

Italy

Known to Italians as *il Bel Paese* (the Beautiful Country), Italy hits the senses hard. It's impossibly beautiful one minute, comically chaotic the next; it's colourful, noisy and highly theatrical. The food is superb and its passion utterly disarming.

It's also a nation with a lot to live up to. Many of its sights seem so familiar that the risk of disappointed expectations is a real one. Fortunately, though, no photo can portray the thrill of exploring the Colosseum in Rome or seeing Michelangelo's *David* in Florence. The unique atmosphere of Venice's haunting canals or Verona's romantic lanes can never be felt on film.

Away from the cities, Italy's ancient landscape provides a wealth of outdoor opportunities. You can walk the Amalfi Coast, ski in the Dolomites or simply soak up the sun on Sicily and Sardinia's golden beaches.

Of course, there's more to Italy than the obvious. To list every beautiful hill town in Umbria, or to review every great trattoria in Puglia or Tuscan vineyard would require a tome heavier than an airline luggage allowance. The art to visiting Italy is to get out there and discover it for yourself – sooner or later you'll find a corner you can call your own.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 301, 230 sq km
- **Capital** Rome
- **Currency** euro (€); A\$1 = €0.60; ¥100 = €0.67; NZ\$1 = €0.50; UK£1 = €1.48; US\$1 = €0.78
- **Famous for** food and wine, Roman ruins, Renaissance art, Tuscany
- **Official Language** Italian
- **Phrases** *buon giorno* (hello); *grazie* (thanks); *mi scusi* (excuse me); *quanto costa?* (how much is it?)
- **Population** 57.8 million
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 39; international access code ☎ 00; reverse-charge code ☎ 170



HIGHLIGHTS

- Throw yourself into the boiling chaos of **Rome** (p716), Italy's most compelling city.
- Savour the spectacular scenery along the **Cinque Terre** (p742) and **Amalfi Coast** (p795).
- Give your imagination a workout in the ancient Greek amphitheatre of **Syracuse** (p807).
- Lap up the romance in **Verona** (p750), Romeo and Juliet's hometown.
- Scramble among **Matera's sassi** (p797), a stark reminder of Italy's lost peasant culture.

ITINERARIES

- **One week** After climbing Pisa's Leaning Tower immerse yourself in Florence for a couple of days. Sated on the Renaissance, stop off at Siena en route to three days in Rome, time enough for its greatest hits.
- **Two weeks** After two days in Venice and a day in Verona start heading south. Gorge yourself on food in Bologna and art in Pisa, Florence and Siena as you make for Rome. Spend two days in the capital and then move on to Naples and the Amalfi Coast. Spend your final two days in the sun on Sicily, in Palermo and Taormina.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

Italian summers are long, hot and often uncomfortably humid. Winters can be surprisingly severe, even in the south where snow

in the mountainous hinterland is an annual fixture. November is Italy's wettest month.

The best times to visit are from April to June or in early autumn (September and October) – at these times the weather's sunny without being scorching and the crowds are bearable. Avoid beaches in August as prices skyrocket and much of the coastline is infested with sun-beds, booked and paid for months in advance. Winter is a peaceful and cost-effective time to visit the cities.

See p1100 for climate charts.

HISTORY

Little is known about the origins of the Etruscans but by the 7th century BC they had grown into the dominant force in central Italy, rivalled only by the Greeks on the south coast. Since the 8th century BC Greek traders had been settling in Italy founding a number of independent city-states, collectively known as Magna Graecia. Both groups thrived until the 3rd century BC when Rome's rampaging legionnaires crashed in.

Rise & Fall of the Romans

Whether or not you believe that Romulus founded Rome in 753 BC, Remus' twin brother is generally acknowledged as the first of Rome's seven kings. The last, the Etruscan Tarquinius, was ousted in 509 BC and replaced by the Roman Republic.

The fledgling republic got off to a shaky start but once it had survived a Gallic invasion in 390 BC, it began to spread its wings. It colonised much of the Mediterranean and, under Julius Caesar, Gaul. Caesar, the last of the republic's consuls, was assassinated in 44 BC, sparking a power struggle between his great-nephew Octavian and Mark Antony (Cleopatra's lover). Octavian prevailed and in 27 BC was hailed as Augustus Caesar, Rome's first emperor.

Rome's golden age came in the 2nd century AD, but by the 3rd century economic decline and the spread of Christianity was fueling discontent. Diocletian tried to stop the rot by splitting the empire into eastern and western halves, but when his successor, Constantine (the first Christian emperor), moved his court to Constantinople, Rome's days were numbered. Sacked by the Goths in 410 and plundered by the Vandals in 455, the Western Empire finally fell in 476.



HOW MUCH?

- Cappuccino & cornetto €1.80
- 0.5L house wine €4
- City bus ticket €1
- Gelato €1.50-3
- Armani jeans €180

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- 1L petrol €1.30
- 1L bottled water €1.50
- Peroni beer €2.50-5
- Souvenir T-shirt €8-15
- Slice of pizza €1.50-3

From the Renaissance to the Risorgimento

The Middle Ages were characterised by the development of powerful city-states. These were often associated with single families: the Sforza in Milan, the Este in Ferrara and, most famously of all, the Medici in Florence. Enthusiastic patrons of the arts, it was the Medici, along with the Roman popes, who financed much of the 15th-century Renaissance.

By the end of the 16th century most of Italy was in foreign hands – the Spanish in the south and the Austrians in the north. Three centuries later, Napoleon's brief Italian interlude gave rise to the idea of unification which, in the mid-19th century, snowballed into the Risorgimento (unification movement). Led by Cavour's political nous and Garibaldi's military daring, the movement culminated in the 1861 declaration of the Kingdom of Italy under King Vittorio Emanuele. In 1870 Rome was wrested from the papacy and became Italy's capital.

Fascism, WWII & the Italian Republic

In 1925, just six years after he'd founded the Fascist Party, Benito Mussolini became Italy's undisputed leader. Invoking Rome's imperial past he embarked on a disastrous invasion of Abyssinia (modern-day Ethiopia) and, in 1940, entered WWII on Germany's side. Three years later the Allies invaded Sicily and his nation rebelled: King Vittorio Emanuele III had Mussolini arrested and Italy surrendered to the Allies. Mussolini was killed by Italian partisans in April 1945.

In the aftermath of the war Italy voted to abolish the monarchy and, in 1946, a republic was declared.

A founding member of the European Economic Community, Italy has enjoyed a largely successful postwar period. Consistent economic growth survived a period of domestic terrorism in the 1970s and continued well into the 1980s.

Modern Times

The 1990s heralded a period of crisis. In 1992, a national bribery scandal known as *Tangentopoli* ('kickback city') revealed a political and business system riddled with corruption. Top business players were im-

prisoned and the main political parties were reduced to tatters, creating a power vacuum into which billionaire media-mogul Silvio Berlusconi deftly stepped. After a short period as prime minister in 1994, he won the elections again in 2001 and went on to become Italy's longest serving postwar prime minister. His tenure was rarely free of controversy as opponents railed against his hold over Italian TV and support for American intervention in Iraq. The party came to an end five years later, when, after an acrimonious election campaign, Romano Prodi's centre-left coalition claimed the narrowest of victories in the April 2006 general election.

PEOPLE

Italy's population is one of the oldest in the world. Of 57.8 million people, some 10 million are over 65, and Istat (Italy's official statistics body) estimates that by 2050 the population will have fallen to 55.8 million.

Immigration has led to a huge increase in Italy's foreign population – from just over 350,000 in 1991 to an estimated 2.6 million in 2004 – and a corresponding escalation in racial tensions.

Traditionally Italians are very conscious of their regional identity and very family orientated. Times are changing, but still 67.9% of single Italian men remain at home until they marry.

RELIGION

The role of religion in modern Italian life is an ambiguous one: on the one hand 84% of Italians consider themselves Catholic; on the other, only 33.9% attend church regularly. Still, first Communion, church weddings and regular feast days are an integral part of life.

Beyond Catholicism, there are about 1.3 million Muslims, making Islam Italy's second religion, about 400,000 evangelical Protestants, 350,000 Jehovah's Witnesses and smaller numbers of Jews and Buddhists.

ARTS

Literature

Italy's literary past ranges from Virgil's (70–19 BC) *Aeneid*, to the anguished war stories of Primo Levi (1919–87) and the fantastical tales of Italo Calvino (1923–85).

THE MAFIA

It takes a pretty big story to knock a general election off the headlines before a winner's even been declared. But that's exactly what happened on 11 April 2006 when it was announced that after 43 years on the run, the Sicilian mafia boss, Bernardo Provenzano, had been arrested. A huge PR victory for the Italian police, the arrest was an important breakthrough in the fight against organised crime; just how important remains to be seen.

Italy's mafia comprises five distinct groups: the original Cosa Nostra in Sicily; the Neapolitan Camorra; the 'Ndrangheta in Calabria, and the two Puglian groups, the Sacra Corona Unita and La Rosa. Together they have an annual turnover estimated at €100 billion or 10% of Italy's GDP.

Of the five it's the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta that's been attracting the most attention in recent months. Said to control distribution of Colombian cocaine in Europe, it sent shivers through Calabria's political hierarchy when, in October 2005, it gunned down the region's vice president. The murder, before witnesses and in broad daylight, was widely interpreted as a declaration of inviolability. That the killers were subsequently caught did little to dent the pervading sense of pessimism.

The mafia groups are deeply entrenched in their territories and with the power to impose silence through fear, they are as healthy now as they've ever been, their profits never healthier. To their traditional activities of trafficking (cigarettes, drugs, arms, bootleg CDs), racketeering and profiteering on public works contracts, they've added the hugely lucrative business of illegal waste disposal. The Italian environmental organisation Legambiente estimates that the ecomafia has made up to €132 billion in the last 10 years, burying or burning everything from asbestos to toxic liquid.

Dante (1265–1321), whose *Divina Commedia* (Divine Comedy) dates to the early 1300s, was one of three 14th-century greats, the others being Petrarch (1304–74) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75), considered the first Italian novelist.

Just over a century later Machiavelli (1469–1527) established his name with his political classic, *The Prince*.

In more recent times Sicily has proved a fertile literary soil. Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa (1896–1957) depicts the island's wary mentality in *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard), a theme that Leonardo Sciascia (1921–89) later returned to. Andrea Camilleri's (1925–) whodunits starring maverick detective Montalbano are hugely popular.

Cinema

For a moment in the early 2000s, it looked like Italian cinema was about to enjoy a Renaissance. Roberto Benigni (1952–) had recently won an Oscar for *La Vita è Bella* (Life is Beautiful; 1997) and Gabriele Muccino (1967–) was winning rave reviews for his smash hit *L'Ultimo Bacio* (The Last Kiss; 2001). Unfortunately, the moment passed and little came of the hope.

The heyday of Italian cinema was the post-WWII period, when the neorealists Roberto

Rossellini (1906–77), Vittorio de Sica (1901–74) and Luchino Visconti (1907–76) turned their cameras onto the war-weary Italians. Classics of the genre include *Ladri di Biciclette* (Bicycle Thieves; 1948) and *Roma Città Aperta* (Rome Open City; 1945).

Federico Fellini (1920–94) created his own highly visual style and won an international audience with films such as *La Dolce Vita* (The Sweet Life; 1959).

Of Italy's contemporary directors, Nanni Moretti (1953–) can usually be relied on for an idiosyncratic take on Italian life. His thinly disguised attack on Berlusconi, *Il Caimano* (The Cayman; 2006), caused controversy when it was released in the middle of the 2006 election campaign.

Music

Emotional and highly theatrical, opera has always appealed to the Italians. Verdi (1813–1901) might be the most famous of Italian composers, but Puccini (1858–1924), Bellini (1801–35), Donizetti (1797–1848) and Rossini (1792–1868) are hardly unknowns. Tenor Luciano Pavarotti (1935–) enjoyed critical acclaim and popular support during his singing career, while Andrea Bocelli (1958–) continues to sell CDs by the box load.

TOP TEN ITALY

- Top Museums – Museo e Galleria Borghese, Rome (p723); Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples (p787)
- Top Medieval Centre – Urbino (p785)
- Top Architecture – Baroque Lecce (p799); Florence's Duomo (p772)
- Top Ruins – Pompeii (p792); Agrigento, Sicily (p808)
- Top Festivals – Il Palio, Siena (p780); Carnevale, Venice (p755)
- Top Walks – Dolomites (p767); Cinque Terre (p742)
- Top Coastline – Amalfi Coast (p795)
- Top Pizza – Da Michele, Naples (p790)
- Top Coffee – San Tommaso 10, Turin (p745)
- Top Drinking Piazzas – Campo de' Fiori, Rome (p734); Campo Santa Margherita, Venice

But it's not all opera. Antonio Vivaldi (1675–1741) created the concerto in its present form and wrote one of classical music's greatest hits *Le Quattro Stagioni* (The Four Seasons). Whether the hits of Eros Ramazzotti (1963–) will be played in 300 years' time is a matter of debate.

Architecture & Visual Arts

Everywhere you go in Italy you're faced with reminders of the country's convoluted past. In the south, where the Greeks left an indelible mark, there are well-preserved temples in the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento (p808), Sicily. Pompeii (p792) offers insights into the day-to-day lives of Romans, while the Byzantine mosaics of Ravenna (p766), Venice (p752) and Palermo (p801) reflect eastern influences.

During the 15th century, artists and architects flourished, particularly in Florence and Rome. Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) defied the architectural laws of the day in creating what was considered the greatest artistic feat of the day – the dome of Florence's Duomo (p772). His achievement was later overshadowed by the works of Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), the greatest of the High Renaissance (1490–

1520) artists. Contemporaries Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) and Raphael (1483–1520) further brightened the scene.

Controversial and highly influential, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573–1610) dominated the late 16th century. More than one of his paintings was rejected by religious patrons on the grounds that it was blasphemous. There were few such problems in the ensuing baroque era when art was put at the service of the church. The result was highly decorative – witness the Roman works of rivals Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) and Francesco Borromini (1599–1667) or, further south, the excesses of Lecce's *centro storico* (historic centre; p799).

Signalling a return to the sober lines of classical art, neoclassicism was the predominant movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Its most famous Italian exponent was Canova (1757–1822), who carved a name for himself with his smooth sensual style. Rome's Spanish Steps (p725) and Trevi Fountain (p725) both date to this period.

But if neoclassicism owed everything to the past, Italian futurism provided a rallying cry for modernism. Inspired by Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916), painters like Giacomo Balla (1871–1958) were hugely influential. Caught up in the modernist spirit, the 1920s *razionalisti* (rationalists) provided the architectural vision behind the EUR district in Rome. Built for the Esposizione Universale di Roma in 1942, from which it takes its name, EUR is a suburb in the south of Rome, an area of wide boulevards and huge linear buildings – unlike anywhere else in the ancient city.

ENVIRONMENT

Bound on three sides by four seas (the Adriatic, Ligurian, Tyrrhenian and Ionian), Italy has more than 8000km of coastline. Inland, about 75% of the peninsula is mountainous – the Alps curve 966km around the country's northern border while the Apennines extend 1350km from north to south.

Italy and its surrounding seas harbour a rich fauna. You're unlikely to meet them, but 80 Marsican brown bears roam free in the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise. To the north, the Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini is home to more than 50

species of mammal, including the wolf and wildcat, and over 150 types of bird. Swordfish, tuna and dolphins are common along the coastline and although white sharks are known to exist, attacks are rare.

Italy has 21 national parks, covering about 5% of the country, and over 400 nature reserves, natural parks and wetlands. Major parks include the Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso (Piedmont/Valle d'Aosta), Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise, Parco Nazionale del Pollino (Basilicata/Calabria) and Parco Nazionale dei Monti Sibillini (Umbria/Le Marche).

Italy also has 40 World Heritage sites, more than any other country. These range from the historic centres of Siena, Naples, Pienza and Florence, to sites of natural beauty such as the Amalfi Coast, Cinque Terre and Aeolian Islands.

Of Italy's environmental challenges, air pollution is the most obvious. A feature of many city centres, it's largely caused by car emissions. Traffic restrictions are helping but still a lot needs to be done.

In the countryside, tree clearing and illegal building have led the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) to claim that a third of Italy's coastline is threatened by erosion. There are also natural hazards: landslides, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

FOOD & DRINK

Italians are serious, knowledgeable and highly opinionated about food. However, *la cucina italiana* is something that only foreigners talk about. Italians discuss Tuscan cuisine or Neapolitan pizzas, Piedmontese wine or Puglian pasta. In short, Italian cooking is regional. Local specialities abound – pesto in Liguria, pizza in Naples, *ragù* (bolognese sauce) in Bologna. It's the same with wine – Piedmont produces Italy's great reds, Barolo, Barbaresco and Dolcetto, while Tuscany's famous for its Chianti, Brunello and white Vernaccia. Peroni is the national beer; for a draft, order it *alla spina*.

As a rule it always pays to eat local food prepared with seasonal produce. Vegetarians will find delicious fruit and veg in the hundreds of daily markets. Few restaurants cater specifically to vegetarians but most serve vegetable-based antipasti (starters), pastas, contorni (side dishes) and salads.

Popular antipasti include fried vegetables and vegetables marinated in olive oil. Pasta is often served with mushrooms, courgettes or eggplant.

Where to Eat & Drink

Dining options are divided into several categories. At the most basic level a *tavola calda* (literally 'hot table') offers canteen-style food. Pizzerias, the best of which have a *forno a legna* (wood-fired oven), serve the obvious but often a full menu as well. For takeaway, a *rosticceria* sells cooked meats and a *pizza al taglio*, pizza by the slice.

To sample wine make for an *enoteca*, a wine bar that will often serve light snacks (cheeses and cold meats) and a couple of hot dishes. Alternatively, most bars/cafés serve *tramezzini* (sandwiches) and *panini* (bread rolls). Another option is to go to one of the many *alimentari* (delicatessens) and ask them to make a panino with the filling of your choice. At a *pasticceria* you can buy pastries, cakes and biscuits. *Forni* (bakeries) are another good choice for a cheap snack.

For a full meal you'll want a trattoria, an *osteria* or a *ristorante*. Traditionally, *trattorie* were family-run places that served a basic menu of local dishes at affordable prices. Thankfully, a few still do. *Ristoranti* offer more choice and smarter service. An *osteria* is usually a small trattoria or wine bar serving a limited food menu.

Restaurants, all of which are nonsmoking, usually open for lunch from noon to 3pm and for dinner from 7.30pm, earlier in tourist areas. For more on opening times see the Italy Directory, p816.

Most eateries charge a *pane e coperto* (cover charge), ranging from €1 to €4, and a *servizio* (service charge) of 10% to 15%. If a service charge isn't included, tourists are expected to round up the bill or leave 10%.

Habits & Customs

A full Italian meal consists of an antipasto, a *primo piatto* (first course), a *secondo piatto* (second course) with an *insalata* (salad) or *contorno* (vegetable side dish), and *dolci* (dessert). When eating out it's perfectly acceptable to order, say, a *primo* followed by an *insalata* or *contorno*.

Italians don't tend to eat a sit-down *colazione* (breakfast), preferring instead a

cappuccino and *cornetto* (croissant) at a bar. *Pranzo* (lunch) is traditionally the main meal of the day, although this is changing as office hours reduce many people to a light lunch and large *cena* (evening meal). Italians are late diners, often not eating until after 9pm.

ROME

pop 2.6 million

Rome. Just the name conjures up 2700 years of Western civilisation. After three millennia of exerting influence over the world's politics, religion, architecture, transportation and social mores, Rome might now be filled with more foreigners carrying maps of Rome than actual Roman citizens. However, its storied past and legendary buildings overpower and captivate even the most jaded visitors. From the iconic Colosseum to the medieval winding streets of Trastevere, practically every centimetre of Rome is saturated in history or artistically inspired, or both. Even the air feels just a tiny bit more significant here.

Modern Rome stands up to its past. It is at once traditional and avant-garde, chaotic and fashionable. It is a thriving metropolis, the seat of many an international organisation, but with nary a skyscraper in sight. Its moniker, the *Città Eterna* (Eternal City), speaks as much to its future as its past.

HISTORY

Rome's earliest origins displayed nothing of the greatness it would later attain. It started out as a settlement of Etruscan, Latin and Sabine tribes, but the legendary founding dates to 21 April 753 BC. The noble twins Romulus and Remus had been sent down the Tiber River as babies by their rival great uncle Amulius. Nursed by a she-wolf and raised by shepherds, the strong and brave twins eventually learned of their noble birth and returned to the village, where they deposed Amulius, taking back control of the village. Soon after establishing the future empire on Palatine Hill, Romulus killed Remus in a quarrel and named the burgeoning settlement after himself.

In just a few hundred years, the village grew into an almost omnipotent superpower and, at one point, controlled most

of the Mediterranean and European world, from Britain to Egypt. Up until the decline and eventual fall of the Roman Empire in AD 476, the city was the grandest the Western world would ever know.

In the fourth century, a new force spread. The apostles Peter and Paul had been slowly gaining Christian converts since their visits in the 1st century AD, but it was Emperor Constantine who helped inextricably link Rome and Christianity by making it the official religion. In AD 312, Constantine reportedly had a vision of the cross before winning a battle. Impressed with the power of this Christian God (and, perhaps even more impressed with the power of institutionalising a state religion of his own choosing), Constantine became the religion's most ardent patron. He stopped crucifixions (in favour of hanging), got rid of pagan sacrifices and temples, Christianised the Eastern city of Byzantium (which became Constantinople and is now modern-day Istanbul), and initiated the Council of Nicaea, which voted to confirm the divinity of Jesus.

ORIENTATION

Rome is surprisingly small. Most sights are between the Roma Termini train station and the Vatican on the other side of the Tevere (Tiber) River, just three metro stops apart, or about an hour's walk.

Most intercity trains stop at Roma Termini (sometimes called Stazione Termini). *Urbano* (city) buses leave from just in front, in the Piazza dei Cinquecento, and Metro Linea A and B trains depart from under the train station. Several trains and most *extraurbano* (intercity) buses depart from Stazione Tiburtina, out of the *centro storico* but accessible by Metro Linea B.

If your time is limited, it helps to plan an itinerary. Most of the major museums and galleries are open all day until 7pm or 8pm, however, some museums are closed on Monday or around lunchtime, and the Vatican museums are closed on all but the last Sunday of the month, so check ahead.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Feltrinelli International (Map p724; Via Orlando 84; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-1.30pm & 4-8pm Sun) An extensive selection of maps, travel books and titles in many different languages.

Discount Cards

Roma Archeologia Card (☎ 06 39 96 77 00; €20, valid 7 days) Gets you into nine important attractions, including the Colosseum, Palatine and some of the Museo Nazionale Romano locations.

Emergency

Foreigners' Bureau (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 468 62 977; Via Genova 2) Report thefts here.
Police station (Questura; Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 468 61; Via San Vitale 11; ☎ 24hr)

Internet Access

Internet cafés are plentiful and most hostels and many hotels offer access (listed under Sleeping); the area near Roma Termini offers the highest concentration.

Easy Internet Café (Map pp722-3; Via Barberini 2; per hr €2; ☎ 8am-1am) Over 100 terminals on two floors.

Telephone Center International (Map p724; Via Volturmo 52; per hr €2) Good rates on international calls.

Medical Services

Each *farmacia* (pharmacy) window has a list of all-night pharmacies, or call ☎ 06 22 89 41. Pharmacists sometimes assist with minor diagnoses.

24-hour Pharmacy (Map p724; ☎ 06 488 00 19; Piazza del Cinquecento 49/50/51) Opposite Roma Termini.

Ospedale Bambino Gesù (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 685 92 351; Piazza di Sant'Onofrio 4) Rome's paediatric hospital.

Ospedale San Gallicano (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 588 23 90; Via di San Gallicano 25a, Trastevere)

Ospedale Santo Spirito (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 68 35 22 41; Lungotevere in Sassetta 1) Near the Vatican; multilingual staff.

Money

American Express (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 676 41; Piazza di Spagna 38)

Thomas Cook (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 482 81 82; Piazza Barberini 21)

Post

For general post information, call ☎ 800 160 100.

Main post office (Map pp722-3; Piazza San Silvestro 19) Near the Spanish Steps.

Vatican post office (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 69 88 34 06; Piazza di San Pietro) Said to offer faster and more reliable service.

Tourist Information

Enjoy Rome (Map p724; ☎ 06 445 18 43; www.enjoyrome.com; Via Marghera 8a; ☎ 8.30am-7pm

Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) Five minutes' walk northeast of Roma Termini. A well-run private tourist office with a free hotel-reservation service and travel agency; books tickets to operas, shows and offers info on nightlife as well as walking tours of Rome and visits to nearby destinations such as Ostia Antica (p738).

Rome Online (www.romaturismo.com) Everything you need to know about Rome.

Tourist information line (☎ 06 8205 9127; ☎ 9am-7pm daily)

Tourist offices Roma Termini (Map p724; ☎ 06 48 90 63 00; ☎ 8am-9pm); Via Parigi 5 (Main Tourist Office; Map p724; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat) Good information on hotels and sights. Both offices provide maps and printed information about bus services.

Vatican tourist office (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 69 88 16 62; Piazza di San Pietro; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) Next to the basilica.

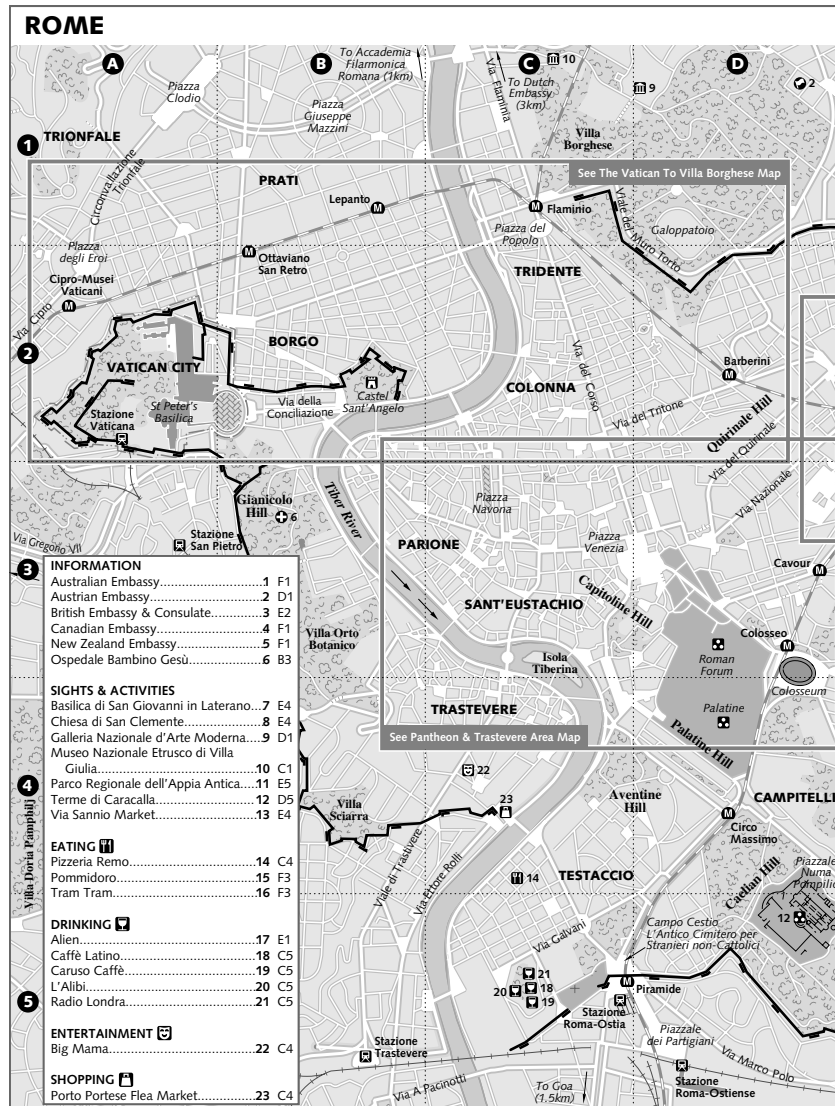
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

When it comes to seeing the sights, that old adage *Roma, non basta una vita* (Rome, a lifetime is not enough), couldn't be more true. Possibly the only European capital with more ruins than dog poop, Rome boasts thousands of years of visible history. Although most tourists stick to the classic itinerary – the Colosseum, Forum, Pantheon and Vatican – we urge you to branch out and spend a day bicycling along the Appia Antica or wandering the Protestant Cemetery.

Colosseum

It takes a bit of imagination, but when visiting Rome's greatest known monument, the **Colosseum** (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 399 67 700; admission with Palatine Hill €10; ☎ 9am-1hr before sunset), try to close your eyes and picture how the ancient arena would have appeared in its heyday – the marble-covered building crammed with 50,000 spectators, complete with boxed seats (some with benefactors' carved names still visible), toilet facilities, refreshment stands and a giant retractable sail to act as a roof. Instead of football, however, they would have been watching gladiators fight panthers, hippopotami and crocodiles, and occasionally, one another.

The Colosseum was built by Emperor Vespasian in AD 72 and finished by his son Titus in AD 80. During the Middle Ages, the Colosseum became a fortress, then later a quarry for travertine and marble to build Palazzo Venezia and other buildings.



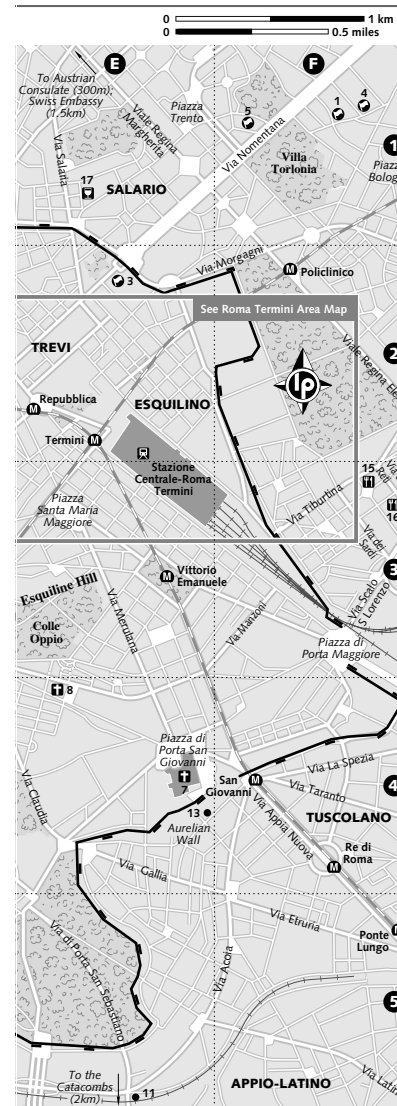
On the west side is the triumphal arch built to honour Constantine following his victory over his rival Maxentius at the battle of Milvian Bridge in AD 312. Its decorative reliefs were taken from earlier structures.

It pays to join one of the impromptu walking tours inside for an extra €8, as you

get to jump the line for a guided tour of both the Colosseum and Palatine Hill.

Roman Forum & Palatine Hill

Visit the dawn of Western civilisation at the **Roman Forum** (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 399 67 700; admission free; 🕒 9am-1hr before sunset Mon-Sat), set in a valley between the Capitoline and Palatine



Hills. Throughout the era of the kings, the Republic and the Empire, the Forum was the political, religious and social centre of the Roman world.

In the 4th century AD, after the fall of the Roman Empire, the area fell into disuse, eventually being used as pasture land. By the medieval days, the buildings were

plundered for their precious marble. Many temples and buildings were converted to other uses, while some monuments lay half-revealed. The area was systematically excavated in the 18th and 19th centuries, and excavations are continuing.

As you enter at Largo Romolo e Remo, to your left is the **Tempio di Antonino e Faustina**, built by the senate in AD 141 and transformed into a church in the 8th century. To your right are the remains of the **Basilica Aemilia**, built in 179 BC. The **Via Sacra**, which traverses the Forum from northwest to southeast, runs in front of the basilica. Towards the Campidoglio is the **Curia**, once the meeting place of the Roman senate and converted into a church. In front of the Curia is the **Lapis Niger**, a large piece of black marble that purportedly covered Romulus' grave.

The **Arco di Settimo Severo** was erected in AD 203 in honour of this emperor and his sons, and is considered one of Italy's major triumphal arches. A circular base stone beside the arch marks the **umbilicus urbis**, the symbolic centre of ancient Rome.

Southwest of the arch is the **Tempio di Saturno**, one of the most important ancient Roman temples. Dedicated to the god of chaos and disorder in 497 BC, it was later used as the state treasury. The **Basilica Giulia**, in front of the temple, was the seat of justice, and nearby is the **Tempio di Giulio Cesare**, erected by Augustus in 29 BC on the site where Caesar's body was burned.

Back towards the Palatine Hill is the **Tempio dei Castori**, built in 489 BC in honour of the Heavenly Twins, or Dioscuri. It is easily recognisable by its three remaining columns.

In the area southeast of the temple is the **Chiesa di Santa Maria Antiqua**, the oldest Christian church in the Forum, now closed to the public. Back on Via Sacra is the **Casa delle Vestali**, home of the virgins who tended the eternal flame of Rome in the adjoining **Tempio di Vesta**. The vestal virgins were chosen at the age of 10 for their beauty and virtue. They were required to stay chaste and committed to keeping the flame for 30 years.

The next major monument is the vast **Basilica di Costantino**. Its impressive design inspired Renaissance architects. The **Arco di Tito**, at the Colosseum end of the Forum, was built in AD 81 in honour of the victories

ROME IN TWO DAYS

Set your alarm early to beat the crowds for the **Sistine Chapel** (opposite), the **Vatican Museums** (opposite) and **St Peter's Basilica** (below). Stop for pizza near the **Trevi Fountain** (p725) or **Campo de' Fiori** (p723). Spend the afternoon at the **Musei Capitolini** (opposite) and head to **Trastevere** (p725) for dinner at **Le Mani in Pasta** (p733), then on to **Sette Oche** (p733) for a drink.

On day two, start at the **Roman Forum** (p718), **Palatine Hill** (p718) and the **Colosseum** (p717). Head to the Jewish Ghetto for lunch at **Sora Margherita** (p732) and into **Piazza Navona** (p722) for some *gelato* and people-watching. If you're still up for a museum, try **Castel Sant'Angelo** (p722) or **Museo e Galleria Borghese** (p725), or spend the afternoon along the **Appia Antica** (p728) or in the **Protestant Cemetery** (p729). Grab pizza and join the *passeggiata* (evening stroll) around Campo de' Fiori and splurge at **Roscioli** (p732) for dinner or deli takeaway, ending with a toast to your Roman holiday at **Bar del Fico** (p734).

of the emperors Titus and Vespasian against Jerusalem.

From here, climb the **Palatine** (admission €10; entrances are along Via di San Gregorio and Piazza dei Santa Maria Nova), where wealthy Romans built their homes and legend says that Romulus founded the city. Archaeological evidence shows that the earliest settlements in the area were in fact on the Palatine and date back to near 753 BC. Like the Forum, the buildings of the Palatine fell into ruin and in the Middle Ages the hill became the site of convents and churches. During the Renaissance, it was quite fashionable to establish a family garden here.

Again, you'll have to use your power of imagination at the **Domus Augustana** and **Domus Flavia**. Although they don't look like much now, the latter was the residence of the Emperor Domitian, who used the large rectangular room (now ruins) as the very first home entertainment system. Satellite TV having not yet been invented, Domitian instead set up his very own home athletic stadium so he could watch sports matches in splendid privacy. Also of note on the Palatine Hill are the **Tempio della Magna Mater**, built in 204 BC, and the fresco-adorned **Casa di Livia**, thought to belong to the wife of Emperor Augustus.

Vatican City

The smallest sovereign nation in the world with a population of 900, Vatican City comprises just 1 sq km west of the Tiber but houses the most important collections of artefacts, art, relics and archaeology in the Catholic world. After Italian unification in 1861, the Papal States of central Italy

became part of the new Kingdom of Italy, causing a considerable rift between Church and State. In 1929 Mussolini gave the pope full sovereignty over what is now called Vatican City. The Vatican has considerable influence, along with its own postal service, currency, newspaper, radio station and even an army of Swiss Guards to watch over the pope's personal safety.

ST PETER'S BASILICA & SQUARE

The glorious **St Peter's Basilica** (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 69 88 20 19; Piazza di San Pietro; admission free; ☎ 7am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Mar) is testament to the religious, artistic and cultural significance of Rome. There has been a church here since Constantine's reign during the 4th century, marking the legendary spot where St Peter was buried. Bramante designed the basilica in 1503, but final kudos went to Michelangelo, who took over the project in 1547, at the age of 72, and was responsible for the design of the grand dome, which soars 120m above the altar and was completed in 1590, long after the genius artist and architect had died. The cavernous interior contains numerous treasures, including Michelangelo's superb *Pietà*, sculpted when he was only 24 years old and the only work to carry his signature.

Enter the Basilica through Piazza di San Pietro, four rows of colonnades designed by Bernini. Pilgrims, nuns and tourists congregate here in long lines. Entrance to the dome is to the right as you climb the stairs to the basilica's atrium. Make the climb on foot (€4) or by lift (€7). Dress rules and security are stringently enforced – no shorts, miniskirts or sleeveless tops, and be prepared to have your bags searched.

Equally impressive is Bernini's masterpiece **Piazza di San Pietro** (St Peter's Square), laid out in the 17th century. The vast piazza is bound by two semicircular colonnades, each comprised of four rows of Doric columns, and in its centre stands an obelisk brought to Rome by Caligula from Heliopolis (in ancient Egypt). The pope usually gives a **public audience** at 10am every Wednesday in the Papal Audience Hall or St Peter's Square. You must make a booking, in person or by fax to the **Prefettura della Casa Pontificia** (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 69 88 46 31; fax 06 69 88 38 65) on the Monday or Tuesday beforehand, between 9am and 1pm. To go in person, enter via the bronze doors under the colonnade to the right of St Peter's (facing the church). Catholics are requested to bring a letter from their parish priest.

VATICAN MUSEUMS

The buildings that house the **Vatican Museums** (Map pp722-3; adult/concession €12/8, free last Sun of month; ☎ hours vary), known collectively as the Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, cover an area of 5½ hectares.

The museums contain an astonishing collection of art and treasures collected by the popes, and you'll need several hours to see the most important areas. Make sure you pick up a floor-plan leaflet. There are four very helpful 'one-way' itineraries, lasting from 1½ to five hours, mapped out with the aim of simplifying visits and containing the huge number of visitors. The Sistine Chapel comes towards the very end of a full visit; otherwise, you can walk straight there, but if you'd like to visit the Stanze di Raffaello, do so first as you can't backtrack once in the chapel.

Museo Pio-Clementino contains Greek and Roman antiquities, and is on the ground floor near the entrance. Through the superb **Galleria delle Carte Geografiche** (Map Gallery) and **Galleria degli Arazzi** (Tapestry Gallery) are the magnificent **Stanze di Raffaello**, which were once the private apartments of Pope Julius II and are decorated with frescoes by Raphael. Of particular interest to Raphael fans is the magnificent **Stanza della Segnatura**, which features the artist's masterpieces *The School of Athens* and *Disputation on the Sacrament*.

From Raphael's rooms, go down the stairs to the sumptuous **Appartamento Borgia**,

decorated with frescoes by Pinturicchio, and then down another flight of stairs to the **Sistine Chapel**, the private papal chapel built in 1473 for Pope Sixtus IV. Michelangelo's wonderful frescoes, *Creation* and *Last Judgment*, have been superbly restored to their original brilliance. It took Michelangelo four years, at the height of the Renaissance, to paint *Creation*; 24 years later he painted the extraordinary *Last Judgment*. The other walls of the chapel were painted by artists including Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio and Signorelli.

Opening hours are very confusing but are listed on signposts all around the Vatican.

Piazza del Campidoglio & Musei Capitolini

The lowest of Rome's seven hills is **Capitoline Hill**, which had been a centre of Jupiter worship in ancient Rome (Brutus hid here in a temple – now destroyed – after assassinating Caesar) and then housed the medieval city government. None other than Michelangelo was commissioned to redesign the interior square of the **Piazza del Campidoglio** (Map pp726-7), which he had face St Peter's rather than the Forum. The grand stairs, known as the **Cordonata**, lead to the two palaces that make up the buildings of the Musei Capitolini as well as the Palazzo Senatorio, the seat of city government since 1143. A modern copy of the bronze equestrian statue of Emperor Marcus Aurelius is at the piazza's centre; the original is on display in the ground-floor portico of the **Palazzo Nuovo** (Palazzo del Museo Capitolino; Map pp726-7).

Impressing visitors since 1471, the **Musei Capitolini** (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 96 74 00; adult/concession €6.50/4.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Sun) is the oldest antiquities museum in the world. Of its hundreds of ancient Roman sculptures and paintings, perhaps the most photographed is what's left of the colossal statue Constantine had commissioned of himself – a giant

MUSEUM ENTRY

Entry to various attractions is free for EU citizens aged under 18 and over 65, and reduced (usually half-price) for EU citizens aged between 18 and 25, plus those from countries with reciprocal arrangements and many university students.



head, hand and foot, themselves larger than most adults.

Walk to the right of the Palazzo Senatorio for a lovely panorama of the Roman Forum. Walk to the left of the same building to reach the ancient Roman **Carcere Mamertino** (Mamertine Prison; Map pp726-7; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm), where it's believed St Peter was imprisoned.

The **Chiesa di Santa Maria d'Araucoeli** (Map pp726-7) is between Piazza del Campidoglio and the Monumento Vittorio Emanuele II, at the highest point of the Capitoline Hill. It is built on the site where legend says the Tiburtine Sybil told the Emperor Augustus of the coming birth of Christ.

Castel Sant'Angelo

The huge fortress in front of the Vatican is **Castel Sant'Angelo** (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 68 19 111; Lungotevere Castello 50; adult/concession €6.50/2.50; ☎ 9am-8pm), built in the 2nd century AD by the Emperor Hadrian for his mausoleum. It's now a museum displaying its 1900 years of history as the papal residence, fortress and prison. As the second-largest building

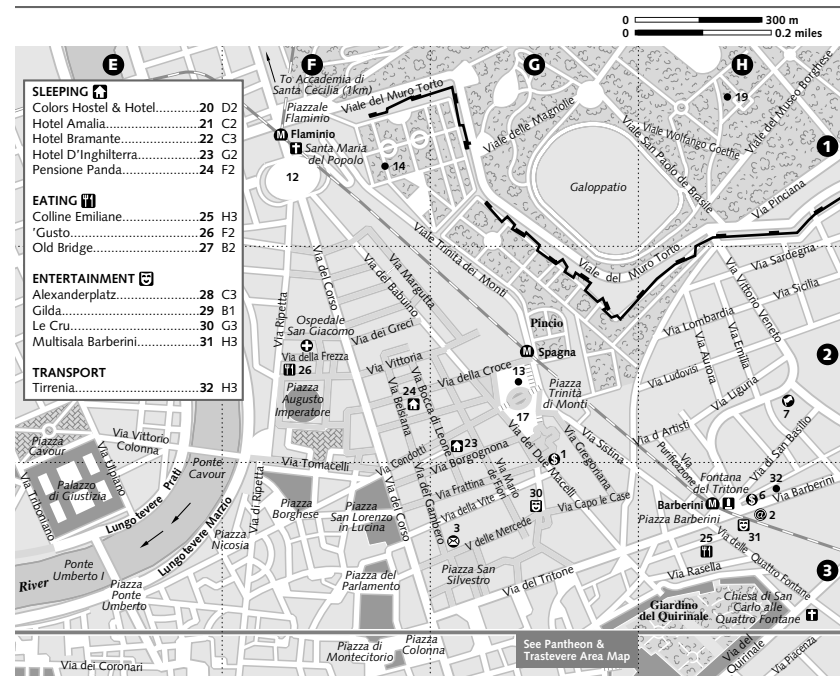
in Rome (next to the Colosseum) it boasts dramatic views from the top.

Pantheon

Nowhere is the splendour of ancient Rome more evident than at the **Pantheon** (Map pp726-7; Piazza della Rotonda; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun, holidays 9am-1pm), the best-preserved building of its time. The original temple was built in 27 BC by Marcus Agrippa, son-in-law of Emperor Augustus, and dedicated to the planetary gods. Agrippa's name remains inscribed over the entrance. The temple's dome is an architectural marvel, even by today's standards – the oculus in the middle allows in light and was built with concrete that becomes lighter in colour the closer it gets to the oculus, dispersing weight. Many Italian kings are buried here, as is Raphael.

Piazza Navona

A few blocks west of the Pantheon, this vast and beautiful **square** (Map pp726-7), lined with baroque palaces, was laid out on the ruins of Domitian's stadium and features three



fountains. In its centre is Bernini's masterpiece **Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi** (Fountain of the Four Rivers; Map pp726-7). Visit at different times of the day, and be sure to grab a **gelato** and relax on one of the stone benches in the sun, or enjoy a cappuccino at one of the many cafés. The expense is worth it to watch the various artists mingling in the piazza and to absorb the ever-vibrant hum.

Piazza Campo de' Fiori

The **Piazza Campo de' Fiori** (Map pp726-7), affectionately called 'Il Campo', was a place of execution during the Inquisition. The artist Caravaggio went on the run after killing a man who had the gall to beat him in tennis on this piazza. Nowadays a **flower and vegetable market** is held here Monday to Saturday, artists congregate to sell their wares on Sunday, and revellers fill the many bars nightly.

The **Palazzo Farnese** (Map pp726-7), in the piazza of the same name, is just off the Campo. This magnificent Renaissance building was started in 1514 by Antonio da Sangallo, carried on by Michelangelo and completed by Giacomo della Porta. Built for Cardinal

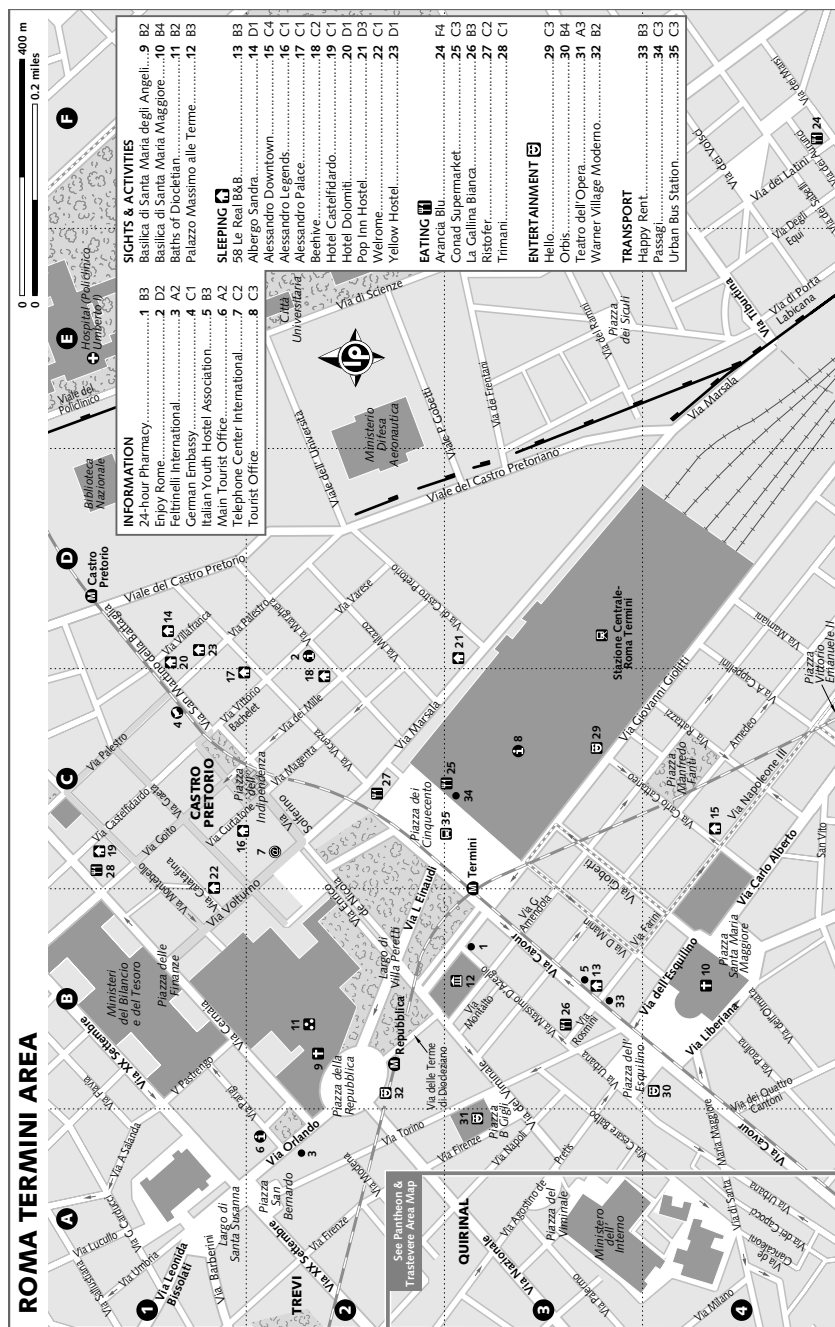
Alessandro Farnese (later Pope Paul III), the palace is now the French embassy. The piazza has two fountains, which are enormous granite baths taken from the **Terme di Caracalla** (Baths of Caracalla; see p728).

Torre Argentina

You'll walk by the **Torre Argentina sacred ruins** (where Caesar was stabbed to death by Brutus on the Ides of March in 44 BC) on your way to practically anywhere in Rome. If you miss Fluffy back home or need a respite from humans, venture downstairs to the **Torre Argentina cat sanctuary** (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 45 42 52 40; www.romancats.com; Largo di Torre Argentina; ☎ noon-6pm, to 8pm Jun-Sep), the cutest place in the whole city. Volunteers at the sanctuary vaccinate and spay or neuter hundreds of cats, some of which are adopted out internationally. Donate money, buy adorable kitty accessories or just lower your blood pressure with an hour of petting.

Villa Borghese

This gorgeous **park** (Map pp722-3) was once the estate of Cardinal Scipione Borghese. His



17th-century villa houses the **Museo e Galleria Borghese** (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 3 28 10; www.galleriaborghese.it; adult/concession €8.50/5.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), which has held an impressive art collection for over 300 years and includes the largest collection of Caravaggio paintings in the world. Take a walk through the leafy park, which has a zoo and a lake full of ducks, swans and turtles. You can hire boats at the lake and bicycles near the Porta Pinciana entrance. Just north of the park is the **Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna** (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 32 34 000; Viale delle Belle Arti 131; admission €6.50; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), a *belle époque* palace housing 19th- and 20th-century paintings. The Etruscan museum, **Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia** (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 32 26 571; admission €4; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), is on the same street in Piazzale di Villa Giulia, in the former villa of Pope Julius III.

Trevi Fountain

The high-baroque **Fontana di Trevi** (Map pp726-7; Piazza di Crociferi), six blocks northeast of the Pantheon, was designed by Nicola Salvi in 1732 and immortalised in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. It sprawls over almost the entire piazza and depicts Neptune's chariot being led by Tritons, with sea horses representing the moods of the sea. Its water was supplied by one of Rome's earliest aqueducts, and the name refers to the three roads (*tre vie*) that converged here. The custom is to throw a coin into the fountain (over your shoulder while facing away) to ensure your return to Rome; a second coin grants a wish.

Piazza di Spagna & Spanish Steps

The exquisite **Piazza di Spagna** (Map pp722-3), church and famous **Spanish Steps** (Scalinata della Trinità dei Monti; Map pp722-3) have long provided a major gathering place for foreigners and locals alike. Built with a legacy from the French in 1725, but named after the Spanish embassy to the Holy See, the steps lead to link the piazza with the well-heeled folks living above it.

In the 18th century, beautiful Italians gathered here, hoping to be chosen as artists' models. Today, beauties of both sexes still abound. To the right as you face the steps is the house where Keats spent the last three months of his life, in 1821. In the piazza is the boat-shaped fountain of the **Barcaccia**,

believed to be by Pietro Bernini, father of the famous Gian Lorenzo. One of Rome's most elegant and expensive shopping streets, **Via Condotti** (Map pp722-3), runs off the piazza to wards Via del Corso.

Piazza del Popolo

The vast and impressive **Piazza del Popolo** (Map pp722-3) was laid out in the 16th century at the point of convergence of three roads – Via Ripetta, Via del Corso and Via del Babuino – which form a trident at what was the city's main entrance from the north. Giuseppe Valadier redesigned it three centuries later, and today this neighbourhood is called 'the trident'. Rainaldi designed the seemingly twin baroque churches in the 17th century, and Bernini worked on the gate around the same time. **Santa Maria del Popolo** (Map pp722-3; Piazza del Popolo 12; ☎ 7am-12pm, 4-7pm) houses two magnificent Caravaggio paintings (of St Peter and St Paul). The piazza is at the foot of the **Pincio Hill** (Map pp722-3), which affords a *bella vista* of the city, especially in the early hours; Keats, Strauss, Ghandi and Mussolini liked strolling here.

