Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

Neighbourhood Top Five

1. Gazing heavenwards at Michelangelo’s masterpieces in the Sistine Chapel (p108) – on the ceiling, his cinematic Old Testament frescoes; on the western wall, his terrifying vision of the Last Judgment.

2. Being blown away by the super-sized opulence of St Peter’s Basilica (p122).

3. Trying to line up the columns on St Peter’s Square (p134) – it is possible.

4. Revelling in the wonderful rooftop views from Castel Sant'Angelo (p134).

Explore: Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

The Vatican, the world’s smallest sovereign state (a mere 0.44 sq km), sits atop the low-lying Vatican hill a few hundred metres west of the Tiber. Centred on the domed bulk of St Peter’s Basilica, it boasts some of Italy’s most revered artworks, many of which are housed in the vast Vatican Museums.

You’ll need at least a morning to do justice to the Vatican Museums. The highlight is the Michelangelo-decorated Sistine Chapel, but there’s enough art on display to keep you busy for years. If you’re with a tour guide, or if you can sneakily join onto a group, you can pass directly from the Sistine Chapel through to St Peter’s Basilica; otherwise you’ll have to walk around and approach from St Peter’s Sq, itself one of the Vatican’s most dramatic sights. Once finished in the basilica, you’ll be ready for a break. There are few good eating options in the Vatican itself, but the nearby Prati district is full of excellent trattorias, takeaways and restaurants.

Between the Vatican and the river lies the medieval district of the Borgo – before Mussolini bulldozed Via dei Concordia into the area, all the streets around St Peter’s were like this. The big sight here is Castel Sant’Angelo, the large, drum-shaped castle overlooking the river.

The Vatican, Borgo and Prati districts are all easy to reach by public transport.

Local Life

- **Fast Food** Rather than having a full-length midday meal, local office workers tend to grab a snack from the many excellent takeaways in Prati. Join them and lunch on *pizza al taglio* (pizza by the slice), *arancine* (deep-fried rice balls stuffed with cheese and vegetables) and gelato.
- **Shopping** Spearing off Piazza del Risorgimento, Via Cola di Rienzo is a popular shopping strip lined with department stores and midrange clothes shops.
- **Catch a Gig** Join the locals for sweet melodies at Alexanderplatz (p138), Rome’s oldest and most famous jazz joint. Another top venue is the basement pub Fonclea (p138).

Getting There & Away

- **Bus** From Termini, bus 40 is the quickest one to the Vatican – it’ll drop you off near Castel Sant’Angelo. You can also take bus 64, which runs a similar route but stops more often. Bus 492 runs from Stazione Tiburtina to Piazza del Risorgimento and Cipro metro station, passing through Piazza Barberini and the centro storico.
- **Metro** Take metro line A to Ottaviano-San Pietro. From the station, signs direct you to St Peter’s.

Lonely Planet’s Top Tip

Be wary of the touts around Ottaviano metro station selling queue-jumping tours of the Vatican Museums. These guys are on commission to round up clients and the tours they offer might well cost more than those sold on the museums’ official website.

Note that if you want to attend Easter or Christmas mass at St Peter’s you’ll have to book (free) tickets through the Prefettura della Casa Pontificia (www.vatican.va/various/prefettura/index_en.html).

Best Places to Eat

- Pizzarium (p138)
- Romeo (p136)
- Velavevodetto Ai Quiriti (p136)
- Enoteca La Torre (p137)

Best Places to Drink

- Sciascia Caffè (p138)
- Makasar (p138)
- Art Studio Café (p138)
- Passaguai (p138)

Best Overground & Underground

- Dome of St Peter’s Basilica (p122)
- Terrace of Castel Sant’Angelo (p134)
- Tomb of St Peter (p125)
- Vatican Grottoes (p125)
In a city of outstanding churches, none can hold a candle to St Peter’s, Italy’s largest, richest and most spectacular basilica. A monument to centuries of artistic genius, it contains some spectacular works of art, including three of Italy’s most celebrated masterpieces: Michelangelo’s Pietà, his breathtaking dome, and Bernini’s baldachin (canopy) over the papal altar.

Note that the basilica gets very busy so expect queues most days. Also, strict dress codes are enforced: no shorts, mini-skirts or bare shoulders.

History
The original St Peter’s, which lies beneath the current basilica, was commissioned by the emperor Constantine and built around 349 on the site where St Peter is said to have been buried between AD 64 and 67. But like many medieval churches, it eventually fell into disrepair and it wasn’t until the mid-15th century that efforts were made to restore it, first by Pope Nicholas V and then, rather more successfully, by Julius II.

