past Burano and Murano, and ends with cheers, sweat and enormous blisters at Punta della Dogana.

**Venezia Suona** ([www.veneziasuona.it](http://www.veneziasuona.it)) Hear medieval *campi* (squares) and baroque palaces echo with music from around the world over a glorious June weekend.

**La Biennale di Venezia** ([www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org)) Venice's international showcase for the arts and architecture has been a showstopper for a century. In odd years the Art Biennale usually runs from June to November and in even years the Architecture Biennale kicks off in September, but every summer the Biennale features avant-garde dance, theatre, cinema and music.

**Festa del Redentore** ([www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)) Walk on water across the Giudecca Canal to Il Redentore via a wobbly pontoon bridge the third Saturday and Sunday in July, then watch the fireworks from the Zattere.

**Venice Film Festival** ([www.labiennale.org/en/cinema](http://www.labiennale.org/en/cinema)) The only thing hotter than a Lido beach in August is this star-studded event's red carpet, usually rolled out the last weekend in August through the first week of September.

**Regata Storica** ([www.comune.venezia.it](http://www.comune.venezia.it)) Never mind who's winning, check out all the cool gear: 16th-century costumes, eight-oared gondolas and ceremonial barks feature in a historical procession re-enacting the arrival of the Queen of Cyprus.

**Festa della Madonna della Salute** ([www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)) If you'd survived plague, floods and Austrian invasion, you'd throw a party too: every 21 November since the 17th century, Venetians cross a pontoon bridge across the Grand Canal to give thanks at Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute and splurge on sweets.

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## SLEEPING

Waking up in a *palazzo* to the sound of a gondolier calling 'Oooeeeeee!' around a canal bend is an unforgettable experience and more affordable than you might think. Many Venetians are opening historic homes as B&Bs, and **APT tourist board** ([www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)) lists 230 B&Bs, 275 *affittacamere* (rooms for rent) and 280 apartments to rent in Venice proper; more can be found at [www.guestinitaly.com](http://www.guestinitaly.com), [www.veniceapartment.com](http://www.veniceapartment.com) and **Craigslist Venice** (<http://venice.it.craigslist.it>); [Click here](#). But don't get your hopes up for eggs and bacon. Venetian laws have strict rules for dining establishments that prohibit B&Bs serving much beyond packaged croissants.

The best rates are in Venice's low season, typically November, early December, January and the period between Carnevale and Easter, but you might swing deals in the heat of July-August. For 400 more options, see [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). For still more choices, try [www.veniceby.com](http://www.veniceby.com) or the Venice Hoteliers Association website, [www.veneziasi.it](http://www.veneziasi.it).

## Camping



**Marina di Venezia** (☎ 041 530 25 11; [www.marinadivenezia.it](http://www.marinadivenezia.it); Via Montello 6, Punta Sabbioni; camping 2 people, car & tent €31.50, 6-person bungalow €56-149; 📅 late Apr-Sep; 📍 🚗) On the Litorale del Cavallino, this marina complex includes a private beach, shops, cinema, minigolf, playground, pools, scuba instruction and air-conditioned bungalows – all a *vaporetto* ride from Fondamente Nuove (Cannaregio).

**Campeggio Fusina** (☎ 041 547 00 55; [www.camping-fusina.com](http://www.camping-fusina.com); Via Moranzani 79, Località Fusina; per person/tent/car €8-9.50/8.50/5; 📍 🚗 📶) A camping village with bonus amenities: laundry, minimarts, bicycle hire, free bed linens and hot showers, a sparsely attended gym and a booming beer garden. Take the Linea Fusina *vaporetto* into Venice (Zattere stop).

## San Marco

**Hotel Locanda Fiorita** (Map; ☎ 041 523 47 54; [www.camorosini.com](http://www.camorosini.com); Campiello Nuovo 3457a; incl breakfast s/d €50-160/50-170, without bathroom €40-90/50-140; 📍 🚗) Take breakfast outdoors on this lovely hidden *campo*, and you'd never guess bustling Campo Santo Stefano is around the corner. Rooms are traditional, with timber ceilings and damask bedspreads; ask for spacious No 1 overlooking the *campo* or No 10 with a private terrace.

**Locanda Antico Fiore** (Map; ☎ 041 522 79 41; [www.anticofiore.com](http://www.anticofiore.com); Corte Lucatello 3486; d €70-140; 📍 🚗 📶) Local colour is the draw in this cosy B&B in a quiet courtyard, from the arty mother-daughter owners to the eight Venetian-styled guestrooms spread out over the top two floors. Ask for the top-floor green canal-view room or the sweet yellow room tucked under eaves.

**Hotel Ai Do Mori** (Map; ☎ 041 528 92 93; [www.hotelaidomori.com](http://www.hotelaidomori.com); Calle Larga San Marco 658; d €75-150, d without bathroom €50-105) Artists' garrets in an enviable location at bargain rates. Book well ahead to score an upper-floor room with wood-beamed ceilings, parquet floors and views over the basilica. Rooms with a view cost the same, so ask for No 11 with a private terrace overlooking Piazza San Marco.

**Locanda Art Deco** (Map; ☎ 041 277 05 58; [www.locandaartdeco.com](http://www.locandaartdeco.com); Calle delle Botteghe 2966; d incl breakfast €80-180; 📍) Rakishly handsome, cream-coloured guestrooms with comfy beds in custom wrought-iron bedsteads, and parquet floors. Take your breakfast in the loft under the rafters, ask helpful hotel staff to arrange in-room massages and private gondola tours, and toss back a *spritz* in adjoining Campo Santo Stefano like a flapper escaping Prohibition.

**our pick Hotel Flora** (Map; ☎ 041 522 53 44; [www.hotelflora.it](http://www.hotelflora.it); Calle Bergamaschi 2283a; d €130-340; 📍 🚗) Down a lane from glitzy Calle Larga XXII Marzo, this garden retreat quietly outclasses brash top-end neighbours. Guestrooms feature antique carved beds piled with soft mattresses and fluffy duvets, but prime options include the opulent gilded No 3 and No 32, which opens onto the garden.

**Novecento** (Map; ☎ 041 241 37 65; [www.novecento.biz](http://www.novecento.biz); Calle del Dose 2683/84; d €140-260; 📍 🚗) World travellers put down roots in nine bohemian-chic rooms with Turkish kilim pillows, Fortuny wall coverings and 19th-century scallop-shell carved bedsteads. Guests linger over breakfast in the garden under an Indian sun parasol, take hotel-arranged cookery courses and mingle around the honesty bar.

## Dorsoduro

**Pensione Seguso** (Map; ☎ 041 528 68 58; [www.pensioneseguso.it](http://www.pensioneseguso.it); Fondamenta Zattere ai Gesuati 779; incl breakfast s/d €50-160/70-190, without bathroom €40-122/65-180) An authentic *pensione* in a 1500 mansion worthy of a Donna Leon mystery novel, with antique hat racks, spooky mirrors, lead-glass windows, even staff dressed in traditional maids' outfits with white aprons. Almost all 34 rooms have

canal views and 24 have ensuite bathrooms; there's a restaurant just for guests and the staff will pack you a picnic upon request.

**Hotel Galleria** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 24 89; [www.hotelgalleria.it](http://www.hotelgalleria.it); Campo della Carità 878a; incl breakfast d from €60-195, s/d without bathroom €40-85/50-135) Bargain-hunter's Holy Grail: a family-run hotel in a 17th-century mansion smack on the Grand Canal, steps from Ponte dell'Accademia, with updated bathrooms. Nos 7 and 9 are small doubles overlooking the Grand Canal, No 8 has Liberty furnishings with Grand Canal views and No 10 sleeps five, with an original frescoed ceiling and two Grand Canal—facing windows.

**Palazzo Zenobio** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 87 70; [www.collegioarmeno.com](http://www.collegioarmeno.com); Palazzo Zenobio; s/d/tr/q €65/100/120/140, without bathroom €30/56/80/100) A gilded 1690 palace that formerly housed a school for Venice's Armenian community recently opened its doors to scholars and guests for a nominal fee. Accommodation is spare but the palace's trompe l'oeil frescoed ceilings are splendid and its overgrown formal garden among Venice's largest and loveliest.

**La Calcina** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 520 64 66; [www.lacalcina.com](http://www.lacalcina.com); Fondamenta Zattere ai Gesuati 780; s/d €90-120/110-250; ☎) An idyllic seaside getaway, with a roof terrace, ground-floor restaurant and several antiques-filled guestrooms facing the Giudecca Canal and Palladio-designed Redentore church. To channel your inner writer, request No 2, where John Ruskin stayed while he wrote *The Stones of Venice* in 1876.

**Charming House DD.724** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 277 02 62; [www.thecharminghouse.com](http://www.thecharminghouse.com); Ramo de Mula 724; incl breakfast d €220-500; ☎ ☎ ☎) Hole up in your own art-filled, modernist-chic Venetian bolthole, with lavish breakfast buffets in the library and a movie-viewing room. Guestrooms are designer-sleek yet cosy; splash out for the superior double with a bathtub and balcony overlooking Peggy Guggenheim's garden.

## San Polo & Santa Croce

**Pensione Guerrato** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 59 27; [www.pensioneguerrato.it](http://www.pensioneguerrato.it); Ruga due Mori, San Polo 240a; incl breakfast d €45-160, without bathroom €40-95; ☎) In a landmark that once served as a hostel for knights heading off on the Third Crusade, updated guestrooms haven't lost their sense of history – ask for one with frescoes or glimpses of the Grand Canal.

**Albergo Casa Peron** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 71 00 21; [www.casaperon.com](http://www.casaperon.com); Salizada San Pantalon 84; incl breakfast s/d €50-100/60-100, without bathroom €30-50/50-85) In true Venetian style, rooms are hidden in a maze of staircases and corridors, paintings cover the walls salon-style, and for an eccentric touch, resident parrot Pierino greets guests in the lobby. Rooms are basic but personable; No 5 features a terrace overlooking I Frari.

**Hotel Alex** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 13 41; [www.hotelalexinvenice.com](http://www.hotelalexinvenice.com); Rio Terà, San Polo 2606; d €60-112, tr €80-150, q €100-190, without bathroom s €35-54, d €40-84, tr €60-114, q €80-144, all incl breakfast) Along a secret local shortcut between I Frari and Campo San Polo, this hotel offers spare, sunny rooms with lacquered furnishings and updated bathrooms on three floors; some upper rooms have a balcony or terrace overlooking two canals.

**Ca' Angeli** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 24 80; [www.caangeli.it](http://www.caangeli.it); Calle del Traghetto de la Madonnetta, San Polo 1343; d €80-250; ☎) Brothers Giorgio and Matteo inherited this Grand Canal mansion and converted it into a hotel and antique showplace, with original Murano glass chandeliers, namesake angels dating from the 16th century and a restored Louis XIV sofa in the canalside reading room. Spacious room 1 has Grand Canal views and a whirlpool bath; No 5 has a superb terrace. Breakfasts are made with organic products

and served in the dining room on antique plates.

**our pick Oltre il Giardino** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 275 00 15; [www.oltreilgiardino-venezia.com](http://www.oltreilgiardino-venezia.com); Fondamenta Contarini, San Polo 2542; d €150-420; ☎ 📺) Live the designer dream in guestrooms brimming with historic charm and modern comforts: marquetry composers desks and flatscreen TVs, candelabra and colourful minibridges, 19th-century poker chairs and babysitting services. Light fills all six high-ceilinged bedrooms, and though Turquoise is sprawling and Green occupies a private corner of the walled garden, Grey has a sexy wrought-iron bedframe under a cathedral ceiling.

## Cannaregio

**Alloggi Gerotto Calderan** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 71 55 62; [www.casagerottocalderan.com](http://www.casagerottocalderan.com); Campo San Geremia 283; dm/s/d/tr/q €25/50/90/105/120; 📺) Cheap and chipper, handily located over a bookshop near the train station in lively Campo San Geremia. Rooms are compact with clean bathrooms, in-room internet access and twee coverlets; some rooms have traditional Venetian rosebud-painted headboards and bowlegged bedstands.

**Residenza Ca' Riccio** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 23 34; [www.cariccio.com](http://www.cariccio.com); Rio Terà dei Birri 5394a; incl breakfast s €70-90, d €95-130; ☎ 📺) Down the street from Casanova's house in a convenient yet hidden location is the Riccio family's lovingly restored 14th-century residence. Seven rooms on the two top floors look out onto a courtyard, and feature simple wrought-iron beds, wood-beamed ceilings, terracotta tiled floors and whitewashed walls.

**Locanda Leon Bianco** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 35 72; [www.leonbianco.it](http://www.leonbianco.it); Corte Leon Bianco 5629; d from €100) Turner used to paint at this canalside hotel, and you can see what he saw in the place: sloping *terrazzo alla Veneziana* (Venetian marble) floors, heavy wooden doors and hulking antique furniture. Three rooms overlook the Grand Canal and No 4 is a corner room with wraparound postcard views, but bring your earplugs for canalside rooms: the Rialto Market opposite starts at 4am.

**Domus Orsoni** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 275 95 38; [www.domusorsoni.it](http://www.domusorsoni.it); Corte Vedei 1045; incl breakfast s €80-150, d €100-250; ☎ 📺) Five stylish rooms sprawl out over this low Venetian house in a tranquil back lane. Breakfast is served in the garden by the Orsoni mosaic works, located here since 1885 – hence the mosaic fantasias glittering across guestroom bathrooms, walls and headboards.

**Ca' Pozzo** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 524 05 04; [www.capozzovenice.com](http://www.capozzovenice.com); Sotoportego Ca' Pozzo 1279; s/d €155/300; ☎ 📺) Biennale-bound travellers find a home away from home-design catalogues in this design shrine near the historic Ghetto. Several guestrooms come with balconies, two are built to accommodate disabled guests, and spacious No 208 could house a Damien Hirst entourage.

**Palazzo Abadessa** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 241 37 84; [www.abadessa.com](http://www.abadessa.com); Calle Priuli 4011; d €145-325; ☎ 📺 📞) Evenings seem enchanted in this opulent 1540 Venetian *palazzo*, with owner Maria Luisa fluffing pillows, plying guests with cake between meals and fulfilling wishes like a fairy godmother. Sumptuous guestrooms feature plush beds, handmade silk-damask walls and 18th-century antique vanities; go for baroque and ask for one with original ceiling frescoes, and enjoy cocktails in the garden until you're whisked off to the opera in the hotel's boat.

## Castello

**Foresteria Valdese** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 67 97; [www.diaconiavaldese.org/venezia](http://www.diaconiavaldese.org/venezia); Palazzo Cavagnis, Castello 5170; incl breakfast dm €22, d from €78) Holy hostel: this rambling palace retreat owned by the Waldensian church has 1st-floor guestrooms with 18th-century frescoes by Bevilacqua, and one floor up guestrooms have canal views. Dorm beds are available only for families or groups; book well ahead.

**Locanda Silva** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 76 43; [www.locandasilva.it](http://www.locandasilva.it); Fondamenta del Rimedio 4423; incl breakfast s €45-80, d €60-130) Along a quiet canal five minutes' walk from Piazza San Marco, this family-run hotel has 23 cheerful, gleamingly clean guestrooms with plain blond-wood furniture. Ask for sunny canalside rooms, and lounge on the giddy rooftop terrace peering at San Marco's campanile.

**La Residenza** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 53 15; [www.venicelaresidenza.com](http://www.venicelaresidenza.com); Campo Bandiera e Moro 3608; s/d €50-100/80-180; ☎) Sleep like the dead in the comfort of this grand 15th-century mansion, presiding over a *campo* that was once the site of public executions. Generously sized rooms are furnished in standard Venetian style, with lacquered wardrobes and beds with striped bedspreads. The upstairs reception is a chandelier-lit salon garlanded with 18th-century stucco, with a grand piano guests occasionally play at happy hour.

## Giudecca

**Ostello Venezia** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 82 11; [www.ostellionline.org](http://www.ostellionline.org); Fondamenta della Croce 86; dm incl breakfast €21-26; ☎ check-in 1.30-11.30pm, check-out 9.30am) Serene canal views make hostel bunks seem miles away from the mad crowds and inflated prices of San Marco, yet it's just a *vaporetto* hop away. Sheets, blanket and a pillow are provided in the bunk price, but you'll need to arrive promptly after 1.30pm opening time to claim that perfect bunk by the window; reserve ahead for one of two viewless private rooms.

**Residenza Junghans** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 521 08 01; [www.residenzajunghans.com/home.htm](http://www.residenzajunghans.com/home.htm); Terzo Ramo della Palada 394; s/d €40/70) Save cash and wax nostalgic about school in this bargain modern dorm residence with instant camaraderie, Ikea desks and school-marmish rules: payment in advance, quiet after 11pm and locked gates at 1.30am. Ask for deals by the week.

**Bauer Palladio & Spa** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 520 70 22; [www.palladiohotelspa.com](http://www.palladiohotelspa.com); Fondamenta della Croce 33; d €210-490) Splash out in a serene, Palladio-designed former cloister with San Marco views, private solar-powered boat service and a superb spa. These premises once housed nuns and orphans, but now offer heavenly comfort in 37 rosy, serenely demure guestrooms, many with garden terraces or Giudecca Canal views. Head downstairs for local, organic breakfast buffets and ecofriendly spa treatments like the milk, honey and rose bath (€90) with complimentary sauna, Jacuzzi and marble steam-room access.

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## CICHETI: VENICE'S BEST MEAL DEALS

Even in unpretentious Venetian *osterie* (bistros), most dishes cost a couple of euros more than they might elsewhere in Italy – not a bad markup, considering all that fresh seafood and produce brought in by boat. But *cicheti*, or Venetian tapas, are some of the best foodie finds in the country, served at lunch and around 6pm to 8pm with wine by the glass. *Cicheti* range from basic bar snacks (spicy meatballs, fresh tomato and basil bruschette) to wildly inventive small plates: think white Bassano asparagus and plump lagoon shrimp wrapped with pancetta at All'Arco (below), or *crostini* with soft local salami and truffle pecorino at I Rusteghi (below). Prices start at €1 for tasty meatballs to €3 to €6 for gourmet fantasias with fancy ingredients, typically devoured standing up or perched atop stools at the bar. For *cicheti* with ultrafresh ingredients at manageable prices, seek out *osterie* along side lanes and canals in Cannaregio, Castello, San Polo and San Marco.

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# EATING

## Restaurants & Osterie

### SAN MARCO

**Enoteca al Volto** (Map; ☎ 041 522 89 45; Calle Cavalli 4081; cicheti €2-3; 🕒 11am-2pm & 5-9pm Tue-Sat) Join the bar crowd working its way through the vast selection of wine and *cicheti*, or come early for a table in the snug wood-beamed backroom for seaworthy bowls of pasta with clams or thick steaks with a sailor-size glass of Amarone.

**our pick I Rusteghi** (Map; ☎ 041 523 22 05; Corte del Tentor 5513; mini-panini €2-5; 🕒 10.30am-3pm & 6-9pm Mon-Sat) Outstanding wine selections and *cicheti* featuring exceptional meats – boar salami, pancetta and velvety cured *lardo di Colonnata* that will win you over to lard. Ask fourth-generation sommelier-owner Giovanni to choose your wine, and he'll give you a long look to suss out your character before presenting a sensual Tocai or heady Refosco you won't find elsewhere.

**Cavatappi** (Map; ☎ 041 296 02 52; Campo della Guerra 525/526; cicheti €2-4, meals €8-15; 🕒 11.15am-4pm Tue-Sat & 7-10pm Fri & Sat) A sleek charmer strong on seasonal *cicheti* and artisanal cheeses, wines by the glass, and that rarest of San Marco finds: a tasty sit-down meal under €10. Get the pasta or risotto of the day and sheep's cheese drizzled with honey for dessert.

**Vini da Arturo** (Map; ☎ 041 528 69 74; Calle dei Assassini 3656; meals €85; 🕒 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Everyone in this corridor-sized restaurant comes for the same reason: the steak, studded with green peppercorn, soured in brandy and mustard, or rare on the bone. A butter knife and credit card are all you need to make short work of an exceptional cut.

### DORSODURO

**Impronta Café** (Map; ☎ 041 275 03 86; Calle Crosera 3815; meals €8-15; 🕒 11am-11pm Mon-Sat) Join Venice's value-minded jet set for Prosecco, espresso and bargain polenta-salami combos. Architectural diagrams of cooking pots and a Buddha presiding over the bar add sly humour to the hipster scene.

**Enoteca ai Artisti** (Map; ☎ 041 523 89 44; [www.enotecaartisti.com](http://www.enotecaartisti.com); Fondamenta de la Toletta 1169a; meals €10-20; 🕒 noon-4pm & 6.30-10pm Mon-Sat) Heartwarming pastas, seasonal *bruschette* (toast with toppings) and inspired cheeses are paired with wines by the glass by your oenophile hosts. The glass shopfront makes great people-watching, but space is limited, so book ahead for groups larger than two.

**Ristorante Oniga** (Map; ☎ 041 522 44 10; [www.oniga.it](http://www.oniga.it); Campo San Barnaba 2852; meals €30-35; 🕒 noon-3pm & 7-10pm Wed-Mon) Purists come for chef Annika's exemplary Venetian seafood platters, while gourmet adventurers order quirky seasonal inventions like ravioli with ricotta, broccoli and poppyseeds.

**Ristorante La Bitta** (Map; ☎ 041 523 05 31; Calle Lunga San Barnaba 2753a; meals €35-40; 🕒 7-10pm Mon-Sat) The daily menu is presented on a miniature artist's easel, and the rustic fare looks like a still life and tastes like a dream: gnocchii graced with pumpkin and herbs, and guinea fowl wades in mascarpone sauce. La Bitta doesn't offer wine by the glass, but it'll cut you a deal on a half-bottle.

### SAN POLO & SANTA CROCE

**our pick All'Arco** (Map; ☎ 041 520 56 66; Calle dell'Arco, San Polo 436; cicheti €1.50-4; 🕒 7am-5pm Mon-Sat) Maestro Francesco and his son Matteo invent Venice's best *cicheti* daily with Rialto Market finds, and if you ask nicely and wait patiently, they'll whip up something special for you on the spot –

baby artichoke topped with *bottarga* (dried caviar paste), or tuna tartare with mint, strawberries and a balsamic reduction. Even with copious Prosecco, hardly any meal here tops €20 or falls short of four stars.

**Pronto Pesce Pronto** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 822 02 98; Rialto Pescheria, San Polo 319; cicheti €3-8; 🕒 11am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Next to Venice's fish market is this designer deli, specialising in artfully composed *crudi* (aka 'Venetian sushi') and well-dressed seafood salads. Grab a stool and a glass of Prosecco with your tangy *folpetti* (baby octopus) salad and plump prawn *crudi*, or enjoy it dockside on the Grand Canal.

**Osteria La Zucca** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 524 15 70; [www.lazucca.it](http://www.lazucca.it); Calle del Tentor, Santa Croce 1762; small plates €5-10; 🕒 12.30-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Sat) Vegetablecentric seasonal small plates bring spice-trade influences to local produce: zucchini with ginger zing, curried carrots with yoghurt, and rice pudding with San Erasmo strawberries. Roast lamb is respectable here too, but the veggies have star quality.

**Ae Oche** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 524 11 61; [www.aeoeche.com](http://www.aeoeche.com); Calle del Tintor 1552a; pizzas €7-13; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Fri, noon-2.30pm & 7-11.30pm Sat & Sun) Architecture students and budget-minded foodies converge here for wood-fired pizzas and ale at excellent prices. Extreme eaters order the lip-buzzing *mangiafuoco* ('fire-eater') with hot salami, Calabrese peppers and Tabasco, while Palladio scholars stick with the classic white *estiva*, topped with rocket, seasoned Grana Padano cheese and cherry tomatoes.

**Osteria Ae Cravate** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 79 12; Salizada San Pantalon, Santa Croce 36; meals €15-30; 🕒 9.30am-4pm & 6-11pm Tue-Sun) A mosquito-motif tie loosened by a ravenous British entomologist is Bruno's favourite of the many *cravate* (neckties) hanging from the ceiling, all donated by diners in thanks for fresh pasta. Try the rustic handmade ravioli, and leave room for house-baked desserts.

**Trattoria da Ignazio** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 48 52; Calle Saoneri 2749, San Polo 36; meals €30-50; 🕒 noon-3pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Dapper waiters serve simply prepared grilled lagoon fish and pasta made in-house ('of course') with a proud flourish, on tables bedecked with yellow linens and orchids. On sunny days and warm nights the neighbourhood converges beneath the garden grape arbour.

**Vecio Fritolin** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 28 81; [www.veciofritolin.it](http://www.veciofritolin.it); Calle della Regina, Santa Croce 2262; meals €40-60; 🕒 noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Tue-Sun) Order the langouste and zucchini spaghetti that packs in Italian slow foodies, or choose today's special with confidence – all produce here is handpicked daily at the Rialto markets and desserts are made in-house. Budget gourmets: stop by for €10 fish-fry takeaway.

## CANNAREGIO

**Al Ponte** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 61 57; Calle Larga Gallina 6378; cicheti €1.50-4; 🕒 11am-3pm & 7-11pm Wed-Sun) Early arrival, Venetian relatives and a magic spell might get you a table at this red-doored pub 'al ponte' (on the bridge). Otherwise, join the crowd standing at the bar for decadently marbled salami *panini*, baby octopus salad and other local, seasonal treats.

**La Cantina** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 82 58; Campo San Felice 3689; cicheti €2-6; 🕒 11am-9.30pm Tue-Sat) Talk about slow food: even the *cicheti* here are made to order, so grab a stool and house-brewed Morgana beer while you await fresh, seasonal bruschette and hearty bean soups.

**Da Alberto** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 81 53; Calle Larga Gallina 5401; meals €15-25; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6-11pm Mon-Sat) All the makings of a true Venetian *osteria* – hidden location, casks of wine, chandeliers that look like medieval torture devices – plus fair prices, seasonal cicheti, crispy Venetian seafood fry, and a silky

*panna cotta* with strawberries.

**Alla Vedova** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 53 24; Calle del Pistor 3912; cicheti €1-3.50, meals €15-40; 🍷 noon-2.30pm & 7-10.30pm Mon-Wed, 7-10.30pm Fri-Sun) Culinary convictions run deep at this venerable Venetian *osteria*: you won't find *spritz* or coffee on the menu, or pay more than €1 for Venetian meatballs at the bar. Call ahead to claim a wooden table that has weathered a thousand elbows in postpasta stupors.

**our pick Anice Stellato** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 72 07 44; Fondamenta della Sensa 3272; meals €25-40; 🍷 11am-3pm & 7-11pm Wed-Sun) If finding this obscure corner of Cannaregio seems like an adventure, wait until dinner arrives: pistachio-encrusted lamb fillet, wild sea bass with aromatic herbs, and perfectly fried *moecche* (soft-shelled crab) gobbled whole. Tin lamps and recycled-paper placemats on communal tables keep the focus on local food and local company – all memorable.

## CASTELLO

**Enoteca Mascareta** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 07 44; Calle Lunga Santa Maria Formosa 5138; meals €30-45; 🍷 7pm-2am Fri-Tue) Hang out by the outdoor bar for *cicheti* and a glass of organic wine for under €10, or head inside for appetiser platters of meats and cheeses that could pass for a meal.

**Corte Sconta** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 70 24; Calle del Pestrin 3886; meals €35-55; 🍷 11.30am-3.30pm & 6-10.30pm Tue-Sat) Seek out this vine-covered *corte sconta* (hidden courtyard) for imaginative housemade pasta and ultrafresh, visually striking seafood: crustaceans arranged on a platter like paint on an artist's palette, black squid-ink pasta topped with bright orange squash and tender scallops, and roast eel looping like the river Brenta on the plate.

## GIUDECCA

**Ai Tre Scaini** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 47 90; Calle Michelangelo 53c; meals €15-25; 🍷 noon-3pm Fri-Wed, 7-10pm Tue, Wed, Sat & Sun) Belly laughs hurt after generous plates of pasta and seafood here, but that doesn't stop the neighbourhood from lingering over lunch in the garden, or date-night dinners with wine flowing straight from the barrel.

**our pick I Figli delle Stelle** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 00 04; [www.ifiigidellestelle.it](http://www.ifiigidellestelle.it); Zitelle 70; meals €15-35; 🍷 noon-3.30pm & 7pm-midnight Tue-Sat, noon-2.30pm Sun) Declarations of love at Venice's most romantic restaurant are slightly suspect: are you sure that's not Chef Luigi's velvety, heartwarming pasta and soup talking? A creamy fava-bean soup with chicory and fresh tomatoes coats the tongue in a naughty way, and the mixed grill for two with *langoustine*, sole and fresh sardines is a commitment – though given the cuisine and waterfront views of San Marco, this is a surprisingly cheap date.

## LIDO

**Trattoria La Favorita** (☎ 041 526 16 26; via Francesco Duodo 33; meals €20-35; 🍷 noon-3.30pm & 7.30-11pm Wed-Sun, 6-10pm Tue, closed Jan—mid-Feb) Spider crab *gnochetti*, fish risotto and *crudi* at noncelebrity prices make La Favorita earn its name. Book ahead for the wisteria-filled garden, where songbirds refuse to be outsung by the ring tones of movie moguls here for the Venice International Film Festival.

## BURANO

**our pick Al Gatto Nero** (☎ 041 73 01 20; [www.gattonero.com](http://www.gattonero.com); via Giudecca 88; 🍷 noon-3.30pm & 7.30-10pm Tue-Sun) Once you've tried the homemade *tagliolini* with spider crab, whole grilled fish and perfect housebaked Burano biscuits, the ferry ride to Burano seems a minor inconvenience – a swim back here from Venice would be worth it for that decadent *langoustine* risotto. Call ahead of the steady stream of visiting dignitaries and star chefs, and plead for canalside seating.

## Cafes

In prime tourist zones, the price of coffee at a table seems more like rent, so take your coffee standing on side streets or splash out and relax on a *campo*, or in the fabulous cafes of the [Museo Correr](#), [Palazzo Querini Stampalia](#) or the Piazza San Marco. A €6 music surcharge is often added to the bill in Piazza San Marco – might as well get your money's worth and do the tango.

**Caffè Florian** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 520 56 41; [www.caffeflorian.com](http://www.caffeflorian.com); Piazza San Marco 56/59; drinks €8-12; ☎ 10am-midnight Thu-Tue Apr-Oct, to 11pm Thu-Tue Nov-Mar) Florian adheres to rituals established in 1720: lovers canoodle over breakfast in plush banquettes indoors, uniformed waiters serve gooey hot chocolate on silver trays, and the orchestra strikes up a dance number as fading sunlight illuminates San Marco's portal mosaics.

**Paradiso** ([Map](#); ☎ 335 622 30 79; Giardini della Biennale 1260, Castello; ☎ 9am-7pm) Curators woo shy artists on mod couches and star architects hold court under sun umbrellas, fuelled by a steady stream of coffee and cocktails for less than you'd expect in this prime waterfront location – this is the only cafe within reach of anyone in stilettos at the Biennale.

**our pick Pasticceria Rizzardini** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 38 35; Campiello dei Meloni 1415, San Polo; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Wed-Mon) 'From 1742' reads the modest shopfront sign, and inside you'll find the secrets to the survival of this standing-room-only cafe-bakery: killer *krapfen* (doughnuts), wagging *lingue di suocere* (mother-in-law's tongues) and suggestively sprinkled *pallone di Casanova* (Casanova's balls). Act fast if you want that last slice of tiramisu.

## Gelaterie

**our pick Alaska** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 71 52 11; Calle Larga dei Bari, Santa Croce 1159; gelato €1-1.60; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-8pm) Day-trippers in San Marco may settle for vanilla ice milk, but Venetians head to Alaska for outlandish organic gelato: one glorious scoop of Venetian roasted pistachio, or two of vaguely minty *carciofi* (artichoke) with tangy lemon.

**Gelateria San Stae** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 71 06 89; Salizada San Stae, Santa Croce 1910; gelato €1-2; ☎ 11am-9pm Tue-Sun) Simple flavours are anything but at San Stae, where signature ingredients cover Venetian trade routes from Piedmont hazelnut to Madagascar vanilla.

**Da Nico** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 52 93; Zattere, Dorsoduro 922; gelato €2.50-8; ☎ 7am-10pm Fri-Wed) Gelato to go is half-price at the bar, but sunny days are meant for lazing away dockside with Da Nico's *gianduiotto*, a slab of hazelnut gelato submerged under *panna* (whipped cream), or *panna in ghiaccio*, frozen whipped cream sandwiched between cookies.

## Quick Eats

Avoid the sad congealed pizza slices around Piazza San Marco and the Rialto, and grab *cicheti* at *osterie*, *panini* at cafes and bars, and hot pizza slices until late in Campo Santa Margherita.

**our pick Snack Bar Ai Nomboli** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 09 95; Rio Terà dei Nomboli, San Polo 271c; panini €2-3; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Two scrumptious *panini* here make a filling lunch, and three is a feast deserving of Bardolino by the glass. Proper crusty rolls are filled with local cheeses, respectable salami, roast beef, roast vegetables and sprightly greens, plus condiments ranging from spicy mustard to wild-nettle sauce.

**Pizza al Volo** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 54 30; Campo Santa Margherita 2944; pizza slice €2-4; ☎ noon-1am)



Peckish night owls run out of options fast in Venice once restaurants start to close at 10pm – but slices here are cheap and tasty, with a thin yet sturdy crust that won't collapse on your bar-hopping outfit.

**Caffé Mandola** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 76 24; Calle della Mandola, San Marco 3630; panini €3-7; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Carbo-load before the opera or between museums with fresh focaccia loaded with tangy tuna and capers or lean *bresaola*, arugula and seasoned Grana Padano cheese. Stools are generally available except when you need them most, at lunch and happy hour.

## Self-Catering

The Rialto Market ([Map](#)) offers superb local produce next to the legendary Pescaria ([Map](#)), Venice's 600-year-old fish market. In backstreets nearby there are bakeries, small groceries and two notable gourmet shops: **Aliani** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 49 13; Ruga Vecchia di San Giovanni, San Polo 654), with cheeses, cured meats and gourmet specialities from balsamic vinegar aged 40 years to *bottarga*; and **Drogheria Mascari** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 97 62; Ruga degli Spezieri 381; 🕒 8am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Sat, 8am-1pm Wed), a dazzling emporium lined with copper-topped jars, spices and truffles galore, as well as an entire backroom of speciality Italian wines.

For basic grocery needs, **Billa Supermarket** ([Map](#); Strada Nova, Cannaregio 3660; 🕒 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun) fits the bill, but the deli selection is better at **Coop** (☎ 041 296 06 21; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Campo San Giacomo dell'Orto 1492 ([Map](#)); Piazzale Roma ([Map](#)).

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## DRINKING

Boozing hot spots are around the Rialto Market area, Campo Santa Margherita in Dorsoduro, Campo Zanipolo and Campo Maria Formosa in Castello, and Fondamenta degli Ormesini in Cannaregio. Happy hour begins at 6pm with an *ombra* (small glass of wine) or *spritz*, the Venetian cocktail of Prosecco and bittersweet Aperol. For a successful *giro di ombra* (roving happy hour), sample fine Veneto wines for as little as €1.50 and *cicheti* at the bar while they're fresh.

**Aurora** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 64 05; [www.aurora.st](http://www.aurora.st); Piazza San Marco 48-50; 🕒 noon-2am Wed-Sun, cocktails from 6.15pm) Historic cafe by day, chilled lounge with local DJs and art openings by night. Local musicians and €2 cocktails bring life to San Marco on Sunday nights, and sporadic Thursday art events draw shy artists out of their garrets.

**Harry's Bar** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 57 77; [www.cipriano.com](http://www.cipriano.com); Calle Vallaresso, San Marco 1323; 🕒 noon-11pm) Aspiring auteurs throng the bar frequented by Ernest Hemingway, Charlie Chaplin, Truman Capote, Orson Welles and others, enjoying a signature €18 Bellini (fresh peach juice and Prosecco) with a side of reflected glory. Despite the basic bistro decor, this is one of Italy's most expensive restaurants – stick to the bar to save financing for your breakthrough film.

**Cantinone 'Gia Schiavi'** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 00 34; Fondamenta Nani 992; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Good lungs and steady hands are instrumental to make your order heard over Cantinone's happy hour and transport *cicheti* and *ombre* or *pallottoline* (small bottles of beer) outside to the canal without spilling on the boisterous throngs of students, gondola builders and Accademia art historians.

**Il Caffè Rosso** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 79 98; Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 2963; 🕒 7am-1am Mon-Sat) Sunny piazza seating is the place to recover from last night's revelry and today's newspaper headlines, until the cycle begins again at 6pm with *spritz* cocktails and standing-room-only student

crowds.

**Muro Vino e Cucina** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 74 95; Campo Bella Vienna, San Polo 222; 🕒 4pm-2am Mon-Sat) A snazzy aluminium bar with see-and-be-seen picture windows, without velvet ropes. Wines by the glass start at just €2 and cocktails from €5, and low tables out in the *campo* are more happening than any VIP lounge.

**Al Mercà** ([Map](#); ☎ 393 992 47 81; Campo Bella Vienna, San Polo 213; 🕒 9-3pm & 4-9pm Mon-Sat) Discerning drinkers throng this upbeat bar for top-notch Prosecco and DOC wines by the glass at €2 to €3.50, and *cicheti* start at just €1 for meatballs and mini-*panini*. Arrive by 6.30pm for the best selection and easy bar access, or mingle with crowds of stragglers stretching to Grand Canal docks.

**Al Timon** ([Map](#); ☎ 346 320 99 78; Fondamenta degli Ormesini, Cannaregio 2754; 🕒 noon-3pm & 6pm-2am Tue-Sun) Pull up your director's chair along the canal and watch the motley parade of drinkers and dreamers headed here for a massive range of *crostini* (open-face sandwiches) and quality hooch until the wee hours.

**Cantina do Mori** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 54 01; Sotoportego dei do Mori, San Polo 429; 🕒 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) A 15th-century watering hole, with gleaming, gargantuan copper pots and incongruously dinky, dainty sandwiches called *francobolli* (postage stamps). Come early for the best selection of *cicheti* (€3 to €4) and local gossip (free).

**Osteria agli Ormesini** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 71 58 34; Fondamenta degli Ormesini, Cannaregio 2710; 🕒 6.30pm-2am Mon-Sat) While the rest of the city is awash in wine, beer is the drink of choice here, with 120 mostly foreign brews. The scene spills into the street over happy-hour *panini* – but try to keep it down, or the neighbours get testy.

**Bacaro** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 296 06 87; Salizada San Moisé, San Marco 1345; 🕒 9am-2am) Good looks and smarts too: backed by the Benetton family, this bar is a shimmering mosaic oval that reflects well on you and the clever company you'll be keeping, once the literary crowd migrates here after Mondadori book-signings upstairs.

**Torino@Night** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 39 14; Campo San Luca, San Marco 4592; 🕒 8pm-1am Tue-Sat) Eclectic, loud and funky as it wants to be, Torino livens up staid San Marco with €2 to €4 drinks and the odd live band, spontaneous singalong, or marathon DJ session of vintage reggae on vinyl.

**Taverna L'Olandese Volante** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 93 49; San Lio, San Marco 5658; 🕒 10am-2pm & 5pm-12.30am Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Go home happily hoarse after another chaotic night at the Flying Dutchman, where study-abroad students mingle easily and laugh loudly with local eccentrics over cheap beer.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

In Venice, you can purchase tickets for major events at **helloVenezia ticket outlets** (☎ 041 24 24; [www.hellovenezia.com](http://www.hellovenezia.com)), located near key *vaporetto* stops [Click here](#). For blockbuster events like the Biennale or La Fenice operas, you'll need to book ahead online at the appropriate website or [www.vivaticket.it](http://www.vivaticket.it) – though you might luck into last-minute discounts at **Weekend a Venezia** (<http://en.venezia.waf.it>).

To find out what's on the calendar in Venice during your visit, drop by the APT tourism office [Click](#)

[here](#) to pick up this month's printed *Eventi* brochure, or click on the Calendar button at [www.comune.venezia](http://www.comune.venezia). Other sites with worthwhile entertainment listings:

- **A Guest in Venice** ([www.aguestinvenice.com](http://www.aguestinvenice.com)) Hotelier association provides information on upcoming exhibits, events and lectures.
- **Venezia da Vivere** (The Creative Guide to Contemporary Venice; [www.veneziadavivere.com](http://www.veneziadavivere.com)) The guide to what's hip and happening in Venice now: music performances, art openings, nightlife, new designers and more.
- **Venice Explorer** (<http://venicexplorer.net>) Provides calendar listings and locator maps for Venice venues, bars and attractions.

## Casinos

No opera can match the drama that's been unfolding at Venice's **Casinò di Venezia** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 529 71 11; [www.casinovenezia.it](http://www.casinovenezia.it); Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi, Cannaregio 2040; admission €5; 🕒 3pm-2.30am Sun-Thu, 3pm-3am Fri & Sat) since the 16th century: Richard Wagner survived the 20-year effort of composing his stormy *Ring* cycle only to expire at the casino in 1883. To take on the high-stakes tables here, jackets are required and strong constitutions advisable.

## Cinemas

**Summer Arena** (Campo San Polo; 🕒 Jul-Aug) July and August see open-air concerts, films and theatre performances in Campo San Polo, but watch this space year-round for anything from kiddie carousels, political rallies and impromptu silent rave sessions to DJ-designed MP3 playlists.

**Multisala Astra** (☎ 041 526 57 36; Via Corfu 12, Lido 30126; adult/senior/student €7/6/5; 🕒 shows 5.30-10pm) When you start feeling the burn on the beach, catch a show in this air-conditioned, recently remodelled cinema. Subtitled art-house films share the marquee with blockbusters dubbed into Italian.

## Theatre, Opera & Classical Music

**our pick** **Teatro La Fenice** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 78 66 11; [www.teatrolafenice.it](http://www.teatrolafenice.it); Campo San Fantin, San Marco 1965; tickets €20-1000) Tours are possible with advance booking (☎ 041 24 24), but the best way to see La Fenice is with the *loggione*, opera buffs who pass judgment on productions from on high in the top-tier cheap seats. In the opera off-season, look for symphonies and chamber-music concerts.

**Interpreti Veneziani** (☎ 041 277 05 61; [www.interpretiveneziani.com](http://www.interpretiveneziani.com); Chiesa San Vidal, San Marco 2862; adult/student & senior €24/19; 🕒 doors open 8.30pm) Everything you knew of Vivaldi, from elevators and mobile ring tones is proved fantastically wrong by Interpreti Veneziani, who play Vivaldi on 18th-century instruments as a soundtrack for living in this city of intrigue – you'll never listen to *The Four Seasons* again without hearing summer storms gathering over the lagoon, or the echoing footsteps over footbridges in a winter's-night intrigue.

**Teatro Goldoni** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 240 20 14; [www.teatrostabileveneto.it](http://www.teatrostabileveneto.it); Calle Teatro Goldoni, San Marco 4650b; tickets €7-30; 🕒 box office in season 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-1pm Thu) Named after the city's greatest playwright, this theatre's dramatic range runs from Goldoni comedy to Shakespearean drama (mostly in Italian), plus ballet and concerts.

**Musica a Palazzo** ([Map](#); ☎ 340 971 72 72; [www.musicapalazzo.com](http://www.musicapalazzo.com); Palazzo Barbarigo-Minotto, Fondamenta Barbarigo o Duodo, San Marco 2504; tickets €45; 🕒 doors open 8pm) In salons overlooking the Grand Canal with splendid Tiepolo ceilings, the soprano's high notes might make you fear for your

wineglass. The drama unfolds over 1½ hours of selected arias from Verdi to Rossini, with 70 guests trailing singers in modern dress as they pour their hearts out in song, progressing from receiving-room overtures to heartbreaking finales in the bedroom.

## Live Music Clubs

**Venice Jazz Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 20 56; [www.venicejazzclub.com](http://www.venicejazzclub.com); Ponte dei Pugni, Dorsoduro 3102; tickets incl drink €20; 🕒 doors open 7pm) Jazz is alive and swinging in Dorsoduro, where the resident Venice Jazz Club Quartet improvises funky tributes to Miles Davis and Charles Mingus and grooves on Italian jazz standards. Drinks are steep, so starving artists booze beforehand and arrive at 8pm for free cold-cut platters.

**Aurora Beach Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 526 80 13; [www.aurora.st](http://www.aurora.st); Piazzale Bucintoro Lungomare D'Annunzio, Lido 20x; 🕒 9am-2am May-Sep) Days flow into nights at this beach venue with four-poster sunbeds, a free library, sports and chill-out zones for daytime use, plus live music sets, cocktail bars, open-air cinema and DJ sets to keep you dancing until you face-plant in the sand.

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## SHOPPING

Retail therapy approaches delirium in Venice. A single visit to Murano can mysteriously max out carry-on limits with fragile glassware, and a visit to the Rialto Market and neighbouring gourmet shops like [Drogheria Mascari](#) induces foodies to stash bottles of wine and jars of mountain honey in their checked baggage. But Venice's ultimate shopping triumphs are unique finds at surprisingly reasonable prices, handcrafted by artisans in tiny backstreet studios (see opposite).

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Most flights arrive and depart from **Marco Polo airport** (VCE; off [Map](#); ☎ 041 260 92 60; [www.veniceairport.it](http://www.veniceairport.it)), 12km outside Venice, east of Mestre. Ryanair's budget flights to/from London Stansted, Dublin, Shannon and Paris currently use **San Giuseppe airport** (TSF; ☎ 0422 31 51 11; [www.trevisoairport.it](http://www.trevisoairport.it)), about 5km southwest of Treviso and a 30km, one-hour drive from Venice. Low-cost airlines are a benefit to travellers, but a burden on the environment and Venice's air quality; to travel with a cleaner conscience, consider a carbon-offset program ([Click here](#)).

Airport bus services link both airports with Venice's Piazzale Roma and Mestre, and the Alilaguna fast ferry runs from Marco Polo airport. ATVO's Eurobus connects to Treviso's San Giuseppe airport. For more details, [Click here](#).

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## TOP FIVE AVANT-GARDE ARTISANS IN VENICE

- Glass – find witty statement jewellery in handblown glass at **Marina & Susanna Sent** ([Map](#); ☎ 041

520 81 36; [www.marinaesusannasent.com](http://www.marinaesusannasent.com); Campo San Vio, Dorsoduro 669; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sat, 3-6.30pm Mon): a double-strand necklace of large, clear glass ‘soap bubbles’, and an asymmetrical black leather collar with dollops of bright orange and red glass that looks like an artist’s palette.

- Fashion – prison orange is so over at **BANCO 10** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 14 39; Salizada Sant’ Antonio, Castello 3478a; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sat): all the sleek jackets, tapestry handbags and diva dresses in this nonprofit boutique are made in a retraining program at a women’s prison on Giudecca, with remnants of sumptuous textiles donated by Fortuny and other local ateliers.
  - Housewares – household items are transformed at **Madera** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 41 81; [www.maderavenezia.it](http://www.maderavenezia.it); Campo San Barnaba 2762; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat) by owner-designer Francesca Meratti and other local and European designers into objects of wonder: frying pans look like clocks, spoons become tongues and a wood salad bowl curls into a wave.
  - Marbled paper – **Rosanna Corró** of **Cartè** ([Map](#); ☎ 320 024 87 76; 1731 Calle di Cristi; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Mon- Sat) applies modern flair to the ancient art of *carta marmorizzata* (marbled paper) in new must-haves: psychedelic paper-panel necklaces, handbound photo albums with lagoon-ripple designs and paper purses in woodgrain patterns.
  - Shoes – woven, sculpted and crested like lagoon birds: each extraordinary pair at **Giovanna Zanella** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 55 00; Calle Carminati, Castello 5641; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-7pm) is custom-made to treat your feet kindly as you stomp Venice’s cobblestones or film festival red carpets.
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## Boat

**Minoan Lines** ([www.minoan.gr](http://www.minoan.gr)) and **Anek** ([www.anekitalia.com](http://www.anekitalia.com)) run regular ferries to Venice from Greece, while **Venezia Lines** ([www.venezialines.com](http://www.venezialines.com)) runs high-speed boats to and from Croatia and Slovenia in summer – but consider big-ship transport carefully. Long-haul ferries and cruise ships have an outsize environmental impact on tiny Venice and its fragile lagoon aquaculture, exposing Venice’s ancient foundations to degradation from high-speed *motoschiaffi* (wakes) and leakage of wastewater from the bilge, ballast and flushing of onboard toilets. Take the lower-impact train instead, and Venice will be most grateful.

## Bus

**Azienda del Consorzio Trasporti Veneziano** (ACTV; ☎ 041 24 24; [www.actv.it](http://www.actv.it)) buses leave from the bus station ([Map](#)) on Piazzale Roma for Mestre and surrounding areas.

**ATVO** (Azienda Trasporti Veneto Orientale; ☎ 041 520 55 30) operates buses to destinations all over the eastern Veneto. Tickets and information are available at the ticket office on Piazzale Roma.

## Car & Motorcycle

The congested Trieste—Turin A4 passes through Mestre. From Mestre, take the Venezia exit. From the south, take the A13 from Bologna, which connects with the A4 at Padua.

Once over the Ponte della Libertà bridge from Mestre, cars must be left at the car park at Piazzale Roma or Tronchetto; expect to pay €20 or more for every 24 hours. Parking stations in Mestre are cheaper. Car ferry 17 transports vehicles from Tronchetto to the Lido.

The car-rental companies listed here all have offices on Piazzale Roma and at Marco Polo airport. Several companies operate in or near Mestre train station too.

**Avis** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 73 77)

**Europcar** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 523 86 16)

**Expressway** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 30 00)

**Hertz** ([Map](#); ☎ 041 528 40 91)

## Train

Prompt, affordable, scenic and environmentally savvy, trains are the preferred transport option to and from Venice. Trains run frequently to Venice's Stazione Santa Lucia (signed as Ferrovia within Venice) from locations throughout Italy and major European cities; *vaporetti* (city ferries) stop right outside the station. Train tickets can be purchased at self-serve ticketing machines in the station, online at [www.trenitalia.it](http://www.trenitalia.it), or in the UK at **Rail Europe** (☎ 0844 8484064; [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk)).

Venice is linked by train to Padua (€2.90 to €15.70, 30 to 50 minutes, three to four each hour) and Verona (€6.15 to €25.20, 1¼ to 2½ hours, two each hour). Regular trains run further afield to Milan (€14.50 to €38.50, 2½ to 3¼ hours), Bologna (€8.90 to €35.20, 1¾ to 2¾ hours), Florence (€21.50 to €54.50, 2¾ to 3¾ hours) and many other major points in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia and Croatia.

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## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

The **Alilaguna** (☎ 041 240 17 01; [www.alilaguna.com](http://www.alilaguna.com)) Orange Line ferry costs €13 from the airport ferry dock (an eight-minute walk from the terminal) to major stops at the Fondamente Nuove, near Piazza San Marco and at Zattere, making several stops along the 70-to-80-minute ride. The faster, direct Gold Line to/from San Zaccaria (near San Marco) takes 35 minutes, costs €25 and runs seven times daily on the half-hour.

**ATVO** (☎ 041 38 36 72; [www.atvo.it](http://www.atvo.it)) buses run to the airport from Piazzale Roma (€3, 20 minutes) about every half-hour. The trip to/from Piazzale Roma takes 65 minutes and costs €5.

### Vaporetto

The city's main mode of public transport is *vaporetto*. Tickets can be purchased from the **helloVenezia ticket booths** ([www.hellovenezia.com](http://www.hellovenezia.com)) at most landing stations. You can also buy tickets when boarding; you may be charged double with luggage.

Instead of spending €6.50 for a one-way ticket, consider buying a **VENICEcard** or a timed pass for unlimited travel within a set time period, which begins when you validate your ticket in the yellow machine located at a ferry dock. Passes for tickets for 12/24/36/48/72 hours are €16/18/23/28/33, and seven days cost €50.

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## VAPORETTO ROUTES

Here are key *vaporetto* lines and major stops, subject to seasonal change:

**No 1** Piazzale Roma—Ferrovia—Grand Canal (all stops)—Lido and back.

**No 2** Circular line: San Zaccaria—Redentore—Zattere—Tronchetto—Ferrovia—Rialto—Accademia—San Marco.

**No 5** San Zaccaria—Murano and back.

**No 8** Sacca Fisola—Zattere—Redentore—Giardini—Lido

**No 13** Fondamente Nuove—Murano—Vignole—Sant’Erasmus—Treporti and back.

**No 17** Car ferry: Tronchetto—Lido and back.

**No 18** Murano—Sant’Erasmus—Lido and back (summer only).

**No 20** San Zaccaria—San Lazzaro—Lido and back.

**No 41** Circular line: Murano—Fondamente Nuove—Ferrovia—Piazzale Roma—Redentore—San Zaccaria—Fondamente Nuove—San Michele—Murano.

**No 42** Circular line in reverse direction to No 41.

**No 51** Circular line: Lido—Fondamente Nuove—Riva de Biasio—Ferrovia—Piazzale Roma—Zattere—San Zaccaria—Giardini—Lido.

**No 52** Circular line in reverse direction to No 51.

**No 61** Limited-stops, weekdays-only circular line: Piazzale Roma—Santa Marta—San Basilio—Zattere—Giardini—Sant’Elena—Lido.

**No 62** Limited-stops, weekdays-only circular line, reverse direction to No 61.

**N** All-stops night circuit: Lido—Giardini—San Zaccaria—Grand Canal (all stops)—Ferrovia—Piazzale Roma—Tronchetto—Zattere—Redentore—San Giorgio—San Zaccaria (starts around 11.30pm; last service around 5am).

**N** A second night service, aka NMU, from Fondamente Nuove to Murano (all stops) – three or four runs from midnight.

**N** A third night run, aka NLN, offers sporadic service between Fondamente Nuove and Burano, Mazzorbo, Torcello and Treporti.

**DM (Diretto Murano)** Tronchetto—Piazzale Roma—Ferrovia—Murano and back.

**LN (Laguna Nord)** San Zaccaria—Lido—Burano—Mazzorbo—Murano (Faro)—Fondamente Nuove and back.

**T** Torcello—Burano (half-hourly service) and back (7am to 8.30pm).

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*Vaporetto* stops can be confusing, so check the signs at the landing dock to make sure you’re at the right stop for the *vaporetto* line and direction you want. At major stops like Ferrovia, there are often two separate docks for the same *vaporetto* line, headed in opposite directions. Some lines make only limited stops, so check boat signage.

## Water Taxis

The standard **water taxi** (☎ 041 522 23 03, 041 240 67 11) between Marco Polo airport and Venice runs €60 to €90 for up to four people; ask your B&B or hotel concierge to pair you with fellow travellers to share the ride. Official rates start at €8.90 plus €1.80 per minute, €6 extra if they’re called to your hotel and more for night trips, luggage and large groups. Prices can be metered or negotiated in advance.

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# AROUND THE VENETO

As though Venice weren't enough of a draw, the Veneto countryside is dotted with walled medieval towns, rustic farmhouse bistros and cities brimming with Unesco World Heritage Sites. Easy day trips let you visit more villas along the Brenta Riviera than a Venetian socialite c 1600 – glimpse your own emotions mirrored in Giotto's early-Renaissance frescoes in Padua, be uplifted by Palladio's gracious architecture in Vicenza and toast star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet with a glass of Amarone in Verona. Wine-tasting excursions and skiing trips to the Dolomites make worthy overnight adventures, even with the timeless temptations of Venice just across the lagoon.

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## BRENTA RIVIERA

Every 13 June for 300 years, summer officially kicked off with a traffic jam along the Grand Canal, as a flotilla of fashionable Venetians headed for the Brenta. Every last ball gown and poker chair was loaded onto Brenta-bound barges for dalliances and diversions that stretched until November. Hearts were won and fortunes lost; vendettas and villas endured.

The party ended when Napoleon took over the area in 1797, but 80 villas still strike elegant poses along the Brenta. Private ownership and privacy hedges leave much to the imagination, but four historic villas are now open as museums; others may be open to organised boat and bicycle tours (see below) and splendid villas can be visited around Vicenza ([Click here](#)).

## Sights

The most romantic Brenta Riviera villa is the Palladio-designed 1555–60 **Villa Foscari** (☎ 041 520 39 66; [www.lamalcontenta.com](http://www.lamalcontenta.com); Via dei Turisti 9, Malcontenta; admission adult/student €10/8; 🕒 9am-noon Tue & Sat, closed 15 Nov-31 Mar), known as 'La Malcontenta' after a grand dame of the Foscari clan allegedly exiled here for cheating on her husband – but these effortlessly light, sociable salons hardly constitute a punishment. The villa was abandoned for years, but Giovanni Zelotti's frescoes have recently been restored to daydream-inducing splendour, from Fame in the study to the Bacchanalian bedroom with Bacchus and Cupid among trompe l'œil grapevines. Modern artists and architects have created site-specific projects here: a recent Zaha Hadid installation used Palladio's blueprint as a matrix for a 3-D fibreglass sculpture of liquid space. Groups of 10 or more can book between April and 14 November at €8 per person.

To appreciate gardening and social engineering in the Brenta Riviera, stop by nearby **Villa Widmann Rezzonico Foscari** (☎ 041 560 06 90; [www.riviera-brenta.it](http://www.riviera-brenta.it); Via Nazionale 420, Mira; adult/student €6/5; 🕒 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar, to 6pm Tue-Sun May-Sep). The 18th-century villa originally owned by Persian-Venetian nobility captures the Brenta's last days of rococo decadence, with Murano sea-monster chandeliers, a frescoed grand salon and an upstairs ladies' gambling parlour. Ignore the incongruous modernised bathrooms and head into the garden, where an albino peacock loudly bemoans bygone glories amid moss-covered sculptures. The gatehouse ticket counter doubles as an **APTV Info Point** (☎ 041 42 49 73) offering brochures on the Brenta.

To keep hard-partying nobles in line, Doge Alvise Pisani provided a monumental reminder of who was in charge with the 1774 **Villa Pisani Nazionale** (☎ 041 271 90 19; [www.villapisani.beniculturali.it](http://www.villapisani.beniculturali.it); Via



Alvise Pisani 7, Strà; adult/EU citizen 18-25yr/under 18yr €10/7.50/free, grounds only €7.50/5/free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar, to 8pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep), with a labyrinthine hedge-maze and pools reflecting the doge's glory. The villa's 114 rooms saw their share of history: the gaming rooms where the Pisani racked up debts, forcing them to sell the mansion to Napoleon; the grand bathroom with a tiny wooden throne used by Napoleon; a sagging bed where Vittorio Emanuele II apparently tossed and turned as the head of independent Italy; and the reception hall where Mussolini and Hitler met for the first time in 1934, rather ironically under Tiepolo's ceiling masterpiece depicting the *Geniuses of Peace*. Outstanding temporary exhibitions here range from contemporary sculptor Mimmo Paladino's sleeping figures in the reflecting pools to 19th-century painter Emma Ciardi's moody views of party stragglers outside Veneto villas. Last admission is one hour before closing.

Well-heeled Venetians wouldn't dream of decamping to the Brenta without their favourite cobblers, sparking a local tradition of high-end shoemaking. Today, 950 companies in the Brenta region produce 20 million pairs of shoes annually. The 'lasting' contribution of Brenta cobblers is commemorated with a **Shoemakers' Museum** at the 18th-century **Villa Foscari Rossi** (☎ 049 980 10 91; [www.villafoscarini.it](http://www.villafoscarini.it); Via Doge Pisani 1/2, Stra; adult/ages 12-18yr & over 65yr €5/2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm Nov-Mar, to 12.30pm Mon, to 12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 2-6pm Sat, 2.30-6pm Sun Apr-Oct), a multiroom dream wardrobe of 18th-century slippers, pairs worn by trendsetters Marlene Dietrich and Katherine Hepburn, and heels handcrafted in the Brenta for Yves Saint Laurent and Pucci.

## Tours

### BOAT

Seeing the Brenta by boat lets you witness an engineering marvel: the hydraulic locks system developed in the 15th century, ingeniously preventing river silt from dumping into the lagoon and turning Venice into a mudflat. Most boats move at a walking pace, but since most villas face the river, you'll be seeing them as Palladio and his contemporaries intended.

**Il Burchiello** (☎ 049 820 69 10; [www.ilburchiello.it](http://www.ilburchiello.it); fullday adult €66-79, 12-17yr €52, 6-11yr €37, under 6yr free, half-day adult & 12-17yr €44-48, 6-11yr €36-37, under 6yr free; ☎ half-day cruises Tue-Fri, full-day cruises Tue-Sun Mar-Oct) is a modern luxury barge that lets you watch 50 villas drift by from cushy velvet couches with a glass of Prosecco from the onboard bar. Day cruises stop at Malcontenta, Widmann and Pisani villas; half-day tours cover two villas. Full-day cruises leave from Venice (Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) or Padua (Wednesday, Friday and Sunday), with bus transfers to train stations.

**I Batelli del Brenta** (☎ 049 876 02 33; [www.battellidelbrenta.it](http://www.battellidelbrenta.it); half-day tours €44-48, full day €66-85; ☎ by reservation Tue-Sun Mar-Nov) offers full-day boat excursions covering three villas, nine swing bridges and five locks along the Brenta, including some cruises on restored wooden *burci* (barges); half-day trips may include optional lunches and transfers to/from Venice or Padua.

### BICYCLE

Speed past tour boats on 150km of cycling routes along the Brenta plains. **Rental Bike Venice** (☎ 346 847 114; [www.rentalbikevenice.blogspot.com](http://www.rentalbikevenice.blogspot.com); Via Gramsci 85, Mira; bicycle per day city & mountain/foldable €10/14; ☎ 8am-8pm) is accessible by bus from Venice, Mestre or Padua (see website for directions) and offers city bikes with baskets, mountain bikes and handy foldable bikes to take on buses, plus roadside assistance and itinerary advice in English.

## Festivals & Events

**Dolo Mercatino dell'Antiquariato** (Antiques Market; Isola Bassa, Dolo) Redo your decor with Brenta villa finds from the region's largest antiques market, held in good weather the fourth Sunday of the month, April to October.

**StraOrganic** ([www.comune.stra.ve.it](http://www.comune.stra.ve.it)) The Brenta claims bragging rights to local, organic foods and handicrafts in Stra; held last weekend in April.

**Riviera Fiorita** ([www.turismovenezia.it](http://www.turismovenezia.it)) Party like it's 1527 with baroque costume parties at the Villa Pisani and Villa Widmann, historically correct country fairs, even gelati in baroque-era flavours; held second weekend in September.

**Venice Marathon** ([www.venicemarathon.it](http://www.venicemarathon.it)) Run like Casanova caught in the act from Villa Pisani along the Brenta to Venice, with the final legs crossing pontoon bridges. Usually held in October, with proceeds funding clean-water projects in Africa.

## Eating

Across the road from La Malcontenta is **Ristorante da Bepi el Ciosato** (☎ 041 69 89 97; [www.hotelgallimberti.it](http://www.hotelgallimberti.it); Via Malcanton 33, Malcontenta; meals €26; 🍴 lunch & dinner), a country bistro that serves very urbane fish baked into *pasticcio di pesce* (fish pie) or wrapped in an artichoke crust. After wandering the vast Villa Pisani, you might feel ready to eat a horse – and that's one of the traditional Veneto meat specialities on the menu at nearby **Trattoria Prandin** (☎ 049 50 23 70; Via Pertile 124, San Pietro di Stra; meals €15-20; 🍴 lunch & dinner), which also serves superb steak with homestyle roast potatoes.

## Getting There & Around

ACTV's **Venezia-Padova Extraurbane bus 53** leaves from [Venice's Piazzale Roma](#) about every half-hour, stopping at key Brenta villages en route to Padua. Train service from Venice stops at Dolo (€2.35 to €3.55, half an hour) en route to Padua. By car, take SS11 from Mestre-Venezia towards Padua (Padua) and take the Autostrada A4 towards Dolo/Padova.

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## PADUA

**pop 212,500**

Although it's just 37km west of Venice, Padua looks more like Milan left in the dryer too long, with oddly shaped medieval piazzas, a student population keeping it hip, and broad boulevards lined with elegant Liberty edifices alongside creepy Fascist buildings and postwar cereal-box architecture. Milan has da Vinci's *Last Supper*, but Padua boasts the signature work by the artist da Vinci credited as his greatest influence: Giotto's Scrovegni Chapel.

Padua has certainly been through the wringer since its founding in the late 12th century BC, but restless reinvention became its trademark. Romans took over the town from Veneti tribes and renamed it Patavium, but Goths besieged the city, and Lombard invasions wiped it out in AD 602. A fire again destroyed the city in 1164, but the city made a comeback to claim Vicenza and establish Italy's third university in 1222, becoming a magnet for thinkers and artists. Padua remained rivals with Verona and repeatedly challenged the authority of Venice, which settled the matter by occupying Padua and its territories in 1405.

As a strategic military-industrial centre, Padua became a parade ground for Mussolini speeches, an

Allied bombing target and a secret Italian Resistance hub based at the university. Once Padua was wrested from Fascist control in 1945, within a year there was a new industrial zone east of the city, the university was back in session and the puzzlework that is Padua began anew.

## Information

**Feltrinelli International** (☎ 049 875 07 92; Via San Francesco 7; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat, 10am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sun) Bookshop and publisher offering books in multiple languages and an outstanding history section.

**Ospedaliere Padova** (☎ 049 821 11 11; Via Giustiniani 1) Main public hospital.

**Police station** (☎ 049 820 51 00; Piazzetta Palatucci 5)

**Post office** (Corso Garibaldi 33; 🕒 8.15am-7.30pm Mon-Sat)

**Roadside emergency assistance** (☎ 116)

**Tourist information** ([www.turismopadova.it](http://www.turismopadova.it)) Galleria Pedrocchi (☎ 049 876 79 27; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat); Piazza del Santo (☎ 049 875 30 87; 🕒 Mar-Oct); train station (☎ 049 875 20 77; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat)

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

A **PadovaCard** (per 48/72hr €15/20) gives one adult plus one child under 14 free use of city public transport and access to 12 of Padua's major attractions, including the Cappella degli Scrovegni (plus €1 booking fee; reservation essential), Musei Civici agli Eremitani, Palazzo della Ragione, Museo del Risorgimento e dell'Età Contemporanea at Caffè Pedrocchi, the cathedral baptistry and the Orto Botanico. The card grants discounts at some Padua restaurants, B&Bs and shops, plus reduced admission at 24 historic sites outside Padua, including Petrarch's House in Arquà Petrarca ([Click here](#)) and Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. PadovaCards are available at Padua tourist offices and monuments covered by the pass.

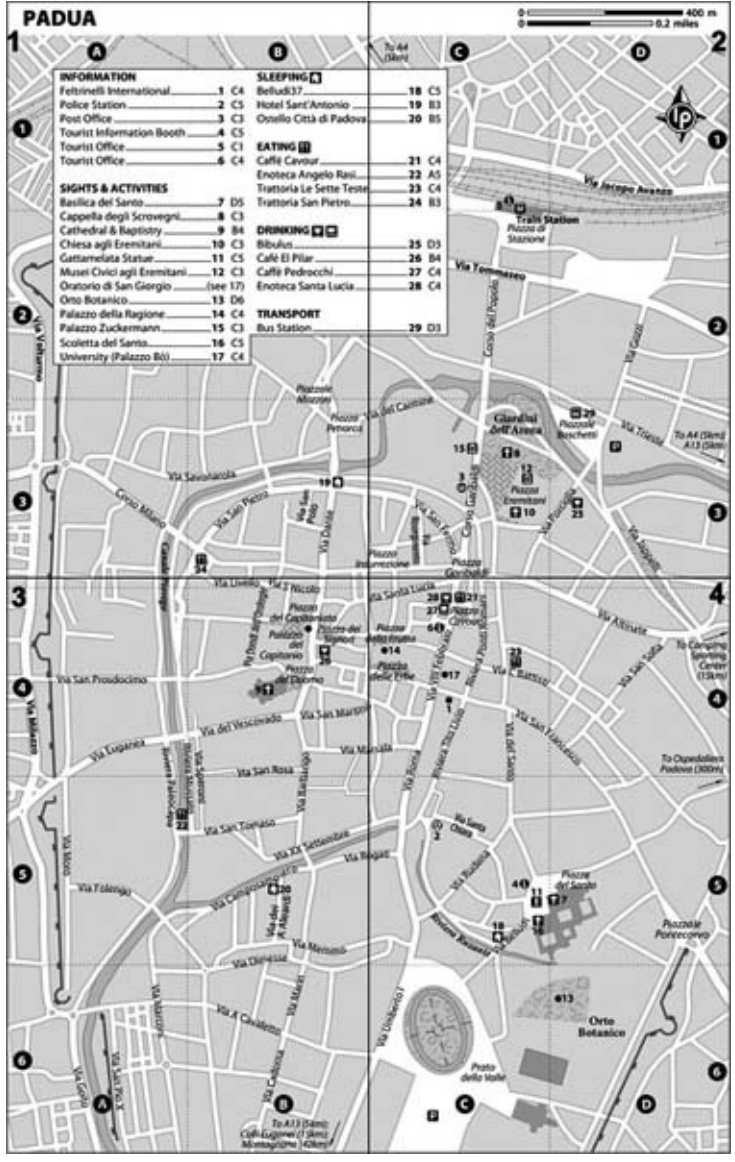
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## Sights

### CAPPELLA DEGLI SCROVEGNI

Almost 200 years before Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel and Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* came Padua's Renaissance breakthrough: Giotto's moving, modern 1303–05 frescoes in the **Scrovegni Chapel** (☎ 049 201 00 20; [www.cappelladeglisrovegni.it](http://www.cappelladeglisrovegni.it); Giardini dell'Arena; admission with PadovaCard free, adult/6-17yr & senior/under 6 yr €12/8/1, night session €8/6/1; 🕒 visits daily by reservation only, minimum 3 days ahead, call centre 9am-7pm Mon-Fri & 9am-6pm Sat). Medieval churchgoers were accustomed to blank stares from flat saints on Gothic thrones – but Giotto introduced biblical figures as relatable characters in recognisable settings caught up in extraordinary circumstances. Onlookers gossip as middle-aged Anne tenderly kisses Joachim, and gives birth to miracle-baby Mary; exhausted new dad Joseph falls asleep sitting up in the manger as sheep and angels watch over baby Jesus; and Jesus stares down Judas as the traitor puckers up for the kiss that sealed Jesus' fate.

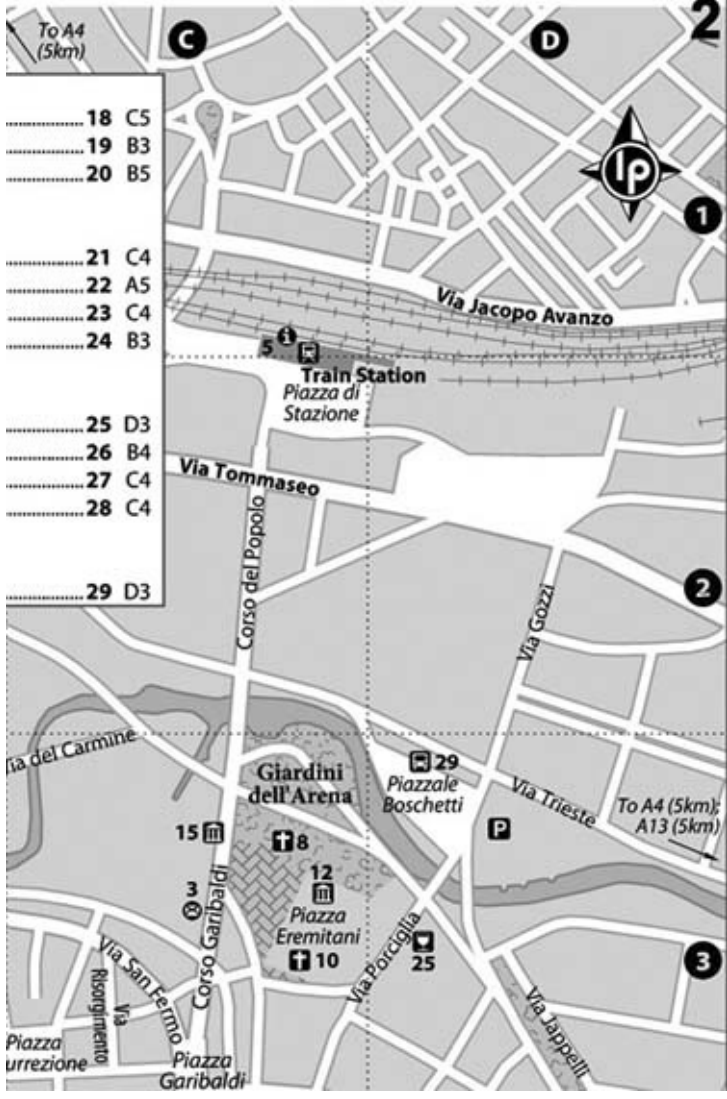
In a new multimedia gallery, video projections and a full-scale set allow you enter each scene and experience how Giotto ended the dark ages in a blaze of glowing colour. His humanist approach was especially well suited for the chapel Enrico Scrovegni commissioned in memory of his father, who as a moneylender was denied a Christian burial.



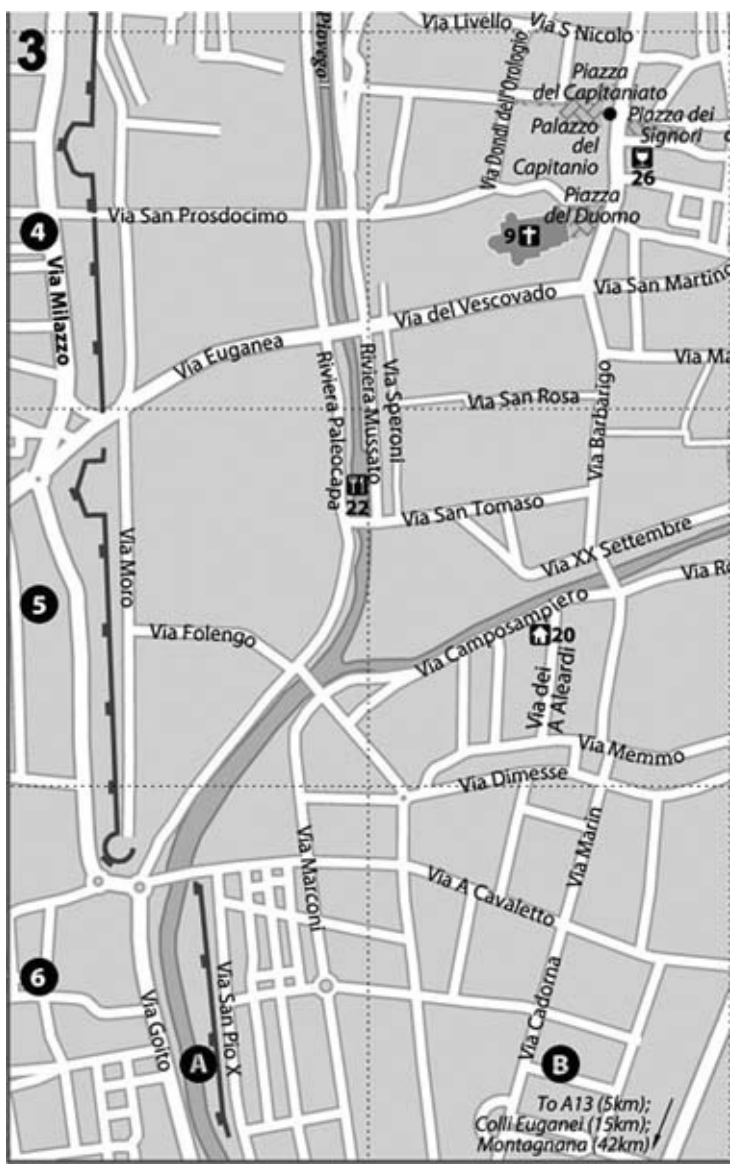
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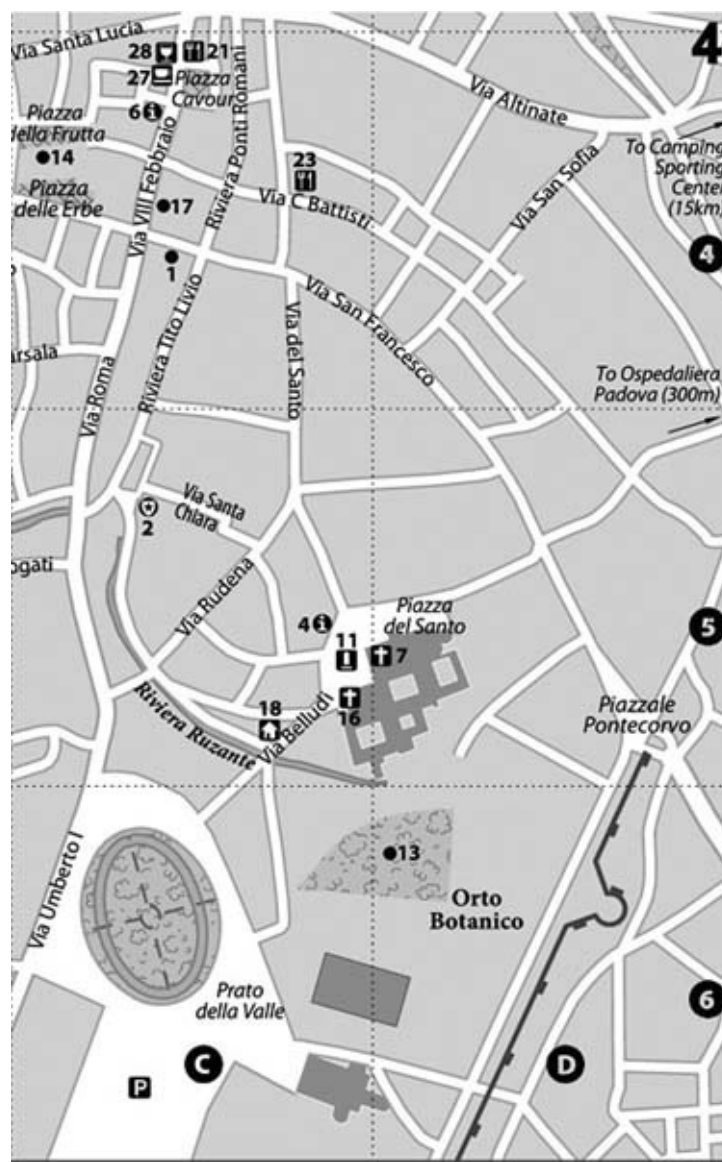
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SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		DRINKING	
Basilica del Santo.....	7 D5	Bibulus.....	C5
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University (Palazzo Bò).....	17 C4		

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The chapel is a five-minute walk from the train station, but booking is required online or by phone at least three days in advance, possibly weeks ahead from April to October. Chapel visits last 15 minutes, though the ‘double turn’ night-session ticket (adult/child seven to 17 years and senior/child under seven years €12/6/1; 7pm to 9.20pm) allows a 30-minute stay and multimedia-room visits can last 30 to 90 minutes.

In the adjacent **Musei Civici agli Eremitani** (☎ 049 820 45 50; Piazza Eremitani 8; free with PadovaCard or Capella degli Scrovegni, museum only adult/child 7-17yr/under 7yr €10/8/free; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), a converted monastery houses artefacts dating from Padua’s pre-Roman history on the ground floor, and notable 14th-to-18th-century works from Veneto artists, from Bellini to Canova, upstairs. The showstopper is a crucifix by Giotto, showing a heartbroken Mary wringing her hands as Jesus’ blood drips through the rocky earth, right into the eye sockets of a skull. On the same ticket you can visit the nearby **Palazzo Zuckermann** (Corso di Garibaldi 33; 🕒 10am-7pm Tue-Sun), home to a decorative-arts museum and a treasury of finely worked ancient coins, weapons and medals.

## CHIESA DEGLI EREMITANI

When a 1944 bombing raid demolished the extraordinary 1448–57 frescoes by Andrea Mantegna in the Capella Overtari in the **Eremitani Church** (☎ 049 875 64 10; Piazza Eremitani; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 3.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun), the loss to art history was incalculable. After a half-century of painstaking reconstruction, the shattered, humidity-damaged stories of Sts James and Christopher have been puzzled together, revealing extreme perspectives that make Mantegna’s saints look



like superheroes.

## HISTORIC CENTRE

Follow Via VIII Febbraio to the Palazzo del Bò, seat of Padua's **university** (☎ 049 827 30 47; Via VIII Febbraio; adult/student & child €5/2; 🕒 tours 9.15am, 10.15am & 12.15pm Tue, Thu & Sat, 2.15pm, 4.15pm & 5.15pm Mon, Wed & Fri). This institution was founded by renegade scholars from Bologna seeking greater intellectual freedom; some of Italy's greatest and most controversial thinkers taught here, including Copernicus, Galileo, Casanova and the world's first woman doctor of philosophy, Elena Cornaro Piscopia (her statue graces the stairs). Guided tours cover Galileo's lecture hall and the world's first anatomy theatre, built for scientific autopsy in 1594 before biohazards were understood – dissected corpses were dumped into an underground stream.

Ancient Padua can be glimpsed in twin squares framed by arcades, the **Piazza delle Erbe** and **Piazza della Frutta**, separated by the triple-decker Gothic **Palazzo della Ragione** (☎ 049 820 50 06; Piazza delle Erbe; adult/child €4/2, during temporary exhibitions €8/5; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), the city's tribunal dating from 1218.

South of the *palazzo* is the city's **cathedral** (☎ 049 66 28 14; Piazza del Duomo; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm & 3.30-8.45pm Sun & holidays), built from a much-altered design of Michelangelo's and completely upstaged by the adjoining 13th-century **baptistry** (☎ 049 65 69 14; Piazza del Duomo; with PadovaCard free, adult/child €2.80/1; 🕒 10am-6pm). This Romanesque gem is completely frescoed with Giusto de' Menabuoi's luminous biblical scenes, including a cupola depicting hundreds of male and female saints posed as though for a school graduation photo, exchanging glances and stealing awestruck looks at the Madonna.

## PIAZZA DEL SANTO

The soul of the city is the **Basilica di Sant'Antonio** (Basilica del Santo; [www.basilicadelsanto.org](http://www.basilicadelsanto.org); 🕒 6.30am-7pm Nov-Feb, to 7.45pm Mar-Oct), burial site of the town's patron saint, St Anthony of Padua (1193–1231). Along the left transept, the saint's tomb is covered with requests and thanks for miracle cures and recovery of lost objects. Under vaulted Gothic ceilings frescoed with starry skies are such notable works as the lifelike 1360s crucifix by Veronese master Altichiero da Zevio in the frescoed **Chapel of St James**, 1528 **sacristy** fresco of St Anthony preaching to spellbound fish by a follower of Girolamo Tessari and 1444–50 **high altar reliefs** by Florentine Renaissance master Donatello (ask guards for access). Outside in the **Piazza del Santo**, Donatello's 1453 equestrian statue commemorating the 15th-century Venetian mercenary leader known as **Gattamelata** ('Honeyed Cat') is considered the first great Italian Renaissance bronze.

Two of Padua's greatest treasures hide in plain sight across the square. The **Oratorio di San Giorgio** (☎ 049 875 52 35; admission incl Scoletta del Santo €2; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Oct-Mar) was frescoed in jewel-like colour by Altichiero da Zevio and Jacopo Avanzi in 1378 and briefly used as a prison by Napoleon, who apparently missed the message of St George's liberation from the torture wheel by avenging angels. Your ticket allows entry next door to the upstairs **Scoletta del Santo**, with Titian paintings that include a 1511 portrait of St Anthony calmly re-attaching his own foot, and a parable painted by Titian's brother Francesco Vecellio showing a miser's bloody heart discovered in a treasure chest.

South of Piazza del Santo, a Unesco World Heritage Site is growing. Padua's **Orto Botanico** (☎ 049 827 21 19; adult/student & child €4/1; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) was planted in 1545 by Padua University's medical faculty in order to study the medicinal properties of rare

plants. It also served as a clandestine Resistance meeting headquarters in WWII.

## Tours

Never mind the puns: iPadova tours are free audio downloads for your iPod with accompanying PDF maps for four intriguing walking tours through Padua, while Giscover Padua downloads guide you around town via GPS. Both are available online at [www.turismopadova.it](http://www.turismopadova.it); click on Soundtouring.

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## WORTH A TRIP: COLLI EUGANEI (EUGANEAN HILLS)

Southwest of Padua, the **Colli Euganei** (Euganean Hills) are a dreamscape of walled hilltop towns, misty vineyards, the occasional castle and bubbling hot springs. The **Padua tourist office** ([www.turismotermeeuganee.it](http://www.turismotermeeuganee.it)) offers area maps, accommodation, walking trail and transport information online. Worthy stops on a side trip from Padua include the following.

### Terme (Natural Hot Springs)

Mountain springwater bubbles up from the Prealps north of Padua, 85°C and rich in mineral salts. For listings of 100 hotels with hot-springs facilities, download the *Terme* guide ([www.turismotermeeuganee.it](http://www.turismotermeeuganee.it)) or stop by tourist offices in **Abano Terme** (☎ 049 866 90 55; Via Pietro d'Abano 18) and **Montegrotto Terme** (☎ 049 79 33 84; Viale Stazione 60).

### Sonnet City

Italy's great poet Petrarch (Petrarca) spent the last five years of his life in the medieval village of **Arquà Petrarca**, where you can visit his stone **house** (☎ 0429 71 82 94; Via Valleselle 4; with PadovaCard free or adult €3; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-noon & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb), add your thoughts to guestbooks signed by Rilke and Mozart and pay homage to Petrarch's embalmed pet cat. Up to three daily buses from Padua (€2.70, 55 minutes) pass through town en route to Este.

### Medieval Fortress Towns

Today Monselice, Este and Montagnana welcome visitors who arrive by SITA bus or the Padua—Montagnana train (€3.40, every one to three hours, 20 to 60 minutes) – but in medieval times, their fortifications kept out drifters, the French and door-to-door salesmen. **Monselice** is securely wrapped in five layers of 11th-to-15th-century fortifications, capped by a restored **castle** (☎ 0429 7 29 31; adult/child 6-14yr/under 6yr €5.50/3/free; Via del Santuario; ☎ 1hr guided tours 9am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Nov). West of Monselice along the Mantua road is **Este**, where a trail heading north behind Este castle's romantic ruins leads to the **Villa Kunkler**, a private home where Byron and Shelley once stayed; there's a marker out the front. About 12km west of Este rise the impressive 2km fortifications of **Montagnana**, with 24 towers and four gates.

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## Sleeping

The **tourist office** ([www.turismopadova.it](http://www.turismopadova.it)) publishes accommodation brochures and lists 90 B&Bs and 60 hotels online.

**Camping Sporting Center** (☎ 049 79 34 00; [www.sportingcenter.it](http://www.sportingcenter.it); Via Roma 123, Montegrotto Terme; per person/tent €8.30/12; ☎ Mar—mid-Nov; ☎ P ☎) The only campground in Padua province, this sprawling complex is 15km from the city centre via city bus M from the train station and offers access to a

pool, spa facilities and shops.

**Ostello Città di Padova** (☎ 049 875 22 19; [www.ostellopadova.it](http://www.ostellopadova.it); Via dei A Aleardi 30; dm incl breakfast €19, f with/without bathroom €56-88/46-76; 🕒 7.15-9.30am & 4.30pm-midnight) Arrive early for your choice of 16 bunk beds, or reserve family rooms with four bunks. Night owls need not apply: curfew is at midnight, breakfast at 7.15 and checkout at 9.30am. Take bus 3, 8 or 12 from the train station to Prato della Valle and ask for the Ostello.

**Koko Nor Association** ([www.bbkokonor.it](http://www.bbkokonor.it); d €60-80) World travellers make themselves at home in the historic heart of Padua in these Tibetan-themed apartments, terrace rooms and artists' garrets owned by welcoming, worldly Italian families; ask about informal Italian conversation classes. Additional B&B listings outside of Padua are listed on an affiliated website, [www.bedandbreakfastpadova.it](http://www.bedandbreakfastpadova.it).

**Hotel Sant'Antonio** (☎ 049 875 13 93; [www.hotel.santantonio.it](http://www.hotel.santantonio.it); Via San Fermo 118; s €63-69, d €82-94; 🕒) A calm, canal-side hotel near the historic city gate, with unfussy, airy rooms and a cafe downstairs (breakfast €7). Cheaper singles without bathroom are in the corridor.

**our pick Belludi37** (☎ 049 66 56 33; [www.belludi37.it](http://www.belludi37.it); Via Luca Belludi 37; s/d incl breakfast €55-80/120-150; 🕒 📺) A sleek boutique hotel with soul: generous beds with stirring views of Basilica di Sant'Antonio and a helpful staff quick with budget-friendly shopping advice, free drinks, biking itineraries and speciality-food-sampling walking tours.

## Eating

**Caffè Cavour** (☎ 049 875 12 24; [www.caffecavour.com](http://www.caffecavour.com); Piazza Cavour 10; pastries €1.50-3; 🕒 7.30am-midnight Wed-Mon) Pistachio macarons, wild berry tarts and other two-bite indulgences sweeten the expressions of traffic cops bolting espresso at the curved granite bar.

**Trattoria Le Sette Teste** (☎ 049 66 47 53; Via C Battisti 44; meals €9-15; 🕒 6.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Vast plates of pasta (€9) are presented here like a dare, and meaty mains and chocolatey desserts pose serious threats to after-lunch sightseeing plans around the corner at the Palazzo della Raggione.

**Osteria Dal Capo** (☎ 049 66 31 05; Via degli Obizzi 2; meals €25; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat & dinner Mon) Rub elbows with locals – literally – over dinner at tiny tables precariously piled with traditional Venetian seafood, local wines by the glass and a few inspired novelties, such as *caviale di melanzane con bufala* (eggplant caviar with *mozzarella di bufala* atop crispy wafer bread). Reservations and a sociable nature advised.

**our pick Enoteca Angelo Rasi** (☎ 049 871 97 97; [www.angelorasi.it](http://www.angelorasi.it); Riviera Paleocapa 7; meals €30; 🕒 dinner Tue-Sun) Come for a glass of wine and *cicheti*, and inevitably you'll pull up a chair by the canal and stay for dinner under the lime trees. Rustic fare is reinvented with a touch of whimsy: creamed cod comes with savoury squid-ink polenta doughnuts, ricotta gnocchi is topped with a decadent zucchini mousse sauce, and cheeses are presented in the form of a clock.

**Trattoria San Pietro** (☎ 049 876 03 30; Via San Pietro 95; meals €30; 🕒 Mon-Sat, closed Jul) Venice meets Milanese influences behind these kitchen doors, but the results are pure Padua: think Venetian artichokes with Milanese veal, or saffron risotto with seafood. Reserve ahead.

## Drinking

Sundown isn't official until you've had your *spritz* in Piazza delle Erbe or Piazza dei Signori.

**Café El Pilar** (☎ 049 65 75 65; Piazza dei Signori 8; 🕒 8.30am-1am Mon-Sat) 'Crush' describes the

quantity of people you'll have to beat to the bar, the technique the bartender uses to make signature cocktails instead of the usual blender, and that pitter-patter you'll feel by night's end in the piazza.

**Caffè Pedrocchi** (☎ 049 878 12 31; [www.caffepedrocchi.it](http://www.caffepedrocchi.it); Via VIII Febbraio 15; ☎ 9am-10pm Sun-Wed, to 1am Thu-Sat) Since 1831, this neoclassical landmark has been a favourite of Stendhal and other pillars of Padua's cafe society for heart-poundingly powerful coffee and *caffè corretto* (coffee cocktails).

**Enoteca Santa Lucia** (☎ 049 875 94 83; Piazza Cavour 15; ☎ 7pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Taking its cue from Milan, Santa Lucia offers upscale wines by the glass for €5 to €10 with a free buffet of local specialities and cheeses from 7pm to 10pm nightly. Occupy your battle station at the glassed-in bar for buffet forays, or head inside the stone-walled tavern for serious boozing.

**Bibulus** (☎ 049 65 41 17; Via Porciglia 32; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 9.30pm Sat) This all-day hot spot near Piazza Eremitani is nicknamed 'the library' because university students practically live here, mesmerised by the orange Op Art decor, 15 wines by the glass and happy-hour buffet, all at philosophy-major prices.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

**SITA buses** (☎ 049 820 68 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it)) from Venice's Piazzale Roma (€3.50, 45 to 60 minutes) arrive at Piazzale Boschetti, 500m south of the train station. Check online for buses to Colli Euganei towns ([Click here](#)).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The A4 (Turin—Milan—Venice—Trieste) passes to the north of town, while the A13 to Bologna starts south of town.

### TRAIN

The easiest way to Padua from Venice is by train (€2.90 to €15.70, 30 to 50 minutes, three or four each hour). The station is about 500m north of Cappella degli Scrovegni.

[Return to beginning of chapter](#)

## VICENZA

### pop 113,500

If Palladio's uplifting spaces are like architectural Prozac, a walking tour of historic Vicenza is a megadose that leaves you simultaneously giddy and grounded, rational and open to possibilities. No wonder Unesco declared Palladio's work in and around the city one grand World Heritage Site.

Palladio had classical foundations to build on in Vicenza, which was the ancient Roman town of Vicentia. Gothic mansions and St Mark's lion emblems appeared around town once it was absorbed by the Venetian Republic in 1404 – but Palladio valued clarity over opulence, creating a singular look for Vicenza that has remained through its changing fortunes over the centuries. Vicenza prospered with textile and computer industries after WWII, yet the city remains surprisingly unpretentious, lingering over rustic lunches of local *salumi* (cured meats), game and handmade pasta.

## Orientation

From the train station in the gardens of Campo Marzo, Viale Roma heads into Piazzale de Gasperi. From

here, Corso Andrea Palladio heads through the historic town centre.

## Information

**Ospedale Civile** (☎ 0444 99 31 11; Viale F Rodolfi 37) Hospital.

**Police station** (☎ 0444 54 33 33; Viale G Mazzini 213)

**Post office** (Contrà Garibaldi 1; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat)

**Tourist office** ([www.vicenzae.org](http://www.vicenzae.org)) Piazza dei Signori (☎ 0444 54 41 22; Piazza dei Signori 8; ☎ 10am-2pm & 2.30-6.30pm); Piazza Matteotti (☎ 0444 32 08 54; Piazza Matteotti 12; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm)

## Sights

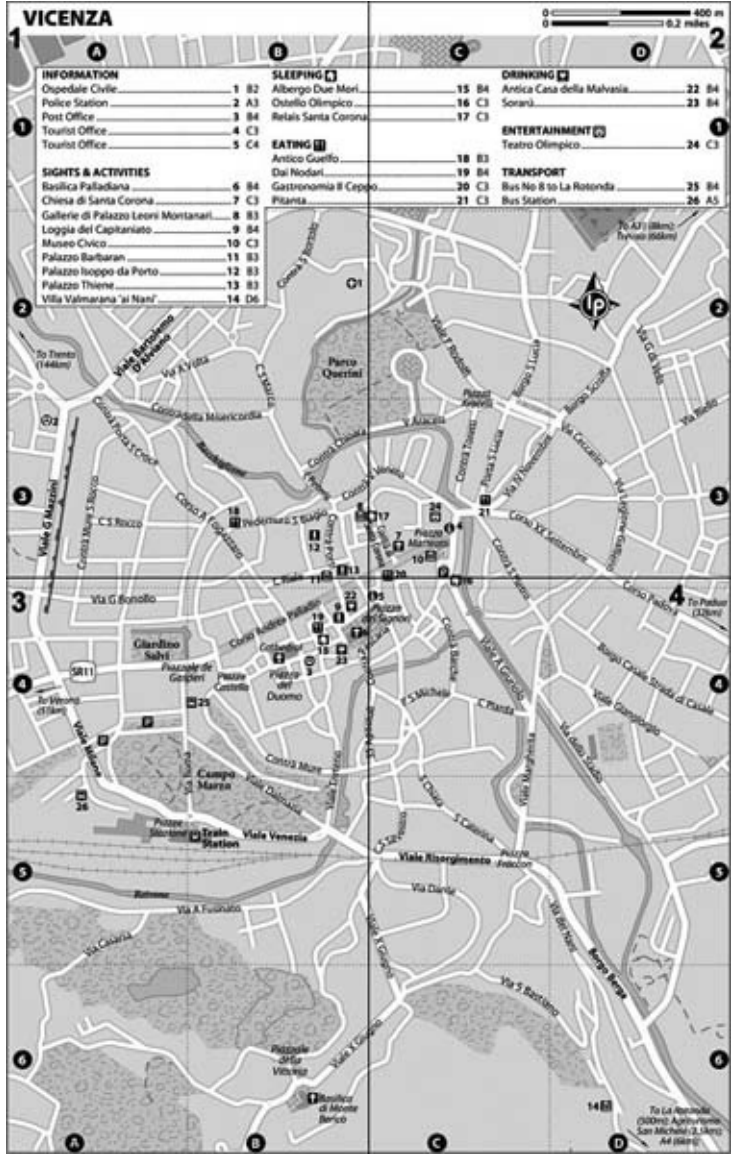
### PIAZZA DEI SIGNORI

The heart of historic Vicenza is Piazza dei Signori, where Palladio lightened the mood of government buildings with plays of light and shadow. Dazzling white Piovene stone arches frame shady double arcades in the **Basilica Palladiana** (☎ 0444 32 36 81; ☎ temporary exhibitions only), designed in 1549, while on the northwest end of the piazza, white stone and stucco grace the exposed red brick colonnade of the 1571-designed **Loggia del Capitaniato**.

### CONTRÀ PORTI

North of Corso Andrea Palladio, three Palladian beauties line Contrà Porti. The finest is the newly restored **Palazzo Barbaran** (☎ 0444 32 30 14; Contrà Porti 11; [www.cisapalladio.org](http://www.cisapalladio.org); admission with PalladioCard free, adult/student €5; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun), built by Palladio c 1569–70 with a stately double row of columns on the facade and a delightful double-height courtyard loggia that seems to usher in the sunlight. Frothy stuccowork and Giambattista Zelotti's frescoes of gambolling gods seem to lift the roof right off spacious ground-floor galleries. In the bathroom, take a moment to contemplate Palladio's clever use of cross-vaulting through the bathroom window.

The bank building at No 12 is **Palazzo Thiene**, begun under Palladio's supervision c 1556–58, with rustic stone arches capped by gabled windows and elegant Corinthian pilasters, drawing the eye skyward. Further along the street at No 21, you can't miss Palladio's blinding white, unfinished 1549–53 **Palazzo Isoppo da Porto**, rippling with eight inset Ionic columns on the 1st floor and crowned with sculpture and pilasters along the attic.

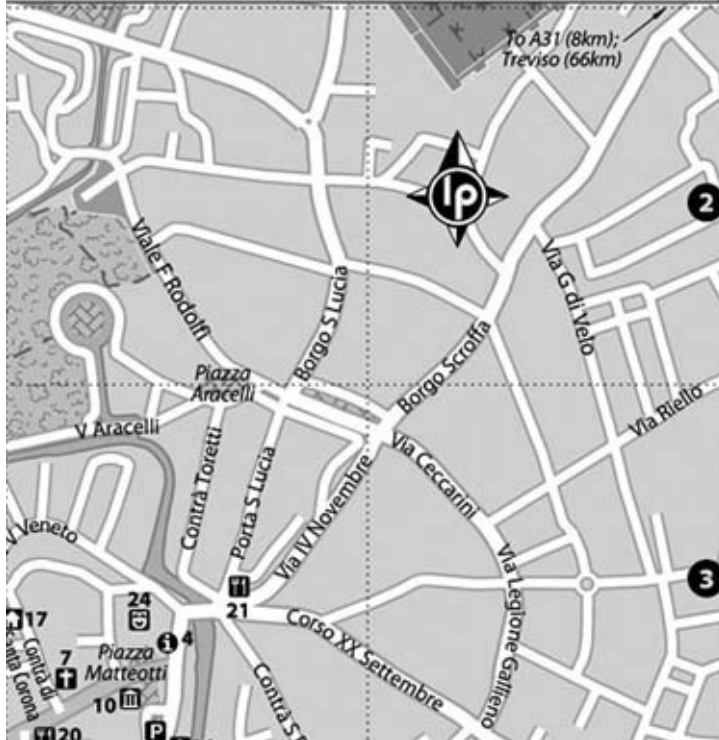




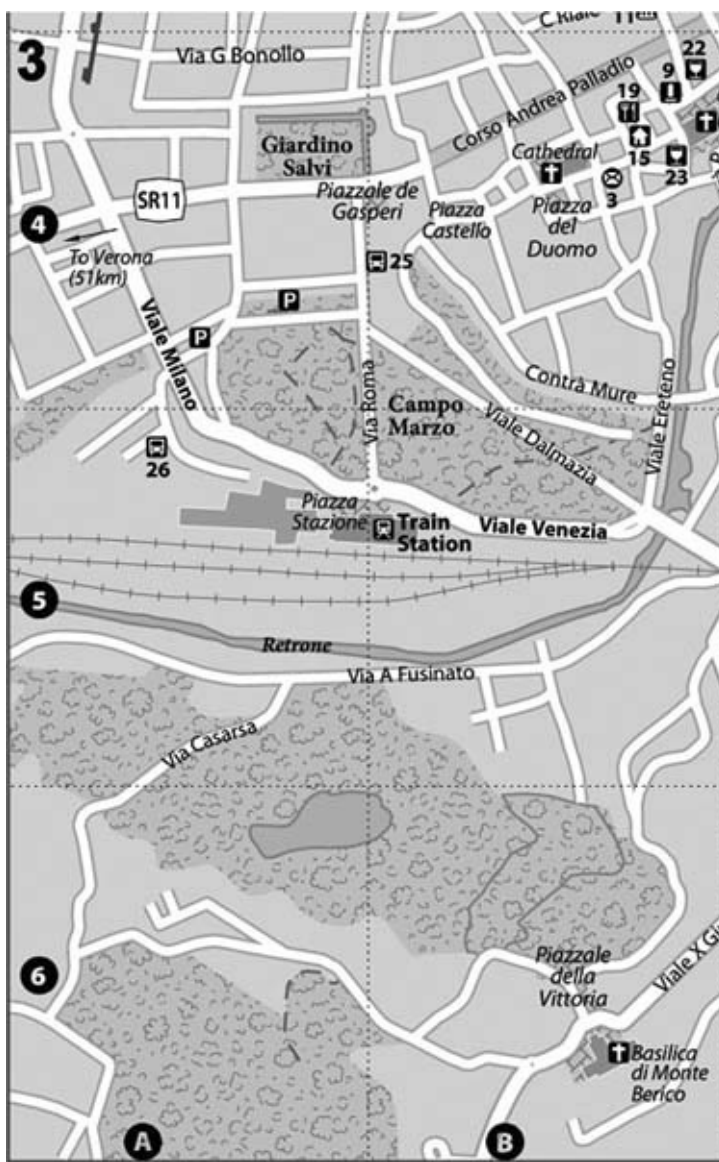
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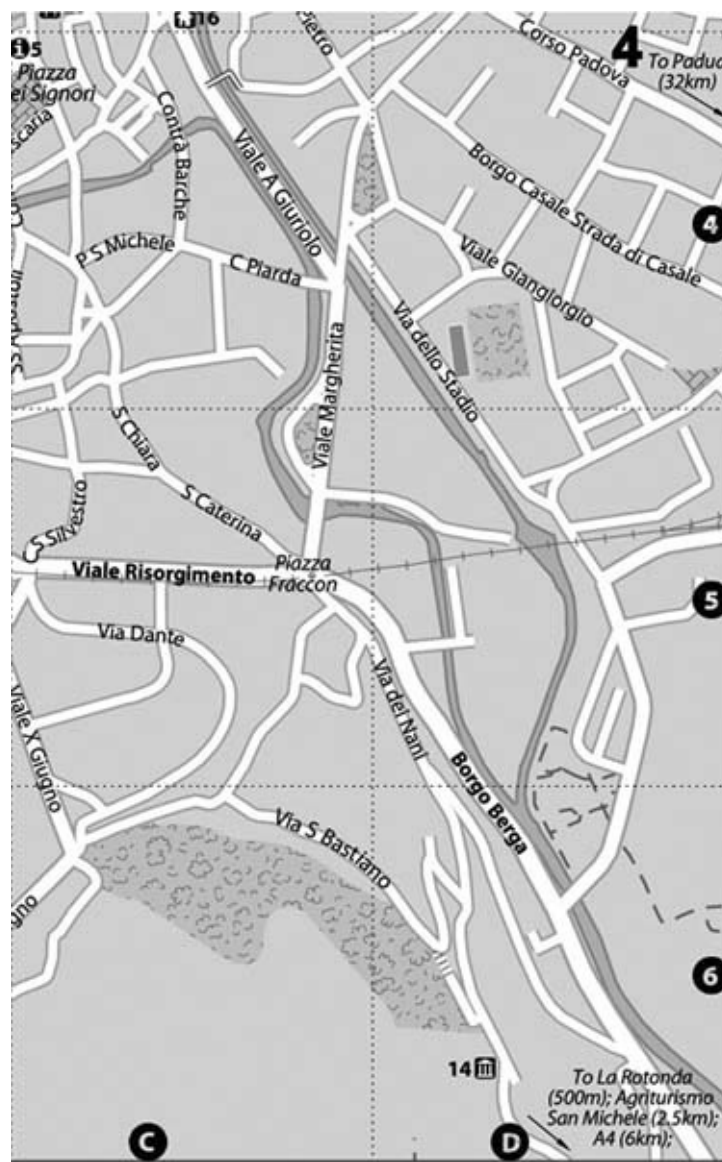


<b>DRINKING</b> ☒	
.....15 B4	Antica Casa della Malvasia..... 22 B4
.....16 C3	Sorarù..... 23 B4
.....17 C3	
<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> 🎪 <span style="float: right;">1</span>	
.....18 B3	Teatro Olimpico..... 24 C3
.....19 B4	
<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
.....20 C3	Bus No 8 to La Rotonda..... 25 B4
.....21 C3	Bus Station..... 26 A5









## CONTRÀ DI SANTA CORONA

Two blocks east of Contrà Porti is another splendid sidestreet: Contrà di Santa Corona, named after **Chiesa di Santa Corona** (🕒 8.30am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun, 4-6pm Mon). Built by the Dominicans in 1261 to house a relic from Christ's crown of thorns, this Romanesque brick church also houses three light-filled masterpieces: Palladio's 1576 Valmarana Chapel in the crypt, Paolo Veronese's *Adoration of the Magi*, much praised by Goethe, and Giovanni Bellini's radiant *Baptism of Christ*, where the holy event is witnessed by a trio of Veneto beauties and a curious red bird.

From outside it looks like a bank, but a treasure beyond accountants' imagining awaits inside the **Gallerie di Palazzo Leoni Montanari** (☎ 800 578875; [www.palazzomontanari.com](http://www.palazzomontanari.com); Contrà di Santa Corona 25; adult/student €4/3; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Ascend past the nymphs along the extravagant stuccoed staircase to grand salons filled with Canaletto's misty lagoon landscapes and Pietro Longhi society satires: in *Tutors of Venier's House*, a sassy child with hand on hip wears out exasperated tutors collapsed in their chairs. Upstairs is Banca Intesa's superb collection of 400 Russian icons, gorgeously spotlit in darkened galleries with Gregorian chants setting the scene. Each room elicits audible gasps: bright-eyed saints haloed in silver peer from 16th-century doors; 19th-century *Menologs* show 99 miniature saints with detailed heads no larger than pencil erasers; and a phalanx of bejewelled, miraculous Madonna icons makes you understand why bags must be left in ground-floor lockers.

## PIAZZA MATTEOTTI

Corso Palladio comes to a full stop with two Palladian landmarks. Behind a charming walled garden lies

a Renaissance marvel: **Teatro Olimpico** (☎ 0444 22 28 00; [www.olimpico.vicenza.it](http://www.olimpico.vicenza.it); combined ticket with Museo Civico adult/student/child under 15 yr €8/6/free, with PalladioCard adult €6; 📧 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), which Palladio began in 1580 with inspiration from Roman structures. Vincenzo Scamozzi finished the elliptical theatre after Palladio's death, adding a stage set modelled on the ancient Greek city of Thebes, with streets built in steep perspective to give the illusion of depth. Since its restoration in 1934, Italian performers have vied to make an entrance on this stage; check online for opera and classical performances, and don't miss Vicenza Jazz concerts here in May.

Save your entry ticket for access to the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0444 32 13 48; [www.museicivivicenza.it](http://www.museicivivicenza.it); Palazzo Chiericati, Piazza Matteotti 37/39; combined ticket with Teatro Olimpico adult/student/child under 15yr €8/6/free, with PalladioCard adult €6; 📧 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), housed in one of Palladio's finest buildings, designed in 1550 with a colonnaded ground floor and double-height loggia flanked by vast sun porches. The lavishly frescoed ground floor includes the Sala dal Firmamento (Salon of the Skies), with Domenico Brusasorci's ceiling fresco of Diana the moon goddess in her chariot galloping across the sky to meet the sun. The upstairs painting galleries present works by Vicenza masters in the context of major works by Venetian masters (Veronese, Tiepolo, Tintoretto), Hans Memling's minutely detailed crucifix, action-packed Jacopo Bassanos, Elisabetta Marchioni's bodacious still lifes and Giambattista Piazzetta's swirling, high-drama 1729 masterpiece, *The Ecstasy of St Francis*.

## VICENZA SOUTH

Head down Viale X Giugno and east along Via San Bastiano and in about 20 minutes you'll reach the **Villa Valmarana 'ai Nani'** (☎ 0444 32 18 03; [www.villavalmarana.com](http://www.villavalmarana.com); Via dei Nani 8; admission adult/student/child under 12 €8/4/free; 📧 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-noon & 2-4.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb), covered with sublime 1757 frescoes by Giambattista Tiepolo and his son Giandomenico. Giambattista painted the Palazzina wing with his signature mythological epics, while his son painted the Foresteria with fanciful themes in rural, carnival and Chinese rooms. Nicknamed 'ai Nani' (dwarfs) for the 17 garden-gnome statues around the garden walls, this estate is a wonderful spot for a summer concert; check dates online.

From 'ai Nani, a path leads to Palladio's Villa Capra, better known as **La Rotonda** (☎ 0444 32 17 93; Via Rotonda 29; admission villa/gardens €6/3; 📧 villa 10am-noon & 3-6pm Wed Mar-Nov, gardens 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Nov). No matter how you look at it, this villa is a showstopper: the namesake dome caps a square base, with colonnaded facades on all four sides. This is one of the architect's most admired creations, inspiring villa variations across Europe and the USA, including Thomas Jefferson's Monticello (the current owner, Mario di Valmarana, is a retired University of Virginia architecture professor). Inside, the circular central hall is frescoed from the walls to the soaring cupola with trompe l'oeil frescoes. You can catch bus 8 (€1.50) to Vicenza out the front.

## Sleeping

Some 50 hotels in the greater Vicenza area are listed on the tourism board website ([www.vicenzae.org](http://www.vicenzae.org)), and a dozen B&Bs can be found at [www.vitourism.it](http://www.vitourism.it).

**Ostello Olimpico** (☎ 0444 54 02 22; [www.ostellovicenza.com](http://www.ostellovicenza.com); Viale Antonio Giuriolo 9; dm €20; 📧 7.30-9.30am & 3.30-11.30pm mid-Mar—mid-Nov) A convenient HI youth hostel in a fine building by the Teatro Olimpico.

**Albergo Due Mori** (☎ 0444 32 18 86; [www.hotelduemori.com](http://www.hotelduemori.com); Contrà do Rode 26; d €80, s/d without bathroom €48/55; 📶 📺) Right off Piazza dei Signori on a boutique-lined cobblestone street, this historic 1854 hotel was recently restored to its period charm, with Liberty-style bedsteads and antique armoires.

There are fans instead of air-con and no TV, but as nods to modernity, there's disabled access and wireless.

**our pick Agriturismo San Michele** (☎ 0444 53 37 54; [www.agrismichele.it](http://www.agrismichele.it); Strada della Pergoletta 118, off Viale Riviera Berica; d incl breakfast €88-145; 📞) On the outskirts of town south of Palladio's La Rotonda (opposite), this 1700 country estate has been redone in minimalist-Palladian style, with spacious all-white suites overlooking vineyards, olive groves and organic orchards. Enjoy the Jacuzzi amid formal gardens, leisurely meals at the downstairs restaurant and horse riding through the estate.

**Relais Santa Corona** (☎ 0444 32 46 78; [www.relaissantacorona.it](http://www.relaissantacorona.it); Contrà Santa Corona 19; s/d incl breakfast €87/104; 📞 🚗 📺 📶) A boutique bargain, offering stylish stays in an 18th-century palace ideally located on a street dotted with landmarks. Guestrooms are soothing and soundproofed, with excellent mattresses, minimal-chic decor and free wi-fi.

## Eating

**Gastronomia Il Ceppo** (☎ 0444 54 44 14; 196 Corso Palladio; prepared dishes per 100g €3-5; 🕒 8am-1pm & 3.30-7.45pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Sat, 3.30-7.45pm Wed) San Daniele hams dangle over a 30ft counter filled with fresh seafood salads, housemade pastas and speciality cheese. Never mind that there's no seating: ask counter staff to pair your selections with a local bottle from the shelves for a dream picnic across the street in the Teatro Olimpico.

**our pick Dai Nodari** (☎ 0444 54 40 85; Contrà do Rode 20; meals under €10; 🕒 noon-3.30pm & 7-11pm Mon-Sat) Rustic fare gets hip in the heart of historic Vicenza, packing in local crowds for €7 lunches and €9 dinner menus featuring hearty chicken with wild local mushrooms, followed by Sachertorte or local-speciality cheese plates with the seasoned, grappa-washed 'Bastardo di Grappa' cheese.

**Pitanta** (☎ 0444 51 35 10; Contrà San Lucia 8; meals €7-15; 🕒 7.30am-1am Mon-Sat, 12.30-2.30pm Sun) An authentic *osteria* showing true local pride, from the Vicenza football relics on the wall to the heaping plates of local *bigoli* pasta with duck sauce for €6 with respectable house wine for €0.80.

**Antico Guelfo** (☎ 0444 54 78 97; Contrà Pedemuro San Biagio 92; meals €35-40; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) This culinary hideaway is a hit with slow foodies for its inventive daily market menu, making the most of local specialities in such dishes as Amarone risotto or buckwheat crepes with Bastardo di Grappa cheese. The chef is a specialist in gluten-free cooking, and adapts dishes to any food sensitivity.

## Drinking

**Sorarú** (☎ 0444 32 09 15; Piazzetta Palladio; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) A splendid spot for an espresso or cocktail at the marble-topped bar, surrounded by pastries made on the premises and tempting jars of sweets stashed on carved-wood shelves.

**Antica Casa della Malvasia** (☎ 0444 54 37 04; Contrà delle Morette 5; meals €35; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Purveyor of wines since 1200, when Malvasia wine was imported from Greece by Venetian merchants. Today the menu covers 80 wines, including prime Italian Malvasia and 100 types of grappa.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

**FTV** (☎ 0444 22 31 15; [www.ftv.vi.it](http://www.ftv.vi.it)) buses leave for outlying areas from the bus station, located near the train station.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The city is on the A4 connecting Milan with Venice, while the SR11 connects Vicenza with Verona and Padua. Large car parks are located near Piazza Castello and the train station.

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## FIREWATER, IMMORTAL FAME & THE GOOD LIFE: VICENZA TO VILLA MASER

A road trip from Vicenza takes you through one of Italy's most sophisticated stretches of countryside, past landmarks of modern art and architecture, to excellent food and drink pit stops, and into Europe's most splendid villa. The drive is about an hour and a quarter each way; stop for lunch and make a day of it.

Head north on SP248 towards **Bassano del Grappa**, home to Italy's famous albino asparagus and powerful grappa spirits. From Bassano's town centre in Piazza Libert , follow Via Matteotti to the **Ponte degli Alpini** (aka Ponte Vecchio), the covered bridge designed by Palladio, and **Poli Museo della Grappa** (☎ 0424 52 44 26; [www.poligrappa.com](http://www.poligrappa.com); Via Gamba 6, Ponte Vecchio; admission free; ☎ 9am-7.30pm), where you can drink in the four-century history of Bassano's signature spirits.

On SP248, head east out of town 17km to **Asolo**, known as the 'town of 100 vistas' for its panoramic hillside location. Picturesque Piazza Garibaldi has a central **tourist office** (☎ 0423 52 90 46; Piazza Garibaldi 73; ☎ 9am-12.30pm Mon-Fri, 3-6pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun) and is framed by tight ranks of golden-hued houses. Enjoy a leisurely lunch of suckling pig with roast potatoes or *tagliatelle* with partridge sauce at the antiques-filled, family-run **Ca' Derton da Nino** (☎ 423 52 96 48; Piazza d'Annunzio 11; meals €20-30; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat). An 11km detour north of Asolo on SP6 leads to **Possagno**, birth- and resting place of Italy's master of neoclassical sculpture, Antonio Canova. Mastery didn't always come easy: you can see Canova's rough drafts in plaster at the **Gipsoteca** (☎ 0423 54 43 23; [www.museocanova.it](http://www.museocanova.it); Possagno; adult/student/child under 6yr €7/4/free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun), in a building completed by modernist master Carlo Scarpa in 1957.

To see Scarpa's latest, greatest work, return to Asolo and head 5km east to **San Vita d'Altivole** town cemetery, where you can't miss the 1969-78 **Brion Family Tomb** (Via del Cimitero; ☎ 9am-7pm) with its raw concrete bridge to the afterlife rising from Zen-style gardens. Follow stepping stones over water into the domed chapel, where the sarcophagi are housed. Scarpa chose to be buried standing up near his clients, along a boundary wall.

Palladio and Paolo Veronese conspired to create the Veneto countryside's finest monument to *la bella vita* at nearby **Villa Mas r** (Villa Barbaro; ☎ 423 92 30 04; [www.villadimaser.it](http://www.villadimaser.it); with/without PalladioCard €3/6; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat & 11am-6pm Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-6pm Tue, Thu, Sat & 11am-6pm Sun Mar, Jul & Aug, 2.30-5pm Sat & Sun Nov & Dec, 10am-5pm Sat & 11am-5pm Sun Jan & Feb). Palladio set the arcaded yellow villa into a verdant hillside with a fanciful grotto out the back, but inside Paolo Veronese has upstaged the master architect with wildly imaginative trompe l'oeil architecture. Don obligatory slippers at the door and pad through rooms designed for delight: vines climb the walls of the Stanza di Baccho; an alert watchdog keeps one eye on the door of the Stanza di Canuccio (Little Dog Room); and in a corner of the frescoed grand salon, the painter has apparently forgotten his spattered shoes and broom. Amid these party scenes, there's a tender moment: through a series of salon doors, Veronese's self-portrait gazes fondly across crowded rooms at a portrait of his niece. Before heading back to Vicenza (or onward to Venice via SP667 to Castelfranco and SR245 to Mestre), stop by the wine-tasting room by the parking lot and toast the Veneto with estate-grown DOC Prosecco.

## TRAIN

Regular trains arrive from Venice (€4.25 to €11.90, 45 minutes to 1¼ hours) and Padua (€2.90 to €10.90, 15 to 30 minutes).

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## VERONA

**pop 264,200**

Though Siena was Shakespeare's initial choice, fair Verona was where he set his scene between star-crossed lovers Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet. As usual, the Bard got it right: romance, drama and fatal family feuds have been Verona's hallmark for centuries.

Verona was a Roman trade centre beginning in 300 BC, with ancient gates and a grand amphitheatre to prove it – but Shakespearean tragedy came with the territory. Lombard king Alboin took over Verona in AD 569, only to be killed by his wife three years later. After Mastino della Scala (aka Scaligeri) lost reelection to Verona's commune in 1262, he rallied the troops and claimed absolute control of the city, until his murder by a conspiracy of nobles. Under Mastino's son Cangrande I (1308–28), Verona's influence extended to Padua and Vicenza, and Dante, Petrarch and Giotto benefited from Verona's patronage and protection. But Mastino's great-grandson Cangrande II (1351–59) was a tyrant whose murder by his brother was not widely mourned – but after yet another fratricide, the Scaligeri were run out of town in 1387.

Verona was claimed by Milan and then Venice in 1404, which controlled Verona despite Scaligeri-backed uprisings until Napoleon took over in 1797. The city was passed as a war trophy to Austria and to Italy in 1866 and became a Fascist control centre from 1938–45, a key location for Resistance interrogation and transit point for Italian Jews sent to Nazi concentration camps. The city survived its tragedies to become a Unesco World Heritage Site, and today is reprising its role as a cosmopolitan crossroads.

## Orientation

Buses leave for Verona's historic centre from outside the train station, south of town. To walk to the centre, head north past the bus station and 1.5km along Corso Porta Nuova to Piazza Brà, take Via G Mazzini northeast to Via Cappello and turn left to reach Piazza delle Erbe.

## Information

**Emergency medical care** (☎ 118)

**Internet Etc** (☎ 045 800 02 22; Via Quattro Spade 3b; per hr €5.50; 📧 2.30-8pm Mon, 10.30am-8pm Tue-Sat, 3.30-8pm Sun)

**Ospedale di Verona** (☎ 045 807 11 11; Piazza A Stefani) Hospital northwest of Ponte Vittoria.

**Police** (☎ 113; Lungadige Galtarossa 11) Near Ponte Navi.

**Post office** (Piazza Viviani 7; 📧 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat)

**Tourist office** ([www.tourism.verona.it](http://www.tourism.verona.it)); train station (☎ 045 800 08 61; 📧 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun); Verona-Villafranca airport (☎ 045 861 91 63; 📧 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun Apr-Nov, to 4pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun Dec-Mar); Via degli Alpini (☎ 045 806 86 80; Via degli Alpini 9; 📧 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun)

# Sights

## ROMAN ARENA

The pink marble Roman **amphitheatre** (Roman Arena; ☎ 045 800 51 51; [www.arena.it](http://www.arena.it); Piazza Brà; ticket office Ente Lirico Arena di Verona, Via Dietro Anfiteatro 6b; tours adult/student/child €4/3/1; 🕒 tours 1.45-7.30pm Mon & 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-May, 8am-3.30pm Jun-Aug) was built in the 1st century AD and survived a 12th-century earthquake to become Verona's legendary open-air opera house, with seating for 30,000 people. [Click here](#) for performance details.

## SHAKESPEARE'S VERONA

Off Via G Mazzini, Verona's main shopping street, is the legendary **Casa di Giulietta** (Juliet's House; ☎ 045 803 43 03; Via Cappello 23; adult/student/child €4/3/1; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, 1.45-7.30pm Mon). Never mind that Romeo and Juliet were completely fictional characters, and that there's hardly room for two on the narrow stone balcony: romantics flock to this 14th-century house to add their lovelorn pleas to the graffiti on the courtyard causeway and rub the right breast of the bronze statue of Juliet for better luck next time. Morbid romantics seek out the **Tomba di Giulietta** (Juliet's Tomb; ☎ 045 800 03 61; Via del Pontiere 35; adult/student/child €3/2/1; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun, 1.45-7.30pm Mon), a cloister with frescoes of minor interest.

## PIAZZA DELLE ERBE

Originally a Roman forum, this piazza is ringed with cafes, buzzing with gossip and lined with some of Verona's most sumptuous buildings, including the baroque **Palazzo Maffei**, at the north end, with the adjoining 14th-century **Torre del Gardello**. On the eastern side, you can't miss the fresco-decorated **Casa Mazzanti**, former home of Verona's history-making Scaligeri clan.

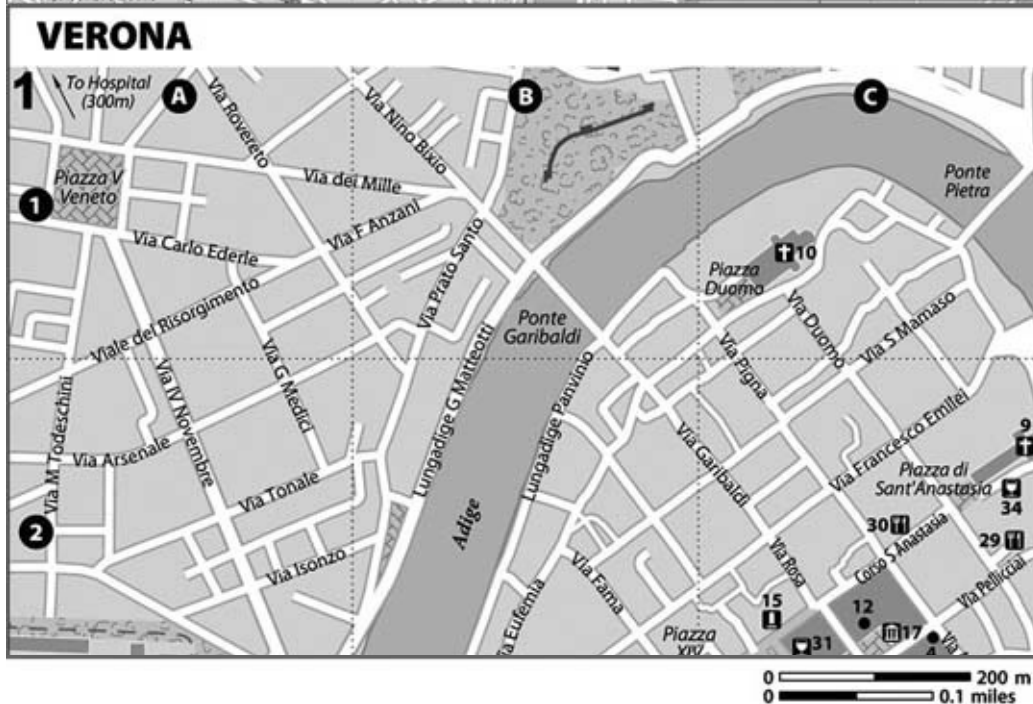
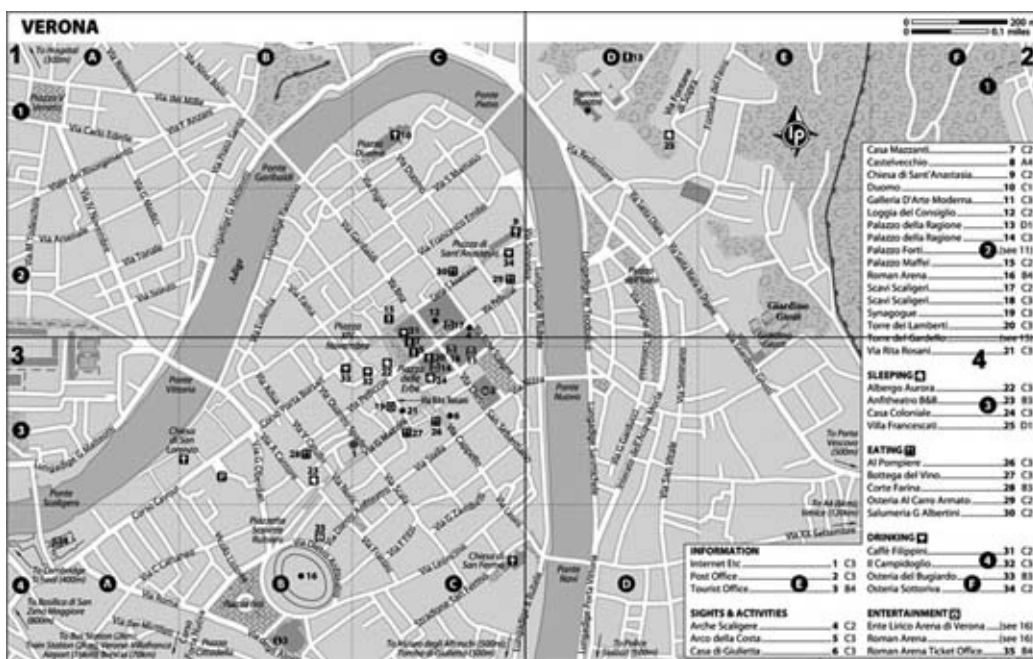
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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

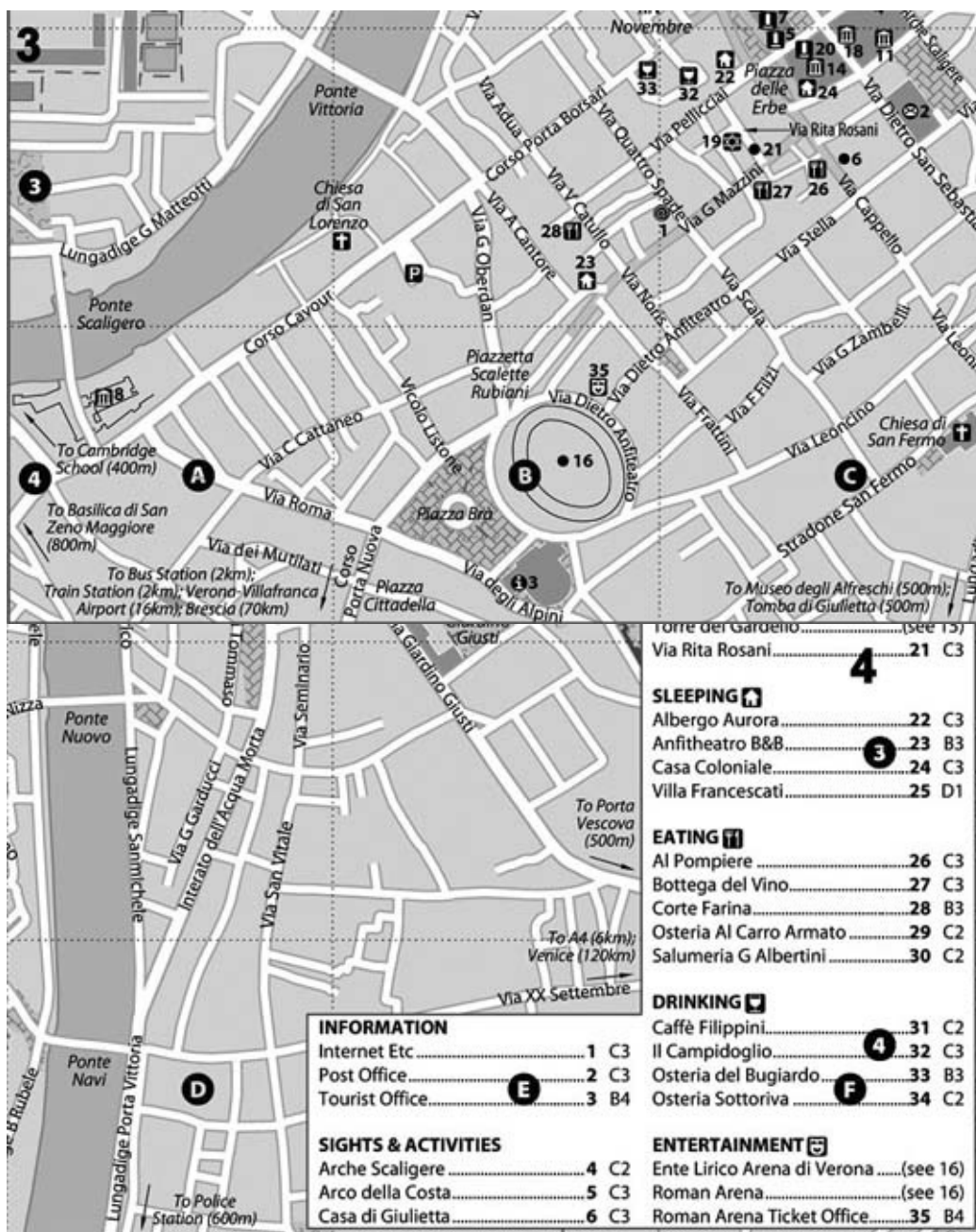
**VeronaCard** (1/3 days €8/12), available at sights and tobacconists, grants access to major monuments and churches and reduced admission on minor sights, plus unlimited use of town buses.

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Separating Piazza delle Erbe from Piazza dei Signori is the **Arco della Costa**, with a suspended whale's rib Veronese legend says will fall on the first just person to walk beneath it. Veronese cynics are quick to point out that over several centuries, it hasn't fallen once, not even on popes who have paraded beneath it. Nearby, the striped **Torre dei Lamberti** (☎ 045 803 27 26; admission by lift/on foot €3/2; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, 1.30-7.30pm Mon) is a watchtower begun in the 12th century and finished in 1463, by which time it was too late to notice the Venetians invading – but it does offer a panoramic city view. **Palazzo Forti** (Palazzo della Ragione; ☎ 199 19 91 11; [www.palazzoforti.it](http://www.palazzoforti.it); adult/student €6/5; 🕒 10.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) is home to the new **Galleria d'Arte Moderna**, with 90 artworks from the 1970s to today and ambitious exhibits featuring such major modern artists as Escher and Sol LeWitt, plus well-curated photography shows in the adjoining **Scavi Scaligeri**.







## PIAZZA DEI SIGNORI

Verona's early-Renaissance landmark is the 15th-century **Loggia del Consiglio**, the former city-council building, at the northern end of this square. Next door where they could keep an eye on conspiring councillors was the **Palazzo degli Scaligeri**, once the main residence of the Scaligeri family. Through the archway at the far end of the piazza are the **Arche Scaligere** (Via Arche Scaligere; admission incl Torre dei Lamberti by lift/on foot €4/3; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, 1.45-7.30pm Mon Jun-Sep), the elaborate Gothic tombs of the Scaligeri family, where murderers are interred not far from the relatives they'd killed.

## CHURCHES & SYNAGOGUE

A masterpiece of Romanesque architecture, the striped brick and tuffo stone **Basilica di San Zeno Maggiore** ([www.chieseverona.it](http://www.chieseverona.it); Piazza San Zeno; combined Verona church ticket/single church entry €5/2.50; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat & 1-6pm Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-1pm & 1.30-4pm Tue-Sat & 1-5pm Sun Nov-Feb) was built in honour of the city's patron saint from the 12th to 14th centuries. Enter through the flower-filled cloister into the vast nave, lined with 12th-to-15th-century frescoes depicting Jesus, Mary Magdalene modestly covered in her curtain of golden hair and St George casually slaying a dragon atop a startled horse. Under the rose window depicting the Wheel of Fortune are meticulously detailed 12th-century bronze doors, including a scene of an exorcism with a demon yanked from a woman's mouth.

Painstaking restoration is reviving Mantegna's 1457–9 *Majesty of the Virgin* polyptych altarpiece, painted with such astonishing perspective and convincing textures that you might believe there are garlands of fresh fruit hanging behind the Madonna's throne. Downstairs is a creepy crypt, with faces carved into medieval capitals and St Zeno's eerily lit corpse.

Verona's 12th-century **Duomo** (Cathedral; Piazza del Duomo; combined Verona church ticket/single church entry €5/2.50; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5.30pm Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-1pm & 1.30-4pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Nov-Feb) is a striking striped Romanesque building, with polychrome reliefs and bug-eyed statues of Charlemagne's paladins Roland and Oliver by medieval master Nicoló on the west porch. Nothing about this sober facade hints at the extravagant interior, frescoed over the 16th to 17th centuries with angels in the trompe l'oeil architecture. The left end of the nave is the Cartolari-Nichesola Chapel, designed by Jacopo Sansovino with a vibrant Titian *Ascension*, showing crowds astonished by the floating Madonna.

North of the Arche Scaligere stands the Gothic 13th-to-15th-century **Chiesa di Sant'Anastasia** (Piazza di Sant'Anastasia; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun Mar-Oct, 10am-1pm & 1.30-4pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Nov-Feb), Verona's largest church and a showcase for Veronese art. The multitude of frescoes is overwhelming, but don't overlook Pisanello's story book—quality fresco *St George Setting out to Free the Princess from the Dragon* in the Pisanelli Chapel, or the 1495 holy-water font featuring a lucky hunchback by Paolo Veronese's father Gabriele Caliari.

Off Piazza delle Erbe to the southwest was once Verona's historic Jewish **Ghetto**. Tall buildings frame the narrow sidestreet of **Via Rita Rosani**, named for the Resistance heroine who commanded a band of partisans in Verona until 1944, when she was caught and summarily executed at 24. On the southeast side of Via Rosani is Verona's newly restored **synagogue**, where you might find the doors open to Jewish visitors and others who express a sincere interest to Signor Willis, the welcoming synagogue keeper and community historian.

## CASTELVECCHIO

Southwest from the Piazza delle Erbe along the river Adige, the 1354–56 fortress of the tyrannical Cangrande II was so severely damaged by Napoleon's troops and WWII bombings that many feared it was beyond repair. Instead of erasing the Castelvecchio's chequered past with restorations, Carlo Scarpa reinvented the building in the 1960s, building bridges over exposed foundations, filling gaping holes with glass panels and balancing a statue of Cangrande I above the courtyard on a concrete gangplank. Scarpa's revived Castelvecchio makes a fitting home for Verona's **museum** (☎ 045 806 26 11; Corso Castelvecchio 2; adult/student/child €8/7/1; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun & 1.45-7.30pm Mon) showcasing frescoes, jewellery, medieval artefacts and paintings by Pisanello, Giovanni Bellini, Tiepolo, Carpaccio and Veronese, plus wonderful temporary shows ranging from Andrea Mantegna retrospectives to modernist glass.

## Sleeping

For more options, **Cooperativa Albergatori Veronesi** (☎ 045 800 98 44; [www.veronapass.com](http://www.veronapass.com)) offers a no-fee booking service for two-star hotels. For homestyle stays outside the city centre, check **Verona Bed & Breakfast** ([www.bedandbreakfastverona.com](http://www.bedandbreakfastverona.com)).

**Camping Castel San Pietro** (☎ 045 59 20 37; [www.campingcastelsanpietro.com](http://www.campingcastelsanpietro.com); Via Castel San Pietro 2; per adult/child/tent €7/5/7; ☎ May-Sep) Leafy camping sites with two terraces for lounging, away from the bustle of downtown. There's a minimarket, washing machines and other mod cons. Catch bus 41 or 95 from the train station.

**Villa Francescati** (☎ 045 59 03 60; [www.ostellionline.org](http://www.ostellionline.org); Salita Fontana del Ferro 15; incl breakfast dm/s in family room €18/20; ☎ 7am-11.30pm) A HI youth hostel housed in a 16th-century villa on a garden estate, with helpful staff to book event tickets and recommend bars. Meals cost €10; there are no cooking facilities. Catch bus 73 (weekdays) or bus 90 (Sunday and holidays) from the train station.

**Casa Coloniale** (☎ 337 47 27 37; [www.casa-coloniale.com](http://www.casa-coloniale.com); Via Cairoli 6; incl breakfast s/d €50-70/80-110; ☎) Snag a prime berth off Piazza Erbe in this hip new B&B, where three rooms have a single stripe of bold colour marked with the room number in a kind of billiard-ball decor scheme.

**our pick Anfiteatro B&B** (☎ 347 24 84 62; [www.anfiteatro-bedandbreakfast.com](http://www.anfiteatro-bedandbreakfast.com); Via Alberto Mario 5; incl breakfast s/d/tr or q €60-90/80-130/100-150) Opera divas and fashionistas rest up in the heart of the action in this recently restored 19th-century townhouse, one block from the Arena off boutique-lined Via Mazzini. Spacious guestrooms have high wood-beamed ceilings, antique armoires for stashing purchases and divans for swooning after shows.

**Albergo Aurora** (☎ 045 59 47 17; [www.hotelaurora.biz](http://www.hotelaurora.biz); Piazza XIV Novembre 2; incl breakfast s/d €90-130/100-150, s without bathroom €58-70; ☎) Right off bustling Piazza Erbe yet cosy and blissfully quiet, this recently renovated hotel has spacious, unfussy rooms with high ceilings. Head to the sunny terrace for drinks overlooking the piazza.

## Eating

**Salumeria G Albertini** (☎ 045 803 10 74; Via Sant'Anastasia 39; ☎ 8am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat) A picture-perfect deli, featuring all the prepared pastas, cured meats, local Asiago sheep's cheese and wine you could want for an ideal picnic by the river or inside the Roman Arena.

**Corte Farina** (☎ 045 800 04 40; Corte Farina 4; pizzas €7-12; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Thu) Argentina meets Verona at this popular pizzeria, which also fires up *empanadas* (savoury meat-filled pastries) in its ovens. Join famished shoppers fresh from Via G Mazzini along the chic banquette, or grab a spot outdoors for street theatre two blocks from the Arena.

**Osteria Al Carro Armato** (☎ 045 803 01 75; Vicolo Gatto 2a; meals €20-30; ☎ Tue-Sun) Join the crowd on rough timber benches in this high-ceilinged, downhome Veronese *osteria* for wine by the glass and hearty local dishes such as *tagliata di manzo* (thin-sliced beef served with rocket) or *pastissada di cavallo*, Verona's legendary horse stew.

**our pick Al Pompiere** (☎ 045 803 05 37; [www.alpompiere.com](http://www.alpompiere.com); Vicolo Regina d'Ungheria 5; meals €25-40; ☎ Tue-Sat & dinner Mon) The fireman's (*pompiere*) hat is still on the wall, but the focal points at this local hot spot are the vast cheese selection and famed house-cured *salumi* platter. Make a meal of the starters with wine by the glass, or graduate to plates of *bigoli con le sarde* (chunky spaghetti with sardines) or ravioli filled with caramelised onion. Reserve ahead.

**Bottega del Vino** (☎ 045 800 45 35; [www.bottegavini.it](http://www.bottegavini.it); Vicolo Scudo di Francia 3a; meals €60-70; ☎ Wed-Mon) Wine is the primary consideration at this historic *enoteca* with backlit bottles above the bar, and your sommelier will gladly recommend a worthy vintage for your lobster *crudo* salad, Amarone risotto, or suckling pig – some of the best wines here are bottled specifically for the Bottega.

## Drinking

**Il Campidoglio** (☎ 045 59 10 59; Piazzetta Tirabosco 4; ☎ 11am-2am Tue-Sun) An island of cool in a hidden plaza up a flight of stairs off Piazza delle Erbe, this place serves cocktails strong and tall during the daily 6pm to 9pm happy hour.

**Osteria Sottoriva** (☎ 045 801 43 23; Via Sottoriva 9a; 🕒 11am-10.30pm Thu-Tue) The last of the historic *osterie* that once lined this riverside alley, Sottoriva still pours wine by the glass at fair prices (€1.50 to €3.50) to overflowing local crowds at rough-hewn tables under the arcade, with traditional pairings of pork sausages and horse meatballs.

**Caffè Filippini** (☎ 045 800 45 49; Piazza delle Erbe 26; 🕒 8am-2am Thu-Tue) The hippest joint in town has been here since 1901, perfecting the house speciality Filippini, a killer cocktail of vermouth, gin, lemon and ice. Come for coffee in the morning, and don't expect to leave before sundown.

**Osteria del Bugiardo** (☎ 045 59 18 69; Corso Portoni Borsari 17a; 🕒 11am-10pm Tue-Sun) On busy Corso Portoni Borsari, traffic converges at Bugiardo for glasses of upstanding Valpolicella bottled specifically for the *osteria*. Polenta and *sopressa* (fresh Venetian-style salami) make worthy bar snacks for the powerful Amarone.

## Entertainment

**Roman Arena** (☎ 045 800 51 51; [www.arena.it](http://www.arena.it); Piazza Brà, ticket office Ente Lirico Arena di Verona, Via Dietro Anfiteatro 6b; tickets €15-150; 🕒 opera season Jun-Aug) This is where Placido Domingo made his debut, and the annual June—August opera season includes 50 performances by the world's top names. In winter months, classical concerts are held across the way at the 18th-century **Ente Lirico Arena di Verona**.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Verona-Villafranca airport** (VRN; ☎ 045 809 56 66; [www.aeroporto.verona.it](http://www.aeroporto.verona.it)) is 12km outside town and accessible by APTV Aerobus to/from the train station (€4.50, 15 minutes, every 20 minutes from 6.30am to 11.30pm). Flights arrive from all over Italy and some European cities, including Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Dusseldorf, London and Paris.

### BUS

The main intercity bus station is in front of the train station, in the Porta Nuova area.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Verona is at the intersection of the A4 (Turin—Trieste) and A22 motorways.

### TRAIN

The trip to/from Venice is easiest by train (from €6.15, two hours, two each hour). Verona has rail links with Padua, Vicenza, Milan, Mantua, Modena, Florence and Rome, plus regular service to Austria, Switzerland and Germany (10 daily to/from Munich).

## Getting Around

**AMT** ([www.amt.it](http://www.amt.it)) city buses 11, 12, 13 and 14 (bus 91 or 92 on Sunday and holidays) connect the train station with Piazza Brà. Buy tickets from newsagents and tobacconists before you board the bus (tickets one hour/day €1/3.50). Otherwise, it's a 20-minute walk to historic Verona along Corso Porta Nuova.

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# VERONA'S WINE COUNTRY

A drive through Verona's hinterland is a lesson in fine wine. To the north and northwest are Valpolicella vineyards dating back to Roman times, and east on the road to Vicenza are the white-wine makers of Soave. Below are two itineraries based on your drink of choice: red or white.

## Red Wine Country: Valpolicella

The occasional Romanesque church, 16th-century villa, or tiny village punctuate this otherwise unbroken stretch of vineyards, but as you plot your visit, bear in mind that most wineries close on Sunday. By car, follow the SS12 highway northwest out of Verona, veer north onto SP4 and follow the route west towards **San Pietro in Cariano** to visit the Pro Loco Valpolicella **tourist office** (☎ 045 770 19 20; [www.valpolicellaweb.it](http://www.valpolicellaweb.it); Via Ingelheim 7; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat). Alternatively, bus 3 departs Verona's Porta Nuova for San Pietro about every half-hour ([www.apr.vr.it](http://www.apr.vr.it); €2.30, 40 minutes). The tourist office offers maps for walking, biking and travelling by bus to scenic spots for wine-tasting. If you make an appointment, you can swing by **Montecariano Cellars** (☎ 045 683 83 35; Via Valena 3, San Pietro; ☎ by appointment Mon-Sat) off central Piazza San Giuseppe to sample an award-winning DOC (quality-controlled) example of the most highly prized Valpolicella red, Amarone.

Foodies detour north of San Pietro to the tiny town of Fumane for lunch in a converted 1400s barn at **ourpick Enoteca Valpolicella** (☎ 045 683 91 46; Via Osan 45; meals €25-35; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat & lunch Sun), where the kitchen keeps flavours pure – risotto with wild herbs, game with polenta – so as not to compete with 700 Italian wines on the menu, including 70 local labels. The *enoteca* owners also run the delightful **La Meridiana B&B** (☎ 045 683 91 46; [www.lameridiana-valpolicella.it](http://www.lameridiana-valpolicella.it); Via Osan 16c, Fumane; incl breakfast s/d €70/90; ☎) in a 1600s stable, with newly renovated guestrooms – get the garden room with the barrel-vaulted stone ceiling – plus swimming at a pool 1km away and tasty breakfasts at the *enoteca*.

A few kilometres west of San Pietro, **Gargagnano** is known for Amarone and if you call ahead, you can taste DOC Amarone and lighter DOC Valpolicella reds outside Gargagnano at **Corte Leardi Winery** (☎ 045 770 13 79; [www.cortealeardi.com](http://www.cortealeardi.com); Via Giare 15; ☎ by appointment 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun). A short ride (or well-marked 5km, two-hour hike) west takes you through the hillside town of **Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella** and onward to the picturesque village of **San Giorgio**, with its fresco-filled, cloistered 8th-century Romanesque **Pieve di San Giorgio** (☎ 045 770 15 30; ☎ 7am-6pm). Halfway between Sant'Ambrogio and San Giorgio is **Boscaini Carlo Winery** (☎ 045 773 14 12; [www.boscainicarlo.it](http://www.boscainicarlo.it); Via Sengia 15; ☎ 10am-noon & 1.30-7pm Mon-Sat), renowned for award-winning DOC Amarone, Valpolicella and an especially voluptuous Ripasso available only from the winery. In San Giorgio, **Trattoria Dalla Rosa Alda** (☎ 045 770 10 18; [www.dallarosalda.it](http://www.dallarosalda.it); meals €30-35; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat & lunch Sun) serves honest local fare, including housemade *gnocchi* and beef braised in Amarone.

## White Wine Country: Soave

You'll never have to look far for a glass of fine white wine in the Veneto, but southeast of Verona, **Soave** serves its namesake DOC white wine in a story-book setting. This medieval town is the centre of Veneto's wine consortium, so the best Amarone and Valpolicella also passes through Soave's crenellated walls. Hop the Milan—Venice train from Verona to San Bonifacio (€2.35 to €3.55, 20 minutes) and catch the APTV bus (line 30), or exit the A4 *autostrada* at San Bonifacio and follow the Viale della Vittoria 2km north into town.

Soave's fortifications encircled with 24 watchtowers aren't intended to keep visitors away from the good stuff: they were built on a medieval base by Verona's fratricidal Scaligeri family, who ultimately had more to fear from one another than marauding invaders. The **Castello** (☎ 045 68 00 36; adult/child €4.50/3; 📧 9am-noon & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun Apr—mid-Oct, 9am-noon & 3-5pm mid-Oct—Mar) is easily reached on foot (signposted) through gardens and vineyards. Cross the drawbridge on the north side of the castle and pass two courtyards to find the stairway to the Mastio, the central defensive tower that apparently served as a dungeon: during restoration work, a mound of human bones 2m high was unearthed inside.

Just below the castle is megaproducer **Cantina del Castello** (☎ 045 768 00 93; [www.cantinacastello.it](http://www.cantinacastello.it); Corte Pittora 5; tour & tasting €8; 📧 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat by appointment) where you can tour underground cellars and sample Soaves ranging from sparkling Brut Soave to superior dessert Recioto di Soave. Across from the church in the old town, **Azienda Agricola Coffele** (☎ 045 768 00 07; [www.coffele.it](http://www.coffele.it); Via Roma 5; 📧 9am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Mon-Sat by appointment) offers tastings of lemon-zesty DOC Soave Classico and nutty, faintly sweet bubbly DOCG (guaranteed-quality) Recioto di Soave. Soave is not known as a complex white, but one trailblazing winery out to change that reputation is **Suavia** (☎ 045 767 50 89; Frazione Fittá, Via Centro 14; 📧 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri & 9am-1pm Sat by appointment), located 8km outside Soave via SP39 in the tiny town of Fitta. By appointment, taste its renegade DOC Monte Carbonare Soave Classico: faintly tropical, with a minerally, ocean-breeze finish.

For rustic local dishes paired with great deals on speciality wines in an 140-year-old *osteria*, head to **Al Gambero** (☎ 045 768 00 10; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 5; meals €20-30; 📧 Tue-Sun) for Soave *sopressa* with polenta or Valeggio-style tortellini tied in love knots. Fancier fare is served in a former 16th-century nunnery at **Lo Scudo** (☎ 045 768 07 66; Via San Matteo 46; meals €30-40; 📧 Tue-Sun), where meals are leisurely but you'll want to arrive early and order fast, or miss out on daily fish specials and risotto with Verona's zesty DOP (quality-assured) Monte Veronese cheese.

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## DOLOMITES

Whether you're into skiing, hiking, or premium Prosecco, head for Veneto's mountain border with Trentino-Alto Adige. For more Dolomite getaways, [Click here](#).

### Conegliano

**pop 37,500**

If you're taking the train or driving to the Dolomites along the A27 north of Treviso, Conegliano is a worthy pit stop for Prosecco and self-flagellation – not necessarily in that order. Conegliano is home to Italy's oldest school for oenology and the toast of the Veneto: Prosecco, a dry, crisp white wine made from Prosecco grapes in *spumante* (bubbly), *frizzante* (sparkling) or still varieties. Conegliano's Prosecco was promoted to DOCG (guaranteed-quality) status in 2009, Italy's highest mark of oenological distinction.

Plot a tasting detour along the Strada di Prosecco (Prosecco Rd) from Conegliano to the Valdobbiadene at [www.coneglianovaldobbiadene.it](http://www.coneglianovaldobbiadene.it), or head to Conegliano's **APT tourist office** (☎ 0438 2 12 30; Via XX Settembre 61; 📧 9am-12.30pm Tue-Wed, to 12.30pm & 3-6pm Thu-Sun).

Along Via XX Settembre in the centre of town, you can't miss the eye-catching **Scuola dei Battuti**,

covered inside and out with 16th-century frescoes by Ludovico Pozzoserrato. This building was once home to a religious lay group known as the *Battuti* (Beaters) for their enthusiastic self-flagellation. Enter the **Duomo** through the Scuola to discover early works by Veneto artists, notably a 1492–93 altarpiece painted by noted local master Cima da Conegliano.

## Belluno

pop 35,600

Perched beneath snow-capped Dolomites, Belluno makes a scenic, strategic base to explore the mountains. The historic old town is its own attraction, with easy walks past Renaissance-era buildings in the long shadow of the Dolomites.

### ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Buses arrive at Piazzale della Stazione in front of the train station. From here, take Via Dante (which becomes Via Loreto), then turn left down Via Matteotti into the central Piazza dei Martiri to reach the **tourist office** (☎ 0437 94 00 83; [www.infodolomiti.it](http://www.infodolomiti.it); Piazza del Duomo 2; ☎ 9am–12.30pm & 3.30–6.30pm Mon–Sat, 9am–12.30pm Sun). The office and its website offer information on skiing, hiking and other sporting activities, including current weather conditions and advisories. For more information on trekking through the Dolomites, check out [www.webdolomiti.net](http://www.webdolomiti.net) and [Click here](#).

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Belluno's main pedestrian square is the **Piazza dei Martiri** (Martyrs' Square), named after the four partisans hanged here in WWII. At the heart of the old town, **Piazza del Duomo** is framed by the early-16th-century Renaissance **Cattedrale di San Martino**, the 16th-century **Palazzo Rosso** and the **Palazzo dei Vescovi**, with a striking 12th-century tower.

Northwest of Belluno, the **Parco Nazionale delle Dolomiti Bellunesi** ([www.dolomitipark.it](http://www.dolomitipark.it)) is a splendid national park offering trails, wildflowers and crisp mountain air. Between late June and early September, hikers walking six **Alte Vie delle Dolomiti** (high-altitude Dolomites walking trails) pass Belluno en route to mountain refuges. Route 1 starts in Belluno and covers 150km of breathtaking mountain scenery to Lago di Braies in Val Pusteria to the north in about 13 days.

### SLEEPING & EATING

To explore hotel, B&B, camping and *agriturismo* options in Belluno, the Parco Nazionale and beyond, check [www.infodolomiti.it](http://www.infodolomiti.it) and [www.dolomitipark.it](http://www.dolomitipark.it).

**Ostello Imperina** (☎ 0437 6 24 51; [www.parks.it/ost/imperina](http://www.parks.it/ost/imperina); Località Le Miniere; dm incl breakfast/half-/full board €20/35/47; ☎ Apr—mid-Oct) The nearest youth hostel is in the Parco Nazionale delle Dolomiti Bellunesi, 35km northwest of Belluno at Rivamonte Agordino. The hostel is in a converted copper-mining centre dating from 1400, surrounded by 50km of hiking trails. Book ahead in April and May. To get there, take the Agordo bus (50 minutes) from Belluno.

**our pick** **Azienda Agrituristica Sant'Anna** (☎ 0437 2 74 91; [www.aziendasantanna.it](http://www.aziendasantanna.it); Via Pedecastello 27, Castion; r & apt €80–120) Get away from it all in an idyllic stone farmhouse 4km outside Belluno, east of the Piave river near Ponte nelle Alpi. Recently renovated rooms have all the mod cons without losing rustic charms: iron bedsteads, creaky timber floors and beamed ceilings. Enthusiastic hosts introduce visitors to local culture through Italian classes, hands-on dairy-farming courses and nature hikes.

**Albergo Cappello e Cadore** (☎ 0437 94 02 46; [www.albergocappello.com](http://www.albergocappello.com); Via Ricci 8; s/d €45–

75/90-103; ☎ ☒) A rosy, cosy 19th-century inn just off Piazza dei Martiri. Most guestrooms are monastery-modest, with plain pine bedsteads; splash out for doubles with Jacuzzis.

**La Taverna** (☎ 0437 2 51 92; Via Cipro 7; meals €20-30; ☒ Mon-Sat) Follow your rumbling stomach off Piazza dei Martiri to top-notch seasonal bruschetta with top-notch Prosecco at Taverna's bar. In the adjoining restaurant, carbo-load for your hike with fresh porcini *tagliolini*, or go gourmet with Taverna's seasonal house specialities: wintertime eel with snails or springtime rabbit with zucchini flowers.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Trains from Venice (€5.70 to €6.15, two to 2½ hours) run here via Treviso and/or Conegliano about five times daily. You'll probably have to change along the way, which can add an hour or more to your trip.

In front of the train station on the western edge of town, **Dolomiti Bus** (☎ 0437 94 12 37; [www.dolomitibus.it](http://www.dolomitibus.it)) offers regular service to Cortina d'Ampezzo, Conegliano and smaller mountain towns.

By car, take the A27 from Venice (Mestre) – it's not the most scenic route, but avoids traffic around Treviso.

## Cortina d'Ampezzo

**pop 6600 / elev 1224m**

The Italian supermodel of ski resorts, Cortina d'Ampezzo is fashionable, pricey, icy and undeniably beautiful. The town's stone church spires and pleasant piazzas are framed by magnificent Alps.

## ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The mountains encircling Cortina are (in clockwise order) Cristallo, the Gruppo di Sorapiss-Marmole, Antelao, Becco di Mezzodi-Croda da Lago, Nuolau-Averau-Cinque Torre and Tofane. To the south are Pelmo and Civetta.

**Croce Bianca** (☎ 0436 86 20 75) Emergency medical aid.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0436 32 31; [www.infodolimiti.it](http://www.infodolimiti.it); Piazzetta San Francesco 8; ☒ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm in season)

## ACTIVITIES

Winter crowds arrive in December for top-notch downhill and cross-country skiing facilities and stay until April, and summertime adventurers hit Cortina for climbing and hiking from June until October. Two cable cars whisk skiers and walkers from Cortina's town centre into the mountains, to a central departure point for chairlifts, cable cars and trails. Lifts usually run from 9am to 5pm daily mid-December to April and resume June to September or October.

Ski and snowboard runs range from bunny slopes to the legendary Staunies black mogul run: starting at 300m, Staunies isn't for the faint of heart or weak of knee. The Dolomiti Superski pass [Click here](#) covers the resort; passes for Cortina are sold at the **ski pass office** (☎ 0436 86 21 71; Via G Marconi 15; 1-/2-/3-day pass €36/72/104; ☒ vary).

Other winter adventures in Cortina include dogsledding, scaling frozen waterfalls and ice skating at the **Olympic Ice Stadium** (☎ 0436 88 18 11; Via dello Stadio; adult/child incl skate rental €10/9), built for the 1956 Winter Olympics.

**Gruppo Guide Alpine Cortina** (☎ 0436 86 85 05; [www.guidecortina.com](http://www.guidecortina.com); Corso Italia 69a) runs



rock-climbing courses (three-day climbing course including gear rental €270) and guided nature hikes (prices vary). In summer, the world-famous **Tre Clime di Lavaredo** peaks near Cortina are crawling with climbers and hikers – mind your sporting etiquette.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Cortina's pedestrian centre is ringed with pizzerias and cafes, which are your best bets for reasonable eats. For additional hotel, B&B, camping, *agriturismo* and *affittacamere* options in Cortina, check [www.infodolomiti.it](http://www.infodolomiti.it).

**International Camping Olympia** (☎ 0436 50 57; [www.campingolympiacortina.it](http://www.campingolympiacortina.it); adult €4.50-8, tent & car €7-9; 📄) Set up camp beneath towering pine trees 4km north of Cortina in Fiames, with local bus service to Cortina and an onsite pizzeria.

**Hotel Montana** (☎ 0436 86 04 98; [www.cortina-hotel.com](http://www.cortina-hotel.com); per person €40-80; 📄 📶) Right in the heart of Cortina, this vintage 1920s Alpine hotel hosts snow bunnies and Olympian curling champions alike. In winter, the hotel requires a seven-night minimum stay (Saturday—Saturday or Sunday—Sunday), but call in case of vacancies.

**Oltres B&B** (☎ 0346 520 31 75; [www.oltres.com](http://www.oltres.com); d incl breakfast Jan-Nov €60-100, Dec €100-140; 📄) According to local legend, Titian was born in this classic 17th-century farmhouse southeast of Cortina and the wildflower meadows may inspire your own masterpiece. Guestrooms are wood-panelled, cosy and quaint, but bathrooms are updated and spotless.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Cortina bus station (Via G Marconi), **SAD buses** (☎ 0471 45 01 11; [www.sad.it](http://www.sad.it)) link to nearby towns, Bolzano and other Alto Adige destinations, while **Dolomiti Bus** (☎ 0437 94 12 37; [www.dolomitibus.it](http://www.dolomitibus.it)) offers service to smaller mountain towns, Belluno and other Veneto locales.

By car, take the A27 motorway from Venice (Mestre), which turns into SS51 around Belluno and heads northwest to Cortina.

[Return to beginning of chapter](#)



# Friuli Venezia Giulia

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TRIESTE  
AROUND TRIESTE  
GORIZIA  
PALMANOVA  
AQUILEIA  
GRADO  
AROUND GRADO  
LAGUNA DI MARANO  
LIGNANO  
PORDENONE & AROUND  
UDINE  
VILLA MANIN  
CIVIDALE DEL FRIULI  
SAN DANIELE DEL FRIULI  
NORTH OF UDINE

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Friuli Venezia Giulia is the hardest of the country's 20 regions to nail down, an overlooked and largely peripheral enclave that fits rather awkwardly into the modern Italian mix. But, unperturbed by the lack of fawning visitors, this far-from-boring northeastern corner has shrugged off the influences of numerous meddling outsiders and developed a flavour of its own.

While Friuli's culture may not be as internationally renowned as that of Rome or Venice, its underlying essence is no less potent, and this is reflected in its complex cuisine, ping-pong history and plethora of jealously guarded traditions. The region even has its own language, Friulian, a Romance tongue related to Ladin with about 600,000 native speakers and three different dialects.

One of Italy's five semi-autonomous regions, Friuli Venezia Giulia has its spiritual home in Udine and its administrative capital in Trieste. However, Trieste is a relative newcomer to this cultural melting pot, added in 1920. Friuli's early power was anchored in Aquileia (under Roman rule), Cividale del Friuli (under the Lombards) and ultimately Udine (under the Venetians).

Bordered by Austria, Slovenia and the Italian region of Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia is an eclectic region, and the physical terrain is equally varied, with the Giulie and Carnic Alps guarding the northern borders, Venetian-like lagoons in the south and a curious karst topography dominating the land around Trieste in the east.

Contrarians keen to draw up an alternative Italian wish list should include hiking around Tarvisio, some beach time in sunny Grado, a cup of Illy coffee in enigmatic Trieste and a world-class glass of white wine underneath the Venetian arches of Udine.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Walk along the star-shaped ramparts of heavily fortified **Palmanova**
- Seek out the literary ghosts of Joyce, Saba and Svevo in the Viennese-style cafes of **Trieste**
- Say ‘good morning’ in three different languages while hiking in the magnificent **Giulie Alps**
- Sample one of Italy’s – and the world’s – finest cured hams in **San Daniele del Friuli**
- Uncover a less-frenetic version of Venice in watery **Sacile**
- Unravel the intricacies of the Friulian language and culture in multifarious **Udine**



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POPULATION: 1.2 MILLION

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AREA: 7845 SQ KM

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[Return to beginning of chapter](#)

## TRIESTE

**pop 205,526**

Grand but not spectacular, melancholy but not sad, historic but not legendary; Trieste is one of Italy’s most cryptic cities, a nostalgic legacy of *Mitteleuropa* that served as Austro-Hungary’s sole outlet to the sea until it was handed over to an ascendant Rome after WWI. Scattered across a thin karstic plateau and almost surrounded by Slovenia and the Adriatic, the city feels isolated and peripheral to the rest of the Italian peninsula –a nowhere land that has long served as an escape hatch for exiles, misfits and writers undergoing identity crises. James Joyce decamped here in the early 1900s and drafted the early chapters

of *Ulysses*, while half a century earlier doomed Habsburg Emperor of Mexico, Maximilian I, constructed an ill-fated dream home, the rhapsodic Castello di Miramare on the coast 7km to the north.

With its chilling *bora scura* winds and curious lack of intimacy, Trieste rarely inspires on first viewing. Extra-savvy travellers seek out its famous *fin de siècle* coffee shops and dark buffet bars, joints where Joyce once sat along with hundreds like him dreaming of Dublin, New York or somewhere else. Trieste, as travel writer Jan Morris once opined, ‘offers no unforgettable landmark, no universally familiar melody, no unmistakable cuisine, hardly a single native name that anyone knows’, yet it still somehow sticks in your memory. Maybe it’s the bracing sea air and the all-pervading sense of isolation, or possibly it’s the thought that – for better or worse – there’s nowhere else remotely like it in Italy.

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## OUR TOP FIVE SMALL TOWNS IN FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

- **Sacile** An attractive melange of rivers and gardens that serves as a tranquillity-seeker’s alternative to Venice.
  - **Tarvisio** Unheralded northeastern town sandwiched between the Carnic and Giulie Alps and close to the tri-point of Italy, Austria and Slovenia.
  - **San Daniele del Friuli** Important centre of Friulian culture and proud purveyor of one of Italy’s finest cured hams.
  - **Muggia** Beguiling Venetian fishing village and the only Italian settlement on the primarily Slavic Istria peninsula.
  - **Aquileia** One-time cornerstone of the Roman Empire that has laid bare its evocative ruins and intricate mosaics.
- 

## History

According to one misty legend, Trieste was founded by Japhet, son of the biblical Noah, while another legend grants founding-father status to Tergeste, a companion of Jason (of Argonauts fame). More prosaically, the Roman colony of Tergeste was established in 178 BC and rapidly became a wealthy port. The Goths, Byzantines and Lombards followed and, in 1202, the city fell to the Venetians. Trieste won its independence, but in 1382 voluntarily accepted the overlordship of Austria.

Trieste (along with Gorizia) and extensive territory in what is now Slovenia and Croatia were assigned to Italy after WWI and the region of Venezia Giulia was created alongside the region of Friuli (whose main cities are Udine, Pordenone and Cividale). Defeat in WWII saw most of Venezia Giulia pass to the then communist Yugoslavia, and Trieste (under Allied control until 1954) was made capital of the single mixed region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, much to the irritation (to this day) of the Udine and Friulian populace.

The 18th and 19th centuries were a prosperous era for the cosmopolitan Habsburg port. Sigmund Freud, James Joyce and Italo Svevo came here to think and write, while two of Verdi’s operas (*Il Corsaro* and *Stifelio*) were premiered in the city. Trieste’s cultural intricacies were revisited in 2001 in travel writer Jan Morris’ evocative memoir *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere*.

## Orientation

The bus and train stations are at the northern edge of town. To the west lies the port and the Adriatic Sea

and to the east rises the Carso plateau. The Borgo Teresiano centres on the photogenic Canal Grande. The vast Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia is the heart of the city, watched over from the southeast by the Colle di San Giusto and its 15th-century castle.

## Information

**Hospital** (☎ 040 399 25 27; Piazza dell'Ospedale 1)

**Mail Boxes Etc** (☎ 040 76 40 55; Via San Francesco d'Assisi 15a; per 20min €2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Internet cafe.

**Police station** (☎ 040 379 01 11; Via Tor Bandena 6)

**Post office** (Piazza Vittorio Veneto 1; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat)

**Regional tourist office** (☎ 040 36 52 48, 800 016044; [www.turismo.fvg.it](http://www.turismo.fvg.it), in Italian; Via Rossini 6; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

**Trieste tourist office** (☎ 040 347 83 12; [www.triestetourism.it](http://www.triestetourism.it); Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia 4b; ☎ 9.30am-7pm) See also [www.triestecultura.it](http://www.triestecultura.it).

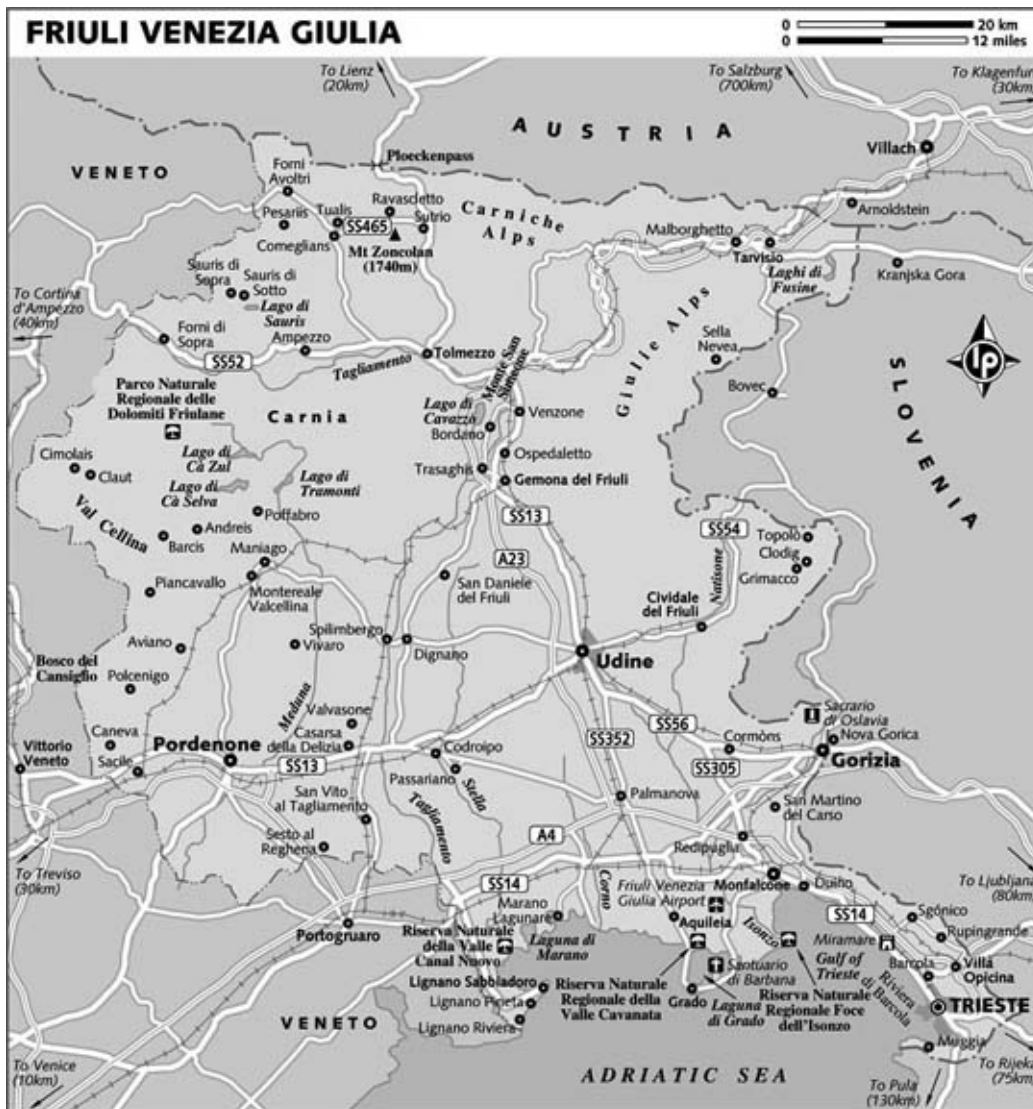
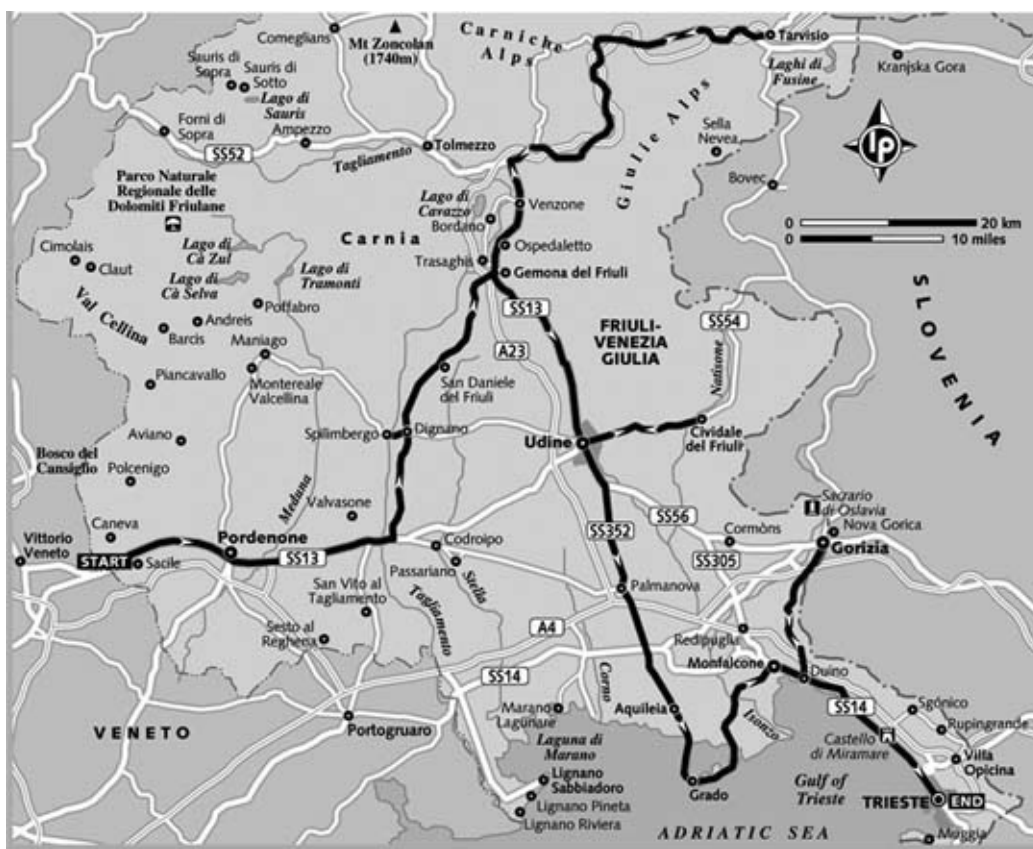
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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### an italy of disparate cultures Two Weeks / Sacile / Trieste

If Europe has an axis point, Friuli Venezia Giulia is surely it; a complex fusion of different cultures – always perplexing but never dull – that arouses your curiosity like a cryptic crossword clue at the ancient gateway to *Mitteleuropa* (Middle Europe).

Start this two week cultural unravelment in diminutive **Sacile**, a mini-Venice of willow-lined river banks and curvaceous Venetian arches, before moving onto stately **Pordenone**; larger, more self-confident and veering culturally towards the east. Heading north next admire the intricate mosaics of **Spilimbergo** and the delicate hams of **San Daniele del Friuli** before reaching mountainous **Carnia**, named for its erstwhile Celtic inhabitants, the Carnics, who decamped here in the 2nd century BC and enriched the valleys with their adroit iron manufacturing skills. For further fascinating cultural interchange base yourself in alpine **Tarvisio** where you can hike inadvertently across three different national borders and bid 'good morning' in German, Slovenian or Italian – or all three! Swing south next down to **Udine**, as Friulian as Friuli gets these days, where a resplendent classically tinged piazza resonates with echoes of Venice and even Rome. Once a grandiose regional HQ, **Cividale del Friuli** to the east still broadcasts rare Lombard architectural influences, while **Aquileia** to the south is home to one of the most complete Roman settlements on the peninsula. **Gorizia** straddles the border with Slovenia and until the 1990s lay in the back-draft of Europe's divisive Iron Curtain. For the ultimate Friulian oxymoron, call in at **Castello di Miramare**, a Gothic castle built for an Austrian archduke who ran away to claim the vacant 'throne' of Mexico. Confused? Wind up your wanderings in whimsical **Trieste** (opposite), a city so indecipherable that even ex-resident James Joyce refrained from writing about it.



## COLLE DI SAN GIUSTO

Often overlooked in favour of Trieste's emblematic Castello di Miramare, the sturdy 15th-century **Castello di San Giusto** (☎ 040 30 93 62; Piazza della Cattedrale 3; admission €5; 🕒 9am-7pm) sits atop a strategic hill where it was built by the city's Venetian rulers over older fortifications. The castle contains a recently renovated museum and armoury with a raft of exhibits, including suits of armour and other weapons. You can also wander around the walls and pop into the **Lapidario Tergestino** with its modest jumble of statuary and architectural fragments.

The **Basilica di San Giusto** (🕒 8am-5pm), completed in 1400, is the synthesis of two earlier Christian basilicas in a blend of the Ravenna and Byzantine styles. The interior contains 13th-century frescoes and a mosaic from the same period depicting St Justus, the town's patron saint. The Virgin and Child and the Apostles appear on another wonderfully preserved 12th-century mosaic.

One intriguing feature of the basilica is the chapel, known as the Escorial Carlista, containing the tombs of nine members of the Spanish royal family. After a dynastic struggle in Spain in the 1830s, Carlos V fled and set up the 'Carlist' court in Trieste, which survived until 1874. The last Spanish royal interred here was Francisco José de Habsburg, as recently as 1975.

The **Civico Museo di Storia ed Arte ed Orto Lapidario** (History & Art Museum & Stone Garden; ☎ 040 31 05 00; Piazza della Cattedrale 1; adult/child €3.50/2.50; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Sun) unites a host of mostly Roman antiquities unearthed in and around Trieste and Aquileia. The more delicate items of Roman, Greek, Egyptian and prehistoric art and artefacts are spread over two floors, while the Orto Lapidario (Stone Garden) is a potluck assembly of more weather-resistant stone finds. Take bus 24 from the train station.

## BORGO TERESIANO

Austrian town planners, at the behest of Empress Maria Theresa, designed much of the elegant city centre area north of Corso Italia in the 18th century. The stately **Canal Grande** marks the northern end of the harbour. Reflecting centuries of religious tolerance, the mosaic-laden Serbian Orthodox **Chiesa di Santo Spiridione** (1868) lies juxtaposed with the enormous neoclassical Catholic **Chiesa di Sant'Antonio Taumaturgo** (1842). On the Via Roma bridge stands a life-sized **statue of James Joyce**.

At the south edge of the *borgo*, take time for the **Civico Museo Teatrale Carlo Schmidl** (☎ 040 675 40 72; Via Rossini 4; adult/child €3/2; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), housed in the grand Palazzo Gopcevich. It retraces the history of theatre and music in Trieste to the 18th century, with an engaging collection of historical instruments on the 1st and 2nd floors and a collection of signatures of such greats as Gioacchino Rossini, Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini.

## AROUND PIAZZA DELL'UNITÀ D'ITALIA

Embracing the Adriatic, the vast public domain of **Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia** exhibits an elegant triumph of Austro-Hungarian town planning. It is said to be the biggest square opening on to a waterfront in Italy.

The **Museo d'Arte Orientale** (☎ 040 322 07 36; Via San Sebastiano 1; adult/child €3/2; 🕒 9am-1pm Wed & Sat), in an 18th-century town house, contains an eclectic collection of Chinese porcelain and Japanese prints, drawings, musical instruments and weaponry.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

The **FVG Card** ([www.turismofvg.it](http://www.turismofvg.it); 24hrs/48hrs/one week €15/20/29) gives free admission to all

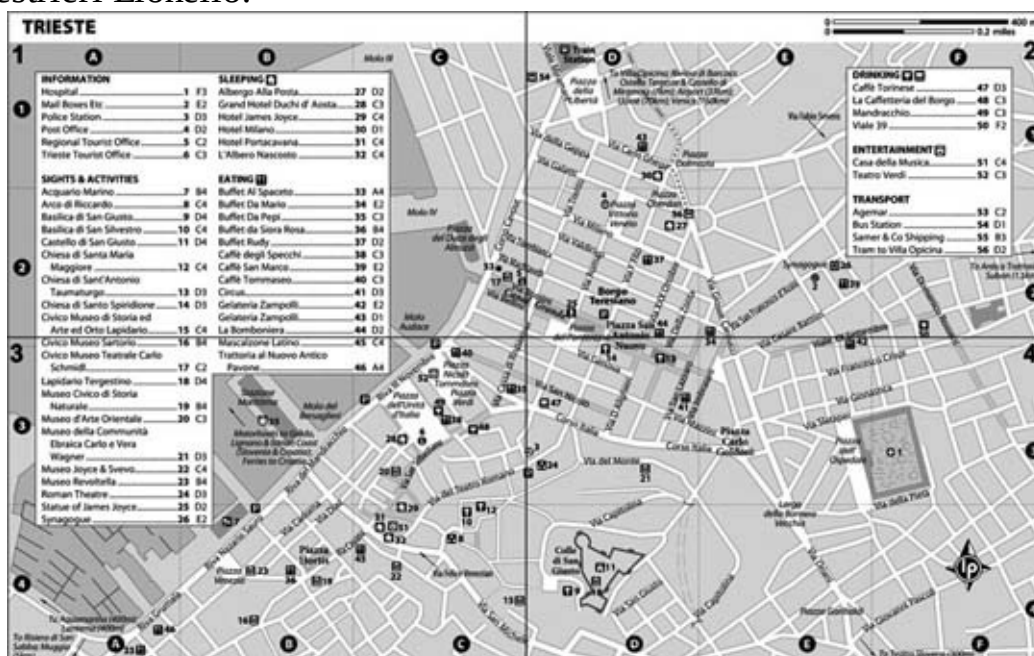
civic museums, free transport in Udine, Lignano and on the Udine—Cividale del Friuli train, and numerous discounts in the region's shops, spas, beaches and parks. The cards can be bought at any FVG tourist office or at various hotels and travel agents (see the website for the full list).

Behind Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia rise remains of the **Roman theatre** (Via del Teatro Romano), which was built between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Concerts are held here occasionally during summer. The **Arco di Riccardo** (Via del Trionfo) is an earlier Roman remnant, one of the old town gateways, dating from 33 BC. Nearby, the baroque **Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore**, next door to the minute Romanesque **Basilica di San Silvestro**, is a cavernous church whose main point of interest is the tiny painting by Sassoferrato of the *Madonna della salute*.

Memories of Trieste's Jewish heritage are preserved at the **Museo della Comunità Ebraica Carlo e Vera Wagner** (☎ 040 63 38 19; Via del Monte 5; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 4-7pm Tue, 10am-1pm Mon, Wed, Thu-Sun), which has a small exhibition of liturgical items, textiles, documents and photographs. To the northeast lies the city's huge **synagogue** (☎ 040 37 14 66; Via San Francisco d'Assisi 19; admission €3.50; 🕒 10-11am Mon-Thu, 10am-noon Sun by guided tour), one of the biggest in Italy (and heavily damaged during WWII).

## AROUND PIAZZA VENEZIA

Baron Pasquale Revoltella (1795–1869) would be pleased. He not only left his three-storey neo-Renaissance mansion to the city, but also his private collection of then-contemporary art. With this and a hefty financial bequest from Revoltella, the **Museo Revoltella** (☎ 040 675 43 50; [www.museorevoltella.it](http://www.museorevoltella.it); Via Diaz 27; adult/child €6/4; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) was born in 1872. The city expanded the collection into two neighbouring buildings. Revoltella's house retains the atmosphere and furnishings of the baron's time. The baron's flamboyant taste fills the gaudy rooms, with their chandeliers, gilded plaster, silk wallpaper and gold curtains. His collection of 19th-century Italian paintings and marble sculptures of nudes is on show here. The modern section, Palazzo Brunner, holds a more extensive assemblage of late 19th- and 20th-century works by Triestine, Italian and international artists. Highlights include Urbano Nono's arresting statue group, *Belisario*, and the huge canvas *Beethoven* by Balestrieri Lionello.





# TRIESTE

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0 0.2 miles

<b>2</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
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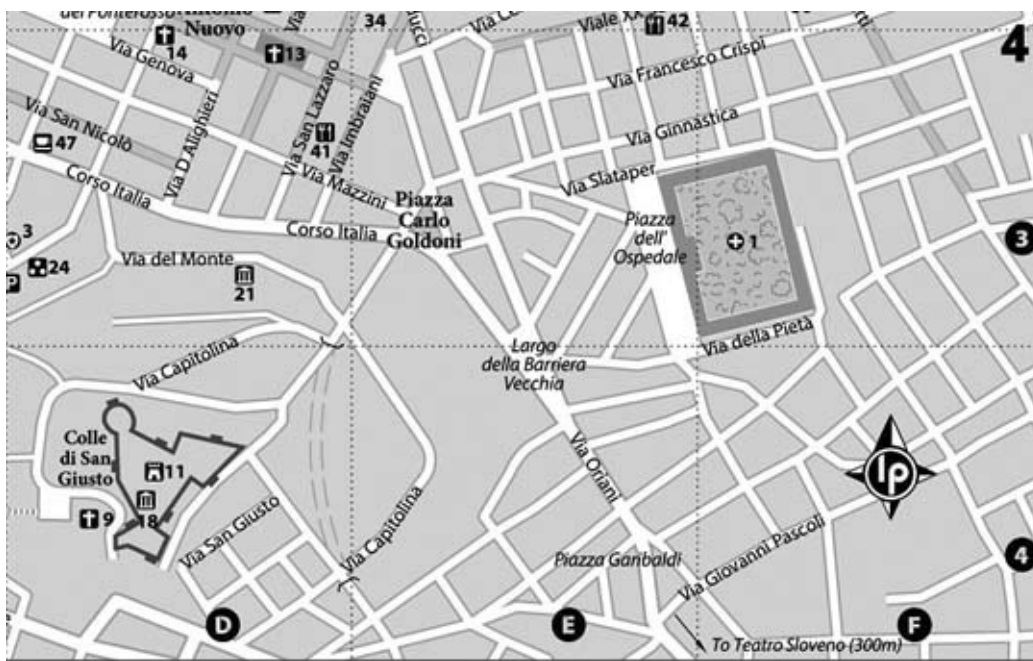
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## JAMES JOYCE & TRIESTE

*'Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home'*

*James Joyce, Ulysses*

Stifled by life in gloomy Dublin, James Joyce escaped to Trieste in 1905 with a contract to teach English at the local Berlitz language school. Aged 23 and accompanied by his lover (and later wife) Nora Barnacle, the precocious yet still unpublished Irish writer arrived in a city that was living through the twilight years of the anachronistic Austro-Hungarian empire.

It was a halcyon era. Replete with German-speaking aristocrats and Futurist intellectuals such as Sigmund Freud and Umberto Saba, Trieste was a cosmopolitan city and the young Joyce wasted no time getting involved in its fertile artistic scene. Perennially poor and unable to afford a full-time office, the wistful Irishman was forced to spend the bulk of his writing hours sitting in the atmospheric *fin de siècle* cafes and bars allowing the surrounding street-theatre to trigger his imagination.

Ever the linguist, Joyce quickly mastered the local Triestine dialect, which he used at home with his two young children and utilised in various newspaper articles and essays. During the day he taught English classes and plotted various business ventures that rarely reached fruition, while at night he drank heavily and slowly set about drafting the text of his first two groundbreaking novels, *Dubliners* and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Joyce made occasional visits to Dublin and Rome (which he hated), but he remained in Trieste until 1915, when the outbreak of WWI forced him to relocate to Zurich in neutral Switzerland. He returned after the war to a changed city on the verge of incorporation into Italy. He was unimpressed by the brash new order and quickly made tracks for Paris.

Despite Joyce's decade-long residency in Trieste, he always refrained from using the city as a backdrop in his books. Instead Trieste acted as a form of prism through which the exiled Irishman viewed his native Dublin and the numerous curses of his childhood. Local characters and mannerisms were skilfully manipulated and adapted; Trieste-based writer and former pupil Italo Svevo became the model for Leopold Bloom in the novel *Ulysses*, while the musicality and colour of the Venetian-influenced Triestine dialect resurfaced in a bastardised form in 1939's *Finnegan's Wake* (in which the city is referred to as 'Tarry-Easty').

To recreate the peculiar atmosphere of Joycean Trieste you can follow a specialised walking

tour that leaves on pre-arranged dates from the tourist office [Click here](#) in Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia. The tour visits the Berlitz school, half a dozen of the author's former residences, the tiny Joyce museum, some key bars and cafes, and the iconic statue of the Irishman that now overlooks the Canal Grande. Alternatively, the same walk can be done solo with a map-and-audio set provided by the Trieste tourist office.

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The **Civico Museo Sartorio** (☎ 040 30 14 79; Largo Papa Giovanni XXIII 1; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Sun), in another villa, offers a varied collection of art, applied arts and jewellery. During restoration work, beautiful ceiling frescoes, some dating to the late 18th century, were uncovered, along with remains of the mosaic floor of a Roman house (*domus*).

The **Museo Civico di Storia Naturale** (☎ 040 675 86 58; 3rd fl, Piazza Hortis 4; adult/child €3/2; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) displays a musty array of stuffed animals and bones. Literature fans can poke about documents and other memorabilia linked to two great 20th-century novelists in the **Museo Joyce & Svevo** (☎ 040 359 36 06; 2nd fl, Via Madonna del Mare 13; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm Mon-Sat, also 3-7pm Thu).

## THE WATERFRONT

Barely 100m from Piazza Venezia stands the waterfront **Acquario Marino** (☎ 040 30 62 01; Riva Nazario Sauro 1; adult/child €4.20/2.10; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), where you can view some of the denizens of the Adriatic deep, as well as tropical fish. The former **fish market** (1913), which fills the southern half of the building, is being developed as a future exhibition space. The waterfront ends at the **Lanterna**, a disused 19th-century lighthouse.

## RISIERA DI SAN SABBA

The San Sabba rice-husking plant sounds like a harmless location, but in 1944 the Germans, with local Fascist help, built a crematorium here and turned it into Italy's only extermination camp. It is believed 20,000 people perished here, including 5000 of Trieste's 6000 Jews. Yugoslav partisans closed it when they liberated the city in 1945, and 20 years later it became a national monument and **museum** (☎ 040 82 62 02; Via Ratto della Pileria 43; admission free; 🕒 9am-7pm). Take bus 8 from the train station.

## Activities

For a dip, head for the modern **Aquamarina** (☎ 040 30 11 00; [www.2001team.com](http://www.2001team.com), in Italian; Molo Fratelli Bandiera 1; adult/child pool admission €6/4.70; 🕒 7.40am-10.20pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 10.20am-6.20pm Tue & Thu, 7.40am-7.40pm Sat, 7.40am-1pm Sun), near the Lanterna. Activities and treatments include aquaerobics classes, a gym, saunas and Turkish baths.

## Tours

**Trieste by Bus** (☎ 040 4 41 44; adult/child under 10yr €5.20/free) city tours depart from in front of the train station and take 2½ hours. They operate in summer and other peak periods like Easter and around Christmas and New Year.

The tourist office offers a handful of guided or self-guided (with audio) walking tours including a James Joyce tour (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)). Ask for a free map.

## Festivals & Events

The first Sunday of May sees the running of one of Italy's biggest running events, the **Maratona d'Europa**

([www.bavisela.it](http://www.bavisela.it)), while the **Barcolana** ([www.barcolana.it](http://www.barcolana.it)) is a major sailing spectacle (with thousands of sailing boats filling the gulf around Trieste) on the second Sunday in October.

## Sleeping

Many midrange and top-end places slash their rates on weekends.

### BUDGET

**Ostello Tergeste** (☎ 040 22 41 02; [www.ostellotergeste.it](http://www.ostellotergeste.it); Viale Miramare 331; dm/d incl breakfast €14/20; 🕒 reception 7am-11.30pm) This HI hostel by the sea, 7km northwest of town, is a next-door neighbour to Castello di Miramare ([Click here](#)). Dorms house between four and 20 beds and have peek-a-boo views (amid the bunk beds) of the sea. Take bus 36.

**Hotel Portacavana** (☎ 040 30 13 13; [www.hotelporcaviana.it](http://www.hotelporcaviana.it); Via Felice Venezian 14; s/d without bathroom €35/50, with bathroom €50/65) Well furnished journeyman hotel with clean facilities and marble bathrooms (in some rooms). Service isn't as touchy-feely as higher-starred establishments, but the price is right and the location handily close to everything.

### MIDRANGE

**Hotel James Joyce** (☎ 040 31 10 23; [www.hoteljamesjoyce.com](http://www.hoteljamesjoyce.com); Via dei Cavazzeni 7; s/d €85/130; 🕒 📺) This place is less about *Ulysses* and more about sparkling modern rooms, great central location and ultra-smooth service – all in a historic 18th-century old town building, no less.

**Hotel Milano** (☎ 040 36 96 80; [www.hotel-milano.com](http://www.hotel-milano.com); Via Carlo Ghega 17; s €95-118, d €130; 📺 🕒) The dark patterned carpets and heavy drapes give the Milano a melancholy Triestine feel, but there's a lighter mood to be found in the welcoming staff, ample (for Italy) breakfasts, and huge sparkling bathrooms. The Milano is handily located 400m from the train station and within shouting distance of the Zampolli ice-cream store.

**our pick Albergo Alla Posta** (☎ 040 36 52 08; [www.albergopostatrieste.it](http://www.albergopostatrieste.it); Piazza Oberdan 1; s €98-110, d €130-155, tr €155-175; 🕒 📺) This stylish place combines a pleasant old-world feel with state-of-the-art amenities. The rooms are restfully decorated in neutral tones. First-floor rooms have a timeless, classic feel, while those on the upper floors are more determinedly modern, with designer touches (such as Philippe Starck beds).

**L'Albero Nascosto** (☎ 040 30 01 88; [www.alberonascosto.it](http://www.alberonascosto.it); Via Felice Venezian 18; s/d €90/135; 🕒 📺) It's easy to miss, but you'd be foolish if you did. This unexpected hideout in a restored *palazzo* in the old town offers rooms (and longer-term apartments) with a clean, bright yet characterful sheen. The whitewashed rooms have easy chairs and large comfortable beds. Complimentary breakfast is in the 'taverna' downstairs. It's not over-fancy but it works.

### TOP END

**Grand Hotel Duchi d'Aosta** (☎ 040 760 00 11; [www.grandhotelduchidaosta.com](http://www.grandhotelduchidaosta.com); Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia 2; s/d Mon-Thu from €188/292, s/d Fri-Sun from €140/212, ste €460-660; 📺 🕒) There's been a hotel of sorts on this prime site since Roman times. Several incarnations and countless centuries later the 'Duchi' remains Trieste's grandest and most stylish pile. Many bigwigs have graced its refined antique-clad rooms, including Admiral Nelson, Casanova, Bob Dylan and Francis Ford Coppola. It's pricey unless you can bag one of the weekend deals. The adjoining Harry's Grill is equally spiffy.

## Eating

## RESTAURANTS

**Circus** (☎ 040 63 34 99; Via San Lazzaro 9b; meals €10-15; 🕒 8am-10.30pm Mon-Sat) A rather quirky hangout for sometimes over-serious Trieste, Circus lives up to its colourful name with a vaguely big-top decor mixed with old-time movie paraphernalia. It's a great lunch stop with its ample *panini* (€4 to €5), huge bowls of salad (€5) and a selection of nicely priced *primi* (first courses). The atmosphere's cool but not haughty.

**Trattoria al Nuovo Antico Pavone** (☎ 040 30 38 99; Riva Grumala 2; meals €25-30; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Fresh fish in many forms, along with regulation pasta, adorn the menu at this cosy harbour-front trattoria.

**Mascalzone Latino** (☎ 040 31 33 32; Via Cavana 12; meals €30; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Just arrived from down south and been flummoxed by all that bratwurst and beer? Fear not, Napoli's never far away. Run by native Neapolitans, this colourful old town *palazzo* replicates the spirit of Campania right down to the decorative lines of washing strung up from the rafters. At table level it's all about pizzas, pasta and paper cones full of chunky chips.

**Antica Trattoria Suban** (☎ 040 5 43 68; Via E Comici 2d; meals €40-50; 🕒 lunch & dinner Wed-Sun, dinner Mon, closed Aug) In the family since 1865, Suban is a Trieste legend that acts as a kind of regional kitchen in microcosm. Don't miss the *jota* soup, succulent meats and delicious Hungarian desserts. It's pricey and outside the centre, but sometimes you've just got to say, 'what the...?'

## BUFFETS

Buffets are to Trieste what tapas are to Seville. Don't leave town without trying one. Expect lots of boiled bacon, sausages and beer. A classic is *cotto caldo con kren* (a boiled slab of ham served with horseradish).

**Buffet Al Spaceto** (☎ 338 3394447; Via Belpoggio 3a; snacks €1.80-3; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-3pm Sat) Locals gather here for a few glasses of local wine and delicious little snacks, including tiny *panini* with various fillings.

**our pick Buffet Da Pepi** (☎ 040 36 68 58; Via Cassa di Risparmio 3; meals €15-18; 🕒 Mon-Sat) One of Trieste's signature buffets, Da Pepi has been concocting traditional boiled meats, cold cuts and beer since – oh – 1897. All kinds of pork joints are produced here, served up with sauerkraut, hot mustard and *kren* (a tangy horseradish).

**Buffet Rudy** (☎ 040 63 94 28; Via Valdirivo 32; meals €18-20; 🕒 10am-midnight Mon-Sat) Come to Rudy for a lesson in Triestine *gnocchi* that is nothing like the familiar pasta-covered potato balls you get in Rome or Turin. Resembling a big dumpling made from potato or bread (you choose), these Friulian classics are served in a tangy goulash sauce. Cancel that dessert.

**Buffet Da Mario** (☎ 040 63 93 24; Via Torrebianca 41; meals €18-22; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Fried squid, and sardines; Trieste is by the sea just in case you'd forgotten.

**Buffet Da Siora Rosa** (☎ 040 30 14 60; Piazza Hortis 3; meals €20-25; 🕒 7am-9.30pm Mon-Fri) Opened before WWII by Mrs Rosa Caltaruzza – a portrait of whom still graces the wall – the family-run Siora Rosa is still one of the best and most traditional of Trieste's buffets. Sit at the bar to sample sausages, sauerkraut and other Germanic offerings, or pasta.

## CAFES & PATISSERIES

**Caffè San Marco** (☎ 040 36 35 38; Via Cesare Battisti 18; 🕒 8.30am-11pm Tue-Sun) Young bloggers mix with 90-year-old former children of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at this dark mahogany haven where dexterous waiters balance coffee cups on silver trays and nothing much has changed since 1949 – or even

1909. The only thing missing is the atmospheric fug of cigarette smoke – a kind of blessing in disguise.

**our pick** **Caffè Tommaseo** (☎ 040 36 26 66; [www.caffetommaseo.com](http://www.caffetommaseo.com); Riva III Novembre; meals €22; ☎ 8am-12.30am) Is it just the hallucinogenic effects of the cappuccino or did you just see James Joyce over there scribbling in a notebook, or Sigmund Freud twitching behind a newspaper, or Umberto Saba polishing off a prosciutto *panini*? Virtually unchanged since its 1830 opening, the belle époque Tommaseo with its moulded ceiling and Viennese mirrors is full of literary ghosts that often play tricks with the tired, delusional or over-caffeinated.

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## COFFEE CULTURE

The inveterate newspaper-rustling coffee-sippers of *Mitteleuropa* (and that includes Trieste) owe their habit to scimitar-brandishing Turkish infidels. When the Turkish hordes appeared at the gates of Vienna in July 1683, they weren't just hauling gunpowder. In between bombarding the Austrian capital, the troopers would brew themselves a hot cuppa. When they hurriedly broke off the siege under Polish cavalry assault in September, they left sacks of the stuff behind. Not bad at all, the Viennese thought, and so began the habit of a lifetime. As Austrian-controlled Trieste became a free port in 1719, it was only natural that it should also become the main gateway for the empire's coffee imports.

Coffee was thus a big part of Trieste's commercial life by the time the city was absorbed by Italy after WWI. In 1933, Francesco Illy (a former Hungarian officer in the Austro-Hungarian army) set up his own coffee business. He had arrived in Trieste during WWI. In 1935, he invented the prototype for modern espresso-making machines and a vacuum-sealed packing system that allowed his burgeoning company to export all over Italy.

Francesco's scientist son Ernesto, today the company's president, set up research deals with several universities and over a few years has turned a national brand into an international hit. One of his two sons, Riccardo (born 1955), has been Trieste's mayor and, between 2003 and 2008 was Friuli Venezia Giulia's president.

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**Caffè degli Specchi** (☎ 040 36 57 77; Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia 7; ☎ 7am-9.30pm) This veritable hall of mirrors (*specchi*) first opened its doors back in 1839 and, despite some modern updates, has been feeding the addictions of Triestine coffee-quaffers ever since.

**Caffè Torinese** (☎ 040 63 60 46; Largo della Barriera Vecchia 12; ☎ 7am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) Numerous writers sought inspiration at compact Caffè Torinese loaded up on the incomparable Illy.

**La Bomboniera** (☎ 040 63 27 52; Via XXX Ottobre 3a; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun) This is a historic pastry shop – one of many that grace the city.

**Gelateria Zampolli** (☎ 040 36 48 68; Via Carlo Ghega 10; ☎ 9.30am-midnight Thu-Tue). For the city's best gelati served by impossibly slim *ragazze*, hit Zampolli. There is another branch at Viale XX Settembre 25a.

## Drinking

Triestines mix bar-hopping with nights at the opera. Expect a more refined late-night atmosphere here. In summer, low-key action concentrates in come-and-go bars along the waterfront from behind the train station up to Miramare. Otherwise, a handful of pubs, bars and clubs are scattered about town.

**La Caffetteria del Borgo** (☎ 040 77 45 12; Via Malcanton 6; ☎ 7am-2am Tue-Sat, 9am-8pm Sun,

7am-2pm Mon) A hip place to start the night (or drop by for coffee during the day), the atmosphere here is made all the homier by the timber furnishings and stone floor.

**Viale 39** (☎ 040 36 72 72; [www.viale39.com](http://www.viale39.com); Viale XX Settembre 39a; 🕒 10pm-3am Wed-Sat) A breeding ground for lounge lizards and bright young things, Viale 39 has multiple personalities as long as you're a snappy dresser. Recline on cushioned sofas with an aperitif or get up and dance at Monday's Latin American Noche Caliente (Hot Night) or Friday's Valentino.

**Mandracchio** (☎ 393 9706005; Passo di Piazza 1; 🕒 11pm-5am Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat) If Viale 39 doesn't close late enough for you, finish the night here and dance until dawn, with Italian hits on Friday and the latest in international DJ dance numbers on Saturday.

## Entertainment

The **Teatro Verdi** (☎ 040 672 21 11, 800 054525; [www.teatroverdi-trieste.com](http://www.teatroverdi-trieste.com); Riva III Novembre 1) opera house is a mix of Milan's La Scala and Venice's La Fenice (both architects had a hand). It first opened in 1801 and was refurbished between 1992 and 1997 at a cost of US\$18 million.

The Slovene side of Triestine life finds expression at the **Teatro Sloveno** (☎ 040 63 26 64, 800 214302; [www.teaterssg.it](http://www.teaterssg.it); Via Petronio 4), southeast of the centre. **Casa della Musica** (☎ 040 30 73 09; [www.casadellamusicatrieste.it](http://www.casadellamusicatrieste.it); Via Capitelli 3) puts on various performances, from jazz quartets to solo acts of all types.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Friuli Venezia Giulia airport** (TRS; ☎ 0481 77 32 24; [www.aeroporto.fvg.it](http://www.aeroporto.fvg.it); Via Aquileia 46), aka Ronchi dei Legionari or Trieste Airport, is 33km northwest of Trieste, near Monfalcone. Direct daily flights to and from Munich, Frankfurt and London Stansted, and less-frequent services to and from Belgrade and Tirana arrive here.

### BOAT

Ferries use the **Stazione Marittima** (ferry terminal; Molo dei Bersaglieri 3) in town. **Agemar** (☎ 040 36 37 37; Piazza Duca degli Abruzzi 1a) sells tickets for the twice-weekly car ferry to and from Durres in Albania (deck seat one way low/high season €60/80).

From mid-June to late September, **Samer & Co Shipping** (☎ 040 670 27 11; [www.samer.com](http://www.samer.com)) has motorboats to and from Grado, Lignano and points along the Istrian coast in Slovenia and Croatia.

### BUS

National and international services operate from the **bus station** (☎ 040 42 50 20; Via Fabio Severo 24). Runs include Udine (€5.10, 1¼ hours, at least hourly) and destinations in Slovenia and Croatia such as Ljubljana (€11.60, 2¾ hours, once daily Monday to Saturday), Zagreb (€14, five hours, once daily Monday to Saturday) and Dubrovnik (€57.65, 15 hours, once daily). Bus services to Belgrade in Serbia (€55, 10 hours, two days a week) and Sofia in Bulgaria (€64, 16½ hours, daily) are operated by **Florentia Bus** (☎ 040 42 50 20; [www.florentiabus.it](http://www.florentiabus.it)). Both services originate in Florence.

### TRAIN

The **train station** (Piazza della Libertà 8) serves Gorizia (€3.80, 50 minutes, hourly), Udine (€6.70, one to 1½ hours, at least hourly), Venice (€9.20 to €13.50, two hours, at least hourly) and Rome (€69.80, 6½

to 7½ hours; most require a change at Mestre).

## Getting Around

Bus 30 connects the train station with Via Roma and the waterfront, bus 24 goes to and from Castello di San Giusto, bus 36 links Trieste bus station with Miramare, and Villa Opicina is served by tram 2 or bus 4. A single ticket (valid for one hour's travel) costs €1.05 (all-day ticket €3.50).

Bus 51 runs to the airport approximately every 30 minutes between 4.30am and 10.35pm from Trieste bus station (€2.85, one hour). Buses are operated by the Gorizia-based **APT** (Azienda Provinciale Trasporti Gorizia; ☎ 800 955957; [www.apggorizia.it](http://www.apggorizia.it), in Italian).

Shuttle boats link the Stazione Marittima with Muggia year-round (one way/return €3.40/6.35, 30 minutes, six to 10 boats sail daily), Barcola (€2.05, 20 minutes, five or six daily) and Grignano (€3.45, 55 minutes, five or six daily) from mid-April to mid-October. Contact **Trieste Trasporti** (☎ 800 016675; [www.triestetrasporti.it](http://www.triestetrasporti.it), in Italian).

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## AROUND TRIESTE

### Miramare & Duino

The **Castello di Miramare** (☎ 040 22 41 43; [www.castello-miramare.it](http://www.castello-miramare.it); adult/EU citizen 18-25yrs/child €4/2/free, audioguide €3.50; ☎ 9am-6:30pm) is a curious place, a fanciful neo-Gothic remnant of the hyperactive imagination of Archduke Maximilian of Austria who deserted Trieste almost as quickly as he adopted it in 1864 to take up the obsolete crown of Mexico (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

One of the castle's main draws is its almost creepy authenticity. Much of the downstairs area has been preserved as it was during Maximilian's brief stay, including his cabin-like ground-floor bedroom (designed to resemble a ship) and peaceful library with its full complement of marble busts and original hand-picked books.

Upstairs, the magnificent Throne Room (never used as such) is plastered with portraits of Habsburg royalty. Also on this floor is a suite of rooms used by the similarly cursed Duke Amadeo of Aosta and his family in the 1930s, and furnished in the then in-vogue art deco style. Amadeo was appointed Viceroy of Ethiopia by Mussolini in 1937, and five years later died in a British POW camp in Kenya.

New Zealand troops were the first to reach the castle at the end of WWII. British units then set up HQ here, replaced by American forces from 1951 to 1954.

The castle, set in 22 hectares of **gardens** (☎ 8am-7pm Apr-Sep, 8am-6pm Mar & Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Feb), bursts with colours and scents of rare and exotic trees. A keen botanist, Maximilian had heated greenhouses built. Today they house **Parco Tropicale** (☎ 040 22 44 06; [www.parcotropicale.it](http://www.parcotropicale.it), in Italian; adult/student/child incl guide €6.50/5/3.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Feb), where tropical butterflies, hummingbirds, parrots and other bright birds disport themselves.

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## MAXIMILIAN & MIRAMARE

It was a life that began with a fanfare of Austrian promise but ended more like the finale of a tragic Italian opera. Born in 1832, Habsburg archduke Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph – younger brother of



Austrian Emperor Franz Josef – grew up in the flourishing cultural capital of Vienna, jewel of the still-powerful Austro-Hungarian Empire. He initially made his name in the Austrian navy rising by the age of 22 to the rank of Commander in Chief, a post that brought him to the burgeoning Adriatic city of Trieste. A free port since 1719, Trieste at the time was in the throes of a mini-economic and cultural revival, and Maximilian in his new authoritative role played a large part in moulding its revitalised naval infrastructure.

Adopting the city as his permanent home in the 1850s, the archduke set about building a house fit for a Habsburg. Scouring the rocky Adriatic coastline, he chose a small promontory of land 7km north of Trieste and commissioned Austrian architect Carl Junker to design a fantastical castle he subsequently christened Miramare.

Work began in 1856 on a 22-hectare plot that also included extensive landscaped gardens (Maximilian was a keen botanist). The following year, the archduke married his second cousin, Princess Charlotte of Belgium, and looked forward to a life of domestic bliss encased in his eclectic new home. But other more ominous voices were calling.

In 1864, with the house barely finished, Maximilian, at the behest of French leader Napoleon III, accepted an offer to become Emperor of Mexico, a country undergoing a period of bloody civil strife. It was a fateful decision. Mexican conservatives in collusion with the expansionist French army had recently dethroned the indigenous republican president, Benito Juárez, and instituted a new order. The well-meaning but gullible Maximilian proved to be a useful pawn in promoting their reactionary monarchist ambitions.

Maximilian left Miramare for Mexico City in 1864 and he was never to return. A reasonable man with liberal ideas, he ultimately satisfied neither the conservative monarchists nor the progressive Mexican republicans (who refused to accept a foreign emperor in principal) and when, with US backing, Juárez forced French troops to withdraw in 1866, he was held up as an undesirable scapegoat.

Captured in May 1867 by republican forces, the noble if naive Maximilian refused to repent and, despite pleas from numerous European leaders, he was executed by Juárez's re-established government the following month. Stricken with grief, his wife Charlotte returned briefly to Miramare before going clinically insane. She spent the rest of her life in Belgium convinced that Maximilian remained alive and adamant that she was still the rightful Empress of Mexico. Miramare, meanwhile – the dream home that got lost in a Mexican nightmare – has remained almost exactly as she and her misguided husband left it.

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The waters here constitute the Riserva Naturale Marina di Miramare (a nature reserve) and swimming is forbidden. The **visitor centre** (☎ 040 22 41 47; [www.riservamarinamiramare.it](http://www.riservamarinamiramare.it), in Italian; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Tue-Wed & Fri-Sun Oct-Mar), in the Castelletto (Little Castle), opposite the Parco Tropicale, has tanks containing live fish, sponges and other local marine residents. The Castelletto, a mini version of the main digs, was where Maximilian lived while waiting for his dream home to be completed.

Fourteen kilometres northwest along the coast from Miramare stands the proud **Castello di Duino** (☎ 040 20 81 20; [www.castellodiduino.it](http://www.castellodiduino.it); adult/student/child 6-16yrs/child under 6yrs €7/4.50/3/free; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm daily Mar-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Wed-Mon Oct, 9.30am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb), a privately owned 14th- and 15th-century bastion filled with all sorts of artworks and curios and surrounded by a verdant garden. The Prague poet Rainer Maria Rilke was a guest here in 1911 and 1912. Take bus 41 from Piazza Oberdan.

# Muggia

pop 13,300

Five kilometres south of Trieste lies the fishing village of Muggia, the only Italian settlement on the historic Istrian peninsula. Slovenia is just 4km south of here and Croatia (the peninsula's main occupant) a score more. Muggia, with its 14th-century castle and semi-ruined walls, has a Venetian feel. Boats sail between Muggia and Trieste ([Click here](#)).

Muggia has eight hotels and some B&Bs should you wish to stay, including the simple but sparkling, portside **La Bussola** (☎ 040 27 12 66; [www.labussoladimuggia.it](http://www.labussoladimuggia.it); Via Manzoni 5; s/d €50/70; ☎). Rooms are spacious but spartan, with parquet floors. Some look straight over the port.

## Il Carso

Completing Trieste's catalogue of weirdness is **Il Carso** (Karst in German), its distinctive hinterland shoehorned between Slovenia and the Adriatic that has lent its name to the geological classification of landscapes across the world characterised by soluble limestone or dolomite rock known as 'karst'. Like other karst areas, the Il Carso plateau is comprised of a white calcareous tableland riddled with caves and doline (sinkholes created when caves collapse), also known as *foibe*.

The most impressive natural feature here is the gaping chasm of the **Grotta Gigante** (☎ 040 32 73 12; [www.grottagigante.it](http://www.grottagigante.it) in Italian; adult/child 6-16yrs/child under 6yrs €9/7/free; ☎ 50min guided tours half-hourly 10am-6pm daily Jul-Aug, half-hourly 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, hourly 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Mar & Oct, hourly 10am-noon & 2-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb) near Villa Opicina, 5km northeast of Trieste. At 107m high, 280m long and 65m wide, the 'giant grotto' is one of the continent's largest accessible caves – St Peter's Basilica in Rome could fit inside. Nearly 500 steps lead you down into its eerily lit vault replete with stunning stalagmites. Take bus 42 from Piazza Oberdan, or tram 2 – the scenic choice that has covered the 5.2km journey since 1902 – to Villa Opicina, then bus 42 to the cave.

Local flora (best seen in spring) buds and flowers at the **Carsiana Giardino Botanico** (☎ 040 22 95 73; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 10am-1pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sat & Sun late Apr—mid-Oct) in Sgònico. You will see everything from local oaks to various types of rhododendron. Take bus 42 from Trieste to Prosecco and change onto bus 46.

Local ethnographic tradition comes to life at the **Casa Carsica** (☎ 040 32 71 24; Rupingrande 31; admission free; ☎ 11am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Sun & holidays Apr-Nov) in Rupingrande, north of Villa Opicina. The plateau's most important folk festival, **Nozze Carsiche** (Karstic Wedding), is held every two years for four days at the end of August, 2km southeast of Rupingrande in a 16th-century fortress in **Monrupino**.

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## GORIZIA

pop 36,034 / elev 86m

To view its modern incarnation, you'd never guess the turmoil of Gorizia's convoluted past, or its erstwhile position, not just at the border between two different cultures, but two missile-toting global ideologies (until 1991 Gorizia was Italy's main window over the Iron Curtain).

The origin of the town's name is Slovenian though much of its history since 1500 has been under Austrian occupation. At the outbreak of WWI it was not uncommon to hear as many as five different

languages – German, Slovenian, Friulian, Italian and Venetian – gossiping in its main square. Under Rome’s jurisdiction since 1920, Gorizia these days is a peaceful place that still displays evidence of its Slovenian and Friulian roots. The Slovenian border crossing – a formality since the country’s entry into the Schengen area in December 2007 – bisects the edge of the town.

Armed with a lucid if limited cache of sights, Gorizia makes a worthwhile day trip from Trieste or Udine.

## Information

**Post office** (Corso Verdi 33; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0481 53 57 64; [www.gorizia-turismo.it](http://www.gorizia-turismo.it); Corso Italia 9; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm)

## Sights

### BORGO CASTELLO

Gorizia’s main sight is its **castello** (☎ 0481 53 51 46; Borgo Castello 36; adult/child €3/free, exhibitions €4-9/free; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) perched, rather like Trieste’s, atop a knoll-like hill. It was restored in the 1920s after suffering serious damage in WWI.

Beneath the main fortress and within the castle walls huddle two museums that couldn’t have less to do with one another. The **Museo della Grande Guerra** (☎ 0481 53 39 26; Borgo Castello 13-15; adult/child €3.50/free; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) tells the gory and tragic tale of WWI trench warfare on the Italian—Austrian front, with a life-size stretch of trench, and photos of Gorizia at war.

The **Museo della Moda e delle Arti Applicate** (Museum of Fashion & Applied Arts; ☎ 0481 53 39 26; Borgo Castello 13-15; admission incl with Museo della Grande Guerra; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) presents a far prettier picture, with a collection of the finery of the well-to-do of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Don’t miss the coquettish, brick-and-whitewash 14th-century Romanesque **Chiesa di Santo Spirito**, near the castle.

### PIAZZA TRANSALPINA

Don’t arrive expecting another grandiose Italian piazza. Transalpina is better known for its Cold War notoriety: the wire fence between Italy and the former Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) once ran through the middle of this rather utilitarian public space. It was finally pulled down in 2004 when Slovenia joined the EU. With Schengen now replacing the Iron Curtain, a sleepy police car along with an economical hotel (see below) are the only real sights worth logging.

### OLD TOWN

The grand **Chiesa di Sant’Ignazio** (Piazza della Vittoria; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm), which was built from 1654 to 1724, lords over the town centre with a broad brush stroke of Eastern mystery, topped as it is by onion-shaped domes.

Inside Gorizia’s 18th-century **synagogue** (☎ 0481 53 21 15; Via Ascoli 19; ☎ 6-8pm Tue & Thu, 4-7pm Mon, Fri & Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Apr-Sep, 5-7pm Tue & Thu, 4-7pm Mon, Fri & Sat, 10am-1pm 2nd Sun of month Oct-Mar) is a modest exhibition dedicated to the history of the Jewish presence in Gorizia.

**Palazzo Coronini Cronberg** (☎ 0481 53 34 85; [www.coronini.it](http://www.coronini.it); Viale XX Settembre 14; admission €4; ☎ Tue-Sun) is not only a sprawling 16th-century residence jammed with antiquities and art, it is also

set in lush gardens that are free to visit. **Palazzo Attmes** (☎ 0481 54 75 41; Piazza De Amicis 2; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) is worth a visit for the mansion and the regional 20th-century art.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Albergo Alla Transalpina** (☎ 0481 53 02 91; [www.hotel-transalpina.com](http://www.hotel-transalpina.com); Via Caprin 30; s/d from €50/70; 📄) There are no iron curtains in front of the windows these days in these uniquely positioned digs overlooking the Italy—Slovenia border on Piazza Transalpina. The 30 rooms are light and airy, with parquet floors, and there's a good restaurant attached. In summer you can take breakfast in the garden.

**Al Falegname** (☎ 0481 54 73 90; [www.alfalegname.it](http://www.alfalegname.it); Via Maniacco 2; meals €25; 🕒 closed Sun) Dedicated carnivores in particular will appreciate this place, which specialises in beef, along with local sausages and big fat *canerdeli*, or bread gnocchi.

**Trattoria Blanch** (☎ 0481 8 00 20; Via Blanchis 35; meals €25-30; 🕒 lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, lunch Tue, closed late Aug-late Sep) Set among fields, this wonderful country-house trattoria with a leafy garden is located 1km north of the centre of Mossa (a village 5km west of Gorizia and known as a centre of asparagus production). It has been in the same family since 1904, and specialises (in season) in game and mushrooms.

Cafes are plentiful on Corso Italia, the main street in the new part of town, while the old-town streets below the castle and around the covered **food market** (Via Verdi 30) are the best places to find trattorias.

## Getting There & Away

The **train station** (Piazzale Martiri Libertà d'Italia), 2km southwest of the centre, has regular connections to and from Udine (€3.25, 25 to 40 minutes, at least hourly) and Trieste (€3.80, 50 minutes, hourly). **APT** (☎ 800 955957; [www.apgorizia.it](http://www.apgorizia.it), in Italian) runs buses from the train station to Nova Gorica bus station (€1, 25 minutes).

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## PALMANOVA

**pop 5500 / elev 26m**

Shaped like a nine-pointed star – although you'd need an aeroplane to prove it – Palmanova is a defensively designed town-within-a-fortress built by the Venetians in 1593. Once common throughout Europe, these urban monoliths were known as 'star forts' or *trace italienne*. So impregnable were the town's defences that Napoleon used and extended them in the late 1700s, as did the Austrians during WWI. To this day the Italian army maintains a garrison here.

From hexagonal Piazza Grande, at the star's centre, six roads radiate through the old town to the defensive walls. A grassy path connects the bastions and three main *porte* (gates): Udine, Cividale and Aquileia. Head along Borgo Udine to uncover local history and weaponry from the Venetian and Napoleonic eras in the **Civico Museo Storico** (☎ 0432 92 91 06; Borgo Udine 4; adult/child €2/1.50; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm Thu-Tue), inside Palazzo Trevisan. The museum also acts as a tourist office and has information on secret-tunnel tours that wind beneath the city walls.

The **Museo Storico Militare** (☎ 0432 92 35 35; Borgo Cividale Dongione di Porta Cividale; admission free; 🕒 9am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-noon & 2-4pm Tue-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Oct-Mar) is inside Porta Cividale. The military museum traces the history of troops

stationed in Palmanova from 1593 to WWII.

The family-owned **Albergo Ristorante Roma** (☎ 0432 92 84 72; [www.hotelromapalmanova.it](http://www.hotelromapalmanova.it); Via Borgo Cividale 27; s/d/tr from €40/60/70; 📍) is a simple but perfectly comfortable 34 room hotel with a TV room, restaurant and parking. There's a good pizza place opposite.

Cafes stud central Piazza Grande, including **Caffè al Municipio** (☎ 0432 92 83 42; Piazza Grande 1), a bright airy place full of wine-quaffers and Monet reproductions. **La Campana d'Oro** (☎ 0432 92 87 19; Borgo Udine 25b; meals €35; 📍 lunch & dinner Wed-Sat, lunch Mon) is known for more delicate cooking, with fish and meat options such as goulash and smoked goose breast.

Regular buses link Palmanova with Udine (€2.20, 25 to 30 minutes) and Aquileia (€2.20, 30 to 40 minutes). They leave from Via Rota, just inside the walls.

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## AQUILEIA

### pop 3500

Friuli, peripheral? Not 2000 years ago. Founded in 181 BC, Aquileia was once one of the largest and richest cities of the Roman Empire, with a population as high as 100,000 at its peak. Levelled by Attila's Huns in AD 452, the city's inhabitants fled south and west where they founded Grado and Venice. A diminished town rose in its place in the early Middle Ages with the construction of the present basilica, and Aquileia was ultimately instrumental in spreading Christianity throughout central Europe. Conferred with a Unesco World Heritage listing in 1998, the area still guards one of the most complete (and unexcavated) Roman sites in Europe.

A small town with large mosaics (including the largest Palaeo-Christian mosaic floor in Europe), Aquileia lies at the eastern end of the Venetian plains. Guided tours of its extraordinary Roman sights are organised by the **tourist office** (☎ 0431 91 94 91; [www.aquileiaturismo.info](http://www.aquileiaturismo.info), in Italian; 📍 9am-5pm) or you can wander at will – and for free.

## Sights

The entire floor of the Latin cross-shaped **basilica** (Piazza Capitolo; 📍 9am-7pm), rebuilt after an earthquake in 1348, is covered with one of the largest and most spectacular Roman-era mosaics in the world. The 760-sq-metre floor of the basilica's 4th-century predecessor is protected by transparent glass walkways, allowing visitors to wander above the long-hidden images, which include episodes from the story of Jonah and the whale, the Good Shepherd, depictions of various sea creatures and birds, and portraits of, presumably, the wealthy Roman patrons of this early Christian church.

Equally remarkable treasures fill the basilica's two **crypts** (admission adult/child €3/free). The 9th-century **Cripta degli Affreschi** (Crypt of Frescoes) is adorned with faded 12th-century frescoes depicting the trials and tribulations of saints, while the **Cripta degli Scavi** (Excavations Crypt) reveals more mosaic floors in varying states of preservation. Images include birds, goats and foliage, as well as more peculiar subjects such as a lobster in a tree and a fight between a tortoise and a chicken. Images here were destroyed or badly damaged by the erection of the basilica's 73m-high **bell tower** (📍 9.30am-1.30pm, 3.30-6.30pm), built in 1030 with stones from the Roman amphitheatre.

Scattered remnants of the Roman town include extensive ruins of the **Porto Fluviale** (River Port; Via Sacra; 📍 8.30am-1hr before sunset), the old port, which once linked the settlement to the sea. Also free to

visit are the partially restored remains of houses, road and the standing columns of the ancient **Forum** on Via Giulia Augusta.

Locally excavated statues, pottery, glassware and jewellery are displayed in the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0431 9 10 16; Via Roma 1; adult/EU citizen 18-25yrs/child €4/2/free; 🕒 8.30am-2pm Mon, 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun), one of northern Italy's most important collections. One intriguing artefact is the gilded bronze head of an emperor dating from the 3rd century AD.

Aquileia's **Museo Paleocristiano** (☎ 0431 9 11 31; Piazza Pirano; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-1.45pm) exhibits early Christian mosaic floors and tombstones from the surrounding ruins.

## Sleeping & Eating

**ourpick** **Ostello Domus Augusta** (☎ 0431 9 10 24; [www.ostelloaquileia.it](http://www.ostelloaquileia.it); Via Roma 25; dm/s/d incl breakfast €15.50/23/38; 📄 📄) Relaxed and friendly, this gleaming hostel has 92 beds shared between rooms sleeping two to six people. It's a real bonus in such a small town.

**Hotel Restaurant Patriarchi** (☎ 0431 91 95 95; [www.hotelpatriarchi.it](http://www.hotelpatriarchi.it); Via Giulia Augusta 12; s €52-58, d €88-96; 📄) This sizable three-storey choice is a stone's throw from the basilica and is the best place in town. Rooms are mostly spacious and some have views of the basilica. The restaurant has a good wine cellar and tasty fish dishes. Half-board rates are available.

## Getting There & Away

Regular SAF buses link Aquileia with Grado (€1.60, 15 minutes), Palmanova (€2.20, 30 minutes, up to eight daily) and Udine (€3, 1¼ hours).

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## GRADO

pop 8900

Another latent Friulian surprise is the tasteful beach resort of Grado, 14km south of Aquileia, spread along a narrow island backed by Venetian-like lagoons (without the buildings) and linked to the mainland by a causeway. Complementing the spacious beach is a maze-like medieval centre, crisscrossed by narrow *calli* (lanes) and dominated by the Romanesque **Basilica di Sant'Eufemia** (Campo dei Parriarchi) and the nearby remains of a 4th- to 5th-century church **mosaic** (Piazza Biagio Marin). Belle époque mansions, beach huts and thermal baths line the cheerful beachfront. From October to April, the place is dead. May onwards, it's anything but.

Small *casoni* (reed huts), built for fishermen during winter, dot the tiny islands surrounding Grado. In summer some can be visited by boat (2½ hours, adult/child €15/8); the **tourist office** (☎ 0431 87 71 11; [www.gradoturismo.info](http://www.gradoturismo.info), in Italian; Viale Dante Alighieri 72; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm) has details. Many of the islands are protected nature reserves and are off limits.

On the first Sunday in July, a votive procession, with a statue of the Virgin Mary on board, sails from Grado to the **Santuario di Barbana** (☎ 0431 8 04 53), an 8th-century church on a lagoon island. Grado fishermen have done this since 1237 when the Madonna of Barbana saved their town from the plague. Boats link the sanctuary with Grado (adult/child return €4/2.50, three to eight times daily from April to October, and twice daily on Sunday from November to March).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Grado Promhotels** (☎ 0431 8 29 29; Riva Zaccaria Gregori 9; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm) can book you into hotels and apartments. Hotel prices rocket in August especially.

**our pick Albergo Alla Spiaggia** (☎ 0431 8 48 41; [www.albergoallaspiaggia.it](http://www.albergoallaspiaggia.it); Via Mazzini 2; s/d from €54/108, half-/full-board per person from €63/68; 🕒 Apr-Oct; 📍 ☎) An archetypal beachfront establishment, the Spiaggia's late-1920s, whitewashed facade has an attractive retro-feel that has recently come back into vogue. Sparkling blue and white rooms exude cleanliness while curvaceous sea-facing balconies are adorned with funky tables and director's chairs.

**Ristorante Tre Corone** (☎ 0431 8 56 39; Calle Toso 4; meals €25; 🕒 6.30-10.30pm, closed Tue) The old town is a tranquil haven away from the trendy beach and this eating escape fits the bill amid the intimate piazzas and pots of geraniums. Try the pizza and pasta standards or choose something more adventurous from the blackboard specials.

## Getting There & Away

Buses run between Grado and Udine (€3.55, 1¼ hours, 12 daily) via Aquileia.

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## AROUND GRADO

**Riserva Naturale Regionale della Valle Cavanata** (☎ 0431 8 82 72; [www.parks.it/riserva.valle.cavanata](http://www.parks.it/riserva.valle.cavanata); 🕒 9am-12.30pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 2-6pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays Apr-Sep, 9am-1pm Tue & Thu, 10am-4pm Sun & holidays Oct-Mar) protects a 1920s fish-farming area and extraordinary birdlife in the east of the lagoon. More than 230 bird species have been observed, including the greylag goose and many wading birds.

Further east, the final 15km stretch of the river Isonzo's journey into the Adriatic flows through the **Riserva Naturale Regionale Foce dell'Isonzo**, a 2350-hectare nature reserve where visitors can bird-watch horse ride, cycle or walk around salt marshes and mud flats. Reserve passes are sold at the **visitor centre** (☎ 0432 99 81 33; [www.riservanaturalefoceisonzo.it](http://www.riservanaturalefoceisonzo.it); adult/child €2/1; 🕒 9am-5pm Fri-Wed) in Isola della Cona in the reserve.

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## LAGUNA DI MARANO

At the head of the Adriatic, sandwiched between the beach resorts of Grado and Lignano, Italy succumbs to nature – in particular birdlife – in the Laguna di Marano. Buildings here are reed huts rather than terracotta palaces and the area is accessible by a couple of gravel roads.

Pretty **Marano Lagunare**, a Roman fishing port that was later fortified, is the only settlement on the lagoon shore. Peace and quiet is ensured by two nature reserves – the 1377-hectare **Riserva Naturale della Foci dello Stella**, protecting the marshy mouth of the river Stella and reached by boat, and the **Riserva Naturale della Valle Canal Nuovo**, a 121-hectare reserve in a former fishing valley. The **visitors centre** (☎ 0431 6 75 51; Via delle Valli 2; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun), in a fisherman's reed hut, is shared by the two reserves.

## LIGNANO

Relatively modern by Italian standards, Lignano is one of northern Italy's premier beach resorts and makes a sunny, if crowded, escape for those who've had their fill of pious Renaissance churches. Occupying the tip of a peninsula facing Laguna di Marano to the north and the Adriatic to the south, **Lignano Sabbiadoro** (Golden Sands) is the easternmost of the three resorts. **Lignano Pineta**, 1km south, went up in the 1950s, while **Lignano Riviera**, the newest of the three at the mouth of the river Tagliamento, is marketed as the most nature-friendly.

There are tourist offices in **Sabbiadoro** (☎ 0431 7 18 21; [www.aptlignano.it](http://www.aptlignano.it); Via Latisana 42) and **Pineta** (☎ 0431 42 21 69; Via dei Pini 53; ☔ Jun-Sep). Hotels (around 135) and holiday flats abound. There are also three camping grounds. Check the [www.lignano.it](http://www.lignano.it) website, on which you can do everything from booking a hotel or an umbrella on the beach to buying a boat.

In Sabbiadoro, portside **Hotel La Goletta** (☎ 0431 7 12 74; [www.hotelgoletta.it](http://www.hotelgoletta.it); Viale Italia 44; s €33-43, d €66-86; ☑) is a reasonable choice. Some of the neutrally decorated, tile-floored rooms look virtually right over the marina.

The young and restless of Udine descend on Lignano on summer nights.

Lignano Sabbiadoro is linked by bus to Udine (€5.10, 1½ hours, many daily).

## PORDENONE & AROUND

### Pordenone

pop 51,300

'Pordenone': you see the royal blue station sign as your *treno* stops halfway between Venice and Trieste, but the name barely registers. Just another wayside Italian town, you assume, with narrow, chaotic streets and too many Fiats. Or is it?

*Scenda* (get off), and proceed 400m or so to the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0434 52 03 81; Via Damiani 2c; ☔ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) and you'll learn that Pordenone is actually rather historic and grandiose.

Pedestrianised, cafe-lined Corso Vittorio Emanuele II draws in an elegant curve between Piazza Cavour and the *duomo* (cathedral) and is lined by an almost unbroken chain of covered *portici* (porches).

The bare Romanesque-Gothic facade of the **Duomo di San Marco** (Piazza San Marco; ☔ 7.30am-noon & 3-7pm) betrays signs of frequent changes down the centuries. Inside, among the frescoes and other artworks, is the *Madonna della misericordia*, by the Renaissance master Il Pordenone (1484–1539). In defiance of the other-worldly, the **Palazzo del Comune** (Town Hall) stands facing away from the *duomo*. The 13th-century brick structure has three Gothic arches and some Renaissance additions, like the loggia and clock tower (what an enormous timepiece!).

Opposite the Palazzo del Comune is the medieval **Palazzo Ricchieri**, in whose richly decorated upper rooms is the city's modest **Museo d'Arte** (☎ 0434 39 23 11; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 51; adult/child €3/2; ☔ 3-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun). Its collection of Friulian and Veneto artists ranges from



the 15th to the 18th centuries. The main interest lies in the building itself (timber ceilings and remains of 14th-century frescoes).

There is a dozen sleeping options including clean, central **Hotel Montereale** (☎ 0434 55 10 11; [www.hotelmontereale.com](http://www.hotelmontereale.com); Via Montereale 18; s/d €42/65; 📞 🚗 🚗). **La Vecia Osteria del Moro** (☎ 0431 2 86 58; Via Castello 2; meals €35-40; 📞 Mon-Sat), just off the Corso near the Comune, is a vaulted den offering a fine mixed-meat grill, *baccalà* (cod) and various snacks.

Pordenone is on the Venice—Udine train line. Frequent services run to and from Udine (€3.80, 30 to 40 minutes). From Venice (Mestre) trains run about every half-hour (€4.95, 1¼ to 1½ hours). **ATAP** (☎ 800 101040; [www.atap.pn.it](http://www.atap.pn.it)) runs buses to the surrounding towns.

## Sacile

**pop 19,400**

The so-named *Giardino della Serenissima* (Garden of Serenity) is another of those sweet Friulian secrets; a mini-Venice whose centre is formed by two islands standing amid the willow-lined Livenza river and canals. Indeed, Sacile took much of its early artistic and architectural inspiration from the Most Serene Republic of Venice, a characteristic reflected in the typically Venetian town houses and palaces that, despite various earthquakes and WWII bombings, still line the tranquil waterways. Of the many, the impressively frescoed **Palazzo Ragazzoni-Flangini-Billia** is worth a peek.

Sacile's 15th-century **Duomo di San Nicolò** dominates pivotal Piazza Popolo and boasts a faintly visible 9th-century fresco. The adjoining 62m *campanile* (bell tower) is topped with a bronze angel.

The annual August **Sagra dei Osei** (bird festival) has been held since 1274 and is one of the oldest festivals in Italy. Look out for exhibitions, a market and a (bird) song contest.

Overnighters need look no further than **Hotel Due Leoni** (☎ 0434 78 81 11; [www.hoteldueleoni.com](http://www.hoteldueleoni.com); Piazza Popolo 24; s/d €92/120; 📞 🚗 🚗). You can choose from bright rooms overlooking either the main square or the river in this understated Venetian marvel that is guarded – as the name implies – by two lions. Adding value is an ample breakfast buffet, small gym and sauna-steam room.

**Pedrocchino** (☎ 0434 7 00 30; Piazza IV Novembre 4; 📞 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch only Sun) is a beautiful lunch or dinner spot with a classic Sacile garden and a menu dominated by fresh fish. Colourful dishes come laid out like impressionist paintings. The only trouble is the expense.

Sacile is on the main train line between Venice (€4.60, one hour) and Udine (€5.50, 45 minutes)

## Spilimbergo

**pop 11,700**

You could mark out a line between ancient Aquileia and modern Spilimbergo in tiny decorative stones. The former is the keeper of some of the best preserved Roman mosaics in the world, while the latter is where the art is still diligently practiced at a world-renowned mosaics school. The **Scuola Mosaicisti** (☎ 0427 20 77; [www.scuolamosaicistifriuli.it](http://www.scuolamosaicistifriuli.it), in Italian; Via Corridoni 6; 📞 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) was founded in 1922 and has a public gallery documenting the history of this ancient art and its manifestation in present day Friuli. Guided tours can be arranged for €5 or for free with a FVG Card (see the boxed text, [Click here](#))

Spilimbergo's cobbled Corso di Roma is flanked by arcaded houses and intriguing lanes. The 14th-century **Duomo di Santa Maria Maggiore** (Via Dante 3; 📞 8am-noon & 2.30-7pm) is a Romanesque-Gothic mongrel and offers a west entrance with seven rose-coloured windows that look like so many

portholes. Admire the 13th- and 14th-century frescoes depicting Bible scenes and the magnificent 15th-century organ decorated by Il Pordenone.

Just behind the *duomo* rises the brooding carcass of the **Castello** (Piazza Castello; ☎ 9am-12.30pm), a medieval fort whose 15th-century **Palazzo Dipinto** (Painted Mansion) attracts particular attention with its frescoes.

Behind the frescoes lies the excellent **Ristorante La Torre** (☎ 0427 5 05 55; Piazza Castello; meals €40; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch Sun). The fort was raised by the Spengenberg clan, a German family that arrived in Friuli in the 11th century and gave its name, in altered form, to the town. By the old town's **east tower**, sip wines and snack on pasta at the hip **Enoteca La Torre** (☎ 0427 29 98; Via di Mezzo 2; ☎ 10.30am-2.30pm & 5pm-midnight Wed-Mon).

For sleeping and eating, skip the town and head 10km to the west to the farming town of Vivaro, where you'll find **Agriturismo Gelindo dei Magredi** (☎ 0427 9 70 37; [www.gelindo.it](http://www.gelindo.it); Via Roma 16; d €70; ☎ ☎). Spacious, quiet rooms (some with kitchens) and elegant, fresh local cooking are the order of the day. There are orchards, family flats, a pool and more.

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## UDINE

**pop 98,360 / elev 114m**

Few people outside Italy have heard of Udine, an enviably rich provincial city shoehorned into the country's little-visited northeastern corner less than 15km from the border with Slovenia.

The spiritual capital of Friulian culture, Udine gives little away in its utilitarian Italian suburbs. But, encased inside the peripheral ring road lies an infinitely grander medieval centre; a dramatic melange of Venetian arches, Grecian statues and Roman columns.

## Information

**Hospital** (☎ 0432 55 21; Piazza Santa Maria della Misericordia 15) About 2km north of the centre.

**Internet** (per hr €2.40; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Inside the bus station.

**Libreria Carducci** (☎ 0432 50 27 86; Piazza XX Settembre 16; ☎ Mon-Sat) Travel guides and maps aplenty.

**Main post office** (Via Vittorio Veneto 42; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat)

**Police station** (☎ 0432 41 31 11; Viale Venezia 31)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0432 29 59 72; [www.udine-turismo.it](http://www.udine-turismo.it); Piazza I Maggio 7; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

## Sights

### PIAZZA DELLA LIBERTÀ & AROUND

Dubbed the most beautiful Venetian square on the mainland, Piazza della Libertà appears like a Renaissance epiphany from the surrounding street maze. The graciously arched **Palazzo del Comune** (Town Hall), also known as the Loggia del Lionello after its architect (a goldsmith by the name of Nicolò Lionello), is a clear reminder of Venetian influence, as is the **Loggia di San Giovanni** opposite, which

features a clock tower modelled on the one gracing Venice's Piazza San Marco. As in Venice, Moorish figures strike the hours.

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## FRIULIAN FOOD

Friulian cuisine has been influenced by many cultures, but poverty has contributed the most. One typical dish, *brovada*, sees you eating turnips fermented with the dregs of pressed grapes (most often served with *muset*, a slightly spicy sausage), while *brodetto* (or *boreto*) is a mixed-fish soup. Otherwise, gnocchi (potato, pumpkin or bread dumplings) is popular, as are *cialzons* (variously spelled, a ravioli-gnocchi hybrid stuffed with everything from cheese to chocolate) or sausages and *bolliti* (boiled meats) dished up with polenta and *cren* (horseradish). *Jota* (of Jewish origin) is a thick soup of beans and sauerkraut.

Buffets are a Trieste phenomenon. The atmosphere in these eateries is more Hungarian than Italian, and you might well find yourself scoffing a goulash. In parts of the Carnia, villages populated in the Middle Ages by German migrants still offer items straight out of Austrian mountain menus, like *klotznudl* (dumplings stuffed with ricotta and pears).

For dessert, try a *gubana*, a pastry stuffed with almonds, raisins, pine nuts, candied orange, butter and sweet liqueur. Cividale and the villages of the Natisone river are the original home to this calorie cannonball.

White wines from the eastern hills of Friuli are considered among the country's tastiest and are best sampled in a *frasca* or *locanda* (rustic, family-run wine bar). Look for such whites as the Pinot Grigio or Tocai Friulano (nothing like the sweet Tokaji from Hungary that in 2007 lost the right to use Tocai in its name) from the Colli Orientali and Collio wine-making areas. Reds include Merlot and Pinot Nero and are good without having the excellence of the whites. A rarer red using strictly local grapes is the Refosco.

Coffee, the coda to any Friulian feast, can be drunk *à la resentin* (coffee in a cup rinsed with grappa). In Trieste they have their own names for the many Italian variants on coffee. *A capo in b*, for example, is the local version of the *macchiato*, in a glass.

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The **Arco Bollani** (Bollani Arch), next to the Loggia di San Giovanni, was designed by Andrea Palladio in 1556 and leads up to the castle used by the Venetian governors. The way is lined by the Porticato del Lippomano, a late-15th-century portico raised along one of the city's former defensive walls.

The **castle** (built in the mid-16th century after an earthquake in 1511 destroyed the previous castle) houses the **Galleria d'Arte Antica** (☎ 0432 27 15 91; adult/child €3/1.50, Sun morning free; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun), which has a handful of works by Caravaggio (there is a portrait of St Francis in room 7), Carpaccio (with a work showing the adoration of Christ's blood in room 3) and Tiepolo (several works in room 10). The bulk of the collection is dedicated to lesser-known Friulian painters and religious sculpture.

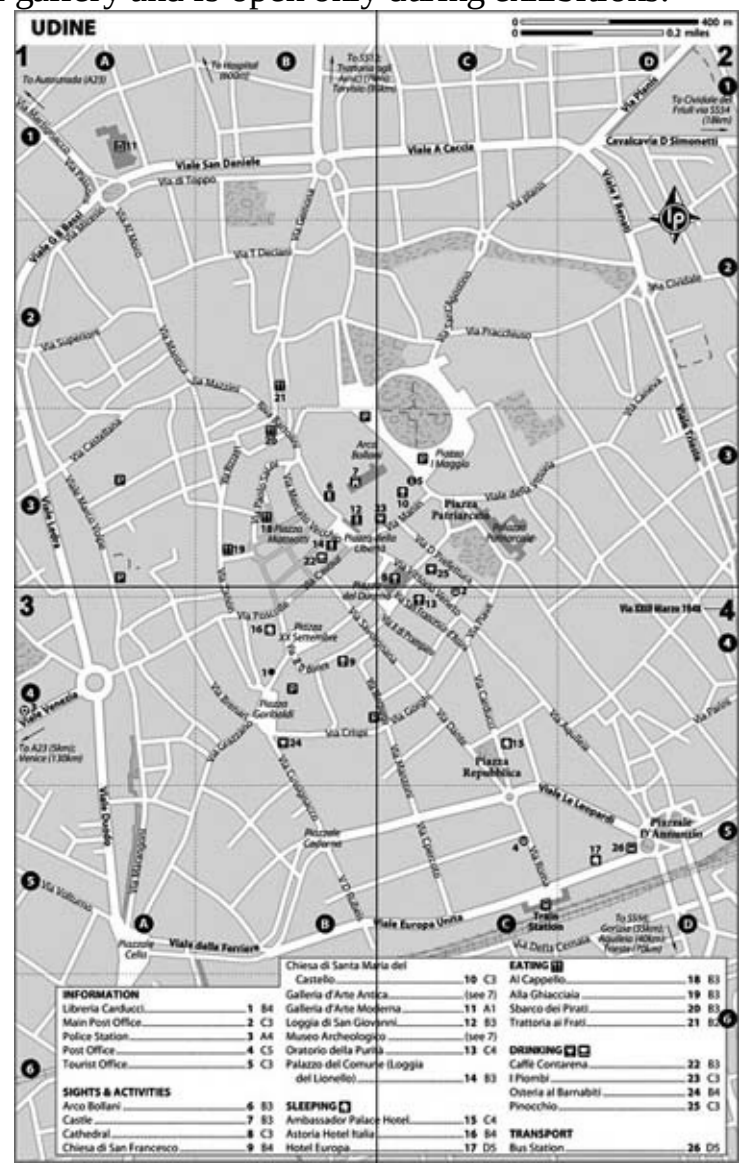
Admission includes a visit to the **Museo Archeologico**, also in the castle, with objects dating as far back as the Iron Age. The 12th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria del Castello** on the hill used to stand within the medieval castle walls and still boasts some frescoes inside.

## CATHEDRAL & AROUND

Heading south from Piazza della Libertà down Via Vittorio Veneto, you reach Piazza del Duomo and

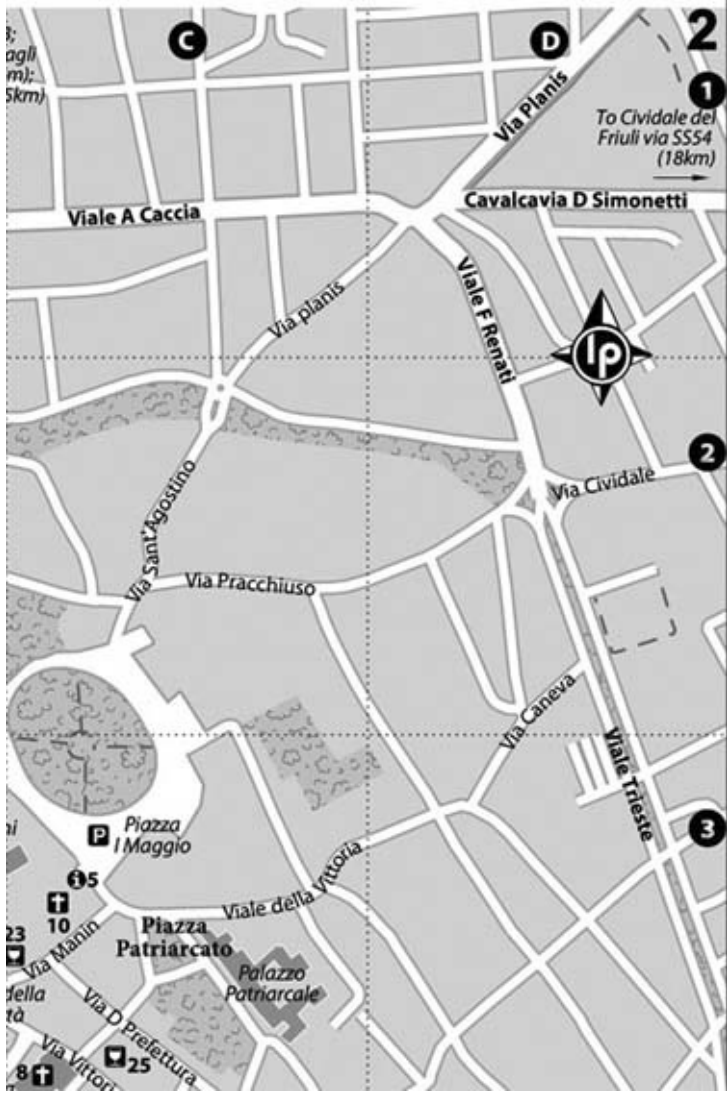
Udine's 13th-century Romanesque-Gothic **cathedral**. Housed in a couple of chapels is the **Museo del Duomo** (☎ 0432 50 68 30; admission free; 🕒 9am-noon & 4-6pm Tue-Sat, 4-6pm Sun), among whose most interesting elements are the 13th- to 17th-century frescoes in the Cappella di San Nicolò. Across the street is the **Oratorio della Purità** (Piazza del Duomo), with a beautiful ceiling painting of the Assumption by Giambattista Tiepolo, and eight biblical scenes in chiaroscuro by Giandomenico Tiepolo on the walls. The building had been raised as a theatre in 1680 but the patriarch of Aquileia had it transformed 80 years later out of repugnance for such a devilish institution so close to the cathedral. Ask in the cathedral for a guided tour (free) of the oratory, which is otherwise generally not open.

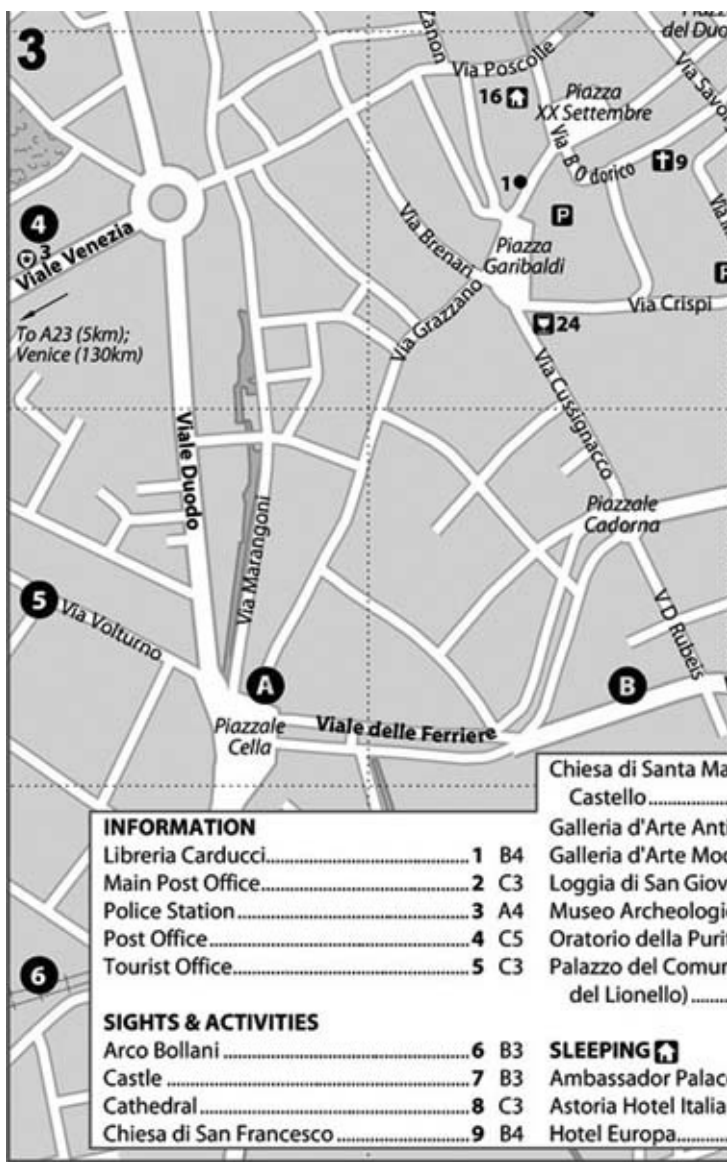
South of Piazza del Duomo, the 13th-century **Chiesa di San Francesco** (Largo Ospedale Vecchio; adult/child €5/3.50; 🕒 exhibitions 9am-noon & 3.30-7pm Tue-Sun) was once one of Udine's most striking churches. It is now used as a gallery and is open only during exhibitions.





0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles





To A23 (5km);  
Venice (130km)

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Galleria d'Arte Moc	
Loggia di San Giov.	
Museo Archeologic	
Oratorio della Purit	
Palazzo del Comur	
del Lionello) .....	

**SLEEPING**

Ambassador Palac
Astoria Hotel Italia
Hotel Europa.....



## GALLERIA D'ARTE MODERNA

The **Modern Art Gallery** (☎ 0432 29 58 91; Piazzale Paolo Diacono 22; adult/child Mon-Sat €3/1.50, admission free Sun; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) was established in 1885 after a rich Udinese merchant left his estate to the city. Since then, the gallery has absorbed other collections as well. It features works by well-known 20th-century Italian artists, such as De Chirico, Severini and Morandi.

## Sleeping

For farmhouse accommodation around Udine, contact **Agriturismo del Friuli Venezia Giulia** (☎ 0432 20 26 46; [www.agriturismofvg.com](http://www.agriturismofvg.com); Via Gorgi 27).

**Hotel Europa** (☎ 0432 50 87 31; [www.hoteleuropa.ud.it](http://www.hoteleuropa.ud.it); Viale Europa Unita 17; s/d €58/92; 📞 🚰) A standard close-to-the-station hotel, the Europa is economical, if a little musty, but close enough to negotiate with a heavy suitcase and no sense of direction (meaning you'll save on taxi fares). The rooms are large and the no-frills service is polite. The city centre's a not unpleasant 20-minute walk.

**Astoria Hotel Italia** (☎ 0432 50 50 91; [www.hotelastoria.udine.it](http://www.hotelastoria.udine.it); Piazza XX Settembre 24; s/d from €76/131; 📞 🚰 🚿) This green-shuttered, yellow, arcaded hotel is housed in a charming historic building on a quiet square in the old town. Rooms are a little compact but tastefully arranged.

**Ambassador Palace Hotel** (☎ 0432 50 37 77; [www.ambassadorpalacehotel.it](http://www.ambassadorpalacehotel.it); Via Carducci 46; s/d



€118/148; ☎ ☎) This smart four-star choice provides a touch of understated elegance in a good central location. Spacious rooms boast parquet floors and heavy curtains. The singles are a little poky.

## Eating

Several open-air cafes and restaurants are dotted around Piazza Matteotti and the surrounding pedestrian streets. Via Paolo Sarpi and its surrounding streets are lined with lively restaurants and bars.

**Sbarco dei Pirati** (☎ 0432 2 13 30; Riva Bartolini 12; meals €20) Pots, pans, saws, clogs, saddles and other assorted knick-knacks hang from the walls and ceiling. Typical meaty Friulian fare fills the brief menu, popular with students and those on a student budget.

**Trattoria ai Frati** (☎ 0432 50 69 26; Piazzetta Antonini 5; meals €25; ☎ Mon-Sat) A delightful old-style eatery on a cobbled cul-de-sac and with tiny timber tables. Expect such local specialities as *frico* (a thick, succulent cheese-and-potato omelette), or *tagliolini* served with San Daniele ham.

**Alla Ghiacciaia** (☎ 0432 50 24 71; Via Zanon 13; meals €25-30; ☎ Tue-Sun) Once an ice factory, this is a pleasing spot to eat local cuisine with a meaty bent, especially if you grab a table by the narrow, burbling canal.

**Al Cappello** (☎ 0432 29 93 27; Via Paolo Sarpi 5; meals €30-35; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Wine lovers should not miss this historic spot, where hundreds of tempting tipples are scribbled on the giant blackboard. Food is predominantly snacky, although with a few you could easily reach lunchtime saturation.

## Drinking

**our pick** **Caffè Contarena** (☎ 0432 51 27 41; [www.caffecontarena.it](http://www.caffecontarena.it); Via Cavour 11; ☎ 9am-2am Mon-Sat) An art deco fantasy with high ceilings and lots of polished timber, this is Udine's glamour-puss scene. The maxim in this stunning cafe beneath the arcades of Palazzo d'Aronco is sip coffee or cocktails and look good.

**I Piombi** (☎ 0432 50 61 68; Via Manin 12; ☎ 10am-2am) Head downstairs into what for centuries was the city's prison. A labyrinth of vaulted brick rooms host long timber benches that creak under the weight of beers, wine, food and a crowd of happy inmates.

**Pinocchio** (☎ 392 9958699; Via Lovaria 3a; ☎ 7pm-3am Tue-Sun) Hip Pinocchio boasts a sprawling bar, low lights and thumping music. Locals balance cocktails while eyeing each other up, although sometimes they are distracted by live acts. Cocktails cost €5, less during happy hour from 7pm.

**Osteria al Barnabiti** (☎ 347 1747850; [www.barnabiti.com](http://www.barnabiti.com); Piazza Garibaldi 3a; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 10am-1am Fri & Sat) The first oddity is the bar itself, a series of giant old wooden lecterns with inkwells. Hang about for fine wines, or get into some of the harder stuff if you choose. Light meals, such as assorted cold meats and cheeses, are available to assist absorption.

## Getting There & Away

From the **bus station** (☎ 0432 50 69 41; Viale Europa Unita 31), services operated by **SAF** (☎ 800 915303, 0432 60 81 11; [www.saf.ud.it](http://www.saf.ud.it)) go to and from Trieste (€5.10, 1¼ hours, hourly), Aquileia (€3, one to 1¼ hours, up to eight daily), Lignano Sabbiadoro (€5.10, 1½ hours, eight to 11 daily) and Grado (€3.55, 1¼ hours, 12 daily). Buses also link Udine and Friuli Venezia Giulia airport (€3.55, one hour, hourly).

From Udine's **train station** (Viale Europa Unita) services run to Trieste (€6 to €7, one to 1½hours), Venice (€8, 1¾ to 2½ hours, several daily) and Gorizia (€3.25, 25 to 40 minutes, hourly).

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## VILLA MANIN

Contemporary-art lovers will appreciate the exhibitions at **Villa Manin** (☎ 0432 90 66 57; Piazza Manin 10; adult/child €8/5; 🕒 museum 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun), a villa in **Passariano**, 30km southwest of Udine. Home to the Venetian noble Manin family from the 1600s until as late as the 1990s (when the last count died heirless), which included the last of Venice's doges, the vast mansion is surrounded by 19 hectares of manicured gardens. Napoleon Bonaparte humiliated Doge Ludovico Manin by turning the mansion into his headquarters in mid-1797 and, in October, signing the Treaty of Campoformido, under which Venice passed to Habsburg Austria. Alight from a train on the Venice—Udine line at Codroipo and take a taxi (or, if you have the patience, one of the few SAF buses) for the five-minute, 3km, ride.

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## CIVIDALE DEL FRIULI

**pop 11,600 / elev 138m**

Small but historically important, Cividale del Friuli (15km east of Udine) is part of the region's cultural DNA. Founded by Julius Caesar in 50 BC as Forum de Lulii (which was ultimately condensed into 'Friuli'), the settlement reached its apex under the Lombards who first arrived in AD 568 and by the 8th century had usurped Roman Aquileia. Though it has long since passed the baton onto Udine in terms of cultural significance, Cividale is still poignantly picturesque and well worth a morning's quiet contemplation.

Splitting the town in two is the symbolic **Ponte del Diavolo** (Devil's Bridge) that crosses the emerald-green Natisone river. Rebuilt post WWI after being blown up by retreating Italian troops, the 22m-high bridge was first constructed in the 15th century with its central arch supported by a huge rock said to have been thrown into the river by the devil.

Cividale's most important monument is the **Tempietto Longobardo** (Longobardo Temple; ☎ 0432 70 08 67; Borgo Brossano; adult/child €2.50/1.50; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 3-7.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Sun Oct-Mar). Also known as the Oratorio di Santa Maria in Valle, this church is the only intact surviving example of Lombard architecture and artwork in Europe. Dating from the 8th century AD, it's famous for its stucco work and frescoes. To the west, the 16th-century **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo) houses the **Museo Cristiano** (Christian Museum) where the star attraction is the 8th-century Altar of Ratchis with its fascinating nave carvings. It was closed for restoration at the time of writing.

Also worth a look-over is the nearby **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0432 70 07 00; Piazza del Duomo 1; admission €2; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon, 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) housing a collection of Roman and medieval sculptures and tombstones.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0432 71 04 60; [www.cividale.net](http://www.cividale.net); Piazza Paolo Diacono 10; 🕒 9.30am-noon & 3.30-6pm), on a pretty square in the old town, has plenty of information on walks around the medieval core of Cividale, whose colourful, centuries-old houses, boutique shops and winding streets make such

rambles rewarding.

The most enticing hotel is the peaceful **Locanda Al Castello** (☎ 0432 73 32 42; [www.alcastello.net](http://www.alcastello.net); Via del Castello 12; s/d €80/150; 📍) housed in a former Jesuit monastery set amid soothing green grounds, around 1km from the historic centre. It has its own restaurant.

Chow down on *cialcions* (a sweetish dumpling typical of the area) at **Al Monastero** (☎ 0432 70 08 08; Via Ristori 9; meals €25-30; 📍 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) in the old town amid original frescoes and antique furniture. Central **Caffè Longobardo** (☎ 0432 73 01 60; Piazza Paolo Diacono 2) has low tables, a gurgling cappuccino machine and the *Corriere della Sera* to browse.

Private trains run by **Ferrovie Udine Cividale** (☎ 0432 58 18 44; [www.ferrovieudinecividale.it](http://www.ferrovieudinecividale.it)) connect Cividale with Udine (€2.20, 20 minutes) at least hourly.

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## SAN DANIELE DEL FRIULI

### pop 8000

There are two world-revered *prosciutti* (hams) manufactured in Italy: the lean, deliciously nutty (and more famous) Parma ham; and the dark, exquisitely sweet Prosciutto di San Daniele. It might come as some surprise to find that the latter – Friuli Venezia Giulia's greatest culinary gift to the world – comes from a village of only 8000 people, where it is concocted in 27 special *prosciuttifici* (large industrial ham-curing plants) safeguarded by EU regulations. San Daniele's **tourist office** (☎ 0432 94 07 65; [www.infosandaniele.com](http://www.infosandaniele.com); Via Roma 3; 📍 9.30am-12.30pm Mon-Sat) has a list of *prosciuttifici* that accept visits (book ahead). For the best treats arrive in August for the **Aria di Festa**, a four-day annual ham festival when factories open their doors, musicians entertain and everyone tucks in.

Frescoes are another of San Daniele's fortes and you'll find some colourful examples etched by Pellegrino da San Daniele, aka Martino da Urbino (1467–1547), in the small Romanesque **Chiesa di San Antonio Abate** (Via Garibaldi). Next to the church, the **Biblioteca Guarneriana** (☎ 0432 95 79 30; Via Roma 1; 📍 9am-1pm, 2.30-6.15pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) is one of Italy's oldest and most venerated libraries and was founded in 1466. It contains 12,000 well preserved antique books, including a priceless manuscript of Dante's *Inferno*.

**Hotel Alla Torre** (☎ 0432 95 45 62; Via del Lago 1; s/d €62/94; 📍) is an unfancy but authentic Friulian sleepover situated on top of the hill that bisects the village centre. Clean, large rooms have private bathrooms and all of the main sights (and hams) are nearby.

You can buy all the ham your heart and stomach desire in **La Casa del Prosciutto** (☎ 0432 95 74 22; Via Ciconi 22-24; 📍 closed Tue), where you can sit down for a full ham meal, or **Bar Municipio** (☎ 0432 95 50 12; Via Garibaldi 21; 📍 Sun-Fri), where they serve it wrapped around *grissini* (bread sticks). At elegant **Da Scarpan** (☎ 0432 94 30 66; Via Garibaldi 41; meals €35; 📍 lunch & dinner Thu-Mon, lunch Tue) you can sample your ham in more elaborate dishes, or indeed skip it altogether.

Three cycling itineraries (each 22km) lead cyclists through the hills around the village; ask at the tourist office. **Vacanze in Mountain Bike** (☎ 0432 94 10 44; [www.bikelandia.it](http://www.bikelandia.it); Via Osoppo 97) organises bike tours.

Regular buses run to San Daniele from Udine (€2.50, 40 minutes), 25km to the southeast.

## NORTH OF UDINE

Hit the extreme north of Italy's most north-easterly region and you'll find yourself surrounded by the Carnic and Giulie (Julian) Alps. Of the two groupings, the former is the gentler and less foreboding range, with hills that stretch as far west as the Dolomites and as far north as the border with Austria. The loftier Giulie (named after Julius Caesar), meanwhile, are rugged, frigid peaks shared with Slovenia (the Triglavski Narodni Park lies just across the border).

Collectively the mountains, with their rich flora and characteristic villages, make for excellent hiking terrain with some of the loneliest and most scenic trails in Italy. Standing at the meeting point of three different cultures, multilingual skills can come in handy here. Hikers should be ready with a congenial *salve* (Italian), *grüss gott* (German) or *dober dan* (Slovenian).

On the way north from Udine make a pit stop in **Bordano**, home to one of Europe's largest butterfly centres with some 1500 species (500 of which are nocturnal). More than 400 species of tropical butterflies are bred at the **Casa delle Farfalle** (☎ 0432 98 81 35; [www.casaperlefarfalle.it](http://www.casaperlefarfalle.it); Via Canada 1; adult/child €6.50/4.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-4pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am-noon & 2-5.30pm Apr-Sep).

## Tarvisio & the Giulie Alps

The Giulie Alps are dramatic limestone monoliths that bear more than a passing resemblance to their more famous Dolomiti cousins. Though undergoing some recent development (including a cross-border ski-lift), the area is still relatively pristine and retains a wildness often lacking further west.

**Tarvisio** (population 5020; elevation 754m), wedged into the Val Canale between the Giulie and Eastern Carnic Alps, is the best base camp; it's an Alpine-walking and skiing resort 7km short of the Austrian border and 11km from Slovenia. The town is famous for its Saturday market that has long attracted day-trippers from Austria and Slovenia, but is also increasingly touted for its skiing; this is the snowiest (and coldest) pocket in the whole Alpine region. The **tourist office** (☎ 0428 23 92; [www.tarvisiano.org](http://www.tarvisiano.org); Via Roma 14) can furnish you with more details.

The main ski centres are at Tarvisio, with a good 4km run, and **Sella Nevea**, where the 2.6km Canin red run is the most satisfying. At the time of research, new cableways and chairlifts linking Sella Nevea with the Bovec ski resort in nearby Slovenia were due to open. For more details see [www.sellanevea.net](http://www.sellanevea.net).

The **Laghi di Fusine** (Fusine Lakes) lie within mirror-signalling distance of the Slovenian border and are perennially popular with hikers (in summer) and cross-country skiers and snow-shoers (in winter). The two lakes – Lago Superiore and Lago Inferiore – are ringed by paths and encased in the **Parco Naturale di Fusine**. For more adventurous walkers, there's a moderately challenging 11km hike up to the **Rifugio Zacchi** (☎ 0428 6 11 95; dm €17-20; ☎ Jun-Sep) and across the face of Monte Mangart. There's a car park and small bar offering refreshments next to the lakes. Buses run up to five times daily from Tarvisio (€1.50, 15 minutes).

Tarvisio has some decent cheap sleeps, including **Hotel Haberl** (☎ 0428 23 12; [www.hotelhaberl.com](http://www.hotelhaberl.com); Via Kugy 1; s/d €50/70; 📍) situated right in the centre, with bright Alpine rooms, a sauna and a large outside restaurant and terrace that's ideal for watching the world go by. **Ristorante Adriatico** (☎ 0428 26 37; Via Roma 59) is typical of Tarvisio's economical eating joints, with a set two-course meat or fish menu including wine for less than €20.

Trains connect Tarvisio with Udine (€7.25, 1½ hours, up to seven daily).

# Tolmezzo & Carnia

The region known as Carnia is intrinsically Friulian (the language is widely spoken here) and named after its original Celtic inhabitants – the Carnics. Geographically, it contains the western and central parts of the Carnic Alps and presents wild and beautiful walking country flecked with curious villages.

**Tolmezzo** (population 10,600) is the region's capital and gateway. You can visit the four-storey **Museo Carnico delle Arti e Tradizioni Popolari** (☎ 0433 4 32 33; [www.carniamusei.org](http://www.carniamusei.org); Via della Vittoria 2; adult/child €4/3; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) with a rich display on mountain life and folklore, and stay in one of five hotels. The top pick is the central and pleasant **Albergo Roma** (☎ 0433 46 80 31; Piazza XX Settembre 14; s/d €50/100; 📄 📄). SAF buses run from Tolmezzo to Udine approximately every hour (€3.10, 50 minutes) from the station in Via Carnia Libera.

Tolmezzo also provides access to **Ampezzo**, a small village 17km to the west with a huddle of centuries-old houses and the unexpected **Museo Geologico della Carnia** (☎ 0433 81 10 30; Piazza Zona Libera della Carnia; 🕒 9am-noon Sat & Sun Oct-May, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep), notable for its rocks and fossils. To the northwest, a minor road passes the plunging Lumiei gorge to emerge at the cobalt-blue **Lago di Sauris**, an artificial lake about 4km east of **Sauris di Sotto**. Another 4km on (up eight switchbacks) is the prettier **Sauris di Sopra**. This twin hamlet is a curious island of German-speakers (who call it Zahre), whose Tyrolean culture is also evident in their timber houses. The area is known for its fine hams, sausages and locally brewed beer (light and dark, the former with a hint of a Weizenbier flavour). There are several places to stay and lots of fine walking trails. **Albergo Ristorante Riglarhaus** (☎ 0433 8 60 13; Fraz Lateis 3; s/d €44/66; 📄) acts as a cosy umbrella full of mountain charm and rustic food.

Close to the border with Veneto, **Forni di Sopra** is a popular ski resort that receives a heavy dump of winter snow. Forni is equally revered for its carpet of summer wildflowers and herbs; the latter are utilised in the local cuisine and are the central theme of the annual **Festa delle Erbe di Primavera** (Festival of Spring Herbs). There are numerous hotels in the town, including **Hotel Edelweiss** (☎ 0433 8 8016; [www.edelweiss-forni.it](http://www.edelweiss-forni.it); Via Nazionale 19; s/d €62/82; 📄 📄), a kid-friendly vista-laden place with gratis mountain bikes and plenty of other perks. The **tourist office** (☎ 0433 88 67 67; Via Cadore 1) can fill in the information gaps.

Regular SAF buses from Tolmezzo service this region and stop in Ampezzo (€2.10, 35 minutes) and Forni de Sopra (€3.10, one hour and 20 minutes).

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# Emilia-Romagna & San Marino

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## SAN MARINO

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Emilia-Romagna has long been overlooked as little more than a stepping stone between the Veneto and Tuscany. But take time to explore this underrated region and you'll discover an area rich in art and culture, an area of mouthwatering food and robust wine, of cosmopolitan resorts and quiet backwaters.

Much of its medieval architecture dates to the Renaissance, when a handful of powerful families set up court here: the Farnese in Parma and Piacenza, the Este in Ferrara and Modena, and the Bentivoglio in Bologna.

The regional capital, Bologna, is one of Italy's unsung joys. A foodie city with a hedonistic approach to life, it's home to Europe's oldest university and a stunning medieval centre. A short hop to the northwest, Modena boasts a superb Romanesque cathedral and a hint of the gourmet delights that await in Parma, the city that gifted the world *prosciutto crudo* (cured ham, popularly known as Parma ham) and *parmigiano reggiano* (Parmesan). In the countryside to the south, castles pepper hilltops as flat plains give way to the Apennine peaks. Ferrara and Ravenna are the highlights of Romagna (the eastern half of Emilia-Romagna). Both are within easy distance of Bologna and both merit a visit – Ferrara for its beautiful Renaissance centre, Ravenna for its sensational Byzantine mosaics. If, after all that high culture, you need a break, head to Rimini where the crowded beaches and cutting-edge clubs promise more earthy pleasures, or San Marino where armies of day-trippers enjoy vast views. Alternatively, saddle up and take to the road – cycling is one of the region's most popular pursuits.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy free concerts and open-air movies all summer long during Bologna's annual **Bologna Estate festival**
- Stand awestruck beneath the stunning apse mosaic at Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe in **Ravenna**
- Survey the patchwork of fields and the distant blue Adriatic from your perch atop **San Marino's** castle walls [Click here](#)
- Grab a free bicycle from the town offices and head for the beach in **Rimini**
- Leave the flatlands behind and climb up the steep cobbled streets in the picturesque medieval village of **Castell'Arquato**
- Contemplate the cargo from a 2000-year-old shipwreck and pose for photos on the whimsical Trepponti bridge in **Comacchio**



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POPULATION: EMILIA-ROMAGNA 4.3 MILLION SAN MARINO 30,000

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AREA: EMILIA-ROMAGNA 22,121 SQ KM, SAN MARINO 61 SQ KM

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## BOLOGNA

**pop 372,000**

Boasting one of the country's great medieval cityscapes – an eye-catching ensemble of red-brick *palazzi*, Renaissance towers and arcaded porticoes – Bologna is a wonderful alternative to the north's more famous cities. Italy's culinary capital, it's an attractive, animated place; a large student population and active gay scene ensure a vitality that's often missing in many of Emilia's smaller towns. It's also a great place to explore on foot, thanks to the 40km of wide, colonnaded walkways that offer pedestrians shelter from traffic, rain and summer heat.

Nicknamed *la rossa* ('the red' – as much a political moniker as reference to its colourful buildings), Bologna has long had a reputation for left-wing militancy. Passions have cooled since students faced down tanks in 1977, but the city remains highly political, and the university, Europe's oldest, is still a source of student agitation.

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## HISTORY

Bologna started life in the 6th century BC as Felsina. For two centuries it was the capital of the Etruscan Po valley territories until tribes from Gaul took over, renaming it Bononia. They lasted another couple of hundred years before surrendering to the Romans. As the Western Empire crumbled, Bologna was successively sacked and occupied by Visigoths, Huns, Goths and Lombards.

The city reached its pinnacle as an independent commune and leading European university around the 12th century. Wealth brought a building boom and every well-to-do family left its mark by erecting a tower – 180 of them in all, of which 22 still stand today. The endless tussle between the papacy and Holy Roman Empire for control of northern Italy inevitably involved Bologna. The city started by siding with



the Guelphs (who backed the papacy), going against the Ghibellines, but adopted neutrality in the 14th century.

Following a popular rebellion against the ruling Bentivoglio family, during which the family's palace was razed, papal troops took Bologna in 1506 and the city remained under their control until the arrival of Napoleon at the end of the 18th century. In 1860 Bologna joined the newly formed Kingdom of Italy.

During heavy fighting in the last months of WWII, up to 40% of the city's industrial buildings were destroyed. However, the historic town inside the walls survived and it has been lovingly and carefully preserved.

Today the city is a centre for Italy's hi-tech industries and is a popular trade-fair venue.

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## ORIENTATION

Bologna is best explored on foot. From the train and bus stations, Via dell'Indipendenza leads to Piazza del Nettuno and Piazza Maggiore, the heart of the city. Just to the east, Piazza di Porta Ravennana marks the starting point of Via Zamboni and the university quarter. The main east—west arteries are Via Ugo Bassi and its continuation, Via Rizzoli.

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## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Feltrinelli International** (☎ 051 26 80 70; Via Zamboni 7b; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat)

**Librerie Coop** (☎ 051 22 01 31; Via Orefici 19; 🕒 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun) Brand new three-level bookshop with its own cafe, restaurant and *enoteca* (wine bar).

### Internet Access

**Iperbole** (☎ 051 20 31 84; [www.comune.bologna.it/wireless](http://www.comune.bologna.it/wireless); Palazzo D'Accursio, Piazza Maggiore 6; internet & wi-fi free; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) The municipal government's free internet service, allowing one hour daily on six public computers, or three hours of wi-fi access. Register at the Iperbole desk inside Palazzo D'Accursio.

**Liong@te** (☎ 051 407 01 61; Via Rizzoli 9; internet per hr €2.20; 🕒 10am-midnight) Up the staircase directly opposite Albergo Garisenda's elevator.

### Laundry

**iWash** (Via Petroni 38; wash & dry per 8kg €6.80; 🕒 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-9pm Sun)

### Left Luggage

**Train station** (per bag 1st 5hr €4, each additional hr €0.60; 🕒 6am-10pm)

# Medical Services

**Ospedale Maggiore** (☎ 051 647 81 11; Largo Nigrisoli 2) West of the city centre; take bus 19 from Via Bassi.

# Post

**Post office** (Piazza Minghetti 4)

# Tourist Information

**Centro Servizi per i Turisti** (☎ 800 856065; [www.cst.bo.it](http://www.cst.bo.it); Piazza Maggiore 1e; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) A free hotel booking service adjacent to the main tourist office.

**Tourist office** ([www.bolognaturismo.info](http://www.bolognaturismo.info); ☎ 9am-7pm); airport (☎ 051 647 21 13); Piazza Maggiore (☎ 051 23 96 60; Piazza Maggiore 1e); train station (☎ 051 25 19 47)

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# REGIONAL ITINERARY

## BOLOGNA & BEYOND One Week / Bologna

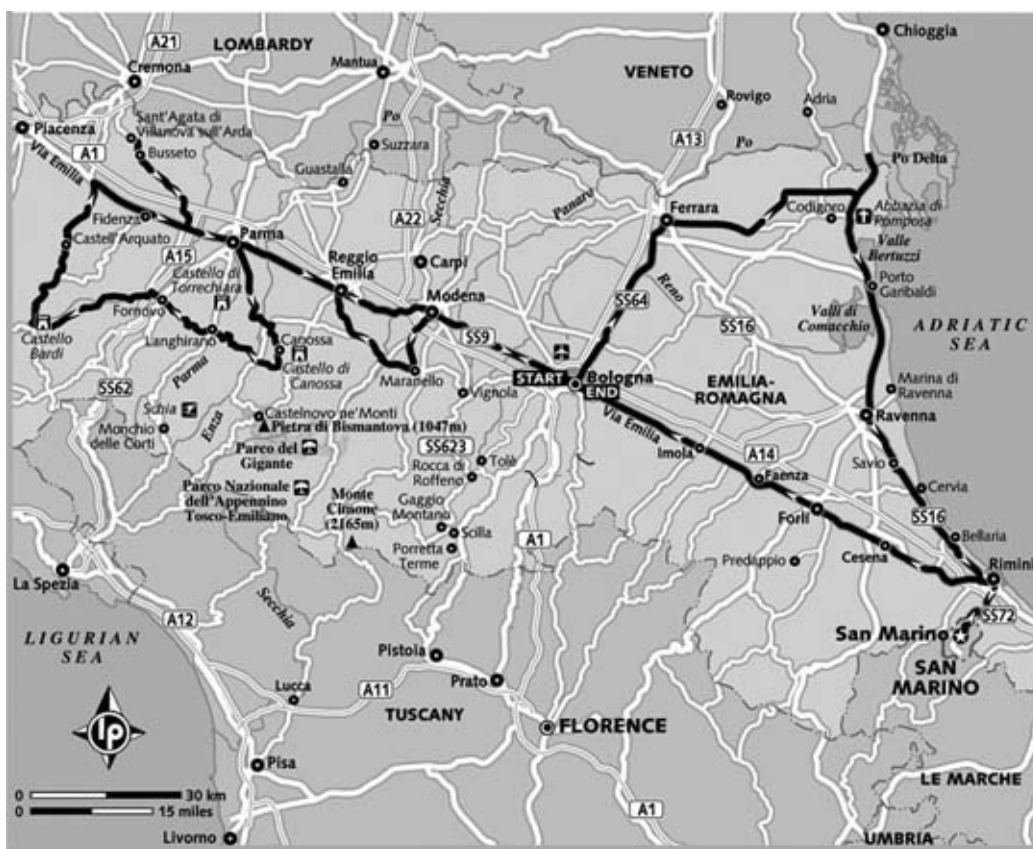
Begin in **Bologna** (opposite): Italy's culinary capital and the region's most dynamic city. Get acquainted with its crenellated palaces and two dozen surviving medieval towers at ground level in central **Piazza Maggiore**, then climb the spiral staircase of 97.6m-high **Torre degli Asinelli** for spectacular bird's-eye views. Spend the evening indulging your tastebuds at the city's legendary eateries or sipping wine in the converted 17th-century chapel at **Le Stanze**.

Next, head west into Emilia's agricultural heartland, home to the fabled triumvirate of Parmesan, prosciutto and balsamic vinegar. After visiting a local **producer**, pause to see the Unesco-listed, 12th-century cathedral in **Modena** (p446) or go to the Galleria Ferrari in **Maranello** before an evening of opera at the Teatro Regio in **Parma**. Next day, explore the hilltop fortresses of **Canossa** and **Castell'Arquato** (p459) or Giuseppe Verdi's villa outside **Busseto**.

Bounce back east into Romagna and join the sea of cyclists in bike-friendly **Ferrara**, where the showy **Castello Estense** and other legacies of the Este dukes are best visited on two wheels. Fortify yourself with some *cappellacci di zucca* (pumpkin-stuffed pasta) and you might just be ready to follow the riverside bike paths 50km further east into the **Po Delta**.

Mosaic lovers will rejoice at the sight of **Ravenna**, whose ensemble of churches holds an incomparably vibrant collection of early Christian artwork in dazzling green and gold. Trade Ravenna's glitter for the Adriatic's glimmer an hour down the coast in **Rimini**, where you can dip your toe in the deep blue sea, hit the lively club circuit at nearby Riccione, or leave the country (briefly) to gawk at the views from the fortified hilltop republic of **San Marino**.

Back in Bologna, spend your last afternoon in the **Quadrilatero** loading up on foodie presents for your friends, and don't forget to treat yourself to a sweet dream—inducing cup of Bologna's best ice cream from **La Sorbetteria Castiglione**.



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## OUR TOP FIVE FOODIE EXPERIENCES IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA

- Shopping the delis of Parma's [Via Garibaldi](#) or Bologna's [Quadrilatero district](#)
- Touring balsamic-vinegar and Parmesan producers near [Modena](#)
- Exploring Bologna's hundreds of [restaurants](#), and discovering first-hand why they call this city '*la grassa*' (the fat one)
- Museum-hopping – from Langhirano's [Museo del Prosciutto](#) to Soragna's [Museo del Parmigiano](#)
- Tasting all 18 ice-cream flavours at [La Sorbetteria Castiglione](#), Bologna

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## SIGHTS

### Piazza Maggiore & Piazza del Nettuno

Flanked by the world's fifth-largest basilica and a series of impressive Renaissance *palazzi*, Piazza Maggiore is the city's principal focus and an obvious starting point for sightseeing. A lively pedestrian hub through which you'll find yourself passing several times, it was laid out in the 13th century.

Adjacent to Piazza Maggiore, Piazza del Nettuno owes its name to the **Fontana del Nettuno** (Neptune's Fountain), a stirring bronze statue sculpted by Giambologna in 1566. Beneath the muscled sea god, four cherubs represent the winds and four buxom sirens, water spouting from every nipple, symbolise the four known continents of the pre-Oceania world.

Forming the western flank of Piazza Maggiore, **Palazzo Comunale** (known also as Palazzo

D'Accursio after its original resident, Francesco D'Accursio) has been home to Bologna city council since 1336. A salad of architectural styles, it owes much of its current look to makeovers in the 15th and 16th centuries. The statue of Pope Gregory XIII, the Bolognese prelate responsible for the Gregorian calendar, was placed above the main portal in 1580, while inside, Donato Bramante's 16th-century staircase was designed to allow horse-drawn carriages to ride directly up to the 1st floor.

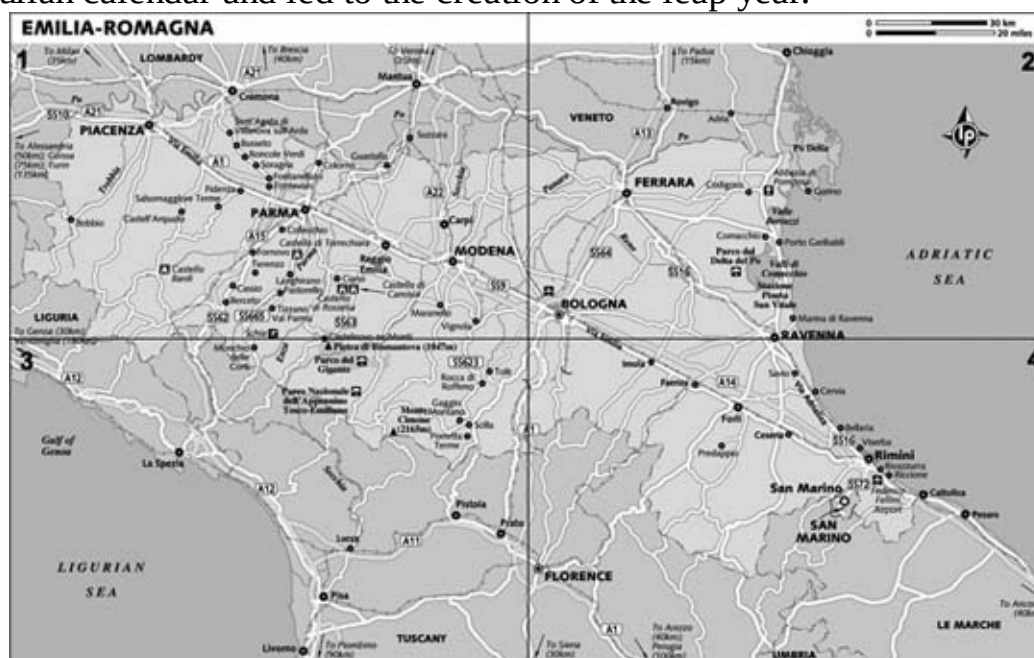
On the 2nd floor you'll find the *palazzo's* two **art galleries** (☎ 051 20 36 29; admission free; 🕒 9am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun): the **Collezioni Comunali d'Arte** with its interesting collection of 13th- to 19th-century paintings, sculpture and furniture, and the **Museo Morandi**, dedicated to the trademark still lives of Bolognese artist Giorgio Morandi.

Outside the *palazzo*, three large panels bear photos of hundreds of partisans killed in the resistance to German occupation, many on this very spot.

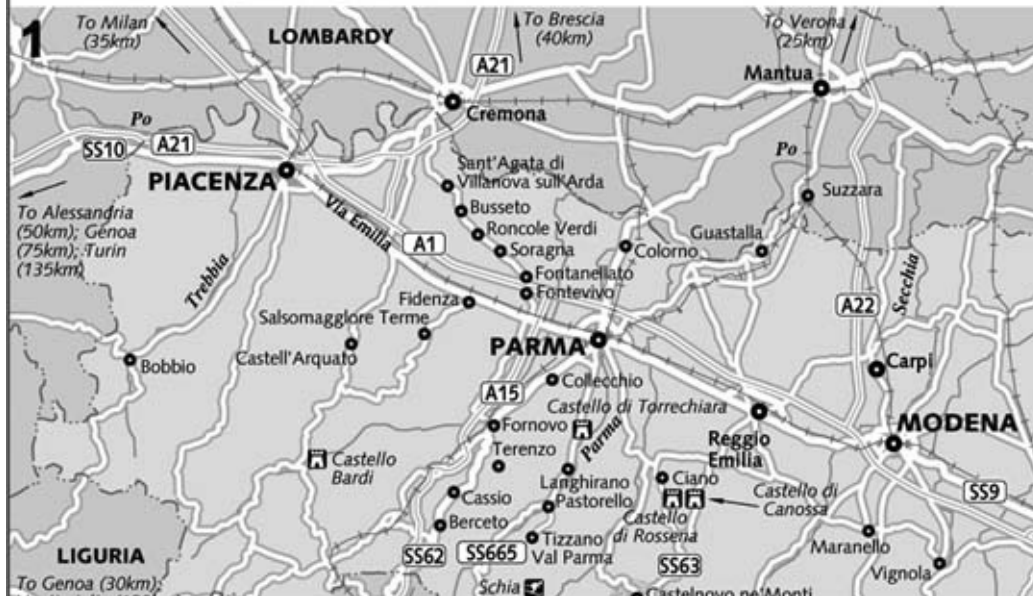
Over the square, the 13th-century **Palazzo del Re Enzo** is named after King Enzo, the illegitimate son of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, who was held here by papal forces between 1249 and 1272. Dating to the same period, the neighbouring **Palazzo del Podestà** was the original residence of Bologna's chief magistrate. Beneath the *palazzo*, there's a **whispering gallery** where two perpendicular passages intersect. Stand diagonally opposite someone and whisper: the acoustics are amazing. Both *palazzi* are off-limits to the public unless there's a temporary exhibition on.

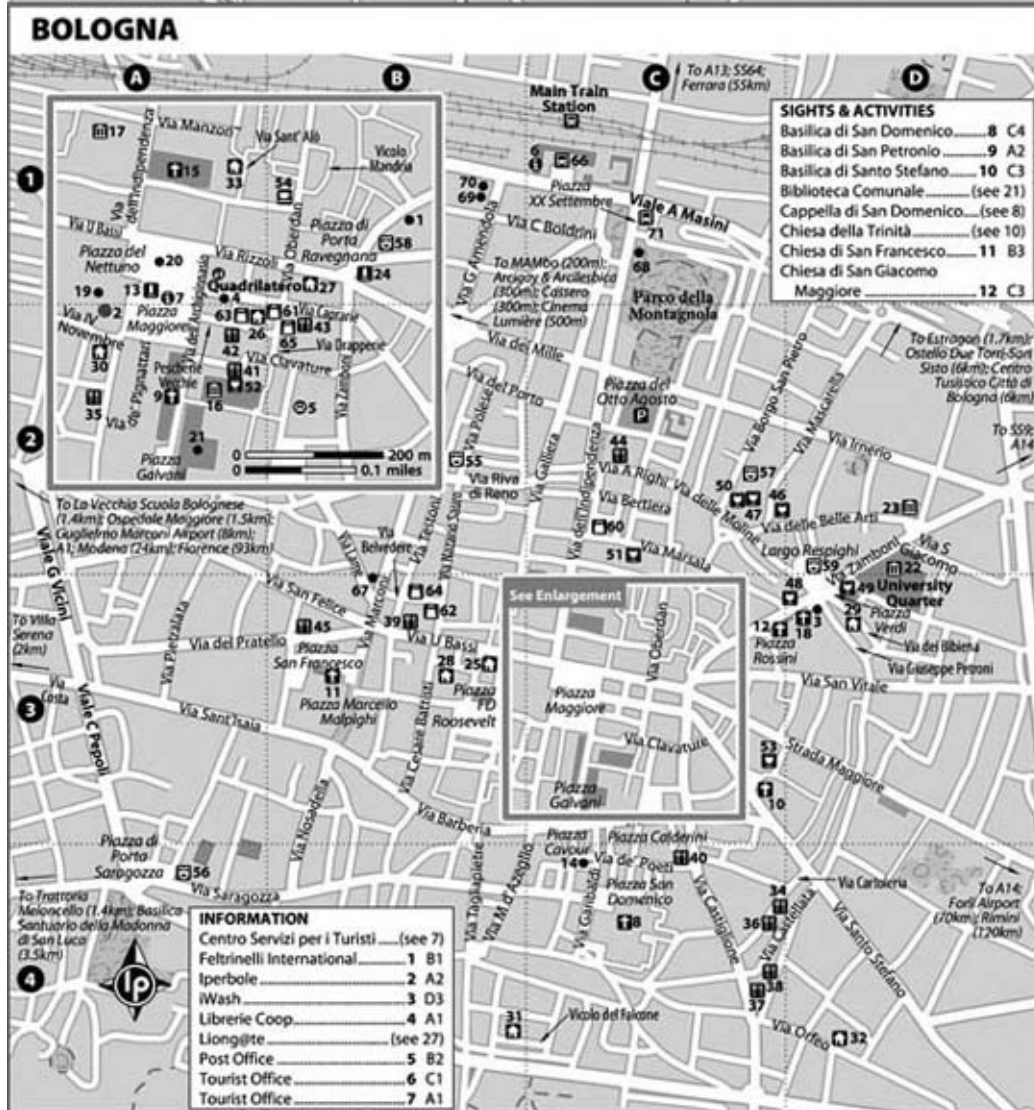
Dominating the piazza's southern flank, the Gothic **Basilica di San Petronio** (☎ 051 22 54 42; 🕒 7.45am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm) is Bologna's greatest church. Dedicated to the city's patron saint and measuring 132m by 66m by 47m, it's the world's fifth-largest basilica. Surprisingly, though, it was never finished. Originally it was intended to be larger than St Peter's in Rome, but in 1561, some 169 years after building had started, Pope Pius IV blocked construction by commissioning a new university on the basilica's eastern flank. As a result the facade was never completed and if you walk along Via dell'Archiginnasio you can see semiconstructed apses poking out oddly.

The central doorway, carved in 1425 by Jacopo della Quercia, boasts a beautiful *Madonna and Child* and scenes from the Old and New Testaments; inside, chapels contain frescoes by Giovanni da Modena and Jacopo di Paolo. Note also the huge sundial that stretches 67.7m along the floor of the eastern aisle. Designed in 1656 by Gian Cassini and Domenico Guglielmi, it was instrumental in discovering the anomalies of the Julian calendar and led to the creation of the leap year.



# EMILIA-ROMAGNA





## The Quadrilatero

To the east of Piazza Maggiore, the grid of streets around Via Clavature (Street of Locksmiths) sits on what was once Roman Bologna. Known as the Quadrilatero, this bustling district is one of the centre's most enticing – colourful market stalls and delicious delis open onto cobbled medieval streets lined with trendy cafes, swish bars and neighbourhood eateries.

## South & West of Piazza Maggiore

Running south off Piazza Maggiore, Via dell'Archiginnasio leads to the **Museo Civico Archeologico** (☎ 051 275 72 11; Via dell'Archiginnasio 2; admission free; 🕒 9am-3pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun) with its well-documented Egyptian and Roman artefacts and one of Italy's best Etruscan collections.

A few doors down, **Palazzo dell'Archiginnasio** is the result of Pope Pius IV's project to curtail the Basilica di San Petronio. Seat of the city university from 1563 to 1805 (notice the professors' coats of arms on the walls), it today houses Bologna's 700,000-volume **Biblioteca Comunale** (Municipal Library) and the fascinating 17th-century **Teatro Anatomico** (☎ 051 27 68 11; Piazza Galvani 1; admission free; 🕒 9am-6.45pm Mon-Fri, to 1.45pm Sat), where public body dissections were held under the sinister gaze of an Inquisition priest, ready to intervene if proceedings became too spiritually compromising. Cedar-wood tiered seats surround a central marble-topped table while a sculptured Apollo looks down from the ceiling. The canopy above the lecturer's chair is supported by two skinless figures carved into the wood. The theatre, and many of the building's frescoes, was destroyed during WWII and subsequently rebuilt.

Collezioni Comunali		La Sorbetteria	
d'Arte..... (see 19)		Castiglione.....	37 C4
Fontana del Nettuno.....	13 A1	Marco Fadiga Bistrot.....	38 C4
Hammam Bleu.....	14 C4	Mercato delle Erbe.....	39 B3
Metropolitana di San Pietro.....	15 A1	Osteria de' Poeti.....	40 C4
Museo Civico Archeologico.....	16 A2	P122@.....	41 A2
Museo Civico Medievale.....	17 A1	Produce Market.....	42 A2
Museo Morandi..... (see 19)		Tamburini.....	43 B2
Oratorio di Santa Cecilia.....	18 D3	Trattoria del Rosso.....	44 C2
Palazzo Comunale.....	19 A1	Trattoria Fantoni.....	45 B3
Palazzo del Podestà..... (see 6)			
Palazzo del Re Enzo.....	20 A1	<b>DRINKING</b> ☎	
Palazzo dell'Archiginnasio.....	21 A2	Bravo Caffè.....	46 C2
Palazzo Poggi.....	22 D2	Cantina Bentivoglio.....	47 C2
Pinacoteca Nazionale.....	23 D2	English Empire.....	48 D3
Teatro Anatomico..... (see 21)		La Scuderia.....	49 D3
Torre degli Asinelli..... (see 24)		Le Stanze.....	50 C2
Torre Garisenda.....	24 B1	Marsalino.....	51 C2
Whispering Gallery..... (see 6)		Nu-Lounge Bar.....	52 A2
<b>SLEEPING</b> ☎		Osteria L'Infedele.....	53 C3
Albergo Centrale.....	25 B3	Terzi.....	54 B1
Albergo delle Drapperie.....	26 A2	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> ☎	
Albergo Garisenda.....	27 B1	Chez Baker Jazz Club.....	55 B2
Albergo Panorama.....	28 B3	Cinema Chaplin.....	56 A4
Albergo Rossini.....	29 D3	Corto Maltese.....	57 C2
Hotel Orologio.....	30 A2	Kinki.....	58 B1
Hotel Porta San Mamolo.....	31 B4	Teatro Comunale.....	59 D2
Il Convento dei Fiori di Seta.....	32 D4	<b>SHOPPING</b> ☎	
Prendiparte B&B.....	33 A1	Enoteca Italiana.....	60 C2
<b>EATING</b> ☎		Gilberto.....	61 B2
Drogheria della Rosa.....	34 C4	I Campetti.....	62 B3
Gelateria Grom.....	35 A2	La Baita.....	63 A2
Godot Wine Bar.....	36 C4	Le Sfoglione.....	64 B3
		Paolo Atti.....	65 B2
		Tamburini..... (see 43)	
		<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
		Aerobus Shuttles.....	66 C1
		ATC..... (see 66)	
		ATC..... (see 71)	
		ATC.....	67 B3
		Autorimessa Pincio.....	68 C1
		Budget.....	69 B1
		Hertz.....	70 B1
		Main Bus Station.....	71 C1

A short walk south brings you to the **Basilica di San Domenico** (☎ 051 640 04 11; Piazza San Domenico 13; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5.30pm Sat & Sun), built in 1238 to house the remains of San Domenico, founder of the Dominican order, who died in 1221. His elaborate sarcophagus is in the **Cappella di San Domenico**, which was designed by Nicola Pisano and later added to by a host of artists. Michelangelo carved the angel on the right of the altar when he was only 19. Notice, too, the intricately executed wooden tableaux of the choir stalls. When Mozart spent a month at the

city's music academy, he occasionally played the church's organ.

Some way to the west, the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 051 22 17 62; Piazza San Francesco; ☎ 6.30am-noon & 3-7pm) was one of the first churches in Italy to be built in the French Gothic style. Features include the tomb of Pope Alexander V and a remarkable 14th-century marble altarpiece depicting sundry saints and scenes from the life of St Francis.

About 3.5km southwest of the city centre, the hilltop **Basilica Santuario della Madonna di San Luca** (☎ 051 614 23 39; Via di San Luca 36; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Feb, to 6pm Mar) houses a representation of the Virgin Mary, supposedly painted by St Luke and transported from the Middle East to Bologna in the 12th century. The 18th-century sanctuary is connected to the city walls by the world's longest portico, held aloft by 666 arches, beginning at Piazza di Porta Saragozza. Take bus 20 from the city centre to Villa Spada, from where you can continue by minibus (buy the €3.40 return ticket on board) to the sanctuary. Alternatively, continue one more stop on bus 20 to the Meloncello arch and walk the remaining 2km under the arches.

## University Quarter

Towering above Piazza di Porta Ravegnana, Bologna's two leaning towers, Le Due Torri, are unmistakable landmarks. The taller of the two, the 97.6m-high **Torre degli Asinelli** (admission €3; ☎ 9am-6pm, to 5pm Oct-May) is open to the public, although it's not advisable for the weak-kneed (there are 498 steps) or superstitious students (local lore says if you climb the tower you'll never graduate). Built by the Asinelli family between 1109 and 1119, today it leans 1.3m off vertical. The neighbouring 48m **Torre Garisenda** is sensibly out of bounds given its drunken 3.2m tilt.

From the two towers, head southeast along Via Santo Stefano for the **Basilica di Santo Stefano** (☎ 051 22 32 56; Via Santo Stefano 24; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm), an atmospheric medieval religious complex. Originally there were seven churches – hence the basilica's nickname Sette Chiese – but only four remain. Entry is via the 11th-century **Chiesa del Crocefisso**, which houses the bones of San Petronio and leads through to the **Chiesa del Santo Sepolcro**. This austere octagonal structure probably started life as a baptistry. Next door, the **Cortile di Pilato** is named after the central basin in which Pontius Pilate is said to have washed his hands after condemning Christ to death. In fact, it's an 8th-century Lombard artefact. Beyond the courtyard, the **Chiesa della Trinità** connects to a modest cloister and a small **museum**. The fourth church, the **Santi Vitale e Agricola**, is the city's oldest. Incorporating recycled Roman masonry and carvings, the bulk of the building dates from the 11th century. The considerably older tombs of two saints in the side aisles once served as altars.

To the north of the basilica complex, along Via Zamboni, the 13th-century **Chiesa di San Giacomo Maggiore** (☎ 051 22 59 70; Piazza Rossini; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm) houses a noteworthy collection of paintings and artefacts. The highlight is the Bentivoglio chapel with frescoes by Lorenzo Costa and an altarpiece by Francesco Raibolini (known as Il Francia). The same pair were mainly responsible for the magnificent 16th-century frescoes in the adjacent **Oratorio di Santa Cecilia** (☎ 051 22 59 70; Via Zamboni 15; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm), one of Bologna's unsung gems. Depicting the life and Technicolor death of St Cecilia and her husband Valeriano, they are in remarkably good nick, their colours vibrant and their imagery bold and unabashed.

For a break from ecclesiastical art head down the road to the university museums at **Palazzo Poggi** (☎ 051 209 93 98; [www.museopalazzopoggi.unibo.it](http://www.museopalazzopoggi.unibo.it); Via Zamboni 33; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Tue-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Sat & Sun), where you can peruse waxwork uteri in the Obstetrics Museum and giant tortoise shells in the Museum of Natural Sciences. Further surprises are to



be found in museums dedicated to ships and old maps, military architecture and physics.

Back on the art trail, the **Pinacoteca Nazionale** (☎ 051 420 94 11; Via delle Belle Arti 56; adult/child €4/2; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) has a strong collection of works by Bolognese artists from the 14th century onwards, including a number of important canvases by the late-16th-century Carracci cousins Ludovico, Agostino and Annibale. Among the founding fathers of Italian baroque art, the Carraccis were deeply influenced by the Counter-Reformation sweeping through Italy in the latter half of the 16th century. Much of their work is religious and their imagery is often highly charged and emotional, designed to appeal to the piety of the viewing public. Works to look out for include Ludovico's *Madonna Bargellini*, the *Comunione di San Girolamo* (Communion of St Jerome) by Agostino and the *Madonna di San Ludovico* by Annibale. Elsewhere in the gallery you'll find several works by Giotto, as well as Raphael's *Estasi di Santa Cecilia* (Ecstasy of St Cecilia). El Greco and Titian are also represented, but by comparatively little-known works.

## North of Piazza Maggiore

A short walk north of Piazza Maggiore, Bologna's cathedral, the **Metropolitana di San Pietro** (☎ 051 22 21 12; Via dell'Indipendenza 9; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 4-6.15pm) has suffered redevelopment many times over the centuries. More a landmark than somewhere to search out, it stands opposite the **Museo Civico Medievale** (☎ 051 219 39 30; Via Manzoni 4; admission free; 🕒 9am-3pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun), over the road in the 15th-century Palazzo Ghilisardi-Fava. Of interest in the museum are the fine frescoes by Jacopo della Quercia and the collection of battle armour, bronze statues and medieval coffin slabs.

Further up, near the northwestern edge of the historical centre, **MAMbo** (Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna; ☎ 051 649 66 11; Via Don Minzoni 14; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 10pm Thu) is Bologna's newest museum. Housed in a cavernous former municipal bakery, its permanent and rotating exhibits showcase the work of up-and-coming Italian artists.

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## ACTIVITIES

Take time out to rejuvenate with a sauna and scrub at **Hammam Bleu** (☎ 051 58 01 62; [www.hammam.it](http://www.hammam.it); Vicolo Barbazzi 4; 🕒 noon-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun), a Turkish bath in the historic centre. Prices start at €50 for a half-hour rub down.

For information on cycling in Bologna and the region as a whole, see the boxed text, opposite.

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## COURSES

Not only a great place to eat, Bologna is also a good place to learn to cook. **La Vecchia Scuola Bolognese** (☎ 051 649 15 76; [www.lavecchiascuola.com](http://www.lavecchiascuola.com); Via Malvasia 49) is one of several schools that offer courses for English speakers. Prices range from €80 for a single four-hour course to €250 for a full week of classes.

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# TOURS

Various outfits offer guided, two-hour walking tours in English (€13). Groups assemble outside the main tourist office on Piazza Maggiore (no booking required).

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## PEDAL ROUND THE REGION

At the forefront of Italy's *cicloturismo* (bicycle tourism) trend, Emilia-Romagna offers excellent cycling. The region's geography is mixed, encompassing the flatlands of the Po Delta and the peaks of the Apennines, and facilities are excellent. There are hundreds of bike-hire points, repair shops are widespread and transporting your bike is easy on the rail network. Tourist offices can supply itineraries and basic maps, although you'd be advised to get hold of a decent regional map; one of the best is *Emilia-Romagna* (1:200,000; €7) published by the Touring Club of Italy.

Outlined below are a couple of routes, one flat, one downhill, which can be modified to make them less challenging.

- **Bologna—Ferrara** – A 45km trip through the villages of the Po valley. From Bologna train station head north along Via Giacomo Matteotti and Via di Corticella, go under the A14 autostrada, to the left of the A13, and follow the signs for Castel Maggiore. Once there continue for 13km to San Pietro in Casale and then to Ferrara, a further 21km. If you don't want to head back to Bologna, you could go on to the Po Delta, about 50km away on the east coast.
  - **Into the Apennines** – A 75km descent from the Apennine spa town of Porretta Terme to Bologna. Take one of the regular trains from Bologna to Porretta, then hit the road for Gaggio Montano via Silla. At Gaggio turn right onto the SS623 and follow for about 20km before turning off right for Rocca di Roffeno and Tolè. From Tolè, the road continues for about 36km back to Bologna.
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**La Chiocciola** (☎ 051 22 09 64; [www.lachiocciolasnc.com](http://www.lachiocciolasnc.com)) Meets 10.15am Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday.

**Le Guide d'Arte** (☎ 051 275 02 54; [www.guidedarte.com](http://www.guidedarte.com)) Meets 3pm Saturday.

**Prima Classe** (☎ 347 8944094; [infoprimaclasse@libero.it](mailto:infoprimaclasse@libero.it)) English-language tours 11am Monday and Friday, 3pm (4pm in summer) Tuesday and Thursday. German-language tours 10am Tuesday and Saturday.

Prima Classe also organises two-hour cycle tours (€20 including bike rental). Call ahead to reserve your spot; there's a minimum of three participants.

**Trambus Open** (☎ 051 35 08 53; [www.trambusopen.com](http://www.trambusopen.com)) runs an hour-long, hop-on-hop-off bus tour of the city departing from the train station several times daily. Tickets (€10) can be bought on board.

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## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Bologna has a lively and varied events calendar with gigs ranging from street raves to jazz concerts, ballet performances and religious processions. Summer is generally the best time to catch a party. Big events include the following:

**Celebrazioni della Madonna di San Luca** Solemn processions take to the city streets in Bologna's major religious festival on the Saturday before the fifth Sunday after Easter and the following Wednesday and Sunday.

**Bologna Estate** A three-month (mid-June to mid-September) program of concerts, film projections, dance performances and much more. Held in open-air venues throughout the city, many events are free. Tourist offices carry details.

**Salotto del Jazz** (July to August) A small-scale jazz fest organised by four venues in and around Via Mascarella in the university quarter northwest of Via Zamboni.

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## SLEEPING

Accommodation in Bologna is geared to the business market, with a glut of midrange to top-end hotels and precious few budget options. If possible, avoid the busy spring and autumn trade-fair seasons, when prices skyrocket, hotels get heavily booked and advance reservations are essential. Outside of fair season, some hotels offer discounts of up to 50% and attractive weekend rates.

### Budget

**Centro Turistico Città di Bologna** (☎ 051 32 50 16; [www.hotelcamping.com](http://www.hotelcamping.com); Via Romita 12; camp sites per adult/child/tent €8.50/5/13, 2-person bungalows €50-90; 🚻 🚰) This large, well-equipped camp ground is on the north side of town, 6km from the train station. On-site facilities include a bar, minimarket and newsagent. Take bus 68 from the main bus station.