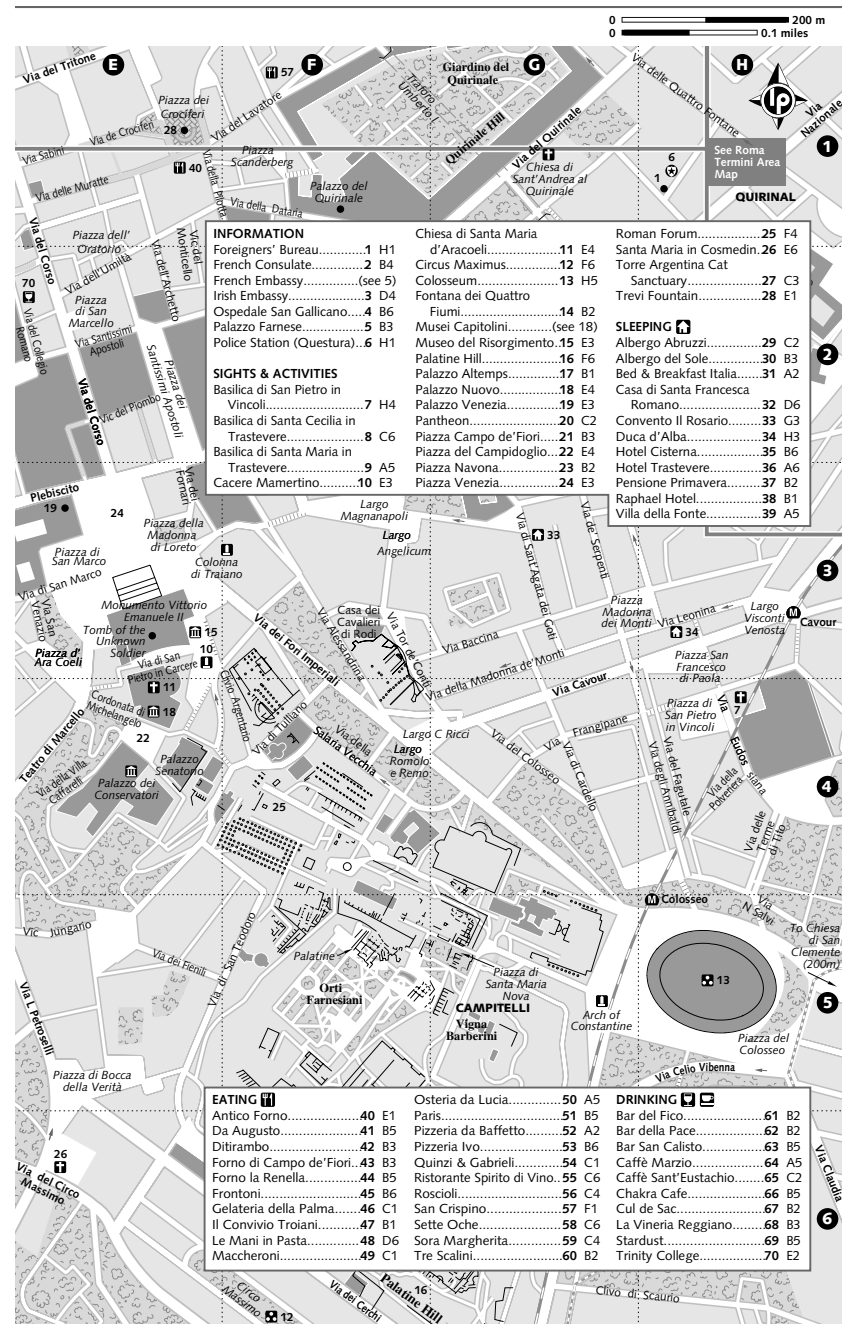
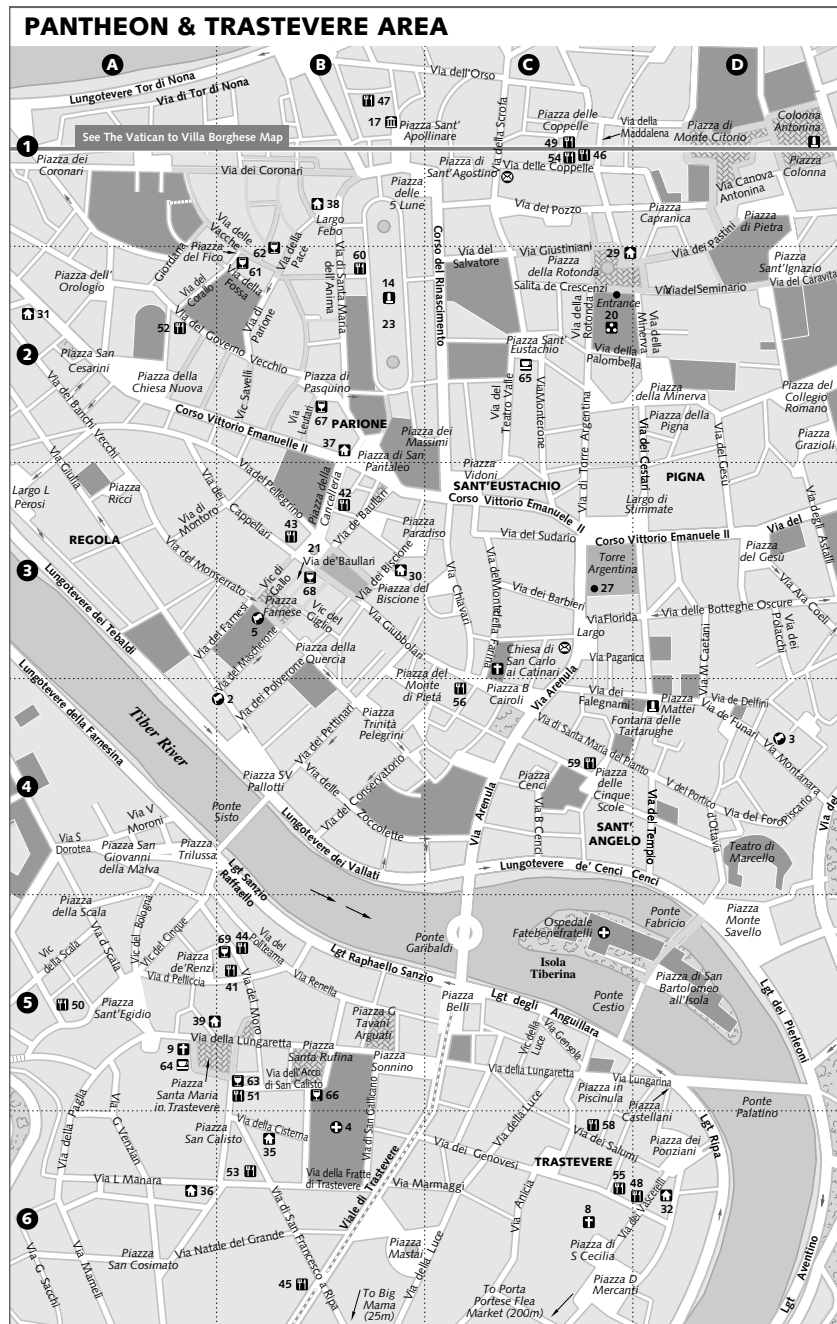
Trastevere

Tras tevere literally means across the Tevere (Tiber) River. Once an Etruscan encampment, Trastevere still retains the feel of a medieval village, complete with narrow winding streets and crackly old buildings. For over a thousand years, it's been a haunt for artists, visitors and thieves, who appreciate its bohemian attitude. The neighbourhood lights up at night as all ages take to the street on the evening *passaggiata* and its cadre of bars and restaurants spill out onto the streets.

Don't miss the **Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere** (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 581 48 02; Piazza di

SPQR

You see it on ancient buildings and modern manhole covers, but what does it mean? The city motto on the coat of arms of Rome, the origins are so ancient even the Romans weren't sure exactly what it stood for. *Senatus Populusque Romanus* (or *Populus Que Romanus*) roughly translated to 'Senate and the People of Rome'. Or, in today's terms: your tax dollars at work.



INFORMATION

Foreigners' Bureau	1 H1	Chiesa di Santa Maria d'Aracoeli	11 E4	Roman Forum	25 F4
French Consulate	2 B4	Circus Maximus	12 F6	Santa Maria in Cosmedin	26 E6
French Embassy	(see 5)	Colosseum	13 H5	Torre Argentina Cat	26 C3
Irish Embassy	3 D4	Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi	14 B2	Sanctuary	27 C3
Ospedale San Gallicano	4 B6	Musei Capitolini (see 18)	15 E3	Trevi Fountain	28 E1
Palazzo Farnese	5 B3	Museo del Risorgimento	15 E3		
Police Station (Questura)	6 H1	Palatine Hill	16 F6		

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Basilica di San Pietro in Vincoli	7 H4	Palazzo Venezia	19 E3		
Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere	8 C6	Palazzo Nuovo	18 E4		
Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere	9 A5	Palazzo Altemps	17 B1		
Cacere Mamertino	10 E3	Pantheon	20 C2		
		Piazza Campo de' Fiori	21 B3		
		Piazza del Campidoglio	22 E4		
		Piazza Navona	23 B2		
		Piazza Venezia	24 E3		

SLEEPING

Albergo Abruzzi	29 C2				
Albergo del Sole	30 B3				
Bed & Breakfast Italia	31 A2				
Casa di Santa Francesca Romano	32 D6				
Convento Il Rosario	33 G3				
Duca d'Alba	34 H3				
Hotel Cisterna	35 B6				
Hotel Trastevere	36 A6				
Pensione Primavera	37 B2				
Raphael Hotel	38 E1				
Villa della Fonte	39 A5				

EATING

Antico Forno	40 E1	Osteria da Lucia	50 A5		
Da Augusto	41 B5	Paris	51 B5	Bar del Fico	61 B2
Ditrambo	42 B3	Pizzeria da Baffetto	52 A2	Bar della Pace	62 B2
Forno di Campo de' Fiori	43 B3	Pizzeria Ivo	53 B6	Bar San Calisto	63 B5
Forno la Renella	44 B5	Quinzì & Gabrieli	54 C1	Caffè Marzio	64 A5
Frontoni	45 B6	Ristorante Spirito di Vino	55 C6	Caffè Sant'Eustachio	65 C2
Gelateria della Palma	46 C1	Roscioli	56 C4	Chakra Cafe	66 B5
Il Convivio Troiani	47 B1	San Crispino	57 F1	Cul de Sac	67 B2
Le Mani in Pasta	48 D6	Sette Oche	58 C6	La Vineria Reggiano	68 B3
Maccheroni	49 C1	Sora Margherita	59 C4	Stardust	69 B5
		Tre Scalini	60 B2	Trinity College	70 E2

DRINKING

ITALY

ITALY

Santa Maria; ☎ 7.30am-1pm, 4-7pm), in the lovely piazza of the same name, believed to be the oldest Roman church dedicated to the Virgin. Although the first church was built on the site in the 4th century, the present structure was built in the 12th century and features a Romanesque bell tower and façade, with a mosaic of the Virgin. Its interior was redecorated during the baroque period, but the vibrant mosaics in the apse and on the triumphal arch date from the 12th century. Also take a look at the **Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere** (Map pp726-7; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 4.15-6.30pm Mon-Sat), with its magnificent 13th-century fresco and oldest baptistry in Rome, possibly dating back to the 5th century.

Appia Antica & the Catacombs

When they say 'All roads lead to Rome', Via Appia Antica (Appian Way) has been the most important and strategic of those roads for 2300 years. Construction began in 312 BC for military purposes. After Spartacus' revolt in 71 BC, it was lined with 6000 crucified slaves to serve as a sanguinary warning to all who travelled its path.

Via Appia Antica is just southeast of the city and accessible on Metro Linea A to Colli Albani, then bus 660. It's technically traffic-free on Sundays if you want to walk or cycle it. For information on bicycle rentals or to join an English-, French- or Spanish-language walking or cycling tour, head to the headquarters of **Parco Regionale**

FREE THRILLS

These Roman delights won't cost a euro:

Go to church – St Peter's Basilica, Basilica di Santa Maria in Trastevere

Sunset gaze – From Pincio Hill or Gianicolo Hill, between St Peter's Basilica and Trastevere

Uncover ancient Rome – Roman Forum or Pantheon

Piazza hop – Piazzas Santa Maria in Trastevere, Navona, Campidoglio, Popolo, di Spagna and 'Il Campo'

Take a garden stroll – Villa Borghese or along the Via Appia Antica

Window shop, gallery gaze – Via Condotti and Via Giulia

Face the 'Mouth of Truth' – Bocca della Verità, Santa Maria in Cosmedin

dell'Appia Antica (Map pp718-19; ☎ 065135316; www.parcappiaantica.org; Via Appia Antica 58; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm summer, 9.30am-1.30pm & 2-4.30pm Mon-Sat winter). Bicycles cost €3 per hour and €10 per day and are a great way to explore this tranquil park.

The largest catacombs in Rome are along Via Appia Antica, including the **Catacombs of San Callisto** (Map pp718-19; Via Appia Antica 110; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5pm, until 5.30pm Jun-Sep) and the **Catacombs of San Sebastiano** (Map pp718-19; Via Appia Antica 136; adult/concession €5/3; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2.30-5pm Mon-Sat, until 5.30pm Jun-Sep, closed mid-Nov–mid-Dec), within walking distance of each other. In all, there are 60 underground tunnels in Rome (but only five open to the public) where the earliest Christians buried their dead. The Roman custom had been to cremate bodies, but as Christ rose from the dead, the first Christians wanted to preserve the corporeal bodies of the deceased...just in case.

Terme di Caracalla

The huge **Terme di Caracalla** (Baths of Caracalla; Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 39 96 77 00; Via delle Terme di Caracalla 52; admission €6; ☎ 9am-1hr before sunset Tue-Sun, to 2pm Mon) complex (now ruins) covers 10 hectares and includes shops, gardens, libraries and entertainment. Begun by Antonius Caracalla and inaugurated in AD 217 with a plumbing system sophisticated enough to handle up to 1600 guests, the baths were used until the 6th century.

Churches & Cathedrals

Down from Roma Termini is the massive **Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore** (Map p724; Via Cavour; ☎ 7am-6.30pm), originally named Santa Maria della Neve and built by Pope Liberius in AD 352 after the Virgin Mary instructed him to construct a church on the spot where the next snow fell. Its main baroque façade was added in the 18th century, preserving the 13th-century mosaics of the earlier façade. Its bell tower is Romanesque and the interior is baroque. There are 5th-century mosaics decorating the triumphal arch and nave.

Rome's cathedral, **Basilica di San Giovanni in Laterano** (Map pp718-19; Via Merulana; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm), was originally a church built in the 4th century, the first Christian basilica in Rome. Largely destroyed over a long period of time, it was rebuilt in the 17th century.

Basilica di San Pietro in Vincoli (Map pp726-7; Piazza San Pietro in Vincoli; ☎ 7am-12pm & 3.30-7pm), just off Via Cavour, shows off Michelangelo's magnificent statue *Moses* and his unfinished statues of Leah and Rachel, as well as the chains worn by St Peter during his imprisonment before being crucified; hence the church's name (St Peter in Chains).

Chiesa di San Clemente (Map pp718-19; Via San Giovanni in Laterano; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6pm), east from the Colosseum, defines how history in Rome exists on many levels. The 12th-century church at street level was built over a 4th-century church that was, in turn, built over a 1st-century Roman house with a temple dedicated to the pagan god Mithras.

Santa Maria in Cosmedin (Map pp726-7; Via del Circo Massimo; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2.30-6pm), northwest of the huge ruins **Circus Maximus** (Map pp726-7; Via del Circo Massimo), is regarded as one of the finest medieval churches in Rome. It has a seven-storey bell tower and its interior is heavily decorated with Cosmatesque inlaid marble, including the beautiful floor. The main attraction for masses of tourists is, however, its **Bocca della Verità** (Mouth of Truth), in front of the entrance. Legend has it that if you put your right hand into the ceramic mouth and tell a lie, it will snap shut.

Piazza Venezia

A neoclassical monument dedicated to Vittorio Emanuele II overshadows the **Piazza Venezia** (Map pp726-7). Built to commemorate Italian unification, the piazza incorporates the **tomb of the unknown soldier**, as well as the **Museo del Risorgimento** (admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm). Also in the piazza is the 15th-century **Palazzo Venezia** (☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Sat, to 1pm Sun), partially built with material quarried from the Colosseum; it was once Mussolini's official residence and is now a museum housing medieval and Renaissance art.

Baths of Diocletian & Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli

The **Baths of Diocletian** (Map p724; ☎ 06 488 05 30; Via Enrico de Nicola 79; admission €5; ☎ 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun) were built at the turn of the 3rd century. Rome's largest baths could accommodate 3000 people; the complex also included libraries, concert halls and gardens and covered about 13 hectares. In AD 536, invaders destroyed the aqueduct that fed the baths and the complex fell into decay.

Parts of the ruins are incorporated into the **Basilica di Santa Maria degli Angeli** (Map p724; Piazza della Repubblica; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm). Designed by Michelangelo, the basilica incorporates what was the great central hall and *tepidarium* (lukewarm room) of the original baths. Over the centuries his original work was drastically changed and little evidence of his design, apart from the great vaulted ceiling of the church, remains. An interesting feature of the church is a double meridian in the transept, one tracing the polar star and the other telling the precise time of the sun's zenith (visible at noon).

National Roman Museums

The important collection of five Roman museums is spread all over the city and comprises ancient art, including Greek and Roman sculpture. The two most important of its collection are housed in the 15th-century **Palazzo Altemps** (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 683 37 59; Piazza Sant'Apollinare 44; admission €5; ☎ 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun), near Piazza Navona. This is home to the majority of the artworks, with numerous important pieces from the Ludovisi collection. **Palazzo Massimo alle Terme** (Map p724; ☎ 06 39 96 77 00; Largo di Villa Peretti 1; admission €6; ☎ 9am-7.45pm Tue-Sun) features an equally impressive collection of frescoes and mosaics from the Villa of Livia, excavated at Prima Porta, and a knockout numismatic collection.

Villa Doria Pamphilj

Rome's largest park, **Villa Doria Pamphilj** (Map pp718-19; Via di San Pancrazio; ☎ sunrise-sunset), west of Trastevere, was laid out by Algardi in the 16th century, and offers a rejuvenating reprieve from the heady city pace. Relax by a baroque fountain, nap under a parasol pine or enjoy a stroll along the lovely walkways. To get there, you can take a bus to Via di San Pancrazio.

Protestant Cemetery

Peaceful enough to sleep for eternity is the **Campo Cestio L'Antico Cimitero per Stranieri non-Cattolici** (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 57 41 900; www.protestantcemetery.com; Via Caio Cestio 6; donation €2; ☎ 9am-5pm, closed Sun & holidays), also known as the Protestant (non-Catholic) Cemetery. With the likes of Goethe, Keats and Shelley buried here, the tombstones read like a literary who's who.

SLEEPING

Rome has plenty of fantastic hotels in beautiful settings...if you don't mind spending €250 a night. If not, you will have to compromise on location, noise or charm, or book weeks in advance. The city tourism website (www.romaturismo.it) has an excellent listing. For B&Bs or longer-term accommodation, try www.cross-pollinate.com.

The head office of the **Italian Youth Hostel Association** (Map p724; ☎ 06 487 11 52; www.ostellionline.org; Via Cavour 44; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) has information about Hostelling International (HI) members in Italy and will assist with bookings to stay at universities during summer.

Budget

There are dozens of hostels in Rome, most near Roma Termini, and no less than 100 lower- to midrange hotels in the same area. The north side around Castel Pretorio holds the best quality low-priced places.

Pop Inn Hostel (Map p724; ☎ 06 495 98 87; www.popinnhostel.com; Via Marsala 80; dm €16-25, s €41-86, d €42-98; ☎) Look for the hippie sticker next to the door and you'll know you've arrived at this chill locale filled with *irre*; other simpatico features include no curfew, free breakfast, free luggage storage, and laundry.

Alessandro Palace (Map p724; ☎ 06 44 61 958; www.hostelalessandropalace.com; Via Vicenza 42; dm €18-20, s/d €90/105; ☎) This is the first and most popular of the three Alessandro hostels. Four floors (no lift) offer over 100 beds in incredibly clean four- to eight-bed dorms, all with en suite bathroom equipped with

hairdryer, well-run and space to spread out. The hostel's bar and pizza nights ensure parties into the wee hours.

Alessandro Legends (☎ 06 446 19 58; www.hostelalessandrolegends.com; Via Curatone 12; dm €21-26, d with shared bathroom €66; ☎) The second of the three Alessandro hostels, with seven rooms that are good for families and quieter travellers

Yellow Hostel (Map p724; ☎ 06 49 38 26 82; www.yellowhostel.com; Via Palestro 44; dm €24-34, s/d €25/50, all ind breakfast; ☎) Fun, young and hip, this place is well-run and immensely popular with backpackers. All amenities are included: hot showers, fully equipped kitchen, festive common room with DVD, and washer and dryers. Some dorm rooms have clean en suite bathrooms. If a single or double is available in one of the partner hotels, it's a chance to practically steal a private room.

Alessandro Downtown (Map p724; ☎ 06 443 40 147; www.hostelalessandrodowntown.com; Via Cattaneo 23; dm/d €30/90, dm/d with shared bath €25/70, ind breakfast; ☎) The last of the three Alessandro hostels (left). Book by phone or online.

Welome (Map p724; ☎ 06 47 82 43 43; www.welome.it; Via Calatafina 15/19; s €40-100, d €50-110) Chatty Mary loves her job telling visitors about Roman history and where to visit, in fluent English, French or Italian. Each room is a respite from Rome – double-paned windows block out street noise and strong showers wash away the grit. There is a hairdryer, phone and refrigerator in every room.

Convento Il Rosario (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 679 23 46; irodopre@tin.it; Via di Sant'Agata dei Goti 10; s/d/tr ind breakfast €48/82/112) Advertising itself as a 'house of welcome for pilgrims and tourists', this convent-run guesthouse is a meditative spot for those who don't mind the 11pm closing and sparse furnishings.

Pensione Panda (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 678 01 79; www.pensionepanda.com; Via della Croce 35; s/d/tr €65/98/130, s/d with shared bathroom €48/68) Close to the Spanish Steps, this 2nd-floor *pensione* has comfortable rooms with arched ceilings and helpful, English-speaking staff.

Albergo Sandra (Map p724; ☎ 06 445 26 12; www.geocities.com/hotelsandra; Via Villafranca 10; s/d/tr ind breakfast €70/96/120, without bathroom s/d/tr €50/80/90) A mere 10-minute walk from Roma Termini, this medium-sized *pensione* has clean and pleasant rooms.

58 Le Real B&B (Map p724; ☎ 06 48 23 566; www.58viacavour.it; Via Cavour 58; s/d/tr incl breakfast €75/95/115; ☎) Close to the Colosseum, this is a clean and pretty apartment, with airy rooms and a sun-drenched terrace. The friendly owners treat guests like friends, offering free access to a fridge loaded with juice, yogurt and water.

Midrange

Hotel Dolomiti (Map p724; ☎ 06 49 10 58; www.hotel-dolomiti.it; Via San Martino della Battaglia 11; s €65-90, d/tr/q €135/170/205, all ind breakfast; ☎) A fabulous deal in the low season, ask for a *camera interna* (internal room) to get away from street noise. Fluffy towels and minibars are a welcome addition.

Casa di Santa Francesca Romano (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 581 21 21; istituto@sfrmana.it; Via dei Vascerelli 61; s/d/tr incl breakfast €70/100/123; ☎) This former noble home is now an inn run by the Catholic church with pretty rooms and a cloistered garden around a babbling waterfall. It's open to all travellers and there are airport pick-ups for €50.

Duca d'Alba (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 48 44 71; www.hotelducaalba.it; Via Leonina 14; s €70-210, d €80-260, tr €100-290, all ind breakfast; ☎) In the quieter neighbourhood of Suburra, this place is just steps from the Cavour metro stop. Filled with amenities like towel warmers and large baths, the bathrooms alone are worth a stay. And then there's the buffet breakfast, with prosciutto, bacon, eggs and fruit (plus room service from 7am to 10pm).

Colors Hostel & Hotel (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 687 40 30; www.colorsotel.com; Via Boezio 31; s/d €75/120, dm/s/d with shared bathroom €25/65/100; ☎) Brightly painted walls and an effusively helpful staff make this residential choice near the Vatican a great bet. After cooking dinner in the kitchen with herbs plucked from the garden, dine alfresco on the terrace.

Hotel Trastevere (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 581 47 13; www.hoteltrastevere.it; Via L. Manara 24a-25; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €80/103/130/155, apt 2-/3-person €150/180) An extremely good value place with friendly service and proximity to restaurants and nightlife, many of the spotless, spacious rooms here look out over Piazza San Cosimato in Trastevere.

Pensione Primavera (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 68 80 31 09; Piazza di San Pantaleo 3; s/d incl breakfast €95/115, with shared bathroom €70/95; ☎) Inexpensive places don't get much closer to the action,

but street-side rooms here sound as if the action is inside. Marble staircases and 19th-century antiques make for a charming Roman holiday. Air-con rooms are available for an extra €6.

Hotel Cisterna (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 58 17 212; www.cisternahotel.it; Via della Cisterna 7/8/9; s/d incl breakfast €98/130; ☎) closed part of Aug; ☎) Location, location, location. In the centre of Trastevere but along a quiet street (pick a room out of the back), the downside here is putting up with cramped, dark rooms. There's satellite TV and breakfast served in the courtyard.

Villa della Fonte (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 580 37 97; www.villafonte.com; Via della Fonte d'Olio 8; s/d incl breakfast €110/160; ☎) Here you'll find five pretty and pristine rooms, a hop from Piazza Santa Maria, and a lovely, sunny garden terrace.

Albergo del Sole (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 687 94 46; www.solealbiscione.it; Via dei Biscione 76; s/d €120/150, with shared bathroom €65/95; ☎) A short walk from Campo de' Fiori, this sunny spot dates from 1462. Don't mind the grumpy reception staff or the street noise, as there is lots of communal space, a pretty patio and a rooftop terrace making this hotel, one of Rome's oldest and best located, a standout.

Albergo Abruzzi (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 679 20 21; www.hotelabruzzo.it; Piazza della Rotonda 69; s/d incl breakfast €155/195; ☎) There's nothing special about the rooms, but the position – overlooking the Pantheon – is hard to beat, even if the piazza can be noisy and the management rests on its geographic laurels.

Other recommendations:

Hotel Amalia (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 397 23 356; www.hotelamalia.com; Via Germanico 66; s/d incl breakfast €130/196; ☎) Good leisure or business hotel.

Hotel Castelfidardo (Map p724; ☎ 06 446 46 38; www.hotelcastelfidardo.com; Via Castelfidardo 31; s/d €90/120, with shared bathroom €60/100) Good midrange option near Roma Termini.

Top End

Hotel Bramante (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 688 06 426; www.hotelbramante.com; Via delle Palline 24; s/d/tr incl breakfast €160/220/235; ☎) Marble bathrooms, fresh flowers and antique furnishings add to the small inn feel here, plus a great location and filling breakfast (with eggs and homemade pastries) doesn't hurt.

Hotel D'Inghilterra (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 699 81 204; <http://hoteldinghilterra.warwickhotels.com/>; Via Bocca di Leone 14; s/d incl breakfast €287/385; ☎) In the fashionable district near the Spanish

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Beehive (Map p724; ☎ 06 447 04 553; www.the-beehive.com; Via Marghera 8; dm/d/tr with shared bathroom €22/75/100; ☎) This is a guesthouse and hostel for those who thought they were done with hostelling. If the idea of carefully enforced 11pm quiet hours, an on-site organic café (see p733) and hanging out petting the resident cat Ingmar sounds far, far more appealing than jello shots and pub crawls, then this is probably the place for you. Seven rooms are artfully decorated and the eight-bed dorm is comfortable enough for all ages. The shared bathrooms are spotless. Reserve dorm beds way in advance.

Steps and housed in a 16th-century *palazzo* is this resplendent hotel with one foot steeped in history and the other safely connected to plasma TVs, DSL connections and 24-hour room service.

Raphael Hotel (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 68 28 31; www.raphaelhotel.com; Largo Febo 2; s/d incl breakfast €300/450; ☒ ☑ ☒) Renaissance art lovers with impeccable taste will appreciate the incredible beauty of this luxurious hotel. The lobby displays ceramic works by Picasso and the rooms are filled with works by Florentine masters. No amenity is forgotten, and don't miss a sunset drink at the terrace restaurant.

EATING

Romans take visible pride in their *cucina* and traditional recipes. The roots of the local cuisine are the diet of the poor, hence a preponderance of *trippa* (tripe), and the Roman-Jewish tradition, with legacies such as stuffed *fiori di zucca* (zucchini/courgette flowers) and *carciofi alla romana* (artichokes with garlic, mint and parsley). Antipasto is a standout, particularly *bruschetta*, and classic Roman pastas include *cacio e pepe* (with pecorino, black pepper and olive oil) and the snappy *all'amatriciana* (with tomato, pancetta and chilli). The most beloved *secondo* is *saltimbocca alla romana* (escalopes of veal sautéed with white wine, sage and prosciutto).

Restaurants, Trattorias & Pizzerias

Rome is filled with tourists, and tourists eating at restaurants set up for tourists. In general, the area around Roma Termini is filled with terrible restaurants, but has many decent foreign takeaways. Trastevere has the best options per square metre and Piazza Navona and Campo de' Fiori can offer charming alfresco or piazza-front dining.

CITY CENTRE

Gusto (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 322 62 73; Piazza Augusto Imperatore 9; pasta from €6) Slick and savvy, this place is a melange of pizzeria, *osteria*, wine bar and kitchen shop. It's a worthy stop any time, with an excellent wine list, an enormous cheese selection and good people-watching.

Pizzeria da Baffetto (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 686 16 17; Via del Governo Vecchio 114; ☒; dinner only; pizza €8) Any self-respecting pizza fan will make a stop at

this Roman institution, always packed to the beams. Come very early or very late if you don't want to queue or share a table.

Ditirambo (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 687 16 26; Piazza della Cancellaria 72; 1st/2nd courses €8/11; ☒ closed Mon lunch) With wood-beamed ceilings, this cosy trattoria serves largely organic fare with a funky twist on Italian vegetarian, including leek pudding with marjoram sauce and red chicory (€8) and *porcini* flan with a *taleggio* (pungent soft cheese) sauce (€10).

Maccheroni (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 683 07 895; Piazza delle Coppelle 44; 1st/2nd courses €8/13) Although the food isn't bad, come here more for the boisterous atmosphere. Diners line up for outside tables on warm summer nights and cheeky waiters entertain guests. *Trippa* is a speciality here.

Colline Emiliane (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 481 75 38; Via degli Avignonesi 22; 1st/2nd courses €9/14) This small trattoria tucked into a cheerless street off Piazza Barberini serves superb Emilia-Romagnan food such as homemade pasta stuffed with pumpkin.

Roscioli (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 687 52 87; Via dei Giubbonari 21; 1st/2nd courses €14/22) Not only is the gourmet food store in the front one of the best places in town for wine, meat, cheese and hard-to-find Italian delicacies, the 10-table restaurant in the back is good enough to impress food critics off the clock.

Quinzi & Gabrieli (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 68 79 389; Via delle Coppelle 5; 1st/2nd courses €16/28; ☒ dinner only, closed Sun & often in August) Dine in a 15th-century palace on seafood amid a romantic setting, complete with paintings done by students of the Academy of Art. Try the spaghetti scampi flambé.

Il Convivio Troiani (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 68 69 432; www.ilconviviotroiani.com; Vicolo dei Soldati 31; 1st/2nd courses €19/36) Known as one of the best restaurants in Rome, the three Troiani brothers' convivium has won awards for its modern take on ancient dishes, superb wine list (over 2000 strong) and impeccable décor and service. Menu items include pastry-wrapped duck foie gras with figs, and pigeon in blood-orange sauce.

WEST OF THE TIBER: TRASTEVERE, JEWISH GHETTO & THE VATICAN

Pizzeria Remo (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 574 62 70; Piazza Santa Maria Liberatrice 44; pizza from €4.50) This place is loud and rowdy – filling with party types on weekend nights – but the cheap

prices, pizza and *bruschette al pomodoro* (bruschettas with tomato) make the chaos and obligatory queues worth it.

Pizzeria Ivo (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 581 70 82; Via di San Francesco a Ripa 158; pizza €5; ☒ closed Tue) The pizzeria of choice in Trastevere for Trasteverians themselves, this place is also quite popular for grilled meats and *scamorza* (smoked cheese).

Sora Margherita (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 68 74 216; Piazza delle Cinque Scole 30; 1st/2nd courses €5/11; ☒ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Fri & Sat only) The most popular restaurant in the Jewish Ghetto area, this speck of a place is fronted by an even smaller speck of a door. The menu is typical Roman-Jewish – fried artichokes and zucchini blossoms, homemade pasta, chickpea soup. Don't even think about showing up on a Friday or Saturday night without a reservation.

Da Augusto (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 580 37 98; Piazza de' Renzi 15; 1st/2nd courses €6/11) This bare-bones-but-beloved mamma's kitchen serves Roman classics – occasionally accompanied by a surly attitude.

Sette Oche (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 58 09 753; Via dei Salumi 36; lunch & drink €6.50-7.50, 1st/2nd courses €6/13; ☒ lunch Sat-Mon, dinner 7.30pm-midnight Tue-Sun, open to 2am) Chill at the 'Seven Ducks' restaurant, pizzeria and wine bar, where the owner often plays Italian folk music in the evenings. Downstairs flaunts a Middle Eastern flair with wall tapestries, low tables and floor cushions.

Osteria da Lucia (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 580 36 01; Via del Mattinato 2; 1st/2nd courses €8/14) Dine under the stars, laundry flittering on the line, at this terrific neighbourhood trattoria serving *trippa alla romana* (Roman tripe) that may well make you a convert.

Le Mani in Pasta (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 58 16 017; Via dei Genovesi 7; 1st/2nd courses €8/14; ☒ closed Mon) A great value *osteria* in Trastevere, the name translates roughly as 'to have one's fingers in the pie'. Grilled fish and calamari are popular, but the reason to come here is – of course – for the pasta dishes. Try the pasta with ricotta, pancetta and nutmeg.

Paris (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 581 53 78; Piazza San Calisto 7; 1st/2nd courses €12/18) This elegant, old-world restaurant serves excellent Roman-Jewish cuisine such as *fritto misto con baccalà* (fried vegetables with salted cod).

Ristorante Spirito di Vino (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 58 96 689; Via dei Genovesi 31a/b; 1st/2nd courses €13/21; ☒ dinner only, closed Sun) The vaulted ceiling

here tops terracotta walls and hanging dried flowers. Maitre d'Romeo will show off the wine cellar, an ancient synagogue and purportedly containing some of the oldest bricks in Rome, while his wife, a scientist by training, cooks and his sommelier son suggests the perfect meal complement. Julius Caesar himself was a fan of a dish they've reinvented, *maiale mazio* (pork marinated in red wine and apple slices).

AROUND ROMA TERMINI & SAN LORENZO

Trimani (Map p724; ☎ 06 446 96 630; Via Cernaia 37; dishes from €5; ☒ closed Sun) Rome's biggest *enoteca* has a vast selection of regional wines along with excellent soups, pasta, canapés and *torta rustica* (quiche).

Ristofer (Map p724; Via Marsala 15; 2 courses €6.50-7) Where Via Vicenza hits Via Marsala, walk three steps up through a large wooden doorway and you'll reach the Termini area's best-value eatery. Granted, it happens to be the railway workers' cafeteria, but everyone is welcome. Its huge portions for hungry workers and convenient location make it a great place for travellers on the run.

La Gallina Bianca (Map p724; ☎ 06 474 37 77; Via Rosmini 9; starters/pizza/dishes €3.50/6.50/7) A welcome respite for those who want to eat near Termini without suffering. Grilled vegetables and *scamorza* (smoked cheese), strawberry tiramisu and overstuffed salads are all winners.

Beehive (Map p724; ☎ 06 447 04 553; Via Marghera 8; set menu €10, takeaway lunch €5; ☒ breakfast & lunch) The downstairs organic café at the Beehive guesthouse/hostel (p730) is a quiet subterranean oasis from the Termini area jungle. Guests sup either at four tables or in the 'living room' area on delicious organic fare. Set menus might include a Greek or Sicilian salad and creamy chocolate brownies.

Arancia Blu (Map p724; ☎ 06 44 54 105; Via dei Latini 65; 1st/2nd courses €7/11; ☒ dinner, Sunday lunch) Find international vegetarian cuisine less than a 10-minute walk behind Termini. All pasta is made in-house, and the ravioli with potato and mint is especially popular.

Pommidoro (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 445 26 92; Piazza dei Sanniti 44; mains from €11) This San Lorenzo trattoria, 500m east of the Termini, is popular with artists and intellectuals; the grilled meats are particularly good.

Tram Tram (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 470 25 85; Via dei Reti 44; 1st/2nd courses €8/12) In the heart of

funky San Lorenzo, this small trattoria, also 500m east of Roma Termini, is worth the trek: it's friendly and *molta carina* (very sweet/charming), with high ceilings, big windows, a cosy bar and loyal local clientele. The menu changes daily, but seafood dishes from southern Italy are the speciality – the swordfish is sublime – and the excellent wine list highlights small producers.

Gelati

San Crispino (Map pp726-7; Via della Panetteria 42) This *gelateria* (ice-cream shop) near Trevi Fountain, is considered to sell the best *gelato* in Rome, and for good reason. The delicious fruit sorbets change with the season – try *fichi* (fig) – but it's the divine cream-based flavours, such as ginger, honey, whisky and cinnamon, that will make you an addict.

Old Bridge (Map pp722-3; Via Bastioni di Michelangelo 5) Serving XXL scoops just across from the Vatican, this place is perfect for those who need a mid-museum pick-me-up deserving of a small religious experience.

Tre Scalini (Map pp726-7; Piazza Navona 30) While ogling in Piazza Navona, swing by Tre Scalini for good *gelato* and a memorable *tartufo nero* (black truffle) concoction.

Also recommended (though not for the indecisive), **Gelateria della Palma** (Map pp726-7; Via della Maddalena 20) has 100 flavours – the creamy mousses are a sure bet.

Snacks & Self-Catering

For quick and cheap eats, head to a bar, where you can wolf a *panini* for under €3, or a *pizza al taglio*, where a slab of oven-hot pizza, sold by weight, can cost as little as €1.50.

Antico Forno (Map pp726-7; Via delle Muratte 8) Head here for delicious oven-hot pizza slices and hearty sandwiches.

Frontoni (Map pp726-7; Viale di Trastevere) Good sandwiches made from local delicacies and sold by weight are on offer here.

Forno la Renella (Map pp726-7; Via del Moro 15-16) This tiny spot spins some of Trastevere's best pizza, plus bakes delectable cakes and macaroons.

Forno di Campo de' Fiori (Map pp726-7; Campo de' Fiori 22) This is Rome's best spot for metres of *pizza bianca* (white pizza; that is without tomato sauce).

Foragers will be orgasmic in the lively food markets, held off Viale delle Milizie, just north of the Vatican, and in Piazza

Vittorio Emanuele, near Roma Termini. There's also a well-stocked **Conad Supermarket** (Map p724; Roma Termini) underneath the main concourse of the station, which is a handy stop for self-caterers.

DRINKING

The days of Roman orgies are long gone. Rome's nightlife focuses more on late-night chats over drinks and a lengthy meal with friends – much of which happens over an intimate bottle of red at an *enoteca* – than dancing 'til 4am (although both options are amply available). Much of the activity is in the centre, where Campo de' Fiori fills with young revellers, and there are atmospheric late-night spots nestled in the alleyways fringing Piazza Navona. Trastevere is packed with friendly bars and co-mingling tourists and locals.

With cafés and bars, you pay for the privilege of atmosphere. A cappuccino taken standing at the bar will cost less than sitting at an outdoor table. However, once you've nabbed that table, you can sit and watch the world go by for an hour...sometimes even two hours, depending on whether you can ever get your waiter's attention for the bill.

Cafés

Caffè Sant'Eustachio (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 686 13 09; Piazza Sant'Eustachio 82) Open since the 1940s and near the Pantheon, this place has been wowing visitors and Romans alike with practically perfect cappuccinos and espresso drinks for over 60 years.

Caffè Marzio (Map pp726-7; Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere) This place has terrific coffee and views onto one of Rome's prettiest piazzas; perfection comes at a price, though.

Bars & Pubs

Bar San Calisto (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 583 58 69; Piazza San Calisto; ☹ closed Sun) Filled with drunks, bums, tourists and artists, all flock here for the groovy atmosphere that spills out onto the piazza during summer. The chocolate *gelato* is legendary.

Bar del Fico (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 687 55 68; Piazza del Fico 24; ☹ 8-2am Mon-Sat, from 6pm Sun) Popular with local actors and artists, this pretty bar has tables beneath its namesake fig tree – providing shade on sunny days and a hit of romance at night – and a snug interior with tasteful music and local art.

Cul de Sac (Map pp726-7; Piazza di Pasquino; small dishes €5-11; ☹ noon-4pm & 6pm-12.30am Tue-Sat) Tucked into a nook off Piazza Navona, this *carina* wine bar has communal wood benches out front, a chattering interior, simple but good *enoteca* fare, such as cheeses and salads, and a robust wine list.

Chakra Cafe (☎ 06 581 66 49; Piazza San Rufino 13; snacks €6-11) A funky modern wine bar in Trastevere is a hang-out joint for locals looking to check out chill-out live music.

La Vineria (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 688 03 268; Campo de' Fiori 15; ☹ 9.30am-2pm & 6pm-1am Mon-Sat, to 2am Sun) Hit the cosy Vineria on the Campo, once the gathering place of the Roman literati.

Trinity College (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 678 64 72; Via del Collegio Romano 6; ☹ 11-3am) If you're hankering for a pub night, try Trinity College; it has a good selection of imported brews, great food and an easy-going ambience; it also gets packed on weekends.

Bar della Pace (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 686 12 16; Via della Pace 3-7) With its elegant ambience and dashing in-crowd, this is an atmospheric drinking spot.

ENTERTAINMENT

Rome is one of the quieter large cities as far as nightlife goes. Romans often spend hours over dinner and at a wine bar, but there is a lively clubbing scene, especially around Testaccio.

The best entertainment guide is *Roma C'è* (www.romace.it, in Italian), with an English-language section, published on Wednesday (€1.20). *La Repubblica* and *Il Messaggero*, daily newspapers, have cinema, theatre and concert listings. All are available at newsstands. Rome's entertainment schedule is particularly heady in summer, with numerous *alfresco* performances; be sure to catch one if possible.

For theatre, opera and sporting events, book ahead through **Hello** (Map p724; Roma Termini), **Enjoy Rome** (see Tourist Information p717) or **Orbis** (Map p724; ☎ 06 48 27 403; Piazza dell'Esquilino 37).

Nightclubs & Live Music

Rome's nightlife usually centres around private parties, restaurants and bars rather than dancing or clubbing. However, there are a few places to get your groove on. Head over to Via di Monte Testaccio, where over a dozen clubs in just a few blocks cater to

locals and international students. Expect to pay upwards of €20 just to get in, which may or may not include one drink.

Goa (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 574 82 77; Via Libetta 13; ☹ 11pm-3am Tue-Sun) With its groovy ethnic décor, Goa is where the Roman and international 'in crowd' (including, once, Leonardo DiCaprio) come to groove to DJs and house while admiring their fellow beautiful people.

Caffè Latino (Map pp718-19; Via di Monte Testaccio 96) Come here for live Latin music and a disco of Latin and funk.

Stardust (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 583 20 875; Vicolo dei Renzi 4; ☹ 7.30pm-2am Mon-Sat, from noon Sun) A tiny Trastevere pub-meets-jazz bar, this funky haunt purrs with sultry jazz and impromptu jam sessions, and doesn't close until the last customers tumble out the door. Head here for the grooviest Sunday brunch in Rome.

Radio Londra (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 575 00 44; Via di Monte Testaccio 65b) Popular and decked out like an air-raid shelter, this club has live music four nights a week (usually Wednesday to Saturday).

Gilda (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 679 73 96; Via Mario de' Fiori 97) With its plush décor and vast dance floor, Gilda attracts a slightly older, jackets-required crowd.

L'Alibi (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 574 34 48; Via di Monte Testaccio 44) This is regarded as Rome's premier gay venue.

Also recommended:

Alien (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 841 22 12; Via Velletri 13; ☹ 10.30pm-4am Tue & Thu-Sun) For sci-fi décor, dancers on raised platforms and hip-hop rhythms.

Big Mama (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 581 24 51; www.bigmama.it; Via San Francesco a Ripa 18; ☹ 9pm-1.30am) Just south of Piazza Mastai in Trastevere.

Cinema

Several cinemas show films in English, including **Multisala Barberini** (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 48 21 082; www.multisalabarberini.it; Piazza Barberini 24/25/26) and **Warner Village Moderno** (Map p724; ☎ 47 77 92 01; Piazza della Repubblica 45/46), a megaplex showing Hollywood blockbusters and Italian films. Expect to pay €7, with discounts on Wednesday.

Opera & Classical Music

Teatro dell'Opera (Map p724; ☎ 06 481 60 28 706; www.operaroma.it, in Italian; Piazza Beniamino Gigli) This theatre offers Rome's finest opera from December to June; ticket prices are steep.

For a full season of orchestral, international and pop music concerts, be sure to check out the 400-year-old **Accademia di Santa Cecilia** (Map pp722-3; ☎ ticket sales 199 10 97 83; www.santacecilia.it; Parco della Musica, Largo Luciano Berio 3), held in three buildings and an outdoor venue collectively known as the Auditorium of Rome. For classical music, visit the **Accademia Filarmonica Romana** (☎ 06 323 48 90; www.teatroolimpico.it; Teatro Olimpico, Piazza Gentile da Fabriano 17), about 2km north of the city – take the bus from Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini.

SHOPPING

Shopping in Rome is undeniably fun and will no doubt lure your attention from ancient ruins. This being Italy, traffic is banned on Saturdays to accommodate the thousands of window shoppers traipsing down the three ancient Roman roads radiating from Piazza del Popolo, the main shopping district.

Fashionistas will be happiest on Via Condotti and the narrow streets fanning from Piazza di Spagna to Via del Corso, lined with expensive boutiques full of clothing, footwear and accessories from the likes of Gucci, Valentino and Armani. Via del Corso, with a nice mix of shops featuring designer knock-offs, is easier on the wallet, as is Via Nazionale. Via del Governo Vecchio is home to second-hand shops and up-and-coming designers.

If you're after art and antiques, wander the streets around Via Margutta, Via Ripetta, Via del Babuino, and Via dei Coronari, near Piazza Navona. For jewellery, the area between Ponte Sisto and Campo de' Fiori shines.

Across the Tiber, head to Via Cola di Rienzo, near the Vatican, for a good selection of clothing, shoes and food shops; the twisty streets of Trastevere harbour lots of little boutiques and design shops.

For funky finds and great bargains, head to Trastevere's **Porta Portese flea market** (Map pp718-19; ☎ 6.30am-2pm Sun), Rome's biggest and best known. It's just 400m southwest of Basilica di Santa Cecilia in Trastevere – even if you don't want to buy an antique vase or doll parts, go for the scene (but be aware of pickpockets). The excellent **Via Sannio market** (Map pp718-19; Via Sannio; ☎ Mon-Sat morning) near Porta San Giovanni sells new and second-hand clothes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Rome's main airport is **Leonardo da Vinci** (FCO; ☎ 06 65 95 55 71; www.adr.it), often simply called Fiumicino (after the town where it's located). Low-cost carriers, including **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) and **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com), are increasingly flying into **Ciampino** (CIA; ☎ 06 79 49 42 25; www.adr.it), which is closer to town. You'll find the main airline offices just north of Roma Termini, in the area around Via Bissolati and Via Barberini.

Boat

Rome's main port is in Civitavecchia, about 80km from Rome's city centre and accessible by train. Tirrenia and the Ferrovie dello Stato (FS) ferries leave for various points in Sardinia (see p809) from Civitavecchia.

A Tirrenia fast ferry leaves from Fiumicino and Civitavecchia to Arbatax and Golfo Aranci, in summer only. Bookings can be made at the Termini-based agency **Passagi** (Map p724; ☎ 7.15am-9pm), at any travel agency displaying the Tirrenia or FS sign, or online at www.traghettonline.net. You can also book directly with **Tirrenia** (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 42 00 98 03; Via San Nicola da Tolentino 5) or at the Stazione Marittima (ferry terminal at Civitavecchia) at the ports. Take the train from Roma Termini to Civitavecchia (€4 to €8, one hour, every 30 minutes); it's about a 15-minute walk to the port (to your right) as you exit the station.

See p821 for more information on transport options.

Bus

The main terminal for intercity buses is in Piazzale Tiburtina, in front of the Stazione Tiburtina. Catch Metro Linea B from Termini to Tiburtina.

Numerous bus lines run services to cities throughout Italy; all depart from the same area and the relevant ticket offices or agents are next to the bus terminus. For general information about which company services what area, go to the tourist office or Enjoy Rome (p717); for information and to make bookings, it's best and easiest to go through a travel agent, as most can book tickets on all long-distance buses.

Cotral (☎ 800 15 00 08; www.cotralspa.it, in Italian) For the Lazio region.

Interbus (☎ 0935 56 51 11; www.interbus.it) Heads to Sicily, including Messina, Catania and Palermo.

Lazzi (☎ 06 884 08 40; www.lazzi.it, in Italian) For northern Italian cities and Tuscany.

Marozzi (☎ 06 44 24 95 19; www.marozzi.it, in Italian) Covers Sorrento, Brindisi, Matera and Lecce.

SAIS (☎ 091 616 60 28; www.saistrasporti.it) Long-haul trips to Sicily.

SENA (☎ 800 93 09 60; www.senabus.it) Services to Siena.

Sulga (☎ 075 575 96 41; www.sulga.it) For Perugia, Assisi and Romagna.

Car & Motorcycle

It's no holiday trying to motor yourself into Rome's centre, which has many traffic restrictions and can be exceedingly nerve fraying to navigate. If you insist, the main road connecting Rome to the north and south is the Autostrada del Sole (A1), which extends from Milan to Reggio di Calabria. On the outskirts of the city it connects with the Grande Raccordo Anulare (GRA), the ring road encircling Rome. It's best to enter or leave Rome via the GRA and the major feeder roads that connect it to the city. If approaching from the north, take the Via Salaria (SS4) or Via Flaminia (SS3) exits. From the south, take Via Appia Nuova (SS7) or Via del Mare (SS8), which connects Rome to the Lido di Ostia. All provide reasonably direct routes into the city. The A12 connects the city to both Civitavecchia and Fiumicino airport.

Car-rental offices at Roma Termini include **Avis** (☎ 06 481 43 73; www.avis.com), **Europcar** (☎ 06 488 28 54; www.europcar.com), **Hertz** (☎ 06 474 03 89; www.hertz.com) and **Maggiore National** (☎ 06 488 00 49; www.maggiore.it, in Italian). All have offices at both airports as well. **Happy Rent** (Map p724; ☎ 06 481 81 85; www.happyrent.com; Via Farini 3) hires scooters (from €31 per day), motorcycles (around €104 and up) and bicycles (from €62 per week). To see Rome in an unforgettable way, they even hire out Vespas with English-speaking drivers.

Train

Almost all trains arrive at and depart from Roma Termini, though some depart from Tiburtina. From Termini, there are regular connections to all major cities in Italy and throughout Europe. You can check the timetables at the train information desks at Roma Termini (Map p724), or by call-

ing the **reservation line** (☎ 89 20 21; ☎ 24hr) or checking the Trenitalia website (www.trenitalia.com, in Italian and English). Trains start operating at around 5.45am and end at around 11pm; the side gates close after midnight, when it's nowhere you'd want to be.

Services at Termini include telephones, money exchange, tourist information, post office, first aid (from 7am to 9pm), an underground mall and **luggage storage** (per piece for 5hr €3.80, per piece per hr 5-12hr €0.60, per piece per hr thereafter €0.20; ☎ 6am-midnight).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

There are several options for getting to and from Rome's main airport, Leonardo da Vinci, about 30km southwest of the city centre. Even though Ciampino is just 15km southeast of the city centre, it is less accessible.

The convenient Leonardo Express train service (follow the signs to the station from the airport arrivals hall), which costs €9.50, arrives at and leaves from platforms 25 to 29 at Termini and takes 35 minutes (if you have luggage, give yourself five to 10 minutes to walk to the far-end platforms). The first direct train leaves the airport at 6.37am and takes 32 minutes. Thereafter, trains run half-hourly until the last one at 11.37pm. From Termini to the airport, trains start at 5.51am and run half-hourly until the last train at 10.51pm. Another train (€5) from Fiumicino stops at Trastevere, Ostiense and Tiburtina stations, but not at Termini, with a service from the airport every 20 minutes from 5.57am to 11.27pm, and from Tiburtina from 5.06am until 10.36pm. From midnight to 5am, an hourly bus runs from Stazione Tiburtina to the airport. Taxis from the airport to the city centre run to about €50.

The **airport shuttle** (☎ 06 420 14 507; www.airportshuttle.it) offers transfers to/from Fiumicino for €26 for one passenger and €6 for each additional passenger (add 30% between 10pm and 7am) and €42 to Ciampino for one or two passengers, €6 for each additional passenger.

The **Terravision** (☎ 06 659 58 646; www.terravision.it) bus departs for Ciampino outside Termini on Via Marsala 22. The single/return journey costs €8.50/13.50 and takes about 40 minutes, depending on traffic.

To get to Ciampino using public transport, take a Blue Cotral bus (running from 6.50am to 11.40pm) from the Anagnina metro stop (line A). The airport is connected to Rome by Via Appia Nuova.

Car & Motorcycle

Negotiating Roman traffic by car is difficult enough, but you are in for enormous life-risking stress if you ride a motorcycle or Vespa. The rule in Rome is to look straight ahead to watch the vehicles in front and pray those behind are watching you. Pedestrians should always watch out for motorcycles, which often skip red lights.

Most of the historic centre is closed to normal traffic, and you are not permitted to drive into the centre from 6.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday and from 2pm to 6pm Saturday without residency or special permission.

If your car goes missing after being parked illegally, check with the **traffic police** (☎ 06 6 76 91). It will cost about €95 to get it back, plus a hefty fine.

The most major parking area closest to the centre is at the Villa Borghese; entrance is from Piazzale Brasile at the top of Via Vittorio Veneto. There is also a supervised car park at Roma Termini. Other car parks are at Piazza dei Partigiani, just outside Stazione Ostiense, and at Stazione Tiburtina, from where you can also catch the metro into the centre.

See p737 for information about car and scooter rental.

Public Transport

Rome has an integrated public transport system, so the same **Metrebus** ticket is valid for all modes of transport: bus, tram and metro. You can buy tickets at all *tabacchi* (tobacconists' shops), newsstands and from vending machines at main bus stops. Single tickets cost €1 for 75 minutes, €4 for one day, €11 for three days and €16 per week. Tickets must be purchased before you get on and validated in the orange machine as you board. Ticketless riders risk a hefty €51 fine, demanded on the spot in cash. Don't even try the 'But I'm a tourist! I didn't know!' line; it hasn't worked in a decade.

ATAC (☎ 800 43 17 84; www.atac.roma.it) is the city's public transport company. Free transport maps and details on bus routes are

available at the ATAC information booth, at the **Urban Bus Station** (Map p724; Piazza dei Cinquecento) in front of Roma Termini, where many of the main bus routes terminate. Largo di Torre Argentina, Piazza Venezia and Piazza San Silvestro are other hubs. Buses generally run from about 6am to midnight, while late-night buses are marked with an owl on top of the bus sign. A fast tram service, the No 8, connects Largo Argentina with Trastevere, Porta Portese and Monteverde Nuovo.

The Metropolitana has two lines: A (the red line) and B (the blue line). Both pass through Roma Termini. Take Linea A for Piazza di Spagna, the Vatican (Ottaviano), and Villa Borghese (Flaminio), and Linea B for the Colosseum and Circus Maximus. Trains run approximately every five minutes between 5.30am and 11.30pm (12.30am on Saturday) for Line B and to 9pm for Line A.

Taxi

Roman taxi drivers can be at the top of the fleecing-foreigners game, so understand the rules before you and your bags get in the car. Make sure your taxi is licensed and metered, and always go with the metered fare, never an arranged price.

Cooperativa Radio Taxi Romana (☎ 06 35 70) oversees many operators. You can't hail a taxi as in most cities, but there are major taxi ranks at the airports, Roma Termini and Largo Argentina in the historical centre (look for the orange-and-black taxi signs). There are surcharges from €1 to €3 for luggage, night service, Sunday and public holidays. Most taxi fares within Rome's historic centre will cost from €7 to €20. Taxis are on radio call 24 hours a day.

AROUND ROME

Ostia Antica

While the ruins of Pompeii show off how the upper classes lived, Ostia's ruins display a once-thriving port city, where 100,000 Roman citizens lived and worked as far back as the 4th century BC. As Rome's port linking the Tiber River and the Mediterranean, Ostia became strategically important as both a merchant and defence centre. Barbarian invasions and the outbreak of malaria led to Ostia Antica's eventual abandonment, but Pope Gregory IV re-established the city in the 9th century AD.

Information about the town and ruins is available from the Rome tourist office or Enjoy Rome (p717).

Of particular note in the **ruins** (☎ 06 563 58 099; adult/concession €4/2; ☎ 8.30am-6pm summer, to 4pm winter) of the excavated city are the mosaics of the **Terme di Nettuno** (Baths of Neptune); a **Roman theatre** built by Agrippa; the **forum** and **Capitolium temple**, dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva; and the **Piazzale delle Corporazioni**, the offices of Ostia's 70 merchant guilds, distinguished by mosaics depicting their different trades.

To get to Ostia Antica from Rome, take the Metro Linea B to Piramide, then the Ostia Lido train (getting off at Ostia Antica). By car, take the Via del Mare or the parallel-running Via Ostiense.

Tivoli

pop 49,254

Set on a hill by the Aniene River, Tivoli was a resort town of the ancient Romans and became popular as a summer playground for the wealthy during the Renaissance. To see evidence of the latter, head to the ornate gardens of Villa d'Este, or to the ruins of Villa Adriana, to see what the Roman emperor Hadrian (as in Hadrian's Wall) thought a little summer villa should look like.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0774 31 12 49; Largo Garibaldi; ☎ 8.30am-2.30pm Tue-Sat & 3-6pm Tue-Thu) is near the Cotral bus stop.

SIGHTS

Hadrian's spectacular summer villa, **Villa Adriana** (☎ 0774 53 02 03; admission €6.50; ☎ 9am-1hr before sunset), built in the 2nd century AD, was one of the largest and most sumptuous in the Roman Empire. Although successively plundered by barbarians and Romans for building materials (many of its original decorations were used to embellish the Villa d'Este), enough splendence remains to convey the villa's magnificence.

The Renaissance **Villa d'Este** (☎ 0774 31 20 70; Piazza Trento; admission €9; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sun summer, to 4.30pm winter) was built in the 16th century for Cardinal Ippolito d'Este. Situated on the site of a Franciscan monastery, the villa's wonderful gardens are decorated with numerous fountains, which are its main attraction.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tivoli is 30km east of Rome and accessible by Cotral bus from outside the Ponte Mammolo station on Metro Linea B. Buses depart every 20 minutes (€1.60). The fastest route by car is on the Rome-L'Aquila autostrada (A24).

Tarquinia

pop 15,472

Without a Tarquinia, there would never have been a Rome as we know it. The Etruscan capital Tarquinia was founded as far back as the 12th century BC and rivalled Athens in its grand scale. Many Tarquin kings ruled Rome just after the mythic founding by Romulus after killing his twin Remus in 753 BC. Although the Etruscans were the greatest Italic rulers before the Romans, not much of their culture remains. Most of what scholars know comes from the very walls of Tarquinia's necropolis, which, along with the necropolis at Cerveteri, was recently added to the list of Unesco's World Heritage sites.