In 1506 construction began on Bramante’s design for a new basilica based on a Greek-cross plan, with four equal arms and a huge central dome. But on Bramante’s death in 1514, building ground to a halt as architects, including Raphael and Antonio da Sangallo, tried to modify his original plans. Little progress was made and it wasn’t until Michelangelo took over in 1547 at the age of 72 that the situation changed. Michelangelo simplified Bramante’s plans and drew up designs for what was to become his greatest architectural achievement: the dome. He never lived to see it built, though, and it was left to Giacomo della Porta and Domenico Fontana to finish it in 1590.
With the dome in place, Carlo Maderno inherited the project in 1605. He designed the monumental facade and lengthened the nave towards the piazza. The basilica was finally consecrated in 1626.

**Facade**
Built between 1608 and 1612, Maderno’s immense facade is 48m high and 118.6m wide. Eight 27m-high columns support the upper attic on which 13 statues stand representing Christ the Redeemer, St John the Baptist and the 11 apostles. The central balcony, the Loggia della Benedizione, is where the pope stands to deliver his Urbi et Orbi blessing at Christmas and Easter.

Behind the columns in the grand atrium, the Porta Santa (Holy Door) is opened only in Jubilee Years.

**Interior – Right Nave**
At the beginning of the right aisle is Michelangelo’s hauntingly beautiful Pietà. Sculpted when the artist was 25 (in 1499), it’s the only work he ever signed – his signature is etched into the sash across the Madonna’s breast.

Nearby, a red floor disk marks the spot where Charlemagne and later Holy Roman emperors were crowned by the pope.

On a pillar just beyond the Pietà, Carlo Fontana’s gilt and bronze monument to Queen Christina of Sweden commemorates the far-from-holy Swedish monarch who converted to Catholicism in 1655.

Moving on, you’ll come to the Cappella di San Sebastiano, home of Pope John Paul II’s tomb, and the Cappella del Santissimo Sacramento, a sumptuously decorated baroque chapel with works by Borromini, Bernini and Pietro da Cortona.

Beyond the chapel, the grandiose monument to Gregory XIII sits near the roped-off Cappella Gregoriana, a chapel built by Gregory XIII from designs by Michelangelo.

Much of the right transept is closed off, but you can still make out the monument to Clement XIII, one of Canova’s most famous works.

**Interior – Central Nave**
Dominating the centre of the basilica is Bernini’s 29m-high baldachin. Supported by four spiral columns and made with bronze taken from the Pantheon, it stands over the papal altar, also known as the Altar of the Confession. In front, Carlo Maderno’s Confessione stands on the site where St Peter was originally buried.

Above the baldachin, Michelangelo’s dome soars to a height of 119m. Based on Brunelleschi’s cupola, Michelangelo’s dome soars to a height of 119m. Based on Brunelleschi’s cupola.

**CHRISTINA, QUEEN OF SWEDEN**
Famously portrayed by Greta Garbo in the 1933 film Queen Christina, the Swedish monarch is one of only three women buried in St Peter’s Basilica – the other two are Queen Charlotte of Cyprus, a minor 15th-century royal, and Agnesina Colonna, a 16th-century Italian aristocrat. Christina earned her place by abdicating the Swedish throne and converting to Catholicism in 1655. As Europe’s most high-profile convert, she became a Vatican darling and spent much of her later life in Rome, where she enjoyed fame as a brilliant patron of the arts. Her active private life was the subject of much salacious gossip, and rumours abounded of affairs with courtiers and acquaintances of both sexes.

Free English-language tours of the basilica are run from the Centro Servizi Pellegrini e Turisti at 9am every Tuesday and Thursday. In certain periods, volunteers from the Pontifical North American College also lead tours. The timetable for these varies, but they typically start at 2.15pm Monday through Friday.
in Florence, it’s supported by four massive stone piers named after the saints whose statues adorn the Bernini-designed niches. These saints are all associated with the basilica’s four major relics: the lance of St Longinus used to pierce Christ’s side; the cloth with which St Veronica wiped Jesus’ face; a fragment of the Cross collected by St Helena; and the head of St Andrew.

At the base of the Pier of St Longinus is Arnolfo di Cambio’s much-loved 13th-century bronze statue of St Peter, whose right foot has been worn down by centuries of caresses.

Domingating the tribune behind the altar is Bernini’s extraordinary Cattedra di San Pietro. A vast gilded bronze throne held aloft by four 5m-high saints, it’s centred on a wooden seat that was once thought to have been St Peter’s but in fact dates to the 9th century. Above, light shines through a yellow window framed by a gilded mass of golden angels and adorned with a dove to represent the Holy Spirit.

To the right of the throne, Bernini’s monument to Urban VIII depicts the pope flanked by the figures of Charity and Justice.

