



Emilia-Romagna & San Marino

Emilia-Romagna has long been overlooked as little more than a stepping stone between the Veneto and Tuscany. But take time to explore this underrated region and you'll discover an area rich in art and culture, an area of mouthwatering food and robust wine, of cosmopolitan resorts and quiet backwaters.

Much of its medieval architecture dates to the Renaissance, when a handful of powerful families set up court here: the Farnese in Parma and Piacenza, the Este in Ferrara and Modena, and the Bentivoglio in Bologna.

The regional capital, Bologna, is one of Italy's unsung joys. A foodie city with a hedonistic approach to life, it's home to Europe's oldest university and a stunning medieval centre. A short hop to the northwest, Modena boasts a superb Romanesque cathedral and a hint of the gourmet delights that await in Parma, the city that gifted the world *prosciutto crudo* (cured ham, popularly known as Parma ham) and *parmigiano reggiano* (Parmesan). In the countryside to the south, castles pepper hilltops as flat plains give way to the Apennine peaks. Ferrara and Ravenna are the highlights of Romagna (the eastern half of Emilia-Romagna). Both are within easy distance of Bologna and both merit a visit – Ferrara for its beautiful Renaissance centre, Ravenna for its sensational Byzantine mosaics. If, after all that high culture, you need a break, head to Rimini where the crowded beaches and cutting-edge clubs promise more earthy pleasures, or San Marino where armies of day-trippers enjoy vast views. Alternatively, saddle up and take to the road – cycling is one of the region's most popular pursuits.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy free concerts and open-air movies all summer long during Bologna's annual **Bologna Estate festival** (p433)
- Stand awestruck beneath the stunning apse mosaic at Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe in **Ravenna** (p466)
- Survey the patchwork of fields and the distant blue Adriatic from your perch atop **San Marino's** castle walls (p473)
- Grab a free bicycle from the town offices and head for the beach in **Rimini** (p473)
- Leave the flatlands behind and climb up the steep cobbled streets in the picturesque medieval village of **Castell'Arquato** (p459)
- Contemplate the cargo from a 2000-year-old shipwreck and pose for photos on the whimsical Trepponti bridge in **Comacchio** (p464)



■ POPULATION: EMILIA-ROMAGNA 4.3 MILLION
SAN MARINO 30,000

■ AREA: EMILIA-ROMAGNA 22,121 SQ KM,
SAN MARINO 61 SQ KM

BOLOGNA

pop 372,000

Boasting one of the country's great medieval cityscapes – an eye-catching ensemble of red-brick *palazzi*, Renaissance towers and arcaded porticoes – Bologna is a wonderful alternative to the north's more famous cities. Italy's culinary capital, it's an attractive, animated place; a large student population and active gay scene ensure a vitality that's often missing in many of Emilia's smaller towns. It's also a great place to explore on foot, thanks to the 40km of wide, colonnaded walkways that offer pedestrians shelter from traffic, rain and summer heat.

Nicknamed *la rossa* ('the red' – as much a political moniker as reference to its colourful buildings), Bologna has long had a reputation for left-wing militancy. Passions have cooled since students faced down tanks in 1977, but the city remains highly political, and the university, Europe's oldest, is still a source of student agitation.

HISTORY

Bologna started life in the 6th century BC as Felsina. For two centuries it was the capital of the Etruscan Po valley territories until tribes from Gaul took over, renaming it Bononia. They lasted another couple of hundred years before surrendering to the Romans. As the Western Empire crumbled, Bologna was successively sacked and occupied by Visigoths, Huns, Goths and Lombards.

The city reached its pinnacle as an independent commune and leading European university around the 12th century. Wealth brought a building boom and every well-to-do family left its mark by erecting a tower – 180 of them in all, of which 22 still stand today. The endless tussle between the papacy and Holy Roman Empire for control of northern Italy inevitably involved Bologna. The city started by siding with the Guelphs (who backed the papacy), going against the Ghibellines, but adopted neutrality in the 14th century.

Following a popular rebellion against the ruling Bentivoglio family, during which the family's palace was razed, papal troops took Bologna in 1506 and the city remained under their control until the arrival of Napoleon at the end of the 18th century. In 1860 Bologna joined the newly formed Kingdom of Italy.

During heavy fighting in the last months of WWII, up to 40% of the city's industrial build-

ings were destroyed. However, the historic town inside the walls survived and it has been lovingly and carefully preserved.

Today the city is a centre for Italy's hi-tech industries and is a popular trade-fair venue.

ORIENTATION

Bologna is best explored on foot. From the train and bus stations, Via dell'Indipendenza leads to Piazza del Nettuno and Piazza Maggiore, the heart of the city. Just to the east, Piazza di Porta Ravegnana marks the starting point of Via Zamboni and the university quarter. The main east-west arteries are Via Ugo Bassi and its continuation, Via Rizzoli.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Feltrinelli International (☎ 051 26 80 70; Via Zamboni 7b; ☎ 9am-7.30pm Mon-Sat)

Librerie Coop (☎ 051 22 01 31; Via Orefici 19; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, to 8pm Sun) Brand new three-level bookshop with its own cafe, restaurant and *enoteca* (wine bar).

Internet Access

Iperbole (☎ 051 20 31 84; www.comune.bologna.it/wireless; Palazzo D'Accursio, Piazza Maggiore 6; internet & wi-fi free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) The municipal government's free internet service, allowing one hour daily on six public computers, or three hours of wi-fi access. Register at the Iperbole desk inside Palazzo D'Accursio.

Liong@te (☎ 051 407 01 61; Via Rizzoli 9; internet per hr €2.20; ☎ 10am-midnight) Up the staircase directly opposite Albergo Garisenda's elevator.

Laundry

iWash (Via Petroni 38; wash & dry per 8kg €6.80; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-9pm Sun)

Left Luggage

Train station (per bag 1st 5hr €4, each additional hr €0.60; ☎ 6am-10pm)

Medical Services

Ospedale Maggiore (☎ 051 647 81 11; Largo Nigrisoli 2) West of the city centre; take bus 19 from Via Bassi.

Post

Post office (Piazza Minghetti 4)

Tourist Information

Centro Servizi per i Turisti (☎ 800 856065; www.cst.bo.it; Piazza Maggiore 1e; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-7pm

REGIONAL ITINERARY

BOLOGNA & BEYOND

One Week / Bologna

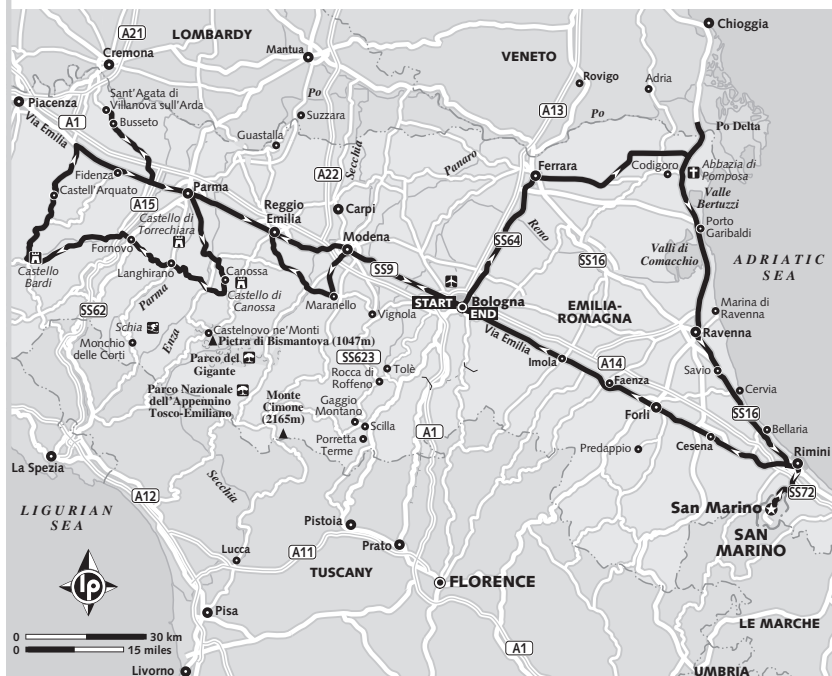
Begin in **Bologna** (opposite): Italy's culinary capital and the region's most dynamic city. Get acquainted with its crenellated palaces and two dozen surviving medieval towers at ground level in central **Piazza Maggiore** (p428), then climb the spiral staircase of 97.6m-high **Torre degli Asinelli** (p431) for spectacular bird's-eye views. Spend the evening indulging your tastebuds at the city's legendary eateries or sipping wine in the converted 17th-century chapel at **Le Stanze** (p436).

Next, head west into Emilia's agricultural heartland, home to the fabled triumvirate of Parmesan, prosciutto and balsamic vinegar. After visiting a local **producer** (p446), pause to see the Unesco-listed, 12th-century cathedral in **Modena** (p446) or go to the Galleria Ferrari in **Maranello** (p449) before an evening of opera at the Teatro Regio in **Parma** (p456). Next day, explore the hilltop fortresses of **Canossa** (p452) and **Castell'Arquato** (p459) or Giuseppe Verdi's villa outside **Busseto** (p456).

Bounce back east into Romagna and join the sea of cyclists in bike-friendly **Ferrara** (p459), where the showy **Castello Estense** (p460) and other legacies of the Este dukes are best visited on two wheels. Fortify yourself with some *cappellacci di zucca* (pumpkin-stuffed pasta) and you might just be ready to follow the riverside bike paths 50km further east into the **Po Delta** (p463).

Mosaic lovers will rejoice at the sight of **Ravenna** (p464), whose ensemble of churches holds an incomparably vibrant collection of early Christian artwork in dazzling green and gold. Trade Ravenna's glitter for the Adriatic's glimmer an hour down the coast in **Rimini** (p468), where you can dip your toe in the deep blue sea, hit the lively club circuit at nearby Riccione, or leave the country (briefly) to gawk at the views from the fortified hilltop republic of **San Marino** (p473).

Back in Bologna, spend your last afternoon in the **Quadrilatero** (p430) loading up on foodie presents for your friends, and don't forget to treat yourself to a sweet dream-inducing cup of Bologna's best ice cream from **La Sorbetteria Castiglione** (p435).



OUR TOP FIVE FOODIE EXPERIENCES IN EMILIA-ROMAGNA

- Shopping the delis of Parma's **Via Garibaldi** (p456) or Bologna's **Quadrilatero district** (p430)
- Touring balsamic-vinegar and Parmesan producers near **Modena** (p446)
- Exploring Bologna's hundreds of **restaurants** (p435), and discovering first-hand why they call this city '*la grassa*' (the fat one)
- Museum-hopping – from Langhirano's **Museo del Prosciutto** to Soragna's **Museo del Parmigiano** (p458)
- Tasting all 18 ice-cream flavours at **La Sorbetteria Castiglione** (p435), Bologna

Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) A free hotel booking service adjacent to the main tourist office.

Tourist office (www.bolognatourismo.info; ☎ 9am-7pm); airport (☎ 051 647 21 13); Piazza Maggiore (☎ 051 23 96 60; Piazza Maggiore 1e); train station (☎ 051 25 19 47)

SIGHTS

Piazza Maggiore & Piazza del Nettuno

Flanked by the world's fifth-largest basilica and a series of impressive Renaissance *palazzi*, Piazza Maggiore is the city's principal focus and an obvious starting point for sightseeing. A lively pedestrian hub through which you'll find yourself passing several times, it was laid out in the 13th century.

Adjacent to Piazza Maggiore, Piazza del Nettuno owes its name to the **Fontana del Nettuno** (Neptune's Fountain), a stirring bronze statue sculpted by Giambologna in 1566. Beneath the muscled sea god, four cherubs represent the winds and four buxom sirens, water spouting from every nipple, symbolise the four known continents of the pre-Oceania world.

Forming the western flank of Piazza Maggiore, **Palazzo Comunale** (known also as Palazzo D'Accursio after its original resident, Francesco D'Accursio) has been home to Bologna city council since 1336. A salad of architectural styles, it owes much of its current look to makeovers in the 15th and 16th centuries. The statue of Pope Gregory XIII, the Bolognese prelate responsible for the Gregorian calendar, was placed above the main portal in 1580, while inside, Donato Bramante's 16th-century staircase was de-

signed to allow horse-drawn carriages to ride directly up to the 1st floor.

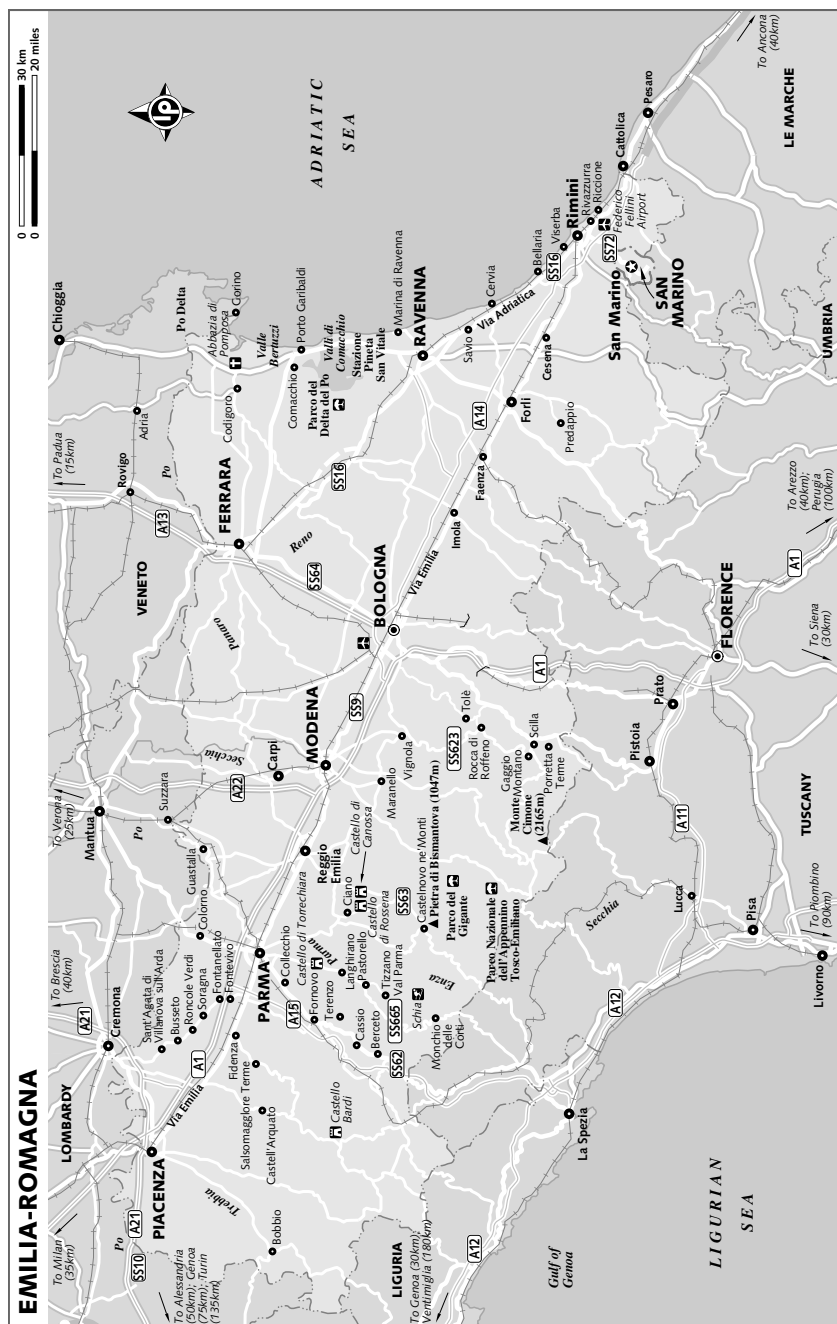
On the 2nd floor you'll find the *palazzo's* two **art galleries** (☎ 051 20 36 29; admission free; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun): the **Collezioni Comunali d'Arte** with its interesting collection of 13th- to 19th-century paintings, sculpture and furniture, and the **Museo Morandi**, dedicated to the trademark still lives of Bolognese artist Giorgio Morandi.

Outside the *palazzo*, three large panels bear photos of hundreds of partisans killed in the resistance to German occupation, many on this very spot.

Over the square, the 13th-century **Palazzo del Re Enzo** is named after King Enzo, the illegitimate son of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, who was held here by papal forces between 1249 and 1272. Dating to the same period, the neighbouring **Palazzo del Podestà** was the original residence of Bologna's chief magistrate. Beneath the *palazzo*, there's a **whispering gallery** where two perpendicular passages intersect. Stand diagonally opposite someone and whisper: the acoustics are amazing. Both *palazzi* are off-limits to the public unless there's a temporary exhibition on.

Dominating the piazza's southern flank, the Gothic **Basilica di San Petronio** (☎ 051 22 54 42; ☎ 7.45am-12.30pm & 3.30-6pm) is Bologna's greatest church. Dedicated to the city's patron saint and measuring 132m by 66m by 47m, it's the world's fifth-largest basilica. Surprisingly, though, it was never finished. Originally it was intended to be larger than St Peter's in Rome, but in 1561, some 169 years after building had started, Pope Pius IV blocked construction by commissioning a new university on the basilica's eastern flank. As a result the facade was never completed and if you walk along Via dell'Archiginnasio you can see semiconstructed apses poking out oddly.

The central doorway, carved in 1425 by Jacopo della Quercia, boasts a beautiful *Madonna and Child* and scenes from the Old and New Testaments; inside, chapels contain frescoes by Giovanni da Modena and Jacopo di Paolo. Note also the huge sundial that stretches 67.7m along the floor of the eastern aisle. Designed in 1656 by Gian Cassini and Domenico Guglielmi, it was instrumental in discovering the anomalies of the Julian calendar and led to the creation of the leap year.

EMILIA-ROMAGNA

BOLOGNA



The Quadrilatero

To the east of Piazza Maggiore, the grid of streets around Via Clavature (Street of Locksmiths) sits on what was once Roman Bologna. Known as the Quadrilatero, this bustling district is one of the centre's most enticing – colourful market stalls and delicious delis open onto cobbled medieval streets lined with trendy cafes, swish bars and neighbourhood eateries.

South & West of Piazza Maggiore

Running south off Piazza Maggiore, Via dell'Archiginnasio leads to the **Museo Civico Archeologico** (☎ 051 275 72 11; Via dell'Archiginnasio 2; admission free; ☎ 9am-3pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun) with its well-documented Egyptian

and Roman artefacts and one of Italy's best Etruscan collections.

A few doors down, **Palazzo dell'Archiginnasio** is the result of Pope Pius IV's project to curtail the Basilica di San Petronio. Seat of the city university from 1563 to 1805 (notice the professors' coats of arms on the walls), it today houses Bologna's 700,000-volume **Biblioteca Comunale** (Municipal Library) and the fascinating 17th-century **Teatro Anatomico** (☎ 051 27 68 11; Piazza Galvani 1; admission free; ☎ 9am-6.45pm Mon-Fri, to 1.45pm Sat), where public body dissections were held under the sinister gaze of an Inquisition priest, ready to intervene if proceedings became too spiritually compromising. Cedar-wood tiered seats surround a central marble-topped table while a sculp-

E		F	
Collezioni Comunali d'Arte..... (see 19)		La Sorbetteria	
Fontana del Nettuno.....13 A1		Castiglione.....37 C4	
Hammam Bleu.....14 C4		Marco Fadiga Bistrot.....38 C4	
Metropolitana di San Pietro.....15 A1		Mercato delle Erbe.....39 B3	
Museo Civico Archeologico.....16 A2		Osteria de' Poeti.....40 C4	
Museo Civico Medievale.....17 A1		P122@s.....41 A2	
Museo Morandi..... (see 19)		Produce Market.....42 A2	
Oratorio di Santa Cecilia.....18 D3		Tamburini.....43 B2	
Palazzo Comunale.....19 A1		Trattoria del Rosso.....44 C2	
Palazzo del Podestà..... (see 6)		Trattoria Fantoni.....45 B3	
Palazzo del Re Enzo.....20 A1			
Palazzo dell'Archiginnasio.....21 A2		DRINKING ☞☞	
Palazzo Poggi.....22 D2		Bravo Caffè.....46 C2	
Pinacoteca Nazionale.....23 D2		Cantina Bentivoglio.....47 C2	
Teatro Anatomico..... (see 21)		English Empire.....48 D3	
Torre degli Asinelli..... (see 24)		La Scuderia.....49 D3	
Torre Garisenda.....24 B1		Le Stanze.....50 C2	
Whispering Gallery..... (see 6)		Marsalino.....51 C2	
SLEEPING ☞		Nu-Lounge Bar.....52 A2	
Albergo Centrale.....25 B3		Osteria L'Infedele.....53 C3	
Albergo delle Drapperie.....26 A2		Terzi.....54 B1	
Albergo Garisenda.....27 B1			
Albergo Panorama.....28 B3		ENTERTAINMENT ☞	
Albergo Rossini.....29 D3		Chez Baker Jazz Club.....55 B2	
Hotel Orologio.....30 A2		Cinema Chaplin.....56 A4	
Hotel Porta San Mamolo.....31 B4		Corto Maltese.....57 C2	
Il Convento dei Fiori di Seta.....32 D4		Kinki.....58 B1	
Prendiparte B&B.....33 A1		Teatro Comunale.....59 D2	
EATING ☞		SHOPPING ☞	
Drogheria della Rosa.....34 C4		Enoteca Italiana.....60 C2	
Gelateria Grom.....35 A2		Gilberto.....61 B2	
Godot Wine Bar.....36 C4		I Campetti.....62 B3	
		La Balta.....63 A2	
		Le Sfoglino.....64 B3	
		Paoletti.....65 B2	
		Tamburini..... (see 43)	
		TRANSPORT	
		Aerobus Shuttles.....66 C1	
		ATC..... (see 66)	
		ATC..... (see 71)	
		ATC.....67 B3	
		Autorimessa Pincio.....68 C1	
		Budget.....69 B1	
		Hertz.....70 B1	
		Main Bus Station.....71 C1	

tured Apollo looks down from the ceiling. The canopy above the lecturer's chair is supported by two skinless figures carved into the wood. The theatre, and many of the building's frescoes, was destroyed during WWII and subsequently rebuilt.