Tarquinia is about 90km northwest of Rome, between Civitavecchia and Fiumicino, and there's a **tourist information office** (☎ 0766 85 63 84; Piazza Cavour 1; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) just past the medieval ramparts.

SIGHTS

The entire town of Tarquinia is a historical monument, but of great note is the **Museo Nazionale Tarquiniense** (☎ 0766 85 60 36; Piazza Cavour; admission incl necropolis €6.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), a significant collection of Etruscan treasures housed in the 15th-century Palazzo Vitelleschi. In addition to sarcophagi laden with everyday tools, you can also admire frescoes from the tombs. Keep an eye out for a few red-and-black plates featuring acrobatic sex acts, which the Etruscans were famous for; the words 'Etruscan' and 'prostitute' were even used interchangeably.

The **necropolis** (☎ 0766 85 63 08; Via Ripagretta; admission €4 or €6.50 with museum; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Tue-Sun), also known as Monterozzi, dates to the 7th century BC. Of its 6000 excavated graves, 200 are painted with various scenes of Etruscan life. It's a 15-minute walk from the town centre.

SLEEPING & EATING

Tarquinia has limited accommodation, so it's best to book ahead; it makes a very fine day trip from Rome.

Hotel San Marco (☎ 0766 84 22 34; www.san-marco.com; Piazza Cavour 18; s/d €50/65) In the medieval centre, just across from the museums, is this convenient (if not exactly calming) little hotel, above a lively bar.

Trattoria Arcadia (☎ 0766 85 55 01; Via Mazzini 6; 1st/2nd courses €6.50/8.50) On a small side street in the medieval centre is this small and affordable local trattoria.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Cotral buses leave every hour for Tarquinia from outside the Lepanto stop on Metro Linea A, arriving at Barriera San Giusto, a short distance from the tourist office.

Cerveteri

The most ancient Etruscan settlement, known as Caere, was the most important commercial centre on the Mediterranean going back to the founding of Rome, around the 7th century BC. The present-day lures are the atmospheric tombs, known as *tumoli*, great mounds of earth with carved stone bases. Treasures taken from these tombs can be seen in the Vatican Museums and the Louvre. There is a **tourist office** (☎ 06 994 06 72; Piazza Aldo Moro; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-6.30pm).

Once inside the main necropolis area, **Banditaccia** (☎ 06 994 00 01; Via del Necropoli; admission €4; ☎ 9am-7pm summer, to 4pm winter, closed Mon), the *tumoli* are laid out in the form of a town. The best-preserved example is the 4th-century-BC **Tomba dei Rilievi**, adorned with painted reliefs depicting household items and cooking implements.

Antica Locanda Le Ginestre (☎ 06 994 06 72; Piazza Santa Maria 5; 1st/2nd courses €10/18; ☎ closed Mon) is well-known and brings Romans out to Cerveteri just for a meal on its outdoor terrace; the pastas are especially good.

Cerveteri is accessible from Rome by Cotral bus (1¼ hours, every 30 minutes) from outside the Lepanto stop on Metro Linea A.

NORTHERN ITALY

Italy's well-heeled north is a fascinating area of historical wealth and natural diversity. Bordered by the northern Alps and boasting some of the country's most spectacular coastline (the Cinque Terre), it also encompasses Italy's largest lowland area, the de-

ETRUSCAN INFLUENCE

The Etruscans were well-known for their spicy exploits (see p739). The Roman historian Livy writes that it was the Tarquin rape of the virtuous lady Lucretia that led to the expulsion of the Tarquin kings from Rome, turning Rome from a monarchy to a Republic in 510 BC.

cidedly unpicturesque Po valley plain. Of the cities it's Venice that hogs the limelight, but in their own way Turin, Genoa and Bologna offer plenty to the open-minded traveller. Verona is justifiably considered one of Italy's most beautiful cities, while the medieval centres of Padua, Ferrara and Ravenna all reward a visit.

GENOA

pop 601,340

A city of aristocratic *palazzi* (mansions, palaces) and malodorous alleyways, of Gothic architecture and industrial sprawl, Genoa is a compelling place. You need only walk the labyrinthine, sometimes seedy streets of the *centro storico* to feel its raw energy. Birthplace of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) and home to Europe's largest aquarium, it was once a powerful maritime republic known as *La Superba*; nowadays it's a fascinating port city well worth a stopover.

Orientation & Information

Central Genoa is concentrated between the two main train stations: Stazione Brignole and Stazione Principe. The central shopping strip, Via XX Settembre, starts a short walk southwest of Stazione Brignole and leads up to Piazza de Ferrari. From adjacent Piazza Giacomo Matteotti, Via San Lorenzo leads to the waterfront and historic centre.

For information head to one of the four **tourist offices** (airport ☎ 010 601 52 47; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-5pm Sun; city centre ☎ 010 868 74 52; www.ap.genova.it; Piazza Giacomo Matteotti; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm; ferry terminal ☎ 010 246 36 86; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm; Stazione Principe ☎ 010 246 26 33; www.ap.genova.it; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat).

Sights

Genoa's central square, Piazza de Ferrari, is a good place to start exploring the city.

Grandiose and impressive, it's flanked by imposing *palazzi* – **Palazzo della Borsa** (closed to the public), **Teatro Carlo Felice** (see p742) and the huge **Palazzo Ducale** (☎ 010 557 40 04; www.palazzoducale.genova.it, in Italian; entrance Piazza Giacomo Matteotti 9; admission adult €8; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Sun), once the seat of the city government, now Liguria's main exhibition space.

A short walk to the west, the 12th-century **Cattedrale di San Lorenzo** (Piazza San Lorenzo; ☎ 8-11.45am & 3-6.45pm) is a beautiful example of Italian Gothic architecture.

Located on the waterfront, the **Porto Antico** (☎ information 010 248 57 10; www.portoantico.it; ☎ 10am-6pm), Genoa's old port, was given a makeover before the city's stint as European City of Culture in 2004. Interest centres on the **Acquario di Genova** (☎ 010 234 56 78; www.acquariodigenova.it; Ponte Spinola; adult/child €14/8.50; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 8.30pm Sat & Sun), Europe's largest aquarium. Designed by architect Renzo Piano, it houses 5000 animals in six million litres of water.

The city facelift didn't, however, extend to the city's dark *centro storico*. While usually crowded by day, the area to the north of Via San Lorenzo can be intimidating at night (particularly Via San Luca). Keep your eyes open and, if possible, your nose closed.

Genoa's main museums are in a series of *palazzi* on Via Garibaldi. The three most important, known collectively as the **Musei di Strada Nuova** (☎ 010 247 63 51; adult/child €7/5; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun), are housed in **Palazzo Bianco** (Via Garibaldi 11), **Palazzo Rosso** (Via Garibaldi 18) and **Palazzo Doria-Tursi** (Via Garibaldi 9). The first two feature works by Flemish, Dutch, Spanish and Italian old masters, while the third displays the personal effects of Niccolò Paganini, Genoa's legendary violinist. Tickets, valid for all three museums, are available from the bookshop in Palazzo Doria-Tursi.

Nearby, the **Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Spinola** (☎ 010 247 70 61; Piazza Pellicceria 1; admission €4; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 1-8pm Sun) displays major Italian and Flemish Renaissance works.

Sleeping

Ostello Genova (☎ 010 242 24 57; hostelge@iol.it; Via Costanzi 120; per person dm/s/d incl breakfast €15/22/20; ☎ closed Jan) Genoa's HI hostel is a functional, modern affair that makes little last-

ing impression, apart from its panoramic city views. Take bus 40 from Brignole; 35 or 40 from Principe.

Carola (☎ 010 839 13 40; www.albergocarola.it; Via Gropallo 4; d €70, s/d with shared bathroom €40/60) Conveniently close to Stazione Brignole, this is a classic old-school *pensione*. Guests are welcomed as if friends, and the 3rd-floor rooms are simple, small and spotless. The shared bathrooms are similarly pristine.

Hotel Bel Soggiorno (☎ 010 54 28 80; www.bel-soggiornohotel.com; Via XX Settembre 19; s/d incl breakfast €82/107; ☎) An endearing mix of the modern and the antique, rooms here are full of character. The colonial-style breakfast room adds to the chintzy, yesteryear atmosphere. It's in an excellent location and has a friendly owner.

Locanda di Palazzo Cicala (☎ 010 251 88 24; www.palazzocicala.it; Piazza San Lorenzo 16; s/d €160/210; ☎ ☎ ☎) A dash of contemporary style awaits guests at this boutique hotel. Hidden in a 16th-century *palazzo* opposite the cathedral, it has sexy high-ceilinged rooms with designer furniture and loos by Philippe Starck.

Eating

Ligurian specialties include *pesto* (a sauce of basil, garlic, pine nuts and Parmesan), *pansotti* (ravioli in ground walnut sauce) and focaccia.

Threagaio (☎ 010 246 57 93; Piazza delle Erbe 17/19; salads €4.50, snacks €5-10) On one of Genoa's 'in' squares, this fashionable spot is ideal for a midday salad or a lingering *aperitivo* (apéritif). The bright yellow interior gets very busy at lunchtime, but the pace relaxes in the evening as the cocktails start to flow.

Il Barbarossa (☎ 010 246 50 97; Piano di Sant'Andrea 21/23r; 1st/2nd courses €7/10) Salute the model of Elvis as you enter the warm, woody atmosphere of this small, brick-vaulted *enoteca-cum-café*. There's wine by the glass (from €3.50), a daily menu of local specialties, *panini* and beer.

Il Panson (☎ 010 246 89 03; Piazza delle Erbe 5; 1st/2nd courses €9/13; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) A historic restaurant, in business since 1790, Il Panson is the place to sample great seafood. Everything's good, but two dishes stand out – the handmade basil ravioli in prawn sauce and the *fritto misto* (mixed fry).

Cantine Squarciafico (☎ 010 247 08 23; Piazza Invrea 3r; 1st/2nd courses €10/12; ☎ closed Aug) Housed

in a 16th-century *palazzo*, this trendy wine bar, complete with vaulted ceilings and stone columns, is an elegant place to eat. The menu of modern regional dishes changes daily but house specialities include *pesto* and *stoccafisso* (stockfish). There's also a 120-strong wine list to choose from.

Antica Cantina i Tre Merli (☎ 010 247 40 95; Vico dietro il Coro Maddalena 26r; 1st/2nd courses €10/15; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) A smart option just off Via Garibaldi, 'The Three Crows' serves excellent Ligurian cuisine with an emphasis on fish. The house speciality *Il Ciuppin* is a superb, taste-charged seafood soup.

Drinking & Entertainment

Action centres on the *centro storico* with a number of good bars clustered around Piazza delle Erbe.

Mentelocale Café (☎ 010 595 96 48; Piazza Giacomo Matteotti 9) This is a swish ultramodern café by the entrance to the Palazzo Ducale. Sit on the Dali-inspired red sofas and sip on something cool as you eye up fellow drinkers.

Cosa Zapata (Via Sampierdarena 36; ☎ 9pm-3am Fri & Sat) Live music fans should seek this *centro sociale* (organised squat), where a younger crowd moshes to modern music within medieval walls.

Teatro Carlo Felice (☎ 010 5398 12 24; www.carlofelice.it, in Italian; Passo Eugenio Montale 4) Treat your partner to a performance at Genoa's neoclassical opera house.

Getting There & Around

AIR
Genoa's **Cristoforo Colombo airport** (GOA; ☎ 010 601 54 10; www.airport.genova.it; Sestri Ponente) is 6km west of the city.

The **Volabus** (☎ 010 558 24 14; ☎ 5.30am-10.30pm) airport shuttle leaves from Piazza Verdi (€3, 25 minutes, half hourly) outside Stazione Brignole, also stopping at Stazione Principe.

BUS

The main bus terminal is on Piazza della Vittoria, south of Stazione Brignole. Book tickets at **Geotravels** (☎ 010 58 71 81; Piazza della Vittoria 57; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri & 9am-12.30pm Sat).

FERRIES

Ferries sail from the **ferry terminal** (☎ 166 152 39 393; www.porto.genova.it; Via Milano 51), west of the city centre. Ferry companies include:

Grandi Navi Veloci (☎ 800 46 65 10; www2.gnv.it) To/from Sardinia (Porto Torres €49, 11 hours; Olbia €38, 10 hours), Sicily (Palermo €75, 20 hours), Barcelona (€56, 18 hours) and Tunis (€104, 24 hours).

Moby Lines (☎ 010 254 15 13; www.mobylines.it) To/from Corsica (Bastia €15, four hours) and Sardinia (Olbia €42, seven hours).

Tirrenia (☎ 800 82 40 79; www.tirrenia.it) To/from Sardinia (Porto Torres €55, 10 hours; Olbia €40, 13½ hours).

TRAIN

There are direct trains to La Spezia (€8, 1½ hours, half hourly), Milan (€13.90, 1¾ hours, up to 25 daily), Pisa (€13.90, two hours, half hourly), Rome (€33.65, 5¼ hours, eight daily) and Turin (€12.90, two hours, up to 20 daily).

It generally makes little difference whether you leave from Brignole or Principe station.

RIVIERA DI LEVANTE

Curving southeast from Genoa to La Spezia, Liguria's eastern Riviera boasts some of Italy's most dramatic coastline. The highlight is the Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre, just north of La Spezia. Summer gets very crowded so try to visit in spring or autumn; viable bases include Santa Margherita in the north and La Spezia in the south.

There are tourist offices at **Santa Margherita** (☎ 0185 28 74 85; www.apptigliullo.liguria.it; Via XXV Aprile 4; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) and **La Spezia** (☎ 0187 77 09 00; www.apptcinqueterre.sp.it; Viale Mazzini 45; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun). For information on activities in the Cinque Terre ask at the **park office** (☎ 0187 76 00 00; www.parcnazionale5terre.it; Via Signorini 118; ☎ 8am-6pm) in Riomaggiore.

Sights & Activities

After you've explored elegant Santa Margherita (which won't take you long) head to **Camogli**, a gorgeous fishing village turned resort, and exclusive **Portofino**. From Portofino, you can walk to the medieval Benedictine **Abbazia di San Fruttuoso** (☎ 0185 77 27 03; Camogli; admission €4; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, to 4pm Tue-Sun Mar, Apr & Oct, to 4pm Sun Dec-Feb).

For the coast's best scenery head south to the **Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre**. Named after its five tiny villages (Riomaggiore, Manorola, Corniglia, Vernazza and Monter-

osso) this Unesco-listed park encompasses some of Italy's most picturesque and environmentally sensitive coastline. The villages, all accessible by train, are linked by the 12km **Via dell'Amore** (Lovers' Lane; toll €3), a magnificent, mildly challenging day's walk.

Via dell'Amore is just one of a network of footpaths and cycle trails that crisscross the park; details are available from the park office (see opposite). If water sports are more your thing, you can hire snorkelling gear, kayaks and diving kit at the **Diving Center 5 Terre** (☎ 0187 92 00 11; www.5terrediving.com; Via San Giacomo) in Riomaggiore.

Sleeping

Ostello 5 Terre (☎ 0187 92 02 15; www.cinqueterre.net/ostello; Via B Riccobaldi 21; dm €22; ☎) In Manorola, this private hostel is justifiably popular. Beds are in six-person single-sex dorms, most of which have sea-views and all of which are clean and bright. Extras include bike/snorkel hire and laundry facilities. Book ahead.

Nuova Riviera (☎ 0185 28 74 03; info@nuovariviera.com; Via Belvedere 10/2, Santa Margherita; s/d €90/100, with shared bathroom €60/70; ☎) Housed in a lovely old villa full of antiques, chandeliers and mosaic floors, the Nuova Riviera exudes a genteel charm. Rooms, divided between the hotel proper and a nearby annex, are inviting and airy. Payment is cash only for rooms with shared bathrooms.

Hotel Astoria (☎ 0187 71 46 55; www.albergoastoria.com; Via Roma 139; s/d incl breakfast €80/130; ☎) The Astoria makes a good base for exploring the Cinque Terre. Not five minutes from La Spezia train station, it offers bright rooms and big, firm beds – something you'll appreciate after a day's walking.

Other recommendations:

La Dolce Vita (☎ 0187 760044; Via Colombo 120; beds from €20) *Affittacamere* (private house renting rooms) in Riomaggiore with a range of simple holiday rooms.

Edi (☎ 0187 92 03 25; Via Colombo 111; d €55-70) Sunny rooms and apartments in Riomaggiore.

Eating & Drinking

A Pie De Ma (☎ 338 222 00 88; Via dell'Amore; snacks €5-8) An ideal pit stop for walkers tackling Via dell'Amore, this café can seriously damage your willpower. It's not the food, which is fine, but the temptation to while away the day gazing over Riomaggiore's bay.

Osteria No 7 (☎ 0185 28 17 03; Via J Ruffini 36; 1st/2nd courses €7/8) In Santa Margherita, Osteria No 7 is a real find. Boisterous and down-to-earth, it serves fantastic regional fare in great, steaming portions. Try the tasty *seppie in umido* (cuttlefish stew).

Bar Centrale (☎ 0187 92 02 08; Via Colombo 144; ☎) Hub of Riomaggiore hijinks, the Bar Centrale bar is, in the off-season, your only real carousing option; in summer it's certainly the most raucous. The Internet costs €6 per hour.

Getting There & Away

From Genoa, trains run to Santa Margherita (€2.10, 35 minutes, half hourly) and La Spezia (€8, 1½ hours, half hourly). From La Spezia, regional trains to/from the Cinque Terre villages run twice hourly between 6am and 9.15pm; unlimited travel between Levanto and La Spezia is covered by the *biglietto giornaliero Cinque Terre* (24-hour Cinque Terre rail pass; €5.40).

In summer, various ferry companies ply the coastal waters: **Servizio Marittimo del Tigulio** (☎ 0185 28 46 70; www.traghettoportofino.it) operates between Santa Margherita, Portofino, the Cinque Terre and Genoa; **Trasporti Marittimi Turistici Golfo Paradiso** (☎ 0185 77 20 91; www.golfoparadiso.it, in Italian) runs between Genoa, Camogli and the Cinque Terre; and **Navigazione Golfo dei Poeti** (☎ 0187 96 76 76; www.navigazionegolfodeipoeti.it) connects La Spezia and the Cinque Terre.

TURIN

pop 867,855

First-time visitors to Turin are often surprised. Expecting a bleak, industrial sprawl they are shocked to discover a dynamic city of royal palaces (Turin was home to Italy's royal Savoy family) and historic cafés, baroque piazzas and world-class museums. Traditionally associated with Fiat, football (Juventus) and the Holy Shroud, Piedmont's capital has rarely looked as good as it does today, its centre gleaming in the aftermath of the 2006 Winter Olympics.

Orientation & Information

Stazione Porta Nuova train station is the main point of arrival, although most trains will be using the revamped Stazione Porta Susa from 2007. From Porta Nuova cross Piazza Carlo Felice and follow Via Roma

for Turin's two focal piazzas: San Carlo and Castello.

City information is available from the three **tourist offices** (Atrium Torino ☎ 011 53 51 81; www.turismotorino.org; Piazza Solferino; ☎ 9.30am-7pm; Porta Nuova train station ☎ 011 53 51 81; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun; ☎ airport 011 53 51 81; ☎ 8.30am-10.30pm).

Sights

Serious sightseers should consider the **Torino Card** (48/72hr card €16/18), available at tourist offices and valid for all public transport and discounts/entry to 120 museums, monuments and castles.

Turin's grandest square is **Piazza Castello**, bordered by porticoed promenades and regal palaces. Dominating the piazza, Palazzo Madama is home to the **Museo Civico d'Arte Antica** (☎ 011 442 99 12; Piazza Castello; ☎ closed at time of research). To the north, statues of Castor and Pollux guard the entrance to the enormous **Palazzo Reale** (Royal Palace; ☎ 011 436 14 55; Piazza Castello; adult/child €6.50/free; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), built for Carlo Emanuele II in the mid-17th century. The palace's **Giardino Reale** (Royal Garden; admission free; ☎ 9am-1hr before sunset) was designed in 1697 by Louis le Nôtre, noted for his work at Versailles.

A short walk away, elegant **Piazza San Carlo**, known as Turin's drawing room, is famous for its cafés and twin baroque churches **San Carlo** and **Santa Cristina**.

Turin's main cathedral, the **Cattedrale di San Giovanni Battista** (☎ 011 436 15 40; Piazza San Giovanni; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, from 8am-Sun), houses the *Sindone* (Turin Shroud), a copy of which is on permanent display in front of the altar (the real thing is kept in a vacuum-sealed box and rarely revealed). Believers claim the linen cloth was used to wrap the crucified Christ; carbon dating, however, dates the cloth to the 13th century. All this, and more, is explained in the **Museo della Sindone** (Museum of the Shroud; ☎ 011 436 58 32; Via San Domenico 28; adult/child €5.50/2.50; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-7pm).

But if Turin's famous for one museum it's the **Museo Egizio** (Egyptian Museum; ☎ 011 561 77 76; www.museoegizio.org; Via Accademia delle Scienze 6; adult/child €6.50/free; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), which houses an engrossing collection of ancient Egyptian art that is considered the world's most important outside of Cairo and London.

Towering 167m over the city centre, the **Mole Antonelliana** (Via Montebello 20) is Turin's most recognisable building. Worth a look in its own right, it nowadays houses the **Museo Nazionale del Cinema** (☎ 011 813 85 60; www.museonazionaledelcinema.org; adult/concession €5.50/4.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Fri & Sun, to 11pm Sat) and its comprehensive collection of cinematic memorabilia. Modern, interactive and fun, the museum makes a refreshing change from Turin's more traditional attractions. Don't

miss the glass **Panoramic Lift** (adult/child €4/3), which whisks you up 85m in 59 seconds – unless you suffer from vertigo.

Sleeping

Campeggio Villa Rey (☎ 011 819 01 17; Strada Superiore Val San Martino 27; per person/tent/car €7/6/1.50; ☎ Mar-Oct) Set amid the greenery of Turin's hills, this camping ground, the closest to the city centre, is east of the Po River – take bus 61 from Porta Nuova to the end of the line, then bus 54.

Ostello Torino (☎ 011 660 29 39; ostello.torino@libero.it; Via Alby 1; per person dm/s/d incl breakfast €14.50/20/19; ☎ closed mid-Dec–mid-Jan; P ☎ ☎ ☎) Turin's HI hostel is quiet, comfortable and clean with three- or eight-person dorms and family rooms. Wi-fi is a further plus. Catch bus 52 from Porta Nuova (64 on Sunday), otherwise it's a steep 1.8km walk.

Bologna (☎ 011 562 01 91; www.hotelbolognasrl.it; in Italian; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 60; s/d incl breakfast €75/95; ☎ ☎) The Bologna's ageing corridors and innocuous public spaces lead through to rooms that are surprisingly spic, spacious and modern. To grab one you'll need to book ahead as the hotel is deservedly popular.

Dogana Vecchia (☎ 011 436 67 52; Via Corte D'Appello 4; s/d €88/105; ☎ ☎ ☎) Once a 17th-century inn, the Dogana Vecchia has accommodated the likes of Verdi and Mozart. Parquet, chandeliers and pot plants provide olde-world ambience, while mod cons ensure contemporary comfort.

Art Hotel Boston (☎ 011 50 03 59; www.hotelboston torino.it; Via Massena 70; s €105-200, d €150-280; ☎ ☎ ☎) The Boston's austere façade gives no clues as to the colourful, modern interior. Individually decorated rooms sport everything from pop art to hanging crocodiles, from floral chintz to white minimalism. The jazzy public spaces are filled with modern art including original works by, among others, Andy Warhol.

Eating & Drinking

Early evening is the time to make for one of the city's cafés and enjoy an aperitif accompanied by a sumptuous buffet of hors d'oeuvres. Two good spots are **Caffè Elena** (☎ 011 812 33 41; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 5) and **Libelux** (☎ 011 436 72 06; Via Corte d'Appello 15f).

Il Granaio (☎ 011 562 10 03; Via San Francesco d'Assisi; mains €6; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat) Walk through the pasta shop to this cheap, hugely popu-

lar self-service canteen. Locals flock here for great pasta and *castagnaccio* (chestnut-flour cake topped with pine kernels and rosemary).

Pizzeria Stars & Stripes (☎ 011 516 20 52; Piazza Paleocapa 20; pizzas/1st/2nd courses €7/7/12; ☎ closed Mon lunch & Sun) Although offering a full menu of pastas and main courses, it's the pizzas that stand out at this colourful pizzeria. Toppings range from the trad to the rad – think tandoori chicken, marinated tuna, caviar and vodka (fortunately, not all on the same pizza).

Ristorante Perbacco (☎ 011 882110; Via Giuseppe Mazzini 31; set menu €30; ☎ 7.45pm-1am Tue-Sun) With its dim lighting and deep-red furnishings, the Perbacco provides a refined setting for first-rate Piedmontese cuisine. Connoisseurs will appreciate the wine list that's longer than the Po.

San Tommaso 10 (☎ 011 53 42 01; Via San Tommaso 10) Come here for Turin's best, and most unusual, coffee. Anyone for a tiramisu espresso or an orange cappuccino? They might offend traditionalists, but believe me, these coffees are good.

Getting There & Around

In Caselle, 16km northwest of the city centre, **Turin airport** (TRN; ☎ 011 567 63 61; www.turin-airport.com) operates flights to/from European and national destinations. **Sadem** (☎ 011 300 01 66; www.sadem.it, in Italian) runs an airport shuttle (€5.50, 40 minutes, every 45 minutes) from the corner of Via Camerana and Corso Vittorio Emanuele II.

Direct trains connect with Milan (€15.60, 1¾ hours, up to 30 daily), Venice (€32.70, five hours, five daily), Genoa (€12.90, two hours, up to 20 daily) and Rome (€43.45, seven hours, seven daily).

MILAN

pop 1.27 million

Italy's financial and fashion capital is strictly for city lovers. To enjoy its vibrant cultural scene and wicked nightlife you'll have to put up with its traffic-ridden streets and charmless city centre. There are surprisingly few must-see sights and unless you're here to shop – for which you'll require the salary of a top model – you'll not want to linger long.

Originally founded by Celtic tribes in the 7th century BC, Milan was conquered by

BLACK MAGIC CITY

Turin is a magic city. Situated on the 45th parallel, it is, according to occult lore, one of the three apexes of the white magic triangle with Lyon and Prague and of its black magic counterpart with London and San Francisco.

Mysterious and ancient lines of energy are said to converge on Turin, as do two rivers, the Po and the Dora. The Po represents the sun and the masculine, while the Dora symbolises the moon and the feminine; together they form a protective ring of water around the city.

The city's black heart is Piazza Statuto. Located in the west of the city, the Romans believed it to be cursed as its position was unfavourable for the setting of the sun. This, they claimed, was a source of negative energy, as sunset symbolised the convergence of good and evil. More prosaically, Piazza Statuto was the site of the city scaffold where thousands met their fate before passing directly through the Gates of Hell, said to lie under the piazza's central flower bed.

To combat these sinister forces, head for Piazza Castello, the centre of the city's white magic map. Bisecting the square, the line dividing the black and white halves of the city passes between the statues of Castor and Pollux outside Palazzo Reale.

Believers cite the vicinity of the Holy Shroud in the Cattedrale di San Giovanni Battista as a source of positive energy, along with the benign forces emanating from the Museo Egizio and the golden auspices of a cave under Palazzo Madama, where the Savoyes used to have the master alchemists of the day practise their mysterious arts.

the Romans in 222 BC and developed into a major trading and transport centre. From the 13th century it flourished under the rule of two powerful families, the Visconti and the Sforza.

Orientation

From Stazione Centrale, take the yellow MM3 underground (Metropolitana Milanese) train line to Piazza del Duomo. The city's main attractions are concentrated in the area between the piazza and Castello Sforzesco.

Information

Grazia Internet (☎ 02 6700543; Piazza Duca d'Aosta 40; per hr €4; ☎ 8am-midnight) Next to Stazione Centrale. Also wi-fi.

Main post office (Via Cordusio 4; M Duomo)

Pharmacy (☎ 02 669 09 35; Stazione Centrale; ☎ 24hr)

Police station (Questura; ☎ 02 622 61; Via Fatebenefratelli 11; M Turati)

Tourist offices Piazza del Duomo (☎ 02 725 24 300; www.milanoinfotourist.com; Via Marconi 1; ☎ 8.45am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 2-5pm Sat & Sun; M Duomo); Stazione Centrale (☎ 02 725 24 360; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Sun); Malpensa airport (☎ 02 748 67 213; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Pick up free guides *Hello Milano* and *Milano Mese*.

Sights

With a capacity of 40,000, Milan's landmark **Duomo** (Piazza del Duomo; admission free; ☎ 7am-7pm; M Duomo) is the world's largest Gothic cathedral. Commissioned in 1386 to a florid French-Gothic design and finished nearly 600 years later, it's a fairy-tale ensemble of 3400 statues, 135 spires and 155 gargoyles. Climb to the **roof** (admission stairs/elevator €3.50/5; ☎ 9am-5.45pm) for memorable city views.

Nearby, on the northern flank of Piazza del Duomo, the elegant iron and glass **Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II** shopping arcade leads towards **Teatro alla Scala** (see p748), the world's most famous opera house.

To the west, the dramatic 15th-century **Castello Sforzesco** (☎ 02 884 63 700; www.milano.castello.it; Piazza Castello 3; admission free; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun; M Cairoli) was the Renaissance residence of the Sforza dynasty. It now shelters the **Musei del Castello** (☎ 02 884 63 703; adult/child €3/free; ☎ 9am-5.30pm), a group of museums dedicated to art, sculpture, furniture, archaeology and music.

Art addicts shouldn't miss the **Pinacoteca di Brera** (☎ 02 72 26 31; www.brera.beniculturali.it; Via Brera 28; admission €5; ☎ 8.30am-7.15pm Tue-Sun; M Monte Napoleone), whose heavyweight collection includes Andrea Mantegna's masterpiece, the *Dead Christ*.

Milan's single most famous painting – Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper* – is in the **Cenacolo Vinciano** (☎ 02 894 21 146; www.cenacolo.vinciano.org; Piazza Santa Maria delle Grazie 2; booking compulsory, admission €8; ☎ 8.15am-6.45pm Tue-Sun; M Cadorna Triennale), just west of the city centre. Book a ticket and decide for yourself whether the apostle to Christ's left is really Mary Magdalene, as author Dan Brown implies in his bestseller *The Da Vinci Code*.

Tours

Autostradale (☎ 02 339 10 794; www.autostradale.it) runs three-hour bus tours that take in the Duomo, Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Castello Sforzesco and the Cenacolo Vinciano. The €50 ticket includes entry to see da Vinci's *Last Supper*. Tickets are available from the tourist office at Piazza Duomo. The multilingual tours depart from outside the office at 9.30am every morning except Monday.

Sleeping

Make sure you book ahead as Milan's hotels fill quickly during frequent trade fairs. And always check the rates as prices often drop by as much as a third when there's no fair on.

Hotel Nuovo (☎ /fax 02 864 60 542; Piazza Beccaria 6; d/tr €100/135, s/d with shared bathroom €30/50; M San Babila) In a city where 'cheap' is an ugly word, the Nuovo is a bastion of budget accommodation. Rooms vary – some sport modern furniture, others are more spartan – but all are basic and clean. The location, just off Corso Vittorio Emanuele II, is a winner too.

Hotel Due Giardini (☎ 02 295 21 093; www.hotelduegiardini.it; Via Benedetto Marcello 47; s €25-75, d €30-130; ☎; M Lima) This is a laid-back family *pensione* with modest, mid-sized rooms and gnomes in the back garden. The décor leaves less of an impression than the attractive rates.

Hotel Nettuno (☎ 02 294 04 481; www.nettunomi.lano.it; Via Tadino 27; s €35-90, d €50-150; ☎; ☎; M Lima) Fresh from a new paint job, the pastel-shaded rooms here are a far cry from

CENTRAL MILAN

INFORMATION	
Grazia Internet.....	1 D1
Lavanderia Self Service.....	2 D3
Main Post Office.....	3 A5
Pharmacy.....	4 D1
Police Station (Questura).....	5 B3
Tourist Office.....	6 B5
Tourist Office.....	7 D1
Train Information Office.....	8 D1

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Castello Sforzesco.....	9 A4
Duomo.....	10 B5
Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II.....	11 B5
Musei del Castello..... (see 9)	6 B5
Pinacoteca di Brera.....	12 B4

SLEEPING	
Hotel Due Giardini.....	13 D2
Hotel Nettuno.....	14 D2
Hotel Nuovo.....	15 C5
Hotel Serena.....	16 D2

EATING	
Di per Di Supermarket.....	17 D2
Osteria del Lazzaretto.....	18 D2
Supermarket.....	19 D1
Supermarket.....	20 D1
DRINKING	
Bar Brera.....	21 B4
ENTERTAINMENT	
Box Office.....	22 B5
Teatro alla Scala.....	23 B4
TRANSPORT	
Autostradale.....	(see 25)
Local Bus to Linate Airport.....	24 C5
Malpensa Bus Express.....	(see 25)
Malpensa Shuttle.....	25 D1
STAM.....	(see 25)

the hotel's dark, cavernous foyer. With laminated wood floors and decent showers, they're comfortable, if anonymous. Wi-fi is available.

Hotel Serena (☎ 02 294 04 958; www.hotelserena.com; Via Boscovich 59; s €50-140, d €60-230, all incl breakfast; ☒ ☑; M Lima) The Serena's jovial owner takes great pride in his sparkling three-star hotel. Rooms, spread over four floors, are not the biggest, but they're light and mod coned with Sky TV and broadband Internet access. The top floor terrace boasts panoramic rooftop views.

Eating

Self-caterers can shop at the two supermarkets at Stazione Centrale – one on the upper level and one on the western side – or at nearby **Di per Di** (Via Felice Casati 30; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Sat).

Osteria del Lazzaretto (☎/fax 02 669 62 34; Via Lazzaretto 15; 1st/2nd courses €7/10; M Repubblica) Good honest Italian food is what you pay not a lot for here. Go for one of the three set menus (€5.50/€7.50/€9.50) or choose from the selection of Milanese classics including risotto and *cotolletto* (breaded veal cutlet).

Ristorante Pizzeria Sabatini (☎ 02 294 02 814; Via Boscovich 54; pizza €8, 1st/2nd courses €8/9; ☎ Mon-Sat; M Lima) Low on atmosphere, Sabatini earns a mention thanks to its fantastic, wood-fired pizzas. You'll find all the usual toppings plus a range of *calzone* (pizzas folded over to form a pie), pastas and main courses.

Tsuru (☎ 02 837 83 66; Via Lagrange 13; sushi €6-20) A cross between a rustic trattoria and a sushi bar, the hugely popular Tsuru serves sushi and sashimi classics as well as a stunning seafood salad. It's excellent value and the location, near the Navigli nightlife, is great for party-goers. To get here take tram 3 from Via Torino, just south of Piazza del Duomo.

Drinking

Milan's drinking scene is centred in the neighbourhoods of Brera and, further south, Navigli.

Bar Brera (☎ 02 87 70 91; Via Brera 23; cocktail €6; M Lanza) One of the many cafés in upmarket Brera, this low-key bar fills early with the well-dressed aperitif set. Sit in the cheerful wooden interior or under the awnings on the cobbled street.

La Sacrestia (☎ 333 321 07 50; Via Conchetta 20) Dubbing itself an 'alcoholic pharmacy', La Sacrestia is a pub with potent medicine. An atmospheric Navigli drinking spot, it sports an eclectic baroque look with red velvet curtains, frescoes and a black panther on the bar. To get here take tram 3 from Via Torino, just south of Piazza del Duomo.

Entertainment

The opera season at **Teatro alla Scala** (☎ 02 86 07 75; www.teatroallascala.org; Piazza delle Scale; M Monte Napoleone) runs from November to July. Tickets are available online or from the **box office** (☎ 02 720 03 744; Galleria del Sagrato, Piazza del Duomo; ☎ noon-6pm; M Duomo) beneath Piazza del Duomo.

A mecca for football fans, the **Stadio Giuseppe Meazza** (San Siro; ☎ 02 404 24 32; Via Piccolomini 5; M Lotto) is home to AC Milan and Internazionale. Match tickets (from €15) are available from branches of Cariplo bank (AC Milan) and Banca Popolare di Milano (Inter). To get to the stadium on match days, take the free shuttle bus from the Lotto (MM1) metro station.

Shopping

For designer clobber head to the so-called Golden Quad, the area around Via della Spiga, Via Sant'Andrea, Via Monte Napoleone and Via Alessandro Manzoni. Street markets are held around the canals, notably on Viale Papiniano on Tuesday and Saturday mornings.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Most international flights fly into **Malpensa airport** (MXP; www.sea-aeroportoimilano.it), about 50km northwest of Milan. Domestic and some European flights use **Linete** (LIN; www.sea-aeroportoimilano.it), about 7km east of the city. For all flight information call ☎ 02 748 52 200.

Increasingly, budget airlines are flying to/from **Orio al Serio airport** (BGY; www.sacbo.it), near Bergamo.

TRAIN

Regular trains depart Stazione Centrale for Venice (€22.20, three hours, 23 daily), Florence (Eurostar, €28.95, 2½ hours, 22 daily), Rome (Eurostar, €46.50, 4½ hours, 20 daily) and other Italian and European

cities. Check timetables at the station **information office** (☎ 7am-9pm). Regional trains stop at Stazione Porta Garibaldi and Stazione Nord in Piazzale Cadorna.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Malpensa Shuttle (☎ 02 585 98 31 85; www.airpullman.com) coaches run to/from Piazza Luigi di Savoia every 20 minutes between 5am and 11pm. Tickets for the 50-minute journey cost €5. **Malpensa Bus Express** (☎ 0331 51 90 00) buses depart from the same piazza half hourly between 5.15am and 10.35pm; tickets cost €5.50 and the trip takes 50 minutes.

By train, take the **Malpensa Express** from Cadorna underground station – there are half-hourly departures between 5.50am and 8.20pm (buses take over from 8.20pm to 11.10pm). The 40-minute journey costs €9.30, or €11.50 if you buy the ticket on board.

For Linate, **Starfly** (☎ 02 585 87 237) buses depart from Piazza Luigi di Savoia every 30 minutes between 5.40am and 9.35pm; tickets cost €3, journey time is 25 minutes. Alternatively, use local bus 73 from Piazza San Babila (€1, 20 minutes).

Autostradale (☎ 035 31 84 72; www.autostradale.it) run half-hourly buses from Piazza Luigi di Savoia to Orio al Serio between 4am and 11.30pm; the journey lasts one hour and tickets are €6.70.

BUS & METRO

Milan's public transport is excellent, with metro (MM), tram and bus services. Buy tickets (€1), valid for one underground ride or up to 75 minutes travel on city buses and trams, at metro stations, tobacconists and newsstands.

MANTUA

pop 47,820

Nestled between three lakes (Superiore, Inferiore and Mezzo), placid Mantua is a popular day trip. Best known for its immaculate medieval centre and grandiose palaces, it was for centuries (1328 to 1707) the stronghold of the Gonzaga family, one of Italy's most powerful Renaissance dynasties.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0376 43 24 32; www.turismo.mantova.it; Piazza Andrea Mantegna 6; ☎ 9am-7pm) is helpful and efficient.

Sights & Activities

Mantua's attractions are concentrated around Piazza Sordello. Chief among them is the enormous **Palazzo Ducale** (☎ 0376 22 48 32; Piazza Sordello; adult/concession €6.50/3.50; ☎ 8.45am-7.15pm Tue-Sun), the former seat of the Gonzaga family. The highlight of the 500 rooms and 15 courtyards is the **Camera degli Sposi** (Bridal Chamber), with 15th-century frescoes by Mantegna. To visit the *Camera* between 15 March and 15 June and 1 September and 15 October you need to book – call ☎ 041 241 18 97.

Nearby, the 15th-century **Basilica di Sant'Andrea** (☎ 0376 32 85 04; Piazza Andrea Mantegna; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm) safeguards several golden vessels said to contain earth soaked by the blood of Christ.

The weekend **market** sprawls across four piazzas, and is more diverse than similar shows in cities twice Mantua's size.

Sleeping & Eating

Albergo Bianchi Stazione (☎ 0376 32 64 65; www.hotelbianchi.mantova.com; Piazza Don Leoni 24; s/d incl breakfast €71/108) Opposite the train station, the Bianchi is more personal than many station hotels, offering a friendly welcome, smart rooms and labyrinthine corridors. Most rooms overlook a quiet internal courtyard.

Hotel ABC (☎ 0376 32 23 29; www.hotelabcmantova.it; Piazza Don Leoni 25; s/d incl breakfast €88/121; ☎) Next door to the Bianchi Stazione, this convenient hotel has big, clinically white rooms, furnished with function more than fun in mind. Prices drop considerably in the off-season.

Ristorante Masseria (☎ 0376 36 53 03; Piazza Broletto 8; pizza €7, 1st/2nd courses €7/10; ☎ closed Thu) If not for the food, good though it is, it's worth eating here to see the 15th-century frescoes on the walls – they're the oldest existing depictions of Mantua. For a filling local dish, the *stracotta con polenta* (beef stew with polenta) is rich and tender.

Osteria Vecchia Mantova (☎ 0376 32 97 20; Piazza Sordello 26; 1st/2nd courses €7/10; ☎ closed Mon) A warm, woody tavern, this atmospheric spot is great for local staples such as sweet *tortelli di zucca* (ring-shaped pasta stuffed with pumpkin).

Getting There & Away

The easiest way to get to Mantua is by train from Verona (€2.30, 40 minutes, hourly).

VERONA

pop 258,115

Wander Verona's atmospheric streets and you'll understand why Shakespeare set *Romeo and Juliet* here. An evocative and vibrant city, it's justly considered one of Italy's most beautiful. Known as *piccola Roma* (little Rome) for its importance in imperial days, its heyday came in the 13th and 14th centuries under the Della Scala (aka the Scaligeri) family, a period noted for the savage family feuding on which Shakespeare based his tragedy.

Information is available at the three **tourist offices** (city centre ☎ 045 806 86 80; www.tourism.verona.it; Via degli Alpini 9; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun; train station ☎ 045 800 08 61; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun; airport ☎ 045 861 91 63; ☎ 11am-5pm Mon-Sat). Alternatively, do your own online research at **Veron@web** (☎ 045 801 33 94; Via Roma 17; per hr €3.50; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, 2-8pm Sat & Sun).

Sights

If you're planning to blitz the city's sights, the **Verona Card** (1/3 days €8/12) covers city transport and the main monuments.

In the corner of Piazza Brà, the 1st-century pink-and-white **amphitheatre** (☎ 045 800 32 04; Piazza Brà; adult/concession €4/3; ☎ 8.30am-7.15pm Tue-Sun, 1.30-7.15pm Mon), known as the Arena, is the third largest Roman amphitheatre in existence. With a capacity of 20,000, it's Verona's opera house (see opposite).

Walk along Via Mazzini, Verona's premier shopping strip, to Via Cappello and **Casa di Giulietta** (☎ 045 803 43 03; Via Capello 23; courtyard free, museum adult/concession €4/3; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun, 1.30-7.30pm Mon), home of the fictional Juliet. Go through the graffiti-strewn gate to look up at literature's most feted balcony. Romantic superstition suggests that rubbing the right breast of Juliet's statue (in the courtyard below the balcony) brings you a new lover. Further along the street is **Porta Leoni**, one of the city's Roman gates; the other, **Porta Borsari**, is north of the Arena.

Set over the city's Roman forum, **Piazza delle Erbe** is lined with sumptuous palaces and filled with touristy market stalls. Through the **Arco della Costa**, the quieter **Piazza dei Signori** is flanked by the **Loggia del Consiglio**, the medieval town hall regarded as Verona's finest Renaissance structure, and

Palazzo degli Scaligeri, the former residence of the Della Scala family.

Sleeping

Ostello Villa Francescatti (☎ 045 59 03 60; fax 045 800 91 27; Salita Fontana del Ferro 15; dm incl breakfast €15.50, meal €9) Verona's beautiful HI hostel is housed in a 16th-century villa set in its own gorgeous grounds. To save yourself a steep uphill walk, take bus 73 from the train station (90 on Sundays). There's a strict 11.30pm curfew.

L'Ospite (☎ 045 803 69 94; www.lospite.com; Via XX Settembre 3; apt for 1/2/4 people €45/80/120; ♿) Over the river from the *centro storico*, L'Ospite has six self-contained flats for up to four people. Simple and bright with wood beamed-ceilings and colourful furniture, they're ideal for families.

Hotel Torcolo (☎ 045 800 75 12; www.hoteltorcolo.it; Vicolo Listone 3; s/d €78/112; ♿) Not 50m from Piazza Brà, the homely Torcolo is ideally located. Its mid-sized rooms range from the prim (floral bedspreads and oil paintings) to the eye-catching (wrought-iron bedsteads and timber ceilings).

Hotel Aurora (☎ 045 59 78 34; www.hotelaurora.biz; Piazza delle Erbe; s/d incl breakfast €120/135, s with shared bathroom €68; ♿) A top of the range two-star, the Aurora has understated rooms with elegant wooden bedsteads and the occasional antique. The terrace overlooking Piazza delle Erbe is a top spot for a drink.

Hotel All'Antica Porta Leona (☎ 045 59 54 99; www.anticaportaleona.com; Corticella Leoni 3; s/d incl breakfast €95/150; ♿) Near Porta Leone, this dependable three-star was being spruced up when we passed through. Its good-sized, tasteful, cream-coloured rooms will be looking better than ever when you land on the doorstep.

Eating

Boiled meats are a Veronese speciality, as is crisp Soave white wine.

Trattoria All'Isolo (☎ 045 59 42 91; Piazza dell'Isolo 5a; 1st/2nd courses €6/9; ☎ closed Wed) Although not entirely tourist-free, All'Isolo's over-the-river location keeps the foreign hordes to a minimum. A small old-school trattoria, it serves homemade *bigoli* (thick wholemeal spaghetti) and challenging meat dishes such as *coniglio in umido* (rabbit stew).

Hosteria All'Orso (☎ 045 597214; Via Sottoriva 3/c; 1st/2nd courses €7/10; ☎ closed Mon lunch & Sun) This

is a charming spot to start an evening in Verona's trendy riverside district. Grab a table under the timber-beamed porticoes or in the rustic-chic interior and order from the menu of tempting north Italian staples.

Al Pompiere (☎ 045 59 42 91; Vicolo Regina d'Ungheria 5; 1st/2nd courses €8/12; ☎ Tue-Sat & dinner Mon) There's no secret to the success of this much-loved trattoria – top notch food and lovely surroundings. A must for cheese fans – there are some 120 on the menu – it also serves time-honoured Veneto classics.

Drinking & Entertainment

The opera season at the Roman **Arena** (☎ 045 800 51 51; www.arena.it; tickets €10-157) runs from July to September. There's also a winter season of classical and modern music, ballet and opera at the 18th-century **Teatro Filarmonico** (☎ 045 800 51 51; www.arena.it; Via dei Mutilati 4).

Nightlife is centred on the bars/*trattorie* of Via Sottoriva. Two goodies are **square** (☎ 045 597 120; Via Sottoriva 15; ☎ 6.30pm-2am Tue-Sat, 5pm-1am Sun), where you can have a shiatsu massage, surf the net, drink cocktails and buy branded homewares; and the more traditional **Sottoriva 23** (☎ 045 800 99 04; Via Sottoriva 23; ☎ 10am-2am), a low-lit cavern bar.

Getting There & Around

Verona-Villafranca airport (VRN; ☎ 045 809 56 66; www.aeroportidelgarda.it) is 12km outside the city and accessible by bus from the train station (€4.50, 15 minutes, every 20 minutes between 5.40am and 11.10pm). Ryanair flies to **Brescia airport** (VBS; ☎ 030 965 65 99), from where shuttle buses (€11, 45 minutes, one daily) connect to Verona's main train station. Departures depend on flight times – for up-to-date details click on www.cga.brescia.it.

From the main bus terminal in front of the train station, buses 11, 12, 13 and 14 (91 and 92 on Sunday) go to Piazza Brà.

Verona is directly linked by rail to Milan (€14.05, two hours, half hourly), Venice (€12.40, 1½ hours, half hourly) and Bologna (€13.90, 1¾ hours, 20 daily).

PADUA

pop 208,940

A lively university city, Padua is a fun place to hang out. But what really makes a visit worthwhile is the Cappella degli Scrovegni

and its stunning Giotto frescoes. Thousands of pilgrims also come to pay their respects to St Anthony, who is buried in the city's cathedral.

From the train station, follow Corso del Popolo and its continuation Corso Garibaldi for 1.5km to the city centre. Alternatively, take buses 3 or 8.

Information is available at the two **tourist offices** (train station ☎ 049 875 20 77; www.turismopadova.it; ☎ 9.15am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun; Galleria Pedrocchi ☎ 049 876 79 27; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat).

Sights

The **PadovaCard** (☎ 049 876 79 27; 1 adult & 1 child €13), available from tourist offices and participating sights, provides free public transport and entry to many sights, including the Cappella degli Scrovegni (plus €1 booking fee).

Many people visit Padua just to see Giotto's extraordinary frescoes in the **Cappella degli Scrovegni** (☎ 049 201 00 20; www.cappelladeglisrovegni.it; Piazza Eremitani 8; admission €12; ☎ 9am-7pm). The 38 colourful panels (c 1304-1306) depicting Christ's life cover Enrico Scrovegni's chapel from floor to ceiling. Visits, for which you'll need to book at least 24 hours in advance, are limited to 15 minutes.

Tickets also cover the adjacent **Musei Civici agli Eremitani** (☎ 049 820 45 51; Piazza Eremitani 8; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) and its collection of Veneto art.

On the other side of the *centro storico*, the **Basilica di Sant'Antonio** (☎ 049 824 28 11; Piazza del Santo; admission free; ☎ 6.30am-7.45pm daily) is an important place of pilgrimage. Each year thousands of visitors come to file past the surprisingly gaudy **tomb** of St Anthony, Padua's patron saint.

In the square outside the basilica, the bronze equestrian statue, the *Gattamelata* (Honeyed Cat), is by the Renaissance sculptor Donatello.

Sleeping

Ostello della Città di Padova (☎ 049 875 22 19; www.ctgveneto.it/ostello2; Via A Aleardi 30; dm incl breakfast €15.50) Functional and friendly, Padua's HI hostel has beds in large single-sex dorms and four-person family rooms. Take buses 3, 8 or 12 to Prato della Valle and then ask for directions.

Hotel Sant'Antonio (☎ 049 875 13 93; www.hotel-santantonio.it; Via Santo Fermo 118; s/d €63/84, s with shared bathroom €42; ♿) On the edge of the historic centre, the three-star Sant'Antonio is a safe, if rather staid option. Rooms, sporting parquet, rugs and fading '70s-style bedspreads, are agreeable if unassuming.

Albergo Verdi (☎ 049 836 41 63; www.albergo-verdidipadova.it; Via Dondi dall'Orologio 7; s/d incl breakfast €70/90; ♿) This is a brand new hotel with groovy multicoloured rooms and glaring modern art. It's not a big place and rooms are small, but the sharp contemporary look and excellent location just off Piazza del Capitaniato more than compensate.

Eating & Drinking

Dalla Zita (Via Gorizia 16; panini from €2.50) Join the hungry lunchtime hordes and order a *panino* at this well-known sandwich bar. With descriptions of more than 100 fillings on the walls you're bound to find something you like.

L'Anfora (☎ 049 65 66 29; Via dei Sconcin 13; 1st/2nd courses €5/10; ♿; Mon-Sat) A typical old-school *osteria* – bare wooden tables and racked wine bottles – L'Anfora is a lovely place for a bowl of *pasta e fagioli* (pasta and beans) or *fegato alla veneziana* (liver and onions).

Godenda (☎ 049 877 41 92; Via Squaricone 4/6; 1st/2nd courses €8/10; ♿; Mon-Sat) All blanched wood and minimalist lines, this is a slick contemporary *enoteca* with a list of more than 300 wines and a delicious deli menu. There are hams and cheeses, salads, smoked fish and dozens of takeaway dishes.

Getting There & Away

SITA buses (☎ 049 820 68 44; www.sitabus.it) arrive from Venice (€3.05, 45 minutes, hourly) at Piazzale Boschetti, 200m south of the train station.

There are also regional trains to/from Venice (€2.50, 40 minutes, every 20 minutes) and direct services to Verona (€9.95, 1½ hours, every 20 minutes) and Bologna (€10.20, 1½ hours, half hourly).

VENICE

pop 271,665

Venice is a hauntingly beautiful city. At every turn you're assailed by unforgettable images – tiny bridges crossing limpid canals, delivery barges jostling chintzy gondolas, tourists posing under flocks of pigeons.

But to reduce Venice to a set of pictures is as impossible as describing it in soundbites. To discover its romantic and melancholic nature you really need to walk its hidden back lanes. Parts of the Cannaregio, Dorsoduro and Castello *sestieri* (districts) rarely see many tourists, and you can lose yourself for hours in the streets between the Accademia and the train station. Stroll late at night to feel an eerie atmosphere, redolent of dark passions and dangerous secrets.

The reality of modern Venice is, however, a city besieged by rising tides and up to 20 million visitors a year. This and the sky-high property prices mean that most Venetians live over the lagoon in Mestre.

History

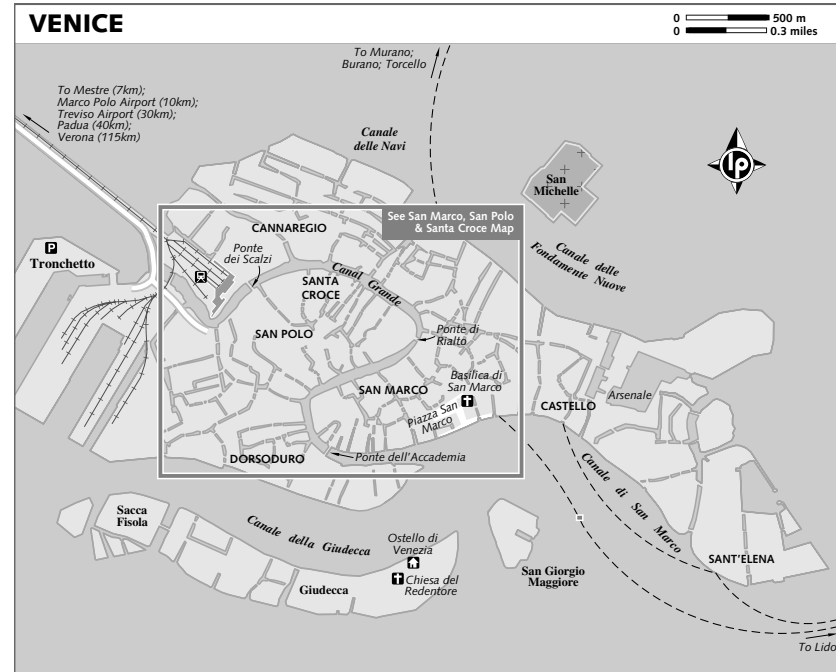
Venice's origins date to the 5th and 6th centuries when barbarian invasions forced the Veneto's inhabitants to seek refuge on the lagoon's islands. The city was initially ruled by the Byzantines from Ravenna, but in AD 726 the Venetians elected their first *doge* (duke).

Over successive centuries, the Venetian Republic grew into a great merchant power, dominating half the Mediterranean, the Adriatic and the trade routes to the Levant – it was from Venice that Marco Polo set out for China in 1271. Decline began in the 16th century and in 1797 the city authorities opened the gates to Napoleon who, in turn, handed the city over to the Austrians. In 1866, Venice was incorporated into the Kingdom of Italy.

Orientation

Everybody gets lost in Venice. How can you not in a city built on 117 islands with 150-odd canals and 400 bridges, only three of which cross the Grand Canal: the Rialto, the Accademia and, at the train station, the Scalzi.

It gets worse: Venetian addresses are almost meaningless to all but local posties. Instead of a street and civic number they often consist of no more than the *sestiere* (Venice is divided into six districts – Cannaregio, Castello, San Marco, Dorsoduro, San Polo and Santa Croce) followed by a long number. Some, however, do have street names and where possible we've provided them. You'll still need to know that a street can be a *calle*, *ruga* or *salizxada*;



beside a canal it's a *fondamenta*. A canal is a *rio*, a filled canal-turned-street a *rio terrà*, and a square a *campo* (Piazza San Marco is Venice's only piazza).