**Interior – Left Nave**

In the roped-off left transept, the Cappella della Madonna della Colonna takes its name from the Madonna that stares out from Giacomo della Porta’s marble altar. To its right, above the tomb of St Leo the Great, is a fine relief by Alessandro Algardi. Under the next arch is Bernini’s last work in the basilica, the monument to Alexander VII.

Halfway down the left aisle, the Cappella Clementina is named after Clement VIII, who had Giacomo della Porta decorate it for the Jubilee of 1600. Beneath the altar is the tomb of St Gregory the Great and, to the left, a monument to Pope Pius VII by Thorvaldsen.

The next arch shelters Alessandro Algardi’s 16th-century monument to Leo XI. Beyond it, the richly decorated Cappella del Coro was created by Giovanni Battista Ricci to designs by Giacomo della Porta. The monument to Innocent VIII by Antonio Pollaiuolo in the next aisle arch is a re-creation of a monument from the old basilica.

Continuing on, the Cappella della Presentazione contains two of St Peter’s most modern works: a black relief monument to John XXIII, by Emilio Greco, and a monument to Benedict XV, by Pietro Canonica.

Under the next arch are the so-called Stuart monuments. On the right is the monument to Clementina Sobieska, wife of James Stuart, by Filippo Barigioni, and on the left is Canova’s vaguely erotic monument to the last three members of the Stuart clan, the pretenders to the English throne who died in exile in Rome.

**Dome**

From the entrance of the dome (with/without lift €7/5; 8am-5.45pm summer, to 4.45pm winter; Ottaviano-San Pietro) on the right of the basilica’s main portico, you can walk the 551 steps to the top or take a small lift halfway and then follow on foot for the last 320 steps. Either way, it’s a long, steep climb. But make it to the top, and you’re rewarded with stunning views from a perch 120m above St Peter’s Square.

**Museo Storico Artistico**

Accessed from the left nave, the Museo Storico Artistico (Tesor; adult/reduced €7/5; 9am-6.15pm summer, to 5.15pm winter; Ottaviano-San Pietro) sparkles with sacred relics. Highlights include a tabernacle by Donatello; the Colonna Santa, a 4th-century Byzantine column from the earlier church; and the 6th-century Crux Vaticana (Vatican Cross), a jewel-encrusted crucifix presented by the emperor Justinian II to the original basilica.
Vatican Grottoes
Extending beneath the basilica, the Vatican Grottoes (9am–6pm summer, to 5pm winter) contain the tombs and sarcophagi of numerous popes, as well as several columns from the original 4th-century basilica. The entrance is in the Pier of St Andrew.

Tomb of St Peter
Excavations beneath the basilica have uncovered part of the original church and what archaeologists believe is the Tomb of St Peter (06 6988 5318; admission €13, over 15yr only). In 1942 the bones of an elderly, strongly built man were found in a box hidden behind a wall covered by pilgrims’ graffiti. And while the Vatican has never definitively claimed that the bones belong to St Peter, in 1968 Pope Paul VI said that they had been identified in a way that the Vatican considered to be ‘convincing’.

The excavations can only be visited by guided tour. To book a spot, email the Ufficio Scavi (scavi@fsp.va) as early as possible.

Contrary to popular opinion, St Peter’s Basilica is not the world’s largest church – the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamoussoukro on the Ivory Coast is bigger. Bronze floor plates in the central aisle indicate the respective sizes of the 14 next-largest churches.

FACE IN THE BALDACCHIN
The frieze on Bernini’s baldachin contains a hidden narrative that begins at the pillar to the left (looking with your back to the entrance). As you walk clockwise around the baldachin, note the woman’s face carved into the frieze of each pillar. On the first three pillars her face seems to express the increasing agony of childbirth; on the last one, it’s replaced by that of a smiling baby. The woman was a niece of Pope Urban VIII and gave birth as Bernini worked on the baldachin.
Visiting the Vatican Museums (Musei Vaticani) is a thrilling and unforgettable experience. With some 7km of exhibitions and more masterpieces than many small countries, this vast museum complex contains one of the world’s greatest art collections. Highlights include a spectacular collection of classical statuary, a suite of rooms painted by Raphael, and the Michelangelo-decorated Sistine Chapel.

Founded by Pope Julius II in the early 16th century, the museums are housed in the lavishly decorated halls and galleries of the Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano. This immense 5.5-hectare building consists of two palaces – the Vatican palace (nearer to St Peter’s) and the Belvedere Palace – joined by two long galleries. On the inside are three courtyards: the Cortile della Pigna, the Cortile della Biblioteca and, to the south, the Cortile del Belvedere. You’ll never cover it all in one day, so it pays to be selective.

**Pinacoteca**

Often overlooked by visitors, the papal picture gallery displays paintings dating from the 11th to 19th centuries, with works by Giotto, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Perugino, Titian, Guido Reni, Guercino, Pietro da Cortona, Caravaggio and Leonardo da Vinci.