**Ostello Due Torri-San Sisto** (☎ 051 50 18 10; [bologna@aighostels.com](mailto:bologna@aighostels.com); Via Viadagola 5 & 14; dm/s/d €16/25/42; 🚻 🚰) Some 6km north of the centre, Bologna's two HI hostels, barely 100m apart, are modern, functional and cheap. Take bus 93 (Monday to Saturday, until 8.20pm) from Via Irnerio, bus 301 (Sunday) from the bus station or bus 21B (evenings, hourly from 8.40pm to 12.40am) opposite the train station.

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## GAY BOLOGNA

'Bologna is the centre of Italy's social and political gay movement,' says Maurizio Cecconi, a gay activist who's been working with Arcigay (Italy's biggest gay-rights organisation) for the past several years. 'The city is home to numerous groups, including the national and Bologna branches of Arcigay and Arcilesbica, which provide health services, counselling and HIV advice. Then there's the Movimento Identità Transessuale (MIT; Movement for Transsexual Identity) and various collectives such as Carniscelte, an *antagonismo* gay group.'

But, as Maurizio is quick to point out, there's more to gay life than politics. 'On the cultural level, Bologna has a vivacious gay scene. There are gay nights at many clubs and lots of cultural events. [The Cassero](#) is very popular – Wednesday is the big night but Thursday is lesbian night and on Fridays there are concerts by international gay and lesbian artists.'

For more information check out **Arcigay** ([www.arcigay.it](http://www.arcigay.it)) or log onto [www.cassero.it](http://www.cassero.it).

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**Albergo Panorama** (☎ 051 22 18 02; [www.hotelpanoramabologna.it](http://www.hotelpanoramabologna.it); 4th fl, Via Livraghi 1; s/d/tr/q without bathroom €50/70/80/90) A cheerful old-school family *pensione* with exceptionally spacious rooms, many offering lovely views of nearby *palazzi*, towers and flowery terraces. The lone room with

bathroom costs €10 extra. English and French are spoken.

## Midrange

**Albergo Rossini** (☎ 051 23 77 16; [www.albergorossini.com](http://www.albergorossini.com); Via dei Bibiena 11; s €40-75, d €70-100; 📅 closed mid-Jul—mid-Aug; 🍷) The modest and friendly Rossini is well placed near studenty Piazza Verdi. Downstairs rooms are mustier than those tucked under the eaves upstairs, which benefit from air-con and skylights that let the sun pour in.

**Albergo Centrale** (☎ 051 22 51 14; [www.albergocentralebologna.it](http://www.albergocentralebologna.it); Via della Zecca 2; incl breakfast s €45-60, d €75-120; 🍷) Offering comfort and a central location for which you could easily pay a lot more, the large old-fashioned rooms at Albergo Centrale come with parquet floors, modern furniture and an ample buffet breakfast.

**Albergo Garisenda** (☎ 051 22 43 69; [www.albergogarisenda.com](http://www.albergogarisenda.com); 3rd fl, Galleria del Leone, Via Rizzoli 9; s without bathroom €45-55, d without bathroom €65-85, d with bathroom €85-110) In the shadow of Bologna's leaning towers, the Garisenda has seven no-nonsense rooms with comfy beds and modest furniture. The entrance is in a covered shopping gallery off Via Rizzoli.

**Albergo delle Drapperie** (☎ 051 22 39 55; [www.albergodrapperie.com](http://www.albergodrapperie.com); Via delle Drapperie 5; s €60-105, d €75-140, breakfast per person €5 extra; 🍷) Right in the heart of the atmospheric Quadrilatero district, this welcoming three-star establishment has 21 attractive rooms with wood-beamed ceilings, the occasional brick arch and colourful ceiling frescoes.

## Top End

**Hotel Porta San Mamolo** (☎ 051 58 30 56; [www.hotel-portasanmamolo.it](http://www.hotel-portasanmamolo.it); Vicolo del Falcone 6-8; s €70-180, d €100-350; 🍷 📺) On a quiet residential street at the historical centre's southern edge, this refined hotel offers solid three-star comforts and plenty of charm. Rooms with shuttered windows and flowerboxes overlook a tranquil garden with flowering trees and an old stone well.

**Il Convento dei Fiori di Seta** (☎ 051 27 20 39; [www.silkflowersnunnery.com](http://www.silkflowersnunnery.com); Via Orfeo 34; r €130-270, ste €280-440; 🍷) A chic boutique hotel housed in a 14th-century convent, Il Convento is a model of sharp design. Religious-inspired frescoes sit alongside Mapplethorpe-style flower photos and snazzy modern light fixtures; beds come with linen sheets and bathrooms feature cool mosaic tiles.

**Hotel Orologio** (☎ 051 745 74 11; [www.bolognarhotels.it](http://www.bolognarhotels.it); Via IV Novembre 10; s €103-327, d €169-357; 📺 🍷 📺 📺) One of four upmarket hotels run by Bologna Arts Hotels, this refined pile just off Piazza Maggiore seduces guests with its slick service, smart rooms furnished in elegant gold, blue and burgundy, swirling grey and white marble bathrooms, complimentary chocs and an unbeatable downtown location.

**our pick Prendiparte B&B** (☎ 051 58 90 23; [www.prendiparte.it](http://www.prendiparte.it); Via Sant'Alò 7; r €300) You don't just get a room at this unique B&B, you get an entire 900-year-old tower. The living area (bedroom, kitchen and lounge) is spread over three floors and there are nine more levels to explore, with a 17th-century prison halfway up and outstanding views from the terrace up top. A dreamy spot for a honeymoon or anniversary; book well in advance.

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## EATING

Known as *la grassa* (the fat one), Bologna is celebrated for its cuisine. Spaghetti bolognese was born

here, even if locals call the meat sauce *ragù* and mix it with *tagliatelle*; *mortadella* (baloney or Bologna sausage) hails from the area and tortellini is a speciality. The hills nearby produce the light, fizzy Lambrusco red and a full, dry sauvignon blanc.

The university district northeast of Via Rizzoli harbours hundreds of restaurants, trattorias, takeaways and cafes catering to hard-up students and gourmet diners alike. For foodie gifts head to the sumptuous delis in the Quadrilatero.

## Restaurants

### BUDGET

**Trattoria Fantoni** (☎ 051 23 63 58; Via del Pratello 11a; meals €15; 🗓 closed Sun & dinner Mon) To the west of the centre, Via del Pratello is a long-standing bohemian hang-out packed with pubs, trattorias and bars. One of the best, Fantoni is a much-loved eatery dishing up classic Italian food at welcome prices. The atmosphere's jovial and the decor is an agreeable clash of clutter and modern art.

**our pick Trattoria del Rosso** (☎ 051 23 67 30; Via A Righi 30; meals €16-18; 🗓 lunch & dinner) This perennially popular trattoria is said to be the oldest in the city. The daily fixed-price lunch and dinner menus (€10) are exceptional value and the vegetarian options are a welcome sight in such a meat-obsessed city.

**Tamburini** (☎ 051 23 47 26; Via Caprarie 1; meals €20; 🗓 lunch Mon-Sat) Bologna's most famous delicatessen also has a classy self-service lunch canteen. To grab a table get here early or be prepared to queue.

### MIDRANGE

**P122@s** (☎ 051 22 45 89; Via dei Musei 2-4; pizzas €6-9, meals €35-45) This trendy spot under the porticoes near Piazza Maggiore attracts a fashionable local crowd with its wood-fired pizzas and tasty – if pricey – pasta, meat and fish dishes.

**Osteria de' Poeti** (☎ 051 23 61 66; Via de' Poeti 1b; meals €30-40; 🗓 closed Mon Oct-May, Sun Jun-Aug) In the wine cellar of a 14th-century *palazzo*, this historic eatery is an atmospheric place to enjoy hearty local fare. Take a table by the impressive stone fireplace and order from a selection of staples such as *taglioline con fiori di zucca, zucchini e prosciutto di Parma* (pasta with pumpkin flowers, courgettes and Parma ham). Evenings feature frequent live music.

**Drogheria della Rosa** (☎ 051 22 25 29; Via Cartoleria 10; meals €35-40; 🗓 lunch & dinner) With its wooden shelves, apothecaries' jars and bottles, it's not difficult to picture this place as the pharmacy that it once was. Nowadays it's a charming, high-end trattoria, run by an affable English-speaking owner who will happily go through the day's short, sweet menu of ultrafresh choices with you. Expect superbly prepared versions of Bolognese classics such as tortellini or steak with balsamic vinegar.

**Marco Fadiga Bistrot** (☎ 051 22 01 18; Via Rialto 23; meals €35-40; 🗓 dinner Tue-Sat) Specialising in fine wine and seafood, from its oyster bar to its let-out-all-the-stops Grand Plateau Royal (an extravagant combo platter that includes just about every sea creature imaginable), this elegant yet relaxed eatery is ideal for a romantic dinner.

**Godot Wine Bar** (☎ 051 22 63 15; Via Cartoleria 12; meals €40-50; 🗓 Mon-Sat) Don't let the name fool you! Yes, there's a great wine selection, with daily specials chalked up on the board and an emphasis on Italian vintages, but Godot has also emerged as one of Bologna's premier restaurants, whipping up extravagant concoctions like *rombo in crosta di patate, datterini semi-confit, olive nere e salsa al*

*prezzemolo* (turbot in a potato crust with semiconfit of dates, black olives and parsley).

## Gelaterie

**our pick** **La Sorbetteria Castiglione** (☎ 051 23 32 57; Via Castiglione 44; 🕒 8.30am-11pm) Locals queue up day and night at this award-winning gelateria, which focuses all of its creative energy on 18 flavours. Taste the *gianduia* (chocolate-hazelnut ice cream with whole hazelnuts inside) and you'll be an instant convert.

**Gelateria Grom** (☎ 051 27 34 37; Via d'Azeglio 13; 🕒 noon-midnight) Bologna's branch of this Torino-based gelateria scoops out some astoundingly tasty flavours, all made with scrupulously sourced ingredients.

## Self-Catering

Stock up on victuals at the **Mercato delle Erbe** (Via U Bassi 27; 🕒 7am-1.15pm Mon-Sat & 5-7.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri), Bologna's main covered market. Alternatively, the Quadrilatero area east of Piazza Maggiore harbours a daily **produce market** (Via Clavature; 🕒 7am-1pm Mon-Sat & 4.15-7.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat) and some of the city's best-known delis ([Click here](#)).

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## DRINKING

There's no shortage of places to drink in Bologna. Whether you're after a raucous pub, a cosy wine bar or a swank cafe, you'll find something to suit your taste. Thirsty students congregate along the cluster of streets fanning out from Piazza Verdi. For a more upmarket, dressier scene head to the Quadrilatero.

**Terzi** (☎ 051 23 64 70; Via Oberdan 10; 🕒 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) A refined cafe serving an unusual range of coffees, Terzi is a great spot to toy with a *caffè con prugna e cannella* (espresso with plum and cinnamon).

**La Scuderia** (☎ 051 656 96 19; Piazza Verdi 2; 🕒 8am-1am Mon-Sat) On Piazza Verdi, this happening bar-cafe occupies the Bentivoglio family's former stables. All the rage with image-conscious students, it features towering columns, vaulted ceilings, arty photos and free wi-fi.

**English Empire** (Via Zamboni 24a; 🕒 7pm-3am) Serving both Guinness and Bass on tap, this university-district pub hums with the raucous energy of its youthful patrons, who spill onto the surrounding colonnaded sidewalks until the wee hours.

**Osteria L'Infedele** (☎ 051 23 94 56; Via Gerusalemme 5a; 🕒 7pm-3am) A very agreeable spot to while away the hours with a glass of wine. Vintage adverts line the walls and the cool, eclectic soundtrack ranges from jazz to blues, interrupted only by football broadcasts on game nights.

**Nu-Lounge Bar** (☎ 051 22 25 32; Via de'Musei 6f) One of several swish cafes in the Quadrilatero, Nu-Lounge attracts a chic, stylishly dressed crowd for everything from predinner *aperitivi* to midnight cocktails on its porticoed terrace.

**Cantina Bentivoglio** (☎ 051 26 54 16; [www.cantinabentivoglio.it](http://www.cantinabentivoglio.it); Via Mascarella 4b; 🕒 8pm-2am) Bologna's top jazz joint, the Bentivoglio is a jack of all trades. Part wine bar (choose from over 500 labels), part restaurant (the daily prix-fixe menu costs €28) and part jazz club (there's live music nightly), this much-loved institution oozes cosy charm with its ancient brick floors, arched ceilings and shelves full of wine bottles.

**Bravo Caffè** (☎ 051 26 61 12; Via Mascarella 1; 🕒 8pm-late) Across from Cantina Bentivoglio, Bravo is a sexy wine bar with red walls, black furniture and soft, subtle lighting. It too features regular live jazz and a full food menu.

**Marsalino** (☎ 051 23 86 75; Via Marsala 13d; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Sun, lunch Mon) Tiny, arty and chameleonlike, Marsalino is a laid-back watering hole that opens as a tearoom at 4pm, morphs into a wine bar at 6pm, and becomes a modest restaurant at 8pm.

**Le Stanze** (☎ 051 22 87 67; Via Borgo San Pietro 1; 11am-3am; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Each of the four interior rooms at this hip corner bar has its own design concept; depending on your mood, you can hide away on velvet backroom couches, people-watch alfresco at the sidewalk tables, or embrace the expansive chapel-chic vibe in the main bar area, where 17th-century frescoes hint at its earlier use as the Bentivoglio family's private chapel.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

Bologna is one of Italy's most culturally vibrant cities. The large student population ensures a cosmopolitan and energetic nightlife and a thriving theatre scene. *A Guest of Bologna*, available free from tourist offices and some hotels, is a useful quarterly guide to what's on, as is the monthly *2night Magazine* ([www.2night.it](http://www.2night.it), in Italian). The most comprehensive listings guide is *Bologna Spettacolo* (€1.50, in Italian), available at newsstands.

### Nightclubs

Whatever your scene, you'll find somewhere to suit your style. The clubs listed here offer everything from '70s pop to underground rock, house, funk and disco. Admission typically costs around €15 for a weekend night.

**Corto Maltese** (☎ 051 22 97 46; Via Borgo San Pietro 9/2a; 🕒 9pm-3am) A popular student joint with commercial sounds and nightly happy hour (9pm to 10.30pm).

**Kinki** (☎ 051 26 60 28; [www.kinkidisco.com](http://www.kinkidisco.com); Via Zamboni 1a; 🕒 11pm-late Sep-May) Still innovating and reinventing itself after 50 years, Kinki remains at the forefront of Bologna's club scene, with art exhibitions, video projections, house music and the Sunday gay night.

**Cassero** (☎ 051 649 44 16; [www.cassero.it](http://www.cassero.it); Via Don Minzoni 18; 🕒 9.30pm-5am Sat, to 2am Wed-Fri, to midnight Sun-Tue) Saturday and Wednesday are the big nights at this legendary gay and lesbian (but not exclusively) club, home of Italy's Arcigay organisation.

**Estragon** (☎ 051 32 34 90; [www.estrakon.it](http://www.estrakon.it), in Italian; Via Stalingrado 83; 🕒 10pm-late Fri & Sat) Large, edge-of-town club (bus 25 from main train station). Hosts concerts and weekend DJ nights.

**Villa Serena** (☎ 051 615 44 47; [www.vserena.it](http://www.vserena.it), in Italian; Via della Barca 1; 🕒 9.30pm-3am Fri & Sat) Three floors of film screenings and music, live and canned, plus a garden for outdoor chilling.

Jazz fiends should make for Cantina Bentivoglio ([Click here](#)) or **Chez Baker Jazz Club** (☎ 051 22 37 95; [www.chez-baker.it](http://www.chez-baker.it), in Italian; Via Polese 7a), which features frequent live music and hosts its own summertime Porto del Jazz festival.

### Cinemas

**Cinema Chaplin** (☎ 051 58 52 53; [www.cinemachaplin.it](http://www.cinemachaplin.it); admission €5) Screens films in English every Monday from September through May.

**Cinema Lumière** (☎ 051 219 53 11; [www.cinetecadibologna.it](http://www.cinetecadibologna.it); Via Gardino 65b; admission €7) Northwest of the city centre; shows art-house films in their original version.

## Theatre & Opera

Bologna has a year-round cultural calendar. **Teatro Comunale** (☎ 051 52 99 58; [www.tcbo.it](http://www.tcbo.it); Largo Respighi 1), where Wagner's works were heard for the first time in Italy, is Bologna's main opera and classical music venue.

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## SHOPPING

Bologna's main shopping streets are Via Ugo Bassi, Via Rizzoli, Via Marconi, Via dell'Indipendenza, Via Massimo d'Azeglio, Via Farini and Via San Felice. You can safely leave your wallet behind on Thursday afternoons, when most shops are shut.

For foodie buys head to the Quadrilatero, a haven of delis and speciality food shops, including **Tamburini** (☎ 051 23 47 26; Via Caprarie 1; ☎ 8.30am-7pm), **Paolo Atti** (☎ 051 23 33 49; Via Drapperie 6; ☎ 7.30am-1.30pm & 4-7.15pm Mon-Sat), **La Baita** (☎ 051 22 39 40; Via Pescheria Vecchie 3; ☎ 8am-8pm, closed Sun Jun-Aug) and **Gilberto** (☎ 051 22 39 25; Via Drapperie 5; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat).

Elsewhere, **Le Sfoglione** (☎ 051 22 05 58; Via Belvedere 7b) sells fine handmade pasta, **I Campetti** (☎ 051 26 60 43; Via Belvedere 2) specialises in Tuscan wine and olive oil, and **Enoteca Italiana** (☎ 051 23 59 89; Via Marsala 2b) stocks a comprehensive selection of regional wine.

On Friday and Saturday there's a flea and antique market at the Parco della Montagnola that seeps into Piazza VIII Agosto.

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Bologna's **Guglielmo Marconi airport** (BLQ; ☎ 051 647 96 15; [www.bologna-airport.it](http://www.bologna-airport.it)) is 8km northwest of the city. Nonstop flights from London are available on British Airways (three daily from Gatwick) and Ryanair (one daily from Stansted).

### Bus

Intercity buses leave from the **main bus station** (☎ 051 24 54 00; [www.autostazionebo.it](http://www.autostazionebo.it)) off Piazza XX Settembre, just southeast of the train station. However, for nearly all destinations, the train's a better option.

### Car & Motorcycle

Bologna is linked to Milan, Florence and Rome by the A1 Autostrada del Sole. The A13 heads directly to Ferrara, Padua and Venice, and the A14 to Rimini and Ravenna. Bologna is also on the SS9 (Via Emilia),



which connects Milan to the Adriatic coast. The SS64 goes to Ferrara.

Major car-hire companies are represented at Guglielmo Marconi airport and outside the train station. City offices include **Budget** (☎ 051 24 71 01; Via G Amendola 12f) and **Hertz** (☎ 051 25 48 30; Via G Amendola 16a).

## Train

Thanks to a high-velocity Eurostar service, Bologna is only an hour from Florence by train, making it an appealing point of entry for overseas visitors planning a tour of Tuscany.

Bologna is a major transport junction for northern Italy and has half-hourly services to Florence (regional train €5.40, 1½ hours; Eurostar €18.10, one hour), Rome (regional €23.20, five hours; Eurostar €50.40, three hours) and Milan (regional €13.50, 2¼ hours; Eurostar €37.10, one hour).

Frequent trains from Bologna serve cities throughout Emilia-Romagna; for details, see Getting There & Away listings under individual cities in this chapter.

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## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

**Aerobus shuttles** (☎ 051 29 02 90; [www.atc.bo.it](http://www.atc.bo.it)) depart from the main train station for Guglielmo Marconi airport every 15 to 30 minutes between 5.30am and 11.10pm. The 20-minute journey costs €5 (tickets can be bought on board).

### Car & Motorcycle

Much of the city centre is off-limits to vehicles. If you're staying downtown, your hotel can provide a ticket (€7 per day) that entitles you to enter the ZTL (Zona a Traffico Limitato), park in designated spaces and make unlimited trips on city buses for 24 hours.

You can hire a bike at **Autorimessa Pincio** (☎ 051 24 90 81; Via dell'Indipendenza 71z; per 12/24hr €13/18; ☎ 7am-midnight Mon-Sat), located near the bus station.

### Public Transport

Bologna has an efficient bus system, run by **ATC** (☎ 051 29 02 90; [www.atc.bo.it](http://www.atc.bo.it)). It has information booths at the main train station, the bus station and on Via Marconi. Buses 25, 30 and A are among several that connect the train station with the city centre.

### Taxi

To book a taxi, phone **Cotabo** (☎ 051 37 27 27) or **CAT RadioTaxi** (☎ 051 53 41 41).

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## WEST OF BOLOGNA

# MODENA

**pop 179,900**

Get past the unsightly factories that ring this affluent city and you'll find a lively medieval centre, thick with market stalls, vibrant piazzas and impressive *palazzi*. The highlight, and reason enough for a visit, is the stunning Unesco World Heritage—listed cathedral.

Some 40km northwest of Bologna, Modena was one of a series of Roman garrison towns established along the Via Emilia in the 2nd century BC. It became a free city in the 12th century and then passed to the Este family late in the following century. Prosperity came when it was chosen to be the capital of a much-reduced Este duchy in 1598, after the family lost Ferrara to the Papal States. Apart from a brief Napoleonic interlude, the Este family ran the town until Italian unification in the 19th century.

## Orientation

Via Emilia is Modena's main drag. The street slices through the historic town centre from west to east. Flanking it to the south and north are Piazza Grande and Piazza Mazzini, the town's principal squares.

## Information

**ModenaTur** (☎ 059 22 00 22; [www.modenatur.it](http://www.modenatur.it), in Italian; Via Scudari 8; ☎ 2.30-6.30pm Mon, 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sat) A private agency that organises tours to balsamic-vinegar producers and *parmigiano reggiano* dairies.

**Post office** (Via Emilia 86)

**Tourist office** (☎ 059 203 26 60; <http://turismo.comune.modena.it>; Piazza Grande 14; ☎ 3-6pm Mon, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) Provides city maps and the useful *Welcome to Modena* brochure.

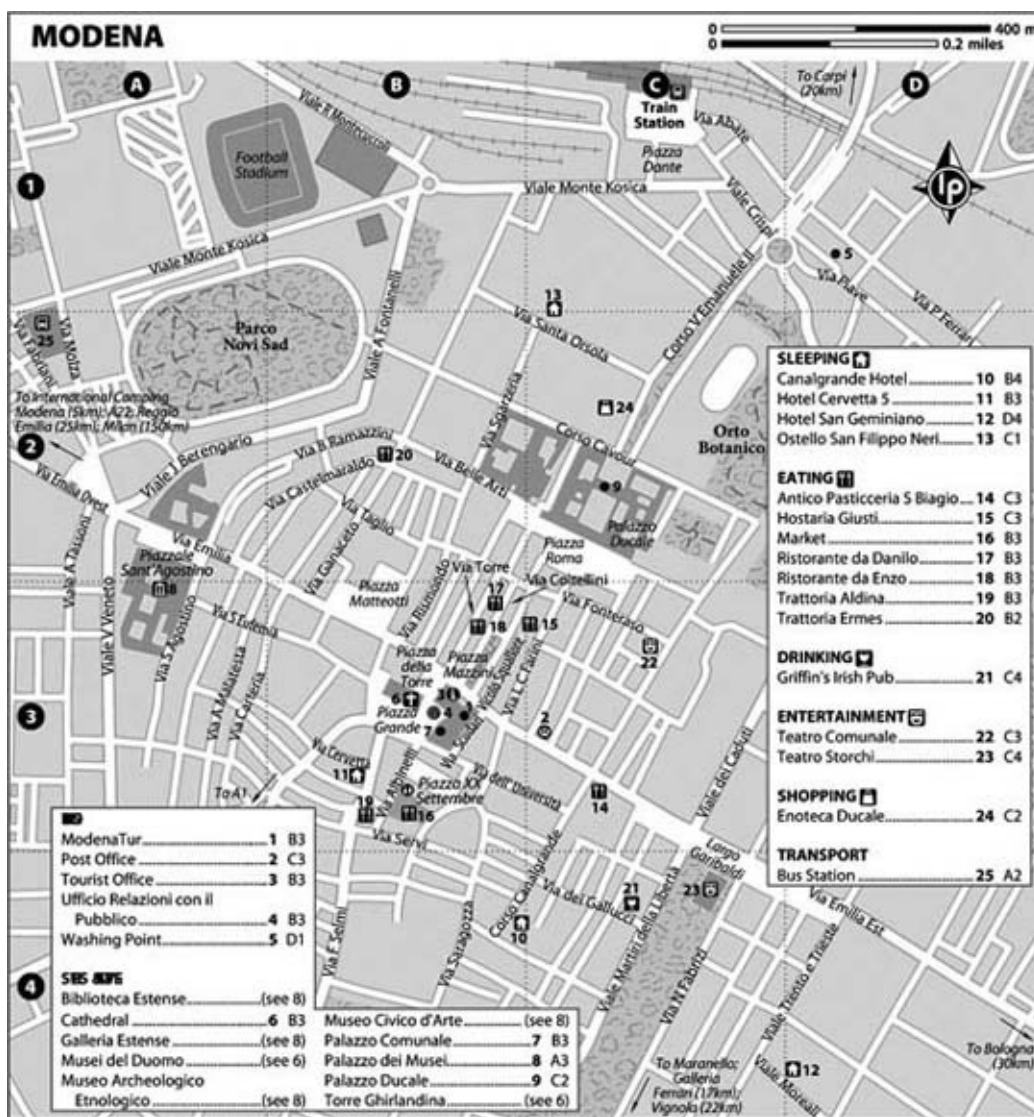
**Ufficio Relazioni con il Pubblico** (☎ 059 2 03 12; Piazza Grande 17; per hr €2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 9am-1pm Wed & Fri) Municipal internet service with initial €2 registration fee, plus hourly rate thereafter.

**WashingPoint** (Via Piave 31; 7kg wash/dry €3.50/3; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat)

## Sights

### CATHEDRAL

One of the finest Romanesque churches in Italy, Modena's Unesco World Heritage—listed **cathedral** (☎ 059 21 60 78; Corso Duomo; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm) is a thrilling example of 12th-century architecture. Dedicated to the city's patron saint, St Geminianus, it was consecrated in 1184, 85 years after construction had begun. The facade is dominated by a huge Gothic rose window, actually a 13th-century addition, under which stands the main portal; to the sides, a series of vivid bas-reliefs depict scenes from Genesis. These are the work of the 12th-century sculptor Wiligelmo, who actually autographed his work (see the panel to the left of the main door), as did the building's architect, Lanfranco (signing off in the main apse). Among Wiligelmo's many vigorous carvings, both sacred and singular, are typical medieval themes depicting the months and agricultural scenes. Inside, highlights include an elaborate rood screen decorated by Anselmo da Campione and, in the crypt, Guido Mazzoni's *Madonna della pappa*, a group of five painted terracotta figures.



Opposite the entrance to the cathedral, the **Musei del Duomo** (☎ 059 439 69 69; Via Lanfranco 6; adult/child €3/2, audioguide €1; 📧 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun) holds yet more of Wiligelmo's captivating stonework.

Rising above the cathedral, the early-13th-century **Torre Ghirlandina** (closed indefinitely for renovation at the time of research) rises to 87m, culminating in a slender Gothic spire. Facing it is the elegant facade of the **Palazzo Comunale**.

## PALAZZO DEI MUSEI

Modena's main museums and galleries are housed in the **Palazzo dei Musei** (Piazzale Sant'Agostino 337) on the western fringes of the historic centre.

The most interesting, the **Galleria Estense** (☎ 059 439 57 11; admission €4; 📧 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) features the Este family's collection of northern Italian paintings from late medieval times to the 18th century. There are also some fine Flemish works and a canvas or two by Velázquez, Correggio and El Greco. Downstairs, the **Biblioteca Estense** (☎ 059 22 22 48; admission free; 📧 9am-1pm Mon-Sat) holds one of Italy's most valuable collections of books, letters and manuscripts, including the celebrated *Bibbia di Borso d'Este*, a masterpiece of medieval illustration.

A combined ticket (€4) gives entry to the **Museo Archeologico Etnologico** (☎ 059 203 31 00; 📧 9am-noon Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) and the **Museo Civico d'Arte** (☎ 059 203 31 00; 📧 9am-noon Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun). The former has some well-displayed local finds from Palaeolithic to medieval eras, as well as exhibits from Africa, Asia, Peru and New Guinea. Most interesting among the

Museo Civico d'Arte's eclectic collection are the sections devoted to traditional paper-making, textiles and musical instruments.

## **PALAZZO DUCALE**

Dominating Piazza Roma, this heavy baroque edifice is home to one of Italy's top military academies. It was started in 1634 and was the Este family residence for two centuries. Admission is only by **guided tour** (tour €6; 📞 tours Sun). Contact Modena [Tur](#) to book.

## **Festivals & Events**

Between late March and early May, vintage cars and snazzy Ferraris take to Modena's historic streets in the annual car fest, **Modena Terra di Motori** ([www.modenaterradimotori.com](http://www.modenaterradimotori.com), in Italian).

In late June and early July, the **Serate Estensi** ([www.comune.modena.it/seratestensi](http://www.comune.modena.it/seratestensi), in Italian) festival is a celebration of all things medieval, involving banquets, jousts and plenty of dressing up.

## **Sleeping**

**International Camping Modena** (📞 059 33 22 52; [www.internationalcamping.org](http://www.internationalcamping.org); Via Cave di Ramo 111; camp sites per adult/child/tent €7.50/6/12; 📞) A well-endowed camping ground, 5km west of town in Bruciata. On-site facilities include a swimming pool, bar and minimarket. Take bus 9 from Modena's train station.

**Ostello San Filippo Neri** (📞 059 23 45 98; [modena@aighostels.com](mailto:modena@aighostels.com); Via Santa Orsola 48-52; dm/s/d €16/20/35; 📞) Modena's businesslike HI hostel has 80 beds in single-sex dorms and family units. Pluses include disabled access, capacious lockers, uncrowded rooms (maximum three beds per dorm) and a bike-storage area. Drawbacks are the 10am to 2pm lockout and the lack of breakfast (though you can bring takeaway food into the hostel's dining area).

**Hotel San Geminiano** (📞 059 21 03 03; [www.hotelsangeminiano.it](http://www.hotelsangeminiano.it); Viale Moreali 41; s/d/tr/q €48/80/100/125, d/tr without bathroom €60/80; 📞 📞) This family-run hotel, 1km from the historic centre, has unspectacular but comfortable and quiet rooms, and the free parking is much appreciated. The popular restaurant next door serves pizza from €4.50.

**Hotel Cervetta 5** (📞 059 23 84 47; [www.hotelcervetta5.com](http://www.hotelcervetta5.com); Via Cervetta 5; s/d/tr €80/110/145; 📞 📞) Within a stone's throw of Piazza Grande, this welcoming boutique hotel boasts a cool, contemporary look, with modern amenities including flat-screen TVs. Breakfast features fresh fruit in season, and garage parking is available for €12.

**Canalgrande Hotel** (📞 059 21 71 60; [www.canalgrandehotel.it](http://www.canalgrandehotel.it); Corso Canalgrande 6; s €114-132, d €154-180, jr ste €190-220; 📞 📞 📞) A venerable Modenese institution, the Canalgrande exudes old-school elegance with its acres of marble, gilt-framed paintings, sparkling chandeliers and a spacious terrace overlooking the garden out back. Parking costs €12.

## **Eating & Drinking**

Like Bologna and Parma, Modena is an important gastronomic town. Its most famous product is *aceto balsamico*, considered the best in Italy by gourmets, but the centre also produces excellent *prosciutto crudo* and *zampone* (stuffed pig's trotter). Another speciality is Lambrusco, a lively, sparkling red, to be drunk chilled and with everything.

**Trattoria Aldina** (📞 059 23 61 06; Via Albinelli 40; meals €17; 📞 lunch Mon-Sat) Where do locals

head for lunch after a morning shopping at the produce market? Straight across the street and upstairs to this sweet, affordable trattoria, which serves the kind of no-nonsense homemade food you'd expect from a mid-1950s Italian mamma. There's no menu; just ask what they're serving today and take your pick.

**Trattoria Ermes** (☎ 059 23 80 65; Via Ganaceto 89; meals €20; 🕒 lunch Mon-Sat) Here's yet another fabulous, affordable little lunch spot, tucked into a single wood-panelled room at the northern edge of downtown Modena. An older couple runs the place – she cooks, he juggles plates and orders while keeping up a nonstop stream of banter with the customers. The menu changes daily depending on what's fresh at the market.

**Ristorante da Danilo** (☎ 059 22 54 98; Via Coltellini 29-31; meals €25-30; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Traditional food served in a warm, old-fashioned dining room is what you pay for at Danilo's. Tuck into an antipasto of salami, *pecorino* cheese and fig marmalade before moving on to the house speciality – *bollito misto* (mixed boiled meat). Vegetarians can opt for risotto *al radicchio trevigiano* (with red chicory) or *ai funghi* (with mushrooms).

**Ristorante da Enzo** (☎ 059 22 51 77; Via Coltellini 17; meals €25-30; 🕒 closed Sun dinner & Mon) This highly regarded restaurant is known for its classic, regional cooking, which translates to dishes such as *scaloppina all'aceto balsamico* (cutlets in balsamic vinegar) and *tortelli di zucca al burro e salvia* (pumpkin tortelli with butter and sage).

**Hostaria Giusti** (☎ 059 22 25 33; Vicolo Squallore 46; meals €50-60; 🕒 12.30-2pm Tue-Sat) Accessed via its attached deli, which dates to the 1600s, this unassuming-looking *hostaria* at the far end of a back alley is one of Modena's most beloved eateries. It hosts only private parties at dinnertime, but at lunch you can sit on the back patio and savour regional specialities like *cotechino fritto con zabaglione al lambrusco* (fried Modena sausage with wine-flavoured egg custard).

**Antica Pasticceria S Biagio** (☎ 059 21 72 84; Via Emilia 77; 🕒 closed Sun afternoon) For the sweet of tooth, with enough delectable cakes to satisfy the child in anyone.

Modena's fresh-produce **market** (🕒 6.30am-2.30pm Mon-Sat year-round, 4.30-7pm Sat Oct-May) has its main entrance on Via Albinelli.

A youthful bar-hopping crowd congregates along Via dei Gallucci at places like **Griffin's Irish Pub** (☎ 059 22 36 06; Largo Hannover 65-67; 🕒 6pm-late). There's another cluster of bars along Via Emilia, near the cathedral.

## Entertainment

During July and August, outdoor concerts and ballet are staged on Piazza Grande. Modena's main opera venue is **Teatro Comunale** (☎ 059 203 30 10; [www.teatrocomunalemodena.it](http://www.teatrocomunalemodena.it); Corso Canalgrande 85), while **Teatro Storchi** (☎ 059 213 60 21; Largo Garibaldi 15) offers mainly drama.

## Shopping

Load up on local wine, grappa and Modena's famous vinegar – aged anywhere from three to 100 years – at **Enoteca Ducale** (☎ 059 427 92 28; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 15; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun).

On the fourth weekend of every month, except for July and December, a giant antiques fair is held in Parco Novi Sad.

## Getting There & Around

The bus station is on Via Molza, northwest of the centre. **ATCM** (☎ 800 111101; [www.atcm.mo.it](http://www.atcm.mo.it), in Italian) buses connect Modena with most towns in the region.

By car, take the A1 Autostrada del Sole if coming from Rome or Milan, or the A22 from Mantua and Verona.

The train station is north of the historic centre, fronting Piazza Dante. Destinations include Bologna (€3.10, 30 minutes, half-hourly), Parma (€4.30, 30 minutes, half-hourly) and Milan (regional/express train €10.55/20.40, two hours, hourly).

ATCM's bus 7 links the train station with the bus station and city centre.

For a taxi, call **Radio Taxi Modena** (☎ 059 37 42 42).

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## FERRARI MOTORS INTO HISTORY

Voted Europe's best workplace (2007) by the *Financial Times*, the near-mythical Maranello factory was established by Enzo Ferrari in 1943, 14 years after he had founded the company that bears his name. Four years later, in 1947, the 125S became the first Ferrari road car to roll off the production line.

More than 60 years on, Ferrari has become the world's ultimate status symbol, its prancing black horse logo (taken from an emblem used by Italian WWI ace Francesco Baracca) a modern motoring icon. Ferrari has also become the most successful racing team of all time – as of 2009 it had won 14 Formula One Constructors' Championships, 14 Drivers' Championships, nine 24-hour Le Mans races and eight Mille Miglia races.

On Sunday in April and May, you can catch the latest Ferrari models on Modena's Piazza Grande. More venerable versions get an extended outing during May's **Mille Miglia** ([www.millemiglia.it](http://www.millemiglia.it)), a vintage-car race that roars through the streets of Ferrara and Modena, then on to the chequered flag in Brescia. May also sees the **Modena Cento Ore**, a four-day event for historic cars that starts and finishes in Modena.

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## AROUND MODENA

### Maranello

pop 16,600

Home to Ferrari, Maranello is a motoring mecca that attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims each year. Most head to the **Galleria Ferrari** (☎ 0536 94 32 04; [www.galleria.ferrari.com](http://www.galleria.ferrari.com); Via Ferrari 43; adult/child €13/9; ☎ 9.30am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Apr) to obsess over the world's largest collection of Ferraris. Just down the road, the company factory is off-limits to the 99.9% of the world's population that doesn't own a Ferrari.

Maranello is 17km south of Modena. From Modena's bus station take bus 800 (€2.30, 30 minutes).

### Carpi

pop 65,800

Once the centre of the Pio family territories, the attractive town of Carpi makes an easy and worthwhile detour from Modena. Information is available from the **tourist office** (☎ 059 64 92 55; [www.turismo.carpidiem.it](http://www.turismo.carpidiem.it); Via Berengario 2; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun, 2.30-6pm Mon) on the edge of the vast **Piazza dei Martiri**. Measuring 270m by 60m, the piazza is Italy's third largest after Piazza San Pietro in Rome and Venice's Piazza San Marco.

Running down the eastern flank of the square, **Palazzo Pio** houses the **Museo Monumento al Deportato Politico e Razziale** (☎ 059 68 82 72; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Fri-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar), which documents the experience of prisoners in the nearby **Fossoli Concentration Camp** (admission free; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Sun Nov-Mar). Ask at the entrance for translated versions (in English, French and German) of the profoundly moving quotes that cover the museum's walls, extracted from letters written home by prisoners.

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## REGGIO EMILIA

**pop 162,300**

With its series of attractive squares, grand public buildings and a leafy park, Reggio Emilia boasts one of the region's most aesthetically harmonious town centres. While there's not really a whole lot to *do*, the city makes a practical base for exploring the Apennines to the south.

Known also as Reggio nell'Emilia, the town started life in the 2nd century BC as a Roman colony along the Via Emilia. Much of Reggio was built by the Este family during the 400 years it controlled the town, beginning in 1406.

### Information

**Post office** (Via Sessi 3)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0522 45 11 52; [www.municipio.re.it/turismo](http://www.municipio.re.it/turismo); Via Farini 1a; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun)

**URP Comune Informa** (☎ 0522 45 66 60; Via Farini 2; ☎ 8.30am-noon Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 9.30am-noon Wed) Free municipal internet service.

### Sights

Reggio's pedestrianised *centro storico* (historic city centre) is an attractive place to wander, with the main sights centred on Piazza C Prampolini and adjacent Piazza San Prospero.

On Piazza Prampolini, Reggio's 13th-century **Duomo** (☎ 0522 43 37 83; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-7pm) was first built in the Romanesque style but was given a comprehensive makeover 300 years later. Nowadays, virtually all that remains of the original is the upper half of the facade and, inside, the crypt.

Marking the southern edge of the square, the 14th-century **Palazzo del Comune** is celebrated as the birthplace of the Italian flag. At a meeting in the **Sala del Tricolore** in 1797, Napoleon's short-lived Cispadane Republic was proclaimed and the tricolour flag was adopted for the first time.

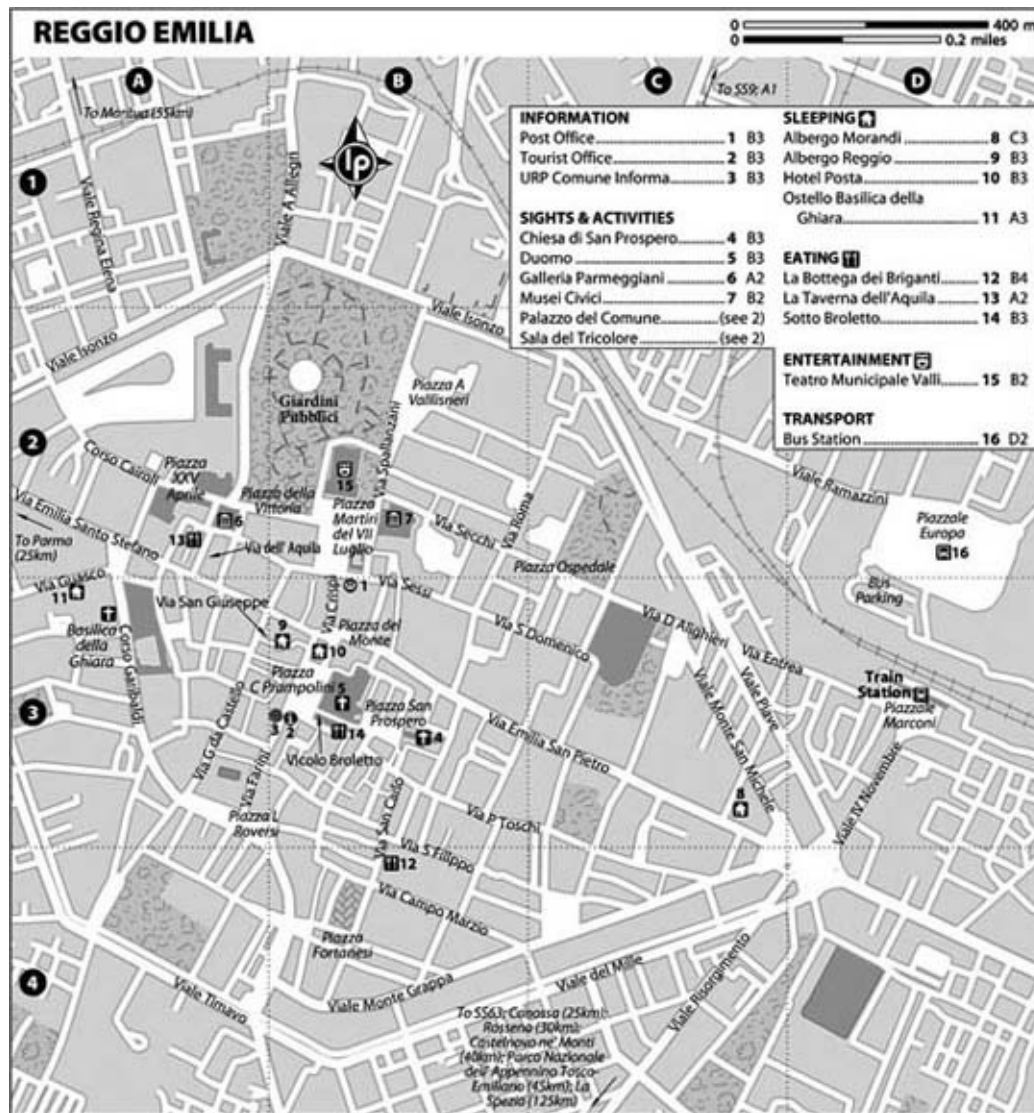
Over on Piazza San Prospero, the 15th-century **Chiesa di San Prospero** (☎ 0522 43 46 67; ☎ 8.30-11.30am) is guarded by a royal pair of red marble lions and their four cubs. A later addition, the striking octagonal bell tower was built in 1537.

To the north, the **Musei Civici** (City Museums; ☎ 0522 45 64 77; [www.musei.re.it](http://www.musei.re.it); admission free; ☎ 9am-noon Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, 9am-noon & 9pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 9pm-midnight Sun Jul & Aug) include **Palazzo San Francesco** (Via Spallanzani 1), with its eclectic collection of mainly 18th-century art and archaeological discoveries, and the **Galleria Parmeggiani** (Corso Cairoli 1), which boasts some worthwhile Italian, Flemish and Spanish paintings, as well as a heterogeneous collection of costumes, arms, jewellery and cutlery.

## Sleeping

**Ostello Basilica della Ghiara** (☎ 0522 45 23 23; fax 0522 45 47 95; Via Guasco 6; dm/s/d €15/20/36) There's no shortage of space at Reggio's memorable HI hostel, housed in a former convent. The two-to-six-bed guestrooms line vast, echoing corridors, and in summer breakfast is served under the porticoes in the internal garden. There's disabled access, and wi-fi scheduled for 2010.

**Albergo Morandi** (☎ 0522 45 43 97; [www.albergomorandi.com](http://www.albergomorandi.com); Via Emilia San Pietro 64; s €65-80, d €85-120; ☎ ☎ ☎) Halfway between the train station and historic centre, the Morandi features spruce rooms with big beds, gleaming bathrooms and satellite TV. There's free parking, and the service is unfailingly courteous.



Elegant inside and out, the grand four-star **Hotel Posta** (☎ 0522 43 29 44; [www.hotelposta.re.it](http://www.hotelposta.re.it); Piazza del Monte 2; s/d/ste €140/190/280; ☎ ☎) is housed in the 13th-century Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo, one-time residence of Reggio's governor. Rooms are individually decorated, with plenty of heavy floral fabrics, gilt-framed mirrors and antique furniture. Parking costs €12. Just around the corner, you'll find the hotel's less expensive, 16-room annexe, **Albergo Reggio** (☎ 0522 45 15 33; [www.albergoreggio.it](http://www.albergoreggio.it);



Via San Giuseppe 7; s/d €75/105).

## Eating

**La Taverna dell’Aquila** (☎ 0522 45 29 56; Via dell’Aquila 6a; meals €20-25; 🗓 Tue-Sat) With its colourful, funky decor, jazzy soundtrack and tasty, homemade food, this bright eatery is a bit different from your classic wood-and-wine-bottle trattoria. The fixed-price lunch menus (€6 to €12) are exceptionally good value.

**Sotto Broletto** (☎ 0522 45 22 76; Vicolo Broletto 1n; pizzas from €5, meals €20-30; 🗓 Fri-Wed) On the tiny alleyway between Piazza Prampolini and Piazza San Prospero, this boisterous pizzeria with sidewalk seating delights hungry patrons with its *pizza tirata*, a megalarge pizza that costs only €2 more than the regular-sized version.

**La Bottega dei Briganti** (☎ 0522 43 66 43; Via San Carlo 14b; meals €25-35; 🗓 dinner Mon-Sat) Duck under the porticoes to this cosy *osteria* with its conspiratorial atmosphere and small leafy courtyard. The food is excellent, particularly the pasta and risottos.

Reggio’s central squares host a **produce market** (🗓 7am-1pm Tue & Fri). Typical local snacks include *erbazzone* (herb pie with cheese or bacon) and *gnocco fritto* (fried salted dough). Parmesan is also produced locally.

## Entertainment

Reggio’s imposing 19th-century **Teatro Municipale Valli** (☎ 0522 45 88 11; [www.iteatri.re.it](http://www.iteatri.re.it), in Italian; Piazza Martiri VII Luglio) stages a full season of dance, opera and theatre.

## Getting There & Around

Bus operator **ACT** (☎ 0522 44 22 00; [www.actre.it](http://www.actre.it)) serves the city and region from its brand new bus station, just behind Reggio’s train station. Destinations include Carpi (€3.30, one hour, 10 daily) and Castelnovo ne’ Monti (€4, 1¼ hours, seven to 14 daily).

Reggio is on the Via Emilia (SS9) and A1 autostrada. The SS63 is a tortuous but scenic route that takes you southwest across the Parma Apennines to La Spezia on the Ligurian coast.

The train station is east of the town centre. Frequent trains serve all stops on the Milan—Bologna line including Milan (regional/express €9.20/18.10, 1½ to 2½ hours, hourly), Parma (€2.40, 15 minutes, half-hourly), Modena (€2.40, 15 minutes, half-hourly) and Bologna (€4.80, 45 minutes, half-hourly).

For a taxi, call **Radiotaxi** (☎ 0522 45 25 45).

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## AROUND REGGIO EMILIA

Southwest of the city, the flat Emilian landscape gives way to the green hills of the Apennines and the Parco del Gigante, part of the **Parco Nazionale dell’Appennino Tosco-Emiliano** ([www.appenninoreggiano.it](http://www.appenninoreggiano.it)). Among several signed walking trails, well served by *rifugi* (mountain huts), the most extensive is the Matilda Way, a four- to seven-day trek from Ciano, in the Enza valley near Canossa, to San Pellegrino in Alpe, just over the border in Tuscany.

About 40km from Reggio, along the scenic SS63, twee **Castelnovo ne’ Monti** makes a convenient base

for exploring the area, including the **Pietra di Bismantova** (1047m), a stark limestone outcrop visible for miles around that's popular with climbers and weekend walkers. Castelnuovo's **tourist office** (☎ 0522 81 04 30; [www.reappennino.com](http://www.reappennino.com), in Italian; Via Roma 15b; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 3-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct, plus 3-6pm Mon-Sat & 9.30am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug) has bags of free information and sells maps of the region for hikers, cyclists and equestrians. It also issues permits for picking wild mushrooms between May and October.

A good place to hole up for the night is **Albergo Bismantova** (☎ 0522 81 22 18; [www.albergobismantova.com](http://www.albergobismantova.com); Via Roma 73; s/d €47/75), which has an attached restaurant, **Le Mormoraie** (meals around €25).

At least seven daily ACT buses link Castelnuovo with Reggio Emilia (€4, 1¼ hours).

Back towards Reggio, a few kilometres east of the main road, a pair of medieval castles merit a detour, as much for their views as for their architectural interest. The **castle of Canossa** (☎ 0522 87 71 04; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), built in 940 and then rebuilt in the 13th century, is where Matilda, countess of Canossa, reconciled the excommunicated Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV with Pope Gregory VII in 1077. Largely ruined, it has a small museum.

From Canossa you can see across to the **castle of Rossena** (☎ 0522 24 20 09; [www.castellorossena.it](http://www.castellorossena.it); admission by guided tour adult/child/family €4.50/3.50/10; ☎ 11am-7pm Sun Apr-Oct, 2.30-5.30pm Sun Nov-Mar), which is better preserved but keeps shorter hours. By road 4km away, it's much nearer as the crow flies.

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## PARMA

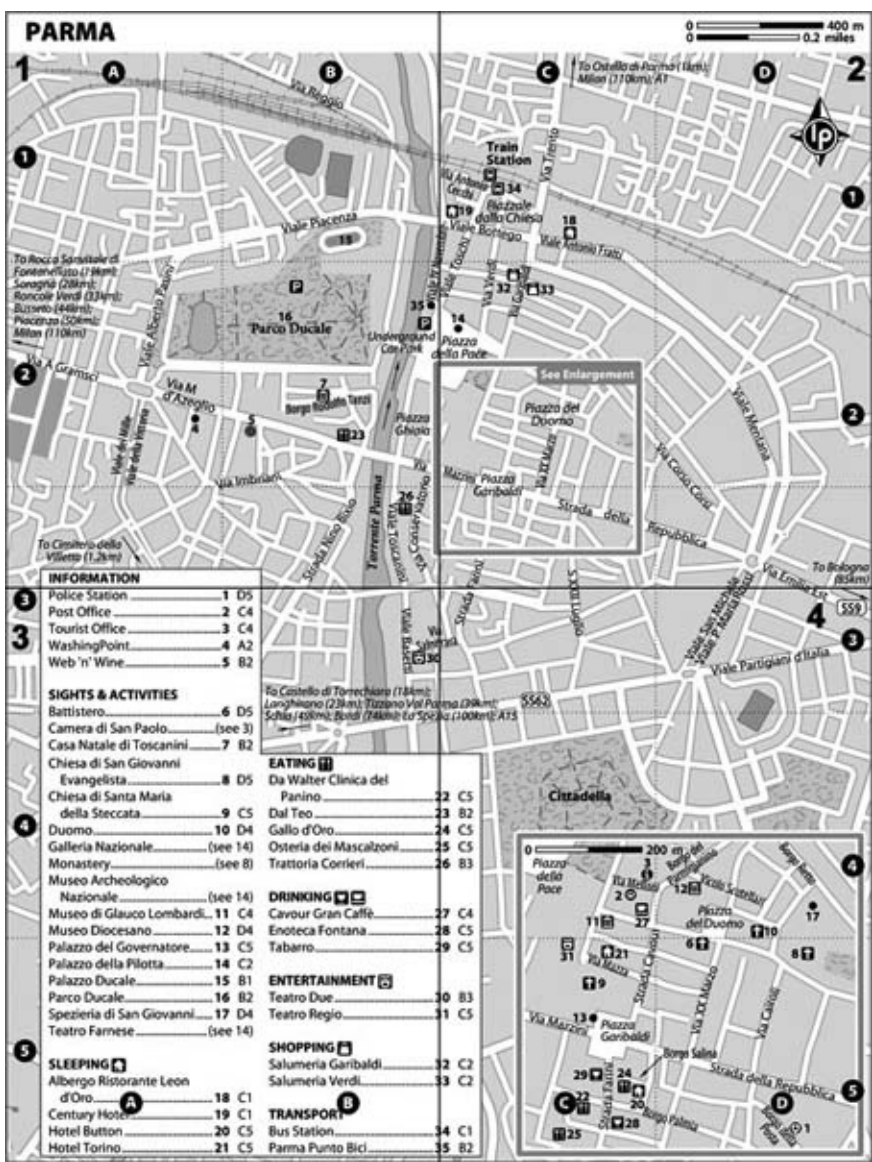
**pop 178,700**

Rich on the back of its food industry, Parma is the perfect picture of a well-off provincial city. Well-dressed locals cycle through pretty piazzas and drink in elegant cafes, while beautifully preserved monuments adorn picturesque cobbled lanes. For visitors, the big draws are Parma's full calendar of cultural events and the sumptuous displays that beckon from local deli windows.

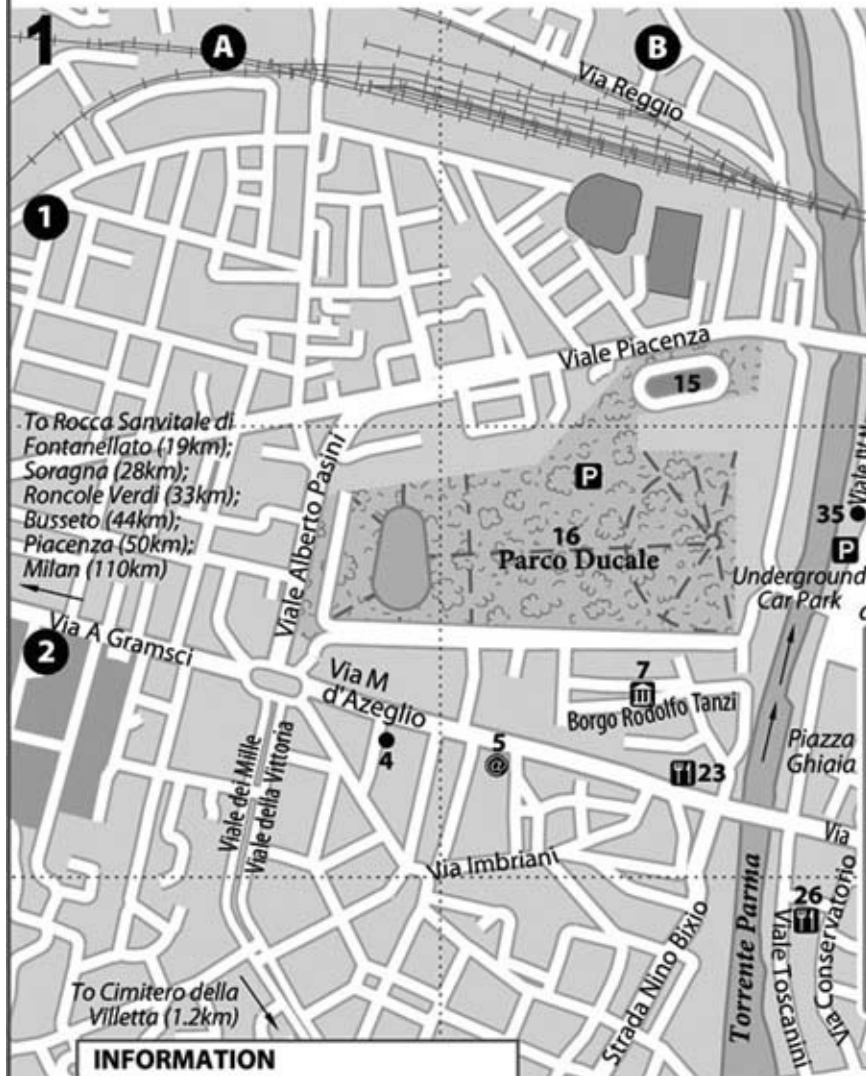
## History

Originally Etruscan, Parma achieved importance as a Roman colony astride what would become the Via Emilia. As Roman authority dwindled, the town passed onto the Goths, then the Lombards and then the Franks.

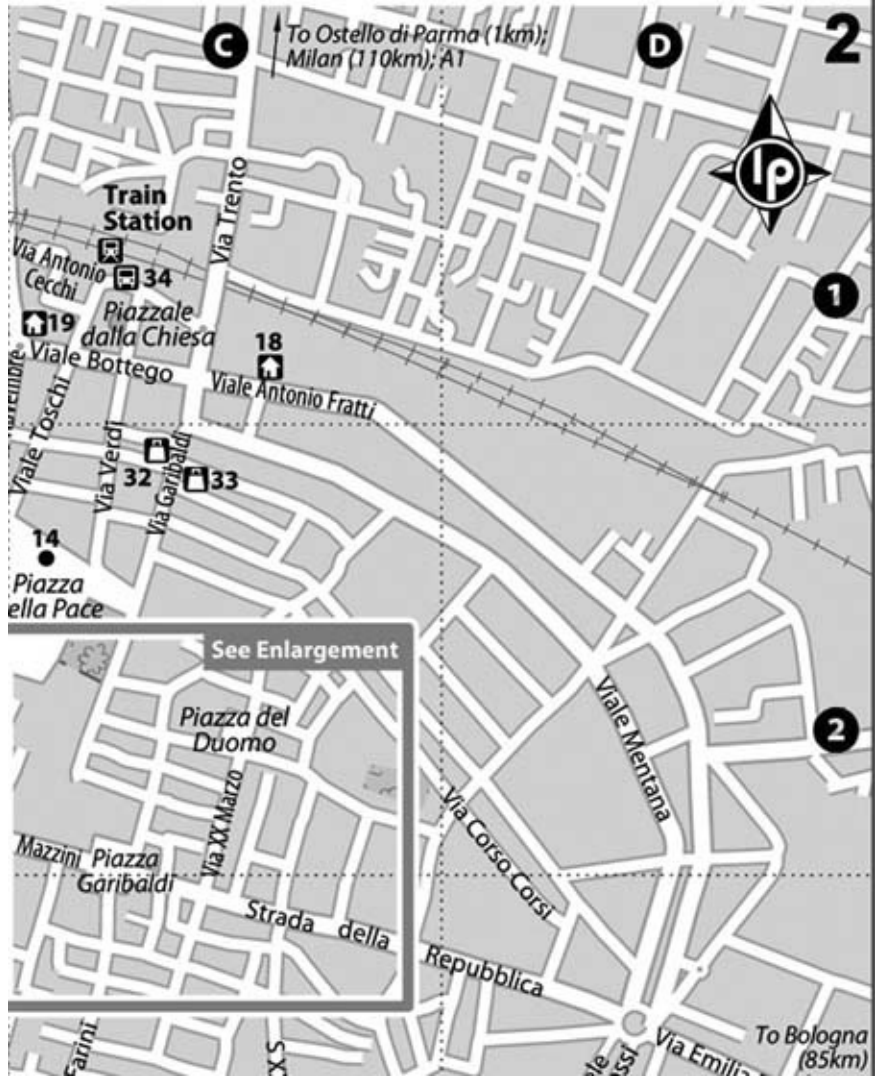
In the 11th century Parma threw in its lot with the Holy Roman Empire against the papacy. In the following centuries it fell successively to the Visconti family, the Sforzas, the French and finally – sweet revenge – the papacy.



# PARMA



0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles



<b>3</b>	Police Station .....	1	D5
	Post Office .....	2	C4
<b>3</b>	Tourist Office .....	3	C4
	WashingPoint.....	4	A2
	Web 'n' Wine.....	5	B2

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

	Battistero.....	6	D5
	Camera di San Paolo.....	(see 3)	
	Casa Natale di Toscanini .....	7	B2
	Chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista.....	8	D5
	Chiesa di Santa Maria della Steccata.....	9	C5
<b>4</b>	Duomo.....	10	D4
	Galleria Nazionale.....	(see 14)	
	Monastery.....	(see 8)	
	Museo Archeologico Nazionale.....	(see 14)	
	Museo di Glauco Lombardi... ..	11	C4
	Museo Diocesano .....	12	D4
	Palazzo del Governatore.....	13	C5
	Palazzo della Pilotta.....	14	C2
	Palazzo Ducale.....	15	B1
	Parco Ducale.....	16	B2
	Spezieria di San Giovanni.....	17	D4
	Teatro Farnese .....	(see 14)	

**SLEEPING** 

	Albergo Ristorante Leon d'Oro.....	<b>A</b>	18	C1
	Century Hotel.....	<b>A</b>	19	C1
	Hotel Button .....		20	C5
	Hotel Torino.....		21	C5



**EATING** 

Da Walter Clinica del Panino .....	2
Dal Teo .....	2
Gallo d'Oro.....	2
Osteria dei Mascalzoni.....	2
Trattoria Corrieri.....	2

**DRINKING**  

Cavour Gran Caffè.....	2
Enoteca Fontana .....	2
Tabarro.....	2

**ENTERTAINMENT** 

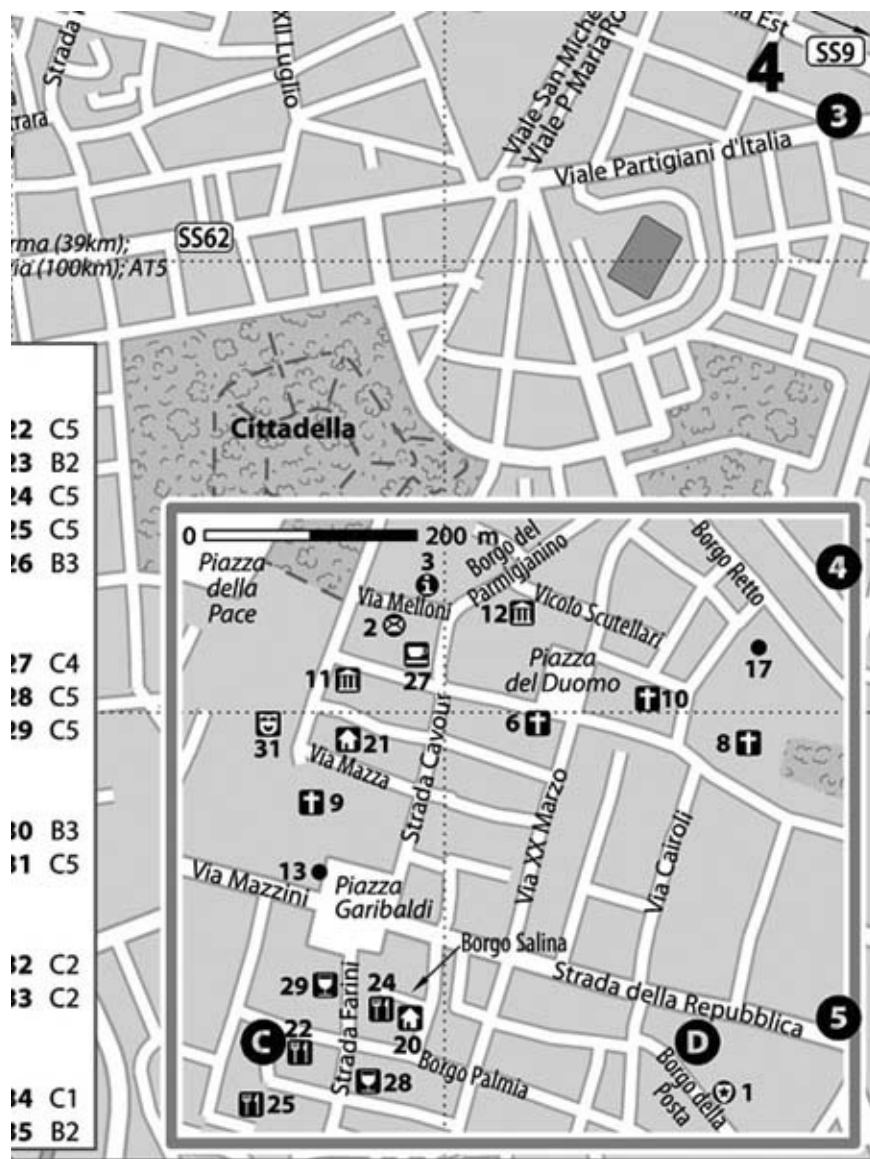
Teatro Due .....	3
Teatro Regio.....	3

**SHOPPING** 

Salumeria Garibaldi.....	3
Salumeria Verdi.....	3

**TRANSPORT** 

Bus Station.....	3
Parma Punto Bici.....	3



12 C5  
13 B2  
14 C5  
15 C5  
16 B3  
17 C4  
18 C5  
19 C5  
10 B3  
11 C5  
12 C2  
13 C2  
14 C1  
15 B2

The Farnese family ruled Parma in the pope's name from 1545 to 1731, when the Bourbons took control, ushering in a period of peace and frenetic cultural activity. Following Napoleon's incursions into northern Italy at the beginning of the 19th century, Parma entered a period of instability that ended only with Italian unification. Some 60 years later, the barricades went up as Parma became the only Emilian city to oppose the infamous 1922 march on Rome by Mussolini's Blackshirts.

## Orientation

From the train station, Via Verdi leads south to the green turf of Piazza della Pace. Continue south along Via Garibaldi to connect with Via Mazzini and Piazza Garibaldi, Parma's main square. Most sights are within easy walking distance of here.

## Information

**Police station** (☎ 0521 21 94; Borgo della Posta 16a)

**Post office** (Via Melloni)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0521 21 88 89; <http://turismo.comune.parma.it/turismo>; Via Melloni 1a; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun)

**Washing Point** (Via M d'Azeglio 108; 7kg wash/dry €4/5; ☎ 8am-10pm)

**Web 'n' Wine** (☎ 0521 03 08 93; Via M d'Azeglio 72d; per hr €4; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-8pm Sat) Enjoy fine wine and good tunes as you surf the net.

# Sights

## PIAZZA DEL DUOMO & AROUND

From the outside, Parma's **Duomo** (☎ 0521 23 58 86; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm), consecrated in 1106, is classic Lombard-Romanesque. Inside, the gilded pulpit and ornate lamp-holders all scream baroque bombast. But there are some genuine treasures here: up in the dome, Antonio Correggio's *Assunzione della Vergine* (Assumption of the Virgin) is a kaleidoscopic swirl of cherubims and whirling angels, while down in the southern transept, Benedetto Antelami's *Deposizione* (Descent from the Cross; 1178) relief is considered a masterpiece of its type.

Antelami was also responsible for the octagonal pink-marble **battistero** (☎ 0521 23 58 86; admission €5; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.45pm) on the south side of the piazza. Combining Romanesque and Gothic styles, it features some of Antelami's best work, including a celebrated set of figures representing the months, seasons and signs of the zodiac. Work began on the baptistry in 1196 but wasn't completed until 1307 thanks to several interruptions, most notably when the supply of pink Verona marble ran out.

On the other side of the square, in the cellars of the former bishop's palace, the **Museo Diocesano** (☎ 0521 20 86 99; Vicolo del Vescovado 3a; admission €4; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm) displays yet more statuary. Highlights include a finely sculpted Solomon and Sheba and a 5th-century early Christian mosaic, which was discovered under Piazza del Duomo.

A combined ticket (€6) allows entry into the baptistry and Museo Diocesano.

East of Piazza del Duomo, the 16th-century **Chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista** (☎ 0521 23 53 11; Piazzale San Giovanni; 🕒 8-11.45am & 3-7.45pm) is noted for its magnificent frescoed dome, the work of Correggio, and a series of frescoes by Francesco Parmigianino. The adjoining **monastery** (🕒 8.30am-noon & 3-6pm) is known as much for the oils and unguents that its monks produce as for its Renaissance cloisters. Just around the corner, the **Spezieria di San Giovanni** (☎ 0521 50 85 32; Borgo Pipa 1; adult/child €2/free; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) is the monastery's ancient pharmacy, which still has its original interior.

## PIAZZA DELLA PACE & AROUND

Looming over Piazza della Pace's manicured lawns and modern fountains, the monumental **Palazzo della Pilotta** is hard to miss. Supposedly named after the Spanish ball game of *pelota* that was once played within its walls, it was originally built for the Farnese family between 1583 and 1622. Heavily bombed in WWII, it has since been largely rebuilt and today houses several museums.

The most important of these, the **Galleria Nazionale** (☎ 0521 23 33 09; adult/child incl Teatro Farnese €6/free; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun), displays Parma's main art collection. Alongside works by local artists Correggio and Parmigianino, you'll find paintings by Fra Angelico, Canaletto and El Greco. Before you get to the gallery, though, you'll pass through the **Teatro Farnese**, a copy of Andrea Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. Constructed entirely out of wood, it was almost completely rebuilt after being bombed in WWII.

For a change of period, the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0521 23 37 18; admission €2; 🕒 9am-2pm Tue-Sun) exhibits Roman artefacts discovered around Parma and Etruscan finds from the Po valley.

Over the road from the piazza is the **Museo di Glauco Lombardi** (☎ 0521 23 37 27; Via Garibaldi 15; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 9.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sat, 9am-6.30pm Sun) and its miscellaneous collection of clothes, paintings, furniture and historical knick-knacks. Many of the exhibits once belonged to Marie-Louise of Austria, who ruled Parma following her husband Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.



Nearby, the **Camera di San Paolo** (☎ 0521 53 32 21; Via Melloni 3; adult/child €2/free; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) in the convent of the same name, displays more frescoes by the prolific Correggio.

## PIAZZA GARIBALDI

On the site of the ancient Roman forum, Piazza Garibaldi is a lively hub bisected by Parma's main east—west artery, Via Mazzini, and its continuation, Strada della Repubblica. On the square's north side, the facade of the 17th-century **Palazzo del Governatore**, these days municipal offices, sports a giant sundial, added in 1829. Behind the palace in the **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Steccata** (☎ 0521 23 49 37; Piazza Steccata 9; 🕒 9am-noon & 3-6pm), you'll find some of Parmigianino's most extraordinary work, notably the stunning, if rather faded, frescoes on the arches above the altar. Many members of the ruling Farnese and Bourbon families lie buried here.

## WEST BANK

Stretching along the west bank of the Parma, the formal gardens of the **Parco Ducale** (🕒 6am-midnight Apr-Oct, 7am-8pm Nov-Mar) were laid out in 1560 around the Farnese family's **Palazzo Ducale**, which now serves as headquarters of the provincial *carabinieri* (military police).

At the park's southeastern corner is the **Casa Natale di Toscanini** (☎ 0521 28 54 99; [www.museotoscanini.it](http://www.museotoscanini.it), in Italian; Borgo R Tanzi 13; admission €2; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 2-6pm Sun), birthplace of Italy's greatest modern conductor, Arturo Toscanini (1867–1957). If in a musical frame of mind, you could also visit the tomb of Niccolò Paganini, 2km south in the Cimitero della Villetta.

## Sleeping

**Ostello di Parma** (☎ 0521 191 75 47; [www.ostelloparma.it](http://www.ostelloparma.it); Via San Leonardo 86; dm/d €18.50/41; 📶) Near the autostrada on Parma's northern outskirts, this modern hostel has free wi-fi, inexpensive laundry facilities and a dining area (but no guest kitchen). Breakfast costs €2.50 extra. There's good bike path access; otherwise take bus 13 or 2N (€1, five minutes) from the train station and get off at the Centro Torri stop.

**Albergo Ristorante Leon d'Oro** (☎ 0521 77 31 82; [www.leondoroparma.com](http://www.leondoroparma.com); Viale Fratti 4a; s/d €55/70, without bathroom €37/60) Flying the flag for budget accommodation in this otherwise pricey city, the Leon d'Oro offers no-nonsense, fan-cooled rooms with high ceilings and old-fashioned furniture. The attached restaurant is a plus, as is the location near the train station, although front rooms can get noisy.

**Hotel Button** (☎ 0521 20 80 39; [www.hotelbutton.it](http://www.hotelbutton.it); Borgo Salina 7; s €70-84, d €90-118; 📶 📶 📶) The spare, hospital-green decor leaves a lot to be desired, but it's hard to argue with Hotel Button's spacious rooms and bathrooms, free wi-fi and convenient location in the heart of historic Parma. Parking costs €10.

**Century Hotel** (☎ 0521 03 98 00; [www.centuryhotel.it](http://www.centuryhotel.it); Piazza dalla Chiesa 5a; s/d/ste €80/120/200; 📶 📶 📶) Directly adjacent to the train station, this slickly remodelled hotel (formerly Albergo Moderno) sports four-star fixtures and amenities at three-star prices (all that's missing is the hotel restaurant). Parking costs €6 and 24-hour wireless access costs €5.

**Hotel Torino** (☎ 0521 28 10 46; [www.hotel-torino.it](http://www.hotel-torino.it); Via Mazza 7; s/d €90/130; 📶 📶) Despite its popularity with performers from the nearby Teatro Regio, there's nothing particularly theatrical about the Torino's rooms; still, it's a reliable, centrally located midrange choice that periodically offers online discounts. Parking costs €12.

## Eating

Parma specialities, which you'll find served just about everywhere, include the world-famous *prosciutto di Parma* (Parma ham) and *parmigiano reggiano* (Parmesan).

**Da Walter Clinica del Panino** (☎ 0521 20 63 09; Borgo Palmia 2; panini from €3; 🕒 9am-9pm Mon-Wed, to 3pm Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat) Fast food, Parma style: neon lights, deft-handed cooks and more than 100 varieties of snacks and sandwiches combined with great prices and supersonic service.

**Dal Teo** (☎ 0521 23 54 00; Piazzale Corridoni 15e; pizza €5-9, meals €15-25; 🕒 closed Sat lunch & Sun) Bored with his day job, the enterprising Teo convinced his mum to help him open a pizzeria, using the same recipe he adored as a child. Mum is up at 4am making dough, and Teo takes care of the rest. Just across the bridge from Parma's historic centre, it's a popular hangout for evening beers and conversation, as well as for its incomparably delicious pizza crust – thick, light and crunchy all at once.

**Gallo d'Oro** (☎ 0521 20 88 46; Borgo Salina 3; meals €25; 🕒 closed dinner Sun) Vintage magazine covers and artfully placed wine bottles lend the Gallo d'Oro a very agreeable bistro feel. But it's not all image: this is one of Parma's best trattorias serving consistently good Emilian cuisine. For proof, dig into a bowl of delicious *tortelli di erbetta* (pasta stuffed with ricotta and herbs). Booking is recommended.

**our pick Trattoria Corrieri** (☎ 0521 23 44 26; Via Conservatorio 1; meals €25; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Eat on the patio under a leafy trellis, or in the labyrinth of rustically decorated interior rooms at this convivial trattoria, under the same ownership as Gallo d'Oro. Everything's top quality –from the *tris di tortelli* (pasta pockets with three different stuffings) to the *torta di cioccolato e pere* (pear-chocolate cake) for dessert.

**Osteria dei Mascalzoni** (☎ 0521 28 18 09; Vicolo delle Cinque Piaghe 1; meals €25-35; 🕒 closed Sat lunch & Sun) Cosy inside and out, this restaurant features a beamed dining room and outdoor tables that take over the adjacent alleyway on warm summer evenings. The menu emphasises grilled meat, plus an excellent selection of Parma's famous cheeses and pork products, including *culatello*, *fiocchetto* and of course *prosciutto*.

## Drinking

The city's animated drinking scene is centred on Strada Farini, home to numerous wine bars, including **Tabarro** (☎ 0521 20 02 23; Strada Farini 5b; 🕒 Tue-Sun), where aficionados sip fine vintages at tables made from barrels, and **Enoteca Fontana** (☎ 0521 28 60 37; Strada Farini 24a; glasses of wine from €1.20, sandwiches from €2.80; 🕒 5-10pm Tue-Sat), popular with a younger, trendier crowd.

On the other side of Piazza Garibaldi, the **Cavour Gran Caffè** (☎ 0521 20 62 23; Strada Cavour 30b; 🕒 7am-8pm) makes a pleasant drinks stop, whether on the terrace or inside beneath the colourful frescoes.

## Entertainment

Parma's opera, concert and theatre season runs from October through April. **Teatro Regio** (☎ 0521 03 93 99; [www.teatroregio-parma.org](http://www.teatroregio-parma.org), in Italian; Via Garibaldi 16a) offers a particularly rich program of music and opera, even by exacting Italian standards, while the **Teatro Due** (☎ 0521 23 02 42; [www.teatrodue.org](http://www.teatrodue.org), in Italian; Via Salnitrrara 10) presents the city's top drama.

In summer, the city sponsors several outdoor music programs.

## Shopping

Stock up on edible goodies at **Salumeria Garibaldi** (☎ 0521 23 56 06; Via Garibaldi 42; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) and **Salumeria Verdi** (☎ 0521 20 81 00; Via Garibaldi 69a; 🕒 8am-1.15pm & 4-7.45pm Mon-

Wed, Fri & Sat, 8am-1.15pm Thu), bountiful delicatessens with dangling sausages, shelves of Lambrusco wines, slabs of Parma ham and wheel upon wheel of *parmigiano reggiano*.

## Getting There & Away

From Piazzale della Chiesa in front of Parma's train station, **TEP** (☎ 800 977966; [www.tep.pr.it](http://www.tep.pr.it), in Italian) operates buses throughout the region, including six daily (one on Sunday) to Busseto (€3.40, one hour) via Soragna (€2.85, 45 minutes).

Parma is on the A1 connecting Bologna and Milan and just east of the A15, which runs to La Spezia. Via Emilia (SS9) passes right through town.

There are frequent trains to Milan (regional/express train €8/16.20, 1¼ to 1¾ hours, hourly), Bologna (€5.80, one hour, half-hourly), Modena (€4.30, 30 minutes, half-hourly) and Piacenza (€4.30, 40 minutes, half-hourly).

## Getting Around

Traffic is banned from the historic centre, so leave your car at the underground car park on Viale Toschi or park it in one of the pay-and-display spaces near the train station.

Bikes are available for hire at **Parma Punto Bici** (☎ 0521 28 19 79; [www.parmapuntobici.pr.it](http://www.parmapuntobici.pr.it), in Italian; Viale Toschi 2a; per hr/day bicycles €0.70/10, electric bikes €0.90/20; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2.30-7.30pm Sun).

For a taxi, call ☎ 0521 25 25 62.

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## AROUND PARMA

### Verdi Country

A pleasant day tour northwest of Parma takes in a couple of the province's more than 20 castles, plus four buildings closely associated with Verdi, Parma's most famous son.

Sitting in a stagnant moat, 19km northwest of Parma in the town of Fontanellato, the formidable **Rocca Sanvitale** (☎ 0521 82 90 55; adult/child €7/2.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm daily Apr-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) is one of the region's best-preserved castles. Built over an older fort by the Sanvitale family in the 16th century, it contains some superb frescoes by Parmigianino, the best of which adorn the Sala di Diana e Atteone.

Nine kilometres further northwest is Soragna, site of the 14th-century **Rocca Meli Lupi** (☎ 0524 59 79 64; adult/child €7.50/4; ☎ 9-11am & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9-11am & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar). A fine example of early baroque, it retains much of the furniture that the Meli Lupi family added in the 16th century.

Admission to both castles is by guided tour only (in Italian).

Continuing towards **Busseto**, it would be easy to miss the humble cottage where Giuseppe Verdi was born in 1813. Now a small museum, the **Casa Natale di Giuseppe Verdi** (☎ 0524 9 74 50; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Nov, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sat & Sun Dec-Feb) is in the hamlet of Roncole Verdi, 5km beyond Soragna.

In Busseto, there are a couple of sights dedicated to the great composer. The most famous is the stately **Teatro Verdi** (☎ 0524 9 24 87; by guided tour only adult/child €4/3; 📧 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb) on the aptly named Piazza Verdi. Also facing the square is **Casa Barezzi** (☎ 0524 93 11 17; Via Roma 119; adult/child €4/3; 📧 10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun); home of the composer's patron and site of Verdi's first concert, it's now a lovingly curated museum filled with Verdi memorabilia.

Verdi's villa, **Sant'Agata** (☎ 0523 83 00 00; Via Verdi 22; admission €8; 📧 9.30-11.45am & 2.30-6.45pm Tue-Sun Mar-Sep, 9.30-11.30am & 2.30-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct & Nov, 9.30-11.30am & 2.30-4.30pm Sat & Sun Jan), where he composed many of his major works, is in Sant'Agata di Villanova sull'Arda, 5km northwest of Busseto.

A combined ticket for the first three Verdi venues costs €8.50. For more information, contact Busseto's **tourist office** (☎ 0524 9 24 87; [www.busetolive.com](http://www.busetolive.com), in Italian; Piazza Verdi 10; 📧 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb).

TEP buses from Parma run along this route six times daily from Monday to Saturday, and once on Sunday.

## South into the Apennines

A relatively unexplored area, the mountainous countryside to the south of Parma is peppered with medieval castles, ancient churches and remote villages. It's ideal for unhurried exploring, although to get the best out of it you'll need a car.

The first port of call is **Langhirano**, 23km south of Parma along the SS665. While the town itself is unexceptional, it has an interesting museum tracing the history of local ham production (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)).

Just north of Langhirano, the majestic **Castello di Torrechiara** (☎ 0521 35 52 55) was closed due to earthquake damage at the time of research, but scheduled to reopen in 2010. One of many castles built or rebuilt by Pier Maria Rossi in the 15th century, it commands great views of the Apennines and has some exquisite frescoes in the Camera d'Oro (Golden Room). There's also a smart restaurant-cum-B&B here, the **Taverna del Castello** (☎ 0521 35 50 15; [www.tavernadelcastello.it](http://www.tavernadelcastello.it); Strada del Castello 25; s/d €55/90), offering meals for around €30.

South of Langhirano, follow the road down the west bank of the Parma, crossing the river at Pastorello and continuing to **Tizzano Val Parma**, a charming Apennine village that offers pleasant walking in summer and reasonable winter skiing at **Schia**, 10km further on.

Further south still, the heights around **Monchio delle Corti** offer views as far as La Spezia, in good weather. It's a possible base for exploring some of the 20 glacial lakes that dot the southern corner of the province.

The mountains here are criss-crossed with **walking** and **cycling** tracks and dotted with *rifugi*. An interesting trek is to follow a section of the signed Romea, or the Via Francigena, an ancient pilgrim route heading south to Rome via the villages of Collecchio, Fornovo, Bardone, Terenzo, Cassio and Berceto, each with a small Romanesque church. The tourist office in [Parma](#) can advise on maps and accommodation.

**Castello Bardi** (☎ 0525 7 13 68; adult/child €5.50/3; 📧 10am-7pm Jul-Aug, 2-7pm Mon-Sat & 10am-7pm Sun Jun & Sep, 2-6pm Sat & 10am-6pm Sun Mar-May & Oct, 2-5pm Sat & 10am-5pm Sun Nov), about 65km southwest of Parma, also merits a mention. Soaring above the surrounding town, it dates from

## PIACENZA

**pop 100,300**

Just short of the regional border with Lombardy, Piacenza is worth a quick stopover if you're in the area. Its picturesque centre boasts a beautiful Gothic town hall and a couple of august churches.

The train station is on the eastern edge of the old town, an easy 15-minute walk from the central square, Piazza dei Cavalli, where you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 0523 32 93 24; [www.comune.piacenza.it/english](http://www.comune.piacenza.it/english); Piazza dei Cavalli 7; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat year-round, plus 9.30am-12.30pm Sun & Mon Apr-Sep).

### Sights

Dominated by **Palazzo Gotico**, the impressive 13th-century town hall, **Piazza dei Cavalli** is named after its two martial bronze horses. The two baroque statues, cast by the Tuscan sculptor Francesco Mochi between 1612 and 1625, depict the Farnese dukes Alessandro and Ranuccio.

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## FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Forget any ideas of fussy fusion cuisine or low-cal Mediterranean diets. Food in Emilia-Romagna is all about ham, cheese, red meat and robust wine. And lots of it. Regional specialities abound – *tortelloni*, *tagliatelle*, *mortadella* and *zampone*, to name a few – but three stand out: prosciutto and *parmigiano reggiano* from Parma, and Modena's balsamic vinegar. All are produced using traditional techniques and rigorously checked by local consortia.

The king of Italian cheeses, *parmigiano reggiano* has been produced in the area around Parma for more than 700 years. It is made from skimmed evening milk and full-cream morning milk, which is poured into copper vats, cultured, heated and then stirred with a giant paddle. When the curd is ready, it is heaved out into cheesecloth. Each lump is shaped into a wheel form and left in brine for more than a month before being aged for at least one, and often two or more, years.

Parma's prosciutto undergoes a similarly meticulous process. Meat is taken from pigs born and raised in one of 11 regions in northern and central Italy and aged in an area south of Parma where the climatic conditions are held to be ideal. After a 10- or 12-month process of drying, cutting and salting, the ham is judged ready if it passes a final test: it is pierced with a needle made from horse bone and sniffed by an expert – if the whiff is right, the ham is ready.

If you want to know more, check out the **Museo del Parmigiano Reggiano** (☎ 0524 59 61 29; Via Volta 5; admission & tasting €5; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct) in Soragna, and the **Museo del Prosciutto di Parma** (☎ 0521 35 50 09; Via Bocchialini 7; admission €3; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Mar-Dec) in Langhirano.

Commercial balsamic vinegar, as sold around the world, bears little relation to its upmarket cousin from Modena. According to the original recipe, it is made by boiling must (unfermented grape juice) from Trebbiano (white) and Lambrusco (red) vines grown in a closely defined area around Modena. The must is filtered, placed in a large oak barrel, then over many years decanted and transferred into smaller barrels made of different woods that are stored in farmhouse lofts. The summer temperature in these lofts can reach 50°C, so much of the must evaporates and the remainder

becomes ever darker and stickier. *Aceto balsamico tradizionale di Modena* is then aged for at least 12 years, and *aceto balsamico tradizionale di Modena extravecchio* for at least 25.

ModenaTur ([Click here](#)) can arrange visits to local producers.

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To the southeast of the piazza, the 12th-century Lombard-Romanesque **cathedral** (☎ 0523 33 51 54; Piazza del Duomo 33; ☎ 7am-noon & 4-7pm) harmoniously blends white and pink marble, mellow sandstone and red brick. Inside, there are some magnificent 17th-century dome frescoes by Morazzone and Guercino.

The nearby **Basilica di Sant'Antonino** (☎ 0523 32 06 53; Piazza Sant'Antonino 6; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-12.30pm & 8-9.30pm Sun) was built in the 11th century on the site of an earlier church. Its peculiar octagonal tower is claimed to be the oldest of its type in Italy.

A short walk away, the **Galleria Ricci Oddi** (☎ 0523 32 07 42; [www.riccioddi.it](http://www.riccioddi.it), in Italian; Via San Siro 13; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) contains a respectable collection of Italian art and sculpture from the 18th century onwards.

On the northern edge of the *centro storico*, the vast **Palazzo Farnese** (☎ 0523 49 26 58; [www.musei.piacenza.it](http://www.musei.piacenza.it); Piazza Citadella; combined admission €6; ☎ 8.45am-1pm Tue-Thu, 8.45am-1pm & 3-6pm Fri & Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun) was started in 1558 but never fully completed. It now houses the Pinacoteca, an art gallery, and four minor museums of archaeology, carriages, Italian unification and, in the main one, the **Museo Civico**, the bizarre Etruscan Fegato di Piacenza, a sheep's liver in bronze that was used for divining the future. Single entry to the archaeology museum costs €3, to the carriages and unification museums €2.50, and to the Pinacoteca and Museo Civico €5.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Ostello Don Zermani** (☎ 0523 71 23 19; [www.ostellodipiacenza.it](http://www.ostellodipiacenza.it); Via Zoni 38-40; dm/s/d €17/25/40; ☎) In a quiet residential area 20 minutes' walk southwest of the city centre, this well-run private hostel offers bright, spotless rooms. Laundry facilities are available, and the building has access for disabled guests. Take bus 1, 16 or 17 from the train station.

**Hotel Astor** (☎ 0523 32 92 96; fax 0523 31 35 84; Via Tibini 29-31; s/d/tr €52/68/78; ☎) This rather worn three-star hotel near the train station offers modest accommodation at reasonable rates. The rooms make no great impression, but they're clean and comfortable enough.

**Antica Trattoria Dell'Angelo** (☎ 0523 32 67 39; Via Tibini 14; meals €20-25; ☎ Thu-Tue) With its beamed ceiling, wood-fired heater and red-checked tablecloths, this laid-back trattoria is as traditional as they come. The food is hearty, homemade fare – think spinach-and-ricotta *tortelloni*, roast meat and fizzy local red wine. Weekday lunch specials are a steal, with pasta/main courses costing €4/5.

**Antica Osteria del Teatro** (☎ 0523 32 37 77; Via Verdi 16; tasting menus €70-90; ☎ Tue-Sat) High-class cuisine in a restored 15th-century *palazzo* is what you get here, at one of Emilia's top restaurants. The seasonally changing menu is built around fresh, locally sourced ingredients and an abundant wine list.

## Getting There & Around

Piacenza's bus station is located on Piazza Citadella; however, the train is a more convenient way to reach most destinations. There are frequent trains to/from Milan (regular/Eurostar €5.10/10.90, one hour, hourly), Parma (€4.30, 40 minutes, half-hourly) and Bologna (regular/Eurostar €8.80/17.10, 1½ hours, hourly).

Piacenza is just off the A1 linking Milan and Bologna and the A21 joining Brescia and Turin. Via Emilia (SS9) also runs past on its way to Rimini and the Adriatic Sea.

Bus 2 (€1) runs between the train station and Piazza dei Cavalli.

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## AROUND PIACENZA

The hill-top *borgo* (village) of **Castell'Arquato** rises above the green countryside of the Arda Valley, 33km southeast of Piacenza. Dominating the beautifully preserved medieval centre is the crenellated **Rocca Viscontea** (☎ 0523 80 32 15; iatcastellarquato@gmail.com; adult/child €3.50/2.50; 📧 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm Sat & Sun, by request at tourist office Tue-Fri), a 14th-century castle built by Luchino Visconti.

Castle apart, Castell'Arquato is an atmospheric place for a stopover. You can try local wine at the **Enoteca Comunale** (☎ 0523 80 61 57; Piazza del Municipio; 📧 10am-10pm Tue-Sun) and stay at **Ca' di Cima** (☎ 0523 80 52 86; [www.cadicima.it](http://www.cadicima.it), in Italian; Vicolo degli Spalti 4; s/d/tr €35/60/75), a rustic two-room B&B five minutes uphill from the castle. Owner Clara and her frisky dog Vito are lovely hosts and can point you to numerous other local attractions.

Local information is available at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0523 80 32 15; [www.castellarquato.net](http://www.castellarquato.net); Piazza del Municipio; 📧 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun) on the main square facing the castle.

**Tempi** (☎ 800 211173; [www.tempi.piacenza.it](http://www.tempi.piacenza.it), in Italian) runs buses regularly between Piacenza and Castell'Arquato (€3.10, 55 minutes).

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## EAST OF BOLOGNA

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## FERRARA

**pop 133,600**

Less smug than some of Emilia-Romagna's provincial cities, Ferrara retains much of the austere splendour of its Renaissance heyday when, as seat of the Este family, it was a force to be reckoned with.

The Este dynasty ruled Ferrara from 1260 to 1598, its political and military prowess matched by intense cultural activity. Petrarch, Titian, Antonio Pisanello and poets Torquato Tasso and Ludovico Ariosto all spent time here under the patronage of the Este dukes.

When the Este fell in 1598, Pope Clement VIII claimed the city, only to preside over its decline. Ferrara recovered importance during and after the Napoleonic period, when it was made chief city of the lower Po. Today's local government has carefully restored much of the centre, which was battered during WWII.

## Orientation

From Porta Po near the train station, Viale Cavour runs southeast to Ferrara's castle. To the castle's immediate east, Corso Martiri della Libertà leads down to the cathedral and adjoining Piazza Trento Trieste, from where the *centro storico* is a brief hop to the south.

## Information

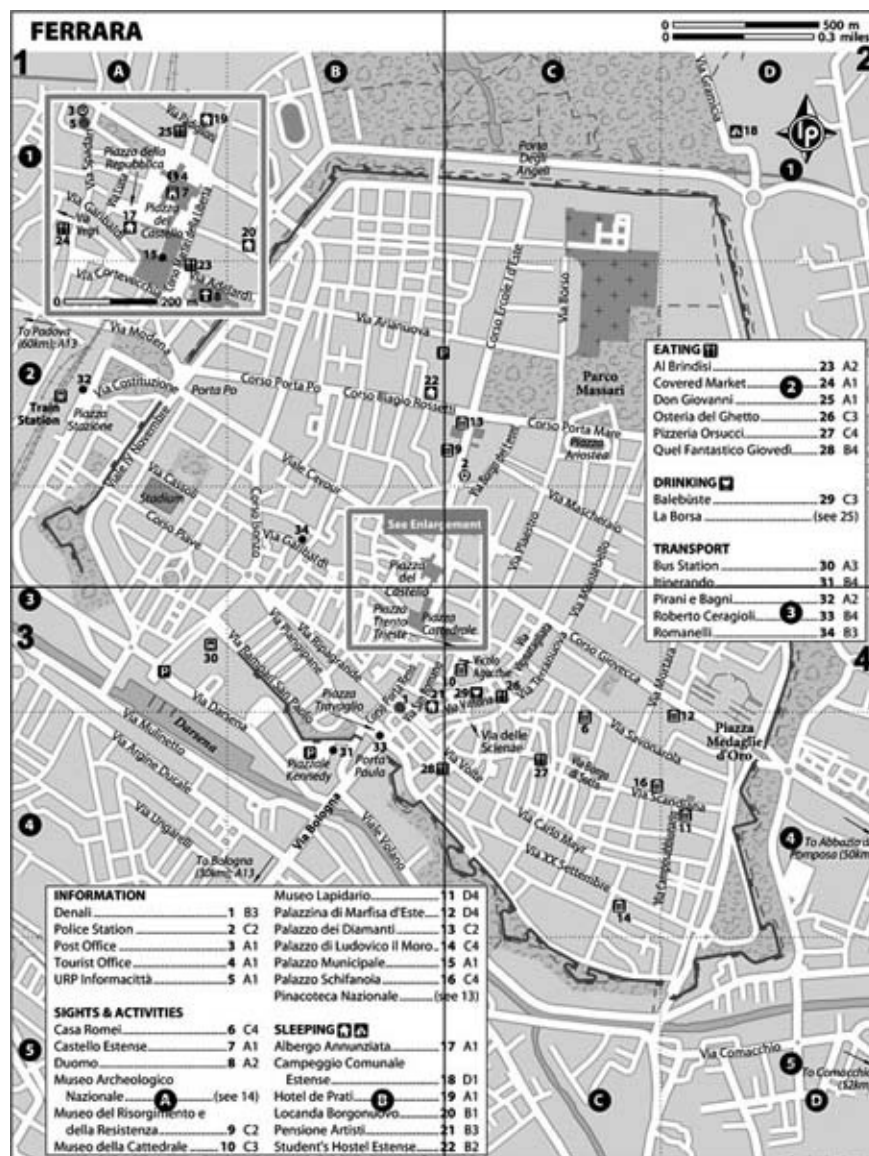
**Denali** (☎ 0532 76 23 22; Via Ragno 14; per hr €4; 📧 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) Internet.

**Police station** (☎ 0532 29 43 11; Corso Ercole I d'Este 26)

**Post office** (Viale Cavour 27)

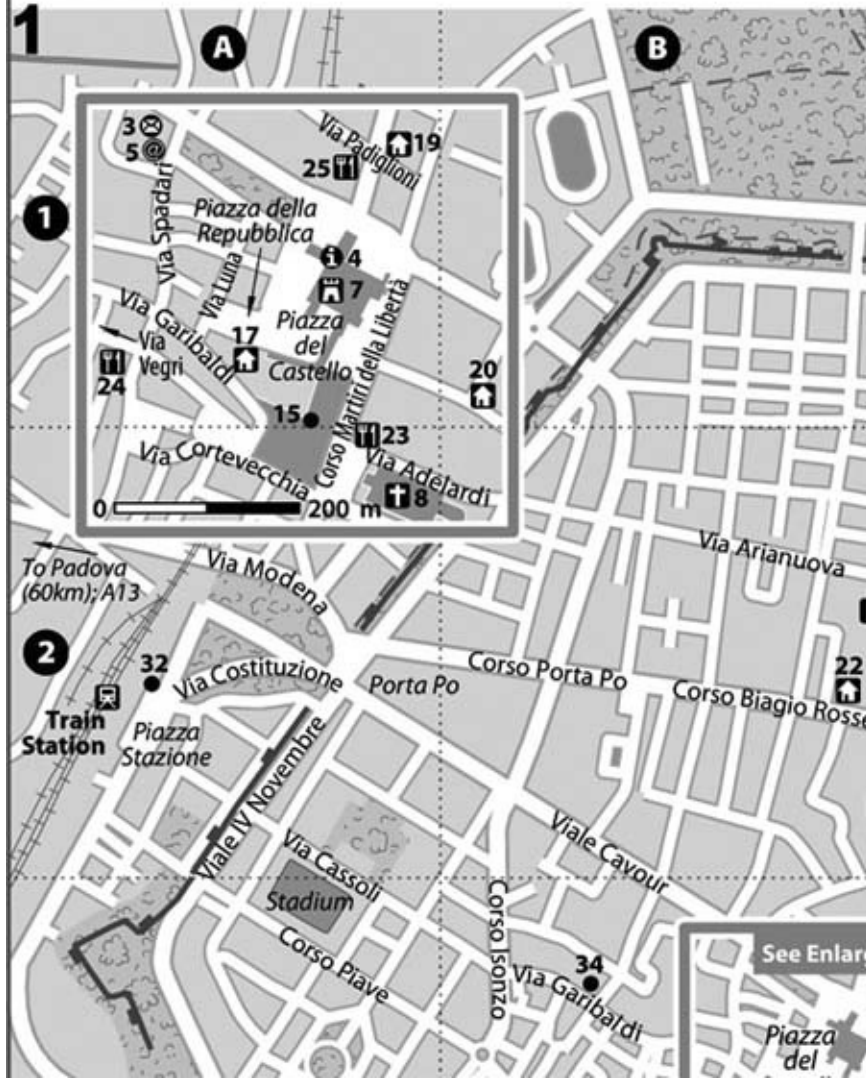
**Tourist office** (☎ 0532 20 93 70; [www.ferrarainfo.com](http://www.ferrarainfo.com); 📧 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun) In Castello Estense's courtyard.

**URP Informacittà** (☎ 0532 41 97 70; Via Spadari 2/2; 📧 8.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-1pm Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Free wi-fi and one public computer provided by the municipal government.

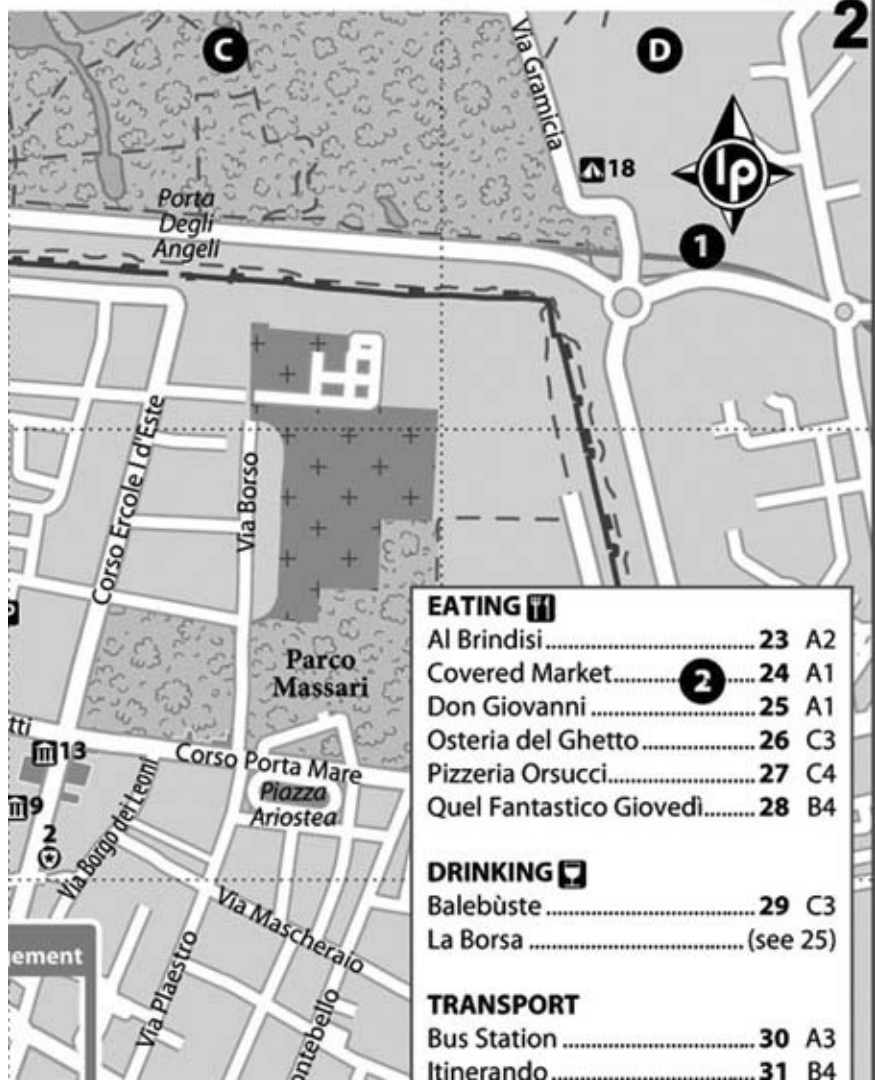




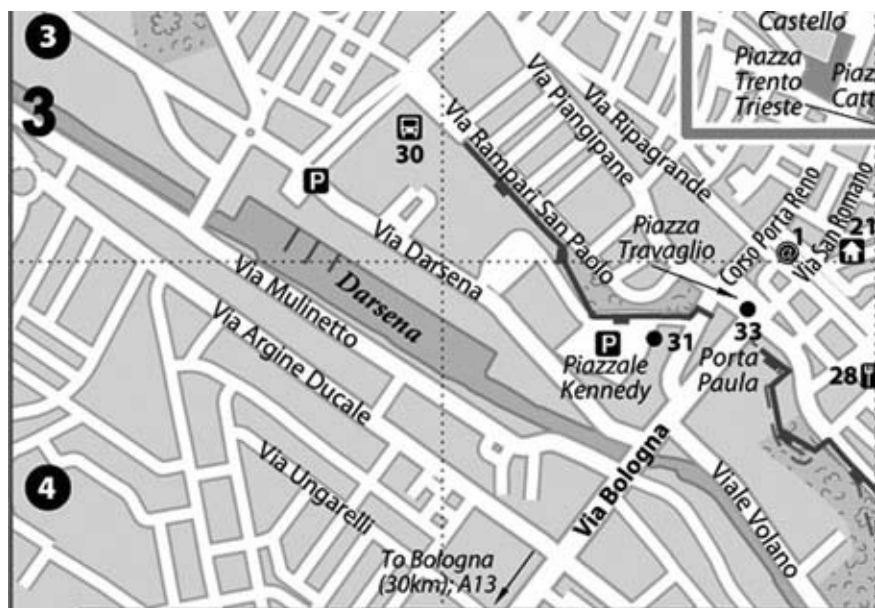
# FERRARA



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## Sights

### CASTELLO ESTENSE

Complete with moat and drawbridge, Ferrara's towering **castle** (☎ 0532 29 92 33; Viale Cavour; adult/child €7/free, tower extra €1; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) was commissioned by Nicolò II d'Este in 1385. Initially it was intended to protect him and his family from the town's irate citizenry, who were up in arms over tax increases, but in the late 15th century it became the family's permanent residence.

Although sections are now used as government offices, a few rooms, including the royal suites, are open for viewing. Highlights are the Sala dei Giganti (Giants' Room) and Salone dei Giochi (Games Salon), the Cappella di Renée de France and the claustrophobic dungeon. It was here in 1425 that Duke Nicolò III d'Este had his young second wife, Parisina Malatesta, and his son, Ugo, beheaded after discovering they were lovers, providing the inspiration for Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess*.

### PALAZZO MUNICIPALE

Linked to the castle by an elevated passageway, the 13th-century crenellated **Palazzo Municipale** (admission free; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Fri) was the Este family home until they moved next door to the castle in the late 15th century. Nowadays, it's largely occupied by administrative offices but you can wander around its twin courtyards. The entrance is watched over by copper statues of Nicolò III and his less-wayward son Borso – they're 20th-century copies but nonetheless imposing.

## CATHEDRAL

The outstanding feature of the pink-and-white 12th-century **Duomo** (☎ 0532 20 74 49; Piazza Cattedrale; 🕒 7.30am-noon & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sun) is its three-tiered marble facade, combining Romanesque and Gothic styles on the lower and upper tiers respectively. Much of the upper level is a graphic representation of the Final Judgment and heaven and hell (notice the four figures clambering out of their coffins). Astride a pair of handsome lions at the base squats an oddly secular duo, mouths agape at the effort of holding it all up.

On the other side of Piazza Trento Trieste, the **Museo della Cattedrale** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via San Romano; adult/child €5/free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) houses various artefacts from the cathedral, including a serene *Madonna* by Jacopo della Quercia, a couple of vigorous Cosimo Tura canvases, and some witty bas-reliefs illustrating the months of the year.

## MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

If you plan to visit multiple museums, consider a combined ticket (€8) that gives entry to the Museo della Cattedrale, Palazzina di Marfisa d'Este, Palazzo Schifanoia and Museo Lapidario.

Named after the diamond-shaped ashlar stones on its facade, the **Palazzo dei Diamanti** was built for Sigismondo d'Este late in the 15th century. Regarded as the family's grandest *palazzo*, it is now home to the **Pinacoteca Nazionale** (☎ 0532 20 58 44; Corso Ercole I d'Este 21; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 9am-2pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, to 7pm Thu, to 1pm Sun) and its interesting collection of paintings from the Ferrarese and Bolognese schools.

Next door, the small **Museo del Risorgimento e della Resistenza** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Corso Ercole I d'Este 19; adult/child €3/free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) exhibits documents, proclamations and posters from the Italian unification movement and WWII, as well as numerous uniforms, guns and hand grenades.

East of Piazza Trento Trieste, the Renaissance **Casa Romei** (☎ 0532 23 41 30; Via Savonarola 30; adult/child €3/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) is where Lucrezia Borgia spent much of her time in Ferrara. The austere brick exterior hides a peaceful inner patio and, on the 1st floor, a 16th-century apartment preserved in its original state.

In similar style, the **Palazzina di Marfisa d'Este** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Corso Giovecca 170; adult/child €3/free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) reveals ornate 16th-century decorations and a shady garden.

Ferrara's most famous frescoes are in the Este's 14th-century pleasure palace, **Palazzo Schifanoia** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via Scandiana 23; adult/child €5/free; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sun). In the Salone dei Mesi, Francesco del Cossa's 15th-century frescoes depicting the months and seasons are considered among the best examples of their type in Italy.

Your ticket also gives entry to the nearby **Museo Lapidario** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via Camposabbionario; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sun), which has a small, undocumented collection of Roman and Etruscan stele, tombs and inscriptions.

You'll find yet more Etruscan artefacts, along with an impressive selection of Attic vases, in **Palazzo di Ludovico il Moro** at the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0532 6 62 99; Via XX Settembre 124; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 9am-2pm Tue-Sun). Many finds came from the Etruscan town of Spina, near modern-day Comacchio.

## CITY WALLS

Most of Ferrara's 9km of ancient city walls are more or less intact and some parts are walkable.

Alternatively, hire a bike and cycle the perimeter.

## Festivals & Events

**Il Palio** ([www.paliodiferrara.it](http://www.paliodiferrara.it)) On the last Sunday of May each year, the eight *contrade* (districts) of Ferrara compete in a horse race that momentarily turns Piazza Ariostea into medieval bedlam. Claimed to be the oldest race of its kind in Italy, the first official competition was held in 1279.

**Buskers' Festival** (☎ 0532 24 93 37; [www.ferrarabuskers.com](http://www.ferrarabuskers.com)) Ferrara's streets are filled with musicians in late August.

**Ferrara Balloons Festival** (☎ 0532 29 93 03; [www.ferraraballoonsfestival.it](http://www.ferraraballoonsfestival.it)) Italy's largest hot-air balloon gathering, in late September.

## Sleeping

**Campeggio Comunale Estense** (☎ 0532 75 23 96; [campeggio.estense@libero.it](mailto:campeggio.estense@libero.it); Via Gramicia 76; camp sites per adult/child/tent €5/3.50/8; 📅 Mar-Dec) Ferrara's municipal camp ground is just outside the city walls. Catch bus 1 or 5 from the train station to Piazzale San Giovanni and follow the signs. Don't forget your insect repellent.

**Student's Hostel Estense** (☎ 0532 20 11 58; [www.ostelloferrara.it](http://www.ostelloferrara.it); Corso Biagio Rossetti 24; incl breakfast dm/s/d/tr €16/35/40/45; 📶) Completely revamped by its youthful new owners, Ferrara's hostel still has classic hostel rooms with three to eight beds, but they've added 24-hour reception, geothermal hot water, a bar, a back patio, free wi-fi and fantastic amenities for cyclists (bike pumps, drinking water for refilling bottles, a maintenance area and a bike storage zone). Meals are also offered (€5 to €10).

**Pensione Artisti** (☎ 0532 76 10 38; Via Vittoria 66; d €60, s/d without bathroom €28/50) Ferrara's best budget option features spotless old-fashioned rooms, free bikes, a small vine-covered terrace and a kitchen for guests' use. The location is convenient and the owners are ultrahospitable. Book ahead for the three rooms with bathroom. No breakfast.

**Hotel de Prati** (☎ 0532 24 19 05; [www.hoteldeprati.com](http://www.hoteldeprati.com); Via Padiglioni 5; s €49-85, d €75-120, ste €110-150; 📶) A step up from your average three-star, de Prati charms with its central location near the castle, beautiful decor and friendly owner. The upstairs guest rooms sport wrought-iron bedsteads and antique furniture, while downstairs the bright public rooms are enlivened by contemporary art. The owners also rent a spacious apartment with its own kitchen in the *palazzo* next door.

**our pick Locanda Borgonuovo** (☎ 0532 21 11 00; [www.borgonuovo.com](http://www.borgonuovo.com); Via Cairoli 29; s €60-70, d €90-100; 📶 📺 📶) Within an arrow-shot of the castle, this little gem is Ferrara's longest-established B&B. There are four refined rooms and three apartments, each decorated with antiques and swathes of polished wood. All rooms have frigobars, safes, flat-screen TVs and wi-fi. Enjoy breakfast in the elegant upstairs sitting room, or retire to the frondy patio, where you can admire Ferrari the pet turtle's impressive displays of speed. Parking costs €8 and guests have free access to the brand-new fleet of bikes. Reservations are essential.

**Albergo Annunziata** (☎ 0532 20 11 11; [www.annunziata.it](http://www.annunziata.it); Piazza della Repubblica 5; s €94-120, d €105-240; 📶 📺) When Casanova spent the night here, the Annunziata was little more than a simple *locanda* (inn). Today it's a refined top-end hotel with abundant creature comforts, although the rooms are surprisingly bland, considering the building's illustrious history. Still, you can't beat the location, directly across from the Castello Estense. There are also six modern apartments (€125 to €300) 150m from the main hotel. Parking costs €3.

## Eating & Drinking

Local specialities include *cappellacci di zucca*, a pasta pouch filled with pumpkin, and *salama da sugo* (stewed pork sausage). Ferrarese bread is well known for its distinctive twisted shape and crunchy consistency.

**our pick Pizzeria Orsucci** (☎ 0532 76 00 00; Via Saraceno 116; pizzas €2.50-3.50; 🕒 5.30pm-1am Fri-Wed) For a slice of Ferrarese culinary history, head to this hole-in-the-wall pizzeria, run by the same family since 1936. Choices are simple: do you want your *pizza margherita* small or medium-sized, with or without anchovies? Aside from draught beer, the only other menu item is *padella di ceci* (a chickpea-flour treat cooked in the wood-fired oven). If you ask, the amiable proprietor Giulio can tell you a story or two about the news clippings and photos that cover the walls, documenting Orsucci's numerous awards and history as a film set.

**Balebùste** (☎ 0532 76 35 57; Via Vittoria 44; meals €20-25; 🕒 Fri-Wed) Sequester yourself under the brick arches in the cosy interior rooms, or mingle with the masses on cobblestoned Via Vittoria at this lively corner bar. Although wine holds centre stage here, it's worth sticking around for the wide-ranging food menu, featuring traditional Ferrarese dishes and daily chef's specials.

**Osteria del Ghetto** (☎ 0532 76 49 36; Via Vittoria 26; meals €25-30; 🕒 Wed-Mon) This sweet little eatery in the heart of Ferrara's old Jewish quarter is a fab place to feast on traditional favourites like *cappellacci di zucca* or *salama da sugo con purea di patate* (stewed pork sausage with mashed potatoes).

**Al Brindisi** (☎ 0532 47 12 25; Via Adelardi 11; meals €25-30) The oldest *osteria* in the world (according to Guinness), this atmospheric wine bar was already an established drinking den in 1435 – Titian drank here, Benvenuto Cellini dropped in on occasion and Copernicus studied in the room upstairs. Alongside the substantial wine list there's a strong selection of grappas and whiskies, plus a full menu of pastas, mains and snacks. Fixed-price lunch menus start at €13.

**La Borsa** (☎ 0532 24 33 63; Corso Ercole I d'Este 1; meals €27-33; 🕒 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) In the grand central courtyard of a historic *palazzo*, this wine bar offers snacks and simpler meals of the same superb quality as its adjacent sister restaurant Don Giovanni, but at much lower prices.

**Quel Fantastico Giovedì** (☎ 0532 76 05 70; Via Castelnuovo 9; meals €30-40; 🕒 Thu-Tue) For fashionable food in a cool, bistro-chic setting, book here. Seafood specialities include *baccalà mantecato con crema di peperoni dolci e polenta* (Venetian-style codfish with sweet pepper-polenta cream), while the mouth-watering dessert menu features *sorbetto di mela verde profumato al moscato* (wine-scented green apple sorbet).

**Don Giovanni** (☎ 0532 24 33 63; Corso Ercole I d'Este 1; meals €45-75; 🕒 dinner Mon-Sat) Open only for dinner, this highly acclaimed eatery specialises in fresh-caught fish from the Adriatic, vegetables harvested from the restaurant's own garden, eight varieties of bread baked daily and a wine list featuring over 600 Italian and international labels. The menu is an imaginative feast of unconventional concoctions such as *tortelli con faraona allo zabaione di parmigiano e prosciutto croccante* (guinea fowl—stuffed pasta in a custard of Parmesan and crunchy ham) or *anguilla arrostita con finferli e emulsione all'alloro* (roast eel with chanterelle mushrooms in bay-leaf emulsion).

Self-caterers can fill up at the **covered market** (Via Vegri; 🕒 7am-1.30pm Mon-Sat).

## Getting There & Around

**ACFT** (☎ 0532 59 94 90; [www.acft.it](http://www.acft.it), in Italian) buses operate within the city and to surrounding towns such as Comacchio (€4.10, one hour, 11 daily), as well as to the Adriatic beaches. Long-distance buses originate at the bus station on Via Rampari San Paolo, then swing by the train station on their way out of town. The train is the better option for Bologna (€3.80, 30 to 50 minutes, half-hourly) and Ravenna (€5.30, 1¼ hours, 14 daily).

Most traffic is banned from the city centre. Overnight parking (€3 per 24 hours) is available at a large car park off Via Darsena (just outside the *centro storico*).

ACFT buses 1 and 9 run from the train station direct to the city centre.

For a taxi, call **Radiotaxi** (☎ 0532 90 09 00).

Even better, get in the saddle and join the hundreds of other pedallers in Italy's most cycle-friendly city. Among the places where you can rent bikes (per day €7 to €10):

**Itinerando** (☎ 0532 20 20 03; Piazzale Kennedy 6-8; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Fri-Sun)

**Pirani e Bagni** (☎ 0532 77 21 90; Piazza Stazione 2; ☎ 4.45am-8pm Mon-Fri)

**Roberto Ceragioli** (☎ 339 4056853; Piazza Travaglio 4; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 3-7.30pm)

**Romanelli** (☎ 0532 20 60 17; Via Aldighieri 28a; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.15-7pm)

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## PO DELTA

Straddling Emilia-Romagna and the Veneto, the Po Delta (Foci del Po) is where the Po spills into the Adriatic Sea. An easy day trip from either Ferrara or Ravenna, it has an atmosphere all of its own, particularly in winter when fog shrouds the extensive pine woods and wetlands in eerie silence.

The area's main attraction is the **Parco del Delta del Po** ([www.parcodeltapo.it](http://www.parcodeltapo.it)), a regional park encompassing one of Europe's largest wetlands and a pair of alluring lagoons, the Valli di Comacchio and Valle Bertuzzi. With more than 300 bird species nesting or passing through the area, it's a paradise for ornithologists. In late April and early May, Comacchio hosts the **International Po Delta Birdwatching Fair** (☎ 0533 5 76 93; [www.podeltabirdfair.it](http://www.podeltabirdfair.it)), the largest event of its kind in Europe.

For fauna of a different kind, a battery of *lidi* (small beach resorts) offer coastal fun.

In summertime, the mosquitoes are man-eaters; slap on the repellent and consider mosquito nets if you're camping.

## Abbazia di Pomposa

About 50km east of Ferrara, the **Abbazia di Pomposa** (☎ 0533 71 91 10; [iatpomposa@libero.it](mailto:iatpomposa@libero.it); Codigoro; admission Mon-Sat €5, monastery/church Sun €3/free; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) is one of Italy's oldest Benedictine endowments. The monk Guido d'Arezzo reputedly invented the musical scale here, and in the 11th century it was one of Italy's foremost cultural centres. Its decline began in the 14th century, and in 1652 vespers were sung here for the last time. The nave of its church has elaborate mosaic paving and is adorned with frescoes from the 14th-century Bologna school and artworks by Vitale di Bologna. There's also a small museum.

The abbey stages a classical music festival, **Rassegna di Musica Clasica**, each July.

## Comacchio



The delta's main centre, Comacchio, is a picturesque fishing village of canals and brick bridges. The most famous **bridge**, the 1635 Trepponti, is an eye-catching construction traversing a cluster of canals.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0533 31 41 54; [www.turismocomacchio.it](http://www.turismocomacchio.it); Corso Mazzini 4; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar) has loads of information about hiking and cycling in the area, bird-watching, horse riding and boat excursions. Useful publications include the *Destra Po* leaflet, which details the 132km Destra Po cycle route from west of Ferrara to the sea, and the pamphlet *Birdwatching in the Po Delta Park: Map & Itineraries*.

In the village, two museums merit a visit. The **Museo della Nave Romana** (☎ 0533 31 13 16; [www.comune.comacchio.fe.it](http://www.comune.comacchio.fe.it); Via della Pescheria 2; adult/child €4.50/2.30; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Jun-Aug, 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Sep-May) displays (with good documentation in English) the fascinating cargo of a Roman shipwreck discovered nearby, while the **Manifattura dei Marinati** (☎ 0533 8 17 42; Corso G Mazzini 200; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Nov-Feb) chronicles the town's traditional eel-fishing industry.

From Ferrara, buses run 11 times daily to Comacchio (€4.10, one hour).

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## RAVENNA

**pop 153,400**

Of the region's artistic jewels none shine brighter than Ravenna's early Christian and Byzantine mosaics. Described as a symphony of colour by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*, they date to Ravenna's golden age as an early Christian centre.

Ravenna was an unimportant provincial city until 402, when Emperor Honorius moved his court here from Milan and made it capital of the Western Roman Empire. He chose Ravenna on the basis that the malarial swamps around the town would provide protection from barbarian invaders – and, in fact, they did until 476 when the city fell to the Goths. The change in regime, however, did little to hinder Ravenna's development and under Theodoric the Great it became one of the Mediterranean's most glamorous cities.

Ravenna's Byzantine heyday was still to come, however. In little more than 200 years, between the Byzantine arrival in 540 and the Lombard capture of the city in 752, the city grew into a glittering showcase for Byzantine art and culture.

More down-to-earth nowadays, it is still a refined and polished place. Less sophisticated are the seaside resorts that crowd the nearby Adriatic beaches.

## Orientation

From Piazza Farini, in front of the train station, it's a 600m walk along Viale Farini and its continuation, Via Diaz, into central Piazza del Popolo. From here, nearly everything of interest is within easy walking distance.

## Information

**Cooperativa Sociale la Formica** (☎ 0544 3 70 31; Piazza Farini; per bag €2.50-5; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri) Just outside the train station; provides a left-luggage service.

**Fast Clean** (Via Candiano 16; 6kg wash €3.50; ☎ 7am-10pm)

**Multimediateca** (☎ 0544 48 20 56; Via Guido da Polenta 4; per hr €2; ☎ 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Sat) Internet access on the 1st floor of Palazzo Farini.

**Police station** (☎ 0544 48 29 99; Piazza Mameli)

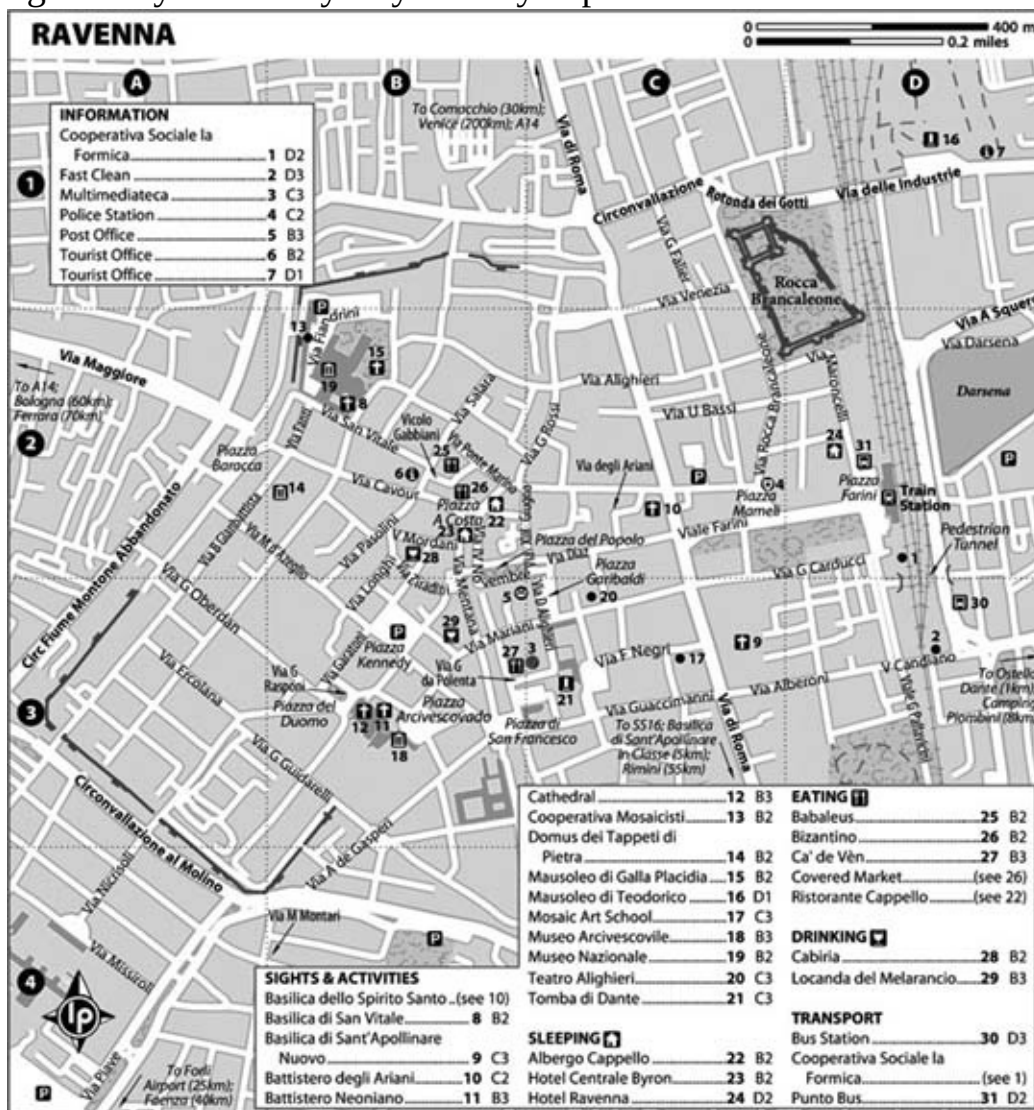
**Post office** (Piazza Garibaldi 1)

**Tourist offices** ([www.turismo.ravenna.it](http://www.turismo.ravenna.it)); Via delle Industrie (☎ 0544 45 15 39; Via delle Industrie 14; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm); Via Salara (☎ 0544 3 57 55; Via Salara 8-12; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Oct-Mar, 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Apr-Sep) The main office is in the centre, on Via Salara.

## Sights

The website [www.ravennamosaici.it](http://www.ravennamosaici.it) gives information, both historical and practical, about Ravenna's main Unesco-listed sights.

To see the mosaics in a different light, do the rounds at night. They're open and illuminated from 9pm to 11pm Tuesday through Friday from early July to early September.



## BASILICA DI SAN VITALE, MAUSOLEO DI GALLA PLACIDIA & MUSEO NAZIONALE

The **basilica** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Via Fiandrini, entrance on Via San Vitale; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Feb) was consecrated in 547 by Archbishop Massimiano. In contrast to the sombre exterior, its interior is awash with colour as the rich greens, golds and blues of the mosaics are bathed in soft yellow sunlight. The mosaics on the side and end walls represent scenes from

the Old Testament: to the left, Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac in the presence of three angels, while the one on the right portrays the death of Abel and the offering of Melchizedek. Inside the chancel, two magnificent mosaics depict the Byzantine emperor Justinian with San Massimiano and a particularly solemn and expressive Empress Theodora, who was his consort.

In the same complex, the small **Mausoleo di Galla Placidia** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Via Fiandrini; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Feb) was constructed for Galla Placidia, the half-sister of Emperor Honorius, who initiated construction of many of Ravenna's grandest buildings. The mosaics here, more muted than those in the basilica, are the oldest in Ravenna.

Next door to the basilica, the **Museo Nazionale** (☎ 0544 54 37 39; Via Fiandrini; admission €4; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) is housed in the cloisters of a former Benedictine monastery. There's a wealth of pottery, bronzes, icons and vestments, plus more Madonna and Child portraits than you can shake a halo at.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

There are three combined tickets on offer in Ravenna. The first (€8.50), valid for seven days, gives entry to the five main monuments: Basilica di San Vitale, Mausoleo di Galla Placidia, Museo Arcivescovile, Battistero Neoniano and Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. There's no individual admission price for these monuments.

Buy a different ticket (€6) for the Museo Nazionale and Mausoleo di Teodorico. Pay an extra €2 to include the Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe, about 5km southeast of town. Each of these sites has its own admission price.

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## MUSEO ARCIVESCOVILE & BATTISTERO NEONIANO

Next to the unremarkable 18th-century **cathedral** (Via Gioacchino Rasponi; ☎ 7am-noon & 2.30-5pm), the tiny **Museo Arcivescovile** (Archepiscopal Museum; ☎ 0544 54 16 88; Piazza Arcivescovado; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) was closed at the time of research, but expected to reopen in early 2010; it's well worth a visit for its fine collection of mosaics and an exquisite 6th-century ivory throne.

Next door, the domed roof of the **Battistero Neoniano** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) holds another impressive set of mosaics depicting the apostles and the baptism of Christ. Thought to have started life as a Roman bathhouse, it was converted into a baptistry in the 5th century.

## BASILICA DI SANT'APOLLINARE NUOVO

Originally built by the Goths in the 6th century, the **basilica** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Via di Roma; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) claims some of Ravenna's most beautiful mosaics. On the right (south) wall, 26 white-robed martyrs are depicted heading towards Christ with his apostles, while on the left, there's an equally expressive procession of virgins, bearing offerings to the Madonna. Spread along both walls are smaller panels depicting scenes from the life of Christ.

## TOMBA DI DANTE

Dante spent the last 19 years of his life in Ravenna, writing much of the *Divine Comedy* here, after Florence expelled him in 1302. As a perpetual act of penance, Florence still supplies the oil for the lamp that burns continually in his **tomb** (Via D Alighieri 9; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm).

Another literary great, Lord Byron, briefly lived in a house on nearby Piazza di San Francesco.

## MAUSOLEO DI TEODORICO

This two-storey **mausoleum** (☎ 0544 68 40 20; Via delle Industrie 14; admission €3; 🕒 8.30am-7pm), built in 520, is a considerable feat of construction with its huge blocks of stone uncemented by any mortar, and 300-tonne dome. At the heart of the mausoleum is a Roman basin of porphyry that was recycled as a sarcophagus. Take bus 2 or 5 from the city centre.

## BASILICA DI SANT'APOLLINARE IN CLASSE

The brilliant star-spangled apse mosaic of the **Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe** (☎ 0544 47 35 69; Via Romea Sud, Classe; admission €3, Sun morning free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm) is a must-see. The basilica, 5km southeast of the city centre, was built in the 6th century on the burial site of Ravenna's patron saint, who converted the city to Christianity in the 2nd century. To get there take bus 4 or 44 to Classe.

## OTHER MONUMENTS

Behind the **Basilica dello Spirito Santo**, just off Via Diaz, is the **Battistero degli Ariani** (☎ 0544 54 37 11; Via degli Ariani; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar, 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Sep), whose breath-taking dome mosaic depicts the baptism of Christ.

To the west, not far from the Basilica di San Vitale, the 6th-century floor mosaics at the **Domus dei Tappeti di Pietra** (☎ 0544 3 25 12; Via B Gianbattista; admission €4; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar; 10am-6.30pm daily Apr-Oct) were unearthed in the early 1990s. Of considerable artistic merit, they are decorated with geometric and floral designs.

## Courses

The following outfits run mosaic courses catering to everyone from beginners to artists:

**Gruppo Mosaicisti** (☎ 0544 3 47 99; [www.gruppomosaicisti.com](http://www.gruppomosaicisti.com); Via Fiandrini; 1-/2-week courses €750/950)

**Mosaic Art School** (☎ 349 601 45 66, toll-free in North America 877-7-MOSAIC; [www.mosaicschool.com](http://www.mosaicschool.com); Via Francesco Negri 14; 1-week course €660-760)

## Festivals & Events

Ravenna hosts one of Italy's top classical-music events, and jazz fans are well served.

**Crossroads** (☎ 0544 40 56 56; [www.crossroads-it.com](http://www.crossroads-it.com), in Italian) Jazz concerts are held in town between late February and the end of May as part of this region-wide festival.

**Ravenna Festival** ([www.ravennafestival.org](http://www.ravennafestival.org)) Renowned Italian conductor Riccardo Muti has close ties with Ravenna and is intimately involved each year with this festival. Concerts are staged from June to late July at venues all over town, including the **Teatro Alighieri** (☎ 0544 24 92 44; [www.teatroalighieri.org](http://www.teatroalighieri.org); Via Mariani 2). Ticket prices start at around €15.

**Ravenna Jazz** (☎ 0544 40 56 66) In late October, stars of the jazz firmament descend on town.

## Sleeping

**Camping Piomboni** (☎ 0544 53 02 30; [www.campingpiomboni.it](http://www.campingpiomboni.it); Viale della Pace 421, Marina di Ravenna; per site €8.20-12.40, plus per person €4.40-8; 🕒 Easter—mid-Sep) In a pine wood 8km from town, this large self-contained camping ground is near the beach at Lido di Ravenna. Take bus 70 from

Ravenna.

**Ostello Dante** (☎ 0544 42 11 64; [www.hostelravenna.com](http://www.hostelravenna.com); Via Nicolodi 12; dm/s/d €15/23/44; 📶) Ravenna's vibrant HI hostel is in a modern building 1km east of the train station. There's an 11.30pm lock-up but for €1 you can hire a 'night key', allowing you to come and go freely. Take bus 80 or the red 'Metrobus' from the train station.

**Hotel Ravenna** (☎ 0544 21 22 04; [www.hotelravenna.ra.it](http://www.hotelravenna.ra.it); Via Maroncelli 12; s/d €55/90, without bathroom €45/70; 📶 📺 📺) A stone's throw from the train station, Hotel Ravenna is a safe bet. The bland rooms feature fading beige and gold decor and unexceptional furniture, but they're large and comfortable enough. Parking is free; wi-fi costs €4 per hour.

**Hotel Centrale Byron** (☎ 0544 21 22 25; [www.hotelbyron.com](http://www.hotelbyron.com); Via IV Novembre 14; s €50-65, d €70-110; 📶 📺 📺) The prime location is what you pay for here, a mere 20 paces from central Piazza del Popolo. The solid, old-fashioned rooms have lost most of their character to modernisation, but you get all the regular three-star comforts, including satellite TV, frigobar and free wi-fi.

**Albergo Cappello** (☎ 0544 21 98 13; [www.albergocappello.it](http://www.albergocappello.it); Via IV Novembre 41; s €110-130, d €130-160; 📶 📺) The old and the new combine to great effect at this eye-catching, centrally located three-star hotel. Murano glass chandeliers, original 15th-century frescoes and coffered ceilings are set against modern fixtures and flat-screen TVs. The ample breakfast features pastries from Ravenna's finest *pasticceria*. Parking costs €13.

## Eating

**Bizantino** (Piazza A Costa; set menus €7-7.70; 🕒 11.45am-2.45pm Mon-Fri) A busy self-service restaurant inside the covered market, Bizantino is ideal for a quick, economical lunchtime bite.

**Babaleus** (☎ 0544 21 64 64; V Gabbiani 7; pizzas from €4, meals €20-25; 🕒 dinner Thu-Tue, lunch Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri) Students come for the €11 'pizza, drink and movie' special (the movie's at the nearby Cinema Astoria), but this relaxed, informal place in the centre also serves up a full menu of pasta, meat and fish.

**Ca' de Vèn** (☎ 0544 3 01 63; Via Corrado Ricci 24; meals €25-35; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Yes, it's touristy, but the atmosphere's wonderful at this cavernous *enoteca*-cum-restaurant in a 15th-century *palazzo* with frescoed domes, vaulted brick ceilings and chequerboard marble floors. Regional specialities are complemented by an encyclopaedic wine list.

**Ristorante Cappello** (☎ 0544 21 98 76; Via IV Novembre 41; tasting menu €35, meals €35-40; 🕒 closed Sun dinner & Mon) Under the hotel of the same name, this refined restaurant takes its food very seriously. The menu changes weekly, but seafood always figures prominently, in dishes such as *strozzapreti con calamaretti*, *zucchine*, *fiori di zucca e zafferano* (pasta with cuttlefish, courgettes, pumpkin flowers and saffron).

Self-caterers and sandwich-fillers should load up at the city's **covered market** (Piazza Andrea Costa).

## Drinking

**Cabiria** (☎ 0544 3 50 60; Via Mordani 8; 🕒 6pm-3am Mon-Sat) A wine bar that hums like a Friday-night pub, Cabiria is a local favourite, popular with the 30-something crowd.

**Locanda del Melarancio** (☎ 0544 21 52 58; Via Mentana 33) A charming 16th-century stone and brick building enlivened with bold red walls forms the backdrop for this smooth, looks-conscious bar.

## Getting There & Around

**ATM** ([www.atm.ra.it](http://www.atm.ra.it), in Italian) local buses depart from Piazza Farini. Intercity buses for Ferrara and towns along the coast leave from the bus station on the east side of the railroad tracks (reached by a pedestrian underpass). **Punto Bus** (☎ 0544 68 99 00; 📧 6.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, from 7.30am Sun), on the piazza, is ATM's information and ticketing office.

Ravenna is on a branch (A14 dir) of the main east coast A14 autostrada. The SS16 (Via Adriatica) heads south to Rimini and on down the coast. The main car parks are east of the train station and north of the Basilica di San Vitale.

Trains connect with Bologna (€5.80, 1¼ hours, hourly), Ferrara (€5.30, 1¼ hours, 14 daily), Rimini (€3.80, one hour, hourly) and the south coast.

In town, cycling is popular. The main (Via Salara) branch of the tourist office offers a free bike-hire service for visitors. Register by presenting a photo ID, then simply grab a yellow bike from one of the cycle stalls outside and return it to the same rack within normal business hours.

Just outside Ravenna's train station, **Cooperativa Sociale la Formica** (☎ 0544 3 70 31; Piazza Farini; bikes per hr/day €1.10/8.50; 📧 7am-7pm Mon-Fri) also rents out bikes.

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## FAENZA

**pop 56,100**

An easy train ride from Ravenna, Faenza is best known for its high-grade ceramics. Production of this faience (tin-glazed earthenware) dates back to the Renaissance and is still a money-spinner for the town. Check out local styles at the vast, ivy-covered **Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche** (☎ 0546 69 73 11; [www.micfaenza.org](http://www.micfaenza.org); Viale Baccarini 19; adult/child €6/3; 📧 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 1.30pm Tue-Thu & to 5.30pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar).

Get details of Faenza's charming medieval centre from the **tourist office** (☎ 0546 2 52 31; [www.prolocofaenza.it](http://www.prolocofaenza.it); Voltone Molinella 2; 📧 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat & 9.30am-12.30pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm Tue-Wed, 9am-12.30pm Thu & Fri Oct-Apr), tucked under the picturesque double-decker loggias of Piazza del Popolo.

Just outside of town, **Agriturismo La Curbastra** (☎ 0546 3 20 89; [www.agriturismolacurbastra.it](http://www.agriturismolacurbastra.it); Via Cesarolo 157; s/d/tr/q €55/60/75/85; 📧) has rustic rooms in the midst of a sea of vines, and a very welcoming swimming pool.

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## IMOLA

**pop 67,300**

Fans of Formula One will know Imola as home to the San Marino Grand Prix. Until the F1 authorities pulled the plug in 2007, the race was held at the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari circuit, the track on which Ayrton Senna crashed and died in 1994.

Imola itself is a pleasant-enough town with a handsome medieval core and a robust red-brick castle – the 13th-century **Rocca Sforzesca** (☎ 0542 60 26 09; Piazza Giovanni dalle Bande Nere; admission €3; 📧)

3-7pm Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun).

The **tourist office** (☎ 0542 60 22 07; [iat@comune.imola.bo.it](mailto:iat@comune.imola.bo.it); Via Emilia 135; 🕒 8.30am-1pm Mon-Fri, 3-6pm Tue, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) can help with accommodation lists and details of events at the racetrack.

Imola is on the Via Emilia (SS9) and half-hourly trains connect it with Bologna (€3.10, 30 minutes).

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## RIMINI

**pop 138,500**

One of Italy's most famous seaside resorts, Rimini is not to everyone's taste. Unless you're happy to share an overdeveloped strip of sand with tens of thousands of like-minded holiday-makers, you might want to think twice about visiting in August. If, however, the thought of days on flesh-packed beaches followed by nights in some of Italy's finest clubs turns you on – welcome to Rimini.

Birthplace of director Federico Fellini, the city does have another, more recognisably Italian, face. Its small *centro storico* was battered by 400 Allied bombing raids in WWII but has since been largely restored. It won't keep you for long but it's good for a quick wander and is loaded with cool bars and eateries.

## History

Originally Umbrian, then Etruscan, and then the important Roman colony of Ariminum, Rimini sits at the centre of the Riviera del Sole. The city continued to change hands throughout the Middle Ages, knowing Byzantine, Lombard and papal rule before ending up in the hands of the Malatesta family in the 13th century. At the beginning of the 16th century, Cesare Borgia added the city to his list of short-lived conquests but Rimini soon succumbed to Venice, then to the Papal States. Rimini, finally its own master, joined the Kingdom of Italy in 1860.

## Orientation

Halfway between the sea and the historic centre, the train station is a useful landmark. To get from the train station to the centre, take Corso Giovanni XXIII down to Corso d'Augusto, hang a left and continue to Piazza Cavour and Piazza Tre Martiri, old Rimini's two main squares. For the seafront, duck under the underpass on the right of Piazzale Cesare Battisti, the square in front of the station, and head straight down Viale Principe Amedeo.

# RIMINI

0 400 m  
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- | INFORMATION                       |      |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Police Station                    | 1 A4 |
| Post Office                       | 2 B4 |
| Tourist Office                    | 3 C4 |
| Tourist Office                    | 4 C2 |
| Ufficio Relazioni con il Pubblico | 5 A4 |
- 
- | SLEEPING                         |         |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| Teatro Amintore Galli            | 5 A4    |
| Tempio Malatestiano              | 6 B4    |
| Hostel Jammin                    | 7 D4    |
| Hotel Aurora Centro              | 8 D4    |
| Hotel Villa Lilla                | 9 C3    |
| Rimini Reservation               | (see 4) |
| Sunflower City Backpacker Hostel | 20 B2   |
- 
- | EATING              |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| Brodo di Giugliole  | 21 A4 |
| Casina del Bosco    | 22 C2 |
| Covered Market      | 23 B4 |
| Gelateria Pellicano | 24 B4 |
| Osteria de Borg     | 25 A3 |
| Osteria i Teatini   | 26 B4 |
| Picnic              | 27 B4 |

- | SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES   |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Arco di Augusto       | 6 B5  |
| Castel Sismondo       | 7 A4  |
| Delfinario Rimini     | 8 C1  |
| Domus del Chirurgo    | 9 A4  |
| Museo della Città     | 10 A4 |
| Palazzo del Municipio | 11 A4 |
| Palazzo del Podestà   | 12 A4 |
| Porte di Tiberio      | 13 A4 |
| Roman Amphitheatre    | 14 C4 |
- 
- | DRINKING              |       |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Barge                 | 28 C1 |
| Caffè Cavour          | 29 A4 |
| Taverna della Vecchia |       |
| Pescheria             | 30 A4 |
- 
- | ENTERTAINMENT      |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Disco Bar Coconuts | 31 C1 |
- 
- | TRANSPORT                   |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Bike Hire                   | 32 D3 |
| Buses for San Marino & Rome | 33 B3 |

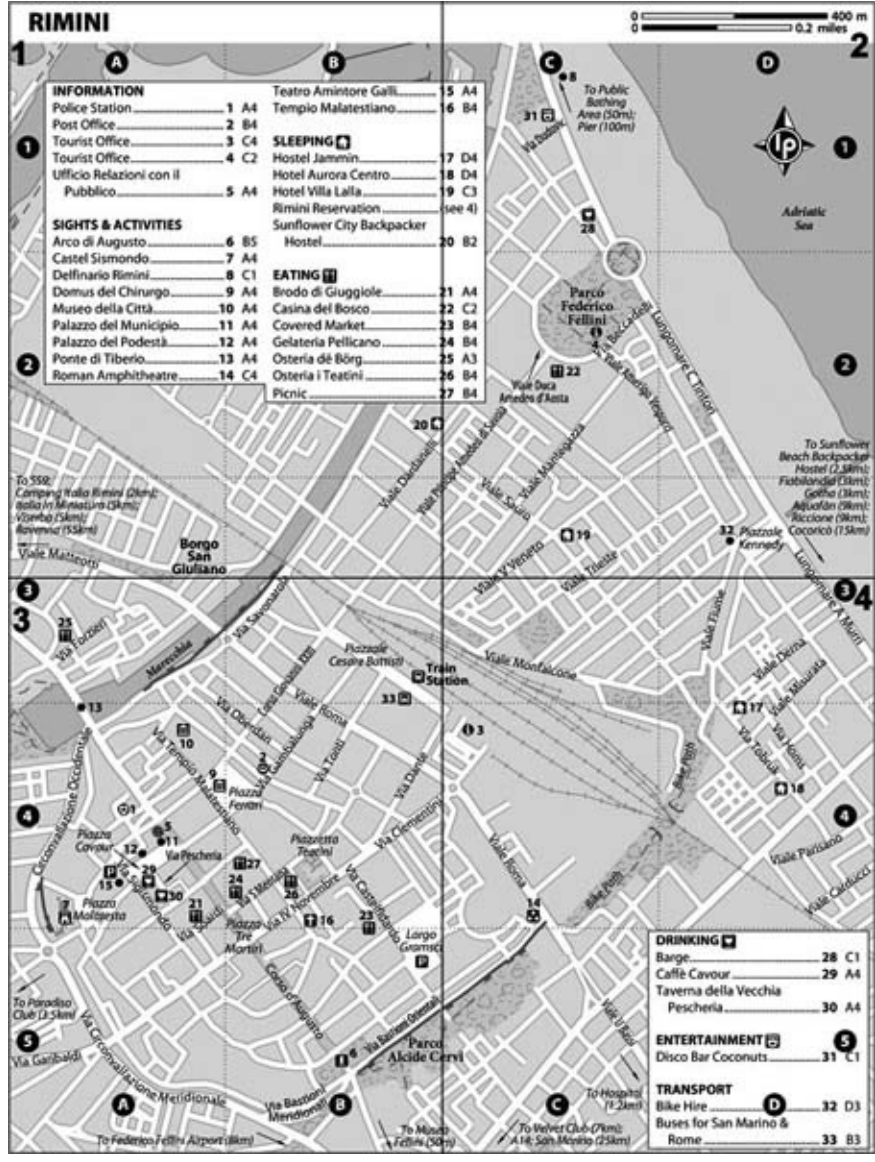
To SSR: Campiano (10km), Marina di Montese (12km), Viareggio (14km), Livorno (15km)

To Paradise Club (1.5km)

Borgo San Giuliano

- To Public Beaching Area (50m), Pier (100m)
- To Sunflower Beach Backpacker Hostel (2.6km), Fidalon (3km), Giffoni (3km), Agugliana (7km), Riccione (9km), Cesena (17.5km)
- To Hospital (1.2km)
- To Velvet Club (7km), A4: San Marino (25km)

To Federico Fellini Airport (8km)





# RIMINI

**1**

**INFORMATION**

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Tourist Office .....	3	C4
Tourist Office .....	4	C2
Ufficio Relazioni con il Pubblico .....	5	A4

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

Arco di Augusto .....	6	B5
Castel Sismondo .....	7	A4
Delfinario Rimini .....	8	C1
Domus del Chirurgo .....	9	A4
Museo della Città .....	10	A4
Palazzo del Municipio .....	11	A4
Palazzo del Podestà .....	12	A4
Ponte di Tiberio .....	13	A4
Roman Amphitheatre .....	14	C4

**2**

Teatro Amintore Galli .....	
Tempio Malatestiano .....	

**SLEEPING**

Hostel Jammin .....	
Hotel Aurora Centro .....	
Hotel Villa Lalla .....	
Rimini Reservation .....	
Sunflower City Backpacker Hostel .....	

**EATING**

Brodo di Giuggiole .....	
Casina del Bosco .....	
Covered Market .....	
Gelateria Pellicano .....	
Osteria de Börg .....	
Osteria i Teatini .....	
Picnic .....	

To SS9;  
 Camping Italia Rimini (2km);  
 Italia in Miniatura (5km);  
 Viserba (5km);  
 Ravenna (55km)

Viale Matteotti

Borgo San Giuliano

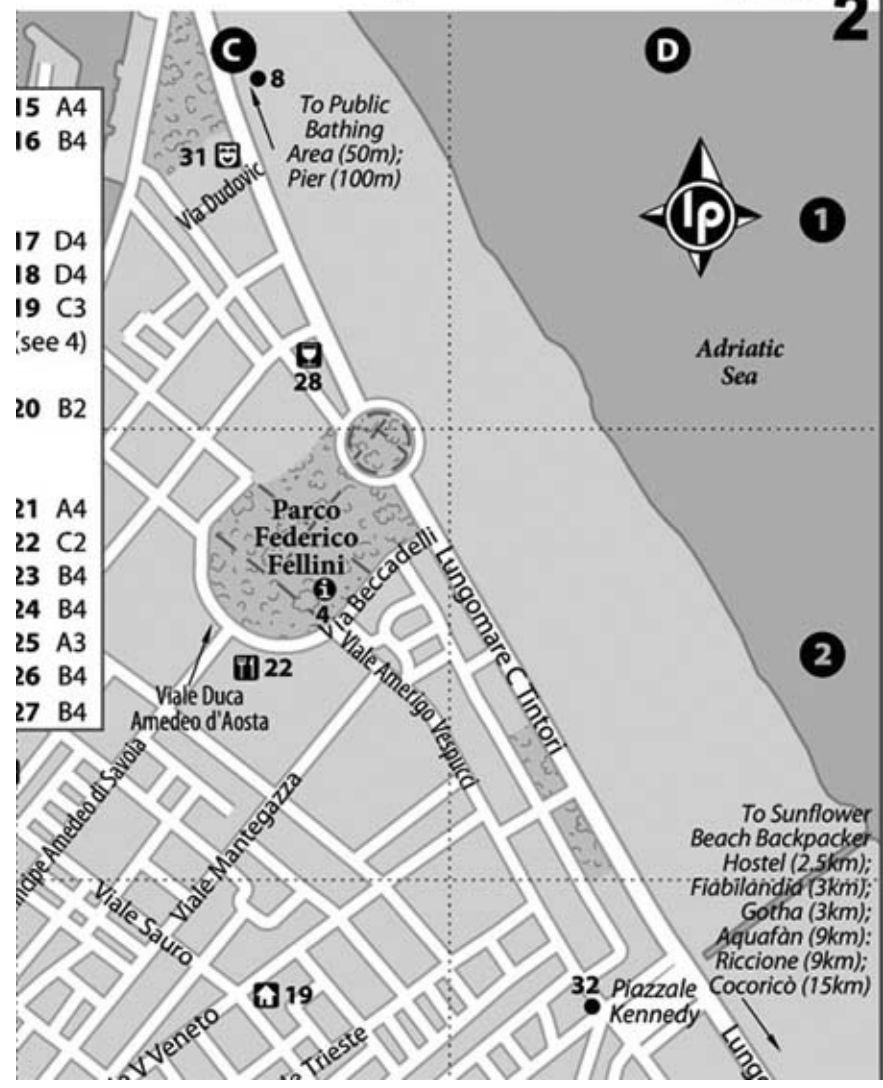
Viale Dardanelli

Viale Pri

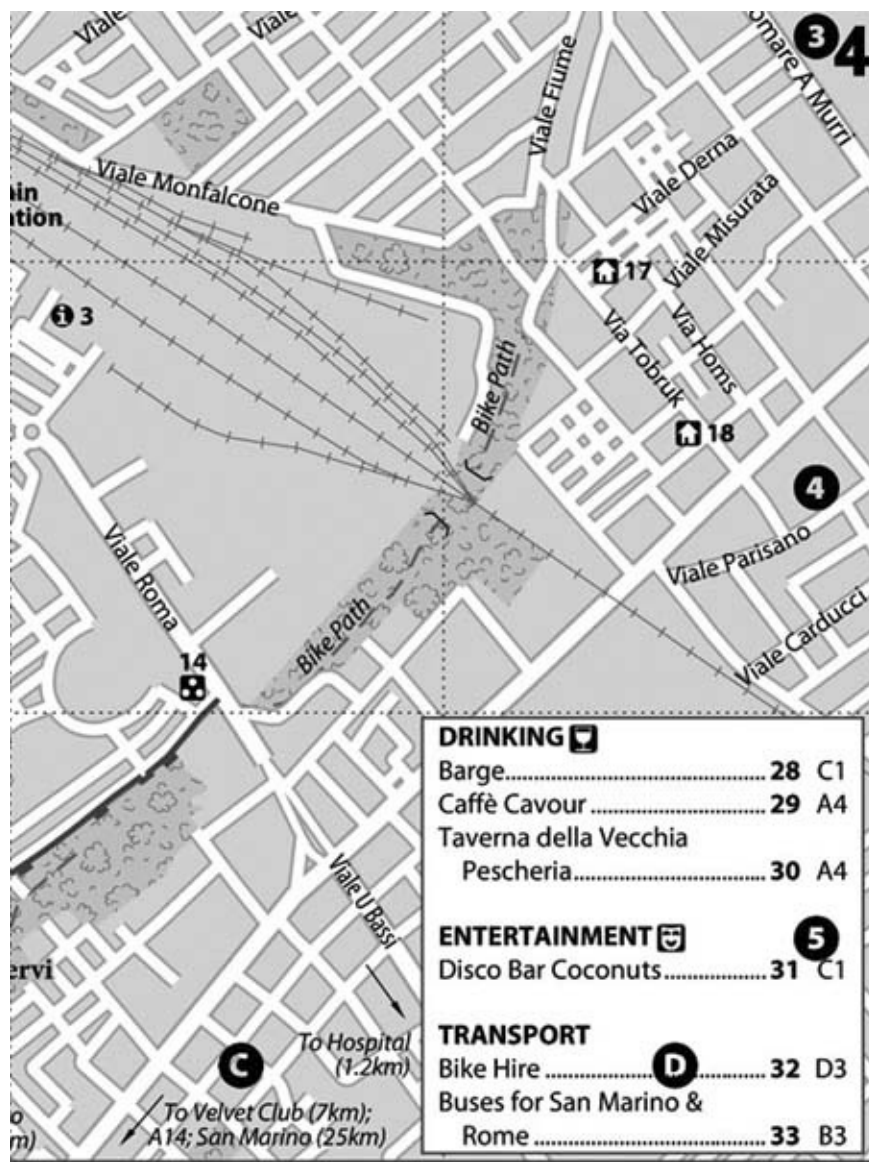
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2







## Information

**Hospital** (☎ 0541 70 51 11; Viale L Settembrini 2) Located 1.2km southeast of the centre.

**Police station** (☎ 0541 35 31 11; Corso d' Augusto 192)

**Post office** (Via Gambalunga 40)

**Tourist offices** ([www.riminiturismo.it](http://www.riminiturismo.it)); Parco Federico Fellini (☎ 0541 5 69 02; Parco Federico Fellini 3; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr); train station (☎ 0541 5 13 31; Piazzale Cesare Battisti; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun May-Sep, to 6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) Multilingual staff at the train station office is exceptionally helpful. There are also three beachfront kiosks, open in summer only.

**Ufficio Relazioni con il Pubblico** (☎ 0541 70 47 04; Corso d' Augusto 158; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-6pm Thu, to 1pm Sat) Free internet provided by Rimini's town government.

## Sights & Activities

### TEMPIO MALATESTIANO & CASTEL SISMONDO

Rimini's grandest monument is its cathedral, the **Tempio Malatestiano** (☎ 051 5 11 30; Via IV Novembre 35; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Sun). Dedicated to St Francis, it was transformed in the 15th century to house the tomb of Isotta degli Atti, the beloved mistress of Sigismondo Malatesta. Sigismondo, a member of the ruling Malatesta clan, was something of a rogue: Pope Pius II,

himself no angel, burned Sigismondo's effigy in Rome and condemned him to hell for an impressive litany of sins that included rape, murder, incest, adultery and severe oppression of the people.

Most of the church's unfinished facade is by the Florentine Leon Battista Alberti, one of the period's great architects. The side chapels are separated from the single wide nave by marble balustrades topped by tubby cherubs. The chapel nearest the altar on the south side has a fine fresco by Piero della Francesca.

A short walk to the west from the cathedral, the 15th-century **Castel Sismondo** (☎ 0541 2 91 92; Piazza Malatesta; 🗨 exhibitions only), also known as the Rocca Malatestiana, is named after the notorious Sigismondo.

## PIAZZA CAVOUR

The city's finest *palazzi* hug this attractive piazza. On its northern flank, **Palazzo del Municipio**, built in 1562 and reconstructed after being razed during WWII, abuts the imposing 14th-century Gothic **Palazzo del Podestà**; neither is open to the public. On the other side of the square, Via Pescheria is the town's old fish market. The **Teatro Amintore Galli** was a 19th-century addition, appearing in 1857 in the feverish years leading to unification.

## MUSEUMS

Rimini's **Museo della Città** (☎ 0541 2 14 82; Via Tonini 1; adult/child incl Domus del Chirurgo €5/3, admission free Sun; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 4.30-7.30pm Sun mid-Jun—mid-Sep, 8.30am-12.30pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Sun mid-Sep—mid-Jun) displays paintings upstairs, including a haunting *Pietà* by Giovanni Bellini and an altarpiece by Domenico Ghirlandaio. However, the museum's centrepiece is the archaeological section on the ground floor. Spread over several rooms, with excellent bilingual (Italian-English) signage, are finds from two nearby Roman villas, including splendid mosaics, a rare and exquisite representation of fish rendered in coloured glass, and the world's largest collection of Roman surgical instruments. You can walk through a life-size reconstruction of the surgeon's offices, then visit the original excavation site across the street at the recently opened **Domus del Chirurgo**, with some fine floor mosaics still intact.

Film buffs will enjoy the Fellini memorabilia at the newly relocated **Museo Fellini** (☎ 0541 5 00 85; [www.federicofellini.it](http://www.federicofellini.it), in Italian; Via Nigra 6; admission free; 🕒 5.30-7.30pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 10am-noon & 4.30-7.30pm Sat).

## ROMAN REMAINS

At the southeastern end of Corso d'Augusto, the **Arco di Augusto** (Arch of Augustus) was erected in 27 BC, while at the Corso's other end, the **Ponte di Tiberio** (Tiberius' Bridge) dates to the 1st century AD. To visit the insubstantial remains of Rimini's **Roman amphitheatre** (Via Vezia 2), once one of the largest in the region, contact the **Musei Comunali** (☎ 0541 70 44 22).

## BORGO SAN GIULIANO

Just over the Ponte di Tiberio, Rimini's old fisherfolk's quarter has been freshened up and is now a colourful patchwork of cobbled lanes, trendy trattorias, wine bars and trim terraced houses.

## BEACHES

Rimini's beaches heave in summer. The Rimini riviera boasts 40km of mostly sandy beaches, in some places 200m wide, yet come August you'll be pushed to find a spare millimetre.

Most beaches are connected to hotels or run by private clubs, which typically charge about €15 per day

for an umbrella and two loungers. The only free sand you'll find is a tiny patch north of the city centre near the pier. Private beaches have bars and most organise activities (aerobics, beach games etc); several also offer windsurfing courses and board hire.

All of Rimini's beaches bear the coveted EU blue flag as an indication of their cleanliness, and pollution levels are monitored daily.

## THEME PARKS

Love 'em or loathe 'em, Rimini's theme parks are hugely popular. The truly committed can buy a Fantasticket (see [www.larivieradeiparchi.it/fantasticket.php](http://www.larivieradeiparchi.it/fantasticket.php)) granting reduced-price admission to multiple parks. The tourist office can provide a full list. Major ones:

**Aquafàn** (☎ 0541 60 30 50; [www.aquafan.it](http://www.aquafan.it); Via Ascoli Piceno 6, Riccione; adult/child €24/18; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Jun—mid-Sep) At Riccione, the area's biggest water park. Bus 42 or 45 from Riccione station.

**Delfinario Rimini** (☎ 0541 5 02 98; [www.delfinariorimini.it](http://www.delfinariorimini.it); Lungomare Tintori 2; adult/child €12/9; 🕒 Easter-Sep) Dolphinarium beside Rimini's public beach.

**Fiabilandia** (☎ 0541 37 20 64; [www.fiabilandia.it](http://www.fiabilandia.it); Via Cardano 15, Rivazzurra; adult/child €22/15) One of Rimini's oldest, this park focuses on fun for little kiddies.

**Italia in Miniatura** (☎ 0541 73 67 36; [www.italiainminiatura.com](http://www.italiainminiatura.com); Via Popilia 239, Viserba; adult/child €19/14; 🕒 9am-11pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-sunset Sep-Jun) Scale models of Italy's major sights. Bus 8 from Rimini train station.

## Festivals & Events

**Paganello** ([www.paganello.com](http://www.paganello.com)) In early April Rimini hosts the annual Frisbee World Cup.

**Cheecoting championship** ([www.bigliedaspiazza.it](http://www.bigliedaspiazza.it), in Italian) Later in April, this involves highly trained athletes flicking marbles around circuits built on the beach.

**Gradisca** On 21 June Rimini celebrates with dancing, fireworks and eating – it's estimated that revellers consume some two tonnes of grilled sardines and 12,000L of Sangiovese wine in that one night.

**Rimini Jazz Festival** (☎ 0541 5 22 06; [www.riminijazz.it](http://www.riminijazz.it), in Italian) In summer this is held beside the main Marina Centro beach area.

**Sagra Musicale Malatestiana** (☎ 0541 70 42 94; [www.sagramusicalemalatestiana.it](http://www.sagramusicalemalatestiana.it), in Italian) Top classical conductors and performers, in September.

## Sleeping

Ironically for a city with more than 1200 hotels, accommodation can be tricky. In July and August many places are booked out and prices are sky-high, especially as many proprietors insist on full board; in winter a lot of places simply shut up shop. If you do arrive without anywhere lined up, **Rimini**

**Reservation** (☎ 0541 5 33 99; [www.riminireservation.it](http://www.riminireservation.it); Parco Federico Fellini 3) can help.

**Camping Italia Rimini** (☎ 0541 73 28 82; [www.campingitaliarimini.it](http://www.campingitaliarimini.it); Via Toscanelli 112, Viserba; camp sites per adult/child/tent/car €10/5.50/11/5; 🕒 Jun-Sep) One of numerous camping grounds along the coast, this tree-shaded place 2km northwest of the city centre has all requisite facilities. Take bus 4 from the train station and get off at stop 14.

**Sunflower City Backpacker Hostel** (☎ 0541 2 51 80; Via Dardanelli 102; [www.sunflowerhostel.com](http://www.sunflowerhostel.com);

dm €18-27, s €26-49, d €46-79; ☎) Run by three ex-backpackers, the chilled-out Sunflower welcomes travellers with laundry and cooking facilities, spacious lockers, retro Austin Powers—style wallpaper, pool tables, a bar and free bike hire.

**Sunflower Beach Backpacker Hostel** (☎ 0541 37 34 32; Viale Siracusa 25; 🗓 Mar-Oct) The same gang runs this seasonal place, which offers the same prices and amenities. Take bus 11 from the train station to stop 24.

**Hostel Jammin** (☎ 0541 39 08 00; [www.hosteljammin.com](http://www.hosteljammin.com); Viale Derna 22; dm €15-27, s €27-42, d €46-76; 🗓 Mar-Oct; ☎ 📶) Just what a hostel should be: cheap, friendly and full of international travellers. The facilities are spot on with clean, spacious rooms, a rooftop terrace, free bike hire and wi-fi, and the beach is only a short stroll away.

**Hotel Aurora Centro** (☎ 0541 39 10 02; fax 0541 39 16 82; Via Tobruk 6; s/d €35/60; 📞) A homely *pensione* with threadbare carpets and children's toys cheerfully littered around the breakfast room. You get no airs and graces here, just clean, simple rooms and a gruff but kindly welcome. The beach is a quick hop away.

**Hotel Villa Lalla** (☎ 0541 5 51 55; [www.villalalla.com](http://www.villalalla.com); Viale V Veneto 22; s €36-56, d €56-96; 📞 🗓 📶) One of the better hotels in the leafy residential district between the beach and the train station. Its smart white rooms are fresh and cool and, in winter, its rates are a snip. From mid-June to mid-September when the restaurant's open, it's a good idea to invest in half-board or full board (a mere €8 extra per meal). Bikes are free for guests.

## Eating

**ourpick Casina del Bosco** (☎ 0541 5 62 95; Via Beccadelli 15; piadine €4-6.20; 🗓 noon-late) For fast food, nothing beats a *piadina*, a toasted half-moon of unleavened bread with a savoury filling – Romagna's retort to the wrap. This immensely popular eatery has built its clientele over 30 years by keeping things simple: *piadine*, salads, beer, wine and ice-cold desserts. Bask on the patio with a draught *hefeweizen* (wheat beer) while you wait for the guys at the grill to do their thing.

**Osteria Dē Börg** (☎ 0541 5 60 74; Via Forzieri 12; meals €25-35; 🗓 lunch & dinner) A homely *osteria* in the old fishing quarter, this place is what eating in Italy is all about: simple, honest food made with local ingredients and served in unpretentious surroundings. Second courses revolve around meat, from stuffed rabbit to steaks grilled on an open fire and seasoned with rosemary and sea salt.

**Picnic** (☎ 0541 2 19 16; Via Tempio Malatestiano 30; meals €30; 🗓 closed Mon Sep-May) In business for nearly half a century, Picnic has a wide-ranging menu of traditional favourites like *salsiccia fagioli con polenta* (sausage with beans and polenta), supplemented with whatever's freshest from the market – grilled fish of the day, for example, or local strawberries with whipped cream.

**Osteria i Teatini** (☎ 0541 2 80 08; Piazza Teatini 3; meals €30-35) Described by its owner as a 'free people's place', this artsy, atmospheric joint is part restaurant, part bar and part alternative nightspot, with eclectic jazz-classical DJ sets on Friday nights and live music on Saturdays. Drink in the wonderful vaulted stone cellar or eat on the outdoor deck in the leafy square outside.

**Brodo di Giuggiole** (☎ 0541 2 67 78; Via Soardi 11; meals €35; 🗓 dinner Tue-Sun) Tucked down an alley off Piazza Tre Martiri, this intimate spot is great for an elegant night out, with its wood-panelled dining room, lanternlit plank terrace and an ever-changing menu featuring some of the freshest, best-prepared fish in town. Reservations are recommended, especially on live-jazz Tuesdays.

**Gelateria Pellicano** (Via S Mentana 10; 🗓 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) This Rimini-based, five-store

chain makes some seriously good ice cream. Try the *pinoli* (pine nut), with toasted whole nuts on top.

For picnic provender, load up at Rimini's **covered market** (Via Castelfidardo; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat).

## Drinking

Rimini is well set up with bars and cafes. Head through the brick triple archway off Piazza Cavour and enter the old *pescheria* (fish market), whose courtyard is crawling with trendy pubs and wine bars. There are also plenty of drinking spots on the seafront.

**Barge** (☎ 0541 70 98 45; Lungomare C Tintori 13; ☎ closed Mon in winter) A magnet for modish 20-somethings, this seafront pub offers an irresistible combo: draught Guinness, regular DJs and frequent live music.

**Caffè Cavour** (☎ 0541 78 51 23; Piazza Cavour 12; ☎ 7am-midnight) This swish cafe on Rimini's main square attracts a well-to-do *aperitivo* set who lounge inside on leather chairs in winter, then decamp outdoors on balmy summer evenings to enjoy the fine Piazza Cavour views.

**Taverna della Vecchia Pescheria** (Via Pisacane 10; ☎ 6pm-2am) In the historic fish market, this rustic pub with little wooden tables and chairs is elbow-to-elbow with locals enjoying draught beer and free snacks at *aperitivo* time.

## Entertainment

Rimini and nearby Riccione are Italy's top clubbing venues, attracting thousands of clubbers each weekend and many more in the frenetic summer months. The tourist office can advise on the 'in' venues and the clubbing bus services (see opposite). Reckon on anything from €15 to €30 for a top gig at a big club.

**Cocoricò** (☎ 0541 60 51 83; [www.cocorico.it](http://www.cocorico.it); Viale Chieti 44, Riccione; ☎ 11pm-5.30am) Dance under a glass pyramid at one of Italy's most famous clubs, 12km south of town in Riccione. Underground, techno and house rule.

**Gotha** (☎ 0541 47 87 39; [www.gotha-rimini.com](http://www.gotha-rimini.com); Viale Regina Margherita 52; ☎ 9pm-5am) An intimate lounge bar for 1000, on the waterfront halfway between Rimini and Riccione, Gotha swings to a Latin beat in winter and a commercial soundtrack in summer.

**Velvet Club** (☎ 0541 75 61 11; [www.velvet.it](http://www.velvet.it); Via Sant'Aquilina 21; ☎ 9pm-late) The Velvet, located 8km southwest of the centre, features DJs, big-name rock acts and dancing till dawn. The adjacent Velvet Factory is a live-work space for international visual and performing artists.

**Disco Bar Coconuts** (☎ 0541 2 44 22; [www.coconuts.it](http://www.coconuts.it); Lungomare C Tintori 5; ☎ 11.30pm-4am) Flaunting its prime waterfront location, Rimini's most centrally located disco exudes a summer-beach-party atmosphere, with palm trees sprouting from the wooden deck and a 'flower power' VW convertible parked out the front.

## Getting There & Away

Ryanair offers thrice-weekly direct flights from London Stansted to Rimini's Federico Fellini airport, 8km south of the city centre. Alitalia also flies nonstop to/from Rome.

There are regular buses from Rimini's train station to San Marino (return €7.40, 45 minutes, 11 daily).

By car, you have a choice of the A14 (south into Le Marche or northwest towards Bologna and Milan)



or the toll-free but very busy SS16.

Hourly trains run down the coast to the ferry ports of Ancona (regional/Eurostar €4.90/11.90, one to 1¼ hours) and Bari (€26.50/48.90, five to six hours). Up the line, they serve Ravenna (€3.80, one hour, hourly) and Bologna (regional/Eurostar €7.80/15.20, one to 1½ hours, half-hourly).

## Getting Around

**TRAMServizi** (☎ 0541 30 08 11; [www.tramservizi.it](http://www.tramservizi.it), in Italian) buses operate throughout the city. Local bus 9 runs between Rimini's train station and the airport (€1, 25 minutes). For Riccione (€1.50, 30 minutes), catch local bus 11 from the train station or along the *lungomare* (seafront); it leaves every eight to 15 minutes between 6am and 2am. In summer, the Blue Line ([www.bluelinebus.com](http://www.bluelinebus.com)) is a special late-night service with on-board music connecting the out-of-town clubs with the city centre, train station and camping grounds. It runs from 2am until 6am and for €4 you can hop on and off at will.

For a taxi, call ☎ 0541 5 00 20.

You can hire bikes and scooters from various kiosks on Piazzale Kennedy. Free bikes are also available from Rimini's municipal offices (Corso d'Augusto 158).

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## SAN MARINO

Perched on the top of a 657m lump of rock, the 61 sq km Repubblica di San Marino is Europe's third-smallest state after the Vatican and Monaco. Added to Unesco's World Heritage List in July 2008, it's a favourite day-trip destination – over two million visitors annually make the very steep climb to the historic centre, which these days is largely given over to tourism. Hundreds of souvenir stalls line the not-unattractive streets selling everything from samurai swords to San Marino stamps and locally minted coins, and restaurants do a brisk trade feeding the visiting hordes. However, if you catch it at a quiet time (ie during the week, preferably in winter) the old town is pleasant enough and the views are spectacular.

Several legends describe the founding of San Marino, including one about a stonecutter who was given the land on top of Monte Titano by a rich Roman woman whose son he had cured. Throughout history, it's pretty much been left to its own devices. Cesare Borgia took possession early in the 16th century, but his rule was short-lived as he died soon after. Then in 1739 one Cardinal Giulio Alberoni took over the republic, but the pope backed San Marino's independence and the cardinal was sent packing. During WWII it remained neutral and played host to 100,000 refugees until 1944, when the Allies marched into town.



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## ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The old part of San Marino, the only element of any interest, is essentially one main street. Enter via Porta San Francesco, ascend Via Basilicius to Piazza Titano, climb another 50m to Piazza Garibaldi, turn left up Contrada del Collegio, go to the end of Contrada del Omagnano or parallel Contrada del Pianello – then stop short or you’ll fall off the cliff. That’s it. You’ve done the capital of this city-state.

**Post office** (Viale A Onofri 87)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0549 88 29 14; [www.visitsanmarino.com](http://www.visitsanmarino.com); Contrada del Collegio 40; 📧 10am-5pm)

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## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

There’s not much to do in San Marino other than stroll the historic centre, watch the half-hourly changing of the guard in Piazza della Libertà, admire the views and perhaps take in a bizarre attraction or two, such as the museums dedicated to vampires, torture, wax dummies and strange facts (the **Museo delle Curiosità**). The archaeological artefacts and paintings at the small **Museo di Stato** (☎ 0549 88 38 35;

[www.museidistato.sm](http://www.museidistato.sm); Piazza Titano 1; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm mid-Jun—mid-Sep, 9am-5pm mid-Sep—mid-Jun) are more mainstream, including several canvases by Guercino. The neo-Gothic **Palazzo Pubblico** (admission €3) overlooks Piazza della Libertà.

At the top of town the two fortresses, the 13th-century **Castello della Guaita** and 14th-century **Castello della Cesta** (admission to 1/2 €3/4.50; ☎ 8am-8pm mid-Jun—mid-Sep, 9am-5pm mid-Sep—mid-Jun) dominate the skyline, offering superb views towards Rimini and the coast. The latter houses a small museum of old weapons.

Collectors can pick up San Marino stamps and coins at the **Azienda Filatelica-Numismatica** (☎ 0549 88 23 65; [www.aasfn.sm](http://www.aasfn.sm); Piazza Garibaldi 5; ☎ 8.15am-6pm Mon & Thu, to 2.15pm Tue, Wed & Fri). To get your passport stamped with a San Marino visa, you'll need to fork out €5 at the tourist office.

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## SLEEPING & EATING

You don't need to overnight in San Marino to do it justice, but if you're determined to do so there are a few hotels in the historic centre, including **Albergo Diamond** (☎ /fax 0549 99 10 03; Contrada del Collegio 50; s/d €40/65), with six modest rooms above a large, busy restaurant.

Food is not one of San Marino's strong points and the best thing about some of the cafes is the views. The centre is well endowed with places offering set meals starting at around €15.

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses run to/from Rimini (return €7.40, 45 minutes, 11 daily), arriving at Piazzale Calcigni. The SS72 leads up from Rimini.

Leave your car at one of the numerous car parks and walk up to the *centro storico*. If necessary, park at car park 11 and take the **funivia** (cable car; return €4.50; ☎ 7.50am-sunset Sep-Jun, to 1am Jul & Aug) up.

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# Tuscany

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[TOURS](#)

[FESTIVALS & EVENTS](#)

[SLEEPING](#)

[EATING](#)

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## AROUND FLORENCE

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## NORTHERN & WESTERN TUSCANY

[PISTOIA](#)

[LUCCA](#)

[THE GARFAGNANA](#)

[APUANE ALPS](#)

[PISA](#)

[LIVORNO](#)

[ELBA](#)

## CENTRAL TUSCANY

[CHIANTI](#)

[SIENA](#)

[SAN GIMIGNANO](#)

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[LE CRETE](#)

## SOUTHERN TUSCANY

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[ETRUSCAN SITES](#)

## EASTERN TUSCANY

Laden with grand-slam sights and experiences, Tuscany (Toscana in Italian) offers the perfect introduction to Italy's famed *dolce vita* (sweet life). Despite incessant praise, its beauty and charm continues to defy description. It truly does have it all: extraordinary art and architecture; colourful festivals; a season-driven cuisine emulated the world over; and never-ending, picture-perfect landscapes of olive groves, vineyards and poplars.

There's an overabundance of things to do and see, because this part of Italy has been value-adding since Etruscan times. You can visit a World Heritage site in the morning (there are six), drive through a national park in the afternoon (there are three) and bunk down in stylish vineyard accommodation at night (we wouldn't dare hazard a guess how many there are). Medieval sculptures, Renaissance paintings and Gothic cathedrals? Check. Spectacular trekking and sensational Slow Food? Yep. Hills laden with vines, ancient olive groves...you've got the picture. Now all you have to do is go.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Transport yourself back to the Renaissance while marvelling at artistic treasures aplenty in Florence's [Uffizi Gallery](#)
- Indulge in some icon-spotting in Pisa's picture-perfect [Piazza dei Miracoli](#)
- Hear Puccini's arias soar to the heavens in Lucca's [Church & Baptistry of Sts Giovanni & Reparata](#)
- Embark on a scenic cycle along the [Strada del Vino Costa degli Etruschi](#) (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)) from Livorno to Elba
- Eat, drink and sleep in style when exploring [Chianti](#), Tuscany's most sybaritic pocket
- Gorge on Gothic architecture and spiced panforte in sensational [Siena](#)



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POPULATION: 3.5 MILLION

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AREA: 22,990 SQ KM

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[Return to beginning of chapter](#)

## FLORENCE

pop 364,710

Return time and again and you won't see it all. Stand on a bridge over the Arno several times in a day and the light, mood and view will always vary. Surprisingly small as it is, this city is like no other. Cradle of the Renaissance and home of Machiavelli, Michelangelo and the Medici, Florence (Firenze) is magnetic, romantic, unrivalled and – above all – busy. Its historic streets teem with tourists, who flock year-round to feast on the city's world-class art and extraordinary architecture.

Yet there's more to this intensely absorbing place than priceless masterpieces. Towers and palaces evoke a thousand tales of its medieval past; designer boutiques and artisan workshops stud its streets; there's a buzzing cafe and bar scene; and – when the summer heat simply gets too stifling – vine-laden hills and terrace restaurants are only a short drive away.

## HISTORY

Controversy continues over who founded Florence. The most commonly accepted story tells us that Emperor Julius Caesar founded Florentia around 59 BC, making it a strategic garrison on the narrowest crossing of the Arno river and thus controlling the Via Flaminia linking Rome to northern Italy and Gaul (France). Archaeological evidence suggests the presence of an earlier village founded by the Etruscans of Fiesole around 200 BC.

In the 12th century Florence became a free *comune* (town council), ruled by 12 *priori* (consuls)

assisted by the Consiglio di Cento (Council of One Hundred), drawn mainly from the merchant class. Agitation among differing factions led to the appointment of a foreign governing magistrate (*podestà*) in 1207.

The first conflicts between two of the factions, the pro-papal Guelphs (Guelfi) and the pro-imperial Ghibellines (Ghibellini), started in the mid-13th century, with power passing between the two groups for almost a century.

In the 1290s the Guelphs split into two: the Neri (Blacks) and Bianchi (Whites). When the Bianchi were defeated, Dante was among those driven into exile in 1302. As the nobility lost ground the Guelph merchant class took control, but trouble was never far away. The plague of 1348 halved the city's population and the government was rocked by agitation from the lower classes.

In the 14th century Florence was ruled by a caucus of Guelphs under the leadership of the Albizi family. Among the families opposing them were the Medici, who substantially increased their clout when they became the papal bankers.

Cosimo il Vecchio (the Elder, also known simply as Cosimo de' Medici) emerged as head of the opposition to the Albizi in the 15th century and became Florence's ruler. His eye for talent saw a constellation of artists such as Alberti, Brunelleschi, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Donatello, Fra' Angelico and Fra' Filippo Lippi flourish.

The rule of Lorenzo il Magnifico (1469–92), Cosimo's grandson, ushered in the most glorious period of Florentine civilisation and of the Italian Renaissance. His court fostered a flowering of art, music and poetry, turning Florence into Italy's cultural capital. Not long before Lorenzo's death, the Medici bank failed and the family was driven out of Florence. The city fell under the control of Savonarola, a Dominican monk who led a puritanical republic, burning the city's wealth on his 'bonfire of vanities'. But his lure was short-lived and after falling from favour he was tried as a heretic and executed in 1498.

After the Spanish defeated Florence in 1512, Emperor Charles V married his daughter to Lorenzo's great-grandson Alessandro de' Medici, whom he made duke of Florence in 1530. Seven years later Cosimo I, one of the last truly capable Medici rulers, took charge, becoming grand duke of Tuscany after Siena fell to Florence in 1569 and ushering in more than 150 years of Medici domination of Tuscany.

In 1737 the grand duchy of Tuscany passed to the French House of Lorraine, which retained control, apart from a brief interruption under Napoleon, until it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy in 1860. Florence briefly became the national capital but Rome assumed the mantle permanently in 1870.

The city was severely damaged during WWII by the retreating Germans, who blew up all its bridges except the Ponte Vecchio. It was ravaged by floods in 1966; and in 1993 the Mafia exploded a massive car bomb, killing five, injuring 37 and destroying a part of Uffizi Gallery. A decade later, the gallery is undergoing its biggest-ever expansion.

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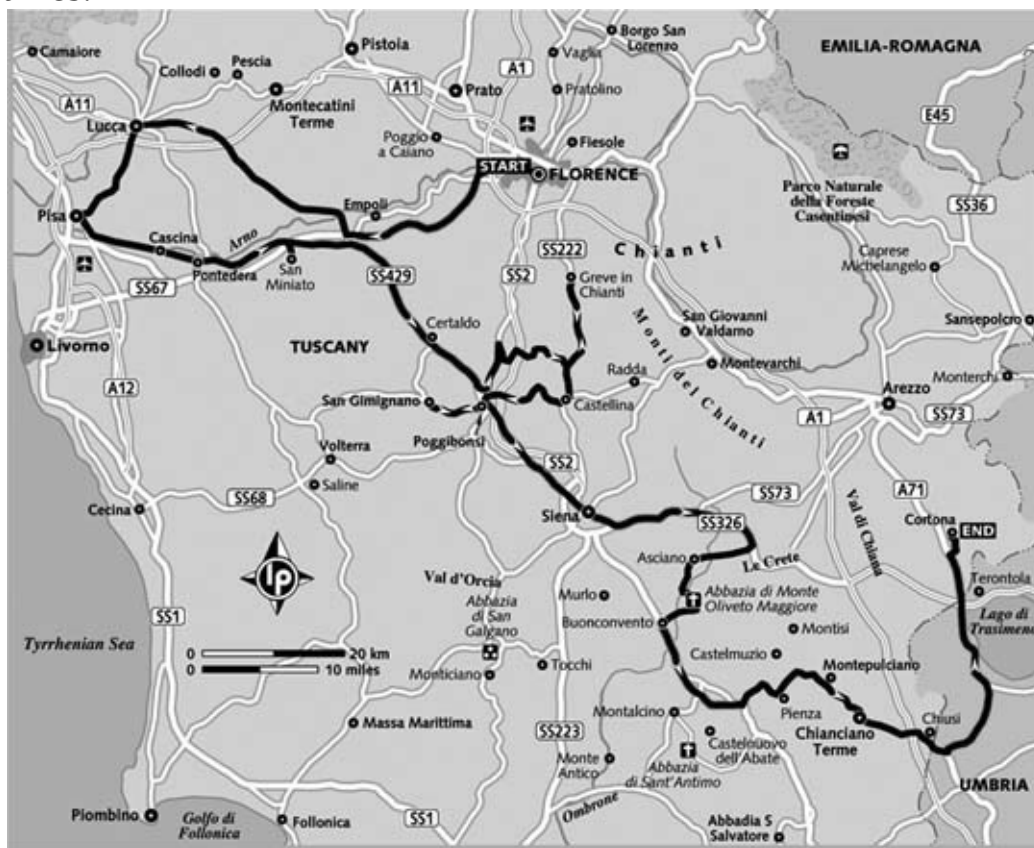
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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### **Tuscan Treasures      One Week / Florence / Cortona**

The magnificent city of **Florence** (opposite) anchors any tour of Tuscany. Spend a day sampling its highlights before tearing yourself away and travelling to **Lucca**, light on heavyweight museums but loaded with important churches, atmospheric cafes and top-notch restaurants. Make sure you take a bike ride around its historic **city walls** and pay homage to favourite son Giacomo Puccini at one of the

nightly concerts staged in the **Church of Saints Giovanni and Reparata**, where the great opera composer once played the organ. On day four, visit **Pisa** to admire the **Piazza dei Miracoli**, scale the iconic **Leaning Tower**, admire the 12th- to 14th-century paintings from the Tuscan school that form the core of the collection of the **Museo Nazionale di San Matteo** and enjoy some of the city's splendid, seafood-dominated regional cuisine. The next morning sees you heading towards the nearby hill-town of **San Miniato**, where you can embark on a truffle hunt or tour the town's gourmet produce shops before checking into an *agriturismo* (farmstay accommodation) in **Chianti** for two nights – many are idyllically located on historic wine estates. Spend the next day tasting Chianti and Chianti Classico in and around **Greve in Chianti** or day-tripping to the walled city of **San Gimignano** with its famous towers. On day six, move on to seductive **Siena**, full of extraordinary art and architecture and known for its enticing eateries. Your final day should see you wending your way through the picture-perfect landscape of **Le Crete**, stopping by World Heritage—listed **Pienza** to admire its Piazza Pio II before moving on to **Montepulciano**, home of one of Tuscany's most famous wines, *Vino Nobile*. Your tour finishes in the captivating town of **Cortona** near the Umbrian border, which dates from Etruscan times.



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## ORIENTATION

Budget hotels are concentrated east of the central train station, Stazione di Santa Maria Novella, around Via Nazionale and south around Piazza di Santa Maria Novella. The main route to the centre is Via de' Panzani and Via de' Cerretani. Spot the Duomo and you're there.

Most major sights are within easy walking distance. From Piazza di San Giovanni around the baptistry, Via Roma leads to Piazza della Repubblica and beyond to Ponte Vecchio. From Piazza del Duomo follow Via de' Calzaiuoli for Piazza della Signoria, the historic seat of government. The Uffizi is on the piazza's southern edge, near the Arno. The less touristy area south of the river is known as the Oltrarno.



# INFORMATION

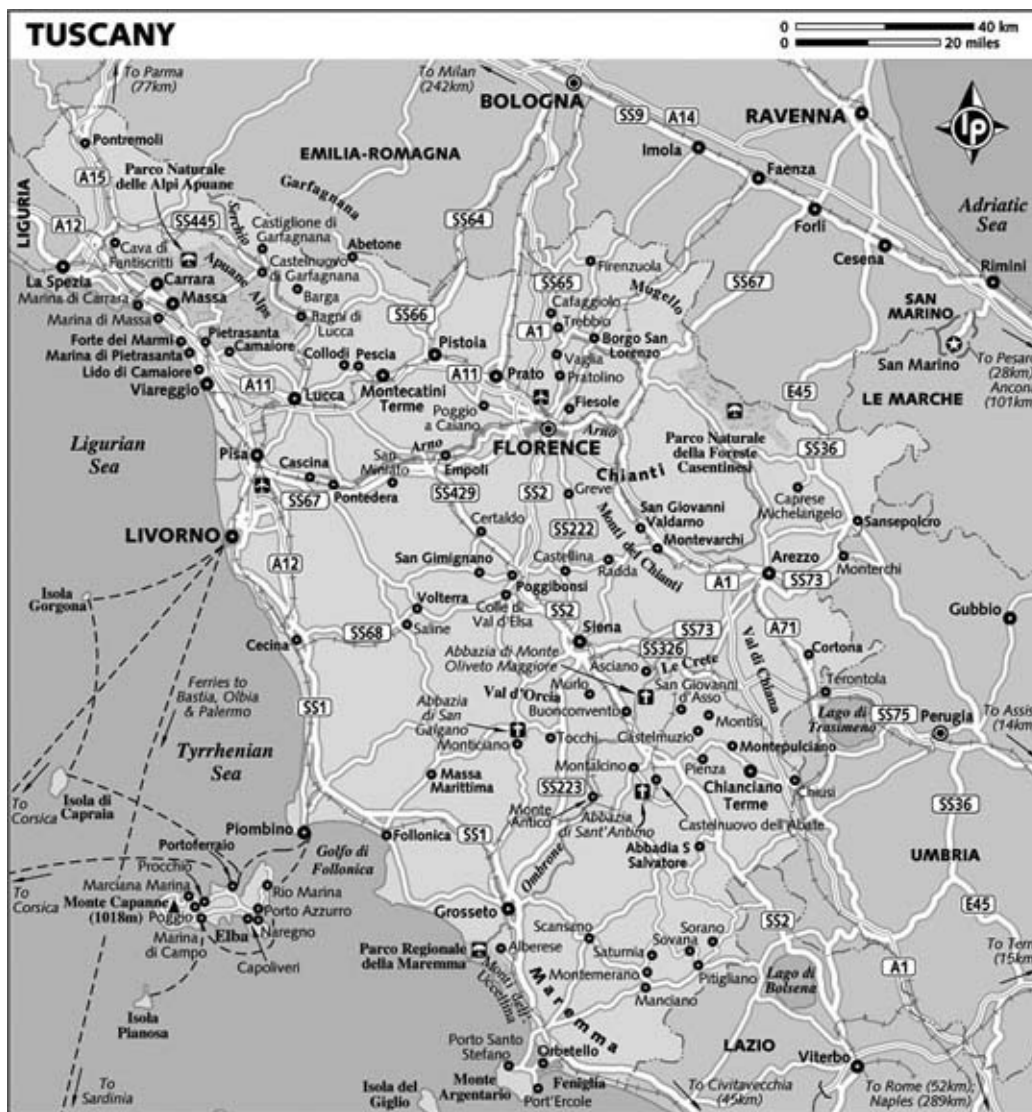
## Bookshops

**Paperback Exchange** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 34 60; [www.papex.it](http://www.papex.it); Via delle Oche 4r; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7.30pm Sat) Excellent Anglo-American bookshop stocking new and second-hand titles and offering a paperback swap scheme.

## Emergency

**Police station** (Questura; [Map](#); ☎ 055 4 97 71; Via Zara 2; 🕒 24hr)

**Tourist Police** (Polizia Assistenza Turistica; [Map](#); ☎ 055 20 39 11; Via Pietrapiana 50r, Piazza dei Ciompi; 🕒 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) English-speaking service for filing reports of thefts etc.



## FLORENCE IN...

## Two Days

Kick-start your day with a coffee in one of Piazza della Repubblica's historic **cafes** before visiting the masterpiece-packed **Uffizi**. After lunch, head to **Piazza del Duomo** to visit the cathedral, baptistry and Museo dell'Opera del Duomo. After this, you'll deserve an *aperitivo* and dinner – join the locals at one of the city's many stylish **bars** and **restaurants**. Next morning, follow the walk outlined in the Duomo to Palazzo Strozzi section on [Click here](#) and then head to San Marco to visit the **Galleria dell'Accademia** and **Museo di San Marco**. For *aperitivo* and dinner, venture across the Arno to the Oltrarno, stopping to admire the sunset from the **Ponte Vecchio** or **Piazzale Michelangelo** on the way.

## Four Days

On day three, explore Palazzo Pitti, the Giardino di Boboli and the Giardino di Bardini. Alternatively, visit the city's major basilicas – **San Lorenzo**, **Santa Croce** and **Santa Maria Novella**. For dinner, enjoy good food and entertainment at Teatro del Sale (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)). On day four, take a guided tour of **Palazzo Vecchio** in the morning and investigate the city's specialist **shops** in the afternoon.

## One week

With three extra days, you'll be able to fit in gems such as the **Cappella Brancacci**, the Cappella di Benozzo at the **Palazzo Medici-Riccardi** and the **Museo del Bargello**. You could also take a day trip to **Fiesole**.

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## Internet Access

**Cyberlink** ([Map](#); [www.cyberlinkplus.com](http://www.cyberlinkplus.com); Via Del Giglio 29r; per hr adult/student €4/3; ☎ 9.30am-12.30am; ☎) Also offers a left luggage service (€5 per 24 hours), FedEx shipping and mobile-phone rental.

**Internet Train** ([www.internettrain.it](http://www.internettrain.it); per hr adult/student €4.30/3.20; ☎ 9.30am-midnight Mon-Sat, 10am-midnight Sun); Via Porta Rossa 38 ([Map](#)); Via dell'Oriuolo 40r ([Map](#)); Via Guelfa 24a ([Map](#)); Borgo San Jacopo 30r ([Map](#); ☎ 055 265 79 35) Opening times are for the Via Porta Rossa branch; others may vary.

## Internet Resources

**APT Firenze** ([www.firenzeturismo.it](http://www.firenzeturismo.it)) Official Florence tourism website.

**Firenze Musei** ([www.firenzemusei.it](http://www.firenzemusei.it)) Online booking site for Florentine museums.

**Firenze Spettacolo** ([www.firenzespettacolo.it](http://www.firenzespettacolo.it)) Online version of the city's definitive entertainment publication.

**Florence for Fun** ([www.florenceforfun.org](http://www.florenceforfun.org)) Website for international students living in the city.

**The Florentine** ([www.theflorentine.net](http://www.theflorentine.net)) Useful English-language newspaper online.

**Studentsville** ([www.studentsville.it](http://www.studentsville.it)) City life from a student perspective.

## Laundry

**Wash & Dry** (8kg wash/dry per load €3.50/3.50, detergent €1; ☎ 8am-10pm) Via de' Serragli 87r ([Map](#)); Via dei Servi 105r ([Map](#)); Via del Sole 29r ([Map](#)); Via della Scala 52-54r ([Map](#)); Via

Nazionale 129r ([Map](#))

## Left Luggage

**Stazione di Santa Maria Novella** ([Map](#); per item for 5hr €4, each additional hr €0.60; ☎ 6am-11.50pm) Next to platform 16.

## Medical Services

**24-Hour Pharmacy** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 67 61; Stazione di Santa Maria Novella) In the main train station.

**24-Hour Dental Emergency** (☎ 155 24 12 08)

**Dr Stephen Kerr** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 80 55; [www.dr-kerr.com](http://www.dr-kerr.com); Piazza Mercato Nuovo 1; ☎ clinic open 3-5pm Mon-Fri, or by appointment) Resident British doctor.

## Post

**Central Post Office** ([Map](#); Via Pellicceria)

## Tourist Information

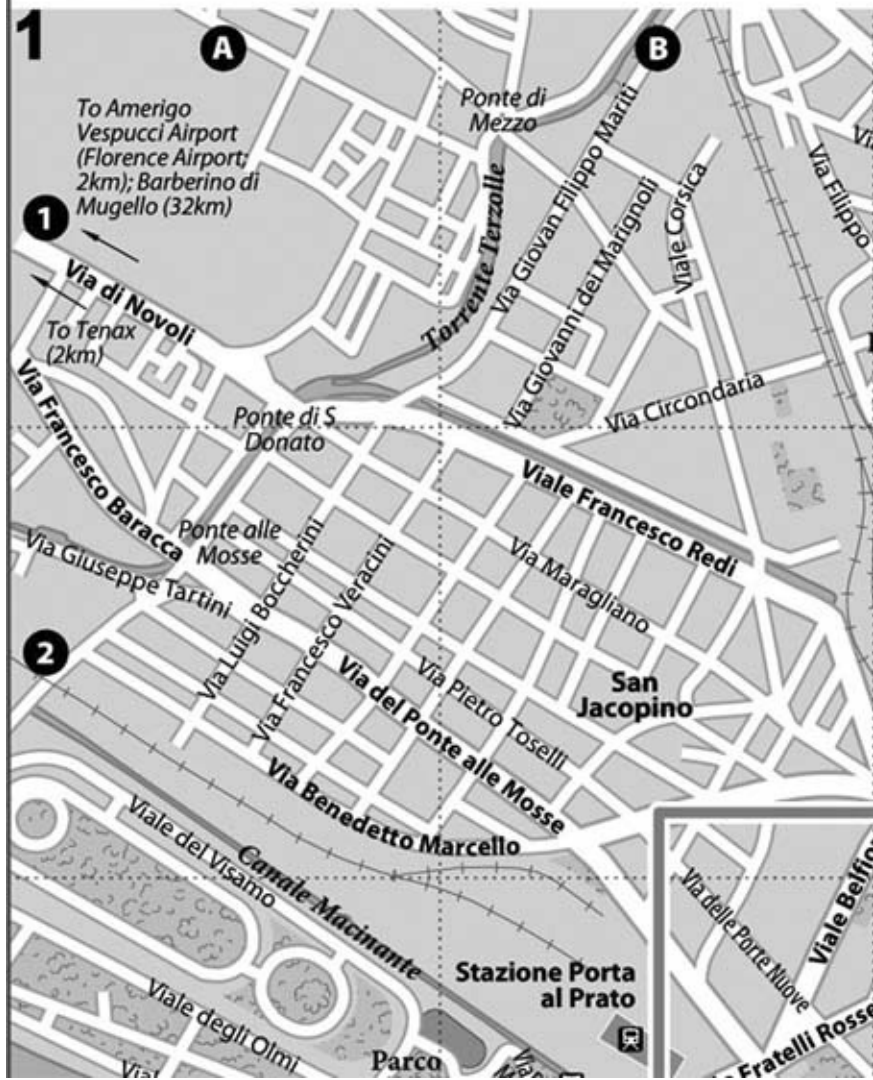
**APT Florence** ([www.firenzeturismo.it](http://www.firenzeturismo.it)); Piazza Beccaria ([Map](#); ☎ 055 2 33 20; Via Manzoni 16; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri); San Lorenzo ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 08 32; Via Cavour 1r; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm Sun); A Vespucci Airport ([Map](#); ☎ 055 31 58 74; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm).

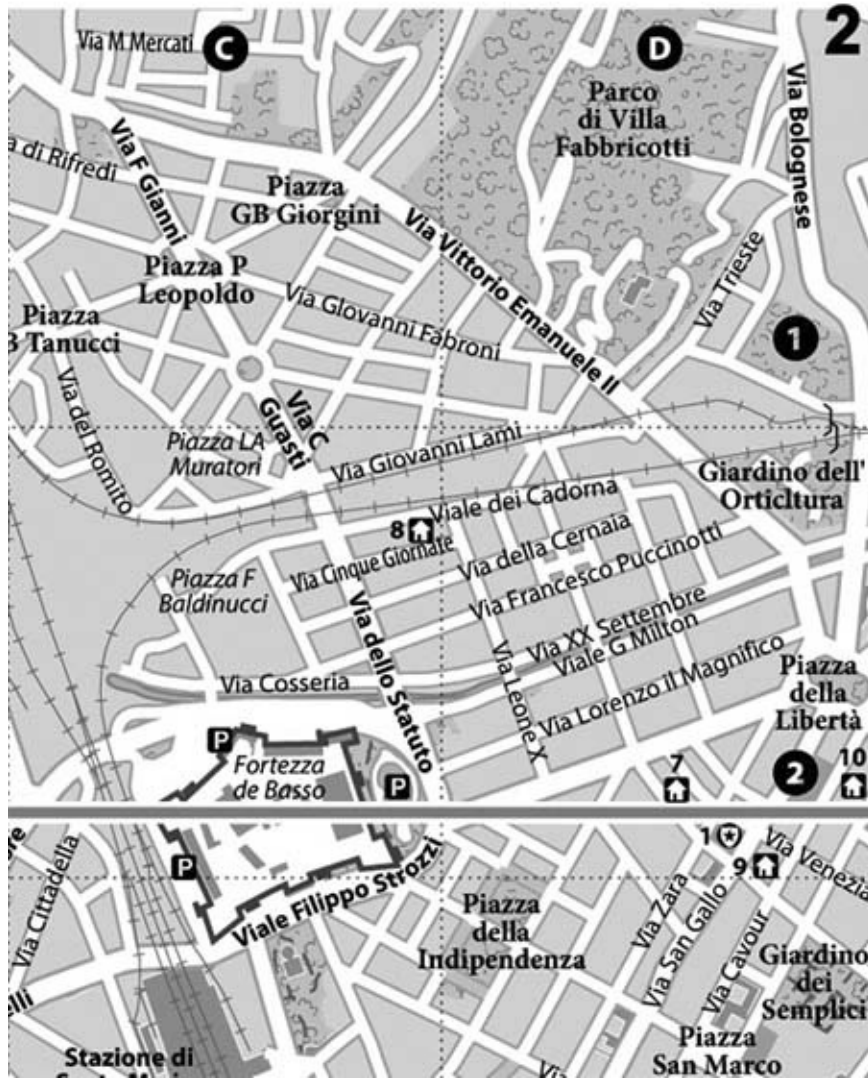
**Comune di Firenze Tourist Office** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 234 04 44; [www.comune.fi.it](http://www.comune.fi.it), in Italian; Borgo Santa Croce 29r; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) Information on the city, run by Florence's city council.

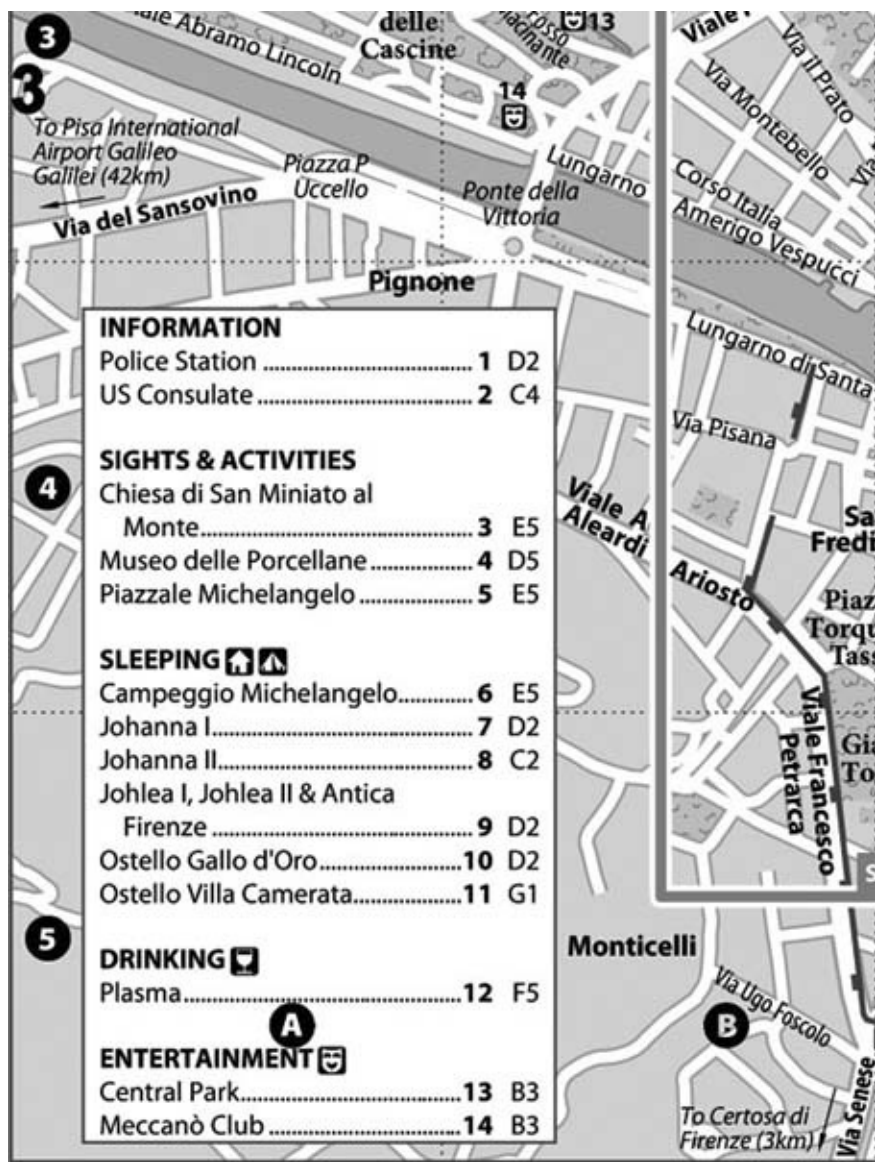
**SOS Turista phoneline** (☎ 055 276 03 82) Run by Provincia di Firenze Tourist Office for tourists in trouble (disputes over hotel bills etc).



# FLORENCE







**INFORMATION**

- Police Station ..... 1 D2
- US Consulate ..... 2 C4

**SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**


- Chiesa di San Miniato al Monte ..... 3 E5
- Museo delle Porcellane ..... 4 D5
- Piazzale Michelangelo ..... 5 E5

**SLEEPING**  

- Campeggio Michelangelo ..... 6 E5
- Johanna I ..... 7 D2
- Johanna II ..... 8 C2
- Johlea I, Johlea II & Antica Firenze ..... 9 D2
- Ostello Gallo d'Oro ..... 10 D2
- Ostello Villa Camerata ..... 11 G1

**DRINKING** 

- Plasma ..... 12 F5

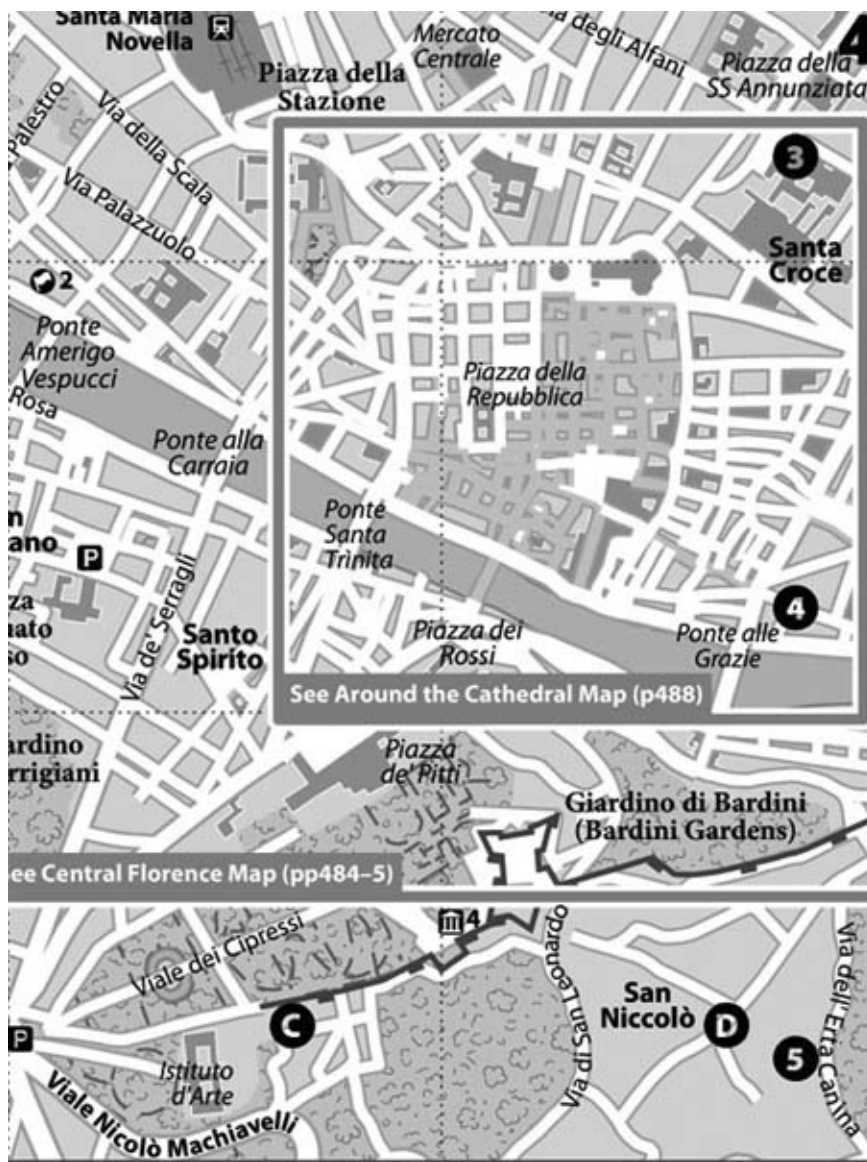
**ENTERTAINMENT** 

- Central Park ..... 13 B3
- Meccanò Club ..... 14 B3

3  
3  
4  
5

A

B



## Travel Agencies

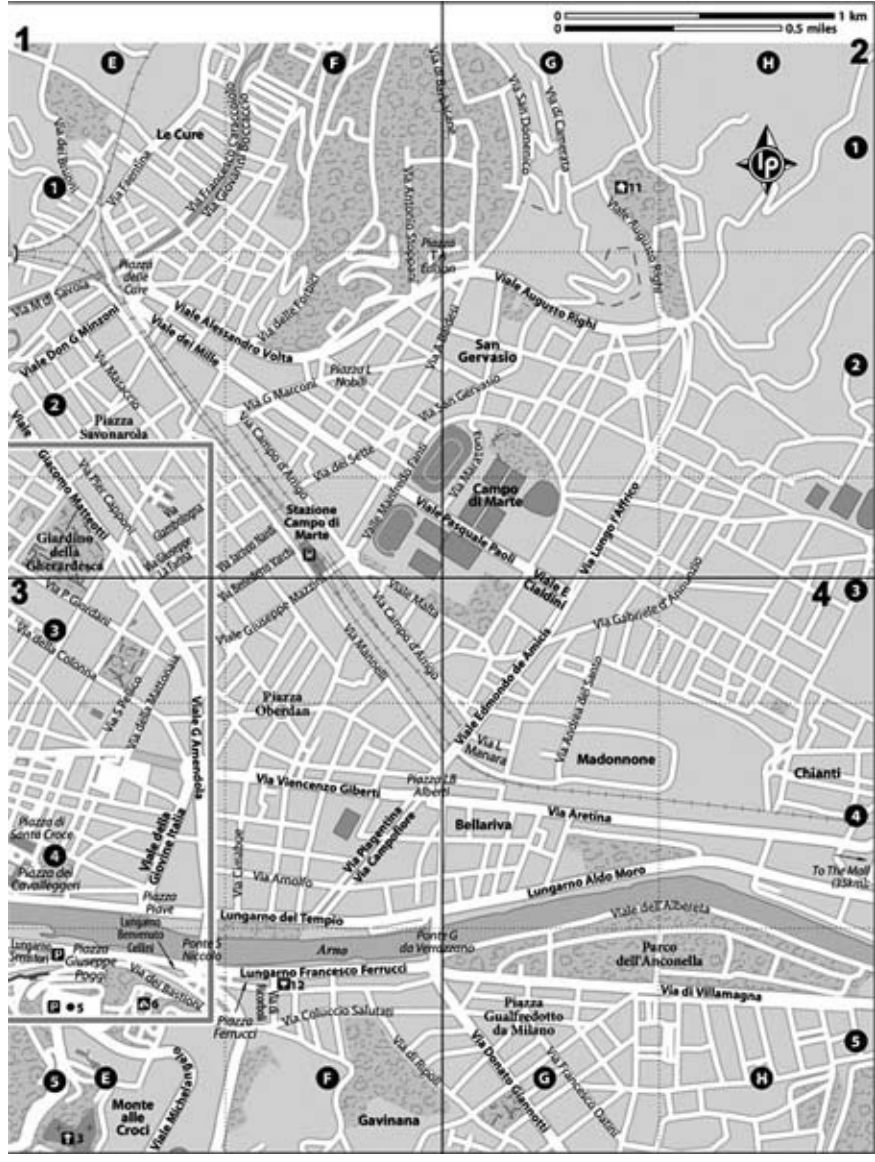
CTS ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 95 70; [www.cts.it](http://www.cts.it), in Italian; Borgo La Croce 42r; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) Florence branch of the national youth travel organisation. Trips, flights, hotels etc.

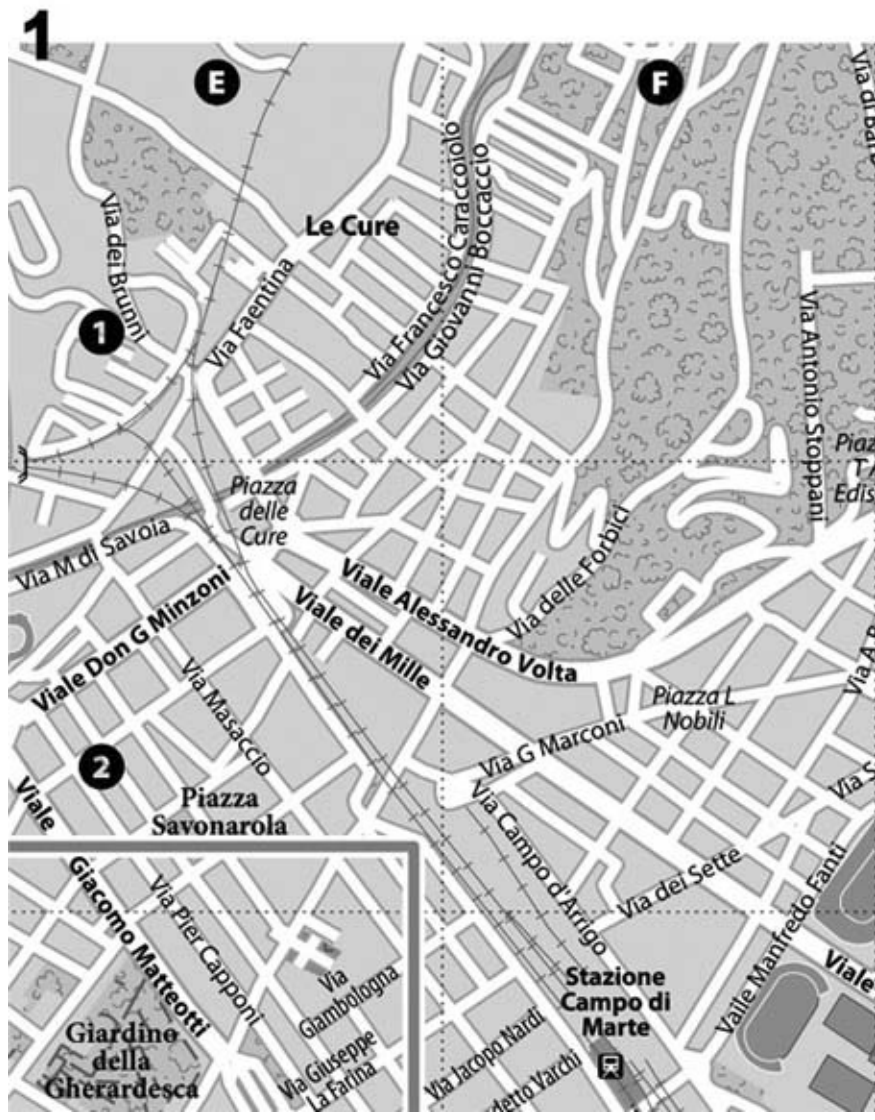
[Return to beginning of chapter](#)

## SIGHTS

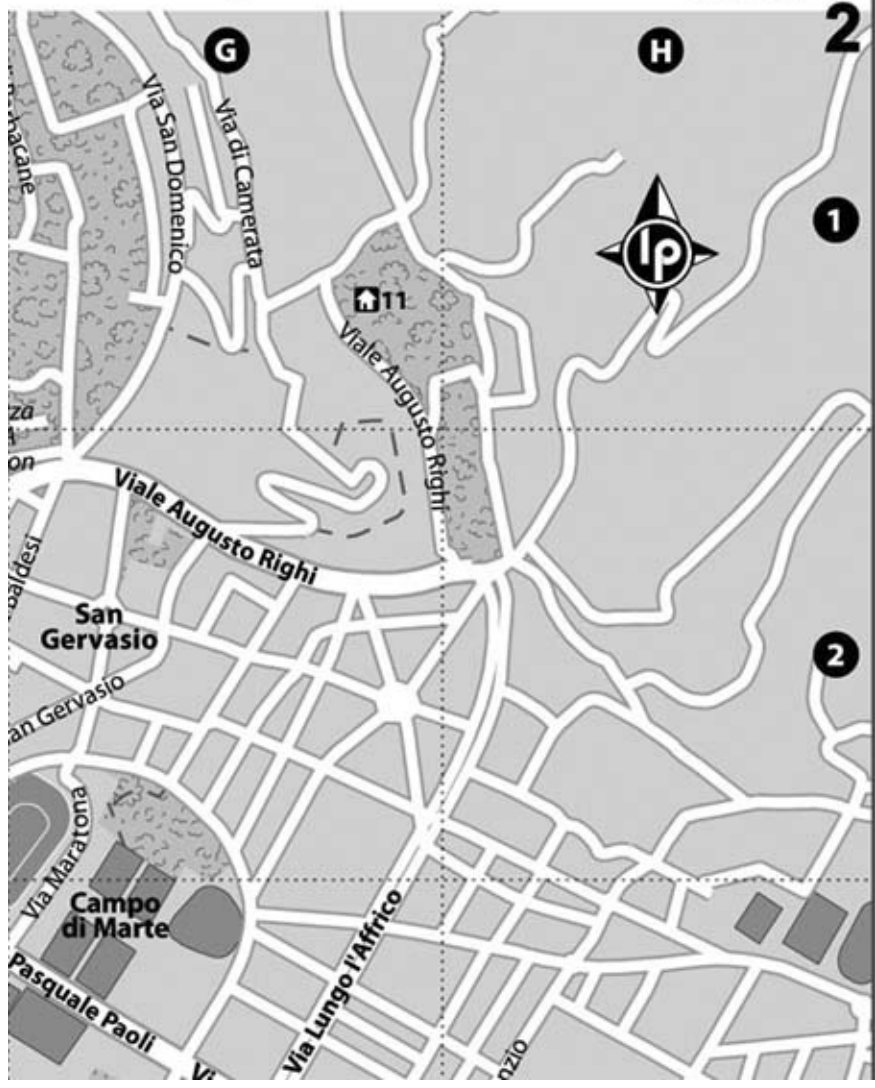
Florence swarms with sights, most of which are within convenient walking distance of each other. In usual Italian fashion, state museums and monuments (Uffizi and Galleria dell'Accademia included) close on Monday.

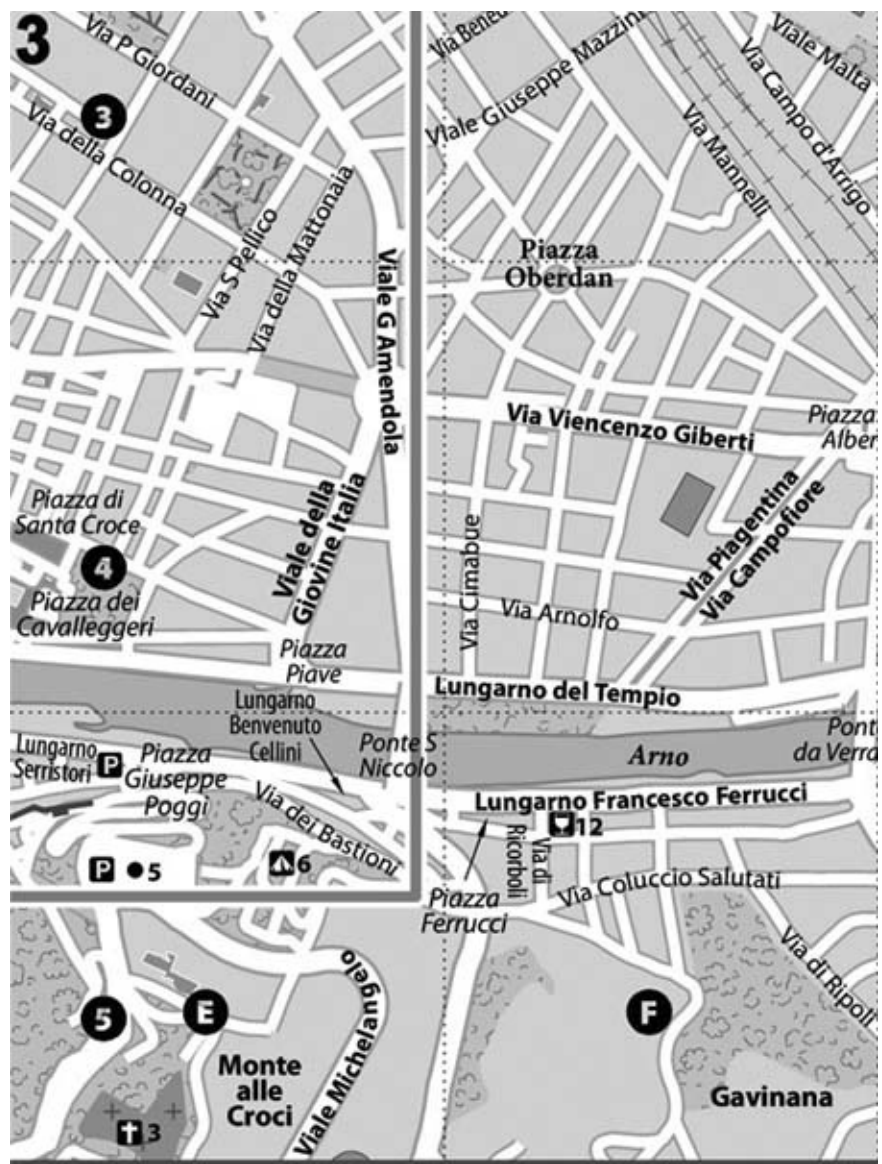


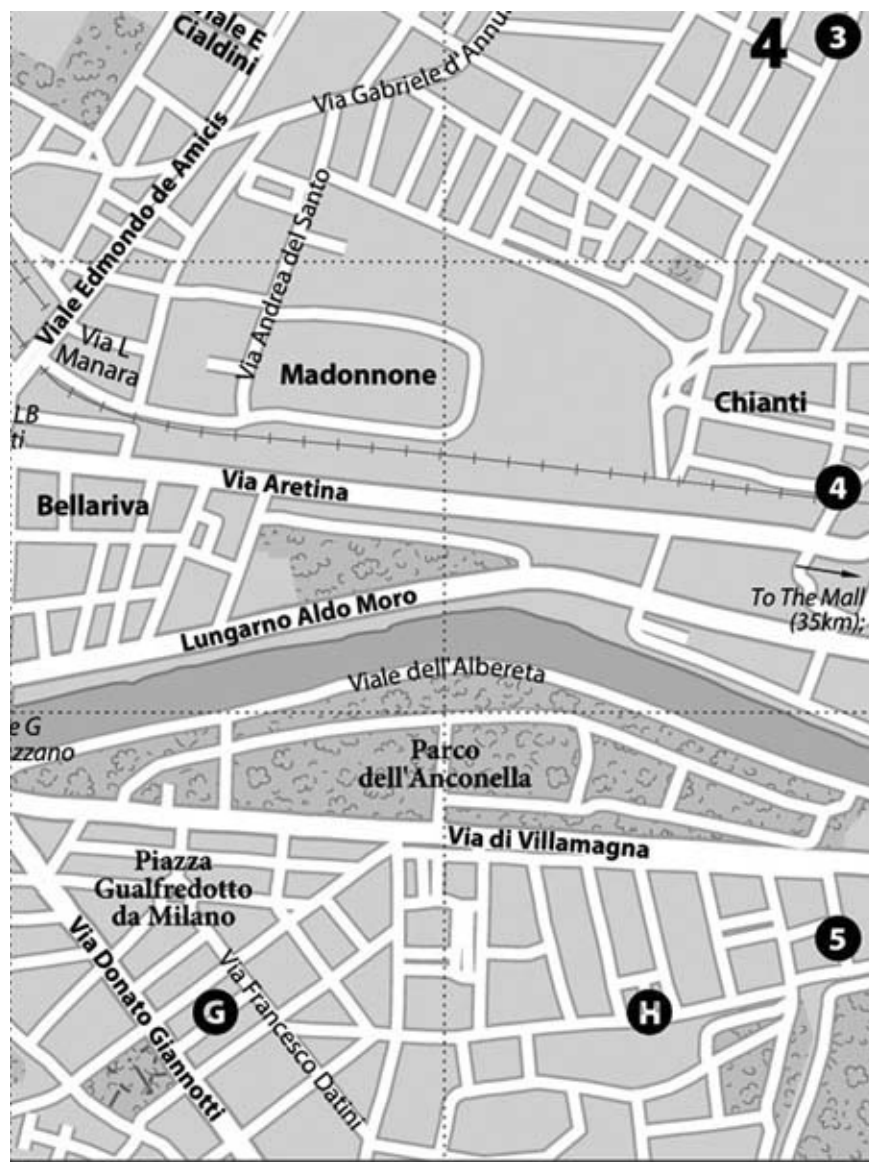




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0 0.5 miles







## Piazza del Duomo

Not only is Florence's **Duomo** (Map; ☎ 055 21 53 80; [www.duomofirenze.it](http://www.duomofirenze.it); 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, to 3.30pm Thu, to 4.45pm Sat, to 3.30pm 1st Sat of month, 1.30-4.45pm Sun, mass in English 5pm Sat) the city's most iconic landmark, it's also one of Italy's 'Big Three' (with Pisa's Leaning Tower and Rome's Colosseum). Its famous red-tiled dome, graceful bell tower and breathtaking pink, white and green marble facade have the wow factor in spades.

Begun in 1296 by Siennese architect Arnolfo di Cambio, the cathedral took almost 150 years to complete. Its neo-Gothic facade was designed in the 19th century by architect Emilio de Fabris to replace the uncompleted original, torn down in the 16th century. The oldest and most clearly Gothic part of the cathedral is its south flank, pierced by **Porta dei Canonici** (Canons' Door), a mid-14th-century High Gothic creation (you enter here to climb up inside the dome).

Wander around the trio of apses, designed as flowers on a stem that is the nave of the church and so reflecting its proper name – Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore (St Mary of the Flower).

After the visually tumultuous facade, the sparse decoration of the cathedral's vast interior, 155m long and 90m wide, is surprising. It is also unexpectedly secular in places (a reflection of the sizeable chunk of the cathedral funded by the *comune* rather than the church).

Scaling the 463 steep stone steps up to the cathedral **dome** (adult/child under 6yr €8/free; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5.40pm Sat) – an incredible feat of engineering – is a must. No supporting frame was

used in its construction (1420–36); it's actually two concentric domes built from red brick to designs by Filippo Brunelleschi. The climb rewards you with an unforgettable 360-degree panorama of one of Europe's most beautiful cities. Allow at least half an hour up here.

Equally physical is the 414-step climb up the neighbouring 82m-high **campanile** ([Map](#); adult/child under 6yr €6.50/free; ☎ 8.30am-6.50pm), designed by Giotto in 1334. He died before the graceful bell tower was complete, leaving Andrea Pisano and Francesco Talenti to finish it.

Lorenzo Ghiberti designed the famous gilded bronze bas-reliefs adorning the eastern doors of the 11th-century Romanesque **baptistry** (battistero; [Map](#); Piazza di San Giovanni; admission €4; ☎ 12.15pm-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm 1st Sat of the month & Sun), an octagonal striped structure of white and green marble. One of Florence's oldest buildings, it's dedicated to St John the Baptist and counts Dante among the famous who have been dunked in its baptismal font.

The baptistry has three sets of doors, conceived as a series of panels in which the story of humanity and the Redemption would be told. Andrea Pisano executed the southern doors (1330) illustrating the life of St John the Baptist, and Ghiberti won a public competition in 1401 to design the northern doors, but it is his gilded bronze doors at the eastern entrance, known as the Gate of Paradise (*Porta del Paradiso*), that are the most celebrated.

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## OUR TOP FIVE WINE TASTINGS

- Vernaccia in [San Gimignano](#)
- Brunello in [Montalcino](#)
- Chianti in – you guessed it – [Chianti](#)
- Vino Nobile in [Montepulciano](#)
- *Vin santo* (holy wine) anywhere in the region

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What you see today are copies of the panels; turn to the **Museo dell'Opera del Duomo** ([Map](#); [www.operaduomo.firenze.it](http://www.operaduomo.firenze.it); Piazza del Duomo 9; admission €6; ☎ 9am-6.50pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun) for the originals, which occupy the glass-topped ground-floor courtyard. On the mezzanine floor is Michelangelo's *Pietà*, which he intended for his own tomb. Vasari recorded in his *Lives of the Artists* (see the boxed text on [Click here](#)) that, dissatisfied with both the quality of the marble and of his own work, Michelangelo broke up the unfinished sculpture, destroying the arm and left leg of the figure of Christ. A student of Michelangelo's later restored the arm and completed the figure of Mary Magdalene.

## Duomo to Palazzo Strozzi

From Piazza di San Giovanni walk south down Via Roma to reach **Piazza della Repubblica** ([Map](#)). Originally the site of a Roman forum and the heart of medieval Florence, this busy civic space was created in the late 1880s as part of a controversial plan of 'civic improvements' involving the demolition of the old market, Jewish ghetto and surrounding slums, and the relocation of nearly 6000 residents. Fortunately, Giorgio Vasari's lovely Loggia del Pesce (Fish Market) was saved and re-erected on Via Pietrapiana ([Map](#)). Today, the piazza is known for its concentration of historic cafes ([Click here](#)).

Continue one block south and turn left (east) into Via Orsanmichele, where you'll find the **Chiesa di Orsanmichele** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 2 38 85; Via Arte della Lana; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), the arcades of a grain market walled in during the 14th century to create a church. Statues of the city guilds'

patron saints adorn the exterior, representing the work of famous Renaissance artists including Pisano, Ghiberti and Donatello. What you see today are copies – the originals are found in museums throughout the city. The main feature of the interior is a splendid Gothic tabernacle by Andrea Orcagna.

Backtrack to Via Roma and continue walking south until you see a huge loggia. This is the **Mercato Nuovo** (New Market), a 16th-century market building commissioned by Cosimo I and called the New Market to differentiate it from the Mercato Vecchio (Old Market) that had occupied the site since the 11th century. In Cosimo's day it was used primarily for the sale of wool, silk and gold, so its current incarnation as an emporium for tacky merchandise is something of an affront. Florentines know the market as 'Il Porcellino' (The Piglet) after the bronze statue of a wild boar on its southern side. Local legend has it that rubbing its snout will ensure your return to Florence.

From the market, head west along Via Porta Rossa until you come to the magnificent **Museo di Palazzo Davanzati** (☎ 055 277 64 61; [www.polomuseale.firenze.it/davanzati](http://www.polomuseale.firenze.it/davanzati); Via Porta Rossa 13; admission free; 🕒 8.15am-1.50pm, closed 2nd & 4th Sun, 1st, 3rd & 5th Mon of month), a warehouse and residence built in the mid-14th century and occupied by the wealthy Davanzati merchant family from 1578. The piazza in front of the building was once edged with heavily fortified tower houses such as this one, but many were demolished in the 1880s 'civic improvements project'. Inside, don't miss the carved faces of the original owners on the pillars in the inner courtyard, the 1st-floor reception room with its painted wooden ceiling and the exquisitely decorated *sala dei pappagalli* (Parrot Room) and *camera dei pavoni* (Peacock Bedroom).

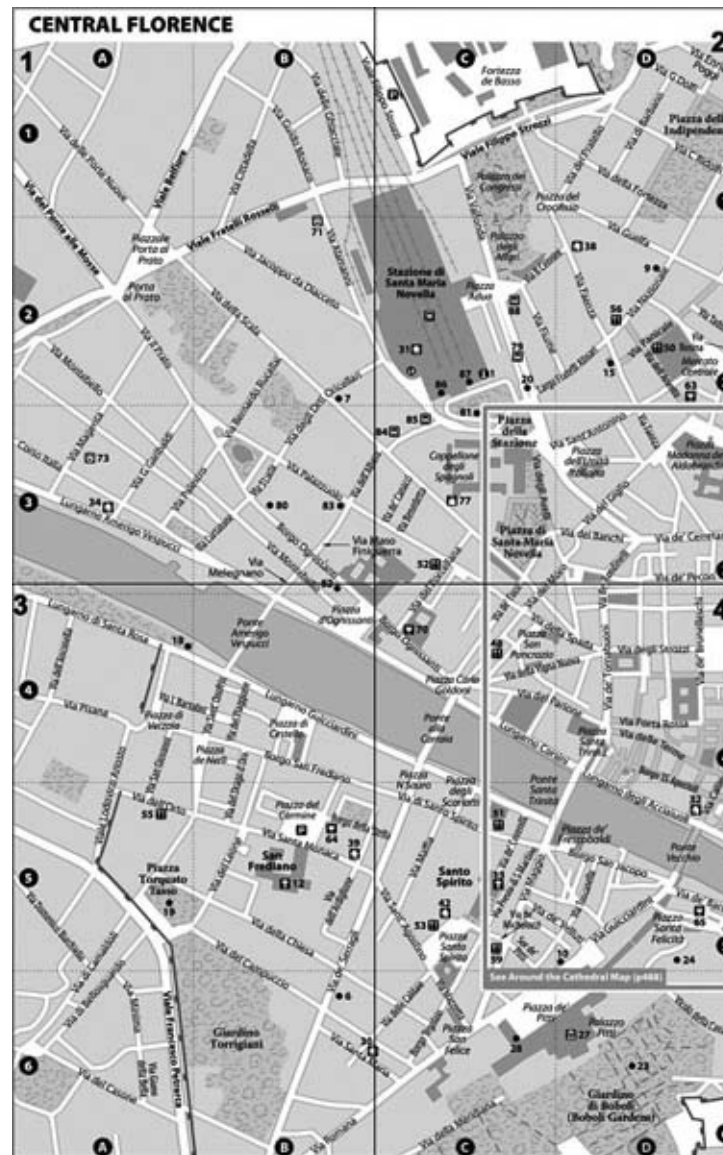
Continue along Via Porta Rossa until you reach **Via de' Tornabuoni**, the city's most legendary fashion street – often called the 'Salotto di Firenze' (Florence's Drawing Room). Turn right (north) to arrive at the magnificent **Palazzo Strozzi** (Map; cnr Via de' Tornabuoni & Via degli Strozzi; admission prices & opening hr vary according to exhibition). Built for wealthy merchant Filippo Strozzi, one of the Medicis' major political and commercial rivals, this impressive 15th-century palace has been reimagined over recent years and is now home to one of the city's most exciting exhibition programs. The building – half palace, half fortress as befits its era and the Strozzi family history (Filippo's entire family was banished from Florence in 1434 and didn't return until 1466) – is built over three levels from large stone blocks. The design, in which Strozzi is thought to have been heavily involved, is incomplete, as he died two years after building commenced and his son soon ran out of money. Today it hosts blockbuster exhibitions in its upstairs spaces and contemporary work in both its basement gallery and imposing internal courtyard. There's always a buzz around this place, with young Florentines congregating in the courtyard cafe and on the benches built into the *palazzo's* eastern facade, which fronts Piazza Strozzi.

## Piazza della Signoria

The hub of the city's political life and surrounded by some of its most celebrated buildings, this lovely cafe-lined piazza, pierced at its centre by an equestrian statue of Cosimo I by Giambologna, has witnessed more events in Florentine history than any other: it was here that preacher-leader Savonarola set light to the city's art – books, paintings, musical instruments, mirrors, fine clothes and so on – on his famous bonfire of vanities in 1497. A year later the Dominican monk was burnt as a heretic on the same spot, marked by a bronze plaque in front of Ammannati's monumental but ugly **Fontana di Nettuno** (Neptune Fountain).

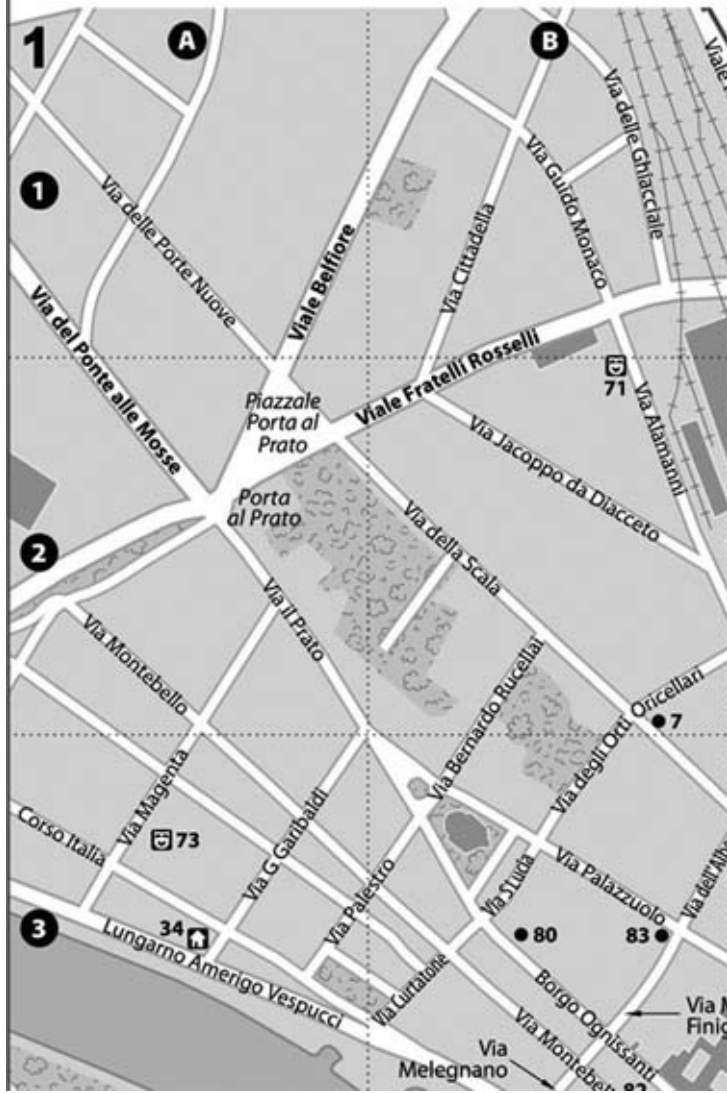
Far more impressive are the equestrian statue of **Cosimo I** by Giambologna in the centre of the piazza, the much-photographed copy of Michelangelo's **David** that has guarded the western entrance to the Palazzo Vecchio since 1910 (the original stood here until 1873 but is now in the Galleria dell'Accademia; Map) and two copies of important Donatello works – **Marzocco**, the heraldic Florentine

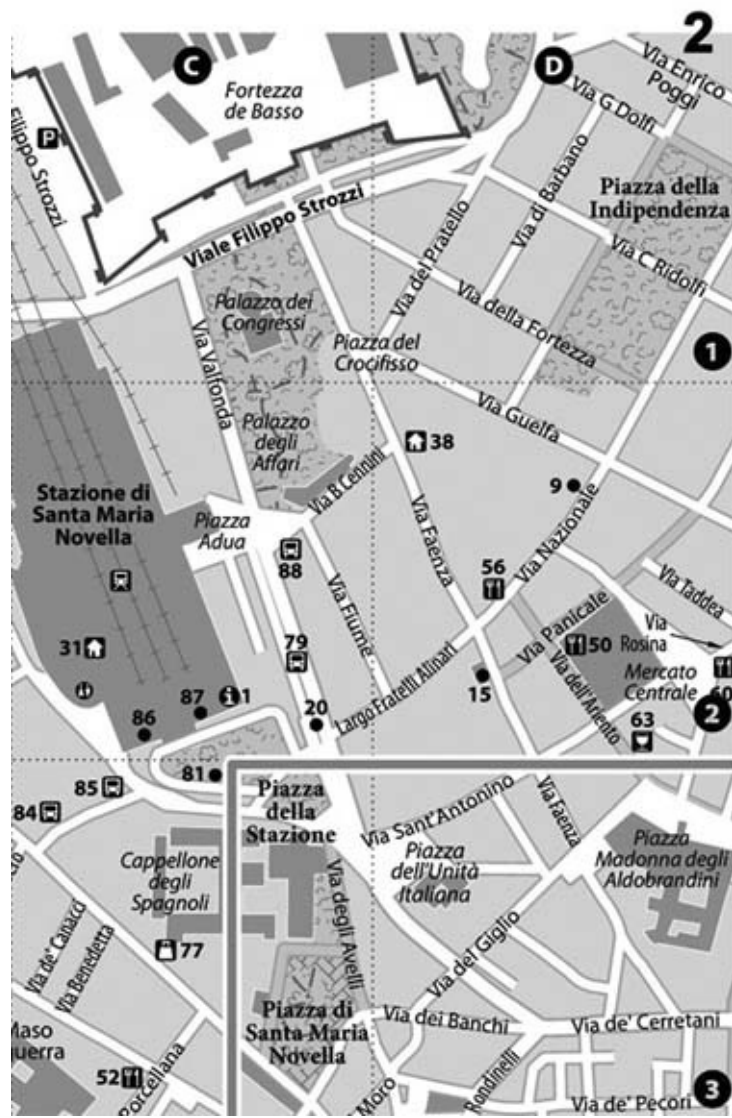
lion (for the original see the Museo del [Bargello](#);) and **Giuditta e Oloferne** (Judith and Holofernes, c 1455; original inside Palazzo Vecchio). Facing this line-up is the 14th-century **Loggia dei Lanzi** ([Map](#)), where works such as Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine Women* (c 1583), Benvenuto Cellini's bronze *Perseus* (1554) and Agnolo Gaddi's *Seven Virtues* (1384–89) are displayed. The loggia owes its name to the *Lanzichenecci* (Swiss bodyguards) of Cosimo I, who were stationed here, and the present day guards live up to this heritage, sternly monitoring crowd behaviour and promptly banishing anyone carrying food or drink.

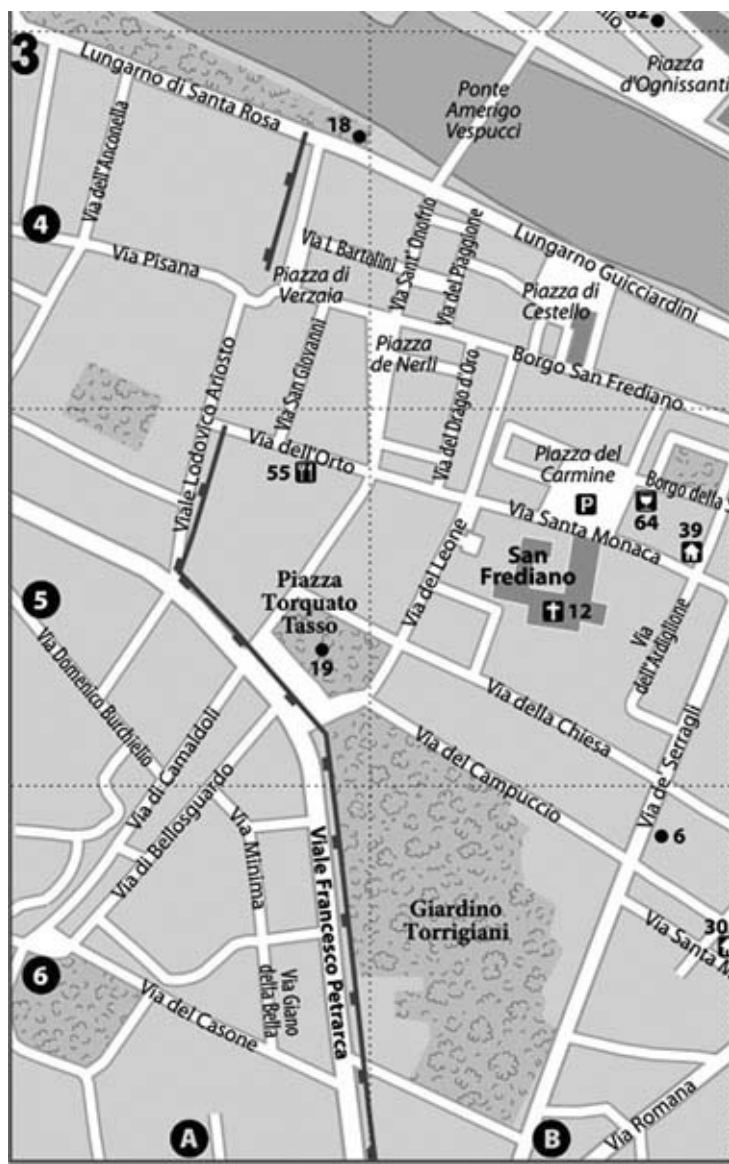


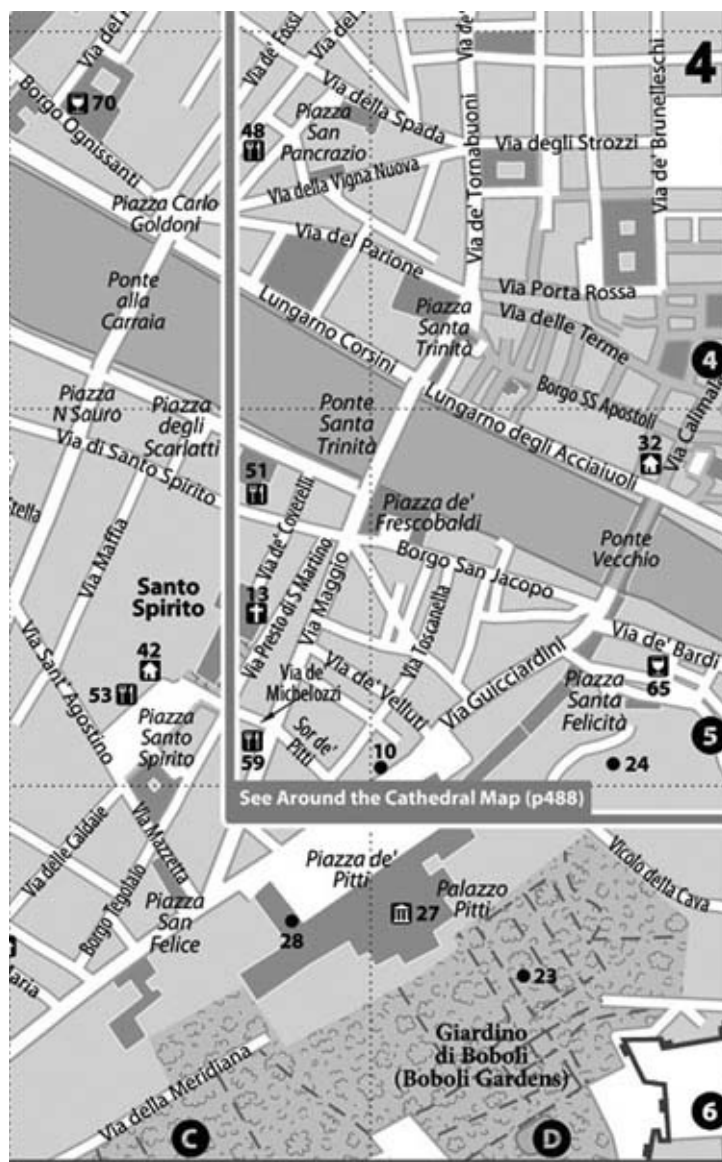


# CENTRAL FLORENCE

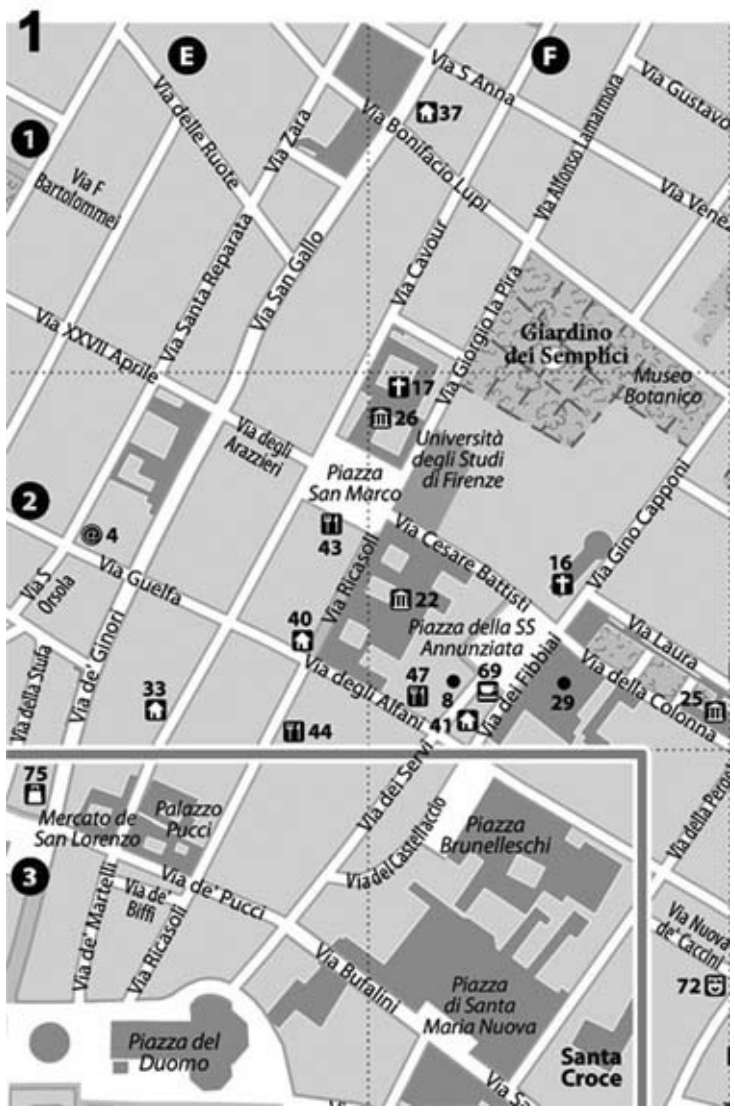




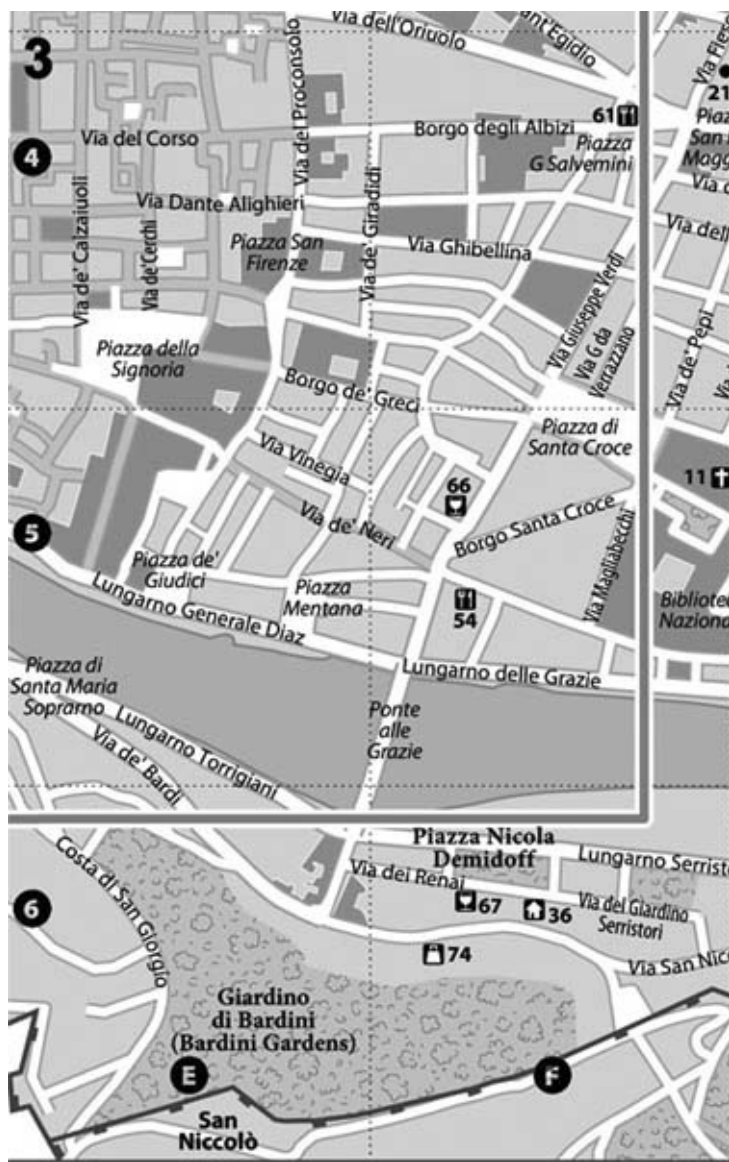




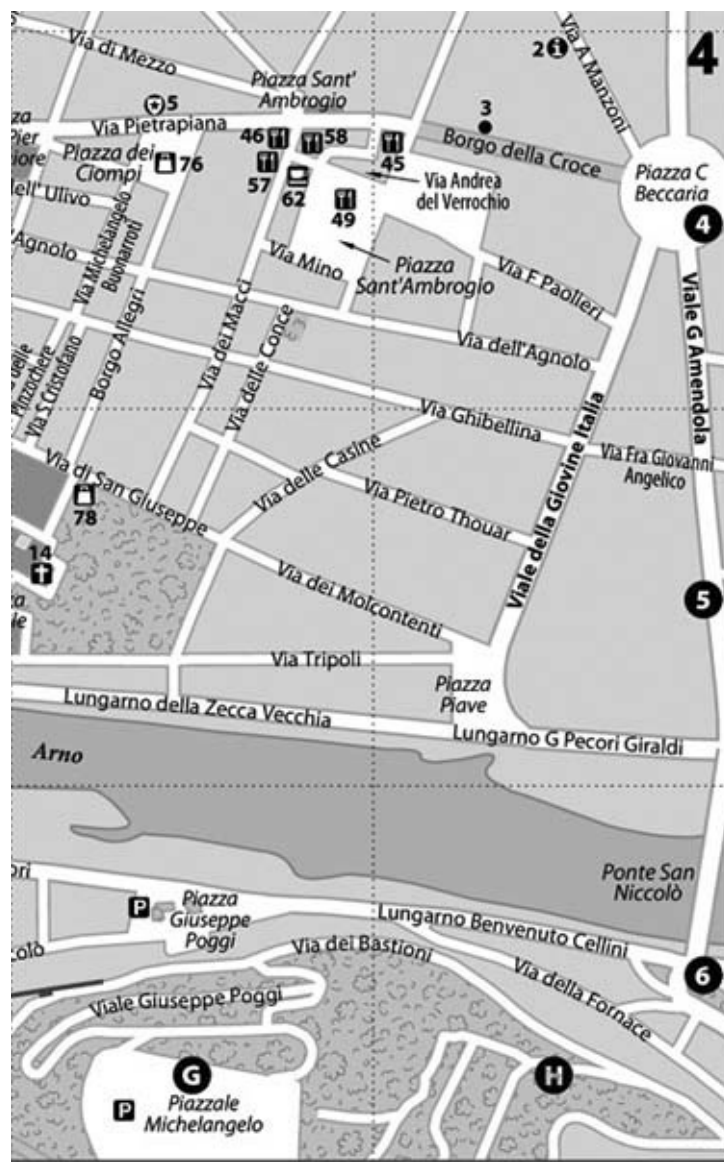












<b>INFORMATION</b>		Althea.....	30	B6	Casa del Vino.....	63	D2
24-Hour Pharmacy.....	1	C2	Consorzio ITA.....	31	C2	Deanna Bar.....	(see 85)
APT Florence.....	2	H4	Continentale.....	32	D5	La Dolce Vita.....	64 B5
CTS.....	3	H4	Hotel Casci.....	33	E2	Le Volpe e L'uva.....	65 D5
Internet Train.....	4	E2	Hotel Consigli.....	34	A3	Moyo.....	66 F5
Tourist Police.....	5	G4	Hotel Morandi alla			Negrone.....	67 F6
Wash & Dry.....	6	B6	Crocetta.....	35	G2	Rex Caffè.....	68 G3
Wash & Dry.....	7	B2	Hotel Silla.....	36	F6	Robiglio.....	69 F2
Wash & Dry.....	8	F2	Johanna & Johlea.....	37	F1	Sei Divino.....	70 C4
Wash & Dry.....	9	D2	Ostello Archi Rossi.....	38	D2		
			Ostello Santa Monaca.....	39	B5	<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> 📺	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>			Palazzo Alfani.....	40	E2	Box Office.....	71 B2
Accademia Italiana.....	10	D5	Residence Hilda.....	41	F2	Jazz Club.....	72 F3
Basilica di Santa Croce.....	11	F5	Residenza Santo Spirito.....	42	C5	Teatro del Maggio	
Basilica di Santa Maria del						Musicale Fiorentino.....	73 A3
Carmine.....	12	B5	<b>EATING</b> 🍴				
Basilica di Santo Spirito.....	13	C5	Accademia Ristorante.....	43	E2	<b>SHOPPING</b> 🛍️	
Cappella dei Pazzi.....	14	G5	Carabè.....	44	E2	Alessandro Dari.....	74 F6
Centro Lorenzo de' Medici.....	15	D2	Enoteca Vitae.....	45	H4	Mercato de San Lorenzo.....	75 E3
Chiesa della SS Annunziata.....	16	F2	Il Pizzaiuolo.....	46	G4	Mercato dei Pulci.....	76 G4
Chiesa di San Marco.....	17	F2	La Mescita.....	47	F2	Officina	
Children's Playground.....	18	A4	L'Osteria di Giovanni.....	48	C4	Profumo-Farmaceutica di	
Children's Playground.....	19	A5	Mercato Centrale.....	(see 50)		Santa Maria Novella.....	77 C3
City Sightseeing Firenze.....	20	C2	Mercato di Sant' Ambrogio.....	49	G4	Scuola del Cuoio.....	78 G5
Florence by Bike.....	21	F4	Nerbone.....	50	D2		
Galleria dell'Accademia.....	22	F2	Olio & Convivium.....	51	C5	<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
Giardino di Boboli (Boboli			Osteria dei Centopoveri.....	52	C3	ATAF Bus Stop (7, 13, 28 &	
Gardens).....	23	D6	Pop Café.....	53	C5	70).....	79 C2
Grotta del Buontalenti.....	24	D5	Ristorante Cibrèo.....	(see 58)		ATAF Ticket & Information	
Museo Archeologico.....	25	F2	Ristorante del Fagioli.....	54	F5	Office.....	(see 79)
Museo dell'Opera di Santa			Ristorante Il Guscio.....	55	A5	Avis.....	80 B3
Croce.....	(see 14)		Ristorante Le Fontacine.....	56	D2	Bicidette a Noleggio.....	81 C3
Museo di San Marco.....	26	F2	Teatro del Sale.....	57	G4	Europcar.....	82 B3
Palazzo Pitti.....	27	D6	Trattoria Cibrèo.....	58	G4	Hertz.....	83 B3
Palazzo Pitti & Firenze			Trattoria La Casalinga.....	59	C5	SITA Bus Station.....	84 C3
Musei Ticket Office.....	28	C6	Trattoria Mario.....	60	D2	Terravision Bus Stop.....	85 C3
Spedale degli Innocenti.....	29	F2	Vestri.....	61	F4	Train Information Counter.....	86 C2
						Train Information Office.....	87 C2
<b>SLEEPING</b> 🛏️			<b>DRINKING</b> 🍷 🍺			Vaubus.....	88 C2
Agenzie 365.....	(see 87)		Caffè Cibrèo.....	62	G4		

As much a symbol of the city as the Duomo is the striking 94m-tall **Torre d'Arnolfo** that crowns the **Palazzo Vecchio** (Map; ☎ 055 276 82 24; [www.palazzovecchio-museoragazzi.it](http://www.palazzovecchio-museoragazzi.it); Piazza della Signoria; adult/child 3-17yr/18-25yr & over 65yr €6/2/4.50, family of 4/5 €14/16, visit & guided tour €8/3/6.50, each additional tour €1; 🕒 9am-7pm Fri-Wed, to 2pm Thu), the traditional seat of Florentine government. Built by Arnolfo di Cambio between 1298 and 1314 for the Signoria, the highest level of Florentine republican government, the palace became the residence of Cosimo I in the 16th century. It remains the mayor's office today.

The series of lavish apartments created for the Medici is well worth seeing, as is the **Salone dei Cinquecento** (16th-Century Room), created within the original building in the 1490s to accommodate the Consiglio dei Cinquecento (Council of Five Hundred) that ruled Florence at the end of the 15th century and expanded and decorated in the mid-1500s. Sheer size aside, what impresses most are the swirling, floor-to-ceiling battle scenes by Vasari glorifying Florentine victories by Cosimo I over arch rivals Pisa and Siena: unlike the Sienese, the Pisans are depicted bare of armour (play 'Spot the Leaning Tower'). To top off this unabashed celebration of his own power, Cosimo had himself portrayed as a god in the centre of the exquisite panelled ceiling – but not before commissioning Vasari to raise the original ceiling 7m in height. Also in this room is Michelangelo's sculpture *Genius of Victory*, destined for Rome and Pope Julius II's tomb, but left unfinished in the artist's studio when he died.

The best way to see this building is by **guided tour** (🕒 9.30am, 12.30pm, 3.30pm & 6.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9.30am & 12.30pm Thu, 10am, 1.30pm, 3pm & 6.30pm Sat & Sun). Around one hour long, these are conducted by English-speaking guides and take you into parts of the building that are not otherwise accessible. The best of the adult bunch is probably the 'Secret Passages' tour, in which groups of 12 are led along the secret staircase built between the palace's super-thick walls in 1342 as an escape route for French Duke of Athens Walter de Brienne, who seized the palace and nominated himself Lord of Florence only to be sent packing back to France by the Florentines a year later. It follows this staircase to the

*tesoretto* (little treasury) of Cosimo I – a tiny room no larger than a cupboard for his private collection, entered by one carefully concealed door and exited by another – and the equally intimate but substantially more sumptuous *studiolo* (study) of his introverted, alchemy-mad son Francesco I. Cosimo commissioned Vasari and a team of top Florentine Mannerist artists to decorate the study, with Francesco appearing in one of the 34 emblematic paintings covering the walls, not as a prince, but as an inconsequential scientist experimenting with gunpowder. The lower paintings concealed 20 cabinets in which the young prince hid his shells, stones, crystals and other curious treasures. The tour ends in the roof above the Salone dei Cinquecento, where you can see the huge wooden trusses that hold up Vasari's ornate ceiling.

For information about special tours for children, [Click here](#). It is highly advisable to book all tours in advance by visiting the desk behind the ticket office on the day before your visit or by telephoning ☎ 055 276 82 24.

## The Uffizi

The Palazzo degli Uffizi, designed and built by Vasari in the second half of the 16th century at the request of Cosimo I, originally housed the city's administrators, judiciary and guilds (*uffizi* means offices).

Cosimo's successor, Francesco I, commissioned the architect Buontalenti to modify the upper floor of the *palazzo* to house the Medici's growing art collection. Thus, indirectly, the first steps were taken to turn it into an art gallery.

For hints about how to avoid the huge queues to enter, see the boxed text on [Click here](#).

### THE GALLERY

Housed inside the vast U-shaped *palazzo*, the **Galleria degli Uffizi** (Uffizi Gallery; [Map](#); Piazza degli Uffizi 6; ☎ 055 238 86 51; adult/under 18yr with EU passport/18-25yr with EU passport €6.50/free/3.25, 85min audioguide for 1/2 people €5.50/8; ☎ 8.15am-6.35pm Tue-Sun, to 9pm Tue Jul-Sep) is home to the Medici family's private collection, bequeathed to Florence in 1743 by the last of the family, Anna Maria Ludovica, on condition that it never leave the city.

The collection comprises 50-odd rooms and 1555 masterpieces. Allow at least four hours for your visit – many spend the entire day. The gallery's pleasant rooftop cafe is only accessible from inside the building and offers light snacks (pizza/*panino* €4.50/6.50, beer €6, cappuccino standing up/sitting down €1.60/4.50) and fabulous views. In the grand old days, this was the terraced hanging garden where the Medici clan gathered to listen to music performances on the square below.

### THE COLLECTION

The collection spans the gamut of art history from ancient Greek sculpture to 18th-century Venetian paintings and is arranged in chronological order by school. Its core is the masterpiece-rich Renaissance collection. We identify highlights in the following paragraphs.

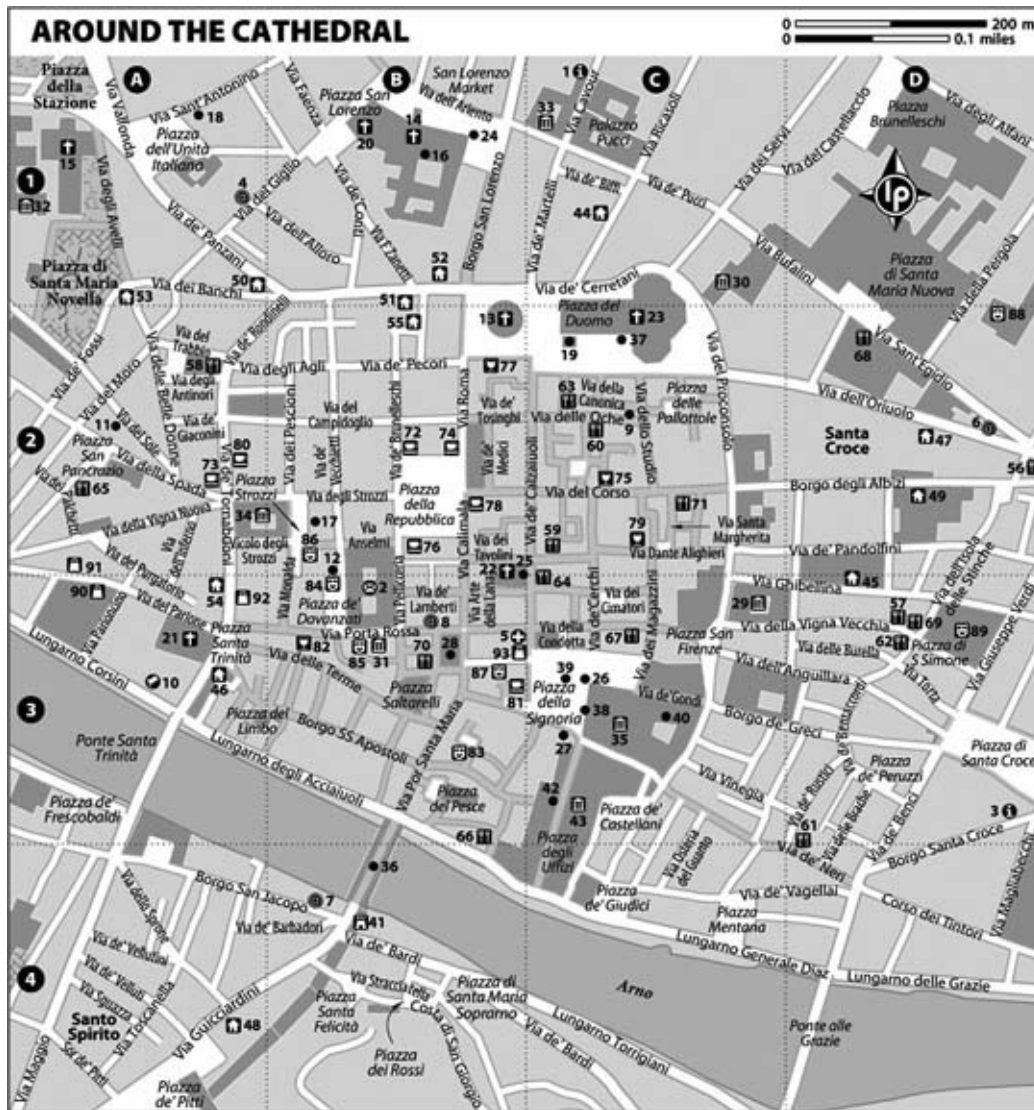
Works are displayed on the 3rd floor in a series of numbered rooms off two dramatically long corridors – the first (*primo corridoio*) and third (*terzo corridoio*). They are linked at one end by a loggia (*secondo corridoio*), from where you can enjoy the finest view in Florence of the crowded Ponte Vecchio and mysterious Corridoio Vasariano ([Click here](#)).

## Tuscan Masters: 12th to 14th Centuries

The first room to the left of the staircase highlights 13th-century Siennese art and is dominated by three large altarpieces – *Madonna in Maestà* (Madonna Enthroned) by Tuscan masters Duccio di Buoninsegna,

Cimabue and Giotto. These clearly reflect the transition from the Gothic to the nascent Renaissance style. Note the overtly naturalistic realism overtones in Giotto's portrayal of the Madonna and child among angels and saints, painted some 25 years after that of Buoninsegna and Giotto's master, Cimabue.

The next room stays in Siena but moves into the 14th century. The highlight is Simone Martini's shimmering *Annunciation* (1333), which was painted with Lippo Memmi and sets the Madonna in a sea of gold. Also of note is the triptych *Madonna with Child and Saints* by Pietro Lorenzetti, which demonstrates the same realism as Giotto; unfortunately both Pietro and his artistic brother Ambrogio died from the plague in Siena in 1348.



Masters in 14th-century Florence paid as much attention to detail as their Siennese counterparts, as works in the next room demonstrate: savour the realism of *San Remigio Pietà* (1360–65), in the Uffizi since 1851, by gifted Giotto pupil, Giotto.

## Renaissance Pioneers

A concern for perspective was a hallmark of the early 15th-century Florentine school (room 7) that pioneered the Renaissance. One panel (the other two are in the Louvre and London's National Gallery) from Paolo Uccello's striking *Battle of San Romano* shows the artist's efforts to create perspective with amusing effect as he directs the lances, horses and soldiers to a central disappearing point. The painting celebrates Florence's victory over Siena.

In room 8, the highlights are Piero della Francesca's famous profile portraits of the crooked-nosed, red-robed Duke and Duchess of Urbino (1465) – the former always painted left-side after losing his right

eye in a jousting accident and the latter painted a deathly white, reflecting the fact that the portrait was painted posthumously.

Carmelite monk Fra' Filippo Lippi had an unfortunate soft spot for earthly pleasures, scandalously marrying a nun from Prato (see the boxed text on [Click here](#)). Search out his self-portrait as a podgy friar in *Coronation of the Virgin* (1439–47) and don't miss his later *Madonna and Child with Two Angels* (1460–65), an exquisite work that clearly influenced his pupil, Sandro Botticelli.

<b>INFORMATION</b>		Museo di Santa Maria Novella.....	32	A1	Gelateria dei Neri.....	61	D3	
APT Florence.....	1	C1	Palazzo del Bargello.....	(see 29)	Gelateria Vivoli.....	62	D3	
Central Post Office.....	2	B3	Palazzo Medici-Riccardi.....	33	Grom.....	63	C2	
Comune di Fienze Tourist Office.....	3	D3	Palazzo Strozzi.....	34	I Due Fratellini.....	64	C3	
Cyberlink.....	4	A1	Palazzo Vecchio.....	35	Il Latini.....	65	A2	
Dr Stephen Kerr.....	5	B3	Ponte Vecchio.....	36	'Ino.....	66	B3	
Internet Train.....	6	D2	Porta dei Canonici.....	37	La Canova di Gustavino.....	67	C3	
Internet Train.....	7	B4	Reproductions of Famous Statues.....	38	Oil Shoppe.....	68	D2	
Internet Train.....	8	B3	Statue of Cosimo I.....	39	Osteria del Caffè Italiano.....	69	D3	
Paperback Exchange.....	9	C2	Torre d'Arnolfo.....	40	Pizzeria del Caffè Italiano.....	(see 69)		
UK Consulate.....	10	A3	Torre dei Manelli.....	41	Tripe Cart.....	70	B3	
Wash & Dry.....	11	A2	Uffizi & Firenze Musel Ticket Office.....	42	Tripe Cart.....	71	C2	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>				<b>DRINKING ☞☞</b>				
Artviva.....	12	B2	Uffizi Gallery.....	43	C3	Caffè Concerto Paszkowski.....	72	B2
Baptistry.....	13	B2	<b>SLEEPING ☞</b>		C3	Caffè Giacosa.....	73	A2
Basilica di San Lorenzo.....	14	B1	Academy Hostel & Lodge House.....	44	C1	Caffè Gilli.....	74	B2
Basilica di Santa Maria Novella.....	15	A1	Borghese Palace Art Hotel.....	45	D3	Chiaroscuro.....	75	C2
Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana.....	16	B1	Hotel Cestelli.....	46	A3	Colle Bereto.....	(see 17)	
British Institute of Florence.....	17	B2	Hotel Dalí.....	47	D2	Giubbe Rosse.....	76	B2
CAF Tours.....	18	A1	Hotel La Scaletta.....	48	A4	JJ Cathedral Pub.....	77	B2
Campanile.....	19	C2	Hotel Orchidea.....	49	D2	La Terrazza.....	78	B2
Cappelle Medicee.....	20	B1	Hotel Paris.....	50	A1	Mayday Club.....	79	C2
Chiesa della Santa Trinità.....	21	A3	Hotel Perseo.....	51	B1	Procacci.....	80	A2
Chiesa di Orsanmichele.....	22	B2	Hotel San Giovanni.....	52	B1	Rivoire.....	81	B3
Duomo.....	23	C2	Hotel Santa Maria Novella.....	53	A1	Slowly Café.....	82	B3
Entrance to Basilica di San Lorenzo.....	24	B1	Hotel Scoti.....	54	A3	<b>ENTERTAINMENT ☞</b>		
Firenze Musei Ticket Booth.....	25	B2	Relais del Duomo.....	55	B2	Caruso Jazz Café.....	83	B3
Fontana del Porcellino.....	(see 28)		<b>EATING ☞</b>			Disco Club YAB.....	84	B3
Fontana di Nettuno.....	26	C3	Antico Noè.....	56	D2	Loonees.....	85	B3
Loggia dei Lanzi.....	27	C3	Caffè Italiano Sud.....	57	D3	Odeon Cinehall.....	86	B2
Mercato Nuovo.....	28	B3	Cantinetta Antinori.....	58	A2	Tabasco Disco Gay.....	87	B3
Museo del Bargello.....	29	C3	Cantinetta dei Verrazzano.....	59	C2	Teatro della Pergola.....	88	D2
Museo dell'Opera del Duomo.....	30	C1	Coquinarius.....	60	C2	Teatro Verdi.....	89	D3
Museo di Palazzo Davanzati.....	31	B3			<b>SHOPPING ☞</b>			
						Alberto Cozzi.....	90	A3
						Letizia Fiorini.....	91	A2
						Officina de Tornabouni.....	92	A3
						Pineider.....	93	B3

Another related pair, brothers Antonio and Piero del Pollaiuolo, fill room 9, where their seven cardinal and theological values of 15th-century Florence – commissioned for the merchant's tribunal in Piazza della Signoria – ooze energy.

## Botticelli Room

The spectacular Sala del Botticelli, numbered 10 to 14 but in fact one large hall, is one of the Uffizi's most popular rooms and is always packed. Of the 15 works by the Renaissance master, *Birth of Venus* (c 1484), *Primavera* (Spring; c 1478), the deeply spiritual *Cestello Annunciation* (1489–90), the *Adoration of the Magi* (1475, featuring the artist's self-portrait on the extreme right) and *The Madonna of the Magnificat* (1483) are the best known, but true aficionados rate his twin set of miniatures depicting a sword-bearing Judith returning from the camp of Holofernes and the discovery of the decapitated Holofernes in his tent (1495–1500) as being among his finest works.

## Leonardo Room

Room 15 displays two early Florentine works by Leonardo da Vinci: the incomplete *Adoration of the Magi* (1481–82), drawn in red earth pigment, and his *Annunciation* (c 1472).

# La Tribuna

The Medici clan stashed away their most precious masterpieces in this exquisite octagonal-shaped treasure trove (room 18) created by Francesco I. Today their family portraits hang on the red upholstered walls and a walkway leads visitors around the edge. The popular favourites here are the Bronzino portraits of the family of Cosimo I, including his wife Eleonora di Toledo (painted with their son Giovanni), the duke himself, young Giovanni holding a bird, daughter Bia and son Francesco.

## High Renaissance to Mannerism

In the third corridor, Michelangelo dazzles with the *Tondo Doni*, a depiction of the Holy Family that steals the High Renaissance show in room 25. The composition is unusual – Joseph holding an exuberant Jesus on his muscled mother’s shoulder as she twists round to gaze at him, the colours as vibrant as when they were first applied in 1504–06.

Raphael (1483–1520) and Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530) rub shoulders in room 26, where Raphael’s charming *Madonna of the Goldfinch* (1505–06) holds centre stage.

Previous works by Tuscan masters can be compared with the greater naturalism inherent in the work of their Venetian counterparts in room 28, where 11 Titians are displayed. Masterpieces include the sensual nude *Venus of Urbino* (1538), the seductive *Flora* (1515) and the striking portrait of *Eleonora Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino* (1536–37).

Room 29 is notable for Parmigianino’s oddly elongated *Madonna of the Long Neck* (1534–40), and subsequent rooms feature works by Paolo Veronese, Tintoretto, Rubens and Rembrandt. Don’t miss room 42, known as the Niobe Room, which was built to house a group of statues representing Niobe and her children. Discovered in a Roman vineyard in 1583 and brought to Florence in 1775, the works are 4th-century BC Roman copies of Greek originals.

## Baroque & Neoclassicism

Downstairs on the 1st floor (something of a building site as the Uffizi undergoes its much-anticipated revamp) are an intense and dramatic group of works by Caravaggio (1573–1610) and his admirers. These include the artist’s *Bacchus* (1595–97) and *Medusa* (1595–98) as well as Artemisia Gentileschi’s gruesome *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1620–21). One of the first female artists to be acclaimed in post-Renaissance Italy, Gentileschi (1593–1653), the victim in a highly scandalous seven-month rape trial, painted strong women seeking revenge on evil males. Like Caravaggio, she used *chiaroscuro* (contrast of light and dark) to full dramatic effect.

## Palazzo del Bargello

It was behind the stark exterior of the Palazzo del Bargello, Florence’s earliest public building, that the *podestà* meted out justice from the late 13th century until 1502. Today the building, which is northeast of the Uffizi, is home to the **Museo del Bargello** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 238 86 06; Via del Proconsolo 4; €7; 🕒 8.15am-5pm Tue-Sun & 1st & 3rd Mon of the month), Italy’s most comprehensive collection of Tuscan Renaissance sculpture.

Crowds clamour to see *David* in the Galleria dell’Accademia but few rush to see his creator’s early works, many of which are on display in the Bargello’s downstairs Sala di Michelangelo. The artist was just 21 when a cardinal commissioned him to create the drunken, grape-adorned *Bacchus* (1496–97) displayed here. Other Michelangelo works to look out for include the marble bust of *Brutus* (c 1539–40),

the *David/Apollo* from 1530–32 and the large, uncompleted roundel of the *Madonna and Child with the Infant St John* (1503–05, aka the *Tondo Pitti*).

On the 1st floor, to the right of the staircase, is the Sala di Donatello. Here, in the majestic Salone del Consiglio Generale where the city's general council met, works by Donatello and other early 15th-century sculptors can be admired. Originally on the facade of Chiesa di [Orsanmichele](#) and now within a tabernacle at the hall's far end, Donatello's wonderful *St George* (1416–17) brought a new sense of perspective and movement to Italian sculpture.

Yet it is his two versions of *David*, a favourite subject for sculptors, which really fascinate: Donatello fashioned his slender, youthful, dressed image in marble in 1408 and his fabled bronze between 1440 and 1450. The latter is extraordinary – the more so when you consider it was the first freestanding naked statue to be sculpted since classical times.

## Santa Maria Novella Area

From the Uffizi, walk west along the Lungarno, passing the [Ponte Vecchio](#), until you reach the **Ponte Santa Trinita** ([Map](#)), rebuilt after being destroyed during WWII. Michelangelo is believed to have drawn the original plan of the bridge, which was executed by Ammannati.

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## CUT THE QUEUE

In summer and in busy periods such as Easter, ridiculously long queues are a fact of life at Florence's major museums, leading to waits of up to four hours if you haven't booked a ticket in advance.

For a fee of €3 per ticket (€4 for the Uffizi and Galleria dell'Accademia), tickets to all 13 *musei statali* (state museums) can be reserved, including the Uffizi, Galleria dell'Accademia (where *David* lives), Palazzo Pitti, Museo del Bargello and the Medicean chapels (Cappelle Medicee). In reality, the only museums where pre-booking is necessary are the Uffizi and the Accademia – for these, prebooking is a *really* good idea. To organise your ticket, telephone **Firenze Musei** (Florence Museums; ☎ 055 29 48 83, 055 265 43 21; ✉ booking line 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) or use the online booking facility at [www.firenzemusei.it](http://www.firenzemusei.it).

At the Uffizi, signs point prebooked-ticket holders to the building opposite the gallery where prebooked tickets can be collected; once you've got the ticket you go to Door One of the museum (for prebooked tickets only) and queue again to enter the gallery. It's annoying, but you'll still save hours of queuing time overall.

In Florence, tickets can easily be prebooked a day or two ahead of time at **Firenze Musei information desks** (☎ 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) in the Galleria degli [Uffizi](#), [Palazzo Pitti](#) or the ticket window at the rear of the Chiesa di [Orsanmichele](#) – if you're in town for a few days, this is the savvy thing to do.

Many hotels and B&Bs also prebook museum tickets for guests.

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Turning right (north) into Via de' Tornabuoni, you arrive at 14th-century **Chiesa della Santa Trinita** ([Map](#); Piazza Santa Trinita), rebuilt in Gothic style and later graced with a mannerist facade. Eye-catching frescoes by Domenico Ghirlandaio depict the life of St Francis of Assisi in the south transept's Cappella Sassetti. Lorenzo Monaco, Fra' Angelico's master, painted the altarpiece in the fourth chapel on the south aisle and the frescoes on the chapel walls.

Further north again is the **Basilica di Santa Maria Novella** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 59 18; Piazza di Santa

Maria Novella; admission €2.50; 📍 9am-5pm Mon-Thu, 1-5pm Fri), begun in the late 13th century as the Dominican order's Florentine base. The lower section of the marble facade is transitional from Romanesque to Gothic, while the upper section (1470) and main doorway were designed by Alberti. The highlight of the Gothic interior, halfway along the north aisle, is Masaccio's superb fresco *Trinity* (1424–25), one of the first artworks to use the then newly discovered techniques of perspective and proportion. Close by, hanging in the nave, is a luminous painted *Crucifix* by Giotto (c 1290).

The first chapel to the right of the altar, **Cappella di Filippo Strozzi**, features lively frescoes by Filippo Lippi depicting the lives of St John the Evangelist and St Philip. Another important work is Ghirlandaio's series of frescoes behind the main altar, painted with the help of artists who may have included the young Michelangelo. Relating the lives of the Virgin Mary, St John the Baptist and others, the frescoes are notable for their depiction of Florentine life during the Renaissance.

To reach the **Museo di Santa Maria Novella** ([Map](#); 📍 055 28 21 87; adult/child/concession €2.70/1/2; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sat), exit the church and then follow signs for the *museo*. Arranged around the monastery's tranquil **Chiostro Verde** (Green Cloister; 1332–62), which takes its name from the green earth base used for the frescoes on three of the cloister's four walls, the museum's indisputable highlight is the spectacular **Cappellone degli Spagnoli** (Spanish Chapel) on the north side of the cloister, which is covered in extraordinary frescoes (c 1365–67) by Andrea di Bonaiuto. The vault features depictions of the *Resurrection*, *Ascension* and *Pentecost* and on the altar wall are scenes of the *Via Dolorosa*, *Crucifixion* and *Descent into Limbo*. On the right wall is a huge fresco of *The Militant and Triumphant Church* – look in the foreground (right) for a portrait of Cimabue, Giotto, Boccaccio, Petrarch and Dante. Other frescoes in the chapels depict the *Triumph of Christian Doctrine*, 14 figures symbolising the Arts and Sciences and the *Life of St Peter*.

End your stroll around Santa Maria Novella with a visit to the **Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella** ([Map](#); 📍 055 21 62 76; Via della Scala 16; 🕒 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-8.30pm Sun), a perfumery-pharmacy in business since 1612. It's famed for the remedies it concocts – after a day spent queuing at the Uffizi or Galleria dell'Accademia you may want to stock up on its famous Acqua di Santa Maria Novella, which is said to be good for curing hysterics. Visit the free **museum** (🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) adjoining the shop to learn more.

## San Lorenzo Area

In 1425 the Medici commissioned Brunelleschi to rebuild what would become the family's parish church and funeral chapter: 50-odd Medici are buried inside **Basilica di San Lorenzo** ([Map](#); Piazza San Lorenzo; admission €3.50, joint ticket covering basilica & biblioteca €6; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5pm Sun), one of the most harmonious examples of Renaissance architecture. However, it looks nothing from the outside: Michelangelo was commissioned to design the facade in 1518 but his design in white Carrara marble was never executed, hence its rough unfinished appearance.

Inside, columns of *pietra serena* (soft grey stone) crowned with Corinthian capitals separate the nave from the two aisles. Donatello, who was still sculpting the two bronze pulpits adorned with panels of the Crucifixion when he died, is buried in the chapel featuring Fra' Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation* (c 1450). Left of the altar is the **Sagrestia Vecchia** (Old Sacristy), designed by Brunelleschi and decorated in the main by Donatello.

To the left of the basilica's entrance are peaceful cloisters, off which an extraordinary staircase designed by Michelangelo leads to the **Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana** ([Map](#); 📍 055 21 15 90; [www.bml.firenze.sbn.it](http://www.bml.firenze.sbn.it); Piazza San Lorenzo 9; admission €3, joint ticket covering basilica & biblioteca



€6; 📍 9.30am-1pm Sun-Fri), commissioned by Giulio de' Medici (Pope Clement VII) in 1524 to house the extensive Medici library that had been started by Cosimo the Elder and greatly added to by Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Nowhere is Medici conceit expressed so explicitly as in their mausoleum, the **Cappelle Medicee** (Medicean Chapels; 📍 055 238 86 02; Piazza Madonna degli Aldobrandini; adult/concession €6/3; 🕒 8.15am-4.50pm Tue-Sat, 1st & 3rd Sun & 2nd & 4th Mon of month). Principal burial place of the Medici rulers, it's sumptuously adorned with granite, the most precious marble, semiprecious stones and some of Michelangelo's most beautiful sculptures. Francesco I lies in the **Cappella dei Principi** (Princes' Chapel) alongside Ferdinando I and II and Cosimo I, II and III. From here, a corridor leads to the stark but graceful **Sagrestia Nuova** (New Sacristy), Michelangelo's first architectural work and showcase for three of his most haunting sculptures: *Dawn and Dusk*, *Night and Day* and *Madonna and Child*.

Just off Piazza San Lorenzo is the **Palazzo Medici-Riccardi** (Map; 📍 055 276 03 40; [www.palazzo-medici.it](http://www.palazzo-medici.it); Via Cavour 3; adult/concession €7/4; 🕒 9am-7pm Thu-Tue), principal Medici residence until 1540 and the prototype for other *palazzi* in the city. Inside, the **Capella di Benozzo** (Chapel of the Magi) houses one of the supreme achievements of Renaissance painting and is an absolute must-see for art lovers. The tiny space is covered in a series of wonderfully detailed and recently restored frescoes (c 1459–63) by Benozzo Gozzoli, a pupil of Fra' Angelico. His ostensible theme of *Procession of the Magi to Bethlehem* is but a slender pretext for portraying members of the Medici clan in their best light; try to spy Lorenzo il Magnifico and Cosimo the Elder in the crowd. Only 10 visitors are allowed into the chapel at a time for a maximum of just five minutes; reserve your slot in advance at the palace ticket desk.

## San Marco Area

At the heart of Florence's university area sits the **Chiesa di San Marco** (Map; Piazza San Marco) and the adjoining Dominican convent that houses the **Museo di San Marco** (Map; 📍 055 238 86 08; Piazza San Marco 1; adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 8.15am-1.50pm Tue-Fri, to 4.50pm Sat, 2nd & 4th Sun & 1st, 3rd & 5th Mon of month), a showcase of the work of Fra' Angelico and one of Florence's most spiritually uplifting museums.

Enter the museum via Michelozzo's **Cloister of Saint Antoninus** (1440). Turn immediately right to enter the **Sala dell'Ospizio** (Pilgrims' Hospital), where Fra' Angelico's attention to perspective and the realistic portrayal of nature comes to life in a number of major paintings, including the *Deposition of Christ* (1432). On the 1st floor, Fra' Angelico's most famous work, *Annunciation* (c 1440), commands all eyes, and a stroll around the monks' living quarters reveals snippets of many more fine religious reliefs by the Tuscan-born friar, who decorated the cells between 1440–41 with deeply devotional frescoes to guide the meditation of his fellow friars. Most were executed by Fra' Angelico himself; others are by aides under his supervision, including Benozzo Gozzoli. Among several masterpieces is the magnificent *Adoration of the Magi* in the cell used by Cosimo the Elder as a meditation retreat (No 38–39). Quite a few of the frescoes are extremely gruesome – check out the cell of San Antonino Arcivescovo, which features a depiction of Jesus pushing open the door of his sepulchre, squashing a nasty-looking devil in the process.

From Piazza San Marco, follow Via Cesare Battisti east to the beautiful **Piazza della SS Annunziata**, where Giambologna's equestrian statue of Grand Duke Ferdinando I de' Medici overlooks the scene. During summer, the piazza hosts the popular Jazz & Co festival ([Click here](#)).

**Chiesa della SS Annunziata** (Map; Piazza della SS Annunziata; 🕒 7.30am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm), established in 1250 and rebuilt by Michelozzo and others in the mid-15th century, is dedicated to the

Virgin Mary. It houses frescoes by Andrea del Castagno, Perugino, Andrea del Sarto and Jacopo Pontormo.

On the piazza's southeastern side, the **Spedale degli Innocenti** (Hospital of the Innocents; [Map](#); Piazza della SS Annunziata 12) was founded in 1421 as Europe's first orphanage (hence the 'innocents' in its name). Filippo Brunelleschi designed the portico, which Andrea della Robbia (1435–1525) decorated with terracotta medallions of babies in swaddling clothes. At the north end of the portico, the false door surrounded by railings was once a revolving door where unwanted children were left. A good number of people in Florence with surnames such as degli Innocenti, Innocenti and Nocentini can trace their family tree only as far back as this orphanage. Inside, the **Museo dello Spedale degli Innocenti** (☎ 055 203 73 08; [www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it](http://www.istitutodegliinnocenti.it); adult/concession €4/2.50; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) on the 2nd floor is home to works by Florentine artists, including Marco della Robbia, Sandro Botticelli and Domenico Ghirlandaio.

About 200m southeast of the piazza is the **Museo Archeologico** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 23 57 50; Via della Colonna 38; adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 2-7pm Mon, 8.30am-7pm Tue & Thu, 8.30am-2pm Wed & Fri-Sun). Its rich collection of finds, including most of the Medici hoard of antiquities, plunges you deep into the past and offers an alternative to all that Renaissance splendour. On the 1st floor you can either head left into the ancient Egyptian collection or right for the smaller section on Etruscan and Graeco-Roman art.

The **Galleria dell'Accademia** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 48 83; Via Ricasoli 60; adult/concession €6.50/3.25; 🕒 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sun) displays paintings by Florentine artists spanning the 13th to 16th centuries. But its main draw is Michelangelo's **David**, carved from a single block of marble when the artist was only 29. Reserve your ticket in advance [Click here](#) if you don't want to queue for hours before entering.

## Santa Croce Area

When Lucy Honeychurch, the heroine of E M Forster's *A Room With a View*, is stranded in the Santa Croce without a Baedeker, she first panics and then, looking around, wonders why the basilica is thought to be such an important building. After all, doesn't it look just like a barn?

On entering, many visitors to the massive Franciscan **Basilica di Santa Croce** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 246 61 05; adult/concession incl Museo dell'Opera €5/3; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 1-5.30pm Sun) share the same reaction. The austere interior can come as something of a shock after the magnificent neo-Gothic facade, which is enlivened by varying shades of coloured marble (both it and the *campanile* are 19th-century additions). The church itself was designed by Arnolfo di Cambio between 1294 and 1385 and owes its name to a splinter of the Holy Cross donated by King Louis of France in 1258.

Though most visitors come to see the tombs of famous Florentines buried inside this church – including Michelangelo, Galileo, Ghiberti and Machiavelli – it's the frescoes by Giotto and his school in the chapels to the right of the altar that are the real highlight. Some of these are substantially better preserved than others – Giotto's murals in the **Capella Peruzzi** are in particularly poor condition. Fortunately, those in the **Capella Bardi** depicting scenes from the life of St Francis (1315–20) have fared better. Giotto's assistant and most loyal pupil, Taddeo Gaddi, frescoed the neighbouring **Chapelle Majeure** and nearby **Capella Baroncelli**; the latter takes as its subject the life of the Virgin (1332–38).

Taddeo's son Agnolo painted the **Cappella Castellani** (1385) with delightful frescoes depicting the life of St Nicholas (later transformed into 'Santa Claus') and was also responsible for the frescoes above the altar.

From the transept chapels a doorway designed by Michelozzo leads into a corridor, off which is the **Sagrestia**, an enchanting 14th-century room dominated on the left by Taddeo Gaddi's fresco of the Crucifixion. There are also a few relics of St Francis on show, including his cowl and belt. Through the next room, the church bookshop, you can access the **Scuola del Cuio** ([☎ 055 24 45 33](tel:055244533); [www.scuoladelcuio.com](http://www.scuoladelcuio.com); Via San Giuseppe 5r; [☎ 10am-6pm](tel:055244533)), a leather school and shop where you can see the goods being fashioned and also buy the finished products. At the end of the corridor is a Medici chapel with a fine two-tone altarpiece in glazed terracotta by Andrea della Robbia.

The second of Santa Croce's two serene **cloisters** was designed by Brunelleschi just before his death in 1446. His unfinished **Cappella de' Pazzi** at the end of the first cloister is notable for its harmonious lines and restrained terracotta medallions of the Apostles by Luca della Robbia, and is a masterpiece of Renaissance architecture.

The **Museo dell'Opera di Santa Croce** ([Map](#); admission incl basilica adult/concession €5/3; [☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 1-5.30pm Sun](tel:055244533)) is located off the first cloister. It features a *Crucifixion* by Cimabue, restored to the best degree possible after flood damage in 1966 when more than 4m of water inundated the Santa Croce area. Other highlights include Donatello's gilded bronze statue *St Louis of Toulouse* (1424), originally placed in a tabernacle on the Orsanmichele facade; a wonderful terracotta bust of St Francis receiving the stigmata by the della Robbia workshop; and frescoes by Taddeo Gaddi, including *The Last Supper* (1333).

## The Oltrarno

Literally 'Beyond the Arno', the atmospheric Oltrarno takes in all of Florence south of the river.

### PONTE VECCHIO

This famous [bridge](#) has twinkled with the glittering wares of jewellers ever since the 16th century, when Ferdinando I de' Medici ordered them here to replace the often malodorous presence of the town butchers, who were wont to toss unwanted leftovers into the river.

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## MICHELE GIUTTARI

**Why do you set your crime novels in Florence?** Florence is a city with a double face. It has a beautiful side, but there's also a dark side. I know this because I worked with this dark side for many years...I saw what the tourists don't see.

**How did you become familiar with this 'dark face'?** I spent eight years as the head of Florence's Squadra Mobile (elite police investigative unit) and four years as the head of a special taskforce investigating the Monster of Florence case.

**What was that?** Between 1974 and 1985, seven couples were murdered while making love in cars parked in the hills around Florence. Despite our best efforts, the killer was never found; the case is now closed.

**The main character in your novels, Michele Ferrara, is also the head of the Squadra Mobile. Are you and he one and the same?** We're very similar in terms of character, so I suppose you could call him my alter ego. He can do things I couldn't, though...he gets his evidence together and solves cases quickly. It's easy to do this in a novel, but not so easy in real life!

**The plot in A Florentine Death is about a serial killer on the loose in Florence and A Death in Tuscany is about a high-level conspiracy surrounding the murder of a girl just outside the city.**

**Were you inspired by your work on the Monster case?** I started writing as a release valve when I

was working on the Monster case, so it must have had an influence.

**Did you work on other high-profile cases?** I was head of Florence's anti-Mafia squad when the Cosa Nostra bombed the Uffizi in 1993. It's still fresh in my mind, and I put it into my latest book, *La Donna della 'ndrangheta*.

**And what about the beautiful side of Florence?** I love to walk across the Ponte Vecchio (above), along the Lungarno and up to [Piazzale Michelangelo](#), where I sit on the terrace at La Loggia and enjoy the view. I will never get tired of how beautiful this city is. Even so, every now and then I see a place where crimes were committed and I am reminded of its dark heart...

*Michele Giuttari is the author of the bestselling crime novels Scarabeo (published in English as A Florentine Death), La Loggia degli Innocenti (A Death in Tuscany) and La Donna della 'ndrangheta (Death of a Mafia Don).*

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The bridge as it stands was built in 1345 and was the only one in Florence saved from destruction by the retreating Germans in 1944. Look above the shops on the eastern side and you will see the **Corridoio Vasariano**, an elevated covered passageway joining the Palazzo Vecchio, Uffizi and Palazzo Pitti that was designed by Vasari for Cosimo I in 1565. Its original design incorporated small windows to ensure the privacy of the Medici family members who used it, but when Hitler visited Florence in 1941, his mate and fellow dictator Benito Mussolini had new windows punched into the corridor walls over the bridge so that his guest could enjoy an expansive view down the Arno. The corridor is currently closed for restoration.

At the southern end of the bridge is the medieval **Torre dei Mannelli** ([Map](#)) which looks rather odd, as the Corridoio Vasariano was built around it, not simply straight through it as the Medici would have preferred.

## **PALAZZO PITTI**

Begun in 1458 for the Pitti family, rivals of the Medici, the original nucleus of this **palace** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 94 48 83; Piazza de' Pitti 1) took up the space encompassing the seven sets of windows on the 2nd and 3rd storeys. Cosimo I and Eleonora di Toledo acquired the palace in 1549 and it remained the official residence of Florence's rulers until 1919, when the Savoy's handed it over to the state.

The ground-floor **Museo degli Argenti** (Silver Museum; ☎ 8.15am-7.30pm Jun-Aug, to 6.30pm Mar-May & Sep, to 5.30pm Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Feb, closed 1st & last Mon of month) often has no silver on display. Go figure. Come instead to see the elaborately frescoed audience chambers, which host temporary exhibitions.

Raphaels and Rubens vie for centre stage in the enviable collection of 16th- to 18th-century art amassed by the Medici and Lorraine dukes in the 1st-floor **Galleria Palatina** (☎ 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sun), reached via staircase from the palace's central courtyard. This gallery has retained the original display arrangement of paintings (squeezed in, often on top of each other) so can be visually overwhelming – go slow and focus on the works one by one.

Highlights include Filippo Lippi's *Madonna and Child with Stories from the Life of St Anne* (aka the *Tondo Bartolini*; 1452–53) and Botticelli's *Madonna with Child and a Young Saint John the Baptist* (c 1490–95) in the Sala di Prometeo; Raphael's *Madonna of the Window* (1513–14) in the Sala di Ulisse; and Caravaggio's *Sleeping Cupid* (1608) in the Sala dell'Educazione di Giove. Don't miss the Sala di Saturno, which is full of magnificent works by Raphael, including the *Madonna of the Chair* (1511) and portraits of Anolo Doni and Maddalena Strozzi (c 1506). Nearby, in the Sala di Giove, the same artist's *Lady with a Veil* (aka *La Velata*; c 1516) holds court alongside Giorgione's *Three Ages of Man* (c 1500).

The sentimental favourite, Tiberio Titi's charming portrait of the young Prince Leopoldo de' Medici, hangs in the Sala di Apollo and the Sala di Venere shines with Titian's *Portrait of a Lady* (c 1536).

Past the Sala di Venere is the **Appartamenti Reali** (Royal Apartments; ☎ 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sun Feb-Dec), a series of rooms presented as they were c 1880–91, when they were occupied by members of the House of Savoy. The style and division of tasks assigned to each room is reminiscent of Spanish royal palaces, all heavily bedecked with drapes, silk and chandeliers.

Forget about Marini, Mertz or Clemente – the collection of the 2nd-floor **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** (Gallery of Modern Art; ☎ 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sun) is dominated by late-19th-century works by artists of the Florentine Macchiaioli school (the local equivalent of Impressionism), including Telemaco Signorini (1835–1901) and Giovanni Fattori (1825–1908).

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## PALAZZO PITTI TICKETING

There are two tickets on sale at the office to the far right of the main entrance. The first (adult/concession €6/3) gives you entrance to the Costume Gallery, Boboli Gardens, Silver Museum, Porcelain Museum and Bardini Gardens. The second (€8.50/4.25) covers the Royal Apartments, Palatine Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art. Note that tickets are more expensive if temporary exhibitions are being staged. If there are no temporary exhibitions, you may purchase a combined ticket (€11.50, valid three days), which gives access to all sights. To do everything here justice, you'll need a full day.

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Few visitors make the effort to visit the Pitti's **Galleria del Costume** (Costume Gallery; ☎ 8.15am-7.30pm Jun-Aug, to 6.30pm Mar-May & Sep, to 5.30pm Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Feb, closed 1st & last Mon of month), thus missing its absolutely fascinating, if somewhat macabre, display of the semi-decomposed burial clothes of Cosimo I, his wife Eleonora di Toledo and their son Don Garzia. Considering their age and the fact that they were buried for centuries, Eleonora's gown and silk stockings are remarkably preserved, as are Cosimo's satin doublet and wool breeches and Garzia's doublet, beret and short cape.

## Giardino di Boboli

The palace's expansive **Boboli Gardens** ([Map](#); ☎ 8.15am-7.30pm Jun-Aug, to 6.30pm Mar-May & Sep, to 5.30pm Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Feb, closed 1st & last Mon of the month) were laid out in the mid-16th century according to a design by architect Niccolò Pericoli, aka Il Tribolo.

Boboli is a prime example of a formal Tuscan garden and is fun to explore: skip along **Cypress Alley**; let the imagination rip with a gallant frolic in the walled **Giardino del Cavaliere** (Knights' Garden); dance around 170-odd statues; meditate next to the **Isoletto**, a gorgeous ornamental pond; discover species and birdsong in the garden along the signposted **nature trail**; or watch a fleshy *Venere* (Venus) by Giambologna rise from the waves in the **Grotta del Buontalenti** ([Map](#); ☎ visits at 11am, 1pm, 3pm, 4pm & 5pm).

At the upper, southern limit of the gardens, fantastic views over the palace complex and Florentine countryside fan out beyond the box-hedged **rose garden**, overlooked by the **Museo delle Porcellane** (Porcelain Museum; [Map](#)), home to Sèvres, Vincennes, Meissen, Wedgwood and other porcelain pieces collected by Palazzo Pitti's wealthy tenants.

## GIARDINO DI BARDINI

Florence's little-known **Bardini Gardens** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 48 83; Costa San Giorgio 4-6 via Boboli Gardens & Via de' Bardi 1r; adult/concession incl Boboli Gardens & Porcelain Museum €5/2.50; 🕒 8.15am-sunset) was named after art collector Stefano Bardini (1836–1922) who bought the villa and gardens in 1913. Accessible from Boboli or down by the Arno, it has all the features of a quintessential Tuscan garden – artificial grottoes, orangery, marble statues, fountains, loggia, amphitheatre and a monumental baroque stone staircase staggering up the beautiful tiered gardens – but without the crowds of other gardens.

Its charming **Belvedere Caffé** (coffee €3, tea with biscotti €5, panino €3), which is set in a loggia overlooking the Florentine skyline, is a wonderful spot for a light lunch or afternoon tea.

Inside the villa is the **Museo Bardini** (☎ 055 263 85 99; [www.bardinipeyron.it](http://www.bardinipeyron.it), in Italian; adult/concession €6/4; 🕒 10am-6pm Wed-Sun Apr-Sep, to 4pm Wed-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar), home to a collection of Roberto Capucci—designed haute couture and host to other temporary exhibitions.

From here, you can return to the Boboli Gardens on the same ticket or exit at Via de' Bardi.

## PIAZZALE MICHELANGELO

Turn your back on the bevy of tacky-tacky souvenir stalls and take in the soaring city panorama from **Piazzale Michelangelo** ([Map](#)), pierced by one of Florence's two *David* copies. The square is a 10-minute uphill walk along the winding route that scales the hillside from the river and Piazza Giuseppe Poggi.

Bus 13 links Stazione di Santa Maria Novella with Piazzale Michelangelo.

## CHURCHES

The Oltrarno has a trio of churches worth seeking out.

The real point of your exertions up to Piazzale Michelangelo is five minutes further uphill, where the wonderful Romanesque **Chiesa di San Miniato al Monte** ([Map](#); Via Monte alle Croce; admission free; 🕒 8am-7pm May-Oct, 8am-noon & 3-6pm Nov-Apr) is found. The church is dedicated to St Minius, an early Christian martyr in Florence who is said to have flown to this spot after his death down in the town (or, if you want to believe an alternative version, to have walked up the hill with his head tucked underneath his arm).

The church dates to the early 11th century, although its typical Tuscan multicoloured marble facade was tacked on a couple of centuries later. Inside, 13th- to 15th-century frescoes adorn the south wall and intricate inlaid marble designs line the nave, leading to a fine Romanesque crypt. The **sacristy** (requested donation €1) in the southeast corner features frescoes by Spinello Arentino depicting the life of St Benedict. Slap bang in the middle of the nave is the bijoux **Capella del Crocefisso**, to which Michelozzo, Agnolo Gaddi and Luca della Robbia all contributed.

The 13th-century **Basilica di Santa Maria del Carmine** ([Map](#); Piazza del Carmine) was all but destroyed by fire in the late 18th century. Fortunately the magnificent frescoes by Masaccio in its **Cappella Brancacci** (☎ advance reservations 055 276 82 24, 055 76 85 58; admission €4; 🕒 10am-4.30pm Wed-Sat & Mon, 1-4.30pm Sun), entered next to the basilica on the square, were spared. A maximum of 30 visitors are allowed in the chapel at a time and visits are by guided tour; places *must* be prebooked. Unfortunately, visits are often marred by the belligerent attitude taken by the attendants, who strictly enforce the ridiculous 15-minute-visit rule that applies here. How the church authorities think that this is enough time to appreciate the magnificent frescoes on show is an absolute mystery.

Considered the painter's finest work, the frescoes with their vibrant colours had an enormous influence

on 15th-century Florentine art. Masaccio painted them in his early 20s but interrupted the task to go to Rome, where he died aged only 28. Filippino Lippi completed the cycle some 60 years later. Masaccio's contribution includes the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise* and *The Tribute Money* on the chapel's upper left wall.

The **Basilica di Santo Spirito** ([Map](#); Piazza Santo Spirito; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-5.30pm Thu-Tue), one of Brunelleschi's last commissions, is beautifully planned, with a colonnade of 35 columns and a series of semicircular chapels. The chapels' works of art include a poorly lit *Madonna and Saints* (1493–94) by Filippino Lippi in the Cappella Nerli in the right transept. Ask an attendant to show you the **sacristy**, where you'll find a poignant wooden crucifix attributed by some critics to Michelangelo.

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## COURSES

Florence has zillions of schools running courses in Italian language and culture. Numerous others teach art, art history, film, dance, cooking and so on. Here are a few:

**Accademia Italiana** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 46 16; [www.accademiaitaliana.com](http://www.accademiaitaliana.com); Piazza de' Pitti 15) Language, culture and a wide range of design programmes in Italian including graphics, textile and fashion.

**British Institute of Florence** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 2677 8200; [www.britishinstitute.it](http://www.britishinstitute.it); Piazza Strozzi 2) Much-respected institution dating to 1917; language, art history, cooking and wine appreciation.

**Centro Lorenzo de' Medici** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 31 42; [www.lorenzodemedici.it](http://www.lorenzodemedici.it); Via Faenza 43) Language and huge variety of supplementary courses, including restoration and conservation, art history and jewellery design.

**Divina Cucina** ([www.divinacucina.com](http://www.divinacucina.com)) American-born, Florence-based chef Judy Francini offers food-lovers' walking tours of the Central Market and a three-day programme comprising the walking tour, a day in Chianti and a one-day Tuscan cooking course.

**Lessons in Lunch** ([www.faihwilling.com](http://www.faihwilling.com)) American-born, Florence-based food writer Faith Willinger offers an eight-course meal limited to eight participants incorporating tastings and demonstrations, lunch and visits by special guests of gastronomic or cultural interest. She also offers hands-on 'market to table' sessions.