A short walk south brings you to the **Basilica di San Domenico** (☎ 051 640 04 11; Piazza San Domenico 13; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5.30pm Sat & Sun), built in 1238 to house the remains of San Domenico, founder of the Dominican order, who died in 1221. His elaborate sarcophagus is in the **Cappella di San Domenico**, which was designed by Nicola Pisano and later added to by a host of artists. Michelangelo carved the angel on the right of the altar when he was only 19. Notice, too, the intricately executed wooden

tableaux of the choir stalls. When Mozart spent a month at the city's music academy, he occasionally played the church's organ.

Some way to the west, the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (☎ 051 22 17 62; Piazza San Francesco; ☎ 6.30am-noon & 3-7pm) was one of the first churches in Italy to be built in the French Gothic style. Features include the tomb of Pope Alexander V and a remarkable 14th-century marble altarpiece depicting sundry saints and scenes from the life of St Francis.

About 3.5km southwest of the city centre, the hilltop **Basilica Santuario della Madonna di San Luca** (☎ 051 614 23 39; Via di San Luca 36; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct-Feb, to 6pm Mar) houses a representation of the Virgin Mary, supposedly painted by St Luke and transported from the Middle East to Bologna in the 12th century. The 18th-century sanctuary is connected to the city walls by the world's longest portico, held aloft by 666 arches, beginning at Piazza di Porta Saragozza. Take bus 20 from the city centre to Villa Spada, from where you can continue by minibus (buy the €3.40 return ticket on board) to the sanctuary. Alternatively, continue one more stop on bus 20 to the Meloncello arch and walk the remaining 2km under the arches.

University Quarter

Towering above Piazza di Porta Ravegnana, Bologna's two leaning towers, Le Due Torri, are unmistakable landmarks. The taller of the two, the 97.6m-high **Torre degli Asinelli** (admission €3; ☎ 9am-6pm, to 5pm Oct-May) is open to the public, although it's not advisable for the weak-kneed (there are 498 steps) or superstitious students (local lore says if you climb the tower you'll never graduate). Built by the Asinelli family between 1109 and 1119, today it leans 1.3m off vertical. The neighbouring 48m **Torre Garisenda** is sensibly out of bounds given its drunken 3.2m tilt.

From the two towers, head southeast along Via Santo Stefano for the **Basilica di Santo Stefano** (☎ 051 22 32 56; Via Santo Stefano 24; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm), an atmospheric medieval religious complex. Originally there were seven churches – hence the basilica's nickname Sette Chiese – but only four remain. Entry is via the 11th-century **Chiesa del Crocifisso**, which houses the bones of San Petronio and leads through to the **Chiesa del Santo Sepolcro**. This austere octagonal structure probably started life as a baptistry. Next door, the **Cortile di Pilato** is

named after the central basin in which Pontius Pilate is said to have washed his hands after condemning Christ to death. In fact, it's an 8th-century Lombard artefact. Beyond the courtyard, the **Chiesa della Trinità** connects to a modest cloister and a small museum. The fourth church, the **Santi Vitale e Agricola**, is the city's oldest. Incorporating recycled Roman masonry and carvings, the bulk of the building dates from the 11th century. The considerably older tombs of two saints in the side aisles once served as altars.

To the north of the basilica complex, along Via Zamboni, the 13th-century **Chiesa di San Giacomo Maggiore** (☎ 051 22 59 70; Piazza Rossini; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 3.30-6.30pm) houses a noteworthy collection of paintings and artefacts. The highlight is the Bentivoglio chapel with frescoes by Lorenzo Costa and an altarpiece by Francesco Raibolini (known as Il Francia). The same pair were mainly responsible for the magnificent 16th-century frescoes in the adjacent **Oratorio di Santa Cecilia** (☎ 051 22 59 70; Via Zamboni 15; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm), one of Bologna's unsung gems. Depicting the life and Technicolor death of St Cecilia and her husband Valeriano, they are in remarkably good nick, their colours vibrant and their imagery bold and unabashed.

For a break from ecclesiastical art head down the road to the university museums at **Palazzo Poggi** (☎ 051 209 93 98; www.museopalazzo.poggi.unibo.it; Via Zamboni 33; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Tue-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Sat & Sun), where you can peruse waxwork uteri in the Obstetrics Museum and giant tortoise shells in the Museum of Natural Sciences. Further surprises are to be found in museums dedicated to ships and old maps, military architecture and physics.

Back on the art trail, the **Pinacoteca Nazionale** (☎ 051 420 94 11; Via delle Belle Arti 56; adult/child €4/2; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun) has a strong collection of works by Bolognese artists from the 14th century onwards, including a number of important canvases by the late-16th-century Carracci cousins Ludovico, Agostino and Annibale. Among the founding fathers of Italian baroque art, the Carraccis were deeply influenced by the Counter-Reformation sweeping through Italy in the latter half of the 16th century. Much of their work is religious and their imagery is often highly charged and emotional, designed to appeal to the piety of the viewing public. Works to look out for include Ludovico's *Madonna Bargellini*, the

Comunione di San Girolamo (Communion of St Jerome) by Agostino and the *Madonna di San Ludovico* by Annibale. Elsewhere in the gallery you'll find several works by Giotto, as well as Raphael's *Estasi di Santa Cecilia* (Ecstasy of St Cecilia). El Greco and Titian are also represented, but by comparatively little-known works.

North of Piazza Maggiore

A short walk north of Piazza Maggiore, Bologna's cathedral, the **Metropolitana di San Pietro** (☎ 051 22 21 12; Via dell'Indipendenza 9; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 4-6.15pm) has suffered redevelopment many times over the centuries. More a landmark than somewhere to search out, it stands opposite the **Museo Civico Medievale** (☎ 051 219 39 30; Via Manzoni 4; admission free; ☎ 9am-3pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun), over the road in the 15th-century Palazzo Ghilisardi-Fava. Of interest in the museum are the fine frescoes by Jacopo della Quercia and the collection of battle armour, bronze statues and medieval coffin slabs.

Further up, near the northwestern edge of the historical centre, **MAMbo** (Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna; ☎ 051 649 66 11; Via Don Minzoni 14; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, to 10pm Thu) is Bologna's newest museum. Housed in a cavernous former municipal bakery, its permanent and rotating exhibits showcase the work of up-and-coming Italian artists.

ACTIVITIES

Take time out to rejuvenate with a sauna and scrub at **Hammam Bleu** (☎ 051 58 01 62; www.hamмам.it; Vicolo Barbazzi 4; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun), a Turkish bath in the historic centre. Prices start at €50 for a half-hour rub down.

For information on cycling in Bologna and the region as a whole, see the boxed text, opposite.

COURSES

Not only a great place to eat, Bologna is also a good place to learn to cook. **La Vecchia Scuola Bolognese** (☎ 051 649 15 76; www.lavecchiascuola.com; Via Malvasia 49) is one of several schools that offer courses for English speakers. Prices range from €80 for a single four-hour course to €250 for a full week of classes.

TOURS

Various outfits offer guided, two-hour walking tours in English (€13). Groups assem-

PEDAL ROUND THE REGION

At the forefront of Italy's *cicloturismo* (bicycle tourism) trend, Emilia-Romagna offers excellent cycling. The region's geography is mixed, encompassing the flatlands of the Po Delta and the peaks of the Apennines, and facilities are excellent. There are hundreds of bike-hire points, repair shops are widespread and transporting your bike is easy on the rail network. Tourist offices can supply itineraries and basic maps, although you'd be advised to get hold of a decent regional map; one of the best is *Emilia-Romagna* (1:200,000; €7) published by the Touring Club of Italy.

Outlined below are a couple of routes, one flat, one downhill, which can be modified to make them less challenging.

- **Bologna-Ferrara** – A 45km trip through the villages of the Po valley. From Bologna train station head north along Via Giacomo Matteotti and Via di Corticella, go under the A14 autostrada, to the left of the A13, and follow the signs for Castel Maggiore. Once there continue for 13km to San Pietro in Casale and then to Ferrara, a further 21km. If you don't want to head back to Bologna, you could go on to the Po Delta, about 50km away on the east coast.
- **Into the Apennines** – A 75km descent from the Apennine spa town of Porretta Terme to Bologna. Take one of the regular trains from Bologna to Porretta, then hit the road for Gaggio Montano via Silla. At Gaggio turn right onto the SS623 and follow for about 20km before turning off right for Rocca di Roffeno and Tolè. From Tolè, the road continues for about 36km back to Bologna.

ble outside the main tourist office on Piazza Maggiore (no booking required).

La Chiocciola (☎ 051 22 09 64; www.lachiocciolasnc.com) Meets 10.15am Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday.

Le Guide d'Arte (☎ 051 275 02 54; www.guidarte.com) Meets 3pm Saturday.

Prima Classe (☎ 347 8944094; infoprimaclasse@libero.it) English-language tours 11am Monday and Friday, 3pm (4pm in summer) Tuesday and Thursday. German-language tours 10am Tuesday and Saturday.

Prima Classe also organises two-hour cycle tours (€20 including bike rental). Call ahead to reserve your spot; there's a minimum of three participants.

Trambus Open (☎ 051 35 08 53; www.trambusopen.com) runs an hour-long, hop-on-hop-off bus tour of the city departing from the train station several times daily. Tickets (€10) can be bought on board.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Bologna has a lively and varied events calendar with gigs ranging from street raves to jazz concerts, ballet performances and religious processions. Summer is generally the best time to catch a party. Big events include the following:

Celebrazioni della Madonna di San Luca Solemn processions take to the city streets in Bologna's major religious festival on the Saturday before the fifth Sunday after Easter and the following Wednesday and Sunday.

Bologna Estate A three-month (mid-June to mid-September) program of concerts, film projections, dance performances and much more. Held in open-air venues throughout the city, many events are free. Tourist offices carry details.

Salotto del Jazz (July to August) A small-scale jazz fest organised by four venues in and around Via Mascarella in the university quarter northwest of Via Zamboni.

SLEEPING

Accommodation in Bologna is geared to the business market, with a glut of midrange to top-end hotels and precious few budget options. If possible, avoid the busy spring and autumn trade-fair seasons, when prices skyrocket, hotels get heavily booked and advance reservations are essential. Outside of fair season, some hotels offer discounts of up to 50% and attractive weekend rates.

Budget

Centro Turistico Città di Bologna (☎ 051 32 50 16; www.hotelcamping.com; Via Romita 12; camp sites per adult/child/tent €8.50/5/13, 2-person bungalows €50-90; ☎ ☎) This large, well-equipped camp ground is on the north side of town, 6km from the train station. On-site facilities include a bar, mini-market and newsagent. Take bus 68 from the main bus station.

Ostello Due Torri-San Sisto (☎ 051 50 18 10; bologna@aighostels.com; Via Viadagola 5 & 14; dm/s/d €16/25/42; ☎ ☎) Some 6km north of the centre,

GAY BOLOGNA

'Bologna is the centre of Italy's social and political gay movement,' says Maurizio Cecconi, a gay activist who's been working with Arcigay (Italy's biggest gay-rights organisation) for the past several years. 'The city is home to numerous groups, including the national and Bologna branches of Arcigay and Arcilesbica, which provide health services, counselling and HIV advice. Then there's the Movimento Identità Transessuale (MIT; Movement for Transsexual Identity) and various collectives such as Carniscelte, an *antagonismo* gay group.'

But, as Maurizio is quick to point out, there's more to gay life than politics. 'On the cultural level, Bologna has a vivacious gay scene. There are gay nights at many clubs and lots of cultural events. The Cassero (p445) is very popular – Wednesday is the big night but Thursday is lesbian night and on Fridays there are concerts by international gay and lesbian artists.'

For more information check out **Arcigay** (www.arcigay.it) or log onto www.cassero.it.

Bologna's two HI hostels, barely 100m apart, are modern, functional and cheap. Take bus 93 (Monday to Saturday, until 8.20pm) from Via Irnerio, bus 301 (Sunday) from the bus station or bus 21B (evenings, hourly from 8.40pm to 12.40am) opposite the train station.

Albergo Panorama (☎ 051 22 18 02; www.hotelpanoramabologna.it; 4th fl, Via Livraghi 1; s/d/tr/q without bath-room €50/70/80/90) A cheerful old-school family *pensione* with exceptionally spacious rooms, many offering lovely views of nearby *palazzi*, towers and flowery terraces. The lone room with bathroom costs €10 extra. English and French are spoken.

Midrange

Albergo Rossini (☎ 051 23 77 16; www.albergorossini.com; Via dei Bibiena 11; s €40-75, d €70-100; ☒ closed mid-Jul–mid-Aug; ☒) The modest and friendly Rossini is well placed near studenty Piazza Verdi. Downstairs rooms are mustier than those tucked under the eaves upstairs, which benefit from air-con and skylights that let the sun pour in.

Albergo Centrale (☎ 051 22 51 14; www.albergoцентralebologna.it; Via della Zecca 2; incl breakfast s €45-60, d €75-120; ☒) Offering comfort and a central location for which you could easily pay a lot more, the large old-fashioned rooms at Albergo Centrale come with parquet floors, modern furniture and an ample buffet breakfast.

Albergo Garisenda (☎ 051 22 43 69; www.albergoгарисенда.com; 3rd fl, Galleria del Leone, Via Rizzoli 9; s without bathroom €45-55, d without bathroom €65-85, d with bath-room €85-110) In the shadow of Bologna's leaning towers, the Garisenda has seven no-nonsense rooms with comfy beds and modest furniture. The entrance is in a covered shopping gallery off Via Rizzoli.

Albergo delle Drapperie (☎ 051 22 39 55; www.albergodrapperie.com; Via delle Drapperie 5; s €60-105, d €75-140, breakfast per person €5 extra; ☒) Right in the heart of the atmospheric Quadrilatero district, this welcoming three-star establishment has 21 attractive rooms with wood-beamed ceilings, the occasional brick arch and colourful ceiling frescoes.

Top End

Hotel Porta San Mamolo (☎ 051 58 30 56; www.hotel-portasanmamolo.it; Vicolo del Falcone 6-8; s €70-180, d €100-350; ☒ ☒) On a quiet residential street at the historical centre's southern edge, this refined hotel offers solid three-star comforts and plenty of charm. Rooms with shuttered windows and flowerboxes overlook a tranquil garden with flowering trees and an old stone well.

Il Convento dei Fiori di Seta (☎ 051 27 20 39; www.silkflowersnunnery.com; Via Orfeo 34; r €130-270, ste €280-440; ☒) A chic boutique hotel housed in a 14th-century convent, Il Convento is a model of sharp design. Religious-inspired frescoes sit alongside Mapplethorpe-style flower photos and snazzy modern light fixtures; beds come with linen sheets and bathrooms feature cool mosaic tiles.

Hotel Orologio (☎ 051 745 74 11; www.bolognarhotels.it; Via IV Novembre 10; s €103-327, d €169-357; ☐ ☒ ☒ ☒) One of four upmarket hotels run by Bologna Arts Hotels, this refined pile just off Piazza Maggiore seduces guests with its slick service, smart rooms furnished in elegant gold, blue and burgundy, swirling grey and white marble bathrooms, complimentary chocs and an unbeatable downtown location.

our pick Prendiparte B&B (☎ 051 58 90 23; www.prendiparte.it; Via Sant'Alò 7; r €300) You don't just get

a room at this unique B&B, you get an entire 900-year-old tower. The living area (bedroom, kitchen and lounge) is spread over three floors and there are nine more levels to explore, with a 17th-century prison halfway up and outstanding views from the terrace up top. A dreamy spot for a honeymoon or anniversary; book well in advance.

EATING

Known as *la grassa* (the fat one), Bologna is celebrated for its cuisine. Spaghetti bolognese was born here, even if locals call the meat sauce *ragù* and mix it with *tagliatelle*; *mortadella* (baloney or Bologna sausage) hails from the area and tortellini is a speciality. The hills nearby produce the light, fizzy Lambrusco red and a full, dry sauvignon blanc.

The university district northeast of Via Rizzoli harbours hundreds of restaurants, trattorias, takeaways and cafes catering to hard-up students and gourmet diners alike. For foodie gifts head to the sumptuous delis in the Quadrilatero.

Restaurants

BUDGET

Trattoria Fantoni (☎ 051 23 63 58; Via del Pratello 11a; meals €15; ☹ closed Sun & dinner Mon) To the west of the centre, Via del Pratello is a long-standing bohemian hang-out packed with pubs, trattorias and bars. One of the best, Fantoni is a much-loved eatery dishing up classic Italian food at welcome prices. The atmosphere's jovial and the decor is an agreeable clash of clutter and modern art.

our pick **Trattoria del Rosso** (☎ 051 23 67 30; Via A Righi 30; meals €16-18; ☹ lunch & dinner) This perennially popular trattoria is said to be the oldest in the city. The daily fixed-price lunch and dinner menus (€10) are exceptional value and the vegetarian options are a welcome sight in such a meat-obsessed city.

Tamburini (☎ 051 23 47 26; Via Caprarie 1; meals €20; ☹ lunch Mon-Sat) Bologna's most famous delicatessen also has a classy self-service lunch canteen. To grab a table get here early or be prepared to queue.

MIDRANGE

P122@s (☎ 051 22 45 89; Via dei Musei 2-4; pizzas €6-9, meals €35-45) This trendy spot under the porticoes near Piazza Maggiore attracts a fashionable local crowd with its wood-fired pizzas and tasty – if pricey – pasta, meat and fish dishes.

Osteria de' Poeti (☎ 051 23 61 66; Via de' Poeti 1b; meals €30-40; ☹ closed Mon Oct-May, Sun Jun-Aug) In the wine cellar of a 14th-century *palazzo*, this historic eatery is an atmospheric place to enjoy hearty local fare. Take a table by the impressive stone fireplace and order from a selection of staples such as *taglioline con fiori di zucca*, *zucchini e prosciutto di Parma* (pasta with pumpkin flowers, courgettes and Parma ham). Evenings feature frequent live music.

Drogheria della Rosa (☎ 051 22 25 29; Via Cartoleria 10; meals €35-40; ☹ lunch & dinner) With its wooden shelves, apothecaries' jars and bottles, it's not difficult to picture this place as the pharmacy that it once was. Nowadays it's a charming, high-end trattoria, run by an affable English-speaking owner who will happily go through the day's short, sweet menu of ultrafresh choices with you. Expect superbly prepared versions of Bolognese classics such as tortellini or steak with balsamic vinegar.

Marco Fadiga Bistrot (☎ 051 22 01 18; Via Rialto 23; meals €35-40; ☹ dinner Tue-Sat) Specialising in fine wine and seafood, from its oyster bar to its let-out-all-the-stops Grand Plateau Royal (an extravagant combo platter that includes just about every sea creature imaginable), this elegant yet relaxed eatery is ideal for a romantic dinner.

Godot Wine Bar (☎ 051 22 63 15; Via Cartoleria 12; meals €40-50; ☹ Mon-Sat) Don't let the name fool you! Yes, there's a great wine selection, with daily specials chalked up on the board and an emphasis on Italian vintages, but Godot has also emerged as one of Bologna's premier restaurants, whipping up extravagant concoctions like *rombo in crosta di patate*, *datterini semi-confit*, *olive nere e salsa al prezzemolo* (turbot in a potato crust with semiconfit of dates, black olives and parsley).

Gelaterie

our pick **La Sorbetteria Castiglione** (☎ 051 23 32 57; Via Castiglione 44; ☹ 8.30am-11pm) Locals queue up day and night at this award-winning gelateria, which focuses all of its creative energy on 18 flavours. Taste the *gianduia* (chocolate-hazelnut ice cream with whole hazelnuts inside) and you'll be an instant convert.

Gelateria Grom (☎ 051 27 34 37; Via d'Azeglio 13; ☹ noon-midnight) Bologna's branch of this Torino-based gelateria scoops out some astoundingly tasty flavours, all made with scrupulously sourced ingredients.

Self-Catering

Stock up on victuals at the **Mercato delle Erbe** (Via U Bassi 27; ☎ 7am-1.15pm Mon-Sat & 5-7.30pm Mon-Wed & Fri), Bologna's main covered market. Alternatively, the Quadrilatero area east of Piazza Maggiore harbours a daily **produce market** (Via Clavature; ☎ 7am-1pm Mon-Sat & 4.15-7.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat) and some of the city's best-known delis (see p445).

DRINKING

There's no shortage of places to drink in Bologna. Whether you're after a raucous pub, a cosy wine bar or a swank cafe, you'll find something to suit your taste. Thirsty students congregate along the cluster of streets fanning out from Piazza Verdi. For a more upmarket, dressier scene head to the Quadrilatero.