Look out for a trio of paintings by Raphael in Room VIII – the *Madonna di Foligno* (Madonna of Folignano), the *Incoronazione della Vergine* (Crowning of the Virgin), and *La Trasfigurazione* (Transfiguration), which was completed by his students after his death in 1520. Other highlights include Filippo Lippi’s *L’Incoronazione della Vergine con Angeli, Santo e donatore* (Coronation of the Virgin with Angels, Saints, and donors), Leonardo da

**DON’T MISS...**
- Sistine Chapel
- Stanze di Raffaello
- Apollo Belvedere & Laocoön, Museo Pio-Clementino
- La Trasfigurazione, Pinacoteca

**PRACTICALITIES**
- Map p312
- ☏ 06 6988 4676
- http://mv.vatican.va
- Viale Vaticano
- adult/reduced €16/8, last Sun of month free
- ☀ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat. 9am-12.30pm last Sun of month
- M Ottaviano-San Pietro
Vinci’s haunting and unfinished *San Gerolamo* (St Jerome), and Caravaggio’s *Deposizione* (Deposition from the Cross).

**Museo Chiaramonti**
This museum is effectively the long corridor that runs down the lower east side of the Belvedere Palace. Its walls are lined with thousands of statues and busts representing everything from immortal gods to playful cherubs and ugly Roman patriarchs. Near the end of the hall, off to the right, is the *Braccio Nuovo* (New Wing; currently closed for restoration), which contains a famous statue of the Nile as a reclining god covered by 16 babies.

**Museo Pio-Clementino**
This stunning museum contains some of the Vatican’s finest classical statuary, including the peerless *Apollo Belvedere* and the 1st-century BC *Laocoön*, both in the *Cortile Ottagono* (Octagonal Courtyard). Before you go into the courtyard, take a moment to admire the 1st-century *Apoxyomenos*, one of the earliest known sculptures to depict a figure with a raised arm.

To the left as you enter the courtyard, the *Apollo Belvedere* is a 2nd-century Rome copy of a 4th-century-BC Greek bronze. A beautifully proportioned representation of the sun god Apollo, it’s considered one of the great masterpieces of classical sculpture. Nearby, the *Laocoön* shows a Trojan priest and his sons in mortal struggle with two sea serpents.

Back inside, the *Sala degli Animali* is filled with a selection of sculpted creatures and some magnificent 4th-century mosaics. Continuing on, you come to the *Sala delle Muse* (Room of the Muses), centred on the *Torso Belvedere*, another must-see. A fragment of a muscular 1st-century BC Greek sculpture, this was found in Campo de’ Fiori and used by Michelangelo as a model for his ignudi (male nudes) in the Sistine Chapel. It’s undergoing restoration.

The next room, the *Sala Rotonda* (Round Room), contains a number of colossal statues, including a gilded-bronze *Ercole* (Hercules) and an exquisite floor mosaic. The enormous basin in the centre of the room was found at Nero’s Domus Aurea and is made out of a single piece of red porphyry stone.

**Museo Gregoriano Egizio**
Founded by Pope Gregory XVI in 1839, the Egyptian museum displays pieces taken from Egypt in ancient Roman times. The collection is small, but there are fascinating exhibits including the *Trono di Rameses II* (part of a statue of the seated king), vividly painted sarcophagi from about 1000 BC, and a couple of macabre mummies.

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**JUMP THE QUEUE**
Avoiding the queues is largely a matter of luck, but there are some things you can do to reduce waiting time. Book tickets online (http://biglietteriamusei.vatican.va/musei/tickets/do; €4 booking fee). On payment, you’ll receive email confirmation, which you should print and present, along with valid ID, at the museum entrance. Alternatively, book a tour with a reputable guide. Time your visit: Tuesdays and Thursdays are quietest; Wednesday mornings are good as everyone is at the pope’s weekly audience; afternoon is better than the morning; avoid Mondays when many other museums are shut.

On the whole, exhibits are not well labelled, so consider hiring an audioguide (€7) or buying the excellent *Guide to the Vatican Museums and City* (€14). The museums are well equipped for visitors with disabilities, and wheelchairs are available free of charge from the Special Permits desk in the entrance hall. They can also be reserved by emailing accoglienza.musei@scv.va. Strollers can be taken into the museums.
Museo Gregoriano Etrusco
At the top of the Simonetti staircase, this fascinating museum contains artefacts unearthed in the Etruscan tombs of northern Lazio, as well as a superb collection of vases and Roman antiquities. Of particular interest is the Marte di Todi (Mars of Todi), a black bronze of a warrior dating to the late 5th century BC.