**Scuola del Cuoio** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 24 45 33; [www.leatherschool.com](http://www.leatherschool.com); Via San Giuseppe 5r) Leather-working courses, from half a day to six months.

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## FLORENCE FOR CHILDREN

Several locally published books and games help children discover Florence – the bookshop in [Palazzo Vecchio](#) has a tip-top selection.

The **Palazzo Vecchio** offers wonderful guided tours for children. These involve actors dressed in Renaissance costume who rope young participants into the performance, imparting loads of interesting historical facts in the process and visiting secret places within the palace. A sumptuously attired Eleonora of Toledo, clearly shocked by the casual attire of today's children, has been known to give advice about proper grooming for young ladies, and Cosimo I is happy to lay down the law about the proper age for a Medici to take on duties as a cardinal (the answer is 14, the age of his son Ferdinando when he became a

cardinal).

It is highly advisable to book the Palazzo Vecchio tours in advance by visiting the desk behind the ticket office on the day before your visit, by emailing [info@museoragazzi@comune.fi.it](mailto:info@museoragazzi@comune.fi.it) or by telephoning ☎ 055 276 82 24.

The best **children's playgrounds** ([Map](#)) for kids under six are in Oltrarno: the riverside space along Lungarno di Santa Rosa (cross the river using Ponte Amerigo Vespucci and turn right) and on Piazza Torquato Tasso. To give kids space to run around, head to the **Giardino di Boboli** (opposite).

A gelato stop always functions as an excellent bribe to ensure good behaviour; see the boxed text on [Click here](#) for a list of the best gelato joints in the city. For a gift to make little eyes light up, visit **Letizia Fiorini** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 65 04; Via del Parione 60r; ☎ Tue-Sat 10.30am-7.30pm), a tiny workshop selling reasonably priced and utterly adorable handmade puppets.

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## TOURS

### Bus

**CAF Tours** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 06 12; [www.caftours.com](http://www.caftours.com); Via Sant'Antonino 6r) Half- and full-day city coach tours (€45 to €100), including designer-outlet shopping tours (€28, six hours).

**City Sightseeing Firenze** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 04 51; [www.firenze.city-sightseeing.it](http://www.firenze.city-sightseeing.it); Piazza Stazione 1; tickets incl audioguide adult/child 5-15yr/family €22/11/66) Those who are disabled or disinclined to walk may want to explore Florence by red open-top bus, hopping on and off at 15 bus stops around the city. Tickets are valid for 24 hours. There's also a tour to Fiesole for the same price.

### Cycling

**Florence by Bike** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 48 89 92; [www.florencebybike.it](http://www.florencebybike.it); Via San Zanobi 120-122r) City bike rental (per hour/5 hours/day/three days €3/8/14.50/36 including self-guided city itineraries) and a 32km-long guided day tour of Chianti (€76 including lunch).

**I Bike Florence** (☎ 055 012 39 94; [www.ibikeflorence.com](http://www.ibikeflorence.com); Via de' Lamberti 1) Two-hour guided city tours (adult/student €29/25) and guided day trips to Chianti (€70 including lunch).

### Walking

**Accidental Tourist** (☎ 055 69 93 76; [www.accidentaltourist.com](http://www.accidentaltourist.com)) Become an Accidental Tourist (membership adult/under 16 years or 70-plus years €20/10) then sign up for a sunset stroll (€250 per couple), cooking class (€70 to €100), nature trail (€75), picnic (€70), walking tour (€90) or winery tour (€50).

**Artviva** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 264 50 33, 329 6132730; [www.italy.artviva.com](http://www.italy.artviva.com); Via de' Sassetti 1) Marketed as 'The Original & Best Walking Tours of Florence', these excellent one- to three-hour walks of the city (€25 to €39) are led by historians or art history graduates; walks include a Classic Walk (€25, three hours) and an Evening Walk/Murder Mystery Tour (€30, two hours).

**Freya's Florence** (☎ 349 0748907; [freyasflorence@yahoo.com](mailto:freyasflorence@yahoo.com)) Highly recommended tours by an Australian-born, Florence-based private tour guide introducing the art, history and magic of



Florence. It costs €50 to €60 per hour for private tours of between one and 20 people, including two-hour ‘Secret Florence at Twilight’ and Uffizi Gallery tours (admission fees extra).

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## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Festa di Anna Maria Medici (Feast of Anna Maria Medici)** Marks the death in 1743 of the last Medici, Anna Maria, with a costumed parade from Palazzo Vecchio to her tomb in the Cappelle Medicee; 18 February.

**Scoppio del Carro (Explosion of the Cart)** A cart of fireworks is exploded in front of the cathedral at 11am on Easter Sunday – get there at least two hours early to grab a good position.

**Maggio Musicale Fiorentino** ([www.maggiofiorentino.com](http://www.maggiofiorentino.com), in Italian) This month-long arts festival held in Florence’s Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino ([Click here](#)) is the oldest in Italy; it stages world-class performances of theatre, classical music, jazz and dance between late-April and June.

**Festa di San Giovanni (Feast of St John)** Florence celebrates its patron saint with a *calcio storico* match on Piazza di Santa Croce and fireworks over Piazzale Michelangelo; 24 June.

**Sant’Ambrogio Summer Festival** ([www.firenzejazz.it](http://www.firenzejazz.it), in Italian) The streets between Borgo La Croce and Piazza Beccaria become an evening stage for art, dance, jazz and theatre; June and July.

**Jazz & Co** ([www.santissima.it](http://www.santissima.it), in Italian) On summer nights, Piazza Santissima Annunziata is filled with tables of people enjoying an *aperitivo* or dinner catered by Slow Food International while listening to live jazz musicians from Italy and overseas perform. It takes place late June to September.

**Festival Firenze Classica** The month of July sees Florence’s highly regarded Orchestra da Camera Toscana ([www.orcafi.it](http://www.orcafi.it)) performing classical music in the atmospheric settings of the Oratorio di San Michele a Castello and Palazzo Strozzi; between April and October, the orchestra performs in the Chiesa di Orsanmichele and in the courtyard of the Museo del Bargello.

**Festa delle Rificolone (Festival of the Paper Lanterns)** A procession of children carrying lanterns, accompanied by drummers, *sbandieratori* (flag throwers), musicians and others in medieval dress, winds its way from Piazza di Santa Croce to Piazza Santissima Annunziata to celebrate the Virgin Mary’s birthday; 7 September.

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## SLEEPING

The city has hundreds of hotels, some excellent hostels and a burgeoning B&B scene. Places in this section have been selected for their good value for money; plenty more Florence options are reviewed online at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com).

Tourist offices don’t recommend or reserve places, but do carry lists of what is available, including *affittacamere* (rooms for rent in private houses).

## ACCOMMODATION AGENCIES

These agencies – two of which have offices inside the main train station – can find/reserve a hotel room in Florence for you, sometimes at no charge, sometimes for a small fee.

**Agenzie 365 Hotel Reservation** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 42 01; [firenze1.gb@agenzie365.it](mailto:firenze1.gb@agenzie365.it); Platform 5,

Stazione di Santa Maria Novella; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) Works in association with [hostelsclub.com](http://hostelsclub.com); reservation fee is €10.

**Associazione Bed & Breakfast Affittacamere** ([www.abba-firenze.it](http://www.abba-firenze.it)) Great one-stop shop for B&Bs.

**Consorzio ITA** (Informazione Turistiche Alberghiere; [Map](#); ☎ 055 28 28 93; ☎ 8am-7.30pm) In the main hall of Stazione di Santa Maria Novella next to the pharmacy; reservation fee is €3.

**Florence Promhotels** (☎ 055 55 39 41, 800 866022; [www.promhotels.it](http://www.promhotels.it)) Online and telephone reservations for one- to five-star hotels.

## Duomo & Piazza della Signoria

### BUDGET

**Hotel Cestelli** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 42 13; [www.hotelcestelli.com](http://www.hotelcestelli.com); Borgo SS Apostoli 25; s €40-60, d €50-80, d with bathroom €70-100; ☎ closed 2 weeks Jan, 3 weeks Aug) The scent of joss sticks and flicker of night lights add a soothing Zen air to this eight-room hotel on the 1st floor of a 12th-century *palazzo*. The location off Via de' Tornabuoni is wonderful and though the rooms are dark, they are attractively furnished, quiet and cool.

**Hotel Dalí** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 234 07 06; [www.hoteldali.com](http://www.hoteldali.com); Via dell'Oriuolo 17; s €34-40, d €56-65, d with bathroom €68-80; ☎ closed 3 weeks Jan; ☎) This spruce, simple hotel on 'Clock Rd' is run with unrelenting energy and smiles by Marco and Samanta. Rooms overlooking the leafy inner courtyard are serene; those facing the street can be noisy. Doubles are big and easily sleep four or five (extra bed €25) and there's free parking for motoring guests – a rare occurrence in Florence.

**Hotel Orchidea** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 248 03 46; [www.hotelorchideaflorence.it](http://www.hotelorchideaflorence.it); Borgo degli Albizi 11; s €30-60, d €50-80) This old-fashioned *pensione* in the mansion where the Donati family roosted in the 13th-century (Dante's wife, Gemma, was allegedly born in the tower) is charm itself. Its seven rooms with sink and shared bathroom are simple; Nos 5, 6 and 7 have huge windows overlooking a gorgeous garden while No 4 spills out onto a terrace. No credit cards.

**Hotel San Giovanni** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 83 85; [www.hotelsangiovanni.com](http://www.hotelsangiovanni.com); Via de' Cerretani 2; s with shared bathroom €30-58, d with shared bathroom €40-75, d with bathroom €65-95; ☎) Buzz to enter and ride the rattly old cage lift (forget jumbo-sized suitcases) up to what was once the bishop's private residence in this 14th-century *palazzo*. Lofty ceilings top off nine light and spacious rooms, just two of which have a private bathroom: Nos 6, 7 and 8 look at the cathedral. Breakfast costs an extra €5.

### MIDRANGE

**Borghese Palace Art Hotel** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 43 63; [www.borghesepalace.it](http://www.borghesepalace.it); Via Ghibellina 174r; s €120, d €140-190, ste €230-240; ☎ ☎ ☎) A key address for art lovers, this stylish ode to design with a glass-topped courtyard and sculptures looming large in the reception showcases original works of art from the 18th century to present day. The location couldn't be more central, breakfast is on a terrace with magnificent views and there's an in-house spa.

**Hotel Perseo** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 25 04; [www.hotelperseo.it](http://www.hotelperseo.it); Via de' Cerretani 1; s €68-125, d €88-165; ☎ ☎) This three-star hotel was overhauled in 2006 and is run by a trio hailing from Italy, Australia and New Zealand. The decor is light and modern – flatscreen TVs, walk-in showers and mellow natural hues. Doubles cleverly turn into bunk-bed quads, making it a great family choice.

**Relais del Duomo** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 01 47; [www.relaisdelduomo.it](http://www.relaisdelduomo.it), in Italian; Piazza dell'Olio 2; s €50-70, d €80-100; ☎ ☎) Location is the prime selling point of this B&B on a quiet traffic-free street

around the corner from the Duomo. The four elegant, pastel-coloured rooms are simple but comfortable.

## TOP END

**Continente** (Map; ☎ 055 2 72 62; [www.lungarnohotels.com](http://www.lungarnohotels.com); Vicolo dell'Oro 6r; d €300-390, ste €1250-1550; 📄 📞 📺 📶) Owned by the Ferragamo fashion house and designed by fashionable Florentine architect Michel Bonan, this glamorous hotel references 1950s Italy in its vibrant decor, and is about as hip as Florence gets.

## Santa Maria Novella Area

### BUDGET

**Ostello Archi Rossi** (Map; ☎ 055 29 08 04; [www.hostelarchirossi.com](http://www.hostelarchirossi.com); Via Faenza 94r; dm €18-26; 📄 closed 2 weeks Dec; 📄 📶) Guests' paintings and graffiti pattern the walls at this ever-busy private hostel near Stazione di Santa Maria Novella. The bright dorms have three to nine beds; some are single-sex and all have private bathrooms. There are washing machines for guests to use (€6 wash and dry), keyed lockers and free internet and wi-fi. No curfew (knock to get in after 2am).

**Ostello Gallo d'Oro** (Map; ☎ 055 552 29 64; [www.ostellogallodoro.com](http://www.ostellogallodoro.com); 1st fl, Via Cavour 104; dm €27-32, d €70; 📄 📶) Dorms at this popular choice max at five beds, all have private bathroom and TV and three have a balcony. Internet and wi-fi are free, breakfast is buffet-style, there are free dinners with wine and beer two nights per week and there's no curfew.

### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Consigli** (Map; ☎ 055 21 41 72; [www.hotelconsigli.com](http://www.hotelconsigli.com); Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci 50; s €60-120, d €60-150; 📄 📞) A short walk from town, this riverside Renaissance palace is perfect for guests who are travelling with their own car (it's easy to access and has its own parking). The flowery terrace with deck chairs is a stargazer's dream.

**Hotel Paris** (Map; ☎ 055 28 02 81; [www.parishotel.it](http://www.parishotel.it); Via dei Banchi 2; s €80-125, d €90-180; 📄 📞 📺 📶) This pair of 15th-century palaces is linked on the 2nd floor by a glass walkway. Three-star rooms sport high ceilings, and window pelmets and bed-heads are adorned with rich, embroidered drapes. The painted ceiling in the breakfast room is breathtaking.

**our pick Hotel Santa Maria Novella** (Map; ☎ 055 27 18 40; [www.hotelsantamarianovella.it](http://www.hotelsantamarianovella.it); Piazza di Santa Maria Novella 1; d €135-200, ste €180-235; 📄 📞 📺 📶) The bland exterior of this excellent four-star choice gives no hint of the spacious and elegant rooms within. All are beautifully appointed, featuring marble bathrooms, comfortable beds and toiletries from the nearby Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di [Santa Maria Novella](#). The breakfast spread is lavish and the online booking rates (cited above) are generous.

**Hotel Scoti** (Map; ☎ 055 29 21 28; [www.hotelscoti.com](http://www.hotelscoti.com); Via de' Tornabuoni 7; s €40-75, d €65-125) Wedged between Dior, Prada and McQueen, this *pensione* is a splendid mix of old-fashioned charm and great value for money. Run with smiling aplomb by Australian Doreen and Italian Carmello, the hotel is enthroned in a 16th-century *palazzo* on Florence's smartest shopping strip. The 11 rooms are clean and comfortable, but the star of the show is the floor-to-ceiling frescoed living room (1780). Breakfast costs an extra €5.

## San Lorenzo Area

## BUDGET & MIDRANGE

**Academy Hostel & Lodge House** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 23986 65; [www.academyhostel.eu](http://www.academyhostel.eu); Via Ricasoli 9; dm €35-42, tw with bathroom €72-86; 🚻 📶) On the 1st floor of a 17th-century *palazzo*, this small and relatively new hostel has elicited rave reviews from some of our readers. Its philosophy is that cheap accommodation shouldn't compromise on comfort – dorms (sleeping between three and six) are bright and well set up, with lockers and single beds (no bunks). Internet and wi-fi are free.

**Johanna & Johlea** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 463 32 92; [www.johanna.it](http://www.johanna.it); s €70-120, d €80-170; 🚻 📶) One of the most established B&Bs in town, J&J has more than a dozen tasteful, individually decorated rooms split between five historic residences; some with wi-fi connections. Those desiring total luxury should ask about the suite apartments.

**Hotel Casci** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 16 86; [www.hotelcasci.com](http://www.hotelcasci.com); Via Cavour 13; s €50-110, d €80-150; 🚻 closed 2 weeks Jan; 🚻 📶) This family-run place offers spick and span rooms with flatscreen satellite TVs, cramped but very clean bathrooms and a feisty breakfast buffet with a bottomless cappuccino. Pay cash and you'll usually get a 10% to 15% discount.

## San Marco Area

### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Morandi alla Crocetta** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 234 47 47; [www.hotelmorandi.it](http://www.hotelmorandi.it); Via Laura 50; s €70-90, d €90-170; 🚻 📶) This medieval convent-turned-hotel away from the madding crowds is a stunner. Rooms are refined, tasteful and full of authentic period furnishings and paintings. A couple of rooms have handkerchief-sized gardens to laze in, but the *pièce de résistance* is frescoed room 29 – the former chapel.

**Palazzo Alfani** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 15 74, 346 0339931; [www.palazzoalfani.com](http://www.palazzoalfani.com); Via Ricasoli 49; 4-person apt €120-300, 8-person €240-500; 🚻 📶) Close to the Galleria dell'Accademia, the five beautiful apartments inside this convent-turned-palace are decorated with original prints and richly upholstered furniture; some overlook a pretty internal garden.

### TOP END

**Residence Hilda** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 80 29; [www.residencehilda.it](http://www.residencehilda.it); Via dei Servi; 2-person apt €200-400, 4-person €300-400; 🚻 📶) The super-stylish lounge foyer gives a strong clue as to what can be found in the 12 upstairs suites at this recently opened residence. Apartments are serviced daily and have equipped kitchenettes, excellent bathrooms, decent workbenches and wonderfully comfy beds. The family suites are perfect if you have little ones in tow. Check the website for specials. No breakfast.

## The Oltrarno

### BUDGET

**Campeggio Michelangelo** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 681 19 77; [www.ecvacanze.it](http://www.ecvacanze.it), in Italian; Viale Michelangelo 80; adult €9.30-10.60, car & tent €11.40-13; 🚻 📶) The closest campsite to the centre, just off Piazzale Michelangelo, south of the river Arno. Big and comparatively leafy with lovely city views and a bar-cafe, it's handy for the historic quarter, though it's a steep walk home. Solo backpackers with a tent can pitch up for €10.80 year-round and there are beds in tent dorms for €15.50. Take bus 13 from Stazione di Santa Maria Novella.

**Ostello Santa Monaca** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 26 83 38; [www.ostello.it](http://www.ostello.it); Via Santa Monaca 6; dm €15-20, d

€40-48; 📍 📶) Once a convent, this large Oltrarno hostel near San Spirito has been run by a cooperative since the 1960s. There's a kitchen, laundrette, safe deposits and free internet access and wi-fi. Mixed- and single-sex dorms sleep four to 22 and are locked between 10am and 2pm. Curfew is 2am.

**Althea** ([Map](#); 📍 055 233 53 41; [www.florencealthea.it](http://www.florencealthea.it); Via delle Caldaie 25; s €39-65, d €65-90; 📍 📶) The decor might be 1970s flower power with plenty of chintz, but the good value for money provided by these seven rooms is outstanding. Each is spotlessly clean, and has its own bathroom, fridge and computer terminal.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel La Scaletta** ([Map](#); 📍 055 28 30 28; [www.hotellascaletta.it](http://www.hotellascaletta.it); Via Guicciardini 13; s €79-94, d €84-109; 📍 📶 📶) An austere air wafts through this maze of a hotel, hidden in a 15th-century *palazzo* near the Palazzo Pitti. But rooms are spacious and taking breakfast/*aperitivo* on the roof terrace overlooking Boboli is a rare opportunity; rooms with garden views are approximately 20% more expensive.

**Hotel Silla** ([Map](#); 📍 055 234 28 88; [www.hotelsilla.it](http://www.hotelsilla.it); Via dei Renai 5; s €90-128, d €75-180; 📍 📶 📶) Briefly headquarters of the Allied Forces in 1944 and a *pensione* since 1964, Silla sits in a palace well away from the crowds in one of the leafiest parts of Florence. Once the leaves fall in autumn, several rooms and the breakfast terrace enjoy beguiling views across the Arno; otherwise, the outlook is green.

**Residenza Santo Spirito** ([Map](#); 📍 055 265 83 76; [www.residenzasspirito.com](http://www.residenzasspirito.com); Piazza Santo Spirito 9; d €90-120; 📍) Located on Florence's most buzzing summertime square, this romantic trio of rooms with sky-high ceilings in Palazzo Guadagni (1505) is remarkable. The frescoed Gold Room is the first to go and the Green Room with two connecting double rooms is the family favourite. Breakfast is pricey, so it's best to hit the local cafes instead.

## Out of Town

### BUDGET

**Ostello Villa Camerata** ([Map](#); 📍 055 60 14 51; [firenzeaighostels@com](mailto:firenzeaighostels@com); Viale Augusto Righi 2-4; dm €20, d/tr/q with bathroom €65/75/88; 📍 📶) In a converted 17th-century villa surrounded by extensive grounds, and a 30-minute bus ride from town, this HI-affiliated hostel is among Italy's most beautiful. Bus 17 from Stazione di Santa Maria Novella stops 400m from the hostel. Non-HI members pay an extra €3 per night and there's lockout between 10am and 2pm.

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## EATING

Quality ingredients and simple execution are the hallmarks of Florentine cuisine. The best-known local dish is the juicy *bistecca alla fiorentina*, a slab of prime T-bone steak rubbed with olive oil, seared on the char grill, garnished with salt and pepper and served *al sangue* (bloody). Other dishes that you will regularly see on menus include *crostini* (toasts topped with chicken-liver pâté), *ribollita* (a thick vegetable, bread and bean soup), *pappa al pomodoro* (soup made with bread and tomatoes) and *trippa alla fiorentina* (tripe cooked in a rich tomato sauce).

## Duomo & Piazza della Signoria

### BUDGET

**Oil Shoppe** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 200 10 92; [www.oleum.it](http://www.oleum.it); Via Sant'Egidio 22r) Stand in line at this student favourite, an olive-oil shop and sandwich shop that builds huge and tasty sandwiches. Choose your fillings or let chef Alberto Scorzon take the lead with a 10-filling wonder. Queue at the back of the shop for hot subs; at the front for cold.

**Ino** (☎ 055 21 92 08; Via dei Georgofili 3r-7r; panini €5-8; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun) Short for *panino*, this stylish sandwich shop near the Uffizi sources its artisan gourmet ingredients locally and uses them in inventive and delicious ways. You can choose your own combination or select from the always-delectable house specials. Scoff on the spot with a glass of wine (included in the price of the sandwich) or take away to picnic on the banks of the Arno.

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## FLORENCE'S FAVOURITE FAST FOOD: TRIPE

When Florentines fancy a fast munch on the move rather than a slow full lunch, they flit by a *trippaio* – a cart on wheels or mobile stand – for a juicy plate or sandwich of tripe. Think cow's stomach chopped up, boiled, sliced and served with seasoning. Yum! Or is it...yuk?

A bastion of good old-fashioned Florentine tradition, *trippai* are few and far between these days. Two old faithfuls still going strong are found on the southwest corner of the Mercato Nuovo ([Map](#)) and near Via Dante Alighieri close to Piazza della Signoria ([Map](#)). Pay under €3 for tripe doused in *salsa verde* (a pea-green sauce of smashed parsley, garlic, capers and anchovies) or garnished with salt, pepper and ground chilli. Alternatively, opt for a bowl of *lampredotto* (cow's fourth stomach chopped and simmered for hours).

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**Cantinetta dei Verrazzano** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 26 85 90; Via dei Tavolini 18-20; platters €4.50-12, focaccia €3-3.50, panini €1.70-3.90; ☎ noon-9pm Mon-Sat) Together, a *forno* (baker's oven) and *cantinetta* (small cellar) equal a match made in heaven. Come here for focaccia fresh from the oven, perhaps topped with caramelised radicchio or porcini mushrooms, washed down with a glass of wine (€2.50 to €8) from the Verrazzano estate in [Chianti](#). Other plates on offer include cheese and meat platters, *panini* filled with truffle or prosciutto, salads and bruschettas.

**I Due Fratellini** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 239 60 96; [www.iduefratellini.com](http://www.iduefratellini.com); Via dei Cimatori 38r; panini €2.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, closed Fri & Sat 2nd half Jun & all Aug) A legend since 1875, this hole in the wall whips out *panini* – sun-dried tomato with goat cheese, wild boar salami, truffled *pecorino* (sheep's milk cheese) and rocket etc – freshly filled as you order. Wash your choice down with a shot, glass or beaker of wine – it's the perfect pavement lunch.

**La Canova di Gustavino** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 239 98 06; Via della Condotta 29r; meals €24; ☎ noon-midnight) The rear dining room of this atmospheric *enoteca* (wine bar) is lined with shelves full of Tuscan wine – the perfect accompaniment to a bowl of soup, pasta dish or hearty main. The emphasis here is on Tuscan classics – *ribollita*, *trippa alla fiorentina*, *baccalà alla livornese* (salted cod in a tomato sauce) – but it's perfectly fine if you choose to limit yourself to a simple cheese and meat platter or a bruschetta.

**Coquinarius** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 230 21 53; [www.coquinarius.com](http://www.coquinarius.com); Via delle Oche 15r; meals €32; ☎ noon-10.30pm) Nestled within the shadow of the Duomo, this *enoteca* is extremely popular with tourists, who respond well to its casually stylish decor and friendly vibe. The menu ranges from salads and crostini (a huge choice of both) to an unusual array of pastas – try the justly famous ravioli with cheese and pear. Bookings essential.

# Santa Maria Novella

## MIDRANGE

**Osteria dei Centopoveri** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 88 46; Via Palazzuolo 31r; meals €32, set menu €28; 🍴 lunch & dinner) The ‘hostel of the hundred poor people’ is far from being a soup kitchen. Instead, it’s a modern dining option serving creative variations on traditional Tuscan cuisine. Choose from decent pizzas, excellent pasta (the lasagnette of fresh porcini mushrooms is delicious) and a range of daily specials.

**Il Latini** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 09 16; [www.illatini.com](http://www.illatini.com); Via dei Palchetti 6r; meals €42; 🍴 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) You have two choices at this Florentine favourite: request a menu (as a tourist, you might not be offered one) or put yourself in the hands of the exuberant waiters and feast on a mixed antipasto of melt-in-your-mouth crostini and mixed Tuscan meats followed by a bowl of (indifferent) pasta and a hunk of roasted meat – rabbit, lamb, chicken or veal with white beans (the rabbit is particularly tasty). The wine and water flow and if you’re lucky you might get a complimentary plate of *cantuccini* (a type of biscuit) and glass of moscato (an Italian dessert wine) with the bill. There are two dinner seatings (7.30pm and 9pm), seating is shared and bookings are mandatory.

**our pick L’Osteria di Giovanni** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 48 97; Via del Moro 22; meals €49; 🍴 lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Our number-one choice for Florentine dining is – insert drum roll – this wonderfully friendly neighbourhood eatery, where everything is delicious and where the final reckoning will be within most budgets. Many opt to start with the house antipasto (a plate of salami, fresh ricotta and crostini with liver pâté) and *lardo* (marinated pork fat), move onto a plate of homemade pasta (perhaps with porcini mushrooms and black truffles) and then forge ahead with a milk-fed veal chop with roasted cherry tomatoes or a sensational *bistecca alla fiorentina*. Make sure you ask about daily specials, particularly desserts.

## TOP END

**Cantinetta Antinori** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 22 34; Via de’ Tornabuoni 7; meals €60; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) This *enoteca* is a 1960s creation of the city’s most famous wine-making dynasty ([www.antinori.it](http://www.antinori.it)). Located in a *palazzo* dating from 1502, it’s a *molto simpatico* spot to sample fine wine accompanied by classic Tuscan cuisine. You can pull up a bar stool and enjoy a glass of wine (the Cabernet Sauvignon—dominated Solaia and Marchese Antinori Chianti Classico DOCG Riserva are particularly highly regarded) with a cheese plate, or colonise a table and order from a limited but alluring menu.

# San Lorenzo

## BUDGET

**Nerbone** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 99 49; Mercato Centrale, Piazza del Mercato Centrale; primi/secondi €4/7; 🍴 7am-2pm Mon-Sat) This unpretentious market stall has been serving its rustic dishes to queues of shoppers and stallholders since 1872. It’s a great place to try local staples such as *trippa alla fiorentina* and *panini con bollito* (a boiled beef bun).

**Trattoria Mario** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 85 50; [www.trattoriamario.com](http://www.trattoriamario.com); Via Rosina 2; meals €22; 🍴 noon-3.30pm Mon-Sat, closed 3 weeks Aug) Despite being in every guidebook, this jam-packed place retains its soul and allure with locals. A 100% family affair since opening in 1953, its chefs shop at the nearby Mercato Centrale and dish up tasty, dirt-cheap dishes with speed and skill. Get here right on the dot of noon to score a stool (tables are shared) and be aware that credit cards aren’t accepted.

## MIDRANGE

**Ristorante Le Fonticine** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 21 06; [www.lefonticine.com](http://www.lefonticine.com); Via Nazionale 79r; meals €37; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Named for the 16th-century fountain by Luca della Robbia that is just to the right of the entrance, this popular eatery features the same checked tablecloths, painting-filled walls, serving trollies and – dare we say it – waiters that have been here since it opened in 1959. The huge menu features excellent homemade pasta and the best *crema di mascarpone* (mascarpone cream) in town.

## San Marco

### BUDGET

**La Mescita** ([Map](#); Via degli Alfani 70r; plates €4-7, panini €1.60-3.50; ☎ 10.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Part *enoteca* and part *fiaschetteria* (simple wine bar), this unapologetically old-fashioned place (it opened in 1927) serves up Tuscan specialities such as maccheroni with sausage and *insalata di farro* (farro salad). Noontime tipplers and all-day drinkers mingle at the old marble-topped bar, where you'll find tasty *panini* and *crostini* to go with the daily pouring of Chianti.

### MIDRANGE

**Accademia Ristorante** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 73 43; [www.ristoranteaccademia.it](http://www.ristoranteaccademia.it); Piazza San Marco 7r; meals €32; ☎ lunch & dinner) There aren't too many decent eateries in this area, which is one of the reasons why this family-run restaurant is perennially packed. Factors such as friendly staff, cheerful decor and consistently good food help, too. The set menu of *antipasto toscana*, a raviolo with porcini mushrooms or truffles, spaghetti in a spicy sauce, and *bistecca alla fiorentina* with oven-roasted potatoes (€30) is excellent value.

## Santa Croce

### BUDGET

**Il Pizzaiuolo** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 24 11 71; Via dei Macci 113r; pizzas €5-10, pastas €6.50-12; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Nearby Piazza Sant' Ambrogio is a popular drinking spot for young Florentines, who often kick on here to nosh on Neapolitan thick-crust pizzas hot from the wood-fired oven. Simplicity is the rule of thumb, from the name ('The Pizza Maker') to the house speciality, *pizza Margherita* (pizza with tomato, mozzarella and oregano). Bookings are essential for dinner (and even then you'll probably have to queue).

### MIDRANGE

**Ristorante del Fagioli** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 24 42 85; Corso Tintori 47r; meals €25; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri) This Slow Food favourite near the Basilica di Santa Croce is the archetypical Tuscan trattoria. It opened in 1966 and has been serving well-priced bean dishes, soups and roasted meats to throngs of appreciative local workers and residents ever since. Try the oven-roasted pork, any of the soups or the *involtini di Gigi* (pan-fried beef slices stuffed with cheese, ham and artichokes). No credit cards.

**Antico Noè** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 234 08 38; Volta di San Piero 6r; meals €26; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) Don't be put off by the dank, rough-and-ready alley in which this legendary place (an old butcher's shop with white marble-clad walls and wrought-iron meat hooks) is found. The drunks loitering outside are generally harmless and the down-to-earth Tuscan fodder served in the *osteria* (wine bar serving some food) is a real joy. For a quick bite, choose from the 18 different types of imaginatively stuffed *panini* (€2.50 to €5) served at the adjoining *fiaschetteria*. No credit cards.

**Caffè Italiano Sud** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 93 68; Via della Vigna Vecchia; meals €30; ☎ 7.30-11pm Tue-Sun)



Chef Umberto Montano's ode to southern Italy brings a breath of fresh air into a local food scene that can suffer from being too inward-looking. Loads of homemade pasta – including unusual dishes from his native Puglia – and other typical dishes from the south can be eaten in or taken away. There are also plenty of vegetarian options (unusual in this meat-obsessed region) and pizzas from Osteria del Caffè Italiano's pizzeria (see below).

**Trattoria Cibrèò** ([Map](#); Via dei Macci 122r; meals €30; ☎ 12.50pm-2.30pm & 6.50-11.15pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jul) Dine here and you'll instantly understand why a queue gathers outside each evening before it opens. Once in, revel in top-notch Tuscan cuisine and personable service. Arrive before 7pm to snag one of the eight tables, and remember: no advance reservations, no credit cards, no pasta and no coffee.

**Ristorante Cibrèò** (☎ 055 234 11 00; Via del Verrocchio 8r; meals €85; ☎ 1-2.30pm & 7-midnight Tue-Sat Sep-Jul) Next door to Trattoria Cibrèò, this place serves some of the best cuisine in Florence, with prices to match.

**Osteria del Caffè Italiano** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 90 20; [www.caffeitaliano.it](http://www.caffeitaliano.it); Via del'Isola delle Stinche 11-13r; meals €42, 5-course set menu €50; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) The menu here holds no surprises – it's full of simple classics such as buffalo mozzarella with parma ham, ravioli stuffed with ricotta and *cavalo nero* (black cabbage) and succulent skewered meats – and the service on our recent visits has been spectacularly bad, but there's still something satisfying about dining in this old-fashioned *osteria* occupying the ground floor of the 14th-century Palazzo Salviati. It's an excellent spot to try the city's famous *bistecca alla fiorentina* (per kg €50).

Next door, the Pizzeria del Caffè Italiano has a simple dining space and offers a limited menu of three types of pizzas – Margherita, Napoli and Marinara.

## The Oltrarno

To taste a different side of Florence, cross the river and make a beeline for the streets around busy Piazza Santo Spirito. The neighbouring quarter of San Frediano hides a couple of gems too.

### BUDGET

**Pop Café** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 38 52; [www.popcafe.net](http://www.popcafe.net); Piazza Santo Spirito 18r; meals €28; ☎ 12.30pm-2am Sep-Jul) Florentine students have adopted this pocket-sized space as their own. Grab a seat and tuck into a super-healthy breakfast, vegetarian buffet lunch (€6 to €8) or Sunday brunch (€8, from 12.30pm to 3pm). There's an all-vegetarian *aperitivo* buffet between 7.30pm and 9.30pm.

**Trattoria La Casalunga** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 86 24; Via de' Michelozzi 9r; meals €20; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Family run and much loved by locals, this unpretentious and always busy place is one of the city's cheapest trattorias. You'll be relegated behind locals in the queue – it's a fact of life and not worth protesting – with the eventual reward being hearty peasant dishes such as *bollito misto con salsa verde* (mixed boiled meats with green sauce).

### MIDRANGE

**Olio & Convivium** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 265 81 98; [www.conviviumfirenze.it](http://www.conviviumfirenze.it), in Italian; Via di Santo Spirito 4; meals €37; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon, 10am-3pm & 5.30-10.30pm Tue-Sat) A key address on any gastronomy agenda: your tastebuds will tingle at the sight of the legs of hams, conserved truffles, wheels of cheese, artisan-made bread and other delectable delicatessen products sold in its shop. You can order a sandwich to go, or take advantage of the bargain lunchtime menu (cold mixed platter, wine, water and dessert for €15). Come dusk, a more sophisticated menu is on offer.

**Ristorante Il Guscio** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 22 44 21; Via dell'Orto 49; meals €39; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) This family-run gem in San Frediano used to be one of the city's best-kept secrets, but recently the local foodie grapevine has been running hot with raves about the exceptional dishes coming out of its kitchen. Meat and fish are given joint billing, with triumphs such as white bean soup with prawns and fish joining superbly executed mains including guinea fowl breast in balsamic vinegar on the sophisticated menu. The lunchtime deal of a daily plate, wine, water and coffee costs a ludicrously low €12.

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## TOP FIVE GELATERIE

Florentines take their gelato seriously. There's a healthy rivalry among the local *gelaterie artigianale* (makers of handmade gelato), who all strive to create the creamiest, most flavourful and freshest product in the city. Flavours change according to what fruit is in season, and a serve costs around €2/3/4/5 for small/medium/large/maxi. After extensive on-the-ground-research, we have narrowed down our favourites:

- **Carabé** ([Map](#); [www.gelatocarabe.com](http://www.gelatocarabe.com); Via Ricasoli 60r; 🕒 10am-midnight, closed mid-Dec—mid-Jan) Traditional Sicilian gelato, granita (sorbet) and brioche (a Sicilian ice-cream sandwich).
  - **Gelateria dei Neri** ([Map](#); Via de' Neri 22r; 🕒 9am-midnight) Semifreddo-style gelato that is cheaper than its competitors; known for its coconut, gorgonzola (yes, you read that correctly), and ricotta and fig flavours.
  - **Gelateria Vivoli** ([Map](#); Via Isola delle Stinche 7; 🕒 9am-1am Tue-Sat) Choose a flavour from the huge variety on offer (both pistachio and chocolate with orange are crowd favourites) and scoff it in the pretty piazza opposite; tubs only.
  - **Grom** ([Map](#); [www.grom.it](http://www.grom.it); cnr Via del Campanile & Via delle Oche; 🕒 10.30am-11pm, till midnight Apr-Sep) This relative newcomer has taken the city by storm; the flavours are all delectable and many ingredients are organic.
  - **Vestri** ([Map](#); [www.vestri.it](http://www.vestri.it); Borgo degli Albizi 11r; 🕒 10.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) Specialises in chocolate; go for the decadent white chocolate with wild strawberries or the chocolate with pepper.
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## Self-Catering

For those looking to self-cater, there are some handy options.

**Mercato Centrale** ([Map](#); Piazza del Mercato Centrale; 🕒 7am-2pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) Central food market inside an iron-and-glass structure dating to 1874.

**Mercato di Sant' Ambrogio** ([Map](#); Piazza Sant' Ambrogio; 🕒 7am-2pm Mon-Sat) Outdoor food market with intimate, local flavour.

**Enoteca Vitae** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 246 65 03; [vitae@email.it](mailto:vitae@email.it); Borgo la Croce 75r; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Fill your water bottle with wine for as little as €2 per litre at this wine shop near Mercato di Sant' Ambrogio.

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## DRINKING

### Cafes

**Caffè Cibrèo** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 234 58 53; Via del Verrochio 5r; ☎ 8-1am Tue-Sat Sep-Jul) This is the perfect spot for a mid-morning coffee and sugar-dusted *ciambella* (doughnut ring) after shopping at the Mercato di Sant' Ambrogio. The light lunches here (served from 1pm to 2.30pm) are also deservedly popular.

**Caffè Giacosa** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 16 56; Via della Spada 10r) Owned by Florentine fashion designer Roberto Cavalli, whose flagship store is located next door, this super-stylish cafe offers good coffee, *panini* and pastries. Be prepared to have your outfit scrutinised by the elegant clientele.

**Chiaroscuro** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 42 47; [www.chiaroscuro.it](http://www.chiaroscuro.it); Via del Corso 36r; ☎ 7.30am-9.30pm) A casual cafe offering excellent coffee and a bustling international vibe.

**La Terrazza** ([Map](#); Piazza della Repubblica 1; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-8pm Sun) For a bird's-eye view of the Duomo and Piazza della Repubblica, visit the rooftop cafe of central department store Rinascente.

**Robiglio** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 45 01; [www.robiglio.it](http://www.robiglio.it); Via de' Servi 112r; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, closed 3 weeks Aug) Conveniently located near the Galleria dell'Accademia and Piazza della SS Annunziata, Robiglio is known for its old-fashioned elegance and delicious pastries and cakes.

## Bars

Like most Italian cities, Florence has wholeheartedly embraced the *aperitivo* trend over the past decade. Many of the bars listed here offer a snack buffet or plate with the price of a drink between 7pm and 9pm.

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## TOP FIVE HISTORIC CAFES

Piazza della Signoria and Piazza della Repubblica are the traditional homes of the city's cafe culture. A key fact to remember: it is substantially cheaper to drink standing up at the bar in these cafes; sit down and prices will be three to four times more expensive (the only exception is Procacci, where everyone orders at the bar and there are only a few tables).

- **Caffè Concerto Paszkowski** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 02 36; [www.paszkowski.com](http://www.paszkowski.com); Piazza della Repubblica 31-35r; ☎ 7-2am Tue-Sun) Born as a brewery overlooking the city's fish market in 1846, this Florentine institution lured the literary set a century ago. Today it pulls a whole gamut of punters with its great cakes and live piano music.
- **Giubbe Rosse** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 22 80; Piazza della Repubblica 13-14r; mains €15; ☎ 8-2am daily) Die-hard members of the early 20th-century Futurist artistic movement drank and debated here. The coffee is good, but the cakes are disappointing.
- **Caffè Gilli** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 38 96; Piazza della Repubblica 3r; ☎ 8-1am Wed-Mon) Utterly delectable cakes, excellent coffee and a beautifully preserved Art Nouveau interior make this the best of Piazza della Repubblica's cafes. Its *millefoglie* (sheets of puff pastry filled with rich vanilla or chocolate chantilly cream) and fresh-fruit tartlets are beyond compare.
- **Rivoire** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 44 12; Piazza della Signoria 4r; ☎ 8am-midnight Tue-Sun) Grab a table on its terrace facing Palazzo Vecchio and settle into a long people-watching session. Tourists and locals have been colonising tables on Rivoire's terrace ever since 1872, when Enrico Rivoire left the service of the Dukes of Savoy and began to seduce Florentines with his exquisite chocolate creations. Go for coffee or *aperitivo*.
- **Procacci** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 16 56; Via de' Tornabuoni 64r; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat) The last remaining bastion of genteel old Florence on Via de' Tornabuoni, this tiny cafe was born in 1885 opposite the

English pharmacy as a delicatessen serving truffles in its repertoire of tasty morsels. Bite-sized *panini tartufati* (truffle pâté rolls, €1.80) remain the thing to order, best accompanied by a glass of *prosecco* (€4.50).

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**Casa del Vino** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 56 09; [www.casadelvino.it](http://www.casadelvino.it); Via dell’Ariento 16r; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, closed Aug) This *enoteca* close to the San Lorenzo Market pours a good range of wines by the glass and offers plenty of rustic *panini* and *crostini* to accompany your drinks. You’ll have to stand or squeeze onto a bench.

**Colle Bereto** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 31 56; Piazza Strozzi 5r; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Sat summer, to 9pm winter) Dark oversized shades are vital at this hip bar, where fashionistas strike poses on a sleek, wood-decked terrace. Inside, pea-green neon and transparent Kartell chairs scream design. It’s owned by a wine estate in Chianti, so *vino* is the tipple of choice.

**JJ Cathedral Pub** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 265 68 92; [www.jjcathedral.com](http://www.jjcathedral.com); Piazza San Giovanni 4r; ☎ 10am-2.30am; 📶) JJ’s is a magnet for foreign students on vacation, who come here to swill beer and admire the views of the Duomo. Try to snaffle the upstairs balcony table.

**La Dolce Vita** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 45 95; [www.dolcevitaflorence.com](http://www.dolcevitaflorence.com); Piazza del Carmine 6r; ☎ 5pm-2am Tue-Sun, closed 2 weeks Aug) Live Brazilian beats or jazz set the mood during *aperitivo* on Wednesdays and Thursdays on the outdoor terrace of this popular bar. Inside, there’s a more intimate feel, with a changing exhibition program and designer decor.

**our pick Le Volpe e L’uva** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 239 81 32; Piazza dei Rossi 1; ☎ 11am-9pm Mon-Sat) Florence’s best *enoteca* – bar none. Just over the Ponte Vecchio, this intimate bar has an impressive list of wines by the glass and serves a delectable array of accompanying antipasti, including juicy *prosciutto di Parma*, *lardo*-topped *crostini* and boutique Tuscan cheeses. There’s a tiny outdoor terrace and a small number of bar stools.

**Moyo** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 247 97 38; [www.moyo.it](http://www.moyo.it); Via de’ Benci 23r; ☎ 6pm-2am; 📶) A drinking establishment held in great esteem by the city’s party-mad student crowd, Moyo also serves American-style breakfasts and light lunches. Come *aperitivo* time, the outdoor seating here is often packed. Wi-fi access is free.

**Negroni** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 24 36 47; [www.negronibar.com](http://www.negronibar.com); Via dei Renai 17r; ☎ 8-2am Mon-Sat, 6.30pm-2am Sun) Negroni shakes up a mean cocktail, including its namesake, made with gin, sweet vermouth and Campari and claimed as the bar’s own invention. The ‘*ethnic l’aperimundo*’ (*aperitivo* buffet featuring foods from different cuisines) pulls in locals galore.

**Plasma** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 051 69 26; [www.virtualplasma.it](http://www.virtualplasma.it); Piazza Ferrucci 1r; ☎ 7pm-2am Wed-Sun) A hip set sips cocktails on Level 0, and gets lost in video art projected on eight 42in plasma screens on Level 1 at this minimalist fiberoptic-lit drinking space. DJs spin till late. Well worth the trek along the Lungarno.

**Mayday Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 238 12 90; [www.maydayclub.it](http://www.maydayclub.it); Via Dante Alighieri 16r; ☎ 8pm-2am Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Not just a bar, this alternative space markets itself as ‘a laboratory and meeting place where it is possible to communicate and interact with open-minded people from other realities and backgrounds’ – we’re not sure whether they’re all from the same planet. It hosts art exhibitions, serves good cocktails and has an eclectic decor.

**Rex Caffè** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 248 03 31; Via Fiesolana 23r; ☎ 6pm-2.30am Sep-May) Gaudy decor, funky

music and expertly concocted cocktails make this American-style bar a long-standing favourite.

**Sei Divino** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 77 91; Borgo Ognissanti 42r; ☎ 8am-2am; 📶) This bar is known for many things – its great wine, mood music, DJs, video projections, wi-fi, no-fuss lunch deal and *aperitivo* spread. Most of the action is on the pavement.

**Slowly Café** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 264 53 54; [www.slowlycafe.com](http://www.slowlycafe.com); Via Porta Rossa 63r; ☎ 9pm-3am Mon-Sat, closed Aug) Sleek and sometimes snooty, this bar is known for its fruit-garnished cocktails, glam interior and Florentine Lotharios. Music is dominated by Ibiza-style lounge tracks.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

Newsstands sell *Firenze Spettacolo* (€1.80; [www.firenzespettacolo.it](http://www.firenzespettacolo.it), in Italian), the city's definitive entertainment publication, which is published monthly. Otherwise, a clutch of freebies, including *The Florentine* ([www.theflorentine.net](http://www.theflorentine.net)), *Informacittà Toscana 24ore* and *Florence Tuscany News* ([www.informacittafirenze.it](http://www.informacittafirenze.it)), list what's on. The city listings in the local edition of *La Repubblica* are also useful.

Tickets for cultural events are sold through **Box Office** ([Map](#); [www.boxol.it](http://www.boxol.it), in Italian; Via Luigi Alamanni 39; ☎ 10am-7.30pm Tue-Fri, 3.30-7.30pm Mon) and **Ticket One** ([www.ticketone.it](http://www.ticketone.it), in Italian).

## Live Music

Most venues for live music are outside the town centre and are closed in July and/or August.

**Loonees** ([Map](#); ☎ 333 1335330; [www.loonees.it](http://www.loonees.it); Via Porta Rossa 15; admission free; ☎ 9pm-3am Mon-Sat, closed Aug) A popular venue for the city's international students, this subterranean club hosts live tribute bands and spins reggae, blues and rock tracks.

**Caruso Jazz Café** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 267 02 07; [www.carusojazzcafe.com](http://www.carusojazzcafe.com); Via Lambertesca 14-16r; ☎ 9.30am-3.30pm & 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Thursday and Friday nights see jazz musicians take the stage at this popular bar.

**Jazz Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 247 97 00; [www.jazzclubfirenze.com](http://www.jazzclubfirenze.com); Via Nuovo de' Caccini 3; membership €8.50; ☎ 9pm-2am Mon-Fri, to 3am Sat, closed Jul & Aug) Live jazz bands play from Tuesday to Saturday; on Mondays there's a free-for-all jam session.

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## A STANDING OVATION...

...is what this stunning dining space and stage created by famous Florentine chef Fabio Picchi and his equally famous comic actress wife, Maria Cassi, gets. Extraordinary value for money and with fabulous entertainment, **Teatro del Sale** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 200 14 92; [www.teatrodelsale.com](http://www.teatrodelsale.com); Via dei Macci 111r; breakfast/lunch/dinner €7/20/30; ☎ 9-11am, 12.30-2.15pm & 7-11pm Tue-Sat Sep-Jul), in an old Florentine theatre, steals the show. Join the club (annual membership fee €5) and make yourself at home in a leather armchair between bookshelves in the cosy wood-panelled library or in a director's chair around fold-up tables in the airy theatre space. Help yourself to water and wine, help yourself to antipasti, then wait for the chef to yell out what's cooking through the glass hatch and queue for a *primo* and *secondo*. *Dolce* (sweets) and coffee are also laid out buffet-style. Lunch is a laid-back affair, while dinner is followed by a performance (advance reservations required) at 9.30pm:

clear away your table, line up your chair and sit back for an evening of drama, music or comedy.

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**Tenax** (off [Map](#); ☎ 055 30 81 60; [www.tenax.org](http://www.tenax.org); Via Pratese 46; admission varies; 🕒 10pm-4am Tue-Sun Oct-Apr) Northwest of town, this is the city's biggest venue for live bands and doubles as a house disco club; check online for details. Take bus 29 or 30 from Stazione di Santa Maria Novella.

## Nightclubs

Florence's tame dance scene grinds to a halt in summer (June to September) when most clubs – bar Central Park and Meccanò Club, which have outdoor dance floors – relocate to the Versilian coast. Admission is often more expensive for males than females and is sometimes free if you arrive early (between 9.30pm and 11pm).

**Central Park** ([Map](#); ☎ 380 344 49 56; Via Fosso Macinante 1; admission varies; 🕒 11pm-4am Wed-Sat) Flit between five different dance floors in city park Parco delle Cascine, where everything from Latin to pop, house to drum and bass plays – many a top Ibiza DJ has spun tunes here. From May the dance floor moves outside beneath the stars.

**Disco Club YAB** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 215160; [www.yab.it](http://www.yab.it), in Italian; Via de' Sassetti 5r; admission free Mon, Tue & Thu, €15 incl 1 drink Fri & Sat; 🕒 9pm-4am, closed Jun-Sep) It's been around since the 1970s, but You Are Beautiful remains a hit with locals and visiting students alike. Smoove on Monday is the hottest hip-hop/R&B night in town; Saturdays are always packed.

**Meccanò Club** ([Map](#); ☎ 380 3444956; Viale degli Olmi 10; admission varies; 🕒 11pm-5am Tue-Sat) Flo's other big-crowd disco, also in the city park, touts three dance spaces spinning house, funk and standard commercial music to a mainstream youthful set.

**Tabasco Disco Gay** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 30 00; [www.tabascogay.it](http://www.tabascogay.it), in Italian; Piazza Santa Cecilia 3; 🕒 10.30pm-late Tue-Sun) The city's most popular gay club welcomes both sexes and is still going strong after nearly four decades.

## Cinemas

Few cinemas screen subtitled films (*versione originale*). The centrally located **Odeon Cinehall** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 50 51; [www.cinehall.it](http://www.cinehall.it); Piazza Strozzi 2) is the notable exception.

## Theatre, Classical Music & Dance

The month of July sees the Festival Firenze Classica, when Florence's highly regarded **Orchestra da Camera Toscana** ([www.orcafi.it](http://www.orcafi.it)) performs classical music in the atmospheric settings of the Oratorio di San Michele a Castello and [Palazzo Strozzi](#); between April and October, the orchestra performs in the Chiesa di [Orsanmichele](#) and in the courtyard of the Museo del [Bargello](#).

**Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino** ([Map](#); ☎ information & credit-card bookings 055 27 793 50, bookings 055 28 72 22; [www.maggiofiorentino.com](http://www.maggiofiorentino.com); Corso Italia 16) The curtain rises on opera, classical concerts and ballet at this lovely theatre, host to the **Maggio Musicale Fiorentina** ([www.maggiofiorentino.com](http://www.maggiofiorentino.com)), an international concert festival held between late April and June.

**Teatro Verdi** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 23 20; [www.teatroverdifirenze.it](http://www.teatroverdifirenze.it); Via Ghibellina 99) Hosts drama, opera, concerts and dance.

**Teatro della Pergola** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 2 26 41; [www.teatrodellapergola.com](http://www.teatrodellapergola.com), in Italian; Via della Pergola 18) Beautiful city theatre with stunning entrance that hosts classical concerts organised by the **Amici della**

## SHOPPING

Tacky mass-produced souvenirs are everywhere, but serious shoppers don't have to look far to identify the top-quality leather goods, jewellery, hand-embroidered linens, designer fashion, natural pharmaceuticals, handmade paper, wine and gourmet foods that Florence is famous for.

For a useful and authoritative guide to the city's fashion ateliers, go to [www.florenceartfashion.com](http://www.florenceartfashion.com), a website put together by the City of Florence's Department of Tourism and Fashion. It lists fashion (men's, women's and children's), jewellery, footwear, leatherwear, textiles and perfume ateliers; shows their locations on maps; and advertises occasional free guided tours in its 'news' section.

## Fashion

Designer fashion boutiques strut their stuff along Via de' Tornabuoni, Via della Vigna Nuova and Via Strozzi. Via Roma, Via de' Calzaiuoli, Via Porta Rossa and Via Por Santa Maria also host plenty of shops liable to lure cash and credit cards out of your wallet.

The tourist office has a list of designer outlet stores selling last season's collections at discounted prices, including **The Mall** (☎ 055 865 77 75; [www.themall.it](http://www.themall.it); Via Europa 8, Leccio; ☎ 10am-7pm), 35km from Florence; and the **Barberino Designer Outlet** (☎ 055 84 21 61; [www.barberino.mcarthurglen.it](http://www.barberino.mcarthurglen.it); A1 Florence-Bologna; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue-Fri, to 9pm Sat & Sun, 2-8pm Mon Jan, Jun-Sep & Dec), 40km north of the city in Barberino di Mugello.

Buses to The Mall (€3.10, four daily on weekdays, two daily on weekends) leave from the SITA bus station; check the timetable for details of return services (12.45pm and 7.05pm daily plus 4pm Monday to Saturday at the time of research). To get to Barberino, take an outlet shuttle bus (return €12) leaving from Fortezza da Basso and Piazza Stazione in Florence at 10am daily and returning at 1.30pm.

## Markets

Piazza Santo Spirito hosts an antique/flea market from 8am to 6pm on the second Sunday of each month; and a food, wine and locally produced gift market on the third Sunday of the month.

**Mercato de San Lorenzo** ([Map](#); Piazza San Lorenzo; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Leather, clothing and jewellery of varying quality on and around Piazza San Lorenzo.

**Mercato dei Pulci** ([Map](#); Piazza dei Ciompi; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) A flea market.

**Mercato Nuovo** ([Map](#); Loggia Mercato Nuovo; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Tourist kitsch and leather.

## Specialist Shops

Via de' Gondi and Borgo de' Greci, east of Piazza della Signoria, seethe with leather shops selling jackets, trousers, shoes and bags, as do the street markets (above). Otherwise, try Scuola del Cuoio, adjoining the Basilica di Santa Croce ([Map](#)).

For paper products, go to **Pineider** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 46 55; [www.pineider.com](http://www.pineider.com); Piazza della Signoria 13-14r) or **Alberto Cozzi** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 49 68; Via del Parione 35r; ☎ Mon-Fri).

For jewellery, head to **Alessandro Dari** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 24 47 47; [www.alessandrodari.com](http://www.alessandrodari.com); Via San

Niccolò 115r) and for natural pharmaceuticals and perfumes go to **Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella** or **Officina de' Tornabuoni** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 10 06; [www.officinadetornabuoni.com](http://www.officinadetornabuoni.com); Via de' Tornabuoni 19, ☎ Mon afternoon-Sun).

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

**Amerigo Vespucci Airport** (FLR; ☎ 055 306 13 00; [www.aeroporto.firenze.it](http://www.aeroporto.firenze.it)), 5km northwest of the city centre, caters for domestic and a handful of European flights. The much larger **Pisa International Airport Galileo Galilei** (☎ 050 84 93 00; [www.pisa-airport.com](http://www.pisa-airport.com)) is one of northern Italy's main international and domestic airports. It is closer to [Pisa](#), but is well linked with Florence by public transport ([Click here](#)).

### Bus

From the **SITA bus station** ([Map](#); ☎ 800 3737 60; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian; Via Santa Caterina da Siena 17r; ☎ information office 8.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat), just west of Piazza della Stazione, there are *corse rapide* (express services) to/from Siena (€6.80, 1¼ hours, at least hourly between 6.10am and 9.15pm). To get to San Gimignano (€6) you need to go to Poggibonsi (50 minutes, at least hourly between 6.10am and 7.50pm) and catch a connecting service (30 minutes, at least hourly between 6.05am and 8.35pm). Direct buses also serve Castellina in Chianti, Greve in Chianti and other smaller cities throughout Tuscany.

**Vaubus** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 21 51 55; [www.vaibus.it](http://www.vaibus.it), in Italian; Piazza della Stazione) and its partner buslines runs buses to/from Pistoia (€3, 50 minutes, four daily), Lucca (€5.10, 1½ hours, frequent) and Pisa (€6.10, two hours, hourly).

### Car & Motorcycle

Florence is connected by the A1 northwards to Bologna and Milan, and southwards to Rome and Naples. The Autostrada del Mare (A11) links Florence with Prato, Lucca, Pisa and the coast, but locals use the FI-PI-LI – a *superstrada* (expressway, no tolls); look for blue signs saying FI-PI-LI (as in Firenze—Pisa—Livorno). Another dual carriageway, the S2, links Florence with Siena.

### Train

Florence's central train station is **Stazione di Santa Maria Novella** ([Map](#); Piazza della Stazione). The **information counter** (☎ 7am-7pm) faces the tracks in the main foyer, as does Consorzio ITA (signposted Informazioni Turistiche Alberghiere), which sells tickets for shuttle buses to/from Pisa airport and for guided tours.

Florence is on the Rome—Milan line. There are regular trains to/from Rome (€16 to €40, 1¾ to 3¾ hours), Bologna (€5.40 to €24.70, one hour to 1¾ hours), Milan (€22.50 to €44.70, 2¼ to 3½ hours) and Venice (€19 to €53.20, 2¾ to 4½ hours).

Frequent regional trains run to Pistoia (€3, 50 minutes to one hour, four daily), Pisa (€5.60 to €11.40, one to 1½ hours, frequent) and Lucca (€5, 1½ to 1¾ hours, half-hourly).

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# GETTING AROUND

## To/From the Airport

A **Volainbus shuttle** (one-way/return €5/8, 25min) travels between Amerigo Vespucci Airport and Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station/SITA bus station every 30 minutes between 6am and 11.30pm.

**Terravision** ([Map](#); [www.terravision.eu](http://www.terravision.eu)) runs services (adult single/return €10/16, child €5/9, 70 minutes, up to 13 daily) between the bus stop outside Florence's Stazione di Santa Maria Novella (Via Alamanni) and Pisa International Airport Galileo Galilei. In Florence get tickets at the Consorzio ITA in the train station and at the **Terravision desk** ([Map](#); Via Alamanni 9r; ☎ 6am-7pm) inside Deanna Bar opposite the Terravision bus stop; at Pisa airport, the Terravision ticket desk is in the arrival hall.

Regular trains link Florence's Stazione di Santa Maria Novella with Pisa International Airport Galileo Galilei (€5.60, 1½ hours, at least hourly from 4.30am to 10.25pm).

A taxi between Amerigo Vespucci Airport and central Florence costs a flat rate of €20, plus surcharges of €2 on Sundays and holidays, €3.30 between 10pm and 6am and €1 per bag. As you exit the terminal building, turn right and you will come to the taxi rank.

## Bicycle

Bike-tour operator **Florence by Bike** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 48 89 92; [www.florencebybike](http://www.florencebybike); Via San Zanobi 120r; ☎ 9am-7.30pm) rents wheels (city bike €14.50 per day, scooter €68 per day), as does the open-air rental outlet **Biciclette a Noleggio** ([Map](#); Piazza della Stazione; per hr/day €1.50/8; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Sun May-Sep, reduced hr Oct-Apr), in front of Stazione di Santa Maria Novella.

## Car & Motorcycle

Most traffic is banned from the historic centre. See the boxed text below for details.

There is free street parking around Piazzale Michelangelo (park within blue lines; white lines are for residents only). Pricy (€18 per day) underground parking can be found in the area around the Fortezza da Basso ([Map](#)) and in the Oltrarno beneath Piazzale di Porta Romana ([Map](#)). Otherwise, many hotels can arrange parking for guests.

Car-rental agencies include the following:

**Avis** ([Map](#); ☎ 199 10 01 33; Borgo Ognissanti 128r)

**Europcar** ([Map](#); ☎ 055 29 04 38; Borgo Ognissanti 53-57r)

**Hertz** ([Map](#); ☎ 199 11 22 11; Via Maso Finiguerra 33r)

## Public Transport

**ATAF** (Azienda Trasporti Area Fiorentina; [Map](#); ☎ 800 42 4500; [www.ataf.net](http://www.ataf.net), in Italian) buses and electric *bussini* (minibuses) serve the city and its periphery. Most – including bus 7 to Fiesole and bus 13 to Piazzale Michelangelo – start/terminate at the ATAF bus stops opposite the southeastern exit of Stazione di Santa Maria Novella.

Tickets cost €1.20 (€2 on board) and are sold at the **ATAF ticket & information office** ([Map](#); Piazza Adua; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat), next to the bus stops outside the train station. A carnet

of 10/21 tickets costs €10/20, a *biglietto multiplo* (four-journey ticket) is €4.50 and a one-/three-day pass is €5/12. Passengers caught travelling without a time-stamped ticket (punch it on board) are fined €40.

## Taxi

For a taxi call ☎ 055 42 42 or ☎ 055 43 90.

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# AROUND FLORENCE

## FIESOLE

pop 14,119

This bijou village perched in hills 9km northeast of Florence is the city's traditional getaway. Its cooler air, olive groves, scattering of Renaissance-styled villas and spectacular views of the plain below have seduced for centuries (victims include Boccaccio, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein and Frank Lloyd Wright) – and still do.

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## WARNING

There is a closely monitored Limited Traffic Zone (Zona Traffico Limitato; ZTL) in Florence's historic centre between 7.30am and 7.30pm Monday to Friday and 7.30am to 6pm Saturday for all nonresidents. The exclusion also applies on Friday, Saturday and Sunday between midnight and 4am mid-May to the end of October.

If you transgress, a fine of around €150 will be sent to you (or the car-hire company you have used). Many travellers have written to us to complain about credit-card charges from car-hire companies being levied months after their unknowing infraction of the ZTL occurred, often with administrative costs of up to €100 added to the fine. For a map of the ZTL, go to [www.comune.fi.it/opencms/export/sites/reteCivica/materiali/turismo/ztlnov.JPG](http://www.comune.fi.it/opencms/export/sites/reteCivica/materiali/turismo/ztlnov.JPG).

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The **tourist office** (☎ 055 597 83 73; [www.comune.fiesole.fi.it](http://www.comune.fiesole.fi.it), in Italian; Via Portigiani 3; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Nov-Feb) is just off the main square, a couple of doors down from the archaeological site. It can supply maps and information about walks in the area.

## Sights & Activities

Make the **Area Archeologica** (☎ 055 5 94 77; [www.fiesolemusei.it](http://www.fiesolemusei.it); Via Portigiani 1; adult/child under 6yr/concession €12/free/8; ☎ 10am-7pm Wed-Mon Apr-Sep, to 6pm Wed-Mon Oct & Mar, to 4pm Thu-Mon Nov-Feb) your first stop. A pretty spot to stroll, the archaeological area ensnares an Etruscan temple (Fiesole was founded in the 7th century BC by the Etruscans), Roman baths, an archaeological museum with exhibits from the Bronze Age to the Roman period, and a 1st-century-BC Roman theatre where live music and theatre is performed during the **Estate Fiesolana** (held June to August) and **Vivere Jazz Festival** ([www.viverejazz.it](http://www.viverejazz.it); ☎ mid-July).

Your ticket to the Area Archeologica also gives admission to the tiny **Museo Bandini** (☎ 055 5 94 77;

Via Dupré; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-6pm Oct & Mar, 10am-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Dec, 11am-5pm Thu-Mon Jan & Feb) next door. The collection of early Tuscan Renaissance works inside includes fine medallions by Giovanni della Robbia (c 1505–20) and Taddeo Gaddi's luminous *Annunciation* (1340–45).

From the museum, a 300m walk along Via Dupré will bring you to the **Museo Primo Conti** (☎ 055 59 70 95; [www.fondazioneprimoconti.org](http://www.fondazioneprimoconti.org); Via Dupré 18; admission €3; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm Mon-Sat), where the eponymous avant-garde 20th-century artist lived and worked. The views from the garden here are lovely, and there are more than 60 of his paintings inside. Ring to enter.

Backtrack to Piazza Mino di Fiesole, presided over by the **Cattedrale di San Romolo** (Piazza della Cattedrale 1; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 3-5pm), and make your way up steep Via San Francesco. Your reward will be staggeringly beautiful views of Florence from a terrace next to the 15th-century **Basilica di Sant' Alessandro**, which hosts temporary exhibitions and has irregular opening hours. Further up the hill, you can also visit the 14th-century **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Campeggio Panoramico** (☎ 055 59 90 69; [www.florencecamping.com](http://www.florencecamping.com); Via Peramonda 1; camping per person €9-10 plus €12-15 site cost; 🚻 🚰) Larger and cooler than the camp sites in Florence and with panoramic views of the city. It offers laundry and kitchen facilities, and its mini-mart, cafe and restaurant operate between April and October.

**Villa Aurora** (☎ 055 5 93 63; [www.villaaurora.net](http://www.villaaurora.net); Piazza Mino da Fiesole 39; s €135-185, d €120-245; 🚻 🚰 🚰) Built right on the main square in 1860, Villa Aurora offers relatively bland standard rooms and far more impressive deluxe rooms featuring original frescoes – one has a spectacular panoramic view of Florence from its private balcony. The same view is enjoyed from the pagoda-covered terrace, where guests dine in style during the summer months.

**Ristorante La Reggia degli Etruschi** (☎ 055 5 93 85; [www.lareggia.org](http://www.lareggia.org); Via San Francesco; meals €37; ☎ 11am-3pm & 6-11pm) The cuisine – which features dishes such as homemade *tagliatelle* with guinea-hen sauce or risotto with porcini mushrooms and local *pecorino* – plays second fiddle to a stunning view at this terrace restaurant tucked up high in an old stone wall. If you don't feel like a large meal, platters of cheese or salami (€10 to €12) are available. On weekends, bookings are essential.

**Trattoria Le Cave di Maiano** (☎ 055 5 91 33; [www.trattoriacavedimaiano.it](http://www.trattoriacavedimaiano.it); Via Cave di Maiano 16, Maiano; meals €36; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Mon winter) Florentines adore this terrace restaurant in Maiano, a neighbouring village five minutes from Fiesole by car, and flock here every fine weekend to enjoy leisurely lunches on the outdoor terrace. The food here is memorable – huge servings are the rule of thumb and everything is home-made, with pastas and vegetable dishes being particularly impressive. A taxi from Fiesole costs approximately €9 and the trip back will be double that (the meter starts ticking when the taxi leaves its base in Fiesole to collect you).

## Getting There & Away

Take ATAF bus 7 (€1.20, 30 minutes) from Florence. If you want to be sure of a seat, it's best to get on the bus at Piazza dell'Unità Italiana, one stop east of Stazione di Santa Maria Novella. The bus travels via the station and Piazza San Marco, winds its way up the hilly and winding road to Fiesole and terminates at Piazza Mino da Fiesole. If you're driving, Fiesole is signed from Florence's Piazza della Libertà, north of the cathedral.

## NORTHERN & WESTERN TUSCANY

Travel through this part of Tuscany, and you will be left with a true understanding of what the term ‘slow travel’ really means. Lingering over lunches of rustic regional specialities swiftly becomes the norm, as do activities such as meandering through medieval hill-top villages, taking leisurely bike rides along a coastal wine trail with spectacular scenery or trekking an island where Napoleon was once exiled. Even the larger towns here – including the university hub of Pisa and ‘love at first sight’ Lucca – have an air of tranquillity and tradition about them that positively begs the traveller to stay for a few days of cultural R&R.

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### PISTOIA

pop 89,418

Pleasant Pistoia sits snugly at the foot of the Apennines. As little as 45 minutes northwest of Florence by train, it deserves more attention than it normally gets. Although it has grown well beyond its medieval ramparts, its historic centre is well preserved and extremely pedestrian-friendly.

On Wednesday and Saturday mornings, the main square Piazza del Duomo and its surrounding streets become a sea of blue awnings and jostling shoppers as Pistoia hosts a lively **market**. The town’s **produce market** (📅 Mon-Sat) occupies Piazza della Sala, west of the cathedral.

On 25 July each year, a medieval equestrian and jousting festival known as **Giostra dell’Orso** (Joust of the Bear) fills Piazza del Duomo in honour of Pistoia’s patron saint, San Giacomo.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0573 2 16 22; [www.pistoia.turismo.toscana.it](http://www.pistoia.turismo.toscana.it), in Italian; cnr Piazza del Duomo & Via della Torre; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm) supplies maps, brochures and advice.

### Sights

Pistoia’s visual wealth is concentrated on Piazza del Duomo – and is reason alone to visit this humble city. The Pisan-Romanesque facade of **Cattedrale di San Zeno** (☎ 0573 2 50 95; Piazza del Duomo; 🕒 8.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm) boasts a lunette of *Madonna col Bambino Fra Due Angeli* (Madonna and Child Between Two Angels) by Andrea della Robbia. The cathedral’s other highlight – the silver **Dossale di San Giacomo** (Altarpiece of St James; adult/child €4/2), begun in 1287 and finished off by Brunelleschi two centuries later – is in the gloomy **Cappella di San Jacopo** off the north aisle.

Next to the cathedral is the **Museo Rospigliosi e Museo Diocesano** (adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 guided tours 10am, 11.30am & 3pm Mon, Wed & Fri), guardian of a wealth of artefacts that were discovered during restoration work of this former bishop’s palace. Many treasures from the cathedral’s collection are also on show here, including a 15th-century reliquary by Lorenzo Ghiberti supposedly housing a bone of St James and parts of his mother’s and the Virgin’s pelvic bones. Visits are strictly by guided tour (1½ hours).

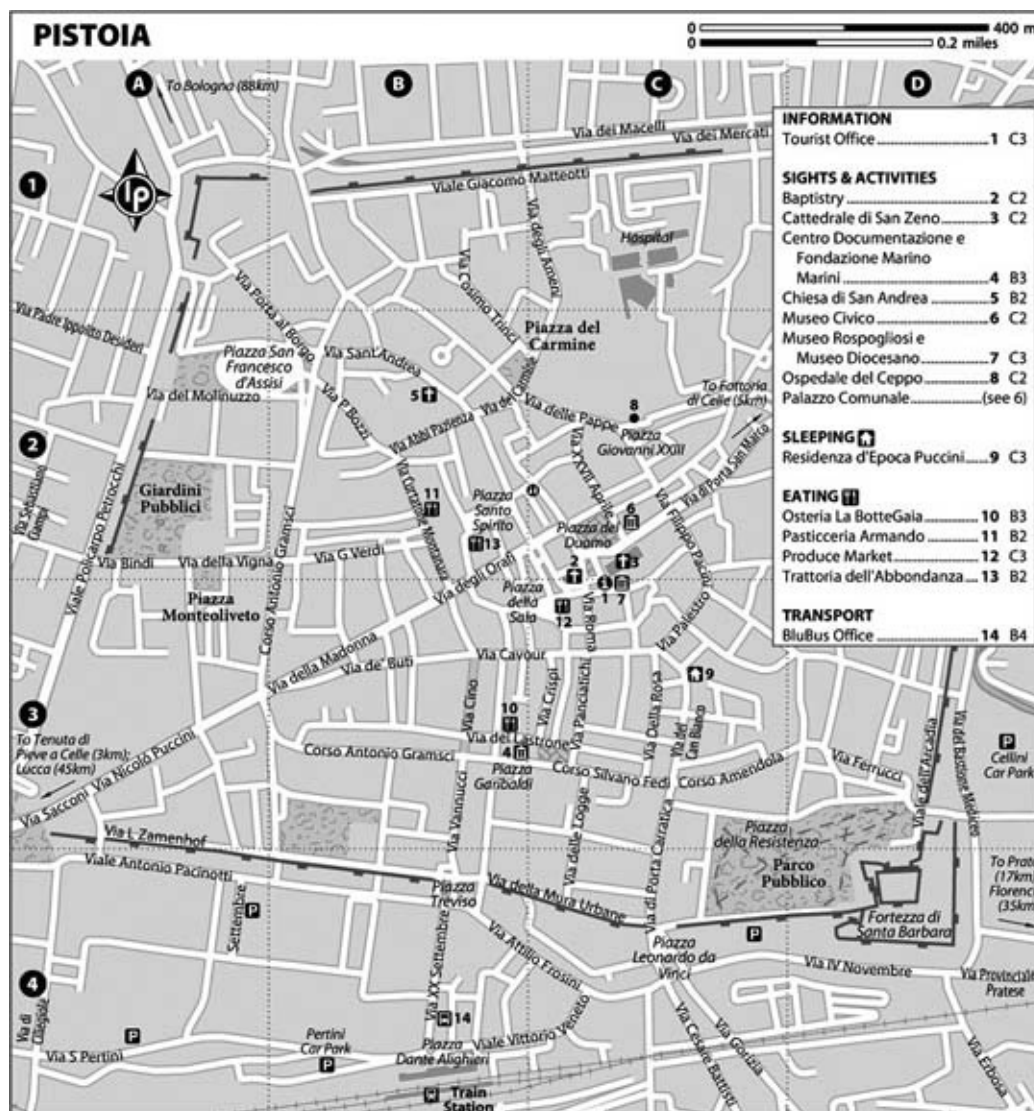
Across Via Roma is the 14th-century octagonal **baptistry** (Piazza del Duomo; admission free; 🕒 uncertain, check with tourist office), elegantly banded in green-and-white marble to a design by Andrea Pisano. An ornate square marble font and soaring dome enliven the otherwise bare, red-brick interior.

The Gothic **Palazzo Comunale** on the eastern flank of the square is home to the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0573 37 12 96; [www.comune.pistoia.it/museocivico](http://www.comune.pistoia.it/museocivico), in Italian; Piazza del Duomo 1; adult/concession €3.50/2; 🕒 10am-5pm or 6pm Tue & Thu-Sat, 3-6pm or 7pm Wed, 11am-5pm or 6pm Sun), with works by Tuscan artists from the 13th to 20th centuries. Don't miss Bernardino di Antonio Detti's *Madonna della Pergola* (1498), with its extraordinarily modern treatment of St James, the Madonna and Baby Jesus; look for the mosquito on Jesus' arm.

The portico of the nearby **Ospedale del Ceppo** (Piazza Giovanni XXIII), with its detailed 16th-century polychrome terracotta frieze by Giovanni della Robbia, will stop even the most monument-weary in their tracks. It depicts the *Sette Opere di Misericordia* (Seven Works of Mercy), while the five medallions represent the *Virtù Teologali* (Theological Virtues), including a beautiful Annunciation.

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

When in Pistoia, consider purchasing a **cumulative ticket** (€6.50), which gives entrance to the Museo Civico, the Museo Rospigliosi e Museo Diocesano and the Centro Documentazione e Fondazione Marino Marini. You can purchase it at the tourist office or any of these museums.



The 12th-century **Chiesa di San Andrea** (☎ 0573 2 1912; Via San Andrea; 🕒 8.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm) was built outside the original city walls, which explains its windowless state (it needed to be fortified). The facade is enlivened by a relief of the *Journey and Adoration of the Magi* (1166) and

inside there is a magnificent marble pulpit carved by Giovanni Pisano between 1298–1301.

A short distance and a half-millennium away is the **Centro Documentazione e Fondazione Marino Marini** (☎ 0573 3 02 85; [www.fondazionemarinomarini.it](http://www.fondazionemarinomarini.it); Corso Silvano Fedi; adult/concession €3.50/2; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat), a museum-gallery devoted to Pistoia's most famous modern son, the eponymous sculptor and painter (1901–80).

## Sleeping & Eating

If you're looking for a place to eat or drink, Via del Lastrone is the street to prowl.

**Residenza d'Epoca Puccini** (☎ 0573 2 67 07; [www.puccini.tv](http://www.puccini.tv); Vicolo Malconsiglio 4; s/d/tr €80/120/140; 📞 📺 📺) Ten spacious rooms with stylish modern fittings are on offer at this recently renovated hotel, occupying an old *palazzo* close to the Duomo. Some have original frescoes and all come with mod cons such as satellite TV.

**Tenuta di Pieve a Celle** (☎ 0573 91 30 87; [www.tenutadipieveacelle.it](http://www.tenutadipieveacelle.it); Via di Pieve a Celle 158; r €110-130; 📞 📺 📺) You'll find this peaceful 1850s country house in the hills 3km outside Pistoia. Set in expansive gardens, it offers five pretty bedrooms and elegant common areas. There's a lovely swimming pool and host Fiorenza will cook meals on request using produce from the estate's organic vegetable gardens.

**Pasticceria Armando** (☎ 0573 2 31 28; Via Curtatone Montanara 38; 🕒 6.30am-1pm & 3-8.30pm Tue-Fri, to 8pm Sat & Sun) Pistoia's best cafe-bar has been plying appreciative locals with delicious cakes, cocktails and coffees since 1947.

**Trattoria dell'Abbondanza** (☎ 0573 36 80 37; Via dell'Abbondanza 10; meals €22; 🕒 lunch & dinner Fri-Tue, dinner Thu) Ask a local where they eat and the answer will often be this unassuming place behind the Duomo. The simple Tuscan dishes on its menu are extremely well priced and absolutely delicious. Choose between indoor or outdoor tables.

**Osteria La BotteGaia** (☎ 0573 36 56 02; [www.labottegaia.it](http://www.labottegaia.it); Via del Lastrone 17; meals €27; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Sun & Mon) Dishes range from the staunchly traditional to experimental at this Slow Food—hailed *osteria*, known for its finely butchered cured meats and interesting wine list.

## Getting There & Around

Trains link Pistoia with Florence (€3, 50 minutes, four daily), Lucca (€3.50, 45 minutes to one hour, half-hourly) and Pisa (€4.50 to €6.50, 1¼ hours, one daily or change at Lucca).

**BluBus/Vaibus** (☎ 800 570530, [www.blubus.it](http://www.blubus.it)) services connect Pistoia with Florence (€3, four daily) and local towns in Tuscany; buy tickets at the **ticket office** (☎ 0573 36 32 43; Via XX Settembre 71; 🕒 6.15am-8.15pm Mon-Sat, 7am-8.10pm Sun) opposite the train station.

Local buses 1 and 10 (€1) connect the train station with the cathedral, but it's easier to walk (15 minutes).

The city is on the A11 and the SS64 and SS66, which head northeast for Bologna and northwest for Parma, respectively.

Most hotels provide motoring guests with a pass ensuring free street parking in the centre; otherwise there is free parking in the Cellini car park on the city's eastern edge and cheap parking (€1 per day) at the Pertini car park near the train station.

# LUCCA

pop 83,228

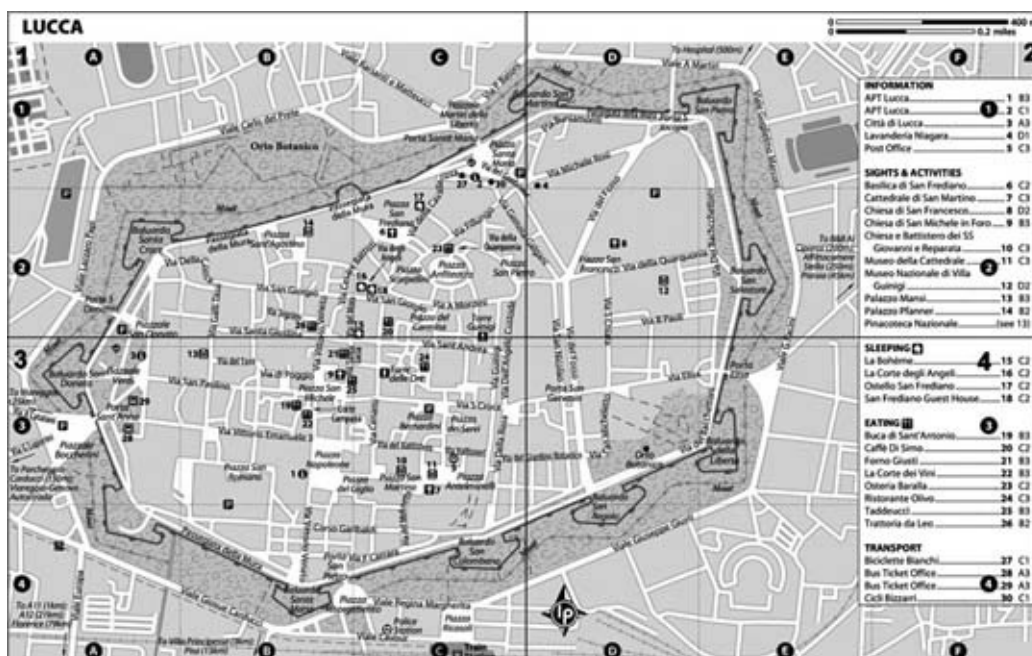
This beautiful old city elicits love at first sight with its rich history, handsome churches and excellent restaurants. Hidden behind imposing Renaissance walls, it is an essential stopover on any Tuscan tour and a perfect base for exploring the Apuane Alps and the Garfagnana.

Founded by the Etruscans, Lucca became a Roman colony in 180 BC and a free *comune* (self-governing city) during the 12th century, when it enjoyed a period of prosperity based on the silk trade. In 1314 it briefly fell under the control of Pisa but under the leadership of local adventurer Castruccio Castracani degli Antelminelli, the city regained its freedom and remained an independent republic for almost 500 years.

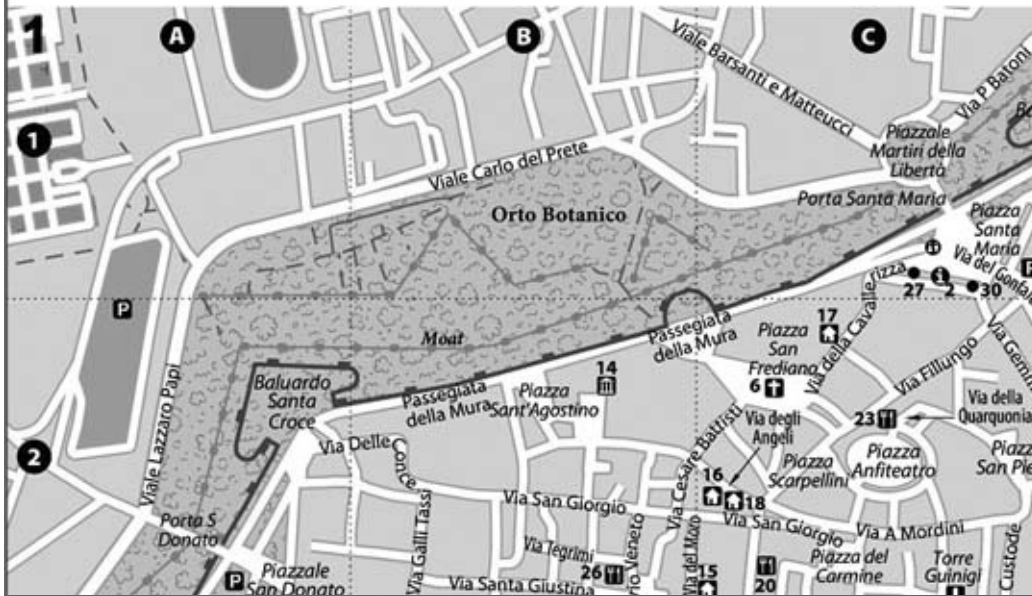
Napoleon ended all this in 1805, when he created the principality of Lucca and placed his sister Elisa in control. Twelve years later the city became a Bourbon duchy, before being incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy. It miraculously escaped being bombed during WWII, so the fabric of the historic centre has remained unchanged for centuries.

## FATTORIA DI CELLE

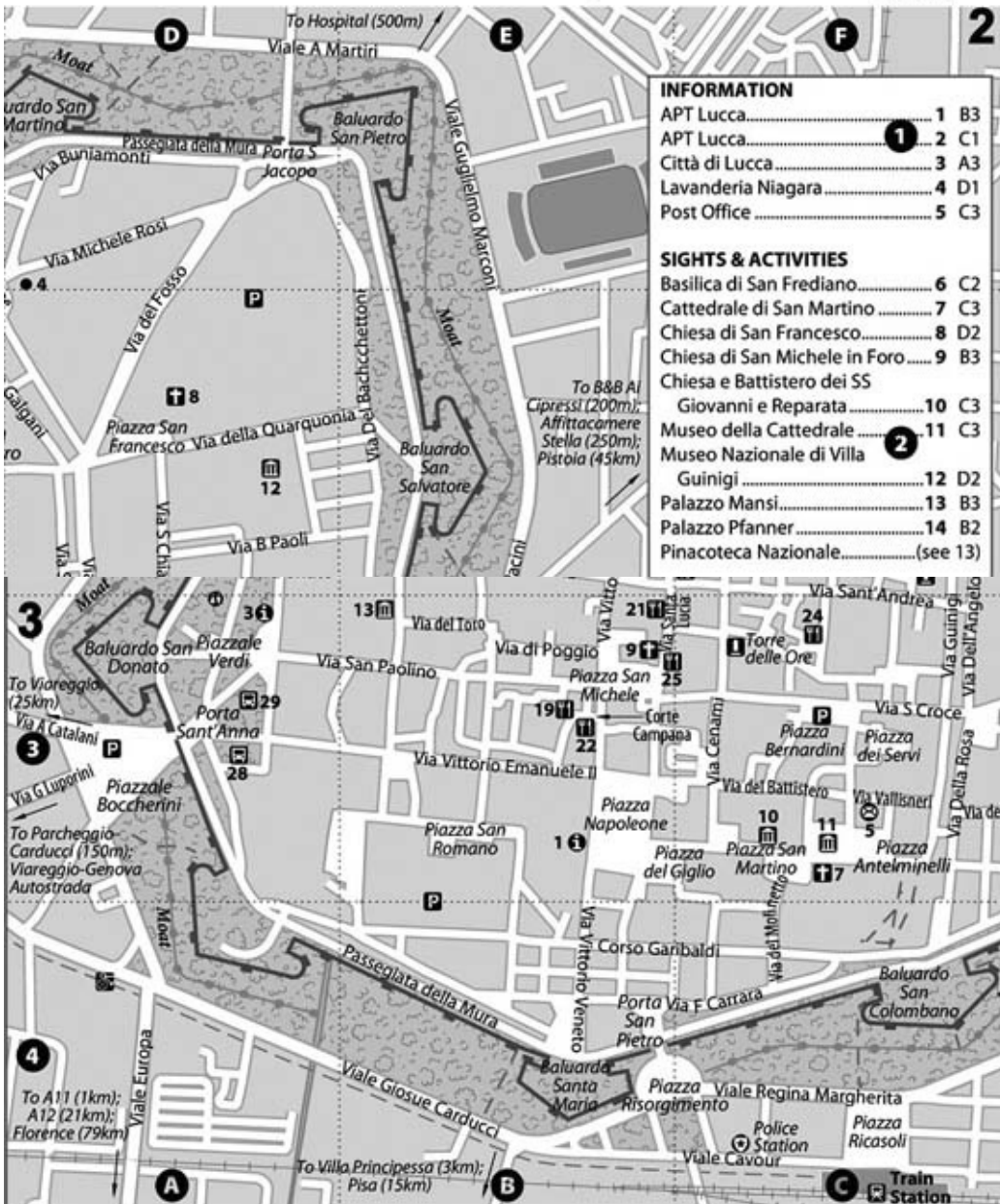
A tea house, aviary and other romantic 19th-century follies mingle with cutting-edge art installations created *in situ* by the world's top contemporary artists at the **Fattoria di Celle** (☎ 0573 47 94 86, 0573 47 99 07; [www.goricoll.it](http://www.goricoll.it), in Italian; Via Montalese 7, Santomato di Pistoia; ✉ by appointment only Mon-Fri May-Sep), 5km from Pistoia. The extraordinary private collection and passion of local businessman Giuliano Gori, this unique sculpture park showcases 70 site-specific installations sprinkled around his vast family estate. Visits – reserved for serious art lovers – require forward planning (apply in writing at least five weeks in advance) and entail a three- to four-hour hike around the art-rich estate, led by the collection's curator, Miranda McPhail.



# LUCCA

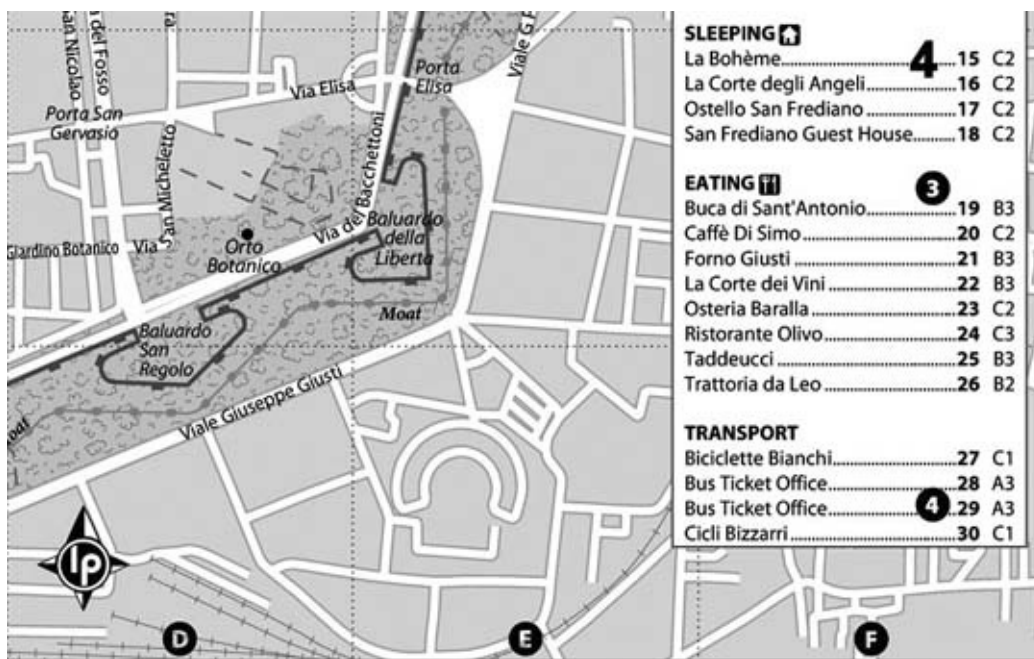


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## Information

**APT Lucca** ([www.luccatourist.it](http://www.luccatourist.it)); Piazza Napoleone (☎ 0583 91 99 41; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat); Piazza Santa Maria (☎ 0583 91 99 31; 🕒 9am-8pm Apr-Oct, 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm mid-Nov—mid-Dec, 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat mid-Dec—Mar) The Piazza Santa Maria office offers pricey internet access (€5 per 30 minutes), though it sometimes charges less.

**Città di Lucca** (☎ 0583 58 31 50; [www.luccaitinera.it](http://www.luccaitinera.it); Piazzale Verdi; 🕒 9am-7pm) Operates an info point that rents bicycles (per hour €2.50) and excellent city audioguides in English (1/2 persons €9/12), sells concert tickets and has a left-luggage service (per hour €1.50).

**Lavanderia Niagara** (Via Michele Rosi 26; wash €4; 🕒 8am-10pm)

**Post office** (Via Vallisneri 2)

[www.luccagrapevine.com](http://www.luccagrapevine.com) Online version of Lucca's English-language monthly mag; buy the fuller paper version (€2) from newsstands.

## Sights

Lucca's biggest attraction is its 12m-high city walls, built snug around the old city in the 16th and 17th centuries, defended by 126 canons and crowned with a wide, silky-smooth footpath just made for a leafy  **Passeggiata della Mura**. Be it strolling, cycling, running or rollerblading, this legendary 4km-long circular footpath above the city proffers shot after shot of local Lucchesi life.

### CATHEDRAL

Lucca's mainly Romanesque **Cattedrale di San Martino** (☎ 0583 95 70 68; [www.museocattedralelucca.it](http://www.museocattedralelucca.it), in Italian; Piazza San Martino; 🕒 9.30am-5.45pm Mon-Fri, to 6.45pm Sat, to 10.45am & noon-6pm Sun mid-Mar—Oct, to 4.45pm Mon-Fri, to 6.45pm Sat, to 10.45am & noon-5pm Sun Nov—mid-Mar), dedicated to San Martino, dates to the 11th century. The exquisite facade was constructed in the prevailing Lucca-Pisan style and designed to accommodate the pre-existing *campanile*. Each of the multitude of columns in its upper part is different. The reliefs over the left doorway of the portico are believed to be by Nicola Pisano.

The interior was rebuilt in the 14th and 15th centuries with a Gothic flourish. Lucca-born sculptor and architect Matteo Civitali designed both the pulpit and the 15th-century *tempietto* (small temple) in the

north aisle that contains the **Volto Santo**. Legend has it that this simply fashioned image of a life-sized Christ on a wooden crucifix was carved by Nicodemus, who witnessed the Crucifixion. In fact, it has recently been dated to the 13th century. A major object of pilgrimage, it's carried in procession through the streets every 13 September at dusk during the *Luminaria di Santa Croce*, a solemn torch-lit procession marking its miraculous arrival in Lucca.

The cathedral's many other artworks include a magnificent *Last Supper* by Tintoretto above the third altar of the south aisle; and the marble tomb of Ilaria del Carretto, a masterpiece of funerary sculpture, in the **sacristy** (adult/concession €2/1.50). Many more 15th- and 16th-century treasures from the cathedral are displayed in the adjacent **Museo della Cattedrale** (Cathedral Museum; ☎ 0583 49 05 30; Piazza Antelminelli; adult/concession €4/2.50; 🕒 10am-6pm mid-Mar—Oct, to 2pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun Nov—mid-Mar).

## CHURCH & BAPTISTRY OF STSGIOVANNI & REPARATA

The 12th-century interior of the deconsecrated **Chiesa e Battistero dei SS Giovanni e Reparata** is a hauntingly atmospheric setting for early evening opera recitals staged by **Puccini e la sua Lucca** (☎ 340 8106042; [www.puccinielasualucca.com](http://www.puccinielasualucca.com); adult/concession €15/10), which are held at 7pm every evening from mid-March to October, and on every evening except Thursday from November to mid-March. Professional singers present a one-hour programme of arias and duets dominated by the music of Puccini. Tickets are available from the church between 10am and 6pm.

In the north transept of the church is a **baptistry** (☎ 0583 49 05 30; Piazza San Giovanni; adult/concession €2.50/1.50; 🕒 10am-6pm mid-Mar—Oct, to 5pm Sat, Sun & religious holidays Nov—mid-Mar) crowning an archaeological area comprising five building levels going back to the Roman period.

## CHIESA DI SAN MICHELE IN FORO

This dazzling Romanesque **church** (☎ 0583 4 84 59; Piazza San Michele; 🕒 7.40am-noon & 3-6pm Apr-Oct, 9am-noon & 3-5pm Nov-Mar) was built on the site of its 8th-century precursor over a period of nearly 300 years, beginning in the 11th century. The exquisite wedding-cake facade is topped by a figure of the Archangel Michael slaying a dragon. Inside, don't miss Filippino Lippi's 1479 painting of Sts Helen, Jerome, Sebastian and Roch (complete with plague sore) in the south transept.

## EAST OF VIA FILLUNGO

Lucca's busiest street, Via Fillungo, threads its way through the medieval heart of the old city and is full of sleek modern boutiques housed in buildings of great charm and antiquity – make sure you regularly cast your eyes above the street-level bustle to appreciate ancient awnings and architectural details. **Piazza Anfiteatro** is a huge oval just east of Via Fillungo. The houses, raised upon the foundations of the one-time Roman amphitheatre, retain the shape of this distant original.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

Those choosing to visit the cathedral's sacristy, the Cathedral Museum and the baptistry of the nearby SS Giovanni e Reparata can save money by purchasing a combined ticket (adult/child €6/4) at any of the venues.

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A short walk further east is **Piazza San Francesco** and the attractive 13th-century **Chiesa di San Francesco**. Nearby, the **Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi** (☎ 0583 49 60 33; Via della Quarquonia;

adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) showcases the city's art collection and archaeological remnants from Roman Lucca.

## WEST OF VIA FILLUNGO

The facade of the **Basilica di San Frediano** (☎ 0583 49 36 27; Piazza San Frediano; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 3-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9-11.30am & 3-5pm Sat & Sun) has a unique (and much-restored) 13th-century mosaic in a markedly Byzantine style. The main feature of the beautiful basilica's interior is the **Fontana Lustrale**, a 12th-century baptismal font decorated with sculpted reliefs, just to the right as you enter. Note, too, the fine capitals, many recycled from the nearby Roman amphitheatre.

The privately owned **Palazzo Pfanner** (☎ 0583 95 40 29; Via degli Asili 33; palace or garden adult/concession €3/2.50, both €4.50/3.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct) is a 17th-century palace where parts of *Portrait of a Lady* (1996) with Nicole Kidman and John Malkovich were shot. Take the outdoor staircase to the frescoed and furnished *piano nobile* (main reception room), and then visit the ornate 18th-century garden, the only one of substance within the city walls. (Felix Pfanner, may God rest his soul, was an Austrian émigré who first brought beer to Italy – and brewed it in the mansion's cellars.)

The 17th-century **Palazzo Mansi** (Via Galli Tassi 43), a wonderful piece of rococo excess (that elaborate, gilded bridal suite must have inspired such high jinks in its time), houses the smallish **Pinacoteca Nazionale** (☎ 0583 5 55 70; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) with paintings of the same period and some lively frescoes.

## Festivals & Events

The city that gave birth to both Puccini and Boccherini has admirably catholic musical tastes. For more than 50 years the nearby village of Torre del Lago has hosted the annual **Puccini Festival** ([www.puccinifestival.it](http://www.puccinifestival.it)) in July and August. Meanwhile, Lucca's **Summer Festival** ([www.summer-festival.com](http://www.summer-festival.com)) in July pulls in top international performers in a variety of musical genres.

## Sleeping

To track down a B&B in or around Lucca, surf **Lucca: B&B 'n' Guesthouses** ([www.welcomeinlucca.it](http://www.welcomeinlucca.it)). For luxurious options at the top end of the budget spectrum, check out [www.villelucchesi.net](http://www.villelucchesi.net).

## BUDGET

**Ostello San Frediano** (☎ 0583 46 99 57; [www.ostellolucca.it](http://www.ostellolucca.it); Via della Cavallerizza 12; dm with/without bathroom €20/18, d/tr/q with bathroom €55/75/100; ☎ ☑) Flags flutter outside as if you're entering a five-star hotel at this staggeringly historic, atmospheric and magnificent...hostel. Top-notch in comfort and service, this HI-affiliated hostel with 141 beds in voluminous rooms is serviced with a bar and grandiose dining room (breakfast/lunch/two-course dinner €3/11/11). Non HI-members can buy a €3 one-night stamp.

**Affittacamere Stella** (☎ 0583 31 10 22; [www.affittacamerestella.com](http://www.affittacamerestella.com); Via Pisana Traversa 2; s €45-55, d €60-70; ☎ ☒ ☑) Just outside the Porta Sant'Anna, this well-regarded guesthouse in an early 20th-century apartment building offers comfortable and attractive rooms with wooden ceilings, a kitchen for guests' use and private parking. No breakfast.

**B&B Ai Cipressi** (☎ 0583 49 65 71; [www.aicipressi.it](http://www.aicipressi.it); Via di Tiglio 126; s €55-79, d €69-99; ☎ ☒ ☑ ☑) Outside Porta Elisa opposite the Sanctuary of Santa Gemma Galgani, this recently opened motel-style B&B is perfect for travellers with their own cars, as it offers free on-site parking. The modern rooms are clean, comfortable and well set up, with good beds and satellite TV.

**San Frediano Guest House** (☎ 0583 46 96 30; [www.sanfrediano.com](http://www.sanfrediano.com); Via degli Angeli 19; s with shared bathroom €38-65, d with shared bathroom €48-80, s with bathroom €50-90, d with bathroom €65-110; 🚽 📶) This comfortable townhouse dates from the 17th century and is located just off Via Fillungo in the centre of Luccese action. It has meat hooks in the beams of reception, where butchers once strung their hams. Less expensive rooms share a bathroom. If full, ask about its sister guesthouse.

## MIDRANGE

**La Bohème** (☎ 0583 46 24 04; [www.boheme.it](http://www.boheme.it); Via del Moro 2; d €90-140; 🚽) A hefty dark-wood door located on a peaceful back street marks the entrance to this five-room B&B, run with charm and style by former architect Ranieri. Rooms are furnished in antique Tuscan style; some have breathtaking high ceilings and all have decent-sized bathrooms. Breakfast is generous.

**Villa Principessa** (☎ 0583 37 00 37; [www.hotelprincipessa.com](http://www.hotelprincipessa.com); Via Nuova per Pisa 1616; d €99-129, ste €320-450; 📶 🚽 📺) You will indeed feel like a *principessa* (princess) at this aristocratic country mansion, residence of Lucca duke Castruccio Castracani in the late 13th and early 14th century. Smothered with an abundance of foliage outside and full of fine chandeliers, period furnishings and rich wallpapers inside, it really is a stunner. Find it 3km south of Lucca.

**La Corte degli Angeli** (☎ 0583 46 92 04; [www.allacortedegliangeli.com](http://www.allacortedegliangeli.com); Via degli Angeli 23; d €139-180; 📶 🚽 📺) Occupying three floors of a 15th-century townhouse, this four-star boutique hotel oozes charm. Its frescoed rooms are named after flowers.

## Eating & Drinking

### BUDGET

**our pick Forno Giusti** (Via Santa Lucia 20; pizza & filled focaccia per kg €7-16; 🕒 7am-1pm & 4-7.30pm, closed Wed afternoon & Sun) Join the crowd queuing in front of this excellent bakery to purchase fresh-from-the-oven pizza and focaccia with a variety of fillings and toppings. It's the perfect place to buy picnic provisions.

**Caffè Di Simo** (☎ 0583 49 62 34; Via Fillungo 58; 🕒 9am-8pm & 8.30pm-1am) This atmospheric Art Nouveau cafe-bar-restaurant was once patronised by Puccini and his coterie (the maestro would tickle the ivories of the piano at the entrance to the dining area). These days, locals stand at the bar for coffee or *aperitivo* and sit at the tables to enjoy their selection from the daily €10 lunch buffet.

**Taddeucci** (☎ 0583 49 49 33; [www.taddeucci.com](http://www.taddeucci.com); Piazza San Michele 34; 🕒 8.30am-7.45pm, closed Thu winter) This *pasticcERIA* (pastry shop) is where the traditional Lucchesi treat of *buccellato* was created in 1881. A ring-shaped loaf made with flour, sultanas, aniseed seeds and sugar, it's the perfect accompaniment to a mid-morning or -afternoon espresso (coffee and slice of *buccellato*, €3.50).

**Trattoria da Leo** (☎ 0583 49 22 36; Via Tegrimi 1; meals €17; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Ask a local to recommend a lunch spot, and they will inevitably nominate this bustling trattoria. The clientele of tourists, students, workers and ladies taking a break from shopping have one thing in common: an appreciation for the cheap food and friendly ambience on offer. The food ranges from acceptable to delicious, with stand-out dishes including the *vitello tonnato* (cold veal with a tuna and caper sauce) and *torta di fichi e noci* (fig and walnut tart). No credit cards.

**La Corte dei Vini** (☎ 0583 58 44 60; Corte Campana 6; meals €24, platters €7-12; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Strategically placed between Piazza Napoleone and Piazza San Michele, this friendly '*enoteca e piccola cucina*' (wine bar and small kitchen) is a great choice for an *aperitivo* or casual meal. It

specialises in rustic dishes, including *tortelli Lucchesi* (meat ravioli) and *minestra di farro della Garbagnana* (soup made with spelt). Get here early to score a choice table on the front terrace.

## MIDRANGE

**Osteria Baralla** (☎ 0583 44 02 40; [www.osteriabaralla.it](http://www.osteriabaralla.it); Via Anfiteatro 5; meals €34; 🗓 Mon-Sat) Dine beneath magnificent red-brick vaults at this busy *osteria*, inevitably packed to the rafters by noon. Rich in tradition (the place dates to 1860) and local specialities, its menu highlights include soup with new-season olive oil, salt cod and chickpeas, *bollito misto* on Thursday and roast pork on Saturday.

**Buca di Sant'Antonio** (☎ 0583 5 58 81; [www.bucadisantantonio.com](http://www.bucadisantantonio.com); Via della Cervia 3; meals €40; 🗓 Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) This atmosphere-laden restaurant dates to 1782 and is an outstanding spot for tasting top-notch Italian wines. Its flattering lighting and banquette seating make it a favourite destination for romantic dinners, and its standards of service are unmatched in the city. Bookings essential.

**Ristorante Olivo** (☎ 0583 49 62 64; [www.ristoranteolivo.it/inglese](http://www.ristoranteolivo.it/inglese); Piazza San Quirico 1; meals €47; 🗓 lunch & dinner daily Apr-Nov, Thu-Tue Dec-Mar) Known for its fresh fish, which is brought in every day from Viareggio, the Olivo epitomises old-fashioned Lucchesi dining. The wine list is excellent (with Tuscan drops dominating) and the menu balances classic Tuscan choices with seafood specialities.

## Getting There & Away

From the bus stops around Piazzale Verdi, Vaibus runs services throughout the region, including destinations in the Garfagnana such as Castelnuovo di Garfagnana (€4, 1½ hours, eight daily). It also runs buses to/from Florence (€5.10, 1½ hours, frequent), Pisa and Pisa Airport (€2.80, one hour, 30 daily) and Viareggio (€3.20, 50 minutes, five daily) via Torre del Lago (€2.80, 30 minutes, six daily).

The train station is south of the city walls, but only a short walk away – take the path across the moat and through the tunnel under Baluardo San Colombano. Regional train services connect Lucca with surrounding cities and towns. Destinations include Florence (€5, 1½ to 1¾ hours, frequent), Pisa (€2.40, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes) and Viareggio (€2.40, 25 minutes, hourly).

The A11 runs westwards to Pisa and Viareggio and eastwards to Florence. To access the Garfagnana, take the SS12 and continue on the SS445.

## Getting Around

Most car parks within the city walls are for residents only, and are indicated by yellow lines. Blue lines indicate pay parks (€1 to €1.50 per hour) that are available to all motorists, but these are few and far between. If you are staying within the city walls, contact your hotel ahead of your arrival and enquire about the possibility of getting a temporary resident permit during your stay. The parks just outside the city walls have a time limit of one to two hours and are closely monitored. The easiest option is to park at Parcheggio Carducci, just outside Porta Sant'Anna.

Bike rental is offered by two shops – Cicli Bizzarri and Biciclette Bianchi – located on either side of the tourist information office on Piazza Santa Maria. These are both open from 9am to 7pm daily and charge €2.50 per hour.

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# THE GARFAGNANA

Nestled between the Apuane Alps and the Apennines are three stunning valleys formed by the Serchio river and its tributaries: the low-lying Lima and Serchio Valleys and the higher Garfagnana Valley. These are often collectively referred to as the Garfagnana and are easily accessed from Lucca.

Many visitors to this relatively undiscovered area of raw beauty come to enjoy its hiking and biking. Others are attracted by the region's rustic cuisine, which utilises local fruits of the forest including chestnuts (often ground into flour), porcini mushrooms and honey. Enthusiasts for military history come to the area around Borgo a Mozzano to see remnants of fortifications from the *Linea Gotica* (Gothic Line), the last major line of defence mounted by the retreating German army in the final stages of WWII.

**Castelnuovo di Garfagnana**, the main town in the valley, is the best spot in the Garfagnana to source information about the neighbouring Apuane Alps. The extremely helpful **Centro Visite Parco Alpi Apuane** (☎ 0583 6 51 69; [www.turismo.garfagnana.eu](http://www.turismo.garfagnana.eu); Piazza delle Erbe 1; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-7pm Jun-Sep, to 5.30pm Oct-May) can supply loads of information on walking, mountain biking, horse riding and other activities, as well as lists of local guides. It also has plenty of information about *agriturismi* (farm stay accommodation) and *rifugi* (mountain huts) off any beaten track and sells hiking maps. To meet up with hardened walkers, try your luck at the local branch of **Club Alpin Italiano** (☎ 0583 6 55 77; [www.garfagnanacai.it](http://www.garfagnanacai.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 3; ☎ 9-10pm Thu, 6-7pm Sat).

In Castelnuovo di Garfagnana, the characterful **Osteria Vecchio Mulino** (☎ 0583 6 21 92; [www.ilvecchiomulino.com](http://www.ilvecchiomulino.com), in Italian; Via Vittorio Emanuele 12; ☎ Tue-Sun 7.30am-8.30pm; tasting menu €15-20 incl wine) is a great spot to stop for lunch. It specialises in regional dishes.

The Garfagnana's other major tourist destination is the picturesque hill-top town of **Barga**, presided over by a magnificent Romanesque **cathedral**. If you choose to stay overnight, **Casa Cordati** (☎ 0583 72 34 50; [www.casacordati.it](http://www.casacordati.it); Via di Mezzo 17, Barga Vecchia; d €40, 2-person apt €60; ☎ Mar-Oct), run by genial gallery owner Giordano Martinelli, offers excellent value. Rooms have lovely views, simple decor and good-sized bathrooms (some shared); the apartment is dark but well sized. There's no breakfast.

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## APUANE ALPS

Rearing up between the Versilian Riviera and the vast inland valley of the Garfagnana is this mountain range protected by the **Parco Regionale delle Alpi Apuane** ([www.parcapuane.it](http://www.parcapuane.it)).

You'll find a good network of marked walking trails and *rifugi* in the park. To guide your steps, pick up *Alpi Apuane Settentrionali* (1:25,000) published by the Massa Carrara APT; or Edizione Multigraphic Firenze's *Parco delle Alpi Apuane* (1:25,000, €7) or *Versilia: Parco delle Alpi Apuane* (1:50,000, €7). *The Alps of Tuscany* by Francesco Greco contains many enjoyable multiday routes.

The main gateways into the Parco Regionale delle Alpi Apuane are Seravezza and Castelnuovo di Garfagnana. In Seravezza, the **information centre** (☎ 0584 7 58 21; Via Corrado del Greco 11; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Jun-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Wed-Mon Oct-May) can supply plenty of information.

## Carrara

pop 65,443

Many first-time visitors assume that the snowy-white mountain peaks forming Carrara's backdrop are capped with snow. In fact, the vista provides a breathtaking illusion – the white is 2000 hectares of marble gouged out of the foothills of the Apuane Alps in vast quarries that have been worked since Roman times.

The texture and purity of Carrara's white marble (derived from the Greek *marmaros*, meaning shining stone) is unrivalled and it was here that Michelangelo selected marble for masterpieces including *David* (actually sculpted from a dud veined block). These days it's a multi-billion-euro industry.

The quarries, which are 5km north of town in Colonnata and Fantiscritti, have long been the area's biggest employers. It's hard, dangerous work and on Carrara's central Piazza XXVII Aprile a monument remembers workers who lost their lives up on the hills. These tough men formed the backbone of a strong leftist and anarchist tradition in Carrara, something that won them no friends among the Fascists or, later, the occupying German forces.

Bar the thrill of seeing its mosaic marble pavements, marble street benches, decorative marble *putti* (winsome cherubs) and marble everything else, the old centre of Carrara doesn't offer much to the visitor. The exception to this rule is in July to September in even-numbered years, when a contemporary sculpture biennale is staged here.

Opposite the stadium, halfway between Carrara and Marina di Carrara, there's a **tourist office** (☎ 0585 84 41 36; Viale XX Settembre; 🕒 8.30am-5.30pm Jun-Aug, 9am-4pm Sep-May) that offers maps and brochures detailing local attractions. Opposite the tourist office is the **Museo del Marmo** (Marble Museum; ☎ 0585 84 57 46; Viale XX Settembre; adult/child/concession €4.50/free/2.50; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-6pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr), which describes extraction from chisel-and-hammer days to the 21st century's high-powered industrial quarrying and has a fascinating audiovisual oral history presentation documenting the lives of quarry workers in the 20th century.

If you're interested in the techniques that artisans use to transform slabs of marble into works of art, make an appointment to visit the dust-filled **Studi di Scultura Carlo Nicoli** (☎ 0585 7 00 79; [www.nicoli-sculptures.com](http://www.nicoli-sculptures.com); Piazza XXVII Aprile 8), the most atmospheric of Carrara's five marble workshops. This is where internationally acclaimed artists such as Louise Bourgeois and Anish Kapoor instruct the marble *laboratory* (workshop) on how they want their work executed, thus taking advantage of a centuries-old tradition of artisanship that has been handed down from generation to generation. Serious artists (as opposed to novices) can also apply to base themselves here for months at a time, learning techniques *in situ*. After visiting, make your way to the area around the Romanesque cathedral for a coffee at **Café Pasticceria Luzio Cafilisch** (☎ 0585 7 16 76; Via Roma 2; 🕒 7am-7.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 2-7.30pm Sun).

After visiting the Museo del Marmo and Studi di Scultura Carlo Nicoli, make your way up the mountain to any of the three major marble quarries: **Cave di Colonnata**, **Cave di Torano** and **Cave di Fantiscritti**, all around 5km north of town – follow the signs '*cave de marmo*' (marble quarries). The Fantiscritti cave is the one best geared towards tourism; here, the hard graft is done in the morning, leaving the afternoons free for **tours** (☎ 339 765 7470; [www.marmotour.com](http://www.marmotour.com); 35min guided tour adult/child under 10 yr €7/3; 🕒 noon-5pm Mon-Fri Mar, Apr, Sep & Oct, 11am-6.30pm Mon-Fri May-Aug, 11am-6.30pm Sat Mar-Oct) of the cathedral-like quarry hollowed out of the mountainside.

Carrara's cheap and cheerful coastline and resorts (**Marina di Carrara** and neighbouring **Marina di Massa**) are especially popular with holidaying Italians. **Ostello Apuano** (☎ 0585 78 00 34; [ostelloapuano@hotmail.com](mailto:ostelloapuano@hotmail.com); Viale delle Pinete, Partaccia 237; dm €12; 🕒 mid-Mar—mid-Oct; 📺) is an

HI-affiliated hostel slap bang next to the sand in a handsome house dating from the 1920s. Accommodation is in single-sex dorms only. Find it in Partaccia, which is just north of Marina di Massa. From the Carrara train station catch bus 53, marked Via Avenza Mare.

## Pietrasanta

pop 24,609

This charming town is a perfect base for explorations into the Apuane Alps. Founded by Guiscardo da Pietrasanta, *podestà* (governing magistrate) of Lucca in 1255, it was seen as a prize by Genoa, Lucca, Pisa and Florence, all of whom jostled for possession of its marble quarries and bronze foundries. As was so often the case, Florence won out and Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici) took control in 1513. Leo put the town's famous quarries at the disposal of Michelangelo, who came here in 1518 to source marble for the facade of San Lorenzo in [Florence](#). The artistic inclination of Pietrasanta dates from this time, and today it is the home of many artists and artisans, including internationally lauded, Colombian-born sculptor Fernando Botero.

Pietrasanta was originally walled, and the historic centre is now a Limited Traffic Zone. If you are arriving by car, park in front of the town hall on Piazza Matteotti. There's a **tourist information point** (☎ 0584 28 32 84; info@pietrasantamarina.it; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 4.30-7pm Thu, 9am-1pm & 4.30-7pm Sat, 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Sun) in nearby Piazza Statuto. From here, walk down the main shopping strip, Via Mazzini, which is book-ended by contemporary street sculptures. The **Chiesa della Misericordia** on this strip is home to frescoes of the *Gate of Paradise* and *Gate of Hell* by Botero (the artist portrays himself in hell). Nearby, **Pasticceria Dazzi** (☎ 0584 7 01 74; Via Mazzini 64) is known for its excellent coffee and sweet treats.

Arriving at sculpture-filled Piazza del Duomo, you can walk straight ahead into Via Garibaldi, home to commercial art galleries and a 17th-century **baptistry** with two beautiful marble fonts dating from 1389 and 1509–1612, respectively. Also here is Pietrasanta's best-loved *enoteca*, the atmospheric **L'Enoteca Marcucci** (☎ 0584 79 19 62; Via Garibaldi 40; 🕒 10am-1pm & 5pm-1am Tue-Sun).

On the other side of the attractive **Duomo di San Martino**, which dates from 1256 and is notable for its fine interior marble carving, is the deconsecrated 13th-century **Chiesa di Sant'Agostino** (🕒 4-7pm Tue-Sun), now a wonderfully evocative venue for art exhibitions. The adjoining former convent dates from 1515–79 and houses a cultural centre and the **Museo dei Bozzetti** (☎ 0584 79 55 00; [www.museodeibozzetti.it](http://www.museodeibozzetti.it); Via S Agostino 1; admission free; 🕒 2-7pm Tue-Sat, 4-7pm Sun), which exhibits moulds of famous sculptures cast or carved in Pietrasanta.

**Albergo Pietrasanta** (☎ 0584 79 37 26; [www.albergopietrasanta.com](http://www.albergopietrasanta.com); Via Garibaldi 35; d €295-375, ste €375-420; 📄 📞 📧) is an elegant art-filled *palazzo* close to Piazza del Duomo. After a day spent exploring the town or walking in the Apuane Alps, you can relax in the gorgeous courtyard or your beautifully appointed room.

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## PISA

pop 87,461

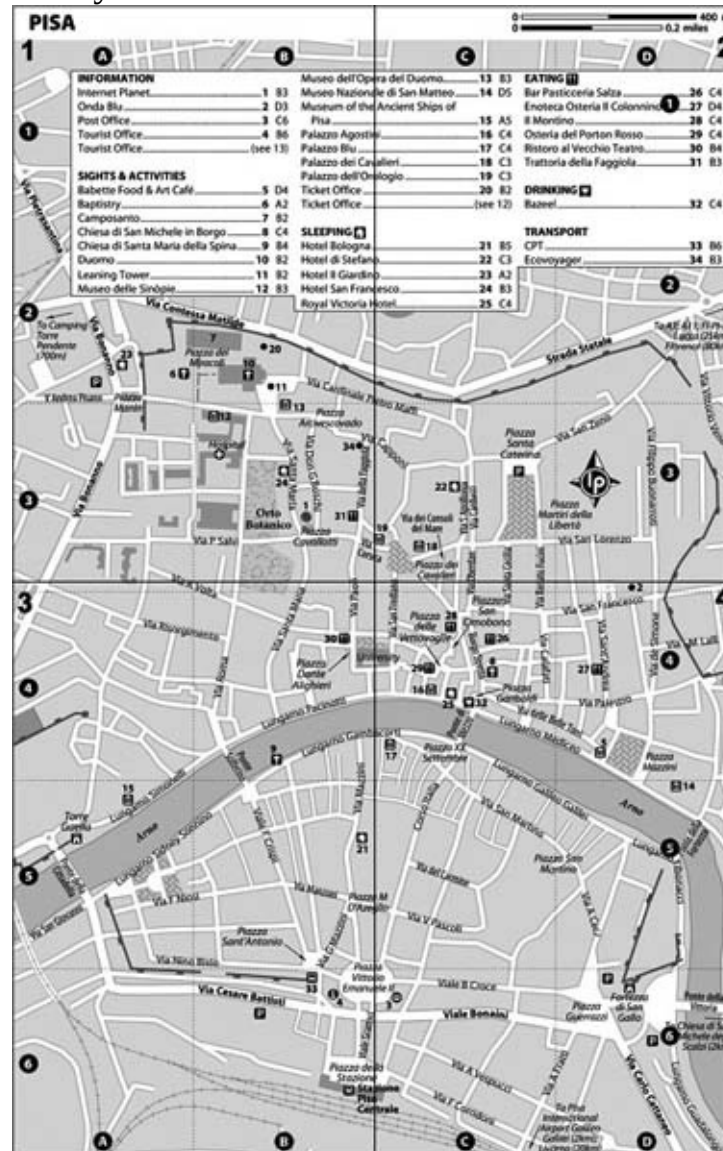
Once a maritime power to rival Genoa and Venice, Pisa now draws its fame from an architectural project gone terribly wrong. But the world-famous Leaning Tower is just one of many noteworthy sights in this compact and compelling city. Education has fuelled the local economy since the 1400s, and students from



across Italy still compete for places in its elite university and research schools. This endows the centre of town with a vibrant and affordable cafe and bar scene, and balances what is an enviable portfolio of well-maintained Romanesque buildings, Gothic churches and Renaissance piazzas with a lively streetlife dominated by locals rather than tourists.

## History

Possibly of Greek origin, Pisa became an important naval base under Rome and remained a significant port for many centuries. The city's so-called golden days began late in the 9th century when it became an independent maritime republic and a rival of Genoa and Venice. The good times rolled on into the 12th and 13th centuries, by which time Pisa controlled Corsica, Sardinia and most of the mainland coast as far south as Civitavecchia. Most of the city's finest buildings date from this period, when the distinctive Pisan-Romanesque architectural style flourished.



# PISA

1

A

B

## INFORMATION

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Onda Blu.....	2	D3
Post Office.....	3	C6
Tourist Office.....	4	B6
Tourist Office.....	(see 13)	

Museo dell'Ope  
 Museo Naziona  
 Museum of the  
 Pisa .....  
 Palazzo Agostir  
 Palazzo Blu .....  
 Palazzo dei Cav  
 Palazzo dell'Or  
 Ticket Office.....  
 Ticket Office.....  
**SLEEPING**   
 Hotel Bologna.  
 Hotel di Stefan  
 Hotel Il Giardin  
 Hotel San Fran  
 Royal Victoria P

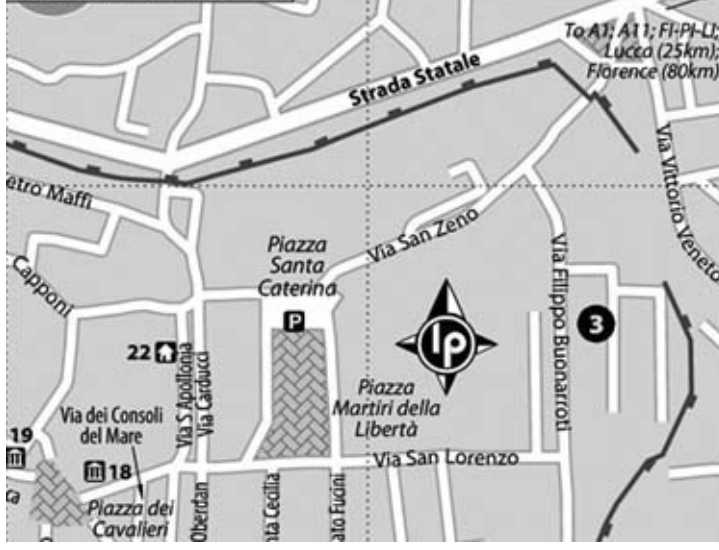
## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

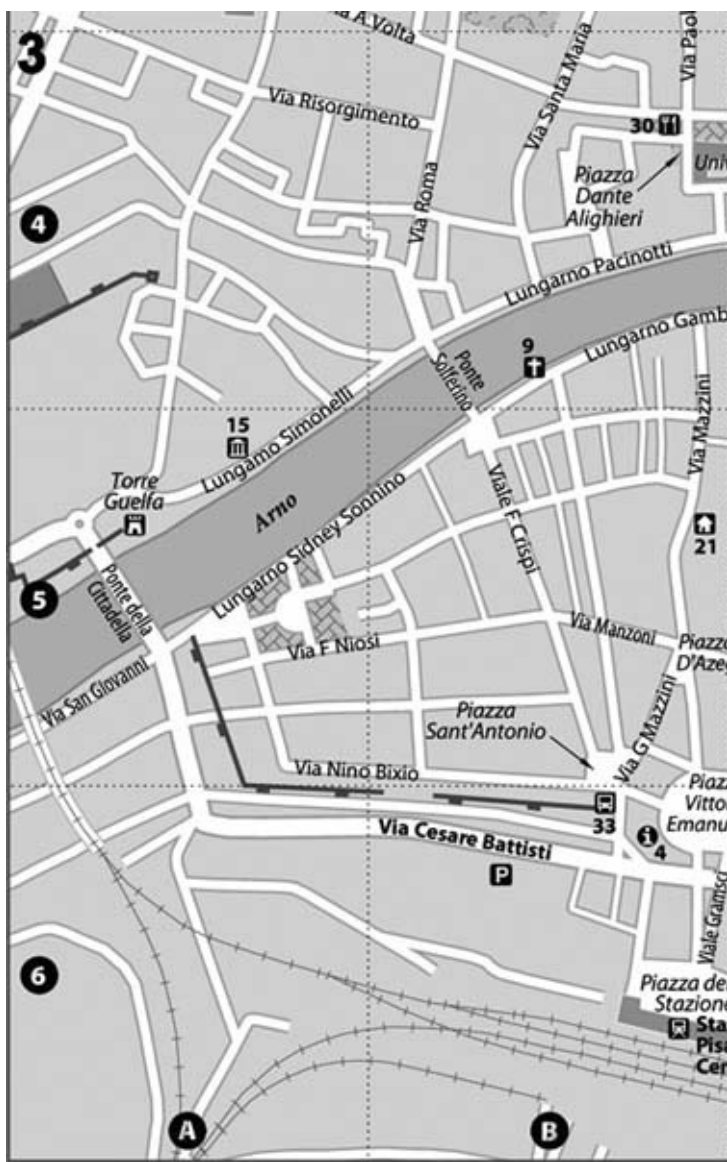
Babette Food & Art Café.....	5	D4
Baptistry.....	6	A2
Camposanto.....	7	B2
Chiesa di San Michele in Borgo.....	8	C4
Chiesa di Santa Maria della Spina.....	9	B4
Duomo.....	10	B2
Leaning Tower.....	11	B2
Museo delle Sinòpie.....	12	B3

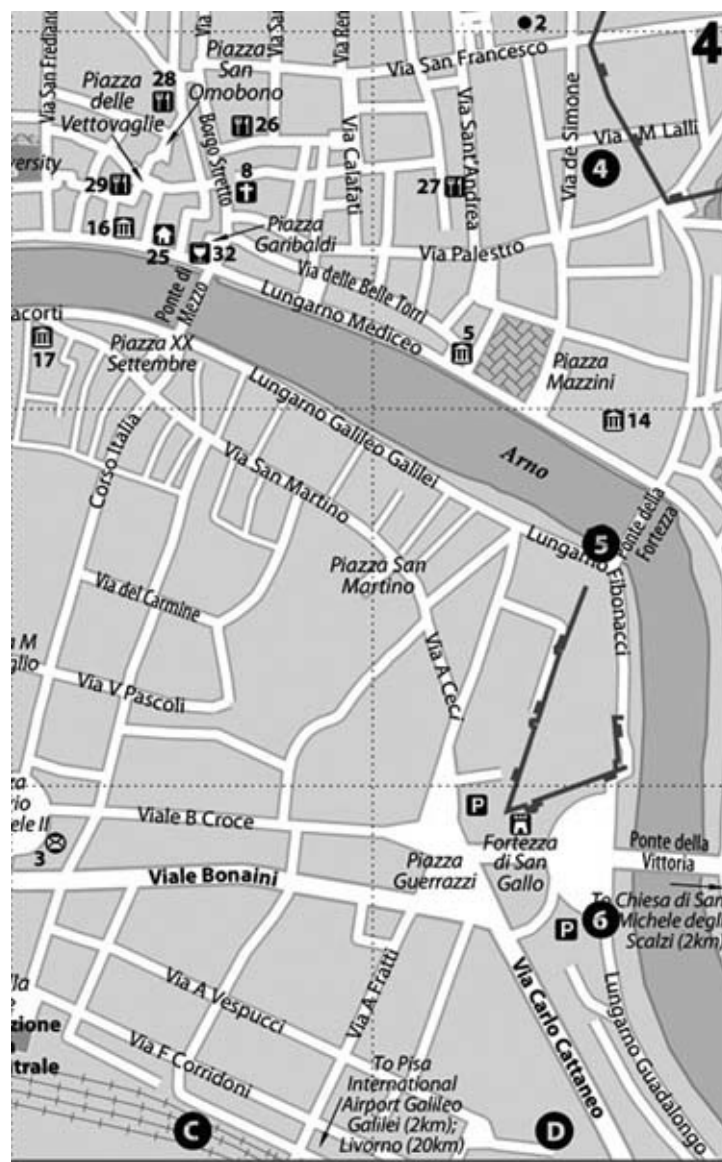




ra del Duomo.....	13	B3	<b>EATING</b>	
le di San Matteo.....	14	D5	Bar Pasticceria Salza .....	26 C4
Ancient Ships of			Enoteca Osteria Il Colonnino <b>1</b> .....	27 D4
.....	15	A5	Il Montino .....	28 C4
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			<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
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.....	24	B3		
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Pisa's support for the Ghibellines during the tussles between the Holy Roman Emperor and the pope brought the city into conflict with its mostly Guelph Tuscan neighbours, including Siena, Lucca and Florence. The real blow came when Genoa's fleet defeated Pisa in devastating fashion at the Battle of Meloria in 1284. After the city fell to Florence in 1406, the Medici encouraged great artistic, literary and scientific endeavours and re-established Pisa's university. Galileo Galilei, the city's most famous son, later taught at the university.

## Information

**APT Pisa** ([www.pisaturismo.it](http://www.pisaturismo.it)); Airport (☎ 050 50 25 18; 🕒 11am-11pm); Piazza dei Miracoli (☎ 050 4 22 91; entrance foyer, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo; 🕒 10am-7pm); Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II (☎ 050 4 22 91; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat) Tourist information.

**Internet Planet** (☎ 050 83 07 02; Piazza Cavallotti 3-4; per hr €4; 🕒 9am-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun)

**Onda Blu** (☎ 800 861346; Via San Francesco 8a; 🕒 8am-10pm) Laundrette.

**Post office** (Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II)

## Sights

Many visitors to Pisa limit their sightseeing to the Piazza dei Miracoli monuments, but those in the know tend to stay an extra day or two to explore the historic centre. This inclination to linger will become even

more pronounced when the **Museum of the Ancient Ships of Pisa** (Museo Navi Antiche Romane di Pisa; [www.cantierenavipisa.it](http://www.cantierenavipisa.it), in Italian) on Lungarno Simonelli opens in early 2010. The museum will display a remarkable collection of nine Roman cargo ships excavated from Pisa's silted-up harbour in 1998 and restored over the past decade.

## PIAZZA DEI MIRACOLI

No Tuscan sight is more immortalised in kitsch souvenirs than the iconic tower teetering on the edge of this famous piazza, which is also known as the Campo dei Miracoli (Field of Miracles) or Piazza del Duomo (Cathedral Square). The piazza's expansive green lawns provide an urban carpet on which Europe's most extraordinary concentration of Romanesque buildings – in the form of Cathedral, Baptistry and Tower – are arranged. Two million visitors every year mean that crowds are the norm, many arriving by tour bus from Florence for a whirlwind visit.

## Leaning Tower

Yes, the **Torre Pendente** (🎫 ticket reservations 050 387 22 10; [www.opapisa.it/boxoffice/index](http://www.opapisa.it/boxoffice/index); 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm Apr—mid-Jun & last 2 weeks Sep, 8.30am-11pm mid-Jun—mid-Sep, 9am-7pm Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb, 9am-6pm or 7pm Mar) really *does* lean; see the boxed text on [Click here](#) for some background as to how it ended up in its sorry state.

In 1160 Pisa boasted 10,000-odd towers – but had no bell tower for its cathedral. Loyal Pisan Berta di Bernardo righted this in 1172 when she died, leaving a legacy for construction of a *campanile* (bell tower). Work began in 1173 but ground to a halt a decade later, when the structure's first three tiers were observed to be tilting. In 1272 work started again, with artisans and masons attempting to bolster the foundations but failing miserably. Despite this, they keep going, compensating for the lean by gradually building straight up from the lower storeys and creating a subtle curve.

Over the centuries, the tower has tilted an extra 1mm each year. By 1993 it was 4.47m out of plumb, more than five degrees from the vertical. The most recent solution saw steel braces slung around the third storey that were then joined to steel cables attached to neighbouring buildings. This held the tower in place as engineers began gingerly removing soil from below the northern foundations. After some 70 tonnes of earth had been extracted from the northern side, the tower sank to its 18th-century level and, in the process, rectified the lean by 43.8cm. Experts believe that this will guarantee the tower's future (and a fat tourist income) for the next three centuries.

Access to the tower is limited to 40 people at one time, and children aged under eight are not admitted. If you don't want to wait for hours, book in advance (online or by telephone); otherwise go straight to a ticket office when you arrive at the piazza and book the first available slot.

Visits – a steep climb up 294 occasionally slippery steps – last 30 minutes; late evening visits in summer proffer enchanting views of Pisa by night. All bags, including handbags, must be deposited at the free left-luggage desk next to the central ticket office.

## Duomo

Construction of Pisa's **Cathedral** (🕒 10am-8pm Apr-Sep, 10am-7pm Oct, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm 1 Nov-24 Dec & 8 Jan-28 Feb, 9am-6pm 25 Dec-7 Jan, 10am-6pm or 7pm Mar) began in 1063 and continued until the 13th century, when the main facade was added. The elliptical dome, the first of its kind in Europe, dates from 1380. The building's striking cladding of alternating bands of green and cream marble became the blueprint for Romanesque churches throughout Tuscany.

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# PIAZZA DEI MIRACOLI TICKETING

Ticket pricing for Piazza dei Miracoli sights is complicated. Tickets to the **Tower** (€15 at ticket office, €17 booked online) and **Duomo** (€2 Mar-Oct, free Nov-Feb) are sold individually, but for the remaining sights combined tickets are available. These cost €5/6/8/10 for one/two/three/five sights and cover the Baptistry, Camposanto, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo and Museo delle Sinópie. Children aged under 10 are free for all sights except the Tower. Any ticket will also give access to the multimedia and information areas located in the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo and Museo delle Sinópie.

Tickets are sold at two **ticket offices** ([www.opapisa.it](http://www.opapisa.it)) on the piazza: the central ticket office is located behind the tower and a second office is located in the entrance foyer of the Museo delle Sinópie. To ensure your visit to the tower, book tickets via the website at least 15 days in advance.

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The cathedral was the largest in Europe when it was constructed, its breathtaking proportions designed to demonstrate Pisa's domination of the Mediterranean. The main facade has four exquisite tiers of columns diminishing skywards, while the vast interior is propped up by 68 hefty granite columns. The wooden ceiling decorated with 24-carat gold is a legacy from the period of Medici rule of the city.

Inside, don't miss the extraordinary early 14th-century octagonal **pulpit** in the north aisle. Sculpted from Carrara marble by Giovanni Pisano and featuring nude and heroic figures, its depth of detail and heightening of feeling brought a new pictorial expressionism and life to Gothic sculpture. Pisano's work forms a striking contrast to the modern pulpit and altar by Italian sculptor Giuliano Vangi, which were controversially installed in 2001.

## Baptistry

The unusual, round **Battistero** (🕒 8am-8pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm or 7pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) has one dome piled on top of another, each roofed half in lead, half in tiles. Construction began in 1152, but it was notably remodelled and continued by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano more than a century later and was finally completed in the 14th century – hence its hybrid architectural style.

Inside, the beautiful hexagonal **pulpit** carved by Nicola Pisano between 1259–60 is the undisputed highlight. Inspired by the Roman sarcophagi in the Camposanto (see below), Pisano used powerful classical models to enact scenes from biblical legend. His figure of Daniel, who supports one of the corners of the pulpit on his shoulders, was clearly modelled on an ancient statue of Hercules and is one of the earliest heroic nude figures in Italian art, often cited as the inauguration of a tradition that would reach perfection with Michelangelo's *David*.

Every 30 minutes, a custodian demonstrates the double dome's remarkable acoustics and echo effects.

## Camposanto & Museo delle Sinópie

Soil shipped from Calvary during the Crusades is said to lie within the white walls of the hauntingly beautiful **Camposanto** (Cemetery; 🕒 8am-8pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm or 7pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb), a cloistered quadrangle where prominent Pisans were once buried. Some of the sarcophagi here are of Graeco-Roman origin, recycled in the Middle Ages.

During WWII, Allied artillery destroyed many of the precious 14th- and 15th-century frescoes that covered the cloister walls. Among the few to survive was the *Triumph of Death* – a remarkable illustration of Hell attributed to 14th-century painter Buonamico Buffalmacco. A program of restoration of those frescoes damaged rather than totally destroyed by the bombs is currently underway and the *sinópie*

(preliminary sketches) drawn by the artists in red earth pigment on the walls of the Camposanto before the frescoes were overpainted are now on display in the **Sinópie Museum** (📞 8am-8pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm or 7pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb), on the opposite side of the square.

## Museo dell'Opera del Duomo

Housed in the Cathedral's former chapter house, the **Museum of the Cathedral** (📞 8am-8pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm or 7pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) is a repository for works of art once displayed in the Cathedral and Baptistry. Highlights include Giovanni Pisano's ivory carving of the *Madonna and Child* (1299), made for the Cathedral's high altar, and his mid-13th-century *Madonna del Colloquio* (Madonna of the Colloquy), from a gate of the Duomo. Legendary booty includes various pieces of Islamic art, including the griffin that once topped the Cathedral and a 10th-century Moorish hippogriff.

## THE CITY

From Piazza dei Miracoli, head south along Via Santa Maria and turn left at Piazza Cavallotti for the splendid **Piazza dei Cavalieri**, remodelled by Vasari in the 16th century. **Palazzo dell'Orologio**, located on the northern side of the piazza, occupies the site of a tower where, in 1288, Count Ugolino della Gherardesca, his sons and grandsons were starved to death on suspicion of having helped the Genovese enemy at the Battle of Meloria, an incident recorded in Dante's *Inferno*. **Palazzo dei Cavalieri**, on the northeastern side of the piazza, was redesigned by Vasari and features remarkable *sgraffito* (a surface covered with plaster which is then scratched away to create a three-dimensional trompe l'œil effect of carved stone or brick). It now houses the Scuola Normale Superiore, considered by many to be the most prestigious university in Italy.

Wander south to the area around Borgo Stretto, the city's medieval heart. Investigate the shops and cafes tucked under the monumental arcades, and marvel at the survival of the graffiti on the facade of **Chiesa di San Michele in Borgo**, which dates all the way back to a 15th-century election for the rector of a local school. A daily food market is held in adjoining **Piazza delle Vettovaglie**, which is ringed with 15th-century porticoes. In the evening, the piazza's bars are popular spots for an *aperitivo*.

From Piazza Garibaldi, veer east along the Lungarno to visit the **Museo Nazionale di San Matteo** (📞 050 54 18 65; Piazza San Matteo in Soarta, Lungarno Mediceo; adult/concession €5/2.50; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun), a repository of medieval masterpieces housed in a 13th-century former Benedictine convent. This fine gallery has a notable collection of 14th- and 15th-century Pisan sculptures, including pieces by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano, Andrea and Nino Pisano, Francesco di Valdambrino, Donatello, Michelozzo and Andrea della Robbia, but its collection of paintings from the Tuscan school (c 12th to 14th centuries) is even better, with works by Berlinghiero, Lippo Memmi, Taddeo Gaddi, Gentile da Fabriano and Ghirlandaio on show. Don't miss Masaccio's *St Paul*, Fra' Angelico's *Madonna of Humility* and Simone Martini's *Polyptych of Saint Catherine*.

To view art from a different era, make your way to the nearby **Babette Food and Art Café** (📞 050 991 33 02; Lungarno Mediceo 15; 🕒 9am-11pm Tue-Sun; 📶), a favourite haunt of the local bohemian set. Its exposed-brick walls play host to a changing programme of works by local artists and its casual vibe encourages coffee-fuelled conversation.

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## THE LEANING CITY OF ITALY

Most people know that Pisa's famous tower leans, but not too many realise that a number of other historic buildings in the city follow its lead. The reason? The soil on which the city is founded is



barely 2m above sea level, made up of a treacherous sand-and-clay mix atop a series of alternate strata of clay, moisture and sand that reaches a depth of more than 40m.

Unfortunately, the city's medieval architects didn't realise that this was the case and failed to compensate with adequate calculations matching the density and mass of structures with the city's precarious ground stability – if architect Bonanno Pisano had designed his tower to have a wider circumference, it probably wouldn't have tilted to the degree we now observe.

Bonanno wasn't the only one to fudge his calculations. In the Piazza dei Miracoli, the Duomo tilts 25cm to the north and the Baptistry inclines a considerable 51cm north. The grand Palazzo Agostini on the Lungarno Mediceo also displays a decided lean.

Additional tilting towers in town include the octagonal bell tower of Chiesa di San Nicola on Via Santa Maria and the tower of Chiesa di San Michele degli Scalzi on Via San Michele degli Scalzi.

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## ACROSS THE ARNO

Cross the Ponte di Mezzo to reach Pisa's major shopping boulevard, **Corso Italia**. West of the corso, facing the river, is the **Palazzo Blu** (☎ 050 2 85 15; [www.palazzoblu.it](http://www.palazzoblu.it); Lungarno Gambacorti 9; 20min tour in Italian free, pre-booked 1hr tour in English or French for up to 5 people €17; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), a magnificently restored 14th-century building that sports over-the-top 19th-century interior decoration. Home to the Foundation CariPisa art collection, which comprises predominantly Pisan works from the 14th to the 20th century, the *palazzo* also hosts temporary exhibitions. Access is via a 20-minute guided tour only (at 4pm, 4.30pm and 5pm daily unless pre-booked).

Continuing west you'll come to one of Pisa's architectural gems, the **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Spina** (Lungarno Gambacorti; adult/concession €2/1.50; 🕒 10am-1.45pm & 3-5.45pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1.45pm & 3-6.45pm Sat Mar-Oct, 10am-2pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb). A fine example of Pisan-Gothic style, this now-deconsecrated church was built between 1223 and 1230 to house a reliquary of a *spina* (thorn) from Christ's crown. Its ornately spired exterior is encrusted with tabernacles and statues but the interior is simple and perfectly suited to quiet reflection. Inside, the focal point is Andrea and Nino Pisano's *Madonna and Child* (aka Madonna of the Rose, 1345–48), a masterpiece of Gothic sculpture that still bears traces of its original colours and gilding. At the other end of the church is a copy of the graceful *Madonna del Latte* (Our Lady of Milk, 1343–47), sculpted by either Nino or Andrea Pisano and now occupying pride of place in the collection of the Museo Nazionale di San Matteo.

## Festivals & Events

On 17 June, the Arno comes to life with the **Regata Storica di San Ranieri**, a rowing competition commemorating the city's patron saint. On the night preceding this event (16 June), Pisa celebrates the **Luminaria**, when some 70,000 candles illuminate the streets running along the Arno river in honour of San Ranieri.

For the **Gioco del Ponte** (Game of the Bridge), on the last Sunday in June, two groups in medieval costume battle it out over the Ponte di Mezzo.

The **Palio delle Quattro Antiche Repubbliche Marinare** (Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics) sees a procession of boats and a dramatic race between the four historical maritime rivals: Pisa, Venice, Amalfi and Genoa. The event rotates between the four towns: it's Pisa's turn in 2010 and 2014. Although usually held in June, it has on occasion been delayed till as late as September.

## Sleeping

## BUDGET

There are no budget hotels or hostels in Pisa worthy of a recommendation.

**Camping Torre Pendente** (☎ 050 56 17 04; [www.campingtorrependente.it](http://www.campingtorrependente.it); Via delle Cascine 86; camping 2 people, car & tent €20-71; 📅 Apr—mid-Oct; 📍) Around 1km northwest of Piazza dei Miracoli, this camping ground isn't Tuscany's most attractive, but it has a supermarket, restaurant and small pool.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel San Francesco** (☎ 050 55 41 09; [www.hotelfrancesco.com](http://www.hotelfrancesco.com); Via Santa Maria 129; r €70-100; 📍 📶 📺) On a busy street leading to the Leaning Tower, the San Francesco offers 13 clean but characterless rooms. Though quiet and relatively well equipped, the standard choices are slightly overpriced; go for one of the 1st-floor rooms (Nos 201 and 202), which share a terrace.

**Hotel Il Giardino** (☎ 050 56 21 01; [www.hotelilgiardino.pisa.it](http://www.hotelilgiardino.pisa.it); Piazza Manin 1; s/d €80/100; 📍 📶 📺) A gaggle of souvenir traders might hit you the second you walk out the door, but the Garden Hotel – an old Medici staging post on the other side of the Cathedral square wall – does have the advantage of a peaceful garden terrace to breakfast on while enjoying the view of the Baptistry dome. Decor is contemporary, with original artworks in all rooms.

**Hotel di Stefano** (☎ 050 55 35 59; [www.hoteldistefano.pisa.it](http://www.hoteldistefano.pisa.it); Via Sant'Apollonia 35-37; s with shared bathroom €45-65, d with shared bathroom €65-80, s with bathroom €65-140, d with bathroom €75-170; 📍) There are three reasons to stay at this friendly three-star: its location in a quiet backstreet in the medieval quarter; its smart, simple rooms; and its terrace with views of the tower's top half. Deluxe rooms in the recently renovated Casa Torre (c 1045) feature wooden-beamed ceilings and exposed stone walls.

**Hotel Bologna** (☎ 050 50 21 20; [www.hotelbologna.pisa.it](http://www.hotelbologna.pisa.it); Via Mazzini 57; s €59-99, d €119-179; 📍 📶 📺) This four-star choice on the south side of the Arno offers quiet, well-equipped rooms, efficient service and a generous breakfast buffet. It's only a 1km walk to Piazza dei Miracoli.

**Royal Victoria Hotel** (☎ 050 94 01 11; [www.royalvictoria.it](http://www.royalvictoria.it); Lungarno Pacinotti 12; r with shared bathroom €80, r with bathroom €100-150; 📍 📶) This doyen of Pisan hotels, run with love and tender care by the Piegaja family for five generations, offers old-world luxury accompanied by warm, attentive service. The central location overlooking the Arno couldn't be better.

## Eating

Being a university town, Pisa has a good range of eating places, especially around Borgo Stretto, the university on Piazza Dante Alighieri and south of the river in the trendy San Martino quarter.

## BUDGET

**Il Montino** (Vicolo del Monte 1; pizza slice €1.20-1.50, full pizza €3.80-7.20; 📅 10.30am-3pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat) Students and sophisticates alike adore the *cecina* (chickpea pizza) and *spuma* (a sweet, non-alcoholic drink) that are the specialities of this famous pizzeria. You can follow their lead or instead opt for a *focaccine* (flat roll) filled with salami, pancetta or *porchetta* (pork). Order to go or claim one of the outdoor tables. You'll find it in the laneway behind Caffetteria Ginostra.

**Bar Pasticceria Salza** (☎ 050 58 02 44; Borgo Stretto 44; 📅 8am-8.30pm Apr-Oct, varies Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) Salza has been tempting patrons off Borgo Stretto and into sugar-induced wickedness ever since the 1920s. Claim one of the tables in the arcade, or save some money by standing at the bar – the excellent coffee and dangerously delicious cakes and chocolates will satisfy regardless of where they are

sampled.

**Trattoria della Faggiola** (☎ 050 55 61 79; Via della Faggiola 1; primi €7-7.50, secondi €8-9.50; ☎ dinner Fri & Sat, lunch Mon-Thu) This popular trattoria recently changed hands, and its loyal clientele suffered a few sleepless nights before the new owners managed to convince them that standards wouldn't slip. Breathing sighs of relief, they continue to choose from the three or four daily specials per course, eaten in the homely interior or at streetside tables. No credit cards.

## MIDRANGE

**Enoteca Osteria Il Colonnino** (☎ 050 313 84 30; Via S Andrea 37-41; meals €31; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Located in the warren of medieval streets between Piazza San Francesco and the river, Il Colonnino is a great spot for lunch, *aperitivo* or dinner, with modern-accented Italian dishes providing perfect accompaniments to an impressive wine list. The weekday lunch deal of a daily plate, water and glass of 'good wine' (€10) is a steal.

**Osteria del Porton Rosso** (☎ 050 58 05 66; Vicolo del Porton Rosso 11; meals €32; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Two menus – one from the land and one from the sea – tempt at this old-fashioned but excellent *osteria* in a laneway behind the Royal Victoria Hotel. Here, Pisan specialities such as fresh ravioli with salted cod and chickpeas happily coexist with Tuscan classics such as grilled fillet steak.

**our pick Ristoro al Vecchio Teatro** (☎ 050 2 02 10; Piazza Dante Alighieri; set menu €35; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Tue-Sat) The Vecchio Teatro's genial host is proud of his set menu, and for good reason. The four courses are dominated by local seafood specialities and diners will encounter delights such as *torta di ceci infranti con le arselle* (an unusual savoury cake of smashed chickpeas with mussels) and risotto with prawns and orange. The dessert finale includes a *castagnaccio* (sweet chestnut cake) that has been known to prompt diners to spontaneous applause.

## Drinking

Most of the student drinking action is in and around Piazza delle Vettovaglie and Piazza Dante.

**Bazeel** ([www.bazeel.it](http://www.bazeel.it), in Italian; Lungarno Pacinotti 1; ☎ 5pm-2am) On the corner of centrally located Piazza Garibaldi, this bar draws a mixed clientele and is famous for its *aperitivo* spread. If you want to score one of the outdoor tables, get there a bit before 6pm. After 9pm there's usually live music or a DJ.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Pisa International Airport Galileo Galilei** (PSA; ☎ 050 84 93 00; [www.pisa-airport.com](http://www.pisa-airport.com)), 2km south of town, is Tuscany's main international airport and handles flights to most major European cities.

### BUS

From its hub on Piazza Sant'Antonio, Pisan bus company **CPT** (Compagnia Pisana Trasporti; ☎ 800 012773; [www.cpt.pisa.it](http://www.cpt.pisa.it), in Italian) runs buses to/from Volterra (€5, two hours, up to 10 daily) and Livorno (€2.50, 55 minutes, half-hourly). To get to Florence or Lucca, take the train.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Pisa is close to the A11 and A12. The SCG FI-PI-LI is a toll-free alternative for Florence and Livorno, while the north—south SS1, the Via Aurelia, connects the city with La Spezia and Rome.

Parking costs between €0.50 and €2 per hour, but you must be careful that the car park you choose is not in the city's exclusion zone (see the boxed text, below). There's a free car park outside the zone on Lungarno Guadalongo near the Fortezza di San Gallo on the south side of the Arno, and well-located pay parking to the west of the Piazza dei Miracoli just outside the Porta di Manin, at the bus station north of the Piazza dei Miracoli, in Piazza Santa Caterina (access this via Porta San Zeno) and on Via Cesare Battisti near the train station on the south side of the river.

## TRAIN

Pisa is connected by rail to Florence and is also on the Rome—La Spezia train line. Destinations include Florence (€5.60 to €11.40, one to 1½ hours, frequent), Rome (€17.65 to €37.10, 2½ to four hours, 16 daily), Livorno (€1.80, 15 minutes, frequent) and Lucca (€2.40, 30 minutes, every 30 minutes). To get to Volterra, catch a train to Cecina (€4.20 to €8.60, 40 to 70 minutes, 23 daily) and then a connecting CPT bus (€3.50, frequent).

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

For Pisa airport, take a train to/from Stazione Pisa Centrale (€1.10, five minutes, 33 per day) or the LAM Rossa (red) line (€1, 10 minutes, every 10 to 20 minutes), which is operated by CPT and passes through the city centre and train station on its way to/from the airport. If you purchase your ticket on board the bus rather than from the airport information office or a newsstand, it will cost an extra €0.50. A taxi between the airport and the city centre will cost between €8 and €10.

**Terravision** ([www.terravision.eu](http://www.terravision.eu)) runs buses between the airport and Florence's Stazione di Santa Maria Novella (adult €10/16 one-way/return, child €5/9, 70 minutes, up to 13 daily). Vaibus/Lazzi runs services between the airport and Lucca (€2.80, one hour, 30 daily). **TRAIN S.p.A.** (☎ 0577 20 42 46; [www.trainspa.it](http://www.trainspa.it)) runs two services daily between the airport and Siena (€14/26 one-way/return).

Local company **Ecovoyager** (☎ 050 56 18 39, 339 7607652; [www.ecovoyager.it](http://www.ecovoyager.it); Via della Faggiola 41; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Fri) offers city bike hire for €12 per day and a 2½-hour Segway tour of the historic centre for €65 per person.

For a taxi call ☎ 050 54 16 00 (airport), ☎ 050 4 12 52 (Pisa railway station) or ☎ 050 56 18 78 (Piazza dei Miracoli).

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## LIVORNO

**pop 160,949**

Livorno is Tuscany's second-largest city and a quintessential port town with few apologies. Having been heavily bombed during WWII, the city was rebuilt with an unfortunate lack of aesthetics.

There's a **tourist kiosk** (☎ 0586 20 46 11; [www.costadeglietruschi.it](http://www.costadeglietruschi.it); Piazza del Municipio; ☎ 9am-5pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) in the centre of town; the **tourist office** (☎ 0586 89 53 20; ☎ Jun-Sep) is near the main ferry terminal at Stazione Marittima.

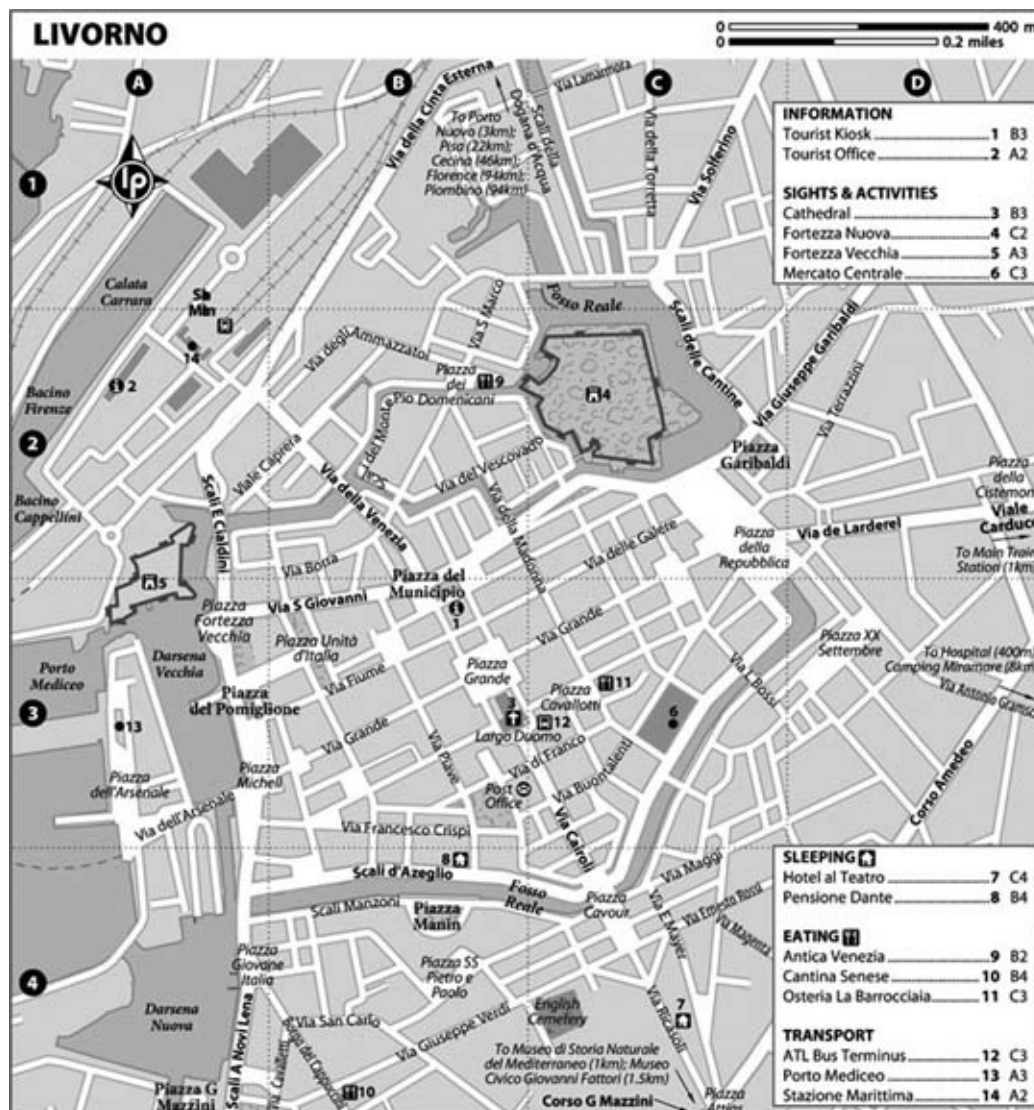
## Sights

**Mercato Centrale** (Via Buontalenti; ☎ 6am-2pm Mon-Sat), Livorno's magnificent late-19th-century,

95m-long neoclassical food market, miraculously survived Allied WWII bombing. Arrive early to appreciate the wares on offer in the amazing fish section.

## WARNING

There is a strict Limited Traffic Zone (ZTL) in Pisa's historic centre for all nonresidents, and this is rigorously enforced. If you drive into the zone, your car will be photographed and a fine of €76 plus administrative costs will be sent to you (or the car-hire company you have used). If you are staying at a hotel in the zone, you must supply the car's registration details to hotel staff as soon as you check in so that they can register you for a temporary permit; if you are disabled, call ☎ 800 086540 and you should also be able to obtain a free temporary permit. For maps of the ZTL, go to <https://secure.comune.pisa.it/tzi/info.jsp>.



The **Fortezza Nuova** (admission free), built for the Medici family in the late 16th century, is in an area known as *Piccola Venezia* (Little Venice) because of its small canals. The interior is now a park and little remains of the fort except for the sturdy outer walls.

Close to the waterfront is the city's other fort, the **Fortezza Vecchia** (Old Fort; admission free), constructed 60 years earlier on the site of an 11th-century building. With huge vertical cracks and bits crumbling away, it looks as though it might give up and slide into the sea at any moment.

Livorno's hands-on **Museo di Storia Naturale del Mediterraneo** (☎ 0586 26 67 11;

[www.provincia.livorno.it](http://www.provincia.livorno.it), in Italian; Via Roma 234; adult/child €10/5; ☎ 9am-1pm Tue-Fri, 3-7pm Tue, Thu & Sat, 3-7pm Sun) is an exhaustive, first-rate museum experience for the natural sciences. Temporary exhibits rotate continually.

The **Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori** (☎ 0586 80 80 01; [museofattori@comune.livorno.it](mailto:museofattori@comune.livorno.it); Via San Jacopo in Acquaviva 65; admission €4; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun), in a pretty park 1km south of the city, features works by the Livorno-based 19th-century Macchiaioli school.

## Sleeping

**Camping Miramare** (☎ 0586 58 04 02; [www.campingmiramare.com](http://www.campingmiramare.com); Via del Littorale 220; camping per person €9-10, pitch €20-40; ☎ year-round; 🚻) This is a shady place with its own restaurant and pizzeria, right beside the beach in Antignano, about 8km south of town. There are three categories of campsites, including some with sea views, sun chairs and umbrellas.

**Pensione Dante** (☎ 349 6260076; [mihaela.b@hotmail.it](mailto:mihaela.b@hotmail.it); 1st fl, Scali d'Azeglio 28; s/d €30/40) New management has introduced new beds and vastly improved bathrooms and a kitchen here. Rooms are large and bare, some with a view of the canal, but everything is squeaky clean. The new breakfast room opens to the canal as well, and has a TV and coffee machine.

**Hotel Al Teatro** (☎ 0586 89 87 05; [www.hotelalteatro.it](http://www.hotelalteatro.it); Via Enrico Mayer 42; s €95-110, d €130-150; 🚻 🚰 🚿) This popular eight-room boutique hotel has smallish, colour-themed rooms with understated, classic furniture and tapestry bedspreads. A few have views of the garden with a 200-year-old tree. Disabled access.

## Eating

**Cantina Senese** (☎ 0586 89 02 39; Borgo dei Cappuccini 95; meals from €19; ☎ Mon-Sat) Food- and value-conscious harbour workers are the first to fill the long wooden tables at this wonderfully unpretentious and friendly eatery, with neighbourhood families arriving later. Ordering is frequently done via faith in one's server, rather than by menu. The mussels are exceptionally good, as is the *cacciucco di pesce* (fish stew).

**Antica Venezia** (☎ 0586 88 73 53; Piazza dei Domenicani; meals €23; ☎ Mon-Sat) A dog-eared, pen-written menu filled with tempting dishes can be produced, with difficulty, if requested, but servers prefer to launch straight into the catch-of-the-day specials, usually negating the need for further consideration. A giant *cacciucco* costs €16.

**Osteria La Barrocciaia** (☎ 0586 88 26 37; Piazza Cavallotti 13; meals €22; ☎ Tue-Sat) The worst-kept dining secret in Livorno it may be, but locating Barrocciaia still takes a careful eye, what with it being the most inconspicuous facade and well-hidden sign in Piazza Cavallotti. Big sandwiches (€5) are sold out of the tiny front room, but with luck and timing you can score a table and enjoy the real reason every local speaks of this place with reverence.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Livorno is a major port. Regular departures for Sardinia and Corsica leave from Calata Carrara, beside Stazione Marittima. Ticket prices vary wildly depending on date and time of travel. Ferries to Capraia and Gorgona depart from Porto Mediceo, a smaller terminal near Piazza dell'Arsenale. Some services to Sardinia depart from Porto Nuovo, about 3km north of the city along Via Sant'Orlando. Ferry companies

operating from Livorno include:

**Corsica Ferries & Sardinia Ferries** (☎ 019 21 55 11; [www.corsicaferries.com](http://www.corsicaferries.com), [www.sardiniaferries.com](http://www.sardiniaferries.com); Stazione Marittima) Heads to Bastia in Corsica (deck class €28 to €36, four hours, two or three services per week, daily summer) and Sardinia (deck class to Golfo Aranci, near Olbia, €32 to €40, six hours express, nine hours regular ferry, four services per week, daily summer).

**Lloyd Sardegna** (☎ 0565 22 23 00; [www.lloydsardegna.it](http://www.lloydsardegna.it)) Daily ferries to Sardinia (Olbia, €15 to €45, 11 hours).

**Moby** (☎ 199 30 30 40; [www.moby.it](http://www.moby.it)) Services to Bastia, Corsica (€19 to €46, three to four hours) and Olbia, Sardinia (€16 to €83, eight to 12 hours).

**Toremar** (☎ 199 12 31 99; [www.toremar.it](http://www.toremar.it), in Italian) Daily services to Isola di Capraia (€14.20, 2½ hours).

## BUS

**ATL** (☎ 800 317700; [www.atl.livorno.it](http://www.atl.livorno.it)) buses depart Pisa International Airport Galileo Galilei travelling to Livorno; they return via Pisa's Stazione Centrale (€2.90, one hour, hourly). CPT offers services to Pisa's Piazza Sant'Antonio (€2.50, 55 minutes, half-hourly).

## TRAIN

Livorno is on the Rome—La Spezia line and is also connected to Florence and Pisa. Destinations include Rome (€16.65 to €30, three to four hours, 12 daily), Florence (€6.50, 1½ hours, 16 daily) and Pisa (€1.80, 15 minutes, frequent).

Trains are less frequent to Stazione Marittima, the station for the ports, but buses to and from the main train station run regularly.

## Getting Around

ATL bus 1 runs from the main train station to Porto Mediceo. To reach Stazione Marittima, take bus 7 or electric bus PB1, PB2 or PB3. All pass through Piazza Grande.

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## ELBA

**pop 31,000**

Napoleon would think twice about fleeing from Elba were he exiled here today. Though it's a bit more congested now than when he arrived in 1814 (he engineered an escape in less than a year), the island is an ever-glorious setting of beaches, blue waters, mountain trekking and mind-bending views.

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## CYCLING THE ETRUSCAN COAST

The central coast is a favourite destination for cyclists, particularly along parts of the Strada del Vino Costa degli Etruschi ([www.lastradadelvino.com](http://www.lastradadelvino.com)), a 150km wine route running south from Livorno to Piombino and across to Elba.

If you're keen to explore on two wheels, a wonderfully conceived and detailed list of routes with maps designed by cycling journalist Enrico Caracciolo can be found at [www.costadeglietruschi.it](http://www.costadeglietruschi.it).

including accommodation options that cater to cyclists. Enrico lives in Donoratico, on this part of the coast, and is full of tips for travellers keen to explore by bike: ‘Go slow, look around, and be ready for hilly roads. Don’t plan your itinerary by only studying a map. You must ask people about road conditions – the map will not tell you if that road is good for cyclists or busy with speeding trucks and cars. For example, the Cecina-Volterra (SS68) and Siena-Grosseto (SS223) roads can be very dangerous. Saturdays and Sundays, when there aren’t any trucks on the roads, are the best times to cycle.’

Enrico also notes that many excellent organized bike tours are on offer in this part of Tuscany – he particularly recommends those run by Cinghiale Cycling Tours ([www.cinghiale.com](http://www.cinghiale.com)), an outfit run by ex-pro American racer Andy Hampsten.

Tourist offices in Tuscany stock free cycling information, including *Cycling on the Tuscan Coast and the Islands of the Archipelago*, a handy kit comprising a booklet and 48 glossy itinerary cards; the *Discovering Tuscany by Bike* booklet; and *Trekking Bike* magazine.

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Over a million visitors a year take the one-hour ferry cruise out here, and in Portoferraio, the primary arrival point, it sometimes feels like they’ve all decided to turn up on the same weekend. Elba is the largest, most visited and most heavily populated island of the Tuscan Archipelago – which incorporates the **Parco Nazionale Arcipelago Toscano** ([www.islepark.it](http://www.islepark.it)), Europe’s largest marine protected area – yet this 28km-long, 19km-wide island has plenty of quiet nooks, particularly if you time a visit for April, May or September. Avoid August at all costs.

## ACTIVITIES

The multilingual tourist-office leaflet *Lo Sport Emerge dal Mare* has a useful map and lists walking and cycling trails plus where to sign on for scuba diving, windsurfing and other watery activities.

The **Centro Trekking Isola d’Elba** (☎ 0565 93 08 37; [www.geniodelbosco.it](http://www.geniodelbosco.it)), run by Il Genio del Bosco, leads trekking, biking and kayaking excursions around Elba, Capraia, Giglio and Pianosa.

**Il Libraio** (☎ 0565 91 71 35; Calata Mazzini 10, Portoferraio) stocks a variety of walking and biking maps for the island.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Elba is an agreeable one-hour ferry journey from Piombino. If you arrive in Piombino by train, take a connecting train on to the port. Boats to Portoferraio are the most frequent, while some call in at Rio Marina, Marina di Campo and Porto Azzurro.

Boats are run by Moby and Toremar. Unless it is a summer weekend or the middle of August, when queues can form, simply buy a ticket at the port. Fares (€10 to €18 per person, €35 to €49 per small car) vary according to the season.

Toremar also operates a passenger-only hydrofoil service (€14 to €17, 40 minutes) year-round, and, between June and August, a fast vehicle and passenger service (two people and car from €69.20 return) to Portoferraio.

## Portoferraio

Known to the Romans as Fabricia and later Ferraia (since it was a port for iron exports), this small harbour was acquired by Cosimo I de’ Medici in the mid-16th century, when the fortifications took shape.

It can be a hectic place, but wandering the streets/steps of the historic centre and indulging in the exceptional eating options more than make up for the squeeze.



## INFORMATION

**Associazione Albergatori Isola d'Elba** (☎ 0565 91 55 55; [www.elbapromotion.it](http://www.elbapromotion.it), in Italian; 2nd fl, Calata Italia 26) The island's professional hotel association can reserve accommodation.

**Elba Link** ([www.elbalink.it](http://www.elbalink.it)) Carries lots of useful information about the island.

**Info Park Are@** (☎ 0565 91 88 09; [infoparkare@gmail.com](mailto:infoparkare@gmail.com); cnr Viale Elba & Calata Italia; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm daily summer, Mon-Sat rest of year) Information office of the Parco Nazionale Arcipelago Toscano.

**Tourist office** (Agenzia per il Turismo dell'Archipelago Toscano; ☎ 0565 91 46 71; [www.aptelba.it](http://www.aptelba.it); Calata Italia 43; ☎ 9am-7pm Jun-Sep, 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun Apr & May, 9am-1pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 9am-1pm & 3-5pm Tue & Thu Feb & Mar) Near the ferry port, it has a list of the island's limited internet log-on options.

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## ELBA TREK

A dizzying network of walking and mountain-biking trails blanket Elba. Though some start right at Portoferraio, walkers can easily get to/from better, far-flung trailheads using the island's robust bus network. A few suggested outings are listed at [www.elbalink.it](http://www.elbalink.it), though the tourist office, Info Park Are@ and Il Libraio in Portoferraio have excellent trail maps for custom expedition planning.

Recommended walks include the following:

- **San Lucia to San Martino** A low-impact, 90-minute walk, starting just outside Portoferraio at the church of San Lucia, traversing meadows and former farmland being repossessed by nature for about 2.2km and terminating at Napoleon's villa in San Martino.
  - **Marciana to Chiessi** A 12km trek starting on high in Marciana, dribbling downhill, past ancient churches, sea vistas and granite boulders for about six hours to the seaside in Chiessi.
  - **The Great Elba Crossing** A three-to-four day, 60km east—west island crossing, including Monte Capanne, Elba's highest point (1019m), overnighing down on the coast as camping is not allowed on the paths. The highlight is the final 19km leg from Poggio to Pomonte, passing the Sanctuary of Madonna del Monte and the Masso dell'Aquila rock formation.
- 

## SIGHTS

From the ferry terminal, the old town, enclosed by a medieval wall and protected by a pair of brooding fortresses, is a bit less than a kilometre along the foreshore. Here you'll encounter the **Villa dei Mulini** (☎ 0565 91 58 46; Piazzale Napoleone; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon & Wed-Sat, to 1pm Sun), Napoleon's home while he was emperor of this small isle, with its splendid terraced garden and library. During his Elban exile, he certainly didn't want for creature comforts – contrast his Elba lifestyle with the simplicity of his camp bed and travelling trunk when he was on the campaign trail. While the history lesson is nice, the dearth of actual Napoleonic artefacts is a tad disappointing.

The **Villa Napoleonica di San Martino** (☎ 0565 91 46 88; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Wed-Sat, to 1pm Sun), where Napoleon occasionally dropped in, is set in hills about 5km southwest of town. Modest by Napoleonic standards, it is dominated by the overbearing mid-19th-century gallery at its base, built to house his memorabilia. A combined ticket for both villas is €5.

## SLEEPING & EATING

In the height of summer many hotels operate a compulsory half-board policy.

**Camping Village Rosselba le Palme** (☎ 0565 93 31 01; [www.rosselbalepalme.it](http://www.rosselbalepalme.it); per person/tent/rooms €16/21/23-90) Set around a genuine botanical garden, and said to be one of the best campsites in Europe, this ‘village’ offers activities including tennis, archery and diving classes taught by Jean-Jacques Mayol, son of legendary free diver Jacques Mayol. A mini-market, bar and pizzeria are on-site.

**Albergo Ape Elbana** (☎ 0565 91 42 45; [www.ape-elbana.it](http://www.ape-elbana.it); Salita de’ Medici 2; s €45-80, d €60-110; 📄 📞) In the old town, overlooking Piazza della Repubblica (where guests can park for free), this butter-coloured building is the island’s oldest hotel, where guests of Napoleon are reputed to have stayed. The position is its best feature as rooms, while large, are a little soulless. Ask for one of the larger ones overlooking the piazza.

**Villa Ombrosa** (☎ 0565 91 43 63; [www.villaombrosa.it](http://www.villaombrosa.it); Via De Gasperi 3; s €57-132, d €82-224; 📄 📞) One of the very few hotels on the island that’s open all year round. With a great location overlooking the sea and Spiaggia delle Ghiaie, it also has its own small private beach. Half-board, considerably more creative than many hotels’ bland buffet fare, is obligatory in summer.

**Il Castagnaccio Pizzeria** (☎ 0565 91 58 45; Via del Mercato Vecchio 5; half/whole pizzas €3/6) Down a narrow street from Piazza Cavour in the historic centre, this is a local institution for takeaway or sit-down pizza bliss. More than 20 different types of wood-fired pizza appear on the menu.

**Cafescondido** (☎ 340 3400881; Via del Carmine 65; meals €27; 📞 Mon-Sat) Way up the hill, towards Fortezza Falcone, with a raucous cafe at the front that gives no sign of the delicious food served in the impressionist art—festooned back room. Servers deftly explain Elba-centric culinary permutations on the chalkboard menu.

**our pick La Libertaria** (☎ 0565 91 49 78; Calata Matteotti 12; meals €30; 📞 Apr-Oct) Seating capacity and backdrops are meagre, but the food here is divine. The *linguine sarde e finocchietto* (pasta with sardines and fennel) is an unlikely treat, and the cooked-to-perfection *tonno in crosta di pistacchi* (tuna fillet with pistachio crust) may actually keep you in Portoferraio an extra night for a second helping.

## GETTING AROUND

Scream around Elba by mountain bike or scooter. Typical high-season daily rates for city bikes are €15, mountain bikes €24, mopeds €28 and scooters (100 to 125cc) €40. Don’t bother with a vehicle: the roads are already overclogged with cars in summer. **Two Wheels Network** (TWN; ☎ 0565 91 46 66; [www.twn-rent.it](http://www.twn-rent.it); Viale Elba 32, Portoferraio) rents bikes, scooters and even kayaks.

ATL runs an efficient trans-island service. Pick up a timetable from the main **bus station** (Viale Elba, Portoferraio). From Portoferraio (the bus station is almost opposite the Toremar jetty), there are at least seven runs daily (all €2) to/from Marciana Marina, Marina di Campo, Capoliveri and Porto Azzurro. A day pass costs €7 and a six-day run-around pass is €19.

## Marciana Marina

Unlike most cookie-cutter marinas, Marciana Marina, 20km west of Portoferraio, has character and history to complement its pleasant pebble beaches. It’s a fine base for attacking the island’s best walking trails.

**Hotel Marinella** (☎ 0565 9 90 18; [www.elbahotelmarinella.it](http://www.elbahotelmarinella.it); Viale Margherita 38; B&B per person €45-92, half-board €53-100; 📞 Easter—mid-Oct; 📄 📞 📞), located 200m from the beach, has facilities

including two tennis courts, sea-water pool, garden, restaurant and bar.

**Osteria del Piano** (☎ 0565 90 72 92; Via Provinciale 24; meals €29; 📅 Apr-Oct), about halfway between Portoferraio and Marciana Marina, is on the road just outside Procchio. It serves up astonishing concoctions such as black-and-white spaghetti served with a crab sauce.

**Il Ristorante Scaraboci** (☎ 0565 99 68 68; Via XX Settembre 29; meals €40; 📅 Thu-Tue) is a promising fish and seafood venue where all pastas and desserts are homemade. For something special, try the *spaghetto al sugo d'astice* (spaghetti with lobster sauce).

## Porto Azzurro & Capoliveri

Dominated by its fort, which was built in 1603 by Philip III of Spain and is now a prison, Porto Azzurro is a pleasant resort town close to some excellent beaches. There's a **tourist office** (📅 4-10pm Mon-Sat mid-Jul—Sep) on Via Vittorio Veneto.

**Hotel Belmare** (☎ 0565 9 50 12; [www.elba-hotelbelmare.it](http://www.elba-hotelbelmare.it); Banchina IV Novembre; per person €40-75; 📅 year-round; 📺) sits in an enviable location on the main promenade. It's nothing fancy, but rooms are comfy enough. There's a small bar and TV room for post-beach R&R. Only some rooms have air-con.

**Osteria La Botte Gaia** (☎ 0565 9 56 07; [www.labottegaia.com](http://www.labottegaia.com); Via Europa 5-7; meals €34-38; 📅 dinner only, closed Mon winter) is Slow Food—featured and deservedly so. Homemade pasta supplements the ever-changing daily menu that runneth over with just-caught fish options and a few veggie plates.

From Porto Azzurro, take a short trip south to **Capoliveri**, one of the island's little hill-top surprise packets. Wander its narrow streets and enjoy the giddy views before trying out one of the nearby beaches such as Barabarca, accessible only by a steep track that winds down the cliff, and Zuccale, more easily reached and perfect for a family outing. For more information, go to the **tourist office** (☎ 0565 96 70 29; Piazza Matteotti; 📅 9am-noon & 7-10pm Mon-Sat mid-Jun—Sep).

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## CENTRAL TUSCANY

This part of the region boasts famous wines, postcard-perfect landscapes and cultural gems galore, including the Gothic buildings of Siena, medieval towers of San Gimignano and the Renaissance town centre in Pienza.

### CHIANTI

When people imagine classic Tuscan countryside, they usually conjure up images of Chianti – gentle hills, sun-baked farmhouses and lots of vines. This area between Florence and Siena produces some of the country's most heavily marketed wine, the best known of which is Chianti Classico, a Sangiovese-dominated drop sold under the Gallo Nero (Black Cockerel/Rooster) symbol.

The area is split between the provinces of Florence (Chianti Fiorentino) and Siena (Chianti Senese). The lovely Monti del Chianti rising into the Apennines marks the area's eastern boundary and the scenic Strada Chiantigiana (the SS222) snakes from Florence to Siena. Vineyards and olive groves carpet much of Chianti, a wealthy pocket studded with Romanesque churches known as *pievi* and the historic castles of Florentine and Siennese warlords.

Bus-hopping is feasible, but having your own wheels – two or four – is the only real way to discover the region. You can rent wheels from **Ramuzzi** (☎ 055 85 30 37; [www.ramuzzi.com](http://www.ramuzzi.com); Via Italo Stecchi 23; bike/50cc scooter per day €20/30; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) in Greve in Chianti. **Florence by Bike** (Map; ☎ 055 48 89 92; [www.florencebybike.it](http://www.florencebybike.it); Via San Zanobi 120-122r) offers a 32km-long day tour of northern Chianti (including lunch and wine tasting, €76) leaving Florence at 9.30am and returning by 4pm. Other companies offering guided bike tours of the region include **I Bike Florence** (☎ 055 012 39 94; [www.ibikeflorence.com](http://www.ibikeflorence.com)), **I Bike Italy** (☎ 055 234 23 71; [www.ibikeitaly.com](http://www.ibikeitaly.com)) and **I Bike Tuscany** (☎ 335 812 07 69; [www.ibiketuscany.com](http://www.ibiketuscany.com)).

## Greve in Chianti

**pop 14,087**

This small town, 20km south of Florence on the SS222 and the only one in Chianti easily accessible from Florence by SITA bus (€3.10, one hour, half-hourly), has two claims to fame. They are the historic *macelleria* (butcher shop) **Antica Macelleria Falorni** (☎ 055 85 30 29; [www.falorni.it](http://www.falorni.it); Piazza Matteotti 71; 🕒 closed Wed pm & daily 1-4pm), known for its mean cuts since 1729; and Giovanni da Verrazzano (1485–1528). Local-boy-made-good and discoverer of New York harbour, Verrazzano was commemorated there by the Verrazzano Narrows bridge linking Staten Island to Brooklyn (the good captain lost a ‘z’ from his name somewhere in the mid-Atlantic).

In the first or second week of September, the town’s main square, Piazza Matteotti, hosts Greve’s annual wine fair. At other times, head to **Le Cantine di Greve in Chianti** (☎ 055 854 64 04; [www.lecantine.it](http://www.lecantine.it); Piazza delle Cantine 2; 🕒 10am-7pm), a vast commercial *enoteca* stocking more than 1200 varieties of wine. To indulge in some of the 140 different wines available for tasting here (including Super Tuscans, top DOCs and DOCGs, *Vin Santo* and grappa), buy a prepaid wine card costing €10 to €25 from the central bar, stick it into one of the many taps and out trickles your tippable of choice. Any unused credit will be refunded when you return the card. It’s fabulous fun, though somewhat distressing for designated drivers. To find it, look for the supermarket on the main road – it’s down a staircase opposite the supermarket entrance.

Three kilometres north of the town is the ancestral home of Greve’s New York pioneer, **Castello di Verrazzano** (☎ 055 85 42 43; [www.verrazzano.com](http://www.verrazzano.com); 🕒 guided tours 10am & 11am Mon-Fri), the castle of an estate where Tuscan produce – Chianti Classico, *Vin Santo*, grappa, honey, olive oil and balsamic vinegar – has been produced for centuries. You can tour its historic wine cellar and gardens and enjoy a tasting of its wines (1½ hours, €14, Monday to Friday only) or go the whole hog and lunch on five estate-produced courses in the company of five different wines (three hours, €48, Monday to Friday only). On Saturdays, there’s a 2½-hour ‘Chianti Tradition’ option including a tour, tasting and light repast (€28).

In the nearby 11th-century abbey of **Badia di Passignano**, another famous wine estate can be visited. The historic cellars here contain the viticulture stash of the Antinori family ([www.antinori.it](http://www.antinori.it)), one of Tuscany’s oldest and most prestigious wine-making families. Guided **wine tours** (2hr visit €25; 🕒 3.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat) visit the estate’s cellar and vineyard and you taste four Antinori wines; bookings must be made in advance at the **Osteria di Passignano** (☎ 055 807 12 78; [www.osteriadipassignano.com](http://www.osteriadipassignano.com); Via Passignano 31; 🕒 wine shop 10am-11pm Mon-Sat), the Antinori wine shop and restaurant situated below the abbey. You don’t need to make a reservation to enjoy a **wine-tasting** (€15, €20 or €30 for three wines depending on what you taste) in the *osteria*.

The **tourist office** (☎ 055 854 62 87; Piazza Matteotti 11; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, & on Sat May-Sep) stocks a mine of electronic info on wineries to visit and trails to cycle or stroll. Particularly popular is the 3km-long walk west (1½ to two hours) to **Castello di Montefioralle**, a medieval fortified

hill-top village with a 10th-century Romanesque church and a couple of restaurants to lunch at.

Note that a popular open-air market is held in Piazza Matteotti every Saturday morning – do not leave your car there the night before as it may be towed away.

## SLEEPING

**Ostello del Chianti** (☎ 055 805 02 65; [www.ostellodelchianti.it](http://www.ostellodelchianti.it); Via Roma 137, Tavernelle Val Di Pesa; dm €14.50, d with shared bathroom €35, d with bathroom €45; 📞 reception 8.30am-11am & 4pm-midnight mid-Mar—Oct; 📍 📶) One of Italy's oldest hostels (it's been going strong since the 1950s), this recently renovated hostel oozes dynamism. The dorms max out at six beds (those in the original wing even have two bathrooms), bike hire can be arranged and it has a great garden for *aperitivi*. Breakfast costs €1.70. Tavernelle is around 14km southwest of Greve.

**Agrifuturismo** (☎ 339 5019849; [www.agrifuturismo.com](http://www.agrifuturismo.com); Strada San Silvestro 11, Barberino Val d'Elsa; 2-/4-/6-bed apt €70/100/120; 📶) Woods filled with oak, juniper, cypress and pine trees sit next to ancient terraces of olive trees on this farm estate 13km southwest of Greve. All cultivation is pesticide-, herbicide- and fertilizer-free, and sustainable features such as solar panels, rain collection and recycling are utilised. The apartments are charming, with a strong and attractive design ethos. All have kitchens. No credit cards.

**Fattoria di Rignana** (☎ 055 85 20 65; [www.rignana.it](http://www.rignana.it); Val di Rignana 15, Rignana; d in fattoria €95-105, d in villa €130-140; 📍 📶 📶) This old farmstead and noble villa 3.8km from Badia di Passignano offers a textbook Chianti experience – namely, great views, wine and food in a tranquil and comfortable vineyard environment. Two accommodation options are on offer: utterly gorgeous frescoed rooms in the 17th-century villa and more rustic rooms in the adjoining *fattoria* (farmhouse).

**Villa Vignamaggio** (☎ 055 85 46 61; [www.vignamaggio.it](http://www.vignamaggio.it); Via Petriolo 5; d €135-450; 📍 📶 📶 📶) A location in Kenneth Branagh's film *Much Ado About Nothing*, this vast 15th-century complex 5km south of Greve makes wine and grappa, and has self-catering apartments and cottages to rent. From Greve, follow the SS222 south for 2km and turn left towards Lamole.

## EATING

**L'Antica Macelleria Cecchini** (☎ 055 85 20 20; <http://dariocecchini.blogspot.com>, Via XX Luglio 11; 📞 9am-2pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Sun, to 6pm Fri & Sat) The small town of Panzano southwest of Greve is known throughout Italy for the *macelleria* owned and run by extrovert butcher, Dario Cecchini. This Tuscan celebrity has carved out a niche for himself as a poetry-spouting guardian of the *bistecca* and other Tuscan meaty treats. He's even opened a burger joint, Mac Dario, above the shop (€10 for a burger, potatoes and vegetables).

**Osteria Le Pazanelle** (☎ 0577 73 35 11; Lucarelli; meals €25; 📞 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Perfect for a light lunch beneath trees, this roadside inn makes a great lunch stop en route from Greve to Siena. Swiss-born chef Angelo cooks up a straightforward choice of around six dishes per course. Don't miss his crostini topped with *lardo* and orange peel, or his pasta dressed in a *pecorino* and pear sauce. Find it 5km south of Panzano on the SP2 to Radda in Chianti.

**La Cantinetta di Rignana** (☎ 055 85 26 01; [www.lacantinettadirignana.it](http://www.lacantinettadirignana.it); Rignana; meals €30; 📞 lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) Idyllically nestled in the old oil mill on the Rignana estate (left), this eatery offers quintessential Tuscan views from its large terrace. Rustic dishes on offer include wild boar carpaccio (thin slices of fish or meat), truffle-stuffed ravioli, warm gooey oven-baked *tomino* (a type of cheese) with locally gathered mushrooms or a simple grilled slab of meat. Service is friendly, but we

were perplexed by the fact that the *cantinetta* doesn't serve wine by the glass – a real problem for diners who need to get back behind the wheel. It's a 15-minute drive from Badia di Passignano, between Panzano and Mercatale Val di Pesa.

**our pick Osteria di Passignano** (☎ 055 807 12 78; [www.osteriadipassignano.com](http://www.osteriadipassignano.com); Via di Passignano 33; meals €65, degustation menus €60 & €100; 🍴 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This elegant dining room on the Antinori Estate is one of Tuscany's most impressive restaurants. The delectable food utilises local produce and is decidedly Tuscan in inspiration, but its execution is refined rather than rustic.

## Castellina

The cylindrical silos at Castellina's entry brim with Chianti Classico, the wine that brought wealth to this old frontier town between warring Siena and Florence.

From the southern car park, take Via Ferruccio, then turn almost immediately right to walk into town beneath the tunnel-like **Via del Volte**. This medieval street, originally open to the elements, then encroached upon by shops and houses, is now a long, vaulted, shady tunnel, particularly welcome in the summertime. Nearby, the area's Etruscan roots form the focus of the modern **Museo Archeologico del Chianti Senese** (☎ 055 74 20 90; [www.museoarcheologicochianti.it](http://www.museoarcheologicochianti.it); Piazza del Comune 18; adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Thu-Tue).

The privately run **tourist office** (☎ 0577 74 13 92; [www.essenceoftuscany.it](http://www.essenceoftuscany.it); Via Ferruccio 26; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-6pm daily Mar-Nov, 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Sat Dec & Feb) can help with maps, tours, accommodation and information.

Down a valley at the end of a 1.5km dirt road, **Locanda La Capannuccia** (☎ 0577 74 11 83; [www.lacapannuccia.it](http://www.lacapannuccia.it); Borgo di Pietrafitta; d €95-125; 🕒 Mar—mid-Oct; 🍴 📺) is a charming Tuscan getaway. Its five rooms are furnished with antiques and hosts Mario and Daniela couldn't be more welcoming. Reserve in the morning for one of Daniela's very special dinners (€24 to €28, Monday to Saturday). To get there, head north along the SS222 from Castellina and turn left to Pietrafitta.

## Radda in Chianti

Shields and escutcheons add a dash of drama to the facade of 16th-century **Palazzo del Podestà** (Piazza Ferrucci), facing the church on the main square of this popular tourist spot 11km east of Castellina. The volunteer-staffed **Ufficio Pro Loco** (☎ 0577 73 84 94; Piazza Castello 6; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1pm Sun mid-Apr—mid-Oct, 10.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat mid-Oct—mid-Apr) supplies tourist information, including ample info on walking in the area, such as several pretty half-day walks. **Enoteca Toscana** (☎ 0577 73 88 45; Via Roma 29) is the place to taste and buy local wine and olive oil.

Alternatively, head 6km north to the gorgeous old-stone hill-top hamlet of **Castello di Volpaia** (☎ 0577 73 80 66; [www.volpaia.it](http://www.volpaia.it); Piazza della Cisterna 1, Volpaia), where particularly lovely wines, olive oils and vinegars have been made for aeons. Book ahead to enjoy a tour or take a cooking class, or pop into the *enoteca*, which is inside the main tower of the castle, to stock up on a few bottles.

Continuing south to Siena, take a walk on the wild art side at the **Parco Sculture del Chianti** (☎ 0577 35 71 51; [www.chiantisculpturepark.it](http://www.chiantisculpturepark.it); adult/child €7.50/5; 🕒 10am-sunset Apr-Oct, by appointment Nov-Mar), a vast green wooded area studded with contemporary sculptures and art installations in Pievasciata, 20km south of Gaiole and 13km north of Siena.

# SIENA

**pop 53,881**

The rivalry between historic adversaries Siena and Florence continues to this day, and every traveller seems to strongly identify with one over the other. It often boils down to aesthetic preference: while Florence saw its greatest flourishing during the Renaissance, Siena's enduring artistic glories are largely Gothic – though there's also the eternal question of who has the best patron saint (Siena's Santa Caterina, obviously).

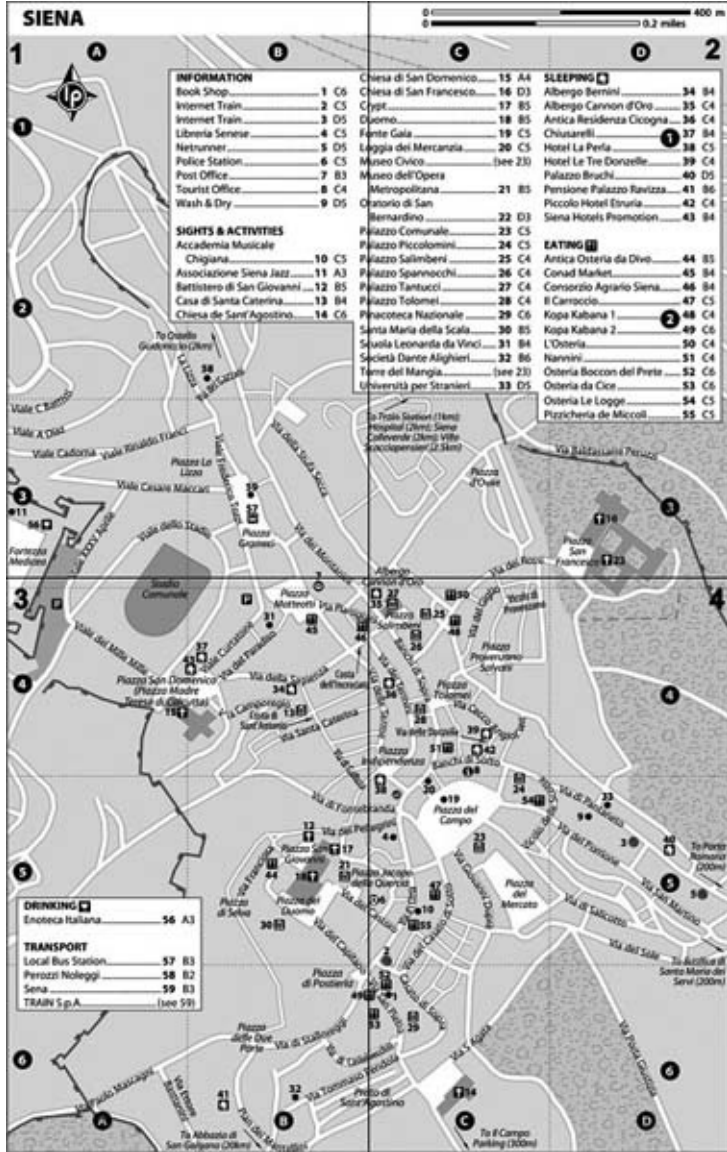
One of Italy's most enchanting cities, Siena's medieval centre is chock-full of majestic buildings and its profusion of churches and small museums harbour a wealth of artwork. Make sure you allow enough time to wander the snarled lanes of the historic centre, a Unesco World Heritage site.

## History

According to legend, Siena was founded by the son of Remus, and the symbol of the wolf feeding the twins Romulus and Remus is as ubiquitous in Siena as in Rome. In reality the city was probably of Etruscan origin, although it didn't begin to grow into a proper town until the 1st century BC, when the Romans established a military colony here called Sena Julia.

In the 12th century, Siena's wealth, size and power grew along with its involvement in commerce and trade. Its rivalry with neighbouring Florence also grew proportionately, leading to numerous wars during the first half of the 13th century between Guelph Florence and Ghibelline Siena. In 1230 Florence besieged Siena and catapulted dung and donkeys over its walls. Siena's revenge came at the Battle of Montaperti in 1260 but victory was short-lived. Only 10 years later, the Tuscan Ghibellines were defeated by Charles of Anjou and for almost a century Siena was allied to Florence, the chief town of the Tuscan Guelph League (supporters of the Pope).

This was when Siena, ruled by the Council of Nine (a bourgeois group constantly bickering with the aristocracy), enjoyed its greatest prosperity. It was the Council that directed the construction of so many of the fine buildings in the Sienese-Gothic style that give the city its striking appearance, including lasting monuments such as the cathedral, the Palazzo Comunale and Il Campo.



**SIENA**

0 0.2 miles 400 m

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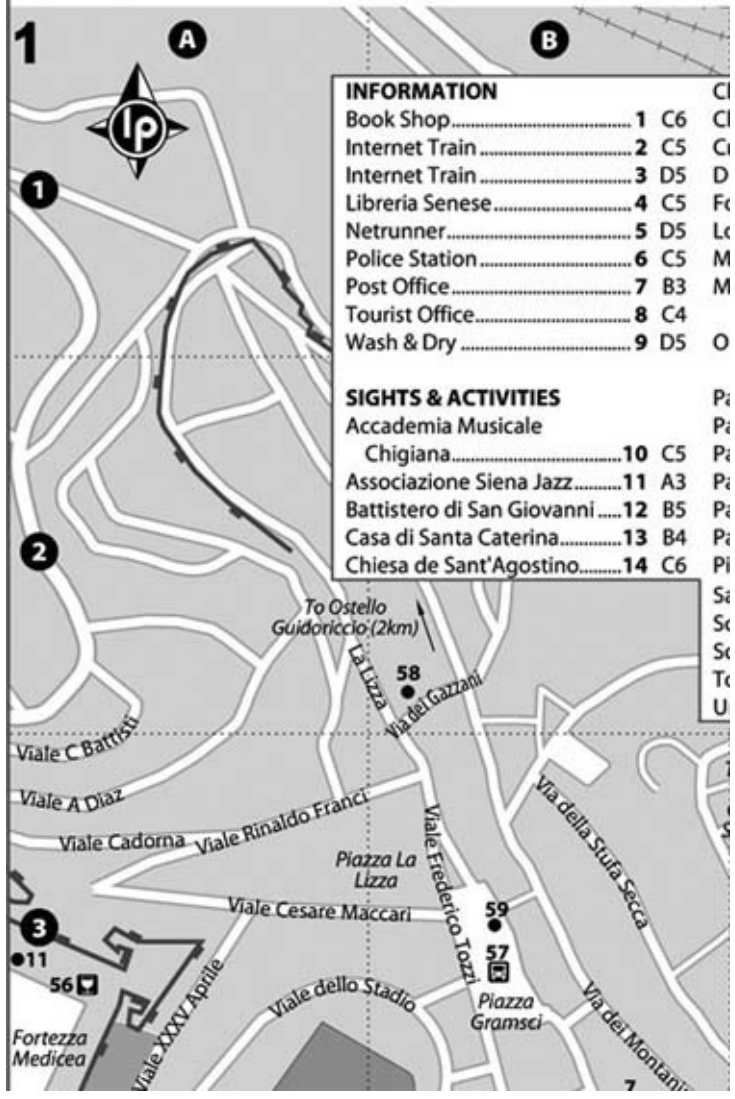
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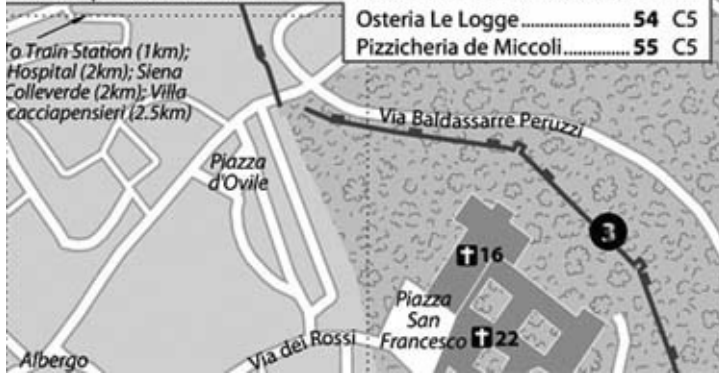
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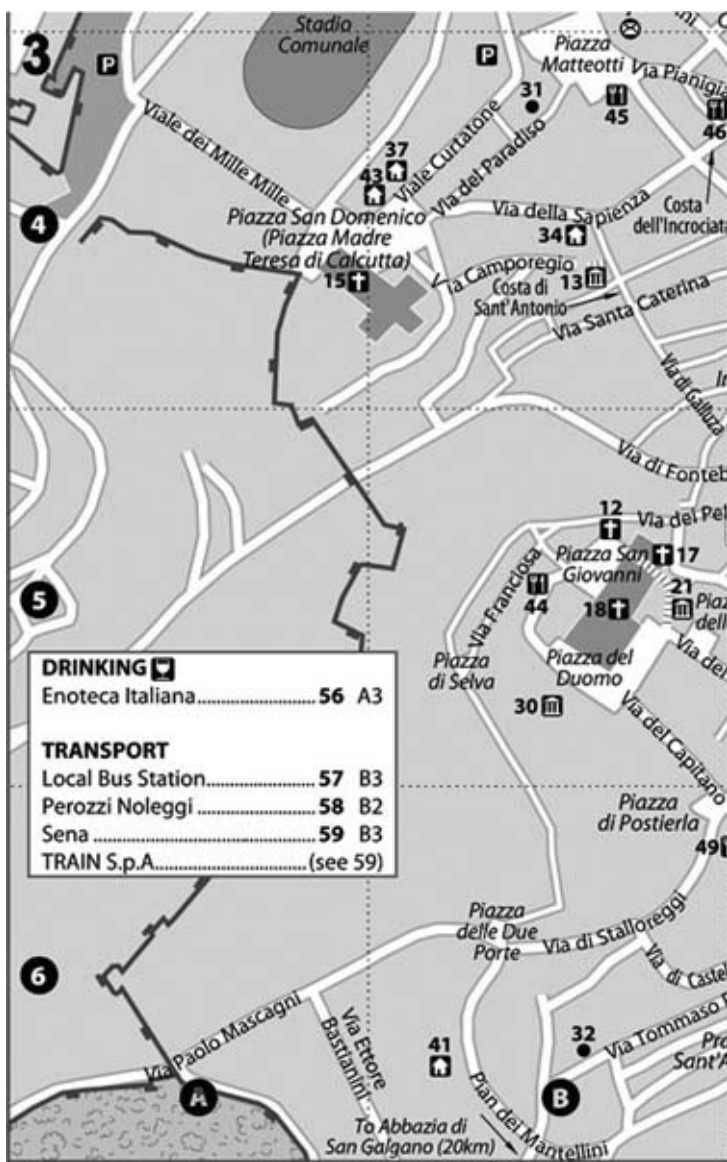


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The Sienese school of painting had its origins at this time and reached its peak in the early 14th century, when artists such as Duccio di Buoninsegna and Ambrogio Lorenzetti were at work.

A plague outbreak in 1348 killed two-thirds of the city's 100,000 inhabitants and led to a period of decline.

At the end of the 14th century, Siena came under the control of Milan's Visconti family, followed in the next century by the autocratic patrician Pandolfo Petrucci. Under Petrucci the city's fortunes improved somewhat until the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V conquered it in 1555 after a two-year siege that left thousands of people dead. He handed the city over to Cosimo I de' Medici, who barred the inhabitants from operating banks and thus severely curtailed Siena's power.

Though the hapless residents that endured it may not agree, Siena's centuries-long economic downturn in the wake of the Medici takeover was a blessing that resulted in the city's present-day, matchless allure. Its predominantly Gothic surroundings have survived largely intact as no one could be bothered to undertake (or fund) demolition or new construction. Furthermore, unlike the poundings endured by neighbouring cities in WWII, the French took Siena virtually unopposed, sparing it discernible damage.

## Orientation

Historic Siena, still largely surrounded by its medieval walls punctuated by the eight original city gates, is small and easily tackled on foot, although the way streets swirl in semicircles around Piazza del Campo (known as Il Campo) can be confusing. At the city's heart is this gently sloping square, around which

curve its main streets: the Banchi di Sopra, Via di Città and Banchi di Sotto.

## Information

**Book Shop** (☎ 0577 22 65 94; [www.bookshopsiena.com](http://www.bookshopsiena.com); Via San Pietro 19) Restock your suitcase library at this emporium of English-language books.

**Hospital** (☎ 0577 58 51 11; Viale Bracci) Just north of Siena at Le Scotte.

**Internet Train** (Via di Città 121; per hr €4; ☎ 10am-10pm Sun-Fri) A popular cafe with cables for laptop hook-ups. Another branch is at Via di Pantaneto 57.

**Libreria Senese** (☎ 0577 28 08 45; Via di Città 62-6) Stocks English, French and German books. Also sells international newspapers.

**Netrunner** (☎ 0577 4 49 46; [www.netrunnersiena.net](http://www.netrunnersiena.net); Via di Pantaneto 132; per hr €6; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat, 3-9pm Sun)

**Police station** (☎ 0577 20 11 11; Via del Castoro 23)

**Post office** (Piazza Matteotti 1)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0577 28 05 51; [www.terresiena.it](http://www.terresiena.it); Piazza del Campo 56; ☎ 9am-7pm) Reserves accommodation and sells direct bus tickets to Pisa airport (€14/26 one-way/return).

**Wash & Dry** (Via di Pantaneto 38; ☎ 8am-10pm) Laundrette.

## Sights

### PIAZZA DEL CAMPO

Sloping Piazza del Campo (Il Campo) has been Siena's civic and social centre ever since it was staked out by the Council of Nine in the mid-14th century. It's paving is divided into nine sectors, representing the members of the Council of Nine. In the upper part of the square is the 15th-century **Fonte Gaia** (Happy Fountain), now clad in reproductions of the original panels by Jacopo della Quercia.

At the lowest point of the square (or the tap of the above mentioned metaphorical sink), the spare, elegant **Palazzo Comunale** is also known as the Palazzo Pubblico, or town hall. Entry to the ground-floor central courtyard is free. From the *palazzo* soars its graceful bell tower, the **Torre del Mangia** (admission €7; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Mar—Oct, to 4pm Nov—mid-Mar), 102m high, completed in 1297.

The lower level of the *palazzo's* facade features a characteristic Sienese-Gothic arcade. Inside is the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0577 29 22 63; adult/student €7.50/4.50, museum & tower €12; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Mar—Oct, to 5.30pm or 6.30pm Nov—mid-Mar), occupying rooms richly decorated by artists of the Sienese school. Of particular note is Simone Martini's famous *Maestà* (Virgin Mary in Majesty), on display in the Sala del Mappamondo. Completed in 1315, it features the Madonna beneath a canopy surrounded by saints and angels and is Martini's first known canvas. In the Sala dei Nove are Ambrogio Lorenzetti's didactic frescoes depicting *Allegories of Good and Bad Government*, contrasting the harmony of good government with the – alas, much deteriorated – depiction of the privations and trials of those subject to bad rule.

### DUOMO

Siena's **cathedral** (☎ 0577 4 73 21; [www.operaduomo.siena.it](http://www.operaduomo.siena.it); Piazza del Duomo; admission €3; ☎ 10.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-6.30pm Sun Mar-Oct, 10.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5.30pm Sun Nov-Feb) is one of Italy's greatest Gothic churches. Begun in 1196, it was completed by 1215, although work continued on features such as the apse and dome well into the 13th century. The magnificent facade of white, green and red polychrome marble was begun by Giovanni Pisano – who completed only the lower

section before his death – and finished towards the end of the 14th century. The mosaics in the gables are 19th-century additions. The statues of philosophers and prophets by Pisano above the lower section are copies; the originals are in the adjacent Museo dell’Opera Metropolitana (see right).

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## IL PALIO

Dating from the Middle Ages, this spectacular event stages a series of colourful pageants and a wild horse race around Il Campo on 2 July and 16 August. Ten of Siena’s 17 *contrade* (town districts) compete for the coveted *palio* (silk banner). Each *contrada* has its own traditions, symbol and colours plus its own church and *palio* museum.

Il Campo becomes a racetrack, with a ring of packed dirt around its perimeter serving as the course. From about 5pm, representatives from each *contrada* parade in historical costume, all bearing their individual banners. For scarcely one exhilarating minute, the 10 horses and their bareback riders tear three times around Il Campo with a speed and violence that makes spectators’ hair stand on end.

Join the crowds in the centre of Il Campo at least four hours before the start (7.45pm in July, 7pm in August) if you want a place on the rails.

A day or two earlier, you might see jockeys and horses trying out in Il Campo – almost as good as the real thing.

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In 1339 the city’s leaders planned to enlarge the cathedral and create one of Italy’s biggest churches. Known as the Nuovo Duomo (New Cathedral), the remains of this project are on Piazza Jacopo della Quercia, on the eastern side of the cathedral. The daring plan, to build an immense new nave with the present church becoming the transept, was scotched by the plague of 1348.

The most precious feature of the cathedral’s interior is the inlaid marble floor, decorated with 56 panels depicting historical and biblical subjects. The earliest ones are graffiti designs in simple black-and-white marble, dating from the mid-14th century. The latest, panels in coloured marble, were created in the 16th century. The most valuable are kept covered and are revealed only from 21 August through 27 October each year (admission is €6 during this period).

Other drawcards include the exquisitely crafted marble and porphyry pulpit by Nicola Pisano, aided by his equally talented son, Giovanni.

Through a door from the north aisle is another of the cathedral’s jewels, the **Libreria Piccolomini**, built to house the books of Enea Silvio Piccolomini, better known as Pius II. The walls of the small hall have vividly coloured narrative frescoes by Bernardino Pinturicchio, depicting events in the life of Piccolomini.

## MUSEO DELL’OPERA METROPOLITANA

This **museum** (☎ 0577 28 30 48; [www.operaduomo.siena.it](http://www.operaduomo.siena.it) Piazza del Duomo 8; admission €6; 🕒 9.30am-7pm Mar-May & Sep-Nov, to 8pm Jun-Aug, 10am-5pm Dec-Feb), also known as Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, is in what would have been the southern aisle of the nave of the Nuovo Duomo.

Inside, formerly adorning the cathedral, are the 12 statues of prophets and philosophers by Giovanni Pisano that decorated the facade. The highlight is Duccio di Buoninsegna’s striking early 14th-century *Maestà*, which is painted on both sides as a screen for the cathedral’s high altar. The front and back have now been separated and the panels depicting the story of the Passion hang opposite the *Maestà*. Other artists represented are Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Simone Martini and Taddeo di Bartolo, and there’s also a

rich collection of tapestries and manuscripts.

For a great panoramic view, haul yourself up the 131-step, narrow corkscrew stairway to the **Panorama del Facciato** (admission €6) at the top of the facade of the putative Nuovo Duomo. A combined ticket for the museum and panorama costs €10 and is valid for three days.

## CRYPT

Just north of the cathedral and down a flight of steps is the **crypt** (admission incl audioguide €6; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mar-May, to 8pm Jun-Aug, to 7pm Sep-Oct), a room below the cathedral's pulpit discovered in 1999. Its walls are completely covered with *pittura a secco* ('dry painting') dating back to the 1200s. There's some 180 sq metres' worth, depicting several biblical stories, including the Passion of Jesus and the Crucifixion.

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## SAFE COMBINATIONS

Siena has a bewildering permutation of combined tickets. The distribution when we last visited was as follows:

- Museo Civico and Torre del Mangia (€12)
  - Museo Civico, Santa Maria della Scala and Palazzo delle Papesse (€11, valid for two days)
  - Museo Civico, Palazzo delle Papesse, Santa Maria della Scala, Museo dell'Opera & Battistero di San Giovanni (€14, valid for seven days, 1 November to 14 March)
  - Museo Civico, Palazzo delle Papesse, Santa Maria della Scala, Museo dell'Opera & Battistero di San Giovanni (€17, valid for seven days, 15 March to 31 October)
  - Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana, Battistero di San Giovanni, Crypt, Oratorio di San Bernardino, Museo Diocesano (€10, valid for three days)
  - Museo Civico, Santa Maria della Scala, SMS Contemporanea, Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana, Battistero di San Giovanni (€14, valid for seven days)
  - Museo Civico, Santa Maria della Scala, SMS Contemporanea, Museo dell'Opera Metropolitana, Battistero di San Giovanni, Museo Diocesano, Chiesa di Sant'Agostino and Oratorio di San Bernardino – the bumper bundle though it doesn't include Torre del Mangia (€17, valid for seven days)
  - 'Siena's Renaissance Trail': Museo Civico, Santa Maria della Scala, National Gallery, Duomo and Libreria Piccolomini, State Archive (€13.50)
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## BATTISTERO DI SAN GIOVANNI

Opposite the crypt is the **Battistero di San Giovanni** (Piazza San Giovanni; admission €3; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mar-May, to 8pm Jun-Aug, to 7pm Sep-Oct).

While the baptistery's Gothic facade has remained unfinished, the interior is richly decorated with frescoes. The centrepiece is a marble font by Jacopo della Quercia, decorated with bronze panels in relief and depicting the life of St John the Baptist. Artists include Lorenzo Ghiberti (*Baptism of Christ* and *St John in Prison*) and Donatello (*Herod's Feast*).

## SANTA MARIA DELLA SCALA

In the basement of this former **pilgrims' hospital** (☎ 0577 22 48 11; Piazza del Duomo 2; admission €6; ☎

10.30am-6.30pm Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar) is the Sala dei Pellegrinaio clad in vivid secular frescoes (quite a relief after so much spirituality all around town) by Domenico di Bartolo, lauding the good works of the hospital and its patrons. There's also a collection of Roman and Etruscan remains.

## PINACOTECA NAZIONALE

Within the 15th-century Palazzo Buonsignori, this **art gallery** (☎ 0577 28 11 61; Via San Pietro 29; adult/child €4/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun, 8.30am-1.30pm Mon) is a showcase for the greatest of Sieneese artists. Look for the *Madonna col Bambino* (Madonna with Child) by Simone Martini, and a series of Madonnas by Ambrogio Lorenzetti.

## CHIESA DI SAN DOMENICO

Santa Caterina di Siena took her vows within this imposing **church** (Piazza San Domenico; 🕒 7.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm). In the **Cappella di Santa Caterina** are frescoes by Sodoma depicting events in her life – as well as the saint's head, held in a 15th-century tabernacle above the altar. St Catherine died in Rome, where most of her body is preserved, but, in line with the bizarre practice of collecting relics of dead saints, her head was returned to Siena. In a small window box to the right of the chapel are her desiccated thumb and the nasty-looking whip that she flogged herself with for the wellbeing of the souls of the faithful.

For more of Santa Caterina – figuratively speaking – visit **Casa di Santa Caterina** (☎ 0577 22 15 62; Costa di Sant'Antonio 6; admission free; 🕒 9am-6.30pm Mar-Nov, 10am-6pm Dec-Feb), where the saint was born and lived with her parents plus, says the legend, 24 siblings. The rooms, converted into small chapels in the 15th century, are decorated with frescoes and paintings by many Sieneese artists, including Sodoma.

## OTHER CHURCHES & PALAZZI

**Loggia dei Mercanzia**, the 15th-century triple-arched balcony where merchants used to plot deals, is just northwest of Il Campo. From here, strike east along Banchi di Sotto until you pass **Palazzo Piccolomini**, a Renaissance *palazzo* housing the city's archives. Further east are the 13th-century **Basilica di Santa Maria dei Servi** (Via dei Servi), with frescoes by Pietro Lorenzetti in a chapel off the north transept, and 14th-century **Porta Romana**.

Return to Piazza del Campo and head north on Banchi di Sopra, past Piazza Tolomei, which is dominated by the 13th-century **Palazzo Tolomei**. Further along, Piazza Salimbeni is bound to the north by **Palazzo Tantucci**, Gothic **Palazzo Salimbeni** (the prestige head office of Monte dei Paschi di Siena bank) to the east and, on the third flank, Renaissance **Palazzo Spannocchi**, from where 29 finely carved busts stare down at you from beneath the eaves.

Northeast of here, along Via dei Rossi, is the **Chiesa di San Francesco**, with its vast single nave. It has suffered over the years from a devastating 17th-century fire and use as army barracks. Beside the church is the **Oratorio di San Bernardino** (☎ 0577 28 30 48; [www.operaduomo.siena.it](http://www.operaduomo.siena.it); Piazza San Francesco 9; admission €3; 🕒 10.30am-1.30pm & 3-5.30pm mid-Mar—Oct) with its small museum of religious artworks.

## Courses

## LANGUAGE & CULTURE

**Scuola Leonardo da Vinci** (☎ 0577 24 90 97; [www.scuolaleonardo.com](http://www.scuolaleonardo.com); Via del Paradiso 16)



Italian-language school with supplementary cultural and culinary options.

**Società Dante Alighieri** (☎ 0577 4 95 33; [www.dantealighieri.com](http://www.dantealighieri.com); Via Tommaso Pendola 37) Language and cultural courses southwest of the city centre.

**Università per Stranieri** (University for Foreigners; ☎ 0577 24 01 15; [www.unistrasi.it](http://www.unistrasi.it)) Offers various courses in Italian language and culture. It's off Via di Pantaneto 45.

## MUSIC

**Accademia Musicale Chigiana** (☎ 0577 2 20 91; [www.chigiana.it](http://www.chigiana.it); Via di Città 89) Offers classical-music courses every summer, as well as seminars and concerts performed by visiting musicians, teachers and students as part of the **Settimana Musicale Senese** (see below).

**Associazione Siena Jazz** (☎ 0577 27 14 01; [www.sienajazz.it](http://www.sienajazz.it); Piazza Libertà) One of Europe's foremost institutions of its type offering courses in jazz.

## Festivals & Events

The Accademia Musicale Chigiana (left) mounts the **Settimana Musicale Senese** in July and the **Estate Musicale Chigiana** in July and August. Concerts in these series are frequently held in the magnificent settings of the Abbazia di **San Galgano**, about 20km southwest of the city, and Abbazia di **Sant'Antimo**, near Montalcino. For information, call ☎ 0577 2 20 91.

In November, the **Festa di Santa Cecilia**, a series of concerts and exhibitions, takes place to honour Cecilia, patron saint of musicians.

## Sleeping

**Vacanze Senesi** (☎ 0577 4 59 00; [www.vacanzesenese.it](http://www.vacanzesenese.it)) has a representative in the tourist office who can arrange all forms of accommodation, or book on its website. **Siena Hotels Promotion** (☎ 0577 28 80 84; [www.hotelsiena.com](http://www.hotelsiena.com); Piazza Madre Teresa di Calcutta 5; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) offers online booking, or you can book in person (in-person fee €2).

## BUDGET

**Siena Colleverde** (☎ 0577 28 00 44; [www.campingcolleverde.com](http://www.campingcolleverde.com); Via Scacciapensieri 47; per person/site/tw mobile home €9.50/5.70/45; ☎ mid-Apr—mid-Oct; 📍) This recently renovated campsite, 2km north of the historical centre, rents mobile homes that sleep two to five people (some have full kitchens) and standard campsites. There's an onsite restaurant and mini-market. To get there take bus 3 from Piazza Gramsci, direction Siena Due Ponti (last bus 11.45pm) or bus 8 from Piazza del Sale (to 9.10pm).

**Ostello Guidoriccio** (☎ 0577 5 22 12; [www.ostelloguidoriccio.com](http://www.ostelloguidoriccio.com); Via Fiorentina 89, Località Stellino; per person €20; 📍 📍) All rooms are doubles at Siena's HI-affiliated youth hostel, about 2km northwest of the city centre. Take bus 10 or 15 from Piazza Gramsci, or bus 77 from the train station.

**Albergo Bernini** (☎ 0577 28 90 47; [www.albergobernini.com](http://www.albergobernini.com); Via della Sapienza 15; s €50, d with shared bathroom €30-65, d with bathroom €45-85; 📍) A welcoming, family-run hotel with a tiny terrace sporting views across to the cathedral and the Chiesa di San Domenico. For space and views, choose room 11.

**Hotel Le Tre Donzelle** (☎ 0577 28 03 58; [www.tredonzelle.com](http://www.tredonzelle.com); Via delle Donzelle 5; s/d with shared bathroom €38/49, d with bathroom €60) Central and popular, this hotel was originally constructed as a tavern in the 13th century. Rooms are clean and simple and the shared bathrooms are spotless. Ask

for a room facing away from the noisy street.

**Hotel La Perla** (☎ 0577 22 62 80; [www.hotellaperlasiena.com](http://www.hotellaperlasiena.com); Piazza Indipendenza 25; s €40-60, d €70-85; 📶 🚿) A very friendly and well-run budget option. Bathrooms are small and a few rooms are musty, but that's a small price to pay when the location, seconds from Piazza del Campo, is considered.

## MIDRANGE

**Albergo Cannon d'Oro** (☎ 0577 4 43 21; [www.cannondoro.com](http://www.cannondoro.com); Via dei Montanini 28; s €45-85, d €66-105; 📶 🚿 🛏) A trim, attractive and excellent-value hotel. Don't be deterred by the golden cannon (the very one that gave the place its name) trained upon you as you face the otherwise amicable reception desk. Only a few rooms have air-con.

**Antica Residenza Cicogna** (☎ 0577 28 56 13; [www.anticaresidenzacicogna.it](http://www.anticaresidenzacicogna.it); Via dei Termini 67; s €70-75, d €90, ste €130; 📶 🚿 🛏) Springless beds, soundproof windows, ornate frescoes, antique furniture and a lavish buffet breakfast make this central option justifiably popular. Reception has limited core hours (8am to 1pm), so arrange your arrival in advance.

**Piccolo Hotel Etruria** (☎ 0577 28 80 88; [www.hoteletruria.com](http://www.hoteletruria.com); Via delle Donzelle 3; s without bathroom €40-50, s with bathroom €45-55, d with bathroom €80-110; 🚿) A welcoming family hotel, just off Il Campo. The rooms are rather plain with zero soundproofing, but there's a central light, airy sitting area and the location is outstanding. There's a 1am curfew. Breakfast costs €6.

**Chiusarelli** (☎ 0577 28 05 62; [www.chiusarelli.com](http://www.chiusarelli.com); Viale Curtatone 15; s €65-91, d €88-132; 📶 🚿 🛏) Functioning continuously since 1870, this hotel has a pleasant, spacious breakfast room and attractive, though somewhat dark, bedrooms. It has a popular restaurant (meals €20) where you'll be dodging elbows to find a seat among the locals.

**Palazzo Bruchi** (☎ 0577 28 73 42; [www.palazzobruchi.it](http://www.palazzobruchi.it); Via di Pantaneto 105; s €80-90, d €90-150; 📶 🛏) The six rooms in the 'ancient and noble' Landi-Bruchi family home may be the only place in Siena where one wakes up to church bells and chirping birds, rather than street noise. The hospitality of Maria Cristina and her daughter Camilla is warmly consistent. There's a shared kitchen and a peaceful inner courtyard.

**Villa Scacciapensieri** (☎ 0577 4 14 41; [www.villascacciapensieri.it](http://www.villascacciapensieri.it); Via Scacciapensieri 10; s €75-140, d €110-265; 📶 🚿 🛏 🦿) Around 2.5km north of Siena is this 19th-century villa with carved wooden ceilings, oil paintings, antiques, formal gardens, tennis courts and an old family chapel. Access for disabled guests.

**Pensione Palazzo Ravizza** (☎ 0577 28 04 62; [www.palazzoravizza.com](http://www.palazzoravizza.com); Pian dei Mantellini 34; s €95-150, d €115-200; 📶 🚿 🛏) *Pensione* is a far too modest title for this intimate, sumptuous place. Occupying a delightful Renaissance *palazzo*, frescoed ceilings and antique furniture co-exist with flatscreen TVs and comprehensive wi-fi coverage. Service is courteous and efficient, and there's a small, leafy garden.

## Eating

According to the Sieneese, most Tuscan cuisine has its origins here. Among many traditional dishes are *panzanella* (summer salad of soaked bread, basil, onion and tomatoes) and *pappardelle con lepre* (ribbon pasta with hare). *Panforte* (a rich cake of almonds, honey and candied fruit) was originally created as tucker for crusaders to the Holy Land.

## BUDGET

**Kopa Kabana** (Via dei Rossi 54) Flout the places with enviable locations and be rewarded with absurd mountains of Siena's freshest gelato, starting at €1.70. A second location is at Via San Pietro 20.

**Nannini** (Banchi di Sopra 22) Always crowded, Nannini is something of a Sienese institution, baking its finest cakes and serving up good coffee with speed and panache.

## MIDRANGE

**L'Osteria** (☎ 0577 28 75 92; Via dei Rossi 79-81; meals €27) We promised a local we wouldn't put this one in the book. We lied. It was just too good. Plus the place was half-filled with tourists when we visited, so it's not exactly a secret. No nonsense, but savoury dishes at prices locals will pay.

**Osteria da Cice** (☎ 0577 28 80 26; Via San Pietro 32; meals €28; 🗓 Tue-Sun) In the hands of a friendly team, reflecting its mainly youthful clientele, this is the place for an informal, relaxed meal. The menu has plenty of vegetarian options among its *primi piatti*.

**Osteria Boccon del Prete** (☎ 0577 28 03 88; Via San Pietro 17; meals €30) A small, hectic, typical Sienese place, offering a daily changing menu. Dishes are largely composed of lighter fare such as smoked swordfish and salmon salad. There's downstairs seating, so don't back out if the place appears to be full.

**Il Carroccio** (☎ 0577 4 11 65; Via del Casato di Sotto 32; meals €34; 🗓 closed Tue dinner & Wed) Exceptional pasta and exceptionally busy, so arrive early for lunch and call ahead for dinner. Try the *pici*, a thick spaghetti typical of Siena, followed by the *tegamate di maiale* (pork with fennel seeds). It's a member of the Slow Food Movement – always a good sign.

**Osteria Le Logge** (☎ 0577 4 80 13; [www.osterialelogge.it](http://www.osterialelogge.it); Via del Porrione 33; meals €45; 🗓 Mon-Sat) This place changes its menu of creative Tuscan cuisine almost daily. In the downstairs dining room, once a pharmacy, bottles are arranged in cases, floor to ceiling, like books in a library; there are over 18,000 more in the cellars so you won't go thirsty. There's also a large streetside terrace.

**our pick Antica Osteria da Divo** (☎ 0577 28 43 81; [www.osteriadadivo.it](http://www.osteriadadivo.it); Via Franciosa 29; meals €50) This place plays background jazz that is as smooth as the walls are rough-hewn. At the lower, cellar level you're dining amid Etruscan tombs. The inventive menu includes dishes such as cannelloni with ricotta, spinach, grilled sweet peppers, tomatoes and Tuscan pesto sauce.

## SELF-CATERING

**Conad Market** (Galleria Metropolitan, Piazza Matteotti; 🗓 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Sun) Self-caterers can stock up on piazza picnic provisions here.

**Consorzio Agrario Siena** (Via Pianagini 13) An enticing emporium of local food and wines.

**Pizzicheria de Miccoli** (☎ 0577 28 91 84; Via di Città 93-95) Richly scented, de Miccoli has windows festooned with sausages, piled-up cheeses and porcini mushrooms by the sackful.

**Wednesday market** (🗓 7.30am-1pm) Spreads all around Fortezza Medicea and seeps towards the Stadio Comunale. One of Tuscany's largest markets, it's great for foodstuffs, cheap clothing or just aimless browsing.

## Drinking

**Enoteca Italiana** (☎ 0577 28 84 97; Fortezza Medicea; 🗓 noon-1am Tue-Sat, to 8pm Sun) Within the fortress walls, the former munitions cellar has been artfully transformed into a classy *enoteca* that carries over 1500 labels.

# Getting There & Away

## BUS

**TRAIN S.p.A.** (☎ 0577 20 42 46; [www.trainspa.it](http://www.trainspa.it)) runs two services daily between Pisa airport and Siena (one-way/return, €14/26).

The local bus station is on Piazza Gramsci. Both TRAIN S.p.A. and SITA have ticket offices underneath the piazza, where there's also a left-luggage office (per day €5.50). Express buses race up to Florence (€6.80, 1¼ hours, at least hourly). Other regional TRAIN S.p.A. destinations include San Gimignano (€5.30, one to 1½ hours, 10 daily either direct or changing in Poggibonsi), Montalcino (€3.30, 1½ hours, six daily), Poggibonsi (€3.80, one hour, up to 10 daily), Montepulciano (€4.70, 1¾ hours) and Colle di Val d'Elsa (€2.60, 30 minutes, hourly), with connections for Volterra. Other destinations in the area include Pienza (€3.80) and Grosseto (€6.60).

**Sena** (☎ 0577 28 32 03; [www.sena.it](http://www.sena.it)) buses run to/from Rome (€20, three hours, eight daily) and Milan (€29, 4¼ hours, three daily) and there are seven buses daily to Arezzo (€5.20, 1½ hours).

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

For Florence, take the SS2, the *superstrada*, or the more attractive SS222, also known as the Strada Chiantigiana, which meanders its way through the hills of Chianti.

## TRAIN

Siena isn't on a major train line so buses are generally a better alternative. By train, change at Chiusi for Rome and at Empoli for Florence.

# Getting Around

TRAIN S.p.A. operates city bus services (€0.90). Buses 8, 9 and 10 run between the train station and Piazza Gramsci.

**Perozzi Noleggi** (☎ 0577 28 83 87; [www.perozzi.it](http://www.perozzi.it); Via dei Gazzani 16-18; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm) rents mountain bikes (per day/week €10/50) and 125cc scooters (per day/week €45/260). If there's no-one in the showroom, pop round the corner to Via del Romitorio 5.

Cars are banned from the town centre, though visitors can drop off luggage at their hotel, then get out (don't forget to have reception report your licence number or risk receiving a 'souvenir' fine). Park illegally inside the city and you'll be towed away in a flash. Try the large car parks at the Stadio Comunale and around the Fortezza Medicea, both just north of Piazza San Domenico, or the one at Il Campo, south of the centre.

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## DETOUR

About 20km southwest of Siena on the SS73 is the 13th-century **Abbazia di San Galgano** (☎ 0577 75 67 00; admission free; ☎ 8am-7.30pm), in its day one of the country's finest Gothic buildings.

On a hill overlooking the abbey is the tiny, round Romanesque **Cappella di Monte Siepi**, home to badly preserved frescoes by Ambrogio Lorenzetti depicting the life of local soldier and saint, San Galgano, who lived his last years here as a hermit.

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There are large car parks at the Stadio Comunale and around the Fortezza Medicea, both just north of

Piazza San Domenico. There's also another big one at Il Campo, south of the centre.

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## SAN GIMIGNANO

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As you crest the hill coming from the east, the 14 towers of this walled town look like a medieval Manhattan. And when you arrive you might well feel that half of Manhattan has moved in. Within easy reach of both Siena and Florence, San Gimignano is a tourist magnet. Come in winter or early spring to indulge your imagination a little; in summer you'll spend your time dodging fellow visitors. Even then, though, you'll discover a different, almost peaceful San Gimignano once the last bus has pulled out.

There's good reason for such popularity. The towers, which once numbered 72, were symbols of the power and wealth of the city's medieval families. San Gimignano delle Belle Torri (meaning 'of the Fine Towers' – though they're actually almost devoid of design and rather dull unless sheer height impresses you) is surrounded by lush, productive land and the setting is altogether enchanting.

Originally an Etruscan village, the town was named after the bishop of Modena, San Gimignano, who is said to have saved the city from Attila the Hun. It became a *comune* in 1199, but continually fought with Volterra. Internal battles between the Ardinghelli (Guelph) and Salvucci (Ghibelline) families over the next two centuries caused divisions. Most of the towers were built during this period; in the 13th century, one *podestà* forbade the building of towers higher than his own 51m pile. In 1348 plague wiped out much of the population and weakened the nobles' power, leading to the town's submission to Florence in 1353. Today, not even the plague would deter the summer swarms.

### Orientation

From the main gate, Porta San Giovanni, at the southern end of the town, Via San Giovanni heads northwards to central Piazza della Cisterna and the connecting Piazza del Duomo. From here the other major thoroughfare, Via San Matteo, extends to the principal northern gate, Porta San Matteo.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0577 94 00 08; [www.sangimignano.com](http://www.sangimignano.com); Piazza del Duomo 1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mar-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Nov-Feb) hires out audioguides of the town (€5) and organises Vernaccia di San Gimignano vineyard visits (two-hour tours, Tuesdays and Thursdays, from May to October; €20). Advance reservations are essential.

### Sights

#### COLLEGIATA

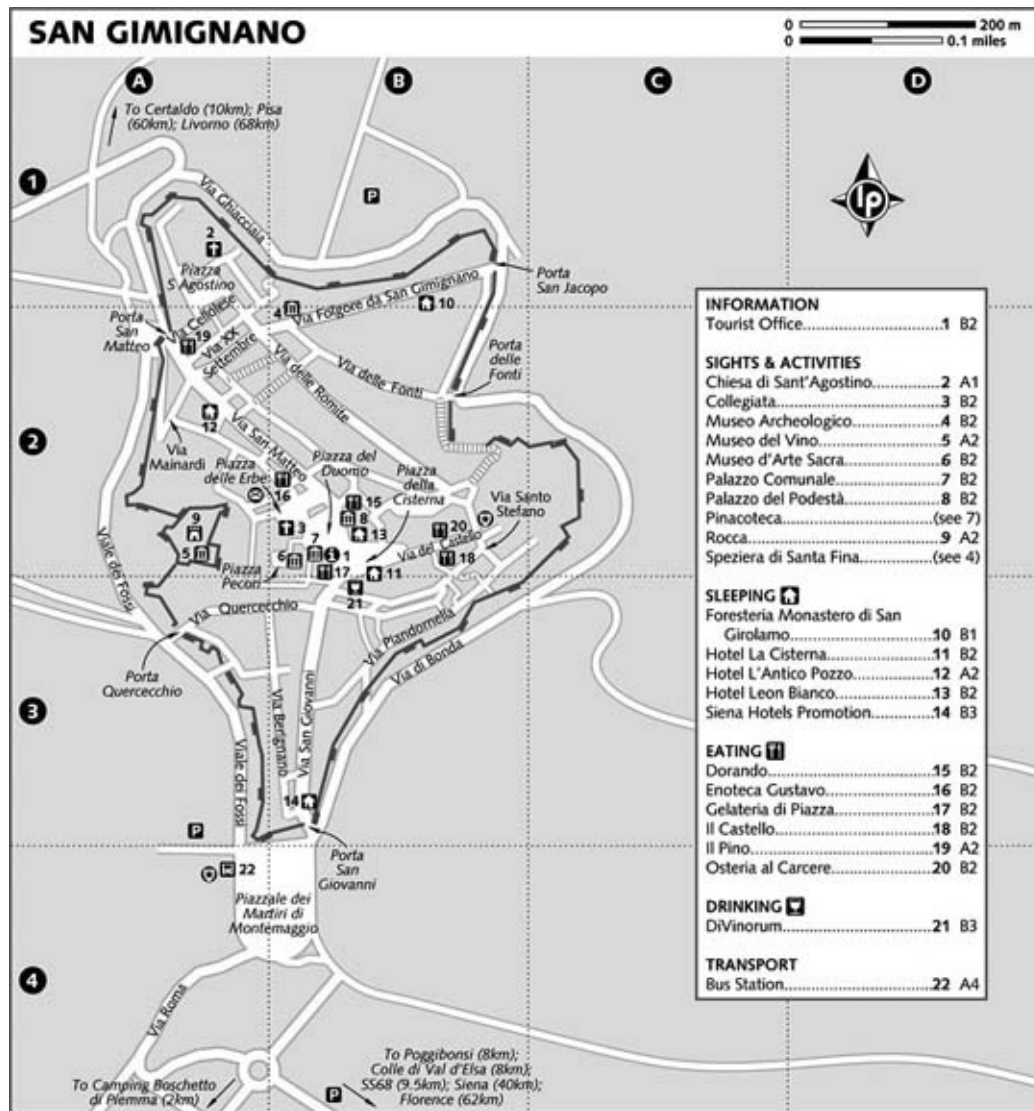
The 13th-century **Palazzo del Podestà** and its tower, the **Torre della Rognosa**, look across to the town's Romanesque **basilica** (adult/child €3.50/1.50; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun Nov—mid-Jan & Mar). Access is up a flight of steps. Its bare facade belies the remarkable 14th-century frescoes that stripe the interior walls like a vast medieval comic strip.

Along the northern aisle are frescoes of key moments from the Old Testament by Bartolo di Fredi. Opposite, covering the walls of the south aisle, the school of Simone Martini illustrates New Testament scenes. On the inside wall of the facade, extending onto adjoining walls, Taddeo di Bartolo probably scared the daylight out of pious locals with his gruesome depiction of the Last Judgment. The **Cappella**

**di Santa Fina** is adorned with naive and touching frescoes by Domenico Ghirlandaio depicting events in the life of the saint, and a superb alabaster and marble altar picked out in gold.

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

If you're an assiduous sightseer, two combined tickets may be worth your while. One (adult/child €7.50/5.50) gives admission to the Palazzo Comunale and its Museo Civico, the archaeological museum, Torre Grossa and some secondary sights. The other (adult/child €5.50/2.50) gets you into the Collegiata and nearby Museo d'Arte Sacra.



Across the square, the **Museo d'Arte Sacra** (☎ 0577 94 03 16; Piazza Pecori 1; adult/child €3/1.50; 🕒 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun Nov—mid-Jan & Mar) has some fine works of religious art, collected in the main from the town's churches.

### PALAZZO COMUNALE

From the internal courtyard, climb the stairs to the **Pinacoteca** (☎ 0577 99 03 12; Piazza del Duomo; museum & tower adult/child €5/4; 🕒 9.30am-7pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5.30pm Nov-Feb), which features paintings from the Sieneese and Florentine schools of the 12th to 15th centuries. In the main room, the great poet Dante addressed the town's council, urging it to support the Guelph cause. The room contains an early 14th-century fresco of the *Maestà* by Lippo Memmi. Climb up the *palazzo's* **Torre Grossa** for a

spectacular view of the town and surrounding countryside.

## MUSEUMS

In an unmarked gallery just outside the town's fortress is **Museo del Vino** (Wine Museum; ☎ 0577 94 12 67; Parco della Rocca; admission free; 🕒 11.30am-6.30pm Thu-Mon, 3-6.30pm Wed Mar-Oct). A sommelier is usually on hand to lead an informed – and paid – tasting of some of the choice local white wines.

The **Museo Archeologico & Speziera di Santa Fina** (☎ 0577 94 03 48; Via Folgore da San Gimignano 11; adult/child both museums €3.50/2.50; 🕒 11am-5.45pm mid-Mar—Dec) complex is home to the town's small archaeological museum and a reconstructed 16th-century pharmacy and herb garden. There's also a **modern art gallery** that in itself merits a visit.

## OTHER SIGHTS

From the **Rocca** (what remains of the town's fortress), there are great views over the surrounding countryside.

At the northern end of the town is the **Chiesa di Sant'Agostino** (Piazza Sant'Agostino; 🕒 7am-noon & 3-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar). Its main attraction is the fresco cycle in the apse by Benozzo Gozzoli, depicting the saint's life.

## Sleeping

In high summer San Gimignano can be as unpromising for accommodation as Christmas Eve in Bethlehem. This said, Siena Hotels Promotion ([Click here](#)) will book hotels and some *affittacamere*. The tourist office, for its part, will reserve a wider range of *affittacamere* and also *agriturismi* if you call by in person.

**Camping Boschetto di Piemma** (☎ 0577 94 03 52; [www.boschettodipiemma.it](http://www.boschettodipiemma.it); per person €6.70-10.10, tent €4.90-8.90, car €1.50-3; 🕒 Easter-Oct; 🚰) The closest campsite is located in Santa Lucia, 2km south of town. There's a bus service between the two (€0.50).

**Foresteria Monastero di San Girolamo** (☎ 0577 94 05 73; [www.monasterosangirolamo.it](http://www.monasterosangirolamo.it); Via Folgore da San Gimignano 26-32; per person €27; 🚰) This is an excellent budget choice. Run by friendly nuns, it has basic but spacious, comfortable rooms with attached bathrooms, sleeping two to five people. Breakfast is €3. Ring ahead as it is perpetually booked. If you don't have a reservation, arrive between 9am and 12.30pm or between 3pm and 5.45pm and ring the monastery bell (not the Foresteria one, which is never answered). Kitchen use costs €3 per day. There's access for disabled guests.

**Hotel Leon Bianco** (☎ 0577 94 12 94; [www.leonbianco.com](http://www.leonbianco.com); Piazza della Cisterna 13; s €65-80, d €85-135; 🚰 🚰 🚰) Occupies a 14th-century mansion. This smoothly run hotel is welcoming and friendly with a ground-floor abundance of plants, a pretty inner courtyard, a breakfast patio, a billiard table and a fitness room.

**Hotel La Cisterna** (☎ 0577 94 03 28; [www.hotelcisterna.it](http://www.hotelcisterna.it); Piazza della Cisterna 24; s €62-78, d €88-145; 🚰 🚰 🚰) Located in a splendid 14th-century building, this accommodation option now offers 21st-century comfort in quiet, spacious rooms.

**Hotel L'Antico Pozzo** (☎ 0577 94 20 14; [www.anticopozzo.com](http://www.anticopozzo.com); Via San Matteo 87; s €85-100, d €110-140; 🕒 closed first 2 weeks Nov & Jan; 🚰 🚰 🚰) L'Antico Pozzo is named after the old, softly illuminated *pozzo* (well) just off the lobby. Each room has its own personality, with thick stone walls, high ceilings, wrought-iron beds, frescoes, antique prints and peach-coloured walls.

# Eating

Each Thursday morning there's a **produce market** (Piazza della Cisterna & Piazza del Duomo).

**Gelateria di Piazza** (Piazza della Cisterna 4; ☎ Mar—mid-Nov) As the pictures on the wall attest, many celebrities have closed their lips around one of these rich ice creams ('All the family thought the ice cream was delicious,' attested one Tony Blair). Master Sergio uses only the choicest ingredients: pistachios from Sicily and cocoa from Venezuela.

**Enoteca Gustavo** (☎ 0577 94 00 57; Via San Matteo 29; snacks & wine from €2.50; ☎ 9am-8pm) Snacks include bruschetta and a plate of cheese with honey to go with your choice from the impressive selection of wines.

**Osteria al Carcere** (☎ 0577 94 19 05; Via del Castello 5; meals €35; ☎ closed Thu lunch & Wed) A fine *osteria*, offering an atypical menu (the words '*primi*' and '*secondi*' are nowhere to be seen) loaded with distinctive plates. There are a half-dozen soups, including *zuppa di farro e fagioli* (spelt and white bean soup) and creative flashes like *tacchina al pistacchi e arance* (turkey with pistachios and orange sauce).

**Il Castello** (☎ 0577 94 08 78; enotecailcastello@iol.it; Via del Castello 20; meals €37; ☎ Mar—mid-Jan) Both wine bar and restaurant, this place has a delightful patio with views and an all-brick, glass-domed courtyard. Nosh on a macho-meaty *bistecca alla fiorentina* or *cinghiale alla sangimignanese con polenta* (wild boar with polenta), or opt for a lighter option such as the *pennette* with broccoli, wild mushrooms and saffron.

**Il Pino** (☎ 0577 94 04 15; Via Cellolese 8-10; meals €40; ☎ Fri-Wed) The atmosphere here is spruce, vaulted and airy. Service is friendly and attentive and the seasonal menu, which includes massive pasta plates and several truffle-based specialities, is a winner.

**Dorando** (☎ 0577 94 18 62; [www.ristorantedorando.it](http://www.ristorantedorando.it); Vicolo dell'Oro 2; meals €60; ☎ daily Easter-Oct, Tue-Sun Oct-Easter) Recognised by the Slow Food Movement, Dorando runs a classic five-course menu with dishes based on authentic Etruscan recipes. The menu is otherwise brief and focused (only four *primi* and four *secondi*). The atmosphere is swanky yet cool, with intimate corners and works of art.

# Drinking

**DiVinorum** (Piazza della Cisterna 30; ☎ 11am-8pm Mar-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Dec) This cool wine bar is housed in cavernous former stables. In summer, sip your drink on the tiny outdoor terrace with stunning valley views.

# Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (Piazzale dei Martiri di Montemaggio) is beside Porta San Giovanni. Buses run to/from Florence (€6, 1¼ hours, over 30 daily) but almost always require a change at Poggibonsi. Buses also run to/from Siena (€5.30, one to 1½ hours, 10 daily).

For Volterra (€4.30, 1½ hours, four daily except Sunday) you need to change in Colle di Val d'Elsa, and maybe also in Poggibonsi.

Poggibonsi (by bus €1.80, about 30 minutes, frequent) is the closest train station.

From Florence or Siena, take the SS2 to Poggibonsi, then the SS429 and finally the SP63. From Volterra, take the SS68 east and follow the turn-off signs north to San Gimignano. There are car parks (per hour €2 or per day €5 to €20) outside the city walls and beside and below Porta San Giovanni.



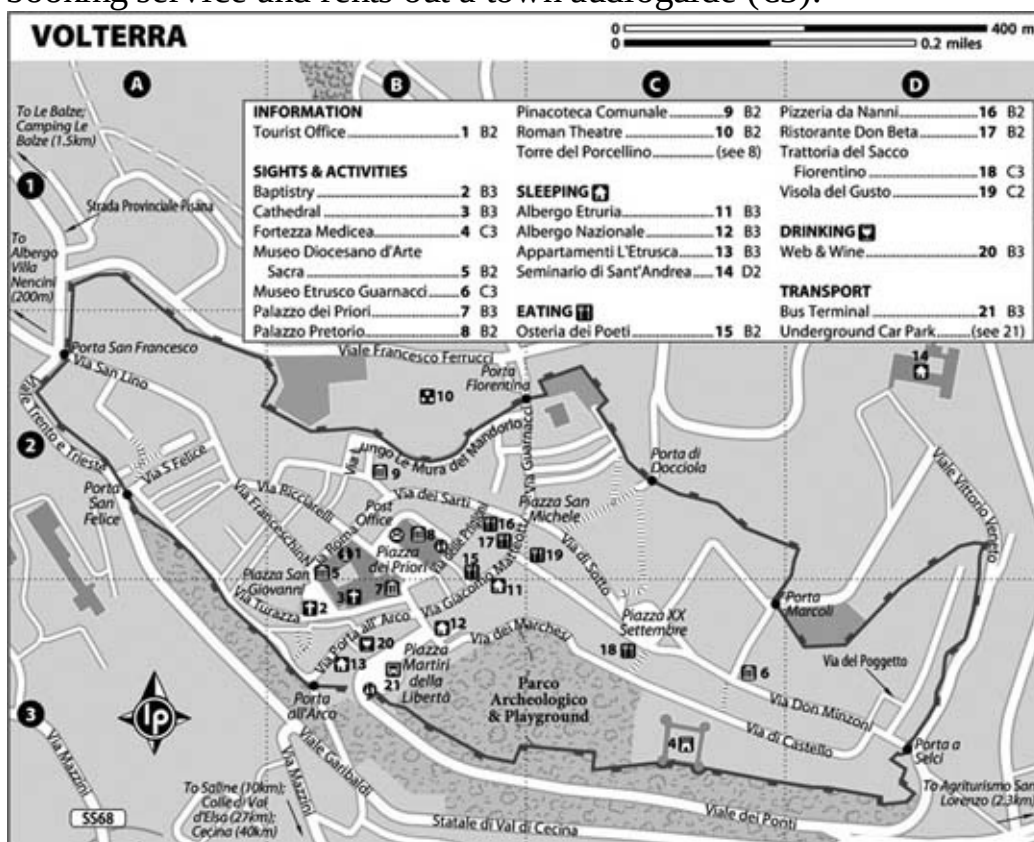
# VOLTERRA

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Volterra's well-preserved medieval ramparts give the windswept town a scrappy, yet proud, forbidding air deemed ideal for the discriminating tastes of the planet's principal vampire coven in the wildly popular book series *Twilight*, by Stephanie Meyer. Where San Gimignano has its towers, Volterra has its archaeological sites, extensive network of mysterious alleys to explore and steep, stone stairways to scale.

## Orientation & Information

Whichever one of the four main gates you enter, the road will lead you to central Piazza dei Priori. The **tourist office** (☎ 0588 8 72 57; [www.volterratur.it](http://www.volterratur.it); Piazza dei Priori 19-20; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm) offers a free hotel-booking service and rents out a town audioguide (€5).



## Sights

### PIAZZA DEI PRIORI & AROUND

Piazza dei Priori is ringed by austere medieval mansions. The 13th-century **Palazzo dei Priori** (admission €1; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm daily mid-Mar—Oct, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov—mid-Mar), the oldest seat of local government in Tuscany, is believed to have been a model for [Florence's Palazzo Vecchio](#). Highlights are a fresco of the Crucifixion by Piero Francesco Fiorentino on the staircase, the magnificent cross-vaulted council hall and a small antechamber on the 1st floor giving a bird's-eye view of the piazza below.

**Palazzo Pretorio** dates back to the same era. From it thrusts the **Torre del Porcellino** (Piglet's Tower), so named because of the wild boar protruding from its upper section.

The **cathedral** (Piazza San Giovanni; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 3-6pm) was built in the 12th and 13th centuries. Highlights include a small fresco, the *Procession of the Magi* by Benozzo Gozzoli, behind a terracotta Nativity group tucked away in the oratory at the beginning of the north aisle. There is also an exquisite 15th-century tabernacle by Mino da Fiesole that rises above the high altar. Just west of the cathedral, the 13th-century **baptistry** features a small marble font by Andrea Sansovino.

Nearby, the **Museo Diocesano d'Arte Sacra** (☎ 0588 8 62 90; Via Roma 1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm mid-Mar—Oct, 9am-1pm Nov—mid-Mar) merits a peek for its collection of ecclesiastical vestments, gold reliquaries and works by Andrea della Robbia and Rosso Fiorentino. The **Pinacoteca Comunale** (☎ 0588 8 75 80; Via dei Sarti 1; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Mar—Oct, 8.30am-1.45pm Nov—mid-Mar) houses a modest collection of local art.

For admission prices, see the boxed text, right.

## MUSEO ETRUSCO GUARNACCI

In terms of content, this is one of Italy's finest **Etruscan Museums** (☎ 0588 8 63 47; Via Don Minzoni 15; adult/student €8/5; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Mar—Oct, 8.30am-1.45pm Nov—mid-Mar). Much of the collection is displayed in the old-style didactic manner, though exhibits on the upper levels have been artfully enriched. The multilingual audioguide (€3) is worth the investment.

All exhibits were unearthed locally. They include a vast collection of some 600 funerary urns carved mainly from alabaster and tufa and are displayed according to subject and period. The best examples (those dating from later periods) are on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

Original touches are the *Ombra della Sera* bronze ex-voto, a strange, elongated nude figure that would fit harmoniously in any museum of modern art, and the urn of the *Sposi*, a terracotta rendering of an elderly couple, their faces depicted in portrait fashion rather than the usual stylised manner.

## OTHER SIGHTS

On the city's northern edge lies the **Roman Theatre** (☎ 10.30am-5.30pm daily mid-Mar—Oct, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov—mid-Mar), a well-preserved complex complete with a Roman bathhouse.

The **Fortezza Medicea**, built in the 14th century and altered by Lorenzo Il Magnifico (Lorenzo de' Medici), is nowadays a prison (admission one felony). To its west is the pleasant **Parco Archeologico**. Little of archaeological interest has survived, apart from a few battered Etruscan tombs, but it's a good place for a picnic.

**Le Balze**, a deep eroded limestone ravine about 2km northwest of the city centre, has claimed several churches since the Middle Ages as the buildings tumbled into its deep gullies. A 14th-century monastery, perched on the precipice, seems perilously close to continuing the tradition.

## Festivals & Events

On the third and fourth Sundays of August, the citizens of Volterra roll back the calendar some 600 years, take to the streets in period costume and celebrate **Volterra AD 1398** with gusto and all the fun of a medieval fair.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

A €8 ticket covers visits to the Museo Etrusco Guarnacci, the Pinacoteca Comunale and the Museo

Diocesano d'Arte Sacra. Meanwhile a €3 ticket allows entry to both the Roman Theatre and the seriously dilapidated Etruscan necropolis within the Parco Archeologico.

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## Sleeping

**Camping Le Balze** (☎ 0588 8 78 80; Via di Mandringa 15; person/tent/car €8/7/3; 📅 Easter-Oct; 📍) The closest campsite to town sits right on Le Balze.

**Seminario di Sant'Andrea** (☎ 0588 8 60 28; [semvescovile@diocesivolterra.it](mailto:semvescovile@diocesivolterra.it); Viale Vittorio Veneto 2; r with shared bathroom €14.28, d with bathroom €36; 📍) Still an active church retreat, this place is peaceful, if a mite dilapidated, with vaulted ceilings and 60 large, clean rooms. Open to all comers, it's a mere 600m or so from Piazza dei Priori.

**Albergo Villa Nencini** (☎ 0588 8 63 86; [www.villanencini.it](http://www.villanencini.it); Borgo Santo Stefano 55; s €60-73, d €73-88; 📍 📍) A tranquil family hotel, Villa Nencini is a mere 200m beyond Porta San Francesco yet a world away from the town's summer bustle. Choose the original 17th-century mansion or the recently constructed wing.

**Appartamenti P'Etrusca** (☎ 0588 8 40 73; [letrusca@libero.it](mailto:letrusca@libero.it); Via Porta all'Arco 37-41; 1-/2-/3-person apt €55/80/90; 📍 📶) Unlike most such rental companies, this place is happy to take you in for even a single night. The exterior of this late-Renaissance building gives no hint of all the mod cons within.

**Albergo Nazionale** (☎ 0588 8 62 84; [www.hotelnazionale-volterra.com](http://www.hotelnazionale-volterra.com); Via dei Marchesi 11; s €65-75, d €78-88; 📍 📶) DH Lawrence once stayed in this late-19th-century hotel. Rooms vary in size and style and some have balconies; room 403, with a pair of them, is your best option. Meals in its summertime restaurant are simple, solid and uncomplicated; the reception desk betrays the same qualities.

**Albergo Etruria** (☎ 0588 8 73 77; [www.albergoetruria.it](http://www.albergoetruria.it); Via Giacomo Matteotti 32; s €60-70, d €80-90; 📅 closed Jan; 📍 📶) This is a good-value hotel realised by two friendly English-speaking ladies. Look for the remains of an Etruscan wall upstairs and savour the fine views from the roof garden – a genuine garden with lawns and bushes. There's also a self-catering kitchen.

**our pick Agriturismo San Lorenzo** (☎ 0588 3 90 80; [www.agriturismosanlorenzo.it](http://www.agriturismosanlorenzo.it); B&B d €90, apt without breakfast €95-110; 📍 📍) Just 3km outside Volterra on the road to Siena, this is a giddy fusion of sustainable tourism, countryside vistas, mod cons and wonderful food (dinner per person €28) served in the 12th-century Franciscan chapel. The mountain-spring-fed biological swimming pool, complete with frogs and salamanders, fronts the converted farmhouse (c 1400s). Rooms are 'farmhouse chic', individually decorated and colourful with modern kitchens and bathrooms. Walking, biking, horseback riding and hands-on, seasonal olive-oil production (October to November) are immediately available, as are cooking classes (per person €90).

## Eating

**Visola del Gusto** (Via Antonio Gramsci 3) Gelato lovers look no further: this place serves the freshest in town, starting at €1.50 for a small cone.

**Pizzeria da Nanni** (☎ 0588 8 40 47; Via delle Prigioni 40; pizzas €6.20-8.50; 📅 Mon-Sat) A hole-in-the-wall-plus – the plus being the excellent pizzas that Nanni spatulas from his oven while sustaining a vivid line of backchat, notably with his wife. Unscheduled closings are increasing as the couple eases into retirement.

**Trattoria del Sacco Fiorentino** (☎ 0588 8 85 37; Piazza XX Settembre 18; meals €32, tasting menu

€26-28; ☎ Thu-Tue) A great little vaulted trattoria that serves up imaginative dishes with a happy selection of local wines. Try the *piccione al vin santo e radicchio rosso* (pigeon baked with red radicchio and wine) or the critical mass of flavour in the beef tartare with artichokes and fresh onions.

**Osteria dei Poeti** (☎ 0588 8 60 29; Via Giacomo Matteotti 55; meals €35, tourist menus €13-35; ☎ Fri-Wed) Get here right at noon, before the business lunchers fill the last seat. Typical Tuscan fare includes *antipasto del poeta* (€15), a rich assortment of canapés, cheeses and cold cuts that is an unexpected delight.

**Ristorante Don Beta** (☎ 0588 8 67 30; Via Giacomo Matteotti 39; meals €40, set menus €12-21; ☎ closed Mon Oct-Apr) With four truffle-based *primi piatti* and five *secondi* enhanced by their fragrance, this is the place to sample the prized fungus, which abounds – insofar as it abounds anywhere – in the woods around Volterra.

## Drinking

**Web & Wine** (☎ 0588 8 15 31; Via Porta all'Arco 11-13; ☎ 9.30am-1am Fri-Wed) At once an internet point (€3 per hour), a stylish *enoteca* (with a good selection of tipples), a snack stop (that also serves full meals) and a hip designer cafe with underlit Etruscan remains.

## Getting There & Around

Driving and parking inside the walled town are more or less prohibited. Park in one of the designated areas around the circumference, most of which are free. There's a four-level underground pay car park beneath Piazza Martiri della Libertà, which is also the bus station.

The tourist office carries bus and train timetables. CPT buses connect the town with Cecina (€3.50, frequent) and its train station. From Cecina, there are trains to Pisa (€4.20 to €8.60, 40 to 70 minutes, 23 daily).

For San Gimignano (€4.30, 1½ hours), Siena (€4.50, 1½ hours) and Florence (€7.40, two hours), change at Colle di Val d'Elsa (€2.50, 50 minutes), to where there are four runs daily from Volterra except on Sunday. The rare, direct run to Florence from Volterra costs €7.10.

By car, take the SS68, which runs between Cecina and Colle di Val d'Elsa.

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## LE CRETE

Le Crete (a Tuscan dialect word meaning clay) is an area of rolling hills scored by steep ravines offering a feast of classic Tuscan images – bare ridges topped by a solitary cypress tree and hills silhouetted one against another as they fade into the misty distance. Its most harmonious valley, the Val d'Orcia, is a Unesco World Heritage site.

**Abbazia di Monte Oliveto Maggiore** (☎ 0577 70 76 11; admission free; ☎ 9.15am-noon & 3.15-6pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar), a 14th-century monastery, is still a retreat for around 40 monks. Frescoes by Signorelli and Sodoma decorate the Great Cloister, illustrating events in the life of the ascetic St Benedict.

## Montalcino

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This retiring hill town is a perfectly nice place to bulk up your calf muscles wandering inhumanly steep streets, but its real attraction is the internationally coveted wine, Brunello, which has been produced here since the middle of the 19th century. You can also savour the more modest, but still very palatable, Rosso di Montalcino.

If you're a jazz-loving oenophile, you'll savour the town's annual **Jazz & Wine festival**, held in the second and third weeks of July.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0577 84 93 31; [www.prolocomontalcino.it](http://www.prolocomontalcino.it), in Italian; Costa del Municipio 1; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5.40pm daily Apr-Oct, closed Mon Nov-Mar) is just off Piazza del Popolo, the main square.

## SIGHTS

**Museo Civico e Diocesano d'Arte Sacra** (☎ 0577 84 60 14; Via Ricasoli 31; adult/child €4.50/3; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5.50pm Tue-Sun), just off Piazza Sant'Agostino, occupies a former monastery. In addition to canvases by Giovanni di Paolo, Sano di Pietro and others, it has a fine collection of painted wooden sculptures by the Sienese school.

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## DETOUR

The beautiful **Abbazia Di Sant'Antimo** (☎ 0577 83 56 59; Castelnuovo dell'Abate; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9-10.30am & 3-6pm Sun) lies in an isolated valley just below the village of Castelnuovo dell'Abate. Its Romanesque exterior, built in pale travertine stone, features stone carvings set in the bell tower and apsidal chapels.

Three daily buses (€1.20, 15 minutes) connect Montalcino with the village of Castelnuovo dell'Abate. From here, it's an easy walk to the church.

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Within the 14th-century **fortress** (☎ 0577 84 92 11; courtyard free, ramparts adult/child €4/2; ☎ 9am-8pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Mar) is an *enoteca* where you can sample and buy local wines. The view is almost as magnificent from the courtyard as it is from the ramparts.

A combined ticket giving full access to the museum and fortress costs €6.

There's a vigorous **Friday market** on and around Via della Libertà.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Il Giardino** (☎ 0577 84 82 57; [albergoilgiardino@virgilio.it](mailto:albergoilgiardino@virgilio.it); Piazza Cavour 4; s €40-45, d €55-60) An excellent-value, friendly, family-run, two-star hotel. Occupying a venerable building overlooking Piazza Cavour, its decor has a distinct 1970s feel.

**Hotel Il Giglio** (☎ 0577 84 81 67; [www.gigliohotel.com](http://www.gigliohotel.com); Via Soccorso Saloni 5; s €82, d €122-135, annex s/d/tr €60/92/115, 2-4 person apt €90-120; 📞 ☎) Montalcino's oldest, but substantially renovated, hotel. Rooms have comfortable wrought-iron beds – each gilded with a painted *giglio* (lily) – and all doubles have panoramic views. There's a small annex just up the street and a couple of apartments. Room 1 has an enormous terrace that comes at no extra cost.

**Hotel Vecchia Oliviera** (☎ 0577 84 60 28; [www.vecchiaoliviera.com](http://www.vecchiaoliviera.com); Via Landi 1; d €160-190; 📞 ☎ ☎) Just beside the Porta Cerbaia, this is a former olive mill that has been tastefully restored utilising earthy colours and terracotta tiles. Tranquil (it's at the very limit of the town), each room is individually decorated. The back patio has stunning views.

**Al Baccanale** (☎ 340 7810273; Via Matteotti 19; meals €32) A family operation favoured by locals, serving belt-challenging, pick-and-mix pasta/sauce plates, including the popular, idiosyncratic *maltagliati*, or ‘badly cut pasta’, the random, leftover bits after other pasta has been cut.

**Re di Macchia** (☎ 0577 84 61 16; Via Soccorso Saloni 21; meals €34, fixed menu €23; ☎ Fri-Wed) This is a very agreeable small restaurant run by an enterprising couple. Roberta selects the freshest of ingredients and the wine cellar is impressive; to sample a variety, try Antonio’s personal selection of four wines (€16), each to accompany a course.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Regular TRAIN S.p.A. buses (€3.30, 1½ hours, six daily) run to/from Siena.

## Pienza

### pop 2172

The World Heritage—listed town of Pienza is on the primary road to Montepulciano. Its **tourist office** (☎ 0578 74 99 05; Corso Il Rossellino; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Wed-Mon) is located within the Museo Diocesano.

Spin 360 degrees in **Piazza Pio II** and you’ve taken in Pienza’s major monuments. Gems of the Renaissance, they were all constructed in a mere three years between 1459 and 1462. The square is named after the pope who, in one of the earliest examples of urban planning, commissioned the architect Bernardo Rossellino to rebuild the little town of his birth.

Highlights of the **cathedral** (☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.15-7pm), with its Renaissance facade, are a superb marble tabernacle by Rossellino, and five altarpieces, all by Sienese artists.

**Palazzo Piccolomini**, Padre Pio II’s country residence, is considered to be Rossellino’s masterpiece. From its loggia, there are spectacular panoramic views over the Val d’Orcia below.

**Palazzo Borgia**, also called the Palazzo Vescovile, houses Pienza’s small **Museo Diocesano** (☎ 0578 74 99 05; adult/child €4.10/2.60; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-7pm Wed-Mon mid-Mar—Oct, Sat & Sun only Nov—mid-Mar), with paintings of the Sienese school and some striking 16th-century Flemish tapestries.

Almost a monument in its own right, the pungent **Bottega del Naturalista** (Corso Rossellino 16) has a truly mouthwatering choice of cheeses, in particular the renowned ewe’s milk *pecorino di pienza*.

Up to four buses run between Siena and Pienza on weekdays (€3.80, 1¼ hours) and nine travel to/from Montepulciano (€1.80). The bus station is just off Piazza Dante Alighieri. Buy tickets at the nearby bar.

## Montepulciano

### pop 14,389

You’ll acquire a newfound appreciation for the term ‘hotel restaurant’ after a day of street (read: hill) climbing here. When your quadriceps reach their failure point, self-medicate with a generous pour of the highly reputed *Vino Nobile* while drinking in the views over the Valdichiana countryside.

## ORIENTATION

The town sheers off to the left and right from the main street, which rises steeply southwards from Porta al Prato to the Piazza Grande and fortress beyond. The 750m walk bordered by the town’s finest buildings may leave you breathless but is well worth the exercise.

## INFORMATION

**Strada del Vino Nobile di Montepulciano Information Office** (☎ 0578 71 74 84; [www.stradavinonobile.it](http://www.stradavinonobile.it); Piazza Grande 7; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) Books accommodation, arranges cooking courses, Slow Food tours, wine tastings, bike rentals and unstrenuous country walks culminating in lunch.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0578 75 73 41; [www.prolocomontepulciano.it](http://www.prolocomontepulciano.it); Piazza Don Minzoni; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-8pm Easter-Jul & Sep-Oct, to 8pm Aug, to 12.30pm Mon-Sat & 3-6pm Sun Nov-Easter) Reserves accommodation without charge, as well as selling local bus tickets and train tickets and renting bikes and scooters.

## SIGHTS

Most of the main sights are clustered around Piazza Grande, although the town's streets harbour a wealth of *palazzi*, fine buildings and churches.

From the **Porta al Prato**, walk south along Via di Gracciano nel Corso. At the upper end of Piazza Savonarola is the **Colonna del Marzocca**, erected in 1511 to confirm Montepulciano's allegiance to Florence.

Among several noble residences lining the main street is the **Palazzo Bucelli** at No 73, whose lower facades are recycled Etruscan and Latin inscriptions and reliefs. The **Palazzo Cocconi**, nearly opposite at No 70, was also designed by Sangallo.

Continuing up Via di Gracciano nel Corso, you will find Michelozzo's **Chiesa di Sant'Agostino** (Piazza Michelozzo; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm). Opposite, the **Torre di Pulcinella**, a medieval tower house, is topped by the town clock and the hunched figure of Pulcinella (Punch of Punch and Judy fame), who strikes the hours.

Overlooking Piazza Grande, which is the town's highest point, is the **Palazzo Comunale** (admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat). Built in the 13th-century Gothic style and remodelled in the 15th century by Michelozzo, it still functions as the town hall. On a clear day, you can see as far as the Monti Sibillini to the east and the Gran Sasso to the southeast from the top of its **tower** (entry 2nd fl; admission €1.60; ☎ Apr-Oct). Opposite is the **Palazzo Contucci** and its extensive wine cellar, **Cantine Contucci** (☎ 0578 75 70 06; [www.contucci.it](http://www.contucci.it); ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm), which is open for visiting and sampling.

The 16th-century **cathedral** (Piazza Grande; ☎ 9am-noon & 4-6pm) has an unfinished facade. Above the high altar is a lovely triptych by Taddeo da Bartolo depicting the Assumption.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Bellavista** (☎ 347 8232314; [bellavista@bccmp.com](mailto:bellavista@bccmp.com); Via Ricci 25; d €65-70; 📞) Nearly all of the 10 high-ceilinged double rooms at this excellent hotel have fantastic views; room 6 has a private terrace. Some rooms have refrigerators and all have great beds. No-one lives here so phone ahead in order to be met and given a key (if you've omitted this stage, there's a phone in the lobby from where you can call).

**Albergo Il Marzocco** (☎ 0578 75 72 62; [www.albergoilmarzocco.it](http://www.albergoilmarzocco.it); Piazza Savonarola 18; s €60-75, d €90-95; 📞) Run as a hotel by the same family for over a century, the rooms in this fabulous 16th-century building are large, comfortable and well furnished. Those with a balcony and views come at no extra cost.

**Meubl  Il Riccio** (☎ 0578 75 77 13; [www.ilriccio.net](http://www.ilriccio.net); Via Talosa 21; s/d €80/100; 📞 📺 📺) This gorgeous tiny hotel, with only six bedrooms, occupies a Renaissance *palazzo* just off Piazza Grande. It has large rooms, antiques, a solarium, a porticoed courtyard and a terrace bar for your glass of *vino* with a view.

**Osteria dell'Acquacheta** (☎ 0578 75 84 43; [www.acquacheta.eu](http://www.acquacheta.eu); Via del Teatro 22; meals €20; 📧 Wed-Mon) This is a small eatery with the look and feel of a country trattoria. The food is excellent and mainly meaty, ranging from *misto di salami toscani* (a variety of Tuscan sausages and salamis) to huge steaks.

**Caffè Poliziano** (☎ 0578 75 86 15; Via di Voltaia nel Corso 27; meals €26) Established as a cafe in 1868, this elegant place has been lovingly restored and has tiny, precipitous balcony tables with expansive views.

**Enoteca a Gambe di Gatto** (☎ 0578 75 74 31; [zelfdizekf@yahoo.it](mailto:zelfdizekf@yahoo.it); Via dell'Opio nel Corso 34; meals €30; 📧 closed Jan-Easter & Wed) Renowned throughout the region, exacting husband and wife team of Emanuel and Laura travel the country each winter to acquire the absolute best products from organic producers. The daily menu fluctuates wildly, depending on market offerings.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

**TRAIN S.p.A.** ([www.trainspa.it](http://www.trainspa.it)) runs five buses daily between Montepulciano and Siena (€4.70, 1¾ hours) via Pienza. Regular **LFI** ([www.lfi.it](http://www.lfi.it)) buses connect with Chiusi (€2.30, 50 minutes, half-hourly) and continue to Chiusi-Chianciano Terme train station, on the main Rome—Florence line. There are three services daily to/from Florence (€9.40) and two to/from Arezzo (€3.70; change at Bettolle).

By car, take the Chianciano Terme exit from the A1 and follow the SS146. Cars are banned from the centre. There are car parks near the Porta al Prato, from where minibuses weave their way to Piazza Grande.

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## SOUTHERN TUSCANY

This is a landscape of lush rumpled hills, distant smoky mountains and ancient hill-top villages. For pure drama, there are Etruscan sites such as the enigmatic *vie cave* (sunken roads), over whose significance archaeologists still puzzle. You can dunk yourself in the hot natural pools of Saturnia; laze on the smart marinas and good beaches of Monte Argentario; and trek through the quiet Parco Regionale della Maremma, which embraces the most varied and attractive stretch of the Tuscan coastline.

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## PARCO REGIONALE DELLA MAREMMA

This spectacular **nature park** (admission €6-9) includes the Monti dell'Uccellina, which drops to a magnificent stretch of unspoiled coastline. The main **visitor centre** (☎ 0564 40 70 98; [www.parcodemaremma.it](http://www.parcodemaremma.it); 📧 8am-5pm mid-Mar—Sep, 8.30am-1.30pm Oct—mid-Mar) is in Alberese, on the park's northern edge. There's a small **seasonal centre** (☎ 0564 88 71 73; 📧 8am-noon & 5-8pm Jul & Aug, to 1pm Sep-Jun) at the park's southern extremity, 400m up a dirt lane about 1km before Talamone. Park access is limited to 11 signed walking trails, varying from 2.5km to 12km. Entry (by ticket bought at the visitor centre) varies according to whether a minibus transports you to your chosen route. Depending on your trail, you stand a chance of spotting deer, wild boar, foxes and hawks.

The **Centro Turismo Il Rialto** (☎ 0564 40 71 02), 600m north of the main visitor centre, offers guided canoe outings (adult/child €16/8; two hours) and rents mountain bikes (per hour/day €3/8). It doesn't have



set core hours, so call ahead or risk finding the place abandoned.

To restore your energy after a walk, **Trattoria e Pizzeria Mancini e Caduro** (☎ 0564 40 71 37; Via del Fante 24; meals €21; 📅 Wed-Mon Apr-Sep), in nearby Alberese, has an affordable menu of homemade Tuscan standards, including *tortelli ricotta e spinace* (pasta with cheese and spinach) and *aquacotta* (soup with bread, onion, tomatoes, celery and egg).

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## ETRUSCAN SITES

### Terme di Saturnia

This **thermal spa** (☎ 0564 60 01 11; [www.termedisaturnia.it](http://www.termedisaturnia.it); day admission €22, 3pm-closing €17, parking €4; 📅 9.30am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Oct-Mar) is about 2.5km south of the village of Saturnia. You can spend a whole day dunking yourself in the hot pools and signing on for ancillary activities such as the alluring ‘four-hand massage shower’ or the somewhat sinister-sounding ‘infiltration of gaseous oxygen to reduce excess fat’.

Econo-bathers can avail themselves of the waters running parallel to the road for several hundred metres, starting just south of the Terme di Saturnia turn-off. Look for the telltale sign of other bathers’ cars parked on the road, then forage down the path until you find a suitable spot of cascading water.

### Pitigliano

#### pop 4008

Growing organically from the high rocky outcrop that towers over the surrounding countryside, Pitigliano is outstanding long-shot, photo-op fodder. The main monuments are within a stone’s throw of Piazza Garibaldi, where you’ll find the **tourist office** (☎ 0564 61 71 11; 📅 10.20am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar).

#### SIGHTS

Off the square are an imposing 16th-century **viaduct** and the 13th-century **Palazzo Orsini** (☎ 0564 61 44 19; adult/child €2.50/1.50; 📅 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar). The latter’s small museum houses a cluttered collection of ecclesiastical objects.

Opposite is the altogether more organised **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0564 61 40 67; Piazza della Fortezza; adult/child €2.50/1.50; 📅 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, to 1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), with a rich display of finds from local Etruscan sites. They’re well displayed, though the descriptive panels are in Italian only.

The town’s medieval lanes and steep alleys are a delight to wander, particularly around the small **Ghetto** quarter. Take Via Zuccarelli and turn left for **La Piccola Gerusalemme** (☎ 0564 61 60 06; Vicolo Manin 30; adult/child €3/2; 📅 10am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Sun-Fri May-Oct, to 12.30pm & 3-6pm Sun-Fri Nov-Apr). The area fell into disrepair with the demise of Pitigliano’s Jewish community at the end of WWII and was practically rebuilt from scratch in 1995. A visit includes the tiny, richly adorned synagogue and a small museum of Jewish culture, including the old bakery, kosher butchers and dyeing shops.

There are some spectacular walks around Pitigliano. The base of the rocky outcrop is stippled with Etruscan tomb caves carved into the soft tufa, many of them recycled as storage cellars. From there, you

can follow a signed trail (about 6km) to Sovana.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Albergo Guastini** (☎ 0564 61 60 65; [www.albergoguastini.it](http://www.albergoguastini.it); Piazza Petruccioli 16; s €35-40, d €58-66; 📅 closed mid-Jan—mid-Feb) Pitigliano's only hotel is particularly friendly and welcoming. Perched on the edge of the cliff face, many of its rooms have marvellous views. Breakfast costs €8.

**Osteria Il Tufo Allegro** (☎ 0564 61 61 92; Vico della Costituzione 2; meals €31; 📅 closed Wed lunch & Tue) This *osteria* is just off Via Zuccarelli. The aromas emanating from its kitchen should be enough to draw you into the cavernous chamber, carved out of the tufa foundations.

**Il Forno** (Via Roma 16) Pick up a stick or two of *sfratto*, a gorgeously sticky local confection made of honey and walnuts, from this place. Counterbalance the sweetness with a glass or two of the town's excellent dryish Bianco di Pitigliano wine.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Rama** ([www.griforama.it](http://www.griforama.it)) buses run between Pitigliano and Grosseto's train station (€6, two hours, four daily). They connect Pitigliano with Sorano (€1.20, 15 minutes, seven daily) and Sovana (€1.20, 20 minutes, one daily). For Saturnia, change at Manciano.

## Necropoli di Sovana

One and a half kilometres south of the pretty nearby village of Sovana are Tuscany's most significant **Etruscan tombs** (admission €5; 📅 9am-7pm Mar-Nov, 10am-5pm Fri-Sun Dec-Feb). Look for the yellow sign on the left for the **Tomba della Sirena**, where you follow a trail running alongside a rank of tomb facades cut from the rock face, as well as walk along a *via cava*.

The **Tomba di Ildebranda**, by far the grandest of Etruscan mausoleums and the only surviving temple-style tomb, still preserves traces of its columns and stairs. **Tomba del Tifone** is about 300m down a trail running alongside a rank of tomb facades cut from the rock face. A few arresting lengths of *via cava* exist here as well.

Due east of the village, just outside the tiny hamlet of San Quirico and signposted from the main square, are the **Vitozza rock caves** (☎ 0564 61 40 74; admission €2; 📅 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, by appointment Nov-Feb), more than 200 of them, peppering a high rock ridge. One of the largest troglodyte dwellings in Italy, the complex was first inhabited in prehistoric times.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

If you plan to visit both Sovana and Sorano, invest in a €7 combined ticket. It gives entry to Tomba della Sirena, Tomba di Ildebranda, Fortezza Orsini, Necropoli di San Rocco, and the Vitozza rock caves. Buy a ticket at any of the sites.

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## Sorano

High on a rocky spur, Sorano's houses, many of which are nowadays unoccupied, seem to huddle together in an effort not to shove one another off their precarious perch. The town's main attraction is the partly renovated **Fortezza Orsini** (☎ 0564 63 37 67; Piazza Cairoli; adult/child under 11yr/child over 11yr €2/free/1; 📅 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Apr-Oct, to 1pm & 3-5.30pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar) with its medieval

museum and underground passageways, visited by separate guided tour (€3; hourly).

A few kilometres out of Sorano on the road to Sovana is the **Necropoli di San Rocco** (☎ 0564 63 30 99; admission €2; 🕒 11am-6pm Mar-Oct), another Etruscan burial area.

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## EASTERN TUSCANY

This corner of Tuscany holds some cinematic oh-wow moments, and the fact that relatively few tourists bother to venture here means that you'll find yourself with plenty of elbowroom.

Fans of Piero della Francesca can follow a trail of his paintings through the towns of Sansepolcro and Monterchi, finishing with a viewing of his fresco cycle in Arezzo's Chiesa di San Francesco.

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## VIE CAVE

There are at least 15 rock-sculpted passages spreading out in every direction from the valleys below Pitigliano. These sunken roads (*vie cave*) are enormous, up to 20m deep and 3m wide, and are believed to be sacred routes linking the necropoli and other sites associated with the Etruscan religious cult. A less popular, more mundane explanation is that these strange megalithic corridors were used to move livestock or as some kind of defence, allowing people to move from village to village unseen.

The countryside around Pitigliano, Sovana and Sorano is riddled with *vie cave*. Two particularly good examples, 500m west of Pitigliano on the road to Sovana, are Via Cava di Fratenucci, with its high vertical walls and Etruscan graffiti; and Via Cava di San Giuseppe, which passes the Fontana dell'Olmo, carved out of solid rock. From this fountain stares the sculpted head of Bacchus, the mythological god of fruitfulness. Via Cava San Rocco, near Sorano, is another fine example. It winds its way through the hills for 2km between the town and the Necropoli di San Rocco.

There's a fine **walk** from Pitigliano to Sovana (8km, three hours) that incorporates parts of the *vie cave*. Inquire at the tourist office in Pitigliano for routes and the all-important return transport.

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## AREZZO

**pop 97,493**

Arezzo may not be a Tuscan centrefold, but those parts of its historic centre that survived merciless WWII bombings are worthy competition for any destination in the region: particularly the sloping Piazza Grande, the Pieve di Santa Maria and the five-star frescoes by Piero della Francesca in the Chiesa di San Francesco. The setting for much of Roberto Benigni's Oscar-winning film *La vita è bella* (Life is Beautiful), it's well worth a visit, easily accomplished as a day trip from Florence.

Once an important Etruscan town, Arezzo was later absorbed into the Roman Empire. A free republic as early as the 10th century, it supported the Ghibelline cause in the violent battles between pope and emperor and was eventually subjugated by Florence in 1384.

Arezzo was the birthplace of the Renaissance poet Petrarch, who popularised the sonnet format,

penning his verses in both Latin and Italian; and of Giorgio Vasari, the prolific painter and architect who contributed so much to Renaissance Florence.

On the second-last Sunday of June and first Sunday of September, the town hosts the famous **Giostra del Saracino**, a horse-jousting competition. A huge, 500-exhibitor **antiques fair** takes over Piazza Grande on the first weekend of every month.

## Orientation

From the train station on the southern edge of the walled city, pedestrianised Corso Italia leads to the Piazza Grande, Arezzo's nucleus.

## Information

**APT tourist office** (☎ 0575 2 08 39; [www.apr.arezco.it](http://www.apr.arezco.it); Piazza della Repubblica 28; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Oct-Mar) Has a representative from Colori Toscani onsite who can arrange accommodation and tours free of charge.

**Centro di Accoglienza Turistico** (☎ 0575 40 35 74; Via Ricasoli; 🕒 9.30am-6.30pm Jun-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-May) Hires out audioguides to Arezzo (adult/child per day €2.50/2) with an accompanying map. Its 'Room 180' shows a 30-minute film about Arezzo (adult/child €2.50/2) in six languages on a 180-degree screen.

**Eutelia** (Via Guido Monaco 61; per hr €2; 🕒 9am-9pm) Internet access and cheap international phone calls.

**Nuovo Ospedale San Donato** (☎ 0575 25 50 01; Via A de Gasperi) Arezzo's hospital, located outside the city walls.

**Police station** (☎ 0575 31 81; Via Fra Guittone 3)

**Post office** (Via Guido Monaco 34)

## Sights

### CHIESA DI SAN FRANCESCO

Gracing the apse of this 14th-century **church** (Piazza San Francesco; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar) is one of the greatest works of Italian art, Piero della Francesca's fresco cycle of the *Legend of the True Cross* (1452–66). This masterpiece relates in 10 episodes a highly coloured subsequent history of the cross on which Christ was crucified.

You can get some sense of the frescoes from beyond the cordon in front of the altar, but to really appreciate them up close, plan ahead for a **visit with audioguide** (☎ reservations 0575 35 27 27; [www.pierodellafrancesca.it](http://www.pierodellafrancesca.it); admission €6; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar). As only 25 people are allowed in every half-hour, it's essential to prebook by phone or at any of the sites that participate in the combined ticket scheme. The ticket office is at Piazza San Francesco 4, to the right of the church's main entrance.

### PIEVE DI SANTA MARIA

This 12th-century **church** (Corso Italia 7; 🕒 8am-1pm & 3-7pm May-Sep, to noon & 3-6pm Oct-Apr) has a magnificent Romanesque arcaded facade, in form reminiscent of the cathedral at Pisa, yet without the glorious marble facing. Over the central doorway are lively carved reliefs representing the months of the year. The 14th-century bell tower with its 40 apertures is something of an emblem for the city. The monochrome of the interior's warm, grey stone is relieved by Pietro Lorenzetti's fine polyptych,

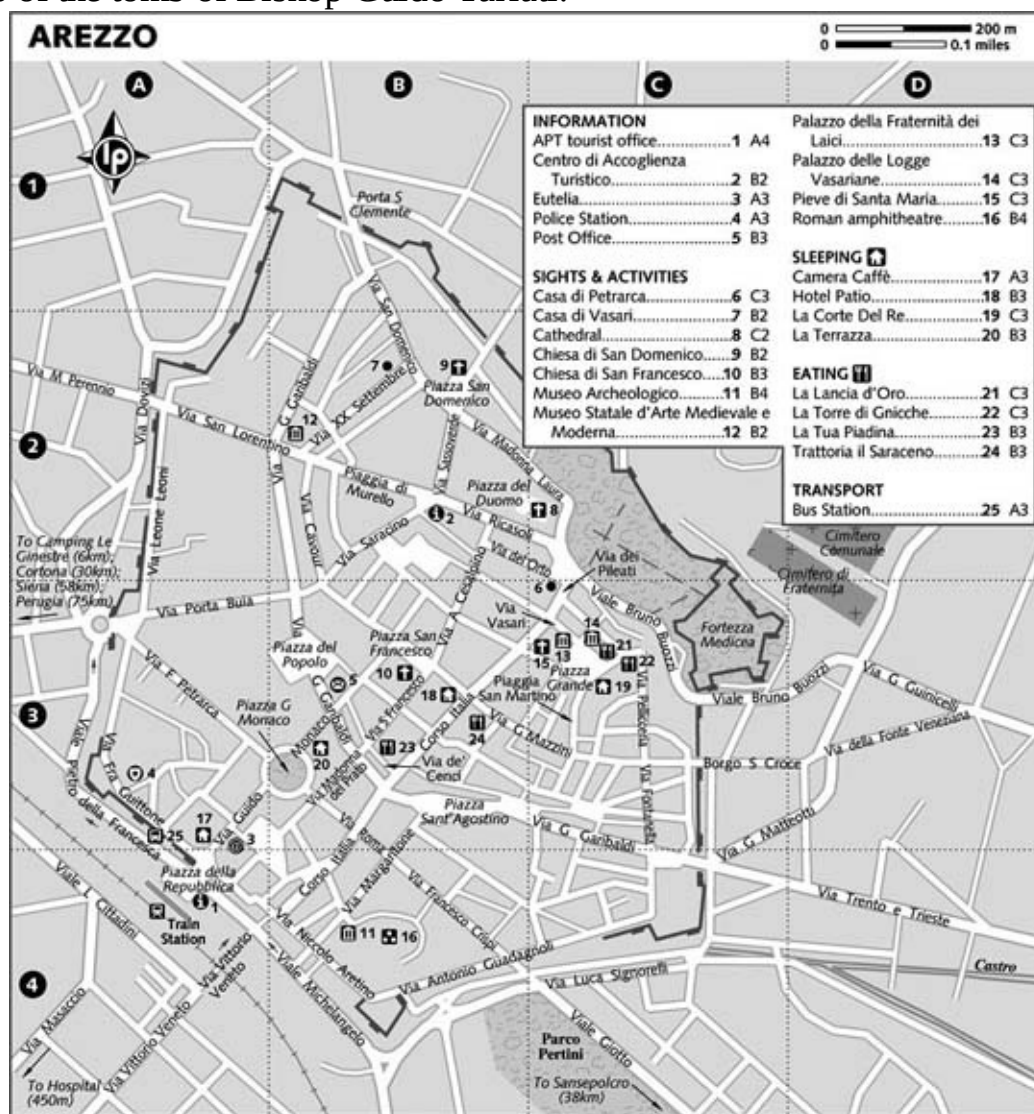
*Madonna and Saints*, beneath the semidome of the apse.

## PIAZZA GRANDE & AROUND

The porticoes of **Palazzo delle Logge Vasariane**, completed in 1573, overlook this cobbled piazza. In the northwest corner, **Palazzo della Fraternità dei Laici**, with its churchlike facade, was started in 1375 in the Gothic style and finished after the onset of the Renaissance. Via dei Pileati leads to **Casa di Petrarca**, the poet's former home.

## CATHEDRAL

Arezzo's **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm) was started in the 13th century yet was not completed until well into the 15th century. In the northeast corner, left of the main altar, an exquisite fresco of *Mary Magdalene* by Piero della Francesca is dwarfed in size, but not beauty, by the rich marble reliefs of the tomb of Bishop Guido Tarlati.



## CHIESA DI SAN DOMENICO & AROUND

The short detour to the **Chiesa di San Domenico** (Piazza San Domenico 7; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) is a must so you can see the haunting *Crucifixion* – one of Cimabue's earliest works, painted around 1265 – that rears above the main altar. To the west, the **Casa di Vasari** (☎ 0575 40 90 40; Via XX Settembre 55; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Mon & Wed-Sat, to 1pm Sun) was built and sumptuously decorated (overwhelmingly so in the case of the Sala del Camino, the Fireplace Room) by the architect himself; ring the bell if the door's closed.

Down the hill, the **Museo Statale d'Arte Medievale e Moderna** (☎ 0575 40 90 50; Via San Lorentino

8; adult/student €10/7; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun) houses works by local artists, including Luca Signorelli and Vasari, spanning from the 13th to 18th centuries.

## MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO & ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE

East of the train station, the **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0575 2 08 82; Via Margaritone 10; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) is in a convent overlooking the remains of a **Roman amphitheatre** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar). It has a sizeable collection of Etruscan and Roman artefacts.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

You can buy a combined ticket (€10) giving entry to the Piero della Francesca frescoes in the Chiesa di San Francesco, plus Museo Archeologico, Museo Statale d'Arte Medievale e Moderna and Casa di Vasari, at any of the four venues.

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## Sleeping

**Camping Le Ginestre** (☎ 0575 36 35 66; [www.campingleginestre.it](http://www.campingleginestre.it); Via Ruscello 100; per person €7-8, pitch €8-10; ☎ year-round) From Arezzo train station, take the LFI bus to Ruscello and request the camping stop.

**Camera Caffé** (☎ 347 0324405; [www.cameracaffe.net](http://www.cameracaffe.net); Via Guido Monaco 92; s with shared bathroom €35, s/d with bathroom €40/55; ☎) Across the street from the train station, the dorm-room decor here is supplemented by cushy beds and fat duvets. The huge, self-serve kitchen has a gorgeous dining terrace and some rooms have air-con.

**La Terrazza** (☎ 0575 2 83 87; [laterrazza@lycos.it](mailto:laterrazza@lycos.it); 5th fl, Via Guido Monaco 25; s/d without bathroom €40/50, d with bathroom €60) Comprising apartments on two floors with eight large, bright rooms and a kitchen for guest use, this place is welcoming and good value. Go down the passage beside Blockbuster.

**La Corte Del Re** (☎ 0575 29 67 20; [www.lacortedelre.com](http://www.lacortedelre.com); Via Borgunto 5; s €60-75, d €70-90; ☎ ☎) A collection of six apartments, centimetres from Piazza Grande, harmoniously blending contemporary design into elements of the historic building. Some apartments have kitchenettes and views of the square. Three night minimum stay.

**Hotel Patio** (☎ 0575 40 19 62; [www.hotelpatio.it](http://www.hotelpatio.it); Via Cavour 23; s €115-130, d €155-176, ste €190-230; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This is Arezzo's most characterful hotel, with 10 themed rooms, each dedicated to one of Bruce Chatwin's travel books. Each has original furnishings from the various countries represented, including Australia, Morocco and China.

## Eating

**La Tua Piadina** (☎ 0575 2 32 40; Via de' Cenci 18) A justifiably popular takeaway place hidden away down a side street, where you can get a range of hot, tasty *piadine*, the Emilia-Romagna version of the wrap, from around €3.50.

**La Torre di Gnicche** (☎ 0575 35 20 35; Piaggia San Martino 8; meals €26; ☎ Thu-Tue) Just off Piazza Grande, this is a fine traditional restaurant offering a rich variety of antipasti. Choose from the ample range of local *pecorino* cheeses, accompanied by a choice red from the extensive wine list.

**Trattoria Il Saraceno** (☎ 0575 2 76 44; [www.ilsaraceno.com](http://www.ilsaraceno.com); Via Giuseppe Mazzini 3a; meals €30; ☎)

Thu-Tue) This trattoria serves quality, varied Tuscan fare. The impressive wine collection is hard to miss, as it conspicuously lines the walls. Pizzas start at €5.

**La Lancia d'Oro** (☎ 0575 2 10 33; Piazza Grande 18-19; meals €47; 📞 closed Sun dinner & Mon) Your order here is supplemented by excellent snacks and tidbits that arrive unannounced. There's a jolly, waggish waiter, while the interior, painted with swags and green-and-white stripes, is like dining in a marquee. Good light lunch menus (€15, two courses, plus glass of wine) are served on the terrace under the loggia that looks down over Piazza Grande.

A veritable produce melee erupts at Piazza Sant'Agostino's **market** each Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

## Getting There & Away

Buses depart Piazza della Repubblica for Cortona (€2.80, one hour, more than 10 weekdays, three Saturday), Sansepolcro (€3.30, one hour, seven daily) and Siena (€5.20, 1½ hours, seven daily). For Florence, you're better off hopping on the train.

Arezzo is on the Florence—Rome train line with frequent services to Rome (€11.70, two hours) and Florence (€5.60, 1½ hours). Trains also call by Cortona (€2.40, 20 minutes, hourly). Arezzo is just a few kilometres east of the A1 and the SS73 heads east to Sansepolcro.

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## DETOUR

North of Arezzo is the **Parco Nazionale delle Foreste Casentinesi** ([www.parcforestecasentinesi.it](http://www.parcforestecasentinesi.it)), a wooded national park that takes in some of the Apennines' most spectacular scenery. One of the highest peaks, Monte Falterona (1654m), marks the source of the Arno. In addition to two monasteries, the park is home to a rich assortment of wildlife and nearly 100 bird species. The dense forests are a cool summer refuge, ideal for both walking and escaping the maddening crowds.

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## SANSEPOLCRO

**pop 16,161**

Sansepolcro was the birthplace of Piero della Francesca and is an important stop on any itinerary inspired by his work. On your way from Arezzo, stop in Monterchi to see his famous fresco **Madonna del Parto** (Pregnant Madonna; ☎ 0575 7 07 13; Via della Reglia 1; adult/child €3.50/free; 📞 9am-1pm & 2-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Mar). A sensitive touch: pregnant women get free admission.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0575 74 05 36; [infosansepolcro@apt.arezzo.it](mailto:infosansepolcro@apt.arezzo.it); Via Matteotti 8; 📞 9.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Apr-Sep, to 12.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, to 12.30pm Sun Oct-Mar) is packed with multilingual information.

Within the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0575 73 22 18; [www.comune.sansepolcro.ar.it](http://www.comune.sansepolcro.ar.it), in Italian; Via Aggiunti 65; adult/child €6/4.50; 📞 9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-7pm Jun-Sep, to 1pm & 2.30-6pm Oct-May), around the corner from the tourist office, are two Piero della Francesca masterpieces: his *Resurrection*, and the

*Madonna della Misericordia* (Madonna of Mercy) polyptych, where the Virgin spreads her protective cloak over the painting's benefactors.

**our pick** **Locanda Giglio & Ristorante Fiorentino** (☎ 0575 74 20 33; [www.ristorantefiorentino.it](http://www.ristorantefiorentino.it); Via Pacioli 60; s/d/tr €55/80/110; 📍 🚗), a very friendly hotel and restaurant, has been in the same family for four generations. The four hotel rooms with their oak floors, underfloor lighting and period furniture recovered from the family loft have been imaginatively renovated by Alessia, an architect/sommelier and youngest of the family (ask for La Torre, with a lovely low bed and the best views), while Dad, Alessio, still runs the restaurant with panache. The pasta's homemade and the imaginative menu (meals €30 to €34) changes with the seasons.

SITA buses link Sansepolcro with Arezzo (€3.30, one hour, seven daily) and there are several trains daily to Perugia (€4.15, 1¾ hours).

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## CORTONA

pop 22,901

With a layout indicative of someone spilling a bucket of 'Etruscan town' down a hillside, rooms with a view are the rule rather than the exception in Cortona. In the late 14th century Fra' Angelico lived and worked here, and fellow artists Luca Signorelli (1450–1523) and Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669) were both born within the walls. More recently, large chunks of *Under the Tuscan Sun*, the soap-in-the-sun film of the book by Frances Mayes, were shot here.

A full week of merriment in May or June (the date varies to coincide with Ascension Day) culminates in the **Giostra dell'Archidado**, a crossbow competition first held in the Middle Ages.

## Orientation

Piazzale Garibaldi, on the southern edge of the walled city, is where buses arrive. From it, there are sensational views across the plain to Lago di Trasimeno in Umbria. From the piazzale, walk straight up Via Nazionale – about the only flat street in the whole town – to Piazza della Repubblica, the main square. The friendly **tourist office** (☎ 0575 63 03 52; Via Nazionale 42; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat Oct-Apr) has maps, brochures and timetables, sells bus and train tickets and can book rooms.

## Sights

Brooding over lopsided Piazza della Repubblica is the **Palazzo Comunale**, built in the 13th century, renovated in the 16th and once again in the 19th. To the north is attractive **Piazza Signorelli** and, on its north side, 13th-century **Palazzo Casali**, whose rather plain facade was added in the 17th century. Inside is the **Museo dell'Accademia Etrusca** (☎ 0575 63 04 15; Piazza Signorelli 9; adult/child €7/4; 🕒 10am-7pm daily Apr-Oct, to 5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), which displays substantial local Etruscan finds, including an elaborate 2nd-century-BC oil lamp.

Little is left of the Romanesque character of the **cathedral**, northwest of Piazza Signorelli. It was completely rebuilt late in the Renaissance and again, indifferently, in the 18th century. Its true wealth lies in the **Museo Diocesano** (☎ 0575 6 28 30; Piazza del Duomo 1; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 10am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) in the former church of Gesù. Its fine collection includes works by Luca Signorelli and a beautiful *Annunciation* and *Madonna* by Fra' Angelico.



Wriggle up through a sleepy warren of steep cobbled lanes in the eastern part of town to the largely 19th-century **Chiesa di Santa Margherita** (Piazza Santa Margherita; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 3-7pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-noon & 3-6pm Oct-Apr). The remains of St Margaret, the patron saint of Cortona, are on display in an ornate, 14th-century, glass-sided tomb above the main altar. It's a stiff climb, but worth it – and it's worth pushing even further uphill to the forbidding **Fortezza Medicea** (☎ 0575 63 04 15; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-6pm Apr, May, Jun & Sep, to 7pm Jul & Aug), Cortona's highest point, with stupendous views over the surrounding countryside.

## Sleeping

**Santa Margherita** (☎ 0575 63 03 36; [comunitacortona@smr.it](mailto:comunitacortona@smr.it); Via Cesare Battisti 15; s/d €40/54; ☎ year-round) Run by sweet, obliging nuns from the religious institute, this is a popular place with Italian groups, so call ahead (with Italian phrasebook at the ready). A renovation in 2009 included new beds, fresh paint and sparkling bathrooms. Breakfast costs €5. Disabled access.

**Hotel Italia** (☎ 0575 63 02 54; [www.hotelitaliacortona.com](http://www.hotelitaliacortona.com); Via Ghibellina 5/7; s €83-88, d €110-116; ☎ ☎) A casual but atmospheric 17th-century *palazzo* just off Piazza della Repubblica. Standard rooms have traditional cross-beamed ceilings and are decorated in warm orange tones, while each of the unique superior rooms features giant bathtubs. Views are breathtaking from the roof-level breakfast room. Oriental massages, wi-fi and mountain-bike hire are available.

**Hotel San Michele** (☎ 0575 60 43 48; [www.hotelsanmichele.net](http://www.hotelsanmichele.net); Via Guelfa 15; d €79-220; ☎ closed Jan—mid-Mar; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is Cortona's finest hotel. Primarily Renaissance, but with elements dating from the 12th century and modifications over subsequent centuries, it's like a little history of Cortona in stone. Rooms are airy, spacious and exquisitely furnished. Prices vary wildly due to frequent special offers and festivals.

## Eating

**Snoopy's** (Piazza Signorelli 29) Gelato is served in generous portions here, starting at €1.50 for a small cone.

**Trattoria Dardano** (☎ 0575 60 19 44; Via Dardano 24; meals €24; ☎ Thu-Tue) Dardano is one of those no-nonsense yet still unexpectedly wonderful *trattorie* that feature prominently in every Tuscany travel memoir, doing amazing things with ostensibly simple dishes. You'll be elbow-to-elbow with locals and giddy, idealistic visitors seriously considering buying and fixing up a nearby farmhouse on the strength of their lunch.

**Osteria del Teatro** (☎ 0575 63 05 56; [www.osteria-del-teatro.it](http://www.osteria-del-teatro.it); Via Maffei 2; meals €40; ☎ Thu-Tue) Friendly service, fresh flowers on every table and a liberal meting out of truffle shavings awaits diners here. Featured in nearly every Italian gastronomic guide, its seasonally driven dishes include the *ravioli ai fiori di zucca* (pumpkin-flower ravioli) in summer.

**La Bucaccia** (☎ 0575 60 60 39; [www.labucaccia.it](http://www.labucaccia.it); Via Ghibellina 17; meals €45) Decidedly tourist-targeted, with Etruscan cellar ambience: wine racks, grape press, tiny wine barrels, cheese wheels and an Etruscan cistern displayed under a glassed floor. The service is indisputably warm, and the food notable in both taste and presentation, but lofty wine prices push the final total quite high.

There's a Saturday **market** (Piazza Signorelli), which sells farmers' products.

## Getting There & Around

From Piazzale Garibaldi, LFI buses connect the town with Arezzo (€2.80, one hour), via Castiglion Fiorentino.

The nearest train station on the main Rome—Florence line is located about 6km away at Camucia-Cortona, to which shuttle buses (€1, 15 minutes) run at least hourly. Destinations include Arezzo (€2.40, 20 minutes, hourly), Florence (€7.10, 1½ hours, hourly), Rome (€9.40, 2¼ hours, every two hours) and Perugia (€3.15, 40 minutes, over 12 daily).

The tourist office has timetables and sells both bus and train tickets.

By car the city is on the north—south SS71 that runs to Arezzo. It's also close to the SS75 that connects Perugia to the A1.

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# Umbria & Le Marche

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## UMBRIA

PERUGIA

TORGIANO

DERUTA

LAGO TRASIMENO

TODI

ASSISI

SPELLO

GUBBIO

SPOLETO

NORCIA, THE VALNERINA & MONTI SIBILLINI

ORVIETO

## LE MARCHE

ANCONA

PARCO DEL CONERO

LORETO

URBINO

PESARO

GROTTE DI FRASASSI

MACERATA

ASCOLI PICENO

SARNANO

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Rolling hills, jagged mountains, swathes of olive orchards and ancient stone buildings...Umbria and Le Marche make up the less famous two-thirds of central Italy, but offer a landscape that rivals the more popular Tuscany.

There are few large cities in either Umbria or Le Marche, and this gives the area its charm. Both regions are quite proud of their agricultural traditions and have transitioned easily into 'Slow Food' destinations. Don't be surprised if you spend two to three hours at one meal, served by six members of the same family.

Most towns in the two regions are steeped in histories that have continued for thousands of years. Locales like Perugia, Ascoli Piceno and Orvieto still bear the ancient markings of Etruscan, Umbri or Piceni tribes. Rome conquered its way through the regions and left the pockmarks of Roman culture –

roads, amphitheatres and city walls. Labyrinthine medieval villages such as Todi, Gubbio and Assisi inspire visitors to want to pick up a paint brush and capture the light, or cower in the ominous shadows of the papal fortresses.

Modern-day Umbria and Le Marche astound visitors for many reasons. Spoleto's festival brings together some of the finest dance and music performances in Italy each year. Myriad sun-seekers flock to Pesaro and the coast of Le Marche to bronze under the Italian sun. Still others head to Ancona to take a ferry to ever more exotic lands. Often missed are the regions' natural destinations – Monti Sibillini's mystical peaks or Monte Conero's subtle charms. But no matter why visitors come, they will almost certainly slow down their pace of life.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit where the best of 13th-century art, religion and history intersect at the **Basilica di San Francesco** in Assisi
- Meander through fields of wildflowers or trek up snow-capped peaks on the Le Marche or Umbrian side of **Monti Sibillini** (p594 and [Click here](#))
- Get in touch with your inner Willy Wonka on a tour at the **Perugina chocolate factory** in Perugia
- Dine off the beaten path in one of any number of excellent fish restaurants in the stunning **Parco del Conero**
- Try your hand at throwing majolica ceramics at **Maioliche Nulli** in Deruta



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POPULATION: UMBRIA 884,450; LE MARCHE 1,553,063

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AREA: UMBRIA 8,456 SQ KM; LE MARCHE 9,694 SQ KM

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# UMBRIA

Every inch of Umbria is ancient. The landscape of rolling hills and meandering country roads has been perfected over three millennia. Known as ‘the green heart of Italy’, it’s the only region in Italy that borders neither the sea nor another country.

Umbria has retained many of Italy’s old-world traditions. You’ll see grandmothers in aprons making pasta by hand and front doors that haven’t been locked in a century. In spring the countryside is splashed with red, pink, yellow, purple and blue wildflowers. In summer it explodes with the vibrant yellow of the sunflowers harvested to make cooking oil. The rolling mountains of the Apennines in the north and east descend into hills, many capped by medieval towns, and eventually flatten out into lush valleys along the river Tiber.

An Umbrian adventure can span from nightlife in the region’s student-filled capital, Perugia, alive with its famous Università per Stranieri (University for Foreigners), to a peaceful stroll through 2700-year-old rural villages. Assisi is one of Umbria’s most magnificent hill towns, with buildings that glow pink in the sunset. To boot, it also happens to be the hometown of St Francis who, not surprisingly, preached about the beauty of the natural world. He wandered through towns like Gubbio, a stately medieval stronghold, and Todi, once called ‘the most liveable city in the world’.

In the southeast, Spoleto attracts art patrons to an international festival that has put the charming city on the map year-round, and in the southwest, Orvieto’s cathedral wows millions of visitors.

Vacationing foodies will delight in Umbrian food and wine. The earthy, addictive *tartufo* (truffle) finds its way onto every menu, gracing the local *strangozzi* or *umbricelli* pastas. Pork from the Norcia area is so well respected, quality pork butchers throughout Italy are known as Norcineria. Orvieto’s golden wines and the Sagrantino of Montefalco have made their way onto tables around the world.

## History

The first two major tribes to share Umbria were the Umbri and the Etruscans. Although the Etruscans have received more press, the Umbri settled the region first, as far back as 1000 BC. The river Tiber (Tevere in Italian) mostly divided the two: Umbri on the east, Etruscan on the west. The Umbri tribe flourished early on in eastern towns such as Spoleto, Gubbio, Città di Castello and Assisi. Etruscans established towns we know today as Perugia, Orvieto and Città della Pieve, eventually creating 12 powerful city-states. You can still see traces of this past in the excellent Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell’[Umbria](#) in Perugia and you can even feel them; most Umbrians acknowledge there’s a palpable difference in culture between Etruscan- and Umbri-settled towns to this day.

Things seriously changed in Umbria around 300 BC. Soldiers from a little upstart village to the south called Rome came knocking. In 295 BC, Rome conquered the Etruscans, and their lands – including Umbria – fell under Roman rule.

Despite the legendary Roman plundering and pillaging, things weren’t totally bad. The Romans initiated public works, some of which are still visible. Emperor Gaius Flaminius built the Via Flaminia in 220 BC, a road that connected Rome to Ancona and the Adriatic Sea, and passed through towns such as Narni, Terni, Spoleto and Foligno, all of which are still littered with Roman ruins. A spur ran to Perugia, whose prominence as the capital of Umbria was growing. In 90 BC, Umbrians were granted full Roman citizenship and, for a handful of centuries, the region thrived.

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# USEFUL WEBSITES ON UMBRIA

- **Bella Umbria** ([www.bellaumbria.net](http://www.bellaumbria.net)) The comprehensive website on Umbria; lists almost all accommodation in Umbria, and the Events and Traditions page allows you to search for festivals by either town or date. In Italian, English, German, French and Spanish.
  - **TourinUmbria** ([www.tourinumbria.org](http://www.tourinumbria.org)) A complete listing of accommodation, restaurants and itineraries accessible to travellers with physical disabilities; in Italian and English.
  - **Umbria2000** ([www.regioneumbria.it](http://www.regioneumbria.it)) The official Umbrian tourist website, in Italian, English and German.
  - **Umbria Online** ([www.umbriaonline.com](http://www.umbriaonline.com)) Details on accommodation, events and itineraries for all major and minor tourist towns in Umbria.
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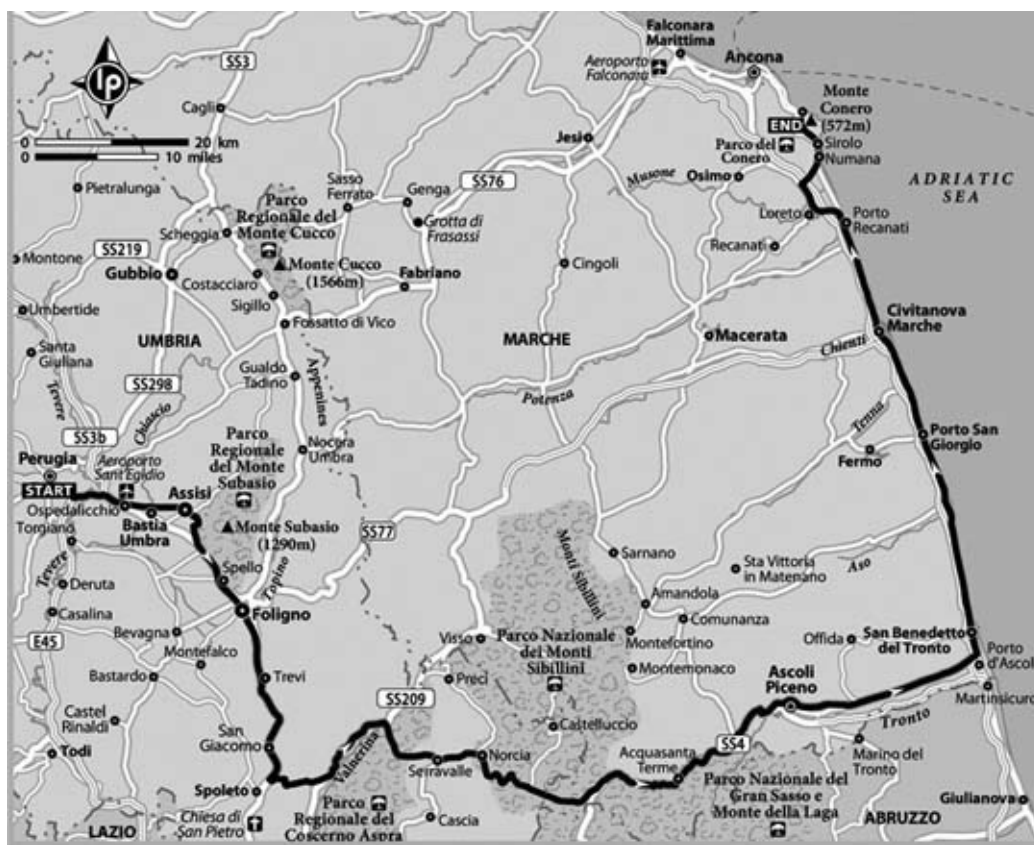
## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### Umbria & Le Marche      Three Days / Perugia / Parco del Conero

Although two of the least-known regions in Italy, Umbria and Le Marche offer a stunning amount of varying rural landscapes and spectacular urban sights. Plus, neither is overrun by busloads of visitors and many of the least-known towns – Ascoli Piceno, Macerata, Spello – you might have practically to yourself in the shoulder or off season. To witness the best the area has to offer, start in **Perugia**, specifically at **Sandri**, for an espresso and some of the famous Perugino chocolate. Visit the museums and gallery in the **Palazzo dei Priori** before dining on organic pizza at the groovy **Al Mangiar Bene**. Use the afternoon *pausa* when everything shuts down to drive or take the train to **Assisi** in time to meditate over the life of St Francis at either the **Eremo delle Carceri** or **Santuario di San Damiano**, where you can walk in the path of the hometown hero turned saint.

