

Abruzzo & Molise



A stunning mountain region little known to foreign visitors, Abruzzo is an area of unspoiled natural beauty and rural, back-country charm. It might only be an hour from Rome but it feels like a world apart with its great Apennine peaks, still, silent valleys and pretty hilltop towns. To the south, Molise offers more of the same, albeit on a smaller, less dramatic scale.

Tourism hasn't bypassed the area but nor has it taken over completely and with visitor numbers in freefall after the devastating earthquake of 2009, there's never been a better time to go. Many people make for the heavily developed Adriatic resorts but it's inland that you'll discover the real heart of these two regions.

Abruzzo and Molise boast three national parks encompassing 3350 sq km of mountainous terrain. The oldest and most popular is the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise, where wolves and bears roam free in the vast beech woods and verdant slopes. A mecca for outdoor enthusiasts, it also offers wonderful hiking, skiing and mountain-biking.

Traditionally poor and neglected, neither region is as culturally rich as its more illustrious neighbours, but there are gems to be found. Pescocostanzo's baroque centre and Sulmona's historic *palazzi* testify to past glories, while prehistoric finds in Isernia reveal the presence of one of Europe's oldest human settlements. Isolation has also ensured the survival of age-old customs such as Cocullo's bizarre snake-charmers' procession and the manic bull race in Ururi. In Scanno, you'll still see elderly women wearing traditional clothing.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Breathe in the pure mountain air of **Pescocostanzo** (p624), one of Abruzzo's hidden jewels
- Travel back in time as you walk the ancient Roman town of **Saepinum** (p630).
- Dance with wolves at **Civitella Alfedena** (p626) deep in Abruzzo's green heartland
- Feel the call of the wild as you climb the **Corno Grande** (p620), summit of the Gran Sasso and the Apennine's highest peak
- Get with the summer swing at **Termoli** (p632), a cheerful and unpretentious Adriatic resort



■ POPULATION: ABRUZZO 1.3 MILLION;
MOLISE 320,850

■ AREA: ABRUZZO 10,794 SQ KM;
MOLISE 4438 SQ KM

ABRUZZO

Best known for its dramatic mountain scenery, Abruzzo's landscape is surprisingly diverse. There are ancient forests in the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise, a vast plain extends east of Avezzano and the coastline is flat and sandy.

Many towns retain a medieval look, while the numerous hilltop castles and isolated, sometimes abandoned, *borghi* (villages) exude a sinister charm, lending credence to Abruzzo's fame as an ancient centre of magic.

PARCO NAZIONALE DEL GRAN SASSO E MONTI DELLA LAGA

About 20km northeast of L'Aquila, the Gran Sasso massif is the centrepiece of the Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga, one of Italy's largest national parks. The park's predominant feature is its jagged rocky landscape through which Europe's southernmost glacier, the Calderone, cuts its course. It's also a haven for wildlife, home to an estimated 40 wolves, 350 chamois and five pairs of royal eagles.

For further information contact the **park office** (☎ 0862 6 05 21; www.gransassolagapark.it, in Italian; Via del Convento 1; ☎ 10.30am–1pm Mon–Fri & 4–6pm Tue & Thu) in **Assergi**.

Fonte Cerreto is the main gateway to the Gran Sasso and Campo Imperatore (2117m), a desolate highland plain where Mussolini

was briefly imprisoned in 1943. A **funivia** (cable car; ☎ 0862 60 61 43; Sat & Sun €14, weekdays €11; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Sat, to 6pm Sun, closed May) runs up to the Campo from Fonte Cerreto. Up top, there's hiking in summer and skiing in winter – see p625.

One of the most popular trekking routes is the surprisingly straightforward climb up **Corno Grande** (at 2912m, it's the Apennines' highest peak). The 9km *via normale* (normal route) starts in the main parking area at Campo Imperatore and heads to the summit. The trail should be clear of snow from early June to late September/early October. If attempting the ascent, or any other serious route, be sure to arm yourself with the CAI 1:25,000 map *Gran Sasso d'Italia* (€10).

The park has a network of *rifugi* (mountain huts) for walkers. Otherwise, you can bed down at **Camping Funivia del Gran Sasso** (☎ 0862 60 61 63; Fonte Cerreto; per person/tent/car €7/8/1.50; ☎ mid-May–mid-Sep), a modest camp site in Fonte Cerreto or, at the top of the cable-car lift, the **Ostello Campo Imperatore** (☎ 0862 40 00 11; Campo Imperatore; per person €30, incl dinner €45), which offers basic year-round digs.

Fonte Cerreto is just off the A24 motorway, clearly signposted. To get here by public transport you'll have to pass through L'Aquila – take bus 76 from L'Aquila to Piazza Santa Maria Paganica, and then the M6 bus to Fonte Cerreto.

EARTHQUAKE ROCKS L'AQUILA

At 3.32am on 6 April 2009, an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale struck northern Abruzzo, killing 308 people, injuring 1500 and leaving almost 65,000 homeless. The epicentre was 10km west of regional capital L'Aquila, but shock waves were felt as far away as Rome, 90km to the southwest, and Naples, 185km to the south.

Much of L'Aquila's *centro storico* was damaged, including the 15th-century Basilica di San Bernadino and the Basilica di Santa Maria di Collemaggio, Abruzzo's most famous church. Built in the 13th century, the basilica is revered by locals for its association with Pope Celestine V, the founder of the Celestine order, who is buried here. To the north, another city landmark, the 16th-century Forte Spagnolo, was also badly hit.

In the aftermath of the quake, and in an effort to focus attention on Abruzzo's plight, Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi hosted the July 2009 G8 summit in L'Aquila, rather than La Maddalena, the original location in northern Sardinia.

Abruzzo and neighbouring Molise are particularly vulnerable to earthquakes as they sit on a major fault line that follows the Apennines from Sicily up to Genoa. In 2002, a 5.4-magnitude quake struck neighbouring Molise, killing 29 people in the small town of San Giuliano di Puglia.

At the time of research L'Aquila's historic centre was off-limits to visitors.

REGIONAL ITINERARY

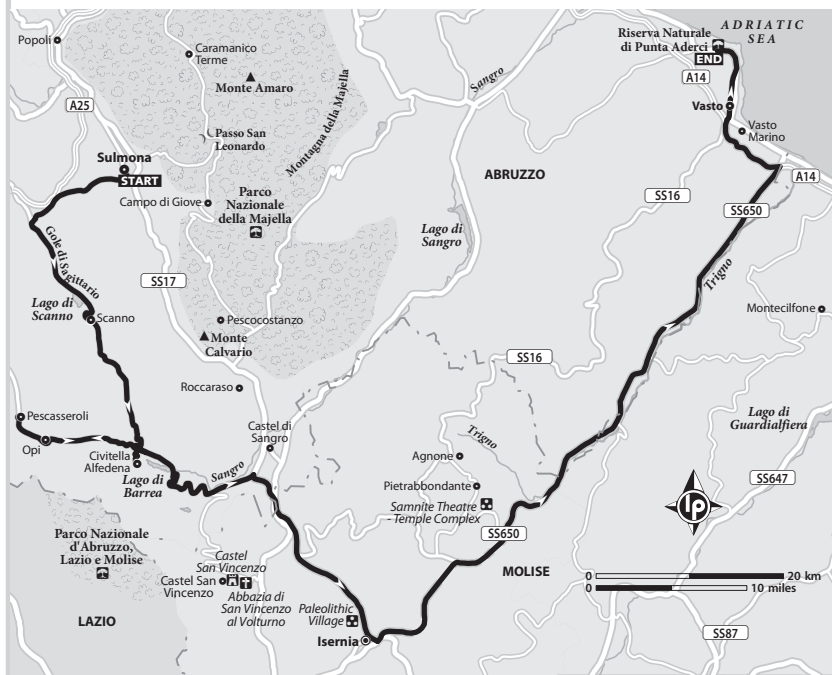
CUT TO THE HEART

One week / Sulmona / Riserva Naturale di Punta Aderci

An oasis in the mountainous terrain of southern Abruzzo, **Sulmona** (p622) is the place to start. With its attractive historic centre, welcoming vibe and great trattorias, it's the archetypal Italian town. Check out the market stalls on Piazza Garibaldi and join the locals on their evening *passeggiata* along Corso Ovidio. After a night in Sulmona, push on southwards to hilltop **Scanno** (p625). It's a slow, scenic ride that takes you through the Gole di Saggittario, a rocky gorge that squeezes the road like a natural vice, and up past the beautiful Lago di Scanno. Scanno's biscuit-tin beauty has made it something of a tourist attraction, but visit out of high summer and you'll find it a tranquil spot.

From Scanno, the next leg leads you up to 1600m and down a long, tortuous descent to the magnificent **Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise** (p626), the most popular of Abruzzo's three national parks. Set up camp in **Civitella Alfedena** (p626), or **Pescasseroli** (p626) if you prefer somewhere livelier, and spend a couple of days exploring the surrounding mountains. Once you've recharged your batteries, continue on to **Isernia** (p631), where excavations have revealed evidence of a Palaeolithic settlement. It's difficult to imagine, but more than 700,000 years ago Homo Erectus was hunting elephant in these parts.

Having boned up on prehistoric history, it's time to hit the coast and top up your tan at **Vasto** (p629), a popular Adriatic resort. If the crowds get too much, and they might in summer, head up the road to the Spiaggia di Punta Penna, a lovely beach in the **Riserva Naturale di Punta Aderci** (p629).





SULMONA

pop 25,325

Hemmed in by dark, brooding mountains, Sulmona is a prosperous provincial town with an atmospheric medieval core. It's easily covered in a day, although you might want to linger and use it as a base for exploring southern Abruzzo.

Despite its medieval appearance, Sulmona's origins predate the Romans. No-one is absolutely sure but tradition holds that it was founded by Solimo, a companion of Aeneas. The poet Ovid was born here in 43 BC, and in the Middle Ages it became an important commercial centre.

Much of Sulmona's modern wealth is based on the production of *confetti* – the sugar almonds presented to guests at Italian weddings – and jewellery.

Orientation

Most sights are on or near the main street, Corso Ovidio, which runs southeast from the Villa Comunale park to Piazza Garibaldi, Sulmona's main square. It's a five-minute stroll and the *corso* is closed to traffic out-

side business hours. About halfway down is Piazza XX Settembre.

The train station is 2km northwest of the historic centre; the half-hourly bus A runs between the two.

Information

3D Sistemi (☎ 0864 21 20 47; Piazza Plebiscito 2; per hr €5; ☒ 9am–1pm & 4–7.30pm Mon–Wed, Fri & Sat) For internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 0864 5 32 76; www.abruzzo.turismo.it; Corso Ovidio 208; ☒ 9am–1pm & 4–7pm Mon–Sat, 9am–1pm Sun mid-May–mid-Sep, 9am–1pm Mon–Sat plus 3–6pm Mon, Wed & Fri mid-Sep–mid-May)

Sights

The most impressive of the *palazzi* on Corso Ovidio is the 16th-century **Palazzo dell'Annunziata** (Corso Ovidio), a harmonious blend of Gothic and Renaissance architecture. Inside, the **Museo Civico** (☎ 0864 21 02 16) has a small collection of Roman mosaics and Renaissance sculpture, and the **Museo Archeologico in situ** showcases a 1st-century-BC Roman villa. At the time of research, both

museums were closed on account of damage sustained in the 2009 earthquake.

Nearby, **Piazza XX Settembre**, with its statue of Ovid, is a popular meeting point.

Continuing along Corso Ovidio you come to what remains of a 13th-century **aqueduct** and, beneath that, **Piazza Garibaldi**, home of Sulmona's Wednesday and Saturday market. In the centre of the piazza, the Renaissance **Fontana del Vecchio** (Fountain of the Old One) is said by some to depict Solimo, the founder of Sulmona. To the northeast, the 14th-century **Chiesa di San Filippo Neri** (Piazza Garibaldi) boasts an impressive Gothic portal.

Also on the square, housed in a former convent, is the **Polo Museale Santa Chiara** (☎ 0864 21 29 62; Piazza Garibaldi; admission €3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-7.30pm daily), a small museum with an eclectic collection of religious and contemporary art. A highlight is a fascinating *presepe* (nativity scene) depicting 19th-century Sulmona.

About 1km from Porta Napoli, at the southern end of Corso Ovidio, is the **Fabbrica Confetti Pelino**, the most famous of Sulmona's *confetti* manufacturers. Learn how they do it at the **Museo dell'Arte Confettiera** (☎ 0864 21 00 47; Via Stazione Introdacqua 55; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat).

Festivals & Events

Crowds swell Piazza Garibaldi on Easter Sunday to witness the **Madonna che Scappa in Piazza** (The Madonna that Escapes to the Square), Sulmona's traditional Easter ceremony.

Summer sees further festivities as the city hosts two medieval tournaments. On the last weekend in July, local horse riders gallop around Piazza Garibaldi in the **Giostra Cavalleresca di Sulmona**. Then, a week later, the competition is opened up to riders from across Europe in the **Giostra Cavalleresca d'Europa**.

Sleeping

B&B Case Bonomini (☎ 0864 5 23 08; www.bedandbreakfastcasebonomini.com; Via Quatrario 71; s €25-30, d €50-70, tr €65-90) Hidden away on a back street in the historic centre, this mini-apartment is one of three properties on the same street. It's a modest place with homey decor and a creaky wooden bed but there's plenty of light, the price is right and there's a fully equipped kitchen.

Albergo Ristorante Stella (☎ 0864 5 26 53; www.hasr.it; Via Panfilo Mazara 18; s €40-50, d €70-80) A bright little three-star in the *centro storico*,

OUR TOP FIVE HILLTOP TOWNS IN ABRUZZO

- **Scanno** (p625) – A picturesque knot of grey stone buildings set against a rugged mountain backdrop.
- **Pescocostanzo** (p624) – At 1400m, this is one of Italy's highest municipalities. It boasts a picturesque medieval centre and great hiking and skiing.
- **Vasto** (p629) – With its pretty lanes, impressive Renaissance museum and vast sea views, Vasto's historic centre cuts quite a dash.
- **Chieti** (p628) – Capital of the ancient Marrucini tribe, this windy outpost harbours some fascinating archaeological finds.
- **Sulmona** (opposite) – OK, it's not exactly hilltop, but Ovid's birthplace makes an attractive base for exploring the Parco Nazionale della Majella.

the Stella offers airy, modern rooms and a smart, ground-floor restaurant-wine bar (lunch €14). Discounts of around 20% are available for stays of more than one night and you can arrange bike/car hire as well as airport pick-ups.

Eating & Drinking

ourpick **Hosteria dell'Arco** (☎ 0864 21 05 53; Via M D'Eramo 20; meals €20; ☎ Tue-Sun) You'll remember this place – superb food, lovely, rustic surroundings, laid-back atmosphere and friendly service, all for the princely sum of €20. First up is the fabulous antipasto buffet, prepared from scratch every night, followed by delicious grilled lamb and scrumptious home-made desserts.

La Cantina di Biffi (☎ 0864 3 20 25; Via Barbato 1; meals €20; ☎ closed Sun evening & Mon) Just off Corso Ovidio, this is a charming and atmospheric bistro-wine bar. Exposed stone walls and the arched, vaulted ceiling set the stage for excellent home-made food and local wine, served by the glass from €4.

Pasticceria Palazzone (☎ 0864 21 11 21; Piazza SS Annunziata 2; ☎ Wed-Mon) Grab an outdoor table and sip something cool as you watch the evening parade on Corso Ovidio. If you get the munchies, there's a great spread of ice cream and savoury snacks.

Shopping

A pack of *confetti* is the traditional Sulmona souvenir. Pick one up at **Confetteria Maria Di Vito** (☎ 0864 5 59 08; Corso Ovidio 187) along with a bar of *torrone*, a chewy nougat confection. *Confetti* costs from €4 for a small packet to €10 for a 2kg bag.

Getting There & Away

ARPA (☎ 199 166 952; www.arpaonline.it) buses go to/from L'Aquila (€5.50, 1½ hours, nine daily), Pescara (€5.50, one hour, nine daily), Scanno (€2.90, one hour, 10 daily) and other nearby towns. Striking further afield, **SATAM** (☎ 0871 34 49 69) runs four daily services to Naples (€15, 2½ hours).

Buses leave from a confusing array of points, including Villa Comunale, the hospital, train station, and beneath Ponte Capograssi. Find out which stop you need when you get your ticket from **Agenzia Fai** (☎ 0864 5 17 15; Via Circonvallazione Orientale 3; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4.20-6.30pm Mon-Sat) near Porta Napoli.

By car, Sulmona is just off the A25 autostrada. From L'Aquila, follow the SS17 south.

Trains link with L'Aquila (€3.90, one hour, 11 daily), Pescara (€3.90, 1¼ hours, 17 daily) and Rome (€8.80, 2½ to three hours, seven daily). From the train station take bus A for the centre.

PARCO NAZIONALE DELLA MAJELLA

Easily accessible from Sulmona, the 750-sq-km Parco Nazionale della Majella is an area

of ominous mountains and empty valleys. More than half the park is over 2000m and its high point, Monte Amaro (2793m), is the Apennines' second-highest peak. Some 500km of paths and cycling trails criss-cross the area, providing ample scope for exercise.

From Sulmona the two easiest access points are **Campo di Giove** (elevation 1064m), a small skiing village 18 tortuous kilometres to the southeast, and the lovely town of **Pescocostanzo**, 33km south of Sulmona along the SS17.

In Pescocostanzo there's a **tourist office** (☎ 0864 64 14 40; Vico delle Carceri; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, 9am-1pm & 4-7pm daily Jul & Aug), just off the central Piazza del Municipio. Further information is also available on the park's comprehensive website www.parcomajella.it.

Set amid verdant highland plains, Pescocostanzo (elevation 1400m) is a real gem, a hilltop town whose historic core has changed little in over 500 years. Much of the cobbled centre dates to the 16th and 17th centuries when it was an important town on the 'Via degli Abruzzi', the main road linking Naples and Florence. Of particular note is the **Collegiata di Santa Maria del Colle**, an atmospheric church that combines a superb Romanesque portal with a lavish baroque interior. Nearby, **Piazza del Municipio** is flanked by a number of impressive *palazzi*, including **Palazzo Comunale** with its distinctive clock tower and **Palazzo Fanzago**, designed by the great baroque architect Cosimo Fanzago in 1624.

SNAKES IN COCULLO

A one-horse hamlet in the hills west of Sulmona, **Cocullo** is the unlikely setting for one of Italy's weirdest festivals. The **Processione dei Serpari** (Snake Charmers' Procession) is the highlight of celebrations to honour St Dominic (San Domenico), Cocullo's patron saint and protector against snake bites. Events kick off at noon on the first Thursday of May when villagers gather in the main square to adorn a statue of St Dominic with jewellery, banknotes and dozens of writhing snakes. Once dressed, the saint is paraded through the streets by a team of fearless *serpari*. Local lore holds that if the snakes twist around the saint's head it's good news for the year ahead; if they crawl up the arms, the omens are bad.

Despite the religious element of the festivities, its origins are said to be pagan. Before the arrival of Christianity, locals worshipped a goddess called Angizia, who supposedly had powers to cure snake bites. As Christianity spread, the ancient deities were substituted by Christian saints and St Dominic inherited Angizia's mantle.

The serpents used for the festival are harmless *cervoni* and *saettoni*. They are caught in the surrounding countryside in late March and released back into the hills once the festivities are over.

Cocullo is accessible by a daily bus from Sulmona (€1.40, 20 minutes), although on festival day extra services are laid on – ask at Sulmona tourist office (p622) for details.

TAKE TO THE PISTES

Abruzzo and Molise might lack the glamour of the northern Alps, but skiing is enthusiastically followed and there are resorts across the regions. These include the following:

- **Campo Imperatore** Twenty-two kilometres of mainly downhill pistes in the Parco Nazionale del Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga (p620).
- **Ovindoli** Abruzzo's biggest ski resort has 30km of downhill pistes and 50km of cross-country trails.
- **Campo Felice** A small resort 40km south of L'Aquila with 40km of pistes (30 downhill, 10 cross-country).
- **Pescasseroli** This popular outpost deep in the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise (p626) has 30km of downhill slopes.
- **Campo di Giove** At the foot of the Majella (opposite), this resort offers Abruzzo's highest skiing at 2350m.
- **Pescocostanzo** Good for ski hiking as well as downhill, Pescocostanzo opposite is celebrated for its medieval architecture.
- **Campitello Matese** In Molise's Monti del Matese (p631), Campitello offers 40km of pistes, including 15km for cross-country.

Bank on about €35 for a daily ski pass.

History apart, Pescocostanzo also offers skiing on **Monte Calvario** and summer hiking in the **Bosco di Sant'Antonio**.

If you want to stay in Pescocostanzo, **Albergo La Rua** (☎ 0864 64 00 83; www.larua.it; Via Rua Mozza 1; d €70-100; ☺) is a charming little hotel in the historic centre. The look is country cosy with low wood-beamed ceilings and a stone fireplace, and the superfriendly owners are a mine of local knowledge.

Daily buses run from Sulmona to Pescocostanzo (€3.60, one daily, three hours) via Castel di Sangro, and to Campo di Giove (€1.90, 45 minutes, three daily).

SCANNO

pop 2035

A tangle of steep alleyways and sturdy, grey-stone houses, Scanno is a photogenic hilltop village and a popular tourist destination. It's left to its own devices in winter, but gets very busy in summer as visitors pour in en masse to enjoy the authentic atmosphere of a remote medieval *borgo*. You would not want to miss it, though – if nothing else for the exhilarating drive up from Sulmona, through the rocky Gole di Sagittaro (Sagittarius Gorges) and past tranquil Lago di Scanno.

Long heralded as a bastion of tradition, Scanno was for centuries a centre of wool

production and it is one of the few places in Italy where you can still see women wearing traditional dress.

To learn more, contact the **tourist office** (☎ 0864 7 43 17; Piazza Santa Maria della Valle 12; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-mid-May) in the village centre.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation is plentiful, although many places close in winter and most insist on half-board in July and August. Book ahead for summer.

Pensione Grotta dei Colombi (☎ 0864 7 43 93; www.grottadeicolombi.it; Viale dei Caduti 64; s/d €35/50, half-board per person €42-50; ☒ closed Nov) A sunny two-star on the edge of the *centro storico*. Rooms, some of which have views over the rocky gorge opposite, are unfussy and straightforward with plain white walls and basic pine furniture.

Hotel Belvedere (☎ 0864 7 43 14; www.belvedere-scanno.it; Piazza Santa Maria della Valle 3; s €27.50-35, d €55-70) Despite the tired-looking exterior, this year-round hotel offers spick-and-span modern rooms decked out with parquet and polished wood trimmings. The location, on Scanno's main piazza, is a further plus.

Pizzeria Trattoria Vecchio Mulino (☎ 0864 74 72 19; Via Silla 50; pizzas €6, meals €25; ☒ closed Wed in winter) This old-school eatery is a good bet for a

classic wood-fired pizza, cheesy antipastos and chargrilled hunks of pork and lamb. In summer the pretty streetside terrace provides a good perch to people-watch as you wait for your order.

Ristorante Gli Archetti (☎ 0864 7 46 45; Via Silla 8; meals €35; ☒ closed dinner Mon & Tue) Housed in the cellar of a Renaissance *palazzo*, this smart restaurant is highly rated. The menu is seasonal, but typical dishes include *prosciutto cotto con l'aceto di mela* (cured ham with apple vinegar) and *filetto al montepulciano* (fillet steak with red wine).

Getting There & Away

ARPA (☎ 199 166 952; www.arpaonline.it) buses connect Scanno with Sulmona (€2.90, one hour, nine daily).

PARCO NAZIONALE D'ABRUZZO, LAZIO E MOLISE

Encompassing 1100 sq km of spectacular mountain scenery, the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise is the oldest and most popular of Abruzzo's national parks. It is also an important natural habitat, supporting 60 species of mammals, including the native Marsican brown bear and Apennine wolf, and up to 300 bird species. At current estimates there are reckoned to be about 50 bears, between 40 and 50 wolves, 700 indigenous chamois and two or three pairs of royal eagles. If you're very lucky you might also spot one of the very few lynx still in the wild.

The park offers superb hiking as well as skiing, mountain-biking and other outdoor pursuits.

Orientation & Information

The park's main centre is **Pescasseroli**, an attractive village about 80km south-west of Sulmona. For somewhere more low-key, nearby **Civitella Alfedena** is much less touristy.

In Pescasseroli (elevation 1167m) information is available from the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0863 91 04 61; Via Principe di Napoli; ☒ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun, 9am-1pm & 4-7pm daily Jul & Aug) and from the **Centro di Visita** (☎ 0863 911 32 21; Viale Colli d'Oro; adult/child €6/4; ☒ 10am-7.30pm daily Apr-Aug, to 5.30pm daily Sep-Mar), which also has a small museum and zoo.

Seventeen kilometres from Pescasseroli, Civitella Alfedena (elevation 1121m) lies on the park's eastern edge above Lago di Barrea.

Here, you can study the local flora and fauna at the **Centro Lupo** (Wolf Centre; ☎ 0864 89 01 41; admission €3; ☒ 10am-2pm & 2.30-5.30pm) and spy on a couple of wolves at the free **Area Faunistica del Lupo**. To see a rare lynx follow the signs to the **Area Faunistica delle Lince**.

Activities

Hiking opportunities abound, whether you want to go it alone or with an organised group. There are numerous outfits offering guided excursions including **Ecotur** (☎ 0863 91 27 60; www.ecotur.org; Via Piave 9), which organises treks, bike rides and various other excursions. For further hiking information see the boxed text, opposite.

Horse riding is a wonderful way to see the park. Between May and October, the **Centro Ippico Vallecupa** (☎ 0863 91 04 44; www.agriturismomaneggiovallecupa.it; Via della Difesa) organises riding lessons and guided rides of various difficulties, costing from €15 for a one-hour ride to €60 for a whole day.

For those who prefer to use their own legs, the tourist office hires out bikes from about €4 per hour.

For skiing information see the boxed text, p625.

Sleeping

Campeggio Wolf (☎ 0864 89 03 60; Via Sotto i Cerri, Civitella Alfedena; per person/tent/car €5/5/3; ☒ May-Sep) This is a friendly camp site in Civitella Alfedena. It's a fairly simple affair but there are free hot showers, games for the kids and a restaurant for parents.

ourpick B&B La Sosta (☎ 0863 91 60 57; Via Marsicana 17, Opi; per person €25) A delightful B&B in Opi, about 7km from Pescasseroli. Run with passionate care by a hospitable elderly couple, it offers six smart rooms, a sunny terrace, and excellent access to the nearby mountains. The breakfasts are quite special too, with cakes and lashings of home-made jam.

Albergo La Torre (☎ 0864 89 01 21; www.albergo.latorre.com; Via Castello 3, Civitella Alfedena; s €30-40, d €40-55; ☒ year-round; ☐) Housed in an atmospheric 18th-century *palazzo* in Civitella Alfedena's medieval centre, this is a warm and cosy hotel with 20 functional rooms and a small restaurant serving hot, fortifying food.

Pensione Al Castello (☎ 0863 91 07 57; www.pensione.castello.it; Viale D'Annunzio 1, Pescasseroli; r €45-60, half-board per person €40-60; ☒ year-round) Just off the main square in Pescasseroli, this family-run *pensione*

STRETCH YOUR LEGS

With about 150 well-marked routes, the Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo, Lazio e Molise is a mecca for hikers. Trails range from easy family jaunts to multiday hikes over rocky peaks and exposed highlands. The best time to go is between June and September, although access to some of the busier routes around Pescasseroli is often limited in July and August. To book entry to trails contact the Centro di Visita (opposite) in Pescasseroli or the Centro Lupo (opposite) in Civitella Alfedena.

Two of the area's most popular hikes are the climbs up Monte Amaro (2793m; Rte F1) and Monte Tranquillo (1841m; Rte C3). The former, a 2½-hour hike, starts from a car park a few kilometres southeast of Pescasseroli (follow the SS83 for about 2km beyond Opi) and rises steeply up to the peaks where you're rewarded with stupendous views over the Valle del Sangro. There's quite a good chance of spotting a chamois on this walk.

The Monte Tranquillo route takes about 2½ hours from a starting point 3km south of Pescasseroli (follow signs for the Hotel Iris and Centro Ippico Vallecupa). If you've still got your breath at the top, you can continue northwards along the Rocca Ridge before descending down to Pescasseroli from the north. This beautiful, but challenging, 19.5km circuit takes about six or seven hours.

has large, sunny rooms decorated with white tiled floors and pleasant wooden furniture. Half-board is compulsory in high season.

Also recommended:

Albergo Ai 4 Camosci (☎ 0864 89 02 62; www.ai4camosci.it; Via Nazionale 25, Civitella Alfedena; d €50-80, q €70-108; 📶) A welcoming year-round option in Civitella Alfedena with basic rooms in a chalet-style building.

Eating

Pizzeria San Francisco (☎ 0863 91 06 50; Via Isonzo 1, Pescasseroli; pizzas €6.50) If you're not eating in your hotel, this laid-back pizzeria is a good bet. A modest place with wooden tables and a bustling atmosphere, it serves delicious pizzas prepared in a traditional wood oven.

Trattoria da Armando (☎ 0863 91 23 86; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 11; meals €15; 📶 Fri-Wed) If you're after a quick, no-fuss lunch, this straight-up trattoria does the job. There's a range of *panini* as well as the usual pasta and meat dishes. And while it's all very basic, the food is as good as you'd get in many pricier joints.

Getting There & Away

Pescasseroli, Civitella Alfedena and the other villages in the national park are linked by six daily buses to Avezzano (€4.70, 1½ hours), from where you can change for L'Aquila, Pescara and Rome; and buses to Castel di Sangro (€3.60, 1¼ hours) for connections to Sulmona and Naples.

PESCARA

pop 122,790

Host of the 2009 Mediterranean Games, Abruzzo's largest city is a heavily developed

seaside resort and an important transport hub. It's a lively place with an animated seafront, but unless you're coming for the 16km of sandy beaches there's really no great reason to hang around.

On the cultural front, the big drawcard is the international **jazz festival** (www.pescarajazz.com), held in mid-July at the Teatro D'Annunzio.

Orientation & Information

From the train and intercity bus stations on Piazzale della Repubblica, the beach is a short walk down Corso Umberto I.

In an ex-silo on Piazzale della Repubblica, the **tourist office** (☎ 085 422 54 62; www.proloco.pescara.it; 🕒 9.30am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep, 9.30am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) has plenty of useful information. There's a second office at the **airport** (☎ 085 432 21 20; 🕒 Jun-Sep) which opens in coincidence with flight arrivals.

Sights

Pescara was heavily bombed during WWII and much of the city centre was reduced to rubble. The main action today centres on three zones: the main pedestrian precinct around Corso Umberto, the seafront, and what's left of the historic centre. Here you'll find a couple of museums worth a quick look: the **Museo delle Genti d'Abruzzo** (☎ 085 451 00 26; www.gentidabruzzo.it; Via delle Caserme 24; adult/under 18yr & over 65yr €5/3; 🕒 8.45am-2pm Mon-Sat, 3.30-6.30pm Sun), which illustrates local peasant culture, and the **Museo Casa Natale Gabriele D'Annunzio** (☎ 0865 6 03 91; Corso Manthoné 116; admission €2; 🕒 9am-2pm daily), birthplace of controversial fascist poet Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Near the seafront, the **Museo d'Arte Moderna Vittoria Colonna** (☎ 085 428 37 59; Via Gramsci 26; admission €2; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-9pm Tue-Sat, 3-9pm Mon) boasts a Picasso and Miró among its small collection of modern art.

Sleeping & Eating

our pick B&B Villa del Pavone (☎ 085 421 17 70; www.villadelpavone.it; Via Pizzoferrato 30; d €60-80) Over the tracks on a quiet residential street about 300m behind the train station, this gorgeous B&B is a home away from home. A model of old-fashioned pride, it's laden with gleaming antiques and chichi knick-knacks while, outside, the lush garden is presided over by a resident peacock.

Hotel Alba (☎ 085 38 91 45; www.hotelalba.pescara.it; Via Michelangelo Forti 14; s €50-70, d €75-110; (P)) A businesslike three-star, the Alba provides anonymous comfort and a central location. Rooms vary but the best sport polished wood, firm beds and plenty of sunlight. Note that rates are lowest at weekends and that garage parking costs €10.

Caffè Letterario (☎ 085 450 33 21; Via delle Caserne 22; lunch menus €5-9) With its huge floor-to-ceiling windows and exposed-brick walls, this is a popular lunchtime spot. The menu is chalked up on a daily board but typically comprises a few pastas and mains and several vegetable side dishes.

Ristorante Marechiaro da Bruno (☎ 085 421 38 49; Lungomare Matteotti 70; pizzas €6.50, meals €30; ☎ Thu-Tue) This large, bustling outfit serves the best pizza on the seafront. And if the impressive fish display is anything to go by, the seafood is pretty good too.

our pick Osteria La Lumaca (☎ 085 451 08 80; Via delle Caserne 51; lunch menus €8-15, meals €35; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) They take their food seriously at this warm wood-panelled restaurant. Particularly outstanding are the cured meats and ricotta, and the Abruzzo lamb. You'll save money at lunch by going for one of the fixed-price menus.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Pescara airport (PSR; ☎ 899 130 310; www.abruzzo-airport.it) is 3km out of town and easily reached by bus 38 (€1, 20 minutes, every 15 minutes) from Corso Vittorio Emanuele II in front of the train station. Ryanair and Air One are among the airlines flying to Pescara.

BOAT

Throughout August, a daily **SNAP** (☎ 071 207 61 16; www.snap.it) jetfoil runs to the Croatian island of Hvar and onto Split (Spalato in Italian). One-way tickets for the 4¼-hour journey cost €90 for a *poltrona* and €120 for a car. For information, contact **Agenzia Sanmar** (☎ 0854 451 08 73; www.sanmar.it; Lungomare Giovanni XXIII Papa 1) at the port.

BUS

ARPA (☎ 199 166 952; www.arpaonline.it) buses leave from Piazzale della Repubblica for L'Aquila (€7.80, 2½ hours, 10 daily), Sulmona (€6, one hour, four daily) and many other destinations around Abruzzo and Molise. Buses also run to Naples (€21, 4½ hours, four daily) and to Rome's Stazione Tiburtina (€15, 2¾ hours, 11 daily).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Heading along the coast, you can choose between the A14 or the toll-free SS16. Both the A25 and SS5 lead towards Rome, L'Aquila and Sulmona.

TRAIN

Pescara is on the main east-coast line. There are direct trains to Ancona (€7.10 to €15.20, 1¼ hours, 20 daily), Bari (€16.80 to €28.50, three hours, 15 daily), Rome (€11.70, 3½ hours, six daily) and Sulmona (€3.90, 1¼ hours, 17 daily).

CHIETI

pop 54,900

One of Abruzzo's four provincial capitals, Chieti is a windy, hilltop town 18km south of Pescara. Its roots date back to pre-Roman times when as capital of the Marrucini tribe it was known as Teate Marrucinorum. Later, in the 4th century BC, it was conquered by the Romans and incorporated into the Roman Republic. These days the main reason to stop by is to visit the town's two fascinating archaeology museums.

Chieti's helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0871 6 36 40; Via Spaventa 47; ☎ 8am-1pm & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Jul-Sep, 8am-1pm Mon-Sat & 3-6pm Tue, Thu & Fri Oct-Jun) can provide information and accommodation lists for the town and surrounding area.

Housed in a neoclassical villa in the Villa Comunale park, the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0871 33 16 68; Villa Frigerj; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) displays a compre-

hensive collection of local finds, including the 6th-century-BC *Warrior of Capecstrano*, considered the most important pre-Roman find in central Italy. Mystery surrounds the identity of the warrior but there are some who reckon it to be Numa Pompilio, the second king of Rome and successor to Romulus.

Nearby is the **Complesso Archeologico la Civitella** (☎ 0871 6 31 37; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun), a modern museum built round a Roman amphitheatre. Exhibits chart the history of Chieti and include weapons and pottery dating back to the Iron Age.

About 3km downhill from the historic centre, **Agriturismo Il Quadrifoglio** (☎ 0871 63 4 00; www.agriturismoilquadrifoglio.com; Strada Licini 22, Località Colle Marcone; s/d €40/50; P) is a picturesque farmhouse with rustic rooms, panoramic views and a lovely, overflowing garden. Meals are €15 to €20. To get here follow signs to Colle Marcone.

Regular buses (€1, 40 minutes, every 20 minutes) link Chieti with Pescara.

VASTO

pop 38,795

On Abruzzo's southern coast, Vasto is a jolly hilltop town with an atmospheric medieval quarter and some great sea views. Two kilometres downhill is the blowsy resort of **Vasto Marina**, a strip of hotels, restaurants and camp sites fronting a long sandy beach.

Much of Vasto's *centro storico* dates to the 15th century, a golden period in which the city was known as 'the Athens of the Abruzzi'.