The most helpful points of reference are the train station and Piazzale Roma in the northwest and Piazza San Marco (St Mark's Square) in the south. The signposted path from the train station to Piazza San Marco (the nearest Venice has to a main drag) is a good half-hour walk.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police station (Questura; Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 271 55 11; Fondamenta di San Lorenzo, Castello 5053)

INTERNET ACCESS

There are tons of Internet cafés in Venice, none cheap. The airport is a wi-fi hotspot. **e copie d@ Toni** (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 51 00; Calle delle Bande, Castello 5268; per hr €7; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm)

Internet Point San Pantalon (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 46 66; Calle dei Preti Crosera, Dorsoduro 3812a; per hr €9; ☎ 9.15am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.15am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Sat)

Internet Point Santo Stefano (Map pp756-7;

☎ 041 894 61 22; Campo Santo Stefano 2958; per hr €9; ☎ 10.15am-8pm)

Planet Internet (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 524 41 88; Rio Terrà San Leonardo, Cannaregio 1520; per hr €8; ☎ 9am-11pm)

LAUNDRY

Speedy Wash (Map pp756-7; Rio Terrà San Leonardo, Cannaregio 1520; 8kg wash/dry €5/3; ☎ 9am-10pm)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Twenty-four-hour pharmacies are listed in *Un Ospite a Venezia* (A Guest in Venice), a free guide available in many hotels.

Ospedale Civile (Hospital; Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 529 41 11; Campo SS Giovanni e Paolo 6777)

MONEY

Most major banks have branches in the area around the Ponte di Rialto and San Marco.

American Express (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 520 08 44;

Salizxada San Moisè 1471; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Travellex (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 528 73 58; Piazza San Marco 142; ☎ 8.50am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun)

POST

Post office (Map pp756-7; Salizzada del Fontego dei Tedeschi)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Pick up the free *Leo Bussola* guide at tourist offices. It contains comprehensive city listings and a useful public transport map on the inside back cover.

Azienda di Promozione Turistica (☎ central information line 041 529 87 11; www.turismovenetia.it)

Lido (Gran Viale Santa Maria Elisabetta 6a; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm Jun-Sep); Marco Polo airport (Arrivals Hall; ☎ 9.30am-7.30pm); Piazza San Marco (Map pp756-7; Piazza San Marco 71f; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Sat); Piazzale Roma (Map pp756-7; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 1.30-4.30pm) In the basement of the car park over the road from the bus ticket office; train station (Map pp756-7; ☎ 8am-6.30pm); Venice Pavilion (Map pp756-7; ☎ 10am-6pm)

Sights

A good way to whet your sightseeing appetite is to take *vaporetto* (small passenger ferry) 1 along the **Grand Canal**, lined with rococo Gothic, Moorish and Renaissance palaces. Alight at Piazza San Marco, Venice's most famous sight.

PIAZZA SAN MARCO

Piazza San Marco beautifully encapsulates the splendour of Venice's past and its tourist-fuelled present. Flanked by the arched **Procuratie Vecchie** and **Procuratie Nuove**, it's filled for much of the day with tourists, pigeons, balloon-vendors and policemen. While you're taking it all in, you might see the bronze *mori* (Moors) strike the bell of the 15th-century **Torre dell'Orologio** (clock tower).

But, it's to the remarkable **Basilica di San Marco** (St Mark's Basilica; Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 52 05; Piazza San Marco; admission free; ☎ 9.45am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun) that all eyes are drawn. An architectural salad of spangled spires, Byzantine domes, mosaics and marble, it was originally built to house the remains of St Mark. According to legend, the Evangelist's body was stolen from Alexandria in Egypt and smuggled to Venice in a barrel of pork. He's since been buried several times, his body now resting under the high altar. The original chapel was destroyed by fire in AD 932 and a new basilica was consecrated in its place in 1094. For the next 500 years it was a work in progress as successive *doges*

added mosaics and embellishments looted from the East. The bronze horses above the entrance are replicas of statues 'liberated' from Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade (1204); the originals are in the **Galleria** (admission €3; ☎ 9.45am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar). Behind the main altar the **Pala d'Oro** (admission €1.50; ☎ 9.45am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun May-Sep, to 4.30pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) is a stunning gold altarpiece decorated with priceless jewels.

The basilica's 99m freestanding **campanile** (bell tower; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct, to 9pm Jul-Aug, 9.30am-4.15pm Nov-Mar) dates from the 10th century, although it suddenly collapsed on 14 July 1902 and had to be rebuilt.

PALAZZO DUCALE

The official residence of the *doges* from the 9th century and the seat of the Republic's government, **Palazzo Ducale** (Doge's Palace; Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 271 59 11; Piazzetta di San Marco; admission with Museum Pass/Card; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar) also housed Venice's prisons. On the 2nd floor, the massive **Sala del Maggior Consiglio** is dominated by Tintoretto's *Paradiso* (Paradise), one of the world's largest oil paintings measuring 22m by 7m.

The **Ponte dei Sospiri** (Bridge of Sighs) connects the palace to an additional wing of the city dungeons. Named after the sighs the prisoners emitted en route, it owes its romantic image to Giacomo Casanova who, for a brief period, languished in the cells.

GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA

One of Venice's top galleries, the **Galleria dell'Accademia** (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 22 47; Dorsoduro 1050; adult €6.50, EU citizens 18-25 yr €3.50, child under 12 & EU citizens under 18 & over 65 free; ☎ 8.15am-2pm Mon, to 7.15pm Tue-Sun) traces the development of Venetian art from the 14th to the 18th century. You'll find works by Bellini, Titian, Carpaccio, Tintoretto, Giorgione and Veronese.

COLLEZIONE PEGGY GUGGENHEIM

For something more contemporary, visit the **Collezione Peggy Guggenheim** (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 240 54 11; www.guggenheim-venice.it; Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, Dorsoduro 701; adult/student/child €10/5/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon). Housed in the American heiress' former home, the spellbinding collection runs the gamut of modern art with works by, among others, Bacon, Pollock, Picasso and Dali. In the

sculpture garden you'll find the graves of Peggy and her dogs.

CHURCHES

As in much of Italy, Venice's churches harbour innumerable treasures; unusually, though, you have to pay to get into many of them. See the Admission Discounts boxed text (below) for details.

Scene of the annual Festa del Redentore (see right), the **Chiesa del Redentore** (Church of the Redeemer; Map p753; Campo del SS Redentore 194; admission €2.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun) was built by Palladio to commemorate the end of the great plague in 1577.

Guarding the entrance to the Grand Canal, the 17th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute** (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 55 58; Campo della Salute 1/b; sacristy admission €1.50; ☎ 9am-noon & 3.30-6pm) contains works by Tintoretto and Titian. Arguably the greatest of Venice's artists, Titian's celebrated masterpiece the *Assunta* (Assumption; 1518) hangs above the high altar in the **Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari** (Map pp756-7; Campo dei Frari, San Polo 3004; admission €2.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-6pm Sun), the same church in which he's buried.

Some way to the east, the vast Gothic **Chiesa dei SS Giovanni e Paolo** (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 59 13; Campo SS Giovanni e Paolo; admission €2.50; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 1-7pm Sun) is famous for its glorious 15th-century stained-glass window, the largest in Venice.

THE LIDO

Unless you're on the Lido for the Venice Film Festival, the main reason to visit is for the beach. Be warned, though, that it's almost impossible to find space on the sand

in summer. The Lido's accessible by *vaporetto* 1, LN, 51, 52, 61 and 62.

ISLANDS

Murano is the home of Venetian glass. Tour a factory for a behind-the-scenes look at production or visit the **Glassworks Museum** (☎ 041 73 95 86; Fondamenta Giustinian 8; admission €4; ☎ 10am-4pm Thu-Tue). **Burano**, with its cheery pastel-coloured houses, is renowned for its lace. **Torcello**, the republic's original island settlement, was largely abandoned due to malaria and now counts no more than 80 residents. Its not-to-be-missed Byzantine cathedral, **Santa Maria Assunta** (☎ 041 270 24 64; Piazza Torcello; admission €3; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb), is Venice's oldest.

Vaporetto LN services the islands from the *vaporetto* station at Fondamenta Nuove in the northeast of the city.

Activities

Be prepared to pay for that most quintessential of Venetian experiences, a **gondola** ride. Official rates, for a maximum of six people, start at €73 (€91 from 8pm to 8am) per gondola for a 50-minute ride. Haggling may or may not get you a reduction.

Festivals & Events

Carnevale Masked ribaldry in Venice's ritzy knees-up in the 10 days before Ash Wednesday.

Palio delle Quattro Repubbliche Marinare Venice, Amalfi, Genoa and Pisa take turns to host this historic regatta. It's in Venice in June 2007.

Festa del Redentore Held on the third weekend in July, celebrations climax with a spectacular fireworks display.

Regata Storica Costumed parades precede gondola races on the Grand Canal; held on the first Sunday in September.

ADMISSION DISCOUNTS

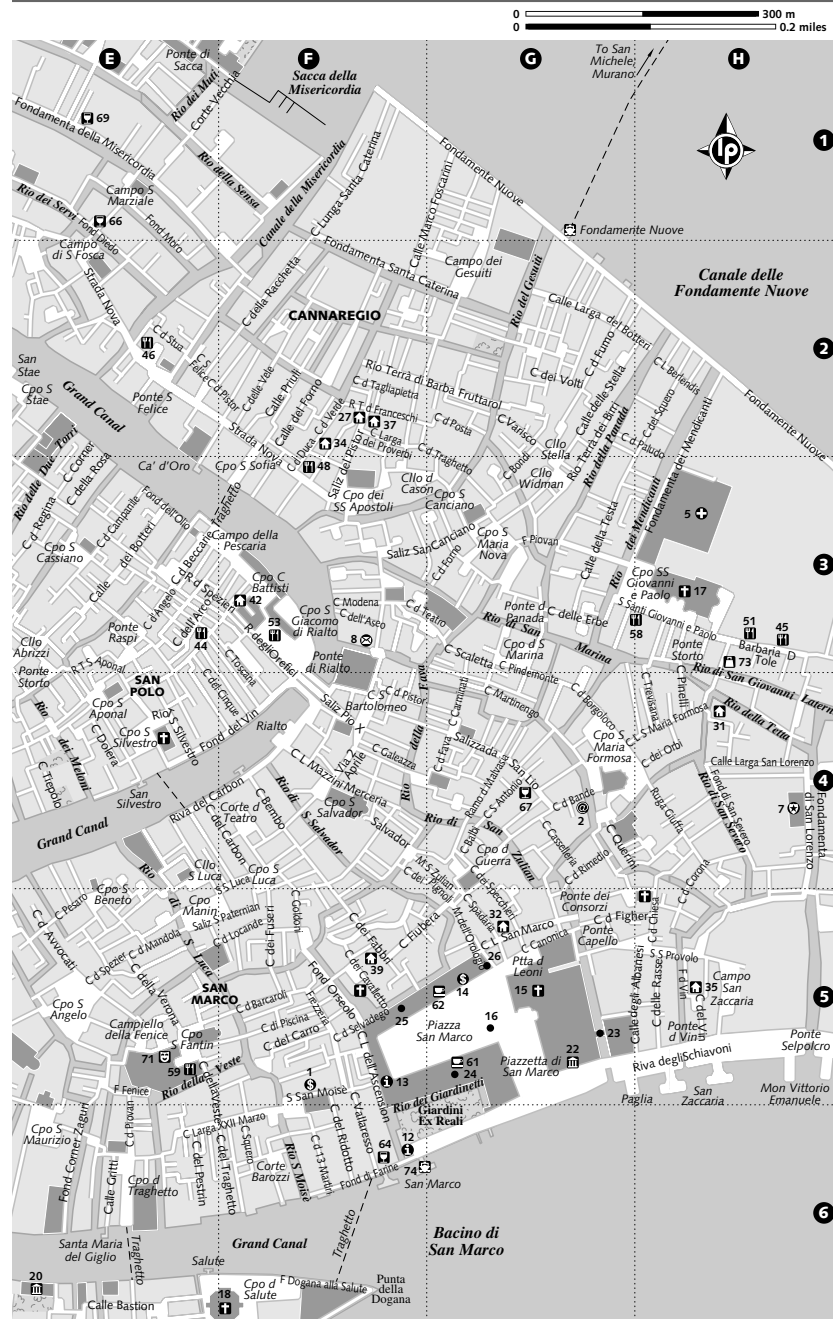
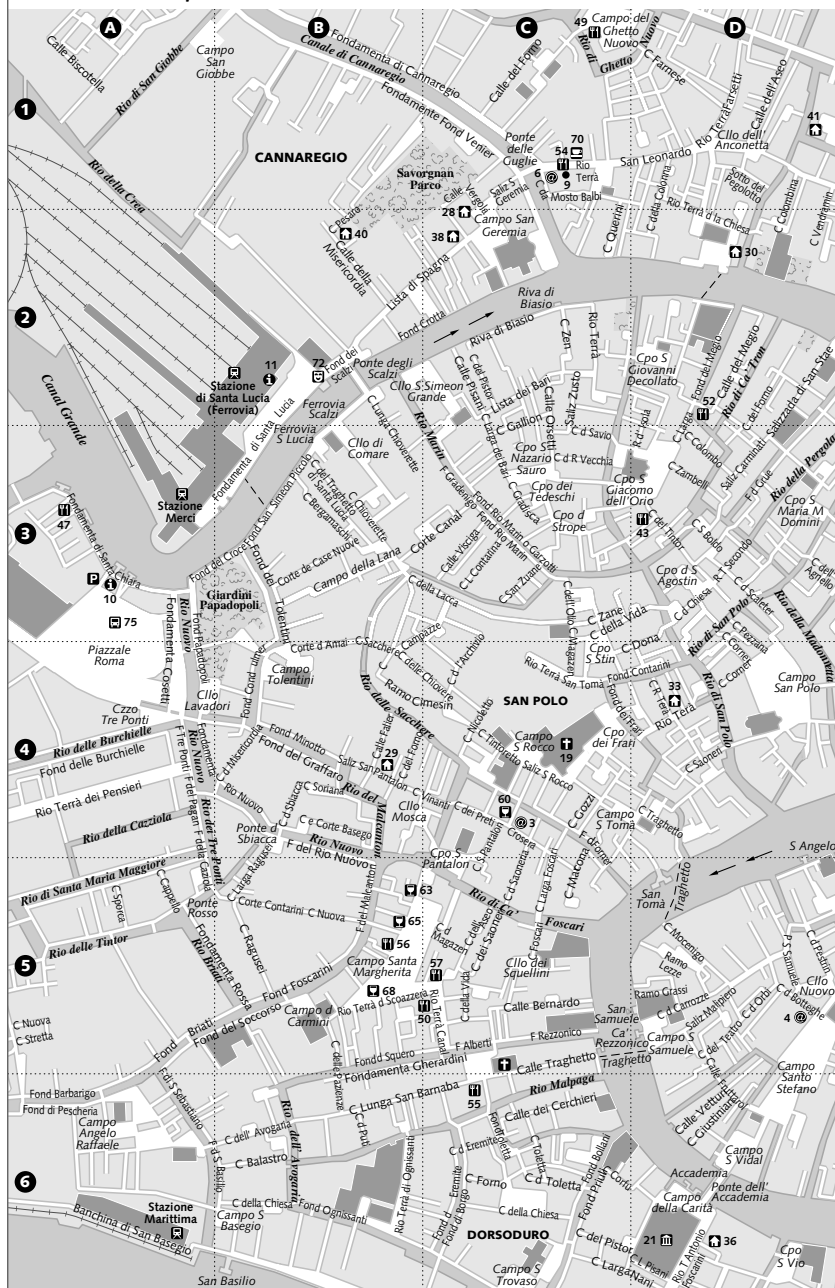
The **Rolling Venice Card** (€3) is for visitors aged 14 to 29; it offers discounts on food, accommodation, shopping, transport and museums. You can get it at tourist offices, public transport ticket offices and Vela information/ticket stands. You'll need your passport and a colour photograph.

The **Venice Card** (☎ 041 24 24; www.venicecard.it; under 29 1/3/7 days €18/35/61, over 29 €28/47/68) entitles holders to discounts on museums, public transport, car parks and restrooms. It doesn't always represent a saving, so check before buying.

To visit the museums on Piazza San Marco you'll need to buy either a **Museum Pass** (☎ 041 240 52 11; www.museicivichevneziani.it; adult/student aged 15-29 €15.50/10), which grants admission to 11 museums, or a **Museum Card** (€11/5.50), which covers fewer sights. Both are available at participating museums.

The **Chorus Pass** (☎ 041 275 04 62; www.chorusvenetia.org; adult/student €9/6) covers admission to 15 of Venice's major churches. Otherwise entry to each church is €2.50.

SAN MARCO, SAN POLO & SANTA CROCE



ITALY

ITALY

INFORMATION		SLEEPING		Market	
American Express	1 F5	Associazione Veneziana		Market	53 F3
e copie d@ Toni	2 G4	Albergatori	(see 11)	Market	54 C1
Internet Point San Pantalon	3 C4	B&B Capier	27 F2	Osteria ai 4 Ferri	55 C6
Internet Point Santo Stefano	4 D5	Casa Gerotto & Alloggi		Pizza al Volo	56 B5
Ospedale Civile	5 H3	Calderan	28 C2	Punto SMA	57 C5
Planet Internet	6 C1	Casa Peron	29 B4	Rosa Salva	58 H3
Police Station (Questura)	7 H4	Ca' San Marcuola	30 D2	Vino Vino	59 E5
Post Office	8 F3	Foresteria Valdese	31 H4	DRINKING	
Speedy Wash	9 C1	Hotel ai Do Mori	32 G5	Caf� Noir	60 C4
Telecom Office	(see 8)	Hotel Alex	33 D4	Caf� Florian	61 G5
Tourist Office	10 A3	Hotel Bernardi Semenzato	34 F2	Caf� Quadri	62 G5
Tourist Office	11 B2	Hotel Doni	35 H5	Chet Baker	63 B5
Tourist Office	12 F6	Hotel Galleria	36 D6	Harry's Bar	64 F6
Tourist Office	13 F5	Hotel Giorgione	37 F2	Il Caff�	65 B5
Travelex	14 G5	Hotel Minerva & Nettuno	38 C2	Il Santo Bevitore	66 E1
Venice Pavilion	(see 12)	Hotel Noemi	39 F5	Inishark	67 G4
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Hotel Santa Lucia	40 B2	Orange	68 B5
Basilica di San Marco	15 G5	Ostello Santa Fosca	41 D1	Paradiso Perduto	69 E1
Campanile	16 G5	Pensione Guerrato	42 F3	Torrefazione Costarica	70 C1
Chiesa dei SS Giovanni e Paolo	17 H3	EATING		ENTERTAINMENT	
Chiesa di Santa Maria della		Ae Oche	43 D3	Gran Teatro La Fenice	71 E5
Salute	18 F6	All'Arco	44 E3	Vela	72 B2
Chiesa di Santa Maria Glorioso		Antica Trattoria		Vela	(see 75)
dei Frari	19 C4	Bandierette	45 H3	SHOPPING	
Collezione Peggy Guggenheim	20 E6	Billa	46 E2	Utz	73 H3
Galleria dell'Accademia	21 D6	Coop	47 A3	TRANSPORT	
Palazzo Ducale	22 G5	Hosteria Ai Promessi Sposi	48 F3	Allaguna Fast Ferry	
Ponte dei Sospiri	23 G5	I Quattro Rusteghi	49 C1	to Airport	74 F6
Procuratie Nuove	24 G5	Il Doge	50 C5	Bus Station	75 A3
Procuratie Vecchie	25 F5	Il Laboratorio	51 H3		
Torre dell'Orologio	26 G5	La Zucca	52 D2		

Venice Biennale Every even-numbered year, a major, year-long exhibition of international visual arts.

Venice International Film Festival Italy's top film fest is held in September at the Lido's Palazzo del Cinema.

Sleeping

Venice is Italy's most expensive city. It's always advisable to book ahead, but essential at weekends, in May and September, and during Carnevale and other holidays. At the train station, the **Associazione Veneziana Albergatori** (Map p753; ☎ 800 843 006; ☎ 8am-10pm Easter-Oct, to 9pm Nov-Easter) will book you a room for a small fee.

BUDGET

Ostello Santa Fosca (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041715775; www.santafosca.it; Cannaregio 2372; dm €19, d per person with shared bathroom €22) These student digs are the only place in town where, for less than €20, you can sunbathe in an enclosed garden before retiring to your dormitory for the night. With a Rolling Venice Card rates are €2 cheaper.

Ostello di Venezia (Map p753; ☎ 041 523 82 11; venezia@ostellionline.org; Fondamenta delle Zitelle 86; dm incl breakfast €19.50) Venice's cheap but charmless HI hostel is over the water from Pi-

azza San Marco on the island of Giudecca. Take *vaporetto* 41, 42 or 82 from the train station, alighting at Zitelle. There's an 11.30pm curfew.

Foresteria Valdese (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 528 67 97; www.diaconiaivaldese.org/venezia; Castello 5170; dm incl breakfast €22, d €78, with shared bathroom €62; ☎) Run by the Waldensian and Methodist Church and housed in a rambling old mansion, this is a popular, well-run hostel. Follow Calle Lunga Santa Maria Formosa from Campo Santa Maria Formosa. Book well ahead.

Casa Gerotto & Alloggi Calderan (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 55 62; www.casagerottocalderan.com; Campo San Geremia 283; dm/s/d/tr €21/46/88/90, s/d with shared bathroom €36/65) This is a rough-round-the-edges *pensione*-cum-hostel with a range of anonymous rooms, many of which look over the square outside. Veteran hostelgoers will recognise the barebones barracks d cor.

Hotel Minerva & Nettuno (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 59 68; www.minervaenettuno.it; Lista di Spagna, Cannaregio 230; s/d/tr €50/100/150, with shared bathroom €40/70/105; ☎ ☎) Stay here and do your bit for the environment. All the mod cons in the antique-laden Venetian rooms are fired

by electricity produced from renewable sources. The owners also run the charming **B&B Capier** (www.capier.com) in a nearby Gothic building.

Casa Peron (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 10 21; www.casa-peron.com; Salizada San Pantalon, San Polo 84; s/d €85/95, with shared bathroom €48/78) If all you're after is a crash pad near Venice's drinking centre, Campo Santa Margherita, Casa Peron will do. Rooms are spartan and outside noise can be a pain – unless you like being woken up at 5am by shouting workmen.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Alex (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 13 41; www.hotelalexvenice.com; Rio Ter , San Polo 2606; d incl breakfast €100, s/d with shared bathroom €48/74) The welcoming Alex provides modest, unfussy rooms in a quiet spot near Campo dei Frari. Spread over three floors (no lift), the rooms are mostly a good size and all are decorated with simple efficiency.

Hotel Santa Lucia (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 51 80; www.hotelslucia.com; Calle della Misericordia, Cannaregio 358; s/d incl breakfast €80/110, with shared bathroom €60/85; ☎) About 200m from the train station, the Santa Lucia is a dependable option, with a helpful English-speaking staff, an attractive gravelled garden and airy rooms.

Hotel Bernardi Semenzato (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 72 57; www.hotelbernardi.com; SS Apostoli Calle dell'Oca, Cannaregio 4366; s €62-112, d €65-115, with shared bathroom s €38-72, d €44-72) A top choice boasting a great location, just off the main station-to-San Marco thoroughfare, you'll find refined rooms and hospitable owners here. There are further rooms available at a nearby annex.

Hotel Galleria (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 24 89; www.hotelgalleria.it; Dorsoduro 878/a; d incl breakfast €120, s/d with shared bathroom €80/105; ☎) In a 17th-century *palazzo* near the Ponte dell'Accademia, the Galleria offers old-fashioned, small rooms with wood-panelling, parquet and antiques. And with the Grand Canal lapping at your window, who cares if there are no mod cons?

Pensione Guerrato (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 71 31; www.pensioneguerrato.it; Calle della Scimia 240/a, San Polo; s/d €100/125, d with shared bathroom €95) Escape the hurly-burly of the Rialto markets in this charming bolthole. Housed in a 13th-century convent, it has spacious colourful rooms with chandeliers and double-glazed windows. On the top floor

there's an apartment, plus kitchen, for up to six people.

Hotel ai Do Mori (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 520 48 17; www.hotelaidomori.com; Calle Larga San Marco 658; s €45-100, d €60-140; ☎ ☎) Up some alarmingly steep stairs (three floors, no lift), rooms here are simple, cosy and carpeted. The pick of the bunch is room 11, with a private terrace and views of San Marco. Further beds are available in a nearby 1st-floor annex. Discounts are available for cash payment.

Ca' San Marcuola (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 60 48; www.casanmarcuola.com; Cannaregio 1763; s/d incl breakfast €120/180; ☎ ☎) From its low-key exterior you get no idea of the rococo Venetian d cor within – chandeliers, gilt-framed mirrors, antiques and statuettes abound. The bright, spacious rooms are more sober but remain in theme.

Other recommendations:

Hotel Doni (Map pp756-7; ☎ /fax 041 522 42 67; www.albergodoni.it; Calle del Vin, Castello 4656; d incl breakfast €120, s/d with shared bathroom €65/95) Characterful family *pensione* near Piazza San Marco.

Hotel Noemi (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 81 44; www.hotelnoemi.com; Calle dei Fabbri, San Marco 909; s €51-110, d €60-200, with shared bathroom s €30-80, d €40-120; ☎ ☎) Decent three-star with small, elegantly appointed rooms.

TOP END

Hotel Giorgione (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 58 10; www.hotelgiorgione.com; calla Larga dei Proverbi, Campo SS Apostoli 4587; s/d €173/265; ☎ ☎) This is a refined but unpretentious four-star hotel. Rooms are decorated in time-honoured Venetian style, while downstairs you will find a billiard table, an enormous candy-like Murano chandelier in the tearoom and free umbrellas for guests.

Eating

Venetian specialties include *risi e bisi* (pea soup thickened with rice), *sarde di saor* (fried sardines marinated in vinegar and onions), and *fragolino*, a fragrant strawberry wine.

RESTAURANTS

Ae Oche (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 524 11 61; Calle del Tintor, Santa Croce 1552a/b; pizza €5, 1st/2nd courses from €6/8) A hybrid of Tex-Mex d cor and Italian food, this is one of Venice's busiest *pizzerie*. You'll find all the usual toppings, plus a range of pastas and meaty mains. Finish

up with *sgroppino*, a cool, creamy, alcoholic lemon sorbet.

Vino Vino (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 70 27; Calle della Veste, San Marco 2007; 1st/2nd courses €6/10; ☎ 10.30am-midnight Wed-Mon) This is a atmospheric old-school *osteria* near Teatro La Fenice with a daily menu of local fare and a 350-label wine list. Seafood is a regular on the blackboard and is usually very good.

Antica Trattoria Bandierette (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 06 19; Castello 6671; 1st/2nd courses €7/9; ☎ closed Mon dinner & Tue) An unassuming neighbourhood trattoria, this place is known for its authentic atmosphere and excellent seafood. What exactly is on the menu depends on the day's catch, but for nonfish eaters there's a selection of fail-safe pastas and meats.

I Quattro Rusteghi (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 51 60; Campo del Ghetto Nuovo, Cannaregio 2888; 1st/2nd courses €8/12) On a lovely square in the heart of Venice's former Jewish ghetto, this bustling restaurant specialises in Venetian cuisine (the *sarde di saor* is a house favourite) and local, organically produced wines. Sit inside or, in summer, on the square.

La Zucca (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 524 15 70; Calle del Tentor, Santa Croce 1762; 1st/2nd courses from €7/12.50; ☎ closed Sun) A wonderful, unpretentious little restaurant in an out-of-the-way spot, 'The Pumpkin' serves a range of innovative dishes prepared with fresh, seasonal ingredients. Examples? Lamb chops with artichokes and pecorino cheese; lentil soup with Swiss chard. Reservations are strongly recommended.

Osteria ai 4 Ferri (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 520 69 78; Calle Lunga San Barnaba, Dorsoduro 2754/a; 1st/2nd courses €9/15; ☎ closed Sun) Run by a young crew, the much-vaunted 4 Ferri (4 Irons) enjoys a deserved reputation for top-notch seafood. There's spaghetti *con il nero di seppia* (with cuttlefish ink) and grilled tuna, baccalà and bream – all of it fresh, all of it swimming in flavour. Reservations required.

Hosteria Ai Promessi Sposi (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 86 09; Calle dell'Oca 4367; 1st/2nd courses €10/15; ☎ closed Mon) Like most *trattorie* in the centre of Venice, the Promessi Sposi now makes most of its money from tourists. This shouldn't put you off though, as the food, particularly the seafood, is spot-on and the atmosphere warm and inviting.

QUICK EATS

Il Laboratorio (Map pp756-7; ☎ 340 600 79 74; Castello 6672; snacks from €2) This characterless neon-lit takeaway serves some of the best fried nibbles in Venice. Try the *arancini* (fried rice balls stuffed with meat sauce) and you'll get the idea.

Il Doge (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 46 07; Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 3058/a; ice cream €2; ☎ 10-2am Feb-Nov) This is a sweet *gelateria* on Campo Santa Margherita.

All'Arco (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 520 56 66; Calle dell'Arco, San Polo 436; panini €3.50; ☎ 7.30am-9pm Mon-Sat) Popular with locals, this tiny *osteria* serves wonderful, fresh *panini*, a range of *cicheti* (bar snacks) and smooth wine by the glass.

Pizza al Volo (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 54 30; Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 2944; pizza from €4; ☎ 11.30am-4pm & 5pm-1.30am) A popular takeaway, ideal for a pizza pitstop, slices here are sail-size and the family pizzas are just that – enough for three or four.

Rosa Salva (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 522 79 49; Campo SS Giovanni e Paolo, Castello 6779; ☎ closed Wed) Stop by this historic café for sensational *fritelle* (fried pastry puffs filled with zabaglione or cream). Then pop next door to the Gelateria Rosa Salva for an ice cream.

SELF-CATERING

For fruit and veg, as well as deli items, head for the markets near the Rialto bridge, or on the Rio Terrà San Leonardo. There are also supermarkets: **Punto Sma** (Map pp756-7; Campo Santa Margherita), **Billa** (Map pp756-7; Strada Nova, Cannaregio 3660) and **Coop** (Map pp756-7; Fondamenta di Santa Chiara, Piazzale Roma 506a).

Drinking BARS

Café Noir (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 09 25; Calle San Pantalon 3805) A mixed crowd of tourists, trendies and bohemians hang out at Café Noir. During the day you can grab a coffee and read the paper at one of the wooden tables; at night the funk goes on the stereo, the volume rises and the windows steam up.

Chet Baker (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 87 27; Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 3684) A small den of a bar, Chet Baker would be the archetypal smoky jazz joint if smoking were not banned in public places. It still manages to catch the mood with a cool jazz soundtrack and a welcoming vibe. There

are DJs on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights.

Harry's Bar (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 528 57 77; Calle Vallesso, San Marco 1323; ☎ 10.30am-11.15pm) To drink a Bellini (white-peach pulp and *prosecco* – Venetian sparkling white) at the bar that invented them is an experience to tick off the list rather than a holiday highlight. Bar to the stars, Harry's is refined and hugely expensive (cocktails from €10).

Il Caffè (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 528 79 98; Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 2963) Popular with foreign and Italian students, this is one of Venice's historic drinking spots. Known to locals as Café Rosso because of its red frontage, it's got outdoor seating and great *sprizze* (a type of aperitif).

Orange (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 523 47 40; Campo Santa Margherita, Dorsoduro 3054) The latest addition to Campo Santa Margherita's buzzing bar scene, Orange sports a contemporary look – bright orange walls, surrealist Miró prints, MTV – and a young, multinational crowd.

Paradiso Perduto (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 72 05 81; Fondamenta della Misericordia, Cannaregio 2540; ☎ closed Mon) Queer-friendly and flamboyant, this restaurant-cum-club heats up late, but when the DJs pump up the decibels it jives. There's live music most weekends, often jazz, and a full food menu (1st/2nd courses €10/15).

Il Santo Bevitore (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 75 60; Campo di S Fosca, Cannaregio 2393/A) A snag little pub by the bridge in Campo di S Fosca, the 'Holy Drinker' is laid-back and friendly. It's also quieter than many better-known bars, making it ideal for a relaxing drink or a light lunch.

CAFÉS

Caffè Florian (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 520 56 41; Piazza San Marco 56/59; coffee €5-10) If you think it's worth paying €5 for an espresso, pull up a seat at Piazza San Marco's most famous café. Watch life on the square as you're serenaded by the in-house musicians. Byron, apparently, used to breakfast here.

Caffè Quadri (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 528 92 99; Piazza San Marco 120; coffee €7-10; ☎ late) Over the square from Florian, the historic Quadri offers more of the same – location, music and comically expensive drinks.

Torrefazione Costarica (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 71 63 71; Rio Terrà San Leonardo, Cannaregio 1337) Connoisseurs come here for Venice's best, and

cheapest, coffee (espresso €0.70, cappuccino €1.10). Espressos are smooth yet charged with flavour, cappuccinos exactly as they should be, warm and creamy.

Entertainment

Tickets for the majority of events in Venice are available from **Vela** (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 24 24; www.hellovenezia.it) kiosks in front of the train station, at Piazzale Roma, and at the Venice Pavilion tourist office (see p754).

Gran Teatro La Fenice (Map pp756-7; ☎ 041 78 65 11; www.teatrolafenice.it; Campo San Fantin, San Marco 1977; tickets from €20) One of Italy's most important opera houses, the Fenice is back to its sumptuous best. Destroyed by fire in 1996, it was reopened in 2003 and is now in full swing.

Shopping

Classic Venetian gift options include Murano glass, lace from Burano, Carnevale masks and *carta marmorizzata* (marbled paper). There are any number of shops selling these items, but if you want the best deal go to the source. Be warned, though, genuine Burano lace is expensive; also, much of the cheaper stuff is imported from the Far East.

The main shopping area is between San Marco and the Rialto, although if you're after designer clobber head to the area west of Piazza San Marco.

Utz (Map pp756-7; ☎ 360 32 53 33; Castello 6400) Named after a Bruce Chatwin book, Utz is an Aladdin's cave of antique Venetian jewellery, glass, furniture, mirrors and assorted odds and ends. Prices are accessible if not cheap.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Most European and domestic flights land at **Marco Polo airport** (VCE; ☎ 041 260 92 60; www.veniceairport.it), 12km outside Venice. Ryanair, however, flies to **Treviso airport** (TSF; ☎ 0422 31 51 11; www.trevisoairport.it), about 30km from Venice.

BOAT

Minoan Lines (☎ 041 240 71 01; www.minoan.gr) run ferries to Corfu (€83, 22 hours), Igoumenitsa (€83, 23½ hours) and Patras (€83, 29½ hours) daily in summer and four times a week in winter.

BUS

ACTV (☎ 041 24 24; www.actv.it) buses service surrounding areas, including Mestre, Padua and Treviso. Tickets and information are available at the **bus station** (Map pp756-7) in Piazzale Roma.

TRAIN

Venice's Stazione di Santa Lucia is directly linked to Padua (€2.50, 40 minutes, three or four hourly), Verona (€12.40, 1½ hours, half hourly) and Bologna (€15.10, two hours, half hourly), and is easily accessible from Rome and Florence. You can also reach points in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Slovenia and Croatia.

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

To get to Marco Polo there are various options: **Alilaguna** (Map pp756-7; www.alilaguna.com) operates a fast ferry service (€10 from near Piazza San Marco, 70 minutes, hourly between 8.20am and 10.20pm); alternatively, from Piazzale Roma take either an **ATVO** (☎ 041 520 55 30; www.atvo.it, in Italian) bus (€3, 20 minutes, hourly) or ACTV bus 5d (€2, more than 50 daily).

For Treviso airport, take the ATVO **Eurobus** (€5, one hour, 16 daily) from Piazzale Roma two hours and 10 minutes before your flight departure.

BOAT

The city's main mode of public transport is *vaporetti*. The most useful routes are:

LN From Fondamenta Nuove for Murano, Burano and the Lido.

T Runs between Burano and Torcelli.

1 From Piazzale Roma to the train station and down the Grand Canal to San Marco and the Lido.

17 Car ferry between Tronchetto and the Lido.

82 All stops on the Grand Canal plus Piazzale Roma, Tronchetto and Giudecca.

Tickets, available from ticket booths at landing stations and Vela outlets, are expensive: €3.50 for a single trip (not valid on the Grand Canal); €5 for 90 minutes unlimited travel; €10.50 for 24 hours; €22 for 72 hours.

The poor man's gondola, *traghetti* (€0.50 per crossing) are used by Venetians to cross the Grand Canal where there's no nearby bridge.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Vehicles must be parked on Tronchetto or at Piazzale Roma (cars are allowed on the Lido – take car ferry 17 from Tronchetto). The car parks are not cheap – €20 every 24 hours – so you're better off leaving your car in Mestre and getting a train over to Venice.

FERRARA

pop 131,135

Ferrara retains much of the austere splendour of its Renaissance heyday, when, as seat of the Este family (1260–1598), it was a force to be reckoned with. Overshadowed by the menacing Castello Estense, the compact medieval centre is atmospheric and lively.

Information is available from the main **tourist office** (☎ 0532 29 93 03; www.ferrara.info; ☎ 9am–1pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, 9.30am–1pm & 2–5pm Sun) inside Castello Estense, or a second **office** (☎ 0532 41 94 74; Piazza Municipale 11; ☎ 9am–1pm Mon–Sat) nearby.

Sights

Easily explored on foot, Ferrara's *centro storico* lies to the south of **Castello Estense** (☎ 0532 29 92 33; Viale Cavour; adult/child under 11 €6/free, plus €1 for Lion's Tower; ☎ 9.30am–5.30pm). Complete with moat and drawbridges, the castle was begun by Nicolò II d'Este in 1385 and became the Este family's residence. Highlights include the **Sala dei Giganti** (Giant's Room) and **Salone dei Giochi** (Games Salon) with frescoes by Camillo and Sebastiano Filippi.

Nearby, 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 more interesting outside than in. Take a moment to stare up at the superb three-tiered marble façade with its Gothic depiction of the Last Judgement. The cathedral **museum** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via San Romano 1–9; adult/under 18 €5/free; ☎ 9.30am–1pm & 3–8pm Tue–Sun) exhibits some attractive Renaissance sculptures and paintings.

Fresco fans won't want to miss **Palazzo Schifanoia** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via Scandiana 23; adult/under 18 €5/free; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sun), one of Ferrara's earliest Renaissance buildings and another of the Este palaces. In the **Sala dei Mesi** (Room of the Months), the 15th-century frescoes are considered among the best examples of their type in Italy. Sadly, though, they're not in great nick.

Sleeping

You won't need to overnight to see Ferrara's sights, but it's a cheap alternative to Bologna, and a viable base for Venice.

Pensione Artisti (☎ 0532 76 10 38; Via Vittoria 66; d €60, s/d with shared bathroom €25/43) Put simply, this is the best budget option in town. Its scrubbed white rooms sparkle, the central location is convenient for everything, there are kitchen facilities for guests, and the owners are super-friendly.

Hotel de Prati (☎ 0532 24 19 05; www.hoteldeprati.com; Via Padiglioni 5; s/d €75/110; ☎) A model of exquisite taste, the Prati has got it exactly right. Not an antique desk or a contemporary print looks out of place in the big, beautifully decorated rooms. Downstairs, the yellow and orange walls stage entertaining art exhibitions.

Hotel Europa (☎ 0532 20 54 56; www.hoteleuropa.ferrara.com; Corso Giovecca 49; s/d €74/115; ☎) Bombed in WWII – history doesn't record if Mussolini was in his room at the time – the Europa retains a period charm despite successive renovations. Some rooms still even have their original 16th-century frescoed ceilings. Extras include wi-fi and bike hire.

Eating & Drinking

Trattoria Il Mandolino (☎ 0532 76 00 80; Via Carlo Mayr 83; 1st/2nd courses €8/10) Taking its name from the mandolin on the wall, this charmingly cluttered trattoria is a memorable place to dine on Ferrarese food. Menu staples include the house speciality, *salama da sugo con purè* (salty braised salami on a bed of mashed potato).

Fusion (☎ 0532 20 14 73; Via Delle Scienze 8/a) Unless you want to be outsmarted by the furniture, you'll need to dress up here. Red leather stools, cream sofas and industrial piping provide the setting for Fusion's sexy self-conscious drinkers. Great fun.

Messisbugo (☎ 0532 76 40 60; Via Carlo Mayr 79; ☎ closed Mon) Despite a name that suggests Tex Mex tack, Mesisbugo is actually a cool, brick-vaulted bar favoured by bohemians and students, with friendly staff, great wines and a laid-back vibe.

Getting There & Around

Ferrara is easy to get to by train. There are regular trains to Bologna (€7.85, 40 minutes, half hourly), Venice (€12.95, 1½

hours, every 45 minutes or so) and nearby Ravenna (€4.30, 1½ hours, 17 daily).

From the station take bus 1 or 9 for the historic centre.

BOLOGNA

pop 373,540

Boasting a boisterous bonhomie rare in Italy's reserved north, Bologna is worth a few days of anyone's itinerary, not so much for its specific attractions, of which there are few, but for the sheer fun of strolling its animated, arcaded streets. A university town since 1088 (Europe's oldest), it's riddled with bars, cafés and *trattorie*.

Traditionally a bastion of socialism – it's often joked that its politics are reflected in its red buildings – Bologna is famous for its food, which, in a country as food conscious as Italy, is good news indeed. Besides the eponymous bolognese sauce (*ragù*), Bologna also gave the world tortellini, lasagne and mortadella.

Information

Liong@te Internet Point (☎ 051 407 01 61; www.liongate.it; 1st fl, Via Rizzoli 9, cnr Galleria del Leone; per hr €2; ☎ 10am–midnight)

Ospedale Maggiore (Hospital; ☎ 051 647 81 11)

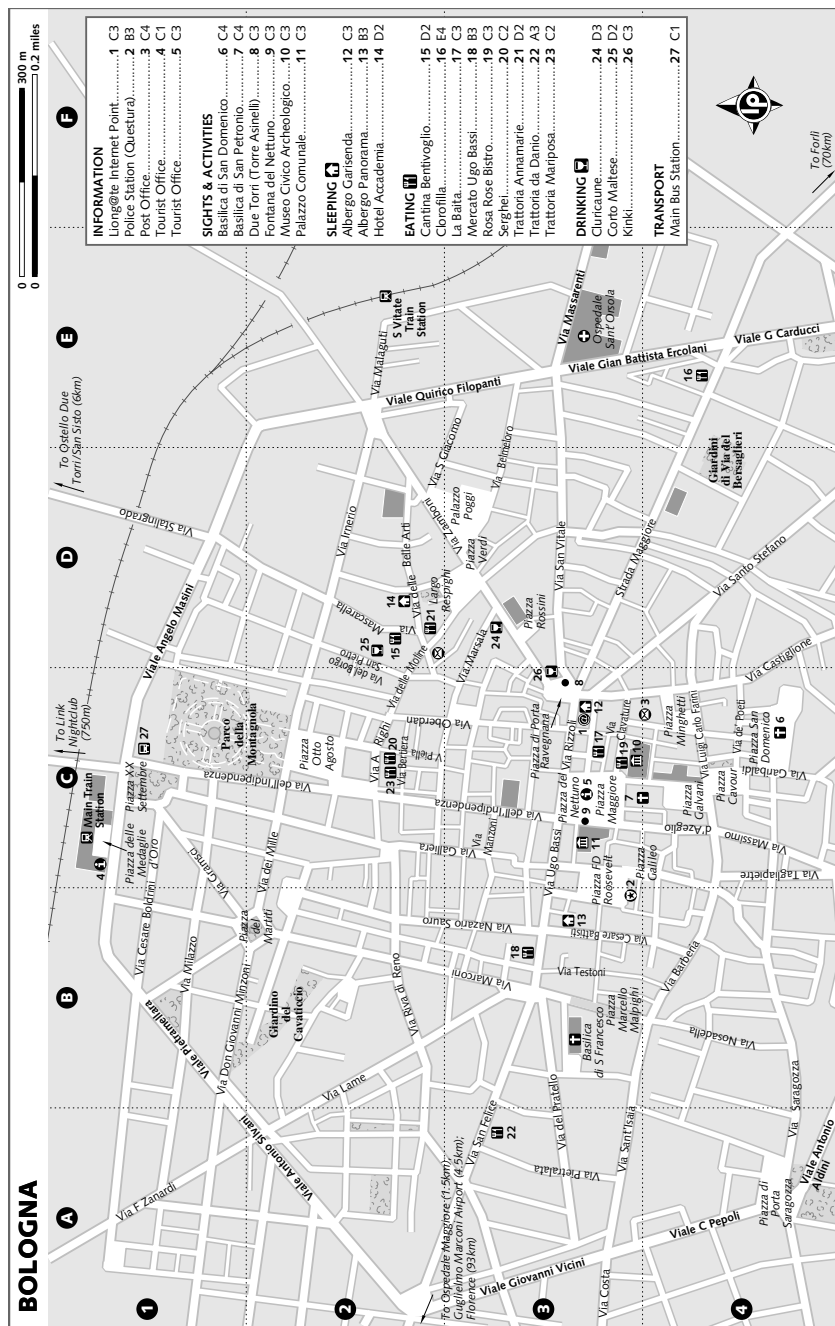
Police station (Questura; ☎ 051 640 11 11; Piazza Galileo 7)

Post office (Piazza Minghetti 1)

Tourist information (☎ 051 24 65 41; www.bologna.turismo.info) Piazza Maggiore 1 (☎ 9am–8pm); train station (☎ 8.30am–7pm Mon–Sat); airport (☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Sat, 9am–3pm Sun)

Sights & Activities

Bologna's porticoed *centro storico* is a vibrant and atmospheric place to wander. The place to start is pedestrianised **Piazza Maggiore** and adjoining **Piazza del Nettuno**. Here you'll find the **Fontana del Nettuno** (Neptune's Fountain), sculpted by Giam-bologna in 1566 and featuring an impressively muscled Neptune. On the western flank of Piazza Maggiore is the **Palazzo Comunale** (Town Hall; ☎ 051 20 31 11; admission free), home to the city's art collection and a museum dedicated to artist Giorgio Morandi. Note the immense central staircase, attributed to Bramante, which was built wide enough to allow horse-drawn carriages up to the 1st floor. Up above the main entrance, a bronze statue depicts the



Bolognese Pope Gregory XIII, creator of the Gregorian calendar.

To the south, the Gothic **Basilica di San Petronio** (☎ 051 22 54 22; Piazza Maggiore; ☞ 7.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm) is dedicated to the city's patron saint, Petronius. Its partially complete façade doesn't diminish its status as the world's fifth-largest basilica. Inside, a giant 17th-century brass sundial stretches along the floor of the eastern aisle.

It's a short walk to **Piazza di Porta Ravegnana** and Bologna's two leaning towers, the **Due Torri**. The taller of the two, the 97m **Torre Asinelli** (admission €3; ☞ 9am-6pm), was built between 1109 and 1119 and is now open to the public. Climb the 498 steps for some superb city views.

Of the city's other churches, the **Basilica di San Domenico** (☎ 051 640 04 11; Piazza San Domenico; ☞ 7.30am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm) is noteworthy for the elaborate sarcophagus of San Domenico, founder of the Dominican order. The tomb stands in the late 12th-century Capella di San Domenico, which was designed by Nicolò Pisano and later added to by, among others, Michelangelo. Mozart, it's said, once played the church's organ.

For tombs of an altogether more sober style, head for the **Museo Civico Archeologico** (☎ 051 23 38 49; Via dell'Archiginnasio 2; adult/concession €4/2; ☞ 9am-3pm Tue-Fri & 10am-6.30pm Sun), which houses one of Italy's best Etruscan collections.

Sleeping

Accommodation is largely geared to the business market. It's expensive and can be difficult to find unless you book ahead.

Ostello Due Torri/San Sisto (☎ 051 50 18 10; hostelbologna@hotmail.com; Via Viadogola 5; dm €15.50) It's quite a hike to these two functional HI hostels, barely 100m apart, but 6km north of the city centre. Take bus 93 (Monday to Saturday daytime), 301 (Sunday) or 21b (daily after 8.30pm) from Via Irnerio or Via Marconi. Mind the 11pm curfew.

Albergo Panorama (☎ 051 22 1802; www.hotelpanoramabologna.it; 4th fl, Via Livraghi 1; s/d/tr/q with shared bathroom €60/75/85/95) Make it up to the 4th floor (there is a lift) and you'll find a lovely, family-run *pensione*. Jolly corridors with paintings and flowers lead to bright, spacious rooms, some of which have distant views of Bologna's medieval towers.

Albergo Garisenda (☎ 051 22 43 69; www.albergo.garisenda.com; Galleria del Leone 1, Via Rizzoli 9; d incl breakfast €110, s/d with shared bathroom €60/85) In the shadow of Bologna's towers, the 3rd-floor Garisenda offers seven unfussy rooms and a prime location (look for the McDonalds sign near the towers). Don't expect frills or even décor, but the beds are comfy and the shared bathrooms are clean.

Hotel Accademia (☎ 051 23 23 18; www.hotelaccademia.it; Via delle Belle Arti 6; s/d €95/130, with shared bathroom €70/100; P ☞ ☞) A good option in the thick of the orange-coloured university quarter, the three-star Accademia has fresh, tasteful rooms, modern bathrooms and satellite TV.

Eating

It's not impossible to eat badly in Bologna, but you'd have to be pretty unlucky. The university area around Via Rizzoli harbours hundreds of *trattorie* and restaurants catering to hard-up students and gourmet diners.

Trattoria da Danio (☎ 051 55 52 02; Via San Felice 50a; 1st/2nd courses €8/9, set menu €11.50) With the television on in the corner and the jovial owner chatting to friends at the bar, this is the quintessential Italian trattoria. The nonsense pastas and filling meat dishes are very much appreciated by the discerning locals and curious foreigners who frequent here.

Serghei (☎ 051 23 3533; Via Piella 12; 1st/2nd courses €8/11; ☞ Mon-Fri) This popular eatery owes its name to a mispronunciation – founder Sergio Pasoti was dubbed Serghei by the Teatro Comunale's Russian dancers who used to drink here. Forty years on and the visitors are still arriving, tempted by regional classics such as *tortelloni di zucca* and *tagliatelle al ragu*. Reserve.

Trattoria Annamarie (☎ 051 26 68 94; Via delle Belle Arti 17; 1st/2nd courses €10/15; ☞ closed Tue dinner & Wed) Trattoria Annamarie looks every inch the classic Bolognese restaurant that it is. Diners sit down to superb homemade pastas and delicious grilled meats under a brick-vaulted ceiling, surrounded by walls covered in photos, paintings and celebrity testimonials.

Also recommended:
Rosa Rose Bistro (☎ 051 22 50 71; Via Clavature 18; salad/pasta €7/7.50) Swish café with eccentric décor, outdoor seating and great salads.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Trattoria Mariposa (☎ 051 22 56 56; Via Bertiera 12; 1st/2nd courses €6/7; ☹ closed Mon, Thu dinner & Sun) is a great example of what Bologna does so well. A small, convivial trattoria, it draws a young local crowd thanks to its down-to-earth cooking and great prices. The menu varies, but if it's on, the *garganelli con pancetta e rucola* (short pasta with pancetta and rocket) is well worth trying. Service, needless to say, is friendly, and although it's always crowded there's never any pressure to move on.

Cantina Bentivoglio (☎ 051 26 54 16; Via Mascarella 4b; 1st/2nd courses €8/10; ☹ 8pm-2am) Nightly jazz, mega wine list, regional food.

Clorofilla (☎ 051 235 53 43; Strada Maggiore 64/c; main courses €6.50; ☹ closed Sun) Laid-back vegetarian eatery good for salads, couscous and tofu.

Self-caterers can stock up at the covered **Mercato Ugo Bassi** (Via Ugo Bassi 27; ☹ closed Sun) or the deli **La Baita** (☎ 051 22 39 40; Via Pescheria Vecchie 3; ☹ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat).

Drinking

Cluricaune (☎ 051 26 34 19; Via Zamboni 18/b) A big Irish pub with all the predictable Guinness paraphernalia and premiership football on the TV, this place is very popular with local and foreign students.

Corto Maltese (☎ 051 22 97 46; Via del Borgo San Pietro 9/A) Tank up during happy hour (between 9pm and 10.30pm) to set yourself up for the commercial tunes the DJs spin on Friday and Saturday nights. There's dancing, pasta and even a pool table.

Kinki (☎ 051 587 51 78; www.kinkidisco.com, in Italian; Via Zamboni 1) It's hot! It's vinyl! Gays, lesbians and über-cool straights are welcome to work it until all hours at Bologna's most famous disco. Themed nights, top DJs, wicked sounds.

Getting There & Around

European and domestic flights arrive at Bologna's **Guglielmo Marconi airport** (BLQ; ☎ 051 647 96 15; www.bologna-airport.it), 6km northwest of the city. An Aerobus shuttle (€4.50, 30 minutes, three times hourly) departs from the main train station. Ryanair now flies to **Forlì** (FRL; ☎ 0543 47 49 21; www.forli-airport.it),

70km southeast of Bologna. **Ebus** (☎ 199 11 55 77) buses run between Forlì and the main train station to coincide with flights.

Bologna is a major rail hub. From the **main train station** (Piazza elle Medaglie d'Oro), trains run to Venice (€15.10, two hours, half hourly), Florence (€10.75, one hour, every 20 minutes) and Rome (Eurostar, €37.20, 2¾ hours, hourly). National and international coaches depart from the **main bus station** (Piazza XX Settembre).

The city is linked to Milan, Florence and Rome by the A1 (Autostrada del Sole). The A13 services Venice and Padua, and the A14 Ravenna. Traffic is restricted in Bologna's centre.

To get to the centre from the train station take bus 21 or 30.

RAVENNA

pop 139,000

Most people visit Ravenna for its remarkable Unesco-protected mosaics. Relics of the city's golden age as capital of the Western Roman and Byzantine Empires, they are described by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*, much of which was written here. Easily accessible from Bologna, this refined and polished town is worth a day trip at the very least.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0544 354 04; www.turismo.ravenna.it; Via Salara 8; ☹ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) is in the *centro storico*.

Sights

Ravenna's five main monuments are covered by a single ticket (€7.50). Available at any one of the five monuments and valid for seven days, it gives entry to the Basilica di San Vitale, the Mausoleo di Galla Placidia, the Basilica di Sant'Appollinare Nuovo, the Museo Arcivescovile and Battistero Neoniano. There's no individual admission prices for these monuments.

On the northern edge of the *centro storico*, the sombre exterior of the 6th-century **Basilica di San Vitale** (☎ 0544 21 51 93; Via Fiandrin; ☹ 9.30am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Mar & Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb) hides a dazzling interior with mosaics depicting Old Testament scenes. Nearby, the **Mausoleo di Galla Placidia** (☎ 0544 21 51 93; Via Fiandrin; ☹ 9.30am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Mar & Oct, to 5pm Nov-Feb) contains the city's oldest mosaics. Adjoining Ravenna's unremarkable cathedral, the **Museo Arcivescovile** (☎ 0544 21 52 91; Piazza Arcivescovado; ☹ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm

Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) boasts an exquisite 6th-century ivory throne, while next door in the **Battistero Neoniano** (Via Battistero; ☹ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) the baptism of Christ and the apostles is represented in the domed roof mosaics. To the east the **Basilica di Sant'Appollinare Nuovo** (☎ 0544 21 95 18; Via di Roma; ☹ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) boasts, among other things, a superb mosaic depicting a procession of martyrs headed towards Christ and his apostles.

Five kilometres southeast of the city, the apse mosaic of the **Basilica di Sant'Appollinare in Classe** (☎ 0544 47 35 69; Via Romea Sud, Classe; admission €2; ☹ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 1-7.30pm Sun) is a must-see. Take bus 4 from Piazza Caduti per la Libertà.

Dante spent the last 19 years of his life in Ravenna after Florence expelled him in 1302. As a perpetual act of penance, Florence supplies the oil for the lamp that burns in his **tomb** (Via Dante Alighieri 9; admission free; ☹ 9am-7pm).

Sleeping & Eating

Albergo Al Giaciglio (☎ 0544 394 03; www.albergoalgiaciglio.com; Via Rocca Brancaleone 42; s/d €43/65, with shared bathroom €38/50) Near the station, this is a welcoming family-run hotel with modest rooms and a good restaurant (set menu €13). There's fresh fish on Friday and a special vegetarian menu (€15).