On the second day, wake up early to join the nuns and monks at the **Basilica di San Francesco** and head through the **Valnerina** to **Norcia** to enjoy a dinner filled with wild boar and truffles.

On day three, head over to **Ascoli Piceno** to wander through its quaint streets and museums, such as the **Pinacoteca** in the Palazzo Comunale, before indulging in the fried, heart-attack goodness of *olive all'ascolana* (olives stuffed with veal, breaded and deep-fried). Make it to the dramatic cliffs of **Parco del Conero** by the afternoon, and enjoy the best spot on the Le Marche coast to savour the beautiful beaches and waterfront.



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## OUR TOP FIVE UMBRIAN DELICACIES TO SAMPLE

While considered a backwater region for years, much of the world is now striving to catch up with Umbria's natural culinary commitment to Slow Food. For hundreds of years, three-hour dinners, organic ingredients and locally grown peasant cuisine have remained Umbria's culinary claim to fame. Here are a few of our favourite ingredients you might want to try when here:

- **Cinghiale** Wild boar is ubiquitous on Umbrian menus, and rightfully so. Richly gamy but tender, the flavourful meat often comes served over pasta or stewed in sauce.
- **Tartufi truffles** In particular Umbrian black truffles (the stronger nero preferably over estivo) are a menu mainstay, especially in the autumn harvest months. The earthy fungus is especially delicious sliced over long, thick pasta like Umbrian *strangozzi*.
- **Lenticchie** The small, thin lentils from Castelluccio (or Colfiorito) are partially responsible for the Piano Grande's floral explosion each spring and summer, and are at their best in a thick soup topped with bruschetta and a fabulous virgin olive oil.
- **Piccione** English uses the euphemistic 'squab', but Umbrians readily order pigeon, often from the highest-end restaurants. The delicate poultry was a mainstay for townfolk under siege in the Middle Ages when hunting and farming were too dangerous.
- **Farro** Spelt was the daily staple in ancient times, and still graces many Umbrian menus. Classic *zuppa di farro* is a rich, nutty distinctly Umbrian experience, perfect for a warm lunch on a cold, misty day in the hills.

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After Rome fell, invasions by Saracens, Goths, Lombards, Byzantines and a whole host of barbarians led to an economic and cultural decline. Starvation and disease were rampant. Umbrians retreated to fortified medieval hill towns such as Gubbio and Todi. Conditions were perfect for the new Roman cult

of Christianity to flourish. The church of [Sant' Angelo](#) in Perugia, built over a former pagan temple around the 5th and 6th centuries AD, is one of Italy's oldest extant churches outside of Rome.

The political power-gap during the Middle Ages was quickly filled by the Lombard Duchy of Spoleto from the 6th to the 13th centuries, until Umbria became a papal territory. Prominent Umbrian families tended to favour rule by either the pope or the Holy Roman Empire, creating a split between Guelphs (papal supporters) and Ghibellines (champions of the emperors).

Spoleto and Todi became Ghibelline cities while Perugia and Orvieto, which both benefited initially from papal rule, became Guelph cities. The remnants of the conflict still dot Umbria today in the form of the *rocca*, or papal fortress, examples of which can be seen in Perugia, Assisi and Narni.

Many important saints (Benedict of Norcia for one, who became the patron of Europe) had put Umbria on the mystical map, but it was in the 13th century when Umbria's most famous son, born in one of its most famous towns – St Francis of Assisi – cemented Umbria's reputation as a centre for spirituality. And it's easy to see why many feel Umbria is one of Italy's most mystical places.

Historians of Umbrian culture like to say that time stopped in 1540. The pope installed a salt tax, resulting in a Salt War that led to a standstill in Umbrian culture, which means the Renaissance didn't flourish here like it did in neighbouring Tuscany, but it also preserved the medieval hearts of most Umbrian towns. To this day, Umbria still retains much of its ancient history, and time seems to move a little slower, even for visitors.

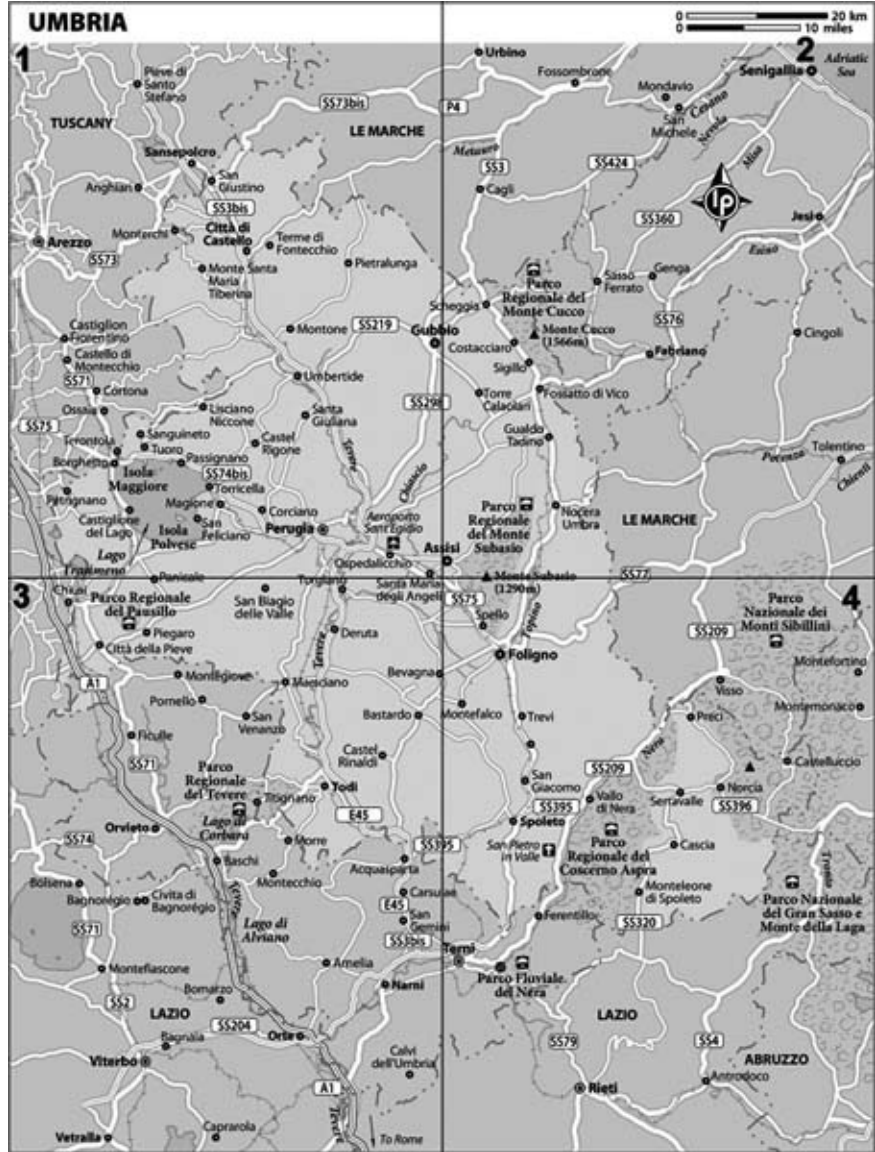
## **National Parks & Reserves**

Umbria shares the beautiful Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini with Le Marche ([Click here](#)). Filled with waterfalls, walking trails, campsites and the odd wolf, this is a world away from the vineyards and medieval art that make up the rest of central Italy. Check the official website at [www.sibillini.net](http://www.sibillini.net) for more information on activities and accommodation.

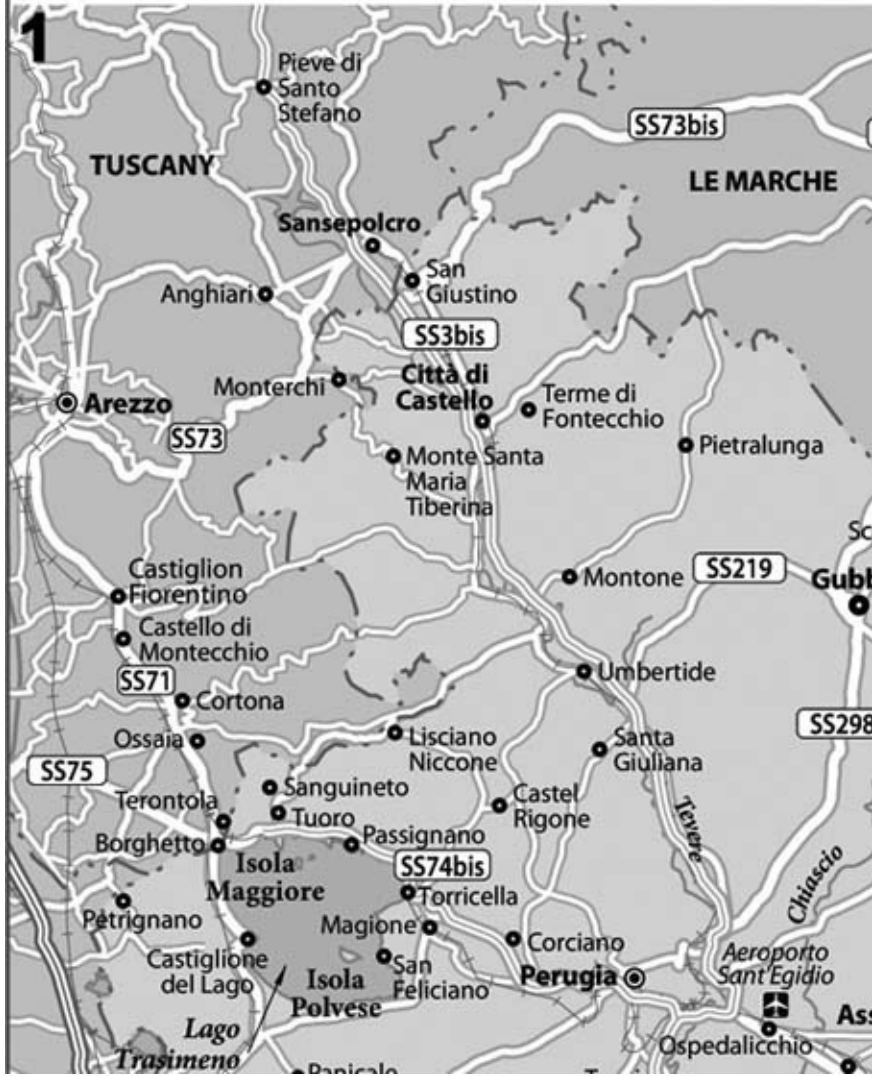
## **Getting Around**

Getting around Umbria on public transport requires some forethought. Conversely, having a car is a hindrance in several congested hill towns. The best way to see Umbria is to take the train or bus to congested towns such as Assisi, Spoleto, Perugia, Orvieto, Spello and Gubbio and then rent a car for a week and wander through the countryside.

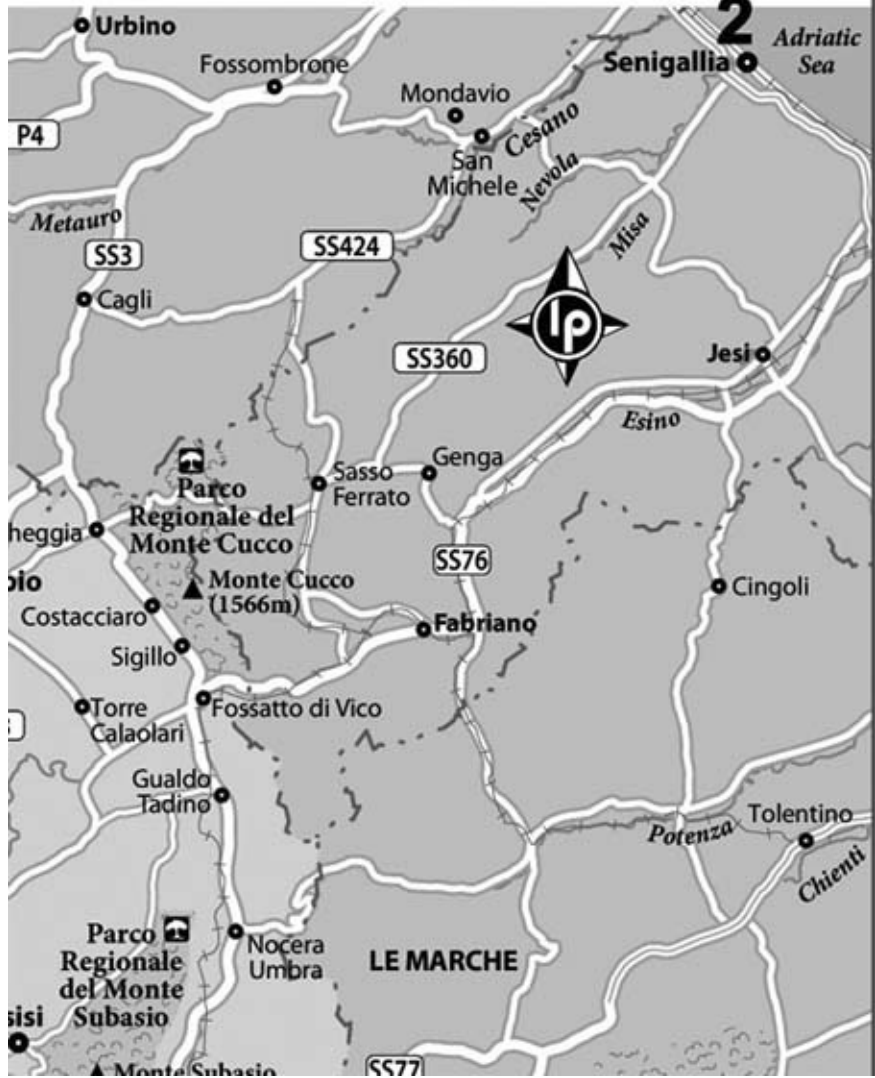


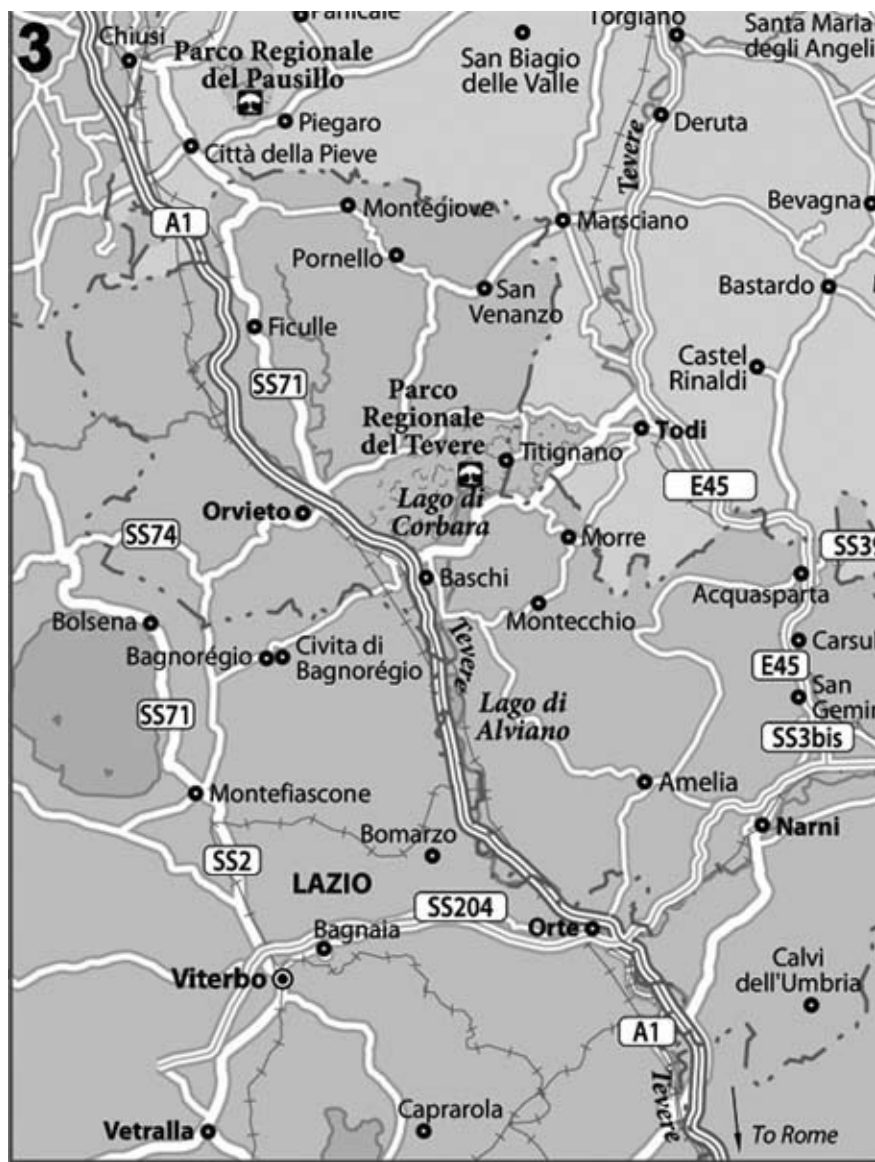


# UMBRIA



0 20 km  
0 10 miles







Buses head from Perugia to every town in this chapter; check at the tourist office or the bus station for exact details. The **state train system** (Ferrovie dello Stato; ☎ 892021; [www.ferroviedellostato.it](http://www.ferroviedellostato.it)) sparsely crisscrosses Umbria, but the private **Ferrovie Centrali Umbra** (FCU; Umbrian Central Railway; ☎ 075 57 54 01; [www.fcu.it](http://www.fcu.it), in Italian) and several bus companies fill in the blanks.

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## PERUGIA

pop 163,287

One of Italy's best-preserved hill towns replete with museums and churches, Perugia is also a hip student town with a never-ending stream of cultural events and concerts. Within the city walls, little has changed architecturally for over 400 years, and a few hotels and restaurants are in triple-digit ages. Culturally, however, Perugia is on the edge. Two major universities, a steady stream of foreigners and a thriving art scene ensure that Perugia melds the modern with its past.

## History

Although the Umbri tribe once inhabited the surrounding area and controlled land stretching from present-day Tuscany into Le Marche, it was the Etruscans who founded the city, leading to its zenith in the 6th century BC. It fell to the Romans in 310 BC and was given the name Perusia.

During the Middle Ages the city was racked by the internal feuding of the Baglioni and Oddi families. In 1538 the city was incorporated into the Papal States under Pope Paul III, remaining under papal control for almost three centuries.

Perugia has a strong artistic tradition. In the 15th century it was home to fresco painters Bernardino Pinturicchio and his master Pietro Vannucci (known as Perugino), who would later teach the famous painter Raphael. Its cultural tradition continues to this day with the University of Perugia and several other universities, including the famous Università per Stranieri (University for Foreigners), which teach Italian, art and culture to thousands of students from around the world.

## Orientation

Old Perugia's main strip, Corso Vannucci (named after hometown artist Pietro Vannucci), runs north from the top of Rocca Paolina through Piazza Italia to the heart of the city, Piazza IV Novembre, where you'll find the Fontana Maggiore and the cathedral. Almost every place listed in this section is within a kilometre of here.

*Urbano* (city) buses originate from Piazza Italia, while *extraurbano* (intercity) buses originate at Piazza Partigiani. From here, take a few sets of *scale mobili* (elevators) through the Rocca Paolina to reach Piazza Italia. If you have heavy luggage, watch out: *scale mobili* interchange with staircases up the steep hillside. From the train station it's an enormous hike, especially with that luggage, or a quick €1 bus ride or €10 taxi trip, 1.5km up the hill to Piazza Italia.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**Libreria Betti** (☎ 075 573 16 67; Via del Sette 1; 🕒 9am-8pm, closed Sun) A good selection of English-language books, cookbooks, guides and dictionaries.

**Libreria Oberdan** (☎ 075 573 50 57; Via Oberdan 52; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-1.30pm & 3.30-8pm Sat & Sun) Stocks a selection of English-language books, as well as maps and Lonely Planet guides in Italian and English.

### EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 075 572 32 32; Palazzo dei Priori)

### INTERNET ACCESS

Over a dozen internet cafes have popped up recently, most charging around €1.50 per hour. If you're sticking around, ask for an *abbonamento* discount card from the cafe you frequent the most, which will save you about 15% on 10 hours. Many cafes now have Skype, with accompanying headphones and cameras.

**Tempo Reale** (☎ 075 573 55 33; Via del Forno 17; 🕒 10am-11.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Central and friendly, with high-speed connection, ample opening hours and cheap long-distance telephone service.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

**Perugia Online** ([www.perugiaonline.com](http://www.perugiaonline.com)) Offers info on accommodation, restaurants, history,

activities and sights. The main site, [www.umbriaonline.com](http://www.umbriaonline.com), lists information in Italian or English for every tourist town in Umbria.

## LAUNDRY

**67 Laundry** (Via Pinturicchio; ☎ 8am-10pm) Wash €3, dry €3, single-serve detergents €1.

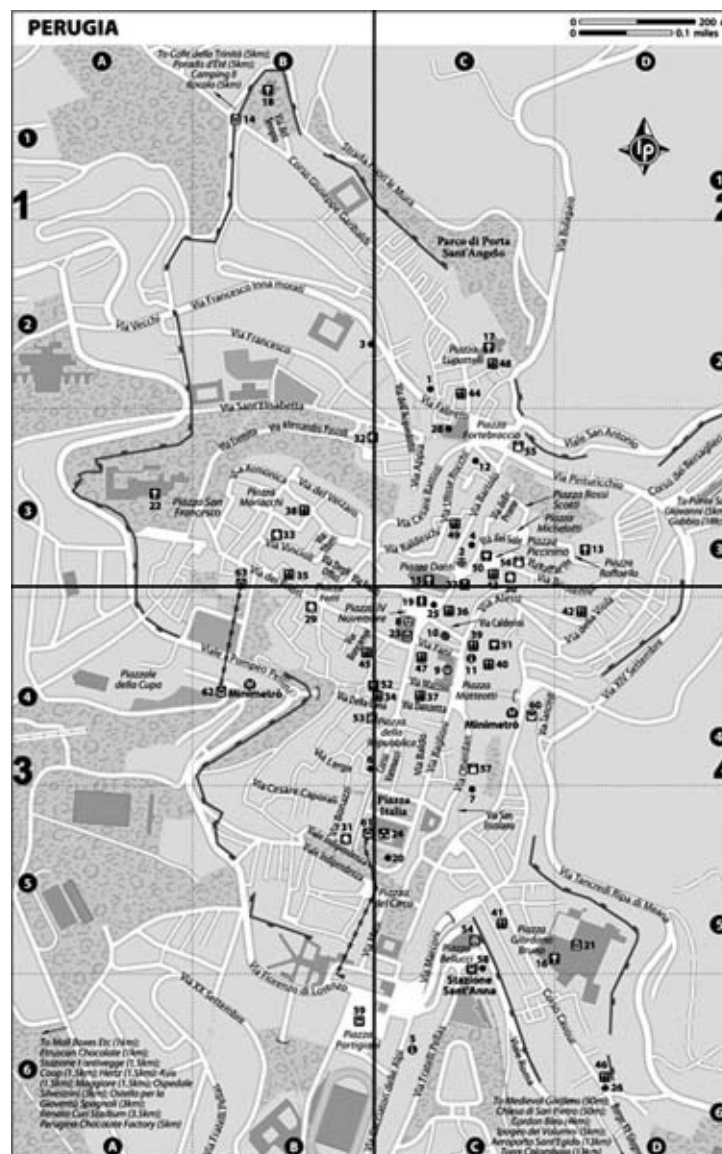
## LEFT LUGGAGE

**Stazione Fontivegge** (per bag for 1st 12hr €3, every 12hr thereafter €2; ☎ 6.30am-7.30pm)

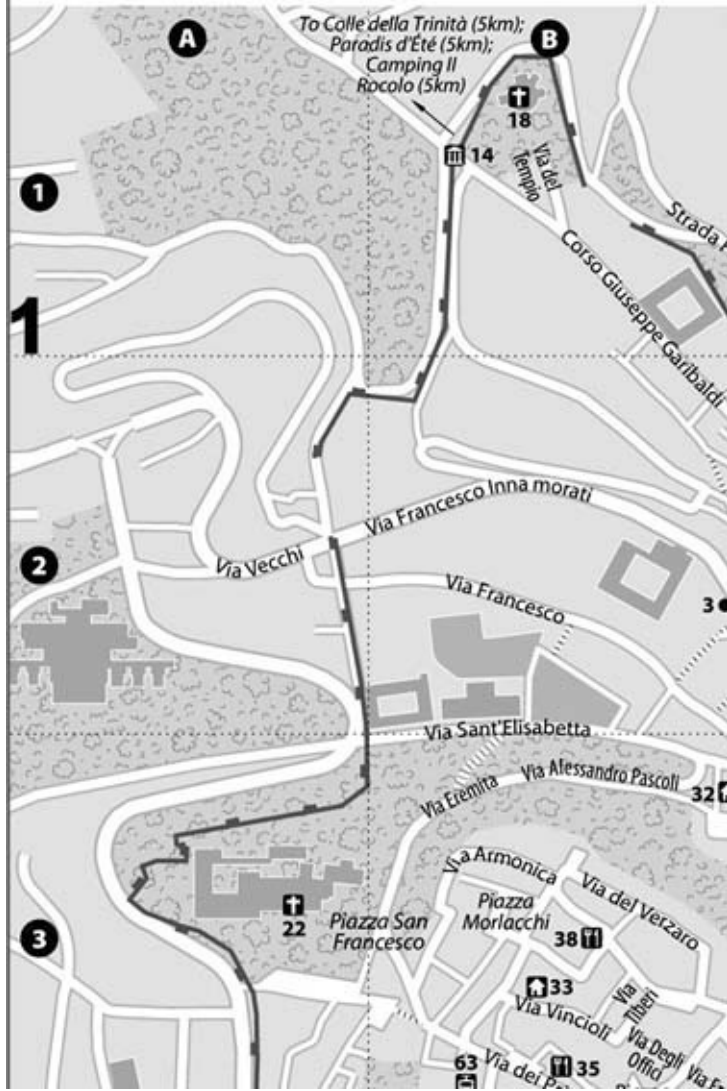
## MEDIA

**Little Blue What-to-Do** This free English-language booklet is a must-have for students or anyone staying longer than a few hours. Known as the ‘little blue book’, it’s available at Cinema Teatro del Pavone, the tourist office and newsstands. Find restaurants, housing suggestions, side trips and a description of local characters.

**Viva Perugia – What, Where, When** The *comune di Perugia*’s monthly publication (€0.80 from newsstands) lists events and public transportation schedules.

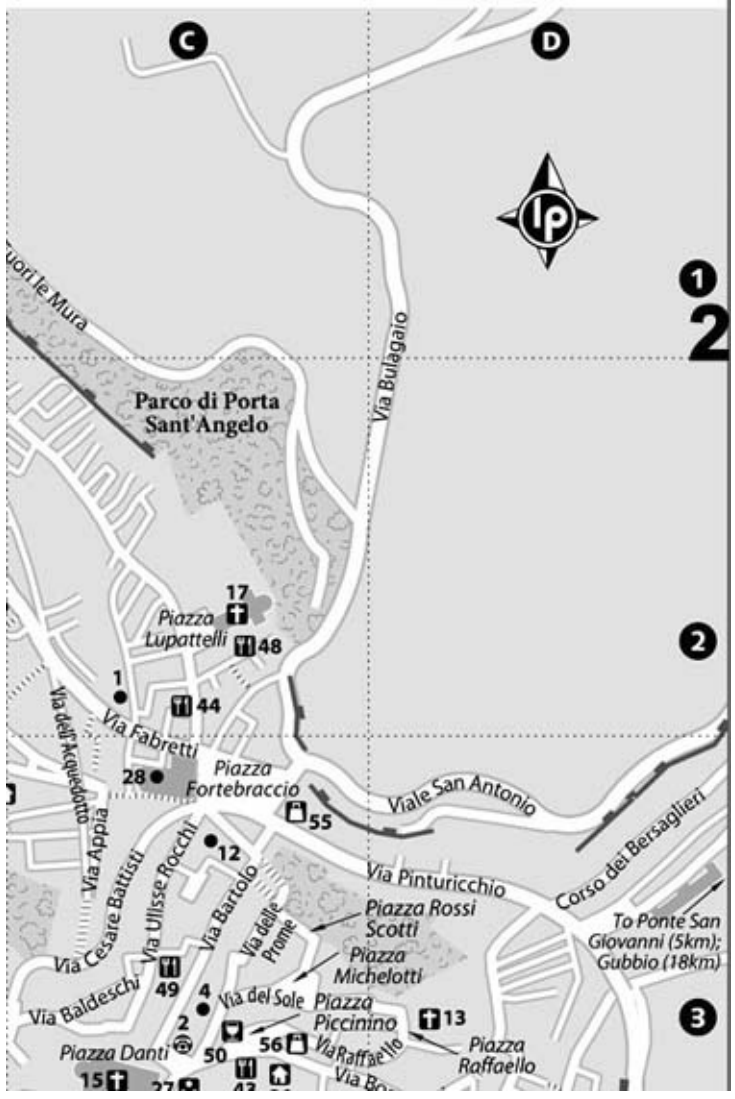


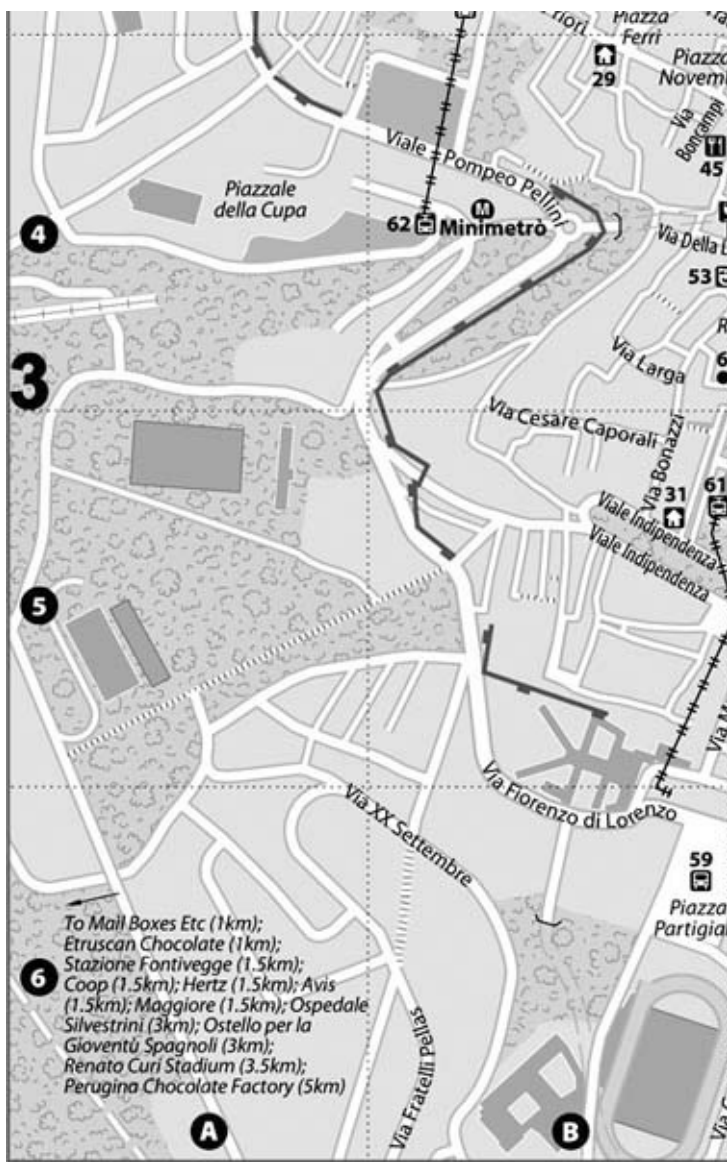
# PERUGIA





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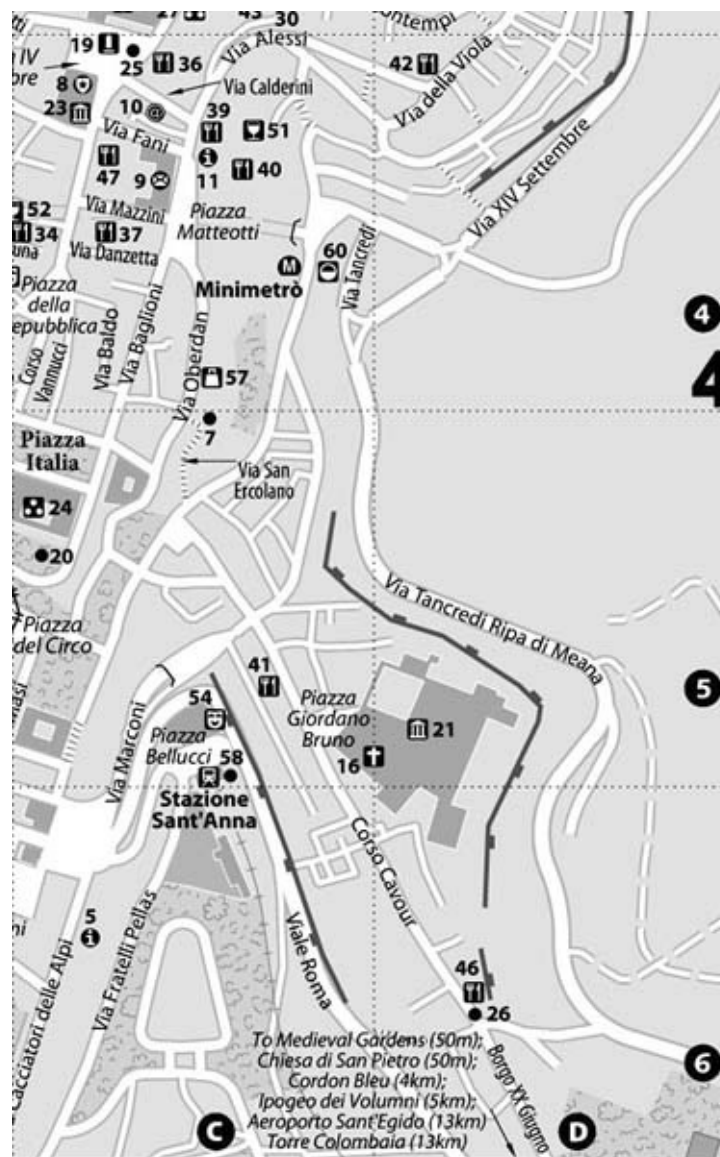




- To Mail Boxes Etc (1km);
- Etruscan Chocolate (1km);
- Stazione Fontivegge (1.5km);
- Coop (1.5km); Hertz (1.5km); Avis (1.5km); Maggiore (1.5km); Ospedale Silvestrini (3km); Ostello per la Gioventù Spagnoli (3km); Renato Curi Stadium (3.5km); Perugia Chocolate Factory (5km)

**A**

**B**



<b>INFORMATION</b>	Nobile Collegio della Mercanzia.....(see 23)	Ristorante dal Mi' Cocco.....44 C2
67 Laundry.....1 C2	Oratorio di San Bernardino.....22 A3	Ristorante Il Bacio.....45 B4
Centro Omnitel.....2 C3	Palazzo dei Priori.....23 C4	Ristorante Nanà.....46 D6
eGeneration.....3 B2	Palazzo della Provincia.....24 C5	Sandri.....47 C4
Il Periscopio.....4 C3	Piazza IV Novembre.....25 C4	Tuttotesto.....48 C2
InfoUmbria.....5 C6	Porta San Pietro.....26 D6	Wine Bartolo Hosteria.....49 C3
Libreria Betti.....6 B4	Pozzo Etrusco.....27 C3	<b>DRINKING ☑</b>
Libreria Oberdan.....7 C5	Rocca Paolina.....(see 24)	Bottega del Vino.....50 C3
Police Station.....8 C4	Sala dei Notari.....(see 23)	La Terrazza.....51 C4
Post Office.....9 C4	Università per Stranieri.....28 C3	Lunabar.....52 C4
Tempo Reale.....10 C4	<b>SLEEPING ☑</b>	<b>ENTERTAINMENT ☑</b>
Tourist Office.....11 C4	Albergo Anna.....29 B4	Cinema Teatro del Pavone.....53 B4
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	Centro Internazionale per la Gioventù.....30 C3	Velvet.....54 C5
Arco Etrusco.....12 C3	Hotel Brufani Palace.....31 B5	<b>SHOPPING ☑</b>
Cappella di San Severo.....13 D3	Hotel San Sebastiano.....32 B3	Augusta Perugia
Cassero di Porta Sant'Angelo.....14 B1	Primavera Minihotel.....33 B3	Cioccolato e Gelateria.....55 C3
Cathedral of San Lorenzo.....15 C3	<b>EATING ☑</b>	Umbria Terraviva.....56 C3
Chiesa di San Domenico.....16 C5	Al Mangiar Bene.....34 C4	Via Oberdan - Shopping Street.....57 C4
Chiesa di Sant'Agostino.....17 C2	Bangladeshi Alimentari.....35 B3	<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Chiesa di Sant'Angelo.....18 B1	Bar Centrale.....36 C4	Ferrovia Centrale Umbra.....58 C5
Comitato Linguistico.....(see 5)	Caffè di Perugia.....37 C4	Intercity Bus Station.....59 B6
Fontana Maggiore.....19 C4	Caffè Morlacchi.....38 B3	Minimetro.....60 C4
Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria.....(see 23)	Coop.....39 C4	Rocca Paolina Scale
Giardini Carducci.....20 C5	Covered Market.....40 C4	Mobile.....61 B5
Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria.....21 D5	Enone.....41 C5	Via dei Priori Scale Mobile.....62 B4
Nobile Collegio del Cambio.....(see 23)	Il Gufo.....42 D4	Via dei Priori Scale Mobile.....63 B3
	Pizzeria Mediterranea.....43 C3	

## MEDICAL SERVICES

Emergency doctor (☎ 075 3 65 84; 📞 weekends & nights)

**Ospedale Silvestrini** (hospital; ☎ 075 57 81; S Andrea delle Frate)

## MONEY

Banks line Corso Vannucci. All have ATMs, known as *bancomats*.

## POST

**Mail Boxes Etc** (☎ 075 50 17 98; Via D'Andreotto 71) Uphill a one-way street from the train station, just past the Agip petrol station on the left.

**Post office** (Piazza Matteotti; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat)

## TELEPHONE

**Centro Omnitel** (☎ 075 572 37 78; Piazza Danti 17) Buy your indispensable Italian *telefonino* (mobile phone) here, or if you already have a GSM-compatible phone, purchase an Italian SIM card to pop into your own phone. You can then purchase *ricariche* (charge cards) here or in many *tabacchi* (tobacconist shops) for more talk-time.

**Tempo Reale** (☎ 075 573 55 33; Via del Forno 17; ☎ 10am-11.30pm, 10am-10pm Sun) Internet phone calls can be made for around €0.03 a minute to most major countries.

## TOILETS

A growing drug problem in Perugia means it's best to use the *bagni* at a bar or restaurant to steer clear of public toilets (and syringes etc).

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**eGeneration** (☎ 075 585 23 87; [www.egeneration.pg.it](http://www.egeneration.pg.it); Via Fabretti 48; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3.30-6pm) Website and office have up-to-date information on concerts, arts and student events. Organises very low-cost trips to various Italian cities.

**InfoUmbria** (☎ 075 57 57; [www.infoumbria.com](http://www.infoumbria.com), in Italian; Piazza Partigiani Intercity bus station, Largo Cacciatori delle Alpi 3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Private InfoUmbria, also known as InfoTourist, offers information on all of Umbria, and is a fantastic resource for *agriturismi* (farm-stay accommodation), festivals, sights, hotels and general information.

**Marco Bellanca** (☎ 075 573 68 53, 347 6002209; [bellsista@yahoo.it](mailto:bellsista@yahoo.it); prices on request, ranging from €100-150 for 3hr to €200-300 for 6hr) An art and history specialist who will meet guests in any town in Umbria, but his favourite is Perugia. Umbrian-born; fluent in German and English.

**Tourist office** (☎ 075 573 64 58; [info@iat.perugia.it](mailto:info@iat.perugia.it); Piazza Matteotti 18; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm) Famously unhelpful, the office nevertheless offers scads of tourist pamphlets (behind the desk) for hotels, activities, events etc. Also has the most up-to-date bus and train timetables.

## TRAVEL AGENCIES

**Il Periscopio** (☎ 075 573 08 08; Via del Sole 6) Arranges excursions, escorted tours and trips within Italy or abroad. The owner speaks fluent English and French.

## Sights

## CORSO VANNUCCI

The centre of Perugia – and therefore the centre of all of Umbria – is **Piazza IV Novembre**. For thousands of years, it was the meeting point for the ancient Etruscan and Roman civilisations. In the medieval period, it was the political centre of Perugia. Now both students and tourists gather here to eat gelato.

On the north end of the piazza is the **Cathedral of San Lorenzo** (☎ 075 572 38 32; Piazza IV Novembre; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun). Although a church has been on this land since the 900s, the version you see was begun in 1345 from designs created by Fra Bevignate in 1300. Building of the cathedral continued until 1587, and the doorway was built in the late 1700s; however, the main facade was never completed. Inside you'll find dramatic Gothic architecture, an altarpiece by Signorelli and sculptures by Duccio. The steps in front of the pink facade are where seemingly all of Perugia congregates.

In the very centre of the piazza stands the **Fontana Maggiore** (Great Fountain). It was designed by Fra Bevignate, and father-son team Nicola and Giovanni Pisano built the fountain between 1275 and 1278. Along the edge are bas-relief statues representing scenes from the Old Testament, the founding of Rome, the 'liberal arts', and a griffin and lion. Look for the griffin all over Perugia – it's the city's symbol. The lion is the symbol for the Guelphs, the Middle Ages faction that favoured rule by the papacy over rule by the Holy Roman Empire.

The **Palazzo dei Priori** houses some of the best museums in Perugia. The foremost art gallery in Umbria is the stunning **Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria** (National Gallery of Umbria; ☎ /fax 800 69 76 16; Palazzo dei Priori, Corso Vannucci 19; adult/concession €6.50/3.25; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm), entered from Corso Vannucci. It's an art historian's dream, with 30 rooms of artwork dating back to Byzantine-like art from the 13th century, as well as rooms dedicated to works from hometown heroes Pinturicchio and Perugino.

Also in the same building is what some consider the most beautiful bank in the world, the **Nobile Collegio del Cambio** (Exchange Hall; ☎ 075 572 85 99; Corso Vannucci 25; adult/concession €4.50/2.60; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat summer, 2.30-5.30pm winter), which has three rooms: the Sala dei Legisti (Legist Chamber), with wooden stalls carved by Giampiero Zuccari in the 17th century; the Sala dell'Udienza (Audience Chamber), with frescoes by Perugino; and the Chapel of San Giovanni Battista, painted by a student of Perugino's, Giannicola di Paolo. The **Nobile Collegio della Mercanzia** (Merchant's Hall; ☎ 075 573 03 66; Corso Vannucci 15; admission €3.10; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.50pm Tue-Sun summer, often closed afternoon winter) highlights an older audience chamber, from the 13th century, covered in wood panelling by northern craftsmen.

The **Sala dei Notari** (Notaries' Hall; ☎ 075 577 23 39; Piazza IV Novembre, Palazzo dei Priori; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun) was built from 1293 to 1297 and is where the nobility met. The arches supporting the vaults are Romanesque, covered with frescoes depicting biblical scenes and Aesop's fables. To reach the hall, walk up the steps from Piazza IV Novembre.

At the southern end of Corso Vannucci is the tiny **Giardini Carducci**, which has lovely views of the countryside and hosts the antiques market. The gardens stand atop a once-massive 16th-century fortress (Palazzo della Provincia), now known as the **Rocca Paolina** (main entrance Piazza Italia, entrances on Via Marzia, Via Masi & Viale Indipendenza; admission free; 🕒 8am-7pm). Pope Paolo III Farnese built the monstrosity in the 1540s, wiping out entire sections of what had been a wealthy neighbourhood. Now used as the throughway for the *scale mobili*, you can still see former homes of Perugia's powerful medieval families, capped with the bricked-over roof of the papal fortress. Its nooks and crannies are now

used for art exhibits throughout the year, and the last weekend of the month sees the antiques market held here.

You can buy a combined ticket called the **Perugia City Museum Circuit** (adult/child/senior €2.50/1/2) at any of the three following sights; the ticket is valid for one week. First, you can venture down into the 3rd century—BC **Pozzo Etrusco** (Etruscan Well; ☎ 075 573 36 69; Piazza Danti 18; 🕒 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Nov-Mar, Wed-Mon except in Apr & Aug). The 36m-deep well was the main water reservoir of the Etruscan town, and, more recently, the source of water during WWII bombing raids. The second stop is the **Cappella di San Severo** (☎ 075 573 38 64; Piazza Raffaello, Porta Sole; 🕒 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Nov-Mar, Wed-Mon except in Apr & Aug), decorated with Raphael's *Trinity with Saints* (thought by many to be his first fresco) during the artist's residence in Perugia (1505–08) and frescoes by his teacher Perugino, dating to 1521. The third museum included is the **Cassero di Porta Sant'Angelo** (Scenic Tower; ☎ 075 4 16 70; Porta Sant'Angelo, Corso Garibaldi; 🕒 11am-1.30pm & 3-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 11am-1.30pm & 3-5pm Nov-Mar, Wed-Mon except in Apr & Aug). The panoramic view facing back onto Perugia is the main reason to come out here, plus it offers a historical briefing of the three city walls.

### CORSO GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI

At the end of Ulisse Rocchi facing Piazza Fortebraccio and the Università per Stranieri are the ancient city gates, the **Arco Etrusco** (Etruscan Arch) dating from the 3rd century BC. The upper part is Roman and bears the inscription 'Augusta Perusia'. The loggia on top dates from the Renaissance.

North along Corso Giuseppe Garibaldi is the **Chiesa di Sant'Agostino** (Piazza Lupattelli; 🕒 8am-noon & 4pm-sunset), a church with a beautiful 16th-century choir by sculptor and architect Baccio d'Agnolo. Small signs forlornly mark the places where artworks once hung before they were carried off to France by Napoleon and his men. Further north along the same thoroughfare, Via del Tempio branches off to the Romanesque **Chiesa di Sant'Angelo** (☎ 075 57 22 64; Via Sant'Angelo; 🕒 10am-noon & 4-6pm), one of Italy's oldest churches, dating back to the 5th and 6th centuries. However, the remnants are even older; it's said to stand on the site of a pagan temple, and several of its inside columns were taken from Roman structures.

### DOWN CORSO CAVOUR

The city's largest church is the early-14th-century **Chiesa di San Domenico** (☎ 075 573 15 68; Piazza Giordano Bruno; 🕒 8am-noon & 4pm-sunset). It has a Romanesque interior, lightened by the immense stained-glass windows, that was replaced by austere Gothic fittings in the 16th century. Pope Benedict XI, who died after eating poisoned figs in 1325, lies buried here.

The adjoining convent is home to the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell'Umbria** (☎ 075 572 71 41; Piazza Giordano Bruno 10; adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, 10am-7.30pm Mon), which will boggle the mind with its collection of Etruscan and prehistoric artefacts – carved funerary urns, coins, Bronze Age statuary – dating back to the 16th century BC. The *Cippo Perugino* (Perugian Memorial Stone) has the longest Etruscan-language engraving ever found, offering a new window into the language.

Just past the Porta di San Pietro is the 10th-century **Chiesa di San Pietro** (☎ 075 3 47 70; Borgo XX Giugno; 🕒 8am-noon & 4pm-sunset), entered through a frescoed doorway in the first courtyard. The interior is an incredible mix of gilt and marble and contains a *pietà* (a painting of the dead Christ supported by the Madonna) by Perugino. Many of the paintings in this church feature depictions of biblical women.

Take a stroll or picnic at the **Medieval Gardens** (☎ 075 585 64 32; Borgo XX Giugno 74; admission free; 🕒 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri), entered from behind the Chiesa di San Pietro. During the medieval period, monasteries often created gardens reminiscent of the Garden of Eden and biblical stories, with plants that symbolised myths and sacred stories.

Numbered locations through this garden include: 3, the Cosmic Tree, symbolising the forefather of all trees; 6, the Tree of Light and Knowledge; 7, the Tree of Good and Evil; 11 and 12, medicinal and edible plants used for centuries; 16, remnants from an ancient fish pond; 20, the Cosmogonic Ovulation Spring (a lily pond); and 24, the exit of the Medieval Gardens, symbolising the elevation of man from the natural plane.

Be sure to check out the groovy alchemist's studio tucked into the corner near number 20, the Yggdrasil Incline.

## OUT OF TOWN

About 5km southeast of the city is the **Ipogeo dei Volumni** (☎ 075 39 33 29; Via Assisana 53; adult/concession €3/1.50; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Sep-Jun, 9am-12.30pm & 4.30-7pm Jul & Aug), a 2nd century—BC Etruscan burial site. An underground chamber contains a series of recesses holding the funerary urns of the Volumnio family. The surrounding grounds are a massive expanse of partially unearthed burial chambers with several buildings housing artefacts that haven't been stolen over the years. Take a train or APM bus 3 from Piazza Italia to Ponte San Giovanni and walk west from there. By car, take the Bonanzano exit heading south on the E45.

The trick for independent travellers visiting the **Perugina chocolate factory** (☎ 075 527 67 96; Van San Sisto; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-1pm Sat Oct-Jan & Mar-May) is to either call ahead to arrange a guided tour, or simply latch on to a tour group (conducted in either Italian or English). After visiting the simple museum, you'll wend your way through an enclosed sky bridge, watching as the white-outfitted Oomp...er, factory workers go about their god-granted talent of creating chocolate. Drive through the gates of the humorously nondescript factory entrance marked Nestlé, or take the bus to San Sisto.

## Courses

Check with the tourist office for lists of all current classes in and around Perugia.

**Comitato Linguistico** (☎ 075 572 14 71; [www.comitatolinguistico.com](http://www.comitatolinguistico.com); Largo Cacciatori delle Alpi 5, 3rd fl) Catering to a more serious crowd, the lessons here are slightly more rigorous than Stranieri. Two- and four-week courses start throughout the year, priced from €150 per week. The school can arrange private or family accommodation.

**Università per Stranieri** (☎ 075 5 74 61; [www.unistrapg.it](http://www.unistrapg.it); Palazzo Gallenga, Piazza Fortebraccio 4) This is Italy's foremost academic institution for foreigners, offering courses in language, literature, history, art, music, opera and architecture, to name a few. A series of degree courses is available, as well as one-, two- and three-month intensive language courses starting at €300 a month and semester-long accredited programs for students.

## Festivals & Events

Perugia – and Umbria in general – has no less than 80 gazillion events, festivals, concerts, summer outdoor movies and *sagre* (traditional festivals). Check [www.bellaumbria.net](http://www.bellaumbria.net) or [www.umbria2000.it](http://www.umbria2000.it) for

details.

**Eurochocolate** (☎ 075 502 58 80; [www.eurochocolate.com](http://www.eurochocolate.com)) Most Perugini know to run, run far away from this most overhyped of festivals, which often sees up to one million visitors. Held around the third week of October, hundreds of booths sell every known concoction of cacao, cocoa and chocolate. If you must, plan your hotel stay months in advance and don't even think of driving.

**Sagra Musicale Umbra** (Holy Music Festival; ☎ 075 572 22 71; [www.perugiamusicaclassica.com](http://www.perugiamusicaclassica.com), in Italian; ticket office Via Danzetti 7; tickets €7-50) One of the oldest music festivals in Europe. Begun in 1937, it's held in Perugia from mid to late September and features world-renowned conductors and musicians.

**Umbria Jazz** (☎ 800 462311, 075 500 11 07; [www.umbriajazz.com](http://www.umbriajazz.com) in Italian) This attracts top-notch international performers for 10 days each July, usually around the middle of the month. In the past, the festival has featured performances by hundreds of jazz greats, including Pat Metheny, the Buena Vista Social Club, Chick Corea and Al Jarreau. Single tickets cost €10 to €100, and week-long or weekend passes are also available. Be sure to check out Giardini Carducci during the day or any number of restaurants or nightspots for impromptu concerts.

## Sleeping

Perugia has a good number of hotels and *pensioni*, but few stand out as special. However, Perugia is a transport hub and is a good place to lay your head if you'd like to do day trips throughout the region. Umbria's real stand-out accommodation is located in the countryside.

### BUDGET

**Camping Il Rocolo** (☎ /fax 075 517 85 50; [www.ilrocolo.it](http://www.ilrocolo.it); Str Fontana 1/n, Loc Colle della Trinità; per person €6.50-8, per car €3-4, per tent €5.50-6.50; ☒ Easter-Sep & during Eurochocolate; ☑) International newspapers, Skype telephone connection, 24-hour hot showers and 100 shaded sites make this a safe choice, and there's also an on-site restaurant, friendly multilingual staff and plenty of extras (barbecue pit, TV area, bocce party, small market, proximity to a bus into Perugia).

**Centro Internazionale per la Gioventù** (☎ 075 572 28 80; [www.ostello.perugia.it](http://www.ostello.perugia.it); Via Bontempi 13; dm €15, sheets €2; ☒ mid-Jan—mid-Dec; ☑) If the 10am to 4pm lockout doesn't scare you off, then you'll appreciate the sweeping countryside view and wafting sounds of church bells from the hostel's terrace, where guests often gather after making dinner. Enjoy the 16th-century frescoed ceilings and tidy four- to six-person rooms.

**Ostello per la Gioventù Spagnoli** (☎ 075 501 13 66; [www.ostellionline.org](http://www.ostellionline.org); Via Cortonese 4; dm/f dm/s incl breakfast & sheets €16/18/22; ☒ ☑) A few kilometres from the city centre is Perugia's main HI hostel. It's large (80 beds) and doesn't have the romance of the city centre hostel (above), but it's clean (towels €1, laundry €3), there's no curfew and the lockout is only 10am to 2pm.

**Albergo Anna** (☎ /fax 075 573 63 04; [www.albergoanna.it](http://www.albergoanna.it); Via dei Priori 48; s €30-50, d €50-80, tr €60-90, all incl breakfast) If you want central and quiet and don't have a lot of heavy luggage (think: 4th floor walk-up), this antiques option is a fabulous bet. You'll feel like you're staying in the private apartment of your great aunt (assuming she's a quirky Italian ceramics teacher with a penchant for knick-knacks and boiling up a mean espresso for breakfast).

**Hotel San Sebastiano** (☎ 075 573 78 65; [www.hotelsansebastiano.it](http://www.hotelsansebastiano.it); Via San Sebastiano 4; s €40-50, d €50-70, all incl breakfast, s without bathroom €25-40) Near Perugia's university is an old-school family-style *pensione*. Its side-street location guarantees a good night's sleep in its sparse rooms.



## MIDRANGE

**Primavera Minihotel** (☎ 075 572 16 57; [www.primaveraminihotel.it](http://www.primaveraminihotel.it); Via Vincioli 8; s €42-48, d €60-70; 🚗 🚰 📶) This central hotel is run by a dedicated English- and French-speaking mother-daughter team is a fabulous find, quietly tucked in a corner. The magnificent views complement the bright and airy rooms and common areas. Breakfast costs €3 to €6. All rooms come with private bathroom, telephone and TV. Great value.

**Etruscan Chocohotel** (☎ 075 583 73 14; [www.chocohotel.it](http://www.chocohotel.it); Via Campo di Marte 134; s €54-73, d €88-140; 🚗 🚰 📶 🚽) The first hotel in the world dedicated to chocolate. Try items from the restaurant's 'chocomenu', shop at the 'chocostore' or swim in the rooftop pool (sadly, filled with water). Free on-site parking, lobby wireless and triple-paned windows make up for the location (on a busy street near the train station). Access for disabled guests.

**our pick Torre Colombaia** (☎ 075 878 73 41; [www.torrecolombaia.it](http://www.torrecolombaia.it); San Biagio delle Valle; per person incl breakfast €40, apt €80-135; dinner Fri-Sun €25; 🚗) The iron staircase curling around the tree-draped fairy-tale cottage will make any urban dweller's heart instantly melt. Just 15 minutes from downtown Perugia, the former Benedictine monastery was confiscated during the Napoleonic era and has been in the family since 1860. The first organic farm in Umbria, Alfredo (the original owner's great great grandson) grows lentils, spelt and other grains in a setting both rustic and idyllic.

## TOP END

**Hotel Brufani Palace** (☎ 075 573 25 41; [www.sinahotels.com](http://www.sinahotels.com); Piazza Italia 12; s/d €215/320, ste €440-850; 🚗 🚰 📶 🚽) One of Umbria's two five-star hotels (the second is Le Tre Vaselle in Torgiano) and a truly spectacular experience, the palace's special touches include frescoed main rooms, impeccably decorated rooms, a garden terrace for summer dining, and helpful trilingual staff. Swim over Etruscan ruins in the subterranean fitness centre. Best of all: check hotel and travel websites for discounts of over 50%. Access for disabled guests.

## Eating

Because of the great number of students and tourists, the amount of places at which to eat in Perugia is staggering. The first days the mercury rises above 15 degrees or so (usually in March) sees dozens of open-air locales spring up along Corso Vannucci. The best two are Ristorante Il Bacio (below) and Caffè di Perugia.

## RESTAURANTS

**Tuttotesto** (☎ 075 573 66 66; Corso Garibaldi 15; meals €9; 🚗 Tue-Sun) Beyond Perugia's pasta-and-meat focus is this casual university spot where professors and students debate Nietzsche over sweet and savoury crêpes, salads and *torta al testo* (Umbrian flatbread sandwiches).

**Ristorante dal Mi' Cocco** (☎ 075 573 25 11; Corso Garibaldi 12; set meals €14; 🚗 Tue-Sun) Don't ask for a menu because there isn't one at this most traditional Perugian restaurant. Diners receive a set menu of a starter, main course, side dish and dessert. You may receive asparagus risotto in May, or *tagliatelle* (long, ribbon-shaped pasta) with peas and ham in November. Extremely popular with students, it's best to call ahead.

**Ristorante Il Bacio** (☎ 075 572 09 09; Via Boncampi 6; meals €13; 🚗 to 12.30am Thu-Tue) This rather cavernous *ristorante* and pizzeria sells good, cheap meals and also sets up a decent outdoor cafe on Corso Vannucci, but its selling point is that it's one of the only late-night restaurants in the historic centre.

**Pizzeria Mediterranea** (☎ 075 572 13 22; Piazza Piccinino 11/12; pizzas €11; 🚗 Wed-Mon) Perugini

(Perugians) know to come here for the best pizza in town. A spaceship-sized wood-fired brick oven heats up pizzas from the simplest margherita to the 12-topping 'his and hers'. Add delectable *mozzarella di bufala* (buffalo mozzarella) to any pizza for an additional €1.60. It gets busy enough to queue, especially Thursday and Saturday nights.

**Ristorante Nanà** (☎ 075 573 35 71; Corso Cavour 206; meals €23.50; 🗓 Mon-Sat) It's a good sign when approximately 47 members of the same family run a 15-table restaurant. Simply furnished with a small menu, the food is 'nuovo italiano': pâté with Sardinian flatbread (€7) or *gnochetti* (little gnocchi) in a pepper and radicchio cream sauce (€6.50). The wine list is equally impressive and affordable.

**Al Mangiar Bene** (☎ 075 573 10 47; Via della Luna 21; pizzas €5-8, meals €25) Ahead of its time, this underground pizza and pasta restaurant is Umbria's first almost entirely organic restaurant. Pizzas and calzones, baked in a hearth-like brick oven, are all made with organic ingredients, including organic flour from the *agriturismo Torre Colombaia*. Even the beer and local wine are organic.

**Wine Bartolo Hosteria** (☎ 075 571 60 27; Via Bartolo 30; meals €32; 🗓 Thu-Tue) Descend a staircase into a hobbit-like burrow that's surrounded by walls of wine bottles around a handful of cosy tables underneath a low brick ceiling. Staff do beautiful things with Chianina beef – stewed with Sangiovese or as a carpaccio with lemon over radicchio.

**Enone** (☎ 075 572 19 50; [www.enone.it](http://www.enone.it); Corso Cavour 61; meals €26; 🗓 7pm-1am Wed-Mon) The trendy hot spot on the Perugian dining and drinking scene, Enone is a mix between a wine bar, restaurant and club. The vaulted brick walls hide all sorts of goings-on, such as live music (usually Monday) and sushi made by a Japanese chef (usually Thursday). The regular menu features funky dishes like carrot and black truffle gnocchi in a Parmesan basket.

**Il Gufo** (☎ 075 573 41 26; Via della Viola 18; meals €29; 🗓 8pm-1am Tue-Sat) The owner/chef gathers ingredients from local markets and cooks up whatever is fresh and in season. Try dishes such as *cinghiale* (wild boar) with fennel (€12.50) or *riso nero* (black rice) with grilled vegetables and brie (€12.50). There is always a good selection of salads for €5. Note: no credit cards.

## CAFES

Many of the restaurants that line Corso Vannucci open up pavement cafes in the warmer months. Don't expect the food to be top-notch, as you're paying for atmosphere.

**Sandri** (☎ 075 572 41 12; Corso Vannucci 32; 🗓 10am-8pm Tue-Sun) When you enter into your third century of business, something must be right. Known for delectable chocolate cakes, candied fruit, espresso and pastries. Staff wrap all take-home purchases (picked up at the counter but paid for at the till), no matter how small, in beautiful red paper with a ribbon bow.

**Caffè Morlacchi** (☎ 075 572 17 60; Piazza Morlacchi 6/8; 🗓 8am-1am Mon-Sat) Bring your bongo drums and leftist rhetoric to this most hip of establishments. Students, professors and expats nosh on international fare, sipping tea or hot chocolate during the day and cocktails at night.

**Bar Centrale** (Piazza IV Novembre 35; 🗓 7am-11pm) This is a popular meeting place for students, with an indoor salon and umbrella-topped outdoor tables where you can munch a *panini* and watch students on the cathedral steps.

**Caffè di Perugia** (☎ 075 573 18 63; Via Mazzini 10; meals €29; 🗓 noon-3pm & 7pm-midnight Wed-Mon) The fanciest sit-down cafe in town, its desserts are worth the high prices. It also serves a fine choice of basic pasta and meat dishes and offers outdoor seating in summer.

## SELF-CATERING

**Coop** (Piazza Matteotti; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) The largest grocery store in the historic centre sells all the staples, fruits and vegetables, and has a deli counter with fresh pasta and cheeses.

**Covered market** (☎ 7am-1.30pm Mon-Sat) Found below Coop, you can buy fresh produce, bread, cheese and meat from this market. From Piazza Matteotti, head down the stairs of the arched doorway labelled £18A.

**Coop** (☎ 075 501 65 04; Piazza Vittorio Veneto; ☎ 9am-7.45pm Mon-Sat) Another Coop, supersized, with its own parking garage directly across from the train station (two hours' free parking with validation).

**Bangladeshi Alimentari** (☎ 075 572 36 41; Via dei Priori 71; ☎ 11am-10pm daily) This grocery just sells the basics, but check out those opening hours.

## Drinking

**Lunabar** (☎ 075 572 29 66; Via Scura 1/6; ☎ 8am-2am Tue-Sun) Atmospherically equidistant between New York and Umbria, the city centre lounge off Corso Vannucci spins together frescoed, Venetian plaster walls with a grey and onyx bar and space-age restrooms. Smokers enjoy their own room and the hungry will appreciate the good *aperitivo* (happy hour snacks) selection.

**Bottega del Vino** (☎ /fax 075 571 61 81; Via del Sole 1; ☎ 7pm-1am Mon-Sat) A fire or candles burn atmospherically on the terrace, while inside, live jazz and hundreds of bottles of wine lining the walls add to the romance of the setting. You can taste dozens of Umbrian wines, which you can purchase with the help of sommelier-like experts.

**La Terrazza** (Via Matteotti 18a; ☎ summer only) Should you sit in the park and enjoy the view of the sun setting over the Umbrian hillside, or head into a darkened pub for a drink? Well, you can come here for both. On the back terrace of the building that houses the Coop and covered markets is this open-air bar, perfect for an evening aperitif.

## Entertainment

Much of Perugia's nightlife parades outside the cathedral and around Fontana Maggiore. Hundreds of local and foreign students congregate here practically every night, playing guitars and drums and chatting with friends. Tourists mix in easily, slurping gelati and enjoying this fascinating version of outdoor theatre. When the student population grows, some of the clubs on the outskirts of town run a bus to Palazzo Gallenga, starting around 11pm. Students get paid to hand out flyers on Corso Vannucci, so check with them or ask at the steps. Most clubs get going around midnight, so be warned on your way back into town: the *scale mobili* stop running at about 1am.

**Cinema Teatro del Pavone** (☎ 075 572 49 11; [www.teatrodelpavone.it](http://www.teatrodelpavone.it); Corso Vannucci 67) Dating back to 1717, the grand theatre plays host to not only films but musical performances and special events. Stop by the lobby to pick up the indispensable *Little Blue What-to-Do*, a free guide to everything you'd ever want to know about visiting or living in Perugia.

**Velvet** (☎ 075 572 13 21; Viale Roma 20; ☎ Tue-Sun) Come to where the beautiful people play. It opens around 10pm, but the well-dressed party here until the wee hours.

**Perugia football team** (☎ 075 500 66 41; [www.perugiacalcio.it](http://www.perugiacalcio.it); Renato Curi Stadium, Via Piccolpasso 48; tickets €2-40) Perugia Calcio has been knocking back and forth between Serie A, B and C, and ticket availability goes up (or down) with the tide, as does the gossip, a favourite discussion topic

for Perugia's residents. Take bus 9, 11 or 13 to the stadium.

## Shopping

If you're lucky enough to be in Perugia on the fourth weekend of the month, spend a few hours in the Mercato Mensile Antiquariato (antiques market) around Piazza Italia and in Giardini Carducci. It's a great place to pick up old prints, frames, furniture, jewellery, postcards and stamps. Open from 9am until 6pm or 7pm, or when it rains.

Look for the banner reading Via Oberdan – Shopping Street. It's the place for boutiques, jewellery, shoes and music shops.

On the first Sunday of the month, check out the **Umbria Terraviva** (organic market; ☎ 075 835 50 62; Piazza Piccinino) located along the side of the Duomo heading towards Via Bonanzi. You'll find all sorts of organic fruits, vegetables and fabulous canned or packaged items to take home as gifts.

Giordano worked for Perugia for 25 years. In 2000, he opened his own shop, **Augusta Perugia Cioccolato e Gelateria** (☎ 075 573 45 77; [www.cioccolatoaugustaperusia.it](http://www.cioccolatoaugustaperusia.it), in Italian; Via Pinturicchio 2; ☎ 10.30am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1pm & 4-8pm Sun), creating delectables from the old tradition, including *baci* (hazelnut 'kisses' covered in chocolate) from the original Perugian recipe. Delicious handmade chocolate bars come in boxes with old paintings of Perugia – great for gifts – or pick up some of the city's best gelato for yourself.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Aeroporto Sant'Egidio** (PEG; ☎ 075 59 21 41; [www.airport.umbria.it](http://www.airport.umbria.it)), 13km east of the city, offers at least three daily **Alitalia** ([www.alitalia.it](http://www.alitalia.it)) flights to Milan, plus a new **Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.co.uk](http://www.ryanair.co.uk)) service to London Stansted thrice weekly. A one-way or round-trip taxi to Sant'Egidio costs €30 from the city centre. An extremely convenient white shuttle-bus (€3.50) leaves from Piazza Italia about an hour and 10 minutes before a scheduled departure, stopping at the train station 15 minutes into the journey. From the airport, buses leave once everyone is off the plane with their luggage.

### BUS

Several towns in Umbria have no train station, but several bus companies pick up the slack. Watch out for Sundays, when bus service is scant. APM Perugia has recently upgraded its fleet with two dozen ecologically friendly buses.

Intercity buses leave from Piazza Partigiani (take the *scale mobili* through the Rocca Paolina from Piazza Italia). Most routes within Umbria are operated by **APM** (☎ 800 512141; [www.apmperugia.com](http://www.apmperugia.com)) in the north and **SSIT** (☎ 0742 67 07 47; [www.spoletina.com](http://www.spoletina.com)) or **ATC Terni** (☎ 0744 40 94 57; [www.atcterni.it](http://www.atcterni.it)) in the south. **Sulga** ([www.sulga.it](http://www.sulga.it)) offers a Perugia—Florence service (€10.50, 2½ hours) that runs Monday and Friday, leaving Perugia at 7.30am and Florence at 6pm (from Piazza Adua at Santa Maria Novella).

Buses head to Deruta (€2.70, 25 minutes, 13 daily), Torgiano (€1.80, 25 minutes, nine daily) by *extraurbano* or city bus, Assisi (€3.10, 50 minutes, nine daily), Todi (€5.40, one hour and 10 minutes, seven daily), Gubbio (€4.50, one hour and 10 minutes, 10 daily), and Lago Trasimeno towns such as Castiglione del Lago (€4.90, 50 minutes to one hour and 10 minutes, six to 10 daily). To get to Narni or Amelia, take an ATC Terni bus from Piazza Partigiani or preferably the FCU train to Terni and switch there. Check the TV monitors above the terminals. It's best to take the train to Spello, Foligno, Spoleto or

Orvieto.

Current train and bus routes, company details and timetables are listed in the monthly booklet *Viva Perugia* (€1), available at the tourist office, hotels and some newsstands.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

From Rome, leave the A1 at the Orte exit and follow the signs for Terni. Once there, take the SS3bis/E45 for Perugia. From the north, exit the A1 at Valdichiana and take dual carriageway SS75 for Perugia. The SS75 to the east connects the city with Assisi.

You'll find three car-rental companies at the main train station. All are open from 8.30am to 1pm and 3.30pm to 7pm Monday to Friday, and from 8.30am to 1pm Saturday.

**Avis** (☎ /fax 075 500 03 95; [alvalrent@hotmail.com](mailto:alvalrent@hotmail.com)) Ask for Pino for a 10% discount.

**Hertz** (☎ 075 500 24 39; [hertzperugia@tiscali.it](mailto:hertzperugia@tiscali.it))

**Maggiore** (☎ 075 500 74 99; [www.maggiore.it](http://www.maggiore.it))

Airport Sant'Egidio agencies also include:

**Europcar** (☎ 075 692 06 15; [www.europcar.com](http://www.europcar.com); ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat, by request Sun)

## TRAIN

Although Perugia's main train station is named 'Stazione Fontivegge', the sign at the station simply reads 'Perugia'. It is on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, a few kilometres west of the city centre and easily accessible by frequent buses from Piazza Italia. It's an extremely steep 1.5km uphill climb into the city centre, so don't even consider walking if you have luggage. The ticket office is open from 6.30am to 8.10pm (closed for lunch 12.50pm to 1.20pm), but you can buy tickets at the automated machines at any time of day with a credit card or cash. For train information, contact **TrenItalia** (☎ 892021; [www.ferroviedellostato.it](http://www.ferroviedellostato.it)).

Perugia is on a spur line, so there's almost always a change in Foligno to the southeast or Terontola to the northwest. Regular trains run to Rome (€10.50 to €29.50, 2¼ to three hours), Florence (€9.20 to €15, two hours) and Arezzo (€4.50 to €6.85, one hour and 10 minutes, every two hours). Within Umbria, it's easy to reach Assisi (€2.05, 25 minutes, hourly), Gubbio (€4.75, 1½ hours, seven daily), Spello (€2.65, 30 minutes, hourly) and Orvieto (€6.15 to €9.60, 1¼ hours, at least every other hour).

About half of the tourist destinations in Umbria require a ride on the **Ferrovía Central Umbra** (FCU; ☎ 075 57 54 01; [www.fcu.it](http://www.fcu.it), in Italian; Stazione Sant'Anna, Piazzale Bellucci). These adorable graffitied Thomas the Tank Engine trains also head to Rome (switch in Terni). You must validate your ticket on board, not before boarding as with all other Italian trains.

Take the FCU south to Fratta Todina for Monte Castello di Vibio (€2.05, 40 minutes, 18 daily), Todi (€2.55, 50 minutes, 18 daily) or Terni (€4.40, 1½ hours, 17 daily). The Sansepolcro line heads north to Umbertide (€2.05, 45 minutes, 19 daily) and Città di Castello (€3.05, one hour and 10 minutes, 16 daily).

## Getting Around

It's a steep 1.5km climb uphill from Perugia's train station, so a bus is highly recommended, essential for those with luggage. The city bus costs €1 and takes you as far as Piazza Italia in the historic centre. Be sure to validate your ticket upon boarding or you will be fined on the spot. If you haven't bought a ticket, you can buy one on the bus for €1.50. Buy your bus ticket from the small green bus kiosk in front of the train station (or in Piazza Italia, or at many *tabacchi* throughout the city). If you're going to stick around

for a while, buy a 10-ticket pass for €8.60.

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## ARRIVING FROM FIUMICINO?

It's quite easy to take a direct bus from Rome's Fiumicino (FCO) airport directly to Perugia. Pick up a blue **Sulga** (☎ 800 0996 61; [www.sulga.it](http://www.sulga.it)) bus across the street from international terminal C. From Monday through Saturday, there are four daily buses to Perugia (€21, 3½ to four hours) at 9am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm and 5pm and two on Sunday and holidays at 12.30pm and 4.30pm. Heading back to Fiumicino, buses leave Piazza Partigiani at 6am, 8am and 9am Monday to Saturday and 7.30am and 8.30am on Sunday and holidays. Several buses stop in Assisi. Check the website for details.

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## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Perugia is humorously difficult to navigate and most of the city centre is only open to residential or commercial traffic (although tourists may drive to their hotels to drop off luggage). Rumour has it that parking police are more lenient on rental cars, but if you park illegally for too long you run the risk of getting towed.

Perugia has seven fee-charging car parks: Piazza Partigiani and the Mercato Coperto are the most central and convenient, plus Viale Sant'Antonio, Viale Pellini, Briglie di Braccio, Pian di Massiano and Piazzale Europa. The free car park is located at Piazza Cupa. *Scale mobili* or *ascensori* (lifts) lead from each car park towards the city centre, but take note: they don't operate 24 hours a day, and they usually stop between about midnight or 1am and 6am or 7am.

Parking fees cost €0.80 to €1.20 per hour, 24 hours a day, in the city centre lots. If you intend to use a car park a lot, buy a tourist *abbonamento* (unlimited parking ticket pass) from the ticket office at the car park. If you're just parking for a while, try the Coop ([Click here](#)) by the train station, where you can park free for two hours with any purchase. Also, many of the spaces near the train station charge a bit more hourly, but only from 9am to 1pm and 4pm to 7pm Monday through Friday, including a car park just north of the station.

Call the **information line** (☎ 075 577 53 75) if your car has been towed or for general parking information.

Your best bet is simply to rent a car on your way out of Perugia.

## METRÒ

The newest transportation option is straight from Disney. Single-car people-movers traverse between the train station and Pincetto (just below Piazza Garibaldi) every minute. The same €1 tickets work for the bus and Minimetrò. From the train station facing the tracks, head right up a long platform.

## TAXI

Taxi services are available from 6am to 2am (24 hours a day in July and August) – call ☎ 075 500 48 88 to arrange pick-up.

A ride from the city centre to the main train station, Stazione Fontivegge, will cost about €10 to €15. Tack on €1 for each suitcase.

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# TORGIANO

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Fans of wine and olive oil will appreciate this town, a true monument to these two most important Umbrian, and indeed Italian, products. Torgiano, just a 25-minute bus ride from Perugia's Piazza Partigiani, is famous throughout the world for its fine wines. Somewhat of a 'company' town, the easily walkable village belongs to the Lungarotti family, the closest thing Umbria has to a ruling noble family these days, who run many of the local vineyards, an excellent wine museum and the second of Umbria's two five-star hotels.

## Sights & Activities

The most important wine museum in Europe, Torgiano's **Museo del Vino** (☎ 075 988 02 00; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 31; adult/concession €4.50/2.50, incl Museo dell'Olivo e dell'Olio €7, audioguide €2; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm summer, to 6pm winter) was started in 1974 by the Lungarotti matriarch, Maria Grazie. The 20-room former palace traces the history of the production of wine in the region back to Etruscan times. Displays of utensils, graphic art, wine containers and production techniques sit alongside a personal collection of photos from the 1950s.

With support from research institutes in Italy and abroad, the Lungarotti family helped organise the **Museo dell'Olivo e dell'Olio** (☎ 075 988 03 00; Via Garibaldi 10; adult/concession €4.50/2.50; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-7pm summer, to 6pm winter), which opened in 2000. Contained in a series of medieval houses, the museum traces the production cycle of the olive, displays olive oil accoutrements and documents the culture and use of olives and how they relate to the economy, the landscape, religion, medicine, diet, sport, crafts and traditions.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Al Grappolo d'Oro** (☎ 075 98 22 53; [www.algrappolodoro.net](http://www.algrappolodoro.net); Via Principe Umberto 22/24; s €50, d €90-105, all incl breakfast; 📞 🍷 🍷) One of the best hotel deals in Umbria, it is worth a stay just for the vineyard view from the pool. Smartly furnished 19th-century rooms have been upgraded with DSL, satellite TV, DVD, hairdryers and towel warmers.

The old-school eatery **Ristorante Siro** (☎ 075 98 20 10; Via Giordano Bruno 16; meals €24.50) is one of those spots where waiters and customers all know each other by name. The *antipastone al tagliere* (large plate of mixed antipasti €15 for two) starter would feed a hungry family and *gnochetti al rubesco e radicchio* (small gnocchi with red wine and radicchio) takes advantage of the local wine. The homemade tiramisu is to die for.

## Getting There & Away

**APM Perugia** (☎ 800 51 21 41; [www.apmperugia.it](http://www.apmperugia.it)) buses head to Perugia (€1.80, 25 minutes, nine daily) by *extraurbano* bus.

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# DERUTA

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South of Perugia is an ancient 'company' town known for one thing: majolica ceramics. The Etruscans and Romans worked the clay around Deruta, but it was not until the blue and yellow metallic-oxide majolica

glazing technique was imported from Majorca in the 15th century that the ceramics industry took off.

Contact the **tourist office** (☎ 075 971 00 43; Piazza dei Consoli; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-5pm Tue-noon Mon) for accommodation or information.

Prices for majolica ceramics in Deruta can be lower or higher than towns like Gubbio or Assisi, but know what you're getting (ie either quality handmade items at boutique outlets or mass-produced factory knockoffs). Many of the larger operations are mass-produced in a factory. The prices will be lower, but so will the quality. For the best quality, head to a smaller shop that follows the centuries-old Deruta traditions.

Try **Maioliche Nulli** (☎ /fax 075 97 23 84; Via Tiberina 142; ☎ daily), where Rolando Nulli creates each item by hand, while his brother Goffredo, wife Tiziana or son Luca finishes them with intricate paintings, specialising in classic medieval designs. If they're not busy and you ask nicely in Italian, they might even bring you downstairs and teach you to throw a bowl on the wheel. Maioliche Nulli packages and ships anywhere in the world. Parking is available and it's open Sunday.

You can get a taste for the genuine article at the **Museo Regionale della Ceramica** (☎ /fax 075 971 10 00; Largo San Francesco; adult/concession/child under 6yr €7/5/2; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 3-6pm or 7pm daily, closed Tue afternoon Oct-Mar), in the former Franciscan convent. The history of the production of pottery in Deruta from the 14th century until the beginning of the 20th century is presented here, along with an explanation of the development of the special glaze, including some splendid examples.

Just south of Deruta in the village of Casalina is **Ristorante Country House L'Antico Forziere** (☎ 075 972 43 14; [www.anticoforziere.com](http://www.anticoforziere.com); Via della Rocca 2, Loc Casalina di Deruta; r €65-150, meals €32; 📞 📺 📷), a charming country house with several well-decorated rooms in an enviable position to reach most of northern Umbria (although a tad close to the highway). However, the restaurant is what brings travellers (and food critics) in the know out here. Three brothers perform magic with dishes such as turnip pasta with leek and poppy seeds, and saffron risotto with cinnamon pork. Don't even think of leaving before trying (and photographing) the dessert sampler.

APM buses connect the town with Perugia (€2.70, 25 minutes, 13 daily).

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## LAGO TRASIMENO

It would have been easy for drop-dead gorgeous Lago Trasimeno to become a holiday haven for busloads of northern European sun-seekers, à la the coast of Le Marche. Granted, you'll find plenty of such folks during the summer months, but the majority of the area – outside Passignano and a strip leaving San Feliciano – has thankfully eschewed the Stalinist high-rise monoarchitecture of such Adriatic holiday villages. *Agriturismo* cover the hills like the omnipresent sunflower, historic Castiglione del Lago folds travellers in gently to allow room for all, and everyone respects the delicate ecology of the precious lake.

Outside of overcrowded August, relaxed visitors enjoy the water sports, local cuisine, never-ending walking trails and Umbria's best hostel, located on its own practically private island.

## Orientation

Two major highways skirt the lake, the SS71 heads from Chiusi to Arezzo on the west side (in Tuscany) and SS75bis crosses the north end of the lake, heading from the A1 in Tuscany to Perugia. Public transport users can arrive easily by train into Magione, Torricella and Castiglione del Lago, and by bus from



Perugia.

## Information

The main **tourist office** (☎ 075 965 24 84; [www.castiglionedellago.it](http://www.castiglionedellago.it); Piazza Mazzini 10, Castiglione del Lago; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) advises on *agriturismi* and activities like biking and water sports, and has an impressive collection of maps.

## Sights & Activities

Popular activities at the lake include trekking, wine tasting, camping, water sports and *dolce far niente* (the sweet enjoyment of doing nothing). Many also go for the culinary delights. The locals are very proud of their excellent produce, most notably their high-quality DOC wines (Denominazione di Origine Controllata; Denomination of Controlled Origin) and DOP (Denominazione d'Origine Protetta; Protected Denomination of Origin) olive oils. If you are interested in following the Strade del Vino (Wine Route) of the Colli del Trasimeno (Trasimeno Hill district), the **Associazione Strada del Vino Colli del Trasimeno** ([www.stradadelvinotrasimeno.it/en](http://www.stradadelvinotrasimeno.it/en)) produces a brochure with suggested itineraries. You can also pick up this brochure at the tourist office in Castiglione del Lago, or take a look at its website for information.

On Wednesday morning, enjoy a pleasant wander through the lake's best **market** in Castiglione del Lago.

Castiglione del Lago's attractions include the **Palazzo della Corgna** (☎ 075 965 82 10; Piazza Gramsci; admission incl Rocca del Leone adult/concession €3/2; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7.30pm summer, 9.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun winter), an ancient ducal palace. A covered passageway connects the palace with the 13th-century **Rocca del Leone**, an excellent example of medieval military architecture.

The lake's main inhabited island – **Isola Maggiore**, near Passignano – was reputedly a favourite with St Francis. The hill top **Chiesa di San Michele Arcangelo** contains a crucifixion painted by Bartolomeo Caporali dating from around 1460. You can also visit the mostly uninhabited island and environmental lab at **Isola Polvese** (see Fattoria Il Poggio, right) for a day trip.

Ask at any of the tourist offices around the lake or in Perugia for a booklet of walking and horse-riding tracks. Horse-riding centres include the **Poggio del Belvedere** (☎ 075 82 90 76; [www.poggiodelbelvedere.it](http://www.poggiodelbelvedere.it); Via San Donato 65, Loc Campori di Sopra in Passignano), which also offers archery courses.

## Sleeping

For a full list of hundreds of places to stay, check out [www.regioneumbria.eu](http://www.regioneumbria.eu), [www.bellaumbria.net](http://www.bellaumbria.net) or any of the tourist offices around the lake or in Perugia.

**Camping Badiaccia** (☎ 075 965 90 97; [www.badiaccia.com](http://www.badiaccia.com); Via Trasimeno I 91, Bivia Borghetto; per person €5.50-7, tent €4.50-5.50, car €2-2.50, dog €2, 3- to 6-person bungalows €38-98; 📞 📺 📶) Practise your Dutch while playing tennis, table tennis or bocce, eating at the surprisingly good *ristorante/pizzeria*, or swimming in one of three pools (one hydromassage and just for adults). The campsite is paradise for families, but the childless will equally enjoy renting a kayak, bicycle or paddleboat, working out at the fitness room, using the laundry facilities, and the beachfront location. For a small fee, staff picks up guests at the Terontola train station.

**our pick Fattoria Il Poggio** (☎ 075 965 95 50; [www.fattoriaisolapolvese.com](http://www.fattoriaisolapolvese.com); Isola Polvese; s €15-18, dm €22-28, from 70-110 d apt, meals from €12; ☎ 1 Mar-30 Oct, reception closed 3-7pm; 📞) Besides

being impeccably run, you would hardly ever know you're staying in an HI youth hostel. Dorm, doubles and family rooms all have views of the surrounding lake. It takes some preplanning, but those who don't mind catching a ferry back by 7pm will be rewarded handsomely with a family-style meal (full meals €10) in a former barn outfitted with many eco-friendly additions on its own private island. Kayaks, private beaches, games, TV with DVDs, laundry room, 14th-century ruins and a nearby environmental lab are just a part of the offerings.

**La Casa sul Lago** (☎ 075 840 00 42; [www.lacasasullago.com](http://www.lacasasullago.com); Via del Lavoro, Torricella; dm€16, r €22-44 per person, all incl breakfast; 📶) One of the top rated hostels in central Italy, and for a very, very good reason. The private rooms could be in a three-star hotel, and guests have access to every amenity known to hostelkind: laundry, bicycles and wi-fi (both free!), internet access, home-cooked group meals, bar, football pitch, foosball table, pedal boat and private garden...all within 50m from the lake. A short walk from the Torricella train station, but use the bicycles to get around the lake.

**Il Torrione** (☎ 075 95 32 36; [www.il-torrione.com](http://www.il-torrione.com); Via delle Mura 4, Castiglione del Lago; r incl breakfast €65-70; 📅 1 Mar-10 Nov) Romance abounds at this artistically minded tranquil retreat. Each room is decorated with artwork painted by the owner, and a private flower-filled garden overlooks the lake, complete with chaises longues from which to watch the sunset and a 16th-century tower. Rent the tower room (up a flight of pirate-ship stairs) for a romantic private apartment, complete with kitchenette and view.

**La Torre** (☎ 075 95 16 66; [www.trasinet.com/latorre](http://www.trasinet.com/latorre); Via Vittoria Emanuele 50, Castiglione del Lago; s €40-65/45-80, 📶) The price is right at this central three-star hotel, a renovated palace. The rooms are a tad sterile but fully outfitted with TV, minibar and telephone, and the owners run the yummy bakery below (breakfast is delicious but costs €6 extra).

## Eating

The main specialities of the Trasimeno area are *fagiolina* (little white beans), olive oil and wine. In addition, you'll find many fish dishes such as carp in *porchetta* (cooked in a wood oven with garlic, fennel and herbs) and *tegamaccio*, a kind of soupy stew of the best varieties of local fish, cooked in olive oil, white wine and herbs.

**La Cantina** (☎ 075 965 24 32; Via Vittoria Emanuele 93, Castiglione del Lago; meals €22; 📅 Tue-Sun) Not only is the well-priced restaurant fabulous – a stately interior with a lovely outdoor terrace for summer dining – but there's also an adjacent *magazzino* (shop) where you can sample and buy the area's best wine, olive oil and treats. Try the delicious trout with local *fagiolina* (€8.20).

**Da Settimio** (☎ 075 847 60 00; Via Lungolago Alicata, San Feliciano; meals €28; 📅 Fri-Wed Jan-Oct; 📶) If you stay on Isola Polvese, you'll most likely pass by this restaurant near the ferry terminal in San Feliciano. It doesn't look like much, but locals know it as the best fish restaurant in the area, handed down from father to son for four generations. Try the *risotto alla pescatora* (fisherman's risotto) or the appetiser of 'fried little fishies'.

**Il Lido Solitario** (☎ 075 95 18 91; Via Lungolago 16, Castiglione del Lago; meals €28) It isn't often we recommend the heavily trafficked waterfront restaurant with the bright plastic signs, but it isn't often you get to try a delicate fish cake topped with sweet Castelluccian lentils or a tender Chianina beef infused with Sagrantino wine. Grab a front porch table overlooking the nearby lake for a true summer experience.

## Entertainment

**Hotel Faliero (Da Maria)** (☎ 075 847 63 41; [www.hotelfaliero.it](http://www.hotelfaliero.it); Loc Montebuono di Magione; meals

€12; ☎ in season open until midnight daily) Dine, dance and sleep it off at Lago Trasimeno's most famous institution. For Umbrians, a trip to the lake simply isn't complete without a visit to this temple of folk dancing, camaraderie and the famous Umbrian sandwich, *torta al testo*. Known as 'Da Maria' after the owner, Il Faliero is hopping with dancers on most summer weekends, but the casual, counter-service restaurant has garnered just as much fame. In a pinch, 13 business-casual hotel rooms (around €65) are far enough from the noise for a good night's sleep.

## Getting There & Around

APM buses (☎ 800 512141; [www.apmperugia.it](http://www.apmperugia.it)) connect Perugia with Passignano (€3, one hour and 10 minutes, nine daily) and Castiglione del Lago (€4.60, 1¼ hours, nine daily). Trains head from Perugia around hourly to Torricella (€2.05 to €3.55, 25 minutes), Passignano (€2.65, 35 minutes) and Castiglione del Lago (€4.90, 50 minutes).

APM also operates ferry services. The company has offices on the waterfront at each town, where you can pick up a timetable. From approximately Easter until the end of September, near hourly ferries head from San Feliciano to Isola Polvese (€3.30, 20 minutes), Tuoro to Isola Maggiore (€3.30, 20 minutes) and Castiglione del Lago or Passignano to Isola Maggiore (€3.90, 30 minutes). Ferries stop running at 7pm.

You can hire bicycles at most campsites, Fattoria Il Poggio or La Casa sul [Lago](#). Also recommended:

**Cicli Valentini** (☎ /fax 075 95 16 63; Via Firenze 68b, Castiglione del Lago)

**Marinelli Ferrettini Fabio** (☎ /fax 075 95 31 26; Via Buoizzi 26, Castiglione del Lago)

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## TODI

pop 17,162

Todi embodies all that is good about a central Italian hill town. Ancient structures line even more ancient roads, and the pace of life inches along, keeping time with the fields of wildflowers that languidly grow with the seasons. Foreign artists share Todi's cobblestone streets with local families who have lived amid Todi's enclosed Roman and Etruscan walls for generations.

Like rings around a tree, Todi's history can be read in layers: the interior walls show Todi's Etruscan and even Umbrian influence, the middle walls are an enduring example of Roman know-how, and the 'new' medieval walls boast of Todi's economic stability and prominence during the Middle Ages.

## Information

**Biblioteca Comunale Lorenzo Leonj** (☎ 075 895 67 10; ☎ 8.30am-2pm Mon-Fri, 3-6pm Tue & Thu) Two free high-speed internet terminals. Requires passport for first-time registration.

**Post office** (☎ 075 894 24 26; Piazza Garibaldi; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 075 894 54 18; Piazza del Popolo 37; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun & holidays winter, 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm Sun & holidays summer)

## Sights

Just try to walk through the **Piazza del Popolo** (Piazza of the People) without feeling compelled to sit on medieval building steps and write a postcard home. The lugubrious 13th-century **Palazzo del Capitano** links to the Palazzo del Popolo to create what is now the **Museo Pinacoteca di Todi** (☎ 075 895 62 16; Piazza del Popolo; admission €3.10; 🕒 10am-1.30pm & 3-6pm Mar-Oct, 10.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb) which features an elegant triple window and houses the city's recently restored *pinacoteca* (art gallery) and archaeological museum.

The **cathedral** (☎ 075 894 30 41; Piazza del Popolo; 🕒 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm), at the northwestern end of the square, has a magnificent rose window and intricately decorated doorway. You can skip the cathedral for two of Umbria's most impressive churches, including the lofty **Tempio di San Fortunato** (Piazza Umberto 1; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mar-Oct, 10am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Mar), with frescoes by Masolino da Panicale, and the tomb of Beato Jacopone, Todi's beloved patron saint. Inside, make it a point to climb the **Campanile di San Fortunato** (adult/concession €1.50/1; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Mar-Oct, 10.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Nov-Feb, closed Mon), where one of the best views of the hills and castles surrounding Todi awaits.

The postcard home you've just written from the Piazza del Popolo? Most likely it's of Todi's famed church, the late-Renaissance masterpiece **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Consolazione** (no phone; Via della Consolazione at Via della Circumvallazione; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5pm Wed-Mon Nov-Mar), considered a veritable modern feat in architecture. Inside, fans can admire its geometrically perfect Greek cross design and outside, its soaring cupola-topped dome from 10km away.

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## FARMHOUSE HOLIDAY

Trade museums and Manolos for barns and bunnies at an *agriturismo* (farm-stay accommodation), the most peaceful of Italian accommodation choices. Quickly gaining in popularity, *agriturismi* embody central Italy's agricultural roots. Italy requires *agriturismi* to grow at least one of their own products and they can run the gamut from a country house with a handful of olive trees to a fully functioning working farm where guests can pitch in.

To find hundreds of *agriturismi*, check with any tourist office for the brochure *Agriturismi*, updated each year, or check online:

- [www.agritour.net](http://www.agritour.net)
- [www.agriturismo.net](http://www.agriturismo.net)
- [www.agriturismo.it](http://www.agriturismo.it)
- [www.bellaumbria.net](http://www.bellaumbria.net)
- [www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org) (for work-exchange holidays on organic farms)

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## Festivals & Events

The **Todi Festival**, held for 10 days each September, is a mixture of classical and jazz concerts, theatre, ballet and cinema. Ask at the tourist office for details.

## Sleeping

**Pensionato SS Annunziata** (☎ 075 894 22 68; [www.monasterosmr.it](http://www.monasterosmr.it); Via San Biagio 2; s/d/tr incl breakfast €32/60/85) Get away to this tranquil retreat within the city walls. Set around a lovely garden,

all rooms come with private bathroom and bed linen, and some with furnishings from the 1400s. Try to catch a meal with your hosts, nuns from the Mary's Servant of Repair order.

**San Lorenzo Tre** (☎ 075 894 45 55; [www.sanlorenzo3.it](http://www.sanlorenzo3.it); Via San Lorenzo 3; s/d €75/110, s/d without bathroom €55/75, all incl breakfast; 📅 Mar-Dec) Five generations of the same family have lived at this proper historic residence, and the current owner, Marzia, keeps the B&B's decor as honest a representation as you'll find anywhere in Umbria. Awaiting guests are filling, home-cooked breakfasts, a stunning rooftop view and rooms so atmospherically romantic, they were once used as the backdrop of a period drama.

**Todi Castle** (☎ 0744 95 20 04; [www.todicastle.com](http://www.todicastle.com); Vocabolo Capecchio, Morre; room in villa from €120, room in castle incl breakfast from €160, weekly rates available; 📅 📶 🚗) Here's your chance to live in an honest-to-goodness castle, or in one of three equally perfect (and more affordable) private villas. From on-site private pools, medieval ruins, a deer park and the most attentive staff in Umbria, you'll feel positively royal.

## Eating

**Antica Hosteria de la Valle** (☎ 075 894 48 48; Via Ciuffelli; meals €27; 📅 Tue-Sun) Art vies with food for top billing at this most creative of restaurants. Every three to four months, new artists not only display their work, but their illustrations adorn the new seasonal menus. Although the *zuppa di farro* (€7, best in cold months) is a mainstay, the chef suggests the spinach ravioli in walnut cream sauce or *tagliatelle* with truffles.

**Ristorante Umbria** (☎ 075 894 27 37; Via Santa Bonaventura 13; meals €29; 📅 Thu-Tue) What's more enjoyable: the food or the outdoor patio with a view back in time? Try the *palombaccio* (a type of pigeon; €13), a risotto dish or its speciality (truffles, of course).

**Bar Pianegiani** (☎ 075 894 23 76; Corso Cavour 40; 📅 6am-midnight Tue-Sun) Just like Clark Kent, this nondescript neighbourhood bar puts on an innocent front to conceal the magic that lies beneath, but 50 years of tradition has created the world's most perfect gelato. Try the black cherry (*spagnola*) or hazelnut (*nocciola*).

## Getting There & Away

The **APM** (☎ 800 512141; [www.apmperugia.it](http://www.apmperugia.it)) bus line leaves for Todi from Perugia's Piazza Partigiani (€5.40, 1½ hours) every hour or so, but not all reach Piazza Jacapone in the city centre. The rest stop at Piazza Consolazione, from where it's possible to take city bus A or B or walk uphill, about a kilometre. There is one daily service to Spoleto (€5.40, 1½ hours, 6.50am).

Todi is on the **FCU** (☎ 075 57 54 01; [www.fcu.it](http://www.fcu.it) in Italian) train line, which runs through Deruta to Perugia (€2.55, 50 minutes, 18 daily). Although the train station is 3km away, city bus C (€0.90, eight minutes) coincides with arriving trains, and every other hour on Sunday. By road, Todi is easily reached on the SS3bis-E45, which runs between Perugia and Terni, or take the Orvieto turn-off from A1 (the Milan—Rome—Naples route).

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## ASSISI

pop 27,279

The spiritual capital of Umbria is Assisi, a town more tied to its most famous son than anywhere else on earth. St Francis of Assisi was born here in 1181 and preached his message throughout Umbria until his death in 1226.

To visit Assisi now is to see it almost as Francis himself saw it. Except, of course, for the millions of pilgrims and tourists now attempting to share in the same tranquillity as you.

## Orientation

Piazza del Comune is the centre of Assisi. At the northwestern edge of this square, Via San Paolo and Via Portica both eventually lead to the Basilica di San Francesco. Via Portica also leads to the Porta San Pietro and the Piazza Unita d'Italia, where most intercity buses stop, although APM buses from smaller towns in the area terminate at Piazza Matteotti. Train riders arrive at Piazza Matteotti by shuttle bus (€1) from Santa Maria degli Angeli.

## Information

**Acquazzura** (☎ 075 804 09 27; Via San Bernardino Siena 6, Santa Maria degli Angeli) A self-service laundromat between the train station and basilica in Santa Maria degli Angeli.

**Bar Sabatini Sandro** (☎ 075 81 62 46; Via Portica 29b; per 30min €3; 📧 8am-8pm) Internet facilities.

**Ospedale di Assisi** (☎ 075 8 13 91; Via Fuori Porta Nuova) Hospital about 1km southeast of Porta Nuova in Fuori Porta.

**Police station** (☎ 075 81 28 20; Piazza del Comune)

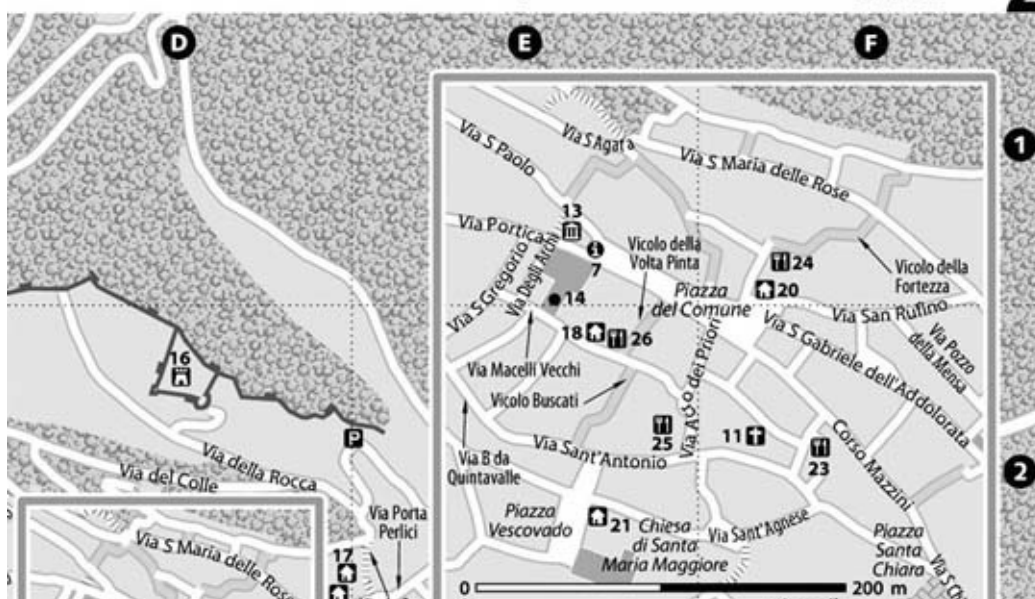
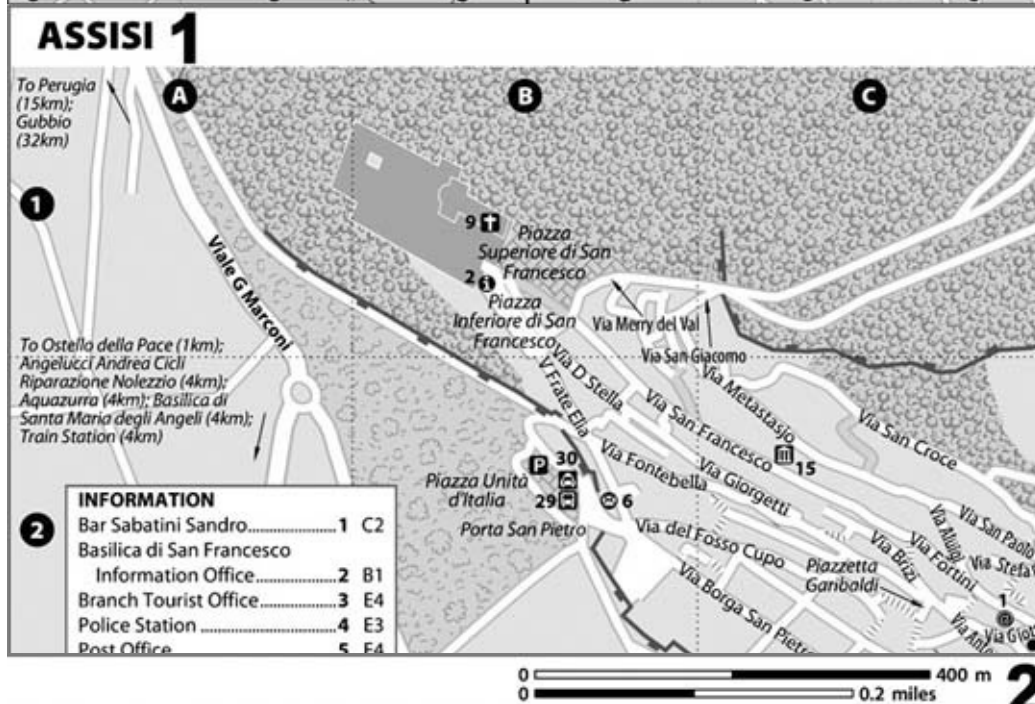
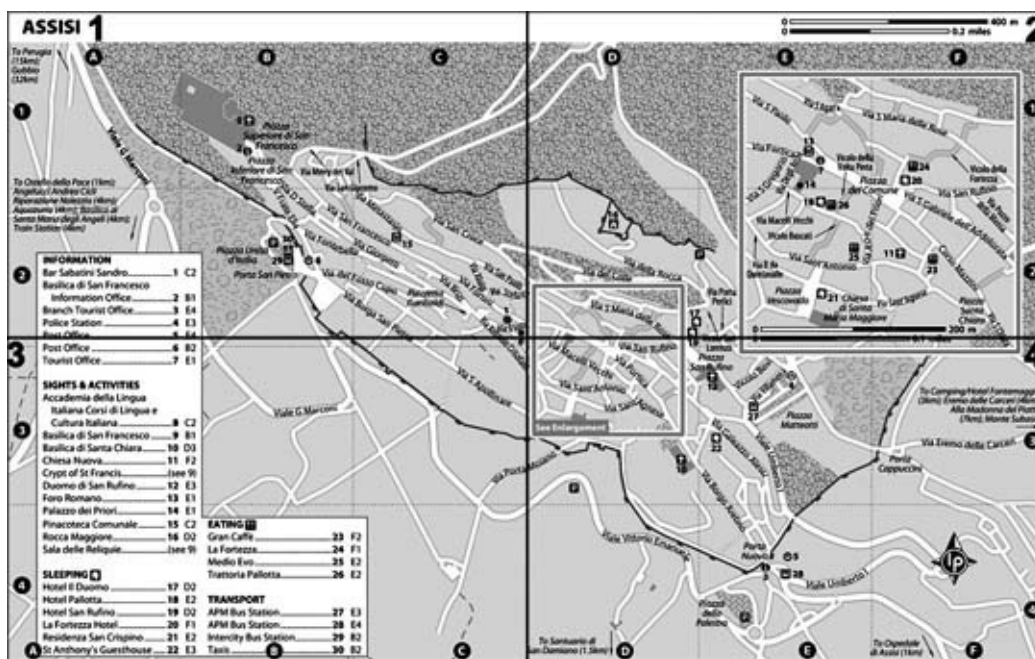
**Post office** Porta Nuova (📧 8am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat); Porta San Pietro (📧 8.10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat & Sun)

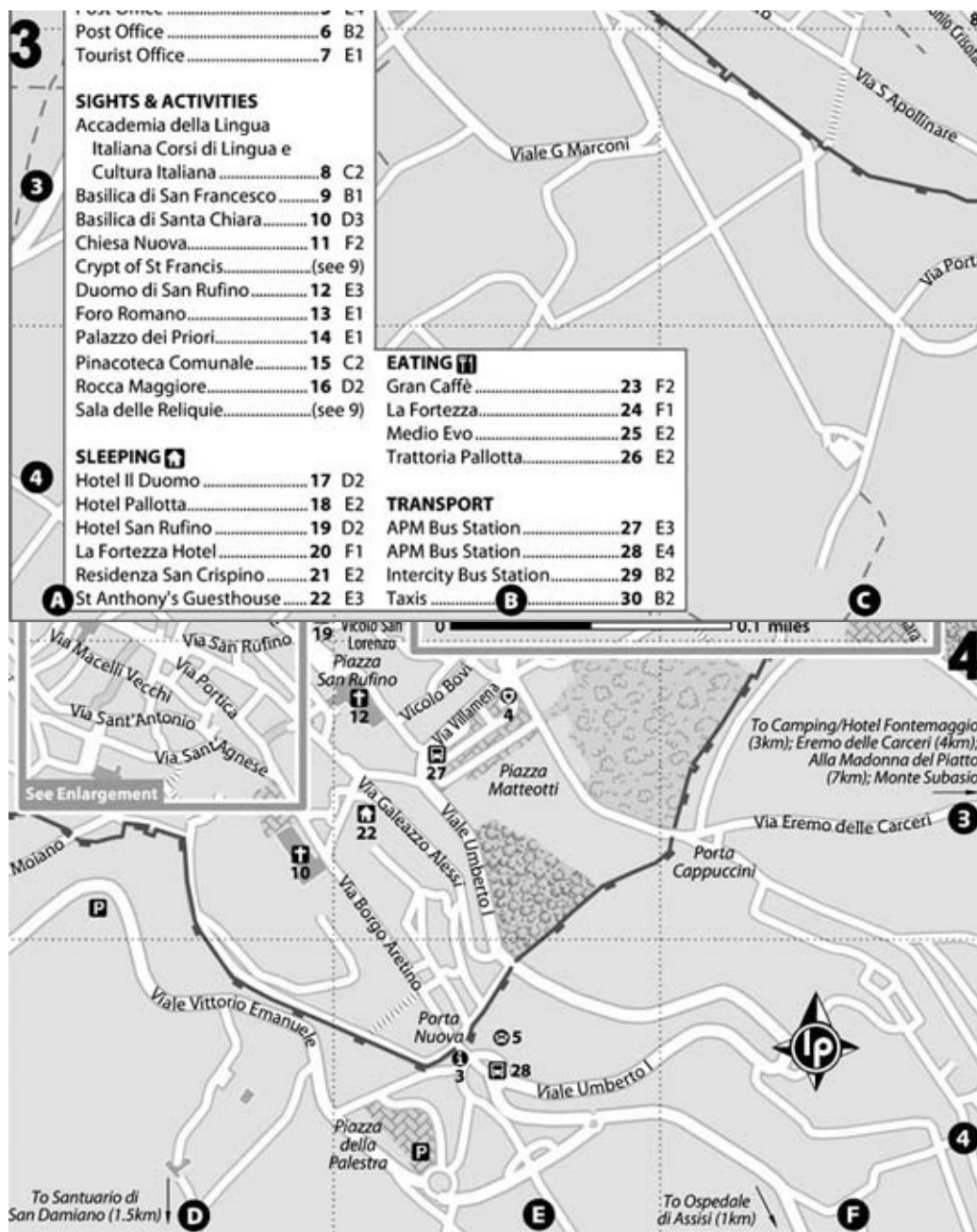
**Tourist office** (☎ 075 813 86 80; [www.assisi.regioneumbria.eu](http://www.assisi.regioneumbria.eu); Piazza del Comune 22; 📧 8am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun summer, 9am-1pm Sun winter) Also has a branch office outside Porta Nuova from Easter through October.

## Sights

### BASILICA DI SAN FRANCESCO

The **Basilica di San Francesco** (☎ 075 81 90 01; Piazza di San Francesco) has a separate **information office** (☎ 075 819 00 84; [www.sanfrancescoassisi.org](http://www.sanfrancescoassisi.org); 📧 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat) opposite the entrance to the lower church where you can schedule a tour in, at the very least, English or Italian, led by a resident Franciscan friar.





## ST FRANCIS THE REVOLUTIONARY

Born the wealthy son of a cloth merchant in 1181, Francis (Francesco in Italian) filled his younger years with wild parties and daydreams about becoming a great knight. In his mid-20s he did head off into battle against Perugia, but a gradual religious awakening was to steer him to a different noble calling.

At the ancient church of San Damiano, he heard the voice of Jesus on the crucifix: 'Francis, repair my church'. He took cloth from his father's shop to sell for the repairs. When his father dragged him in front of the bishop for punishment, Francis stripped off his clothes and renounced his former life.

He walked the countryside, wearing simple robes and preaching the virtues of poverty and equal respect for popes and lepers alike. He had a special affinity with animals and it's said he once preached to a flock of birds who stayed completely still until he said they could fly off. Many people were attracted to Francis' lifestyle and within a few years, he developed the first order of the Frati Minori (Friars Minor) which, after his death, became known as the Franciscans.

Francis spent his remaining years living out what would become the Franciscan vows of poverty,



chastity and obedience. In 1224, at age 43, he received the stigmata, realising a dream to truly feel Jesus' suffering. Two years later, he died lying on the floor of a mud hut among his brothers and sisters of the order and his beloved Lady Poverty.

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The basilica was built on a hill known as Colle d'Inferno (Hell Hill). People were executed at the gallows here until the 13th century. St Francis asked his followers to bury him here in keeping with Jesus, who had died on the cross among criminals and outcasts. The area is now known as Paradise Hill.

The **upper church** (☞ 8.30am-6.45pm Easter-Oct, to 6pm Oct-Easter) was built just after the lower church, between 1230 and 1253, and the change in style and grandiosity is readily apparent. One of the most famous pieces of art in the world is the 28-part fresco circling the walls. The fresco has been attributed to Giotto and his pupils for hundreds of years, but the question of who produced it is now under debate within the art-historian community. The fresco starts just to the right of the altar and continues clockwise around the church. Above each image is a biblical fresco with 28 corresponding images from the Old and New Testaments (possibly painted by Giotto, or Pietro Cavallini, who might or might not have painted the fresco cycle). The frescoes in the basilica literally revolutionised art in the Western world. All the gold leaf and flat iconic images of the Byzantine and Romanesque periods were eschewed for natural backgrounds, people of all classes, and a human, suffering Jesus. This was in keeping with Francis' idea that the human body was 'brother' and the earth around him mother and sister.

These fresco painters were the storytellers of their day, turning biblical passages into *Bibliae Pauperum*: open public Bibles for the poor, who were mostly illiterate. The scenes in St Francis' life were tied to the scenes as a way to translate the Bible through images. For instance, the fifth fresco shows St Francis renouncing his father, while the corresponding biblical fresco shows the disobedient Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The **lower church** (☞ 6am-6.45pm Easter-Oct, to 6pm Oct-Easter) was built between 1228 and 1230. The stained-glass windows are the work of master craftsmen brought in from Germany, England and Flanders during the 13th century, and were quite an architectural feat at that time.

In the centre of the lower church, above the main altar, are four frescoes attributed to Maestro delle Vele, a pupil of Giotto, that represent what St Francis called 'the four greatest allegories'. The first was the victory of Francis over evil, and the other three were the precepts his order was based on: poverty, obedience and chastity.

Lorenzetti's triptych in the left transept ends with his most famous and controversial, *Madonna Who Celebrates Francis*. Mary is seen holding the baby Jesus and indicating with her thumb towards St Francis. On the other side of Mary is the Apostle John, whom we're assuming is being unfavourably compared with Francis. In 1234 Pope Gregory IX decided that the image was not heretical because John had written the gospel, but Francis had lived it.

Cimabue was the most historically important painter who worked in this church because he was the only artist to get a first-hand account from St Francis' two nephews, who had personally known the saint. In the *Madonna in Majesty*, in the right transept, much has been tampered with, but Cimabue's intact depiction of St Francis is considered the most accurate. Francis appears peaceful and calm in this painting. The first biographer of St Francis, Thomas of Celano, wrote in the middle of the 13th century that Francis was an eloquent man, of cheerful countenance and of a kindly aspect.

One of the most moving locations in the basilica complex is downstairs from the lower church: the **crypt of St Francis**, where the saint's body has been laid to rest. Bench seating around the tomb allows time for quiet reflection.

The basilica's **Sala delle Reliquie** (Relics Hall; ☎ 075 81 90 01; 🕒 9am-6pm daily, 1-4.30pm holidays) contains items from St Francis' life, including his simple tunic and sandals and fragments of his celebrated *Canticle of the Creatures*. The most important relic here is the Franciscan Rule parchment, the *Book of Life*, composed by Francis.

## CHURCHES & MUSEUMS

**Basilica di Santa Chiara** (☎ 075 81 22 82; Piazza Santa Chiara; 🕒 6am-noon & 2-7pm summer, to 6pm winter) is 13th-century Romanesque, with steep ramparts and a striking facade. The white and pink stone that makes up the exterior here (the same stone that makes many buildings in Assisi look like they glow in the sunlight) came from nearby Subasio. The daughter of an Assisian nobleman, St Clare was a spiritual contemporary of St Francis and founded the *Sorelle Povere di Santa Chiara* (Order of the Poor Ladies), now known as the Poor Clares. She is buried in the church's crypt. The Byzantine cross that is said to have spoken to St Francis is also housed here.

From the basilica, take Via Santa Chiara or Corso Mazzani back to Piazza del Comune, which once was the site of a partially excavated **Foro Romano** (Roman Forum; ☎ 075 81 30 53; Via Portica; adult/child incl Pinacoteca €3/2; 🕒 10am-6pm summer, to 5pm winter). Some of the shops on the piazza open their basements to reveal Roman ruins. The **Chiesa Nuova** (☎ 075 81 23 39; Piazza Chiesa Nuova; 🕒 6.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm summer, 6.30am-noon & 2-5pm winter) was built by King Philip III of Spain in the 1600s on the spot reputed to be the house of St Francis' family. Mass is said daily at 7am, with an extra service on holidays at 10am.

Dominating the city is the massive 14th-century **Rocca Maggiore** (☎ 075 81 52 92; Via della Rocca; adult/concession €5/3.50; 🕒 10am-sunset), an oft-expanded, pillaged and rebuilt hill-fortress offering 360-degree views of Perugia to the north and the surrounding valleys below. Walk up windy staircases and claustrophobic passageways to reach the archer slots that served Assisians as they went medieval on Perugia.

The 13th-century Romanesque **Duomo di San Rufino** (☎ 075 81 60 16; Piazza San Rufino; 🕒 7am-noon & 2.30-7pm, to 6pm in winter), remodelled by Galeazzo Alessi in the 16th century, contains the fountain where St Francis and St Clare were baptised. The facade is festooned with grotesque figures and fantastic animals.

## FRANCISCAN SITES

Walk the 1.5km olive tree-lined stroll to the **Santuario di San Damiano** (☎ 075 81 22 73; admission free; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-6pm summer, 10am-noon & 2-4.30pm winter, vespers 7pm summer, 5pm winter), where St Francis first heard the voice of God and where he wrote his *Canticle of the Creatures*. The serene locale is popular with pilgrims, as you can practically feel the spirit of St Francis and St Clare (who died here in 1253) at the simple church.

Find out why St Francis chose the caves of **Eremo delle Carceri** (☎ 075 81 23 01; admission free; 🕒 6.30am-7pm Easter-Oct, to sunset Oct-Easter) as his hermitage. The *carceri* (isolated places, or 'prisons') along the slopes of Monte Subasio are as peaceful today as in St Francis' time. These days, many use the locale as a jumping-off point for contemplative walks or picnics under the oaks. It's a 4km drive (or walk) east, and a dozen nearby hiking trails are well signposted.

A quick walk from the train station is the imposing **Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli** (☎ 075 8 05 11; Santa Maria degli Angeli; 🕒 6.15am-12.50pm & 2.30-7.30pm summer), built between 1565 and 1685 around the first Franciscan monastery and tiny Porziuncola Chapel. Perugino fans will appreciate his intact crucifixion, painted on the rear wall. St Francis died at the site of the **Cappella del Transito** on 3

October 1226.

## Activities

St Francis buffs and nature buffs will appreciate the plethora of strolls, day hikes and overnight pilgrimage-walks leading into and out of Assisi. Many make the trek to Eremo delle Carceri or Santuario di San Damiano on foot. The tourist office has several maps for those on such a peregrination, including a route that follows in St Francis' footsteps to Gubbio (18km). A popular spot for hikers is nearby **Monte Subasio**. Local bookstores sell all sorts of walking and mountain-biking guides and maps for the area and the tourist office can help with brochures and maps as well.

Bicycle rentals are available at **Angelucci Andrea Cicli Riparazione Noleggio** (☎ 075 804 25 50; [www.angeluccicicli.it](http://www.angeluccicicli.it); Via Risorgimento 54a) in Santa Maria degli Angeli and at Ostello della Pace (right).

## Courses

**Accademia della Lingua Italiana Corsi di Lingua e Cultura Italiana** (☎ /fax 075 81 52 81; [www.aliassisi.it](http://www.aliassisi.it); Via Tiberio d'Assisi 10) runs a variety of courses, including Italian language, culture, singing, painting and cooking. It also offers free preparation for the CILS (Italian teacher abroad) course. There's a maximum of 12 students per class and costs start at about €300 for two weeks of instruction.

## Festivals & Events

The **Festa di San Francesco** falls on 3 and 4 October and is the main religious event in the city. **Settimana Santa** (Easter Week) is celebrated with processions and performances. The colourful **Festa di Calendimaggio** celebrates spring in medieval fashion and starts the first Thursday after 1 May. Europe's largest peace march, the **Marcia della Pace**, began in 1961 and attracts more than 150,000 pilgrims the first week in October, who walk the 24km route between Perugia and Assisi.

## Sleeping

Assisi has a phenomenal amount of rooms, which ensures the best prices in any Umbrian town popular with tourists. Keep in mind that in peak periods such as Easter, August and September, and during the Festa di San Francesco, you will need to book accommodation well in advance.

The tourist office has a complete list of private rooms, religious institutions (of which there are 17), flats and *agriturismi* options in and around Assisi and can assist with bookings in a pinch. Otherwise, keep an eye out for *camere* (rooms for rent) signs as you wander the streets.

## BUDGET

**Camping/Hotel Fontemaggio** (☎ 075 81 23 17; [www.fontemaggio.it](http://www.fontemaggio.it); Via Eremo delle Carceri 8; per person/tent/car €6/5/3, dm/s/d €20/35/52, 4- to 6-person bungalow with kitchen €32-110) This is the sort of place St Francis himself probably would have stayed. A full complement of bungalows, campsites and hotel rooms offers up a bed for just about any taste. On the way to Eremo delle Carceri, it's a beautiful walk into town, but the restaurant might just keep you for the evening.

**Ostello della Pace** (☎ 075 81 67 67; [www.assisihotel.com](http://www.assisihotel.com); Via Valecchie 177; dm incl breakfast €15-18, r from €32; ☎ 1 Mar-8 Nov & 27 Dec-6 Jan; ☎ ☎) Student groups, couples appreciating the handful of private rooms, backpackers and pilgrims all can find their bliss at Assisi's HI hostel. Beautiful and quiet, it's just off the road coming in from Santa Maria degli Angeli (one minute from a shuttle-bus

stop). Thrifty travellers will appreciate the dinners (€10) and hikers will appreciate the boxed lunches (€6.50), and everyone will appreciate the idyllic setting.

**St Anthony's Guesthouse** (☎ 075 81 25 42; [atoneassisi@tiscali.it](mailto:atoneassisi@tiscali.it); Via Galeazzo Alessi 10; s/d/tr incl breakfast €40/60/80; 📍) Look for the iron statue of St Francis feeding the birds and you've found your Assisian oasis. Rooms are austere but welcoming and six have balconies with take-your-breath-away views. Gardens, ample parking, an 800-year-old breakfast salon and an ancient Door of Death make this a heavenly choice. Like most religious accommodation, it has a two-night minimum stay and an 11pm curfew.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel San Rufino** (☎ 075 81 28 03; [www.hotelsanrufino.it](http://www.hotelsanrufino.it); Via Porta Perlici 7; s €38-45, d €48-55, breakfast €4-5) With rooms in two locations (rooms at the Hotel Il Duomo around the corner are slightly smaller) in the centre of town, this hotel is as quiet as it is comfortable. Stairs to the hotel can be tricky, but once you arrive at the San Rufino, a lift comes in handy. Sweetly decorated rooms all come with private bathrooms and TVs.

**La Fortezza Hotel** (☎ 075 81 24 18; [www.lafortezzahotel.com](http://www.lafortezzahotel.com); Vicolo della Fortezza 2b; d incl breakfast €54-80; 📍 📶) Seven simply outfitted rooms offer guests a comfortable respite, but it's the rooftop deck, perfect for a wine and cheese break, which makes this hotel so inviting. The stone building is up a quiet stone staircase, tucked just above the Piazza del Comune and La Fortezza's extremely popular restaurant (see right). Call or email ahead to inquire about a bus or train station pickup.

**Hotel Pallotta** (☎ 075 81 26 49; [www.pallottaassisi.it](http://www.pallottaassisi.it); Vicolo della Volta Pinta; s/d/tr incl breakfast €35/65/75; 📶) Yet another great-value hotel in the heart of Assisi. Rooms are as modern as they are ancient; medieval walls and shuttered windows coexist with spotless tile bathrooms and wall-mounted televisions. Check out the view from the top floor.

**Alla Madonna del Piatto** (☎ 075 819 90 50; [www.incampagna.com](http://www.incampagna.com); Pieve San Nicolo 18; d incl breakfast €85-120; 📍 Mar—mid Nov; 📍) As beautiful as it is seemingly isolated, this *agriturismo* is less than 15 minutes from the basilica. Each of the six Moroccan- or Indian-designed guest chambers is truly a room with a view. But the real reason to stay here is the intimate cooking classes Letizia runs (in Italian or English). Start the day in local markets and finish it off with a feast of your own creation. Two-night minimum.

**Residenza San Crispino** (☎ 075 815 51 24; [www.sancrispinoresidence.com](http://www.sancrispinoresidence.com); Via Sant'Agnese 11; ste incl breakfast €170-240; 📍) Rooms are medieval old but have been upgraded with armoire kitchenettes to become blissful apartment suites named after St Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures* – Brother Sun, Sister Water etc. If the short stroll to the Basilica di Santa Chiara or monastic-quiet garden hasn't calmed you down quite enough, jump on their shuttle to the Resort and Spa San Crispino.

## Eating

### RESTAURANTS

While we normally recommend staying away from hotel restaurants, most of Assisi's better restaurants (even the more inexpensive ones) are part of hotels.

**Trattoria Pallotta** (☎ 075 81 26 49; Vicolo della Volta Pinta; meals €25; 📍 Wed-Mon) Head through the Volta Pinta (Painted Vault) off Piazza del Comune, being careful not to bump into someone as you gaze at the 16th-century frescoes above you, into this gorgeous setting of vaulted brick walls and wood-

beamed ceilings. They cook all the Umbrian classics here: rabbit, homemade *strangozzi*, even pigeon. See also the hotel, left.

**Medio Evo** (☎ 075 81 30 68; Via Arco dei Priori 4; meals €28; 🕒 Thu-Tue) Traditional Umbrian dishes are served in fabulous vaulted 13th-century surroundings, including rabbit stew (€12) and truffle omelettes (€10). The early 6.45pm opening time is geared for, and highly appreciated by, non-Italian tourists.

**La Fortezza** (☎ 075 81 24 18; Vicolo della Fortezza 2b; meals €22; 🕒 Fri-Wed) This family-run restaurant off Piazza del Comune serves traditional Umbrian dishes and flame-roasted meats, as well as those from Trentino, and a good selection of local wines.

## CAFES

**Gran Caffè** (☎ 075 815 51 44; Corso Mazzini 16; 🕒 8am-midnight) This elegant place has the most fabulous gelati, mouth-watering pastries and cakes, and a great selection of drinks. Try the *tè freddo alla pesca* (iced tea with peach) on a hot day, or choose from a selection of delicious hot chocolates and coffee when the weather is cool. Remember it costs much more to sit.

## Shopping

Assisi is an easy town for shopping, as many shops stay open during siesta. The closer you get to the basilica, the tackier the souvenirs – Franciscan friar shot-glasses and nuns playing poker – but meander off the beaten path for leather, ceramics and clothing. Open-air markets take place in Piazza Matteotti on Saturday and Santa Maria degli Angeli on Monday.

## Getting There & Away

Assisi is very easy to reach by bus or train. Although the train station is 4km west in Santa Maria degli Angeli, shuttle bus C (€0.80) runs between the train station and the APM bus station on Piazza Matteotti every 30 minutes. Tickets are available in the *tabacchi* at the station and in town. Assisi is on the Foligno—Terontola line with regular services to Perugia (€2.05, 25 minutes, hourly). You can change at Terontola for Florence (€9.40 to €15.20, 1¾ to 2¾ hours, 10 daily) and at Foligno for Rome (€9.40 to €16, two to 2½ hours, hourly).

**APM Perugia** (☎ 800 512141; [www.apmperugia.it](http://www.apmperugia.it)) runs to Perugia (€3.10, 50 minutes, nine daily) and Gubbio (€5.20, one hour and 10 minutes, 11 daily) from Piazza Matteotti. **Sulga** (☎ 800 099661; [www.sulga.it](http://www.sulga.it)) buses leave from Porta San Pietro for Florence (€11, 2½ hours, one daily at 7am) and Rome's Stazione Tiburtina (€16.50, 3¼ hours, three daily).

To reach Assisi from Perugia by road, take the SS75, exit at Ospedalicchio and follow the signs.

## Getting Around

A shuttle bus (€0.80) operates every half-hour between Piazza Matteotti and the train station. Normal traffic is subject to restrictions in the city centre and daytime parking is all but banned. Six car parks dot the city walls (they are connected to the centre by orange shuttle buses), or head for Via della Rocca where, for the price of a short but fairly steep walk, you should be able to find free parking.

For a taxi, dial ☎ 075 81 31 00.

# SPELLO

pop 8592

Sometimes it seems like it's just not possible for the next Umbrian town to be any prettier than the last. And then you visit Spello. It's often passed by as tourists head to nearby Assisi or Perugia, but the proliferation of arched stone walkways and hanging flowerpots make it well worth a visit, especially in spring when the whole bloomin' town smells of flowers.

## Orientation & Information

Spello is one of Umbria's easiest towns to explore, as the train station is a mere 500m from the centre of town. Just past the Chiesa di Sant'Andrea on the far side of Piazza Matteotti is the local **tourist information office** (Pro Loco; ☎ /fax 0742 30 10 09; [prospello@libero.it](mailto:prospello@libero.it), Piazza Matteotti 3; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm). It can provide you with a list of accommodation and has maps of walks in the surrounding area, including an 8km walk across the hills to Assisi. Purchase a city map here for €0.50. The city website is [www.comune.spello.pg.it](http://www.comune.spello.pg.it).

## Sights

Spello isn't known for any one sight; a leisurely stroll is the best way to see the town. The entrance to Spello begins at **Porta Consolare**, which dates back to Roman times. Head towards Piazza Matteotti, the heart of Spello, where the impressive 12th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore** (Piazza Matteotti; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 2-7pm Mar-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Feb) houses the town's real treat. In its **Cappella Baglioni**, Pinturicchio's beautiful frescoes of the life of Christ are in the right-hand corner as you enter (you'll need to pay to illuminate the great works, which helps keep damage to a minimum). Even the floor, dating back to 1566, is a masterpiece. Stay in the same piazza for the gloomier **Chiesa di Sant'Andrea** (Piazza Matteotti; 🕒 8am-7pm), where you can admire Pinturicchio's *Madonna with Child and Saints*. To see the view of all views, head up past the **Arco Romano** to the **Chiesa di San Severino**. The active Capuchin monastery is closed to the public but its exterior Romanesque facade is so stunning you'll have trouble deciding on whether you'd like to gaze at its architecture or the bucolic countryside view below.

## Festivals & Events

The people of Spello celebrate the feast of **Corpus Domini** in June (the Sunday 60 days after Easter) by skilfully decorating stretches of the main street with fresh flowers in colourful designs. Come on the Saturday evening before the Sunday procession to see the floral fantasies being laid out (from about 8.30pm) and participate in the festive atmosphere. The Corpus procession begins at 11am Sunday.

## Sleeping

**Del Prato Paolucci** (☎ 0742 30 10 18; [www.hoteldelpratopaolucci.it](http://www.hoteldelpratopaolucci.it); Via Brodolini 4; s/d/tr incl breakfast €40/60/80; 📞 📺) A swimming pool and recent remodel have bumped up the comfort level of the modest family-run spot. Plus, you'll have a perfectly acceptable bathroom, TV and phone, and a few rooms have views. Call ahead and the gregarious owners will pick you up at the train station.

**Residence San Jacopo** (☎ 0742 30 12 60, 333 2232899; [www.residencesanjacopo.it](http://www.residencesanjacopo.it), in Italian; Via Borgo di Via Giulia 1; apt for 2/3 people €62/93) This vacation house saw its first incarnation in 1296 as the hospice of San Jacopo, a way station for pilgrims heading to Compostella in Galicia. Seven mini-apartments feature a kitchenette, bathroom and TV, and are furnished with rustic antiques. Vanya, the owner, also runs a nearby *enoteca* (wine bar), and knows everything about local wine and delicacies.

**Hotel Ristorante La Bastiglia** (☎ 0742 65 12 77; [www.labastiglia.com](http://www.labastiglia.com); Via dei Molini 7; s €80-155, d €110-185, tr €210-300, all incl breakfast; ♿ 🚻 🚰 📶) Welcoming well-heeled pilgrims, bicyclists and tour participants for decades. Three classes of rooms open the stunning grounds to a larger swathe of the travelling public, all of whom enjoy seasonal breakfast (Italian style) on the terrace. The restaurant is one of Umbria's best. Access for disabled guests.

## Eating & Drinking

**Il Giardino di Spello** (☎ 0742 30 14 45; Via Centrale Umbra 36; tapas €4.50; 🕒 7am-midnight Tue-Sun) Near the train station and main bus stop, this is a fab place for quick eats. For just a few euros, diners can load up on tapas. Tack on two more euros for Spello's best homemade gelato.

**Enoteca Properzio** (☎ 0742 30 15 21; [www.enoteche.it](http://www.enoteche.it); Palazzo dei Canonici, Piazza Matteotti 8/10; 🕒 9am-11pm Apr-Oct, 9am-8pm Nov-Mar) Umbrian wineries aren't usually open to the public, so one of the only chances visitors have of tasting several wines at once without breaking the bank (or getting sloshed) is to stop off at an *enoteca* in town. And there's no better place in Umbria to do so than here, where for €30 you can try a half-dozen Umbrian wines while snacking on cheese, prosciutto and bruschetta. For €144, this *enoteca* will ship a dozen bottles abroad.

## Getting There & Away

Spello is directly on the train line between Perugia and Foligno, so trains run at least hourly to Perugia (€2.65, 30 minutes) and Assisi (€2.05, 10 minutes). The station is often unstaffed, so buy your tickets at either the self-service ticket machine or at the newsstand **Rivendita Giornali** (Piazza della Pace) 1. It's a 10-minute walk into town. Spello is on the SS75 between Perugia and Foligno.

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## GUBBIO

pop 32,804

While most of Umbria feels soft and rounded by the millennia, Gubbio is angular, sober and imposing. Perched along the steep slopes of Monte Ingino, the Gothic buildings wend their way up the hill towards Umbria's closest thing to an amusement park ride, its open-air funicular. During the holidays, the side of the mountain becomes the world's largest Christmas tree.

The small town is easy to reach by bus or car, easy to explore on foot and has plenty of good low-cost accommodation. Gothic architecture buffs shouldn't miss it.

Gubbio is famous for its Eugubinan Tablets, which date from 300 to 100 BC and constitute the best existing example of ancient Umbrian script. An important ally of the Roman Empire and a key stop on the Via Flaminia, the town declined during the Saracen invasions. In the 14th century it fell into the hands of the Montefeltro family of [Urbino](#) and was later incorporated into the Papal States.

## Orientation

The city is small and easy to explore. The immense traffic circle known as Piazza Quaranta Martiri, at the base of the hill, is where buses to the city terminate, and it also has a large car park. The square was named in honour of 40 local people who were killed by the Nazis in 1944 in reprisal for partisan activities. From here it is a short, if somewhat steep, walk up Via della Repubblica to the main square, Piazza Grande, also known as Piazza della Signoria. Or, you can take the lift from the Palazzo del Podestà





## FUNIVIA COLLE ELETTO

Although the **Basilica di Sant'Ubaldo** – where you'll find the body of St Ubaldo, the 12th-century bishop of Gubbio – is a perfectly lovely church, the adventure is in the getting there. Take the **Funivia Colle Eletto** (☎ 075 922 11 99; adult/child return €5/4; 🕒 9am-8pm Jul-Aug, 9.30am or 10am-1.15pm & 2.30-5.30pm or 7pm Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-1.15pm & 2.30-5pm Nov-Feb, closed Wed winter), where your first rule is to believe the man when he tells you to stand on the dot. He will then throw you into a moving metal contraption and you're then whisked instantly away on a cable car that looks more like a precarious ski-lift, dangling dozens of metres above a rocky hill (bring a camera, but hold tight). The ride up is as frightening as it is utterly beautiful. There's a restaurant on top of the hill and the aforementioned church, but the nicest way to spend the day is to bring a picnic and have a wander.

Just below the Funivia Colle Eletto is the **Museo della Ceramica a Lustrò e Torre Medioevale di Porta Romana** (☎ 075 922 11 99; Via Dante 24; admission €2.50; 🕒 10.30am-1pm & 3.30-7pm). The *a lustrò* ceramic style has its origins in 11th-century Muslim Spain. On the 2nd floor, ceramics from prehistoric times share space with medieval and Renaissance pieces. There's also a collection of crossbows from the 18th century, some of which have a target range as far as 50m. Check out the really unfun-looking chastity belt on the 4th floor and appreciate the fact that you are alive today instead of 300 years ago.

## VIA FEDERICO DA MONTEFELTRO

Walk up Via Ducale to a triumvirate of ancientness, the 13th-century pink **cathedral** (Via Federico da Montefeltro; donations welcome; 🕒 10am-5pm), with a fine 12th-century stained-glass window and a fresco attributed to Bernardino Pinturicchio. Opposite, the 15th-century **Palazzo Ducale** (☎ 075 927 58 72; Via Federico da Montefeltro; adult/concession €2/1; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 9am-10.30pm Sat) was built by the Duke of Montefeltro's family as a scaled-down version of their grand *palazzo* in Urbino; its walls hide an impressive Renaissance courtyard. Next door is the **Museo Diocesano** (☎ 075 922 09 04; Via Federico da Montefeltro; 🕒 10am-7pm summer, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat winter, 10am-6pm Sun & holidays all year), a winding homage to Gubbio's medieval history.

## FOUNTAIN OF LUNATICS

In the western end of the medieval section is the 13th-century **Palazzo del Bargello**, the city's medieval police station and prison. In front of it is the **Fontana dei Pazzi** (Fountain of Lunatics), so-named because of a belief that if you walk around it three times, you will go mad. On summer weekends the number of tourists actually carrying out this bizarre ritual is indeed cause for concern about their collective sanity.

## ROMAN THEATRE

Southwest of Piazza Quaranta Martiri, off Viale del Teatro Romano, are the overgrown remains of a 1st-century **Teatro Romano** (Roman Theatre; ☎ 075 922 09 22; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, 8am-1.30pm Oct-Mar). In the summer, check with the tourist office about outdoor concerts held here.

## Festivals & Events

The **Corsa dei Ceri** (Candles Race) is a centuries-old event held each year on 15 May to commemorate the city's patron saint, Sant'Ubaldo. It starts at 5.30am and involves three teams, each carrying a *cerò* (massive wooden pillars weighing about 400kg, each bearing a statue of a 'rival' saint) and racing through the city's streets. This is one of Italy's liveliest festivals and has put Gubbio on the map.

On the last Sunday in May, there's the annual **Palio della Balestra**, an archery competition involving medieval crossbows, in which Gubbio competes with its neighbour San Sepolcro. The festival carries

over all year in tourist shops alive with crossbow paraphernalia.

## Sleeping

The tourist office has an extremely thorough list of all accommodation options within the area.

**Città di Gubbio & Villa Ortoguidone** (☎ 075 927 20 37; [www.gubbiocamping.com](http://www.gubbiocamping.com); Loc Ortoguidone 49; per person €6.50-9.50, tent €7-9.50, car €3, 2- to 4-person apt €36-100; ☹ Easter-Sep; 📶) Just a few minutes from Gubbio's centre is this full-service, four-star campsite (including a tennis court, Jacuzzi, pool and snack bar). Stunning apartments in an old stone manor house offer TVs, beautiful wooden furnishings and private bathrooms. July and August visits require a one-week stay. From the SS298, follow the signs for 3km to 'Agriclub Villa Ortoguidone'.

**Maestro Pie Filippini** (☎ 075 927 37 68; Corso Garibaldi 100; per person €20) Six basic rooms serve up to 16 guests in this religious accommodation that's more institutional than spiritual, but the price and location can't be beaten. You might share the open reading salon with resident nuns, or retire to your room (singles to quads) for a bath. Two-night minimum, 10.30pm curfew and advance reservations required.

**our pick** **Residenza di Via Piccardi** (☎ 075 927 61 08; [www.agriturismocolledelesole.it](http://www.agriturismocolledelesole.it); Via Piccardi 12; s/d/apt incl breakfast €30/55/60; ☹ closed Jan-Feb) Step through the arched gate into the romantic garden of this period residence. Share an amorous breakfast for two in the garden or cook up a simple dinner in the mini-apartment's kitchenette. Family owned, the characteristically medieval stone building has cosy rooms decorated in cheery florals with all the basic comforts. The best value hotel in Umbria.

**Ristorante Hotel Grotta dell'Angelo** (☎ 075 927 17 47; [www.grottadellangelo.it](http://www.grottadellangelo.it); Via Gioia 47; s €38-42, d €55-60; ☹ closed 2-3 weeks in Jan) While it is mostly a popular restaurant with all sorts of truffle dishes and a beautiful garden, the Grotta dell'Angelo also serves up a few basic rooms for rent.

**Bosone Palace** (☎ 075 922 06 88; [www.mencarelligroup.com](http://www.mencarelligroup.com); Via XX Settembre 22; r €160-190, ste €184-230, all incl breakfast; 📶 📶) Fancy looking at a fresco during breakfast? How about staying in a room once frequented by Dante Alighieri? All rooms have minibars, satellite TV and phones in the bathroom, and many have gorgeous views of the surrounding valley.

## Eating

**our pick** **Ristorante La Fornace di Mastro Giorgio** (☎ 075 922 18 36; Via Mastro Giorgio 2; meals €46; ☹ Wed-Mon) Named after Gubbio's most famous medieval ceramicist (whose oven still graces one of the restaurant's ancient walls), Mastro Giorgio is our favourite place for a special occasion (not just for the 500-item wine list, either). The seasonal menu includes modern takes on traditional dishes: venison carpaccio wrapped with salt, olive oil and asparagus, and the signature dish is a *stinco* (veal shank) stewed to falling-off-the-bone perfection.

**Ristorante Fabiani** (☎ 075 927 46 39; Piazza Quaranta Martiri 26; meals €28; ☹ Wed-Mon) This is a fabulous spot to sit on a back patio and enjoy the garden for a few hours. The selection here is vast, and there is a rotating €15 tourist menu or a €20 *menù gastronomico* of whatever is in season. Stop in on Thursday or Friday for the fish specials.

**Taverna del Lupo** (☎ 075 927 43 68; Via Ansidei 21; meals €42; ☹ Tue-Sun) Il Lupo was the wolf that St Francis domesticated, a wolf that supposedly came back to this restaurant to dine. He made an excellent choice. The atmosphere is sophisticated, if a bit stiff, and diners will feel more comfortable smartly dressed. Most ingredients are locally produced in the surrounding Apennines, including cheese, truffles and olive oil. Set aside at least two hours for a meal.

# Shopping

**Leo Grilli Arte** (☎ 075 922 22 72; Via dei Consoli 78) In the Middle Ages, ceramics were one of Gubbio's main sources of income and there are some fabulous contemporary samples on sale in this crumbly 15th-century mansion.

## Getting There & Around

**APM** (☎ 800 51 21 41; [www.apmperugia.it](http://www.apmperugia.it)) buses run to Perugia (€4.50, one hour and 10 minutes, 10 daily), Gualdo Tadino (€2.80, 50 minutes, 10 daily) and Umbertide (€3, 50 minutes, three daily). Buses depart from Piazza Quaranta Martiri.

The closest train station is at Fossato di Vico, about 18km southeast of the city. Hourly APM buses connect the station with Gubbio (€2.60, 30 minutes). From Fossato di Vico, hourly trains take about 30 minutes to Foligno (€2.55), where you can switch for other cities, including Perugia (€4.75, 1½ hours, seven daily).

By car or motorcycle, take the SS298 from Perugia or the SS76 from Ancona, and follow the signs. Parking in the large car park in Piazza Quaranta Martiri costs €0.80 per hour.

Walking is the best way to get around, but APM buses connect Piazza Quaranta Martiri with the funicular station and most main sights.

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## SPOLETO

**pop 38,909**

Spoletto was one of those sleepy Umbrian hill towns until, in 1958, Italian American composer Gian Carlo Menotti changed everything when he founded the Festival dei Due Mondi, known around the world now as, simply, the Spoleto Festival. Combining theatre, dance, music, spoken word and other art forms, the festival has gained a reputation as one of the best of its kind in the world and put this town, historically important since Roman times, back on the map. However, even outside of festival season, Spoleto has more than enough museums, Roman ruins, restaurants and wanderable streets to keep you busy for a good day or two.

Historically, Umbria was first divided in half between the Etruscans and Umbrians. After Rome fell, it was divided again: Byzantines on the east of the Tiber river, Lombards to the west. Spoleto, which was just to the west of the Tiber, became the capital of the Lombardy duchy and in AD 890, the title of Holy Roman Emperor went to a duke from Spoleto. Although much of its pre-Lombard artwork has been lost, you'll see many of the signature religious buildings and hermitages in the area.

## Orientation





The old part of the city is about 1km south of the main train station; every 20 minutes, an orange shuttle bus (€0.80) marked A, B or C heads to Piazza della Libertà in the centre, where you'll find the tourist office and the Roman-era theatre. Piazza del Mercato, a short walk northeast of Piazza della Libertà, marks the engaging heart of old Spoleto. Between here and Piazza del Duomo you'll find the bulk of the city's monuments and some fine shops.

## Information



# SPOLETO

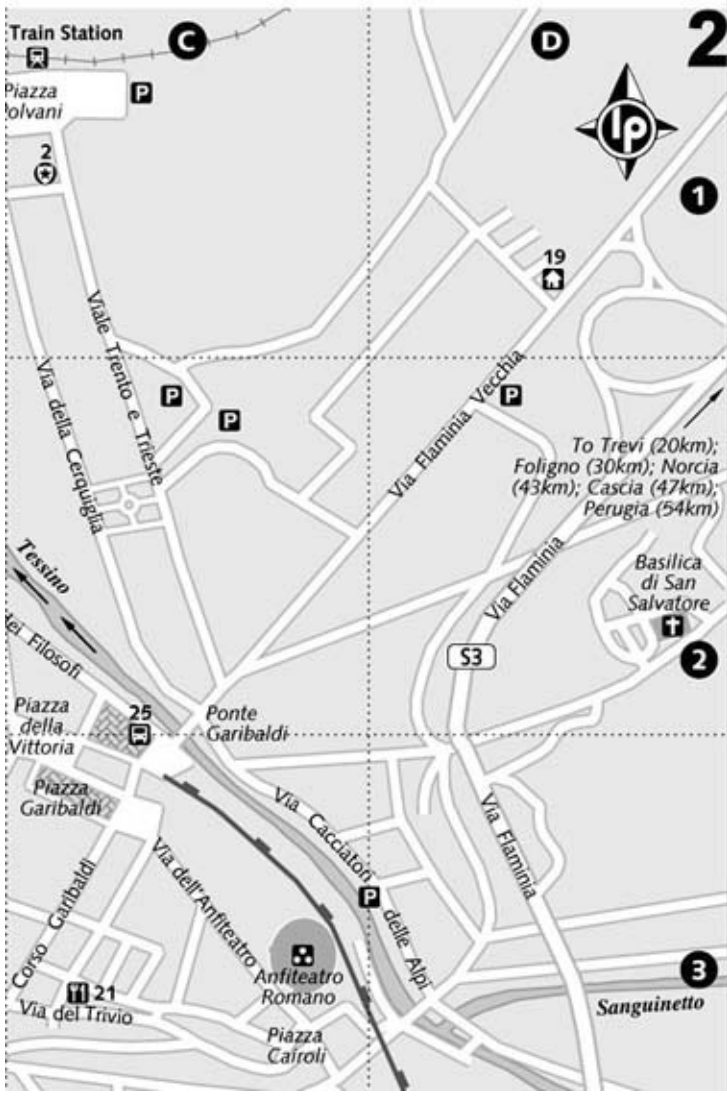
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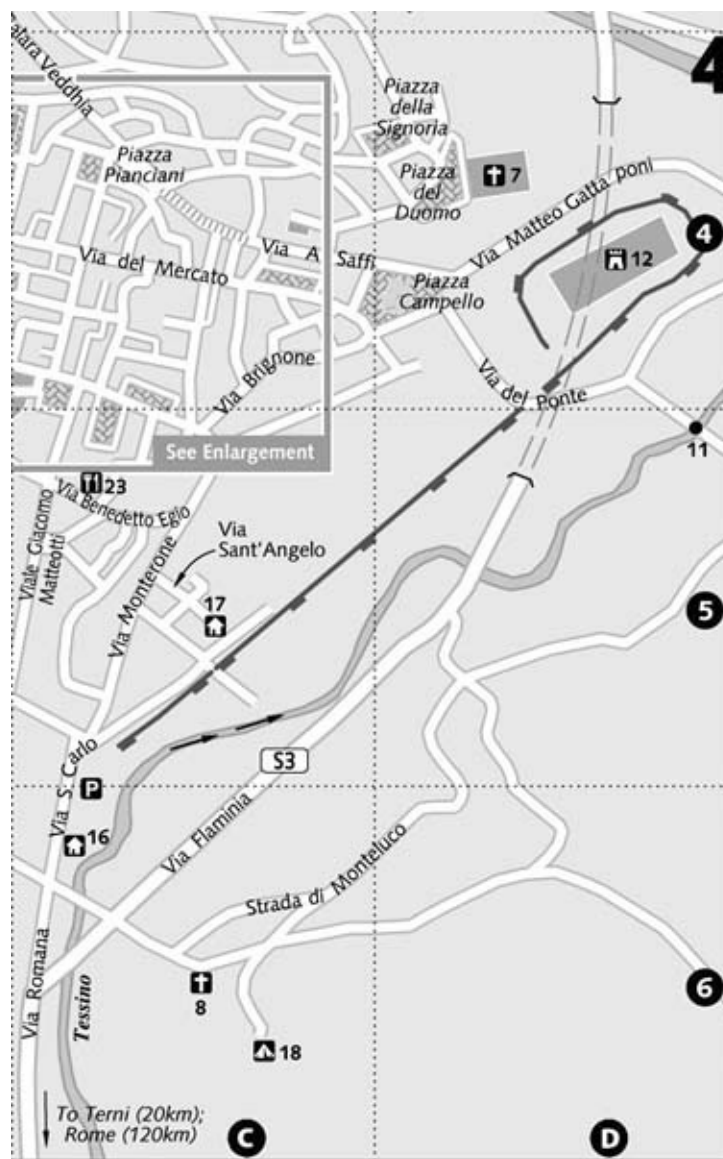
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## Sights

### ROMAN SPOLETO

Make your first stop the **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0743 22 32 77; Via S Agata; adult/concession/child €4/2/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm), located on the western edge of Piazza della Libertà. It holds a well-displayed collection of Roman and Etruscan bits and bobs from the area. Then step outside to view the mostly intact 1st-century **Teatro Romano** (Roman Theatre), which often hosts live performances during the summer. Check with the museum or the tourist office.

East of Piazza della Libertà, around the Piazza Fontana, are more Roman remains, including the **Arco di Druso e Germanico** (Arch of Drusus and Germanicus; sons of the Emperor Tiberius), which marks the entrance to the old forum. The excavated **Casa Romana** (Roman House; ☎ /fax 0743 23 42 50; Via di Visiale; adult/child €2.50/2; 🕒 10am-6pm 15 Oct-31 Mar, closed Tue, 10am-8pm daily 1 Apr-14 Oct) isn't Pompeii, but it gives visitors a peek into what a typical Roman house of the area would have looked like in the 1st century BC.

The **cathedral** (☎ 0743 4 43 07; Piazza Duomo; 🕒 7.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm summer, 7.30am-12.30pm & 3-5pm winter) was consecrated way back in 1198, but later-day (17th century) remodelling included a striking Renaissance porch. In the 11th century, huge blocks of salvaged stones from Roman buildings were put to good use in the construction of its rather sombre belltower. Mosaic frescoes in the domed apse were executed by Filippo Lippi and his assistants. Lippi died before completing the work



and Lorenzo de Medici travelled to Spoleto from Florence and ordered Lippi's son, Filippino, to build a mausoleum for the artist. This now stands in the right transept of the cathedral.

The spectacular closing concert of the Spoleto Festival is held on the piazza.

## OTHER SIGHTS

The **Rocca Albornoziana** (☎ /fax 0743 22 30 55; Piazza Campello; adult/child incl tour €4/3; 🕒 10am-8pm summer & weekends, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm late Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10-11.45am & 2-4.15pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb) dominates the city. It's a former papal fortress that until 1982 was a high-security prison housing such notables as Pope John Paul II's attempted assassin, Mehmet Ali Agca. Reservations for tours are essential as entry is only by guided tour.

An hour-long stroll or an all-day hike can be made along the Via del Ponte to the **Ponte delle Torri**, which was erected in the 14th century on the foundations of a Roman aqueduct. Cross the bridge and follow the lower path, Strada di Monteluco, to reach the **Chiesa di San Pietro** (☎ 0743 4 48 82; Loc San Pietro; admission free; 🕒 9.30-11am & 3.30-6.30pm). The 13th-century facade, the main attraction of the church, is liberally bedecked with sculpted animals.

To check out more modern artwork, head towards the **Galleria D'Arte Moderna** (☎ 0743 4 64 34; Palazzo Collicola; adult/child €4/3; 🕒 10.30am-1pm & 3-5.30pm 16 Oct-14 Mar, 10.30am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Wed-Mon 15 Mar-15 Oct) an homage to Spoleto's commitment to its ongoing artistic support. The Italian sculptor Leoncillo has a dedicated room here.

## Festivals & Events

The Italian American composer Gian Carlo Menotti conceived the **Festival dei Due Mondi** (Festival of Two Worlds) in 1958. Now simply known as the Spoleto Festival, it has given the town a worldwide reputation.

Events at the festival, held over three weeks from late June to mid-July, range from opera and theatre performances to ballet and art exhibitions, in the Rocca Albornoziana, the Teatro Romano at the archaeological museum and the cathedral, among other places. Tickets cost €5 to €200, but most are in the €20 to €30 range.

The most famous performances sell out as early as March or April, but you can still buy tickets during the festival for many shows. There are usually several free concerts in various churches.

For details, phone ☎ 800 565600 or look for further details and book tickets online at [www.spoletofestival.it](http://www.spoletofestival.it).

## Sleeping

The city is well served by cheap hotels, *affittacamere* (rooms for rent), hostels and campsites. Expect significantly higher prices during the festival.

## BUDGET

**Monteluco** (☎ /fax 0743 22 03 58; [www.geocities.com/monteluco2002](http://www.geocities.com/monteluco2002); Loc San Pietro; per person €5-7, tent €5-7, car €3; 🕒 Apr-Sep) This leafy, simple campsite is just behind the Chiesa di San Pietro. It's a good 15- to 20-minute walk uphill from the town centre and less than 1km from the aqueduct and several good hiking trails. The restaurant is good enough to bring locals out.

**Ostello Villa Redenta** (☎ 0743 22 49 36; [www.villaredenta.com](http://www.villaredenta.com); Via di Villa Redenta 1; dm €18-23, s

€25-35, d €52-60, all incl breakfast; 📞) Pope Leone XII slept here. Literally. The 17th-century home is set within a quiet park just outside the historic centre and comes complete with a bar, breakfast and private bathroom in each room. Reception is open 8am to 1pm and 3.30pm to 8pm.

**Hotel San Carlo Borromeo** (📞 0743 22 53 20; [www.geocities.com/sancarloborromeo](http://www.geocities.com/sancarloborromeo); Via San Carlo; s €30-37, d €45-55, tr €65-75, all incl breakfast; 📞 🚗 📶) The least atmospheric of the hotels listed, the convenience, price and free car park make it a safe bet. The back rooms are quieter and have a view of the countryside around Monteluco, but all are clean, functional and spacious.

**Istituto Bambino Gesù** (📞 0743 4 02 32; Via Sant'Angelo 4 off Via Monterone; s/d incl breakfast €43/75) The combined age of these enterprising nun/B&B proprietors might be older than the 16th-century convent itself. Get in touch with your monastic side in these bare-bones cells, no more than a bed, dresser and postage-stamp-sized bathroom. But the price is right, the views are amazing and the dead silent, pitch-black nights will guarantee a good night's sleep.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Aurora** (📞 0743 22 03 15; [www.hotelauroraspoletto.it](http://www.hotelauroraspoletto.it); Via Apollinare 3; s/d/tr incl breakfast from €40/55/70; 📞 📶) Just off Piazza della Libertà, the Aurora is very central and is fabulous value. Staff are friendly and will help you plan your Spoleto itinerary. From a few rooms, you can enjoy a private balcony view over the Roman amphitheatre below.

**our pick Hotel Charleston** (📞 0743 22 00 52; [www.hotelcharleston.it](http://www.hotelcharleston.it); Piazza Collicola 10; s incl breakfast €40-75, d €52-135; 🚗 📶 📶) With a sauna, fireplace and an outdoor terrace, the Charleston is an enticing location in both winter and summer. Named after Charleston, South Carolina (home of a sister Spoleto Festival), the hotel is covered in distinguished modern art and provides wine tastings or aperitifs every evening. The 17th-century building has been thoroughly renovated with double-paned windows and some rooms come with VCRs or bathtubs. Parking costs €10.

## Eating

**Pizzeria Zeppelin** (📞 0743 4 77 67; Corso Giuseppe Mazzini 81; pizzas & snacks €0.80-3; 🕒 10.30am-9.30pm) A meeting point in town, where you can get a filling slice of pizza for less than €1, plus check your email (one hour costs €3).

**Osteria del Trivio** (📞 0743 4 43 49; Via del Trivio 16; meals €25; 🕒 Wed-Mon, closed Jan) Strings of garlic and dried peppers grace the walls of this most homey of home-style restaurants. This is a great place to try the *strangozzi alla spoletina* (local pasta in a tangy tomato sauce), and the stuffed artichokes are legendary.

**Ristorante degli Abeti** (📞 0743 22 00 25; Via Benedetto Egio 3/5; meals €27; 🕒 Wed-Mon) Get your red-meat and cream fix here. Not the place for dieters or vegetarians, the menu offers sinfully rich piles of artery-thickeners, such as *pappardelle con cinghiale e tartufo* (pasta with wild boar and truffles) and *prosciutto di cinghiale* (ham with wild boar).

**Apollinaire** (📞 0743 22 32 56; Via S Agata 14; tasting menus incl veg €30-48; 🕒 Wed-Sun) California cuisine meets Umbrian tradition: somehow this restaurant manages to figure out that squid-ink pasta does go with pesto and crayfish, and rabbit feels quite at home in a black olive sauce. No matter what, save room for dessert. The menu changes seasonally but you are constantly enveloped in low wood-beamed ceilings and candlelight flickering against brick.

## Shopping

**L'Antico Frantoio** (☎ 0743 4 98 93; Via Arco di Druso 8) Sandra has been cooking up her own sauces for several decades now. She sells them at this gourmet store, along with cheeses, salami, pasta, *lenticchie* (lentils) and all sorts of Umbrian goodies. A conveniently placed grocer is just next door, selling fresh olive bread and drinks with which to plan your Spoleto picnic.

## Getting There & Around

From the train station, take city bus A, B or C for €0.80 (make sure the bus reads 'Centro'). The local **Società Spoletina di Imprese Trasporti** (SSIT; ☎ 0743 21 22 09; [www.spoletina.com](http://www.spoletina.com)) buses depart from near the train station. Long-distance buses are rare as the train is so convenient, but you'll need a bus to get to Norcia and the Valnerina (€4.80, one hour, six daily) or Cascia (€4.80, one hour and 10 minutes, six daily). Buses to Monteluco run in summer only (€0.80, 15 minutes, hourly).

Trains from the main station connect with Rome (€7.10 to €11.60, 1½ hours, hourly), Perugia (€3.70, one hour, nine daily – take care not to land on one of the €9.10 Eurostars).

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## NORCIA, THE VALNERINA & MONTI SIBILLINI

Rafting, climbing, dining, hang-gliding and pork products – this area has practically everything you could ever want in an active and gastronomic Umbrian holiday. Many consider this the most beautiful area in the region, and we heartily agree. It's near impossible to reach using public transport, but those with a car could easily fill an entire week here. Norcia produces the country's best salami – the word 'Norcineria' is synonymous with 'butcher' throughout all of Italy – and the surrounding area is one of the largest producers of the elusive black truffle.

Visit the **Casa del Parco** (☎ 0743 81 70 90; Via Solferino 22, Norcia; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Sat & Sun) for tourist information about the area, including Monti Sibillini.

## Festivals & Events

Truffle lovers, foodies and mooches should head to Norcia on the last weekend in February and the first weekend in March for the **Mostra Mercato del Tartufo Nero** ([www.neronorcia.it](http://www.neronorcia.it)). Thousands of visitors from all over the world sift through dozens of booths, tasting, of course, all things truffle from Norcia, but also candies from Sicily, cheese from Tuscany and other goodies. The entrance and most tastings are free and any gifts will be well loved.

## Activities

The tiny hill top village of **Castelluccio** is the only town on the Umbrian side of the **Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini**. The town is famous for its *lenticchie*, and *pecorino* and ricotta cheeses, but it's the location of the gods that brings in visitors. The town is surrounded by the **Piano Grande**, a wide open expanse that blooms with gazillions of wildflowers every spring and fills with snow each winter. The Casa del Parco in Norcia has information on walking and other activities in the surrounding area.

To learn hang-gliding, contact **Pro Delta** (☎ 0743 82 11 56; [www.prodelta.it](http://www.prodelta.it); Via delle Fate 3) in Castelluccio; it opens in summer only. Readers have heartily recommended the courses. Another school is **Fly Castelluccio** (☎ 0736 25 56 30; [www.flycastelluccio.it](http://www.flycastelluccio.it); Via Iannella 32, Ascoli Piceno, Le Marche). A beginners course of five days will cost about €400 at both organisations.

## Sleeping & Eating

Norcia is lined with shops selling local products, cheeses and every conceivable piece of pig in every conceivable form of pork product. While it might seem tempting, check with your import laws before you arrive; you can't ship most forms of meat to many countries.

**Ostello Norcia** (☎ 349 3002091; [www.montepatino.com](http://www.montepatino.com); Via Ufente 1/b, Norcia; dm incl breakfast €16) The walls of this former hospital for the poor are covered with everything you'll need to know for your trip into the Valnerina and Monti Sibillini; that is, if you haven't booked an excursion through them yet. Fifty-two tidy rooms come with two to 10 beds, but the hostel often fills up with school or tour groups, so call ahead. It's brought to you in conjunction with the Casa del Parco folks.

**Hotel Grotta Azzura** (☎ 0743 81 65 13; [www.bianconi.com](http://www.bianconi.com); Via Alfieri 12, Norcia; s €37-88, d €47-135, all incl breakfast; 🍷) This 18th-century *palazzo* with suits of armour in the reception can be a fabulous deal during the week and in low season. It is steeped in the area's history. Cross-vaulted rooms are stately if a bit dark, complete with carved ceilings and recently upgraded bathrooms. Its Ristorante Granaro del Monte has been open daily for 150 years running. It is a tad touristy, but the food is still excellent and comes in great piles of porcini mushrooms, sausages and prosciutto, truffles and *cinghiale*. In the winter, sit inside next to the grand fireplace.

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## THE PASSEGGIATA

One of the very best things to take advantage of in Umbria is the *passeggiata* (traditional evening stroll). No matter how big or small a town, locals and visitors of all ages take to the streets with friends or family, by themselves or, these days, attached to a mobile phone. Most towns in Umbria (and many in Le Marche) are built concentrically around a main square that might have started out as a Roman forum or medieval gathering place. Best of all, 'un *passaggio*' is free, doesn't require any preplanning and practically forces you to eat a double gelato. Think of it as improvised urban street theatre. In Perugia, watch as the students preen and flirt, jostling their way towards adulthood. In Orvieto, sit around the cathedral with older locals, who come to deliver Italian lessons to unsuspecting visitors. In Castelluccio, your *passeggiata* will most likely be shared with the town's herd of goats.

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**Palazzo Seneca** (☎ 0743 81 74 34; [www.palazzoseneca.com](http://www.palazzoseneca.com); Via Cesare Battisti 12, Norcia; r €120-300, suite €270-800; 🍷) Perhaps it's as you play chess in an overstuffed leather chair in front of the fireplace or maybe it's while you're enjoying your Thai massage in the subterranean spa that you truly feel like you live in a palace, even just for a night or two. Four-poster beds and marble bathrooms meld seamlessly with ancient stone walls, and the accompanying practically perfect Ristorante Vespasia (below) means you never have to leave.

**Residenza San Pietro in Valle** (☎ 0744 78 01 29; [www.sanpietroinvalle.com](http://www.sanpietroinvalle.com); SS209 Valnerina km20; s €98-109, d €129-139, all incl breakfast; 🍷 around Easter-Oct; 📍) One of the most scenic roads in all of Umbria is the SS209, where a medieval convent beckons travellers with its historical charm and delicious cuisine. The rooms have been upgraded quite a bit since their days as medieval nunnery cells, but the stone fireplaces and breathtaking view over the cloisters are the same. Ask for myriad hiking maps and activity suggestions, or start a leisurely morning with freshly baked bread and home-made preserves on the abbey's outdoor patio. Or, just stop by for lunch or dinner at its famed restaurant, **Il Cantico** (☎ 0744 78 00 05; meals €31; 🍷 mid-Mar—Oct), tucked under the abbey in a centuries-old subterranean

stone vault. Seasonal dishes include crayfish ravioli with Trasimeno bean soup, pumpkin flan with *pecorino* sauce and truffles, and pigeon breast in Sagrantino wine sauce, all made with fresh, local ingredients. A great bet is to order one of the four enormous tasting menus: vegetarian (€35), rivers and lakes (€40), Valnerina specialities (€38) or meat (€40).

**Ristorante Vespasia** (☎ 0743 81 65 13; Via Cesare Battisti 10; restaurant meals €55, lounge meals €32; 🕒 open daily for lunch & dinner) Set in a 16th-century *palazzo*, the elegantly simple furnishings complement the understated gourmet cuisine. A simple organically grown egg is topped with a generous helping of Norcia black truffles, or locally grown saffron accompanies risotto and local pork. Herbs come from, of course, their own garden. In warmer months, dine in the garden to jazz or blues.

**Albergo Sibilla** (☎ /fax 0743 82 11 13; [www.sibillacastelluccio.com](http://www.sibillacastelluccio.com); Via Pian Grande 2, Castelluccio; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €50/65/80/85; 🕒 Apr-Oct; 📍) The Albergo Sibilla is the sole hotel in Castelluccio and has 11 rooms, some with a view to die for, and a good restaurant downstairs. Since the nightlife consists mostly of chasing goats around dilapidated stone buildings, a good night's sleep is practically guaranteed.

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## ORVIETO

pop 20,955

Orvieto is placed precariously on a cliff made of tufaceous stone, a craggy porous limestone that seems imminently ready to crumble under the weight of the magnificent Gothic cathedral (or at least under all the people who come to see it). Just off a main autostrada, Orvieto can get a bit crowded with summer bus tours, but they're all here for good reason.

### Orientation

Trains pull in at Orvieto Scalo and from here you can catch bus 1 up to the old town or board the funicular to take you up the steep hill to Piazza Cahen.

Those with cars should head to the free parking behind the train station (at the roundabout in front of the station head in the direction of 'Arezzo' and turn left into the large parking lot). There's plenty of parking space in Piazza Cahen and in several designated areas outside the old city walls. [The Orvieto Unica Card](#) will buy you five hours of free parking at the former Campo della Fiera and take you on an *ascensore* into the city centre.

### Information

**Avis** (☎ 0763 39 00 30, 389 5678910; [orvieto.pk1@avis-autonoleggio.it](mailto:orvieto.pk1@avis-autonoleggio.it); Via I Maggio 57; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Car rental 100m from the train station.

**Caffè Montanucci** (☎ 0763 34 12 61; Corso Cavour 21; per 30min €3.10; 🕒 6.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, tol 1am Sat & Sun) Pricy, but the only internet in town.

**Campo della Fiera tourist office** (☎ 0763 30 23 78; bottom of funicular; 🕒 9am-4pm) Buy funicular, bus and Carta Unica tickets here.

**Farmacia del Moro** (☎ 0763 34 41 00; Corso Cavour 89; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat) Posts 24-hour pharmacy information.

**Hospital** (☎ 0763 30 71) In the Ciconia area, east of the train station.

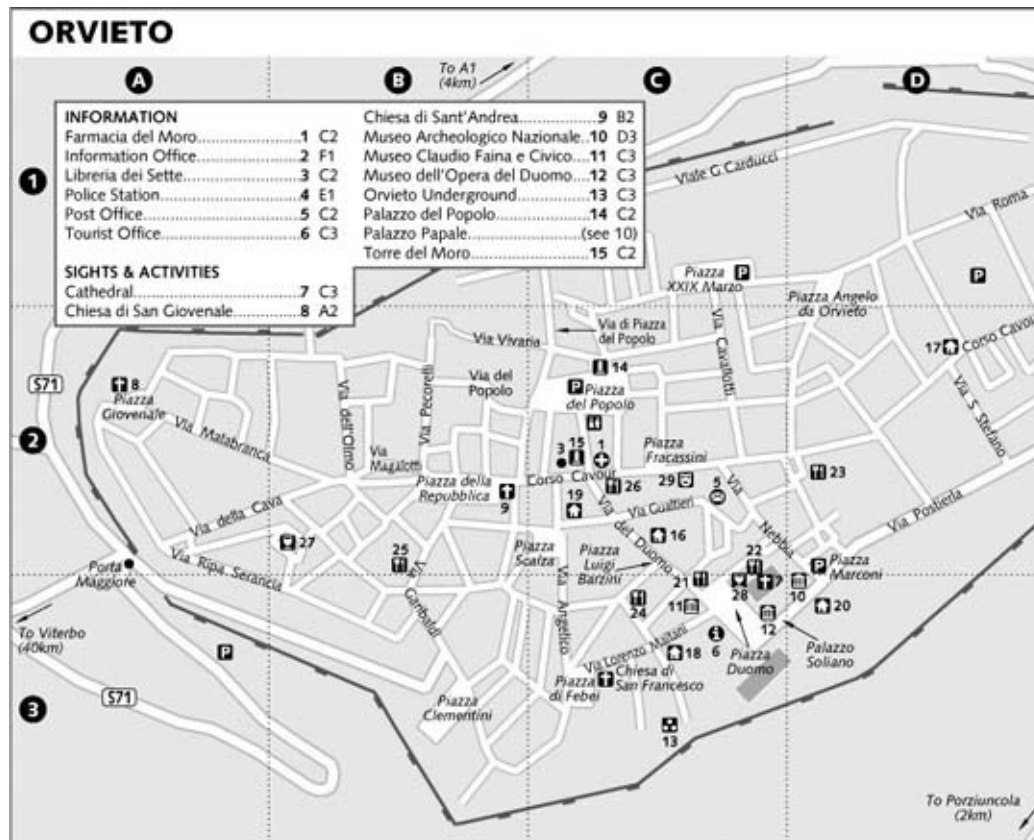
**Libreria dei Sette** (☎ 0763 34 44 36; Corso Cavour 85; 🕒 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat &

Sun) Stock up on a collection of maps, English-language books or Lonely Planet guides.

**Police station** (☎ 0763 3 92 11; Piazza Cahen)

**Post office** (☎ 0763 3 98 31; Via Largo M Ravelli; 📧 8.10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.10am-12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0763 34 17 72; info@iat.orvieto.tr.it; Piazza Duomo 24; 📧 8.15am-1.50pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sat, Sun & holidays)



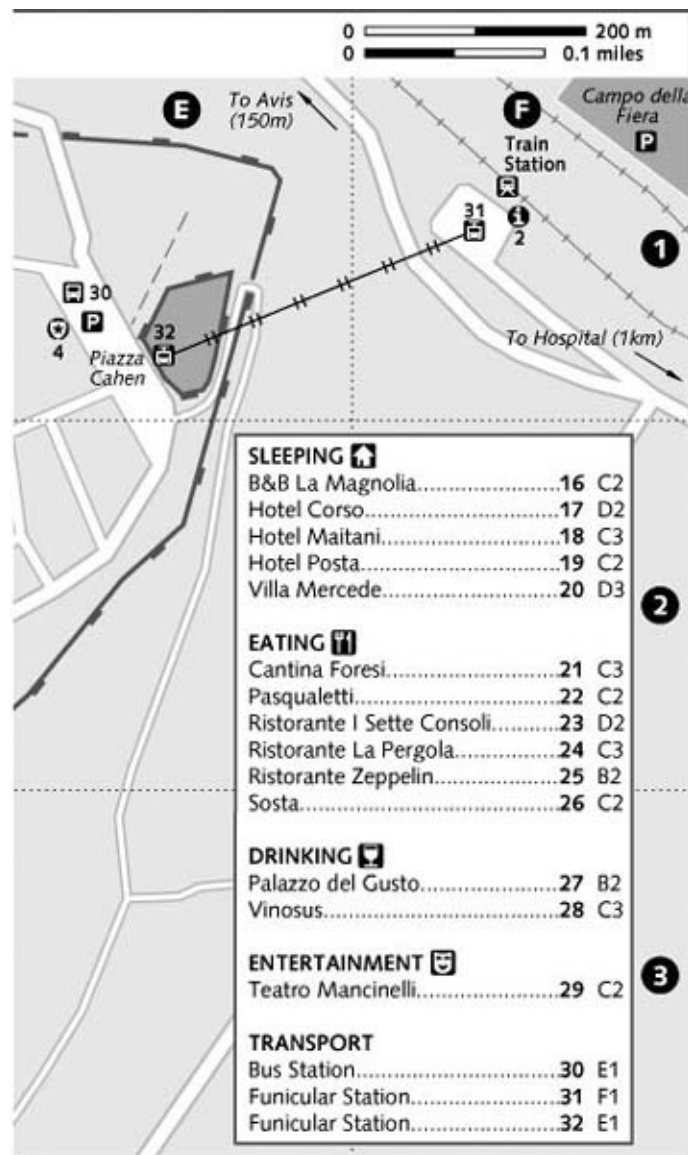
## Sights

### CATHEDRAL

Little can prepare you for the visual feast that is the **cathedral** (☎ 0763 34 11 67; Piazza Duomo; 📧 7.30am-12.45pm year-round, 2.30-7.15pm Apr-Sep, 2.30-6.15pm Mar & Oct, 2.30-5.15pm Nov-Feb). Started in 1290, this remarkable edifice was originally planned in the Romanesque style but, as work proceeded and architects changed, Gothic features were incorporated into the structure. The black-and-white marble banding of the main body of the church is overshadowed by the rich rainbow colours of the facade. A harmonious blend of mosaic and sculpture, plain stone and dazzling colour, it has been likened to a giant outdoor altar screen.

The building took 30 years to plan and three centuries to complete. It was probably started by Fra Bevignate and later additions were made by Lorenzo Maitani (responsible for Florence's cathedral), Andrea Pisano and his son Nino Pisano, Andrea Orcagna and Michele Sanicheli. The great bronze doors, the work of Emilio Greco, were added in the 1960s.

Inside, Luca Signorelli's fresco cycle *The Last Judgement* shimmers with life. Look for it to the right of the altar in the **Cappella di San Brizio** (admission €3; 📧 closed during Mass). Signorelli began work on the series in 1499, and Michelangelo is said to have taken inspiration from it. Indeed, to some, Michelangelo's masterpiece runs a close second to Signorelli's work. The **Cappella del Corporale** houses the blood-stained altar linen of the miracle, preserved in a silver reliquary which has been decorated by artists of the Siennese school. The walls feature frescoes depicting the miracle, painted by



## AROUND THE CATHEDRAL

Next to the cathedral is the **Museo dell'Opera del Duomo** (☎ 0763 34 24 77; Palazzo Soliano, Piazza Duomo; adult/concession €5/4; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Jul & Aug, 10am-6pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar, closed Tue in winter), which houses a clutter of religious relics from the cathedral, as well as Etruscan antiquities and works by artists such as Simone Martini and the three Pisanos: Andrea, Nino and Giovanni.

Around the corner, view Etruscan antiquities in the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ /fax 0763 34 10 39; Palazzo Papale, Piazza Duomo; adult/concession €3/1.50; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm). While some of the artefacts are over 2500 years old, they're a bit jumbled, so get your bearings first at the fantastic **Museo Claudio Faina e Civico** (☎ 0763 34 15 11; [www.museofaina.it](http://www.museofaina.it); Piazza Duomo 29; adult/concession-€4.50/3; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), opposite the cathedral, which houses one of Italy's most important collection of Etruscan archaeological artefacts, as well as some significant Greek ceramic works, mostly found near Piazza Cahen in tombs dating back to the 6th century BC. There are guided tours at 11am and 4pm (3pm October to March) and an interactive trip for kids.

## OTHER SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Head northwest along Via del Duomo to Corso Cavour and the **Torre del Moro** (Moor's Tower; ☎ 0763 34 45 67; Corso Cavour 87; adult/concession €2.80/2; 🕒 10am-8pm May-Aug, 10am-7pm Mar, Apr, Sep & Oct, 10.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Nov-Feb). Climb all 250 steps for sweeping views of the city. Back on

ground level, continue west to Piazza della Repubblica and to the 12th-century **Chiesa di Sant'Andrea** (Piazza della Repubblica; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm) and its curious decagonal bell tower. The piazza, once Orvieto's Roman forum, is at the heart of what remains of the medieval city.

North of Corso Cavour, the 12th-century Romanesque-Gothic **Palazzo del Popolo** presides over the piazza of the same name. At the northwestern end of town is the **Chiesa di San Giovenale** (Piazza Giovenale; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm), a church constructed in the year 1000. Its Romanesque-Gothic art and later frescoes from the medieval Orvieto school are an astounding contrast.

The **Teatro Mancinelli** (☎ 0763 39 31 27; Corso Cavour 122; adult/concession €2/1, tickets €10-60; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 4-8pm Sun) plays host to Umbria Jazz in winter but offers everything from ballet and opera to folk music and Pink Floyd tributes throughout the year. If you're not able to catch a performance, it's worth a visit to see the allegorical frescoes and tufa walls.

The coolest place in Orvieto – literally – is the **Orvieto Underground** (☎ 0763 34 06 88, 339 7332764; Parco delle Grotte; adult/concession €5.50/3.30; ☎ tours 11am, 12.15pm, 4pm & 5.15pm daily Mar-Jan, Sat & Sun Feb), a series of 440 caves used for millennia by locals for various purposes. The tours (with English- or German-speaking guides) take you through several that were used back through the centuries as WWII bomb shelters, refrigerators, wells and, during many a pesky Roman or barbarian siege, as dovecotes to trap the usual one-course dinner: pigeon (still seen on local restaurant menus as *palombo*). Tours leave from in front of the tourist office. Hint: during the summer, take the 12.15pm tour. You'll enjoy the year-round temperature of 12°C to 15°C, while most museums and shops are closed.

## Festivals & Events

**Umbria Jazz Winter** takes place from the end of December to early January, with a great feast and party on New Year's Eve. Ask at the tourist office for a program of events. [Click here](#) for details of the summer jazz festival.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

Pick up an **Orvieto Unica Card** (adult/concession valid 1yr €18/15). It entitles its owner to entrance to the nine main attractions (including the Cappella di San Brizio in the cathedral, Museo Claudio Faina e Civico, Orvieto Underground, Torre del Moro, Museo dell'Opera del Duomo and the Crocifisso del Tufo necropolis) and either five hours' free car parking at the Campo della Fiera car park next to the funicular, or a round trip on the funicular and city buses. It can be purchased at the Campo della Fiera car park, many of the attractions, the tourist office or the funicular car park.

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Orvieto's most famous festival is the **Palombella**, held every year on Pentecost Sunday. Unusually, it is world-famous for its highlight event rather than the parades and crafts fairs. For traditionalists, the sacred rite has been celebrating the Holy Spirit and good luck since 1404. For animal rights activists, the main event celebrates nothing more than scaring the living crap out of a bewildered dove.

For six centuries, the ritual has gone like this: take one dove, cage it, surround the cage with a wheel of exploding fireworks, and hurtle the cage 300m down a wire towards the cathedral steps. If the dove lives (which it usually does), the couple most recently married in the cathedral become its caretakers (and, presumably, the ones who pay for post-traumatic dove-stress-disorder counselling). It's not likely you'll see a fake dove in the cage, but if so, you'll know who has won.



# Sleeping

Orvieto does not lack for hotels, and visitors will benefit from the highly competitive pricing. It's always a good idea to book ahead in summer or at the weekend or if you're planning to come over New Year when the Umbria Jazz Winter festival is in full swing.

## BUDGET

**Porziuncola** (☎ 0763 34 13 87; Loc Cappuccini 8; dm €12-16; 📄) With only eight beds in two separate single-sex rooms, you'd do best to call ahead. Take bus 5 from Piazza Cahen to the Cappuccini neighbourhood, just a couple of kilometres away.

**Hotel Posta** (☎ 0763 34 19 09; [www.orvietohotels.it](http://www.orvietohotels.it); Via Luca Signorelli 18; d with/without bathroom €56/43; 📄) Sometimes 'palatial' isn't an adjective one might use to describe a palace. After a full renovation, the mustiness is (mostly) gone but the historical touches have remained. Quiet garden-view guest rooms, breakfast on the centuries-old patio and a convenient lift bump up the quality.

**Villa Mercedes** (☎ 0763 34 17 66; [www.argoweb.it/casareligiosa\\_villamercede](http://www.argoweb.it/casareligiosa_villamercede); Via Soliana 2; s/d/tr incl breakfast €50/70/90; 📄) Heavenly close to the Duomo, with 23 rooms there's space for a gaggle of pilgrims. The building dates back to the 1500s, so the requisite frescoes adorn several rooms. High ceilings, a quiet garden and free parking seal the deal. Vacate rooms each morning by 9.30am or you'll earn the housekeepers' wrath.

**B&B La Magnolia** (☎ 0763 34 28 08, mobile 338 9027400; [www.bblamagnolia.it](http://www.bblamagnolia.it); Via del Duomo 29; r €65-75, apt for 2 people €75, for 3 people €90 & 4 people €105) In the centre of Orvieto is this light-filled historic residence with six delightful rooms, an English-speaking owner and a large shared kitchen.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Corso** (☎ /fax 0763 34 20 20; [www.hotelcorso.net](http://www.hotelcorso.net); Corso Cavour 343; s/d/tr €60-66/80-92/100-120, buffet breakfast €6.50; 📄 📄) Set a bit further away from the cathedral than most other hotels, this is nevertheless an excellent choice. Several rooms are enveloped with wood-beamed ceilings, terracotta bricks and antique cherry furniture, allowing one to describe them as snug rather than tiny. The breakfast buffet is an extra €6.50 but it's worth it to sit on the outdoor terrace. There's a 10% discount for stays of more than two nights.

**Hotel Maitani** (☎ 0763 34 20 11; [www.hotelmaitani.com](http://www.hotelmaitani.com); Via Lorenzo Maitani 5; s/d/ste €77/126/170, breakfast €10; 📄 📞) Every detail is covered, from a travel-sized toothbrush and toothpaste in each room to chocolates (Perugino, of course) on your pillow. Several rooms have cathedral or countryside views. Rooms are pin-drop quiet, as they come with not one but two double-paned windows.

# Eating

## RESTAURANTS

**Sosta** (☎ 0763 34 30 25; Corso Cavour 100a; meals €6.50) This extremely simple self-service restaurant serves up decent pizza and pasta. It is cafeteria style so you order as much or as little as you like, including meat and vegetable dishes. Students get a discount.

**Ristorante La Pergola** (☎ 0763 34 30 65; Via dei Magoni 9b; meals €26; 📅 Thu-Tue) The food at this restaurant is typically Umbrian – good and filling – but the real draw here is the flower-filled garden in the back. It's an excellent place to try *cinghiale*.

**Ristorante Zeppelin** (☎ 0763 34 14 47; Via Garibaldi 28; meals €32; 📅 Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) This natty

place has a cool 1920s atmosphere, jazz on the stereo and a long wooden bar where Ingrid Bergman would have felt right at home. It serves creative Umbrian food, including well-priced tasting menus for vegetarians (€25), children (€20), truffle-lovers (€40) and traditionalists (€25). Ask about its day-long cooking courses.

**Ristorante I Sette Consoli** (☎ 0763 34 39 11; Piazza Sant'Angelo 1/a; meals €45; 📅 Thu-Tue) Foodies have been known to flock here from Rome or Milan just for lunch. With dishes like pan-fried pigeons with caramelized grapes, it's no wonder it's considered a leader in nouvelle cuisine. Reservations highly recommended for dinner.

## CAFES

**Cantina Foresi** (☎ /fax 0763 34 16 11; Piazza Duomo 2; snacks from €4.50; 📅 9.30am-7.30pm) A family-run *enoteca* and cafe serving up *panini* and sausages, washed down with dozens of local wines from the ancient cellar.

## GELATERIE

**Pasqualetti** (☎ 0763 34 10 34; Piazza Duomo 14) This gelateria serves mouth-watering gelato, plus there are plenty of tables on the piazza for you to gaze at the magnificence of the cathedral while you gobble.

## Drinking

**Palazzo del Gusto** (☎ 0763 39 35 29; [www.orvietowine.info](http://www.orvietowine.info); Via Ripa Serancia I 16; wine tastings €5-11; 📅 11am-1pm & 3-5pm winter, 11am-1pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri summer) This Etruscan subterranean wine-cellar is as infused with atmosphere as it is with yeast. Several tunnels have been redecorated for wine tastings and parties. Peek behind the glass doors for a look at ancient Etruscan tunnels. Check with the tourist office if one of the cellar's many weekend events are open to the public.

**Vinosus** (☎ 0763 34 19 07; Piazza Duomo 15; tapas €6-10; 📅 Tue-Sun) In photo-op range of the cathedral's northwest wall is this wine bar and eatery. Try the cheese platter with local honey for an elegant addition to wine. Open until the wee hours.

## Getting There & Away

Orvieto is on the main Rome to Florence line, so is ridiculously easy to reach from points west, difficult from points east. Main train connections include Rome (€7.10 to €15, 1¼ hours, hourly), Florence (€10.80 to €16.90, 1½ to 2½ hours, hourly), Perugia (€6.15 to €14.20, 1¼ to 2½ hours, at least every other hour). Buses depart from the station on Piazza Cahen, stopping at the train station. **Bargagli** (☎ 057 778 62 23) runs a daily bus service to Rome's Tiburtina station (€8, one hour and 20 minutes, 8.10am and 7.10pm on Sunday). The city is on the A1, and the SS71 heads north to Lago Trasimeno.

## Getting Around

A century-old cable car connects Piazza Cahen with the train station, with carriages leaving every 10 minutes from 7.20am to 8.30pm Monday to Friday and every 15 minutes from 8am to 8pm Saturday and Sunday (€1.80 round trip, including the bus from Piazza Cahen to Piazza Duomo). Bus 1 also runs up to the old town from the train station (€0.95). Once in Orvieto, the easiest way to see the city is on foot, although ATC bus A connects Piazza Cahen with Piazza Duomo and bus B runs to Piazza della Repubblica.

For a taxi, dial ☎ 0763 30 19 03 for the train station or ☎ 0763 34 26 13 for Piazza della Repubblica.



# LE MARCHE

Le Marche is Italy in microcosm. From the beachside resorts along the Adriatic through sloped hill-towns in the centre, it arrives at the jagged mountain range of Monti Sibillini. You'll want to pick and choose carefully, however. While Monte Conero offers an unhurried coastal holiday and Pesaro teems with history (and, from June to September, holiday-makers), much of Le Marche's coast is lined with rows of rather depressing high-rise hotels and apartment buildings.

But further inland is where Le Marche really shines. Urbino, perhaps Le Marche's most famous town to outsiders and chock-full of university students, boasts an impressive display of Renaissance art and history up and down its vertical streets. Ascoli Piceno is filled with a history rivalling any Italian city but remains undiscovered. Equally walkable is the quaint Macerata, with a world-famous open-air opera theatre and festival. The gritty capital, Ancona, has been a bustling port city for 3000 years.



## History

Not much is known about the first inhabitants of Le Marche, who lived along the coast as far back as 23,000 years ago. The first archaeological evidence is from the Piceni tribe, whose 3000-year-old artefacts can be seen in the [Museo Archeologico](#) in Ascoli Piceno. The Romans invaded the region early in the 3rd century BC, and dominated the area for almost 700 years. At the fall of the Roman Empire, Le Marche was sacked by the Goths, Vandals, Ostrogoths and, finally, the Lombards.

In the middle of the 8th century AD, Pope Stephen II decided to call upon foreigners to oust the ungodly Lombards. The first to lead the charge of the Frankish army was Pepin the Short, but it was his rather tall son Charlemagne who finally took back control from the Lombards for good. On Christmas Day AD 800, Pope Leo III crowned him Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. However, he was never recognised as such by the Eastern Byzantine church, which had control of much of Le Marche's Adriatic coast at the time.

After Charlemagne's death, Le Marche entered into centuries of war, anarchy and general Dark Ages mayhem. In central Italy, two factions developed, that of the Guelphs – who backed papal rule – and the Ghibellines – who backed rule by the emperor. The Guelph faction eventually won out and Le Marche became part of the Papal States, held under close watch by a succession of popes, while much of Europe was busy enjoying the Renaissance. It stayed that way until Italian unification in 1861.

## National Parks & Reserves

In the 1980s and 1990s mass tourism, almost all concentrated on the coast, threatened to encroach on several natural areas. In response, Le Marche developed no less than 10 national and regional parks or protected areas, including the stunning Monti Sibillini in the far west Apennines and the coastal beauty of the Parco Naturale del Monte Conero near Ancona.

## Getting There & Around

Drivers have two options on the coastline: the A14 autostrada (main highway) or the SS16 *strada statale* (state highway). Inland roads are either secondary or tertiary and much slower. Regular trains ply the coast on the Bologna—Lecce line and spurs head to Macerata and Ascoli Piceno, but it requires some forethought and help from the tourist board to travel between inland towns.

If you're interested in getting an insider's and hands-on experience of the region, try **Le Marche Tours** (☎ 0733 63 85 88; [www.lemarchetours.com](http://www.lemarchetours.com)). Its South African/German/American owners have been living in a refurbished Italian farmhouse in the Marche countryside for years. They offer hiking, food and wine, and off-the-beaten-track cultural tours, as well as experiential and educational trips (eg photography, creativity workshops, real estate tours). Prices for all-inclusive tours of around a week range from €1550 to €2000.

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## ANCONA

pop 101,242

A port town through and through, the main tourist draw of Ancona is leaving Ancona. Embarrassingly lacking in good accommodation, Italy's largest mid-Adriatic ferry port is trying to develop a tourist infrastructure. Although fairly grimy and tattered around the port and train station, the town does have a fascinating history, a handful of sights to warrant an extra day or two, and the downtown area is very pedestrian friendly.

## Orientation

There are two distinct parts to Ancona: the modern sprawl around the train station and the old centre further up the hill. All trains arrive at the main station on Piazza Nello e Carlo Rosselli, and a few continue into the ferry terminal Ancona Marittima. Most hotels cluster around the main train station, a

grimy area but busy enough to be safe during the day.

When you exit the station, buses 1/2, 1/4 and 1/5 will take you to the centre of town, and bus 12 takes you to the port. Cross past the first bus lane to the covered bus stop with a sign that reads Porto/Centro. Tickets are available at all *tabacchi* for €1.10.

## MAPS

You'll find plenty of maps of Ancona and the surrounding area at the excellent newsstand at the main train station or at the tourist information centres, bookshops, hotels and newsstands around town. Ancona can be somewhat confusing, so a good map is highly recommended.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**Feltrinelli** (☎ 071 207 39 43; Corso Giuseppe Garibaldi 35; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm & 5-8pm Sat & Sun) Carries maps and books in English, French and Spanish.

### EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 071 2 28 81; Via Giovanni Gervasoni 19) South of the city centre.

### INTERNET ACCESS

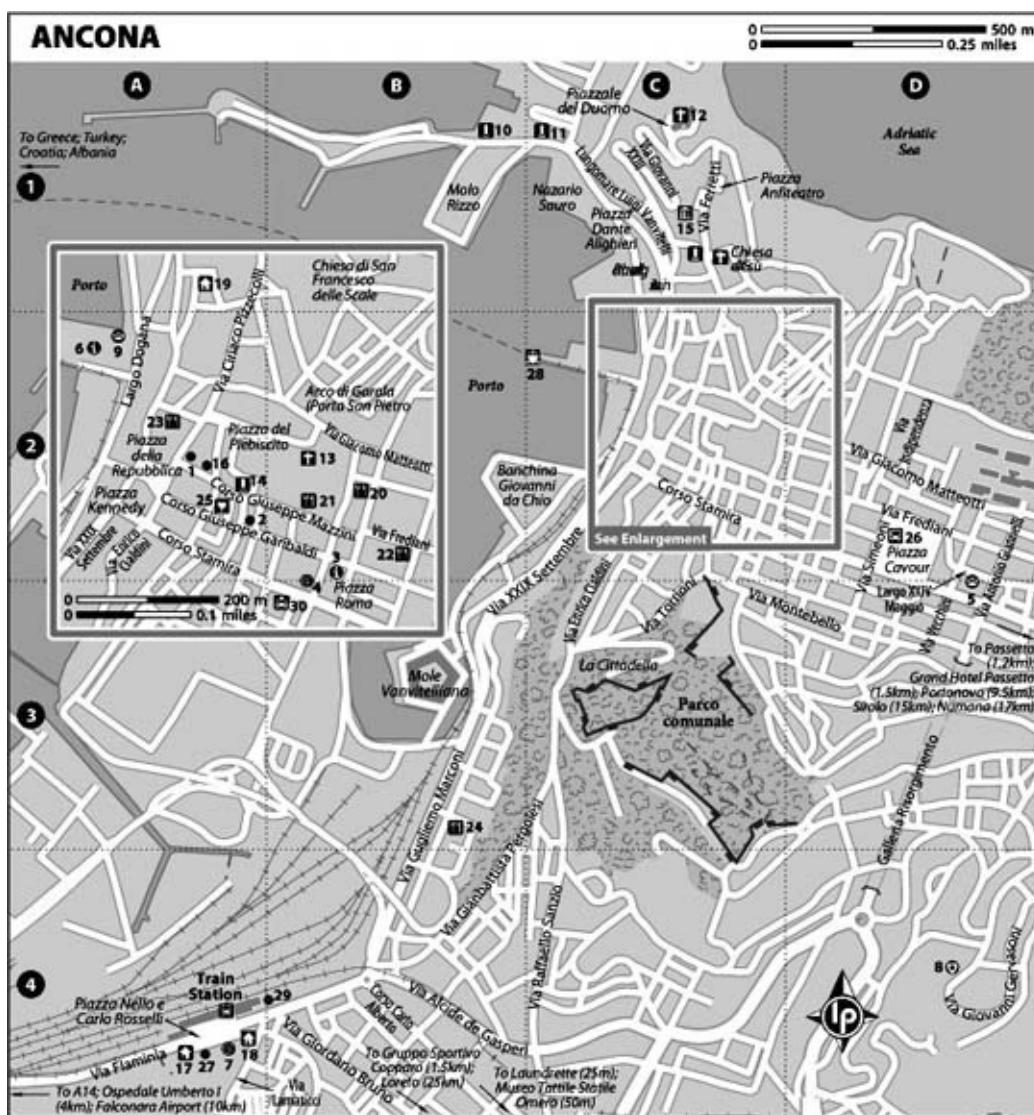
**Internet Point/Phone Centre** (☎ 071 5 42 33; Piazza Roma 26-27; internet 15min/1hr €1/2, to call worldwide fixed line/mobile €0.08/0.25; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm)

**New International Service** (☎ 071 4 40 84; Piazza Roselli 5a; internet per hr €3, to call fixed lines in the US €0.08, UK €0.07, Australia €0.25; ☎ 9am-10pm) Across from the train station.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Farmacia Centrale** (☎ 071 20 27 46; Corso Mazzini 1)

**Ospedale Umberto I** (☎ 071 59 61; Piazza Capelli 1) Hospital.



## POST

**Main post office** (Largo XXIV Maggio; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**InfoPoint** (☎ 320 0196321; Via Gramisci 2a; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm May-Oct) Tourist office for the city of Ancona.

**Marche Info** (☎ 071 35 89 91; [www.comune.ancona.it](http://www.comune.ancona.it); Via della Loggia 50; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) Tourist office for the province of Le Marche.

## Sights

The elegant Piazza del Plebiscito has been Ancona's meeting spot since medieval times. The piazza is flanked by the baroque **Chiesa di San Domenico** (☎ 071 20 67 04; Piazza del Plebiscito; ☎ 10am-noon & 5-7pm), containing the superb *Crucifixion* by Titian and *Annunciation* by Guercino. That gigantic statue in front is Pope Clement XII, who was honoured by the town for giving it free port status. The fountain in front is from the 19th century, but head instead along Corso Mazzini, where you will see the 16th-century **Fontana del Calamo**, 13 masked spouts of satyrs and fauns designed in 1560 by architect Pellegrino Tibaldi.

The ornate **Teatro delle Muse** (☎ 071 5 25 25; [www.teatrodellemuse.org](http://www.teatrodellemuse.org); Via della Loggia), built in

1826, has a neoclassical facade of six Ionic columns which meld with Greek friezes portraying Apollo and the Muses.

The **Museo Archeologico Nazionale delle Marche** (☎ 071 20 26 02; Via Ferretti 6; adult/concession/child €4/2/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, closed Mon except holidays) is in the 16th-century Palazzo Ferretti, where the ceilings are covered with original frescoes and bas-reliefs. Although not the most thoughtfully laid-out display, artefacts range from Greek and Etruscan back to the Bronze and Neolithic Ages.

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**Museo Tattile Statile Omero** (☎ 071 281 19 35; [www.museoomero.it](http://www.museoomero.it); Via Tiziano 50; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sat) is the only museum of its kind in all of Europe; this is one museum where you're supposed to touch the art. All of its sculptures have been created for the blind in order to feel the representations of Roman statues, the Parthenon and St Peter's, as well as Michelangelo's *David*.

## CATTEDRALE DI SAN CIRIACO

Via Giovanni XXIII leads up Monte Guasco and Piazzale del Duomo, where there are sweeping views of the city and the port. Here, the **Cattedrale di San Ciriaco** (☎ 071 5 26 88; Piazzale del Duomo; admission free; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-7pm summer, to 6pm winter) sits grandly atop the site of an ancient Pagan temple, jimmied together with Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic features. You can take bus 11, which runs from Piazza Roma to Piazza della Repubblica, or get your exercise walking up the steep hill.

## ANCONA'S ARCHES

North of Piazza Dante Alighieri, at the far end of the port, is the **Arco di Traiano** (Trajan's Arch), erected in 115 BC by Apollodorus of Damascus in honour of the Roman Emperor Trajan. Luigi Vanvitelli's grand **Arco Clementino** (Clementine's Arch), inspired by Apollodorus' arch and dedicated to Pope Clement XII, is further on, near Molo Rizzo. Keep going, and you'll come across the enormous **Mole Vanvitelliana**, designed by Luigi Vanvitelli in 1732 for Pope Clementine. Just past the pentagonal building, on Via XXIX Settembre, is the baroque **Porta Pia**, built as a monumental entrance to the town in the late 18th century at the request of Pope Pius VI.

## Sleeping

**Ostello della Gioventù** (☎ /fax 071 4 22 57; Via Lamaticci 7; dm €18; 🕒 6.30am-noon & 4pm-midnight) Ancona's HI youth hostel is divided into a male and female floor with spotless four- to six-person bedrooms and separate bathrooms. What they lack in character they make up for in proximity to the train station and...well, that's it, actually.

**Hotel Gino** (☎ /fax 071 4 21 79; [hotel.gino@tiscalinet.it](mailto:hotel.gino@tiscalinet.it); Via Flaminia 4; s €32, d €40-45, tr €60, all incl breakfast; 🕒 ☑) The cheapest of the grotty and interchangeable train station hotels with a slightly shady 'hourly' sort of feel, especially with the handful of slot machines on the ground floor (a lift carries you away quickly, though). Thirty minutes' free internet access and hairdryers kick it up one (small) notch.



The breakfast is tiny.

**Residence Vanvitelli** (☎ 071 20 60 23, 338 8974705; [www.residencevanvitelli.it](http://www.residencevanvitelli.it); Piazza Saffi; studio/1-/2-room apt per night €65/80/95, per week €375/475/575; 📄 📺) Tucked away in a tiny piazza no more than a 10-minute walk from most of Ancona's sights is this comfortable, quiet and modern rental. All flats include kitchenettes, Sky TV (€5/10/16 per day/three days/week), and high-speed internet (€2/10 per day/week). The flat is cleaned twice a week and the bed linen is changed once weekly.

**Grand Hotel Passetto** (☎ 071 3 13 07; [www.hotelpassetto.it](http://www.hotelpassetto.it); Via Thaon de Revel 1; s/d/tr/ste incl breakfast €120/195/205/215; 📄 📺 📺) Perfectly located along a private beach. The rooms all come with sea view, terrace, jacuzzi, four-poster iron bed or some combination of the four. Several rooms are interconnected and ideal for families. Stroll to the *ascensore* to get to the beach or cross the road to the restaurant, reputedly the best in town. Substantial discounts can be had on weekends and around holidays.

## Eating

**Cremeria Rosa** (☎ 071 20 34 08; Corso Mazzini 61) A cafeteria, bar and gelateria all in one, it's also on the main drag, perfect for people-watching while eating a sundae as big as your whole head. The adjoining pizzeria serves up pies from €4.50 to €8.

**Mercato delle Erbe** (Corso Giuseppe Mazzini 130; 🕒 7.30am-12.45pm & 5-8pm summer, 4.30-7.30pm winter, Mon-Sat) A picnickers' mecca. Dozens of booths line this green metal-and-glass-enclosed bazaar. Freshly baked pastries and bread, locally produced cheese and meat, and everything else you would need for a picnic (including plastic cups) are sold here.

**Osteria del Pozzo** (☎ 071 207 39 96; Via Bonda 2; meals €30; 🕒 Mon-Sat) The black-ink squid risotto alone deserves a trip to this Ancona favourite, as does the sea bass ravioli with zucchini and clam sauce. Most locals go for the fixed-price lunch and dinner offers, which range from €10.50 to €16.

**Enopolis** (☎ 071 207 15 05; Corso Mazzini 7; meals €36; 🕒 Wed-Mon) A visit to this restaurant and international wine establishment is worth it simply for the tour of the labyrinthine cellars of the 18th-century Palazzo Jona, as the cellars descend a full three levels under the streets above. With fresh fish as the main event (besides, of course, the wine), you can sit amongst contemporary art or next to an ancient well as you sample the fixed-price menus (€36 to €45) along with recommended wines for each course.

**Sot'Ajarchi** (☎ 071 20 24 41; Via Guglielmo Marconi 93; meals €44; 🕒 Mon-Sat) This small restaurant under the *portici* (arcade) in front of the port specialises in fish. For your *primo piatto* (first course) try the *pasta con frutti di mare* or the *minestra di seppie* (cuttlefish soup) and finish off with a simple homemade dessert such as *zuppa inglese* (liquor-soaked sponge with custard) and some *biscottini* dipped into *vin santo* (little biscuits in wine).

## Drinking

**Liberty Cocktail Lounge** (☎ 071 20 34 84; Via Traffico 7-10; 🕒 11.30am-2am Thu-Tue, 5pm-2am holidays) The hot spot in town, this art deco inspired cafe would have made Picasso feel right at home. Asian-influenced artwork, Tiffany glass lamps and a classy bohemian crowd will make you want to paint the scene and sell it as a framed poster. It's off Piazza Kennedy.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Falconara airport** (Raffaello Sanzio Airport; AOI; ☎ 071 2 82 71; [www.ancona-airport.it](http://www.ancona-airport.it), in Italian),

although it's expanded in recent years, is still without some services (such as, oh, restaurants). Flights arrive from Munich, Dusseldorf, London, Rome, Florence and Moscow, along with a few more obscure locales like Timisoara and Majorca. Major airlines that fly into Ancona include Lufthansa, Alitalia and Ryanair. [Click here](#) for more information on low-cost carriers such as Ryanair.

## BUS

Most buses originate at Piazza Cavour except for a few to Falconara and the Portonovo bus, which originate at the train station. See the table below for destinations.

Destination	Cost (€)	Duration	Frequency
Falconara airport	1.70	40min	every 45min
Jesi	2.50	50min	hourly
Loreto	2.50	1 hr	hourly
Macerata	3.75	1½hr	12 daily
Numana	1.95	40min	hourly
Portonovo	1.10	30min	9 daily Jun-Aug
Recanati	2.75	1hr 20 min	hourly
Senigallia	2.25	55min	hourly

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Ancona is on the A14, which links Bologna with Bari. The SS16 coastal road runs parallel to the autostrada and is a more pleasant toll-free alternative if you're not looking to get anywhere fast. The SS76 connects Ancona with Perugia and Rome.

## FERRY

Ferry operators have booths at the ferry terminal or check with any of a dozen agencies in town. Ferries operate to Greece, Croatia, Albania and Turkey.

## TRAIN

Ancona is on the Bologna—Lecce line, so note whether you're taking a Eurostar or not, as there can be a substantial supplement. For more 24-hour information, call ☎ 848 8880 88. FS Informa, which provides this service, has recently tested a service for providing train information to your mobile phone. See [www.trenoproblem.it](http://www.trenoproblem.it) for an update or to look up information online. See the table below for train destinations.

Destination	Cost (€)	Duration	Frequency
Bari	41	4hr	8 daily
Bologna	11.80-23	2-3hr	hourly
Florence	30-40	3.5hr	every 2hr
Milan	34-41.50	3-4hr	hourly
Pesaro	3.25	30-50min	hourly
Rome	14-29	3-4hr	every 2hr

## Getting Around

There are about six Conero Bus services, including bus 1/3, 1/4 and 1/5 which connects the main train station with the centre (Piazza Cavour) and bus 12, which connects the main train station with the ferry port (€1.10); look for the bus stop with the big signpost displaying Centro and Porto. You can check schedules and routes online at [www.coneobus.it](http://www.coneobus.it).

For a taxi, telephone ☎ 071 4 33 21 at the train station or ☎ 071 20 28 95 in the town centre.

You'll find **Europcar** (☎ 071 20 31 00) across from the train station and **Maggiore** (☎ 071 4 26 24) 40m to the left as you walk out. At the airport, there are **Avis** (☎ 071 5 22 22; [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com)) and **Hertz** (☎ 071 207 37 98; [www.hertz.com](http://www.hertz.com)) desks.

## GETTING TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Conero Bus service J runs roughly every hour from the train station to the airport, from 6.05am to 8.15pm Monday to Saturday and line S runs five times a day on Sunday and public holidays. The trip costs €1.70 and takes anywhere from 25 to 45 minutes. Going the other way from the airport into Ancona, line J runs until 11.30pm. The airport **taxi consortium** (☎ 334 154 88 99) arranges taxis from central Ancona (€34 to €38), Monte Conero (€57 to €62) and even Macerata (€78 to €87) or Pesaro (€87 to €92).

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## PARCO DEL CONERO

Minutes from Ancona but a world unto itself, one of the only sections of the unspoilt Adriatic coastline in Marche, Monte Conero is tiny but visually stunning. This park extends 58 sq km from Portonovo (9.5km south of Ancona), Sirolo (22km from Ancona) and Numana (a further 2km southeast), which borders the tackiness of Porto Recanati further south.

Tiny Portonovo is its own mini-retreat, with one of Italy's most stunning hotels. Sirolo is more upmarket, surrounded by town walls with gorgeous ocean views but not directly on the water. Numana starts off well on the northern end but slips into the tacky waterfront that the rest of Le Marche seems to favour.

## Information

**Visitors centre** (☎ /fax 071 933 11 61; [www.parcodelconero.eu](http://www.parcodelconero.eu); Via Peschiera 30, Sirolo; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm 15 Jun-15 Sep, 9am-1pm Mon-Sat 16 Sep-14 Jun) For information on the park itself or to arrange guided tours.

## Sleeping

**Camping Internazionale** (☎ 071 933 08 84; [www.campinginternazionale.com](http://www.campinginternazionale.com); Via San Michele 10, Sirolo; per person €5-11, tent €10-16, car €2-6, bungalows & chalets €42-122; ☎ Easter-Sep; 📶 📶 📶) Shaded in the trees just a few metres from the scenic beaches below Sirolo is this full-service campsite, replete with hot showers, caravan hook-ups and a children's playground.

**Rocco Locanda & Ristorante** (☎ 071 933 05 58; [www.locandarocco.it](http://www.locandarocco.it); Via Torrione 1, Sirolo; d €125-200, tr €185-250, all incl breakfast; 🍷) In town rather than on the beach, the elegant seven-room hotel above the eponymous restaurant feels more intimate than stuffy. Feather-soft sheets and period details like wrought-iron beds and stone walls make this a romantic town hideaway.

**Hotel Fortino Napoleonico** (☎ 071 80 14 50; [www.hotelfortino.it](http://www.hotelfortino.it); Via Poggio 166, Portonovo; r incl breakfast €180-250; 🍷 📶 📶) One of Le Marche's most stunning beachfront hotels is this former Napoleonic fort shaped somewhat like Mickey Mouse's head. It practically begs for a romantic tryst. Its stone-built walls, antique furnishings and plush sitting rooms might be enough to bring you inside from the ocean-fronted terrace, and the gilded restaurant (open lunch and dinner daily; meals €39) specialising in local dishes and fresh fish might make you linger even longer.

## Eating

Some of Le Marche's best restaurants are in Parco Naturale del Monte Conero.

## PORTONOVO

**Il Molo** (☎ 071 80 10 40; Spaggia di Portonovo; meals €27; 🕒 daily Apr-Oct) Would you like some fish with your seafood? How about clams or mussels? Pasta with shellfish? If you can find it in the ocean within a few kilometres of Monte Conero, it's on the menu at Il Molo, where most items are courtesy of the fishermen who show up here each morning with their fresh catches.

**Giacchetti** (☎ 071 80 13 84; Via Portonovo 171; meals €33; 🕒 Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) This waterfront mainstay has been serving local *glitterati* since 1959. Fronted by its own mini-beach and surrounded by floor-to-ceiling windows, diners in suits sup on seafood soup or spaghetti with Conero mussels, and watch wind surfers and sunbathers.

**Susci Bar al Clandestino** (☎ 071 80 14 22; Via Portonovo, Loc Poggio; meals €36; 🕒 May—mid-Sep) Beyond cool, the Caribbean blue-coloured Susci Bar al Clandestino serves food that is highly recommended by Italy's food critics. There's no formality here and, after a swim in the beautiful Baia di Portonove, you can drop in for a taste of its Mediterranean sushi or some tapas.

## SIROLO

**Rocco** (☎ 071 933 05 58; Via Torrione 1; meals €35; 🕒 Wed-Mon Easter to mid-Oct) A Slow Food restaurant run by passionate young cooks who base their excellent dishes on the freshest ingredients. A leafy outdoor veranda serves up, not surprisingly, many fish and shellfish meals.

## NUMANA

**Il Saraghino** (☎ /fax 071 739 15 96; Via Litoranea 209, Loc Martelli; meals €55; 🕒 Tue-Sun Mar—mid-Dec) Never mind the plastic 'Baby Farm' playland next door, as it'll be closed by the time you're dining on one of this restaurant's famed *nouvelle* dishes – artichokes with gorgonzola or *tagliatelle con scampetti* (pasta with lobster). The restaurant and its chef have been bathed in awards and accolades for years, but it's the beachfront location that impresses most visitors.

**La Torre** (☎ 071 933 07 47; Via la Torre 1; meals €38) Leave behind quaint stone walls and wood-beamed ceilings for open duct-work and metal furnishings. Stylish wood tables look out over a giant oceanfront window. Fish is the big draw here, but the homemade desserts shouldn't be missed.

## Getting There & Away

Buses from Ancona run sporadically throughout the year, peaking in July and August. See the table on [Click here](#) for more information.

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## LORETO

Thousands upon thousands of Catholic pilgrims travel here every year, possibly because of the belief that angels transferred the house of the Virgin Mary from Palestine to this spot towards the end of the 13th century, and possibly because they can't find statues of glow-in-the-dark Jesus statues anywhere else.

While the original basilica started in 1468 was Gothic, Renaissance additions (including some savvy engineering by Bramante) have made today's imposing **Basilica della Santa Casa** (☎ 071 97 01 04, 071 97 68 37; Piazza della Madonna; 🕒 6.15am-8pm Apr-Sep, 6.45am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Oct-Mar) an architectural masterpiece. Inside, gold-leafed halos, impressive frescoes and religious triptychs create viewing opportunities worth braving the schlock shops. Plus, whether you've sinned in Italian, English,

Japanese or German, you're in luck: in addition to several daily masses, visitors can take advantage of multilingual confessionals throughout the day.

Equally fascinating is the **Museo Antico Tesoro della Santa Casa** (☎ 071 974 71 60; [www.santuarioloreto.it](http://www.santuarioloreto.it); Piazza della Madonna; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), where relics and images from the basilica and throughout history are on display.

On 7 September, Loreto turns out for the **Corsa del Drappo**, now a race between the various Loreto quarters, but the festive event started out as a cattle and horse market.

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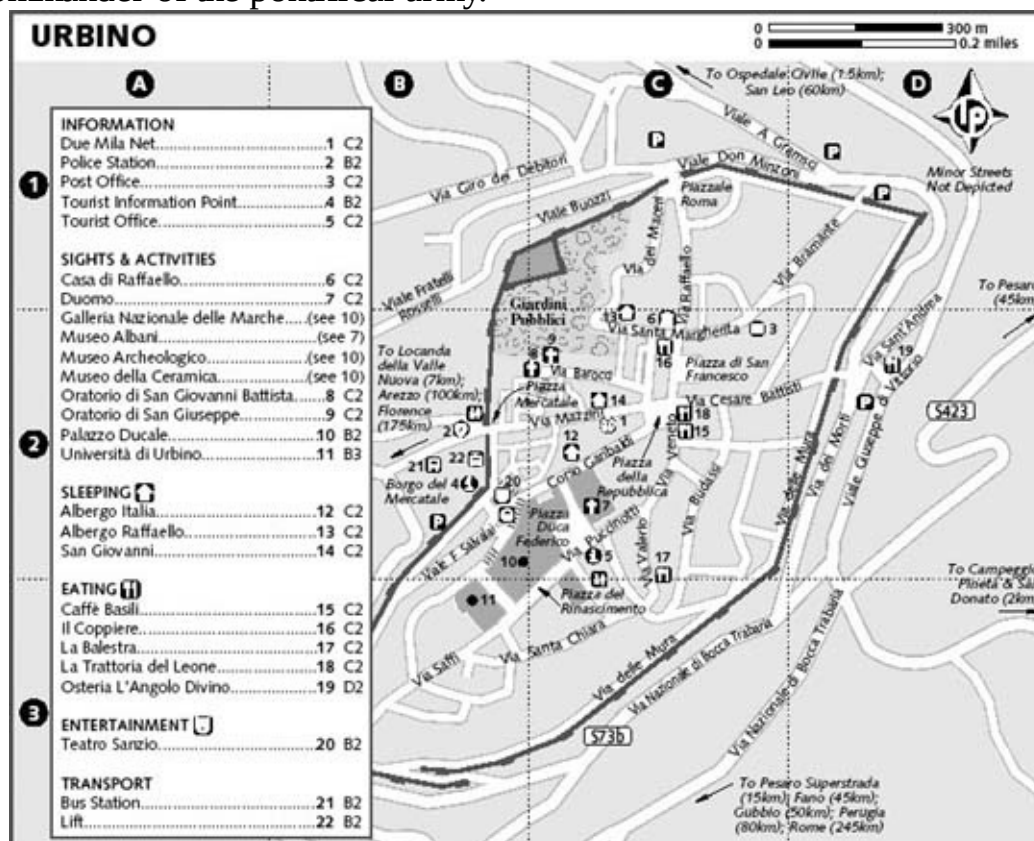
## URBINO

pop 15,459

Urbino is most people's first stop on a trip to Le Marche, and it's not hard to understand why. The patriarch of the Montefeltro family, Duca Federico da Montefeltro, created the hippest art scene in the 15th century. The famed art patron gathered together all the great artists, architects and scholars of his day to create a sort of Renaissance think-tank. The university here still dominates any social scene. The town's splendour was made official by Unesco, which deemed the entire city centre a World Heritage Site.

## History

By the mid-16th century, central Italy was under papal rule; only the duchy of Urbino remained autonomous. The city and its territories were reigned over by the Della Rovere family, since the Montefeltro family had been left without heirs. The Della Rovere family was, however, linked to the papacy. Two of its members were elected popes (Sisto IV and Giulio II), and Francesco Maria I Della Rovere became commander of the pontifical army.



# Orientation

Urbino is outlandishly difficult to navigate in a car, by public transport or on foot, so bring some patience with you. Buses arrive at Borgo del Mercatale, at the western edge of the city. The city's main car park is located here (mostly hidden underground), but there are several others around the city (shown on the [Map](#)). To get to the centre, hike up Via Mazzini or take the €0.50 *ascensore* to Teatro Sanzio. Take care not to park at Piazzale Roma overnight on Friday as there is a market Saturday morning and your car *will* be towed away.

You can buy the useful *Urbino Mini-guide con Pianta* (in English) for €2 from the Piazza Mercatale information point, or from various newspaper and magazine shops in the old town. The main tourist map, *Urbino: Piantina della Città*, available from the tourist office and at many hotels and sights, is more than sufficient for most travellers.

# Information

**Assessorato Cultura e Turismo** ([www.urbinoculturaturismo.it](http://www.urbinoculturaturismo.it), in Italian) Provided for tourists in association with the city of Urbino and Unesco. It's in Italian, but contains listings for all accommodation (including B&Bs and *agriturismi*) and popular historic, cultural and artistic sights.

**Due Mila Net** (☎ 0722 37 81 95; Via Mazzini 17; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, noon-10pm Sun; per 30min/1hr €2.50/4) Internet facilities.

**Ospedale Civile** (☎ 0722 30 11; Via Bonconte da Montefeltro) Hospital located about 1.5km north of the city centre.

**Police station** (☎ 0722 3 51 81; Piazza Mercatale)

**Post office** (☎ 0722 3 77 91; Via Bramante 28; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist information point** (Piazza Mercatale; ☎ 6.30am-8.30pm) At the entrance of the lift into town.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0722 26 13; fax 0722 24 41; Via Puccinotti 3; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat, 3-6pm Tue-Fri) Visitors have 10 minutes of free internet access.

# Sights

## PALAZZO DUCALE

A microcosm of Renaissance architecture, art and history, the **Palazzo Ducale** (☎ 0722 2 76 01; Piazza Duca Federico; adult/concession €8/4; ☎ 8.30am-7.15pm Tue-Sun, 8.30am-2pm Mon) houses the **Galleria Nazionale delle Marche**, **Museo Archeologico** and **Museo della Ceramica**. The museum triptych is housed within Federico da Montefeltro's Renaissance palace, a work of art in itself, as the duke employed some of the greatest artists and architects of the Renaissance to create what was then a modern masterpiece.

A monumental staircase, one of Italy's first, leads to the *piano nobile* (literally 'noble floor') and the Ducal Apartments. Piero della Francesca was one of the artists employed by the duke, and his work, *The Flagellation*, adorns the duke's library. The collection also includes a large number of drawings by Federico Barocci, as well as works by Raphael, Titian and Signorelli.

From Corso Garibaldi you get the best view of the complex, with its unusual Facciata dei Torricini, a three-storey loggia in the form of a triumphal arch, flanked by circular towers.

## CHURCHES

Rebuilt in the early 19th century in neoclassical style, the interior of Urbino's **Duomo** (Piazza Duca Federico; ☎ 7.30am-1pm & 2-7pm) commands much greater interest than its austere facade. Particularly memorable is Federico Barocci's *Last Supper*. The basilica's **Museo Albani** (☎ 0722 65 00 24; admission €3; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm) contains religious artefacts, vestments and more paintings, including Andrea da Bologna's *Madonna del Latte* (Madonna Breastfeeding) and one by Giovanni Santi (Raphael's father).

The 14th-century **Oratorio di San Giovanni Battista** (☎ 347 6711181; Via Barocci; admission €2; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) features brightly coloured frescoes by Lorenzo and Giacomo Salimbeni. A few steps away, the **Oratorio di San Giuseppe** (☎ 34767 111 81; Via Barocci; admission €2; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) boasts a stucco *Nativity* by Federico Brandani.

## CASA DI RAFFAELLO

North of the Piazza della Repubblica you'll find the 15th-century **Casa di Raffaello** (☎ 0722 32 01 05; Via Raffaello 57; adult/student €2/1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm daily Mar-Oct, 9am-2pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Nov-Feb), the house where Raphael spent his first 16 years. On the 1st floor is possibly one of Raphael's first frescoes, a Madonna with child.

## Courses

**Università di Urbino** (☎ 800 462446; [www.uniurb.it](http://www.uniurb.it); Via Saffi 2) offers an intensive one-month course in language and culture for foreign students during August for €500. The school can also arrange accommodation in apartments, *agriturismi* or private homes starting at €200.

## Festivals & Events

In May Urbino decks itself out in flowers for the **Urbino Città Fiorita** festival. The **Urbino Jazz Festival** takes place in June, while in July the **International Festival of Ancient Music** occurs. The **Festa dell'Duca** takes place on the second Sunday in August, when the town's streets become the setting for a costume procession and the re-enactment of a tournament on horseback. Europe's only kite-flying competition is held here on the first Sunday in September. Check with the tourist office for up-to-date details.

## Sleeping

The tourist office can provide a full list of private rooms and other accommodation options.

**Campeggio Pineta** (☎ 0722 47 10; [campeggiopinetaurbino@email.it](mailto:campeggiopinetaurbino@email.it); Via Ca' Mignone 5, San Donato; per person/tent €7/12; ☎ Easter-Sep) Only 2km from the city centre is this campsite, located amid a luscious surrounding of trees. Hot showers, a bar and market await campers. Take the shuttle bus into town.

**San Giovanni** (☎ 0722 28 72, fax 0722 32 90 55; Via Barocci 13; s/d/tr €39/60/72, s/d without bathroom €28/44; ☎ closed 10-30 Jul & 20 Dec-10 Jan) Fittingly for a university town, these dormitory-looking rooms are good value for the price. Despite the slightly musty smell, beds are comfy enough and the shared bathrooms are clean.

**Albergo Italia** (☎ 0722 27 01; [www.albitalia.it](http://www.albitalia.it); Corso Garibaldi 32; s €47-70, d €70-120, all incl breakfast, ☎ ☎) Set behind the Palazzo Ducale, the Italia could not be better positioned. Modern but well designed, the multistorey building is restfully quiet while offering all the amenities of a business hotel. In

warmer months, take breakfast on the balcony.

**Albergo Raffaello** (☎ 0722 47 84; [www.albergoraffaello.com](http://www.albergoraffaello.com); Via Santa Margherita 40; s €45-65, d €70-115, all incl breakfast; 🍷) The imposing marbled entrance of this former seminary makes way for plain but comfortable rooms outfitted with TVs, minibars and radios. Some rooms have fantastic views of the palace. The proprietors will transport guests to and from any of the car parks or bus stations in town.

**our pick** **Locanda della Valle Nuova** (☎ /fax 0722 33 03 03; [www.vallenuova.it](http://www.vallenuova.it); La Cappella 14, Sagrata di Fermignano; per person incl breakfast €55, per week €680; 📅 mid-Jun—mid-Nov; 📍 📺 📶) Ecology and comfort coexist in perfect balance at this six-room working *agriturismo*. Also an organic restaurant, Locanda della Valle Nuova grows an incredible array of fruit, vegetables, grains and wine grapes plus raises naturally fed cattle and hens. Enjoy a horse ride or a home-grown truffle. It is about 20 minutes from Urbino, but the English-speaking owners will assist you with transport and visiting the local towns. Minimum stay is three nights.

## Eating

Don't miss Italy's only homicidal pasta – *strozzapreti* (priest-stranglers) – available in most restaurants. One legend has it that the shredded pasta was designed to choke priests who would eat for free at local restaurants. Another says it was the priests' gluttonous overeating that led to their demise. Either way, if you happen to wear the collar, be careful.

**La Trattoria del Leone** (☎ 0722 32 98 94; Via Cesare Battisti 5; meals €24; 🍷 dinner nightly, lunch Sat & Sun) One of Urbino's only new restaurants, this city centre trattoria specialises in inventive Marchigiani cuisine such as ravioli with the local Casciotta d'Urbino cheese.

**Osteria L'Angolo Divino** (☎ 0722 32 75 59; Via Sant'Andrea 14; meals €32; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat & lunch Sun Jun—mid-Dec) This subterranean *enoteca* just oozes atmosphere. Arched brick alcoves overflow with wine bottles, available for tastings. Even teetotallers will enjoy this place, as the menu boasts simple but perfectly flavoured pasta specialities, including the much better tasting than it sounds *pasta nel sacco* (pasta in a sack), which is fresh pasta coated with eggs and breadcrumbs.

**La Balestra** (☎ 0722 29 42; Via Valerio 16; meals €20; 🍷 dinner-midnight) Urbino's literati and university students congregate amid a vaulted brick ceiling and ancient artefacts adorning the walls. The food goes back in time, as well, with medieval recipes a big hit. Try the speciality, *pappardelle del duca* (thick ribbon pasta) or the famous *strozzapreti*.

**Il Coppiere** (☎ 0722 32 23 26; Via Santa Margherita 1; meals €23) Follow the unmistakable scent of black truffle up the stairs to this unassumingly simple restaurant with even better prices (and a good view of the town below). The speciality is *cappelletti* with mushrooms, cream, tomatoes and truffle (€9), but the *caciotta* with truffles and fall-off-the-bone *stinco di maiale* (pork shoulder) are equally delicious local treats.

**Caffè Basili** (☎ 0722 24 48; Piazza della Repubblica; 📅 6.30am-2am daily) Urbino students and professionals know it as 'Bar Centrale', the best of the piazza cafes. Its outdoor tables get a relaxing dose of afternoon sun. Pastries, sandwiches and gelato are served any time of day, and *aperitivi* accompany late-afternoon drinks.

## Entertainment

The arts come alive in Urbino during the summer season.

The grand old 19th-century **Teatro Sanzio** (☎ 0722 22 81; Corso Garibaldi) hosts plays and concerts,



particularly from July to September. Pick up a brochure at the main tourist office.

## Getting There & Around

There is no train service to Urbino (pick up trains in Pesaro, about 35km away; [Click here](#)).

The Pesaro-based **Adriabus** (☎ 0800 66 43 32, ☎ 0722 37 67 38; [www.adriabus.eu](http://www.adriabus.eu) in Italian) runs up to 15 services daily between Urbino and Pesaro (€2.75 to €3.55 minutes). **Autolinee Ruocco** (☎ 800 901591, 0975 790 33; [www.viaggiaruocco.eu/portale](http://www.viaggiaruocco.eu/portale), in Italian) runs a daily bus to Perugia (€17, 1¼ hours) for which it is essential to book a seat in advance. It leaves from Urbino at 12.45pm and Perugia at 2.30pm. **Autolinee Bucci** (☎ 0721 3 24 01; [www.autolineebucci.com](http://www.autolineebucci.com)) runs two buses a day to Rome (€20.89, 4½ hours). **Soget** (☎ 0721 54 96 20) buses link with Pesaro (€2.75 to €3, 1¼ hours, 15 daily), where you can pick up a train for Bologna (€8.80 to €16.60, two hours, hourly).

An autostrada and the S423 connect Urbino with Pesaro, while the S73B connects the town with the SS3 heading for Rome. Most motor vehicles are banned from the walled city. **Taxis** (☎ 0722 25 50) and shuttle buses operate from Piazza della Repubblica and Piazza Mercatale. There are car parks outside the city gates. Note that there is no parking on Piazzale Roma on Saturday morning as it's market day.

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## PESARO

pop 93,488

Geographically, the town of Pesaro is practically perfect. Its beachfront locale adds to the beauty of its winding, ancient pedestrian zone (flat, even!) and backdrop of undulating hills. Too bad tens of thousands of Speedo-clad northern Europeans come here for five months out of the year to do a sardine impression on the beach, and that this beach is backed by a Soviet-looking strip of high-rise concrete hotels. However, the charming historic centre deserves an entire day to wander, and the composer Gioachino Rossini loved his hometown so much he willed Pesaro all of his possessions when he died (be sure to check out Casa Rossini while you're here).

## Orientation & Information

The train station is on the far western edge of downtown, about 2km from the beach. From the train station, walk along Viale del Risorgimento, through the Piazza Lazzarini, where the name switches to Via Branca, Via Rossini and finally Viale della Repubblica. It ends at the waterfront and the tourist office in Piazza della Libertà.

**Pesaro Urbino Tourism** ([www.turismo.pesarourbino.it](http://www.turismo.pesarourbino.it)) Has excellent information in English, with maps, hotels and sights.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0721 6 93 41; [www.comune.pesaro.ps.it](http://www.comune.pesaro.ps.it), in Italian; Piazzale della Libertà 11; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun summer, 9am-1pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat, 3-6pm Tue & Thu winter) Pick up its free *Handy Guide*, in English.

## Sights & Activities

In 1792 the famed composer Rossini was born in a typical Pesaro house that is now known as the **Casa Rossini** (☎ 0721 38 73 57; Via Rossini 34; adult/under 25yr €4/3, incl entry to Musei Civici €7/4; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm Tue-Sun, 4-7pm Thu-Sun Sep-Jun, to 10.30pm Tue & Thu Jul-Aug). Follow the history

of Rossini and opera through the early 19th century via a series of prints, personal effects and portraits.

Opened in 1860 just after Italian reunification, the town's original art gallery is now the **Musei Civici** (☎ 0721 38 75 41; Piazza Toschi Mosca 29; adult/under 25yr €4/2, incl entry to Casa Rossini €7/4; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm Tue-Sun, 4-10pm Thu, 4-7pm Fri-Sun Jul-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm Tue-Sun, 4-7pm Fri-Sun Sep-Jun), which also displays Pesaro's 700-year-old ceramic tradition with one of Italy's best collections of majolica ceramics. The Pinacoteca houses Giovanni Bellini's magnificent altarpiece depicting the coronation of the Virgin.

Pesaro has four major beach areas – **Levante**, **Ponente**, **Baia Flaminia** and the **free beach**. Levante and Ponente are the jam-packed hotel-fronted beaches on either side of the tourist office, so for elbow room, head to the free (open) beach to the south of the city, under Monte Ardizio.

## Festivals & Events

In honour of its most famous son, the town hosts the **Rossini Opera Festival** (☎ 0721 380 02 94; [www.rossinioperafestival.it](http://www.rossinioperafestival.it); Via Rossini 24; 🕒 box office 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri) around town each summer. Tickets run anywhere from €10 to €125, with substantial student and last-minute discounts.

## Sleeping & Eating

The majority of hotels close down from October until around Easter. Most places are square concrete blocks from the 1960s, uninspiring but close to or on the beach. For a room, contact the **Associazione Pesarese di Albergatori** (☎ 0721 6 79 59; [www.apahotel.it](http://www.apahotel.it), in Italian, English, French & German; Viale Marconi 57) or try the tourist office.

**Marinella** (☎ 0721 5 57 95; [www.campingmarinella.it](http://www.campingmarinella.it); SS Adriatica km244, Loc Fossejore; per person/tent/car from €5/5/3, bungalows d/tr/q €60/70/103; 🕒 Easter-Sep) Drift off to the sound of waves breaking on the beach in your seaside tent. A casual restaurant is on-site, as well as a market, beach volleyball, washing machines, showers and lots of child-friendly activities.

**Felici e Contenti** (☎ 0721 3 20 60; Via Cattaneo 37; meals €26; 🕒 Tue-Sat, dinner Sun) When a restaurant names itself 'Happily Ever After', you can bet you'll retire for the evening both happy and content. Its speciality is fish, but pasta also makes a memorable entrance on the menu. The atmosphere is more sophisticatedly urban than many other Pesaro restaurants and it's located on a quiet side street in the medieval centre.

**C'Era Una Volta** (☎ 0721 3 09 11; Via Cattaneo 26; pizzas from €4; 🕒 Tue-Sun) The raucous atmosphere is almost as fun as the pizzas, topped with peas, artichokes, *speck*, pancetta or even *patate fritti* (chips). No glass of wine is more than €2.80 and an enormous array of pasta dishes can be had for under €9.

## Entertainment

The 400-year-old **Teatro Rossini** (☎ 0721 3 24 82; [www.enteconcerti.it](http://www.enteconcerti.it); Via Rossini) was renamed in the composer's honour, and its grand ceiling and ornate box seats make it a take-your-breath-away spot to catch a concert, especially during the Rossini Opera Festival.

## Getting There & Around

The main bus station is on Piazza Matteotti. **Bucci** (☎ 0721 3 24 01) operates a service to Ancona (€3.10, one hour and 20 minutes, four daily) and Rome (€19.80, four hours, 40 minutes). **Adriabus** (☎ 0800 66 43

32, 0722 37 67 38; [www.adriabus.eu](http://www.adriabus.eu), in Italian) runs up to 15 buses daily to Urbino (€2.75 to €3, 55 minutes).

Pesaro is on the Bologna—Lecce train line and you can reach Rome (€16.10 to €26.15, four hours, nine daily) by changing trains at Falconara Marittima, just before Ancona. There are hourly services to Ancona (€3.25, 30 to 50 minutes), Rimini (€2.60 to €6, 20 to 40 minutes) and Bologna (€7.70 to €15, two hours). By car, Pesaro is on the A14 and the SS16.

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## GROTTE DI FRASASSI

In September 1971 a team of climbers stumbled across a hole in the hill country around Genga, which turned out to be the biggest known cave in Europe, containing a spectacle of stalactites and stalagmites, some of them 1.4 million years old.

The **grotte** (☎ 0732 9 00 80; [www.frasassi.com](http://www.frasassi.com); adult/concession/child under 6yr & disabled persons €15/13/free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mar-Oct, 11am & 4pm admissions Mon-Fri, 11am-6pm weekends & holidays Nov-Feb, closed 10 Jan-30 Jan) now has a 1.5km-long trail laid through five chambers where professional guides take you on a 70-minute tour.

**Ancona Abyss**, the first chamber, is almost 200m high, 180m wide and 120m long. The ticket area and car park are just outside San Vittore Terme, and the entrance to the caves is 600m further west. The whole area deserves an entire day, as you can also check out a Romanesque temple and enjoy one of many beautiful hiking trails.

For €35 to €45 you can have a more challenging experience that lasts for three to four hours and involves passing across 30m chasms and crawling on your hands and knees along narrow passages and tunnels. Book in advance.

To reach the caves from Ancona, take the SS76 off the A14. The closest train station is in Genga, 61km from Ancona or Gubbio and about 2km from the caves' ticket area; a shuttle bus runs from the train station in summer.

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## MACERATA

**pop 42,896**

Macerata is well off the tourist radar, but offers charming hill-town scenery, great accommodation, one of Italy's most famous opera festivals and several days' worth of sights. While the Picena tribe settled the area as a trading centre 3000 years ago, its largest draw these days is the Arena Sferisterio, which holds the opera festival in July and August.

## Orientation

Piazza della Libertà is the focal point of the medieval city, contained within the 14th-century walls above the sprawl of the more modern development. Intercity buses arrive at the huge Giardini Diaz below. An underground pass leads to a lift that takes you to the bottom of Via XX Settembre in the old town. Follow this road through Piazza Oberdan and along Via Gramsci to reach Piazza della Libertà and the tourist office. If you arrive by train, bus 6 links the train station, which is south of the city centre, to Piazza della

Libertà. Other buses climb up Viale Leopardi.

There is paid parking (8am to 8pm) skirting the city walls and if you're lucky you may even find a space on one of the main squares inside the old city. For free parking, go to the Giardini Diaz where the buses arrive. However, be aware the underground walking path closes at 9pm.

## Information

**Assessorato al Turismo** ([www.comune.macerata.it](http://www.comune.macerata.it)) Town website.

**Internet centre** (☎ 0733 26 44 04; Piazza Mazzini 52; per hr €4; ☎ 10am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat)

**Macerata Incoming – Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 0733 23 43 33;

[www.macerataincoming.com](http://www.macerataincoming.com); Porta Picena 1; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm winter, 3-7pm Tue-Sun summer) Information on visiting the Sferisterio. Private tourist help centre.

**Marche Voyager** ([www.le-marche.com/Marche/html/macerata.htm](http://www.le-marche.com/Marche/html/macerata.htm)) Tourist website from the Le Marche Region Tourism Department.

**Post office** (☎ 0733 27 30 53; Via Gramsci 44; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0733 23 48 07; [iat.macerata@regione.marche.it](mailto:iat.macerata@regione.marche.it); Piazza della Libertà 9; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug)

## Sights & Activities

One of Europe's most stunning outdoor theatres is the **Arena Sferisterio** (☎ 0733 23 07 35; [www.sferisterio.it](http://www.sferisterio.it); Piazza Mazzini 10; adult/student & over 65yr/under 14yr €3/2/free, shows €15-150; ☎ tours depart at noon & 5pm summer, noon & 4pm Mon-Sat winter), which resembles an ancient Roman arena but was built between 1819 and 1829. Between 15 July and 15 August every year it's a venue for the Stagione Lirica, one of Italy's most prestigious musical events, which attracts big operatic names. In late June every year, the arena plays host to the finals of the *Musicultura* competition for talented, up-and-coming singer/songwriters as well as a famous guest singer (tickets €5 to €30).

The city centre starts at the Loggia dei Mercanti, next to the tourist office in the Piazza della Libertà. Built in the 16th century, the open-air building housed travelling merchants selling their wares to the area's villagers. Across the square is the **Teatro Lauro Rossi** (☎ 0733 23 35 08; Piazza della Libertà 21; admission from €19; ☎ tours 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Fri), an elegant theatre built in 1774 for the musical enjoyment of the nobility, which now allows well-dressed riffraff to attend.

In Piazza Vittorio Veneto, at the end of the main boulevard Corso della Repubblica, you will find a museum triumvirate in the Palazzo Ricci: the **Museo Civico**, the **Museo delle Carrozze** and the **Pinacoteca** (☎ 0733 25 63 61; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 2; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun). Recently reopened after years of renovation, the Pinacoteca has a good collection of early Renaissance works, including a 15th-century Madonna by Carlo Crivelli. The Museo delle Carozze (carriage museum) houses an extensive collection of 18th- to 20th-century coaches. The Museo Civico contains Roman and Piceni archaeological remains. As if this wasn't enough, there's also the Municipal Library, which boasts 300,000 texts, many ancient maps and medieval manuscripts.

The 16th-century **Museo Palazzo Ricci** (☎ 0733 26 14 87; Via Ricci 1; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Sat, Sun & holidays Mar-Dec, daily Jul-Aug) houses a collection of 20th-century Italian pop art and futurists such as Giorgio De Chirico, Giacomo Balla and Renato Guttuso, alongside an impressive display of 18th-century noble furnishings.

## Festivals & Events

During the week leading up to the first Sunday in August, in nearby Treia you can witness the annual **Disfida del Bracciale**, a festival that revives the tradition and folklore surrounding the 19th-century game. *Bracciale* involves players hitting leather balls with spiked wooden hand-guards that look like a cross between a torture device and a pine cone.

[Click here](#) for details on the Arena Sferisterio's opera season.

## Sleeping

**Ostello Asilo Ricci** (☎ /fax 0733 23 25 15; [ostelloasiloricci@virgilio.it](mailto:ostelloasiloricci@virgilio.it); Via dell'Asilo 36; dm/s/d/tr/f incl breakfast €16/25/40/55/64; 🏠) Housed in a restored school a stone's throw from the town centre, this quiet hostel has spacious rooms in Venetian plaster and is so tidy that the sheets are even ironed.

**Albergo Arena** (☎ 0733 23 60 59; [www.albergoarena.com](http://www.albergoarena.com); Vicolo Sferisterio 16; s €45-65, d €65-95, both incl breakfast; 🍳 🏠) One of the best breakfasts of any three-star hotel around, Arena has a beautiful display of fresh fruit, juice and pastries. Comfortable rooms include spotless bathrooms with hairdryer *and* a towel warmer.

**Hotel Arcadia** (☎ 0733 23 59 61; [www.harcadia.it](http://www.harcadia.it); Via Matteo Ricci 134; s €40-65, d €65-95, both incl breakfast; 🍳 🏠) Owned by the Albergo Arena folks but a step up in comfort, the business-bland hotel on a quiet street not far from the cathedral gives three-star comfort at very reasonable prices. All come with 'frigo-bar', and a few have mini-balconies over the cobblestone streets below.

**Hotel Claudiani** (☎ 0733 26 14 00; [www.hotelclaudiani.it](http://www.hotelclaudiani.it); Via Ulissi 8; s/d incl breakfast 70/105; 🍳 🏠 📶) Macerata's only four-star hotel is tucked into a quiet side street, just a stone's throw from the heartbeat of the historic centre. Although laid out for efficient business travellers, the building is a recently restored *palazzo* of the noble Claudiani family.

## Eating

**Trattoria Il Cortile** (☎ 0733 23 50 51; Via Lauri 15; meals €19; 🍴 daily Jun-Sep, Tue-Sun Oct-May) Home-cooked meals are lovingly prepared by the *nonna* of a boisterous family. Top off a healthy meal of bitter greens with homemade gelato or delectable cakes.

**Da Secondo** (☎ 0733 26 09 12; Via Pescheria Vecchia 26/28; meals €30; 🍴 Tue-Sun) *The* place in Macerata to try the local cuisine. Follow the town's history through photos covering the walls as well as in the regional ingredients: *pecorino* (sheep's-milk cheese), *tartufo* (truffles) and osso buco with porcini mushrooms. In summer, dine on the romantic outdoor terrace. Its famed warm chocolate torte caps off a perfect meal.

**Osteria dei Fiori** (☎ 0733 26 01 42; Via Lauro Rossi 61; meals €23; 🍴 Mon-Sat) For an atmosphere that is subdued, warm and homey, this is the place. Try the typical *maceratense* cuisine and, in the warmer months, sit outside on the welcoming patio.

**Caffè Venanzetti** (☎ 0733 23 60 55; Galleria Scipione, Via Gramsci 21/23) Locals have assured us this is the best coffee shop in town. High ceilings and an old-style wood and mirror decor is a visual treat to go along with a delectable pastry case and one of the best cappuccinos in Le Marche.

## Getting There & Around

Macerata is off the main railway line, which ensures its tranquillity but requires at least one change, either in Civitanova Marche for most easterly routes (including Ancona and some trains from Rome) or the more time-consuming Fabriano to the west (including Umbria, Tuscany and most trains from Rome).

The **train station** (☎ 0733 24 03 54) is located at Piazza XXV Aprile 8/10. Good connections include Ancona (€4.20, one hour and 20 minutes, hourly) and Rome (€13.80 to €28.50, four to 5½ hours, eight daily). To reach Ascoli Piceno (€5.60, two hours, 10 daily) change trains in San Benedetto del Tronto and Civitanova Marche (there are two daily direct trains for about double the price).

Buses head to Rome (€21, four hours, three daily, four on Sunday) and Civitanova Marche (€2.25, one hour, hourly). Timetables are available at the bus terminal behind **Giardini Diaz** (☎ 0733 26 15 94).

The local orange APM buses leave from either Rampa Zara or Piazza della Libertà. Both the routes and bus numbers change in summer months (July to August). In summer, take Circolare C, 7, 8 or 11 between the train station and city centre. Off-season, take Circolare C, 2, 6A, 6B, 7 and 11.

You'll find **taxis** (☎ 0733 23 35 70) for hire at Piazza della Libertà, at the **train station** (☎ 0733 24 03 53), as well as at **Giardini Diaz** (☎ 0733 23 13 39).

The SS77 connects the city with the A14 to the east and roads for Rome in the west.

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## ASCOLI PICENO

**pop 51,629**

With a continuous history dating to the Sabine tribe in the 9th century, Ascoli – as it's known locally – is like the lovechild of ancient Rome and a small *Marchigiani* village, heavy on the history and food. Weary legs will appreciate its lack of hills and all travellers will appreciate its historical riches, excellent pinacoteca, one of Italy's unsung perfect piazzas and a veal-stuffed fried olive treat (*olive all'ascolana*) good enough to plan a heart attack around.

### Orientation

The old town lies at the convergence of the Tronto river and Castellano *torrente* (small river). The train and most buses stop in the modern extension, just east of the rivers. From the station on foot, turn right onto Viale Indipendenza, which turns into Corso Emanuele. From here, you'll run into Piazza Arringo, the tourist office, the cathedral and most museums. The walk takes around 15 minutes, and the entire town is flat enough to rollerblade around.

### Information

**City of Ascoli Piceno** ([www.comune.ascoli-piceno.it](http://www.comune.ascoli-piceno.it)) A consortium interested in promoting the area. Has information on events and festivals.

**Hospital** (☎ 0736 35 81; Monticelli) Located 4km east of town.

**Phone Point** (☎ /fax 0736 25 23 70; Piazza Bonfine 6; per hr internet €2; ☎ 9am-12.45pm & 4-9pm Mon-Sat, 2-9pm Sun, closed Tue morning) Phone calls to the UK, US and Australia for €0.15 per minute.

**Police station** (☎ 0736 35 51 11; Viale della Repubblica 8)

**Post office** (☎ 0736 24 22 85; Via Crispi; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

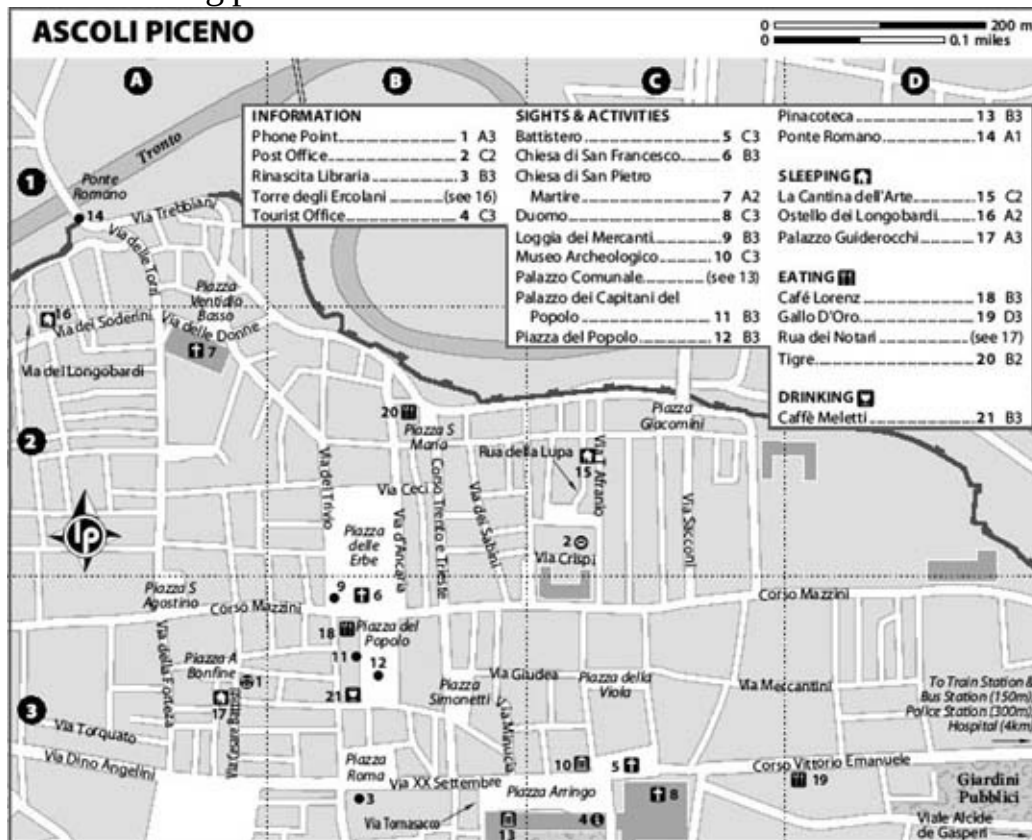
**Rinascita Libreria** (☎ 0736 25 96 53; [www.rinascita.it](http://www.rinascita.it), in Italian; Piazza Roma 7; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Thu, 9am-9pm Fri & Sat, 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Sun, 4-8pm Mon) English-language books, a whole Lonely Planet section (in Italian), plus loads of maps and a lovely cafe to while away an afternoon.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0736 29 82 04; [iat.ascolipiceno@regione.marche.it](mailto:iat.ascolipiceno@regione.marche.it); Piazza Arringo 7; ☎ 9am-

## Sights

### PIAZZA DEL POPOLO

The imposing Piazza del Popolo has since Roman times been Ascoli's *salotto* (sitting room). The square, which is rectangular, is flanked on the west by the 13th-century **Palazzo dei Capitani del Popolo**. Built in the same famed travertine stone used throughout the region for centuries, the 'Captain's Palace' was the headquarters for the leaders of Ascoli. The statue of Pope Paul III above the main entrance was erected in recognition of his efforts to bring peace to the town.



The beautiful **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 0736 25 94 46; Piazza del Popolo; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 3.30-8pm) was started back in 1262 as a homage to a visit from St Francis himself. In the left nave is a 15th-century wooden cross that miraculously made it through a 1535 fire at the Palazzo dei Capitani, and has since reputedly spilled blood twice. Virtually annexed to the church is **Loggia dei Mercanti**, built in the 16th century by the powerful guild of wool merchants, to hide their rough-and-tumble artisan shops.

### PIAZZA ARRINGO

The second-largest art gallery in Le Marche is inside the 17th-century **Palazzo Comunale**. The **Pinacoteca** (☎ 0736 29 82 13; Piazza Arringo; adult/concession €8/5; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sun Mar-Sep, 10.30am-5pm Oct-Feb) boasts an outstanding display of art, sculpture and religious artefacts, 400 works in total, including paintings by Van Dyck, Titian and Rembrandt, and a stunning embroidered 13th-century papal cape worn by Ascoli-born Pope Nicholas IV. The gallery was founded in 1861 with works taken from churches and religious orders that were suppressed in the wake of Italian unification. The **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0736 25 35 62; Piazza Arringo; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) holds a small collection of tribal artefacts from Piceni and other European people back to the first centuries AD.

On the eastern flank of Piazza Arringo, Ascoli's **Duomo** (☎ 0736 25 97 74; Piazza Arringo; ☎ 7am-

6pm) was built in the 15th century over a medieval building and dedicated to St Emidio, patron saint of the city. In the **Cappella del Sacramento** is what is considered by critics to be Carlo Crivelli's best work, the *Polittico*, a polyptych executed in 1473. The **crypt of Sant Emidio** has a set of mosaics any ceramicist will appreciate, but be sure to look through the locked gates at the ancient tunnels.

The **battistero** (baptistry) – next to the cathedral and something of a traffic barrier today – has remained unchanged since it was constructed in the 11th century.

## VECCHIO QUARTIERE

The town's Vecchio Quartiere (Old Quarter) stretches from Corso Mazzini (the main thoroughfare of the Roman-era settlement) to the Castellano river. Its main street is the picturesque Via delle Torri, which eventually becomes Via Solestà; it's a perfect spot to wander. On Via delle Donne (Street of Women) is the 14th-century **Chiesa di San Pietro Martire** (☎ 0736 25 52 14; Piazza Ventidio Basso; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm), dedicated to the saint who founded the Dominican community at Ascoli. The chunky Gothic structure houses the **Reliquario della Santa Spina**, containing what is said to be a thorn from Christ's crown.

The 40m-high **Torre degli Ercolani** located on Via dei Soderini, west of the Chiesa di San Pietro Martire, is the tallest of the town's medieval towers. **Palazzetto Longobardo**, a 12th-century Lombard-Romanesque defensive position and now the Ostello dei Longobardi (below), a youth hostel, abuts the tower. Just to the north is the well-preserved **Ponte Romano**, a single-arched Roman bridge.

## Festivals & Events

With all the medieval festivals in Italy, when one of them receives an accolade for best historical re-enactment, there's probably a pretty good reason. Ascoli's **Quintana**, held the second Saturday in July and the first Sunday in August, brings out thousands and thousands of locals dressed in the typical costume of the 12th and 13th centuries: knights in suits of armour, ladies in velvet and lace. Processions and flag-waving contests take place throughout July and August, but the big draw is the Quintana day's joust, when the town's six *sestiers* (quarters) face each other in a joust.

## Sleeping

For a town with not many hotels, Ascoli has a good range of accommodation. Tourist offices have lists of other accommodation options, including rooms and apartments, *agriturismi* and B&B options in outlying districts.

**Ostello dei Longobardi** (☎ 0736 26 18 62; fax 0736 25 91 91; [longobordoascoli@libero.it](mailto:longobordoascoli@libero.it); Via dei Soderini 26; dm €16, in winter €18) Oozing atmosphere aside, remember that comfort and warmth were invented after the Middle Ages, so when staying at an 11th-century stone palace-turned-youth hostel, don't expect much from the plumbing, and ask for an extra blanket in the winter. Two single-sex rooms sleep just eight each.

**La Cantina dell'Arte** (☎ 0736 25 56 20, mobile 328 7204823; [www.cantinadellarte.it](http://www.cantinadellarte.it); Rua della Lupa 8; s/d/tr/q €30/50/60/65) The simple rooms come with a bathroom and the quad has a tiny balcony. Even though it's tucked onto a side street, bring earplugs, as soundproofing hasn't improved much since the building's inception in 1748.

**B&B Rainbow** (☎ 0736 25 11 76, 320 8082705; [incontridanza@libero.it](mailto:incontridanza@libero.it); Via Salvadori 2; s/d €30/50) He teaches theatre and mime, she teaches yoga and dance, and together the English-speaking couple runs a B&B that's as warm and inviting as it is casual. Instead of Botticellis or bad landscapes



gracing the walls, you'll find their sons' artistic creations. Be sure to carry on the LP tradition of cross-cultural conversations over home-cooked breakfasts; Mariangela reports Lonely Planet readers are her favourite guests!

**Palazzo Guiderocchi** (☎ 0736 24 40 11; [www.palazzoguiderocchi.com](http://www.palazzoguiderocchi.com); Via Cesare Battisti 3; r incl breakfast €69-199; 📄 📄) Not many places offer the history, atmosphere and comfort of this 16th-century palace. Fully restored, it maintains the romance of 6m vaulted ceilings on the 1st floor, low wood-beamed ceilings on the 2nd, and frescoes and several original doors throughout. During slow months, palatial rooms can be an absolute steal.

## Eating

**Cafe Lorenz** (☎ 0736 25 99 59; Piazza del Popolo 5; snacks & gelati €2-7; 🕒 10am-2pm) Head upstairs for a convivial drink (drinks and wine €2 to €5) or a light dinner. But the main reason to come here again and again: Lorenz sells takeaway *olive all'ascolana* (olives from Ascoli) for €3.

**Gallo D'Oro** (☎ 0736 25 35 20; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 54; meals €26; 🕒 Mon-Sat) A bit outside the tourist area and popular with long-time Ascoli residents, this business-casual restaurant has been serving up local fare for decades. Try the appetiser selection of fried goodies.

**Rua dei Notari** (☎ 0736 26 36 30; Via Cesare Battisti 3; meals €30) Perfect for a special meal, this elegant restaurant possesses old-world charm in a modern setting. Dishes present as artfully as the contemporary paintings covering the walls. There are meat and pasta dishes as well as starters, including fried goods from Ascoli and *pecorino* with local honey (€8).

**Tigre** (☎ 0763 34 10 00; Viale Indipendenza; 🕒 8.45am-12.45pm & 4-8pm, closed Sun & mornings Mon) The most central of Ascoli's supermarkets, this location has a deli and a good wine selection.

## Drinking

**Caffè Meletti** (☎ 0736 25 96 26; Piazza del Popolo; 🕒 8am-7pm) From the shade of the ancient portico you can sip a coffee or the famous anisette as you gaze onto the perfect Italian piazza. Or sit inside to enjoy the statuesque carved wood stairway and bar. It was once a popular spot for the likes of Ernest Hemingway and Jean-Paul Sartre. The cafe, founded in 1907, fell into disrepair but has since been completely restored to its former glory.

## Getting There & Away

Buses leave from Piazzale della Stazione, in front of the train station in the new part of town, east of the Castellano river. **Start** (☎ 800 218692; [www.startspa.it](http://www.startspa.it)) runs buses to Rome (€14.50, three hours, four daily) and Civitanova Marche (€4.95, two hours, 12 daily). In Rome, Start buses leave from Viale Castro Pretorio 84 in front of the Biblioteca Nazionale di Roma. **Mazzuca** (☎ 0736 40 22 67; [www.mazzuca.it](http://www.mazzuca.it)) leaves from Piazza Simonetti (buy tickets on board) and serves Montemonaco (€4.10, 1½ hours, four daily), Amandola (€3.70, one hour and 10 minutes, six daily) and other towns near the Monti Sibillini range. At 6.30am daily, **Amadio** (☎ 0736 34 23 40) runs a service to Perugia (€17, arrives 11am) and on to Siena (€25, arrives 12.30pm) from in front of the train station.

Ascoli Piceno is on its own spur line from San Benedetto del Tronto, which is easily reached on the main Bologna to Lecce line along the Adriatic coast. There are good connections to Ancona (€4.20, one hour and 10 minutes), but Macerata requires one or two changes (€5.60, two hours, 10 daily).

From the A14 motorway, exit at San Benedetto del Tronto and follow the *superstrada* (expressway) for

Ascoli Piceno. From Rome, take the Antique Salaria or A2 motorway L'Aquila—Teramo. Follow the state road Piceno—Aprutina for Ascoli Piceno.

## MONTI SIBILLINI

The beautiful **Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini** covers some of the most scenic mountains in central Italy. The area is filled with mystical valleys, ancient hamlets, infinite expanses of wildflowers and soaring peaks (10 are more than 2000m high).

Monti Sibillini straddles the Le Marche—Umbria border. For tourist purposes, the region is divided into four slopes for all tastes: flowering, magic, sacred, historical.

The area is paradise for anyone interested in outdoor activities and wildlife. Walking trails crisscross the area. *Rifugi* (mountain huts) welcome hikers every few kilometres with a restaurant and a warm bed (most open summer only; maps with phone numbers and opening details are available at all local tourist offices).

There's a good driving-circle around the mountains, which visitors can easily reach from Norcia (in Umbria) or Ascoli Piceno, Macerata or Ancona. From the southwest, start in Norcia, heading to Castelluccio. Follow signs to Montemonaco, Montefortino and Amandola. Just past Montefortino, take the road marked for Madonna dell'Ambro, which will take you to the **Gola dell'Infernaccio**, Monti Sibillini's waterfall masterpiece. Backtrack to Montefortino and continue on the circle.

Although not technically in the Monti Sibillini national park, the largest and prettiest town is Sarnano, on the SS78, which leads to Sasso Tetto, the main ski area in Monti Sibillini. From the main ski area, the road drops down to Lago Fiasstra. To continue on an equally stunning drive, circle around to the SS209 through the Valnerina in Umbria.

## Information

There are 15 'Casa del Parco' visitors information centres, several of which are open daily, including **Amandola** (☎ /fax 0736 84 85 98; Via Indipendenza 73; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-6pm Easter-Sep). Each tourist office carries a plethora of books, maps, brochures and guides to satisfy every cultural or natural interest, from monasteries to mountain-biking trails.

Check out [www.sibillini.net](http://www.sibillini.net), the area's official website, which is mostly translated into English and has loads of information on camping and hotels, hikes, outdoor activities and services.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Montespino** (☎ /fax 0736 85 92 38; Montefortino Cerratana; person/tent €4.15/6.20, 2-/4-/6-bed bungalow €26/39/47; ☎ Jun-Sep, weekends only mid-Sep—Dec; 📄 📄) With a view of Monte Conero and surrounded by a forest full of trees, this campsite seems like it's in the middle of nowhere but it's just a few kilometres off the SS78 between Macerata and Ascoli Piceno. Full service with a restaurant, bar, market, bocce court, swimming pool and children's games.

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## MAGIC MOUNTAINS

Sibylline: the very word has become synonymous with occult and mysterious things, and for centuries the rugged, wild world of the Monti Sibillini has stirred the imagination of writers. In the Middle Ages, this mountain range of 20 summits was known as a realm of demons, necromancers and fairies.

The name derives from the famous legend of Sibyl, thought to be able to foresee the future and reputed to live in a cave below Mt Sibylla, one of the three highest peaks of the range.

Whether or not you believe these ancient stories, you can't help but be entranced by the magic of these mountains that straddle Umbria and Le Marche. As you climb, the vegetation changes, from oaks, European hops and flowering ashes to beechwoods higher up. Higher still you find rough grazing land and rare, precious species of flowers like Apennine edelweiss. In the summer, the northernmost part of the park is filled with blooming orchids, liliaceae, narcissuses and alpine aster. The creatures that live in the mountains are just as wild. There are wolves, wild cats, roe deer and porcupines, while golden eagles, goshawks, sparrowhawks and peregrine falcons soar overhead.

The 700 sq km set aside in 1993 as a national park also contain other evocative reminders of an ancient world. There are abbeys and medieval towns nestling at the bottom of the mountains, and churches with late-Gothic frescoes, castles and lookout towers erected by valley dwellers to defend themselves against Saracen raids. In the valley of Lago Fiastra is the Grotta dei Fratti (The Friars' Cave), an impressive ravine hollowed out by water that served as a refuge in the 11th century for the Clarena monks. Norcia is the birthplace of St Benedict, the patron saint of Europe. It's the starting point for many excursions including to the Abbey of Sant Eutizio, in the *comune* of Preci, founded at the end of the 5th century and famous for the skills the monks developed in healing the sick with medicinal herbs from the Sibillini mountains.

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**Ristorante/B&B Osteria del Lago** (☎ 0737 5 26 69; Via San Lorenzo al Lago 19, Lago di Fiastra; r €40-85; meals €21) During the shoulder seasons, have a mountain lake all to yourself while eating the best *cinghiale* in Le Marche. A few homey rooms grace the top floor of the simple family-owned trattoria. Nearby are dozens of walking trails that go throughout the Lago di Fiastra area.

**Casa Sibillini** (☎ 0736 85 90 44; [www.casasibillini.com](http://www.casasibillini.com); Via dei Tiratori 11, Montefortino; s/d/apt incl breakfast €40/60/80; 🏠) The English-owned B&B is a gracious home appointed with well-appreciated touches – an indoor brick oven, a comfortable living room area filled with books, and a home-cooked breakfast each morning. Fountains of information about the area, the owners can help you plan your day or trip around the mountain.

**Hotel Paradiso** (☎ 0737 84 74 68; [www.sibillinihotels.it](http://www.sibillinihotels.it); Piazza Umberto I, Amandola; s €40, d €62-100; 🏨) It's not easy to find or to reach, but this private retreat hamlet is worth the slog for the view alone. With 40 comfortable rooms (most with balconies), an impressive restaurant (breakfast €5, lunch and dinner €20) and the surrounding baroque-style year-round theatre, tennis courts and romantic arched walkway, the unassuming-looking hotel offers everything you need in a mountain holiday.

**our pick La Quercia della Memoria** (☎ 0733 69 44 31; [www.querciadellamemoria.it](http://www.querciadellamemoria.it); Contrada Vellato, San Ginesio; per person €30-40; meals €25; 🏠) Follow the pandas to this one-in-a-million find. About 15 minutes off the Monti Sibillini route, but so worth the drive. On the weekends, dine in the *biologico* (organic) restaurant on home-grown and -ground wheat bread or stay in the refurbished stone houses, where dozens of sustainable building touches include radiant floor heating made from wine bottles, a grey-water system and solar power.

## Getting There & Away

Monti Sibillini is best reached by bus from Ascoli Piceno or Macerata. The services are heaviest when school is in session, so can be spotty for tourists. It's best to check with tourist offices in [Ascoli](#) or [Macerata](#) or with the bus companies themselves, including **Contram** (☎ 800 443040) in Ascoli Piceno or **Start** (☎ 800 037737) in Macerata. There is no train service in the mountains; the closest stops are in

## SARNANO

Though not technically in Monti Sibillini, Sarnano is the largest town near the range, and the most hospitable. Its red-brick facade charms all who visit.

The **Sarnano tourist office** (☎ 0733 65 71 44; [iat.sarnano@regione.marche.it](mailto:iat.sarnano@regione.marche.it); Largo Ricciardi 1; 📧 9am-1pm Mon-Sat, 3-6pm Tue-Fri) has walking and climbing information and details of accommodation in the park.

Fabulously located just outside of Sarnano, the family-friendly campsite **Quattro Stagioni** (☎ 0733 65 11 47; [www.camping4stagioni.it](http://www.camping4stagioni.it); Loc Brillì; 2 people & caravan €18-27, extra person €5-6, 4-person bungalows €40-80; 📄 📧) has two separate pools for adults and children, table tennis, a discotheque and courts for just about everything: bocce, tennis and soccer. It's open all year and has a restaurant, market and pizzeria. During high season it offers instruction in swimming, horse riding and even aerobics classes. Bungalows come with kitchenettes and have full bathrooms.

**Albergo La Villa** (☎ 0733 65 72 18; [www.hrlavilla.com](http://www.hrlavilla.com); Viale della Rimembranza 46, Sarnano; s €35-45, d €52-60; 📄) The bench in the flower-filled garden is reason enough to stay here, but the dead silence, five-minute walk into town, price (rooms with shared bathroom are less expensive), adjoining restaurant with local treats (rabbit, truffles, lamb etc) and children's play space make this an excellent choice for families or couples.

On the Sassotetto road lies the sparkingly modern **Novidra** (☎ 0733 65 71 97; [www.novidra.com](http://www.novidra.com); Via DeGasperi 26; s €50, d €90-150, all incl breakfast; 📄 📧 📶 📱) serving weary skiers, view seekers and spa aficionados. Although the long corridors feel a bit spooky, rooms are comfortably designed for those visiting the next-door spa, with soft sheets, plush bathrobes and a full cadre of toiletries.

The stone staircase leading to the cavernous interior of **Ristorante Il Vicolo** (☎ 0733 65 85 65; Vicolo Brunforte 191a; meals €23; 📧 Thu-Tue) is a hint as to the history found in the restaurant's dishes – hare, wild boar and grilled pork. The house antipasto '*della nonna*' is a mix of Marchigiani specialities and international flavours, such as chickpeas with curry.



## Abruzzo & Molise

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### ABRUZZO

[PARCO NAZIONALE DEL GRAN SASSO E MONTI DELLA LAGA](#)

[PARCO NAZIONALE DELLA MAJELLA](#)

[PARCO NAZIONALE D'ABRUZZO, LAZIO E MOLISE](#)

[PESCARA](#)

[CHIETI](#)

[VASTO](#)

### MOLISE

[CAMPOBASSO](#)

[AROUND CAMPOBASSO](#)

[ISERNIA](#)

[TERMOLI](#)

[ALBANIAN TOWNS](#)

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A stunning mountain region little known to foreign visitors, Abruzzo is an area of unspoiled natural beauty and rural, back-country charm. It might only be an hour from Rome but it feels like a world apart with its great Apennine peaks, still, silent valleys and pretty hilltop towns. To the south, Molise offers more of the same, albeit on a smaller, less dramatic scale.

Tourism hasn't bypassed the area but nor has it taken over completely and with visitor numbers in freefall after the devastating earthquake of 2009, there's never been a better time to go. Many people make for the heavily developed Adriatic resorts but it's inland that you'll discover the real heart of these two regions.

Abruzzo and Molise boast three national parks encompassing 3350 sq km of mountainous terrain. The oldest and most popular is the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise, where wolves and bears roam free in the vast beech woods and verdant slopes. A mecca for outdoor enthusiasts, it also offers wonderful hiking, skiing and mountain-biking.

Traditionally poor and neglected, neither region is as culturally rich as its more illustrious neighbours, but there are gems to be found. Pescocostanzo's baroque centre and Sulmona's historic *palazzi* testify to past glories, while prehistoric finds in Isernia reveal the presence of one of Europe's oldest human settlements. Isolation has also ensured the survival of age-old customs such as Cocullo's bizarre snake-

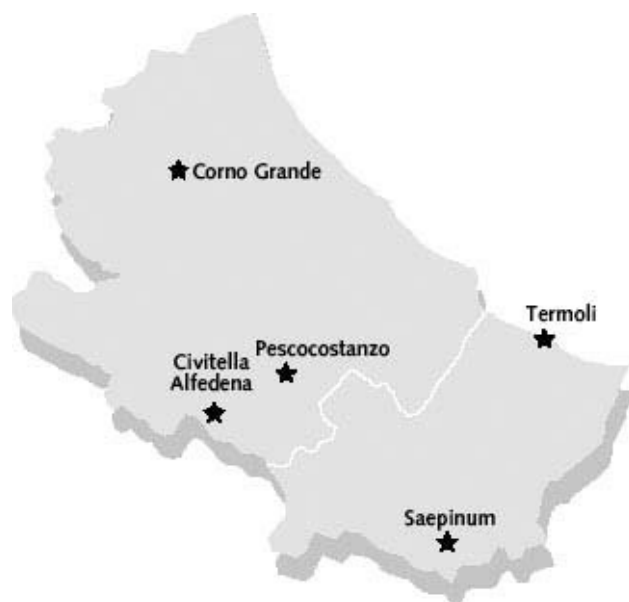
charmers' procession and the manic bull race in Ururi. In Scanno, you'll still see elderly women wearing traditional clothing.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Breathe in the pure mountain air of **Pescocostanzo**, one of Abruzzo's hidden jewels
- Travel back in time as you walk the ancient Roman town of **Saepinum**.
- Dance with wolves at **Civitella Alfedena** deep in Abruzzo's green heartland
- Feel the call of the wild as you climb the **Corno Grande**, summit of the Gran Sasso and the Apennine's highest peak
- Get with the summer swing at **Termoli**, a cheerful and unpretentious Adriatic resort



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POPULATION: ABRUZZO 1.3 MILLION; MOLISE 320,850

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AREA: ABRUZZO 10,794 SQ KM; MOLISE 4438 SQ KM

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## ABRUZZO

Best known for its dramatic mountain scenery, Abruzzo's landscape is surprisingly diverse. There are ancient forests in the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise, a vast plain extends east of Avezzano and the coastline is flat and sandy.

Many towns retain a medieval look, while the numerous hilltop castles and isolated, sometimes abandoned, *borghi* (villages) exude a sinister charm, lending credence to Abruzzo's fame as an ancient centre of magic.

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# PARCO NAZIONALE DEL GRAN SASSO E MONTI DELLA LAGA

About 20km northeast of L'Aquila, the Gran Sasso massif is the centrepiece of the Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga, one of Italy's largest national parks. The park's predominant feature is its jagged rocky landscape through which Europe's southernmost glacier, the Calderone, cuts its course. It's also a haven for wildlife, home to an estimated 40 wolves, 350 chamois and five pairs of royal eagles.

For further information contact the **park office** (☎ 0862 6 05 21; [www.gransassolagapark.it](http://www.gransassolagapark.it), in Italian; Via del Convento 1; ☎ 10.30am-1pm Mon-Fri & 4-6pm Tue & Thu) in **Assergi**.

**Fonte Cerreto** is the main gateway to the Gran Sasso and Campo Imperatore (2117m), a desolate highland plain where Mussolini was briefly imprisoned in 1943. A **funivia** (cable car; ☎ 0862 60 61 43; Sat & Sun €14, weekdays €11; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 6pm Sun, closed May) runs up to the Campo from Fonte Cerreto. Up top, there's hiking in summer and skiing in winter – [Click here](#).

One of the most popular trekking routes is the surprisingly straightforward climb up **Corno Grande** (at 2912m, it's the Apennines' highest peak). The 9km *via normale* (normal route) starts in the main parking area at Campo Imperatore and heads to the summit. The trail should be clear of snow from early June to late September/early October. If attempting the ascent, or any other serious route, be sure to arm yourself with the CAI 1:25,000 map *Gran Sasso d'Italia* (€10).

The park has a network of *rifugi* (mountain huts) for walkers. Otherwise, you can bed down at **Camping Funivia del Gran Sasso** (☎ 0862 60 61 63; Fonte Cerreto; per person/tent/car €7/8/1.50; ☎ mid-May—mid-Sep), a modest camp site in Fonte Cerreto or, at the top of the cable-car lift, the **Ostello Campo Imperatore** (☎ 0862 40 00 11; Campo Imperatore; per person €30, incl dinner €45), which offers basic year-round digs.

Fonte Cerreto is just off the A24 motorway, clearly signposted. To get here by public transport you'll have to pass through L'Aquila – take bus 76 from L'Aquila to Piazza Santa Maria Paganica, and then the M6 bus to Fonte Cerreto.

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## EARTHQUAKE ROCKS L'AQUILA

At 3.32am on 6 April 2009, an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale struck northern Abruzzo, killing 308 people, injuring 1500 and leaving almost 65,000 homeless. The epicentre was 10km west of regional capital L'Aquila, but shock waves were felt as far away as Rome, 90km to the southwest, and Naples, 185km to the south.

Much of L'Aquila's *centro storico* was damaged, including the 15th-century Basilica di San Bernadino and the Basilica di Santa Maria di Collemaggio, Abruzzo's most famous church. Built in the 13th century, the basilica is revered by locals for its association with Pope Celestine V, the founder of the Celestine order, who is buried here. To the north, another city landmark, the 16th-century Forte Spagnolo, was also badly hit.

In the aftermath of the quake, and in an effort to focus attention on Abruzzo's plight, Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi hosted the July 2009 G8 summit in L'Aquila, rather than La Maddalena, the original location in northern Sardinia.

Abruzzo and neighbouring Molise are particularly vulnerable to earthquakes as they sit on a major fault line that follows the Apennines from Sicily up to Genoa. In 2002, a 5.4-magnitude quake struck neighbouring Molise, killing 29 people in the small town of San Giuliano di Puglia.

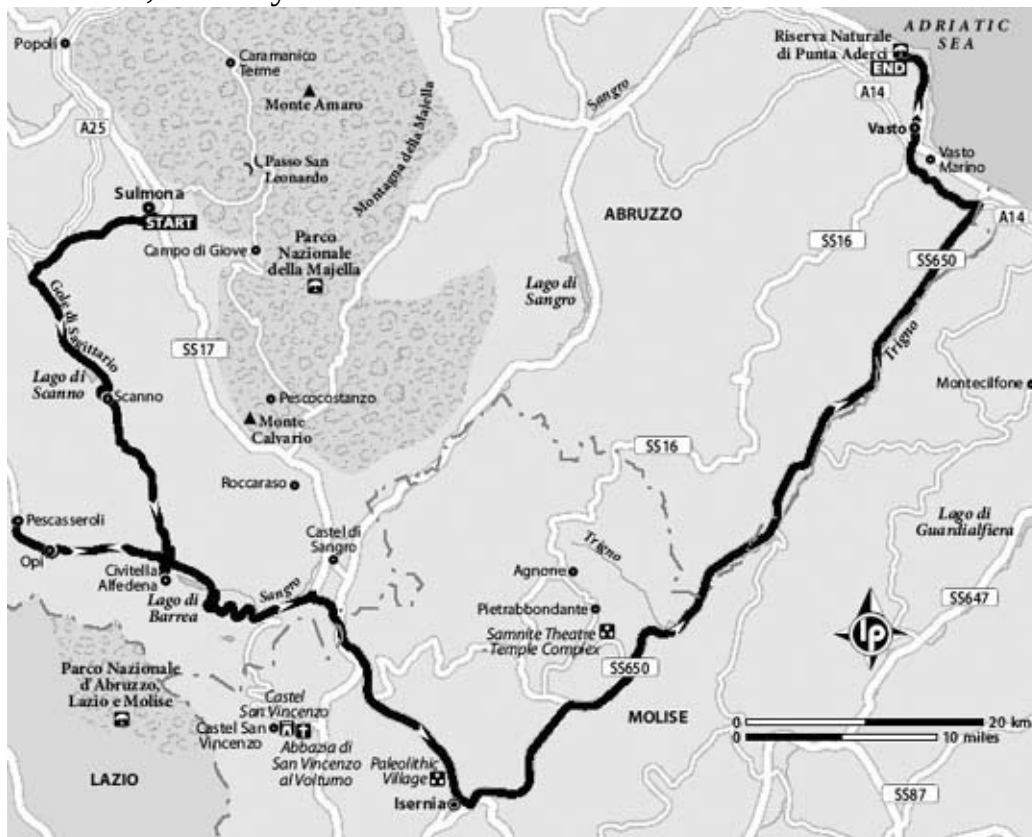
## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### cut to the heart      One week / Sulmona / Riserva Naturale di Punta Aderci

An oasis in the mountainous terrain of southern Abruzzo, **Sulmona** is the place to start. With its attractive historic centre, welcoming vibe and great trattorias, it's the archetypal Italian town. Check out the market stalls on Piazza Garibaldi and join the locals on their evening *passeggiata* along Corso Ovidio. After a night in Sulmona, push on southwards to hilltop **Scanno**. It's a slow, scenic ride that takes you through the Gole di Saggittario, a rocky gorge that squeezes the road like a natural vice, and up past the beautiful Lago di Scanno. Scanno's biscuit-tin beauty has made it something of a tourist attraction, but visit out of high summer and you'll find it a tranquil spot.

From Scanno, the next leg leads you up to 1600m and down a long, tortuous descent to the magnificent **Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise**, the most popular of Abruzzo's three national parks. Set up camp in **Civitella Alfedena**, or **Pescasseroli** if you prefer somewhere livelier, and spend a couple of days exploring the surrounding mountains. Once you've recharged your batteries, continue on to **Isernia**, where excavations have revealed evidence of a Palaeolithic settlement. It's difficult to imagine, but more than 700,000 years ago Homo Erectus was hunting elephant in these parts.

Having boned up on prehistoric history, it's time to hit the coast and top up your tan at **Vasto**, a popular Adriatic resort. If the crowds get too much, and they might in summer, head up the road to the Spiaggia di Punta Penna, a lovely beach in the **Riserva Naturale di Punta Aderci**.







## SULMONA

pop 25,325

Hemmed in by dark, brooding mountains, Sulmona is a prosperous provincial town with an atmospheric medieval core. It's easily covered in a day, although you might want to linger and use it as a base for exploring southern Abruzzo.

Despite its medieval appearance, Sulmona's origins predate the Romans. No-one is absolutely sure but tradition holds that it was founded by Solimo, a companion of Aeneas. The poet Ovid was born here in 43 BC, and in the Middle Ages it became an important commercial centre.

Much of Sulmona's modern wealth is based on the production of *confetti* – the sugar almonds presented to guests at Italian weddings – and jewellery.

## Orientation

Most sights are on or near the main street, Corso Ovidio, which runs southeast from the Villa Comunale park to Piazza Garibaldi, Sulmona's main square. It's a five-minute stroll and the *corso* is closed to traffic outside business hours. About halfway down is Piazza XX Settembre.

The train station is 2km northwest of the historic centre; the half-hourly bus A runs between the two.

## Information

**3D Sistemi** (☎ 0864 21 20 47; Piazza Plebiscito 2; per hr €5; ☒ 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat) For internet access.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0864 5 32 76; [www.abruzzoturismo.it](http://www.abruzzoturismo.it); Corso Ovidio 208; ☒ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun mid-May—mid-Sep, 9am-1pm Mon-Sat plus 3-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri mid-Sep—mid-May)

## Sights

The most impressive of the *palazzi* on Corso Ovidio is the 16th-century **Palazzo dell'Annunziata** (Corso Ovidio), a harmonious blend of Gothic and Renaissance architecture. Inside, the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0864 21 02 16) has a small collection of Roman mosaics and Renaissance sculpture, and the **Museo Archeologico in situ** showcases a 1st-century-BC Roman villa. At the time of research, both museums were closed on account of damage sustained in the 2009 earthquake.

Nearby, **Piazza XX Settembre**, with its statue of Ovid, is a popular meeting point.

Continuing along Corso Ovidio you come to what remains of a 13th-century **aqueduct** and, beneath that, **Piazza Garibaldi**, home of Sulmona's Wednesday and Saturday market. In the centre of the piazza, the Renaissance **Fontana del Vecchio** (Fountain of the Old One) is said by some to depict Solimo, the founder of Sulmona. To the northeast, the 14th-century **Chiesa di San Filippo Neri** (Piazza Garibaldi) boasts an impressive Gothic portal.

Also on the square, housed in a former convent, is the **Polo Museale Santa Chiara** (☎ 0864 21 29 62; Piazza Garibaldi; admission €3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm daily), a small museum with an eclectic collection of religious and contemporary art. A highlight is a fascinating *presepe* (nativity scene) depicting 19th-century Sulmona.

About 1km from Porta Napoli, at the southern end of Corso Ovidio, is the **Fabbrica Confetti Pelino**, the most famous of Sulmona's *confetti* manufacturers. Learn how they do it at the **Museo dell'Arte Confettiera** (☎ 0864 21 00 47; Via Stazione Introdacqua 55; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat).

## Festivals & Events

Crowds swell Piazza Garibaldi on Easter Sunday to witness the **Madonna che Scappa in Piazza** (The Madonna that Escapes to the Square), Sulmona's traditional Easter ceremony.

Summer sees further festivities as the city hosts two medieval tournaments. On the last weekend in July, local horse riders gallop around Piazza Garibaldi in the **Giostra Cavalleresca di Sulmona**. Then, a week later, the competition is opened up to riders from across Europe in the **Giostra Cavalleresca d'Europa**.

## Sleeping

**B&B Case Bonomini** (☎ 0864 5 23 08; [www.bedandbreakfastcasebonomini.com](http://www.bedandbreakfastcasebonomini.com); Via Quatrario 71; s €25-30, d €50-70, tr €65-90) Hidden away on a back street in the historic centre, this mini-apartment is one of three properties on the same street. It's a modest place with homey decor and a creaky wooden bed but there's plenty of light, the price is right and there's a fully equipped kitchen.

**Albergo Ristorante Stella** (☎ 0864 5 26 53; [www.hasr.it](http://www.hasr.it); Via Panfilo Mazara 18; s €40-50, d €70-80) A bright little three-star in the *centro storico*, the Stella offers airy, modern rooms and a smart, ground-floor restaurant—wine bar (lunch €14). Discounts of around 20% are available for stays of more than one night and you can arrange bike/car hire as well as airport pick-ups.

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## OUR TOP FIVE HILLTOP TOWNS IN ABRUZZO

- **Scanno** – A picturesque knot of grey stone buildings set against a rugged mountain backdrop.

- **Pescocostanzo** – At 1400m, this is one of Italy’s highest municipalities. It boasts a picturesque medieval centre and great hiking and skiing.
  - **Vasto** – With its pretty lanes, impressive Renaissance museum and vast sea views, Vasto’s historic centre cuts quite a dash.
  - **Chieti** – Capital of the ancient Marrucini tribe, this windy outpost harbours some fascinating archaeological finds.
  - **Sulmona** (opposite) – OK, it’s not exactly hilltop, but Ovid’s birthplace makes an attractive base for exploring the Parco Nazionale della Majella.
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## Eating & Drinking

**our pick** **Hosteria dell’Arco** (☎ 0864 21 05 53; Via M D’Eramo 20; meals €20; 📅 Tue-Sun) You’ll remember this place – superb food, lovely, rustic surroundings, laid-back atmosphere and friendly service, all for the princely sum of €20. First up is the fabulous antipasto buffet, prepared from scratch every night, followed by delicious grilled lamb and scrumptious home-made desserts.

**La Cantina di Biffi** (☎ 0864 3 20 25; Via Barbato 1; meals €20; 📅 closed Sun evening & Mon) Just off Corso Ovidio, this is a charming and atmospheric bistro—wine bar. Exposed stone walls and the arched, vaulted ceiling set the stage for excellent home-made food and local wine, served by the glass from €4.

**Pasticceria Palazzone** (☎ 0864 21 11 21; Piazza SS Annunziata 2; 📅 Wed-Mon) Grab an outdoor table and sip something cool as you watch the evening parade on Corso Ovidio. If you get the munchies, there’s a great spread of ice cream and savoury snacks.

## Shopping

A pack of *confetti* is the traditional Sulmona souvenir. Pick one up at **Confetteria Maria Di Vito** (☎ 0864 5 59 08; Corso Ovidio 187) along with a bar of *torrone*, a chewy nougat confection. *Confetti* costs from €4 for a small packet to €10 for a 2kg bag.

## Getting There & Away

**ARPA** (☎ 199 166 952; [www.arpaonline.it](http://www.arpaonline.it)) buses go to/from L’Aquila (€5.50, 1½ hours, nine daily), Pescara (€5.50, one hour, nine daily), Scanno (€2.90, one hour, 10 daily) and other nearby towns. Striking further afield, **SATAM** (☎ 0871 34 49 69) runs four daily services to Naples (€15, 2½ hours).

Buses leave from a confusing array of points, including Villa Comunale, the hospital, train station, and beneath Ponte Capograssi. Find out which stop you need when you get your ticket from **Agenzia Fai** (☎ 0864 5 17 15; Via Circonvallazione Orientale 3; 📅 9am-1pm & 4.20-6.30pm Mon-Sat) near Porta Napoli.

By car, Sulmona is just off the A25 autostrada. From L’Aquila, follow the SS17 south.

Trains link with L’Aquila (€3.90, one hour, 11 daily), Pescara (€3.90, 1¼ hours, 17 daily) and Rome (€8.80, 2½ to three hours, seven daily). From the train station take bus A for the centre.

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## PARCO NAZIONALE DELLA MAJELLA

Easily accessible from Sulmona, the 750-sq-km Parco Nazionale della Majella is an area of ominous mountains and empty valleys. More than half the park is over 2000m and its high point, Monte Amaro

(2793m), is the Apennines' second-highest peak. Some 500km of paths and cycling trails criss-cross the area, providing ample scope for exercise.

From Sulmona the two easiest access points are **Campo di Giove** (elevation 1064m), a small skiing village 18 tortuous kilometres to the southeast, and the lovely town of **Pescocostanzo**, 33km south of Sulmona along the SS17.

In Pescocostanzo there's a **tourist office** (☎ 0864 64 14 40; Vico delle Carceri; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, 9am-1pm & 4-7pm daily Jul & Aug), just off the central Piazza del Municipio. Further information is also available on the park's comprehensive website [www.parcomajella.it](http://www.parcomajella.it).

Set amid verdant highland plains, Pescocostanzo (elevation 1400m) is a real gem, a hilltop town whose historic core has changed little in over 500 years. Much of the cobbled centre dates to the 16th and 17th centuries when it was an important town on the 'Via degli Abruzzi', the main road linking Naples and Florence. Of particular note is the **Collegiata di Santa Maria del Colle**, an atmospheric church that combines a superb Romanesque portal with a lavish baroque interior. Nearby, **Piazza del Municipio** is flanked by a number of impressive *palazzi*, including **Palazzo Comunale** with its distinctive clock tower and **Palazzo Fanzago**, designed by the great baroque architect Cosimo Fanzago in 1624.

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## SNAKES IN COCULLO

A one-horse hamlet in the hills west of Sulmona, **Cocullo** is the unlikely setting for one of Italy's weirdest festivals. The **Processione dei Serpari** (Snake Charmers' Procession) is the highlight of celebrations to honour St Dominic (San Domenico), Cocullo's patron saint and protector against snake bites. Events kick off at noon on the first Thursday of May when villagers gather in the main square to adorn a statue of St Dominic with jewellery, banknotes and dozens of writhing snakes. Once dressed, the saint is paraded through the streets by a team of fearless *serpari*. Local lore holds that if the snakes twist around the saint's head it's good news for the year ahead; if they crawl up the arms, the omens are bad.

Despite the religious element of the festivities, its origins are said to be pagan. Before the arrival of Christianity, locals worshipped a goddess called Angizia, who supposedly had powers to cure snake bites. As Christianity spread, the ancient deities were substituted by Christian saints and St Dominic inherited Angizia's mantle.

The serpents used for the festival are harmless *cervoni* and *saettoni*. They are caught in the surrounding countryside in late March and released back into the hills once the festivities are over.

Cocullo is accessible by a daily bus from Sulmona (€1.40, 20 minutes), although on festival day extra services are laid on – ask at Sulmona tourist office [Click here](#) for details.

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## TAKE TO THE PISTES

Abruzzo and Molise might lack the glamour of the northern Alps, but skiing is enthusiastically followed and there are resorts across the regions. These include the following:

- **Campo Imperatore** Twenty-two kilometres of mainly downhill pistes in the Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della [Laga](#).
- **Ovindoli** Abruzzo's biggest ski resort has 30km of downhill pistes and 50km of cross-country trails.
- **Campo Felice** A small resort 40km south of L'Aquila with 40km of pistes (30 downhill, 10 cross-

country).

- **Pescasseroli** This popular outpost deep in the Parco Nazionale d’Abruzzo, Lazio e [Molise](#) has 30km of downhill slopes.
- **Campo di Giove** At the foot of the Majella (opposite), this resort offers Abruzzo’s highest skiing at 2350m.
- **Pescocostanzo** Good for ski hiking as well as downhill, Pescocostanzo opposite is celebrated for its medieval architecture.
- **Campitello Matese** In Molise’s Monti del [Matese](#), Campitello offers 40km of pistes, including 15km for cross-country.

Bank on about €35 for a daily ski pass.

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History apart, Pescocostanzo also offers skiing on **Monte Calvario** and summer hiking in the **Bosco di Sant’Antonio**.

If you want to stay in Pescocostanzo, **Albergo La Rua** (☎ 0864 64 00 83; [www.larua.it](http://www.larua.it); Via Rua Mozza 1; d €70-100; 📶) is a charming little hotel in the historic centre. The look is country cosy with low wood-beamed ceilings and a stone fireplace, and the superfriendly owners are a mine of local knowledge.

Daily buses run from Sulmona to Pescocostanzo (€3.60, one daily, three hours) via Castel di Sangro, and to Campo di Giove (€1.90, 45 minutes, three daily).

## SCANNO

### pop 2035

A tangle of steep alleyways and sturdy, grey-stone houses, Scanno is a photogenic hilltop village and a popular tourist destination. It’s left to its own devices in winter, but gets very busy in summer as visitors pour in en masse to enjoy the authentic atmosphere of a remote medieval *borgo*. You would not want to miss it, though – if nothing else for the exhilarating drive up from Sulmona, through the rocky Gole di Sagittaro (Sagittarius Gorges) and past tranquil Lago di Scanno.

Long heralded as a bastion of tradition, Scanno was for centuries a centre of wool production and it is one of the few places in Italy where you can still see women wearing traditional dress.

To learn more, contact the **tourist office** (☎ 0864 7 43 17; Piazza Santa Maria della Valle 12; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat Oct—mid-May) in the village centre.

## Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation is plentiful, although many places close in winter and most insist on half-board in July and August. Book ahead for summer.

**Pensione Grotta dei Colombi** (☎ 0864 7 43 93; [www.grottadeicolombi.it](http://www.grottadeicolombi.it); Viale dei Caduti 64; s/d €35/50, half-board per person €42-50; 🕒 closed Nov) A sunny two-star on the edge of the *centro storico*. Rooms, some of which have views over the rocky gorge opposite, are unfussy and straightforward with plain white walls and basic pine furniture.

**Hotel Belvedere** (☎ 0864 7 43 14; [www.belvederescanno.it](http://www.belvederescanno.it); Piazza Santa Maria della Valle 3; s €27.50-35, d €55-70) Despite the tired-looking exterior, this year-round hotel offers spick-and-span modern rooms decked out with parquet and polished wood trimmings. The location, on Scanno’s main

piazza, is a further plus.

**Pizzeria Trattoria Vecchio Mulino** (☎ 0864 74 72 19; Via Silla 50; pizzas €6, meals €25; 📞 closed Wed in winter) This old-school eatery is a good bet for a classic wood-fired pizza, cheesy antipastos and chargrilled hunks of pork and lamb. In summer the pretty streetside terrace provides a good perch to people-watch as you wait for your order.

**Ristorante Gli Archetti** (☎ 0864 7 46 45; Via Silla 8; meals €35; 📞 closed dinner Mon & Tue) Housed in the cellar of a Renaissance *palazzo*, this smart restaurant is highly rated. The menu is seasonal, but typical dishes include *prosciutto cotto con l'aceto di mela* (cured ham with apple vinegar) and *filetto al montepulciano* (fillet steak with red wine).

## Getting There & Away

**ARPA** (☎ 199 166 952; [www.arpaonline.it](http://www.arpaonline.it)) buses connect Scanno with Sulmona (€2.90, one hour, nine daily).

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## PARCO NAZIONALE D'ABRUZZO, LAZIO E MOLISE

Encompassing 1100 sq km of spectacular mountain scenery, the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise is the oldest and most popular of Abruzzo's national parks. It is also an important natural habitat, supporting 60 species of mammals, including the native Marsican brown bear and Apennine wolf, and up to 300 bird species. At current estimates there are reckoned to be about 50 bears, between 40 and 50 wolves, 700 indigenous chamois and two or three pairs of royal eagles. If you're very lucky you might also spot one of the very few lynx still in the wild.

The park offers superb hiking as well as skiing, mountain-biking and other outdoor pursuits.

## Orientation & Information

The park's main centre is **Pescasseroli**, an attractive village about 80km southwest of Sulmona. For somewhere more low-key, nearby **Civitella Alfedena** is much less touristy.

In Pescasseroli (elevation 1167m) information is available from the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0863 91 04 61; Via Principe di Napoli; 📞 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, 9am-1pm & 4-7pm daily Jul & Aug) and from the **Centro di Visita** (☎ 0863 911 32 21; Viale Colli d'Oro; adult/child €6/4; 📞 10am-7.30pm daily Apr-Aug, to 5.30pm daily Sep-Mar), which also has a small museum and zoo.

Seventeen kilometres from Pescasseroli, Civitella Alfedena (elevation 1121m) lies on the park's eastern edge above Lago di Barrea. Here, you can study the local flora and fauna at the **Centro Lupo** (Wolf Centre; ☎ 0864 89 01 41; admission €3; 📞 10am-2pm & 2.30-5.30pm) and spy on a couple of wolves at the free **Area Faunistica del Lupo**. To see a rare lynx follow the signs to the **Area Faunistica delle Lince**.

## Activities

Hiking opportunities abound, whether you want to go it alone or with an organised group. There are numerous outfits offering guided excursions including **Ecotur** (☎ 0863 91 27 60; [www.ecotur.org](http://www.ecotur.org); Via Piave 9), which organises treks, bike rides and various other excursions. For further hiking information see the boxed text, opposite.

Horse riding is a wonderful way to see the park. Between May and October, the **Centro Ippico Vallecupa** (☎ 0863 91 04 44; [www.agriturismomaneggiovallecupa.it](http://www.agriturismomaneggiovallecupa.it); Via della Difesa) organises riding lessons and guided rides of various difficulties, costing from €15 for a one-hour ride to €60 for a whole day.

For those who prefer to use their own legs, the tourist office hires out bikes from about €4 per hour.

For skiing information see the boxed text, [Click here](#).

## Sleeping

**Campeggio Wolf** (☎ 0864 89 03 60; Via Sotto i Cerri, Civitella Alfedena; per person/tent/car €5/5/3; ☞ May-Sep) This is a friendly camp site in Civitella Alfedena. It's a fairly simple affair but there are free hot showers, games for the kids and a restaurant for parents.

**ourpick B&B La Sosta** (☎ 0863 91 60 57; Via Marsicana 17, Opi; per person €25) A delightful B&B in Opi, about 7km from Pescasseroli. Run with passionate care by a hospitable elderly couple, it offers six smart rooms, a sunny terrace, and excellent access to the nearby mountains. The breakfasts are quite special too, with cakes and lashings of home-made jam.

**Albergo La Torre** (☎ 0864 89 01 21; [www.albergolatorre.com](http://www.albergolatorre.com); Via Castello 3, Civitella Alfedena; s €30-40, d €40-55; ☞ year-round; ☑) Housed in an atmospheric 18th-century *palazzo* in Civitella Alfedena's medieval centre, this is a warm and cosy hotel with 20 functional rooms and a small restaurant serving hot, fortifying food.

**Pensione Al Castello** (☎ 0863 91 07 57; [www.pensionecastello.it](http://www.pensionecastello.it); Viale D'Annunzio 1, Pescasseroli; r €45-60, half-board per person €40-60; ☞ year-round) Just off the main square in Pescasseroli, this family-run *pensione* has large, sunny rooms decorated with white tiled floors and pleasant wooden furniture. Half-board is compulsory in high season.

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## STRETCH YOUR LEGS

With about 150 well-marked routes, the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise is a mecca for hikers. Trails range from easy family jaunts to multiday hikes over rocky peaks and exposed highlands. The best time to go is between June and September, although access to some of the busier routes around Pescasseroli is often limited in July and August. To book entry to trails contact the Centro di Visita (opposite) in Pescasseroli or the Centro Lupo (opposite) in Civitella Alfedena.

Two of the area's most popular hikes are the climbs up Monte Amaro (2793m; Rte F1) and Monte Tranquillo (1841m; Rte C3). The former, a 2¼-hour hike, starts from a car park a few kilometres southeast of Pescasseroli (follow the SS83 for about 2km beyond Opi) and rises steeply up to the peaks where you're rewarded with stupendous views over the Valle del Sangro. There's quite a good chance of spotting a chamois on this walk.

The Monte Tranquillo route takes about 2½ hours from a starting point 3km south of Pescasseroli (follow signs for the Hotel Iris and Centro Ippico Vallecupa). If you've still got your breath at the top, you can continue northwards along the Rocca Ridge before descending down to Pescasseroli from the north. This beautiful, but challenging, 19.5km circuit takes about six or seven hours.

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Also recommended:

**Albergo Ai 4 Camosci** (☎ 0864 89 02 62; [www.ai4camosci.it](http://www.ai4camosci.it); Via Nazionale 25, Civitella

Alfedena; d €50-80, q €70-108; 📍) A welcoming year-round option in Civitella Alfedena with basic rooms in a chalet-style building.

## Eating

**Pizzeria San Francisco** (📞 0863 91 06 50; Via Isonzo 1, Pescasseroli; pizzas €6.50) If you're not eating in your hotel, this laid-back pizzeria is a good bet. A modest place with wooden tables and a bustling atmosphere, it serves delicious pizzas prepared in a traditional wood oven.

**Trattoria da Armando** (📞 0863 91 23 86; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 11; meals €15; 📧 Fri-Wed) If you're after a quick, no-fuss lunch, this straight-up trattoria does the job. There's a range of *panini* as well as the usual pasta and meat dishes. And while it's all very basic, the food is as good as you'd get in many pricier joints.

## Getting There & Away

Pescasseroli, Civitella Alfedena and the other villages in the national park are linked by six daily buses to Avezzano (€4.70, 1½ hours), from where you can change for L'Aquila, Pescara and Rome; and buses to Castel di Sangro (€3.60, 1¼ hours) for connections to Sulmona and Naples.

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## PESCARA

pop 122,790

Host of the 2009 Mediterranean Games, Abruzzo's largest city is a heavily developed seaside resort and an important transport hub. It's a lively place with an animated seafront, but unless you're coming for the 16km of sandy beaches there's really no great reason to hang around.

On the cultural front, the big drawcard is the international **jazz festival** ([www.pescarajazz.com](http://www.pescarajazz.com)), held in mid-July at the Teatro D'Annunzio.

## Orientation & Information

From the train and intercity bus stations on Piazzale della Repubblica, the beach is a short walk down Corso Umberto I.

In an ex-silo on Piazzale della Repubblica, the **tourist office** (📞 085 422 54 62; [www.proloco.pescara.it](http://www.proloco.pescara.it); 📧 9.30am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) has plenty of useful information. There's a second office at the **airport** (📞 085 432 21 20; 📧 Jun-Sep) which opens in coincidence with flight arrivals.

## Sights

Pescara was heavily bombed during WWII and much of the city centre was reduced to rubble. The main action today centres on three zones: the main pedestrian precinct around Corso Umberto, the seafront, and what's left of the historic centre. Here you'll find a couple of museums worth a quick look: the **Museo delle Genti d'Abruzzo** (📞 085 451 00 26; [www.gentidabruzzo.it](http://www.gentidabruzzo.it); Via delle Caserme 24; adult/under 18yr & over 65yr €5/3; 📧 8.45am-2pm Mon-Sat, 3.30-6.30pm Sun), which illustrates local peasant culture, and the **Museo Casa Natale Gabriele D'Annunzio** (📞 0865 6 03 91; Corso Manthonè 116; admission €2; 📧 9am-2pm daily), birthplace of controversial fascist poet Gabriele D'Annunzio.



Near the seafront, the **Museo d'Arte Moderna Vittoria Colonna** (☎ 085 428 37 59; Via Gramsci 26; admission €2; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-9pm Tue-Sat, 3-9pm Mon) boasts a Picasso and Miró among its small collection of modern art.

## Sleeping & Eating

**ourpick** **B&B Villa del Pavone** (☎ 085 421 17 70; [www.villadelpavone.it](http://www.villadelpavone.it); Via Pizzoferrato 30; d €60-80) Over the tracks on a quiet residential street about 300m behind the train station, this gorgeous B&B is a home away from home. A model of old-fashioned pride, it's laden with gleaming antiques and chichi knick-knacks while, outside, the lush garden is presided over by a resident peacock.

**Hotel Alba** (☎ 085 38 91 45; [www.hotelalba.pescara.it](http://www.hotelalba.pescara.it); Via Michelangelo Forti 14; s €50-70, d €75-110; 📄) A businesslike three-star, the Alba provides anonymous comfort and a central location. Rooms vary but the best sport polished wood, firm beds and plenty of sunlight. Note that rates are lowest at weekends and that garage parking costs €10.

**Caffè Letterario** (☎ 085 450 33 21; Via delle Caserme 22; lunch menus €5-9) With its huge floor-to-ceiling windows and exposed-brick walls, this is a popular lunchtime spot. The menu is chalked up on a daily board but typically comprises a few pastas and mains and several vegetable side dishes.

**Ristorante Marechiaro da Bruno** (☎ 085 421 38 49; Lungomare Matteotti 70; pizzas €6.50, meals €30; 🕒 Thu-Tue) This large, bustling outfit serves the best pizza on the seafront. And if the impressive fish display is anything to go by, the seafood is pretty good too.

**ourpick** **Osteria La Lumaca** (☎ 085 451 08 80; Via delle Caserme 51; lunch menus €8-15, meals €35; 🕒 closed Sat lunch & Sun) They take their food seriously at this warm wood-panelled restaurant. Particularly outstanding are the cured meats and ricotta, and the Abruzzo lamb. You'll save money at lunch by going for one of the fixed-price menus.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Pescara airport** (PSR; ☎ 899 130 310; [www.abruzzo-airport.it](http://www.abruzzo-airport.it)) is 3km out of town and easily reached by bus 38 (€1, 20 minutes, every 15 minutes) from Corso Vittorio Emanuele II in front of the train station. Ryanair and Air One are among the airlines flying to Pescara.

### BOAT

Throughout August, a daily **SNAV** (☎ 071 207 61 16; [www.snav.it](http://www.snav.it)) jetfoil runs to the Croatian island of Hvar and onto Split (Spalato in Italian). One-way tickets for the 4¾-hour journey cost €90 for a *poltrona* and €120 for a car. For information, contact **Agenzia Sanmar** (☎ 0854 451 08 73; [www.sanmar.it](http://www.sanmar.it); Lungomare Giovanni XXIII Papa 1) at the port.

### BUS

**ARPA** (☎ 199 166 952; [www.arpaonline.it](http://www.arpaonline.it)) buses leave from Piazzale della Repubblica for L'Aquila (€7.80, 2½ hours, 10 daily), Sulmona (€6, one hour, four daily) and many other destinations around Abruzzo and Molise. Buses also run to Naples (€21, 4½ hours, four daily) and to Rome's Stazione Tiburtina (€15, 2¾ hours, 11 daily).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Heading along the coast, you can choose between the A14 or the toll-free SS16. Both the A25 and SS5

lead towards Rome, L'Aquila and Sulmona.

## TRAIN

Pescara is on the main east-coast line. There are direct trains to Ancona (€7.10 to €15.20, 1¾ hours, 20 daily), Bari (€16.80 to €28.50, three hours, 15 daily), Rome (€11.70, 3½ hours, six daily) and Sulmona (€3.90, 1¼ hours, 17 daily).

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## CHIETI

**pop 54,900**

One of Abruzzo's four provincial capitals, Chieti is a windy, hilltop town 18km south of Pescara. Its roots date back to pre-Roman times when as capital of the Marrucini tribe it was known as Teate Marrucinatorum. Later, in the 4th century BC, it was conquered by the Romans and incorporated into the Roman Republic. These days the main reason to stop by is to visit the town's two fascinating archaeology museums.

Chieti's helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0871 6 36 40; Via Spaventa 47; 🕒 8am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 8am-1pm Mon-Sat & 3-6pm Tue, Thu & Fri Oct-Jun) can provide information and accommodation lists for the town and surrounding area.

Housed in a neoclassical villa in the Villa Comunale park, the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0871 33 16 68; Villa Frigerj; adult/child €4/2; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) displays a comprehensive collection of local finds, including the 6th-century-BC *Warrior of Capestrano*, considered the most important pre-Roman find in central Italy. Mystery surrounds the identity of the warrior but there are some who reckon it to be Numa Pompilio, the second king of Rome and successor to Romulus.

Nearby is the **Complesso Archeologico la Civitella** (☎ 0871 6 31 37; adult/child €4/2; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), a modern museum built round a Roman amphitheatre. Exhibits chart the history of Chieti and include weapons and pottery dating back to the Iron Age.

About 3km downhill from the historic centre, **Agriturismo Il Quadrifoglio** (☎ 0871 63 4 00; [www.agriturismoilquadrifoglio.com](http://www.agriturismoilquadrifoglio.com); Strada Licini 22, Località Colle Marccone; s/d €40/50; 📍) is a picturesque farmhouse with rustic rooms, panoramic views and a lovely, overflowing garden. Meals are €15 to €20. To get here follow signs to Colle Marccone.

Regular buses (€1, 40 minutes, every 20 minutes) link Chieti with Pescara.

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## VASTO

**pop 38,795**

On Abruzzo's southern coast, Vasto is a jolly hilltop town with an atmospheric medieval quarter and some great sea views. Two kilometres downhill is the blowsy resort of **Vasto Marina**, a strip of hotels, restaurants and camp sites fronting a long sandy beach.

Much of Vasto's *centro storico* dates to the 15th century, a golden period in which the city was known as 'the Athens of the Abruzzi'.

## Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 0873 36 73 12; Piazza del Popolo 18; 🕒 9am-1pm Mon-Fri & 3-6pm Tue, Thu & Fri mid-Sep—Jun, 9am-1pm daily & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Jul—mid-Sep) is in the historic centre.

## Sights & Activities

Up in the old town, interest centres on the small historic centre. From the landmark **Castello Caldoresco** on Piazza Rossetti, Corso de Parma leads down to the 13th-century **Cattedrale di San Giuseppe** (☎ 0873 36 71 93; Via Buonconsiglio 12; 🕒 8.30am-noon & 4.30-7pm), a lovely low-key example of Romanesque architecture. Nearby, the Renaissance **Palazzo d'Avalos** houses the **Museo Civico Archaeologica** (☎ 0873 36 77 73; Piazza del Popolo; admission €1.50; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Tue-Sun) with its eclectic collection of ancient bronzes, glasswork and paintings, as well as three other museums – the **Pinacoteca Comunale** (admission €3.50), the **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** (admission free) and the **Museo del Costume** (admission €1.50).