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 0873 36 73 12; Piazza del Popolo 18; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri & 3-6pm Tue, Thu & Fri mid-Sep-Jun, 9am-1pm daily & 4-7pm Mon-Sat Jul-mid-Sep) is in the historic centre.

Sights & Activities

Up in the old town, interest centres on the small historic centre. From the landmark Castello Caldoreo on Piazza Rossetti, Corso de Parma leads down to the 13th-century **Cattedrale di San Giuseppe** (☎ 0873 36 71 93; Via Buonconsiglio 12; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 4.30-7pm), a lovely low-key example of Romanesque architecture. Nearby, the Renaissance **Palazzo d'Avalos** houses the **Museo Civico Archaeologico** (☎ 0873 36 77 73; Piazza del Popolo; admission €1.50;

☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Tue-Sun) with its eclectic collection of ancient bronzes, glasswork and paintings, as well as three other museums – the **Pinacoteca Comunale** (admission €3.50), the **Galleria d'Arte Moderna** (admission free) and the **Museo del Costume** (admission €1.50).

In summer the action moves down to the beach at Vasto Marina. It gets very crowded in August but with a car you can escape north up the SS16 to the beautiful **Spiaggia di Punta Penna** and the **Riserva Naturale di Punta Aderci** (www.puntaderci.it), a 285-hectare area of uncontaminated rocky coastline.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel San Marco (☎ 0873 6 05 37; www.hotelsanmarco.vasto.com; Via Madonna dell'Asilo 4; s €38-52, d €66-86;

☎ ☎) Just off Corso Garibaldi in the upper town, this cracking little two-star is excellent value for money, offering slick modern rooms at far from designer prices. Free wi-fi is also thrown in.

Hostaria del Pavone (☎ 0873 6 02 27; Via Barbarotta; meals €35; ☎ Wed-Mon) With its brick barrel-vaulted ceiling and nautical knick-knacks, this highly regarded restaurant is a great place for creative seafood. Of the menu staples, the standout dish is *brodetto alla vastese*, Vasto's signature fish soup.

Down in Vasto Marina, you can stock up on essentials at **La Bottega del Gusto** (Viale Dalmazia 96; ☎ 8am-1.15pm & 4.30-8.30pm, closed Mon afternoon), a minimarket one block back from the beach.

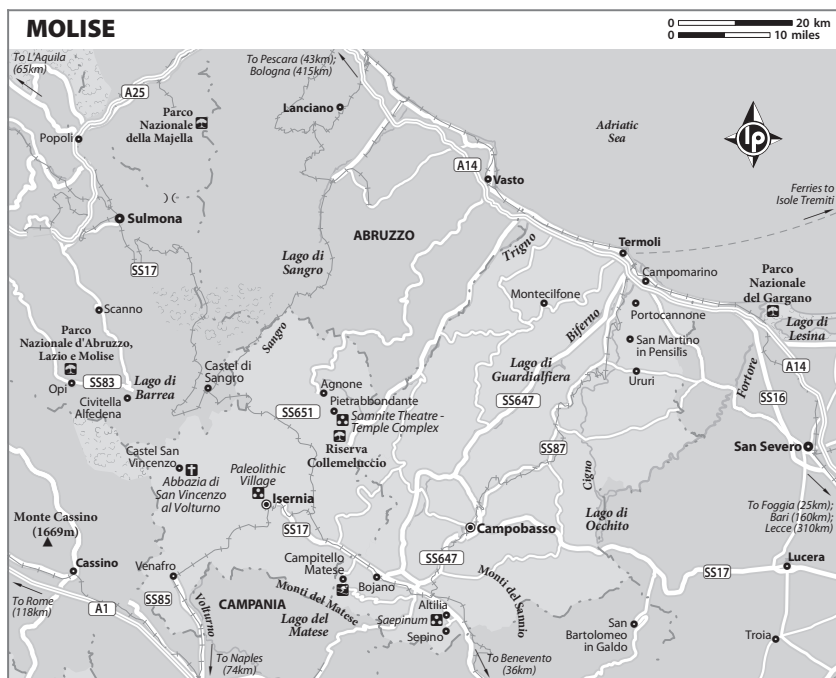
Getting There & Away

By car Vasto is on the A14 autostrada and the SS16, both of which run up the Adriatic coast.

The train station (Vasto-San Salvo) is about 2km south of Vasto Marina. Regional trains run to Pescara (€3.90, one hour, hourly) and Termoli (€2.20, 1¼ hours, 16 daily). From the station take bus 1 or 4 for Vasto Marina and the town centre (€0.90).

MOLISE

One of Italy's forgotten regions, Molise is one of the few parts of the country where you can still get off the beaten track. And while it lacks the grandeur of its northern neighbour, the lack of a slick tourist infrastructure



and the raw, unspoiled countryside ensure a gritty authenticity, so often missing in more celebrated areas.

To get the best out of Molise, you really need your own transport.

CAMPOBASSO

pop 51,320

Molise's regional capital and main transport hub is a sprawling, uninspiring city with little to recommend it. However, if you do find yourself passing through, the pocket-sized *centro storico* is worth a quick look.

Although rarely open, the Romanesque churches of **San Bartolomeo** (Salita San Bartolomeo) and **San Giorgio** (Viale della Rimembranza) are fine examples of their genre. Further up the hill, at the top of a steep tree-lined avenue sits **Castello Monforte** (☎ 339 601 44 80; admission free; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sun). Much of the squat, quadrangular tower that you see today was built in the 15th and 16th centuries after the original Norman castle was damaged by earthquake in 1456. Ceramics found in the castle are now on show at the small **Museo Samnitico** (Samnite Museum; ☎ 0874 41 22 65; Via Chiarizia 12; admission free;

☎ 9am-1pm, 2-5.30pm), along with artefacts from local archaeological sites.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0874 41 56 62; Piazza della Vittoria 14; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon & Wed, to 1.30pm Tue & Thu-Sat) can provide further information on the city and surrounding province. Online, Italian speakers can read up about the city's sights at www.centrostoricocb.it.

For a spot of lunch, **Trattoria La Grotta di Zi Concetta** (☎ 0874 31 13 78; Via Larino 7; meals €25; ☎ Mon-Fri) is an old-school trattoria serving delicious home-made pasta and superb meat dishes.

Unless coming from Isernia, Campobasso is best reached by bus. Services link with Termoli (€3.20, 1¼ hours, nine daily), Naples (€9.60, 2¾ hours, four daily weekdays), and Rome (€11.60, 3½ hours, eight daily). Up to 14 daily trains run to/from Isernia (€2.80, one hour).

AROUND CAMPOBASSO

One of Molise's hidden treasures, the Roman ruins of **Saepinum** (admission free) are among the best preserved and least visited in the country. Unlike Pompeii and Ostia Antica, which were both major ports, Saepinum was a small

provincial town of no great importance. It was originally established by the Samnites but the Romans conquered it in 293 BC, paving the way for an economic boom in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Some 700 years later, it was sacked by Arab invaders. The walled town retains three of its four original gates and its two main roads, the *cardus maximus* and the *decimanus*. Highlights include the forum, basilica and theatre, near to which the **Museo Archeologico Vittoriano** (admission €2; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) displays artefacts unearthed on the site.

It's not easy to reach Saepinum by public transport, but the **Larivera** (☎ 0874 6 47 44; www.lariverabus.it) bus from Campobasso to Sepino (€1.20, six daily weekdays) generally stops near the site at Altilia, although it's best to ask the driver.

Looming over the ruins are the **Monti del Matese** (Matese Mountains). The small town of **Bojano** is the starting point for various walks in the wooded hills, while further uphill the resort of **Campitello Matese** (elevation 1430m) is a popular ski resort with facilities for winter and summer sports.

Outside of the ski season and summer holiday period, the resort pretty much shuts up shop but you can always grab a bite at **Ristorante 2000** (☎ 0874 78 42 03), a no-frills bar-cum-trattoria which serves door-stopper *panini* for €4.

From Campobasso regular buses connect with Bojano (€1.60, 30 minutes, 13 daily). Between December and March, **Autolinee Micone** (☎ 0874 78 01 20) runs three daily buses up to Campitello Matese (one hour).

ISERNIA

pop 21,775

Surrounded by remote, scarcely populated hills, Isernia doesn't make a huge impression. Earthquakes and a massive WWII bombing raid have spared little of its original *centro storico* and the modern centre is a drab, workaday place. The one reason to stop over is to visit the site of one of Europe's oldest human settlements, a 700,000-year-old village unearthed by road workers in 1978 – see the boxed text, below.

If you don't make it to the site, the dusty **Museo Santa Maria delle Monache** (☎ 0865 41 05 00; Corso Marcelli 48; admission €2; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm) houses many of its findings, including piles of elephant and rhino bones, fossils and stone tools.

Isernia's **tourist office** (☎ 0865 39 92; 6th fl, Palazzo della Regione, Via Farinacci 9; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) can provide accommodation lists but little more in the way of practical help.

If you want to stay the night, **Hotel Sayonara** (☎ 0865 5 09 92; www.sayonara.is.it; Via G Berta 131; s/d €55/85; ☎) is the most centrally located hotel. It's an anonymous business-style set-up but rooms are comfortable and there's a convenient restaurant. You'll eat far better though if you head down to the *centro storico*. Whet your appetite with an *aperitivo* at the square-side bar **Alter Ego** (Piazza Celestino V 23, cocktails from €5), before adjourning to **O'Pizzaiuolo** (☎ 0865 41 27 76; Corso Marcelli 214; pizzas €6, meals €20-25) for a delicious wood-fired pizza.

From the bus terminus next to the train station on Piazza della Repubblica, **Trasporti**

HOMO ERECTUS, ISERNIA'S OLDEST CITIZEN

In 1978 work on a new road between Naples and Vasto unearthed an extraordinary archaeological find – a human settlement dating to the lower Palaeolithic period, roughly 730,000 years ago.

Although no hominid fossils have been found, researchers believe the settlement was inhabited by *Homo Erectus*, an evolutionary ancestor of *Homo Sapiens* and the first human species found outside of Africa. The site would have been ideal for habitation with water available from a nearby stream (which is no longer there) and hunting fodder plentiful on the surrounding plains. That *Homo Erectus* was a hunter is evident from the shape of the limestone and flint tools that have been unearthed and the quantity of animal bones discovered on the site, many of which show signs of butchering. Further analysis of the bones reveals that many come from bison, bears, elephants, rhinos and hippos.

Putting all the evidence together, the picture emerges of a small settlement of perhaps 15 to 20 seminomadic hunters living in a landscape of prairies, marshland and wooded mountains.

Excavations are ongoing, although you can visit by calling the **site office** (☎ 0865 41 35 26; Contrada Ramiera Vecchia 1, Località La Pineta).

Molise (☎ 0874 49 30 80; www.molisetrasporti.it) runs buses to Campobasso (€2.80, 50 minutes, eight daily) and Termoli (€6.40, 1¼ hours, three daily). Get tickets from Bar Ragno d'Oro on the square.

Trains connect Isernia with Sulmona (€7.10, 2¼ hours, two daily), Campobasso (€2.80, one hour, 14 daily), Naples (€6, 1¼ hours, six daily) and Rome (€10.50, two hours, six daily).

AROUND ISERNIA

The hills around Isernia are peppered with places of interest. About 30km northeast of town, outside **Pietrabbondante**, the remains of a 2nd-century-BC **Samnite theatre-temple complex** (☎ 0865 7 61 29; adult/concession €2/1; ☎ 10am-6pm) reward a visit, as much as anything for its panoramic setting high above the rolling green countryside.

En route, the 350-hectare **Riserva Collemeluccio** (☎ 9.30am-7pm Jun-Sep, to 5.30pm Apr-May, to 4.30pm Oct-Mar) is a prime picnic venue. It also offers good walking, with several trails leading off from the roadside visitors centre.

Further north, **Agnone** is an ancient hilltop town famous for its bell-making. For more than 1000 years, local artisans have been producing church bells for some of Italy's most famous churches, including St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Learn all about it at the **Marinelli Pontificia Fonderia di Campanie** (☎ 0865 7 82 35; Via D'Onofrio 14; adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☎ guided tours 11am, noon, 4pm & 6pm Mon-Sat & 11am Sun Aug, noon & 4pm Mon-Sat & noon Sun Sep-Jul).

For further information and details of accommodation in the area, ask at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0865 7 72 49; www.prolocoagnone.com; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 78; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 4-6.30pm daily).

From Isernia, **SATI** (☎ 0874 60 52 20) buses serve Pietrabbondante (€1.50, 35 minutes, two daily) and Agnone (€2.05, one hour, nine daily). Buy tickets on the bus.

A 30km drive northwest of Isernia, near Castel San Vincenzo, the **Abbazia di San Vincenzo al Volturno** (☎ 0865 95 52 46; ☎ by appointment only) is famous for its cycle of 9th-century frescoes by Epifanio (824-842). The abbey, one of the foremost monastic and cultural centres in 9th-century Europe, is now home to a community of Benedictine nuns.

Larivera (☎ 0874 6 47 44; www.lariverabus.it) buses run between Isernia and Castel San Vincenzo (€1.50, 45 minutes, five daily), a 1km walk from the abbey.

TERMOLI

pop 31,975

Despite its touristy trattorias and brassy bars, Molise's top beach resort retains a winning, low-key charm. At the eastern end of the sea-front, the pretty *borgo antico* (old town) juts out to sea atop a natural pier, dividing the sandy beach from Termoli's small harbour. From the port, year-round ferries sail for the Isole Tremiti.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0875 70 39 13; www.termoli.net; Piazza Bega 42, 1st flr; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri & 3-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri) is tucked away in a car park behind a small shopping gallery, 100m east of the train station.

The town's most famous landmark, Frederick II's 13th-century **Castello Svevo** (☎ 0875 71 23 54; ☎ on request) guards entry to the tiny *borgo*, a tangle of narrow streets, pastel-coloured houses and souvenir shops. From the castle, follow the road up and you come to Piazza Duomo and Termoli's majestic 12th-century **Cattedrale di San Basso** (☎ 0875 70 63 59; Piazza Duomo; ☎ mass 8.30am Mon-Sat, 9am, 11am & 6.30pm Sun). A masterpiece of Puglian-Romanesque architecture, the cream-coloured facade features a striking round-arched central portal.

Sleeping

Coppola Viallaggio Camping Azzurra (☎ 0875 5 24 04; www.camping.it/molise/azzurra; SS16 Europa 2; per person/tent/car €9/15/3, 4-person bungalow €65-130; ☎ mid-May-Sep; Ⓟ) Termoli's only camp site is a modern, beachfront affair 2km outside town on the SS16 coastal road. As well as shady tent pitches and bungalows, on-site facilities include a minimarket and restaurant.

Pensione Osteria San Giorgio (☎ 0875 70 43 84; www.pensioneangiorgio.it; Corso Fratelli Brigida 20-22; d €55-85, tr €75-110; ☎ year-round; Ⓜ) Right in the heart of the action, this modest *pensione* has 10 clean, uncluttered rooms above a bustling *osteria* (meals €20). With their wrought-iron beds and clean tiled bathrooms, they're pretty good value but they can get noisy in summer.

Residenza Savoia (☎ 0875 70 68 03; www.residenza.sveva.com; Piazza Duomo 11; s €40-80, d €79-180; Ⓜ) Discretion is the keyword at this elegant *centro storico* hotel. The reception is on Piazza Duomo, near the cathedral, but the 13 rooms are squeezed into several *palazzi* in the *borgo*. The style is summery with plenty of gleaming blue tiles and traditional embroidery.

Eating

La Sacrestia (☎ 0875 70 56 03; Via Ruffini 48-50; meals €25, pizzas €6; ☎ daily summer, closed Tue winter) One of the better restaurants in the lively area between Corso Nazionale and Via Fratelli Brigida. Sit streetside or in the brick vaulted interior and chow down on knockout pizza or fresh-off-the-boat seafood.

our pick **Ristorante Da Nicolino** (☎ 0875 70 68 04; Via Roma 3; meals €35; ☎ Fri-Wed) Highly regarded by locals, this discreet restaurant serves the best seafood in town. It's all exceptional, but if you really want to push the boat out, order the show-stopping *brodetto di pesce* (fish soup) served in a big earthenware tureen.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Termoli is the only port with year-round ferries to the Isole Tremiti (p704). The two main companies are **Tirrenia Navigazione** (☎ 0875 70 53 43; www.tirrenia.it), which runs a year-round ferry and **Navigazione Libera del Golfo** (☎ 0875 70 48 59; www.navlib.it), which operates a quicker hydrofoil. Buy tickets (€15.80 to €17.70 for the ferry; €15 to €19 for the hydrofoil) at the port.

BUS

Termoli's intercity bus station is beside Via Martiri della Resistenza. Various companies operate from here, with services to/from Campobasso (€3.20, 1¼ hours, nine daily), Isernia (€6.40, 1¼ hours, three daily), Pescara (€4.90, 1¼ hours, four daily), Naples (€13, 3½

hours, four daily) and Rome (€15, four hours, nine daily).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Termoli is on the A14 and SS16, which follow the coast north to Pescara and south to Bari. The SS87 links Termoli with Campobasso.

TRAIN

Direct trains serve Bologna (€23.20 to €37.50, 5¼ hours, 10 daily), Lecce (€23 to €32.50, five hours, six daily) and stations along the Adriatic coast.

ALBANIAN TOWNS

Several villages to the south of Termoli form an Albanian enclave that dates back to the 15th century. These include **Campomarino**, **Portocannone**, **San Martino in Pensilis** and **Ururi**. Although the inhabitants shrugged off their Orthodox religion in the 18th century, they still use a version of Albanian that's incomprehensible to outsiders. However, it's for their *carressi* (chariot races) that the villages are best known. Each year Ururi (3 May), Portocannone (the Monday after Whit Sunday) and San Martino in Pensilis (30 April) stage a no-holds-barred **chariot race**. The chariots (more like carts) are pulled by bulls and hurtle round a traditional course, urged on by villagers on horseback.

Getting to these villages is quite a trial without your own transport but Larivera runs daily buses to all four from Termoli.

Campania



Campania is southern Italy's diva – an intense, addictive brew of architectural glories, gastronomic brilliance and geological drama. From the hyperactive laneways of Naples to the ethereal beauty of the Amalfi Coast, the region is as varied as it is compelling.

At its heart is Naples, a sprawling love-it-or-hate-it city theatrically set on a sweeping bay. In the background Mt Vesuvius broods darkly, a reminder of the fate it dealt Pompeii and Herculaneum 2000 years ago. Further down the coast, the magnificent temples at Paestum predate Roman times, testament to the region's Greek colonial past.

Myth abounds in Campania. Icarus plunged to his death in the Campi Flegrei, and Aeneas consulted the Cumaean Sybil before entering Hades via Lago d'Averno (Lake Avernus). To the south, sirens lured sailors to their deaths in the sparkling waters off Sorrento.

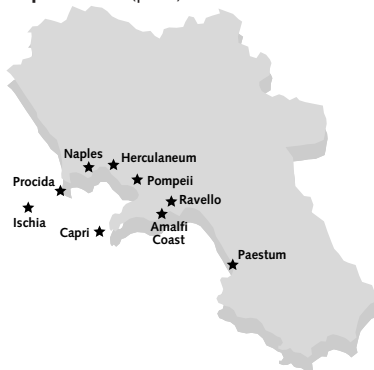
Capri is the most celebrated of Naples' three bay islands. A byword for Med chic, it's the darling of perma-tanned celebrities and starry-eyed day-trippers. Further north, Ischia bubbles with its thermal spas, and Procida inspires with its authentic, windswept air.

For many, Campania's crown jewel is the Amalfi Coast, a vertical world of plunging cliffs, tumbling villages and mesmerising views. Hidden to the world until 'discovered' in the mid-20th century, it's now one of Italy's must-sees. Inland, wooded mountains provide breathtaking hiking and refuge from the summer hordes.

To really get off the beaten track, though, head to the highlands of the Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano, one of the region's wildest and least-explored wonderlands.

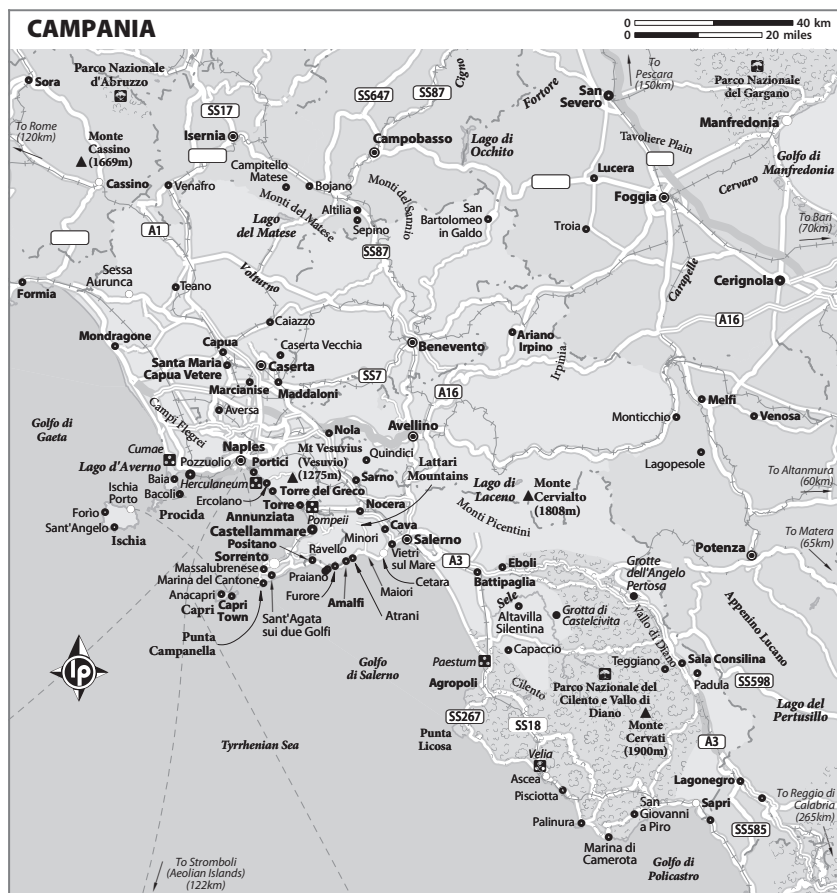
HIGHLIGHTS

- Encounter artistic greats at the **Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte** (p648)
- Channel ancient ghosts at the ruins of **Pompeii** (p673) and **Herculaneum** (p670)
- Let Capri's ethereal **Grotta Azzurra** (p664) bewitch you
- Lunch by the waves on pastel-hued **Procida** (p670)
- Fall for the lavish gardens of Ischia's **La Mortella** (p667) and Ravello's **Villa Rufolo** (p688)
- Savour market produce at the **Mercato di Porta Nolana** (p645)
- Walk with the gods on the **Amalfi Coast** (p681)
- Eye-up Hellenic ingenuity at the World Heritage-listed temples of **Paestum** (p691)



■ POPULATION: 5.8 MILLION

■ AREA: 13,595 SQ KM



NAPLES

pop 3,100,000

Italy's most misunderstood city is also one of its finest – an exhilarating mess of crumbling baroque churches, bellowing baristas and electrifying street life. Contradiction is the catchphrase here; a place where anarchy, pollution and crime sidle up to lavish palaces, mighty museums and aristocratic tailors.

First stop for many is the Unesco World Heritage-listed *centro storico* (historic city centre). It's here, under the washing lines, that you'll find Naples' arabesque street life – cocky kids playing football in noisy piazzas, overloaded Vespas hurtling through cobbled alleyways and clued-up *casalinghe* (home-

makers) bullying market vendors. Once the heart of Roman Neapolis, this intoxicating warren of Dickensian streets groans with ancient churches, citrus-filled cloisters, and rough'n'tumble pizzerias.

By the sea the cityscape opens up. Imperious palaces flank show-off squares as Gucci-clad shoppers strut their stuff and lunch in chandeliered cafes. This is Royal Naples, the Naples of the Bourbons that so impressed the 18th-century Grand Tourists.

A place of heirloom businesses, vacuum-packed families and old-school attitude, *Napoli* is Europe's antidote to homogenised culture. Take time to look behind the grime and you'll learn why true love was never meant to be easy.

REGIONAL ITINERARY

CRASH-COURSE CAMPANIA

12 Days / Naples / Salerno

Dive into the deep end with two days in **Naples** (p635), shopping for local produce at the **Mercato di Porta Nolana** (p645) and plugging into culture at the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (p645) and the **Certosa di San Martino** (p646). Sneak through the city's **ancient aqueducts** on a Napoli Sotteranea tour (p649) and schmooze the night away with the bohemians at **Il Caffè Arabo** (p653). For inspiring views, spend a morning climbing **Mt Vesuvius** (p672) and an afternoon pondering its malevolent force in ill-fated **Pompeii** (p673). From here, continue south to **Sorrento** (p676) to catch a ferry to fabled **Capri** (p660) for two days of chichi R&R. Admire natural beauty at **Monte Solaro** (p664) and the **Grotta Azzurra** (p664) and the cosmetically enhanced variety at VIP hangout **Anema e Cora** (p666).

Head back to Sorrento and push on to picture-perfect **Positano** (p682) for a couple of nights. If it's summer, hire a **boat** (p682) and comb the coast for perfect beaches. For a heavenly hike, hit the **Sentiero degli Dei** (see the boxed text, p681) to the vintage fishing village of **Praiano** (p684). Stay overnight before following the coastal road to **Amalfi** (p685). Drop in at the fascinating **Museo della Carta** (p685) before retreating overnight in lofty **Ravello** (p687), home to the uber-romantic **Villa Rufolo** (p688). The following day, hit the coast again, stopping off at the foodie village of **Cetara** (p689) for perfect seafood before capping your crash course in bustling, portside **Salerno** (p689).



HISTORY

Little is known of Naples' early days. According to legend, traders from Rhodes established the city on the island of Megaris (where Castel dell'Ovo, p648, now stands) in about 680 BC. Originally called Parthenope in honour of the siren whose body had earlier washed up there (she drowned herself after failing to seduce Ulysses), it was eventually incorporated into a new city, Neapolis, founded by Greeks from Cumae (Cuma) in 474 BC. However, within 150 years it was in Roman hands, becoming something of a VIP resort favoured by emperors Pompey, Caesar and Tiberius.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, Naples became a duchy, originally under the Byzantines and later as an independent dukedom, until it was captured in 1139 by the Normans and absorbed into the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Normans, in turn, were replaced by the German Swabians, whose charismatic leader Frederick II injected the city with new institutions, including its university.

The Swabian period came to a violent end with the victory of Charles I of Anjou at the 1266 battle of Benevento. The Angevins did much for Naples, promoting art and culture, building Castel Nuovo (p647) and enlarging the port, but they were unable to stop the Spanish Aragonians taking the city in 1442. Naples continued to prosper, though. Alfonso I of Aragon, in particular, introduced new laws and encouraged the arts and sciences.

In 1503 Naples was absorbed by Spain, which sent viceroys to rule as virtual dictators. Despite Spain's heavy-handed rule, Naples

flourished artistically and acquired much of its splendour. Indeed, it continued to bloom when the Spanish Bourbons re-established Naples as the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1734. Aside from a Napoleonic interlude under Joachim Murat (1806–15), the Bourbons remained until unseated by Garibaldi and the Kingdom of Italy in 1860.

The city was heavily bombed in WWII, and the effects can still be seen on many monuments around the city. Since the war Naples has continued to suffer. Endemic corruption and the re-emergence of the Camorra have plagued much of the city's postwar resurrection, reaching a nadir in the 1980s after a severe earthquake in 1980.

Naples' recent history has brought mixed blessings. In the mid-1990s, charismatic mayor Antonio Bassolino led a mass clean-up of the city. Dubbed the Neapolitan Renaissance, its high point came in 1994 when the city hosted the G7 summit. Bassolino has since been replaced by Naples' first woman mayor, Rosa Russo Jervolino, who has struggled to keep up the momentum. The city's Mafia wars hit the world's headlines in late 2004 and early 2005, and again in 2008 with the release of Matteo Garrone's film *Gomorra* (Gomorra), itself based on a Camorra exposé by Neapolitan writer Roberto Saviano. In 2008, the city's sporadic garbage-disposal crisis flared up again, leading frustrated residents to set fire to uncollected rubbish in the streets.

More promising has been the recent inauguration of a major theatre festival, a still-under-construction high-speed rail terminal by British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid and a planned revamp of Pompeii's train stations by prolific US architect Peter Eisenman.

OUR TOP FIVE FILM LOCATIONS IN CAMPANIA

- Naples' airy **Piazza del Gesù Nuovo** (p644), where acting great Sergio Solli makes his anything-but-menacing phone threats in *No Grazie, Il Caffè Mi Rende Nervoso* (1982).
- Caserta's blue-blooded **Palazzo Reale** (p659), whose interiors moonlight as Queen Amidala's pad in *Star Wars: Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace* (1999) and *Star Wars: Episode 2 - Attack of the Clones* (2002).
- Ischia's brooding **Castello Aragonese** (p667), backdrop to Ripley's cunning first meeting with Dickie and Marge in *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999).
- The tumbling fishing village of **Corricella** (p669) on Procida, where Massimo Troisi bashfully flirts with waiter Beatrice in *Il Postino* (1994).
- The town of **Amalfi** (p685), host to scandal and Scarlett Johansson in *A Good Woman* (2004).

NAPLES IN...

Two Days

Start your Neapolitan sojourn with a mean espresso at **Caffè Mexico** (p653) before slipping into the Unesco World Heritage-listed *centro storico*. Pop into the **Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo** (p644) and the **Basilica di Santa Chiara** (p645) before taking in the street life along **Spaccanapoli** (p643) and **Via San Gregorio Armeno** (p645). For an authentic Neapolitan lunch, munch away at **Pizzeria Gino Sorbillo** (p652) or **Trattoria Mangia e Bevi** (p652), then spend the second half of the day at the **Chiesa e Scavi di San Lorenzo Maggiore** (p645) and the **Cappella Sansevero** (p644). After dinner, kick back at **Intra Moenia** (p653) for late-night lounging. Start Day Two with a market wander through **La Pignasecca** (p646) before taking in the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (p645). Alternatively, take a funicular up to Vomero for art and vistas at the **Certosa di San Martino** (p646). Either way, head down to Chiaia for an evening *Passeggiata* (stroll) along the **Lungomare** (p648) before dining harbourside on Borgo Marinaro.

Four Days

If you find yourself pining for peace on Day Three, retreat underground on a tour of **Napoli Sotterranea** (see p649) or explore the **Catacombe di San Gennaro** (p648). From the catacombs, the **Palazzo Reale di Capodimonte** (p648) and its superlative art collection is a quick trip uphill. Head back down for dinner at **Nennella** (p653) and a late-night cocktail in fashionable Chiaia. The following day, head west to explore Pozzuoli's **Anfiteatro Flavio** (p658) Roman amphitheatre, the ruins below **Rione Terra** (p658) and the freakish **Solfatara crater** (p658).

ORIENTATION

Naples stretches along the waterfront and is divided into *quartieri* (districts). A convenient point of reference, Stazione Centrale (the main train station) forms the eastern flank of Piazza Garibaldi, Naples' chaotic transport hub. It's not an attractive place, and the surrounding area is noisy, dirty and seedy.

From Piazza Garibaldi, busy Corso Umberto I runs down to Piazza Bovio, skirting the southern edge of the *centro storico*. The historic heart is centred on two parallel east-west roads: Via San Biagio dei Librai and its continuation Via Benedetto Croce (together these are known as Spaccanapoli); and, to the north, Via dei Tribunali. At the western end of Via dei Tribunali is Piazza Dante and the north-south road Via Toledo, which is Naples' main shopping strip. From the piazza, head north up Via Enrico Pessina (Via Toledo's continuation) to get to Parco di Capodimonte; go south for Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples' showpiece square.

From Piazza Trieste e Trento, adjacent to Piazza del Plebiscito, Via San Carlo leads to Castel Nuovo and Piazza del Municipio. On the seafront at the castle, Molo Beverello is the terminal for ferries to Capri, Ischia and Procida; next door, long-distance ferries sail to Sicily and beyond from the Stazione Marittima.

Follow the seafront west for the districts of Santa Lucia, Chiaia, Mergellina and Posillipo. Above it all sits Naples' upper-middle class in the relative calm of Vomero, a natural balcony with lavish views.

INFORMATION
Bookshops

Feltrinelli Chiaia (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 240 54 11; Piazza dei Martiri); Toledo (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 552 14 36; Via San Tommaso d'Aquino 15) Smart chain store with a good selection of maps, fiction and Lonely Planet titles in English.

Emergency

Police station (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 794 11 11; Via Medina 75). To report a stolen car, call ☎ 113.

Internet Access

Navig@ndo (Map p642; ☎ 081 193 60 030; Via Santa Anna di Lombardi 28; per hr €2; ☎ 9.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

Zeudi Internet Point (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 251 22 50; Via Chiaia 199c; per hr €3; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat)

Internet Resources

Around Naples (www.napoli.com) For listings and local news.

Turismo Regione Campania (www.turismoregione.campania.it) Up-to-date events listings, as well as audio clips and itineraries.

I Naples (www.inaples.it) The official tourist board site.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

If you're planning to blitz the sights, the **Campania artecard** (☎ 800 600601; www.campaniartecard.it) is an excellent investment. A cumulative ticket that covers museum admission and transport, it comes in various forms. The Naples and Campi Flegrei three-day ticket (€16/10 for adult 18 to 25 years) gives free admission to three participating sites, a 50% discount on others and free transport in Naples and the Campi Flegrei. Other options range from €12 to €30 and cover sites as far afield as Pompeii and Paestum. The tickets can be bought at train stations, newsagents, participating museums, via the internet or through the call centre.

Laundry

Lavanderia Self-Service (Map p642; ☎ 328 6196341; Largo Donnaregina 5; 7kg wash & dry €7; ☎ 8am-7.20pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat, closed Aug)

Medical Services

Ospedale Loreto-Mare (Map p642; ☎ 081 20 10 33; Via Amerigo Vespucci 26)

Pharmacy (Map p642; ☎ 081 549 93 36; Piazza Dante 71; ☎ 24hr)

Post

Post office (Map p642; ☎ 081 428 95 85; Piazza Matteotti; ☎ 8am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

Tourist Information

Head to the following tourist bureaus for information and a copy of the useful bilingual brochure *Qui Napoli*:

Tourist Information Office Mergellina train station (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 761 21 02; ☎ hrs vary); Piazza del Gesù Nuovo 7 (Map p642; ☎ 081 552 33 28; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun); Stazione Centrale (Map p642; ☎ 081 26 87 79; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat); Via San Carlo 9 (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 40 23 94; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1.30pm Sun)

Travel Agencies

CTS (Map p642; ☎ 081 552 79 60; Via Mezzocannone 25) Student travel centre.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Petty crime can be a problem in Naples. Be especially vigilant for pickpockets and scooter bandits, many of whom specifi-

cally target out-of-towners with expensive watches. Also, watch out for groups of dishevelled-looking women and children asking for money.

Car and motorcycle theft is rife, so think twice before bringing a vehicle into town and never leave anything in your car, particularly at night.

Ignore touts offering taxis at Stazione Centrale; use only marked, registered taxis and ensure the meter is running.

Never purchase electronic goods (cameras, mobile phones) from market stalls and be careful about walking alone late at night, particularly near Stazione Centrale. The area west of Via Toledo and as far north as Piazza Carità, though safe enough during the day, can also be threatening after dark.