Terzi (☎ 051 23 64 70; Via Oberdan 10; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) A refined cafe serving an unusual range of coffees, Terzi is a great spot to toy with a *caffè con prugna e cannella* (espresso with plum and cinnamon).

La Scuderia (☎ 051 656 96 19; Piazza Verdi 2; ☎ 8am-1am Mon-Sat) On Piazza Verdi, this happening bar-cafe occupies the Bentivoglio family's former stables. All the rage with image-conscious students, it features towering columns, vaulted ceilings, arty photos and free wi-fi.

English Empire (Via Zamboni 24a; ☎ 7pm-3am) Serving both Guinness and Bass on tap, this university-district pub hums with the raucous energy of its youthful patrons, who spill onto the surrounding colonnaded sidewalks until the wee hours.

Osteria L'Infedele (☎ 051 23 94 56; Via Gerusalemme 5a; ☎ 7pm-3am) A very agreeable spot to while away the hours with a glass of wine. Vintage adverts line the walls and the cool, eclectic soundtrack ranges from jazz to blues, interrupted only by football broadcasts on game nights.

Nu-Lounge Bar (☎ 051 22 25 32; Via de' Musei 6f) One of several swish cafes in the Quadrilatero, Nu-Lounge attracts a chic, stylishly dressed crowd for everything from predinner *aperitivi* to midnight cocktails on its porticoed terrace.

Cantina Bentivoglio (☎ 051 26 54 16; www.cantina.bentivoglio.it; Via Mascarella 4b; ☎ 8pm-2am) Bologna's top jazz joint, the Bentivoglio is a jack of all trades. Part wine bar (choose from over 500 labels), part restaurant (the daily prix-fixe menu costs €28) and part jazz club (there's live music nightly), this much-loved institution oozes

cosy charm with its ancient brick floors, arched ceilings and shelves full of wine bottles.

Bravo Caffè (☎ 051 26 61 12; Via Mascarella 1; ☎ 8pm-late) Across from Cantina Bentivoglio, Bravo is a sexy wine bar with red walls, black furniture and soft, subtle lighting. It too features regular live jazz and a full food menu.

Marsalino (☎ 051 23 86 75; Via Marsala 13d; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, dinner Sun, lunch Mon) Tiny, arty and chameleonlike, Marsalino is a laid-back watering hole that opens as a tearoom at 4pm, morphs into a wine bar at 6pm, and becomes a modest restaurant at 8pm.

Le Stanze (☎ 051 22 87 67; Via Borgo San Pietro 1; 11am-3am; ☎ Mon-Sat) Each of the four interior rooms at this hip corner bar has its own design concept; depending on your mood, you can hide away on velvet backroom couches, people-watch alfresco at the sidewalk tables, or embrace the expansive chapel-chic vibe in the main bar area, where 17th-century frescoes hint at its earlier use as the Bentivoglio family's private chapel.

ENTERTAINMENT

Bologna is one of Italy's most culturally vibrant cities. The large student population ensures a cosmopolitan and energetic nightlife and a thriving theatre scene. A *Guest of Bologna*, available free from tourist offices and some hotels, is a useful quarterly guide to what's on, as is the monthly *2night Magazine* (www.2night.it, in Italian). The most comprehensive listings guide is *Bologna Spettacolo* (€1.50, in Italian), available at newsstands.

Nightclubs

Whatever your scene, you'll find somewhere to suit your style. The clubs listed here offer everything from '70s pop to underground rock, house, funk and disco. Admission typically costs around €15 for a weekend night.

Corto Maltese (☎ 051 22 97 46; Via Borgo San Pietro 9/2a; ☎ 9pm-3am) A popular student joint with commercial sounds and nightly happy hour (9pm to 10.30pm).

Kinki (☎ 051 26 60 28; www.kinkidisco.com; Via Zamboni 1a; ☎ 11pm-late Sep-May) Still innovating and reinventing itself after 50 years, Kinki remains at the forefront of Bologna's club scene, with art exhibitions, video projections, house music and the Sunday gay night.

(Continued on page 445)

(Continued from page 436)

Cassero (☎ 051 649 44 16; www.cassero.it; Via Don Minzoni 18; ☎ 9.30pm-5am Sat, to 2am Wed-Fri, to midnight Sun-Tue) Saturday and Wednesday are the big nights at this legendary gay and lesbian (but not exclusively) club, home of Italy's Arcigay organisation.

Estragon (☎ 051 32 34 90; www.estrason.it, in Italian; Via Stalingrado 83; ☎ 10pm-late Fri & Sat) Large, edge-of-town club (bus 25 from main train station). Hosts concerts and weekend DJ nights.

Villa Serena (☎ 051 615 44 47; www.vserena.it, in Italian; Via della Barca 1; ☎ 9.30pm-3am Fri & Sat) Three floors of film screenings and music, live and canned, plus a garden for outdoor chilling.

Jazz fiends should make for Cantina Bentivoglio (see p436) or **Chez Baker Jazz Club** (☎ 051 22 37 95; www.chez-baker.it, in Italian; Via Polese 7a), which features frequent live music and hosts its own summertime Porto del Jazz festival.

Cinemas

Cinema Chaplin (☎ 051 58 52 53; www.cinemachaplin.it; admission €5) Screens films in English every Monday from September through May.

Cinema Lumière (☎ 051 219 53 11; www.cinetecadi.bologna.it; Via Gardino 65b; admission €7) Northwest of the city centre; shows art-house films in their original version.

Theatre & Opera

Bologna has a year-round cultural calendar. **Teatro Comunale** (☎ 051 52 99 58; www.tcbo.it; Largo Respighi 1), where Wagner's works were heard for the first time in Italy, is Bologna's main opera and classical music venue.

SHOPPING

Bologna's main shopping streets are Via Ugo Bassi, Via Rizzoli, Via Marconi, Via dell'Indipendenza, Via Massimo d'Azeglio, Via Farini and Via San Felice. You can safely leave your wallet behind on Thursday afternoons, when most shops are shut.

For foodie buys head to the Quadrilatero, a haven of delis and speciality food shops, including **Tamburini** (☎ 051 23 47 26; Via Caprarie 1; ☎ 8.30am-7pm), **Paolo Atti** (☎ 051 23 33 49; Via Drapperie 6; ☎ 7.30am-1.30pm & 4-7.15pm Mon-Sat), **La Baita** (☎ 051 22 39 40; Via Pescheria Vecchie 3; ☎ 8am-8pm, closed Sun Jun-Aug) and **Gilberto** (☎ 051 22 39 25; Via Drapperie 5; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat).

Elsewhere, **Le Sfogline** (☎ 051 22 05 58; Via Belvedere 7b) sells fine handmade pasta, **I Campetti**

(☎ 051 26 60 43; Via Belvedere 2) specialises in Tuscan wine and olive oil, and **Enoteca Italiana** (☎ 051 23 59 89; Via Marsala 2b) stocks a comprehensive selection of regional wine.

On Friday and Saturday there's a flea and antique market at the Parco della Montagnola that seeps into Piazza VIII Agosto.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Bologna's **Guglielmo Marconi airport** (BLQ; ☎ 051 647 96 15; www.bologna-airport.it) is 8km northwest of the city. Nonstop flights from London are available on British Airways (three daily from Gatwick) and Ryanair (one daily from Stansted).

Bus

Intercity buses leave from the **main bus station** (☎ 051 24 54 00; www.autostazionebo.it) off Piazza XX Settembre, just southeast of the train station. However, for nearly all destinations, the train's a better option.

Car & Motorcycle

Bologna is linked to Milan, Florence and Rome by the A1 Autostrada del Sole. The A13 heads directly to Ferrara, Padua and Venice, and the A14 to Rimini and Ravenna. Bologna is also on the SS9 (Via Emilia), which connects Milan to the Adriatic coast. The SS64 goes to Ferrara.

Major car-hire companies are represented at Guglielmo Marconi airport and outside the train station. City offices include **Budget** (☎ 051 24 71 01; Via G Amendola 12f) and **Hertz** (☎ 051 25 48 30; Via G Amendola 16a).

Train

Thanks to a high-velocity Eurostar service, Bologna is only an hour from Florence by train, making it an appealing point of entry for overseas visitors planning a tour of Tuscany.

Bologna is a major transport junction for northern Italy and has half-hourly services to Florence (regional train €5.40, 1½ hours; Eurostar €18.10, one hour), Rome (regional €23.20, five hours; Eurostar €50.40, three hours) and Milan (regional €13.50, 2¼ hours; Eurostar €37.10, one hour).

Frequent trains from Bologna serve cities throughout Emilia-Romagna; for details, see Getting There & Away listings under individual cities in this chapter.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

Aerobus shuttles (☎ 051 29 02 90; www.atc.bo.it) depart from the main train station for Guglielmo Marconi airport every 15 to 30 minutes between 5.30am and 11.10pm. The 20-minute journey costs €5 (tickets can be bought on board).

Car & Motorcycle

Much of the city centre is off-limits to vehicles. If you're staying downtown, your hotel can provide a ticket (€7 per day) that entitles you to enter the ZTL (Zona a Traffico Limitato), park in designated spaces and make unlimited trips on city buses for 24 hours.

You can hire a bike at **Autorimessa Pincio** (☎ 051 24 90 81; Via dell'Indipendenza 71z; per 12/24hr €13/18; ☎ 7am-midnight Mon-Sat), located near the bus station.

Public Transport

Bologna has an efficient bus system, run by **ATC** (☎ 051 29 02 90; www.atc.bo.it). It has information booths at the main train station, the bus station and on Via Marconi. Buses 25, 30 and A are among several that connect the train station with the city centre.

Taxi

To book a taxi, phone **Cotabo** (☎ 051 37 27 27) or **CAT RadioTaxi** (☎ 051 53 41 41).

WEST OF BOLOGNA

MODENA

pop 179,900

Get past the unsightly factories that ring this affluent city and you'll find a lively medieval centre, thick with market stalls, vibrant piazzas and impressive *palazzi*. The highlight, and reason enough for a visit, is the stunning Unesco World Heritage-listed cathedral.

Some 40km northwest of Bologna, Modena was one of a series of Roman garrison towns established along the Via Emilia in the 2nd century BC. It became a free city in the 12th century and then passed to the Este family late in the following century. Prosperity came when it was chosen to be the capital of a much-reduced Este duchy in 1598, after the family lost Ferrara to the Papal States. Apart from a brief Napoleonic

interlude, the Este family ran the town until Italian unification in the 19th century.

Orientation

Via Emilia is Modena's main drag. The street slices through the historic town centre from west to east. Flanking it to the south and north are Piazza Grande and Piazza Mazzini, the town's principal squares.

Information

ModenaTur (☎ 059 22 00 22; www.modenatur.it, in Italian; Via Scudari 8; ☎ 2.30-6.30pm Mon, 9am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sat) A private agency that organises tours to balsamic-vinegar producers and *parmigiano reggiano* dairies.

Post office (Via Emilia 86)

Tourist office (☎ 059 203 26 60; <http://turismo.comune.modena.it>; Piazza Grande 14; ☎ 3-6pm Mon, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) Provides city maps and the useful *Welcome to Modena* brochure.

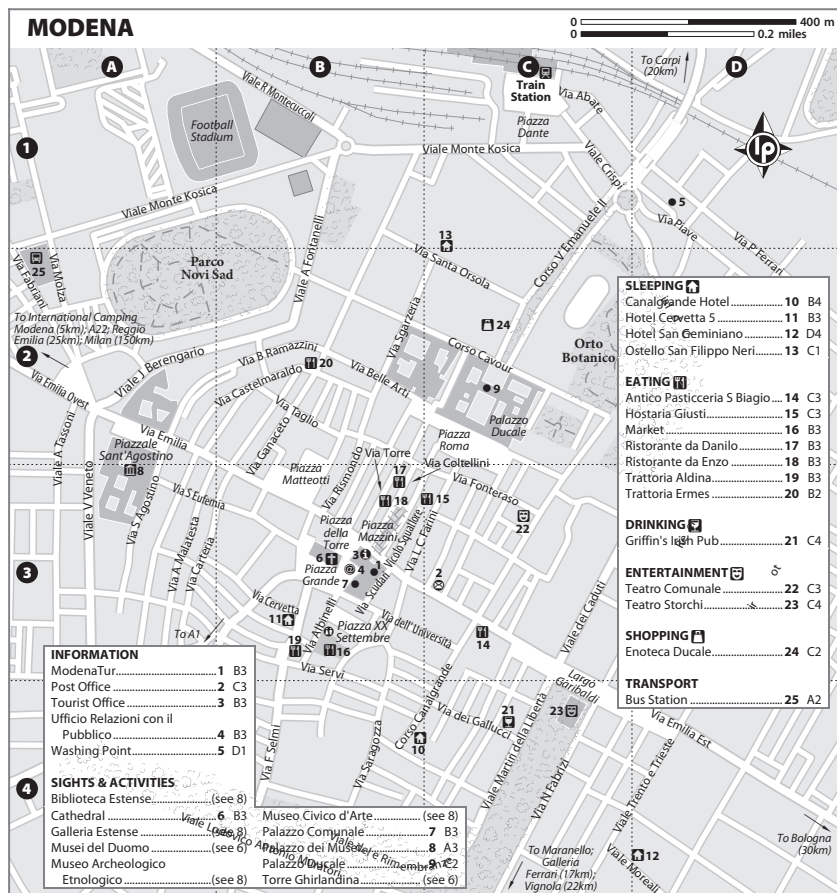
Ufficio Relazioni con il Pubblico (☎ 059 2 03 12; Piazza Grande 17; per hr €2.50; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 9am-1pm Wed & Fri) Municipal internet service with initial €2 registration fee, plus hourly rate thereafter.

WashingPoint (Via Piave 31; 7kg wash/dry €3.50/3; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Sat)

Sights

CATHEDRAL

One of the finest Romanesque churches in Italy, Modena's Unesco World Heritage-listed **cathedral** (☎ 059 21 60 78; Corso Duomo; ☎ 7am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm) is a thrilling example of 12th-century architecture. Dedicated to the city's patron saint, St Geminianus, it was consecrated in 1184, 85 years after construction had begun. The facade is dominated by a huge Gothic rose window, actually a 13th-century addition, under which stands the main portal; to the sides, a series of vivid bas-reliefs depict scenes from Genesis. These are the work of the 12th-century sculptor Wiligelmo, who actually autographed his work (see the panel to the left of the main door), as did the building's architect, Lanfranco (signing off in the main apse). Among Wiligelmo's many vigorous carvings, both sacred and singular, are typical medieval themes depicting the months and agricultural scenes. Inside, highlights include an elaborate rood screen decorated by Anselmo da Campione and, in the crypt, Guido Mazzoni's *Madonna della pappa*, a group of five painted terracotta figures.



Opposite the entrance to the cathedral, the **Musei del Duomo** (☎ 059 439 69 69; Via Lanfranco 6; adult/child €3/2, audioguide €1; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun) holds yet more of Wiligelmo's captivating stonework.

Rising above the cathedral, the early-13th-century **Torre Ghirlandina** (closed indefinitely for renovation at the time of research) rises to 87m, culminating in a slender Gothic spire. Facing it is the elegant facade of the **Palazzo Comunale**.

PALAZZO DEI MUSEI

Modena's main museums and galleries are housed in the **Palazzo dei Musei** (Piazzale Sant'Agostino 337) on the western fringes of the historic centre.

The most interesting, the **Galleria Estense** (☎ 059 439 57 11; admission €4; 🕒 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) features the Este family's collection of northern Italian paintings from late medieval times to the 18th century. There are also some fine Flemish works and a canvas or two by Velázquez, Correggio and El Greco. Downstairs, the **Biblioteca Estense** (☎ 059 22 22 48; admission free; 🕒 9am-1pm Mon-Sat) holds one of Italy's most valuable collections of books, letters and manuscripts, including the celebrated *Bibbia di Borso d'Este*, a masterpiece of medieval illustration.

A combined ticket (€4) gives entry to the **Museo Archeologico Etnologico** (☎ 059 203 31 00; 🕒 9am-noon Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) and the **Museo Civico d'Arte** (☎ 059 203 31 00; 🕒 9am-noon

Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun). The former has some well-displayed local finds from Palaeolithic to medieval eras, as well as exhibits from Africa, Asia, Peru and New Guinea. Most interesting among the Museo Civico d'Arte's eclectic collection are the sections devoted to traditional paper-making, textiles and musical instruments.

PALAZZO DUCALE

Dominating Piazza Roma, this heavy baroque edifice is home to one of Italy's top military academies. It was started in 1634 and was the Este family residence for two centuries. Admission is only by **guided tour** (tour €6; (V) tours Sun). Contact ModenaTur (p446) to book.

Festivals & Events

Between late March and early May, vintage cars and snazzy Ferraris take to Modena's historic streets in the annual car fest, **Modena Terra di Motori** (www.modenaterradimotori.com, in Italian).

In late June and early July, the **Serate Estensi** (www.comune.modena.it/serateestensi, in Italian) festival is a celebration of all things medieval, involving banquets, jousts and plenty of dressing up.

Sleeping

International Camping Modena (☎ 059 33 22 52; www.internationalcamping.org; Via Cave di Ramo 111; camp sites per adult/child/tent €7.50/6/12; (P)) A well-endowed camping ground, 5km west of town in Bruciata. On-site facilities include a swimming pool, bar and minimarket. Take bus 9 from Modena's train station.

Ostello San Filippo Neri (☎ 059 23 45 98; modena.aighostels.com; Via Santa Orsola 48-52; dm/s/d €16/20/35; (P)) Modena's businesslike HI hostel has 80 beds in single-sex dorms and family units. Pluses include disabled access, capacious lockers, uncrowded rooms (maximum three beds per dorm) and a bike-storage area. Drawbacks are the 10am to 2pm lockout and the lack of breakfast (though you can bring takeaway food into the hostel's dining area).

Hotel San Geminiano (☎ 059 21 03 03; www.hotel.sangeminiano.it; Viale Moreali 41; s/d/tr/q €48/80/100/125, d/tr without bathroom €60/80; (P) (P)) This family-run hotel, 1km from the historic centre, has unspectacular but comfortable and quiet rooms, and the free parking is much appreciated. The popular restaurant next door serves pizza from €4.50.

Hotel Cervetta 5 (☎ 059 23 84 47; www.hotel.cervetta5.com; Via Cervetta 5; s/d/tr €80/110/145; (P) (P))

Within a stone's throw of Piazza Grande, this welcoming boutique hotel boasts a cool, contemporary look, with modern amenities including flat-screen TVs. Breakfast features fresh fruit in season, and garage parking is available for €12.

Canalgrande Hotel (☎ 059 21 71 60; www.canalgrande.hotel.it; Corso Canalgrande 6; s €114-132, d €154-180, jr ste €190-220; (P) (P) (P)) A venerable Modenese institution, the Canalgrande exudes old-school elegance with its acres of marble, gilt-framed paintings, sparkling chandeliers and a spacious terrace overlooking the garden out back. Parking costs €12.

Eating & Drinking

Like Bologna and Parma, Modena is an important gastronomic town. Its most famous product is *aceto balsamico*, considered the best in Italy by gourmets, but the centre also produces excellent *prosciutto crudo* and *zampone* (stuffed pig's trotter). Another speciality is Lambrusco, a lively, sparkling red, to be drunk chilled and with everything.

Trattoria Aldina (☎ 059 23 61 06; Via Albinelli 40; meals €17; (V) lunch Mon-Sat) Where do locals head for lunch after a morning shopping at the produce market? Straight across the street and upstairs to this sweet, affordable trattoria, which serves the kind of no-nonsense homemade food you'd expect from a mid-1950s Italian mamma. There's no menu; just ask what they're serving today and take your pick.

Trattoria Ermete (☎ 059 23 80 65; Via Ganaceto 89; meals €20; (V) lunch Mon-Sat) Here's yet another fabulous, affordable little lunch spot, tucked into a single wood-panelled room at the northern edge of downtown Modena. An older couple runs the place – she cooks, he juggles plates and orders while keeping up a nonstop stream of banter with the customers. The menu changes daily depending on what's fresh at the market.

Ristorante da Danilo (☎ 059 22 54 98; Via Coltellini 29-31; meals €25-30; (V) Mon-Sat) Traditional food served in a warm, old-fashioned dining room is what you pay for at Danilo's. Tuck into an antipasto of salami, *pecorino* cheese and fig marmalade before moving on to the house speciality – *bollito misto* (mixed boiled meat). Vegetarians can opt for risotto *al radicchio trevigiano* (with red chicory) or *ai funghi* (with mushrooms).

Ristorante da Enzo (☎ 059 22 51 77; Via Coltellini 17; meals €25-30; (V) closed Sun dinner & Mon) This highly

regarded restaurant is known for its classic, regional cooking, which translates to dishes such as *scaloppina all'aceto balsamico* (cutlets in balsamic vinegar) and *tortelli di zucca al burro e salvia* (pumpkin tortelli with butter and sage).

Hostaria Giusti (☎ 059 22 25 33; Vicolo Squallore 46; meals €50-60; ☎ 12.30-2pm Tue-Sat) Accessed via its attached deli, which dates to the 1600s, this unassuming-looking *hostaria* at the far end of a back alley is one of Modena's most beloved eateries. It hosts only private parties at dinnertime, but at lunch you can sit on the back patio and savour regional specialties like *cotechino fritto con zabaglione al lambrusco* (fried Modena sausage with wine-flavoured egg custard).