Galleria dei Candelabri & Galleria degli Arazzi
Originally an open loggia, the Galleria dei Candelabri is packed with classical sculpture and several elegantly carved candelabras that give the gallery its name. The corridor continues through to the Galleria degli Arazzi (Tapestry Gallery) and its huge hanging tapestries. The best, on the left, were woven in Brussels in the 16th century.

Galleria delle Carte Geografiche & Sala Sobieski
One of the unsung heroes of the Vatican Museums, the 120m-long Map Gallery is hung with 40 huge topographical maps. These were created between 1580 and 1583 for Pope Gregory XIII based on drafts by Ignazio Danti, one of the leading cartographers of his day. Beyond the gallery, the Sala Sobieski is named after an enormous 19th-century painting depicting the victory of the Polish King John III Sobieski over the Turks in 1683.

continued on p130

Museum Tour

Vatican Museums

LENGTH THREE HOURS

Pass through the entrance complex and head up the modern spiral ramp to the 1 Cortile delle Corazze, the start point for all routes through the museums. Take a moment to nip out to the terrace for views over St Peter’s dome and the Vatican Gardens. Re-enter and follow through to the 2 Cortile della Pigna, named after the huge Augustan-era bronze pine cone in the monumental niche. Cross the courtyard and enter the long corridor that is the 3 Museo Chiaramonti. Don’t stop here, but continue left, up the stairs, to the Museo Pio-Clementino for the Vatican’s finest classical statuary. Follow the flow of people through to the 4 Cortile Ottagono (Octagonal Courtyard), where you’ll find the mythical masterpieces, the Laocoön and Apollo Belvedere. Continue through a series of rooms – the 5 Sala degli Animali (Animal Room), the 6 Sala delle Muse (Room of the Muses), home of the famous Torso Belvedere, and the 7 Sala Rotonda (Round Room), centred on a vast red basin. From the neighbouring 8 Sala Croce Greca (Greek Cross Room), the Simonetti staircase leads up to the 9 Galleria dei Candelabri (Gallery of the Candelabra), the first of three galleries along a lengthy corridor. It gets crowded up here as you’re funnelled through the 10 Galleria degli Arazzi (Tapestry Gallery) and onto the 11 Galleria delle Carte Geografiche (Map Gallery), a 120m long hall hung with huge topographical maps. At the end of the corridor, carry on through the 12 Sala Sobieski to the 13 Sala di Costantino, the first of the four Stanze di Raffaello (Raphael Rooms) – the others are the 14 Stanza d’Eliodoro, the 15 Stanza della Segnatura, featuring Raphael’s superlative La Scuola di Atene, and the 16 Stanza dell’Incendio di Borgo. Anywhere else these magnificent frescoed chambers would be the star attraction, but here they serve as the warm-up for the grand finale, the Sistine Chapel.
**Stanze di Raffaello**

These four frescoed chambers, currently undergoing partial restoration, were part of Pope Julius II’s private apartments. Raphael himself painted the **Stanza della Segnatura** (1508–11) and the **Stanza d’Eliodoro** (1512–14), while the **Stanza dell’Incendio** (1514–17) and **Sala di Costantino** (1517–24) were decorated by students following his designs.

The first room you come to, the **Sala di Costantino** (Reception Room) is dominated by the **Battaglia di Costantino contro Maxentius** (Battle of the Milvian Bridge), a huge fresco showing the victory of Constantine, Rome’s first Christian emperor, over his rival Maxentius. Leading off the sala, but usually closed to the public, the **Cappella di Niccolo V**, Pope Nicholas V’s private chapel, boasts a superb cycle of frescoes by Fra Angelico.

The **Stanza d’Eliodoro**, which was used for private audiences, takes its name from the **Cacciata d’Eliodoro** (Expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple), an allegorical work referring to Pope Julius II’s policy of forcing foreign powers off Church lands. To its right is the **Messa di Bolsena** (Mass of Bolsena), showing Julius II paying homage to the relic of a 13th-century miracle at the lakeside town of Bolsena. Next is the **Incontro di Leone Magno con Attila** (Encounter of Leo the Great with Attila), and, on the fourth wall, the **Liberazione di San Pietro** ( Liberation of St Peter), a brilliant work illustrating Raphael’s masterful ability to depict light.

The **Stanza della Segnatura**, Pope Julius’ study and library, was the first room that Raphael painted, and it’s here that you’ll find his great masterpiece, **La Scuola di Atene** (The School of Athens), featuring philosophers and scholars gathered around Plato and Aristotle. The seated figure in front of the steps is believed to be Michelangelo, while the figure of Plato is said to be a portrait of Leonardo da Vinci, and Euclide (the bald man bending over) is Bramante. Raphael also included a self-portrait in the lower right corner (he's the second figure from the right in the black hat). Opposite is **La Disputa del Sacramento** (Disputation on the Sacrament), also by Raphael.