In summer the action moves down to the beach at Vasto Marina. It gets very crowded in August but with a car you can escape north up the SS16 to the beautiful **Spiaggia di Punta Penna** and the **Riserva Naturale di Punta Aderci** ([www.puntaderci.it](http://www.puntaderci.it)), a 285-hectare area of uncontaminated rocky coastline.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel San Marco** (☎ 0873 6 05 37; [www.hotelsanmarcovasto.com](http://www.hotelsanmarcovasto.com); Via Madonna dell'Asilo 4; s €38-52, d €66-86; 📶 📶) Just off Corso Garibaldi in the upper town, this cracking little two-star is excellent value for money, offering slick modern rooms at far from designer prices. Free wi-fi is also thrown in.

**Hostaria del Pavone** (☎ 0873 6 02 27; Via Barbarotta; meals €35; 🕒 Wed-Mon) With its brick barrel-vaulted ceiling and nautical knick-knacks, this highly regarded restaurant is a great place for creative seafood. Of the menu staples, the standout dish is *brodetto alla vastese*, Vasto's signature fish soup.

Down in Vasto Marina, you can stock up on essentials at **La Bottega del Gusto** (Viale Dalmazia 96; 🕒 8am-1.15pm & 4.30-8.30pm, closed Mon afternoon), a minimarket one block back from the beach.

## Getting There & Away

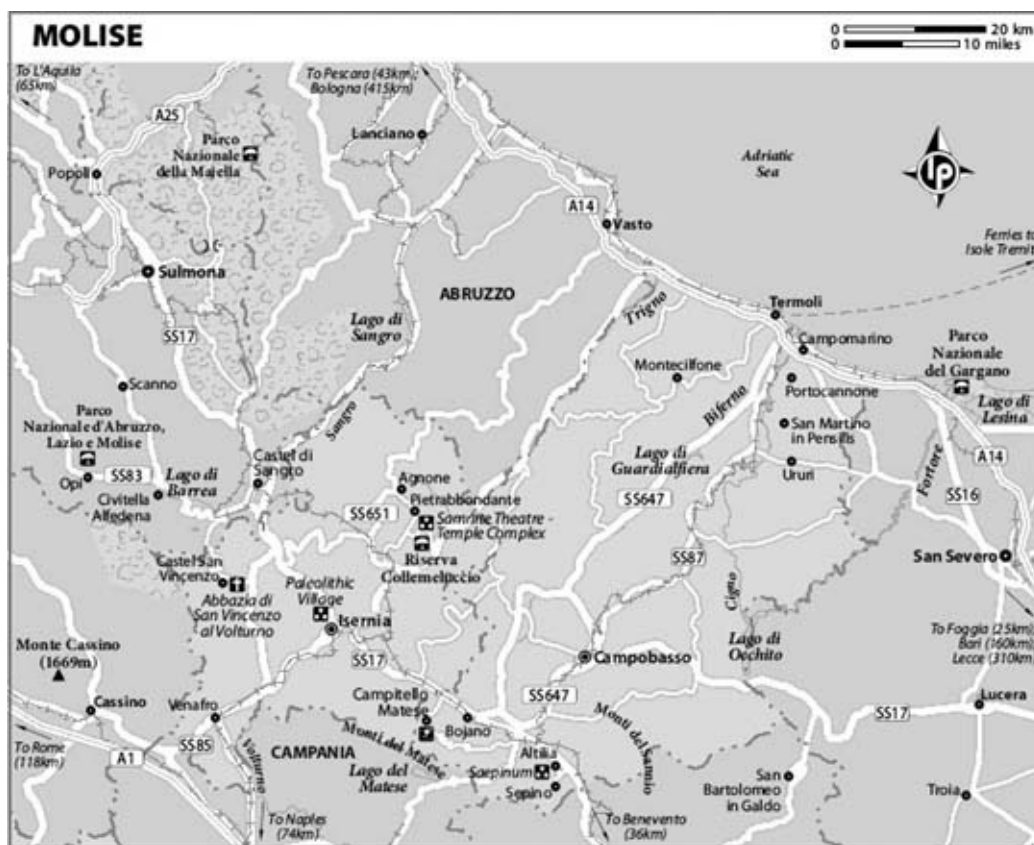
By car Vasto is on the A14 autostrada and the SS16, both of which run up the Adriatic coast.

The train station (Vasto—San Salvo) is about 2km south of Vasto Marina. Regional trains run to Pescara (€3.90, one hour, hourly) and Termoli (€2.20, 1¼ hours, 16 daily). From the station take bus 1 or 4 for Vasto Marina and the town centre (€0.90).

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## MOLISE

One of Italy's forgotten regions, Molise is one of the few parts of the country where you can still get off the beaten track. And while it lacks the grandeur of its northern neighbour, the lack of a slick tourist infrastructure and the raw, unspoiled countryside ensure a gritty authenticity, so often missing in more celebrated areas.



To get the best out of Molise, you really need your own transport.

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## CAMPOBASSO

pop 51,320

Molise's regional capital and main transport hub is a sprawling, uninspiring city with little to recommend it. However, if you do find yourself passing through, the pocket-sized *centro storico* is worth a quick look.

Although rarely open, the Romanesque churches of **San Bartolomeo** (Salita San Bartolomeo) and **San Giorgio** (Viale della Rimembranza) are fine examples of their genre. Further up the hill, at the top of a steep tree-lined avenue sits **Castello Monforte** (☎ 339 601 44 80; admission free; 🕒 10am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun). Much of the squat, quadrangular tower that you see today was built in the 15th and 16th centuries after the original Norman castle was damaged by earthquake in 1456. Ceramics found in the castle are now on show at the small **Museo Samnitico** (Samnite Museum; ☎ 0874 41 22 65; Via Chiarizia 12; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm, 2-5.30pm), along with artefacts from local archaeological sites.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0874 41 56 62; Piazza della Vittoria 14; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon & Wed, to 1.30pm Tue & Thu-Sat) can provide further information on the city and surrounding province. Online, Italian speakers can read up about the city's sights at [www.centrostoricocb.it](http://www.centrostoricocb.it).

For a spot of lunch, **Trattoria La Grotta di Zi Concetta** (☎ 0874 31 13 78; Via Larino 7; meals €25; 🕒 Mon-Fri) is an old-school trattoria serving delicious home-made pasta and superb meat dishes.

Unless coming from Isernia, Campobasso is best reached by bus. Services link with Termoli (€3.20, 1¼ hours, nine daily), Naples (€9.60, 2¾ hours, four daily weekdays), and Rome (€11.60, 3½ hours, eight daily). Up to 14 daily trains run to/from Isernia (€2.80, one hour).

## AROUND CAMPOBASSO

One of Molise's hidden treasures, the Roman ruins of **Saepinum** (admission free) are among the best preserved and least visited in the country. Unlike Pompeii and Ostia Antica, which were both major ports, Saepinum was a small provincial town of no great importance. It was originally established by the Samnites but the Romans conquered it in 293 BC, paving the way for an economic boom in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Some 700 years later, it was sacked by Arab invaders. The walled town retains three of its four original gates and its two main roads, the *cardus maximus* and the *decamanus*. Highlights include the forum, basilica and theatre, near to which the **Museo Archeologico Vittoriano** (admission €2; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) displays artefacts unearthed on the site.

It's not easy to reach Saepinum by public transport, but the **Larivera** (☎ 0874 6 47 44; [www.lariverabus.it](http://www.lariverabus.it)) bus from Campobasso to Sepino (€1.20, six daily weekdays) generally stops near the site at Altilia, although it's best to ask the driver.

Looming over the ruins are the **Monti del Matese** (Matese Mountains). The small town of **Bojano** is the starting point for various walks in the wooded hills, while further uphill the resort of **Campitello Matese** (elevation 1430m) is a popular ski resort with facilities for winter and summer sports.

Outside of the ski season and summer holiday period, the resort pretty much shuts up shop but you can always grab a bite at **Ristorante 2000** (☎ 0874 78 42 03), a no-frills bar-cum-trattoria which serves door-stopper *panini* for €4.

From Campobasso regular buses connect with Bojano (€1.60, 30 minutes, 13 daily). Between December and March, **Autolinee Micone** (☎ 0874 78 01 20) runs three daily buses up to Campitello Matese (one hour).

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## ISERNIA

pop 21,775

Surrounded by remote, scarcely populated hills, Isernia doesn't make a huge impression. Earthquakes and a massive WWII bombing raid have spared little of its original *centro storico* and the modern centre is a drab, workaday place. The one reason to stop over is to visit the site of one of Europe's oldest human settlements, a 700,000-year-old village unearthed by road workers in 1978 – see the boxed text, below.

If you don't make it to the site, the dusty **Museo Santa Maria delle Monache** (☎ 0865 41 05 00; Corso Marcelli 48; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm) houses many of its findings, including piles of elephant and rhino bones, fossils and stone tools.

Isernia's **tourist office** (☎ 0865 39 92; 6th fl, Palazzo della Regione, Via Farinacci 9; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) can provide accommodation lists but little more in the way of practical help.

If you want to stay the night, **Hotel Sayonara** (☎ 0865 5 09 92; [www.sayonara.is.it](http://www.sayonara.is.it); Via G Berta 131; s/d €55/85; ☎) is the most centrally located hotel. It's an anonymous business-style set-up but rooms are comfortable and there's a convenient restaurant. You'll eat far better though if you head down to the *centro storico*. Whet your appetite with an *aperitivo* at the square-side bar **Alter Ego** (Piazza Celestino V 23, cocktails from €5), before adjourning to **O'Pizzaiuolo** (☎ 0865 41 27 76; Corso Marcelli 214; pizzas €6, meals €20-25) for a delicious wood-fired pizza.

From the bus terminus next to the train station on Piazza della Repubblica, **Trasporti Molise** (☎ 0874 49 30 80; [www.molisetrasporti.it](http://www.molisetrasporti.it)) runs buses to Campobasso (€2.80, 50 minutes, eight daily) and Termoli (€6.40, 1¾ hours, three daily). Get tickets from Bar Ragno d'Oro on the square.

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## HOMO ERECTUS, ISERNIA'S OLDEST CITIZEN

In 1978 work on a new road between Naples and Vasto unearthed an extraordinary archaeological find – a human settlement dating to the lower Palaeolithic period, roughly 730,000 years ago.

Although no hominid fossils have been found, researchers believe the settlement was inhabited by *Homo Erectus*, an evolutionary ancestor of *Homo Sapiens* and the first human species found outside of Africa. The site would have been ideal for habitation with water available from a nearby stream (which is no longer there) and hunting fodder plentiful on the surrounding plains. That *Homo Erectus* was a hunter is evident from the shape of the limestone and flint tools that have been unearthed and the quantity of animal bones discovered on the site, many of which show signs of butchering. Further analysis of the bones reveals that many come from bison, bears, elephants, rhinos and hippos.

Putting all the evidence together, the picture emerges of a small settlement of perhaps 15 to 20 seminomadic hunters living in a landscape of prairies, marshland and wooded mountains.

Excavations are ongoing, although you can visit by calling the **site office** (☎ 0865 41 35 26; Contrada Ramiera Vecchia 1, Località La Pineta).

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Trains connect Isernia with Sulmona (€7.10, 2¼ hours, two daily), Campobasso (€2.80, one hour, 14 daily), Naples (€6, 1¾ hours, six daily) and Rome (€10.50, two hours, six daily).

## AROUND ISERNIA

The hills around Isernia are peppered with places of interest. About 30km northeast of town, outside **Pietrabbondante**, the remains of a 2nd-century-BC **Samnite theatre-temple complex** (☎ 0865 7 61 29; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-6pm) reward a visit, as much as anything for its panoramic setting high above the rolling green countryside.

En route, the 350-hectare **Riserva Collemeluccio** (☎ 9.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, to 5.30pm Apr-May, to 4.30pm Oct-Mar) is a prime picnic venue. It also offers good walking, with several trails leading off from the roadside visitors centre.

Further north, **Agnone** is an ancient hilltop town famous for its bell-making. For more than 1000 years, local artisans have been producing church bells for some of Italy's most famous churches, including St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Learn all about it at the **Marinelli Pontificia Fonderia di Campane** (☎ 0865 7 82 35; Via D'Onofrio 14; adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☎ guided tours 11am, noon, 4pm & 6pm Mon-Sat & 11am Sun Aug, noon & 4pm Mon-Sat & noon Sun Sep-Jul).

For further information and details of accommodation in the area, ask at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0865 7 72 49; [www.prolocoagnone.com](http://www.prolocoagnone.com); Corso Vittorio Emanuele 78; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm daily).

From Isernia, **SATI** (☎ 0874 60 52 20) buses serve Pietrabbondante (€1.50, 35 minutes, two daily) and Agnone (€2.05, one hour, nine daily). Buy tickets on the bus.

A 30km drive northwest of Isernia, near Castel San Vincenzo, the **Abbazia di San Vincenzo al Volturno** (☎ 0865 95 52 46; ☎ by appointment only) is famous for its cycle of 9th-century frescoes by

Epifanio (824–842). The abbey, one of the foremost monastic and cultural centres in 9th-century Europe, is now home to a community of Benedictine nuns.

**Larivera** (☎ 0874 6 47 44; [www.lariverabus.it](http://www.lariverabus.it)) buses run between Isernia and Castel San Vincenzo (€1.50, 45 minutes, five daily), a 1km walk from the abbey.

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## TERMOLI

**pop 31,975**

Despite its touristy trattorias and brassy bars, Molise's top beach resort retains a winning, low-key charm. At the eastern end of the seafront, the pretty *borgo antico* (old town) juts out to sea atop a natural pier, dividing the sandy beach from Termoli's small harbour. From the port, year-round ferries sail for the Isole Tremiti.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0875 70 39 13; [www.termoli.net](http://www.termoli.net); Piazza Bega 42, 1st flr; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri & 3-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri) is tucked away in a car park behind a small shopping gallery, 100m east of the train station.

The town's most famous landmark, Frederick II's 13th-century **Castello Svevo** (☎ 0875 71 23 54; ☎ on request) guards entry to the tiny *borgo*, a tangle of narrow streets, pastel-coloured houses and souvenir shops. From the castle, follow the road up and you come to Piazza Duomo and Termoli's majestic 12th-century **Cattedrale di San Basso** (☎ 0875 70 63 59; Piazza Duomo; ☎ mass 8.30am Mon-Sat, 9am, 11am & 6.30pm Sun). A masterpiece of Puglian-Romanesque architecture, the cream-coloured facade features a striking round-arched central portal.

## Sleeping

**Coppola Villaggio Camping Azzurra** (☎ 0875 5 24 04; [www.camping.it/molise/azzurra](http://www.camping.it/molise/azzurra); SS16 Europa 2; per person/tent/car €9/15/3, 4-person bungalow €65-130; ☎ mid-May—Sep; 📍) Termoli's only camp site is a modern, beachfront affair 2km outside town on the SS16 coastal road. As well as shady tent pitches and bungalows, on-site facilities include a minimarket and restaurant.

**Pensione Osteria San Giorgio** (☎ 0875 70 43 84; [www.pensionesangiorgio.it](http://www.pensionesangiorgio.it); Corso Fratelli Brigida 20-22; d €55-85, tr €75-110; ☎ year-round; 📍) Right in the heart of the action, this modest *pensione* has 10 clean, uncluttered rooms above a bustling *osteria* (meals €20). With their wrought-iron beds and clean tiled bathrooms, they're pretty good value but they can get noisy in summer.

**Residenza Savoia** (☎ 0875 70 68 03; [www.residenzasveva.com](http://www.residenzasveva.com); Piazza Duomo 11; s €40-80, d €79-180; 📍) Discretion is the keyword at this elegant *centro storico* hotel. The reception is on Piazza Duomo, near the cathedral, but the 13 rooms are squeezed into several *palazzi* in the *borgo*. The style is summery with plenty of gleaming blue tiles and traditional embroidery.

## Eating

**La Sacrestia** (☎ 0875 70 56 03; Via Ruffini 48-50; meals €25, pizzas €6; ☎ daily summer, closed Tue winter) One of the better restaurants in the lively area between Corso Nazionale and Via Fratelli Brigida. Sit streetside or in the brick vaulted interior and chow down on knockout pizza or fresh-off-the-boat seafood.

**our pick** **Ristorante Da Nicolino** (☎ 0875 70 68 04; Via Roma 3; meals €35; ☎ Fri-Wed) Highly

regarded by locals, this discreet restaurant serves the best seafood in town. It's all exceptional, but if you really want to push the boat out, order the show-stopping *brodetto di pesce* (fish soup) served in a big earthenware tureen.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Termoli is the only port with year-round ferries to the [Isole Tremiti](#). The two main companies are **Tirrenia Navigazione** (☎ 0875 70 53 43; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it)), which runs a year-round ferry and **Navigazione Libera del Golfo** (☎ 0875 70 48 59; [www.navlib.it](http://www.navlib.it)), which operates a quicker hydrofoil. Buy tickets (€15.80 to €17.70 for the ferry; €15 to €19 for the hydrofoil) at the port.

### BUS

Termoli's intercity bus station is beside Via Martiri della Resistenza. Various companies operate from here, with services to/from Campobasso (€3.20, 1¼ hours, nine daily), Isernia (€6.40, 1¾ hours, three daily), Pescara (€4.90, 1¼ hours, four daily), Naples (€13, 3½ hours, four daily) and Rome (€15, four hours, nine daily).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Termoli is on the A14 and SS16, which follow the coast north to Pescara and south to Bari. The SS87 links Termoli with Campobasso.

### TRAIN

Direct trains serve Bologna (€23.20 to €37.50, 5¼ hours, 10 daily), Lecce (€23 to €32.50, five hours, six daily) and stations along the Adriatic coast.

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## ALBANIAN TOWNS

Several villages to the south of Termoli form an Albanian enclave that dates back to the 15th century. These include **Campomarino**, **Portocannone**, **San Martino in Pensilis** and **Ururi**. Although the inhabitants shrugged off their Orthodox religion in the 18th century, they still use a version of Albanian that's incomprehensible to outsiders. However, it's for their *carressi* (chariot races) that the villages are best known. Each year Ururi (3 May), Portocannone (the Monday after Whit Sunday) and San Martino in Pensilis (30 April) stage a no-holds-barred **chariot race**. The chariots (more like carts) are pulled by bulls and hurtle round a traditional course, urged on by villagers on horseback.

Getting to these villages is quite a trial without your own transport but Larivera runs daily buses to all four from Termoli.

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# Campania

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SALERNO

SOUTH OF SALERNO

PAESTUM

COSTIERA CILENTANA

PARCO NAZIONALE DEL CILENTO E VALLO DI DIANO

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Campania is southern Italy's diva – an intense, addictive brew of architectural glories, gastronomic brilliance and geological drama. From the hyperactive laneways of Naples to the ethereal beauty of the Amalfi Coast, the region is as varied as it is compelling.

At its heart is Naples, a sprawling love-it-or-hate-it city theatrically set on a sweeping bay. In the background Mt Vesuvius broods darkly, a reminder of the fate it dealt Pompeii and Herculaneum 2000 years ago. Further down the coast, the magnificent temples at Paestum predate Roman times, testament to the region's Greek colonial past.

Myth abounds in Campania. Icarus plunged to his death in the Campi Flegrei, and Aeneas consulted the Cumaean Sybil before entering Hades via Lago d'Averno (Lake Avernus). To the south, sirens lured sailors to their deaths in the sparkling waters off Sorrento.

Capri is the most celebrated of Naples' three bay islands. A byword for Med chic, it's the darling of perma-tanned celebrities and starry-eyed day-trippers. Further north, Ischia bubbles with its thermal spas, and Procida inspires with its authentic, windswept air.

For many, Campania's crown jewel is the Amalfi Coast, a vertical world of plunging cliffs, tumbling villages and mesmerising views. Hidden to the world until 'discovered' in the mid-20th century, it's now one of Italy's must-sees. Inland, wooded mountains provide breathtaking hiking and refuge from the summer hordes.

To really get off the beaten track, though, head to the highlands of the Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano, one of the region's wildest and least-explored wonderlands.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Encounter artistic greats at the **Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte**
- Channel ancient ghosts at the ruins of **Pompeii** and **Herculaneum**
- Let Capri's ethereal **Grotta Azzurra** bewitch you
- Lunch by the waves on pastel-hued **Procida**
- Fall for the lavish gardens of Ischia's **La Mortella** and Ravello's **Villa Rufolo**
- Savour market produce at the **Mercato di Porta Nolana**
- Walk with the gods on the **Amalfi Coast**
- Eye-up Hellenic ingenuity at the World Heritage—listed temples of **Paestum**



POPULATION: 5.8 MILLION  
 AREA: 13,595 SQ KM



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# NAPLES

pop 3,100,000

Italy's most misunderstood city is also one of its finest – an exhilarating mess of crumbling baroque churches, bellowing baristas and electrifying street life. Contradiction is the catchphrase here; a place where anarchy, pollution and crime sidle up to lavish palaces, mighty museums and aristocratic tailors.

First stop for many is the Unesco World Heritage—listed *centro storico* (historic city centre). It's here, under the washing lines, that you'll find Naples' arabesque street life – cocky kids playing football in noisy piazzas, overloaded Vespas hurtling through cobbled alleyways and clued-up *casalinghe* (homemakers) bullying market vendors. Once the heart of Roman Neapolis, this intoxicating warren of Dickensian streets groans with ancient churches, citrus-filled cloisters, and rough'n'tumble pizzerias.

By the sea the cityscape opens up. Imperious palaces flank show-off squares as Gucci-clad shoppers strut their stuff and lunch in chandeliered cafes. This is Royal Naples, the Naples of the Bourbons that so impressed the 18th-century Grand Tourists.

A place of heirloom businesses, vacuum-packed families and old-school attitude, *Napoli* is Europe's antidote to homogenised culture. Take time to look behind the grime and you'll learn why true love was never meant to be easy.

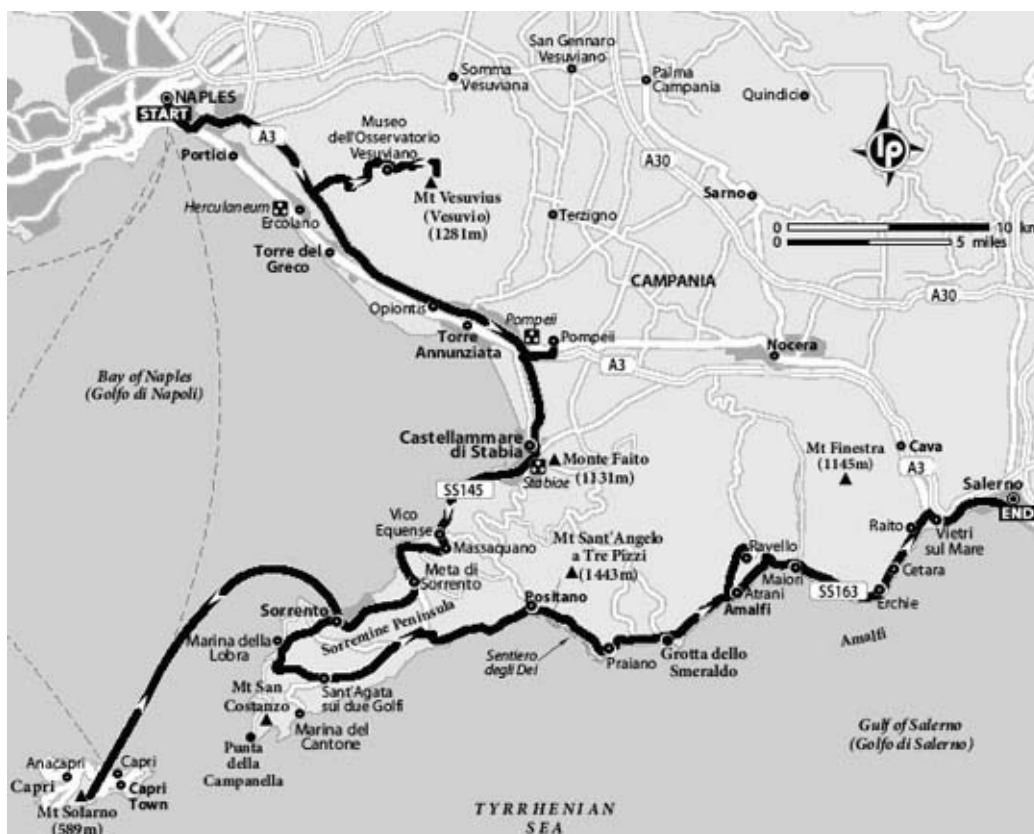
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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### Crash-Course Campania      12 Days / Naples / Salerno

Dive into the deep end with two days in [Naples](#), shopping for local produce at the [Mercato di Porta Nolana](#) and plugging into culture at the [Museo Archeologico Nazionale](#) and the [Certosa di San Martino](#). Sneak through the city's **ancient aqueducts** on a Napoli Sotteranea tour [Click here](#) and schmooze the night away with the bohemians at [Il Caffè Arabo](#). For inspiring views, spend a morning climbing [Mt Vesuvius](#) and an afternoon pondering its malevolent force in ill-fated [Pompeii](#). From here, continue south to [Sorrento](#) to catch a ferry to fabled [Capri](#) for two days of chichi R&R. Admire natural beauty at [Monte Solaro](#) and the [Grotta Azzurra](#) and the cosmetically enhanced variety at VIP hangout [Anema e Cora](#).

Head back to Sorrento and push on to picture-perfect [Positano](#) for a couple of nights. If it's summer, hire a [boat](#) and comb the coast for perfect beaches. For a heavenly hike, hit the [Sentiero degli Dei](#) (see the boxed text, [Click here](#)) to the vintage fishing village of [Praiano](#). Stay overnight before following the coastal road to [Amalfi](#). Drop in at the fascinating [Museo della Carta](#) before retreating overnight in lofty [Ravello](#), home to the uber-romantic [Villa Rufolo](#). The following day, hit the coast again, stopping off at the foodie village of [Cetara](#) for perfect seafood before capping your crash course in bustling, portside [Salerno](#).



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## HISTORY

Little is known of Naples' early days. According to legend, traders from Rhodes established the city on the island of Megaris (where Castel dell'Ovo, [Click here](#), now stands) in about 680 BC. Originally called Parthenope in honour of the siren whose body had earlier washed up there (she drowned herself after failing to seduce Ulysses), it was eventually incorporated into a new city, Neapolis, founded by Greeks from Cumae (Cuma) in 474 BC. However, within 150 years it was in Roman hands, becoming something of a VIP resort favoured by emperors Pompey, Caesar and Tiberius.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, Naples became a duchy, originally under the Byzantines and later as an independent dukedom, until it was captured in 1139 by the Normans and absorbed into the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Normans, in turn, were replaced by the German Swabians, whose charismatic leader Frederick II injected the city with new institutions, including its university.

The Swabian period came to a violent end with the victory of Charles I of Anjou at the 1266 battle of Benevento. The Angevins did much for Naples, promoting art and culture, building [Castel Nuovo](#) and enlarging the port, but they were unable to stop the Spanish Aragon taking the city in 1442. Naples continued to prosper, though. Alfonso I of Aragon, in particular, introduced new laws and encouraged the arts and sciences.

In 1503 Naples was absorbed by Spain, which sent viceroys to rule as virtual dictators. Despite Spain's heavy-handed rule, Naples flourished artistically and acquired much of its splendour. Indeed, it continued to bloom when the Spanish Bourbons re-established Naples as the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1734. Aside from a Napoleonic interlude under Joachim Murat (1806–15), the Bourbons remained until unseated by Garibaldi and the Kingdom of Italy in 1860.

The city was heavily bombed in WWII, and the effects can still be seen on many monuments around the

city. Since the war Naples has continued to suffer. Endemic corruption and the re-emergence of the Camorra have plagued much of the city's postwar resurrection, reaching a nadir in the 1980s after a severe earthquake in 1980.

Naples' recent history has brought mixed blessings. In the mid-1990s, charismatic mayor Antonio Bassolino led a mass clean-up of the city. Dubbed the Neapolitan Renaissance, its high point came in 1994 when the city hosted the G7 summit. Bassolino has since been replaced by Naples' first woman mayor, Rosa Russo Jervolino, who has struggled to keep up the momentum. The city's Mafia wars hit the world's headlines in late 2004 and early 2005, and again in 2008 with the release of Matteo Garrone's film *Gomorra* (Gomorra), itself based on a Camorra exposé by Neapolitan writer Roberto Saviano. In 2008, the city's sporadic garbage-disposal crisis flared up again, leading frustrated residents to set fire to uncollected rubbish in the streets.

More promising has been the recent inauguration of a major theatre festival, a still-under-construction high-speed rail terminal by British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid and a planned revamp of Pompeii's train stations by prolific US architect Peter Eisenman.

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## OUR TOP FIVE FILM LOCATIONS IN CAMPANIA

- Naples' airy **Piazza del Gesù Nuovo**, where acting great Sergio Solli makes his anything-but-menacing phone threats in *No Grazie, Il Caffè Mi Rende Nervoso* (1982).
  - Caserta's blue-blooded **Palazzo Reale**, whose interiors moonlight as Queen Amidala's pad in *Star Wars: Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace* (1999) and *Star Wars: Episode 2 - Attack of the Clones* (2002).
  - Ischia's brooding **Castello Aragonese**, backdrop to Ripley's cunning first meeting with Dickie and Marge in *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999).
  - The tumbling fishing village of **Corricella** on Procida, where Massimo Troisi bashfully flirts with waiter Beatrice in *Il Postino* (1994).
  - The town of **Amalfi**, host to scandal and Scarlett Johansson in *A Good Woman* (2004).
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## NAPLES IN...

### Two Days

Start your Neapolitan sojourn with a mean espresso at **Caffè Mexico** before slipping into the Unesco World Heritage—listed *centro storico*. Pop into the **Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo** and the **Basilica di Santa Chiara** before taking in the street life along **Spaccanapoli** and **Via San Gregorio Armeno**. For an authentic Neapolitan lunch, munch away at **Pizzeria Gino Sorbillo** or **Trattoria Mangia e Bevi**, then spend the second half of the day at the **Chiesa e Scavi di San Lorenzo Maggiore** and the **Cappella Sansevero**. After dinner, kick back at **Intra Moenia** for late-night lounging. Start Day Two with a market wander through **La Pignasecca** before taking in the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale**. Alternatively, take a funicular up to Vomero for art and vistas at the **Certosa di San Martino**. Either way, head down to Chiaia for an evening *passeggiata* (stroll) along **the Lungomare** before dining harbourside on Borgo Marinaro.

## Four Days

If you find yourself pining for peace on Day Three, retreat underground on a tour of **Napoli Sotterranea** ([Click here](#)) or explore the **Catacombe di San Gennaro**. From the catacombs, the **Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte** and its superlative art collection is a quick trip uphill. Head back down for dinner at **Nemella** and a late-night cocktail in fashionable Chiaia. The following day, head west to explore Pozzuoli's **Anfiteatro Flavio** Roman amphitheatre, the ruins below **Rione Terra** and the freakish **Solfatara crater**.

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## ORIENTATION

Naples stretches along the waterfront and is divided into *quartieri* (districts). A convenient point of reference, Stazione Centrale (the main train station) forms the eastern flank of Piazza Garibaldi, Naples' chaotic transport hub. It's not an attractive place, and the surrounding area is noisy, dirty and seedy.

From Piazza Garibaldi, busy Corso Umberto I runs down to Piazza Bovio, skirting the southern edge of the *centro storico*. The historic heart is centred on two parallel east—west roads: Via San Biagio dei Librai and its continuation Via Benedetto Croce (together these are known as Spaccanapoli); and, to the north, Via dei Tribunali. At the western end of Via dei Tribunali is Piazza Dante and the north—south road Via Toledo, which is Naples' main shopping strip. From the piazza, head north up Via Enrico Pessina (Via Toledo's continuation) to get to Parco di Capodimonte; go south for Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples' showpiece square.

From Piazza Trieste e Trento, adjacent to Piazza del Plebiscito, Via San Carlo leads to Castel Nuovo and Piazza del Municipio. On the seafront at the castle, Molo Beverello is the terminal for ferries to Capri, Ischia and Procida; next door, long-distance ferries sail to Sicily and beyond from the Stazione Marittima.

Follow the seafront west for the districts of Santa Lucia, Chiaia, Mergellina and Posillipo. Above it all sits Naples' upper-middle class in the relative calm of Vomero, a natural balcony with lavish views.

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## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**Feltrinelli** Chiaia ([Map](#); ☎ 081 240 54 11; Piazza dei Martiri); Toledo ([Map](#); ☎ 081 552 14 36; Via San Tommaso d'Aquino 15) Smart chain store with a good selection of maps, fiction and Lonely Planet titles in English.

### Emergency

**Police station** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 794 11 11; Via Medina 75). To report a stolen car, call ☎ 113.

### Internet Access

**Navig@ndo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 193 60 030; Via Santa Anna di Lombardi 28; per hr €2; 📧 9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

**Zeudi Internet Point** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 251 22 50; Via Chiaia 199c; per hr €3; 📧 10am-8pm Mon-Sat)

## Internet Resources

**Around Naples** ([www.napoli.com](http://www.napoli.com)) For listings and local news.

**Turismo Regione Campania** ([www.turismoregionecampania.it](http://www.turismoregionecampania.it)) Up-to-date events listings, as well as audio clips and itineraries.

**I Naples** ([www.inaples.it](http://www.inaples.it)) The official tourist board site.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

If you're planning to blitz the sights, the **Campania artecard** (☎ 800 600601; [www.campaniartecard.it](http://www.campaniartecard.it)) is an excellent investment. A cumulative ticket that covers museum admission and transport, it comes in various forms. The Naples and Campi Flegrei three-day ticket (€16/10 for adult 18 to 25 years) gives free admission to three participating sites, a 50% discount on others and free transport in Naples and the Campi Flegrei. Other options range from €12 to €30 and cover sites as far afield as Pompeii and Paestum. The tickets can be bought at train stations, newsagents, participating museums, via the internet or through the call centre.

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## Laundry

**Lavanderia Self-Service** ([Map](#); ☎ 328 6196341; Largo Donnaregina 5; 7kg wash & dry €7; 📧 8am-7.20pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat, closed Aug)

## Medical Services

**Ospedale Loreto-Mare** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 20 10 33; Via Amerigo Vespucci 26)

**Pharmacy** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 549 93 36; Piazza Dante 71; 📧 24hr)

## Post

**Post office** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 428 95 85; Piazza Matteotti; 📧 8am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

## Tourist Information

Head to the following tourist bureaus for information and a copy of the useful bilingual brochure *Qui Napoli*:

**Tourist Information Office** Mergellina train station ([Map](#); ☎ 081 761 21 02; 📧 hrs vary); Piazza del Gesù Nuovo 7 ([Map](#); ☎ 081 552 33 28; 📧 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun); Stazione Centrale ([Map](#); ☎ 081 26 87 79; 📧 9am-7pm Mon-Sat); Via San Carlo 9 ([Map](#); ☎ 081 40 23 94; 📧 9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun)



# Travel Agencies

CTS ([Map](#); ☎ 081 552 79 60; Via Mezzocannone 25) Student travel centre.

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## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Petty crime can be a problem in Naples. Be especially vigilant for pickpockets and scooter bandits, many of whom specifically target out-of-towners with expensive watches. Also, watch out for groups of dishevelled-looking women and children asking for money.

Car and motorcycle theft is rife, so think twice before bringing a vehicle into town and never leave anything in your car, particularly at night.

Ignore touts offering taxis at Stazione Centrale; use only marked, registered taxis and ensure the meter is running.

Never purchase electronic goods (cameras, mobile phones) from market stalls and be careful about walking alone late at night, particularly near Stazione Centrale. The area west of Via Toledo and as far north as Piazza Carità, though safe enough during the day, can also be threatening after dark.

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## SIGHTS

### Centro Storico

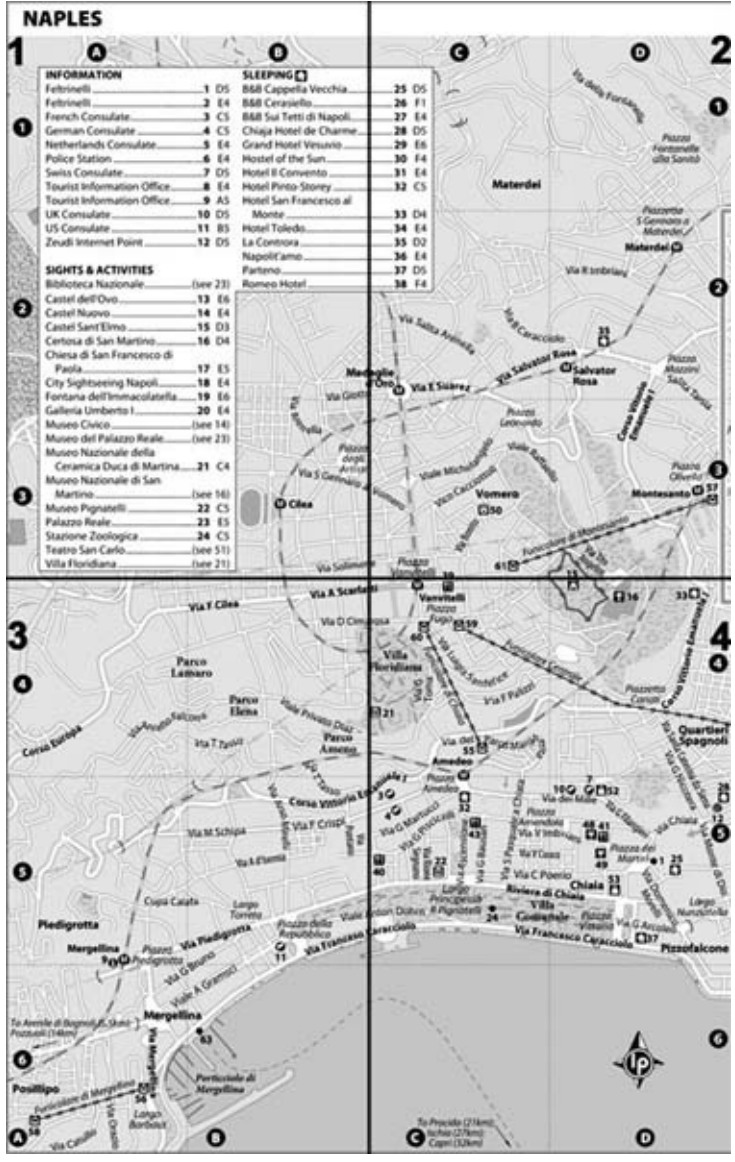
#### DUOMO & AROUND

Naples' spiritual centrepiece, the **Duomo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 44 90 97; Via Duomo; ⏰ 8am-12.30pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1pm & 5-7pm Sun) sits on the site of earlier churches, them selves preceded by a temple to the god Neptune. Begun by Charles I of Anjou in 1272 and consecrated in 1315, it was largely destroyed by an earthquake in 1456. Copious nips and tucks over the centuries, including the addition of a late-19th-century neo-Gothic facade, have created a melange of styles and influences.

Topping the huge central nave is a gilded coffered ceiling studded with late mannerist art. The high sections of the nave and the transept were decorated by Luca Giordano.

The 17th-century baroque **Cappella di San Gennaro** (Chapel of St Januarius; also known as the Chapel of the Treasury) features a fiery painting by Giuseppe Ribera and a bevy of silver busts and bronze statues. Above them, a heavenly dome glows with frescoes by Giovanni Lanfranco. Hidden away behind the altar is a 14th-century silver bust containing the skull of St Januarius and the two phials that hold his miraculous blood. Naples' patron saint was martyred at Pozzuoli in AD 305, and according to legend, his blood liquefied in these phials when his body was transferred back to Naples. For information on the mysterious San Gennaro festival, [Click here](#).

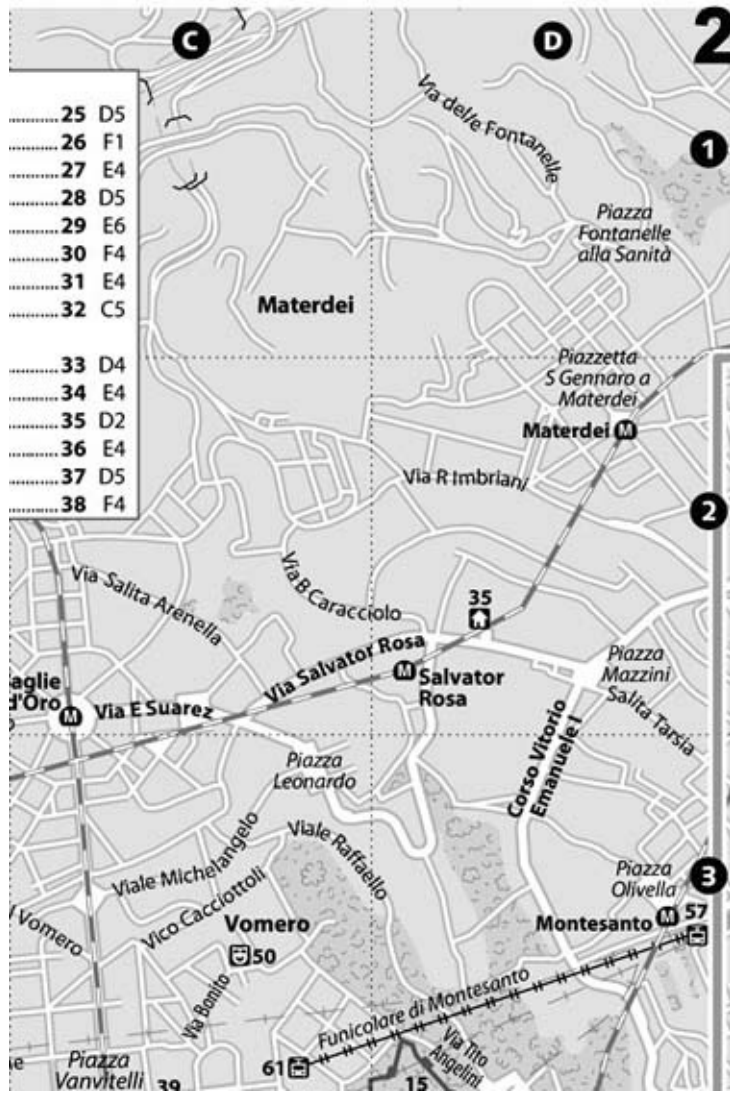
The next chapel eastwards contains an urn with the saint's bones, cupboards full of femurs, tibias and fibulas, and a stash of other grisly relics. Below the high altar is the Renaissance **Cappella Carafa**, also known as the Crypt of San Gennaro.



To Positano (21km)  
To Amalfi (27km)  
To Capri (32km)

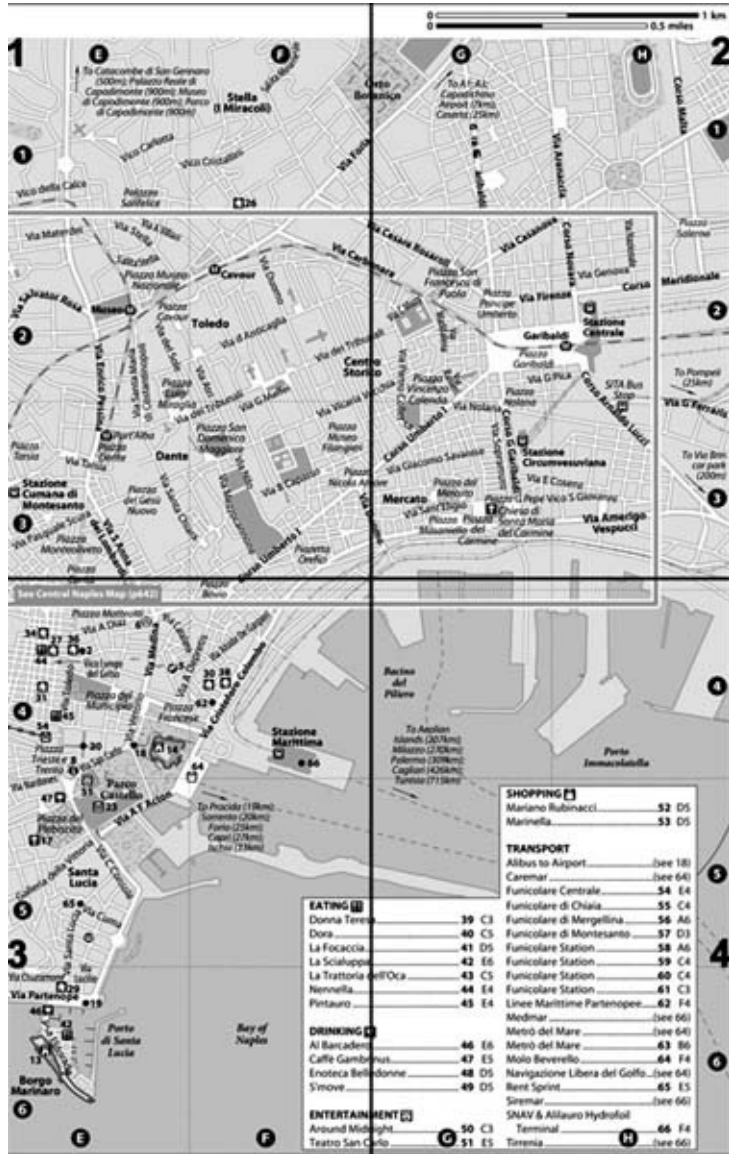
# NAPLES

INFORMATION		SLEEPING	
Feltrinelli .....	1 D5	B&B Cappella Vecchia.....	
Feltrinelli .....	2 E4	B&B Cerasiello.....	
French Consulate.....	3 C5	B&B Sui Tetti di Napoli.....	
German Consulate .....	4 C5	Chiaja Hotel de Charme.....	
Netherlands Consulate.....	5 E4	Grand Hotel Vesuvio .....	
Police Station .....	6 E4	Hostel of the Sun .....	
Swiss Consulate.....	7 D5	Hotel Il Convento .....	
Tourist Information Office.....	8 E4	Hotel Pinto-Storey .....	
Tourist Information Office.....	9 A5	Hotel San Francesco al	
UK Consulate.....	10 D5	Monte .....	
US Consulate .....	11 B5	Hotel Toledo.....	
Zeudi Internet Point .....	12 D5	La Controra .....	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>		Napolit'amo .....	
Biblioteca Nazionale.....	(see 23)	Parteno .....	
Castel dell'Ovo.....	13 E6	Romeo Hotel .....	
Castel Nuovo .....	14 E4		
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**Bacino del Piliero**

To Aeolian Islands (207km);  
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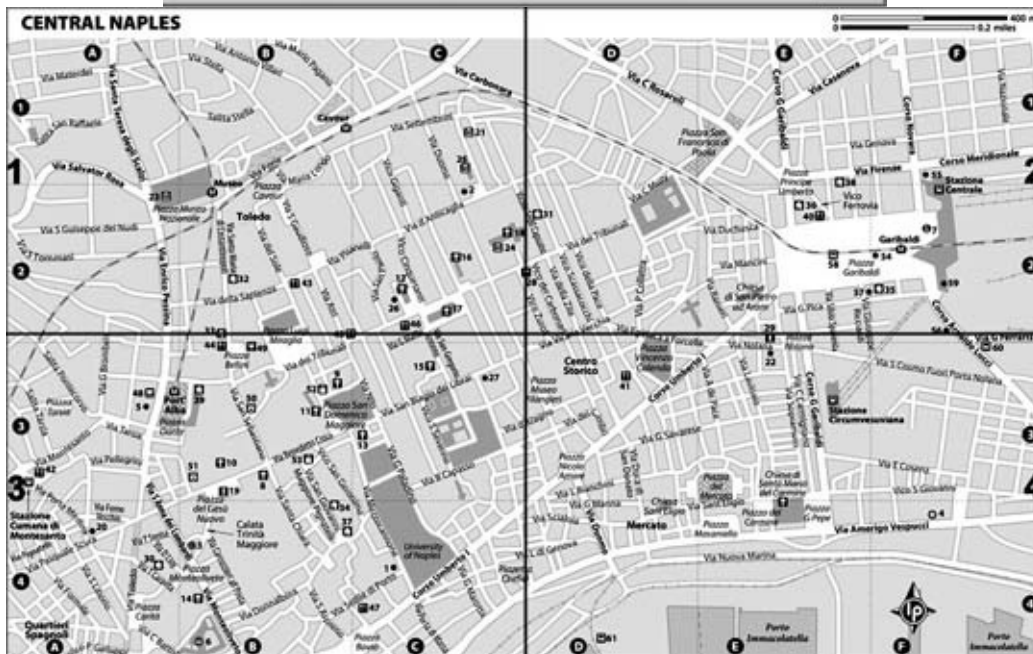
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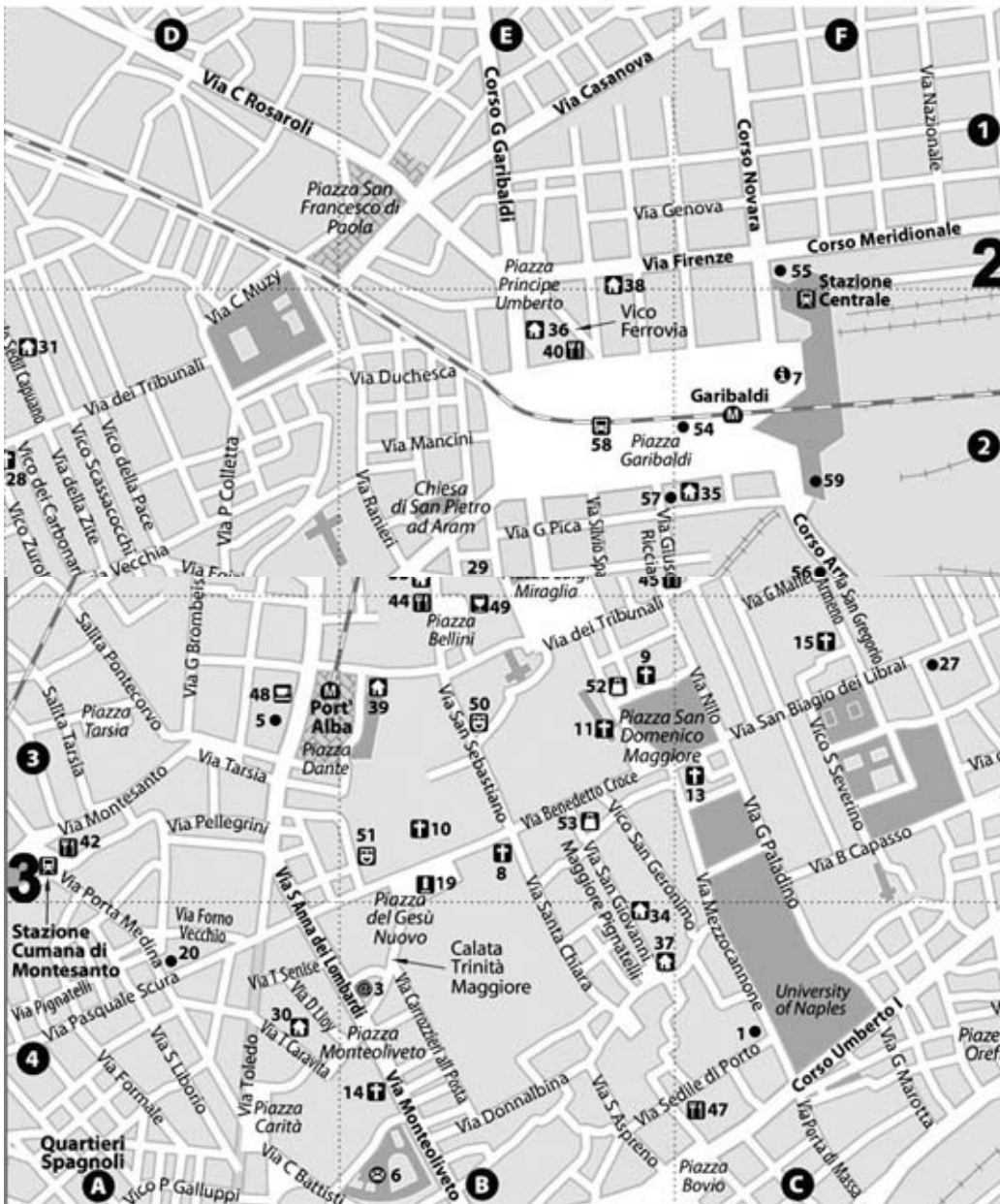
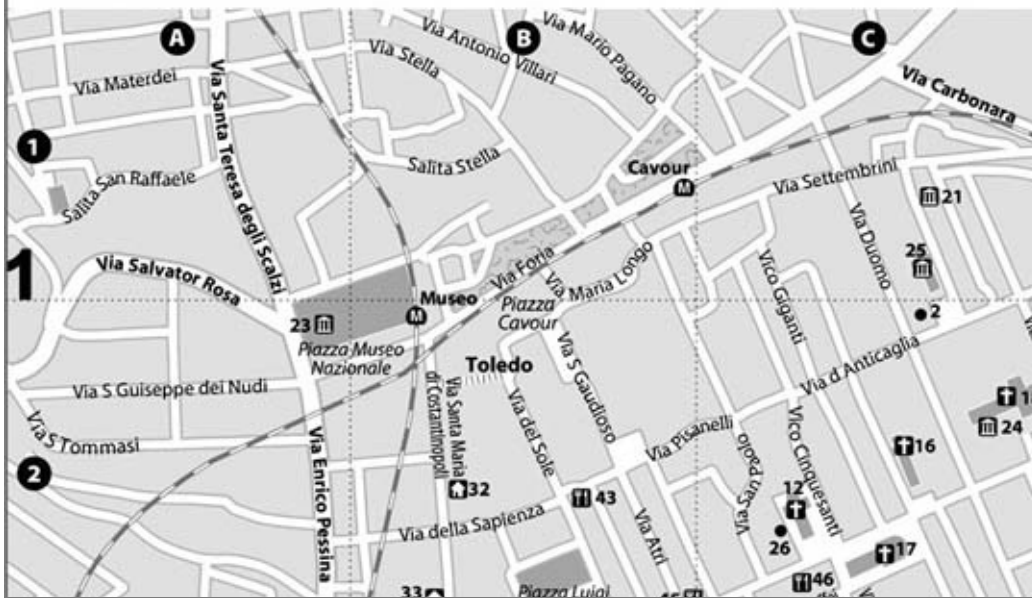
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# CENTRAL NAPLES





16; [www.museomadre.it](http://www.museomadre.it); Via Settembrini 79; admission €7, Mon free; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon & Wed-Fri, to midnight Sat & Sun) has the city's best collection of contemporary art. Highlights include Jeff Koons' uberkitsch *Wild Boy and Puppy*, Rebecca Horn's eerie *Spirits*, and a perspective-warping installation by Anish Kapoor.

Nearby, the baroque Chiesa di Donnaregina Nuova houses the **Museo Diocesano di Napoli** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 557 13 65; [www.museodiocesanonapoli.it](http://www.museodiocesanonapoli.it); Chiesa di Santa Maria Donnaregina Nuova, Largo Donnaregina; admission €5; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon, Wed-Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) and its superb collection of religiously themed art, from Renaissance triptychs and 19th-century wooden sculptures to works from baroque greats like Fabrizio Santafede, Andrea Vaccaro and Luca Giordano.

## SPACCANAPOLI

Following the path of the ancient Roman *decumanus inferior* (minor road), **Via San Biagio dei Librai** (becoming Via Benedetto Croce to the west and Via Vicaria Vecchia to the east) is affectionately known as Spaccanapoli (Break Naples). Seen from above, it cuts right through the heart of the old city.

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## MARIO SPADA

This award-winning documentary photographer and stills photographer for the film *Gomorra* muses on his home town.

**What are your favourite corners of Naples?** There are several. I like walking up the Salita Moiariello ([Map](#)) in the Miracoli district. From here, Vesuvius forms the backdrop to the Centro Direzionale's skyscrapers. To me, it's a more realistic view of contemporary Naples than those traditional postcard panoramas.

**Places you would take a novice to Naples?** After breakfast at a *pasticceria*, we'd go straight to Pio Monte della Misericordia (opposite) to see Caravaggio's incredible *Le Sette Opere di Misericordia*, followed by a trip to see the *Cristo Velato* at the Cappella Sansevero (below). We'd probably go for a seaside walk in Mergellina, then cap the night off in a *centro storico* bar.

**What distinguishes Neapolitans from other Italians?** In Morocco, I often find myself in situations that remind me of home. To me, Neapolitans are half '*magrebini*' (Maghrebis). Our temperament has a similar intensity – in both good and bad ways. Our faces and gestures recall Caravaggio's *chiaroscuro*.

**A record 100,000 people attended an anti-Mafia memorial march in 2009. Does this give you hope for the future?** No, because while people are hungry for change, the fundamental steps required aren't taken. Here, too many politicians prefer to let problems fester until they become emergencies. This way they can step in with token gestures and exploit the crisis for their own political gain. The 'emergency' inevitably passes, and the root of the problem remains.

**What do you miss most when you're out of town?** The food, the coffee and Naples' one-of-a-kind energy.

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At its eastern end, the **Ospedale delle Bambole** ([Map](#); Dolls' Hospital; ☎ 339 5872274; Via San Biagio dei Librai 81) is a local institution, a quirky shop full of dusty dolls' heads and assorted mannequins. Further down, the **Chiesa di Sant'Angelo a Nilo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 420 12 22; Vico Donnaromita 15; ☎ 9am-1pm daily plus 4-6pm Mon-Sat) is benignly presided over by a quartet of tubby gilt cherubs. A modest 14th-century church, it's of note for the monumental Renaissance tomb of Cardinal Brancaccio, created by Donatello and others.

Backing on to lively Piazza San Domenico Maggiore, the Gothic **Chiesa di San Domenico Maggiore** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 557 32 04; Piazza San Domenico Maggiore 8a; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 4.30-7pm) was completed in 1324 and much favoured by the Angevin nobility. The interior, a cross between baroque and 19th-century neo-Gothic, features some fine 14th-century frescoes by Pietro Cavallini and, in the sacristy, 45 coffins of Aragon princes and other nobles.

The simple exterior of the nearby **Cappella Sansevero** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 551 84 70; Via de Sanctis 19; admission €6; ☎ 10am-5.40pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 10am-1.10pm Sun) belies the sumptuous sculpture inside. The centrepiece is *Cristo Velato* (Veiled Christ), Giuseppe Sanmartino's jaw-dropping depiction of Jesus covered by a veil so realistic that it's tempting to try and lift it. Also intriguing is Corradini's *Pudicizia* (Modesty), which is more erotic than modest. Downstairs are two meticulously preserved human arterial systems, testament to the bizarre obsession of alchemist Prince Raimondo di Sangro, the man who financed the chapel's 18th-century makeover.

## PIAZZA DEL GESÙ NUOVO & AROUND

Marking the end of Via Benedetto Croce, **Piazza del Gesù Nuovo** is a popular student hang-out. At its centre soars the **Guglia dell'Immacolata**, an 18th-century baroque obelisk; to the north and east sit two of Naples' most famous churches.

Characterised by the pyramid-shaped ashlar stones on its facade, whose carvings are said to be esoteric symbols, the **Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 551 86 13; Piazza del Gesù Nuovo; ☎ 7am-1pm & 4-7.30pm), dating back to the 16th century, is considered one of the city's greatest examples of Renaissance architecture. Its frescoed barrel-vaulted interior, the result of a 17th-century spruce-up, features works by a trio of Naples' big-name baroque artists – Cosimo Fanzago, Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena.

To the east, the Gothic **Basilica di Santa Chiara** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 195 759 15; Via Benedetto Croce; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm & 5.30-7.30pm Sun) is famous for its majolica-tiled cloisters. What you see today is not, however, the original 14th-century Angevin church but a brilliant recreation – the original was all but destroyed by Allied bombing in August 1943. Within the **nuns' cloisters** (admission €5; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun) is a long parapet entirely covered in decorative ceramic tiles depicting scenes of rural life, from hunting to posing peasants. The four internal walls are covered with softly coloured 17th-century frescoes of Franciscan tales. Adjacent to the cloisters, an elegant **museum** of mostly ecclesiastical props also features the excavated ruins of a 1st-century spa complex.

From the square, Calata Trinità Maggiore leads down to Piazza Monteoliveto and the 15th-century **Chiesa di Sant'Anna dei Lombardi** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 551 33 33; Piazza Monteoliveto; ☎ 9am-noon Tue-Sun), worth a look for its fine Renaissance sculpture, including a superb terracotta *Pietà* (1492) by Guido Mazzoni.

## VIA DEI TRIBUNALI & AROUND

One block to the north of Spaccanapoli is Via dei Tribunali, the *decumanus maior* (main road) of ancient Neapolis. Connecting the two, **Via San Gregorio Armeno** is celebrated for its shops selling *presepi* (nativity scenes). The street is also home to the 16th-century **Chiesa e Chiostro di San Gregorio Armeno** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 420 63 85; Via San Gregorio Armeno 44; ☎ 9.30am-noon Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun), a blast of bombastic baroque. Highlights include sumptuous wood and papier-mâché choir stalls and lavish frescoes by Paolo de Matteis and Luca Giordano.

A masterpiece of French Gothic architecture, the **Chiesa e Scavi di San Lorenzo Maggiore** ([Map](#); ☎

081 211 08 60; Via dei Tribunali 316; church admission free, excavations €5; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) dates to the late 13th century. Inside, note the impressive 14th-century mosaic-covered tomb of Catherine of Austria. You can also pass through to the cloisters of the neighbouring convent, where the poet Petrarch stayed in 1345.

Beneath the complex are some remarkable *scavi* (excavations) of the original Graeco-Roman city. Stretching the length of the underground area is a road lined with ancient bakeries, wineries and communal laundries.

Across Via dei Tribunali, a grand double staircase leads up to the **Chiesa di San Paolo Maggiore** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 45 40 48; Piazza San Gaetano 76; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun), whose huge gold-stuccoed interior features paintings by Massimo Stanzione, as well as frescoes by Francesco Solimena in the exquisite sacristy.

To the east, the 17th-century **Pio Monte della Misericordia** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 44 69 44; Via dei Tribunali 253; admission €5; ☎ 9am-2pm Thu-Tue) is home to Caravaggio's masterpiece *Le sette opere di Misericordia* (The Seven Acts of Mercy), considered by many to be the single most important painting in Naples.

## MERCATO DI PORTA NOLANA

Naples at its vociferous, gut-rumbling best, the **Mercato di Porta Nolana** ([Map](#); ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) is a heady street market where bellowing fishmongers and green grocers collide with fragrant delis and bakeries, industrious Chinese traders and contraband cigarette stalls. Dive in for anything from buxom tomatoes and mozzarella to golden-fried street snacks, cheap luggage and bootleg CDs. The market's namesake, **Porta Nolana**, is one of Naples' medieval city gates. Standing at the head of Via Sopramuro, its arch features a bas-relief of Ferdinand I of Aragon on horseback.

## Toledo & Quartieri Spagnoli

The magnificent **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 44 01 66; Piazza Museo Nazionale 19; admission €6.50; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Wed-Mon) houses one of the world's finest collections of Graeco-Roman artefacts. It was originally a cavalry barracks and later the seat of the city's university. The museum was established by the Bourbon king Charles VII in the late 18th century to house the rich collection of antiquities he had inherited from his mother, Elisabetta Farnese, as well as treasures that had been looted from Pompeii and Herculaneum. The museum also contains the Borgia collection of Etruscan and Egyptian relics.

To avoid getting lost in its rambling galleries (numbered in Roman numerals), invest €7.50 in the green quick-guide *National Archaeological Museum of Naples* or, to concentrate on the highlights, €4 for an audioguide in English. It's also worth calling ahead to ensure the galleries you want to see are open, as staff shortages often mean that sections of the museum close for part of the day.

While the basement houses the Borgia collection of Egyptian relics and epigraphs, the ground floor is given over to the **Farnese collection** of Greek and Roman sculpture. The two highlights are the colossal *Toro Farnese* (Farnese Bull) in Room XVI and gigantic *Ercole* (Hercules) in Room XI. Sculpted in the early 3rd century AD, the *Toro Farnese*, probably a Roman copy of a Greek original, depicts the death of Dirce, Queen of Thebes, who was tied to a bull and torn apart over rocks. The sculpture, carved from a single block, was discovered in Rome in 1545 and restored by Michelangelo before being shipped to Naples in 1787. *Ercole* was discovered in the same Roman excavations. It was found legless, but the Bourbons had his original pins fitted when they turned up at a later dig.



On the mezzanine floor is a small but stunning collection of **mosaics**, mostly from Pompeii. Of the series taken from the Casa del Fauno at Pompeii, it's the awe-inspiring *La Battaglia di Alessandro Contro Dario* (The Battle of Alexander against Darius) that stands out. Measuring 20 sq metres, it's the best-known depiction of Alexander the Great in existence.

Beyond the mosaics is the **Gabinetto Segreto** (Secret Room), home to the museum's ancient porn. The climax, so to speak, is an intriguing statue of Pan servicing a nanny goat, originally found in Herculaneum. The erotic paintings depicting sexual positions once served as a menu for brothel clients.

On the 1st floor, the vast **Sala Meridiana** contains the Farnese Atlante, a statue of Atlas carrying a globe on his shoulders. The rest of the floor is largely devoted to discoveries from Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae and Cuma. Items range from huge murals and frescoes to a pair of gladiator helmets, household items, ceramics and glassware.

South of the museum, in the lively Quartieri Spagnoli, **La Pignasecca** ([Map](#); Via Pignasecca; ☎ 8am-1pm) is Naples' oldest street market. A multisensory escapade into a world of wriggling seafood, drool-worthy delis and clued-up *casalinghe* (homemakers), it's a great place to soak up Naples' trademark street life and pick up a few bargains.

## Vomero

Visible from all over Naples, the stunning Certosa di San Martino is the one compelling reason to take the funicular [Click here](#) up to Vomero (*vom-e-ro*), an area of spectacular views and Liberty mansions.

### CERTOSA DI SAN MARTINO

The high point (quite literally) of Neapolitan baroque, this stunning charterhouse is home to the **Museo Nazionale di San Martino** ([Map](#); ☎ 848 80 02 88; Largo San Martino 5; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue). Founded as a Carthusian monastery in the 14th century, the Certosa owes most of its present look to facelifts in the 16th and 17th centuries, the latter by baroque maestro Cosimo Fanzago. The church and the rooms that flank it contain a feast of frescoes and paintings by Naples' greatest 17th-century artists – Francesco Solimena, Massimo Stanzione, Giuseppe de Ribera and Battista Caracciolo.

Adjacent to the church, the elegant **Chiostro dei Procuratori** is the smaller of the monastery's two cloisters. A grand corridor on the left leads to the larger **Chiostro Grande**, considered one of Italy's finest. Originally designed by Giovanni Antonio Dosio in the late 16th century and added to by Fanzago, it's a sublime composition of white Tuscan-Doric porticoes, manicured gardens and marble statues. The skulls mounted on the balustrade were a light-hearted reminder to the monks of their own mortality.

Just off the Chiostro dei Procuratori, the **Sezione Navale** focuses on the history of the Bourbon navy from 1734 to 1860, and features a small collection of beautiful royal barges.

To the north of the Chiostro Grande, the **Sezione Presepiale** houses a whimsical collection of rare Neapolitan *presepi* (nativity scenes) carved in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The **Quarto del Priore** (Prior's Quarter) in the southern wing houses the bulk of the picture collection, as well as one of the museum's most famous pieces, Pietro Bernini's tender *La Vergine col Bambino e San Giovannino* (Madonna and Child with the Infant John the Baptist).

### CASTEL SANT'ELMO

Commanding spectacular views across the city, this star-shaped **castle** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 578 40 30; Via Tito Angelini 22; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue, 9am-6.30pm Sun) was built by the Spanish in 1538. Impressive though it is, the austere castle has seen little real military action. It has, however, seen

plenty of prisoners: a long-time jail, its dungeons were used as a military prison until the 1970s. The admission times and price can change when the castle is being used for exhibitions.

## VILLA FLORIDIANA

In a city decidedly short of green space, this public **park** ([Map](#); Via Domenico Cimarosa; admission free; 🕒 9am to 1hr before sunset Tue-Sun) is a tonic, spreading down the slopes towards Mergellina. Sitting snugly at the bottom, Villa Floridiana was built in 1817 by Ferdinand I for his wife, the Duchess of Florida. Nowadays it contains the **Museo Nazionale della Ceramica Duca di Martina** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 578 84 18; admission €2.50; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Wed-Mon) and its 6000-piece collection of European, Chinese and Japanese china, ivory and enamels; and Italian majolica.

## Santa Lucia & Chiaia

### CASTEL NUOVO

Known to Neapolitans as the Maschio Angioino (Angevin Keep) and to everyone else as the **Castel Nuovo**, this crenellated 13th-century castle is a hulking Neapolitan landmark. Built as part of the city makeover that Charles I of Anjou launched in the late 13th century, it was erected in three years from 1279 and christened the Castrum Novum (New Castle) to distinguish it from the Castel dell'Ovo.

Of the original structure only the Cappella Palatina remains; the rest is the result of renovations by the Aragonese two centuries later, as well as a meticulous restoration effort prior to WWII. The two-storey Renaissance triumphal arch at the entrance, the Torre della Guardia, commemorates the triumphal entry of Alfonso I of Aragon into Naples in 1443.

The walls of the **Cappella Palatina** were once graced by Giotto frescoes, of which only fragments remain on the splays of the Gothic windows. To the left of the cappella, the glass-floored **Sala dell'Armeria** (Armoury Hall) showcases Roman ruins discovered during restoration works on the **Sala dei Baroni** (Hall of the Barons) above.

Nowadays, they all form part of the **Museo Civico** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 795 58 77; admission €5; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat), spread across several halls on three floors. The 14th- and 15th-century frescoes and sculptures on the ground floor are of the most interest. The other two floors mostly display paintings, either by Neapolitan artists, or with Naples or Campania as subjects, covering the 17th to the early 20th centuries. Worth looking out for is Guglielmo Monaco's 15th-century bronze door, complete with a cannonball embedded in it.

### PIAZZA DEL PLEBISCITO & AROUND

The undisputed star of Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples' largest square, is the **Chiesa di San Francesco di Paola** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 74 51 33; 🕒 8am-noon & 3.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun), a later addition to the colonnade that formed the highlight of Joachim Murat's original piazza (1809). A neoclassical copy of the Pantheon in Rome, the church was commissioned by Ferdinand I in 1817 to celebrate the restoration of his kingdom after the Napoleonic interlude.

Facing the church is the Palazzo Reale (below), with its eight statues of past kings. The royal theme continues centre square with Antonio Canova's statue of a galloping Bourbon king Charles VII and a nearby statue of his son Ferdinand I by Antonio Calí.

Adjoining the square, Piazza Trieste e Trento is fronted on the northeastern side by Italy's largest opera house, the sumptuous **Teatro San Carlo** ([Map](#); ☎ box office 081 797 23 31, guided tours 081 553 45 65; [www.teatrosancarlo.it](http://www.teatrosancarlo.it); Via San Carlo 98; tours €5; 🕒 9am-5pm Wed-Mon), famed for its perfect

acoustics. Locals will proudly boast that it was built in 1737, predating its northern rival, Milan's La Scala, by 41 years. Inaugurated on 4 December 1737 by Charles VII, it was severely damaged by a fire in 1816 and rebuilt by Antonio Niccolini, the same architect who a few years before had added the facade. At the time of research, the future of the 40-minute tours of the theatre was unclear. Contact the theatre or tourist office for updates.

Across Via San Carlo is one of the four entrances to the palatial glass atrium of the **Galleria Umberto I** shopping centre. Opened in 1900 as a twin arcade to the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II [Click here](#) in Milan, it's worth a quick look for its beautiful marble floor and elegant engineering.

## **PALAZZO REALE**

Flanking Piazza del Plebiscito, the rusty red **Palazzo Reale** ([Map](#); Royal Palace; ☎ 081 40 04 54; Piazza Trieste e Trento; admission €4; 🕒 9am- 7pm Thu-Tue) was built around 1600. It was completely renovated in 1841 and suffered extensive damage during WWII.

From the courtyard, a monumental doublestaircase leads to the royal apartments, now home to the **Museo del Palazzo Reale** and its rich collection of baroque and neoclassical furnishings, porcelain, tapestries, statues and paintings. There's also a lavish private theatre, the Teatrino di Corte (1768), and a colossal 18th-century *presepe* in the Cappella Reale (Royal Chapel).

The palace also houses the **Biblioteca Nazionale** (National Library; [Map](#); ☎ 081 781 92 31; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), which includes at least 2000 papyrus discovered at Herculaneum and fragments of a 5th-century Coptic Bible. Bring ID or miss out.

## **THE LUNGOMARE**

Marking the eastern end of the 2.5km *lungomare* (seafront), **Castel dell'Ovo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 240 00 55; Borgo Marinaro; admission free; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat & Sun) sits atop the rocky Borgo Marinaro. Naples' oldest castle, it was built by the Normans in the 12th century and became a key fortress in the defence of Campania. According to myth, the castle owes its improbable name (Castle of the Egg) to Virgil, who was said to have buried an egg on the site where the castle now stands, warning that when the egg breaks, the castle (and Naples) will fall.

Nearby, the **Fontana dell'Immacolatella** dates from the 17th century and features statues by Bernini and Naccherini.

West of Santa Lucia, Via Partenope spills into Piazza Vittoria, marking the beginning of the Riviera di Chiaia. This boulevard runs beside the **Villa Comunale**, a long leafy park bordered on its seaward side by Via Francesco Caracciolo, which is closed to traffic on Sunday mornings and taken over by strollers, scooters and joggers.

Within the park is Europe's oldest aquarium. Dating to 1872, the **Stazione Zoologica** (aquarium; [Map](#); ☎ 081 583 32 63; Villa Comunale; admission €1.50; 🕒 9am-6pm Tue-Sat, to 7.30pm Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, to 2pm Sun Nov-Feb) contains some 200 species of sea life fished out of the Bay of Naples.

Further along Riviera di Chiaia, the **Museo Pignatelli** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 761 23 56; Riviera di Chiaia 200; admission €2; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Wed-Mon) is housed in a neoclassical villa that once belonged to the Rothschilds. It contains mostly 19th-century furnishings, china and other mildly interesting knick-knacks. A pavilion set in the villa's handsome gardens houses a coach museum, currently closed.

## **Capodimonte**

## PALAZZO REALE DI CAPODIMONTE

On the northern edge of the city, this colossal palace took more than a century to build. It was originally intended as a hunting lodge for Charles VII of Bourbon, but as construction got under way in 1738, the plans kept on getting grander and grander. The result was the monumental *palazzo* that since 1759 has housed the art collection that Charles inherited from his mother Elisabetta Farnese.

The **Museo di Capodimonte** (off [Map](#); ☎ 081 749 91 11; Parco di Capodimonte; admission €7.50; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue, last entry 90min before closing) is spread over three floors and 160 rooms. You'll never see the whole place in one day, but a morning should be enough for an abridged best-of tour.

On the 1st floor you'll find works by Bellini, Botticelli, Caravaggio, Masaccio and Titian. Highlights are numerous, but look out for Masaccio's *Crocifissione* (Crucifixion), Bellini's *Trasfigurazione* (Transfiguration) and Parmigianino's *Antea*.

Also on the 1st floor, the **royal apartments** are a study in regal excess. The Salottino di Porcellana (Room 51) is an outrageous example of 18th-century Chinoiserie, its walls and ceiling crawling with whimsically themed porcelain 'stucco'. Originally created between 1757 and 1759 for the Palazzo Reale in Portici, it was transferred to Capodimonte in 1867.

Upstairs, the 2nd-floor galleries display work by Neapolitan artists from the 13th to the 19th centuries, plus some spectacular 16th-century Belgian tapestries. The piece that many come to Capodimonte to see, Caravaggio's *Flagellazione* (Flagellation; 1607–10), hangs in reverential solitude in Room 78, at the end of a long corridor.

If you have any energy left, the small **gallery of modern art** on the 3rd floor is worth a quick look, if for nothing else than Andy Warhol's popstastic *Mt Vesuvius*.

Once you're finished in the museum, the 130-hectare **Parco di Capodimonte** (off [Map](#); admission free; 🕒 9am to 1hr before sunset) provides a much-needed breath of fresh air.

## CATACOMBE DI SAN GENNARO

The oldest and most famous of Naples' ancient catacombs, the **Catacombe di San Gennaro** (off [Map](#); ☎ 081 741 10 71; Via di Capodimonte 13; admission €5; 🕒 1hr tours 9am, 10am, 11am, noon, 2pm, 3pm Tue-Sat, 9am, 10am, 11pm, noon Sun), date to the 2nd century. Spread over two levels and decorated with early Christian frescoes, they contain a mix of tombs, corridors and broad vestibules held up by columns and arches. They were an important pilgrimage site in the 5th century, when St Januarius' body was brought here.

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## TOURS

**Napoli Sotterranea** (Underground Naples; [Map](#); ☎ 081 29 69 44; [www.napolisotterranea.org](http://www.napolisotterranea.org); Piazza San Gaetano 68; tours €9.30; 🕒 tours noon, 2pm & 4pm Mon-Fri, extra tours 10am & 6pm Sat & Sun, 9pm Thu) runs 1½-hour guided tours of the city's underworld. Visits take you 40m below the city to explore a network of creepy passages and caves. The passages were originally hewn by the Greeks to extract tufa stone used in construction and channel water from Mt Vesuvius. Extended by the Romans, the network of conduits and cisterns was more recently used as air-raid shelters in WWII. Part of the tour takes place by candlelight via extremely narrow passages – not suitable for expanded girths!

**City Sightseeing Napoli** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 551 72 79; [www.napoli.city-sightseeing.it](http://www.napoli.city-sightseeing.it); adult/child €22/11)

operates a hop-on, hop-off bus service with four routes across the city. All depart from Piazza del Municipio Parco Castello, and tickets, available on board, are valid for 24 hours for each of the routes. Tour commentaries are provided in English.

**Torres Travel** (☎ 081 856 78 02; [www.torrestravel.it](http://www.torrestravel.it); Viale Mazzini 7 bis, Pompeii) is one of several companies that organise themed excursions to the Bay of Naples islands, the Amalfi Coast, Pompeii, Herculaneum and Vesuvius. Prices range from €125 for a tour to Pompeii or €220 for a Pompeii, Sorrento and Capri tour. A Naples city tour costs €175.

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## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Naples' main festival, the **Festa di San Gennaro**, honours St Januarius. On the first Sunday in May and then on 19 September and 16 December, thousands of people gather in the Duomo to witness the saint's blood liquefy – a miracle believed to save the city from potential disasters. In 1944 the miracle failed and Mt Vesuvius erupted; in 1980 it failed again and the city was struck by an earthquake. Coincidence?

In May, Naples premier cultural event, **Maggio dei Monumenti**, ensures a month-long menu of exhibitions, concerts, dance performances, guided tours and more.

Summer sees plenty of festival fun. In June, the **Napoli Teatro Festival Italia** ([www.teatrofestivalitalia.it](http://www.teatrofestivalitalia.it)) serves up over three weeks of local and international theatre in venues across the city. The **Madonna del Carmine**, held on 16 July, culminates in a fabulous fireworks display on Piazza del Carmine ([Map](#)), while southern Italy's top rock fest, the **Neapolis Rock Festival** ([www.neapolis.it](http://www.neapolis.it)), attracts top international acts in July/August.

In early to mid-September, Naples' traditional **Festa di Piedigrotta** ([www.festadipiedigrotta.it](http://www.festadipiedigrotta.it)) combines folk tunes with floats and fireworks around the Chiesa di Piedigrotta ([Map](#)) in Mergellina.

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## SLEEPING

Accommodation in Naples is varied and plentiful, ranging from luxe seafront piles to cheery backpacker hostels and funky B&Bs.

If you're after a cheap hotel, the area around Stazione Centrale is your best bet, although it can be seedy at night. The places listed, however, are all clean and safe.

For maximum atmosphere, hit the *centro storico*, where historic *palazzi* house charming hotels. You'll also have many of the city's sights on your doorstep.

Seaside Santa Lucia is home to some of the city's most prestigious hotels, and Chiaia is cool and chic. For lofty views and a chilled-out vibe, hit Vomero.

The closest campsites are in Pozzuoli to the west and Pompeii to the east.

## Around Stazione Centrale & Mercato

### BUDGET

**Hotel Ideal** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 26 92 37; [www.albergoideal.it](http://www.albergoideal.it); Piazza Garibaldi 99; s €34-50, d €39-60; ☎ 📶)

It mightn't ooze atmosphere, but the Ideal is a short stagger from the train station and staffed by friendly folk. Upstairs, the spacious rooms are soothing hideaways, with warm salmon tones, polished wood furniture and wrought-iron bedsteads.

**Hotel Zara** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 28 71 25; [www.hotelzara.it](http://www.hotelzara.it); 2nd fl, Via Firenze 81; s €39-45, d €46-62; 🚻 📺) A world away from the grungy streets outside, the Zara is clean, good value and friendly. Rooms are straightforward, with shiny natural wood, off-white furnishings and double-glazed windows. There's a book exchange, and breakfast is an optional €4. Bring €0.05 for the lift.

**Hostel of the Sun** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 420 63 93; [www.hostelnapoli.com](http://www.hostelnapoli.com); Via Melisurgo 15; s €45-50, d €60-70, dm/s/d without bathroom from €16/40/50; 🚻 📺) Recently renovated and constantly winning accolades, HOTS is an ultrafriendly hostel near the port. On the 7th floor of an uninspiring *palazzo* (have €0.05 handy for the lift), it's a bright, sociable place with multicoloured dorms and, five floors down, a series of hotel-standard private rooms.

## MIDRANGE

**Hotel Nuovo Rebecchino** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 26 80 26; [www.nuovorebecchino.it](http://www.nuovorebecchino.it); Corso G Garibaldi 356; s €60-105, d €70-160; 🚻 🚿 📺) Refined Regency furniture and 19th-century prints combine to elegant effect in the Rebecchino's large rooms. Bathrooms are fresh and bright, and include a jacuzzi in the superior-class rooms.

## Centro Storico

### BUDGET

**6 Small Rooms** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 790 13 78; [www.6smallrooms.com](http://www.6smallrooms.com); Via D Lioy 18; dm €18, s €35-40, d €45; 📺) On the top floor of a dusty old building, this happy little hostel has bright dorms, funky wall murals, two spartan private rooms downstairs (with air-con), a huge communal kitchen, and a cat called Simon. BYO lock for the lockers.

**B&B DiLetto a Napoli** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 033 09 77, 338 9264453; [www.dilettoanapoli.it](http://www.dilettoanapoli.it); Vicolo Sedil Capuano 16; s €35-55, d €50-75; 🚻 🚿 📺) Four rooms with vintage *cotto* (fired clay) floor tiles, organza curtains and artisan decor set a stylish scene at this B&B set in a 15th-century *palazzo*. The urbane communal lounge comes with a kitchenette and dining table for convivial noshing and lounging.

**B&B Cerasiello** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 033 09 77, 338 9264453; [www.cerasiello.it](http://www.cerasiello.it); Via Supportico Lopez 20; s €40-60, d €55-80; 🚻 📺) Technically in the Sanità district but a short walk from the *centro storico*, this gorgeous B&B has four rooms, an enchanting communal terrace (with barbeque), stylish kitchen and an ethno-chic look. Bring €0.10 for the lift.

**Hotel Pignatelli** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 658 49 50; [www.hotelpignatellinapoli.com](http://www.hotelpignatellinapoli.com), in Italian; Via San Giovanni Maggiore Pignatelli 16; s €45, d €75-80) Hidden on the 2nd floor of a historic *palazzo*, this gem has rustic, Renaissance-style rooms complete with brass beds, butter-colour walls and terracotta tiles; some boast original 15th-century wood-beam ceilings. At the time of research, construction was under way on five new rooms, with plans for a panoramic rooftop terrace.

## MIDRANGE

**Belle Arti Resort** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 557 10 62; [www.belleartiresort.com](http://www.belleartiresort.com); Via Santa Maria di Costantinopoli 27; s €65-99, d €80-160; 🚻 📺) More boutique than B&B, this urbane hideaway melds contemporary cool with vintage touches. Four of the impeccable rooms (some as big as small suites) have ceiling frescoes, while all feature marble bathrooms and funky painted headboards.

**Portalba Relais** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 564 51 71; [www.portalbarelais.com](http://www.portalbarelais.com); Via Port'Alba 33; s €65-99, d €80-160; 🍷 🍷) On a vintage street lined with bookshops, this sassy B&B has soaring bookshelves in the foyer and six rooms that ooze Armani-inspired chic – think muted tones, stainless-steel detailing and mosaic showers; Room 216 has a jacuzzi. Rooms look out over lively Piazza Dante, but double-glazing keeps the noise at bay.

**Decumani Hotel de Charme** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 551 81 88; [www.decumani.it](http://www.decumani.it); Via San Giovanni Maggiore Pignatelli; 15; s €90-105, d €105-130, deluxe d €130-150; 🍷 🍷 📶) Don't be fooled by the scruffy staircase; this boutique hotel is fresh, elegant and located in the former *palazzo* of Cardinal Sisto Riario Sforza, the last bishop of the Bourbon Kingdom. The simple yet stylish rooms have high ceilings, 19th-century furniture and modern bathrooms. Deluxe rooms have a jacuzzi, and the restored baroque hall hosts cultural soirées.

## TOP END

**Costantinopoli 104** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 557 10 35; [www.costantinopoli104.it](http://www.costantinopoli104.it); Via Santa Maria di Costantinopoli 104; s/d €170/220; 🍷 🍷 📶 🍷) Chic and tranquil, Costantinopoli 104 is set in a neoclassical villa in the city's bohemian heartland. Although showing a bit of wear in places, rooms remain elegant and clean – those on the 1st floor open on to a sun terrace, while ground-floor rooms face the small, palm-fringed pool. Antique furniture and a stained-glass Liberty window add a dash of vintage glam.

**Romeo Hotel** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 017 50 08; [www.romeohotel.it](http://www.romeohotel.it); Via Cristoforo Colombo 45; r €165-330; 🍷 🍷 📶) Naples new design hotel is a striking combo of Artesia stone and ivory-hued interiors, A-list art and furniture, metro-glam sushi bar, rooftop restaurant, and jaw-dropping spa centre. 'Classic' category rooms are small but luxe, with personal DeLonghi espresso machines and sleek bathrooms. Up a notch, 'Deluxe' rooms (€225 to €450) offer the same perks but with added space and bay views.

## Toledo & Vomero

### BUDGET

**La Controra** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 549 40 14; [www.lacontrora.com](http://www.lacontrora.com); Piazzetta Trinità alla Cesarea 231; dm €15-24, s €28-30, d €30-32; 🍷 🍷 📶) Housed in a converted 18th-century convent, this upbeat hostel is a hip combo of stainless-steel lamps, sleek bar, blonde-wood bunks, mint-colour bathrooms and a funky communal kitchen. Snooze in a courtyard hammock or log on to free wi-fi.

**B&B Sui Tetti di Napoli** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 033 09 77, 338 9264453; [www.suitettidinapoli.net](http://www.suitettidinapoli.net); Vico Figuerelle a Montecalvario 6; s €35-65, d €45-80; 🍷 📶) A block away from Via Toledo, this B&B is more like four apartments atop a thigh-toning stairwell. While two apartments share a terrace, the rooftop option has its own, complete with mesmerising views. All apartments include a kitchenette (the cheapest two share a kitchen), simple yet savvy furnishings and a homey vibe.

### MIDRANGE

**Napolit'amo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 552 36 26; [www.napolitamo.it](http://www.napolitamo.it); Via Toledo 148; s €55-65, d €79-99; 🍷 🍷) Escape the shopping hordes at this gilded enclave. The grandiose staircase sets the tone for the 1st-floor hotel, which has huge 18th-century mirrors, lofty ceilings and eyefuls of gold leaf.

**Hotel Il Convento** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 40 39 77; [www.hotelilconvento.com](http://www.hotelilconvento.com); Via Speranzella 137a; s €55-110, d €65-160; 🍷 🍷) Taking its name from the neighbouring convent, this lovely hotel is a soothing blend of antique Tuscan furniture, erudite book collections and candlelit stairs. Rooms are cosy and elegant,

combining creamy tones and dark woods with patches of 16th-century brickwork. For €80 to €180 you get a room with a private roof garden.

**Hotel Toledo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 40 68 71; [www.hoteltoledo.com](http://www.hoteltoledo.com); Via Montecalvario 15; s/d €85/130; ☒ ☑) Snugly situated in an old three-storey building, Hotel Toledo offers comfy, smallish rooms with terracotta tiles and mod cons; the rooms are a little on the dark side, however. Suites come with a stove, and breakfast is served on the rooftop terrace when the weather's warm.

## TOP END

**our pick** **Hotel San Francisco al Monte** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 423 91 11; [www.hotelsanfrancesco.it](http://www.hotelsanfrancesco.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele I 328; s €160-190, d €170-225; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☑ ☒ ☑) The monks in this 16th-century monastery never had it as good as the hotel's pampered guests. The cells have been converted into stylish rooms, the ancient cloisters house an open-air bar and the barrel-vaulted corridors are cool and atmospheric. Topping it all off is the 7th-floor swimming pool.

## Santa Lucia & Chiaia

### MIDRANGE

**B&B Cappella Vecchia** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 240 51 17; [www.cappellavecchia11.it](http://www.cappellavecchia11.it); Vico Santa Maria a Cappella Vecchia 11; s €50-70, d €75-100; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☑) Run by a superhelpful young couple, this B&B has six simple, witty rooms with funky bathrooms and different Neapolitan themes, from *mal'occhio* (evil eye) to *peperoncino* (chilli) There's a spacious communal area for breakfast, and free internet available 24/7. Check the website for monthly packages.

**Hotel Pinto-Storey** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 68 12 60; [www.pintostorey.it](http://www.pintostorey.it); 4th & 5th fl, Via Martucci 72; s €68-98, d €88-153; ☒ ☑) Make it up to the 5th floor – the lift is in the far corner as you enter – and you'll find a relaxed hotel with large, airy rooms, classic decor and some stunning sea views. On a clear day you can see Capri shimmering in the haze.

**Parteno** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 245 20 95; [www.parteno.it](http://www.parteno.it); Via Partenope 1; s €80-100, d €100-125; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☑) Six chic rooms, each named after a flower, are exquisitely decorated with period furniture, vintage Neapolitan prints and silk bedding. The azalea room (€130 to €165) steals the show with its silver-screen view of sea, sky and Capri. Hi-tech touches include satellite TV and free landline calls to Europe, USA and Canada. Call ahead for last-minute offers.

**Chiaja Hotel de Charme** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 41 55 55; [www.hotelchiaia.it](http://www.hotelchiaia.it); Via Chiaia 216; s €95-105, d €99-145, superior d €140-165; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☑) Encompassing a former brothel and an aristocratic town house, this refined hotel lives up to its name. The look is effortlessly noble – think gilt-framed portraits on pale lemon walls, opulent table lamps and heavy fabrics. Rooms facing Via Chiaia come with a jacuzzi.

## TOP END

**Grand Hotel Vesuvio** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 764 00 44; [www.vesuvio.it](http://www.vesuvio.it); Via Partenope 45; s €230-370, d €290-450; ☒ ☑ ☒ ☑) Known for bedding legends – past guests include Rita Hayworth and Humphrey Bogart – this five-star heavyweight is a decadent wonderland of dripping chandeliers, period antiques and opulent rooms. Count your lucky stars while drinking a martini at the rooftop restaurant.

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## EATING



Drizzle and fusion might cut it elsewhere but not in Naples. Neapolitans don't want a culinary artist poncing about with their food; they want it as they've always had it – simple, seasonal and fresh. And that's exactly how they get it at the huge number of pizzerias, trattorias and *ristoranti* that litter the city.

Pizza and pasta are the staples of Neapolitan cuisine. Pizza was created here and nowhere will you eat it better. Seafood is another local speciality and you'll find mussels and clams served in many dishes.

Neapolitan street food is equally brilliant. *Misto di frittura* – courgette flowers, deep-fried potato and aubergine – makes for a great snack, especially if eaten from paper outside a tiny streetside stall.

Neapolitan *sfogliatelle* (sweet pastries filled with cinnamon-infused ricotta) are envied across the land, and even the coffee tastes better in Naples.

Many eateries close for two to four weeks in August.

## Around Stazione Centrale & Mercato

**Attanasio** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 28 56 75; Vico Ferrovia 1-4; snacks from €1.20; 🕒 6.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) This retro pastry peddler makes one mighty *sfogliatella*, not to mention creamy *cannoli siciliani* (pastry shells with a sweet filling of ricotta) and runny, rummy *babà* (rum-soaked yeast cake). Savoury fiends shouldn't miss the hearty *pasticcino rustico* (savoury bread), stuffed with *provola* (provolone), ricotta and salami.

**Da Michele** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 553 92 04; Via Cesare Sersale 1; pizzas from €4; 🕒 Mon-Sat) As hard-core as it gets, Naples' most famous pizzeria takes the no-frills ethos to its extremes. It's dingy and old-fashioned and serves only two types of pizza: *margherita* (tomato, basil and mozzarella) and *marinara* (tomatoes, garlic and oregano). But boy are they good!

## Centro Storico

**our pick Pizzeria Gino Sorbillo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 44 66 43; Via dei Tribunali 32; pizzas from €3; 🕒 Mon-Sat) The clamouring crowds say it all: Gino Sorbillo is king of the pizza pack. Head in for gigantic, wood-fired perfection, best followed by a velvety *semifreddo*; the chocolate and *torroncino* (almond nougat) combo is divine.

**Trattoria Mangia e Bevi** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 552 95 46; Via Sedile di Porto 92; meals €8; 🕒 lunch Mon-Fri) Everyone from pierced students to bespectacled *professori* squeeze around the lively, communal tables for brilliant home cooking at rock-bottom prices. Scan the daily-changing menu, jot down your choices and brace for gems like juicy *salsiccia di maiale* (pork sausage) and *peperoncino*-spiked *friarielli* (local broccoli).

**Trattoria da Carmine** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 29 43 83; Via dei Tribunali 330; meals €18; 🕒 Wed-Sat, lunch Tue & Sun) A quiet haven of homey, Neapolitan cooking in the midst of the tumultuous *centro storico*. Beneath vintage photos, the patient waiter guides diners through the limited menu of regional staples, such as marinated anchovies and *penne alla sorrentina* (pasta, mozzarella and tomatoes).

**La Cantina della Sapienza** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 45 90 78; Via della Sapienza 40; meals €18; 🕒 lunch Mon-Sat) Pared-down classics made with the morning's market shop are what they do best here. Think *parmigiana di melanzane* (slices of aubergine alternated with layers of tomato sauce and mozzarella) and *caprese con provola*. Sweet teeth take note: owner Gaetano whips up a different dessert every day.

**La Stanza del Gusto** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 40 15 78; Via Costantinopoli 100; set lunch €18, meals €45; 🕒 cheese bar 7.30pm-midnight Mon, 11am-4pm & 7.30pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun, restaurant

7.30pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Hip and eclectic, the 'Taste Room' offers a ground-floor 'cheese bar' for low-fuss vino sessions and grazing (the rare cheeses are fabulous), and an upstairs dining room for mod-twist adventures – think *fegatini* (chicken liver) flan with strawberry salsa and variations on *baccalà* (salted cod). A small basement food shop stocks the kitchen's own sauces, as well as take-home deli treats and wines.

## Toledo & Vomero

**Friggitoria Fiorenzano** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 551 27 88; Piazza Montesanto; snacks from €1; 🗓 Mon-Sat) The Brits don't have a monopoly on fried food served in paper. Here you'll find piles of crunchy deep-fried aubergines and artichokes, croquets filled with prosciutto and mozzarella, and a whole lot more.

**Pintauro** ([Map](#); ☎ 348 7781645; Via Toledo 275; sfogliatelle €1.50; 🗓 8am-2pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun Sep-May) Another local institution, the cinnamon-scented Pintauro peddles perfect *sfogliatelle* to shopped-out locals.

**Nennella** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 41 43 38; Vico Lungo Teatro 103-105; meals €10; 🗓 Mon-Sat) *Casareccio* (homestyle) cooking and Neapolitan theatricality collide at loud, unmissable Nennella. Give your name to Ciro and wait for the boisterous staff to call you in. Inside, roguish waiters serve up uncomplicated gems like crispy fried sardines, lip-smacking *spaghetti con lupine* (spaghetti with lupin) or *insalatona nennella* (rocket, bresaola and radish salad).

**Donna Teresa** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 556 70 70; Via Kerbaker 58; meals €14; 🗓 Mon-Sat) Locals know exactly what they're getting when they squeeze into this tiny, eight-table trattoria – traditional food as their *nonna* (grandma) would have cooked it. The limited menu changes daily, but you might find *spezzatini al ragù* (meat stew), *polpette* (meat balls) or *salsicce al sugo* (sausages in tomato sauce).

## Santa Lucia & Chiaia

**La Focaccia** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 41 22 77; Vico Belledonne a Chiaia 31; focaccia from €1.60; 🗓 11am-late Mon-Sat, 5pm-late Sun) Head to this funky, no-fuss bolthole for fat focaccia squares stacked with combos like artichokes and *provola*, or aubergine with *pecorino* cheese and smoked ham. Best of all, there isn't a microwave oven in sight.

**La Trattoria dell'Oca** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 41 48 65; Via Santa Teresa a Chiaia 11; meals €20; 🗓 closed dinner Sun Oct-May) Refined yet relaxed, this softly lit trattoria celebrates beautifully cooked classics, which may include *gnocchi al ragù* or a superb *baccalà* (salted cod) cooked with succulent cherry tomatoes, capers and olives.

**La Scialuppa** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 764 53 33; Borgo Marinaro 4; meals €45; 🗓 Tue-Sun) Almost 150 years young and a hit with Italian VIPs, La Scialuppa is a sound choice for romantic harbourside noshing. Predictably, seafood is the star, from the moreish *fritto misto* (mixed fried seafood) to the vino-infused *risotto alla scialuppa* (seafood risotto). In the warmer months, the yacht-flanking alfresco tables are a prized possession, so book ahead.

**our pick Dora** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 68 05 19; Via Palasciano 30; meals €60; 🗓 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat) Don't be fooled by the humble front on a forlorn street: Dora's is one of Naples' finest fish restaurants. Surrounded by breezy blue-and-white tiles and marine memorabilia, you can dive into juicy chargrilled prawns and a crisp *frittura di pesce* (fried fish) as the veteran owner breaks into song. Reservations are essential.

## DRINKING

The city's student and alternative drinking scene is around the piazzas and alleyways of the *centro storico*. For a chicer vibe, hit the cobbled lanes of upmarket Chiaia. While some bars operate from 8am, most open from around 6.30pm and close around 2am.

**Al Barcadero** ([Map](#); ☎ 333 2227023; Banchina Santa Lucia 2) Duck down the steps on the left as you walk towards Borgo Marinaro and you'll find this unpretentious waterside bar. Grab a beer and watch the fishers pootle around the marina.

**Caffè Mexico** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 549 93 30; Piazza Dante 86; ☎ 7am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Make a beeline for Naples' best-loved espresso bar, where old-school baristas serve up the city's mightiest espresso.

**Enoteca Belledonne** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 40 31 62; Vico Belledonne a Chiaia 18) One of the best-loved wine bars in Chiaia. All exposed-brick walls and bottle-lined shelves, it's a stalwart of the area's well-trodden *aperitivo* (happy hour) circuit.

**Il Caffè Arabo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 442 06 07; Piazza Bellini) One of the squareside cafes on bohemian Piazza Bellini, this raffish spot is good for a laid-back wine (the cheapest on the piazza) and a Middle Eastern nibble or two. Just to the right, Intra Moenia (☎ 081 29 07 20, Piazza Bellini 70) is its more upmarket neighbour, complete with erudite bookshop.

**S'Move** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 764 58 13; Vico dei Sospiri 10a) Another *aperitivo* hot spot in Chiaia, the bulbous lamps and futuristic wall panels here channel Barbarella. DJs spin nu-jazz, acid jazz, electro and funk every Thursday to Sunday.

**Caffè Gambrinus** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 41 41 33; Via Chiaia 12) Tourists and overdressed visitors self-consciously sip overpriced coffee and cocktails at Naples' most venerable cafe. Oscar Wilde and Bill Clinton count among the celebs who have graced its lavish art-nouveau interior.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

Options run the gamut from world-class opera and jazz to rock festivals and cavernous clubbing. For cultural listings pick up the monthly *Qui Napoli* (at the tourist offices) or a local newspaper; for the latest club news check out the free minimag *Zero* (in Italian), available from many bars.

You can buy tickets for most cultural events at the box office inside **Feltrinelli** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 764 21 11; Piazza dei Martiri; ☎ 4.30-8pm Mon, 10am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm Tue-Sat).

The month-long Maggio dei Monumenti festival in May offers concerts and cultural activities in various museums and monuments around town, most of which are free. From May until September, alfresco concerts are common throughout the city. Tourist offices have details.

At the time of writing, only local residents were permitted to attend football matches at Naples' Stadio San Paolo; a measure aimed at curbing hooliganism.

## Nightclubs & Live Music

Clubs usually open at 10.30pm or 11pm but don't fill up until after midnight. Many close in summer (July to September), some transferring to out-of-town beach locations. Admission charges vary, but expect to

pay between €5 and €25, which may or may not include a drink.

**Rising South** ([Map](#); ☎ 335 8790428; Via San Sebastiano 19) Urged on by a strident soundtrack of hip hop, drum and bass, Latin and electronica, a young, up-for-it crowd grooves beneath the *centro storico*. Art-house video projections provide the visuals.

**Velvet Zone** ([Map](#); ☎ 328 9577115; Via Cisterna dell'Olio 11) A historic Naples club, the Velvet rocks to different tunes on different nights. Expect anything from minimal techno to house, retro and rock.

**Around Midnight** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 742 32 78; Via Bonito 32A; 📅 Sep—early Jul) One of Naples' oldest and most famous jazz clubs, this tiny swinging bolthole features mostly home-grown live gigs, with the occasional blues band putting in a performance.

**Arenile di Bagnoli** (off [Map](#); ☎ 081 230 30 50; Via Nuova Bagnoli 10; 📅 Apr-Sep) The biggest of Naples' beachside clubs. Order a pizza, catch a band or hit the beachside dance floor for thumping house under the stars. The club is a short walk south of Bagnoli station on the Cumana rail line.

## Theatre

**Teatro San Carlo** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 797 23 31; [www.teatrosancarlo.it](http://www.teatrosancarlo.it); Via San Carlo 98; 📅 box office 10am-7pm Tue-Sat) One of Italy's premier opera venues, the theatre stages a year-round programme of opera, ballet and concerts, though tickets can be fiendishly difficult to get hold of. For opera, count on €50 for a place in the sixth tier and €100 for a seat in the stalls. If you're under 30 (and can prove it), last-minute tickets are available one hour before performances for €15.

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## SHOPPING

Colourful markets, artisan studios, and heirloom tailors – shopping in Naples is highly idiosyncratic.

For a gastronomic souvenir, head to **Limonè** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 29 94 29; Piazza San Gaetano 72), where you'll be able to try the organic *limoncello* (lemon liqueur) before buying a bottle. If it goes to your head, grab some lemon pasta as well. For organic, handmade soaps and beauty products, head to **Kiphy** ([Map](#); ☎ 393 8703280; Piazza San Gaetano 72), while those after offbeat art, design and craft should check out **Mani Design** ([Map](#); ☎ 347 9532930; Via San Giovanni Maggiore Pignatelli 1B).

Chiaia is the place for the fashion big guns and Naples' legendary tailors; places like **Mariano Rubinacci** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 41 57 93; Via Filangeri 26), where you'll pay around €1500 for a jacket, or **Marinella** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 245 11 82; Piazza Vittoria 287), whose made-to-measure ties were worn by Aristotle Onassis and Gianni Agnelli.

For traditional Neapolitan *presepi* (nativity scenes), drop into the artisan shops lining **Via San Gregorio Armeno**.

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

**Capodichino airport** (NAP; off [Map](#); ☎ 081 789 62 59; [www.gesac.it](http://www.gesac.it)), 7km northeast of the city centre,

is southern Italy's main airport, linking Naples with most Italian and several major European cities, as well as New York. Serviced by a number of major airlines, including Alitalia and British Airways, the airport also hosts a number of low-cost carriers. Among the latter is easyjet which connects Naples to several European cities, including London, Paris (Orly) and Berlin.

## Boat

Naples, the bay islands and the Amalfi Coast are served by a comprehensive ferry network. In Naples, ferries and hydrofoils leave for Capri, Sorrento, Ischia, Procida and Forio from Molo Beverello in front of Castel Nuovo; hydrofoils for Capri, Ischia and Procida also sail from Mergellina; longer-distance ferries for Palermo, Cagliari, Milazzo, the Aeolian Islands (Isole Eolie) and Tunisia leave from the Stazione Marittima.

Tickets for shorter journeys can be bought at the ticket booths on Molo Beverello and at Mergellina. For longer journeys try the offices of the ferry companies or a travel agent.

*Qui Napoli* lists timetables for Bay of Naples services. Note, however, that ferry services are pared back considerably in the winter, and adverse sea conditions may affect sailing schedules.

Following is a list of ferry and hydrofoil companies and the destinations they service. The fares, unless otherwise stated, are for a one-way, high-season, deck-class single.

**Alilauro** (Map; ☎ 081 497 22 67; [www.alilauro.it](http://www.alilauro.it); Stazione Marittima) Operates hydrofoils from Naples to Sorrento (€9, seven daily), Ischia (€16, 10 daily) and Forio (€15.50, five daily); also ferries between Capri and Ischia (€15.50, one daily) and Amalfi (€13.50, two daily).

**Caremar** (Map; ☎ 081 551 38 82; [www.caremar.it](http://www.caremar.it); Molo Beverello) Runs services from Naples to Capri (ferry/hydrofoil €9.60/11, five daily), Ischia (€9.10/16, 13 daily) and Procida (€7/8.60, 12 daily); also between Sorrento and Capri (€7.50, four daily).

**Linee Marittime Partenopee** (Map; ☎ 081 704 19 11; [www.consorziolmp.it](http://www.consorziolmp.it); Via Guglielmo Melisurgo 4) Runs hydrofoils from Sorrento to Capri (€13.50, 23 daily) and frequent daily hydrofoils/ferries from Capri to Positano (€16.50/14.50), Amalfi (€17/15) and Salerno (€16/17.50).

**Medmar** (Map; ☎ 081 551 33 52; [www.medmargroup](http://www.medmargroup); Stazione Marittima) Operates services from Naples to Ischia (€9.60, seven daily) and a daily service to Procida (€4.50).

**Metrò del Mare** (Map; ☎ 199 446644; [www.metrodelmare.com](http://www.metrodelmare.com)) Runs summer-only services between Naples and Sorrento (€6.50, three daily), Positano (€14, four daily), Amalfi (€15, six daily) and Salerno (€16, two daily), as well as between the main Amalfi Coast towns.

**Navigazione Libera del Golfo** (NLG; Map; ☎ 081 552 07 63; [www.navlib.it](http://www.navlib.it), in Italian, Molo Beverello) From Naples NLG runs hydrofoils to and from Capri (€17, four daily) year-round.

**Siremar** (Map; ☎ 081 017 19 98; [www.siremar.it](http://www.siremar.it); Stazione Marittima) Operates boats to the Aeolian Islands and Milazzo (seat €62, six times weekly in summer, three times weekly in the low season).

**SNAV** (Map; ☎ 091 428 55 55; [www.snav.it](http://www.snav.it); Stazione Marittima) Runs hydrofoils to Capri (€16, seven daily), Procida (€13.60, four daily) and Ischia (€16, four daily), as well as ferries to Palermo (€30, one daily). In summer there are daily services to the Aeolian Islands (€60 to Lipari).

**Tirrenia** (Map; ☎ 081 720 11 11; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it); Stazione Marittima, Molo Angioino) From Naples runs a weekly boat to and from Cagliari (deck class €34.89) and Palermo (deck class €43.83). The service increases to twice weekly in summer. From Palermo and Cagliari there are connections to Tunisia, directly or via Trapani (Sicily).

# Bus

Most national and international buses leave from Piazza Garibaldi.

Regional bus services are operated by a number of companies, the most useful of which is **SITA** (☎ 199 730749; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian), which runs buses from Naples to Pompeii (€2.40, 40 minutes, half-hourly), Sorrento (€3.30, one hour 20 minutes, twice daily), Positano (€3.30, two hours, twice daily), Amalfi (€3.30, two hours, twice daily) and Salerno (€3.30, one hour 10 minutes, every 25 minutes). Casting wider, it runs from Salerno to Bari via Naples (€22.50, 4½ hours, twice daily) and operates a service to Germany, including Frankfurt (€105), Düsseldorf (€118) and Hamburg (€124). You can buy SITA tickets and catch buses either from Porto Immacolatella, near Stazione Marittima, or from Via Galileo Ferraris ([Map](#)), near Stazione Centrale; you can also buy tickets at **Bar Clizia** ([Map](#); Corso Arnaldo Lucci 173).

**Marino** (☎ 080 311 23 35) has buses to Bari (€22, three hours, up to five services daily); **Miccolis** (☎ 081 20 03 80) runs to Taranto (€17.50, four hours, three to four services daily), Brindisi (€25.20, five hours) and Lecce (€28.50, 5½ hours); while **CLP** (☎ 081 531 17 07) serves Foggia (€11, two hours, frequent), Perugia (€29.45, 3½ hours) and Assisi (€32, 4½ hours, one per day).

## Car & Motorcycle

Naples is on the Autostrada del Sole, the A1 (north to Rome and Milan) and the A3 (south to Salerno and Reggio di Calabria). The A30 skirts Naples to the northeast, while the A16 heads across the Apennines to Bari.

On approaching the city, the motorways meet the Tangenziale di Napoli, a major ring road around the city. The ring road hugs the city's northern fringe, meeting the A1 for Rome in the east, and continuing westwards towards the Campi Flegrei and Pozzuoli.

## Train

Naples is southern Italy's main rail hub. Most national trains arrive at or depart from Stazione Centrale or, underneath the main station, Stazione Garibaldi. There are up to 30 trains daily to Rome (IC €19.50, two hours), some of which stop at Mergellina station, and some 20 to Salerno (IC €6.50, 35 minutes).

The **Stazione Circumvesuviana** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 772 24 44; [www.vesuviana.it](http://www.vesuviana.it); Corso Garibaldi), southwest of Stazione Centrale (follow the signs from the main concourse), operates trains to Sorrento (€3.30, 70 minutes) via Ercolano (€1.80, 20 minutes), Pompeii (€2.40, 40 minutes) and other towns along the coast. There are about 40 trains daily running between 5am and 10.30pm, with reduced services on Sunday.

**Ferrovía Cumana** and **Circumflegrea** (☎ 800 001616; [www.sepsa.it](http://www.sepsa.it)), based at Stazione Cumana di Montesanto ([Map](#)) on Piazza Montesanto, 500m southwest of Piazza Dante, operate services to Pozzuoli (€1.10, 20 minutes, every 25 minutes).

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## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

By public transport you can take either the regular **ANM** (☎ 800 639525; [www.anm.it](http://www.anm.it), in Italian) bus 3S

(€1.10, 45 minutes, every 15 minutes) from Piazza Garibaldi or the **Alibus** (☎ 800 5311705) airport shuttle (€3, 45 minutes, every 30 minutes) from Piazza del Municipio or Piazza Garibaldi.

Official taxi fares to the airport are as follows: €21 from a seafront hotel or from the Mergellina hydrofoil terminal; €18 from Piazza del Municipio; and €14.50 from Stazione Centrale.

## Bus

In Naples, buses are operated by the city transport company **ANM** (☎ 800 639525; [www.anm.it](http://www.anm.it), in Italian). There's no central bus station, but most buses pass through Piazza Garibaldi, the city's chaotic transport hub. To locate your bus stop you'll probably need to ask at the information kiosk in the centre of the square.

Useful bus services:

**140** Santa Lucia to Posillipo via Mergellina.

**152** From Piazza Garibaldi, along Corso Garibaldi, Via Nuova Marina, Via Colombo, to Molo Beverello, Via Santa Lucia, Piazza Vittoria and Via Partenope.

**404D** A night bus operating from 11.20pm to 4am (hourly departures) from Stazione Centrale to Piazza del Municipio, on to Mergellina and Vomero, and then back down to Stazione Centrale.

**C25** Piazza Amedeo to Piazza Bovio via Castel dell'Ovo and Piazza del Municipio.

**C28** From Piazza Vittoria up Via dei Mille and on to Piazza Vanvitelli in Vomero.

**E1** From Piazza del Gesù, along Via Costantinopoli, to Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Via Tribunali, Via Duomo, Piazza Nicola Amore, along Corso Umberto I and Via Mezzocannone.

**R1** From Piazza Medaglie D'Oro to Piazza Carità, Piazza Dante and Piazza Bovio.

**R2** From Stazione Centrale, along Corso Umberto I, to Piazza Bovio, Piazza del Municipio and Piazza Trieste e Trento.

**R3** From Mergellina along the Riviera di Chiaia to Piazza del Municipio, Piazza Bovio, Piazza Dante and Piazza Carità.

**R4** From Capodimonte down past Via Dante to Piazza Municipio and back again.

## Car & Motorcycle

Vehicle theft and anarchic traffic make driving in Naples a bad option.

Officially much of the city centre is closed to nonresident traffic for much of the day. Daily restrictions are in place in the *centro storico*, in the area around Piazza del Municipio and Via Toledo, and in the Chiaia district around Piazza dei Martiri. Hours vary but are typically from 8am to 6.30pm, possibly later.

East of the city centre, there's a 24-hour car park at Via Brin (€1.30 for the first four hours, €7.20 for 24 hours).

An economy car will cost about €60 per day; for a scooter expect to pay about €35. The major car-hire firms are all represented in Naples:

**Avis** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 28 40 41; [www.avisautonoleggio.it](http://www.avisautonoleggio.it); Corso Novara 5) Also at Capodichino airport.

**Hertz** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 20 62 28; [www.hertz.it](http://www.hertz.it); Via Giuseppe Ricciardi 5) Also at Capodichino airport and Mergellina.

**Maggiore** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 28 78 58; [www.maggiore.it](http://www.maggiore.it); Stazione Centrale) Also at Capodichino

airport.

**Rent Sprint** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 764 13 33; Via Santa Lucia 36) Scooter hire only.

## Funicular

Three of Naples' four funicular railways connect the centre with Vomero:

**Funicolare Centrale** Ascends from Via Toledo to Piazza Fuga.

**Funicolare di Chiaia** From Via del Parco Margherita to Via Domenico Cimarosa.

**Funicolare di Montesanto** From Piazza Montesanto to Via Raffaele Morghen.

The fourth, Funicolare di Mergellina, connects the waterfront at Via Mergellina with Via Manzoni.

Unico Napoli tickets (see boxed text, below) are valid on the funiculars.

## Metro

Currently being extended, Naples' **Metropolitana** (☎ 800 568866; [www.metro.na.it](http://www.metro.na.it)) is, in fact, mostly above ground. Metro journeys are covered by Unico Napoli tickets (see boxed text, below).

**Line 1** Runs north from Piazza Dante stopping at Museo (for Piazza Cavour and Line 2), Materdei, Salvator Rosa, Cilea, Piazza Vanvitelli, Piazza Medaglie D'Oro and seven stops beyond.

**Line 2** Runs from Gianturco, just east of Stazione Centrale, with stops at Piazza Garibaldi (for Stazione Centrale), Piazza Cavour, Montesanto, Piazza Amedeo, Mergellina, Piazza Leopardi, Campi Flegrei, Cavaleggeri d'Aosta, Bagnoli and Pozzuoli.

## Taxi

Official taxis are white and have meters. There are taxi stands at most of the city's main piazzas or you can call one of the five taxi cooperatives: **Napoli** (☎ 081 556 44 44), **Consortaxi** (☎ 081 20 20 20), **Cotana** (☎ 081 570 70 70), **Free** (☎ 081 551 51 51) or **Partenope** (☎ 081 556 02 02).

The minimum taxi fare is €4.75, of which €3.10 is the starting fare. There's also a baffling range of additional charges: €0.95 for a radio taxi call, €2.10 extra on Sundays and holidays, €2.40 more between 10pm and 7am, €2.95 for an airport run and €0.60 per piece of luggage in the boot. Guide dogs for the blind and wheelchairs are carried free of charge.

Always ensure the meter is running.

See opposite for fares to the airport.

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## AROUND NAPLES

### CAMPI FLEGREI

Stretching west from Posillipo to the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Campi Flegrei (Phlegraean – or 'Fiery' – Fields) is a pockmarked area of craters, lakes and fumaroles, one of the world's most geologically unstable. Here, archaeological ruins stand in the midst of modern eyesores, and history merges with myth.



This is where Icarus plunged to his death, where Aeneas sought the Sybil's advice, and where Greek colonists first settled in Italy – Cuma dates to the 8th century BC, while Pozzuoli, the main centre, was founded around 530 BC.

Before exploring the area it's worth stopping at Pozzuoli's tourist office for updated information on the area's sights and opening times. Also a good idea is the two-day €4 cumulative ticket that covers the archaeological sites of Baia and Cuma.

## Pozzuoli

The first town that emerges beyond Naples' dreary western suburbs is Pozzuoli, a workaday place whose attractions are not immediately apparent. However, nose around and you'll find some impressive Roman ruins and an eerie, steaming volcanic crater. The town was established by the Greeks around 530 BC and later renamed Puteoli (Little Wells) by the Romans, who turned it into a major port. It was here that St Paul is said to have landed in AD 61 and that screen goddess Sophia Loren spent her childhood.

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## TICKETS PLEASE

Tickets for public transport in Naples and the surrounding Campania region are managed by **Unico Campania** ([www.unicocampania.it](http://www.unicocampania.it)). There are various plans, depending on where you plan to travel. Both the Unico Napoli 90-minute ticket (€1.10) and the 24-hour ticket (€3.10, reduced to €2.60 at weekends) offer unlimited travel by bus, tram, funicular, metro, Ferrovia Cumana or Circumflegrea. Other deals include the Unico 3T, a 72-hour ticket for €20 which covers rail travel throughout Campania, including the Alibus and transport on the islands of Ischia and Procida; Unico Ischia, which costs €1.20 for 90 minutes and €1.20 for 24 hours of bus travel on Ischia; and a similar deal offered with Unico Capri that covers bus travel on Capri. If you plan to do much travelling by SITA bus and/or Circumvesuviana train in the Bay of Naples and Amalfi Coast area, then save money by investing in a Unico Costiera card, available between April and October for durations of 45 minutes (€2), 90 minutes (€3), 24 hours (€6) or 72 hours (€15). Aside from the SITA buses, the 24- and 72-hour tickets also allow you to hop on the City Sightseeing tourist bus that travels between Amalfi and Ravello and Amalfi and Maiori. All Unico Campania tickets are sold at stations, ANM booths and tobacconists.

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The **tourist office** (☎ 081 526 66 39; Piazza G Matteotti 1a; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm daily Jun-Sep, 9am-2pm & 2.30-3.40pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) is beside the Porta Napoli gate, around 700m downhill from the metro station.

Rising 33m above the western end of the seafront, the **Rione Terra** (☎ 848 800288; Largo Sedile di Porto; admission €3) is Pozzuoli's oldest quarter and ancient Puteoli's acropolis. Underground visits to the quarter, which contains Roman-era roads, shops and even a brothel, are by guided tour only. Contact the tourist office for opening times: hours vary and the site closes sporadically.

Just east of the port, sunken in a leafy piazza, sits the **Tempio di Serapide** (Temple of Serapis). Despite its name, it wasn't a temple at all, but an ancient *macellum* (town market). Named after a statue of the Egyptian god Serapis found here in 1750, its toilets (at either side of the eastern apse) are considered works of ancient ingenuity. Badly damaged over the centuries by bradyseism (the slow upward and downward movement of the earth's crust), the temple is occasionally flooded by sea water.

Head northeast along Via Rosini to the ruins of the 1st-century-BC **Anfiteatro Flavio** (☎ 081 526 60

07; Via Terracciano 75; admission €4; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset Wed-Mon). The third-largest amphitheatre in Italy, it could hold over 20,000 spectators and was occasionally flooded for mock naval battles. Under the main arena you can wander among fallen columns and get your head around the complex mechanics involved in hoisting the caged wild beasts up to their waiting victims. In AD 305 seven Christian martyrs, including St Januarius, were thrown to the animals here. They survived only to be beheaded later.

Some 2km up Via Rosini, which becomes Via Solfatara, the surreal **Solfatara crater** (☎ 081 526 23 41; [www.solfatara.it](http://www.solfatara.it); Via Solfatara 161; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am to 1hr before sunset) was known to the Romans as the Forum Vulcani (home of the god of fire). At the far end of the steaming, malodorous crater are the **Stufe**, in which two ancient grottoes were excavated at the end of the 19th century to create two brick *sudatoria* (sweat rooms). Christened Purgatory and Hell, they both reach temperatures of up to 90°C. To get to the crater, catch any city bus heading uphill from the metro station and ask the driver to let you off at Solfatara.

Pozzuoli has several campsites; they're the nearest ones to Naples. Up by the Solfatara, a panoply of trees provides shade at the well-equipped **Camping Vulcano Solfatara** (☎ 081 526 74 13; [www.solfatara.it](http://www.solfatara.it); Via Solfatara 161; camping 2 people, car & tent €26-32.60; 🚰).

There are frequent car and passenger ferries from Pozzuoli to Ischia and Procida, run by a variety of companies. Typical prices are €6.60 to Procida and €7.60 to Ischia – more if you take a hydrofoil.

Both the **Ferrovía Cumana** (☎ 800 001616; [www.sepsa.it](http://www.sepsa.it)) and the Naples metro (line 2) serve Pozzuoli.

By bus, take AMN bus 152 from Naples.

If you have your own wheels, take the Tangenziale ring road from Naples and swing off at the Pozzuoli exit. Less swift but more scenic is taking Via Francesco Caracciolo along the Naples waterfront to Posillipo, then on to Pozzuoli.

## Baia & Cuma

About 7km southwest of Pozzuoli, Baia was an upmarket Roman holiday resort with a reputation as a sordid centre of sex and sin. Today much of the ancient town is underwater, and modern development has left what is effectively a built-up, ugly and uninspiring coastal road.

Between April and October, CYMBA runs glass-bottom-boat tours of **Baia Sommersa** (☎ 349 4974183; [www.baiasommersa.it](http://www.baiasommersa.it); tours €12; ☎ 10am, noon & 3pm Sat & Sun), the underwater ruins. All year round, however, you can admire the elaborate *nymphaeum* (shrine to the water nymph), complete with statues, jewels, coins and decorative pillars dredged up and reassembled in the recently expanded **Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei** (☎ 081 523 37 97; Via Castello; admission €4; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset Tue-Sun). The 15th-century castle that houses the museum was built by Naples' Aragon rulers as a defence against possible French invasion.

Cuma (known to the ancient Greeks as Cumae) was the earliest Greek colony on the Italian mainland. The highlight of the **Acropoli di Cuma** (☎ 081 854 30 60; Via Montecuma; admission €4; ☎ 9am to 2hr before sunset) is the haunting **Antro della Sibilla Cumana** (Cave of the Cuman Sybil). Hollowed out of the tufa bank, its eerie 130m-long trapezoidal tunnel leads to the vaulted chamber where the Sybil was said to pass on messages from Apollo. The poet Virgil writes of Aeneas coming here to seek the oracle, who directs him to the underworld, entered from nearby **Lago d'Averno** (Lake Avernus). The lake, a 1km walk from Lucrino train station, is now a chilled-out spot for a picnic.

From Fusaro train station (Ferrovía Cumana), walk 150m north to Via Fusaro and jump on a Cuma-bound **EAV bus** ([www.eavbus.it](http://www.eavbus.it), in Italian), which runs roughly every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday and every hour on Sunday. For Baia, jump on a Miseno-bound EAV Bus from the opposite side of the street.

## CASERTA

**pop 79,620**

The one compelling reason to stop at this otherwise nondescript town, 22km north of Naples, is to visit the colossal Palazzo Reale. Dubbed the Italian Versailles, the vast palace is one of the greatest – and last – achievements of Italian baroque architecture. It is also where Tom Cruise shot scenes for *Mission Impossible III* and where George Lucas filmed the interior shots of Queen Amidala's royal residence in *Star Wars: Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace* and *Star Wars: Episode 2 - Attack of the Clones*.

Caserta was founded in the 8th century by the Lombards on the site of a Roman emplacement atop Monte Tifata, expanding onto the plains below from the 12th century onwards.

Caserta's **tourist office** (☎ 0823 32 11 37; Piazza Dante; 🕒 9am-4.15pm Mon-Fri) is near the entrance to the palace gardens.

## Sights

Known to Italians as the Reggia di Caserta, the Unesco-listed **Palazzo Reale** (☎ 0823 44 80 84; Via Douhet 22; admission €10; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Wed-Mon) is one of Italy's tourist heavyweights, pulling in some 460,000 visitors each year.

Work on the palace began in 1752 after King Charles VII of Bourbon ordered a palace to rival Versailles. Neapolitan Luigi Vanvitelli was commissioned for the job and built a palace not just equal to Versailles, but even bigger. With its 1200 rooms, 1790 windows, 34 staircases and a 250m-long facade, it was reputedly the largest building in 18th-century Europe.

You enter by Vanvitelli's immense staircase, a masterpiece of vainglorious baroque, and follow a route through the royal apartments, richly decorated with tapestries, furniture and crystal. Beyond the library is a room containing a vast collection of *presepi* composed of hundreds of hand-carved nativity pieces.

To clear your head afterwards, take a walk in the elegant landscaped **park** (🕒 8.30am-7pm Jun-Aug, to 5.30pm May & Sep, to 6pm Apr, to 4.30pm Oct, to 4pm Mar, to 3.30pm Nov-Feb, last entry 1hr before closing Wed-Mon). It stretches for some 3km to a waterfall and fountain of Diana and the famous **Giardino Inglese** (English Garden; 🕒 tours 9.30am-1pm Wed-Mon) with its intricate pathways, exotic plants, pools and cascades. Last entry is one hour before closing.

The weary can cover the same ground in a pony and trap (from €5), or for €1 you can bring a bike into the park. A picnic is another good idea. Within the palace there's also the **Mostra Terrea Motus** (admission free with palace ticket; 🕒 9am-6pm Wed-Mon), illustrating the 1980 earthquake that devastated the region.

When you're done, revive yourself in the palace's cafeteria and restaurant.

## Getting There & Away

CTP buses connect Caserta with Naples' Piazza Garibaldi (€2.90) about every 35 minutes between 6am and 9pm. Some Benevento services also stop in Caserta.

The town is on the main train line between Rome (€10.50, around two hours and 30 minutes) and Naples (€2.90, 40 minutes). Both bus and train stations are near the Palazzo Reale entrance, which is signposted from each. If you're driving, follow signs for the Reggia.

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## BENEVENTO

**pop 62,950**

Inside the ring of drab modern housing blocks that announce Benevento, the city has a lovely centre peppered with remnants of its ancient past. Nestled in the green hills of the Apennines, it was originally known as Maleventum but was renamed Beneventum after the Romans ousted the Samnites in 275 BC. Its golden age came around the 8th century, when it controlled much of southern Italy as a Lombard duchy. In the 11th century it was transferred to the control of the papacy and remained mostly under papal rule until 1860.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0824 31 99 11; [www.eptbenevento.it](http://www.eptbenevento.it); Via Nicola Sala 31; 🕒 8.15am-1.45pm & 3pm-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) is east of the historic centre. Catch local bus 1 from the train station to reach it.

### Sights

The town was heavily bombed in WWII and the Romanesque **cathedral** with its elaborate facade had to be largely rebuilt. Southwest of the cathedral is a restored **Roman theatre** dating from Hadrian's time. The beautifully preserved **Arco di Traiano** (Trajan's Arch), built in AD 114, commemorates the opening of the Via Traiano, while the **obelisk** (Piazza Matteotti) marks the Napoleonic invasion of Italy.

Nearby, the atmospheric 8th-century **Chiesa di Santa Sofia** adjoins what was once a Benedictine abbey. Nowadays, the abbey houses the **Museo Sannio** (☎ 0824 218 18; Piazza Santa Sofia; admission €4; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), whose collection contains remnants of a 1st-century temple dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis, along with some impressive archaeological finds. The ticket price includes admission to the church's tranquil cloisters.

Housed in the handsome Palazzo del Governo across from the museum, **ARCOS** (Museo di Arte Contemporanea del Sannio; ☎ 0824 312 465; [www.museoarcos.it](http://www.museoarcos.it), in Italian; Corso Garibaldi 1; admission €4) is the Sannio region's contemporary art museum, with regular temporary exhibitions in a beautiful vaulted gallery. Opening hours vary.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel President** (☎ 0824 31 67 16; [www.hotelpresidentbenevento.it](http://www.hotelpresidentbenevento.it); Via Giovan Battista Perasso 1; s/d €78/115; 📶 🚰 🚿) Modern and central, the President is convenient rather than characterful. The comfortable, bland rooms feature stripy fabrics, white walls and polished wood.

**Osteria Nunzia** (☎ 0824 294 31; Via Annunziata 152; meals €18; 🕒 Mon-Sat) A slow-food stalwart, this vaulted nosh spot serves soulful regional classics to in-the-know foodies. Highlights include heavenly *linguine al nero di seppia* (linguine pasta with black squid ink) and an equally exquisite tender *polipo* (calamari) with tomato sauce.

### Getting There & Away

**Metrocampania Nord-Est** (☎ 800 053939 [www.metrocampanianordest.it](http://www.metrocampanianordest.it)) operates direct train services

between Benevento and Naples (€4.20). The train station is a good half-hour slog from the town centre and sights. Alternatively, local bus 1 runs half-hourly from the train station to the town centre. Buses also link Benevento with Rome (€17.50, three hours, four to five services daily) and Campobasso (€3.60, two hours, two services daily).

Benevento is on the SS7 (Via Appia) and close to the A16.

## AVELLINO & AROUND

Largely rebuilt after the shattering earthquake of 1980, modern-day Avellino won't delay you long. The area's main sight is 1000m above town, perched on the vertiginous summit of Monte Vergine (1493m): the **Santuario di Montevergine** (☎ 0825 729 24; museum €1; 🕒 7.30am-6.30pm year-round) dates to the 12th century, when a young pilgrim, Guglielmo di Vercelli, built the first church here. Since then it's undergone numerous facelifts, the last being in the mid-20th century. You can visit the abbey (admission free), and enjoy a small collection of archaeological finds, sculpture and painting in the sanctuary museum.

The green slopes around Avellino are home to some of Campania's finest vineyards. Fiano di Avellino, a dry white, Greco di Tufo, a dry and aromatic white, and Taurasi, the region's top red, are all produced in the area.

For winter exercise, there's limited skiing at **Lago di Laceno**, about 30km southeast of Avellino.

For more information on Avellino and its environs contact the town's **tourist office** (☎ 0825 747 32; [www.eptavellino.it](http://www.eptavellino.it), in Italian; Via Due Principati 32a; 🕒 8.30am-2.30pm Mon-Sat).

Buses connect Avellino to Naples (€3.30, every 20 minutes or so Monday to Saturday and hourly on Sunday). In summer buses go from Avellino to Monte Vergine and the sanctuary.

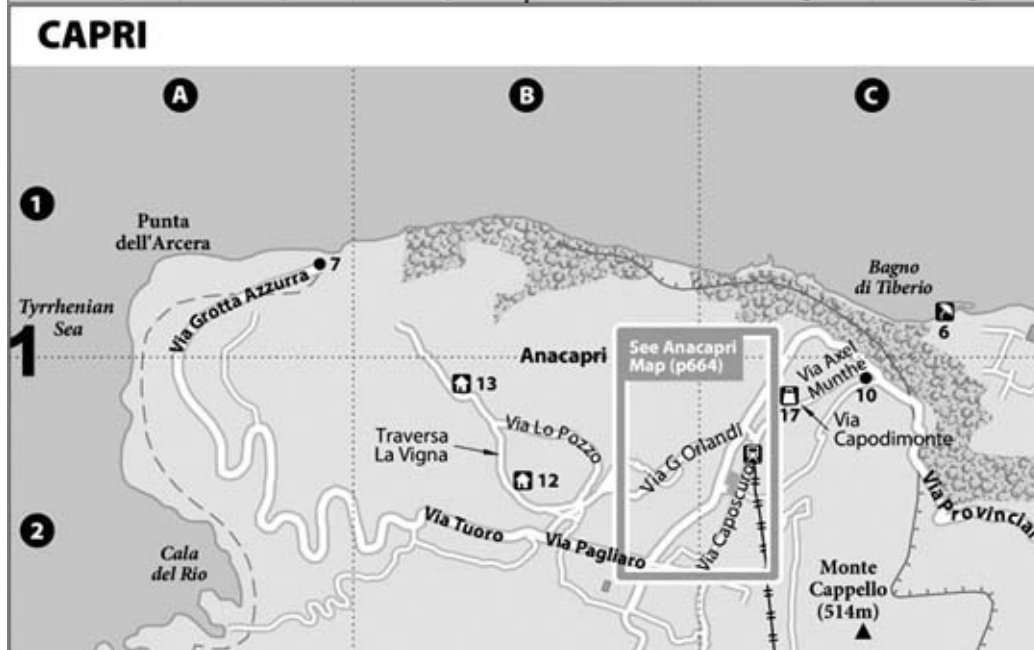
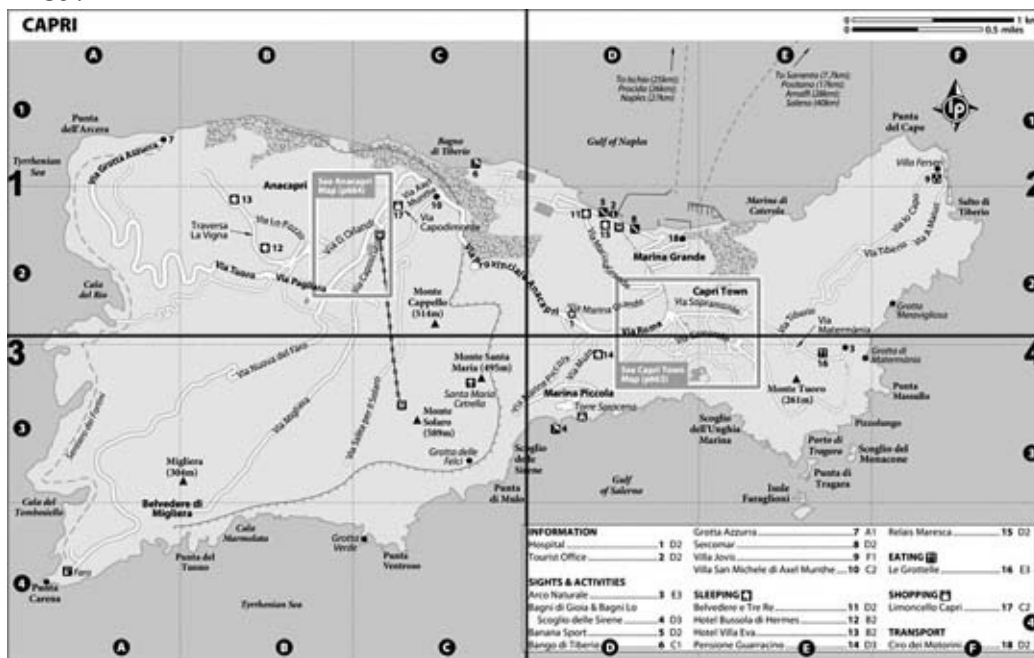
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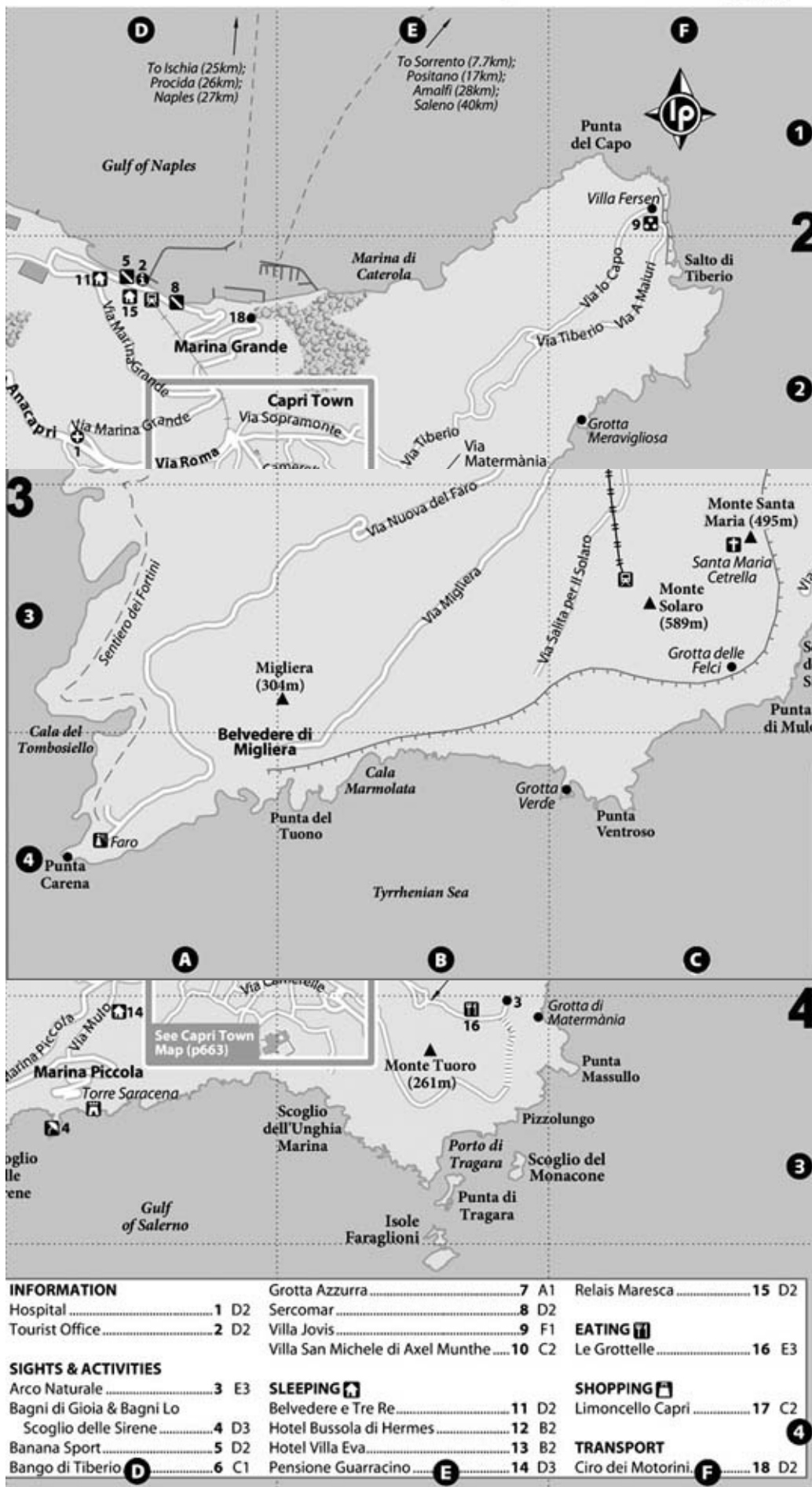
# BAY OF NAPLES

## CAPRI

pop 13,100

A stark mass of limestone rock that rise sheerly through impossibly blue water, Capri (pronounced *ca-pri*) is the perfect microcosm of Mediterranean appeal – a smooth cocktail of chichi piazzas and cool cafes, Roman ruins and rugged seascapes. It's also a hugely popular day-trip destination and a summer favourite of holidaying VIPs. Inevitably, the two main centres, Capri Town and its uphill rival, Anacapri, are almost entirely given over to tourism and high prices. But explore beyond the designer boutiques and pointedly traditional trattorias and you'll find that Capri's hinterland retains an unspoiled rural charm with grand villas, overgrown vegetable plots, sun-bleached peeling stucco and banks of brilliantly coloured bougainvillea.





There are few must-sees on the island, but there's one you'd be sorry to miss. The Grotta Azzurra (Blue Cave) might be Capri's most visited sight, but the impact of the ethereal blue light is no less powerful for

the crowds and singing boat-owners. On the island's other extremity, the ruins of Villa Jovis testify to the presence of the infamous Tiberius.

## History

Already inhabited in the Palaeolithic age, Capri was briefly occupied by the Greeks before the Emperor Augustus made it his private playground and Tiberius retired here in AD 27. Its modern incarnation as a tourist centre dates to the early 20th century, when it was invaded by an army of European artists and writers and Russian revolutionaries.

## Orientation

About 5km from the mainland at its nearest point, Capri is a mere 6km long and 2.7km wide. All hydrofoils and ferries arrive at Marina Grande, the island's transport hub. From here the quickest way up to Capri Town is by funicular, but there are also buses and taxis. On foot, it's a tough 2.25km climb along Via Marina Grande. At the top, turn left (east) at the junction with Via Roma for the centre of town or right (west) for Via Provinciale di Anacapri, which eventually becomes Via Orlandi as it leads up to Anacapri.

Pint-size Piazza Umberto I is the focal point of Capri Town. A short hop to the east, Via Vittorio Emanuele leads down to the main shopping street, Via Camerelle.

Up in Anacapri, buses and taxis drop you off in Piazza Vittoria, from where Via Orlandi runs southwest and Via Capodimonte heads up to Villa San Michele di Axel Munthe.

## Information

### EMERGENCY

**Police station** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 42 11; Via Roma 70, Capri Town)

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Capri Internet Point** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 32 83; Piazzetta Cimitero, Anacapri; per hr €2; 📧 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 2.30pm Sun May-Oct, shorter hrs Nov-Apr) Also sells international newspapers.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

**Capri Island** ([www.capri.net](http://www.capri.net)) Excellent website with listings, itineraries and ferry schedules.  
**Capri Tourism** ([www.capritourism.com](http://www.capritourism.com)) Official website of Capri's tourist office.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Farmacia Internazionale** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 04 85; Via Roma 45, Capri Town)  
**Hospital** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 838 12 05; Via Provinciale Anacapri 5)

### POST

**Post office** Capri Town ([Map](#); ☎ 081 978 52 11; Via Roma 50); Anacapri ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 10 15; Via de Tommaso 8)

### TOURIST INFORMATION



**Tourist office** Marina Grande ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 06 34; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.45pm Jun-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Sat Oct-May); Capri Town ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 06 86; Piazza Umberto I; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.45pm Mon-Sat Oct-May); Anacapri ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 15 24; Via Orlandi 59; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Sat Oct-Dec & Mar-May) Each tourist office can provide a free map of the island with town plans of Capri and Anacapri, and a more detailed one for €1. For hotel listings and other useful information, ask for a free copy of *Capri è*.

## Sights

### CAPRI TOWN

With its whitewashed stone buildings and tiny car-free streets, Capri Town evokes a film set. In summer its toy-town streets swell with camera-wielding day-trippers and the glossy rich. Central to the action is **Piazza Umberto I** (aka the Piazzetta), the showy, open-air salon where tanned tourists pay eye-watering prices to sip at one of four squareside cafes. Nearby, the 17th-century **Chiesa di Santo Stefano** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 00 72; Piazza Umberto I; 🕒 8am-8pm) has a well-preserved marble floor (taken from Villa Jovis) and a statue of San Costanzo, Capri's patron saint. Beside the northern chapel is a reliquary with a saintly bone that reputedly saved Capri from the plague in the 19th century.

Across the road, **Museo Cerio** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 66 81; Piazzetta Cerio 5; admission €2.50; 🕒 10am-1pm Tue-Sat) harbours a library of books and journals about the island (mostly in Italian) and a collection of locally found fossils.

To the east of the Piazzetta, Via Vittorio Emanuele and its continuation, Via Serena, lead down to the picturesque **Certosa di San Giacomo** (Charterhouse of San Giacomo; [Map](#); ☎ 081 837 62 18; Viale Certosa 40; admission free; 🕒 9am-2pm Tue-Sun), a 14th-century monastery with two cloisters and some fine 17th-century frescoes in the chapel.

From the *certosa*, Via Matteotti leads down to the colourful **Giardini di Augusto** (Gardens of Augustus; [Map](#); 🕒 dawn-dusk), founded by the Emperor Augustus. The view from the gardens is breathtaking, looking over to the **Isole Faraglioni** ([Map](#)), three limestone pinnacles that rise vertically out of the sea.

### VILLA JOVIS & AROUND

East of Capri Town, a comfortable 2km walk along Via Tiberio, is **Villa Jovis** (Jupiter's Villa; [Map](#); ☎ 081 837 06 34; Via Tiberio; admission €2; 🕒 9am to 1hr before sunset), also known as the Palazzo di Tiberio. Standing 354m above sea level, this was the largest and most sumptuous of the island's 12 Roman villas and Tiberius' main Capri residence. It's not in great nick today, but the size of the ruins gives an idea of the scale at which Tiberius liked to live. His private rooms, with superb views over to the Punta Campanella, were on the northern and eastern sides of the complex.

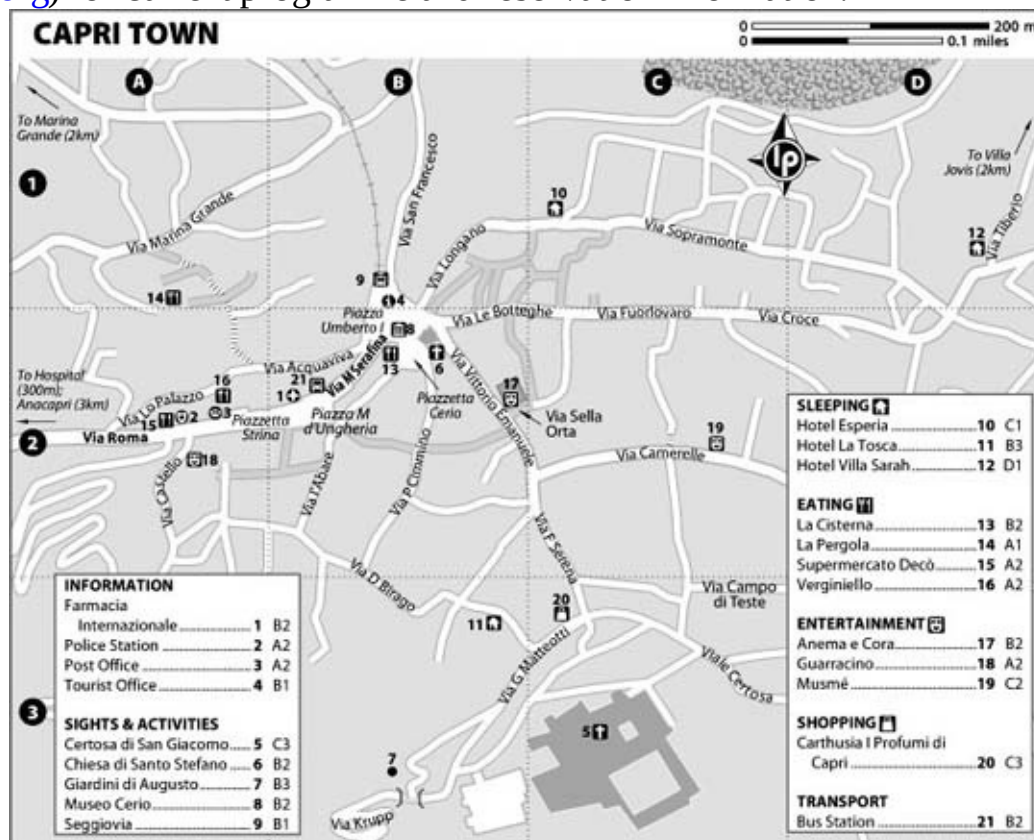
The stairway behind the villa leads to the 330m-high **Salto di Tiberio** (Tiberius' Leap), a sheer cliff from where Tiberius had out-of-favour subjects hurled into the sea.

A 1.5km walk from the villa, down Via Tiberio and Via Maternània, is the **Arco Naturale** ([Map](#)), a huge rock arch formed by the pounding sea.

### ANACAPRI & AROUND

Coming up from Capri Town, the bus deposits you in Piazza Vittoria, from where it's a short walk to **Villa San Michele di Axel Munthe** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 14 01; Via Axel Munthe; admission €5; 🕒 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10.30am-3.30pm Nov-Feb, 9.30am-4.30pm Mar, 9.30am-5pm Apr & Oct), the former home of self-

aggrandising Swedish doctor Axel Munthe. The story behind the villa, built on the ruined site of a Roman villa, is told by Munthe himself in his autobiography *The Story of San Michele* (1929). Other than the collection of Roman sculpture, the villa's best feature is the beautifully preserved gardens and their superb views. If you are here between July and September, you may be able to catch one of the classical concerts that take place in the gardens. Check with the **Axel Munthe Foundation** (☎ 081 837 14 01; [www.sanmichele.org](http://www.sanmichele.org)) for current programme and reservation information.



Beyond the villa, Via Axel Munthe continues to the 800-step stairway leading down to Capri Town. Built in the early 19th century, this was the only link between Anacapri and the rest of the island until the present mountain road was constructed in the 1950s. Traditionally, the people of Capri and Anacapri have been at loggerheads, and they are always ready to trot out their respective patron saints to ward off the *malocchio* (evil eye) of their rivals.

From Piazza Vittoria, the **seggiovia** (chair lift; [Map](#); ☎ 081 837 14 28; single/return €5/6.50; 🕒 9.30am-5pm Mar-Oct, 10.30am-3pm Nov-Feb) carries you to the summit of **Monte Solaro** (589m), Capri's highest point. The views from the top are outstanding – on a clear day you can see the entire Bay of Naples and the islands of Ischia and Procida.

Rising above Punta Carena, Capri's rugged southwesterly point, is the **Faro** ([Map](#)), Italy's second-tallest and most powerful lighthouse. From Anacapri a bus runs to the Faro every 20 minutes in summer and every 40 minutes in winter.

## GROTTA AZZURRA

Capri's single most famous attraction is the **Grotta Azzurra** (Blue Grotto; [Map](#); admission €10.50; 🕒 9am to 1hr before sunset), a stunning sea cave illuminated by an other-worldly blue light.

Long known to local fishers, it was rediscovered by two Germans, Augustus Kopisch and Ernst Fries, in 1826. Subsequent research, however, revealed that Emperor Tiberius had built a quay in the cave around AD 30, complete with a *nymphaeum*. You can still see the carved Roman landing stage towards the rear of the cave.

Far from being an overblown tourist attraction, the grotto's iridescent blue light is pure magic. It's caused by the refraction of sunlight off the sides of the 1.3m-high entrance, coupled with the reflection off the white sandy bottom.

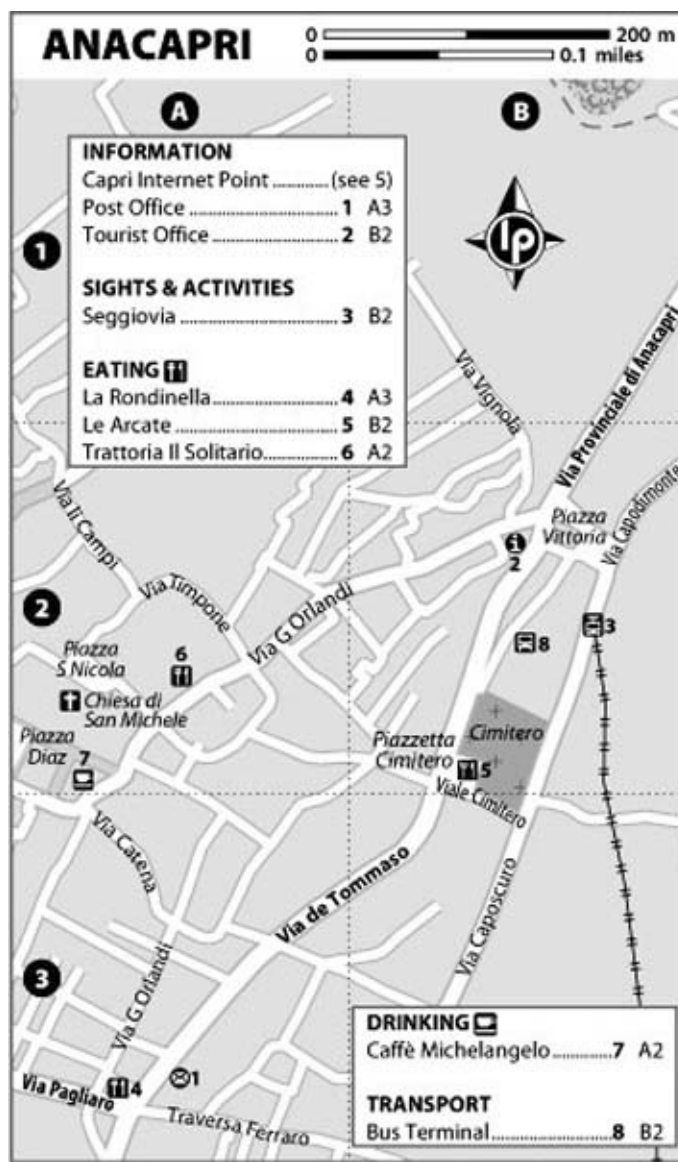
The easiest way to visit is to take a boat tour from Marina Grande. A return trip will cost €18.50, comprising a return motorboat to the cave, a rowing boat into the cave and admission fee; allow a good hour. The singing 'captains' are included in the price, so don't feel any obligation if they push for a tip.

The grotto is closed if the sea is too choppy, so before embarking check that it's open at the Marina Grande tourist office.

## Activities

Marina Grande is the hub of Capri's thriving water-sports business. **Sercomar** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 87 81; [www.capriub.com](http://www.capriub.com); Via Colombo 64; 📅 closed Nov) offers various diving packages, costing from €100 for a single dive to €350 for a four-session beginners' course.

Operating out of a kiosk to the west of the port, **Banana Sport** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 51 88; 📅 mid-Apr—Oct) hires out five-person motorised dinghies for €75 for two hours or €175 for the day. Here you can also pick up a boat to the **Bagno di Tiberio** ([Map](#)), a popular swimming spot west of Marina Grande. It's said that Tiberius once swam here, although he wouldn't have had to pay €8.50 to access the private beach as you will. Other swimming spots include Punta Carena near the lighthouse and the small pebbly beach at Marina Piccola. At Marina Piccola you can hire canoes at **Bagni di Gioia** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 77 02) and **Bagni Lo Scoglio delle Sirene** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 02 21) for around €8/14 per hour for a single/double canoe.



Capri also offers some memorable hiking. Favourite routes link the Arco Naturale with Punta di Tragara and Monte Solaro with Anacapri. Running along the island's oft-overlooked western coast, the Sentiero dei Fortini (Path of the Small Forts) leads from Punta Carena up to the Grotta Azzurra.

## Sleeping

Capri's accommodation is top-heavy, with plenty of four- and five-star hotels but few budget options. Cheaper *pensioni* do exist, but they tend to be at the top of their price bracket. Although there are a growing number of B&Bs, they're rarely much of a saving. As a general rule, the further you go from Capri Town, the less you'll pay. Camping is forbidden.

Always book ahead. Hotel space is at a premium during the summer, and many places close in winter, typically between November and March.

### MARINA GRANDE

**Belvedere e Tre Re** (Map; ☎ 081 837 03 45; [www.belvedere-tre-re.com](http://www.belvedere-tre-re.com); Via Marina Grande 238; s/d €100/120; ☎ Apr-Nov; ☎) Five minutes' walk from the port with superb boat views, this fairly modest two-star offers rooms that have been recently modernised, complete with private covered balconies. There's a sun-bronzing terrace on the top floor.

**Relais Maresca** (Map; ☎ 081 837 96 19; [www.relaismaresca.it](http://www.relaismaresca.it); Via Marina Grande 284; r incl breakfast €130-220; ☎ Mar-Dec; ☎) A delightful four-star, this is the top choice in Marina Grande, with

acres of gleaming ceramic in turquoise, blue and yellow. There's a range of rooms (and corresponding prices); the best have balconies and sea views. There's also a lovely flower-filled 4th-floor terrace. Minimum two-day stay on weekends in July and August.

## CAPRI TOWN

**Hotel La Tosca** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 09 89; [www.latoscahotel.com](http://www.latoscahotel.com); Via Birago 5; s €45-80, d €65-125; ☹ Apr-Oct; ☹) This charming one-star *pensione* is hidden away down a quiet back lane overlooking the Certosa di San Giacomo and the surrounding mountains. The rooms are plain but comfortable, with pine furniture, striped fabrics and large bathrooms. Several have private terraces. The genial owner extends a warm welcome. It's popular, so book ahead!

**Pensione Guarracino** ([Map](#); ☎ /fax 081 837 71 40; [guarracino@capri.it](mailto:guarracino@capri.it); Via Mulo 13; s €70-85, d €90-115; ☹) A short walk from the centre of Capri Town and within easy striking distance of Marina Piccola, this small, family-run *pensione* has 13 modest rooms, each decked out with a comfy bed, decent shower and independent air-con.

**Hotel Esperia** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 02 62; [www.esperiacapri.eu](http://www.esperiacapri.eu); Via Sopramonte 41; r €130-180; ☹ Apr-Oct; ☹) The Esperia exudes fading charm. A short uphill walk from the centre of town, it's housed in a 19th-century villa, complete with peeling facade, handsome columns and giant urns. Rooms are large and airy, with modern furniture and a floral theme. The best have terraces with sea views.

**Hotel Villa Sarah** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 06 89; [www.villasarah.it](http://www.villasarah.it); Via Tiberio 3a; s €90-140, d €140-210; ☹ Easter-Oct; ☹ ☹) Villa Sarah retains a rustic appeal that so many of the island's hotels have long lost. Surrounded by its own fruit-producing gardens, it has 19 airy rooms, all decorated in classical local style with ceramic tiles and old-fashioned furniture. Best of all, though, is the small swimming pool.

## ANACAPRI

**Hotel Bussola di Hermes** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 838 20 10; [www.bussolahermes.com](http://www.bussolahermes.com); Traversa La Vigna 14; s €50-120, d €70-140; ☹ ☹) This hotel has moved up several elegant notches from its days as a hostel-cum-hotel. The sun-filled rooms have luxurious drapes and a blue-and-white colour scheme, while the public spaces are a Pompeii-esque combo of columns, statues and vaulted ceilings. To get here take the bus up to Piazza Vittoria and call for the hotel shuttle service.

**our pick Hotel Villa Eva** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 15 49; [www.villaeva.com](http://www.villaeva.com); Via La Fabbrica 8; r €100-120; ☹ Mar-Oct; ☹ ☹) Rooms at this gorgeous retreat, which is hidden among fruit trees, have unusual trappings, including a tiled fireplace, a brick well, domed ceilings and a boxed radio (room 6). There's also a swimming pool, snack bar and treetop views down to the sea. On the down side, it's tricky to get to – take the Grotta Azzurra bus from Anacapri and ask the driver where to get off or cough up €24 for a port-side pick-up.

## Eating

Traditional food in traditional trattorias is what you'll find on Capri. The island's culinary gift to the world is *insalata caprese*, a salad of fresh tomato, basil and mozzarella bathed in olive oil. Also look out for *caprese* cheese, a cross between mozzarella and ricotta, and *ravioli caprese*, ravioli stuffed with ricotta and herbs.

Many restaurants, like the hotels, close over winter.

## CAPRI TOWN

**Supermercato Decò** ([Map](#); Via Roma; ☹ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun) Next to the police station is this

good place to load up with picnic provisions.

**Verginiello** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 09 44; Via Lo Palazzo 25; meals €20; 🗓 closed Nov) Offering reliable, earthy food and grandstand views over Marina Grande, this bustling restaurant is as near to a budget diner as you'll find in Capri Town. Of the pastas, the *spaghetti alle cozze* (spaghetti with mussels) is worth trying.

**La Cisterna** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 56 20; Via M Serafina 5; meals €25; 🗓 closed Feb) Named after and housed in a 2000-year-old Roman cistern, this unpretentious trattoria is a perennial favourite. Owned by the larger-than-life Salvatore, whose memorable picture adorns the bottles of house wine, it's good for traditional dishes like pasta with beans, veal cutlets and wood-fired pizzas.

**Le Grotelle** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 57 19; Via Arco Naturale 13; meals €28; 🗓 Apr-Oct) About 150m from the Arco Naturale, Capri's most atmospheric place has two dining areas: one set in a cave, the other on a terrace perched above a wooded hillside sloping down to the sea. The food is traditional – think simple pasta dishes followed by grilled fish, chicken or rabbit.

**La Pergola** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 74 12; Via Traversa Lo Palazzo 2; meals €30; 🗓 Thu-Tue Nov-Sep) The vine-shaded terrace and sea views provide a wonderful setting for La Pergola's delicious, innovative food. Here, Capri classics mix it with more modern dishes such as *paccheri con cozze*, *patate e peperoncino* (large pasta rings with mussels, potatoes and chilli).

## ANACAPRI

**Trattoria Il Solitario** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 13 82; Via G Orlandi 96; pizzas from €4.50, meals €20; 🗓 Apr-Oct) One of the better trattorias in the heart of Anacapri's touristy centre, Il Solitario serves large helpings of tasty local food at honest prices. It's a relaxed place with children's toys in the corner and tables laid out in an inviting green backyard. Book ahead on summer weekends.

**La Rondinella** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 12 23; Via G Orlandi 295; meals €28) One of Anacapri's most consistently good restaurants, La Rondinella has a relaxed, rural feel. For something different try chef Michele's *linguine alla ciammura*, a delicious pasta dish with a creamy white sauce of anchovies, garlic and parsley.

**Le Arcate** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 33 25; Via de Tommaso 24; meals €30) This is the restaurant that the locals recommend – and frequent. An unpretentious place with hanging baskets of ivy and well-aged terracotta tiles, it specialises in delicious *primi* (first courses) and pizzas. A real show-stopper is the *risotto con polpa di granchio, rughetta e scaglie di parmigiano* (risotto with crab meat, rocket and shavings of Parmesan).

## Drinking & Entertainment

The main evening activity is styling up and hanging out, ideally on Capri Town's Piazzetta. There are few nightclubs to speak of and just a few upmarket taverns. Most places open around 10pm and charge anywhere between €20 and €30 for admission. Many close between November and March.

In Capri Town, celebs head for the self-styled tavern **Anema e Cora** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 64 61; Via Sella Orta 39e), the island's most famous nightspot. **Guarracino** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 05 14; Via Castello 7) is somewhat more casual.

For something racier, run the gauntlet of bouncers outside **Musmé** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 60 11; Via Camerelle 61b).

Up in Anacapri, **Caffè Michelangelo** ([Map](#); Via Orlandi 138) is a laid-back cafe good for people-

watching.

## Shopping

If you're not in the market for a new Rolex or Prada bag, look out for ceramic work and anything lemony – in particular, lemon-scented perfume and *limoncello*. For the former try **Carthusia I Profumi di Capri** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 03 68; Via F Serena 28) in Capri Town; for the latter go up to Anacapri and **Limoncello Capri** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 29 27; Via Capodimonte 27), the birthplace of *limoncello*. Apparently, the grandmother of current owner Vivica made the tot as an after-dinner treat for the guests in her hotel, some 100 years ago.

If you *are* in the market for a new Rolex or Prada bag, head to Via Vittorio Emanuele and Via Camerelle.

## Getting There & Away

See Naples [Click here](#) and [Sorrento](#) for details of year-round ferries and hydrofoils to the island.

In summer hydrofoils connect with Positano (€16.50, 30 to 40 minutes), Amalfi (€17), Salerno (€17.50) and Ischia (€15.50, one hour).

Note that some companies require you to pay a small supplement for luggage, typically around €1.50.

## Getting Around

The best way to get around Capri is by bus. There's no car-hire service on the island.

Operating from Capri Town bus station, **Sippic** (☎ 081 837 04 20) runs regular buses to/from Marina Grande, Anacapri and Marina Piccola. It also operates buses from Marina Grande to Anacapri and from Marina Piccola to Anacapri.

From Anacapri bus terminal, **Staiano Autotrasporti** (☎ 081 837 24 22; [www.staiano-capri.com](http://www.staiano-capri.com)) buses serve the Grotta Azzurra and Faro.

Single tickets cost €1.40 on all routes, as does the funicular that links Marina Grande with Capri Town.

You can hire a scooter from **Ciro dei Motorini** ([Map](#); ☎ 081 837 80 18; Via Marina Grande 55) at Marina Grande. Rates are about €15 per hour or €60 per day.

From Marina Grande, a **taxi** (☎ in Capri Town 081 837 05 43, in Anacapri 081 837 11 75) costs around €20 to Capri and €25 to Anacapri; from Capri to Anacapri costs about €15.

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## ISCHIA

**pop 61,640**

Sprawling over 46 sq km, Ischia is the biggest and busiest island in the bay. It's a lush concoction of sprawling spa towns, mud-wrapped Germans and ancient booty. Also famous for its thermal waters, it has some fine beaches and spectacular scenery.

Most visitors stay on the touristy north coast, but go inland and you'll find a rural landscape of chestnut forests, dusty farms and earthy hillside towns. On the tranquil south coast, Sant'Angelo is a blissful blend of twisting laneways, cosy harbour and bubbling beaches.

# History

Ischia was one of the first Greek colonies in the 8th century BC, named Pithekoussai after the *pithos* (pottery clay) found there. An important stop on the trade route from Greece to northern Italy, it was renamed Aenaria by the Romans. In 1301 an eruption of the now-extinct Monte Arso forced the inhabitants to flee to the mainland, where many stayed permanently.

The Spanish took the island in 1495 and ruled until a brief French occupation in the early 19th century. The English attacked in 1806, sparking fierce fighting and the bombardment of the Castello Aragonese; the scars are still evident today. Like so many of these islands, Ischia was a political prison during the 19th century.

## Orientation

Ferries dock at Ischia Porto, the main gateway and tourist hub. The bus station is a one-minute walk west of the pier, with buses servicing all other parts of the island. East of the pier, shopping strip Via Roma eventually becomes Corso Vittoria Colonna and heads 2km southeast to Ischia Ponte.

## Information

**Ischia Online** ([www.ischiaonline.it](http://www.ischiaonline.it)) Website with hotels, sights, activities and events.

**Tourist office** (☎ 081 507 42 11; [www.infoischiaprocida.it](http://www.infoischiaprocida.it); Via Sogliuzzo 72, Ischia Porto; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat)

## Sights & Activities

Ischia's most famous landmark, the **Castello Aragonese** (☎ 081 99 28 34; Rocca del Castello; admission €10; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar), sits on a rocky islet just off Ischia Ponte. A sprawling complex comprising a 14th-century cathedral and several smaller churches, it largely dates to the 1400s, when King Alfonso of Aragon gave an older Angevin fortress a makeover. Inside, the **Museo delle Armi** (Weaponry Museum) has a curious collection of torture tools, kinky illustrations and medieval armoury.

On the west coast, Ischia's own Garden of Eden can be found at **La Mortella** (☎ 081 98 62 20; [www.lamortella.it](http://www.lamortella.it); Via F Calese 39, Forio; admission €10; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun Apr-Nov). More than 1000 rare and exotic plants flourish in the grounds, which were designed by Russell Page and inspired by the Moorish gardens of Granada's Alhambra in Spain. They were established by Sir William Walton, the late British composer, and his wife, who made La Mortella their home in 1949. Classical music concerts are staged in the gardens in spring and autumn.

Also in Forio, the 6000-sq-metre **Giardini Ravino** (☎ 081 99 77 83; [www.ravino.it](http://www.ravino.it); SS 270, Forio; admission €8; ☎ 9am-sunset, closed Tue & Thu) has an extraordinary collection of cactii, as well as other succulent plants, many of which have reputed homeopathic qualities. Guided walks take place on Saturday at 5.30pm.

A strenuous uphill walk from the village of Fontana brings you to the top of **Monte Epomeo** (788m), the island's highest point, with superb views of the Bay of Naples. The little church near the top is the 15th-century **Cappella di San Nicola di Bari**, which features a pretty majolica floor.

Unlike Capri, Ischia has some great beaches. From chic Sant'Angelo on the south coast, water taxis reach the sandy **Spiaggia dei Maronti** (€5 one-way) and the intimate cove of **Il Sorgeto** (€7 one-way), with its steamy thermal spring. Sorgeto can also be reached on foot down a poorly signposted path from



the village of Panza.

If you fancy a dive, **Captain Cook** (☎ 335 6362630; [www.captaincook.it](http://www.captaincook.it); Via Iasolino 106, Ischia Porto) has equipment for hire and runs courses. A single dive will typically cost from €40. **Westcoast Boat Hire** (☎ 081 90 86 04; [www.westcoastischia.it](http://www.westcoastischia.it); Porto di Forio) provides full- and half-day hire of motorised boats and dinghies (from €100).

## Sleeping

Most hotels close in winter, and prices normally drop considerably among those that stay open.

**Camping Mirage** (☎ 081 99 05 51; [www.campingmirage.it](http://www.campingmirage.it); Via Maronti 37, Spiaggia dei Maronti, Barano d'Ischia; camping 2 people & tent €29.50-35; 📍) On Spiaggia dei Maronti is this shady campsite with pitches under a panoply of eucalyptus trees. On-site facilities include showers, a laundry, a bar and a restaurant serving great seafood pasta.

**Albergo Macri** (☎ /fax 081 99 26 03; Via Iasolino 96, Ischia Porto; s €38-46, d €65-78; 📍 🍷) Down a blind alley near the main port, this place oozes a friendly vibe. While the pine and bamboo furnishings won't snag any design awards, rooms are clean, bright and comfy. All 1st-floor rooms have terraces, and the small downstairs bar serves a mean espresso.

**Hotel Semiramis** (☎ 081 90 75 11; [www.hotelsemiramisischia.it](http://www.hotelsemiramisischia.it); Spiaggia di Citara, Forio; r €100-140; 📍 Apr-Oct; 📍 🍷 🍷) This bright, friendly hotel has a tropical-oasis feel, with its central pool surrounded by palms. Rooms, the best of which have distant sea views, are large and beautifully tiled in the traditional yellow-and-turquoise pattern.

**Hotel La Sirenella** (☎ 081 99 47 43; [www.lasirenella.net](http://www.lasirenella.net); Corso Rizzoli 41, Lacco Ameno; s/d €70/140; 📍 Apr-Oct; 📍) This welcoming beachfront hotel in Lacco Ameno is a family-run place with sunny rooms, beach views and a bright, breezy atmosphere. Stifle your hunger pangs with a pizza at the downstairs restaurant.

**Hotel Casa Celestino** (☎ 081 99 92 13; [www.casacelestino.it](http://www.casacelestino.it); Via Chiaia delle Rose, Sant'Angelo; s €120-135, d €130-140; 📍 Jan-Oct; 📍 🍷) This chic little number is a soothing blend of creamy furnishings, whitewashed walls and contemporary art. Bedrooms have majolica-tiled floors, modern bathrooms and balconies overlooking the sea. There's a good restaurant across the way.

## Eating

Seafood aside, Ischia is famed for its rabbit, which is bred on inland farms. Another local speciality is *rucolino* – a green liquorice-flavoured liqueur made from *rucola* (rocket) leaves.

**Zi Carmela** (☎ 081 99 84 23; Via Schioppa 27, Forio; meals €20; 📍 Apr-Oct) Clued-up locals head here for seafood dishes such as the *fritturina e pezzogne* (a local whitefish baked with potatoes and herbs in the wood-fired pizza oven) or *tartare di palamito al profumo d'arancia* (tartar of local fish with citrus). Eat in the sunny garlic-strung dining room or on the terrace overlooking the port.

**Lo Scoglio** (☎ 081 99 95 29; Via Cava Ruffano 58, Sant'Angelo; meals €28; 📍 closed Jan-Mar & mid-Nov—mid-Dec) Jutting out over the sea beside a gorgeous beach cove, Lo Scoglio dishes up brilliant seafood. The ingredients are as fresh as the day's catch, appearing in dishes like mussel soup and grilled sea bass. Sunday lunchtime is a popular weekly event.

**La Baia el Clipper** (☎ 081 333 42 09; Via Porto 116, Ischia Porto; meals €40) With its romantic setting at the port's entrance, this restaurant is a crowd pleaser. The waiters are friendly, the service slick, and

the day's catch is proudly displayed in the entrance. Try the *linguine con gamberetti e rucola* (with shrimp and rocket), one of the more interesting specialities. Dress up – it's that kind of place.

## Getting There & Away

[Click here](#) for details of hydrofoils and ferries to/from Naples. You can also catch hydrofoils direct to Capri (€15.50) and Procida (€9).

## Getting Around

The main bus station is in Ischia Porto. There are two principal lines: the CS (Circo Sinistra; Left Circle) and CD (Circo Destra; Right Circle), which circle the island in opposite directions, passing through each town and leaving every 30 minutes. Buses pass near all hotels and campsites. A single ticket, valid for 90 minutes, costs €1.30, while an all-day, multi-use ticket is €4.50. Taxis and microtaxis (scooter-engined three-wheelers) are also available.

Do the island a favour by not bringing your car. If you want to hire one (or a scooter), there are plenty of rental firms, including **Fratelli del Franco** (☎ 081 99 13 34; Via A De Luca 127, Ischia Ponte), which hires out cars (from €30 per day), scooters (€25 to €35) and mountain bikes (around €10 per day). You can't take a rented vehicle off the island.

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## PROCIDA

**pop 10,700**

Dig out your paintbox: the Bay of Naples' smallest island (and its best-kept secret) is a soulful blend of hidden lemon groves, weathered fishers and pastel-hued houses.

August aside – when beach-bound mainlanders flock to its shores – its narrow sun-bleached streets are the domain of the locals: wiry young boys clutch fishing rods, weary mothers clutch wiry young boys and wizened old seafarers swap tales of malaise.

## Orientation & Information

Marina Grande is the hop-off point for ferries and hydrofoils and forms most of the tourist showcase. Here, **Graziella Travel Agency** (☎ 081 896 95 94; [www.isoladiprocida.it](http://www.isoladiprocida.it); Via Roma 117; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, closed Sat afternoon Nov-Mar) can organise accommodation, boat trips (about €15 for a two-hour tour) and bicycle hire (half-day/full-day €5/8). It also has a free map of the island.

## Sights & Activities

The best way to explore the island – a mere 4 sq km – is on foot or by bike. However, the island's narrow roads can be clogged with cars – one of its few drawbacks.

Clinging on to Procida's highest point is the crumbling 16th-century **Castello d'Avalos**, a former Bourbon hunting lodge and ex-prison. Next door, the **Abbazia di San Michele Arcangelo** (☎ 081 896 76 12; Via Terra Murata 89; admission €2; ☎ 9.45am-12.45pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 3.30-6pm May-Oct), a one-time Benedictine abbey, contains a church, a small museum with some arresting paintings, and a honeycomb of catacombs.

From panoramic Piazza dei Martiri, the village of **Corricella** tumbles down to its marina in a riot of

pinks, yellows and whites. Further south, a steep flight of steps leads down to **Chiaia** beach, one of the island's most beautiful.

All pink, white and blue, little **Marina di Chiaiolella** has a yacht-stocked marina, old-school eateries and a languid disposition. Nearby the **Lido** is a popular beach.

The **Procida Diving Centre** (☎ 081 896 83 85; [www.vacanzeaprocida.it/framediving01-uk.htm](http://www.vacanzeaprocida.it/framediving01-uk.htm); Via Cristoforo Colombo 6, Marina di Chiaiolella) runs diving courses and hires out equipment. The price ranges from €45 for a single dive to €130 for a snorkelling course, with more advanced open-water diving also on offer.

You can charter a yacht from **Blue Dream** (☎ 081 896 05 79, 339 5720874; [www.bluedreamcharter.com](http://www.bluedreamcharter.com); Via Ottimo 3) from €70 per person per day.

## Festivals & Events

Good Friday sees a colourful **procession of the Misteri**. A wooden statue of Christ and the Madonna Addolorata, along with life-sized tableaux of plaster and papier-mâché illustrating events leading to Christ's crucifixion, is carted across the island. Men dress in blue tunics with white hoods, while many of the young girls dress as the Madonna.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Celeste** (☎ 081 896 74 88; [www.hotelceleste.it](http://www.hotelceleste.it); Via Rivoli 6, Marina di Chiaiolella; s €30-60, d €40-100; 🍷 🍷) The Celeste, a bright, ecofriendly hotel overlooking sweet orange groves, boasts the island's first solar panels. Rooms differ in look (some are white, some are yellow) but all are pristine, light and comfortable. Outside there's a home-style garden.

**Casa Giovanni da Procida** (☎ 081 896 03 58; [www.casagiovannidaprocida.it](http://www.casagiovannidaprocida.it); Via Giovanni da Procida 3; s €50-80, d €65-100; 🍷 closed Feb; 🍷 🍷) This chic farmhouse B&B basks in the shade of a centuries-old magnolia tree and has split-level rooms with low-rise beds and contemporary furniture. Bathrooms are small but slick, with funky mosaic tiling and cube basins.

**Hotel La Corricella** (☎ 081 896 75 75; [www.hotelcorricella.it](http://www.hotelcorricella.it); Via Marina Corricella 88; s €70-100, d €90-120; 🍷 Apr-Oct) One bookend to Marina Corricella, it's hard to miss this peach-and-yellow candy-cane colour scheme. Low-fuss rooms feature modular-style furniture with fans and TVs. The large shared terrace has top-notch harbour views, the restaurant serves decent seafood, and a boat service reaches the nearby beach.

Campsites are dotted around the island and open from April/May to September/October. Typical prices are €10 per site plus €10 per person. Reliable places include **La Caravella** (☎ 081 810 18 38; Via IV Novembre).

## Eating

**Da Giorgio** (☎ 081 896 79 10; Via Roma 36, Marina Grande; meals €12; 🍷 Mar-Oct) These folks try hard to please with a reasonable menu, welcoming window boxes and inexpensive beer. The menu holds few surprises, but the ingredients are fresh, zesty and flavourful in classics like *gnocchi alla sorrentina* (gnocchi baked in tomato sauce with mozzarella).

**Gorgona** (☎ 081 810 10 60; Via Marina Corricella; meals €20; 🍷 Mar-Oct) Along unpretentious Marina Corricella, with its old fishing boats, piles of fishing nets and sleek, lazy cats, any restaurant will provide you with a memorable experience. That said, this place peddles particularly fine smoked-seafood

dishes, including swordfish and tuna steaks.

**La Conchiglia** (☎ 081 896 76 02; Via Pizzaco 10; meals €25; 📅 Mar-Oct) Topaz waves at your feet, pastel Corricella in the distance – this is what you come to Procida for. Up against the views, the food holds its own with dishes such as *spaghetti alla povera* (spaghetti with *peperoncino*, green peppers, cherry tomatoes and anchovies). To get here, take the steep steps down from Via Pizzaco or book a boat from Corricella.

**Ristorante Scarabeo** (☎ 081 896 99 18; Via Salette 10; meals €27; 📅 daily Mar-Oct, weekends only Dec-Feb, closed Nov) Behind a veritable jungle of lemon trees lies the venerable kitchen of Signora Battinelli. With husband Francesco, she whips up classics like *fritelle di basilico* (fried patties of bread, egg, Parmesan and basil) and home-made aubergine-and-*provola* ravioli. They breed their own rabbits, make their own *falanghina* (a light, fruit-forward white wine) and it's all yours to devour under a pergola of bulbous lemons.

## Getting There & Around

Procida is linked by boat and hydrofoil to Ischia (€9), Pozzuoli (€9) and Naples ([Click here](#)).

There is a limited bus service (€0.80), with four lines radiating out from Marina Grande. Bus L1 connects the port and Marina di Chiaiolella.

Microtaxis can be hired for two to three hours for about €35, depending on your bargaining prowess. Contact **Graziella Travel Agency** (☎ 081 896 95 94; [www.isoladiprocida.it](http://www.isoladiprocida.it); Via Roma 117) for bike hire (per half-/full day €5/8).

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# SOUTH OF NAPLES

## ERCOLANO & HERCULANEUM

Ercolano is an uninspiring Neapolitan suburb that's home to one of Italy's best-preserved ancient sites – Herculaneum. A superbly conserved Roman fishing town, Herculaneum is smaller and less daunting than Pompeii, allowing you to visit without that nagging itch that you're bound to miss something.

### History

In contrast to modern Ercolano, classical Herculaneum was a peaceful fishing and port town of about 4000 inhabitants, and something of a resort for wealthy Romans and Campanians.

Herculaneum's fate paralleled that of nearby Pompeii. Destroyed by an earthquake in AD 63, it was completely submerged in the AD 79 eruption of Mt Vesuvius. However, as it was much closer to the volcano than Pompeii, it drowned in a 16m-thick sea of mud rather than in the lapilli (burning pumice stone) and ash that rained down on Pompeii. This essentially fossilised the town, ensuring that even delicate items, like furniture and clothing, were discovered remarkably well preserved.

The town was rediscovered in 1709, and amateur excavations were carried out intermittently until 1874, with many finds being carted off to Naples to decorate the houses of the well-to-do or to end up in museums. Serious archaeological work began again in 1927 and continues to this day, although with much of the ancient site buried beneath modern Ercolano, it's slow going.

# Orientation & Information

From the Circumvesuviana Ercolano-Scavi station, it's a simple 500m downhill walk to the ruins – follow the signs for the *scavi* (excavations) down the main street, Via IV Novembre. En route, you'll pass the **tourist office** (☎ 081 788 12 43; Via IV Novembre 82; 🕒 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat early Apr-Oct, to 2pm Mon-Sat Nov-early Apr) on your right.

## Sights

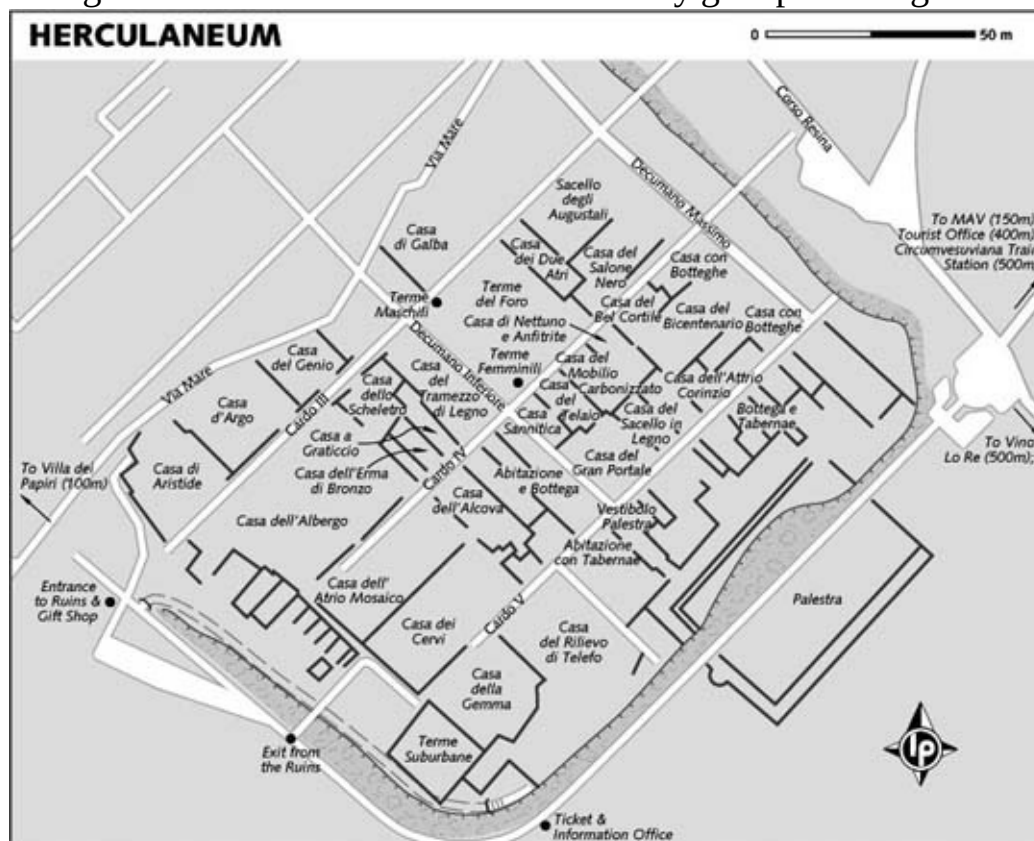
Covering 4.5 hectares, the **ruins** (☎ 081 732 43 38; Corso Resina 6; adult/EU national 18-25yr/EU national under 18yr & over 65yr €11/5.50/free, combined ticket incl Pompeii, Oplontis, Stabiae & Boscoreale €20/10/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar, last entry 90min before closing) are easily visited in a morning.

From the site's main gateway on Corso Resina, head down the wide boulevard, where you'll find the new **ticket office** on the left. Pick up a free map and guide booklet here, and then follow the boulevard right to the actual entrance into the ruins themselves. Here you can hire the useful audioguide (€6.50).

To enter the ruins you pass through what appears to be a moat around the town but is in fact the ancient shoreline. It was here in 1980 that archaeologists discovered some 300 skeletons, the remains of a crowd that had fled to the beach only to be overcome by boiling surge clouds sweeping down from Vesuvius.

As you begin your exploration northeast along **Cardo III** you'll stumble across **Casa d'Argo** (Argus House), a well-preserved example of a Roman noble family's house, complete with porticoed garden and triclinium (dining area).

Across the street sits the **Casa dello Scheletro** (House of the Skeleton), a modest-size house with five styles of mosaic flooring and the remnants of an ancient security grill protecting the original skylight.



Across the Decumano Inferiore (one of ancient Herculaneum's main streets), the **Terme Maschili** was the men's section of the **Terme del Foro** (Forum Baths). Note the ancient latrine to the left of the entrance before stepping into the *apodyterium* (changing room). To the left is the *frigidarium* (cold bath), to the

right the *tepadarium* (tepid bath), *caldarium* (hot bath) and an exercise area.

At the end of Cardo III, **Decumano Massimo** (Herculaneum's main thoroughfare) is lined with ancient shops and advertising, such as that adorning the wall to the right of the **Casa del Salone Nero**.

Further east along Decumano Massimo, a crucifix found in an upstairs room of the **Casa del Bicentenario** (Bicentenary House) provides possible evidence of a Christian presence in pre-Vesuvius Herculaneum.

Turn into Cardo IV from Decumano Massimo and you'll find the **Casa del Bel Cortile** (House of the Beautiful Courtyard), which houses three of the 300 skeletons discovered on the ancient shore in 1980.

Next door, the **Casa di Nettuno e Anfitrite** (House of Neptune and Amphitrite) is named after the extraordinary mosaic in the *nymphaeum*.

Over the road, the **Terme Femminili** was the women's section of the **Terme del Foro**; note the finely executed floor mosaic of a naked Triton in the *apodyterium*.

Further southwest on Cardo IV, the **Casa dell'Atrio a Mosaico** (House of the Mosaic Atrium; closed for restoration) is an impressive mansion with extensive floor mosaics, including a black-and-white chessboard design in the atrium.

Backtrack up Cardo IV and turn right at Decumano Inferiore. Here you'll find the **Casa del Gran Portale** (House of the Large Portal), whose main entrance is flanked by elegant brick Corinthian columns. Inside are some well-preserved wall paintings.

Accessible from Cardo V, **Casa dei Cervi** (House of the Deer) is an imposing example of a Roman noble family's house. The two-storey villa, around a central courtyard, contains murals and still-life paintings. In the courtyard is a diminutive pair of marble deer assailed by dogs and an engaging statue of a peeing Hercules.

Marking the site's southernmost tip, the 1st-century-AD **Terme Suburbane** (Suburban Baths; closed for restoration) is one of the best-preserved bath complexes in existence, with deep pools, stucco friezes and bas-reliefs looking down upon marble seats and floors.

Northwest of the ruins, **Villa dei Papiri** was a vast four-storey, 245m-long complex owned by Julius Caesar's father-in-law. At the time of research, the villa was closed for restoration. For updates, contact [www.arethusa.net](http://www.arethusa.net).

On the main street linking the ruins and the train station, child-friendly **MAV** (Museo Archeologico Virtuale; ☎ 081 1980 6511; [www.museomav.com](http://www.museomav.com); Via IV Novembre; admission €7; 🕒 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is a new virtual-reality archaeology museum bringing the region's ruins back to life through holograms and computer-generated video.

## Sleeping & Eating

You're unlikely to want to stay overnight at Ercolano – there's not much to see other than the ruins and it's an easy rail journey from Naples or Sorrento.

**Vino Lo Re** (☎ 081 739 02 07; Corso Resina 261; meals €30; 🕒 Tue-Sat, lunch only Sun, closed Aug) serves delicious revamped classics and has a savvy wine list. If you do fancy staying overnight, the owners run a stylish, contemporary B&B upstairs with air-con and wi-fi (singles/doubles €50/70).

## Getting There & Away

The best way to get to Ercolano is by Circumvesuviana train (get off at Ercolano-Scavi). Trains run regularly to/from Naples (€1.80), Pompeii (€1.40) and Sorrento (€1.90).

By car take the A3 from Naples, exit at Ercolano Portico and follow the signs to car parks near the site's entrance.

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## MT VESUVIUS

Towering darkly over Naples and its environs, Mt Vesuvius (Vesuvio; 1281m) is the only active volcano on the European mainland. Since it exploded into history in AD 79, burying Pompeii and Herculaneum and pushing the coastline out several kilometres, it has erupted more than 30 times. The most devastating of these was in 1631, the most recent in 1944. And while there's little evidence to suggest any imminent activity, observers worry that the current lull is the longest in the past 500 years.

A full-scale eruption would be catastrophic. Some 600,000 people live within 7km of the crater and, despite incentives to relocate, few are willing to go.

Today, Vesuvius is better protected than many of the towns beneath it. The **Parco Nazionale del Vesuvio** ([www.parconazionaledelvesuvio.it](http://www.parconazionaledelvesuvio.it)) was established in 1995 and today attracts some 400,000 visitors annually.

From a car park at the summit, an 860m path leads up to the **crater** (admission incl tour €6.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Apr-Jun, to 4pm Mar & Oct, to 3pm Nov-Feb, ticket office closes 1hr before closing). It's not a strenuous walk, but it's more comfortable in trainers than in sandals or flip-flops. You'd also do well to take sunglasses – useful against swirling ash – and a sweater, as it can be chilly up top, even in summer.

About halfway up the hill, the **Museo dell'Osservatorio Vesuviano** (Museum of the Vesuvian Observatory; ☎ 081 610 84 83; [www.ov.ingv.it](http://www.ov.ingv.it); admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) tells the history of 2000 years of Vesuvius-watching.

The easiest way to visit Vesuvius is to get a bus from Pompeii up to the crater car park. **Vesuviana Mobilità** (☎ 081 963 44 20) operates buses (€8.90 return, one hour, eight to 10 daily) from Piazza Anfiteatro.

From Ercolano there are only two buses (€7.80 return, 1½ hours), departing from Via Panoramica (about 50m from the train station) at 8.25am and 12.45pm and returning at 2.40pm and 5.25pm. Tickets are available on board.

By car, exit the A3 at Ercolano Portico and follow signs for the Parco Nazionale del Vesuvio.

Note that when weather conditions are bad the summit path is shut and bus departures are suspended.

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## POMPEII

**pop 25,723**

A stark reminder of the malign forces that lie deep inside Vesuvius, Pompeii (Pompei in Italian) is Europe's most compelling archaeological site. Each year about 2.5 million people pour in to wander the ghostly shell of what was once a thriving commercial centre.

Its appeal goes beyond tourism, though. From an archaeological point of view, it's priceless. Much of the value lies in the fact that it wasn't simply blown away by Vesuvius: rather it was buried under a layer of lapilli (burning pumice stone), as Pliny the Younger describes in his celebrated account of the eruption.

## History

The eruption of Vesuvius wasn't the first disaster to strike the Roman port of Pompeii. In AD 63, a massive earthquake hit the city, causing widespread damage and the evacuation of much of the 20,000-strong population. Many had not returned when Vesuvius blew its top on 24 August AD 79, burying the city under a layer of lapilli and killing some 2000 men, women and children.

The origins of Pompeii are uncertain, but it seems likely that it was founded in the 7th century BC by the Campanian Oscans. Over the next seven centuries the city fell to the ancient Greeks and the Samnites before becoming a Roman colony in 80 BC.

After its catastrophic demise, Pompeii receded from the public eye until 1594, when the architect Domenico Fontana stumbled across the ruins while digging a canal. However, short of recording the find, he took no further action.

Exploration proper began in 1748 under the Bourbon king Charles VII and continued into the 19th century. In the early days, many of the more spectacular mosaics were siphoned off to decorate Charles' palace in Portici; thankfully, though, most were subsequently moved up to Naples, where they now sit in the [Museo Archeologico Nazionale](#).

Work continues today and although new discoveries are being made – in 2000 roadworks revealed a whole frescoed leisure area – the emphasis is now on restoring what has already been unearthed rather than raking for new finds.

## Orientation

The Circumvesuviana train drops you at Pompeii-Scavi-Villa dei Misteri station, beside the main Porta Marina entrance. By car, signs direct you from the A3 to the *scavi* and car parks. Modern Pompeii is 1km away down Via Plinio.

## Information

**First-aid post** (☎ 081 535 91 11; Via Colle San Bartolomeo 50)

**Police station** (☎ 081 856 35 11; Piazza Porta Marina Inferiore)

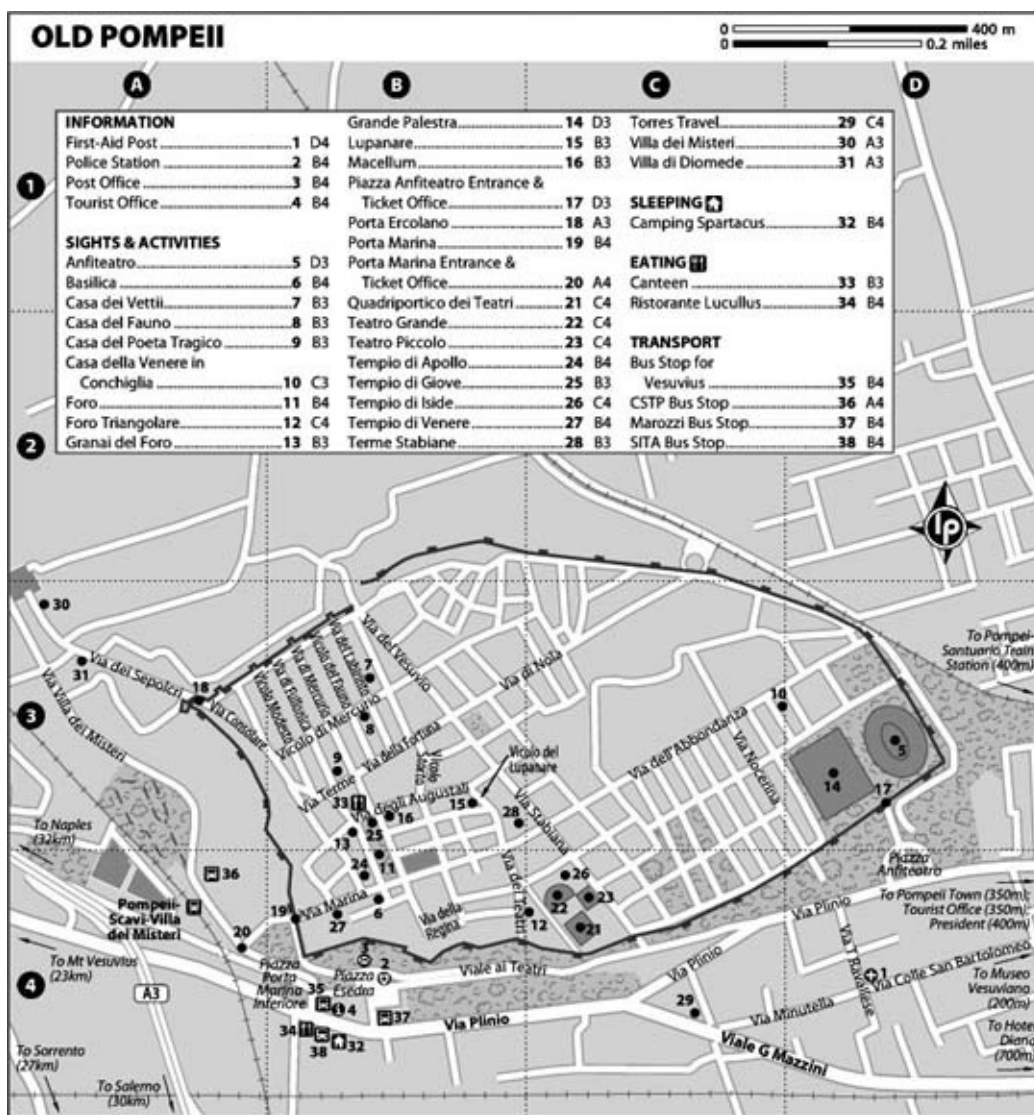
**Pompeii Sites** ([www.pompeiiites.org](http://www.pompeiiites.org)) is a comprehensive website covering Pompeii and Herculaneum.

**Post office** (☎ 081 861 09 58; Piazza Esedra)

**Tourist office** (🕒 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat; Porta Marina ☎ 081 536 32 93;

[www.pompeiturismo.it](http://www.pompeiturismo.it); Piazza Porta Marina Inferiore 12; Pompeii town (☎ 081 850 72 55; Via Sacra 1)





# Sights

## THE RUINS

Of Pompeii's original 66 hectares, 44 have now been excavated. Of course, that doesn't mean that you'll have unhindered access to every inch of the Unesco World Heritage—listed **ruins** (☎ 081 857 53 47; entrances at Porta Marina & Piazza Anfiteatro; adult/EU national 18yr-25yr/EU national under 18yr & over 65yr €11/5.50/free, combined ticket incl Herculaneum, Oplontis, Stabiae & Boscoreale & 3 minor sites €20/10/free; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, last entry 6pm, 8.30am-5pm Nov-Mar, last entry 3.30pm); you'll come across areas cordoned off for no apparent reason, the odd stray dog and a noticeable lack of clear signs. Audioguides (€6.50) are a sensible investment, and a good guidebook will help – try the €8 *Pompeii* published by Electa Napoli.

If visiting in summer, note that there's not much shade on-site, so bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water.

To do justice to the site allow at least three or four hours, longer if you want to go into detail.

The site's main entrance is at **Porta Marina**, the most impressive of the seven gates that punctuated the ancient town walls. A busy passageway, now as then, it originally connected the town with the nearby harbour. Immediately on the right as you enter is the 1st-century-BC **Tempio di Venere** (Temple of Venus), formerly one of the town's most opulent temples.

Continuing down Via Marina you come to the **basilica**, the 2nd-century-BC seat of the city's law courts

and exchange. Opposite, the **Tempio di Apollo** (Temple of Apollo) is the oldest and most important of Pompeii's religious buildings, dating to the 2nd century BC. The grassy **foro** (forum) adjacent to the temple was the city's main piazza – a huge traffic-free rectangle flanked by limestone columns.

North of the forum stands the **Tempio di Giove** (Temple of Jupiter), one of whose two flanking triumphal arches remains, and the **Granai del Foro** (Forum Granary), now used to store hundreds of amphorae and a number of body casts. These casts were made in the late 19th century by pouring plaster into the hollows left by disintegrated bodies. Nearby, the **macellum** was the city's main meat and fish market.

From the market follow Via degli Augustali until Vicolo del Lupanare. Halfway down this narrow alley is the **Lupanare**, an ancient brothel. A tiny two-storey building with five rooms on each floor, it's lined with some of Pompeii's raunchiest frescoes.

At the end of Via dei Teatri, the green **Foro Triangolare** would originally have overlooked the sea. The main attraction here was, and still is, the 2nd-century-BC **Teatro Grande**, a huge 5000-seat theatre. Behind the stage, the porticoed **Quadriportico dei Teatri** was initially used for the audience to stroll between acts and later as a barracks for gladiators. Next door, the **Teatro Piccolo**, also known as the Odeion, was once an indoor theatre, while the pre-Roman **Tempio di Iside** (Temple of Isis) was a popular place of cult worship.

Back on Via dell'Abbondanza, the **Terme Stabiane** is a typical 2nd-century-BC bath complex. Entering from the vestibule, bathers would stop off in the vaulted *apodyterium* (changing room) before passing through to the *tepidarium* (warm room) and *caldarium* (hot room).

Towards the northeastern end of Via dell'Abbondanza, **Casa della Venere in Conchiglia** (House of the Venus Marina) harbours a lovely peristyle looking on to a small, manicured garden. It's here that you'll find the striking Venus fresco after which the house is named.

Nearby, the grassy **anfiteatro** is the oldest-known Roman amphitheatre in existence. Built in 70 BC, it was at one time capable of holding up to 20,000 bloodthirsty spectators. Over the way, the **Grande Palestra** is an athletics field with an impressive portico and, at its centre, the remains of a swimming pool.

From here, double back along Via dell'Abbondanza and turn right into Via Stabiana to see some of Pompeii's grandest houses. Turn left into Via della Fortuna for the **Casa del Fauno** (House of the Faun), Pompeii's largest private house. Named after the small bronze statue in the *impluvium* (rain tank), it was here that early excavators found Pompeii's greatest mosaics, most of which are now in [Naples' Museo Archeologico Nazionale](#). A couple of blocks away, the **Casa del Poeta Tragico** (House of the Tragic Poet) features the world's first 'beware of the dog' – *cave canem* – warnings. To the north, on Vicolo di Mercurio, the **Casa dei Vettii** is home to a famous depiction of Priapus with his gigantic phallus balanced on a pair of scales.

From here follow the road west and turn right into Via Consolare, which takes you out of the town through **Porta Ercolano**. Continue past **Villa di Diomede**, turn right, and you'll come to the **Villa dei Misteri**, one of the most complete structures left standing in Pompeii. The *Dionysiac Frieze*, the most important fresco still on-site, spans the walls of the large dining room. One of the world's largest ancient paintings, it depicts the initiation of a bride-to-be into the cult of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine.

The **Museo Vesuviano** (☎ 081 850 72 55; Via Bartolomeo 12; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm Mon-Fri), southeast of the excavations, contains an interesting array of artefacts.

## Tours

You'll almost certainly be approached by a guide outside the *scavi* ticket office. Authorised guides wear identification tags. Reputable tour operators include **Casting** (☎ 081 850 07 49), **Gata** (☎ 081 861 56 61) and **Promo Touring** (☎ 081 850 88 55). Expect to pay between €100 and €120 for a two-hour tour, whether you're alone or in a group. **Torres Travel** (☎ 081 856 78 02; [www.torrestravel.it](http://www.torrestravel.it); Viale Mazzini 7 bis) also offers tours of the ruins, as well as excursions to other regional hot spots, including Naples, Capri and the Amalfi Coast.

## Sleeping

There's really no need to stay overnight in Pompeii. The ruins are best visited on a day trip from Naples, Sorrento or Salerno, and once the excavations close for the day, the area around the site becomes decidedly seedy. If you do need to stay, the following places are recommended.

**Camping Spartacus** (☎ 081 862 40 78; [www.campingspartacus.it](http://www.campingspartacus.it); Via Plinio 117; camping 2 people, tent & car €11-18, bungalows €30-35; 🚻 🚗 📶) About 200m from the entrance to the ruins, this was Pompeii's first campsite. Pitch your tent in the shade of the towering eucalyptus and pine trees or snuggle down in one of the basic bungalows, all of which come with air-con and private bathroom.

**Hotel Diana** (☎ 081 863 12 64; [www.pompeihotel.com](http://www.pompeihotel.com); Vicolo Sant'Abbondio 12; s €55-65, d €75-85; 📞 🚻 📶) Steps away from the Ferrovia dello Stato (State Railway) station in modern Pompeii, this hospitable, family-run hotel offers 22 clean, comfy, albeit smallish rooms, nine of which are brand spanking new. The petite, citrus-filled garden is perfect for uncomplicated chilling.

## Eating

Most of the restaurants near the ruins are characterless affairs set up for feeding busloads of tourists. Wander down to the modern town and it's a little better, with a few decent restaurants serving excellent local food.

**Ristorante Lucullus** (☎ 081 861 30 55; Via Plinio 129; pizzas from €6, meals €28; 🕒 10.30am-10pm Jun-Sep, 10.30am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) Near the ruins and set back from the main road down an oleander-fringed drive, Lucullus does good pizzas as well as classic meat dishes and a delicious *penne Lucullus* (pasta with squash and prawns).

**President** (☎ 081 850 72 45; Piazza Schettini 12; meals €35; 🕒 closed Mon & dinner Sun Nov-Feb, closed 2 weeks Jan) Dripping chandeliers meet culinary brilliance at this charming restaurant in modern Pompeii. Here, local produce is celebrated in creations like aubergine *millefoglie* (flaky puff pastry) with Cetara anchovies, mozzarella *filante* (melted mozzarella) and grated *tarallo* (savoury almond biscuit). The degustation menus (€40 to €70) are a gourmand's delight.

Although closed during the writing of this guide, the onsite **canteen** (Via di Mercurio) at the ruins was set to re-open soon. You'll find it near the Tempio di Giove.

## Getting There & Away

Frequent Circumvesuviana trains run from Pompeii-Scavi-Villa dei Misteri station to Naples (€2.40, 40 minutes) and Sorrento (€1.90, 30 minutes).

Otherwise, **SITA** (☎ 199 730749; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) operates buses half-hourly to/from Naples (€2.40, 40 minutes) and **CSTP** (☎ 800 016 659; [www.cstp.it](http://www.cstp.it), in Italian) bus 50 runs to/from Salerno (€1.90, one hour).

For Rome, **Marozzi** (☎ 080 579 01 11; [www.marozzivi.it](http://www.marozzivi.it)) has two daily buses (€16.50, three hours), departing from Piazza Esedra.

For information on getting to/from Vesuvius [Click here](#). Buses to Vesuvius depart from both Piazza Anfiteatro and Piazza Porta Marina Inferiore.

To get here by car, take the A3 from Naples. Use the Pompeii exit and follow signs to Pompeii Scavi. Car parks (approximately €4 per hour) are clearly marked and vigorously touted.

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## **SORRENTO**

**pop 16,547**

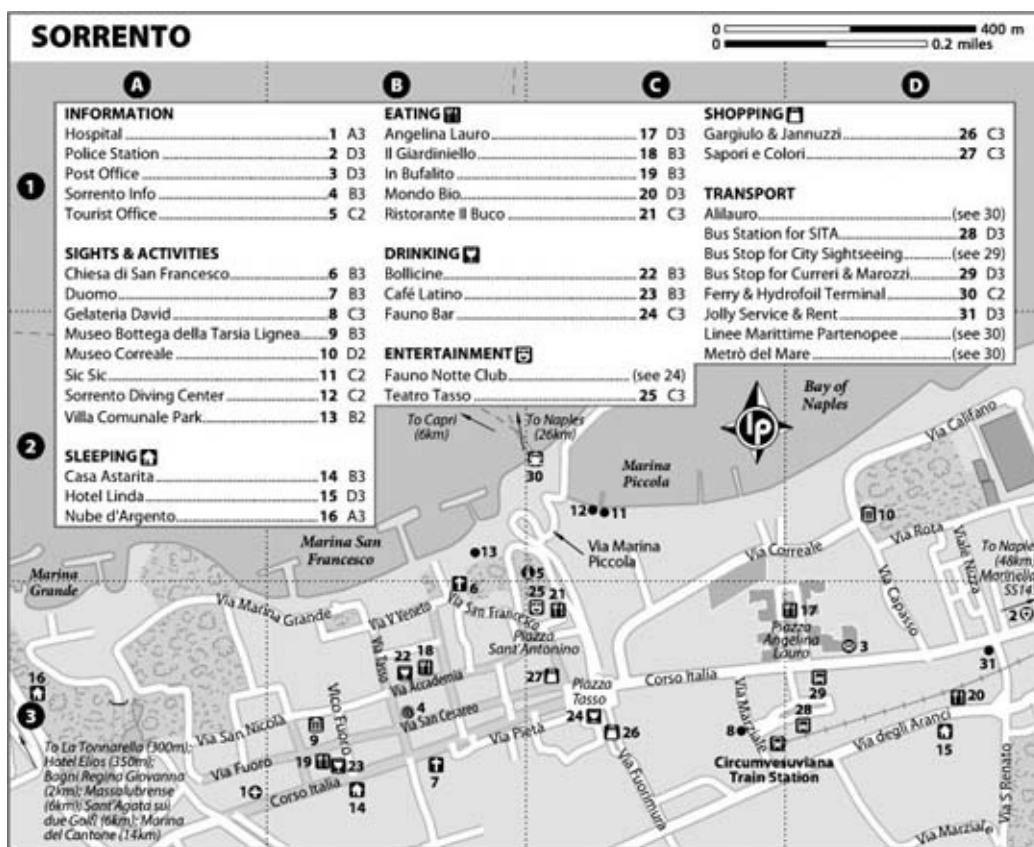
On paper Sorrento is a place to avoid – a package-holiday centre with few must-see sights, no beach to speak of and a glut of brassy English-style pubs. In reality, it's a strangely appealing place, its laid-back southern Italian charm resisting all attempts to swamp it in souvenir tat and graceless development.

Dating to Greek times and known to Romans as Surrentum, Sorrento's main selling point is its fabulous location. Straddling cliffs that look directly over the Bay of Naples to Mt Vesuvius, it's ideally situated for exploring the surrounding area: to the west, the best of the peninsula's unspoiled countryside and, beyond that, the Amalfi Coast; to the north, Pompeii and the archaeological sites; offshore, the fabled island of Capri.

According to Greek legend, it was in Sorrento's waters that the mythical sirens once lived. Sailors of antiquity were powerless to resist the beautiful song of these charming maidens-cum-monsters, who would lure them and their ships to their doom. Homer's Ulysses escaped by having his oarsmen plug their ears with wax and by strapping himself to his ship's mast as he sailed past.

### **Orientation**

Piazza Tasso, bisected by Sorrento's main street, Corso Italia, is the centre of town. It's about a 300m walk northwest of the Circumvesuviana train station, along Corso Italia. From Marina Piccola, where ferries and hydrofoils dock, walk south along Via Marina Piccola then climb about 200 steps to reach the piazza. Corso Italia becomes the SS145 on its way east to Naples and, heading west, changes its name to Via Capo.



## Information

**Hospital** (☎ 081 533 11 11; Corso Italia 1)

**Police station** (☎ 081 807 53 11; Via Capasso 11)

**Post office** (☎ 081 877 08 34; Corso Italia 210)

**Sorrento Info** (☎ 081 807 40 00; Via Tasso 19; internet per hr €4.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-8.30pm Mon-Sat Mar-Dec) Provides tourist information and internet access.

**Sorrento Tour** ([www.sorrentotour.it](http://www.sorrentotour.it)) Extensive website with tourist and transport information on Sorrento and environs.

**Tourist office** (☎ 081 807 40 33; Via Luigi De Maio 35; ☎ 8.45am-6.15pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 8.45am-12.45pm Sun Aug) In the Circolo dei Forestieri (Foreigners' Club). Has plenty of useful printed material and a hotel reservation service.

## Sights & Activities

Spearing off from Piazza Tasso, Corso Italia (closed to traffic from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 7am) cuts through the *centro storico*, whose narrow streets throng with tourists on summer evenings. An attractive area, it's thick with loud souvenir stores, cafes, churches and restaurants.

On Corso Italia, the gleaming white facade of the **Duomo** (☎ 081 878 22 48; Corso Italia; ☎ 8am-noon & 6-8pm) gives no hint of its inner exuberance. Of particular note are the marble bishop's throne and the beautiful wooden choir stalls. Outside, the triple-tiered bell tower rests on an archway into which three classical columns have been set.

One of Sorrento's most beautiful spaces, the medieval cloisters of the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 081 878 12 69; Via San Francesco; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-8pm) are well worth a look. A harmonious marriage of architectural styles – two sides are lined with 14th-century crossed arches, the other two with round arches supported by octagonal pillars – they are often used to host exhibitions and summer concerts. Next

door, the **Villa Comunale park** (🕒 8am-8pm mid-Oct—mid-Apr, 8am-midnight mid-Apr—mid-Oct) commands grand views over the water to Mt Vesuvius.

You get similar views from the gardens of the **Museo Correale** (☎ 081 878 18 46; [www.museocorreale.com](http://www.museocorreale.com); Via Correale 50; admission €8; 🕒 9am-2pm Wed-Mon), Sorrento's main museum. Waiting inside is a rich collection of 17th- and 19th-century Neapolitan art, Japanese, Chinese and European ceramics, clocks and furniture, as well as Greek and Roman artefacts.

Since the 18th century Sorrento has been famous for its *intarsio* (marquetry) furniture, some great examples of which you'll find at the palatial **Museo Bottega della Tarsia Ligna** (☎ 081 877 19 42; Via San Nicola 28; admission €8; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3pm-6pm Mon-Sat).

Sweet tooths can learn the art of gelato-making by taking a course at **Gelateria David** (☎ 081 807 36 49; Via Marziale 19; class €7). Classes last around one hour and times vary according to demand, so call or drop by to organise.

Sorrento does not have great beaches. In town the two main swimming spots are **Marina Piccola** and, to the east, **Marina Grande**, although neither is especially appealing. Much nicer is **Bagni Regina Giovanna**, a rocky beach set among the ruins of the Roman Villa Pollio Felix. It's possible to walk there (follow Via Capo west for about 2km), but it's quicker to get the SITA bus for Massalubrense.

To find the best swimming spots, you'll really need a boat. **Sic Sic** (☎ 081 807 22 83; [www.nauticasicsic.com](http://www.nauticasicsic.com); Marina Piccola; 🕒 May-Oct) rents out a variety of boats, starting at around €32 per hour or €95 a day (excluding petrol).

**Sorrento Diving Center** (☎ 081 877 48 12; [www.sorrentodivingcenter.it](http://www.sorrentodivingcenter.it); Via Marina Piccola 63) organises dives and a series of courses. Budget on around €95 for a half-day course, €45 for a single dive.

## Tours

**City Sightseeing Sorrento** (☎ 081 877 47 07; [www.sorrento.city-sightseeing.it](http://www.sorrento.city-sightseeing.it); adult/6-15yr €15/7.50) runs a hop-on, hop-off bus tour of Sorrento and the surrounding area. Daily departures are at 9.30am, 11.30am, 1.30pm and 3.30pm from Piazza De Curtis (Circumvesuviana station). English-language commentaries are provided, and tickets, available on board, are valid for six hours.

## Festivals & Events

The city's patron saint, Sant'Antonino, is remembered on 14 February each year with processions and huge markets. The saint is credited with having saved Sorrento during WWII, when Salerno and Naples were heavily bombed.

Sorrento's **Settimana Santa** Easter processions are famous throughout Italy. There are two main processions: one at midnight on the Thursday preceding Good Friday, the second on Good Friday.

## Sleeping

Most accommodation is in the town centre or clustered along Via Capo, the coastal road west of the centre. Be sure to book early for the summer season.

**Nube d'Argento** (☎ 081 878 13 44; [www.nubedargento.com](http://www.nubedargento.com); Via Capo 21; camping 2 people, tent & car €25-37, 2-person bungalows €50-85; 🕒 Mar-Dec; 📶 🚰) This inviting campsite is an easy 1km drive west of the Sorrento town centre. Pitches and wooden chalet-style bungalows are spread out beneath a

canopy of olive trees, and the facilities, including an open-air swimming pool, are excellent.

**Hotel Elios** (☎ 081 878 18 12; Via Capo 33; s €40, d €60-70; 📅 Easter-Nov) Owned by a charming old dear, this modest *pensione* offers no frills (unless you count the views) – just impeccable old-fashioned hospitality and light, airy rooms. If your room doesn't have a balcony, and few do, enjoy the views from the downstairs terrace.

**Hotel Linda** (☎ /fax 081 878 29 16; [www.hotellinda.it](http://www.hotellinda.it); Via degli Aranci 125; s/d €50/75) In an anonymous concrete block, this *pensione* is a homey welcoming place. The rooms could do with an update and fresh coat of paint, but they have the essentials, plus balconies; a couple are larger with sofas and desks. There's no air-con, but fans are provided in summer.

**our pick Casa Astarita** (☎ 081 877 49 06; [www.casastarita.com](http://www.casastarita.com); Corso Italia 67, Sorrento; r €80-100; 📅 ☑) This gem of a B&B is housed in a central, 16th-century building. All six rooms combine original structural elements with flat-screen TVs, fridges and excellent water pressure. Tasteful artwork and antiques complete the eclectic look. Rooms surround a central parlour where breakfast is served on a large rustic table.

**La Tonmarella** (☎ 081 878 11 53; [www.latonmarella.it](http://www.latonmarella.it); Via Capo 31; d €150-190, ste €270-280; 📅 Apr-Oct & Christmas; 📶 📺 📺 📺) A dazzling combo of blue-and-yellow majolica tiles, antiques, chandeliers and statues. Most of the classically themed rooms have their own balcony or small terrace, and the hotel has its own private beach (accessible by lift). There's an excellent terrace restaurant to boot.

## Eating

A local speciality to look out for is *gnocchi alla sorrentina* (gnocchi baked in tomato sauce with mozzarella).

**Mondo Bio** (☎ 081 807 56 94; Via degli Aranci 146; snacks €3, pasta €6.50; 📅 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Flying the banner for organic vegetarian food, this bright shop-cum-restaurant serves a limited range of meat-free dishes. The menu, chalked up outside, changes daily but might include *zuppa di soia verde* (soybean soup) and *polpette di tofu* (tofu balls).

**Angelina Lauro** (☎ 081 807 40 97; Piazza Angelina Lauro 39-40; self-service meals €12; 📅 daily Jul & Aug, Wed-Mon Sep-Jun) It might look like a college canteen, but this place hits the spot for a filling, inexpensive lunch. Grab a tray and choose from the daily selection of pastas, meats and vegetable side dishes. You can order à la carte too, but it's pricier and not as good.

**Il Giardiniello** (☎ 081 878 46 16; Via Accademia 7; pizzas from €3.50, meals €18) A vintage mishmash of religious prints, faded family pics, and the odd cracked ceramic plate set the scene for hearty classics like *pasta e fagioli* (pasta and white beans) and *ravioli con spinaci e ricotta* (ravioli stuffed with spinach and ricotta).

**our pick In Bufalito** (☎ 338 1632921; Via Fuoro 21; meals €25; 📅 closed Nov-Feb) A brilliant Slow Food mozzarella bar-restaurant. Head here for sterling local produce – think Sorrento-style cheese fondue, buffalo meat carpaccio and *salsiccia* (local sausage) with broccoli. There's regular cheese tastings, along with photography and art exhibitions and occasional live music.

**Ristorante Il Buco** (☎ 081 878 23 54; Rampa Marina Piccola 5; meals €55; 📅 Thu-Tue Feb-Dec) Hardly the hole its name suggests, this Michelin-starred restaurant is housed in a former monks' wine cellar. The emphasis is on innovative regional cooking, so expect modern combos such as pasta with rock-fish sauce or *treccia* (local cheese) and prawns. Reservations recommended.

## Drinking

From wood-panelled wine bars to cocktail-centric cafes, you'll find no shortage of drinking dens in Sorrento.

**Bollicine** (☎ 081 878 46 16; Via dell'Accademia 9) An unpretentious wine bar with a dark wooden interior and boxes of bottles littered around the place. The wine list includes all the big Italian names and a selection of local labels –the amiable bartender will happily advise you. There's also a small menu of *panini*, bruschetta and a pasta dish or two.

**Café Latino** (☎ 081 878 37 18; Vico I Fuoro 4a) A romantic choice, this is the place to sit among orange and lemon trees and gaze into your lover's eyes over a chilled cocktail. If you can't drag yourselves away, you can also eat here (meals €30).

**Fauno Bar** (☎ 081 878 11 35; Piazza Tasso) This elegant cafe covers half of Piazza Tasso and offers the best people-watching in town. Expect stiff drinks at stiff prices – cocktails start at around €8.50. Snacks and sandwiches are also available (from €7).

## Entertainment

In the summer, concerts are held in the cloisters of Chiesa di San Francesco; otherwise head to **Teatro Tasso** (☎ 081 807 55 25; [www.teatrotasso.com](http://www.teatrotasso.com); Piazza Sant'Antonino) for a good old sing-along. The southern Italian equivalent of a cockney music hall, it's home to the Sorrento Musical (€28), a sentimental revue of Neapolitan classics such as 'O Sole Mio'. The 75-minute performances start at 9.30pm every evening from Monday to Saturday from March to October.

Teatro Tasso's direct competitor **Fauno Notte Club** (☎ 081 878 10 21; [www.faunonotte.it](http://www.faunonotte.it); Piazza Tasso 1) offers 'a fantastic journey through history, legends and folklore'. In other words, 500 years of Neapolitan history set to music.

## Shopping

The pedestrianised *centro storico* is the place to shop. Ignore the replica football shirts and souvenir junk and look out for inlaid wood and *limoncello*. You'll find plenty of the former at **Gargiulo & Jannuzzi** (☎ 081 878 10 41; Viale Enrico Caruso 1), a historic warehouse-cum-shop just off Piazza Tasso, and *limoncello* by the litre at **Sapori e Colori** (☎ 081 878 42 78; Via San Cesareo 57) in the historic centre.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Sorrento is the main jumping-off point for Capri and also has excellent ferry connections to Naples, Ischia and Amalfi coastal resorts. **Alilauro** (☎ 081 878 14 30; [www.alilauro.it](http://www.alilauro.it)) runs up to seven daily hydrofoils between Naples and Sorrento (€9, 35 minutes). Slower **Metrò del Mare** (☎ 199 600700; [www.metrodelmare.com](http://www.metrodelmare.com)) covers the same route (€6.50, one hour, four daily). **Linee Marittime Partenopee** (☎ 081 704 19 11; [www.consorziolmp.it](http://www.consorziolmp.it)) runs hydrofoils from Sorrento to Capri from April to November (€13.50, 20 minutes, 23 daily).

All ferries and hydrofoils depart from the port at Marina Piccola, where you buy your tickets.

### BUS

**Curreri** (☎ 081 801 54 20; [www.curreriviaggi.it](http://www.curreriviaggi.it)) runs six daily services to Sorrento from Naples' Capodichino airport, departing from outside the Arrivals hall and arriving in Piazza Angelina Lauro. Buy



tickets (€10) for the 75-minute journey on the bus.

**SITA** (☎ 199 730749; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) buses serve Naples (€3.30, one hour 20 minutes), the Amalfi Coast and Sant'Agata sui due Golfi, leaving from outside the Circumvesuviana train station. Buy tickets at the station bar or from shops bearing the blue SITA sign. At least 11 buses a day run between Sorrento and Amalfi (€2.50, 1½ hours), looping around Positano (€1.50, 50 minutes). Change at Amalfi for Ravello.

**Marozzi** (☎ 080 579 01 11; [www.marozzi.vt.it](http://www.marozzi.vt.it)) operates two weekday buses to/from Rome (€17.50).

## TRAIN

**Circumvesuviana** (☎ 081 772 24 44; [www.vesuviana.it](http://www.vesuviana.it)) trains run every half-hour between Sorrento and Naples (€3.30), via Pompeii (€1.90) and Ercolano (€1.90).

## Getting Around

Local bus Line B runs from Piazza Tasso to the port at Marina Piccola (€1.10).

**Jolly Service & Rent** (☎ 081 877 34 50; [www.jollyrent.eu](http://www.jollyrent.eu); Via degli Aranci 180) has smart cars from €50 a day and 50cc scooters from €25.

For a taxi, call ☎ 081 878 22 04.

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## WEST OF SORRENTO

The countryside west of Sorrento is the very essence of southern Italy. Tortuous roads wind their way through hills covered in olive trees and lemon groves, passing through sleepy villages and tiny fishing ports. There are magnificent views at every turn, the best from Sant'Agata sui due Golfi and the high points overlooking Punta Campanella, the westernmost point of the Sorrentine Peninsula.

### Sant'Agata sui due Golfi

Perched high in the hills above Sorrento, sleepy Sant'Agata sui due Golfi commands spectacular views of the Bay of Naples on one side and the Bay of Salerno on the other (hence its name, Saint Agatha on the two Gulfs). The best viewpoint is the **Deserto** (☎ 081 878 01 99; Via Deserto; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 4-9pm Apr-Sep, 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Oct-Mar), a Carmelite convent 1.5km uphill from the village centre.

A short drive, or a long walk, from the village you'll find **Agriturismo Le Tore** (☎ 081 808 06 37; [www.letore.com](http://www.letore.com); Via Pontone 43; s €80-90, d €90-110, dinner €25-30; ☎ Easter—mid-Nov; ☎), a working organic farm with eight barnlike rooms and an apartment that sleeps five (€700 to €1000 per week). The setting is lovely, a rustic farmhouse hidden among fruit trees, and the welcome is warm.

From Sorrento, there's a pretty 3km (approximately one hour) trail up to Sant'Agata. Otherwise, hourly SITA buses leave from the Circumvesuviana train station.

### Marina del Cantone

From Sorrento, follow the coastal road round to **Termini**. Stop a moment to admire the views before continuing on to **Nerano**, from where a beautiful hiking trail leads down to the stunning **Bay of Ieranto**, one of the coast's top swimming spots, and **Marina del Cantone**. This unassuming village with its small

pebble beach is a lovely, tranquil place to stay and a popular diving destination.

**Nettuno Diving** (☎ 081 808 10 51; [www.sorrentodiving.com](http://www.sorrentodiving.com); Via Vespucci 39) leads various underwater activities, including snorkelling excursions, beginner courses and cave dives. Adult rates start at €20 for a day-long outing to the Bay of Leranto.

Set among olive groves by the village entrance, **Villaggio Residence Nettuno** (☎ 081 808 10 51; [www.villaggionettuno.it](http://www.villaggionettuno.it), [www.torreturbolo.com](http://www.torreturbolo.com); Via Vespucci 39; camping 2 people, tent & car € 22.50-31, bungalow from €50, apt from €80; 📧 Mar-early Nov; 🅇 🅈 🅉 📶 📷) offers tent pitches, bungalows for two to eight people, mobile homes for two to four people, and apartments in a 16th-century tower for two to five people.

The village has a reputation as a gastronomic hot spot and VIPs regularly boat over from Capri to dine here. A favourite is **Lo Scoglio** (☎ 081 808 10 26; Marina del Cantone; meals €50), which serves superlative seafood tempters like a €24 antipasto of raw seafood and a celestial *spaghetti al riccio* (spaghetti with sea urchins).

SITA runs regular bus services between Sorrento and Marina del Cantone (marked on timetables as Nerano Cantone; €1.10, one hour).

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## AMALFI COAST

Stretching about 50km along the southern side of the Sorrentine Peninsula, the Amalfi Coast (Costiera Amalfitana) is one of Europe's most breathtaking. Cliffs terraced with scented lemon groves sheer down into sparkling seas; sherbet-hued villas cling precariously to unforgiving slopes while sea and sky merge in one vast blue horizon.

Yet its stunning topography has not always been a blessing. For centuries after the passing of Amalfi's glory days as a maritime superpower (from the 9th to the 12th centuries), the area was poor and its isolated villages regular victims of foreign incursions, earthquakes and landslides. But it was this very isolation that first drew visitors in the early 1900s, paving the way for the advent of tourism in the latter half of the century. Today the Amalfi Coast is one of Italy's premier tourist destinations, a favourite of cashed-up jet-setters and love-struck couples.

The best time to visit is in spring or early autumn. In summer the coast's single road (SS163) gets very busy and prices are inflated; in winter much of the coast simply shuts down.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Boat services to the Amalfi Coast towns are generally limited to the period between April and October. From Naples, **Metrolò del Mare** (☎ 199 446644; [www.metrodelmare.com](http://www.metrodelmare.com)) runs summer-only services to Sorrento (€6.50, three daily), Positano (€14, four daily), Amalfi (€15, six daily) and Salerno (€16, two daily). **TraVelMar** (☎ 089 87 29 50) connects Salerno with Amalfi (€7) and Positano (€9).

### BUS

Bus services along the coast are year-round and efficient. **SITA** (☎ 199 730749; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) operates a frequent service along the SS163 between Sorrento and Salerno (€3), via Amalfi.

Buses also connect Rome and the Amalfi Coast, terminating in Salerno.

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## WALK THE COAST

Rising steeply from the coast, the densely wooded Lattari mountains provide some stunning walking opportunities. An extraordinary network of paths traverses the craggy precipitous peaks, climbing to remote farmhouses through wild and beautiful valleys. It's tough going, though – long ascents up seemingly endless flights of steps are almost unavoidable.

Probably the best-known walk, the 12km Sentiero degli Dei (Path of the Gods; 5½ to six hours) follows the steep, often rocky paths linking Positano to Praiano. It's a spectacular trail passing through some of the area's least developed countryside. The route is marked by red-and-white stripes daubed on rocks and trees, although some of these have become worn in places and might be difficult to make out. Pick up a map of the walk at local tourist offices, included in a series of three excellent booklets containing the area's most popular hikes, including the equally famed (and lyrically named) *Via degli Incanti* (Trail of Charms) from Amalfi to Positano.

To the west, the tip of the Sorrentine Peninsula is another hiking hot spot. Some 110km of paths criss-cross the area, linking the spectacular coastline with the rural hinterland. These range from tough all-day treks – such as the 14.1km Alta Via dei Monti Lattari from the Fontanelle hills near Positano down to the Punta Campanella – to shorter walks suitable for the family. Tourist offices throughout the area can provide maps detailing the colour-coded routes. With the exception of the Alta Via dei Monti Lattari (marked in red and white), long routes are shown in red on the map; coast-to-coast trails in blue; paths connecting villages in green; and circular routes in yellow.

If you're intent on trying one of the more demanding routes in the region, invest in a detailed map such as the CAI's (Club Alpino Italiano) *Monti Lattari, Penisola Sorrentina, Costiera Amalfitana: Carta dei Sentieri* (€8) at 1:30,000 scale.

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## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If driving from the north, exit the A3 autostrada at Vietri sul Mare and follow the SS163 along the coast. From the south leave the A3 at Salerno and head for Vietri sul Mare and the SS163.

## TRAIN

From Naples you can take either the Circumvesuviana to Sorrento or a Trenitalia train to Salerno, then continue along the Amalfi Coast, eastwards or westwards, by SITA bus.

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## POSITANO

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The pearl in the pack, Positano is the coast's most photogenic and expensive town. Its steeply stacked houses are a medley of peaches, pinks and terracottas, and its near-vertical streets (many of which are, in fact, staircases) are lined with voguish shop displays, jewellery stalls, elegant hotels and smart restaurants. Look closely, though, and you'll find reassuring signs of everyday reality – crumbling stucco, streaked paintwork and even, on occasion, a faint whiff of drains.

An early visitor, John Steinbeck wrote in 1953: 'Positano bites deep. It is a dream place that isn't quite real when you are there and becomes beckoningly real after you have gone.' More than 50 years on, his

words still ring true.

## Orientation

Positano is split in two by a cliff bearing the Torre Trasita (tower). West of this is the smaller, less crowded Spiaggia del Fornillo beach and the less expensive side of town; east is Spiaggia Grande, backing up to the town centre.

Navigating is easy, if steep. Via Marconi, part of the main SS163 coastal road, forms a huge horseshoe around and above the town. From it, one-way Viale Pasitea makes a second, lower loop, ribboning off Via Marconi from the west towards the town centre, then climbing back up as Via Colombo to rejoin Via Marconi and the SS163. Branching off the bottom of Viale Pasitea, Via dei Mulini leads down to Spiaggia Grande.

## Information

**La Brezza** (☎ 089 87 58 11; Via del Brigantino 1; per 15min €3; 🕒 10am-10pm Mar-Dec) Small ceramics shop with internet access.

**Police station** (☎ 089 87 50 11; cnr Via Marconi & Viale Pasitea)

**Positano.com** ([www.positano.com](http://www.positano.com)) A slick website with hotel and restaurant listings, itineraries and transport information.

**Post office** (☎ 089 87 51 42; Via Marconi 318)

**Tourist office** (☎ 089 87 50 67; [www.aziendaturismopositano.it](http://www.aziendaturismopositano.it); Via del Saracino 4; 🕒 8am-2pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar)

## Sights & Activities

The lofty, ceramic-tiled dome of the **Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta** (Piazza Flavio Gioia; 🕒 8am-noon & 3.30-7pm) is the town's most famous, and pretty much only, major sight. Inside the church, classical lines are broken by pillars topped with gilded Ionic capitals, while winged cherubs peek from above every arch. Above the main altar is a 13th-century Byzantine Black Madonna and Child.

It's a short hop to the nearby beach, **Spiaggia Grande**. Although it's no one's dream beach, with greyish sand covered by legions of brightly coloured umbrellas, the water's clean and the setting is memorable. Hiring a chair and umbrella in the fenced-off areas costs around €18 per person per day, but the crowded public areas are free.

Boating isn't cheap. Operating out of a kiosk on Spiaggia Grande, **Blue Star** (☎ 089 81 18 89; [www.bluestarpositano.it](http://www.bluestarpositano.it); Spiaggia Grande; 🕒 9am-8pm Easter-Nov) hires out small motorboats for around €55 per hour and also organises excursions to Capri and the Grotta dello **Smeraldo**. A similar company, **L'Uomo e il Mare** (☎ 089 81 16 13; [www.gennaroosalvatore.it](http://www.gennaroosalvatore.it); 🕒 9am-8pm Easter-Nov) operates from a kiosk near the ferry terminal and offers a range of tours, including Capri and Amalfi day trips (€80, including lunch) and a romantic sunset cruise, complete with champagne, to the Li Galli islands (€24).

Over on Spiaggia del Fornillo the **Centro Sub Costiera Amalfitana** (☎ 089 81 21 48; [www.centrosb.it](http://www.centrosb.it)) runs dives (€60 for two hours) and lessons for adults and children.

## Sleeping

Most hotels are three-star and above and prices are universally high. Cheaper accommodation is more

limited and must usually be booked well in advance for summer. Ask at the tourist office about rooms or apartments in private houses.

**Hostel Brikette** (☎ 089 87 58 57; [www.brikette.com](http://www.brikette.com); Via Marconi 358; dm €23-25, d €65-85, apt €115-180; 📧 late Mar-Nov; 📶) Not far from the Bar Internazionale bus stop on the coastal road is this bright and cheerful hostel offering the cheapest accommodation in town. There are various options: six- to eight-person dorms (single sex and mixed), double rooms, and apartments for two to five people. There are also laundry, free wi-fi and left-luggage facilities.



**our pick** **Pensione Maria Luisa** (☎ 089 87 50 23; [www.pensionemarialuisa.com](http://www.pensionemarialuisa.com); Via Fornillo 42; s €50, d €70-80; 📶) The best budget choice in town, Maria Luisa's rooms and bathrooms have recently been updated with shiny new blue tiles and fittings; those with private terraces are well worth the extra €10 for the bay view. Other perks include a sunny communal area and a jovial, helpful owner.

**Villa Nettuno** (☎ 089 87 54 01; [www.villanettunopositano.it](http://www.villanettunopositano.it); Viale Pasitea 208; s/d €70/85) Hidden behind a barrage of foliage, Villa Nettuno oozes charm. Rooms in the 300-year-old part of the building have heavy rustic decor, frescoed wardrobes and a communal terrace; those in the renovated part are still good value but less interesting. That said, you probably won't be thinking of the furniture as you lie in bed gazing out to sea.

**Hotel Ristorante Pupetto** (☎ 089 87 50 87; [www.hotelpupetto.it](http://www.hotelpupetto.it); Via Fornillo 37; s €90-100, d €130-170; 📧 Apr—mid-Nov; 📶) Overlooking Spiaggia del Fornillo, this is as close to the beach as you can get without sleeping on a sun-lounge. A bustling, cheerful place, the hotel forms part of a large, rambling beach complex with a popular terraced restaurant (meals €25), a nautical-theme bar and sunny, renovated guest rooms with gorgeous sea views.

**Hotel Palazzo Murat** (☎ 089 87 51 77; [www.palazzomurat.it](http://www.palazzomurat.it); Via dei Mulini 23; s €120-250, d €150-375; 📶) This upmarket treat is housed in the *palazzo* that Gioacchino Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law and one-time king of Naples, used as his summer residence. Beyond the lush gardens, rooms are traditional, with antiques, original oil paintings and plenty of lavish marble. Wi-fi is available in the central courtyard.

# Eating

Most restaurants, bars and trattorias, many of which are unashamedly touristy, close over winter, making a brief reappearance for Christmas and New Year.

**our pick Da Costantino** (☎ 089 87 57 38; Via Montepertuso; pizzas from €4, meals €20; 📅 closed Wed) It might not seem so, but it's worth the slog up to this bustling trattoria about 300m north of Hostel Brikette. One of the few authentic places in town, it serves honest, down-to-earth Italian grub, including excellent pizzas and delicious *scialatielli* (ribboned pasta) served with aubergines, tomato and mozzarella.

**Il Saraceno d'Oro** (☎ 089 81 20 50; Viale Pasitea 254; pizzas from €5, meals €25; 📅 Mar-Oct) A busy, bustling place, the Saracen's blend of cheery service, uncomplicated food and reasonable prices continues to please the punters. The pizzas are good, the pasta's tasty and the desserts are sticky and sweet. The complimentary end-of-meal glass of *limoncello* makes for a pleasing epilogue.

**Ristorante Bruno** (☎ 089 87 53 92; Via Colombo 157; meals €28; 📅 closed Thu lunch & Nov-Jan) Don't let the underwhelming decor fool you – this unassuming restaurant serves superb seafood. Bag a table across the street and enjoy *the* view of Positano while swooning over house specialities like the antipasto of marinated fish with vegetables, orange and Parmesan; for a main course try the grilled fish with a wedge of local lemon.

**Lo Guarracino** (☎ 089 87 57 94; Via Positanesi d'America; pizzas from €8.50, meals €30; 📅 Mar-Dec) On the scenic path connecting Positano's two beaches, this a memorable place to eat even if you're more likely to remember the views than the straightforward food. The menu is seafood-heavy, with dishes like *tagliatelle verdi ai frutti di mare* (green pasta with seafood). Pizzas and steaks add variety. It's popular, so try to book ahead.

**Ristorante Max** (☎ 089 87 50 56; Via dei Mulini 22; meals €40; 📅 Mar-Nov) Peruse the artwork while choosing your dish at this perennial favourite of 'ladies who lunch'. Options include set menus and daily specials like ravioli with clams and asparagus, and zucchini flowers stuffed with ricotta and salmon. Cooking courses are offered in the summer months.

# Entertainment

Generally speaking, Positano's nightlife is genteel, sophisticated and safe.

**Music on the Rocks** (☎ 089 87 58 74; [www.musicontherocks.it](http://www.musicontherocks.it); Via Grotte dell'Incanto 51; cover €10-25; 📅 Easter-Oct) Carved into the tower at the eastern end of Spiaggia Grande, this uberchic nightclub attracts a good-looking crowd and some of the region's best DJs. Sounds are mainstream house and disco.

# Getting There & Around

SITA runs frequent buses to/from Amalfi (€1.40, 40 to 50 minutes) and Sorrento (€1.40, 60 minutes). Buses drop you off at one of two main bus stops: coming from Sorrento and the west, opposite Bar Internazionale; arriving from Amalfi and the east, at the top of Via Colombo. When departing, buy bus tickets at Bar Internazionale or, if headed eastwards, from the tobacconist at the bottom of Via Colombo.

Between April and October, daily ferries link Positano with Amalfi (€6, 15 minutes, six daily), Sorrento (€9, five daily), Salerno (€8.50, 70 minutes, five daily), Naples (€14, four daily) and Capri (€15.50, 45 minutes, five daily).

Getting around Positano is largely a matter of walking. If your knees can handle them, there are dozens of narrow alleys and stairways that make walking relatively easy and joyously traffic-free. Otherwise, an orange bus follows the lower ring road every half-hour, passing along Viale Pasitea, Via Colombo and Via Marconi. Stops are clearly marked, and you buy your ticket (€1.10) on board. It passes by both SITA bus stops.

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## AROUND POSITANO

### Nocelle

A tiny, still-isolated mountain village, Nocelle (450m) affords some of the most spectacular views on the entire coast. A world apart from touristy Positano, it's a sleepy, silent place where not much ever happens and none of the few residents would ever want it to.

The easiest way to get here is by local bus from Positano (€1.10, 30 minutes, 17 daily). Hikers tackling the Sentieri degli Dei ([Click here](#)) might fancy lunch at the **Trattoria Santa Croce** (☎ 089 81 12 60; meals €25; ☒ summer) as they pass through.

### Praiano & Furore

An ancient fishing village, **Praiano** has one of the coast's most popular beaches, Marina di Praia. From the SS163 (next to the Hotel Continental), take the steep path that leads down the side of the cliffs to a tiny inlet with a small stretch of coarse sand and deep-blue water.

On the coastal road east of Praiano, **Hotel Pensione Continental** (☎ 089 87 40 84; [www.continental.praiano.it](http://www.continental.praiano.it); Via Roma 21; camping 2 people, tent & car €35-40, s €45-65, d €70-90, apt per week €500-1500; ☒ camping Apr-Oct, rm & apt year-round) offers the full gamut of accommodation: cool, white rooms with sea views, apartments sleeping up to six people, and 12 tent sites on a series of grassy terraces. From the lowest of these a private staircase leads down to a rocky platform on the sea. Transport is no problem, either, as there's a bus stop just outside the hotel.

A few kilometres further on, **Marina di Furore** sits at the bottom of what's known as the fjord of Furore, a giant cleft that cuts through the Lattari mountains. The main village, however, stands 300m above, in the upper Vallone del Furore. A one-horse place that sees few tourists, it breathes a distinctly rural air despite the colourful murals and unlikely modern sculpture.

To get to upper Furore by car follow the SS163 and then the SS366 signposted to Agerola; from Positano, it's 15km. Otherwise, regular SITA buses depart from the bus terminus in Amalfi (€1.10, 30 minutes, 17 daily).

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## AMALFI

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It is hard to grasp that pretty little Amalfi, with its sun-filled piazzas and small beach, was once a maritime superpower with a population of more than 70,000. For one thing, it's not a big place – you can easily walk from one end to the other in about 20 minutes. For another, there are very few historical buildings of note. The explanation is chilling – most of the old city, and its populace, simply slid into the

sea during an earthquake in 1343.

Today, although the resident population is fairly modest, the numbers swell significantly during summer, when day-trippers pour in by the coachload.

Just around the headland, neighbouring Atrani is a picturesque tangle of whitewashed alleys and arches centred on a lively, lived-in piazza and popular beach.

## Orientation

Buses and boats drop you off at Amalfi's main transport hub, Piazza Flavio Gioia. Cross the road and duck through to Piazza del Duomo, the town's focal square. Most of the hotels and restaurants are in the tangled lanes either side of the main strip, Via d'Amalfi, and its continuation, Via Capuano, which snake north from the cathedral. On the seafront Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare follows the coast eastwards, becoming Via Pantaleone Comite as it leads to the Saracen tower and Atrani.

## Information

**Amalfi Servizi Express** (☎ 089 87 34 47; Piazza dei Dogi 8; internet per 15min €3; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat, closed Thu evening)

**Post office** (☎ 089 830 48 31; Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare 31) Next door to the tourist office.

**Tourist office** (☎ 089 87 11 07; [www.amalfitouristoffice.it](http://www.amalfitouristoffice.it); Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare 33; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm & 3-5.15pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat Sep-Jun, 1.30pm & 3-7.15pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat Jul & Aug) Good for bus and ferry timetables.

## Sights & Activities

Dominating Piazza del Duomo, the iconic **Cattedrale di Sant'Andrea** (☎ 089 87 10 59; Piazza del Duomo; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Jun, 9am-9pm Jul-Sep, 9.30am-5.15pm Oct & Mar, 10am-1pm & 2.30-4.30pm Nov-Feb) makes an imposing sight at the top of its sweeping flight of stairs. The cathedral dates in part from the early 10th century, although its distinctive striped facade has been rebuilt twice, most recently at the end of the 19th century. It's a melange of architectural styles: the two-toned masonry is largely Sicilian Arabic-Norman while the less impressive interior is pure baroque. In high season, entrance between 10am and 5pm is through the adjacent Chiostro del Paradiso.

To the left of the cathedral's porch, the pint-sized **Chiostro del Paradiso** (☎ 089 87 13 24; admission €2.50; 🕒 9am-7pm Jun-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2.30-4.30pm Nov-May) was built in 1266 to house the tombs of Amalfi's prominent citizens.

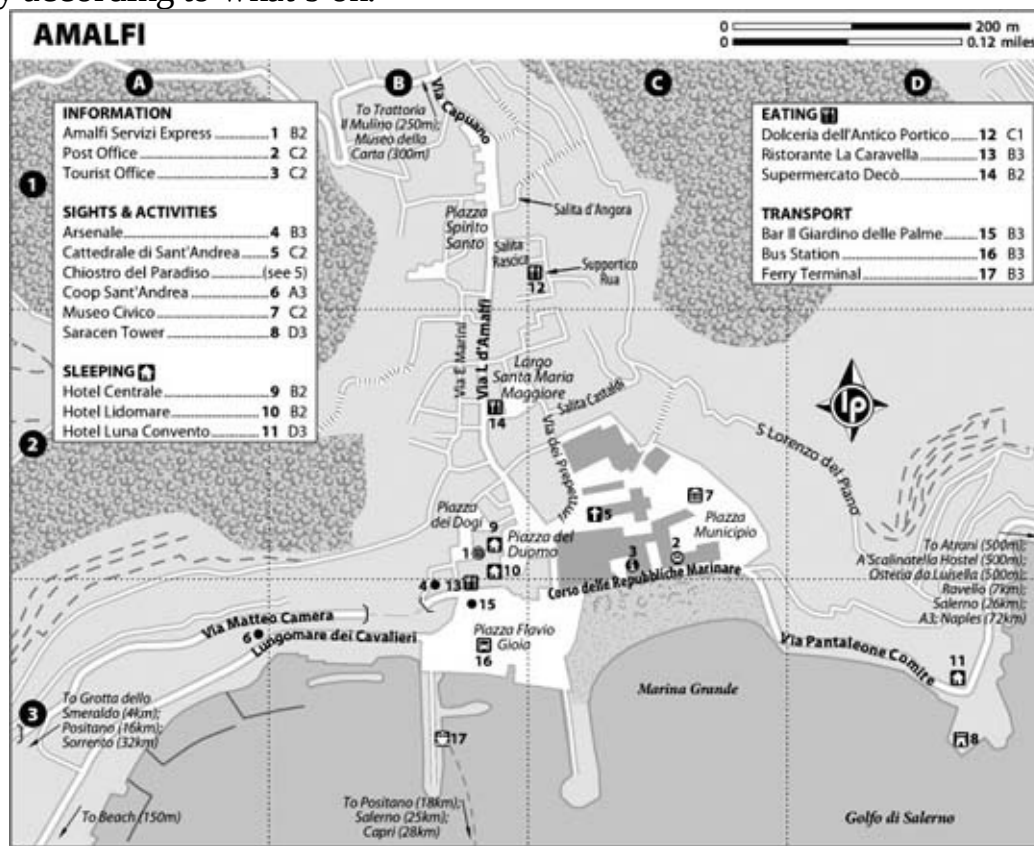
In the town hall, the one-room **Museo Civico** (☎ 089 87 10 66; Piazza Municipio; admission free; 🕒 8.30am-1pm Mon-Fri) contains the *Tavole Amalfitane*, an ancient manuscript draft of Amalfi's maritime code, and other historical documents.

Amalfi's other museum of note is the fascinating **Museo della Carta** (Paper Museum; ☎ 089 830 45 61; [www.museodellacarta.it](http://www.museodellacarta.it); Via delle Cartiere; admission €4; 🕒 10am-6.30pm Apr—mid-Nov, 10am-3pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun mid-Nov—Mar). Housed in a 13th-century paper mill (the oldest in Europe), it lovingly preserves the original paper presses, which are still in full working order, as you'll see during the 15-minute guided tour (in English).

Harking back to Amalfi's days as a great maritime republic, the cavernous **Arsenale** (Via Matteo Camera) was once the town's main shipbuilding depot. Today it's used to host temporary exhibitions –



opening hours vary according to what's on.



For all its seafaring history, Amalfi's main beach is not a particularly appealing swimming spot. If you're intent on a dip, think about hiring a boat. You'll find a number of operators along Lungomare dei Cavalieri, charging about €50 for a couple of hours.

Four kilometres west of Amalfi, Conca dei Marini is home to the **Grotta dello Smeraldo** (admission €6; ☎ 9am-4pm Mar-Oct, 9am-3pm Nov-Feb), a haunting cave named after the eerie emerald colour that emanates from the seawater. SITA buses regularly pass the car park above the cave entrance (from where you take a lift or stairs down to the rowing boats). Alternatively, **Coop Sant'Andrea** (☎ 089 87 31 90; [www.coopsantandrea.it](http://www.coopsantandrea.it); Lungomare dei Cavalieri 1) runs two daily boats from Amalfi (€14 return) at 9am and 3.30pm. Allow 1.5 hours for the round trip.

## Festivals & Events

Every 24 December and 6 January, skin-divers from all over Italy make a pilgrimage to the ceramic *presepe* submerged in the Grotta dello Smeraldo.

The **Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics**, which rotates between Amalfi, Venice, Pisa and Genoa, is held on the first Sunday in June. Amalfi's turn comes round again in 2013.

## Sleeping

**A' Scalinatella Hostel** (☎ 089 87 14 92; [www.hostelscalinatella.com](http://www.hostelscalinatella.com); Piazza Umberto I, Atrani; dm €20-25, s €35-50, d €70-90) This bare-bones operation, just round the headland in Atrani, has dorms, rooms and apartments scattered across the village. Breakfast is included in the price, and there's a laundry to boot. Doors are locked at 2am.

**Hotel Lidomare** (☎ 089 87 13 32; [www.lidomare.it](http://www.lidomare.it); Largo Duchini Piccolomini 9; s/d €50/110; ☎ ☑) This old-fashioned, family-run hotel has real character. The spacious rooms have an air of gentility, with their appealingly haphazard decor, old-fashioned tiles and fine old antiques. Some rooms have jacuzzi

bathbubs, others boast sea views.

**Hotel Centrale** (☎ 089 87 26 08; [www.hotelcentraleamalfi.it](http://www.hotelcentraleamalfi.it); Largo Duchi Piccolomini 1; s €60-120, d €70-140; 📞 📺 📶 🚰) This is one of the best-value hotels in Amalfi. The entrance is on a tiny little piazza in the *centro storico*, but many rooms actually overlook Piazza del Duomo (24 is a good choice). The bright green and blue tile work gives the place a vibrant, fresh look, and the views from the rooftop terrace are magnificent.

**Hotel Luna Convento** (☎ 089 87 10 02; [www.lunahotel.it](http://www.lunahotel.it); Via Pantaleone Comite 33; s €220-280, d €240-300; 📞 📺 📶 🚰) This former convent was founded by St Francis in 1222. Rooms in the original building are in the former nuns' cells, but there's nothing pokey about the bright tiles, balconies and sea views. The newer wing is equally beguiling, with religious frescoes over the bed (to stop any misbehaving). The cloistered courtyard is magnificent.

## Eating

**Supermercato Decò** (Salita dei Curiali 6; 🕒 8am-1.30pm & 5-8.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 5-8.30pm Thu, 8am-1.30pm & 5-9pm Sat year-round, plus 8am-1.30pm Sun only May-Sep) Picnickers and self-caterers can stock up here.

**our pick Dolceria dell'Antico Portico** (☎ 089 87 11 43; Supportico Rua 10; cakes from €3) Run by celebrated pastry chef, Tiziano Mita, head here for modern twists on trad sweets – think *sfogliatelle* in the form of a *trullo* (conical roofed building unique to Puglia).

**Trattoria Il Mulino** (☎ 089 87 22 23; Via delle Cartiere 36; pizzas €6, meals €20) A TV-in-the-corner, kids-running-between-the-tables sort of place, this is about as authentic a trattoria as you'll find in Amalfi. The menu features the usual pizzas, pasta and seafood, but the food is tasty and the prices honest. The *scialatiella alla pescatore* (pasta ribbons with prawns, mussels, tomato and parsley) is fabulous.

**Osteria da Luisella** (☎ 089 87 10 87; Piazza Umberto I, Atrani; meals €30; 🕒 Thu-Tue) Great food, great people-watching and an atmospheric setting make this a winner. Grab a table under the arches and sit back to some fresh-off-the-boat seafood. The menu varies, but if they're on, the warm seafood salad and the *cassuola* (octopus stew) are scrumptious. Herbivores might go for the *caporalessa*, a tasty baked concoction of aubergines, tomatoes and cheese.

**Ristorante La Caravella** (☎ 089 87 10 29; Via Matteo Camera 12; meals €60, tasting menu €75; 🕒 Wed-Mon Jan—mid-Nov) One of the few places in Amalfi where you pay for the food rather than the location, this celebrated dining den serves a mix of simple, soulful classics and regional grub with a nouvelle twist – think black ravioli with cuttlefish ink, scampi and ricotta. The 15,000-label wine list is an aficionado's dream.

## Getting There & Away

SITA buses run from Piazza Flavio Gioia to Sorrento (€2.50, 1½ hours, at least 11 daily) via Positano (€1.40, 40 minutes), and also to Ravello (€1.10, 25 minutes, every 30 minutes), Salerno (€2.50, 1¼ hours, at least hourly) and Naples (€3.30, two to three hours depending on the route, twice daily). Buy tickets and check schedules at **Bar Il Giardino delle Palme** (Piazza Flavio Gioia), opposite the bus stop.

Between April and October there are daily ferry sailings to Salerno (€6.50), Naples (€15), Positano (€8) and Capri (€15). For details, [Click here](#).

# RAVELLO

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Sitting high in the hills above Amalfi, refined Ravello is a polished town almost entirely dedicated to tourism. Boasting impeccable bohemian credentials – Wagner, DH Lawrence and Virginia Woolf all lounged here – it's today known for its ravishing gardens and stupendous views, the best in the world according to former resident Gore Vidal.

Most people visit on a day trip from Amalfi – a nerve-tingling 7km drive up the Valle del Dragone – although to best enjoy Ravello's romantic otherworldly atmosphere you'll need to stay overnight.

The **tourist office** (☎ 089 85 70 96; [www.ravellotime.it](http://www.ravellotime.it); Via Roma 18bis; ☎ 10am-8pm) has some general information on the town, plus walking maps.

## Sights & Activities

Forming the eastern flank of Piazza del Duomo, the **cathedral** (☎ 8.30-1pm & 4.30-8pm) was originally built in 1086 but has since undergone various facelifts. The facade is 16th century, even if the central bronze door is an 1179 original; the interior is a late-20th-century interpretation of what the original must once have looked like. The pulpit is particularly striking, supported by six twisting columns set on marble lions and decorated with flamboyant mosaics of peacocks, birds and dancing lions. Note also how the floor is tilted towards the square – a deliberate measure to enhance the perspective effect. To the right of the central nave, stairs lead down to the cathedral **museum** (admission €2) and its modest collection of religious artefacts.

To the south of the cathedral, **Villa Rufolo** is famous for its fabulous 19th-century **gardens** (☎ 089 85 76 57; admission €6; ☎ 9am-sunset). Commanding mesmerising views, they are packed with exotic colours, artistically crumbling towers and luxurious blooms. On seeing them in 1880, Wagner wrote that he had found the garden of Klingsor (setting for the second act of his opera *Parsifal*). Today the gardens are used to stage concerts during the town's celebrated festival.

Some way east of Piazza del Duomo, the 20th-century **Villa Cimbrone** (☎ 089 85 80 72; adult/under 12yr & over 65yr €6/3; ☎ 9am-sunset) is worth seeking out for the vast views from the delightfully ramshackle gardens. The best viewpoint is the Belvedere of Infinity, an awe-inspiring terrace lined with fake classical busts.

## Festivals & Events

Between June and mid-September the **Ravello Festival** (☎ 089 85 83 60; [www.ravellofestival.com](http://www.ravellofestival.com)) turns much of the town centre into a stage. Events ranging from orchestral concerts and chamber music to ballet performances, film screenings and exhibitions are held in various locations.

Ravello's program of classical music actually begins in March and continues until late October, reaching crescendos in June and September with the International Piano Festival and Chamber Music Weeks. Performances are world class, and the two venues (Villa Rufolo and the Convento di Santa Rosa in Conca dei Marini) are unforgettable. Tickets, bookable by phone, fax or online, start at €20. For information and reservations, contact the **Ravello Concert Society** (☎ 089 85 81 49; [www.ravelloarts.org](http://www.ravelloarts.org)).

## Sleeping

**Agriturismo Monte Brusara** (☎ 089 85 74 67; [www.montebusara.com](http://www.montebusara.com); Via Monte Brusara 32; s/d

€35/70, incl half-board €50/100) It's a tough half-hour walk from Ravello's centre, but this authentic mountainside *agriturismo* (farm-stay accommodation) is the real McCoy. It's an ideal spot to escape the crowds and offers three comfortable but basic rooms, fabulous food and some big views.

**Hotel Villa Amore** (☎ /fax 089 85 71 35; Via dei Fusco 5; s €50-60, d €75-100; 📶) This welcoming *pensione* is the best budget choice in town. Tucked away down a quiet lane, it has modest, homey rooms and sparkling bathrooms. Some, like room 3, have their own balcony; others have bathtubs – a few have both. The garden restaurant (meals about €20) is a further plus.

**Hotel Toro** (☎ /fax 089 85 72 11; [www.hoteltoro.it](http://www.hoteltoro.it); Via Roma 16; r €85/118; 📶 Easter-Nov; 📶 📶) A hotel since the late 19th century, the Toro is just off Piazza del Duomo, within easy range of the clanging cathedral bells. The not-huge rooms are decked out in traditional style with terracotta or light-marble tiles and soothing cream furnishings. Outside, the walled garden is the perfect place for a sundowner.

## Eating

**Take Away da Nino** (☎ 089 858 62 49; Viale Parco della Rimembranza 41) Fast food Ravello-style – come here for takeaway pizza and crunchy fried nibbles.

**Da Salvatore** (☎ 089 8572 27; [www.salvatoreravello.co](http://www.salvatoreravello.co); Via della Repubblica 2; meals €25, 📶 Tue-Sun) Located just before the bus stop and the Garden Hotel, this average-looking nosh spot has an exceptional view, not to mention creative dishes like tender squid on a bed of puréed chickpeas with spicy *peperoncino*. In the evening, head in for some of the best wood-fired pizza this side of Naples.

**Ristorante Pizzeria Vittoria** (☎ 089 85 79 47; Via dei Rufolo 3; meals €30; 📶 closed Nov—mid-Mar) Exceptional pizzas aside, this elegantly subdued restaurant serves a wonderful sliced octopus on green salad with olive oil and lemon, and an innovative chickpea and cod antipasto.

## Getting There & Away

SITA operates hourly buses from the eastern side of Piazza Flavio Gioia in Amalfi (€1.10, 25 minutes). By car, turn north about 2km east of Amalfi. Vehicles are not permitted in Ravello's town centre, but there's plenty of space in supervised car parks on the perimeter.

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## FROM AMALFI TO SALERNO

The 26km drive to Salerno, though less exciting than the 16km stretch westwards to Positano, is exhilarating and dotted with a series of small towns, each with their own character and each worth a brief look.

Three and a half kilometres east of Amalfi, or a steep 1km-long walk down from Ravello, **Minori** is a small, workaday town, popular with holidaying Italians. Further along, **Maiori** is the coast's biggest resort, a brassy place full of large seafront hotels, restaurants and beach clubs.

Just beyond **Erchie** and its beautiful beach, **Cetara** is a picturesque tumbledown fishing village with a reputation as a gastronomic highlight. Tuna and anchovies are the local specialities, appearing in various guises at **Al Convento** (☎ 089 26 10 39; Piazza San Francesco 16; meals €20; 📶 closed Wed Oct—mid-May), a sterling seafood restaurant near the small harbour. For your money, you'll probably not eat better anywhere else on the coast; the *spaghetti con alici e finocchietto selavatrigo* (spaghetti with anchovies and wild fennel) sings with flavour.

Shortly before Salerno, the road passes through **Vietri sul Mare**, the ceramics capital of Campania. Its not-unattractive historic centre is packed to the gills with ceramics shops, the most famous of which is **Ceramica Artistica Solimene** (☎ 089 21 02 43; [www.solimene.com](http://www.solimene.com); Via Madonna degli Angeli 7; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Sat), a vast factory outlet with an extraordinary glass-and-ceramic facade.

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## SALERNO

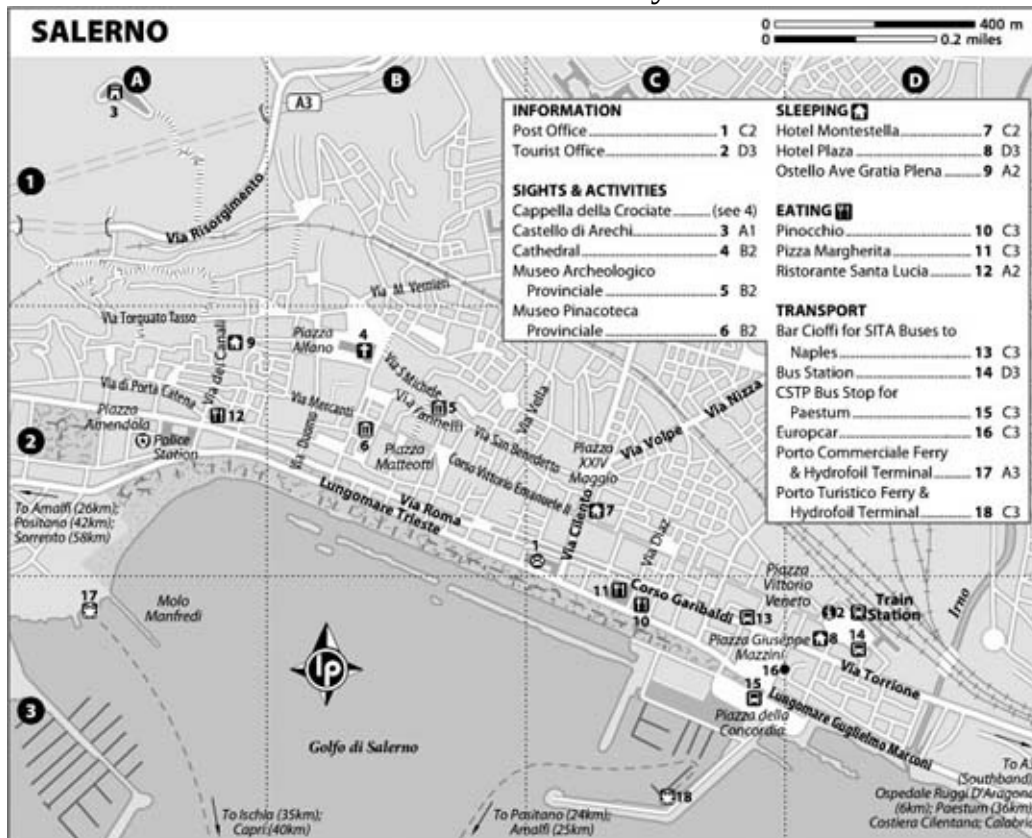
pop 140,363

Salerno provides something of a reality check after the glut of postcard-pretty towns along the Amalfi Coast. As a major port and transport hub it's unlikely to detain you long, but if you do find yourself passing through en route to Paestum, don't despair. The *centro storico* is a vibrant area of medieval churches, neighbourhood trattorias and neon-lit wine bars, and the seafront is a fine place for an evening stroll.

Originally an Etruscan and later a Roman colony, Salerno flourished with the arrival of the Normans in the 11th century. Robert Guiscard made it the capital of his dukedom in 1076 and, under his patronage, the Scuola Medica Salernitana was renowned as one of medieval Europe's greatest medical institutes. More recently, it was left in tatters by the heavy fighting that followed the 1943 landings of the American 5th Army, just south of the city.

## Orientation

Salerno's train station is on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, at the eastern end of town. The main strip, the car-free Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, leads off northwest to the *centro storico*. Running parallel is Corso Garibaldi, which becomes Via Roma as it heads out of the city towards the Amalfi Coast.



# Information

**Ospedale Ruggi D’Aragona** (☎ 089 67 11 11; Via San Leonardo) Hospital.

**Post office** (☎ 089 257 20 49; Corso Garibaldi 203)

**Tourist office** (☎ 089 23 14 32; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 1; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 9am-12.30pm & 5-7.30pm Sun Jul & Aug)

## Sights

The highlight of the *centro storico* is the impressive **cathedral** (☎ 089 23 13 87; Piazza Alfano; ☎ 10am-6pm). Built by the Normans under Robert Guiscard in the 11th century and remodelled in the 18th century, it sustained severe damage in the 1980 earthquake. It’s dedicated to San Matteo (St Matthew), whose remains were reputedly brought to the city in 954 and now lie beneath the main altar in the vaulted crypt. In the right-hand apse, the **Cappella delle Crociate** (Chapel of the Crusades) was so named because crusaders’ weapons were blessed here. Under the altar stands the tomb of the 11th-century pope Gregory VII.

To the south of the cathedral, the **Museo Archeologico Provinciale** (☎ 089 23 11 35; Via San Benedetto 28; admission free) was, at the time of writing, closed for restoration. It contains archaeological finds from around the region, including a 1st-century-BC bronze head of Apollo.

In the heart of the medieval quarter, the **Museo Pinacoteca Provinciale** (☎ 089 258 30 73; Via Mercanti 63; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-3.15pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) houses a small but interesting art collection dating from the Renaissance right up to the first half of the 19th century.

Overlooking Salerno, the forbidding **Castello di Arechi** (☎ 089 22 55 78; Via Benedetto Croce; ☎ 9am-3.30pm) is spectacularly positioned 263m above the city. Originally a Byzantine fort, it was built by the Lombard duke of Benevento, Arechi II, in the 8th century and subsequently modified by the Normans and Aragonese. Today it houses a permanent collection of ceramics, arms and coins. To get there take bus 19 from Piazza XXIV Maggio in the city centre.

## Sleeping

**Ostello Ave Gratia Plena** (☎ 089 23 47 76; [www.ostellodisalerno.it](http://www.ostellodisalerno.it); Via dei Canali; dm/s/d €15/32/45; ☎ ☎) Housed in a 16th-century convent, Salerno’s HI hostel is right in the heart of the *centro storico*. Inside there’s a charming central courtyard and a range of bright rooms, from dorms to doubles with private bathroom. The 2am curfew is for dorms only.

**Hotel Montestella** (☎ 089 22 51 22; [www.hotelmontestella.it](http://www.hotelmontestella.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele 156; s/d/tr incl breakfast €75/100/110; ☎ ☎) Competitively priced and right on Salerno’s main pedestrian thoroughfare (halfway between the historic centre and train station), this slumber number is a convenient option. The 45 guest rooms might be underwhelming, but all are clean and air-con cool.

**Hotel Plaza** (☎ 089 22 44 77; [www.plazasalerno.it](http://www.plazasalerno.it); Piazza Vittorio Veneto 42; s/d €65/100; ☎ ☎) The Plaza is convenient and comfortable, a stone’s throw from the train station. Despite the dowdy public areas, it’s a friendly place and the decent-size rooms, complete with gleaming bathrooms, are pretty good value for money. Those round the back have terraces overlooking the city and, beyond, the mountains.

## Eating

Head to Via Roma in the lively medieval centre, where you’ll find everything from traditional, family-run

trattorias and gelaterie to jazzy wine bars, pubs and pricey restaurants.

**Pizza Margherita** (☎ 089 22 88 80; Corso Garibaldi 201; pizzas/buffets from €5/6.50, lunchtime menu €8) It might look like a bland canteen but this is one of Salerno's favourite lunch spots. On any given day, the lavish lunchtime buffet might include mozzarella, mussels in various guises, and a range of salads. The daily lunchtime menu (pasta, main course, salad and half a litre of water) is chalked up on a blackboard, and there's also the regular menu of pizzas, pastas and mains.

**Ristorante Santa Lucia** (☎ 089 22 56 96; Via Roma 182; meals €22; ☒ closed Mon) This is one of the best eateries on trendy Via Roma, good for delicious seafood and bubbling wood-fired pizzas. Expect classic dishes such as *linguine ai frutti di mare* (flat spaghetti with seafood) and chargrilled cuttlefish, both of which are superb. The laid-back atmosphere and friendly service add to the pleasure.

**Pinocchio** (☎ 089 22 99 64; Lungomare Trieste 56; meals €24; ☒ Sat-Thu) Join the locals for heaping plates of no-nonsense regional grub. Seafood is the speciality, but there's also a selection of decent meats, including sausages and *scaloppine* (breaded veal) in a creamy mushroom sauce. In summer, tables are set outside.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

**Metrol del Mare** (☎ 199 600700; [www.metrodelmare.com](http://www.metrodelmare.com)) operates regular ferries to/from Naples (€16, two daily) and to/from Sorrento (€12, seven daily). From April to October **Linee Marittime Partenopee** (☎ 081 704 19 11; [www.consorziolmp.it](http://www.consorziolmp.it)) and **TraVelMar** (☎ 089 87 29 50) runs frequent daily hydrofoils/ferries from Salerno to various resorts and the islands. Approximate prices are to/from Capri (€17.50/16), to/from Positano (€9/8.50, 10 daily) and to/from Amalfi (€7/6.50). Departures are from the Porto Turistico, 200m down the pier from Piazza della Concordia. You can buy tickets from the booths by the embarkation point.

Departures for Capri and Ischia leave from Molo Manfredi at the Porto Commerciale.

Note that at the time of writing, a Zaha Hadid—designed ferry terminal was under construction, so it's a good idea to contact the tourist office for updates and schedules.

### BUS

SITA buses for Amalfi (€2.50, 1¼ hours, at least hourly) depart from Piazza Vittorio Veneto, beside the train station, stopping en route at Vietri sul Mare, Cetara, Maiori and Minori. The Naples service, however, departs from outside **Bar Cioffi** (Corso Garibaldi 134), where you buy your €3.20 ticket.

**CSTP** (☎ 800 016 659; [www.cstp.it](http://www.cstp.it), in Italian) bus 50 runs from Piazza Vittorio Veneto to Pompeii (€2, one hour, 15 daily). For Paestum (€3.10, one hour 20 minutes, hourly) take bus 34 from Piazza della Concordia.

**Buonotourist** (☎ 089 79 50 68; [www.buonotourist.it](http://www.buonotourist.it)) runs daily services (excluding Sunday and public holidays) to Naples' Capodichino airport, departing from the train station. Tickets (€7) can be bought on board; journey time is one hour.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Salerno is on the A3 between Naples and Reggio di Calabria, which is toll-free from Salerno southwards.

## TRAIN

Salerno is a major stop on southbound routes to Calabria and the Ionian and Adriatic coasts. From the station in Piazza Vittorio Veneto there are regular trains to Naples (€6.50, 50 minutes, half-hourly), Rome (Eurostar €33, 2½ hours, hourly), and Reggio di Calabria (€32, 4½ hours, 15 daily).

## Getting Around

Walking is the most sensible option; from the train station it's a 1.2km walk along Corso Vittorio Emanuele II to the historic centre.

If you want to hire a car there's a **Europcar** (☎ 089 258 07 75; [www.europcar.com](http://www.europcar.com); Via Giacinto Vicinanza) agency not far from the train station.

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# SOUTH OF SALERNO

## PAESTUM

Paestum's Unesco-listed temples are among the best-preserved monuments of Magna Graecia, the Greek colony that once covered much of southern Italy. An easy day trip from Salerno or Agropoli, they are one of the region's most iconic sights and absolutely unmissable.

Paestum, or Poseidonia as the city was originally called (in honour of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea), was founded in the 6th century BC by Greek settlers and fell under Roman control in 273 BC. It became an important trading port and remained so until the fall of the Roman Empire, when periodic outbreaks of malaria and savage Saracen raids led its weakened citizens to abandon the town.

Its temples were rediscovered in the late 18th century by road builders – who proceeded to plough their way right through the ruins. However, the road did little to alter the state of the surrounding area, which remained full of malarial swamps, teeming with snakes and scorpions, until well into the 20th century.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0828 81 10 16; [www.infopaestum.it](http://www.infopaestum.it); Via Magna Grecia 887; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-May) has practical information on Paestum and the Costiera Cilentana.

## Sights

### THE RUINS

Tickets to the **ruins** (☎ 0828 81 10 23; admission €4, incl museum €6.50; ☎ 8.45am-7.45pm, last entry 7pm) are sold at the main entry point, near the tourist office, or, in winter, from the museum, where you can also hire an audioguide (€4).

The first temple you encounter on entering from the main entrance is the 6th-century-BC **Tempio di Cerere** (Temple of Ceres). The smallest of the three temples, it served for a time as a Christian church.

Heading south, you pass the **agorà** (piazza), which contained the city's most important monument, a shrine to Poseidon known as the **heroon**. Nearby, a sunken area marks where once a public **swimming pool** stood, part of a larger sports campus.



The grassy rectangular area south of the pool is the **foro** (forum), the heart of the Roman city. Among the partially standing buildings are a vast domestic housing area, an Italic temple, the Bouleuterion (where the Roman senate used to meet) and, further south, the amphitheatre.

The **Tempio di Nettuno** (Temple of Neptune), dating from about 450 BC, is the largest and best preserved of the three temples; only parts of its inside walls and roof are missing. Although originally attributed to Neptune, recent studies have claimed that it was, in fact, dedicated to Apollo.

Next door, the **basilica** (in reality, a temple to the goddess Hera) is Paestum's oldest surviving monument. Dating to the middle of the 6th century BC, and with nine columns across and 18 along the sides, it's a majestic building. Just to its east you can, with a touch of imagination, make out remains of the temple's sacrificial altar.

In its time the city was ringed by an impressive 4.7km of walls, subsequently built and rebuilt by both Lucanians and Romans. The most intact section is south of the ruins themselves.

## MUSEO DI PAESTUM

Just east of the ruins, the **museum** (☎ 0828 81 10 23; admission €4, incl ruins €6.50; 🕒 8.45am-7pm, closed 1st & 3rd Mon of month) houses a collection of much-weathered metopes (bas-relief friezes), including 33 of the original 36 from the **Tempio di Argiva Hera** (Temple of Argive Hera), 9km north of Paestum, of which virtually nothing else remains. The star exhibit is the 5th-century-BC Tomba del Truffatore (Tomb of the Diver), whose depiction of a diver in mid-air reputedly represents the passage of life to death.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Villaggio dei Pini** (☎ 0828 81 10 30; [www.campingvillaggiodeipini.com](http://www.campingvillaggiodeipini.com); Via Torre; camping 2 people, tent & car €28-38, 2-person bungalows per week from €300) One of the many campsites on the coast, this well-equipped ground is about 1km from the ruins. With its volleyball/football pitch, private beach, pizzeria, snack bar and live entertainment, it ticks all the boxes for a lively stay.

**Casale Giancesare** (☎ 0828 72 80 61; [www.casale-giancesare.it](http://www.casale-giancesare.it); Via Giancesare 8; s €45-60, d €65-90; 📞 📺 📺 📺) A converted 19th-century farmhouse, this charming stone-clad B&B is 2.5km from Paestum. Surrounded by vineyards and olive and mulberry trees, the views are stunning, particularly from the swimming pool. Delightful owner Anna works at the tourist office in Agropoli, making her a fount of local information.

**Nonna Scepa** (☎ 0828 85 10 64; Via Laura 53; meals €30) Worth seeking out as an alternative to the mediocre, overpriced on-site restaurants. Dishes are robust, strictly seasonal and, during the summer, concentrate on fresh seafood like the refreshingly simple grilled fish with lemon. The risotto with courgettes and artichokes is equally inspired.

## Getting There & Away

The best way to get to Paestum by public transport is to take **CSTP** (☎ 800 016 659; [www.cstp.it](http://www.cstp.it), in Italian) bus 34 from Piazza della Concordia in Salerno (€3.10, one hour 20 minutes, 12 daily) or, if approaching from the south, the same bus from Agropoli (€1.40, 15 minutes, 12 daily).

If you're driving you could take the A3 from Salerno and exit for the SS18 at Battipaglia. Better, and altogether more pleasant, is the Litoranea, the minor road that hugs the coast. From the A3 take the earlier exit for Pontecagnano and follow the signs for Agropoli and Paestum.

## COSTIERA CILENTANA

Southeast of the Gulf of Salerno, the coastal plains begin to give way to wilder, jagged cliffs and unspoilt scenery, a taste of what lies further on in the stark hills of Basilicata and the wooded peaks of Calabria. Inland, dark mountains loom over the remote highlands of the Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano, one of Campania's best-kept secrets.

CSTP buses leave Salerno for Sapri, on the regional boundary between Campania and Basilicata.

Several destinations on the Cilento coast are served by the main rail route from Naples to Reggio di Calabria. Check the **Trenitalia website** ([www.trenitalia.it](http://www.trenitalia.it)) for fares and information. For Palinuro, the nearest train station is Pisciotta, from where there is regular bus service to the resort.

By car take the SS18, which connects Agropoli with Velia via the inland route, or the SS267, which hugs the coast.

### Agropoli

**pop 20,678**

The main town on the southern stretch of the coast, Agropoli makes a good base for Paestum and the beaches to the northwest. Popular with holidaying Italians, it's an otherwise tranquil place with a ramshackle medieval core on a promontory overlooking the sea.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0974 82 74 71; Viale Europa 34; ☎ 9.30am-2pm) can provide you with a city map.

Agropoli's friendly hostel, **Ostello La Lanterna** (☎ /fax 0974 83 83 64; [lanterna@cilento.it](mailto:lanterna@cilento.it); Via Lanterna 8; dm €14-15, d without bathroom €30, d with bathroom €35-40, f €60-65; ☎ mid-Mar—Oct) has dorms, doubles and four-bed family rooms, as well as a garden and optional evening meals (€10). The beach is a two-minute walk away.

Across from Agropoli's sweeping sandy beach, **Anna** (☎ 0974 82 37 63; [www.bbanna.it](http://www.bbanna.it); Via S Marco 28-30, Agropoli; s €35-50, d €50-70; ☎ ☎) has bright, cheerful rooms with white walls, smart striped fabrics, and balconies; request a sea view. Sunbeds and bicycles are available for a minimal price, and the downstairs restaurant (pizzas from €3, meals €15) is a hit with locals.

In a 17th-century building on the headland, **U'Sghiz** (☎ 0974 82 93 31; Piazza Umberto I; pizzas from €3, meals €15) specialises in seafood dishes like *spaghetti a vongole* (with mussels), and also has an extensive pizza menu. We suggest you ditch the quarter carafe of house red wine (€2) for one of the marginally more expensive drops.

### Velia

On the coast 75km south of Salerno, the Greek settlement of Elea (now Velia), was founded in the 6th century BC and later became a popular resort for wealthy Romans. The **ruins** (☎ 0974 97 23 96; Contrada Piana di Velia; admission €2; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset Mon-Sat), topped by a tower visible for miles around, are not in great nick but merit a quick look if you're passing through.

### South to Sapri

Continuing southwards, the road climbs, dips and curves its way through silent green hills peppered with medieval villages. Down below, crystal waters fringe long sandy beaches.

Some 12km southeast of Ascea, **Pisciotta** is an attractive village clinging to the mountainside. Here, amid orchards of olive and fruit trees, **Agriturismo San Carlo** (☎ /fax 0974 97 61 77; Via Noce 8; r per person with half-board €40-50, with full board €45-55) has lovely rustic rooms and beautiful home-made olive oil, wine and *limoncello*.

Another 25km or so further on, **Palinuro** is named after Palinurus, Aeneas' pilot, who was killed there after falling off his ship under the influence of a sleeping curse. A vibrant town, it has striking sandy beaches and some unforgettable coastal scenery, particularly around Capo Palinuro.

A little further still, where the road turns steeply inland to pass through San Giovanni a Piro, is **Marina di Camerota**, which has a small medieval centre. From there it's another 25km to Sapri, an uninspiring resort near the border with Basilicata.

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## PARCO NAZIONALE DEL CILENTO E VALLO DI DIANO

Stretching from the coast up to Campania's highest peak, Monte Cervati (1898m), and beyond to the regional border with Basilicata, the Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano is Italy's second-largest national park. A little-explored area of barren heights and empty valleys, it's the perfect antidote to the holiday mayhem on the coast. To get the best out of it, you will, however, need a car – either that or unlimited patience and a masterful grasp of local bus timetables.

For further information stop by the tourist office in **Paestum**. For guided hiking opportunities, contact **Gruppo Escursionistico Trekking** (☎ 0975 725 86; [www.getvallo didiano.it](http://www.getvallo didiano.it); Via Provinciale 29, Sassano) or **Associazione Trekking Cilento** (☎ 0974 84 33 45; [www.trekkingcilento.it](http://www.trekkingcilento.it), in Italian; Via Cannetiello 6, Agropoli).

About 25km northeast of Paestum, the WWF **Oasi Naturalistica di Persano** (☎ 0828 97 46 84; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed, Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-3pm Wed, Sat & Sun Oct-May) covers 110 hectares of wetlands on the river Sele. A favourite of ornithologists, it's home to a wide variety of birds, both resident and seasonal. Signs direct you there from the SS18. Visits should be booked a day in advance. Guided tours should be booked three days in advance.

There are also two cave systems worth exploring. Located about 20km northeast of Paestum, the **Grotte di Castelcivita** (☎ 0828 77 23 97; Castelcivita; admission €8; ☎ tours 10am, 11am, noon, 1.30pm, 2.30pm, 3.30pm, 4.30pm, 5.30pm & 6.30pm mid-Mar—Sep, 10am, 11.30am, 1.30pm, 3pm & 4.30pm Oct—mid-Mar) complex is where Spartacus is said to have taken refuge following his slave rebellion in 71 BC. There are longer three-hour tours (€20) between May and September, when the water deep within the cave complex has dried up. Hard hats and a certain level of fitness and mobility are required.

There is a **De Rosa** (☎ 0828 94 10 65) bus that departs from Capaccio (6km east of Paestum) at 9.20am and returns at 1.25pm and 5.25pm, Monday to Saturday. By car take the SS18 from Paestum towards Salerno and follow the signs.

On the eastern edge of the park, the **Grotte dell'Angelo Pertosa** (☎ 0975 39 70 37; [www.grottedipertosa.it](http://www.grottedipertosa.it); Pertosa; tours €10; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Feb) is a 2.5km-long system bristling with stalactites and stalagmites. Although SITA buses from Salerno to Pertosa (€4.40) run Monday to Saturday, their inconvenient running times make the possibility of a day trip redundant. By car take the A3 southbound from Salerno, exit at Petina and follow the SS19 for 9km.

Continuing south on the A3 autostrada, **Padula** harbours one of the region's hidden jewels, the

magnificent **Certosa di San Lorenzo** (☎ 0975 7 77 45; Padula; admission €4; 📧 9am-7.30pm). Also known as the Certosa di Padula, this is one of Europe's biggest monasteries, with a huge central courtyard, wood-panelled library and sumptuously frescoed chapels. Begun in the 14th century and modified over time, it was abandoned in the 19th century, then suffered further degradation as a children's holiday home and later a concentration camp.

**Lamanna** (☎ 0975 52 04 26) buses run frequently from Salerno to Padula.

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# Puglia, Basilicata & Calabria

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## PUGLIA

PROMONTORIO DEL GARGANO

ISOLE TREMITI

FOGGIA

LUCERA

TRANI

AROUND TRANI

BARI

AROUND BARI

MURGIA PLATEAU & TRULLI COUNTRY

BRINDISI

LECCE

PENISOLA SALENTINA

OTRANTO

AROUND OTRANTO

GALLIPOLI

TARANTO

## BASILICATA

IONIAN COAST

MATERA

VENOSA

POTENZA

TYRRHENIAN COAST

PARCO NAZIONALE DEL POLLINO

## CALABRIA

PARCO NAZIONALE DEL POLLINO

NORTHERN TYRRHENIAN COAST

COSENZA

LA SILA

IONIAN COAST

CATANZARO

ASPROMONTE

Italy's south is out on a limb; this is the heel of Italy, a hotter, edgier place than the urbane, sophisticated and, dare we suggest, mildly smug north. But the traditional north—south divide is starting to blur. Tuscany in the '80s, Umbria in the '90s...many of today's trend-spotters feel the south and, in particular, Puglia, is the new darling of travellers in the know and holiday-home Brits.

This is not yet another *dolce vita* region that can be glibly described with a few apt superlatives. There are plenty of reminders of unrelenting poverty and plenty to regret –such as the stark urban sprawl of Brindisi and the industrial development around Potenza and Taranto.

The flip side is a rich and varied portfolio of plains in the south, mountains in the north and a dramatic and varied coastline. The people are similarly diverse, although share a fierce local pride, reflecting Greek, Spanish and Turkish influences in their culture and cuisine.

Basilicata is a crush of mountains and rolling hills with a dazzling stretch of coastline. Calabria is Italy's wildest area with fine beaches, subtropical vegetation and a mountainous landscape with peaks frequently crowned by ruined castles. Puglia's charms include 800km of coastline beneath limestone cliffs, interspersed with thick forests and olive groves.

This is an area that still feels like it has secret places to explore, although you will need your own wheels (and some Italian) if you plan to seriously sidestep from the beaten track.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Dip into the Disney-style scenario of the gnome-size *trulli* dwellings in **Alberobello**, Puglia
- Wonder at ornate baroque facades in **Lecce**
- Immerse yourself in nature exploring the verdant **Promontorio del Gargano**
- Discover one of Calabria's most characterful old centres in seaside **Tropea**
- Vanish into the vast hills of **La Sila** in Calabria, and the **Parco Nazionale del Pollino** in both **Basilicata** and **Calabria**
- Drive or trek into the wilds of mysterious **Aspromonte**
- Explore the otherworldly *sassi* (former cave dwellings) of **Matera** in Basilicata



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POPULATION: PUGLIA 4.07 MILLION; BASILICATA 596,500; CALABRIA 2.01 MILLION

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AREA: PUGLIA 19,348 SQ KM; BASILICATA 9992 SQ KM; CALABRIA 15,080 SQ KM

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[Return to beginning of chapter](#)

## PUGLIA

Puglia is sun-bleached landscapes, seascapes and silver olive groves; hilltop and coastal towns; factories and power stations; *tarantella* (mesmerising local folk music); fields stippled with a dazzle of spring flowers; cigarette-and-people-smuggling; elderly men on benches; elderly women mopping their front step; plenty of bicycles; summer carnivals; immigrants arriving by boat; and dialects that change from town to town.

Italy's heel has the country's longest coastline. Two seas meet here: the Adriatic to the east and the Ionian to the south. It's legendary for its food, in a land where the cuisine is all-important: olive oil, grapes tomatoes, aubergines, artichokes, peppers, salami, fungi, olives and fresh seafood strain its table. The region looks out to sea and bears the marks of many invading overseas visitors: the Normans, the Spanish, the Turks, the Swabians and the Greeks. Puglia feels authentic – in some places it's rare to hear a foreign voice. In July and August it becomes a huge party, with thousands of Italian tourists heading down here for their annual break.

They're here to bask on some of Italy's loveliest coastline, from the dramatic Promontorio del Gargano to the white-sand beaches of the Penisola Salentina. Geologically speaking the region resembles Croatia – the land mass to which it was once joined – rather than the rest of Italy. The coast alternates between glittering limestone precipices and long beaches edged by waters veering between emerald-green and dusky powder blue.

There are festivals here throughout the year, but fabulous events, concerts (often *tarantella*), and *sagre* (festivals, usually involving food) take place virtually every night in July and August. Check the [www.quisalento.it](http://www.quisalento.it) website for a schedule.

# History

At times Puglia feels Greek – and for good reason. This tangible legacy dates from when the Greeks founded a string of settlements along the Ionian coast in the 8th century BC. A form of Greek dialect (Griko) is still spoken in some towns southeast of Lecce. Historically, their major city was Taras (Taranto), settled by Spartan exiles who dominated until they were defeated by the Romans in 272 BC.

The long coastline made the region vulnerable to conquest. The Normans left their fine Romanesque churches, the Swabians their fortifications, and the Spanish their flamboyant baroque buildings. No one, however, knows exactly the origins of the extraordinary 16th-century, conical-roofed stone houses, the *trulli*, unique to Puglia.

Apart from invaders and pirates, malaria was long the greatest scourge of the south, forcing many towns to build away from the coast and into the hills. After Mussolini's seizure of power in 1922 following WWI, the south became the frontline in his 'Battle for Wheat'. This initiative was aimed at making Italy self-sufficient when it came to food, following the sanctions imposed on the country after its conquest of Ethiopia – Puglia is now covered in wheat fields, olive groves and fruit arbours.

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## PROMONTORIO DEL GARGANO

The coast surrounding the promontory seems permanently bathed in a pink-hued, pearly light, providing a painterly contrast to the sea which softens from intense to powder blue as the evening draws in. It's one of Italy's most beautiful areas, encompassing white limestone cliffs, fairy-tale grottoes, sparkling sea, ancient forests, and tangled, fragrant maquis. Once connected to what is now Dalmatia, the 'spur' of the Italian boot has more in common with the land mass across the sea than with the rest of Italy. Creeping urbanisation was halted in 1991 by the creation of the **Parco Nazionale del Gargano**. Aside from its magnificent display of flora and the primeval forests of Quarto, Spigno and Umbra, the park takes in miracle town San Giovanni Rotonda ([Click here](#)) and the historic pilgrimage destination of Monte Sant'Angelo. Seaside towns Vieste and Peschici are popular summer destinations.

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## OUR TOP FIVE CENTRO STORICOS (HISTORIC CENTRES) IN PUGLIA

- [Locorotondo](#)
  - [Martina Franca](#)
  - [Ostuni](#)
  - [Vieste](#)
  - [Lecce](#)
- 
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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

italy's authentic south

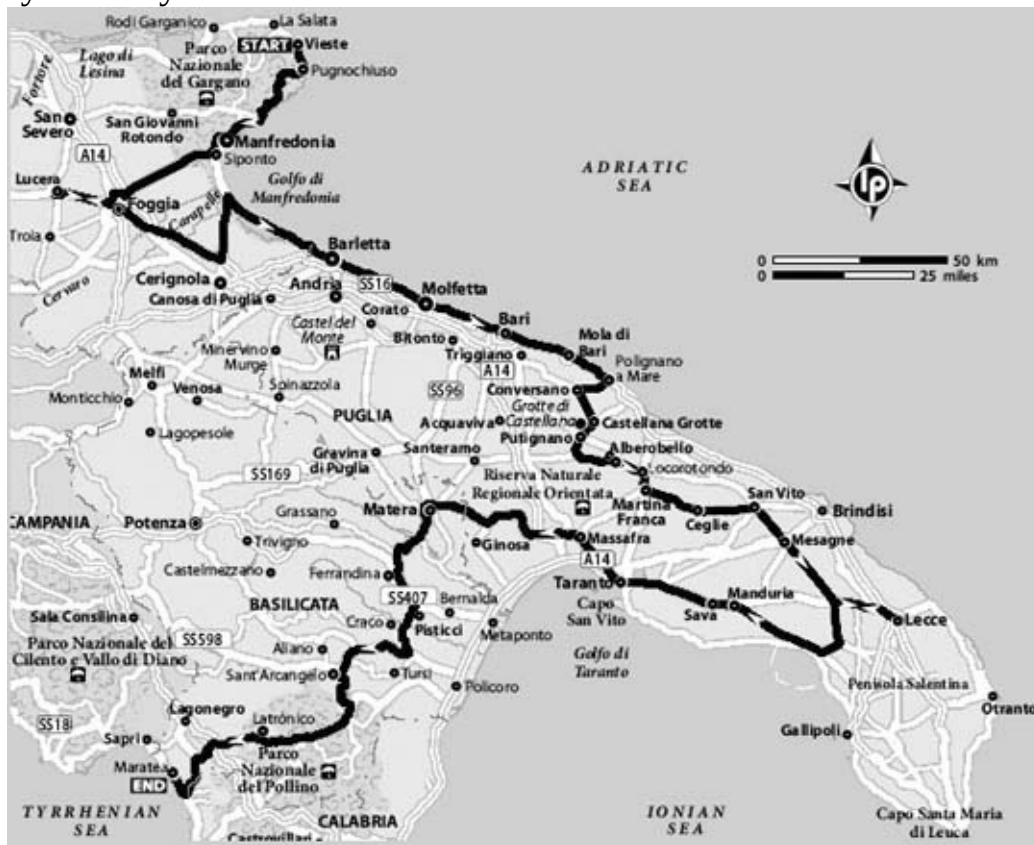
One Week / Vieste / Maratea



Consider a gentle start in lovely, laid-back **Vieste** with its white sandy beaches, medieval backstreets and lush back garden of the **Parco Nazionale del Gargano** (opposite). Continue to ease into the southern-Italian lifestyle with a next-day stop at **Lucera** a honey-coloured town of *palazzi* (mansions), churches, chic shops and a general air of contentment, especially evident during the evening *passeggiata* (stroll). Next day it's *trulli* (circular stone-built houses) time with a visit to one of the most unusual urban landscapes in Italy. En route dip into pretty **Polignano a Mare** with its dramatic location above the pounding surf. After a midday snack at **Boca Chica**, make the short hop inland to **Alberobello**, home to a dense neighbourhood of these extraordinary cone-shaped homes. Shake your head in wonder and consider an overnight *trulli* stay.

Stroll or (bike ride) around one of the most picturesque *centro storico*'s in southern Italy at **Locorotondo**. Hit the road and cruise on to a delightful gem of a city: **Lecce** where you can easily chalk up a full day exploring the sights, the shops and the flamboyantly fronted *palazzi* and churches, including the **Basilica di Santa Croce** cherry on the (wedding) cake.

Day five will be one to remember. Nothing can prepare you for Basilicata's **Matera** where the *sassi* (former cave dwellings) are a dramatic, albeit harrowing, reminder of the town's poverty-stricken past. After days of pasta, *fave* beans and *cornetti* (Italian croissants), it's high time you laced up those hiking boots and checked out the trails and activities on offer in the spectacular **Parco Nazionale del Pollino**. Finally, wind up the trip and soothe those aching muscles with a dip in the sea at postcard-pretty **Maratea** with its surrounding seaside resorts, medieval village and cosmopolitan harbour offset by a thickly forested and mountainous interior.



Along the coast you'll spot strange cat's-cradle wood-and-rope arrangements. These are *trabucchi*, structures built by fishermen from where they cast their nets, and are unique to the area.

The main park office, **Ente Parco Nazionale del Gargano** (☎ 0884 56 89 11; [www.parcogargano.it](http://www.parcogargano.it), in Italian; Via Abate 121; 📧 9am-noon Mon-Fri, 3.45-6.30pm Mon-Wed), is in Monte Sant'Angelo, on the edge of town. On its website is a long list of official park guides.

Walks and excursions are organised by **Soc Cooperative Ecogargano** (☎ 0884 56 54 44) based in

Monte Sant'Angelo, and **Explora Gargano** (☎ 0884 70 22 37; [www.exploragargano.it](http://www.exploragargano.it)) in Vieste, which runs jeep, quad-bike, mountain-bike and walking tours.

## Foresta Umbra

The 'Forest of Shadows' is the Gargano's enchanted interior – thickets of tall, epic trees, interspersed with picnic spots that are bathed in dappled light. It's the last remnant of Puglia's ancient forests: Aleppo pines, oaks, yews and beech trees shade the mountainous terrain. More than 65 different types of orchid have been discovered here while the wildlife includes roe deer, wild boar, foxes, badgers and the increasingly rare wild cat. Walkers and mountain bikers will find plenty of well-marked trails within the forest's 5790 sq km.

There is a small *centro visitatori* (visitors centre) in the middle of the forest that houses a **museum and nature centre** (☎ 0884 8 80 55; [www.ecogargano.it](http://www.ecogargano.it); €1.60; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep) with fossils, photographs and stuffed animals and birds. Half-day guided hikes can be organised from around €10 per person and walking maps are available (€2.50).

Specialist tour operators also organise excursions. From Vieste, **Agenzia Sol** (☎ 0884 70 15 58; [www.solvieste.it](http://www.solvieste.it); Via Trepiccioni 5) runs trekking, biking and jeep excursions in the Foresta Umbra, and boat trips around Vieste and to the Isole Tremiti.

**La Chiusa delle More** (☎ 330 543766; [www.lachusadellemore.it](http://www.lachusadellemore.it); Vallo dello Schiaffo; B&B per person €80-100; ☎ May-Aug; 📍 📞 📧) offers an escape from the cramped coast. An attractive stone-built *agriturismo* (farm-stay), only 1.5km from Peschici, it's set in a huge olive grove, and you can dine on home-grown produce, borrow mountain bikes and enjoy panoramic views from your poolside lounge. Note there is a three-night minimum stay.

## Peschici

pop 4300

Perched above a turquoise sea and tempting beach, Peschici clings to the hilly, wooded coastline. It's a pretty resort area, with a tight-knit old walled town of Arabesque whitewashed houses. The small town gets crammed in summer, so book in advance. Boats zip across to the Isole Tremiti in high season.

## ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The medieval town occupies the clifftop, while the newer parts extend inland and around the bay. The bus terminal is beside the sportsground, uphill from the main street, Corso Garibaldi. Turn right into the *corso* (main street) and walk straight to reach the old town.

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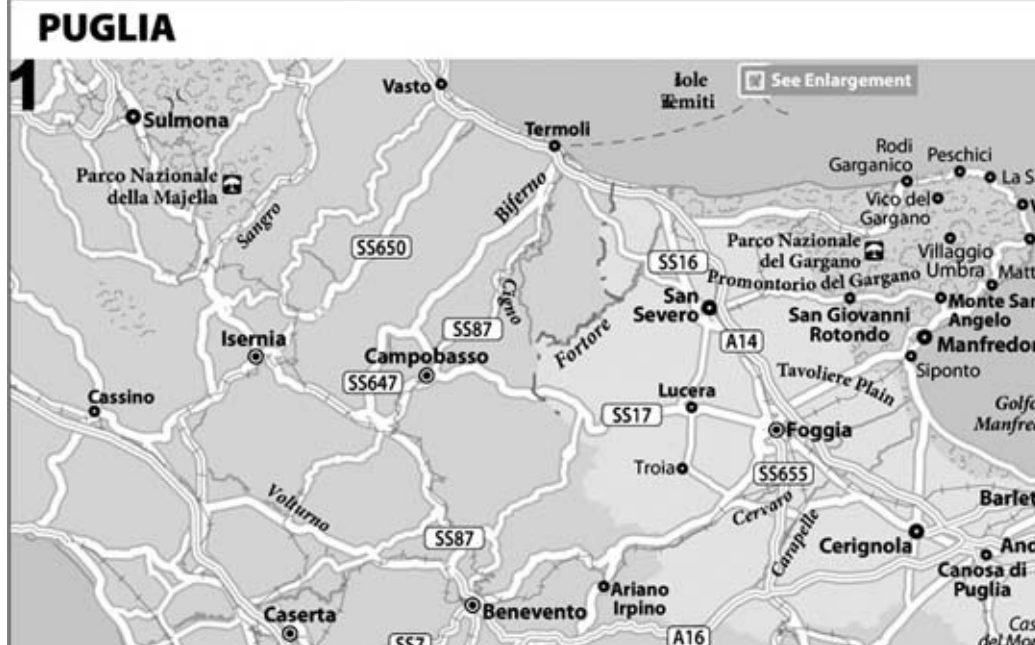
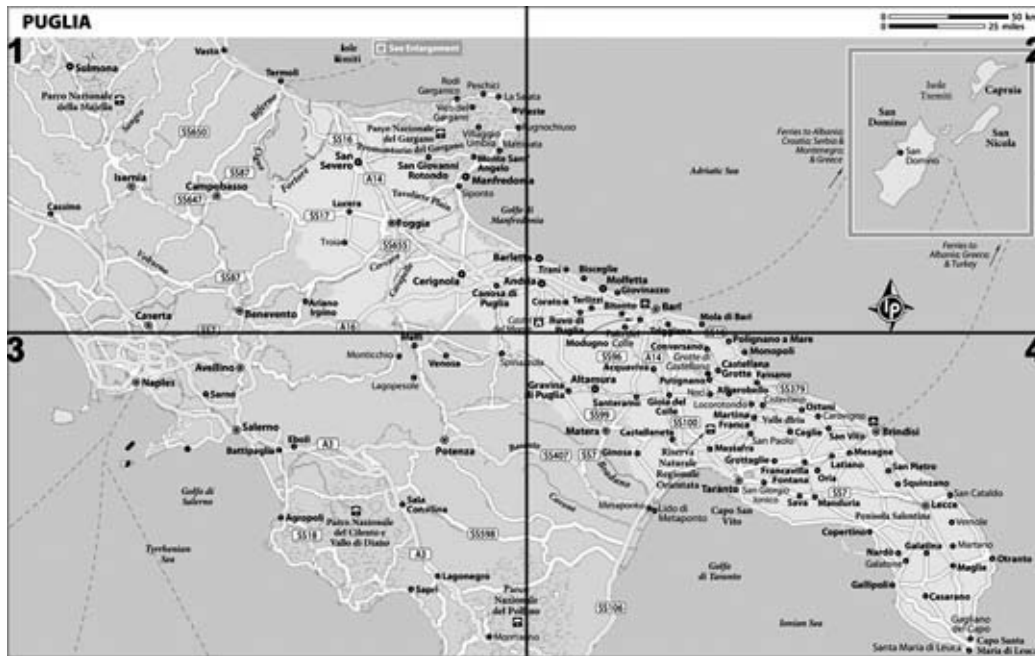
## CAMPING IN STYLE

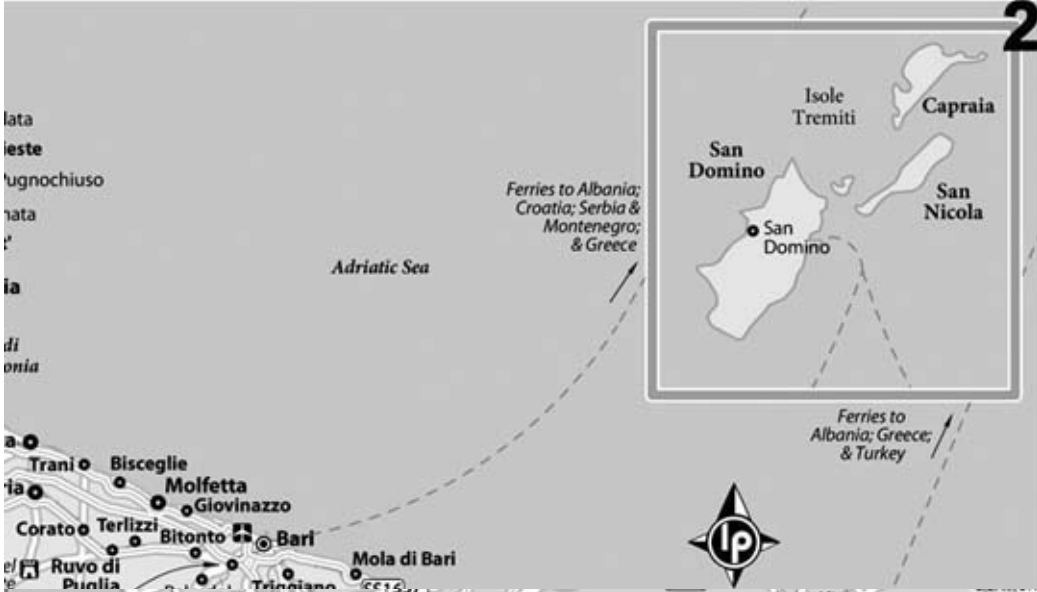
If your experience of camping is the boy-scout version of flapping tents, freezing nights and eating cold baked beans out of a tin, you will be delighted at the five-star quality of the typical campsites in this southern region of Italy. They are also prolific, particularly in an around the national parks. In the Gargano region alone there are an astonishing 100 campsites, compared to the relatively modest number of *pensioni* and hotels. If you don't fancy sleeping under canvas (or need a plug for those heated rollers) then consider a bungalow rental.

Virtually all these camping *villaggios* (villages) include well-furnished and equipped bungalows which means you can really economise on eating out, as well as having the advantages of the campsite

facilities, which often include tennis courts, swimming pool, a childrens' playground and small supermarket. Bungalows (normally only available for weeklong rentals) start from around €250 for a two-person bungalow or mobile-home rental. Traditional under-canvas campers can expect to pay a daily rate of approximately €18, including the site, tent and car parking space.

Check the following websites for more information and camping listings: [www.camping.it](http://www.camping.it); [www.camping-italy.net](http://www.camping-italy.net) and [www.caravanandcampsites.eu](http://www.caravanandcampsites.eu).





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Modugno  
Colle  
Conversano  
Grotte di Castellana  
Altamura  
Acquaviva  
Gravina di Puglia  
Santeramo  
Ginosa  
Matera  
Castellaneta  
Riserva Naturale Regionale Orientata  
Metaponto  
Lido di Metaponto  
Capo San Vito  
Gallipoli  
Casarano  
Gagliano del Capo  
Capo Santa Maria di Leuca

# PUGLIA ON YOUR PLATE

Puglia is home to Italy's most uncorrupted, brawniest, least known vernacular cuisines. It has evolved from *cucina povera* – literally 'cooking of the poor' or peasant cooking: think of pasta made without eggs and dishes prepared with wild greens gathered from the fields.

Most of Italy's fish is caught off the Puglian coast, 80% of Europe's pasta is produced here and 80% of Italy's olive oil originates in Puglia and Calabria. Tomatoes, broccoli, chicory, fennel, figs, melons, cherries and grapes are all plentiful in season and taste better than anywhere else. Almonds, grown near Ruvo di Puglia, are packed into many traditional cakes and pastries, which used to be eaten only by the privileged.

Like their Greek forbears, the Pugliese eat *agnello* (lamb) and *capretto* (kid). *Cavallo* (horse) has only recently galloped to the table while *trippa* (tripe) is another mainstay. Meat is usually roasted or grilled with aromatic herbs or served in tomato-based sauces.

Raw fish (such as anchovies or baby squid) are marinated in olive oil and lemon juice. *Cozze* (mussels) are prepared in multitudinous ways, with garlic and breadcrumbs, or as *riso cozze patata*, baked with rice and potatoes – every area has its variations on this dish.

Bread and pasta are close to the Pugliese heart, with per capita consumption at least double that of the USA. You'll find *orecchiette* (small ear-shaped pasta, often accompanied by a small rod-shaped variety, called *strascinati* or *cavatelli*), served with broccoli or *ragù* (meat sauce), generally topped by the pungent local cheese *ricotta forte*.

Previously known for quantity rather than quality, Pugliese wines are now developing apace. The best are produced on the Penisola Salentina (the Salice Salentino is one of the finest reds), in the *trulli* (conical houses) area around Locorotondo (famous for its white wine), around Cisternino (home of the fashionable heavy red Primitivo) and in the plains around Foggia and Lucera.

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There's a small **tourist office** (☎ 0884 96 44 25; Corso Garibaldi 57; 🕒 10.30am-12.30pm & 5.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-12.30pm Sat).

## SLEEPING & EATING

Peschici has several hotels and *pensioni*, and camp sites line the coast.

**Baia San Nicola** (☎ 0884 96 42 31; [www.baiasannicola.it](http://www.baiasannicola.it); camping 2 people, car & tent €27.50, 2-person bungalow per week €270-32; 🕒 mid-May—mid-Oct) The best camp site in the area, 2km south of Peschici towards Vieste, Baia San Nicola is on a pine-shaded beach, and offers camping, bungalows, apartments and myriad amenities.