SIGHTS

Centro Storico

DUOMO & AROUND

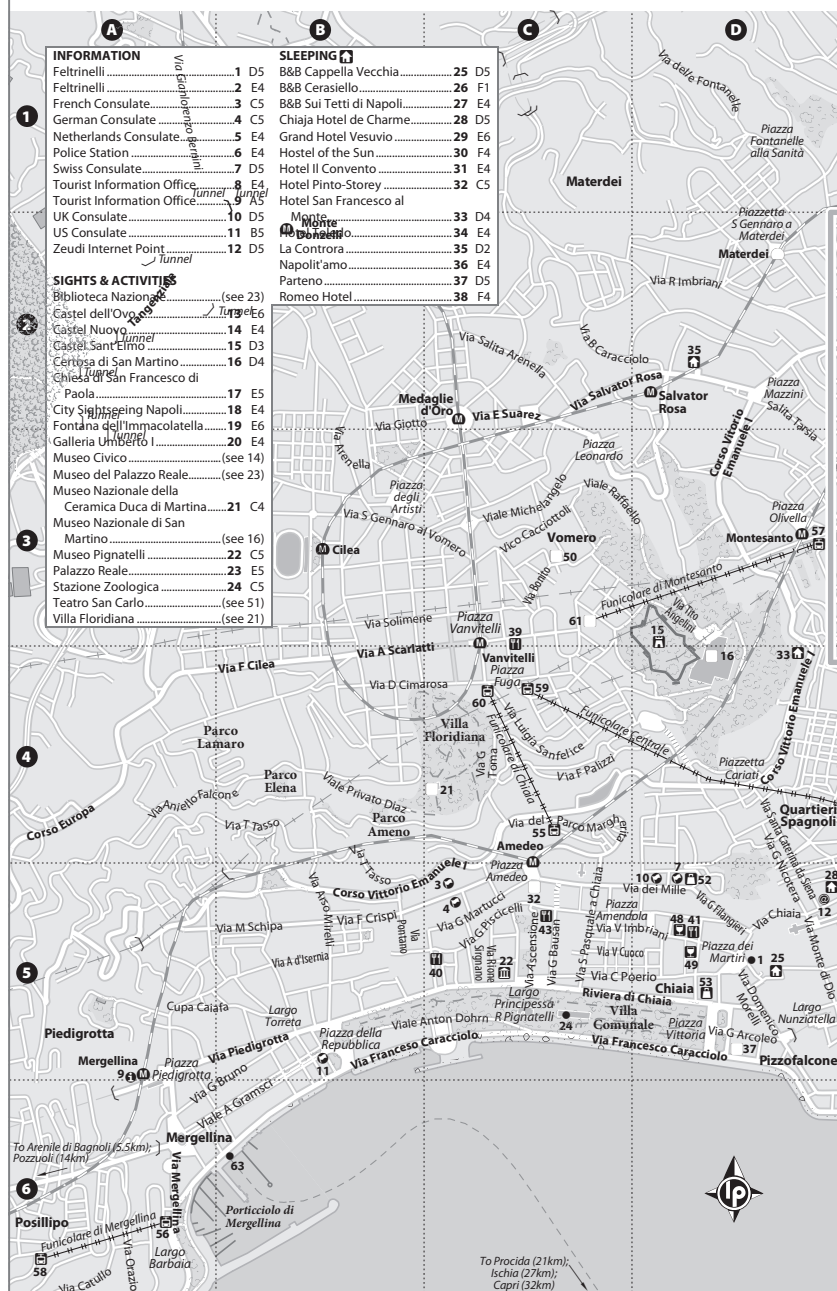
Naples' spiritual centrepiece, the **Duomo** (Map p642; ☎ 081 44 90 97; Via Duomo; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-1pm & 5-7pm Sun) sits on the site of earlier churches, themselves preceded by a temple to the god Neptune. Begun by Charles I of Anjou in 1272 and consecrated in 1315, it was largely destroyed by an earthquake in 1456. Copious nips and tucks over the centuries, including the addition of a late-19th-century neo-Gothic facade, have created a melange of styles and influences.

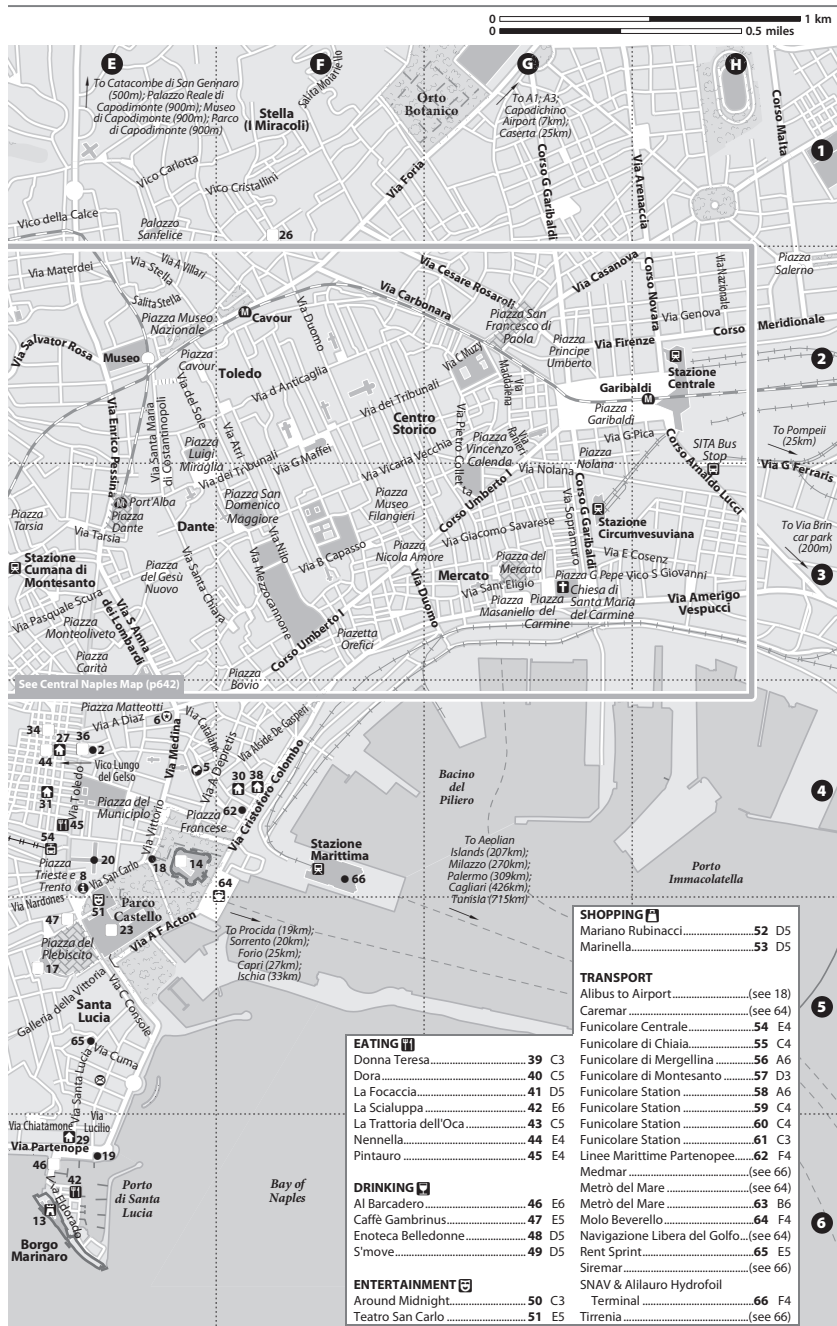
Topping the huge central nave is a gilded coffered ceiling studded with late mannerist art. The high sections of the nave and the transept were decorated by Luca Giordano.

The 17th-century baroque **Cappella di San Gennaro** (Chapel of St Januarius; also known as the Chapel of the Treasury) features a fiery painting by Giuseppe Ribera and a bevy of silver busts and bronze statues. Above them, a heavenly dome glows with frescoes by Giovanni Lanfranco. Hidden away behind the altar is a 14th-century silver bust containing the skull of St Januarius and the two phials that hold his miraculous blood. Naples' patron saint was martyred at Pozzuoli in AD 305, and according to legend, his blood liquefied in these phials when his body was transferred back to Naples. For information on the mysterious San Gennaro festival, see p649.

The next chapel eastwards contains an urn with the saint's bones, cupboards full

NAPLES







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Chiesa di Sant'Angelo a Nilo	13	C3
Chiesa di Sant'Anna dei Lombardi	14	B4
Chiesa e Chiostro di San Gregorio Armeno	15	C3
Chiesa e Pinacoteca dei Girolamini	16	C2
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La Pignasecca	20	A4
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Mercato di Porta Nolana	22	E3
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Museo del Tesoro di San Gennaro	24	C2
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SITA Bus Stop	61	D4

of femurs, tibias and fibulas, and a stash of other grisly relics. Below the high altar is the Renaissance **Cappella Carafa**, also known as the Crypt of San Gennaro.

Halfway down the north aisle and beyond the 17th-century Basilica di Santa Restituta is the fascinating **archaeological zone** (admission €3; ☎ 9am-noon & 4.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun). Tunnels burrow into the remains of the site's original Greek and Roman buildings. Here, too, is the **baptistry**, the oldest in western Europe, with its remarkably fresh 4th-century mosaics.

At the Duomo's southern end, the **Museo del Tesoro di San Gennaro** (Map p642; ☎ 081 29 49 80; Via Duomo 149; admission €6; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-2.30pm Sun) glimmers with gifts made to St Januarius over the centuries, from bronze busts and sumptuous paintings to silver ampullas and a gilded 18th-century sedan chair. Admission includes a multilingual audioguide.

Opposite the cathedral is the entrance to the **Chiesa e Pinacoteca dei Girolamini** (Map p642; ☎ 081 44 91 39; ☎ gallery 9.30am-12.30pm Mon-Sat), a rich baroque church with two facades. A small gallery in the adjoining 17th-century convent features excellent local art, including works

by Luca Giordano and Battista Caracciolo. Church opening hours vary.

A short walk to the north, **MADRE** (Map p642; Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina; ☎ 081 19 31 30 16; www.museomadre.it; Via Settembrini 79; admission €7, Mon free; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon & Wed-Fri, to midnight Sat & Sun) has the city's best collection of contemporary art. Highlights include Jeff Koons' uberkitsch *Wild Boy and Puppy*, Rebecca Horn's eerie *Spirits*, and a perspective-warping installation by Anish Kapoor.

Nearby, the baroque Chiesa di Donnaregina Nuova houses the **Museo Diocesano di Napoli** (Map p642; ☎ 081 557 13 65; www.museodiocesanonapoli.it; Chiesa di Santa Maria Donnaregina Nuova, Largo Donnaregina; admission €5; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon, Wed-Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) and its superb collection of religiously themed art, from Renaissance triptychs and 19th-century wooden sculptures to works from baroque greats like Fabrizio Santafede, Andrea Vaccaro and Luca Giordano.

SPACCANAPOLI

Following the path of the ancient Roman *decumanus inferior* (minor road), **Via San Biagio dei Librai** (becoming Via Benedetto Croce to the west and Via Vicaria Vecchia to the east) is affectionately known as Spaccanapoli

MARIO SPADA

This award-winning documentary photographer and stills photographer for the film *Gomorra* muses on his home town.

What are your favourite corners of Naples? There are several. I like walking up the Salita Moiarriello (Map pp640–1) in the Miracoli district. From here, Vesuvius forms the backdrop to the Centro Direzionale's skyscrapers. To me, it's a more realistic view of contemporary Naples than those traditional postcard panoramas.

Places you would take a novice to Naples? After breakfast at a *pasticceria*, we'd go straight to Pio Monte della Misericordia (opposite) to see Caravaggio's incredible *Le Sette Opere di Misericordia*, followed by a trip to see the *Cristo Velato* at the Cappella Sansevero (below). We'd probably go for a seaside walk in Mergellina, then cap the night off in a *centro storico* bar.

What distinguishes Neapolitans from other Italians? In Morocco, I often find myself in situations that remind me of home. To me, Neapolitans are half '*magrebini*' (Maghrebis). Our temperament has a similar intensity – in both good and bad ways. Our faces and gestures recall Caravaggio's *chiaroscuro*.

A record 100,000 people attended an anti-Mafia memorial march in 2009. Does this give you hope for the future? No, because while people are hungry for change, the fundamental steps required aren't taken. Here, too many politicians prefer to let problems fester until they become emergencies. This way they can step in with token gestures and exploit the crisis for their own political gain. The 'emergency' inevitably passes, and the root of the problem remains.

What do you miss most when you're out of town? The food, the coffee and Naples' one-of-a-kind energy.

(Break Naples). Seen from above, it cuts right through the heart of the old city.

At its eastern end, the **Ospedale delle Bambole** (Map p642; Dolls' Hospital; ☎ 339 5872274; Via San Biagio dei Librai 81) is a local institution, a quirky shop full of dusty dolls' heads and assorted mannequins. Further down, the **Chiesa di Sant'Angelo a Nilo** (Map p642; ☎ 081 420 12 22; Vico Donnaromita 15; ☎ 9am–1pm daily plus 4–6pm Mon–Sat) is benignly presided over by a quartet of tubby gilt cherubs. A modest 14th-century church, it's of note for the monumental Renaissance tomb of Cardinal Brancaccio, created by Donatello and others.

Backing on to lively Piazza San Domenico Maggiore, the Gothic **Chiesa di San Domenico Maggiore** (Map p642; ☎ 081 557 32 04; Piazza San Domenico Maggiore 8a; ☎ 8.30am–noon & 4.30–7pm) was completed in 1324 and much favoured by the Angevin nobility. The interior, a cross between baroque and 19th-century neo-Gothic, features some fine 14th-century frescoes by Pietro Cavallini and, in the sacristy, 45 coffins of Aragon princes and other nobles.

The simple exterior of the nearby **Cappella Sansevero** (Map p642; ☎ 081 551 84 70; Via de Sanctis 19; admission €6; ☎ 10am–5.40pm Mon & Wed–Sat, 10am–1.10pm Sun) belies the sumptuous sculpture inside. The centrepiece is *Cristo Velato* (Veiled Christ), Giuseppe Sanmartino's jaw-

dropping depiction of Jesus covered by a veil so realistic that it's tempting to try and lift it. Also intriguing is Corradini's *Pudicizia* (Modesty), which is more erotic than modest. Downstairs are two meticulously preserved human arterial systems, testament to the bizarre obsession of alchemist Prince Raimondo di Sangro, the man who financed the chapel's 18th-century makeover.

PIAZZA DEL GESÙ NUOVO & AROUND

Marking the end of Via Benedetto Croce, **Piazza del Gesù Nuovo** is a popular student hang-out. At its centre soars the **Guglia dell'Immacolata**, an 18th-century baroque obelisk; to the north and east sit two of Naples' most famous churches.

Characterised by the pyramid-shaped ashlar stones on its facade, whose carvings are said to be esoteric symbols, the **Chiesa del Gesù Nuovo** (Map p642; ☎ 081 551 86 13; Piazza del Gesù Nuovo; ☎ 7am–1pm & 4–7.30pm), dating back to the 16th century, is considered one of the city's greatest examples of Renaissance architecture. Its frescoed barrel-vaulted interior, the result of a 17th-century spruce-up, features works by a trio of Naples' big-name baroque artists – Cosimo Fanzago, Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena.

To the east, the Gothic **Basilica di Santa Chiara** (Map p642; ☎ 081 195 759 15; Via Benedetto Croce; ☞ 9am-1pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm & 5.30-7.30pm Sun) is famous for its majolica-tiled cloisters. What you see today is not, however, the original 14th-century Angevin church but a brilliant re-creation – the original was all but destroyed by Allied bombing in August 1943. Within the **nuns' cloisters** (admission €5; ☞ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun) is a long parapet entirely covered in decorative ceramic tiles depicting scenes of rural life, from hunting to posing peasants. The four internal walls are covered with softly coloured 17th-century frescoes of Franciscan tales. Adjacent to the cloisters, an elegant **museum** of mostly ecclesiastical props also features the excavated ruins of a 1st-century spa complex.

From the square, Calata Trinità Maggiore leads down to Piazza Monteoliveto and the 15th-century **Chiesa di Sant'Anna dei Lombardi** (Map p642; ☎ 081 551 33 33; Piazza Monteoliveto; ☞ 9am-noon Tue-Sun), worth a look for its fine Renaissance sculpture, including a superb terracotta *Pietà* (1492) by Guido Mazzoni.

VIA DEI TRIBUNALI & AROUND

One block to the north of Spaccanapoli is Via dei Tribunali, the *decumanus maior* (main road) of ancient Neapolis. Connecting the two, **Via San Gregorio Armeno** is celebrated for its shops selling *presepi* (nativity scenes). The street is also home to the 16th-century **Chiesa e Chiostro di San Gregorio Armeno** (Map p642; ☎ 081 420 63 85; Via San Gregorio Armeno 44; ☞ 9.30am-noon Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun), a blast of bombastic baroque. Highlights include sumptuous wood and papier-mâché choir stalls and lavish frescoes by Paolo de Matteis and Luca Giordano.

A masterpiece of French Gothic architecture, the **Chiesa e Scavi di San Lorenzo Maggiore** (Map p642; ☎ 081 211 08 60; Via dei Tribunali 316; church admission free, excavations €5; ☞ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun) dates to the late 13th century. Inside, note the impressive 14th-century mosaic-covered tomb of Catherine of Austria. You can also pass through to the cloisters of the neighbouring convent, where the poet Petrarch stayed in 1345.

Beneath the complex are some remarkable *scavi* (excavations) of the original Graeco-Roman city. Stretching the length of the underground area is a road lined with ancient bakeries, wineries and communal laundries.

Across Via dei Tribunali, a grand double staircase leads up to the **Chiesa di San Paolo Maggiore** (Map p642; ☎ 081 45 40 48; Piazza San Gaetano 76; ☞ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun), whose huge gold-stuccoed interior features paintings by Massimo Stanzione, as well as frescoes by Francesco Solimena in the exquisite sacristy.

To the east, the 17th-century **Pio Monte della Misericordia** (Map p642; ☎ 081 44 69 44; Via dei Tribunali 253; admission €5; ☞ 9am-2pm Thu-Tue) is home to Caravaggio's masterpiece *Le sette opere di Misericordia* (The Seven Acts of Mercy), considered by many to be the single most important painting in Naples.

MERCATO DI PORTA NOLANA

Naples at its vociferous, gut-rumbling best, the **Mercato di Porta Nolana** (Map p642; ☞ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) is a heady street market where bellowing fishmongers and green grocers collide with fragrant delis and bakeries, industrious Chinese traders and contraband cigarette stalls. Dive in for anything from buxom tomatoes and mozzarella to golden-fried street snacks, cheap luggage and bootleg CDs. The market's namesake, **Porta Nolana**, is one of Naples' medieval city gates. Standing at the head of Via Sopramuro, its arch features a bas-relief of Ferdinand I of Aragon on horseback.

Toledo & Quartieri Spagnoli

The magnificent **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (Map p642; ☎ 081 44 01 66; Piazza Museo Nazionale 19; admission €6.50; ☞ 9am-7.30pm Wed-Mon) houses one of the world's finest collections of Graeco-Roman artefacts. It was originally a cavalry barracks and later the seat of the city's university. The museum was established by the Bourbon king Charles VII in the late 18th century to house the rich collection of antiquities he had inherited from his mother, Elisabetta Farnese, as well as treasures that had been looted from Pompeii and Herculaneum. The museum also contains the Borgia collection of Etruscan and Egyptian relics.

To avoid getting lost in its rambling galleries (numbered in Roman numerals), invest €7.50 in the green quick-guide *National Archaeological Museum of Naples* or, to concentrate on the highlights, €4 for an audioguide in English. It's also worth calling ahead to ensure the galleries you want to see are open, as staff shortages often mean that sections of the museum close for part of the day.

While the basement houses the Borgia collection of Egyptian relics and epigraphs, the ground floor is given over to the **Farnese collection** of Greek and Roman sculpture. The two highlights are the colossal *Toro Farnese* (Farnese Bull) in Room XVI and gigantic *Ercole* (Hercules) in Room XI. Sculpted in the early 3rd century AD, the *Toro Farnese*, probably a Roman copy of a Greek original, depicts the death of Dirce, Queen of Thebes, who was tied to a bull and torn apart over rocks. The sculpture, carved from a single block, was discovered in Rome in 1545 and restored by Michelangelo before being shipped to Naples in 1787. *Ercole* was discovered in the same Roman excavations. It was found legless, but the Bourbons had his original pins fitted when they turned up at a later dig.

On the mezzanine floor is a small but stunning collection of **mosaics**, mostly from Pompeii. Of the series taken from the Casa del Fauno at Pompeii, it's the awe-inspiring *La Battaglia di Alessandro Contro Dario* (The Battle of Alexander against Darius) that stands out. Measuring 20 sq metres, it's the best-known depiction of Alexander the Great in existence.

Beyond the mosaics is the **Gabinetto Segreto** (Secret Room), home to the museum's ancient porn. The climax, so to speak, is an intriguing statue of Pan servicing a nanny goat, originally found in Herculaneum. The erotic paintings depicting sexual positions once served as a menu for brothel clients.

On the 1st floor, the vast **Sala Meridiana** contains the Farnese Atlante, a statue of Atlas carrying a globe on his shoulders. The rest of the floor is largely devoted to discoveries from Pompeii, Herculaneum, Stabiae and Cuma. Items range from huge murals and frescoes to a pair of gladiator helmets, household items, ceramics and glassware.

South of the museum, in the lively Quartieri Spagnoli, **La Pignasecca** (Map p642; Via Pignasecca; ☎ 8am-1pm) is Naples' oldest street market. A multisensory escapade into a world of wriggling seafood, drool-worthy delis and clued-up *casalinghe* (homemakers), it's a great place to soak up Naples' trademark street life and pick up a few bargains.

Vomero

Visible from all over Naples, the stunning Certosa di San Martino is the one compelling reason to take the funicular (p656) up to

Vomero (*vom-e-ro*), an area of spectacular views and Liberty mansions.

CERTOSA DI SAN MARTINO

The high point (quite literally) of Neapolitan baroque, this stunning charterhouse is home to the **Museo Nazionale di San Martino** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 848 80 02 88; Largo San Martino 5; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue). Founded as a Carthusian monastery in the 14th century, the Certosa owes most of its present look to facelifts in the 16th and 17th centuries, the latter by baroque maestro Cosimo Fanzago. The church and the rooms that flank it contain a feast of frescoes and paintings by Naples' greatest 17th-century artists – Francesco Solimena, Massimo Stanzione, Giuseppe de Ribera and Battista Caracciolo.

Adjacent to the church, the elegant **Chiostro dei Procuratori** is the smaller of the monastery's two cloisters. A grand corridor on the left leads to the larger **Chiostro Grande**, considered one of Italy's finest. Originally designed by Giovanni Antonio Dosio in the late 16th century and added to by Fanzago, it's a sublime composition of white Tuscan-Doric porticoes, manicured gardens and marble statues. The skulls mounted on the balustrade were a light-hearted reminder to the monks of their own mortality.

Just off the Chiostro dei Procuratori, the **Sezione Navale** focuses on the history of the Bourbon navy from 1734 to 1860, and features a small collection of beautiful royal barges.

To the north of the Chiostro Grande, the **Sezione Presepiale** houses a whimsical collection of rare Neapolitan *presepi* (nativity scenes) carved in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The **Quarto del Priore** (Prior's Quarter) in the southern wing houses the bulk of the picture collection, as well as one of the museum's most famous pieces, Pietro Bernini's tender *La Vergine col Bambino e San Giovannino* (Madonna and Child with the Infant John the Baptist).

CASTEL SANT'ELMO

Commanding spectacular views across the city, this star-shaped **castle** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 578 40 30; Via Tito Angelini 22; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue, 9am-6.30pm Sun) was built by the Spanish in 1538. Impressive though it is, the austere castle has seen little real military action. It has, however, seen plenty of prisoners: a long-time jail, its dungeons were used as a

military prison until the 1970s. The admission times and price can change when the castle is being used for exhibitions.

VILLA FLORIDIANA

In a city decidedly short of green space, this public **park** (Map pp640-1; Via Domenico Cimarosa; admission free; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset Tue-Sun) is a tonic, spreading down the slopes towards Mergellina. Sitting snugly at the bottom, Villa Floridiana was built in 1817 by Ferdinand I for his wife, the Duchess of Florida. Nowadays it contains the **Museo Nazionale della Ceramica Duca di Martina** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 578 84 18; admission €2.50; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Wed-Mon) and its 6000-piece collection of European, Chinese and Japanese china, ivory and enamels; and Italian majolica.

Santa Lucia & Chiaia

CASTEL NUOVO

Known to Neapolitans as the Maschio Angioino (Angevin Keep) and to everyone else as the **Castel Nuovo**, this crenellated 13th-century castle is a hulking Neapolitan landmark. Built as part of the city makeover that Charles I of Anjou launched in the late 13th century, it was erected in three years from 1279 and christened the *Castrum Novum* (New Castle) to distinguish it from the Castel dell'Ovo.

Of the original structure only the Cappella Palatina remains; the rest is the result of renovations by the Aragonese two centuries later, as well as a meticulous restoration effort prior to WWII. The two-storey Renaissance triumphal arch at the entrance, the Torre della Guardia, commemorates the triumphal entry of Alfonso I of Aragon into Naples in 1443.

The walls of the **Cappella Palatina** were once graced by Giotto frescoes, of which only fragments remain on the spays of the Gothic windows. To the left of the cappella, the glass-floored **Sala dell'Armeria** (Armoury Hall) showcases Roman ruins discovered during restoration works on the **Sala dei Baroni** (Hall of the Barons) above.

Nowadays, they all form part of the **Museo Civico** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 795 58 77; admission €5; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat), spread across several halls on three floors. The 14th- and 15th-century frescoes and sculptures on the ground floor are of the most interest. The other two floors mostly display paintings, either by Neapolitan artists, or with Naples or Campania as subjects, covering the 17th to the early 20th centuries. Worth looking out for is Guglielmo

Monaco's 15th-century bronze door, complete with a cannonball embedded in it.

PIAZZA DEL PLEBISCITO & AROUND

The undisputed star of Piazza del Plebiscito, Naples' largest square, is the **Chiesa di San Francesco di Paola** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 74 51 33; ☎ 8am-noon & 3.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun), a later addition to the colonnade that formed the highlight of Joachim Murat's original piazza (1809). A neoclassical copy of the Pantheon in Rome, the church was commissioned by Ferdinand I in 1817 to celebrate the restoration of his kingdom after the Napoleonic interlude.

Facing the church is the Palazzo Reale (below), with its eight statues of past kings. The royal theme continues centre square with Antonio Canova's statue of a galloping Bourbon king Charles VII and a nearby statue of his son Ferdinand I by Antonio Chiari.

Adjoining the square, Piazza Trieste e Trento is fronted on the northeastern side by Italy's largest opera house, the sumptuous **Teatro San Carlo** (Map pp640-1; ☎ box office 081 797 23 31, guided tours 081 553 45 65; www.teatrosancarlo.it; Via San Carlo 98; tours €5; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed-Mon), famed for its perfect acoustics. Locals will proudly boast that it was built in 1737, predating its northern rival, Milan's La Scala, by 41 years. Inaugurated on 4 December 1737 by Charles VII, it was severely damaged by a fire in 1816 and rebuilt by Antonio Niccolini, the same architect who a few years before had added the facade. At the time of research, the future of the 40-minute tours of the theatre was unclear. Contact the theatre or tourist office for updates.

Across Via San Carlo is one of the four entrances to the palatial glass atrium of the **Galleria Umberto I** shopping centre. Opened in 1900 as a twin arcade to the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II (p264) in Milan, it's worth a quick look for its beautiful marble floor and elegant engineering.

PALAZZO REALE

Flanking Piazza del Plebiscito, the rusty red **Palazzo Reale** (Map pp640-1; Royal Palace; ☎ 081 40 04 54; Piazza Trieste e Trento; admission €4; ☎ 9am-7pm Thu-Tue) was built around 1600. It was completely renovated in 1841 and suffered extensive damage during WWII.

From the courtyard, a monumental double staircase leads to the royal apartments, now

home to the **Museo del Palazzo Reale** and its rich collection of baroque and neoclassical furnishings, porcelain, tapestries, statues and paintings. There's also a lavish private theatre, the Teatrino di Corte (1768), and a colossal 18th-century *presepe* in the Cappella Reale (Royal Chapel).

The palace also houses the **Biblioteca Nazionale** (National Library; Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 781 92 31; ☹ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat), which includes at least 2000 papyruses discovered at Herculaneum and fragments of a 5th-century Coptic Bible. Bring ID or miss out.

THE LUNGOMARE

Marking the eastern end of the 2.5km *lungomare* (seafront), **Castel dell'Ovo** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 240 00 55; Borgo Marinaro; admission free; ☹ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat & Sun) sits atop the rocky Borgo Marinaro. Naples' oldest castle, it was built by the Normans in the 12th century and became a key fortress in the defence of Campania. According to myth, the castle owes its improbable name (Castle of the Egg) to Virgil, who was said to have buried an egg on the site where the castle now stands, warning that when the egg breaks, the castle (and Naples) will fall.

Nearby, the **Fontana dell'Immacolatella** dates from the 17th century and features statues by Bernini and Naccherini.

West of Santa Lucia, Via Partenope spills into Piazza Vittoria, marking the beginning of the Riviera di Chiaia. This boulevard runs beside the **Villa Comunale**, a long leafy park bordered on its seaward side by Via Francesco Caracciolo, which is closed to traffic on Sunday mornings and taken over by strollers, scooters and joggers.

Within the park is Europe's oldest aquarium. Dating to 1872, the **Stazione Zoologica** (aquarium; Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 583 32 63; Villa Comunale; admission €1.50; ☹ 9am-6pm Tue-Sat, to 7.30pm Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-5pm Tue-Sat, to 2pm Sun Nov-Feb) contains some 200 species of sea life fished out of the Bay of Naples.

Further along Riviera di Chiaia, the **Museo Pignatelli** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 761 23 56; Riviera di Chiaia 200; admission €2; ☹ 8.30am-1.30pm Wed-Mon) is housed in a neoclassical villa that once belonged to the Rothschilds. It contains mostly 19th-century furnishings, china and other mildly interesting knick-knacks. A pavilion set in the villa's handsome gardens houses a coach museum, currently closed.

Capodimonte

PALAZZO REALE DI CAPODIMONTE

On the northern edge of the city, this colossal palace took more than a century to build. It was originally intended as a hunting lodge for Charles VII of Bourbon, but as construction got under way in 1738, the plans kept on getting grander and grander. The result was the monumental *palazzo* that since 1759 has housed the art collection that Charles inherited from his mother Elisabetta Farnese.

The **Museo di Capodimonte** (off Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 749 91 11; Parco di Capodimonte; admission €7.50; ☹ 8.30am-7.30pm Thu-Tue, last entry 90min before closing) is spread over three floors and 160 rooms. You'll never see the whole place in one day, but a morning should be enough for an abridged best-of tour.

On the 1st floor you'll find works by Bellini, Botticelli, Caravaggio, Masaccio and Titian. Highlights are numerous, but look out for Masaccio's *Crocifissione* (Crucifixion), Bellini's *Trasfigurazione* (Transfiguration) and Parmigianino's *Antea*.

Also on the 1st floor, the **royal apartments** are a study in regal excess. The Salottino di Porcellana (Room 51) is an outrageous example of 18th-century Chinoiserie, its walls and ceiling crawling with whimsically themed porcelain 'stucco'. Originally created between 1757 and 1759 for the Palazzo Reale in Portici, it was transferred to Capodimonte in 1867.

Upstairs, the 2nd-floor galleries display work by Neapolitan artists from the 13th to the 19th centuries, plus some spectacular 16th-century Belgian tapestries. The piece that many come to Capodimonte to see, Caravaggio's *Flagellazione* (Flagellation; 1607-10), hangs in reverential solitude in Room 78, at the end of a long corridor.

If you have any energy left, the small **gallery of modern art** on the 3rd floor is worth a quick look, if for nothing else than Andy Warhol's popstastic *Mt Vesuvius*.

Once you're finished in the museum, the 130-hectare **Parco di Capodimonte** (off Map pp640-1; admission free; ☹ 9am to 1hr before sunset) provides a much-needed breath of fresh air.

CATACOMBE DI SAN GENNARO

The oldest and most famous of Naples' ancient catacombs, the **Catacombe di San Gennaro** (off Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 741 10 71; Via di Capodimonte 13; admission €5; ☹ 1hr tours 9am, 10am, 11am, noon,

2pm, 3pm Tue-Sat, 9am, 10am, 11pm, noon Sun), date to the 2nd century. Spread over two levels and decorated with early Christian frescoes, they contain a mix of tombs, corridors and broad vestibules held up by columns and arches. They were an important pilgrimage site in the 5th century, when St Januarius' body was brought here.

TOURS

Napoli Sotterranea (Underground Naples; Map p642; ☎ 081 29 69 44; www.napolisotterranea.org; Piazza San Gaetano 68; tours €9.30; ☎ tours noon, 2pm & 4pm Mon-Fri, extra tours 10am & 6pm Sat & Sun, 9pm Thu) runs 1½-hour guided tours of the city's underworld. Visits take you 40m below the city to explore a network of creepy passages and caves. The passages were originally hewn by the Greeks to extract tufa stone used in construction and channel water from Mt Vesuvius. Extended by the Romans, the network of conduits and cisterns was more recently used as air-raid shelters in WWII. Part of the tour takes place by candlelight via extremely narrow passages – not suitable for expanded girths!

City Sightseeing Napoli (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 551 72 79; www.napoli.city-sightseeing.it; adult/child €22/11) operates a hop-on, hop-off bus service with four routes across the city. All depart from Piazza del Municipio Parco Castello, and tickets, available on board, are valid for 24 hours for each of the routes. Tour commentaries are provided in English.

Torres Travel (☎ 081 856 78 02; www.torrestravel.it; Viale Mazzini 7 bis, Pompeii) is one of several companies that organise themed excursions to the Bay of Naples islands, the Amalfi Coast, Pompeii, Herculaneum and Vesuvius. Prices range from €125 for a tour to Pompeii or €220 for a Pompeii, Sorrento and Capri tour. A Naples city tour costs €175.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Naples' main festival, the **Festa di San Gennaro**, honours St Januarius. On the first Sunday in May and then on 19 September and 16 December, thousands of people gather in the Duomo to witness the saint's blood liquefy – a miracle believed to save the city from potential disasters. In 1944 the miracle failed and Mt Vesuvius erupted; in 1980 it failed again and the city was struck by an earthquake. Coincidence?

In May, Naples premier cultural event, **Maggio dei Monumenti**, ensures a month-long

menu of exhibitions, concerts, dance performances, guided tours and more.

Summer sees plenty of festival fun. In June, the **Napoli Teatro Festival Italia** (www.teatrofestivalitalia.it) serves up over three weeks of local and international theatre in venues across the city. The **Madonna del Carmine**, held on 16 July, culminates in a fabulous fireworks display on Piazza del Carmine (Map pp640-1), while southern Italy's top rock fest, the **Neapolis Rock Festival** (www.neapolis.it), attracts top international acts in July/August.

In early to mid-September, Naples' traditional **Festa di Piedigrotta** (www.festadiapedigrotta.it) combines folk tunes with floats and fireworks around the Chiesa di Piedigrotta (Map pp640-1) in Mergellina.

SLEEPING

Accommodation in Naples is varied and plentiful, ranging from luxe seafront piles to cheery backpacker hostels and funky B&Bs.

If you're after a cheap hotel, the area around Stazione Centrale is your best bet, although it can be seedy at night. The places listed, however, are all clean and safe.

For maximum atmosphere, hit the *centro storico*, where historic *palazzi* house charming hotels. You'll also have many of the city's sights on your doorstep.

Seaside Santa Lucia is home to some of the city's most prestigious hotels, and Chiaia is cool and chic. For lofty views and a chilled-out vibe, hit Vomero.

The closest campsites are in Pozzuoli to the west and Pompeii to the east.

Around Stazione Centrale & Mercato BUDGET

Hotel Ideal (Map p642; ☎ 081 26 92 37; www.albergoideal.it; Piazza Garibaldi 99; s €34-50, d €39-60; ☎ ☎) It mightn't ooze atmosphere, but the Ideal is a short stagger from the train station and staffed by friendly folk. Upstairs, the spacious rooms are soothing hideaways, with warm salmon tones, polished wood furniture and wrought-iron bedsteads.

Hotel Zara (Map p642; ☎ 081 28 71 25; www.hotelzara.it; 2nd fl, Via Firenze 81; s €39-45, d €46-62; ☎ ☎) A world away from the grungy streets outside, the Zara is clean, good value and friendly. Rooms are straightforward, with shiny natural wood, off-white furnishings and double-glazed windows. There's a book exchange,

and breakfast is an optional €4. Bring €0.05 for the lift.

Hostel of the Sun (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 420 63 93; www.hostelnapoli.com; Via Melisurgo 15; s €45-50, d €60-70, dm/s/d without bathroom from €16/40/50; ☎ ☎) Recently renovated and constantly winning accolades, HOTS is an ultrafriendly hostel near the port. On the 7th floor of an uninspiring *palazzo* (have €0.05 handy for the lift), it's a bright, sociable place with multicoloured dorms and, five floors down, a series of hotel-standard private rooms.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Nuovo Rebecchino (Map p642; ☎ 081 26 80 26; www.uovorebecchino.it; Corso G Garibaldi 356; s €60-105, d €70-160; ☎ ☎ ☎) Refined Regency furniture and 19th-century prints combine to elegant effect in the Rebecchino's large rooms. Bathrooms are fresh and bright, and include a jacuzzi in the superior-class rooms.

Centro Storico

BUDGET

6 Small Rooms (Map p642; ☎ 081 790 13 78; www.6smallrooms.com; Via D Lioy 18; dm €18, s €35-40, d €45; ☎) On the top floor of a dusty old building, this happy little hostel has bright dorms, funky wall murals, two spartan private rooms downstairs (with air-con), a huge communal kitchen, and a cat called Simon. BYO lock for the lockers.

B&B DiLetto a Napoli (Map p642; ☎ 081 033 09 77, 338 9264453; www.dilettoanapoli.it; Vicolo Sedil Capuano 16; s €35-55, d €50-75; ☎ ☎ ☎) Four rooms with vintage *cotto* (fired clay) floor tiles, organza curtains and artisan decor set a stylish scene at this B&B set in a 15th-century *palazzo*. The urbane communal lounge comes with a kitchenette and dining table for convivial noshing and lounging.