Albergo Cappello (☎ 0544 21 98 13; www.albergo cappello.it; Via IV Novembre 41; s/d incl breakfast €93/110; ☹ ☎) Stylishly marrying the old with the new, the Cappello has seven ample rooms on the 1st floor of a 15th-century townhouse. Modern metallic walls and lamps with sprouting bulbs combine with coffered ceilings and frescoes.

Cà de Vén (☎ 0544 301 63; Via Corrado Ricci 24; 1st/2nd courses €8/13; ☹ closed Mon) This cavernous, high-ceilinged *enoteca*-cum-restaurant attracts visitors in droves. But that shouldn't distract you from its fine regional food (the menu changes weekly) and infinite collection of local wine.

Getting There & Around

Trains connect the city with Bologna (€7 to €15, 1½ hours, hourly) and Ferrara (€4.30, 1¼ hours, 15 daily).

In town, cycling is popular. Rent bikes from **Cooperative Sociale la Formica** (☎ 0544 370

31; Piazza Farini; per hr/day €1/7.75; ☹ 7am-8pm Mon-Sat) outside the train station, or from the **tourist office** (free; ☹ spring & summer only).

THE DOLOMITES

Stretching across Trentino-Alto Adige and into the Veneto, the stabbing sawtooth peaks of the Dolomites provide some of Italy's most thrilling scenery. With their jagged silhouettes and colourful tints (blue-grey turning to red, then purple as the sun sets), they are popular year-round – in winter for the skiing, in summer for the superb hiking.

Resorts range from exclusive Cortina d'Ampezzo (see p768) to family-oriented resorts in the Val Gardena (p768). Ski passes cover either single resorts or a combination of slopes; the most comprehensive is the **Superski Dolomiti pass** (www.dolomitisuperski.com; high season 3/6 days €110/194), which accesses 464 lifts and 1220km of runs in 12 valleys.

Hiking opportunities run the gamut from kid-friendly strolls to hardcore mountain treks. Trails are well marked with numbers on red-and-white bands on trees and rocks, or by numbers inside coloured triangles for the four *Alte Vie* (High Routes). Recommended areas include the Alpe di Siusi, a vast plateau above the Val Gardena; the area around Cortina; and Pale di San Martino, accessible from San Martino di Castrozza.

For more information on skiing and cycling, see the Activities section in the Italy Directory, p815.

Information

Information on Trentino Alto-Adige can be obtained in Trent at the **tourist office** (☎ 0461 98 38 80; www.ap.trento.it; Via Mancini 2; ☹ 9am-7pm). Bolzano's **tourist office** (☎ 0471 30 70 00; www.bolzano-bozen.it; Piazza Walther 8; ☹ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) can also help.

For activities and accommodation in the Veneto, ask at the tourist office in Cortina – see p768.

The best online resource option is www.dolomiti.org, which has a great deal of useful information.

Getting There & Around

In Trentino-Alto Adige, **Bolzano airport** (BZO; ☎ 0471 25 52 55; www.abd-airport.it) is served by ski charter flights from the UK in the

WARNING

Even in summer the weather is extremely changeable in the Alps; though it may be sweltering when you set off, be prepared for very cold, wet weather on even the shortest walks. Essentials include good-quality, worn-in walking boots, a waterproof jacket, warm hat and gloves, light food, plenty of water and a decent map. The best maps are the Tabacco 1:25,000 series, widely available throughout the area.

winter and daily year-round flights from Rome and Milan. Otherwise the nearest airports are in Verona (see p751) or Bergamo (see p748).

On terra firma, the area's excellent bus network is run by **Trentino Trasporti** (☎ 0461 82 10 00; www.ttspa.it, in Italian) in Trentino; **SAD** (☎ 800 84 60 47; www.sii.bz.it) in Alto Adige; and **Dolomiti Bus** (www.dolomitibus.it, in Italian) in the Veneto. During winter, most resorts offer 'ski bus' services.

The main towns and the many ski resorts can be reached directly from cities such as Rome, Florence, Venice, Bologna, Milan and Genoa. Information is available from tourist offices and regional bus stations.

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

pop 6085

Surrounded by some of the Dolomites most dramatic scenery, Cortina is one of Italy's most famous, fashionable and expensive ski resorts. Predictably it boasts first-class facilities (skiing, skating, sledding, climbing) and superb hiking; less obviously, it has some reasonably priced accommodation. Ask at the **tourist office** (☎ 0436 32 31; www.info.dolomiti.it; Piazzetta San Francesco 8; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm) for listings.

International Camping Olympia (☎ 0436 50 57; www.campingolympiacortina.it; per person/tent & car €7.50/9; ☎ year-round) This is a large, well-set-up camping ground 3.5km north of Cortina at Fiames. Self-sufficient with shops, a bar and pizzeria, it's accessible by bus from Cortina.

Casa Tua (☎ 0436 22 78; www.casatuacortina.com; Via Zuel 100; per person €34-60; ☎) This friendly B&B is in a picturesque mountain-chalet 2.5km from Cortina. Rooms are monastic,

but the down duvets will ensure a warm night. To get here from Cortina take the bus for Zuel.

SAD buses connect Cortina with Dobbiaco (€1, 45 minutes, three times daily), where you can change for Bolzano. ATVO runs a daily service to/from Venice (€10.60, 3½ hours, one daily).

CANAZEI

pop 1855

One of the best known resorts in the Val di Fassa, Canazei is a great spot for serious skiers. It has got 120km of downhill and cross-country runs and is linked to the challenging Sella Ronda ski network. There's even summer skiing on the Marmolada glacier, whose stunning 3342m-summit marks the highest point in the Dolomites.

Spend a cheap night at the **Marmolada camping ground** (☎ 0462 60 16 60; per person/tent €9.50/9.50; ☎ year-round), or contact the **tourist office** (☎ 0462 60 11 13; www.fassa.com; Piazza Marconi 5; ☎ 8.30am-12.15pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) for accommodation lists. The resort is accessible by Trentino Trasporti bus from Trent (€5.30, 2½ hours, three daily).

VAL GARDENA

Branching northeast off the Val di Fassa, the Val Gardena is a popular skiing area with great facilities and accessible prices. In summer, hikers head to the valley in throngs – to the Sella Group and the Alpe di Siusi for rugged, high altitude walks; to the Vallunga for more accessible family strolls.

The valley's main towns are Ortisei, Santa Cristina and Selva, all offering plenty of accommodation and easy access to runs. Further information is available online at www.gardena.org, or from the towns' tourist offices:

Ortisei (☎ 0471 79 63 28; Via Rezia 1; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 5-6.30pm Sun)

Santa Cristina (☎ 0471 79 30 46; Via Chemun 9; ☎ 8am-noon & 2.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-noon Sun)

Selva (☎ 0471 79 51 22; Via Me'isules 213; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon & 5-6.30pm Sun)

The Val Gardena is accessible from Bolzano by SAD bus and from Canazei in summer.

SAN MARTINO DI CASTROZZA

pop 700

At the foot of the imposing Pale di San Martino range, San Martino di Castrozza acts as a gateway to the Parco Naturale Paneveggio-Pale di San Martino. The **tourist office** (☎ 0439 76 88 67; www.sanmartino.com; Via Passo Rolle 165; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) can provide skiing information and help with accommodation.

Hotel GarniMadonna (☎ 0439 681 37; www.hotel.madonna.it; Via Passo Rolle 72; per person B&B €35-60) Housed in San Martino's former post house, this inviting three-star offers 25 comfortable rooms and some picturesque views of the surrounding summits.

Trentino Trasporti buses run to/from Trent (€5.60, 2½ hours, four daily).

TUSCANY

Blessed with beauty, wine and an unparalleled artistic legacy, Tuscany's a region that largely lives up to its press. Its fabled rolling landscape has long been considered the embodiment of rural chic, a favourite of holidaying PMs and retired advertising executives, while its cities harbour a significant slice of the world's Renaissance art. Florence, in itself, boasts more world-class art than many countries. Some people never venture beyond the region's crowded capital, but with some of Italy's most striking Gothic architecture (Siena) and the Leaning Tower of Pisa both an easy trip away, to do so would be a waste.

FLORENCE

pop 367,260

Of all Italy's cities few excite foreign visitors as much as Florence. Just as 18th- and 19th-century poets swooned at its beauty, so today hordes of tourists pour in to admire its Renaissance riches. An essential stop on everyone's Italian itinerary, it's busy year-round and can be disheartening. Much of the city centre has been surrendered to tourism and in summer the heat, pollution and crowds can be stifling. That said, it remains a charismatic city you'd be sorry to miss. The list of its famous sons reads like a Renaissance Who's Who – under 'M' alone you'll find Medici, Machiavelli and Michelangelo – and its

celebrated cityscape lingers in the memory long after you've left town.

History

Many hold that Florentia was founded by Julius Caesar around 59 BC, but archaeological evidence suggests an earlier village, possibly founded by the Etruscans around 200 BC. A rich merchant city by the 12th century, its golden age arrived in the 15th century. Under the Medici Lorenzo il Magnifico (1469–92), the city's cultural, artistic and political fecundity culminated in the Renaissance.

The Medici were succeeded in the 18th century by the French House of Lorraine, which ruled until 1860 when the city was incorporated into the kingdom of Italy. From 1865 to 1870, Florence was, in fact, capital of the fledgling kingdom.

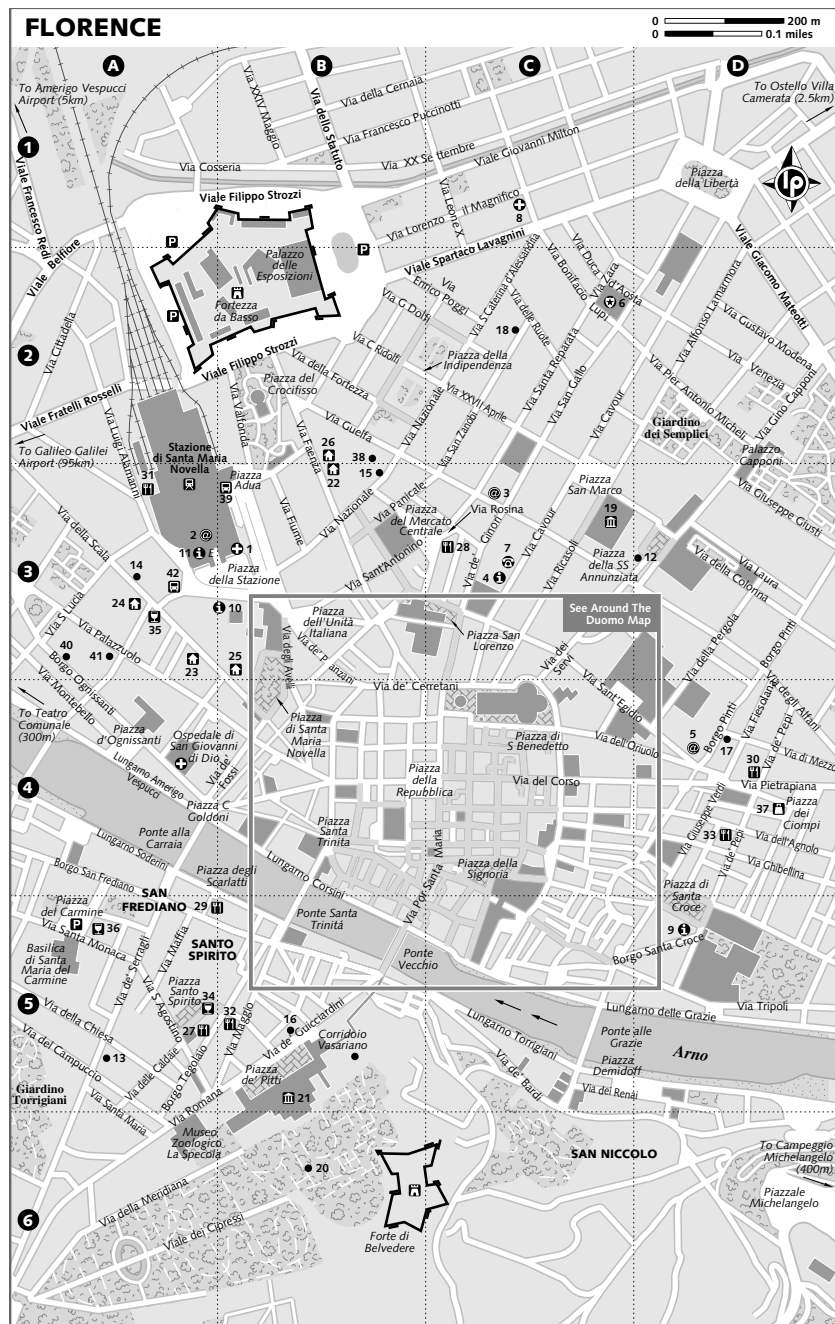
During WWII, parts of the city were destroyed by bombing, including all of its bridges except for Ponte Vecchio. In 1966 a devastating flood destroyed or severely damaged many important works of art. More recently, in 1993, the Mafia exploded a massive car bomb, killing five people and destroying part of the Uffizi Gallery.

Orientation

From the main train station, Santa Maria Novella, it's a 550m walk along Via de' Panzani and Via de' Cerretani to the Duomo. From Piazza di San Giovanni, next to the Duomo, Via Roma leads down to Piazza

TOP FIVE TUSCAN TREASURES

- Visit **David**, Michelangelo's version of Goliath's nemesis, in the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence (p774).
- Admire Botticelli's Renaissance masterpiece **La Nascita di Venere (Birth of Venus)** in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (p772).
- See that it's no misnomer: the **Leaning Tower of Pisa** is way off vertical (p777).
- **Marvel at Siena's Duomo**, one of Italy's most beautiful Gothic cathedrals (p779).
- Take in the memorable panoramic view from San Gimignano's highest tower, **Torre Grossa** (p781).



INFORMATION		Florence by Bike.....18 C2		Ristorante Beccofino.....29 A5		
Farmacia Comunale.....1 B3	Galleria d'Arte Moderna.....(see 21)	Standa.....30 D4				
Internet Train.....2 A3	Galleria del Costume.....(see 21)	Supermarket.....31 A3				
Internet Train.....3 C3	Galleria dell'Accademia.....19 C3	Trattoria Casalinga.....32 B5				
Main Tourist Office.....4 C3	Galleria Palatina.....(see 21)	Trattoria Pane e Vino.....33 D4				
Netgate.....5 D4	Giardino di Boboli.....20 B6					
Police Station (Questura).....6 C2	Museo degli Argenti.....(see 21)	DRINKING ☑				
Telecom Office.....7 C3	Palazzo Pitti.....21 B5	Cabilia.....34 A5				
Tourist Medical Service.....8 C1					Joshua Tree Pub.....35 A3	
Tourist Office.....9 D5					La Dolce Vita.....36 A5	
Tourist Office.....10 B3					SLEEPING ☑	
Train Information Office.....11 A3	Albergo Margaret.....23 A3					
Wash & Dry.....12 D3	Albergo Montreal.....24 A3					
Wash & Dry.....13 A5	Hotel Aprile.....25 B3					
Wash & Dry.....14 A3	Hotel Marine.....(see 22)					
Wash & Dry.....15 B3	Ostello Archi Rossi.....26 B2					
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		EATING ☑				
Accademia Italiana.....16 B5	Borgo Antico.....27 A5					
Cordon Bleu.....17 D4	Mario's.....28 C3					
		SHOPPING ☑				
		Flea Market.....37 D4				
		TRANSPORT				
		Alinari.....38 B2				
		ATAF Local Bus Station.....39 B3				
		Avis.....40 A3				
		Hertz.....41 A3				
		SITA Bus Station.....42 A3				

della Repubblica and continues as Via Calimala and Via Por Santa Maria to Ponte Vecchio.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Feltrinelli International (Map p773; ☎ 055 21 95 24; Via Cavour 12r) Great selection of fiction and nonfiction in English.

Paperback Exchange (Map p773; ☎ 055 29 34 60; Via delle Oche 4r) New and second-hand books in English.

EMERGENCY

Police station (Questura; Map p770; ☎ 055 497 71; Via Zara 2)

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Train (per hr about €4; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun) Via dell'Oriuolo 40r (Map p773; ☎ 055 263 89 68); Via Guelfa 24a (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 47 94); Borgo San Jacopo 30r (Map p773; ☎ 055 265 79 35); beneath Stazione Santa Maria Novella (Map p770; ☎ 055 239 97 20) Opening times vary but are approximately as above.

Netgate (Map p770; ☎ 055 658 02 07; Via Sant' Egidio 12r; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-11.30pm)

LAUNDRY

Wash & Dry (☎ 800 23 11 72; 8kg wash/dry €3.50/3.50; ☎ 8am-10pm) Via Nazionale 129r (Map p770); Via del Sole 29r (Map p773); Via della Scala 52-54r (Map p770); Via dei Servi 105r (Map p770); Via de' Serragli 87r (Map p770)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Farmacia Comunale (Map p770; ☎ 055 28 94 35; Stazione di Santa Maria Novella; ☎ 24hr) Inside the train station.

Misericordia di Firenze (Map p773; ☎ 055 21 22 22; Vicolo degli Adimari 1, Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 2-6pm Mon-Fri Mar-Oct) Fee-paying medical service.

Tourist Medical Service (Map p770; ☎ 055 47 54 11; Via Lorenzo il Magnifico 59; ☎ 24hr)

MONEY

American Express (Map p773; ☎ 055 509 81; Via Dante Alighieri 22r; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Travellex (Map p773; ☎ 055 28 97 81; Lungarno degli Acciaiuoli 6r; ☎ 9am-5.50pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-4.50pm Sun)

POST

Post office (Map p773; Via Pellicceria 3)

TELEPHONE

Telecom office (Map p770; Via Cavour 21r; h7am-11pm) Public payphones.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist offices Main office (Map p770; ☎ 055 29 08 32; www.firenzeturismo.it; Via Cavour 1r; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun); Piazza della Stazione 4 (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 22 45; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun); Borgo Santa Croce 29r (Map p770; ☎ 055 234 04 44; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun); airport (☎ 055 31 58 74; ☎ 7.30am-11.30pm)

Sights & Activities

Sightseeing in Florence inevitably means time spent in queues. You'll never avoid them altogether, but by pre-booking museum tickets you'll save time. For €3 extra per museum you can book tickets for the Uffizi, Palazzo Pitti, Galleria dell'Accademia and Cappelle Medicee through **Firenze Musei** (☎ 055 29 48 83; www.firenzemusei.it; ☎ booking service 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat). Collect

your ticket from the information desks at the Uffizi or Palazzo Pitti.

Entry to all state museums is free for EU citizens under 18 and over 65, and half-price for those between 18 and 25. To claim the discount you'll need your passport.

PIAZZA DEL DUOMO & AROUND

Pictures don't do justice to Florence's Gothic **Duomo** (Map p773; ☎ 055 230 28 85; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-3.30pm Thu, 10am-4.45pm Sat, 1.30-4.45pm Sun) – while they reproduce the startling colours of the tiered red, green and white marble façade and the beautiful symmetry of the dome, they fail to give any sense of its size. One of the world's largest cathedrals – officially known as the Cattedrale di Santa Maria del Fiore – it was begun in 1294 by Siennese architect Arnolfo di Cambio and consecrated in 1436. Its most famous feature, the enormous octagonal **cupola** (dome; admission €6; 🕒 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5.40pm Sat) was built by Brunelleschi after his design won a public competition in 1420. The interior is decorated with frescoes by Vasari and Zuccari, and the stained-glass windows are by Donatello, Paolo Uccello and Lorenzo Ghiberti. The façade is a 19th-century replacement of the unfinished original, pulled down in the 16th century.

Beside the cathedral, the 82m **campanile** (Map p773; admission €6; 🕒 8.30am-6.50pm) was begun by Giotto in 1334 and completed after his death by Andrea Pisano and Francesco Talenti. The views from the top make the 414-step climb worthwhile.

To the west, the Romanesque **battistero** (baptistry; Map p773; Piazza di San Giovanni; admission €3; 🕒 noon-7pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-2pm Sun) is one of the oldest buildings in Florence and it was here that Dante was baptised. Built on the site of a Roman temple between the 5th and 11th centuries, it's famous for its gilded-bronze doors, particularly Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gate of Paradise*. Andrea Pisano's south door (1336) is the oldest.

GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI (UFFIZI GALLERY)

Home to the world's greatest collection of Italian Renaissance art, the **Galleria degli Uffizi** (Map p773; ☎ 055 238 86 51; www.uffizi.firenze.it; Piazza degli Uffizi 6; admission €6.50, audio guide €5; 🕒 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sun) attracts some 1.5 million visitors annually. They won't all

be there when you visit, but unless you've booked a ticket (see Firenze Musei, p771), expect to queue.

The gallery houses the Medici family collection, bequeathed to the city in 1743 on the condition that it never leave the city. Highlights include *La Nascita di Venere* (Birth of Venus) and *Allegoria della Primavera* (Allegory of Spring) in the Botticelli Rooms (10 to 14); Leonardo da Vinci's *Annunciazione* (Annunciation; room 15); Michelangelo's *Tondo Doni* (Holy Family; room 25); and Titian's *Venere d'Urbino* (Venus of Urbino; room 28). Elsewhere you'll find works by Giotto and Cimabue, Filippo Lippi, Fra Angelico and Paolo Uccello, Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Tintoretto and Caravaggio.

PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA

Traditional hub of Florence's political life, Piazza della Signoria is dominated by **Palazzo Vecchio** (Map p773; ☎ 055 276 82 24; admission €6; 🕒 9am-7pm Fri-Wed, to 2pm Thu), the historical seat of the Florentine government. Characterised by the 94m **Torre d'Arnolfo**, it was designed by Arnolfo di Cambio and built between 1298 and 1340. Visit the Michelozzo courtyard and the lavish upstairs apartments.

To the south, the famous **Loggia della Signoria** (Map p773) is a 14th-century sculpture showcase. The statue of *David* is a copy of Michelangelo's original, which stood here until 1873 but is now in the Galleria dell'Accademia (p774).

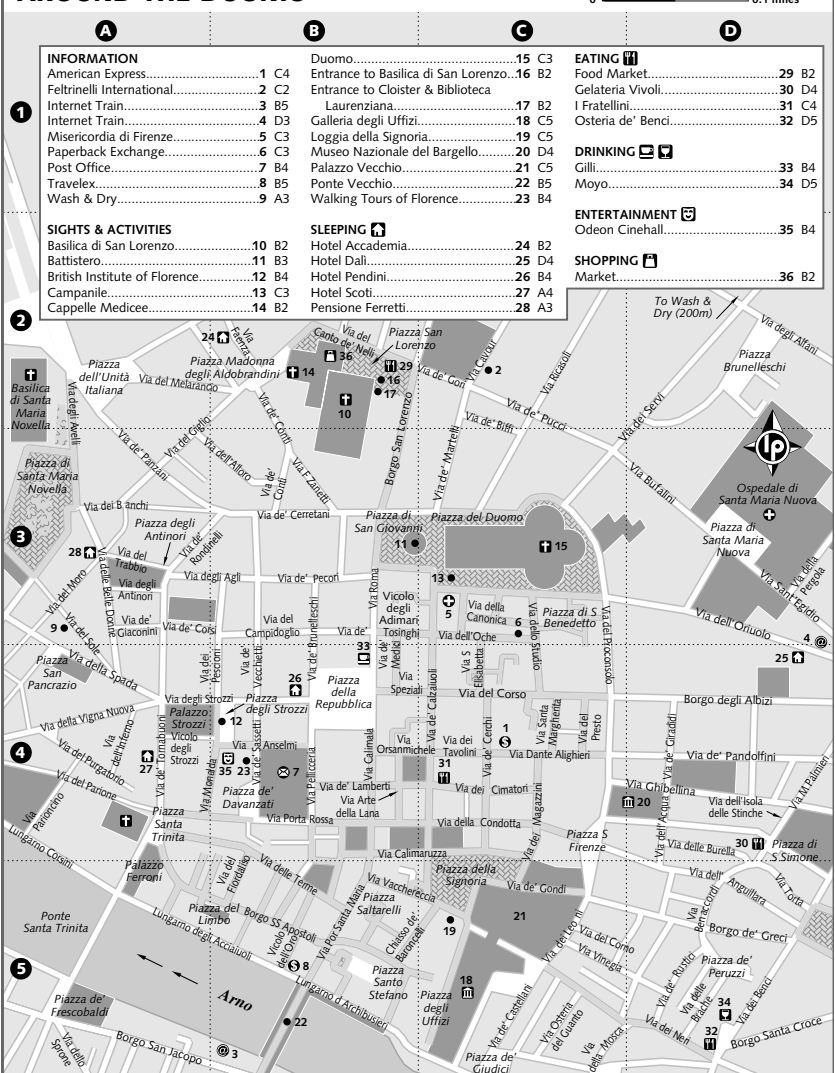
PONTE VECCHIO

Lined with jewellery shops, the 14th-century **Ponte Vecchio** (Map p773) was originally flanked by butchers' shops. But when the Medici built a corridor through the bridge to link Palazzo Pitti with Palazzo Vecchio, they ordered that the smelly butchers be replaced with goldsmiths.

PALAZZO PITTI

Built for the Pitti family, great rivals of the Medici, the vast 15th-century **Palazzo Pitti** (Map p770; ☎ 055 238 86 14; Piazza de' Pitti) was bought by the Medici in 1549 and became their family residence. Today it houses four museums, of which the **Galleria Palatina** (Palatine Gallery; Map p770; ☎ 055 238 86 14; admission incl Royal Apartments €6.50; 🕒 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sun) is the most important. Works

AROUND THE DUOMO



by Raphael, Filippo Lippi, Titian and Rubens adorn lavishly decorated rooms, culminating in the royal apartments. The other museums are the **Museo degli Argenti** (Silver Museum; Map p770; ☎ 055 238 87 09; admission €4; 🕒 8.15am-4.30pm Tue-Sun, 2nd & 3rd Mon each month); the **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** (Modern Art Gallery; Map p770; ☎ 055 238 86 16; admission €5;

🕒 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sat); and the **Galleria del Costume** (Costume Gallery; Map p770; ☎ 055 238 87 13; admission €5; 🕒 8.15am-1.50pm Tue-Sat).

Rising above the palace, the Renaissance **Giardino di Boboli** (Boboli Gardens; Map p770; admission €4; 🕒 8.15am-7.30pm Jun-Aug, to 6.30pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct, to 5.30pm Mar, to 4.30pm Nov-Feb) is well worth a wander.

GALLERIA DELL'ACCADEMIA

The people queuing outside **Galleria dell'Accademia** (Map p770; ☎ 055 238 86 09; Via Ricasoli 60; admission €6.50; 🕒 8.15am-6.50pm Tue-Sun) are waiting to see *David*, arguably the Western world's most famous sculpture. Michelangelo carved the giant figure from a single block of marble, finishing it in 1504 when he was just 29. The gallery also displays paintings by Florentine artists spanning the 13th to 16th centuries and regularly hosts temporary exhibitions.

BASILICA DI SAN LORENZO & CAPPELLE MEDICEE (MEDICI CHAPELS)

One of the city's finest examples of Renaissance architecture, the **Basilica di San Lorenzo** (Map p773; ☎ 055 264 51 84; Piazza San Lorenzo; admission €2.50; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5pm Sun) was built by Brunelleschi in the 15th century and includes his **Sagrestia Vecchia** (Old Sacristy), with sculptural decoration by Donatello. The cloister leads to the **Biblioteca Laurenziana**, built to house the Medici collection of some 10,000 manuscripts. Closed to all but researchers, the library's real highlight is Michelangelo's vestibule and stairway, thankfully open to all.

The sumptuous **Cappelle Medicee** (Medici Chapels; Map p773; ☎ 055 238 86 02; Piazza Madonna degli Aldobrandini; admission €6; 🕒 8.15am-4.50pm Tue-Sat, 1st, 3rd & 5th Sun of month, 1st & 4th Mon) are around the corner. Highlights are the extravagant **Cappella dei Principi**, the principal burial place of the Medici grand dukes, and the incomplete **Sagrestia Nuova**, Michelangelo's first architectural effort containing some exquisite sculptures.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Boasting Italy's most comprehensive collection of Renaissance sculpture, the **Museo Nazionale del Bargello** (Map p773; ☎ 055 238 86 06; Via del Proconsolo 4; admission €4; 🕒 8.15am-1.50pm Tue-Sat & 2nd & 4th Sun of month) is housed in Florence's medieval police station.

For the best views of the city, head up to **Piazzale Michelangelo**, a steep 600m walk from the southern bank of the Arno.

Courses

Florence is well set up with schools offering courses in language, cooking, art and history. The following are well-established institutions:

Accademia Italiana (Map p770; ☎ 055 28 46 16; www.accademiaitaliana.com; Piazza de' Pitti 15) Language and cultural courses.

British Institute of Florence (Map p773; ☎ 055 267 78 200; www.britishinstitute.it; Piazza degli Strozzi 2) Language courses.

Cordon Bleu (Map p770; ☎ 055 234 54 68; www.cordonbleu-it.com; Via di Mezzo 55r) Cooking courses.

Tours

CYCLING

The following offer tours of the Tuscan countryside. One-day rides typically cost between €60 and €75.

Bicycle Tuscany (☎ 055 22 25 80; www.bicycletuscany.com)

Florence by Bike (Map p770; ☎ 055 48 89 92; www.florencebybike.it; Via San Zanobi 120-122r)

I Bike Italy (☎ 055 234 23 71; www.ibikeitaly.com)

WALKING

Walking Tours of Florence (Map p773; ☎ 055 264 50 33; www.italy.artviva.com; Via de' Sassetti 1; tours per person from €25) Offers a range of city tours, all led by English-speaking guides.

Festivals & Events

Scoppio del Carro (Explosion of the Cart) A cart full of fireworks is exploded in front of the Duomo on Easter Sunday.

Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (www.maggiomusicalefiorentino.com; April to Jun) Italy's longest-running music festival.

Festa di San Giovanni (Feast of St John) Florence's patron saint is celebrated on 24 June with costumed soccer matches on Piazza di Santa Croce.

Sleeping

Although there are hundreds of hotels in Florence, it's still prudent to book ahead.

BUDGET

Campeggio Michelangelo (☎ 055 681 19 77; Viale Michelangelo 80; www.ecvacanze.it; per person/car/tent €10/6/6) Just off Piazzale Michelangelo, this large and well-equipped camping ground is the nearest to the city centre. Take bus 13 from the train station.

Ostello Villa Camerata (☎ 055 60 14 51; firenze@ostellionline.org; Viale Augusto Righi 2-4; dm incl breakfast €17.50; 📍) Housed in a 17th-century villa 4km northeast of the train station and set in its own park, Florence's HI hostel has 322 beds in various room combinations. Take bus 17, 17B or 17C from the train station. Reservations are essential in summer.

Ostello Archi Rossi (Map p770; ☎ 055 29 08 04; ostelloarchirossi@hotmail.com; Via Faenza 94r; dm incl breakfast €18-26; 📍) A faux-frescoed private hostel, the Archi is a busy, boisterous backpacker pad. Near the train station, it's well equipped with washing machines, microwaves and snack dispensers.

Hotel Dali (Map p773; ☎ 055 234 07 06; www.hoteldali.com; Via dell'Ortiolo 17; d €80, s/d with shared bathroom €40/60; 📍) Escape the crowds at Florence's best budget hotel. Owners Marco and Samanta go out of their way to ensure a pleasant stay, while the spotless, sunny rooms provide a homely retreat from the ever-present masses down the road at the Duomo.

Albergo Margaret (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 01 38; www.dormireintoscana.it/margaret; Via della Scala 25; d €90, s/d with shared bathroom €60/70; 📍) A warm welcome and pristine, peach-coloured rooms await guests here. One of the best budget choices on Via della Scala, it offers comfort and muted style, for which you could easily pay more.

MIDRANGE

Albergo Montreal (Map p770; ☎ 055 238 23 31; www.hotelmontreal.com; Via della Scala 43; d €130, s/d with shared bathroom €60/80; 📍) This is a slick, modern one-star with smart, if soulless, rooms and a range of mod cons (satellite TV, air-con) exceptional for the category. A further plus is the sound-proofing that ensures a good night's sleep.

Hotel Scoti (Map p773; ☎ 055 29 21 28; www.hotel.scoti.com; Via de' Tornabuoni 7; s/d €70/105) On Florence's smartest shopping strip, the friendly Scoti is a gem. After a sing-along around the piano in the communal sitting room, adjourn to your airy room, decorated with simple rustic furniture.

Albergo Azzi (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 38 06; www.hotelazzi.it; Via Faenza 56; s/d incl breakfast €70/140, with shared bathroom €60/90) Heavy wood furniture, books and assorted antiques lend the Azzi an air of bohemian charm. Rooms are clean and comfortable; those facing away from Via Faenza are quieter. On the 2nd floor, the **Hotel Marine** (☎ 055 26 42 51; d €70-110; 📍) is run by the same people.

Hotel Accademia (Map p770; ☎ 055 29 34 51; www.hotelaccademiafirenze.com; Via Faenza 7; s/d incl breakfast €85/150; 📍) The Accademia's grand staircase, magnificent stained-glass doors and carved wooden ceilings are a throwback to

a more elegant age. Rooms, decked out in parquet and tasteful fabrics, are more modest, if no less appealing.

Other recommendations:

Pensione Ferretti (Map p773; ☎ 055 238 13 28; www.emmeti.it/ferretti/index.uk.html; Via delle Belle Donne; s/d incl breakfast €65/102, with shared bathroom €52/82; 📍) Family-run *pensione* with basic, clean rooms.

Hotel Pendini (Map p773; ☎ 055 21 11 70; www.florenceitaly.net; Via degli Strozzi 2; s/d incl breakfast €110/150; 📍) Antique-clad three-star overlooking Piazza della Repubblica.

TOP END

Hotel Aprile (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 62 37; www.hotelaprire.it; Via della Scala 6; s/d incl breakfast €150/250; 📍) Housed in a Medici palace, complete with brick-vaulted corridors, this stylish hotel is a worthwhile indulgence. Rooms vary – some have four-poster beds, others frescoes – but all are attractive. There's also a gorgeous courtyard garden.

Eating

Classic Tuscan dishes include *ribollita*, a heavy vegetable soup, *cannellini* (white beans) and *bistecca alla Fiorentina* (Florentine steak). Chianti is the local tipple.

RESTAURANTS

Trattoria Pane e Vino (Map p770; ☎ 055 24 38 03; Via dell'Agnolo 105; 1st/2nd courses €4/7; 🕒 closed Sun dinner) For filling home-style food, this earthy trattoria does the job. The food – steaming bowls of *ribollita* and slabs of grilled meat – is as authentic as the dusty wine bottle décor.

Mario's (Map p770; Via Rosina 2r; 1st/2nd courses €4/8; 🕒 lunch Mon-Sat) Lunch at Mario's is fun, filling and frenetic. A noisy, cheerful place full of market workers and tourists, it serves hearty pastas and meaty main courses at prices rare for such a central spot.

Trattoria Casalinga (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 86 24; Via dei Michelozzi 9r; 1st/2nd courses €5/7; 🕒 Mon-Sat) The Casalinga is a brash, no-frills trattoria that offers a workaday menu of pasta staples and simple meat dishes. It's always full so is better suited to a swift fill-up than a long, lingering lunch.

Borgo Antico (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 04 37; Piazza Santo Spirito 6r; pizza/salad/2nd courses €7/12) On a vibrant piazza, this trendy eatery is great for whiling away a summer evening over a pizza and glass of something cool. Select

from the menu of leafy salads, wood-fired pizzas and Tuscan specialities.

Osteria de' Benci (Map p773; ☎ 055 234 49 23; Via de' Benci 13r; 1st/2nd courses €9/13; ☎ Mon-Sat) In-the-know diners flock to this modish *osteria* – raspberrry-coloured walls and a wood-vaulted ceiling – for its convivial atmosphere and consistently good food. If it's on, the *carpaccio* (thinly shredded raw meat) is excellent.

Ristorante Beccofino (Map p770; ☎ 055 29 00 76; Piazza degli Scarlatti 1r; 1st/2nd courses €10/20; ☎ closed Mon) The metropolitan décor of this innovative restaurant-cum-wine bar wouldn't look out of place in London or New York. Serving *nouvelle* takes on Tuscan cuisine, it boasts an impressive wine list and snazzy lavs.

QUICK EATS

Gelateria Vivoli (Map p773; ☎ 055 29 23 34; Via dell'Isola delle Stinche 7) Ice-cream aficionados rate the *gelati* here the city's best. Flavours range from orange chocolate to fig and walnut.

I Fratellini (Map p773; ☎ 055 239 60 96; Via dei Cimatori 38r; panini €2-3) Although no more than a hole-in-the-wall *panino* bar, I Fratellini is a city institution. Locals horde to the tiny counter for fresh-filled *panini* ready in the twinkle of an eye.

SELF-CATERING

Fresh produce is available at the central **food market** (Map p770; Piazza San Lorenzo; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Sat). Alternatively, there's a **supermarket** (Map p770; Stazione di Santa Maria Novella) at the train station, and a **Standa** (Map p770; Via Pietrapiana 94) east of Piazza del Duomo.

Drinking

Cabiria (Map p770; ☎ 055 21 53 72; Piazza Santo Spirito 4/r; ☎ closed Tue) By day a pleasant enough café, Cabiria morphs into a cool bar at night. Its understated vibe lends itself perfectly to hours of languid people watching.

Gilli (Map p773; ☎ 055 21 38 96; Piazza della Repubblica 39r; ☎ Wed-Sun) The city's grandest café, Gilli has been serving tourists with overpriced coffee since 1733.

Joshua Tree Pub (Map p770; Via della Scala 37r; happy-hr pint €3; ☎ 4pm-1am, happy hour 4-9pm) This thumping pub rocks, more often to the Beta Band than the Pogues, but the Guinness is still great. It's smoky, rowdy and totally addictive.

La Dolce Vita (Map p770; ☎ 055 28 45 95; Piazza del Carmine 6/r; ☎ 5pm-2am Tue-Sun) A swish hipster magnet favoured by cocktail-sipping fashionistas, La Dolce Vita gets very crowded at weekends.

Moyo (Map p773; ☎ 055 247 97 38; Via de' Benci 23r) A mixed crowd of sharp locals and foreign students drink at this funky modern bar. It's good for an aperitif to a background of upbeat jazz.

Entertainment

Florence's definitive monthly listings guide *Firenze Spettacolo* is sold at newsstands (€1.75). *Florence Concierge Information*, a bi-monthly city guide, runs a good what's-on website: www.florence-concierge.it.

Concerts, opera and dance are performed year-round at the **Teatro Comunale** (☎ 800 11 22 11; Corso Italia 16), which is also the venue for events organised by the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (see Festivals & Events, p774).

English-language films are screened at the **Odeon Cinehall** (Map p773; ☎ 055 21 40 68; www.cinehall.it, in Italian; Piazza Strozzi; tickets €7.50) on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Shopping

Shopping is concentrated between the Duomo and the Arno, with boutiques along Via Roma, Via de' Calzaiuoli and Via Por Santa Maria. For the big fashion guns, head to Via de' Tornabuoni and Via della Vigna Nuova.

Just north of the Duomo, the **market** (Map p773; Piazza San Lorenzo; ☎ Mon-Sat) is the place for leather goods, clothing and jewellery, although quality and prices vary. For bric-a-brac and the occasional antique, head for the **flea market** (Map p770; Piazza dei Ciompi; ☎ daily) north of Piazza di Santa Croce.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The main airport serving Florence is Pisa's **Galileo Galilei airport** (PSA; ☎ 050 50 07 07; www.pisa-airport.com). There's also a small city airport 5km north of Florence, **Amerigo Vespucci** (FLR; ☎ 055 37 34 98; www.aeroporto.firenze.it).

BUS

The **SITA bus station** (Map p770; ☎ 800 37 37 60; www.sita-on-line-it, in Italian; Via Santa Caterina da Siena 17) is just south of the train station. SITA buses leave for Siena (€6.50, 1¼ hours,

hourly) and, via Poggibonsi, San Gimignano (€5.90, 1¼ hours, 14 daily).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Florence is connected by the A1 autostrada to Bologna and Milan in the north and Rome and Naples to the south. The A11 links Florence with Pisa and the coast, and a *superstrada* (expressway) joins the city to Siena.

TRAIN

Florence is well connected by train. There are regular services to/from Pisa (Regional, €5.10, 1¼ hours, every 20 minutes), Rome (€24.95, 2½ hours, half hourly), Bologna (€10.75, one hour, every 20 minutes) and Milan (Eurostar, €28.95, 2¾ hours, 22 daily). For Venice, change at Bologna. Check times at the **train information office** (Map p770; ☎ 7am-9pm) in the station's main foyer.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Terravision (☎ 06 321 20 011; www.terravision.it) runs a bus service between the train station and Galileo Galilei airport (€7.50, one hour 10 minutes, 12 daily). Otherwise there are regular trains (€5.10, 1½ hours, hourly between 6.37am and 8.37pm).

A **Vola in Bus** (☎ 800 42 45 00; www.ataf.net) shuttle (€4, 25 minutes, half-hourly 5.30am to 11pm) connects Amerigo Vespucci airport with the SITA bus station.

BICYCLE

Alinari (Map p770; ☎ 055 28 05 00; www.alinarirental.com; Via Guelfa 85r; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2.45-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) rent out bikes from €7/12/24 for five hours/day/weekend.

BUS

ATAF (Map p770; ☎ 800 42 45 00; www.ataf.net) buses service the city centre and Fiesole, a small town in the hills 8km northeast of Florence. The most useful terminal is just outside the train station's eastern exit. Take bus 7 for Fiesole and 13 for Piazzale Michelangelo. Tickets (one/three/24 hours €1/1.80/4.50) are sold at tobacconists and newsstands.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Much of the city centre is restricted to traffic so the best advice is to leave your car in a car park and use public transport. De-

tails of car parks are available from **Firenze Parcheggi** (☎ 055 500 19 94; www.firenzeparcheggi.it, in Italian). If your car is towed away, call ☎ 055 78 38 82.

To rent, try **Hertz** (Map p770; ☎ 199 11 22 11; Via M Finiguerra 33r) or **Avis** (☎ 199 10 01 33; Borgo Ognissanti 128r).

PISA

pop 88,990

One of Italy's most recognisable monuments, the Leaning Tower of Pisa (Torre Pendente) is a genuinely shocking sight. Veering upwards at an alarming angle, it stands in permanent defiance of the laws of gravity. Tower aside, Pisa is an unassuming university town that while pleasant enough, won't hinder you long.

Pisa's golden age came in the 12th and 13th centuries when it was a maritime power rivalling Genoa and Venice. It was eventually defeated by the Genoese in 1284 and, in 1406, fell to Florence. Under the Medici, the arts and sciences flourished and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) taught at the university.

Orientation & Information

From Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, just north of the train station, the Leaning Tower is a straightforward 1.5km walk – follow Corso Italia to the Arno, cross the river and continue down Borgo Stretto. At the end of Via G Carducci, bear left down Via Cardinale Pietro Maffi. You could also take bus 1 from the train station.

For city information ask at one of the three **tourist offices**: city centre (☎ 050 4 22 91; Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II 16; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sun); Leaning Tower (☎ 050 56 04 64; Piazza del Duomo 1; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4.30pm Sun); airport (☎ 050 50 37 00; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm & 6-10pm daily).

Go online at **Internet Planet** (☎ 050 83 07 02; Piazza Cavallotti 3-4; per hr €3.10; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Fri, to 8pm Sat, 2.30pm-midnight Sun).

Sights

The entry times listed here are those in force at the time of research, but they change frequently – call ☎ 050 387 22 10 or log onto www.opapisa.it for confirmation.

Pisans claim that the **Campo dei Miracoli** (Field of Miracles) is among the most beautiful squares in the world. Certainly, the immaculate walled lawns provide a

gorgeous setting for the cathedral, baptistry and tower; on the other hand, few places boast so many tat-waving hawkers.

Forming the centrepiece of the Campo's Romanesque trio, the candy-striped **cathedral** (admission €2; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun), begun in 1063, has a graceful tiered façade and cavernous interior. The transept's bronze doors are by Bonanno Pisano, but the 16th-century entrance doors are by Giambologna.

To the west, the cupcake-like **battistero** (baptistry; admission €5; ☎ 10am-5pm) was started in 1153 and completed by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano in 1260. Inside, note Nicola Pisano's beautiful pulpit.

But it's to the campanile, better known as the **Leaning Tower** (Torre Pendente; www.opapisa.it; admission €15; ☎ 9.30am-5pm), that all eyes are drawn. Bonanno Pisano began building in 1173, but almost immediately his plans came a cropper in a layer of shifting soil. Only three of the tower's seven tiers were completed before it started tilting – continuing at a rate of about 1mm per year. By 1990 the lean had reached 5.5 degrees – a tenth of a degree beyond the critical point established by computer models. Stability was finally ensured in 1998 when a combination of biased weighting and soil drilling forced the tower into a safer position. Today it's almost 4.1m off the perpendicular.

Visits are limited to groups of 30; entry times are staggered and queuing is predictably inevitable.

Flanking the Campo, the beautiful **Camposanto cemetery** (admission €5; ☎ 10am-5pm) is said to contain soil shipped from Calvary during the crusades – soil that's reputed to reduce cadavers to skeletons within days.

Sleeping

Ostello della Gioventù (☎/fax 050 89 06 22; Via Pietrasantina 15; dm €15) In open country about 1km north of the Leaning Tower, this no-frills private hostel offers Pisa's cheapest beds. Take bus 1 from the train station and make sure you've got some insect repellent – mosquitoes are a nuisance in summer.

Hotel Francesco (☎ 050 55 54 53; www.hotelfrancesco.com; Via Santa Maria 129; s/d €90/100; ☎ ☎) The best of the hotels lining busy Via Santa Maria (just off Campo dei Miracoli), the small family-run Francesco offers a warm

welcome and bright, mod-conned rooms. It also hires out bikes (€3 per hour).

Hotel di Stefano (☎ 050 55 35 59; www.hoteldistefano.pisa.it; Via Sant'Apollonia 35-37; s/d €100/120, with shared bathroom €65/80; ☎ ☎) There are three reasons to stay at this friendly three-star: its location – a quiet backstreet in the medieval quarter; its smart, simple rooms; and its terrace with views of the tower's top half.

Eating

Fried Fish (☎ 050 58 10 11; Via Cavalca 11; snacks €3-5) This is a great little takeaway specialising in delicious fried nibbles. The mixed platter (€5) includes fried onions, mozzarella, potatoes, octopus, prawns and bread. Perfect for eating on the hoof.

Antica Trattoria il Campano (☎ 050 58 05 85; Via Cavalca 19; 1st/2nd courses from €6/11; ☎ closed Wed) An atmospheric trattoria serving outstanding regional fare in a medieval setting, the house speciality here is the meal-in-itself *Tagliere del Re* ('cut of the king') starter – a combo of 12 antipasti.

Trattoria La Buca (☎ 050 56 06 60; Via Gallit Tussi 6; pizza/1st/2nd courses €6/7/11; ☎ closed Fri) Home-style Tuscan grub is what they do best at this laid-back trattoria. Portions are filling, prices are reasonable and the atmosphere is unhurried.

Getting There & Away

The city's **Galileo Galilei airport** (PSA; ☎ 050 50 07 07; www.pisa-airport.com) is linked to the centre by train (€1.10, five minutes, 15 daily), or by bus 1.

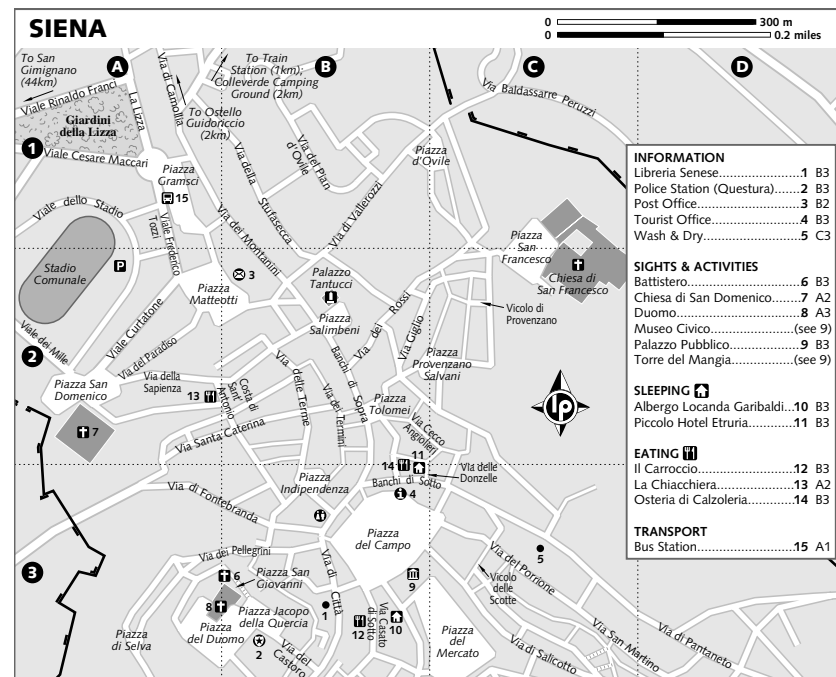
Lazzi (☎ 050 462 88; www.lazzi.it, in Italian) buses depart from the airport to Florence (€11.40, two hours, hourly) via Lucca.

Regular trains run to Florence (Regional, €5.10, 1¼ hours, every 20 minutes), Rome (€26, three to four hours, 15 daily) and Genoa (€13.90, two hours, half-hourly).

SIENA

pop 54,370

Famous for its annual horse race (Il Palio), Siena is one of Italy's most enchanting medieval towns. Its walled centre, a beautifully preserved warren of dark lanes punctuated by Gothic *palazzi*, piazzas and eye-catching churches, is a lovely place to get lost. The action centres on Piazza del Campo (known as Il Campo), the sloping square that serves



as a communal sunbed to scores of day-trippers.

According to legend, Siena was founded by the sons of Remus. In the Middle Ages its dramatic rise caused political and cultural friction with Florence. Painters of the Siennese School (most notably the 13th to 15th centuries) produced significant works of art, and the city was home to saints Catherine and Benedict.

Orientation

From the train station take bus 8, 9 or 10 to Piazza Gramsci, from where Il Campo is a short, signposted walk away. The centre's main streets – the Banchi di Sopra, Via di Città and Banchi di Sotto – curve around Il Campo.

Visitors' cars aren't permitted in the centre.

Information

Libreria Senese (☎ 0577 28 08 45; Via di Città 62-66)

Bookshop with selection of English books and newspapers.

Police station (Questura; ☎ 0577 20 11 11; Via del Castoro 23)

Post office (Piazza Matteotti 1)

Tourist office (☎ 0577 28 05 51; www.terresiena.it; Piazza del Campo 56; ☎ 9am-7pm)

Wash & Dry (Via di Pantaneto 38; wash/dry €3.50/3.50; ☎ 8am-10pm)

Sights

Ever since the 14th century, the slanting, shell-shaped **Piazza del Campo** has been the city's civic centre. Forming the base of the piazza, the **Palazzo Pubblico** (Palazzo Comunale) is a magnificent example of Siennese Gothic architecture. Soaring above it, the 102m **Torre del Mangia** (admission €6; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Mar–end Oct, to 4pm Nov–mid-Mar) was completed in 1297. On the ground floor, the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0577 22 62 30; admission €7; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Mar–end Oct, to 5.30pm Nov–mid-Feb, to 6.30pm mid-Feb–mid-Mar) houses a rich collection of Siennese art.

The spectacular **Duomo** (☎ 0577 473 21; admission €3; ☎ 10.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-5.30pm Sun Mar-May, 10.30am-8pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-6.30pm Sun Jun-Aug, 10.30am-7.30pm daily Sep-Oct, 10.30am-6pm Mon-Sat Nov-Feb) is another Gothic masterpiece. Begun in 1196 it was completed in

WORTH A TRIP

Set in classic rolling countryside, pint-size Pienza is as flawless a medieval centre as you'll find in Italy. Commissioned by Pope Pio II and built between 1459 and 1462, its Unesco-protected *centro storico* is the very picture of Renaissance urban-chic. Nowadays it's almost entirely given over to tourism and is full of wine and cheese shops, bars and restaurants.

You can get information from the **tourist office** (☎ 0578 74 99 05; Piazza Pio II; ☹ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm) just off the central square.

Nearby Montepulciano is famous for its wine and thermal baths. Treat yourself to a bottle of *vino nobile* and a massage at the **Terme Montepulciano** (☎ 0578 79 11; www.termemontepulciano.it; Via delle Terme 46, Località Sant'Albino; massages from €60).

Tra-in runs five buses daily between Montepulciano and Siena (€4.50, 1¼ hours) via Pienza.

1215, although work continued well into the 13th century. Subsequent expansion plans were stymied by the plague of 1348. The striking façade of green, red and white marble was designed by Giovanni Pisano, who also helped his dad, Nicola, craft the cathedral's intricate pulpit. Inside, it's the 14th-century **inlaid-marble floor** (fl viewing €6; ☹ 10.30am-7.30pm mid-Jun-mid Oct), decorated with 56 biblical panels, that's the highlight. Other noteworthy features include Donatello's bronze of St John the Baptist and statues of St Jerome and Mary Magdalene by Bernini.

North of the cathedral and down a flight of stairs, the **battistero** (baptistry; Piazza San Giovanni; admission €3; ☹ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, to 7pm Sep-May) has a Gothic façade and a rich interior of 15th-century frescoes.

On the western edge of the walled city, the **Chiesa di San Domenico** (Piazza San Domenico 1; admission free; ☹ 7.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm) is the last resting place of St Catherine's head. You'll find it above the altar in the Cappella di Santa Caterina. Her thumb, incidentally, is in a small window box to the right of the chapel.

Festivals & Events

Siena's great annual event is the **Palio** (2 July & 16 August), a pageant culminating in a bare-back horse race round Il Campo. The city is divided into 17 *contrade* (districts), of which 10 are chosen annually to compete for the *palio* (silk banner). The only rule in the three-lap race is that jockeys can't tug the reins of other horses.

Sleeping

It's always advisable to book in advance, but for August and the Palio, it's essential.

Colleverde Camping Ground (☎ 0577 28 00 44; campingsiena@terresiena.it; Strada di Scacciapensieri 47; per person/tent €7.50/7.50; ☹ mid-Apr-mid-Oct; 🚻) This is a large, well-organised camping ground 2km north of the historic centre (take bus 3 from Piazza Gramsci). On-site facilities include a swimming pool and bar.

Ostello Guidoriccio (☎ 0577 522 12; siena@ostellonline.org; Via Fiorentina 89; per person €14; 📍) An inconvenient 20-minute bus ride from the town centre, Siena's HI hostel is clean, quiet-ish and very cheap. Take bus 10 or 15 from Piazza Gramsci, or 77 from the train station and tell the driver you're after the *ostello* (hostel).

Piccolo Hotel Etruria (☎ 0577 28 80 88; www.hotel.etruria.com; Via delle Donzelle 3; s/d €53/83, s with shared bathroom €48; 🚻) A friendly family-run *pensione* not yards from Il Campo, the Etruria offers nine bright, basic rooms. There's a 1am curfew, but it shouldn't be a problem as Siena rarely kicks on that long.

Albergo Locanda Garibaldi (☎ 0577 28 42 04; Via Giovanni Dupré 18; d/tr/q €75/95/110, set menu €20) Smarter inside than out, this hotel is full of character and exceptional value for money. Above the trattoria of the same name, there are seven charming rooms with parquet, low wood-beamed ceilings and wrought iron bedsteads.

Eating

La Chiacchiera (☎ 0577 28 06 31; Costa di Sant'Antonio 4; 1st/2nd courses €4/6) With its rustic wooden tables and stone walls, this is an atmospheric spot. The food is seasonal, earthy and filling – try the *pici boscaiola* (thick spaghetti with mushrooms) for some deep autumnal flavours. In summer, there is outdoor seating on a quiet pedestrian street.

Osteria di Calzoleria (☎ 0577 28 90 10; Via di Calzoleria 12; 1st/2nd courses €7/11; ☹ dinner) On a winding street meandering off the Campo, this is a lively place to sit down to a steaming bowl of *ribollita* and other regional classics; it also serves excellent *contorni* (side dishes), ideal for vegetarians.

Il Carroccio (☎ 0577 411 65; Via Casato di Sotto 32; 1st/2nd courses from €7/12; ☹ closed Tue dinner & Wed) Recommended by the prestigious Slow Food movement (always a good sign), Il Carroccio specialises in traditional Siennese cooking. Staples include *pici* (thick spaghetti) and succulent *bistecca di chianina alla brace* (grilled steak).