**Locanda al Castello** (☎ 0884 96 40 38; Via Castello 29; s €35-70, d €75-100; 🍷 🍴) Staying here is like entering a large, welcoming family home. By the cliffs, with fantastic views, it's definitely the pick of the old quarter. Enjoy hearty home cooking in the restaurant (meals €18).

**Hotel Timiana** (☎ /fax 0884 96 43 21; Viale Libeta 73; r per person €80-90; 🕒 May—mid-Sep; 🍷 🍴 📺) Surrounded by well-manicured grounds 800m from the sea, small-scale Timiana is an elegant shuttered building with cool white rooms. It serves delicious traditional dishes. Free shuttle to the beach.

**La Collinetta** (☎ 0884 96 41 51; Madonna di Loreto; meals €25; 🕒 Apr-Sep; 🍷) Located 2.5km before Peschici on the coastal road from Vieste. This is a classy restaurant serving fresh fish, with a sunny terrace overlooking the pine trees, olive groves and azure coast.

Also recommended is midrange **Il Villaggio** (☎ 0884 70 61 38; [www.holidayvillagevieste.it](http://www.holidayvillagevieste.it); Loc Baia di Sfinale; 🕒 Apr-Sep), around 4km outside Peschici. It's situated on a beautiful sweep of beach and

offers campsites, bungalows and mobile homes.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**Ferrovie del Gargano** (☎ 0881 58 72 11; [www.ferroviedelgargano.com](http://www.ferroviedelgargano.com), in Italian) buses run between Peschici and Vieste (€1.30, 35 minutes, 11 daily). From April to September, daily boats serve the Isole Tremiti (adult/12 to 25 years/under 12 years €30/20/free, one to 1½ hours). For boat tickets and information, try the following:

**MS&G Società di Navigazione** (☎ 0884 96 27 32; [www.msgnavigazioni.it](http://www.msgnavigazioni.it); Corso Umberto I 20)  
**Navigare SRL** (☎ 0884 96 42 34; Corso Umberto I)

## Lago di Lesina & Lago di Varano

Huge lagoons run along the Adriatic coast north of Peschici. An 800m-wide dune separates the 20km-long Lago di Lesina from the sea, while Lago di Varano is 10km long and even more isolated. Excellent for bird watching, biking trails and walks; the **Lesina Visitor Centre** (☎ 0882 99 27 27; Via Banchina Vollaro; ☎ 9-1.30pm & 4-8pm) has more information.

## Vieste

**pop 13,600**

Vieste is a small, steep, cobbled town, with a delightful *centro storico*, spilling down the hillside. It's the Gargano capital and sits above the area's most spectacular beach, a gleaming wide strip backed by sheer white cliffs and overshadowed by the towering rock monolith, Scoglio di Pizzomunno. It's packed in summer and ghostly quiet in winter.

## ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

From Piazzale Manzoni, where intercity buses terminate, a 10-minute walk east along Viale XXIV Maggio, which becomes Corso Fazzini, brings you into the old town and the Marina Piccola's attractive promenade.

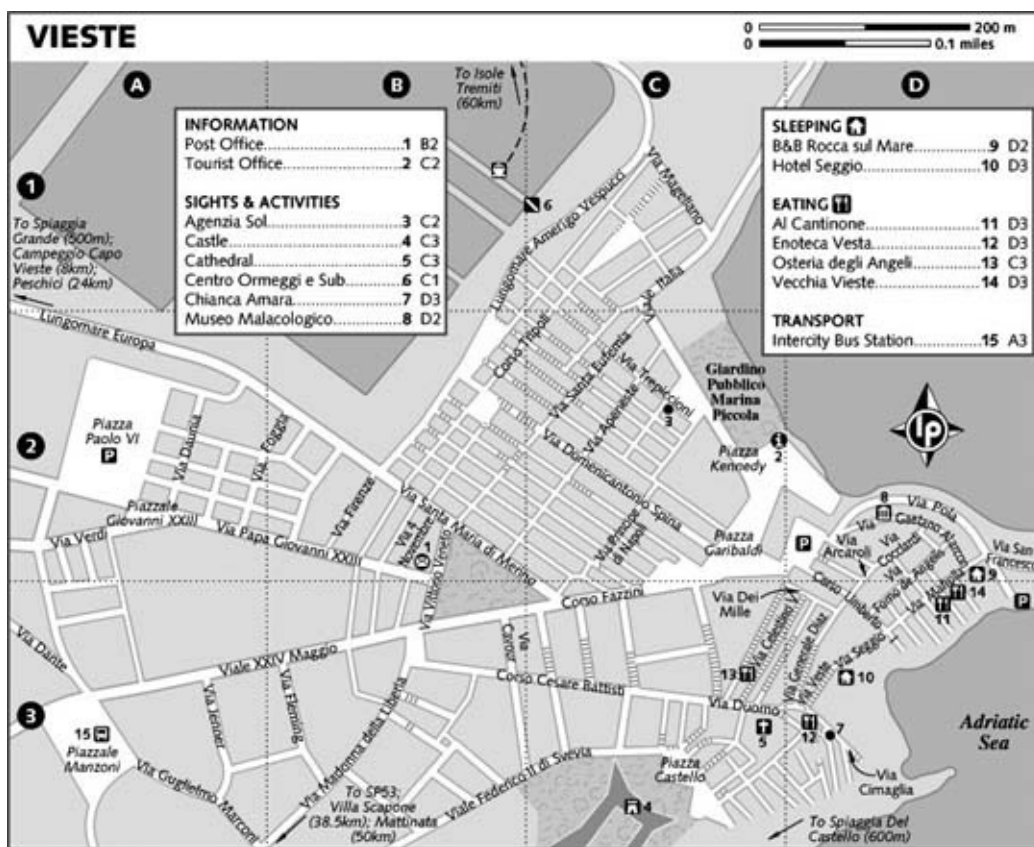
**Post office** (Via 4 Novembre 1)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0884 70 88 06; Piazza Kennedy; ☎ 8am-1.30pm Mon-Fri & 4-7pm Tue-Thu Oct-Apr, 8am-1.30pm & 3-9pm Mon-Sat May-Sep)

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Vieste is about beaches, eating and drinking; for the latter head for Via Pola's seafront bars and clubs. The most gruesome of the handful of sights here is the **Chianca Amara** (Bitter Stone; Via Cimaglia), where thousands were beheaded when Turks sacked Vieste in the 16th century. Nearby is a **castle** built by Frederick II. It's occupied by the military and closed to the public. Built by the Normans on the ruins of a Vesta temple, the **cathedral** (Via Duomo) is in Puglian-Romanesque style with a fanciful tower that resembles a cardinal's hat. It was rebuilt in 1800.

The **Museo Malacologico** (☎ 0884 70 76 88; Via Pola 8; admission free; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 4-7pm) has three rooms of fossils and molluscs (shells), some enormous and all beautifully patterned and coloured. Prices start at a reasonable €3.



At the port, **Centro Ormeggi e Sub** (☎ 0884 70 79 83; 📧 May-Sep) offers diving courses and rents out sailing boats and motorboats. You can also visit nearby grottos with **Leonarda Motobarche** (☎ 0884 70 13 17; [www.motobarcheleonarda.it](http://www.motobarcheleonarda.it); per person €13; 📧 Apr-Sep)

From May to September fast boats zoom to the [Isole Tremiti](#).

Superb sandy beaches surround the town: in the south, Spiaggia del Castello, Cala San Felice and Cala Sanguinaria, and due north head for the area known as La Salata.

Take a beach break and go walking or cycling with **Agenzia Sol** (☎ 0884 70 15 58; [www.solvieste.it](http://www.solvieste.it); Via Trepiccioni 5) in the Foresta Umbra.

## SLEEPING

Most of Vieste's hotels and *pensioni* are scattered along the beachfront roads north and south of town. Camp sites line the coast.

**Campeggio Capo Vieste** (☎ 0884 70 63 26; Litoranea Vieste-Peschici Km8; camping 2 people, car & tent €33; 📧 Mar-Oct) This wood-shaded camp site is right by a sandy beach at La Salata, around 8km from Vieste and accessible by bus. Activities include tennis and a sailing school.

**B&B Rocca sul Mare** (☎ 0884 70 27 19; [www.roccasulmare.it](http://www.roccasulmare.it); Via Mafrolla 32; r incl breakfast €50-120) In a former convent in the old quarter, this place has charm, with large, plain, high-ceilinged rooms, some busy tilework and steep staircases. Some rooms open onto the original cloisters and there's a vast rooftop terrace with panoramic views. Meals available.

**Villa Scapone** (☎ 0884 55 92 84; [www.villascapone.it](http://www.villascapone.it); Litoranea Mattinata—Vieste Km11.5; r €55-110; 📧 Apr-Oct; 🅓 🅔 🅕) An attractive villa fantastically sited on the cliffs between Mattinata and Vieste. The hotel terraces, sun decks and elegant rooms all share stunning sea views. A secluded sliver of beach and sea can be reached through the rocks.

**Hotel Seggio** (☎ 0884 70 81 23; [www.hotelseggio.it](http://www.hotelseggio.it); Via Veste 7; d €80-150; 📧 Apr-Oct; 🅓 🅔 🅕) A

butter-coloured *palazzo* (mansion) in the town's historic centre with steps that spiral down to a pool and sunbathing terrace with the backdrop of the sea. The rooms are modern and plain but it's family-run and has a warm Italian feel.

## EATING

**Vecchia Vieste** (☎ 0884 70 70 83; Via Mafrolla 32; meals €20; 🗓 Mar-Oct) A cosy stone-vaulted interior equals a cosy setting for dining on reliably good local dishes like *orecchiette*, *cozze e rucola* ('little ears' pasta with mussels and rocket).

**Osteria degli Angeli** (☎ 0884 70 11 12; Via Celestino V 50; meals €20; 🗓 late May-Sep) Tucked away on an arched alley near the cathedral is this friendly restaurant offering great cooking in a stone-vaulted interior. Try the *troccoli dell'angeli* (pasta with prawns) or *parmigiana di melanzane* (baked aubergine with mozzarella).

**our pick Al Cantinone** (☎ 0884 70 77 53; Via Mafrolla 26; meals €20) Run by a charming Italian-Spanish couple who have a passion for cooking; the food is exceptional and exquisitely presented. Try the asparagus risotto or *penne* with *fave* beans, potatoes and *pecorino* cheese. Out of the approximate 100 restaurants in town, this is one of the 15 or so that stays open all year – hooray!

**Enoteca Vesta** (☎ 0884 70 64 11; Via Duomo 14; meals €25) Housed in a cool, vaulted cave, you can savour a magnificent selection of Puglian wines here to accompany innovative dishes like fried stuffed anchovies with cheese and eggs and baked grey mullet with wild fennel.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

Vieste's port is to the north, about a five-minute walk from the tourist office. In summer several companies, including **Navigazione Libera del Golfo** (☎ 0884 70 74 89; [www.navlib.it](http://www.navlib.it)), head to the Isole Tremiti. Tickets can be bought portside and there are several daily boats (€16.50, 1½ hours).

Several companies also offer tours of the caves which pock the Gargano coast – a three-hour tour costs around €13.

**SITA** (☎ 0881 35 20 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) buses run between Vieste and Foggia (€5.70, 2¾ hours, four daily) via Manfredonia, and between Vieste and Monte Sant'Angelo (€4.40), while **Ferrovie del Gargano** (☎ 0881 58 72 11; [www.ferroviedelgargano.com](http://www.ferroviedelgargano.com), in Italian) services go to Peschici (€1.30, 35 minutes, 11 daily).

Agenzia Sol (see left) also sells bus and boat tickets.

## Monte Sant'Angelo

**pop 13,800 / elev 796m**

One of Europe's most important pilgrimage sites, this isolated mountain-top has an extraordinary atmosphere. Pilgrims have been coming here for centuries – so have the hustlers, pushing everything from religious kitsch to parking spaces.

The object of devotion is the Santuario di San Michele. Here, in AD 490, St Michael the Archangel is said to have appeared in a grotto to the Bishop of Siponto. He left behind his scarlet cloak and instructions not to consecrate the site as he had already done so.

During the Middle Ages, the sanctuary marked the end of the Route of the Angel, which began in Normandy and passed through Rome. In 999 the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III made a pilgrimage to the sanctuary to pray that prophecies about the end of the world in the year 1000 would not be fulfilled. His



prayers were answered, the world staggered on and the sanctuary's fame grew – possibly globally these days – at least judging from the surprising number of wi-fi hot spots around town.

## SIGHTS

Look out for 17th-century pilgrims' graffiti as you descend the steps to the **Santuario di San Michele** (admission free; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Jul-Sep, 7.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Apr-Jun & Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar). St Michael is said to have left a footprint in stone inside the grotto, so it became customary for pilgrims to carve outlines of their feet and hands.

Etched Byzantine bronze and silver doors, cast in Constantinople in 1076, open into the grotto itself. Inside, a 16th-century statue of the archangel covers the site of St Michael's footprint.

Once outside, descend the short flight of steps opposite the sanctuary to the **Tomba di Rotari** (admission €0.60; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Apr-Oct) – not a tomb, but a 12th-century baptistry with a deep sunken basin for total immersion. You enter the baptistry through the facade of the **Chiesa di San Pietro**, with its intricate rose window squirming with serpents – all that remains of the church, destroyed by a 19th-century earthquake. The Romanesque portal of the adjacent 11th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria Maggiore** has some fine bas-reliefs.

The town's serpentine alleys and jumbled houses are perfect for a little aimless ambling. Heading up to the highest point you'll reach a rugged, bijou Norman **castle** (admission €1.80; ☎ 8am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sep-Jun) with Swabian and Aragonese additions and lovely views. Head for the **belvedere** for more sweeping vistas.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Casa di Pellegrino** (☎ 0884 56 23 96; Via Carlo d'Angio; s/d €33/45) The pilgrims' lodge is an institutional but intriguing place, with around 50 rooms above the sanctuary, beside the main car park. The atmosphere veers somewhere between a private hospital and *The Shining*, but rooms are comfortable and many have views. There's an 11pm curfew and a 9.30am checkout.

**Hotel Michael** (☎ 0884 56 55 19; [www.hotelmichael.com](http://www.hotelmichael.com); Via Basilica 86; s €45-50, d €65-75; ☎) A small hotel with shuttered windows on the main street, across from the sanctuary, this traditional place has spacious rooms with extremely pink bedspreads. Ask for a room with a view.

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## WHO IS THE GENIAL MONK?

The smiling, bearded man who pops up on walls everywhere is Padre Pio (1887–1968), who on 16 June 2002 took his place in the pantheon before an estimated 300,000 devotees, to become the 457th saint to be canonised by Pope John Paul II.

Miracles were needed to support the canonisation. First was an Italian woman who had recovered from a burst lymph vessel after praying to Padre Pio, then a seven-year-old boy recovered from meningitis in 2000 after seeing a vision of him.

Padre Pio found himself with stigmata in around 1911. The ailing Capuchin priest arrived in **San Giovanni Rotondo**, then a tiny, isolated medieval village, in 1916. As Pio's fame grew, the town too underwent a miraculous transformation. These days, it's a mass of functional hotels and restaurants catering to 8 million pilgrims a year. It's all overlooked by the palatial Home for the Relief of Suffering, one of Italy's premier hospitals (established by Pio in 1947).

The **Convent of the Minor Capuchin Friars** (☎ 0882 41 71; [www.conventopadrepio.com](http://www.conventopadrepio.com)) includes Padre Pio's **cell** (☎ 7.30am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Jun-Aug, to 6pm Sep-May), a simple room

containing mementoes such as his blood-stained socks. The **old church**, where he used to say Mass, dates from the 16th century. The spectacular **new church**, designed by Genovese Renzo Piano (who also designed Paris' Pompidou Centre), resembles a huge futuristic seashell, with an interior of boney vaulting. Padre Pio's body now lies in the geometric perfection of the semicircular crypt.

SITA buses run daily to San Giovanni Rotondo from Monte Sant'Angelo (opposite).

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**La Jalantuúmene** (☎ 0884 56 54 84; Piazza de Galganis 5; meals €40; 🍽 lunch only Wed-Mon Feb-Dec) This renowned restaurant serves excellent fare, accompanied by a long, select wine list, in picturesque surroundings. In summer, tables spill into the piazza.

## SHOPPING

**Odori Sapori** (☎ 0884 56 39 27; Largo Tomba di Rocari 3) Buy the local speciality here: *ostie ripiene* (or 'stuffed Hosts') – wafers resembling the Hosts used at Mass, filled with caramelised almonds. Ask for a taste of the delicious local liquor, *Amaro O Limon* made with olives and lemons.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Monte Sant'Angelo can be accessed by **SITA** (☎ 0881 35 20 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) buses from Foggia (€3.45, 1¾ hours, three daily) and from Vieste (€4.40, two hours, five daily). Buy your tickets from Bar Esperia next to the sanctuary.

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# ISOLE TREMITI

## pop 400

This beautiful archipelago of three islands, 36km offshore, makes for a splendid trip. The hour-long boat ride takes you to a world of raggedy cliffs, sandy coves and thick pine woods, surrounded by the glittering dark-blue sea.

Unfortunately the islands are no secret, and in July and August some 100,000 holiday-makers descend on the archipelago, somewhat masking the islands' tranquillity – although not its natural beauty. In the low season most tourist facilities close down, and the few permanent residents resume their quiet and isolated lives.

The islands' main facilities are on San Domino, the largest and lushest island, which was formerly used to grow crops. It's ringed by alternating sandy beaches and limestone cliffs, while the inland is covered in thick maquis flecked with rosemary and foxgloves. The centre harbours a nondescript small town with several hotels.

Easily defended, the small San Nicola island is the traditional administrative centre – a castlelike cluster of medieval buildings rises up from the rocks. The third island, Capraia, is uninhabited.

Most boats arrive at San Domino. Small boats regularly make the brief crossing to San Nicola (€6 return) in high season – from October to March a single boat makes the trip after meeting the boat from the mainland.

## Sights & Activities

Head to **San Domino** for walks, grottoes and coves. It has a pristine, marvellous coastline, and the islands' only sandy beach, **Cala delle Arene**. Alongside the beach there is a small cove **Grotta**

**dell'Arene** with calm clear waters for swimming. You can also take a boat trip (€12 from the port) around the island to explore the grottoes: the largest, **Grotta del Bue Marino**, is 70m long. A tour around all three islands costs €17. Diving in the translucent sea is another option with **Tremi Diving Center** (☎ 337 648917; [www.tremidivingcenter.com](http://www.tremidivingcenter.com); Via Federico 2, San Domino).

There's an undemanding, but enchanting, walking track around the island, starting at the far end of the village. Alternatively, you could hire wheels from **Jimmy Bike** (☎ 338 8970909; [www.jimmybike.com](http://www.jimmybike.com); bicycle/scooter per day €20/50) at Piazzetta San Domino.

Medieval buildings thrust out of **San Nicola's** rocky shores, the same pale-sand colour as the barren cliffs. In 1010 Benedictine monks founded the **Abbazia e Chiesa di Santa Maria** here, and for the next 700 years the islands were ruled by a series of abbots who accumulated great wealth. Although the church retains a weather-worn Renaissance portal and a fine 11th-century floor mosaic, its other treasures have been stolen or destroyed throughout its troubled history. The only exceptions are a painted wooden Byzantine crucifix brought to the island in AD 747 and a black Madonna, probably transported here from Constantinople in the Middle Ages.

The third of the Isole Tremiti, **Capraia**, (named after the wild caper plant) is uninhabited. Birdlife is plentiful, with impressive flocks of seagulls. There's no organised transport, but trips can be negotiated with local fishermen.

## Sleeping & Eating

In summer you'll need to book well ahead and many hotels insist on full board. Camping is forbidden.

**Pensione Ristorante-Bar Belvedere** (☎ 0882 46 32 82; Via Garibaldi 6, San Domino; r €50-140) Located above a bustling year-round cafe, this guest house has plain, pretty rooms with tiled floors and sea views.

**Hotel Gabbiano** (☎ 0882 46 34 10; [www.hotel-gabbiano.com](http://www.hotel-gabbiano.com), in Italian; Piazza Belvedere, San Domino; s/d incl breakfast €45-85/€70-120; ☎) Run for more than 30 years by a Neapolitan family, this smart hotel has pastel-coloured rooms with balconies overlooking San Nicola and the sea. Its renowned terrace restaurant offers straight-from-the-sea fish. Facilities include a games room with billiards. Across the road from Pensione Belvedere.

**Architiello** (☎ 0882 46 30 54; San Nicola; meals €25; ☎ Apr-Oct) A class act with a sea-view terrace, this specialises in – what else – fresh fish.

## Getting There & Away

Boats for the Isole Tremiti depart from several points on the Italian mainland: Manfredonia, Vieste and Peschici in summer ([Click here](#)), and Termoli in nearby Molise year-round ([Click here](#)).

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## FOGGIA

**pop 155,000**

Foggia's name derives from its famous *fovea* (grain stores). Entering Puglia from the north you descend from Molise's lush pastures to the sun-baked flatness of the Tavoliere plain, a golden wheat-producing expanse – though tomatoes are increasingly creeping into the picture – and into Foggia.

Frederick II (1194–1250) loved Foggia, and his heart was kept here in a casket until the massive

earthquake of 1731 destroyed the town and most things in it. More destruction came during WWII as strategic airbases nearby became prime bomb targets. The damaged buildings were replaced by some gruesome 1960s architecture, though a kernel of medieval city remains in the centre.

Besides the 12th-century cathedral, there's little to detain you here, though nearby Troia and Lucera are worth a visit.

## Orientation & Information

Train and bus stations face Piazza Vittorio Veneto, on the town's northern rim. Viale XXIV Maggio – with hotels, restaurants and shops – leads south into Piazza Cavour. The **tourist office** (☎ 0881 72 31 41; 1st fl, Via Senatore Emilio Perrone 17; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri, plus 3-6pm Tue & Thu) is near Piazzale Puglia.

## Sights

The 12th-century Romanesque **cathedral** (☎ 7am-12.30pm & 5-8pm), is off Corso Vittorio Emanuele II. The lower half is Romanesque; the upper part was rebuilt in exuberant baroque style after the earthquake in 1731. Most of the cathedral's treasures were lost in the quake but you can see a Byzantine icon preserved in a chapel inside the church. Legend has it that, in the 11th century, shepherds discovered the icon lying in a pond over which burned three flames. These flames are now the symbol of the city.

The **Museo Civico** (☎ 0881 72 62 45; Piazza Nigri; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm Tue-Sun & 4-7pm Tue & Thu) houses archaeological finds from the area, folk crafts and some Carlo Levi paintings in an attractive old *palazzo*.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Cicolella** (☎ 0881 56 61 11; [www.accorhotels.com](http://www.accorhotels.com); Viale XXIV Maggio 60; s/d incl breakfast €100-135/€130-160; ☎) Situated near the railway station, Foggia's finest hotel, a rust-red landmark, was founded more than 100 years ago but is now one of the contemporary Mercure chain. The rooms sport parquet or carpeted floors plus all mod cons, while the restaurant is one of the best in town.

**Ristorante Margutta** (☎ 0881 70 80 60; Via Piave 33; meals €25) Hung with ivy, this friendly frescoed restaurant is justifiably popular. It specialises in fish dishes, including an excellent *grigliata mista di pesce* (mixed fish grill).

## Getting There & Around

### BUS

Buses depart from Piazzale Vittorio Veneto, by the train station, for towns throughout Foggia province. Reduced service at weekends.

**SITA** (☎ 0881 35 20 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) and **Ferrovie del Gargano** (☎ 0881 58 72 11; [www.ferroviedelgargano.com](http://www.ferroviedelgargano.com), in Italian) have services to/from Vieste (€5.70, 2¾ hours, at least five daily), Monte Sant'Angelo (€3.40, 1¾ hours, at least 10 daily) and Lucera (€1.65, 30 minutes, hourly).

### TRAIN

There are frequent services to Bari (from €14, 1½ hours) and on to Brindisi (from €13.70, three hours) and Lecce (from €16, 3¼ hours). Northwards, trains head for Ancona (€48, 3½ hours) and Milan (€68, seven to nine hours).

# LUCERA

**pop 35,036 / elev 219m**

Lovely off-the-beaten-track Lucera has one of Puglia's most impressive castles and a handsome old town centre with mellow sand-coloured brick and stone work and chic shops lining wide shiny-stone streets.

Founded by the Romans in the 4th century BC, it was abandoned by the 13th century. Following excommunication by Pope Gregory IX, Frederick II decided to bolster his support base in Puglia by importing 20,000 Sicilian Arabs, simultaneously diminishing the headache Arab bandits were causing him in Sicily.

It was an extraordinary move by the Christian monarch, even more so because Frederick allowed Lucera's new Muslim inhabitants the freedom to build mosques and practise their religion a mere 290km from Rome.

History, however, was less kind; when the town was taken by the rabidly Christian Angevins in 1269, every Muslim who failed to convert was slaughtered.

Lucera's **tourist office** (☎ 0881 52 27 62; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-2pm Oct-Mar) is near the cathedral.

## Sights

Frederick II's enormous **castle** (admission free; ☎ 9am-2pm year-round & 3-7pm Apr-Sep), shows just what a big fish Lucera once was in the Puglian pond. Built in 1233, it's 14km northwest of Lucera on a rocky hillock surrounded by a perfect 1km pentagonal wall, guarded by 24 towers.

On the site of Lucera's Great Mosque, Puglia's only Gothic **cathedral** (☎ 6.30am-noon & 4-7pm May-Sep, 5-8pm Oct-Apr) was built in 1301 by Charles II of Anjou. The altar was once the castle banqueting table.

Dominated by a huge rose window, the contemporaneous Gothic **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 8am-noon & 4-7pm) incorporates recycled materials from Lucera's 1st-century-BC **Roman amphitheatre** (admission free; ☎ 8am-2.30pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sun). The amphitheatre was built for gladiatorial combat and accommodated up to 18,000 people. It's undergoing restoration so check if it's open at the tourist office.

## Sleeping & Eating

**B&B Elena degli Angeli** (☎ 0881 53 04 46; Piazza Oberdan 3; r €60-80; 🍷) There are just four atmospheric rooms here with frescoes, handsome wooden bedheads and dizzily patterned tiles. The small outside terrace has rooftop views. The excellent and stylish downstairs restaurant (meals €25) is run by the owner's son.

**our pick** **Le Foglie di Acanto** (☎ 349 4514937; [www.lefogliediacanto.it](http://www.lefogliediacanto.it); Via Frattarolo 3; s/d €70/100) Run by an enthusiastic brother and sister team this former 16th-century *palazzo* has elaborately frescoed ceilings, sumptuous floor tiles, exquisite antiques and a charming shady garden. Breakfast features organic jams and the like.

**La Tavernetta** (☎ 0881 52 00 55; Via Schiavone 7; pizzas from €4; ☎ Tue-Sun) Located in a large exposed-brick cellar with jaunty tablecloths and an enthusiastic young staff, the crispy wood-fired pizzas

are excellent. La Tavernetta is behind the cathedral.

**Il Cortiletto** (☎ 0881 54 25 54; Via de Nicastrì 26) A superb restaurant with a barrel-vault interior, central courtyard and a menu that includes traditional dishes like *orecchiette* with *cimie di rape* (bitter greens) and *cozze pelose* (Puglia's indigenous clams).

## Getting There & Away

Regular SITA and Ferrovie del Gargano buses (€1.65, 30 minutes) run to Lucera from [Foggia](#).

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## TRANI

**pop 53,520**

Trani is a Pugliese gem. Shimmering with a mother-of-pearl light, it has a sophisticated feel, particularly in summer when well-heeled visitors pack the diminutive array of marina-side bars. Its Norman cathedral and piazza, perched above the sea, are an unforgettable sight – especially after a few glasses of the local sweet tipple, Moscato di Trani.

The historic centre with its medieval churches and glossy stone streets indicate a prosperous past. During the Middle Ages the town rivalled Bari in importance, and became a major embarkation point for merchants travelling to the Near East.

## Orientation & Information

From the train station, Via Cavour leads through Piazza della Repubblica to Piazza Plebiscito and the public gardens. Turn left for the harbour and cathedral.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0883 58 88 30; [www.traniweb.it](http://www.traniweb.it); 1st fl, Palazzo Palmieri, Piazza Trieste 10; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, plus 3.30-5.30pm Tue & Thu) is 200m south of the cathedral.

## Sights

Surrounded by a rare light and space, the dramatic seafront **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 8.15am-12.15pm & 3.15-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.45pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun) is dedicated to St Nicholas the Pilgrim, famous for being foolish. The Greek Christian wandered through Puglia, crying '*Kyrie eleison*' (Greek for 'Lord, have mercy'). First thought to be a simpleton, he was revered after his death (aged 19) after several miracles attributed to him occurred.

Started in 1097 on the site of a Byzantine church, the cathedral was completed in the 13th century. The magnificent original bronze doors (now displayed inside) were cast by Barisano da Trani, an accomplished 12th-century artisan.

The interior of the cathedral reflects typical Norman simplicity, and is lined by colonnades. Near the main altar are the remains of a 12th-century floor mosaic, stylistically similar to that in Otranto. Below the church is the crypt, a forest of ancient columns where the bones of St Nicholas are kept beneath the altar.

Two hundred metres north of the cathedral is Trani's other major landmark, the vast, almost modernist Swabian **castle** (☎ 0883 50 66 03; Piazza Manfredi 16; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm) built by Frederick II in 1233. Charles V later strengthened the fortifications, and it was used as a prison from 1844 to 1974.

Also in the historic centre is the 12th-century **Ognissanti Church** (Via Ognissanti; ☎ hours vary), built by the Knights Templar. Here Norman knights swore allegiance to Bohemond I of Antioch, their leader, before setting off on the First Crusade.

**Scolanova Church** (☎ 0883 48 17 99; Via Scolanova 23; ☎ hours vary) was one of four former synagogues in the ancient Jewish quarter. They were all converted to churches in the 14th century. Inside is a beautiful Byzantine painting of Madonna dei Martiri.

## Sleeping

**B&B Trani** (☎ 0883 50 61 76; [www.bbtrani.it](http://www.bbtrani.it); Via Leopardi 29; s/d incl breakfast €33-40/56-68) With pots of character, this simple, old-fashioned B&B inhabits an old backstreet monastery and is run by an elderly couple. There's a rooftop terrace with fabulous views and a pretty-in-pink breakfast room.

**Albergo Lucy** (☎ 0883 48 10 22; [www.albergolucy.com](http://www.albergolucy.com); Piazza Plebiscito 11; d/tr/q €60/80/100) In a restored 17th-century *palazzo* overlooking a leafy square, close to the shimmering port, this place offers a cheery welcome and huge, high-ceilinged rooms full of charm and light.

**Hotel Regia** (☎ /fax 0883 58 44 44; [www.hotelregia.it](http://www.hotelregia.it); Piazza del Duomo 2; s/d €120-130/130-150; ☎ ) A lone building facing the cathedral, the understated grandeur of 18th-century Palazzo Filisio houses a charming hotel. Rooms are sober and stylish, and there's a good restaurant (meals €30).

## Eating

**Osteria Ferro e Fuoco** (☎ 0883 58 73 87; Piazza Mazzini 8; meals €25) This new kid on the block serves reliably good dishes including fried ricotta antipasti and roasted veal chops. It has a charming position on the piazza with terrace seating overlooking time-worn traditional buildings adorned with washing.

**La Darsena** (☎ 0883 48 73 33; Via Statuti Marittimi 98; meals €30; ☎ Tue-Sun) Renowned for its seafood, La Darsena is housed in a waterfront *palazzo*. Outside tables are shielded by thick greenery while inside photos of old Puglia cover the walls beneath a huge wrought-iron dragon chandelier.

**Corteinfiore** (☎ 0883 50 84 02; Via Ognissanti 18; meals €30; ☎ Tue-Sun) Enjoys a light summery feel with a marquee-conservatory arrangement, wooden decking, buttercup-yellow tablecloths and bebies of friendly waiters. The wines are excellent and the cooking is delicious, with dishes such as pasta with monkfish and clams.

## Getting There & Away

**STP** (☎ 0883 49 18 00; [www.stpspa.it](http://www.stpspa.it), in Italian) travels along the coast and inland, serving Barletta (€1.10, 30 minutes, half-hourly) and Bari (€2.95, 45 minutes, frequent). Services depart from **Bar Stazione** (Piazza XX Settembre 23), which also has timetables and tickets.

The SS16 runs through Trani, linking it to Bari and Foggia, or you can hook up with the A14 Bologna—Bari autostrada.

Trani is on the main train line between Bari (€3.50, 30 to 60 minutes, frequent) and Foggia (€6.50, 40 minutes, frequent) and is easily reached from other coastal towns.

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## AROUND TRANI

# Barletta

**pop 92,094**

Barletta is a modern prosperous town – as big as Lecce – and has a 4th-century bronze Colossus and a splendid art gallery (but little else in the way of sights).

Crusaders embarked for the Holy Land from Barletta's port and King Richard the Lionheart helped build Barletta's cathedral, the principal seat of the Archbishop of Nazareth for some 600 years (1291–1891).

In the centre, on Corso Vittorio Emanuele, looms an astonishing (and incongruous) sight: the 5m-high Roman **Colossus**, the largest surviving Roman bronze in the world and a bad-tempered fellow he looks too. The Venetians stole the Colossus in 1203 after the sack of Constantinople, but there was a shipwreck and the statue washed ashore. For years it lay untouched – Barletta's inhabitants were too superstitious to go anywhere near it – but it was finally brought to the centre where its missing hands and legs were restored. It was nearly melted down in 1309 to make a bell.

The **Pinacoteca Giuseppe de Nittis** (☎0883 57 86 15; [www.pinacotecadenittis.it](http://www.pinacotecadenittis.it); Via Cialdini 75; adult/concession €4/2; 📧 10am-8pm Tue-Sun) has palatial surrounds and an impressive display of the work of local hero de Nittis (1846–1884), the only Italian impressionist, plus excellent temporary exhibitions.

From the bus station, **STP** (☎ 0883 49 18 00; [www.stpspa.it](http://www.stpspa.it)) travels to Trani (€1.10, 30 minutes, half-hourly) and Bari (€3.45, one hour 20 minutes).

# Castel del Monte

You'll see **Castel del Monte** (☎ 0883 56 99 97; admission €3; 📧 9am-6.30pm Oct-Feb, 3pm-7.45pm Mar-Sep), an unearthly geometric shape on a hilltop, from miles away. Mysterious, and perfectly octagonal, it's one of southern Italy's most talked-about landmarks and a Unesco World Heritage Site.

No-one knows why Frederick II built it. Nobody has ever lived here – note the lack of kitchens – and there's no nearby town or strategic crossroads. It was not built to defend anything, as it has no moat or drawbridge, no arrow slits, and no trapdoors for pouring boiling oil on invaders.

Some theories claim that, according to mid-13th-century beliefs in geometric symbolism, the octagon represented the union of the circle and square, of God-perfection (the infinite) and man-perfection (the finite). The castle was therefore nothing less than a celebration of the relationship between man and God.

The castle has eight octagonal towers. Its interconnecting rooms have decorative marble columns and fireplaces, and the doorways and windows are framed in corallite stone. Many of the towers have washing rooms – Frederick II, like the Arab world he admired, set great store by cleanliness.

You need your own wheels to get here, otherwise there is a sporadic daily service from nearby Andria.

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# BARI

**pop 328,500**

'*Se Parigi avesse il mare, sarebbe una piccola Bari*' (If Paris had the sea, it would be a little Bari). This popular saying tells you more about the local sense of humour than it does about the city, but Bari has a surprising amount of charm, particularly Bari Vecchia, its increasingly chic medieval old town.



Construction of the new city's graceful grid was started in 1813. When independence was gained in 1861 it had 34,000 inhabitants, but since then it has spread apace north and south along the coast. A spanking new suburban business centre of glass skyscrapers has also recently opened.

Bari is Puglia's capital and one of the south's most prosperous cities – check out the designer shops along Via Sparano da Bari. Here you will eat and shop well alongside a demanding local clientele.

On a darker note, the fourth-largest mafia clan in Italy – and among the most feared – is the *Sacra Corona Unita*; a youthful Yakuza-style group operating from the notorious San Paolo suburb.

## Orientation

Orient yourself from Piazza Aldo Moro in front of the main train station. Any of the streets heading north from Piazza Aldo Moro will take you to Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, which separates the old and new parts of the city, and further north to the ferry terminal.

## Information

There are plenty of banks and ATMs in Bari.

**CTS** (☎ 080 555 99 16; Via Postiglione 27) Good for student travel and discount flights.

**Hospital** (☎ 080 557 57 24; Piazza Cesare)

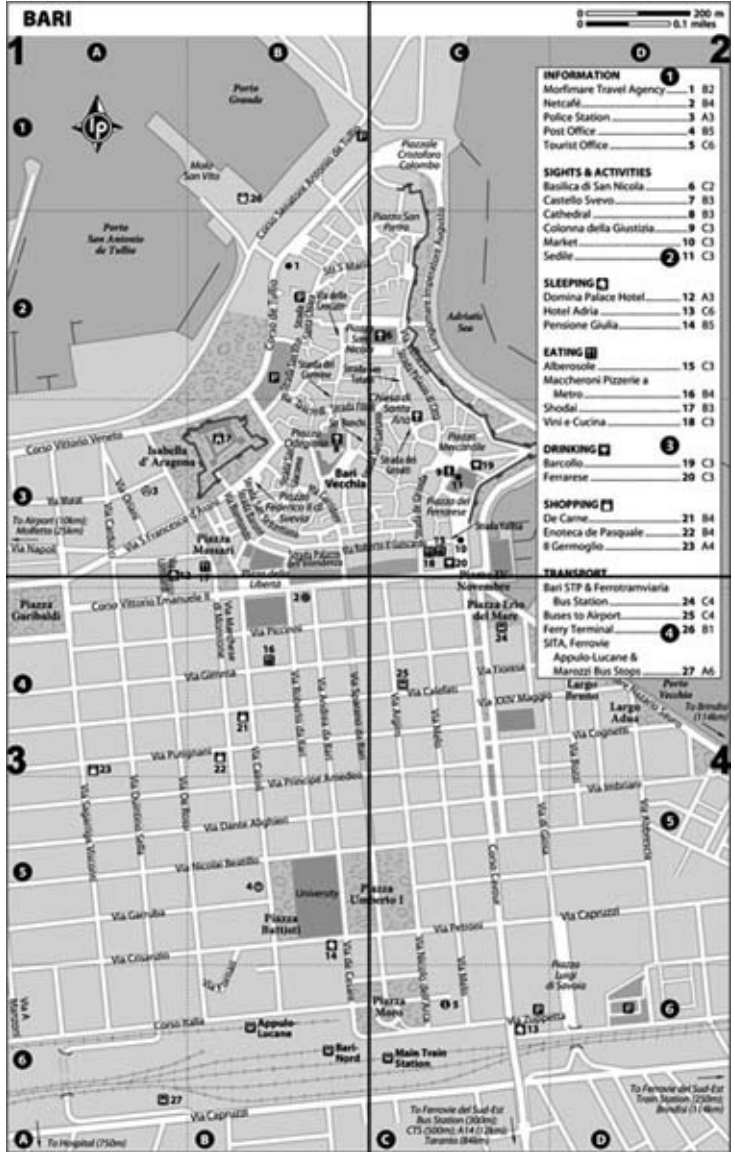
**Morfirmare Travel Agency** (☎ 080 578 98 11; [www.morfirmare.it](http://www.morfirmare.it); Corso de Tullio 36-40) Ferry bookings.

**Netcafé** (☎ 080 524 17 56; Via Andrea da Bari 11; per hr €4; ☒ 9am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun)

**Police station** (☎ 080 529 11 11; Via Murat 4)

**Post office** (Piazza Battisti; ☒ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 080 990 93 41; [www.pugliaturismo.com](http://www.pugliaturismo.com); 1st fl, Piazza Moro 33a; ☒ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

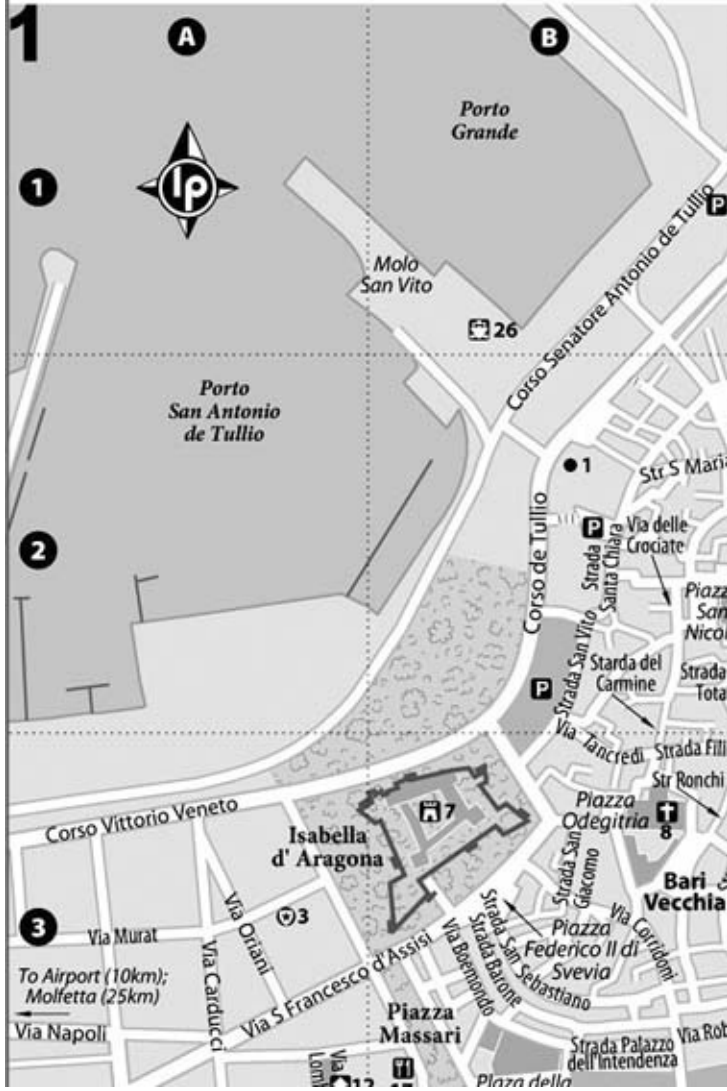


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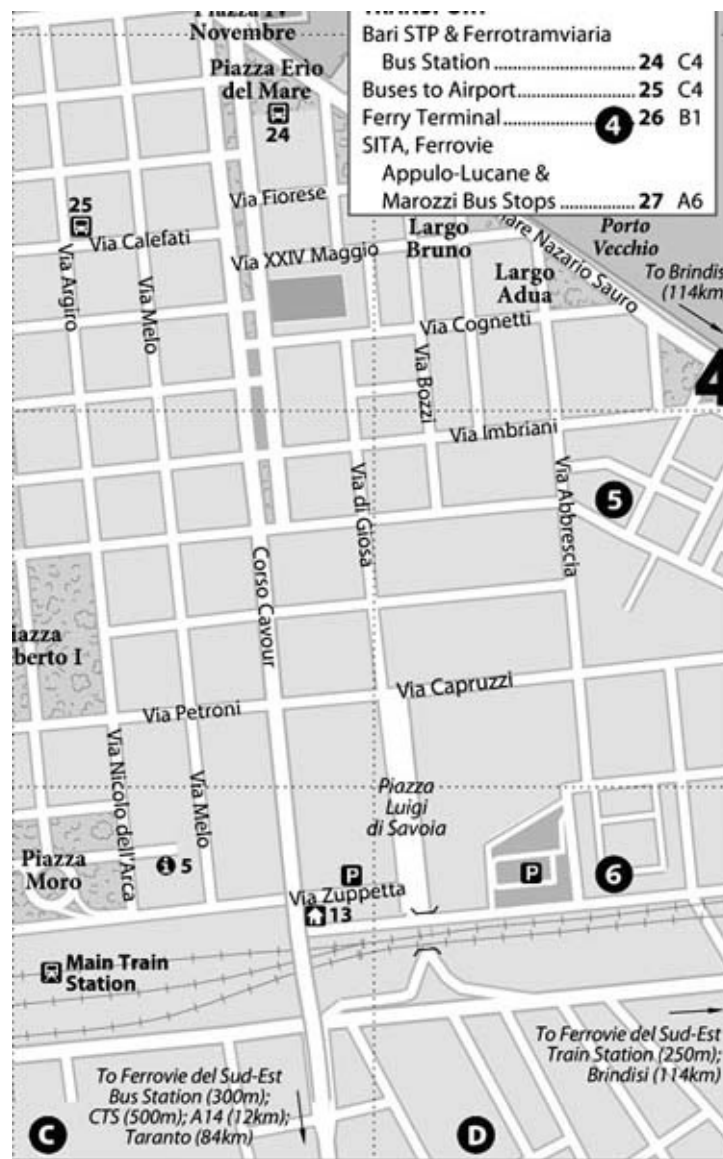
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## Dangers & Annoyances

Petty crime can be a problem, so take all the usual precautions: don't leave anything in your car; don't display money or valuables; and watch out for bag-snatchers on scooters. Be careful in Bari Vecchia's dark streets at night.

## Sights

### BARI VECCHIA

Bari Vecchia – the old town – is a medieval labyrinth opening onto graceful piazzas, and crams in 40 churches and more than 120 shrines. It fills a small peninsula, sheltering the new port to the west and the old port to the southeast.

You could start your exploration with the chaotic **market** alongside Piazza del Ferrarese. Stumble out of there and walk north to the glorious medieval Piazza Mercantile, fronted by the **Sedile**, the headquarters of Bari's Council of Nobles. In the square's northeast corner is the **Colonna della Giustizia** (Column of Justice), where debtors were once tied and whipped.

Northwest past the small Chiesa di Santa Ana is the remarkable **Basilica di San Nicola** (Piazza San Nicola; ☎ 7am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 7am-1pm & 4-9pm Sun), one of the south's first Norman churches. It's a splendid example of Puglian-Romanesque style, built to house the relics of St Nicholas (better known as Father Christmas), which were stolen from Turkey in 1087 by local fishermen. His remains are

said to emanate a miraculous manna liquid with special powers. For this reason – and because he is also patron saint of prisoners and children – the basilica remains an important place of pilgrimage. The interior is huge and simple with a decorative 17th-century wooden ceiling. The magnificent 13th-century ciborium over the altar is Puglia's oldest. The shrine in the crypt, lit by hanging lamps, is beautiful.

A brief walk south along Via delle Crociate brings you to the 11th-century Romanesque **cathedral** (Piazza Odegitria; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm & 5-8.30pm Sat & Sun). Built over the original Byzantine church, the cathedral retains its basilica plan and Eastern-style cupola. The severely plain walls are punctuated with deep arcades and the eastern window is a tangle of plant and animal motifs.

## CASTELLO SVEVO

The **Castello Svevo** (Swabian Castle; ☎ 083 184 00 09; Piazza Federico II di Svevia; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue) broods on the edge of Bari Vecchia. The Normans originally built over the ruins of a Roman fort. Frederick II then built over the Norman castle, incorporating it into his design – the two towers of the Norman structure still stand. The bastions, with corner towers overhanging the moat, were added in the 16th century during Spanish rule, when the castle was a magnificent residence. Permanent and temporary art exhibitions are held here.

## Festivals & Events

**Festa di San Nicola** (Festival of St Nicholas), held around 7 to 9 May, is Bari's biggest annual shindig, celebrating the 11th-century arrival of St Nicholas' relics (from Turkey). On the first evening a procession leaves Castello Svevo for the Basilica di San Nicola. The next day a fleet of boats carries the statue of St Nicholas along the coast and the evening ends with a massive fireworks competition.

## Sleeping

Accommodation here tends to be bland and overpriced, aimed at business clientele. The Bari Vecchia is the most attractive part of town to stay, and is convenient for the ferry terminal.

**Pensione Giulia** (☎ 080 521 66 30; [www.hotelpensionejiulia.it](http://www.hotelpensionejiulia.it); Via Crisanzio 12; s/d €60/75, without bathroom €50/65) Near the train station, this popular place is family run with rooms that resemble a hospital ward, until you look up – most rooms sport truly lovely original frescoes (go for room 21 if you are angelically inclined). The bathrooms are the built-in boxy variety, so make sure you know your room-mate well.

**Hotel Adria** (☎ 080 524 66 99; [www.adriahotelbari.com](http://www.adriahotelbari.com); Via Zuppetta 10; s/d €70/110; 📶 📺 🚰) A dusky-pink building fronted by wrought-iron balconies, this is a great choice, with comfortable, good-value rooms that are bright and modern. Extras include Sky TV and a roof garden.

**Domina Palace Hotel** (☎ 080 521 65 51; [www.dominahotels.com](http://www.dominahotels.com); Via Lombardi 13; s/d €195/260; 📶 📺 🚰) Look past the dated '60s-style exterior and this is an oasis of luxury, with plush, elegant rooms and a renowned rooftop restaurant. Meals at the on-site Murat (€30), include refined dishes like honey-glazed turkey with truffle sauce, complemented by fantastic views.

## Eating

**Maccheroni Pizzeria a Metro** (☎ 080 521 33 56; Via Gimma 90; pizzas €7-9) Not the place for a candlelit dinner for two, but great if you love pizza and people – equally. The long and short of it is that the whole table's order is made into one continuous pizza, served by the metre and, most importantly,

delicious.

**Vini e Cucina** (☎ 338 212 03 91; Strada Vallisa 23; meals €10; 🕒 Mon-Sat) Run by the same family for more than a century, this boisterous *osteria* (wine bar serving some food) chalks up its daily specials of well-prepared and filling Pugliese dishes. Grab a seat in the brick-flanked tunnel of a dining room and wait (and wait) to be served by the one impressively indefatigable waiter.

**Shodai** (☎ 080 528 35 89; Piazza Massari; 23; meals €25) Bari's first Japanese restaurant is deservedly popular. Enjoy Asian classics like vegetable tempura, salmon sashimi and tuna sushi in a suitably Zen-inspired interior, with tubular steel furniture complemented by a minimalistic black-and-red colour scheme.

**Alberosole** (☎ 080 523 54 46; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 13; meals €30; 🕒 Tue-Sun Sep-Jul) Dine alongside bankers in Brioni suits at this elegant restaurant. The contemporary menu is complemented by a traditional dining room, complete with old stone floor and cathedral ceiling. The *linguine con gamberi di Gallipoli, pesto di fave fresche e zenzero* (linguine with prawns, fava bean pesto and ginger) comes recommended. Reserve ahead.

If you're self-catering or stocking up for a ferry journey, pass by the **market** (Piazza del Ferrarese). For more information see opposite.

## Drinking

Like most student towns, Bari is good for a night out. Kick start your evening with an *aperitivo* at **Ferrarese** (☎ 392 0744474; Piazza Ferrarese 1) overlooking the harbour on Piazza Ferrarese. Move on to Piazza Mercantile, where Bari's young and beautiful congregate. A good start is **Barcollo** (☎ 080 521 38 89; Piazza Mercantile 69/70; cocktails €6; 🕒 8am-3am), where you can lounge on brilliant-red banquettes or sit outside on the twinkling square sipping a cocktail and nibbling work-of-art hors d'oeuvres.

## Shopping

Bari is superb for shopping. For designer shops and the main Italian chains, head for Via Sparano da Bari. Foodies are similarly well catered for with delis and gourmet shops located throughout the city.

**De Carne** (☎ 080 521 96 76; Via Calefati 128; 🕒 8am-2pm & 5-8.40pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 8am-2pm Thu) Breathe in delicious scents and seriously indulge by buying fine regional produce at this venerable delicatessen.

**Il Germoglio** (☎ 080 524 27 72; Via Putignani 204; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 4.30-8.30pm Mon-Sat) A treasure trove of organic jams and cheeses.

**Enoteca de Pasquale** (☎ 080 521 31 92; Via Marchese di Montrone 87; 🕒 8am-2pm & 4-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Stock up on Puglian wines.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Bari's Palese **airport** (BRI; ☎ 080 580 02 00; [www.seap-puglia.it](http://www.seap-puglia.it)) is served by a host of international and budget airlines, including British Airways, Alitalia, Hapag-Lloyd Express and Ryanair.

### BOAT

Ferries run from Bari to Greece, Turkey, Albania, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. All boat companies



have offices at the ferry terminal, accessible on bus 20 from the main train station. Fares from Bari to Greece are generally more expensive than those for [Brindisi](#) to Greece. Tariffs can be up to one-third cheaper outside mid-July to late August. Bicycles are normally free.

The main companies and their routes:

**Blue Star Ferries** (☎ 080 52 11 416; [www.bluestarferries.com](http://www.bluestarferries.com)) Services depart for Patras and Igoumenitsa at 8pm daily.

**Jadrolinija** (☎ in Croatia 385-516 66 111; [www.jadrolinija.hr](http://www.jadrolinija.hr)) To Dubrovnik in Croatia.

**Montenegro Lines** (☎ 080 578 98 27; [www.morfimare.it](http://www.morfimare.it)) Reservations via Morfimare Travel Agency ([Click here](#)); to Bar in Montenegro (10pm Sunday to Friday, April to September); Cephalonia (6.30pm July to September, every few days); Igoumenitsa (6.30pm daily, April to September); and Patraso (6.30pm daily, April to September).

**Superfast** (☎ 080 528 28 28; [www.superfast.com](http://www.superfast.com)) To Igoumenitsa, Patras and Corfu, in Greece. Daily departure at 8pm. Accepts Eurail, Eurodomino and Inter-Rail passes (port taxes and a high-season supplement payable).

**Ventouris Ferries** (☎ for Greece 080 521 76 99, for Albania 521 27 56; [www.ventouris.gr](http://www.ventouris.gr)) Regular ferries to Igoumenitsa and Corfu (Greece) and daily ferries to Durrës (Albania).

FERRY CROSSINGS FROM BARI		
Destination	Cost (€) seat/cabin/car*	Duration (hr)
Bar, Montenegro	112/150/159	9
Cephalonia, Greece	140/208/130	15½
Corfu, Greece	143/208/134	11
Durrës, Albania	52/93/91	8
Igoumenitsa, Greece	140/208/130	10-12
Patras, Greece	142/207/133	16½

\* cost of a return ticket in high season

## BUS

Intercity buses leave from several locations. From Via Capruzzi, south of the main train station, **SITA** (☎ 080 579 01 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) covers local destinations. **Ferrovie Appulo-Lucane** (☎ 080 572 52 29; [www.fal-srl.it](http://www.fal-srl.it), in Italian) buses serving Matera also depart from here, plus **Marozzi** (☎ 080 556 24 46; [www.marozzivi.it](http://www.marozzivi.it)) buses for Rome (€35, eight hours, 8.35 am, 1pm, 4pm, 5pm, 11.50pm – the overnight bus departs from Piazza Moro) and other long-distance destinations.

Piazza Eroi del Mare is the terminal for **STP** (☎ 080 505 82 80; [www.stpspa.it](http://www.stpspa.it)) buses serving Andria (€3.45, 1½ hours, seven daily) and Trani (€2.95, 45 minutes, frequent). **Ferrotramviaria** (☎ 080 578 95 42; [www.ferrovienordbarese.it](http://www.ferrovienordbarese.it)) runs frequent buses to Andria (€3.80, one hour) and Ruvo di Puglia (€3, 40 minutes).

Buses operated by **Ferrovie del Sud-Est** (FSE; ☎ 080 546 21 11; [www.fseonline.it](http://www.fseonline.it) in Italian) leave from Largo Ciaia, south of Piazza Moro, for Brindisi (€6.60, 23 to 24 hours, four daily Monday to Saturday), Taranto (€5.30, 1¾ to 2¼ hours, frequent), Alberobello (€3.60, 1¼ hours) and on to Locorotondo and Martina Franca, Grotte di Castellana (€2.60, one hour) and Ostuni (€4.90, two hours).

## TRAIN

A web of train lines spreads out from Bari. Note that there are fewer services on the weekend.

From the **main train station** (☎ 080 524 43 86) Eurostar trains go to Milan (from €68, eight to 9½ hours) and Rome (from €36, five hours). Frequent trains serve elsewhere in Puglia, including Foggia

(from €14, 1½ hours) and Brindisi (from €6.80, 1¼ hours).

**Ferrovìa Bari-Nord** (☎ 080 578 95 42; [www.ferrovianordbarese.it](http://www.ferrovianordbarese.it)) goes to the airport (€1.10, 10 minutes, around 20 daily), continuing to Bitonto, Andria and Barletta.

**Ferrovie Appulo-Lucane** (☎ 080 572 52 29; [www.fal-srl.it](http://www.fal-srl.it)) goes to Altamura (€2.90, one hour, at least hourly), Matera (€4.35, 1½ hours, 12 daily) and Potenza (€9.10, four hours, four daily).

**FSE trains** (☎ 080 546 21 11; [www.fseonline.it](http://www.fseonline.it), in Italian) head for the towns of Alberobello (€4.10, 1½ hours, hourly), Martina Franca (€4.90, two hours, hourly) and Taranto (from €7.40, 2½ hours, six daily), leaving from the station in Via Oberdan – cross under the train tracks south of Piazza Luigi di Savoia and head east along Via Capruzzi for about 500m.

## Getting Around

Central Bari is compact – a 15-minute walk will take you from Piazza Moro to the old town. For the ferry terminal take bus 20 from Piazza Moro (€1.10).

Street parking is migraine-inducing. There's a large free parking area south of the main port entrance, otherwise there's a large multistorey car park between the main and Ferrovie del Sud-Est train stations and one on Via Zuppetta opposite Hotel Adria.

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

To get to the airport, take the Cotrap bus (€4.50) which leaves regularly from the main train station. A taxi trip from the airport to town costs around €24.

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## AROUND BARI

### Polignano a Mare

Dip into this spectacularly positioned small town if you can. Located around 34km south of Bari on the S16 coastal road, **Polignano a Mare** is built on the edge of a craggy ravine pockmarked with caves.

On Sunday the *logge* (balconies) are crowded with day-trippers from Bari who come here to view the crashing waves, visit the caves and crowd out the *cornetterias* (shops specialising in Italian croissants) in the atmospheric *centro storico*. The town is thought to be one of the most important ancient settlements in Puglia and was later inhabited by successive invaders ranging from the Huns to the Normans. There are several baroque churches, an imposing Norman monastery and the medieval **Porta Grande**, the only access to the historic centre until the 18th century. You can still see the holes that activated the heavy drawbridge and the openings from where boiling oil was poured onto any unwelcome visitors to town.

There are a handful of hotels and B&Bs in town. **Paluada** (☎ 328 2858658; [www.paluada.it](http://www.paluada.it); Via Martiri di Dogali 60; s €38-50, d €76-100) is conveniently located with pleasant modern rooms and easy parking nearby. You can enjoy tasty Spanish-style *pinchos* (snacks) at **Boca Chica** (☎ 333 3388496; Piazza San Benedetto; from €2.50) right on this pleasant piazza where locals congregate, children play and lovers stroll arm-in-arm. Several operators organise boat trips to the grottoes, including **Dorino** (☎ 329 64659 04), costing around €20 per person.

Although there is a twice-daily bus service from Bari, your own car is the best way to reach Polignano.

## MURGIA PLATEAU & TRULLI COUNTRY

Between the Ionian and Adriatic coasts rises the great limestone plateau of the Murgia (473m). It has a strange karst geology; the landscape is riddled with holes and ravines through which small streams and rivers gurgle, creating what is, in effect, a giant sponge. At the heart of the Murgia lies the idyllic Valle d'Itria. Here you will begin to spot curious circular stone-built houses dotting the countryside, their roofs tapering up to a stubby and endearing point. These are *trulli*, Puglia's unique rural architecture. It's unclear why the architecture developed in this way; one popular story says that it was so the dry-stone constructions could be quickly dismantled, to avoid payment of building taxes.

The rolling green valley is criss-crossed by dry-stone walls, vineyards, almond and olive groves and winding country lanes, and punctuated by the towns of Alberobello, Locorotondo, Cisternino, Martina Franca and Ostuni, each shimmering with charm. This is the part of Puglia most visited by foreign tourists and is the best served for hotels and luxury *masserias* (manor farms). Around here also are many of Puglia's self-catering villas; to find them, try websites such as [www.tuscanynow.com](http://www.tuscanynow.com), [www.ownersdirect.co.uk](http://www.ownersdirect.co.uk), [www.holidayhomesinitaly.co.uk](http://www.holidayhomesinitaly.co.uk), [www.longtravel.co.uk](http://www.longtravel.co.uk), and [www.trulliland.co.uk](http://www.trulliland.co.uk).

### Grotte di Castellana

Don't miss these spectacular limestone **caves** (☎ 800 23 19 76, 080 499 82 11; [www.grottedicastellana.it](http://www.grottedicastellana.it); Piazzale Anelli; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm Nov-Mar), 40km southeast of Bari, and Italy's longest natural subterranean network. The interlinked galleries, first discovered in 1938, contain an incredible range of underground landscapes, with extraordinary stalactite and stalagmite formations – look out for the jellyfish, the bacon and the stocking. The highlight is the Grotta Bianca (White Grotto), an eerie white alabaster cavern hung with stiletto-thin stalactites.

There are two tours in English: a 1km, 50-minute tour that doesn't include the Grotta Bianca (€8, on the half-hour); and a 3km, two-hour tour (€13, on the hour) that does include it. The temperature inside the cave averages 15°C so take a light jacket. Visit, too, the **Museo Speleologico Franco Anelli** (☎ 080 499 82 30; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm mid-Mar—Oct, 10am-1pm Nov—mid-Mar) or the **Osservatorio Astronomico Sirio** (☎ 080 499 82 11; ☎ admission €3), with its telescope and solar filters allowing for maximum solar-system visibility. Guided visits only with advance notification.

The grotto can be reached by rail from Bari on the FSE Bari—Taranto train line. Get off at Castellana Grotte (€2.60, one hour, hourly). From the station there are local buses to the caves, 2km away (€1.20).

### Alberobello

**pop 10,930**

Unesco World Heritage Site Alberobello resembles a mini urban sprawl – for gnomes. The Zona dei Trulli on the western hill of town is a dense mass of 1500 beehive-shaped houses, white-tipped as if dusted by snow. These dry-stone buildings are made from local limestone, none older than the 14th century. Inhabitants do not wear pointy hats, but they do sell anything a visitor might want, from miniature *trulli* to woollen shawls.

The town is named after the primitive oak forest *Arboris Belli* (beautiful trees) that once covered this area. It's an amazing area, but is also something of a tourist trap – from May to October busloads of tourists pile into *trullo* homes, drink in *trullo* bars and shop in *trullo* shops.

## ORIENTATION

Alberobello spreads across two hills. The new town is perched on the eastern hilltop, while the Zona dei Trulli lies on the western hill, and consists of two adjacent neighbourhoods, the Rione Monti and the Rione Aia Piccola.

If you park in Lago Martellotta, follow the steps up to the Piazza del Popolo where Belvedere Trulli offers fabulous views over the whole higgledy-piggledy picture.

## INFORMATION

**Tourist information office** (☎ 080 432 28 22; [www.prolocoalberobello.it](http://www.prolocoalberobello.it); Monte Nero 1; ☎ 9am-7.30pm) Local office in the Zona dei Trulli.

**Tourist office** (☎ 080 432 51 71; Piazza del Popolo; ☎ 8am-1pm Mon-Fri, plus 3-6pm Tue & Thu) In the Casa d'Amore, off the main square.

## SIGHTS

Sightseeing in Alberobello mainly consists of wandering around admiring its eccentricity. Within the old town quarter of **Rione Monti** over 1000 *trulli* cascade down the hillside, most of which are now souvenir shops. To its east, on the other side of Via Indipendenza, is **Rione Aia Piccola**. This neighbourhood is much less commercialised, with 400 *trulli*, many still used as family dwellings. You can climb up for a rooftop view at many shops, although most do have a strategically located basket for a donation.

For the all-round *trullo* experience, you can stay in one. As well as *trullo* hotels, there are lots that have been converted into rentable holiday homes (see below).

In the modern part of town, the 18th-century **Trullo Sovrano** (☎ 080 432 60 30; [www.trullosovrano.it](http://www.trullosovrano.it); Piazza Sacramento; admission €1.50; ☎ 10am-6pm) is the only two-floor *trullo*, built by a wealthy priest's family. It's a small museum giving something of the atmosphere of *trullo* life, with sweet, rounded rooms which include a re-created bakery, bedroom and kitchen. The souvenir shop here has a wealth of literature on the town and surrounding area.

## SLEEPING & EATING

It's a unique experience to stay in your own *trullo*, though some people might find Alberobello too touristy to use as a base.

**Camping dei Trulli** (☎ 080 432 36 99; [www.campingdeitrulli.com](http://www.campingdeitrulli.com); Via Castellana Grotte, Km1.5; camping 2 people, car & tent €26.50, bungalows per person €22-30, trulli per person €30-44; 🅓 🅔 🅕) This well-equipped camp site is 1.5km out of town. It has a restaurant, market, two swimming pools, tennis courts and bicycle hire, and you can also rent *trulli* or mini-apartments.

**Trullidea** (☎ 080 432 38 60; [www.trullidea.it](http://www.trullidea.it); Via Monte San Gabriele 1; 2-person trulli from €63-149) A series of 20 renovated *trulli* in Alberobello's Trulli Zone, these are snug but can feel a bit dark as you're hemmed in by the other *trulli*. They're available on a self-catering, B&B, or half- or full-board basis.

**our pick Trattoria Amatulli** (☎ 080 432 29 79; Via Garibaldi 13; meals €15; ☎ Tue-Sun) Excellent trattoria with a cheerily cluttered interior papered with photos of smiley diners, plus superb down-to-earth dishes like *orecchietta al ragù con carne* ('little ears' pasta in a meat-and-tomato based sauce). Wash it down with the surprisingly drinkable house wine costing the lordly sum of €4 a litre.

**La Cantina** (☎ 080 432 34 73; Vico Lippolis 8; meals €20; ☎ Wed-Mon Jul-Sep) Although tourists

have discovered this place, it has maintained the high standards established back in 1958. There are just seven tables and one frenetic waiter, who serves dishes like *tagliolina* (fettuccine-style pasta) with porcini mushrooms and chestnuts, grilled meats and superb seasonal vegetables.

**Il Poeta Contadino** (☎ 080 432 19 17; Via Indipendenza 21; meals €60; 📧 Tue-Sun Feb-Dec) The dining room here has a medieval banqueting feel with its sumptuous decor and chandeliers. Although the tasting menu will set you back a cool €1000, you can dine for a lot less on dishes like guinea fowl with goose ham and black truffle (€23) or aubergine ravioli, seafood sauce and courgette julienne (€15).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Alberobello is easily accessible from Bari (€4.10, 1½ hours, hourly) on the FSE Bari—Taranto train line. From the station, walk straight ahead along Via Mazzini, which becomes Via Garibaldi, to reach Piazza del Popolo.

## Locorotondo

pop 14,000

Locorotondo (circular place) has an extraordinarily beautiful and whisper-quiet *centro storico*, where everything is shimmering white aside from the blood-red geraniums that tumble from the window boxes. Situated on a hilltop on the Murge plateau, it's a *borghi più belli d'Italia* ([www.borghitalia.it](http://www.borghitalia.it)), that is, it's rated as one of the most beautiful towns in Italy. The streets are paved with smooth ivory-coloured stones, with the church of **Santa Maria della Graecia** their sunbaked centrepiece.

From **Villa Comunale**, a public garden, you can enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding valley. You enter the historic quarter directly across from here.

The **tourist office** (☎ 080 431 30 99; [www.procolocorotondo.it](http://www.procolocorotondo.it); Piazza Vittorio Emanuele 27; 📧 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) is also in this part of town and offers free internet access.

Not only is this deepest *trulli* country, but it's also the liquid heart of the Puglian wine region. You simply cannot come to Locorotondo without sampling some of the local Spumante. You can do this at the local winery, **Cantina del Locorotondo** (☎ 080 431 16 44; [www.locorotondodoc.com](http://www.locorotondodoc.com); Via Madonna della Catena 99) run by congenial Oronzo Mastro.

**Truddhi** (☎ 080 443 13 26; [www.trulliresidence.it](http://www.trulliresidence.it); C da Tritto 292; per week €450-741) is a small cluster of self-catering *trulli* in the hamlet of Tritto near Locorotondo. It's run by Mino and Carole and, being a lecturer in gastronomy, Mino is happy to give cooking demonstrations.

Charming trattoria **U'Curdunn** (☎ 080 431 70 70; Via Dura 19; meals €25; 📧 9am-1am Sep-May, to 2am Wed-Mon Jun-Aug) is well signposted in the midst of the historic centre. It's an arched, cosy restaurant – a cool, dark lunch spot to steal into on a blazingly bright day. All produce here is organic and you can expect good service and a buzzing atmosphere.

In a narrow side street next to an ancient tunnel is the well-regarded **La Taverna del Duca** (☎ 080 431 30 07; Via Papadotero 3; meals €35), a serene place serving local classics such as *orecchiette* with various vegetable sidekicks. The antipasto is also particularly good.

Locorotondo is easily accessible by frequent trains from Bari (€4, 1½ to two hours) on the FSE Bari—Taranto train line.

## Cisternino

pop 12,050

An appealing hilltop town, slow-paced, whitewashed Cisternino has a charming *centro storico* beyond the bland modern outskirts. Beside its 13th-century **Chiesa Matrice** and **Torre Civica** there's a pretty communal garden with rural views. If you take Via Basilioni next to the tower you can amble along an elegant route right to the central piazza, Vittorio Emanuele.

Just outside the historic centre, the **tourist office** (☎ 080 444 77 38; [www.prolococisternino.it](http://www.prolococisternino.it); Via San Quirico 18 ☏ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) can advise on B&Bs in the historic centre, but be prepared to suitcase-trundle, as parking can be a problem.

Cisternino has a grand tradition of *fornello pronto* (ready-to-go roast or grilled meat) and in numerous butchers' shops and trattorias you can select a cut of meat, which is then promptly cooked on the spot. Try it under rustic whitewashed arches at **Trattoria La Botte** (☎ 080 444 78 50; Via Santa Lucia 47; meals €20; ☏ noon-3pm & 7pm-1am Mon-Wed & Sat Jun-Sep, to 11pm Oct-May), also serving up Pugliese favourites such as *fave e verdura* (beans and greens), which will bring a smile to the face of any vegetarian.

Cisternino is accessible by regular trains from Bari (€5.10, 45 minutes, three daily) on the FSE Bari—Taranto train line.

## Martina Franca

pop 49,100

The old quarter of this town has a southern Spain feel to it, with its blinding white houses, blood-red geraniums and lively, lived-in feel. There are graceful baroque and rococo buildings here too, plus airy piazzas and curlicue iron-work balconies that are so wide (and neighbourly) above the narrow streets that they almost touch. This town is the highest in the Murgia, and was founded in the 10th century by refugees fleeing the Arab invasion of Taranto. It only started to flourish in the 14th century when Philip of Anjou granted tax exemptions (*franchigie*, hence Franca); the town became so wealthy that a castle and defensive walls complete with 24 solid bastions were built. The modern-day town is just as comfortable and contented as its historic counterpart and is a prosperous wine-producing centre.

### ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The FSE train station is downhill from the historic centre. Go right along Viale della Stazione, continuing along Via Alessandro Fighera to Corso Italia; continue to the left along Corso Italia to Piazza XX Settembre.

The **tourist office** (☎ 080 480 57 02; Piazza Roma 37; ☏ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat, 4.30-7pm Tue & Thu, 9am-12.30pm Sat) is within Palazzo Ducale (part of the Bibliotece Comunale).

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## LUSH LOCATIONS

Puglia's most luxurious *masserias* (manor farms) cluster around Fasano, with discreet drives leading to worlds where the linen is soft, the pools glorious, the look rustic-regal and the golf courses pea-green.

**Masseria Torre Cocco** (☎ 080 482 93 10; [www.masseriatorrecocco.com](http://www.masseriatorrecocco.com); Contrada Cocco 8, Savelletri di Fasano; d €333-466; ☏ ☏ ☏), around 10km from Locorotondo, has a hacienda feel. This super-chic yet countrified *masseria* is housed in an evocative fortified farmhouse, with a glorious spa set in a cave, a beach-style swimming pool, spa and restaurant (meals €90). Next door is **Masseria Maizza** ([www.masseriatorremaizza.com](http://www.masseriatorremaizza.com); ☏ ☏ ☏). Run by the same people, it is a similarly

luxurious farm-complex conversion but is more contemporary and glamorous, and aimed at couples. The two *masserias* share a balmy beach club (about 4km away) and neighbouring golf course and also run cookery courses. Closer to the coast is the converted 16th-century **Masseria San Domenico** (☎ 080 482 77 69; [www.imasseria.com](http://www.imasseria.com); d €300-490, ste €430-650; ☒ ☑ ☒) with sumptuous rooms and a superb spa.

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## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Passing under the baroque **Arco di Sant'Antonio** at the western end of pedestrianised Piazza XX Settembre, you emerge into Piazza Roma, dominated by the imposing, elegant 17th-century **Palazzo Ducale**, built over an ancient castle and now used as municipal offices.

From Piazza Roma, follow the fine Corso Vittorio Emanuele, with baroque townhouses, to reach Piazza Plebiscito, the centre's baroque heart. The piazza is overlooked by the 18th-century **Basilica di San Martino**, its centrepiece city patron, St Martin, swinging a sword and sharing his cloak with a beggar.

Walkers can ask for the *Carta dei Sentieri del Bosco delle Pianelle* (free) from the tourist office which maps out 10 walks, with varying distances and level of difficulty, in the nearby **Bosco delle Pianelle** (around 10km west of town). This lush woodland is part of the larger **Riserva Naturale Regionale Orientata** which covers 1206 hectares of lofty trees, including silver ash and elm, and flora and fauna that includes wild orchids and a rich and varied birdlife with kestrels, owls, buzzards, hoopoe and sparrow hawks.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

**Festival della Valle d'Itria** is an annual music festival (late July to early August) featuring international performances of opera, classical and jazz. For information, contact the **Centro Artistico Musicale Paolo Grassi** (☎ 080 480 51 00; [www.festivaldellavalleditria.it](http://www.festivaldellavalleditria.it); ☎ 10am-1pm Mon-Fri) in the Palazzo Ducale.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**B&B San Martino** (☎ 080 48 56 01; <http://xoomer.virgilio.it/bed-and-breakfast-sanmartino>; Via Abate Fighera 32; 2-person apt €90-160, per week €300-700; ☒ ☑) A stylish B&B in an historic palace with rooms overlooking gracious Piazza XX Settembre. The apartments have exposed stone walls, shiny parquet floors, wrought-iron beds and small kitchenettes. Guests have the use of a pool some 3km away.

**Villaggio In** (☎ 080 480 50 21; [www.villaggioin.it](http://www.villaggioin.it); Via Arco Grassi 8; apt per week for 2/3/4/5/6 people €335-420/380-550/450-895/615-710/680-820) These charming arched apartments are located in original *centro storico* homes with steep stairs and small rooms. Antiques and whitewashed walls complete the traditional look.

**Ciacco** (☎ 080 480 04 72; Via Conte Ugolino; meals €20; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Dive into the historic centre to find Ciacco, a traditional restaurant with white-clad tables and a cosy fireplace, serving up Puglian cuisine in a modern key. It's tucked down a narrow pedestrian lane a couple of streets in from the Chiesa del Carmine.

**Due Gnelli** (☎ 080 430 28 27; Piazza Plebiscito 9; pizzas from €4.50, meals €20; ☎ Thu-Tue) Step into this shiny black-and-white dining space to enjoy surprisingly traditional dishes, like *orecchiette alle cime di rape* ('little ears' pasta with turnip tops) and *fritto misto* (fried seafood). Tables outside overlook this lovely square.

**Il Ritrovo degli Amici** (☎ 080 483 92 49; Corso Messapia 8; meals €35; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun Mar-Jan) This excellent restaurant, with stone walls and vaulting, has a convivial atmosphere

oiled by the region's Spumante. Dishes are traditional with salamis and sausages the specialities.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

Take the **FSE** (☎ 080 546 21 11) train from Bari (€4.90, two hours, hourly) or Taranto (€2.40, 40 minutes, seven daily).

FSE buses serve Alberobello (€1.50, 30 minutes, five daily Monday to Saturday) and Lecce (€6, two hours, seven daily).

Buses III and IV connect the FSE train station, down on the plain, with Piazza XX Settembre.

## Ostuni

**pop 32,800**

Ostuni shines like a pearly white tiara, extending across three hills, with the magnificent gem of a cathedral as its sparkling centrepiece. It's the end of the *trulli* region and the beginning of the hot, dry Penisola Salentina. Chic, with some excellent restaurants, stylish bars and swish yet intimate places to stay, it's packed in summer.

## ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

From Piazza della Libertà, where the new town meets the old, take Via Cattedrale to the cathedral. Turn right for a view across the olive groves to the Adriatic Sea, or turn left to get agreeably lost in whitewashed lanes.

Ostuni's **tourist office** (☎ 0831 30 12 68; Corso Mazzini 8; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-9pm Mon-Fri, 5.30-8.30pm Sat & Sun), off Piazza della Libertà, can organise guided visits of the town and bike rental.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Museo di Cività Preclassiche della Murgia** (☎ 0831 33 63 83; Via Cattedrale 15; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Thu, 3.30-7pm Sun Apr-Oct, 3.30-7pm Tue & Thu Nov-Mar), in the Convento delle Monacelle, is most famous for the 25,000-year-old star of the show: Delia. She was pregnant at the time of her death and her well-preserved skeleton was found in a local cave. Many of the finds here come from the Palaeolithic burial ground, now the **Parco Archeologico e Naturale di Arignano**, which can be visited by appointment (ask at the museum). Close to the museum is Ostuni's dramatic 15th-century **cathedral** with its superbly preserved rose window.

Ostuni is surrounded by olive groves so this is the place to buy some of the region's DOC 'Collina di Brindisi' – either delicate, medium or strong – direct from producers such as **Cooperativa Agricola Sololio** (☎ 0831 33 29 52; [www.ulivetibruno.it](http://www.ulivetibruno.it), in Italian; Corso Mazzini 7).

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Ostuni's annual feast day, **La Cavalcata**, is held on 26 August, when processions of horsemen dressed in glittering red-and-white uniforms (resembling Indian grooms on their way to be wed) follow the statue of Sant'Oronzo around town.

## SLEEPING

**Le Sole Blu** (☎ 0831 30 38 56; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 16; s €30-40, d €60-80) In the 18th-century (rather than medieval) part of town, there is just one room available here and it is delightful: large and homey with comfortable furniture, a separate entrance and a visiting fluffy white cat.

**La Terra** (☎ 0831 33 66 51; [www.laterrahotel.it](http://www.laterrahotel.it); Via Petrarolo; s €80-105, d €130-170 ☎ ☎) This



former 13th-century palace offers atmospheric and stylish accommodation with original niches, dark-wood beams and furniture, and contrasting light stonework and whitewash. The result is a cool contemporary look. The bar is as cavernous as they come – it is tunnelled out of a cave.

**Il Frantoio** (☎ 0832 33 02 76; [www.trecolline.it](http://www.trecolline.it); SS16, Km874; per person €88-108; 🍷) For a country-house stay, head to this charming, whitewashed farmhouse, where the owners still live and work, producing high-quality organic olive oil. (Or else book yourself in for one of the marathon 10-course Sunday lunches; the food is unbelievably good here.) Il Frantoio lies 5km outside Ostuni along the SS16 in the direction of Fasano. You'll see the sign on your left-hand side when you reach the Km874 sign.

**Borgo San Marco** (☎ 080 439 57 57; [www.borgosanmarco.it](http://www.borgosanmarco.it); s €105-135, d €160-180) Another working farm producing luscious olive oil, this restored 15th-century structure is a 14-room hotel, and is traditional with a bohemian edge. Nearby are some frescoed rock churches to explore. It's 8km from Ostuni. To get here take the SS379 in the direction of Bari, exiting at the sign that says SC San Marco – Zona Industriale Sud Fasano, then follow the signs. Note that there's a one-week minimum stay in August.

## EATING

**Osteria Piazzetta Cattedrale** (☎ 0831 33 50 26; Via Arcidiacono Trinchera 7; meals €25; 🍷) Just beyond the arch opposite Ostuni's cathedral is this tiny little hostelry serving up magical food. The menu includes plenty of vegetarian options, like *frittelle di verdure miste profumate alla menta su salsa de yogurt* (vegetable fritter with a yoghurt and mint sauce). The service is attentive, and the atmosphere deeply contented.

**Osteria del Tempo Perso** (☎ 0831 30 33 20; Gaetano Tanzarella Vitale 47; meals €30; 🍷 dinner daily, lunch Sun) A sophisticated rustic restaurant in a former bakery, this laid-back place serves great Pugliese food, specialising in roasted meats. To get here, face the cathedral's south wall and turn right through two archways into Largo Giuseppe Spennati, then follow the signs to the restaurant.

**Porta Nova** (☎ 0831 33 89 83; Via G Petrarolo 38; meals €45; 🍷 Thu-Tue) This restaurant has a wonderful location on the old city wall. Revel in the rolling views from the terrace or relax in the elegant interior while you feast on top-notch local cuisine, with fish and seafood the speciality. Try the prawns from Gallipoli.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

STP buses run to Brindisi (€2.90, 50 minutes, six daily), leaving from Piazza Italia in the newer part of Ostuni, and to Martina Franca (€2, 45 minutes, five daily).

Trains run frequently to Brindisi (€3, 30 minutes) and Bari (€4.90, two hours). A half-hourly local bus covers the 2.5km between the station and town.

## Oria

**pop 15,400**

The multicoloured dome of Oria's **cathedral** can be seen for miles around, surrounded by the narrow streets of this appealing medieval town. An intriguing, if ghoulish, sight is the cathedral's **Cripta delle Mummie** (Crypt of the Mummies), where 11 mummified corpses of former monks are still preserved. Surmounting the town, the Frederick II **castle** (☎ 0831 84 00 09; 🍷 9.30am-12.30pm Mar-Oct, 3.30-6.30pm Mar—mid-Jun & mid-Sep-Oct, 5-8pm mid-Jun—mid-Sep, by appointment in winter), built in a triangle shape, has been carefully restored and has a pretty garden.

Stay at **Borgo di Oria** (☎ 329 2307506; [www.borgodioria.it](http://www.borgodioria.it); ste €70-75; 🍷), run by the helpful

Francesco Pipino, recommended by readers and offering 10 characterful self-catering suites (with kitchenettes) in the historic centre.

Dating back to Frederick II's reign, **Il Torneo dei Rioni**, in mid-August, is the annual battle between the town's quarters. It takes the form of a spectacular medieval *palio* (horse race).

Oria is on the main Trenitalia line and there are frequent serves from both Brindisi and Taranto. You can also connect with Ostuni and change at Francavilla Fontana for Alberobello and Martina Franca.

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## **BRINDISI**

**pop 87,900**

Like all ports, Brindisi has its seamy side, but it's also surprisingly slow-paced and balmy, particularly the palm-lined Corso Garibaldi linking the port to the train station and the promenade stretching along the interesting seafront.

The town was the end of the ancient Roman road, Via Appia, down whose weary length trudged legionnaires and pilgrims, crusaders and traders all heading to Greece and the Near East. These days little has changed except Brindisi's pilgrims are sun-seekers rather than soul-seekers.

### **Orientation**

The new port is east of town, across the Seno di Levante at Costa Morena, in a bleak industrial wilderness.

The old port is about 1km from the train station along Corso Umberto I, which leads into Corso Garibaldi where there are numerous cafes, shops, ferry companies and travel agencies.

### **Information**

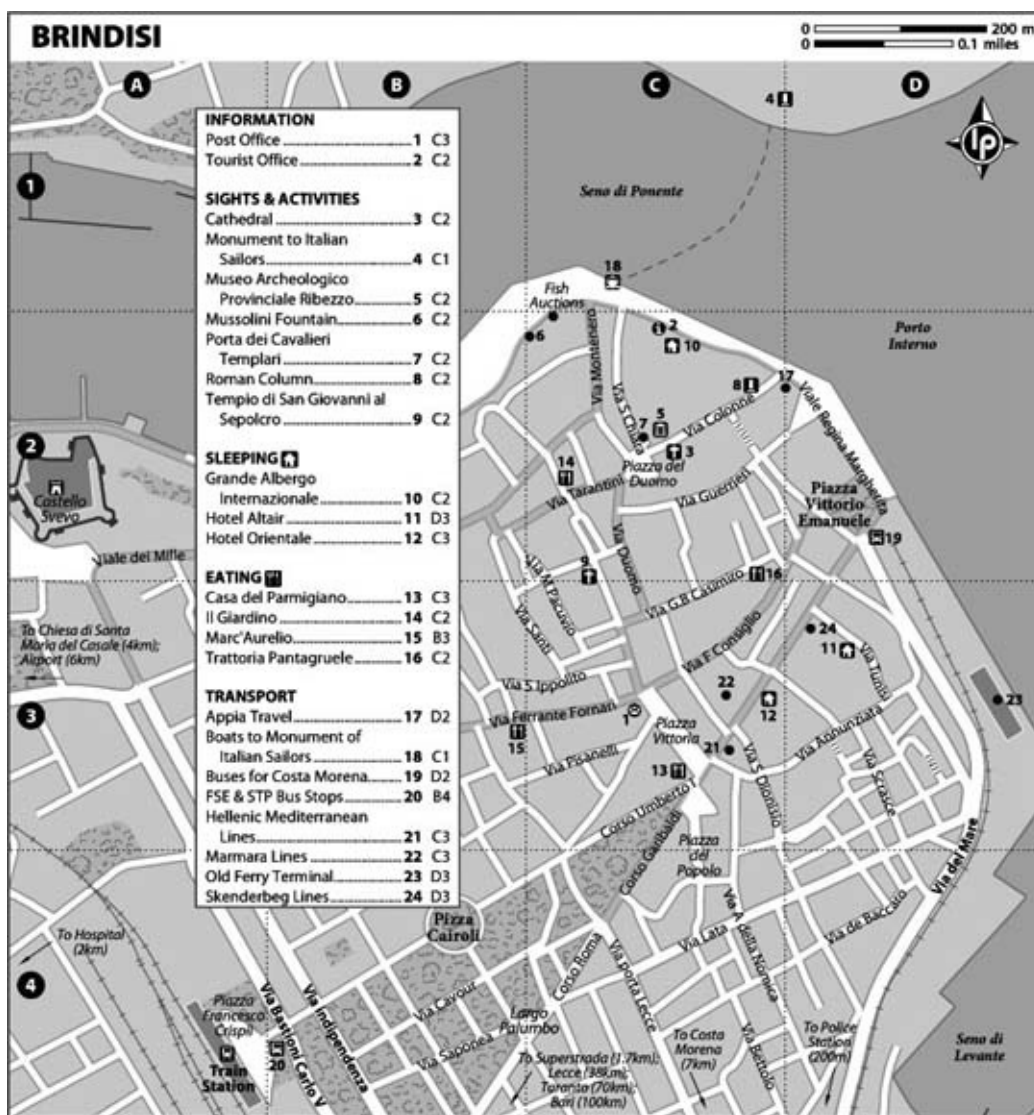
Corso Umberto I and Corso Garibaldi bristle with currency-exchange offices and banks, and several cafes have the internet.

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## **THE BIG BELCHER**

It's not on the 'A' list, it's on the 'P' (for pollution) list. The smoking tower stacks that welcome you to Brindisi are from its major power plant, which the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has listed as number nine in Europe for the amount of CO2 produced, some 22.8 million tonnes annually. As we all know by now, CO2 is recognised as being one of the principal causes of global warning and the EU directive is to reduce this by 30% by 2020. On a more flippant note, this is an example of how, when it comes to industrial big brother, the unrelenting no-smoking ban in Italy does not appear to extend to the country's ultimate big puffer.

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**Ferries** ([www.ferries.gr](http://www.ferries.gr)) Details of ferry fares and time-tables to Greek destinations.

**Hospital** (☎ 0831 53 71 11; SS7 for Mesagne) Southwest of the centre.

**Police station** (☎ 0831 54 31 11; Via Bastioni S Giacomo)

**Post office** (☎ 0831 56 09 61; Piazza Vittoria)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0831 52 30 72; Viale Regina Margherita 44; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9.30am-1.30pm Sat Sep-Jun, 3.30-9pm Sat & 5-9pm Sun Jul & Aug) Has a wealth of information and brochures on the area. If you are interested in pedal power, pick up *Le Vie Verdi* map ([www.ciclomici.it](http://www.ciclomici.it)) with eight bicycling routes in the Brindisi area, ranging from 6km to 30km.

## Sights & Activities

For centuries, two great **Roman columns** marked the imperial Via Appia terminus at Brindisi. One was presented to the town of **Lecce** back in 1666 as thanks to Sant'Oronzio for having relieved Brindisi of the plague. The other is *in situ*, a delicate, gleaming white column above a sweeping set of sun-whitened stairs. Legend has it that the Roman poet Virgil died in a house nearby after returning from Greece. A little further west along the promenade is a **fountain**, unmistakably the work of Il Duco (Mussolini).

In the small historic quarter, the sand-coloured **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri & Sun, 8am-noon Sat) was built in the 11th century but then substantially remodelled about 700 years later. You can see how it may have looked from the nearby **Porta dei Cavalieri Templari**, a fanciful portico with pointy arches – all that remains of the Knights Templar's main church. Their other church, the **Tempio di San Giovanni al Sepolcro** (Via San Giovanni), is a square brown bulk of Norman stone

conforming to the circular plan the Templars so loved.

Abutting the cathedral's north side is the superb **Museo Archeologico Provinciale Ribezzo** (☎ 0831 56 55 08; Piazza del Duomo 8; admission free; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sat, plus Sun, 3.30-6.30pm Tue, Thu & Sat, 10am-1pm & 5-8pm Sun) which was substantially expanded in 2009 and now covers several floors with well-documented exhibits (in English) including some 3000 bronze sculptures and fragments in Hellenistic Greek style, terracotta figurines from the 7th century, and Roman statues and heads (not always together).

Another main sight is the **Chiesa di Santa Maria del Casale** (🕒 8am-8pm), located 4km north, towards the airport. Built by Prince Philip of Taranto around 1300, the church mixes up Puglian Romanesque, Gothic and Byzantine styles, with a Byzantine banquet of interior frescoes. The immense *Last Judgement* on the entrance wall, full of blood and thunder, is the work of Rinaldo di Taranto.

Take one of the regular boats (return ticket bought on land/board €1.80/1.75) on Viale Regina Margherita across the harbour to the **Monument to Italian Sailors**, erected by Mussolini in 1933, for a wonderful view of Brindisi's waterfront.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Altair** (☎ 0831 56 22 89; Via Giudea 4; s €30, d €40-50) Hidden in a sidestreet off Corso Garibaldi, this modest hotel has seen better days; the rooms' arched high ceilings suggest a more glamorous past. It's ideal for early morning departures, though, as the port bus stop is a short walk away.

**Hotel Orientale** (☎ 0831 56 84 51; Corso Garibaldi 40; [www.hotelorientale.it](http://www.hotelorientale.it); s/d €98/130; 📞 📺) This sleek, modern hotel overlooks the long palm-lined *corso*. The decor has benefited from a recent revamp and rooms have shiny parquet floors, contemporarily tiled bathrooms and Sky TV. A new fitness centre, private car park and (rare) cooked breakfast option are agreeable extras.

**Grande Albergo Internazionale** (☎ 0831 52 34 73; [www.albergointernazionale.it](http://www.albergointernazionale.it); Viale Regina Margherita 23; s/d €160/250; 📞 📺 📶) This 19th-century palace was built for English merchants en route to Bombay and the Raj. It has great harbour views, large rooms with grandly draped curtains, and is the kind of place you could imagine maiden aunts coming on holiday for the sea air.

## Eating

**Il Giardino** (☎ 0831 22 40 26; Via Tarantini 14-18; meals €30; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Established more than 40 years ago in a restored 15th-century *palazzo*, sophisticated Il Giardino serves refined seafood and meat dishes in a delightful garden setting.

**Trattoria Pantagruelle** (☎ 0831 56 06 05; Via Salita di Ripalta 1; meals €40; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Named after French writer François Rabelais' satirical character, this charming trattoria three blocks from the waterfront serves up excellent fish and grilled meats, as well as scrumptious home-made desserts.

**Marc' Aurelio** (☎ 0831 52 17 73; Via Ferrante Fornari 26; meals €55; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) In a beautiful, historic building, this classy restaurant and oyster bar is *the* place for simple, exquisitely cooked seafood. Finish with the local speciality *spumone* (a hazelnut ice-cream confection). There's a garden terrace.

**Casa del Parmigiano** (Piazza Vittoria 11) A wonderful shop for cheese lovers, selling great wheels of *parmigiano* and local and national cheeses.

# Getting There & Away

## AIR

From **Papola Casale** (BDS; [www.seap-puglia.it](http://www.seap-puglia.it)), Brindisi's small airport, there are internal flights to Rome, Naples and Milan. The airport is served mainly by Alitalia, AirOne and Myair. There are also direct flights from London Stansted with Ryanair. Flights are scarce in winter.

Major and local car-rental firms are represented at the airport and there are regular SITA buses to Lecce (€5.30, 50 minutes, eight daily) and STP buses to central Brindisi (€3.30, 40 minutes, nine daily).

## BOAT

Ferries, all of which take vehicles, leave Brindisi for Greek destinations including Corfu, Igoumenitsa and Patras, from where there's a bus to Athens. Boats also serve Albania (daily) and Turkey and the Ionian islands (seasonally).

Most ferry companies operate from June to August. All have offices at Costa Morena (the newer port), and the major ones also have offices in town. There's a tax of €10 per person and car. Check in at least two hours before departure or you risk losing your reservation.

FERRY CROSSINGS FROM BRINDISI		
Destination	Cost (€)* seat/bed**/car	Duration (hr)
Cesme, Turkey	88/122/159	19
Corfu, Greece	132/185/109	12
Cephalonia, Greece	146/226/113	12
Igoumenitsa, Greece	114/193/120	9-12
Patras, Greece	133/194/110	15-20
Vlore, Albania	93/122/97	8½

\*cost of a return ticket in high season \*\*in 4-person cabin

**Hellenic Mediterranean Lines** (☎ 0831 52 85 31; [www.hml.it](http://www.hml.it); Corso Garibaldi 8) To Corfu, Igoumenitsa and Patras (April to October), to Cefalonia (June to September) and the Ionian islands (July and August).

**Marmara Lines** (☎ 0831 56 86 33; [www.marmaralines.com](http://www.marmaralines.com); Corso Garibaldi 19) Twice weekly ferry to Cesme (Turkey). Departs Saturday and Wednesday at 10.30am and 11.30am respectively.

**Skenderbeg Lines** (☎ 0831 52 54 48; [www.skenderbeglines.com](http://www.skenderbeglines.com); Corso Garibaldi 88) Ferries most days to Vlore (Valona; in Albania).

**SNAV** (☎ 0831 52 54 92; [www.snav.it](http://www.snav.it)) Ferries to Corfu and on to Paxos.

## BUS

Buses operated by **STP** (☎ 0831 54 92 45) go to Ostuni (€2.90, 50 minutes, six daily) and Lecce (€3.30, 45 minutes, two daily), as well as towns throughout the Penisola Salentina. Most leave from Via Bastioni Carlo V, in front of the train station. **Ferrovie del Sud-Est** (FSE; ☎ 800 07 90 90) buses serving local towns also leave from here.

**Marozzi** (☎ 0831 52 16 84) runs to Rome's Stazione Tiburtina (€36 to €40, 8½ hours, four daily). **Appia Travel** (☎ 0831 52 16 84; Viale Regina Margherita 8-9) sells tickets.

## TRAIN

Brindisi is on the main **Trenitalia** train line and trains run regularly to Bari (from €6.80, 1¼ hours), Lecce (from €8.10, 30 minutes) and Taranto (from €5.10, 1¼ hours). Other destinations include Milan (€65 to €86, 9½ hours) and Rome (€47 to €67, six hours).

# Getting Around

A free minibus connects the train station and old ferry terminal with Costa Morena. It departs two hours before boat departures. You'll need a valid ferry ticket.

To reach the airport take the Cotrap bus from Via Bastoni Carlo V (€5, 15 minutes).

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## LECCE

**pop 91,600**

Central, historic Lecce is a beautiful baroque town; a glorious architectural confection of palaces and churches intricately sculpted from the soft local sandstone. It is a city full of surprises: one minute you are perusing sleek designer fashions from Milan, the next you are faced with a church, dizzyingly decorated with asparagus column tops, decorative dodos and cavorting gremlins. Swooning 18th-century traveller Thomas Ashe thought it 'the most beautiful city in Italy', but the less-impressed Marchese Grimaldi said the facade of Santa Croce made him think a lunatic was having a nightmare.

Either way, it's a lively, graceful university town, packed with upmarket boutiques, antique shops and furniture restorers. There are also some excellent restaurants here, and the city is convenient for both the Adriatic and Ionian Seas: it's a great base for exploring the Penisola Salentina.

## Orientation

The train station is 1km southwest of Lecce's historic centre. The centre's twin main squares are Piazza Sant'Oronzo and Piazza del Duomo, linked by pedestrianised Corso Vittorio Emanuele.

## Information

You'll find banks on and around Piazza Sant'Oronzo.

**Clio.com** (Via Fazzi 11; per hr €4; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Central internet cafe.

**CTS** (☎ 0832 30 18 62; Via Palmieri 89) Travel agency for youth bargain fares.

**Hospital** (☎ 0832 66 11 11; Via San Cesario) About 2km south of the centre on the Gallipoli road.

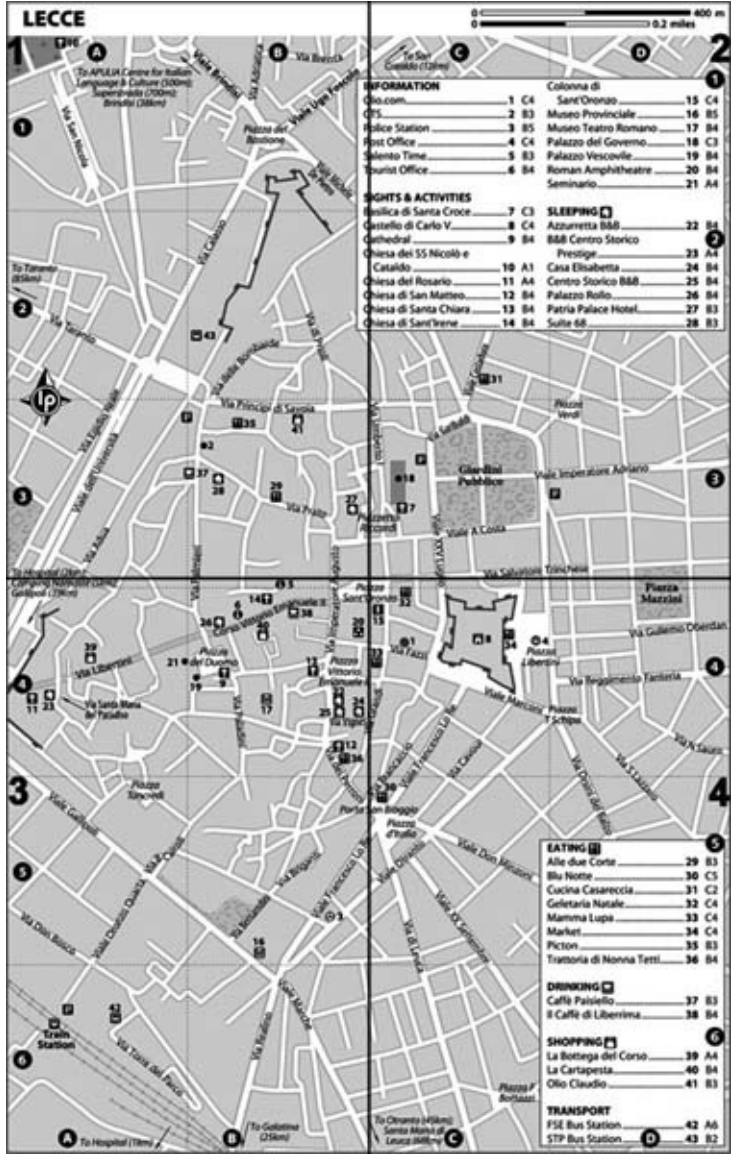
**Liberrima** (☎ 0832 24 26 26; Corte del Cicala 1; ☎ 10am-midnight Tue-Sat, 4.30pm-midnight Sun & Mon) Stylish bookshop with guides and music.

**Police station** (☎ 0832 69 11 11; Viale Otranto 1)

**Post office** (Piazza Libertini)

**Salento Time** (☎ 0832 30 36 86; [www.salentotime.it](http://www.salentotime.it); Via Revina Isabella 22; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat) Independent tourist office which can provide help with accommodation, as well as bike rental (per day €10) and internet access (per hr €3).

**Tourist office** (☎ 0832 24 80 92; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 24; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4.30-9pm Mon-Sat)

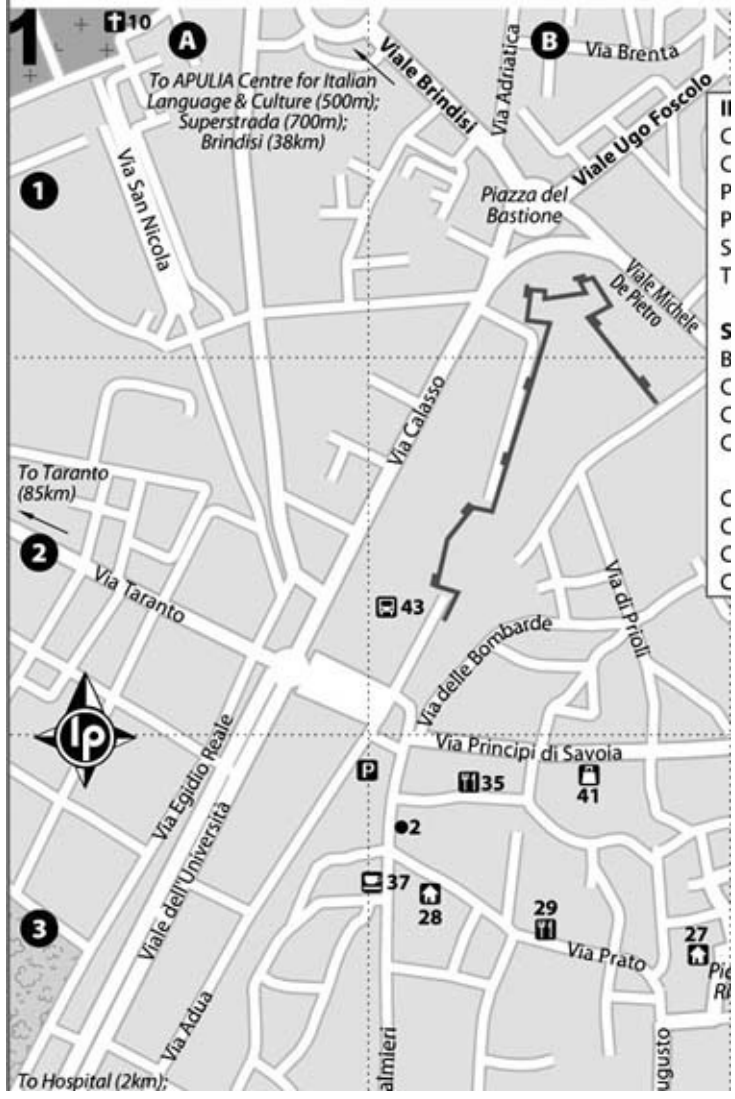


**LECCE**

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# LECCE

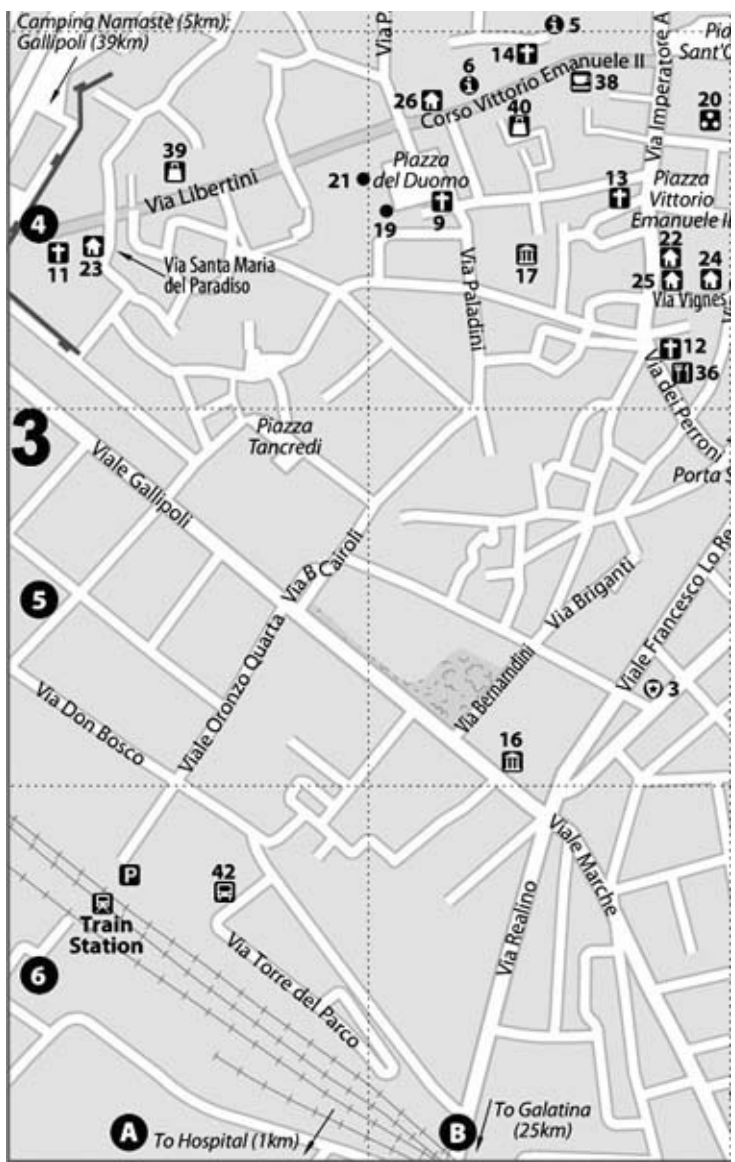






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Castello di Carlo V.....	8 C4	B&B Centro Storico.....	23 A4
Cathedral.....	9 B4	Prestige.....	24 B4
Chiesa dei SS Nicolò e Cataldo.....	10 A1	Casa Elisabetta.....	25 B4
Chiesa del Rosario.....	11 A4	Centro Storico B&B.....	26 B4
Chiesa di San Matteo.....	12 B4	Palazzo Rollo.....	27 B3
Chiesa di Santa Chiara.....	13 B4	Patria Palace Hotel.....	28 B3
Chiesa di Sant'Irene.....	14 B4	Suite 68.....	28 B3







## Sights

Lecce has more than 40 churches and at least as many *palazzi*, all built or renovated between the 17th and 18th centuries, giving the city an extraordinary cohesion. Two of the main proponents of *barocco leccese* (Lecce baroque – the craziest, most lavish decoration imaginable) were brothers Antonio and Giuseppe Zimbalo, who both had a hand in the fantastical Basilica di Santa Croce.

### BASILICA DI SANTA CROCE

It seems that hallucinating stonemasons have been at work on the **Basilica di Santa Croce** (☎ 0832 24 19 57; Via Umberto I; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 5-9pm). Sheep, dodos, cherubs and beasties writhe across the facade, a swirling magnificent allegorical feast. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries a team of artists – under Giuseppe Zimbalo – laboured to work the building up to this pitch.

The interior is more conventionally Renaissance and deserves a look, once you've finished swooning outside. Zimbalo also left his mark in the former Convento dei Celestini, just north of the basilica, which is now the **Palazzo del Governo**, the local government headquarters.

### PIAZZA DEL DUOMO

Piazza del Duomo is a baroque feast, the city's focal point and a sudden open space amid the surrounding enclosed lanes. During times of invasion the inhabitants of Lecce would barricade themselves in the square, with its conveniently narrow entrances. The 12th-century **cathedral** (☎ 6.30am-noon & 4-6.30pm)

is one of Giuseppe Zimbalo's finest works – he was also responsible for the towering, 68m-high **bell tower**. The cathedral is unusual in that it has two facades, one on the western end and the other, more ornate, facing the piazza. It's framed by the 15th-century **Palazzo Vescovile** (Episcopal Palace) and the 18th-century **Seminario** (☎ exhibitions only), designed by Giuseppe Cino.

## ROMAN REMAINS

Below the ground level of Piazza Sant'Oronzo is the restored 2nd-century-AD **Roman amphitheatre** (admission €2; ☎ 10am-noon & 4-6pm), discovered in 1901 by construction workers. It was excavated in the 1930s to reveal a perfect horseshoe with seating for 15,000. Nearby rises the **Colonna di Sant'Oronzo**, a statue of Lecce's patron saint, perched precariously on the second pillar from Via Appia – the Roman road that stretched from Rome to Brindisi.

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## LECCE IN ...

### One Day

Ponder the sumptuous facades of the *palazzi* (mansions), churches and not-so-plain old buildings on Via Libertini before heading for the Roman amphitheatre and a quick duck into fascinating **Museo Teatro Romano**. Head for an outdoor cafe on Piazza Sant'Oronzo for a cappuccino. All that froth should be good preparation for the fanciful **Basilica di Santa Croce** (above); worth at least an hour of your time.

It's late morning by now, time to cool down with a Campari and ice across the way at the delightful art-deco bar at the **Patria Palace Hotel**. Duly energised – and relaxed – stroll to the entertaining mix of shops on Corso Vittorio Emanuele, checking out the classy coffee-table books at **Librerrima** (above), before lunching on typical Pugliese fare at firmly traditional **Alle due Corti**.

If you are a stride-out sort of person, you can walk off the pasta and beans by heading across town to the excellent **Museo Provinciale**. If not, no worries, Lecce's baroque feast of *palazzi*-flanked streets (like Via Palmieri), **churches** and **cathedral** (above) will keep you simpering happily till dinner time. Crown your day in style with a meal at **Picton** housed in a wonderful old *palazzo*. Stroll back to your hotel via the Basilica, which is spectacularly lit up at night.

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The small Roman theatre near here was also uncovered in the 1930s – a neat little arc hemmed between buildings. It contains the **Museo Teatro Romano** (☎ 0832 27 91 96; Via Ammirati; admission €2.60; ☎ 9.30am-1pm Mon-Sat), with well-preserved russet-coloured Roman mosaics and frescoes.

## CHURCHES

On Corso Vittorio Emanuele, the interior of 17th-century **Chiesa di Sant'Irene** contains a magnificent pair of mirror-image baroque altarpieces, facing each other across the transept. Opening hours are sporadic due to ongoing reformation. Other notable baroque churches include **Chiesa di Santa Chiara** (Piazza Vittorio Emanuele; ☎ 9.30-11.30am daily, 4.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat), with every niche a swirl of twisting columns and ornate statuary; 200m to its south, the **Chiesa di San Matteo** (Via dei Perroni 29; ☎ 9am-12.30pm Tue-Sun, 4-7.30pm daily); and the last work of Giuseppe Zimbalo, **Chiesa del Rosario** (Via Libertini). Instead of the intended dome roof, it ended up with a quick-fix wooden one following Zimbalo's death before the building was completed. The **Chiesa dei SS Nicolò e Cataldo** (Via San Nicola; ☎ 9am-noon, Sep-Apr, 5-7pm Jun-Aug), near Porta Napoli, was built by the Normans in 1180. It got caught up in the city's baroque frenzy and was revamped in 1716 by the prolific Cino, who retained the Romanesque rose window and portal.

## OTHER SIGHTS

The **Museo Provinciale** (☎ 0832 68 35 03; Via Gallipoli 28; admission free; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 2.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun) stylishly covers 10,000 years of history, from Palaeolithic and Neolithic bits and bobs to a handsome display of Greek and Roman jewels, weaponry and ornaments. The stars of the show are the Messapians, who were making jaunty jugs and bowls centuries before the Greeks arrived to give them any pottery lessons. There are also some excellent temporary exhibitions.

Lecce's 16th-century **Castello di Carlo V** (admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-8.30pm) was built around a 12th-century Norman tower to the orders of Charles V. It consists of two concentric trapezoidal structures. It's been used as a prison, a court, and military headquarters; now you can wander around the baronial spaces and visit the occasional art exhibition.

## Activities

The countryside surrounding Lecce is perfect for cycling. **Ciclovagando** (☎ 339 5967280; [www.ciclovagando.com](http://www.ciclovagando.com); Via di Savoia 19, Mesagne; €120) organise guided full-day tours, including bike rental and helmets, with a choice of three to four itineraries. Each tour covers approximately 20km and they depart daily from Lecce (as well as Matera, Trani and Castellana Grotte).

## Courses

**Apulia Centre for Italian Language & Culture** (☎ 0832 39 03 12; [www.apuliadomus.com](http://www.apuliadomus.com); Via Adriatica 10-12) An established school offering group or individual tuition in Italian for foreigners, this has good facilities and runs lots of activities.

**Awaiting Table** ([www.awaitingtable.com](http://www.awaitingtable.com); day/weeklong course €350/2145) Silvestro Silvestori's splendid cooking and wine school provides day or weeklong courses with tours, tastings and noteworthy lecturers.

## Sleeping

Lecce's burgeoning B&B scene offers the best-value accommodation.

**Casa Elisabetta** (☎ 0832 30 70 52; [www.beb-lecce.com](http://www.beb-lecce.com); Via Vignes 15; s/d €30/55) An elegant mansion that's centred on a graceful courtyard close to Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, this has nice, stately rooms, and is efficient and well run.

**Azzurretta B&B** (☎ 0832 24 22 11; [www.bblecce.it](http://www.bblecce.it); s €30-38, d €55-70) The friendly brother of Centro Storico (below) runs this shabbier version located within the same building. The parking (for both) is a major plus.

**Centro Storico B&B** (☎ 0832 24 27 27; [www.bedandbreakfast.lecce.it](http://www.bedandbreakfast.lecce.it); Via Vignes 2b; s €35-40, d €52-100; 📄 🚗) The rooms and suites in this charming 16th-century hideaway are stylish and colourful; think dark-pink walls in the suite. There is a rooftop terrace with sunloungers and views.

**B&B Centro Storico Prestige** (☎ 0832 24 33 53; [www.bbprestige-lecce.it](http://www.bbprestige-lecce.it); Via Santa Maria del Paradiso 4; s €60-70, d €70-90; 📄 🚗) In the historic centre with tonnes of character. Rooms are light, airy and beautifully finished, with traditional furnishings and small balconies. There's also a pretty, communal suntrap terrace with views over San Giovanni Battista church.

**our pick Suite 68** (☎ 0832 30 35 06; [www.kalekora.it](http://www.kalekora.it); Via Prato; r €80-120; 🚗) This place has a North African feel with light streaming in the large bright rooms, painted in desert hues and decorated with vividly coloured rugs. Room 1 has a luxurious, sea-blue mosaic-tiled tub. Bikes available.

**Palazzo Rollo** (☎ 0832 30 71 52; [www.palazzorollo.it](http://www.palazzorollo.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 14; d €90-120, 4-person studio €100; 📄 📺) Stay in a 17th-century palace – the family seat for over 200 years. The three grand B&B suites (with kitchenettes) have high curved ceilings and chandeliers. Downstairs, contemporary-chic studios open onto an ivy-hung courtyard. The rooftop garden has wonderful views.

**Patria Palace Hotel** (☎ 0832 24 51 11; [www.patriapalacelecce.com](http://www.patriapalacelecce.com); Piazzetta Riccardi 13; s €106-210, d €165-350; 📄 📺 📺 📶) This sumptuous hotel has comfortable carpeted rooms with large mirrors, dark-wood furniture and wistful murals. The location is wonderful, the bar gloriously art deco with a magnificent carved ceiling, and the shady roof terrace has views over the Basilica di Santa Croce.

## Eating

### RESTAURANTS

**Trattoria di Nonna Tetti** (☎ 0832 24 60 36; Piazzetta Regina Maria 28; meals €15-20; 📄 lunch Tue-Sun dinner daily) A warmly inviting restaurant that is popular with all ages and budgets and serves a wide choice of traditional dishes. Try the most emblematic Pugliese dish here – braised wild chicory with a puree of boiled dried *fava* beans, along with very more-ish *contorni* (side dishes) like *patate casarecce* (home-made thinly sliced fries).

**Alle due Corti** (☎ 0832 24 22 23; [www.alleduecorti.com](http://www.alleduecorti.com); Corte dei Giugni 1; meals €15-20) For a taste of sunny Salentina, check out this no-frills, fiercely traditional restaurant. The seasonal menu is classic Pugliese, written in a dialect that even some Italians struggle with. Go for the real deal with a dish of *tajeddha* (layered potatoes, rice and mussels) or *ciceri e tria* (crisply fried pasta with chickpeas).

**Mamma Lupa** (☎ 340 7832765; Via Acaja 12; meals €15-20; 📄 Tue-Sun) Looking and tasting suitably rustic, this *osteria* serves proper peasant food – such as roast tomatoes, potatoes and artichokes, or horse meatballs – in snug surroundings with just a few tables surrounded by dark ochre walls.

**Blu Notte** (☎ 0832 30 42 86; Via Brancaccio 3; meals €30) Highly recommended by locals, this place is famed for its spectacular antipasti and wonderful seafood. It's a relaxed, pretty place, just by Porta San Biaggio at the edge of the bar district, with outside tables.

**Picton** (☎ 0832 33 23 83; Via Idomeneo 14; meals €35; 📄 Tue-Sun) This backstreet restaurant has an elegant dress-for-dinner feel. It is housed in an old *palazzo* with a cool barrel-vaulted interior and a refreshing internal garden, and the cuisine is traditional with a twist, including dishes such as *saltimbocca* (veal dish with sage and prosciutto meaning 'leap in the mouth').

**Cucina Casareccia** (☎ 0832 24 51 78; Viale Costadura 19; meals €40; 📄 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) Ring the bell to gain entry here. This place feels more like a private home, with its patterned cement floor tiles, desk piled high with papers, and charming owner Carmela Perrone. She'll whisk you through a dazzling array of Salentine dishes from the true *cucina povera* (cooking of the poor), including horsemeat done here in a *salsa piccante* (spicy sauce). Booking is a must.

Pick up your own ingredients at Lecce's fresh-produce **market** (Piazza Libertini; 📄 mornings Mon-Sat).

### CAFÉS & GELATARIE

**Caffè Paisiello** (☎ 0832 30 14 04; Via Palmieri 72; 📄 7am-midnight) Popular with shoppers, this high-ceilinged cafe has excellent light snacks and a charming old-fashioned feel. There are some outside tables.

**Il Caffè di Liberrima** (☎ 0832 24 26 26; Corte dei Cicala; 📄 8am-1am) Tables fill the little square next

to the bookshop and *enoteca* (wine bar) on the central pedestrianised strip – an ideal place to watch the world amble past. Service is slow enough for the bookshop to come in handy.

**Gelateria Natale** (☎ 0832 25 60 60; Via Trinchese 7a; 🕒 8am-1am) Lecce's best ice cream – you might have to queue but this will give you time to choose. It's also a fabulous confectioner, gleaming with jewel-like treats, truffles, panna cotta and dark chocolate cakes that pool like oil slicks on golden plates.

## Drinking

Via Imperatore Augusto is full of bars, and on a summer's night feels like one long party. Wander along to find somewhere to settle. Otherwise, Il Caffè di Liberrima (above) is good for a drink.

## Shopping

Lecce's streets are lined with pretty boutiques, well-stocked bookshops, cake shops and inviting delicatessens.

**La Cartapesta** (☎ 0832 24 34 10; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 27) Lecce is famous for its papier-mâché figures. You can buy handcrafted figurines (including a commemorative model of Pope John Paul II) in this, Claudio Riso's workshop.

**La Bottega del Corso** (☎ 0832 24 98 66; Via Libertini 52; 🕒 8.30am-1.15pm daily, plus 4.30-8.30pm Thu-Tue) A well-stocked deli full of typical produce and freshly baked breads.

**Olio Claudio** (☎ 0832 82 29 04; [www.olioclaudio.com](http://www.olioclaudio.com); Via Principi di Savoia 43) This small oil-packed shop is where to head for some classy olive oil. A litre starts from €4.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

**STP** (☎ 0832 35 91 42) runs buses to Brindisi (€3.30, 45 minutes, two daily) and throughout Puglia from the STP bus station.

**FSE** (☎ 0832 66 81 11) runs buses to Gallipoli (€3.50, one hour, four daily), Otranto (€2.90, one hour, two daily) and Brindisi (€3.30, 45 minutes, two daily), leaving from Via Torre del Parco.

### TRAIN

There are frequent trains to Bari (from €13.80, 1½ to two hours), to Brindisi (from €8.10, 30 minutes), to Rome (from €62, 5½ to nine hours) and Bologna (from €66, 8½ to 9½ hours). For Naples (from €44, 5½ hours), change in Caserta.

FSE trains head to Otranto and Martina Franca.

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## PENISOLA SALENTINA

The Penisola Salentina (Salentine Peninsula) is hot, dry and remote, retaining a flavour of its Greek past. Here the lush greenery of Valle d'Itria gives way to ochre-coloured fields, hazy with wild flowers in spring, and endless olive groves. The sun-bleached towns are shuttered and hushed, only coming alive in the summer months.

# Galatina

**pop 27,700**

With a charming historic centre, Galatina – 18km south of Lecce – is at the core of the Salentine Peninsula’s Greek past. It is almost the only place where the ritual *tarantismi* (a frenzied dance meant to rid the body of tarantula-bite poison) is still practised. The tarantella folk dance evolved from it, and each year on the feast day of St Peter and St Paul (29 June), the ritual is performed at the (now deconsecrated) church.

However most people come to Galatina see the incredible 14th-century **Basilica di Santa Caterina d’Alessandria** (☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4.30-6.45pm Apr-Sep, 8am-12.30pm & 3.45-5.45pm Oct-Mar), its interior a kaleidoscope of fresco. It was built by the Franciscans, whose patroness was Frenchwoman Marie d’Enghien de Brienne. Married to Raimondello Orsini del Balzo, the Salentine’s wealthiest noble, she had plenty of cash to splash on interior decoration. The gruesome story goes that Raimondello (who is buried here) climbed Mount Sinai to visit relics of Santa Caterina (St Catherine). Kissing the dead saint’s hand, he bit off a finger and brought it back as a holy relic.

The church is absolutely beautiful, with a pure-white altarpiece set against the frenzy of frescoes. Bring a torch. It is not clear who the artists Marie employed really were; they could have been itinerant painters down from Le Marche and Emilia, or southerners who’d absorbed the latest Renaissance innovations on trips north.

Soothe the soul further with a stay at nearby **Le Campine Eco-Resort** (☎ 0836 80 21 08; [www.lecampineresort.com](http://www.lecampineresort.com); Via Stazione 116; ☎ ☎) located around 7km east of here in tiny Zollino. As well as ayurvedic treatments, there are yoga courses with meals prepared according to macrobiotic and Slow Food precepts. Check the website for upcoming retreats and courses.

FSE runs regular trains between Galatina and Lecce (€1.30, 30 minutes, hourly).

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# OTRANTO

**pop 5500**

Otranto overlooks a pretty harbour with brightly painted boats atop shimmering clear blue waters. In the historic centre, looming golden walls guard narrow car-free lanes, protecting countless pretty little shops selling touristic odds and ends. In July and August it’s one of Puglia’s most vibrant towns. Much is closed in the low season.

Otranto was Italy’s main port to the Orient for 1000 years, and suffered a brutal history. There are fanciful tales that King Minos was here and St Peter is supposed to have celebrated the first Western Mass here.

A more definite historical event is the Sack of Otranto in 1480, when 18,000 Turks besieged the town and killed 800 faithful Christians who refused to convert.

Today the only fright you’ll get is the summer crush on Otranto’s scenic beaches and in its narrow streets.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0836 80 14 36; Piazza Castello; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-8pm Mon-Fri Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) faces the castle.



## Sights & Activities

Don't leave Otranto without visiting the extraordinary Romanesque **cathedral** (Piazza Basilica; ☎ 8am-noon daily, 3-6pm Apr-Sep, 3-5pm Oct-Mar), built by the Normans in the 11th century, though given a few facelifts since. A vast 12th-century mosaic covers its floor, a stupendous tree of life balanced on the back of two elephants. It was created by a young monk called Pantaleone (who had obviously never seen an elephant), whose vision of Heaven and Hell encompassed an amazing (con)fusion of the classics, religion and plain old superstition, including Adam and Eve, Diana the huntress, Hercules, King Arthur, Alexander the Great, and a menagerie of monkeys, snakes and sea monsters. Don't forget to look up; the cathedral also boasts a beautiful wooden coffered ceiling.

It's amazing that the cathedral survived at all, as the Turks stabled their horses here when they beheaded the martyrs of Otranto on a stone preserved in the altar of the chapel (to the right of the main altar). This Cappella Mortiri (Chapel of the Dead) is a ghoulishly fascinating sight, with the skulls and bones of the martyrs arranged in neat patterns in glass cases.

Within the tiny **Chiesa di San Pietro** (☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-noon & 3-6pm Oct-Mar) are more vivid Byzantine frescoes. It is signposted off the *corso*. If it's closed, ask for the key at the cathedral.

The well-restored and central Aragonese **castle** (Piazza Castello; adult/child €2/free; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Sep-May, 10am-1pm & 4-11pm Jun, 10am-1pm & 4pm-midnight Jul & Aug), is a squat thick-walled fort, with the Charles V coat of arms above the entrance. There are some faded original murals and original canon balls on display, plus good views from the ramparts.

There are some great beaches north of Otranto. Head out of town on the coastal road for 7.1km until you reach the Lido dei Pini exit. Follow the signs for **Spiaggia Azzurra**; a beautiful beach with velvet-soft sand. You can rent sunbeds (per day €4) just west of here at Lido Sirena. There are a handful of bars and restaurants along this strip of coast.

The clear waters and rocky coast around here are good for diving, and **Scuba Diving Otranto** (☎ 0836 80 27 40; [www.scubadiving.it](http://www.scubadiving.it); Via Francesco di Paola 43) offers day or night dives as well as introductory courses and diving courses.

Brush-up your Italian at **Otranto nel Mondo** (☎ 0836 80 20 03; [www.otrantonelmondo.com](http://www.otrantonelmondo.com)) over the summer. The courses involve lots of extracurricular high jinks such as horse riding, sailing and wine tasting.

## Sleeping

Otranto (and down the coast as far as Santa Maria di Leuca) is a good area for self-catering accommodation ([Click here](#) for suggested websites).

**Balconcino d'Oriente** (☎ 0836 80 15 29; [www.balconcinodoriente.com](http://www.balconcinodoriente.com); Via San Francesco da Paola 71; s €25-55, d €50-100; 📞 ☎) A friendly B&B in a great location and offering a more imaginative breakfast than most. There is an African-cum—Middle-Eastern theme throughout with colourful bed linens, African prints, Moroccan lamps and orange colour washes on the walls.

**Palazzo de Mori** (☎ 0836 80 10 88; [www.palazzodemori.it](http://www.palazzodemori.it); Bastione dei Pelasgi; s €85-100, d €100-150; ☎ Jan-Oct; 📞 ☎) This charming boutique hotel is located in Otranto's historic centre. Enjoy a breakfast of fruits and yoghurt on the sun terrace overlooking the port and in the afternoon retire for a siesta in one of the soothing white-on-white rooms.

**Palazzo Papaleo** (☎ 0836 80 21 08; [www.hotelpalazzopapaleo.com](http://www.hotelpalazzopapaleo.com); Via Rondachi 1; s €140-250, d €150-280; 📄 📞 📧) Located next to the cathedral, this sumptuous hotel was the first to earn the EU Eco-label in Puglia. (For more information about the criteria, check the [www.eco-label.com](http://www.eco-label.com) website). Aside from its ecological convictions, the hotel has magnificent rooms with original frescoes, exquisitely carved antique furniture and walls washed in soft greys, ochres and yellows. Soak in the panoramic views while enjoying the rooftop jacuzzi.

## Eating & Drinking

**La Botte** (☎ 0836 80 42 93; Via del Porto; pizzas from €4) Has a large wooden terrace and reliably good pizzas. It is located just outside the touristy pedestrian loop on the road leading from the port.

**Laltro Baffo** (☎ 0836 60 16 36; Cenoblio Basiliano 23; meals €25) A new kid on the block with a more fashionable look than some of the old timers. Readers have recommended the excellent seafood; go for the daily fish option prepared with pasta.

**Da Sergio** (☎ 0836 80 14 08; Corso Garibaldi 9; meals €36) Smart, chic and favoured by locals, this is Otranto's most famous fish restaurant, situated in an ace position for people-watching, smack bang in the centre of the touristy *corso*. There is no menu, instead you will be provided a choice of the day's catch which is then charged by weight.

You can drink at bars along the city wall, overlooking the sea. A popular bar serving *aperitivi* and snacks is **Il Covo dei Mori** (☎ 0836 80 20 33; Via Leon Dari).

## Shopping

**Anima Mundi** (☎ 0836 195 52 62; Vicolo Majorano 8) sells stunning photography (and other) books about the region, as well as local music. Massimiliano Morabito is a good bet if you are looking for traditional *tarantella* folk music – check him out on YouTube.

## Getting There & Away

Otranto can be reached from Lecce by FSE train (€2.90, one hour), or by bus (€4, 80 minutes).

**Marozzi** (☎ 0836 80 15 78) has a daily bus service to Rome (€46, 10½ hours).

For travel information and reservations, head to **Ellade Viaggi** (☎ 0836 80 15 78; [www.elladeviaggi.it](http://www.elladeviaggi.it), in Italian; Via del Porto) at the port.

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## AROUND OTRANTO

The road south from Otranto takes you along a wild coastline. The land here is rocky and dramatic, with cliffs falling down into the sparkling sea. When the wind is up you can see why it is largely treeless. Many of the towns here started life as Greek settlements, although there are few monuments to be seen. When you reach the resort town of **Santa Maria di Leuca**, you've reached the tip of Italy's stiletto and the dividing line between the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. The Ionian side of the Penisola Salentina has some good beaches. There are few cheap hotels in the area but this is a good place to seek out self-catering villas, and camp sites abound along the coast – try **Camping Maggiano** (☎ 0832 34 06 86; [www.campingportomiggiano.it](http://www.campingportomiggiano.it); camping 2 people, car & tent €23; 📅 Jun-Sep), 16km south of Otranto. It's on the clifftop and is olive-tree shaded, with steps down to the beach.

# GALLIPOLI

**pop 20,900**

Gallipoli (from ‘beautiful town’ in Greek) is an almost-island. The old medieval centre fills an island in the Ionian Sea, connected by a bridge to the mainland and modern city. An important fishing centre, it’s 39km southwest of Lecce and has a history of strong-willed independence, being the last Salentine settlement to succumb to the Normans in the 11th century. It’s a very genuine place with a gritty individuality and still feels like a working Italian town, unlike more seasonal coastal places. In the summer, bars and restaurants make the most of the island’s ramparts, looking out to sea.

## Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 0833 26 25 29; Via Antonietta de Pace 86; 🕒 10am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat) is located near the cathedral in the old town.

## Sights

The medieval town’s entrance is guarded by an Angevin **castle**. Just opposite, below the ramp leading to the island, is a lively **fish market**.

In the centre, on the highest point of the island, is the 17th-century baroque **Cattedrale di Sant’Agata** (Via Antonietta de Pace; 🕒 hours vary), lined with paintings by local artists. Zimbalo, who imprinted Lecce with his crazy baroque styles [Click here](#), also worked on the facade. Nearby, and across from the tourist office, look out for **Farmacia Provenzana** (Via Antonietta de Pace; 🕒 8.30am-1pm & 4.30-8.30pm), a beautifully decorated pharmacy dating from 1814. Further west is the small **Museo Civico** (☎ 0833 26 42 24; Via Antonietta de Pace 108; adult/child €1/free; 🕒 10am-1pm & 6-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat), founded in 1878; a 19th-century time capsule featuring fish heads, ancient sculptures, a 3rd-century-BC sarcophagus and other weird stuff.

Back over the bridge and in the modern part of town is the **Fontana Antica**. Reconstructed in the 16th century from a Greek original, this fountain’s much-weathered sculptured figures tell a steamy tale of incest and bestiality.

## Sleeping & Eating

**La Casa del Mare** (☎ 328 179136; [www.lacasadelmare.com](http://www.lacasadelmare.com); Piazza de Amicis 14; d €60-110; 🍷) This butter-coloured 16th-century building on a little square in the town centre overlooking a statue of a cheery **Padre Pio** is a good choice, with plain but bright white-walled rooms. Pre-book or turn up between 3pm and 6pm when owners Laura and Federico are there.

**our pick Insula** (☎ 0833 20 14 13; Via de Pace 56; [www.bbinsulagallipoli.it](http://www.bbinsulagallipoli.it); d €70-130; 🍷) A magnificent 15th-century building houses this memorable B&B. The rooms are all different but share the same princely atmosphere with exquisite antiques, vaulted high ceilings and cool pastel paintwork. The tranquil terrace, flanked by ancient walls with original stone work, has a tangible historic feel.

**Masseria Don Cirillo** (☎ 0832 30 35 06; [www.masseriadoncirillo.it](http://www.masseriadoncirillo.it); Torre San Giovanni, Ugento; r €150-230; 🕒 Apr-Oct; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Around 15km from Gallipoli, this is a fabulous special-occasion *masseria*. Its furnishings are a chic mix of modern and rustic and its rooms, arched in pale stone, are surrounded by greenery. Traditional *gozzo* (wooden boat) and bikes are available.

**Relais Corte Palmieri** (☎ 0833 26 25 63; [www.relaiscortepalmieri.it](http://www.relaiscortepalmieri.it); Corte Palmieri 3; s €90-170, d €120-200; ☎ ☎) A cream-coloured, well-kept hotel. It's run by the same management as Palazzo del Corso (just outside the old town) and the equally good Palazzo Mosco Inn B&B (see the website for info) and has elegant rooms accentuated by traditional painted furniture, wrought-iron bedheads and crisp red-and-white linen.

**Il Giardino Segreto** (☎ 0833 26 44 30; Via de Pace 116; meals €15) 'The Secret Garden' is just that, with a secluded courtyard out back and tables set around a lemon tree centrepiece. Dishes should suit the fussiest of diners with salads, bruschetta, pasta, meat and fish dishes and a reasonable €15 daily menu.

**La Puritate** (☎ 0833 26 42 05; Via S Elia 18; meals €45; ☎ Thu-Tue) A great place for fish in the old town with picture windows and sea views. Follow the excellent antipasti with delicious *primi* (first courses) such as seafood spaghetti, then see what's been caught that day – the swordfish is usually a good bet.

## Getting There & Away

FSE buses and trains head to Lecce (€3.50, one hour, four daily).

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## TARANTO

**pop 199,000**

Men in wellies selling fish on corners, a collapsing historic medieval centre and an industrial horror show – Taranto's distinctive characteristics protect an edgy, but characterful heart and possibly the best seafood in southern Italy.

According to legend, the city was founded by Taras, son of Poseidon who arrived on the back of a dolphin (as you do). Less romantically, the city was actually founded in the 7th century BC by exiles from Sparta – although the name Taras stuck – to become one of the wealthiest and most important colonies of Magna Graecia, with a peak population of 300,000. The fun finished, however, in the 3rd century BC when the Romans marched in, changed its name to Tarentum and set off a two-millennia decline in fortunes.

Taranto, along with La Spezia, is Italy's major naval base, and the presence of young sailors is emblematic of a city that has always looked to the sea.

## Orientation & Information

Taranto neatly splits into three. The old town is on a tiny island, lodged between the northwest port and train station and the new city to the southeast. Italy's largest steel plant occupies the city's entire western half. The grid-patterned new city contains the banks, most hotels and restaurants, and the **tourist office** (☎ 099 453 23 97; Corso Umberto I 113; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat).

## Sights

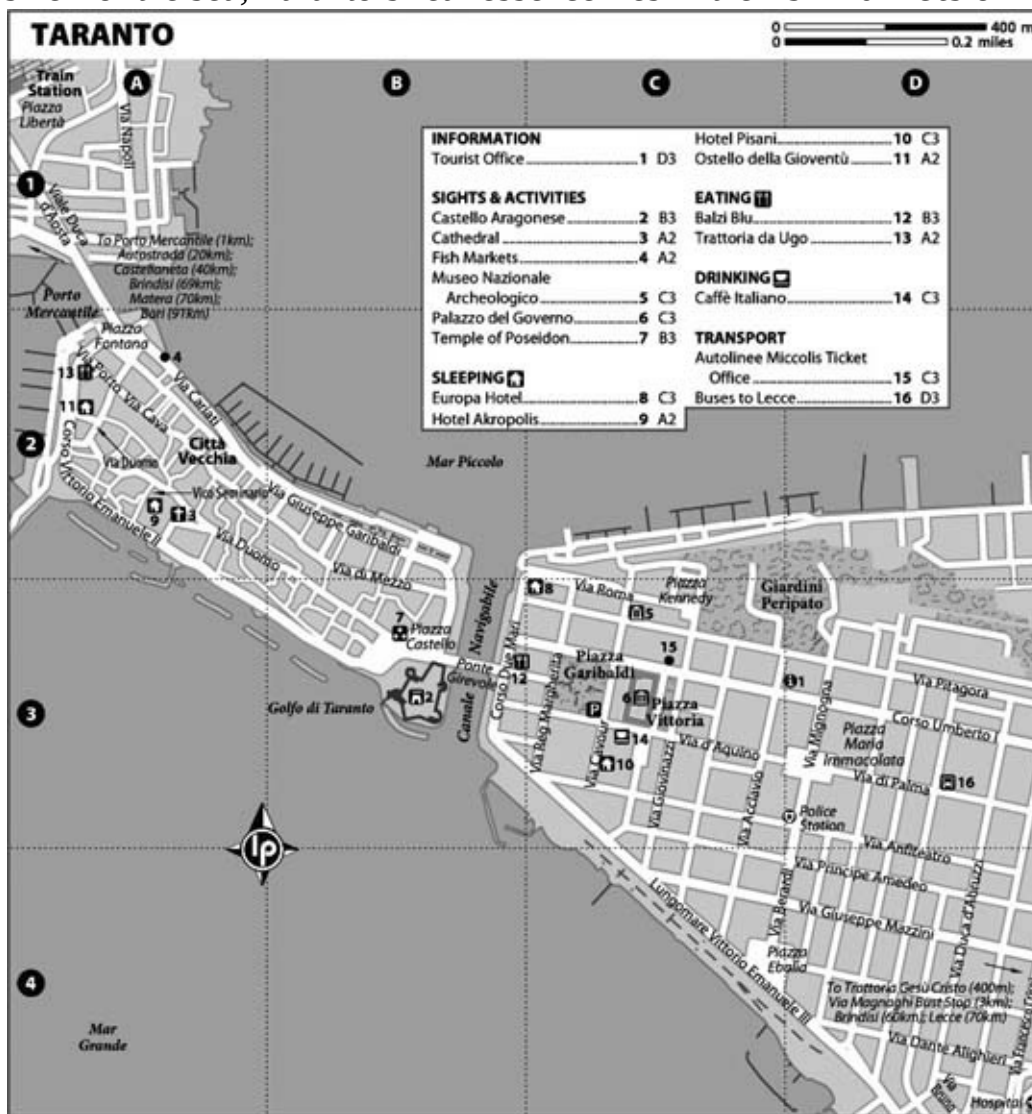
### CITTÀ VECCHIA

Although Taranto's medieval town centre is rundown, it is gradually being tastefully renovated and has a gritty and vibrant atmosphere. It is perched on the small island dividing the Mar Piccolo (Small Sea; an enclosed lagoon) and the Mar Grande (Big Sea). This peculiar geography means that blue sea and sky

surround you wherever you go. Guarding the swing bridge that joins the old and new parts of town, the 15th-century **Castello Aragonese** (☎ 099 775 34 38; 📧 by appointment 9am-noon Mon-Fri) is an impressive structure, currently occupied by the Italian navy. Opposite, you will see the remaining columns of Taranto's ancient **Temple of Poseidon** (Piazza Castello).

Buried in the old town is the 11th-century **cathedral** (Via del Duomo), one of Puglia's oldest Romanesque buildings and an extravagant treat. It's dedicated to San Cataldo; the Capella di San Cataldo is a baroque riot of frescoes and polychrome marble inlay.

Awash with the smell of the sea, Taranto's real essence lies in the **fish markets** on Via Cariatì.



## NEW TOWN

Taranto's urbane new town is a pleasant surprise, with sleek shopping streets shooting off from the impressive palm-planted Piazza Garibaldi, which is dominated by the gigantic rust-red 1920s **Palazzo del Governo**.

The superb **Museo Nazionale Archeologico** (☎ 099 453 21 12; [www.museotaranto.it](http://www.museotaranto.it), in Italian; Via Cavour 10; adult/child €5/free; 📧 8.30am-7.30pm) is one of Italy's most important archaeological museums, and houses, among other ancient artefacts, the largest collection of Greek terracotta figures in the world. Also exhibited in this brand-new museum space are fine collections of 1st-century-BC glassware, classic black-and-red Attic vases and stunning jewellery such as a 4th-century-BC bronze and terracotta crown.

## Activities

The closest beach is the thoroughly acceptable Lido Bruno just southeast of the city. They improve the further you get from the city. The stretch between Torre Ovo and Torretta is lovely, with beaches backed by low dunes and plenty of off-road parking.

## Festivals & Events

Taranto is famous for its **Le Feste di Pasqua** (Holy Week) celebrations – the biggest in the region – when bearers in Ku Klux Klan—style robes carry icons around the town. There are three processions: the Perdoni, celebrating pilgrims; the Addolorata (which lasts 12 hours but covers only 4km); and the Misteri (even slower at 14 hours to cover 2km).

## Sleeping

**Ostello della Gioventù** (☎ 099 476 00 33; [www.ostellolalocanda.it](http://www.ostellolalocanda.it); Vico Civitanova; dm €20, s/d €30/50; 📍) Spartan clean and sufficiently comfortable rooms in a great location, just off Piazza Fontana. Meals available (€12).

**Hotel Pisani** (☎ 099 453 40 87; Via Cavour 43; s/d €30/50) Tucked off the main square in the new town (Garibaldi), the dated rooms and slimline bathrooms are fairly forgettable. However they are freshly mopped and sufficiently comfortable providing you have no allusions to grandeur.

**Europa Hotel** (☎ 099 452 59 94; [www.hoteleuropaonline.it](http://www.hoteleuropaonline.it); Via Roma 2; s/d €80/105; 📍) On the seafront next to the swing bridge, this shipshape, if bland, option overlooks the old town. A hotel since 1888, it has an elegant 19th-century facade concealing modern, business-oriented rooms.

**Hotel Akropolis** (☎ 099 470 41 10; [www.hotelakropolis.it](http://www.hotelakropolis.it); Vico I Seminario 3; s €105-125, d €145-175; 📍 📺) A converted medieval *palazzo* in the crumbling old town, this luxurious hotel sits grandly beside the cathedral. There are 13 stylish cream-and-white rooms, original majolica-tiled floors, and tremendous views from the rooftop terrace.

## Eating & Drinking

Taranto's restaurants are hidden like pearls amid its decrepit streets. It has been famous for its seafood – especially shellfish – since antiquity.

**Caffè Italiano** (☎ 099 452 17 81; Via D'Aquino 86a; salads & snacks €4; 🕒 5am-2am) Swish as you might wish, this is a Taranto hot spot, a classy cafe with excellent *focaccine*, coffee and ice cream, and outside seating on the pedestrianised street.

**Balzi Blu** (☎ 347 4653211; Corso Due Mari 22; pizza from €4.50, meals €15; 🕒 Tue-Sun) A local favourite on the *corso*, serving some 300 different wines, plus excellent pizza with an exceptional crust made from 13 different types of flour. There are great views of the old city from the summer terrace.

**Trattoria da Ugo** (☎ 329 1415850; cnr of Via Cataldo de Tulio & Via Fontana; meals €18-25; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, lunch Sat) A deeply traditional Tarantine trattoria with a seafood-only menu, including grilled mussels, octopus with lemon and olive oil and fried prawns and squid. Superb value.

**Trattoria Gesù Cristo** (☎ 099 477 72 53; Via Battisti 8; meals €30; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) Atmospheric family-friendly place southeast of the centre with a menu of seafood that really *is* the catch of the day (the owners run the fish shop next door). Go for a grilling with the simplest dish on the menu: freshly grilled fish with lemon.

# Getting There & Around

## BUS

Buses heading north and west depart from Porto Mercantile; those going south and east leave from Via Magnaghi in the new city. Note there are fewer services on Sunday.

**FSE** (☎ 800 07 90 80) buses go to Bari (€5.30, 1¾ to 2¼ hours, frequent). Infrequent **SITA** (☎ 899 32 52 04; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) buses leave from Porto Mercantile for Matera (€4.60, 1¾ hr, one daily). **STP** (☎ 0832 22 44 11) and FSE buses go to Lecce (€7, two hours, five daily).

**Marozzi** (☎ 080 579 90 111) has express services serving Rome's Stazione Tiburtina (€41.50, six hours, four daily). **Autolinee Miccolis** (☎ 099 470 44 51) serves Naples (€18, four hours, three daily) via Potenza (€9.50, two hours).

The bus **ticket office** (☎ 7am-1.30pm & 3-9.30pm) is at Porto Mercantile.

## TRAIN

It's preferable to travel by train on long-distance routes. Both **Trenitalia** (☎ 89 20 21) and **FSE** (☎ 099 471 59 01) trains go to Brindisi (€5.10, 1¼ hours, frequent) and Bari (€7.40, 2½ hours, frequent), as well as Rome (from €41, six to 7½ hours, five daily).

**AMAT** (☎ 099 4 52 67 32) buses 1, 2, 3 and 8 run between the train station and the new city.

There is metered parking in the Piazza Garibaldi.

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# BASILICATA

Basilicata has an otherworldly landscape of tremendous mountain ranges, dark forested valleys and villages so melded with the rockface that they seem to have grown there.

Since the 1930s this land has been inseparable from the name of writer Carlo Levi. His superb book *Christ Stopped at Eboli* documented the harsh life of Basilicata's poverty-stricken peasants – its title suggesting that Basilicata was beyond the hand of God. The discovery of Western Europe's largest oilfield 30km south of Potenza in 1996 should have altered the view of Basilicata as a poor wild region beyond commercial development, but the stereotype lingers.



However today Basilicata's remote atmosphere and tremendous landscape is attracting the attention of travellers. *The Passion of Christ* – the gospel according to Mel Gibson – brought the extraordinary *sassi* (former cave dwellings) of Matera to the world's attention, while Maratea is one of Italy's most chic seaside resorts. The purple-hued mountains of the interior are impossibly grand and a wonderful destination for naturalists, particularly the soaring peaks of the Lucanian Apennines and the Parco Nazionale del Pollino.

## History

Basilicata spans Italy's instep with slivers of coastline touching the Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas. It was known to the Greeks and Romans as Lucania (a name still heard today) after the Lucani tribe who lived here as far back as the 5th century BC. The Greeks also prospered, settling along the coastline at Metapontum and Erakleia, but things started to go wrong under the Romans, when Hannibal, the ferocious Carthaginian general, rampaged through the region.

In the 10th century, the Byzantine Emperor, Basilikòs (976–1025) renamed the area, overthrowing the Saracens in Sicily and the south and reintroducing Christianity. The pattern of war and overthrow continued throughout the Middle Ages as the Normans, Hohenstaufens, Angevins and the Bourbons



constantly tussled over its strategic location, right up until the 19th century. As talk of the Italian unification began to gain ground, Bourbon-sponsored loyalists took to Basilicata's mountains to oppose political change. Ultimately they became the much-feared bandits of local lore who make scary appearances in writings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the 1930s, Basilicata was used as a kind of open prison for political dissidents – most famously Carlo Levi – sent into exile to remote villages by the fascists.

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## IONIAN COAST

In stark contrast to the dramatic Tyrrhenian coast, the Ionian coast is a listless, flat affair dotted with large tourist resorts. However, the Greek ruins at Metaponto and Policoro, with their accompanying museums, bring alive the enormous influence of Magna Graecia in southern Italy.

### Metaponto

Metaponto's Greek ruins are a rare site where archaeologists have managed to map the entire ancient urban plan. Settled by Greeks in the 8th and 7th centuries BC, Metapontum was probably an outpost of Sibari (in Calabria) and acted as a buffer between there and Taranto. Its most famous resident was Pythagoras, who founded a school here after being banished from Crotona (also Calabria) in the 6th century BC.

From the train station, go straight ahead for 500m to the roundabout. About 1.5km to your right (east) is the **Parco Archeologico** (admission free) and to your left, is the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0835 74 53 27; Via Aristeia 21; admission €2.50; 🕒 9am-8pm Tue-Sun, 2-8pm Mon). In the park you can see what remains of a **Greek theatre** and the Doric **Tempio di Apollo Licio**, but the real draw is the museum, with artefacts from Metapontum and other sites.

After Pythagoras died, his house and school were incorporated into the Temple of Hera. The remains of the temple – 15 columns and sections of pavement – are Metaponto's most impressive sight. They're known as the **Tavole Palatine** (Palatine Tables), since knights, or paladins, are said to have gathered here before heading to the Crusades. It's a little way north, just off the highway – to find it follow the slip road for Taranto onto the SS106.

**SITA** (☎ 0835 38 50 07; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) buses run from Matera (€3, one hour, up to five daily). The town is on the Taranto—Reggio line, and trains connect with Potenza, Salerno and occasionally Naples.

### Bernalda

**pop 12,100**

Only 15km from the sea, hilltop Bernalda clings above the Basento valley. Its historic centre dates from the 15th century, with a two-tower castle opposite the 16th-century, Byzantine-domed San Bernardino church. Modern times have seen its development sprawl towards the coast. In May and August, a costumed procession of knights carries the statue of San Bernardino around town. Francis Ford Coppola is this town's favourite son – his grandparents are from here – and he recreated the town's festival in *The Godfather III*. Coppola is converting the 19th-century Palazzo Margherita into a glamorous 12-room boutique hotel, as well as developing an experimental centre for visual and musical arts in nearby Metaponto (left), along with his nephew Nicolas Cage.

SITA buses run between Bernalda and Matera.

## Policoro

pop 15,422

If you get as far as Metaponto, consider continuing about 21km southwest to Policoro, originally the Greek settlement of Erakleia. It's worth visiting for the wonderful **Museo della Siritide** (☎ 0835 97 21 54; Via Colombo 8; admission €2.50; 🕒 9am-8pm Wed-Mon, 2-8pm Tue), where you can work your way from 7000 BC through Lucanian ornaments to Greek mirrors, then to the spears and javelins of the Romans, who put them to perilous use.

SITA buses run here from Metaponto (left).

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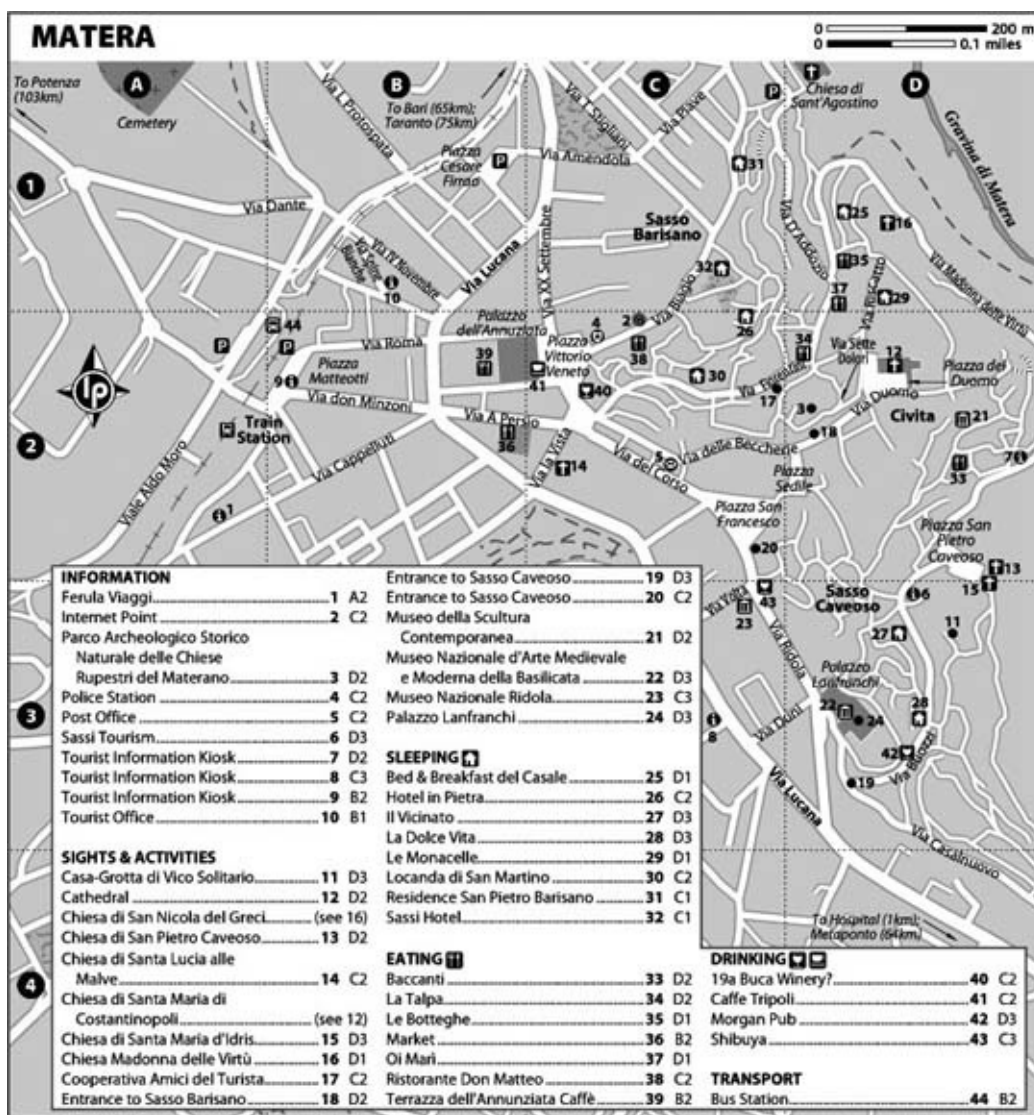
## MATERA

pop 59,144 / elev 405m

Approach Matera from virtually any direction and your first glimpse of its famous *sassi* (stone houses carved out of the caves and cliffs) is sure to be etched in your memory forever. Haunting and beautiful, though not in a snowdrops-in-spring kind of way, this great monochrome slab of mountainside is pockmarked with caves; a harrowing reminder of former scenes of abject poverty. In 1993 the *sassi* were declared a Unesco World Heritage Site. Ironically, the town's history of outrageous misery has transformed it into Basilicata's leading tourist attraction, particularly post-2004 when Mel Gibson's controversial blockbuster *The Passion of Christ* was filmed here.

## History

Matera is said to be one of the world's oldest towns. The simple natural grottoes that dotted the gorge were adapted to become homes. In time, an ingenious system of canals regulated the flow of water and sewage, and small hanging gardens lent splashes of colour. The prosperous town became the capital of Basilicata in 1663, a position it held until 1806 when the power moved to Potenza. In the decades that followed, an unsustainable increase in population led to the habitation of unsuitable grottoes – originally intended as animal stalls – even lacking running water.



By the 1950s over half of Matera's population lived in the *sassi*, a typical cave sheltering an average of six children. The infant mortality rate was 50%. In his *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, Carlo Levi describes how children would beg passers-by for quinine to stave off the deadly malaria. Such publicity finally galvanised the authorities into action and in the late 1950s about 15,000 inhabitants were forcibly relocated to new government housing schemes. It remains one of modern Italy's great scandals.

## Orientation

A short walk down Via Roma from the train and bus stations off Piazza Matteotti brings you to the Piazza Vittorio Veneto, the town's pedestrianised heart. The two *sassi* ravines open up to its east and southeast.

## MAPS

The *sassi* are quite a tangle, but it's not difficult to find your way around. Arm yourself with the map *Matera: Percorsi Turistici* (€1.50), available from various kiosks and hotels around town, which describes in English and Italian five itineraries through the *sassi*.

The tourist office has a map (in Italian) of excursions in the surrounding Parco della Murgia Materana, showing some routes around the gorge.

## Information

**Basilicata Turistica** ([www.aptbasilicata.it](http://www.aptbasilicata.it))

**Ferula Viaggi** (☎ 0835 33 65 72; [www.materaturismo.it](http://www.materaturismo.it); Via Cappelluti 34; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3.30-

7pm Mon-Sat) Excellent tourist cooperative and travel agency dedicated to promoting Basilicata. It runs great tours ([Click here](#) for more details), and tours in the Pollino ([Click here](#)).

**Hospital** (☎ 0835 25 31 11; Via Montescaglioso) About 1km southeast of the centre.

**Internet point** (☎ 0835 34 41 66; Via San Biagio 9; per hr €3; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-8.30pm)

**Parco Archeologico Storico Naturale delle Chiese Rupestri del Materano** (☎ 0835 33 61 66; [www.parcomurgia.it](http://www.parcomurgia.it); Via Sette Dolori) For info on the Murgia park.

**Police station** (☎ 0835 37 81; Piazza Vittorio Veneto)

**Post office** (Via del Corso 1; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

**Sassi Tourism** (☎ 0835 31 94 58; [www.sassitourism.it](http://www.sassitourism.it); Via Buoizzi 141) Tourism organisation offering tours around Matera as well as entry into sites (see below).

**Sassiweb** ([www.sassiweb.it](http://www.sassiweb.it)) Extensive, informative website with hotels, tours, history and fascinating images.

**Tourist information kiosk** (☎ 0835 24 12 60; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 4-7pm summer) Branches on Via Madonna delle Virtù, Piazza Matteotti and Via Lucana. Run by the Comune di Matera, offers guided tours and tickets for entry to churches.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0835 33 19 83; [www.materaturismo.it](http://www.materaturismo.it); Via Spine Bianche; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-6.30pm Mon-Sat) Can provide guides.

## Sights & Activities

### THE SASSI

Matera's many belvederes, such as from Piazza Vittorio Veneto, Palazzo Lanfranchi or the cathedral, present a town and landscape unlike anywhere else. The deep limestone ravines are pitted with caves, dating as far back as the 8th century BC.

There are two *sasso* districts: the more restored, northwest-facing **Sasso Barisano** and the more impoverished, northeast-facing **Sasso Caveoso**. Both are extraordinary, riddled with serpentine alleyways and staircases, and dotted with frescoed *chiese rupestri* (cave churches) created between the 8th and 13th centuries. Matera contains some 3000 habitable caves.

You can easily navigate the *sassi* alone, but a qualified guide has benefits. They can take you to the most interesting sites, offer lots of background and unlock many of the more interesting cave churches. For details see left.

Highlights in the Sasso Barisano include the magnificent monastic complex of **Madonna delle Virtù and San Nicola del Greci** (Via Madonna delle Virtù; ☎ 10am-7pm Sat & Sun), composed of dozens of caves spread over two floors. The church of the Chiesa Madonna delle Virtù was built in the 10th or 11th century and restored in the 17th century. Above it, the simple church of Chiesa di San Nicola del Greci is rich in frescoes. The complex was used in 1213 by Benedictine monks of Palestinian origin. From late June to October a modern art exhibition is showcased in Madonna delle Virtù.

Sasso Caveoso includes the highlights of **Chiesa di San Pietro Caveoso** (Piazza San Pietro Caveoso) and the richly frescoed rock churches **Santa Maria d'Idris** (Piazza San Pietro Caveoso) and **Santa Lucia alle Malve** (Via la Vista). A couple of *sassi* have been refurbished as they were when inhabited. The most interesting is the **Casa-Grotta di Vico Solitario** (admission €1.50), off Via Buoizzi. It has an engaging 10-minute multilingual audio explanation describing the gruelling living conditions of a typical cave house, which included a manure room and a cordoned-off area for a donkey. It's little wonder that the infant mortality rate was 50%.

Sassi Tourism (see left) operates entry into five churches, including Santa Maria d'Idris, several others set in the *sassi* and an ex-monastery. Tickets cost €2.50/5/6 for one site/three sites/all the sites.

The *sassi* are accessible from several points. There's an entrance off Piazza Vittorio Veneto, or take Via delle Beccherie to Piazza del Duomo and follow the tourist itinerary signs to enter either Barisano or Caveoso. Sasso Caveoso is also accessible from Via Ridola.

For a great photograph, head out of town on the Taranto—Laterza road and follow signs for the *chiese rupestri*. This takes you up on the Murgia plateau to the location of the crucifixion in *The Passion of the Christ*, from where you have fantastic views of the plunging ravine and Matera.

The **Museo della Scultura Contemporanea** (MUSMA; [www.musma.it](http://www.musma.it); ☎ 10am-2pm & 4-8pm Apr-Oct, 10am-2pm Nov-Mar; adult/concession €5/3.50) is a fabulous contemporary sculpture museum, housed in Palazzo Pomarici. Exhibits are artfully displayed in atmospherically lit caves, including contemporary representations of space, thought-provoking interpretations of Adam and Eve, and a sumo-wrestling St Francis. Upstairs – in grand upper rooms adorned with 17th-century frescoes – the collection tells the story of sculpture from 1880 to the present day and features artists such as Lynn Chadwick, one of the leading British sculptors after World War II.

## TOWN CENTRE

The focus of the town is Piazza Vittorio Veneto, an excellent, bustling meeting point for an evening  *Passeggiata* (stroll). It's surrounded by elegant churches and richly adorned *palazzi*, with their backs to the *sassi*; an attempt by the bourgeois to block out the shameful poverty the *sassi* once represented. Further excavations here have yielded more ruins of Byzantine Matera, including a rock church, a castle, a large cistern and numerous houses. You can gaze down to the site from the piazza.

Set high up in the town, the subdued, graceful exterior of the 13th-century Puglian-Romanesque **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ closed for renovation) makes the neobaroque excess within all the more of a surprise: ornate capitals, sumptuous chapels and tons of gilding. Pediments mounted on its altars came from the temples at Metaponto. Matera's patron saint, the Madonna della Bruna, is hidden within the older church, **Santa Maria di Costantinopoli**, which can be accessed from the cathedral if it's open. Her saint's day on 2 July is the region's most important festival.

The **Museo Nazionale Ridola** (☎ 0835 31 00 58; Via Ridola 24; adult/concession €2.50/1.25; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Sun, 2-8pm Mon) occupies the 17th-century convent of Santa Chiara. The impressive collection includes some remarkable Greek pottery, such as the *Craterea Mascheroni*, a huge urn over 1m high. A little south, on Piazzetta Pascoli, is the **Museo Nazionale d'Arte Medievale e Moderna della Basilicata** (☎ 0835 31 42 35; Palazzo Lanfranchi; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Tue-Sun). The stars of the show are Levi's paintings, including the enormous mural, *Lucania '61*, depicting peasant life in biblical Technicolour.

## Tours

There are plenty of official guides for the *sassi* – try the tourist office or [www.sassiweb.it](http://www.sassiweb.it). Alternatively, contact the **Cooperativa Amici del Turista** (☎ 0835 33 03 01; [www.amicidelturista.it](http://www.amicidelturista.it); Via Fiorentini 28-30) or **Ferula Viaggi** which does a classic tour, an underground tour, tours that include tastings or cookery courses, longer trips into the gorge or Pollino, and also runs Bike Basilicata – for more information, see the boxed text (above). The people that run MUSMA ([Click here](#)) run tours to a spectacular crypt chapel.

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# MATERA IN ...

## One Day

Aim for one of the belvederes for a photo-snap of the *sassi* (former cave dwellings) before any heat haze sets in. Precede any further *sassi* exploration by heading for the contrasting elegant centre of town for a cappuccino at **Caffe Tripoli** (Piazza Vittorio Veneto 17). Stroll around **Piazza Vittorio Veneto** ([Map](#)), admiring the opulent exteriors of the *palazzi* (mansions) and churches before returning to the *sassi* flipside. Approach Sasso Barisano via Via Fiorentini and take the steep steps up to Piazza del Duomo; the highest point in town where you can fill another flash card with vista-view photos before exploring the **cathedral** (above) and surrounding 15th-century perfectly preserved streets. Follow the map up to the monastic complex of **Madonna delle Virtù and San Nicola dei Greci** with its original frescoes. Stop for lunch at **Le Botteghe** and, after hotel siesta time, head for Sasso Caveoso's rock churches of **San Pietro Caveoso**, **Santa Maria d'Idris** and **Santa Lucia alle Malve**. Early evening, enjoy a sassy cocktail at the **Morgan Pub** before completing the day's loop by returning to Piazza Vittorio Veneto for dinner at **Restaurante Don Matteo**, just off the square.

## Two Days

A second day could be devoted to Matera's excellent museums. In the heart of Sasso Caveoso the **Casa-Grotte di Vico Solitario** may sound a tad contrived but really *does* provide a vivid picture of former living conditions here. Allow plenty of time for a visit to the **Museo della Scultura Contemporanea** (MUSMA;) with its atmospheric cave setting. Next, take a giant step into the past at the **Museo Nazionale Ridola** (above) with its prehistoric and Bronze Age exhibits. Finally, art enthusiasts should not miss the **Museo Nazionale d'Arte Moderna** (above) within the Museo di Arte Medievale e Moderna della Basilicata, which highlights the bold and stylistic work of local Renaissance man, Carlo Levi.

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## EXPLORING THE GORGE

Gazing out over Matera's extraordinary gorge, you may well feel the urge to strike out into it. **Ferula Viaggi** ([www.materaturismo.it](http://www.materaturismo.it)) operates according to the principle of 'slow travel' and offers various guided trips (two to 15 people; [Click here](#)) out on the Murgia plateau, from a couple of hours' walk to weeklong trips. For example, the two-day tour takes in the rock churches and visits fortified farms and frescoed cave chapels (€162), while a weeklong trip might visit the *sassi*, the canyon and the highest summits of the Pollino (€440). The best time to walk is in spring or autumn, but light walks are possible in the heat of July and August if you start early or late. Ferula Viaggi also runs **Bike Basilicata** ([www.bikebasilicata.it](http://www.bikebasilicata.it)), which rents bikes and helmets and supplies a road book and map so you can head off on your own (per day/week €18/60); guided bike tours include a seven-night 500km odyssey across Puglia and Basilicata.

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A reliable English-speaking guide is American **Amy Weideman** (☎ 339 282 3618). A half-day tour for two people costs €40.

## Festivals & Events

In the **Sagra della Madonna della Bruna** (2 July) the colourful Procession of Shepherds parades ornately decorated papier-mâché floats around town. The finale is the *assalto al carro*, when the crowd descends

on the main cart and tears it to pieces.

## Sleeping

Matera has some of Basilicata's most unusual and stylish hotels housed in the historic *sassi*.

**La Dolce Vita** (☎ 0835 31 03 24; Rione Malve 51; s €40-60, d €50-80) Owner Vincenzo Altieri (ex-manager of Hotel Sant'Angelo) has created a delightful ecofriendly B&B in Sasso Caveoso, with solar panels and recycled rain water for plumbing. The rooms are cool and simply furnished with cream paintwork, dark-wood furniture and the occasional religious picture.

**Bed & Breakfast del Casale** (☎ 0835 33 73 04; Via Casale 43; s €40-60, d €60-80) The spacious and *sassi*-central apartment here burrows deep into the cave. Located in Sasso Barisano, the decor is dated, but very comfortable, and there is a kitchenette and terrace.

**Il Vicinato** (☎ 0835 31 26 72; [www.ilvicinato.com](http://www.ilvicinato.com); Piazzetta San Pietro Caveoso 7; s/d 45/70) Enjoys a great, easy-to-find location, and rooms are decorated in clean modern lines, with views across to Idris rock and the Murgia plateau. There's a room with a balcony, and a small apartment, each with independent entrances.

**Le Monacelle** (☎ 0835 34 40 97; [www.lemonacelle.it](http://www.lemonacelle.it); Via Riscatto 9; dm €18, s/d €55/86; ☎ 📶) Near the duomo, and next to the delightful small Chiesa di San Francesco d'Assisi chapel, this 16th-century-building offers simple dorms and plainly furnished rooms, as well as atmospheric cobbled terraces with stunning *sassi* views.

**Sassi Hotel** (☎ 0835 33 10 09; [www.hotelsassi.it](http://www.hotelsassi.it); Via San Giovanni Vecchio 89; s/d incl breakfast €70/90; ☎) In an 18th-century rambling edifice in Sasso Barisano, this has graceful rooms – some in caves, some not – with cathedral views from the balconies and the added plus of fridges in the rooms.

**Residence San Pietro Barisano** (☎ 0835 34 61 91; [www.residencesanpietrobarisano.it](http://www.residencesanpietrobarisano.it); Rione San Biagio €52/56; s/d from €60/80; ☎) The five apartments here are all light pine and sleek, ergonomic furnishings, set against the soothing natural cave interiors. The restaurant is similarly elegant and excellent (meals €35).

**Locanda di San Martino** (☎ 0835 25 66 00; [www.locandadisanmartino.it](http://www.locandadisanmartino.it); Via Fiorentini 71; s/d €87/102; ☎ 📶) A sumptuous hotel where you can swim in a cave without dipping your toe in the sea; a subterranean full-length swimming pool is due to open here in 2010. The cave accommodation, complete with niches and rustic brick floors, is set around a warren of cobbled paths and courtyards.

**our pick Hotel in Pietra** (☎ 0835 31 40 10; [www.hotelinpietra.it](http://www.hotelinpietra.it); Via San Giovanni Vecchio 22; Barisano; s €70, d €110-150; ☎ 📶) This boutique hotel opened in 2008 and is simply breathtaking. The lobby is set in a former 13th-century chapel complete with soaring arches, while the eight rooms combine soft golden stone with the natural cave interior. Furnishings are Zen-style with low beds, while the bathrooms are super-stylish and include vast sunken tubs.

## Eating

**Terrazza dell'Annunziata Caffè** (☎ 0835 33 65 25; Piazza Vittorio Veneto; snacks €5) This is the roof terrace of the old convent Palazzo dell'Annunziata (now converted into a cinema and library). Take the lift and enjoy peace, quiet and panoramic views.

**Oi Marì** (☎ 0835 34 61 21; Via Fiorentini 66; pizzas/pastas from €3.50/6.50; ☎ Wed-Mon) In Sasso Barisano, this big convivial cavern is styled as a Neapolitan pizzeria – and has a great cheery atmosphere

and excellent, substantial pizzas to match.

**our pick La Talpa** (☎ 0835 33 50 86; Via Fiorentini 168; meals €15; 🍷 Wed-Mon) Down the road from Oi Marì, the cavernous dining rooms are moodily lit and atmospheric. A popular spot for romancing couples, the standard is very high, both for pizzas and specialities like *capuntí con purea dí cicerchié, funghi e rucola* (pasta with a bean, mushrooms and rocket sauce).

**Le Botteghe** (☎ 0835 34 40 72; Piazza San Pietro Barisano; meals €40; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, lunch Sun) In Sasso Barisano, this is a classy but informal restaurant in arched whitewashed rooms. Try delicious local specialities like *fusilli mollica e crusco* (pasta and fried bread with local sweet peppers) followed by the *strascinate salsiccia e funghi* (pasta with sausage and mushrooms).

**Ristorante Don Matteo** (☎ 0835 34 41 45; Via San Biagio 12; meals €50; 🍷 lunch Wed-Mon, dinner Thu-Tue) A discreet, venerable restaurant in vaulted stone rooms, presided over by the charming Don Matteo himself. The service is impeccable and the poetic menu is full of delicious and refined takes on traditional dishes.

**Baccanti** (☎ 0835 33 37 04; Via Sant'Angelo; meals €50; 🍷 lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) As classy as a cave can be. The design is simple glamour against the low arches of the cavern; the dishes are delicate and complex, using local ingredients. This is where stars go to twinkle when in town.

There's a daily fresh-produce **market** (Via Persio) just south of Piazza Vittorio Veneto.

## Drinking

**19a Buca Winery?** (☎ 0835 33 35 92; Via Lombardi 3; 🍷 11am-midnight Tue-Sun) The question mark says it all – 13m below Piazza Vittorio Veneto the past takes a futuristic twist. Suffering an identity crisis, this ultra-chic wine bar—restaurant-cafe-lounge has white space-pod chairs, a 19-hole indoor golf course surrounding an ancient cistern and an impressive wine cellar and degustation menu (meals €30).

**Morgan Pub** (☎ 0835 31 22 33; Via Buoizzi 2; 🍷 Wed-Mon) A hip and cavernous cellar pub with outside tables in the summer.

**Shibuya** (☎ 0835 33 74 09; Vico Purgatorio 12; 🍷 9am-3am Tue-Sun) This cool little cafe and CD shop is also a bar and has regular DJs; make a beeline for the few outside tables at the top of an ancient alley.

**Caffe Tripoli** (Piazza Vittorio Veneto) Enjoy some of the best pastries and cappuccino in town, served by bow-tied waiters in this prime people-watching spot.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The bus station is north of Piazza Matteotti, near the train station. **SITA** (☎ 0835 38 50 07; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) goes to Taranto (€4.60, two hours, one daily) and Metaponto (€3.20, one hour, up to five daily) and many small towns in the province. **Grassani** (☎ 0835 72 14 43) serves Potenza (€5.30, two daily). Buy tickets from newspaper kiosks on Piazza Matteotti.

**Marozzi** (☎ 06 225 21 47; [www.marozzivi.it](http://www.marozzivi.it)) runs three daily buses to Rome (€32.50, 6½ hours). A joint SITA and Marozzi service leaves daily for Siena, Florence and Pisa, via Potenza. Advance booking is essential.

### TRAIN

**Ferrovie Appulo-Lucane** (FAL; ☎ 0835 33 28 61; [www.fal-srl.it](http://www.fal-srl.it)) runs regular trains (€4.35, 1½ hours,



12 daily) and buses to Bari. For Potenza, take a FAL bus to Ferrandina and connect with a Trenitalia train, or head to Altamura to link up with FAL's Bari—Potenza run.

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## VENOSA

**pop 12,147**

About 25km east of Melfi, autumn-coloured Venosa, with its medieval centre and flagstone lanes, used to be a thriving Roman colony, owing much of its prosperity to being a stop on the Appian Way. It was also the birthplace of the poet Horace in 65 BC. The main reason to come here is to see the remains of Basilicata's largest monastic complex.

Venosa's main square, Piazza Umberto I, is dominated by a 15th-century Aragonese castle with a small **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0972 3 60 95; Piazza Umberto I; admission €2.50; 🕒 9am-8pm Wed-Mon, 2-8pm Tue) that houses finds from Roman Venusia and human bone fragments dating back 300,000 years, Europe's oldest examples of human life.

Admission to the museum also gets you into the ruins of the **Roman settlement** (🕒 9am-1hr before dusk Wed-Mon, 2pm-1hr before dusk Tue), and the graceful later ruins of **Abbazia della Santissima Trinità** (☎ 0972 3 42 11). At the northeastern end of town, the *abbazia* (abbey) was erected above the Roman temple in around 1046 by the Benedictines, and predates the Norman invasions. Within the complex is a pair of churches, one unfinished. The earlier church contains the tomb of Robert Guiscard, Norman crusader, and his fearsome half-brother Drogo – it's said Robert arranged Drogo's death. The other unfinished church was begun in the 11th century using materials from the neighbouring Roman amphitheatre. A little way south are some Jewish and Christian catacombs.

**Hotel Orazio** (☎ 0972 3 11 35; Vittorio Emanuele II 142; s/d €45/65) is a 17th-century palace complete with antique majolica tiles and marble floors. It's overseen by a pair of grandmotherly ladies who do all they can to make your stay comfortable. The terrace has beautiful views.

**Al Frantoio** (☎ 0972 3 69 25; Via Roma 211; meals €40; 🕒 Tue-Sun) is an elegant, well-regarded restaurant occupying several graceful rooms in a building backed by olive groves; it specialises in spectacular takes on local dishes.

Venosa can be reached by a bus Mondays to Saturdays from Potenza (€6.20, 1½ hours).

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## POTENZA

**pop 68,800 / elev 819m**

Basilicata's regional capital Potenza has been ravaged by earthquakes (the last in 1980), and has some brutal housing blocks. If that wasn't enough, as the highest town in the land, it broils in summer and shivers in winter. You may find yourself here, however, as it's a major transport hub.

The centre straddles east to west across a high ridge. To the south lie the main Trenitalia and Ferrovie Appulo—Lucane train stations, connected to the centre by buses 1 and 10.

Potenza's few sights are in the old centre, at the top of the hill. To get there, take the elevators from Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II. The ecclesiastical highlight is the **cathedral**, erected in the 12th century and rebuilt in the 18th. The elegant Via Pretoria, flanked by a boutique or two, makes a pleasant traffic-free

stroll, especially during the *passeggiata*.

In central Potenza, **Al Convento** (☎ 097 12 55 91; [www.alconvento.eu](http://www.alconvento.eu); Largo San Michele Arcangelo 21; s €50-55, d €80-90; ☒ ☑) is a great accommodation choice. It's in an early-19th-century building (funnily enough, once a convent), housing a mix of polished antiques and design classics.

**Antica Osteria Marconi** (☎ 097 15 69 00; Viale Marconi 233; meals €40; ☒ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat Sep-Jul) is a fantastic restaurant serving traditional dishes prepared with flair and imagination with an emphasis on fish. It's cosy in winter and for summer there's a terrace.

Various transport companies operate from different locations in town; the tourist office has a comprehensive list of destinations and services.

**Grassani** (☎ 0835 72 14 43) has buses to Matera (€5.30, one hour, two daily). **SITA** (☎ 0971 50 68 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) has daily buses to Melfi, Venosa and Maratea. Buses leave from Via Appia 185 and also stop near the Scalo Inferiore Trenitalia train station. **Liscio** (☎ 097 15 46 73) buses serve cities including Rome (€23, 4½ hours, one daily) and Naples (€8.59, two hours, three daily), via Salerno (€7, 1½ hours).

There are regular train services from Potenza Inferiore to Taranto (€8.50, two hours), Salerno (€6.30, two hours) and Foggia (€6.40, 2¼ hours). For Bari (€9.10, four hours, four daily), use the **Ferrovie Appulo—Lucane** (☎ 0971 41 15 61) at Potenza Superiore station.

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## APPENNINO LUCANO

The Appennino Lucano (Lucanian Apennines) bite Basilicata in half like a row of jagged teeth. Sharply rearing up south of Potenza, they protect the lush Tyrrhenian Coast and leave the Ionian shores gasping in the semi-arid heat. Careering along its hair-raising roads through the broken spine of mountains can be arduous, but if you're looking for drama, the drive could be the highlight of your trip.

The Fascists exiled writer and political activist Carlo Levi to this isolated region in 1935. He lived and is buried in the tiny hilltop town of **Aliano**, where remarkably little seems to have changed since he wrote his dazzling *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, which laid bare the boredom, poverty and hypocrisy of village life. The **Pinacoteca Carlo Levi** (☎ 0835 56 83 15; Piazza Garibaldi; admission €3; ☒ 10am-1pm & 4-7.30pm in summer, 10am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm in winter) also houses the **Museo Storico di Carlo Levi**, featuring his papers, documents and paintings. Admission to the pinacoteca (art gallery) includes a tour of Levi's house and entry to the museum.

More spectacular than Aliano are the two mountaintop villages of **Castelmezzano** (elevation 985m) and **Pietrapertosa** (elevation 1088m), ringed by the Lucanian Dolomites. They are Basilicata's highest villages, and are often swathed in cloud, making you wonder why anyone would build here, in territory best suited to goats. Castelmezzano is surely one of Italy's most dramatic villages; the houses huddle along an impossibly narrow ledge that falls away in gorges to the Caperrino river. Pietrapertosa is even more amazing: the Saracen fortress at its pinnacle is difficult to spot, as it is carved out of the mountain.

You can spend an eerie night in Pietrapertosa in the simple *pensione* **Albergo Il Frantoio** (☎ 0971 98 31 90; [albfrontoio@tiscalinet.it](mailto:albfrontoio@tiscalinet.it); Via M Torraca 15/17; s/d €28/40, d with full board €47). Don't miss the high-up, authentic Lucano restaurant **Al Becco della Civetta** (☎ 0971 98 62 49; Vicolo I Maglietta 7; meals €25; ☒ Wed-Mon; ☒) in Castelmezzano, which also offers traditionally furnished, simple whitewashed rooms (single/double €50/80) with lots of dark wood and fabulous views.

Aliano is accessible by SITA bus [Click here](#) from Matera, with a change in Pisticci Scalo. You'll need your own vehicle to visit Castelmezzano and Pietrapertosa.

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## TYRRHENIAN COAST

Resembling a mini-Amalfi, Basilicata's Tyrrhenian coast is short (about 20km) but sweet. Squeezed between Calabria and Campania's Cilento peninsula, it shares the same beguiling characteristics: hidden coves and pewter sandy beaches backed by majestic coastal cliffs. The SS18 threads a spectacular route along the mountains to the coast's star attraction, the charming seaside settlements of Maratea.

### Maratea

pop 5300

Maratea is a charming, if confusing, place at first, being comprised of several distinct localities ranging from a medieval village to a stylish harbour. The setting is lush and dramatic, with a coastal road (narrower even than the infamous Amalfi Coast road!) that dips and winds past the cliffs and pocket-size beaches that line the sparkling Golfo di Policastro. Studded with elegant hotels, Maratea's attraction is no secret and you can expect tailback traffic and fully booked hotels in July and August. Conversely, many hotels and restaurants close from October to March.

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## OUR TOP FIVE RESTAURANTS IN BASILICATA

- [La Talpa](#), Matera
  - [Da Peppe](#), Rotunda
  - Al Frantoio [Click here](#), Venosa
  - Lanterna Rossa (opposite), Maratea
  - [Baccanti](#), Matera
- 

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Your first port of call should be the pretty **Porto di Maratea**, a harbour where sleek yachts and bright-blue fishing boats bob in the water, overlooked by bars and restaurants. Then there's the enchanting 13th-century medieval *borgo* (small town) of **Maratea Inferiore**, with pint-sized piazzas, wriggling alleys and interlocking houses, offering startling coastal views. It's all overlooked by a 21m-high, gleaming white statue of Christ the Redeemer – if you have your own transport, don't miss the rollercoaster road and stupendous views from the statue-mounted summit – below which lie the ruins of **Maratea Superiore**, all that remains of the original 8th-century-BC Greek colony.

The deep green hillsides that encircle this tumbling conurbation offer excellent walking trails and there are a number of easy day trips to the surrounding hamlets of **Acquafredda di Maratea** and **Fiumicello**, with its small sandy beach. You will find the **tourist office** (☎ 0973 87 69 08; Piazza Gesù 40; 🕒 8am-2pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hrs Sep-Jun) in Fiumicello.

**Centro Sub Maratea** (☎ 0973 87 00 13; [www.csmaratea.it](http://www.csmaratea.it); Via Santa Caterina 28, Maratea) offers diving courses and boat tours that include visits to surrounding grottoes and coves. Also rents boats.

A worthwhile day trip via car is to pretty **Rivello** (elevation 479m). Perched on a ridge, framed by the southern Apennines, these days it is a centre for arts and crafts and has long been known for its exquisite working of gold and copper. It is also a gastronomic centre for the rapidly expanding Slow Food Movement. Rivella's interesting Byzantine history is evident in the tiny tiled cupolas and frescoes of its gorgeous churches.

## SLEEPING

Maratea is one of the most sophisticated resorts in the south, with accommodation to match.

**B&B Nefer** (☎ 0973 87 18 28; [www.bbnefer.it](http://www.bbnefer.it); Via Cersuta; s €50-60, d €65-80; 📄) A B&B set in a small hamlet (Via Cersuta), 5km northwest of Maratea. It has three rooms decorated in sea greens and blues that open onto a lush green lawn complete with deckchairs for contemplating the distant sea view. From here you can walk along narrow seaside paths to a dramatic small, black-sanded beach.

**Hotel Villa Cheta Elite** (☎ 0973 87 81 34; [www.villacheta.it](http://www.villacheta.it); Via Timpone 46; d €90-125; 📅 May-Oct; 📄 📄) A charming art-nouveau villa at the entrance to the hamlet of Acquafredda. The broad terrace commands spectacular views and, as one-time home to the aristocratic Morsicano family, the rooms retain their faded antique charm. There's also a fabulous restaurant (meals €50).

**Locanda delle Donne Monache** (☎ 0973 87 74 87; [www.locandamonache.com](http://www.locandamonache.com); Via Mazzei 4; r €120-230; 📅 May-Oct; 📄 📄 📄) Overlooking the medieval *borgo*, this exclusive hotel is in a converted 18th-century convent with a suitably lofty setting. It's a hotchpotch of vaulted corridors, terraces and gardens fringed with bougainvillea and lemon trees. The rooms are elegantly decorated in pastel shades, while the Sacello restaurant prepares delicate dishes drawing on the regional flavours of Lucania.

## EATING

**Litrico's** (☎ 0973 87 70 05; Via San Venere; meals €18) A sprawling restaurant and terrace on the approach to Fiumicello's modest commercial strip. The menu holds few surprises but dishes won't disappoint. You can work off the carbs with a game of tennis – the owners run the public tennis court next door.

**Lanterna Rossa** (☎ 0973 87 63 52; Maratea Porto; meals €30; 📅 Apr-Sep) Head for the terrace overlooking the port to dine on exquisite seafood dishes, like marinated anchovies with chilli red peppers, or a sumptuous antipasto. Cheese lovers shouldn't miss the cream of ricotta and Battipaglia cheese with Calabrian caviar.

**Taverna Rovita** (☎ 0973 87 65 88; Via Rovita 13; meals €35; 📅 Wed-Mon mid-Mar—Dec) This tavern is just off Maratea Inferiore's main piazza. Rovita is excellent value and specialises in hearty local fare, with Lucanian specialities involving stuffed peppers, game birds, local salami and fine seafood.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

**SITA** (☎ 0971 50 68 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) operates a comprehensive network of routes including up the coast to Sapri in Campania (€1.60, 50 minutes, six daily). Local buses (€1) connect the coastal towns and Maratea train station with Maratea Inferiore, running frequently in summer. Intercity and regional trains on the Rome—Reggio line stop at Maratea train station, below the town.

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## PARCO NAZIONALE DEL POLLINO

Italy's largest national park, the **Pollino National Park** ([www.parcopollino.it](http://www.parcopollino.it)), straddles Basilicata and Calabria, (see the beginning of the Calabria section, [Click here](#)) for the park area that falls under that region). It acts like a rocky curtain separating the region from the rest of Italy and has the richest repository of flora and fauna in the south, covering 1960 sq km.

The park's most spectacular areas are the central Monte Pollino (2248m), and the Monti di Orsomarso (1987m), in the southwest (in Calabria). These sheer mountains, often snowbound, are blanketed by forests of oak, alder, maple, beech, pine and fir which filter the harsh southern sun and protect the delicately budding peonies and orchids that set the land ablaze after the snow melts. The park is most famous, however, for its ancient *pino loricato* trees, which are only found here and in the Balkans. The oldest specimens reach 40m in height and their scaly, grey trunks look like sculptures against the huge bald rocks.

Walkers in the park can enjoy varied landscapes, from deep river canyons to alpine meadows, and the park still protects a rare stock of roe deer, wild cats, wolves, birds of prey including the golden eagle and Egyptian vulture, and the endangered otter, *Lutra lutra*.

The SS653 cuts across the park and is the best route if you want to explore unique Albanian villages such as **San Paolo Albanese** and **San Costantino Albanese**. These isolated and unspoilt communities fiercely maintain their mountain culture and the Greek liturgy is retained in the main churches. They're a great place to buy rare local handicrafts – wooden crafts in **Terranova di Pollino**, alabaster in **Latronico** and wrought iron in **Sant'Arcangelo**.

## Orientation & Information

The park's main centre is **Rotonda** (elevation 626m), which is accessible from the A3 and SS19 and is home to the official park office, **Ente Parco Nazionale del Pollino** (☎ 0973 66 93 11; Via delle Frece Tricolori 6; 🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Fri, 3-5.30pm Mon & Wed). For an English-speaking guide, contact Giuseppe Cosenza at Asklepios (see below), who arranges trekking trips (from personalised programmes to family treks), mountain biking and rafting (one hour/four hours €15/50). **Pollino Info Point** ([www.ferulaviaggi.it](http://www.ferulaviaggi.it)) is run by [Ferula Viaggi](#) based in Matera, and provides information, including nature and culture, on the area. Ferula Viaggio also runs trips, mountain-bike excursions and treks into the Pollino.

The *Carta Excursionistica del Pollino Lucano* (scale 1:50000), produced by the Basilicata tourist board, is a useful driving map. You should be able to find a copy at the tourist offices in Rotonda, Matera or Maratea. The large-scale *Parco Nazionale del Pollino* map available at the Rotonda park office, and from Ferula Viaggi shows all the main routes and includes some useful information on the park, its flora and fauna and the park communities. Both maps are free. You can also buy the *Parco Nazionale del Pollino settore centro-settentrionale* (central—north region) map (1:55.000; €6) online at [www.ecommerce.escursionista.it](http://www.ecommerce.escursionista.it).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Asklepios** (☎ 0973 66 92 90/347 2631462; [www.asklepios.it](http://www.asklepios.it); Contrada Barone 9; s/d €25/50) This modern place with simple rooms has a rural setting a few kilometres outside Rotonda. It's the place to stay for walkers as it's run by Giuseppe Cosenza, one of the few English-speaking guides in the Pollino. Advance booking is advisable. Asklepios is linked to the similar *agriturismi* (farm-stay accommodation) Agriturismo Civarra (☎ 0973 669152) and Agriturismo il Calivino (☎ 0973 661688), both of which have great views. You can arrange trekking or rafting from all three places and they offer special activity

packages. For more information see the Asklepios website.

**Picchio Nero** (☎ 0973 9 31 70; [www.picchionero.com](http://www.picchionero.com); Via Mulino 1; s/d incl breakfast €60/73; 📍) The chalet-style Picchio Nero in Terranova di Pollino, with its Austrian-style wooden balconies and recommended restaurant (meals €35), is the most popular hotel for hikers. It's family-run, cosy and friendly, has a small garden and can help arrange excursions.

**Luna Rossa** (☎ 0973 9 32 54; Via Marconi 18; meals €35; 📅 Thu-Tue) In Terranova di Pollino, Luna Rossa is very highly regarded, with outstanding and creative local specialities cooked simply and with real flair, served in a rustic wood-panelled setting with breathtaking views.

**Da Peppe** (☎ 0973 66 12 51; Corso Garibaldi 13; meals €35; 📅 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue & Thu-Sun) In Rotonda, this is a winner, with wonderful local meat and woodland products such as truffles and mushrooms, served in a cosy converted townhouse near the main piazza.

## Getting There & Away

It's difficult to navigate the park without your own vehicle. Bus services are limited and almost nonexistent outside high summer.

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# CALABRIA

Tell a non-Calabrese Italian that you're going to Calabria and you will probably elicit some surprise, inevitably followed by stories of the 'ndrangheta – the Calabrian Mafia – notorious for smuggling and kidnapping wealthy northerners and keeping them hidden in the mountains.

But Calabria contains startling natural beauty and spectacular towns that seem to grow out of the craggy mountaintops. It has three national parks: the Pollino in the north, the Sila in the centre and the Aspromonte in the south. It's around 90% hills, but skirted by some of Italy's finest coast, 780km of it (ignore the bits devoured by unappealing holiday camps). Bergamot grows here, and it's the only place in the world where the plants are of sufficient quality to produce the essential oil used in many perfumes and to flavour Earl Grey tea. As in Puglia, there are hundreds of music and food festivals here year-round, reaching a fever pitch in July and August.

Admittedly, you sometimes feel as if you have stepped into a 1970s postcard, as its towns, destroyed by repeated earthquakes, are often surrounded by brutal breeze-block suburbs. The region has suffered from the unhealthy miscegenation between European and government subsidies (aimed to develop the south) and dark Mafia opportunism. Half-finished houses often mask well-furnished flats where families live happily, untroubled by invasive house taxes.

This is where to head for an adventure into the unknown.

## History

Traces of Neanderthal, Palaeolithic and Neolithic life have been found in Calabria, but the region only became internationally important with the arrival of the Greeks in the 8th century BC. They founded a colony at what is now Reggio di Calabria. Remnants of this colonisation, which spread along the Ionian coast with Sibari and Crotona as the star settlements, are still visible. However, the fun didn't last for the Greeks, and in 202 BC the cities of Magna Graecia all came under Roman control. Destroying the

countryside's handsome forests, the Romans did irreparable geological damage. Navigable rivers became fearsome *fiumare* (torrents) dwindling to wide, dry, drought-stricken riverbeds in high summer.

Calabria's fortified hilltop communities weathered successive invasions by the Normans, Swabians, Aragonese and Bourbons, and remained largely undeveloped. Earthquakes were another hazard; the biggest, in 1783, killed 50,000 people.

Although the 18th-century Napoleonic incursion and the arrival of Garibaldi and Italian unification inspired hope for change, Calabria remained a disappointed, feudal region and, like the rest of the south, was racked by malaria.

A by-product of this tragic history was the growth of banditry and organised crime. Calabria's Mafia, known as the 'ndrangheta (from the Greek for heroism/virtue), inspires fear in the local community, but tourists are rarely the target of its aggression. For many, the only answer has been to get out and, for at least a century, Calabria has seen its young people emigrate in search of work.

## Getting There & Around

**Lamezia Terme airport** (Sant'Eufemia Lamezia, SUF; ☎ 0968 41 43 33; [www.sacal.it](http://www.sacal.it)), 63km south of Cosenza and 36km west of Catanzaro, at the junction of the A3 and SS280 motorways, links the region with major Italian cities and is also a destination for charters from northern Europe.

**Reggio di Calabria airport** (Ravagnese; ☎ 0965 64 05 17) is located around 5km south of town, and mainly handles national flights.

Public transport is not always fast or easy. For remoter places you'll need a car.

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## PARCO NAZIONALE DEL POLLINO

You enter Calabria through the natural fortress of Italy's largest national park, which straddles the border with Basilicata. On Calabria's side are the peak of Monti di Orsomarso and the spectacular canyon of the Gole del Raganello. For more information see the official website [www.guidapollino.it](http://www.guidapollino.it), and for info on the Basilicata part of the park, [Click here](#).

You can order detailed maps online from [www.ecommerce.escursionista.it](http://www.ecommerce.escursionista.it), including *Orsomarso-Pollino* 1:50.000 (€6.20) and *Parco Nazionale del Pollino* 1:55.000 (€6).

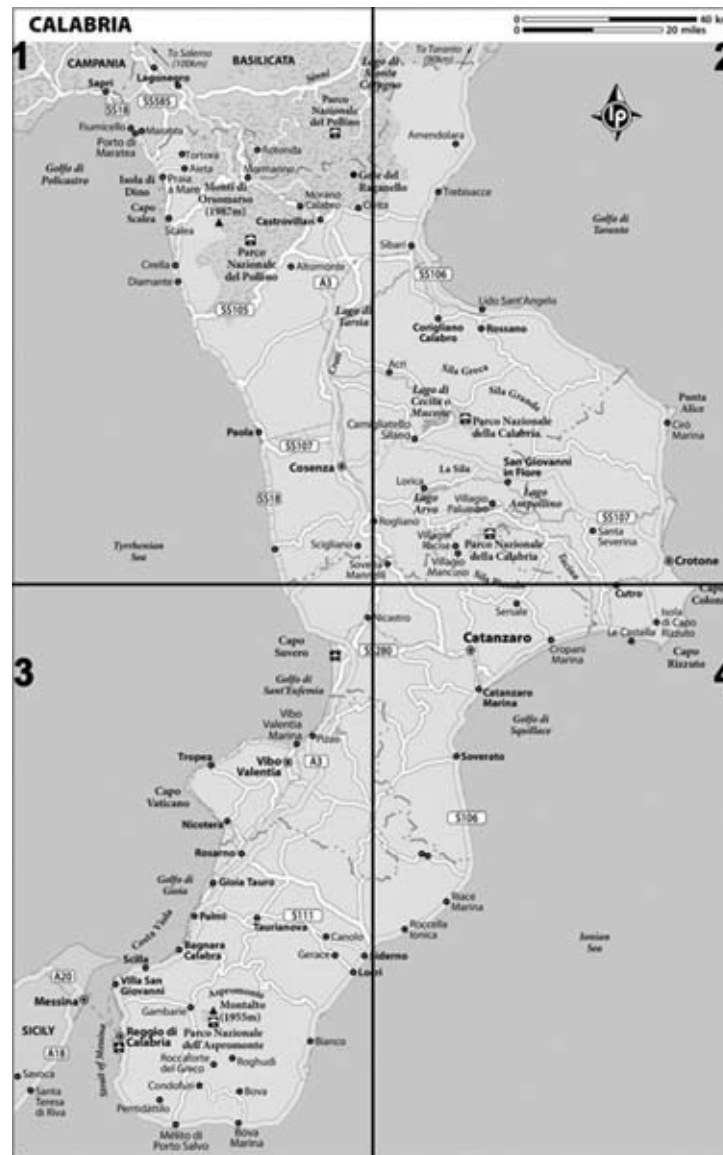
One of the most beautiful experiences in the Calabrian Pollino is to go white-water rafting down the spectacular Lao river. You can arrange rafting, as well as canoeing, canyoning, trekking and mountain biking at **Centro Lao Action Raft** (☎ 0985 2 14 76; [www.laoraft.com](http://www.laoraft.com); Via Lauro 10/12) in Scalea and **Aventure Lao** (☎ 0985 8 33 54; [www.raftinglao.com](http://www.raftinglao.com); Calle de Miralonga) near Papisidero.

**Civita**, like many of the villages in the Pollino, was founded by Albanian refugees (in 1746), and its tiny **Museo Etnico Arbëreshe** (☎ 0981 7 31 50; Piazza Municipio 9; ☎ 5-8pm) is stuffed with interesting photos and artisanal work, while the houses in the village are characterised by decorated chimneys. Other towns worth visiting are **Castrovillari**, with its well-preserved 15th-century Aragonese castle and **Morano Calabro** – look up the beautiful MC Escher woodcut of this town. Naturalists should also check out wildlife museum **Centro Il Nibbio** (☎ 0981 3 07 45; Vico II Annunziata 11; admission €3; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) in Morano, which explains the Pollino ecosystem.

In Castrovillari, **Locanda di Alia** (☎ 0981 4 63 70; [www.alia.it](http://www.alia.it); Via Letticelle 55; s/d €90/120; 📞 📧 📷)

offers bungalow-style accommodation in a lush green garden. Inside, rooms feature wall murals, quirky light fittings and leather sofas. It's famous for its **restaurant** (meals €60-70; 📞 Mon-Sat Jun-Apr), where you can sample delectable local recipes featuring peppers, pork, figs, anise and honey.

**Agriturismo Colloredo** (📞 347 3236914; [www.colloredo.it](http://www.colloredo.it); Fratelli Coscia; s/d €28/56), near Morano Calabro, is in a remote rural setting, gorgeous amid rolling hills. Rooms are comfortable, old-fashioned country-style with polished wood and flagstone floors. Activities include riding, walking, fishing and rafting.



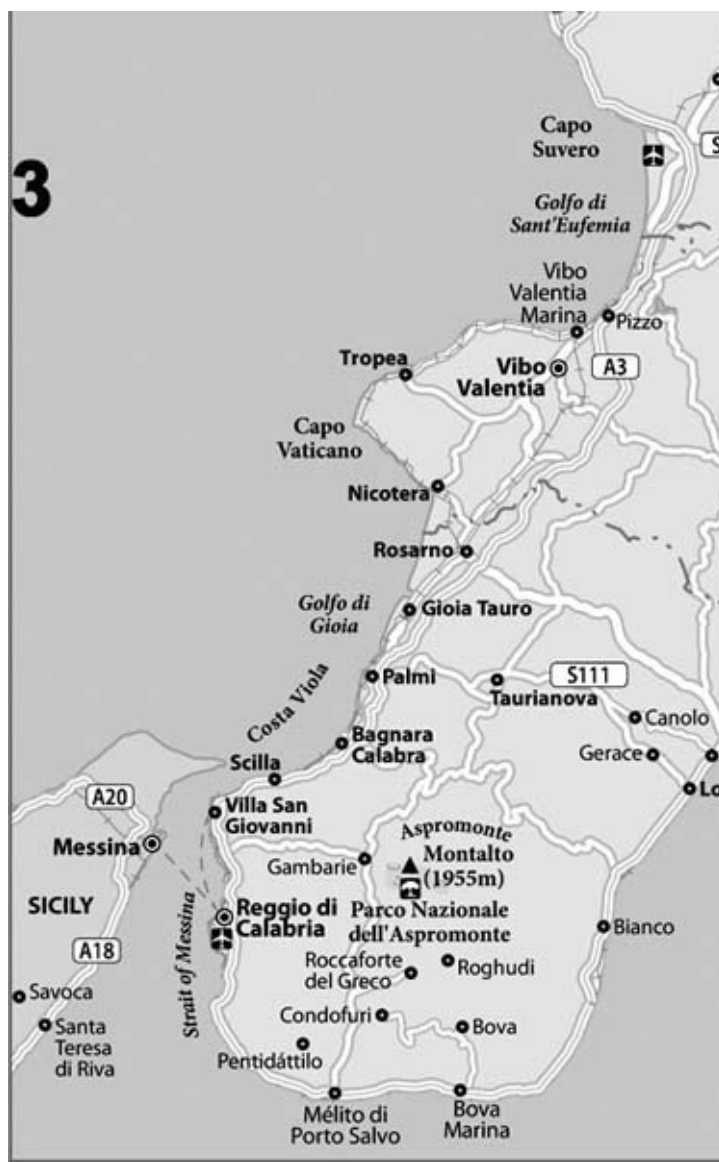


# CALABRIA





3





Public transport in this part of the park is scarce, so a car is a must.

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## NORTHERN TYRRHENIAN COAST

The good, the bad and the ugly line the region's western seashore.

The Autostrada del Sole (A3) is one of Italy's great coastal drives. It twists and turns through mountains, past huge swathes of dark-green forest and flashes of cerulean-blue sea. But the Italian penchant for cheap summer resorts has taken its toll here, and certain stretches are blighted by shoddy hotels and soulless stacks of flats.

In the low season, most places close. In summer many hotels are full, but you should have an easier time with the camping sites.

For information about the southern section of this coast, [Click here](#).

### Praia a Mare

**pop 6400**

Praia a Mare lies just short of Basilicata, the start of a stretch of wide, pebbly beach that continues south for about 30km to Cirella and Diamante. This flat, leafy grid of a town sits on a wide pale-grey beach,

looking out to an intriguing rocky chunk off the coast: the Isola di Dino.

Just off the seafront is the **tourist office** (☎ 0985 7 25 85; Via Amerigo Vespucci 6; 🕒 8am-1pm) with information on the **Isola di Dino**, famed for its sea caves. To visit the caves expect to pay around €5 for a guided tour from the old boys who operate off the beach. Alternatively, ask at the tourist office.

**Autolinee Preite** (☎ 0984 41 30 01) operates buses to Cosenza (€5.10, two hours, seven daily). **SITA** (☎ 0971 50 68 11; [www.sitabus.it](http://www.sitabus.it), in Italian) goes north to Maratea and Potenza. Regular trains also pass through for Paola and Reggio di Calabria.

## Diamante

### pop 5400

This fashionable seaside town, with its long promenade, is central to Calabria's famous *peperoncino* – the conversation-stalling spice that so characterises its cuisine. In early September a hugely popular **chilli-eating competition** takes place. Diamante is also famed for the bright murals that contemporary local and foreign artists have painted on the facades of the old buildings. For the best seafood restaurants head for the seafront at Spiaggia Piccola.

**Autolinee Preite** (☎ 0984 41 30 01) buses between Cosenza and Praia a Mare (seven daily) stop at Diamante.

## Aieta & Tortora

Precariously perched, otherworldly **Aieta** and **Tortora** must have been difficult to reach pre-asphalt. **Rocco** (☎ 0985 76 53 12) buses serve both villages, 6km and 12km from Praia respectively. Aieta is higher than Tortora and the journey constitutes much of the reward. When you arrive, walk up to the 16th-century **Palazzo Spinello** at the end of the road and take a look into the ravine behind it – it's a stunning view.

## Paola

### pop 17,100

Paola is worth a stop to see its holy shrine. The large pilgrimage complex is above a sprawling small town where the dress of choice is a tracksuit and the main activity is hanging about on street corners. The 80km of coast south from here to Pizzo is mostly overdeveloped and ugly. Paola is the main train hub for Cosenza, about 25km inland.

Watched over by a crumbling castle, the **Santuario di San Francesco di Paola** (☎ 0982 58 25 18; admission free; 🕒 6am-1pm & 2-6pm) is a curious, empty cave with tremendous significance to the devout. The saint lived and died in Paola in the 15th century and the sanctuary that he and his followers carved out of the bare rock has attracted pilgrims for centuries. The cloister is surrounded by naive wall paintings depicting the saint's truly incredible miracles. The original church contains an ornate reliquary of the saint. Also within the complex is a modern basilica, built to mark the second millennium. Black-clad monks hurry about.

There are several hotels near the station but you'll be better off staying in towns further north along the coast.

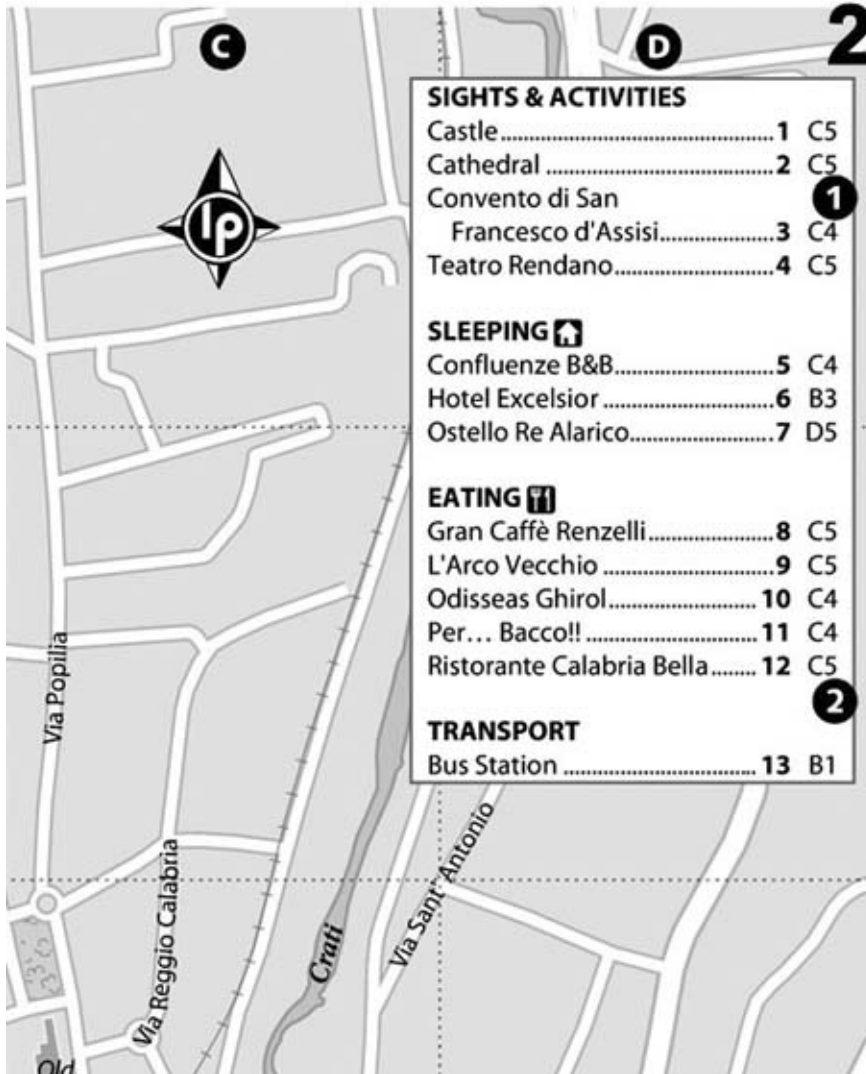
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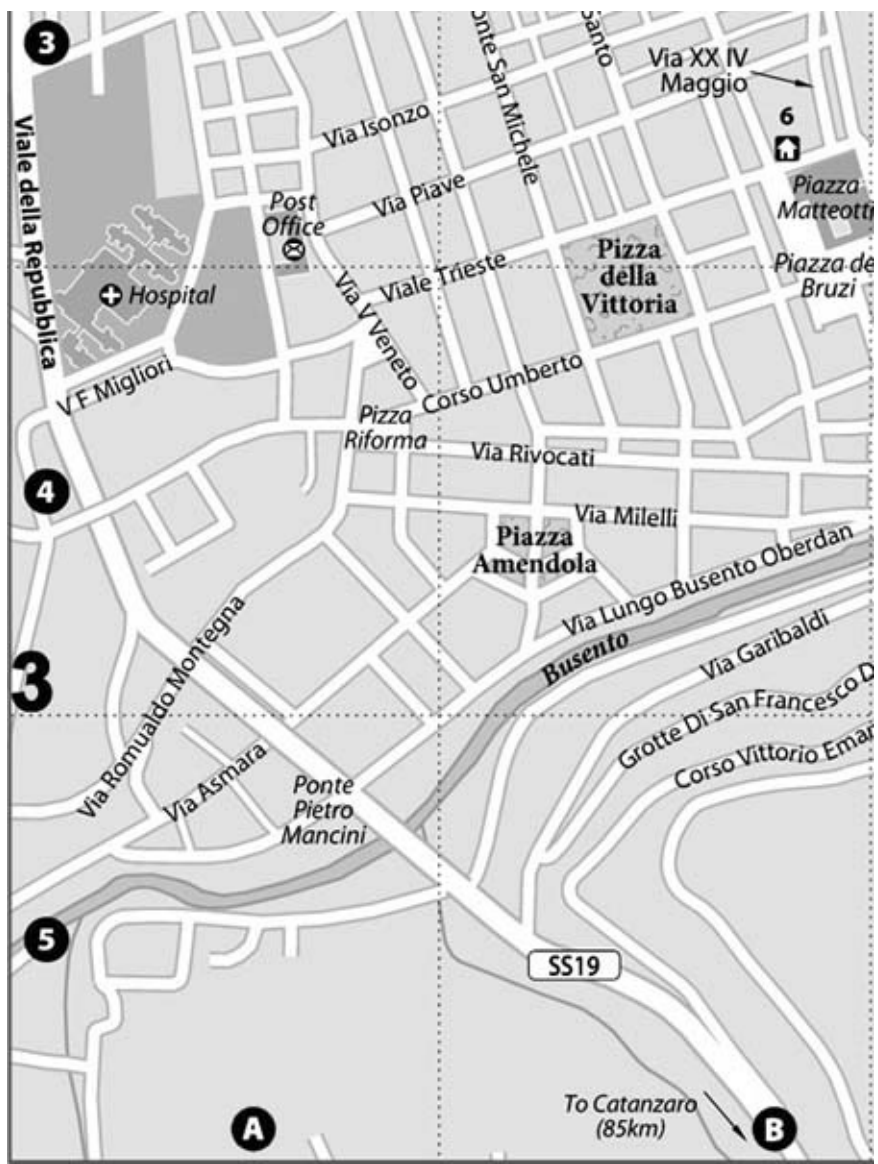
# COSENZA

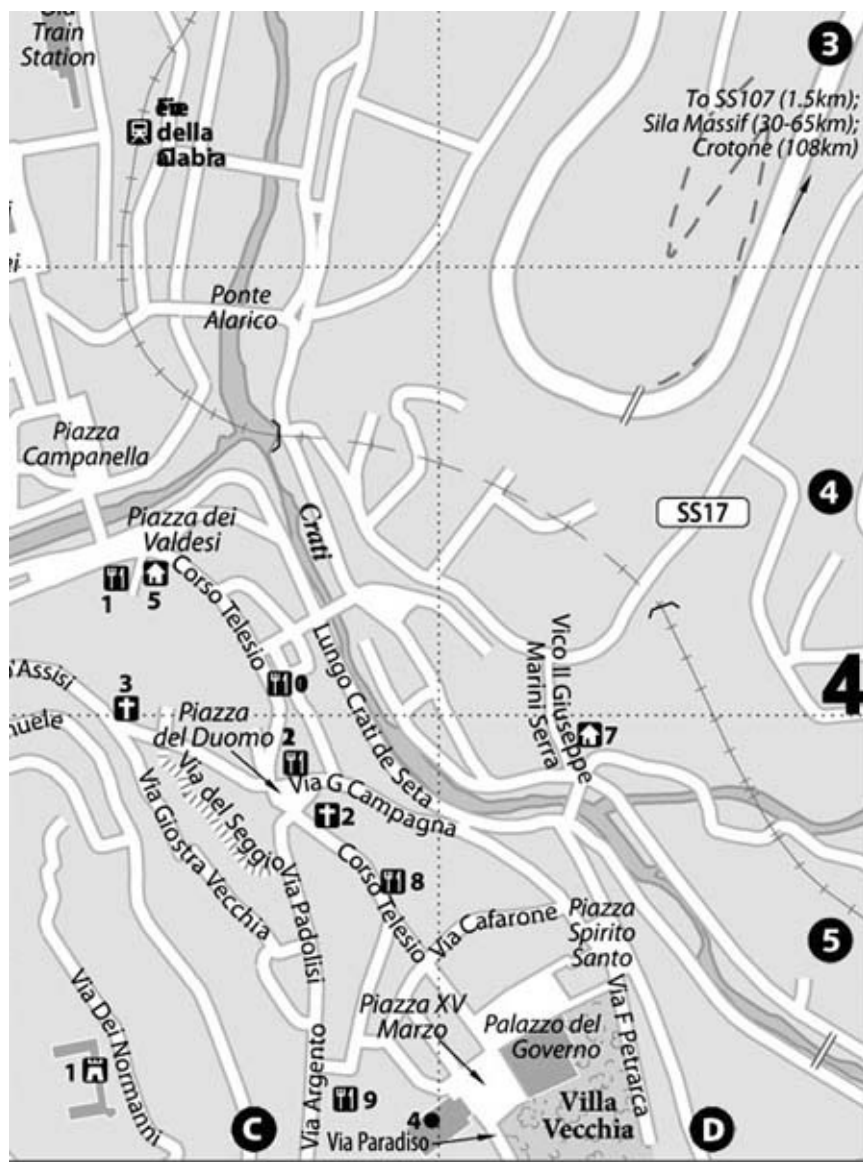


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Cosenza is home to Calabria's most important university, and its theatre hosts an excellent opera season. It's also the gateway to La Sila's mountains and is a major transport hub. There's a riverside Friday-morning market.

## Orientation & Information

The main drag, Corso Mazzini, runs south from Piazza Fera (near the bus station) and intersects Viale Trieste before meeting Piazza dei Bruzi. Head further south and cross the Busento river to reach the old town. Try the official website, [www.aptcosenza.it](http://www.aptcosenza.it), for information.

## Sights

There's not much to see here, but the medieval centre is very atmospheric. Head up the winding, charmingly dilapidated Corso Telesio which has a raw Neapolitan feel to it and is lined with ancient hung-with-washing tenements, antiquated shopfronts and a worrying number of funeral parlours. At the top, the 12th-century **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ hrs vary) has been rebuilt in restrained baroque style in the 18th century. In a chapel off the north aisle is a copy of an exquisite 13th-century Byzantine Madonna.

From the cathedral, you can walk up Via del Seggio through a little medieval quarter before turning right to reach the 13th-century **Convento di San Francesco d'Assisi**. Otherwise head along the *corso* to Piazza XV Marzo, an appealing square fronted by the Palazzo del Governo and the handsome neoclassical

## Teatro Rendano.

South of the piazza stretches the lovely **Villa Vecchia** park with lofty mature trees providing welcome shade.

From Piazza XV Marzo, follow Via Paradiso, then Via Antonio Siniscalchi for the route to the down-at-heel Norman **castle** (Piazza Federico II; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm), left in disarray by several earthquakes. It's empty inside, but the view merits the steep ascent.

## Sleeping

Cosenza isn't geared for tourism, but has a couple of good budget options.

**Ostello Re Alarico** (☎ 0984 79 25 70; Vico II Giuseppe Marini Serra 10; dm €16, s/d €30/50) A fabulous youth hostel in a beautiful old house, decorated with a lovely mix of antiques and new paintings. Some rooms have brilliant views over the old city. There's a fantastic lounge with an open fire and a self-catering kitchen.

**Confluenze B&B** (☎ 0984 7 64 88; Vico IV Santa Lucia 48; s €25-35, d with/without bathroom €70/50) Tucked away in the shabby backstreets behind Piazza dei Valdesi, this small, popular B&B has cosy, plain, wood-ceilinged rooms in an old building, as well as a lounge and kitchen. Only one room is en suite.

**Hotel Excelsior** (☎ /fax 0984 7 43 83; Piazza Matteotti 14; s/d €50/70; ☎ ☎) The old polished lobby of this once-grand station hotel retains the dimensions of its more illustrious past. Rooms are large, practical and good value.

## Eating

**Gran Caffè Renzelli** (☎ 0984 2 68 14; Corso Telesio 46) This venerable cafe behind the duomo has been run by the same family since 1801 when the founder arrived from Naples and began baking gooey cakes and desserts (cakes start at around €1.20). Sink your teeth into *torroncino torrefacto* – a confection of sugar, spices and hazelnuts – in elegant 19th-century surroundings.

**Odiseas Ghirol** (☎ 348 4016821; Corso Telesio 78; meals €12) There's not much elbow room at this pint-sized Greek restaurant with just a few scrubbed pine tables. But this is the place to come if you yearn for something different from traditional Calabrian cuisine, with authentic Greek dishes on the menu like moussaka and souvlaki.

**Ristorante Calabria Bella** (☎ 0984 79 35 31; Piazza del Duomo; meals €25; ☎ noon-3pm & 7pm-midnight) This is one of the best choices in the old town, located beside the cathedral. Join the local businessmen and ladies-who-lunch tucking into Calabrian cuisine, such as *grigliata mista di carne* (mixed grilled meats), in a series of wood-beamed rooms.

**Per... Bacco!!** (☎ 0984 79 55 69; Piazza dei Valdesi; meals €25) This smart yet informal restaurant has windows onto the square. Inside are exposed stone walls, vines and heavy beams. The reassuringly brief menu includes a generous antipasto (€8) and various *baccalà* (cod) dishes.

**L'Arco Vecchio** (☎ 0984 7 25 64; Piazza Archi di Ciaccio 21; meals €25; ☎ Wed-Mon) This family concern is deep in the old town in a 16th-century house. It has attractive low-ceilinged rooms, white tablecloths, pretty paintings and a glossy baby grand, and serves tasty, traditional dishes like *lagane e ceci* (pasta with chickpeas, garlic and oil).

## Getting There & Around

The main bus station is northeast of Piazza Fera. Services leave for Catanzaro (€4.60, 1¼ hours, eight daily), Paola (€2.70, 40 minutes, 10 daily) and towns throughout La Sila. **Autolinee Preite** (☎ 0984 41 30 01) has buses heading daily along the north Tyrrhenian coast, and **Autolinee Romano** (☎ 0962 2 17 09) serves Crotona, as well as Rome and Milan.

Cosenza is off the A3 autostrada. The SS107 connects the city with Crotona and the Ionian coast, across La Sila.

**Stazione Nuova** (☎ 0984 2 70 59) is about 2km northeast of the centre. Regular trains go to Reggio di Calabria (1st/2nd class €17.40/11.60, three hours) and Rome (€50/37, 5½ hours), both usually with a change at Paola, and Naples (€36/25, 3½ to four hours), as well as most destinations around the Calabrian coast.

Don't miss the spectacularly scenic **Ferrovie della Calabria** ([www.ferroviedellacalabria.it](http://www.ferroviedellacalabria.it)) line, which has its terminal beside the old train station. Its little trains run through La Sila and serve small towns around Cosenza (note trains only run between 7am and 7pm).

**Amaco** (☎ 0984 30 80 11) bus 27 links the centre and Stazione Nuova, the main train station.

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## LA SILA

La Sila is a big landscape, where wooded hills create endless rolling views. It's dotted with small villages and cut through with looping roads that make driving on them a test of your digestion.

It's divided into three areas covering 130 sq km: the Sila Grande, with the highest mountains; the strongly Albanian Sila Greca (to the north); and the Sila Piccola (near Catanzaro), with vast forested hills.

The highest peaks, covered with tall Corsican pines, reach 2000m – high enough for thick snow in winter. This makes it a popular skiing destination. In summer the climate is coolly alpine with carpets of spring wildflowers and mushroom-hunting in autumn. At its peak is the Bosco di Gallopani (Forest of Gallopani), part of the **Parco Nazionale della Calabria**. There are several beautiful lakes, the largest of which is Lago di Cecita o Mucone near Camigliatello Silano. There is also plenty of wildlife here, including the light-grey Apennine wolf, a protected species.

Good-quality information in English is scarce. You can try the **Calabrian National Park office** (☎ 0984 57 97 57) or the **tourist office** (☎ 0984 57 80 91) in Camigliatello. A useful internet resource is [www.portalesila.it](http://www.portalesila.it). The people who run B&B Calabria (opposite) are extremely knowledgeable and helpful.

For maps, try [www.ecommerce.escursionista.it](http://www.ecommerce.escursionista.it), where you can buy maps of Sila Grande 1:50,000 (€6.50) and Sila Piccola (€9.50). *Carte Stradali Turistiche La Sila* 1:100,000 is available at local petrol stations, or online at [www.globalmap.it](http://www.globalmap.it) (€7).

You can take fantastic trekking trips with **Valli Cupe** (☎ 333 6988835/86436 01; [www.vallicupe.it](http://www.vallicupe.it)) – on foot or via donkey or jeep – in the area around Sersale (in the southeast), where there are myriad waterfalls and the dramatic Canyon Valli Cupe. Trips cost only €7 per person per day. Specialising in botany, the guides (who speak Italian and French) also visit remote monasteries and churches. Stay in their rustic accommodation in the town (see below).

During August, **Sila in Festa** takes place, featuring traditional music. Autumn is mushroom season, when you'll be able to frequent fungi festivals and pile into porcini pasta.

## Sila Towns

Sila's main town, **San Giovanni in Fiore** (1049m) is named after the founder of its beautiful medieval **abbey**. The town has an attractive old centre, once you've battled through the suffocating suburbs, and is famous for its Armenian-style handloomed carpets and tapestry. You can visit the studio and shop of **Domenico Caruso** (☎ 0984 99 27 24; [www.scuolatappeti.it](http://www.scuolatappeti.it)), but ring ahead.

A popular ski-resort town, with 6km of slopes, **Camigliatello Silano** (1272m) looks much better under snow. A few lifts operate on Monte Curcio, about 3km to the south. Around 5.5km of slopes and a 1500m lift can be found near **Lorica** (1370m), on gloriously pretty Lago Arvo – the best place to camp in summer.

**Scigliano** (620m), in Sila Piccola, is a small hilltop town and has a superb B&B, and from **Sersale** (739m) further south, you can go trekking with Valli Cupe (see above) and see the Campanero, Aquila and Inferno waterfalls.

## Sleeping

It's wonderful to stay around the pretty lakes, but the small towns also make good bases, including Camigliatello in the winter.

**Camping Lorica** (☎ 0984 53 70 18; camping 2 people, tent & car €25) Lorica's lakeside is a particularly great place to camp. Try this place – high up and wonderful.

**Valli Cupe** (☎ 333 6988835; Sersale; [www.vallicupe.it](http://www.vallicupe.it); per person €15) Valli Cupe can arrange a stay in a charming rustic cottage in Sersale, complete with an open fireplace (good for roasting chestnuts) and kitchen. All bookings via website.

**our pick B&B Calabria** (☎ 349 8781894; Scigliano; [www.bedandbreakfastcalabria.it](http://www.bedandbreakfastcalabria.it); s/d €35/50) Break through the invisible curtain of Calabrese reserve by staying at this unique B&B run by delightful couple, Raffaele and Esther. They'll give you tips on good shops, great eating places, pack you picnics, lend you their mountain bikes and regale you with hilarious stories of life in a real Italian village. Rooms have character and clean modern lines and there's a wonderful terrace overlooking endless forested vistas.

**Hotel Aquila & Edelweiss** (☎ 0984 57 80 44; [www.hotelaquilaedelweiss.com](http://www.hotelaquilaedelweiss.com); Viale Stazione 15. Camigliatello; s €60-80, d €80-100; ☎) This three-star hotel is in Camigliatello. Although the exterior is stark and anonymous, the public areas are wood-panelled, the rooms are cosy and comfortable and the location is tops.

**Park Hotel 108** (☎ 0521 64 81 08; [www.hotelpark108.it](http://www.hotelpark108.it); Via Nazionale 86, Lorica; r €90-130) Situated on the hilly banks of Lago Arvo, surrounded by dark-green pines, the rooms here are decorated in classic bland hotel style. They are spacious and comfortable, however, and who cares about decor with views like this.

## Shopping

La Sila's forests yield wondrous wild mushrooms, both edible and poisonous. Sniff around the **Antica Salumeria Campanaro** (Piazza Misasi 5) in Camigliatello Silano; it's a temple to all things fungoid, as well as an emporium of fine meats, cheeses, pickles and wines, rivalled in richness, if not in size, by its

neighbour, La Casa del Fungho.

## Getting There & Away

You can reach Camigliatello Silano and San Giovanni in Fiore via regular Ferrovie della Calabria buses along the SS107, which links Cosenza and Crotona, or by the train running between Cosenza and San Giovanni in Fiore.

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## IONIAN COAST

With its flat coastline and wide sandy beaches, the Ionian coast has some fascinating stops from Sibari to Santa Severina. However, the coast has borne the brunt of some ugly development and is mainly a long, uninterrupted string of resorts, thronged in the summer months and shut down from October to May.

### Sibari

About 4km south of the modern, fast-developing town of Sibari are the remnants of the seat of the ancient Sybarites, those luxury-loving Greeks renowned for their wealth and love of pampering. Sybaris was destroyed by a jealous Crotona in the 6th century BC. You can visit the **ruins** (admission free; ☎ 9am-1hr before sunset), though 90% remain buried. The small **Museo Archeologico della Sibaritide** (admission €2; ☎ 9am-7.30pm, closed 1st & 3rd Mon of month) is 7km away (signposted off the autostrada).

The coastline from Sibari to the unappealing urban centre of Crotona is the region's least developed, partly because the beaches are not terribly good.

### Santa Severina

#### pop 2300

Around 26km northwest of Crotona, Santa Severina is a spectacular mountaintop town, dominated by a Norman castle, and home to a beautiful Byzantine church.

Stay at charming, rural **Agriturismo Querceto** (☎ 0962 5 14 67; [www.agriturismoilquerceto.kr.it](http://www.agriturismoilquerceto.kr.it); s/d €35/50; ☎), an organic farm around 4km from the centre, which produces olive oil and jams and has double rooms or mini-apartments with kitchens.

**Autolinee Romano** (☎ 0962 2 17 09) runs buses to/from Crotona.

### Le Castella

Le Castella is south of a rare protected area (Capo Rizzuto) along this coast, rich not only in nature but also in Greek history. For further information on the park try [www.riserva.marinacaporizzuto.it](http://www.riserva.marinacaporizzuto.it).

The town is named for its impressive 16th-century Aragonese **castle** (admission €3, ☎ 9am-1pm), a vast edifice linked to the mainland by a short causeway. The philosopher Pliny said that Hannibal constructed the first tower. Evidence shows it was begun in the 4th century BC, designed to protect Crotona in the wars against Pyrrhus.

With around 15 camp sites near Isola di Capo Rizzuto to the north, this is the Ionian coast's prime camping area. Try **La Fattoria** (☎ 0962 79 11 65; Via del Faro; sites for 2 people €8-12, car €4, tent €8; ☎ Jun-Sep), 1.5km from the sea, with bungalows also available.

At **L'Aragonese** (☎ 0962 79 50 13; Via Discesa Marina; meals €25) you can eat a good meal overlooking the castle; or try **Da Annibale** (☎ 0962 79 50 04; Via Duomo 35; meals €30), a splendid fish restaurant, for fresh, delicious seafood. It doubles as a B&B with pleasant rooms (single/double €50/70).

## Gerace

### pop 2900

A spectacular medieval hill town, Gerace is worth a detour for the views alone – on one side the Ionian Sea, on the other dark, interior mountains. About 10km inland from Locri on the SS111, it has Calabria's largest Romanesque **cathedral**. Dating from 1045, later alterations have robbed it of none of its majesty.

For a taste of traditional Calabrian cooking, modest, welcoming **Ristorante a Squella** (☎ 0964 35 60 86; Viale della Resistenza 8; meals €20) makes for a great lunchtime stop serving reliably good dishes, specialising in seafood and pizzas. Afterwards you can wander down the road and admire the views.

Further inland is **Canolo**, a small village seemingly untouched by the 20th century. Buses connect Gerace with Locri and also Canolo with Siderno, both of which link to the main coastal railway line.

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## CATANZARO

### pop 95,100 / elev 320m

Catanzaro can be a lively town if you don't catch it during the mid-afternoon snooze. Located 12km inland from the Ionian coast, it replaced Reggio as the regional capital in the 1970s. Little remains of its Byzantine and medieval past, thanks to earthquakes and WWII bombs. Although rundown, the centre's not unattractive. It's also the birthplace of artist Mimmo Rotella, who became famous in the 1950s for his film-poster collages.

**Villa Trieste** (☎ 7am-9pm summer, to 6pm winter) is an attractive park and contains the city's **Museo Provinciale** (☎ 0961 72 00 19; Villa Margherita; admission free; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1.30pm Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun), with various works by Calabrian artists, including Mimmo Rotella, as well as an archaeological section.

**Caffè Imperiale** (☎ 0961 74 32 31; Corso Mazzini 159; ☎ 7.30am-2am) A classic belle-époque cafe on Catanzaro's main thoroughfare that is popular with powdered ladies here for their morning cappuccino.

Hidden down a narrow sidestreet, **Da Salvatore** (☎ 0961 72 43 18; Via Salita del Rosario 28; pizzas from €3, meals €11) is an unpretentious restaurant serving excellent local dishes and pizza. Try the *salsiccia alla Palanca* (sausages with greens), named in honour of a local football hero.

## Getting There & Away

**Ferrovie della Calabria** (☎ 0961 89 62 10; [www.ferroviedellacalabria.it](http://www.ferroviedellacalabria.it)) buses terminate beside the Ferrovie della Calabria train station. They serve the Ionian coast, La Sila and Cosenza (€4.60, 1¼ hours, eight daily) and Vibo Valentia (€3.80, two hours, four daily), among other provincial towns. They also run to Catanzaro Lido, where you can pick up a train for Reggio or head northeast along the Ionian coast.

From the Catanzaro city station, trains connect with Lamezia Terme, Reggio and Cosenza, as well as Naples, Rome, Milan and Turin.

## ASPROMONTE

Most Italians think of the **Parco Nazionale dell'Aspromonte** ([www.aspromonte.it](http://www.aspromonte.it), in Italian) as a hiding place used by Calabrian kidnapers in the 1970s and '80s. It's still rumoured to contain 'ndrangheta strongholds, but as a tourist you're unlikely to encounter any murky business. The park is startlingly dramatic, rising sharply inland from Reggio. Its highest peak, **Montalto** (1955m), is dominated by a huge bronze statue of Christ and offers sweeping views across to Sicily.

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## NO BONES ABOUT IT

It's a familiar story, just when you think you are going to get smart modern housing, a flashy commercial centre or, as in this case, spanking new regional government offices, the diggers go and discover some chipped old water vessel from Roman times. Construction grinds to a halt, workmen are laid off, and the site is a mass of rubble for months, even years. Who needs it? Sorry guys but in this case the jackhammer hit the jackpot.

In the suburbs of Catanzaro, a necropolis dating to the 5th century BC was unearthed in February 2008. The burial ground includes six tombs containing skeletons as well as grave artefacts such as amphorae. Touted as the greatest archaeological discovery in central Calabria in the last 30 years by Calabrian President, Agazio Loiero, archaeologists have noted that the find was in a zone thought to have stretched between Terina and Skilleton, two ancient cities of Magna Graecia, the name given to the former Greek colonies located here. Thanks to DNA testing, far more will be revealed.

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Subject to frequent mudslides and carved up by torrential rivers, the mountains captivated artist Edward Lear in the 19th century and are still awesomely beautiful. Underwater rivers keep the peaks covered in coniferous forests and ablaze with flowers in spring.

Extremes of weather and geography have resulted in some extraordinary villages, such as **Pentidàtillo** and **Roghudi**, clinging limpetlike to the craggy, rearing rocks and now all but deserted. It's wonderful walking country and the park has several colour-coded trails.

Try [www.ecommerce.escursionista.it](http://www.ecommerce.escursionista.it) for detailed maps, such as *Carta Escursionista della Calabria – Aspromonte* 1:50,000 (€9.75).

**Gambarie**, Aspromonte's main town, is the easiest approach the park. The roads are good and many activities are organised from here – you can ski and it's also the place to hire a 4WD; ask around in the town.

It's also possible to approach from the south, but the roads aren't as good. The co-operative **Naturaliter** ([www.naturaliterweb.it](http://www.naturaliterweb.it)), based in **Condofuri**, is an excellent source of information, and can help arrange walking and donkey treks and place you in B&Bs throughout the region. Otherwise stay at **Azienda Agrituristica Il Bergamotto** (☎ 0965 72 72 13; Condofuri Marina; s/d with half-board €35/70) where Ugo Sergi can also arrange excursions. The rooms are simple and the food delicious.

Reggio-based **Misafumera** (☎ 0965 67 70 21; [www.misafumera.it](http://www.misafumera.it), in Italian; Via Nazionale 306d) runs weeklong trekking excursions (€480; April to November) or a four-day trek in the snowy season (€260; December to April).

To reach Gambarie, take ATAM city bus 127 from Reggio di Calabria (€2, 1½ hours, three daily).



Most of the roads inland from Reggio eventually hit the SS183 road that runs north to the town.

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## REGGIO DI CALABRIA

**pop 183,000**

Reggio is the main launching point for ferries to Sicily, which sparkles temptingly across the Strait of Messina. It is also home to the spectacular Bronzi di Riace and has a long, impressive seafront promenade – packed during the evening  *Passeggiata*. Otherwise, the city’s grid system of dusty streets has the slightly dissolute feel shared by most ports.

Beyond the seafront, the centre gives way to urban sprawl. Ravaged by earthquakes, the most recent in 1908, this once-proud ancient Greek city has plenty of other woes. As a port and the largest town close to the ’ndrangheta strongholds of Aspromonte, organised crime is a major problem, with the associated corrosive social effect.

On a lighter note, there are plenty of festivals in Reggio – early August sees the **Festival dello Stretto** ([www.festivaldellostretto.it](http://www.festivaldellostretto.it)), featuring the traditional music of the south.

### Orientation

Stazione Centrale, the main train station, is at the town’s southern edge. Walk northeast along Corso Garibaldi, for the tourist office, shopping and other services. The *corso* has long been a de-facto pedestrian zone during the ritual  *Passeggiata*.

### Information

**Hospital** (☎ 0965 39 71 11; Via Melacrino)

**Police station** (☎ 0965 41 11 11; Corso Garibaldi 442)

**Post office** (Via Miraglia 14)

**Tourist office** (Via Roma 3 ☎ 0965 2 25 30; ☎ 7.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri); airport (☎ 0965 64 32 91);  
Stazione Centrale (☎ 0965 2 71 20)

### Sights

A Magna Graecia munificence fills the excellent **Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia** (☎ 0965 81 22 55; Piazza de Nava 26; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun). The museum’s pride, displayed in an earthquake-proof basement, are the world’s finest examples of ancient Greek sculpture: the **Bronzi di Riace**, two exquisite bronze statues discovered on the seabed near Riace in 1972. Larger than life, they depict the Greek obsession with the body beautiful, inscrutable, determined and fierce, their perfect form more godlike than human. No-one knows who they are – whether man or god – and even their provenance is a mystery. They date from around 450 BC, and it’s believed they’re the work of two artists.

Aside from the bronzes, there are other magnificent ancient exhibits. Look for the 5th-century-BC bronze *Philosopher’s Head*, the oldest known Greek portrait in existence.

# REGGIO DI CALABRIA

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- Police Station ..... 2 A5
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- Tourist Office ..... 4 A5
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## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

- Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia ..... 6 C3

## SLEEPING

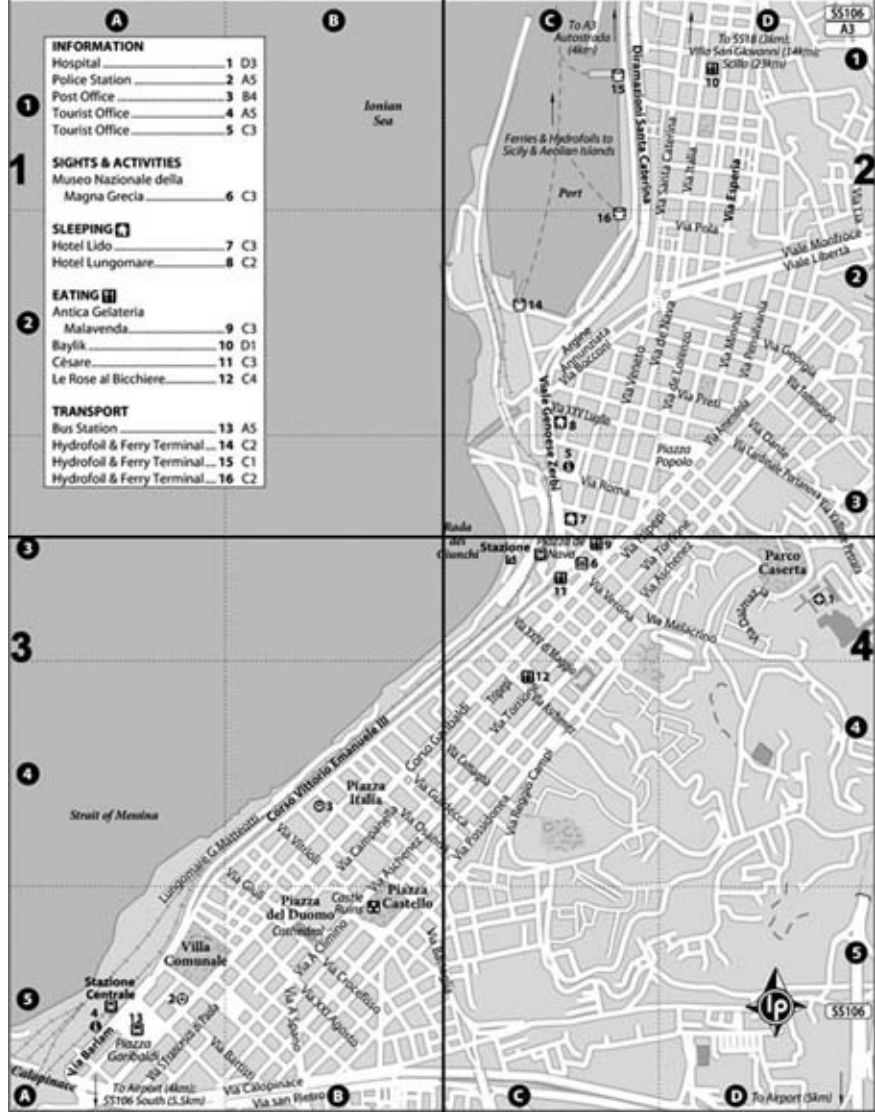
- Hotel Lido ..... 7 C3
- Hotel Lungomare ..... 8 C2

## EATING

- Antica Gelateria ..... 9 C3
- Baylik ..... 10 D1
- Cesare ..... 11 C3
- Le Rose al Bicchiere ..... 12 C4

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- Bus Station ..... 13 A5
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# REGGIO DI CALABRIA

**A****B****INFORMATION**

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Post Office .....	3	B4
Tourist Office .....	4	A5
Tourist Office .....	5	C3

*Ionian  
Sea***SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia .....	6	C3
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**SLEEPING** 

Hotel Lido .....	7	C3
Hotel Lungomare.....	8	C2

**EATING** 

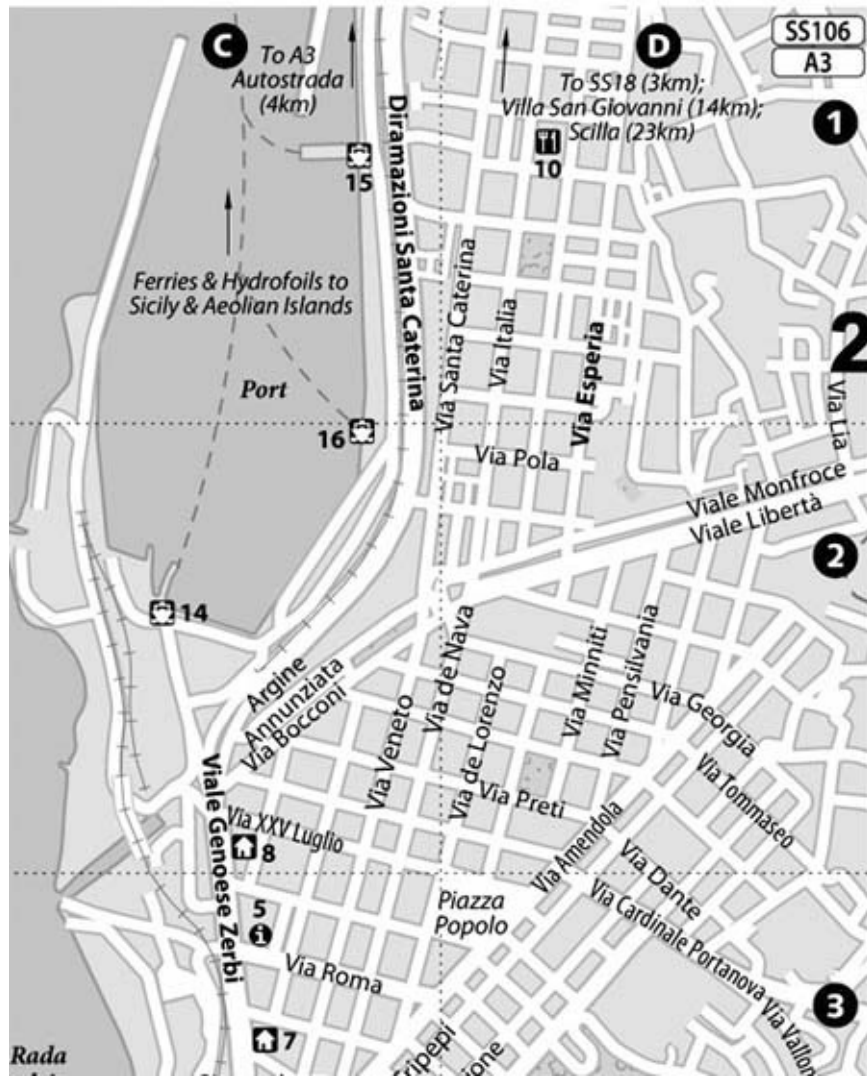
Antica Gelateria Malavenda.....	9	C3
Baylik .....	10	D1
Cèsare.....	11	C3
Le Rose al Bicchiere.....	12	C4

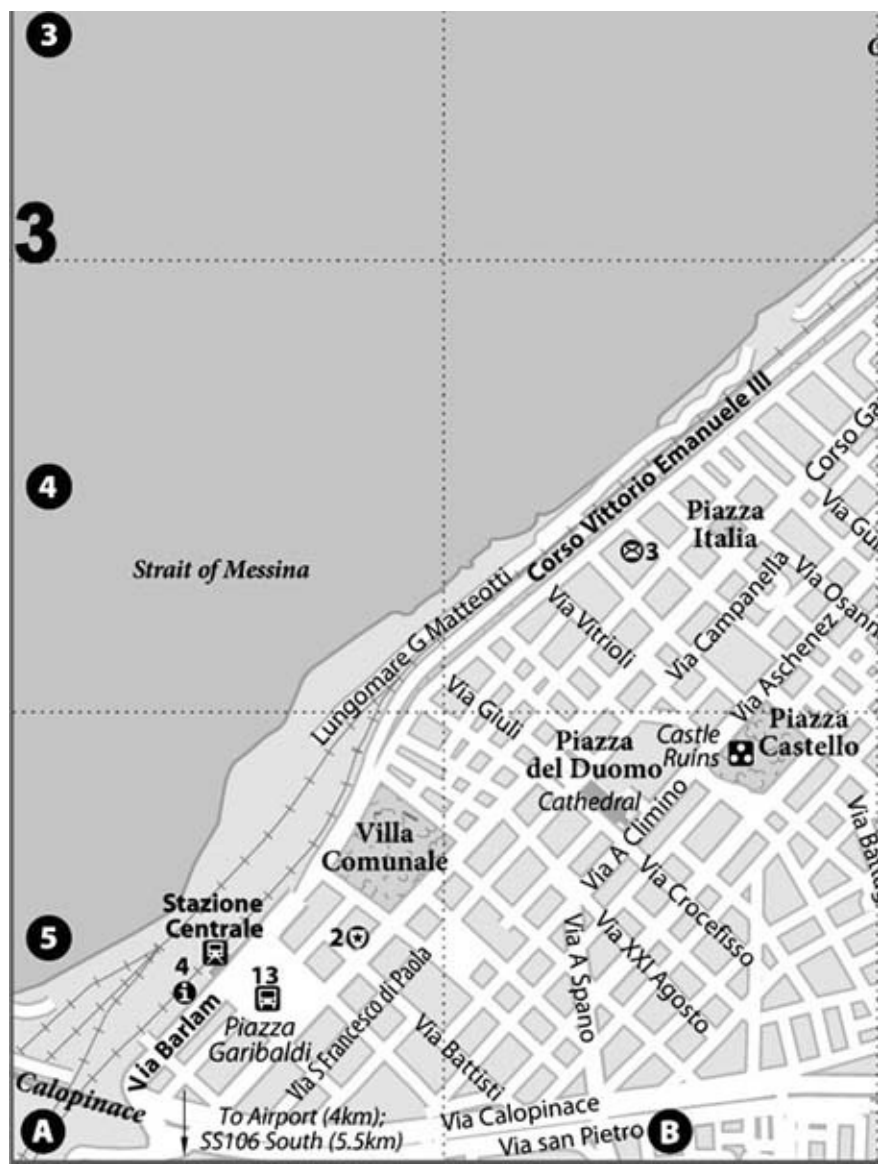
**TRANSPORT**

Bus Station .....	13	A5
Hydrofoil & Ferry Terminal....	14	C2
Hydrofoil & Ferry Terminal....	15	C1
Hydrofoil & Ferry Terminal....	16	C2

**1****2**

0 500 m  
0 0.3 miles







## Sleeping

Finding a room should be easy, even in summer, since most visitors pass straight through en route to Sicily.

**Hotel Lido** (☎ 0965 2 50 01; [www.hotellido.rc.it](http://www.hotellido.rc.it); Via Tre Settembre 6; s/d €80/100; 🏠 📺) A pleasant hotel with modern rooms washed in pastel colours with colourful artwork, Sky TV and the possibility of activities, including nearby windsurfing.

**Hotel Lungomare** (☎ 0965 2 04 86; [www.hotellungomare.rc.it](http://www.hotellungomare.rc.it); Viale Genoese Zerbi 13; s/d €80/110; 🏠 📺) The ornate wedding-cake exterior is a welcome reprise from Reggio's faceless modern blocks. Rooms are plain and nothing special, but the staff are friendly and courteous. Ask for a room with a sea view.

## Eating

For Reggio's best ice cream, you'll have to decide between **Antica Gelateria Malavenda** (☎ 0965 89 14 49; cnr Via Romeo & Via Amendola; 🕒 6am-midnight Sun-Fri, to 1am Sat), and **Cèsare** (Piazza Indipendenza; 🕒 8am-1am), a popular green kiosk at the end of the *lungomare* (seafront).

**Le Rose al Bicchiere** (☎ 0965 2 29 56; Via Demetrio Tripepi 118; meals €30; 🕒 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat Oct-Jun) A wine bar with some delicious fresh local and organic produce on offer to accompany wines so inviting you'll have to pour yourself onto the ferry. The local cheeses and desserts are

particularly good.

**Baylik** (☎ 0965 4 86 24; Vico Leone 3; meals €30; 🍴 lunch daily, dinner Fri-Wed) Worth the slight trek, Baylik is friendly, and the calamari is so fresh your knife glides through it like butter; the spaghetti with clams is another winner.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Reggio's **airport** (Aeroporto Civile Minniti, REG; ☎ 0965 64 05 17) is at Ravagnese, about 5km south. Alitalia and/or Air One fly to and from Rome, Milan and Bergamo. Air Malta flies to Barcelona, Rome and Malta.

### BOAT

Boats for Messina (Sicily) leave from the port (just north of Stazione Lido), where there are three adjacent ferry terminals. In high season there are up to 20 hydrofoils daily; in low season there are as few as two. Some boats continue to the Aeolian Islands.

Services are run by various companies including **Meridiano** (☎ 0965 81 04 14; [www.meridianolines.it](http://www.meridianolines.it)). Prices for cars are €12 one way and for foot passengers €1.50 to €2.80. The crossing takes 25 minutes and departs every 20 minutes.

### BUS

Most buses terminate at Piazza Garibaldi, in front of the Stazione Centrale. Several different companies operate to towns in Calabria and beyond. **ATAM** (☎ 800 43 33 10; [www.atam-rc.it](http://www.atam-rc.it)) serves the Aspromonte Massif, with bus 127 to Gambarie (€2.30, 1½ hours, five daily). **Costaviola** (☎ 0965 75 15 86; [www.costaviolabus.it](http://www.costaviolabus.it)) serves Scilla (€2.30, 45 minutes, six daily). **Lirosi** (☎ 0966 5 79 01) serves Rome (€54, eight hours, three daily).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The A3 ends at Reggio. If you are continuing south, the SS106 hugs the coast round the 'toe', then heads north along the Ionian Sea. Reggio has a weirdly complex parking system – buy a parking permit (€0.50 per hour) from newspaper kiosks or from a parking representative, if you can find one.

### TRAIN

Trains stop at **Stazione Centrale** (☎ 0965 89 20 21) and less frequently at Stazione Lido, near the museum. Reggio is the terminus for frequent trains to Milan (1st/2nd class €76/70, 16½ to 17½ hours), Rome (€76/54, 6½ to eight hours) and Naples (€61/42, 4½ to 5½ hours). There are also services for Turin, Florence and Venice but for a wider choice change at Paola (€30/22, two hours, five daily). Regional services run along the coast to Scilla and Tropea (more convenient than the bus), and also to Catanzaro and less frequently to Cosenza and Bari.

## Getting Around

Orange local buses run by **ATAM** (☎ 800 43 33 10; [www.atam-rc.it](http://www.atam-rc.it)) cover most of the city. For the port, take bus 13 or 125 from Piazza Garibaldi outside Stazione Centrale. The Porto—Aeroporto bus (125) runs from the port via Piazza Garibaldi to the airport and vice versa (25 minutes, hourly). Buy your ticket at ATAM offices, tobacconists or newsstands.

## SOUTHERN TYRRHENIAN COAST

North of Reggio, along the coast-hugging Autostrada del Sole (A3), the scenery rocks and rolls to become increasingly beautiful and dramatic, if you ignore the shoddy holiday camps and unattractive developments that sometimes scar the land. Like the northern part of the coast ([Click here](#)) it's mostly closed in winter and packed in summer.

### Scilla

pop 5134

In Scilla, cream, ochre and earth-coloured houses cling on for dear life to the jagged promontory, ascending in jumbled ranks to the hill's summit which is crowned by a castle and, just below, the dazzling white confection of the Chiesa Arcipretale Maria Immacolata. Lively in summer and serene in low season, the town is split in two by the tiny port. The fishing district of Scilla Chianalea, to the north, harbours small hotels and restaurants off narrow lanes, lapped by the sea.

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## OUR TOP FIVE ACCOMMODATIONS IN CALABRIA

- [Agriturismo Colloredo](#), near Morano Calabro
  - B&B [Calabria](#), Scigliano
  - [Agriturismo Querceto](#), Santa Severina
  - Albergo le Sirene (below), Scilla
  - Donnaccicina (right), Tropea
- 

Scilla's highpoint is a rock at the northern end, said to be the lair of Scylla, the mythical six-headed sea monster who drowned sailors as they tried to navigate the Strait of Messina. Swimming and fishing off the town's glorious white sandy beach is somewhat safer today. Head for Lido Paradiso from where you can squint up at the castle while sunbathing on the sand.

**Albergo le Sirene** (☎ 0965 75 40 19; Via Nazionale 55; s €30-40, d €50-70; 🍷) Has original tiled floors, pleasant large rooms and wistful *sirene* trompe l'œils throughout. There's the added perk of a large seafront communal terrace.

**Le Piccole Grotte** (☎ 338 209 67 27; Via Grotte 10; d €90-120) At the other end of Scilla, in the picturesque Chianalea district. It's housed in a 19th-century fishermen's house beside steps leading to the crystal-clear sea. Rooms have small balconies facing the cobbled alleyway or the sea.

Good seafront restaurants include **Bleu de Toi** (☎ 0965 79 05 85; Via Grotte 40; meals €40; 🍷 Thu-Tue), in the Chianalea district, with a terrace over the water and excellent seafood like gratinated mussels and whitebait fritters. You can sink a beer at the **Dali City Pub** (☎ 0965 79 01 96; Via Porto), on the beach in Scilla town, which has a Beatles tribute corner (appropriately named *The Cavern*) and has been going since 1972.

### Capo Vaticano

There are spectacular views from this rocky cape, with its beaches, ravines and limestone sea cliffs. Birdwatchers' spirits should soar. Around 7km south of Tropea, Capo Vaticano has a lighthouse, built in



1885, which is close to a short footpath from where you can see as far as the Aeolian Islands. Capo Vaticano beach is one of the balmiest along this coast.

## Tropea

pop 6900

Tropea, a puzzle of lanes and piazzas, is famed for its captivating prettiness, dramatic position and sunsets the colour of amethyst. It sits on the Promontorio di Tropea, which stretches from Nicotera in the south to Pizzo in the north. The coast alternates between dramatic cliffs and icing-sugar-soft sandy beaches, all edged by translucent sea. Unsurprisingly, hundreds of Italian holidaymakers descend here in summer. If you hear English being spoken it is probably from Americans visiting relatives: enormous numbers left the region for America in the early 20th century.

The town overlooks **Santa Maria dell'Isola**, a medieval church with a Renaissance makeover, which sits on its own island, although centuries of silt have joined it to the mainland.

Despite the mooted theory that Hercules founded the town, it seems this area has been settled as far back as Neolithic times. Tropea has been occupied by the Arabs, Normans, Swabians, Anjous and Aragonese, as well as attacked by Turkish pirates. Perhaps they were after the famous local sweet red onions.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0963 6 14 75; Piazza Ercole; ☹ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm) is in the old town centre.

The beautiful Norman **cathedral** (☹ 6-11.50am & 4-7pm) has two undetonated WWII bombs near the door: it's believed they didn't explode due to the protection of the town's patron saint, Our Lady of Romania.

During summer there are lots of discos and special events. Many hotels close in winter.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Donnaciccina** (☎ 0963 621 80; Via Pelliccia 9; s €30-60, d €55-110; ☹ ☹) Set in the family home, Umberto and Rosella have opened this delightful B&B which has retained a tangible sense of history with its carefully selected antiques, canopy beds and exposed stone walls. Flat-screen TVs, in-room fridges and internet access are welcome modern touches.

**Residence il Barone** (☎ 0963 60 71 81; Largo Barone; [www.bedebreakfast-residenza-il-barone.it](http://www.bedebreakfast-residenza-il-barone.it); s €56-126, d €80-200; ☹ ☹) A graceful *palazzo*, it has six suites decorated in masculine neutrals and tobacco-browns, with dramatic modern paintings by the owner's brother adding pizzazz to the walls. The suites are superbly appointed, and you can breakfast on the small roof terrace with views over the old city and out to sea.

**Al Pinturicchio** (☎ 0963 60 34 52; Via Dardona, cnr Largo Duomo; €meals 16; ☹ closed Tue) Has candlelit tables tucked in a corner in the old town. The romance doesn't stop here, the food is similarly endearing with superb and imaginative dishes. Vegetarian (or not), don't miss the delicious vegetable antipasti.

Also recommended is the fish restaurant **Osteria del Pescatore** (☎ 0963 60 30 18; Via del Monte 7; meals €30; ☹ 7.30pm-late), tucked away in the backstreets.

Trains run to Vibo Valentia (24 minutes), Pizzo (30 minutes), Scilla (one hour 20 minutes) and Reggio (two hours). **SAV** (☎ 0963 611 29) buses connect with other towns on the coast.

## Vibo Valentia

## pop 33,700

About 8km south of Pizzo, up high and slightly inland, is Vibo Valentia, a one-time Greek, then Roman, settlement, good for a brief roam if you're stuck waiting for public transport. Above the town is its **castle**, which was built by the Normans and later reinforced by both Frederick II and the Angevins. It offers sweeping panoramas and an excellent small **museum** (☎ 0963 4 33 50; adult/child €2/1; 🕒 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), housing well-displayed artefacts from Hipponion – the original Greek settlement – including 6th-century-BC bronze helmets.

**La Locanda Daffinà** (☎ 0963 47 26 69; [www.lalocandadaffina.it](http://www.lalocandadaffina.it); Corso Umberto I 160; s/d/ste €75/100/150), near the cathedral, is a 19th-century palace with stately antique-furnished rooms. The restaurant (open Monday to Saturday, meals €50), in the graceful loggia, is the place to go if you deserve a long lunch.

A coastal railway runs around the promontory from Rosarno and Nicotera to Vibo Valentia Marina and Pizzo. **SAV** (☎ 0963 6 11 29) buses also connect most resorts with Tropea and Pizzo.

## Pizzo

### pop 8900

Stacked high up on a sea cliff, pretty little Pizzo is the place to go for *tartufo*, a death-by-chocolate ice-cream ball, and to see an extraordinary rock-carved grotto church. It's a popular tourist stop. Piazza della Repubblica is the epicentre, set high above the sea with great views. Settle here at one of the many gelateria terraces for an ice-cream fix.

A kilometre north, the **Chiesa di Piedigrotta** (admission €2; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7.30pm) is an underground cave full of carved stone statues. It was carved into the tufa rock by Neapolitan shipwreck survivors in the 17th century. Other sculptors added to it and it was eventually turned into a church. Later statues include the less-godly figures of Fidel Castro and JFK. It's a bizarre, one-of-a-kind mixture of mysticism, mystery and kitsch.

In town, the 16th-century **Chiesa Matrice di San Giorgio** (Via Marconi), with its dressed-up Madonnas, houses the tomb of Joachim Murat, brother of Napoleon and one-time king of Naples. Although he was the architect of enlightened reforms, the locals showed no great concern when Murat was imprisoned and executed here. At the neat little 15th-century **Castello Murat** (☎ 0963 53 25 23; admission €2; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3pm-midnight Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Oct-May), south of Piazza della Repubblica, you can see Murat's cell. His last days and death by firing squad are graphically illustrated by waxworks.

**Armonia B&B** (☎ 0963 53 33 37; [www.casaarmonia.com](http://www.casaarmonia.com); Via Armonia 9; s without bathroom €35-60, d without bathroom €50-80) is a great choice. Run by charismatic Franco in his 18th-century family home, the atmosphere is homey and welcoming. Eat at equally welcoming **Pizzeria Ruota** (☎ 0963 53 24 27; Piazza della Repubblica 36; pizzas from €4; 🕒 11am-3.30pm & 7.30pm-midnight Thu-Tue), which has splendid, big pizzas; try the namesake *Ruota* with *pomodori* (tomatoes), mozzarella, olives, tuna and peppers (€6).

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# Sicily



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## PALERMO

ORIENTATION

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## AROUND PALERMO

MONDELLO

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## TYRRHENIAN COAST

PARCO NATURALE REGIONALE DELLE MADONIE

CEFALÙ

MILAZZO

## AEOLIAN ISLANDS

LIPARI

VULCANO

SALINA

PANAREA

STROMBOLI

FILICUDI & ALICUDI

## IONIAN COAST

MESSINA

TAORMINA

CATANIA

MT ETNA

## SOUTHEASTERN SICILY

SYRACUSE

NOTO  
MODICA  
RAGUSA

## CENTRAL & SOUTHERN SICILY

ENNA  
VILLA ROMANA DEL CASALE  
AGRIGENTO  
AROUND AGRIGENTO  
SELINUNTE

## WESTERN SICILY

MARSALA  
SALINE DI TRAPANI  
TRAPANI  
ERICE  
SEGESTA  
GOLFO DI CASTELLAMMARE  
EGADI ISLANDS  
PANTELLERIA

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More of a sugar-spiked espresso than a milky cappuccino, Sicily will reward you with an intense bittersweet experience rather than anything lightweight and frothy. In Sicily it seems as though the sun shines brighter, the shadows are darker, and life is lived full-on and for the moment. Overloaded with art treasures, undersupplied with infrastructure and continuously struggling to thwart Mafia-driven corruption, Sicily possesses some baffling social topography. Brace yourself to reconcile architectural beauty with modern squalor, artistic excellence with moral ambivalence and the rational with the sensual. This is an island to be visited with an open mind – and a healthy appetite; one factor remains a constant, and that is the uncompromisingly high quality of the cuisine.

After some 25 centuries of foreign domination, Sicilians are heirs to an impressive cultural legacy, from the refined architecture of Magna Graecia to a beguiling, if contradictory, artistic fusion of Arab craftsmanship and Norman austerity. This complexity of culture is matched by a startling diversity of landscape that includes bucolic rolling countryside, a smouldering Mt Etna, kilometres of aquamarine coastline and a tiara of island gems.

Today, Sicily's new generation is loathe to remain trapped in the past. New ventures are seeing aristocratic entrepreneurs prising open the doors of some of Europe's finest *palazzi* and villas, while sensitive *agriturismi* (farm-stay accommodation) are shedding light on Sicily's hidden rural treasures and national parks. Sicily also has a refreshing lack of neon-blazing entertainment and theme parks, which further helps preserve its individuality and appeal.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Bargain with the fish vendors at dawn, climb Europe's most active volcano in the afternoon and enjoy Sicily's best nightlife in constantly buzzing **Catania**.
- Soak up the sun and hike to your heart's content as you island-hop across the seven stunningly

beautiful **Aeolian Islands**

- Marvel at the majesty of **Segesta**, whose perfectly preserved Greek temple sits in splendid isolation on a windswept hillside
- Shop till you drop in **Taormina**, or ply the limpid waters in the sparkling coves below
- Test the legendary acoustics of Dionysius' Ear, then settle in for an evening of classical drama at the fabled Greek amphitheatre in **Syracuse**
- Get that end-of-the-earth feeling amid the black volcanic cliffs, domed *dammusi* and brilliant blue waters of **Pantelleria**.



Population: 5 million

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Area: 25,708 sq km

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## History

Sicily's list of invaders features all the usual suspects: Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Byzantines, Spaniards and, more surprisingly, the Normans with their delightful Monty Python—style names (King Roger, William the Bad, Walter the Archbishop...).

The island's most deeply ingrained cultural influences, however, originate from its first inhabitants – the Sicani from North Africa, the Siculi from Latium (Italy) and the Elymni from Greece in the south. The subsequent colonisation of the island by the Carthaginians (also from North Africa) and the Greeks, in the 8th and 6th centuries BC respectively, compounded this cultural divide through decades of war when powerful opposing cities, such as Palermo and Catania, struggled to dominate the island.

Although inevitably part of the Roman Empire, it was not until the Arab invasions of AD 831 that Sicily truly came into its own. Trade, farming and mining were all fostered under Arab influence and Sicily soon became an enviable prize for European opportunists. The Normans, desperate for a piece of the pie, invaded in 1061 and made Palermo the centre of their expanding empire and the finest city in the Mediterranean.

Impressed by the cultured Arab lifestyle, King Roger squandered vast sums on ostentatious palaces and churches and encouraged a hedonistic atmosphere in his court. But such prosperity – and decadence (Roger's grandson, William II, even had a harem) – inevitably gave rise to envy and resentment and, after 400 years of pleasure and profit, the Norman line was extinguished and the kingdom passed to the austere German House of Hohenstaufen with little opposition from the seriously eroded and weakened Norman

occupation. In the centuries that followed, Sicily passed to the Holy Roman Emperors, Angevins (French), Aragonese (Spanish) and Austrians in a turmoil of rebellion and revolution that continued until the Spanish Bourbons united Sicily with Naples in 1734 as the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Little more than a century later, on 11 May 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi planned his daring and dramatic unification of Italy from Marsala.

Reeling from this catalogue of colonisers, Sicilians struggled in poverty-stricken conditions. Unified with Italy, but no better off, nearly one million men and women emigrated to the USA between 1871 and 1914 before the outbreak of WWI.

Ironically, the Allies (seeking Mafia help in America for the reinvasion of Italy) helped in establishing the Mafia's stranglehold on Sicily. In the absence of suitable administrators, they invited the undesirable *mafiosi* Don Calógero Vizzini to do the job. When Sicily became a semi-autonomous region in 1948, Mafia control extended right to the heart of politics and the country plunged into a 50-year silent civil war. It only started to emerge from this after the anti-Mafia maxi-trials of the 1990s, which led to important prosecutions against members of the massive heroin and cocaine network between Palermo and New York, known as the 'pizza connection'.

Today most Sicilians continue to be less than enthralled by an organisation that continues to grow rich on money from the illegal drugs trade, human trafficking and – that old, ubiquitous cash-flow booster – extortion and protection which, experts say, many businesses in Sicily still pay. At least the thuggery and violence of the 1980s has diminished and there have been some important arrests (see boxed text, [Click here](#)). The 2008 conviction of Sicilian governor Salvatore Cuffaro based on his alleged ties to Cosa Nostra (an unimaginable scenario in years past) has also served to encourage those who would speak out against Mafia influence.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Although it's unlikely that you'll be subjected to a Mafia shoot-out at your favourite pizzeria, there *is* petty crime here, particularly in Palermo, with pickpockets and bag-snatchers most notably in the marketplaces. Car theft is also a problem in the city, so use private, guarded car parks if possible.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

An increasing number of airlines fly direct to Sicily – although most still require a transfer in Rome or Milan. **Alitalia** ([www.alitalia.com](http://www.alitalia.com)) is the main carrier. See [p772](#) and [Click here](#) for further details.

### BOAT

Regular car and passenger ferries cross the strait between Villa San Giovanni (Calabria) and Messina. Hydrofoils connect Messina with Reggio di Calabria. See the Getting There & Away sections of [Messina](#) and Reggio di [Calabria](#).

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## REGIONAL ITINERARY

### TRAIPSING ROUND THE TRIANGLE    One Week / Syracuse / Catania

Start in [Syracuse](#): one of the great cities of the ancient world, where traces of Magna Graecia are everywhere in evidence, from papyrus-fringed [Fontana Aretusa](#) to the amphitheatres, altars and

caves of the **Parco Archeologico**. Sicily's countless layers of history continue to reveal themselves as you head inland, first in the terraced baroque architecture of **Ragusa** then in the dazzling Roman mosaic floors at **Villa Romana del Casale**, where bikini-clad gymnasts and wild African beasts prance side by side.

The history-fest just gets better heading west. Nowhere in Italy is there such a dramatic concentration of Greek temples as in the archaeological sites of **Agrigento**, **Selinunte** and **Segesta**. Next, sidle through the salt marshes to **Trapani**, and savour the influence of nearby north Africa with a meal of seafood couscous before climbing to the medieval hilltop village of **Erice** for stunning views down to the wild coastline of **Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro**.

Sicily's most exotic city, **Palermo**, will lure you in with its ebullient **street markets** and the splendid mosaics of the **Capella Palatina**. From here, detour into the mountainous reaches and stone villages of **Parco Naturale Regionale delle Madonie** before dropping back through fragrant citrus groves to the seashore at captivating **Cefalù**.

Float over to the **Aeolian Islands**, a land of capers, ancient volcanoes and fabulous hikes. Walk through six millennia of ancient history at Lipari's **archaeological museum** or revel in the mystical fireworks of **Stromboli**, an eternal lava-lamp that lights up the sky and sea nightly.

Start winding down with a little shopping and swimming in picturesque **Taormina**. At sundown, gaze across at **Mt Etna** and start daydreaming about your final day, either forging up the volcano's smoky slopes or circumnavigating it by train. Finally, devote your last evening to the cosmopolitan pleasures of **Catania**, the Sicilian city that never sleeps.



Sicily is also accessible by ferry from Naples, Genoa and Cagliari, as well as from Malta and Tunisia. Prices are at their most expensive between June and September. Tickets can be booked through the companies' respective websites or at travel agencies. In summer you may need to book several weeks in advance. Offices and telephone numbers for the ferry companies are listed in the Getting There & Away sections of the relevant cities.

**Grandi Navi Veloci** (☎ 091 58 74 04; [www.gnv.it](http://www.gnv.it)) Daily ferries from Genoa to Palermo and weekly

from Tunis to Palermo.

**Grimaldi Ferries** (☎ 081 49 64 44; [www.grimaldi-ferries.com](http://www.grimaldi-ferries.com)) Operates a twice-weekly service from Tunis to Palermo.

**Siremar** (☎ 091 749 31 11; [www.siremar.it](http://www.siremar.it) in Italian) Local operator with services from Palermo to Ustica, Palermo and Milazzo to the Aeolian Islands, Trapani to the Egadi Islands and Pantelleria, and Porto Empedocle (Agrigento) to the Pelagic Islands.

**Tirrenia** (☎ 02 263 028 03; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it)) The main company servicing the Mediterranean. Routes include a weekly ferry from Cagliari to Palermo and a daily ferry from Naples to Palermo.

**TTT Lines** (☎ 081 575 21 92; [www.tttlignes.it](http://www.tttlignes.it), in Italian) Based in Naples, TTT Lines has a daily car ferry from Naples to Catania.

**Ustica Lines** (☎ 0923 87 38 13; [www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it)) Hydrofoil from Naples, Palermo and Cefalù to the Aeolian Islands, Reggio Calabria to Messina, Trapani and Marsala to the Egadi Islands, and Porto Empedocle (Agrigento) to the Pelagic Islands.

**Virtu Ferries** (☎ 095 53 57 11; [www.virtuferries.com](http://www.virtuferries.com)) Runs a daily high-speed hydrofoil service between Malta and Pozzallo, just south of Syracuse, and up to four daily services in July and August.

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## OUR TOP FIVE SICILIAN FILM LOCATIONS

- **Pollara** This dramatically sited town on Salina Island was where Pablo Neruda philosophised with a humble postman in *Il Postino* (1994).
  - **Teatro Massimo** The grandiose front steps of this theatre were site of the grisly climactic scene in *The Godfather, Part III* (1990).
  - **Cefalù** The tangle of medieval streets in this Tyrrhenian coastal town formed part of the backdrop for *Cinema Paradiso* (1989).
  - **Stromboli** The Aeolian Islands' most famous volcano presided over the scandalous romance between Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini and lent its name to their 1949 film *Stromboli*.
  - **La Martorana** In *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999), this church in Palermo served as a last-minute stand-in for director Anthony Minghella's intended shooting location in Venice.
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## OUR TOP FIVE WALKS IN SICILY

- **Stromboli** Watching the sun sink into the sea and anticipating the evening fireworks as you climb towards the summit.
  - **Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro** Snaking in and out of dramatic coves along the trail through Italy's oldest nature reserve.
  - **Fossa delle Felci** Watching extinct volcanoes lined up in perfect formation from the summit of Salina Island's highest point.
  - **Riserva Naturale di Torre Salsa** Squishing sand between your toes and watching for birds on the long, wild strand of Torre Salsa beach.
  - **Mt Etna** Sniffing for sulphur and feeling the earth's heat under your feet as you ascend towards the craters of the 3329m-high summit.
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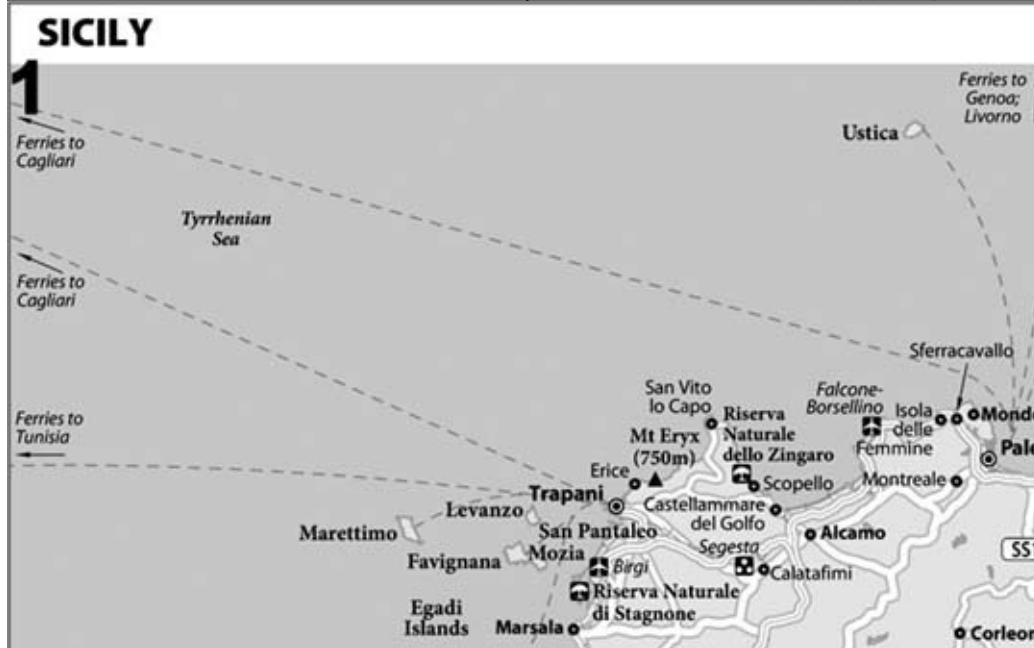
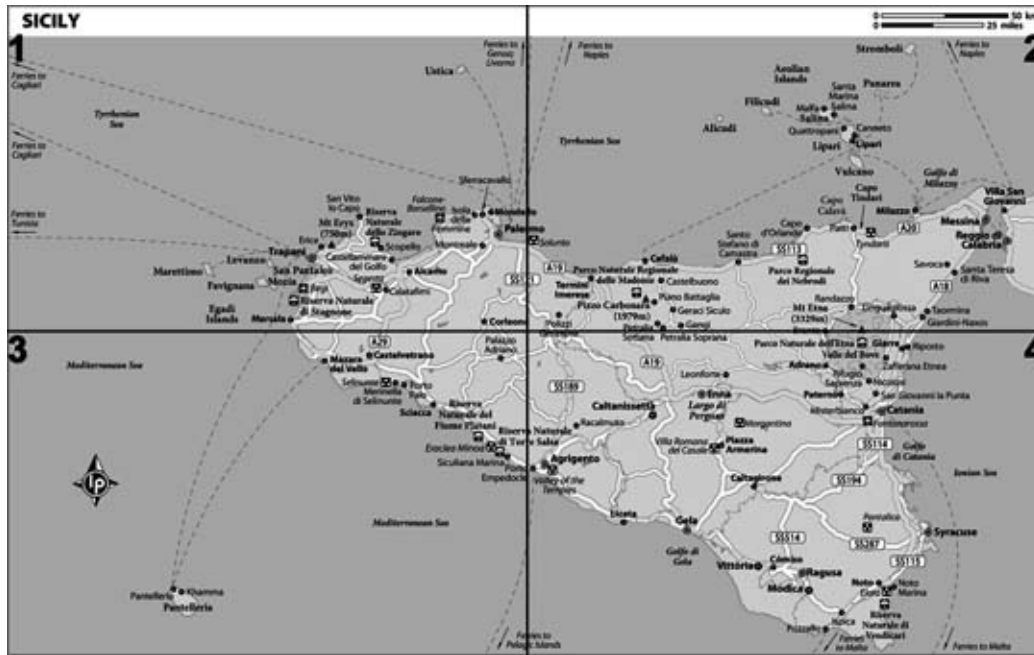


# BUS

Major companies that run long-haul services from Rome or Naples to Sicily include **Interbus** (☎ 0935.50 27 11; [www.interbus.it](http://www.interbus.it)).

# TRAIN

Direct trains run from Milan, Florence, Rome, Naples and Reggio di Calabria to Messina and on to Palermo, Catania and other provincial capitals – the trains are transported from the mainland by ferry from Villa San Giovanni.



2



4



# SICILIAN GODFATHER ARRESTED

Bernardo Provenzano, Italy's reputed number one Mafia boss, was arrested in Sicily on 11 April 2006 after more than four decades on the run. Provenzano's nickname was *Binnu u tratturi* (Bennie the tractor) because, in the chilling words of one informant: 'he mows people down'. Bernardo was captured when some 50 policemen swooped on a farmhouse in the countryside near Corleone. The police were able to pinpoint Provenzano's exact location by the most mundane of means: they tracked a delivery of clean laundry from his family to the farmhouse hideout.

Provenzano, who had reputedly been on the run longer than any other criminal, was condemned to life imprisonment for more than a dozen murders, including those of two of Sicily's top anti-Mafia magistrates, one of whom was Paolo Borsellino. Until his arrest, the only known photographs of Provenzano were taken during the 1950s. The authorities had claimed to have been 'close' to locating the Mafia boss on numerous occasions over the previous 10 years, declarations that had been greeted with a certain degree of scepticism – after all, how could a man remain undetected for such a long time, especially on a relatively small island such as Sicily? It is, rather, believed that 'Uncle Bernie', as he is known to his friends, had a tacit understanding with the Italian authorities, under which he was not harassed. Indeed, the very fact that his predecessor, Totò Rina, was finally arrested at his home address after supposedly being also 'on the run' for nearly 20 years, lends credence to this theory.

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## Getting Around

### AIR

Palermo's Falcone-Borsellino is the hub airport for regular domestic flights to Pantelleria and Lampedusa. Local carriers Alitalia, Meridiana and Air One offer a good choice of flights. Tickets can be bought online, at the airport or through any travel agent.

### BUS

Bus services within Sicily are provided by a variety of companies. Buses are usually faster if your destination involves travel through the island's interior; trains tend to be cheaper (and sometimes faster) on the major coastal routes. In small towns and villages tickets are often sold in bars or on the bus.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

There's no substitute for the freedom your own vehicle can give you, especially when getting to places not well served by public transport. The roads are generally good and autostradas connect most major cities. There's a cheap and worthwhile toll road running along the Ionian coast. Drive defensively; the Sicilians are some of the most aggressive drivers in Italy and have a penchant for overtaking on blind corners with a mobile phone in one hand while gesticulating wildly with the other!

### TRAIN

The coastal train service is very efficient. Services to towns in the interior tend to be infrequent and slow, although if you have the time the routes can be very picturesque.

**Trenitalia** ([www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)) is the partially privatised train system. IC trains are the fastest and most expensive, while the *regionale* is the slowest. All tickets must be validated via a machine on the platform or in the station before you board the train.

# PALERMO

pop 663,200

Palermo is a city of decay and of splendour and – provided you can handle its raw energy, deranged driving and chaos – has plenty of appeal. Unlike Florence or Rome, many of the city's treasures are hidden, rather than scrubbed up for endless streams of tourists. Be prepared to explore: this giant treasure trove of palaces, castles and churches has a unique architectural fusion of Byzantine, Arab, Norman, Renaissance and baroque gems. Palermitans themselves have inherited the intriguing looks and social rituals of their multicultural past. Life here is full on: a very public, warm-hearted and noisy affair.

While some of the crumbling *palazzi* bombed in WWII are being restored, others remain dilapidated; turned into shabby apartments, the faded glory of their ornate facades is just visible behind strings of brightly coloured washing. The evocative history of the city remains very much part of the daily life of its inhabitants, and the dusty web of backstreet markets in the old quarter has a tangible Middle Eastern feel.



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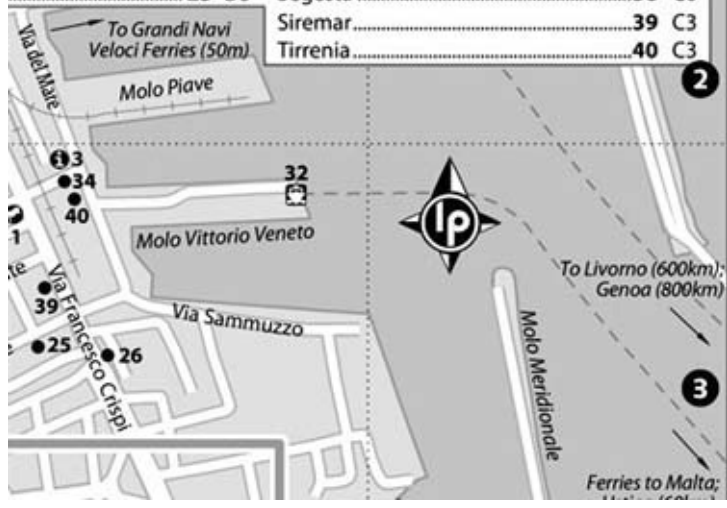
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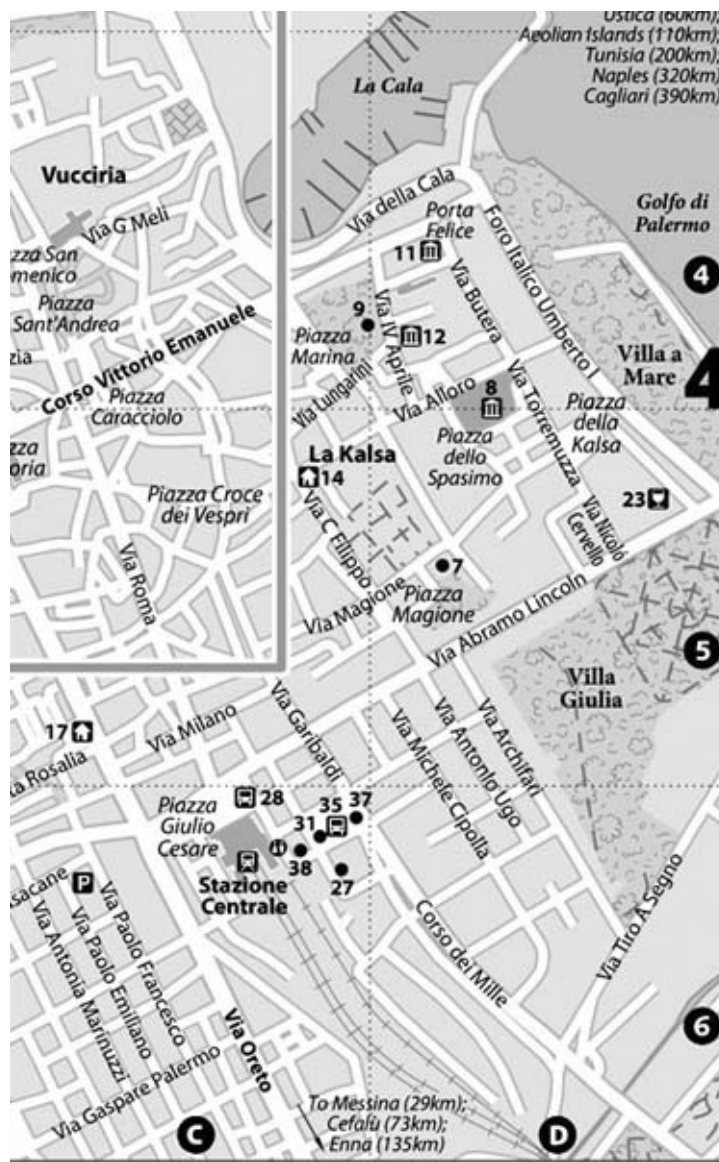




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## EXPRESS TRAINS ITALY—SICILY

For travellers originating in Rome and points south, InterCity trains like the *Archimede* and the *Peloritano* cover the distance from mainland Italy to Sicily in the least possible time, without a change of train. If coming from Milano, Bologna or Florence, your fastest option is to take the ultra-high-speed *Frecciarossa* as far as Naples, then change to the *Archimede* for the rest of the journey. Night trains like the *Freccia del Sud*, the *Gattopardo*, the *Bellini* and the *Trinacria* will still get you there fast – but without taking such a big bite out of your budget.

Route	Fastest (cost €)	Fastest (duration hours)	Cheapest (cost €)	Cheapest (duration hours)
Milan-Catania	174/124	13¾	52.60	17½
Milan-Messina	166/119	12	51.10	15¾
Milan-Palermo	184/131	15	81.70	19½
Rome-Catania	69/50	9¾	36.90	10¾
Rome-Messina	63/46	8	32.80	9
Rome-Palermo	80/58	11	50	12¾

The flip side is the modern city, a mere 15-minute stroll away, parts of which could be neatly jigsawed and slotted into Paris with their grid system of wide avenues lined by seductive shops and handsome 19th-century apartments.

At one time an Arab emirate and seat of a Norman kingdom, Palermo became Europe's grandest city in



the 12th century but, in recent years its fame (or notoriety) has originated mainly from headline-grabbing assassinations and political corruption. The Mafia still maintains a stranglehold on the city; many of the judges require 24-hour police surveillance and protection pay-offs remain commonplace.

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## SICILY FERRY CROSSINGS

Route	Cost (€) adult seat/car	Duration (hours)
Genoa-Palermo	102/27	19
Malta-Pozzallo	87/70	1½
Naples-Catania	38/75	11
Naples-Palermo	47/79	10
Naples-Trapani (hydrofoil only)	90	7
Reggio di Calabria-Messina	1.50/23	35min
Tunis-Palermo	44/70	10

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## ORIENTATION

Palermo is a large but manageable city. Via Maqueda is the central street, extending from the train station in the south through Via Ruggero Settimo to the grand Piazza Castelnuovo in the north. Here it turns into Viale della Libertà, a wide leafy boulevard marking the start of the city's modern district.

The intersection known as the Quattro Canti (Four Corners) divides the historic centre into four traditional quarters that contain the majority of Palermo's sights.

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## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

Several newsstands around Piazza Verdi sell foreign newspapers.

**Feltrinelli** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 78 12 91; Via Cavour 133) Great bookshop with city maps, guides and a foreign-language section.

### Emergency

**Ambulance** (☎ 091 30 66 41)

**Police station** ([Map](#); ☎ theft & lost documents 091 21 01 11, foreigners office 091 656 91 11; Piazza della Vittoria) For reporting theft and other petty crimes.

### Internet Access

There are countless internet points in the old centre, particularly around Via Maqueda where they double as phone centres for the city's immigrant population.

**Aboriginal Café** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 662 22 29; [www.aboriginalcafe.com](http://www.aboriginalcafe.com); Via Spinuzza 51; per hr €3.50; ☎ 9am-3am) A lively Australian-style bar and internet cafe.

**CENTRAL PALERMO**

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## Laundry

**Delfino Blu** ([Map](#); ☎ 331 475 10 50; Via Teatro Santa Cecilia 4; wash & dry per load €10; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 2.30pm Sat)

# Left Luggage

**Train station** ([Map](#); per bag 1st 5hr €4, additional hr €0.60, maximum 5 days; ☎ 7am-10.30pm)

# Medical Services

**Farmacia Inglese** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 33 44 82; Via Mariano Stabile 177; ☎ 4.30pm-1pm Mon-Fri, 8pm-8.30am Sat & Sun) All-night pharmacy service, seven days a week.

**Ospedale Civico** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 666 11 11; Via Carmelo Lazzaro) Emergency facilities.

# Money

ATMs are plentiful. There are exchange offices open outside normal banking hours at the airport.

# Post

**Main post office** ([Map](#); Via Roma 322) Smaller branch offices can be found at the train station and on Piazza Verdi.

# Tourist Information

**CIT tourist information booths** (☎ 091 611 78 87;

[www.comune.palermo.it/Comune/assessorato\\_turismo](http://www.comune.palermo.it/Comune/assessorato_turismo) in Italian; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm) At several locations throughout town, including Piazza Bellini, the port, Via Cavour and Piazza della Vittoria.

**Tourist office** ([www.palermotourism.com](http://www.palermotourism.com)) airport (☎ 091 59 16 98; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat); city centre ([Map](#); ☎ 091 605 83 51; Piazza Castelnuovo 34; ☎ 8.30am-2pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri) Has friendly, multilingual staff and abundant brochures.

# Travel Agencies

**S Tagliavia** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 25 33; [www.tagliavia.it](http://www.tagliavia.it); Via Cavour 117; ☎ 9am-12.45pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.45pm Sat) Can book train, ferry and air tickets.

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# SIGHTS

## Around the Quattro Canti

The busy intersection of Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Via Maqueda marks the **Quattro Canti**, the centre of the oldest part of town, neatly dividing the historic nucleus into four manageable sectors.

Nearby **Piazza Pretoria** is the civic heart of Palermo, where a crowd of imposing churches and buildings surrounds the ornate **Fontana Pretoria** ([Map](#)). This huge fountain fills the piazza with its tiered basins, supporting the sculptures, rippling in concentric circles. The city bought the fountain in 1573; however, the flagrant nudity of the provocative nymphs proved too much for Sicilian church-goers attending Mass at the grandly formal **San Giuseppe dei Teatini** ([Map](#)), and they prudishly dubbed it the

Fountain of Shame.

Twelfth-century **La Martorana** ([Map](#); Chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio; Piazza Bellini 3; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1pm Sun) was originally planned as a mosque by King Roger's Syrian Emir, George of Antioch. In 1433 the church was donated to an aesthetically challenged order of Benedictine nuns who demolished most of the stunning mosaics executed by Greek craftsmen and replaced them with gaudy baroque ornamentation, thus destroying the church's cohesive integrity. The few remaining original mosaics include two magnificent portraits of George of Antioch and Roger II that are well worth seeking out.

The **Chiesa di San Cataldo** ([Map](#); Piazza Bellini 3; adult/concession €1.50/free; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3.30-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat & Sun) almost looks Eastern European but, disappointingly, is almost bare inside. Its main point of interest to visitors lies in the Arab-Norman style of its exterior: the dusky-pink bijoux domes, solid square shape, blind arcading and delicate tracery.

In nearby Piazza Sant'Anna, the **Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 843 16 05; [www.galleriadartemodernapalermo.it](http://www.galleriadartemodernapalermo.it) in Italian; adult/concession /child €7/5 /free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun) is housed in a 15th-century *palazzo*, which metamorphosed into a convent in the 17th century. The wide-ranging collection of 19th- and 20th-century Sicilian art is beautifully displayed, and there's a regular program of modern-art exhibitions here, as well as an excellent bookshop and gift shop.

## Albergheria

The austere fortified palace of **Palazzo dei Normanni** ([Map](#); Palazzo Reale; ☎ 091 705 70 03; Piazza Indipendenza 1; adult/concession incl Cappella Palatina €7/5 Tue-Thu, €8.50/6.50 Fri-Mon; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-12.30pm Sun) was once the centre of a magnificent medieval court.

On the middle level of the three-tiered loggia is Palermo's premier tourist attraction, the **Cappella Palatina** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 705 47 49; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 8.30-9.45am & 11am-12.30pm Sun), designed by Roger II in 1130. Restoration work completed in July 2008 (after a small earthquake in 2002 damaged the structure) has returned the chapel to its original splendour, and the walls once again swarm with figures in glittering, dreamy gold. These exquisite mosaics recount tales of the Old and New Testaments, capturing expression, detail and movement with extraordinary grace. The harmony of the chapel's decoration is further enhanced by the inlaid marble floors and the wooden *muqarnas* ceiling, a masterpiece of honeycomb carving in Arabic style that reflects the cultural complexity of Norman Sicily. Outside the chapel, a 12th-century stone tablet affixed to the wall bears inscriptions in Latin, Greek and Arabic, further exemplifying the Normans' engagement with the island's many cultures.

South of the *palazzo* are the peaceful Norman cloisters of the **Chiesa di San Giovanni degli Eremiti** ([Map](#); Via dei Benedettini; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat).

Behind the splendours of the Palazzo dei Normanni lies the contrastingly shabby, run-down district of Albergheria, once inhabited by Norman court officials and now home to a growing number of immigrants who are attempting to revitalise its dusty backstreets. This is also the location of Palermo's busiest street market, the **Mercato di Ballarò** ([Map](#)), which throbs with activity well into the early evening. It's a fascinating mix of noise, smells and full-on street life, and the cheapest place for everything from Chinese padded bras to fresh produce, fish and meat, plus the best and most appetising cheese selection imaginable – smile nicely for a taste.

## Capo

On 5 May 1072 the Norman 'wolf' Robert Guiscard seized Palermo, thus beginning the city's most

prosperous era. Ambitious builders, the Normans gave birth to the extraordinary Arab-Norman style unique to Sicily. Chief among these is the **cathedral** ([Map](#); [www.cattedrale.palermo.it](http://www.cattedrale.palermo.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele; ☎ 7am-7pm), an extraordinary (and enormous) feast of geometric patterns, ziggurat crenulations, majolica cupolas and blind arches. The interior, although impressive in scale, is a marble shell, a sadly un-exotic resting place for the royal Norman tombs. The **crypt** and **treasury** (adult/concession €2.50/1.50; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) contain various jewels belonging to Queen Costanza of Aragón, a bejewelled Norman crown and, most bizarrely, a tooth extracted from Santa Rosalia, Palermo's patron saint.

The Capo, another web of interconnected streets and blind alleys, has its own street market, **Mercato del Capo** ([Map](#)), running the length of Via Sant'Agostino. Like Ballarò it is a seething mass of colourful activity during the day. You can also pop your head into the madly marbled **Chiesa della Concezione** ([Map](#); Via Porta Carini; ☎ 9am-noon & 4-6pm Mon-Sat) along the way.

The centrepiece of the quarter is the imposing monastery of **Sant'Agostino** ([Map](#); ☎ 7am-noon & 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 7am-noon Sun). Redecorated by the wealthy Scláfani family, the interior sports *putti* (cherubs) statues by Giacomo Serpotta, while the older cloister is decorated in a similar style to that of **Monreale**.

## Vucciria

Architectural gems in this quarter include the **Oratorio del Rosario di Santa Zita** ([Map](#); Via Squarcialupo; admission free; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Mon-Sat), the **Oratorio del Rosario di San Domenico** ([Map](#); Via dei Bambinai 2; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat) and the **Oratorio di San Lorenzo** ([Map](#); Via dell'Immacolatella; admission €2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm). Covered in ornate stuccowork, these former social clubs for the celebs of their time are ostentatious displays of 17th-century status and wealth.

In stark contrast to this splendour, the shabby streets of Vucciria mark the chasm between rich and poor. Palermo's notorious street market, **Mercato della Vucciria** ([Map](#); Piazza Caracciolo) was once known as a den of Mafia activity but is a muted affair today compared to the spirited Ballarò and Capo markets.

North along Via Roma, the **Museo Archeologico Regionale** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 611 68 05; Piazza Olivella 24; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 8.30am-1.45pm & 3-6.45pm Tue-Fri, 8.30am-1.45pm Sat-Mon), in a Renaissance monastery, displays some of Sicily's most valuable Greek and Roman artefacts. The galleries surround a gracious courtyard and display treasures from Selinunte such as a series of decorative friezes depicting classical scenes, full of humour and energy. In one, Perseus gleefully beheads the Gorgon, and the Cercopes twins, hanging upside down, laugh at the sunburnt bum of Hercules. There's good wheelchair access.

## La Kalsa

Due to its proximity to the port, La Kalsa was subjected to carpet bombing during WWII, leaving it derelict and rundown. Mother Teresa considered it akin to the shanty towns of Calcutta and established a mission here. Thankfully, this galvanised embarrassed authorities into action and the quarter is now undergoing extensive restoration.

The arterial Via Alloro hides the wonderful **Galleria Regionale Siciliana** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 623 00 11; Via Alloro 4), closed indefinitely for restoration at the time of research, whose collection includes works by Sicilian artists from the Middle Ages to the 18th century.

Just south of the gallery is the **Complessa di Santa Maria dello Spasimo** ([Map](#); Via Spasimo; admission free; ☎ 8am-8pm), originally a church and convent and the only example of northern Gothic

style in Sicily. Its elegant polygonal apse and tall slender nave have stood for centuries without a roof. It makes a fabulous venue for regular exhibitions and concerts in the summer.

Lovely **Piazza Marina** is lined with *palazzi* and flanked by the small but beautiful **Giardino Garibaldi** ([Map](#)). In contrast, the 14th-century **Palazzo Chiaromonte Steri** ([Map](#); Piazza Marina; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) has a dark past: in the 17th century it was the headquarters of the Inquisition, where heretics were routinely burnt to death.

On a more jolly note, the **Museo Internazionale delle Marionette** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 80 60; [www.museomarionettepalermo.it](http://www.museomarionettepalermo.it), in Italian; Via Butera 1; adult/child & concession €5/3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) houses over 3500 puppets, marionettes and glove puppets from Italy, China, India, southern Asia, Turkey and Africa. Delightful puppet shows are staged every Friday at 5.30pm. For more on Sicily's famous puppet tradition, see boxed text, [Click here](#).

## The 19th-Century City

North of Piazza Giuseppe Verdi, Palermo elegantly slips into cosmopolitan mode with some fabulous neoclassical and art-nouveau buildings hailing from the last golden age of Sicilian architecture.

The grand neoclassical **Teatro Massimo** ([Map](#); ☎ tour reservations 091 609 08 31; [www.teatromassimo.it](http://www.teatromassimo.it); Piazza Giuseppe Verdi; guided tours adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 10am-2.30pm Tue-Sun) took more than 20 years to complete. Nowadays the theatre is an iconic Palermo landmark and has become a symbol of the triumph and tragedy of the city. Appropriately, the closing scene of *The Godfather: Part III*, with its visually stunning juxtaposition of high culture, low crime, drama and death, was filmed here.

**Teatro Politeama Garibaldi** ([Map](#); ☎ bookings 091 605 33 15; Piazza Ruggero Settimo; ☎ performances Nov-May) is Palermo's second theatre. Designed by architect Giuseppe Damiani Almeyda between 1867 and 1874, it has the same imposing circular layout as the Teatro Massimo and features a striking facade resembling a triumphal arch topped by a huge bronze chariot.

Beyond Piazza Ruggero Settimo, the broad boulevard of Viale della Libertà is lined with late-19th-century mansion blocks. Head up here for a sybaritic experience at Palermo's **Hammam** (☎ 091 32 07 83; [www.hammam.pa.it](http://www.hammam.pa.it); Via Torrearsa 17d; admission €40; ☎ 2-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat, men only Tue, Thu & Sat, women only Mon, Wed & Fri), a luxurious marble-lined Moorish bathhouse where you can indulge in a vigorous scrub-down, a steamy sauna and many different types of massages and therapies. There's a one-off charge (€10) for slippers and a hand glove.

## The Suburbs

The morbid **Catacombe dei Cappuccini** (☎ 091 652 41 56; Piazza Cappuccini; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm) is home to the mummified bodies and skeletons of some 8000 Palermitans who died between the 17th and 19th centuries. Earthly power, sex, religion and professional status are still rigidly distinguished; men and women occupy separate corridors and within the women's area there's a 1st-class section for virgins. Dressed in their Sunday best, the corpses' clothes have survived better than some of the bodies themselves. This is possibly not a place to take the kiddies. From Piazza Indipendenza, it's a 15-minute walk; alternatively, catch any bus running along Via Cappuccini to the corner of Via Pindemonte, then walk one block to Piazza Cappuccini.

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# FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Palermo's biggest annual festival, **U Fistinu**, celebrates the patron saint of the city, Santa Rosalia, with parades amid four days of partying from 10 to 15 July.

In February Sicily's oldest **Carnevale** is held in the coastal town of Termini Imerese, 26km southeast of the city en route to Cefalù with parades of decorated floats and giant papier-mâché figures.

At Easter, **Settimana Santa** (Holy Week) is the year's major religious festival, celebrated virtually all over the island. In Palermo there are Greek Orthodox celebrations at [La Martorana](#).

**Palermo di Scena** ([www.associazioneculturalechiediscena.com](http://www.associazioneculturalechiediscena.com)) is a series of music, cinema, theatre and ballet programs held throughout the summer.

During the **Festa di Morgana** ([www.museomarionettepalermo.it](http://www.museomarionettepalermo.it), in Italian), puppeteers from all over the world gather at Museo Internazionale delle Marionette. Dates vary each year, so check out the website.

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## SLEEPING

Compared with the rest of Italy, Sicilian accommodation is reasonably priced. Most budget options can be found around Via Maqueda and Via Roma in the vicinity of the train station. The majority of midrange and top-end hotels are located north of the Quattro Canti. Book ahead in summer.

Parking usually costs an extra €10 to €15 per day.

## Budget

**Camping Trinacria** (☎ 091 53 05 90; [www.campingtrinacria.it](http://www.campingtrinacria.it); Via Barcarello; camp sites per adult/child/tent/car €7/6/7/4, 2-person bungalow €40-60) Situated across from the sea this camping ground has good facilities, including a pizzeria and a few plain but comfortable bungalows.

**Hotel Firenze** (Map; ☎ 091 784 76 45; [www.palermohotelfirenze.com](http://www.palermohotelfirenze.com); Via Candelai 68; dm/s/d without bathroom €18/30/45, s/d with bathroom 35/50) Steps away from the youthful bar scene on Via Candelai, this recently opened hostel in a converted old *palazzo* can get very noisy, but it has a nice communal kitchen and rooftop terrace to go along with basic dorms and private rooms.

**A Casa di Amici B&B** (Map; ☎ 091 58 48 84; [www.acasadiamici.com](http://www.acasadiamici.com); Via Voltorno 6; dm/s/d without bathroom €25/35/60, s/d with bathroom 40/70; ☒ ☑) This friendly, hostel-type place has an artsy atmosphere, a youthful clientele and a slightly wacky owner named Claudia. It's right behind Teatro Massimo in a renovated 19th-century *palazzo*, with four lovely rooms that sleep from two to four people. Each room has a different theme, but all have high ceilings, colourful walls and 'ethnic' decor. There are shared bathrooms and a kitchen.

**Hotel Orientale** (Map; ☎ 091 616 57 27; [www.albergoorientale.191.it](http://www.albergoorientale.191.it); Via Maqueda 26; s €30-50, d €50-70; ☒) This *palazzo*'s arcaded courtyard, complete with rusty bicycles, stray cats and strung-up washing, is an evocative introduction to an atmospheric hotel. Rooms have wrought-iron beds, tall windows and heavy wooden furniture. Check out the lovely frescoed ceiling in the library. The cheapest rooms come with shared bathrooms. Breakfast is served at the cafe down the street.

**Albergo Ariston** (Map; ☎ 091 33 24 34; [www.aristonpalermo.it](http://www.aristonpalermo.it); Via Mariano Stabile 139; s €42-49, d

€60-69; 📍 🗺 📶) Behind a deceptively shabby exterior, this simple 6th-floor hotel in the new part of town is a great budget option, featuring bright, clean and spacious rooms equipped with private bathroom, frigobar and wi-fi. Owner Giuseppe speaks French and English. Breakfast (€2.50) is optional.

## Midrange

**Al Giardino dell'Alloro** (Map; 📍 091 617 69 04; [www.giardinodellalloro.it](http://www.giardinodellalloro.it); Vicolo San Carlo 8; s €40-45, d €80-90, tr €120; 📍 🗺 📶) This bijou B&B with flat-screen TVs, free wi-fi and walls hung with artwork from the nearby academy is a very pleasant retreat. The rooms are painted in vivid colours and there's a communal fridge for guests' use. It's tucked down a slender alley opposite a wisteria-draped wall.

**Hotel del Centro** (Map; 📍 091 617 03 76; [www.hoteldelcentro.it](http://www.hoteldelcentro.it); Via Roma 72; s €60-110, d €80-130, tr €95-175; 📍 🗺 📶) Rooms are attractively decked out with brass beds, colourful botanical prints and pale yellow walls at this pleasant hotel overlooking the trees and bustle of Via Roma. Perks include wi-fi access and double-glazed windows to keep out the street noise.

**Hotel Tonic** (Map; 📍 091 58 17 54; [www.hoteltonic.it](http://www.hoteltonic.it); Via Mariano Stabile 126; s €72-90, d €88-110, ste €145-180; 📍) This townhouse hotel towards the top of town has been thoroughly revamped, while retaining attractive original features like painted tile floors and high ceilings. Two rooms are equipped for guests with disabilities, and there are four spacious suites, each named after a famous artist (Monet, Van Gogh, Klimt and Degas).

**Hotel Gallery House** (Map; 📍 091 612 47 58; [www.hotelgalleryhouse.com](http://www.hotelgalleryhouse.com); Via Mariano Stabile 136; s €80-110, d €100-140; 📍 🗺 📶) Gallery House stands out amid the clutch of hotels in this area. Rooms are furnished in warm ochres, oranges and yellows, and come with chic marbled bathrooms. Tapestries, carpets and nice wooden floors in the common areas add to the elegant feel.

**Hotel Letizia** (Map; 📍 091 58 91 10; [www.hotelletizia.com](http://www.hotelletizia.com); Via dei Bottai 30; s €85-110, d €115-125, ste €134-150; 📍 🗺) This boutique hotel is situated just off lovely Piazza Marina. Rooms, while on the small side, are warmly decorated with rugs and parquet floors, plus tasteful artwork and furniture. The hotel also operates a B&B on the floor above (single/double/suite €65/85/125).

## Top End

**Centrale Palace Hotel** (Map; 📍 091 33 66 66; [www.centralepalacehotel.it](http://www.centralepalacehotel.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele 327; s €130-170, d €187-190; 📍 🗺 📶) This 18th-century *palazzo* is one of Palermo's most elegant hotels with a superb location in the heart of the historic centre. The hotel offers a high level of service and the rooms are comfortable, if a little corporate-looking. The restaurant is over-the-top opulent with its frescoed ceiling, geometrically patterned marble floor and twinkling chandeliers.

**Grand Hotel et des Palmes** (Map; 📍 091 602 81 11; [www.hotel-despalmes.it](http://www.hotel-despalmes.it); Via Roma 398; r €225-255; 📍 🗺) The Grand Hotel, which opened in 1874, is one of Palermo's most historically fascinating hotels. Like a royal court, it has been the scene of intrigue, liaisons and double-dealings throughout Palermo's history. The grand salons still impress with their chandeliers and gigantic mirrors, while the rooms are regally luxurious. The official rates listed above are often slashed in half during slow periods; look online for special deals.

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## EATING



One of Sicily's best-kept secrets is its ancient cuisine, a mixture of spicy and sweet flavours. Palermo's most famous dish is *pasta con le sarde* (pasta with sardines, fennel, peppers, capers and pine nuts). Cakes and pastries are works of art – try the *cannoli* (tubes of pastry filled with cream, ricotta or chocolate) – and, like the Spaniards, Sicilians have a penchant for marzipan. The locals are also late eaters and restaurants rarely start to fill up until 9.30pm.