The most famous work in the **Stanza dell’Incendio di Borgo** (Dining Room) is the **Incendio di Borgo** (Fire in the Borgo), which depicts Leo IV extinguishing a fire by making the sign of the cross. The ceiling was painted by Raphael’s master, Perugino. From the Raphael Rooms, stairs lead to the **Appartamento Borgia** and the Vatican’s collection of modern religious art.

**The Sistine Chapel**

The jewel in the Vatican crown, the Sistine Chapel (**Cappella Sistina**) is home to two of the world’s most famous works of art – Michelangelo’s ceiling frescoes and his **Giudizio Universale** (Last Judgment).

**History**

The chapel was originally built for Pope Sixtus IV, after whom it is named, and consecrated on 15 August 1483. It's a big, barnlike structure, measuring 40.2m long, 13.4m wide and 20.7m high – the same size as the Temple of Solomon – and even pre-Michelangelo it would have been impressive. Frescoes by the leading artists of the day adorned the walls, the vaulted ceiling was coloured to resemble a blue sky with golden stars, and the floor had an inlaid polychrome marble pattern.

However, apart from the wall frescoes and floor, little remains of the original decor, which was sacrificed to make way for Michelangelo’s two masterpieces. The first, the ceiling, was commissioned by Pope Julius II and painted between 1508 and 1512; the second, the spectacular **Giudizio Universale**, was completed almost 30 years later in 1541.
Both were controversial works influenced by the political ambitions of the popes who commissioned them. The ceiling came as part of Julius II’s drive to transform Rome into the Church’s showcase capital, while Pope Paul III intended the Giudizio Universale to serve as a warning to Catholics to toe the line during the Reformation, which was then sweeping through Europe.

**Restoration**

In recent years debate has centred on the chapel’s multimillion-dollar restoration, which finished in 1999 after nearly 20 years. In removing almost 450 years’ worth of dust and candle soot, restorers finally revealed the frescoes in their original technicolour glory. But some critics claimed that they also removed a layer of varnish that Michelangelo had added to darken them and enhance their shadows. Whatever the truth, the Sistine Chapel remains a truly spectacular sight.

**The Ceiling & the Ignudi**

The Sistine Chapel provided the greatest challenge of Michelangelo’s career, and painting the 800-sq-metre vaulted ceiling at a height of more than 20m pushed him to the limits of his genius.

When Pope Julius II first approached him – some say on the advice of his chief architect, Bramante, who was keen for Michelangelo to fail – he was reluctant to accept. He regarded himself as a sculptor and had had virtually no experience painting frescoes. However, Julius was determined and in 1508 he persuaded Michelangelo to accept the commission for a fee of 3000 ducats (more or less €1.5 to €2 million in today’s money).

Originally, Pope Julius wanted Michelangelo to paint the twelve apostles and a series of decorative architectural elements. But the artist rejected this and came up with a much more complex design to cover the entire ceiling based on stories from the book of Genesis. And it’s this that you see today.

The focus of the ceiling frescoes are the nine central panels, but set around them are 20 athletic male nudes, known as ignudi. These muscle-bound models caused a scandal when they were first revealed and today art historians are still divided over their meaning – some claim they are angels, others say that they represent Michelangelo’s neo-Platonic vision of ideal man.

**Wall Frescoes**

If you can tear your eyes away from the Michelangelo, the Sistine Chapel also boasts some superb wall frescoes. These formed part of the original chapel decoration and were painted between 1481 and 1482.
On entering the chapel head over to the main entrance in the far (east) wall for the best views of the ceiling.

Michelangelo’s ceiling design – which took him four years to complete – covers the entire 800-sq-m surface. With painted architectural features and a colourful cast of biblical figures, it centres on nine central panels depicting the Creation, Adam and Eve, the Fall, and the plight of Noah.

As you look up from the east wall, the first panel is the 1 Drunkenness of Noah, followed by 2 The Flood, and the 3 Sacrifice of Noah. Next, 4 Original Sin and Banishment from the Garden of Eden famously depicts Adam and Eve being sent packing after accepting the forbidden fruit from Satan, represented by a snake with the body of a woman coiled around a tree. The 5 Creation of Eve is then followed by the 6 Creation of Adam. This, one of the most famous images in Western art, shows a bearded God pointing his finger at Adam, thus bringing him to life. Completing the sequence are the 7 Separation of Land from Sea, the 8 Creation of the Sun, Moon and Plants and the 9 Separation of Light from Darkness, featuring a fearsome God reaching out to touch the sun.