B&B Cerasiello (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 033 09 77, 338 9264453; www.cerasiello.it; Via Suppartico Lopez 20; s €40-60, d €55-80; ☎ ☎) Technically in the Sanità district but a short walk from the *centro storico*, this gorgeous B&B has four rooms, an enchanting communal terrace (with barbeque), stylish kitchen and an ethno-chic look. Bring €0.10 for the lift.

Hotel Pignatelli (Map p642; ☎ 081 658 49 50; www.hotelpignatellinapoli.com, in Italian; Via San Giovanni Maggiore Pignatelli 16; s €45, d €75-80) Hidden on the 2nd floor of a historic *palazzo*, this gem has rustic, Renaissance-style rooms complete with brass beds, butter-colour walls and terracotta tiles;

some boast original 15th-century wood-beam ceilings. At the time of research, construction was under way on five new rooms, with plans for a panoramic rooftop terrace.

MIDRANGE

Belle Arti Resort (Map p642; ☎ 081 557 10 62; www.belleartiresort.com; Via Santa Maria di Costantinopoli 27; s €65-99, d €80-160; ☎ ☎ ☎) More boutique than B&B, this urbane hideaway melds contemporary cool with vintage touches. Four of the impeccable rooms (some as big as small suites) have ceiling frescoes, while all feature marble bathrooms and funky painted headboards.

Portalba Relais (Map p642; ☎ 081 564 51 71; www.portalbarelais.com; Via Port'Alba 33; s €65-99, d €80-160; ☎ ☎ ☎) On a vintage street lined with bookshops, this sassy B&B has soaring bookshelves in the foyer and six rooms that ooze Armani-inspired chic – think muted tones, stainless-steel detailing and mosaic showers; Room 216 has a jacuzzi. Rooms look out over lively Piazza Dante, but double-glazing keeps the noise at bay.

Decumani Hotel de Charme (Map p642; ☎ 081 551 81 88; www.decumani.it; Via San Giovanni Maggiore Pignatelli 15; s €90-105, d €105-130, deluxe d €130-150; ☎ ☎ ☎) Don't be fooled by the scruffy staircase; this boutique hotel is fresh, elegant and located in the former *palazzo* of Cardinal Sisto Riario Sforza, the last bishop of the Bourbon Kingdom. The simple yet stylish rooms have high ceilings, 19th-century furniture and modern bathrooms. Deluxe rooms have a jacuzzi, and the restored baroque hall hosts cultural soirées.

TOP END

Costantinopoli 104 (Map p642; ☎ 081 557 10 35; www.costantinopoli104.it; Via Santa Maria di Costantinopoli 104; s/d €170/220; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Chic and tranquil, Costantinopoli 104 is set in a neoclassical villa in the city's bohemian heartland. Although showing a bit of wear in places, rooms remain elegant and clean – those on the 1st floor open on to a sun terrace, while ground-floor rooms face the small, palm-fringed pool. Antique furniture and a stained-glass Liberty window add a dash of vintage glam.

RomeoHotel (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 017 5008; www.romeohotel.it; Via Cristoforo Colombo 45; r €165-330; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Naples new design hotel is a striking combo of Artesia stone and ivory-hued interiors, A-list art and furniture, metro-glam sushi bar, rooftop restaurant, and jaw-dropping

spa centre. 'Classic' category rooms are small but luxe, with personal DeLonghi espresso machines and sleek bathrooms. Up a notch, 'Deluxe' rooms (€225 to €450) offer the same perks but with added space and bay views.

Toledo & Vomero

BUDGET

La Controra (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 549 40 14; www.lacontrora.com; Piazzetta Trinità alla Cesarea 231; dm €15-24, s €28-30, d €30-32; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Housed in a converted 18th-century convent, this upbeat hostel is a hip combo of stainless-steel lamps, sleek bar, blonde-wood bunks, mint-colour bathrooms and a funky communal kitchen. Snooze in a courtyard hammock or log on to free wi-fi.

B&B Sui Tetti di Napoli (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 033 0977, 338 9264453; www.suitettidinapoli.net; Vico Figuerelle a Montecalvario 6; s €35-65, d €45-80; 🍷 🍷) A block away from Via Toledo, this B&B is more like four apartments atop a thigh-toning stairwell. While two apartments share a terrace, the rooftop option has its own, complete with mesmerising views. All apartments include a kitchenette (the cheapest two share a kitchen), simple yet savvy furnishings and a homey vibe.

MIDRANGE

Napolit'amo (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 552 36 26; www.napolitamo.it; Via Toledo 148; s €55-65, d €79-99; 🚗 🚕) Escape the shopping hordes at this gilded enclave. The grandiose staircase sets the tone for the 1st-floor hotel, which has huge 18th-century mirrors, lofty ceilings and eyefuls of gold leaf.

Hotel Il Convento (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 40 39 77; www.hotelilconvento.com; Via Speranzella 137a; s €55-110, d €65-160; 🚗 🚲) Taking its name from the neighbouring convent, this lovely hotel is a soothing blend of antique Tuscan furniture, erudite book collections and candlelit stairs. Rooms are cosy and elegant, combining creamy tones and dark woods with patches of 16th-century brickwork. For €80 to €180 you get a room with a private roof garden.

Hotel Toledo (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 40 68 71; www.hoteltoledo.com; Via Montecalvario 15; s/d €85/130; ☼ ☎) Snugly situated in an old three-storey building, Hotel Toledo offers comfy, smallish rooms with terracotta tiles and mod cons; the rooms are a little on the dark side, however. Suites come with a stove, and breakfast is served on the rooftop terrace when the weather's warm.

TOP END

our pick **Hotel San Francisco al Monte** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 423 91 11; www.hotelsanfrancesco.it; Corso Vittorio Emanuele I 328; s €160-190, d €170-225; P ♿ 📺 📶 🚰) The monks in this 16th-century monastery never had it as good as the hotel's pampered guests. The cells have been converted into stylish rooms, the ancient cloisters house an open-air bar and the barrel-vaulted corridors are cool and atmospheric. Topping it all off is the 7th-floor swimming pool.

Santa Lucia & Chiaia

MIDRANGE

B&B Cappella Vecchia (Mapp640-1; ☎ 081 2405117; www.cappellavecchia11.it; Vico Santa Maria a Cappella Vecchia 11; s €50-70, d €75-100; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Run by a superhelpful young couple, this B&B has six simple, witty rooms with funky bathrooms and different Neapolitan themes, from *mal'occhio* (evil eye) to *peperoncino* (chilli). There's a spacious communal area for breakfast, and free internet available 24/7. Check the website for monthly packages.

Hotel Pinto-Storey (Mapppp640-1; ☎ 081 68 1260; www.pintostorey.it; 4th & 5th fl, Via Martucci 72; s €68-98, d €88-153; 🚗 🚗) Make it up to the 5th floor – the lift is in the far corner as you enter – and you'll find a relaxed hotel with large, airy rooms, classic decor and some stunning sea views. On a clear day you can see Capri shimmering in the haze.

Partenò (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 245 20 95; www.partenò.it; Via Partenope 1; s €80-100, d €100-125; ☼ ☑ ☎) Six chic rooms, each named after a flower, are exquisitely decorated with period furniture, vintage Neapolitan prints and silk bedding. The azalea room (€130 to €165) steals the show with its silver-screen view of sea, sky and Capri. Hi-tech touches include satellite TV and free landline calls to Europe, USA and Canada. Call ahead for last-minute offers.

Chiaja Hotel de Charme (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 41 55 55; www.hotelchiaia.it; Via Chiaia 216; €95-105, d €99-145, superior d €140-165; 🚗 🚶 🚲) Encompassing a former brothel and an aristocratic town house, this refined hotel lives up to its name. The look is effortlessly noble – think gilt-framed portraits on pale lemon walls, opulent table lamps and heavy fabrics. Rooms facing Via Chiaia come with a jacuzzi.

TOP END

Grand Hotel Vesuvio (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 764 00 44; www.vesuvio.it; Via Partenope 45; s €230-370, d €290-450;

☼ ☼ ☼ Known for bedding legends – past guests include Rita Hayworth and Humphrey Bogart – this five-star heavyweight is a decadent wonderland of dripping chandeliers, period antiques and opulent rooms. Count your lucky stars while drinking a martini at the rooftop restaurant.

EATING

Drizzle and fusion might cut it elsewhere but not in Naples. Neapolitans don't want a culinary artist poncing about with their food; they want it as they've always had it – simple, seasonal and fresh. And that's exactly how they get it at the huge number of pizzerias, trattorias and *ristoranti* that litter the city.

Pizza and pasta are the staples of Neapolitan cuisine. Pizza was created here and nowhere will you eat it better. Seafood is another local speciality and you'll find mussels and clams served in many dishes.

Neapolitan street food is equally brilliant. *Misto di frittura* – courgette flowers, deep-fried potato and aubergine – makes for a great snack, especially if eaten from paper outside a tiny street-side stall.

Neapolitan *sfogliatelle* (sweet pastries filled with cinnamon-infused ricotta) are envied across the land, and even the coffee tastes better in Naples.

Many eateries close for two to four weeks in August.

Around Stazione Centrale & Mercato

Attanasio (Map p642; ☎ 081 28 56 75; Vico Ferrovia 1-4; snacks from €1.20; ☼ 6.30am–7.30pm Tue–Sun) This retro pastry peddler makes one mighty *sfogliatella*, not to mention creamy *cannoli siciliani* (pastry shells with a sweet filling of ricotta) and runny, rummy *babà* (rum-soaked yeast cake). Savoury fiends shouldn't miss the hearty *pasticcino rustico* (savoury bread), stuffed with *provolone* (provolone), ricotta and salami.

Da Michele (Map p642; ☎ 081 553 92 04; Via Cesare Sersale 1; pizzas from €4; ☼ Mon–Sat) As hard-core as it gets, Naples' most famous pizzeria takes the no-frills ethos to its extremes. It's dingy and old-fashioned and serves only two types of pizza: *margherita* (tomato, basil and mozzarella) and *marinara* (tomatoes, garlic and oregano). But boy are they good!

Centro Storico

our pick Pizzeria Gino Sorbillo (Map p642; ☎ 081 44 66 43; Via dei Tribunali 32; pizzas from €3; ☼ Mon–Sat) The

clamouring crowds say it all: Gino Sorbillo is king of the pizza pack. Head in for gigantic, wood-fired perfection, best followed by a velvety *semifreddo*; the chocolate and *torroncino* (almond nougat) combo is divine.

Trattoria Mangia e Bevi (Map p642; ☎ 081 552 95 46; Via Sedile di Porto 92; meals €8; ☼ lunch Mon–Fri) Everyone from pierced students to bespectacled *professori* squeeze around the lively, communal tables for brilliant home cooking at rock-bottom prices. Scan the daily-changing menu, jot down your choices and brace for gems like juicy *salsiccia di maiale* (pork sausage) and *peperoncino*-spiked *friarielli* (local broccoli).

Trattoria da Carmine (Map p642; ☎ 081 29 43 83; Via dei Tribunali 330; meals €18; ☼ Wed–Sat, lunch Tue & Sun) A quiet haven of homey, Neapolitan cooking in the midst of the tumultuous *centro storico*. Beneath vintage photos, the patient waiter guides diners through the limited menu of regional staples, such as marinated anchovies and *penne alla sorrentina* (pasta, mozzarella and tomatoes).

La Cantina della Sapienza (Map p642; ☎ 081 45 90 78; Via della Sapienza 40; meals €18; ☼ lunch Mon–Sat) Pared-down classics made with the morning's market shop are what they do best here. Think *parmigiana di melanzane* (slices of aubergine alternated with layers of tomato sauce and mozzarella) and *caprese con provola*. Sweet tooths take note: owner Gaetano whips up a different dessert every day.

La Stanza del Gusto (Map p642; ☎ 081 40 15 78; Via Costantinopoli 100; set lunch €18, meals €45; ☼ cheese bar 7.30pm–midnight Mon, 11am–4pm & 7.30pm–midnight Tue–Sat, 11am–4pm Sun, restaurant 7.30pm–midnight Mon–Sat) Hip and eclectic, the 'Taste Room' offers a ground-floor 'cheese bar' for low-fuss vino sessions and grazing (the rare cheeses are fabulous), and an upstairs dining room for mod-twist adventures – think *fegatini* (chicken liver) flan with strawberry salsa and variations on *baccalà* (salted cod). A small basement food shop stocks the kitchen's own sauces, as well as take-home deli treats and wines.

Toledo & Vomero

Friggitoria Fiorenzano (Map p642; ☎ 081 551 27 88; Piazza Montesanto; snacks from €1; ☼ Mon–Sat) The Brits don't have a monopoly on fried food served in paper. Here you'll find piles of crunchy deep-fried aubergines and artichokes, croquets filled with prosciutto and mozzarella, and a whole lot more.

Pintauro (Map pp640-1; ☎ 348 7781645; Via Toledo 275; sfogliatelle €1.50; ☎ 8am-2pm & 2.30-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun Sep-May) Another local institution, the cinnamon-scented Pintauro peddles perfect *sfogliatelle* to shopped-out locals.

Nennella (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 41 43 38; Vico Lungo Teatro 103-105; meals €10; ☎ Mon-Sat) *Casareccio* (homestyle) cooking and Neapolitan theatricality collide at loud, unmissable Nennella. Give your name to Ciro and wait for the boisterous staff to call you in. Inside, roguish waiters serve up uncomplicated gems like crispy fried sardines, lip-smacking *spaghetti con lupine* (spaghetti with lupin) or *insalatona nennella* (rocket, bresaola and radish salad).

Donna Teresa (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 556 70 70; Via Kerkaker 58; meals €14; ☎ Mon-Sat) Locals know exactly what they're getting when they squeeze into this tiny, eight-table trattoria – traditional food as their *nonna* (grandma) would have cooked it. The limited menu changes daily, but you might find *spezzatini al ragù* (meat stew), *polpette* (meat balls) or *salsicce al sugo* (sausages in tomato sauce).

Santa Lucia & Chiaia

La Focaccia (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 41 22 77; Vico Belledonne a Chiaia 31; focaccia from €1.60; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Sat, 5pm-late Sun) Head to this funky, no-fuss bolthole for fat focaccia squares stacked with combos like artichokes and *provola*, or aubergine with *pecorino* cheese and smoked ham. Best of all, there isn't a microwave oven in sight.

La Trattoria dell'Oca (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 41 48 65; Via Santa Teresa a Chiaia 11; meals €20; ☎ closed dinner Sun Oct-May) Refined yet relaxed, this softly lit trattoria celebrates beautifully cooked classics, which may include *gnocchi al ragù* or a superb *baccalà* (salted cod) cooked with succulent cherry tomatoes, capers and olives.

La Scialuppa (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 764 53 33; Borgo Marinaro 4; meals €45; ☎ Tue-Sun) Almost 150 years young and a hit with Italian VIPs, La Scialuppa is a sound choice for romantic harbour-side noshing. Predictably, seafood is the star, from the moreish *fritto misto* (mixed fried seafood) to the vino-infused *risotto alla scialuppa* (seafood risotto). In the warmer months, the yacht-flanking alfresco tables are a prized possession, so book ahead.

Our pick Dora (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 68 05 19; Via Palasciano 30; meals €60; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat) Don't be fooled by the humble front on a forlorn street: Dora's is one of Naples' finest fish restaurants. Surrounded by breezy blue-and-

white tiles and marine memorabilia, you can dive into juicy chargrilled prawns and a crisp *frittura di pesce* (fried fish) as the veteran owner breaks into song. Reservations are essential.

DRINKING

The city's student and alternative drinking scene is around the piazzas and alleyways of the *centro storico*. For a chicer vibe, hit the cobbled lanes of upmarket Chiaia. While some bars operate from 8am, most open from around 6.30pm and close around 2am.

Al Barcadere (Map pp640-1; ☎ 333 2227023; Banchina Santa Lucia 2) Duck down the steps on the left as you walk towards Borgo Marinaro and you'll find this unpretentious waterside bar. Grab a beer and watch the fishers pootle around the marina.

Caffè Mexico (Map p642; ☎ 081 549 93 30; Piazza Dante 86; ☎ 7am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Make a bee-line for Naples' best-loved espresso bar, where old-school baristas serve up the city's mightiest espresso.

Enoteca Belledonne (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 40 31 62; Vico Belledonne a Chiaia 18) One of the best-loved wine bars in Chiaia. All exposed-brick walls and bottle-lined shelves, it's a stalwart of the area's well-trodden *aperitivo* (happy hour) circuit.

Il Caffè Arabo (Map p642; ☎ 081 442 06 07; Piazza Bellini) One of the squareside cafes on bohemian Piazza Bellini, this raffish spot is good for a laid-back wine (the cheapest on the piazza) and a Middle Eastern nibble or two. Just to the right, *Intra Moenia* (☎ 081 29 07 20, Piazza Bellini 70) is its more upmarket neighbour, complete with erudite bookshop.

S'Move (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 764 58 13; Vico dei Sospiri 10a) Another *aperitivo* hot spot in Chiaia, the bulbous lamps and futuristic wall panels here channel Barbarella. DJs spin nu-jazz, acid jazz, electro and funk every Thursday to Sunday.

Caffè Gambrinus (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 41 41 33; Via Chiaia 12) Tourists and overdressed visitors self-consciously sip overpriced coffee and cocktails at Naples' most venerable cafe. Oscar Wilde and Bill Clinton count among the celebs who have graced its lavish art-nouveau interior.

ENTERTAINMENT

Options run the gamut from world-class opera and jazz to rock festivals and cavernous clubbing. For cultural listings pick up the monthly *Qui Napoli* (at the tourist

offices) or a local newspaper; for the latest club news check out the free minimag *Zero* (in Italian), available from many bars.

You can buy tickets for most cultural events at the box office inside **Feltrinelli** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 764 21 11; Piazza dei Martiri; ☎ 4.30-8pm Mon, 10am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm Tue-Sat).

The month-long *Maggio dei Monumenti* festival in May offers concerts and cultural activities in various museums and monuments around town, most of which are free. From May until September, alfresco concerts are common throughout the city. Tourist offices have details.

At the time of writing, only local residents were permitted to attend football matches at Naples' *Stadio San Paolo*; a measure aimed at curbing hooliganism.

Nightclubs & Live Music

Clubs usually open at 10.30pm or 11pm but don't fill up until after midnight. Many close in summer (July to September), some transferring to out-of-town beach locations. Admission charges vary, but expect to pay between €5 and €25, which may or may not include a drink.

Rising South (Map p642; ☎ 335 8790428; Via San Sebastiano 19) Urged on by a strident soundtrack of hip hop, drum and bass, Latin and electronica, a young, up-for-it crowd grooves beneath the *centro storico*. Art-house video projections provide the visuals.

Velvet Zone (Map p642; ☎ 328 9577115; Via Cisterna dell'Olio 11) A historic Naples club, the Velvet rocks to different tunes on different nights. Expect anything from minimal techno to house, retro and rock.

Arondo Midnight (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 742 32 78; Via Bonito 32A; ☎ Sep-early Jul) One of Naples' oldest and most famous jazz clubs, this tiny swinging bolthole features mostly home-grown live gigs, with the occasional blues band putting in a performance.

Arenile di Bagnoli (off Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 230 30 50; Via Nuova Bagnoli 10; ☎ Apr-Sep) The biggest of Naples' beachside clubs. Order a pizza, catch a band or hit the beachside dance floor for thumping house under the stars. The club is a short walk south of Bagnoli station on the Cumana rail line.

Theatre

Teatro San Carlo (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 797 23 31; www.teatrosancarlo.it; Via San Carlo 98; ☎ box office 10am-7pm

Tue-Sat) One of Italy's premier opera venues, the theatre stages a year-round programme of opera, ballet and concerts, though tickets can be fiendishly difficult to get hold of. For opera, count on €50 for a place in the sixth tier and €100 for a seat in the stalls. If you're under 30 (and can prove it), last-minute tickets are available one hour before performances for €15.

SHOPPING

Colourful markets, artisan studios, and heirloom tailors – shopping in Naples is highly idiosyncratic.

For a gastronomic souvenir, head to **Limone** (Map p642; ☎ 081 29 94 29; Piazza San Gaetano 72), where you'll be able to try the organic *limoncello* (lemon liqueur) before buying a bottle. If it goes to your head, grab some lemon pasta as well. For organic, handmade soaps and beauty products, head to **Kiphy** (Map p642; ☎ 393 8703280; Piazza San Gaetano 72), while those after offbeat art, design and craft should check out **Mani Design** (Map p642; ☎ 347 9532930; Via San Giovanni Maggiore Pignatelli 1B).

Chiaia is the place for the fashion big guns and Naples' legendary tailors; places like **Mariano Rubinacci** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 41 57 93; Via Filangeri 26), where you'll pay around €1500 for a jacket, or **Marinella** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 245 11 82; Piazza Vittoria 287), whose made-to-measure ties were worn by Aristotle Onassis and Gianni Agnelli.

For traditional Neapolitan *presepi* (nativity scenes), drop into the artisan shops lining **Via San Gregorio Armeno**.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Capodichino airport (NAP; off Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 789 62 59; www.gesac.it), 7km northeast of the city centre, is southern Italy's main airport, linking Naples with most Italian and several major European cities, as well as New York. Serviced by a number of major airlines, including Alitalia and British Airways, the airport also hosts a number of low-cost carriers. Among the latter is easyjet which connects Naples to several European cities, including London, Paris (Orly) and Berlin.

Boat

Naples, the bay islands and the Amalfi Coast are served by a comprehensive ferry network. In Naples, ferries and hydrofoils leave for

Capri, Sorrento, Ischia, Procida and Forio from Molo Beverello in front of Castel Nuovo; hydrofoils for Capri, Ischia and Procida also sail from Mergellina; longer-distance ferries for Palermo, Cagliari, Milazzo, the Aeolian Islands (Isole Eolie) and Tunisia leave from the Stazione Marittima.

Tickets for shorter journeys can be bought at the ticket booths on Molo Beverello and at Mergellina. For longer journeys try the offices of the ferry companies or a travel agent.

Qui Napoli lists timetables for Bay of Naples services. Note, however, that ferry services are pared back considerably in the winter, and adverse sea conditions may affect sailing schedules.

Following is a list of ferry and hydrofoil companies and the destinations they service. The fares, unless otherwise stated, are for a one-way, high-season, deck-class single.

Alilauro (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 497 22 67; www.alilauro.it; Stazione Marittima) Operates hydrofoils from Naples to Sorrento (€9, seven daily), Ischia (€16, 10 daily) and Forio (€15.50, five daily); also ferries between Capri and Ischia (€15.50, one daily) and Amalfi (€13.50, two daily).

Caremar (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 551 38 82; www.caremar.it; Molo Beverello) Runs services from Naples to Capri (ferry/hydrofoil €9.60/11, five daily), Ischia (€9.10/16, 13 daily) and Procida (€7/8.60, 12 daily); also between Sorrento and Capri (€7.50, four daily).

Linee Marittime Partenopee (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 704 19 11; www.consorziolmp.it; Via Guglielmo Melisurgo 4) Runs hydrofoils from Sorrento to Capri (€13.50, 23 daily) and frequent daily hydrofoils/ferries from Capri to Positano (€16.50/14.50), Amalfi (€17/15) and Salerno (€16/17.50).

Medmar (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 551 33 52; www.medmargroup.it; Stazione Marittima) Operates services from Naples to Ischia (€9.60, seven daily) and a daily service to Procida (€4.50).

Metrol del Mare (Map pp640-1; ☎ 199 446644; www.metrolmare.com) Runs summer-only services between Naples and Sorrento (€6.50, three daily), Positano (€14, four daily), Amalfi (€15, six daily) and Salerno (€16, two daily), as well as between the main Amalfi Coast towns.

Navigazione Libera del Golfo (NLG; Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 552 07 63; www.navlib.it, in Italian, Molo Beverello) From Naples NLG runs hydrofoils to and from Capri (€17, four daily) year-round.

Siremar (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 017 19 98; www.siremar.it; Stazione Marittima) Operates boats to the Aeolian Islands and Milazzo (seat €62, six times weekly in summer, three times weekly in the low season).

SNAV (Map pp640-1; ☎ 091 428 55 55; www.snav.it; Stazione Marittima) Runs hydrofoils to Capri (€16, seven daily), Procida (€13.60, four daily) and Ischia (€16, four

daily), as well as ferries to Palermo (€30, one daily). In summer there are daily services to the Aeolian Islands (€60 to Lipari).

Tirrenia (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 720 11 11; www.tirrenia.it; Stazione Marittima, Molo Angioino) From Naples runs a weekly boat to and from Cagliari (deck class €34.89) and Palermo (deck class €43.83). The service increases to twice weekly in summer. From Palermo and Cagliari there are connections to Tunisia, directly or via Trapani (Sicily).

Bus

Most national and international buses leave from Piazza Garibaldi.

Regional bus services are operated by a number of companies, the most useful of which is **SITA** (☎ 199 730749; www.sitabus.it, in Italian), which runs buses from Naples to Pompeii (€2.40, 40 minutes, half-hourly), Sorrento (€3.30, one hour 20 minutes, twice daily), Positano (€3.30, two hours, twice daily), Amalfi (€3.30, two hours, twice daily) and Salerno (€3.30, one hour 10 minutes, every 25 minutes). Casting wider, it runs from Salerno to Bari via Naples (€22.50, 4½ hours, twice daily) and operates a service to Germany, including Frankfurt (€105), Düsseldorf (€118) and Hamburg (€124). You can buy SITA tickets and catch buses either from Porto Immacolatella, near Stazione Marittima, or from Via Galileo Ferraris (Map pp640-1), near Stazione Centrale; you can also buy tickets at **Bar Clizia** (Map p642; Corso Arnaldo Lucci 173).

Marino (☎ 080 311 23 35) has buses to Bari (€22, three hours, up to five services daily); **Miccolis** (☎ 081 20 03 80) runs to Taranto (€17.50, four hours, three to four services daily), Brindisi (€25.20, five hours) and Lecce (€28.50, 5½ hours); while **CLP** (☎ 081 531 17 07) serves Foggia (€11, two hours, frequent), Perugia (€29.45, 3½ hours) and Assisi (€32, 4½ hours, one per day).

Car & Motorcycle

Naples is on the Autostrada del Sole, the A1 (north to Rome and Milan) and the A3 (south to Salerno and Reggio di Calabria). The A30 skirts Naples to the northeast, while the A16 heads across the Apennines to Bari.

On approaching the city, the motorways meet the Tangenziale di Napoli, a major ring road around the city. The ring road hugs the city's northern fringe, meeting the A1 for Rome in the east, and continuing westwards towards the Campi Flegrei and Pozzuoli.

Train

Naples is southern Italy's main rail hub. Most national trains arrive at or depart from Stazione Centrale or, underneath the main station, Stazione Garibaldi. There are up to 30 trains daily to Rome (IC €19.50, two hours), some of which stop at Mergellina station, and some 20 to Salerno (IC €6.50, 35 minutes).

The **Stazione Circumvesuviana** (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 772 24 44; www.vesuviana.it; Corso Garibaldi), southwest of Stazione Centrale (follow the signs from the main concourse), operates trains to Sorrento (€3.30, 70 minutes) via Ercolano (€1.80, 20 minutes), Pompeii (€2.40, 40 minutes) and other towns along the coast. There are about 40 trains daily running between 5am and 10.30pm, with reduced services on Sunday.

Ferrovia Cumana and Circumflegrea (☎ 800 001616; www.sepsa.it), based at Stazione Cumana di Montesanto (Map p642) on Piazza Montesanto, 500m southwest of Piazza Dante, operate services to Pozzuoli (€1.10, 20 minutes, every 25 minutes).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

By public transport you can take either the regular **ANM** (☎ 800 639525; www.anm.it, in Italian) bus 3S (€1.10, 45 minutes, every 15 minutes) from Piazza Garibaldi or the **Alibus** (☎ 800 5311705) airport shuttle (€3, 45 minutes, every 30 minutes) from Piazza del Municipio or Piazza Garibaldi.

Official taxi fares to the airport are as follows: €21 from a seafront hotel or from the Mergellina hydrofoil terminal; €18 from Piazza del Municipio; and €14.50 from Stazione Centrale.

Bus

In Naples, buses are operated by the city transport company **ANM** (☎ 800 639525; www.anm.it, in Italian). There's no central bus station, but most buses pass through Piazza Garibaldi, the city's chaotic transport hub. To locate your bus stop you'll probably need to ask at the information kiosk in the centre of the square.

Useful bus services:

140 Santa Lucia to Posillipo via Mergellina.

152 From Piazza Garibaldi, along Corso Garibaldi, Via Nuova Marina, Via Colombo, to Molo Beverello, Via Santa Lucia, Piazza Vittoria and Via Partenope.

404D A night bus operating from 11.20pm to 4am (hourly departures) from Stazione Centrale to Piazza del Municipio,

on to Mergellina and Vomero, and then back down to Stazione Centrale.

C25 Piazza Amedeo to Piazza Bovio via Castel dell'Ovo and Piazza del Municipio.

C28 From Piazza Vittoria up Via dei Mille and on to Piazza Vanvitelli in Vomero.

E1 From Piazza del Gesù, along Via Costantinopoli, to Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Via Tribunali, Via Duomo, Piazza Nicola Amore, along Corso Umberto I and Via Mezzocannone.

R1 From Piazza Medaglie D'Oro to Piazza Carità, Piazza Dante and Piazza Bovio.

R2 From Stazione Centrale, along Corso Umberto I, to Piazza Bovio, Piazza del Municipio and Piazza Trieste e Trento.

R3 From Mergellina along the Riviera di Chiaia to Piazza del Municipio, Piazza Bovio, Piazza Dante and Piazza Carità.

R4 From Capodimonte down past Via Dante to Piazza Municipio and back again.

Car & Motorcycle

Vehicle theft and anarchic traffic make driving in Naples a bad option.

Officially much of the city centre is closed to nonresident traffic for much of the day. Daily restrictions are in place in the *centro storico*, in the area around Piazza del Municipio and Via Toledo, and in the Chiaia district around Piazza dei Martiri. Hours vary but are typically from 8am to 6.30pm, possibly later.

East of the city centre, there's a 24-hour car park at Via Brin (€1.30 for the first four hours, €7.20 for 24 hours).

An economy car will cost about €60 per day; for a scooter expect to pay about €35. The major car-hire firms are all represented in Naples:

Avis (Map p642; ☎ 081 28 40 41; www.avisautonoleggio.it; Corso Novara 5) Also at Capodichino airport.

Hertz (Map p642; ☎ 081 20 62 28; www.hertz.it; Via Giuseppe Ricciardi 5) Also at Capodichino airport and Mergellina.

Maggiore (Map p642; ☎ 081 28 78 58; www.maggiore.it; Stazione Centrale) Also at Capodichino airport.

Rent Sprint (Map pp640-1; ☎ 081 764 13 33; Via Santa Lucia 36) Scooter hire only.

Funicular

Three of Naples' four funicular railways connect the centre with Vomero:

Funicolare Centrale Ascends from Via Toledo to Piazza Fuga.

Funicolare di Chiaia From Via del Parco Margherita to Via Domenico Cimarosa.

Funicolare di Montesanto From Piazza Montesanto to Via Raffaele Morghen.

The fourth, Funicolare di Mergellina, connects the waterfront at Via Mergellina with Via Manzoni.

Unico Napoli tickets (see boxed text, below) are valid on the funiculars.

Metro

Currently being extended, Naples' **Metropolitana** (☎ 800 568866; www.metro.na.it) is, in fact, mostly above ground. Metro journeys are covered by Unico Napoli tickets (see boxed text, below).

Line 1 Runs north from Piazza Dante stopping at Museo (for Piazza Cavour and Line 2), Materdei, Salvator Rosa, Cilea, Piazza Vanvitelli, Piazza Medaglie D'Oro and seven stops beyond.

Line 2 Runs from Gianturco, just east of Stazione Centrale, with stops at Piazza Garibaldi (for Stazione Centrale), Piazza Cavour, Montesanto, Piazza Amedeo, Mergellina, Piazza Leopardi, Campi Flegrei, Cavaleggeri d'Aosta, Bagnoli and Pozzuoli.

Taxi

Official taxis are white and have meters. There are taxi stands at most of the city's main piazzas or you can call one of the five taxi cooperatives: **Napoli** (☎ 081 556 44 44), **Consortaxi** (☎ 081 20 20 20), **Cotana** (☎ 081 570 70 70), **Free** (☎ 081 551 5151) or **Partenope** (☎ 081 556 02 02).

The minimum taxi fare is €4.75, of which €3.10 is the starting fare. There's also a baffling range of additional charges: €0.95 for a radio taxi call, €2.10 extra on Sundays and holidays, €2.40 more between 10pm and 7am, €2.95 for an airport run and €0.60 per piece of luggage in the boot. Guide dogs for the blind and wheelchairs are carried free of charge.

Always ensure the meter is running. See opposite for fares to the airport.

AROUND NAPLES

CAMPI FLEGREI

Stretching west from Posillipo to the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Campi Flegrei (Phlegraean – or 'Fiery' – Fields) is a pockmarked area of craters, lakes and fumaroles, one of the world's most geologically unstable. Here, archaeological ruins stand in the midst of modern eyesores, and history merges with myth. This is where Icarus plunged to his death, where Aeneas sought the Sybil's advice, and where Greek colonists first settled in Italy – Cuma dates to the 8th century BC, while Pozzuoli, the main centre, was founded around 530 BC.

Before exploring the area it's worth stopping at Pozzuoli's tourist office for updated information on the area's sights and opening times. Also a good idea is the two-day €4 cumulative ticket that covers the archaeological sites of Baia and Cuma.

Pozzuoli

The first town that emerges beyond Naples' dreary western suburbs is Pozzuoli, a workaday place whose attractions are not immediately apparent. However, nose around and you'll find some impressive Roman ruins and an eerie, steaming volcanic crater. The town was established by the Greeks around 530 BC and later renamed Puteoli (Little Wells) by the Romans, who turned it into a major port. It

TICKETS PLEASE

Tickets for public transport in Naples and the surrounding Campania region are managed by **Unico Campania** (www.unicocampania.it). There are various plans, depending on where you plan to travel. Both the Unico Napoli 90-minute ticket (€1.10) and the 24-hour ticket (€3.10, reduced to €2.60 at weekends) offer unlimited travel by bus, tram, funicular, metro, Ferrovia Cumana or Circumflegrea. Other deals include the Unico 3T, a 72-hour ticket for €20 which covers rail travel throughout Campania, including the Alibus and transport on the islands of Ischia and Procida; Unico Ischia, which costs €1.20 for 90 minutes and €1.20 for 24 hours of bus travel on Ischia; and a similar deal offered with Unico Capri that covers bus travel on Capri. If you plan to do much travelling by SITA bus and/or Circumvesuviana train in the Bay of Naples and Amalfi Coast area, then save money by investing in a Unico Costiera card, available between April and October for durations of 45 minutes (€2), 90 minutes (€3), 24 hours (€6) or 72 hours (€15). Aside from the SITA buses, the 24- and 72-hour tickets also allow you to hop on the City Sightseeing tourist bus that travels between Amalfi and Ravello and Amalfi and Maiori. All Unico Campania tickets are sold at stations, ANM booths and tobacconists.

was here that St Paul is said to have landed in AD 61 and that screen goddess Sophia Loren spent her childhood.

The **tourist office** (☎ 081 526 66 39; Piazza G Matteotti 1a; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4-7.30pm daily Jun-Sep, 9am-2pm & 2.30-3.40pm Mon-Fri Oct-May) is beside the Porta Napoli gate, around 700m downhill from the metro station.

Rising 33m above the western end of the seafloor, the **Rione Terra** (☎ 848 800288; Largo Sedile di Porto; admission €3) is Pozzuoli's oldest quarter and ancient Puteoli's acropolis. Underground visits to the quarter, which contains Roman-era roads, shops and even a brothel, are by guided tour only. Contact the tourist office for opening times: hours vary and the site closes sporadically.

Just east of the port, sunken in a leafy piazza, sits the **Tempio di Serapide** (Temple of Serapis). Despite its name, it wasn't a temple at all, but an ancient *macellum* (town market). Named after a statue of the Egyptian god Serapis found here in 1750, its toilets (at either side of the eastern apse) are considered works of ancient ingenuity. Badly damaged over the centuries by bradyseism (the slow upward and downward movement of the earth's crust), the temple is occasionally flooded by sea water.

Head northeast along Via Rosini to the ruins of the 1st-century-BC **Anfiteatro Flavio** (☎ 081 526 60 07; Via Terracciano 75; admission €4; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset Wed-Mon). The third-largest amphitheatre in Italy, it could hold over 20,000 spectators and was occasionally flooded for mock naval battles. Under the main arena you can wander among fallen columns and get your head around the complex mechanics involved in hoisting the caged wild beasts up to their waiting victims. In AD 305 seven Christian martyrs, including St Januarius, were thrown to the animals here. They survived only to be beheaded later.