Getting There & Away

Siena is not on a main train line so it's easier to take a bus. From the bus station on Piazza Gramsci, **Tra-in** (☎ 0577 20 42 46) and SITA buses run to/from Florence (€6.50, 1¼ hours, hourly) and San Gimignano (€5.20, 1¼ hours, 14 daily), either direct or via Poggibonsi.

Sena (☎ 0577 28 32 03; www.sena.it) operates services to/from Rome (€17.50, three hours, 11 daily).

Both Tra-in and Sena have ticket offices underneath the piazza.

SAN GIMIGNANO

pop 7100

Dubbed the medieval Manhattan, San Gimignano is a tiny hilltop town deep in the Tuscan countryside. A mecca for day-trippers, it owes its nickname to the 11th-century towers that soar above its pristine *centro storico*. Originally 72 were built as monuments to the town's wealth but only 13 remain. To avoid the worst of the crowds try to visit midweek, preferably in deep winter.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0577 94 00 08; Piazza del Duomo 1; ☹ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mar-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Nov-Feb) is a short walk from Piazza dei Martiri di Montemaggio, the nearest San Gimignano has to a bus terminal.

On the southern edge of Piazza del Duomo, the **Palazzo Comunale** (☎ 0577 99 03 12; Piazza del Duomo; adult/child €5/4; ☹ 9.30am-7pm Mar-Oct, 10am-5.30pm Nov-Feb) houses San Gimignano's art gallery (the **Pinacoteca**) and tallest tower, the **Torre Grossa**. Climb to the top for some unforgettable views.

Nearby, the Romanesque **Duomo** (☎ 0577 94 03 16; Piazza del Duomo; adult/child €3.50/1.50;

☹ 9.30am-7.10pm Mon-Fri, to 5.10pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-4.40pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-4.40pm Sun Feb, Mar & Nov-Jan), known also as the Collegiata, boasts frescoes by Ghirlandaio and a gruesome *Last Judgment* by Taddeo di Bartolo.

Hotels are expensive in San Gimignano, but there are plenty of cheaper *affittacamere* and *agriturismi* (accommodation on working farms). The tourist office has a list.

Hotel La Cisterna (☎ 0577 94 03 28; www.hotel.cisterna.it; Piazza della Cisterna 23; s/d €76/98, d with view €115; 🚻 📍) In a 14th-century *palazzo* overlooking San Gimignano's central square, this historic hotel is perfectly placed. Rooms, some of which have panoramic valley views, are bright, airy and comfortable.

Enoteca Gustavo (☎ 0577 94 00 57; Via San Matteo 29; snacks from €3.50) This is an atmospheric brick-vaulted *enoteca* serving a range of delicious *bruschette*, *panini* and smooth local Chianti.

Gelateria di Piazza (☎ 0577 94 22 44; Piazza della Cisterna 4; ☹ Mar-mid-Nov) Tony Blair thought the ice cream here was 'delicious'. Praise indeed!

Regular buses link San Gimignano with Florence (€5.90, 1¼ hours, 14 daily) and Siena (€5.20, 1¼ hours, 11 daily). Most require a change at Poggibonsi.

UMBRIA & LE MARCHE

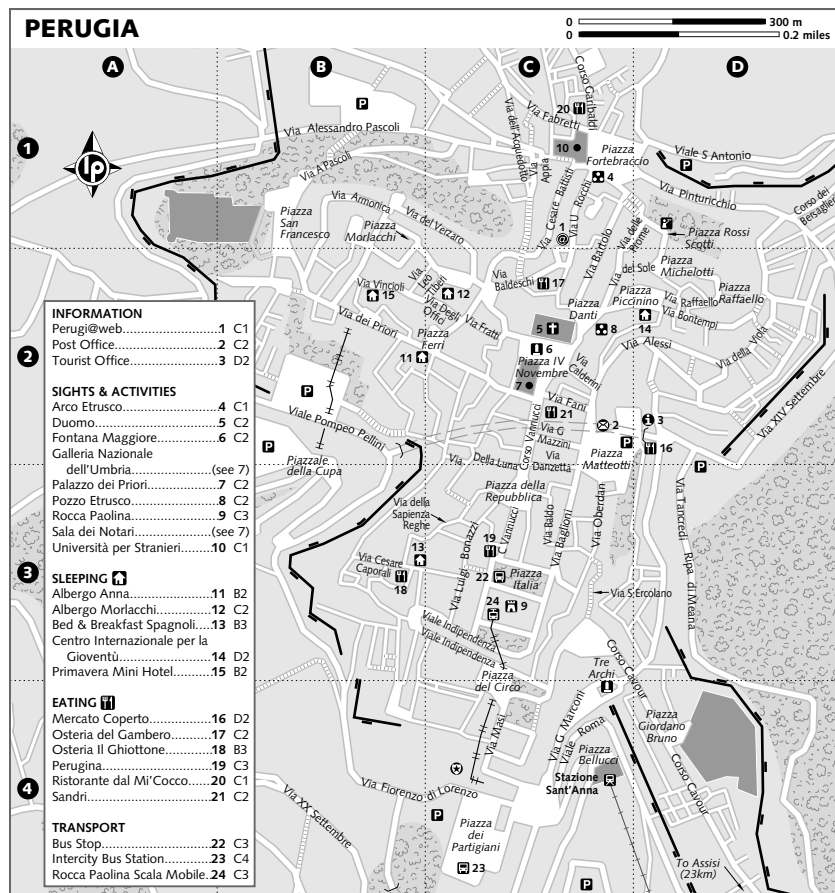
Dubbed the 'green heart of Italy', Umbria is a beautiful and predominantly rural region. It harbours some of Italy's best-preserved historic *borghi* (villages) and a wealth of artistic and architectural bounty. The regional capital Perugia provides a convenient base, with Assisi an easy day trip away.

To the east, mountainous Le Marche offers more of the same, its appeal encapsulated in the medieval centre of Urbino. On the coast, charmless Ancona is an important Adriatic ferry port.

PERUGIA

pop 153,850

With its hilltop medieval centre and international student population, Perugia is Umbria's largest and most cosmopolitan city. There's not a huge amount to see, but the presence of the University for Foreigners ensures a buzz that's not always apparent in the region's sleepy hinterland. In



July, music fans inundate the city for the prestigious Umbria Jazz festival.

Perugia has a bloody and lively past. In the Middle Ages, the Baglioni and Oddi families fought for control of the city, while later, as a papal satellite, the city fought with its neighbours. All the while art and culture thrived: painter Perugino and Raphael, his student, both worked here.

Orientation & Information

Up the hill, Perugia's main strip, Corso Vannucci, runs north-south from Piazza Italia, where buses terminate, down to Piazza IV Novembre, the city's focal point. City maps are available at the **tourist office** (☎ 075 573 64 58; Piazza Matteotti 18; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm

Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) opposite the **post office** (☎ 075 573 69 77; Piazza Matteotti).

To check your email try **Perugi@web** (☎ 075 572 01 05; Via Ulisse Rocchi 30; per hr €2.50; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, 4-11pm Sun) in the historic centre.

Sights

Flanking Piazza IV Novembre, the austere 14th-century **Duomo** (☎ 075 572 38 32; Piazza IV Novembre; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 4-6.45pm Mon-Sat, 8am-12.45pm & 4-6.45pm Sun) has an unfinished two-tone façade and, inside, an altarpiece by Signorelli and sculptures by Duccio. It's more famous, however, as being home to the Virgin Mary's wedding ring, unveiled every 30 July.

In the centre of the piazza, the **Fontana Maggiore** was designed by Fra Bevignate and carved by Nicola and Giovanni Pisano between 1275 and 1278.

The 13th-century **Palazzo dei Priori** houses Perugia's best museums, including the **Galleria Nazionale dell'Umbria** (☎ 075 572 10 09; Corso Vannucci 19; adult/concession €6.50/3.50; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm), whose collection contains works by local heroes Perugino and Pinturicchio. Still in the *palazzo*, the impressively frescoed **Sala dei Notari** (Notaries' Hall; ☎ 075 577 23 39; Piazza IV Novembre; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun) is where Perugia's nobles used to meet.

At the southern end of Corso Vannucci, the **Rocca Paolina** (Paolina Fortress) is the remnant of a massive 16th-century citadel. Exhibitions are sometimes held in the underground ruins.

Etruscan remains include the **Arco Etrusco** (Etruscan Arch; Piazza Fortebraccio) and the 36m-deep **Pozzo Etrusco** (Etruscan Well; ☎ 075 573 36 69; Piazza Danti 18; ☎ 10am-1.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Apr-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Mar).

Courses

The **Università per Stranieri** (University for Foreigners; ☎ 075 574 61; www.unistrapg.it; Piazza Fortebraccio 4) runs hundreds of courses in language, art, history, music and architecture.

Sleeping

Centro Internazionale per la Gioventù (☎ 075 572 28 80; www.ostello.perugia.it; Via Bontempi 13; dm €14.50, sheets €2; ☎ closed mid-Dec-mid-Jan) This is a private hostel with decent four- to six-bed dorms, a frescoed TV room and great views from the terrace. The lockout (9.30am to 4pm) and midnight curfew are strictly enforced.

Bed & Breakfast Spagnoli (☎ 075 573 51 27; www.perugiaonline.com/bbspagnoli; Via Cesare Caporali 17; s/d/tr incl breakfast €38/58/75) If a homestay B&B is what you're after, look no further. The convivial English-speaking Spagnoli family offers guests three spacious rooms in their home near Piazza Italia.

Primavera Mini Hotel (☎ 075 572 16 57; www.primaveraminihotel.com; Via Vinciglioli 8; s/d €48/70; ☎ ☎) On the top floor of a 16th-century *palazzo* – hence some memorable views – this intimate two-star has spruce modern rooms decorated with understated style. Warmly recommended.

Also available:

Albergo Anna (☎ 075 573 63 04; www.albergoanna.it; Via dei Priori 48; s/d €40/62, with shared bathroom €30/48) Fourth-floor *pensione* with character to sell.

Albergo Morlacchi (☎ 075 572 03 19; Via Leo Tiberi 2; s/d €56/70, s with shared bathroom €44) Lovely art-filled place with frescoes, fireplaces and antiques.

Eating

Ristorante dal Mi' Cocco (☎ 075 573 25 11; Corso Giuseppe Garibaldi 12; set menu €13; ☎ closed Mon) This is a fun restaurant with long communal tables and an ebullient taverna-vibe. Meals are dished up at set times – lunch 1pm, dinner 8.15pm – according to the weekly menu, written in local dialect. Meat eaters will enjoy the *polenta 'nc la salsiccia* (polenta with sausage).

Osteria Il Ghiottone (☎ 075 573 62 84; Via Cesare Caporali 12; 1st/2nd courses €7.50/10; ☎ closed Wed) Earthy Umbrian cooking is what draws locals to this small family-run *osteria*. The homemade pasta is delicious, the lamb chops tender and the Billy Idol on the stereo kinda sweet.

Sandri (☎ 075 44 9 41; Corso Vannucci 32; ☎ 8am-11pm Tue-Sun) Perugia's premier café, Sandri has the best cakes in town, as well as free chocolates on the bar.

Don't leave town without trying Perugia's famous chocolate. There's a wide selection at **Perugina** (☎ 075 573 66 77; Corso Vannucci 101; ☎ 9.30am-7.45pm, closed Mon morning) near Piazza Italia.

Mercato Coperto (Covered markets; Piazza Matteotti; ☎ 7am-1.30pm Mon-Sat & 4.30-7.30pm Sat) Stock up here on fresh fruit, bread, cheese and meat.

Getting There & Away

From the intercity bus station on Piazza dei Partigiani, **Sulga** (☎ 800 09 96 61; www.sulga.it, in Italian) buses depart for Florence (€9.80, two hours, one daily) and Rome (€1.5, three hours, five daily), continuing onto Fiumicino airport (€20, four hours). **Sena** (☎ 800 93 09 60; www.sena.it, in Italian) serves Siena (€11, 1½ hours, three daily), while **APM** (☎ 075 50 67 81; www.apmperugia.it, in Italian) and **SSIT** (☎ 0742 67 07 46; www.spoletina.com) buses head up to Assisi (€3, one hour, 13 daily).

Regional trains connect with Rome (€10.15, 2¾ hours, seven daily), Florence (€7.90, two hours, five daily) and Assisi (€1.65, 20 minutes, hourly).

Getting Around

The train station is downhill from the historic centre; take bus 6, 7 or 15A to Piazza Italia. From the intercity bus station on Piazza dei Partigiani, jump on the free **Rocca Paolina scala mobile** (public escalator; ☎ 6.15-1.45am) for the centre.

The centre is mostly closed to traffic so park in one of the supervised car parks and take the escalator up. There's a **car park** (Piazza dei Partigiani; 1st hr €0.80, per hr thereafter €1.05; ☎ 24hr) near the bus station.

ASSISI

pop 26, 030

Seen from afar the only clue to Assisi's importance is the imposing form of the Basilica di San Francesco jutting over the hillside. Thanks to St Francis, born here in 1182, this quaint medieval town is a major destination for millions of pilgrims.

The **tourist office** (☎ 075 81 25 34; www.umbria2000.it; Piazza del Comune 22; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 8am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Nov-Mar) can provide practical information.

Sights

Dress rules are applied rigidly at the main religious sights, so no shorts, miniskirts, low-cut dresses or tops.

The **Basilica di San Francesco** (☎ 075 81 90 01; Piazza di San Francesco) comprises two churches. The **upper church** (☎ 8.30am-6.50pm Mon-Sat, to 7.15pm Sun Easter-Nov, to 6pm daily Nov-Easter) was damaged during a severe earthquake in 1997, but has since been restored to its former state. Built between 1230 and 1253 in the Italian Gothic style, it features superb frescoes by Giotto and works by Cimabue and Pietro Cavallini.

Downstairs in the dimly lit **lower church** (☎ 6.30am-6.50pm Mon-Sat, to 7.15pm Sun Easter-Nov, to 6pm daily Nov-Easter), constructed between 1228 and 1230, you'll find a series of colourful frescoes by Simone Martini, Cimabue and Pietro Lorenzetti and, beneath the floor, the crypt where St Francis is buried.

The 13th-century **Basilica di Santa Chiara** (☎ 075 81 22 82; Piazza Santa Chiara; ☎ 6.30am-noon & 2-7pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar) contains the remains of St Clare, friend of St Francis and founder of the Order of Poor Clares.

Looming over Assisi, the massive 14th-century fortress **Rocca Maggiore** (☎ 075 81 30

53; Via della Rocca; admission €3; ☎ 10am-sunset) commands great views of the valley below.

Sleeping & Eating

You'll need to book ahead during peak times: Easter, August and September, and the Feast of St Francis (3 and 4 October).

Grotta Antica (☎ 075 81 34 67; Via Macelli Vecchi 1; s/d/tr €30/40/50) Just off central Piazza del Comune, this hospitable *pensione* offers seven clean, spartan rooms at bargain basement prices. Downstairs in the trattoria (1st/2nd courses €7/8) the food is similarly modest and well priced.

Pensione La Rocca (☎ 075 81 22 84; www.hotela-rocca.it; Via Porta Perlici 27; s/d €40/48; ☎ ☑) Near Piazza Matteotti in the upper reaches of town, La Rocca has 27 bright rooms spread over three floors. Décor is limited to functional furniture, but the spectacular views more than compensate. Noise from the downstairs restaurant (set menu €12) can be a nuisance.

Camere Santa Chiara (☎ 075 81 25 99; Vicolo Sant'Antonio; d €50) Run by the same family as the Grotta Antica, this is slightly smarter.

Trattoria Pallotta (☎ 075 81 26 49; Vicolo della Volta Pinta 2; 1st/2nd courses €7/12; ☎ closed Tue) Duck under the frescoed Volta Pinta (Painted Vault) off Piazza del Comune to this brick-vaulted, wood-beamed trattoria. The menu is unapologetically local, featuring homemade *strangozzi* (like tagliatelle), roast pigeon and rabbit stew.

Getting There & Away

APM and SSIT buses connect Assisi with Perugia (€3, one hour, 13 daily), departing from Piazzas Matteotti and Unità d'Italia. Sulga operates buses to Rome (€16.50, three hours, two daily) and Florence (€11, 2½ hours, one daily).

Assisi's train station is 4km from Assisi proper in Santa Maria degli Angeli. A bus (Linea C, €0.90, half hourly) runs between Piazza Matteotti and the station. Hourly trains run to Perugia (€1.65, 20 minutes).

ANCONA

pop 101,540

Unless you're picking up a ferry here, you won't want to hang around in Ancona. Regional capital of Le Marche and Italy's largest Adriatic port, it's an industrial workaday city with little of interest.

Buses 1 and 4 connect the train station to the port and centre of town. The most convenient **tourist office** (☎ 071 20 11 83; ☎ 8am-8pm Tue-Sat & 2-8pm Sun & Mon Jun-15 Sep) is at the ferry terminal. Otherwise it's a 2km slog to the **main office** (☎ 071 35 89 91; www.turismo.marche.it; Via Thaon de Revel 4; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sun Sep-May).

Sleeping

Ostello della Gioventù (☎ /fax 071 422 57; Via Lamacici 7; dm €16) Ancona's HI hostel is about 400m from the main train station. Divided into male and female floors, it's got beds in four- and six-person dorms. Unspectacular, but it does the job.

Hotel Fortuna (☎ 071 426 63; www.hotelfortuna.it; Piazza Rosselli 15; s/d/tr ind breakfast €55/88/98; ☎ ☑) The pick of the station hotels, the Fortuna has spotless pale yellow rooms enlivened by tartan bedspreads and pay TV. Breakfast is abundant and there's wi-fi.

Getting There & Away

Falconara airport (A0I; ☎ 071 282 71; www.ancona-airport.it) handles daily national and European flights. **Conero** (☎ 071 280 20 92; www.conerobus.it) bus service J runs between the airport and the city centre (€1.10, 45 minutes, hourly).

Ferry operators have booths at the terminal, off Piazza Kennedy.

Adriatica (☎ 199 123 199; www.adriatica.it) To Split in Croatia (€46, 7½ hr).

Marmara Lines (☎ 071 207 61 65; www.marmaralines.com) To Cesme (€92, 5½ hr) in Turkey.

Minoan Lines (☎ 071 201 708; www.minoan.gr) To Greece's Igoumenitsa (€80, 16hr) and Patras (€72, 22hr).

Superfast Ferries (☎ 071 207 02 40; www.superfast.com) Also have services to Igoumenitsa (€74, 15hr) and Patras (€74, 21hr).

Regular trains connect Ancona with Bologna (€19.35, 2¼ hours, hourly) and Rome (Eurostar, €21.50, 3¼ hours, nine daily).

URBINO

pop 15,490

If you visit only one town in Le Marche, make it Urbino. It's a pain to get to, but as you wander its steep, Unesco-protected streets you'll appreciate the effort. Birthplace of Raphael and Bramante and a university town since 1564, it's still today a bustling centre of culture and learning.

To get to the centre from the bus terminal on Borgo Mercatale, head up Via Mazzini or take the *ascensore* (lift) to Teatro Sanzio.

Information and accommodation listings are available at the **tourist office** (☎ 0722 26 13; Via Puccinotti 3; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun May-Sep).

Urbino's centerpiece is the Renaissance **Palazzo Ducale** (☎ 0722 32 90 57; Piazza Duca Federico; admission €4; ☎ 8.30am-7.15pm Tue-Sun, to 2pm Mon), designed by Laurana and completed in 1482. Inside, the **Galleria Nazionale delle Marche** features works by Raphael, Paolo Uccello and Verrocchio.

To the north, the 15th-century **Casa di Raffaello** (☎ 0722 32 01 05; Via Raffaello 57; admission €3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) is the house where Raphael lived until he was 16.

Albergo Italia (☎ 0722 27 01; www.albergo-italia-urbino.it; Corso Garibaldi 32; s €45-65, d €65-115 both ind breakfast; ☎) Right in the heart of the walled town, the white walls and modern fittings in the Italia's rooms contrast with the historic everything else around them.

La Balestra (☎ 0722 29 42; Via Valerio Lorenzo 16; 1st/2nd courses €7/10) Popular with local students, this cheery eatery specialises in meaty game dishes and autumnal pastas with truffles and *porcini*. If that doesn't appeal, there are also pizzas.

Trains don't run to Urbino. **Soget** (☎ 0721 54 96 20) buses link with Pesaro (€2.20, one hour, 16 daily), where you can pick up a train for Ancona. **Bucci** (☎ 0721 324 01; www.autolineebucci.com) runs two buses per day to Rome (€19, 4½ hours).

SOUTHERN ITALY

You'll hardly believe you're in the same country as Milan or Venice here, and for most Southern Italians, this is a source of pride. Long regarded by the North as the poor stepchild, the literal and figurative heel of Italy, the South is actually a treasure trove of all that is good about Italy, and the best place to experience the languid sweet life, *la dolce vita*.

Often referred to as the *Mezzogiorno* (the midday sun), the southern half of the boot is inextricably linked to its former Mediterranean invaders: Greeks, Arabs and Spanish Aragonese. The Amalfi Coast and

Capri host some of the finest scenery in the country, Matera will captivate anyone who makes the long trek and Naples is as unforgettable as your first love.

NAPLES

pop 1.04 million

As the birthplace of Sophia Loren, pizza and chaos, Naples is filled with a palpable frenetic energy, most noticeable among the hordes of young people on Vespas who congregate outside bars, cigarettes dangling just so. You're never quite sure whether they're planning a party, a revolution or a heist, but you know whichever it is, it'll be a rollicking good time.

You'll never feel more alive than when you're in Naples – though that might be partly because you'll never be more aware of your own mortality, as Vespas careen past while shady figures hover around your pockets. The ancient city was once queen of the Mediterranean and is pockmarked with a history worthy of the most cultured traveller. Museo Archeologico Nazionale is a microcosm of the city; it's got one of the best antiquities collections in the world (including an X-rated section), but the jumbled layout and lacklustre curating causes those visitors who don't look below the surface to miss its inimitable charms.

Orientation

Naples lazes along the waterfront and is divided into *quartieri* (districts). Both the Stazione Centrale and the main bus terminal are off Piazza Garibaldi, east of Spaccanapoli, the city's ancient heart. Corso Umberto I, the main shopping thoroughfare, heads southwest from Piazza Garibaldi to Piazza Bovio, skirting Spaccanapoli. The newest fashionable district is Chiaia, starting at the Galleria Umberto I and Via Toledo. Santa Lucia, to the southwest of the city, along the bay, is a serene contrast with the chaotic historical centre. In the hills above is the serene and affluent Vomero district, a natural balcony with grand Vesuvian views.

Information

DISCOUNT CARDS

Campania ArteCard (☎ 800 600 601; www.campaniaartecard.it; 3 days Naples/3 days Campania/7 days Campania €13/25/28) Free or discounted admission to dozens of

museums, plus free public transportation. Pick up the card and accompanying brochure and map at the train stations, port, airport, hotels, museums or newsagents.

EMERGENCY

Police station (Questura; ☎ 081 794 11 11, to report a stolen car 081 794 14 35; Via Medina 75) Just off Via Armando Diaz.

INTERNET ACCESS/LAUNDRY

Onda Blu (☎ 081 563 49 96; Via Zannotti 11; wash & dry €4.50; ☎ 8am-8pm) Internet access *and* laundry.

LEFT LUGGAGE

Stazione Centrale (per piece for hr €3.80, per piece for 6-12hr €0.60, per piece after 12hr €0.20; ☎ 7am-11pm)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Guardia Medica After-hours medical service; phone numbers are listed in *Qui Napoli* (Here Naples; see below).
Ospedale Loreto-Mare (Hospital; ☎ 081 254 27 01; Via Amerigo Vespucci) On the waterfront, near the train station.

Pharmacy (☎ 081 268 881; Stazione Centrale; ☎ 8am-8pm)

MONEY

There are plenty of ATMs throughout the city, as well as foreign-exchange booths.

Every Tour (☎ 081 551 85 64; Piazza Municipio 5-6) Represents American Express, changes money and is a Western Union agent.

POST

Main post office (Piazza Matteotti) Off Via Armando Diaz.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Ask for *Qui Napoli* at tourist offices, published monthly in English and Italian. It lists events in the city, as well as information about transport and other services. Be aware that the tourist offices may randomly close off-season if budgets are tight.

Tourist offices Stazione Centrale (☎ 081 20 66 66; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun); Piazza del Gesù Nuovo (☎ 081 552 33 28; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 3pm Sun) Buy an ArteCard at any office.

Dangers & Annoyances

Naples' image has improved dramatically over the last decade or so and the overall crime rate, although undeniably the highest of all Italian cities, has dropped. The local Mafia – the Camorra – is more pervasive

INFORMATION

Every Tour (American Express)	1	A3
Main Post Office	2	A3
Onda Blu	3	B2
Ospedale Loreto-Mare	4	D2
Pharmacy	5	D1
Police Station (Questura)	6	B3
Tourist Office	7	A3

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Basilica di Santa Chiara	8	B2
Castel dell'Ovo	9	A5
Castel Nuovo	10	B3
Chiesa di Gesù Nuovo	11	B2
Duomo	12	B1
Museo Archeologico Nazionale	13	A1
Museo Civico	14	A1
Palazzo Reale	14	A4
Port'Alba	15	A2

SLEEPING

6 Small Rooms	16	A2
Bella Capri	17	B3

EATING

Brandi	26	A4
Da Michele	27	C2
Del Presidente	28	B1
Di Matteo	29	B1
La Sfogliatella Mery	(see 40)	
Leon d'Oro	30	A2
Pizzeria Sorbillo	31	B2
Trattoria Castel dell'Ovo	32	A5
Trilanon	33	C2

DRINKING

Bar Lazzarella	34	A2
Caffè Gambirinus	35	A4
Farinella	36	A4
Intra Moenia	37	B2
Vineria del Corso	38	B2

ENTERTAINMENT

Teatro San Carlo	39	A4
------------------	----	----

SHOPPING

Galleria Umberto I	40	A3
--------------------	----	----

TRANSPORT

Funicolare Centrale	41	A3
Long-Distance Ferries	42	C4
Molo Beverello (Local Ferries)	43	B4
Urban & Inter-city Bus Station	44	D1

than most Neapolitans would like to admit; recent years have shown murder rates into the triple digits. However, tourists need not worry too much about being the target of a mob hit. Still, petty theft and pickpockets are rampant. Keep an eye on any bags, mobile phones, wallets or even loose necklaces, especially in crowds or as mopeds speed by.

Sights

If you visit one museum in Southern Italy, make sure it's the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 081 44 01 66; Piazza Museo Nazionale; adult/concession €6.50/3.50, up to €9 if special exhibit; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Wed-Mon), which houses the collection of the noble Farnese family and treasures from Pompeii and Herculaneum.

If you can navigate the five jumbled floors, you'll be rewarded with life-size marble statues, mosaics, household furniture like a reconstructed *trichinia* (sofa for reclining at meals), plus a **Gabinetto Segreto** (Secret Cabinet), where you can discover just how very fond ancient Romans were of the male nether parts.

CENTRO STORICO

Start your sightseeing at Spaccanapoli, the historic centre of Naples. From the station and Corso Umberto I, turn right onto Via Mezzocannone, taking you to Via Benedetto Croce, the bustling main street of the quarter. To the left is spacious Piazza del Gesù Nuovo, with the 15th-century rusticated façade of **Chiesa di Gesù Nuovo** and the 14th-century **Basilicata di Santa Chiara**, restored to its original Gothic-Provençal style after being severely damaged by WWII bombing. The beautifully tiled **Chiostro delle Clarisse** (Nuns' Cloisters; Piazza del Gesù Nuovo; admission €4; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm Sun), inside the basilica, is also worth visiting.

The **Duomo** (☎ 081 44 90 97; Via Duomo; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1pm & 5-8pm Sun, closes one hr earlier Nov-Feb) has a 19th-century façade but was built by the Angevin kings at the end of the 13th century on the site of an earlier basilica. Inside is the **Cappella di San Gennaro**, containing the head of St Januarius (the city's patron saint) and two vials of his congealed blood. The saint is said to have saved the city from disasters such as plague and volcanic eruptions.

Turn off Via Duomo onto the very characteristic Via dei Tribunali and head for Piazza Dante, through the 17th-century **Port'Alba**, one of the city's gates. Via Roma, the most fashionable street in old Naples, heads south (becoming Via Toledo) and ends at **Piazza Trento e Trieste** and **Piazza del Plebiscito**.

Near the piazzas is **Palazzo Reale** (☎ 081 794 40 21; admission €4.50; ☎ 9am-8pm Thu-Tue), the former official residence of the Bourbon and Savoy kings, now a museum. Just off Piazza Trento e Trieste is the world-renowned **Teatro San Carlo** (☎ 081 797 21 11; Via San Carlo 98; tours €5), famed for its perfect acoustics. Visit its lavish interior or go for a show (see p791).

CHIAIA & SANTA LUCIA

The area known as **Chiaia** (Neapolitan dialect for beach) runs along the western coast from Via Toledo down the Via Chiaia. It's known for its nightlife and great shopping. Check out the **Galleria Umberto I**, filled with shops and restaurants.

Along the waterfront the 13th-century **Castel Nuovo**, with the **Museo Civico** (☎ 081 795 58 77; adult/concession €5/4; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) on the first three floors, overlooks the ferry port. The early Renaissance triumphal arch commemorates the entry of Alfonso I of Aragon into Naples in 1443.

Situated southwest along the waterfront, at Santa Lucia, is the **Castel dell'Ovo** (☎ 081 24 00 055; Borgo Marinaro; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun), originally a Norman castle and Angevin fortress. It's lovely enough, but the real draw here is just to wander the surrounding **Borgo Marinaro**, a tiny fishing village that feels a world away.

VOMERO

Catch the **Funicolare Centrale** from Via Toledo to Vomero where you will find the **Certosa di San Martino**, a 14th-century Carthusian monastery, rebuilt in the 17th century in Neapolitan-baroque style. It houses the **Museo Nazionale di San Martino** (☎ 081 578 17 69; Via Tito Angelini; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm; ☎ closed Wed). Fans of the writer Umberto Eco and medieval history should not miss the former monastery, complete with a gilded carriage, monastic spicery, Neapolitan nativity scenes and 14th-century science implements.

Built partly out of the surrounding tufa (volcanic rock), **Castel Sant'Elmo** (☎ 081 57 84 030; Via Tito Angelini 20; admission €3; ☎ 9am-6.30pm, closed Wed) dates back to 1329 and often hosts art exhibits.

CAPODIMONTE

The areas known as Capodimonte is a bit out of the historic centre but worth a full day visit. The former Bourbon palace is now a top-notch museum surrounded by a park, where you'll often find Neapolitan families enjoying a picnic amid the forested setting of this former noble hunting ground.

One of the better fine art museums in Southern Italy, **Museo di Capodimonte** (☎ 848 800 288; Via Miano 1; adult/concession €7.50/4, audio guide €4; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm, closed Wed) houses the col-

lection from the Farnese family whose patriarch became the first king of Naples in 1734. Master painters on display include El Greco, Titian and Bruegel.

Take bus 24 to reach the park and the museum.

Festivals & Events

The **Festa di San Gennaro** honours the city's patron saint and is held three times a year (first Sunday in May, 19 September and 16 December). Thousands swarm the Duomo to witness the saint's blood, held in two vials, liquefy, a miracle said to save the city from potential disasters.

Sleeping

Location is everything in Naples. Those who value convenience or have wee-hour train departures might want to stay near the train station, although it is loud and lacks the historic ambience of Spaccanapoli. Several hotels require €0.05 for the lift, including **Bella Capri** and **Hostel of the Sun**.

BUDGET

6 Small Rooms (☎ 081 790 13 78; www.at6smallrooms.com; Via Diodato Liroy 18; dm/d incl breakfast €18/45) The young or young-at-heart might not mind hauling up six flights of treacherous stairs to enjoy the Australian-run casual atmosphere, laid-back common room and lax regard for antismoking rules here. There's a full kitchen and several private rooms.

Hostel of the Sun (☎/fax 081 420 63 93; www.hostelnapoli.com; Via Melisurgo 15; dm/s/d/tr/q with shared bathroom €20/45/55/80/90, d/t/q €70/90/100, all incl breakfast; ☎) Constantly winning awards and accolades for what is practically hostel perfection, HOTS has achieved an enviable balance between social and relaxing, well-run but casual. Guests quickly become friends over a shared DVD or night out on the town at a local pizzeria. Hotel-quality private rooms on a separate floor mean softies can get in a good eight hours of sleep.

Pensione Mancini (☎ 081 553 67 31; www.hostelpensionemancini.com; Via Mancini 33; dm/s/d with shared bathroom €20/35/45, s/d/tr/q €45/60/80/100, all incl breakfast) Your parents will rest easy knowing you're being well cared for at this clean and safe hostel/hotel. A machine for free coffee and hot chocolate 24/7, in-room lockers and free luggage storage make this a great train station bet.

Bella Capri (☎ 081 55 29 265; www.bellacapri.it; Via Melisurgo 4; dm/s/d/tr with shared bathroom €22/50/60/84, s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €70/80/100/110; ☎ ☎) It's tough to hold a candle to neighbour **Hostel of the Sun**, but **Bella Capri** more than delivers. Hotel rooms are comfortably simple and safe, all with TVs and a few with terraces. The hostel was under construction when we visited, but expect brightly painted rooms, full wheelchair access, en suite coded dorm rooms (with hairdryers!), a festive common room with wide-screen TV and DVD player, and laundry facilities.

Hotel Zara (☎ 081 28 71 25; www.hotelzara.it; Via Firenze 81; s/d €45/65; ☎ ☎) This is one of the nicer train station hotels; it's a bit smoky but safe, with a good-size collection of English-language books.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Pignatelli (☎ 081 658 49 50; www.hotelpignatelli.napoli.com; Via S Giovanni Pignatelli 16; s/d/tr incl breakfast €50/90/130) The owner here, previously a bodyguard, takes good care of guests, even cooking homemade pasta on occasion. The building is bathed in layers of history and rooms have ancient vaulted ceilings and are large enough for an echo. Email ahead for an airport (€15) or train station (€10) pick-up.

Napolit'amo (☎ 081 552 36 26; www.napolitamo.it; Via Toledo 148; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €75/115/135/165; ☎ ☎) Feel like royalty in this 16th-century palace, packed with faded glory and stylish décor. In the heart of the Chiaia shopping district, it's walking distance to many restaurants and bars. Good off-season discounts.

WORTH A TRIP

Hapsburgs, Schmapsburgs: the Italians also knew how to make themselves one impressive palace. The lovely **Palazzo Reale** (☎ 0823 44 80 84; Via Douhet 22, Caserta; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 8.30am-7pm, closed Tue) is easily reached on the main Naples to Rome train line in the town of Caserta; it's just a five-minute walk from the station. Never ones for subdued style, these Italians knew how to build a seriously garish palace, including gilded 7m-high doors and giant marble statues. The gardens are as marvelous as the palace apartments.

Soggiorno Sansevero (☎ 081 79 01 000; www.albergosansevero.it; Piazza San Domenico Maggiore 9; s/d €90/100, with shared bathroom €70/90; 🍴) One of a three-property chain, this tasteful hotel is housed in a historic building and offers excellent value.

Nuovo Rebecchino (☎ 081 553 53 27; www.nuovo.rebecchino.it; Corso G Garibaldi 356; s/d incl breakfast €105/160; 🍴 📺) The best higher-end hotel near the train station, the Rebecchino is equipped with absolutely every amenity you could want: TV, direct-dial telephone, hairdryer, minibar, in-room wi-fi, large buffet breakfast, even a billiards table downstairs.

TOP END

MH Hotel (☎ 081 19 57 15 76; www.mhhotel.it; Via Chiaia 245; s €140-180, d €170-230, incl breakfast; 🍴 📺) Known as a 'design hotel' for its innumerable aesthetic touches, the MH Hotel is also perfectly located in the heart of pedestrianised Chiaia, but with much-appreciated soundproof windows. Jacuzzis and sleek furnishings give rooms a Prada-does-feng shui feel.

Eating

You might hear a passing reference or two to the fact that pizza was created here. True Neapolitan pizza is all about the purity of ingredients, time-tested leavening methods and a wood-fired brick oven. The pizzas themselves are usually nothing more than the classic *margherita* – olive oil, tomato sauce, basil and mozzarella cheese – or the *marinara* – tomatoes, garlic, oregano and olive oil. We're still not quite sure how something so simple can taste so good, but we're pretty sure it has something to do with an alchemical transformation.

Breaded mozzarella sticks and *misto di frittura* (deep-fried vegetables), such as fried zucchini flowers, are available at takeaways called *friggatorie* all over town.

PIZZA

Da Michele (☎ 081 55 39 204; Via Cesare Sersale 1/3; pizza €3.50-4.50; 🕒 10am-11pm, closed Sun) In the heart of pizza country is this, the apogee of pizza, which calls itself 'Il Tempio della Pizza'. Open since 1870, you're practically guaranteed a raucously sacred experience. Choices are *margherita* or *marinara* and water, soda or beer.

Di Matteo (☎ 081 45 52 62; Via dei Tribunali 94; pizza & calzone around €4-5; 🕒 9am-midnight, closed Sun) Careful you don't miss the tiny tiled entrance here. The owner didn't want to ruin the pizza essence with anything fancy, so expect paper plates, plastic cups...and really, really good pizza.

Del Presidente (☎ 081 21 09 03; Via dei Tribunali 120/121; pizza €4) Bill Clinton probably has no clue that one visit to Di Matteo started a shrine, but a former *pizzaiolo* (pizza maker) took the ex-pres's visit as inspiration and opened this nearby contender. Downstairs is filled with Clintonian memorabilia.

Brandi (☎ 081 41 69 28; Salita S Anna di Palazzo 1/2; pizza €5) Once a restaurant has its website translated into six languages, you might guess – correctly – that quality has lost some of its importance. Still, *pizza margherita* was invented here in 1889 (the restaurant has been open since 1780).

Pizzeria Sorbillo (☎ 081 44 66 43; Via dei Tribunali; pizza from €5) This always-packed place is a shoe-in contender for one of Naples' top pizza parlours – a long lineage of talented *pizzaioli* has ensured this.

Trionon (☎ 081 553 94 26; Via P Colletta 46; pizza €5-10) With marble-topped tables and a warm welcome, this place has been tossing very good pizzas since 1923.

NOT PIZZA

Trattoria Castel dell'Ovo (☎ 081 76 46 352; Via Luculliana 28; mains from €8) This unpretentious spot, south of Santa Lucia, serves well-priced, delicious seafood at harbour-side tables with lovely views of Borgo Marinaro.

Leon d'Oro (☎ 081 54 99 404; Piazza Dante 48; pizza €6, 1st/2nd courses €8.50/14; 🕒 closed Mon & one week in August) This is a homey old-school restaurant with good service and an intimate atmosphere. They do serve pizza, of course, but the gnocchi and steak are a welcome distraction.

La Sfogliatella Mery (☎ 081 40 22 18; Galleria Umberto I) In the heart of the Chiaia shopping district is this famed pastry shop in the elegant Galleria Umberto I shopping arcade. A must is the *Babà al Rum* pastry.

Drinking BARS

Farinella (☎ 081 423 84 55; Via Alabadiere 10; dishes €3.50-12; 🕒 restaurant to midnight, bar to 2am, closed Sun) Absolutely oozing with atmosphere, the

young and hip make their way to this Chiaia lounge and chill spot. There's live music on Tuesday.

Bar Lazzarella (☎ 081 55 10 005; Calata Trinita Maggiore 7-8) Grab a drink and sit back with the students, international travellers and young Neapolitans who flock here for a beer or a coffee with Baileys and to enjoy primo people-watching off the Piazza del Gesù Nuovo.

Vineria del Corso (Via Giovanni Paladino 8a) This is a snug wine bar featuring a good wine list, welcoming lighting, charming décor and low-key electronica played at a polite volume.

CAFÉS

Caffè Gambrinus (☎ 081 41 75 82; Via Chiaia 12) Naples' oldest and most posh café, in the heart of the city's most fashionable street, remains a beloved haunt for artists, intellectuals and musicians.

Intra Moenia (☎ 081 29 07 20; Piazza Bellini 70; salads & light meals from €8) Tucked onto a beautiful piazza, this café/bookshop/publishing house hosts the city's intellectual elite; it's arty, literary and left leaning – with excellent salads to boot.

Entertainment

The monthly *Qui Napoli* and local newspapers are the best guides to what's on when. In May, the city organises **Maggio dei Monumenti**, a month of mostly free concerts and cultural events. Ask at the tourist offices for details. **Teatro San Carlo** (☎ box office 081 797 23 31; www.teatrosancarlo.it, in Italian; Via San Carlo 98; tickets €25-120) has year-round concerts and performances of opera and ballet. There are discounts for under-30s one hour before the curtain, and 10% discount with the Campania ArteCard.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Capodichino airport (NAP; ☎ 848 88 87 77; www.gesac.it) is about 6km northeast of the city centre. In addition to Alitalia and Lufthansa, several low-cost carriers arrive in Naples, including easyJet and Meridiana. Take the Alibus airport bus (€3, 20 minutes, at least hourly) from Piazza Municipio or the port. Taxi fares are set at €21.60 with additional charges for luggage and night calls.

BOAT

Naples is above all a water city, and *traghetti* (ferries), *aliscafi* (hydrofoils) and *navi veloci* (fast ships) leave for Sorrento and the islands of Capri, Ischia and Procida from Molo Beverello, in front of Castel Nuovo. Some hydrofoils leave for the bay islands from Mergellina. Hydrofoils cost around double the price of ferries but take half the time.

Check the website www.traghettonline.net for information on all ferries in or out of Italy. The major companies out of Naples are **Tirrenia** (☎ 199 12 31 99; www.tirrenia.com), which operates ferries to Palermo (€55, 10½ hours, daily) and Cagliari (€44, 13½ hours, weekly), while its sister company **Siremar** (☎ 081 580 03 40) services the Aeolian Islands and Milazzo. **SNAV** (☎ 081 428 55 55) runs hydrofoils to the islands of Capri (€12, 30 minutes, five daily) and Palermo (€16-68, 10½ hours). **Caremar** (☎ 081 551 38 82) services Capri (hydrofoil €12, 30 minutes; ferry €6, 1½ hours), Procida and Ischia by ferry and hydrofoil. The most convenient (and cheapest) way to buy tickets is online, however, you can also purchase them at a travel agent or at the port of embarkation.

BUS

Buses leave from Piazza Garibaldi, in front of the train station, for nearby destinations, including Salerno, the Amalfi Coast and Caserta, as well as far-flung Bari (€20, three hours), Lecce (€25, 5½ hours) and Brindisi (€23, five hours). Signage is sparse, so check destinations carefully or ask at the information kiosk.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If you value your sanity and life, skip driving in Naples. The traffic is constant and chaotic, theft is rife and the street plan does not lend itself to easy navigation. But if you want to tempt fate, the city is easily accessible from Rome on the A1. The Naples-Pompeii-Salerno road (A3) connects with the coastal road to Sorrento and the Amalfi Coast.

TRAIN

The main Naples train station is known as Stazione Centrale (sometimes called Stazione Garibaldi). Naples is the rail hub for the south, and regular trains for most

major Italian cities arrive and depart from Stazione Centrale. There are up to 30 fast trains daily to/from Rome (€10 to €20, two to three hours).

The Ferrovia Circumvesuviana operates trains for Herculaneum, Pompeii (€2.30, 35 minutes, hourly) and Sorrento (€3.20, one hour, hourly). The station is about 400m southwest of Stazione Centrale, on Corso G Garibaldi (take the underpass from Stazione Centrale). The Ferrovia Cumana and the Circumflegrea, based at Stazione Cumana in Piazza Montesanto, operate services to Pozzuoli, Baia and Cumae every 20 minutes.

Getting Around

You can make your way around Naples by bus, tram, metro and funicular. City **Unico Campania** (☎ 081 551 31 09; www.unicocampania.it) buses leave from Piazza Garibaldi for the centre of Naples and Mergellina. You can buy 'Giranapoli' tickets at bus stations and tobacconists. A ticket costs €1 and is valid for 1½ hours of unlimited public transport. A daily ticket is good value at €3. Campania ArteCards (p786) are also valid on all forms of public transport.

The main funicular connecting the city centre with Vomero is in Piazza Duca d'Aosta, next to Galleria Umberto I, on Via Toledo.

AROUND NAPLES Pompeii

Although former residents might not think so, the Mt Vesuvius explosion in AD 79 was one of the best things that ever happened to Roman archaeology. On 24 August, the world's most famous volcano erupted, leaving behind fascinating **ruins** (☎ 081 857 53 47; www.pompeisites.org; adult/concession €10/5, no credit cards; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-5pm Nov-Mar) that provide insight into the daily life of ancient Romans, perfectly preserved under 6m of volcanic ash. Pompeii was a resort town for the wealthy, and you can still walk its roads filled with impressive temples, a forum, an amphitheatre, apartments and a shopping district. The coolest/creepiest thing to see is the casts of the volcano's victims, created in 1863 by the director of excavations pouring plaster of Paris on top of incinerated bodies. The casts are so lifelike, you can

THE FIRST GRAFFITI

To learn the true history of Pompeii, it's best to hear it straight from Pompeians themselves. The eruption left behind walls and walls filled with graffiti, political inscriptions and for-sale signs. Here's a taste:

- The finances officer of the Emperor Nero says this food is poison.
- Celadus the Thracian gladiator is the delight of all the girls.
- Chie, I hope your haemorrhoids rub together so much that they hurt worse than they ever have before!
- Phileros is a eunuch!

see clothing folds, hair, even the expressions of terror on faces.

There is a **tourist office** (☎ 081 85 75 347; info pompeii@tin.it; Piazza Porta Marina Inferiore 12; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Sat) just outside the excavations at Porta Marina.

Catch the Ferrovia Circumvesuviana train from Naples (€2.30, 35 minutes, hourly) and get off at the Pompeii Scavi-Villa dei Misteri stop; the Porta Marina entrance is nearby.

CAPRI

pop 7270

The Emperor Tiberius recognised the innate beauty of this Bay of Naples island. After his stepfather, the Emperor Augustus, visited on holiday, Tiberius set up permanent residence on Capri in AD 27 and built 12 summer villas where he could engage in equal parts decadence, cruelty and debauchery. It's been an upscale summer holiday destination ever since, although shopping has replaced young boys as the object of visitors' orgiastic attention.

The island is easily reached via Naples and Sorrento on ferry or hydrofoil. Although hordes and hordes of tourists visit the island's two main towns – Capri and Anacapri – it's still a stunningly beautiful island with fantastic walking, a world-famous sea grotto and high-end holiday resorts and shopping.

Ferries stop at Marina Grande and buses head up to Capri and then Anacapri. Online information can be found at www.capri.it and www.capritourism.com. There

are also numerous **tourist offices** (☎ 8.30am-8.30pm summer, 9am-3pm Mon-Sat winter; Marina Grande ☎ 081 837 06 34; ☎ Capri 081 837 06 86; Piazza Umberto I; Anacapri ☎ 081 837 15 24; Piazza Vittoria 4) around the island. Contact **Rent an Electric Scooter** (☎ 081 83 75 863; Via Roma 68; per hr €10) if you want to...well, you know.

Sights & Activities

Although it's one of the world's biggest tourist attractions, Capri's **Blue Grotto** (admission €4; ☎ 9am-1hr before sunset, closed during rough seas) is actually a sparkingly magical sea cave that really shouldn't be missed. Try to visit early or late in the day to avoid the hordes of bus tourists. Boats leave to visit the cave from the Marina Grande and a return trip will cost €17, including the return motor boat to the grotto, rowing boat in, admission fee and singing captains; allow an hour for the trip. You'll save little money and spend more time if you catch a bus from either town, as you still have to pay for the rowing boat and admission.

The most interesting points on the island require visitors to leave their cars or tourist buses, ensuring a bit of quiet. From Marina Grande, take a walk along the architectural engineering feat of **Via Krupp**, built by a German industrialist as a series of hairpin turns hewn from the rock that wind their way (past the nudist spot Grotta dell'Arsenale) to the best viewpoint in all of Capri, the **Giardini d'Augusto**.

One hour up a walking trail, along Via Tiberio, is **Villa Jovis** (admission €2; ☎ 9am-1hr before sunset), the ruins of one of Tiberius' villas. It's a gorgeous walk along Via Matrimonia to the **Arco Naturale** – follow the spur trail, marked by splashes of paint, winding up the piney hillside. Near Anacapri, the resplendent **Villa San Michele** (☎ 081 837 14 01; Viale Axel Munthe; admission €5; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, closes 3.30pm Nov-Feb, 4.30pm Mar, 5pm Apr & Oct) is now a Swedish cultural foundation with a small museum of antiquities.

Sleeping

High-season prices can come into effect any time between 1 May and 30 September; most places stay open from March or April until October or November. Don't even think about arriving in mid-August unless you have a reservation and a wheel-

barrow full of cash, as prices shoot up on everything, even groceries.

Bussola di Hermes (☎ 081 838 2010; www.bussolahermes.com; Trav La Vigna 14, Anacapri; dm €26-28, d €70-115, tr €100-140, q €100-170, all incl breakfast; ☎) This place is a thousand times more than just a hotel. English-speaking Rita and her brother turned their father's farmhouse into 18 perfectly decorated inn rooms, plus eight dorm rooms, with touches such as hand-built Roman columns, local tile work and a dreamy rooftop terrace. A few 2nd-floor rooms have terraces and beautiful views and some of the tiny doubles are veritable steals, charging dorm prices. It's just outside Anacapri.

Albergo Stella Maris (☎ 081 837 04 52; Via Roma 27; s/d/tr €50/110/150) One of the least expensive places on Capri and a stone's throw from the centre of Capri town, it's as plain as could be, but it's central and open all year. All rooms have sea views.

Hotel La Minerva (☎ 081 837 03 74; www.laminervacapri.com; Via Occhio Marino; s €100, d €150-270, both incl breakfast; ☎) The more you pay here, the better your view gets, up to the superior double, which has sea views from the Jacuzzi. Crisp white rooms, majolica tile floors and individual bougainvillea-shaded terraces are just part of what make this a great deal. It's just off Via Camerelle, the main shopping strip in Capri.

Also available:

Hotel Loreley (☎ 081 837 14 40; www.loreley.it; Via G Orlandi 16, Anacapri; s/d/tr incl breakfast €85/125/150; ☎ Apr-Nov) A family-owned small hotel.

Eating

Pulalli Wine Bar (☎ 081 837 4108; Piazza Umberto I; dishes from €4; ☎ closed Tue & winter) Perched in the clock tower overlooking Capri's main piazza, this is the place in town to sip local wine and nosh on tapas, especially on the terrace during summer.

Barbarossa (☎ 081 837 1483; Porta 5, Anacapri; pizza €7, 1st/2nd courses €8/12) This is where the locals go when they want good pizza or simple pasta dishes.

La Capannina (☎ 081 83 78 899; Via Le Botteghe 12/14; pasta from €8) Metres away from Piazzetta di Capri (the main centre of Capri town) is this family-owned restaurant, Capri's most beloved for over 70 years. The island's fishermen supply the seafood daily, and the *ravioli alla caprese* (ravioli with basil, tomatoes and mozzarella) is a standout.

Capri's (☎ 081 837 71 08; Via Roma 38; pizza €7, 1st/2nd courses €10/16) Don't let the photo of Keanu Reeves scare you away. Sure, Giovanni will hit on the girls and charge you an astounding 12% service charge, but he makes up for it by serving home-grown herbs and *pomodorini* (baby tomatoes) from his garden. Take a peek out to sea from any table in the restaurant to watch as tomorrow's fish and to-die-for lobster gets reeled in.

Il Cucciolo (☎ 081 83 71 917; Trav Veterino 8; 1st/2nd courses €10/18; ☒ Mar-Oct) It's worth the hike (head towards the Blue Grotto from Anacapri) for the views of Naples and Mt Vesuvius, but the gastronomic views aren't half bad: including gorgeous *caprese* salads and seafood.

Getting There & Around

There are hydrofoils and ferries virtually every hour from Naples' Molo Beverello and Mergellina, especially in summer. In Naples, pick up the daily *Il Mattino* for sailing times. Several companies make the trip; see p791. Hydrofoils cost about €12 each way and take about 30 minutes; ferries cost €6 each way and take about 1½ hours. From Sorrento, ferries leave hourly in summer and cost about €5 (up to €11 for a hydrofoil or for the last ferry of the day). During summer, **Metro del Mare** (☎ 199 60 07 00; www.metrodelmare.com) runs ferries along the coast from Naples' Mergellina to Pompeii (€3.50, 45 minutes, three daily) and Sorrento (€4.50, one hour 35 minutes, five daily), and from Naples' Molo Beverello to Positano (€9, one hour 25 minutes, five daily) and on to Amalfi (€10, one hour 55 minutes, five daily).

Local buses connect the Marina Grande port with Capri, Anacapri and other points around the island, and run between the two main towns until just past midnight. The funicular takes passengers straight up the hill from Marina Grande to Capri town (but closes for the month of February). Tickets for the funicular and buses cost €1.30 each trip or €6.70 per daily ticket.

SORRENTO

pop 17,429

Perched on a cliff in the Bay of Naples and the jumping off point for the Amalfi Coast, Capri and Pompeii, Sorrento has been a busy seaside resort town for two

millennia. Sometimes, it feels like not one of these tourists has since left, especially in August. Despite its overcrowding, Sorrento remains a beautiful city with just enough elbow room to allow visitors to soak up its beauty.

Orientation

The centre of town is Piazza Tasso, a short walk from the train station along Corso Italia. If you arrive by boat at Marina Piccola, walk south along Via Marina Piccola then climb the 200 steps to reach the piazza. From the Circumvesuviana bus and train station, walk straight ahead to Corso Italia then head left 100m.

Information

Ospedale Civile (Hospital; ☎ 081 533 11 11; Corso Italia 1)

Police station (Questura; ☎ 081 807 44 33; Corso Italia 236)

Post office (Corso Italia 210)

Sorrento Service (☎ 081 807 55 70; Via S Paolo 5/7; Internet for 30min/1hr €3/5; ☒ 10am-10pm or later in summer, until 7pm or 8pm in winter, closed Mon) For Internet access. Also offers low international phone rates.

Tourist information office (☎ /fax 081 807 40 33; www.infosorrento.it; Via Luigi de Maio 35; ☒ 8.45am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, closes 4pm Jan-Feb) An excellent office inside the Circolo dei Forestieri complex. See also www.sorrentotourism.com.

Sleeping

Many places in Sorrento close during at least part of the low season, between November and March. All the places listed below are open year-round.

Nube d'Argento (☎ 081 878 13 44; www.nube.dargento.com; Via del Capo 21; per person/car €10/6, per tent €6-10; ☒ ☒) This camping ground is tucked into a sea of olive trees 1km from Piazza Tasso and 200m from the beach. You'll feel as luxurious as those at the grand hotels as you admire the sea view from the pool or dine on brick-oven-baked pizza. There are also bungalows available (from €50 for two people in the low season to €150 for six people in August).

Ostello delle Sirene (☎ 081 877 13 91; Via degli Aranci 160; dm/s/d €16/40/60; ☒) This hostel (the only one) seems like a business afterthought to the popular smoky bar next door. Rickety metal beds, no common room to speak of, and a rumbling train right outside your

window make this a good option for the price only. The Internet here costs €2.60 for 30 minutes.

Hotel Pensione Linda (☎ 081 878 29 16; Via degli Aranci 125; s/d/tr €35/60/80) Hosting Hostel Sirene refugees for over a decade now, Linda's is a clean and comfortable one-star alternative with a helpful owner. Ask for a back room.

La Magnolia (☎ 081 877 35 60; www.magnolia.sorrento.it; Via Caruso 14; s €50-90, d €70-120, tr €80-140; ☒ ☒) Slip through an ancient locked gateway and pass the private citrus garden to enjoy your oasis, just steps from the excitement of Piazza Tasso. Rooms have inlaid Sorrentine wood furniture, satellite TV and a refrigerator. No breakfast salon means breakfast (€6) will be delivered to your room. Pity.

Bellevue Syrene 1820 (☎ 081 878 10 24; www.bellevue.it; Piazza della Vittoria 5; r incl breakfast €220-420; ☒ ☒ ☒) Built on top of the ruins of a Roman villa, the Bellevue was transformed into a hotel in, you guessed it, 1820, when Empress Eugenia of France stayed for three months, probably admiring the expansive view the entire time. All sorts of extras – private beach access, live outdoor concerts, excellent concierge services, terrace restaurant, bicycle rentals, even a cigar bar – make this a standout location.