Antica Pasticceria S Biagio (☎ 059 21 72 84; Via Emilia 77; ☎ closed Sun afternoon) For the sweet of tooth, with enough delectable cakes to satisfy the child in anyone.

Modena's fresh-produce **market** (☎ 6.30am-2.30pm Mon-Sat year-round, 4.30-7pm Sat Oct-May) has its main entrance on Via Albinelli.

A youthful bar-hopping crowd congregates along Via dei Gallucci at places like **Griffin's Irish Pub** (☎ 059 22 36 06; Largo Hannover 65-67; ☎ 6pm-late). There's another cluster of bars along Via Emilia, near the cathedral.

Entertainment

During July and August, outdoor concerts and ballet are staged on Piazza Grande. Modena's main opera venue is **Teatro Comunale** (☎ 059 203 30 10; www.teatrocomunalemodena.it; Corso Canalgrande 85), while **Teatro Storchi** (☎ 059 213 60 21; Largo Garibaldi 15) offers mainly drama.

Shopping

Load up on local wine, grappa and Modena's famous vinegar – aged anywhere from three to 100 years – at **Enoteca Ducale** (☎ 059 427 92 28; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 15; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun).

On the fourth weekend of every month, except for July and December, a giant antiques fair is held in Parco Novi Sad.

Getting There & Around

The bus station is on Via Molza, northwest of the centre. **ATCM** (☎ 800 111101; www.atcm.mo.it, in Italian) buses connect Modena with most towns in the region.

By car, take the A1 Autostrada del Sole if coming from Rome or Milan, or the A22 from Mantua and Verona.

The train station is north of the historic centre, fronting Piazza Dante. Destinations include Bologna (€3.10, 30 minutes, half-hourly), Parma (€4.30, 30 minutes, half-hourly) and Milan (regional/express train €10.55/20.40, two hours, hourly).

ATCM's bus 7 links the train station with the bus station and city centre.

For a taxi, call **Radio Taxi Modena** (☎ 059 37 42 42).

AROUND MODENA

Maranello

pop 16,600

Home to Ferrari, Maranello is a motoring mecca that attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims each year. Most head to the **Galleria Ferrari** (☎ 0536 94 32 04; www.galleria.ferrari.com; Via Ferrari 43; adult/child €13/9; ☎ 9.30am-7pm May-Sep, to 6pm Oct-Apr) to obsess over the world's largest

FERRARI MOTORS INTO HISTORY

Voted Europe's best workplace (2007) by the *Financial Times*, the near-mythical Maranello factory was established by Enzo Ferrari in 1943, 14 years after he had founded the company that bears his name. Four years later, in 1947, the 125S became the first Ferrari road car to roll off the production line.

More than 60 years on, Ferrari has become the world's ultimate status symbol, its prancing black horse logo (taken from an emblem used by Italian WWI ace Francesco Baracca) a modern motoring icon. Ferrari has also become the most successful racing team of all time – as of 2009 it had won 14 Formula One Constructors' Championships, 14 Drivers' Championships, nine 24-hour Le Mans races and eight Mille Miglia races.

On Sunday in April and May, you can catch the latest Ferrari models on Modena's Piazza Grande. More venerable versions get an extended outing during May's **Mille Miglia** (www.millemiglia.it), a vintage-car race that roars through the streets of Ferrara and Modena, then on to the chequered flag in Brescia. May also sees the **Modena Cento Ore**, a four-day event for historic cars that starts and finishes in Modena.

collection of Ferraris. Just down the road, the company factory is off-limits to the 99.9% of the world's population that doesn't own a Ferrari.

Maranello is 17km south of Modena. From Modena's bus station take bus 800 (€2.30, 30 minutes).

Carpi

pop 65,800

Once the centre of the Pio family territories, the attractive town of Carpi makes an easy and worthwhile detour from Modena. Information is available from the **tourist office** (☎ 059 64 92 55; www.turismo.carpidiem.it; Via Berengario 2; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun, 2.30-6pm Mon) on the edge of the vast **Piazza dei Martiri**. Measuring 270m by 60m, the piazza is Italy's third largest after Piazza San Pietro in Rome and Venice's Piazza San Marco.

Running down the eastern flank of the square, **Palazzo Pio** houses the **Museo Monumento al Deportato Politico e Razziale** (☎ 059 68 82 72; adult/child €3/2; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Fri-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar), which documents the experience of prisoners in the nearby **Fossoli Concentration Camp** (admission free; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Sun Nov-Mar). Ask at the entrance for translated versions (in English, French and German) of the profoundly moving quotes that cover the museum's walls, extracted from letters written home by prisoners.

REGGIO EMILIA

pop 162,300

With its series of attractive squares, grand public buildings and a leafy park, Reggio Emilia boasts one of the region's most aesthetically harmonious town centres. While there's not really a whole lot to do, the city makes a practical base for exploring the Apennines to the south.

Known also as Reggio nell'Emilia, the town started life in the 2nd century BC as a Roman colony along the Via Emilia. Much of Reggio was built by the Este family during the 400 years it controlled the town, beginning in 1406.

Information

Post office (Via Sessi 3)

Tourist office (☎ 0522 45 11 52; www.municipio.re.it/turismo; Via Farini 1a; ☎ 8.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun)

URP Comune Informa (☎ 0522 45 66 60; Via Farini 2; ☎ 8.30am-noon Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 9.30am-noon Wed) Free municipal internet service.

Sights

Reggio's pedestrianised *centro storico* (historic city centre) is an attractive place to wander, with the main sights centred on Piazza C Prampolini and adjacent Piazza San Prospero.

On Piazza Prampolini, Reggio's 13th-century **Duomo** (☎ 0522 43 37 83; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-7pm) was first built in the Romanesque style but was given a comprehensive makeover 300 years later. Nowadays, virtually all that remains of the original is the upper half of the facade and, inside, the crypt.

Marking the southern edge of the square, the 14th-century **Palazzo del Comune** is celebrated as the birthplace of the Italian flag. At a meeting in the **Sala del Tricolore** in 1797, Napoleon's short-lived Cispadane Republic was proclaimed and the tricolour flag was adopted for the first time.

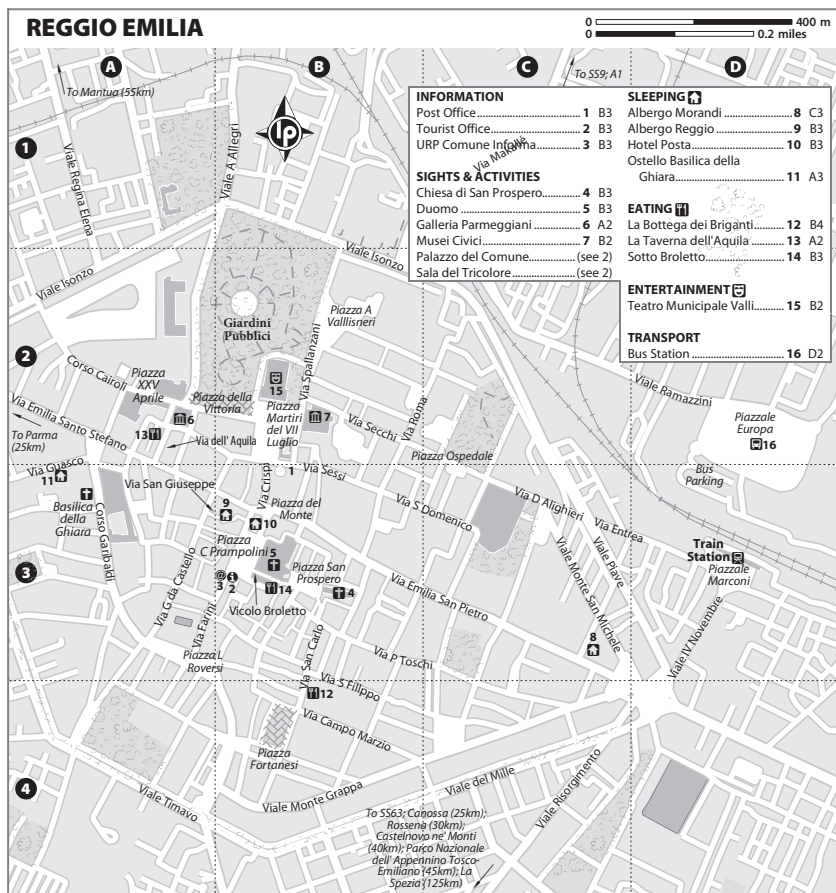
Over on Piazza San Prospero, the 15th-century **Chiesa di San Prospero** (☎ 0522 43 46 67; ☎ 8.30-11.30am) is guarded by a royal pair of red marble lions and their four cubs. A later addition, the striking octagonal bell tower was built in 1537.

To the north, the **Musei Civici** (City Museums; ☎ 0522 45 64 77; www.musei.re.it; admission free; ☎ 9am-noon Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, 9am-noon & 9pm-midnight Tue-Sat, 9pm-midnight Sun Jul & Aug) include **Palazzo San Francesco** (Via Spallanzani 1), with its eclectic collection of mainly 18th-century art and archaeological discoveries, and the **Galleria Parmeggiani** (Corso Cairoli 1), which boasts some worthwhile Italian, Flemish and Spanish paintings, as well as a heterogeneous collection of costumes, arms, jewellery and cutlery.

Sleeping

Ostello Basilica della Ghiara (☎ 0522 45 23 23; fax 0522 45 47 95; Via Guasco 6; dm/s/d €15/20/36) There's no shortage of space at Reggio's memorable HI hostel, housed in a former convent. The two-to-six-bed guestrooms line vast, echoing corridors, and in summer breakfast is served under the porticoes in the internal garden. There's disabled access, and wi-fi scheduled for 2010.

Albergo Morandi (☎ 0522 45 43 97; www.albergo-morandi.com; Via Emilia San Pietro 64; s €65-80, d €85-120;



(P) (P) (P) Halfway between the train station and historic centre, the Morandi features spruce rooms with big beds, gleaming bathrooms and satellite TV. There's free parking, and the service is unfailingly courteous.

Elegant inside and out, the grand four-star **Hotel Posta** (☎ 0522 43 29 44; www.hotelpostare.it; Piazza del Monte 2; s/d/ste €140/190/280; (P) (P) (P)) is housed in the 13th-century Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo, one-time residence of Reggio's governor. Rooms are individually decorated, with plenty of heavy floral fabrics, gilt-framed mirrors and antique furniture. Parking costs €12. Just around the corner, you'll find the hotel's less expensive, 16-room annexe, **Albergo Reggio** (☎ 0522 45 15 33; www.albergoreggio.it; Via San Giuseppe 7; s/d €75/105).

Eating

La Taverna dell'Aquila (☎ 0522 45 29 56; Via dell'Aquila 6a; meals €20-25; (P) Tue-Sat) With its colourful, funky decor, jazzy soundtrack and tasty, homemade food, this bright eatery is a bit different from your classic wood-and-wine-bottle trattoria. The fixed-price lunch menus (€6 to €12) are exceptionally good value.

Sotto Boretto (☎ 0522 45 22 76; Vicolo Boretto 1n; pizzas from €5, meals €20-30; (P) Fri-Wed) On the tiny alleyway between Piazza Prampolini and Piazza San Prospero, this boisterous pizzeria with sidewalk seating delights hungry patrons with its *pizza tirata*, a megalarge pizza that costs only €2 more than the regular-sized version.

La Bottega dei Briganti (☎ 0522 43 66 43; Via San Carlo 14b; meals €25-35; (P) dinner Mon-Sat) Duck

under the porticoes to this cosy *osteria* with its conspiratorial atmosphere and small leafy courtyard. The food is excellent, particularly the pasta and risottos.

Reggio's central squares host a **produce market** (☎ 7am-1pm Tue & Fri). Typical local snacks include *erbazzone* (herb pie with cheese or bacon) and *gnocco fritto* (fried salted dough). Parmesan is also produced locally.

Entertainment

Reggio's imposing 19th-century **Teatro Municipale Valli** (☎ 0522 45 88 11; www.iteatri.re.it, in Italian; Piazza Martiri VII Luglio) stages a full season of dance, opera and theatre.

Getting There & Around

Bus operator **ACT** (☎ 0522 44 22 00; www.actre.it) serves the city and region from its brand new bus station, just behind Reggio's train station. Destinations include Carpi (€3.30, one hour, 10 daily) and Castelnovo ne' Monti (€4, 1½ hours, seven to 14 daily).

Reggio is on the Via Emilia (SS9) and A1 autostrada. The SS63 is a tortuous but scenic route that takes you southwest across the Parma Apennines to La Spezia on the Ligurian coast.

The train station is east of the town centre. Frequent trains serve all stops on the Milan-Bologna line including Milan (regional/express €9.20/18.10, 1½ to 2½ hours, hourly), Parma (€2.40, 15 minutes, half-hourly), Modena (€2.40, 15 minutes, half-hourly) and Bologna (€4.80, 45 minutes, half-hourly).

For a taxi, call **Radiotaxi** (☎ 0522 45 25 45).

AROUND REGGIO EMILIA

Southwest of the city, the flat Emilian landscape gives way to the green hills of the Apennines and the Parco del Gigante, part of the **Parco Nazionale dell'Appennino Tosco-Emiliano** (www.appenninoreggiano.it). Among several signed walking trails, well served by *rifugi* (mountain huts), the most extensive is the Matilda Way, a four- to seven-day trek from Ciano, in the Enza valley near Canossa, to San Pellegrino in Alpe, just over the border in Tuscany.

About 40km from Reggio, along the scenic SS63, twee **Castelnovo ne' Monti** makes a convenient base for exploring the area, including the **Pietra di Bismantova** (1047m), a stark limestone outcrop visible for miles around that's popular with climbers and weekend walkers. Castelnovo's **tourist office** (☎ 0522 81 04 30;

www.reappennino.com, in Italian; Via Roma 15b; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat year-round, plus 3-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct, plus 3-6pm Mon-Sat & 9.30am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug) has bags of free information and sells maps of the region for hikers, cyclists and equestrians. It also issues permits for picking wild mushrooms between May and October.

A good place to hole up for the night is **Albergo Bismantova** (☎ 0522 81 22 18; www.albergo bismantova.com; Via Roma 73; s/d €47/75), which has an attached restaurant, **Le Mormoraie** (meals around €25).

At least seven daily ACT buses link Castelnovo with Reggio Emilia (€4, 1¼ hours).

Back towards Reggio, a few kilometres east of the main road, a pair of medieval castles merit a detour, as much for their views as for their architectural interest. The **castle of Canossa** (☎ 0522 87 71 04; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 9am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), built in 940 and then rebuilt in the 13th century, is where Matilda, countess of Canossa, reconciled the excommunicated Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV with Pope Gregory VII in 1077. Largely ruined, it has a small museum.

From Canossa you can see across to the **castle of Rossena** (☎ 0522 24 20 09; www.castel lorossena.it; admission by guided tour adult/child/family €4.50/3.50/10; ☎ 11am-7pm Sun Apr-Oct, 2.30-5.30pm Sun Nov-Mar), which is better preserved but keeps shorter hours. By road 4km away, it's much nearer as the crow flies.

PARMA pop 178,700

Rich on the back of its food industry, Parma is the perfect picture of a well-off provincial city. Well-dressed locals cycle through pretty piazzas and drink in elegant cafes, while beautifully preserved monuments adorn picturesque cobbled lanes. For visitors, the big draws are Parma's full calendar of cultural events and the sumptuous displays that beckon from local deli windows.

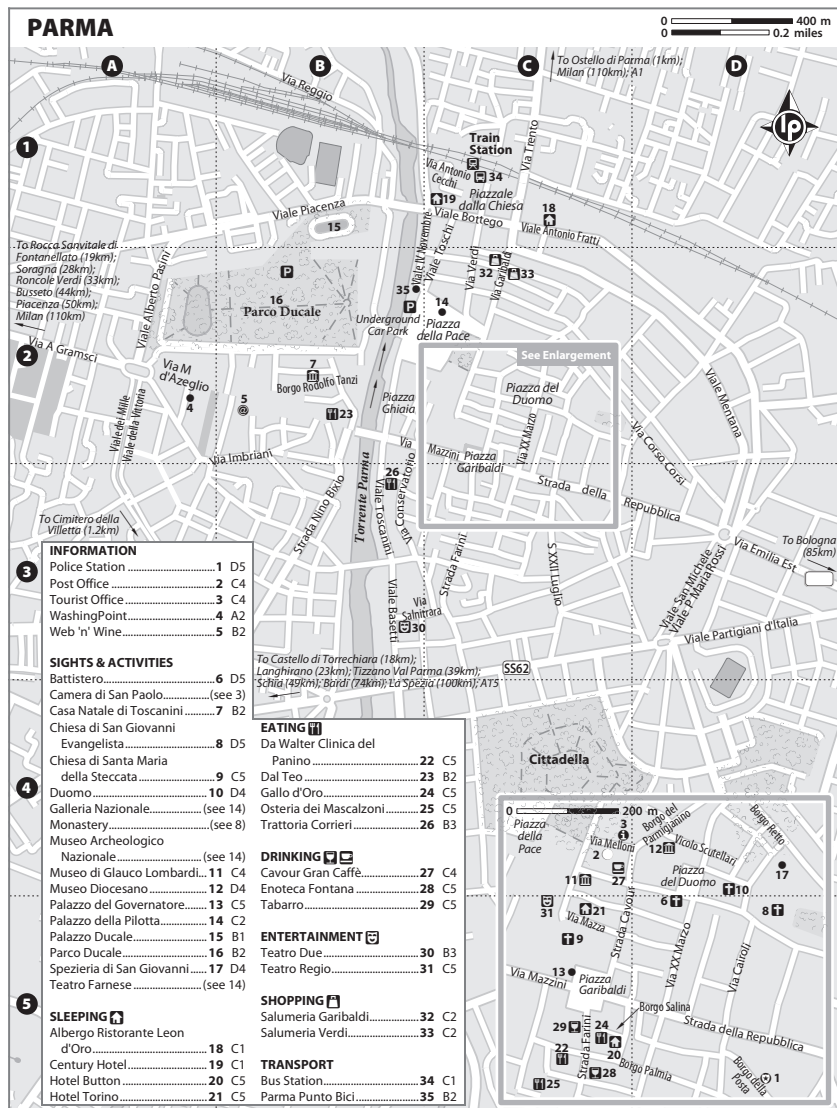
History

Originally Etruscan, Parma achieved importance as a Roman colony astride what would become the Via Emilia. As Roman authority dwindled, the town passed onto the Goths, then the Lombards and then the Franks.

In the 11th century Parma threw in its lot with the Holy Roman Empire against the

The Farnese family ruled Parma in the pope's name from 1545 to 1731, when the Bourbons took control, ushering in a period of peace and frenetic cultural activity.

Following Napoleon's incursions into northern Italy at the beginning of the 19th century, Parma entered a period of instability that ended only with Italian unification. Some 60 years later, the barricades went up as Parma became the only Emilian city to oppose the infamous 1922 march on Rome by Mussolini's Blackshirts.



Orientation

From the train station, Via Verdi leads south to the green turf of Piazza della Pace. Continue south along Via Garibaldi to connect with Via Mazzini and Piazza Garibaldi, Parma's main square. Most sights are within easy walking distance of here.

Information

Police station (☎ 0521 21 94; Borgo della Posta 16a)

Post office (Via Melloni)

Tourist office (☎ 0521 21 88 89; <http://turismo.comune.parma.it/turismo>; Via Melloni 1a; ☎ 9am-1pm &

3-7pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun)

WashingPoint (Via M d'Azeglio 108; 7kg wash/dry €4/5; ☎ 8am-10pm)

Web 'n' Wine (☎ 0521 03 08 93; Via M d'Azeglio 72d; per hr €4; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-8pm Sat) Enjoy fine wine and good tunes as you surf the net.

Sights

PIAZZA DEL DUOMO & AROUND

From the outside, Parma's **Duomo** (☎ 0521 23 58 86; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm), consecrated in 1106, is classic Lombard-Romanesque. Inside, the gilded pulpit and ornate lamp-holders all scream baroque bombast. But there are some genuine treasures here: up in the dome, Antonio Correggio's *Assunzione della Vergine* (Assumption of the Virgin) is a kaleidoscopic swirl of cherubims and whirling angels, while down in the southern transept, Benedetto Antelami's *Deposizione* (Descent from the Cross; 1178) relief is considered a masterpiece of its type.

Antelami was also responsible for the octagonal pink-marble **battistero** (☎ 0521 23 58 86; admission €5; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.45pm) on the south side of the piazza. Combining Romanesque and Gothic styles, it features some of Antelami's best work, including a celebrated set of figures representing the months, seasons and signs of the zodiac. Work began on the baptistry in 1196 but wasn't completed until 1307 thanks to several interruptions, most notably when the supply of pink Verona marble ran out.

On the other side of the square, in the cellars of the former bishop's palace, the **Museo Diocesano** (☎ 0521 20 86 99; Vicolo del Vescovado 3a; admission €4; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm) displays yet more statuary. Highlights include a finely sculpted Solomon and Sheba and a 5th-century early Christian mosaic, which was discovered under Piazza del Duomo.

A combined ticket (€6) allows entry into the baptistry and Museo Diocesano.