Some 2km up Via Rosini, which becomes Via Solfatara, the surreal **Solfatara crater** (☎ 081 526 23 41; www.solfatara.it; Via Solfatara 161; admission €6; ☎ 8.30am to 1hr before sunset) was known to the Romans as the Forum Vulcani (home of the god of fire). At the far end of the steaming, malodorous crater are the **Stufe**, in which two ancient grottoes were excavated at the end of the 19th century to create two brick *sudatoria* (sweat rooms). Christened Purgatory and Hell, they both reach temperatures of up to 90°C. To get to the crater, catch any city bus

heading uphill from the metro station and ask the driver to let you off at Solfatara.

Pozzuoli has several campsites; they're the nearest ones to Naples. Up by the Solfatara, a panoply of trees provides shade at the well-equipped **Camping Vulcano Solfatara** (☎ 081 526 74 13; www.solfatara.it; Via Solfatara 161; camping 2 people, car & tent €26-32.60; ☎).

There are frequent car and passenger ferries from Pozzuoli to Ischia and Procida, run by a variety of companies. Typical prices are €6.60 to Procida and €7.60 to Ischia – more if you take a hydrofoil.

Both the **Ferrovia Cumana** (☎ 800 001616; www.sepsa.it) and the Naples metro (line 2) serve Pozzuoli.

By bus, take AMN bus 152 from Naples.

If you have your own wheels, take the Tangenziale ring road from Naples and swing off at the Pozzuoli exit. Less swift but more scenic is taking Via Francesco Caracciolo along the Naples waterfront to Posillipo, then on to Pozzuoli.

Baia & Cuma

About 7km southwest of Pozzuoli, Baia was an upmarket Roman holiday resort with a reputation as a sordid centre of sex and sin. Today much of the ancient town is underwater, and modern development has left what is effectively a built-up, ugly and uninspiring coastal road.

Between April and October, CYMBA runs glass-bottom-boat tours of **Baia Sommersa** (☎ 349 4974183; www.baiaimmersa.it; tours €12; ☎ 10am, noon & 3pm Sat & Sun), the underwater ruins. All year round, however, you can admire the elaborate *nymphaeum* (shrine to the water nymph), complete with statues, jewels, coins and decorative pillars dredged up and reassembled in the recently expanded **Museo Archeologico dei Campi Flegrei** (☎ 081 523 37 97; Via Castello; admission €4; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset Tue-Sun). The 15th-century castle that houses the museum was built by Naples' Aragon rulers as a defence against possible French invasion.

Cuma (known to the ancient Greeks as Cumae) was the earliest Greek colony on the Italian mainland. The highlight of the **Acropoli di Cuma** (☎ 081 854 30 60; Via Montecuma; admission €4; ☎ 9am to 2hr before sunset) is the haunting **Antro della Sibilla Cumana** (Cave of the Cumaean Sybil). Followed out of the tufa bank, its eerie 130m-long trapezoidal tunnel

leads to the vaulted chamber where the Sybil was said to pass on messages from Apollo. The poet Virgil writes of Aeneas coming here to seek the oracle, who directs him to the underworld, entered from nearby **Lago d'Averno** (Lake Avernus). The lake, a 1km walk from Lucrino train station, is now a chilled-out spot for a picnic.

From Fusaro train station (Ferrovia Cumana), walk 150m north to Via Fusaro and jump on a Cuma-bound **EAV bus** (www.eavbus.it, in Italian), which runs roughly every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday and every hour on Sunday. For Baia, jump on a Miseno-bound EAV Bus from the opposite side of the street.

CASERTA

pop 79,620

The one compelling reason to stop at this otherwise nondescript town, 22km north of Naples, is to visit the colossal Palazzo Reale. Dubbed the Italian Versailles, the vast palace is one of the greatest – and last – achievements of Italian baroque architecture. It is also where Tom Cruise shot scenes for *Mission Impossible III* and where George Lucas filmed the interior shots of Queen Amidala's royal residence in *Star Wars: Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace* and *Star Wars: Episode 2 - Attack of the Clones*.

Caserta was founded in the 8th century by the Lombards on the site of a Roman emplacement atop Monte Tifata, expanding onto the plains below from the 12th century onwards.

Caserta's **tourist office** (☎ 0823 32 11 37; Piazza Dante; ☎ 9am–4.15pm Mon–Fri) is near the entrance to the palace gardens.

Sights

Known to Italians as the Reggia di Caserta, the Unesco-listed **Palazzo Reale** (☎ 0823 44 80 84; Via Douhet 22; admission €10; ☎ 8.30am–7pm Wed–Mon) is one of Italy's tourist heavyweights, pulling in some 460,000 visitors each year.

Work on the palace began in 1752 after King Charles VII of Bourbon ordered a palace to rival Versailles. Neapolitan Luigi Vanvitelli was commissioned for the job and built a palace not just equal to Versailles, but even bigger. With its 1200 rooms, 1790 windows, 34 staircases and a 250m-long facade, it was reputedly the largest building in 18th-century Europe.

You enter by Vanvitelli's immense staircase, a masterpiece of vainglorious baroque, and follow a route through the royal apartments, richly decorated with tapestries, furniture and crystal. Beyond the library is a room containing a vast collection of *presepi* composed of hundreds of hand-carved nativity pieces.

To clear your head afterwards, take a walk in the elegant landscaped **park** (☎ 8.30am–7pm Jun–Aug, to 5.30pm May & Sep, to 6pm Apr, to 4.30pm Oct, to 4pm Mar, to 3.30pm Nov–Feb, last entry 1hr before closing Wed–Mon). It stretches for some 3km to a waterfall and fountain of Diana and the famous **Giardino Inglese** (English Garden; ☎ tours 9.30am–1pm Wed–Mon) with its intricate pathways, exotic plants, pools and cascades. Last entry is one hour before closing.

The weary can cover the same ground in a pony and trap (from €5), or for €1 you can bring a bike into the park. A picnic is another good idea. Within the palace there's also the **Mostra Terrea Motus** (admission free with palace ticket; ☎ 9am–6pm Wed–Mon), illustrating the 1980 earthquake that devastated the region.

When you're done, revive yourself in the palace's cafeteria and restaurant.

Getting There & Away

CTP buses connect Caserta with Naples' Piazza Garibaldi (€2.90) about every 35 minutes between 6am and 9pm. Some Benevento services also stop in Caserta.

The town is on the main train line between Rome (€10.50, around two hours and 30 minutes) and Naples (€2.90, 40 minutes). Both bus and train stations are near the Palazzo Reale entrance, which is signposted from each. If you're driving, follow signs for the Reggia.

BENEVENTO

pop 62,950

Inside the ring of drab modern housing blocks that announce Benevento, the city has a lovely centre peppered with remnants of its ancient past. Nestled in the green hills of the Apennines, it was originally known as Maleventum but was renamed Beneventum after the Romans ousted the Samnites in 275 BC. Its golden age came around the 8th century, when it controlled much of southern Italy as a Lombard duchy. In the 11th century it was transferred to the control of the papacy and remained mostly under papal rule until 1860.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0824 31 99 11; www.eptbenevento.it; Via Nicola Sala 31; ☎ 8.15am-1.45pm & 3pm-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) is east of the historic centre. Catch local bus 1 from the train station to reach it.

Sights

The town was heavily bombed in WWII and the Romanesque **cathedral** with its elaborate facade had to be largely rebuilt. Southwest of the cathedral is a restored **Roman theatre** dating from Hadrian's time. The beautifully preserved **Arco di Traiano** (Trajan's Arch), built in AD 114, commemorates the opening of the Via Traiano, while the **obelisk** (Piazza Matteotti) marks the Napoleonic invasion of Italy.

Nearby, the atmospheric 8th-century **Chiesa di Santa Sofia** adjoins what was once a Benedictine abbey. Nowadays, the abbey houses the **Museo Sannio** (☎ 0824 218 18; Piazza Santa Sofia; admission €4; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun), whose collection contains remnants of a 1st-century temple dedicated to the Egyptian goddess Isis, along with some impressive archaeological finds. The ticket price includes admission to the church's tranquil cloisters.

Housed in the handsome Palazzo del Governo across from the museum, **ARCOS** (Museo di Arte Contemporanea del Sannio; ☎ 0824 312 465; www.museoarcos.it, in Italian; Corso Garibaldi 1; admission €4) is the Sannio region's contemporary art museum, with regular temporary exhibitions in a beautiful vaulted gallery. Opening hours vary.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel President (☎ 0824 31 67 16; www.hotelpresidentbenevento.it; Via Giovan Battista Perasso 1; s/d €78/115; ☎ ☎ ☎) Modern and central, the President is convenient rather than characterful. The comfortable, bland rooms feature striped fabrics, white walls and polished wood.

Osteria Nunzia (☎ 0824 294 31; Via Annunziata 152; meals €18; ☎ Mon-Sat) A slow-food stalwart, this vaulted nosh spot serves soulful regional classics to in-the-know foodies. Highlights include heavenly *linguine al nero di seppia* (linguine pasta with black squid ink) and an equally exquisite tender *polipo* (calamari) with tomato sauce.

Getting There & Away

Metrocampania Nord-Est (☎ 800 053939 www.metrocampanianordest.it) operates direct train services between Benevento and Naples (€4.20). The

train station is a good half-hour slog from the town centre and sights. Alternatively, local bus 1 runs half-hourly from the train station to the town centre. Buses also link Benevento with Rome (€17.50, three hours, four to five services daily) and Campobasso (€3.60, two hours, two services daily).

Benevento is on the SS7 (Via Appia) and close to the A16.

AVELLINO & AROUND

Largely rebuilt after the shattering earthquake of 1980, modern-day Avellino won't delay you long. The area's main sight is 1000m above town, perched on the vertiginous summit of Monte Vergine (1493m): the **Santuario di Montevergine** (☎ 0825 729 24; museum €1; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm year-round) dates to the 12th century, when a young pilgrim, Guglielmo di Vercelli, built the first church here. Since then it's undergone numerous facelifts, the last being in the mid-20th century. You can visit the abbey (admission free), and enjoy a small collection of archaeological finds, sculpture and painting in the sanctuary museum.

The green slopes around Avellino are home to some of Campania's finest vineyards. Fiano di Avellino, a dry white, Greco di Tufo, a dry and aromatic white, and Taurasi, the region's top red, are all produced in the area.

For winter exercise, there's limited skiing at **Lago di Laceno**, about 30km southeast of Avellino.

For more information on Avellino and its environs contact the town's **tourist office** (☎ 0825 747 32; www.eptavellino.it, in Italian; Via Due Principati 32a; ☎ 8.30am-2.30pm Mon-Sat).

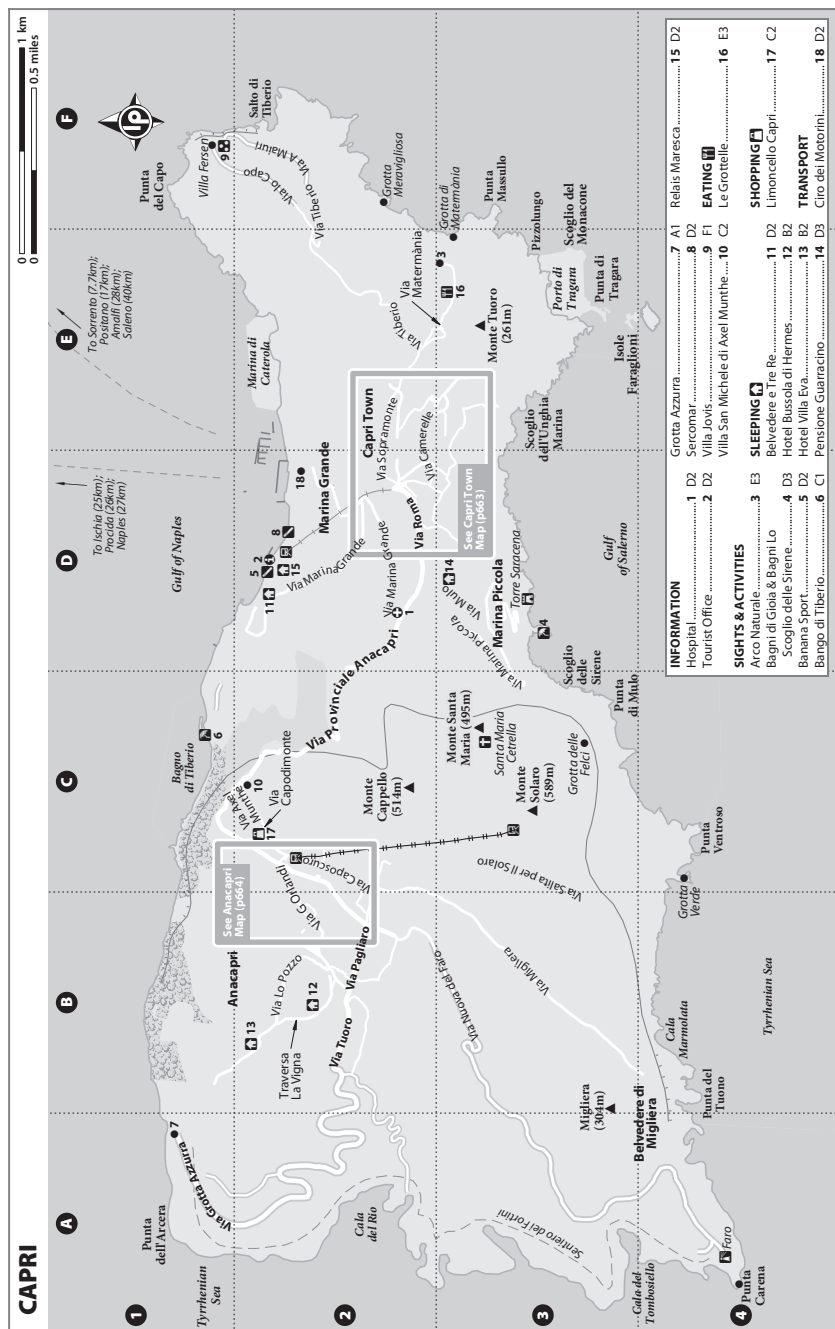
Buses connect Avellino to Naples (€3.30, every 20 minutes or so Monday to Saturday and hourly on Sunday). In summer buses go from Avellino to Monte Vergine and the sanctuary.

BAY OF NAPLES

CAPRI

pop 13,100

A stark mass of limestone rock that rise sheerly through impossibly blue water, Capri (pronounced *ca-pri*) is the perfect microcosm of Mediterranean appeal – a smooth cocktail of chichi piazzas and cool cafes, Roman ruins and rugged seascapes. It's also a hugely popular day-trip destination and a summer favourite of



holidaying VIPs. Inevitably, the two main centres, Capri Town and its uphill rival, Anacapri, are almost entirely given over to tourism and high prices. But explore beyond the designer boutiques and pointedly traditional trattorias and you'll find that Capri's hinterland retains an unspoiled rural charm with grand villas, overgrown vegetable plots, sun-bleached peeling stucco and banks of brilliantly coloured bougainvillea.

There are few must-sees on the island, but there's one you'd be sorry to miss. The Grotta Azzurra (Blue Cave) might be Capri's most visited sight, but the impact of the ethereal blue light is no less powerful for the crowds and singing boat-owners. On the island's other extremity, the ruins of Villa Jovis testify to the presence of the infamous Tiberius.

History

Already inhabited in the Palaeolithic age, Capri was briefly occupied by the Greeks before the Emperor Augustus made it his private playground and Tiberius retired here in AD 27. Its modern incarnation as a tourist centre dates to the early 20th century, when it was invaded by an army of European artists and writers and Russian revolutionaries.

Orientation

About 5km from the mainland at its nearest point, Capri is a mere 6km long and 2.7km wide. All hydrofoils and ferries arrive at Marina Grande, the island's transport hub. From here the quickest way up to Capri Town is by funicular, but there are also buses and taxis. On foot, it's a tough 2.25km climb along Via Marina Grande. At the top, turn left (east) at the junction with Via Roma for the centre of town or right (west) for Via Provinciale di Anacapri, which eventually becomes Via Orlandi as it leads up to Anacapri.

Pint-size Piazza Umberto I is the focal point of Capri Town. A short hop to the east, Via Vittorio Emanuele leads down to the main shopping street, Via Camerelle.

Up in Anacapri, buses and taxis drop you off in Piazza Vittoria, from where Via Orlandi runs southwest and Via Capodimonte heads up to Villa San Michele di Axel Munthe.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police station (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 42 11; Via Roma 70, Capri Town)

INTERNET ACCESS

Capri Internet Point (Map p664; ☎ 081 837 32 83; Piazzetta Cimitero, Anacapri; per hr €2; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, to 2.30pm Sun May-Oct, shorter hrs Nov-Apr) Also sells international newspapers.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Capri Island (www.capri.net) Excellent website with listings, itineraries and ferry schedules.

Capri Tourism (www.capritourism.com) Official website of Capri's tourist office.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Farmacia Internazionale (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 04 85; Via Roma 45, Capri Town)

Hospital (Map p661; ☎ 081 838 12 05; Via Provinciale Anacapri 5)

POST

Post office Capri Town (Map p663; ☎ 081 978 52 11; Via Roma 50); Anacapri (Map p664; ☎ 081 837 10 15; Via de Tommaso 8)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office Marina Grande (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 06 34; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.45pm Jun-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Sat Oct-May); Capri Town (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 06 86; Piazza Umberto I; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.45pm Mon-Sat Oct-May); Anacapri (Map p664; ☎ 081 837 15 24; Via Orlandi 59; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Sat Oct-Dec & Mar-May) Each tourist office can provide a free map of the island with town plans of Capri and Anacapri, and a more detailed one for €1. For hotel listings and other useful information, ask for a free copy of *Capri è*.

Sights

CAPRI TOWN

With its whitewashed stone buildings and tiny car-free streets, Capri Town evokes a film set. In summer its toy-town streets swell with camera-wielding day-trippers and the glossy rich. Central to the action is **Piazza Umberto I** (aka the Piazzetta), the showy, open-air salon where tanned tourists pay eye-watering prices to sip at one of four squareside cafes. Nearby, the 17th-century **Chiesa di Santo Stefano** (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 00 72; Piazza Umberto I; ☎ 8am-8pm) has a well-preserved marble floor (taken from Villa Jovis) and a statue of San Costanzo, Capri's patron saint. Beside the northern chapel is a reliquary with a saintly bone that reputedly saved Capri from the plague in the 19th century.

Across the road, **Museo Cerio** (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 66 81; Piazzetta Cerio 5; admission €2.50; ☎ 10am-1pm

Tue-Sat) harbours a library of books and journals about the island (mostly in Italian) and a collection of locally found fossils.

To the east of the Piazzetta, Via Vittorio Emanuele and its continuation, Via Serena, lead down to the picturesque **Certosa di San Giacomo** (Charterhouse of San Giacomo; Map p663; ☎ 081 837 62 18; Viale Certosa 40; admission free; ☞ 9am-2pm Tue-Sun), a 14th-century monastery with two cloisters and some fine 17th-century frescoes in the chapel.

From the *certosa*, Via Matteotti leads down to the colourful **Giardini di Augusto** (Gardens of Augustus; Map p663; ☞ dawn-dusk), founded by the Emperor Augustus. The view from the gardens is breathtaking, looking over to the **Isole Faraglioni** (Map p661), three limestone pinnacles that rise vertically out of the sea.

VILLA JOVIS & AROUND

East of Capri Town, a comfortable 2km walk along Via Tiberio, is **Villa Jovis** (Jupiter's Villa; Map p661; ☎ 081 837 06 34; Via Tiberio; admission €2; ☞ 9am to 1hr before sunset), also known as the Palazzo di Tiberio. Standing 354m above sea level, this was the largest and most sumptuous of

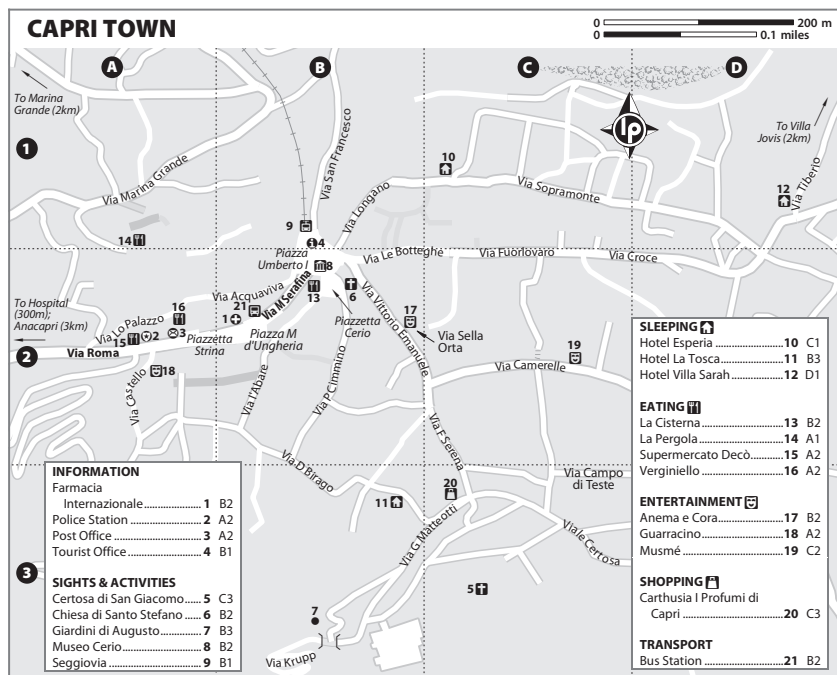
the island's 12 Roman villas and Tiberius' main Capri residence. It's not in great nick today, but the size of the ruins gives an idea of the scale at which Tiberius liked to live. His private rooms, with superb views over to the Punta Campanella, were on the northern and eastern sides of the complex.

The stairway behind the villa leads to the 330m-high **Salto di Tiberio** (Tiberius' Leap), a sheer cliff from where Tiberius had out-of-favour subjects hurled into the sea.

A 1.5km walk from the villa, down Via Tiberio and Via Maternània, is the **Arco Naturale** (Map p661), a huge rock arch formed by the pounding sea.

ANACAPRI & AROUND

Coming up from Capri Town, the bus deposits you in Piazza Vittoria, from where it's a short walk to **Villa San Michele di Axel Munthe** (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 14 01; Via Axel Munthe; admission €5; ☞ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10.30am-3.30pm Nov-Feb, 9.30am-4.30pm Mar, 9.30am-5pm Apr & Oct), the former home of self-aggrandising Swedish doctor Axel Munthe. The story behind the villa, built on the ruined site of a Roman villa, is told by Munthe



himself in his autobiography *The Story of San Michele* (1929). Other than the collection of Roman sculpture, the villa's best feature is the beautifully preserved gardens and their superb views. If you are here between July and September, you may be able to catch one of the classical concerts that take place in the gardens. Check with the **Axel Munthe Foundation** (☎ 081 837 14 01; www.sanmichele.org) for current programme and reservation information.

Beyond the villa, Via Axel Munthe continues to the 800-step stairway leading down to Capri Town. Built in the early 19th century, this was the only link between Anacapri and the rest of the island until the present mountain road was constructed in the 1950s. Traditionally, the people of Capri and Anacapri have been at loggerheads, and they are always ready to trot out their respective patron saints to ward off the *malocchio* (evil eye) of their rivals.

From Piazza Vittoria, the **seggiovia** (chair lift; Map p664; ☎ 081 837 14 28; single/return €5/6.50; ☎ 9.30am–5pm Mar–Oct, 10.30am–3pm Nov–Feb) carries you to the summit of **Monte Solaro** (589m), Capri's highest point. The views from the top are outstanding – on a clear day you can see the entire Bay of Naples and the islands of Ischia and Procida.

Rising above Punta Carena, Capri's rugged southwesterly point, is the **Faro** (Map p661), Italy's second-tallest and most powerful lighthouse. From Anacapri a bus runs to the Faro every 20 minutes in summer and every 40 minutes in winter.

GROTTA AZZURRA

Capri's single most famous attraction is the **Grotta Azzurra** (Blue Grotto; Map p661; admission €10.50; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset), a stunning sea cave illuminated by an other-worldly blue light.

Long known to local fishers, it was rediscovered by two Germans, Augustus Kopisch and Ernst Fries, in 1826. Subsequent research, however, revealed that Emperor Tiberius had built a quay in the cave around AD 30, complete with a *nymphaeum*. You can still see the carved Roman landing stage towards the rear of the cave.

Far from being an overblown tourist attraction, the grotto's iridescent blue light is pure magic. It's caused by the refraction of sunlight off the sides of the 1.3m-high entrance, coupled with the reflection off the white sandy bottom.

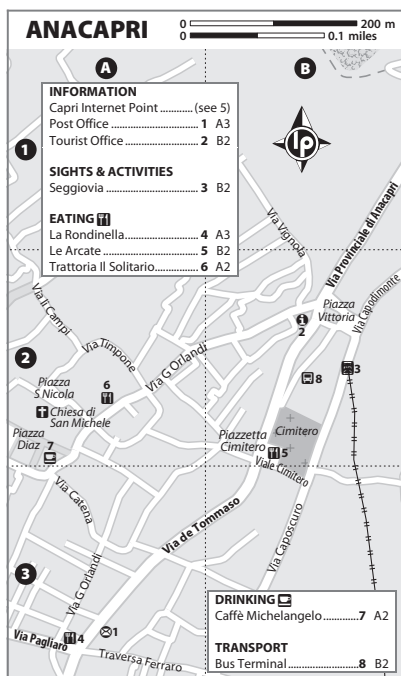
The easiest way to visit is to take a boat tour from Marina Grande. A return trip will cost €18.50, comprising a return motorboat to the cave, a rowing boat into the cave and admission fee; allow a good hour. The singing 'captains' are included in the price, so don't feel any obligation if they push for a tip.

The grotto is closed if the sea is too choppy, so before embarking check that it's open at the Marina Grande tourist office.

Activities

Marina Grande is the hub of Capri's thriving water-sports business. **Sercomar** (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 87 81; www.capisub.com; Via Colombo 64; ☎ closed Nov) offers various diving packages, costing from €100 for a single dive to €350 for a four-session beginners' course.

Operating out of a kiosk to the west of the port, **Banana Sport** (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 51 88; ☎ mid-Apr–Oct) hires out five-person motorised dinghies for €75 for two hours or €175 for the day. Here you can also pick up a boat to the **Bagno di Tiberio** (Map p661), a popular swimming spot west of Marina Grande. It's said that Tiberius once swam here, although



he wouldn't have had to pay €8.50 to access the private beach as you will. Other swimming spots include Punta Carena near the lighthouse and the small pebbly beach at Marina Piccola. At Marina Piccola you can hire canoes at **Bagni di Gioia** (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 77 02) and **Bagni Lo Scoglio delle Sirene** (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 02 21) for around €8/14 per hour for a single/double canoe.

Capri also offers some memorable hiking. Favourite routes link the Arco Naturale with Punta di Tragara and Monte Solaro with Anacapri. Running along the island's oft-overlooked western coast, the Sentiero dei Fortini (Path of the Small Forts) leads from Punta Carena up to the Grotta Azzurra.

Sleeping

Capri's accommodation is top-heavy, with plenty of four- and five-star hotels but few budget options. Cheaper *pensioni* do exist, but they tend to be at the top of their price bracket. Although there are a growing number of B&Bs, they're rarely much of a saving. As a general rule, the further you go from Capri Town, the less you'll pay. Camping is forbidden.

Always book ahead. Hotel space is at a premium during the summer, and many places close in winter, typically between November and March.

MARINA GRANDE

Belvedere e Tre Re (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 03 45; www.belvedere-tre-re.com; Via Marina Grande 238; s/d €100/120; ☎ Apr-Nov; ☎) Five minutes' walk from the port with superb boat views, this fairly modest two-star offers rooms that have been recently modernised, complete with private covered balconies. There's a sun-bronzing terrace on the top floor.

Relais Maresca (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 96 19; www.relaismaresca.it; Via Marina Grande 284; r incl breakfast €130-220; ☎ Mar-Dec; ☎) A delightful four-star, this is the top choice in Marina Grande, with acres of gleaming ceramic in turquoise, blue and yellow. There's a range of rooms (and corresponding prices); the best have balconies and sea views. There's also a lovely flower-filled 4th-floor terrace. Minimum two-day stay on weekends in July and August.

CAPRI TOWN

Hotel La Tosca (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 09 89; www.latoscahotel.com; Via Birago 5; s €45-80, d €65-125; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎)

This charming one-star *pensione* is hidden away down a quiet back lane overlooking the Certosa di San Giacomo and the surrounding mountains. The rooms are plain but comfortable, with pine furniture, striped fabrics and large bathrooms. Several have private terraces. The genial owner extends a warm welcome. It's popular, so book ahead!

Pensione Guarracino (Map p661; ☎/fax 081 837 71 40; guarracino@capri.it; Via Mulo 13; s €90-85, d €90-115; ☎) A short walk from the centre of Capri Town and within easy striking distance of Marina Piccola, this small, family-run *pensione* has 13 modest rooms, each decked out with a comfy bed, decent shower and independent air-con.

Hotel Esperia (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 02 62; www.esperiacapri.eu; Via Sopramonte 41; r €130-180; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) The Esperia exudes fading charm. A short uphill walk from the centre of town, it's housed in a 19th-century villa, complete with peeling facade, handsome columns and giant urns. Rooms are large and airy, with modern furniture and a floral theme. The best have terraces with sea views.

Hotel Villa Sarah (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 06 89; www.villasarah.it; Via Tiberio 3a; s €90-140, d €140-210; ☎ Easter-Oct; ☎) Villa Sarah retains a rustic appeal that so many of the island's hotels have long lost. Surrounded by its own fruit-producing gardens, it has 19 airy rooms, all decorated in classical local style with ceramic tiles and old-fashioned furniture. Best of all, though, is the small swimming pool.

ANACAPRI

Hotel Bussola di Hermes (Map p661; ☎ 081 838 20 10; www.bussolahermes.com; Traversa La Vigna 14; s €50-120, d €70-140; ☎ ☎) This hotel has moved up several elegant notches from its days as a hostel-cum-hotel. The sun-filled rooms have luxurious drapes and a blue-and-white colour scheme, while the public spaces are a Pompeii-esque combo of columns, statues and vaulted ceilings. To get here take the bus up to Piazza Vittoria and call for the hotel shuttle service.

Our pick Hotel Villa Eva (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 15 49; www.villaeva.com; Via La Fabbrica 8; r €100-120; ☎ Mar-Oct; ☎) Rooms at this gorgeous retreat, which is hidden among fruit trees, have unusual trappings, including a tiled fireplace, a brick well, domed ceilings and a boxed radio (room 6). There's also a swimming pool, snack bar and treetop views down to the sea.

On the down side, it's tricky to get to – take the Grotta Azzurra bus from Anacapri and ask the driver where to get off or cough up €24 for a port-side pick-up.

Eating

Traditional food in traditional trattorias is what you'll find on Capri. The island's culinary gift to the world is *insalata caprese*, a salad of fresh tomato, basil and mozzarella bathed in olive oil. Also look out for *caprese* cheese, a cross between mozzarella and ricotta, and *ravioli caprese*, ravioli stuffed with ricotta and herbs.

Many restaurants, like the hotels, close over winter.

CAPRI TOWN

Supermercato Decò (Map p663; Via Roma; ☎ 8am–9pm Mon–Sat, to 1pm Sun) Next to the police station is this good place to load up with picnic provisions.

Verginiello (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 09 44; Via Lo Palazzo 25; meals €20; ☎ closed Nov) Offering reliable, earthy food and grandstand views over Marina Grande, this bustling restaurant is as near to a budget diner as you'll find in Capri Town. Of the pastas, the *spaghetti alle cozze* (spaghetti with mussels) is worth trying.

La Gisterna (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 56 20; Via M Serafina 5; meals €25; ☎ closed Feb) Named after and housed in a 2000-year-old Roman cistern, this unpretentious trattoria is a perennial favourite. Owned by the larger-than-life Salvatore, whose memorable picture adorns the bottles of house wine, it's good for traditional dishes like pasta with beans, veal cutlets and wood-fired pizzas.

Le Grotte (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 57 19; Via Arco Naturale 13; meals €28; ☎ Apr–Oct) About 150m from the Arco Naturale, Capri's most atmospheric place has two dining areas: one set in a cave, the other on a terrace perched above a wooded hillside sloping down to the sea. The food is traditional – think simple pasta dishes followed by grilled fish, chicken or rabbit.

La Pergola (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 74 12; Via Traversa Lo Palazzo 2; meals €30; ☎ Thu–Tue Nov–Sep) The vine-shaded terrace and sea views provide a wonderful setting for La Pergola's delicious, innovative food. Here, Capri classics mix it with more modern dishes such as *paccheri con cozze*, *patate e peperoncino* (large pasta rings with mussels, potatoes and chilli).

ANACAPRI

Trattoria Il Solitario (Map p664; ☎ 081 837 13 82; Via G Orlandi 96; pizzas from €4.50, meals €20; ☎ Apr–Oct) One of the better trattorias in the heart of Anacapri's touristy centre, Il Solitario serves large helpings of tasty local food at honest prices. It's a relaxed place with children's toys in the corner and tables laid out in an inviting green backyard. Book ahead on summer weekends.

La Rondinella (Map p664; ☎ 081 837 12 23; Via G Orlandi 295; meals €28) One of Anacapri's most consistently good restaurants, La Rondinella has a relaxed, rural feel. For something different try chef Michele's *linguine alla ciammura*, a delicious pasta dish with a creamy white sauce of anchovies, garlic and parsley.

Le Arcate (Map p664; ☎ 081 837 33 25; Via de Tommaso 24; meals €30) This is the restaurant that the locals recommend – and frequent. An unpretentious place with hanging baskets of ivy and well-aged terracotta tiles, it specialises in delicious *primi* (first courses) and pizzas. A real show-stopper is the *risotto con polpa di granchio, rughetta e scaglie di parmigiano* (risotto with crab meat, rocket and shavings of Parmesan).

Drinking & Entertainment

The main evening activity is styling up and hanging out, ideally on Capri Town's Piazzetta. There are few nightclubs to speak of and just a few upmarket taverns. Most places open around 10pm and charge anywhere between €20 and €30 for admission. Many close between November and March.

In Capri Town, celebs head for the self-styled tavern **Anema e Cora** (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 64 61; Via Sella Orta 39e), the island's most famous nightspot. **Guarracino** (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 05 14; Via Castello 7) is somewhat more casual.

For something racier, run the gauntlet of bouncers outside **Musmé** (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 60 11; Via Camerelle 61b).

Up in Anacapri, **Caffè Michelangelo** (Map p664; Via Orlandi 138) is a laid-back café good for people-watching.

Shopping

If you're not in the market for a new Rolex or Prada bag, look out for ceramic work and anything lemony – in particular, lemon-scented perfume and *limoncello*. For the former try **Carthusia I Profumi di Capri** (Map p663; ☎ 081 837 03 68; Via F Serena 28) in Capri Town; for the latter go up to Anacapri and **Limoncello Capri** (Map p661;

☎ 081 837 29 27; Via Capodimonte 27), the birthplace of *limoncello*. Apparently, the grandmother of current owner Vivica made the tot as an after-dinner treat for the guests in her hotel, some 100 years ago.

If you *are* in the market for a new Rolex or Prada bag, head to Via Vittorio Emanuele and Via Camerelle.

Getting There & Away

See Naples (p654) and Sorrento (p679) for details of year-round ferries and hydrofoils to the island.

In summer hydrofoils connect with Positano (€16.50, 30 to 40 minutes), Amalfi (€17), Salerno (€17.50) and Ischia (€15.50, one hour).

Note that some companies require you to pay a small supplement for luggage, typically around €1.50.

Getting Around

The best way to get around Capri is by bus. There's no car-hire service on the island.

Operating from Capri Town bus station, **Sippic** (☎ 081 837 04 20) runs regular buses to/from Marina Grande, Anacapri and Marina Piccola. It also operates buses from Marina Grande to Anacapri and from Marina Piccola to Anacapri.

From Anacapri bus terminal, **Staiano Autotrasporti** (☎ 081 837 24 22; www.staiano-capri.com) buses serve the Grotta Azzurra and Faro.

Single tickets cost €1.40 on all routes, as does the funicular that links Marina Grande with Capri Town.

You can hire a scooter from **Ciro dei Motorini** (Map p661; ☎ 081 837 80 18; Via Marina Grande 55) at Marina Grande. Rates are about €15 per hour or €60 per day.

From Marina Grande, a **taxi** (☎ in Capri Town 081 837 05 43, in Anacapri 081 837 11 75) costs around €20 to Capri and €25 to Anacapri; from Capri to Anacapri costs about €15.

ISCHIA

pop 61,640

Sprawling over 46 sq km, Ischia is the biggest and busiest island in the bay. It's a lush concoction of sprawling spa towns, mud-wrapped Germans and ancient booty. Also famous for its thermal waters, it has some fine beaches and spectacular scenery.

Most visitors stay on the touristy north coast, but go inland and you'll find a rural

landscape of chestnut forests, dusty farms and earthy hillside towns. On the tranquil south coast, Sant'Angelo is a blissful blend of twisting laneways, cosy harbour and bubbling beaches.