Straight ahead of you on the west wall is Michelangelo’s mesmeric 10 Giudizio Universale (Last Judgment), showing Christ (in the centre near the top) passing sentence over the souls of the dead as they are torn from their graves to face him. The saved get to stay up in heaven (in the upper right), the damned are sent down to face the demons in hell (in the bottom right).

The chapel’s side walls also feature stunning Renaissance frescoes, representing the lives of Moses (to your left) and Christ (to the right). Look out for Botticelli’s 11 Temptations of Christ and Perugino’s 12 Handing over of the Keys.
by a team of Renaissance artists, including Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Pinturicchio, Perugino and Luca Signorelli. They represent events in the lives of Moses (to the left, looking at the *Giudizio Universale*) and Christ (to the right).

**Giudizio Universale (Last Judgment)**
Michelangelo’s second stint in the Sistine Chapel, from 1535 to 1541, resulted in the *Giudizio Universale* (Last Judgment), his highly charged depiction of Christ’s second coming on the 200-sq-metre western wall.

The project, which was commissioned by Pope Clement VII and encouraged by his successor Paul III, was controversial from the start. Critics were outraged when Michelangelo destroyed two Perugino frescoes when preparing the wall – it had to be replastered so that it tilted inwards to protect it from dust – and when it was unveiled in 1541, its dramatic, swirling mass of 391 predominantly naked bodies provoked outrage. So fierce were feelings that the Church’s top brass, meeting at the 1564 Council of Trent, ordered the nudity to be covered up. The task fell to Daniele da Volterra, one of Michelangelo’s students, who added fig leaves and loin-cloths to 41 nudes, earning himself the nickname *il braghettone* (the breeches maker).

For his part Michelangelo rejected the criticism. He even got his own back on one of his loudest critics, Biagio de Cesena, the papal master of ceremonies, by depicting him as Minos, judge of the underworld, with donkey ears and a snake wrapped around him.

Another famous figure is St Bartholomew, just beneath Christ, holding his own flayed skin. The face in the skin is said to be a self-portrait of Michelangelo, its anguished look reflecting the artist’s tormented faith.

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**HEAVENLY BLUE**
One of the striking features of the *Giudizio Universale* is the amount of ultramarine blue in the painting – in contrast with the ceiling frescoes, which don’t have any. In the 16th century, blue paint was made from the hugely expensive stone lapis lazuli, and artists were reluctant to use it unless someone else was paying. In the case of the *Giudizio Universale*, the pope picked up the tab for all of Michelangelo’s materials; on the ceiling, however, the artist had to cover his own expenses and so used less costly colours.

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**It’s often said that Michelangelo worked alone. He didn’t.**
Throughout the job, he employed a steady stream of assistants to help with the plasterwork (producing frescoes involves painting directly onto wet plaster).

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**MYTHS DEBUNKED**
A popular myth is that Michelangelo painted lying down, as portrayed by Charlton Heston in the film *The Agony and the Ecstasy*. In fact, Michelangelo designed a curved scaffolding system that allowed him to work standing up, albeit in an awkward, leaning-back position.
SIGHTS

Boasting priceless treasures at every turn, the Vatican is home to some of Rome’s most popular sights. The Vatican Museums and St Peter’s Basilica are the star attractions, but Castel Sant’Angelo, one of the city’s most recognisable landmarks, is also well worth a visit.

Vatican City

ST PETER’S BASILICA
See p122.

VATICAN MUSEUMS
See p126.

ST PETER’S SQUARE
Map p312 (Piazza San Pietro; M Ottaviano-San Pietro) Overlooked by St Peter’s Basilica, the Vatican’s central square was laid out between 1656 and 1667 to a design by Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Seen from above, it resembles a giant keyhole with two semi-circular colonnades, each consisting of four rows of Doric columns, encircling a giant ellipse that straightens out to funnel believers into the basilica. The effect was deliberate – Bernini described the colonnades as representing ‘the motherly arms of the church’.

The scale of the piazza is dazzling: at its largest it measures 340m by 240m. There are 284 columns and, atop the colonnades, 140 saints. The 25m obelisk in the centre was brought to Rome by Caligula from Heliopolis in Egypt and later used by Nero as a turning post for the chariot races in his circus.

Leading off the piazza, the monumental approach road, Via della Conciliazione, was commissioned by Mussolini and built between 1936 and 1950.

VATICAN GARDENS
Map p312 (http://biglietteriamusei.vatican.va/musei/tickets/do; adult/reduced incl Vatican Museums €32/24; by reservation only; M Ottaviano-San Pietro) Up to half the Vatican is covered by the perfectly manicured Vatican Gardens, which contain fortifications, grottoes, monuments and fountains. Visits are by two-hour guided tour only, for which you’ll need to book at least a week in advance. Note that after the tour you’re free to visit the Vatican Museums on your own.