East of Piazza del Duomo, the 16th-century **Chiesa di San Giovanni Evangelista** (☎ 0521 23 53 11; Piazzale San Giovanni; ☎ 8-11.45am & 3-7.45pm) is noted for its magnificent frescoed dome, the work of Correggio, and a series of frescoes by Francesco Parmigianino. The adjoining **monastery** (☎ 8.30am-noon & 3-6pm) is known as much for the oils and unguents that its monks produce as for its Renaissance cloisters. Just around the corner, the **Spezieria di San Giovanni** (☎ 0521 50 85 32; Borgo Pipa 1; adult/child €2/free; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun) is the monastery's ancient pharmacy, which still has its original interior.

PIAZZA DELLA PACE & AROUND

Looming over Piazza della Pace's manicured lawns and modern fountains, the monumental **Palazzo della Pilotta** is hard to miss. Supposedly named after the Spanish ball game of *pelota* that was once played within its walls, it was originally built for the Farnese family between 1583 and 1622. Heavily bombed in WWII, it has since been largely rebuilt and today houses several museums.

The most important of these, the **Galleria Nazionale** (☎ 0521 23 33 09; adult/child incl Teatro Farnese €6/free; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-Sun), displays Parma's main art collection. Alongside works by local artists Correggio and Parmigianino, you'll find paintings by Fra Angelico, Canaletto and El Greco. Before you get to the gallery, though, you'll pass through the **Teatro Farnese**, a copy of Andrea Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza. Constructed entirely out of wood, it was almost completely rebuilt after being bombed in WWII.

For a change of period, the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0521 23 37 18; admission €2; ☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Sun) exhibits Roman artefacts discovered around Parma and Etruscan finds from the Po valley.

Over the road from the piazza is the **Museo di Glauco Lombardi** (☎ 0521 23 37 27; Via Garibaldi 15; adult/child €4/free; ☎ 9.30am-3.30pm Tue-Sat, 9am-6.30pm Sun) and its miscellaneous collection of clothes, paintings, furniture and historical knick-knacks. Many of the exhibits once belonged to Marie-Louise of Austria, who ruled Parma following her husband Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.

Nearby, the **Camera di San Paolo** (☎ 0521 53 32 21; Via Melloni 3; adult/child €2/free; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm Tue-

Sun) in the convent of the same name, displays more frescoes by the prolific Correggio.

PIAZZA GARIBALDI

On the site of the ancient Roman forum, Piazza Garibaldi is a lively hub bisected by Parma's main east-west artery, Via Mazzini, and its continuation, Strada della Repubblica. On the square's north side, the facade of the 17th-century **Palazzo del Governatore**, these days municipal offices, sports a giant sundial, added in 1829. Behind the palace in the **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Steccata** (☎ 0521 23 49 37; Piazza Steccata 9; ☎ 9am-noon & 3-6pm), you'll find some of Parmigianino's most extraordinary work, notably the stunning, if rather faded, frescoes on the arches above the altar. Many members of the ruling Farnese and Bourbon families lie buried here.

WEST BANK

Stretching along the west bank of the Parma, the formal gardens of the **Parco Ducale** (☎ 6am-midnight Apr-Oct, 7am-8pm Nov-Mar) were laid out in 1560 around the Farnese family's **Palazzo Ducale**, which now serves as headquarters of the provincial *carabinieri* (military police).

At the park's southeastern corner is the **Casa Natale di Toscanini** (☎ 0521 28 54 99; www.museo.toscanini.it, in Italian; Borgo R Tanzi 13; admission €2; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sat, 2-6pm Sun), birthplace of Italy's greatest modern conductor, Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957). If in a musical frame of mind, you could also visit the tomb of Niccolò Paganini, 2km south in the Cimitero della Villetta.

Sleeping

Ostello di Parma (☎ 0521 191 75 47; www.ostelloparma.it; Via San Leonardo 86; dm/d €18.50/41; ☎) Near the autostrada on Parma's northern outskirts, this modern hostel has free wi-fi, inexpensive laundry facilities and a dining area (but no guest kitchen). Breakfast costs €2.50 extra. There's good bike path access; otherwise take bus 13 or 2N (€1, five minutes) from the train station and get off at the Centro Torri stop.

Albergo Ristorante Leon d'Oro (☎ 0521 77 31 82; www.leondoroparma.com; Viale Fratti 4a; s/d €55/70, without bathroom €37/60) Flying the flag for budget accommodation in this otherwise pricey city, the Leon d'Oro offers no-nonsense, fan-cooled rooms with high ceilings and old-fashioned furniture. The attached restaurant is a plus, as is the location near the train station, although front rooms can get noisy.

Hotel Button (☎ 0521 20 80 39; www.hotelbutton.it; Borgo Salina 7; s €70-84, d €90-118; ☎ ☎ ☎) The spare, hospital-green decor leaves a lot to be desired, but it's hard to argue with Hotel Button's spacious rooms and bathrooms, free wi-fi and convenient location in the heart of historic Parma. Parking costs €10.

Century Hotel (☎ 0521 03 98 00; www.centuryhotel.it; Piazza dalla Chiesa 5a; s/d/ste €80/120/200; ☎ ☎ ☎) Directly adjacent to the train station, this slickly remodelled hotel (formerly Albergo Moderno) sports four-star fixtures and amenities at three-star prices (all that's missing is the hotel restaurant). Parking costs €6 and 24-hour wireless access costs €5.

Hotel Torino (☎ 0521 28 10 46; www.hotel-torino.it; Via Mazza 7; s/d €90/130; ☎ ☎) Despite its popularity with performers from the nearby Teatro Regio, there's nothing particularly theatrical about the Torino's rooms; still, it's a reliable, centrally located midrange choice that periodically offers online discounts. Parking costs €12.

Eating

Parma specialities, which you'll find served just about everywhere, include the world-famous *prosciutto di Parma* (Parma ham) and *parmigiano reggiano* (Parmesan).

Da Walter Clinica del Panino (☎ 0521 20 63 09; Borgo Palma 2; panini from €3; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Wed, to 3pm Thu, to midnight Fri & Sat) Fast food, Parma style: neon lights, deft-handed cooks and more than 100 varieties of snacks and sandwiches combined with great prices and supersonic service.

Dal Teo (☎ 0521 23 54 00; Piazzale Corridoni 15e; pizza €5-9, meals €15-25; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) Bored with his day job, the enterprising Teo convinced his mum to help him open a pizzeria, using the same recipe he adored as a child. Mum is up at 4am making dough, and Teo takes care of the rest. Just across the bridge from Parma's historic centre, it's a popular hangout for evening beers and conversation, as well as for its incomparably delicious pizza crust – thick, light and crunchy all at once.

Gallo d'Oro (☎ 0521 20 88 46; Borgo Salina 3; meals €25; ☎ closed dinner Sun) Vintage magazine covers and artfully placed wine bottles lend the Gallo d'Oro a very agreeable bistro feel. But it's not all image: this is one of Parma's best trattorias serving consistently good Emilian cuisine. For proof, dig into a bowl of delicious *tortelli di erbetta* (pasta stuffed with ricotta and herbs). Booking is recommended.

Our pick **Trattoria Corrieri** (☎ 0521 23 44 26; Via Conservatorio 1; meals €25; ☎ lunch & dinner) Eat on the patio under a leafy trellis, or in the labyrinth of rustically decorated interior rooms at this convivial trattoria, under the same ownership as Gallo d'Oro. Everything's top quality – from the *tris di tortelli* (pasta pockets with three different stuffings) to the *torta di cioccolato e pere* (pear-chocolate cake) for dessert.

Osteria dei Mascalzoni (☎ 0521 28 18 09; Vicolo delle Cinque Piaghe 1; meals €25-35; ☎ closed Sat lunch & Sun) Cosy inside and out, this restaurant features a beamed dining room and outdoor tables that take over the adjacent alleyway on warm summer evenings. The menu emphasises grilled meat, plus an excellent selection of Parma's famous cheeses and pork products, including *culatello*, *fiocchetto* and of course *prosciutto*.

Drinking

The city's animated drinking scene is centred on Strada Farini, home to numerous wine bars, including **Tabarro** (☎ 0521 20 02 23; Strada Farini 5b; ☎ Tue-Sun), where aficionados sip fine vintages at tables made from barrels, and **Enoteca Fontana** (☎ 0521 28 60 37; Strada Farini 24a; glasses of wine from €1.20, sandwiches from €2.80; ☎ 5-10pm Tue-Sat), popular with a younger, trendier crowd.

On the other side of Piazza Garibaldi, the **Cavour Gran Caffè** (☎ 0521 20 62 23; Strada Cavour 30b; ☎ 7am-8pm) makes a pleasant drinks stop, whether on the terrace or inside beneath the colourful frescoes.

Entertainment

Parma's opera, concert and theatre season runs from October through April. **Teatro Regio** (☎ 0521 03 93 99; www.teatroregioparma.org, in Italian; Via Garibaldi 16a) offers a particularly rich program of music and opera, even by exacting Italian standards, while the **Teatro Due** (☎ 0521 23 02 42; www.teatrodue.org, in Italian; Via Salnitara 10) presents the city's top drama.

In summer, the city sponsors several outdoor music programs.

Shopping

Stock up on edible goodies at **Salumeria Garibaldi** (☎ 0521 23 56 06; Via Garibaldi 42; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) and **Salumeria Verdi** (☎ 0521 20 81 00; Via Garibaldi 69a; ☎ 8am-1.15pm & 4-7.45pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, 8am-1.15pm Thu), bountiful delicatessens with dangling sausages, shelves of Lambrusco wines, slabs of Parma ham and wheel upon wheel of *parmigiano reggiano*.

Getting There & Away

From Piazzale della Chiesa in front of Parma's train station, **TEP** (☎ 800 977966; www.tep.pr.it, in Italian) operates buses throughout the region, including six daily (one on Sunday) to Busseto (€3.40, one hour) via Soragna (€2.85, 45 minutes).

Parma is on the A1 connecting Bologna and Milan and just east of the A15, which runs to La Spezia. Via Emilia (SS9) passes right through town.

There are frequent trains to Milan (regional/express train €8/16.20, 1¼ to 1½ hours, hourly), Bologna (€5.80, one hour, half-hourly), Modena (€4.30, 30 minutes, half-hourly) and Piacenza (€4.30, 40 minutes, half-hourly).

Getting Around

Traffic is banned from the historic centre, so leave your car at the underground car park on Viale Toschi or park it in one of the pay-and-display spaces near the train station.

Bikes are available for hire at **Parma Punto Bici** (☎ 0521 28 19 79; www.parmapuntobici.pr.it, in Italian; Viale Toschi 2a; per hr/day bicycles €0.70/10, electric bikes €0.90/20; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm & 2.30-7.30pm Sun).

For a taxi, call ☎ 0521 25 25 62.

AROUND PARMA

Verdi Country

A pleasant day tour northwest of Parma takes in a couple of the province's more than 20 castles, plus four buildings closely associated with Verdi, Parma's most famous son.

Sitting in a stagnant moat, 19km northwest of Parma in the town of Fontanellato, the formidable **Rocca Sanvitale** (☎ 0521 82 90 55; adult/child €7/2.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm daily Apr-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) is one of the region's best-preserved castles. Built over an older fort by the Sanvitale family in the 16th century, it contains some superb frescoes by Parmigianino, the best of which adorn the Sala di Diana e Atteone.

Nine kilometres further northwest is Soragna, site of the 14th-century **Rocca Meli Lupi** (☎ 0524 59 79 64; adult/child €7.50/4; ☎ 9-11am & 3-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 9-11am & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar). A fine example of early baroque, it retains much of the furniture that the Meli Lupi family added in the 16th century.

Admission to both castles is by guided tour only (in Italian).

Continuing towards **Busseto**, it would be easy to miss the humble cottage where Giuseppe Verdi was born in 1813. Now a small museum, the **Casa Natale di Giuseppe Verdi** (☎ 0524 9 74 50; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Nov, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6.30pm Sat & Sun Dec-Feb) is in the hamlet of Roncole Verdi, 5km beyond Soragna.

In Busseto, there are a couple of sights dedicated to the great composer. The most famous is the stately **Teatro Verdi** (☎ 0524 9 24 87; by guided tour only adult/child €4/3; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb) on the aptly named Piazza Verdi. Also facing the square is **Casa Barezzi** (☎ 0524 93 11 17; Via Roma 119; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun); home of the composer's patron and site of Verdi's first concert, it's now a lovingly curated museum filled with Verdi memorabilia.

Verdi's villa, **Sant'Agata** (☎ 0523 83 00 00; Via Verdi 22; admission €8; ☎ 9.30-11.45am & 2.30-6.45pm Tue-Sun Mar-Sep, 9.30-11.30am & 2.30-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct & Nov, 9.30-11.30am & 2.30-4.30pm Sat & Sun Jan), where he composed many of his major works, is in Sant'Agata di Villanova sull'Arda, 5km north-west of Busseto.

A combined ticket for the first three Verdi venues costs €8.50. For more information, contact Busseto's **tourist office** (☎ 0524 9 24 87; www.bussetolive.com, in Italian; Piazza Verdi 10; ☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-4.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb).

TEP buses from Parma run along this route six times daily from Monday to Saturday, and once on Sunday.

South into the Apennines

A relatively unexplored area, the mountainous countryside to the south of Parma is peppered with medieval castles, ancient churches and remote villages. It's ideal for unhurried exploring, although to get the best out of it you'll need a car.

The first port of call is **Langhirano**, 23km south of Parma along the SS665. While the town itself is unexceptional, it has an interesting museum tracing the history of local ham production (see the boxed text, p458).

Just north of Langhirano, the majestic **Castello di Torrechiara** (☎ 0521 35 52 55) was closed due to earthquake damage at the time of re-search, but scheduled to reopen in 2010. One of many castles built or rebuilt by Pier Maria Rossi in the 15th century, it commands great

views of the Apennines and has some exquisite frescoes in the Camera d'Oro (Golden Room). There's also a smart restaurant-cum-B&B here, the **Taverna del Castello** (☎ 0521 35 50 15; www.tavernadelcastello.it; Strada del Castello 25; s/d €55/90), offering meals for around €30.

South of Langhirano, follow the road down the west bank of the Parma, crossing the river at Pastorello and continuing to **Tizzano Val Parma**, a charming Apennine village that offers pleasant walking in summer and reasonable winter skiing at **Schia**, 10km further on.

Further south still, the heights around **Monchio delle Corti** offer views as far as La Spezia, in good weather. It's a possible base for exploring some of the 20 glacial lakes that dot the southern corner of the province.

The mountains here are criss-crossed with **walking** and **cycling** tracks and dotted with *ri-fugi*. An interesting trek is to follow a section of the signed Romea, or the Via Francigena, an ancient pilgrim route heading south to Rome via the villages of Collecchio, Fornovo, Bardone, Terenzo, Cassio and Berceto, each with a small Romanesque church. The tourist office in Parma (p454) can advise on maps and accommodation.

Castello Bardi (☎ 0525 7 13 68; adult/child €5.50/3; ☎ 10am-7pm Jul-Aug, 2-7pm Mon-Sat & 10am-7pm Sun Jun & Sep, 2-6pm Sat & 10am-6pm Sun Mar-May & Oct, 2-5pm Sat & 10am-5pm Sun Nov), about 65km southwest of Parma, also merits a mention. Soaring above the surrounding town, it dates from 898, although most of the present structure was built in the 15th century.

PIACENZA

pop 100,300

Just short of the regional border with Lombardy, Piacenza is worth a quick stop-over if you're in the area. Its picturesque centre boasts a beautiful Gothic town hall and a couple of august churches.

The train station is on the eastern edge of the old town, an easy 15-minute walk from the central square, Piazza dei Cavalli, where you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 0523 32 93 24; www.comune.piacenza.it/english; Piazza dei Cavalli 7; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat year-round, plus 9.30am-12.30pm Sun & Mon Apr-Sep).

Sights

Dominated by **Palazzo Gotico**, the impressive 13th-century town hall, **Piazza dei Cavalli** is named after its two martial bronze horses.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Forget any ideas of fussy fusion cuisine or low-cal Mediterranean diets. Food in Emilia-Romagna is all about ham, cheese, red meat and robust wine. And lots of it. Regional specialties abound – *tortelloni*, *tagliatelle*, *mortadella* and *zampone*, to name a few – but three stand out: prosciutto and *parmigiano reggiano* from Parma, and Modena's balsamic vinegar. All are produced using traditional techniques and rigorously checked by local consortia.

The king of Italian cheeses, *parmigiano reggiano* has been produced in the area around Parma for more than 700 years. It is made from skimmed evening milk and full-cream morning milk, which is poured into copper vats, cultured, heated and then stirred with a giant paddle. When the curd is ready, it is heaved out into cheesecloth. Each lump is shaped into a wheel form and left in brine for more than a month before being aged for at least one, and often two or more, years.

Parma's prosciutto undergoes a similarly meticulous process. Meat is taken from pigs born and raised in one of 11 regions in northern and central Italy and aged in an area south of Parma where the climatic conditions are held to be ideal. After a 10- or 12-month process of drying, cutting and salting, the ham is judged ready if it passes a final test: it is pierced with a needle made from horse bone and sniffed by an expert – if the whiff is right, the ham is ready.

If you want to know more, check out the **Museo del Parmigiano Reggiano** (☎ 0524 59 61 29; Via Volta 5; admission & tasting €5; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Sat & Sun Mar-Oct) in Soragna, and the **Museo del Prosciutto di Parma** (☎ 0521 35 50 09; Via Bocchialini 7; admission €3; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Mar-Dec) in Langhirano.

Commercial balsamic vinegar, as sold around the world, bears little relation to its upmarket cousin from Modena. According to the original recipe, it is made by boiling must (unfermented grape juice) from Trebbiano (white) and Lambrusco (red) vines grown in a closely defined area around Modena. The must is filtered, placed in a large oak barrel, then over many years decanted and transferred into smaller barrels made of different woods that are stored in farmhouse lofts. The summer temperature in these lofts can reach 50°C, so much of the must evaporates and the remainder becomes ever darker and stickier. *Aceto balsamico tradizionale di Modena* is then aged for at least 12 years, and *aceto balsamico tradizionale di Modena extraveccchio* for at least 25.

ModenaTur (see p446) can arrange visits to local producers.

The two baroque statues, cast by the Tuscan sculptor Francesco Mochi between 1612 and 1625, depict the Farnese dukes Alessandro and Ranuccio.

To the southeast of the piazza, the 12th-century Lombard-Romanesque **cathedral** (☎ 0523 33 51 54; Piazza del Duomo 33; ☎ 7am-noon & 4-7pm) harmoniously blends white and pink marble, mellow sandstone and red brick. Inside, there are some magnificent 17th-century dome frescoes by Morazzone and Guercino.

The nearby **Basilica di Sant'Antonino** (☎ 0523 32 06 53; Piazza Sant'Antonino 6; ☎ 8am-noon & 4-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-12.30pm & 8-9.30pm Sun) was built in the 11th century on the site of an earlier church. Its peculiar octagonal tower is claimed to be the oldest of its type in Italy.

A short walk away, the **Galleria Ricci Oddi** (☎ 0523 32 07 42; www.riccioddi.it, in Italian; Via San Siro 13; adult/child €4/3; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) contains a respectable collection of Italian art and sculpture from the 18th century onwards.

On the northern edge of the *centro storico*, the vast **Palazzo Farnese** (☎ 0523 49 26 58; www.musei.piacenza.it; Piazza Cittadella; combined admission €6; ☎ 8.45am-1pm Tue-Thu, 8.45am-1pm & 3-6pm Fri & Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 3-6pm Sun) was started in 1558 but never fully completed. It now houses the Pinacoteca, an art gallery, and four minor museums of archaeology, carriages, Italian unification and, in the main one, the **Museo Civico**, the bizarre Etruscan Fegato di Piacenza, a sheep's liver in bronze that was used for divining the future. Single entry to the archaeology museum costs €3, to the carriages and unification museums €2.50, and to the Pinacoteca and Museo Civico €5.

Sleeping & Eating

Ostello Don Zermari (☎ 0523 71 23 19; www.ostello.piacenza.it; Via Zoni 38-40; dm/s/d €17/25/40; ☐) In a quiet residential area 20 minutes' walk southwest of the city centre, this well-run private hostel offers bright, spotless rooms. Laundry facilities are available, and the building has

access for disabled guests. Take bus 1, 16 or 17 from the train station.

Hotel Astor (☎ 0523 32 92 96; fax 0523 31 35 84; Via Tibini 29-31; s/d/tr €52/68/78; 🏠) This rather worn three-star hotel near the train station offers modest accommodation at reasonable rates. The rooms make no great impression, but they're clean and comfortable enough.

Antica Trattoria Dell'Angelo (☎ 0523 32 67 39; Via Tibini 14; meals €20-25; 🕒 Thu-Tue) With its beamed ceiling, wood-fired heater and red-checked tablecloths, this laid-back trattoria is as traditional as they come. The food is hearty, homemade fare – think spinach-and-ricotta *tortelloni*, roast meat and fizzy local red wine. Weekday lunch specials are a steal, with pasta/main courses costing €4/5.

Antica Osteria del Teatro (☎ 0523 32 37 77; Via Verdi 16; tasting menus €70-90; 🕒 Tue-Sat) High-class cuisine in a restored 15th-century *palazzo* is what you get here, at one of Emilia's top restaurants. The seasonally changing menu is built around fresh, locally sourced ingredients and an abundant wine list.