History

Ischia was one of the first Greek colonies in the 8th century BC, named Pithekoussai after the *pithos* (pottery clay) found there. An important stop on the trade route from Greece to northern Italy, it was renamed Aenaria by the Romans. In 1301 an eruption of the now-extinct Monte Arso forced the inhabitants to flee to the mainland, where many stayed permanently.

The Spanish took the island in 1495 and ruled until a brief French occupation in the early 19th century. The English attacked in 1806, sparking fierce fighting and the bombardment of the Castello Aragonese; the scars are still evident today. Like so many of these islands, Ischia was a political prison during the 19th century.

Orientation

Ferries dock at Ischia Porto, the main gateway and tourist hub. The bus station is a one-minute walk west of the pier, with buses servicing all other parts of the island. East of the pier, shopping strip Via Roma eventually becomes Corso Vittoria Colonna and heads 2km southeast to Ischia Ponte.

Information

Ischia Online (www.ischiaonline.it) Website with hotels, sights, activities and events.

Tourist office (☎ 081 507 42 11; www.infoischia.procida.it; Via Sogliuzzo 72, Ischia Porto; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat)

Sights & Activities

Ischia's most famous landmark, the **Castello Aragonese** (☎ 081 99 28 34; Rocca del Castello; admission €10; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar), sits on a rocky islet just off Ischia Ponte. A sprawling complex comprising a 14th-century cathedral and several smaller churches, it largely dates to the 1400s, when King Alfonso of Aragon gave an older Angevin fortress a makeover. Inside, the **Museo delle Armi** (Weaponry Museum) has a curious collection of torture tools, kinky illustrations and medieval armoury.

On the west coast, Ischia's own Garden of Eden can be found at **La Mortella** (☎ 081 98 62 20;

www.lamortella.it; Via F Calese 39, Forio; admission €10; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun Apr-Nov. More than 1000 rare and exotic plants flourish in the grounds, which were designed by Russell Page and inspired by the Moorish gardens of Granada's Alhambra in Spain. They were established by Sir William Walton, the late British composer, and his wife, who made La Mortella their home in 1949. Classical music concerts are staged in the gardens in spring and autumn.

Also in Forio, the 6000-sq-metre **Giardini Ravino** (☎ 081 99 77 83; www.ravino.it; SS 270, Forio; admission €8; ☎ 9am-sunset, closed Tue & Thu) has an extraordinary collection of cactii, as well as other succulent plants, many of which have reputed homeopathic qualities. Guided walks take place on Saturday at 5.30pm.

A strenuous uphill walk from the village of Fontana brings you to the top of **Monte Epomeo** (788m), the island's highest point, with superb views of the Bay of Naples. The little church near the top is the 15th-century **Cappella di San Nicola di Bari**, which features a pretty majolica floor.

Unlike Capri, Ischia has some great beaches. From chic Sant'Angelo on the south coast, water taxis reach the sandy **Spiaggia dei Maronti** (€5 one-way) and the intimate cove of **Il Sorgeto** (€7 one-way), with its steamy thermal spring. Sorgeto can also be reached on foot down a poorly signposted path from the village of Panza.

If you fancy a dive, **Captain Cook** (☎ 335 6362630; www.captaincook.it; Via lasolino 106, Ischia Porto) has equipment for hire and runs courses. A single dive will typically cost from €40. **Westcoast Boat Hire** (☎ 081 90 86 04; www.westcoastischia.it; Porto di Forio) provides full- and half-day hire of motorised boats and dinghies (from €100).

Sleeping

Most hotels close in winter, and prices normally drop considerably among those that stay open.

Camping Mirage (☎ 081 99 05 51; www.campingmirage.it; Via Maronti 37, Spiaggia dei Maronti, Barano d'Ischia; camping 2 people & tent €29.50-35; ☎) On Spiaggia dei Maronti is this shady campsite with pitches under a panoply of eucalyptus trees. On-site facilities include showers, a laundry, a bar and a restaurant serving great seafood pasta.

Albergo Macri (☎/fax 081 99 26 03; Via lasolino 96, Ischia Porto; s €38-46, d €65-78; ☎ ☎) Down a blind

alley near the main port, this place oozes a friendly vibe. While the pine and bamboo furnishings won't snag any design awards, rooms are clean, bright and comfy. All 1st-floor rooms have terraces, and the small downstairs bar serves a mean espresso.

Hotel Semiramis (☎ 081 90 75 11; www.hotelsemiramisischia.it; Spiaggia di Citara, Forio; r €100-140; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎ ☎ ☎) This bright, friendly hotel has a tropical-oasis feel, with its central pool surrounded by palms. Rooms, the best of which have distant sea views, are large and beautifully tiled in the traditional yellow-and-turquoise pattern.

Hotel La Sirenella (☎ 081 99 47 43; www.lasirenella.net; Corso Rizzoli 41, Lacco Ameno; s/d €70/140; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☎) This welcoming beachfront hotel in Lacco Ameno is a family-run place with sunny rooms, beach views and a bright, breezy atmosphere. Stifle your hunger pangs with a pizza at the downstairs restaurant.

Hotel Casa Celestino (☎ 081 99 92 13; www.casacellestino.it; Via Chiaia delle Rose, Sant'Angelo; s €120-135, d €130-140; ☎ Jan-Oct; ☎ ☎) This chic little number is a soothing blend of creamy furnishings, whitewashed walls and contemporary art. Bedrooms have majolica-tiled floors, modern bathrooms and balconies overlooking the sea. There's a good restaurant across the way.

Eating

Seafood aside, Ischia is famed for its rabbit, which is bred on inland farms. Another local speciality is *rucolino* – a green liquorice-flavoured liqueur made from *rucola* (rocket) leaves.

Zi Carmela (☎ 081 99 84 23; Via Schioppa 27, Forio; meals €20; ☎ Apr-Oct) Clued-up locals head here for seafood dishes such as the *fritturina e pezzogne* (a local whitefish baked with potatoes and herbs in the wood-fired pizza oven) or *tartare di palamito al profumo d'arancia* (tartar of local fish with citrus). Eat in the sunny garlic-strung dining room or on the terrace overlooking the port.

Lo Scoglio (☎ 081 99 95 29; Via Cava Ruffano 58, Sant'Angelo; meals €28; ☎ closed Jan-Mar & mid-Nov–mid-Dec) Jutting out over the sea beside a gorgeous beach cove, Lo Scoglio dishes up brilliant seafood. The ingredients are as fresh as the day's catch, appearing in dishes like mussel soup and grilled sea bass. Sunday lunchtime is a popular weekly event.

La Baia el Clipper (☎ 081 333 42 09; Via Porto 116, Ischia Porto; meals €40) With its romantic setting at

the port's entrance, this restaurant is a crowd pleaser. The waiters are friendly, the service slick, and the day's catch is proudly displayed in the entrance. Try the *linguine con gamberetti e rucola* (with shrimp and rocket), one of the more interesting specialities. Dress up – it's that kind of place.

Getting There & Away

See p654 for details of hydrofoils and ferries to/from Naples. You can also catch hydrofoils direct to Capri (€15.50) and Procida (€9).

Getting Around

The main bus station is in Ischia Porto. There are two principal lines: the CS (Circo Sinistra; Left Circle) and CD (Circo Destra; Right Circle), which circle the island in opposite directions, passing through each town and leaving every 30 minutes. Buses pass near all hotels and campsites. A single ticket, valid for 90 minutes, costs €1.30, while an all-day, multi-use ticket is €4.50. Taxis and micro-taxis (scooter-engined three-wheelers) are also available.

Do the island a favour by not bringing your car. If you want to hire one (or a scooter), there are plenty of rental firms, including **Frattelli del Franco** (☎ 081 99 13 34; Via A De Luca 127, Ischia Ponte), which hires out cars (from €30 per day), scooters (€25 to €35) and mountain bikes (around €10 per day). You can't take a rented vehicle off the island.

PROCIDA

pop 10,700

Dig out your paintbox: the Bay of Naples' smallest island (and its best-kept secret) is a soulful blend of hidden lemon groves, weathered fishers and pastel-hued houses.

August aside – when beach-bound mainlanders flock to its shores – its narrow sun-bleached streets are the domain of the locals: wiry young boys clutch fishing rods, weary mothers clutch wiry young boys and wizened old seafarers swap tales of malaise.

Orientation & Information

Marina Grande is the hop-off point for ferries and hydrofoils and forms most of the tourist showcase. Here, **Graziella Travel Agency** (☎ 081 896 95 94; www.isoladiprocida.it; Via Roma 117; ☎ 9am–1pm & 4–8pm Mon–Sat Apr–Oct, closed Sat afternoon Nov–Mar) can organise accommodation, boat trips (about €15 for a two-hour tour) and bicycle

hire (half-day/full-day €5/8). It also has a free map of the island.

Sights & Activities

The best way to explore the island – a mere 4 sq km – is on foot or by bike. However, the island's narrow roads can be clogged with cars – one of its few drawbacks.

Clinging on to Procida's highest point is the crumbling 16th-century **Castello d'Avalos**, a former Bourbon hunting lodge and ex-prison. Next door, the **Abbazia di San Michele Arcangelo** (☎ 081 896 76 12; Via Terra Murata 89; admission €2; ☎ 9.45am–12.45pm Mon–Sat year-round, plus 3.30–6pm May–Oct), a one-time Benedictine abbey, contains a church, a small museum with some arresting paintings, and a honeycomb of catacombs.

From panoramic Piazza dei Martiri, the village of **Corricella** tumbles down to its marina in a riot of pinks, yellows and whites. Further south, a steep flight of steps leads down to **Chiaia** beach, one of the island's most beautiful.

All pink, white and blue, little **Marina di Chiaiolella** has a yacht-stocked marina, old-school eateries and a languid disposition. Nearby the **Lido** is a popular beach.

The **Procida Diving Centre** (☎ 081 896 83 85; www.vacanzeaprocida.it/framediving01-uk.htm; Via Cristoforo Colombo 6, Marina di Chiaiolella) runs diving courses and hires out equipment. The price ranges from €45 for a single dive to €130 for a snorkelling course, with more advanced open-water diving also on offer.

You can charter a yacht from **Blue Dream** (☎ 081 896 05 79, 339 5720874; www.bluedreamcharter.com; Via Ottimo 3) from €70 per person per day.

Festivals & Events

Good Friday sees a colourful **procession of the Misteri**. A wooden statue of Christ and the Madonna Addolorata, along with life-sized tableaux of plaster and papier-mâché illustrating events leading to Christ's crucifixion, is carted across the island. Men dress in blue tunics with white hoods, while many of the young girls dress as the Madonna.

Sleeping

Hotel Celeste (☎ 081 896 74 88; www.hotelceleste.it; Via Rivoli 6, Marina di Chiaiolella; s €30–60, d €40–100; ☎ ☎) The Celeste, a bright, ecofriendly hotel overlooking sweet orange groves, boasts the island's first solar panels. Rooms differ in look

(some are white, some are yellow) but all are pristine, light and comfortable. Outside there's a home-style garden.

Casa Giovanni da Procida (☎ 081 896 03 58; www.casagiovannidaprocida.it; Via Giovanni da Procida 3; s €50-80, d €65-100; ☹ closed Feb; ☐ ☹) This chic farmhouse B&B basks in the shade of a centuries-old magnolia tree and has split-level rooms with low-rise beds and contemporary furniture. Bathrooms are small but slick, with funky mosaic tiling and cube basins.

Hotel La Corricella (☎ 081 896 75 75; www.hotelcorricella.it; Via Marina Corricella 88; s €70-100, d €90-120; ☹ Apr-Oct) One bookend to Marina Corricella, it's hard to miss this peach-and-yellow candy-cane colour scheme. Low-fuss rooms feature modular-style furniture with fans and TVs. The large shared terrace has top-notch harbour views, the restaurant serves decent seafood, and a boat service reaches the nearby beach.

Campsites are dotted around the island and open from April/May to September/October. Typical prices are €10 per site plus €10 per person. Reliable places include **La Caravella** (☎ 081 810 18 38; Via IV Novembre).

Eating

Da Giorgio (☎ 081 896 79 10; Via Roma 36, Marina Grande; meals €12; ☹ Mar-Oct) These folks try hard to please with a reasonable menu, welcoming window boxes and inexpensive beer. The menu holds few surprises, but the ingredients are fresh, zesty and flavourful in classics like *gnocchi alla sorrentina* (gnocchi baked in tomato sauce with mozzarella).

Gorgona (☎ 081 810 10 60; Via Marina Corricella; meals €20; ☹ Mar-Oct) Along unpretentious Marina Corricella, with its old fishing boats, piles of fishing nets and sleek, lazy cats, any restaurant will provide you with a memorable experience. That said, this place peddles particularly fine smoked-seafood dishes, including swordfish and tuna steaks.

La Conchiglia (☎ 081 896 76 02; Via Pizzaco 10; meals €25; ☹ Mar-Oct) Topaz waves at your feet, pastel Corricella in the distance – this is what you come to Procida for. Up against the views, the food holds its own with dishes such as *spaghetti alla povera* (spaghetti with *peperoncino*, green peppers, cherry tomatoes and anchovies). To get here, take the steep steps down from Via Pizzaco or book a boat from Corricella.

Ristorante Scarabeo (☎ 081 896 99 18; Via Salette 10; meals €27; ☹ daily Mar-Oct, weekends only Dec-Feb, closed Nov) Behind a veritable jungle of lemon trees lies the venerable kitchen of Signora Battinelli. With husband Francesco, she whips up classics like *fritelle di basilico* (fried patties of bread, egg, Parmesan and basil) and home-made aubergine-and-*provola* ravioli. They breed their own rabbits, make their own *falanghina* (a light, fruit-forward white wine) and it's all yours to devour under a pergola of bulbous lemons.

Getting There & Around

Procida is linked by boat and hydrofoil to Ischia (€9), Pozzuoli (€9) and Naples (see p654).

There is a limited bus service (€0.80), with four lines radiating out from Marina Grande. Bus L1 connects the port and Marina di Chiaiolella.

Microtaxi can be hired for two to three hours for about €35, depending on your bargaining prowess. Contact **Graziella Travel Agency** (☎ 081 896 95 94; www.isoladiprocida.it; Via Roma 117) for bike hire (per half-/full day €5/8).

SOUTH OF NAPLES

ERCOLANO & HERCULANEUM

Ercolano is an uninspiring Neapolitan suburb that's home to one of Italy's best-preserved ancient sites – Herculaneum. A superbly conserved Roman fishing town, Herculaneum is smaller and less daunting than Pompeii, allowing you to visit without that nagging itch that you're bound to miss something.

History

In contrast to modern Ercolano, classical Herculaneum was a peaceful fishing and port town of about 4000 inhabitants, and something of a resort for wealthy Romans and Campanians.

Herculaneum's fate paralleled that of nearby Pompeii. Destroyed by an earthquake in AD 63, it was completely submerged in the AD 79 eruption of Mt Vesuvius. However, as it was much closer to the volcano than Pompeii, it drowned in a 16m-thick sea of mud rather than in the lapilli (burning pumice stone) and ash that rained down on Pompeii. This essentially fossilised the town, ensuring that even

delicate items, like furniture and clothing, were discovered remarkably well preserved.

The town was rediscovered in 1709, and amateur excavations were carried out intermittently until 1874, with many finds being carted off to Naples to decorate the houses of the well-to-do or to end up in museums. Serious archaeological work began again in 1927 and continues to this day, although with much of the ancient site buried beneath modern Ercolano, it's slow going.

Orientation & Information

From the Circumvesuviana Ercolano-Scavi station, it's a simple 500m downhill walk to the ruins – follow the signs for the *scavi* (excavations) down the main street, Via IV Novembre. En route, you'll pass the **tourist office** (☎ 081 788 12 43; Via IV Novembre 82; ☹ 8.30am–6pm Mon–Sat early Apr–Oct, to 2pm Mon–Sat Nov–early Apr) on your right.

Sights

Covering 4.5 hectares, the **ruins** (☎ 081 732 43 38; Corso Resina 6; adult/EU national 18–25yr/EU national under 18yr & over 65yr €11/5.50/free, combined ticket incl Pompeii,

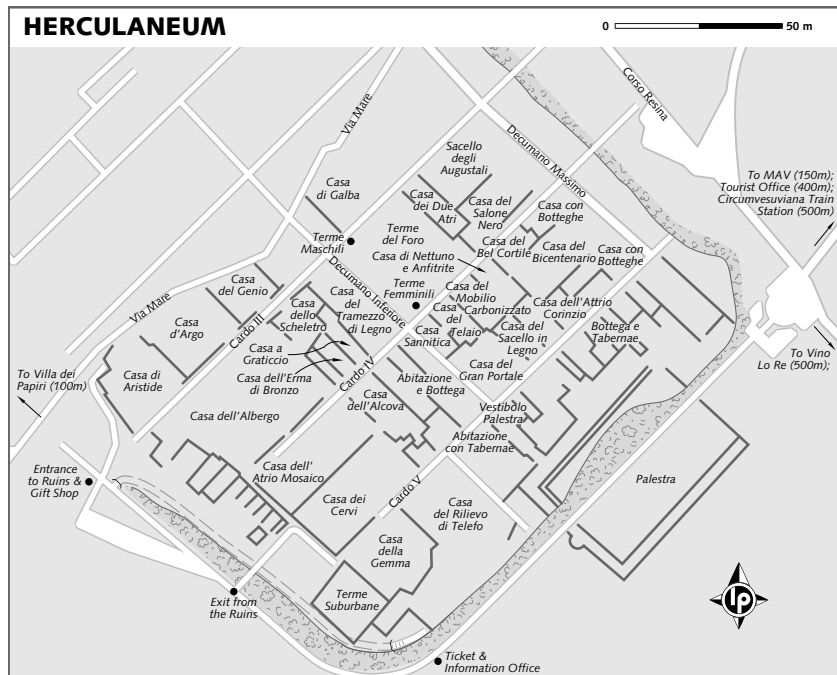
Oplontis, Stabiae & Boscoreale €20/10/free; ☹ 8.30am–7.30pm Apr–Oct, to 5pm Nov–Mar, last entry 90min before closing) are easily visited in a morning.

From the site's main gateway on Corso Resina, head down the wide boulevard, where you'll find the new **ticket office** on the left. Pick up a free map and guide booklet here, and then follow the boulevard right to the actual entrance into the ruins themselves. Here you can hire the useful audioguide (€6.50).

To enter the ruins you pass through what appears to be a moat around the town but is in fact the ancient shoreline. It was here in 1980 that archaeologists discovered some 300 skeletons, the remains of a crowd that had fled to the beach only to be overcome by boiling surge clouds sweeping down from Vesuvius.

As you begin your exploration northeast along Cardo III you'll stumble across **Casa d'Argo** (Argus House), a well-preserved example of a Roman noble family's house, complete with porticoed garden and triclinium (dining area).

Across the street sits the **Casa dello Scheletro** (House of the Skeleton), a modest-size house with five styles of mosaic flooring and the



remnants of an ancient security grill protecting the original skylight.

Across the Decumano Inferiore (one of ancient Herculaneum's main streets), the **Terme Maschili** was the men's section of the **Terme del Foro** (Forum Baths). Note the ancient latrine to the left of the entrance before stepping into the *apodyterium* (changing room). To the left is the *frigidarium* (cold bath), to the right the *tepidarium* (tepid bath), *caldarium* (hot bath) and an exercise area.

At the end of Cardo III, **Decumano Massimo** (Herculaneum's main thoroughfare) is lined with ancient shops and advertising, such as that adorning the wall to the right of the **Casa del Salone Nero**.

Further east along Decumano Massimo, a crucifix found in an upstairs room of the **Casa del Bicentenario** (Bicentenary House) provides possible evidence of a Christian presence in pre-Vesuvius Herculaneum.

Turn into Cardo IV from Decumano Massimo and you'll find the **Casa del Bel Cortile** (House of the Beautiful Courtyard), which houses three of the 300 skeletons discovered on the ancient shore in 1980.

Next door, the **Casa di Nettuno e Anfritrite** (House of Neptune and Amphitrite) is named after the extraordinary mosaic in the *nymphaeum*.

Over the road, the **Terme Femminili** was the women's section of the **Terme del Foro**; note the finely executed floor mosaic of a naked Triton in the *apodyterium*.

Further southwest on Cardo IV, the **Casa dell'Atrio a Mosaico** (House of the Mosaic Atrium; closed for restoration) is an impressive mansion with extensive floor mosaics, including a black-and-white chessboard design in the atrium.

Backtrack up Cardo IV and turn right at Decumano Inferiore. Here you'll find the **Casa del Gran Portale** (House of the Large Portal), whose main entrance is flanked by elegant brick Corinthian columns. Inside are some well-preserved wall paintings.

Accessible from Cardo V, **Casa dei Cervi** (House of the Deer) is an imposing example of a Roman noble family's house. The two-storey villa, around a central courtyard, contains murals and still-life paintings. In the courtyard is a diminutive pair of marble deer assailed by dogs and an engaging statue of a peeing Hercules.

Marking the site's southernmost tip, the 1st-century-AD **Terme Suburbane** (Suburban

Baths; closed for restoration) is one of the best-preserved bath complexes in existence, with deep pools, stucco friezes and bas-reliefs looking down upon marble seats and floors.

Northwest of the ruins, **Villa dei Papiri** was a vast four-storey, 245m-long complex owned by Julius Caesar's father-in-law. At the time of research, the villa was closed for restoration. For updates, contact www.arethusa.net.

On the main street linking the ruins and the train station, child-friendly **MAV** (Museo Archeologico Virtuale; ☎ 081 1980 6511; www.museomav.com; Via IV Novembre; admission €7; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is a new virtual-reality archaeology museum bringing the region's ruins back to life through holograms and computer-generated video.

Sleeping & Eating

You're unlikely to want to stay overnight at Ercolano – there's not much to see other than the ruins and it's an easy rail journey from Naples or Sorrento.

Vino Lo Re (☎ 081 739 02 07; Corso Resina 261; meals €30; ☎ Tue-Sat, lunch only Sun, closed Aug) serves delicious revamped classics and has a savvy wine list. If you do fancy staying overnight, the owners run a stylish, contemporary B&B upstairs with air-con and wi-fi (singles/doubles €50/70).

Getting There & Away

The best way to get to Ercolano is by Circumvesuviana train (get off at Ercolano-Scavi). Trains run regularly to/from Naples (€1.80), Pompeii (€1.40) and Sorrento (€1.90).

By car take the A3 from Naples, exit at Ercolano Portico and follow the signs to car parks near the site's entrance.

MT VESUVIUS

Towering darkly over Naples and its environs, Mt Vesuvius (Vesuvio; 1281m) is the only active volcano on the European mainland. Since it exploded into history in AD 79, burying Pompeii and Herculaneum and pushing the coastline out several kilometres, it has erupted more than 30 times. The most devastating of these was in 1631, the most recent in 1944. And while there's little evidence to suggest any imminent activity, observers worry that the current lull is the longest in the past 500 years.

A full-scale eruption would be catastrophic. Some 600,000 people live within 7km of the

crater and, despite incentives to relocate, few are willing to go.

Today, Vesuvius is better protected than many of the towns beneath it. The **Parco Nazionale del Vesuvio** (www.parconazionalevesuvio.it) was established in 1995 and today attracts some 400,000 visitors annually.

From a car park at the summit, an 860m path leads up to the **crater** (admission incl tour €6.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Jul & Aug, to 5pm Apr-Jun, to 4pm Mar & Oct, to 3pm Nov-Feb, ticket office closes 1hr before closing). It's not a strenuous walk, but it's more comfortable in trainers than in sandals or flip-flops. You'd also do well to take sunglasses – useful against swirling ash – and a sweater, as it can be chilly up top, even in summer.

About halfway up the hill, the **Museo dell'Osservatorio Vesuviano** (Museum of the Vesuvian Observatory; ☎ 081 610 84 83; www.ov.ingv.it; admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) tells the history of 2000 years of Vesuvius-watching.

The easiest way to visit Vesuvius is to get a bus from Pompeii up to the crater car park. **Vesuviana Mobilità** (☎ 081 963 44 20) operates buses (€8.90 return, one hour, eight to 10 daily) from Piazza Anfiteatro.

From Ercolano there are only two buses (€7.80 return, 1½ hours), departing from Via Panoramica (about 50m from the train station) at 8.25am and 12.45pm and returning at 2.40pm and 5.25pm. Tickets are available on board.

By car, exit the A3 at Ercolano Portico and follow signs for the Parco Nazionale del Vesuvio.

Note that when weather conditions are bad the summit path is shut and bus departures are suspended.

POMPEII

pop 25,723

A stark reminder of the malign forces that lie deep inside Vesuvius, Pompeii (Pompeii in Italian) is Europe's most compelling archaeological site. Each year about 2.5 million people pour in to wander the ghostly shell of what was once a thriving commercial centre.

Its appeal goes beyond tourism, though. From an archaeological point of view, it's priceless. Much of the value lies in the fact that it wasn't simply blown away by Vesuvius: rather it was buried under a layer of lapilli (burning pumice stone), as Pliny the Younger describes in his celebrated account of the eruption.

History

The eruption of Vesuvius wasn't the first disaster to strike the Roman port of Pompeii. In AD 63, a massive earthquake hit the city, causing widespread damage and the evacuation of much of the 20,000-strong population. Many had not returned when Vesuvius blew its top on 24 August AD 79, burying the city under a layer of lapilli and killing some 2000 men, women and children.

The origins of Pompeii are uncertain, but it seems likely that it was founded in the 7th century BC by the Campanian Oscans. Over the next seven centuries the city fell to the ancient Greeks and the Samnites before becoming a Roman colony in 80 BC.

After its catastrophic demise, Pompeii receded from the public eye until 1594, when the architect Domenico Fontana stumbled across the ruins while digging a canal. However, short of recording the find, he took no further action.

Exploration proper began in 1748 under the Bourbon king Charles VII and continued into the 19th century. In the early days, many of the more spectacular mosaics were siphoned off to decorate Charles' palace in Portici; thankfully, though, most were subsequently moved up to Naples, where they now sit in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale (p645).

Work continues today and although new discoveries are being made – in 2000 roadworks revealed a whole frescoed leisure area – the emphasis is now on restoring what has already been unearthed rather than raking for new finds.

Orientation

The Circumvesuviana train drops you at Pompeii-Scavi-Villa dei Misteri station, beside the main Porta Marina entrance. By car, signs direct you from the A3 to the *scavi* and car parks. Modern Pompeii is 1km away down Via Plinio.

Information

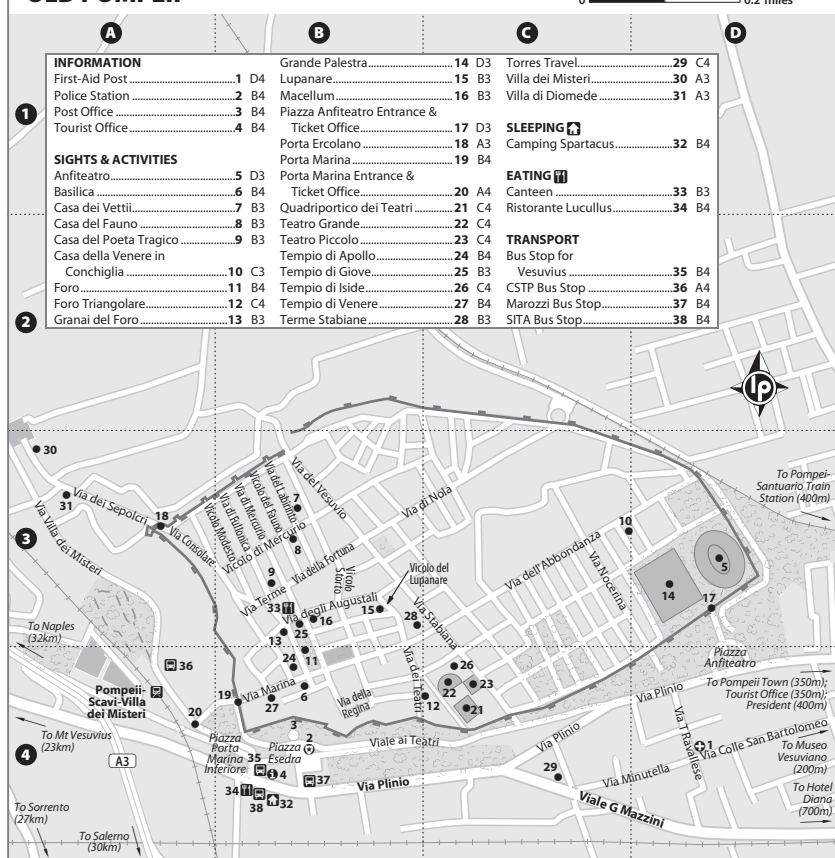
First-aid post (☎ 081 535 91 11; Via Colle San Bartolomeo 50)

Police station (☎ 081 856 35 11; Piazza Porta Marina Inferiore)

Pompeii Sites (www.pompeiiites.org) is a comprehensive website covering Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Post office (☎ 081 861 09 58; Piazza Esedra)

OLD POMPEII

0 400 m
0 0.2 miles

Tourist office (☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat; Porta Marina ☎ 081 536 32 93; www.pompeiturismo.it; Piazza Porta Marina Inferiore 12; Pompeii town (☎ 081 850 72 55; Via Sacra 1)

Sights

THE RUINS

Of Pompeii's original 66 hectares, 44 have now been excavated. Of course, that doesn't mean that you'll have unhindered access to every inch of the Unesco World Heritage-listed ruins (☎ 081 857 53 47; entrances at Porta Marina & Piazza Anfiteatro; adult/EU national 18yr-25yr/EU national under 18yr & over 65yr €11/5.50/free, combined ticket incl Herculaneum, Oplontis, Stabiae & Boscoreale & 3 minor sites €20/10/free; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Oct, last entry 6pm, 8.30am-5pm Nov-Mar, last entry 3.30pm); you'll come across areas

cordoned off for no apparent reason, the odd stray dog and a noticeable lack of clear signs. Audioguides (€6.50) are a sensible investment, and a good guidebook will help – try the €8 *Pompeii* published by Electa Napoli.

If visiting in summer, note that there's not much shade on-site, so bring a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water.

To do justice to the site allow at least three or four hours, longer if you want to go into detail.

The site's main entrance is at **Porta Marina**, the most impressive of the seven gates that punctuated the ancient town walls. A busy passageway, now as then, it originally connected the town with the nearby harbour. Immediately on the right as you enter is the

1st-century-BC **Tempio di Venere** (Temple of Venus), formerly one of the town's most opulent temples.

Continuing down Via Marina you come to the **basilica**, the 2nd-century-BC seat of the city's law courts and exchange. Opposite, the **Tempio di Apollo** (Temple of Apollo) is the oldest and most important of Pompeii's religious buildings, dating to the 2nd century BC. The grassy **foro** (forum) adjacent to the temple was the city's main piazza – a huge traffic-free rectangle flanked by limestone columns.

North of the forum stands the **Tempio di Giove** (Temple of Jupiter), one of whose two flanking triumphal arches remains, and the **Granai del Foro** (Forum Granary), now used to store hundreds of amphorae and a number of body casts. These casts were made in the late 19th century by pouring plaster into the hollows left by disintegrated bodies. Nearby, the **macellum** was the city's main meat and fish market.

From the market follow Via degli Augustali until Vicolo del Lupanare. Halfway down this narrow alley is the **Lupanare**, an ancient brothel. A tiny two-storey building with five rooms on each floor, it's lined with some of Pompeii's raunchiest frescoes.

At the end of Via dei Teatri, the green **Foro Triangolare** would originally have overlooked the sea. The main attraction here was, and still is, the 2nd-century-BC **Teatro Grande**, a huge 5000-seat theatre. Behind the stage, the porticoed **Quadrilatero dei Teatri** was initially used for the audience to stroll between acts and later as a barracks for gladiators. Next door, the **Teatro Piccolo**, also known as the Odeion, was once an indoor theatre, while the pre-Roman **Tempio di Iside** (Temple of Isis) was a popular place of cult worship.

Back on Via dell'Abbondanza, the **Terme Stabiane** is a typical 2nd-century-BC bath complex. Entering from the vestibule, bathers would stop off in the vaulted **apodyterium** (changing room) before passing through to the **tepidarium** (warm room) and **caldarium** (hot room).

Towards the northeastern end of Via dell'Abbondanza, **Casa della Venere in Conchiglia** (House of the Venus Marina) harbours a lovely peristyle looking on to a small, manicured garden. It's here that you'll find the striking Venus fresco after which the house is named.

Nearby, the grassy **anfiteatro** is the oldest-known Roman amphitheatre in existence. Built in 70 BC, it was at one time capable of

holding up to 20,000 bloodthirsty spectators. Over the way, the **Grande Palestra** is an athletics field with an impressive portico and, at its centre, the remains of a swimming pool.

From here, double back along Via dell'Abbondanza and turn right into Via Stabiana to see some of Pompeii's grandest houses. Turn left into Via della Fortuna for the **Casa del Fauno** (House of the Faun), Pompeii's largest private house. Named after the small bronze statue in the **impluvium** (rain tank), it was here that early excavators found Pompeii's greatest mosaics, most of which are now in Naples' Museo Archeologico Nazionale (p645). A couple of blocks away, the **Casa del Poeta Tragico** (House of the Tragic Poet) features the world's first 'beware of the dog' – *cave canem* – warnings. To the north, on Vicolo di Mercurio, the **Casa dei Vettii** is home to a famous depiction of Priapus with his gigantic phallus balanced on a pair of scales.

From here follow the road west and turn right into Via Consolare, which takes you out of the town through **Porta Ercolano**. Continue past **Villa di Diomede**, turn right, and you'll come to the **Villa dei Misteri**, one of the most complete structures left standing in Pompeii. The **Dionysiac Frieze**, the most important fresco still on-site, spans the walls of the large dining room. One of the world's largest ancient paintings, it depicts the initiation of a bride-to-be into the cult of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine.

The **Museo Vesuviano** (☎ 081 850 72 55; Via Bartolomeo 12; admission free; 🕒 9am–1pm Mon–Fri), southeast of the excavations, contains an interesting array of artefacts.

Tours

You'll almost certainly be approached by a guide outside the *scavi* ticket office. Authorised guides wear identification tags. Reputable tour operators include **Casting** (☎ 081 850 07 49), **Gata** (☎ 081 861 56 61) and **Promo Touring** (☎ 081 850 88 55). Expect to pay between €100 and €120 for a two-hour tour, whether you're alone or in a group. **Torres Travel** (☎ 081 856 78 02; www.torstravel.it; Viale Mazzini 7 bis) also offers tours of the ruins, as well as excursions to other regional hot spots, including Naples, Capri and the Amalfi Coast.

Sleeping

There's really no need to stay overnight in Pompeii. The ruins are best visited on a day

trip from Naples, Sorrento or Salerno, and once the excavations close for the day, the area around the site becomes decidedly seedy. If you do need to stay, the following places are recommended.

Camping Spartacus (☎ 081 862 40 78; www.campingspartacus.it; Via Plinio 117; camping 2 people, tent & car €11-18, bungalows €30-35; 🚻 🚰 🚿) About 200m from the entrance to the ruins, this was Pompeii's first campsite. Pitch your tent in the shade of the towering eucalyptus and pine trees or snuggle down in one of the basic bungalows, all of which come with air-con and private bathroom.

Hotel Diana (☎ 081 863 12 64; www.pompeihotel.com; Vico Sant'Abbondio 12; s €55-65, d €75-85; 🍷 🚰 🚿) Steps away from the Ferrovia dello Stato (State Railway) station in modern Pompeii, this hospitable, family-run hotel offers 22 clean, comfy, albeit smallish rooms, nine of which are brand spanking new. The petite, citrus-filled garden is perfect for uncomplicated chilling.

Eating

Most of the restaurants near the ruins are characterless affairs set up for feeding busloads of tourists. Wander down to the modern town and it's a little better, with a few decent restaurants serving excellent local food.

Ristorante Lucullus (☎ 081 861 30 55; Via Plinio 129; pizzas from €6, meals €28; 🍷 10.30am-10pm Jun-Sep, 10.30am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-May) Near the ruins and set back from the main road down an oleander-fringed drive, Lucullus does good pizzas as well as classic meat dishes and a delicious *penne Lucullus* (pasta with squash and prawns).

President (☎ 081 850 72 45; Piazza Schettini 12; meals €35; 🍷 closed Mon & dinner Sun Nov-Feb, closed 2 weeks Jan) Dripping chandeliers meet culinary brilliance at this charming restaurant in modern Pompeii. Here, local produce is celebrated in creations like aubergine *millefoglie* (flaky puff pastry) with Cetara anchovies, mozzarella *filante* (melted mozzarella) and grated *tarallo* (savoury almond biscuit). The degustation menus (€40 to €70) are a gourmand's delight.

Although closed during the writing of this guide, the onsite **canteen** (Via di Mercurio) at the ruins was set to re-open soon. You'll find it near the Tempio di Giove.

Getting There & Away

Frequent Circumvesuviana trains run from Pompeii-Scavi-Villa dei Misteri station to

Naples (€2.40, 40 minutes) and Sorrento (€1.90, 30 minutes).