## Restaurants

### BUDGET

**ourpick** **Trattoria Basile** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 33 56 28; Via Bara all'Olivella 76; meals €6-10; 🕒 noon-3.30pm Mon-Sat) This popular, unpretentious trattoria offers an unforgettable, authentic Palermitan eating experience. Pay first, take a number at the window for your pasta (€2 to €2.50) or main course (€3 to €4), then sidle over to the antipasti bar where you can choose three items for €2 or six items for €3.50. While enjoying your appetisers, listen for your number – they'll bellow it out (in Italian) when the rest of your food is ready. Try to avoid the really busy period between 1pm and 2pm when every workman in town is elbowing in for his plate of pasta.

**Antica Focacceria di San Francesco** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 02 64; Via Alessandro Paternostro 58; meals €12; 🕒 closed Tue) A Palermitan institution, this atmospheric, informal place is one of the city's oldest eating houses (opened in 1834). It hosted the first Sicilian parliament and was a favourite haunt of notorious Mafia boss 'Lucky' Luciano. Fixed-price menus including *cannoli* and the drink of your choice cost €6 to €12. The sandwiches (€2 to €4) are also great – try an oven-baked Vecchia Palermo *moffoletta* with cherry tomatoes, anchovies, *caciocavallo* cheese and oregano, or brave a *maritata*, the age-old Palermitan snack featuring *milza* (veal innards) and ricotta cheese.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Trattoria Biondo** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 36 62; Via Carducci 15; pizzas €5-12; meals €30-40; 🕒 closed Wed) Biondo has a split personality. The trattoria side is pure Fellini film set, always crammed with congenial, noisy locals who come for Palermitan classics such as *involtini di pesce spada* (swordfish roulades) or *pasta con le sarde*. Crates of fresh produce greet you at the door, which leads to several low-ceilinged dining rooms decorated with plates, tiles and paintings. Just around the corner, Pizzeria Biondo offers the same great quality at half the price. An animated crowd fills the sidewalk tables every night for some of Palermo's finest pizza.

**Casa del Brodo** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 16 55; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 175; meals €18-28; 🕒 closed Sun) This old-fashioned place is another Palermo classic, with bow-tied wait staff and elegant red and gold tablecloths. Founded in 1890, the restaurant is named after its heart-warming pots of *brodo* (broth), such as *macco di fave e finocchietto* (broad bean soup with fennel). There's also a soul-satisfying antipasti spread (€9).

**Primavera** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 94 08; Piazza Bologna 4; meals €20-23; 🕒 closed Mon) This Slow Food—recommended spot doesn't look like much from the outside, but the kitchen prepares excellent, authentic Sicilian stalwarts at very reasonable prices, including *risotto funghi e noci* (mushroom-walnut risotto).

**Bellini** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 56 91; Piazza Bellini 6; pizzas €4-9, meals €20-30; 🕒 closed Mon in winter) In the shadow of La Martorana, this pleasantly situated restaurant is in an ex-theatre, with tables sprawling out onto a terrace. It's justifiably touristy but the Sicilian cuisine (and ice cream) remains reliably good, and the speedy service comes with a smile.

**Les Amis** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 66 42; Piazza San Carlo 9; meals €25; 🕒 dinner Wed-Mon) A community

trattoria with tasty fish and pasta dishes, Les Amis has had consistently good recommendations over the years. It's decorated in classic Italian style, with terracotta walls and peachy lighting.

**Caffetteria-Ristorante Galleria d'Arte Moderna** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 617 16 31; Via Sant'Anna 21; meals €25-30; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) A hidden gem in the courtyard of Palermo's modern art museum, this bright, informal and artsy cafe features a short menu of dishes like *tonno e pesce spada affumicati con mousse di formaggio fresco al finocchietto selvatico* (smoked tuna and swordfish with cheese and wild fennel mousse). If the quality-to-price ratio seems surprisingly good, that's because it's owned by the same people who run the elegant Osteria dei Vespri across the street.

**Acanto Blu** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 04 44; Via Torrearsa 10; meals €30-35; 🕒 dinner Mon-Sat) New-town elegance together with inventive cooking make L'Acanto one of the most fashionable restaurants among the designer-chic crowd. In the summer tables are set out back on the patio and fill up around 10pm.

**Sant'Andrea** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 33 49 99; Piazza Sant'Andrea 4; meals €30-35; 🕒 dinner Mon-Sat) The position of this excellent restaurant is a reflection of Palermo's contradictory appeal. It's tucked into the corner of a ruined church in a shabby piazza. Sant'Andrea's well-heeled customers pick their way across the broken flagstones to enjoy creative, yet classic, dishes such as tagliatelle with lobster and almond pesto.

**Cucina Papoff** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 64 60; Via Isidoro la Lumia 32; meals €30-35; 🕒 closed Sat lunch & Sun) Specialising in Sicilian classics like *trancio di pesce in umido con capperi e olive* (slow-simmered fish stew with capers and olives), Papoff creates an intimate ambience with carved wooden ceilings, exposed brickwork and torch-style lighting.

**Osteria dei Vespri** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 617 16 31; Piazza Croce dei Vespri 6; meals €40-55, tasting menu €75; 🕒 closed Sun) This sophisticated Michelin-star restaurant has a stone-vaulted ceiling and intimate dining space. In the summer, sit out under the shadow of the *palazzo* and tuck into dishes such as purple potato and oregano gnocchi with porcini mushrooms, chestnuts and peppers, topped off with the deliciously calorific dark-and-white chocolate mousse with candied orange peel.

## Cafes

There are plenty of cafes with outdoor tables, where you can soothe your travel-worn spirit and linger a while.

**Antico Caffè Spinnato** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 92 20; Via Principe di Belmonte 107-15; snacks €4-8) A sophisticated cafe dating back to 1860 located on the smart pedestrian boulevard. Sit on the vast terrace to enjoy coffees, cocktails, ice creams, sumptuous cakes and snacks.

**Il Baretto** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 96 40; Via XX Settembre 43; salads & sandwiches €5-8; 🕒 closed Sun) This tiny tearoom, wedged between expensive boutiques, is where designer-dressed women and well-oiled men with shades congregate for their light lunch or early evening chit-chat.

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## DRINKING

Three of the liveliest clusters of bars are on Via Alessandro Paternostro; along Via dei Candelai; and in the area around Piazza Olivella, Via Spinuzza, and Via Patania. Higher end bars and dance venues are concentrated in the newer part of Palermo. In summer, many Palermitans decamp to Mondello by the sea.

**Mi Manda Picone** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 06 60; Via Alessandro Paternostro 59; 🕒 8pm-1am) Housed in a sumptuous 13th-century building is this stylish wine bar with brick arches, sitting pretty on the square. It hosts art exhibitions and is a good choice for getting in the mood for an indulgent night out.

**our pick** **Kursaal Kalhesa** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 00 50; [www.kursaalkalhesa.it](http://www.kursaalkalhesa.it), in Italian; Foro Umberto I 21; 🕒 Tue-Sun noon-1.30am) Recline on plump sofas with silk cushions and sip a cocktail beneath the high vaulted ceilings. There's a roaring fire in winter, plus art exhibits and a bookstore with foreign newspapers. A lively unpretentious crowd is attracted by the good program of music and literary events. Meals (from €30) are served in the dining room or on the leafy patio flanked by 15th-century walls.

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## SICILIAN STREET FOOD

If you were taught that it was bad manners to eat in the street, you can break the rule in good company here. The mystery is simply how Palermo is not the obesity capital of Europe given just how much eating goes on! Palermitans are at it all the time: when they're shopping, on the way to work, on the way home from work, when they're discussing business, romancing... basically at any time of the day. What they're enjoying is the *buffitieri* – little hot snacks prepared at stalls and meant to be eaten on the spot, just as they were in the marketplaces of Sicily's Greek-settled cities.

Kick off the morning with a *pane e pannelle*, Palermo's famous chickpea fritters – great for vegetarians and they make a change from a sweet custard-filled croissant. Or, if it's later in the day, you might want to go for the potato croquettes, the *sfincione* (a spongy, oily pizza topped with onions and *caciocavallo* cheese) or *scaccie* (discs of bread dough spread with a filling and rolled up into a pancake). In summer, locals enjoy a freshly baked brioche filled with a type of ice cream flavoured with fruits, coffee or nougat.

From 4pm onwards the snacks become decidedly more carnivorous and you may just wish you hadn't read the following translations: how about some barbecued *stigghiola* (goat intestines filled with onions, cheese and parsley), for example? Or a couple of *pani cu'la mensa* (bread roll stuffed with sautéed beef spleen). You'll be asked if you want it '*schietta o maritata*' ('single or married'). If you choose *schietta*, the roll will only have ricotta in it before being dipped into boiling lard; choose *maritata* and you'll get the beef spleen as well. Somewhat tamer, and a favourite in Catania, are all manner of *impanata* (bread-dough snacks) stuffed with meat, vegetables or cheese, and the unique *arancino* (a deep-fried rice ball stuffed with meat, tomato and vegetables).

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**I Grilli Giù** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 47 47; Piazza Cavalieri di Malta 11) A popular cocktail bar (and restaurant) northeast of the Vucciria market. Here you can sip a long, cool drink and hip-sway to the latest DJ sounds.

Via dei Candelai is also a short stagger of a street flanked by pubs, bars and discos catering to a younger, rowdier crowd.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

The daily paper *Il Giornale di Sicilia* has a listing of what's on. The tourist office and information booths also have programs and listings.

**Lo Spasimo** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 14 86; Via Spasimo) This cultural centre in the atmospheric, if tragic,

bombed-out remains of a church ([Click here](#)) hosts art exhibitions and live concerts from May through September.

**Teatro Massimo** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 605 35 80; [www.teatromassimo.it](http://www.teatromassimo.it); Piazza Verdi 9) Ernesto Basile's art-nouveau masterpiece stages opera, ballet and music concerts. The theatre's program runs from October to May.

**Teatro Politeama Garibaldi** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 79 73; Via Castrofilippo 30) Another grandiose theatre for opera, ballet and classical concerts. The season runs from November to May.

**Teatro della Verdura** (☎ 091 688 41 37; Viale del Fante) A summer-only program of ballet and music in the lovely gardens of the Villa Castelnuovo.

**Cuticchio Mimmo** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 32 34 00; [www.figlidartecuticchio.com](http://www.figlidartecuticchio.com); Via Bara all'Olivella 95; ☎ 6.30pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jul) A charming low-tech choice for children (and adults) with fabulous handcrafted puppets (see boxed text, [Click here](#)). Visit the workshop (see below), a few doors away, where they're made.

You can also catch performances at the Museo Internazionale delle Marionette ([Click here](#)).

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## SHOPPING

Via Bara all'Olivella is good for arts and crafts. Check out the puppet workshop of the Cuticchio family, **Il Laboratorio Teatrale** ([Map](#); Via Bara all'Olivella 48-50). For exquisite and innovative Sicilian ceramics and pottery, stop by **Casa Merlo** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 623 06 47; Via Merlo 44), which also ships abroad.

Palermo is famed for its elaborately sculptured marzipan sweets, the best of which are produced by [Antico Caffè Spinnato](#). To stock up on Sicilian wines, check out the huge selection at [Mi Manda Picone](#).

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

**Falcone-Borsellino airport** (PMO; ☎ 091 702 01 11; [www.gesap.it](http://www.gesap.it)) is at Punta Raisi, 31km west of Palermo.

Several no-frills airlines operate between major European cities and Palermo. Falcone-Borsellino is also the hub airport for regular domestic flights to the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa.

### Boat

The ferry terminal is located off Via Francesco Crispi. Ferries depart regularly from Molo Vittorio Veneto for Cagliari and Naples. Ferries for Genoa leave from Molo S Lucia.

**Grandi Navi Veloci** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 74 04; [www.gnv.it](http://www.gnv.it), in Italian; Calata Marinai d'Italia) Ferries from Palermo to Genoa (€96, 19 hours, daily).

**Grimaldi Ferries** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 611 36 91; [www.grimaldi-ferries.com](http://www.grimaldi-ferries.com); Via Enrico Amari 8) Ferries

from Palermo to Tunis (€44 to €65, 10 hours, twice weekly).

**Siremar** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 749 31 11; [www.siremar.it](http://www.siremar.it), in Italian; Via Francesco Crispi 118) Ferries (€17.35, 2½ hours, one daily) and summer-only hydrofoils (€21.55, 1¼ hours, two daily) from Palermo to Ustica.

**Tirrenia** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 976 07 73; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it); Calata Marinai d'Italia; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-8.45pm Mon-Fri, 3.30-8.45pm Sat, 5-8.45pm Sun) Services from Palermo to Cagliari (€52, 13 hours, one weekly) and an overnight ferry to Naples (€47, 10 hours, one daily). The office is located at the port to the right of the main entrance.

**Ustica Lines** (☎ 0923 87 38 13; [www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it)) Summer-only hydrofoil service to Lipari (€38.25, four hours, two daily) and other points on the Aeolian Islands.

## Bus

The main intercity bus station is on Via Paolo Balsamo, one block east of the train station. Sicily's buses are privatised, and different routes are serviced by various companies, all with their own ticket offices in the same area.

**Azienda Siciliana Trasporti** ([Map](#); AST; ☎ 091 680 00 32; [www.aziendasicilianatrasporti.it](http://www.aziendasicilianatrasporti.it); Via Rosario Gregorio 46) Services to southeastern destinations including Ragusa (€12.60, four hours, four daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday).

**Cuffaro** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 15 10; [www.cuffaro.info](http://www.cuffaro.info); Via Paolo Balsamo 13) Services to Agrigento (€8.10, 2½ hours, three to nine daily).

**SAIS** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 60 28; [www.saisautolinee.it](http://www.saisautolinee.it); Via Paolo Balsamo 16-20) Services to Cefalù (€5, one hour, four Monday to Saturday, one Sunday), Catania (€12, 2¾ hours, at least nine daily) and Messina (€12, 2¾ hours, three to eight daily).

**Segesta** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 616 90 39; [www.segesta.it](http://www.segesta.it); Via Paolo Balsamo 26) Services to Trapani (€8.60, two hours, at least 10 daily). Also sells Interbus tickets to Syracuse (€15.30, 3¼ hours, two to three daily).

## Car & Motorcycle

Palermo is accessible on the A20-E90 toll road from Messina and the A19-E932 from Catania via Enna. Trapani and Marsala are also easily accessible from Palermo by motorway (A29), while Agrigento and Palermo are linked by the SS121, a good state road through the interior of the island.

Car hire is not cheap in Sicily (a week can cost anything from €250 to €500). It often pays to shop around and book your rental online before you leave home. One dependable low-budget choice in downtown Palermo is **Auto Europa** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 10 45; [www.autoeuropa.it](http://www.autoeuropa.it); Via Mariano Stabile 6a). **Avis** ([www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com)); airport (☎ 091 59 16 84); port ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 69 40; Via Francesco Crispi 115) also has a downtown branch and is among the many larger car-hire companies represented at the airport. Alternatively, the originally named **Rent a Scooter** ([Map](#); ☎ 091 33 68 04; [www.rentascooters.com](http://www.rentascooters.com); Via Amari 63) rents scooters starting at €27 per day.

## Train

Regular trains leave for Messina (€11 to €24, 3½ hours), Agrigento (€7.60, 2¼ hours, 11 daily) and Cefalù (€4.70, one hour, 17 daily). There are also intercity trains to Reggio di Calabria, Naples and Rome. Train timetable information is available in English at the station.

For Catania or Syracuse, you're generally better off taking the bus. There's only one direct train daily

to Catania (€11.60, 3¾ hours); all the others require a time-consuming change at Messina.

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## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

**Prestia e Comandè** (☎ 091 58 63 51; [www.prestiaecomande.it](http://www.prestiaecomande.it)) runs a half-hourly bus service from the airport to the centre of town, with stops outside Teatro Politeama Garibaldi and at the train station. Tickets for the 50-minute journey cost €5.60 and are available on the bus. Return journeys to the airport run with similar frequency and pick up at the same points.

The Trinacria Express train also runs from the airport to the train station (€5.50, one hour, half-hourly Monday to Saturday, hourly on weekends). There are plenty of taxis outside the airport but the fare for the same trip is a crippling €50.

### Bus

Palermo's orange **city buses** (AMAT; ☎ 091 35 01 11, 848 80 08 17; [www.amat.pa.it](http://www.amat.pa.it)) are frequent but often crowded and slow due to the traffic. Ask at the tourist information booths around town for a leaflet detailing the bus lines; most stop at the train station. Tickets must be purchased before you get on the bus, available from *tabacchi* (tobacconists) or AMAT booths at major transfer points. They cost €1.20 for up to 90 minutes or €3.50 for a day.

There are two small buses – Linea Gialla and Linea Rossa (€0.55 for 24-hour ticket) – that operate in the narrow streets of the *centro storico* and can be useful if you're moving between tourist sights.

For bus 389 to Monreale, head to the stop at Piazza Indipendenza.

### Car & Motorcycle

Driving is frenetic in the city and best avoided, if possible. Theft of, and from, vehicles is also a problem; use one of the attended car parks around town (€10 to €16 per day) if your hotel lacks parking.

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## AROUND PALERMO

Palermo is as exhausting as it is energising, and visitors may welcome an occasional break. Three excellent excursions are to the nearby beaches of Mondello, the island of Ustica and the medieval brilliance of the mosaics at Monreale.

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### MONDELLO

Set in the lee of **Monte Pellegrino** is the typical Italian beach resort of Mondello. The long, sandy beach here became fashionable in the 19th century, when people came to the seaside in their carriages, thus warranting the huge art-nouveau pier. Most of the beaches near the pier are private (two sun lounges and

an umbrella cost €10 to €20); however, there's a wide swath of public beach opposite the centre of town with all the prerequisite pedaloes and jet skis for hire. You can also rent a bike with **Ciclotour** (091 45 47 98; [www.ciclotour.it](http://www.ciclotour.it); Via Principe di Scalea; per day €10).

Given its easygoing seaside feel, Mondello is an excellent base for families. The **Splendid Hotel La Torre** (☎ 091 45 02 22; [www.latorre.com](http://www.latorre.com); Via Piano Gallo 11; s €110-158, d €145-182; 📞 📺 📺 📺) has every luxury, along with dramatic views and direct access to the beach. A couple of blocks inland are the much simpler **B&B Il Banano** (☎ 091 45 59 26; [www.ilbanano.com](http://www.ilbanano.com); Via Stesicoro 3; s €33-40, d €66-80) and **B&B Al Baglio** (☎ 091 684 12 75; [www.mondellobaglio.com](http://www.mondellobaglio.com); Via Gallo 19; s €60-65, d €80-90).

The waterfront is lined with snack stalls, terrace bars and restaurants, and the central Piazza Mondello has a couple of good gelaterie (ice-cream shops). Mondello's most memorable dining experience is at the classy **Charleston** (☎ 091 45 01 71; Viale Regina Elena; meals €35-40), a fairytale art-nouveau palace jutting out over the waves.

To get to Mondello take bus 806 (€1.20, 30 minutes) from Piazza Sturzo in Palermo.

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## MONREALE

Inspired by a vision of the Virgin and determined to outdo his grandfather Roger II, who was responsible for the cathedral in Cefalù and the Cappella Palatina in Palermo, William II set about building the **Cattedrale di Monreale** (☎ 091 640 44 03; Piazza del Duomo; 🕒 cathedral 8am-6pm, treasury 9.30am-noon & 3.30-5.30pm), 8km southwest of Palermo. The resulting cathedral is considered the finest example of Norman architecture in Sicily, incorporating Norman, Arab, Byzantine and classical elements.

The interior, completed in 1184 and executed in shimmering mosaics, depicts 42 Old Testament stories. There's a captivating naivety in the style, a complete contrast to the sophisticated realism of the Cappella Palatina. Here, the child-sized scenes depict classic storybook images: Noah's huge ark perches atop the waves, while Christ heals a leper afflicted with wildly exaggerated sores and blotches.

Outside the cathedral, the **cloister** (admission €6; 🕒 9am-7pm) is a tranquil courtyard with a tangible oriental feel. Surrounding the perimeter, elegant Romanesque arches are supported by an exquisite array of slender columns alternately decorated with mosaics. The detail on each capital is different; together they represent a unique sculptural record of medieval Sicily. The capital of the 19th column on the west aisle depicts William II benevolently offering the cathedral to the Madonna.

To reach Monreale (€1.20, 35 minutes, half-hourly) take bus 389 from Piazza Indipendenza in Palermo. A word of warning: this generally crowded bus is notorious for pickpockets.

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## USTICA

Another easy overnight trip from Palermo is to the tiny volcanic island of Ustica, which became Italy's first marine reserve in 1986. This island (8.7 sq km) is actually the tip of a submerged volcano and, as a result, the surrounding waters are a feast of fish and coral, ideal for snorkelling, diving and underwater photography. In July the island hosts the **International Festival of Underwater Activities**, which draws divers from around the world. The best months in which to visit, however, are June and September when

the wild coastline and dazzling grottoes can be appreciated without the crowds.

The best dive sites are the **Secca Colombara** to the north of the island and the **Scoglio del Medico** to the west. Note that Zone A of the marine reserve is a protected area. Fishing, diving and even swimming are forbidden here. For landlubbers the rugged coastline can be enjoyed from a series of coastal paths, the most scenic of which passes through pine woods up to the summit of **Guardia di Mezzo** (248m) before descending to the best part of the coast at **Spalmatore**, where you can swim in natural rock pools.

**Profondo Blu** (☎ 091 844 96 09; [www.ustica-diving.it](http://www.ustica-diving.it); Contrada Oliastrello; dive from €40, 10 dives package €330) is one of several dive centres on the island. It offers a young, enthusiastic vibe, a wide range of courses and pleasant two- and four-person apartments (€60 to €90 and €120 to €190 respectively).

## Sleeping & Eating

There are several hotels, plus *affittacamere* (rooms for rent).

**Hotel Clelia** (☎ 091 844 90 39; [www.hotelclelia.it](http://www.hotelclelia.it); Via Sindaco I 29; s €29-99, d €48-158) A neat little three-star hotel in a central location that offers bargain rates outside the busy summer season. Divers will also like their seven-night, six-dive packages starting at €384 per person.

**Schiticchio** (☎ 091 844 96 62; Via Tre Mulini; pizzas €5-10, meals €25-30) This down-home, informal restaurant serves wonderfully fresh fish along with superb pastas and pizzas.

**Ristorante Giulia** (☎ 091 844 90 07; Via San Francesco 16; meals €25-35; ☎ dinner) Near Ustica's central square, this family-run place is renowned for its seafood.

## Getting There & Around

**Siremar** (☎ 091 844 90 02; Piazza Capitano Longo 9) operates a year-round car ferry (€17.35, 2½ hours, one daily) from Palermo. From June to September two daily hydrofoils are also in service (€21.55, 1¼ hours). Siremar's ticket office is a 10-minute walk uphill from the port, in the centre of Ustica.

From June to the end of September you can also pick up the Trapani—Favignana—Ustica—Naples hydrofoil, run by **Ustica Lines** ([www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it)) three days a week. The journey from Naples to Ustica takes four hours and costs €72.40 one way.

Orange minibuses (€1) make a round trip of the island; they leave from Piazza Umberto every half-hour in summer (hourly the rest of the year). Alternatively, rental scooters are available all over town (per day €20 to €25).

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## TYRRHENIAN COAST

The coast between Palermo and Milazzo is studded with popular tourist resorts attracting a steady stream of holiday-makers, particularly between June and September. The best of these include the two massive natural parks of the Madonie and Nebrodi mountains, the sweeping beaches around Capo d'Orlando and Capo Tindari, and Cefalù, a resort second only to Taormina in popularity.

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# PARCO NATURALE REGIONALE DELLE MADONIE

This 40,000-hectare park between Palermo and Cefalù incorporates the Madonie mountain range and some of the highest mountains in Sicily after Mt Etna, including the imposing Pizzo Carbonara (1979m). The wild, wooded slopes are home to wolves, wildcats and eagles. Forests cover vast areas of the mountains and include the near-extinct ancient Nebrodi fir trees that have survived since the last ice age. In summer, *agriturismi* offer a good way of exploring the area and enjoying the distinctive rural cuisine, which includes roasted lamb and goat, cheeses, grilled mushrooms and aromatic pasta with *sugo* (sauce).

The park is actually an inhabited area, rather than simply a nature reserve, so you can combine walking with visits to handsome mountain towns such as **Castelbuono**, the colourful capital of the Madonie. Castelbuono has fine restaurants and excellent pastry shops such as historic **Fiasconaro** ([www.fiasconaro.com](http://www.fiasconaro.com); Piazza Margherita 10), with its exclusive hand-wrapped Mannetto sponge cakes spiked with candied fruit or chocolate. Other lovely old towns are **Petralia Soprana** and **Petralia Sottana** perched across from one another on hillsides. And in winter **Piano Battaglia** is the only place in Sicily, other than Etna, where you can ski.

## Information

The body responsible for the park is **Ente Parco delle Madonie** (☎ 0921 68 40 11; [www.parcodellemadonie.it](http://www.parcodellemadonie.it); Corso Paolo Agliata 16), which has its headquarters in Petralia Sottana, a branch office in Cefalù and an excellent, informative website. Another useful information source is the **Municipal Tourist Office** (☎ 0921 67 11 62; [www.comune.castelbuono.pa.it](http://www.comune.castelbuono.pa.it); Via Sant'Anna 25; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm) in Castelbuono. All of these offices can provide information about transport, activities and accommodation in the park. Eggheads may enjoy the *Madonie Park Geological Guide* (€10), which includes information on the fossils and geology of the park.

## Activities

The park is ideal for hiking, cycling and horse trekking. The tourist office has a wealth of information, including a booklet, *Stones and Water* (€1), that highlights several walking trails with photos and descriptive explanations. The office can also provide you with a free map, *Madonie Itinerari nel Parco*, that highlights 15 footpaths, ranging from 3km to 16km, with details and level of difficulty (in English). Cyclists can pick up the free, glossy *Moving Landscape* brochure with its seven detailed itineraries. If you fancy a canter in the park, contact **Accademia della Stella** (☎ 339 489 63 32; [www.castelbuonotrekking.it](http://www.castelbuonotrekking.it); Via Conceria 57, Castelbuono; from €90) which organises guided treks of three to 10 days.

## Sleeping

There are several *rifugi* (mountain huts) in the park and some good B&Bs and *agriturismi*. Many hotels have their own restaurants and some only offer full or half-board.

**Rifugio Piero Merlino** (☎ 0921 64 99 95; [www.rifugiopieromerlino.it](http://www.rifugiopieromerlino.it); Piano Battaglia; B&B/full board per person €25/60) An alpine chalet in the heart of the mountains, with wood-panelled rooms and rustic decor, this place caters to all ages and has lots of info on cycling and walking in the region.

**Albergo Il Castello** (☎ 0921 64 12 50; [www.il-castello.net](http://www.il-castello.net) in Italian; Via Generale di Maria 27, Petralia Sottana; s/d/tr/q €40/65/90/115; ☎) This sweet, stone-built hotel at the top of town has simple, comfortable rooms.

**L'Antico Casale** (☎ 0921 55 11 60; [www.anticocasaleparcomadonie.it](http://www.anticocasaleparcomadonie.it) in Italian; r per person €45-50; with full board €70-80; 📍 🚗 🚶) A delightful country hotel 9km north of Polizzi Generosa, with simple large rooms, fabulous views and an excellent restaurant. Figs, apricots, oranges, almonds and hazelnuts are grown on the land, and the tennis court, surrounded by trees, will surely inspire your game.

**Relais Santa Anastasia** (☎ 0921 67 22 33; [www.santa-anastasia-relais.it](http://www.santa-anastasia-relais.it); Contrada Santa Anastasia, Castelbuono; s/d/ste from €140/190/310; 📍 🚗) This luxurious resort is set in a 12th-century abbey among vineyards and rolling hills. The decor is disappointingly staid but the views are superb, especially from the pool. It's 9km from Castelbuono in the direction of Cefalù.

## Eating

**Trattoria-Pizzeria 'da Salvatore'** (☎ 0921 68 01 69; Piazza San Michele 3, Petralia Soprana; pizzas €3.50-8, meals €25; 📍 lunch & dinner daily Jun-Sep, lunch Wed-Mon, dinner Sat & Sun Oct-May) Charismatic Salvatore (who speaks German, French and some English) has run this popular, Slow Food—recommended trattoria in 'upper' Petralia for 25 years. The wide-ranging antipasti selection (€9) includes grilled seasonal vegetables and a delicious fresh ricotta frittata (omelette). Everything is prepared in the wood-burning oven, including pizzas (from €4), which are an evening-only treat.

**Ristorante Petrae Lejum** (☎ 0921 64 19 47; Corso Paolo Agliata 113, Petralia Sottana; meals €15-20) At this cosy family-run place specialising in mountain cuisine, you can indulge in rare treats such as *cinghiale affumicato* (smoked wild boar), *tagliatelle delle Madonie* (pasta with fennel, almonds, fresh sardines, raisins, tomato sauce and *pecorino* cheese) or *maccheroni alla carrettera ottocentesca* (macaroni with parsley, pistachios, hot peppers, garlic and *pecorino* cheese).

**Nangalarruni** (☎ 0921 67 14 28; Via delle Confraternite 5/7, Castelbuono; meals €25-45) A restaurant famous throughout Sicily for its mushrooms, local cheeses, roast meats and vegetable dishes. Spike your appetite with *zuppe di funghi e legumi* (mushroom and vegetable soup).

## Getting There & Away

**SAIS** (☎ 091 616 60 28) runs services from Palermo and Cefalù to Castelbuono and some of the other mountain towns. However, to fully appreciate the Madonie, you're better off hiring a car for a couple of days. Bussing around this area is time-consuming, and you'll miss out on the opportunity to explore the pretty backroads at your own pace.

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## CEFALÙ

**pop 13,800**

This popular holiday resort wedged between a dramatic mountain peak and sweeping stretch of sand has the lot: a great beach; a truly lovely historic centre with a grandiose cathedral; and winding medieval streets lined with restaurants, boutiques and small, intriguing shops. Avoid the height of summer when it's hard to find towel space on the beach and the charm of the place is tainted by bad-tempered drivers trying to find a parking space.

From the train station, turn right into Via Moro to reach Via Matteotti and the old town. If you're heading for the beach, turn left and walk along Via Gramsci, which in turn becomes Via V Martoglio.

## Information

There are plenty of ATMs in town along Corso Ruggero.

**Ambulance** (☎ 0921 42 45 44)

**First aid** (☎ 0921 42 36 23; Via Mazzini 8)

**Hospital** (☎ 0921 92 01 11; Contrada Pietrapollastra) On the main road out of town in the direction of Palermo.

**La Galleria** (☎ 0921 42 02 11; Via Mandralisca 23; per hr €6; 🕒 11am-midnight Fri-Wed) Cocktail bar with two fast internet computers.

**Police station** (☎ 0921 42 11 04; Via Roma 15)

**Post office** (Via Vazzana 2) Just in from the *lungomare* (seafront promenade).

**Presidio Parco delle Madonie** (☎ 0921 92 33 27; [www.parcodellemadonie.it](http://www.parcodellemadonie.it), in Italian; Corso Ruggero 116; 🕒 8am-8pm) The official office for the Madonie park, with lots of relevant information.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0921 42 10 50; [strefalu@regione.sicilia.it](mailto:strefalu@regione.sicilia.it); Corso Ruggero 77; 🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) English-speaking staff, offering lots of leaflets and good maps.

## Sights

Looming over the town, the craggy mass of **La Rocca** appears a suitable home for the race of giants that are said to have been the first inhabitants of Sicily. It was here that the Arabs built their citadel, occupying it until the Norman conquest in 1061 forced the locals down from the mountain to the port below. An enormous staircase, the **Salita Saraceno**, winds up through three tiers of city walls, a 30-minute climb nearly to the summit. There's stunning views of the town below and the ruined 4th-century **Tempio di Diana** provides a quiet and romantic getaway for young lovers.

Cefalù's **cathedral** (☎ 0921 92 20 21; Piazza del Duomo; 🕒 8am-5.30pm winter, to 7.30pm summer) is the final jewel in the Arab-Norman crown alongside the Cappella Palatina and Monreale. Inside, a towering figure of Christ Pantocrator is the focal point of the elaborate 12th-century Byzantine mosaics. Framed by the steep cliff, the twin pyramid towers of the cathedral stand out above the magnificent **Piazza del Duomo**, which swarms with camera-snapping tourists among the pavement cafes and restaurants.

Off Piazza del Duomo is the private **Museo Mandralisca** (☎ 0921 42 15 47; Via Mandralisca 13; adult/child €5/3; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm). The museum has an interesting collection that includes Greek ceramics and Arab pottery, the highlight being the *Portrait of an Unknown Man*, a Renaissance masterpiece painting by Antonello da Messina.

## Activities

Cefalù's crescent-shaped beach is lovely, but in the summer get here early to find a patch for your brolly and towel.

You can escape with a boat tour along the coast or to the Aeolian Islands (from €60) during the summer months with several agencies located along Corso Ruggero. The **Barakuda Diving Centre** (☎ 347 685 30 51; Hotel Kalura, Via Vincenzo Cavallaro 13) organises dives, or you can ride horses in the hinterland with **Vallegrande** (☎ 0921 42 02 86; [www.vallegrande.it](http://www.vallegrande.it); Contrada Vallegrande; 3hr trek €54). If you prefer pedal power,  **Scooter for Rent** (☎ 0921 42 04 96; [www.scooterforrent.it](http://www.scooterforrent.it); Via G Matteotti 13) rents out bicycles (€10 to €15 per day) and scooters (€35 per day).

## Sleeping

Cheap accommodation is generally scarce year-round. Bookings are essential.

**Camping Costa Ponente** (☎ 0921 42 00 85; Contrada Ogliastrillo; camping 2 people, tent & car €24.90; 📶) This camping ground, 4km west of the town, has a tennis court and pool. Take the bus (€1) from the train station heading for La Spisa.

**Locanda Cangelosi** (☎ 0921 42 15 91; [www.locandacangelosi.it](http://www.locandacangelosi.it); Via Umberto I 26; r without bathroom €35-40) Four clean, simple rooms, with a shared TV room, are available in this private home; it's the cheapest indoor sleep you'll find on this stretch of coast.

**B&B Dolce Vita** (☎ 0921 92 31 51; [www.dolcevitabb.it](http://www.dolcevitabb.it); Via Bordonaro 8; r €60-120; 📶 📺 📶) This popular B&B has one of the loveliest terraces in town, complete with deck chairs overlooking the sea and a barbecue for those warm balmy evenings. Rooms are airy and light, with comfy beds. Free wi-fi access is a bonus.

**L'Arca** (☎ 0921 42 33 65; [www.sunseasicily.com](http://www.sunseasicily.com); Via Seveso 14, Contrada Pisciotto; 2-person apt per week €300-575) These cute-as-a-button apartments are recommended for longer stays – but only if you rent a car. They are located above the town and have stunning views; see the website for exact location details.

**Hotel Kalura** (☎ 0921 42 13 54; [www.hotel-kalura.com](http://www.hotel-kalura.com); Via Vincenzo Cavallaro 13; d €90-150; 📶 📺 📶) East of town on a rocky outcrop, this German-run, family-oriented hotel has its own pebbly beach, restaurant and fabulous pool. Most rooms have sea views, and the hotel arranges tonnes of activities, including mountain biking, hiking, canoeing, pedaloos, diving and dance nights. It's a 20-minute walk into town.

## Eating & Drinking

There are dozens of restaurants along Via Vittorio Emanuele, but the food can be surprisingly mundane and the ubiquitous tourist menus can quickly pall.

**Al Porticciolo** (☎ 0921 92 19 81; Via Carlo Ortolani di Bordonaro 66; pizzas €5-11, meals €18-30; 📶 closed Wed Oct-Apr) If the indoor dining room looks empty, it's because everyone's piled out on the ample waterfront terrace, one of the prettiest in town. The pizzas are excellent, and fixed-price menus start at €18.

**Lo Scoglio Ubriaco** (☎ 0921 42 33 70; Via Carlo Ortolani di Bordonaro 2; pizzas €5-10, meals €20-35; 📶 closed Tue) Dine in a five-star setting without shifting your credit card into overdrive at this elegant restaurant with its seaview terrace. Pizzas are served at night, while the whole gamut of pasta, meat and fish choices is available at midday.

**La Galleria** (☎ 0921 42 02 11; Via Mandralisca 23; cocktails €5, meals €25-40; 📶 11am-midnight Fri-Wed) Here you'll find a literary cafe, sophisticated cocktail bar, and tasteful art gallery combined into a supercool, one-of-a-kind venue. Start or end your evening here, or stick around for dinner on their outdoor patio.

**Sotto Zero Cafè** (Via Lungomare; snacks €5, drinks €3-6; 📶 11am-late) A very cool waterfront bar, spread out along the steps leading to the beach. Its Buddha Bar—inspired decor is dreamy: seating on low cushions, with the candlelit stairs covered in soft carpets and the sound of the sea lapping below. It's a great place for *aperitivi*, cocktails and chatting till late.

## Getting There & Away

The best way of getting to and from Cefalù is by train. The line links Cefalù with Palermo (€4.85, one hour, hourly) and virtually every other town on the coast.

From June to September, you can also get a hydrofoil from Cefalù to the Aeolian Islands with **Ustica Lines** ([www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it)). Hydrofoils depart daily at 8.15am for Alicudi (€19.25, 1¼ hours), Filicudi (€22.40, 1¾ hours), Salina (€25.70, 2¾ hours) and Lipari (€28.10, 3¼ hours). You can buy tickets at the dock or at **Pietro Barbaro** (☎ 0921 42 15 95; Corso Ruggero 82; 🕒 8am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat).

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## MILAZZO

pop 32,700

Most visitors only treat Milazzo as a stepping stone to get off the main island and head for the Aeolian archipelago. But away from its oil refinery and busy dock, Milazzo's Spanish quarter is actually very pretty, and the isthmus that juts out to the north is an area of great natural beauty.

### Information

All the ferry-company offices are directly opposite the port, along Via dei Mille.

**Petit Hotel** (Via dei Mille) This friendly hotel across from the hydrofoil docks stores bags (€2 apiece); the adjoining newsagent is a good source of Aeolian Islands maps and books.

**Tourist office** (☎ 090 922 28 65; [strmilazzo@regione.sicilia.it](mailto:strmilazzo@regione.sicilia.it); Piazza C Duilio 20; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Sat) Has very limited information.

### Sights & Activities

Milazzo's main in-town attraction is its enormous **Spanish castle** (☎ 090 922 12 91; Via Impallomeni) It was closed indefinitely for restoration at the time of research; when open, it has guided tours on the hour and is a lovely site to clamber around, full of flowers and crumbling walls with dreamy views of the Aeolians. To reach the castle, climb the **Salita Castello**, which rises up through the atmospheric Spanish quarter.

There's good swimming to be had at **Capo Milazzo** (6km north of the city) at the tip of the spit of land that stretches out towards the Aeolian Islands; the most accessible pebble beach is at the end of Via Colombo.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Petit Hotel** (☎ 090 928 67 84; [www.petithotel.it](http://www.petithotel.it); Porto di Milazzo; s/d/tr/q €75/120/150/180; 🕒 📺) The hotel of choice in Milazzo is right opposite the hydrofoil dock. Obsessively ecofriendly, it uses renewable energy sources and serves a delicious home-made breakfast. It has very friendly staff, and you can leave your car here (€12 to €20 per day) while visiting the islands.

**U Pignataru** (☎ 090 928 68 88; Via L Rizzo 24; meals €13) With its €13 lunch menu, this place near the waterfront is perfect for a midday bite while awaiting the hydrofoil to the Aeolian Islands.

### Getting There & Away

Milazzo is easy to reach by bus or train from Palermo and Messina. All intercity buses run from Piazza

della Repubblica along the quayside. **Giuntabus** ([www.giuntabus.com](http://www.giuntabus.com)) runs bus services from Messina (€3.80, 50 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, three Sunday).

Frequent trains leave from Milazzo's station, 4km south of the centre, for Palermo (€9.65, 2½ to three hours) and Messina (€3.10, 30 to 45 minutes). The train station is connected to the port by AST buses (€1, once or twice hourly).

If you fancy leaving your car here while you island-hop, there are plenty of well-advertised garages by the port, charging €12 to €20 per day depending on vehicle size.

See right for details of travel to and from the Aeolian Islands.

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## AEOLIAN ISLANDS

The Aeolian Islands are a little piece of paradise. Stunning cobalt sea, splendid beaches, some of Italy's best hiking, and an awe-inspiring volcanic landscape are just part of the appeal; the islands also have a fascinating human and mythological history that goes back several millennia; the Aeolians figured prominently in Homer's *Odyssey*, and evidence of the distant past can be seen everywhere, most notably in Lipari's excellent archaeological museum.

The seven islands of Lipari, Vulcano, Salina, Panarea, Stromboli, Alicudi and Filicudi are part of a huge 200km volcanic ridge that runs between the smoking stack of Mt Etna and the threatening mass of Vesuvius above Naples. Collectively, the islands exhibit a unique range of volcanic characteristics, which earned them a place on Unesco's World Heritage list in 2000. The islands are mobbed with visitors in July and August, but out of season, things remain remarkably tranquil.

### Getting There & Away

In summer, ferries and hydrofoils leave regularly from Milazzo and Messina. In Milazzo, the ticket offices are in or around the port, while in Messina the office is halfway up Via Vittorio Emanuele II. Peak season is from June to September with winter services much reduced and sometimes cancelled due to heavy seas. All of the following prices are one-way high-season fares.

#### FERRY

Siremar and **NGI Traghetti** (☎ 090 928 40 91; [www.ngi-spa.it](http://www.ngi-spa.it)) both run car ferries from Milazzo to the islands; they're slightly cheaper, but slower and less regular than the summer hydrofoils.

#### HYDROFOIL

Both Ustica Lines and Siremar run hydrofoils from Milazzo to Lipari (€15.80, one hour), and then on to the other islands. From 1 June to 30 September hydrofoils depart almost hourly (from around 7am to 7pm) to Lipari, stopping en route at Vulcano (€15, 45 minutes) and continuing onward to Santa Marina or Rinella (€17.55, 1½ to two hours) on Salina island. Beyond Salina, boats either branch off east to Panarea (€17.80, 2¼ hours) and Stromboli (€20.95, three hours), or west to Filicudi (€22.25, 2½ hours) and Alicudi (€27.70, 3¼ hours).

In summer, Ustica Lines hydrofoils also connect Lipari with Messina (€22.90, 1½ to 3¾ hours, five daily), Reggio di Calabria (€23.90, two to three hours, five daily), Cefalù (€28.10, 3½ hours, one daily) and Palermo (€38.25, four hours, two daily).

# Getting Around

## BOAT

Regular hydrofoil and ferry services operate between the islands. On Lipari all hydrofoil and ferry services arrive at and depart from Marina Lunga. Siremar and Ustica Lines have ticket offices in a cabin opposite the port. Full timetable information is available at all offices. On the other islands, ticket offices are at or close to the docks.

The following table lists destinations, fares and approximate sailing times from Lipari.

Destination	Cost (€)		Duration	
	hydrofoil	ferry	hydrofoil	ferry
Alicudi	18.85	15.45	2	4hr
Filicudi	15.80	13.90	1¼	2¾hr
Panarea	10.40	9	1	2hr
Salina (Rinella)	9.60	8.80	45min	1½hr
Salina (Santa Marina)	8.80	6.70	25	45min
Stromboli	17.80	13.90	1¾	4hr
Vulcano	5.80	4.70	10	25min

## CAR & SCOOTER

If you're only visiting the islands for a couple of days, it's not worth the expense of taking a car; you can garage it in Milazzo from €12 per day (see opposite). For longer trips, however, it works out cheaper than hiring one on the islands. You can take cars by ferry to Lipari, Vulcano and Salina, all of which have scooter- and car-hire outlets.

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## LIPARI

pop 11,100 / elev 602m

At the centre of the archipelago, Lipari has been inhabited for some 6000 years. The island was settled in the 4th millennium BC by Sicily's first known inhabitants, the Stentillenians, who developed a flourishing economy based on obsidian, a glassy volcanic rock. Commerce subsequently attracted the Greeks, who used the islands as ports on the east—west trade route.

Today's trade is still flourishing, with a bustling and historic main street flanked by shops, restaurants and bars. Overlooking the colourful snake of day-trippers is a grand dame of a castle, once plundered by pirates such as Barbarossa (or Redbeard), who was eager to get his hands on Lipari's lucrative obsidian and pumice mines.

Lipari is the best-equipped base for island-hopping, with plenty of places to stay, eat and drink.

## Orientation

Lipari has two harbours, Marina Lunga and Marina Corta. They frame either side of the clifftop citadel, which is surrounded by 16th-century walls. The town centre extends between the harbours. The main street, Corso Vittorio Emanuele, runs roughly north—south to the west of the castle. From Marina Corta, walk across the piazza to Via Garibaldi; follow the *centro* signs for Corso Vittorio Emanuele.

## Information

Corso Vittorio Emanuele is lined with ATMs. The other islands have fewer facilities so it's best to sort out your finances here before moving on.

**Ambulance** (☎ 090 988 54 67)

**Farmacia Sparacino** (☎ 090 981 13 92; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 174; ☎ 10am-1pm & 5-9pm)

**Internet Point** (☎ 090 988 04 11; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 185; per hr €5; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-9pm winter, 9am-1pm & 5.30pm-midnight summer)

**Ospedale Civile** (☎ 090 988 51 11; Via Sant'Anna) Operates a first-aid service.

**Police** (☎ 090 981 13 33; Via Guglielmo Marconi)

**Post office** (Corso Vittorio Emanuele 207)

**Siremar ticket office** (Marina Lunga; per bag per 12/24hr €5/9; ☎ 8am- 8pm) Left-luggage facilities.

**Tourist office** (☎ 090 988 00 95; [www.aasteolie.191.it](http://www.aasteolie.191.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele 202; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Fri year-round, 8.30am-1.30pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug) Lipari's office provides information covering all the islands and can assist with finding accommodation.

## Sights

After Barbarossa rampaged through the town in 1544, murdering most of the citizens, enslaving the women and desecrating the relics of St Bartholomew (charming fellow that he was), the Spaniards rebuilt and fortified Lipari with the **citadel** (☎ 9am-7pm). Within these fortifications you will find the fabulous **Museo Archeologico Eoliano** (☎ 090 988 01 74; Castello di Lipari; admission €6; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3-7pm), one of the very best museums in Sicily, tracing the volcanic and human history of the islands. It is divided into three sections: an archaeological section devoted to artefacts from the Neolithic period and Bronze Age to the Roman era; a classical section with finds from Lipari's necropolis (including the most complete collection of sensational miniature Greek theatrical masks in the world); and a section on vulcanology and finds from the other islands.

The southern part of the citadel contains viewable **archaeological ruins** dating from the Neolithic period to the Roman era, which have given archaeologists valuable clues to the prehistoric civilisations that flourished in the Mediterranean.

## Activities

Sunbathers and swimmers head for Canneto, a few kilometres north of Lipari town, to bask on the pebbly **Spiaggia Bianca**. Further north are the **pumice mines** of Pomiciazzo and Porticello, where there's another beach, **Spiaggia della Papesca**, dusted white by the fine pumice that gives the sea its limpid turquoise colour.

A nice excursion on the island's west side is the scenic boat trip past the *faraglioni* (rock spires) to **Spiaggia Valle i Muria**, a rocky beach with gorgeous views south to Vulcano. Call **Barni** (☎ 349 183 95 55), to arrange boat transport (€5/10 one way/return), or catch the bus from Marina Lunga towards Quattropani, get off at Quattrochi and walk 15 minutes steeply down towards the water. On the beach Barni operates a snack shack and kayak-rental place, built into a cave.

Another pleasant hike is the hour-long stroll from Quattropani to Acquacalda along Lipari's north shore, which affords spectacular views of Salina and a distant Stromboli. Take the bus to Quattropani, then simply proceed downhill on the main road 5km to Acquacalda, where you can catch the bus back to Lipari.



Given the crystal-clear waters, snorkelling and scuba diving are also incredibly popular. For details on courses or hiring equipment, contact **Diving Center La Gorgonia** (☎ 090 981 26 16; [www.lagorgoniadiving.it](http://www.lagorgoniadiving.it); Salita San Giuseppe, Marina Corta; dive/night dive/beginner course €32/40/60).

## Tours

You can take boat tours to the surrounding islands (€20 to €40), or arrange a day trip to hike up Stromboli with agencies throughout town, including **Da Massimo/Dolce Vita** (☎ 090 981 30 86; [www.damassimo.it](http://www.damassimo.it); Via Maurolico 2) and **Gruppo di Navigazione Regina** (☎ 090 982 22 37; [www.navigazioniregina.com](http://www.navigazioniregina.com); Via Maurolico).

## Sleeping

Lipari provides plenty of options for a comfortable stay; however, prices soar in summer. The tourist office may be able to help find accommodation in private homes.

**Baia Unci** (☎ 090 981 19 09; [www.baiaunci.com](http://www.baiaunci.com); Via Marina Garibaldi, Canneto; campsite per person €7-14; 📧 mid-Mar—mid-Oct) This camp ground 2km north of Lipari provides excellent facilities, shady sites and an ace (if noisy) position along the seafront promenade. Book ahead in August.

**Casa Vittorio** (☎ 090 981 15 23; [www.casavittorio.com](http://www.casavittorio.com); Vico Sparviero 15; r per person €18-45) These comfortable rooms, some sleeping up to five people, are off Via Garibaldi near Marina Corta. You'll find the owner nearby at Vico Selinunte 21. There's a communal kitchen, plus two terraces with views. Prices are significantly reduced out of season or for longer stays.

**our pick Diana Brown** (☎ 090 981 25 84; [www.dianabrown.it](http://www.dianabrown.it); Vico Himera 3; s €30-80, d €40-100; 📧) Tucked down a narrow alley, South African Diana has delightful rooms decorated in contemporary style with tile floors, abundant hot water, bright colours and welcome extras such as kettles and fridges. Darker rooms downstairs are compensated for by built-in kitchenettes. There's a sunny breakfast terrace and solarium with deck chairs, plus book exchange and laundry service. The optional breakfast costs €5 extra.

**Enzo Il Negro** (☎ 090 981 31 63; [www.enzoilnegro.altervista.org](http://www.enzoilnegro.altervista.org); Via Garibaldi 29; s €40-50, d €60-90; 📧) This is a great low-season choice in the thick of the action. In a multistorey private home near Marina Corta, it sports large, brightly tiled and pine-furnished rooms with fridges. There are two panoramic terraces and a rooftop solarium overlooking the rooftops and castle walls.

## Eating & Drinking

Fish abound in the waters of the archipelago and include tuna, mullet, cuttlefish and sole, all of which end up on local menus. Try *pasta all'eoliana*, a simple blend of the island's excellent capers with olive oil, anchovies and basil.

Bars are concentrated along Corso Vittorio Emanuele and down by Marina Corta. In peak season everything stays open into the wee hours.

**Bar Pasticceria Subba** (☎ 090 981 13 52; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 92; pastries from €1; 📧 7am-10pm) Feed your sweet tooth with fabulous pastries at this long-established bakery (since 1930); the pistachio profiteroles with green cream filling are to die for!

**La Piazzetta** (☎ 090 981 25 22; pizzas €5-9; 📧 dinner, closed Tue Sep-Jun) A lively pizzeria with vine-draped outdoor seating that has served the likes of Audrey Hepburn. It's off Corso Vittorio Emanuele, behind Pasticceria Subba.

**La Cambusa** (☎ 349 476 60 61; Via Garibaldi 72; meals €20; 🍴 lunch & dinner, closed Nov-Easter) This single-room, family-run place serves delicious, reasonably priced Aeolian food, from the *misto di capricci siciliani* (roast peppers, aubergine *caponata* and vegetables of the day) to the classic *fritto misto* (fried shrimp and squid).

**Kasbah** (☎ 090 981 10 75; Via Maurolico 25; pizzas €6-8, meals €25-30; 🍴 7pm-3am mid-Mar—Oct) Choose the environment that suits you best: the sleek contemporary white banquettes in the interior dining room or the vine-covered, candlelit garden out back. The food is superb, including delicious pizzas and delicacies such as *agnello stracotto in umido alla siciliana* (stewed lamb with almonds and dates).

**Filippino** (☎ 090 981 10 02; Piazza Municipio; meals €30-50; 🍴 closed Mon Oct-Mar) Celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2010, Filippino's is a mainstay of Lipari's culinary scene, its menu filled with traditional dishes named in Sicilian dialect such as *maccarruna i casa alla Filippino* (pasta with tomatoes, courgettes, basil, mint, mozzarella and ricotta) and close to 20 delectable desserts. There are separate menus for olive oil, bottled water, grappas (120) and, more conventionally, wine.

**E Pulera** (☎ 090 981 10 02; Via Isabella Vainicher Conti; meals €30-50; 🍴 dinner May-Sep) Filippino's sister restaurant just west of the centre has a serene garden setting and equally exquisite food. Despite the upmarket ambience, the menu includes some surprisingly affordable choices.

Self-caterers can shop for supplies at the **SISA supermarket** (Corso Vittorio Emanuele).

## Shopping

You simply can't leave these islands without a small pot of capers and a bottle of sweet Malvasia wine. You can get both, along with meats, cheeses and other delicious goodies at **La Formagella** (☎ 090 988 07 59; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 250; 🍴 7.30am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) Try the house speciality, *alerchino di capperi*, a pungent mix of capers, garlic, pepper, oil and vinegar.

## Getting There & Around

**Autobus Urso Guglielmo** (☎ 090 981 12 62, 090 981 10 26; Via Cappuccini 9) runs frequent buses around the island from Marina Lunga (€1.50 to €1.90 depending on destination). One main route serves the island's eastern shore, from Canneto to Acquacalda, while the other serves the western highland settlements of Quattrochi, Pianoconte and Quattropani. Multi-ride booklets (six/10/20 rides €7/10.50/20.50) will save you money if you're here for several days.

**Roberto Foti** (☎ 090 981 13 70; Via F Crispi 31) rents scooters (€20 to €35 per day) and cars (Fiat Uno €40 per day).

[Click here](#) for ferry and hydrofoil details.

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## VULCANO

**pop 720 / 500m**

Vulcano is a memorable island, not least because of the vile smell of sulphurous gases. Once you escape the drab and dated tourist centre, Porto di Levante, there's a delightfully tranquil, unspoilt quality to the landscape. Following the well-marked trail to the looming Fossa di Vulcano, the landscape gives way to rural simplicity with allotments, birdsong and a surprising amount of greenery. The island is worshipped by Italians for its therapeutic mud baths and hot springs, and its black beaches and weird steaming

landscape make for an interesting day trip.

## Orientation

Boats dock at Porto di Levante. To the right, as you face the island, is the small Vulcanello peninsula. To reach the mud baths, walk right along the *lungomare* and at the end, hidden behind a small hillock, are the pools. All facilities are concentrated between Porto di Levante and Porto di Ponente, where you will find the Spiaggia Sabbia Nera (Black Sand Beach).

## Information

**Emergency doctor** (☎ 090 985 22 20; Via Lentia)

**Thermessa Turismo** (☎ 090 985 22 30; Via Provinciale) Changes money and sells tickets for Ustica Lines hydrofoils.

## Activities

The top attraction is the trek up the **Fossa di Vulcano** (391m). Follow the signs south along Via Provinciale out of town. It's about an hour's scramble to the lowest point of the crater's edge (290m), but once you reach the top, the sight of the steaming crater encrusted with red and yellow crystals is reward enough. The bottom is clearly visible from the rim and you can take a steep trail down to walk along the crater floor. Wimps can opt for walking clockwise around the crest and be smugly rewarded with stunning views of all the islands lined up to the north.

Set out early in the day if possible and don't forget a hat and water. If you want to hire a guide, contact **Gruppo Trekking Vulcano** (☎ 339 418 58 75). More sedentary volcano-watchers can visit the small museum administered by **Gruppo Nazionale Vulcanologia** (☎ 090 985 25 28; Porto Ponente; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 5-8pm Jun-Sep), which has displays about Vulcano and a video (in English, French and Italian) about Stromboli's last big eruption.

Mud-bath enthusiasts should head for the **Laghetto di Fanghi** (admission €2), a large mud pit of thick, smelly, sulphurous gloop that has long been considered an excellent treatment for arthritis, rheumatism and skin disorders. Don't wear your designer swimsuit (you'll never get the smell out), and be sure to leave your gold chains behind (they will tarnish). Afterwards you can hop into the water at the adjacent beach where *acquacalda* (hot springs) create a natural jacuzzi effect.

On the far side of the peninsula from Porto di Levante at Porto di Ponente is the dramatic **Spiaggia Sabbia Nera**, curving around a pretty bay and only mildly commercialised. It is one of the few sandy beaches in the archipelago. A similar, quieter beach, **Spiaggia dell'Asina**, can be found on the island's southern side near Gelso.

You can go diving with the **Diving Center Saracen** (☎ 090 985 21 89; [www.divingcentersaracen.com](http://www.divingcentersaracen.com); Porto di Ponente; dive/night dive €33/40).

## Sleeping

Unless you're here for the walking and the mud baths, Vulcano is not a great place for an extended stay; the town is pretty soulless, the hotels are expensive and the mud baths really do smell. If you do stay, the best hotels are situated around Spiaggia Sabbia Nera.

**Camping Togo Togo** (☎ 090 985 23 03; [www.campingvulcano.it](http://www.campingvulcano.it); Porto Ponente; campsite per person

€10-12, 2-1/4-person bungalow €60/100; ☎ Apr-Sep) Offering eucalyptus-shaded campsites and somewhat musty bungalows, Togo Togo is just back from Spiaggia Sabbia Nera.

**La Giara** (☎ 090 985 22 29; Via Provinciale 40; s €31-59, d €62-102; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) A fine choice between the dock and the volcano, fronted by lemon trees in a quiet residential street. The rooftop breakfast terrace has impressive volcano views and eclectic decor, including a lovely antique Sicilian cart.

**Hotel Conti** (☎ 090 985 20 12; [www.contivulcano.it](http://www.contivulcano.it); Porto Ponente; s €50-71, d €84-126) An older hotel with an attached restaurant and sprawling terrace overlooking Spiaggia Sabbia Nera. Rooms are a bit cramped, but you can't argue with the location; book ahead for beachfront rooms 24 to 27.

**Hotel Les Sables Noires** (☎ 090 985 01 11; [www.framon-hotels.com](http://www.framon-hotels.com); Porto Ponente; s €95-170, d €150-250; ☎ May-Sep; ☎ ☎) Vulcano's premier hotel has a fabulous pool backed by the volcano's looming presence, and a restaurant-bar with fine views of the island's best black-sand beach.

## Eating & Drinking

Vulcano's restaurants tend to be overpriced, and some offer very average food. The following are welcome exceptions.

**La Forgia Maurizio** (☎ 339 137 91 07; Via Provinciale 45; meals €25-30) The owner of this devilishly good restaurant spent 20 winters in Goa, India; eastern influences sneak into a menu of Sicilian specialities, all prepared and presented with flair. Don't miss the *liquore di kumquat e cardamom*, Maurizio's home-made answer to *limoncello*. The tasting menu is an excellent deal at €25 including wine and dessert.

**Trattoria Maniaci Pina** (☎ 090 985 22 42, 368 66 85 55; Gelso; meals €20-25; ☎ May-Oct) On the south side of the island, beside a black-sand beach, this atmospheric, down-to-earth trattoria serves hefty portions of fresh-caught fish at affordable prices. Try the spaghetti with *nero di seppia* (cuttlefish ink).

For pizzas and snacks, try **Café Piazzetta** (☎ 090 985 32 67; Piazzetta Faraglione; pizzas €6-8), which has live music in the summer.

## Getting There & Around

Vulcano is an intermediate stop between Milazzo and Lipari and a good number of vessels go both ways throughout the day. [Click here](#) for more details.

Scooters (per day €15 to €45), bicycles (€5 to €8) and small motorised cars (€35 to €70) can be rented from **Sprint** (☎ 090 985 22 08) or **Da Paolo** (☎ 090 985 21 12), both well signposted near the hydrofoil dock. The former is run by Luigi and Nidra, a friendly multilingual couple with in-depth knowledge of the island; they offer helpful tourist info and rent out an apartment in Vulcano's tranquil interior.

You can hire boats at **Centro Nautico Baia di Levante** (☎ 339 337 27 95; [www.baialevante.it](http://www.baialevante.it); ☎ Apr-Oct), in a shed on the beach to the left of the hydrofoil dock.

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## SALINA

pop 2300 / elev 962m

In stark contrast to Vulcano's barren landscape, Salina's twin craters of Monte dei Porri and Monte Fossa

delle Felci are lushly wooded, a result of the numerous freshwater springs on the island. Wildflowers, thick yellow gorse bushes and serried ranks of grapevines carpet the hillsides in vibrant colours and cool greens, while its high coastal cliffs plunge towards dramatic beaches.

The famous Aeolian capers grow plentifully here, as do the grapes used for making Malvasia wine.

## Orientation

Most boats dock at Santa Marina Salina. The main road, Via Risorgimento, runs parallel to the *lungomare* and is filled with small boutiques. Accommodation can be found in Salina's three main towns: Santa Marina Salina, Malfa and Rinella, a fishing hamlet on the southern coast.

## Information

All addresses below are in Santa Marina Salina. Tourist information is available through the Lipari office.

**Banco di Sicilia** (Via Risorgimento) Has an ATM on Santa Marina's main pedestrian street, just in from the waterfront.

**Emergency doctor** (☎ 090 984 40 05)

**Police** (☎ 090 984 30 19)

**Post office** (Via Risorgimento)

**Salina Computer** (☎ 090 984 34 44; Via Risorgimento 110; internet per hr €5; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm)

## Sights & Activities

For jaw-dropping views of Salina and the surrounding islands, climb to Salina's highest point, the **Fossa delle Felci** (962m). At Valdichiesa, in the valley that separates Salina's two volcanoes, is the **Santuario della Madonna del Terzito**, which is a place of pilgrimage, particularly around the Feast of the Assumption on 15 August. From the church, you can follow the track (signposted) up through a nature reserve all the way to the peak (about two hours). Once you've reached the top, you have unparalleled views of the entire archipelago. To get to the trailhead, take the bus from Santa Marina Salina to Malfa, then change for a Rinella-bound bus and ask the driver to let you off at the sanctuary.

Don't miss a trip to **Pollara**; sandwiched dramatically between the sea and the steep slopes of an extinct volcanic crater on Salina's western edge. The gorgeous beach here was used as a location in the 1994 film *Il Postino*. Although the land access route to the beach has since been closed due to landslide danger, you can still descend the steep stone steps at the northwest end of town and swim across, or simply admire the spectacular view, with its backdrop of volcanic cliffs.

Boats are available for hire from June to August at **Nautica Levante** (☎ 090 984 30 83; Via Risorgimento, Santa Marina Salina).

## Tours

**Eolie Adventure** (☎ 333 469 95 30; [www.eolieadventure.com](http://www.eolieadventure.com)) organises excellent nature hikes on Salina, as well as the other islands.

# Sleeping & Eating

The island remains relatively undisturbed by mass tourism, yet still offers some fine hotels and restaurants.

**Campeggio Tre Pini** (☎ 090 98 01 55; [www.trepini.com](http://www.trepini.com); Rinella; campsite per person/tent/car €8/7.70/3.50; 📅 Mar-Oct) This camp ground has lovely terraced sites amid olive groves and eucalyptus trees overlooking the sea, plus a supermarket and restaurant. It's a five-minute walk from Rinella's hydrofoil dock.

**Casa del Melograno** (☎ 333 469 95 30; [www.eolieadventure.com](http://www.eolieadventure.com); Via Fontana 2; s €20-70, d €30-90; tr €45-120) A steep climb uphill from Santa Marina's hydrofoil dock, this budget option is housed in an old building with high ceilings, original tiled floors, pretty patios and views. Friendly local guide Emanuele Bottari, who runs the place, can organise boat rides, tours and outdoor activities. No breakfast.

**A Cannata** (☎ 090 984 31 61; [www.acannata.it](http://www.acannata.it); Via Umberto, Lingua; r per person incl breakfast €35-85, incl half-board €60-100) This simple *pensione* and its Slow Food—acclaimed restaurant (meals €25 to €30) overlook an unruly garden shaded by pines, just inland from Lingua's waterfront. Half-board rates are available from March through October.

**Hotel Mamma Santina** (☎ 090 984 30 54; [www.mammasantina.it](http://www.mammasantina.it); Via Sanità 40, Santa Marina Salina; d €110-230; 📅 Apr-Nov; 📷 📺 📱) A labour of love for its architect owner, this boutique hotel has inviting rooms decorated with original artwork and pretty tiles in traditional Aeolian designs. Many of the sea-view terraces come equipped with hammocks, and on warm evenings, the attached restaurant has outdoor seating overlooking the glowing blue pool and landscaped garden filled with cacti and lemon trees.

**our pick Da Alfredo** (☎ 090 984 30 75; Piazza Marina Garibaldi, Lingua; granite €2.50, sandwiches €5-9) The most atmospheric place on Salina for an affordable snack, Alfredo's place has been renowned for decades for its *granite* (ices made with coffee, fresh fruit or locally grown pistachios and almonds) and *pane cunzato* (open-faced sandwiches piled high with tuna, ricotta, eggplant, tomatoes, capers and olives).

**Porto Bello** (☎ 090 984 31 25; Via Bianchi 1, Santa Marina Salina; meals €30-50; 📅 Tue-Sun) This award-winning seafood restaurant dates back to 1978 with the same family at the helm. It has a terrace overlooking the harbour. Aside from fish, it's famous for its *pasta al fuoco* (fiery pasta with hot peppers).

**'nni Lausta** (☎ 090 984 34 86; Via Risorgimento, Santa Marina Salina; meals €35-40) This acclaimed restaurant with its cute lobster logo serves superb food based on fresh local ingredients. The understatedly elegant upstairs dining area features high ceilings, white lacquered tables and an outdoor terrace. The downstairs bar is a popular late-night drinking spot.

# Getting There & Around

Hydrofoils and ferries service Santa Marina Salina and Rinella from Lipari. You'll find ticket offices in both places.

**CITIS** (☎ 090 984 41 50) buses run roughly half-hourly from Santa Marina Salina to Lingua, Malfa, Rinella, Pollara, Valdichiesa and Leni (€1.50 to €2.20 depending on destination). Timetables are posted at the ports and bus stops. The service is reduced out of season, to around once every 90 minutes.

Motorcycles and scooters can be hired (per day from €20) in Santa Marina Salina from **Antonio Bongiorno** (☎ 090 984 34 09; Via Risorgimento 240) and in Rinella from **Giro dell'Isola** (☎ 090 984 40 34; Via Roma 112).

# PANAREA

**pop 320 / elev 421m**

Just 3km long and 2km wide with adobe-style whitewashed houses, tiny Panarea feels like a Greek island. Exclusive and expensive, it's the smallest and most fashionable of the Aeolians, attracting the international jet-setters and Milanese fashionistas for a little taste of *dolce far niente* (sweet nothing). In the summer, luxury yachts fill the tiny harbour while flocks of day-trippers dock at San Pietro, where you'll find most of the expensive accommodation.

## Sights & Activities

Originally a bigger island, Panarea is now a mini archipelago of its own – the original volcano is long gone. The other five islets of Basiluzzo, Dàtilo, Lisca Bianca, Bottaro and Lisca Nera are located off the eastern shore and can only be reached by boat. **Tesoriero Roberto** (☎ 090 98 30 33; Via San Pietro) and **Nautilus** (☎ 333 423 31 61; Baia di Drautto) offer all kinds of boat rentals (per day from €65 to €150). **Amphibia** (☎ 335 613 85 29; dive from €35), at the port, organises scuba dives.

On Panarea you will find the remains of a **Bronze Age village** at the rocky outcrop of Punta Milazzese (it's about a 30-minute walk from the port).

Other than around exclusive hotel pools, you can bronze yourself on the pretty **beaches** of Cala Junco and Caletta degli Zimmari (south from the port) or Spiaggia Fumarola (north from the port).

## Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation can be nightmarishly expensive in July and August. Out of season, however, prices plummet.

**Da Francesco** (☎ 090 98 30 23; [www.dafrancescopanarea.com](http://www.dafrancescopanarea.com); Via San Pietro; r per person €40-80) This place overlooking the dock offers 12 pleasant rooms, some with sea-view terraces, for a fraction of the price you'd pay elsewhere on Panarea. Meals in the attached restaurant are also excellent value at €25 to €30.

**Raya** (☎ 090 98 30 13; [www.hotelraya.it](http://www.hotelraya.it); Via San Pietro; d €180-540, ste €420-750; ☎ ☑ ☑) The absolute blow-out choice for experiencing Panarea's chic allure to the fullest, Raya is a honeycomb of exquisite white adobe-walled rooms tucked up against a flower-bedecked volcanic hillside. Each room is different, but seductive details abound, including hand-batiked tree-of-life bedspreads, picture-perfect terraces looking out to Stromboli, private gardens and shower-saunas, and a jacuzzi filled with mineral water from the island's natural hot springs. There's also a popular summer disco crawling with beautiful people, plus a fab pool.

**Trattoria da Paolino** (☎ 090 98 30 08; Via Iditella 75; meals €30-35; ☎ Apr-Oct) Top quality, home-style Aeolian specialities are served on Paolino's pretty terrace, a 10-minute walk north from the harbour.

## Getting There & Away

In summer there are at least six daily hydrofoils and one daily ferry that link the island with Stromboli to the northeast and Salina to the west.

# STROMBOLI

**pop 400 / elev 924m**

Stromboli's perfect triangle of a volcano juts dramatically out of the sea. It's the only island whose smouldering cone is permanently active, thus attracting experts and amateurs alike, like moths to a massive flame. Volcanic activity has scarred and blackened one side of the island, while the eastern side is untamed, ruggedly green and dotted with low-rise whitewashed houses. A youngster among the Aeolians, Stromboli was formed a mere 40,000 years ago and its gases continue to send up an almost constant spray of liquid magma. The most recent major eruptions took place in February 2007 when two new craters opened on the volcano's summit, producing two scalding lava flows. Although seismic activity, including rock falls, continued for several days, fortunately no mass evacuation was deemed necessary.

## Orientation

Boats arrive at Scari/San Vincenzo, downhill from the town. Most accommodation, as well as the meeting point for guided hikes up the volcano, is a short walk up the Scalo Scari to Via Roma. For the beaches, follow the road along the waterfront.

## Information

**Emergency doctor** (☎ 090 98 60 97; Via Vittorio Emanuele)

**Police station** (☎ 090 98 60 21; Via Roma) Just on the left as you walk up Via Roma.

**Post office** (Via Roma)

**Totem Trekking** (Piazza San Vincenzo 4; per 15min €1; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm) One agonisingly slow internet computer.

**Volcanological Information Centre** (Porto Scari; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 5-7.30pm Mon-Sat) An information centre dedicated to the volcano; located 150m west of the port.

## Activities

Note that you're legally required to hire a guide if you're considering climbing the volcano.

The path to the summit (920m) is a demanding five- to six-hour trek (rest stops every 40 minutes), but the atmosphere is charged and you will be rewarded with tremendous views of the **Sciara del Fuoco** (Trail of Fire) and the constantly smoking crater. Fiery explosions usually occur every 20 minutes or so and are preceded by a loud belly-roar as gases force the magma into the air. Departure times for organised treks vary from 3.30pm to 6pm, depending on the season; treks are always timed so you can observe sunset from the mountaintop, then ooh and aah over the crater's fireworks for about 45 minutes as night falls.

To undertake the climb you will need heavy shoes; clothing for cold, wet weather; a torch (flashlight); a backpack that allows free movement of both arms; and a good supply of water. **Totem Trekking** (☎ 090 986 57 52; Piazza San Vincenzo 4) hires out all the necessary equipment, including headlamps (€3), trekking boots (€6) and windbreakers (€5).

Two other great ways to see the volcano, with less huffing and puffing, are the hike up to [L'Osservatorio](#) and the nightly boat tours to Sciara del Fuoco (below). To reach the pizzeria, follow the waterfront 2km west from the hydrofoil dock to the community of Piscità, then climb the gradual, winding path 1km further, following the signs.



The most accessible swimming and sunbathing is at **Ficogrande**, a beach of rocks and black volcanic sand 10 minutes by foot from the hydrofoil dock. Further-flung beaches worth exploring are at **Piscità** to the west and **Forgia Vecchia** to the south. **La Sirenetta Diving Club** (☎ 347 596 14 99; [www.lasirenettadiving.it](http://www.lasirenettadiving.it); Via Marina 33) offers diving courses and accompanied dives.

## Tours

**Magmatrek** (☎ 090 986 57 68; [www.magmatrek.it](http://www.magmatrek.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele) has experienced, multilingual vulcanological guides that lead regular treks (maximum group size 20) up to the crater every afternoon (per person €28). It can also put together tailor-made treks for individual groups.

**Società Navigazione Pippo** (☎ 090 98 61 35) and **Antonio Caccetta** (☎ 090 98 60 23) are among the numerous boat companies at Porto Scari offering daytime circuits of the island (€20) and sunset excursions to watch the Sciara del Fuoco from the sea (€15 per person).

## Sleeping & Eating

Overnighting on Stromboli can be very pleasant, although as elsewhere on the islands, prices erupt in the high season.

**Pensione Aquilone** (☎ 090 98 60 80; [www.aquiloneresidence.it](http://www.aquiloneresidence.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 29; per person €25-50) A cheerful little place with a sunny patio and views up to the volcano; some rooms come with cosy cooking nooks; otherwise, the friendly owner Francesco provides breakfast.

**Casa del Sole** (☎ 090 98 63 00; [casa-del-sole@tiscali.it](mailto:casa-del-sole@tiscali.it); Via Domenico Cincotta; dm €25-30, s €30-50, d €60-100) This wonderful Aeolian-style guest house, painted in warm colours, is only 100m from a sweet black-sand beach. Rooms (dorms and private rooms) surround a sunny patio, overhung with vines, fragrant with lemon blossoms, and decorated with the masks and stone carvings of sculptor-owner Tano Russo. There's also a nice guest kitchen.

**Il Giardino Segreto** (☎ 090 98 62 11; [www.giardinosegretobb.it](http://www.giardinosegretobb.it); Via Francesco Natoli; s low season only €35, d €70-110) This fabulous little B&B offers ultra-clean, stylishly tiled and decorated rooms five minutes' walk above the church on the way to the volcano, in a 'secret garden' framed by picturesque rows of cypresses. Five-day minimum stay in peak summer season.

**Locanda del Barbablù** (☎ 090 98 61 18; [www.barbablu.it](http://www.barbablu.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 17; d €110-240; ☎ Apr-Oct) This dusky-pink Aeolian house is an inn in the true sense of the word. Its six sumptuous rooms each have private terrace, period furniture and the contemporary luxury of pure silk coverlets. The universally acclaimed restaurant is the island's classiest, serving a nightly four-course tasting menu of traditional Sicilian dishes for €50 (drinks excluded).

**Ritrovo Ingrid** (☎ 090 98 63 85; Piazza San Vincenzo; ☎ 8am-midnight Sep-Jun, 8am-3am Jul & Aug) Trekkers gather here to gossip over ice cream or sundowners, while locals come for morning coffee and pastries; in summer, the attached restaurant serves pizzas and full meals.

**L'Osservatorio** (☎ 090 98 63 60; pizzas €7-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Sure, you could eat a pizza in town, but come on – you're on Stromboli! Make the long uphill trek to this pizzeria and you'll be rewarded with exceptional volcano views, best after sundown.

Also recommended is **Punta Lena** (☎ 090 98 62 04; Via Marina, Ficogrande; meals €30-40; ☎ lunch & dinner) for delicious seafood accompanied by magnificent sea and Strombolicchio views; reserve ahead.

## Getting There & Away

It takes four hours to reach the island from Lipari by ferry, or 1½ to two hours by hydrofoil. Ticket offices for **Ustica Lines** (☎ 090 98 60 03) and **Siremar** (☎ 090 98 60 16) are at the port.

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## FILICUDI & ALICUDI

### pop 300

Filicudi is arguably the wildest and the prettiest of the Aeolian Islands, with crystal-clear waters and deep grottoes, including the dazzling **Grotta del Bue Marino**. Other attractions include **Scoglio della Canna** (Cane Reef), a dramatic 71m rock tower off Filicudi's northwestern shore, and Capo Graziano, 1km southeast of the port, where you'll find the remains of a **prehistoric village** dating from 1800 BC. There's also a network of beautiful hiking trails, with destinations including the abandoned village of Zucco Grande and the mid-island peak called Fossa Felci (774m).

**I Delfini** (☎ 090 988 90 77; [www.idelfinifilicudi.it](http://www.idelfinifilicudi.it), in Italian; Pecorini Mare) rents out scooters, boats and diving equipment; you can also explore the watery depths with the **Apogon Diving Center** (☎ 347 330 71 85; [www.apogon.it](http://www.apogon.it), in Italian; dive from €35).

For real isolation, head for Alicudi, the furthest island from Lipari and the least developed of all the Aeolians. It's home only to a handful of fishermen. While here, walk up **Monte Filo dell'Arpa** (672m) to see the crater of the extinct Montagnola volcano and the **Timpone delle Femmine**, huge fissures where women are said to have taken refuge during pirate raids.

## Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation on both islands is scarce (Alicudi in particular has only one proper hotel), so it's advisable to book ahead. Half-board is obligatory at most places in July and August.

**our pick** **La Sirena** (☎ 090 988 99 97; [www.pensionelasirena.it](http://www.pensionelasirena.it); Pecorini Mare, Filicudi; r per person with half-board €65-100; ☎ Mar-Nov) On the quiet side of already quiet Filicudi, La Sirena overlooks a beachfront filled with colourful fishing boats. Run by a lovely British-Italian couple, it's got high-ceilinged rooms with French doors opening onto harbour views, and one of the Aeolians' most innovative restaurants; people sail over every summer for specialities such as *carbonara di tonno con la pasta arrostita* (toasted pasta with egg-and-tuna carbonara sauce) and *penne al ragù di arancia* (pasta with a sauce of oranges, minced meat, tomatoes and orange peel).

**La Canna** (☎ 090 988 99 56; [www.lacannahotel.it](http://www.lacannahotel.it); Via Rosa 43, Filicudi; r per person incl breakfast €45-80, incl half-board €65-105; ☎ Apr-Nov; ☎ ☎) Perched like a private paradise high above the port, this delightful hotel features rooms with beams, terracotta tiles, bright rugs, modern artwork and panoramic terraces with a seagull's-eye view of the harbour sparkling below. Delicious traditional meals at the attached restaurant feature olives, vegies and wine from the adjacent gardens.

**Ericusa** (☎ 090 988 99 02; [www.alicudihotel.it](http://www.alicudihotel.it); Via Regina Elena, Alicudi; r per person with half-board €70-90, with full-board €90-110; ☎ Jun-Sep) This pleasant 12-room hotel also has a good restaurant.

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# IONIAN COAST

Magnificent, overdeveloped, crowded – and exquisitely beautiful – the Ionian coast is Sicily’s most popular tourist destination and home to 20% of the island’s population. Moneyed entrepreneurs have built their villas and hotels up and down the coastline, eager to bag a spot on Sicily’s version of the Amalfi Coast. Above it all towers the muscular peak of Mt Etna (3329m), puffs of smoke billowing from its snow-covered cone. The volcano is surrounded by the huge Parco dell’Etna, the largest unspoilt wilderness remaining in Sicily.

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## MESSINA

**pop 244,000**

Messina is a chaotic, traffic-clogged city; most people come here to travel the high seas to mainland Italy or because they have four flat tyres and no car jack. The reality is that Messina is all about the straits, a veritable highway of seafaring traffic. The Greeks mythologised the clashing currents as the twin monsters of Charybdis (the whirlpool) and Scylla (the six-headed monster), and strong currents still make swimming a danger.

Beneath the choppy surface of the sea a geological fault line has brought both prosperity and adversity to the city. In 1908 it was responsible for one of the worst natural disasters to hit the island – an earthquake sank the shore by half a metre and killed 84,000 people – but the narrow waterway is also the secret of Messina’s economic success. Plans to build the world’s largest suspension bridge to span the straits between Sicily and the mainland – already on the drawing board for years – are still a bone of contention among Sicilians (see boxed text, [Click here](#)).

## Orientation

Wide boulevards and a practical grid system make Messina relatively easy to navigate, although the style of driving is a combination of dodgem and Formula One. The main transport hub, home to the train station and intercity bus station, is Piazza della Repubblica, just south of the centre; Trenitalia ferries also arrive here.

Those visitors coming by hydrofoil from Reggio di Calabria arrive about 1km north of the city on Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, while drivers on the private car ferry from Villa San Giovanni land a few kilometres further along, just north of the trade-fair area (Fiera).

## Information

**Internet Point DGD** (090 71 07 19; Via I Settembre 68; per hr €3; ☎ 9am-8pm) Telephones and internet connection.

**Ospedale Piemonte** (☎ 090 22 21; Viale Europa) Has a casualty service.

**Tourist office** (☎ 090 67 29 44; infotur@comune.messina.it; Piazza della Repubblica 44; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-1.30pm Fri) To the right as you exit the train station. Friendly English-speaking staff with good information about Messina and onward travel.

## Sights

Messina is a rusty tiara with a few precious gems. The Norman **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 8am-6pm) is one of the most attractive in Sicily despite having been stricken by one disaster after another. Built in 1150, it suffered its first mishap in 1254 at the funeral of Conrad IV (son of Frederick II), when a mass of candles set the church on fire. Devastating earthquakes in 1783 and 1908, and a WWII incendiary bomb in 1943, put paid to the rest. True to their patrician nature, the Messinese rebuilt it faithfully in the style of the original basilica, complete with its mosaic apses. The lovely stripy marble inlay, the tracery of the facade and the Catalan-Gothic portal with its sculpted columns are some of the few original elements that were salvaged.

The magnificent 1668 Golden Mantle (a cloth that's draped around an image of the Virgin at key religious festivals), designed by Innocenzo Mangani, is kept in the cathedral **treasury** (adult/concession €3/1; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat). Outside, the elegant **campanile** (admission €3.50; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat) houses the world's largest astronomical clock. It strikes at noon, setting in motion a procession of slow-moving bronze automata that set off a comical roaring lion and crowing cockerel. You can climb the bell tower and see the enormous figures up close and personal.

Below the tower, the pale marble **Fontana di Orione** (1553) commemorates Orion, the mythical founder of Messina. It was constructed by Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli (a pupil of Michelangelo) to celebrate the construction of Messina's first aqueduct (the local residents were the first in Sicily to receive running water).

Catch the city tram at Piazza Carioli (or the train station), and take a laid-back ride up the sickle-shaped harbour. Halfway up is Messina's other great fountain, the 16th-century **Fontana del Nettuno**. Get off here to enjoy views over the harbour and admire the huge golden statue of the **Madonnino del Porto**. Alternatively, continue on to the end of the tram line to the **Museo Regionale** (☎ 090 36 12 92; Viale della Libertà 465; adult/concession €4.50/2; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 9am-1.30pm & 3-5.30pm Tue, Thu & Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun). It houses works of art including the *Virgin and Child with Saints* by Antonello da Messina (born here in 1430) and two masterpieces by Caravaggio – *L'Adorazione dei pastori* and *Resurrezione di Lazzaro*.

If you have your own transport, the drive north along the coast from Messina to Capo Peloro and then round to the east is pretty, and there are some reasonable beaches between the Cape and Acquarone. Alternatively, you can take bus 79 or 80 to the lighthouse at **Torre del Faro** (8km north) and the popular summer resort of **Mortelle**.

## Sleeping

Despite being a major transport hub, Messina is not geared for tourists. If you do have to stay here, you'll be rubbing shoulders with insurance salesmen and the like. Prices generally don't vary with the season.

**Hotel Touring** (☎ 090 293 88 51; [www.hoteltouring-me.it](http://www.hoteltouring-me.it); Via N Scotto 17; s/d €40/60; ☎) This is a pleasant, well-maintained cheap sleep near the station.

**Royal Palace Hotel** (☎ 090 65 03; [www.nh-hotels.it](http://www.nh-hotels.it); Via Tommaso Cannizzaro 224; s €60-86, d €100-125; ☎) Rooms at this grey concrete monster have dated, dizzying-patterned decor; the public areas are more attractive. Sixth-floor rooms with terraces are nicest.

**Grand Hotel Liberty** (☎ 090 640 94 36; [www.nh-hotels.it](http://www.nh-hotels.it); Via I Settembre 15; s €85-137, d €104-165; ☎) The most comfortable hotel in Messina, the Grand is a renovated Liberty-style villa with luxurious rooms decorated in fashionable earthy colours.

# Eating

Messina is most famous for its delicious swordfish dishes.

**Trattoria da Mario** (☎ 090 4 24 77; Via Vittorio Emanuele II 108; meals €20-25; ☹ closed Wed) Opposite the Ustica Lines hydrofoil dock, this fish restaurant is popular with locals. Antipasti are laid out buffet-style – a delicious mixture of fish and vegetables.

**Da Piero** (☎ 090 640 93 54; Via Ghibellina 121; meals €35-45; ☹ Mon-Sat) A classy restaurant frequented by well-heeled Messinese. It's an excellent place to try the typical swordfish *agghiotta*, flavoured with pine nuts, sultanas, garlic, basil and tomatoes. Reservations are essential.

Also recommended: **Pasticceria Irrera** (☎ 090 67 38 23; Piazza Cairoli 12; pastries from €1; ☹ 8am-9pm), a fabulous pastry shop celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2010.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

Messina is the main point of arrival for ferries and hydrofoils from the Italian mainland, just a quick hop across the straits.

**Trenitalia/Bluvia** (☎ 090 66 16 74; [www.trenitalia.it](http://www.trenitalia.it); Ferry Dock) runs frequent passenger-only ferries to Reggio di Calabria (€3.30, 35 minutes) and car ferries to Villa San Giovanni on the Italian mainland (passenger/motorcycle/car €1.50/6/23, 35 minutes).

**Ustica Lines** (☎ 090 36 40 44; [www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele II) runs hydrofoils to Reggio di Calabria (€4.30, 15 minutes, two daily) and Lipari in the Aeolian Islands (€22.90, 1½ hours, five daily in summer, one in winter).

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## IN SUSPENSION

Like a never-ending ping-pong match, debate rages on about plans for a bridge across the Strait of Messina. Despite receiving EU approval and having a construction schedule already in place, the bridge was put on hold back in April 2006 when Italy's centre left came to power. But with Silvio Berlusconi back in the driver's seat, the bridge has once again gotten the green light – in March 2009 the re-elected premier pledged €1.3 billion towards its completion.

Supporters argue that the bridge is an essential infrastructure project that would boost the depressed Sicilian economy and provide jobs for some 40,000 people. Environmentalists have long been fiercely opposed to the project, while other critics argue that it would be unsafe in an earthquake-prone area and would waste billions of euros. Still others fear Mafia involvement, saying that crime clans would be able to obtain lucrative building contracts by intimidating competitors and bribing local officials. Stay tuned – as always, the bridge remains a very volatile political hot potato.

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**Caronte** (☎ 800 62 74 14; [www.carontetourist.it](http://www.carontetourist.it); Viale della Libertà) runs ferries to Salerno (passenger/car €30/80, eight hours, two daily).

### BUS

**Interbus** (☎ 090 66 17 54; [www.interbus.it](http://www.interbus.it); Piazza della Repubblica 6) runs a regular service to Taormina (€3.50, 1½ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday).

**SAIS** (☎ 090 77 19 14; [www.saisautolinee.it](http://www.saisautolinee.it); Piazza della Repubblica) serves Palermo (€14.80, 2¾ hours, eight daily Monday to Friday, two daily Saturday and Sunday) and Catania (€7.50, 1½ hours, half-hourly Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday).

**Giuntabus** (☎ 090 67 57 49; [www.giuntabustrasporti.com](http://www.giuntabustrasporti.com); Piazza della Repubblica 278) runs a service to Milazzo (€3.80, 50 minutes, at least hourly Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday) to catch the ferries and hydrofoils to the Aeolian Islands.

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

For Palermo (or Milazzo and the Aeolian Islands), turn right from the docks and follow Via Garibaldi along the waterfront. After about 1km, turn left into Viale Boccetta and follow the green autostrada signs for Palermo. To reach Taormina and Syracuse, turn left from the docks into Via La Farina and follow the autostrada signs for Catania.

Car hire is widely available along Via Vittorio Emanuele II between the train station and the Ustica Lines hydrofoil dock.

## TRAIN

Several trains daily connect Messina with Milazzo (€3.10, 30 minutes), Taormina (€3.70, 40 to 75 minutes), Catania (€6.45, 1½ to two hours), Syracuse (regional/InterCity train €9/14.50, three to 3½ hours) and Palermo (regional/InterCity train €11/18, three to four hours). However, be aware that the train stations for Milazzo and Taormina are inconveniently located some distance from their respective town centres.

From Messina you can also take the train across the straits for Rome and Milan (for details, [Click here](#)).

## Getting Around

An electric tram runs the length of the town, from Piazza Cairoli via the train station up to the Museo Regionale. You can buy a single-ride ticket (€0.50) or a two-hour ticket (€1) from local *tabacchi*.

City buses (tickets €1, valid for two hours) run from outside the train station.

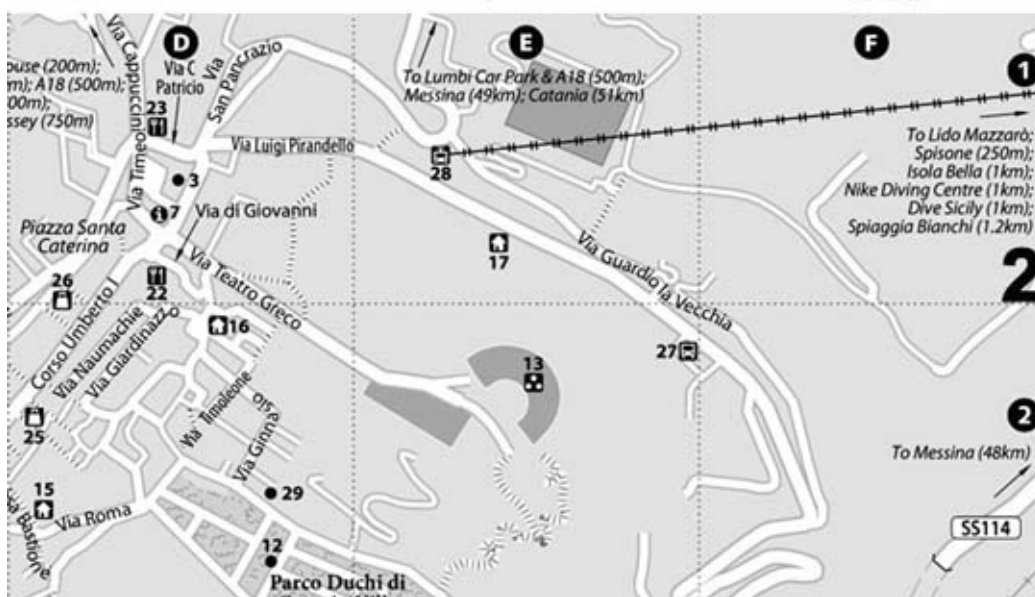
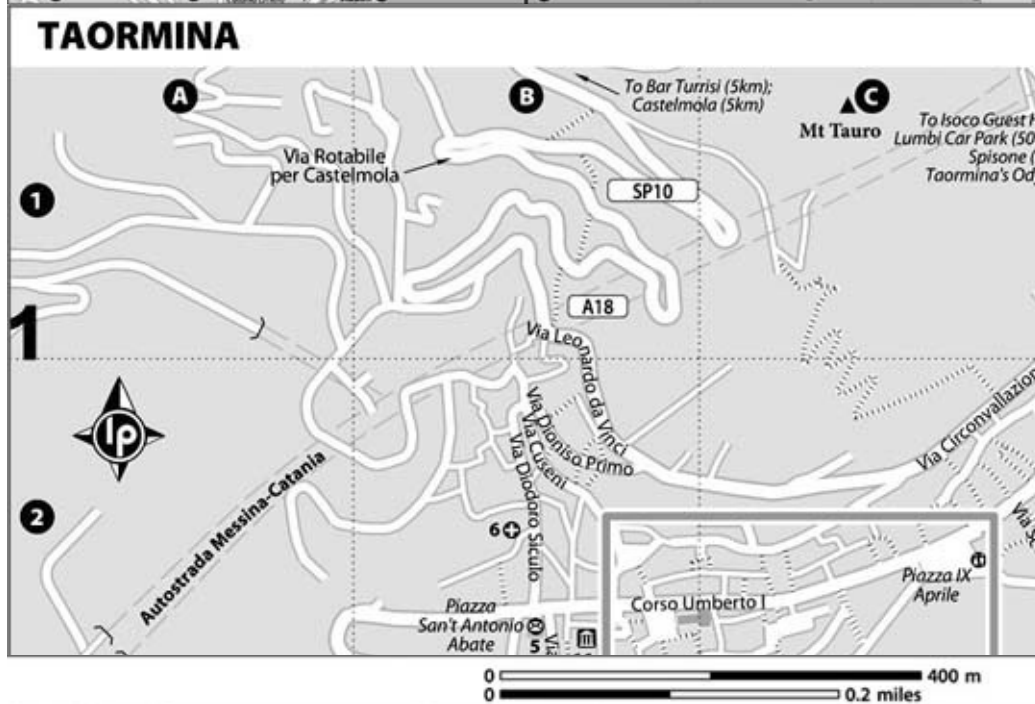
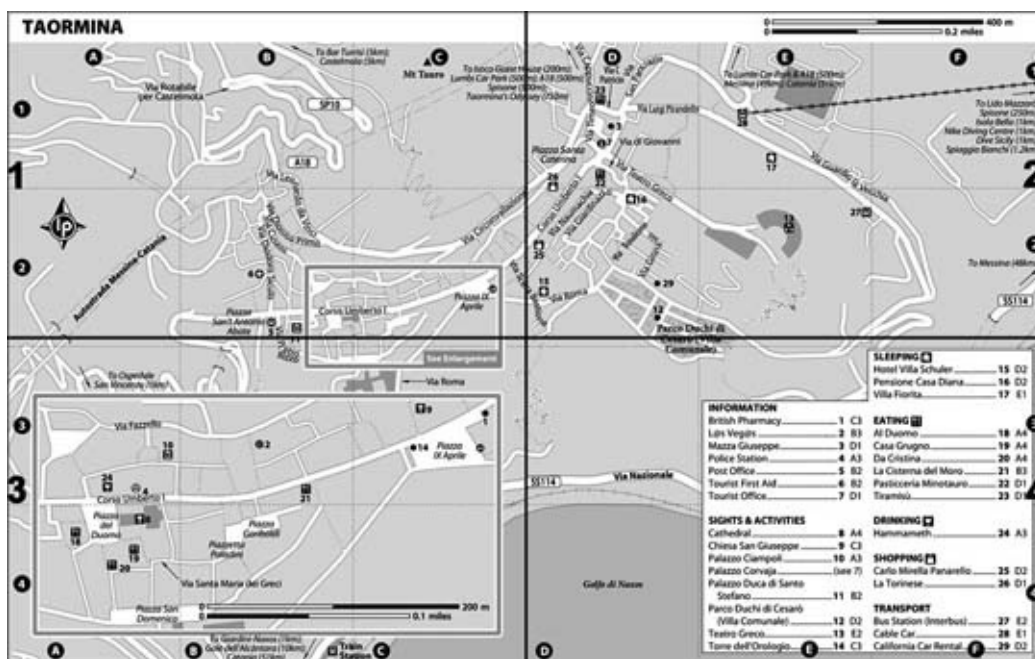
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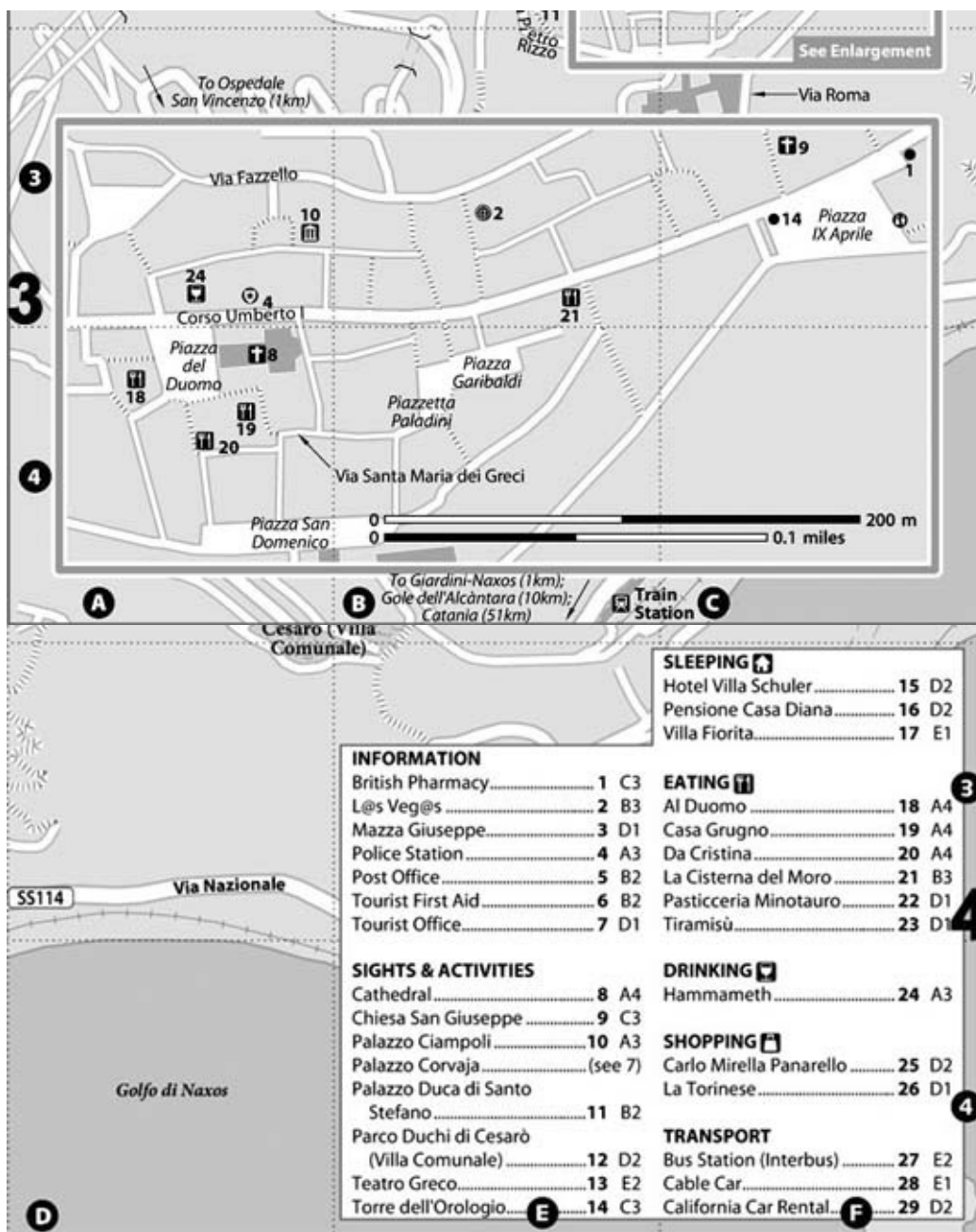
## TAORMINA

**pop 11,000 / elev 204m**

Spectacularly situated on a terrace of Monte Tauro, with views westwards to Mt Etna, Taormina is a beautiful small town, reminiscent of Capri or an Amalfi coastal resort. Over the centuries, Taormina has seduced an exhaustive line of writers and artists, aristocrats and royalty, and these days it's host to a summer arts festival [Click here](#) that packs the town with international visitors.

Perched on its eyrie, Taormina is sophisticated, chic and comfortably cushioned by some serious wealth – very far removed from the banal economic realities of other Sicilian towns. But the charm is not manufactured. The capital of Byzantine Sicily in the 9th century, Taormina is an almost perfectly preserved medieval town, and if you can tear yourself away from the shopping and sunbathing, it has a wealth of small but perfect tourist sites. Taormina is also a popular resort with gay men.





Be warned that in July and August the town is choked with tourists and the only space left on the beach may well be next to the rubbish bins.

## Orientation

The train station (Taormina-Giardini) is at the bottom of Monte Tauro. From there you'll need to hop on an Interbus coach (€1.50) to get to the bus station on Via Luigi Pirandello. A short walk uphill from the bus station brings you to Corso Umberto I, which traverses the length of the medieval town and connects its two historic town gates, Porta Messina and Porta Catania.

## Information

There are plenty of banks with ATMs along Corso Umberto I.

**British Pharmacy** (☎ 0942 62 58 66; Piazza IX Aprile; 🕒 8.30am-8pm) Offers an emergency night call-out service.

**L@s Veg@s** (☎ 0942 2 40 59; Salita Alexander Humboldt; per 20min €2; 🕒 11.30am-9.30pm Nov-May, 10am-late Jun-Sep) A slick internet bar with several fast computers, wi-fi and a choice of



cocktails.

**Mazza Giuseppe** (Corso Umberto I 9) Newsagent selling foreign newspapers and magazines.

**Ospedale San Vincenzo** (☎ 0942 57 92 97; Contrada Sirina) Downhill and 2km southwest of the centre. Call the same number for an ambulance.

**Police station** (☎ 0942 61 11 11; Corso Umberto I 219)

**Post office** (Piazza Sant'Antonio Abate)

**Tourist first aid** (☎ 0942 62 54 19; Piazza San Francesco di Paola) A 24-hour, free medical service available from 16 June to 15 September.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0942 2 32 43; [www.gate2taormina.com](http://www.gate2taormina.com); Palazzo Corvaja, Corso Umberto I; ☎ 8.30am-2pm Mon-Fri & 4-7pm Mon-Thu) Busy tourist office with informative brochures and helpful staff.

## Sights

One of the chief delights of Taormina is wandering along its medieval main avenue, and browsing among the antique and craft shops, delis and designer boutiques. If you're seeking more tranquillity, check out **Teatro Greco** (☎ 0942 2 32 20; Via Teatro Greco; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 9am-4.30pm Nov-Mar), Taormina's premier attraction. This perfect horseshoe-shaped theatre, suspended between sea and sky, was built in the 3rd century BC and is the second largest in Sicily (after Syracuse), and the most dramatically situated Greek theatre in the world. In summer the theatre is used as the venue for the international arts festival, Taormina Arte ([Click here](#)). In peak season the site is best explored early in the morning to avoid the crowds.

When the shops and the sights have exhausted their charms, revel in the stunning panoramic views from Piazza IX Aprile and pop your head into the charming rococo church, **Chiesa San Giuseppe** (Piazza IX Aprile; ☎ 9am-7pm).

On the western side of Piazza IX Aprile is the 12th-century clock tower, **Torre dell'Orologio**, which leads you through into the Borgo Medievale, the oldest quarter of the town. Head down here to Piazza del Duomo, where teenagers congregate around the ornate baroque fountain (built 1635), which sports a two-legged centaur with the bust of an angel, the symbol of Taormina. On the eastern side of this piazza is the 13th-century **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-7pm). It survived much of the Renaissance-style remodelling undertaken throughout the town by the Spanish aristocracy in the 15th century. The Renaissance influence is better illustrated in various palaces like **Palazzo Duca di Santo Stefano** with its Norman-Gothic windows, **Palazzo Corvaja** (the tourist office) and **Palazzo Ciampoli** (now the Hotel Palazzo Vecchio).

To get away from the crowds, wander down to **Villa Comunale** (Parco Duchi di Cesarò; Via Bagnoli Croci; admission free; ☎ 9am-midnight summer, 9am-10pm winter). Created by Englishwoman Florence Trevelyan, these hanging gardens are a lush paradise of tropical plants and delicate flowers. There's also a children's play area.

For eye-popping views of the coastline, head 5km up Via Leonardo da Vinci to **Castelmola** with its ruined castle; the walk will take you around an hour along a well-paved route. Alternatively, Interbus runs an hourly service (€1.50) up the hill.

## Activities

Many visitors to Taormina come only for the beach scene. To reach **Lido Mazzarò**, directly beneath Taormina, take the **cable car** (Via Luigi Pirandello; one way/return €2/3.50; ☎ 8am-8.15pm, to 1am in

summer). This beach is well serviced with bars and restaurants; private operators charge a fee for umbrellas and deck chairs (€5 per person per day). To the west of the beach, past the Sant'Andrea hotel, is the minuscule **Isola Bella**, set in a stunning cove with fishing boats. You can walk here in a few minutes but it's more fun to rent a small boat from Mazzarò and paddle round Capo Sant'Andrea.

**Nike Diving Centre** (☎ 339 196 15 59; [www.diveniketaormina.com](http://www.diveniketaormina.com); Contrada Isola Bella Spiaggia; dive from €30), located opposite Isola Bella, offers a wide range of courses for children and adults. **Dive Sicily** (☎ 360 28 95 55; [www.divesicily.com](http://www.divesicily.com); Lido Mazzarò) offers similar deals.

For a sandy beach you will have to go to **Spisone**, just beneath the autostrada exit (left from the cable-car station). When you reach Le Capinera restaurant, take the staircase on your right, which will take you through a tunnel and out onto the large sandy beach.

**Spiaggia Bianchi**, popular with gay men, is located around 1km north of the cable-car station.

Other activities involve short excursions around Taormina, one of the most popular being to the **Gole dell'Alcàntara**, a series of vertiginous lava gorges swirling with rapids. The Gole dell'Alcàntara runs **tours** (☎ 0942 98 50 10; adult €4.30) on-site and hires out the necessary wellies and wetsuits (€6). Take the bus from Taormina (€4.30, one hour, four daily Monday to Saturday). It's forbidden to enter the gorges from around November to May due to regular flooding.

## Festivals & Events

The **Taormina Arte festival** (☎ 0942 2 11 42; [www.taormina-arte.com](http://www.taormina-arte.com)) from June to August includes films, theatrical events and music concerts from an impressive list of international names.

**Raduno del Costume e del Carretto Siciliano** is a parade featuring traditional Sicilian carts and folkloric groups. It's usually held in autumn; ask at the tourist office for details and dates.

## Sleeping

Taormina has plenty of expensive and luxurious accommodation; the following are among the more reasonable options. You will also need to book your parking place at most hotels. This usually incurs an extra charge of €10 to €15 per day.

**Taormina's Odyssey** (☎ 349 810 77 33; [www.taorminaodyssey.com](http://www.taorminaodyssey.com); Traversa A, Via Gaetano Martino 2; dm/s/d without breakfast €19/30/60; 📞) This welcoming hostel has earned a flurry of complimentary letters from Lonely Planet readers who highly rate its warm, friendly atmosphere, lack of curfew and open kitchen. It's a 10-minute walk from the town centre.

**Pensione Casa Diana** (☎ 0942 2 38 98; Via Di Giovanni 6; s/d €35/50) This centrally located *pensione* is resided over by an elderly, deaf, Italian *signora* (with no English). The rooms are plain, small and clean, with well-dusted plastic flowers.

**Isoco Guest House** (☎ 0942 2 36 79; [www.isoco.it](http://www.isoco.it); Via Salita Branco 2; s €65-120, d €85-120; 📞 🚻 🚿) Every room in this exceptionally welcoming, gay-friendly B&B is dedicated to an artist – from Botticelli to the sculpted buttocks and pant-popping thighs on the walls of the Herb Ritts room. The excellent breakfast, free internet access, sundecks and outdoor jacuzzi are great as well. In summer, owner Michele serves multi-course dinners on the terrace for €25 per person (including drinks).

**Villa Fiorita** (☎ 0942 2 41 22; [www.villafioritahotel.com](http://www.villafioritahotel.com); Via Luigi Pirandello 39; s/d €110/125; 📞 🚻 🚿) A quiet, old-fashioned hotel decorated with oriental rugs, antiques and fine artwork. Private terraces and balconies have sea views. There's a nice pool, a pretty garden and even an ancient Greek tomb.

**Hotel Villa Schuler** (☎ 0942 2 34 81; [www.hotelvillaschuler.com](http://www.hotelvillaschuler.com); Via Roma, Piazzetta Bastione; s €120, d €134-190; 📄 📞) Surrounded by shady terraced gardens and with views of Mt Etna, the rose-pink Villa Schuler is family-owned and preserves a homely atmosphere. A lovely breakfast is served on the panoramic terrace. A great choice.

## Eating

Eating out in Taormina goes hand in hand with posing. It's essential to make a reservation at the more exclusive choices. Be aware that Taormina's cafes charge extraordinarily high prices even for coffee.

**La Cisterna del Moro** (☎ 0942 2 30 01; Via Bonifacio 1; sandwiches €5, pizzas €5.50-9.50) Affordability and aesthetics don't usually go hand in hand in Taormina, but this restaurant down an alley off Corso Umberto I is a welcome exception. Enjoy pizza, sandwiches or full meals as you contemplate the view from their pleasant outdoor terrace.

**Tiramisù** (☎ 0942 2 48 03; Via Cappuccini 1; pizzas €7-10, meals €30-40; 📄 closed Tue) This stylish but unpretentious place hidden away just outside Porta Messina makes fabulous meals, from *linguine cozze, menta e zucchine* (pasta with mussels, mint and courgettes) to old favourites like *scaloppine al limone e panna* (veal escalope in lemon cream sauce). When dessert rolls around, don't miss their trademark tiramisù, a perfect ending to any meal here.

**Al Duomo** (☎ 0942 62 56 56; Vico Ebrei 11; meals €45, tasting menu €60; 📄 lunch & dinner) This highly acclaimed restaurant with a romantic terrace overlooking the cathedral serves a mix-and-match menu of antipasti, first and second courses. Choose your favourite two or three items for a fixed price, or go all out and indulge in the chef's comprehensive tasting menu.

**Casa Grugno** (☎ 0942 2 12 08; Via Santa Maria dei Greci; tasting menus €80-100; 📄 dinner Mon-Sat) Despite the Austrian chef in the kitchen, the cuisine is modern Sicilian – and sublime. This is Taormina's most fashionable restaurant and has a walled-in terrace surrounded by plants.

Also recommended for quick, low-cost snacks are **Pasticceria Minotauro** (☎ 0942 2 47 67; Via di Giovanni 15; 📄 9am-8.30pm), whose €0.50 mini-*cannoli* make the perfect mid-afternoon pick-me-up, and **Da Cristina** (☎ 0942 2 11 71; Via Strabone 2; snacks from €1.75) for tasty focaccia, *arancini* and pizza slices.

## Drinking

**Hammameth** (☎ 349 849 71 18; Piazza del Duomo; 📄 10am-3am) Sip your cocktail while sitting on satin cushions in a seductive candlelit atmosphere; there are also outside tables for balmy night-time quaffing.

**our pick Bar Turrisi** (☎ 0942 2 81 81; Castelmola; 📄 9am-2am) A few kilometres outside Taormina, in the hilltop community of Castelmola, this whimsical bar is built on four levels overlooking the church square. Its decor is an eclectic tangle of Sicilian influences, with everything from painted carts to a giant stone *minchia* (you'll need no translation once you see it). Sip a glass of almond wine, enjoy the view, and don't forget to check out the bathrooms on the way out!

## Shopping

Taormina is a shopper's paradise, choked with smart boutiques, quaint antique shops, stylish jewellers and tempting delis. The quality in most places is high but don't come here expecting a bargain – instead think of purchasing one or two memorable items such as a piece of quality ceramic art from **Carlo Mirella Panarello** (Via Antonio Marziani). If olive oil, capers, jam and wine are more your cup of tea,

head for **La Torinese** (Corso Umberto I 59).

## Getting There & Around

### BUS

The bus is the easiest way to reach Taormina. **Interbus** (☎ 0942 62 53 01; Via Luigi Pirandello) services leave daily for Messina (€3.70, 55 minutes to 1¼ hours, 10 daily Monday to Saturday) and Catania (€5, 1¼ hours, six to nine daily). The Catania bus also services the train station (€1.50). Additional services go to the Gola dell'Alcàntara (€4.30, four daily) and up to Castelmola (€1.50, 15 minutes, four daily).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Taormina is on the A18 autostrada and the SS114 between Messina and Catania. Parking is a complete nightmare and Corso Umberto I is closed to traffic. The only real place to park is the **Lumbi car park** (☎ 0942 2 43 45; 📧 24hr), north of the town centre. There's a shuttle service to the centre from Porta Messina.

**California** (☎ 0942 2 37 69; Via Bagnoli Croce 86; Vespa 125 per day/week €30/189, Fiat Punto €72/327) rents out cars and scooters at reasonable prices.

### TRAIN

There are regular trains to and from Messina (€3.70, 40 to 75 minutes, hourly) and Catania (€3.70, 40 to 55 minutes, hourly), but the awkward location of Taormina's station is a strong disincentive. If you arrive this way, catch an Interbus service (€1.50) up to the town. They run roughly every 30 to 90 minutes (less frequently on Sunday).

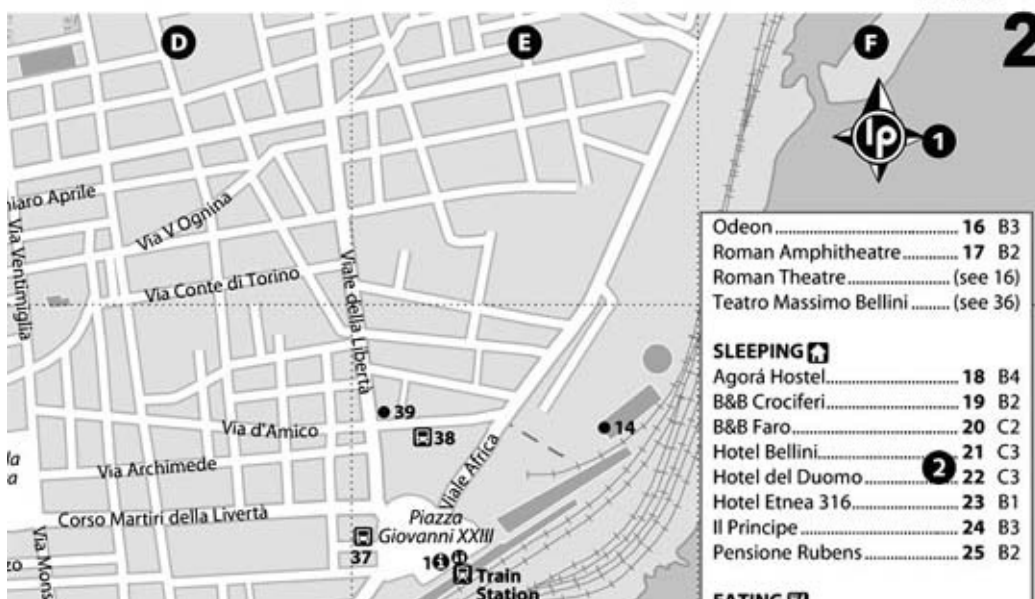
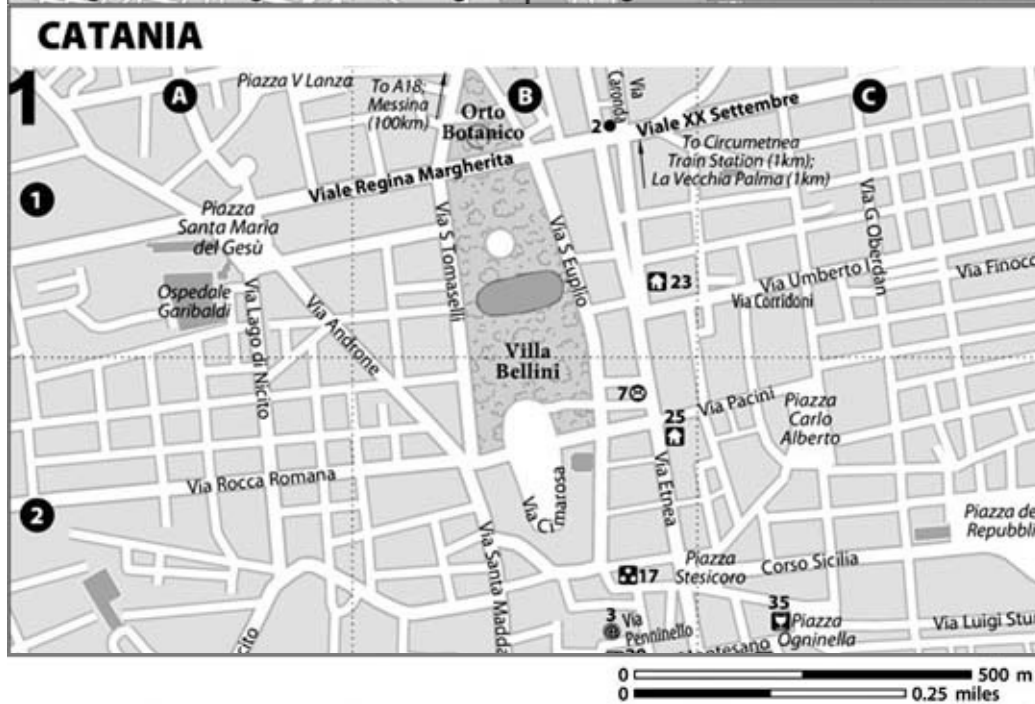
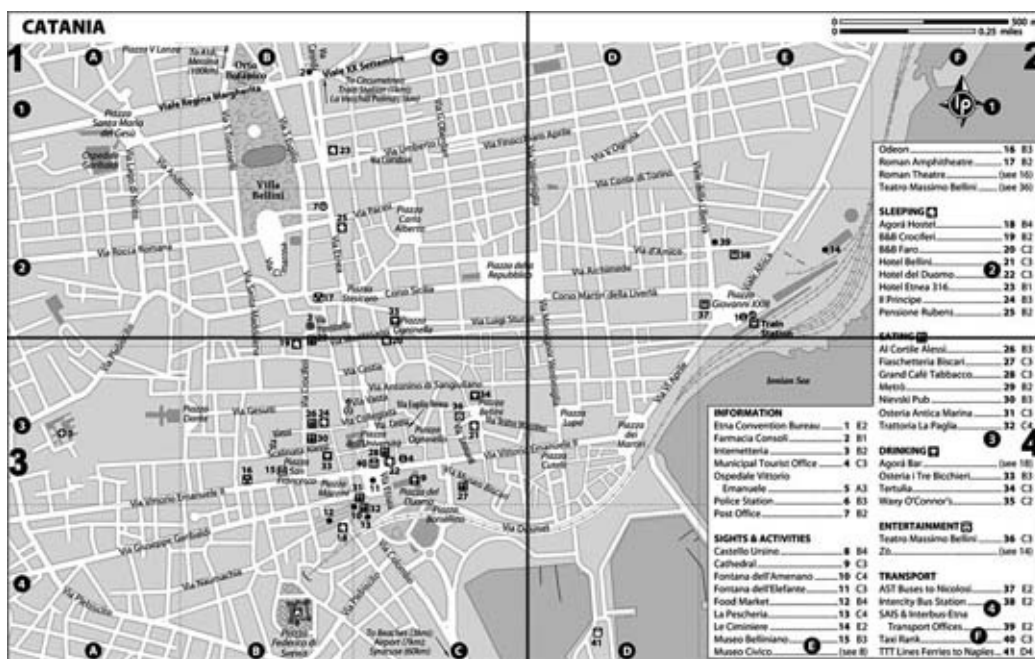
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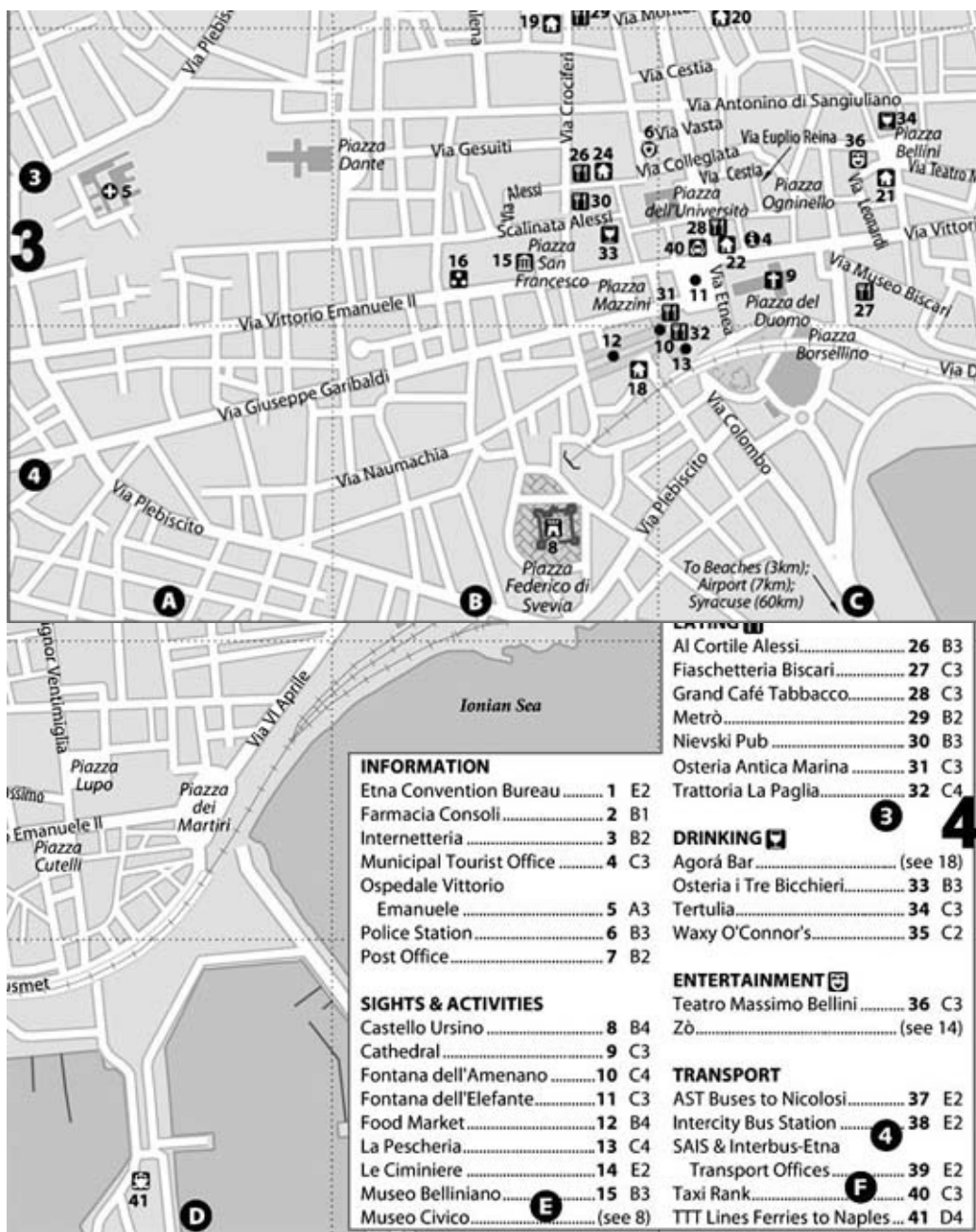
## CATANIA

### pop 299,000

Catania is a true city of the volcano. Much of it is constructed from the lava that poured down the mountain and engulfed the city in the 1669 eruption in which nearly 12,000 people lost their lives. It is also lava-black in colour, as if a fine dusting of soot permanently covers its elegant buildings, most of which are the work of baroque master Giovanni Vaccarini. He almost single-handedly rebuilt the civic centre into an elegant modern city of spacious boulevards and set-piece piazzas.

Catania is Sicily's second commercial city – a thriving, entrepreneurial centre with a large university and a tough, resilient local population that adheres strongly to the motto of *carpe diem* (seize the day).





## Orientation

The main train station is near the port at Piazza Giovanni XXIII, and the intercity bus terminal is one block up at Via d'Amico. Most sights are concentrated around and west of Piazza del Duomo, while the commercial centre of Catania is further north around Via Pacini and Via Umberto I.

## Information

Banks with ATMs are concentrated around Piazza del Duomo and along Via Etnea.

**Ambulance** (☎ 118)

**Etna Convention Bureau** airport (☎ 095 093 70 23; aeroportoct@live.it; ☎ 9am-9pm); train station (☎ 095 093 70 24; stazionect@gmail.com ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Sat) Has taken over airport and train station tourist information posts formerly operated by Catania's provincial tourism board.

**Farmacia Consoli** (☎ 095 44 83 17; Via Etnea 400; ☎ 4.30pm-1pm Mon-Fri, 8pm-8.30am Sat & Sun) Late-night pharmacy that closes for lunch during the week and daytimes on weekends.

**Internetteria** (☎ 095 31 01 39; Via Penninello 44; per hr €2; ☎ 10am-10pm) Fast internet and a great little bar-cafe.

**Municipal tourist office** (☎ 095 742 55 73; [bureau.turismo@comune.catania.it](mailto:bureau.turismo@comune.catania.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 172; ☎ 8.15am-7.15pm Mon-Fri, 8.15am-12.15pm Sat)

**Ospedale Vittorio Emanuele** (☎ 091 743 54 52; Via Plebiscito 628) Has a 24-hour emergency doctor.

**Police station** (☎ 095 736 71 11; Piazza Santa Nicoletta)

**Post office** (Via Etna 215)

**Train station** (per bag per 12hr €3; ☎ 7am-9pm) Left-luggage service.

## Sights

Catania's central square, **Piazza del Duomo**, is a Unesco World Heritage site. It's a set piece of sinuous buildings and a grand cathedral, all built in Catania's own style of baroque, with its contrasting lava and limestone. In the centre of the piazza is Catania's most memorable monument, and a symbol of the city, the smiling **Fontana dell'Elefante** (built in 1736). The statue is crowned by a naive black-lava elephant, dating from the Roman period, surmounted by an improbable Egyptian obelisk. Legend has it that it belonged to the 8th-century magician Eliodorus, who reputedly made his living by turning men into animals. The obelisk is believed to possess magical powers that help to calm the restless activity of Mt Etna.

Facing the statue is Catania's other defence against Mt Etna, St Agata's **cathedral** (☎ 095 32 00 44; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-7pm), with its impressive marble facade. Inside the cool, vaulted interior lie the remains of the city's patron saint, the young virgin Agata, who resisted the advances of the nefarious Quintian (AD 250) and was horribly mutilated. The saint's jewel-drenched effigy is ecstatically venerated on 5 February in one of Sicily's largest *feste* (see below).

A few blocks northeast you'll stumble onto Piazza Bellini. Its centrepiece is the **Teatro Massimo Bellini** ([www.teatromassimobellini.it](http://www.teatromassimobellini.it); Via Perrotta 12; guided tours €5; ☎ tours Wed, Fri, Sat), named after the composer Vincenzo Bellini, the father of Catania's vibrant modern musical scene. There's a small museum, **Museo Belliniano** (☎ 095 715 05 35; Piazza San Francesco; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm Sun & holidays), which houses a collection of memorabilia from the composer's life.

The best show in town, however, is the bustling **La Pescheria** (fish market; Via Pardo; ☎ 5-11am) and adjoining **food market** (Via Naumachia; ☎ 8-9am & 6-7pm) where carcasses of meat, silvery fish, skinned sheep's heads, strings of sausages, huge wheels of cheese and piles of luscious vegetables are all rolled together in a few noisy, jam-packed alleyways. The **Fontana dell'Amenano** marks the entrance to the market and is Tito Angelini's commemoration of the Amenano River, which once ran overground and on whose banks the Greeks first founded the city of Katáne.

Catania also has a number of Roman remains dotted throughout the city. West along Via Vittorio Emanuele II is the **Roman theatre** and a small rehearsal theatre, the **Odeon** (Via Vittorio Emanuele II 266), both closed for restoration at the time of research. North of Piazza del Duomo, more leftovers from Roman days include a modest **Roman amphitheatre** on Piazza Stesicoro. For relief from the madding crowd, continue north along Via Etna to the lovely gardens of **Villa Bellini** (☎ 8am-8pm) with its views of Mt Etna.

Catania's **Museo Civico** (☎ 095 34 58 30; Piazza Federico II di Svevia; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm Sun) is housed in the grim-looking **Castello Ursino**. The museum is the repository of the valuable Biscari archaeological collection, an extensive exhibition of paintings, vases and sculpture, plus an impressive coin collection.

## Festivals & Events

There are hysterical celebrations during **Festa di Sant'Agata** (3 to 5 February), where one million Catanians follow as the Fercolo (a silver reliquary bust of the saint) is carried along the main street of the city accompanied by spectacular fireworks.

Held in July are **Catania Musica Estate**, a classical music festival; **Settimana Barocca**, a week of baroque concerts, pageants and other performances; and **Etna Jazz** – ask at the tourist office for information on these musical events.

## Sleeping

Catania is served by a good range of reasonably priced places to stay, making it an excellent base for exploring the Ionian coast and Etna.

**Agorá Hostel** (☎ 095 723 30 10; [www.agorahostel.com](http://www.agorahostel.com); Piazza Curró 6; dm €18-21, s €25-30, d €50-55; 📶) A classic hostel with rooms of six to 10 beds and some doubles. There's no lockout, an internet point is provided (€2 per hour) and you can do laundry (€4 per wash). Its location near La Pescheria makes it a great base for self-caterers, and its restaurant-bar is one of Catania's coolest night spots.

**Hotel Bellini** (☎ 095 715 09 69; [www.bellinihotel.com](http://www.bellinihotel.com); Via Landolina 41; s €35-40, d €50-60; 📶 🚗 📶) A good budget choice near Teatro Bellini and its lively bar scene, with free wi-fi and limited free parking. Breakfast (optional) costs €5 extra per person.

**B&B Faro** (☎ 349 457 88 56; [www.bebfaro.it](http://www.bebfaro.it); Via San Michele 26; s €50, d €70-80; 📶) You'll need to call ahead to arrange your visit to this stylish B&B in the historic centre. There's not even a sign outside – yet the place does a brisk word-of-mouth business. Artists Anna and Antonio have completely remodelled four spacious rooms with polished wood floors on the upper floor of an older building, incorporating double-glazed windows, top-of-the-line modern bathroom fixtures, antique tiles and bold colours into a uniquely cohesive design concept. The one larger suite is especially nice, and during slower season can sometimes be booked for the price of a double. They also rent out a lovely apartment with its own kitchen near the Roman amphitheatre on Piazza Stesicoro (€35 per person).

**Pensione Rubens** (☎ 095 31 70 73; [www.hotelrubenscatania.com](http://www.hotelrubenscatania.com); Via Etna 196; s/d/tr/q €45/75/95/115; 📶) Seven comfortable, spacious rooms are kept in tip-top condition by the affable Signor Caviezel, whose advice on his home town makes for a rewarding and enjoyable stay; book ahead.

**Hotel del Duomo** (☎ 095 250 31 77; [www.hoteldelduomo.it](http://www.hoteldelduomo.it); Via Etna 28; s €50-65, d €75-95; 📶) Enjoying an ideal location between Piazza del Duomo and Piazza dell'Università, this hotel occupies an entire wing of an ancient *palazzo*. The rooms have elegant Regency-style furnishings, and many offer romantic views over the floodlit piazza at night.

**our pick B&B Crociferi** (☎ 095 715 22 66; [www.bbcrociferi.it](http://www.bbcrociferi.it); Via Crociferi 81; s/d €65/90; 📶) Affording easy access to the animated nightlife of Catania's historic centre, this B&B in a beautifully decorated family home is one of Catania's most delightful places to stay. With only three rooms, it fills up fast, so advance booking is essential. Rooms are spacious, with tall ceilings and artistic accoutrements brought back from the owners' travels in India. Mario (who speaks French) can offer tours of the



coastline in his private boat, while Teresa (who speaks excellent German and English) makes a memorable breakfast, often including freshly squeezed orange juice, scrambled eggs and home-made cake.

**Il Principe** (☎ 095 250 03 45; [www.ilprincipemotel.com](http://www.ilprincipemotel.com); Via Alessi 24; s €89-114; d €124-159, 🚽 📺 📶) This boutique-style hotel in an 18th-century building features luxurious rooms on one of the liveliest nightlife streets in town (thank goodness for double glazing!). Perks include international cable TV, free wi-fi and fluffy bathrobes to wear on your way to the Turkish steam bath. Check online for regularly updated special rates. More expensive rooms have marble bathrooms with jacuzzis and spiral staircases leading to a second level.

Also recommended: **Hotel Etnea 316** (☎ 095 250 30 76; [www.hoteletnea316.com](http://www.hoteletnea316.com); Via Etnea 316; s/d €60/80; 🚽 📺), located opposite the Bellini gardens.

## Eating

Aside from some very good restaurants, the city has a number of street-facing bar counters serving *arancini* (fried rice balls filled with meat, cheese or tomatoes), *cartocciate* (bread stuffed with ham, mozzarella, olives and tomato) and *pasta alla Norma* (with basil, aubergine and ricotta), a dish that originated here.

**Al Cortile Alessi** (☎ 095 31 54 44; Via Alessi 28; pizzas €6-8; 🕒 8pm-1am) Catanians of all ages flock here on weekend evenings, drawn by the excellent pizzas, draft beer and relaxed atmosphere. The outdoor courtyard is especially fun, with its banana trees and overhanging silk tapestries.

**Nievski Pub** (☎ 095 31 37 92; Scalinata Alessi 15; meals €15-25; 🕒 8pm-2am) Popular with Catania's alternative crowd, this place serves affordable food and alcohol with a slightly arch attitude (one sign at the bar translates as, 'we don't serve minors, and we don't serve Red Bull or other crap like that'). Cuban revolutionary posters adorn the walls, while the menu is an eclectic mix of salads, vegetarian fare and fish brought in daily from La Pescheria market. At night the beer flows freely as students gather on the steps outside.

**Trattoria La Paglia** (☎ 095 34 68 38; Via Pardo 23; meals €15-25; 🕒 closed Sun) This is a great, cheap trattoria with an in-your-face view of the action around La Pescheria market.

**Fiaschetteria Biscari** (☎ 095 093 27 61; Via Museo Biscari 8; meals €25-30; 🕒 closed 1 variable day per week) In the former stables of Palazzo Biscari, this wonderfully atmospheric wine bar and restaurant places a high value on quality; the menu is built around ultra-fresh ingredients from the nearby fish and produce markets.

**Osteria Antica Marina** (☎ 095 34 81 97; Via Pardo 29; meals €30-35; 🕒 closed Wed) This rustic-style trattoria behind the fish market is the place to come for seafood. Try the local favourite, a raw anchovy salad (tastier than it sounds!). Decor-wise think solid wooden tables and rough stone walls. Reservations are essential.

**Metrò** (☎ 095 32 20 98; Via Crociferi 76; meals €25-35; 🕒 closed Sun) This Slow Food—recommended eatery prides itself on stylish presentation and innovative adaptations of traditional Sicilian specialities. Their *tonno in cipuddata* (tuna steak smothered in caramelised onions) is fabulous, as is the *dialogo fra il cioccolato e il pistacchio* (a slice of sinfully dense chocolate cake topped with a thin layer of cream and accompanied by a dome of pistachio flan).

**Grand Cafè Tabacco** (Via Etnea 28) An old-style *pasticcERIA* (pastry shop) with outdoor seating at the lively junction of Via Etnea and Piazza del Duomo, this is the perfect place to people-watch during the

*passaggiata*. Try a selection of mini-tarts filled with fresh fruit.

The **morning market** adjacent to La Pescheria ([Click here](#)) is a fantastic place to shop for fruit, cheese, and sandwich fixings (don't let those staring swordfish intimidate you!).

## Drinking

Not surprisingly for a busy university town, Catania has a reputation for its effervescent nightlife. Fun streets for bar-hopping include (from west to east) Via Alessi, Via Collegiata, Via Vasta, Via Mancini, Via Montesano, Piazza Spirito Santo and Via Teatro Massimo.

**Tertulia** (☎ 095 715 26 03; Via Michele Rapisardi 1-3; 🕒 4.30pm-1.30am Sep-Jul) A nocturnal bookshop-cafe with a stylish tea-house atmosphere. There's occasional live music, plus literary evenings and book presentations.

**our pick Agorá Bar** (☎ 095 723 30 10; [www.agorahostel.com](http://www.agorahostel.com); Piazza Curró 6) The super-atmospheric bar here is in a neon-lit cave 18m below ground, complete with its own subterranean river. The Romans used it as a spa and now a cosmopolitan crowd lingers over drinks in the cavern. Meals cost €20 to €25.

**Waxy O'Connor's** (Piazza Spirito Santo 1) A popular Irish pub where revellers down pints of Guinness on the sidewalk terrace while listening to (sometimes pretty dodgy) live music and watching the dancers shake their booties. There's another Irish pub, Joyce, just across the street.

**Osteria i Tre Bicchieri** (☎ 095 715 35 40; Via San Giuseppe al Duomo 27; 🕒 8pm-midnight Mon-Sat) The dark wood-panelled interior creates the perfect atmosphere for this elegant wine bar that stocks more than 400 different labels. There's a classy restaurant adjacent (meals €30 to €35).

## Entertainment

Pick up a copy of *Lapis*, a free bi-weekly program of music, theatre and art available throughout the city.

**Teatro Massimo Bellini** (☎ 095 730 61 11; [www.teatromassimobellini.it](http://www.teatromassimobellini.it); Via Perrotta 12; 🕒 Oct-May) Ernesto Basile's art-nouveau theatre stages opera, ballet and music concerts. You can book tickets online.

**Zò** (☎ 095 53 38 71; [www.zoculture.it](http://www.zoculture.it); Piazzale Asia 6) Just northeast of the train station, Catania's former sulphur works, Le Ciminiere, has been renovated into a very cool cultural centre featuring films, live music, dancing, and a bar-cafe-restaurant serving good food.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Catania's airport, **Fontanarossa** (☎ 095 723 91 11; [www.aeroporto.catania.it](http://www.aeroporto.catania.it)), is 7km southwest of the city centre. To get there, take the special Alibus 457 (€1, 30 minutes, every 20 minutes) from outside the train station. **Etna Transporti/Interbus** (☎ 095 53 03 96; [www.interbus.it](http://www.interbus.it)) also runs a regular shuttle from the airport to Taormina (€5.60, 1½ hours, six to nine daily). All the main car-hire companies are represented here.

### BOAT

The ferry terminal is located south of the train station along Via VI Aprile.

**Virtu Ferries** (☎ 095 53 57 11; [www.virtuferries.com](http://www.virtuferries.com); one way/return €87/119) runs direct ferries from Catania to Malta (three hours) at least once weekly from May through October, with more frequent service to Malta via the southern port of Pozzallo (four hours including connecting coach from Catania to

Pozzallo).

**TTT Lines** (☎ 800 91 53 65, 081 575 21 92; [www.tttlignes.it](http://www.tttlignes.it)) has a daily ferry from Naples to Catania (seat €38 to €60, cabin per person €63 to €165, car €75 to €115, 10½ hours).

## BUS

Intercity buses terminate in the area around Piazza Giovanni XXIII, in front of the train station, and depart from Via d'Amico one block north. Catania's buses surpass the rather plodding train service.

**AST** (☎ 095 723 05 35; [www.aziendasicilianatrasporti.it](http://www.aziendasicilianatrasporti.it); Via Luigi Sturzo 230) runs similar services to SAIS and Interbus, as well as to many smaller provincial towns around the Catania region, including to Nicolosi (€2.20, one hour, half-hourly).

**Interbus** (☎ 095 53 03 96; [www.interbus.it](http://www.interbus.it); Via d'Amico 187) runs buses to Syracuse (€5.20, 1¼ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, eight on Sunday), Piazza Armerina (€8.30, 1¾ hours, six daily Monday to Saturday) and Taormina (€5, 1¼ hours, six to nine daily).

**SAIS** (☎ 095 53 61 68; [www.saisautolinee.it](http://www.saisautolinee.it); Via d'Amico 181) serves Palermo (€13.90, 2¾ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday), Agrigento (€12.20, three hours, at least 10 daily) and Messina (€7.50, 1½ hours, hourly Monday to Saturday, five on Sunday). It also has an overnight service to Rome (€46, 12 hours).

## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Catania is easily reached from Messina on the A18 autostrada and from Palermo on the A19. From the autostrada, signs for the centre of Catania will bring you to Via Etnea.

## TRAIN

Frequent trains connect Catania with Messina (€6.65, 1¾ hours, hourly) and Syracuse (€6, 1¼ hours, 11 daily). There are one or two direct trains to Palermo (€11.95, 3¾ hours) and Agrigento (€10.95, 3¾ hours, five daily) each day, but the bus is usually a better option for these cities.

The private Ferrovia Circumetnea train line circles Mt Etna, stopping at the towns and villages on the volcano's slopes; for details, [Click here](#).

## Getting Around

Many of the more useful **AMT city buses** (☎ 095 736 01 11) terminate in front of the train station. These include Alibus 457 (station to airport every 20 minutes), bus 1-4 (station to Via Etnea) and bus 4-7 (station to Piazza del Duomo). A 90-minute ticket costs €1. In summer, a special service (D) runs from Piazza G Verga to the sandy beaches.

For a taxi, call **CST** (☎ 095 33 09 66).

For drivers, some words of warning: there are complicated one-way systems around the city and the centre has now been pedestrianised, which means parking is scarce.

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## MT ETNA

**elev 3329m**

Dominating the landscape of eastern Sicily and visible from the moon (if you happen to be there), Mt Etna

is Europe's largest volcano and one of the world's most active. Eruptions occur frequently, both from the four craters at the summit and on the slopes of the volcano, which is littered with fissures and old craters. The volcano's most devastating eruptions occurred in 1669 and lasted 122 days. A huge river of lava poured down its southern slope, engulfing a good part of Catania and dramatically altering the landscape. Considerably more recently, in 2002, lava flows from Mt Etna caused an explosion in Sapienza, which destroyed two buildings in the complex and temporarily wiped out the use of the cable cars. Locals understandably keep a close eye on the smouldering peak.

Since 1987 the volcano and its slopes have been part of a national park, the Parco Naturale dell'Etna, a territory that encompasses a fascinatingly varied natural environment, from the severe almost surreal summit to deserts of lava and alpine forests.

## Orientation & Information

The two main approaches to Etna are from Piano Provenzano on the northern flank and Rifugio Sapienza on the southern flank. You can pick up information at a number of sources, the most convenient being the main tourist office in [Catania](#).

On Etna the office of the **Parco dell'Etna** (☎ 095 82 11 11; [www.parcoetna.ct.it](http://www.parcoetna.ct.it), in Italian; Via del Convento 45; ☎ 9am-2pm & 4-7.30pm) is in Nicolosi on the southern side. Near the summit at Rifugio Sapienza, you will find the **Etna Sud Tourist Office** (☎ 095 91 63 56; ☎ 9am-4pm), plus souvenir shops, restaurants, a couple of *albergos* (hotels) and groups of shivering tourists wishing they had remembered to dress warmly.

On the northern side of the mountain, the local **tourist office** (☎ 095 64 73 52; [www.procolinguaglossa.it](http://www.procolinguaglossa.it); Piazza Annunziata 5; ☎ 9am-3pm) in Linguaglossa is the best source of information.

## Sights & Activities

With a daily bus link from Catania via Nicolosi, the southern side of the volcano presents the easier ascent to the **craters**. The AST bus drops you off at the **Rifugio Sapienza** (1923m) from where **Funivia dell'Etna** (☎ 095 91 41 41; [www.funiviaetna.com](http://www.funiviaetna.com); cable car one way/return €14.50/27, incl bus & guide €60; ☎ 9am-4.30pm) runs a cable car up the mountain to 2500m (the ticket office accepts credit cards).

Once out of the cable car you can attempt the long walk (3½ to four hours return) up the winding track to the authorised crater zone (2920m). If you plan to do this, make sure you leave yourself enough time to get up *and* down before the last cable car leaves at 4.45pm. Otherwise hop on one of the Mercedes Benz trucks (with obligatory guide; €21).

On a clear day, the landscape above the cable-car station is stunning – the black cone of the Cratere Sud-Est against a bright blue sky. The guided tour takes you on a 45-minute walk around the Bocca Nuova. On the eastern edge of the volcano, the Valle del Bove falls away in a 1000m drop. Smoke billows up from its depths, enveloping you on the ridge above.

On the northern flank of the volcano, you can also make an ascent from the **Piano Provenzano** (1800m). This is the area that was severely damaged during the 2002 eruptions and, although it has been largely rebuilt, the bleached skeletons of the surrounding pine trees bear testament to the disaster. There are regular 4WD excursions to the summit from here (around €40 per person). To reach this side of the volcano you will need a car, however, as there's no public transport from Linguaglossa, 16km away.

If you're interested in hiking solo on Mt Etna, pick up a copy of the excellent free *Mt Etna and Mother*

*Nature* tourist map from tourist offices throughout the region; it has detailed mapped-out routes of 14 hikes of varying difficulty.

Passionate hikers should also consider visiting the **Parco Regionale dei Nebrodi** ([www.parcodeinebrodi.it](http://www.parcodeinebrodi.it)) just northwest of Etna, which covers some 85 hectares of densely wooded and mountainous countryside. A very well-signposted 70km, three-day hike known as La Dorsale dei Nebrodi recently opened here, which includes places to stay. Check the website for details.

## Tours

**Volcano Trek** (☎ 333 209 66 04; [www.volcanotrek.com](http://www.volcanotrek.com); Via Minicucca 16, San Giovanni La Punta) is run by expert geologists. Several tour options are available; see the website.

**Siciltrek** (☎ 095 96 88 82; [www.sicilitrek.it](http://www.sicilitrek.it); Via Marconi 27, Sant'Alfio) runs group tours up Etna, including the cable car and bus trip to 2900m. Andrea Ercolani of Siciltrek also organises and leads excellent private tours throughout the region.

**Gruppo Guide Alpine Etna Sud** (☎ 095 791 47 55; Via Etna 49, Nicolosi) is the official guide service on the mountain's southern flank, running day or multiday guided itineraries from their hut below Rifugio Sapienza.

**Gruppo Guide Alpine Etna Nord** (☎ 095 64 78 33; Piazza Santa Caterina 24, Linguaglossa) runs a similar tour service to Etna Sud, taking in the north side of the volcano.

## Sleeping & Eating

There's plenty of accommodation around Mt Etna, particularly in the small, pretty town of Nicolosi. For information on local B&Bs, contact **EtnaTourism** (☎ 095 791 62 87; [www.etnatourism.it](http://www.etnatourism.it)), a consortium whose members will also grant you a 20% discount on the Mt Etna cable car.

**B&B Massalargia** (☎ 095 791 45 86; [www.massalargia.it](http://www.massalargia.it); Via Manzoni 19; s €30-40, d €48-70; 📞 📺) An amiable owner runs this pleasant place, 2km from Nicolosi en route to Catania. The rooms are large with lots of thoughtful, homey touches and there's a sitting room for the use of guests.

**B&B La Giara** (☎ 095 791 90 22; [www.giara.it](http://www.giara.it); Viale della Regione 12a, Nicolosi; s €35-55, d €55-80; 📞 📺 📺 📺) The rooms here are washed in bright colours and sport wrought-iron beds, rattan furniture, colourful prints and large balconies. There's free wi-fi, and your friendly, English-speaking hostess Patrizia can help with excursions, bike rental and transfers from the Catania airport (€40).

**Rifugio Sapienza** (☎ 095 91 53 21; [www.rifugiosapienza.com](http://www.rifugiosapienza.com); Piazzale Funivia; per person B&B/half-board €55/75) As close to the summit as you can get, this place adjacent to the cable car offers comfortable accommodation with a good restaurant (fortunately – there's not a lot of choice in these parts!).

## Getting There & Away

Having your own transport will make life much easier around Mt Etna, but there are some public transport options.

### BUS

**AST** (☎ 095 53 17 56) runs daily buses from Catania to Rifugio Sapienza (one way/return €3.40/5.60, one hour). Buses leave from the car park opposite Catania's train station at 8.15am, travelling via Nicolosi, and return at 4.45pm.

## TRAIN

You can circle Etna on the private **Ferrovia Circumetnea** (FCE; ☎ 095 54 12 50; [www.circumetnea.it](http://www.circumetnea.it); Via Caronda 352a, Catania) train line. Catch the metro from Catania's main train station to the FCE station at Via Caronda (metro stop Borgo) or take bus 429 or 432 going up Via Etna and ask to be let off at the Borgo metro stop.

The train follows a 114km trail around the base of the volcano, providing fabulous views. It also passes through many of Etna's unique towns such as Adrano, Bronte and Randazzo (€4.70, two hours).

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## SOUTHEASTERN SICILY

This is a region of river valleys, fields of olive, almond and citrus trees and magnificent ruins. Within the evocative stone-walled checkerboard lies a series of handsome towns: Ragusa, Modica and Noto. Shattered by a devastating earthquake in 1693, they were rebuilt in the ornate and much-lauded Sicilian baroque style; that lends the region a honey-coloured cohesion and collective beauty. Writer Gesualdo Bufalino described the southeast as an 'island within an island' and, certainly, this pocket of Sicily has a remote, genteel air – a legacy of its glorious Greek heritage.

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## SYRACUSE

**pop 123,600**

A dense tapestry of overlapping cultures and civilisations, Syracuse is one of Sicily's most visited cities. Boosted by EU funding, derelict landmarks and ancient buildings lining the slender streets are being aesthetically restored. Settled by colonists from Corinth in 734 BC, Syracuse was considered to be the most beautiful city of the ancient world, rivalling Athens in power and prestige. Under the demagogue Dionysius the Elder, the city reached its zenith, attracting luminaries such as Livy, Plato, Aeschylus and Archimedes, and cultivating the sophisticated urban culture that was to see the birth of comic Greek theatre. As the sun set on Ancient Greece, Syracuse became a Roman colony and was looted of its treasures. Lacking the drama of Palermo and the energy of Catania, Syracuse still manages to seduce visitors with its quiet decrepitude, excellent hotels and fascinating sights.

## Orientation

The main sights of Syracuse are in two areas: on the island of Ortygia and 2km across town in the Parco Archeologico della Neapolis. The train station is located to the west of busy Corso Gelone. If you arrive by bus, you'll be dropped across the street on Corso Umberto. Stay on Ortygia for atmosphere, great restaurants and good-quality hotels.

## Information

There are numerous banks with ATMs throughout the city.

**Fish House** (☎ 339 777 13 64; Via Cavour 29-31, Ortygia; internet per hr €3; ☎ 10am-midnight Jun-Sep, 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Oct-May) Has several fast computers.

**Lavanderia Roma** (☎ 338 214 56 74; Via Roma 123, Ortygia; wash & dry per kg €5) Laundry with

next-day service.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0931 46 42 55; Via Maestranza 33, Ortygia; 🕒 8am-2pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-2pm Fri) English-speaking staff and lots of good information.

**Ospedale Generale Provinciale** (☎ 0931 72 40 33; Via Testaferrata 1)

**Police station** (☎ 0931 46 35 66; Piazza S Giuseppe)

**Post office** (Riva della Posta)

## Sights

### ORTYGIA

Despite its baroque veneer, the Greek essence of Syracuse is everywhere in evidence, from the formal civility of the people to disguised architectural relics. The most obvious of these is the **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; 🕒 8am-noon & 4-7pm), which is, in fact, a Greek temple that was converted into a church when the island was evangelised by St Paul. The sumptuous baroque facade, designed by Andrea Palma, barely hides the Temple of Athena skeleton beneath, and the huge 5th-century-BC Doric columns are still visible both inside and out.

Just down the winding main street from the cathedral is the **Fontana Aretusa**, where fresh water bubbles up just as it did in ancient times when it was the city's main water supply. Legend has it that the goddess Artemis transformed her beautiful handmaiden Aretusa into the spring to protect her from the unwelcome attention of the river god Alpheus. Now populated by ducks, grey mullet and papyrus plants, the fountain is *the* place to hang out on summer evenings.

Just up Via Capodieci from the fountain is **Museo Regionale d'Arte Medioevale e Moderna** (☎ 0931 6 96 17; Via Capodieci 14). Closed indefinitely for restoration at the time of research, it houses a respectable collection of sculpture and paintings dating from the Middle Ages to the 20th century. Its highlights include Byzantine icons and Caravaggio's *La Sepoltura di Santa Lucia* (The Burial of St Lucy; 1608). The *palazzo* itself is Ortygia's finest Catalan-Gothic mansion.

Simply walking through the tangled maze of alleys that characterises Ortygia is an atmospheric experience, especially down the narrow lanes of **Via Maestranza**, the heart of the old guild quarter, and the crumbling Jewish ghetto of **Via della Giudecca**. Renovations at the Alla Giudecca hotel ([Click here](#)) uncovered an ancient Jewish **miqwe** (ritual bath; ☎ 0931 2 22 55; Alla Giudecca, Via Alagona 52; hourly tours €5; 🕒 10am-7pm) some 20m below ground level. The baths were blocked up in 1492 when the Jewish community was expelled from the island and hadn't been revealed since then.

Also in the Jewish quarter is Syracuse's own thriving puppet theatre, **Piccolo Teatro dei Pupi** (☎ 0931 46 55 40; [www.pupari.com](http://www.pupari.com); Via della Giudecca 17). See its website for a calendar of performances. The workshop, where you can buy puppets, is at No 5.

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## IL TEATRO DEI PUPPI

Any preconceptions you may have about puppet shows being only fit to keep small children quiet at the seaside deserve to be challenged in Sicily. Since the 18th century the traditional Sicilian puppet theatre has been entralling adults and children alike. The shows are a mini theatrical performance with some puppets standing 1.5m high – a completely different breed from the Pooh Bear—style of glove puppet popular in the West. These characters are intricately carved from beech, olive or lemon wood with realistic-looking glass eyes and distinct features. And, to make sure that they will have no

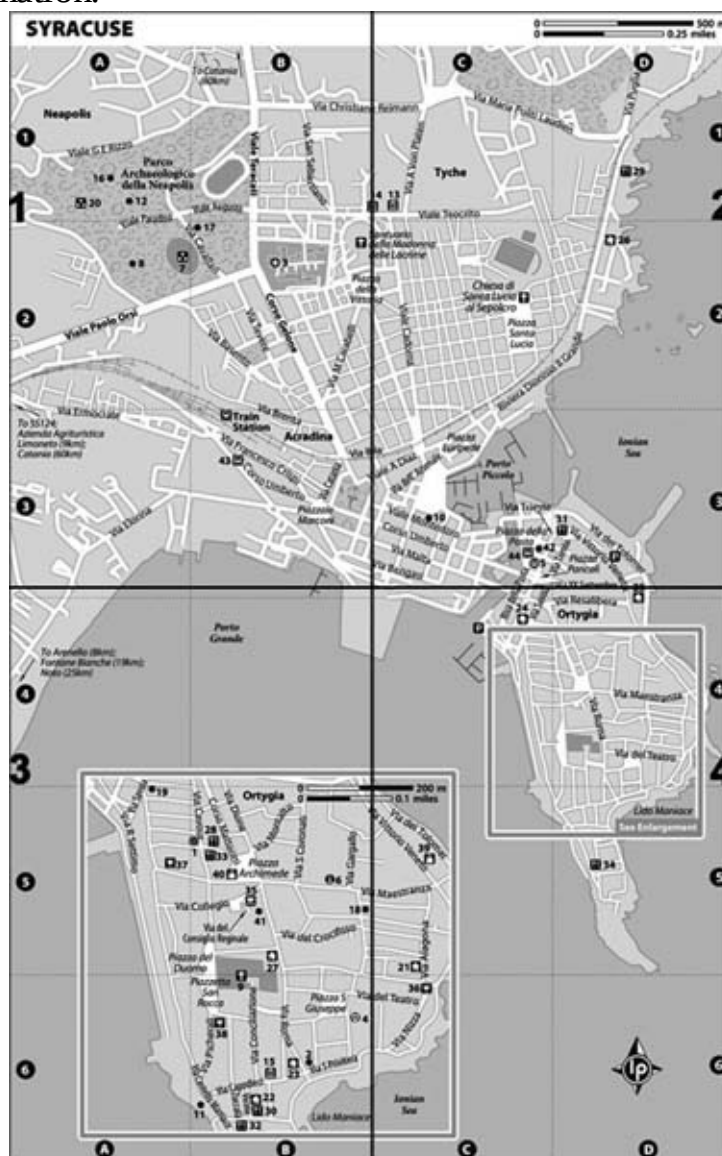
problem swinging their swords or beheading dragons, their joints have flexible wire.

The tales are suitably swashbuckling; they centre on the legends of Charlemagne's heroic knights, Orlando and Rinaldo, and the extended cast includes the fair Angelica, the treacherous Gano di Magonza and forbidding Saracen warriors. Good puppeteers are judged on the dramatic effect they can create – lots of stamping feet and a gripping running commentary – and on their speed and skill in directing the battle scenes.

Effectively the soap operas of their day, puppet theatres expounded the deepest sentiments of life – unrequited love, treachery, thirst for justice and the anger and frustration of the oppressed. Pretty timeless themes, you could say.

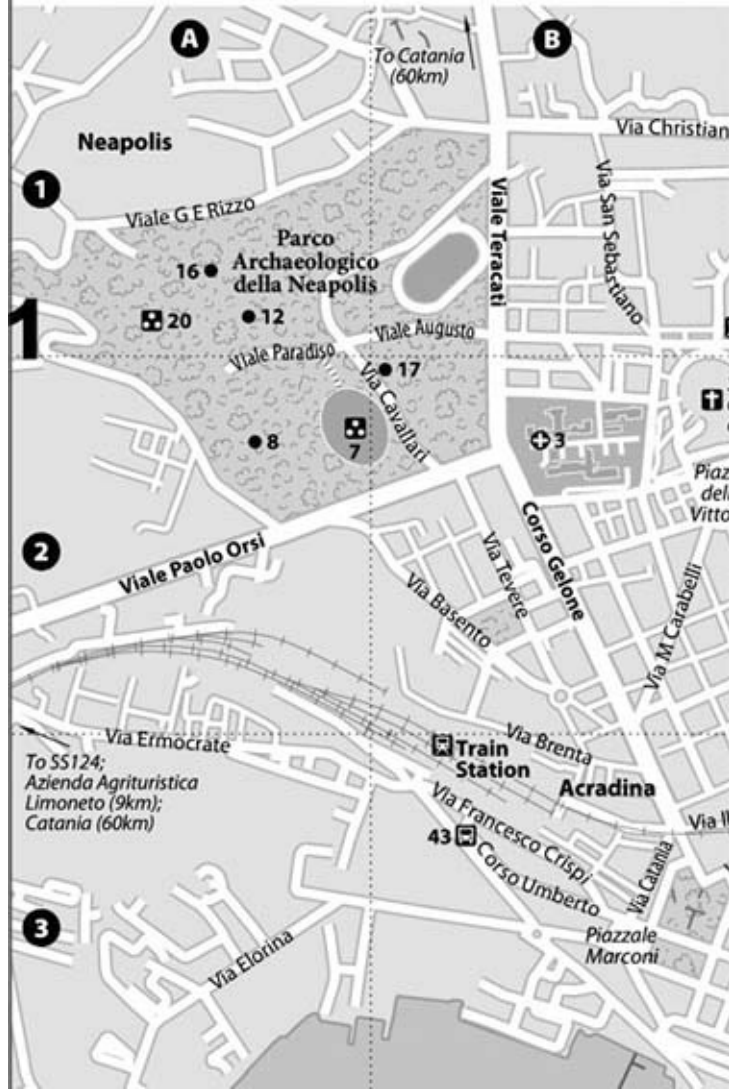
## PARCO ARCHAEOLOGICO DELLA NEAPOLIS

For the classicist, Syracuse's real attraction is the **Parco Archeologico della Neapolis** (☎ 0931 6 62 06; Viale Paradiso; adult/concession €8/4; 🕒 9am-2hr before sunset, to 4.30pm during theatre festival), with its pearly white, 5th-century-BC **Teatro Greco**, hewn out of the rock above the city. This theatre saw the last tragedies of Aeschylus (including *The Persians*), which were first performed here in his presence. In summer it is brought to life again with an annual season of classical theatre. Check the [www.ap-siracusa.it](http://www.ap-siracusa.it) website for information.

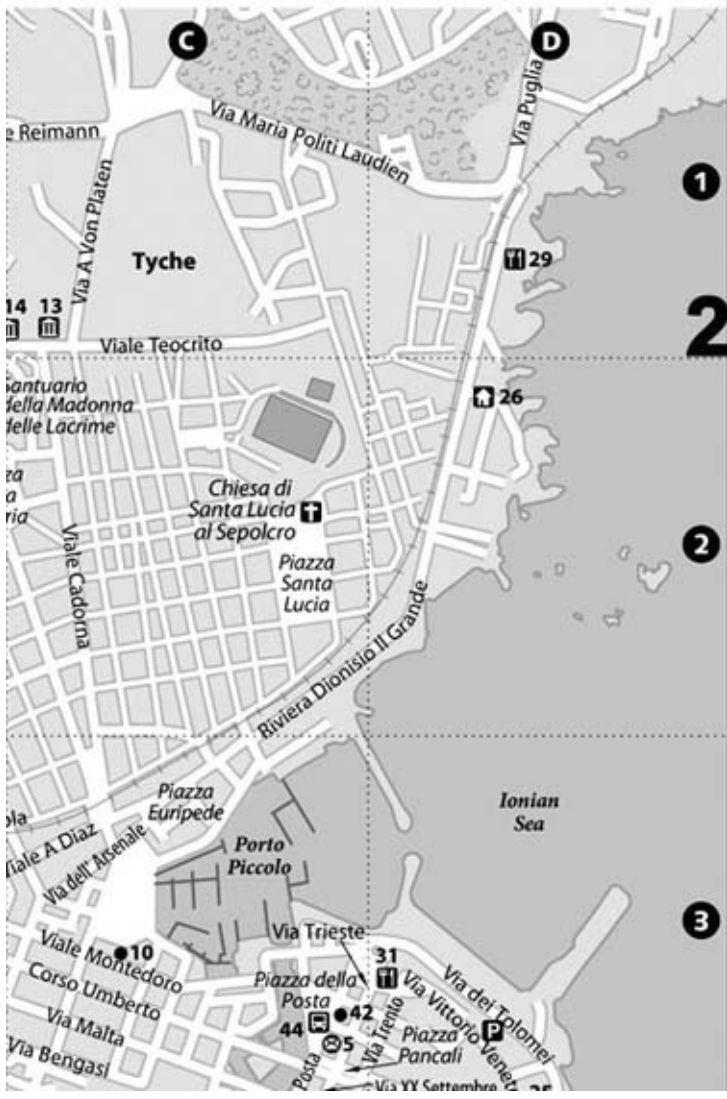




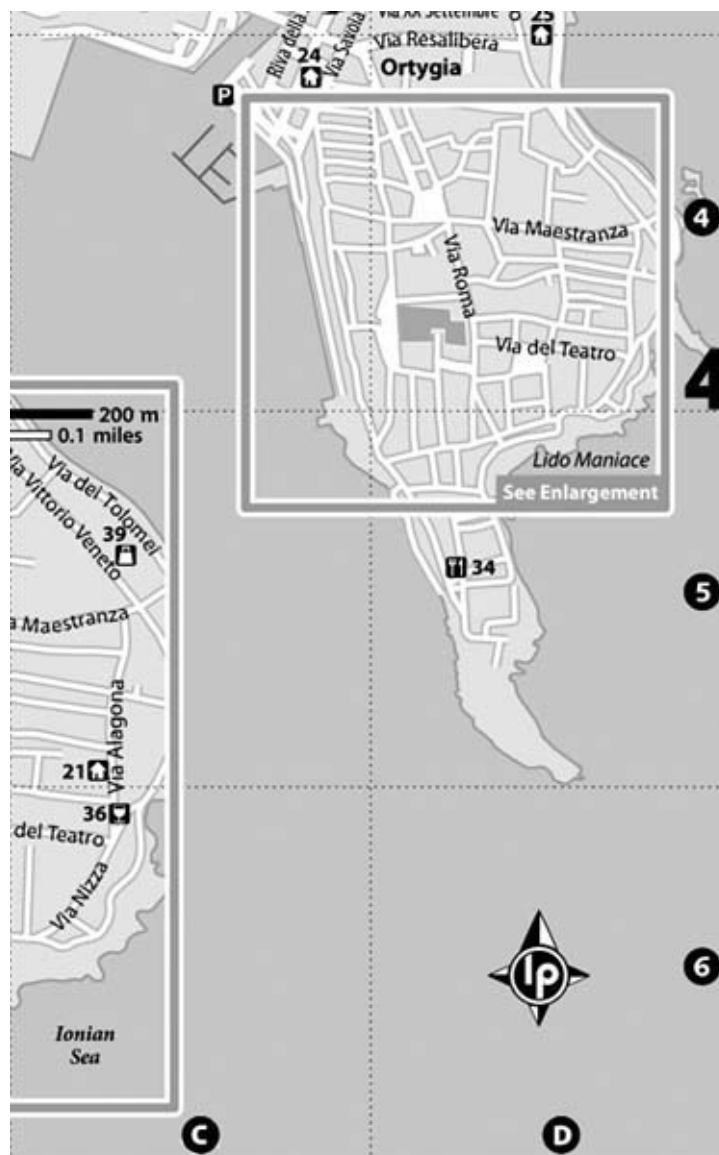
# SYRACUSE



0 500 m  
0 0.25 miles







<b>INFORMATION</b>	Orecchio di Dionisio.....	16	A1	Produce Market.....	31	D3
Fish House.....	1	B5	Parco Archeologico Ticket			
Lavanderia Roma.....	2	B6	Office.....	17	B2	Ristorante Medusa.....
Ospedale Generale			Piccolo Teatro dei Pupi.....	18	B5	Sicilia in Tavola.....
Provinciale.....	3	B2	Sailing Team.....	19	A5	Taberna Sveva.....
Police Station.....	4	B6	Teatro Greco.....	20	A1	<b>DRINKING</b> ☑ ☑
Post Office.....	5	C3				Bar Zen.....(see 29)
Tourist Office.....	6	B5	<b>SLEEPING</b> ☑			Biblios Cafe.....
			Alla Giudecca.....	21	C5	Il Blu.....
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>			B&B Aretusa.....	22	B6	Il Sale.....
Anfiteatro Romano.....	7	A2	B&B dei Viaggiatori,			San Rocca.....
Ara di Gerone II.....	8	A2	Viandanti e Sognatori.....	23	B6	
Cathedral.....	9	B6	Hotel Gran Bretagne.....	24	C4	<b>SHOPPING</b> ☑
Ente Fauna Siciliana.....	10	C3	Hotel Gutkowski.....	25	D3	Circo Fortuna.....
Fontana Aretusa.....	11	B6	Hotel Riviera.....	26	D2	Massimo Izzo.....
Latomia del Paradiso.....	12	A1	Hotel Roma.....	27	B5	
Museo Archeologico Paolo			<b>EATING</b> ☑			<b>TRANSPORT</b>
Orsi.....	13	C1	Do Schogghiu.....	28	B5	Allakatalla.....
Museo del Papiro.....	14	C1	Jonico.....	29	D1	AST Bus Ticket Office.....
Museo Regionale d'Arte			Osteria da Mariano.....	30	B6	Intercity Bus Stop.....
Medioevale e Moderna.....	15	B6				Urban Bus Station.....

Just beside the theatre is the mysterious **Latomia del Paradiso** – deep, precipitous limestone quarries out of which the stone for the ancient city was extracted. These quarries, riddled with catacombs and filled with citrus and magnolia trees, are where the 7000 survivors of the war between Syracuse and Athens in 413 BC were imprisoned. The **Orecchio di Dionisio** (Ear of Dionysius), a grotto 23m by 3m deep, was named by Caravaggio after the tyrant, who is said to have used the almost perfect acoustics of the quarry to eavesdrop on his prisoners.

Back outside this area you'll find the entrance to the 2nd-century-AD **Anfiteatro Romano**. The amphitheatre was used for gladiatorial combats and horse races. The Spaniards, little interested in

archaeology, largely destroyed the site in the 16th century, using it as a quarry to build the city walls of Ortygia. West of the amphitheatre is the 3rd-century-BC **Ara di Gerone II**. This monolithic sacrificial altar to Heron II was a kind of giant abattoir where up to 450 oxen could be killed at one time.

To get to the park, take bus 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12 or 15 from Piazza della Posta to Corso Gelone/Viale Teracati. The walk from Ortygia will take about 30 minutes. If you have a car, you can park along Viale Augusto for €1 (for as long as you like).

## MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO PAOLO ORSI & MUSEO DEL PAPIRO

In the grounds of Villa Landolina, about 500m east of the archaeological park, is the **Museo Archeologico Paolo Orsi** (☎ 0931 46 40 22; Viale Teocrito; admission €4; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun). It contains the best organised and most interesting archaeological collection in Sicily (and one of the most extensive archaeological collections in Europe) and certainly merits a visit. The opening hours are all over the place and are often extended in summer; check with one of the tourist offices. The museum is wheelchair accessible.

Around the corner, the **Museo del Papiro** (☎ 0931 6 16 16; Viale Teocrito 66; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm Tue-Sun) includes papyrus documents and products, boats and a good English-language film about the history of papyrus. The plant grows in abundance around the Ciane River, near Syracuse, and was used to make paper in the 18th century.

## Activities

Syracuse is all about urban pleasures with few activities more energetic than shopping and sightseeing. You can book yourself a pew on Syracuse's tiny **Lido Maniace** ([www.lidomaniace.it](http://www.lidomaniace.it)), a platform crowded with sunbeds and shades (€10 for two people), where you can take a dip into the water – a pastime particularly recommended in midsummer when Ortygia steams like a cauldron. Longer stretches of sand can be found at **Arenella** (take bus 23 from Piazza della Posta) and the **Fontana Bianche** (bus 21 or 22), but note that they are very busy and, as with many Sicilian beaches, there are charges on certain sections. From mid-June to mid-September, there's also great sunbathing (for a fee) and diving off the rocks adjacent to **Bar Zen**, 2km north of Ortygia.

One of the best activities is taking a boat trip on one of the gorgeous rigs rented out by **Sailing Team** (☎ 0931 6 08 08; [www.sailingteam.biz](http://www.sailingteam.biz); Via Savoia 14). The whole day costs €350 (for up to 12 people), departing at 10am and returning at 6pm, enabling you to explore the coastline and snorkel to your heart's content.

Landlubbers should consider an excursion with **Ente Fauna Siciliana** (☎ 338 488 8822; [www.entefaunasiciliana.it](http://www.entefaunasiciliana.it)). Itineraries include short hikes along the coastline (€5 per person) and archaeological and botanical itineraries. A *calendario attività* (activities calendar) with booking numbers and departure points can be downloaded from the website. Most of the tours are in Italian only.

## Festivals & Events

In May and June Syracuse hosts the **Ciclo di Rappresentazioni Classiche** (Festival of Greek Theatre; ☎ 0931 48 72 48; [www.indafondazione.org](http://www.indafondazione.org); Via Cavour 48). Syracuse boasts the only school of classical Greek drama outside Athens and the performances (in Italian) attract Italy's finest performers. Tickets (€22 to €58) are available online, from the Via Cavour office in Ortygia or at the ticket booth outside the theatre.

During the **Festa di Santa Lucia** (13 December) the enormous silver statue of the city's patron saint

wends its way from the cathedral to Piazza Santa Lucia accompanied by fireworks.

## Sleeping

Syracuse prides itself on discerning tourism, reflected in its excellent hotels. The best options are on Ortygia. Cheaper hotels are located around the train station.

### BUDGET

**B&B dei Viaggiatori, Viandanti e Sognatori** (☎ 0931 2 47 81; [www.bedandbreakfastsicily.it](http://www.bedandbreakfastsicily.it); Via Roma 156; s €35-50, d €55-70, tr €75-85, q €100, 🚗 📶) An old palace at the end of Via Roma cradles this lovely B&B. Rooms are colourfully and stylishly decorated, with super-comfy beds. There's free wi-fi, and the sunny roof terrace with sweeping sea views makes a perfect breakfast spot.

**B&B Aretusa** (☎ 0931 48 34 84; [www.aretusavacanze.com](http://www.aretusavacanze.com); Vicolo Zuccalà 1; s €55, d €79; 🚗 📶 📺) This great budget option, elbowed into a tiny pedestrian street in a 17th-century building, has large rooms and apartments with kitchenettes, computers, wi-fi, satellite TV and small balconies from where you can shake hands with your neighbour across the way.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Alla Giudecca** (☎ 0931 2 22 55; [www.allagiudecca.it](http://www.allagiudecca.it); Via Alagona 52; s €60-75, d €80-120; 🚗) Located in the old Jewish quarter, this charming hotel boasts 23 suites with warm terracotta-tiled floors, exposed wood beams and lashings of heavy white linen. The communal areas are a warren of vaulted rooms full of museum-quality antiques and enormous tapestries, and feature cosy sofas gathered around huge fireplaces. During renovations an ancient Jewish *miqwe* was discovered here ([Click here](#)).

**Hotel Riviera** (☎ 0931 6 70 50; [www.hotelrivierasiracusa.com](http://www.hotelrivierasiracusa.com); Via Eucleida 7; s/d/tr/q €67/87/115/125; 🚗 📶) One of the only hotels in Syracuse with a seafront location, this friendly family-run place offers lovely views from the 1st-floor terrace and most rooms.

**Azienda Agrituristica Limoneto** (☎ 0931 71 73 52; [www.emmeti.it/Limoneto](http://www.emmeti.it/Limoneto); Via del Platano 3; s €50-60, d €90-120; 🚗 📶 📺) This large country farm set amid attractive citrus and olive groves is noted for its organic produce and excellent restaurant (meals cost €25). You'll find it 9km from Syracuse along the SS124.

**Hotel Gran Bretagne** (☎ 0931 6 87 65; [www.hotelgranbretagna.it](http://www.hotelgranbretagna.it); Via Savoia 21; s €75-90, d €90-125; 🚗 📶) This handsome, small hotel is in a great location on Ortygia. Rooms are spacious, with chequered floors and high ceilings, a few adorned with frescoes. Don't miss the glass panel adjacent to the breakfast room revealing the 16th-century town wall below.

**Hotel Gutkowski** (☎ 0931 46 58 61; [www.guthotel.it](http://www.guthotel.it); Lungomare Vittorini 26; s/d €80/110; 🚗 📶) Book well in advance for one of the seven sea-view rooms at this charming and friendly hotel on the Ortygia waterfront. Rooms in the original hotel have pretty tiled floors, colourful walls, and retain the building's historic character, while those in the annexe down the street have a more modern feel. There's a nice rooftop sun terrace with sea views, and a brand new bar adjoining the pleasant breakfast area.

**Hotel Roma** (☎ 0931 46 56 26; [www.hotelroma.sr.it](http://www.hotelroma.sr.it); Via Roma 66; s €80-90, d €100-150; 🚗 📶 📺 📶) Set in a restored *palazzo*, the Roma has individually decorated rooms with parquet floors, oriental rugs, wood-beam ceilings and tasteful artwork. Additional amenities include a peaceful courtyard, a gym and a Finnish sauna, plus wi-fi in the lobby and several guest rooms. Parking costs €10 extra.

## Eating

The best restaurants are on Ortygia.

**Sicilia in Tavola** (☎ 392 461 08 89; Via Cavour 28; meals €16-30; 📅 closed Mon) A tiny place with a dozen tables that specialises in all manner of fresh pasta dishes (try the speciality of the house, seafood ravioli).

**Taberna Sveva** (☎ 0931 2 46 63; Piazza Federico di Svevia; meals €23-30; 📅 closed Wed) This charming tavern has a cosy terrace on a peaceful cobblestoned square, down near the castle at Ortygia's southern tip. Food is top-notch, all the way from *primi*-like *gnocchi al pistacchio* (with olive oil, parmesan, pepper, garlic and grated pistachios) to a delicious tiramisu to wrap things up

**Ristorante Medusa** (☎ 0931 6 14 03; Via S Teresa 21-23; meals €25-35; 📅 closed Mon) At this elegant eatery run by an Italian-Tunisian family, the week's highlight is the Thursday night couscous feast, but it's worth a visit any day of the week for the delicious seafood-based pasta dishes and mains.

**Osteria da Mariano** (☎ 0931 6 74 44; Vicolo Zuccalà 9; meals €17-21; 📅 Wed-Mon) Specialising in the mountain cuisine of nearby Ragusa, with more meat than fish, this cheerful place sets out a river of tables under the lights and balconies of a narrow alleyway, with cosy indoor seating in a beamed dining room. Everything's tasty and affordably priced, and the atmosphere's very convivial, if you can forgive the sometimes lackadaisical service.

**Do Schogghiu** (Via Domenico Scinà 11; meals €20; 📅 closed Mon) A very basic, family-run *spaghetteria* that serves up pasta a million different ways, with plenty of agreeable father-son banter in the background. Ask for the free *aperitivo* offered on the menu.

**Jonico** (☎ 0931 6 55 40; Riviera Dionisio il Grande 194; pizzas €4-7, meals €20-30; 📅 closed Tue) Inconveniently located but worth the trek or taxi ride, Jonico's Liberty (art nouveau) dining room and its open-air terrace have spectacular views of blue-green sea and sandstone cliffs, while the all-Sicilian menu features dishes such as *tonno all siciliana* (tuna with cherry tomatoes, capers and white wine) and *orata c'aranci* (gilthead with orange juice, orange peel and black pepper). Below the restaurant, the alluring Bar Zen (open 7.30pm to 2am mid-June to mid-September) doubles as a swimming area and solarium during the day, where you can plunge off rocks or lounge under an umbrella all day before retiring to the outdoor deck to sip drinks all night.

Syracuse's **produce market** (Antico Mercato; 📅 8am-1pm Mon-Sat) is near the harbour where red-canopied stalls overflow with piles of mussels, oysters, octopuses and shellfish.

## Drinking

Syracuse is a vibrant university town, which means plenty of life on the streets at cocoa time.

Four recommended drinking spots in Ortygia are the literary **Biblios Cafe** (Via del Consiglio Reginale 11; 📅 10am-1.30pm & 5-9pm, closed Wed & Sun mornings); **Il Sale** (Via dell'Amalfitania 56/2), hidden away in a courtyard and recognisable from the street only by the beckoning glow of its twin Paulaner München lamps **Il Blu** (Via Nizza), a superb wine bar with a cosy front porch near the waterfront; and lovely **San Rocca** (Piazzetta San Rocca), the most popular of several bars with tables sprawled across bustling Piazzetta San Rocca.

## Shopping

Ortygia is full of quirky little shops such as **Circo Fortuna** (☎ 347 216 33 74, [www.circofortuna.it](http://www.circofortuna.it); Via dei Tolomei 20), which produces lots of cheeky ceramics, and **Massimo Izzo** (☎ 0931 2 23 01; Piazza Archimede 25; 📅 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sat, 4-8pm Mon), specialising in jewellery handcrafted from

Sciacca coral and gold.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Long-distance buses operate from a strip along Corso Umberto, just east of Syracuse's train station.

**Interbus** (☎ 0931 6 67 10) runs buses to Catania (€5.20, 1¼ hours, 19 daily Monday to Saturday, eight on Sunday) and its airport, and Palermo (€15.30, 3¼ hours, two to three daily).

**AST** (☎ 0931 46 27 11) offers services to Noto (€3, 50 minutes, 12 daily Monday to Saturday) and Ragusa (€6.40, 2½ hours, six daily Monday to Saturday).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If arriving from the north, you'll enter Syracuse on Viale Scala Greca. To reach the centre of the city, turn left onto Viale Teracati and follow it south; Viale Teracati eventually becomes Corso Gelone.

There's a large underground car park on Via V Veneto on Ortygia where you can park for €1.

### TRAIN

More than a dozen trains depart daily for Messina (InterCity/regional train €14.50/9.25, 2½ to 3¼ hours) via Catania (€7.50/6, 1¼ hours). Some go on to Rome, Turin and Milan as well as other long-distance destinations. For Palermo, the bus is a better option. There are also local trains from Syracuse to Noto (€3.20, 30 minutes) and Ragusa (€7.25, 2¼ hours).

## Getting Around

AST city buses 1, 4 and 12 make the trip from Ortygia's Piazza della Posta to Parco Archeologico della Neapolis. A two-hour city bus ticket costs €1.

**Allakatalla** (☎ 0931 6 74 52; Via Roma 10; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat) hires out bicycles (€15 per day) and scooters (€35 per day).

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## NOTO

**pop 23,500 / elev 160m**

Flattened in 1693 by an earthquake, Noto was grandly rebuilt by its nobles. It is now the finest baroque town in Sicily, especially appreciable at night when the illuminations introduced in 2006 accentuate its beauty and intricately carved facades. The baroque masterpiece is the work of Rosario Gagliardi and his assistant, Vincenzo Sinatra, local architects who also worked in Ragusa and Modica. Recently added to Unesco's list of World Heritage sites, Noto's fragile sandstone buildings are currently undergoing extensive restoration. On 16 March 1996 the town was horrified when the roof and dome of the cathedral collapsed during a thunderstorm – luckily it was 10.30pm and the cathedral was empty. In June 2007 the cathedral finally reopened after lengthy reconstruction.

## Information

**Ambulance** (☎ 0931 89 02 35)

**Police station** (☎ 0931 83 52 02)



**Tourist office** (☎ 0931 57 37 79; [www.comune.noto.sr.it](http://www.comune.noto.sr.it); Piazza XVI Maggio; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4-8pm) An excellent and busy information office with multilingual staff and free maps.

## Sights

The **San Nicoló Cathedral** stands in the centre of Noto's most graceful square, Piazza Municipio, and is surrounded by elegant town houses such as Palazzo Ducezio (Town Hall) and Palazzo Landolina, once home to Noto's oldest noble family. The only *palazzo* that has so far been restored to its former glory, however, is the **Palazzo Villadorata** (Palazzo Nicolaci; ☎ 0931 83 50 05; [www.palazzonicolaci.it](http://www.palazzonicolaci.it); Via Corrado Nicolaci; adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun), where wrought-iron balconies are supported by a swirling pantomime of grotesque figures. Although empty of furnishings, the richly brocaded walls and frescoed ceilings of the *palazzo* give an idea of the sumptuous lifestyle of Sicilian nobles, as brought to life in the Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa novel *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard; [Click here](#)).

Two other piazzas break up the long Corso Vittorio Emanuele: Piazza dell'Immacolata to the east and Piazza XVI Maggio to the west. The latter is overlooked by the beautiful **Chiesa di San Domenico** and the adjacent Dominican monastery, both designed by Rosario Gagliardi. On the same square, Noto's elegant 19th-century **Teatro Comunale** is worth a look, as is the mirrored Sala degli Specchi in the **Palazzo Ducezio** opposite the Duomo (admission to either €2, combined ticket €3). For sweeping rooftop views of Noto's baroque splendour, climb the *campanile* (bell tower) at **Chiesa di San Carlo al Corso** (admission €2; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 4-7pm) or **Chiesa di Santa Chiara** (admission €1.50; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 3-7pm).

## Festivals & Events

**Infiorata**, held for two weeks in mid- to late May, is Noto's colourful flower festival, celebrated with parades, historical re-enactments and a public art project in which artists decorate the length of Via Corrada Nicolaci with designs made entirely of flower petals.

## Sleeping

B&Bs are plentiful in Noto. Ask at the tourist office for a detailed list.

**Il Castello Youth Hostel** (☎ 392 415 78 99, 329 396 11 71; [world-service@simail.it](mailto:world-service@simail.it); Via Fratelli Bandiera 2; dm €16) Directly uphill from the Duomo in a beautiful old building, this place commands fabulous views and is great value for money, despite a few downsides (no guest kitchen, a 10am to 3pm lockout and an 11.30pm curfew).

**B&B Montandòn** (☎ 0931 83 63 89; [www.b-bmontandon.it](http://www.b-bmontandon.it); Via Sofia 50; s €40-55, d €65-80; 🕒 📞) Accessed via imposing vaulted hallways, this B&B in a crumbling *palazzo* near the top of town has lovely, light rooms with elegant furnishings. Upper rooms have panoramic views over town.

**Hotel della Ferla** (☎ 0931 57 60 07; [www.hoteldellaferla.it](http://www.hoteldellaferla.it); Via A Gramsci; s €48-78, d €84-120; 📞 🕒 📶) This small, friendly hotel is located in a residential area near the train station, around 10 minutes' walk downhill from the historic centre. Rooms are large and bright, with pine furnishings, small balconies and free wi-fi.

## Eating

The people of Noto are serious about their food, so take time to enjoy a meal and follow it up with a visit to one of the town's excellent ice-cream shops.

**Trattoria del Carmine** (☎ 0931 83 87 05; Via Ducezio 1; meals €15-20) A low-key eatery that's popular with locals, serving classic Sicilian cuisine.

**Trattoria Ducezio** (☎ 347 858 73 19; Via Ducezio 51; meals €15-20) Ducezio is another popular local trattoria.

**Trattoria Baglieri Crocifisso** (☎ 0931 57 11 51; Via Principe Umberto 48; meals €25-30) This Slow Food-acclaimed trattoria is one of Noto's finest eateries. The list of bottled wines is extensive, but you can also get an excellent glass, starting at €3.50.

**Ristorante Il Cantuccio** (☎ 0931 83 74 64; Via Cavour 12; meals €30-35; 🍴 dinner Tue-Sun, lunch Sun) Chef Valentina presents a seasonally changing menu that combines familiar Sicilian ingredients in exciting new ways. Try her exquisite *gnocchi al pesto del Cantuccio* (ricotta-potato dumplings with basil, parsley, mint, capers, almonds and cherry tomatoes) and follow it up with *legaccio di spigola al limone con insalata d'arancia e finocchi* (lemon-stuffed bass with orange-fennel salad).

**Caffè Sicilia** (☎ 0931 83 50 13; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 125) Dating from 1892, this vies with Dolceria Corrado Costanzo (below) for the honours of Noto's best dessert shop. Sicilia is especially renowned for its *granite*.

**Dolceria Corrado Costanzo** (☎ 0931 83 52 43; Via Silvio Spaventa 9) This is just around the corner from Caffè Sicilia. Both make superb *dolci di mandorla* (almond cakes and sweets), cassata (with ricotta cheese, chocolate and candied fruit) and *torrone* (nougat). Costanzo is famous for its gelati.

## Getting There & Around

Noto is easily accessible by AST and Interbus buses from Catania (€6.70, 1¾ hours, 12 daily Monday to Saturday, seven on Sunday) and Syracuse (€3, 50 minutes, 12 daily Monday to Saturday). From June to August only, buses run frequently between Noto and Noto Marina. Trains from Syracuse are frequent (€3.20, 30 minutes, 11 daily), but the station is located 1.5km south of the bus station area.

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## MODICA

**pop 54,300 / 296m**

A powerhouse in Grecian times, Modica may have lost its pre-eminent position to Ragusa, but it remains a superbly atmospheric town with its ancient medieval buildings climbing steeply up either side of a deep gorge.

The multilayered town is divided into Modica Alta (Upper Modica) and Modica Bassa (Lower Modica). A devastating flood in 1902 resulted in the wide avenues of Corso Umberto and Via Giarrantana (the river was dammed and diverted), which remain the main axes of the town, lined by shabby *palazzi* and tiled stone houses.

Aside from simply wandering the streets and absorbing the atmosphere, a visit to the extraordinary **Chiesa di San Giorgio** (Modica Alta; 🕒 9am-noon & 4-7pm) is a highlight. This church, Gagliardi's masterpiece, is a vision of pure rococo splendour, a butter-coloured confection perched on a majestic 250-step staircase. Its counterpoint in Modica Bassa is the **Cattedrale di San Pietro** (Corso Umberto I), another impressive church atop a rippling staircase lined with life-sized statues of the Apostles.

Modica is also famous for its confectionary, a legacy of the town's Spanish overlords who imported

cocoa from their South American colonies. To taste some sweet crunchiness – flavoured with cinnamon, vanilla and orange peel – head for Sicily’s oldest chocolate factory, **Dolceria Bonajuto** (☎ 0932 94 12 25; [www.bonajuto.it](http://www.bonajuto.it); Corso Umberto I 159; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 4.30-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 4.30-8.30pm Sun).

## Sleeping & Eating

The quality-to-price ratio tends to be excellent, making Modica a top destination for discerning travellers.

**Albergo I Tetti di Siciliando** (☎ 0932 94 28 43; [www.siciliando.it](http://www.siciliando.it); Via Cannata 24, Modica Alta; s €30-35, d €42-60) A delightfully friendly guest house, with bright, artistically decorated rooms and balconies with views.

**Palazzo Failla** (☎ 0932 94 10 59; [www.palazzofailla.it](http://www.palazzofailla.it); Via Blandini 5, Modica Alta; r €100-195; ☎ ☎ ☎) This exquisitely restored 18th-century palace has retained its historical splendour, with original frescoed ceilings and hand-painted floor tiles. There’s a generous breakfast buffet, plus two good restaurants – one more traditional, one more innovative – under the same management nearby.

**Osteria dei Sapori Perduti** (☎ 0932 94 42 47; Corso Umberto I 228-230; meals €14-17) On Modica’s main drag, this attractive restaurant mixes rustic decor, elegantly dressed waiters, and very reasonable prices on Sicilian specialities like *cunigghju à stimpirata* (sweet and sour rabbit).

**Taverna Nicastro** (☎ 0932 94 58 84; Via S Antonino 28, Modica Alta; meals €13-19) With over 60 years of history and a Slow Food recommendation, this is one of the upper town’s most authentic and atmospheric restaurants; the nightly tourist menu is a bargain at €15 including antipasti, wine and dessert.

## Getting There & Away

From Modica’s train station, 600m east of the centre, eight trains daily (three on Sunday) leave for Syracuse (€6.65, 1¾ hours). Buses run two to four times daily to Syracuse (€5.80) and Ragusa (€2.20, 30 minutes) from Corso Umberto I near Chiesa di San Giorgio.

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## RAGUSA

pop 72,500 / elev 502m

Like a grand old dame, Ragusa is a dignified and well-aged provincial town largely overlooked by tourists. Like every other town in the region, Ragusa collapsed after the 1693 earthquake; a new town called Ragusa Superiore was built on a high plateau above the original settlement. But the old aristocracy were loathe to leave their tottering *palazzi* and rebuilt Ragusa Ibla on the original site. The two towns were only merged in 1927.

## Orientation

Ragusa Ibla remains the heart and soul of the town, and has all the best restaurants and the majority of sights. A perilous bus ride or some very steep steps connect the lower town to its modern sister up the hill.

## Information

**Ibl@café** (☎ 0932 68 31 08; Piazza della Repubblica 10; per hr €3; ☎ 7am-midnight) Internet cafe housed inside a bar.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0932 22 15 29; [www.ragusaturismo.it](http://www.ragusaturismo.it) in Italian; Via Capitano Bocchieri 33; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Mon-Fri & 4-6.30pm Tue)

## Sights

Grand churches and *palazzi* line the twisting, narrow streets of Ragusa Ibla, interspersed with gelaterie and delightful piazzas where the local elderly gather on benches. If you continue east from the Via 11 Febbraio intersection along Via del Mercato (which has excellent views of the valley below), you'll get your first view of palm-planted Piazza del Duomo, dominated by the **Cattedrale di San Giorgio** (☎ 10am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm). The cathedral, with its magnificent neoclassical dome and stained-glass windows, dates from 1739. The smaller **Chiesa di San Giuseppe** is on Piazza Pola, east of Piazza del Duomo.

At the eastern end of the old town is the **Giardino Ibleo** (☎ 8am-8pm), a pleasant public garden laid out in the 19th century that is perfect for a picnic lunch.

## Sleeping & Eating

All places listed here are in Ragusa Ibla, the picturesque lower town.

**Ai Giardini Iblei** (☎ 0932 24 68 44; [www.aigiardini.it](http://www.aigiardini.it); Via Normanni 4; s €35-40, d €50; ☎) Nicely positioned near the entrance to the public gardens, this simple B&B is run by a lovely Italian-Brazilian couple.

**our pick Risveglio Ibleo** (☎ 0932 24 78 11; [www.risveglioibleo.com](http://www.risveglioibleo.com); Largo Camerina 3; s €35-42.50, d €70-85; ☎) This welcoming place, housed in an 18th-century Liberty-style villa, has spacious, high-ceilinged rooms, walls hung with family portraits and a flower-flanked terrace overlooking the rooftops. The exceptionally warm older couple who run the place go out of their way to share local culture, including their own home-made culinary delights.

**Locanda Don Serafino** (☎ 0932 22 00 65; [www.locandadonserafino.it](http://www.locandadonserafino.it); Via XI Febbraio 15; s €118-165, d €148-195) This historic building near the Duomo has beautiful rooms, some with original vaulted stone ceilings. Guests have access to the hotel's private beach at Marina di Ragusa, 20km away.

**our pick Gelati DiVini** (☎ 0932 22 89 89; [www.gelatidivini.it](http://www.gelatidivini.it); Piazza Duomo 20; ice cream from €1.80) You've never had ice cream like this before! DiVini (which is a play on the words 'divine' and 'wine' in Italian) makes wine-flavoured ice creams like marsala, muscat and *traghetto d'acqua*, along with exceptional offerings like rose, fennel and wild mint, all derived from the original plant.

**Il Barocco** (☎ 0932 65 23 97; Via Orfanotrofia 29; meals €17-30) This beloved traditional restaurant has an evocative setting in an old stable block, the troughs now filled with wine bottles instead of water. You can taste cheeses and olive oils and purchase all sorts of exquisite hand-selected Sicilian gastronomic treats at the newly opened *enoteca* (wine bar) next door.

**Ristorante Duomo** (☎ 0932 65 12 65; Via Capitano Bocchieri 31; meals €75-90, tasting menu €120) It has been called Sicily's best restaurant. Inside, a quintet of small rooms are outfitted like private parlours, ensuring a suitably romantic atmosphere. Dishes reflect a creative approach to classic recipes.

## Getting There & Around

There are four daily trains to Syracuse (€7.25, 2¼ hours) via Noto (€5.40, 1½ hours).

**Interbus** (Viale Tenente Lena 42) runs daily buses to Catania (€6.95, two hours, six to 10 daily);

information and tickets are available at the nearby Caffè del Viale. **AST** (☎ 0932 68 18 18) offers service to Syracuse (€6.40, 2½ hours, six daily Monday to Saturday).

City buses 1 and 3 run from Piazza del Popolo in the upper town to Piazza Pola and the Giardino Ibleo in the lower town of Ragusa Ibla.

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## CENTRAL & SOUTHERN SICILY

This is an area of great panoramas, where coastal plains push inland to the mountains. The juxtapositions continue with undulating fields and severe mountain ridges; shabby hilltop towns and superb sandy beaches; and the busiest and most lauded classical site in Sicily – unfortunately set against hectares of hideous modern development. Persevere in this ancient landscape and you will be rewarded with an insight into a more authentic Sicily not yet sanitised for tourists.

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## ENNA

**pop 28,100 / elev 931m**

The highest provincial capital in Italy and a natural balcony frequently blanketed by cloud, this handsome working town and agricultural centre has long been the seat of a sacred cult of Demeter (the goddess of fertility). Throughout the Greek, Roman and Arab periods, Enna supplied far-flung places with grain, wheat, cotton and cane; a tradition it continues, albeit on a far smaller scale, today.

### Information

**Parco Savarese** (☎ 0935 50 22 14; [www.parcosavarese.it](http://www.parcosavarese.it); Via Roma 464; ☎ 3-7pm Mon, 9.30am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sat) More helpful than the official tourist office, the multilingual staff at this cultural centre offer information about Enna as well as internet access (€2 per hour).

**Tourist office** (☎ 0935 50 08 75; [www.ennaturismo.info](http://www.ennaturismo.info), in Italian; Piazza Colajanni; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri)

### Sights

Jealously guarded by locals, Enna's massive **Castello di Lombardia** (☎ 0935 50 09 62; Piazza Mazzini; admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm) is the most obvious physical manifestation of the inward-looking nature of Sicily's mountain villages. It is hardly surprising given the waves of invaders who sought to possess this mountain eyrie. This history is perfectly illustrated in the hotchpotch architecture of the **cathedral** (☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm), a catalogue of Graeco-Roman remains, medieval walls, Gothic doors and apses, Renaissance artwork and baroque carvings.

To enjoy a gorgeous sunset over the rust-red town of Calascibetta, situated on the opposite hill, head for Piazza Francesco Crispi and its spectacular **belvedere**.

### Festivals & Events

During **Holy Week** (Easter), thousands of people participate in a solemn procession to the cathedral,

wearing hoods and capes that represent the town's different religious confraternities.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Grande Albergo Sicilia** (☎ 0935 50 08 50; [www.hotelsiciliaenna.it](http://www.hotelsiciliaenna.it); Piazza Colajanni 7; s €55-62, d €75-91; 📄 📄 📄) Newly refurbished in 2009, Enna's best hotel has a panoramic breakfast terrace and cheery, comfortable rooms with kitsch gold-framed Botticelli prints and wrought-iron bedheads.

**Ristorante Centrale** (☎ 0935 50 09 63; Piazza VI Dicembre 9; meals €25; 📄 closed Sat in winter) This place has friendly service, an outside terrace and excellent traditional mountain food.

**Antica Hostaria** (☎ 0935 2 25 21; Via Castagna; meals €30; 📄 closed Mon night & Tue) This Slow Food-acclaimed eatery is famous for its pork *ragù*, an ancient mountain staple served only in winter; no worries if you're visiting in summer: the menu features other fine local recipes year-round.

**Alkenisa** (☎ 0935 2 64 35; Via Roma 481; 📄 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat) Up near the castle, this newly opened literary cafe is beautifully sited amid the restored stone walls of an ancient mosque-turned-church.

## Getting There & Around

Enna's official **bus station** (Viale Diaz) is in the historic upper town (Enna Alta); however, service is much more frequent from the separate stop called Enna Bassa, 3km downhill. **SAIS** (☎ 0935 50 09 02) runs buses (mostly from Enna Bassa) to Catania (€7.20, 1½ hours, nine daily Monday to Saturday) and Palermo (€9.20, 1¾ hours, six daily Monday to Saturday). For connections to Agrigento, head to Caltanissetta (€3.70, one hour, six daily Monday to Friday) Regular buses also run to Piazza Armerina (€3, 45 minutes, six daily Monday to Saturday). Service to all destinations is significantly reduced on Sunday.

The train station is inconveniently located at the bottom of a steep hill 3.5km northeast of Enna Alta. Trains service Catania (€6, 1¼ hours, three daily) and Palermo (€8.40, 2¼ hours, two daily); purchase tickets from the machine on the platform. Local buses (€1) make the run to town hourly (except Sunday, when you might have to wait a couple of hours between buses). You can call for a taxi on ☎ 0935 50 09 05.

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## VILLA ROMANA DEL CASALE

Situated 35km southeast of Enna and 5km southwest of Piazza Armerina is the **Villa Imperiale** (☎ 0935 68 00 36; [www.villaromanadelcasale.it](http://www.villaromanadelcasale.it); adult/concession €6/3; 📄 8am-6.30pm), a stunning 3rd-century Roman villa and one of the few remaining sites of Roman Sicily. This sumptuous hunting lodge is thought to have belonged to Diocletian's co-emperor Marcus Aurelius Maximianus. Buried under mud in a 12th-century flood, it remained hidden for 700 years before its magnificent floor mosaics were discovered in the 1950s. It is worth arriving out of season or early in the day to avoid the hordes of tourists.

The mosaics cover almost the entire floor (3500 sq metres) of the villa and are considered unique for their narrative style, the range of subject matter and variety of colour – many are clearly influenced by African themes. Along the eastern end of the internal courtyard is the wonderful **Corridor of the Great Hunt**, depicting chariots, rhinos, cheetahs and lions in rich golden colours. The stylised animals seem ready to jump out of the scene, watched by the voluptuously beautiful Queen of Sheba. On the other side

of the corridor is a series of apartments, where floor illustrations reproduce scenes from Homer. But perhaps the most captivating of the mosaics is the so-called **Room of the Ten Girls in Bikinis**, with depictions of sporty girls in scanty bikinis throwing a discus, using weights and throwing a ball; they would blend in well on a Malibu beach.

The helpful multilingual staff at **Omniaturist** (☎ 0935 68 66 54; Via Umberto I 3, Piazza Armerina; 📧 9am-8.30pm) provides free town maps and an Italian-English brochure about the villa and other local attractions.

From 1 May to 30 September, Autolinee Urbane runs eight buses daily to the villa (€0.70, 30 minutes), leaving Piazza Armerina's Piazza Manescalchi on the hour (9am to noon and 3pm to 6pm) and returning from the villa on the half-hour.

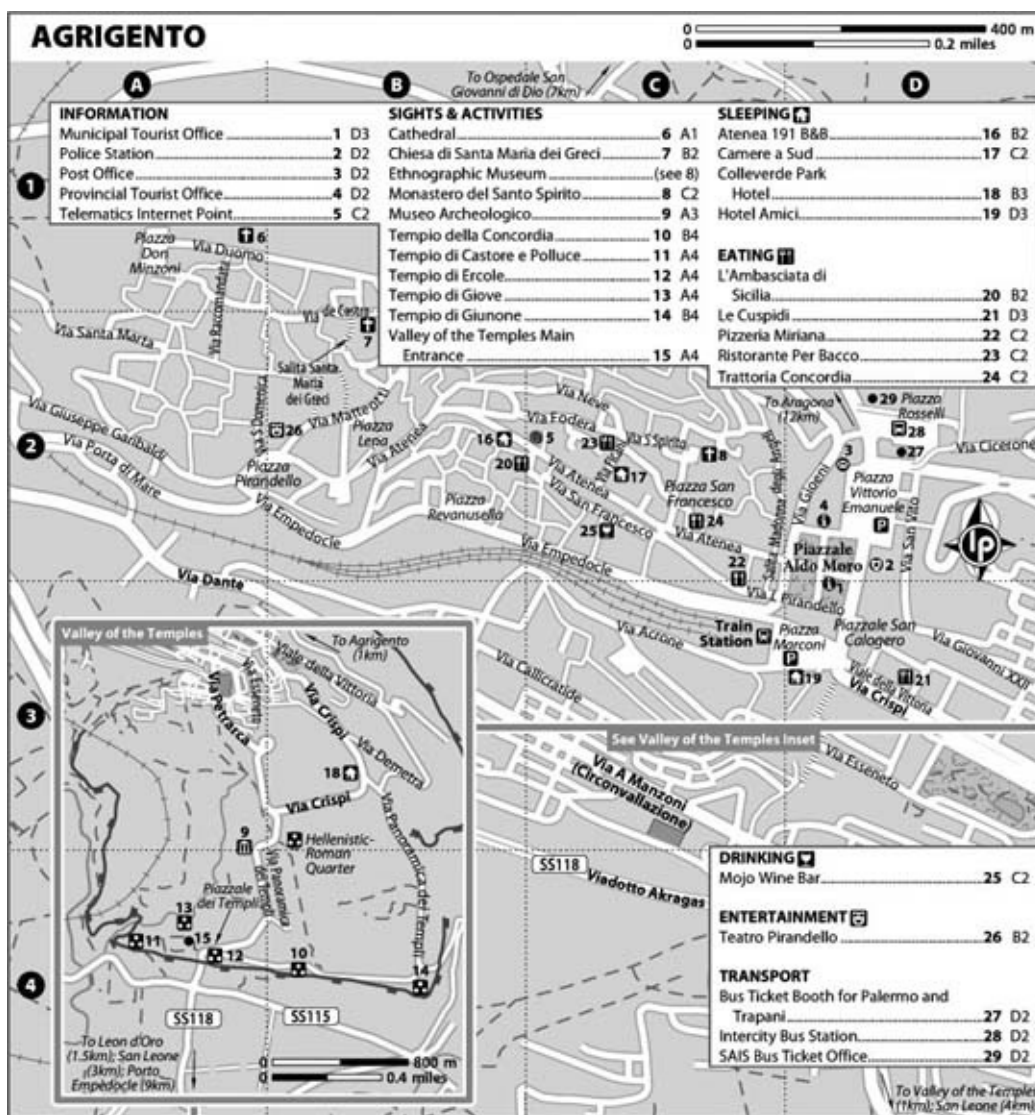
If visiting outside of summer, you'll have to walk (5km, mostly downhill), drive or get a taxi. Taxis (parked all over town) will take you there, wait for an hour and drive you back to Piazza Armerina for about €20. If you have your own car, head south along the SS117.

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## **AGRIGENTO**

**pop 59,200 / elev 230m**

Surrounded by green, Agrigento's rows of bland modern apartment blocks curve around Sicily's oldest tourist site (the Valley of the Temples, or Valle dei Templi), first put on the map by Goethe in the 18th century. In ancient times, Pindar declared that the people of Akragas were 'built for eternity but feasted as if there were no tomorrow'. Nowadays modern Agrigento, one of the liveliest and most aggressive cities in Sicily, has more in common with the character rather than the aesthetics of its ancient counterpart. Overshadowed by the new city on the hill above it, the splendid Valley of the Temples loses much of its immediate impact and it is only when you get down among the ruins that you can appreciate its true monumentality.



## Orientation

Intercity buses arrive on Piazza Rosselli; the train station is slightly south on Piazza Marconi. Running between Piazzale Aldo Moro and Piazza Pirandello is the main street of the medieval town, Via Atenea. Frequent city buses run to the Valley of the Temples below the town ([Click here](#)).

## Information

There are banks on Piazza Vittorio Emanuele I and along the high street, Via Atenea.

**Ambulance** (☎ 0922 40 13 44)

**Municipal tourist office** (☎ 0922 59 61 68; [hoteldoville@libero.it](mailto:hoteldoville@libero.it)) train station (🕒 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat); Piazzale Aldo Moro (🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Fri, 3-6pm Tue & Thu) Provides maps of Agrigento and information about the archaeological park.

**Ospedale San Giovanni di Dio** (☎ 0922 40 13 44; Contrada da Consolida)

**Police station** (☎ 0922 59 63 22; Piazzale Aldo Moro 2)

**Post office** (Piazza Vittorio Emanuele I)

**Provincial tourist office** (☎ 800 23 68 37; [www.provincia.agrigento.it](http://www.provincia.agrigento.it); Piazzale Aldo Moro; 🕒 8am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat) Provides local and regional information.

**Telematics Internet Point** (☎ 0922 40 27 83; Cortile Contarini 7; per hr €3.20; 🕒 9.15am-1.15pm & 3.30-9pm Mon-Sat) Internet and international phone service.



# Sights

## VALLEY OF THE TEMPLES

The Valley of the Temples is one of Sicily's premier attractions. A Unesco World Heritage site, it incorporates a complex of temples and old city walls from the ancient Greek city of Akragas. Despite the name, the five Doric temples stand along a ridge, designed as a beacon to homecoming sailors. Although in varying states of ruin, the temples give a tantalising glimpse of what must truly have been one of the most luxurious cities in Magna Graecia. The most scenic time to come is from February to March when the valley is awash with almond blossom. The main entrance to the Valley of the Temples is at Piazzale dei Templi which also has a large car park. There's a second entrance and ticket office, west of here, at the intersection of Viadotto Akragas and Via Panoramica dei Templi.

The **archaeological park** (☎ 0922 49 72 26; adult/concession/child €8/4/free, incl archaeological museum €10/5/free; 🕒 9am-11.30pm Jul & Aug, 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun & Mon Sep-Jun) is divided into two main sections. East of Via dei Templi are the most spectacular temples, the first of which is the **Tempio di Ercole** (Temple of Hercules), built towards the end of the 6th century BC and believed to be the oldest of the temples. Eight of its 38 columns were raised in 1924 to reveal a structure that was roughly the same size as the Parthenon. The magnificent **Tempio della Concordia** (Temple of Concord) is the only temple to survive relatively intact. Built around 440 BC, it was transformed into a Christian church in the 6th century. The **Tempio di Giunone** (Temple of Juno) stands high on the edge of the ridge, a five-minute walk to the east. Part of its colonnade remains and there's an impressive sacrificial altar.

Across Via dei Templi, to the west, is what remains of the massive **Tempio di Giove** (Temple of Jupiter), never actually completed and now totally in ruins, allowing you to appreciate the sheer size of the rocks. It covered an area of 112m by 56m with columns 20m high. Between the columns stood *telamoni* (colossal statues), one of which was reconstructed and is now in the Museo Archeologico (see right). A copy lies on the ground among the ruins and gives an idea of the immense size of the structure. Work began on the temple around 480 BC and it was probably destroyed during the Carthaginian invasion in 406 BC. The nearby **Tempio di Castore e Polluce** (Temple of Castor and Pollux) was partly reconstructed in the 19th century, although probably using pieces from other constructions. All the temples are atmospherically lit up at night.

The **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0922 4 01 11; Contrada San Nicola; adult/concession €6/3; 🕒 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun & Mon), north of the temples, has a huge collection of clearly labelled artefacts from the excavated site. It also has wheelchair access.

## MEDIEVAL AGRIGENTO

Roaming around the town's lively, winding streets is relaxing after a day among the temples. The **Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Greci** (Salita Santa Maria dei Greci; 🕒 8am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Sat), uphill from Piazza Lena (at the end of Via Atenea), is an 11th-century Norman church built on the site of a 5th-century-BC Greek temple. Note the remains of the wooden Norman ceiling and some Byzantine frescoes. If the church is closed, check with the custodian at Salita Santa Maria dei Greci 1, who will open the doors for you (don't forget to tip).

Further up the hill is the fragile-looking **cathedral** (Via Duomo; 🕒 9am-noon & 4-7pm). Built in AD 1000, it has been restructured many times, and is dedicated to the Norman San Gerlando. Back towards the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele I, the **Monastero del Santo Spirito** was founded by Cistercian nuns at the end of the 13th century. Giacomo Serpotta is responsible for the stuccoes in the chapel. There's a small **Ethnographic Museum** (☎ 0922 59 03 71; Via Foderà; admission free; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 4.30-6.30pm

Mon-Sat) above the old church. The nuns here will sell you cakes and pastries, including *dolci di mandorla*, *cuscusu* (couscous made of almonds and pistachio) and *bucellati* (rolled sweet dough with figs).

## Tours

The tourist office can provide you with a list of multilingual guides. The official rate is €95 to €115 for a half-day.

**Michele Gallo** (☎ 0922 40 22 57) is an excellent English-speaking guide who can organise individual and group itineraries (two to 3½ hours) according to travellers' specific interests.

## Festivals & Events

The **Sagra del Mandorlo in Fiore** is a huge folk festival held on the first Sunday in February, when the Valley of the Temples is cloaked in almond blossom.

**Festa di San Calògero** (Feast of St Calògero) is held on the first Sunday in July. It's a week-long festival in which the statue of St Calògero (who saved Agrigento from the plague) is carried through the town while spectators throw spiced loaves at it.

## Sleeping

The places listed below all offer good value for money.

**Hotel Amici** (☎ 0922 40 28 31; [www.hotelamici.com](http://www.hotelamici.com); Via Acrone 5; s €35-45, d €65-75; 🚿) Directly across from the train station, the Amici is a good budget option, with plain but spotlessly clean rooms, comfortable beds, free wi-fi in the lobby and excellent facilities for disabled travellers.

**Atenea 191 B&B** (☎ 349 59 55 94; [www.atenea191.com](http://www.atenea191.com); Via Atenea 191; s €35-55, d €50-85) The gregarious, multilingual and well-travelled Sonia runs this B&B on Agrigento's main shopping thoroughfare. The breakfast terrace has sweeping views over the valley, as do some rooms. Sonia is a great source of local travel tips and an entertaining storyteller (ask about her close encounters with whales and sharks, or her trip to Antarctica).

**Camere a Sud** (☎ 349 638 44 24; [www.camereasad.it](http://www.camereasad.it); Via Ficani 6; r €60-70) Run by a friendly Agrigentan couple, this extremely cute and well-signposted B&B has cheerful rooms and a delightful roof terrace. Cash only.

**Colleverde Park Hotel** (☎ 0922 2 95 55; [www.colleverde-hotel.it](http://www.colleverde-hotel.it); Via Panoramica dei Templi; d €130-190; 🚗 🚻 🚿) A good choice if you have a car, this hotel halfway between the town and the valley looks disarmingly modern and blockish, but the lushly landscaped gardens are lovely and the rooms bright and comfortable.

## Eating

**Le Cuspidi** (☎ 0922 59 59 14; Viale della Vittoria; ice cream from €1; 🕒 9am-late) This fabulous gelateria is the perfect antidote to Agrigento's oppressive heat. Especially scrumptious is the pistachio, flecked with nuts and oh so creamy.

**Pizzeria Miriana** (☎ 0922 2 28 28; Via Pirandello 6; pizza slices €1.20) This is a local favourite for good, cheap pizza.

**Trattoria Concordia** (☎ 0922 2 26 68; Via Porcello 8; meals €18-30) Tucked up a side alley, this

rustic trattoria with exposed stone and stucco walls specialises in grilled fish along with traditional Sicilian *primi* like *casarecce con pesce spada, melanzane e menta* (pasta with swordfish, eggplant and mint).

**Ristorante Per Bacco** (☎ 0922 55 33 69; Vicolo Lo Presti 2; meals from €17; 🍴 dinner Tue-Sun) The set menus – including antipasto, *primo*, *secondo*, *contorno*, local wine, water and dessert for under €20 – are a great deal at this restaurant just above Via Atenea.

**L'Ambasciata di Sicilia** (☎ 0922 2 05 26; Via Giambertoni 2; meals €20-25; 🍴 Mon-Sat) At the 'Sicilian Embassy', they do everything they can to improve foreign relations, plying tourists with tasty plates of traditional Sicilian fare. Try to get a table on the small outdoor terrace, which has splendid views.

**Leon d'Oro** (☎ 0922 41 44 00; Viale Emporium 102; meals €30; 🍴 closed Mon) An excellent restaurant that warrants its high prices and perfectly mixes the fish and fowl that typify Agrigento cuisine. Try the *coniglio in agrodolce* (rabbit in a sweet sauce) or the *triglia e macco di fave* (mullet with broad beans).

## Drinking

**Mojo Wine Bar** (☎ 0922 46 30 13; Piazza San Francesco 11-13; 🍴 Mon-Sat) A trendy *enoteca* (wine bar) in a pretty piazza. Enjoy a cool white Inzolia, and munch on olives and spicy salami, as you listen to laid-back jazz.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

For most destinations, bus is the easiest way to get to and from Agrigento. The intercity bus station and ticket booths are located on Piazza Rosselli, just off Piazza Vittorio Emanuele I. **Autoservizi Camilleri** (☎ 0922 59 64 90) runs buses to Palermo (€8.10, two hours, five daily Monday to Saturday, two on Sunday). **Lumia** (☎ 0922 2 91 36; [www.autolineelumia.it](http://www.autolineelumia.it)) has departures to Trapani (€11.10, three to four hours, three daily Monday to Saturday, one on Sunday) and **SAIS** (☎ 0922 2 93 24) runs buses to Catania (€12.20, three hours, hourly).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The SS189 links Agrigento with Palermo, while the SS115 runs along the coast, northwest towards Trapani and southeast to Syracuse. To get to Enna, take the SS640 via Caltanissetta.

Driving in the medieval town is near impossible due to all the pedestrianised streets. There's metered parking at the train station (Piazza Marconi) and free parking along Via Esseneto just below.

### TRAIN

Trains run regularly to Palermo (€7.85, 2¼ hours, 11 daily). There's also one daily train to Catania (€10.95, 3¾ hours). Although trains serve other destinations as well, you're better off taking the bus.

The train station has left-luggage lockers on the lower level (€2.50 per 12 hours).

## Getting Around

City buses (€1) run down to the Valley of the Temples from in front of the train station. Take bus 1, 2 or 3 and get off at either the museum or the Piazzale dei Templi. Bus 1 continues to Porto Empedocle and bus 2

continues to San Leone. The Linea Verde (Green Line) bus runs hourly from the train station to the cathedral.

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## AROUND AGRIGENTO

Twenty-three kilometres due west of Agrigento, **Siculiana Marina** has a pleasant unspoilt beach and a World Wildlife Fund—protected park nearby. If you want to stay overnight, beachfront **Hotel Paguro** (☎ 0922 81 55 12; [www.hotelresidencepaguro.it](http://www.hotelresidencepaguro.it); s €35-40, d €60-70, 5-person apt per week €700-750) has spacious rooms and family-sized apartments, many with sea views. Or head for well-signposted **Camping Canne** (☎ 338 747 66 60; campsite per person €7.50-10), whose facilities include a mini-market and restaurant. Just in from the sweeping Lido Sabbia d’Oro beach, **La Scogliera** (☎ 0922 81 75 32; Via S Pietro; meals €25-35) has excellent fresh seafood, an unforgettable *sorbetto di limone e basilico* (lemon-basil sorbet), a good wine list and a terrace overlooking the sea.

The stunning 761-hectare natural park, **Riserva Naturale di Torre Salsa** ([www.wwfitorresalsa.it](http://www.wwfitorresalsa.it)), administered by the World Wildlife Fund, is signposted at the approach to the marina; alternatively, you can follow the SS115 10km north of Siculiana Marina to the second Montallegro exit and follow the signs for ‘WWF Riserva Naturale Torre Salsa’. There’s plenty of scope for walkers here with well-marked trails and sweeping panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and coast. The long, deserted Torre Salsa beach (reached from the northern entrance) is especially beautiful, although the access road is rough.

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## SELINUNTE

The ruins of Selinunte are the most impressively sited in Sicily. Try to visit in spring when the surroundings are ablaze with purple, yellow and white wildflowers. The huge city was built in 628 BC on a promontory overlooking the sea, and for 2½ centuries it was one of the richest and most powerful in the world. It was destroyed by the Carthaginians in 409 BC and finally fell to the Romans in about 350 BC, at which time it went into rapid decline and disappeared from historical accounts.

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## SIDE TRIP: THE PELAGIC ISLANDS

Burnt out on temples and tour buses? Consider a trip to the Isole Pelagie (Pelagic Islands), a three-island archipelago halfway between Agrigento and Africa. Home to some spectacular beaches – Lampedusa’s Spiaggia dei Conigli makes it onto many world Top 10 lists – it’s also reputed to have the cleanest waters in Italy, and it’s hard to disagree once you get an eyeful of that dazzling aquamarine colour.

From May through October, **Ustica Lines** ([www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it)) runs hydrofoils (€53.90, 4¼ hours) daily to Lampedusa and its sister island Linosa (€34.10, three hours) from Porto Empedocle just outside of Agrigento.

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The city’s past is so remote that the names of the various temples have been forgotten and they are now identified by the letters A to G, M and O. The most impressive, **Temple E**, has been partially rebuilt, its

columns pieced together from their fragments with part of its tympanum. Many of the carvings, particularly from **Temple C**, are now on display in the archaeological museum in Palermo ([Click here](#)). Their quality is on a par with the Parthenon marbles and clearly demonstrates the high cultural levels reached by many Greek colonies in Sicily.

No visit to Selinunte is complete without a walk along the beach below the city, from where there are marvellous views of the temples. The road down is to the left of the parking area adjacent to Temple C.

The **ticket office** (☎ 0924 4 62 51; adult/concession/child €6/3/free; 🕒 9am-1hr before sunset) is located near the eastern temples. Just within the site you can join a tour by electric cart (half-hour/two hours costs €3/€12) to explore the enormous site.

## Sleeping & Eating

Selinunte is close to the fishing village and popular Italian resort of Marinella di Selinunte. There are several beachfront hotels that drop prices drastically in the off-season.

**Hotel Miramare** (☎ 0924 4 60 45; [www.hotelmiramareselinunte.com](http://www.hotelmiramareselinunte.com); Via Pigafetta 2; s €40-45, d €60-80) With its bland decor and plastic deck furniture, this hotel won't win any style awards, but it's hard to argue with the free access to Miramare's private beach below. Several rooms have terraces facing the sea, and there's also a waterfront restaurant with distant temple views where you can grab a bite or a drink between swims.

**our pick Vittorio** (☎ 0925 7 83 81; Porto Palo; meals €25-45) If you've got a car, this is one detour you absolutely shouldn't miss. In business for over 40 years, Vittorio has earned a reputation as one of Sicily's best seafood eateries, serving hefty portions of the freshest fish and shellfish around. Come here at sunset and dine to the sound of crashing breakers. It's right on the beach in Porto Palo, a 15km drive east of Selinunte. Rooms are available upstairs for anyone too stuffed to drive home (single/double €60/80).

## Getting There & Away

**Autoservizi Salemi** (☎ 0924 8 18 26) runs six buses daily from Selinunte to Castelvetro (€0.90, 30 minutes), where you can make onward bus connections to Agrigento, or train connections to Marsala (€3.70, 40 minutes), Trapani (€5.40, 1¼ hours) and Palermo (€7.25, 2½ hours).

If travelling by car, take the Castelvetro exit off the A29 and follow the brown signs for about 6km. If you're driving from Agrigento, take the SS115 and follow the signposts.

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## WESTERN SICILY

The west of the island is a different Sicily from the ordered and industrious east. Colonised by Arabs who preferred carefree indulgence to orderly Greek temples, western Sicily has a bit of the Wild West about it – which is all part of the appeal. There's plenty to incite the senses here, ranging from unpretentious fishing towns to one of Sicily's finest nature reserves, the Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro. The offshore cluster of islands, Pantelleria and the Egadi archipelago, are steeped in history and prehistory – the latter was once a land bridge between Italy and North Africa.

# MARSALA

## pop 82,500

Best known for its sweet dessert wines, the historic centre of Marsala is an elegant town full of stately baroque buildings and bookshops within a perfect square of walls.

It was founded by the Phoenicians who escaped the Roman onslaught at Mozia. Not taking any chances, they fortified their city with 7m-thick walls, which ensured it was the last Punic settlement to fall to the Romans. In AD 830 it was conquered by the Arabs, who gave it its current name, Marsa Allah (Port of God).

It was here in 1860 that Giuseppe Garibaldi, leader of the movement for Italian unification, landed in his rickety, old boats with his 1000-strong army – a claim to fame that finds its way into every tourist brochure.

## Information

**Biblioteca Comunale** (Via XI Maggio 65; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Free internet access in the public library just off Piazza della Repubblica.

**Hospital** (☎ 0923 71 60 31; Contrada Cardilla) Marsala's brand-new hospital is on the eastern outskirts of town.

**Police station** (☎ 0923 71 88 11; Via Verdi 1)

**Post office** (Via Garibaldi)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0923 71 40 97; ufficioturisticoproloco@comune.marsala.tp.it; Via XI Maggio 100; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) A friendly tourist office with a good map and brochures.

## Sights & Activities

Marsala's finest treasure is the partially reconstructed remains of a Carthaginian *liburna* (warship) in the **Museo Archeologico Baglio Anselmi** (☎ 0923 95 25 35; Lungomare Boeo; admission €3; ☎ 9am-6pm). Sunk off the Egadi Islands during the first of the Punic Wars nearly 3000 years ago, the ship's bare bones are the only remaining physical evidence of the Phoenicians' seafaring superiority in the 3rd century BC. The ship resonates with history – especially if you see it after you visit the excavations on [San Pantaleo](#) – giving a glimpse of a civilisation that was extinguished by the Romans.

Marsala's other sights are limited to the **Museo degli Arazzi Fiammingi** (☎ 0923 71 13 27; Via Giuseppe Garraffa 57; admission €2.50; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 4.30-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30-12.30 Sun), which displays eight 16th-century Flemish tapestries woven for Spanish king Philip II, and the adjoining **cathedral** on elegant Piazza della Repubblica. Although the cathedral was built in the 17th century, it wasn't actually completed until 1956 when a returning emigrant donated some much-needed cash.

## Festivals & Events

The **Processione del Giovedì Santo** (Holy Thursday Procession) is a centuries-old tradition, where actors depict the events leading up to Christ's crucifixion.

## Sleeping

Marsala has few hotels within the historic centre.

**Villa Favorita** (☎ 0923 98 91 00; [www.villafavorita.com](http://www.villafavorita.com); Via Favorita 27; s €60-100, d €85-125; 📶 📶 📶) This 19th-century villa surrounded by lovely gardens has an old Spanish hacienda feel, but it's also jam-packed with 21st-century amenities including tennis courts and wi-fi. Choose between the large rooms in the main hotel or the poolside bungalows out back.

**Hotel Carmine** (☎ 0923 71 19 07; [www.hotelcarmine.it](http://www.hotelcarmine.it); Piazza Carmine 16; s €70-90, d €100-125; 📶 📶 📶) This lovely hotel in a 16th-century monastery has elegant rooms (especially numbers 7 and 30), with original blue-and-gold majolica tiles, stone walls, antique furniture and lofty beamed ceilings. Enjoy your cornflakes in the baronial-style breakfast room with its historic frescoes and over-the-top chandelier, or sip your drink by the roaring fireplace in winter. Modern perks include wi-fi and a rooftop solarium.

## Eating

**Divino...Rosso** (☎ 0923 71 17 70; Via XI Maggio; pizzas €5-7, meals €20-30; 🕒 7-11pm) With outdoor tables on Marsala's main pedestrian thoroughfare, this excellent restaurant and wine bar serves pizzas, over 150 different wines and an extensive menu of local dishes.

**Trattoria Garibaldi** (☎ 0923 95 30 06; Piazza Addolorata 35; meals €18-28; 🕒 closed lunch Sat & dinner Sun) This reliable trattoria, a perennial favourite of the Slow Food judges, has a pleasant traditional dining space and serves hearty Sicilian fare, with an emphasis on seafood.

**Il Gallo e l'Innamorata** (☎ 0923 195 44 46; Via San Bilardello 18; meals €20-25) Warm orange walls and arched stone doorways lend an artsy, convivial atmosphere to this Slow Food—acclaimed eatery. The menu is short and sweet, featuring a few well-chosen dishes each day, including the classic *scaloppine* (veal cooked with marsala wine and lemon).

## Shopping

Tipplers should head to **Cantine Florio** (☎ 0923 78 11 11; [www.cantineflorio.it](http://www.cantineflorio.it); Lungomare Florio; tours €5; 🕒 tasting room 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, English-language tours 11am & 4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am Sat) on the road to Mazara del Vallo (bus 16 from Piazza del Popolo). Florio opens its doors to visitors to explain the process of making Marsala wine and to give you a taste of the goods. Pellegrino, Donnafugata, Rallo, Mavis and Intorcia are other producers in the same area. Booking is recommended; ask at the tourist office.

You can sample and buy the wine in town at several *enoteche*, including classy **La Sirena Ubriaca** ([www.sicilywine.com](http://www.sicilywine.com); Via Garibaldi 39).

## Getting There & Away

From Marsala, buses run to Agrigento (Lumia bus company; €9.20, 2½ to 3½ hours, one to three daily) Trapani (AST; €3, 30 minutes, four daily Monday to Saturday) and Palermo (Salemi; €8.60, 2½ hours, 15 daily).

There's also regular train service to Trapani (€3.20, 30 minutes, 14 daily) and Palermo (€8.70, 3½ hours, six daily).

**Ustica Lines** (☎ 348 357 98 63; [www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it)) runs daily hydrofoils to Favignana year-round (€8.80) and to Marettimo from June through September (€15.30).

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# SALINE DI TRAPANI

Drive along the SS115 coast road between Marsala and Trapani and you will find yourself in a bleached landscape of shallow *saline* (salty pools) and softly shimmering heaps of salt. The salt from these pans is considered the best in Italy and has been big business since the 12th century. Now, however, only a cottage industry remains, providing for Italy's more discerning dinner tables.

The most attractive spot along the coast is the **Riserva Naturale di Stagnone**, a shallow lagoon and noted wetlands area. In the foreground floats the site of ancient **Mozia** (see boxed text, opposite) on the tiny island of **San Pantaleo**, connected to the mainland by a Phoenician road that can still be seen at a depth of 1m below the water. The island is accessible by a private boat (€5 return), which departs every 25 minutes from 9am to 6:30pm.

The island (5km north of Marsala) was bought in 1888 by the amateur archaeologist Joseph Whitaker, who spent decades excavating and assembling the unique collection of Phoenician artefacts that now appear in the **Whitaker Museum** (☎ 0923 71 25 98; adult/concession €9/5; 🕒 9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mar-Sep). The museum's main treasure is *Il Giovinetto di Mozia*, a marble statue of a young man in a pleated robe suggesting Carthaginian influences.

On the mainland near the pier is the small **Museo Saline Ettore e Infersa** (☎ 0923 73 30 03; admission €4; 🕒 9.30am-sunset Apr-Oct, by appointment Nov-Mar), a salt museum housed in an old windmill. The museum shows a film in multiple languages about the history of salt production in this area. Ask at the reception about renting bikes (€10 per half-day) and canoes (€6 per hour, summer only).

There's a busy cafe, **Mamma Caura** (☎ 0923 96 60 36; meals €30-35), opposite the pier, with outdoor tables overlooking the lagoon. It's a lovely place for an evening drink as the sun turns the salt pans rosy pink. The menu features dishes made with *aglio rosso di Nubia*, a variety of red garlic grown only in this area. Above the cafe, **La Finestra sul Sale** (☎ 348 380 4301) rents out three attractive beamed rooms (single/double €100/130) with views over the salt pans.

To get here from Marsala, take bus 4 from the Piazza del Popolo (€0.80, 25 minutes, Monday to Saturday).

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## TRAPANI

**pop 70,600**

The lively port city of Trapani makes a wonderful base for exploring Sicily's western tip. Its historic centre is filled with atmospheric pedestrian streets and some lovely churches and baroque buildings. The surrounding countryside is beautiful, ranging from the watery vastness of the coastal salt ponds to the rugged mountainous shoreline north of town.

Once situated at the heart of a powerful trading network that stretched from Carthage to Venice, Trapani's sickle-shaped spit of land hugs the precious harbour, nowadays busy with a steady stream of tourists and traffic to and from Tunisia, Pantelleria and the Egadi Islands.

## Orientation

The main bus station is on Piazza Montalto, with the train station around the corner on Piazza Umberto I. The cheaper hotels are in the heart of the old centre, about 500m west. Make for Piazza Scarlatti down Corso Italia. The narrow streets of the old part of town can be a nightmare to negotiate if you're driving,



so head for the port and park near there.

## Information

Trapani has dozens of banks with ATMs.

**Egatours** (☎ 0923 2 17 54; [www.egatourviaggi.it](http://www.egatourviaggi.it); Via Ammiraglio Staiti 13) Travel agency for bus, plane and ferry tickets.

**Emergency doctor** (☎ 0923 2 96 29; Piazza Generale Scio 1)

**Internet Point** (Via Regina Elena 26-28; per hr €5; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat)

**Ospedale Sant'Antonio Abate** (☎ 0923 80 91 11, casualty 0923 80 94 50; Via Cosenza)

**Police station** (☎ 0923 59 81 11; Piazza Vittoria Veneto)

**Post office** (Piazza Vittoria Veneto)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0923 2 90 00; [infotp@micso.net](mailto:infotp@micso.net); Casina delle Palme, Piazza Garibaldi; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) One of Sicily's friendliest and most informative tourist offices, thanks to Agostino Mighali, who's worked here since 1978.

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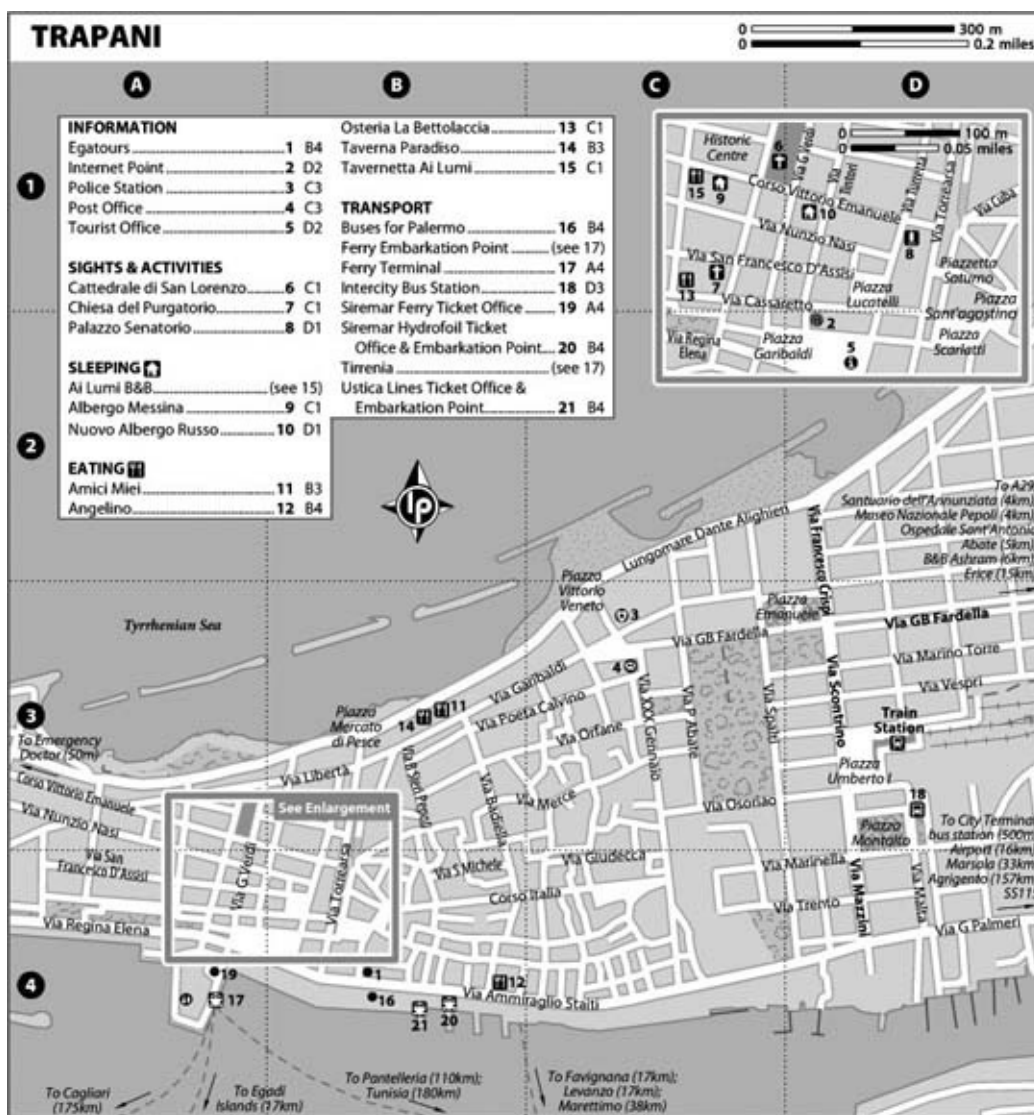
## SPOILS UNDERFOOT

In mid-2005 a Phoenician temple was unearthed in Mozia, at the site of the ancient city of Motya, after a portion of a lagoon was drained. When the pool began to fill up again, a freshwater spring was discovered, indicating that this was once probably a holy place. Phoenicians typically placed their cities on the coast near water springs, which for them symbolised a divine presence. Digs are continuing at the site after the thrilling discovery, which includes Phoenician columns and fragments of an obelisk. The most recent discovery in August 2006 was 40 sarcophagi unearthed at the sacred Phoenician burial grounds of nearby Birgi. The tombs were discovered by chance by a group of construction workers excavating the foundations of a house. Given Sicily's extraordinary history as heir to many cultures and civilisations, it makes one ponder exactly what other riches are waiting to be discovered.

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## Sights

The narrow network of streets in Trapani's historic centre remains a Moorish labyrinth, although it takes much of its character from the fabulous 18th-century baroque of the Spanish period – a catalogue of examples can be found down the pedestrianised **Via Garibaldi**. The best time to walk down here is in the early evening (around 7pm) when the *passeggiata* is in full swing.



Trapani's other main street is Corso Vittorio Emanuele, punctuated by the huge **Cattedrale di San Lorenzo** (Corso Vittorio Emanuele; ☎ 8am-4pm), with its baroque facade and stuccoed interior. Facing off the east end of the corso is another baroque confection, the **Palazzo Senatorio**.

Just off the corso, south along Via Generale Dom Giglio, is the **Chiesa del Purgatorio** (☎ 0923 56 28 82; Via San Francesco d'Assisi; ☎ 4-6.30pm), which houses the impressive 18th-century *Misteri*, 20 life-sized wooden effigies depicting the story of Christ's Passion (used in *I Misteri*; see opposite).

Trapani's major sight is the 14th-century **Santuario dell'Annunziata** (Via Conte Agostino Pepoli 179; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-7pm), 4km east of the centre. The Cappella della Madonna, behind the high altar, contains the venerated *Madonna di Trapani*, thought to have been carved by Nino Pisano.

Adjacent to the Santuario dell'Annunziata, in a former Carmelite monastery, is the **Museo Nazionale Pepoli** (☎ 0923 55 32 69; Via Conte Agostino Pepoli 200; adult/concession €4/free; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun). It houses the collection of Conte Pepoli, who made it his business to salvage much of Trapani's local arts and crafts, not least the garish coral carvings – once all the rage in Europe before the banks of coral off Trapani were decimated. The museum also has a good collection of Gagini sculptures, silverwork, archaeological artefacts and religious artwork.

## Festivals & Events

**I Misteri** (Easter Holy Week), Sicily's most venerated Easter procession, is a four-day festival of extraordinary religious fervour. Nightly processions, bearing life-sized wooden effigies, make their way through the old quarter to a specially erected chapel in Piazza Lucatelli. The high point is on Good Friday

when the celebrations reach fever pitch.

## Sleeping

Trapani has a limited choice of small hotels and *pensioni*. The best options are, thankfully, in the historic centre.

**Albergo Messina** (☎ 0923 2 11 98; [albergomessina@libero.it](mailto:albergomessina@libero.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele 71; s/d without bathroom €20/40) The entertaining Albergo Messina is run by an ancient Trapanesi couple. It is cheap and basic but a real insight into 1950s Italy. Beware of being greeted by a quizzical old guy in his dressing gown – he’s your host! Breakfast costs an extra €3.50.

**B&B Ashram** (☎ 0923 56 06 06; [www.ashram.it](http://www.ashram.it); Via Martogna 16; d €60; ☎) This 16th-century former monastery 4km from Trapani on the road from Erice is being sensitively restored by the architect Fluvio and his wife. There are six rooms, plus a living room in the former sacristy; the adjacent chapel is also being restored to its former glory. There are superb views, and a farmyard of animals, including cows, chickens and donkeys, creates a delightful rural atmosphere.

**Nuovo Albergo Russo** (☎ 0923 2 21 63; [www.nuovoalbergorusso.it](http://www.nuovoalbergorusso.it); Via Tintori 4; s €40-45, d €70-85; ☎) This small, somewhat eccentric *albergo* is in a superb location across from the cathedral; the rooms have small balconies and are clean and bright. Some have been remodelled, but many retain their dated 1950s decor and furniture.

**Ai Lumi B&B** (☎ 0923 54 09 22; [www.ailumi.it](http://www.ailumi.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele 71; s €50-70, d €80-100, 3-/4-/5-person apt €105/130/145; ☎) Housed in an 18th-century *palazzo* on Trapani’s most elegant pedestrian street, Ai Lumi offers good-value rooms and small apartments furnished with wrought-iron beds. Guests receive a discount at the Tavernetta Ai Lumi next door (right).

## Eating

Sicily’s Arab heritage and Trapani’s unique position on the sea route to Tunisia have made couscous (‘*cuscus*’ or ‘*kuscus*’ as they spell it around here) a local speciality.

**Angelino** (☎ 0923 2 80 64; Via Ammiraglio Staiti 87; ☎ 6.30am-midnight) On the waterfront near the hydrofoil docks, this is a convenient place to pick up Sicilian sweets, snacks, light meals or other provisions before heading off to the islands.

**Amici Miei** (☎ 0923 2 59 07; Lungomare Dante Alighieri 30; pizzas €4-10; ☎ dinner) On balmy evenings, locals throng the sidewalk tables at this lively pizzeria across from Trapani’s northern waterfront.

**Osteria La Bettolaccia** (☎ 0923 2 16 95; Via Generale Enrico Fardella 25; meals €25-35; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) An unwaveringly authentic, Slow Food–recommended restaurant, this is the perfect place to try *cuscus con pesce a zuppa* (couscous with mixed seafood in a spicy fish sauce flavoured with tomatoes, garlic and parsley).

**Tavernetta Ai Lumi** (☎ 0923 87 24 18; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 73-77; meals €30-45) Converted from an 18th-century stable block, this tavern is rustic to the core. Exposed brickwork, heavy wooden furniture and huge arches lend the dining room great character, while the outside terrace, in the heart of historic Trapani, is delightful on summer evenings. The menu features plenty of fresh seafood along with superbly prepared local classics such as *casarecce al pesto trapanese* (pasta with a sauce of tomatoes, toasted almonds and garlic).

**Taverna Paradiso** (☎ 0923 2 23 03; Lungomare Dante Alighieri 22; meals €30-50; 🍴 dinner daily, lunch Tue-Sat) This is Trapani's best restaurant, where Dolce & Gabbana—clad women and bejewelled men gorge themselves on succulent seafood specialities from an encyclopaedic 24-page menu. Reservations are essential, as is donning the glad rags.

## Getting There & Around

### AIR

Trapani's small **Vincenzo Florio Airport** (TPS; ☎ 0923 84 25 02) is 16km south of town at Birgi.

**Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) flies to and from Birmingham, Dublin and London Luton; other destinations include Pantelleria, Rome and Tunis.

AST buses connect Trapani's port and bus station with the airport (€3.50, 45 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, seven on Sunday).

### BOAT

Trapani's main **ferry terminal** (☎ 0923 54 54 11) is located opposite Piazza Garibaldi. Inside you'll find ticket offices for Tirrenia and Siremar ferries.

For Ustica Lines and Siremar hydrofoils, the ticket office and embarkation point is 150m further east along Via Ammiraglio Staiti.

**Ustica Lines** (☎ 0923 87 38 13; [www.usticalines.it](http://www.usticalines.it); Via Ammiraglio Staiti) runs hydrofoils year-round to Favignana (€9.80, 20 to 40 minutes depending on routing), Levanzo (€9.80, 20 to 40 minutes) and Marettimo (€17.30, one to 1½ hours), plus thrice-weekly summer-only services to Ustica (€24.40, three hours) and Naples (€89.40, seven hours).

**Siremar** (☎ 0923 54 54 55; [www.siremar.it](http://www.siremar.it); Via Ammiraglio Staiti) runs ferries and hydrofoils to Favignana, Levanzo and Marettimo for similar prices as Ustica Lines, plus a daily ferry to Pantelleria (€31, six hours) at midnight from June to September.

**Tirrenia** (☎ 0923 52 18 96; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it); ferry terminal) runs a weekly service to Cagliari (seat €49, 2nd-class cabin €120, 10 hours).

**Grimaldi Lines** ([www.grimaldi-ferries.com](http://www.grimaldi-ferries.com)) also runs weekly services to Tunisia (€50, eight hours) and Civitavecchia (€80, 14 hours). Tickets can be purchased at [Egatours](#).

### BUS

Intercity buses arrive and depart from the new City Terminal bus station on Piazza Papa Giovanni Paolo II. Tickets can be bought from kiosks in the station or at [Egatours](#) near the port.

**Segesta** (☎ 0923 2 17 54) runs express buses connecting Trapani with Palermo (€8.60, two hours, hourly Monday to Saturday). You can board at the bus stop across the street from Egatours or at the bus station.

**AST** (☎ 0923 2 32 22) runs from Trapani's bus station to Erice (one way/return €2.20/3.40, 45 minutes, 10 daily) and Marsala (one way/return €3/4.90, 30 minutes, four daily). Autoservizi **Tarantola** (☎ 0924 3 10 20) runs service to Segesta (one way/return €3.40/5.60, 35 to 50 minutes, four daily).

**Lumia** (☎ 0923 2 17 54) buses serve Agrigento (€11.10, three to four hours, one to three daily).

Two free city buses (No 10 and 11) do circular trips through Trapani, connecting the bus station, the train station and the port.

## TRAIN

Trapani is linked to Palermo (€7.35, 2½ hours, 10 daily) and Marsala (€3.20, 30 minutes, 14 daily). The train is the best option for travelling along this coast.

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## ERICE

**pop 28,600 / elev 751m**

One of Italy's most spectacular hill towns, Erice combines medieval charm with astounding 360-degree views. Erice sits on the legendary Mt Eryx (750m); on a clear day, you can see Cape Bon in Tunisia. Wander the medieval tangle of streets interspersed by churches, forts and tiny cobbled piazzas. The town has a seductive history as a centre for the cult of Venus. Settled by the mysterious Elymians, Erice was an obvious abode for the goddess of love, and the town followed the peculiar ritual of sacred prostitution, with the prostitutes themselves accommodated in the Temple of Venus. Despite countless invasions, the temple remained intact – no guesses why.

Erice's tourist infrastructure is excellent. Posted throughout town, you'll find bilingual (Italian-English) informational displays along with town maps displaying suggested walking routes.

## Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 0923 86 93 88; [stalice@regione.sicilia.it](mailto:stalice@regione.sicilia.it); Via Tommaso Guarrasi 1; 🕒 8.30am-2pm Mon-Fri, plus 3.30-6pm Wed) is in the centre of town.

## Sights

The best views can be had from **Giardino del Balio**, which overlooks the rugged turrets and wooded hillsides down to the saltpans of Trapani and the sea. Adjacent to the gardens is the Norman **Castello di Venere** (Via Castello di Venere), built in the 12th and 13th centuries over the Temple of Venus where all that debauchery was taking place. The castle now houses the town's most exclusive hotel, Torri Pepoli (see opposite).

There are several churches and monuments in the small, quiet town and you can purchase a €5 ticket to visit the lot. Especially lovely are the 14th-century **Chiesa Matrice** (Via Vito Carvini; admission €2; 🕒 10am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Apr), just inside Porta Trapani, and its adjacent bell tower, **Torre di Re Federico** (admission €2), where climbing the 110 steps rewards you with fabulous views. Together the church and tower form a truly graceful ensemble.

## Sleeping & Eating

Erice has some excellent hotels and, after the tourists have left, the town assumes a beguiling medieval air.

**Hotel San Giovanni** (☎ 0923 86 91 71; [www.hotelsangiovannierice.it](http://www.hotelsangiovannierice.it); Via Nunzio Nasi 12; s/d €45/75, with full-board €67/114; 🍽️) This excellent budget choice in a former convent enjoys some of the most stunning views in town. Public areas are glossily marbled while the rooms are plain with tiny bathrooms.

**Hotel Moderno** (☎ 0923 86 93 00; [www.hotelmodernoerice.it](http://www.hotelmodernoerice.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 63; s €70-90, d €95-120; 🍽️) The ironically named Moderno is one of Erice's oldest hotels, dating back to the 1880s. Cozy and small, it retains a lovely, distinguished air and features rooms with bright rugs and mismatched

furniture that somehow work together. The friendly owner speaks impeccable English.

**Hotel Elimo** (☎ 0923 86 93 77; [www.hotelelino.it](http://www.hotelelino.it); Via Vittorio Emanuele 23; s €80-110, d €110-130, ste €170; 📍 📷) Elimo is in an atmospheric historic house with tiled beams and marble fireplaces. The eccentric owner has filled his communal rooms with intriguing art, knick-knacks and antiques. The bedrooms are more mainstream, although many – along with the hotel terrace and restaurant – have breathtaking vistas.

**Torri Pepoli** (☎ 0923 86 01 17; [www.torriepoli.it](http://www.torriepoli.it); Giardini del Balio; d €150-240, ste €300-500; 📍 📷 📺) Be king (or queen) of the castle and stay in one of Sicily's grandest hotels, opened in 2005. There are just six rooms, plus a suite in the tower. The rooms are brightly coloured and exquisitely decorated to blend with the natural stone and embellishments; the bathroom in room 1 is set into the rock side. The restaurant lives up to royal expectations (meals €35 to €40).

**Osteria di Venere** (☎ 0923 86 93 62; Via Roma 6; meals €20-30; 📍 closed Wed) Downhill from Erice's main square en route to the castle, this traditional, family-run tavern makes excellent regional food, with special emphasis on grilled meat and fish.

Erice has a tradition of *dolci ericini* (Erice sweets) made by the local nuns. There are numerous pastry shops in town, such as **Antica Pasticceria del Convento** (☎ 0923 86 97 77; Via Guarnotti). Try the *bellibrutti*, dense marzipan concoctions bursting with the fragrance of almonds and lemons.

## Getting There & Away

There's a regular AST bus service to and from Trapani (one way/return €2.20/3.40, 45 minutes). A **funicular** (tickets €3; 📍 12.30-9.30pm Mon, 8.30am-9.30pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-midnight Sat & Sun) also runs from opposite Erice's main car park (at the foot of Via Vittorio Emanuele) to Via Martogna in Trapani.

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## SEGESTA

**elev 304m**

The ancient Elymians must have been great aesthetes if their choice of sites for cities is any indication. Along with Erice, they founded Segesta. Set on the edge of a deep canyon in the midst of wild, desolate mountains, this huge 5th-century-BC temple is a magical site. On windy days its 36 giant columns are said to act like an organ, producing mysterious notes.

The city was in constant conflict with Selinunte in the south, whose destruction it sought with dogged determination and singular success. Time, however, has done to Segesta what violence inflicted on Selinunte; little remains now, save the **theatre** and the never-completed **Doric temple** (☎ 0924 95 23 56; adult/concession €6/2.50; 📍 9am-4pm Nov-Mar, 9am-7pm Apr-Aug), the latter dating from around 430 BC and remarkably well preserved. A shuttle bus (€1.50) runs every 30 minutes from the temple entrance 1.5km uphill to the theatre.

During July and August, performances of Greek plays are staged in the theatre. For information, contact the tourist office in [Trapani](#).

Segesta is accessible by **Tarantola** (☎ 0924 3 10 20) buses from Trapani (one way/return €3.40/5.60, 35 to 50 minutes, four daily in summer). Otherwise catch a train from Trapani (€3.20, 25 minutes, three daily) or Palermo (€6.65, two hours, three daily) to Segesta Tempio; the site is then a 20-minute walk

away. There are signs to direct you.

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## GOLFO DI CASTELLAMMARE

Saved from development and road projects by local protests, the tranquil **Riserva Naturale dello Zingaro** (☎ 0924 3 51 08; [www.riservazingaro.it](http://www.riservazingaro.it); adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 7am-7.30pm Apr-Sep, 8am-4pm Oct-Mar) is the star attraction on the gulf. Sicily's and Italy's first nature reserve, Zingaro's wild coastline is a haven for the rare Bonelli's eagle along with 40 other species of bird. Mediterranean flora dusts the hillsides with wild carob and bright yellow euphorbia, and hidden coves, such as Marinella Bay, provide tranquil swimming spots. The main entrance to the park is 2km from Scopello. There are several walking trails, which are detailed on maps available for free at the entrance. You can also download these from the website (in Italian only).

**Cetaria Diving Center** (☎ 0924 54 11 77; [www.cetaria.com](http://www.cetaria.com); Via Marco Polo 3) in Scopello organises dives and underwater tours of the nature reserve from the Tonnara di Scopello in summer.

Once home to tuna fishers, **Scopello** now mainly hosts tourists, although outside of peak summer season it retains some of its sleepy village atmosphere. Its port, 1km below town by footpath or 2.5km by car, is extremely picturesque, with a rust-red *tonnara* (tuna processing plant) and *faraglioni* (rock spires) rising out of the water.

There are plenty of places to stay and eat clustered around the old manor house at the centre of town. The comfortable rooms at **La Tavernetta** (☎ 0924 54 11 29; [www.albergolatavernetta.it](http://www.albergolatavernetta.it); Via Diaz 3; s €55-75, d €68-95; 📶 🚗 🚰 🚿) are enhanced by free wi-fi, parking (a hot commodity hereabouts) and an excellent restaurant downstairs. Nearby, **Pensione Tranchina** (☎ 0924 54 10 99; [www.pensionetranchina.com](http://www.pensionetranchina.com); Via Diaz 7; B&B per person €36-46, half-board per person €55-69) is another good choice. **Il Baglio** (☎ 0924 54 12 00; Baglio Isonzo 4; pizzas €4-9), despite its hilariously bad attempts at English translation, serves great pizza in the huge cobblestoned courtyard at the heart of town.

AST buses run from Trapani to Castellammare del Golfo (€3.70, five daily), where you can make onward connections to Scopello (€2.20, four daily).

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## EGADI ISLANDS

For centuries the Egadi islanders have lived off the sea – most famously from the tuna harvest in spring. The lucrative industry caused successive conquerors to fortify the islands until the 17th century, when they were sold to Genovese bankers and ultimately passed into the hands of business tycoon Ignazio Florio, who made his fortune from them.

These days the waters around the islands have been overfished and the tuna fishery (once the only cannery in Europe) is long closed. Tourism has become the main earner – even the *mattanza*, the ritual slaughtering of tuna, has become a spectator sport (see boxed text, right).

Ferries and hydrofoils run between the islands and to Trapani. [Click here](#) for details.

## Levano, Favignana & Marettimo

Closest to Trapani lies Levanzo, the smallest island of the archipelago, inhabited by just a handful of people due to its lack of fresh water. A steady stream of tourists visit here, however, mainly to see the ancient rock carvings at **Grotta del Genovese**. The huge cave exhibits Mesolithic and Neolithic etchings ‘painted’ on the walls using animal fat and carbon. Fittingly, there’s one image of the tuna that, even then, must have been revered. In all, the prehistoric art comprises 29 animals and four fragile human figures. The cave can be visited by sea (if you negotiate with one of the fishermen at the port). Contact Signor Natale Castiglione, the **custodian** (☎ 0923 92 40 32, 339 741 88 00; ncasti@tin.it; visits by foot/boat €6/12; 🕒 10am-1pm & 3-6pm).

The largest of the islands is butterfly-shaped Favignana, dominated by Monte Santa Caterina. It is pleasant to explore on bicycle as it’s almost completely flat, and around the coast tufa quarries are carved out of the crystal-clear waters – most notably around **Cala Rossa** and **Cala Cavallo**. Wander around the **tonnara** at the port. It was closed at the end of the 1970s due to the general crisis in the local tuna fishing industry.

Given the history, this is unsurprisingly an excellent place to pick up tuna-related products. **Capricci del Tonno** (☎ 0923 92 24 91; Piazza Madrice) and **Casa del Tonno** (☎ 0923 92 22 27; Via Roma 12) are two great little shops filled to the rafters with smoked and canned blue-fin tuna, *bottarga* (roe), sardines and a host of other fishy delicacies.

**Elyos** (☎ 0923 92 25 87; elyos.coop@libero.it; Piazza Madrice 37; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat year-round, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun Jun-Sep) provides tourist information and internet access (€1 per 10 minutes) in Favignana town, with a summer-only branch at the port. You will find dive-hire outlets at the small harbour, and bicycles or scooters for rent all over town.

The last of the islands, and the most distant, is Marettimo. A few hundred people live mostly in the tiny village on the eastern coast and there are no roads. The island’s crystal-clear waters are the main attraction for divers. Alternatively, you can explore some of the 400 grottoes along the rocky coast by arranging an excursion with one of the local fishermen at the port.

## SLEEPING & EATING

There’s good accommodation on Favignana and two hotels on Levanzo. There are no hotels on Marettimo, but some of the locals let out rooms, so ask around.

During the *mattanza* and in August you’ll have trouble finding a bed without an advance booking.

**Albergo Egadi** (☎ 0923 92 12 32; [www.albergoegadi.it](http://www.albergoegadi.it); Via Colombo 17, Favignana; s €65-115, d €100-200) This small *albergo*, whose friendly staff and food earn rave reviews from guests, has 12 rooms decorated in soft blues and pinks with wafting chiffon curtains. Its restaurant is among the best on the islands (meals €35 to €45, dinner daily).

**Trattoria Due Colonne** (☎ 0923 92 22 91; Piazza Madrice 76; meals €20-30; 🕒 lunch & dinner) With down-to-earth Sicilian home cooking, cheery blue-and-orange decor, outdoor seating on Favignana’s main square and that rarest of all rarities – no cover charge – Due Colonne makes an appealing lunch spot.

Levanzo has slim pickings for staying overnight. The best hotel, **Albergo Paradiso** (☎ 0923 92 40 80; Via Lungomare; half-board per person €60-75; 🕒), is a whitewashed building with sea-blue trim, a geranium-clad terrace and a happy holiday feel.

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## LA MATTANZA



A centuries-old tradition, the Egadi Islands' *mattanza* (the ritual slaughter of tuna) is on the critical list. For centuries, shoals of tuna have used the waters around western Sicily as a mating ground. Locals recall the golden days when it wasn't uncommon to catch giant breeding tuna of between 200kg and 300kg. Today, tuna stocks are less than 70% of what they were in the 1970s due to competition from long-line trawlers and, more recently, a new 'hi-tech *mattanza*' that deploys satellite detection to scour the oceans for the schools of tuna; high-speed fishing fleets subsequently capture the tuna in huge nets and cages. Several countries are involved and there's EU and (some say) Mafia investment. Most of the tuna heads for Japan where it ends up daubed with *wasabi* as tuna sushi, the country's veritable national dish.

Meanwhile on Favignana the *mattanza* is putting up a fight and reinventing itself as a tourist attraction. From around 20 May to 10 June visitors flock here to witness the event. For a fee you can watch the fishermen from nearby boats (ask at the tourist office on Favignana) but be prepared: you will need a strong stomach (if any fish are caught, that is). It's a bloody affair with up to eight or more *tonnarottis* (tuna fishermen) sinking huge hooks into a tuna and dragging it aboard. The word *mattanza* comes from the Spanish word *matar* (to kill). No surprises there.

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## PANTELLERIA

This volcanic outcrop is Sicily's largest offshore island, although it lies closer to Tunisia than it does to Sicily. Buffeted by winds, even in August, the island is characterised by jagged lava stone, low-slung caper bushes, dwarf vines, steaming fumaroles and the **Bagno dell'Aqua** (Lago di Venere) mud baths near Bugeber. Near Siba, at the summit of Montagna Grande (836m), there are also steaming natural saunas, **Stufa del Bagno di Arturo**.

Pantelleria has no true beaches, but its gorgeous, secluded coves are perfect for snorkelling and diving. The northeastern end of the island provides the best spots with a popular **acquacalda** at Gadir. Here you can while away your day wallowing like a walrus in the hot, shallow springs. Further down the coast you'll find ever more scenic spots such as **Cala Tramontana**, **Cala Levante** and **Balata dei Turchi**. Boat excursions are available from numerous companies along the waterfront.

The island has excellent hiking trails, not only along the coast but in the high vineyard country of **Piana di Ghirlanda**. Near **Mursia** on the west coast, there are also some signposted but poorly maintained remnants of *sesi* (ancient funerary monuments), evidence of a Bronze Age settlement. Many of the tombs have been destroyed and the lava rock used to build the famous *dammusi* (houses with thick, whitewashed walls and shallow cupolas). The exotic and remote atmosphere of Pantelleria has long made it a favourite with celebrities from Truman Capote to Sting, Madonna and Giorgio Armani, who has his own *dammuso* here.

There's a small **tourist office** (☎ 0923 91 18 38; [www.pantelleria.com](http://www.pantelleria.com); Piazza Cavour; 🕒 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, plus 4-6.30pm Tue & Thu) in the corner of the Municipal Hall.

## Sleeping & Eating

Summer accommodation bookings should be made well in advance. While you can save money by staying in Pantelleria town, the places in the surrounding countryside are much more appealing and generally have their own restaurants.

**Papuscia Resort** (☎ 0923 91 54 63; [www.papuscia.it](http://www.papuscia.it); Contrada Sopra Portella 48, Tracino; s €50-75,

d €70-120; ☎) In the hills on the island's east side, this delightful stone-clad B&B is set in a lovely garden.

**Zubebi Resort** (☎ 0923 91 36 53; [www.zubebi.com](http://www.zubebi.com); Contrada Zubebi; per week d €980-2000, ste €1200-2600; 📄 ☎ 📺 📶) A complex made up of traditional *dammusi*. Inside the decor is austere minimalism, smooth concrete walls and Indian furnishings. Attractions include an uberstylish crescent-shaped pool, on-site mountain bikes and scooters and free airport pickup. Weekly rental only.

**Il Cappero** (☎ 0923 91 26 01; Via Roma 33; meals €25-30; ☎ dinner) For good-value dining in town, try this unpretentious trattoria-pizzeria. They serve excellent pasta and fish dishes, including the local speciality *ravioli con menta e ricotta* (ravioli with mint and ricotta cheese).

## Getting There & Away

**Meridiana** ([www.meridiana.it](http://www.meridiana.it)) and **Alitalia** ([www.alitalia.com](http://www.alitalia.com)) offer regular flights to Pantelleria from Palermo and Trapani, plus limited service to additional cities on the Italian mainland. A local bus (€1) connects the airport with Pantelleria town.

**Siremar** (☎ 0923 91 11 20; [www.siremar.it](http://www.siremar.it); Via Borgo Italia 65) runs one ferry daily between Trapani and Pantelleria (low/high season €27/31).

**La Cossira** (☎ 0923 91 10 78; [www.lacossira.com](http://www.lacossira.com); Via Borgo Italia 77; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat), a waterfront travel agency in Pantelleria town, handles air tickets, *dammuso* bookings and general tourist queries.

Local buses (€1) depart from Piazza Cavour in Pantelleria town at regular intervals each day (except Sunday) and service all the towns on the island. Alternatively, **Autonoleggio Policardo** (☎ 0923 91 28 44; Via Messina 31) rents out scooters (from €25 per day) and cars (from €35 per day) from its offices at the port and the airport.

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# Sardinia

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## CAGLIARI

ORIENTATION

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GETTING AROUND

## AROUND CAGLIARI

VILLASIMIUS & COSTA REI

NORA & AROUND

COSTA DEL SUD & AROUND

## SOUTHWESTERN SARDINIA

IGLESIAS

AROUND IGLESIAS

IGLESIENTE COAST

CARBONIA & AROUND

SANT'ANTIOCO & SAN PIETRO

COSTA VERDE

## WESTERN SARDINIA

ORISTANO

BARUMINI & AROUND

SINIS PENINSULA

NORTH ORISTANO COAST

LAGO OMEDEO CIRCUIT

BOSA

## NORTHERN SARDINIA

ALGHERO  
AROUND ALGHERO  
SASSARI  
AROUND SASSARI  
PORTO TORRES  
STINTINO & PARCO NAZIONALE DELL'ASINARA  
SANTA TERESA DI GALLURA  
PALAU & ARCIPELAGO DI LA MADDALENA  
COSTA SMERALDA & AROUND  
OLBIA  
GOLFO ARANCI  
EASTERN SARDINIA  
NUORO  
NORTH OF NUORO  
SUPRAMONTE  
GOLFO DI OROSEI  
OGLIASTRA

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The Mediterranean's second-largest island, Sardinia is a strange and beautiful place. It's best known as a summer beach destination but venture inland and you'll discover an altogether different Sardinia, an island of untamed nature and proud tradition, of dark granite peaks, dizzying valleys and endless forests. Up to 7000 *nuraghi* (singular *nuraghe*; stone towers) litter this Celtic landscape, adding a sense of prehistoric mystery to the all-encompassing silence.

Tourist interest remains largely focused on the coast, which is one of Italy's most impressive. On the western coast, wild seas crash in on the untamed, unspoilt Costa Verde, while to the northeast, azure waters lap the Costa Smeralda's pristine bays. Further south, the Golfo di Orosei is ringed by a granite curtain of plunging cliffs and idyllic coves. Popular resorts get very busy in July and August, but with your own transport it's possible to escape the crowds even in peak months.

Until the advent of tourism in the 1960s, Sardinia was a poor and isolated outpost. Even on the island, communities were often cut off from their neighbours by inhospitable mountains and a lack of infrastructure. But with isolation came pride and a deep-rooted respect for local traditions. To get a feel for this aspect of island life, head to the area around Nuoro, where elderly women wear black and ancient festivals are celebrated with brooding passion. Encompassing much of the area, the Parco Nazionale del Golfo di Orosei e del Gennargentu offers superlative sport and innumerable photo opportunities.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Plunge into Europe's Grand Canyon, the **Gola Su Gorruppu**, and trek to the *nuraghic* site of **Tiscali**
- Sail down the **Golfo di Orosei**, stopping off at secluded beaches and magical coves
- Explore the medieval lanes of **Il Castello**, Cagliari's rocky citadel, before an *aperitivo* on **Bastione San Remy**
- Leave civilisation behind and head to the wild, windswept beaches of the **Costa Verde**
- Drive the **Costa del Sud**, a stunning stretch of southern coastline



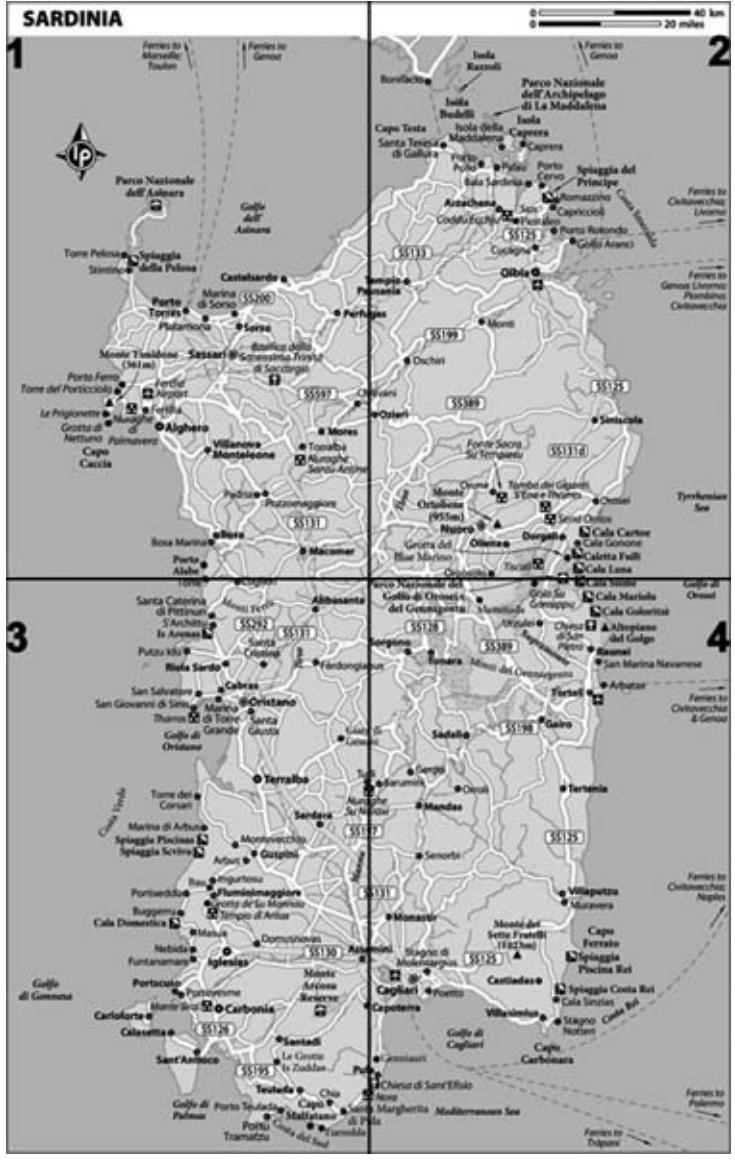
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Population: 1.66 million

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Area: 24,090 sq km

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# SARDINIA



0 40 km  
0 20 miles

2





3





## History

Little is known about Sardinia's prehistoric history but the first islanders probably arrived from mainland Italy in about 350,000 BC. By the Neolithic period (8000 BC to 3000 BC) tribal communities were thriving in north central Sardinia. Their Bronze Age descendants, known as the *nuragic* people, dominated the island until the arrival of the Phoenicians in around 850 BC. The Carthaginians came next followed by the Romans, who took over in the 3rd century BC.

In the Middle Ages, the island was divided into four independent *giudicati* (kingdoms) but by the 13th century the Pisans and Genoese were battling for control. They were toppled by the Catalan-Aragonese from northern Spain, who also had to subdue bitter Sard resistance led by Eleonora d'Arborea (1340–1404), Sardinia's very own Joan of Arc.

Sardinia became Spanish territory after the unification of the Spanish kingdoms in 1479 and, still today, there is a tangible Hispanic feel to towns such as [Alghero](#) and [Iglesias](#). In the ensuing centuries, Sardinia suffered as Spain's power crumbled and, in 1720, the Italian Savoy took possession of the island. After Italian unity in 1861, Sardinia found itself under the disinterested boot of Rome.

In the aftermath of WWII, efforts were made to drag the island into the modern era. In 1946 a huge project was launched to rid the island of malaria and in 1948 Sardinia was granted its own autonomous regional parliament.

Coastal tourism arrived in the 1960s and has since become a mainstay of the Sardinian economy. And

while most would argue that it has been beneficial, environmentalists worry about the impact it has had on the island's coastline.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Flights from Italian and European cities serve Sardinia's three main airports: **Elmas** (CAG; ☎ 070 211 211; [www.sogaer.it](http://www.sogaer.it)) in Cagliari; Alghero's **Fertilia** (AHO; ☎ 079 93 52 82; [www.aeroportodialghero.it](http://www.aeroportodialghero.it)); and the **Aeroporto Olbia Costa Smeralda** (OLB; ☎ 0789 56 34 00; [www.geasar.it](http://www.geasar.it)) in Olbia. As well as major international carriers, several no-frills airlines operate direct flights including **Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)), **easyJet** ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) and **TUIfly** ([www.tuifly.com](http://www.tuifly.com)). Some routes are restricted to between April and October.

### BOAT

Sardinia is accessible by ferry from Genoa, Savona, La Spezia, Livorno, Piombino, Civitavecchia and Naples, and from Palermo and Trapani in Sicily. Ferries also run from Bonifacio and Porto Vecchio in Corsica, and from Marseille and Toulon via the Corsican ports of Ajaccio and Propriano.

The arrival points in Sardinia are Olbia, Golfo Aranci, Palau, Santa Teresa di Gallura and Porto Torres in the north; Arbatax on the east coast; and Cagliari in the south.

The boxed text [Ferries to Sardinia](#) gives sample fares for the main routes and lists the main ferry operators.

Services are most frequent from mid-June to mid-September, when it is advisable to book well ahead. Useful online resources include [www.traghettiweb.it](http://www.traghettiweb.it) and [www.traghettonline.com](http://www.traghettonline.com) (in Italian).

## Getting Around

Getting round Sardinia on public transport is difficult and time-consuming, but not impossible. In most cases buses, which are generally cheap and efficient, are preferable to trains.

### BUS

Sardinia's main bus company **ARST** (Azienda Regionale Sarda Trasporti; ☎ 800 865 042; [www.arst.sardegna.it](http://www.arst.sardegna.it) in Italian) runs most local and long-distance services.

**FdS** (Ferrovie della Sardegna; ☎ 800 460 220; [www.ferroviesardegna.it](http://www.ferroviesardegna.it) in Italian) operates services between Cagliari and Nuoro, Oristano and Sassari.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Sardinia is best explored by road. For details about rental agencies in Cagliari, [Click here](#). There are also rental agencies at airports and in major towns.

### TRAIN

**Trenitalia** (☎ 89 20 21; [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)) services link Cagliari with Oristano, Sassari, Porto Torres, Olbia and Golfo Aranci. Services are slow but generally reliable. Slow **FdS** (Ferrovie della Sardegna; ☎ 070 34 31 12; [www.ferroviesardegna.it](http://www.ferroviesardegna.it), in Italian) trains serve Sassari, Alghero and Nuoro. Between mid-June and early September, FdS also operates a tourist train service known as the Trenino Verde – [Click here](#).

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# REGIONAL ITINERARY

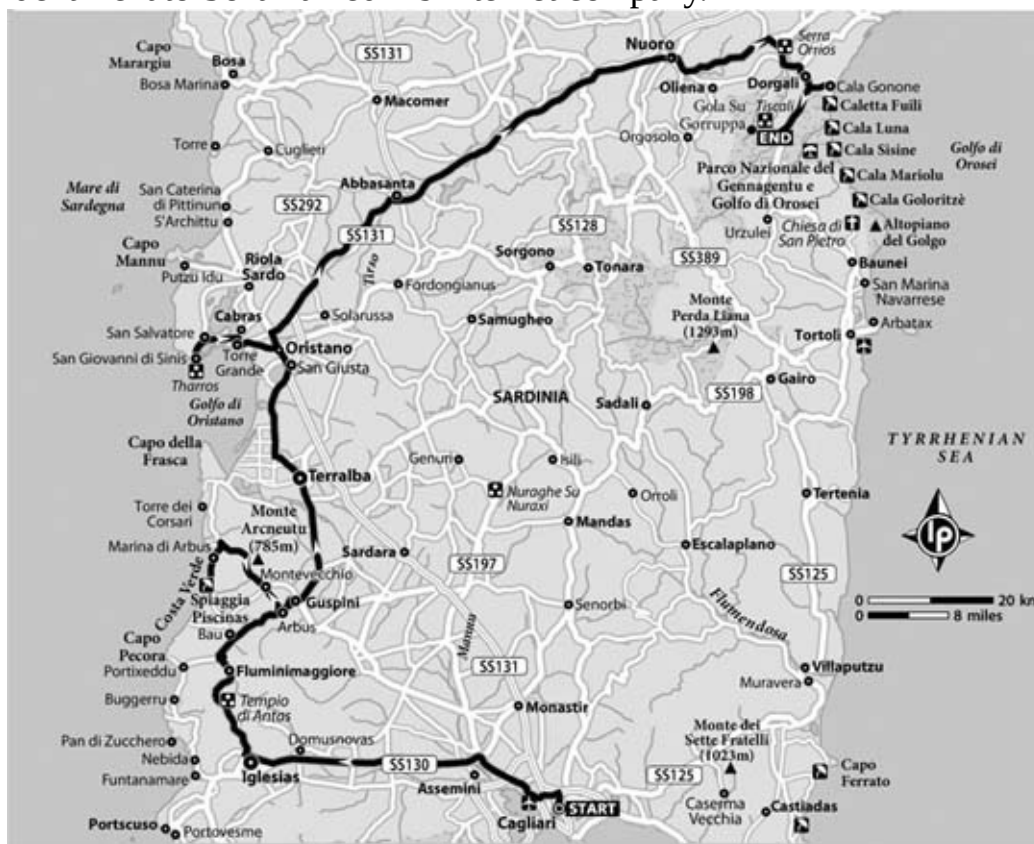
## savour sardinia     One week / Cagliari / Cala Gonone

Kick off in **Cagliari** (opposite), Sardinia's down-to-earth capital. Explore the crowning citadel **Il Castello** and stroll the characteristic streets down by the seafront. Make sure to visit the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale**, with its wonderful collection of *nuraghic bronzetti*, and the beach at **Poetto**, a favourite with young Cagliariitani.

From Cagliari the road leads west to **Iglesias** in the heart of Sardinia's mining country. A night here is enough to lap up the vibrant Spanish atmosphere and investigate the pretty historic centre. To the northwest the **Costa Verde** is a magnificent, unspoiled stretch of hilly coastline. Book into an *agriturismo* and head down to **Spiaggia Piscinas**, a broad swathe of virgin sand wedged between a desert of imposing dunes and a wild, untamed sea.

Continuing northwards brings you to **Oristano**, a refined medieval town that was once the nerve centre of local resistance to Spanish colonialism. There are not many must-see sights but you'll enjoy the animated vibe and it makes a great base for visiting the ancient ruins at **Tharros**, a short hop away on the Sinis Peninsula.

To get a feel for Sardinia's proud and ancient heart you need to visit the spectacular mountainous region around **Nuoro**. Nuoro itself boasts a couple of worthwhile museums – the **Museo della Vita e delle Tradizioni Sarde**, which documents Sardinian folklore and traditions, and the **Museo Deleddiano**, dedicated to the life of Nobel Prize-winning author Grazia Deledda – but it's the exhilarating countryside that's the main draw here. Base yourself in **Cala Gonone** and take to the wild. Boats sail the imperious coastline of the **Golfo di Orosei** stopping off at the Grotta del **Bue Marino** and at dreamy beaches hidden in rocky coves. Inland, you won't want to miss the **Gola Su Gorruppu**, dubbed Europe's Grand Canyon, and the *nuraghic* village of **Tiscali** after which former Sardinian president Renato Soru named his internet company.



# FERRIES TO SARDINIA

Prices quoted here are adult high-season fares for a 2nd-class *poltrona* (reclinable seat) and small car. Children aged four to 12 generally pay around half-price; those under four go free. Most companies offer discounts for early booking and online deals – it's always worth checking.

From	To	Fare (€)	Car (€)	Duration (hr)
Bonifacio	Santa Teresa di Gallura	25	68	1
Civitavecchia	Arbatax	49	96	10½
Civitavecchia	Cagliari	58	104	14½
Civitavecchia	Olbia	43	102	4½-10
Civitavecchia	Golfo Aranci+	78	100	5½
Genoa	Olbia	59	108	13¼
Genoa	Porto Torres+	107	182	10
Livorno	G Aranci+	83-117	21-90	6
Livorno	Olbia	94	135	7-9
Marseille	Porto Torres	93	121	15-17
Naples	Cagliari	53	94	16¼
Palermo	Cagliari	52	92	14½
Piombino	Olbia	94	135	6½
Trapani	Cagliari	52	92	11

+ indicates a high-speed service

## Ferry Operators

**CMN La Méridionale** (☎ France 0810 20 13 20; [www.cmn.fr](http://www.cmn.fr)) To Porto Torres from Marseille via Corsica. In July and August some services depart from Toulon.

**Grandi Navi Veloci** (☎ 010 209 45 91; [www.gnv.it](http://www.gnv.it)) To Olbia and Porto Torres from Genoa.

**Moby Lines** (☎ 199 30 30 40; [www.mobylines.it](http://www.mobylines.it)) To Olbia from Civitavecchia, Genoa, Livorno and Piombino; to Porto Torres from Genoa. Also has ferries between Sardinia and Corsica (April to September).

**Sardinia Ferries** (☎ 199 400 500; [www.sardiniaferries.com](http://www.sardiniaferries.com)) To Golfo Aranci from Civitavecchia and Livorno. Also Sardinia to Corsica (April to September).

**Saremar** (☎ 892 123; [www.saremar.it](http://www.saremar.it)) To Santa Teresa di Gallura from Bonifacio (Corsica).

**SNCM** (☎ France 08 91 70 18 01, Sardinia 079 51 44 77; [www.sncm.fr](http://www.sncm.fr)) To Porto Torres from Marseille via Corsica. In July and August some services depart from Toulon.

**Tirrenia** (☎ 892 123; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it)) To Cagliari from Civitavecchia, Naples, Palermo and Trapani; to Olbia from Civitavecchia, Genoa; to Arbatax from Civitavecchia and Genoa; to Porto Torres from Genoa.

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## CAGLIARI

pop 158,040

Cagliari, Sardinia's capital and most cosmopolitan city, rises from the sea in a helter-skelter of golden-hued *palazzi*, domes and facades. Towering over everything, a rocky citadel provides an instantly recognisable landmark. Yet for all its splendour, Cagliari remains what it always has been – a busy working port with a gritty, down-to-earth atmosphere and a vibrant buzz.

The city was founded by the Phoenicians in the 8th century BC but came of age as a Roman port. Later, the Pisans arrived and treated it to a major medieval facelift, the results of which impress to this day.

Against this historical backdrop, the Cagliariitani enjoy their city. Restaurants and bars cater to locals as much as tourists and a large student population ensures life in the piazzas.

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## ORIENTATION

The port is near Piazza Matteotti, where you'll find the main bus and train stations and the city tourist office. The busy seafront road Via Roma intersects with Largo Carlo Felice which heads up to Piazza Yenne, the centre's focal square. Rising above everything is the Castello (castle) district. Much of the budget accommodation and many good-value eateries are in the Marina neighbourhood down by the seafront.

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## INFORMATION

### Emergency

**Police station** (Questura; ☎ 070 6 02 71; Via Amat Luigi 9)

### Internet Access

**Lamari** (☎ 070 66 84 07; Via Napoli 43; per hr €3; 📧 9am-8pm Mon-Sat)

### Medical Services

**Farmacia Dr Spano** (☎ 070 65 56 83; Via Roma 99; 📧 9am-1pm & 4.50-8.10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

**Guardia Medica** (☎ 070 609 52 02; Via Talete) For an out-of-hours doctor.

**Ospedale Brotzu** (☎ 070 53 91; Via Peretti 21) Take bus No 1 from Via Roma.

### Money

ATMs are available in the train station and along Largo Carlo Felice.

**Mail Boxes Etc** (☎ 070 67 37 04; Viale Trieste 65/b; 📧 9am-1pm Mon-Sat & 4-7.30pm Mon-Fri)  
An agent for Western Union.

### Post

**Post office** (Piazza del Carmine; 📧 8am-6.50pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1.15pm)

### Tourist Information

**Main tourist office** (☎ 800 20 35 41; [www.cagliariturismo.it](http://www.cagliariturismo.it); Piazza Matteotti; 📧 8.30am-1.30pm & 2-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat & Sun)

**Tourist Information Points** Piazza dell'Indipendenza (📧 8am-8pm); Marina Piccola (📧 8am-8pm)

# SIGHTS

## Il Castello & Around

Built by the Pisans and Aragonese, Cagliari's medieval citadel dominates the city skyline. Precipitous stone walls enclose what was once the fortified home of the city's aristocracy and religious authorities, known to locals as Su Casteddu. Guarding its southern entrance, the **Torre dell'Elefante** (Via Università; adult/child €4/2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-4.30pm Nov-Mar) is one of only two medieval towers still standing. It takes its name from the sculpted elephant by the vicious-looking portcullis. To the north, the 36m-high **Torre di San Pancrazio** (Piazza Indipendenza; adult/concession €4/2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-4.30pm Nov-Mar) is built on the city's highest point.

At the heart of the district is Cagliari's striking cathedral, the **Cattedrale di Santa Maria** (☎ 070 66 38 37; [www.duomodicagliari.it](http://www.duomodicagliari.it); Piazza Palazzo 4; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm & 4-8pm Sat & Sun). Apart from the square-based bell tower, little remains of the original 13th-century Gothic structure – the interior is 17th-century baroque and the Pisan-Romanesque facade is a 20th-century imitation – but it's still an impressive sight. Inside are two intricate stone pulpits on either side of the central entrance, sculpted by Guglielmo da Pisa and donated to the city in 1312.

Cagliari's main museum complex, the **Citadella dei Musei**, houses four museums in what was once the city arsenal. Of these, the star is the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 070 68 40 00; Piazza dell'Arsenale; adult/concession €4/2, incl Pinacoteca Nazionale €5/2.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Sun), Sardinia's premier archaeological museum. Exhibits date from prehistoric to late Roman times, but the highlight is the superb collection of pint-sized *nuraghic bronzetti* (bronze figurines). In the absence of any written records, these are a vital source of information on Sardinia's mysterious *nuraghic* culture.

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## OUR TOP FIVE ACTIVITIES IN SARDINIA

- **Hiking** Head to the Parco Nazionale del Golfo di Orosei e del [Gennargentu](#) for stunning scenery and exhilarating trekking.
- **Cycling** It's tough going but cycling is a great way of experiencing Sardinia's countryside. Sardinia Hike & Bike ([www.sardiniabikeandhike.com](http://www.sardiniabikeandhike.com)) is a great source of information.
- **Climbing** Rock climbers test their mettle on Cala Gonone's limestone peaks [Click here](#) and around [Domusnovas](#).
- **Diving** Sardinia's fabulous waters are a divers' dream. Check out the Med's largest underwater cave near [Alghero](#), or the depths of the Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago di [La Maddalena](#).
- **Windsurfing** Winds course through the Bonifacio Straits between Sardinia and Corsica making [Porto Pollo](#) a top venue. [Chia](#) is another favourite spot.

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The **Pinacoteca Nazionale** (☎ 070 68 40 00; Piazza dell'Arsenale; adult/concession €2/1, incl Museo Archeologico Nazionale €5/2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sun) showcases a collection of 15th- to 17th-century art, including four outstanding works by Pietro Cavaro, father of the so-called Stampace school and arguably Sardinia's most important artist.

The other two museums are not quite what you'd expect. The **Raccolta di Cere Anatomiche** (Piazza dell'Arsenale; admission €1.55; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun) is a kind of ghoulish Madame Tussaud's with 23 anatomical wax models, while the **Museo d'Arte Siamese** (☎ 070 65 18 88; Piazza dell'Arsenale, Citadella dei Musei; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Tue-Sun) boasts an eclectic collection of Asian art, crafts and weaponry.

You can reach the citadel from various approaches. The most impressive is the monumental stairway that connects busy Piazza Costituzione with **Bastione San Remy**, formerly a strong point in the city walls and now a lively panoramic platform. Alternatively, you can climb the Scalette di Santa Chiara from behind Piazza Yenne, or, better still, take the elevator from the bottom of the Scalette.

To the north of Il Castello, the **Galleria Comunale d'Arte** (☎ 070 49 07 27; [www.galleriacomunalecagliari.it](http://www.galleriacomunalecagliari.it); Viale San Vincenzo; adult/student/child €6/2.60/free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Wed-Mon Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm Nov-Mar) displays a rich collection of modern Sardinian and Italian art.

## Stampace & Marina

Stampace, the city's medieval working-class district, harbours several impressive churches including the 16th-century **Chiesa di San Michele** (☎ 070 65 86 26; Via Ospedale 2; ☎ 8am-11am & 6-9pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-noon & 7-9pm Sun), celebrated for its lavish 18th-century rococo decor. Outside in the atrium, note the four-columned pulpit from which the Spanish emperor Carlos V is said to have delivered a stirring speech before setting off on a fruitless campaign against Arab corsairs in Tunisia.

A steep uphill walk brings you to the **Orto Botanico** (Viale Sant' Ignazio; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar), one of Italy's most famous botanical gardens. Just north of here is the **Anfiteatro Romano** (Roman amphitheatre; ☎ 070 65 29 56; [www.anfiteatro romano.it](http://www.anfiteatro romano.it); Viale Sant' Ignazio; adult/student/child €4.30/2.80/free; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun Nov-Mar), Cagliari's most impressive Roman monument. Although much of the original 2nd-century theatre was cannibalised for building material, enough has survived to pique the imagination. In summer, the amphitheatre recovers something of its vocation by hosting summer concerts.

Back down by the seafront, the characterful Marina district is enjoyable to explore. Not so much for any specific sights, of which there are few, but for the authentic atmosphere of its dark, narrow streets filled with artisans' shops, cafes, and eateries of all description. In the centre of the district, the **Museo del Tesoro e Area Archeologica di Sant'Eulalia** (☎ 070 66 37 24; Vico del Collegio 2; adult/child €4; ☎ 10am-1pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sun) displays a rich collection of religious art, as well as an archaeological area which extends for up to 200 sq metres beneath the adjacent **Chiesa di Sant'Eulalia**.

## East of the Centre

East of Via Regina Margherita, you'll find two of Cagliari's most important churches. The **Basilica di San Saturnino** (☎ 070 65 98 69; Piazza San Cosimo; ☎ closed for restoration) is an august example of Paleo-Christian architecture and one of the island's oldest churches. Dating from the 5th century, it stands over a Roman necropolis where Saturninus, a much revered local martyr, was buried in AD 304. Nearby, Cagliari's former abattoir houses **Exmà** (☎ 070 66 63 99; [www.camuweb.it](http://www.camuweb.it); Via San Lucifero 71; exhibitions €3-10; ☎ 5pm-midnight Tue-Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-May), a cultural centre which stages contemporary art exhibitions and summer concerts.

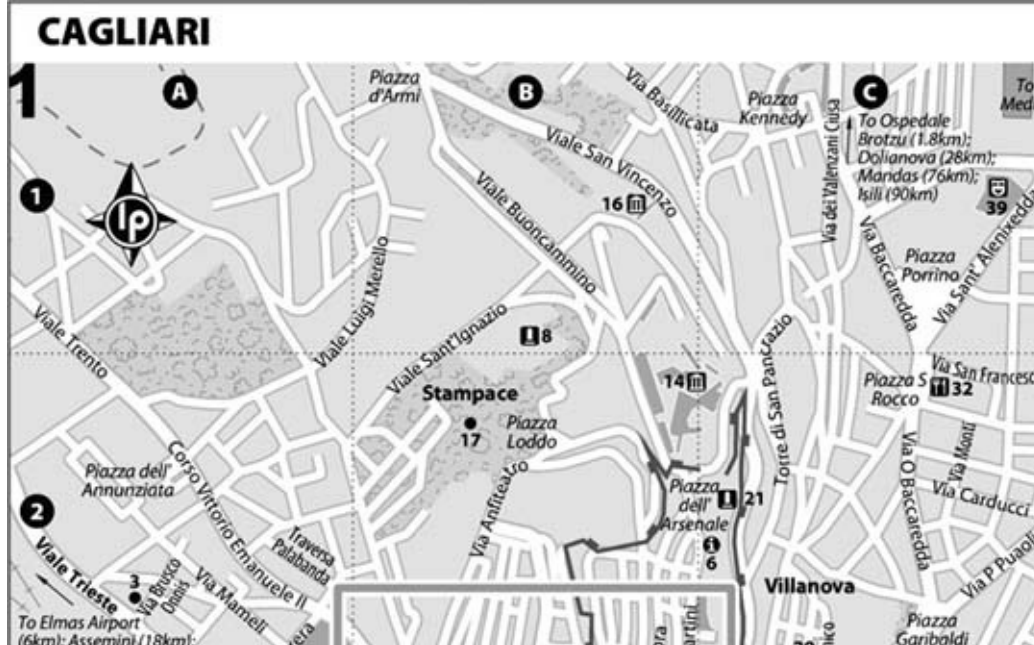
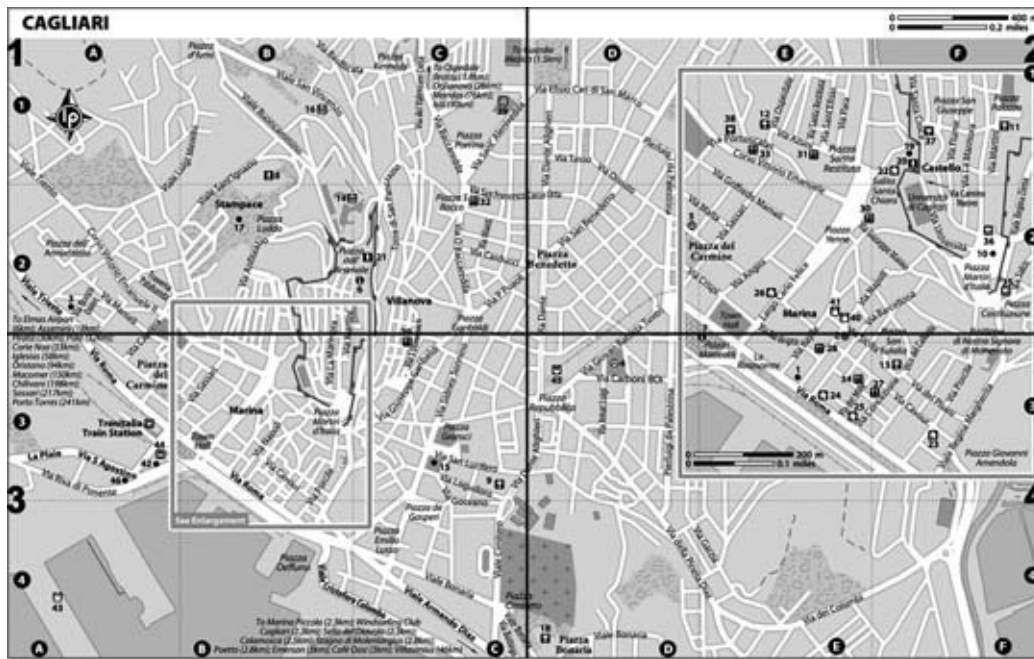
Dominating the Bonaria hill, the **Santuario di Nostra Signora di Bonaria** (☎ 070 30 17 47; Piazza



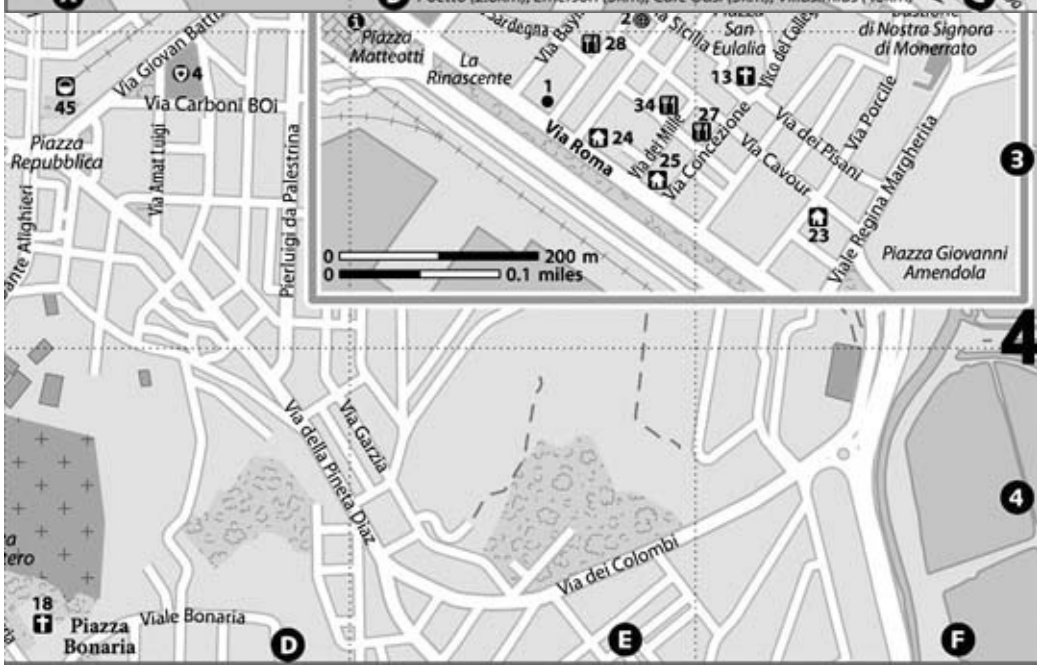
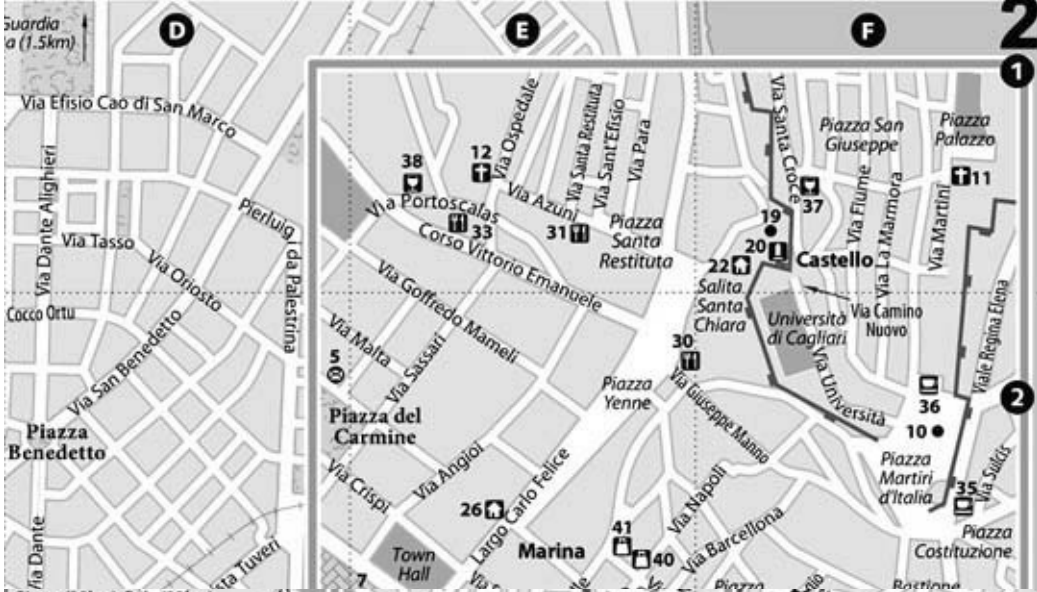
Bonaria 2; donations welcome; ☎ 6.30-11.30am & 5.30-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 6.30-11.30am & 4.30-6.30pm Nov-Mar) is a hugely popular pilgrim site. Devotees come from all over the world to pray to *Nostra Signora di Bonaria*, a statue of the Virgin Mary that is said to have saved a 14th-century Spanish ship during a storm. To the right of the sanctuary, the much larger **basilica** still acts as a landmark for returning sailors.

## Poetto & the Sella del Diavola

An easy bus ride from the city centre, Cagliari's fabulous **Poetto** beach extends for about 6km beyond the green Promontorio di Sant'Elia, known locally as the **Sella del Diavola** (Devil's Saddle). In summer much of the city's youth decamps here to sunbathe by day and party in the restaurants, bars and discos that line the sand.



0 400 m  
0 0.2 miles



<b>INFORMATION</b>	Orto Botanico..... 17 B2	Mercato di San Benedetto..... 32 C2
Farmacia Dr Spano..... 1 E3	Pinacoteca Nazionale..... (see 14)	Monica e Ahmed..... 33 E1
Lamari..... 2 E2	Raccolta di Cere	Trattoria Gennargentu..... 34 E3
Mail Boxes Etc..... 3 A2	Anatomiche..... (see 14)	
Police Station..... 4 D3	Santuario & Basilica di	
Post Office..... 5 D2	Nostra Signora di	<b>DRINKING ☕</b>
Tourist Information Point..... 6 C2	Bonaria..... 18 D4	Antico Caffè..... 35 F2
Tourist Office..... 7 E2	Scalette di Santa	Caffè degli Spirti..... 36 F2
	Chiara..... 19 F1	Caffè Librarium Nostrum..... 37 F1
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## CAGLIARI IN...TWO DAYS

Start off by exploring the atmospheric lanes down by the seafront. The head up Largo Carlo Felice to Piazza Yenne where you can reward yourself with a mid-morning coffee. Charged up, take an hour or so to check out the Stampace district, including Chiesa di San Michele and its exuberant rococo decoration. After lunch on Corso Vittorio Emanuele, make your way up to Il Castello, on foot if you're feeling energetic or by lift if not. Here you can applaud views from the Torre dell'Elefante and admire Sardinia's best archaeological collection at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale. As evening approaches retire to one of the chill bars on Bastione San Remy.

On day two investigate the Basilica di San Saturnino, one of Sardinia's oldest churches, and the Santuario di Nostra Signora di Bonaria, a sanctuary beloved of mariners and pilgrims. At this point it makes sense to continue on to Poetto, Cagliari's popular beach, where you can while away the rest of the day swimming and sunbathing.

Water sports are popular and you can generally hire canoes at the beach clubs. From its base at **Marina Piccola**, the **Windsurfing Club Cagliari** (☎ 070 37 26 94; Viale Marina Piccola; [www.windsurfingclubcagliari.it](http://www.windsurfingclubcagliari.it)) offers a range of courses, starting from about €150.

For Poetto take buses PF or PQ from Piazza Matteotti.

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## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Sardinia's patron saint is the star of Cagliari's blockbuster **Festa di Sant'Efisio** between 1 and 4 May. On the opening day the saint's effigy is paraded around the city on a bullock-drawn carriage amid an extravagantly costumed procession.

Cagliari also puts on a good show for **Carnevale** in February and Easter **Holy Week**, when a hooded procession climbs up to the cathedral in Il Castello.

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# SLEEPING

**B&B La Marina** (☎ 070 67 00 65, mobile 349 176 73 68; [www.la-marina.it](http://www.la-marina.it); Via Porcile 23; s €40, d €70-75) Owned by a cordial elderly couple, this modest B&B offers good value in the seafront Marina district. There's nothing flash about the sterile white rooms but they are clean and quiet, and the bathrooms have excellent showers.

**Hotel A&R Bundes Jack** (☎ 070 65 79 70; [www.hotelbjvittoria.it](http://www.hotelbjvittoria.it); Via Roma 75; s €48-58, d €78-88; ☒) The best budget option on the seafront, this is an old-fashioned family-run *pensione*. Run by a garrulous old boy, it has big, high-ceilinged rooms decorated with antique furniture and sparkling chandeliers. No breakfast or credit cards.

**Hotel Miramare** (☎ 070 66 40 21; [www.hotelmiramarecagliari.it](http://www.hotelmiramarecagliari.it); Via Roma 59; s €76-122, d €98-146, ste €145-235; ☒ ☺) This boutique four-star is a good choice for a splurge. Rooms are individually styled but think crimson walls, spangly chandeliers, high wooden beds and modern bathrooms. Wi-fi is available and kids under 12 stay free.

Also recommended:

**Albergo Aurora** (☎ 070 65 86 25; [www.hotelcagliariaurora.it](http://www.hotelcagliariaurora.it); Salita Santa Chiara 19; s €41-47, d €65-70, without bathroom s €34-39, d €50-58; ☒) A friendly, spartan option just off Piazza Yenne.

**Sardinia Domus** (☎ 070 65 97 83; [www.sardiniadomus.it](http://www.sardiniadomus.it), in Italian; Largo Carlo Felice 26; s €65-70, d €85-100, q €130-144; ☒ ☑) A slickly run B&B with exposed stone walls and inviting rooms.

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# EATING

Cagliari is chock full of with restaurants, trattorias, bars and takeaways. Dining hotspots include the Marina area and up near Piazza Yenne.

**Isola del Gelato** (☎ 070 65 98 24; Piazza Yenne 35; cone €2.50; ☒ 9am-2am Tue-Sun). This hugely popular gelateria boasts an incredible selection of ice-creamy treats, including low-fat, soy, yoghurt and *semi-freddo*, a delicious semi-frozen mousse.

**Il Fantasma** (☎ 070 65 67 49; Via San Domenico 94; pizzas €7; ☒ Mon-Sat) This boisterous pizzeria does the best pizza in Cagliari. Friendly waiters adroitly navigate the crowded barrel-vaulted interior to deliver bubbling pizzas straight from the wood-fired oven. Book or expect to queue.

**Trattoria Gemargentu** (☎ 070 65 82 47; Via Sardegna 60; meal €20; ☒ closed Wed lunch & Sun) It doesn't look much from outside but this no-frills trattoria serves excellent food. There's a full menu of pastas and meaty mains but the seafood is particularly good. Try the *spaghetti con arselle* (with clams) and you'll get the idea.

**L'Osteria** (☎ 070 311 01 68; Via Azuni 56; meals €28; ☒ closed Sun dinner) Homey decor, friendly service, and authentic local food – this spot-on trattoria fits the bill perfectly. Everything about the place is right, from the bare brick walls and earthenware wine jugs, to the warm bread doused in olive oil and the gorgeous food.

**Da Lillicu** (☎ 070 65 29 70; Via Sardegna 78; meal €30; ☒ Mon-Sat, closed late Aug) A Cagliari institution, this historic trattoria has an excellent local reputation and is nearly always packed. Diners come for the noisy, convivial atmosphere and excellent seafood – signature dishes include *fritto misto*

(mixed fry) and *burridda* (catfish marinated in white-wine vinegar and served with nuts).

**our pick** **Monica e Ahmed** (☎ 070 640 20 45; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 119; meals €30-40; 📅 closed Sun dinner) If you love seafood you'll love it here. Start with a mixed antipasto – at the time of research this comprised swordfish carpaccio, fried calamari, tuna with beans, mussels, and lobster in vinaigrette – before moving on to the main event. You could play it safe with spaghetti *ai frutti di mare* (with mussels and clams) or push the boat out and order grilled giant prawns.

Self-caterers can pick up picnic fare at **I Sapori dell'Isola** (☎ 070 65 23 62; Via Sardegna 50) or at Cagliari's historic morning food market, **Mercato di San Benedetto** (Via San Francesco Cocco Ortu; 📅 Mon-Sat).

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## DRINKING

**Antico Caffè** (☎ 070 65 82 06; [www.anticocaffe1855.it](http://www.anticocaffe1855.it); Piazza Costituzione; 📅 7am-2am Wed-Mon) Unfortunately located on a busy road junction, this is Cagliari's most famous cafe. Sip cocktails on the terrace or inside amid the polished wood and brass.

**Caffè Librarium Nostrum** (☎ 070 65 09 43; Via Santa Croce 33; 📅 7.30am-2am Tue-Sun) A modish Castello bar with panoramic seating on top of the city's medieval ramparts. Occasional live music jacks up the atmosphere in the brick-lined interior.

**Caffè degli Spiriti** (Bastione San Remy; 📅 9am-2am) Grab a hammock, lie back and enjoy the vibe at this stylish lounge bar on the Bastione San Remy. If you get the munchies call for pizza (€7) or grilled meat (€17).

**Il Merlo Parlante** (☎ 070 65 39 81; Via Portoscalas 69; 📅 7pm-3am Tue-Sun) Shoehorned into a narrow alley off Corso Vittorio Emanuele, this popular student pub serves lager and rock to a young international crowd.

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## ENTERTAINMENT

Cagliari's after-hours scene tends to revolve around the city's bars and cafes, which in summer means the beach at Poetto. Beach-front bars/clubs drift in and out of fashion but current favourites include **Emerson** (☎ 070 37 51 94; Viale Poetto, 4th stop) and **Café Oasi** (☎ 070 338 08 48; Viale Poetto, 4th stop).

For information on cultural events, ask at the tourist office or pick up a copy of the local newspaper *L'Unione Sarda*. Classical music, opera and ballet are staged at the **Teatro Lirico** (Teatro Comunale; ☎ 070 408 22 30; [www.teatroliricodicagliari.it](http://www.teatroliricodicagliari.it); Via Sant'Alenixedda), to the north of the city centre. In summer, the **Anfiteatro Romano** stages a season of stand-up comedy, music and dance.

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## SHOPPING

A good place to pick up a last-minute gift, **Durke** (☎ 070 66 67 82; [www.durke.com](http://www.durke.com); Via Napoli 66) is an enticing Aladdin's cave of Sardinian sweets and pastries, all prepared according to traditional recipes.

For something more weighty, **Loredana Mandas** (☎ 070 66 76 48; Via Sicilia 31) sells the fine gold filigree for which Sardinia is famous.

Market-goers will enjoy the Sunday morning **flea market** on the Bastione San Remy.

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

Cagliari's Elmas **airport** (CAG; ☎ 070 211 211; [www.sogaer.it](http://www.sogaer.it)) is 6km northwest of the city centre. Flights connect with mainland Italy and European destinations including Barcelona, London, Paris and Stuttgart. In summer, there are additional charter flights.

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### TRENINO VERDE

If you're not in a rush, one of the best ways of exploring Sardinia's rugged interior is on the **Trenino Verde** ([www.treninoverde.com](http://www.treninoverde.com)), a slow, narrow-gauge diesel operated by Ferrovie della Sardegna (FdS). There are four tourist routes: Mandas to Arbatax; Isili to Sorgono; Macomer to Bosa; and Nulvi to Palau. Of these, the twisting Mandas—Arbatax line is particularly spectacular, crossing the remote highlands of the Parco Nazionale del Golfo di Orosei e del Gennargentu.

To get to Mandas, take the metro from Piazza Repubblica to Gottardo from where you can catch a train through to Mandas. Once there, trains depart at 8.35am and 3.25pm. A one-way ticket costs €17.50.

The Trenino Verde runs between mid-June and early September.

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### Boat

Cagliari's ferry port is just off Via Roma. **Tirrenia** (☎ 892 123; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it); Via dei Ponente 1) is the main operator, with year-round services to Civitavecchia, Naples, Palermo and Trapani. Book tickets at the port or at travel agencies.

[Click here](#) for further details.