Getting There & Around

Piacenza's bus station is located on Piazza Cittadella; however, the train is a more convenient way to reach most destinations. There are frequent trains to/from Milan (regular/Eurostar €5.10/10.90, one hour, hourly), Parma (€4.30, 40 minutes, half-hourly) and Bologna (regular/Eurostar €8.80/17.10, 1½ hours, hourly).

Piacenza is just off the A1 linking Milan and Bologna and the A21 joining Brescia and Turin. Via Emilia (SS9) also runs past on its way to Rimini and the Adriatic Sea.

Bus 2 (€1) runs between the train station and Piazza dei Cavalli.

AROUND PIACENZA

The hill-top *borgo* (village) of **Castell'Arquato** rises above the green countryside of the Arda Valley, 33km southeast of Piacenza. Dominating the beautifully preserved medieval centre is the crenellated **Rocca Viscontea** (☎ 0523 80 32 15; iatcastellarquato@gmail.com; adult/child €3.50/2.50; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-5.30pm Sat & Sun, by request at tourist office Tue-Fri), a 14th-century castle built by Luchino Visconti.

Castle apart, Castell'Arquato is an atmospheric place for a stopover. You can try local wine at the **Enoteca Comunale** (☎ 0523 80 61 57; Piazza del Municipio; 🕒 10am-10pm Tue-Sun) and stay at **Ca' di Cima** (☎ 0523 80 52 86; www.cadicima.it, in

Italian; Vicolo degli Spalti 4; s/d/tr €35/60/75), a rustic two-room B&B five minutes uphill from the castle. Owner Clara and her frisky dog Vito are lovely hosts and can point you to numerous other local attractions.

Local information is available at the helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0523 80 32 15; www.castellarquato.net; Piazza del Municipio; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Tue-Sun) on the main square facing the castle.

Tempi (☎ 800 211173; www.tempi.piacenza.it, in Italian) runs buses regularly between Piacenza and Castell'Arquato (€3.10, 55 minutes).

EAST OF BOLOGNA

FERRARA

pop 133,600

Less smug than some of Emilia-Romagna's provincial cities, Ferrara retains much of the austere splendour of its Renaissance heyday when, as seat of the Este family, it was a force to be reckoned with.

The Este dynasty ruled Ferrara from 1260 to 1598, its political and military prowess matched by intense cultural activity. Petrarch, Titian, Antonio Pisanello and poets Torquato Tasso and Ludovico Ariosto all spent time here under the patronage of the Este dukes.

When the Este fell in 1598, Pope Clement VIII claimed the city, only to preside over its decline. Ferrara recovered importance during and after the Napoleonic period, when it was made chief city of the lower Po. Today's local government has carefully restored much of the centre, which was battered during WWII.

Orientation

From Porta Po near the train station, Viale Cavour runs southeast to Ferrara's castle. To the castle's immediate east, Corso Martiri della Libertà leads down to the cathedral and adjoining Piazza Trento Trieste, from where the *centro storico* is a brief hop to the south.

Information

Denali (☎ 0532 76 23 22; Via Ragno 14; per hr €4;

🕒 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) Internet.

Police station (☎ 0532 29 43 11; Corso Ercole I d'Este 26)

Post office (Viale Cavour 27)

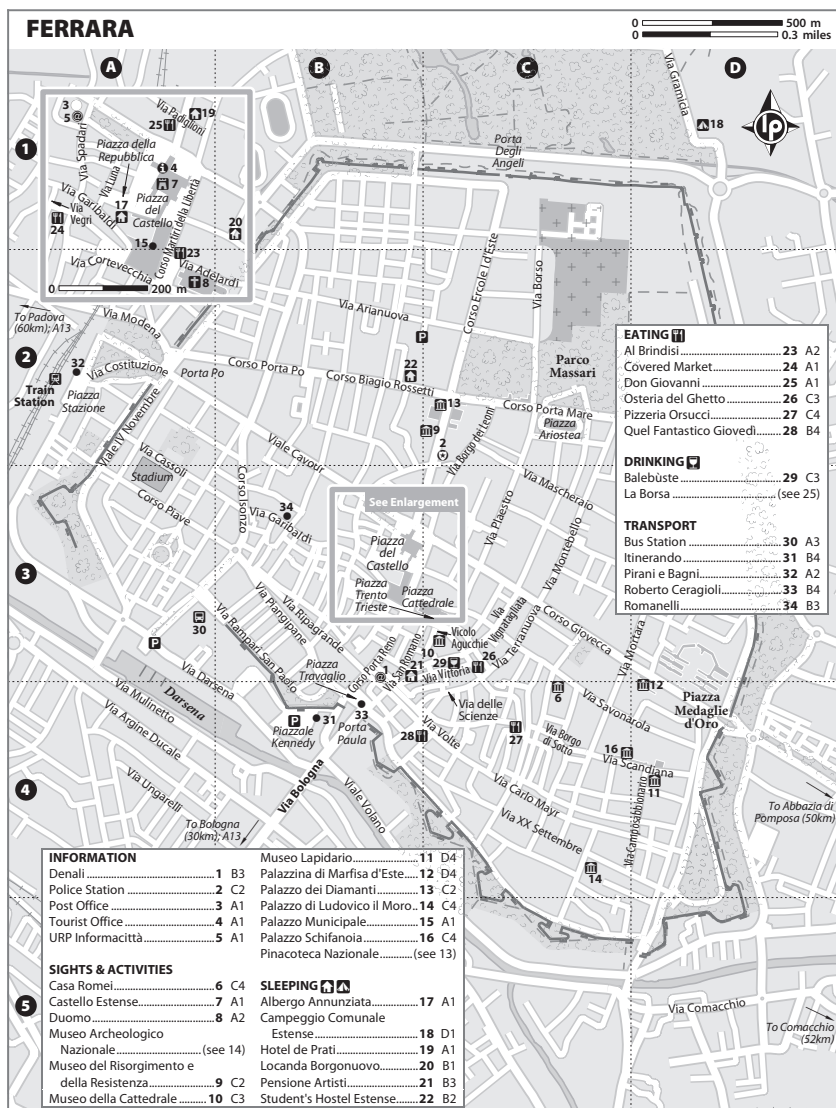
Tourist office (☎ 0532 20 93 70; www.ferrarainfo.com;

🕒 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 2-5pm

ln) In Castello Estense's courtyard.

URP Informacittà (☎ 0532 41 97 70; Via Spadari 2/2;

🕒 8.30am-1pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8.30am-1pm



Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Free wi-fi and one public computer provided by the municipal government.

Sights

CASTELLO ESTENSE

Complete with moat and drawbridge, Ferrara's towering **castle** (☎ 0532 29 92 33; Viale Cavour; adult/child €7/free, tower extra €1; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun)

was commissioned by Nicolò II d'Este in 1385. Initially it was intended to protect him and his family from the town's irate citizenry, who were up in arms over tax increases, but in the late 15th century it became the family's permanent residence.

Although sections are now used as government offices, a few rooms, including the royal

suites, are open for viewing. Highlights are the Sala dei Giganti (Giants' Room) and Salone dei Giochi (Games Salon), the Cappella di Renée de France and the claustrophobic dungeon. It was here in 1425 that Duke Nicolò III d'Este had his young second wife, Parisina Malatesta, and his son, Ugo, beheaded after discovering they were lovers, providing the inspiration for Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess*.

PALAZZO MUNICIPALE

Linked to the castle by an elevated passageway, the 13th-century crenellated **Palazzo Municipale** (admission free; ☎ 9am-2pm Mon-Fri) was the Este family home until they moved next door to the castle in the late 15th century. Nowadays, it's largely occupied by administrative offices but you can wander around its twin courtyards. The entrance is watched over by copper statues of Nicolò III and his less-wayward son Borso – they're 20th-century copies but nonetheless imposing.

CATHEDRAL

The outstanding feature of the pink-and-white 12th-century **Duomo** (☎ 0532 20 74 49; Piazza Cattedrale; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7.30pm Sun) is its three-tiered marble facade, combining Romanesque and Gothic styles on the lower and upper tiers respectively. Much of the upper level is a graphic representation of the Final Judgment and heaven and hell (notice the four figures clambering out of their coffins). Astride a pair of handsome lions at the base squats an oddly secular duo, mouths agape at the effort of holding it all up.

On the other side of Piazza Trento Trieste, the **Museo della Cattedrale** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via San Romano; adult/child €5/free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) houses various artefacts from the cathedral, including a serene *Madonna* by Jacopo della Quercia, a couple of vigorous Cosimo Tura canvases, and some witty bas-reliefs illustrating the months of the year.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

If you plan to visit multiple museums, consider a combined ticket (€8) that gives entry to the Museo della Cattedrale, Palazzina di Marfisa d'Este, Palazzo Schifanoia and Museo Lapidario.

Named after the diamond-shaped ashlar stones on its facade, the **Palazzo dei Diamanti** was built for Sigismondo d'Este late in the 15th

century. Regarded as the family's grandest *palazzo*, it is now home to the **Pinacoteca Nazionale** (☎ 0532 20 58 44; Corso Ercole I d'Este 21; adult/child €4/free; ☎ 9am-2pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, to 7pm Thu, to 1pm Sun) and its interesting collection of paintings from the Ferrarese and Bolognese schools.

Next door, the small **Museo del Risorgimento e della Resistenza** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Corso Ercole I d'Este 19; adult/child €3/free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) exhibits documents, proclamations and posters from the Italian unification movement and WWII, as well as numerous uniforms, guns and hand grenades.

East of Piazza Trento Trieste, the Renaissance **Casa Romei** (☎ 0532 23 41 30; Via Savonarola 30; adult/child €3/free; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) is where Lucrezia Borgia spent much of her time in Ferrara. The austere brick exterior hides a peaceful inner patio and, on the 1st floor, a 16th-century apartment preserved in its original state.

In similar style, the **Palazzina di Marfisa d'Este** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Corso Giovecca 170; adult/child €3/free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sun) reveals ornate 16th-century decorations and a shady garden.

Ferrara's most famous frescoes are in the Este's 14th-century pleasure palace, **Palazzo Schifanoia** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via Scandiana 23; adult/child €5/free; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun). In the Salone dei Mesi, Francesco del Cossa's 15th-century frescoes depicting the months and seasons are considered among the best examples of their type in Italy.

Your ticket also gives entry to the nearby **Museo Lapidario** (☎ 0532 24 49 49; Via Camposabbionaro; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Sun), which has a small, undocumented collection of Roman and Etruscan stele, tombs and inscriptions.

You'll find yet more Etruscan artefacts, along with an impressive selection of Attic vases, in **Palazzo di Ludovico il Moro** at the **Museo Archeologico Nazionale** (☎ 0532 6 62 99; Via XX Settembre 124; adult/child €4/free; ☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Sun). Many finds came from the Etruscan town of Spina, near modern-day Comacchio.

CITY WALLS

Most of Ferrara's 9km of ancient city walls are more or less intact and some parts are walkable. Alternatively, hire a bike and cycle the perimeter.

Festivals & Events

Il Palio (www.paliodiferrara.it) On the last Sunday of May each year, the eight *contrade* (districts) of Ferrara compete

in a horse race that momentarily turns Piazza Ariostea into medieval bedlam. Claimed to be the oldest race of its kind in Italy, the first official competition was held in 1279.

Buskers' Festival (☎ 0532 24 93 37; www.ferrara-buskers.com) Ferrara's streets are filled with musicians in late August.

Ferrara Balloons Festival (☎ 0532 29 93 03; www.ferraraballoonsfestival.it) Italy's largest hot-air balloon gathering, in late September.

Sleeping

Campeggio Comunale Estense (☎ 0532 75 23 96; campeggio.estense@libero.it; Via Gramicia 76; camp sites per adult/child/tent €5/3.50/8; ☹ Mar-Dec) Ferrara's municipal camp ground is just outside the city walls. Catch bus 1 or 5 from the train station to Piazzale San Giovanni and follow the signs. Don't forget your insect repellent.

Student's Hostel Estense (☎ 0532 20 11 58; www.ostelloferrara.it; Corso Biagio Rossetti 24; incl breakfast dm/s/d/tr €16/35/40/45; ☹) Completely revamped by its youthful new owners, Ferrara's hostel still has classic hostel rooms with three to eight beds, but they've added 24-hour reception, geothermal hot water, a bar, a back patio, free wi-fi and fantastic amenities for cyclists (bike pumps, drinking water for refilling bottles, a maintenance area and a bike storage zone). Meals are also offered (€5 to €10).

Pensione Artisti (☎ 0532 76 10 38; Via Vittoria 66; d €60, s/d without bathroom €28/50) Ferrara's best budget option features spotless old-fashioned rooms, free bikes, a small vine-covered terrace and a kitchen for guests' use. The location is convenient and the owners are ultrahospitable. Book ahead for the three rooms with bathroom. No breakfast.

Hotel de Prati (☎ 0532 24 19 05; www.hoteldeprati.com; Via Padiglioni 5; s €49-85, d €75-120, ste €110-150; ☹) A step up from your average three-star, de Prati charms with its central location near the castle, beautiful decor and friendly owner. The upstairs guest rooms sport wrought-iron bedsteads and antique furniture, while downstairs the bright public rooms are enlivened by contemporary art. The owners also rent a spacious apartment with its own kitchen in the *palazzo* next door.

our pick Locanda Borgonuovo (☎ 0532 21 11 00; www.borgonuovo.com; Via Cairoli 29; s €60-70, d €90-100; ☹ ☹ ☹) Within an arrow-shot of the castle, this little gem is Ferrara's longest-established B&B. There are four refined rooms and three apartments, each decorated with antiques and swathes of polished wood. All rooms have

frigobars, safes, flat-screen TVs and wi-fi. Enjoy breakfast in the elegant upstairs sitting room, or retire to the frondy patio, where you can admire Ferrari the pet turtle's impressive displays of speed. Parking costs €8 and guests have free access to the brand-new fleet of bikes. Reservations are essential.

Albergo Annunziata (☎ 0532 20 11 11; www.annunziata.it; Piazza della Repubblica 5; s €94-120, d €105-240; ☹ ☹ ☹) When Casanova spent the night here, the Annunziata was little more than a simple *locanda* (inn). Today it's a refined top-end hotel with abundant creature comforts, although the rooms are surprisingly bland, considering the building's illustrious history. Still, you can't beat the location, directly across from the Castello Estense. There are also six modern apartments (€125 to €300) 150m from the main hotel. Parking costs €3.

Eating & Drinking

Local specialities include *cappellacci di zucca*, a pasta pouch filled with pumpkin, and *salama da sugo* (stewed pork sausage). Ferrarese bread is well known for its distinctive twisted shape and crunchy consistency.

our pick Pizzeria Orsucci (☎ 0532 76 00 00; Via Saraceno 116; pizzas €2.50-3.50; ☹ 5.30pm-1am Fri-Wed) For a slice of Ferrarese culinary history, head to this hole-in-the-wall pizzeria, run by the same family since 1936. Choices are simple: do you want your *pizza margherita* small or medium-sized, with or without anchovies? Aside from draught beer, the only other menu item is *padella di ceci* (a chickpea-flour treat cooked in the wood-fired oven). If you ask, the amiable proprietor Giulio can tell you a story or two about the news clippings and photos that cover the walls, documenting Orsucci's numerous awards and history as a film set.

Balebuste (☎ 0532 76 35 57; Via Vittoria 44; meals €20-25; ☹ Fri-Wed) Sequester yourself under the brick arches in the cosy interior rooms, or mingle with the masses on cobblestoned Via Vittoria at this lively corner bar. Although wine holds centre stage here, it's worth sticking around for the wide-ranging food menu, featuring traditional Ferrarese dishes and daily chef's specials.

Osteria del Ghetto (☎ 0532 76 49 36; Via Vittoria 26; meals €25-30; ☹ Wed-Mon) This sweet little eatery in the heart of Ferrara's old Jewish quarter is a fab place to feast on traditional favourites

like *cappellacci di zucca* or *salama da sugo con purea di patate* (stewed pork sausage with mashed potatoes).

Al Brindisi (☎ 0532 47 12 25; Via Adelardi 11; meals €25-30) The oldest *osteria* in the world (according to Guinness), this atmospheric wine bar was already an established drinking den in 1435 – Titian drank here, Benvenuto Cellini dropped in on occasion and Copernicus studied in the room upstairs. Alongside the substantial wine list there's a strong selection of grappas and whiskies, plus a full menu of pastas, mains and snacks. Fixed-price lunch menus start at €13.

La Borsa (☎ 0532 24 33 63; Corso Ercole I d'Este 1; meals €27-33; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) In the grand central courtyard of a historic *palazzo*, this wine bar offers snacks and simpler meals of the same superb quality as its adjacent sister restaurant Don Giovanni, but at much lower prices.

Quel Fantastico Giovedì (☎ 0532 76 05 70; Via Castelnovo 9; meals €30-40; ☎ Thu-Tue) For fashionable food in a cool, bistro-chic setting, book here. Seafood specialties include *baccalà mantecato con crema di peperoni dolci e polenta* (Venetian-style codfish with sweet pepper-polenta cream), while the mouth-watering dessert menu features *sorbetto di mela verde profumato al moscato* (wine-scented green apple sorbet).

Don Giovanni (☎ 0532 24 33 63; Corso Ercole I d'Este 1; meals €45-75; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Open only for dinner, this highly acclaimed eatery specialises in fresh-caught fish from the Adriatic, vegetables harvested from the restaurant's own garden, eight varieties of bread baked daily and a wine list featuring over 600 Italian and international labels. The menu is an imaginative feast of unconventional concoctions such as *tortelli con faraona allo zabaione di parmigiano e prosciutto croccante* (guinea fowl-stuffed pasta in a custard of Parmesan and crunchy ham) or *anguilla arrostita con finferli e emulsione all'alloro* (roast eel with chanterelle mushrooms in bay-leaf emulsion).

Self-caterers can fill up at the **covered market** (Via Vegri; ☎ 7am-1.30pm Mon-Sat).

Getting There & Around

ACFT (☎ 0532 59 94 90; www.acft.it, in Italian) buses operate within the city and to surrounding towns such as Comacchio (€4.10, one hour, 11 daily), as well as to the Adriatic beaches. Long-distance buses originate at the bus sta-

tion on Via Rampari San Paolo, then swing by the train station on their way out of town. The train is the better option for Bologna (€3.80, 30 to 50 minutes, half-hourly) and Ravenna (€5.30, 1¼ hours, 14 daily).

Most traffic is banned from the city centre. Overnight parking (€3 per 24 hours) is available at a large car park off Via Darsena (just outside the *centro storico*).

ACFT buses 1 and 9 run from the train station direct to the city centre.

For a taxi, call **Radiotaxi** (☎ 0532 90 09 00).

Even better, get in the saddle and join the hundreds of other pedallers in Italy's most cycle-friendly city. Among the places where you can rent bikes (per day €7 to €10):

Itinerando (☎ 0532 20 20 03; Piazzale Kennedy 6-8;

☎ 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Fri-Sun)

Pirani e Bagni (☎ 0532 77 21 90; Piazza Stazione 2;

☎ 4.45am-8pm Mon-Fri)

Roberto Ceragioli (☎ 339 4056853; Piazza Travaglio 4; ☎ 7.30am-12.30pm & 3-7.30pm)

Romanelli (☎ 0532 20 60 17; Via Aldighieri 28a;

☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.15-7pm)

PO DELTA

Straddling Emilia-Romagna and the Veneto, the Po Delta (Foci del Po) is where the Po spills into the Adriatic Sea. An easy day trip from either Ferrara or Ravenna, it has an atmosphere all of its own, particularly in winter when fog shrouds the extensive pine woods and wetlands in eerie silence.

The area's main attraction is the **Parco del Delta del Po** (www.parcodeltapo.it), a regional park encompassing one of Europe's largest wetlands and a pair of alluring lagoons, the Valli di Comacchio and Valle Bertuzzi. With more than 300 bird species nesting or passing through the area, it's a paradise for ornithologists. In late April and early May, Comacchio hosts the **International Po Delta Birdwatching Fair** (☎ 0533 5 76 93; www.podeltabirdfair.it), the largest event of its kind in Europe.

For fauna of a different kind, a battery of *lidi* (small beach resorts) offer coastal fun.

In summertime, the mosquitoes are man-eaters; slap on the repellent and consider mosquito nets if you're camping.

Abbazia di Pomposa

About 50km east of Ferrara, the **Abbazia di Pomposa** (☎ 0533 71 91 10; iatpomposa@libero.it; Codigoro; admission Mon-Sat €5, monastery/church Sun €3/free; ☎ 8.30am-7pm) is one of Italy's oldest

Benedictine endowments. The monk Guido d'Arezzo reputedly invented the musical scale here, and in the 11th century it was one of Italy's foremost cultural centres. Its decline began in the 14th century, and in 1652 vespers were sung here for the last time. The nave of its church has elaborate mosaic paving and is adorned with frescoes from the 14th-century Bologna school and artworks by Vitale di Bologna. There's also a small museum.

The abbey stages a classical music festival, **Rassegna di Musica Classica**, each July.