Otherwise, **SITA** (☎ 199 730749; www.sitabus.it, in Italian) operates buses half-hourly to/from Naples (€2.40, 40 minutes) and **CSTP** (☎ 800 016 659; www.cstp.it, in Italian) bus 50 runs to/from Salerno (€1.90, one hour).

For Rome, **Marozzi** (☎ 080 579 01 11; www.marozzi.it) has two daily buses (€16.50, three hours), departing from Piazza Esedra.

For information on getting to/from Vesuvius see p672. Buses to Vesuvius depart from both Piazza Anfiteatro and Piazza Porta Marina Inferiore.

To get here by car, take the A3 from Naples. Use the Pompeii exit and follow signs to Pompeii Scavi. Car parks (approximately €4 per hour) are clearly marked and vigorously touted.

SORRENTO

pop 16,547

On paper Sorrento is a place to avoid – a package-holiday centre with few must-see sights, no beach to speak of and a glut of brassy English-style pubs. In reality, it's a strangely appealing place, its laid-back southern Italian charm resisting all attempts to swamp it in souvenir tat and graceless development.

Dating to Greek times and known to Romans as Surrentum, Sorrento's main selling point is its fabulous location. Straddling cliffs that look directly over the Bay of Naples to Mt Vesuvius, it's ideally situated for exploring the surrounding area: to the west, the best of the peninsula's unspoiled countryside and, beyond that, the Amalfi Coast; to the north, Pompeii and the archaeological sites; offshore, the fabled island of Capri.

According to Greek legend, it was in Sorrento's waters that the mythical sirens once lived. Sailors of antiquity were powerless to resist the beautiful song of these charming maidens-cum-monsters, who would lure them and their ships to their doom. Homer's Ulysses escaped by having his oarsmen plug their ears with wax and by strapping himself to his ship's mast as he sailed past.

Orientation

Piazza Tasso, bisected by Sorrento's main street, Corso Italia, is the centre of town. It's about a 300m walk northwest of the Circumvesuviana train station, along Corso Italia. From Marina Piccola, where ferries and

SORRENTO

0 400 m
0 0.2 miles

A	B	C	D
INFORMATION			
Hospital.....1	A3	EATING	Shopping
Police Station.....2	D3	Angelina Lauro.....17	D3
Post Office.....3	D3	Il Giardinello.....18	B3
Sorrento Info.....4	B3	In Bufalito.....19	B3
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Museo Bottega della Tarsia Ligne.....9	B3	Fauno Bar.....24	C3
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hydrofoils dock, walk south along Via Marina Piccola then climb about 200 steps to reach the piazza. Corso Italia becomes the SS145 on its way east to Naples and, heading west, changes its name to Via Capo.

Information

Hospital (☎ 081 533 11 11; Corso Italia 1)

Police station (☎ 081 807 53 11; Via Capasso 11)

Post office (☎ 081 807 08 34; Corso Italia 210)

Sorrento Info (☎ 081 807 40 00; Via Tasso 19; internet per hr €4.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-8.30pm Mon-Sat Mar-Dec) Provides tourist information and internet access.

Sorrento Tour (www.sorrentotour.it) Extensive website with tourist and transport information on Sorrento and environs.

Tourist office (☎ 081 807 40 33; Via Luigi De Maio 35; ☎ 8.45am-6.15pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 8.45am-12.45pm Sun Aug) In the Circolo dei Forestieri (Foreigners' Club). Has plenty of useful printed material and a hotel reservation service.

Sights & Activities

Spearing off from Piazza Tasso, Corso Italia (closed to traffic from 10am to 1pm and 7pm to 7am) cuts through the *centro storico*, whose

narrow streets throng with tourists on summer evenings. An attractive area, it's thick with loud souvenir stores, cafes, churches and restaurants.

On Corso Italia, the gleaming white facade of the **Duomo** (☎ 081 878 22 48; Corso Italia; ☎ 8am-noon & 6-8pm) gives no hint of its inner exuberance. Of particular note are the marble bishop's throne and the beautiful wooden choir stalls. Outside, the triple-tiered bell tower rests on an archway into which three classical columns have been set.

One of Sorrento's most beautiful spaces, the medieval cloisters of the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 081 878 12 69; Via San Francesco; ☎ 8am-1pm & 2-8pm) are well worth a look. A harmonious marriage of architectural styles – two sides are lined with 14th-century crossed arches, the other two with round arches supported by octagonal pillars – they are often used to host exhibitions and summer concerts. Next door, the **Villa Comunale park** (☎ 8am-8pm mid-Oct–mid-Apr, 8am-midnight mid-Apr–mid-Oct) commands grand views over the water to Mt Vesuvius.

You get similar views from the gardens of the **Museo Correale** (☎ 081 878 18 46;

www.museocorreale.com; Via Correale 50; admission €8; (M) 9am-2pm Wed-Mon), Sorrento's main museum. Waiting inside is a rich collection of 17th- and 19th-century Neapolitan art, Japanese, Chinese and European ceramics, clocks and furniture, as well as Greek and Roman artefacts.

Since the 18th century Sorrento has been famous for its *intarsio* (marquetry) furniture, some great examples of which you'll find at the palatial **Museo Bottega della Tarsia Lignea** (☎ 081 877 19 42; Via San Nicola 28; admission €8; (M) 10am-1pm & 3pm-6pm Mon-Sat).

Sweet tooths can learn the art of gelato-making by taking a course at **Gelateria David** (☎ 081 807 36 49; Via Marziale 19; class €7). Classes last around one hour and times vary according to demand, so call or drop by to organise.

Sorrento does not have great beaches. In town the two main swimming spots are **Marina Piccola** and, to the east, **Marina Grande**, although neither is especially appealing. Much nicer is **Bagni Regina Giovanna**, a rocky beach set among the ruins of the Roman Villa Pollio Felix. It's possible to walk there (follow Via Capo west for about 2km), but it's quicker to get the SITA bus for Massalubrense.

To find the best swimming spots, you'll really need a boat. **Sic Sic** (☎ 081 807 22 83; www.nauticasic.com; Marina Piccola; (M) May-Oct) rents out a variety of boats, starting at around €32 per hour or €95 a day (excluding petrol).

Sorrento Diving Center (☎ 081 877 48 12; www.sorrentodivingcenter.it; Via Marina Piccola 63) organises dives and a series of courses. Budget on around €95 for a half-day course, €45 for a single dive.

Tours

City Sightseeing Sorrento (☎ 081 877 47 07; www.sorrento.city-sightseeing.it; adult/6-15yr €15/7.50) runs a hop-on, hop-off bus tour of Sorrento and the surrounding area. Daily departures are at 9.30am, 11.30am, 1.30pm and 3.30pm from Piazza De Curtis (Circumvesuviana station). English-language commentaries are provided, and tickets, available on board, are valid for six hours.

Festivals & Events

The city's patron saint, Sant'Antonino, is remembered on 14 February each year with processions and huge markets. The saint is credited with having saved Sorrento during WWII, when Salerno and Naples were heavily bombed.

Sorrento's **Settimana Santa** Easter processions are famous throughout Italy. There are two main processions: one at midnight on the Thursday preceding Good Friday, the second on Good Friday.

Sleeping

Most accommodation is in the town centre or clustered along Via Capo, the coastal road west of the centre. Be sure to book early for the summer season.

Nube d'Argento (☎ 081 878 13 44; www.nube.dargento.com; Via Capo 21; camping 2 people, tent & car €25-37, 2-person bungalows €50-85; (M) Mar-Dec; ☎ ☎) This inviting campsite is an easy 1km drive west of the Sorrento town centre. Pitches and wooden chalet-style bungalows are spread out beneath a canopy of olive trees, and the facilities, including an open-air swimming pool, are excellent.

Hotel Elios (☎ 081 878 18 12; Via Capo 33; s €40, d €60-70; (M) Easter-Nov) Owned by a charming old dear, this modest *pensione* offers no frills (unless you count the views) – just impeccable old-fashioned hospitality and light, airy rooms. If your room doesn't have a balcony, and few do, enjoy the views from the downstairs terrace.

Hotel Linda (☎ /fax 081 878 29 16; www.hotellinda.it; Via degli Aranci 125; s/d €50/75) In an anonymous concrete block, this *pensione* is a homey welcoming place. The rooms could do with an update and fresh coat of paint, but they have the essentials, plus balconies; a couple are larger with sofas and desks. There's no air-con, but fans are provided in summer.

our pick Casa Astarita (☎ 081 877 49 06; www.casastarita.com; Corso Italia 67, Sorrento; r €80-100; ☎ ☎) This gem of a B&B is housed in a central, 16th-century building. All six rooms combine original structural elements with flat-screen TVs, fridges and excellent water pressure. Tasteful artwork and antiques complete the eclectic look. Rooms surround a central parlour where breakfast is served on a large rustic table.

La Tonnarella (☎ 081 878 11 53; www.latonnarella.it; Via Capo 31; d €150-190, ste €270-280; (M) Apr-Oct & Christmas; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A dazzling combo of blue-and-yellow majolica tiles, antiques, chandeliers and statues. Most of the classically themed rooms have their own balcony or small terrace, and the hotel has its own private beach (accessible by lift). There's an excellent terrace restaurant to boot.

Eating

A local speciality to look out for is *gnocchi alla sorrentina* (gnocchi baked in tomato sauce with mozzarella).

Mondo Bio (☎ 081 807 56 94; Via degli Aranci 146; snacks €3, pasta €6.50; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Flying the banner for organic vegetarian food, this bright shop-cum-restaurant serves a limited range of meat-free dishes. The menu, chalked up outside, changes daily but might include *zuppa di soia verde* (soybean soup) and *polpette di tofu* (tofu balls).

Angelina Lauro (☎ 081 807 40 97; Piazza Angelina Lauro 39-40; self-service meals €12; ☎ daily Jul & Aug, Wed-Mon Sep-Jun) It might look like a college canteen, but this place hits the spot for a filling, inexpensive lunch. Grab a tray and choose from the daily selection of pastas, meats and vegetable side dishes. You can order à la carte too, but it's pricier and not as good.

Il Giardinello (☎ 081 878 46 16; Via Accademia 7; pizzas from €3.50, meals €18) A vintage mishmash of religious prints, faded family pics, and the odd cracked ceramic plate set the scene for hearty classics like *pasta e fagioli* (pasta and white beans) and *ravioli con spinaci e ricotta* (ravioli stuffed with spinach and ricotta).

our pick In Bufalito (☎ 338 1632921; Via Fuoro 21; meals €25; ☎ closed Nov-Feb) A brilliant Slow Food mozzarella bar-restaurant. Head here for sterling local produce – think Sorrento-style cheese fondue, buffalo meat carpaccio and *salsiccia* (local sausage) with broccoli. There's regular cheese tastings, along with photography and art exhibitions and occasional live music.

Ristorante Il Buco (☎ 081 878 23 54; Rampa Marina Piccola 5; meals €55; ☎ Thu-Tue Feb-Dec) Hardly the hole its name suggests, this Michelin-starred restaurant is housed in a former monks' wine cellar. The emphasis is on innovative regional cooking, so expect modern combos such as pasta with rock-fish sauce or *treccia* (local cheese) and prawns. Reservations recommended.

Drinking

From wood-panelled wine bars to cocktail-centric cafes, you'll find no shortage of drinking dens in Sorrento.

Bollicine (☎ 081 878 46 16; Via dell'Accademia 9) An unpretentious wine bar with a dark wooden interior and boxes of bottles littered around the place. The wine list includes all the big Italian names and a selection of local labels –

the amiable bartender will happily advise you. There's also a small menu of *panini*, bruschetta and a pasta dish or two.

Café Latino (☎ 081 878 37 18; Vico I Fuoro 4a) A romantic choice, this is the place to sit among orange and lemon trees and gaze into your lover's eyes over a chilled cocktail. If you can't drag yourselves away, you can also eat here (meals €30).

Fauno Bar (☎ 081 878 11 35; Piazza Tasso) This elegant cafe covers half of Piazza Tasso and offers the best people-watching in town. Expect stiff drinks at stiff prices – cocktails start at around €8.50. Snacks and sandwiches are also available (from €7).

Entertainment

In the summer, concerts are held in the cloisters of Chiesa di San Francesco; otherwise head to **Teatro Tasso** (☎ 081 807 55 25; www.teatrotasso.com; Piazza Sant'Antonino) for a good old sing-along. The southern Italian equivalent of a cockney music hall, it's home to the Sorrento Musical (€28), a sentimental revue of Neapolitan classics such as 'O Sole Mio'. The 75-minute performances start at 9.30pm every evening from Monday to Saturday from March to October.

Teatro Tasso's direct competitor **Fauno Notte Club** (☎ 081 878 10 21; www.faunonotte.it; Piazza Tasso 1) offers 'a fantastic journey through history, legends and folklore'. In other words, 500 years of Neapolitan history set to music.

Shopping

The pedestrianised *centro storico* is the place to shop. Ignore the replica football shirts and souvenir junk and look out for inlaid wood and *limoncello*. You'll find plenty of the former at **Gargiulo & Jannuzzi** (☎ 081 878 10 41; Viale Enrico Caruso 1), a historic warehouse-cum-shop just off Piazza Tasso, and *limoncello* by the litre at **Sapori e Colori** (☎ 081 878 42 78; Via San Cesareo 57) in the historic centre.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Sorrento is the main jumping-off point for Capri and also has excellent ferry connections to Naples, Ischia and Amalfi coastal resorts.

Alilauro (☎ 081 878 14 30; www.alilauro.it) runs up to seven daily hydrofoils between Naples and Sorrento (€9, 35 minutes). Slower **Metrol del Mare** (☎ 199 600700; www.metrodelmare.com) covers the same route (€6.50, one hour, four daily). **Linee Marittime Partenopee** (☎ 081 704 19 11;

www.consorziolmp.it) runs hydrofoils from Sorrento to Capri from April to November (€13.50, 20 minutes, 23 daily).

All ferries and hydrofoils depart from the port at Marina Piccola, where you buy your tickets.

BUS

Curreri (☎ 081 801 54 20; www.curreriviaggi.it) runs six daily services to Sorrento from Naples' Capodichino airport, departing from outside the Arrivals hall and arriving in Piazza Angelina Lauro. Buy tickets (€10) for the 75-minute journey on the bus.

SITA (☎ 199 730749; www.sitabus.it, in Italian) buses serve Naples (€3.30, one hour 20 minutes), the Amalfi Coast and Sant'Agata sui due Golfi, leaving from outside the Circumvesuviana train station. Buy tickets at the station bar or from shops bearing the blue SITA sign. At least 11 buses a day run between Sorrento and Amalfi (€2.50, 1½ hours), looping around Positano (€1.50, 50 minutes). Change at Amalfi for Ravello.

Marozzi (☎ 080 579 01 11; www.marozzi.vt.it) operates two weekday buses to/from Rome (€17.50).

TRAIN

Circumvesuviana (☎ 081 772 24 44; www.vesuviana.it) trains run every half-hour between Sorrento and Naples (€3.30), via Pompeii (€1.90) and Ercolano (€1.90).

Getting Around

Local bus Line B runs from Piazza Tasso to the port at Marina Piccola (€1.10).

Jolly Service & Rent (☎ 081 877 3450; www.jollyrent.eu; Via degli Aranci 180) has smart cars from €50 a day and 50cc scooters from €25.

For a taxi, call ☎ 081 878 22 04.

WEST OF SORRENTO

The countryside west of Sorrento is the very essence of southern Italy. Tortuous roads wind their way through hills covered in olive trees and lemon groves, passing through sleepy villages and tiny fishing ports. There are magnificent views at every turn, the best from Sant'Agata sui due Golfi and the high points overlooking Punta Campanella, the western-most point of the Sorrentine Peninsula.

Sant'Agata sui due Golfi

Perched high in the hills above Sorrento, sleepy Sant'Agata sui due Golfi commands

spectacular views of the Bay of Naples on one side and the Bay of Salerno on the other (hence its name, Saint Agatha on the two Gulfs). The best viewpoint is the **Deserto** (☎ 081 878 01 99; Via Deserto; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 4-9pm Apr-Sep, 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Oct-Mar), a Carmelite convent 1.5km uphill from the village centre.

A short drive, or a long walk, from the village you'll find **Agriturismo Le Tore** (☎ 081 808 06 37; www.letore.com; Via Pontone 43; s €80-90, d €90-110, dinner €25-30; ☎ Easter-mid-Nov; ☎), a working organic farm with eight barnlike rooms and an apartment that sleeps five (€700 to €1000 per week). The setting is lovely, a rustic farmhouse hidden among fruit trees, and the welcome is warm.

From Sorrento, there's a pretty 3km (approximately one hour) trail up to Sant'Agata. Otherwise, hourly SITA buses leave from the Circumvesuviana train station.

Marina del Cantone

From Sorrento, follow the coastal road round to **Termini**. Stop a moment to admire the views before continuing on to **Nerano**, from where a beautiful hiking trail leads down to the stunning **Bay of Ieranto**, one of the coast's top swimming spots, and **Marina del Cantone**. This unassuming village with its small pebble beach is a lovely, tranquil place to stay and a popular diving destination.

Nettuno Diving (☎ 081 808 10 51; www.sorrento diving.com; Via Vespucci 39) leads various underwater activities, including snorkelling excursions, beginner courses and cave dives. Adult rates start at €20 for a day-long outing to the Bay of Ieranto.

Set among olive groves by the village entrance, **Villaggio Residence Nettuno** (☎ 081 808 10 51; www.villaggonettuno.it, www.torreturbolo.com; Via Vespucci 39; camping 2 people, tent & car € 22.50-31, bungalow from €50, apt from €80; ☎ Mar-early Nov; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) offers tent pitches, bungalows for two to eight people, mobile homes for two to four people, and apartments in a 16th-century tower for two to five people.

The village has a reputation as a gastronomic hot spot and VIPs regularly boat over from Capri to dine here. A favourite is **Lo Scoglio** (☎ 081 808 10 26; Marina del Cantone; meals €50), which serves superlative seafood tempters like a €24 antipasto of raw seafood and a celestial *spaghetti al riccio* (spaghetti with sea urchins).

SITA runs regular bus services between Sorrento and Marina del Cantone (marked on timetables as Nerano Cantone; €1.10, one hour).

AMALFI COAST

Stretching about 50km along the southern side of the Sorrentine Peninsula, the Amalfi Coast (Costiera Amalfitana) is one of Europe's most breathtaking. Cliffs terraced with scented lemon groves sheer down into sparkling seas; sherbet-hued villas cling precariously to unforgiving slopes while sea and sky merge in one vast blue horizon.

Yet its stunning topography has not always been a blessing. For centuries after the passing of Amalfi's glory days as a maritime superpower (from the 9th to the 12th centuries), the area was poor and its isolated villages regular victims of foreign incursions, earthquakes and landslides. But it was this very isolation that first drew visitors in the early 1900s, paving the way for the advent of tourism in the latter half of the century. Today the Amalfi Coast is one of Italy's premier tourist destina-

tions, a favourite of cashed-up jet-setters and love-struck couples.

The best time to visit is in spring or early autumn. In summer the coast's single road (SS163) gets very busy and prices are inflated; in winter much of the coast simply shuts down.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Boat services to the Amalfi Coast towns are generally limited to the period between April and October. From Naples, **Metrol del Mare** (☎ 199 446644; www.metrodelmare.com) runs summer-only services to Sorrento (€6.50, three daily), Positano (€14, four daily), Amalfi (€15, six daily) and Salerno (€16, two daily). **TraVelMar** (☎ 089 87 29 50) connects Salerno with Amalfi (€7) and Positano (€9).

BUS

Bus services along the coast are year-round and efficient. **SITA** (☎ 199 730749; www.sitabus.it, in Italian) operates a frequent service along the SS163 between Sorrento and Salerno (€3), via Amalfi. Buses also connect Rome and the Amalfi Coast, terminating in Salerno.

WALK THE COAST

Rising steeply from the coast, the densely wooded Lattari mountains provide some stunning walking opportunities. An extraordinary network of paths traverses the craggy precipitous peaks, climbing to remote farmhouses through wild and beautiful valleys. It's tough going, though – long ascents up seemingly endless flights of steps are almost unavoidable.

Probably the best-known walk, the 12km Sentiero degli Dei (Path of the Gods; 5½ to six hours) follows the steep, often rocky paths linking Positano to Praiano. It's a spectacular trail passing through some of the area's least developed countryside. The route is marked by red-and-white stripes daubed on rocks and trees, although some of these have become worn in places and might be difficult to make out. Pick up a map of the walk at local tourist offices, included in a series of three excellent booklets containing the area's most popular hikes, including the equally famed (and lyrically named) *Via degli Incanti* (Trail of Charms) from Amalfi to Positano.

To the west, the tip of the Sorrentine Peninsula is another hiking hot spot. Some 110km of paths criss-cross the area, linking the spectacular coastline with the rural hinterland. These range from tough all-day treks – such as the 14.1km Alta Via dei Monti Lattari from the Fontanelle hills near Positano down to the Punta Campanella – to shorter walks suitable for the family. Tourist offices throughout the area can provide maps detailing the colour-coded routes. With the exception of the Alta Via dei Monti Lattari (marked in red and white), long routes are shown in red on the map; coast-to-coast trails in blue; paths connecting villages in green; and circular routes in yellow.

If you're intent on trying one of the more demanding routes in the region, invest in a detailed map such as the CAI's (Club Alpino Italiano) *Monti Lattari, Penisola Sorrentina, Costiera Amalfitana: Carta dei Sentieri* (€8) at 1:30,000 scale.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

If driving from the north, exit the A3 autostrada at Vietri sul Mare and follow the SS163 along the coast. From the south leave the A3 at Salerno and head for Vietri sul Mare and the SS163.

TRAIN

From Naples you can take either the Circumvesuviana to Sorrento or a Trenitalia train to Salerno, then continue along the Amalfi Coast, eastwards or westwards, by SITA bus.

POSITANO

pop 3872

The pearl in the pack, Positano is the coast's most photogenic and expensive town. Its steeply stacked houses are a medley of peaches, pinks and terracottas, and its near-vertical streets (many of which are, in fact, staircases) are lined with voguish shop displays, jewellery stalls, elegant hotels and smart restaurants. Look closely, though, and you'll find reassuring signs of everyday reality – crumbling stucco, streaked paintwork and even, on occasion, a faint whiff of drains.

An early visitor, John Steinbeck wrote in 1953: 'Positano bites deep. It is a dream place that isn't quite real when you are there and becomes beckoningly real after you have gone.' More than 50 years on, his words still ring true.

Orientation

Positano is split in two by a cliff bearing the Torre Trasita (tower). West of this is the smaller, less crowded Spiaggia del Fornillo beach and the less expensive side of town; east is Spiaggia Grande, backing up to the town centre.

Navigating is easy, if steep. Via Marconi, part of the main SS163 coastal road, forms a huge horseshoe around and above the town. From it, one-way Viale Pasitea makes a second, lower loop, ribboning off Via Marconi from the west towards the town centre, then climbing back up as Via Colombo to rejoin Via Marconi and the SS163. Branching off the bottom of Viale Pasitea, Via dei Mulini leads down to Spiaggia Grande.

Information

La Brezza (☎ 089 87 58 11; Via del Brigantino 1; per 15min €3; ☎ 10am-10pm Mar-Dec) Small ceramics shop with internet access.

Police station (☎ 089 87 50 11; cnr Via Marconi & Viale Pasitea)

Positano.com (www.positano.com) A slick website with hotel and restaurant listings, itineraries and transport information.

Post office (☎ 089 87 51 42; Via Marconi 318)

Tourist office (☎ 089 87 50 67; www.aziendaturismo.positano.it; Via del Saracino 4; ☎ 8am-2pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar)

Sights & Activities

The lofty, ceramic-tiled dome of the **Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta** (Piazza Flavio Gioia; ☎ 8am-noon & 3.30-7pm) is the town's most famous, and pretty much only, major sight. Inside the church, classical lines are broken by pillars topped with gilded Ionic capitals, while winged cherubs peek from above every arch. Above the main altar is a 13th-century Byzantine Black Madonna and Child.

It's a short hop to the nearby beach, **Spiaggia Grande**. Although it's no one's dream beach, with greyish sand covered by legions of brightly coloured umbrellas, the water's clean and the setting is memorable. Hiring a chair and umbrella in the fenced-off areas costs around €18 per person per day, but the crowded public areas are free.

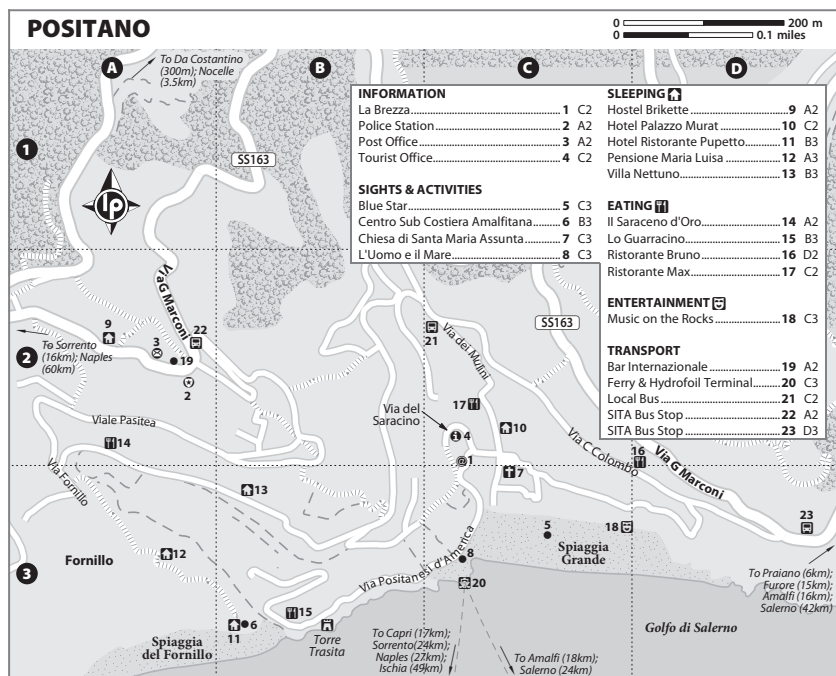
Boating isn't cheap. Operating out of a kiosk on Spiaggia Grande, **Blue Star** (☎ 089 81 18 89; www.bluestarpositano.it; Spiaggia Grande; ☎ 9am-8pm Easter-Nov) hires out small motorboats for around €55 per hour and also organises excursions to Capri and the Grotta dello Smeraldo (p686). A similar company, **L'Uomo e il Mare** (☎ 089 81 16 13; www.gennaroelsalvatore.it; ☎ 9am-8pm Easter-Nov) operates from a kiosk near the ferry terminal and offers a range of tours, including Capri and Amalfi day trips (€80, including lunch) and a romantic sunset cruise, complete with champagne, to the Li Galli islands (€24).

Over on Spiaggia del Fornillo the **Centro Sub Costiera Amalfitana** (☎ 089 81 21 48; www.centrosusb.it) runs dives (€60 for two hours) and lessons for adults and children.

Sleeping

Most hotels are three-star and above and prices are universally high. Cheaper accommodation is more limited and must usually be booked well in advance for summer. Ask at the tourist office about rooms or apartments in private houses.

Hostel Brikette (☎ 089 87 58 57; www.brikette.com; Via Marconi 358; dm €23-25, d €65-85, apt €115-180; ☎ late Mar-



Nov; ☎ () Not far from the Bar Internazionale bus stop on the coastal road is this bright and cheerful hostel offering the cheapest accommodation in town. There are various options: six- to eight-person dorms (single sex and mixed), double rooms, and apartments for two to five people. There are also laundry, free wi-fi and left-luggage facilities.

our pick **Pensione Maria Luisa** (☎ 089 87 50 23; www.pensionemarialuisa.com; Via Fornillo 42; s €50, d €70-80; ☎) The best budget choice in town, Maria Luisa's rooms and bathrooms have recently been updated with shiny new blue tiles and fittings; those with private terraces are well worth the extra €10 for the bay view. Other perks include a sunny communal area and a jovial, helpful owner.

Villa Nettuno (☎ 089 87 54 01; www.villanettuno.positano.it; Viale Pasitea 208; s/d €70/85) Hidden behind a barrage of foliage, Villa Nettuno oozes charm. Rooms in the 300-year-old part of the building have heavy rustic decor, frescoed wardrobes and a communal terrace; those in the renovated part are still good value but less interesting. That said, you probably won't be thinking of the furniture as you lie in bed gazing out to sea.

Hotel Ristorante Pupetto (☎ 089 87 50 87; www.hotelupetto.it; Via Fornillo 37; s €90-100, d €130-170; ☎ Apr-mid-Nov; ☎) Overlooking Spiaggia del Fornillo, this is as close to the beach as you can get without sleeping on a sun-lounge. A bustling, cheerful place, the hotel forms part of a large, rambling beach complex with a popular terraced restaurant (meals €25), a nautical-theme bar and sunny, renovated guest rooms with gorgeous sea views.

Hotel Palazzo Murat (☎ 089 87 51 77; www.palazzomurat.it; Via dei Mulini 23; s €120-250, d €150-375; ☎) This upmarket treat is housed in the *palazzo* that Gioacchino Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law and one-time king of Naples, used as his summer residence. Beyond the lush gardens, rooms are traditional, with antiques, original oil paintings and plenty of lavish marble. Wi-fi is available in the central courtyard.

Eating

Most restaurants, bars and trattorias, many of which are unashamedly touristy, close over winter, making a brief reappearance for Christmas and New Year.

ourpick Da Costantino (☎ 089 87 57 38; Via Montepertuso; pizzas from €4, meals €20; ☒ closed Wed) It might not seem so, but it's worth the slog up to this bustling trattoria about 300m north of Hostel Brikette. One of the few authentic places in town, it serves honest, down-to-earth Italian grub, including excellent pizzas and delicious *scialatielli* (ribboned pasta) served with aubergines, tomato and mozzarella.

Il Saraceno d'Oro (☎ 089 81 20 50; Viale Pasitea 254; pizzas from €5, meals €25; ☒ Mar-Oct) A busy, bustling place, the Saracen's blend of cheery service, uncomplicated food and reasonable prices continues to please the punters. The pizzas are good, the pasta's tasty and the desserts are sticky and sweet. The complimentary end-of-meal glass of *limoncello* makes for a pleasing epilogue.

Ristorante Bruno (☎ 089 87 53 92; Via Colombo 157; meals €28; ☒ closed Thu lunch & Nov-Jan) Don't let the underwhelming decor fool you – this unassuming restaurant serves superb seafood. Bag a table across the street and enjoy *the* view of Positano while swooning over house specialties like the antipasto of marinated fish with vegetables, orange and Parmesan; for a main course try the grilled fish with a wedge of local lemon.

Lo Guarracino (☎ 089 87 57 94; Via Positanesi d'America; pizzas from €8.50, meals €30; ☒ Mar-Dec) On the scenic path connecting Positano's two beaches, this a memorable place to eat even if you're more likely to remember the views than the straightforward food. The menu is seafood-heavy, with dishes like *tagliatelle verdi ai frutti di mare* (green pasta with seafood). Pizzas and steaks add variety. It's popular, so try to book ahead.

Ristorante Max (☎ 089 87 50 56; Via dei Mulini 22; meals €40; ☒ Mar-Nov) Peruse the artwork while choosing your dish at this perennial favourite of 'ladies who lunch'. Options include set menus and daily specials like ravioli with clams and asparagus, and zucchini flowers stuffed with ricotta and salmon. Cooking courses are offered in the summer months.

Entertainment

Generally speaking, Positano's nightlife is genteel, sophisticated and safe.

Music on the Rocks (☎ 089 87 58 74; www.musicontherocks.it; Via Grotte dell'Incanto 51; cover €10-25; ☒ Easter-Oct) Carved into the tower at the eastern end of Spiaggia Grande, this uberchic nightclub attracts a good-looking crowd and some of

the region's best DJs. Sounds are mainstream house and disco.

Getting There & Around

SITA runs frequent buses to/from Amalfi (€1.40, 40 to 50 minutes) and Sorrento (€1.40, 60 minutes). Buses drop you off at one of two main bus stops: coming from Sorrento and the west, opposite Bar Internazionale; arriving from Amalfi and the east, at the top of Via Colombo. When departing, buy bus tickets at Bar Internazionale or, if headed eastwards, from the tobacconist at the bottom of Via Colombo.

Between April and October, daily ferries link Positano with Amalfi (€6, 15 minutes, six daily), Sorrento (€9, five daily), Salerno (€8.50, 70 minutes, five daily), Naples (€14, four daily) and Capri (€15.50, 45 minutes, five daily).

Getting around Positano is largely a matter of walking. If your knees can handle them, there are dozens of narrow alleys and stairways that make walking relatively easy and joyously traffic-free. Otherwise, an orange bus follows the lower ring road every half-hour, passing along Viale Pasitea, Via Colombo and Via Marconi. Stops are clearly marked, and you buy your ticket (€1.10) on board. It passes by both SITA bus stops.

AROUND POSITANO

Nocelle

A tiny, still-isolated mountain village, Nocelle (450m) affords some of the most spectacular views on the entire coast. A world apart from touristy Positano, it's a sleepy, silent place where not much ever happens and none of the few residents would ever want it to.

The easiest way to get here is by local bus from Positano (€1.10, 30 minutes, 17 daily). Hikers tackling the Sentieri degli Dei (see p681) might fancy lunch at the **Trattoria Santa Croce** (☎ 089 81 12 60; meals €25; ☒ summer) as they pass through.

Praiano & Furore

An ancient fishing village, **Praiano** has one of the coast's most popular beaches, Marina di Praia. From the SS163 (next to the Hotel Continental), take the steep path that leads down the side of the cliffs to a tiny inlet with a small stretch of coarse sand and deep-blue water.

On the coastal road east of Praiano, **Hotel Pensione Continental** (☎ 089 87 40 84; www.continental.praiano.it; Via Roma 21; camping 2 people, tent & car €35-40,

s €45-65, d €70-90, apt per week €500-1500; ☎ camping Apr-Oct, rm & apt year-round) offers the full gamut of accommodation: cool, white rooms with sea views, apartments sleeping up to six people, and 12 tent sites on a series of grassy terraces. From the lowest of these a private staircase leads down to a rocky platform on the sea. Transport is no problem, either, as there's a bus stop just outside the hotel.

A few kilometres further on, **Marina di Furore** sits at the bottom of what's known as the fjord of Furore, a giant cleft that cuts through the Lattari mountains. The main village, however, stands 300m above, in the upper Vallone del Furore. A one-horse place that sees few tourists, it breathes a distinctly rural air despite the colourful murals and unlikely modern sculpture.

To get to upper Furore by car follow the SS163 and then the SS366 signposted to Agerola; from Positano, it's 15km. Otherwise, regular SITA buses depart from the bus terminus in Amalfi (€1.10, 30 minutes, 17 daily).

AMALFI

pop 5527

It is hard to grasp that pretty little Amalfi, with its sun-filled piazzas and small beach, was once a maritime superpower with a population of more than 70,000. For one thing, it's not a big place – you can easily walk from one end to the other in about 20 minutes. For another, there are very few historical buildings of note. The explanation is chilling – most of the old city, and its populace, simply slid into the sea during an earthquake in 1343.

Today, although the resident population is fairly modest, the numbers swell significantly during summer, when day-trippers pour in by the coachload.

Just around the headland, neighbouring Atrani is a picturesque tangle of whitewashed alleys and arches centred on a lively, lived-in piazza and popular beach.

Orientation

Buses and boats drop you off at Amalfi's main transport hub, Piazza Flavio Gioia. Cross the road and duck through to Piazza del Duomo, the town's focal square. Most of the hotels and restaurants are in the tangled lanes either side of the main strip, Via d'Amalfi, and its continuation, Via Capuano, which snake north from the cathedral. On the seafont Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare

follows the coast eastwards, becoming Via Pantaleone Comite as it leads to the Saracen tower and Atrani.

Information

Amalfi Servizi Express (☎ 089 87 34 47; Piazza dei Dogi 8; internet per 15min €3; ☎ 9.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat, closed Thu evening)

Post office (☎ 089 830 48 31; Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare 31) Next door to the tourist office.

Tourist office (☎ 089 87 11 07; www.amalfitouristoffice.it; Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare 33; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm & 3-5.15pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat Sep-Jun, 1.30pm & 3-7.15pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat Jul & Aug) Good for bus and ferry timetables.