Eating

Fauno Bar (☎ 081 87 81 135; Piazza Tasso 13/14/15; small dishes from €4) The central meeting point of Sorrentines for generations, this place serves good-value small meals, mouth-wateringly gorgeous pastries and *gelato*, right on the main square for ample people-watching.

La Fenice (☎ 081 878 16 52; Via degli Aranci 11; pizza €5, 1st/2nd courses €7/14) Rightfully popular, this pretty spot serves delicious fresh seafood and good pizzas.

La Basilica Ristorante Pizzeria (☎ 081 877 47 90; Via Sant' Antonino; pizza €6, 1st/2nd courses €8/13; ☒ 11am-11pm) An absolutely enormous dining room by Italian standards, this pizzeria is busy and boisterous, and packed with locals who flock for the seafood dishes.

Sisa Supermercato (☎ 081 807 44 65; Via degli Arancia 157) Located just past the hostel and Pensione Linda, this is Sorrento's largest supermarket.

Getting There & Away

Circumvesuviana trains run every 30 minutes between Sorrento and Naples via Pompeii and Ercolano. At least 12 SITA buses a day leave from outside the train station for the Amalfi Coast, first stopping in Positano (€1.30, one hour) and then Amalfi (€2.40, 1½ hours). Hydrofoils and ferries leave from the port at Marina Piccola for Capri (€5.80, one hour 20 minutes, at least five daily, double in summer).

AMALFI COAST

'Dramatic scenery' doesn't do justice to the 50km of sheer rock cliff that is the Amalfi Coast. Villages are impossibly perched in-between crags, and ancient terraced farming shows off the area's abundant citrus groves and flowers. As one of the most popular tourist destinations in Italy, you won't have this scenery to yourself, not even in the dead of winter, but the magical landscape is worth it.

There are tourist offices in the individual towns. For itinerary planning, www.amalficoast.com is useful.

Getting There & Away

SITA buses head from Sorrento to Positano (€1.30) and Amalfi (€2.40). For Amalfi, the bus stops at the intersection of Via C Colombo and the SS163; you can walk into town from there. The buses run every other hour during winter and about hourly in summer.

The narrow, spectacular and tortuous coastal road is clogged with traffic in summer; be prepared for delays and incredibly tight squeezes around tour buses. Things are a little quieter at other times. **Sorrento Rentacar** (☎ 081 878 13 86; Corso Italia 210a, Sorrento) rents scooters and cars.

Hydrofoils and ferries leave Naples and Sorrento for the Amalfi Coast.

Positano

pop 3900

With its Moorish flair and colourful houses, Positano is the most photographed, fashionable and expensive town on the coast. The town centre – more steps than streets – is filled with boutiques selling 'wearable art', perfect for that quirky ceramics teacher aunt of yours. The hills behind the town are full of wonderful walks; pick up a hiking

map at the **tourist office** (☎ 089 87 50 67; Via del Saracino 4; ☎) 3.30-8pm in front of the Santa Maria della Assunta church.

Hostel Brikette (☎ 089 87 58 57; www.brikette.com; Via Marconi 358; dm/d with shared bathroom from €22/65, d/tr from €75/120, all incl breakfast; ☎) After you have your breakfast of homemade pastries and freshly brewed coffee on the sea-view terrace, it's just a quick stroll to the beach, town or coastal bus from here. At night you can hang out in the brand-new Mediterranean rock-hewn bar.

Villa Maria Antonietta (☎ 089 87 50 71; Via C Colombo 41; r incl breakfast €80-100) Started as the first rental accommodation in Positano 50 years ago by the current owner's grandmother, all seven of the recently remodelled rooms here are situated alongside a flower-filled terrace and have sea views.

Villa Rosa (☎ 089 81 19 55; www.villarosapositano.it; Via C Colombo 127; d incl breakfast €160) Each room in this small, family-run villa has impeccable sea views from the terrace, where you can enjoy breakfast (or room service) from their Caffè Positano restaurant.

Il Saraceno d'Oro (☎ 089 81 20 50; Viale Pasitea 254; pizza €6, 1st/2nd courses €8/13; ☎ Mar-Oct) This is a popular eatery with decent pizzas and exceptional profiteroles, with the added bonus of homemade *limoncello* (lemon liqueur) after your meal.

Caffè Positano (☎ 089 87 50 82; Viale Pasitea 168/170; 1/2 courses €11/18) Artists, tourists and romantics head here to drink, talk and dine in the sumptuous indoor rooms or under the stars on the terrace. For a truly romantic evening, make a reservation for one of the semi-private terraces.

AROUND POSITANO

Hikers will love the classic **Sentiero degli Dei** (Path of the Gods; five to 5½ hours) – ask at the tourist office for more information. For a shorter option, head to **Nocelle**, a tiny village above Positano, accessible by walking track from the stairs near Bar Internazionale. Have lunch at **Trattoria Santa Croce** (☎ 089 81 12 60; pastas from €6; ☎ lunch & dinner spring-autumn), with panoramic views. Nocelle is also accessible by local bus from Positano via Montepertuso.

Just south of Positano is the town of **Praiano**, less scenic but with the only camping ground on the Amalfi Coast. **La Tranquillità** (☎ 089 87 40 84; www.continental.praiano.it; Via Roma

21; 2 people & tent €39, bungalow €90) has many sleeping options, and the SITA bus stops outside.

Amalfi pop 5528

A maritime superpower during the 11th century, Amalfi is now a legendary tourist resort. Despite being packed to the gills in summer, the town retains an appealing vibe. In the centre is an impressive **Duomo** (☎ 089 87 10 59; Piazza del Duomo; admission free; ☎) 9am-7pm Apr-Jun, 9am-9pm Jul-Sep, 9.30am-5.15pm Oct & Mar, 10am-1pm & 2.30-4.30pm Nov-Feb) and nearby is **Grotta dello Smeraldo** (admission €5; ☎) 9am-4pm), a rival to Capri's Blue Grotto. This is excellent walking terrain. The **tourist office** (☎ 089 87 11 07; Corso Roma 19; ☎) 8.30am-1.30pm & 3-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) can provide details.

SLEEPING & EATING

A'Scalinatella Hostel (☎ 089 87 14 92; www.hos.telscalinatella.com; Piazza Umberto I 5, Atrani; dm/d with shared bathroom €21/60, d €83, all incl breakfast) Just 1km west of Amalfi proper is this comfortable and quiet hostel with kitchen and laundry facilities, and a small breakfast included.

Albergo Lidomare (☎ 089 87 13 32; www.lidomare.it; Largo Duchi Piccolomini 9; s €45-60, d €70-120, tr €80-130, q €90-140, all incl breakfast; ☎) A great deal, this well-outfitted 15-room hotel offers modern conveniences – satellite TV, mini-bar, jet showers or Jacuzzis, towel warmers – plus seaside resort atmosphere, including terraces, a 14th-century building and antique furnishings.

Residence del Duca (☎ 089 87 36 365; www.residencedelduca.it; Via Mastalo II Duca 3; d incl breakfast €70-180 depending on season; ☎) Once you've made it up the tricky staircase here, you'll be rewarded with the best deal in Amalfi: petite palatial rooms, romantic terraces and a few rooms with private balconies. The original building dates back to the 900s and the rooms are styled after a 16th-century duke's palace.

Pizzeria al Teatro (Via E Marini 19; pizza €5, 1st/2nd courses €8/13; ☎) closed Nov-Mar) You'll find good local dishes and a welcoming ambience here. Follow the signs to the left from Via Pietro Capuana, the main shopping street.

Trattoria San Giuseppe (Salita Ruggero II 4; pizza €5, 1st/2nd courses €9/14) This is a tasty, family-run joint hidden away in Amalfi's maze-

like alleyways; follow the signs from Via Lorenzo d'Amalfi.

MATERA

pop 57,315

At first glance, Matera doesn't seem real. It is one of the oldest continuously inhabited places on earth. Prehistoric caves are just across the river from the 'newer' town, where residents and their farm animals shared caves without running water or electricity up until a few years before humans landed on the moon. The caves – known as *sassi* – are a Unesco World Heritage site and, more recently, provided the setting for Mel Gibson's bloodbath *The Passion of the Christ*, being the closest thing to ancient Jerusalem.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0835 33 18 17; www.matera.turismo.it; Via Spine Bianche 22; ☎) 9am-1pm & 4-6.30pm Mon-Sat, open Tue-Thu afternoon only in winter) has plenty of *sassi* maps.

Even people who've never considered hiring a guide might want to pool resources with a few other travellers and hire a local guide through **Sassi Tourism** (☎ 0835 31 94 58; half & full-day from €35), as many of the prehistoric caves and churches are extremely difficult to reach without a car and knowledgeable local guide (some of whose parents grew up in the *sassi*).

Sights & Activities

Within Matera proper there are two *sassi* areas to discover, **Barisano** and **Caveoso**. Soon after Carlo Levi wrote his famous book *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1945), about poor living conditions in southern Italy, the Italian government considered the malaria-ridden area a national embarrassment and began to move citizens to the modern part of town. Now, tourists and artists are flocking to the area, and even a hi-tech firm has moved in.

In the Caveoso area, the churches of **Santa Maria d'Ildris** (☎) 10am-1.30pm & 2.30pm-6.30pm) and **Santa Lucia alle Malve** (☎) 10am-1.30pm & 2.30pm-6.30pm) have a plethora of history, with well-preserved Byzantine frescoes dating from the 1250s. In this complex is the **Casa-Grotta di Vico Solitario** (Sasso Caveoso; admission €1.50; ☎) 9am-8.30pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb), set up to show family life 40 years ago, when a family of 10 might have shared one cave with a donkey and several pigs, but with no running water or electricity (which might have contributed to the infant mor-

tality rate of over 50%). Contact **Sassi Tourism** (☎ 0835 31 94 58; admission adult/child 1 church €2.50/1, 3 churches €5/2, 5 churches €6/3) to purchase tickets or, alternatively, pick them up at any one of the five churches on the Circuito Urbano di Chiese Rupestri.

The **Murgia Plateau**, which you can see from the *sassi*, is filled with dozens of Palaeolithic caves and monastic developments; it needs to be explored with a guide.

Sleeping

All hotels listed are in the *sassi*.

Le Monacelle (☎ 0835 34 40 97; www.lemonacelle.it; Via Riscatto 9/10; dm/s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €16/55/86/95/135; ☎) This former monastery is also a cultural centre, and guests are invited to take part in the outdoor concerts during summer. Rooms are decorated in monastic-chic style: simple, quiet and comfortable. The building is centrally located and has wi-fi.

Sassi Hotel (☎ 0835 33 10 09; www.hotelsassi.it; Via San Giovanni Vecchio 89; dm/s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €16/60/87/120/140; ☎). Hotel rooms here are set within the Barisano caves; each one has a view of the *sassi*, and some have a private terrace. The two dorm rooms have been recently refurbished.

Sant'Angelo (☎ 0835 31 40 10; www.hotelsantangelo.sassi.it; Rione Pianelle, Piazza di San Pietro Caveoso; s/d incl breakfast €90/120; ☎) Who has not wondered what it would be like to sleep in a cave? Undeniably unique for a four-star hotel, each room here was once a *sassi* home. Guest rooms have nicks in the wall that used to hold the donkey pen gates or cooking implements. Satellite TVs, grand furnishings and spa-like bathrooms allow for a bit of time travel, but without requiring the proper vaccinations.

Also available:
Torre B&B (☎ 349 162 14 01; Via Ospedale Vecchio; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €45/65/80/95, apt for up to 6 people €180) Rooms tucked inside a fascinating private *sassi* home.

Residence San Pietro Barisano (☎ 0835 34 61 91; www.residence.sanpietrobarisano.it; Rione San Biagio 52; s/d incl breakfast €75/110; ☎) Also a restaurant, blends modern with ancient.

Eating & Drinking

Ginger Caffè (☎ 0835 33 53 07; Via Lucana 54) With a great neighbourhood atmosphere, the draw here is the *aperitivo* – buy a €5 drink and

snack on a full meal's worth of delicious homemade savouries.

Il Terrazzino (☎ 0835 33 25 03; Vico San Giuseppe 7, off Piazza V Veneto; set menu €14) For a visual and gastronomic treat during summer, eat on the terrace here overlooking the *sassi*. Try their invention: *orecchiette al tegamino* (homemade ear-shaped pasta bubbling in a tomato- and cheese-filled dish; €6).

Fresh-produce market (Via A Persio) This is a daily market, just south of Piazza Vittoria Veneto.

Getting There & Away

Matera is most easily reached by long-distance bus or the private train Ferrovie Appulo Lucane, which runs hourly from Bari (€4, one hour 20 minutes). From Bari Centrale station, turn left out of the main entrance and enter the bright yellow building on the corner to catch the train to Matera. Catch a Marozzi bus between Rome's Stazione Tiburtina and Matera (€30, five hours, one daily). Buy tickets at **Biglietteria Manicone** (☎ 0835 332 86 21; Piazza Matteotti 3; ☎ 6-9am, 11am-12.15pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 5-7pm Sat).

BRINDISI

pop 90,020

Let's face it: no one is coming to Brindisi except to catch a ferry. Despite its shady reputation, there are worse places you could find yourself for the day. There's a hostel, several Internet cafés and decent restaurants, and even a fascinating history, as Brindisi was the final port for Crusaders on the Apian Way.

From the train station, walk straight out onto Corso Umberto I towards the fountain to reach the historic centre. For the free shuttle bus to Costa Morena port (from where the Greece- and Turkey-bound ferries leave), the tourist office or the restaurants listed following, veer slightly left from the fountain facing the sea on Corso Garibaldi until you reach Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. For the ferries to Albania, continue from there and veer right onto Via del Mare.

While in town, check your email, grab a snack or play video games at **Tetris** (☎ 0831 59 09 54; Via Bastioni S Giorgio 20/22; per 20 min €1; ☎ 10.30-12am Mon-Sat, 4pm-12am Sun in Nov-Feb), or stop by the **tourist office** (☎ 0831 52 30 72; www.brindisiweb.com or www.pugliaturismo.com; Viale Regina

Margherita 44; ☎ 8am-10pm Jun-Sep, 8am-1.30pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Sat Nov-Feb), which is an attraction in itself, housed in an old Crusader palace from the 11th century.

Carpe Diem (☎ 0831 418 418, 338 323 5545; www.hostelcarpediem.it; Via Nicola Brandi 2; camping per person €5, dm/s/d incl breakfast €15/25/40, day use €6; ☎) For day use or to overnight, stop into this well-serviced hostel. You can forgive the less-than-spotless bathrooms for all the extras, including free pick-up and drop off at the port, airport, train station or downtown (or take bus 3 from downtown), and laundry facilities (wash and dry €6). There's no kitchen to use, but Maurizio serves big plates of communal pasta for lunch and dinner (€6). Internet costs €1.50 for 15 minutes.

Albergo Venezia (☎ 0831 527 511; Via Pisanelli 4, off Piazza Mercato; s/d/tr/q with shared bathroom €16/26/48/60) With prices like these and located just 200m from the free shuttle bus, keep your expectations low and you'll do fine here.

For a good and filling lunch, visit Amalia's kitchen at **Trattoria Pizzeria Regina** (☎ 0831 568 693; Largo Guglielmo da Brindisi 28; pizza from €3, set menu €10), where Amalia cooks up delicious four-course meals and pizzas single-handedly.

Getting There & Away

Appia Travel (☎ 0831 52 16 84; Viale Regina Margherita 8-9) sells bus tickets for Rome (€36, nine hours). There are rail connections to major cities in northern Italy, as well as to Bari, Lecce, Ancona, Naples and Rome, and you can fly to/from Rome, Naples, Milan, Bologna and Pisa from Brindisi's small airport, **Papola Casale** (BDS; ☎ 0831 41 21 41).

BOAT

Ferries, all of which take vehicles and have snack bars and sleeping cabins or berths, leave Brindisi for Greek destinations, including Corfu (10 to 15 hours), Igoumenitsa (nine to 12 hours) and Patra (15 to 20 hours). Boats also service Albania (daily) and Turkey (seasonal).

Most ferry companies operate only in summer. All have offices at Costa Morena, and the major ones also have offices in town along Corso Garibaldi.

Hellenic Mediterranean Lines (HML; ☎ 0831 52 85 31; www.hml.gr; Corso Garibaldi 8)

Blue Star Ferries (☎ 0831 56 22 00; www.bluestarferries.com; Corso Garibaldi 65)

Italian Ferries (☎ 0831 59 08 40; www.italianferries.it; Corso Garibaldi 96)

Agoudimos (☎ 0831 52 14 08; www.agoudimos-lines.com; Via Anime 23)

The largest, most expensive and most reliable of the lines, HML also officially accepts Eurail and Inter-Rail passes, entitling you to travel free in deck class (paying a €15 supplement in July and August). If you intend to use your pass, it is best to reserve in advance in summer.

The port tax is €6, payable when you buy your ticket. Check in at least two hours before departure or risk losing your reservation. To get to the port of Costa Morena from the train station, take the free Portabagagli bus, a large white minibus that runs between town and the port every hour when ferries are running.

Check prices and availability at www.traghettonline.net or www.ferries.gr for destinations in Greece.

LECCE

pop 97,462

This sparkling little city hosts an astonishing array of baroque architecture; the effect is of a crazy but delightful architect gone a bit mad. Unabashedly opulent, the local style is known to Italians as *barocco leccese* (Lecce baroque), and Lecce is oft referred to as the 'Florence of the South'. The university town exudes a sassy charm and supports a vibrant bar scene at weekends. It's also home to a high population of lawyers, but don't let that discourage you from visiting this elegant surprise.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0832 24 80 92; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 24; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 9am-1pm Mon-Fri & 4-7pm Tue & Thu Oct-Jun) is near Piazza Duomo. The historic centre is a five-minute walk from the train station, or take bus 1, 2 or 4 from the station to Viale Marconi.

Sights

Lecce's baroque style is most famously on display at the **Basilica della Santa Croce** (☎ 0832 24 19 57; Via Umberto I; admission free; ☎ 8am-1pm & 4-7.30pm). A team of artists worked throughout the 16th and 17th centuries to decorate the building and its extraordinarily ornate

façade. In the **Piazza del Duomo** are the 12th-century **cathedral** (admission free; ☎ 6.30am-noon & 4-6.30pm), completely restored in baroque style by Giuseppe Zimbalo, and its 70m-high **bell tower**; the 15th-century **Palazzo Ves-covile** (Bishop's Palace); and the **Seminario**, with its elegant façade and baroque well in the courtyard. The piazza is particularly beautiful at night, illuminated by floodlights. In **Piazza Sant'Oronzo** you can stroll across a bridge spanning the remains of a 2nd-century-AD **Roman amphitheatre**.

Sleeping

Hotel Cappello (☎ 0832 30 88 81; Via Montegrappa 4; s/d €35/50; ☎) The only nonbusiness hotel option in Lecce, the Cappello is plain but centrally located.

Centro Storico (☎ 0832 24 28 28; www.bedandbreakfast.lecce.it; Via Vignes 2/b; s/d with shared bathroom incl breakfast €35/57, ste €80; ☎) This hotel has a lovely solarium and library. It's run by the same family and in the same building as **Azzurretta B&B** (☎ 338 258 59 58; www.bblecte.it; in Italian; Via Vignes 2; s/d incl breakfast €35/63), where the rooms have kitchenettes.

Sweet Place (☎ 338 87 10 295; sweet.place@fisicaonline.net; Via Frante d'Aragone 17b; s/d €35/60) An aptly named B&B run by a sweet family, you get an entire apartment to yourself here, complete with TV, hydro-massage shower and fully equipped kitchen.

B&B Prestige (☎ 0832 24 33 53; www.bbprestige-lecce.it; Via S Maria del Paradiso; s/d/tr incl breakfast €70/80/110; ☎ closed mid-Feb) On the 3rd floor of a 16th-century *palazzo*, this gem has elegantly furnished and balconied rooms, a roof garden and a hip owner.

Eating and Drinking

Il Giardino dei Mocenigo (☎ 0832 30 11 08; Via dei Mocenigo 15; 1st/2nd courses €5.50/13) A covered terrace and pasta starting at €4 make this busy restaurant a good choice.

Trattoria Casereccia (☎ 0832 24 51 78; Via Colonnello Costadura 19; pasta from €6; ☎ closed Mon) This family-run favourite serves home cooking at good value prices.

Picton (☎ 0832 33 23 83; Via Idomeno 14; 1st/2nd courses €9/16; ☎ closed Mon) Bathed in local tradition, this is the place to try local Lecce cuisine. A cosy stone fireplace and subterranean cantina add to the atmosphere, while fresh pasta and fish dishes deliver good quality.

Torre di Merlino (☎ 0832 24 18 74; Vico del Tufo; ☎ from 8pm) The historic centre hosts a plethora of picturesque little bars; this is one of the better ones. It serves over 400 wines and dozens of meats and cheeses, which you can sample on a mixed plate (€14 to €20).

Getting There & Away

Lecce is the end of the main southeastern train line and there are trains to Brindisi (€2.30, 35 minutes, hourly), Bari (€8.60 to €12.20, two hours, hourly), Rome (€44.20, seven hours, six daily), Naples (€35.90, six hours) and Bologna (€53, 8½ hours), as well as to points throughout Puglia.

SICILY

Sicily is at once wholeheartedly Italian, but universally distinct. It witnessed cultural diversity 2000 years before the term became fashionable, and continues to see an influx of immigrants from all around the Mediterranean and beyond. The island the Italian boot seems poised to drop-kick into the Mediterranean has been occupied by dozens of invading forces for the past three millennia, all of whom left their architectural, cultural and gastronomic mark. Go one step in any direction on the largest island in the Mediterranean, and find the scars of domination: Greek temples, Arab domes, Byzantine mosaics, Norman castles, Angevin churches and baroque architecture.

Sicily's landscape is dominated by Mt Etna (3350m) on the east coast, laced with fertile citrus groves, fringed with dazzling coastline, and has a vast plateau at its heart. Although cacti cover the southern ridges, snow is not uncommon at higher elevations and can linger on Mt Etna until June. The winters are quite mild but the summers relentlessly hot. Spring and autumn are the best seasons to visit, to avoid crowds, rain and oppressive humidity.

Most ferries from Italy arrive at Sicily's capital, Palermo. If you're short on time, spend an awestruck day in Palermo looking at the sites and museums while dodging lawless drivers, and then hit Taormina to wander its chic streets and fab beaches, Syracuse for the ancient island-cum-tourist-

resort of Ortygia, or Agrigento's marvelously kept Greek ruins and museum.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Flights from all over mainland Italy and from major European cities land at **Palermo** (PMO; ☎ 091 70 20 111; www.gesap.it) and **Catania** (CTA), including the main Italian airline **Alitalia** (☎ 00 39 06 22 22; www.alitalia.com). Low-cost carriers **Meridiana** (☎ 199 111 333; www.meridiana.it) and **Air One** (☎ 199 20 70 80; www.flyairone.it) both fly into Palermo and Catania.

BOAT

Sicily is accessible by ferry from Genoa, Livorno, Naples, Reggio di Calabria and Cagliari, and also from Malta and Tunisia. The main companies servicing the Mediterranean are **Tirrenia** (☎ 199 12 31 99; www.tirrenia.it), **Grimaldi** (☎ 091 58 74 04; www.grimaldi.it) and **Grandi Navi Veloci** (☎ 091 58 79 39; www.gnv.it). **SNAV** (☎ in Palermo 091 58 60 66, in Naples 081 761 23 48; www.snv.com) runs a summer ferry between Naples and Palermo. Prices vary by season and are highest from July to September. Timetables vary, so check with any Italian travel agency or on the Web at www.traghettonline.net. Book well in advance during summer, particularly if you have a car.

For information on ferries going from the mainland directly to the Aeolian Islands, see p805.

BUS

Direct bus services between Rome and Sicily are operated by **SAIS** (☎ 091 616 60 28; www.saistrasporti.it, in Italian) and **Interbus** (☎ 0935 56 51 11; www.interbus.it, in Italian), departing from Rome's Piazza Tiburtina. Buses service Messina (€27, 9¼ hours), Catania (€30, 11 hours), Palermo (€35, 12 hours) and Syracuse (€32.50, 11½ hours).

TRAIN

Taking a train to Sicily takes a bit of extra time because of the strait crossing to Messina, but you don't pay extra for the ferry. For train information, call **Trenitalia** (☎ 89 20 21; ☎ 7am-9pm).

Getting Around

The island has good bus and train services. Buses are quite regular and reliable between larger towns. All of the towns listed

in this chapter have good train connections as well. The coastal train services between Messina and Palermo and from Messina to Syracuse vary from efficient and reliable to delayed and unpredictable, as does the run between Palermo and Agrigento.

The roads can vary dramatically, from winding single lanes to vast *autostrade* (highway).

PALERMO

pop 680,000

Palermo is chaotic, traffic-laden and densely packed, but makes up for it with some of the most unique restaurants in Italy, dozens of once-grand palaces and a frenetic pace that will enliven even the most ho-hum of visitor.

It might not be the most tranquil place, but the striations of history make it a fascinating destination. Palermo has been conquered countless times by countless forces – Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Spaniards, Arabs, Normans, Byzantines, Savoy, Austrians et al – making the city feel like it's been shaken in a cultural, gastronomic and architectural snow globe for 2800 years and spewed out willy-nilly along a harbour. As a result it seems many residents are too exhausted to pay attention to stop signs or traffic rules, but it also means that visitors brave enough to navigate the congested streets will be rewarded with a living history lesson.

Orientation

Palermo's historic core is large but easily manageable on foot, which is lucky, as driving here equates with a death wish. You can walk from the ferry terminal or train station to any hotel listed here within 20 minutes. The main historic sights radiate out from the 'four corners' intersection (Quattro Canti).

Information

Citysightseeing Palermo (☎ 091 58 94 29; www.palermo.city-sightseeing.it; adult/child €15/7.50) One ticket buys 24 hours, enabling two separate days of sightseeing. Begins in front of Teatro Politeamo.

Lo Cascio Night Pharmacy (☎ 091 616 21 17; Via Roma 1; ☎ all night, closed 1-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun) Just in front of the train station.

Ospedale Civico (Hospital; ☎ 091 666 11 11; Via Carmelo Lazzaro)

Palazzo del Poste (Post Office; ☎ 091 753 11 11; Via Roma 322)

Police station (Questura; ☎ theft & lost documents 091 21 01 11, foreigners' office 091 651 43 30; Piazza della Vittoria; ☎ 24hr)

Pronto Soccorso (☎ 091 655 37 29) First aid.

Sun Fone Center (☎ 091 617 23 12; Via Maqueda 125; Internet per hr €2; ☎ 9am-11pm) For Internet and cheap international phone rates.

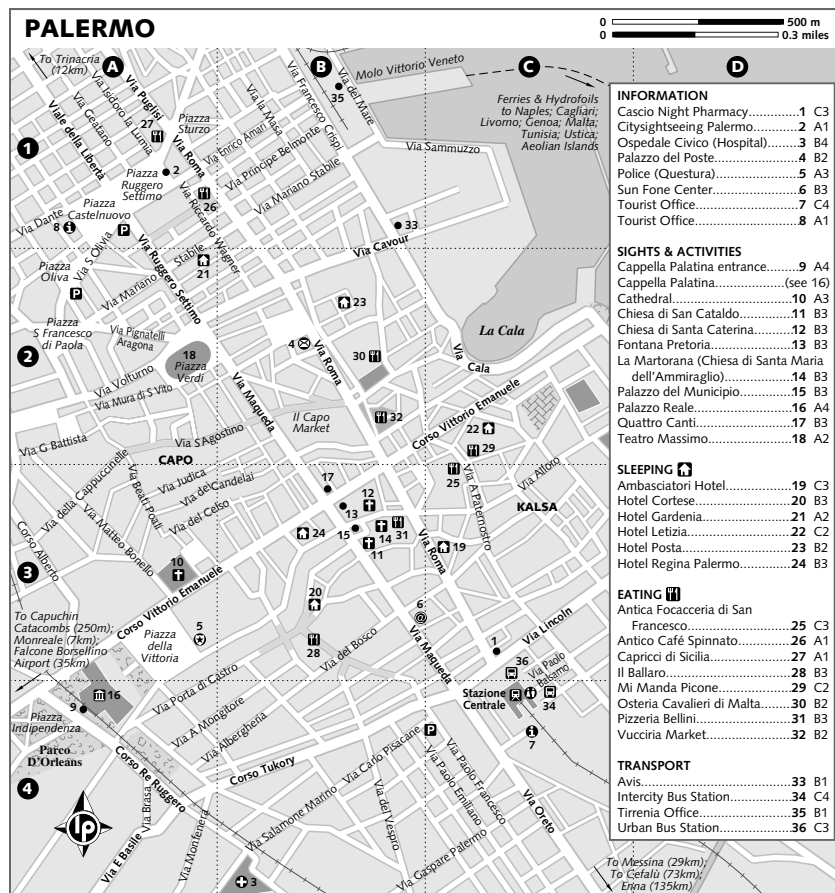
Tourist offices (www.palermotourism.com); Piazza Castelnuovo 34 (☎ 091 60 58 351; ☎ 8.30am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri); Stazione Centrale (☎ 091 616 59 14; ☎ 8.30am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri); airport (☎ 091 59 16 98; ☎ 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 8am-8pm Sat) All are exceedingly helpful. Pick up a copy of *Agenda*, which lists everything you could possibly need: bus times and prices, museum hours and prices, local trips.

Sights

The intersection of Corso Vittorio Emanuele and Via Maqueda marks the **Quattro Canti**, the historic centre of Palermo where the four city districts converge. On each corner stands a building decorated with baroque sculptures commissioned by the Spanish viceroy when Palermo was under Spain's control. Nearby, Piazza Pretoria houses the beautifully ornate **Fontana Pretoria**, one of the only examples of Renaissance art in the entire city, brought from Florence in the 16th century. For a striking example of baroque domes, check out the **Chiesa di Santa Caterina**, and the **Palazzo del Municipio** (town hall).

Around the corner, in Piazza Bellini, you'll find Palermo's top wedding spot, the famous church **La Martorana** (Chiesa di Santa Maria dell'Ammiraglio; ☎ 091 616 1692; admission free; ☎ 8am-1pm & 3.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1pm Sun), with a striking Arab-Norman bell tower and stunning Byzantine mosaic interior. Next door is the red-domed **Chiesa di San Cataldo**, which meshes Arab and Norman styles.

Perhaps the creepiest place in...oh, just about the entire world, is the **Capuchin Catacombs** (☎ 091 21 21 17; Piazza Cappuccini 1; admission €2; ☎ 9am-12pm & 3-5pm), where there's an entire underground catacomb filled with skeletal remains and mummified bodies of Palermitans. The first underground, ahem, residents were Capuchin monks in 1599. Bodies are preserved so well here – some with arsenic or lime, others by 'straining' the body dry and then preserving it in



vinegar – that you can still see hair, skin and eyeballs. Just to make it more macabre, some mummies hang along the wall fully dressed and there's a 'virgin' room dedicated to unmarried young girls.

In Piazza Verdi is the grand neoclassical **Teatro Massimo** (☎ 800 655 858; www.teatromassimo.it, in Italian; guided tours adult/concession €3/2; 🕒 10am–3.30pm Tue–Sun except on rehearsal days). It took over 20 years to complete and, in 1897, opened to celebrate the unification of Italy. The theatre has become a symbol of the triumph and tragedy of Palermo itself; appropriately, the closing scene of *The Godfather III* was filmed here.

The huge **cathedral** (☎ 091 33 43 73; Corso Vittorio Emanuele; admission free; 🕒 9.30am–5.30pm),

modified many times over the centuries, is a good example of Sicily's unique Arab-Norman style. At Piazza Indipendenza is **Palazzo Reale**, also known as the Palazzo dei Normanni, now the seat of the Sicilian parliament. Step inside and downstairs to see the **Cappella Palatina** (☎ 091 705 48 79; admission free; 🕒 8.30am–noon & 2–4.30pm Mon–Sat, 8.30am–2pm & 3–4.45pm Sun & holidays), a truly jaw-dropping example of Arab-Norman architecture, designed by Roger II in 1130 and lavishly decorated with exquisite mosaics. King Roger's former bedroom, **Sala di Ruggero** (☎ 091 705 43 17; admission free; 🕒 9am–noon Mon, Fri & Sat), is adorned with 12th-century mosaics; you can only visit the room with a guide (free).

Sleeping

Trinacria (☎/fax 091 53 05 90; www.campingtrinacria.it; Via Barcarello 25; per person/camp site €4.50/7.50) The area's best camping is 12 km northwest of Palermo, at Sferracavallo, by the sea. Catch bus 628 from Piazzale Alcide de Gasperi, reached by bus 101 or 107 from the station.

Hotel Regina Palermo (☎ 091 611 42 16; www.hotelreginapalermo.com; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 316; s/d with shared bathroom €23/42, d/tr incl breakfast €52/72)

Just past Quattro Canti on the main street is this great value hotel. All rooms come with heating, fan and TV. Street noise can be an issue, so bring earplugs.

Hotel Cortese (☎ 091 33 17 22; www.hotelcortese.net; Via Scarparelli; s/d/tr €35/60/80, s/d with shared bathroom €30/50; 🚿 🚰 🚰) Near the chaotic open markets of Ballaró is this adorable hotel, housed in a 1700s villa. Enjoy the great towels, clean shared bathrooms, small shared terrace and large buffet breakfast (€4).

Hotel Gardenia (☎ 091 3227 61; www.hotelgardenia.palermo.it; Via Mariano Stabile 136; s/d/tr €65/90/130; 🚿 🚰) All rooms at this two-star hotel are sound-proofed and have DSL lines and modest private terraces.

Ambasciatori Hotel (☎ 091 610 66 881; www.ambasciatorihotelpalermo.com; 5th fl, Via Roma 111; s/d/tr/€60/100/110/125; 🚿 🚰 🚰) This hotel's main charm is its 6th-floor rooftop terrace, where you can have breakfast or just admire the bird's-eye view. The young English-speaking staff is helpful and the shower's strong water pressure is a welcome respite after a day in Palermo. Internet costs €3 per 15 minutes.

Hotel Posta (☎ 091 58 73 38; www.hotelpostapalermo.it; Via Gagini 77; s/d/tr incl breakfast €85/112/145; 🚿 🚰 🚰) Clean bathrooms and large sleeping quarters make this a good choice. Near the post office it's been a mainstay for artists for several decades. You can get on the Net for €0.10 per minute.

Hotel Letizia (☎ 091 58 91 10; www.hotelletizia.com; Via dei Bottai 30; s/d/tr incl breakfast €85/134/155; 🚰) One of Palermo's sweetest inns, this place also seamlessly doubles as a business hotel. Thirteen pretty rooms come with wood floors and an airy ambience; there's also a cheery reading nook and a breakfast terrace (but no lift).

Eating

Palermo became a crossroads of cuisine 3000 years ago, when it was a market city dedicated to trading spices between East

and West, and has been perfecting its cooking ever since. Even Homer sang the praises of the island's vegetable produce back in *The Odyssey*, and many classic Sicilian dishes come from the Saracen/Arab influence from the 800s, including pasta and ice cream.

Locals dine late and restaurants rarely open for dinner before 8.30pm.

Antico Café Spinnato (☎ 091 58 32 31; Via Principe Belmonte 107-15) This elegant pastry shop has been serving its loyal clientele since 1860. The cakes are works of art, the *gelato* heavenly and the shaded outdoor tables ideal for a coffee *granita* (slushy iced dessert).

Capricci di Sicilia (☎ 091 32 77 77; Via Istituto Pignatelli 6; 2nd courses from €7) Once a puppet theatre, this cosy restaurant serves typical Sicilian fare, with an excellent selection of antipasto; it's always whirring with locals, so make a reservation in summer.

Osteria Cavalieri di Malta (☎ 091 58 65 95; Vicolo Pantelleria 30; 1st/2nd courses €7/10; 🕒 closed Wed) Posh red brocade walls, ancient beams and chandeliers somehow fit seamlessly into this casual neighbourhood restaurant. Specialities include *pasta con sardi* (fettuccine with sardines), walnut ravioli and risotto with walnuts and lemon. The classic Sicilian *cassata* (sponge cake with candied fruits and nuts) is fantastic.

Pizzeria Bellini (☎ 091 616 56 91; Piazza Bellini 6; pizza €5, 1st/2nd courses €7/10) The oldest pizzeria in town has a coveted spot, nestled in the shadow of La Martorana; come to eat at night, when the churches glow with floodlights.

Antica Focacceria di San Francesco (☎ 091 32 02 64; Via Paternostro 58; mains €8, self-service €2-7) A local institution with workers since 1834, there are three levels here including takeaway, self-service and a restaurant. Downstairs offers a bustling atmosphere and serves delicious *calzone*, pizza slices and some Palermitan speciality snacks, such as *panini* stuffed with ricotta and steaming calf innards.

Mi Manda Picone (☎ 091 616 06 60; Via A Paternostro 59; mains from €10) Nestled in a 13th-century building on Piazza San Francesco, this terrific restaurant serves top-notch contemporary cuisine in an airy arched interior. It doubles as an *enoteca*, where you can opt for generous platters of cheese and salami while sipping Sicilian *vino*.

WORTH A TRIP

In the town of **Monreale**, just 8km south-west of Palermo, is the world-famous 12th-century **Duomo** (☎ 091 640 44 13; admission free; 🕒 8am-6pm), where the entire ceiling is covered in 6400 sq m of mosaics telling the stories of Adam and Eve, Noah, and God creating the universe in seven days. It's also worth checking out its **cloisters** (admission €4.50; 🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun). To get there, take bus 389 from Palermo's Piazza Indipendenza.

Palermo's best open-air markets are the **Vucciria** (🕒 Mon-Sat), in the narrow streets around Piazza San Domenico, and **Il Ballaro** (🕒 daily), held in the Albergheria quarter off Via Maqueda; both have excellent offerings and unbeatable local colour.

Getting There & Away

Falcone-Borsellino airport (PMO; ☎ 091 70 20 111; www.gesap.it) is 30km west of Palermo along the A29. **Alitalia** (☎ 06 22 22; www.alitalia.it) flies in, as do some of the low-cost airlines such as **Air One** (☎ 199 20 70 80; www.flyairone.it) and **Meridiana** (☎ 199 111 333; www.meridiana.it).

The main intercity bus station is around Via Paolo Balsamo, to the right as you leave the train station. Main companies include **SAIS Autolinee** (☎ 091 616 60 28; www.saisautolinee.it, in Italian) and **Interbus** (☎ 0935 56 51 11; www.interbus.it, in Italian). They head to the mainland through Messina.

Regular trains leave from the Stazione Centrale for Milazzo, Messina, Catania, Trapani, Syracuse and Agrigento, as well as for nearby towns such as Cefalù. Direct trains go to Reggio di Calabria, Naples and Rome.

Boats leave from the port (Molo Vittorio Veneto) for Sardinia and the mainland (see p800). The **Tirrenia office** (☎ 091 602 11 11) is at the port.

Getting Around

Taxis to the airport cost about €40, but the blue **Prestia e Comandé** (☎ 091 58 04 57) buses are extremely convenient. One way costs €5 and they leave every 30 minutes, between 5am and 11pm from the city and from 6.30am to midnight from the airport. In town, they leave from near the train sta-

tion (in front of Hotel Elena) and in front of Hotel Politeama. There's also an hourly train service from the airport to Stazione Centrale (€4.50) between 5.40am and 10.40pm.

Most of Palermo's city buses stop outside or near the train station. You must buy tickets before you get on the bus; they cost €0.80 and are valid for two hours, or €2.60 for a day pass.

For car rentals, there's an **Avis** (☎ 091 586 940; 113 Via Francesco Crispi; 🕒 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) office near the ferry terminal.

AEOLIAN ISLANDS

The entire *Isole Eolie* (Aeolian Islands) chain is so stunning it's been declared a Unesco World Heritage site. They've been impressing visitors since Homer's hero Odysseus blew through in *The Odyssey*. Formed by a volcanic eruption, the seven islands have a landscape distinct from both Sicily and the mainland. Residents emigrated 100 years ago because of difficult living conditions, but the tourists who descend upon its beaches don't seem to mind the lack of arable farmland.

The islands have distinct personalities – from bustling Lipari to elite Panarea to the rugged beauty of Salina, Vulcano or Stromboli and the rustic, undeveloped Alicudi and Filicudi – but they all have overcrowded summers in common. Best visit in spring or autumn.

There is a **tourist information office** (☎ 090 988 00 95; www.estateolie.it, in Italian; Via Vittorio Emanuele 202; 🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Sat & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri) in Lipari. Offices on Vulcano, Salina and Stromboli are open during summer only.

Sights & Activities

On **Lipari** visit the Spanish Aragon-built **citadel** (🕒 9am-7pm), with its fabulous **Museo Archeologico Eoliano** (☎ 090 988 01 74; admission €4.50; 🕒 9am-1.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat). There are excellent walks on the island, as well as good snorkelling and scuba diving. The tourist office has information on trails, beaches and excursions.

With its pungent sulphurous odour, **Vulcano** is a short boat trip from Lipari. The main volcano, **Vulcano Fossa**, is still active, although the last recorded period of eruption was 1888–90. You can take the one-

hour hike to the crater, or a bath in the therapeutic hot mud.

On the most spectacular of the islands, **Stromboli**, you can climb the volcano. While recent activity has made it too dangerous to hike to the volcano's 841m summit, you can still hike 365m up the craters with a guide (or 270m without) and view the impressive Sciarà del Fuoco (Trail of Fire) – lava streaming down the side of the volcano. Contact **Magmatrek** (☎ 090 986 57 68; www.magma.trek.it) for guided treks to the crater (they only depart if groups are large enough).

Sleeping & Eating

Camping facilities are available on Lipari, Salina and Vulcano. Most accommodation in summer is booked out well in advance on the smaller islands, particularly on Stromboli, and many places close during winter. Prices skyrocket during summer, but you can find good deals outside the high season.

LIPARI

Lipari has the most options and greatest range of accommodation, and from here the other islands are easily accessible by regular hydrofoil. Don't dismiss outright offers for *affittacamere* by touts when you arrive at the port – they're often genuine.

Diana Brown (☎ 090 981 25 84; dbrown@netnet.it; Vico Himerà 3; s/d/tr €70/80/100, apt in high season up to €100; 🛏) has 12 comfortable rooms that are centrally located. The self-catering apartments have small kitchenettes. Diana is a fountain of local knowledge; she and her husband also run **Gruppo di Navigazione** (www.navigazioniregina.com), featuring boat tours of all the islands.

Lazing over half the piazza, Lipari's classiest joint **Filippino** (☎ 090 981 10 02; Piazza Municipio; mains from €16) has superb seafood and top-notch service; dress to show off your tan and make a reservation. For pizza, hit the rightfully popular **La Piazzetta** (☎ 090 981 25 22; pizza from €5), off Corso Vittorio with pizza-side tables. Also recommended is tiny **La Cambusa** (☎ 349 476 60 61; Via Garibaldi 72; mains from €12), serving delicious pastas and fish.

STROMBOLI

La Sirenetta (☎ 090 98 60 25; www.lasirenetta.it; Via Marina 33; s €115, d €180-240; 🛏 🚿 🚿) is a serene pad perfectly located in front of Strömbol-icchio, a towering promontory rising out

of the sea at San Vincenzo. The panoramic terrace with a great restaurant encourages lingering, and the ocean-view rooms are honeymoon-worthy.

VULCANO

You'll find good value at **Hotel Torre** (☎ /fax 090 985 23 42; www.hotelortorevulcano.it; Via Favalloro 1; per person low/high season €39/78; 🛏 🚿), a modest affair with large rooms, kitchens, terraces and beach access just 150m away.

ALICUDI & FILICUDI

If you want seclusion and still-wild beauty, head for Alicudi or Filicudi. The former offers the simple but nice **Ericusa** (☎ 090 988 99 02; fax 090 988 96 71; Via Regina Elena; d €62, half-board per person €60), while Filicudi has the truly delightful **La Canna** (☎ 090 988 99 56; vianast@tin.it; Via Rosa 43; s/d €40/80). There are good restaurants at both.

Getting There & Away

Ferries and hydrofoils leave for the islands from Milazzo (easily reached by train from Palermo and Messina) and all ticket offices are along Corso dei Mille at the port. If arriving at Milazzo by train, catch a Giunta bus to the port. **SNAV** (☎ 081 428 51 11) and **Siremar** (☎ 081 580 03 40) run hydrofoils (€11.30), and the latter also has ferries (€7.50).

The ferry journey takes about two hours to Lipari and five to seven hours to Stromboli (two to four daily, July to September). Hydrofoils make the journey to Vulcano (40 minutes), Lipari (55 minutes) and Stromboli (two hours and 50 minutes, seven daily), running up to seven times daily in July through September. Prices range from €5.30 to €12.50. Tickets for hydrofoils are slightly more, ranging from €9.40 to €21.30. SNAV also runs hydrofoils between the islands and Palermo (summer only).

You can also travel directly to the islands from the mainland. Siremar runs regular ferries from Naples, and SNAV runs hydrofoils from Naples, Messina and Reggio di Calabria. Occasionally, rough seas cancel sailings.

Getting Around

Regular hydrofoil and ferry services operate between the islands. Both Siremar and SNAV have booths at Lipari's port, where you can get full timetable information.

TAORMINA

pop 10,700

Perched impossibly along a rocky cliff-top promontory, Taormina is both a tiny, cobblestone village and Sicily's glitziest resort. In summer, hordes of visitors come for the chic shops and to wander the streets made famous by Goethe and DH Lawrence, two of Taormina's most famed former residents. Outside of July and August, the crowds thin enough to enjoy the Greek theatre, English gardens, island beach and labyrinthine streets that make this a popular locale.

Taormina is horribly complicated to navigate, and many hotels will gather you at the car park or train station rather than try to explain directions.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0942 2 32 43; www.gate2taormina.com; Palazzo Corvaja 1 at Lungo Santa Caterina; ☎ 8.30am-2pm & 4-7pm, closed Sun) has local maps, excursion information, and lists of *affittacamere* and B&Bs. Head to **Net Point** (☎ 0943 626 080; Via Jallia Bassia 34; per min €0.10, minimum 20 min) to check your email.

Sights & Activities

You'll recognise the famous Sicilian postcard image of **Teatro Greco** (☎ 0942 2 32 20; Via Teatro Greco; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 9am-4pm winter, 9am to sunset summer), the Graeco-Roman theatre in the half-round looking out over the Ionian Sea. Although the Greeks built it in the 3rd century BC, the Romans did some remodelling. During summer, ask at the tourist office about open-air concerts.

From the colourful, well-tended English gardens of **Giardino Trevelyan** (☎ 9am-7pm), you'll have a panoramic view of the sea. Along the pedestrianised Corso Umberto I is **Piazza del Duomo**, which has a baroque fountain and Norman-Gothic cathedral. During summer, throw in an adventurous ride to Taormina's unique island beach, **Isola Bella**, which is accessible by **cable car** (one way/return €1.70/3; ☎ 8am-8pm, until 1am in summer, every 15 min).

Mt Etna trips (€27) can be organised through **CST** (☎ 0942 62 60 88; Corso Umberto I 101).

Sleeping & Eating

Taormina's Odyssey (☎ 0942 2 45 33; www.taorminaodyssey.com; Trav A - Via G Martino 2; dm/d incl breakfast €17/45) Just three dorm rooms and two doubles share a small kitchen and convivial

common room off Fontana Vecchia and Via Cappuccini. Taormina's is a 10-minute walk from town; follow the signs for Hotel Andromaco.

Pensione Svizzera (☎ 0942 2 37 90; www.pensione-svizzera.com; Via Pirandello 26; s €95, d €100-125, all incl breakfast; ☎ Feb-Nov; ☎ ☎) Owned by the same family since 1925, the staff here will arrange just about anything, and a shuttle runs to the beach in high season. Room prices go up as the view gets better.

Hotel Belvedere (☎ 0942 2 37 91; www.villabelvedere.it; Via Bagnoli Croce 79; s €70-134, d €118-212, all incl breakfast; ☎ Mar-Nov, Christmas; ☎ ☎) One of the first hotels in town (opened in 1902), this family-run spot has an enviable location, and the pretty citrus gardens and pool-side lunch service make it a holiday idyll.

Ritrovo Trocadero (☎ 0943 2 43 30; Via Pirandello 1; ☎ 8am-midnight) Trocadero is good, cheap and keeps all-day traveller-friendly hours. Try the *maccheroni trocadero*: homemade pasta with fish, tomatoes, basil and cream (€7.50). Omelettes are served all day (around €5.50).

Ristorante Luraleo (☎ 0942 62 01 64; Via Bagnoli Crod 27/31) A cross between '60s kitsch and old-world farmhouse, Luraleo features hanging copper pots, a tiled wood-burning stove and vine-draped outdoor terrace alongside tacky stained glass. Ask for the house special, an enormous plate of fresh fish and vegetables (€20 per person).

Granduca (☎ 0942 2 49 83; Corso Umberto 172; pizza from €5) Excellent pizza and a spectacular terrace make this a consistently good choice.

Getting There & Away

Taormina is easily reached on the main rail line from Messina (€3.15, 50 minutes, hourly except from 9.30am to 12.10pm) and Catania (€3.15, 45 minutes, hourly). You can also take the intercity bus **Etna Trasporti** (☎ 095 53 27 16) to Catania (€3, 1½ hours, hourly), leaving from Via Pirandello.

MT ETNA

Dominating the landscape in eastern Sicily between Taormina and Catania, Mt Etna (3350m) is Europe's largest live volcano, and is also one of the world's most active. Eruptions occur frequently, both from the four live craters at the summit and on the volcano's slopes, which are littered with fissures and extinct cones.

Volcanic activity picks up pace from time to time, so be aware that trekking excursions are at the mercy of steam plumes and lava flows. Due to the volcano's unpredictability, you can no longer climb to the craters, although it is still possible to climb one of the peaks in front of the Rifugio Sapienza to get a small taste of the real thing. **Gruppo Guide Alpine Etna Sud** (☎ 095 791 47 55) or **Natura e Turismo** (☎ 095 33 35 43; day trips approximately €55) organise excursions involving trekking and 4WD vehicles, led by a vulcanologist or alpine guide.

Mt Etna is best approached from Catania by **AST bus** (☎ 095 746 10 96), which departs from the car park in front of the main train station at 8.30am, and leaves from Rifugio Sapienza at about 4.45pm (€5.15 return). The private **Ferrovie Circumetnea train line** (☎ 095 54 12 50; www.circumetnea.it) circles Mt Etna from Catania to Riposto, a 3½-hour trip. You can reach Riposto from Taormina by train or bus if you want to make the trip from that direction.

The youthful **Agora Hostel** (☎ 095 723 30 10; www.agorahostel.com; Piazza Curro 6; dm/d €18/45; ☎) in Catania is known for its live music, cheap eats and good bar. It's the stopping-off point for Mt Etna, which is just a 30-minute bus ride away.

SYRACUSE

pop 126,000

Few places on the planet rival the historical importance of Syracuse (Siracusa, sikh-racco-sa). Founded in 734 BC by Corinthian settlers, it became the dominant Greek city-state on the Mediterranean, battling Carthaginians and Etruscans before falling to the Romans in 212 BC. Nowadays, the largest battles you'll find here are for parking spots in the packed historical centre, but the stunning archaeological park and position on the eastern coast make this Sicily's top destination.

Orientation

Most of Syracuse is a sprawling suburb. Everything listed in this section, except for the archaeological park, is on the island of Ortygia, linked to the mainland by the Umberto bridge about 200m east of the train station along Corso Umberto I. The **tourist office** (☎ 0931 46 42 55; Via Maestranza 33; ☎ 8.30am-1.45pm & 3-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1.45pm Sat) is just

east of Piazza Archimede in the centre of Ortygia.

Sights

ORTYGiA

The **cathedral** (Piazza del Duomo; admission free; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-7pm) was built in the 7th century on top of the Temple of Athena, incorporating most of the temple's original columns in its three-aisled structure. The splendid **Piazza del Duomo** is lined with baroque palaces. Just down the winding street from the cathedral is **Fontana Aretusa**, a natural freshwater spring. Greek legend has it that the goddess Artemis transformed her handmaiden Aretusa into the spring to protect her from the unwelcome attention of the river-god Alpheus. Undeterred, Alpheus turned himself into the river that feeds the spring.

NEAPOLIS-PARCO ARCHEOLOGICO

To get to the **Neapolis-Parco Archeologico** (☎ 0931 6 50 68; Viale Paradisa; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 8am-7pm), catch bus 1 or 2 from Riva della Posta on Ortygia. The main attraction here is the sparkling-white 5th-century-BC **Greek theatre**, entirely hewn out of solid rock and facing seaward over the city. Nearby is the **Orecchio di Dionisio**, an ear-shaped artificial grotto used by Syracuse's resident tyrant Dionysius to eavesdrop on his prisoners. The impressive 2nd-century **Roman amphitheatre** is well preserved.

The excellent **Museo Archeologico Paolo Orsi** (☎ 0931 46 40 22; Viale Teocrito 66/a; adult/concession €6/3; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun), about 500m east of the archaeological zone, shows off the region's history going back to pre-historic times, and includes a dizzying array of Greek and Roman artefacts.

Sleeping & Eating

Fontane Bianche (☎ 0931 79 03 33; Via dei Lidi 476; per person/tent €6/4.50; ☎ May-Sep) About 15km southwest of town, this camping ground is near a beach that teems with active bars come summer; catch bus 21 or 22 from Corso Umberto I.

B&B Casa Mia (☎ 0931 46 33 49; www.bbcasamia.it; Corso Umberto 112; s/d incl breakfast €45/75; ☎ ☎) Many readers have written in with high marks for this B&B, even though it's across the river from Ortygia. The seven rooms all contain grand antiques, but the main draw

here is the breakfast of homemade pastries and jam served on the pleasant terrace.

Sogno Sondesto (☎ 0931 21 775; www.sogno.sondesto.net; Via Logoteta 18; s/d/tr/q €50/70/95/120; ☒) This place comprises two comfortable rooms in a private home perfectly located on a quiet side street near the centre of Ortygia. Be sure to ask Sergio (in Italian, English, French, Spanish or Portuguese) all about Syracuse. He'll set you up right for a day of sightseeing with an enormous Sicilian breakfast.

Hotel Gutkowski (☎ 0931 46 58 61; www.guthotel.it; Lungomare Vittorini 26; s/d incl breakfast €70/100; ☒) This lovely pastel-blue, seafront hotel has an appealing minimalist décor in its 25 small rooms. Breakfast is mostly organic and health-conscious.

Castello Fiorentino (☎ 0931 21 097; Via del Crocifisso 6, trav Via Roma; pizza from €3.50) Who knew combining caviar and smoked salmon on a pizza could taste so good? This restaurant is enormous, with a few quieter side rooms, and filled with happy Syracusans, always a good sign.

Don Camillo (☎ 0931 6 71 33; Via Maestranza 96; 1st/2nd courses €11/19) Don't let the waiters in penguin suits scare you away from this upscale trattoria, long regarded as one of the best restaurants in Syracuse. The wine list runs for days and you could make a tapas meal out of a few starters.

For scrumptious Sicilian sweets, head to **Pasticceria Tipica Catanese** (Corso Umberto 46); for good local wines, accompanied by hearty cheese and ham platters, try **Fermento** (Via Crocifisso 44/46), a terrific vaulted wine bar located in the heart of *passeggiata* territory.

Getting There & Away

Services with **Interbus** (☎ 0931 6 67 10) leave from Via Trieste for Catania (€4.60, one hour, hourly Monday to Saturday) and onto Palermo (€14.20, four hours or less with direct service, about hourly). The service for Rome (€38, 12 hours) also leaves from here, connecting with the Rome bus at Catania. **AST** (☎ 0931 46 48 20) buses service the town and the surrounding area from Riva della Posta.

Trains head from the Piazza della Stazione to Taormina (€6.60, one hour, nine per day), Messina (€8.75, three hours, nine daily) and Catania (€8.15, one to 1½ hours, hourly except between 8.50am and

12.45pm). Change in Catania or Messina for Palermo (€14.80, six hours, seven per day), and in Catania for Agrigento (€12.70, 5½ hours, 6am and 10.45am).