### Bus

From the main bus station on Piazza Matteotti, buses serve nearby Pula (€2.50, 50 minutes, hourly) and Villasimius (€4, 1½ hours, six daily), as well as Iglesias (€4.50, 1½ hours, seven daily), Oristano (€6.50, one hour 35 minutes, two daily), Nuoro (€14.50, 2½ to five hours, two daily) and Sassari (€17.50, 3¼ hours, three daily). **Turmo Travel** (☎ 0789 214 87; [www.gruppoturmotravel.com](http://www.gruppoturmotravel.com)) runs a daily bus to Olbia (€18, 4¼ hours).

Get bus tickets from the McDonald's on the square.

### Car & Motorcycle

The island's main dual-carriage, the SS131 Carlo Felice highway links the capital with Porto Torres via Oristano and Sassari. The SS130 leads east to Iglesias.

## Train

The main Trenitalia station is on Piazza Matteotti. Trains serve Iglesias (€3.65, one hour, 10 daily), Carbonia (€4.15, one hour, six daily), Sassari (€15, four hours, five daily) and Porto Torres (€16.05, 4¼ hours, two daily) via Oristano (€5.65, one to two hours, hourly). A branch line connects with Olbia (€14.60, 4¼ hours, five daily) and Golfo Aranci (€15.80, five to seven hours, three daily) via Oristano or Chilivani.

For information on the Trenino Verde summer tourist train, check out the boxed text on above.

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## GETTING AROUND

### To/From the Airport

Buses run from Piazza Matteotti to Elmas airport (€2, 10 minutes, 30 daily) from 5.20am to 10.30pm. Between 9am and 10.30pm departures are every hour and half past the hour.

A taxi costs about €35.

### Bus

**CTM** (☎ 070 209 12 10; [www.ctmcagliari.it](http://www.ctmcagliari.it), in Italian) bus routes cover the city and surrounding area. A standard ticket costs €1 and is valid for 90 minutes; a daily ticket is €2.30.

### Car & Motorcycle

On-street parking within the blue lines costs €1 per hour. Alternatively, there's a useful car park next to the train station, which costs €0.90 per hour, €10 for 24 hours.

At **CIA Rent a Car** (☎ 070 65 65 03; [www.ciarent.it](http://www.ciarent.it); Via Molo Sant'Agostino 13) you can hire a Ford Fiesta from €69 per day.

### Taxi

There are taxi ranks at Piazza Matteotti, Piazza della Repubblica and on Largo Carlo Felice. Otherwise you can call one from **Quattro Mori** (☎ 070 400 101; 📧 24hr).

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## AROUND CAGLIARI

East and north of Cagliari, lies the lonely Sarrabus, one of Sardinia's least populated and least developed areas. In its centre rise the bushy green peaks of the Monte dei Sette Fratelli, a miraculously wild hinterland where some of the island's last remaining deer wander undisturbed.

East of Poetto the SP17 hugs the coast prettily (if precariously) all the way around to Villasimius and then north along the Costa Rei.

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# OUR TOP FIVE BEACHES IN SARDINIA

- **Chia** (opposite) Two golden strips of sand divided by a Pisan watchtower and beloved of windsurfers.
  - **Spiaggia Piscinas & Scivu** Famous for their sand dunes and wild beauty, these are the stars of the Costa Verde.
  - **Spiaggia del Principe** Prince of the Costa Smeralda's idyllic beaches.
  - **Is Aruttas** On the Sinis Peninsula and prized for its white quartz sand.
  - **Cala Mariolu** Dreamy tropical waters lap this tiny inlet on the Golfo di Orosei.
- 

A few kilometres short of Villasimius, a road veers south to **Capo Carbonara**, Sardinia's most southeasterly point. On the western side of the peninsula is a marina and what remains of a Spanish tower, the **Fortezza Vecchia**. To the south is lovely **Spiaggia del Riso**. The eastern side is dominated by the **Stagno Notteri** lagoon, often host to flamingos in winter. On its seaward side is the stunning **Spiaggia del Simius** beach with its Polynesian blue waters.

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## VILLASIMIUS & COSTA REI

A popular resort, Villasimius is a lively, cheerful place, although activity all but dies out in winter. The central **tourist office** (☎ 070 793 02 71; [www.villasimiusweb.com](http://www.villasimiusweb.com); Piazza Giovanni XXIII; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon-Fri plus & 3.30-6.30pm Mon & Thu, 4-7pm Fri) can provide information on activities in the town. At the Porto Turistico, about 3km outside of town, you can arrange boat tours (about €65 per person) and dives (from €35).

Campers converge on **Spiaggia del Riso** (☎ 070 79 10 52; [www.villaggiospiaggiadelriso.it](http://www.villaggiospiaggiadelriso.it); Località Campulongu; per person/tent/car €16/6/4, bungalows €80-150; ☎ May-Oct; 📄), a big camping ground near the Porto Turistico. It has excellent facilities but gets hellishly crowded in summer.

In the town centre, the year-round **Albergo Stella d'Oro** (☎ 070 79 12 55; fax 070 79 26 32; Via Vittorio Emanuele 25; s €35-55, d €60-110; 📄 ☎) is a friendly, laid-back *pensione* with modest rooms and an excellent seafood restaurant (meals €25 to €30).

For a bite to eat, **Ristorante La Lanterna** (☎ 070 79 16 59; Via Roma 62; meals €30-35; ☎ closed Mon lunch) offers alfresco dining and fine seafood.

ARST buses run to and from Cagliari (€4, 1½ hours, six daily) throughout the year.

From Villasimius, the SP17 follows the coast north to the Costa Rei. About 25km out of Villasimius you hit **Cala Sinzias**, a pretty sandy strand with two camping grounds. Continue for a further 6km and you come to the Costa Rei resort, a holiday village full of villas, shops, bars, clubs and a few indifferent eateries. **Spiaggia Costa Rei** is, like the beaches to its south and north, a dazzling white strand lapped by remarkably clear blue-green water.

By the resort's southern entrance, **Camping Capo Ferrato** (☎ 070 99 10 12; [www.campingcapoferrato.it](http://www.campingcapoferrato.it); per person/tent €12.40/15.90; ☎ May-Oct) is a welcoming camping ground with direct access to the beach.

North of the resort, **Spiaggia Piscina Rei** continues the theme of blinding white sand and turquoise



water. A couple more beaches fill the remaining length of coast up to **Capo Ferrato**, beyond which drivable dirt trails lead north.

The same ARST buses from Cagliari to Villasimius continue around to Costa Rei, taking about half an hour.

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## NORA & AROUND

About 30km southwest of Cagliari, the archaeological zone of **Nora** (adult/child incl Museo Archeologico in Pula €5.50/2.50; ☎ 9am-7.30pm) is what's left of a once powerful ancient city. Founded by Phoenicians in the 11th century BC, it passed into Carthaginian hands before being taken over by the Romans and becoming one of the most important cities on the island. Upon entry, you pass a single melancholy **column** from a former temple and then a small but beautifully preserved Roman **theatre**. To the west are the substantial remains of the **Terme al Mare** (Baths by the Sea). Four columns stand at the heart of what was a patrician villa; the surrounding rooms retain their mosaic floor decoration.

In nearby **Pula**, the one-room **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 070 920 96 10; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 67; admission €2.50, incl Nora €5.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr) displays finds from Nora, including ceramics found in Punic and Roman tombs, some gold and bone jewellery, and Roman glassware.

For further information about Pula and the surrounding area, ask at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 347 237 78 42; Piazza del Popolo; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) just off the town's main hub, Piazza del Popolo.

From Pula, the SS195 follows the coast round to Chia and the stunning Costa del Sud. But unless you're staying at one of the self-contained resort hotels that hog this stretch of coast you're unlikely to glimpse much of sea.

Accommodation tends to be expensive in these parts but you can still find some affordable, locally run places. Near the beach at Nora, the **Hotel Su Gunventeddu** (☎ 070 920 90 92; [www.sugunventeddu.com](http://www.sugunventeddu.com); Località Su Gunventeddu; s €40-70, d €60-100; 🍷) has spacious, old-fashioned rooms decorated with family knick-knacks and dark-wood furnishings. Its restaurant (meals €25 to €30) has an excellent local reputation, but doesn't open for Tuesday and Wednesday lunch.

Off the road to Santa Margherita di Pula are two further choices: **B&B Solivariu** (☎ 339 367 40 88; SS195 km33, Santa Margherita di Pula; per person €30-60; 🍷), a lovely, authentic farm B&B surrounded by fragrant fruit trees; and **Camping Flumendosa** (☎ 070 920 83 64; [www.campingflumondosa.it](http://www.campingflumondosa.it); SS195 km33, Santa Margherita di Pula; per person/tent €7.50/8.50), set in pine and eucalyptus trees near the beach.

Regular buses connect Pula and Cagliari (€2.50, 50 minutes). From Pula there are frequent shuttle buses down to Nora (€0.70), 4km away.

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## COSTA DEL SUD & AROUND

One of the most beautiful stretches of coast in southern Sardinia, the Costa del Sud runs 25km from **Chia** to **Porto Teulada**. Chia's two ravishing beaches are popular with wind- and kite-surfers, while 3km away

there's a magnificent strip of sand at **Tuoredda**. As you wind your way towards the high point of **Capo Malfatano** wonderful views spring into view around every corner.

Budget accommodation is available in two camping grounds at either end of the coastal run. At Chia, there's **Campeggio Torre Chia** (☎ 070 923 00 54; [www.campeggiotorrechia.it](http://www.campeggiotorrechia.it); per person/tent €10.50/17), a busy spot a few hundred metres back from the beach, while 25km to the west, **Portu Tramatzu Camping Comunale** (☎ 070 928 30 27; Località Porto Tramatzu; per person/tent €10.50/9; ☹ week before Easter—Oct) has modest facilities and an on-site diving centre near Porto di Teulada.

Some 25km inland, the **Le Grotte Is Zuddas** (☎ 0781 95 57 41; [www.grotteiszuddas.it](http://www.grotteiszuddas.it) in Italian; adult/child €8/5; ☹ entry at noon & 4pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm Sun Oct-Mar, 9.30am-noon & 2.30-6pm daily Apr-Sep) is a spectacular cave system.

From Cagliari, there are ARST buses to and from Chia (€3, 1¼ hours, 10 daily). Then, between mid-June and mid-September, two daily buses ply the Costa del Sud.

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## SOUTHWESTERN SARDINIA

### IGLESIAS

**pop 27,680**

Surrounded by the skeletons of Sardinia's once-thriving mining industry, Iglesias is an urbane and lively city. Its historic centre, an appealing ensemble of lived-in piazzas, sun-bleached buildings and Aragonese-style wrought-iron balconies, creates an atmosphere that is as much Iberian as Sardinian, a vestige of its history as a Spanish colony. Visit at Easter to experience a quasi-Seville experience during the extraordinary drum-beating processions.

The Romans called the town Metalla, after the precious metals mined here, especially lead and silver. Mining equipment dating back to the Carthaginian era was discovered in the 19th century.

### Sights

Iglesias' central square, **Piazza Quintino Sella** was laid out in the 19th century in what was at the time a field outside the city walls. Just off the square, scruffy stairs leading up to a stout tower are all that remains of **Castello Salvaterra**, a Pisan fortress built in the 13th century. A stretch of the northwestern perimeter wall survives along Via Campidano.

Dominating the eastern flank of Piazza del Municipio in the heart of the *centro storico*, the **Duomo** (Piazza del Municipio; ☹ closed for renovation) retains a lovely Pisan-flavoured facade, as does the bell tower, with its chequerboard stonework.

Bone up on Iglesias' mining history at the **Museo dell'Arte Mineraria** (☎ 0781 35 00 37; [www.museoartemineraria.it](http://www.museoartemineraria.it); Via Roma 47; admission free; ☹ 7-9pm Sat & Sun Jul-Sep, 6-8pm Sat & Sun Jun, by appointment rest of year), a former mining school, where you can experience the harsh conditions in which miners worked in a series of recreated mine shafts.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Artu** (☎ 0781 224 92; [www.hotelartuiglesias.it](http://www.hotelartuiglesias.it); Piazza Quintino Sella 15; s €46-60, d €78-90, apt

€65-95; 📞 📍) Right in the heart of the action, this is a functional middle-of-the-road option. Beyond the awful concrete exterior, it offers comfortable modern rooms, a popular restaurant (meals €20 to €25) and a friendly welcome. Parking is available for €3.50.

**Eurohotel** (📞 0781 226 43; [www.eurohoteliglesias.it](http://www.eurohoteliglesias.it); Via Fratelli Bandieri 34; s €60-80, d €85-110; 📞 📍) A five-minute walk from the centre, this welcoming hotel resembles a kitsch Pompeian villa. With its porticoed entrance and gleefully OTT decor – think chandeliers, marble busts, gilt chairs and oil paintings – it’s great fun. The restaurant is a good bet for a no-nonsense evening meal (€25 to €30).

**Volters & Murion** (📞 078 13 37 88; Piazza Collegio 1; fixed menu €25; 📍 Tue-Sun) Serving everything from hamburgers to pasta and seafood, this is a cheerful eatery near the Duomo. With the TV on in the corner and locals laughing at the bar, it’s a laid-back place, as good for a meal as an evening drink.

## Getting There & Away

Buses for Cagliari (€4.50, 1½ hours, seven daily) arrive at and depart from Via XX Settembre. Get tickets from **Bar Giardini** (Via Oristano 8; 📍 5.30am-2.30pm & 3.30-9pm Mon-Sat) across the park. From the train station on Via Garibaldi, a 15-minute walk from the town centre, there are up to 10 daily trains to Cagliari (€3.65, one hour, 10 daily).

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## AROUND IGLESIAS

A winding 15km drive north of Iglesias (follow for Fluminimaggiore) brings you to the sand-coloured **Tempio di Antas** (📞 0781 58 09 90; adult/child €3/2; 📍 9.30am-7.30pm daily Jul-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm daily Apr-Jun & Oct, 9.30-4.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar), an impressive Roman temple set in bucolic scenery. The 3rd-century temple was built by the Roman emperor Caracalla over a 6th-century-BC Punic sanctuary, which itself stood over an earlier *nuragic* settlement. From near the ticket office a path marked *Antica Strada Romana, Antas Su Mannau* leads to what little remains of this settlement. About an hour and a half further on is the **Grotta de Su Mannau** (📞 0781 58 04 11; [www.sumannau.it](http://www.sumannau.it); 📍 currently closed for work), an 8km-long cave complex with incredible rock formations.

About 10km east of Iglesias, the unremarkable town of **Domusnovas** sits at the centre of one of Sardinia’s most exciting rock-climbing areas. The outlying countryside is peppered with limestone rocks, cliffs and caves, many of which are ideal for sports climbing. For technical information, check out [www.climb-europe.com/sardinia](http://www.climb-europe.com/sardinia) and [www.sardiniaclimb.com](http://www.sardiniaclimb.com).

Four kilometres north of town, the 850m-long **Grotta di San Giovanni** is an impressive sight. Eight daily buses connect Iglesias and Domusnovas (€1, 15 minutes).

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## IGLESIENTE COAST

Iglesias’ local beach is at **Funtanamare** (also spelt Fontanamare), about 8km west of town. From Funtanamare, the SP83 coastal road affords spectacular views as it dips, bends and climbs its way northwards. Dominating the seascape off Nebida, 5.5km to the north, is the 133m-high **Scoglio Pan di Zuccherò** (Sugarloaf Rock), the largest of several *faraglioni* (sea stacks) that rise out of the glassy blue waters. A small and rather drab village, **Nebida** is a former mining settlement sprawled along the road high above the sea. Near its southern entrance, **Pan di Zuccherò** (📞 0781 4 71 14;

[www.hotelpandizucchero.it](http://www.hotelpandizucchero.it); Via Centrale 365; s €40-45, d €55-60, half-board per person €70) is a family-run *pensione* with neat, modestly furnished rooms and a panoramic restaurant (meals €30 to €35).

A few kilometres north, **Masua** is another former mining centre. Seen from above, it looks pretty ugly but it's not without interest. The main draw is the town's unique mining port, **Porto Flavia** (☎ 0781 49 13 00; [www.igeaminiere.it](http://www.igeaminiere.it), in Italian; adult/child €8/4.50; ✉ by appointment). In 1924 two 600m tunnels were dug into the cliffs. In the lower of the two a conveyor belt received zinc and lead ore from the underground deposits and transported it via an ingenious mobile loading arm directly to the ships moored below.

Local buses run between Iglesias and Masua, stopping off at Nebida (€1.50, 30 minutes, 10 daily).

Beyond Masua, and signposted off the SP83, **Cala Domestica** is a cool sandy beach wedged into a natural inlet. **Buggerru**, the biggest village on this stretch of coastline and another former mining settlement, won't delay you long, but it has a useful **tourist office** (☎ 0781 540 93; SP83; ✉ 7am-8.30pm) on the main road. If the office is shut ask at the adjacent bar.

The road out of Buggerru climbs high along the cliffs for a couple of kilometres before descending down to **Spiaggia Portixeddu**, one of the area's best beaches. At its southern tip, you can dine on pizza and fresh fish at **Ristorante San Nicolò** (☎ 0781 5 43 59; Località San Nicolò; meals €30, pizzas €7).

Accommodation in the area is limited, but the **Hotel Golfo del Leone** (☎ 0781 549 52; [www.golfodelleone.it](http://www.golfodelleone.it); Località Caburu de Figù; s €48-53, d €63-90) boasts sunny sea-facing rooms about 1km back from the beach. Service is friendly and the helpful staff can organise horse-riding excursions. The adjacent restaurant serves up decent local food for about €25 to €30 per head.

Inland, there are several *agriturismi*, including **Biologico Fighezia** (☎ 348 069 83 03; Località Fighezia, Fluminimaggiore; half-board per person €45-50, B&B in winter per person €25-30). Set in tranquil countryside, it offers lush views and cabin-style rooms decorated with terracotta tiles, solid wooden fixtures and private terraces. Dinner is served on a large communal table on the terrace of the main house.

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## CARBONIA & AROUND

**pop 30,125**

You won't miss much if you bypass **Carbonia**, a drab town built by Mussolini to house workers from the nearby Sirai-Serbariu coalfield. However, in the vicinity there are a couple of sights worth a detour. The **Museo del Carbone** (☎ 0781 67 05 91; [www.museodelcarbone.it](http://www.museodelcarbone.it); Località Grande Miniera di Serbariu; adult/child €6/4; ✉ 10.30am-7.30pm daily Jun-Sep, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) offers a chastening look into the life of Carbonia's miners, with an interesting collection of machines, photos and equipment, and guided tours into the claustrophobic mine shafts.

A short drive away, the ruins of the 7th-century-BC Phoenician fort at **Monte Sirai** (☎ 0781 626 65; [www.meditinera.it](http://www.meditinera.it); adult/child €5/3; ✉ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Wed-Sun Oct-Mar) sit atop a steep hill 4km northwest of Carbonia. Although not a great deal remains, you can make out the placement of the Carthaginian acropolis, a necropolis and *tophet*, a sacred burial ground for children.

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# SANT'ANTIOCO & SAN PIETRO

These islands off Sardinia's southwestern coast display very different characters. Both are popular summer destinations but Isola Sant'Antioco, the larger and more developed of the two, is less obviously picturesque with a rocky Sardinian landscape and gritty working port. Barely half an hour across the water, the pastel houses and bobbing fishing boats of Isola di San Pietro are much more what you'd expect of a holiday island.

## Information

**Tourist office** San Pietro (☎ 0781 85 40 09; [www.prolococarloforte.it](http://www.prolococarloforte.it), in Italian; Piazza Carlo Emanuele III 19; 10am-1pm & 5-8pm); Sant'Antioco (☎ 0781 8 20 31; Via Roma 43; ☎ 10.30am-1pm & 4.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri)

## Sights & Activities

The main sights are in Sant'Antioco. Up in the high part of town, the **Basilica di Sant'Antioco Martire** (☎ 078 18 30 44; Piazza Parrocchia 22; ☎ 9am-12pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 10.30-11.15am & 3-6pm Sun) is a sublimely simple 5th-century church set over an extensive system of creepy **catacombs** (guided tours €2.50).

In the outskirts of town, the excellent **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0781 821 05; [www.archeotur.it](http://www.archeotur.it), in Italian; admission €6/3.50; ☎ 9am-7pm) contains a fascinating collection of local archaeological finds.

For beaches head to **Maladroixa** and **Spiaggia Coa Quaddus** on the eastern coast.

Over on Isola San Pietro the main activity is wandering the streets of laid-back **Carloforte**, the main town. On the seafront, **Cartur Dea** (☎ 0781 85 43 31; molo Tagliafico) is one of several outfits offering boat tours. Bank on about €25 per person. Carloforte's big annual event, the four-day **Girotonno** ([www.girotonno.org](http://www.girotonno.org)) festival held in late May or early June is dedicated to the island's traditional tuna kill, known locally as the *mattanza*.

## Sleeping

**Hotel California** (☎ 0781 85 44 70; [www.hotelcaliforniacarloforte.it](http://www.hotelcaliforniacarloforte.it); Via Cavallera 15; s €32-50, d €45-90) In Carloforte, this super-friendly family-run *pensione* is in a residential street a few blocks back from the *lungomare*. It's a modest place but the spacious, sun-filled rooms are more than adequate and its location ensures a good night's sleep.

**Hotel Moderno** (☎ 0781 831 05; [www.albergoristorantemoderno.com](http://www.albergoristorantemoderno.com); Via Nazionale 82; Sant'Antioco; s €44-60, d €70-100; ☎) A bright, welcoming hotel on the main road into Sant'Antioco. Rooms are agreeable with a relaxing cream-and-salmon colour scheme and big, comfy beds. Downstairs, the airy restaurant (open April to October) serves a good line in local fish.

Also recommended:

**Hotel del Corso** (☎ 0781 80 02 65; [www.hoteldelcorso.it](http://www.hoteldelcorso.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele 32; Sant'Antioco; s €44-60, d €69-100; ☎) Has smart rooms over an elegant cafe in Sant'Antioco.

**Hotel Riviera** (☎ 0781 85 41 01; [www.hotelriviera-carloforte.com](http://www.hotelriviera-carloforte.com); Corso Battellieri 26; s €75-120, d €120-190; ☎) Offers designer chic on the Carloforte seafront.

# Eating

Tuna is king of *San Pietro* cuisine and appears on almost all island menus.

**Ristorante Pizzeria Al Castello** (☎ 0781 85 62 83; Via Castello 5; pizzas €6, meals €25; 📅 Mon-Sat) At the top of Carloforte, this is where locals come to get their pizza. A friendly, laid-back place with a spacious dining room and comprehensive menu, it's well worth the short but steep climb to get here.

**Ristorante 7 Nani** (☎ 0781 84 09 00; Via Garibaldi 139; pizzas €7, meals €30; 📅 Wed-Mon) A laid-back Sant'Antioco trattoria set-up with simple wood tables, a garden dining area and pictures of Snow White's seven dwarves. The wood-fired pizzas are superb, the seafood is fresh and the local *mirto* (a berry-based liqueur) a sweet way to finish off.

**Osteria della Tonnara** (☎ 078 185 57 34; Corso Battellieri 36; meals €35; 📅 Jun-Sep) Run by Isola San Pietro's tuna cooperative, this is the place to try *tonno alla carlofortina* (tuna roasted and served with a tomato sauce). Booking is recommended and credit cards are not accepted.

## Getting There & Around

Sant'Antioco is connected to the mainland by a bridge and is accessible by bus from Iglesias (€3, 1¾ hours) and Carbonia (€1, 50 minutes).

To get to Isola San Pietro (Carloforte), you'll need to catch a ferry from Portovesme (per person/car €2.60/5.80, 30 minutes, at least 15 daily) or from Calasetta on Isola Sant'Antioco (per person/car €2.30/5, 13 daily).

Local buses run around Sant'Antioco, and limited summertime services operate on San Pietro. Tickets cost €1.

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## COSTA VERDE

One of Sardinia's great untamed coastal stretches, the Costa Verde (Green Coast) extends northwards from Capo Pecora to the small resort of Torre dei Corsari. Named after the green *macchia* (Mediterranean scrub) that covers much of its mountainous hinterland, it's an area of wild, exhilarating beauty and spectacular, unspoilt beaches.

To reach the area's two best beaches, head inland from Portixeddu along the SS126 and follow for Arbus. Signs off to the left direct you to Gennamari, Bau and **Spiaggia Scivu**, a golden beach backed by 70m-high sand dunes. A further 4km beyond this turn-off is another for the ghost town of **Ingurtosu** and beyond that, the magnificent and untamed **Spiaggia Piscinas**. Note that the route down to the beach involves at least 10km of dirt-track driving.

If you want to stay in the area, there's an excellent *agriturismo* off the SP65 between Montevecchio and Torre dei Corsari

**our pick** **Agriturismo L'Oasi del Cervo** (☎ 347 301 13 18; [www.oasidelcervo.com](http://www.oasidelcervo.com); Località Is Gennas Arbus; half-board per person €43-60) is as authentic as it gets, a working farm at the end of a 2.5km dirt track in the middle of silent green hills. Rooms are extremely simple, but the location and the superb home-made food more than compensate.

North of here, **Torre dei Corsari** is a fairly uninspiring modern resort with a fine dune-backed beach.

There's a useful **supermarket** (☎ 070 97 72 45; Piazza Stella Maris; ☒ 9am-1pm & 5-8pm daily) on the central square and a number of sleeping options. The best is **Verdemare** (☎ 070 97 72 72, in winter 070 773 08 49; [www.verdemare.com](http://www.verdemare.com); Via Colombo; s €46-68, d €70-104; ☒ Apr-Oct; ☒), a lovely villa with lush gardens, distant sea views and bright, cool rooms.

You'll really need a car to explore the Costa Verde. But during July and August, an ARST bus runs daily from Oristano to Torre dei Corsari (€4, 1½ hours).

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## WESTERN SARDINIA

### ORISTANO

**pop 32,620**

With its elegant shopping streets, ornate piazzas and popular cafes, Oristano's animated centre makes a great base for exploring this part of the island. The city was founded in the 11th century and became capital of the Giudicato d' Arborea, one of Sardinia's four independent provinces. Eleonora of Arborea, a heroine in the Joan of Arc mould, became head of the *giudicato* in 1383 and led fierce resistance against the island's Spanish invaders. But with her death, anti-Spanish opposition crumbled and Oristano was incorporated into the rest of Aragonese-controlled Sardinia. Eleonora is also remembered for her celebrated Carta di Logu (Code of Laws), an extraordinary law code which tackled land and property legislation as well as introducing a whole raft of women's rights.

### Information

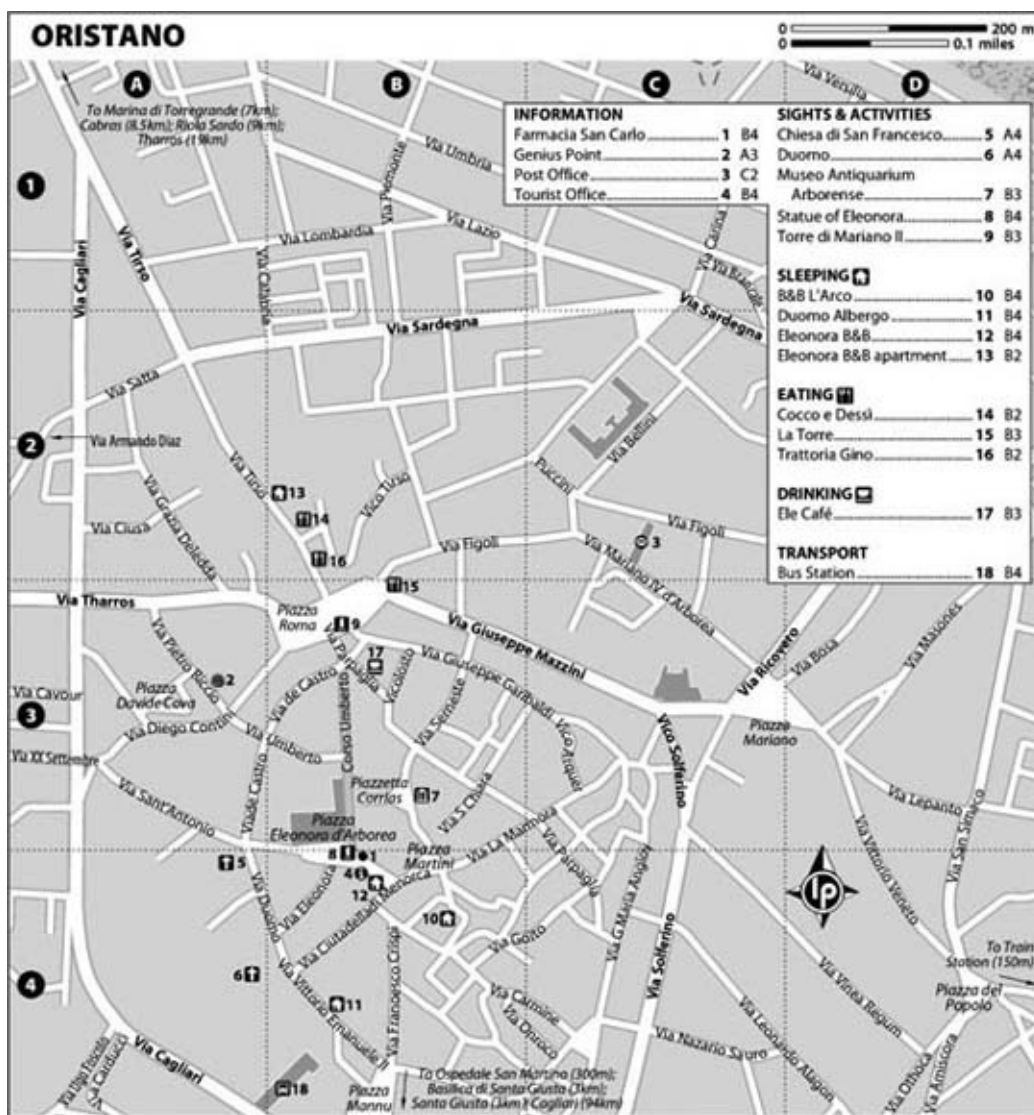
**Farmacia San Carlo** (☎ 0783 7 11 23; Piazza Eleonora d' Arborea 10/11)

**Genius Point** (Via Pietro Riccio 4; per hr €4; ☒ 8.30am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat) Internet access.

**Ospedale San Martino** (☎ 0783 31 71; Piazza San Martino)

**Post office** (Via Mariano IV d' Arborea)

**Tourist office** (☎ 0783 368 32 10; [turismo@provincia.or.it](mailto:turismo@provincia.or.it); Piazza Eleonora d' Arborea 19; ☒ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri & 4-6.30pm Mon-Thu)



## Sights

One of the few vestige's of Oristano's medieval past, the 13th-century **Torre di Mariano II** (Piazza Roma) was the town's northern gate and an important part of the city defences. From here, pedestrianised Corso Umberto I leads to Piazza Eleonora d'Arborea, Oristano's elegant outdoor salon. In the centre stands an ornate 19th-century **statue of Queen Eleonora**, raising a finger as if about to launch into a political discourse. Nearby, the neoclassical **Chiesa di San Francesco** (Via Sant'Antonio; ☎ Mass 6.30pm Sat, 7.30am, 9.30am & 6pm Sun) harbours a 14th-century wooden sculpture, the *Crocifisso di Nicodemo*, considered one of Sardinia's most precious carvings. Follow Via Duomo to the **Duomo** (Piazza del Duomo; ☎ Mass 5pm Sat, 10am & noon Sun), built in the 13th century but remodelled 500 years later. Its free-standing *campanile*, topped by a conspicuous majolica-tiled dome, adds an exotic Byzantine look to Oristano's skyline.

Oristano's sole museum, the **Museo Antiquarium Arborensis** (☎ 0783 79 12 62; Piazza Corrias; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-8pm) contains one of the island's major archaeological collections with prehistoric artefacts from the Sinis Peninsula and finds from Carthaginian and Roman Tharros. There's also a small collection of *retablos* (painted altarpieces), including the 16th-century *Retablo del Santo Cristo*, which depicts a decorative series of Franciscan saints.

Around 3km south of Oristano at Santa Giusta is the 12th-century **Basilica di Santa Giusta** (☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat), one of Sardinia's finest Tuscan-style Romanesque churches.

## Festivals & Events



One of Sardinia's top festivals, Oristano's **Sa Sartiglia** is held over two days, Sunday and *martedì grasso* (Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras). It involves a costumed medieval joust and some amazing acrobatic horse riding.

## Sleeping

**B&B L'Arco** (☎ 0783 7 28 49; [www.arcobedandbreakfast.it](http://www.arcobedandbreakfast.it); Vico Ammirato 12; d without bathroom €60) This homey B&B is hidden away in a quiet cul-de-sac near Piazza Martini. There are only two guest rooms but they are spacious and tastefully decorated with exposed wood beams, terracotta tiles and dark-wood furnishings.

**our pick Eleonora B&B** (☎ 0783 7 04 35; [www.eleonora-bed-and-breakfast.com](http://www.eleonora-bed-and-breakfast.com); Piazza Eleonora d'Arborea 12; s €35-40, d €60-70, apt €80; ☎ 📶) Housed in a medieval *palazzo* on Oristano's central piazza, this charming B&B is an excellent option with tastefully decorated rooms, creaky parquet floors and heavy wooden furniture. Wi-fi is available. The young owners also rent out a funky, two-bedroom loft apartment, ideal for families or longer stays.

**Duomo Albergo** (☎ 0783 77 80 61; [www.hotelduomo.net](http://www.hotelduomo.net); Via Vittorio Emanuele 34; s/d €80/135; ☎ 📶) Inside and out, Oristano's top hotel is refined and elegantly understated. Behind the discreet facade, spacious rooms reveal a low-key look with traditional fabrics and cooling white tones.

## Eating & Drinking

**La Torre** (☎ 0783 30 14 94; Piazza Roma 52; pizzas €6.50, meals €20-25; ☎ Tue-Sun) This place doesn't look like much from outside; in fact, it's not so amazing inside either. No matter, it serves the best pizza in town. If you're off pizza but just want to enjoy the hectic atmosphere, there's a full menu of pastas and grilled mains.

**Trattoria Gino** (☎ 0783 7 14 28; Via Tirso 13; meals €25-30; ☎ Mon-Sat) An old-school neighbourhood trattoria, Gino has been serving tasty, no-nonsense food since the 1930s. The menu covers most bases, but it's the seafood that really stands out. Start with risotto *alla marinara* (seafood risotto) before diving into chargrilled *seppia* (cuttlefish).

**Cocco e Dessì** (☎ 0783 25 26 48; Via Tirso 30; meals €35, pizzas €6) Smart, but not oppressively so, this is a popular modern restaurant. Well-dressed diners sit down to whopping pizzas and tasty, stylishly presented local food. Menu staples include *polpi con patate* (octopus with potato), served cold as an antipasto, and *orata al vapore* (steamed sea bream).

Of the centre's various cafes and bars, **Ele Café** (☎ 0783 30 20 69; Via Parpaglia 6) is hot right now, filling quickly in the early evening and carrying on late.

## Getting There & Around

From the bus station on Via Cagliari buses leave for Santa Giusta (€1, 15 minutes, half-hourly), Cagliari (€6.50, one hour 35 minutes, two daily), Sassari (€7.50 to €9.50, two hours, three daily) and Nuoro (€6.50, 2½ hours, six daily).

The main train station is in Piazza Ungheria, east of the town centre. Up to 12 daily trains run between Oristano and Cagliari (€5.65, one to two hours).

City buses on the *azzurra* (blue) line run from Via Cagliari to the beach at Marina di Torregrande (€0.70 or €1.10 if bought on bus, 20 minutes).

## BARUMINI & AROUND

In the heart of voluptuous green countryside near Barumini, the **Nuraghe Su Nuraxi** (adult/concession €7/5; 🕒 9am-7pm summer, to 6pm spring & autumn, to 4pm winter) is Sardinia's sole World Heritage site and the island's most visited *nuraghe*. The focal point is the 1500 BC tower, which originally stood on its own but was later incorporated into a fortified compound. The first village buildings were erected in the Iron Age, and it's these that constitute the beehive of circular interlocking buildings that spread across the grass.

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## MYSTERY TOWERS, FAIRY HOUSES & SACRED WELLS

To the untrained eye, the strange stone circles that litter Sardinia's interior are mysterious and incomprehensible. But to archaeologists they provide one of the few windows into the dark world of the Bronze Age *nuraghe* people.

There are said to be up to 7000 *nuraghi* (stone towers) across the island, most built between 1800 and 500 BC. No one is absolutely certain what they were used for, although most experts think they were defensive watchtowers.

Early *nuraghi* were simple free-standing structures with internal chambers. Over time, they became bigger and more complex and eventually walls were added to form fortified villages. The most spectacular example of this is the Nuraghe Su Nuraxi (opposite) near Barumini.

Even before they started building *nuraghi*, the Sardinians were busy digging tombs into the rock, known as *domus de janas* (fairy houses). More elaborate were the common graves fronted by what appeared to be great ceremonial entrances known as *tombe dei giganti* (giants' tombs).

Evidence of pagan religious practices are provided by *pozzi sacri* (well temples). Built from around 1000 BC, these were often constructed so as to capture light at the yearly equinoxes, hinting at a naturalistic religion as well as sophisticated building techniques. The well temple at Santa Cristina ([Click here](#)) is a prime example.

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In Barumini, **Albergo Sa Lolla** (📞 070 936 84 19; [www.wels.it/salolla](http://www.wels.it/salolla); Via Cavour 49, Barumini; s €42-47, d €55-65, meals €25; 📄 🚰 🚰 🚰) is a tastefully refurbished farmstead with seven airy rooms and an excellent restaurant. Note that breakfast costs an extra €6.

Five kilometres west of Barumini, the village of **Tuli** is a gateway to the **Giara di Gesturi**, a high basalt plateau famous for its population of wild *cavallini* (literally 'minihorses'), most likely seen by shallow *pauli* (seasonal lakes) at daybreak or dusk.

To the east, it's a 25km drive to the village of Serri and the **Santuario Santa Vittoria di Serri** (adult/concession €4/2; 🕒 9am-7pm summer, to 5pm winter), the most extensive *nuraghic* settlement unearthed in Sardinia.

Three weekday buses run from Cagliari to Barumini (€4.50, 1½ hours), otherwise you'll need your own transport.

## SINIS PENINSULA

West of Oristano, the Sinis Peninsula feels like a world apart with its glassy lagoons, low-lying countryside and snow-white beaches. The main sight is the ancient town of Tharros.

## Tharros & Around

The blue choppy waters of the Golfo di Oristano form the ideal backdrop to the ruins of ancient **Tharros** (☎ 0783 39 73 06; admission incl Museo Civico in Cabras €5; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Oct-May). Founded by the Phoenicians in the 8th century BC, it thrived as a Carthaginian naval base and was later taken over by the Romans. Much of what you see today dates to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, when the basalt streets were laid, and the aqueduct, baths and other major monuments were built.

On the side of the road just before Tharros, you'll see the 6th-century **Chiesa di San Giovanni di Sinis** (☎ 9am-7pm Jun-Sep, to 5pm Oct-May), one of oldest churches in Sardinia.

Some 4km north, the weird village of San Salvatore is worth a quick look. Used as a spaghetti-western film set during the 1960s, it is centred on a dusty town square surrounded by rows of tiny terraced houses, known as *cumbessias*. In the piazza, the 16th-century **Chiesa di San Salvatore** (☎ 9.30am-1pm daily & 3.30-6pm Mon-Sat summer, in winter morning only) is built over a pagan sanctuary dating from the *nuraghic* period.

Just beyond the turnoff for the village, the excellent **Agriturismo Su Pranu** (☎ 0783 39 25 61; [www.supranu.com](http://www.supranu.com); Località San Salvatore; B&B per person €32-40, half-board per person €50-60; ☎) is a genuine working farm offering six bright guest rooms and superb home-grown food.

In July and August, there are five daily buses for San Giovanni in Sinis from Oristano (€1.50, 35 minutes).

## Cabras

This straggling lagoon town is really only worth stopping at for the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0783 29 06 36; [www.penisoladelsinis.it](http://www.penisoladelsinis.it), in Italian; Via Tharros 121; adult/concession incl Tharros €5/3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Oct-May) at the southern end of the town. It houses finds from the prehistoric site of **Cuccuru Is Arrius**, 3km to the southwest, and Tharros. Buses run every 20 minutes or so from Oristano (€1, 15 minutes).

## Beaches

The beaches on the Sinis Peninsula are well worth tracking down. One of the best is **Is Aruttas**, whose white quartz sand was for years carted off to be used in aquariums and on beaches on the Costa Smeralda. However, it's now illegal to take any. The beach is signposted and is 5km west off the main road north from San Salvatore.

Within walking distance of the beach, **Camping Is Aruttas** (☎ 0783 39 11 08; [www.campingisaruttas.it](http://www.campingisaruttas.it); Località Marina Aruttas; per person & tent/car €16/4; ☎ mid-May—Sep) has modest camping facilities set amid olive trees and Mediterranean shrubbery.

At the north of the peninsula, the popular surfing beach of **Putzu Idu** is backed by a motley set of holiday homes, beach bars and surfing outlets. One such, the **Capo Mannu Kite School** (☎ 347 007 70 35; [www.capomannukiteschool.it](http://www.capomannukiteschool.it)) runs kite-surfing lessons for all levels. For underwater thrills, **9511 Diving** (☎ 349 291 37 65; [www.9511.it](http://www.9511.it)) runs dives and snorkelling trips, as well as excursions to the eloquently named **Isola di Mal di Ventre** (Stomachache Island), 10km off the coast. Another reliable operator is **Naturawentura** (☎ 0783 5 21 97; [www.capomannu.it](http://www.capomannu.it)), which offers a whole range of activities,

including wind- and kite-surfing, diving, rock climbing, mountain-biking and trekking.

As a rough guide, reckon on €35 plus for a standard dive and about €50 for an excursion over to Isola di Male di Ventre.

Two weekday buses run to Putzu Idu from Oristano (€2, 55 minutes). In July and August, there are four additional services.

## Riola Sardo

The single main reason to stop off at this otherwise drab town, is to stay at the wonderful **our pick Hotel Lucrezia** (☎ 0783 41 20 78; [www.hotellucrezia.it](http://www.hotellucrezia.it); Via Roma 14/a, Riola Sardo; s €85-100, d €130-160; 📍 📷). Housed in an ancient *cortile* (courtyard house) it has rustically decorated rooms surrounding an inner courtyard complete with wisteria-draped pergola, fig and citrus trees. Free bikes are provided, and the welcoming staff regularly organise cooking, painting and wine-tasting courses.

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## NORTH ORISTANO COAST

North of the Sinis Peninsula, there are some superb beaches in and around the popular resort of **Santa Caterina di Pittinuri**. These include **Spiaggia dell'Arco** at **S'Archittu**, and further south, **Is Arenas**, one of the longest beaches in the area. Nearby, **Camping Is Arena** (☎ 0783 5 21 03; [www.campingisarenas.it](http://www.campingisarenas.it); per person/tent & car €11/14, 2-person bungalow €35-55) is one of three camping grounds in the vicinity. Large and well-equipped, it has tent sites and bungalows immersed in pine trees.

Inland, the **Monti Ferru** massif (105m) is a beautiful and largely uncontaminated area of ancient forests, natural springs and small market towns. There's some great walking in the area and gourmets will enjoy the wonderful food.

From Oristano, five weekday buses run to Santa Caterina (€2, 40 minutes) and S'Archittu (€2, 40 minutes). Extra services are added in July and August.

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## LAGO OMEDEO CIRCUIT

Follow the SS131 north out of Oristano for the **Nuraghe Santa Cristina** (☎ 0785 5 54 38; admission incl Museo Archeologico-Etnografico in Paulilatino €5; 🕒 8.30am-sunset), an important *nuraghe* whose extraordinary Bronze Age *tempio a pozzo* (well-temple) is one of the best preserved in Sardinia. Finds from the site can be viewed a few kilometres up the road at Paulilatino's small **Museo Archeologico-Etnografico** (☎ 0785 5 54 38; Via Nazionale 127; admission incl Santa Cristina €5; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun May-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-5.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr).

Just north of Paulilatino is another major *nuraghe*, the impressive **Nuraghe Losa** (☎ 0785 5 23 02; [www.nuragheiosa.net](http://www.nuragheiosa.net); admission €3.50; 🕒 9am-1hr before sunset) dating from 1500 BC.

About 14km to the northeast, the unremarkable rural town of **Sedilo** explodes into life for the **Ardia** festival on 6 and 7 July, when an unruly pack of skilled horsemen race around a dusty track while crowds of up to 50,000 drink, hoot and fire guns into the air.

Your own transport is needed to get to most of these sights, although buses do run from Oristano to

Abbasanta (€2.50, 55 minutes), via Paulilatino. These will drop you within walking distance of Nuraghe Losa.

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## BOSA

### pop 8080

Bosa is one of Sardinia's most attractive towns. Seen from a distance, its rainbow townscape resembles a vibrant Paul Klee canvas, with pastel houses stacked on a steep hillside, tapering up to a stark, grey castle. In front, moored fishing boats bob on the glassy Temo River and palm trees line an elegant riverfront. Three kilometres west, Bosa Marina, the town's satellite beach resort, is less obviously attractive with modern low-rise hotels, restaurants and holiday homes.

In the absence of a working tourist office the best place for information is the Casa Deriu museum on Corso Vittorio Emanuele, Bosa's main strip. Check emails at **Web Copy** (☎ 0785 37 20 49; Via Vincenzo Gioberti 12; per hr €4; 🕒 9am-1pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat).

## Sights & Activities

It's quite a climb up to Bosa's hilltop castle, **Castello Malaspina** (☎ 333 544 56 75; admission €2.50; 🕒 10am-12.30pm Sat & Sun or by reservation), built in 1112 by a noble Tuscan family. Note that these opening times often change, and it might well be open for longer over summer.

Down below, the **Museo Casa Deriu** (☎ 0785 37 70 43; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 59; adult/concession €4.50/3; 🕒 10am-1pm & 4-6pm Tue-Sun) illustrates the town's history, including a section on Bosa's old tanning industry. Also of interest is the Gothic-Romanesque **Cattedrale di San Pietro Extramuros** (🕒 10.30am-12.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr, to 7pm May-Sep), 2km from the old bridge on the south bank of the Temo.

Bosa has much to offer outdoor enthusiasts. You can hire bikes and scooters at **Cuccu** (☎ 0785 37 54 16; Via Roma 5), a mechanics' on the southern side of the river – €8 per day for a bike and €40 for a scooter. At Bosa Marina, **Bosa Diving** (☎ 335 818 97 48; [www.bosadiving.it](http://www.bosadiving.it), in Italian; Via Colombo 2) runs dives (from €35) and snorkelling excursions (€35), as well as hiring out canoes (double canoe €10 per hour) and dinghies (from €25 per hour).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Ostello Malaspina** (☎ 346 236 38 44; [www.valevacanze.com](http://www.valevacanze.com); Via Sardegna 1; dm €16, d €20, q €75-85; 🕒) A rare year-round option at Bosa Marina, this functional hostel offers reliable institutional-style accommodation in six-person dorms, double and family rooms. It gets bonus points for the garden out back, the washing machines (€5), evening meals (€10 to €15) and canoe hire.

**Bio Agriturismo Bainas** (☎ 339 209 0 967, 0785 37 31 29; [www.agriturismobainasbosa.com](http://www.agriturismobainasbosa.com); Via San Pietro; s €35-50, d €60-75, q €118-136, meals €20) Surrounded by fields of artichokes, olive and orange trees, this modest *agriturismo* is about a kilometre outside of town. There are few frills but the guest rooms in the small farmstead are clean and do the job well enough. Outside, there's a verandah with lovely, bucolic views.

**our pick** **Corte Fiorita** (☎ 0785 37 70 58; [www.albergo-diffuso.it](http://www.albergo-diffuso.it); Via Lungo Temo de Gasperi 45; s €45-90, d €65-115; 🕒 🕒) Corte Fiorita has beautiful, spacious rooms in four refurbished *palazzi* across

town – one on the riverfront and three in the historic centre. No two rooms are exactly the same but you'll generally find plenty of exposed stonework, wooden beams and vaulted ceilings. Mini-apartments are also available for longer stays (€390 to €950 per week).

**La Pulce Rossa** (☎ 0785 37 56 57; Via Lungo Temo Amendola 1; pizzas €6, meals €25; 📅 Tue-Sun) A 20-minute walk from the centre, this friendly family-run restaurant serves filling working-man's fare at decidedly untouristy prices. For a real gut-buster try the house speciality, *pennette 'Pulce Rossa'*, a rich concoction of pasta, giant prawns, cream and saffron.

**Sa Pischedda** (☎ 0785 37 30 65; Via Roma 8; meals €30-35, pizzas €7; 📅 Wed-Mon, daily summer) At the hotel of the same name, this is one of Bosa's best restaurants. Speciality of the house is stylishly presented fish, both seawater and freshwater, but it also does excellent pizza and pasta. Reservations in summer are a good idea.

## Getting There & Away

All buses terminate at Piazza Zanetti. There are services to and from Alghero (€3 to €4.50, 1½ hours, two daily), Sassari (€5.50, 2¼ hours, three daily) and Oristano (€5.50, two hours, six daily Monday to Saturday). Get tickets from the bus depot on Via Nazionale (opposite Sa Pischedda restaurant) or ask the driver.

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# NORTHERN SARDINIA

## ALGHERO

**pop 40,800**

A smart medieval town, Alghero is the main resort in northwest Sardinia. But although it's largely given over to tourism, it has managed to avoid many of its worst excesses, and it retains a proud and independent spirit. The main focus is the picturesque historic centre, a tightly knit enclave of shady cobbled lanes, Gothic *palazzi* and cafe-lined squares, all enclosed by robust, honey-coloured sea walls. Hanging over everything is a palpable Spanish atmosphere, a hangover of the 14th century when Sardinia's Aragonese invaders tried to 'ethnically cleanse' Alghero by replacing the local populace with Catalan colonists.

## Orientation

Alghero's historic centre is on a small promontory jutting into the sea. The new town stretches out behind it and along the northern coast. Intercity buses arrive in Via Catalogna, just outside the historic centre. The train station is about 1km north, on Via Don Minzoni.

## Information

**Bar Miramare** (☎ 079 973 10 27; Via Gramsci 2; per hr €5; 📅 8.30am-1pm & 4.30pm-2am) Internet access.

**Farmacia Bulla** (☎ 079 95 21 15; Via Garibaldi 13)

**Laundry** (Via Sassari 113/A; 7kg wash/dry €7/1.50; 📅 8.30am-8.30pm)

**Ospedale Civile** (☎ 079 99 62 00; Via Don Minzoni) The main hospital.

**Police station** (☎ 079 972 00 00; Piazza della Mercede 4)

**Post office** (Via Carducci 35)

**Tourist office** (☎ 079 97 90 54; [www.comune.alghero.ss.it](http://www.comune.alghero.ss.it); Piazza Porta Terra 9; ☎ 8am-8pm daily, closed Sun in winter)

## Sights & Activities

A leisurely stroll around Alghero's animated *centro storico* is a good way of getting into the holiday atmosphere. Overlooking Piazza Duomo, the oversized **Cattedrale di Santa Maria** (☎ 079 97 92 22; Piazza Duomo; ☎ 7am-noon & 5-7.30pm) is an odd mishmash of Moorish, baroque, Renaissance and other influences. Of greater interest is the **campanile** (bell tower; admission €2; ☎ 7-9.30pm Tue, Thu & Sat Jul & Aug, 5-8pm Tue, Thu, & Sat Sep, on request rest of year) around the back, a fine example of Catalan-Gothic architecture.

On the old town's main street, the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 079 97 92 58; Via Carlo Alberto; ☎ 7.30-noon & 5-8.30pm) hides some beautiful 14th-century cloisters behind an austere stone facade.

Several 14th-century towers remain from the medieval city, including **Torre Porta a Terra** (☎ 079 973 40 45; Piazza Porta Terra; adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 6pm-11pm Mon-Sat Jul & Aug, 9.30am-1pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat Apr-Jun & Sep, 9.30am-1pm Mon-Sat & 5-7pm Wed & Fri Oct-Mar) which was once one of the city's two main gates. It now houses a small multimedia museum dedicated to the city's past and a terrace with sweeping, 360-degree views.

To the north, the **Bastione della Maddalena**, with its eponymous tower, is the only extant remnant of the city's former land battlements. The Mediterranean crashes against the seaward walls of the **Bastioni di San Marco** and **Bastioni di Cristoforo Colombo**. Along these bulwarks are some inviting restaurants and bars where you can watch the sunset over a cocktail.

North of Alghero's yacht-jammed port, Via Garibaldi sweeps up to the town's beaches, **Spiaggia di San Giovanni** and the adjacent **Spiaggia di Maria Pia**. Nicer by far, though, are the beaches near Fertilia ([Click here](#)). From the port you can take boat trips along the impressive northern coast to **Capo Caccia**. Prices range from about €40 to €100 per person.

## Courses

Brush up on your Italian with a course at **Stroll & Speak** (☎ 339 489 93 14; [www.strollandspeak.com](http://www.strollandspeak.com); Via Cavour 4; 20hr class of 5 students, per person €180), an established language school in the historic centre.

## Festivals & Events

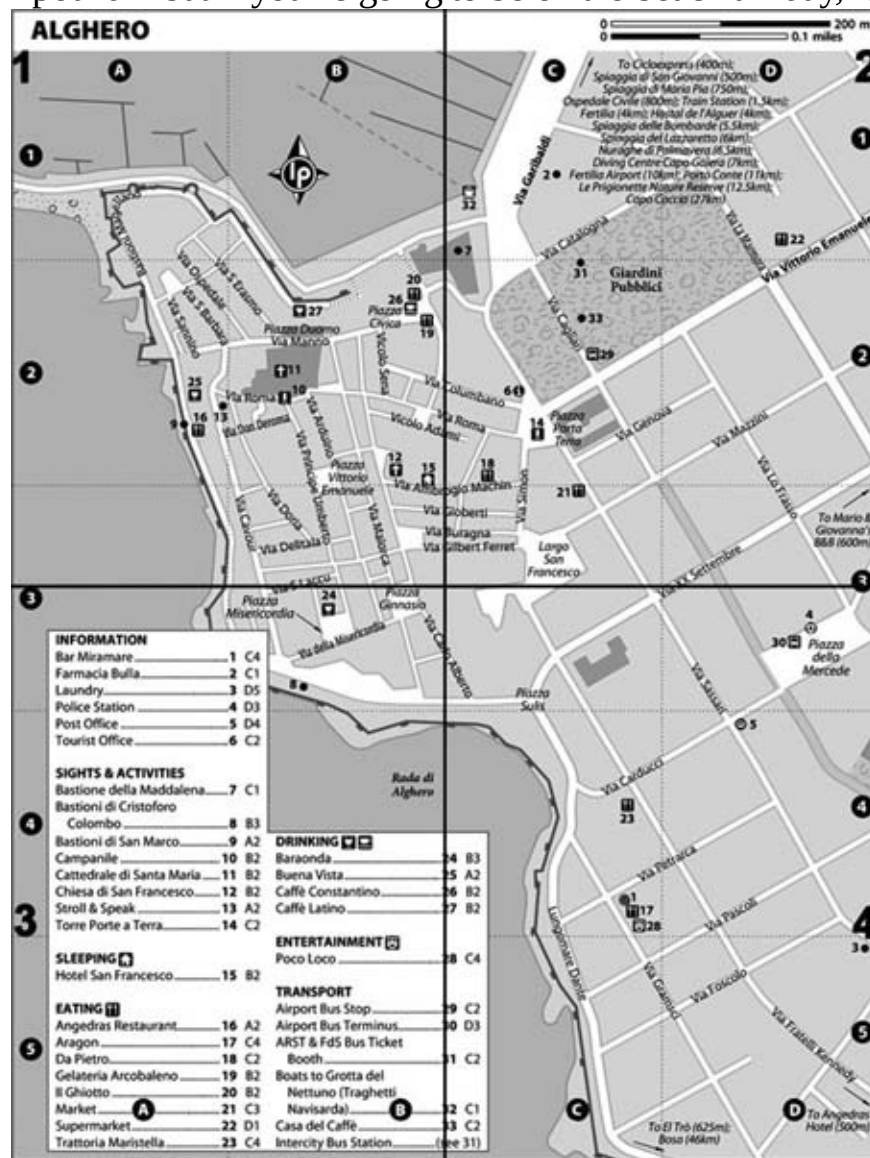
The **Estate Musicale Internazionale di Alghero** (International Summer of Music) is staged in July and August, and features classical music concerts in the evocative setting of the Chiesa di San Francesco cloister.

## Sleeping

Booking ahead is a good idea year-round and essential in July and August.

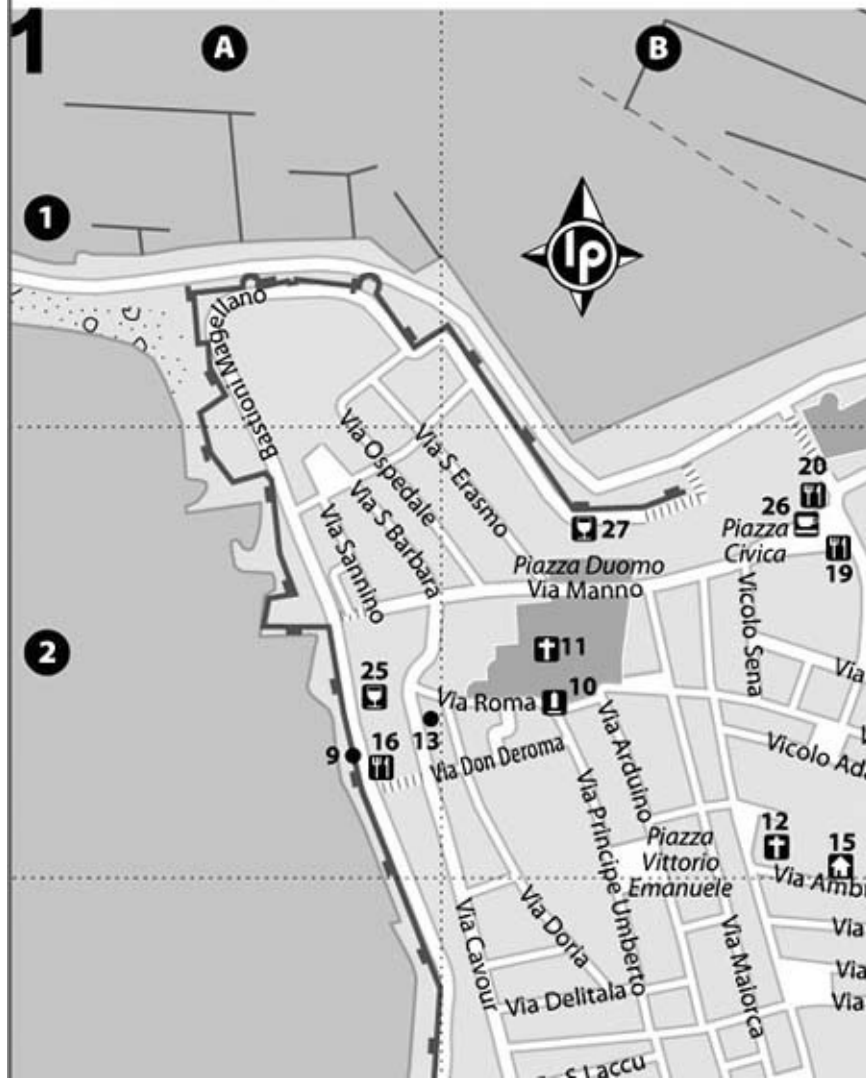
**Hostal de l'Alguer** (☎ 079 93 04 78; [www.algherohostel.com](http://www.algherohostel.com); Via Parenzo 79; dm €20, per person in d/tr & q €26/23, meal €10; ☎ ☎) About 4km north of town in Fertilia, this hostel is clean, friendly and characterless. You won't want to hang around much – single-sex dorms are in a series of prefab

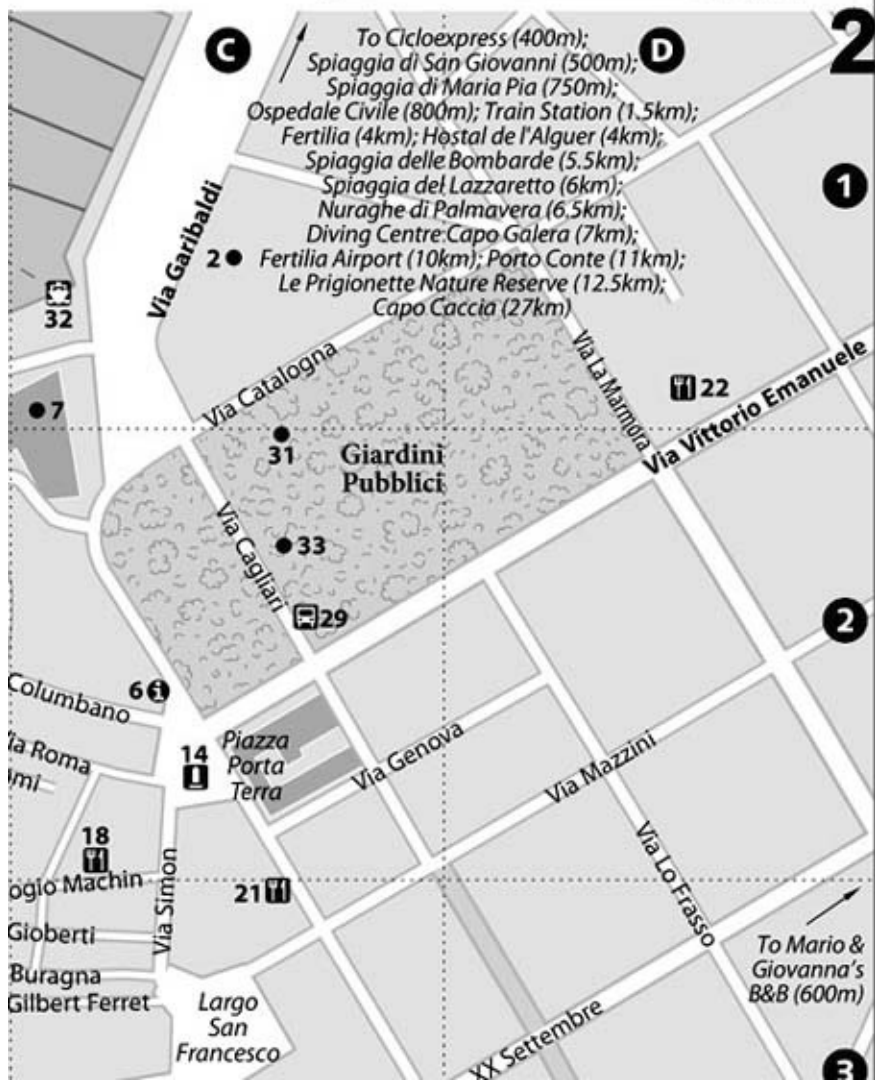
bungalows in a dusty compound – but if you're going to be on the beach all day, it's not a bad call.





# ALGHERO





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**Da Pietro** (☎ 079 97 96 45; Via Ambrogio Machin 20; set menus €25-35; 📅 Thu-Tue) With its stone vaulted ceiling, intimate atmosphere and traditional menu, this is an archetypal Sardinian trattoria. If you've never had *ricci* (sea urchins), a prized local speciality, this is a good place to try them.

**Trattoria Maristella** (☎ 079 97 81 72; Via Fratelli Kennedy 9; meals €27; 📅 closed Sun dinner) Visitors and locals flock to this bustling little trattoria for reliable seafood and local specialities such as *culurgiones* (ravioli stuffed with potato, pecorino cheese and mint) and *crema catalana*, a delicious creamy dessert. Booking recommended.

**Aragon** (☎ 079 973 10 01; Via Gramsci 8; meals €30, pizzas €5; 📅 Tue-Sun) A big bustling restaurant-cum-pizzeria just up from the seafront. It gets fairly hectic and the service isn't exactly endearing but the wood-fired pizzas are superb and the pasta dishes are tasty and fresh.

**Angedras Restaurant** (☎ 079 973 50 78; [www.angedrasrestaurant.it](http://www.angedrasrestaurant.it); Bastioni Marco Polo 41; meals €35; 📅 Wed-Mon) Dining on Alghero's honey-coloured stone ramparts is a memorable experience. This is one of the better restaurants on the walls, serving a largely traditional menu, including traditional roast suckling pig.

Self-caterers can stock up at Alghero's weekday **market** (Via Sassari 23) between Via Sassari and Via Cagliari. Otherwise, there's a **supermarket** (Via La Marmora 28) near the Giardini Pubblici.

## Drinking

**Baraonda** (☎ 079 97 59 22; Piazza della Misericordia) Burgundy walls and black and white jazz photos set the tone at this moody wine bar. In summer, sit out on the piazza and watch the world parade by.

**Caffè Latino** (☎ 079 97 65 41; Bastioni Magellano 10; cocktails from €5) Up on the ramparts overlooking the port, this chic bar is a summer classic. Kick back on the grey rattan chairs, order from the ample menu, and listen to the breeze rattle the masts below you.

**Caffè Costantino** (☎ 079 97 61 54; Piazza Civica 31) The most famous cafe in town attracts a constant stream of tourists to its square-side tables. There's a full food menu, although if you just want to eat you'll get better value almost everywhere else.

**our pick Buena Vista** (Bastioni Marco Polo 47; cocktails €7) Fabulous mojitos, fresh fruit cocktails, golden views – what more could you want of a seafront bar? Upbeat tunes and a cavernous interior add to the vibe at this popular bar on the western walls.

## Entertainment

**Poco Loco** (☎ 079 973 10 34; Via Gramsci 8) An all-purpose venue with internet, beer on tap, pizza, live music and an upstairs bowling alley (closed Monday). The concert program covers a range of musical styles, but jazz and blues feature more than most.

**El Trò** (☎ 079 973 30 00; Via Lungomare Valencia 3) El Trò becomes a steamy mosh pit on hot summer weekends as hyped up holidaymakers boogie until dawn on the seafront dance floor.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Fertilia airport** (AHO; ☎ 079 93 50 39), 10km north of town, serves domestic flights to and from Italy, and **Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) flights to and from London and Frankfurt.

## BUS

Intercity buses stop at and leave from Via Catalogna, by the Giardini Pubblici. Buy tickets at the ticket office in the gardens.

Up to 11 daily buses run to and from Sassari (€2.50 to €3, one hour). There are also services to Porto Torres (€2.50, one hour, six daily) and Bosa (€4.50, 1½ hours, two daily).

## TRAIN

The train station is 1.5km north of the old town on Via Don Minzoni. Up to 11 trains run to and from Sassari (€2.20, 35 minutes).

## Getting Around

Hourly buses between 5am and 11pm travel between Via Cagliari and the airport (€1, 20 minutes).

Line AO runs from Via Cagliari to the beaches. For Fertilia and the youth hostel you can either take the airport bus or bus AF. Tickets are available at newsagents and *tabbachi* (tobacconists) across town.

**Cicloexpress** (☎ 079 98 69 50; [www.cicloexpress.com](http://www.cicloexpress.com); Via Garibaldi) hires out cars (from €55 per day), scooters (from €30) and bikes (from €8).

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## AROUND ALGHERO

### Along the Coast

A few kilometres west of Alghero are two favourite beaches: **Spiaggia delle Bombarde** and **Spiaggia del Lazzaretto**. Both are signposted off the main road, but if you've not got a car the Capo Caccia bus from Alghero passes nearby. Divers should continue westwards to the **Diving Centre Capo Galera** (☎ 079 94 21 10; [www.capogalera.com](http://www.capogalera.com); Località Capo Galera; d €65-100, dives from €20), which offers superlative diving in the Nereo Cave, the biggest underwater grotto in the Mediterranean, and cheerful accommodation in a big white villa.

Heading on to Porto Conte you'll pass the impressive **Nuraghe di Palmavera** (adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Apr & Oct, 10am-2pm Nov-Mar), a 3500-year-old *nuraghic* village. You'll need your own transport to get there as the AF local bus from Alghero passes by but returns via an inland route, leaving you stranded.

Beyond the *nuraghe*, **Porto Conte** is a lovely unspoilt bay, centred on **Spiaggia Mugoni**, a good spot for windsurfing, canoeing, kayaking and sailing. Regular buses run between Porto Conte and Alghero (€1, 30 minutes, six daily).

Just west of Porto Conte at the base of Monte Timidone, **Le Prigionette Nature Reserve** (☎ 079 94 90 60; admission free but ID required; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun) is home to deer, albino donkeys, Giara horses and wild boar. It has well-marked forest paths and tracks, suitable for walkers and cyclists.

At the end of the road, **Capo Caccia** is a dramatic cape jutting out high above the sea. From the car park, a vertiginous 654-step staircase descends 110m of sheer cliff to the **Grotta di Nettuno** (☎ 079 94 65 40; adult/child €10/5; ☎ 9am-7pm), an underground fairyland of stalactites and stalagmites. If you don't fancy the staircase, there are ferries from Alghero – **Traghetti Navisarda** (☎ 079 95 06 03; adult/child return €14/7), departing hourly between 9am and 5pm from June to September, and four times

daily in the rest of the year. Otherwise, there's a daily bus from Via Catalogna (€2, 50 minutes) which departs Alghero at 9.15am and returns at midday. From June to September, there are two extra runs at 3.10pm and 5.10pm, returning at 4.05pm and 6.05pm.

Those with transport should explore the flat, green land north of Capo Caccia. Hot spots include **Torre del Porticciolo**, a tiny natural harbour, backed by a small arc of beach, and 6km to the north, one of the island's longest stretches of wild sandy beach, **Porto Ferro**.

## Inland

About 7km north of Alghero, just to the left (west) of the road to Porto Torres, lie scattered the ancient burial chambers of the **Necropoli di Anghelu Ruiu** (adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Apr & Oct, 10am-2pm Nov-Mar). The 38 tombs carved into the rock, known as *domus de janas*, date from between 3300 BC and 2700 BC.

Further up the road is the 650-hectare estate of Sardinia's top wine producer, **Sella e Mosca** (☎ 079 99 77 00; [www.sellaemosca.com](http://www.sellaemosca.com)). Here you can join a free guided tour of the estate's **museum** (☎ 5.30pm Mon-Sat end Jun-Oct, by request rest of the year) and stock up at the **enoteca** (wine shop; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 8.30-8pm Sun mid-Jun—end Sep).

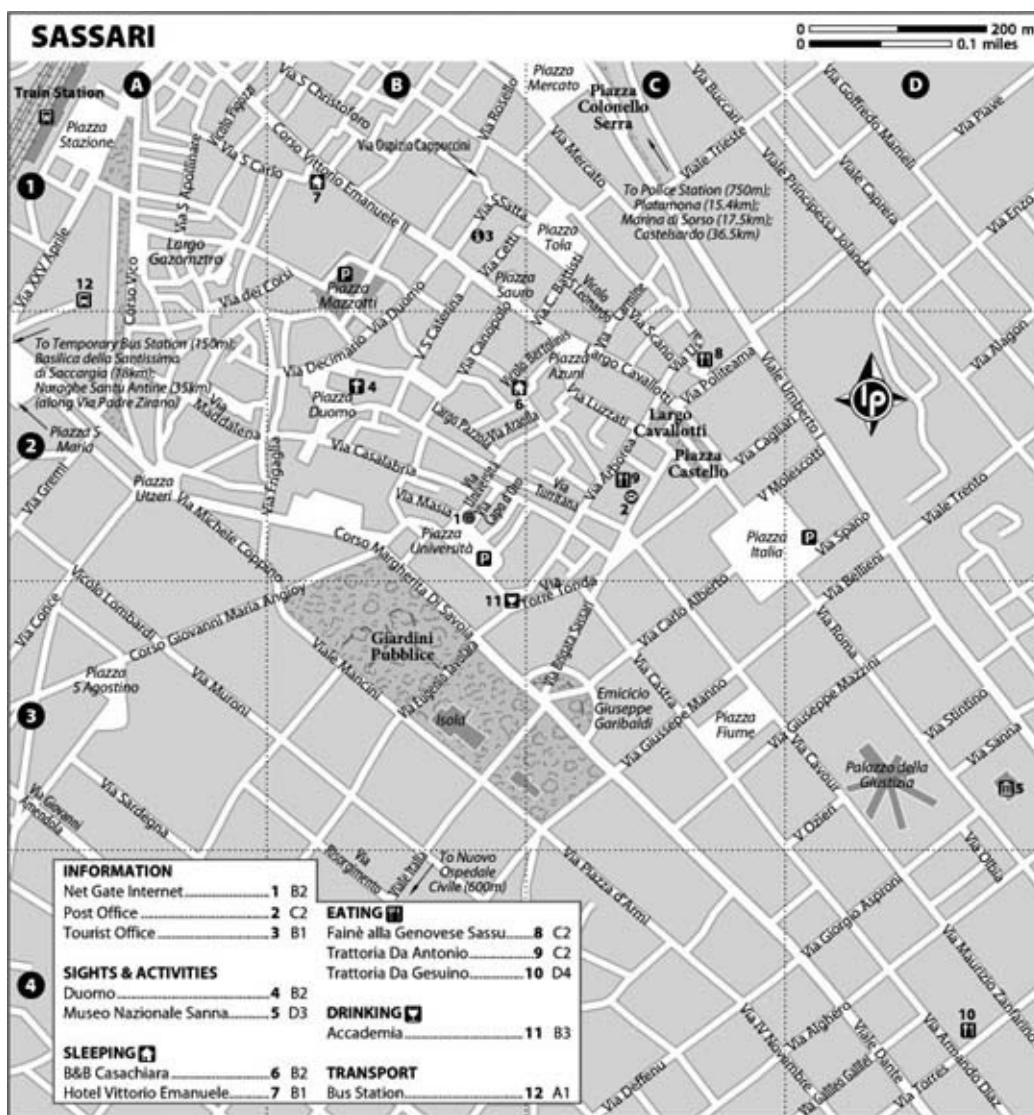
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## SASSARI

**pop 129,085**

Sardinia's second city is a proud and cultured university town with a medieval heart and a modern outlook. It's not an immediately appealing place but once you've broken through the drab outskirts you'll discover a grand centre and an evocative, lived-in historical core. You probably won't want to stay long – there's not that much to see – but if you need a shot of urban energy you'll find plenty of life in the student bars and excellent restaurants.

The city's golden age came in the 14th century, firstly as capital of the medieval Giudicato di Logudoro and then as an autonomous city state. But decline followed and for centuries the city was ruled by Spanish colonialists.



## Orientation

The most obvious focus is Piazza Italia, the city's biggest square, and the starting point of busy Via Roma. To the northwest of the piazza, the historic centre is bisected by Corso Vittorio Emanuele II which leads down to the train station.

## Information

**Net Gate Internet** (☎ 079 23 78 94; Piazza Università 4; per hr €3.50; 📧 9am-1.15pm & 3.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri)

**Nuovo Ospedale Civile** (☎ 079 206 10 00; Via De Nicola)

**Police station** (Questura; ☎ 079 249 50 00; Via Ariosto 3)

**Post office** (Via Brigata di Sassari)

**Tourist office** (☎ 079 200 80 72; Via Sebastiano Satta 13; 📧 9am-1pm & 4-6pm Mon-Fri)

## Sights

Sassari's main attraction is the **Museo Nazionale Sanna** (☎ 079 27 22 03; Via Roma 64; admission €4; 📧 9am-8pm Tue-Sun) and its comprehensive archaeological collection. The highlight is the *nuraghic* bronzeware, including weapons, bracelets, votive boats and figurines depicting humans and animals. Also has an interesting picture gallery and a small collection of Sardinian folk art.



Nearby, imposing 19th-century buildings flank **Piazza Italia**, one of Sardinia's most impressive public spaces.

In the heart of the *centro storico*, Sassari's **Duomo** (Piazza Duomo; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 4-7.30pm) dazzles with its 18th-century baroque facade, a giddy free-for-all of statues, reliefs, friezes and busts. Inside, the cathedral reverts to its original Gothic character.

## Festivals & Events

One of Sardinia's most high-profile festivals, the **Cavalcata Sarda** is held on the second-last Sunday of May. Costumed processions and acrobatic horse riding are accompanied by much high-spirited singing and dancing.

A second big festival is **I Candelieri**, held every 14 August. Teams wearing medieval costume and representing various 16th-century guilds bear nine wooden columns (the 'candlesticks') through the town.

## Sleeping

**B&B Casachiara** (☎ 079 200 50 52, mobile 339 695 71 18; [www.casachiara.net](http://www.casachiara.net); Vicola Bertolinis 7; s/d €30/60; 🏠) In the buzzing uni area, this is a laid-back B&B with a breezy, homey atmosphere. Resembling a well-kept student flat, it's got three colourful bedrooms, a dining room and a cheerfully cluttered kitchen.

**Hotel Vittorio Emanuele** (☎ 079 23 55 38; [www.hotelvittorioemanuele.ss.it](http://www.hotelvittorioemanuele.ss.it), in Italian; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 100-102; s €50-65, d €70-89; 🏨 🏠) Housed in a medieval *palazzo*, this good-value three-star is awash with antiques and colourful paintings. Rooms are spacious if sterile with their corporate white-grey decor. Weekend discounts are available.

## Eating & Drinking

**Fainè alla Genovese Sassu** (Via Usai 17; fainè €5; ☎ 7-11pm Thu-Tue) This no-frills spot is the place to fill up on *fainè*, a cross between a pancake and pizza. There's nothing else on the menu but with a wide range of toppings, you should find something to suit your tastes.

**Trattoria Da Antonio** (☎ 079 23 42 97; Via Arborea 2/b; meals €20; ☎ Tue-Sun) Affectionately known as *Lu Panzone* (the Big Belly), this boisterous, old-school trattoria does a great line in homespun, no-nonsense food. Think antipasti of salami, ham and cheese followed by steaming portions of pasta and hunks of grilled meat.

**Trattoria Da Gesuino** (☎ 079 27 33 92; Via Torres 17G; meals €30, pizzas €6.50; ☎ Mon-Sat) Hidden away in the newer part of town, Da Gesuino hits exactly the right tone. It's relaxed but service is efficient, the interior is inviting and the food is excellent. Pizzas are always a good choice as is the delicious risotto.

**Accademia** (Via Torre Tonda 11; ☎ Mon-Sat) A cool bar in the buzzing university district. With tables in an attractive wrought-iron pavilion it gets very busy at lunchtime and on Friday and Saturday nights, when it stays open late.

## Getting There & Away

At the time of research Sassari's main bus station on Via XXV Aprile was being dug up and a temporary terminus had been set up at Via Padre Zirano. By the time you read this, service should have returned to normal but there's no guarantee. Buses from Sassari connect with Alghero (€2.50 to €3, one hour, 11

daily), Porto Torres (€1.50, 35 minutes, hourly), Castelsardo (€2.50, one hour, 11 Monday to Saturday), Nuoro (€7.50 to €9.50, 2½ hours, seven daily) and Oristano (€7.50 to €9.50, two hours, three daily).

For Cagliari (€15, 3¾ hours, five daily) and Olbia (€7, two hours, four daily), you're better off taking the train. The train station is just beyond the western end of the old town on Piazza Stazione.

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## AROUND SASSARI

The countryside south and east of Sassari is a patchwork of rugged slopes and golden wheat fields peppered by delightful Romanesque churches built in a rough Tuscan style by the Pisans. The most impressive is the **Basilica della Santissima Trinità di Saccargia** (admission €1.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, to 6.30pm Sep, to 6pm May, to 5.30pm Oct, to 5pm Apr, to 4.30pm Mar) about 18km southeast of Sassari on the SS597 road to Olbia.

Some 25km south, near Torralba, the **Nuraghe Santu Antine** (☎ 079 84 72 96; [www.nuraghesantuantine.it](http://www.nuraghesantuantine.it); ☎ currently closed for restoration) is one of Sardinia's most interesting *nuraghic* sites dating from about 1600 BC. On weekdays, there are up to eight buses from Sassari to Torralba (€2.50, 1½ hours), although to get to the *nuraghe* from the village you'll have to walk about 4km.

On the coast north of Sassari, there are popular beaches at **Platamona** and **Marina di Sorso**, both accessible by the summer Buddi Buddi bus (line MP) from Via Eugenio Tavolara.

From here, the SS200 hugs the coast up to **Castelsardo**, a picturesque town with a dramatic medieval centre rising out of a rocky seafront peak. Regular buses run from Sassari (€2.50, one hour, 11 Monday to Saturday).

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## PORTO TORRES

**pop 22,080**

A busy working port surrounded by a fuming petrochemical plant, Porto Torres is no picture. But if you find yourself passing through – and you might, if heading to Corsica – take an hour or so to visit the impressive Basilica di San Gavino.

You can get information about the town and environs from the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 079 500 87 11; [www.comune.porto-torres.it](http://www.comune.porto-torres.it); Piazza Garibaldi 17; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat).

About 1km from the port up Corso Vittorio Emanuele, the **Basilica di San Gavino** (☎ 347 400 12 88; crypt €1.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm May-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Oct-Apr) is Sardinia's largest Romanesque church. Built between 1030 and 1080 to honour three Roman-era Christian martyrs, it is notable for the apses on either end – there is no facade – and its two-dozen marble columns, pilfered by the Pisan builders from the nearby Roman site. Underneath, a crypt is lined with religious statuary and stone tombs.

If you want to stopover in Porto Torres, **Hotel Elisa** (☎ 079 51 32 60; [www.hotelelisaportotorres.com](http://www.hotelelisaportotorres.com); Via Mare 2; s €50-55, d €70-80; ☎) is a straightforward three-star place with functional, modern rooms and a convenient seafront location.

Buses leave from Via Mare for Sassari (€1.50, 35 minutes, hourly), Alghero (€2.50, one hour, six daily) and Stintino (€2.50, 30 minutes, five daily). For information on ferries, [Click here](#).

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## STINTINO & PARCO NAZIONALE DELL'ASINARA

Once a forgotten fishing village, Stintino is now a sunny little resort and a good base for exploring the surrounding area. There are some fine beaches in these parts but pick of the bunch is the **Spiaggia della Pelosa**, a salt-white strip of sand fronted by shallow, turquoise waters and strange, low-lying licks of land. On the road to Pelosa beach, the **Asinara Diving Centre** (☎ 079 52 70 00; [www.asinaradivingcenter.it](http://www.asinaradivingcenter.it); Porto dell'Ancora) offers a range of dives starting at about €35. On the beach itself, the **Windsurfing Center Stintino** (☎ 079 52 70 06; [www.windsurfingcenter.it](http://www.windsurfingcenter.it)) rents out windsurfers (€15 per hour) and canoes (from €8 per hour).

Over the water from Pelosa lies Isola Asinara, home to native *asini bianchi* (albino donkeys), and until recently off-limits due to its maximum-security prison. The prison is now closed and the island has been designated a national park, **Parco Nazionale dell'Asinara** ([www.parcoasinara.org](http://www.parcoasinara.org)). From Stintino, **Linea del Parco** (☎ 079 52 31 18; Porto Mannu) offers a number of packages including bus/jeep tours (€36/55) and yacht/fishing boat excursions (€60/65 including lunch). If you want to visit on your own you'll have to take a bike as there's no public transport on the island and access is limited to certain restricted areas. Reckon on €22 for transport with bike and park admission.

Accommodation in the area is mainly in large, resort-style hotels but there are some pleasant lower-key choices. In Stintino, **Albergo Silvestrino** (☎ 079 52 34 73; [www.silvestrino.it](http://www.silvestrino.it), in Italian; Via XXI Aprile 4; d €70-110, half-board per person €60-95; 🍷 🍴) is a summery three-star place with cool tiled rooms and an excellent seafood restaurant (meals €35).

At laid-back **Lu Famili** (☎ 079 52 30 54; Lungomare C Colombo 89; meals €28, pizzas from €5.50) you can watch boats bob by as you dig into reliably good pizzas and seafood classics such as *calamari e seppie grigliati* (grilled calamari and cuttlefish).

There are five weekday buses to Stintino from Porto Torres (€2.50, 30 minutes) and Sassari (€4, one hour 10 minutes). Services are increased between June and September.

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## SANTA TERESA DI GALLURA

pop 5050

One of the main resorts on Gallura's northern coast, Santa Teresa di Gallura boasts a great seafront location and a young, laid-back summer vibe. It gets extremely busy in August yet somehow manages to retain a distinct local character, making it an agreeable alternative to the more soulless resorts on the Costa Smeralda. Nearby, Capo Testa is famous for its surreal wind-sculpted rocks, while over the water Corsica is a short ferry-hop away.

### Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 0789 75 41 27; [www.comunesantateresagallura.it](http://www.comunesantateresagallura.it); Piazza Vittorio Emanuele 24; 🗺 9am-midnight daily Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm Mon-Fri & 4-6pm Tue & Wed Oct-May) Has loads of useful

information.

**Bar Sport** (Via Mazzini 7; per hr €5; ☎ 6am-midnight) Internet access is available here.

## Sights & Activities

When not on the beach, most people hang out in the centre, eyeing-up fellow holiday-makers and lounging around cafe-lined Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. Otherwise, you can wander up to the 16th-century **Torre di Longonsardo** near the entrance to the town's idyllic (but crowded) **Spiaggia Rena Bianca**.

Four kilometres west of Santa Teresa, **Capo Testa** resembles a bizarre sculptural garden. Giant boulders lay strewn about the grassy slopes, their weird and wonderful forms the result of centuries of wind erosion. On the way from town you'll pass by a couple of pleasant beaches – **Rena di Levante** and **Rena di Ponente**.

To stretch your legs you can rent bikes from **Global** (☎ 0789 75 50 80; Piazza San Vittorio 7; ☎ 9am-1pm) near the central piazza. Go diving with **Idra Diving** (☎ 348 802 66 72; [www.idradiving.it](http://www.idradiving.it); Camping Arcobaleno), whose prices start at about €40.

## Sleeping & Eating

There are many hotels though most only open from Easter to October. In August you may have to pay *mezza pensione* (half-board).

**Camping La Licia** (☎ /fax 0789 75 51 90; [www.campinglalicia.com](http://www.campinglalicia.com); SP for Castelsardo km59; per person & tent/car €13/3, 2-person bungalow €50-96; ☎ May-Sep) This slick seaside camping ground is 5km west of town on the road towards Castelsardo. Its situated in typical scrubland and boasts extensive facilities including a restaurant, playground and sports area.

**Hotel Moderno** (☎ 0789 75 42 33, 0789 75 51 08; [www.modernohotel.eu](http://www.modernohotel.eu); Via Umberto 39; s €45-65, d €62-130; ☎ Easter-Oct; ☎) This is a homey, family-run *pensione* near the central piazza. Rooms are bright and airy with little overt decor but traditional blue-and-white Gallurese bedspreads and tiny balconies.

**Caffè Mediterraneo** (☎ 0789 75 90 14; Via Amsicora 7; cocktails €6.50, panini €3.50) With its arched windows and polished-wood bar, this stylish cafe attracts a young, good-looking crowd.

**Ristorante Pizzeria La Lampara** (☎ 0789 74 10 93; Via S. Pertini; pizzas from €5.30, meals €30; ☎ Wed-Mon) Down in a residential neighbourhood, this informal spot is popular with locals and visitors alike. Sit down on the roadside terrace and tuck into local speciality *ravioli Gallurese dolci* (sweet ravioli) or a crunchy *fritto misto* (mixed fish fry).

**Il Grottino** (☎ 0789 75 42 32; Via del Mare; pizzas from €5, meals €30; ☎ closed Feb & Mar) Il Grottino sets a rustic picture with bare grey stone walls and warm, low lighting. The food is similarly wholesome with hearty, no-nonsense pastas, fresh seafood and juicy steaks.

## Getting There & Around

From the bus terminus on Via Eleonora d'Arborea, buses run to and from Olbia (€4.50, 1½ hours, five daily) and Sassari (€6.50, 2½ hours, three daily).

For information on ferries to Bonifacio in Corsica, [Click here](#).

# PALAU & ARCIPELAGO DI LA MADDALENA

On Sardinia's northeastern tip, Palau is a well-to-do summer resort crowded with surf shops, boutiques, bars and restaurants. From here year-round ferries make the short crossing over to **Isola della Maddalena**, the biggest of the more than 60 islands and islets that comprise the **Parco Nazionale dell'Arcipelago di La Maddalena** ([www.lamaddalenapark.it](http://www.lamaddalenapark.it)). An area of spectacular, windswept seascapes, La Maddalena is best explored by boat, although the two main islands have plenty of charm with their sunbaked ochre buildings, cobbled piazzas and infectious holiday atmosphere. Up to 60 other islets are sprinkled round about, including Isola Spargi, Isola Santa Maria, Isola Budelli and Isola Razzoli.

Information is available at tourist offices in **Palau** (☎ 0789 70 70 25; [www.palau.it](http://www.palau.it); Piazza Fresi; 9am-1pm & 4-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-May, 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep) and in **La Maddalena** (☎ 0789 73 63 21; [www.lamaddalena.com](http://www.lamaddalena.com); Cala Gavetta; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri & 3.30-5.30pm Mon & Wed).

## Sights & Activities

The main activity in these parts is beach-bumming or boating around the islands. Down at the port in Palau, **Petagus** (☎ 0789 70 86 81; [www.petag.it](http://www.petag.it)) offers trips, which include lunch and several swimming stops, for €30 to €40 per person. On La Maddalena, operators congregate around Cala Mangiavolpe.

Windsurfers converge on **Porto Pollo**, about 7km west of Palau, for some of the best wind conditions on the island. You can also try kite-surfing, canoeing, diving and sailing, with kit and lessons available along the beachfront.

There's also some excellent diving in the marine park. In Palau, **Nautilus** (☎ 0789 70 90 58; [www.divesardegna.com](http://www.divesardegna.com); Piazza Fresi 8, Palau) runs dives from €45.

Linked to La Maddalena by a narrow causeway is **Isola Caprera**, a tiny island where Giuseppe Garibaldi once lived. His home, the **Compendio Garibaldi** (☎ 0789 72 71 62; adult/child €5/2.50; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Tue-Sun & 2.30-7pm Tue-Sat Jun-Sep, 9am-1.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-May), is visitable by guided tours (in Italian) only.

About 1.5km north of the Compendio, a walking trail drops down to the steep and secluded **Cala Coticcio** beach. Marginally easier to get to is **Cala Brigantina** (signposted), southeast of the complex.

## Sleeping

**Camping Baia Sardegna** (☎ 0789 70 94 03; [www.baiasaraceno.com](http://www.baiasaraceno.com); per person incl tent & car €18, 2-person bungalow €45-87; Località Punta Nera; ☎ Mar-Oct) Beautifully located on Palau's beach, this is a lovely spot to rest up. Pine trees provide shade for tents and bungalows, and the on-site restaurant-pizzeria means you don't have to go far to eat.

**Hotel La Roccia** (☎ 0789 70 95 28; [www.hotellaroccia.com](http://www.hotellaroccia.com); Via dei Mille 15; s €50-90, d €78-150; ☎ Easter-Oct; 📞) Lovely three-star La Roccia boasts simple, sun-filled white rooms and a festive blue and white boating decor. If possible go for a room with a seaview balcony.

**Hotel Miralonga** (☎ 0789 72 25 63; Strada Panoramica; [www.miralonga.it](http://www.miralonga.it); d €90-140, half-board per person €55-105; 📞) A big modern affair west of the town centre, the Miralonga is one of Maddalena's few year-round hotels. Its bright, airy rooms are functional more than inviting but the views are great and the staff are friendly.

# Eating

**Osteria Enoteca da Liò** (☎ 0789 73 75 07; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 2-6; sea/land menus €15/18) Go through the pretty ivy-clad exterior to enter this historic *osteria*, on the go since 1890. Don't expect fusion frills, just hearty bowls of steaming pasta and fish grilled straight off the boat.

**Trattoria Pizzeria L'Olimpico** (☎ 0789 73 77 95; Via Principe Amedeo 45-47; pizzas €6, meals €25-30; ☒ Wed-Mon) Escape the obvious tourist traps to this popular local eatery in the bland streets east of Maddalena's centre. The food is excellent – pizzas and the usual array of pastas, meats and seafood – and the friendly service a real pleasure.

**San Giorgio** (☎ 0789 70 80 07; Vicolo La Maddalena 4; pizzas €7, meals €30; ☒ closed Mon winter) One of the best eateries in Palau, this pizzeria-cum-restaurant is housed in a large chalet-style building near Hotel La Roccia. The pizzas are pretty good but pride of place goes to the spaghetti *allo scoglio* (with mixed seafood).

Opposite the port on La Maddalena you'll find a useful **Despar supermarket** (Via Giovanni Amendola 3).

# Getting There & Around

Buses connect Palau with Olbia (€3, 1¼ hours, 10 daily), Santa Teresa di Gallura (€2, 40 minutes, five daily) and Arzachena (€1, 20 minutes, eight daily). In summer, **Nicos-Caramelli** (☎ 0789 67 06 13) run buses to Porto Pollo (€1.50, 35 minutes), Baia Sardinia (€4, 35 minutes) and Porto Cervo (€4, 50 minutes).

All buses leave from the port.

Ferries to La Maddalena are operated by three companies: **Enermar** (☎ 899 20 00 01; [www.enermar.it](http://www.enermar.it)), **Saremar** (☎ 892 123; [www.saremar.it](http://www.saremar.it)), and **Delcomar** (☎ 0789 73 90 88; [www.delcomar.it](http://www.delcomar.it)). Delcomar runs four night crossings between half past midnight and 4.30am, and the other two have crossings every half-hour between 6.15am and 11.45pm. The 20-minute trip costs single/return €5/9 and €13 for a small car.

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# COSTA SMERALDA & AROUND

Stretching 55km from the Golfo di Arzachena to Porto Rotondo, the Costa Smeralda (Emerald Coast) is Sardinia's most fêted summer destination, a gilded enclave of luxury hotels, secluded beaches and exclusive marinas. The area was first developed by the Aga Khan in the 1960s and soon became a favourite of the European jet set. It still is and every summer paparazzi swarm to the area hoping to snap celebs in compromising clinches. But despite all the superficial fluff, it's a stunning stretch of coast with great granite mountains plunging into emerald waters in a series of dramatic fjord-like inlets.

The Costa's capital is **Porto Cervo**, a weird, artificial town whose pseudo-Moroccan architecture and perfectly manicured streets give it a strangely sterile atmosphere. Out of season, there's virtually no one around, but between June and September this is party central with tanned beauties posing on the **Piazzetta** and cashed-up shoppers perusing the designer boutiques.

The coast's best beaches are all within striking distance of Porto Cervo. To the west, **Baia Sardinia** faces onto a gorgeous strip of sand, while to the south, aficionados head for **Capriccioli** and **Spiaggia**

**Liscia Ruia**, both near the exclusive Hotel Cala di Volpe, and **Spiaggia del Principe**, near the signposted Hotel Romazzino.

Inland, the rustic village of **San Pantaleo** merits a quick look, particularly on summer evenings when its picturesque piazza hosts a bustling market. Further on, the workaday town of **Arzachena** offers some great accommodation and a number of interesting archaeological sites, including the **Nuraghe di Albucciu** (admission €5; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Mar—mid-Oct) on the main Olbia road, and **Coddu Ecchju** (admission €5; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Mar—mid-Oct), one of Sardinia's most important *tombe di giganti*.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Villaggio Camping La Cugnana** (☎ 0789 3 31 84; [www.campingcugnana.it](http://www.campingcugnana.it); Località Cugnana; per person & tent/car €18/4.50, 2-person bungalow per week €270-610; ☎ May-Sep; 📍) One of the very few budget options on the Costa, this slick, seaside camping ground is on the main road just north of Porto Rotondo. It has a supermarket, swimming pool and free beach shuttle bus.

**La Villa Giulia** (☎ 0789 9 86 29 or 348 511 12 69; [www.lavillagiulia.it](http://www.lavillagiulia.it); Monticanaglia; d €69-89; ☎ Apr-Nov) Also calling itself B&B Costa Smeralda, this wonderful B&B sits in glorious isolation at the top of a tough dirt track. Rooms, with their homey furnishings and jolly tiled bathrooms, are modest, but the lovely natural surroundings and spectacular rates make it a real winner.

**B&B Lu Pastrucialeddu** (☎ 0789 8 17 77; [www.pastrucialeddu.com](http://www.pastrucialeddu.com); Località Lu Pastrucialeddu, Arzachena; s €50-100, d €70-120; 📍) This is the real McCoy, a smashing *agriturismo* housed in a typical stone farmstead. It's run by the ultra-hospitable Caterina Ruzittu, who prepares the sumptuous breakfasts and keeps the seven simple rooms in pristine nick. Outside, a swimming pool shimmers in the lush green garden.

**Il Fungo** (☎ 0789 8 33 40; Via Lamarmora 21; pizzas from €5, meal €30; ☎ closed Wed winter) Wood-fired pizza and cracking seafood are the hallmarks of this cheerful restaurant in Arzachena. Locals come to grab a takeaway and chat with the *pizzaiola* (pizza maker) while out-of-towners sit down to huge helpings of fresh fish and juicy chargrilled steaks.

**Il Peperone** (☎ 0789 90 70 49; cnr Via Cerbiatta & Via Sa Conca; meals €35-40; ☎ Easter-Oct) This is a traditional pizzeria-cum-restaurant on the main road into Porto Cervo. There's nothing spectacular about the food but the pizzas are pretty good and the atmosphere is convivial.

For self-caterers and picnickers there's a **Despar supermarket** (Piazza Principe Porto Cervo), just outside the resort centre.

## Getting There & Away

Between June and September, **Sun Lines** (☎ 348 260 98 81) operates buses from Olbia airport to the Costa Smeralda, stopping at Porto Cervo and various other points along the coast. During the rest of the year, there's one daily bus between Porto Cervo and Olbia (€3, 1½ hours).

For Arzachena there are regular year-round services to and from Olbia (€2, 45 minutes, eight daily).

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## OLBIA

pop 60,000

Surrounded by industrial sprawl and thunderous roads, Olbia is a busy and unsightly transport hub. It's

neither an easy place to warm to, nor is it as bad as it might at first seem. There's a small, well-kept *centro storico* and the main pedestrianised strip is a fun place to hang out on warm summer evenings.

## Orientation

Ferries arrive at the Stazione Marittima (terminal) 1km east of town and the local bus 9 goes to the centre. Most interest lies in or around pedestrianised Corso Umberto, which runs from the waterfront to the train station.

## Information

**Inter Smeraldo** (Via Porto Romano 8b; per hr €5; ☎ 9.45am-1.15pm & 4-8.30pm Mon-Sat) For internet.

**Tourist office** (☎ 0789 55 77 32; [www.olbiaturismo.it](http://www.olbiaturismo.it); Via Nanni 39; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri & 3-6pm Mon-Thu) Near the causeway that leads to the port.

## Sights

There's precious little to visit in Olbia apart from the Romanesque **Chiesa di San Simplicio** (Via San Simplicio; ☎ 7.30am-1pm & 3.30-6pm). Built entirely of granite in the late 11th century, it is a curious mix of Tuscan and Lombard styles.

To the south of Corso Umberto, the tightly packed warren of streets that represent the original fishing village have a certain charm, particularly in the evening when the cafes and trattorias fill with groups of hungry locals.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Cavour** (☎ 0789 20 40 33; [www.cavourhotel.it](http://www.cavourhotel.it); Via Cavour 22; s €50-65, d €75-90; ☎ P) An inviting hotel in Olbia's old town. Rooms are simple white affairs with unfussy furniture, pastel fabrics and double-glazed windows – a necessity given the noise from the lively streets below.

**Hotel Terranova** (☎ 0789 2 23 95; [www.hotelterranova.it](http://www.hotelterranova.it); Via Garibaldi 3; s €40-80, d €70-130; P ☎) On a narrow lane in the heart of the action, this is a friendly, family-run three-star hotel with small, cosy rooms and a highly rated restaurant, Ristorante Da Gesuino (meals €35 to €40), specialising in seafood. Parking costs €7.

## Eating & Drinking

**Antica Trattoria** (☎ 0789 2 40 53; Via Pala 4; fixed menus €15/19.80/25, meals €23; ☎ Mon-Sat) Welcome to antipasto heaven. Trays of marinated anchovies, vegetables in olive oil, creamy potato salad and a whole lot more, just sit there waiting to be eaten. There's also excellent pizza, pastas and failsafe meat dishes.

**La Lanterna** (☎ 0789 2 30 82; Via Olbia 13; pizzas €8, meals €30; ☎ Thu-Tue winter, daily summer) The Lanterna distinguishes itself with its cosy subterranean setting and beautifully fresh food. Start off with sweet-and-sour sardines and move on to almond-crusted bream served with a celery and pepper sauce.

**Enoteca Cosimino** (☎ 0789 21 00 13; Piazza Margherita 3) A cafe by day and elegant wine bar in the evening, Enoteca Cosimino is on Piazza Margherita, Olbia's main cafe strip. Cocktails cost around €7.50 and there's a comprehensive list of local wines.



# Getting There & Away

## AIR

Olbia's **Aeroporto Olbia Costa Smeralda** (OLB; ☎ 0789 56 34 44; [www.geasar.it](http://www.geasar.it)) is about 5km southeast of the centre and handles flights from most mainland Italian airports, as well as international flights from a number of European cities.

## BOAT

Regular ferries arrive in Olbia from Genoa, Civitavecchia and Livorno. Book tickets at travel agents in town, or directly at the port. For further route details [Click here](#).

## BUS

Buses run from Olbia to Arzachena (€2, 45 minutes, eight daily), Golfo Aranci (€1.50, 25 minutes, six daily from mid-June to mid-September) and Porto Cervo (€3, 1½ hours, one daily). Further afield you can get to Santa Teresa di Gallura (€4.50, 1½ hours, five daily), Nuoro (€7.50, 2½ hours, five daily), and Dorgali (€7.50, 2¾ hours, two daily). Get tickets from **Café Adel** (Corso Vittorio Veneto 2), just over the road from the main bus stops.

Local bus 2 (€0.80 or €1.30 if ticket is bought on board) runs half-hourly between 7.30am and 8pm between the airport and Via Goffredo Mameli in the centre.

## TRAIN

The train station is just off Corso Umberto. Trains run to Sassari (€7, two hours, four daily) and Golfo Aranci (€2.20, 25 minutes, five daily).

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## GOLFO ARANCI

Some 18km northeast of Olbia, Golfo Aranci is an important summer port – [Click here](#) for route information. Most people pass through without a second glance and while it's not an especially beautiful place, it's not unpleasant and has three sandy white beaches. Regular buses and trains run to Olbia.

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## EASTERN SARDINIA

Considered Sardinia's traditional heartland, Eastern Sardinia is an area of unsurpassed natural beauty. From the great grey mountains of the Supramonte to the Golfo di Orosei's breathtaking coastline and the vast, empty valleys of the Ogliastra, this is one of Sardinia's great untamed wildernesses. A paradise for outdoor enthusiasts, it boasts exhilarating trekking, cycling and climbing, as well as myriad water-borne possibilities.

For centuries this uncompromising landscape kept the world at bay and even now there's a palpable sense of isolation, particularly in the inland Barbagia district. As a result traditions have survived and it's not uncommon to see elderly women wearing traditional black dress.

Although larger towns are accessible by bus, you'll get far more out of the area with your own transport.

# NUORO

pop 36,495

A scruffy and not immediately likeable town, Nuoro does little to endear itself. But scratch beneath the surface and you'll discover a proud, hospitable city, sustained by long-held traditions and a deep-grained culture. Nobel prize—winning author Grazia Deledda was born here and its museums, some of the island's best, open a fascinating window onto the area's rural identity.

By the end of the 18th century Nuoro barely numbered 3000 inhabitants but it was the only real 'urban' centre in a world of subsistence farming and banditry. The town took off after being made provincial capital in 1927.

## Orientation & Information

The historic centre, in Nuoro's northeastern corner, is based around pedestrianised Corso Garibaldi. The train and bus station are west of the city centre. Information is available at two offices, both helpful:

**Punto Informa** (☎ 0784 3 87 77; Corso Garibaldi 155; 🕒 9am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat) in the *centro storico*, and the official **tourist office** (☎ 0784 23 88 78; Piazza Italia 7; 🕒 9am-7pm daily May-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr).

## Sights

Nuoro has various museums but two stand out. The **Museo della Vita e delle Tradizioni Sarde** (☎ 0784 25 70 35; Via Antonio Mereu 56; adult/child €3/1; 🕒 9am-8pm daily mid-Jun—Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Oct—mid-Jun) provides a fascinating insight into Sardinian traditions, folklores, superstitions and celebrations. Its pièce de résistance is the colourful display of traditional costumes.

Up in the oldest part of town, the birthplace of Grazia Deledda has been converted into a lovely little museum, the **Museo Deleddiano** (☎ 0784 25 80 88; Via Grazia Deledda 42; admission free; 🕒 9am-8pm daily mid-Jun—Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Oct—mid-Jun). The rooms, full of Deledda memorabilia, have been carefully restored to show what a well-to-do 19th-century Nuorese house actually looked like.

About 7km northeast of Nuoro, **Monte Ortobene** (955m) is capped by a 7m-high bronze statue of the Redentore (Christ the Redeemer) and covered in thick woods. Local bus 8 runs up to the mountain from Via Manzoni (€1.10, twice daily mid-September to mid-June, 14 times daily mid-June to mid-September).

## Festivals & Events

The **Sagra del Redentore** (Feast of Christ the Redeemer) in the last week of August is the main event in Nuoro, and one of Sardinia's most exuberant festivals with parades, live music and a torchlit procession.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Casa Solotti** (☎ 0784 3 39 54; [www.casasolotti.it](http://www.casasolotti.it); per person €26-35) This welcoming B&B is set in a rambling garden near the top of Monte Ortobene. Surrounded by woods and walking trails, it's a relaxed place with modest rooms and a pleasant, family atmosphere. Horseback riding, packed lunches and evening meals can be arranged.

**Hotel Grillo** (☎ 0784 3 86 78; [www.grillohotel.it](http://www.grillohotel.it); Via Monsignor Melas 14; s €65-75, d €91-110; 🕒 📶) The most central of Nuoro's five officially listed hotels, the Grillo is not an especially thrilling choice,

but rooms are comfortable enough and the restaurant serves earthy Sardinian grub (meals €22 to €30). Wi-fi is available.

**our pick Il Rifugio** (☎ 0784 23 23 55; Via Antonio Mereu 28-36; pizzas from €5, meals €30; 📅 Thu-Tue) Head down to this laid-back, local favourite for great pizzas and delicious Sardinian fare. Lamb features heavily on the menu, starring in dishes such as *pecora in cassola alla nuorese con cipolline e funghi* (Nuoro-style lamb with onions and mushrooms).

## Getting There & Away

From the main bus station on Viale Sardegna there are services to Dorgali (€2.50, 45 minutes, six daily), Santa Maria Navarrese (€6.50, two hours 25 minutes, five daily), Tortolì (€6.50, two hours 40 minutes, five daily), Olbia (€7.50, 2½ hours, five daily), Oristano (€6.50, 2½ hours, six daily), Sassari (€7.50 to €9.50, 2½ hours, seven daily) and Cagliari (€14.50, 2½ to five hours, two daily). There are also regular buses to Oliena (€1, 20 minutes) and Orgosolo (€1.50, 35 minutes).

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## NORTH OF NUORO

Set in dramatic hill country near the dusty town of **Orune**, the **Fonte Sacra Su Tempiesu** (☎ 0784 27 67 16; adult/child €3/2; 📅 9am-7pm daily Jun-Sep, to 5pm Oct-May) is a sophisticated and elegant *nuraghic* well temple, dating from the 2nd millennium BC. Its distinguishing feature is the strange keyhole-shaped entrance to the well.

Getting there is a problem if you don't have your own transport as buses only go as far as Orune, some 5km from the site.

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## SUPRAMONTE

Southeast of Nuoro rises the foreboding limestone massif of the Supramonte, its sheer walls like an iron curtain just beyond Oliena. This thrilling landscape forms the landward section of the **Parco Nazionale del Golfo di Orosei e del Gennargentu**, Sardinia's largest national park.

## Oliena

pop 7500

From Nuoro you can see the multicoloured rooftops of Oliena cupped in the palm of Monte Corrasì. An atmospheric place with a grey stone centre and a magnificent setting, it was founded in Roman times and is today famous its blood-red Cannonau wine and traditional Easter celebrations.

The best source of information is **Tourpass** (☎ 0784 28 60 78; [www.galaveras.it](http://www.galaveras.it); Corso Deledda 32; 📅 9.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Mar-Nov, 9.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Fri Dec-Feb), which can advise on activities in the area, as well as providing internet access (€1 per 15 minutes), bike hire (€10 per half-day), and an accommodation booking service.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Piazza Santa Maria is the site of the Saturday market and the 13th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria**. There are several other wonderful old churches here, including the blessedly simple 14th-century **Chiesa di San**

**Lussorio** (Via Cavour).

The village's usual sleepy torpor is shattered on Easter Sunday for *S'Incontru* (The Meeting), a boisterous procession in which bearers carry a statue of Christ to meet a statue of the Virgin Mary in Piazza Santa Maria.

The countryside surrounding Oliena provides awesome trekking. **Sardegna Nascosta** (☎ 0784 28 85 50; [www.sardegnanascosta.it](http://www.sardegnanascosta.it)) and **Barbagia Insolita** (☎ 0784 28 60 05; [www.barbagiainsolita.it](http://www.barbagiainsolita.it); Corso Vittoria Emanuele 48) both organise a range of excursions, including trekking, canoeing, abseiling, climbing and riding.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Hotel Cikappa** (☎ 0784 28 87 33; [www.cikappa.com](http://www.cikappa.com); Corso Martin Luther King; s/d €40/60, meals €25; 🍴) A small hotel providing good modest digs above a popular restaurant. Rooms are simply decorated with pine furniture and bare white walls, and the best have balconies overlooking the surrounding mountains.

**Hotel Monte Maccione** (☎ 0784 28 83 63; [www.coopenis.it](http://www.coopenis.it); s €37-46, d €62-76; 🍴) Run by the Cooperativa Enis, this place offers simple, rustic rooms and fine views from its hilltop location – deep in the woods of Monte Maccione (700m), 4km above Oliena. You can also pitch a tent in the grounds (per tent with breakfast €14 to €15) and eat at the tasty restaurant (€25).

**our pick Agriturismo Guthiddai** (☎ 0784 28 60 17, mobile 349 267 21 59; [www.agriturismoguthiddai.com](http://www.agriturismoguthiddai.com); Nuoro-Dorgali bivio Su Gologone; half-board per person €55-65; 🍴 mid-Mar—mid-Nov) On the road to Su Gologone this fabulous *agriturismo* is in a lovely whitewashed farmstead, surrounded by fruit trees and backed by a looming 500m sheer rock face. Olive oil and wine are produced and home-grown fruit and veg ends up on the breakfast and dinner table. The wood-beamed rooms are exquisitely tiled in pale greens and cobalt blues.

**Hotel Su Gologone** (☎ 0784 28 75 12; [www.sugologone.it](http://www.sugologone.it); s €115-180, d €140-240, ste €340-440; 🍴 Mar-Nov; 🍴 🍷 🍴) Treat yourself to a spot of rural luxury at this retreat 7km east of Oliena. Rooms are decorated with original artworks and local handicrafts, and the facilities are top notch – there's a pool, a leisure centre, a huge wine cellar and a restaurant (meals €50 to €60), considered one of Sardinia's best.

**Ristorante Masiloghi** (☎ 0784 28 56 96; Via Galiani 68; meals €30) Housed in a sunny Mediterranean villa on the main road into town, this smart restaurant showcases local art in its rustic dining hall and serves delicious food. Speciality of the house is the local lamb.

## Orgosolo & Mamoiada

For centuries **Orgosolo** was feared as a centre of banditry and kidnapping. Nowadays, it's better known for the vibrant graffiti-style murals that adorn much of its town centre. Like satirical caricatures, they depict all the big political events of the 20th century and are often very moving. An outstanding example is a series illustrating the death of 12-year-old Palestinian Mohammed el Dura as he hid behind his father during a Gaza shoot-out in 2000.

Ten kilometres to the west of Orgosolo, the undistinguished town of **Mamoiada** stages Sardinia's most sinister **carnival** celebrations. These kick off with the **Festa di Sant'Antonio** on 17 January, and climax on Shrove Tuesday and the preceding Sunday. At the centre of events are the *mamuthones*, costumed characters decked out in shaggy brown sheepskins and primitive wooden masks. Anthropologists believe that the *mamuthones* embodied all the untold horrors that primitive humans feared, and that the ritual parade is an attempt to exorcise these demons before the new spring.

Buses run to both Mamoiada (€1.50, 20 minutes) and Orgosolo (€1.50, 35 minutes) from Nuoro.

## Dorgali

pop 8450

Set amid vineyards and olive groves on the slopes of Monte Bardia, Dorgali is a typical Sardinian mountain town. It's a dusty, bustling place that, while of little interest in itself, makes an excellent base for exploring the surrounding countryside.

The local **tourist office** (☎ 0784 9 62 43; [www.dorgali.it](http://www.dorgali.it), in Italian; Via Lamarmora 108/b; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Fri) can provide plenty of local information, including contact details for trekking outfits and accommodation lists.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Other than perusing the local craftwork shops – Dorgali is famous for its leather goods, ceramics, carpets and filigree jewellery – the main attraction here is the great green wilderness.

There are several outfits that organise 4WD excursions, hikes and caving expeditions. These include **Atlantikà** (☎ 328 972 97 19; [www.atlantika.it](http://www.atlantika.it); Via Lamarmora 195), a consortium of local guides which also hires out mountain bikes (from €20 per day) and canoes (€24 per day). Another, **Cooperative Ghivine** (☎ 0784 9 67 21, mobile 349 442 55 52; [www.ghivine.com](http://www.ghivine.com); Via Lamarmora 69/e), organises a huge range of expeditions, including a four-hour hike through the Gola Su Gorruppu (€35 per person) and a three-and-a-half-hour trek to the prehistoric village of Tiscali (€40 per person).

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Hotel S'Adde** (☎ 0784 9 44 12; [www.hotelsadde.it](http://www.hotelsadde.it); Via Concordia 38; s €40-70, d €70-110, half-board per person €60-80; 🍷) A short, signposted walk up from the main thoroughfare, this is a pink Alpine-chalet affair. Rooms are pine-clad with terraces and green views, and the owners are welcoming. The restaurant-pizzeria (meals €25 to €30) opens onto a 1st-floor terrace.

**Ristorante Colibrì** (☎ 0784 9 60 54; Via Gramsci 14; meals €30; ☎ Mon-Sat) Tucked away in an incongruous residential area, this is the bee's knees for meat eaters with dishes like *cinghiale al rosmarino* (wild boar with rosemary) and *porcettu* (suckling pig). The pasta is also excellent, unlike the drab decor.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses serve Nuoro (€2.50, 45 minutes, six daily) and Olbia (€7.50, 2¾ hours, two daily). Up to six daily services shuttle back and forth between Dorgali and Cala Gonone (€1, 25 minutes).

## Grotta di Ispinigoli

Four kilometres north of Dorgali, the **Grotta di Ispinigoli** (adult/child €7.50/3.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Aug, to 6pm Jul & Sep, 9am-noon & 3-5pm Mar-Jun, 10am-noon & 3-4pm Nov & Dec, 10am-noon Jan & Feb) is home to the world's second-tallest stalagmite (the highest is in Mexico and stands at 40m). Unlike most caves of this type, which you enter from the side, here you descend 60m inside a giant 'well', at whose centre stands the magnificent 38m-high stalagmite.

## Serra Orrios & Thomes

The *nuraghic* village of **Serra Orrios** (adult/child €6/2.50; ☎ 9am-noon year round, & 4-6pm Jul & Aug, 3-5pm Apr-Jun & Sep, 2-4pm Oct-Dec & Jan-Mar), while not as remarkable as the site at Santa Vittoria

di Serri, is still worth a stop. The remnants of more than 70 huts are clustered around what is left of two temples. The site lies 11km northwest of Dorgali (3km north off the Dorgali—Oliena road).

From Sierra Orrios you could continue north to see the **Tomba dei Giganti S'Ena e Thomes** (admission free; ☞ dawn-dusk), a fine example of a *tomba dei giganti*. The stone monument is dominated by a central oval-shaped stele that once closed off an ancient burial chamber.

## Gola Su Gorruppu

Dubbed the 'Grand Canyon of Europe', the Gola Su Gorruppu (Gorruppu Gorge) is a spectacular gorge flanked by vertical 400m rock walls. There are two main approach routes. The hardest is from the **Genna 'e Silana pass** and is signposted to the east of the SS125 at km183. Note, however, that this is pretty much the last sign you'll see on this route. If you don't get lost, and it is a real possibility, you'll reach the gorge after about two hours.

The easier approach is via the **Sa Barva bridge**, about 15km from Dorgali. To get to the bridge, exit Dorgali and follow for Tortolì. After a few kilometres, you'll see a small sign on the right for the Gola Su Gorruppu and Tiscali. Take this and continue until the asphalt finishes after about 20 minutes. Park here and cross the Sa Barva bridge, after which you'll see the trail for the Gola signposted off to the left. From here it's a two-hour hike down to the mouth of the gorge, beyond which you can go for a further 500m or so until the path is blocked by a series of huge boulders. To go any further you'll need a guide.

As well as the outfits in Dorgali, the **Cooperativa Gorropu** (☎ 0782 64 92 82, mobile 333 850 71 57; [www.gorropu.com](http://www.gorropu.com)) arranges all sorts of excursions. Some of the longer treks also include meals and accommodation.

## Tiscali

Hidden in a mountain-top cave deep in the Valle Lanaittu, the *nuragic* village of **Tiscali** (adult/child €5/2; ☞ 9am-7pm May-Sep, to 5pm rest of yr) is one of Sardinia's archaeological highlights. Dating from the 6th century BC and populated until Roman times, the village was discovered at the end of the 19th century. At the time it was relatively intact, but since then grave robbers have done a pretty good job of looting the place, stripping the conical stone-and-mud huts down to the skeletal remains that you see today.

Many local outfits offer guided tours (typically about €40) but if you want to go it alone the simplest route starts from same point as for the Gola Su Gorruppu ([Click here](#)). The trail is signposted and takes about one and three-quarter hours.

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## GOLFO DI OROSEI

Boasting Sardinia's most spectacular coastal scenery, this rugged gulf forms part of the Parco Nazionale del Golfo di Orosei e del Gennargentu. Here the high mountains of the Gennargentu abruptly meet the sea, forming a crescent of dramatic cliffs riven by false inlets and lapped by crystalline waters.

## Cala Gonone

Backed by imperious tree-specked cliffs, the small but popular resort of Cala Gonone enjoys a stunning setting. And with plenty of hotels, bars and restaurants it makes an excellent base from which to explore the coves along this magnificent stretch of coast.

You can get plenty of local information at the **tourist office** (☎ 0784 9 36 96; [www.calagonone.com](http://www.calagonone.com); Viale Bue Marino 1/a; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-5pm daily, longer in summer) in the small park off to the right as you enter town.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

If you do nothing else in Sardinia, try to take a boat trip along Cala Gonone's southern coast. Some tasty beaches are accessible from town by car or on foot – **Cala Cartoe** to the north; **Cala Fuili**, and **Cala Luna**, to the south – but the best are only reached by sea.

From the port, boats head south to the **Grotta del Bue Marino** (adult/child €8/4, ☎ tours on the hr 9am-noon & 3-5pm Aug, 10am-noon & 3pm Jul, 10am, 11am & 3pm Sep, 11am & 3pm Mar-Jun, Oct & Nov), a haunting complex of stalactite- and stalagmite-filled caves where monk seals used to pup.

From there follow a string of coves and beaches, from the crescent-shaped **Cala Luna** and **Cala Sisine**, backed by a green valley, through to the incredible cobalt-blue waters of **Cala Mariolu** and **Cala Goloritzè**. This last is a favourite with rock climbers who come to tackle its bizarre granite pinnacles.

Outdoor pursuits are big here and there's excellent diving, snorkelling, mountain biking and hiking. **Argonauta** (☎ 0784 9 30 46, 347 530 40 97; [www.argonauta.it](http://www.argonauta.it); Via dei Lecci 10) offers a range of water-based activities, including snorkelling tours (€25), dives (from €35) and canyoning excursions (€40). For climbing information contact **Prima Sardegna** (☎ 0784 9 33 67; [www.primasardegna.com](http://www.primasardegna.com); Via Lungomare Palmasera 32), which also rents out mountain bikes (per day €24), kayaks (per day €30), scooters (per day €48) and cars (from €75).

To explore the rocky hinterland, **Atlantikà** (☎ 328 972 97 19; [www.atlantika.it](http://www.atlantika.it)) arranges all sorts of activities including excursions to Gola Su Gorruppu (€35) and Tiscali (€35). Another reliable operator is **Dolmen** (☎ 0784 9 32 60; [www.sardegnaescoprire.it](http://www.sardegnaescoprire.it); Via Vasco da Gama 18) which runs 4WD tours into the Supramonte, and has bikes, scooters and dinghies for hire.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Camping Cala Gonone** (☎ 0784 9 31 65; [www.campingcalagonone.it](http://www.campingcalagonone.it); per person incl car & tent €13.50-19.50, 2-person bungalow €48-105; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) By the entrance to town on the main road from Dorgali, this shady camping ground has excellent facilities, including a tennis court, barbecue area, pizzeria and swimming pool. Book ahead for August.

**our pick Agriturismo Nuraghe Mannu** (☎ 0784 9 32 64, mobile 328 868 58 24; [www.agriturismonuragemannu.com](http://www.agriturismonuragemannu.com); off the SP26 Dorgali—Cala Gonone road; d €24-30, half-board per person €40-48, meals €25-35) Immersed in greenery and with blissful sea views, this cracking *agriturismo* has four simple rooms, plus space for five tent pitches (€8 to €10 per person). The superb farmhouse restaurant runs up feasts of local fare with plenty of home-produced cheese, salami, pork, lamb and wine.

**Hotel Miramare** (☎ 0784 9 31 40; [www.htmlmiramare.it](http://www.htmlmiramare.it); Piazza Giardini; s €40-77, d €60-132; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) A super-friendly hotel right in the heart of the action. Outside, a large terrace hums with gossiping locals while inside, sunshine and sea views (not all rooms have them) brighten the plain white accommodation. The restaurant is good for local fish and traditional Sardinian cooking.

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## BOATING ALONG THE COAST

A huge fleet of boats, from large high-speed dinghies to small cruisers and graceful sailing vessels, is

on hand at Cala Gonone to whisk you along the coast.

The **Nuovo Consorzio Trasporti Marittimi** (☎ 0784 9 33 05; [www.calagononecrociere.it](http://www.calagononecrociere.it)) offers a range of packages, including return trips to Cala Luna (€12 to €20), Cala Sisine (€18 to €24) and Cala Mariolu (€26 to €35). A return ticket to the Grotta Bue Marino costs €16.50 to €18, which includes entry to the cave, while a coastal cruise will set you back €26 to €35. Between June and August, it also hires out *gomme* (motorised dinghies). Prices vary according to month and the size of your group, but reckon on about €80 for two people and €100 to €120 for four.

**Cielomar** (☎ 0784 92 00 14; [www.cielomar.it](http://www.cielomar.it)) is another outfit offering boat hire at the port. Reckon on €80 to €120 per day, excluding petrol which usually adds an extra €25 or so.

Boats generally operate from March until about November – dates depend a lot on demand. Prices vary according to season with ‘very high season’ being around 11 to 25 August. You can get information at agencies around town or at the booths at the port.

**Bue Marino** (☎ 0784 92 00 78; [www.hotelbuemarino.it](http://www.hotelbuemarino.it); Via A Vespucci; s €60-98, d €75-135; ☎ Easter-Nov; 🍷 🍷) This sunny blue-and-white themed hotel has a Mediterranean feel with its fashionable seafront bar and coolly tiled rooms. The panoramic 4th-floor restaurant dishes up surprisingly unpretentious food at very reasonable prices (meals €30).

**Fronte del Porte** (Via Acqua Dolce 5; pizzas from €3.50, meals €15-25) This bright and breezy spot is a good call for a portside fill-up. The comprehensive menu caters to most tastes with everything from *panini* and ice cream to pizza, pasta and steaks.

**Ristorante Acquarius** (☎ 0784 9 34 28; Lungomare Palmasera 34; pizza €6-8, meals €30; ☎ Apr-Sep) One of a number of restaurants on the *lungomare*, this bustling, laid-back restaurant serves a typical menu of wood-fired pizza, pasta and seafood.

## Getting There & Away

Up to six daily buses run to Cala Gonone from Dorgali (€1, 25 minutes, six daily) and Nuoro (€3, 70 minutes).

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## OGLIASTRA

Wedged in between the provinces of Nuoro and Cagliari, Ogliastra is a dramatic, vertical land of vast, unspoiled valleys, silent woods and windswept rock faces. To get here from Dorgali follow the SS125 as it winds its way south through the mountainous Parco Nazionale del Golfo di Orosei e del Gennargentu. The first 18km to the **Genna 'e Silana** pass (1017m) are the most breathtaking.

## Baunei & the Altopiano del Golgo

Around 28km south of the Genna 'e Silana pass, you come to the uninspiring shepherd's town of Baunei. There's little reason to stop off here, but what is seriously worth your while is the 10km detour up to the **Altopiano del Golgo**, a strange, otherworldly plateau where goats and donkeys graze in dusty shrubland. From the town a signpost sends you up a 2km climb of impossibly steep switchbacks to the plateau. Head north and after 8km follow the **Su Sterru** (Il Golgo) sign (for less than 1km), leave your vehicle and make for this remarkable feat of nature – a 270m abyss just 40m wide at its base. Its funnel-like opening is now fenced off but, knowing the size of the drop, just peering into the dark opening is enough to bring on the vertigo.



In the heart of the plateau, the **Locanda Il Rifugio** (☎ 0782 61 05 99, mobile 368 702 89 80; [www.coopgoloritze.com](http://www.coopgoloritze.com), in Italian; half-board per person €100-110; 📧 Apr-Oct) has six basic rooms in a converted farmstead and facilities for campers (per tent €5). Managed by the **Cooperativa Goloritzè** ([www.coopgoloritze.com](http://www.coopgoloritze.com)), the refuge makes an excellent trekking base, organising a number of excursions ranging from trekking and horse riding (€15 per hour) to 4WD jeep trips. Many treks involve a descent from the plateau through dramatic *codula* (canyons) to the beautiful beaches of the Golfo di Orosei (see opposite). Staff at the refuge also organise guides and logistical support for walkers attempting the infamous Selvaggio Blu, Sardinia's toughest trek – see the boxed text.

Just beyond the refuge is the late-16th-century **Chiesa di San Pietro**, a humble construction flanked to one side by some even humbler *cumbessias* – rough, largely open stone affairs which are not at all comfortable for the passing pilgrims who traditionally sleep there on the saint's day.

## Santa Maria Navarrese

At the southern end of the Golfo di Orosei, the unpretentious and attractive town of Santa Maria Navarrese is a popular beach resort. Shipwrecked Basque sailors built a small church here in 1052, dedicated to Santa Maria di Navarra on the orders of the Princess of Navarre, who happened to be one of the survivors. The church was set in the shade of a grand olive tree that is still standing.

Information is available at the **Tourpass office** (☎ 0782 61 53 30; [www.turinforma.it](http://www.turinforma.it); Piazza Principessa di Navarra 19; 📧 9am-1pm & 4-6pm Mon-Sat, 4-7pm Tue & Thu in winter), hidden behind the Banco di Sardegna in the town centre.

Lofty pines and eucalyptus trees back the lovely beach lapped by transparent water (with more sandy stretches to the south). Offshore are several islets, including the **Isolotto di Ogliastra**, a giant hunk of pink porphyritic rock. The leafy northern end of the beach is topped by a watchtower built to watch for raiding Saracens.

Down at the port, the **Consorzio Marittimo Ogliastra** (☎ 0782 61 51 73; [www.mareogliastra.com](http://www.mareogliastra.com)) runs boat tours along the Golfo di Orosei for between €30 and €35 per person.

There are several hotels in town, including **Ostello Bellavista** (☎ 0782 61 40 39; [www.ostelloinogliastra.com](http://www.ostelloinogliastra.com); Via Pedra Longa; s €35-65, d €50-100; 📧), a rare year-round option which compensates for its inconvenient position – a steep climb from the village centre – with huge views and a warm welcome. There's a bit of an institutional feel about the place but rooms are good value for money and the in-house restaurant serves cracking local food (meals €25).

A handful of buses link Santa Maria Navarrese with Tortolì (€1, 15 minutes, 11 daily), Dorgali (€4.50, 1½ hours, two daily) and Nuoro (€6.50, two hours 25 minutes, five daily).

## Tortolì & Arbatax

### pop 10,395

Tortolì, Ogliastra's provincial capital, is unlikely to make a big impression with its large roadside hotels and uninspiring shops. About 4km away, Arbatax is little more than a port fronted by a few bars and restaurants. The only sight of any note are the *rocce rosse* (red rocks), a series of bizarre, weather-beaten rocks rising from the sea in Arbatax.

Near the port, you'll find the terminus for the **Trenino Verde**, the summer tourist train to Mandas ([Click here](#)).

Local buses 1 and 2 run from Arbatax to Tortolì and, in the case of the latter service, to the beach and

hotels at nearby Porto Frailis.

There's no shortage of accommodation in these parts, although most places tend to be big resort-style hotels. An exception is the old-fashioned **Hotel Splendour** (☎ 0782 62 30 37; [www.hotelsplendor.com](http://www.hotelsplendor.com); Viale Arbatax; s €35-50, d €50-70; 📍), a cheery family-run two-star place halfway between Tortolì and Arbatax. The halls are decorated with colourful oil paintings and family knick-knacks while rooms are small and unpretentious. For a bite to eat **Star 2** (☎ 0782 66 75 03; Via Lungomare, Arbatax; pizzas €6, meals €25) serves tasty pizzas and juicy steaks in Arbatax.

For information on ferry connections, check out [Click here](#).

Buses connect Tortolì with Santa Maria Navarrese (€1, 15 minutes, 11 daily), Dorgali (€4.50, one hour 50 minutes, one daily), and Nuoro (€6.50, two hours 40 minutes, five daily), as well as many inland villages.

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## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Italy can range from the sublime to the ridiculous with prices to match. Hotels and *pensioni* (guesthouses) make up the bulk of the offerings, covering a rainbow of options from cheap, nasty and ill-lit dosshouses near stations to luxury hotels considered among the best on the planet. Youth hostels and camping grounds are scattered across the country. Other options include charming B&B-style places that continue to proliferate, villa and apartment rentals, and *agriturismi* (farm stays). Some of the latter

are working farms, others converted farmhouses (often with pool). Mountain walkers will find *rifugi* (alpine huts) handy. Capturing the imagination still more are the options to stay in anything from castles to convents and monasteries.

An original option born in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region is the **albergo diffuso** ([www.albergodiffuso.com](http://www.albergodiffuso.com)). In several villages, various apartments and houses are rented to guests through a centralised hotel-style reception in the village.

In this book a range of prices is quoted, from low to high season; these are intended as a guide only. Hotels are listed according to three categories (budget, midrange and top end). Half-board equals breakfast and either lunch or dinner; full board includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Prices can fluctuate enormously depending on the season, with Easter, summer and the Christmas—New Year period being the typical peak tourist times. There are many variables. Expect to pay top prices in the mountains during the ski season (December to March). Summer is high season on the coast, but in the parched cities can equal low season. In August especially, many city hotels charge as little as half price. It is always worth considering booking ahead in high season (although in the urban centres you can usually find something if you trust to luck).

As an average guide, a budget double room can cost up to €80, a midrange one from €80 to €200 and top-end anything from there to thousands of euros for a suite in one of the country's premier establishments. Price depends greatly on where you're looking. A bottom-end budget choice in Venice or Milan will set you back the price of a decent midrange option in, say, rural Campania. Where possible and appropriate, we have presented prices with the maximum low- and high-season rates thus: s €40–60, d €80–130, meaning that a single might cost €40 at most in low season and a double €130 at most in high season.

Some hotels barely alter their prices throughout the year. This is especially true of the lower-end places, although in low season there is no harm in trying to bargain for a discount. You may find hoteliers especially receptive if you intend to stay for several days.

For more on costs, [Click here](#).

To make a reservation, hotels usually require confirmation by fax or, more commonly, a credit-card number. In the latter case, if you don't show up you will be docked a night's accommodation.

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## PRACTICALITIES

- Use the metric system for weights and measures.
- Plugs have two or three round pins. The electric current is 220V, 50Hz, but older buildings may still use 125V.
- If your Italian's up to it, try the following newspapers: *Corriere della Sera*, the country's leading daily; *Il Messaggero*, a popular Rome-based broadsheet; or *La Repubblica*, a centre-left daily with a flow of Mafia conspiracies and Vatican scoops. For the Church's view, try the *Osservatore Romano*.
- Tune into Vatican Radio ([www.radiovaticana.org](http://www.radiovaticana.org); 93.3 FM and 105 FM in the Rome area) for a run-down on what the pope is up to (in Italian, English and other languages); or state-owned Italian RAI-1, RAI-2 and RAI-3 ([www.rai.it](http://www.rai.it)), which broadcast all over the country and abroad. Commercial stations such as Rome's Radio Centro Suono ([www.radiocentrosuono.it](http://www.radiocentrosuono.it)) and Radio Città Futura

([www.radiocittafutura.it](http://www.radiocittafutura.it)), Naples' Radio Kiss Kiss ([www.kisskissnapoli.it](http://www.kisskissnapoli.it)) and Milan-based left-wing Radio Popolare ([www.radiopopolare.it](http://www.radiopopolare.it)) are all good for contemporary music.

- Switch on the box to watch the state-run RAI-1, RAI-2 and RAI-3 ([www.rai.it](http://www.rai.it)) and the main commercial stations (mostly run by Silvio Berlusconi's Mediaset company): Canale 5 ([www.canale5.mediaset.it](http://www.canale5.mediaset.it)), Italia 1 ([www.italia1.mediaset.it](http://www.italia1.mediaset.it)), Rete 4 ([www.rete4.mediaset.it](http://www.rete4.mediaset.it)) and La 7 ([www.la7.it](http://www.la7.it)).
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## Agriturismo & B&Bs

Holidays on working farms, or *agriturismi*, are popular with travellers and property owners looking for extra revenue. Accommodation can range from simple, rustic affairs to luxury locations where little actual farming is done and the swimming pool sparkles. *Agriturismo* business has long boomed in Tuscany and Umbria, but is also steadily gaining ground in other regions.

Local tourist offices can usually supply lists of operators. For detailed information on *agriturismo* facilities throughout Italy check out **Agriturst** ([www.agriturist.com](http://www.agriturist.com)) and **Agriturismo.com** ([www.agriturismo.com](http://www.agriturismo.com)). Other sites include **Network Agriturismo Italia 2005** ([www.agriturismo-italia2005.com](http://www.agriturismo-italia2005.com)), which in spite of its name is updated annually, **Agriturismo-Italia.net** ([www.agriturismo-italia.net](http://www.agriturismo-italia.net)), **Agriturismoitalia.com** ([www.agriturismoitalia.com](http://www.agriturismoitalia.com)) and **Agriturismo Vero** ([www.agriturismovero.com](http://www.agriturismovero.com)).

B&B options include everything from restored farmhouses, city *palazzi* and seaside bungalows to rooms in family houses. Tariffs per person cover a wide range, from around €25 to €75. For more information, contact **Bed & Breakfast Italia** (☎ 06 687 86 18; [www.bbitalia.it](http://www.bbitalia.it); Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 282, Rome, 00186).

## Camping

Most camping grounds in Italy are major complexes with swimming pools, restaurants and supermarkets. They are graded according to a star system. Charges often vary according to the season, rising to a peak in July and August. Such high-season prices range from €6 to €20 per adult, free to €12 for children under 12, and from €5 to €25 for a site. In the major cities, grounds are often a long way from the historic centres. Many camping grounds offer the alternative of bungalows or even simple, self-contained flats. In high season, some only offer deals for a week at a time.

Independent camping is not permitted in protected areas but, out of the main tourist season, independent campers who choose spots that aren't visible from the road and who don't light fires shouldn't have too much trouble. Get permission from the landowner if you want to camp on private property.

Lists of camping grounds are available from local tourist offices or can be looked up on various sites, including [www.campeggi.com](http://www.campeggi.com), [www.camping.it](http://www.camping.it) and [www.italcamping.it](http://www.italcamping.it). The Touring Club Italiano (TCI) publishes the annual *Campeggi in Italia* (Camping in Italy), listing all camping grounds, and the Istituto Geografico de Agostini publishes *Guida ai Campeggi in Europa* (Guide to Camping in Europe), sold together with *Guida ai Campeggi in Italia*. Both are available in major bookshops.

Other sites worth looking up are [www.canvasholidays.com](http://www.canvasholidays.com), [www.eurocamp.co.uk](http://www.eurocamp.co.uk), [www.keycamp.co.uk](http://www.keycamp.co.uk) and [www.select-site.com](http://www.select-site.com) (on this site it's possible to make individual site bookings).

## Convents & Monasteries

What about a night or two in monastic peace? Some convents and monasteries let out cells or rooms as a modest revenue-making exercise and happily take in tourists, while others are single sex and only take in pilgrims or people who are on a spiritual retreat. Many do not take in guests at all. Convents and monasteries generally impose a fairly early curfew. Charges hover around €40/75/100 for a single/double/triple, although some charge more like €65/100 for singles/doubles.

As a starting point, take a look at the website of the **Chiesa di Santa Susana** ([www.santasusanna.org/comingToRome/convents.html](http://www.santasusanna.org/comingToRome/convents.html)), an American Catholic church in Rome. On this site, it has searched out convent and monastery accommodation options around the country. Don't ask the church to set things up for you – staff has simply put together the information. Getting a spot is generally up to you contacting the individual institution – however one central booking agency for convents and monasteries (see below) has popped up recently. Note that some places are just residential accommodation run by religious orders and not necessarily big on monastic atmosphere.

It was probably just a matter of time before someone set up a central booking centre for monasteries – check out [www.monasterystays.com](http://www.monasterystays.com).

Another site worth a look is [www.initaly.com/agri/convents.htm](http://www.initaly.com/agri/convents.htm), for options in Abruzzo, Emilia-Romagna, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardy, Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany, Umbria and the Veneto. You pay US\$6 to access the online newsletter with addresses. At [www.realrome.com/accommconvents.html](http://www.realrome.com/accommconvents.html) you will find a list of Roman convents that generally take in young single women. A useful if ageing publication is Eileen Barish's *The Guide to Lodging in Italy's Monasteries*. Another is *Guida ai Monasteri d'Italia*, by Gian Maria Grasselli and Pietro Tarallo. It details hundreds of monasteries, including many that provide lodging.

## Hostels

*Ostelli per la Gioventù* (youth hostels) are run by the **Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù** (AIG; [Map](http://www.ostellionline.org); ☎ 06 487 11 52; [www.ostellionline.org](http://www.ostellionline.org); Via Cavour 44, Rome), affiliated with **Hostelling International** (HI; [www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)). A valid HI card is required in all associated youth hostels in Italy. You can get this in your home country or direct at many hostels.

Pick up a booklet on Italian hostels, with details of prices, locations and so on, from the national head office of AIG. Nightly rates vary from around €16 to €20, which usually includes a buffet breakfast. You can often get lunch or dinner for €10.

Accommodation is generally in segregated dormitories and it can be basic, although many hostels offer singles/doubles (for around €30/50) and family rooms.

Hostels will sometimes have a lock-out period between about 9am and 1.30pm. Check-in is usually not before 1pm and in many hostels there is a curfew from around 11pm. It is usually necessary to pay before 9am on the day of departure.

A growing contingent of independent hostels offers alternatives to HI hostels. Many are barely distinguishable from budget hotels. One of many hostel websites is [www.hostelworld.com](http://www.hostelworld.com).

## Hotels & Pensioni

There is often little difference between a *pensione* and an *albergo* (hotel). However, a *pensione* will generally be of one- to three-star quality and traditionally it has been a family-run operation, while an *albergo* can be awarded up to five stars. *Locande* (inns) long fell into much the same category as *pensioni*, but the term has become a trendy one in some parts and reveals little about the quality of a

place. *Affittacamere* are rooms for rent in private houses. They are generally simple affairs.

Quality can vary enormously and the official star system gives only limited clues. One-star hotels/*pensioni* tend to be basic and usually do not offer private bathrooms. Two-star places are similar but rooms will generally have a private bathroom. At three-star joints you can usually assume reasonable standards. Four- and five-star hotels offer facilities such as room service, laundry and dry-cleaning.

Prices are highest in major tourist destinations. They also tend to be higher in northern Italy. A *camera singola* (single room) costs from €25. A *camera doppia* (twin beds) or *camera matrimoniale* (double room with a double bed) will cost from around €40.

Tourist offices usually have booklets with local accommodation listings. Many hotels are also signing up with (steadily proliferating) online accommodation-booking services. You could start your search here:

**Alberghi in Italia** ([www.alberghi-in-italia.it](http://www.alberghi-in-italia.it))

**All Hotels in Italy** ([www.hotelsitalyonline.com](http://www.hotelsitalyonline.com))

**Hotels web.it** ([www.hotelsweb.it](http://www.hotelsweb.it))

**In Italia** ([www.initalia.it](http://www.initalia.it))

**Travel to Italy** ([www.travel-to-italy.com](http://www.travel-to-italy.com))

## Mountain Huts

The network of *rifugi* in the Alps, Apennines and other mountains in Italy is usually only open from July to September. Accommodation is generally in dormitories but some of the larger refuges have doubles. The price per person (which usually includes breakfast) ranges from €17 to €26 depending on the quality of the refuge (it's more for a double room). A hearty postwalk single-dish dinner will set you back another €11.50.

*Rifugi* are marked on good walking maps. Some are close to chair lifts and cable-car stations, which means they are usually expensive and crowded. Others are at high altitude and involve hours of hard walking. It is important to book in advance. Additional information can be obtained from the local tourist offices.

The **Club Alpino Italiano** (CAI; [www.cai.it](http://www.cai.it), in Italian) owns and runs many of the mountain huts. Members of organisations such as the Australian Alpine Club and British Mountaineering Council can enjoy discounted rates for accommodation and meals by obtaining a reciprocal rights card (for a fee).

## Rental Accommodation

Finding rental accommodation in the major cities can be difficult and time-consuming – rental agencies (local and foreign) can assist, for a fee. Rental rates are higher for short-term leases. A small apartment or a studio anywhere near the centre of Rome will cost around €1000 per month and it is usually necessary to pay a deposit (generally one month in advance). Expect to spend similar amounts in cities such as Florence, Milan, Naples and Venice. Apartments and villas for rent are listed in local publications such as Rome's weekly *Porta Portese* and the fortnightly *Wanted in Rome*. Another option is to answer an advertisement in a local publication to share an apartment. If you are staying for a few months and don't mind sharing, check out university noticeboards for student flats with vacant rooms.

If you're looking for an apartment or studio to rent for a short stay (such as a week or two) the easiest option is to check out the websites of agencies dealing in this kind of thing:

**Guest in Italy** ([www.guestinitaly.com](http://www.guestinitaly.com)) An online agency, with apartments (mostly for two to four people) ranging from about €120 to €450 a night.

**Holiday Lettings** ([www.holidaylettings.co.uk](http://www.holidaylettings.co.uk)) Has hundreds of apartments all over the country.

**Homelidays** ([www.homelidays.com](http://www.homelidays.com)) Here you will find apartments for rent all over the country. Smallish flats in central Florence for two or three people can start at around €450 a week and rise to €700.

**Interhome** ([www.interhome.co.uk](http://www.interhome.co.uk)) Here you book apartments for blocks of a week, starting at around UK£500-600 for two or three people in central Rome.

In major resort areas, such as popular coastal areas in summer and the ski towns in winter, the tourist offices have lists of apartments and villas for rent.

## Villa Rentals

Long the preserve of the Tuscan sun, the villa-rental scene in Italy has taken off in recent years, with agencies offering villa accommodation – often in splendid rural locations not far from enchanting medieval towns or Mediterranean beaches – up and down the country. More eccentric options include renting *trulli*, the conical traditional houses of southern Puglia, or *dammusi* (houses with thick, whitewashed walls and a shallow cupola) on the island of Pantelleria, south of Sicily. You can start your search with the following agencies but there are dozens of operators.

For villas in the time-honoured and most popular central regions, particularly Tuscany and Umbria, check out the following:

**Cuendet** ([www5.cuendet.com](http://www5.cuendet.com)) One of the old hands in this business; operates from the heart of Siena province in Tuscany.

**Ilios Travel** ([www.iliostravel.com](http://www.iliostravel.com)) UK-based company with villas, apartments and castles in Venice, Tuscany, Umbria, Lazio, Le Marche, Abruzzo and Sardinia.

**Invitation to Tuscany** ([www.invitationtotuscany.com](http://www.invitationtotuscany.com)) Wide range of properties across Tuscany, Umbria & Liguria.

**Simpson** ([www.simpson-travel.com](http://www.simpson-travel.com)) Concentrates on Tuscany, Umbria, the Amalfi Coast and Sicily. It also has properties in Rome, Florence and Venice.

**Summer's Leases** ([www.summerleases.com](http://www.summerleases.com)) Properties in Tuscany and Umbria.

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## BOOK ACCOMMODATION ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

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Some agencies concentrate their energies on the south (especially Campania and Puglia) and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia:

**Costa Smeralda Holidays** ([www.costasmeralda-holidays.com](http://www.costasmeralda-holidays.com)) Concentrates on Sardinia's northeast.

**Long Travel** ([www.long-travel.co.uk](http://www.long-travel.co.uk)) From Lazio and Abruzzo south, including Sardinia and Sicily.

**Think Sicily** ([www.thinksicily.com](http://www.thinksicily.com)) Strictly Sicilian properties.

**Voyages Ilena** ([www.voyagesilena.co.uk](http://www.voyagesilena.co.uk)) For Sardinia and Sicily.



Operators offering villas and other short-term let properties across the country:

**Carefree Italy** ([www.carefreeitaly.com](http://www.carefreeitaly.com)) Apartments and villas.

**Cottages & Castles** ([www.cottagesandcastles.com.au](http://www.cottagesandcastles.com.au)) An Australian-based specialist in villa-style accommodation in Italy.

**Cottages to Castles** ([www.cottagestocastles.com](http://www.cottagestocastles.com)) UK-based operator with properties across the country and agents worldwide.

**Parker Villas** ([www.parkervillas.co.uk](http://www.parkervillas.co.uk)) Has properties all over Italy.

**Veronica Tomasso Cotgrove** ([www.vtcitaly.com](http://www.vtcitaly.com)) This London-based company also acts in the sale of property in Tuscany and Umbria.

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## BUSINESS HOURS

Generally shops open from 9am to 1pm and 3.30pm to 7.30pm (or 4pm to 8pm) Monday to Saturday. Many close on Saturday afternoon and some close on a Monday morning or afternoon, and sometimes again on a Wednesday or Thursday afternoon. In major towns, most department stores and supermarkets have continuous opening hours from 10am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday. Some even open from 9am to 1pm on Sunday.

Banks tend to open from 8.30am to 1.30pm and 3.30pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday. They close at weekends but exchange offices usually remain open in the larger cities and in main tourist areas.

Central post offices open from 8am to 7pm from Monday to Friday and 8.30am to 7pm (in some cases only until noon) on Saturday. Smaller branches tend to open from 8am to 2pm Monday to Friday and 8.30am to noon on Saturday.

*Farmacie* (pharmacies) are generally open 9am to 12.30pm and 3.30pm to 7.30pm. Most shut on Saturday afternoon, Sunday and holidays but a handful remain open on a rotation basis (*farmacie di turno*) for emergency purposes. Closed pharmacies display a list of the nearest ones open. They are usually listed in newspapers and you can also check out [www.miniportale.it](http://www.miniportale.it) (click on Farmacie di Turno and then the region you want).

Many bars and cafes open from about 8am to 8pm. Others then go on into the night serving a nocturnal crowd while still others, dedicated more exclusively to nocturnal diversion, don't get started until the early evening (even if they officially open in the morning). Few bars anywhere remain open beyond 1am or 2am. Clubs (*discoteche*) might open around 10pm (or earlier if they have eateries on the premises) but things don't get seriously shaking until after midnight.

Restaurants open noon to 3pm and 7.30pm to around 11pm or midnight (sometimes even later in summer and in the south), although the kitchen often shuts an hour earlier than final closing time. Most restaurants and bars close at least one day a week.

The opening hours of museums, galleries and archaeological sites vary enormously, although at the more important sites there is a trend towards continuous opening from around 9.30am to 7pm. Many close on Monday. Some of the major national museums and galleries remain open until 10pm in summer. [Click here](#) for the opening hours of tourist offices.

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# CHILDREN

## Practicalities

Italians love children but there are few special amenities for them. Always make a point of asking staff members at tourist offices if they know of any special family activities or have suggestions on hotels that cater for kids. Discounts are available for children (usually aged under 12 but sometimes based on the child's height) on public transport and for admission to sites.

If you have kids, book accommodation in advance to avoid any inconvenience and, when travelling by train, reserve seats where possible to avoid finding yourselves standing. You can hire car seats for infants and children from most car-rental firms, but you should always book them in advance.

You can buy baby formula in powder or liquid form, as well as sterilising solutions such as Milton, at pharmacies. Disposable nappies (diapers) are available at supermarkets and pharmacies. Fresh cow's milk is sold in cartons in supermarkets and in bars with a 'Latteria' sign. UHT milk is popular and in many out-of-the-way areas the only kind available. For info on eating out with children, [Click here](#).

## Sights & Activities

Successful travel with children can require a special effort. Don't try to overdo things and make sure activities include the kids – older children could help in the planning of these. Try to think of things that might capture their imagination, like the sites at [Pompeii](#), the [Colosseum](#) and the [Roman Forum](#) in Rome, and Greek temples in the south and on Sicily. Another good bet is the volcanoes in the south.

Water activities, from lolling on a beach to snorkelling or sailing, are always winners.

When choosing museums, throw in the odd curio that may be more likely to stir a young child's fascination than yet another worthy art gallery! Boys will probably like such things as [Venice's Museo Storico Navale](#), while girls might enjoy the idea of a little fashion shopping with mum in [Milan's Golden Quad](#) district. And while you're in northern Italy, make a stopover at [Gardaland](#), the amusement park near Lago di Garda in Lombardy, or at Italia in [Miniatura](#) in Emilia-Romagna.

Always allow time for kids to play, and make sure treats such as a whopping gelato or slice of their favourite pizza are included in the bag of tricks.

See also Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* or the websites [www.travelwithyourkids.com](http://www.travelwithyourkids.com) and [www.familytravelnetwork.com](http://www.familytravelnetwork.com).

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## CLIMATE CHARTS

Situated in the temperate zone and jutting deep into the Mediterranean, Italy is regarded by many tourists as a land of sunny, mild weather. However, due to the north—south orientation of the peninsula and the fact that it is largely mountainous, the country's climate is variable. [Click here](#) for more information on when to go.

In the Alps, temperatures are lower and winters can be long and severe. Generally the weather is warm from July to September, although rainfall can be high in September. While the first snowfall is usually in November, light snow sometimes falls in mid-September and heavy falls can occur in early October. Freak snowfalls in June are not unknown at high altitudes. Mind you, with climate change, many ski

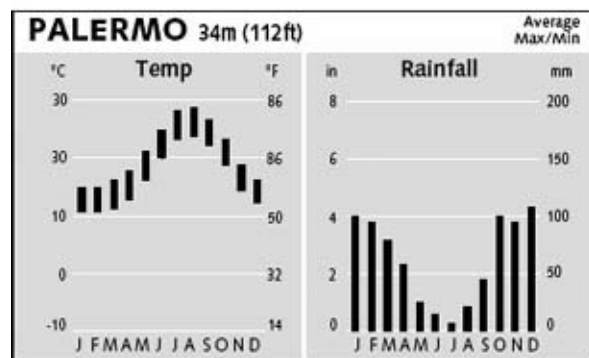
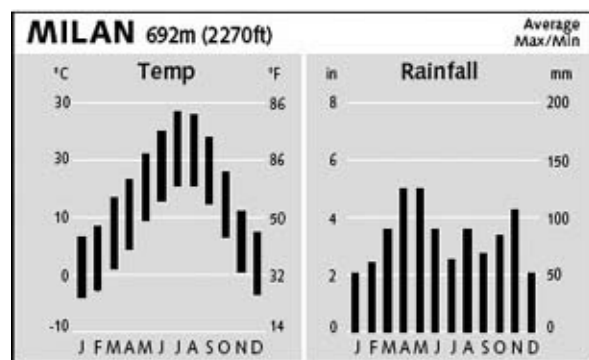
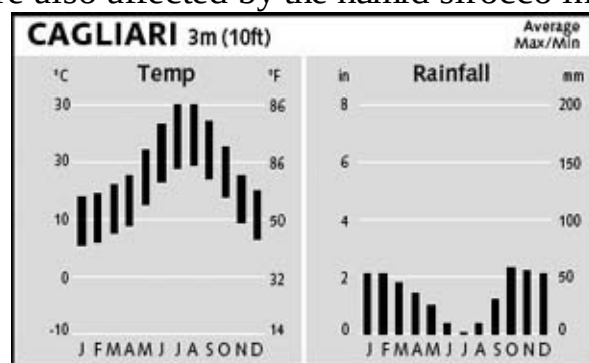
resorts can remain distressingly snow-free until early January (the exceptionally snowy winter of 2008–09 notwithstanding!).

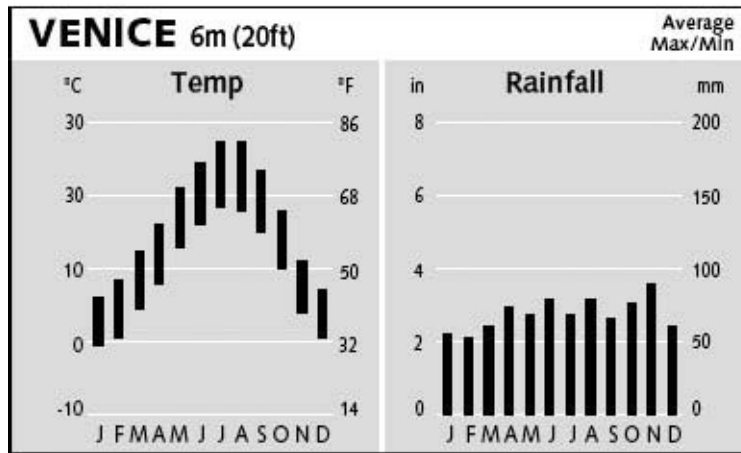
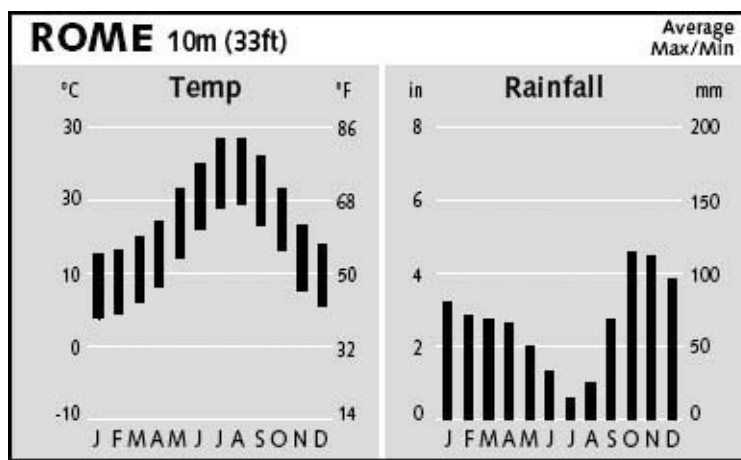
The Alps shield northern Lombardy and the Lakes area, including Milan, from the extremes of the northern European winter, and Liguria enjoys a mild, Mediterranean climate similar to that in southern Italy because it is protected by the Alps and Apennine range.

Winters are severe and summers torrid in the Po valley. Venice can be hot and humid in summer and, although not too cold in winter, it can be unpleasant if wet or when the sea level rises and *acque alte* (literally ‘high waters’) inundate the city. This is most likely in November and December. Along the Po valley, and in Venice especially, January and February can be surprisingly crisp and stunning.

In Florence, encircled by hills, the weather can be quite extreme but, as you travel towards the tip of the boot, temperatures and weather conditions become milder. Rome, for instance, has an average July and August temperature in the mid-20s (Celsius), although the impact of the sirocco (a hot, humid wind blowing from Africa) can produce stiflingly hot weather in August, with temperatures in the high 30s for days on end. Winters are moderate and snow is rare in Rome, although winter clothing (or at least a heavy overcoat) is still a requirement.

The south of Italy and the islands of Sicily and Sardinia have a Mediterranean climate. Summers are long, hot and dry, and winter temperatures tend to be relatively moderate, with daytime averages not too far below 10°C. These regions are also affected by the humid sirocco in summer.





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## COURSES

Holiday courses are a booming section of the Italian tourist industry and they cover everything – from painting, art, sculpture, wine, food, photography and scuba diving to even hang-gliding. You will find details on various local courses throughout this book. US students looking to sign up for courses in Italy might want to check out the offerings at **Study Abroad Italy** ([www.studyabroaditaly.com](http://www.studyabroaditaly.com)).

Apart from the following categories, possibilities range from history courses in Venice to fashion courses in Milan. **Learn4good** ([www.learn4good.com](http://www.learn4good.com)) is a good place to start your search.

## Cooking

Many people come to Italy just for the food so it is hardly surprising that cookery courses are among the most popular. Check out **Mama Margaret** ([www.italycookingschools.com](http://www.italycookingschools.com)) for ideas on courses throughout the country; [Click here](#) for details on specific courses.

## Language

Courses are run by private schools and universities throughout the country and are a great way to learn Italian while enjoying the opportunity to live in an Italian city or town. Among the more popular and reasonably priced options, the **Università per Stranieri di Perugia** ([www.unistrapg.it](http://www.unistrapg.it)) and the **Università per Stranieri di Siena** ([www.unistrasi.it](http://www.unistrasi.it)) are both set in beautiful medieval cities. Frequently these schools offer extracurricular or full-time courses in painting, art history, sculpture and architecture, too. One school in Siena, **Saenaiulia** (☎ 0577 441 55; [www.saenaiulia.it](http://www.saenaiulia.it)), has a web link listing language

schools around the country.

**Florence** and are teeming with Italian-language schools, while most cities and major towns have at least one.

The Istituto Italiano di Cultura (IIC), which has branches all over the world, is a government-sponsored organisation aimed at promoting Italian culture and language. This is a good place to start your search for places to study in Italy. The institute's numerous branches worldwide include Australia (Sydney), Canada (Montreal), the UK (London) and the USA (Los Angeles, New York and Washington). The website of the **Italian foreign ministry** ([www.esteri.it](http://www.esteri.it)) has a full list of institutions; click on Diplomatic Network and then on Italian Cultural Institutes.

## Painting

Art and painting courses abound, especially in Florence. One place to start looking is at **Learn4good** ([www.learn4good.com](http://www.learn4good.com)), which has information on several art schools in Italy. **It-Schools.com** ([www.it-schools.com](http://www.it-schools.com)) is also worth checking out.

## Yoga

It will always be hard to close your senses to the food and drink of Italy, but another way to enjoy the country is with a little gentle bodywork. **Yoga in Italy** (☎ 0445 48 02 98; [www.yogainitaly.it](http://www.yogainitaly.it)) offers a variety of week-long holidays combining yoga with anything from walks in the Chianti countryside to white-water rafting.

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## CUSTOMS REGULATIONS

Duty-free sales within the EU no longer exist (but goods are sold tax-free in European airports). Visitors coming into Italy from non-EU countries can import, duty free: 1L of spirits (or 2L wine), 50g perfume, 250mL eau de toilette, 200 cigarettes and other goods up to a total of €175; anything over this limit must be declared on arrival and the appropriate duty paid. On leaving the EU, non-EU citizens can reclaim any Value Added Tax (VAT) on expensive purchases ([Click here](#)).

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## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

It sometimes requires patience to deal with the Italian concept of service, which does not always seem to follow the maxim that the customer is always right. While often courteous and friendly, some people in uniform or behind a counter (including police officers, waiters and shop assistants) may regard you with supreme indifference.

Long queues are the norm in banks, post offices and government offices.

## Pollution

Problems in the major cities are noise and air pollution, caused mainly by heavy traffic. A headache after a day of sightseeing in Rome or Milan is likely to be caused by breathing in carbon monoxide and lead, rather than simple tiredness.

In summer (and occasionally other seasons) pollution alerts come as a wake-up call in cities like Rome, Milan, Naples and Florence. The elderly, children and people with respiratory problems are warned to stay indoors. If you fit into one of these categories, keep yourself informed through the tourist office or your hotel. Often traffic is cut by half during these alerts by obliging drivers with odd and even number plates to drive on alternate days.

Watch where you step as dog poop on the pavements is a big-city irritation. Italian dog-owners are catching onto the idea of cleaning up their best friend's daily doings, but this is by no means a universal courtesy.

Italy's beaches can be polluted by industrial waste, sewage and oil spills from the Mediterranean's considerable sea traffic. The best and cleanest beaches are on Sardinia, Sicily, less-populated southern areas of the mainland and Elba.

## **Smoking**

Since early 2005, smoking in all closed public spaces (from bars to elevators, offices to trains) has been banned.

## **Theft**

Pickpockets and bag-snatchers operate in most cities, especially Naples and Rome. Reduce the chances of such petty theft by wearing a money belt (with money, passport, credit cards and important documents) *under* your clothing. Wear bags or cameras slung across the body to make it harder to snatch them. If your hotel has a safe, use it.

Watch for groups of dishevelled-looking women and children asking you for money. Their favourite haunts are train stations, tourist sights and shopping areas. If you've been targeted by a group, take evasive action (such as crossing the street) or shout '*Va via!*' (Go away!). Again, this is an issue mainly in Rome and Naples.

Parked cars, particularly those with foreign number plates or rental-company stickers, are prime targets. Try not to leave anything in the car and certainly not overnight. Car theft is a problem in Rome, Campania and Puglia.

In case of theft or loss, always report the incident to police within 24 hours and ask for a statement, otherwise your travel-insurance company won't pay out.

## **Traffic**

Italian traffic can seem chaotic, although it has improved a trifle now that Italian drivers have point-system licences. Drivers are not keen to stop for pedestrians, even at pedestrian crossings, and are more likely to swerve. Where this is the case, follow the locals (even if they seem bent on suicide) by marching out into the (swerving) traffic.

Confusingly, in some cities, roads that appear to be only for one-way traffic have lanes for buses travelling in the opposite direction – always look both ways before stepping onto the road.

Signposting is often confusing. It is not uncommon to see signs to the same place pointing in two opposing directions at once. This can be especially unnerving for drivers navigating their way out of a city for the first time (although one becomes accustomed to these 'options' after a while).

City driving can be nerve-wracking at first, with what seems a cavalier dodgem-cars element to it.

Motorcyclists should be prepared for anything in the cities. Once you get the hang of Italian-style urban driving, though, you might come to like it!

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## DISCOUNT CARDS

At museums and galleries, never hesitate to enquire after discounts for students, young people, children, families or the elderly. When sightseeing and wherever possible buy a *biglietto cumulativo*, a ticket that allows admission to a number of associated sights for less than the combined cost of separate admission fees.

### Senior Cards

Senior citizens are often entitled to public-transport discounts but usually only for monthly passes (not daily or weekly tickets); the minimum qualifying age is 65 years.

Seniors (over 60) travelling extensively by rail should consider the one-year Carta d'Argento ([Click here](#)).

Admission to most museums in Rome is free for over-60s but in other cities (such as Florence) often no concessions are made for nonresidents. In numerous places, EU seniors have free entry to sights, sometimes only on certain days. Always ask.

### Student & Youth Cards

Free admission to some galleries and sites is available to under-18s. Discounts (usually half the normal fee) are available for some sights to EU citizens aged between 18 and 25. An **International Student Identity Card** (ISIC; [www.isic.org](http://www.isic.org)) is no longer sufficient at many tourist sites as prices are usually based on age, so a passport, driver's licence or **Euro<26** ([www.euro26.org](http://www.euro26.org)) card is preferable.

An ISIC card may still, however, prove useful for cheap transport, theatre and cinema discounts, as well as occasional discounts in some hotels and restaurants (check the lists on the ISIC website); similar cards are available to teachers (International Teacher Identity Card, or ITIC). For nonstudent travellers under 25, the International Youth Travel Card (IYTC) offers the same benefits.

Student cards are issued by student unions and hostelling organisations as well as some youth travel agencies. In Italy, the **Centro Turistico Studentesco e Giovanile** (CTS; [www.cts.it](http://www.cts.it)) youth travel agency can issue ISIC, ITIC and Euro<26 cards.

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## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

For foreign embassies and consulates in Italy not listed here, look under 'Ambasciate' or 'Consolati' in the telephone directory. In addition to the following, some countries run honorary consulates in other cities.

**Australia** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 85 27 21, emergencies 800 877790; [www.italy.embassy.gov.au](http://www.italy.embassy.gov.au); Via Antonio Bosio 5, 00161); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7770 4217; [www.austrade.it](http://www.austrade.it); Via Borgogna 2, 20122)  
**Austria** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 844 01 41; [www.bmaa.gv.at](http://www.bmaa.gv.at); Via Pergolesi 3, Rome, 00198)

**Canada** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 85 44 41; [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canadaeuropa/italy](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canadaeuropa/italy); Via Zara 30, Rome, 00198)

**France** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 68 60 11; [www.france-italia.it](http://www.france-italia.it); Piazza Farnese 67, 00186); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 655 91 41; Via della Moscova 12, 20121); Naples ([Map](#); ☎ 081 598 07 11; Via Francesco Crispi 86, 80121); Turin (☎ 011 573 23 11; Via Roma 366, 10121); Venice ([Map](#); ☎ 041 522 43 19; Palazzo Morosini, Castello 6140, 30123)

**Germany** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 49 21 31; [www.rom.diplo.de](http://www.rom.diplo.de); Via San Martino della Battaglia 4, 00185); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 623 11 01; [www.mailand.diplo.de](http://www.mailand.diplo.de); Via Solferino 40, 20121); Naples ([Map](#); ☎ 081 248 85 11; [www.neapel.diplo.de](http://www.neapel.diplo.de); Via Francesco Crispi 69, 80121)

**Ireland** ([Map](#); ☎ 06 697 91 21; [www.ambasciata-irlanda.it](http://www.ambasciata-irlanda.it); Piazza Campitelli 3, Rome, 00186)

**Japan** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 48 79 91; [www.it.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.it.emb-japan.go.jp); Via Quintino Sella 60, 00187); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 624 11 41; Via Cesare Mangili 2/4, 20121)

**Netherlands** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 3228 6001; [www.olanda.it](http://www.olanda.it); Via Michele Mercati 8, 00197); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 485 58 41; Via San Vittore 45, 20123); Naples ([Map](#); ☎ 081 551 30 03; Via Agostino Depretis 114, 80133); Palermo ([Map](#); ☎ 091 58 15 21; Via Enrico Amari 8, 90139)

**New Zealand** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 853 75 01; [www.nzembassy.com](http://www.nzembassy.com); Via Clitunno 44, 00198); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 7217 0001; Via Terraggio 17, 20123)

**Switzerland** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 80 95 71; [www.eda.admin.ch/roma](http://www.eda.admin.ch/roma); Via Barnarba Oriani 61, 00197); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 777 91 61; [www.eda.admin.ch/milano](http://www.eda.admin.ch/milano); Via Palestro 2, 20121); Naples ([Map](#); ☎ 081 734 11 32; [www.eda.admin.ch/napoli](http://www.eda.admin.ch/napoli); Centro Direzionale, Isola B3, 80143)

**UK** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 4220 0001; [www.britishembassy.gov.uk](http://www.britishembassy.gov.uk); Via XX Settembre 80a, 00187); Florence ([Map](#); ☎ 055 28 41 33; Lungarno Corsini 2, 50123); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 72 30 01; Via San Paolo 7, 20121); Naples ([Map](#); ☎ 081 423 89 11; Via dei Mille 40, 80121)

**USA** Rome ([Map](#); ☎ 06 4 67 41; [www.usis.it](http://www.usis.it); Via Vittorio Veneto 119a, 00187); Florence ([Map](#); ☎ 055 26 69 51; Lungarno Amerigo Vespucci 38, 50123); Milan ([Map](#); ☎ 02 29 03 51; Via Principe Amedeo 2/10, 20121); Naples ([Map](#); ☎ 081 583 81 11; Piazza della Repubblica, 80122)

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## FOOD & DRINK

Restaurant listings in this book are given in order of cheapest to most expensive, going by the price of a meal, unless otherwise stated. A meal in this guide consists of a *primo* (first course), a *secondo* (second course) and a dessert. Drinks are not included. The budget category is for meals costing up to €20, midrange is €20 to €45 and top end is anything over €45. These figures represent a halfway point between the expensive cities such as Milan and Venice and the considerably cheaper towns across the south. Indeed, a restaurant rated as midrange in one place might be considered cheap as chips in Milan. It is best to check the menu, usually posted by the entrance, for prices. Most eating establishments have a cover charge (called *coperto*; usually around €1 to €2) and *servizio* (service charge) of 10% to 15%.

A *tavola calda* (literally ‘hot table’) normally offers cheap, pre-prepared food and can include self-service pasta, roast meats and *pizza al taglio* (pizza by the slice).

A *trattoria* is traditionally a cheaper, often family-run version of a *ristorante* (restaurant) with less-aloof service and simpler dishes. An *osteria* is likely to be either a wine bar offering a small selection of dishes with a verbal menu, or a small trattoria. You can sometimes get food to accompany your tipples in an *enoteca* (wine bar).

Bars are popular hang-outs, serving mostly coffee, soft drinks and alcohol. They often sell brioche



(breakfast pastry), *cornetti* (croissants), *panini* (bread rolls with simple fillings) and *spuntini* (snacks) to have with your drink.

You'll find vegetarian and vegan restaurants in larger cities, such as Rome and Milan. Otherwise vegans can have a tough time. Many Italians seem to think cheese is vegetarian, so make sure your dish is 'senza formaggio' (without cheese). The good news is that most places usually do some good vegetable starters and side dishes.

Children's menus are uncommon but you can generally ask for a *mezzo piatto* (half plate) off the menu. Kids are generally welcome in most restaurants but do not count on the availability of high chairs.

For an introduction to the famous Italian cuisine and wines, [Click here](#). For information on the opening hours of restaurants, [Click here](#).

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## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Homosexuality is legal in Italy and well tolerated in the major cities. However, overt displays of affection by homosexual couples could attract a negative response in the more conservative south, and smaller towns. The legal age of consent is generally 16 (there are some exceptions where people below that age are concerned, in which case it can drop to as low as 13).

There are gay clubs in Rome, Milan and Bologna, and a handful in places such as Florence. Some coastal towns and resorts (such as the Tuscan town of Viareggio or Taormina in Sicily) have much more action in summer. For clues, track down local gay organisations or publications such as *Pride*, a national monthly magazine, and *AUT* published by **Circolo Mario Mieli** ([www.mariomieli.org](http://www.mariomieli.org)) in Rome. The useful website **Gay.it** ([www.gay.it](http://www.gay.it), in Italian) lists gay bars and hotels across the country. **Arcigay & Arcilesbica** (☎ 051 649 30 55; [www.arcigay.it](http://www.arcigay.it); Via Don Minzoni 18, Bologna), is a worthy national organisation for gays and lesbians.

Check out the English-language **GayFriendlyItalia.com** ([www.gayfriendlyitaly.com](http://www.gayfriendlyitaly.com)), which is produced by Gay.it. It has information on everything from hotels to homophobia issues and the law.

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## HOLIDAYS

Most Italians take their annual holiday in August. This means that many businesses and shops close for at least a part of that month. The Settimana Santa (Easter week) is another busy holiday period for Italians.

Individual towns have public holidays to celebrate the feasts of their patron saints ([Click here](#)). National public holidays include the following:

**New Year's Day** (Capodanno or Anno Nuovo) 1 January

**Epiphany** (Epifania or Befana) 6 January

**Easter Monday** (Pasquetta or Lunedì dell'Angelo) March/April

**Liberation Day** (Giorno della Liberazione) On 25 April – marks the Allied Victory in Italy, and the end of the German presence and Mussolini, in 1945.

**Labour Day** (Festa del Lavoro) 1 May

**Republic Day** (Festa della Repubblica) 2 June

**Feast of the Assumption** (Assunzione or Ferragosto) 15 August

**All Saints' Day** (Ognissanti) 1 November

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception** (Immacolata Concezione) 8 December

**Christmas Day** (Natale) 25 December

**Boxing Day** (Festa di Santo Stefano) 26 December

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## INSURANCE

A travel-insurance policy to cover theft, loss and medical problems is a good idea. It may also cover you for cancellation or delays to your travel arrangements. Paying for your ticket with a credit card can often provide limited travel accident insurance and you may be able to reclaim the payment if the operator doesn't deliver. Ask your credit-card company what it will cover.

For information on health insurance, check out [Click here](#).

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## INTERNET ACCESS

If you plan to carry your notebook or palmtop computer with you, carry a universal AC adaptor for your appliance (most are sold with these). Do not rely on finding wi-fi whenever you want it, as hot spots remain few and far between and often require payment. Another option is to buy a card pack with one of the Italian mobile-phone operators, which gives wireless access through the mobile telephone network. These are usually prepay services that you can top up as you go.

Most travellers make constant use of internet cafes and free web-based email such as Yahoo, Hotmail or Gmail. Internet cafes and centres are present, if not always abundant, in all cities and most main towns (don't forget your incoming mail server name, account name and password). Prices hover at around the €5 to €8 mark per hour. For some useful internet addresses, [Click here](#). By law, you must present photo ID (such as passport or drivers licence) to use internet points in Italy.

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## LEGAL MATTERS

For many Italians, finding ways to get around the law is a way of life. This is partly because bureaucracy has long been seen by most (with some justification) as a suffocating clamp on just about all areas of human activity.

The average tourist will only have a brush with the law if robbed by a bag-snatcher or pickpocket.

## Alcohol & Drugs

Italy's drug laws were toughened in 2006 and possession of any controlled substances, including cannabis or marijuana, can get you into hot water. Those caught in possession of 5g of cannabis can be considered traffickers and prosecuted as such. The same applies to tiny amounts of other drugs. Those caught with amounts below this threshold can be subject to minor penalties.

The legal limit for blood-alcohol level is 0.05% and random breath tests do occur.

# LEGAL AGE

- The right to vote: 18 years old
  - Age of consent: 14 years old (both heterosexual and homosexual, but there are some exceptions to the general rules)
  - Driving: 18 years old
- 

## Police

If you run into trouble in Italy, you are likely to end up dealing with the *polizia statale* (state police) or the *carabinieri* (military police).

The *polizia* deal with thefts, visa extensions and permits (among other things). They wear powder blue trousers with a fuchsia stripe and a navy blue jacket. Details of police stations, or *questure*, are given throughout this book.

The *carabinieri* deal with general crime, public order and drug enforcement (often overlapping with the *polizia*). They wear a black uniform with a red stripe and drive night blue cars with a red stripe. They are based in a *caserma* (barracks), a reflection of their past military status (they came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence).

One of the big differences between the police and *carabinieri* is the latter's reach – even many villages have a *carabinieri* post.

Other police include the *vigili urbani*, basically local traffic police. You will have to deal with them if you get a parking ticket or your car is towed away. The *guardia di finanza* are responsible for fighting tax evasion and drug smuggling. The *guardia forestale*, aka *corpo forestale*, are responsible for enforcing laws concerning forests and the environment in general.

For national emergency numbers, see the inside front cover.

## Your Rights

Italy still has antiterrorism laws on its books that could make life difficult if you are detained. You should be given verbal and written notice of the charges laid against you within 24 hours by arresting officers. You have no right to a phone call upon arrest. The prosecutor must apply to a magistrate for you to be held in preventive custody awaiting trial (depending on the seriousness of the offence) within 48 hours of arrest. You have the right not to respond to questions without the presence of a lawyer. If the magistrate orders preventive custody, you have the right to then contest this within the following 10 days.

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## MAPS

### City Maps

The city maps in this book, combined with tourist office maps, are generally adequate. More detailed maps are available in Italy at good bookshops, such as Feltrinelli, De Agostini, Touring Club Italiano (TCI) and Michelin all publish detailed city maps.

## Road Atlases

If you are driving around Italy, the Automobile Association's (AA) *Road Atlas Italy*, available in the UK, is scaled at 1:250,000 and includes 31 town maps. Just as good is Michelin's *Tourist and Motoring Atlas Italy*, scaled at 1:300,000, with 74 town maps.

In Italy, De Agostini publishes a comprehensive *Atlante Turistico Stradale d'Italia* (1:250,000), which includes 140 city maps (the AA *Road Atlas* is based on this). TCI publishes an *Atlante Stradale d'Italia* (1:200,000) divided into three parts – Nord, Centro and Sud (€45 for the lot at [www.touringclub.com](http://www.touringclub.com)). They contain a total of 147 city maps.

Many of these are available online. Check out TrekTools.com ([www.trektools.com](http://www.trektools.com)).

## Small-Scale Maps

Michelin has a series of good foldout country maps. No 735 covers the whole country on a scale of 1:1,000,000. You could also consider the series of six area maps at 1:400,000. TCI publishes a decent map of Italy at 1:800,000, as well as a series of 15 regional maps at 1:200,000 (costing €7 each).

## Walking Maps

Maps of walking trails in the Alps and Apennines are available at all major bookshops in Italy, but the best are the TCI bookshops.

The best walking maps are the 1:25,000 scale series published by **Tabacco** ([www.tabaccoeditrice.com](http://www.tabaccoeditrice.com)), covering an area from Bormio in the west to the Slovene border in the east. It also does maps on a grander scale. **Kompass** ([www.kompass-italia.it](http://www.kompass-italia.it)) also publishes 1:25,000 scale maps of various parts of Italy, as well as a 1:50,000 series and several in other scales (including one at 1:7500 of Capri). The Club Alpino Italiano (CAI) produces many hiking maps too, and Edizioni Multigraphic Florence produces a series of walking maps concentrating mainly on the Apennines.

The series *Guide dei Monti d'Italia*, 22 grey hardbacks published by the TCI and CAI, consists of exhaustive walking guides with maps.

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## MONEY

The euro is Italy's currency. The seven euro notes come in denominations of €500, €200, €100, €50, €20, €10 and €5. The eight euro coins are in denominations of €2 and €1, and 50, 20, 10, five, two and one cents.

Exchange rates are given on the inside front cover of this book. For the latest rates, check out [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com). For some hints on costs in Italy, turn to [Click here](#).

## Cash

There is little advantage in bringing foreign cash into Italy. True, exchange commissions are often lower than for travellers cheques, but the danger of losing the lot far outweighs such gains.

## Credit & Debit Cards

Credit and debit cards can be used in a *bancomat* (ATM) displaying the appropriate sign. Visa and

MasterCard are among the most widely recognised, but others like Cirrus and Maestro are also well covered. Only some banks give cash advances over the counter, so you're better off using ATMs. Cards are also good for payment in most hotels, restaurants, shops, supermarkets and tollbooths.

Check any charges with your bank. Most banks now build a fee of around 2.75% into every foreign transaction. In addition, ATM withdrawals can attract a further fee, usually around 1.5%.

It is not uncommon for ATMs in Italy to reject foreign cards. Try a few more ATMs displaying your card's logo before assuming the problem lies with your card (although, unfortunately, this may trigger alarms with your bank and lead it to block your card – make sure you always have some cash for calls home to your bank to explain what happened!).

If your card is lost, stolen or swallowed by an ATM, you can telephone toll free to have an immediate stop put on its use:

**Amex** (☎ 06 7290 0347 or your national call number)

**Diners Club** (☎ 800 864064)

**MasterCard** (☎ 800 870866)

**Visa** (☎ 800 819014)

## Moneychangers

You can change money in banks, at the post office or in a *cambio* (exchange office). Post offices and most banks are reliable and tend to offer the best rates. Commission fluctuates and depends on whether you are changing cash or cheques. Generally, post-office commissions are lowest and the exchange rate reasonable. The main advantage of exchange offices is the longer hours they keep, but watch for high commissions and inferior rates.

## Taxes & Refunds

A value-added tax of around 20%, known as IVA (Imposta di Valore Aggiunto), is slapped onto just about everything in Italy. If you are a non-EU resident and spend more than €155 (€154.94 to be more precise!) on a purchase, you can claim a refund when you leave. The refund only applies to purchases from affiliated retail outlets that display a 'tax free for tourists' (or similar) sign. You have to complete a form at the point of sale, then have it stamped by Italian customs as you leave. At major airports you can then get an immediate cash refund; otherwise it will be refunded to your credit card. For information, pick up a pamphlet on the scheme from participating stores.

## Tipping

You are not expected to tip on top of restaurant service charges but you can leave a little extra if you feel service warrants it. If there is no service charge, the customer should consider leaving a 10% tip, but this is not obligatory. In bars, Italians often leave small change as a tip, maybe only €0.10. Tipping taxi drivers is not common practice, but you are expected to tip the porter at top-end hotels.

## Travellers Cheques

Traditionally a safe way to carry money and possibly not a bad idea as a backup, travellers cheques have been outmoded by plastic. Various readers have reported having trouble changing travellers cheques in Italy and it seems most banks apply hefty commissions, even on cheques denominated in euros.

Visa, Travelex and Amex are widely accepted brands. Get most of your cheques in fairly large

denominations to save on per-cheque commission charges. Amex exchange offices do not charge commission to exchange travellers cheques.

It's vital to keep your initial receipt, along with a record of your cheque numbers and the ones you have used, separate from the cheques. Take along your passport as identification when you go to cash travellers cheques.

Phone numbers to report lost or stolen cheques:

**Amex** (☎ 800 914912)

**MasterCard** (☎ 800 872050)

**Visa** (☎ 800 874155)

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## POST

**Le Poste** (☎ 803160; [www.poste.it](http://www.poste.it)), Italy's postal system, is reasonably reliable. The most efficient mail service is *posta prioritaria* (priority mail). For post office opening hours, [Click here](#).

*Francobolli* (stamps) are available at post offices and authorised tobacconists (look for the official *tabacchi* sign: a big 'T', usually white on black). Since letters often need to be weighed, what you get at the tobacconist for international airmail will occasionally be an approximation of the proper rate. Tobacconists keep regular shop hours [Click here](#).

## Postal Rates & Services

The cost of sending a letter by *via aerea* (airmail) depends on its weight, size and where it is being sent. Most people use *posta prioritaria*, guaranteed to deliver letters sent to Europe within three days and to the rest of the world within four to eight days. Letters up to 20g cost €0.65 within Europe, €0.85 to Africa, Asia and North and South America and €1 to Australia and New Zealand. Letters weighing 21g to 50g cost €1.45 within Europe, €1.50 to Africa, Asia and the Americas, and €1.80 to Australia and New Zealand.

## Receiving Mail

Poste restante (general delivery) is known as *fermo posta* in Italy. Letters marked thus will be held at the counter of the same name in the main post office in the relevant town. Poste restante mail to Verona, for example, should be addressed as follows:

John SMITH,

Fermo Posta,

37100 Verona,

Italy

You will need to pick up your letters in person and you must present your passport or national ID.

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## SHOPPING

Italy is a shopper's paradise, so bring your plastic well charged up and even an empty bag for your purchases (or buy a new one while in Italy).

Fashion is probably one of the first things that springs to the mind of the serious shopper. The big cities and tourist centres, especially Milan, Rome and Florence, are home to countless designer boutiques spilling over with clothes, shoes and accessories by all the great Italian names, and many equally enticing unknowns.

Foodies and wine lovers will want to bring home some souvenirs for the kitchen, ranging from fine Parma ham to aromatic cheeses, from class wines (especially from Tuscany, Piedmont and the Veneto) to local tipples (such as Benevento's La Strega, grappa from Bassano del Grappa, the almond-based Amaretto, and *limoncello*, the lemon-based liqueur common in Naples and Sicily as well as other parts of the south).

Many cities and provinces offer specialised products. Sicily is known for its ceramics, as is the town of Gubbia in Umbria. Shoes and leathergoods are one of Florence's big calling cards. In Venice, seek out beautifully handmade Carnevale masks, along with Murano glassware and Burano lace.

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## SOLO TRAVELLERS

The main disadvantage for solo travellers in Italy is the higher price they generally pay for accommodation. A single room in a hotel or *pensione* usually costs around two-thirds of the price of a double.

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## TELEPHONE

### Domestic Calls

As elsewhere in Europe, Italians choose from a host of providers of phone plans and rates, making it difficult to make generalisations about costs. A local call from a public phone costs €0.10 every minute and 10 seconds. For a long-distance call within Italy you pay €0.10 when the call is answered and then €0.10 every 57 seconds. Calling from a private phone is cheaper.

Telephone area codes all begin with 0 and consist of up to four digits. The area code is followed by a number of anything from four to eight digits. The area code is an integral part of the telephone number and must always be dialled, even when calling from next door. Mobile-phone numbers begin with a three-digit prefix such as 330. Toll-free (free-phone) numbers are known as *numeri verdi* and usually start with 800. Nongeographical numbers start with 840, 841, 848, 892, 899, 163, 166 or 199. The range of rates for these makes a rainbow look boring – beware that some can be costly. Some six-digit national rate numbers are also in use (such as those for Alitalia, rail and postal information).

### International Calls

Direct international calls can easily be made from public telephones by using a phonecard. Dial ☎ 00 to get out of Italy, then the relevant country and area codes, followed by the telephone number.

To call home, use your country's direct-dialling services paid for at home-country rates (such as AT&T

in the USA and Telstra in Australia). Get their access numbers before you leave home. Alternatively, try making calls from cheap-rate call centres or using international call cards, which are often on sale at newspaper stands.

To call Italy from abroad, call the international access number (usually 00), Italy's country code (☎ 39) and then the area code of the location you want, including the leading 0.

## Directory Enquiries

National and international phone numbers can be requested at ☎ 1254 (or online at <http://1254.alice.it>). Another handy number, where operators will respond in several languages, is ☎ 89 24 12. These services have varying costs and can be dear.

## Mobile Phones

Italy uses GSM 900/1800, which is compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia but not with North American GSM 1900 or the totally different Japanese system (though some GSM 1900/900 phones do work here). If you have a GSM phone, check with your service provider about using it in Italy and beware of calls being routed internationally (very expensive for a 'local' call).

Italy has one of the highest levels of mobile-phone penetration in Europe, and you can get a temporary or prepaid account from several companies if you already own a GSM, dual- or tri-band cellular phone. You will usually need your passport to open an account. Always check with your mobile-service provider in your home country to ascertain whether your handset allows use of another SIM card. If yours does, it can cost as little as €10 to activate a local prepaid SIM card (sometimes with €10 worth of calls on the card).

Of the four main mobile phone companies, TIM (Telecom Italia Mobile) and Vodafone have the densest networks of outlets across the country.

## Payphones & Phonecards

Partly privatised Telecom Italia is the largest telecommunications organisation in Italy and its orange public payphones are liberally scattered about the country. The most common accept only *carte/schede telefoniche* (phonecards), although you'll still find some that take cards and coins. Some card phones accept credit cards.

Telecom payphones can be found in the streets, train stations and some stores as well as in Telecom offices. Where these offices are staffed, it is possible to make international calls and pay at the desk afterwards. You can buy phonecards (most commonly €2.50 or €5) at post offices, tobacconists and newsstands. You must break off the top left-hand corner of the card before you can use it. Phonecards have an expiry date. This is usually 31 December or 30 June, depending on when you purchase the card.

Other companies, such as Infostrada and BT Italia, also operate a handful of public payphones, for which cards are usually available at newsstands.

You will find cut-price call centres in all of the main cities. Rates can be considerably lower than from Telecom payphones for international calls. You simply place your call from a private booth inside the centre and pay for it when you've finished. Alternatively, ask about international calling cards at newsstands and tobacconists. They can be hit-and-miss but are sometimes good value.



# TIME

Italy is one hour ahead of GMT. Daylight-saving time, when clocks are moved forward one hour, starts on the last Sunday in March. Clocks are put back an hour on the last Sunday in October. Italy operates on a 24-hour clock.

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## TOURIST INFORMATION

The quality of tourist offices in Italy varies dramatically. Three tiers of tourist office exist: regional, provincial and local. They have different names, but roughly offer the same services, with the exception of regional offices, which are generally concerned with promotion, planning and budgeting.

### Local & Provincial Tourist Offices

Throughout this book, offices are referred to as tourist offices rather than by their more elaborate titles. The Azienda Autonoma di Soggiorno e Turismo (AAST) is the local tourist office in many towns and cities of the south. AASTs have town-specific information and should also know about bus routes and museum opening times. The Azienda di Promozione Turistica (APT) is the provincial (ie main) tourist office, which should have information on the town you are in and the surrounding province. Informazione e Assistenza ai Turisti (IAT) has local tourist office branches in towns and cities, mostly in the northern half of Italy. Pro Loco is the local office in small towns and villages and is similar to the AAST office. Most tourist offices will respond to written and telephone requests for information.

Tourist offices are generally open from 8.30am to 12.30pm or 1pm and 3pm to 7pm Monday to Friday. Hours are usually extended in summer, when some offices also open on Saturday or Sunday.

Information booths at most major train stations tend to keep similar hours but in some cases operate only in summer. Staff can usually provide a city map, list of hotels and information on the major sights.

English, and sometimes French or German, is spoken at tourist offices in larger towns and major tourist areas. German is spoken in Alto Adige and French in much of the Valle d'Aosta.

### Regional Tourist Authorities

As a rule, the regional tourist authorities are more concerned with planning and marketing than offering a public information service, with work done at a provincial and local level. Addresses of local tourist offices appear throughout the guide. Following are some useful regional websites. In some cases you need to look for the Tourism or Turismo link within the regional site. At the website of the **Italian National Tourist Office** ([www.enit.it](http://www.enit.it)) you can find details of all provincial and local tourist offices across the country.

**Abruzzo** ([www.abruzzoturismo.it](http://www.abruzzoturismo.it))

**Basilicata** ([www.aptbasilicata.it](http://www.aptbasilicata.it))

**Calabria** ([www.turiscalabria.it](http://www.turiscalabria.it))

**Campania** ([www.in-campania.com](http://www.in-campania.com))

**Emilia-Romagna** ([www.emiliaromagnaturismo.it](http://www.emiliaromagnaturismo.it))

**Friuli Venezia Giulia** ([www.turismo.fvg.it](http://www.turismo.fvg.it))

**Lazio** ([www.turislazio.it](http://www.turislazio.it))

**Le Marche** ([www.le-marche.com](http://www.le-marche.com))

**Liguria** ([www.turismoinliguria.it](http://www.turismoinliguria.it))

**Lombardy** ([www.turismo.regione.lombardia.it](http://www.turismo.regione.lombardia.it))

**Molise** ([www.regione.molise.it/turismo](http://www.regione.molise.it/turismo), in Italian)

**Piedmont** ([www.regione.piemonte.it/turismo](http://www.regione.piemonte.it/turismo), in Italian)

**Puglia** ([www.pugliaturismo.com](http://www.pugliaturismo.com))

**Sardinia** ([www.sardegnaturismo.it](http://www.sardegnaturismo.it))

**Sicily** ([www.regione.sicilia.it/turismo](http://www.regione.sicilia.it/turismo))

**Trentino-Alto Adige** ([www.trentino.to](http://www.trentino.to), [www.provincia.bz.it](http://www.provincia.bz.it))

**Tuscany** ([www.turismo.toscana.it](http://www.turismo.toscana.it))

**Umbria** ([www.umbria.org](http://www.umbria.org))

**Valle d'Aosta** ([www.regione.vda.it/turismo](http://www.regione.vda.it/turismo))

**Veneto** ([www.veneto.to](http://www.veneto.to))

## Tourist Offices Abroad

Information on Italy is available from the **Italian National Tourist Office** (ENIT; ☎ 06 4 97 11; [www.enit.it](http://www.enit.it); Via Marghera 2, Rome, 00185) in the following countries:

**Australia** (☎ 02 9262 1666; [italia@italiantourism.com.au](mailto:italia@italiantourism.com.au); Level 4, 46 Market St, Sydney, NSW 2000)

**Austria** (☎ 01 505 16 39; [delegation.wien@enit.at](mailto:delegation.wien@enit.at); Kärntnerring 4, Vienna, A-1010)

**Canada** (☎ 416 925 4882; [www.italiantourism.com](http://www.italiantourism.com); Suite 907, South Tower, 175 Bloor St East, Toronto, M4W 3R8)

**France** (☎ 01 42 66 03 96; [enit.direction@wanadoo.fr](mailto:enit.direction@wanadoo.fr); 23 rue de la Paix, Paris, 75002)

**Germany** Berlin (☎ 030 247 8398; [enit.berlin@t-online.de](mailto:enit.berlin@t-online.de); Kontorhaus Mitte, Friedrichstrasse 187, 10117); Frankfurt (☎ 069 237 069; [enit.ffm@t-online.de](mailto:enit.ffm@t-online.de); Neue Mainzerstrasse 26, 60311); Munich (☎ 089 531 317; [enit.muenchen@t-online.de](mailto:enit.muenchen@t-online.de); Prinzregentenstrasse 22, 80333)

**Japan** (☎ 03 3478 2051; [enittky@dream.com](mailto:enittky@dream.com); 2-7-14 Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107-0062)

**Netherlands** (☎ 020 616 82 46; [amsterdam@enit.it](mailto:amsterdam@enit.it); Stadhouderskade 2, 1054 ES Amsterdam)

**Switzerland** (☎ 043 466 40 40; [info@enit.ch](mailto:info@enit.ch); Uraniastrasse 32, Zurich, 8001)

**UK** (☎ 020 7399 3562; [italy@italiantouristboard.co.uk](mailto:italy@italiantouristboard.co.uk); 1 Princes St, London W1B 2AY)

**USA** Chicago (☎ 312 644 09 96; [enitch@italiantourism.com](mailto:enitch@italiantourism.com); [www.italiantourism.com](http://www.italiantourism.com); 500 North Michigan Ave, Suite 2240, IL 60611); Los Angeles (☎ 310 820 1898; [enitla@italiantourism.com](mailto:enitla@italiantourism.com); 12400 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 550, CA 90025); New York (☎ 212 245 5618; [enitny@italiantourism.com](mailto:enitny@italiantourism.com); 630 Fifth Ave, Suite 1565, NY 10111)

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## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Italy is not an easy country for disabled travellers and getting around can be a problem for wheelchair users. Even a short journey in a city or town can become a major expedition if cobblestone streets have to be negotiated. Although many buildings have lifts, they are not always wide enough for wheelchairs. Not an awful lot has been done to make life for the deaf and/or blind any easier either.

The Italian National Tourist Office (above) in your country may be able to provide advice on Italian associations for the disabled and information on what help is available. It may also carry a small

brochure, *Services for Disabled Passengers*, published by Italian railways, which details facilities at stations and on trains. It also has a national helpline at ☎ 199 303060.

A handful of cities also publish general guides on accessibility, among them Bologna, Milan, Padua, Reggio Emilia, Turin, Venice and Verona.

Some organisations that may help:

**Accessible Italy** (☎ +378 94 11 11; [www.accessibleitaly.com](http://www.accessibleitaly.com)) A San Marino—based company that specialises in holiday services for the disabled, ranging from tours to the hiring of adapted transport. It can even arrange romantic Italian weddings. This is the best first port of call.

**Consorzio Cooperative Integrate** (COIN; ☎ within Italy 800 271027; [www.coinsociale.it](http://www.coinsociale.it)) Based in Rome, COIN is a great reference point for disabled travellers. It provides information on the capital (including transport and access) and is happy to share its contacts throughout Italy.

**Holiday Care** (☎ 0845 124 9971; [www.holidaycare.org.uk](http://www.holidaycare.org.uk)) Has information on hotels with access for disabled guests, where to hire equipment and tour operators dealing with disabled travellers.

You can also check out **Tour in Umbria** ([www.tourinumbria.org](http://www.tourinumbria.org)) and **Milano per Tutti** ([www.milanopertutti.it](http://www.milanopertutti.it)) for information on getting around those destinations.

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## VISAS

Italy is one of 25 member countries of the Schengen Convention, under which 22 EU countries (all but Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ireland, Romania and the UK) plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland have abolished permanent checks at common borders. For detailed information on the EU, including which countries are member states, visit <http://europa.eu.int>.

Legal residents of one Schengen country do not require a visa for another. Residents of 28 non-EU countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand and the USA, do not require visas for tourist visits of up to 90 days (this list varies for those wanting to travel to the UK and Ireland).

All non-EU nationals (except those from Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) entering Italy for any reason other than tourism (such as study or work) should contact an Italian consulate, as they may need a specific visa. They should also have their passport stamped on entry as, without a stamp, they could encounter problems when trying to obtain a residence permit (*permesso di soggiorno*). If you enter the EU via another member state, get your passport stamped there.

The standard tourist visa is valid for up to 90 days. A Schengen visa issued by one Schengen country is generally valid for travel in other Schengen countries. However, individual Schengen countries may impose additional restrictions on certain nationalities. It is worth checking visa regulations with the consulate of each country you plan to visit.

You must apply for a Schengen visa in your country of residence. You can apply for only two Schengen visas in any 12-month period and they are not renewable inside Italy. If you are going to visit more than one Schengen country, you should apply for the visa at a consulate of your main destination country or the first country you intend to visit.

EU citizens do not require any permits to live or work in Italy but, after three months' residence, are supposed to register themselves at the municipal registry office where they live and offer proof of work

or sufficient funds to support themselves. Non-EU foreign citizens with five years' continuous legal residence may apply for permanent residence.

## Copies

All important documents (passport data page and visa page, credit cards, travel insurance policy, tickets, driver's licence etc) should be photocopied before you leave home. Leave a copy with someone at home and keep one with you, separate from the originals.

## Permesso di Soggiorno

Non-EU citizens planning to stay at the same address for more than one week are supposed to report to the police station to receive a *permesso di soggiorno* (a permit to remain in the country). Tourists staying in hotels are not required to do this.

A *permesso di soggiorno* only really becomes a necessity if you plan to study, work (legally) or live in Italy. Obtaining one is never a pleasant experience; it involves long queues and the frustration of arriving at the counter only to find you don't have the necessary documents.

The exact requirements, like specific documents and *marche da bollo* (official stamps), can change. In general, you will need a valid passport (if possible containing a stamp with your date of entry into Italy), a special visa issued in your own country if you are planning to study (for non-EU citizens), four passport photos and proof of your ability to support yourself financially. You can apply at the *ufficio stranieri* (foreigners' bureau) of the police station closest to where you're staying.

EU citizens do not require a *permesso di soggiorno*.

## Study Visas

Non-EU citizens who want to study at a university or language school in Italy must have a study visa. These can be obtained from your nearest Italian embassy or consulate. You will normally require confirmation of your enrolment, proof of payment of fees and adequate funds to support yourself. The visa covers only the period of the enrolment. This type of visa is renewable within Italy but, again, only with confirmation of ongoing enrolment and proof that you are able to support yourself (bank statements are preferred).

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## VOLUNTEERING

**Concordia International Volunteer Projects** (☎ 01273 422218; [www.concordia-iy.org.uk](http://www.concordia-iy.org.uk); 19 North St, Portslade, Brighton BN41 1DH, UK) Short-term community-based projects covering the environment, archaeology and the arts. You might find yourself working as a volunteer on a restoration project or in a nature reserve.

**European Youth Portal** ([http://europa.eu.int/youth/working/index\\_eu\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/youth/working/index_eu_en.html)) Has various links suggesting volunteering options across Europe. Narrow down the search to Italy, where you will find more specific links on volunteering.

**Italian Association for Education, Exchanges & Intercultural Activities** (AFSAI; ☎ 06 537 03 32; [www.afsai.org](http://www.afsai.org); Viale dei Colli Portuensi 345, Rome) Financed by the EU, this voluntary program runs projects of six to 12 months for those aged between 16 and 25 years. Knowledge of

Italian is required.

**World Wide Organisation of Organic Farming** ([www.wwoof.it](http://www.wwoof.it)) For a membership fee of €25 this organisation provides a list of farms looking for volunteer workers.

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## WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Italy is not a dangerous country for women to travel in. Clearly, as with anywhere in the world, women travelling alone need to take certain precautions and, in some parts of the country, be prepared for more than their fair share of unwanted attention. Eye-to-eye contact is the norm in Italy's daily flirtatious interplay. Eye contact can become outright staring the further south you travel.

Lone women may find it difficult to remain alone. In many places, local Lotharios will try it on with exasperating insistence, which can be flattering or a pain. Foreign women are particular objects of male attention in tourist towns like Florence and more generally in the south. Usually the best response to undesired advances is to ignore them. If that doesn't work, politely tell your interlocutors you're waiting for your *marito* (husband) or *fidanzato* (boyfriend) and, if necessary, walk away. Avoid becoming aggressive as this may result in an unpleasant confrontation. If all else fails, approach the nearest member of the police.

Watch out for men with wandering hands on crowded buses. Either keep your back to the wall or make a loud fuss if someone starts fondling your behind. A loud '*Che schifo!*' (How disgusting!) will usually do the trick. If a more serious incident occurs, report it to the police, who are then required to press charges.

Women travelling alone should use their common sense. Avoid walking alone in dark streets, and look for hotels that are central (unsafe areas are noted in this book). Women should avoid hitchhiking alone. Use some dress sense, too. Skimpy beachwear is not a good idea in the south (except perhaps at the beach), and especially in more conservative areas, such as the smaller towns.

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## WORK

It is illegal for non-EU citizens to work in Italy without a *permesso di lavoro* (work permit), but trying to obtain one can be time-consuming. EU citizens are allowed to work in Italy but, like Italian citizens, require a *codice fiscale* (tax-file number).

Immigration laws require non-EU workers to be 'legalised' through their employers, and this applies even to cleaners and babysitters. The employers then pay pension and health-insurance contributions. This doesn't mean there aren't employers willing to take people without the right papers.

Work options depend on a number of factors (eg location, length of stay, nationality and qualifications) but, in the major cities at least, job possibilities for English speakers can be surprisingly plentiful. Go armed with a CV (if possible in Italian) and be persistent.

Jobs are advertised in local newspapers and magazines, such as Rome's *Porta Portese* (weekly) and *Wanted in Rome* (fortnightly) or *Secondamano* in Milan, and you can also place an ad yourself. A useful guide is *Living, Studying and Working in Italy* by Travis Neighbor Ward and Monica Larner.

The most easily secured jobs are short-term work in bars, hostels, on farms, babysitting and volunteering (in return for accommodation and some expenses paid; see opposite). An obvious work

source for English-speaking foreigners is teaching English. Most of the reputable language schools will only hire people who hold a work permit. The more professional schools will require you to have a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate.

Some useful organisations to start the job hunt:

**Au Pair International** (☎ 051 636 01 45; [www.au-pair-international.com](http://www.au-pair-international.com); Via Sante Vincenzi 46, Bologna) Organises au pair jobs in Italian families for women aged 18 to 30. EU citizens are preferred, but citizens of countries such as Australia, Canada and the USA can be placed for up to three months.

**British Institutes** (Map; ☎ 02 439 00 41; [www.britishinstitutes.it](http://www.britishinstitutes.it); Via Leopardi 8, Milan) Recruits English-speaking teachers. Italian essential.

**Cambridge School** (☎ 045 800 31 54; [www.cambridge-school.it](http://www.cambridge-school.it); Via Rosmini 6, Verona) Another major employer of English teachers.

**Center for Cultural Exchange** (☎ 312 944 25 44; [www.cci-exchange.com](http://www.cci-exchange.com); 746 North LaSalle Dr, Chicago, IL 60654, USA) A nonprofit cultural-exchange organisation that offers short-term internships in Italy.

**European Youth Portal** ([http://europa.eu.int/youth/working/index\\_eu\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/youth/working/index_eu_en.html)) Has various links suggesting work and volunteering options across Europe. You can narrow down the search to Italy, where you will find pages of general work links and more specific links on things like au pair opportunities, seasonal work and volunteering.

**Recruitaly** ([www.recruitaly.it](http://www.recruitaly.it)) For graduates looking for long-term employment in Italy, this useful website links up to professional employers.

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# Transport

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Competition between airlines means you should be able to pick up a reasonably priced fare to Italy, even from as far away as Australia. If you live in Europe, you'll often find good deals to and from many Italian cities with a variety of low-cost airlines. On the other hand, the per person carbon emissions of flying are greater than, say, travelling by train. There are plenty of rail and bus connections, especially with northern Italy. Car and passenger ferries operate to ports in Albania, Corsica, Croatia, Greece, Malta, Spain, Tunisia and Turkey.

Flights, tours and rail tickets can be booked online at [www.lonelyplanet.com/travel\\_services](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/travel_services).

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## THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

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# ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Citizens of the 27 European Union (EU) member states and Switzerland can travel to Italy with their national identity card alone. If such countries do not issue ID cards – as in the UK – travellers must carry a full valid passport. All other nationalities must have a valid passport.

If applying for a visa ([Click here](#)), check that your passport's expiry date is at least six months away. If not an EU citizen, you may be required to fill out a landing card (at airports).

By law you are supposed to have your passport or ID card with you at all times. It doesn't happen often, but it could be embarrassing if you are asked by the police to produce a document and you don't have it with you. You will need one of these documents for police registration when you take a hotel room.

In theory, there are no passport checks at land crossings from neighbouring countries, as all are members of the Schengen zone (in which border controls have been eliminated). In fact, random customs controls still take place when crossing between Italy and Switzerland.

Airport security is tighter than ever. Check the latest restrictions on what can and cannot be carried on flights as hand-held luggage.

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## AIR

High seasons are generally June to September, Christmas and Easter, although it depends in part on your destination. Shoulder season is often from mid-September to the end of October and again in April. Low season is generally November to March.

## Airports & Airlines

The country's main intercontinental gateway is the **Leonardo da Vinci Airport** (Fiumicino; ☎ 06 6 59 51; [www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it)) in Rome, but many low-cost carriers land at Rome's **Ciampino Airport** (☎ 06 6 59 51; [www.adr.it](http://www.adr.it)) – [Click here](#) for more details. Regular intercontinental flights also serve Milan's **Malpensa Airport** (☎ 02 7485 2200; [www.sea-aeroportimilano.it](http://www.sea-aeroportimilano.it)), which is located 50km from the city. Plenty of flights from other European cities fly to regional capitals ([Click here](#) for more information).

Many European and international airlines compete with the country's national carrier, Alitalia. Listed here are some of the more frequent carriers, with Italian contact telephone numbers unless otherwise stated:

**Aerlingus** (EI; ☎ 02434 5 83 26; [www.aerlingus.com](http://www.aerlingus.com))

**Air Berlin** (AB; ☎ 199 400737; [www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com))

**Air Canada** (AC; ☎ 06 6501 1462; [www.aircanada.com](http://www.aircanada.com))

**Air Dolomiti** (EN; ☎ 045 288 61 40; [www.airdolomiti.it](http://www.airdolomiti.it))

**Air France** (AF; ☎ 848 884466; [www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com))

**Air Malta** (KM; ☎ 199 259103; [www.airmalta.com](http://www.airmalta.com))

**Air Transat** (TS; ☎ 800 873233; [www.airtransat.it](http://www.airtransat.it))

**Alitalia** (AZ; ☎ 06 22 22; [www.alitalia.com](http://www.alitalia.com))

**American Airlines** (AA; ☎ 06 6605 3169; [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com))

**Blu Express** (BV; ☎ 199 419777; [www.blu-express.com](http://www.blu-express.com))



**Blue Panorama** (BV; ☎ 06 9895 6666; [www.blue-panorama.com](http://www.blue-panorama.com))  
**BMI** (BD; ☎ in UK 0870 6070555; [www.flybmi.com](http://www.flybmi.com))  
**British Airways** (BA; ☎ 199 712266; [www.britishairways.com](http://www.britishairways.com))  
**Brussels Airlines** (SN; ☎ 899 800903; [www.flysn.com](http://www.flysn.com))  
**Clickair** (XG; ☎ 800 25425247; [www.clickair.com](http://www.clickair.com))  
**EasyJet** (U2; ☎ 899 676789; [www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com))  
**Emirates Airlines** (EK; ☎ 06 4520 6070; [www.emirates.com](http://www.emirates.com))  
**Eurofly** (GJ; ☎ 800 4590581; [www.eurofly.it](http://www.eurofly.it))  
**FlyGlobeSpan** (Y2; ☎ in UK 08712 710415; [www.flyglobespan.com](http://www.flyglobespan.com))  
**Germanwings** (4U; ☎ 91 625 97 04, in Germany 0900-1919100; [www15.germanwings.com](http://www15.germanwings.com))  
**Jet2** (LS; ☎ 199 404023; [www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com))  
**KLM** (KL; ☎ 199 414207; [www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com))  
**Lufthansa** (LH; ☎ 199 400044; [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com))  
**Meridiana** (IG; ☎ 892928; [www.meridiana.it](http://www.meridiana.it))  
**MyAir** (8I; ☎ 892444; [www.myair.com](http://www.myair.com))  
**Qantas** (QF; ☎ 848 350010; [www.qantas.com.au](http://www.qantas.com.au))  
**Ryanair** (FR; ☎ 899 678910; [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com))  
**Singapore Airlines** (SQ; ☎ 02 777 29 21; [www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com))  
**Sky Europe** (NE; ☎ 166 205304; [www.skyeurope.com](http://www.skyeurope.com))  
**Swiss** (LX; ☎ 848 868120; [www.swiss.com](http://www.swiss.com))  
**Thai Airways International** (TG; ☎ 02 890 03 51; [www.thaiair.com](http://www.thaiair.com))  
**Thomson Fly** (TOM; ☎ in UK 0871 231 4691; [www.thomsonfly.com](http://www.thomsonfly.com))  
**Transavia** (HV; ☎ 899 009901; [www.transavia.com](http://www.transavia.com))  
**TUIfly** (X3; ☎ 199 192692; [www.tuifly.com](http://www.tuifly.com))  
**United Airlines** (UA; ☎ 02 6963 3707; [www.united.com](http://www.united.com))  
**US Airways** (US; ☎ 848 813177; [www.usairways.com](http://www.usairways.com))  
**Vueling** (VY; ☎ 199 308830; [www.vueling.com](http://www.vueling.com))  
**Windjet** (IV; ☎ 892020; [w2.volawindjet.it](http://w2.volawindjet.it))  
**Wizz** (W6; ☎ 199 259100; <http://wizzair.com>)

## Tickets

The internet is increasingly becoming the easiest way of locating and booking reasonably priced seats. This is especially so for flights from around Europe, regardless of whether you are flying with major carriers like Alitalia or low-cost airlines.

Full-time students and those under 26 sometimes have access to discounted fares, especially on longer-haul flights from beyond Europe. You have to show a document proving your date of birth or a valid International Student Identity Card (ISIC) when buying your ticket. Other cheap deals include the discounted tickets released to travel agents and specialist discount agencies.

There is no shortage of online agents:

- [www.bookingbuddy.com](http://www.bookingbuddy.com)
- [www.cheapflights.com](http://www.cheapflights.com)
- [www.cheaptickets.com](http://www.cheaptickets.com)
- [www.discount-tickets.com](http://www.discount-tickets.com)
- [www.ebookers.com](http://www.ebookers.com)
- [www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com)

- [www.flightline.co.uk](http://www.flightline.co.uk)
- [www.flynow.com](http://www.flynow.com)
- [www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com)
- [www.lastminute.com](http://www.lastminute.com)
- [www.openjet.com](http://www.openjet.com)
- [www.opodo.com](http://www.opodo.com)
- [www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com)
- [www.planesimple.co.uk](http://www.planesimple.co.uk)
- [www.priceline.com](http://www.priceline.com)
- [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net)
- [www.travelocity.co.uk](http://www.travelocity.co.uk)
- [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

## Africa

From South Africa many major airlines fly to Italy, including British Airways from Cape Town and Johannesburg through the UK; Air France with connections throughout Europe; and Lufthansa connecting through Germany. Ethiopian Airlines has connecting flights from many African capitals to Rome via Addis Ababa. In South Africa, try **Flight Centre** (☎ 0860 400 727; [www.flightcentre.co.za](http://www.flightcentre.co.za)) or **STA Travel** (☎ 0861 781 781; [www.statravel.co.za](http://www.statravel.co.za)).

## Asia

STA Travel proliferates in Asia, with branches in **Bangkok** (☎ 02-236 0262; [www.statravel.co.th](http://www.statravel.co.th)), **Singapore** (☎ 6737 7188; [www.statravel.com.sg](http://www.statravel.com.sg)), **Hong Kong** (☎ 2730 2800; [www.hkst.com](http://www.hkst.com)) and **Japan** (☎ 03 5391 2922; [www.statravel.co.jp](http://www.statravel.co.jp)). Another resource in Japan is **No 1 Travel** (☎ 03 3205 6073; [www.no1-travel.com](http://www.no1-travel.com)); in Hong Kong try **Four Seas Travel** (☎ 2200 7760; [www.fourseastravel.com](http://www.fourseastravel.com)).

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## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely on, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel as a global benefit but believes we have a responsibility to limit our personal contribution to global warming.

### Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorised travel generates CO<sub>2</sub> (the main cause of human-induced climate change), but planes are the worst offenders – not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the US will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a year.

### Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, supports the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff travel.

For more information check out our website: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com).

Singapore Air flies nonstop to Rome from three to seven times per week. Thai Airways runs regular flights direct from Bangkok to Rome, as well as to Milan's Malpensa airport.

## Australia

Flights from Australia to Europe generally go via Southeast Asian capitals. Qantas and Alitalia have occasional direct flights or, more regularly, trips that make one stop en route. Most of the major Asian airlines have flights between Australian state capitals and Rome, with a change of flight in Asia along the way. Flights from Perth can be a few hundred dollars cheaper.

**STA Travel** (☎ 134 782; [www.statravel.com.au](http://www.statravel.com.au)) and **Flight Centre** (☎ 133 133; [www.flightcentre.com.au](http://www.flightcentre.com.au)) are major dealers in cheap airfares, although discounted fares can also be found at your local travel agent. For online bookings, try [www.travel.com.au](http://www.travel.com.au).

## Canada

Alitalia flies direct to Milan from Toronto, with connections on to Rome. Air Transat flies nonstop from Montreal to Rome in summer.

Air Canada flies daily from Toronto to Rome, direct and via Montreal and Frankfurt. British Airways, Air France, KLM and Lufthansa all fly to Italy via their respective home countries. Canada's main student travel organisation is **Travel Cuts** (☎ 1 866 246 9762; [www.travelcuts.com](http://www.travelcuts.com)), with offices in all major cities.

## Continental Europe

All national European carriers offer services to Italy. The largest, Air France, Lufthansa and KLM, have offices in all major European cities. Italy's national carrier, Alitalia, has a huge range of offers on many European destinations. Check out the low-cost airlines too (see Airports & Airlines, [Click here](#)).

## New Zealand

Singapore Airlines flies from Auckland through Singapore to Rome's Fiumicino – sometimes with more than one stop. Air New Zealand flies via London. **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800 243544; [www.flightcentre.co.nz](http://www.flightcentre.co.nz)) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0800 474400; [www.statravel.co.nz](http://www.statravel.co.nz)) have offices in Auckland as well as in various other cities.

## UK & Ireland

The cheapest way to fly between the UK or Ireland and Italy is, generally, the no-frills way. **EasyJet** ([www.easyjet.com](http://www.easyjet.com)) flies to Milan, Naples, Palermo, Pisa, Rome and Venice. Irish **Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) has numerous destinations connecting various airports in the UK (especially London Stansted) and Ireland (and elsewhere in Europe) with Italian destinations, including Alghero, Ancona, Bergamo, Bologna, Brescia, Brindisi, Bari, Cagliari, Cuneo, Genoa, Lamezia (Calabria), Milan, Olbia, Palermo, Parma, Perugia, Pescara, Pisa, Rimini, Rome, Trapani, Trieste, Turin and Venice. Some of these routes are seasonal. **BMI Baby** ([www.bmibaby.com](http://www.bmibaby.com)) flies from Birmingham to Bergamo and Rome. Prices vary wildly according to season and depend on how far in advance you book.

The two national airlines linking the UK and Italy are British Airways and Alitalia, both operating regular flights to Rome, Milan, Venice, Florence, Naples, Palermo, Turin and Pisa.

**STA Travel** (☎ 0871 230 0040; [www.statravel.co.uk](http://www.statravel.co.uk)) and **Trailfinders** (☎ 0845 050 5945;

[www.trailfinders.com](http://www.trailfinders.com)), with offices throughout the UK, sell discounted and student tickets.

Most British travel agents are registered with the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA). If you have paid for your flight with an ABTA-registered agent who then goes bust, ABTA will guarantee a refund or some alternative.

## USA

Alitalia has nonstop daily flights from New York's JFK airport to Rome Fiumicino and Milan Malpensa. Various European and US airlines fly into Rome and Milan, mostly via other European hubs such as Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Paris.

Discount travel agencies in the USA are known as consolidators. San Francisco is the ticket-consolidator capital of America, though good deals can be found in other big cities.

**STA Travel** (☎ 800 781 40 40; [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com)) has offices in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco and many more locations. Fares vary wildly depending on season, availability and luck. **Discover Italy** (☎ 1 866 878 7477; [www.discoveritaly.com](http://www.discoveritaly.com)) offers flight, hotel- and villa-booking services.

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## LAND

There are plenty of options for entering Italy by train, bus or private vehicle. Bus is the cheapest option, but services are less frequent, less comfortable and significantly longer than the train. Check whether you require a visa to pass through any countries on your way.

## Border Crossings

The main points of entry to Italy from France are the coast road from Nice, which becomes the A10 motorway along the Ligurian coast, and the Mont Blanc tunnel near Chamonix, which connects with the A5 for Turin and Milan. From Switzerland, the Grand St Bernard tunnel also connects with the A5 and the Simplon tunnel connects with the SS33 road that leads to Lago Maggiore. From Austria, the Brenner Pass connects with the A22 to Bologna. The Gotthard tunnel (which will have a new parallel railway tunnel, the Gotthard Base tunnel, possibly by 2015) in Switzerland crosses the Swiss Alps into the Swiss canton of Ticino, from where the N2 highway heads south into Italy via Lugano. All these tunnels are open year-round. Other mountain passes are often closed in winter and sometimes even in autumn and spring. Make sure you have snow chains if driving in winter.

Regular trains on two lines connect Italy with France in the west (one along the coast and the other via the French Alps to Turin). Trains from Milan head for Switzerland and on into France and the Netherlands. Two main lines head for the main cities in Austria and on into Germany, France or Eastern Europe. Those crossing the frontier at the Brenner Pass go to Innsbruck, Stuttgart and Munich. Those crossing at Tarvisio in the east proceed to Vienna, Salzburg and Prague. The main international train line to Slovenia crosses near Trieste.

## Bus

**Eurolines** ([www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com)) is a consortium of European coach companies that operates across Europe with offices in all major European cities. Italy-bound buses head to Milan, Rome, Florence, Siena, Venice and other Italian cities and all come equipped with on-board toilet facilities.

## BUS PASSES

**Eurolines** ([www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com)) offers a low-season pass valid for 15/30 days that costs €199/299 (€169/229 for under-26s and senior citizens over 60). This pass allows unlimited travel between 40 European cities. Italian cities on the route are Milan, Venice, Florence, Siena and Rome. Fares increase to €329/439 (€279/359) between June and mid-September.

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## Car & Motorcycle

### CONTINENTAL EUROPE

When driving in Europe, always carry proof of ownership of a private vehicle and evidence of third-party insurance. If driving a vehicle registered and insured in an EU country, your home country insurance is sufficient. Theoretically, the International Insurance Certificate, also known as the Carta Verde (Green Card), is no longer required for EU-registered cars. Unfortunately, in case of an accident, police may still ask for it!

Ask your insurer for a European Accident Statement (EAS) form, which can simplify matters in the event of an accident.

A European breakdown assistance policy is a good investment. If you don't have one, assistance can be obtained through the Automobile Club d'Italia ([Click here](#)).

Every vehicle travelling across an international border should display a nationality plate of its country of registration (unless it has the standard EU number plates with the blue strip and country ID).

You can book a car before you leave home (for multinational car-rental agencies [Click here](#)), but you can sometimes find better deals by dealing with local agencies as you go (check individual chapters for contact information). Check with your credit-card company to see if it offers a Collision Damage Waiver, which covers you for additional damage if you use that card to pay for the car. Many car-rental agencies request that you bring the car back with the tank filled and will charge you extra if it's not. Many companies do not rent cars or bikes to drivers aged 25 and younger.

Italy is made for motorcycle touring, and motorcyclists swarm into the country in summer to meander along the scenic roads. With a bike you rarely have to book ahead for ferries and can enter restricted-traffic areas in cities. Crash helmets are compulsory. The US-based **Beach's Motorcycle Adventures** (☎ 1 716 773 4960; [www.beachs-mca.com](http://www.beachs-mca.com)) can arrange two-week tours around various parts of Italy in May and October. Riders need to have a motorcycle licence – an international one is best.

One interesting way to get around Italy is to rent or buy a camper van. Check **IdeaMerge** ([www.ideamerge.com](http://www.ideamerge.com)) for where you can lease or buy vehicles.

### UK

You can take your car across to France by ferry or via the Channel Tunnel on **Eurotunnel** (☎ 0870 535 3535; [www.eurotunnel.com](http://www.eurotunnel.com)). The latter runs four crossings (35 minutes) an hour between Folkestone and Calais in the high season.

For breakdown assistance, both the **AA** (☎ for European breakdown cover 0800 085 7253; [www.theaa.com](http://www.theaa.com)) and the **RAC** (☎ in UK 08705 722722; [www.rac.co.uk](http://www.rac.co.uk)) offer comprehensive cover in Europe.

# Train

In the era of low-cost air travel, rail seems to have become outmoded. Hold your horses! Depending on distances travelled, rail can be highly competitive. Those travelling from neighbouring countries to northern Italy will find it is frequently only marginally longer and/or more expensive. There are advantages. You avoid all the airport hassle and generally can rely on trains being on time. Trains are generally more civilised than cattle class on airplanes, with more space and dining cars.

Those travelling longer distances (say, from London, Spain, the northern half of Germany or Eastern Europe) will no doubt find flying cheaper and quicker. Even then, if you have time, loathe airports, have a fear of flying or simply enjoy moving a little more slowly, trains can have a charm all of their own.

It is also a much greener way to go – the same trip by rail can contribute up to 10 times less carbon dioxide emissions per person than by air. As Europe's cutting-edge, high-speed rail network is expanded in coming years, it will become increasingly difficult to talk of rail travel being slow!

## CONTINENTAL EUROPE

Thomas Cook's *European Rail Timetable* has a complete listing of train schedules. The timetable is updated monthly and available from Thomas Cook offices worldwide and online ([www.thomascookpublishing.com](http://www.thomascookpublishing.com)) for around UK£14. It is always advisable, and sometimes compulsory, to book seats on international trains to/from Italy. Some of the main international services include transport for private cars. Consider taking long journeys overnight, as the €20 or so extra for a sleeper costs substantially less than Italian hotels.

## UK

The passenger train **Eurostar** (☎ 08705 186186; [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)) travels between London and Paris, and London and Brussels. Alternatively you can get a train ticket that includes crossing the Channel by ferry.

For the latest fare information on journeys to Italy, including the Eurostar, contact the **Rail Europe Travel Centre** (☎ in UK 08448 484064; [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk)). Another source of rail information for all of Europe is **Rail Choice** ([www.railchoice.com](http://www.railchoice.com)). Travel times depend in large measure on what connections you make in Paris.

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## RAIL PASSES

The InterRail Pass is available to people who have lived in Europe for six months or more. It can be bought at most major stations and student travel outlets.

Eurail passes are for those who have lived in Europe for less than six months and are supposed to be bought outside Europe. They are available from leading travel agencies and online at [www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com).

Seniors travelling from the UK should ask at the Rail Europe Travel Centre about possible discounts on rail travel in continental Europe (see opposite).

## InterRail Passes

**InterRail** ([www.interrail.net](http://www.interrail.net), [www.interrailnet.com](http://www.interrailnet.com)) passes are for people who have been resident in Europe for more than six months. A Global pass encompassing 30 countries comes in four versions, ranging from five days' travel in 10 days to a full month's travel. These in turn come with three prices: adult 1st class, adult 2nd class and youth 2nd class. The one-month pass costs, respectively,

€809/599/399. The InterRail one-country pass for Italy can be used for three, four, six or eight days in one month. For the eight-day pass you pay €309/229/149/154.50/114.50 for adult 1st class/adult 2nd class/youth 2nd class/child 1st class/child 2nd class. Children's passes are for kids aged 4 to 11, youth passes for people aged 12 to 25, and adult passes for those 26 and over. Children aged three and under travel for free. Cardholders get discounts on travel in the country where they purchase the ticket.

## Eurail Passes

Eurail passes are good for travel in 20 European countries (not including the UK), but forget it if you intend to travel mainly in Italy. People aged over 26 pay for a 1st-class Global Pass and those aged under 26 for a 2nd-class-pass version.

Passes are valid for 15 days, 21 days, or for one, two or three months; the 1st-class adult pass costs €511/662/822/1161/1432. The 2nd-class youth version comes in at €332/429/535/755/933. Children aged between four and 11 pay half-price for the 1st-class passes.

The 1st-class Saver is for groups of two or more and brings a 15% reduction in the standard Global Pass adult prices. Another option is a Global Pass for 10/15 days' travel within two months, which costs €603/792. The 15-day version costs €675/515 for the Saver/2nd-class youth versions.

## Eurail Selectpasses

This provides between five and 15 days of unlimited travel within a two-month period in three to five bordering countries (from a total of 23 possible countries). As with Global passes, those aged over 26 pay for a 1st-class pass, while those aged under 26 can get a cheaper, 2nd-class pass. The basic five-day pass for three countries costs €324/275/211 for the 1st-class adult/Saver/2nd-class youth versions.

## Regional & National Passes

Eurail also offers an Italy national pass and several two-country regional passes (France-Italy, Spain-Italy and Greece-Italy). Choose from three to 10 days' train travel in a two-month period for any of these passes. Single-country and regional passes come in five versions: 1st- and 2nd-class adult, 1st-class and 2nd-class adult Saver, and 2nd-class youth. The 10-day regional pass for Italy and France costs €442/386/386/338/295. The 10-day Italy pass costs €335/271/285/231/221. As with all Eurail passes, make sure you will be covering a lot of ground to make these worthwhile. Check some sample prices in euros of where you intend to travel on the **Trenitalia** ([www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com)) website to compare.

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## SEA

Dozens of ferry companies connect Italy with virtually every other Mediterranean country. The helpful search engine **Traghettonline** ([www.traghettonline.com](http://www.traghettonline.com), in Italian) covers all the ferry companies in the Mediterranean; you can also book online. Tickets are most expensive in summer, and many routes are only operated in summer. Prices for vehicles usually vary according to their size.

Ferry companies and their destinations:

**Agoudimos Lines** (☎ 0831 52 14 08; [www.agoudimos.it](http://www.agoudimos.it); Via Giannelli 23, Brindisi) Brindisi to Vlore (Albania) and Corfu, Igoumenitsa, Paxos (Greece), Bari to Durrës (Albania) and to

Cephalonia, Igoumenitsa and Patras (Greece).

**Blue Star Ferries** (☎ 080 52 11 416; [www.bluestarferries.com](http://www.bluestarferries.com)) Bari and Ancona to Patras and Igoumenitsa (Greece).

**Endeavor Lines/Hellenic Mediterranean Lines** (☎ 0831 52 85 31; [www.ferries.gr](http://www.ferries.gr); Corso Garibaldi 8, Brindisi) Brindisi to Corfu, Igoumenitsa and Patras, and to Cephalonia – from where you can get a ferry to Zante (all in Greece).

**Grandi Navi Veloci** (☎ 010 209 45 91; [www1.gnv.it](http://www1.gnv.it)) Genoa to Tangiers (Morocco) via Barcelona (Spain), and Tunis (Tunisia).

**Grimaldi Ferries** (☎ 081 49 64 44; [www.grimaldi-ferries.com](http://www.grimaldi-ferries.com)) Plies the Mediterranean from Civitavecchia, Livorno, Salerno and Palermo to Tunis (Tunisia), Porto Vecchio (Corsica), Toulon (France) and Barcelona (Spain).

**Jadrolinija** (☎ in Croatia 51 666 111; [www.jadrolinija.hr](http://www.jadrolinija.hr)) From Ancona to destinations along the Croatian coast, including Split and Zadar and from Bari to Dubrovnik.

**Marmara Lines** (☎ 071 207 61 65; [www.marmaralines.com](http://www.marmaralines.com)) Ancona to Cesme (Turkey).

**Minoan Lines** (☎ in Greece 2810 399800; [www.minoan.gr](http://www.minoan.gr)) Venice and Ancona to Igoumenitsa, Corfu or Patras (Greece).

**Montenegro Lines** (☎ 080 578 98 11; [www.morfimare.it](http://www.morfimare.it)) Reservations via Morfimare Travel Agency ([Click here](#)); Bari and Ancona to Bar (Montenegro).

**Skenderbeg Lines** (☎ 0831 52 54 48; [www.skenderbeglines.com](http://www.skenderbeglines.com); Corso Garibaldi 88, Brindisi) Brindisi to Vlore (Albania).

**SNAV** (☎ 071 207 61 16; [www.snav.it](http://www.snav.it)) Brindisi to Corfu and Paxos (Greece), Ancona to Split (Croatia) and Pescara to Hvar (Croatia).

**Superfast** (☎ 080 528 28 28; [www.superfast.com](http://www.superfast.com)) Ancona and Bari to Igoumenitsa and Patras (Greece), Bari to Corfu (Greece).

**Tirrenia Navigazione** (☎ 892123; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it)) Bari to Durrës (Albania) and Genoa to Tunis (Tunisia).

**Ventouris Ferries** (☎ Greece/Albania line 080 521 76 99/521 27 56; [www.ventouris.gr](http://www.ventouris.gr)) Bari to Igoumenitsa, Corfu (Greece), and Durrës (Albania).

**Virtu Ferries** (☎ 095 53 57 11; [www.virtuferries.com](http://www.virtuferries.com)) Catania and Pozzallo to Malta.

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## GETTING AROUND

You can reach almost any destination in Italy by train, bus or ferry, and services are efficient and cheap; for longer distances there are plenty of domestic air services.

Your own wheels give you the most freedom, but *benzina* (petrol) and autostrada (motorway) tolls are expensive and Italian drivers have a style all their own: the stress of driving and parking in a big Italian city could outweigh the delights of pattering about elsewhere in the country. One solution might be to take public transport between large cities and rent a car only for country drives.

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## AIR

The privatised national airline, Alitalia, is the main domestic carrier. Smaller airlines have brought



competition, although tough times have seen some close. Among those listed at the beginning of the chapter ([Click here](#)) EasyJet, Meridiana, MyAir and Windjet operate domestic flights. **AirAlps** (A6; ☎ 06 2222; [www.airalps.at](http://www.airalps.at)) has short-range domestic flights – book through Alitalia.

Alitalia is generally fairly expensive, but you should enquire about possible discounted rates for young people, families, seniors and weekend travellers, as well as advance-purchase deals. Airport taxes are factored into the price of your ticket.

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## BICYCLE

Cycling is a popular pastime in Italy. There are no special road rules, but you would be wise to equip yourself with a helmet and lights. With good reason, you cannot take bikes onto the autostradas. If you plan to bring your own bike, check with your airline for any additional costs. The bike will need to be disassembled and packed for the journey. Make sure you include a few tools, spare parts and a hefty bike lock and chain.

Bikes can be taken on any train carrying the bicycle logo. The cheapest way to do this is to buy a separate bicycle ticket (€3.50, or €5 to €12 on Intercity, Eurostar and Euronight trains), available even at the self-service kiosks. You can use this ticket for 24 hours, making a day trip quite economical. Bikes dismantled and stored in a bag can be taken for free, even on night trains, and all ferries allow free bicycle passage.

In the UK, **Cyclists' Touring Club** (☎ 0844 736 8450; [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)) can help you plan your tour or organise a guided tour. Membership costs £12 for under-18s and students, and £36 for adults.

## Hire

Bikes are available for hire in most Italian towns, and many places have both city and mountain bikes. In Florence, for instance, there are several private outlets and a municipal scheme. Rental costs for a city bike start at €10/30 per day/week.

## Purchase

If you shop around, bargain prices for bikes range from about €100 for a standard women's bike without gears to €210 for a mountain bike with 16 gears.

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## BOAT

*Navi* (large ferries) service Sicily and Sardinia, and *traghetti* (smaller ferries) and *aliscafi* (hydrofoils) service the smaller islands. The main embarkation points for Sardinia are Genoa, Livorno, Civitavecchia and Naples; for Sicily the main points are Naples and Villa San Giovanni in Calabria (near Reggio Calabria). The main points of arrival in Sardinia are Cagliari, Arbatax, Olbia and Porto Torres; in Sicily they're Palermo and Messina.

For a comprehensive guide to all ferry services into and out of Italy, check out **Traghettonline** ([www.traghettonline.com](http://www.traghettonline.com), in Italian). The website lists every route and includes links to ferry companies, where you can buy tickets or search for deals.

**Tirrenia Navigazione** (☎ 892123; [www.tirrenia.it](http://www.tirrenia.it)) is the main national ferry company and services most Italian ports.

Detailed information on ferry companies, prices and times for Sicily can be found on [Click here](#), and for Sardinia on [Click here](#). For other relevant destinations, see the Getting There & Away sections of individual chapters.

Many ferry services operate overnight, and travellers can choose between cabin accommodation in a two- to four-person cabin or even a dorm, or a *poltrona*, which is an airline-type armchair. Deck class (which allows you to sit/sleep in the general lounge areas or on deck) is available only on some ferries. Most ferries carry vehicles.

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## BUS

Numerous companies provide bus services in Italy, ranging from local routes meandering between villages to fast and reliable intercity connections. Buses are not always cheaper than the train but are often the only way to get to smaller towns.

It is usually possible to get bus timetables from local tourist offices. In larger cities most of the intercity bus companies have ticket offices or operate through agencies. In some villages and even good-size towns, tickets are sold in bars or on the bus.

Although it's usually not necessary to make reservations on buses, booking is advisable in the high season for overnight or long-haul trips.

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## CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Italy boasts an extensive privatised network of autostradas, represented on road signs by a white A followed by a number on a green background. The main north—south link is the Autostrada del Sole (the 'Motorway of the Sun'), which extends from Milan to Reggio di Calabria (called the A1 from Milan to Rome, the A2 from Rome to Naples, and the A3 from Naples to Reggio di Calabria).

On most of the motorways you pay a toll. You can pay by cash or credit card as you leave the autostrada. For information on road tolls and passes, contact **Autostrade per l'Italia** (☎ 840 042121; [www.autostrade.it](http://www.autostrade.it), in Italian), where you can also get information on the latest traffic situation.

Off the beaten path you'll be doing most of your travelling on the larger system of *strade statali* (state highways). On maps they're represented by 'S' or 'SS' and can vary from toll-free, four-lane highways to two-lane main roads. The latter can be extremely slow, especially in mountainous regions. Two other categories, in descending order, are the similar *strade regionali* (highways administered by the regions, coded SR or R) and *strade provinciali* (administered at provincial level, SP or P), which you'll find in rural areas and connecting small villages. Finally there are *strade locali*, which might not even be paved or mapped. You'll often find the most beautiful scenery off the provincial and local roads.

## Automobile Associations

The ever-handly **Automobile Club d'Italia** (ACI; [www.aci.it](http://www.aci.it); Via Colombo 261, Rome) is a driver's best resource in Italy. To reach the ACI in a roadside emergency, dial ☎ 803116 from a landline or ☎ 800

116800 from a mobile phone. Foreigners do not have to join but instead pay a per-incident fee. The numbers operate 24 hours a day.

## Bring Your Own Vehicle

Cars entering Italy from abroad need a valid national licence plate and an accompanying registration card. A car imported from a country that does not use the Latin alphabet will need to have its registration card translated at the nearest Italian consulate before entering the country. [Click here](#).

If you plan to ship your car, be aware that you must have less than a quarter of a tank of petrol. Unfortunately, you can't use your vehicle as a double for luggage storage; it's supposed to be empty apart from any necessary car-related items. All vehicles must be equipped with any necessary adjustments for the Italian market; for example, left-side-drive cars will need to have their headlamps adjusted.

## Driving Licence

All EU member states' driving licences are fully recognised throughout Europe. Those with a non-EU licence are supposed to obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) to accompany their national licence, which your national automobile association can issue. It's valid for 12 months and must be kept with your proper licence. In practice, many non-EU licences (such as Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and US licences) are generally accepted by car-hire outfits in Italy. People who have held residency in Italy for one year or more must apply for an Italian driving licence (those holding an EU-country licence will have to exchange this for the Italian version). If you want to hire a car or motorcycle you'll need to produce your driving licence.

## Fuel & Spare Parts

Italy is covered by a good network of petrol stations. Prices are among the highest in Europe and vary from one service station (*benzinaio, stazione di servizio*) to another. Lead-free (*senza piombo*; 95 octane) costs up to €1.11 per litre. A 98-octane variant costs as much as €1.20 per litre. Diesel (*gasolio*) comes in at €1.06 per litre. Prices fluctuate with world oil prices.

For spare parts, try the 24-hour ACI motorist assistance number, ☎ 803116, although it may be easier to seek out a garage.

## Hire

### CARS

Most tourist offices and hotels can provide information about car or motorcycle rental. To rent a car in Italy you have to be aged 25 or over and you have to have a credit card. Most firms will accept your standard licence or IDP for identification purposes. Consider hiring a small car, which you'll be grateful for when negotiating narrow city lanes.

Multinational car rental agencies:

**Autos Abroad** (☎ in UK 0845 029 1945; [www.autosabroad.com](http://www.autosabroad.com))

**Avis** (☎ 199 100133; [www.avisautonoleggio.it](http://www.avisautonoleggio.it))

**Budget** (☎ 199 307373; [www.budgetautonoleggio.it](http://www.budgetautonoleggio.it))

**Europcar** (☎ 199 307030; [www.europcar.com](http://www.europcar.com))

**Hertz** (☎ 08708 44 88 44; [www.hertz.it](http://www.hertz.it))

**Italy by Car** (☎ 800 846083; [www.italybycar.it](http://www.italybycar.it))



The speed limit on the autostradas is 130km/h (on some motorways with three lanes in either direction, the limit can be raised to 150km/h), and on all other highways it is 110km/h. On minor, non-urban roads, it is up to 90km/h. In built-up areas, the limit is 50km/h. Speeding fines follow EU standards and are proportionate with the number of kilometres that you are caught driving over the speed limit, reaching up to €2000 with possible suspension of your driving licence.

You don't need a licence to ride a scooter under 50cc but you should be aged 14 or over and you can't carry passengers or ride on an autostrada. Indeed, you should not venture on to an autostrada with a bike of less than 150cc. On all two-wheeled transport, helmets are required. The speed limit for a moped is 40km/h. To ride a motorcycle or scooter up to 125cc, you must be aged 16 or over and have a licence (a car licence will do). Helmets are compulsory. For motorcycles over 125cc you need a motorcycle licence.

You'll be able to enter most restricted traffic areas in Italian cities on a motorcycle without any problems, and traffic police generally turn a blind eye to motorcycles or scooters parked on footpaths.

All vehicles must use headlights at all times (day and night) on the autostradas. It is advisable for motorcycles on all roads at all times.

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## HITCHING

Hitching is uncommon in Italy. Public transport is reliable (save for regular train and bus strikes) and most Italians would rather give up an arm than their car. Hitchhikers can be stranded for hours and women would be extremely unwise to hitch.

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## LOCAL TRANSPORT

All the major cities have good transport systems, with bus and underground-train networks usually integrated. In Venice, your only options are by *vaporetti* (small passenger ferries) or to go on foot.

### Bus & Underground Trains

You must buy bus tickets before you board the bus and validate them once on board. If you get caught with an unvalidated ticket you will be fined on the spot (up to €50 in most cities).

There are *metropolitane* (underground systems) in Rome, Milan, Naples and Turin (which has built the country's first automated metro line). Again, you must buy tickets and validate them before getting on the train, with fines of up to €50 if you don't. You can get a map of the network from tourist offices in the relevant city.

Every city or town of any size has an efficient *urbano* (city) and *extraurbano* (city, suburbs and outlying areas) system of buses that reach even the most remote of villages. Services can be limited (or nonexistent) on Sundays and holidays.

Tickets can be bought from a *tabaccaio* (tobacconist), newsstands, ticket booths or dispensing machines at bus stations and in underground stations, and usually cost around €1 to €1.20. Most large cities offer good-value 24-hour or daily tourist tickets.

# Taxi

You can usually find taxi ranks at train and bus stations or you can telephone for radio taxis. It's best to go to a designated taxi stand, as it's illegal for them to stop in the street if hailed. If you phone a taxi, bear in mind the meter starts running from when you've called rather than when it picks you up.

Charges vary somewhat from one region to another. In Milan, for instance, there is a minimum charge ranging from €3 to €6.10, depending on the time of day or night, plus €0.98 per km (rising to €1.47 per km after the first €13.25). Most short city journeys cost between €10 and €15. Generally, no more than four people are allowed in one taxi.

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# TRAIN

Trains in Italy are relatively cheap compared with other European countries, and the better categories of train are fast and comfortable.

**Trenitalia** (📞 892021 in Italian; [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com), [www.ferroviedellostato.it](http://www.ferroviedellostato.it)) is the partially privatised, state train system that runs most services. Other private Italian train lines are noted throughout this book.

There are several types of trains. Some stop at all or most stations, such as *regionale* or *interregionale* trains. Intercity (IC) trains are fast services that operate between major cities. Eurocity (EC) trains are the international version. High-speed *pendolini* and other fast services are collectively known as Eurostar Italia (ES), and some make fewer stops than others.

Quicker still, the Alta Velocità (High Speed) services (variously known as AV and ESA) that began operation on the new Turin—Milan—Bologna—Florence—Rome—Naples—Salerno line in late 2009 have revolutionised train travel on that route. Nonstop trains between Milan and Rome take three hours, at least 2½ hours less than any other standard service (an Intercity train takes 6¼ hours)! With stops in Bologna and Florence, the time is 3½ hours. Already in early 2009, fast trains using standard track had cut traditional travel times (3½ and four hours, respectively, on the Milan—Rome route). Prices vary according to the time of travel and how far in advance you book.

## Classes & Costs

There are 1st and 2nd classes on most Italian trains; a 1st-class ticket typically costs from a third to half more than the 2nd-class ticket.

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## STAMP IT!

Countless foreigner travellers in Italy learn the hard way that their train tickets must be stamped in the yellow machines (usually found at the head of rail platforms) just before boarding. Failure to do so usually results in fines, although the cry of 'I didn't know' sometimes elicits an indulgent response from ticket controllers. So stamp that ticket!

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# TRAIN ROUTES







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Travel on Intercity, Eurostar and Alta Velocità trains means paying a supplement, determined by the distance you are travelling. This is included in the ticket, but if you have a standard ticket for, say, an *interregionale* and end up hopping on to a faster IC train, you will have to pay the difference on board. You can only board a Eurostar or Alta Velocità train if you have a booking, so the problem does not arise in those cases.

For longer trips, the faster trains are generally worth the extra paid. On the Rome—Milan run, for instance, the difference in price in 2nd class between the 6¼-hour IC train and the 3½-hour run on the AV is €22.50.

For shorter hops (say, Venice—Padua or even Milan—Turin, for which there is at most a half-hour time gain for up to three times the price of a *regionale* ticket), the time gain is often not worth the extra money.

## Reservations

Reservations are obligatory on Eurostar and AV trains. Otherwise they're not and, generally, you should be fine without them. You can do this at railway station counters, selected travel agents and, when they haven't broken down, at the automated machines sprinkled around most stations. Reservations generally carry a fee of an extra €3.

## Train Passes

Trenitalia offers various discount passes. The one-year Carta Verde (Green Card, €40) is for people

between the ages of 12 and 26, and the Carta d'Argento (Silver Card, €30) is for seniors over 60. They provide discounts of between 10% and 15% on most trains and up to 25% off standard fares on international journeys beginning or ending in Italy. They're worth considering if you are staying in Italy for a while and planning to cover a fair amount of ground. Apply at train stations and most travel agents.

Other discount possibilities include the Amica and Familia options. The former can get you up to 20% off certain trips that are booked ahead, while the latter offers discounts for families of three to five people, of whom at least one must be an adult and one a child under 12. Ask at stations.

For information on various rail passes you can acquire before arrival in Italy, [Click here](#).

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# Health

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## BEFORE YOU GO

While Italy has reasonable health care (although public hospitals tend to be less impressive the further south you travel), prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save trouble later. Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medication, including generic names, is also a good idea. If carrying syringes or needles, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity. If you are embarking on a long trip, make sure your teeth are OK (dental treatment is expensive in Italy) and take your optical prescription with you.

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## INSURANCE

If you're an EU citizen (or from Switzerland, Norway or Iceland), a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) covers you for most medical care in public hospitals free of charge, but not for emergency repatriation home or non-emergencies. The card is available from health centres and (in the UK) from post offices. Citizens from other countries should find out if there is a reciprocal arrangement for free medical care between their country and Italy (Australia, for instance, has such an agreement; carry your Medicare card). If you do need health insurance, make sure you get a policy that covers you for the worst possible scenario, such as an accident requiring an emergency flight home. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures.

## RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

No jabs are required to travel to Italy. The World Health Organization (WHO), however, recommends that all travellers should be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, the measles, mumps, rubella and polio, as well as hepatitis B.

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## INTERNET RESOURCES

The WHO's publication *International Travel and Health* is revised annually and is available online at [www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith).

Other useful websites:

[www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk) Advice on travel for the elderly.

[www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) General travel advice for the layperson.

[www.maristopes.org.uk](http://www.maristopes.org.uk) Information on women's health and contraception.

[www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com) Travel health recommendations for every country; updated daily.

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## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during a plane flight, chiefly because of prolonged immobility (the longer the flight, the greater the risk).

The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side. When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should seek medical attention immediately.

To prevent the development of DVT on long-haul flights, you should walk about the cabin, contract the leg muscles while sitting, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

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## JET LAG

To avoid jet lag try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep etc) as soon as possible.

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## IN ITALY

## **AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CARE**

If you need an ambulance anywhere in Italy, call ☎ 118. For emergency treatment, head straight to the *pronto soccorso* (casualty) section of a public hospital, where you can also get emergency dental treatment.

Excellent health care is readily available throughout Italy, but standards can vary significantly. Pharmacists can give you valuable advice and sell over-the-counter medication for minor illnesses. They can also advise you when more specialised help is required and point you in the right direction. In major cities you are likely to find English-speaking doctors or a translator service available.

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## **TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA**

If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably in the form of an oral rehydration solution such as Dioralyte. If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking, chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

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## **ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**

### **Bites, Stings & Insect-Borne Diseases**

Italian beaches are occasionally inundated with jellyfish. Their stings are painful but not dangerous. Dousing in vinegar will deactivate any stingers that have not fired. Calamine lotion, antihistamines and analgesics may reduce the reaction and relieve pain.

Italy's only dangerous snake, the viper, is found throughout the country except on Sardinia. To minimise the possibilities of being bitten, always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present. Don't put your hands into holes or crevices, and be careful when collecting firewood. Viper bites do not cause instantaneous death, and an antivenin is widely available in pharmacies. Keep the victim calm and still, wrap the bitten limb tightly, as you would for a sprained ankle, and attach a splint to immobilise it. Seek medical help, if possible with the dead snake for identification. Don't attempt to catch the snake if there is a possibility of being bitten again. Tourniquets and sucking out the poison are now comprehensively discredited.

Always check all over your body if you have been walking through a potentially tick-infested area, as ticks can cause skin infections and other more serious diseases such as Lyme disease and tick-borne encephalitis. If a tick is found attached, press down around the tick's head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the risk of infection and disease. Lyme disease begins with the spreading of a rash at the site of the bite, accompanied by fever, headache, extreme fatigue, aching joints and muscles, and severe neck stiffness. If untreated, symptoms usually disappear, but disorders of the nervous system, heart and joints can develop later. Treatment works best early in the illness – medical help should be sought. Symptoms of tick-borne encephalitis include blotches around the bite, which is sometimes pale in the middle, and headaches, stiffness and other flu-like symptoms (as well as extreme tiredness) appearing a week or two after the bite. Again, medical help must be sought.

Rabies is still found in Italy but only in isolated areas of the Alps. Any bite, scratch or even lick from a

mammal in an area where rabies does exist should be scrubbed with soap and running water immediately and then cleaned thoroughly with an alcohol solution. Medical help should be sought.

Leishmaniasis is a group of parasitic diseases transmitted by sandflies and found in coastal parts of Italy. Cutaneous leishmaniasis affects the skin tissue and causes ulceration and disfigurement; visceral leishmaniasis affects the internal organs. Avoiding sandfly bites by covering up and using repellent is the best precaution against this disease.

## **Heatstroke**

Heatstroke occurs following excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty –aim to drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. To treat heatstroke, drink water and/or fruit juice, and cool the body with cold water and fans. It is also recommended to drink rehydration fluids or salts, available from any pharmacy.

## **Hypothermia**

Hypothermia occurs when the body loses heat faster than it can produce it. As ever, proper preparation will reduce the risks of getting it. Even on a hot day in the mountains, the weather can change rapidly, so carry waterproof garments, warm layers and a hat, and inform others of your route. Hypothermia starts with shivering, loss of judgment and clumsiness. Unless rewarming occurs, the sufferer deteriorates into apathy, confusion and coma. Prevent further heat loss by seeking shelter, warm, dry clothing, hot, sweet drinks and shared bodily warmth.

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## **TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN**

Make sure children are up to date with routine vaccinations and discuss possible travel vaccines well before your departure as some vaccines are not suitable for children under a year. Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* includes travel health advice for younger children.

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## **WOMEN'S HEALTH**

Emotional stress, exhaustion and travelling through different time zones can all contribute to an upset in a woman's menstrual pattern.

If using oral contraceptives, remember that some antibiotics, diarrhoea and vomiting can stop the pill from working. Time zones, gastrointestinal upsets and antibiotics do not affect injectable contraception.

Travelling during pregnancy is usually possible, but always consult your doctor before planning your trip. The most risky times for travel are during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and after 30 weeks.

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## **SEXUAL HEALTH**

Condoms are readily available but emergency contraception is not, so take the necessary precautions.



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# Language

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Italian is a Romance language related to French, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian. The Romance languages belong to the Indo-European family, which includes English. In addition, as English has borrowed many words from Romance languages, you will recognise many Italian words.

Modern literary Italian began to develop in the 13th and 14th centuries, predominantly through the works of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, who wrote chiefly in the Florentine dialect. The language drew on its Latin heritage and many dialects to develop into the standard Italian of today. Although many dialects are spoken in everyday conversation, standard Italian is the national language of schools, media and literature, and is understood throughout the country.

If you've managed to gain more than the most fundamental grasp of the language, you will need to be aware that many older Italians still expect to be addressed by the third person polite, that is, *Lei* instead of *tu*. Also, it is not considered polite to use the greeting *ciao* when addressing strangers, unless they use it first; it's better to say *buongiorno* 'good day' (or *buona sera* 'good evening', as the case may be) and *arrivederci* 'goodbye' (or the more polite form, *arrivederla* 'goodbye'). We have used the polite address for most of the phrases in this guide. Use of the informal address is indicated by 'inf'.

Italian has both masculine and feminine forms (in the singular they often end in 'o' and 'a' respectively). Where both forms are given in this guide, they are separated by a slash, with the masculine form first.

If you'd like a more comprehensive guide to the language, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Italian Phrasebook*.

## PRONUNCIATION

Italian pronunciation isn't very difficult to master once you learn a few easy rules. Although some of the vowels and stress on double letters require careful practice for English speakers, it's easy enough to make yourself understood.

### Vowels

Vowel sounds are generally shorter in unstressed syllables:

- a** as in 'art', eg *caro* (dear); sometimes short, eg *amico* (friend)
- e** short, as in 'let', eg *mettere* (to put); long, as in 'there', eg *mela* (apple)
- i** short, as in 'it', eg *inizio* (start); long, as in 'marine', eg *vino* (wine)
- o** short, as in 'dot', eg *donna* (woman); long, as in 'port', eg *ora* (hour)
- u** as the 'oo' in 'book', eg *puro* (pure)

### Consonants

The pronunciation of most Italian consonants is similar to that of their English counterparts. Pronunciation of some consonants depends on certain rules:

- c** as the 'k' in 'kit' before **a**, **o**, **u** and **h**; as the 'ch' in 'choose' before **e** and **i**
- g** as the 'g' in 'get' before **a**, **o**, **u** and **h**; as the 'j' in 'jet' before **e** and **i**
- gli** as the 'lli' in 'million'
- gn** as the 'ny' in 'canyon'
- h** always silent (ie not pronounced)
- r** a rolled 'rr' sound
- sc** as the 'sh' in 'sheep' before **e** and **i**;  
as 'sk' before **a**, **o**, **u** and **h**
- z** at the beginning of a word, as the 'dz' in 'adze'; elsewhere as the 'ts' in 'its'

Note that when **ci**, **gi** and **sci** are followed by **a**, **o** or **u**, the 'i' is not pronounced unless the accent falls on the 'i'. Thus the name 'Giovanni' is pronounced joh·vahn·nee.

A double consonant is pronounced as a longer, more forceful sound than a single consonant. This can directly affect the meaning of a word, eg *sono* (I am), *sonno* (sleep), but the context of a sentence will usually get the message across.

### Word Stress

Stress is indicated in our pronunciation guide by italics. Word stress generally falls on the second-last syllable, as in *spaghetti*, pronounced spa·ge·tee; but when a word has an accent, the stress falls on that syllable, as in *città*, pronounced chee·ta (city).

## ACCOMMODATION

<b>I'm looking for a ...</b>	<i>Cerco ...</i>	<i>cher-ko ...</i>
<b>guest house</b>	<i>una pensione</i>	<i>oo-na pen-syo-ne</i>
<b>hotel</b>	<i>un albergo</i>	<i>oon al-ber-go</i>
<b>youth hostel</b>	<i>un ostello per la gioventù</i>	<i>oon os-te-lo per la jo-ven-too</i>
<b>Where is a cheap hotel?</b>		
<i>Dov'è un albergo</i>	<i>do-ve oon al-ber-go</i>	
<i>a buon prezzo?</i>	<i>a bwon pre-tso</i>	
<b>What is the address?</b>		
<i>Qual'è l'indirizzo?</i>	<i>kwa-le leen-dee-ree-tso</i>	
<b>Could you write the address, please?</b>		
<i>Può scrivere l'indirizzo, per favore?</i>	<i>pwo skree-ve-re leen-dee-ree-tso per fa-vo-re</i>	
<b>Do you have any rooms available?</b>		
<i>Avete camere libere?</i>	<i>a-ve-te ka-me-re lee-be-re</i>	
<b>I'd like (a) ...</b>	<i>Vorrei ...</i>	<i>vo-ray ...</i>
<b>bed</b>	<i>un letto</i>	<i>oon le-to</i>
<b>double room (with double bed)</b>	<i>una camera matrimoniale</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra ma-tree-mo-nya-le</i>
<b>room with a bathroom</b>	<i>una camera con bagno</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra kon ba-nyo</i>
<b>room with two beds</b>	<i>una camera doppia</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra do-pya</i>
<b>single room</b>	<i>una camera singola</i>	<i>oo-na ka-me-ra seen-go-la</i>
<b>to share a dorm</b>	<i>un letto in dormitorio</i>	<i>oon le-to een dor-mee-to-ryo</i>
<b>How much is it ...?</b>		
<i>Quanto costa ...?</i>	<i>kwan-to ko-sta ...</i>	
<b>per night</b>	<i>per la notte</i>	<i>per la no-te</i>
<b>per person</b>	<i>per persona</i>	<i>per per-so-na</i>

## MAKING A RESERVATION

(for phone or written requests)

<b>To ...</b>	<i>A ...</i>
<b>From ...</b>	<i>Da ...</i>
<b>Date</b>	<i>Data</i>
<b>I'd like to book ...</b>	<i>Vorrei prenotare ...</i>
<b>in the name of ...</b>	<i>a nome di ...</i>
<b>for the night(s) of ...</b>	<i>per la notte/le notti di ...</i>
<b>Please confirm availability and price.</b>	<i>Prego confermare disponibilità e prezzo.</i>
<b>credit card (...)</b>	<i>(... della) carta di credito</i>
<b>number</b>	<i>numero</i>
<b>expiry date</b>	<i>data di scadenza</i>

### May I see it?

*Posso vederla? po-so ve-der-la*

### Where is the bathroom?

*Dov'è il bagno? do-ve eel ba-nyo*

### I'm/We're leaving today.

*Parto/Partiamo oggi. par-to/par-tya-mo o-jee*

## CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Buongiorno./</i>	bwon-jor-no/
	<i>Ciao. (inf)</i>	chow
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Arrivederci./</i>	a-ree-ve-der-chee/
	<i>Ciao. (inf)</i>	chow
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Sì.</i>	see
<b>No.</b>	<i>No.</i>	no
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Per favore./</i>	per fa-vo-re/
	<i>Per piacere.</i>	per pya-chay-re
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Grazie.</i>	gra-tsye
<b>That's fine./</b>	<i>Prego.</i>	pre-go
<b>You're welcome.</b>		
<b>Excuse me.</b>	<i>Mi scusi.</i>	mee skoo-zee
<b>I'm sorry.</b>	<i>Mi scusi./</i>	mee skoo-zee/
	<i>Mi perdoni.</i>	mee per-do-nee

### What's your name?

<i>Come si chiama?/</i>	ko-me see kya-ma/
<i>Come ti chiami? (inf)</i>	ko-me tee kya-mee

### My name is ...

<i>Mi chiamo ...</i>	mee kya-mo ...
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### Where are you from?

<i>Da dove viene?/</i>	da do-ve vye-ne/
<i>Di dove sei? (inf)</i>	dee do-ve se-ee

### I'm from ...

<i>Vengo da ...</i>	ven-go da ...
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### I (don't) like ...

<i>(Non) mi piace ...</i>	(non) mee pya-che ...
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### Just a minute.

<i>Un momento.</i>	oon mo-men-to
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## DIRECTIONS

### Where is ...?

<i>Dov'è ...?</i>	do-ve ...
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### Go straight ahead.

<i>Si va sempre dritto./</i>	see va sem-pre dee-ree-to/
<i>Val sempre dritto. (inf)</i>	va-ee sem-pre dee-ree-to

### Turn left.

<i>Giri a sinistra.</i>	jee-ree a see-nee-stra
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### Turn right.

<i>Giri a destra.</i>	jee-ree a de-stra
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### at the next corner

<i>al prossimo angolo</i>	al pro-see-mo an-go-lo
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### at the traffic lights

<i>al semaforo</i>	al se-ma-fo-ro
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<b>behind</b>	<i>dietro</i>	<i>dye-tro</i>
<b>far (from)</b>	<i>lontano (da)</i>	<i>lon-ta-no (da)</i>
<b>in front of</b>	<i>davanti</i>	<i>da-van-tee</i>
<b>near (to)</b>	<i>vicino (a)</i>	<i>vee-chee-no (a)</i>
<b>opposite</b>	<i>di fronte a</i>	<i>dee fron-te a</i>
<b>beach</b>	<i>la spiaggia</i>	<i>la spya-ja</i>
<b>bridge</b>	<i>il ponte</i>	<i>eel pon-te</i>
<b>castle</b>	<i>il castello</i>	<i>eel kas-te-lo</i>
<b>cathedral</b>	<i>il duomo</i>	<i>eel dwo-mo</i>
<b>island</b>	<i>l'isola</i>	<i>lee-so-la</i>
<b>(main) square</b>	<i>la piazza (principale)</i>	<i>la pya-tsa (preen-chee-pa-le)</i>
<b>market</b>	<i>il mercato</i>	<i>eel mer-ka-to</i>
<b>old city</b>	<i>il centro storico</i>	<i>eel chen-tro sto-ree-ko</i>
<b>palace</b>	<i>il palazzo</i>	<i>eel pa-la-tso</i>
<b>ruins</b>	<i>le rovine</i>	<i>le ro-vee-ne</i>
<b>sea</b>	<i>il mare</i>	<i>eel ma-re</i>
<b>tower</b>	<i>la torre</i>	<i>la to-re</i>

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## EATING OUT

### I'd like to reserve a table.

*Vorrei riservare un tavolo.* vo-ray ree-ser-va-re oon ta-vo-lo

### I'd like the menu, please.

*Vorrei il menù, per favore.* vo-ray eel me-noo per fa-vo-re

### Do you have a menu in English?

*Avete un menù in inglese?* a-ve-te oon me-noo een een-gle-ze?

### What would you recommend?

*Cosa mi consiglia?* ko-za mee kon-see-lya?

### I'd like a house/local speciality.

*Vorrei una specialità della casa/zona.* vo-ray oo-na spe-cha-lee-ta de-la ka-za/zo-na

### Is it made in house?

*È fatto/a in casa? (m/f)* e fa-to/a een ka-za?

### We'd like to share ...

*Vorremo dividere ...* vo-ray-mo dee-vee-de-re ...

## SIGNS

<b>Aperto</b>	Open
<b>Camere Libere</b>	Rooms Available
<b>Chiuso</b>	Closed
<b>Completo</b>	Full/No Vacancies
<b>Gabinetti/Bagni</b>	Toilets
<b>Donne</b>	Women
<b>Uomini</b>	Men
<b>Informazione</b>	Information
<b>Ingresso/Entrata</b>	Entrance
<b>Polizia/Carabinieri</b>	Police
<b>Proibito/Vietato</b>	Prohibited
<b>Questura</b>	Police Station
<b>Uscita</b>	Exit

**Could you make that without ...?***Potrebbe farlo senza ...? po-tre-be far-lo sen-tsa ...***I'm a vegetarian.***Sono vegetariano/a. (m/f) so-no ve-je-ta-rya-no/a***I'm a vegan.***Sono vegetariano/a. (m/f) so-no ve-je-ta-ly-a-no/a***Please bring me the bill.***Mi porta il conto, per favore. mee por-ta eel kon-to per fa-vo-re*[Return to beginning of chapter](#)

# HEALTH

**I'm ill.***Mi sento male. mee sen-to ma-le***It hurts here.***Mi fa male qui. mee fa ma-le kwee***I'm ...***Sono ... so-no ...*

<b>asthmatic</b>	<i>asmatico/a (m/f)</i>	<i>az-ma-tee-ko/a</i>
<b>diabetic</b>	<i>diabetico/a (m/f)</i>	<i>dee-a-be-tee-ko/a</i>
<b>epileptic</b>	<i>epilettico/a (m/f)</i>	<i>e-pee-le-tee-ko/a</i>

**I'm allergic ...***Sono allergico/a ... (m/f) a-ler-jee-ko/a ...*

<b>to antibiotics</b>	<i>agli anti-biotici</i>	<i>a-lyee an-tee-bee-o-tee-chee</i>
<b>to aspirin</b>	<i>all'aspirina</i>	<i>a-la-spe-ree-na</i>
<b>to penicillin</b>	<i>alla penicillina</i>	<i>a-la pe-nee-chee-lee-na</i>
<b>to nuts</b>	<i>alle noci</i>	<i>a-le no-chee</i>

<b>antiseptic</b>	<i>antisettico</i>	<i>an-tee-se-tee-ko</i>
<b>aspirin</b>	<i>aspirina</i>	<i>as-pee-ree-na</i>
<b>condoms</b>	<i>preservativi</i>	<i>pre-zer-va-tee-vee</i>
<b>contraceptive</b>	<i>contraccettivo</i>	<i>kon-tra-che-tee-vo</i>
<b>diarrhoea</b>	<i>diarrea</i>	<i>dee-a-re-a</i>
<b>medicine</b>	<i>medicina</i>	<i>me-dee-chee-na</i>
<b>sunblock cream</b>	<i>crema solare</i>	<i>kre-ma so-la-re</i>
<b>tampons</b>	<i>tamponi</i>	<i>tam-po-nee</i>

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# LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES

**Do you speak English?***Parla inglese?* par-la een-gle-ze**Does anyone here speak English?***C'è qualcuno che* che kwal-koo-no ke*parla inglese?* par-la een-gle-ze**How do you say ... in Italian?***Come si dice ... in* ko-me see dee-che ... een*italiano?* ee-ta-lya-no**What does ... mean?***Che vuol dire ...?* ke vvol dee-re ...**I understand.***Capisco.* ka-pee-sko**I don't understand.***Non capisco.* non ka-pee-sko**Please write it down.***Può scriverlo, per favore?* pwo skree-ver-lo per fa-vo-re**Can you show me (on the map)?***Può mostrarmelo* pwo mos-trar-me-lo*(sulla piantina)?* (soo-la pyan-ta)[Return to beginning of chapter](#)

# NUMBERS

0	<i>zero</i>	<i>dze-ro</i>
1	<i>uno</i>	<i>oo-no</i>
2	<i>due</i>	<i>doo-e</i>
3	<i>tre</i>	<i>tre</i>
4	<i>quattro</i>	<i>kwa-tro</i>
5	<i>cinque</i>	<i>cheen-kwe</i>
6	<i>sei</i>	<i>say</i>
7	<i>sette</i>	<i>se-te</i>
8	<i>otto</i>	<i>o-to</i>
9	<i>nove</i>	<i>no-ve</i>
10	<i>dieci</i>	<i>dye-chee</i>
11	<i>undici</i>	<i>oon-dee-chee</i>
12	<i>dodici</i>	<i>do-dee-chee</i>
13	<i>tredici</i>	<i>tre-dee-chee</i>
14	<i>quattordici</i>	<i>kwa-tor-dee-chee</i>
15	<i>quindici</i>	<i>kween-dee-chee</i>
16	<i>sedici</i>	<i>se-dee-chee</i>
17	<i>diciassette</i>	<i>dee-cha-se-te</i>
18	<i>diciotto</i>	<i>dee-cho-to</i>
19	<i>diciannove</i>	<i>dee-cha-no-ve</i>
20	<i>venti</i>	<i>ven-tee</i>
21	<i>ventuno</i>	<i>ven-too-no</i>
22	<i>ventidue</i>	<i>ven-tee-doo-e</i>
30	<i>trenta</i>	<i>tren-ta</i>
40	<i>quaranta</i>	<i>kwa-ran-ta</i>
50	<i>cinquanta</i>	<i>cheen-kwan-ta</i>
60	<i>sessanta</i>	<i>se-san-ta</i>
70	<i>settanta</i>	<i>se-tan-ta</i>
80	<i>ottanta</i>	<i>o-tan-ta</i>
90	<i>novanta</i>	<i>no-van-ta</i>
100	<i>cento</i>	<i>chen-to</i>
1000	<i>mille</i>	<i>mee-le</i>
2000	<i>due mila</i>	<i>doo-e mee-la</i>



## EMERGENCIES

**Help!**

*Aiuto!* a-yoo-to

**There's been an accident!**

*C'è stato un  
incidente!* che sta-to oon  
een-chee-den-te

**I'm lost.**

*Mi sono perso/a. (m/f)* mee so-no per-so/a

**Go away!**

*Lasciami in pace!/  
Vai via! (inf)* la-sha-mi een pa-che/  
va-ee vee-a

<b>Call ...!</b>	<i>Chiami ...!</i>	kee-ya-mee ...
<b>a doctor</b>	<i>un dottore/ un medico</i>	oon do-to-re/ oon me-dee-ko
<b>the police</b>	<i>la polizia</i>	la po-lee-tsee-ya

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## PAPERWORK

<b>name</b>	<i>nome</i>	no-me
<b>nationality</b>	<i>nazionalità</i>	na-tsyo-na-lee-ta
<b>date/place of birth</b>	<i>data/luogo di nascita</i>	da-ta/lwo-go dee na-shee-ta
<b>sex (gender)</b>	<i> sesso</i>	se-so
<b>passport</b>	<i>passaporto</i>	pa-sa-por-to
<b>visa</b>	<i>visto</i>	vee-sto

## QUESTION WORDS

<b>Who?</b>	<i>Chi?</i>	kee
<b>What?</b>	<i>Che?</i>	ke
<b>When?</b>	<i>Quando?</i>	kwan-do
<b>Where?</b>	<i>Dove?</i>	do-ve
<b>How?</b>	<i>Come?</i>	ko-me

## SPRING & SERVICES

<b>I'd like to buy ...</b> <i>Vorrei comprare ...</i>		vo-ray kom-pra-re ...
<b>How much is it?</b> <i>Quanto costa?</i>		kwan-to ko-sta
<b>I don't like it.</b> <i>Non mi piace.</i>		non mee pya-che
<b>May I look at it?</b> <i>Posso dare un'occhiata?</i>		po-so da-re oo-no-ky-a-ta
<b>I'm just looking.</b> <i>Sto solo guardando.</i>		sto so-lo gwar-dan-do
<b>It's cheap.</b> <i>Non è caro/a. (m/f)</i>		non e ka-ro/a
<b>It's too expensive.</b> <i>È troppo caro/a. (m/f)</i>		e tro-po ka-ro/a
<b>I'll take it.</b> <i>Lo/La compro. (m/f)</i>		lo/la kom-pro
<b>Do you accept credit cards?</b> <i>Accettate carte di credito?</i>		a-che-ta-te kar-te dee kre-dee-to
<b>I want to</b>	<i>Voglio</i>	vo-lyo
<b>change ...</b>	<i>cambiare ...</i>	kam-by-a-re ...
<b>money</b>	<i>del denaro</i>	del de-na-ro
<b>travellers</b>	<i>assegni di</i>	a-se-nyee dee
<b>cheques</b>	<i>viaggio</i>	vee-a-jo
<b>more</b>	<i>più</i>	pyoo
<b>less</b>	<i>meno</i>	me-no
<b>smaller</b>	<i>più piccolo/a (m/f)</i>	pyoo pee-ko-lo/a
<b>bigger</b>	<i>più grande</i>	pyoo gran-de
<b>I'm looking for ...</b>	<i>Cerco ...</i>	cher-ko ...
<b>a bank</b>	<i>un banco</i>	oon ban-ko
<b>the church</b>	<i>la chiesa</i>	la kye-za
<b>the city centre</b>	<i>il centro</i>	eel chen-tro
<b>the ... embassy</b>	<i>l'ambasciata di ...</i>	lam-ba-sha-ta dee ...
<b>the market</b>	<i>il mercato</i>	eel mer-ka-to
<b>the museum</b>	<i>il museo</i>	eel moo-ze-o
<b>the post office</b>	<i>la posta</i>	la po-sta
<b>a public toilet</b>	<i>un gabinetto</i>	oon ga-bee-ne-to
<b>the telephone</b>	<i>il centro</i>	eel chen-tro
<b>centre</b>	<i>telefonico</i>	te-le-fo-nee-ko
<b>the tourist</b>	<i>l'ufficio</i>	loo-fee-cho
<b>office</b>	<i>di turismo</i>	dee too-reez-mo

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## TIME & DATES

<b>What time is it?</b>	<i>Che ore sono?</i>	ke o-re so-no
<b>It's (8 o'clock).</b>	<i>Sono (le otto).</i>	so-no (le o-to)
<b>in the afternoon</b>	<i>di pomeriggio</i>	dee po-me-ree-jo
<b>in the evening</b>	<i>di sera</i>	dee se-ra
<b>in the morning</b>	<i>di mattina</i>	dee ma-tee-na
<b>today</b>	<i>oggi</i>	o-jee
<b>tomorrow</b>	<i>domani</i>	do-ma-nee
<b>yesterday</b>	<i>ieri</i>	ye-ree
<b>Monday</b>	<i>lunedì</i>	loo-ne-dee
<b>Tuesday</b>	<i>martedì</i>	mar-te-dee
<b>Wednesday</b>	<i>mercoledì</i>	mer-ko-le-dee
<b>Thursday</b>	<i>giovedì</i>	jo-ve-dee
<b>Friday</b>	<i>venerdì</i>	ve-ner-dee
<b>Saturday</b>	<i>sabato</i>	sa-ba-to
<b>Sunday</b>	<i>domenica</i>	do-me-nee-ka
<b>January</b>	<i>gennaio</i>	je-na-yo
<b>February</b>	<i>febbraio</i>	fe-bra-yo
<b>March</b>	<i>marzo</i>	mar-tso
<b>April</b>	<i>aprile</i>	a-pree-le
<b>May</b>	<i>maggio</i>	ma-jo
<b>June</b>	<i>giugno</i>	joo-nyo

## ROAD SIGNS

<b>Dare la Precedenza</b>	Give Way
<b>Deviazione</b>	Detour
<b>Divieto di Accesso</b>	No Entry
<b>Divieto di Sorpasso</b>	No Overtaking
<b>Divieto di Sosta</b>	No Parking
<b>Entrata</b>	Entrance
<b>Passo Carrabile/Carraio</b>	Keep Clear
<b>Pedaggio</b>	Toll
<b>Pericolo</b>	Danger
<b>Rallentare</b>	Slow Down
<b>Senso Unico</b>	One-Way
<b>Uscita</b>	Exit

<b>July</b>	<i>luglio</i>	loo-lyo
<b>August</b>	<i>agosto</i>	a-gos-to
<b>September</b>	<i>settembre</i>	se-tem-bre
<b>October</b>	<i>ottobre</i>	o-to-bre
<b>November</b>	<i>novembre</i>	no-vem-bre
<b>December</b>	<i>dicembre</i>	dee-chem-bre

# TRANSPORT

## Public Transport

<b>What time does the ... leave/arrive?</b>	<i>A che ora parte/arriva ...?</i>	a ke o-ra par-te/ a-ree-va ...
<b>boat</b>	<i>la nave</i>	la na-ve
<b>(city) bus</b>	<i>l'autobus</i>	low-to-boos
<b>(intercity) bus</b>	<i>il pullman</i>	eel pool-man
<b>plane</b>	<i>l'aereo</i>	la-e-re-o
<b>train</b>	<i>il treno</i>	eel tre-no
<b>I'd like a ... ticket.</b>	<i>Vorrei un biglietto ...</i>	vo-ray oon bee-lye-to ...
<b>one-way</b>	<i>di solo andata</i>	dee so-lo an-da-ta
<b>return</b>	<i>di andata e ritorno</i>	dee an-da-ta e ree-toor-no
<b>1st class</b>	<i>di prima classe</i>	dee pree-ma kla-se
<b>2nd class</b>	<i>di seconda classe</i>	dee se-kon-da kla-se
<b>I want to go to ...</b>	<i>Voglio andare a ...</i>	vo-lyo an-da-re a ...
<b>The train has been cancelled/delayed.</b>	<i>Il treno è soppresso/ in ritardo.</i>	eel tre-no e so-pre-so/ een ree-tar-do
<b>the first</b>	<i>il primo</i>	eel pree-mo
<b>the last</b>	<i>l'ultimo</i>	lool-tee-mo
<b>platform (two)</b>	<i>binario (due)</i>	bee-na-ryo (doo-e)
<b>ticket office</b>	<i>biglietteria</i>	bee-lye-te-ree-a
<b>timetable</b>	<i>orario</i>	o-ra-ryo
<b>train station</b>	<i>stazione</i>	sta-tsyo-ne

## Private Transport

<b>I'd like to hire a/an ...</b>	<i>Vorrei noleggiare ...</i>	vo-ray no-le-ja-re ...
<b>car</b>	<i>una macchina</i>	oo-na ma-kee-na
<b>4WD</b>	<i>un fuoristrada</i>	oon fwo-ree- stra-da
<b>motorbike</b>	<i>una moto</i>	oo-na mo-to
<b>bicycle</b>	<i>una bici(cletta)</i>	oo-na bee-chee- (kle-ta)

**Is this the road to ...?**

<i>Questa strada porta a ...?</i>	<i>kwe-sta stra-da por-ta a ...</i>
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**Where's a service station?**

<i>Dov'è una stazione di servizio?</i>	<i>do-ve oo-na sta-tsyo-ne dee ser-vee-tsyo</i>
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**Please fill it up.**

<i>Il pieno, per favore.</i>	<i>eel pye-no per fa-vo-re</i>
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**I'd like (30) litres.**

<i>Vorrei (trenta) litri.</i>	<i>vo-ray (tren-ta) lee-tree</i>
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**(How long) can I park here?**

<i>(Per quanto tempo) posso parcheggiare qui?</i>	<i>(per kwan-to tem-po) po-so par-ke-ja-re kwee</i>
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**diesel***gasolio/diesel**ga-zo-lyo/dee-zel***petrol/gasoline***benzina**ben-dzee-na***Where do I pay?**

<i>Dove si paga?</i>	<i>do-ve see pa-ga</i>
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**I need a mechanic.**

<i>Ho bisogno di un meccanico.</i>	<i>o bee-zo-nyo dee oon me-ka-nee-ko</i>
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**I have a flat tyre.**

<i>Ho una gomma bucata.</i>	<i>o oo-na go-ma boo-ka-ta</i>
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**I've run out of petrol.**

<i>Ho esaurito la benzina.</i>	<i>o e-zo-ree-to la ben-dzee-na</i>
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## TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

**The car/motorbike has broken down (at ...).**

<i>La macchina/moto si è guastata (a ...).</i>	<i>la ma-kee-na/mo-to see e gwas-ta-ta (a ...)</i>
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**The car/motorbike won't start.**

<i>La macchina/moto non parte.</i>	<i>la ma-kee-na/mo-to non par-te</i>
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**I've had an accident.**

<i>Ho avuto un incidente.</i>	<i>o a-yoo-to oon een-chee-den-te</i>
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**Do you mind if I breastfeed here?**

<i>Le dispiace se allatto il/la bimbo/a qui? (m/f)</i>	<i>le dees-pya-che se a-la-to eel/la beem-bo/a kwee</i>
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**Are children allowed?**

<i>I bambini sono ammessi?</i>	<i>ee bam-bee-nee so-no a-me-see</i>
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**Is there ...?**

<i>C'è ...?</i>	<i>che ...</i>
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**I need ...**

<i>Ho bisogno di ...</i>	<i>o bee-zo-nyo dee ...</i>
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<b>a baby change room</b>	<i>un bagno con fasciatoio</i>	oon <i>ba-nyo</i> kon fa-sha-to-yo
<b>a car baby seat</b>	<i>un seggiolino per bambini</i>	oon se-jo-lee-no per bam-bee-nee
<b>a child-minding service</b>	<i>un servizio di babysitter</i>	oon ser-vee-tsyo dee be-bee-see-ter
<b>a children's menu</b>	<i>un menù per bambini</i>	oon me-noo per bam-bee-nee
<b>(disposable) nappies/diapers</b>	<i>pannolini (usa e getta)</i>	pa-no-lee-nee (oo-sa e je-ta)
<b>an (English-speaking) babysitter</b>	<i>un/una babysitter (che parla inglese) (m/f)</i>	oon/oo-na be-bee-see-ter (ke par-lee een-gle-ze)
<b>formula (milk)</b>	<i>latte in polvere</i>	la-te in pol-ve-re
<b>a highchair</b>	<i>un seggiolone</i>	oon se-jo-lo-ne

Also available from Lonely Planet: *Italian Phrasebook*

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# GLOSSARY

What follows is a general glossary of common terms you may come across while in Italy. For architectural lingo, turn to the [Architecture Glossary](#), while foodies can get some handy restaurant vocab on [Click here](#). For those with a more devout sensibility, a quick look at the [Saints Glossary](#) should be enlightening.

**AAST** – Azienda Autonoma di Soggiorno e Turismo; city or town tourist office (mostly in southern Italy)

**abbazia** – abbey

**ACI** – Automobile Club Italiano (Italian Automobile Association)

**acquacalda** – hot spring (Sicily)

**affittacamere** – rooms for rent in private houses

**agriturismo** – tourist accommodation on farms; farm stays

**AIG** – Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù (Italian Youth Hostel Association)

**(pizza) al taglio** – (pizza) by the slice

**albergo** – hotel

**alimentari** – grocery shop; delicatessen

**aliscafo** – hydrofoil

**Alleanza Nazionale** – National Alliance; right-wing political party

**alto** – high

**ambasciata** – embassy

**ambulanza** – ambulance

**anfiteatro** – amphitheatre

**aperitivo** – before-evening-meal drink and snack

**APT** – Azienda di Promozione Turistica; local town or city tourist office

**autonoleggio** – car hire

**autostrada** – motorway; highway

**autunno** – autumn

**AV** – Alta Velocità, high-speed trains that entered service Turin–Milan–Bologna–Florence–Rome–Naples–Salerno line in late 2009

**bambino** – child

**bancomat** – ATM

**battistero** – baptistry

**benzina** – petrol

**bianco** – white

**biblioteca** – library

**biglietto** – ticket

**biglietto cumulativo** – a cumulative ticket that allows entrance to a number of associated sights

**borgo** – archaic name for a small town, village or town sector (often dating to Middle Ages)

**Brigate Rosse** – BR; Red Brigades (terrorist group)

**cambio** – money-exchange office

**camera** – room  
**campo** – field; also a square in Venice  
**cappella** – chapel  
**carabinieri** – police with military and civil duties  
**Carnevale** – carnival period between Epiphany and Lent  
**caruggio** – dark, narrow alley (Liguria)  
**casa** – house  
**castello** – castle  
**cattedrale** – cathedral  
**cena** – evening meal  
**centro** – city centre  
**centro storico** – historic centre  
**certosa** – monastery belonging to or founded by Carthusian monks  
**chiesa** – church  
**cima** – summit  
**città** – town; city  
**città alta** – upper town  
**città bassa** – lower town  
**colle** – hill  
**colonna** – column  
**comune** – equivalent to a municipality or county; a town or city council; historically, a self-governing town or city  
**contrada** – district  
**convalida** – validation (eg of train ticket)  
**coperto** – cover charge in restaurants  
**corso** – boulevard  
**CTS** – Centro Turistico Studentesco e Giovanile; student/youth travel agency  
**cuccetta** – couchette; bed in train carriage

**dammuso** – house with thick whitewashed walls and a shallow cupola (on Pantelleria)  
**Democratici di Sinistra** – DS; Left Democrats; political party  
**Democrazia Cristiana** – DC; Christian Democrats; former Italian political party  
**diretto** – direct, slow train  
**discoteca** – nightclub  
**dolina** – pl *doline*; sinkhole created by collapsing caves; see *foiba*  
**douja** – terracotta wine jug unique to Asti  
**duomo** – cathedral

**ENIT** – Ente Nazionale Italiano per il Turismo; Italian National Tourist Board  
**enoteca** – wine bar  
**ES** – Eurostar Italia; fast train  
**espresso** – express mail; express train; short black coffee  
**est** – east  
**estate** – summer

**faraglione** – rock tower projecting out of water off the coast  
**fermo posta** – poste restante (general delivery)



**ferrovia** – railway  
**festa** – feast day; holiday  
**Feste di Pasqua** – Easter Holy Week  
**fiume** – river  
**foiba** – pl *foibe*; sinkhole created by collapsing caves; see *dolina*  
**fondaco** – trading house and hotel (Venice)  
**fontana** – fountain  
**fornaio** – bakery  
**foro** – forum  
**Forza Italia** – Go Italy; political party  
**francobollo** – postage stamp  
**frazione** – municipal division  
**funicolare** – funicular railway  
**funivia** – cable car

**gabinetto** – toilets; WC  
**gasauto, GPL** – liquid petroleum gas, LPG  
**gasolio** – diesel  
**gelateria** – ice-cream shop  
**giardino** – garden  
**golfo** – gulf  
**grotta** – cave  
**guardia forestale** – forest ranger

**IAT** – Informazione e Assistenza ai Turisti; local tourist office  
**IC** – Intercity; fast train  
**interregionale** – long-distance train that stops frequently  
**inverno** – winter  
**isola** – island  
**IVA** – Imposta di Valore Aggiunto; value-added tax

**lago** – lake  
**largo** – small square  
**lavanderia** – laundrette  
**Lega Nord** – Northern League; political party  
**lido** – beach  
**locanda** – inn; small hotel  
**lungomare** – seafront road/promenade

**mar, mare** – sea  
**marito** – husband  
**masseria** – manor farm  
**mattanza** – tuna slaughter  
**mercato** – market  
**Metropolitana (Met)** – the Rome and Naples underground transport systems  
**MM** – Metropolitana Milano (aka *il metrò*); Milan's underground transport system  
**monte** – mountain

**motorino** – scooter

**municipio** – town hall

**Natale** – Christmas

**necropoli** – ancient name for cemetery or burial site

**nord** – north

**nuraghe** – megalithic stone fortress in Sardinia

**osmizza** – little roadside shack or house in which to drink wine, eat cheese and so on

**ostello per la gioventù** – youth hostel

**osteria** – simple, trattoria-style restaurant, usually with a bar

**ovest** – west

**palazzo** – mansion; palace; large building of any type, including an apartment block

**palio** – contest

**parco** – park

**Partito della Rifondazione Comunista** – PRC; Refounded Communist Party; political party

**passeggiata** – traditional evening stroll

**pasticceria** – cake/pastry shop

**pensione** – guesthouse

**permesso di lavoro** – work permit

**permesso di soggiorno** – residency permit

**piazza** – square

**piazzale** – large open square

**pietà** – literally ‘pity’ or ‘compassion’; sculpture, drawing or painting of the dead Christ supported by the Madonna

**pinacoteca** – art gallery

**polena** – statuette that graced the prows of vessels

**polizia statale** – state police

**poltrona** – airline-type chair on a ferry

**ponte** – bridge

**porta** – gate; door

**portico** – covered walkway, usually attached to the outside of buildings

**porto** – port

**posta** – post office; also *ufficio postale*

**presepio** – nativity scene; also *presepe*

**primavera** – spring

**pronto soccorso** – first aid; casualty

**putto** – cherub

**quartiere** – district

**questura** – police station

**reale** – royal

**regionale** – slow local train

**rifugio** – mountain hut; accommodation in the Alps

**ristorante** – restaurant

**rocca** – fortress

**rosticceria** – shop selling roast meats; rotisserie

**sala** – room; hall

**salumeria** – delicatessen

**sassi** – literally ‘stones’; stone houses built in two ravines in Matera, Basilicata

**scalinata** – staircase

**scavi** – excavations

**sci alpinismo** – ski mountaineering

**sci alpino** – downhill skiing

**sci di fondo** – cross-country skiing

**servizio** – service charge in restaurants

**sestiere** – city district in Venice

**settimana bianca** – literally ‘white week’; winter-sports holiday

**spiaggia** – beach

**stazione** – station

**stazione marittima** – ferry terminal

**strada** – street; road

**strada provinciale** – main provincial road; sometimes just a country lane

**strada statale** – state highway, toll free and sometimes multilane

**sud** – south

**superstrada** – expressway; highway with divided lanes

**tavola calda** – literally ‘hot table’; pre-prepared meat, pasta and vegetable selection, often self-service

**teatro** – theatre

**tempietto** – small temple

**tempio** – temple

**terme** – thermal baths

**tesoro** – treasury

**torrente** – stream

**traghetto** – ferry

**trattoria** – simple restaurant

**Trenitalia** – Italian State Railways; also known as Ferrovie dello Stato (FS)

**trullo** – conical house in Perugia

**ufficio postale** – post office; also *posta*

**ufficio stranieri** – foreigners bureau

**vaporetto** – small passenger ferry (Venice)

**vendemia** – grape harvest

**via** – street; road

**viale** – avenue

**vico** – alley; alleyway

**vigili del fuoco** – fire brigade

**vigili urbani** – local police; traffic police

**villa** – town house; country house; also the park surrounding the house

# SAINTS GLOSSARY

**San Ambrogio** (c 337–397) – b Trier, Germany. Patron: beekeepers, domestic animals. Feast day: 7 December. This Bishop of Milan regularly incurred the ire of the emperor with his principle that ‘the emperor is within the church, he is not above it’. He is numbered among the four great doctors of the church (with Augustine, Jerome and Gregory the Great).

**Sant’Angela Merici** (1474–1540) – b Desenzano, near Brescia. Patron: sickness, handicapped people. Feast day: 27 January. Orphaned early, Angela began giving catechism lessons to the children of her village with such success that she was invited to do similar work in Brescia. Founded the Company of St Ursula (Ursuline nuns), the first teaching order of women to be established.

**San Antoni di Padova** (1195–1231) – b Lisbon, Portugal. Patron: barrenness, elderly people, pregnant women. Feast day: 13 June. Anthony joined the Franciscans and came to Italy after missionary work in Morocco. Had an unusual gift for preaching and a remarkable knowledge of the Bible. Many miracles have been attributed to his intercession and his shrine in Padua is a major pilgrimage location.

**San Benedetto da Norcia** (c 480–547) – b Norcia, Umbria. Patron: farmers. Feast day: 11 July. St Benedict divided his life between directing his monastery and living as a hermit. He was the founder of the Benedictine order.

**San Bernadino di Siena** (1380–1444) – b Massa Marittima, Tuscany. Patron: advertising, communications. Feast day: 20 May. Urging listeners to fling objects of temptation into ‘bonfires of vanities’, his public preaching attracted thousands.

**Santa Caterina di Siena** (1347–80) – b Siena, Tuscany. Patron: nurses, fire-fighters. Feast day: 29 April. Her 300-plus surviving letters are considered masterpieces of early Tuscan literature. Now somewhat dispersed – her head and right thumb in Siena, body in Rome and foot in Venice.

**Santa Cecilia** (unknown) – Patron: musicians and church music. Feast day: 22 November. Honoured as a virgin and martyr, Cecilia founded a church in the Trastevere quarter of Rome and was martyred after being charged with being an obstinate Christian.

**Santa Chiara** (1194–1253) – b Assisi, Umbria. Patron: goldsmiths. Feast day: 11 August. A devotee of St Francis, St Clare founded the order that still bears her name. Members – known as the ‘Poor Clares’ – go barefoot and mostly observe silence.

**San Francesco** (c 1181–1226) – b Assisi, Umbria. Patron: animals, merchants, the environment. Feast day: 4 October. After a wild youth, St Francis assumed extreme humility and founded the Franciscan order of friars. He lived with animals, cared for lepers and received stigmata.

**Santa Francesca Romana** (1384–1440) – b Rome. Patron: automobile drivers. Feast day: 9 March. The daughter of Roman aristocrats, Frances of Rome was married aged 13 and led an exemplary life dedicated to self-denial and good deeds.

**San Francesco di Girolamo** (1642–1716) – b near Taranto, Puglia. Feast day: 11 May. A member of the Society of Jesus, St Francis of Girolamo preached in prisons, brothels and galleys in and around Naples and also converted Turkish and Moorish prisoners. Many miraculous cures are attributed to him.

**Gregory the Great** (c 540–604) – b Rome. Patron: musicians, singers, students and teachers. Feast day: 3 September. Gregory came from a patrician family, worked as a magistrate and joined the church aged 35, becoming pope in 590.

**Ignatius of Loyola** (1491–1556) – b Loyola, Spain. Patron: soldiers. Feast day: 31 July. The founder of

the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) was the youngest son of a Basque nobleman. He was ordained in Rome aged 47 and established the Jesuit order shortly afterwards.

**San Giovanni Melchior Bosco** (1815–1888) – b Turin. Patron: editors, publishers, schoolchildren, young people. Feast day: 31 January. Raised in a peasant family, John Bosco was drawn to working among boys and young men from an early age. He opened workshops for the teaching of trades and a boarding house for apprentices. His followers are called Salesians.

# ARCHITECTURE GLOSSARY

**apse** – a vaulted semicircular or polygonal recess, especially at the end of a choir in a church

**architrave** – 1. the part of the entablature that holds columns in place; 2. a band of mouldings or other ornamentation atop or around openings or panels

**baldachin** – canopy, usually over a high altar in a basilica

**baptistry** – a church building in which baptism is/was administered

**basilica** – 1. in Roman times, a large rectangular building, typically with aisle on either side of a long nave and often with an apse at one or both ends, which was used as a place to meet or dispense justice; 2. an early or medieval Christian church with a ground plan similar to or derived from the Roman basilica

**campanile** – bell tower

**chiostro** – cloister; covered walkway, usually enclosed by columns, around a quadrangle

**coffer** – ornamental sunken panel in a ceiling

**colonnade** – a series of columns set at regular intervals, and usually supporting an entablature, a roof or a series of arches

**cornice** – 1. a horizontal moulded projection that crowns or finishes a wall or building; 2. the uppermost division of an entablature, resting on the frieze; 3. the moulding(s) between the walls and ceiling of a room

**cruciform** – cross-shaped

**crypt** – underground chamber or vault used as a burial place

**cupola** – a rounded vault or dome

**entablature** – sits on top of a row of columns on a classical facade; includes an architrave, the decorative frieze atop that and the triangular pediment to cap it off

**font** – receptacle, usually of stone, that holds the water used in baptisms

**frieze** – the part of an entablature between the architrave and the cornice, commonly ornamented with sculpture

**insula** – apartment block (antiquity)

**loggia** – covered area on the side of a building; porch; lodge

**mausoleo** – mausoleum; stately and magnificent tomb

**narthex** – vestibule along the facade of an early Christian church

**nave** – the main body, or middle part (lengthwise), of a church, flanked by aisles and extending typically from the entrance to the apse

**nymphaeum** – grotto or cave for recreation or worship (antiquity)

**pediment** – a low triangular gable crowned with a projecting cornice, especially over a portico or porch at the end of a gable-roofed building

**pietra serena** – greenish-grey ‘serene stone’

**podium** – a low continuous structure serving as a base or terrace wall

**portico** – a structure consisting of a roof supported by columns or piers forming the entrance to a church or other building

**pulpit** – a platform or raised structure in a church from which a priest delivers a sermon

**quadriporto** – four-sided porch (antiquity)

**relief** – an apparent projection of parts in a sculpture or frieze giving the appearance of the third dimension

**rustification** – stone with a chiselled, rough-hewn look

**sacristy** – room in a church where the sacred vessels, vestments etc are kept

**santuario** – sanctuary; 1. the part of a church above the altar; 2. an especially holy place in a temple (antiquity)

**sgraffito** – a surface covered with plaster, then scratched away to create a three-dimensional trompe-l’oeil effect of carved stone or brick

**spolia** – creative reuse of ancient monuments in new structures

**torre** – tower

**transept** – the transverse portion(s) of a cruciform church

**travertine** – limestone used in paving and building

**triclinium** – banqueting hall (antiquity)

**vault** – arched structure forming a ceiling or roof

**vestibule** – passage, hall or antechamber between the outer door and interior parts of a building

**vomitoria** – entrance arches to Roman amphitheatres (antiquity)

# The Authors

## DAMIEN SIMONIS

**Coordinating Author, Lombardy & the Lakes**

Damien still remembers listening to crackly shortwave Italian broadcasts years ago on many an Australian midsummer night. It all started in Rome, part of a typical backpacking tour, and carried on as a university obsession. Damien has explored Italy from Bolzano in the north to the island of Lampedusa, way south of Sicily. He has lived in Milan, Florence, Venice and Palermo, and returns frequently for work and (especially) pleasure. Involved with this guide since its 2nd edition, Damien also wrote the original editions of Lonely Planet's *Venice*, *Best of Venice*, *Florence*, *Tuscany* and *Sardinia* guides. He was last seen working on the *Italian Lakes*, a new regional guide.

For this edition of *Italy*, Damien updated the Destination, Getting Started, Itineraries, History, Lombardy & the Lakes, Directory, Transport, Language and Health chapters.

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## ALISON BING

**Culture, Food, Live to Eat, The Veneto**

When not scribbling notes in church pews and methodically eating her way across Venice's *sestiere*, Alison contributes to Lonely Planet's *Venice*, *USA*, *San Francisco* and *Tuscany & Umbria* guides and architecture, food, and art glossies, including *Architectural Record*, *Cooking Light*, and *Italy's Flash Art*. Currently, she divides her time between San Francisco and a hilltop town on the border of Lazio and Tuscany with partner Marco Flavio Marinucci. Alison holds a bachelor's degree in art history and a masters' degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, a joint programme of Tufts and Harvard Universities – perfectly respectable diplomatic credentials she regularly undermines with opinionated culture commentary for newspapers, magazines, TV and radio.

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## LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).

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## CRISTIAN BONETTO



Much to the chagrin of his northern Italian relatives, Cristian's loyalties lie with Naples. Such affection seems only natural for a writer of farce and soap with a penchant for running red lights. Based in Melbourne, Australia, Cristian makes regular trips to Campania and its capital to indulge his weakness for *mozzarella di bufala* and hot-blooded locals. His musings on the region have appeared in print from Sydney to London, while his Naples-based play *Il Cortile* toured Italy in 2003. Cristian's other Italian Lonely Planet titles to date are *Naples & the Amalfi Coast* and *Rome Encounter*.

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## GREGOR CLARK

Emilia-Romagna & Sicily

Gregor caught the Italy bug at age 14 thanks to a year living in Florence, during which his professor dad trundled the family off to see every fresco, mosaic, church and museum within a 1000km radius. He's been making regular return visits to Italy ever since, including longer stints in Venice and Le Marche, leading bike tours in the Po Valley, and huffing and puffing up every major pass in the Dolomites while researching Lonely Planet's *Cycling Italy*. A lifelong polyglot with a degree in romance languages, Gregor is a regular contributor to Lonely Planet titles, including *Brazil*, *Argentina*, *Portugal* and *New England Trips*. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Vermont, USA.

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## DUNCAN GARWOOD

Environment, Abruzzo & Molise, Outdoors, Sardinia

Duncan never set out to become an Italy buff, it just sort of happened after an encounter in a London pub and a subsequent move to Bari. More than 10 years later and he's still in Italy, now based in the Alban hills just outside of Rome. He got his first Lonely Planet commission in 2002 and has since then contributed to a raft of Italy guides, including the *Rome* city guide, *Naples & the Amalfi Coast*, *Sardinia*, and *Piedmont*. As he travels he's constantly revising his best-of lists which currently have Rome as top city, Sardinia as best beach hangout, and Abruzzo as most resilient region in the face of natural disaster.

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## Abigail Hole

Rome & Lazio

Chaos, beauty, endless summer, effortless cool, handsome inhabitants, the ice cream of your dreams, and picture-book countryside on your doorstep: Rome fits Abigail's view of an ideal city, and since she visited in 2003, she's never really left. She's married to an Italian, her first son was born in the Eternal City, and her Italian *famiglia* live here. She's written on Rome for various newspapers, magazines and websites, and contributed to Lonely Planet's *Best of Rome, Italy*, and *Puglia &*

*Basilicata* guides. A freelance writer, she nowadays does her best to divide her time between Rome, London and Puglia.

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## Alex Leviton

**Umbria & Le Marche**

Alex updated the Umbria & Le Marche chapter for the 3rd edition in a row. Alex first visited Perugia in 1998, and has returned to work, live and travel throughout Umbria and Le Marche a dozen times since. Alex received a master's degree in journalism from the University of California at Berkeley in 2002 and has been freelancing and writing for Lonely Planet ever since. She lives mostly in San Francisco and sometimes in Durham, North Carolina, but one day dreams of buying a farmhouse in the Umbria hills.

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## Virginia Maxwell

**Italian Art, Architecture, Tuscany**

After working for many years as a publishing manager at Lonely Planet's Melbourne headquarters, Virginia decided that she'd be happier writing guidebooks rather than commissioning them. Since making this decision she's written or contributed to Lonely Planet books about nine countries, eight of which are on the Mediterranean. Virginia has covered Rome for previous editions of Lonely Planet's *Italy* and the north of the country for *Western Europe*. She is also the coordinating author of Lonely Planet's *Tuscany & Umbria*.

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## Josephine Quintero

**Puglia, Basilicata & Calabria**

Born in England, Josephine started travelling with a backpack and guitar in the late '60s (didn't everyone?), stopping off in Israel on a kibbutz for a year. Further travels took her to Kuwait, where she was editor of *The Kuwaiti Digest* and was held hostage during the Iraqi invasion. She moved to the relaxed shores of Andalucía, Spain, shortly thereafter from where she makes frequent trips to Italy to visit family and deepen her appreciation of the finer things in life.

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## Brendan Sainsbury

**Liguria, Piedmont & Valle d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli Venezia Giulia**

An expat Brit now living in Vancouver, Canada, Brendan first visited Italy as an inter-railer in the 1980s when he ran out of *soldi* in Venice and ended up falling asleep outside the ticket office at Milan

railway station. He returned on his bike in 1992 and sprinted west out of Turin just in time to see Italian cycling hero Claudio Chiappucci nab a legendary Tour de France stage victory in Sestriere. As well as updating three chapters for this guidebook, Brendan is also the author of Lonely Planet's *Hiking in Italy*.

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# Behind the Scenes

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## THIS BOOK

This 9th edition of *Italy* was updated by Damien Simonis, Abigail Hole, Alex Leviton, Alison Bing, Brendan Sainsbury, Cristian Bonetto, Duncan Garwood, Gregor Clark, Josephine Quintero and Virginia Maxwell. The Health chapter was adapted from material written by Dr Caroline Evans. This guidebook was commissioned in Lonely Planet's London office, and produced by the following:

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## **ALISON BING**

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## **THE LONELY PLANET STORY**

Fresh from an epic journey across Europe, Asia and Australia in 1972, Tony and Maureen Wheeler sat at their kitchen table stapling together notes. The first Lonely Planet guidebook, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, was born.

Travellers snapped up the guides. Inspired by their success, the Wheelers began publishing books to Southeast Asia, India and beyond. Demand was prodigious, and the Wheelers expanded the business rapidly to keep up. Over the years, Lonely Planet extended its coverage to every country and into the virtual world via lonelyplanet.com and the Thorn Tree message board.

As Lonely Planet became a globally loved brand, Tony and Maureen received several offers for the company. But it wasn’t until 2007 that they found a partner whom they trusted to remain true to the company’s principles of travelling widely, treading lightly and giving sustainably. In October of that year, BBC Worldwide acquired a 75% share in the company, pledging to uphold Lonely Planet’s commitment to independent travel, trustworthy advice and editorial independence.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with over 500 staff members and 300 authors. Tony and Maureen are still actively involved with Lonely Planet. They’re travelling more often than ever, and they’re devoting their spare time to charitable projects. And the company is still driven by the philosophy of *Across Asia on the Cheap*: ‘All you’ve got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!’

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## **CRISTIAN BONETTO**

An epic *grazie* to my very own San Lucano, his partner in crime, Silvana, Valentina Vellusi and Francesco Calazzo for their incredible generosity and insight. Also, a heartfelt thanks to Santiago Faraone Mennella, Valerio Prodomo, Fulvio Salvi, Luca Cuttitta, Sally O’Brien and Denis Balibouse, Penelope Green, Antonio Romano, Carmine Romano, Daniela Ibello, Mario Spada and Daniele Sanzone. At Lonely Planet, a big thanks to Paula Hardy for the commission and support, and to Josephine Quintero and Duncan Garwood for their sterling research.

## **GREGOR CLARK**

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## **DUNCAN GARWOOD**

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# 1 MAP LEGEND

**MAP LEGEND ROUTES**

	Tollway		Mall/Steps
	Freeway		Tunnel
	Primary		Pedestrian Ramp
	Secondary		Walking Tour
	Tertiary		Walking Tour Detour
	Lane		Walking Trail
	Under Construction		Track
	Unsealed Road		One-Way Street

**TRANSPORT**

	Ferry		Rail
	Metro		Rail (Underground)
	Steam		Rail (Fast Track)
	Bus Route		Cable Car, Funicular

**HYDROGRAPHY**

	River, Creek		Canal
	Intermittent River		Water
	Swamp		Lake (Dry)
	Reef		Lake (Salt)
	Glacier		Mudflats

**BOUNDARIES**

	International		Regional, Suburb
	State, Provincial		Ancient Wall
	Marine Park		Cliff

**AREA FEATURES**

	Airport		Land
	Area of Interest		Wall
	Beach, Desert		Market
	Building		Park

**2**

	Campus		Reservation
	Cemetery, Christian		Rocks
	Cemetery, Other		Sports
	Forest		Urban

**POPULATION**

	CAPITAL (NATIONAL)		CAPITAL (STATE)
	Large City		Medium City
	Small City		Town, Village

**SYMBOLS**

<b>Sights/Activities</b>	<b>Eating</b>	<b>Information</b>
	<b>Drinking</b>	
	<b>Cafe</b>	
	<b>Entertainment</b>	
	<b>Shopping</b>	
	<b>Sleeping</b>	
	<b>Transport</b>	<b>Geographic</b>

# 1 MAP LEGEND

## ROUTES

	..... Tollway		..... Mall/Steps
	..... Freeway		..... Tunnel
	..... Primary		..... Pedestrian Overpass
	..... Secondary		..... Walking Tour
	..... Tertiary		..... Walking Tour Detour
	..... Lane		..... Walking Trail
	..... Under Construction		..... Track
	..... Unsealed Road		..... One-Way Street

## TRANSPORT

	..... Ferry		..... Rail
	..... Metro		..... Rail (Underground)
	..... Tram		..... Rail (Fast Track)
	..... Bus Route		..... Cable Car, Funicular

## HYDROGRAPHY

	..... River, Creek		..... Canal
	..... Intermittent River		..... Water
	..... Swamp		..... Lake (Dry)
	..... Reef		..... Lake (Salt)
	..... Glacier		..... Mudflats

## BOUNDARIES

	..... International		..... Regional, Suburb
	..... State, Provincial		..... Ancient Wall
	..... Marine Park		..... Cliff

## AREA FEATURES

	..... Airport		..... Land
	..... Area of Interest		..... Mall
	..... Beach, Desert		..... Market
	..... Building		..... Park

**2**

	Campus		Reservation
	Cemetery, Christian		Rocks
	Cemetery, Other		Sports
	Forest		Urban

**POPULATION**

	<b>CAPITAL (NATIONAL)</b>		<b>CAPITAL (STATE)</b>
	<b>Large City</b>		<b>Medium City</b>
	<b>Small City</b>		<b>Town, Village</b>

**SYMBOLS**

<b>Sights/Activities</b>	<b>Eating</b>	<b>Information</b>
Beach	Eating	Bank, ATM
Buddhist	<b>Drinking</b>	Embassy/Consulate
Canoeing, Kayaking	Drinking	Hospital, Medical
Castle, Fortress	Cafe	Information
Christian	<b>Entertainment</b>	Internet Facilities
Diving, Snorkeling	Entertainment	Police Station
Golf	<b>Shopping</b>	Post Office, GPO
Islamic	Shopping	Telephone
Jewish	<b>Sleeping</b>	Toilets
Monument	Sleeping	Wheelchair Access
Museum, Gallery	Camping	<b>Geographic</b>
Point of Interest	<b>Transport</b>	Hazard
Pool	Airport, Airfield	Lighthouse
Ruin	Border Crossing	Lookout
Sikh	Bus Station	Mountain, Volcano
Skiing	Cycling, Bicycle Path	National Park
Snorkeling	General Transport	Oasis
Surfing, Surf Beach	Parking Area	Pass, Canyon
Trail Head	Petrol Station	River Flow
Windsurfing	Taxi Rank	Shelter, Hut
Winery, Vineyard		Spot Height
Zoo, Bird Sanctuary		Waterfall

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