Comacchio

The delta's main centre, Comacchio, is a picturesque fishing village of canals and brick bridges. The most famous **bridge**, the 1635 Trepponti, is an eye-catching construction traversing a cluster of canals.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 0533 31 41 54; www.turismocomacchio.it; Corso Mazzini 4; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar) has loads of information about hiking and cycling in the area, bird-watching, horse riding and boat excursions. Useful publications include the *Destra Po* leaflet, which details the 132km Destra Po cycle route from west of Ferrara to the sea, and the pamphlet *Birdwatching in the Po Delta Park: Map & Itineraries*.

In the village, two museums merit a visit. The **Museo della Nave Romana** (☎ 0533 31 13 16; www.comune.comacchio.fe.it; Via della Pescheria 2; adult/child €4.50/2.30; ☎ 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Jun-Aug, 9.30am-1pm & 3-6.30pm Sep-May) displays (with good documentation in English) the fascinating cargo of a Roman shipwreck discovered nearby, while the **Manifattura dei Marinati** (☎ 0533 8 17 42; Corso G. Mazzini 200; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mar-Oct, 9.30am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Nov-Feb) chronicles the town's traditional eel-fishing industry.

From Ferrara, buses run 11 times daily to Comacchio (€4.10, one hour).

RAVENNA

pop 153,400

Of the region's artistic jewels none shine brighter than Ravenna's early Christian and Byzantine mosaics. Described as a symphony of colour by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*, they date to Ravenna's golden age as an early Christian centre.

Ravenna was an unimportant provincial city until 402, when Emperor Honorius moved his court here from Milan and made

it capital of the Western Roman Empire. He chose Ravenna on the basis that the malarial swamps around the town would provide protection from barbarian invaders – and, in fact, they did until 476 when the city fell to the Goths. The change in regime, however, did little to hinder Ravenna's development and under Theodoric the Great it became one of the Mediterranean's most glamorous cities.

Ravenna's Byzantine heyday was still to come, however. In little more than 200 years, between the Byzantine arrival in 540 and the Lombard capture of the city in 752, the city grew into a glittering showcase for Byzantine art and culture.

More down-to-earth nowadays, it is still a refined and polished place. Less sophisticated are the seaside resorts that crowd the nearby Adriatic beaches.

Orientation

From Piazza Farini, in front of the train station, it's a 600m walk along Viale Farini and its continuation, Via Diaz, into central Piazza del Popolo. From here, nearly everything of interest is within easy walking distance.

Information

Cooperativa Sociale la Formica (☎ 0544 3 70 31; Piazza Farini; per bag €2.50-5; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri) Just outside the train station; provides a left-luggage service.

Fast Clean (Via Candiano 16; 6kg wash €3.50; ☎ 7am-10pm)

Multimediateca (☎ 0544 48 20 56; Via Guido da Polenta 4; per hr €2; ☎ 3-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm & 3-6pm Sat) Internet access on the 1st floor of Palazzo Farini.

Police station (☎ 0544 48 29 99; Piazza Mameli)

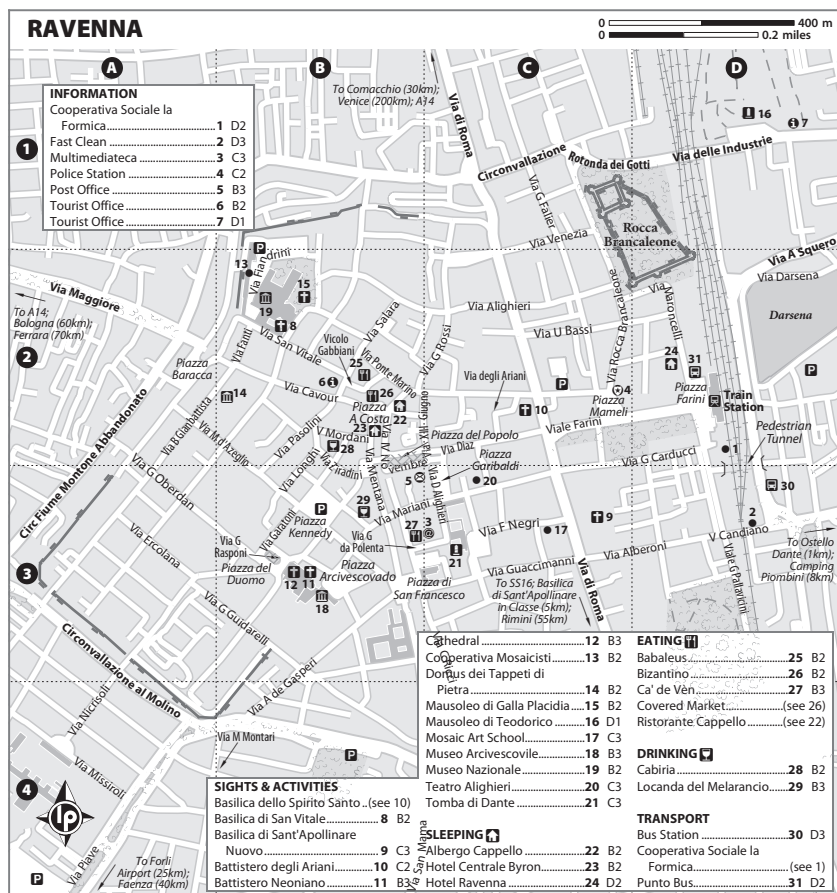
Post office (Piazza Garibaldi 1)

Tourist offices (www.turismo.ravenna.it); Via delle Industrie (☎ 0544 45 15 39; Via delle Industrie 14; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6pm); Via Salara (☎ 0544 3 57 55; Via Salara 8-12; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Oct-Mar, 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Apr-Sep) The main office is in the centre, on Via Salara.

Sights

The website www.ravennamosaici.it gives information, both historical and practical, about Ravenna's main Unesco-listed sights.

To see the mosaics in a different light, do the rounds at night. They're open and illuminated from 9pm to 11pm Tuesday through Friday from early July to early September.



BASILICA DI SAN VITALE, MAUSOLEO DI GALLA PLACIDIA & MUSEO NAZIONALE

The **basilica** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Via Fiandrini, entrance on Via San Vitale; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Feb) was consecrated in 547 by Archbishop Massimiano. In contrast to the sombre exterior, its interior is awash with colour as the rich greens, golds and blues of the mosaics are bathed in soft yellow sunlight. The mosaics on the side and end walls represent scenes from the Old Testament: to the left, Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac in the presence of three angels, while the one on the right portrays the death of Abel and the offering of Melchizedek. Inside the chancel, two magnificent mosaics depict the Byzantine emperor Justinian with San Massimiano and

a particularly solemn and expressive Empress Theodora, who was his consort.

In the same complex, the small **Mausoleo di Galla Placidia** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Via Fiandrini; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, to 5.30pm Mar & Oct, 9.30am-5pm Nov-Feb) was constructed for Galla Placidia, the half-sister of Emperor Honorius, who initiated construction of many of Ravenna's grandest buildings. The mosaics here, more muted than those in the basilica, are the oldest in Ravenna.

Next door to the basilica, the **Museo Nazionale** (☎ 0544 54 37 39; Via Fiandrini; admission €4; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Tue-Sun) is housed in the cloisters of a former Benedictine monastery. There's a wealth of pottery, bronzes, icons and vestments, plus more Madonna and Child portraits than you can shake a halo at.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EURO

There are three combined tickets on offer in Ravenna. The first (€8.50), valid for seven days, gives entry to the five main monuments: Basilica di San Vitale, Mausoleo di Galla Placidia, Museo Arcivescovile, Battistero Neoniano and Basilica di Sant'Apollinare Nuovo. There's no individual admission price for these monuments.

Buy a different ticket (€6) for the Museo Nazionale and Mausoleo di Teodorico. Pay an extra €2 to include the Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe, about 5km south-east of town. Each of these sites has its own admission price.

MUSEO ARCIVESCOVILE & BATTISTERO NEONIANO

Next to the unremarkable 18th-century **cathedral** (Via Gioacchino Rasponi; ☎ 7am-noon & 2.30-5pm), the tiny **Museo Arcivescovile** (Archepiscopal Museum; ☎ 0544 54 16 88; Piazza Arcivescovado; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) was closed at the time of research, but expected to reopen in early 2010; it's well worth a visit for its fine collection of mosaics and an exquisite 6th-century ivory throne.

Next door, the domed roof of the **Battistero Neoniano** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Piazza del Duomo; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) holds another impressive set of mosaics depicting the apostles and the baptism of Christ. Thought to have started life as a Roman bathhouse, it was converted into a baptistery in the 5th century.

BASILICA DI SANT'APOLLINARE NUOVO

Originally built by the Goths in the 6th century, the **basilica** (☎ 0544 54 16 88; Via di Roma; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mar & Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Feb) claims some of Ravenna's most beautiful mosaics. On the right (south) wall, 26 white-robed martyrs are depicted heading towards Christ with his apostles, while on the left, there's an equally expressive procession of virgins, bearing offerings to the Madonna. Spread along both walls are smaller panels depicting scenes from the life of Christ.

TOMBA DI DANTE

Dante spent the last 19 years of his life in Ravenna, writing much of the *Divine Comedy*

here, after Florence expelled him in 1302. As a perpetual act of penance, Florence still supplies the oil for the lamp that burns continually in his **tomb** (Via D Alighieri 9; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm).

Another literary great, Lord Byron, briefly lived in a house on nearby Piazza di San Francesco.

MAUSOLEO DI TEODORICO

This two-storey **mausoleum** (☎ 0544 68 40 20; Via delle Industrie 14; admission €3; ☎ 8.30am-7pm), built in 520, is a considerable feat of construction with its huge blocks of stone uncemented by any mortar, and 300-tonne dome. At the heart of the mausoleum is a Roman basin of porphyry that was recycled as a sarcophagus. Take bus 2 or 5 from the city centre.

BASILICA DI SANT'APOLLINARE IN CLASSE

The brilliant star-spangled apse mosaic of the **Basilica di Sant'Apollinare in Classe** (☎ 0544 47 35 69; Via Romea Sud, Classe; admission €3, Sun morning free; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm) is a must-see. The basilica, 5km southeast of the city centre, was built in the 6th century on the burial site of Ravenna's patron saint, who converted the city to Christianity in the 2nd century. To get there take bus 4 or 44 to Classe.

OTHER MONUMENTS

Behind the **Basilica dello Spirito Santo**, just off Via Diaz, is the **Battistero degli Ariani** (☎ 0544 54 37 11; Via degli Ariani; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Oct-Mar, 8.30am-7.30pm Apr-Sep), whose breathtaking dome mosaic depicts the baptism of Christ.

To the west, not far from the Basilica di San Vitale, the 6th-century floor mosaics at the **Domus dei Tappeti di Pietra** (☎ 0544 3 25 12; Via B Gianbattista; admission €4; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, to 6pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar; 10am-6.30pm daily Apr-Oct) were unearthed in the early 1990s. Of considerable artistic merit, they are decorated with geometric and floral designs.

Courses

The following outfits run mosaic courses catering to everyone from beginners to artists:

Gruppo Mosaicisti (☎ 0544 3 47 99; www.gruppomosaicisti.com; Via Fiandrin; 1-/2-week courses €750/950)

Mosaic Art School (☎ 349 601 45 66, toll-free in North America 877-7-MOSAIC; www.mosaicsschool.com; Via Francesco Negri 14; 1-week course €660-760)

Festivals & Events

Ravenna hosts one of Italy's top classical-music events, and jazz fans are well served.

Crossroads (☎ 0544 40 56 56; www.crossroads-it.com, in Italian) Jazz concerts are held in town between late February and the end of May as part of this region-wide festival.

Ravenna Festival (www.ravennafestival.org) Renowned Italian conductor Riccardo Muti has close ties with Ravenna and is intimately involved each year with this festival. Concerts are staged from June to late July at venues all over town, including the **Teatro Alighieri** (☎ 0544 24 92 44; www.teatroalighieri.org; Via Mariani 2). Ticket prices start at around €15.

Ravenna Jazz (☎ 0544 40 56 66) In late October, stars of the jazz firmament descend on town.

Sleeping

Camping Piomboni (☎ 0544 53 02 30; www.campingpiomboni.it; Viale della Pace 421, Marina di Ravenna; per site €8.20-12.40, plus per person €4.40-8; ☹ Easter-mid-Sep) In a pine wood 8km from town, this large self-contained camping ground is near the beach at Lido di Ravenna. Take bus 70 from Ravenna.

Ostello Dante (☎ 0544 42 11 64; www.hostelravenna.com; Via Nicolodi 12; dm/s/d €15/23/44; ☹) Ravenna's vibrant HI hotel is in a modern building 1km east of the train station. There's an 11.30pm lock-up but for €1 you can hire a 'night key', allowing you to come and go freely. Take bus 80 or the red 'Metrobus' from the train station.

Hotel Ravenna (☎ 0544 21 22 04; www.hotelravenna.ra.it; Via Maroncelli 12; s/d €55/90, without bathroom €45/70; ☹ ☹ ☹) A stone's throw from the train station, Hotel Ravenna is a safe bet. The bland rooms feature fading beige and gold decor and unexceptional furniture, but they're large and comfortable enough. Parking is free; wi-fi costs €4 per hour.

Hotel Centrale Byron (☎ 0544 21 22 25; www.hotelbyron.com; Via IV Novembre 14; s €50-65, d €70-110; ☹ ☹ ☹) The prime location is what you pay for here, a mere 20 paces from central Piazza del Popolo. The solid, old-fashioned rooms have lost most of their character to modernisation, but you get all the regular three-star comforts, including satellite TV, frigobar and free wi-fi.

Albergo Cappello (☎ 0544 21 98 13; www.albergocappello.it; Via IV Novembre 41; s €110-130, d €130-160; ☹ ☹ ☹) The old and the new combine to great effect at this eye-catching, centrally located three-star hotel. Murano glass chandeliers, original 15th-century frescoes and coffered ceilings are set against modern fixtures and

flat-screen TVs. The ample breakfast features pastries from Ravenna's finest *pasticceria*. Parking costs €13.

Eating

Bizantino (Piazza A Costa; set menus €7-7.70; ☹ 11.45am-2.45pm Mon-Fri) A busy self-service restaurant inside the covered market, Bizantino is ideal for a quick, economical lunchtime bite.

Babaleus (☎ 0544 21 64 64; V Gabbiani 7; pizzas from €4, meals €20-25; ☹ dinner Thu-Tue, lunch Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri) Students come for the €11 'pizza, drink and movie' special (the movie's at the nearby Cinema Astoria), but this relaxed, informal place in the centre also serves up a full menu of pasta, meat and fish.

Ca' de Vèn (☎ 0544 3 01 63; Via Corrado Ricci 24; meals €25-35; ☹ Tue-Sun) Yes, it's touristy, but the atmosphere's wonderful at this cavernous *enoteca*-cum-restaurant in a 15th-century *palazzo* with frescoed domes, vaulted brick ceilings and chequerboard marble floors. Regional specialities are complemented by an encyclopaedic wine list.

Ristorante Cappello (☎ 0544 21 98 76; Via IV Novembre 41; tasting menu €35, meals €35-40; ☹ closed Sun dinner & Mon) Under the hotel of the same name, this refined restaurant takes its food very seriously. The menu changes weekly, but seafood always figures prominently, in dishes such as *strozzapreti con calamaretti, zucchini, fiori di zucca e zafferano* (pasta with cuttlefish, courgettes, pumpkin flowers and saffron).

Self-caterers and sandwich-fillers should load up at the city's **covered market** (Piazza Andrea Costa).

Drinking

Cabiria (☎ 0544 3 50 60; Via Mordani 8; ☹ 6pm-3am Mon-Sat) A wine bar that hums like a Friday-night pub, Cabiria is a local favourite, popular with the 30-something crowd.

Locanda del Melarancio (☎ 0544 21 52 58; Via Mentana 33) A charming 16th-century stone and brick building enlivened with bold red walls forms the backdrop for this smooth, looks-conscious bar.

Getting There & Around

ATM (www.atm.ra.it, in Italian) local buses depart from Piazza Farini. Intercity buses for Ferrara and towns along the coast leave from the bus station on the east side of the railroad tracks (reached by a pedestrian underpass). **Punto Bus** (☎ 0544 68 99 00; ☹ 6.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, from 7.30am

Sun), on the piazza, is ATM's information and ticketing office.

Ravenna is on a branch (A14 dir) of the main east coast A14 autostrada. The SS16 (Via Adriatica) heads south to Rimini and on down the coast. The main car parks are east of the train station and north of the Basilica di San Vitale.

Trains connect with Bologna (€5.80, 1½ hours, hourly), Ferrara (€5.30, 1¼ hours, 14 daily), Rimini (€3.80, one hour, hourly) and the south coast.

In town, cycling is popular. The main (Via Salara) branch of the tourist office offers a free bike-hire service for visitors. Register by presenting a photo ID, then simply grab a yellow bike from one of the cycle stalls outside and return it to the same rack within normal business hours.

Just outside Ravenna's train station, **Cooperativa Sociale la Formica** (☎ 0544 3 70 31; Piazza Farini; bikes per hr/day €1.10/8.50; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri) also rents out bikes.

FAENZA

pop 56,100

An easy train ride from Ravenna, Faenza is best known for its high-grade ceramics. Production of this faience (tin-glazed earthenware) dates back to the Renaissance and is still a money-spinner for the town. Check out local styles at the vast, ivy-covered **Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche** (☎ 0546 69 73 11; www.micfaenza.org; Viale Baccarini 19; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, to 1.30pm Tue-Thu & to 5.30pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar).

Get details of Faenza's charming medieval centre from the **tourist office** (☎ 0546 2 52 31; www.prolocofaenza.it; Voltone Molinella 2; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat & 9.30am-12.30pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-5.30pm Tue-Wed, 9am-12.30pm Thu & Fri Oct-Apr), tucked under the picturesque double-decker loggias of Piazza del Popolo.

Just outside of town, **Agriturismo La Curbastra** (☎ 0546 3 20 89; www.agriturismolacurbastra.it; Via Cesarlo 157; s/d/tr/q €55/60/75/85; 🍷) has rustic rooms in the midst of a sea of vines, and a very welcoming swimming pool.

IMOLA

pop 67,300

Fans of Formula One will know Imola as home to the San Marino Grand Prix. Until the F1 authorities pulled the plug in 2007, the race was held at the Autodromo Enzo e Dino

Ferrari circuit, the track on which Ayrton Senna crashed and died in 1994.

Imola itself is a pleasant-enough town with a handsome medieval core and a robust red-brick castle – the 13th-century **Rocca Sforzesca** (☎ 0542 60 26 09; Piazza Giovanni dalle Bande Nere; admission €3; ☎ 3-7pm Sat, 10am-1pm & 3-7pm Sun).

The **tourist office** (☎ 0542 60 22 07; iat@comune.imola.bo.it; Via Emilia 135; ☎ 8.30am-1pm Mon-Fri, 3-6pm Tue, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) can help with accommodation lists and details of events at the racetrack.

Imola is on the Via Emilia (SS9) and half-hourly trains connect it with Bologna (€3.10, 30 minutes).

RIMINI

pop 138,500

One of Italy's most famous seaside resorts, Rimini is not to everyone's taste. Unless you're happy to share an overdeveloped strip of sand with tens of thousands of like-minded holiday-makers, you might want to think twice about visiting in August. If, however, the thought of days on flesh-packed beaches followed by nights in some of Italy's finest clubs turns you on – welcome to Rimini.

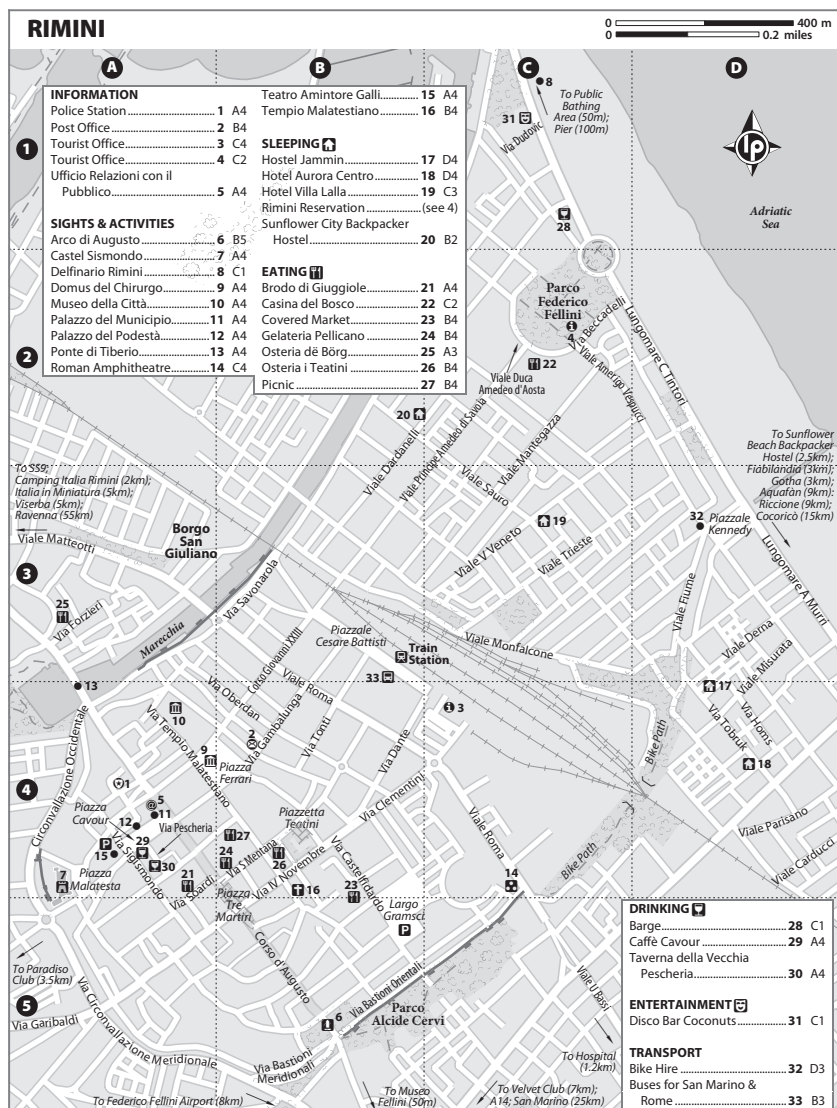
Birthplace of director Federico Fellini, the city does have another, more recognisably Italian, face. Its small *centro storico* was battered by 400 Allied bombing raids in WWII but has since been largely restored. It won't keep you for long but it's good for a quick wander and is loaded with cool bars and eateries.