AGRIGENTO

pop 55,900

Agrigento would hardly be on the tourist map if not for the absolutely stunning Greek temples strewn along a ridge below town. Founded around 582 BC, this was one of ancient Greece's great cities. The city proper is rather sprawling, but the medieval centre isn't bad and the ruins are a quick bus ride away.

There's a so-so **tourist office** (☎ 0922 2 04 54; Via Cesare Battisti 15; ☎: 8.30am-1.30pm Mon-Fri). Buses 1 and 3 (€0.85) head between town, the Piazza Stazione (train station), the archaeological museum and Valley of the Temples, and bus 2 continues on to the beach of San Leone and the camping ground (see opposite).

Sights

Agrigento's **Valley of the Temples** (☎ 0922 2 61 91; admission €6, with museum €10; ☎: 8.30am-1hr before sunset in winter, until 7pm spring & autumn, until 10.30pm Jul & Aug) is one of the major Greek archaeological sights in the world. The ancient Greek town of Agrakas was founded here in 581 BC, during the 50th Olympiad. Some of the grandest temples of the ancient Greek world are in various states of ruin, but are still a stunning sight, worth an entire day. The only temple to survive relatively intact was **Tempio della Concordia**, transformed into a church. **Tempio di Giunone**, a short walk uphill to the east, has an impressive sacrificial altar. **Tempio di Ercole** is the oldest of the structures and is equivalent in size to the Parthenon. Nearby is the **Tempio di Castore e Polluce**, partly reconstructed in the 19th century.

Cross the road to visit the imposing **Tempio di Giove**, mostly in ruins now but one of its *telamoni* (giant male statues) is perfectly preserved and on display in the museum. Giove/Jupiter was the Roman equivalent of the Greek god Zeus, and the temple you see now – one of the largest ever built in ancient Greece – was rebuilt after a 480 BC Carthaginian attack.

To better understand the ruins, head first to the **Museo Archeologico** (☎ 0922 40 15 65; admission see above; ☎: 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 1pm Sun &

Mon, to 10.30pm Tue-Sat Jul-Sep), just north of the temples on Via dei Templi. Museums all around the world strive to create the kind of symbiosis attained here. All of the signage is in English, and there is a colossal example of a *telamoni*.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Valle dei Templi (☎ 0922 41 11 15; www.campingvalledeiempli.com; Viale Emporium 192, San Leone; per person/tent/car €7/5.50/3; ☐ ☒ ☓) This camping ground is past the Valley of the Temples, towards the beach town of San Leone. A pool, bocce court, games, babysitting service and pizzeria make this a good location for those with kids. Bungalows are also available.

Bella Napoli (☎ 0922 2 04 35; www.hotelbellanapoli.com; Piazza Lena 6; s/d €35/65) The only low-priced hotel in the city centre, this place has good prices and rooms that are comfortable, but could use a good cleaning.

B&B Atenea 191 (☎ 0922 59 55 94; www.atenea191.com; Via Atenea 191; s/d/tr/q incl breakfast €50/80/120/160; ☒) This place is near the vivacious shopping street Via Ateneo, with an ocean view to end all views. Take breakfast (freshly baked pastries) on the patio of the 17th-century building for a holiday treat.

Cappriccio del Mare (☎ 0922 411 761; Via Crispi; pizza €5, 1st/2nd courses €9/14) Come to this local hang-out to get your fill of Sicilian fish specialities, like spaghetti with clams and the *antipasto della casa* – smoked fish and *caponata* (Sicilian stew with eggplant and tomatoes). Near the train station, there are a few outdoor tables on a busy piazza, and inside is welcoming with peach-coloured walls.

Café Girasole (Via Atenea 68-70) This is a great little wine bar in the heart of the medieval town.

Getting There & Away

Intercity buses leave from Piazza Rosselli, just off Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, for Palermo (€11.50, two hours, four daily).

SARDINIA

Sardinia (Sardegna in Italian) is as geographically distinct from mainland Italy as it is culturally. Its ancient history goes back a millennia before Rome. Paleolithic inhabitants built settlements still evident today in

the form of circular stone fortresses called *nuraghe*, about 7000 of which remain scattered on the island. Despite constant domination by Phoenicians, Romans, Pisans, Genovese and Spaniards (among others), the proud locals, known as Sardi, have retained a strong sense of identity.

Although a few towns are easy to reach by public transport, Sardinia's main draws – its beaches and *nuraghe* – really require your own wheels. The striking landscape ranges from a wild interior carved with gorges and valleys, to stunning stretches of unspoiled coastline. The island gets overwhelmed by weekenders and sun-seekers during the summer months, especially August, so spring and autumn are the best times to visit.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are international and national flights into Sardinia's two main airports: **Cagliari Elmas** (CAG; ☎ 070 2 10 51; www.cagliariairport.it) in Cagliari, and **Fertilia** (AHO; ☎ 079 93 52 82; www.algheroairport.it) in Alghero. Weekenders are discovering Sardinia because of low-cost airlines such as Air One and Ryanair.

BOAT

Sardinia is accessible by ferry from Civitavecchia, Livorno, Genoa, Piombino, Naples and Fiumicino on mainland Italy, and Bonifacio on Corsica. Departure 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. To check all ferry services in the Mediterranean, go to www.traghettonline.net.

The main company, **Tirrenia** (www.tirrenia.com, in Italian), runs a service between Cagliari and Trapani, Palermo, Civitavecchia and Naples; between Olbia and Genoa or Civitavecchia; between Arbatax and Fiumicino, Civitavecchia or Genoa; from Golfo Aranci to Fiumicino; and from Porto Torres to Genoa. **Linea dei Golfi** (www.lineaiegolfi.it) runs ferries between Cagliari and Livorno, and Olbia and Piombino or Livorno. The national railway, Ferrovie dello Stato (FS), also runs a service between Civitavecchia and Golfo Aranci. **Moby Lines** (www.mobylines.it) operates services between Olbia and Civitavecchia, Livorno or Genoa, and between

Santa Teresa di Gallura and Bonifacio on Corsica. **Corsica Ferries** (www.corsicaferries.com) operates services from Golfo Aranci to Civitavecchia or Livorno. **Grandi Navi Veloci** (www.gnavi.it) runs a service between Porto Torres or Olbia and Genoa.

Getting Around

Getting around Sardinia without a car can be quite a trek, although both Cagliari and Alghero are accessible by train, ferry or bus. The easiest way to get between Cagliari and Alghero is on the Logudoro bus (see p812). The main bus company is **ARST** (☎ 0800 86 50 42; www.arst.sardegna.it, in Italian), which operates extensive services throughout the island.

The main **Trenitalia** (www.trenitalia.it) train lines link Cagliari with Oristano, Sassari and Olbia, and are generally reliable but can be very slow. The private railways that link smaller towns throughout the island can be even slower. However, the **Trenino Verde** (Little Green Train; ☎ 800 46 02 20; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri), which runs a route from Cagliari to Arbatax through the scenic Barbagia region, is a relaxing way to see part of the interior.

CAGLIARI

pop 175,200

The capital and largest city on Sardinia, Cagliari (*cal-yar-ee*) offers several sightseeing days' worth of history within its medieval centre, as well as a few day trips to neighbouring beaches and even to a salt lake filled with bathing pink flamingos.

Orientation

The main bus and train stations and port are near Piazza Matteotti, where the useful city tourist office is as well. The main street along the harbour is Via Roma, and the old city stretches up the hill behind it to the castle. There are several hotels and restaurants near the port, normally not a great place in most cities, but perfectly safe and pleasant here.

Information

Guardia Medica (☎ 070 50 29 31; Via Talette 6) For after-hour medical emergencies.

Main post office (☎ 070 6 03 11; Piazza del Carmine 27)
Ospedale San Giovanni di Dio (Hospital; ☎ 070 60 92 215; Via Ospedale)

Police station (Questura; ☎ 070 60 2 71; Via Amat 9) Tucked behind the imposing law courts.

Tourist office (☎ 070 66 92 55; Piazza Matteotti 9; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat) Call ahead, as it might be moving in 2007 or 2008. There are additional information offices at the airport.

World Link Center (☎ 070 67 39 42; Via Cavour 47; ☎ 9am-10.30pm) For Internet needs.

Sights & Activities

In the Cittadella dei Musei, the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 070 68 40 00; Piazza dell'Arsenale; admission €4; ☎ 9am-8pm Tue-Sun) has a fascinating collection of Nuragic bronzes. These bronzes are objects found in *nuraghe* all over Sardinia, and are an excellent legacy of the island's native culture.

It's enjoyable to wander through the medieval quarter. The Pisan-Romanesque **Duomo** (Piazza Palazzo) was built in the 13th century and has an interesting Romanesque pulpit.

There are good sea and city views from **Bastione San Remy** (Piazza Costituzione), above the piazza in the town's centre, which once formed part of the fortifications of the old city. Now, it's a great hang-out spot, with ice skating in winter and outdoor cafés in summer.

The **Torre di San Pancrazio** (Piazza Indipendenza; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is also worth a look. The **Roman amphitheatre** (Viale Buon Cammino; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is considered the most important Roman monument in Sardinia. During summer, opera is performed here.

A day on the **Spaggia di Poetto**, east of the centre, is a day well spent, and you can wander across to the salt lakes to view the flamingos.

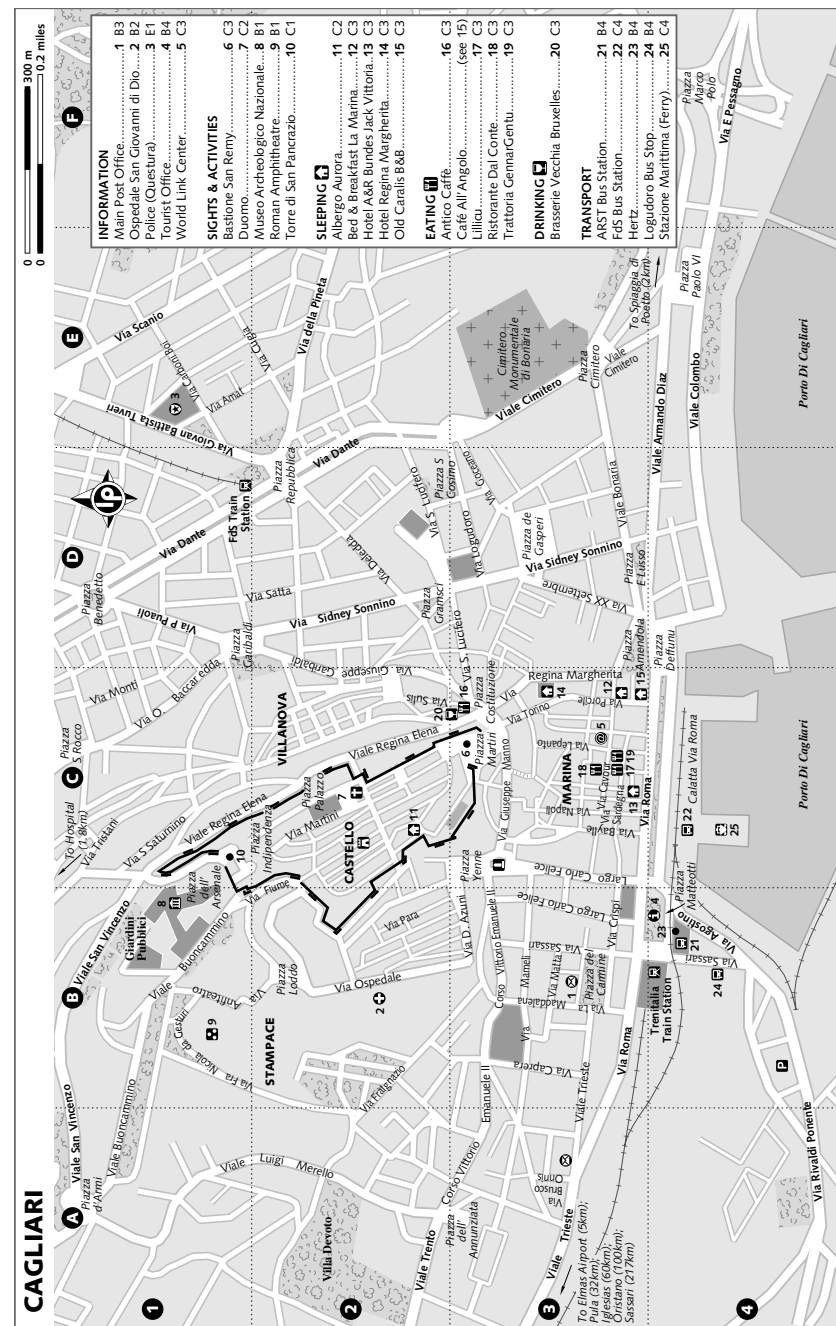
Festivals & Events

The **Festival of Sant'Efisio**, a colourful celebration mixing the secular and the religious, is held annually for four days from 1 May.

Sleeping

Bed & Breakfast La Marina (☎ 070 67 00 65, 349 17 67 368; www.la-marina.it; Via Porcile 23; s €35, d €60-70; ☎) You'll have your own mini-apartment here. All four rooms come with use of the shared kitchen and eating area. The charming owners run the market downstairs and are a wealth of information about the area.

Albergo Aurora (☎ 070 65 86 25; www.hotelcagliari.aurora.it; Salita Santa Chiara 19 at Piazza Yenne; s/d €45/65, with shared bathroom €35/48; ☎) The brightly coloured interiors here offer a cheery holiday



spot, and some rooms have views of the old city. Air-con is available for an extra €8.

Hotel A&R Bundes Jack Vittoria (☎/fax 070 66 79 70; hotel.aerbundesjack@libero.it; Via Roma 75; s/d €47/72, with shared bathroom €40/60) The Marina's choice spot has a warm welcome and high-ceilinged rooms that are spotless, comfortable and face the port.

Old Caralis B&B (☎ 349 29 12 853; www.oldcaralis.it; Via Porcile 11; s/d €50/80; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is a private home with three merrily cosy rooms (two with shared bathroom, one with private). You'll share the living area with friendly Roberto and his mum. It's eat-off-the-floor clean and the bathrooms have great towels and hot showers. They'll even serve you breakfast in bed for €2.

Hotel Regina Margherita (☎ 070 67 03 42; www.hotelreginamargherita.com; Viale Regina Margherita 44; s/d incl breakfast €132/175; ☎ ☎) This four-star hotel near the centre of town has quiet and comfortable rooms, many with stunning views of the port and town, that would please both business and leisure travellers.

Eating & Drinking

Café All'Angolo (☎ 070 652 354; Via Porcile 13/A; ☎ closed Sun) Not just an ordinary bar, this place also serves the cheapest meals in town, with pasta dishes for €4.50. Try their homemade vegetarian lasagne with bechamel sauce.

Lillicu (☎ 070 65 29 70; Via Sardegna 78; 1st/2nd courses €7.50/11) This is an authentic trattoria that's often packed with happy locals downing good seafood dishes at large communal marble tables.

Trattoria GennarGentu (☎ 070 67 20 21; Via Sardegna 60; 1st/2nd courses €8/12) At this welcoming spot, try the Sardinian specialities such as *spaghetti bottarga* (spaghetti with dried tuna roe).

Ristorante Dal Conte (☎ 070 66 33 36; www.ristorantedalconte.com; Via Cavour 83; 1st/2nd courses €8/14) Original stone walls and mosaic floors add to the romantic feel of this intimate seafood restaurant, as does the extensive wine selection. Serves local favourites such as *culurgiones* (local ravioli).

Also worth a mention are **Antico Caffè** (☎ 070 65 82 96; Piazza Costituzione), Cagliari's most elegant café with a terrace and marble-topped tables, and **Brasserie Vecchia Bruxelles** (☎ 070 68 20 37; Via Sullis 4; ☎ Mon-Sat), with stone vaults and long comfy sofas; it's an

excellent choice for a beer, snack or nip of whiskey.

Getting There & Away

Some 8km northwest of the city at Elmas is the airport, **Cagliari Elmas** (AG; ☎ 070 2 10 51; www.cagliariairport.it). ARST buses (€1) are scheduled to coincide with flight arrivals and departures. Buses leave Piazza Matteotti for the airport about 1½ hours before flight departure and return about 20 to 30 minutes after an arrival.

In connection with Ryanair, **Logudoro Tours** (☎ 079 28 17 28) runs a service between the Alghero airport and Cagliari (€12.50, three hours 50 minutes, one to three daily depending on season).

The main **Trenitalia train station** (☎ 89 20 21) faces Piazza Matteotti; there are regular services to Oristano (€4.80, two hours) and Sassari (€12.70, 4¼ hours). The private **Ferrovie della Sardegna train station** (FdS; ☎ 070 49 13 04) is in Piazza Repubblica; trains, including the Trenino Verde (Little Green Train; see p810), head from here to smaller regions. FdS has taken over the PANI bus services to Alghero (€14.40, 4½ hours, nine daily), Sassari (€15, 3¼ hours, four daily) and Nuoro (€6.10, 3½ hours, one daily at 6.15pm); all buses leave from Piazza Matteotti. **ARST** (☎ 800 86 50 42) buses service nearby towns, the Costa del Sud and the Costa Rei.

Ferries arrive at the port adjacent to Via Roma. Bookings for **Tirrenia** (☎ 070 66 60 65; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.50pm Mon-Fri) can be made at the Stazione Marittima in the port area. See p809 for details of services.

For rental cars, try **Hertz** (☎ 070 66 81 05; Piazza Matteotti 1), which also has a branch at the airport. **Autonoleggio Cara** (☎ 070 66 34 71) can deliver a scooter or bike to your hotel.

CALA GONONE

pop 1010

The main spot on the seaside resort area known as the Golfo di Orosei, Cala Gonone is a good base to explore the coastline. The attractive region is known for beautiful beaches, mythical sea caves, Nuraghic sites and rugged terrain. To really explore the area, it's best to spring for a rental car and boat trips, well worth it for an adventurous beachfront holiday.

There are a couple of **tourist offices** (Cala Gonone; ☎ 0784 9 36 96; Viale Bue Marino 1a; ☎ 9am-

6pm Apr-Oct, to 11pm Jul & Aug; Dorgali; ☎ 0784 9 62 43; Via Lamarmora 181; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Fri); the Cala Gonone office has maps, a list of hotels and plenty of local information. **Coop Ghivine** (☎ 0784 9 67 21; www.ghivine.com; Via Montebello 5, Dorgali) organises excellent guided treks and farm stays in the region from €30 per person.

Sights & Activities

From Cala Gonone's tiny port, catch a boat to the **Grotta del Bue Marino** (admission €5.50), where a guide will take you on a 1km walk to see vast caves with stalagmites and stalactites. Sardinia's last colony of monk seals once lived here, but has not been seen for quite some time. Boats also leave for **Cala Luna**, an isolated beach where you can walk along **Codula di Luna**, a fabulous gorge. The beach is packed with day-tripping tourists in summer. The boat trip to visit the grotto and beach costs around €20.

A **walking track** along the coast links Cala Fuili, about 3.5km south of Cala Gonone, and Cala Luna (about 1½ hours one way). There's also some good mountain biking and diving in the area. The tourist offices have information on local outfitters.

There is a wide range of activities for those who have time or money or both: scuba diving, PADI certification courses, sea cruises, caving, farm stays and more. The tourist office has brochures and information on dozens of operators, or check www.calagonone.com.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Cala Gonone (☎ 0784 9 31 65; www.campingcalagonone.it; per person incl car & tent €11.50-17, 2-bed/4-bed bungalow up to €57/135; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) Along the main road from Dorgali, this camping ground has good quality, shady sites, plus a pool and restaurant, but gets overrun in August.

Pop Hotel (☎ 0784 9 31 85; www.hotelpop.com; per person incl breakfast €27-53; ☎) Just 100m from the sea, this terracotta-hued hotel near the port has clean and pleasant rooms – all with balconies – and a decent restaurant.

Hotel Costa Dorada (☎ 0784 9 33 32; www.hotelcostadorada.it; Via Lungomare Palmasera 45; s €68-113, d €100-180, incl breakfast; ☎ Apr-Oct) This is a romantic hotel with a swatch of beach across the street, flower-laced terraces and lovely rooms.

Hotel Su Gologone (☎ 0784 28 75 12; www.sugologone.it; s/d €95/135; ☎ ☎) If you have your own transport, don't miss the opportunity to stay here, at the base of Sardinia's second-highest peak, about 20 minutes west of town, near Dorgali. This gorgeous white-washed hacienda has pretty rooms decorated with locally crafted furnishings, walking trails, a pool, spa and fitness centre, and a fabulous restaurant serving classic Sardinian mountain cuisine.

Getting There & Away

There are seven ARST buses a day from Nuoro through Dorgali to Cala Gonone (€4.50, 1¼ hours). If you are travelling by car, you will need a proper road map of the area.

ALGHERO

pop 43,387

Although the narrow lanes and stone defence ramparts make for a charming coastal holiday spot, Alghero is a fairly new town in comparison to other Mediterranean lands. The Genovese founded it in the 11th century and it was Catalan-controlled for hundreds of years. Hearing the Catalan dialect amid tourists arriving on new low-cost airlines, you'd swear you were in a resort on the Spanish Costa Brava, just with more pasta and *gelato*.

Orientation

Alghero's historic centre is on a small promontory jutting into the sea, with the new town stretching out behind and north along the coast.

Information

Main post office (☎ 079 97 20 252; Via Carducci 35)

Ospedale Civile (Hospital; ☎ 079 98 71 61; Via Don Minzoni)

Tourist office (☎ 079 97 90 54; www.infoalghero.it, in Italian; Piazza Porta Terra 9; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Near the port and just across the gardens from the bus station, this is an exceedingly helpful office.

Sights & Activities

The narrow streets of the old city and around the port are lovely. The most interesting church is the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (Via Carlo Alberto; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 5-8.30pm). Although constant remodelling has ruined the cathedral, the **bell tower** (admission €1.50;

☞ 7am–9.30pm Easter–Sep) remains a fine example of Gothic–Catalan architecture.

OUT OF TOWN

If you're up for the 654 steps down, head out towards **Capo Caccia** to witness the **Grotte di Nettuno** (☎ 079 94 65 40; adult/concession €10/5; ☞ 9am–7pm Apr–Sep, 10am–5pm Oct, 9am–4pm Nov–Mar), an underground fairyland. Outside of the low season, it's accessible with the ferry company **Navisarda** (☎ 079 97 89 61; www.navisarda.it) from the port (adult/concession €12/6, 2½ hour round-trip, hourly 9am to 5pm June to September, 10am to 3pm April, May and October), or by the FdS bus from the Via Catalogna bus stop (€4 return, 50 minutes, three daily June to September).

If you have a car, don't miss the **Nuraghe di Palmavera** (☎ 079 95 32 00; admission €2.10; ☞ 9am–7pm), 3500-year-old stone ruins 10km out of Alghero on the road to Porto Conte.

Rugged cliffs stretch down to solitary beaches out towards **Bosa**, which is one of the last habitats of the griffon vulture. The best way to see the coast is by car or motorcycle. If you want to rent a bicycle (from €7 a day) or motorcycle (from €70) to explore the coast, try **Cicloexpress** (☎ 079 98 69 50; Via Garibaldi) at the port.

Festivals & Events

In summer Alghero stages a music festival in the cloisters of the church of San Francesco. Another festival, complete with fireworks display, is held on 15 August for the Feast of the Assumption.

Sleeping & Eating

It is virtually impossible to find a room in August unless you book in advance, and you'd do best to book ahead in June or July, just in case. There is only one hotel in the historic centre.

Camping La Mariposa (☎ 079 95 03 60; Via Lido 22; per person/tent €10.50/5, bungalow up to €72; ☞ Apr–Oct) About 2km north of the centre, this low-key camping ground is on the beach.

Hotel San Francesco (☎ /fax 079 98 03 30; www.sanfrancescohotel.com; Via Ambrogio Machin 2; s/d/tr incl breakfast €58/92/120; 🍴) The only hotel in the ambient town centre, this place has passable levels of charm in simple rooms housed in what used to be a convent.

Villa Las Tronas (☎ 079 98 18 18; www.hotelvillalalatrondas.it; Lungomare Valencia 1; s/d €215/280; 📞 📺 📺)

On its own private promontory, this former summer residence of the Italian royalty has a pool and very pretty rooms, but an overly formal feel elsewhere. Still, the views are stupendous, the breakfasts enough to cover lunch, and there are mountain bikes for pedalling the coast.

Trattoria Maristella (☎ 079 97 81 72; Via Fratelli Kennedy 9; 1st/2nd courses €7.50/11; ☞ closed Sun dinner) The most popular spot with locals, with Mediterranean-splashed décor and chatting families, this restaurant offers good value, reliable grub and alfresco dining.

Osteria Machiavello (☎ 079 98 06 28; Via Cavour 7; 1st/2nd courses €9/13; ☞ closed Tue) Quirky meat dishes and seafood is the draw here, including *cinghiale* (wild boar) and even horse. In the historic centre with a sea view and serving regional wine and seasonal cooking, it's a good bet for admiring Sardinia.

Focacce Sarde Ripiene (Via Garibaldi 11; ☞ to 1.30am) Serving delicious sandwiches, this place fronts the sea and is always packed with locals.

Caffè Costantino (Piazza Civica 30) This is a classy coffee stop in the historic centre that also serves good wine and tantalising cakes.

Getting There & Away

Alghero's airport **Fertilia** (AHO; ☎ 079 93 60 51; www.algheroairport.it) is extremely popular with low-cost airlines Ryanair and Air One, as well as Alitalia and British Airways. To reach Alghero, take the Logudoro bus from Cagliari (€12.50, four hours, one to three daily depending on season) or connect in Sassari by bus or train. There are hourly buses to Sassari (€3 to €3.50, 50 minutes, about hourly between 5.35am and 7.50pm) and a train service (€1.85, 35 minutes, 11 daily). The bus stop is next to the public gardens in the old town on Via Catalogna. To get to the train station 1km to the south-east, take the yellow city buses (€0.80).

ITALY DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

In this chapter accommodation is divided into budget (under €100 for a double room), midrange (€100 to €190) and top end (€190 and up). Unless otherwise stated, prices are high-season rates for rooms with private bathrooms.

The bulk of Italy's accommodation is made up of *alberghi* (hotels) and *pensionari* – often housed in converted apartments. Prices vary enormously, but expect to pay high-season rates at Easter, in summer and over the Christmas–New Year period. Note, however, that many city centre hotels offer discounts in August to lure guests away from the crowded coasts. Northern Italy is generally more expensive than the south.

As a rough guide, reckon on paying from €40 to €120 for a double room in a one-star hotel; €50 to €150 in a two-star; and €80 to €300 in a three-star.

Italian *ostelli per la gioventù* (youth hostels) are run by the **Associazione Italiana Alberghi per la Gioventù** (AIG; Italian Youth Hostel Association; Map p724; ☎ 06 487 11 52; www.ostellionline.org; Via Cavour 44, Rome), affiliated with **Hostelling International** (HI; www.ihf.org). A valid HI card is required, which you can get in your home country or at many hostels. Dorm rates are typically between €15 and €25, with breakfast often included. Many places also offer dinner for around €10.

Camping is well catered for in Italy, with grounds scattered throughout the country. Lists are available from local tourist offices or online at www.campeggi.com or www.camping.it. The **Touring Club Italiano** (TCI; www.touringclub.it) also publishes an annual guide called *Campeggi in Italia*. Expect to pay from €5 to €12 per person and €5 to €12 for a site. Independent camping is not permitted in many places.

To stay in the countryside consider an *agriturismo* (farm stay). Accommodation varies from spartan billets on working farms to palatial suites at luxurious rural retreats. For information check out **Agriturismo** (www.agriturist.it).

Bed and breakfast (B&B) is also popular. Prices are typically between €70 and €150 for a room. Contact **Bed & Breakfast Italia** (Map pp726–7; ☎ 06 688 01 513; www.bbitalia.it; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II 282, 00186 Rome) for further information.

Religious accommodation is a reliable money-saver – about €75 for a modest double room. The **Chiesa di Santa Susanna** (www.santasusanna.org/comingToRome/convents.html) has a list of convents and monasteries throughout the country.

Italy boasts an extensive network of mountain *rifugi* (refuges). Open from July

to September, they offer basic dorm-style accommodation, although some larger ones have double rooms. Reckon on €16 to €30 per person, per night (with breakfast usually included). The best source of information is the **Club Alpino Italiano** (CAI; www.cai.it, in Italian), which owns and runs many of the refuges.

Rental Accommodation

Finding rental accommodation in the major cities can be difficult. A studio flat will typically cost around €1000 per month, with a month's rent payable in advance as a deposit. An online agency with apartments on its books is **Guest in Italy** (www.guestinitaly.com).

There are dozens of agencies specialising in villa rentals. An established operator is **Cuendet** (www.cuendet.com).

ACTIVITIES

Cycling

Tuscany and Umbria are popular cycling areas. **Bicycle Tuscany** (☎ 055 22 25 80; www.bicycle-tuscany.com), **Florence by Bike** (055 48 89 92; www.florencebybike.it) and **I Bike Italy** (☎ 055 234 23 71; www.ibikeitaly.com) all offer guided rides – see p774. Elsewhere, there's excellent mountain-biking in the northern Alps, Sardinia and Sicily.

Lonely Planet's *Cycling in Italy* offers practical tips and several detailed itineraries.

Hiking & Walking

Thousands of kilometres of *sentieri* (marked trails) crisscross Italy, ranging from hardcore mountain treks to gentle lakeside ambles. In season (the end of June to September), the Dolomites (p767) are a favourite hiking destination. Other popular areas include the Cinque Terre (p742), Amalfi Coast (p795) and Mt Etna in Sicily (p806).

Useful websites include www.cai.it (in Italian) and www.parks.it. Lonely Planet's *Walking in Italy* has descriptions of more than 50 walks.

Skiing

Most of the country's top ski resorts are in the northern Alps, although there are excellent facilities throughout the Apennines. Skiing isn't cheap, and high season (Christmas to early January, early February to April) costs will hit your pocket hard. The best way to save money is to buy a

settimana bianca (literally 'white week') package deal, covering seven days' accommodation, food and ski passes.

See The Dolomites section, p767, for further details.

BOOKS

To get in the mood for Italy, dip into:

- *Italy* (Lonely Planet) Where to go, why and how.
- *The World from Italy: Football, Food & Politics* (George Negus) Aussie journalist's wry take on a year in Italy.
- *Heel to Toe: Encounter in the South of Italy* (Charles Lister) Follow Lister on a moped journey through southern Italy.
- *The Dark Heart of Italy* (Tobias Jones) A no-holds exposé of Berlusconi's many shenanigans.

BUSINESS HOURS

For the purposes of this chapter, opening hours have only been provided in the Information, Eating, Drinking, Entertainment and Shopping sections when they differ from the following standards:

Banks (8.30am-1.30pm & 2.45-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Bars & Cafés (7.30am-8pm) Many open earlier and some stay open until the small hours. Pubs often open noon-2am.

Discos & Clubs (10pm-4am) The action rarely starts much before midnight.

Pharmacies (8.30am-1pm & 4-7.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Outside of these times, pharmacies open on a rotation basis, although all are legally required to post a list of places open in the vicinity.

Post Offices Major offices (8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) branch offices (8.30am-1.50pm Mon-Fri, to 11.50am Sat)

Restaurants (noon-3pm & 7.30-11pm, later in summer) By law, restaurants close one day a week; many also close for a couple of weeks in August.

Shops (9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm, or 4-8pm Mon-Sat) Increasingly, chain stores and supermarkets open from 9am to 7.30pm Monday to Saturday; some also open from 11am to 1pm and 4pm to 7pm Sunday. Food shops often close on Thursday afternoons; some other shops remain closed on Monday mornings.

Tourist Offices (8.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Fri) In major cities, offices generally open all day; in smaller towns opening times can vary according to the season.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Petty theft is the main problem for travelers in Italy. See the Regional Directory,

p1101, for more on this. An insidious form of theft to watch out for is short-changing. One popular dodge goes as follows: you pay for a €4 *panino* with a €20 note. The cashier then distractedly gives you a €1 coin and a €5 note before turning away. The trick here is to wait and chances are that the €10 note you're waiting for will appear without a word being said.

Road rules in Italy are obeyed with discretion, so don't take it for granted that cars will stop at red lights. To cross the road you'll need to step confidently into the traffic and walk calmly across. Tread carefully though – there's a lot of dog mess about. Heavy traffic also means nasty air pollution, particularly in Rome, Milan, Florence and Naples.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Italian Embassies & Consulates

Australia Canberra (☎ 02-6273 3333; www.ambitalia.org.au; 12 Grey St, Deakin ACT 2600); Melbourne (☎ 03-9867 5744; consolatogenerale.melbourne@esteri.it; 509 St Kilda Rd VIC 3004); Sydney (☎ 02-9392 7900; itconsyd@itconsyd.org; Level 45, The Gateway, 1 Macquarie Pl NSW 2000)

Austria (☎ 01-712 51 21; www.ambvienna.esteri.it; Metternichgasse 13, Vienna, 1030)

Canada Ottawa (☎ 613-232 2401; www.italyincanada.com; 21st fl, 275 Slater St, Ontario, K1P 5H9); Montreal (☎ 514-849 8351; www.italconsul.montreal.qc.ca; 3489 Drummond St, Quebec H3G 1X6); Vancouver (☎ 604-684 7288; www.italianconsulate.bc.ca; Standard Bldg 1100-510 West Hastings St, BC V6B 1L8)

France (☎ 01 49 54 03 00; www.ambparigi.esteri.it; 7 rue de Varenne, Paris, 75343)

Germany (☎ 030-254 40 0; www.ambberlino.esteri.it; Hiroshima Strasse 1, Berlin, 10785)

Ireland (☎ 01-660 1744; www.italianembassy.ie; 63-65 Northumberland Rd, Dublin 4)

Netherlands (☎ 070-302 10 30; www.ambblaja.esteri.it; Alexanderstraat 12, The Hague, 2514 JL)

New Zealand (☎ 04-494 7170; www.ambwellington.esteri.it; 34 Grant Rd, Thorndon, Wellington)

Switzerland (☎ 031 350 07 77; www.ambberna.esteri.it; Elfenstrasse 14, Bern, 3006)

UK London (☎ 020-7312 2200; www.ambblondra.esteri.it; 14 Three Kings Yard, W1K 4EH); Edinburgh (☎ 0131-220 36 95; 32 Melville St, EH3 7HA)

USA Washington (☎ 202-612 4400; www.italyemb.org; 3000 Whitehaven St, NW Washington, DC 20008); Los Angeles (☎ 310-826 62 07; la.italcons@itwash.org; Suite 300, 12400 Wilshire Blvd, 90025); New York (☎ 212-737 9100; www.italconsulnyc.org; 690 Park Ave, 10021)

Embassies & Consulates in Italy

Australia (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 85 27 21, emergencies 800 87 77 90; www.italy.embassy.gov.au; Via Antonio Bosio 5, 00161; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Austria Embassy (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 844 01 41; www.austria.it; Via Pergolesi 3, 00198); Consulate (off Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 855 28 80; Via Liegi 32; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Canada (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 44 59 81; www.canada.it; Via G B de Rossi 27, 00161; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

France Embassy (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 68 60 11; www.france-italia.it; Piazza Farnese 67, 00168) Consulate (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 68 60 11; Via Giulia 251; ☎ 9am-12.30pm Mon-Fri)

Germany (Map p724; ☎ 06 49 21 31; www.rom.diplo.de; Via San Martino della Battaglia 4, 00185; ☎ 8.30-11.30am Mon-Fri)

Ireland (Map pp726-7; ☎ 06 697 91 21; www.ambasciata-irlanda.it; Piazza Campitelli 3, 00186; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon-Fri)

Netherlands (off Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 36 76 71; www.olanda.it; Via della Camiluccia 701, 00135; ☎ 9am-noon Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri)

New Zealand (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 441 71 71; www.nzembassy.com; Via Zara 28, 00198; ☎ 8.30am-12.45pm & 1.45-5pm Mon-Fri)

Switzerland (off Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 80 95 71; www.eda.admin.ch/roma; Via Barnaba Oriani 61, 00197; ☎ 9am-noon Mon-Fri)

UK (Map pp718-19; ☎ 06 422 00 001; www.britishembassy.gov.uk; Via XX Settembre 80a, 00187; ☎ 9.15am-1.30pm Mon-Fri)

USA (Map pp722-3; ☎ 06 4 67 41; www.usis.it; Via Vittorio Veneto 119a, 00187; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The following is a brief list of some of Italy's most famous celebrations:

February, March & April

Carnevale In the period before Ash Wednesday, many towns stage carnivals. The best known is in Venice (see p755).

Settimana Santa Italy celebrates Holy Week with processions and Passion plays. On the evening of Good Friday, the pope leads a candlelit procession to the Colosseum in Rome and on Easter Sunday he gives his traditional blessing.

Scoppio del Carro A cart full of fireworks is exploded in Florence's Piazza del Duomo on Easter Saturday (see p774).

May–September

Palio delle Quattro Antiche Repubbliche Marinare (Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics) Boat races between the four historical maritime republics – Pisa,

Venice, Amalfi and Genoa. The event rotates between the towns and is usually held in June.

Il Palio On 2 July and 16 August, Siena stages its extraordinary bareback horse race (see p780).

Mostra del Cinema di Venezia (Venice International Film Festival) The international film glitterati disembark at Venice Lido for the annual film fest (see p755).

December

Natale During the weeks preceding Christmas, there are numerous processions and religious events. Many churches set up elaborate cribs or nativity scenes known as *presepe* – Naples is famous for these.

HOLIDAYS

Most Italians take their annual holiday in August. This means that many businesses and shops close down for at least a part of the month, particularly around *Ferragosto* (Feast of the Assumption; 15 August).

Italian schools close for three months in summer, for three weeks over Christmas, and for a week at Easter.

Public holidays include:

Epifania (Epiphany) 6 January

Pasquetta (Easter Monday) March/April

Giorno della Liberazione (Liberation Day) 25 April

Festa del Lavoro (Labour Day) 1 May

Festa della Repubblica (Republic Day) 2 June

Ferragosto (Feast of the Assumption) 15 August

Ognisanti (All Saints' Day) 1 November

Immacolata Concezione (Feast of the Immaculate Conception) 8 December

Natale (Christmas Day) 25 December

Festa di Santo Stefano (Boxing Day) 26 December

Individual towns also have holidays to celebrate their patron saints.

Festa di San Marco (Feast of St Mark; Venice) 25 April

Festa di San Giovanni (Feast of St John the Baptist; Florence, Genoa and Turin) 24 June

Festa di San Pietro e San Paolo (Feast of St Peter and St Paul; Rome) 29 June

Festa di Santa Rosalia (Feast of St Rosalia; Palermo) 15 July

Festa di San Gennaro (Feast of St Januarius; Naples) first Sunday in May, 19 September & 16 December

Festa di Sant'Ambrogio (Feast of St Ambrose; Milan) 7 December

INTERNET RESOURCES

Delicious Italy (www.deliciousitaly.com) Get your tastebuds in the mood.

Italian Government Tourist Board (www.enit.it) Comprehensive site of the Italian tourist board.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Comprehensive travel website.

Parks.it (www.parks.it) Information on Italy's national parks.

Trenitalia (www.trenitalia.it) Plan, book and check on Italy's railway site.

Vatican (www.vatican.va) The Vatican's official website.

What's On (www.whatsoninrome.com) A good website resource for events in Rome.

MONEY

Italy's currency since 2002 has been the euro. The best way to manage your money is to use your debit/credit cards, while keeping a fistful of travellers cheques as backup. Visa and MasterCard are widely recognised, as are Cirrus and Maestro; American Express is accepted but is less common. Credit and debit cards can be used in *bancomat* (ATMs) displaying the appropriate sign. If you don't have a PIN, some, but not all banks will advance cash over the counter.

If your credit card is lost, stolen or swallowed by an ATM, telephone toll free to have an immediate stop put on its use. For MasterCard call ☎ 800 87 08 66; for Visa ☎ 800 81 90 14; and for American Express ☎ 800 864 046.

Visa, Travelex and Amex are the most widely accepted travellers cheques, although changing even these in smaller cities can be difficult. You'll find exchange offices at major airports and train stations. For lost or stolen cheques call: Amex ☎ 800 72 000; MasterCard ☎ 800 870 866; Travelex ☎ 800 335 511; Visa ☎ 800 874 155.

You're not expected to tip on top of restaurant service charges, but if you think the service warrants it feel free to leave a little extra – 10% is fine. In bars, Italians often leave small change (€0.10/€0.20).

POST

Italy's much maligned postal system, **Poste** (☎ 803 160; www.poste.it, in Italian), has improved a lot in recent years, but is still hardly a model of efficiency.

The best service to use is *posta prioritaria* (priority mail), which guarantees delivery of letters to European destinations in three days and to the rest of the world in four to eight days. Registered mail is known as *raccomandato*, insured mail as *assicurato*.

Stamps (*francobolli*) are available at post offices and tobacconists (*tabacchi*) – look

for the official sign, a big white 'T' against a black background.

TELEPHONE

Local and long-distance calls can be made from Telecom offices or public phones. Rates, particularly for long-distance calls, are among the highest in Europe. The cheapest time to call is from midnight to 8am and all of Sunday; peak rates apply from 8am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday and until 1pm on Saturday.

To make a reverse-charge (collect) international call, dial ☎ 170. All operators speak English. For international directory inquiries, call ☎ 176.

To call Italy from abroad, dial ☎ 0039 and then the area code, including the first zero.

Mobile Phones

Italy is one of the most mobile saturated countries in the world and was one of the first places to introduce video phones. Phones operate on the GSM 900/1800 network, which is compatible with the rest of Europe and Australia, but not with the North American GSM 1900 or the Japanese system (although some GSM 1900/900 phones do work here).

If you have a GSM dual- or tri-band cellular phone that you can unlock (check with your service provider), you need only buy a *prepagato* (prepaid) SIM card to use it in Italy. Companies offering SIM cards include TIM (Telecom Italia Mobile), Wind and Vodafone-Omnitel. You'll need your passport to open an account.

Phone Codes

The country code for Italy is 39. Mobile phone numbers begin with a three-digit prefix such as 330 or 339; toll-free (free-phone) numbers are known as *numeri verdi* and usually start with 800; national call rate numbers start with 848 or 199.

Area codes are an integral part of all Italian phone numbers, meaning that you must always use them, even when calling locally.

Phonecards

To phone from a public pay phone you'll need a *scheda telefonica* (telephone card), although you'll still find some that accept

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance ☎ 118
- Carabinieri/police ☎ 112/113
- Fire Brigade ☎ 115
- Road Rescue ☎ 116

credit cards and coins. You can buy phone-cards (€5, €10, €20) at post offices, tobacconists and newsstands.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Italy is not an easy country for disabled travellers. Cobble streets, blocked pavements and tiny lifts all make life difficult. Rome-based **Consorzio Cooperativo Integrate** (COIN; ☎ 06 232 69 231; www.coinsociale.it) is the best point of reference for disabled travellers.

For those travelling by train, www.trenitalia.com has details of services at stations.

VISAS

EU citizens don't need a visa to enter Italy and, with a *permesso di soggiorno* (permit to stay, see below), can stay as long as they like. Nationals of Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Switzerland and the USA don't need a visa for stays of up to 90 days.

South African citizens require a visa for Italy. The standard tourist visa for a Schengen country (Italy is one of the 15 signatories of the Schengen Convention – for further details see the Regional Directory, p1109) is valid for 90 days. You must apply for it in your country of residence and you can not apply for more than two in any 12-month period. They are not renewable inside Italy.

Technically, all foreign visitors to Italy are supposed to register with the local police within eight days of arrival. However, if you're staying in a hotel you don't need to bother as the hotel does this for you.

Permesso di Soggiorno

A *permesso di soggiorno* is required by all EU citizens who stay in Italy longer than three months and by all non-EU nationals. In theory, non-EU citizens should apply for one within eight days of arriving in Italy. To get one you'll need a valid passport, containing a stamp with your date of entry into Italy

(ask for this as it's not automatic); a study visa if relevant; four passport-style photographs; and proof of your ability to support yourself financially (ideally a letter from an employer or school/university). These requirements change periodically, so always check before you join the inevitable queue.

Non-EU citizens who want to study in Italy must obtain a study visa from their nearest Italian embassy or consulate.

TRANSPORT IN ITALY

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The increasing number of low-cost carriers means you should be able to find a decent airfare into Italy. High season is June to September; two months either side of this is the shoulder season, with low season officially November to March. Christmas and Easter also cause fares to spike. For details of discounted fares see Tickets in the Transport in Western Europe chapter, p1112.

Italy's main intercontinental gateway is **Leonardo da Vinci airport** (FCO; www.adr.it) in Rome, but regular intercontinental flights also serve Milan's **Malpensa** (MXP; www.sea-aeropotomilano.it). Low-cost carriers generally fly into Italy's regional airports, including **Ciampino** (CIA; www.adr.it) in Rome, Pisa's **Galileo Galilei** (☎ 050 50 07 07; www.pisa-airport.com) and **Marco Polo** (VCE; www.veniceairport.it) in Venice.

The country's national carrier is Alitalia. At the time of research, the company was beset by industrial strife as management tried to impose cost-cutting measures on an increasingly insecure workforce.

International airlines flying to/from Italy include:

Air Berlin (code AB; ☎ 848 39 00 54; www.airberlin.com)

Air Canada (code AC; ☎ 06 55 112; www.aircanada.ca)

Air Dolomiti (code EN; ☎ 045 860 52 11; www.airdolomiti.it)

Air France (code AF; ☎ 848 88 44 66; www.airfrance.com)

Air New Zealand (code NZ; ☎ 06 488 07 61; www.airnz.co.nz)

Alitalia (code AZ; ☎ 06 22 22; www.alitalia.it)

American Airlines (code AA; ☎ 06 660 53 169; www.aa.com)

British Airways (code BA; ☎ 199 712 266; www.britishairways.com)

Delta Air Lines (code DL; ☎ 800-477-999; www.delta.com)

easyJet (code U2; ☎ 848 88 77 66; www.easyjet.com)

Hapag-Lloyd Express (code X3; ☎ 199 192 692; www.hlx.com)

Jet2 (code LS; ☎ in UK 44-207 170 07 37; www.jet2.com)

KLM (code KL; ☎ 199 414 199; www.klm.com)

Lufthansa (code LH; ☎ 199 400 044; www.lufthansa.com)

Qantas (code QF; ☎ 06 524 82 725; www.qantas.com)

Ryanair (code FR; ☎ 889 67 89 10; www.ryanair.com)

Singapore Airlines (code SQ; ☎ 06 478 55 360; www.singaporeair.com)

Thai Airways International (code TG; ☎ 06 47 81 31; www.thaiair.com)

Virgin Express (code TV; ☎ 800 097 097; www.virgin-express.com)

Land BUS

A consortium of European coach companies, **Eurolines** (www.eurolines.com), operates across Europe with offices in all major European cities. Italy-bound buses head to Turin, Milan, Rome and Florence. Its multilingual website gives details of prices, passes and travel agencies where you can book tickets.

Busabout (☎ 020 7950 1661; www.busabout.com) runs to Rome, Florence, Siena, Pisa, Ancona, Venice and La Spezia as well as 60 other European cities. It offers passes of varying duration, allowing you to use its hop-on hop-off service.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Traversing the Alps into Italy, the main, year-round road routes are: the Mont Blanc tunnel from France; the Grand St Bernard tunnel from Switzerland; and the Brenner Pass from Austria. All three connect with major *autostrade* (motorways).

When driving into Italy always carry proof of ownership of a private vehicle. You'll also need third-party motor insurance. For more on driving in Italy see opposite.

TRAIN

International trains depart from Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin and Venice for a number of destinations including Nice, Paris, Munich, Barcelona, Zurich and Vienna. It's always advisable, and sometimes necessary, to book seats on international trains.

For the latest fare information on journeys to Italy, contact the **Rail Europe Travel Centre** (☎ 0870 848 848; www.raileurope.co.uk).

For details of Eurail and Inter-Rail passes, both valid in Italy, see the Transport in Western Europe chapter, p1121.

Sea

Numerous ferry services connect Italy with other Mediterranean countries; for a comprehensive list log onto **Traghettonline** (www.traghettonline.net).

Unless otherwise stated, quoted prices are for a one-way deck ticket in high season. Note that Eurail and Inter-Rail pass holders pay only a supplement on the Italy to Greece routes from Ancona and Bari. See also p822 for details of the Greece 'n' Italy pass.

Major ferry companies include:

Adriatica (☎ 199 12 31 99; www.adriatica.it) Ancona to Split in Croatia (€46, 7½hr).

Agoudimos (☎ 0831 52 90 91; www.agoudimos-lines.com) Brindisi to Corfu (€54, 6½hr) and Igoumenitsa (€54, 7½hr).

Fragline Ferries (☎ 0831 54 85 40; www.fragline.gr) Brindisi to Igoumenitsa (€53, 10hr) and/or Corfu (€53, 8¼hr).

Grandi Navi Veloci (☎ 800 46 65 10; www2.gnv.it) Genoa to Sardinia (Porto Torres €49, 11hr; Olbia €38, 10hr), Sicily (Palermo €75, 20hr), Barcelona (€56, 18hr) and Tunis (€104, 24hr).

Hellenic Mediterranean Lines (☎ 0831 52 85 31; www.hml.it) Brindisi to Igoumenitsa (€44, 8hr), Patras (€54, 14hr), Corfu (€44, 11½ hr) and Kefallonia (€54, 12½hr).

Marmara Lines (☎ 071 207 61 65; www.mararalines.com) Ancona to Cesme in Turkey (€92, 55½ hr).

Minoan Lines (☎ 071 20 17 08; www.minoan.gr) Ancona to Igoumenitsa (€80, 16hr) and Patras (€80, 22hr); Venice to Corfu (€83, 22hr), Igoumenitsa (€83, 23½ hr) and Patras (€83, 29½ hr).

Moby Lines (☎ 010 254 15 13; www.mobylines.it) Genoa to Corsica (Bastia €15, 4hr) and Sardinia (Olbia €42, 7hr)

SNAV (☎ 0831 52 54 92; www.snav.it) Naples to Palermo (€31, 10½hr) and Lipari (€85, 5½hr); Brindisi to Corfu (€80, 3¾hr).

Superfast Ferries (☎ 071 207 02 40; www.superfast.com) Ancona to Igoumenitsa (€74, 15hr) & Patras (€74, 21hr).

Tirrenia (☎ 800 82 40 79; www.tirrenia.it) Genoa to Sardinia (Porto Torres €55, 10hr; Olbia €40, 13½ hr).

For further details on sea transport see individual town entries.

GETTING AROUND

You can get pretty much anywhere in Italy by train, bus or ferry – services are generally efficient and cheap. Domestic airlines connect major cities, but flights are relatively expensive. If driving, weigh up the pros (often considerable) against the cons of expensive petrol, motorway tolls and the difficulty of city parking.

Air

Italy's domestic airlines are **Air One** (☎ 199 20 70 80; www.flyairone.it); **Alitalia** (☎ 06 22 22; www.alitalia.it); **Meridiana** (☎ 199 11 13 33; www.meridiana.it) and **Volareweb** (☎ 199 41 45 00; www.buyvolareweb.com).

The main airports are in Rome, Pisa, Milan, Bologna, Genoa, Turin, Naples, Venice, Catania, Palermo and Cagliari, but there are other, smaller airports throughout the country.

Bicycle

Cycling is a popular pastime in Italy, particularly in the north. Tourist offices can provide details of designated bike trails and bike hire (rental costs are about €10 per day).

There are no particular road rules for cyclists, although you'd do well to equip yourself with a helmet and lights.

Bikes can be taken on any train carrying the bike logo, but you'll need to pay a bike supplement (€3.50, or €5 for Eurostars). They travel free on ferries.

Boat

Navi (large ferries) service Sicily and Sardinia; *traghetti* (smaller ferries) and *aliscafi* (hydrofoils) cover the smaller island routes, including Elba, the Aeolian Islands, Capri and Ischia. The main embarkation points for Sardinia are Genoa, Livorno, Civitavecchia and Naples; for Sicily, Naples and Villa San Giovanni in Calabria. Most long-distance ferries travel overnight.

For details of the major ferry companies see the list on opposite; otherwise, refer to individual town entries.

Bus

Italy boasts an extensive and largely reliable bus network. Buses are not necessarily cheaper than trains, but in mountainous areas such as Umbria, Sicily and Sardinia they are often the only choice. Reserva-

tions are usually only necessary for longer trips.

Major companies include **Marozzi** (www.marozzi.it, in Italian) and **Interbus** (☎ 0935 56 51 11; www.interbus.it, in Italian).

Car & Motorcycle

Roads are generally good throughout the country and there's an excellent system of *autostrade*. There's a toll to use most *autostrade*, payable in cash or by credit cards at exit barriers. Motorways are indicated by an A on a green background, main roads (*strade statali*) by an S or SS against a blue background.

Italy's motoring organisation **Automobile Club d'Italia** (ACI; ☎ 800 116 80; www.aci.it; ☎ 24hr) is an excellent source of information and offers 24-hour emergency assistance (dial ☎ 116 from a landline or ☎ 800 11 68 00 from a mobile).

Petrol prices are high in Italy – around €1.30 for a litre of *benzina senza piombo* (unleaded petrol); *gasolio* (diesel) is cheaper at €1.20.

DRIVING LICENCE

All EU driving licences are recognised in Italy. Holders of non-EU licences must get an International Driving Permit (IDP) to accompany their national licence.

HIRE

To hire a car you must be 21 or over (23 or above for some companies), possess a valid driving licence and have a credit card (without one you will have to leave a large cash deposit). Make sure you understand what is included in the price (unlimited kilometres, tax, insurance, collision damage waiver etc) and what your liabilities are. For the best rental rates, book your car before leaving home.

The most competitive multinational rental agencies are:

Avis (☎ 199 10 01 33; www.avis.com)

Budget (☎ 800 472 33 25; www.budget-italy.com)

Europcar (☎ 800 01 44 10; www.europcar.com)

Hertz (☎ 199 21 31 12; www.hertz.com)

Maggiore (☎ 848 86 70 67; www.maggiore.com)

You'll have no trouble hiring a scooter or motorcycle (provided you're over 18); there are rental agencies in all Italian cities. Rates average about €20 a day for a 50cc scooter.

INSURANCE

If you're driving your own car, you'll need an international insurance certificate, known as a *Carta Verde* (Green Card), available from your insurance company.

ROAD RULES

In Italy drive on the right, overtake on the left and give way to cars coming from the right. It's obligatory to wear seat belts (including rear seat belts if fitted), to drive with your headlights on outside built-up areas and to carry a warning triangle and fluorescent waistcoat in case of breakdown. Wearing a helmet is compulsory on all two-wheeled vehicles. The blood alcohol limit is 0.05%.

Speed limits, unless otherwise indicated by local signs, are: 130km/h (in rain 110km/h) on *autostrade*; 110km/h (in rain 90km/h) on all main, nonurban roads; 90km/h on secondary, nonurban roads; and 50km/h in built-up areas. Speeding fines range from a minimum of €35 to a maximum of €1433.

Many Italian cities, including Rome, Bologna, Florence, Milan and Turin, have introduced restricted access to their historical centres. The restrictions apply to both private and rental cars, but not vehicles with foreign registrations. *Motorini* (mopeds and scooters) can enter the zones.

Train

The partially privatised **Trenitalia** (☎ 89 20 21; www.trenitalia.com) runs most train services in

Italy. There are several types of trains: local *regionale* or *interregionale* trains; faster InterCity (IC) services; and quickest of all, the Eurostar (ES) trains.

Ticket prices depend on the type of train and class (first class costs almost double second class). Regional trains are cheaper than InterCity and Eurostar services, both of which require a supplement determined by the distance to travel. Eurostar ticket prices include a compulsory reservation fee. Generally, it's cheaper to buy all local train tickets in Italy – check for yourself on the Trenitalia website.

Unless otherwise stated, train prices quoted in this chapter are for an InterCity, one-way 2nd-class ticket.

Tickets must be validated – in the yellow machines at the entrance to platforms – before boarding trains.

TRAIN PASSES

Available at all major train stations, the Trenitalia Pass allows for four to 10 days of travel within a two-month period. At the time of writing, four-/six-/10-day passes cost €158/194/266.

The Greece 'n' Italy Pass (4-day adult/youth pass €199/167, 10-day adult/youth pass €319/269) entitles holders to travel on trains in Italy and Greece for four to 10 days within a two-month period, as well as a return ticket on any Superfast or Blue Star ferry between Ancona/Brindisi and Greece.