Sights & Activities

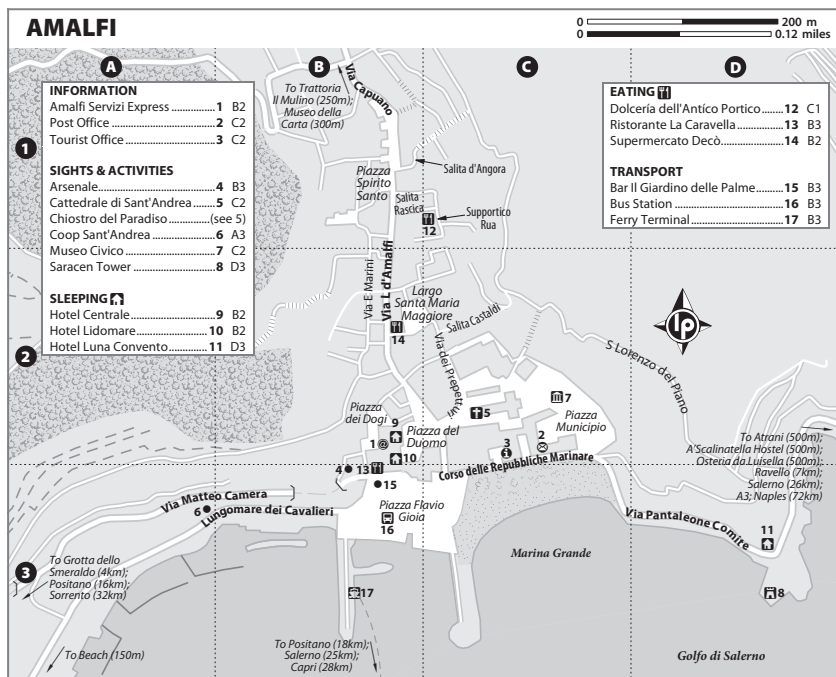
Dominating Piazza del Duomo, the iconic **Cattedrale di Sant'Andrea** (☎ 089 87 10 59; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Jun, 9am-9pm Jul-Sep, 9.30am-5.15pm Oct & Mar, 10am-1pm & 2.30-4.30pm Nov-Feb) makes an imposing sight at the top of its sweeping flight of stairs. The cathedral dates in part from the early 10th century, although its distinctive striped facade has been rebuilt twice, most recently at the end of the 19th century. It's a melange of architectural styles: the two-toned masonry is largely Sicilian Arabic-Norman while the less impressive interior is pure baroque. In high season, entrance between 10am and 5pm is through the adjacent Chiostro del Paradiso.

To the left of the cathedral's porch, the pint-sized **Chiostro del Paradiso** (☎ 089 87 13 24; admission €2.50; ☎ 9am-7pm Jun-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2.30-4.30pm Nov-May) was built in 1266 to house the tombs of Amalfi's prominent citizens.

In the town hall, the one-room **Museo Civico** (☎ 089 87 10 66; Piazza Municipio; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-1pm Mon-Fri) contains the *Tavole Amalfitane*, an ancient manuscript draft of Amalfi's maritime code, and other historical documents.

Amalfi's other museum of note is the fascinating **Museo della Carta** (Paper Museum; ☎ 089 830 45 61; www.museodellacarta.it; Via delle Cartiere; admission €4; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Apr–mid-Nov, 10am-3pm Tue, Wed & Fri–Sun mid-Nov–Mar). Housed in a 13th-century paper mill (the oldest in Europe), it lovingly preserves the original paper presses, which are still in full working order, as you'll see during the 15-minute guided tour (in English).

Harking back to Amalfi's days as a great maritime republic, the cavernous **Arsenale** (Via Matteo Camera) was once the town's main shipbuilding depot. Today it's used to host



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- Arsenale 4 B3
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Coop Sant'Andrea 6 A3
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Saracen Tower 8 D3

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- Hotel Centrale 9 B2
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Hotel Luna Convento 11 D3

EATING

- Dolceria dell'Antico Portico 12 C1
Ristorante La Caravella 13 B3
Supermercato Decò 14 B2

TRANSPORT

- Bar Il Giardino delle Palme 15 B3
Bus Station 16 B3
Ferry Terminal 17 B3

temporary exhibitions – opening hours vary according to what's on.

For all its seafaring history, Amalfi's main beach is not a particularly appealing swimming spot. If you're intent on a dip, think about hiring a boat. You'll find a number of operators along Lungomare dei Cavalieri, charging about €50 for a couple of hours.

Four kilometres west of Amalfi, Conca dei Marini is home to the **Grotta dello Smeraldo** (admission €6; ☎ 9am–4pm Mar–Oct, 9am–3pm Nov–Feb), a haunting cave named after the eerie emerald colour that emanates from the seawater. SITA buses regularly pass the car park above the cave entrance (from where you take a lift or stairs down to the rowing boats). Alternatively, **Coop Sant'Andrea** (☎ 089 87 31 90; www.coopsantandrea.it; Lungomare dei Cavalieri 1) runs two daily boats from Amalfi (€14 return) at 9am and 3.30pm. Allow 1.5 hours for the round trip.

Festivals & Events

Every 24 December and 6 January, skin-divers from all over Italy make a pilgrimage to the ceramic *presepe* submerged in the Grotta dello Smeraldo.

The **Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics**, which rotates between Amalfi, Venice, Pisa and Genoa, is held on the first Sunday in June. Amalfi's turn comes round again in 2013.

Sleeping

A'Scalinatella Hostel (☎ 089 87 14 92; www.hostelscalinatella.com; Piazza Umberto I, Atrani; dm €20–25, s €35–50, d €70–90) This bare-bones operation, just round the headland in Atrani, has dorms, rooms and apartments scattered across the village. Breakfast is included in the price, and there's a laundry to boot. Doors are locked at 2am.

Hotel Lidomare (☎ 089 87 13 32; www.lidomare.it; Largo Duchi Piccolomini 9; s/d €50/110; ☎ ☎) This old-fashioned, family-run hotel has real character. The spacious rooms have an air of gentility, with their appealingly haphazard decor, old-fashioned tiles and fine old antiques. Some rooms have jacuzzi bathtubs, others boast sea views.

Hotel Centrale (☎ 089 87 26 08; www.hotelcentraleamalfi.it; Largo Duchi Piccolomini 1; s €60–120, d €70–140; ☎ ☎ ☎) This is one of the best-value

hotels in Amalfi. The entrance is on a tiny little piazza in the *centro storico*, but many rooms actually overlook Piazza del Duomo (24 is a good choice). The bright green and blue tile work gives the place a vibrant, fresh look, and the views from the rooftop terrace are magnificent.

Hotel Luna Convento (☎ 089 87 10 02; www.lunahotel.it; Via Pantaleone Comite 33; s €220-280, d €240-300; P ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This former convent was founded by St Francis in 1222. Rooms in the original building are in the former nuns' cells, but there's nothing pokey about the bright tiles, balconies and sea views. The newer wing is equally beguiling, with religious frescoes over the bed (to stop any misbehaving). The cloistered courtyard is magnificent.

Eating

Supermercato Decò (Salita dei Curiali 6; ☎ 8am-1.30pm & 5-8.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 5-8.30pm Thu, 8am-1.30pm & 5-9pm Sat year-round, plus 8am-1.30pm Sun only May-Sep) Picnickers and self-caterers can stock up here.

our pick Dolceria dell'Antico Portico (☎ 089 87 11 43; Supportico Rua 10; cakes from €3) Run by celebrated pastry chef, Tiziano Mita, head here for modern twists on trad sweets – think *sfogliatelle* in the form of a *trullo* (conical roofed building unique to Puglia).

Trattoria Il Mulino (☎ 089 87 22 23; Via delle Cartiere 36; pizzas €6, meals €20) A TV-in-the-corner, kids-running-between-the-tables sort of place, this is about as authentic a trattoria as you'll find in Amalfi. The menu features the usual pizzas, pasta and seafood, but the food is tasty and the prices honest. The *scialatiella alla pescatore* (pasta ribbons with prawns, mussels, tomato and parsley) is fabulous.

Osteria da Luisella (☎ 089 87 10 87; Piazza Umberto I, Atrani; meals €30; ☎ Thu-Tue) Great food, great people-watching and an atmospheric setting make this a winner. Grab a table under the arches and sit back to some fresh-off-the-boat seafood. The menu varies, but if they're on, the warm seafood salad and the *cassuola* (octopus stew) are scrumptious. Herbivores might go for the *caporalessa*, a tasty baked concoction of aubergines, tomatoes and cheese.

Ristorante La Caravella (☎ 089 87 10 29; Via Matteo Camera 12; meals €60, tasting menu €75; ☎ Wed-Mon Jan-mid-Nov) One of the few places in Amalfi where you pay for the food rather than the location, this celebrated dining den serves a mix of

simple, soulful classics and regional grub with a nouvelle twist – think black ravioli with cuttlefish ink, scampi and ricotta. The 15,000-label wine list is an aficionado's dream.

Getting There & Away

SITA buses run from Piazza Flavio Gioia to Sorrento (€2.50, 1½ hours, at least 11 daily) via Positano (€1.40, 40 minutes), and also to Ravello (€1.10, 25 minutes, every 30 minutes), Salerno (€2.50, 1¼ hours, at least hourly) and Naples (€3.30, two to three hours depending on the route, twice daily). Buy tickets and check schedules at **Bar Il Giardino delle Palme** (Piazza Flavio Gioia), opposite the bus stop.

Between April and October there are daily ferry sailings to Salerno (€6.50), Naples (€15), Positano (€8) and Capri (€15). For details, see p897.

RAVELLO

pop 2500

Sitting high in the hills above Amalfi, refined Ravello is a polished town almost entirely dedicated to tourism. Boasting impeccable bohemian credentials – Wagner, DH Lawrence and Virginia Woolf all lounged here – it's today known for its ravishing gardens and stupendous views, the best in the world according to former resident Gore Vidal.

Most people visit on a day trip from Amalfi – a nerve-tingling 7km drive up the Valle del Dragone – although to best enjoy Ravello's romantic otherworldly atmosphere you'll need to stay overnight.

The **tourist office** (☎ 089 85 70 96; www.ravello.time.it; Via Roma 18bis; ☎ 10am-8pm) has some general information on the town, plus walking maps.

Sights & Activities

Forming the eastern flank of Piazza del Duomo, the **cathedral** (☎ 8.30-1pm & 4.30-8pm) was originally built in 1086 but has since undergone various facelifts. The facade is 16th century, even if the central bronze door is an 1179 original; the interior is a late-20th-century interpretation of what the original must once have looked like. The pulpit is particularly striking, supported by six twisting columns set on marble lions and decorated with flamboyant mosaics of peacocks, birds and dancing lions. Note also how the floor is tilted towards the square – a deliberate measure to enhance the perspective

effect. To the right of the central nave, stairs lead down to the cathedral **museum** (admission €2) and its modest collection of religious artefacts.

To the south of the cathedral, **Villa Rufolo** is famous for its fabulous 19th-century **gardens** (☎ 089 85 76 57; admission €6; ☞ 9am-sunset). Commanding mesmerising views, they are packed with exotic colours, artistically crumbling towers and luxurious blooms. On seeing them in 1880, Wagner wrote that he had found the garden of Klingsor (setting for the second act of his opera *Parsifal*). Today the gardens are used to stage concerts during the town's celebrated festival.

Some way east of Piazza del Duomo, the 20th-century **Villa Cimbrone** (☎ 089 85 80 72; adult/under 12yr & over 65yr €6/3; ☞ 9am-sunset) is worth seeking out for the vast views from the delightfully ramshackle gardens. The best viewpoint is the Belvedere of Infinity, an awe-inspiring terrace lined with fake classical busts.

Festivals & Events

Between June and mid-September the **Ravello Festival** (☎ 089 85 83 60; www.ravellofestival.com) turns much of the town centre into a stage. Events ranging from orchestral concerts and chamber music to ballet performances, film screenings and exhibitions are held in various locations.

Ravello's program of classical music actually begins in March and continues until late October, reaching crescendos in June and September with the International Piano Festival and Chamber Music Weeks. Performances are world class, and the two venues (Villa Rufolo and the Convento di Santa Rosa in Conca dei Marini) are unforgettable. Tickets, bookable by phone, fax or online, start at €20. For information and reservations, contact the **Ravello Concert Society** (☎ 089 85 81 49; www.ravelloarts.org).

Sleeping

Agriturismo Monte Brusara (☎ 089 85 74 67; www.montebusara.com; Via Monte Brusara 32; s/d €35/70, incl half-board €50/100) It's a tough half-hour walk from Ravello's centre, but this authentic mountainside *agriturismo* (farm-stay accommodation) is the real McCoy. It's an ideal spot to escape the crowds and offers three comfortable but basic rooms, fabulous food and some big views.

Hotel Villa Amore (☎ /fax 089 85 71 35; Via dei Fusco 5; s €50-60, d €75-100; ☞) This welcoming *pensione* is the best budget choice in town. Tucked away down a quiet lane, it has modest, homey rooms and sparkling bathrooms. Some, like room 3, have their own balcony; others have bathtubs – a few have both. The garden restaurant (meals about €20) is a further plus.

Hotel Toro (☎ /fax 089 85 72 11; www.hoteltoro.it; Via Roma 16; r €85/118; ☞ Easter-Nov; ☞ ☞) A hotel since the late 19th century, the Toro is just off Piazza del Duomo, within easy range of the clanging cathedral bells. The not-huge rooms are decked out in traditional style with terracotta or light-marble tiles and soothing cream furnishings. Outside, the walled garden is the perfect place for a sundowner.

Eating

Take Away da Nino (☎ 089 858 62 49; Viale Parco della Rimembranza 41) Fast food Ravello-style – come here for takeaway pizza and crunchy fried nibbles.

Da Salvatore (☎ 089 8572 27; www.salvatoreravello.com; Via della Repubblica 2; meals €25, ☞ Tue-Sun) Located just before the bus stop and the Garden Hotel, this average-looking nosh spot has an exceptional view, not to mention creative dishes like tender squid on a bed of pureed chickpeas with spicy *peperoncino*. In the evening, head in for some of the best wood-fired pizza this side of Naples.

Ristorante Pizzeria Vittoria (☎ 089 85 79 47; Via dei Rufolo 3; meals €30; ☞ closed Nov–mid-Mar) Exceptional pizzas aside, this elegantly subdued restaurant serves a wonderful sliced octopus on green salad with olive oil and lemon, and an innovative chickpea and cod antipasto.

Getting There & Away

SITA operates hourly buses from the eastern side of Piazza Flavio Gioia in Amalfi (€1.10, 25 minutes). By car, turn north about 2km east of Amalfi. Vehicles are not permitted in Ravello's town centre, but there's plenty of space in supervised car parks on the perimeter.

FROM AMALFI TO SALERNO

The 26km drive to Salerno, though less exciting than the 16km stretch westwards to Positano, is exhilarating and dotted with a series of small towns, each with their own character and each worth a brief look.

Three and a half kilometres east of Amalfi, or a steep 1km-long walk down from Ravello,

Minori is a small, workaday town, popular with holidaying Italians. Further along, **Maiori** is the coast's biggest resort, a brassy place full of large seafront hotels, restaurants and beach clubs.

Just beyond **Erbie** and its beautiful beach, **Cetara** is a picturesque tumbledown fishing village with a reputation as a gastronomic highlight. Tuna and anchovies are the local specialties, appearing in various guises at **Al Convento** (☎ 089 26 10 39; Piazza San Francesco 16; meals €20; ☹ closed Wed Oct–mid-May), a sterling seafood restaurant near the small harbour. For your money, you'll probably not eat better anywhere else on the coast; the *spaghetti con alici e finocchietto selvatico* (spaghetti with anchovies and wild fennel) sings with flavour.

Shortly before Salerno, the road passes through **Vietri sul Mare**, the ceramics capital of Campania. Its not-unattractive historic centre is packed to the gills with ceramics shops, the most famous of which is **Ceramica Artistica Solimene** (☎ 089 21 02 43; www.solimene.com; Via Madonna degli Angeli 7; ☹ 8am–7pm Mon–Fri, 8am–1.30pm & 4–7pm Sat), a vast factory outlet with an extraordinary glass-and-ceramic facade.

SALERNO

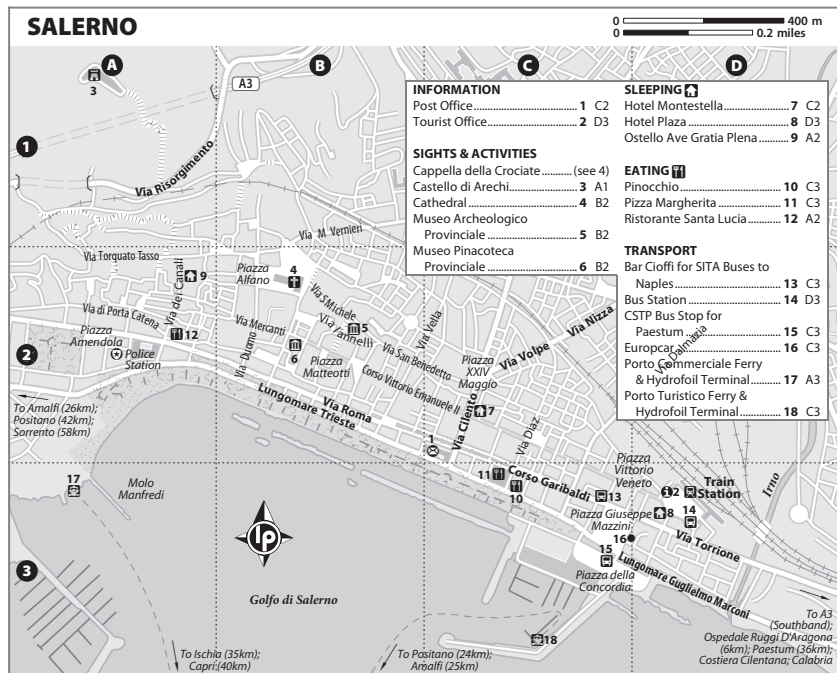
pop 140,363

Salerno provides something of a reality check after the glut of postcard-pretty towns along the Amalfi Coast. As a major port and transport hub it's unlikely to detain you long, but if you do find yourself passing through en route to Paestum, don't despair. The *centro storico* is a vibrant area of medieval churches, neighbourhood trattorias and neon-lit wine bars, and the seafront is a fine place for an evening stroll.

Originally an Etruscan and later a Roman colony, Salerno flourished with the arrival of the Normans in the 11th century. Robert Guiscard made it the capital of his dukedom in 1076 and, under his patronage, the Scuola Medica Salernitana was renowned as one of medieval Europe's greatest medical institutes. More recently, it was left in tatters by the heavy fighting that followed the 1943 landings of the American 5th Army, just south of the city.

Orientation

Salerno's train station is on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, at the eastern end of town. The main strip, the car-free Corso Vittorio Emanuele



II, leads off northwest to the *centro storico*. Running parallel is Corso Garibaldi, which becomes Via Roma as it heads out of the city towards the Amalfi Coast.

Information

Ospedale Ruggi D'Aragona (☎ 089 67 11 11; Via San Leonardo) Hospital.

Post office (☎ 089 257 20 49; Corso Garibaldi 203)

Tourist office (☎ 089 23 14 32; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 1; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 9am-12.30pm & 5-7.30pm Sun Jul & Aug)

Sights

The highlight of the *centro storico* is the impressive **cathedral** (☎ 089 23 13 87; Piazza Alfano; ☎ 10am-6pm). Built by the Normans under Robert Guiscard in the 11th century and remodelled in the 18th century, it sustained severe damage in the 1980 earthquake. It's dedicated to San Matteo (St Matthew), whose remains were reputedly brought to the city in 954 and now lie beneath the main altar in the vaulted crypt. In the right-hand apse, the **Capella delle Crociate** (Chapel of the Crusades) was so named because crusaders' weapons were blessed here. Under the altar stands the tomb of the 11th-century pope Gregory VII.

To the south of the cathedral, the **Museo Archeologico Provinciale** (☎ 089 23 11 35; Via San Benedetto 28; admission free) was, at the time of writing, closed for restoration. It contains archaeological finds from around the region, including a 1st-century-BC bronze head of Apollo.

In the heart of the medieval quarter, the **Museo Pinacoteca Provinciale** (☎ 089 258 30 73; Via Mercanti 63; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-3.15pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) houses a small but interesting art collection dating from the Renaissance right up to the first half of the 19th century.

Overlooking Salerno, the forbidding **Castello di Arechi** (☎ 089 22 55 78; Via Benedetto Croce; ☎ 9am-3.30pm) is spectacularly positioned 263m above the city. Originally a Byzantine fort, it was built by the Lombard duke of Benevento, Arechi II, in the 8th century and subsequently modified by the Normans and Aragonese. Today it houses a permanent collection of ceramics, arms and coins. To get there take bus 19 from Piazza XXIV Maggio in the city centre.

Sleeping

Ostello Ave Gratia Plena (☎ 089 23 47 76; www.ostellodisalerno.it; Via dei Canali; dm/s/d €15/32/45; ☎ ☎)

Housed in a 16th-century convent, Salerno's HI hostel is right in the heart of the *centro storico*. Inside there's a charming central courtyard and a range of bright rooms, from dorms to doubles with private bathroom. The 2am curfew is for dorms only.

Hotel Montestella (☎ 089 22 51 22; www.hotelmontestella.it; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 156; s/d/tr incl breakfast €75/100/110; ☎ ☎) Competitively priced and right on Salerno's main pedestrian thoroughfare (halfway between the historic centre and train station), this slumber number is a convenient option. The 45 guest rooms might be underwhelming, but all are clean and air-con cool.

Hotel Plaza (☎ 089 22 44 77; www.plazasalerno.it; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 42; s/d €65/100; ☎ ☎) The Plaza is convenient and comfortable, a stone's throw from the train station. Despite the dowdy public areas, it's a friendly place and the decent-size rooms, complete with gleaming bathrooms, are pretty good value for money. Those round the back have terraces overlooking the city and, beyond, the mountains.

Eating

Head to Via Roma in the lively medieval centre, where you'll find everything from traditional, family-run trattorias and gelaterie to jazzy wine bars, pubs and pricey restaurants.

Pizza Margherita (☎ 089 22 88 80; Corso Garibaldi 201; pizzas/buffets from €5/6.50, lunchtime menu €8) It might look like a bland canteen but this is one of Salerno's favourite lunch spots. On any given day, the lavish lunchtime buffet might include mozzarella, mussels in various guises, and a range of salads. The daily lunchtime menu (pasta, main course, salad and half a litre of water) is chalked up on a blackboard, and there's also the regular menu of pizzas, pastas and mains.

Ristorante Santa Lucia (☎ 089 22 56 96; Via Roma 182; meals €22; ☎ closed Mon) This is one of the best eateries on trendy Via Roma, good for delicious seafood and bubbling wood-fired pizzas. Expect classic dishes such as *linguine ai frutti di mare* (flat spaghetti with seafood) and chargrilled cuttlefish, both of which are superb. The laid-back atmosphere and friendly service add to the pleasure.

Pinocchio (☎ 089 22 99 64; Lungomare Trieste 56; meals €24; ☎ Sat-Thu) Join the locals for heaping plates of no-nonsense regional grub. Seafood is the speciality, but there's also a selection of decent meats, including sausages and *scaloppine*

(breaded veal) in a creamy mushroom sauce. In summer, tables are set outside.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Metrol del Mare (☎ 199 600700; www.metrodelmare.com) operates regular ferries to/from Naples (€16, two daily) and to/from Sorrento (€12, seven daily). From April to October **Linee Marittime Partenopee** (☎ 081 704 19 11; www.consorziolmp.it) and **TraVelMar** (☎ 089 87 29 50) runs frequent daily hydrofoils/ferries from Salerno to various resorts and the islands. Approximate prices are to/from Capri (€17.50/16), to/from Positano (€9/8.50, 10 daily) and to/from Amalfi (€7/6.50). Departures are from the Porto Turistico, 200m down the pier from Piazza della Concordia. You can buy tickets from the booths by the embarkation point.

Departures for Capri and Ischia leave from Molo Manfredi at the Porto Commerciale.

Note that at the time of writing, a Zaha Hadid-designed ferry terminal was under construction, so it's a good idea to contact the tourist office for updates and schedules.

BUS

SITA buses for Amalfi (€2.50, 1¼ hours, at least hourly) depart from Piazza Vittorio Veneto, beside the train station, stopping en route at Vietri sul Mare, Cetara, Maiori and Minori. The Naples service, however, departs from outside **Bar Cioffi** (Corso Garibaldi 134), where you buy your €3.20 ticket.

CSTP (☎ 800 016 659; www.cstp.it, in Italian) bus 50 runs from Piazza Vittorio Veneto to Pompeii (€2, one hour, 15 daily). For Paestum (€3.10, one hour 20 minutes, hourly) take bus 34 from Piazza della Concordia.

Buonotourist (☎ 089 79 50 68; www.buonotourist.it) runs daily services (excluding Sunday and public holidays) to Naples' Capodichino airport, departing from the train station. Tickets (€7) can be bought on board; journey time is one hour.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Salerno is on the A3 between Naples and Reggio di Calabria, which is toll-free from Salerno southwards.

TRAIN

Salerno is a major stop on southbound routes to Calabria and the Ionian and Adriatic coasts. From the station in Piazza Vittorio Veneto

there are regular trains to Naples (€6.50, 50 minutes, half-hourly), Rome (Eurostar €33, 2½ hours, hourly), and Reggio di Calabria (€32, 4½ hours, 15 daily).

Getting Around

Walking is the most sensible option; from the train station it's a 1.2km walk along Corso Vittorio Emanuele II to the historic centre.

If you want to hire a car there's a **Europcar** (☎ 089 258 07 75; www.europcar.com; Via Giacinto Vicinanza) agency not far from the train station.

SOUTH OF SALERNO

PAESTUM

Paestum's Unesco-listed temples are among the best-preserved monuments of Magna Graecia, the Greek colony that once covered much of southern Italy. An easy day trip from Salerno or Agropoli, they are one of the region's most iconic sights and absolutely unmissable.

Paestum, or Poseidonia as the city was originally called (in honour of Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea), was founded in the 6th century BC by Greek settlers and fell under Roman control in 273 BC. It became an important trading port and remained so until the fall of the Roman Empire, when periodic outbreaks of malaria and savage Saracen raids led its weakened citizens to abandon the town.

Its temples were rediscovered in the late 18th century by road builders – who proceeded to plough their way right through the ruins. However, the road did little to alter the state of the surrounding area, which remained full of malarial swamps, teeming with snakes and scorpions, until well into the 20th century.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0828 81 10 16; www.info.paestum.it; Via Magna Grecia 887; ☎ 9am-1.30pm & 2.30-7pm Mon-Sat Jun-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-May) has practical information on Paestum and the Costiera Cilentana.

Sights

THE RUINS

Tickets to the **ruins** (☎ 0828 81 10 23; admission €4, incl museum €6.50; ☎ 8.45am-7.45pm, last entry 7pm) are sold at the main entry point, near the tourist office, or, in winter, from the museum, where you can also hire an audioguide (€4).

The first temple you encounter on entering from the main entrance is the 6th-century-BC **Tempio di Cerere** (Temple of Ceres). The smallest of the three temples, it served for a time as a Christian church.

Heading south, you pass the **agorà** (piazza), which contained the city's most important monument, a shrine to Poseidon known as the **heroon**. Nearby, a sunken area marks where once a public **swimming pool** stood, part of a larger sports campus.

The grassy rectangular area south of the pool is the **foro** (forum), the heart of the Roman city. Among the partially standing buildings are a vast domestic housing area, an Italic temple, the Bouleuterion (where the Roman senate used to meet) and, further south, the amphitheatre.

The **Tempio di Nettuno** (Temple of Neptune), dating from about 450 BC, is the largest and best preserved of the three temples; only parts of its inside walls and roof are missing. Although originally attributed to Neptune, recent studies have claimed that it was, in fact, dedicated to Apollo.

Next door, the **basilica** (in reality, a temple to the goddess Hera) is Paestum's oldest surviving monument. Dating to the middle of the 6th century BC, and with nine columns across and 18 along the sides, it's a majestic building. Just to its east you can, with a touch of imagination, make out remains of the temple's sacrificial altar.

In its time the city was ringed by an impressive 4.7km of walls, subsequently built and rebuilt by both Lucanians and Romans. The most intact section is south of the ruins themselves.

MUSEO DI PAESTUM

Just east of the ruins, the **museum** (☎ 0828 81 10 23; admission €4, incl ruins €6.50; ☒ 8.45am-7pm, closed 1st & 3rd Mon of month) houses a collection of much-weathered metopes (bas-relief friezes), including 33 of the original 36 from the **Tempio di Argiva Hera** (Temple of Argive Hera), 9km north of Paestum, of which virtually nothing else remains. The star exhibit is the 5th-century-BC Tomba del Truffatore (Tomb of the Diver), whose depiction of a diver in mid-air reputedly represents the passage of life to death.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping Villaggio dei Pini (☎ 0828 81 10 30; www.campingvillaggiodeipini.com; Via Torre; camping 2 people, tent

& car €28-38, 2-person bungalows per week from €300) One of the many campsites on the coast, this well-equipped ground is about 1km from the ruins. With its volleyball/football pitch, private beach, pizzeria, snack bar and live entertainment, it ticks all the boxes for a lively stay.

Casale Giancesare (☎ 0828 72 80 61; www.casale-giancesare.it; Via Giancesare 8; s €45-60, d €65-90; ☐ ☒ ☑ ☒) A converted 19th-century farmhouse, this charming stone-clad B&B is 2.5km from Paestum. Surrounded by vineyards and olive and mulberry trees, the views are stunning, particularly from the swimming pool. Delightful owner Anna works at the tourist office in Agropoli, making her a fount of local information.

Nonna Scepa (☎ 0828 85 10 64; Via Laura 53; meals €30) Worth seeking out as an alternative to the mediocre, overpriced on-site restaurants. Dishes are robust, strictly seasonal and, during the summer, concentrate on fresh seafood like the refreshingly simple grilled fish with lemon. The risotto with courgettes and artichokes is equally inspired.

Getting There & Away

The best way to get to Paestum by public transport is to take **CSTP** (☎ 800 016 659; www.cstp.it, in Italian) bus 34 from Piazza della Concordia in Salerno (€3.10, one hour 20 minutes, 12 daily) or, if approaching from the south, the same bus from Agropoli (€1.40, 15 minutes, 12 daily).

If you're driving you could take the A3 from Salerno and exit for the SS18 at Battipaglia. Better, and altogether more pleasant, is the Litoranea, the minor road that hugs the coast. From the A3 take the earlier exit for Pontecagnano and follow the signs for Agropoli and Paestum.

COSTIERA CILENTANA

Southeast of the Gulf of Salerno, the coastal plains begin to give way to wilder, jagged cliffs and unspoilt scenery, a taste of what lies further on in the stark hills of Basilicata and the wooded peaks of Calabria. Inland, dark mountains loom over the remote highlands of the Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano, one of Campania's best-kept secrets.

CSTP buses leave Salerno for Sapri, on the regional boundary between Campania and Basilicata.

Several destinations on the Cilento coast are served by the main rail route from Naples

to Reggio di Calabria. Check the **Trenitalia website** (www.trenitalia.it) for fares and information. For Palinuro, the nearest train station is Pisciotta, from where there is regular bus service to the resort.

By car take the SS18, which connects Agropoli with Velia via the inland route, or the SS267, which hugs the coast.

Agropoli

pop 20,678

The main town on the southern stretch of the coast, Agropoli makes a good base for Paestum and the beaches to the northwest. Popular with holidaying Italians, it's an otherwise tranquil place with a ramshackle medieval core on a promontory overlooking the sea.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0974 82 74 71; Viale Europa 34; ☎ 9.30am-2pm) can provide you with a city map.

Agropoli's friendly hostel, **Ostello La Lanterna** (☎ /fax 0974 83 83 64; lanterna@cilento.it; Via Lanterna 8; dm €14-15, d without bathroom €30, d with bathroom €35-40, f €60-65; ☎ mid-Mar-Oct) has dorms, doubles and four-bed family rooms, as well as a garden and optional evening meals (€10). The beach is a two-minute walk away.

Across from Agropoli's sweeping sandy beach, **Anna** (☎ 0974 82 37 63; www.bbanna.it; Via S Marco 28-30, Agropoli; s €35-50, d €50-70; ☎ ☎) has bright, cheerful rooms with white walls, smart striped fabrics, and balconies; request a sea view. Sunbeds and bicycles are available for a minimal price, and the downstairs restaurant (pizzas from €3, meals €15) is a hit with locals.

In a 17th-century building on the headland, **U'Sghiz** (☎ 0974 82 93 31; Piazza Umberto I; pizzas from €3, meals €15) specialises in seafood dishes like *spaghetti a vongole* (with mussels), and also has an extensive pizza menu. We suggest you ditch the quarter carafe of house red wine (€2) for one of the marginally more expensive drops.

Velia

On the coast 75km south of Salerno, the Greek settlement of Elea (now Velia), was founded in the 6th century BC and later became a popular resort for wealthy Romans. The **ruins** (☎ 0974 97 23 96; Contrada Piana di Velia; admission €2; ☎ 9am to 1hr before sunset Mon-Sat), topped by a tower visible for miles around, are not in great nick but merit a quick look if you're passing through.

South to Sapri

Continuing southwards, the road climbs, dips and curves its way through silent green hills peppered with medieval villages. Down below, crystal waters fringe long sandy beaches.

Some 12km southeast of Ascea, **Pisciotta** is an attractive village clinging to the mountainside. Here, amid orchards of olive and fruit trees, **Agriturismo San Carlo** (☎ /fax 0974 97 61 77; Via Noce 8; r per person with half-board €40-50, with full board €45-55) has lovely rustic rooms and beautiful home-made olive oil, wine and *limoncello*.

Another 25km or so further on, **Palinuro** is named after Palinurus, Aeneas' pilot, who was killed there after falling off his ship under the influence of a sleeping curse. A vibrant town, it has striking sandy beaches and some unforgettable coastal scenery, particularly around Capo Palinuro.

A little further still, where the road turns steeply inland to pass through San Giovanni a Piro, is **Marina di Camerota**, which has a small medieval centre. From there it's another 25km to Sapri, an uninspiring resort near the border with Basilicata.

PARCO NAZIONALE DEL CILENTO E VALLO DI DIANO

Stretching from the coast up to Campania's highest peak, Monte Cervati (1898m), and beyond to the regional border with Basilicata, the Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diano is Italy's second-largest national park. A little-explored area of barren heights and empty valleys, it's the perfect antidote to the holiday mayhem on the coast. To get the best out of it, you will, however, need a car – either that or unlimited patience and a masterful grasp of local bus timetables.

For further information stop by the tourist office in Paestum (p691). For guided hiking opportunities, contact **Gruppo Escursionistico Trekking** (☎ 0975 725 86; www.getvallodidiano.it; Via Provinciale 29, Sassano) or **Associazione Trekking Cilento** (☎ 0974 84 33 45; www.trekkingcilento.it, in Italian; Via Cannetiello 6, Agropoli).

About 25km northeast of Paestum, the WWF **Oasi Naturalistica di Persano** (☎ 0828 97 46 84; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed, Sat & Sun Jun-Sep, 10am-3pm Wed, Sat & Sun Oct-May) covers 110 hectares of wetlands on the river Sele. A favourite of ornithologists, it's home to a wide variety of birds, both resident and seasonal. Signs direct you there from the SS18. Visits should be booked a day

in advance. Guided tours should be booked three days in advance.

There are also two cave systems worth exploring. Located about 20km northeast of Paestum, the **Grotte di Castelcivita** (☎ 0828 77 23 97; Castelcivita; admission €8; ☞ tours 10am, 11am, noon, 1.30pm, 2.30pm, 3.30pm, 4.30pm, 5.30pm & 6.30pm mid-Mar–Sep, 10am, 11.30am, 1.30pm, 3pm & 4.30pm Oct–mid-Mar) complex is where Spartacus is said to have taken refuge following his slave rebellion in 71 BC. There are longer three-hour tours (€20) between May and September, when the water deep within the cave complex has dried up. Hard hats and a certain level of fitness and mobility are required.

There is a **De Rosa** (☎ 0828 94 10 65) bus that departs from Capaccio (6km east of Paestum) at 9.20am and returns at 1.25pm and 5.25pm, Monday to Saturday. By car take the SS18 from Paestum towards Salerno and follow the signs.

On the eastern edge of the park, the **Grotte dell'Angelo Pertosa** (☎ 0975 39 70 37; www.grotte

dipertosa.it; Pertosa; tours €10; ☞ 9am–7pm Mar–Oct, to 4pm Nov–Feb) is a 2.5km-long system bristling with stalactites and stalagmites. Although SITA buses from Salerno to Pertosa (€4.40) run Monday to Saturday, their inconvenient running times make the possibility of a day trip redundant. By car take the A3 southbound from Salerno, exit at Petina and follow the SS19 for 9km.

Continuing south on the A3 autostrada, **Padula** harbours one of the region's hidden jewels, the magnificent **Certosa di San Lorenzo** (☎ 0975 7 77 45; Padula; admission €4; ☞ 9am–7.30pm). Also known as the Certosa di Padula, this is one of Europe's biggest monasteries, with a huge central courtyard, wood-panelled library and sumptuously frescoed chapels. Begun in the 14th century and modified over time, it was abandoned in the 19th century, then suffered further degradation as a children's holiday home and later a concentration camp.

Lamanna (☎ 0975 52 04 26) buses run frequently from Salerno to Padula.

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