History

Originally Umbrian, then Etruscan, and then the important Roman colony of Ariminum, Rimini sits at the centre of the Riviera del Sole. The city continued to change hands throughout the Middle Ages, knowing Byzantine, Lombard and papal rule before ending up in the hands of the Malatesta family in the 13th century. At the beginning of the 16th century, Cesare Borgia added the city to his list of short-lived conquests but Rimini soon succumbed to Venice, then to the Papal States. Rimini, finally its own master, joined the Kingdom of Italy in 1860.

Orientation

Halfway between the sea and the historic centre, the train station is a useful landmark. To get from the train station to the



centre, take Corso Giovanni XXIII down to Corso d'Augusto, hang a left and continue to Piazza Cavour and Piazza Tre Martiri, old Rimini's two main squares. For the seafront, duck under the underpass on the right of Piazzale Cesare Battisti, the square in front of the station, and head straight down Viale Principe Amedeo.

Information

Hospital (☎ 0541 70 51 11; Viale L Settembrini 2)

Located 1.2km southeast of the centre.

Police station (☎ 0541 35 31 11; Corso d'Augusto 192)

Post office (Via Gambalunga 40)

Tourist offices (www.riminiturismo.it); Parco Federico Fellini (☎ 0541 5 69 02; Parco Federico Fellini 3; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-6.30pm

Mon-Sat Oct-Apr; train station (☎ 0541 5 13 31; Piazzale Cesare Battisti; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 1.30pm Sun May-Sep, to 6pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) Multilingual staff at the train station office is exceptionally helpful. There are also three beachfront kiosks, open in summer only.

Ufficio Relazioni con il Pubblico (☎ 0541 70 47 04; Corso d'Augusto 158; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-6pm Thu, to 1pm Sat) Free internet provided by Rimini's town government.

Sights & Activities

TEMPIO MALATESTIANO & CASTEL SISMONDO

Rimini's grandest monument is its cathedral, the **Tempio Malatestiano** (☎ 051 5 11 30; Via IV Novembre 35; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm & 3.30-7pm Sun). Dedicated to St Francis, it was transformed in the 15th century to house the tomb of Isotta degli Atti, the beloved mistress of Sigismondo Malatesta. Sigismondo, a member of the ruling Malatesta clan, was something of a rogue: Pope Pius II, himself no angel, burned Sigismondo's effigy in Rome and condemned him to hell for an impressive litany of sins that included rape, murder, incest, adultery and severe oppression of the people.

Most of the church's unfinished facade is by the Florentine Leon Battista Alberti, one of the period's great architects. The side chapels are separated from the single wide nave by marble balustrades topped by tubby cherubs. The chapel nearest the altar on the south side has a fine fresco by Piero della Francesca.

A short walk to the west from the cathedral, the 15th-century **Castel Sismondo** (☎ 0541 2 91 92; Piazza Malatesta; ☎ exhibitions only), also known as the Rocca Malatestiana, is named after the notorious Sigismondo.

PIAZZA CAVOUR

The city's finest *palazzi* hug this attractive piazza. On its northern flank, **Palazzo del Municipio**, built in 1562 and reconstructed after being razed during WWII, abuts the imposing 14th-century Gothic **Palazzo del Podestà**; neither is open to the public. On the other side of the square, Via Pescheria is the town's old fish market. The **Teatro Amintore Galli** was a 19th-century addition, appearing in 1857 in the feverish years leading to unification.

MUSEUMS

Rimini's **Museo della Città** (☎ 0541 2 14 82; Via Tonini 1; adult/child incl Domus del Chirurgo €5/3, admission free Sun; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Tue-Sat, 4.30-7.30pm

Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 8.30am-12.30pm & 5-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Sun mid-Sep-mid-Jun) displays paintings upstairs, including a haunting *Pietà* by Giovanni Bellini and an altarpiece by Domenico Ghirlandaio. However, the museum's centrepiece is the archaeological section on the ground floor. Spread over several rooms, with excellent bilingual (Italian-English) signage, are finds from two nearby Roman villas, including splendid mosaics, a rare and exquisite representation of fish rendered in coloured glass, and the world's largest collection of Roman surgical instruments. You can walk through a life-size reconstruction of the surgeon's offices, then visit the original excavation site across the street at the recently opened **Domus del Chirurgo**, with some fine floor mosaics still intact.

Film buffs will enjoy the Fellini memorabilia at the newly relocated **Museo Fellini** (☎ 0541 5 00 85; www.federicofellini.it, in Italian; Via Nigra 6; admission free; ☎ 5.30-7.30pm Tue-Fri & Sun, 10am-noon & 4.30-7.30pm Sat).

ROMAN REMAINS

At the southeastern end of Corso d'Augusto, the **Arco di Augusto** (Arch of Augustus) was erected in 27 BC, while at the Corso's other end, the **Ponte di Tiberio** (Tiberius' Bridge) dates to the 1st century AD. To visit the insubstantial remains of Rimini's **Roman amphitheatre** (Via Vezia 2), once one of the largest in the region, contact the **Musei Comunali** (☎ 0541 70 44 22).

BORGO SAN GIULIANO

Just over the Ponte di Tiberio, Rimini's old fisherfolk's quarter has been freshened up and is now a colourful patchwork of cobbled lanes, trendy trattorias, wine bars and trim terraced houses.

BEACHES

Rimini's beaches heave in summer. The Riviera boasts 40km of mostly sandy beaches, in some places 200m wide, yet come August you'll be pushed to find a spare millimetre.

Most beaches are connected to hotels or run by private clubs, which typically charge about €15 per day for an umbrella and two loungers. The only free sand you'll find is a tiny patch north of the city centre near the pier. Private beaches have bars and most organise activities (aerobics, beach games etc); several also offer windsurfing courses and board hire.

All of Rimini's beaches bear the coveted EU blue flag as an indication of their cleanliness, and pollution levels are monitored daily.

THEME PARKS

Love 'em or loathe 'em, Rimini's theme parks are hugely popular. The truly committed can buy a Fantasticket (see www.larivieradeiparchi.it/fantasticket.php) granting reduced-price admission to multiple parks. The tourist office can provide a full list. Major ones: **Aquafan** (☎ 0541 60 30 50; www.aquafan.it; Via Ascoli Piceno 6, Riccione; adult/child €24/18; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Jun-mid-Sep) At Riccione, the area's biggest water park. Bus 42 or 45 from Riccione station.

Delfinario Rimini (☎ 0541 5 02 98; www.delfinario.rimini.it; Lungomare Tintori 2; adult/child €12/9; ☎ Easter-Sep) Dolphinarium beside Rimini's public beach.

Fiabilandia (☎ 0541 37 20 64; www.fiabilandia.it; Via Cardano 15, Rivazzurra; adult/child €22/15) One of Rimini's oldest, this park focuses on fun for little kiddies. **Italia in Miniatura** (☎ 0541 73 67 36; www.italiainminiatura.com; Via Popilia 239, Viserba; adult/child €19/14; ☎ 9am-11pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-sunset Sep-Jun) Scale models of Italy's major sights. Bus 8 from Rimini train station.

Festivals & Events

Paganello (www.paganello.com) In early April Rimini hosts the annual Frisbee World Cup.

Cheecoting championship (www.bigliedaspaggia.it, in Italian) Later in April, this involves highly trained athletes flicking marbles around circuits built on the beach.

Gradisca On 21 June Rimini celebrates with dancing, fireworks and eating – it's estimated that revellers consume some two tonnes of grilled sardines and 12,000L of Sangiovese wine in that one night.

Rimini Jazz Festival (☎ 0541 5 22 06; www.riminijazz.it, in Italian) In summer this is held beside the main Marina Centro beach area.

Sagra Musicale Malatestiana (☎ 0541 70 42 94; www.sagramusicalemalatestiana.it, in Italian) Top classical conductors and performers, in September.

Sleeping

Ironically for a city with more than 1200 hotels, accommodation can be tricky. In July and August many places are booked out and prices are sky-high, especially as many proprietors insist on full board; in winter a lot of places simply shut up shop. If you do arrive without anywhere lined up, **Rimini Reservation** (☎ 0541 5 33 99; www.riminireservation.it; Parco Federico Fellini 3) can help.

Camping Italia Rimini (☎ 0541 73 28 82; www.campingitaliarimini.it; Via Toscanelli 112, Viserba; camp sites per adult/child/tent/car €10/5.50/11/5; ☎ Jun-Sep) One of numerous camping grounds along the coast, this tree-shaded place 2km northwest of the city centre has all requisite facilities. Take bus 4 from the train station and get off at stop 14.

Sunflower City Backpacker Hostel (☎ 0541 2 51 80; Via Dardanelli 102; www.sunflowerhostel.com; dm €18-27, s €26-49, d €46-79; ☎) Run by three ex-backpackers, the chilled-out Sunflower welcomes travellers with laundry and cooking facilities, spacious lockers, retro Austin Powers-style wallpaper, pool tables, a bar and free bike hire.

Sunflower Beach Backpacker Hostel (☎ 0541 37 34 32; Viale Siracusa 25; ☎ Mar-Oct) The same gang runs this seasonal place, which offers the same prices and amenities. Take bus 11 from the train station to stop 24.

Hostel Jammin (☎ 0541 39 08 00; www.hosteljammin.com; Viale Derna 22; dm €15-27, s €27-42, d €46-76; ☎ Mar-Oct; ☎ ☎) Just what a hostel should be: cheap, friendly and full of international travellers. The facilities are spot on with clean, spacious rooms, a rooftop terrace, free bike hire and wi-fi, and the beach is only a short stroll away.

Hotel Aurora Centro (☎ 0541 39 10 02; fax 0541 39 16 82; Via Tobruk 6; s/d €35/60; ☎) A homely *pensione* with threadbare carpets and children's toys cheerfully littered around the breakfast room. You get no airs and graces here, just clean, simple rooms and a gruff but kindly welcome. The beach is a quick hop away.

Hotel Villa Lalla (☎ 0541 5 51 55; www.villalalla.com; Viale V Veneto 22; s €36-56, d €56-96; ☎ ☎ ☎) One of the better hotels in the leafy residential district between the beach and the train station. Its smart white rooms are fresh and cool and, in winter, its rates are a snip. From mid-June to mid-September when the restaurant's open, it's a good idea to invest in half-board or full board (a mere €8 extra per meal). Bikes are free for guests.

Eating

our pick **Casina del Bosco** (☎ 0541 5 62 95; Via Beccadelli 15; piadine €4-6.20; ☎ noon-late) For fast food, nothing beats a *piadina*, a toasted half-moon of unleavened bread with a savoury filling – Romagna's retort to the wrap. This immensely popular eatery has built its clientele over 30 years by keeping things simple: *piadine*, salads, beer, wine and ice-cold desserts. Bask on the patio with a draught *hefeweizen* (wheat

beer) while you wait for the guys at the grill to do their thing.

Osteria Dè Börg (☎ 0541 5 60 74; Via Forzieri 12; meals €25-35; ☎ lunch & dinner) A homely *osteria* in the old fishing quarter, this place is what eating in Italy is all about: simple, honest food made with local ingredients and served in unpretentious surroundings. Second courses revolve around meat, from stuffed rabbit to steaks grilled on an open fire and seasoned with rosemary and sea salt.

Picnic (☎ 0541 2 19 16; Via Tempio Malatestiano 30; meals €30; ☎ closed Mon Sep-May) In business for nearly half a century, Picnic has a wide-ranging menu of traditional favourites like *sal-siccia fagioli con polenta* (sausage with beans and polenta), supplemented with whatever's freshest from the market – grilled fish of the day, for example, or local strawberries with whipped cream.

Osteria Teatini (☎ 0541 2 80 08; Piazza Teatini 3; meals €30-35) Described by its owner as a 'free people's place', this artsy, atmospheric joint is part restaurant, part bar and part alternative nightspot, with eclectic jazz-classical DJ sets on Friday nights and live music on Saturdays. Drink in the wonderful vaulted stone cellar or eat on the outdoor deck in the leafy square outside.

Brodo di Giuggiole (☎ 0541 2 67 78; Via Soardi 11; meals €35; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) Tucked down an alley off Piazza Tre Martiri, this intimate spot is great for an elegant night out, with its wood-panelled dining room, lanternlit plank terrace and an ever-changing menu featuring some of the freshest, best-prepared fish in town. Reservations are recommended, especially on live-jazz Tuesdays.

Gelateria Pellicano (Via S Mentana 10; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) This Rimini-based, five-store chain makes some seriously good ice cream. Try the *pinoli* (pine nut), with toasted whole nuts on top.

For picnic provender, load up at Rimini's **covered market** (Via Castelfidardo; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Sat).

Drinking

Rimini is well set up with bars and cafes. Head through the brick triple archway off Piazza Cavour and enter the old *pescheria* (fish market), whose courtyard is crawling with trendy pubs and wine bars. There are also plenty of drinking spots on the seafont.

Barge (☎ 0541 70 98 45; Lungomare C Tintori 13; ☎ closed Mon in winter) A magnet for modish

20-somethings, this seafront pub offers an irresistible combo: draught Guinness, regular DJs and frequent live music.

Caffè Cavour (☎ 0541 78 51 23; Piazza Cavour 12; ☎ 7am-midnight) This swish cafe on Rimini's main square attracts a well-to-do *aperitivo* set who lounge inside on leather chairs in winter, then decamp outdoors on balmy summer evenings to enjoy the fine Piazza Cavour views.

Taverna della Vecchia Pescheria (Via Pisacane 10; ☎ 6pm-2am) In the historic fish market, this rustic pub with little wooden tables and chairs is elbow-to-elbow with locals enjoying draught beer and free snacks at *aperitivo* time.

Entertainment

Rimini and nearby Riccione are Italy's top clubbing venues, attracting thousands of clubbers each weekend and many more in the frenetic summer months. The tourist office can advise on the 'in' venues and the clubbing bus services (see opposite). Reckon on anything from €15 to €30 for a top gig at a big club.

Cocoricò (☎ 0541 60 51 83; www.cocorico.it; Viale Chieti 44, Riccione; ☎ 11pm-5.30am) Dance under a glass pyramid at one of Italy's most famous clubs, 12km south of town in Riccione. Underground, techno and house rule.

Gotha (☎ 0541 47 87 39; www.gotha-rimini.com; Viale Regina Margherita 52; ☎ 9pm-5am) An intimate lounge bar for 1000, on the waterfront halfway between Rimini and Riccione, Gotha swings to a Latin beat in winter and a commercial soundtrack in summer.

Velvet Club (☎ 0541 75 61 11; www.velvet.it; Via Sant'Aquilina 21; ☎ 9pm-late) The Velvet, located 8km southwest of the centre, features DJs, big-name rock acts and dancing till dawn. The adjacent Velvet Factory is a live-work space for international visual and performing artists.

Disco Bar Coconut (☎ 0541 2 44 22; www.coconuts.it; Lungomare C Tintori 5; ☎ 11.30pm-4am) Flaunting its prime waterfront location, Rimini's most centrally located disco exudes a summer-beach-party atmosphere, with palm trees sprouting from the wooden deck and a 'flower power' VW convertible parked out the front.

Getting There & Away

Ryanair offers thrice-weekly direct flights from London Stansted to Rimini's Federico Fellini airport, 8km south of the city centre. Alitalia also flies nonstop to/from Rome.

There are regular buses from Rimini's train station to San Marino (return €7.40, 45 minutes, 11 daily).

By car, you have a choice of the A14 (south into Le Marche or northwest towards Bologna and Milan) or the toll-free but very busy SS16.

Hourly trains run down the coast to the ferry ports of Ancona (regional/Eurostar €4.90/11.90, one to 1½ hours) and Bari (€26.50/48.90, five to six hours). Up the line, they serve Ravenna (€3.80, one hour, hourly) and Bologna (regional/Eurostar €7.80/15.20, one to 1½ hours, half-hourly).

Getting Around

TRAMServizi (☎ 0541 30 08 11; www.tramservizi.it, in Italian) buses operate throughout the city. Local bus 9 runs between Rimini's train station and the airport (€1, 25 minutes). For Riccione (€1.50, 30 minutes), catch local bus 11 from the train station or along the *lungomare* (seafront); it leaves every eight to 15 minutes between 6am and 2am. In summer, the Blue Line (www.blueonlinebus.com) is a special late-night service with on-board music connecting the out-of-town clubs with the city centre, train station and camping grounds. It runs from 2am until 6am and for €4 you can hop on and off at will.

For a taxi, call ☎ 0541 5 00 20.

You can hire bikes and scooters from various kiosks on Piazzale Kennedy. Free bikes are also available from Rimini's municipal offices (Corso d'Augusto 158).

SAN MARINO

Perched on the top of a 657m lump of rock, the 61 sq km Repubblica di San Marino is Europe's third-smallest state after the Vatican and Monaco. Added to Unesco's World Heritage List in July 2008, it's a favourite day-trip destination – over two million visitors annually make the very steep climb to the historic centre, which these days is largely given over to tourism. Hundreds of souvenir stalls line the not-unattractive streets selling everything from samurai swords to San Marino stamps and locally minted coins, and restaurants do a brisk trade feeding the visiting hordes. However, if you catch it at a quiet time (ie during the week, preferably in winter) the

old town is pleasant enough and the views are spectacular.

Several legends describe the founding of San Marino, including one about a stonecutter who was given the land on top of Monte Titano by a rich Roman woman whose son he had cured. Throughout history, it's pretty much been left to its own devices. Cesare Borgia took possession early in the 16th century, but his rule was short-lived as he died soon after. Then in 1739 one Cardinal Giulio Alberoni took over the republic, but the pope backed San Marino's independence and the cardinal was sent packing. During WWII it remained neutral and played host to 100,000 refugees until 1944, when the Allies marched into town.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The old part of San Marino, the only element of any interest, is essentially one main street. Enter via Porta San Francesco, ascend Via Basilicis to Piazza Titano, climb another 50m to Piazza Garibaldi, turn left up Contrada del Collegio, go to the end



of Contrada del Omagnano or parallel Contrada del Pianello – then stop short or you'll fall off the cliff. That's it. You've done the capital of this city-state.

Post office (Viale A Onofri 87)

Tourist office (☎ 0549 88 29 14; www.visitsanmarino.com; Contrada del Collegio 40; ☎ 10am–5pm)

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

There's not much to do in San Marino other than stroll the historic centre, watch the half-hourly changing of the guard in Piazza della Libertà, admire the views and perhaps take in a bizarre attraction or two, such as the museums dedicated to vampires, torture, wax dummies and strange facts (the **Museo delle Curiosità**). The archaeological artefacts and paintings at the small **Museo di Stato** (☎ 0549 88 38 35; www.mu.seidistato.sm; Piazza Titano 1; admission free; ☎ 8am–8pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 9am–5pm mid-Sep–mid-Jun) are more mainstream, including several canvases by Guercino. The neo-Gothic **Palazzo Pubblico** (admission €3) overlooks Piazza della Libertà.

At the top of town the two fortresses, the 13th-century **Castello della Guaita** and 14th-century **Castello della Cesta** (admission to 1/2 €3/4.50; ☎ 8am–8pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 9am–5pm mid-Sep–mid-Jun) dominate the skyline, offering superb views towards Rimini and the coast. The latter houses a small museum of old weapons.

Collectors can pick up San Marino stamps and coins at the **Azienda Filatelica-Numismatica** (☎ 0549 88 23 65; www.aasfn.sm; Piazza Garibaldi 5; ☎ 8.15am–6pm Mon & Thu, to 2.15pm Tue, Wed & Fri). To get your passport stamped with a San Marino visa, you'll need to fork out €5 at the tourist office.

SLEEPING & EATING

You don't need to overnight in San Marino to do it justice, but if you're determined to do so there are a few hotels in the historic centre, including **Albergo Diamond** (☎/fax 0549 99 10 03; Contrada del Collegio 50; s/d €40/65), with six modest rooms above a large, busy restaurant.

Food is not one of San Marino's strong points and the best thing about some of the cafes is the views. The centre is well endowed with places offering set meals starting at around €15.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses run to/from Rimini (return €7.40, 45 minutes, 11 daily), arriving at Piazzale Calcigni. The SS72 leads up from Rimini.

Leave your car at one of the numerous car parks and walk up to the *centro storico*. If necessary, park at car park 11 and take the **funivia** (cable car; return €4.50; ☎ 7.50am–sunset Sep–Jun, to 1am Jul & Aug) up.

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