NECROPOLI VIA TRIUMPHALIS
Map p312 (http://biglietteriamusei.vatican.va/musei/tickets/do; adult/reduced incl Vatican Museums €26/20, incl Vatican Museums & Gardens €37/29; by reservation only; M Ottaviano-San Pietro) Not to be confused with the Tomb of St Peter, this ancient Roman cemetery extends beneath the Vatican hill. Guided tours, which must be pre-booked, follow modern walkways through the ongoing excavations, taking in tombs and burial chambers unearthed during construction of an underground car park.

Borgo

CASTEL SANT’ANGELO
Map p312 (06 681 91 11; http://castelsantan- gelo.beniculturali.it; Lungotevere Castello 50; adult/reduced €7/3.50; 9am-7.30pm Tue-Sun; Piazza Pia) With its chunky round keep, this castle is an instantly recognisable landmark. Built as a mausoleum for the emperor Hadrian, it was converted into a papal fortress in the 6th century and named after an angelic vision that Pope Gregory the Great had in 590. Nowadays, it houses the Museo Nazionale di Castel Sant’Angelo and its eclectic collection of
paintings, sculpture, military memorabilia and medieval firearms.

Many of these weapons were used by soldiers fighting to protect the castle, which, thanks to a secret 13th-century passageway to the Vatican (the Passetto di Borgo), provided sanctuary to many popes in times of danger. Most famously, Pope Clemente VI holed up here during the 1527 sack of Rome.

The castle’s upper floors are filled with lavishly decorated Renaissance interiors, including the beautifully frescoed Sala Paolina. Two storeys up, the terrace, immortalised by Puccini in his opera Tosca, offers unforgettable views over Rome.

Note that ticket prices may increase during temporary exhibitions.

PONTE SANT’ANGELO 
The emperor Hadrian built the Ponte Sant’Angelo in 136 to provide an approach to his mausoleum, but it was Bernini who brought it to life, designing the angel sculptures in 1668. The three central arches of the bridge are part of the original structure; the end arches were restored and enlarged in 1892–94 during the construction of the Lungotevere embankments.

EATING
Beware, hungry travellers: there are an unholy number of overpriced tourist-traps around the Vatican and St Peter’s. A better bet is nearby Prati, which has lots of excellent eateries catering to the lawyers and media execs who work in the area, many at the headquarters of RAI, the Italian state broadcaster.

VATICAN CITY, BORGO & PRATI EATING

OLD BRIDGE
Map p312 (www.gelateriaoldbridge.com; Viale dei Bastioni di Michelangelo 5; gelato €2-5; ☏9am-2am Mon-Sat, 2.30pm-2am Sun; Piazza del Risorgimento, Piazza del Risorgimento) Ideal for a pre- or post-Vatican pick-me-up, this tiny gelateria has been cheerfully dishing up huge portions of delicious gelato for over 20 years. Alongside all the traditional flavours, there are also yoghurts and refreshing sorbets.

PAPAL AUDIENCES
At 11am on Wednesdays, the pope addresses his flock at the Vatican (in July and August in Castel Gandolfo near Rome). For details of how to apply for free tickets, see the Vatican website (www.vatican.va/various/prefettura/index_en.html).

When he’s in Rome, the Pope blesses the crowd in St Peter’s Sq on Sundays at noon. No tickets are required.

Borgo

LA VERANDA 
RISTORANTE €€€
Map p312 (06 687 29 73; www.laveranda.net; Borgo Santo Spirito 73; meals €60-70, brunch €18-27; 12.30-3pm & 7.30-11pm Tue-Sun; Piazza Pia) A location in Paolo Sorrentino’s Oscar-winning film The Great Beauty, this fine-dining restaurant sets a memorable stage for quality Italian cuisine. Inside, you can dine under 15th-century Pinturicchio frescoes, while in the warmer months, you can opt for a shady table in the garden. To enjoy the atmosphere for a snip of the regular price, stop by for Sunday brunch.

Prati

FATAMORGANA
GELATERIA €
Map p312 (www.gelateriafatamorgana.it; Via Bettolo 7; gelato from €2; noon-11pm; Ottaviano–San Pietro) It’s off the beaten track, but this superb gelateria is well worth the walk. As well as all the classic flavours there are some wonderfully original creations, such as a mouth-wateringly good agrumi (citrus fruit) and a strange but delicious basilico, miele e noci (basil, honey and hazelnuts).

FA-BIO
SANDBICHES €
Map p312 (06 6452 5810; www.fa-bio.com; Via Germanico 43; sandwiches €5; 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat) Sandwiches, salads and smoothies are all prepared with speed, skill and fresh organic ingredients at this tiny takeaway. Locals and in-the-know visitors come to grab a quick lunchtime bite, and if you can squeeze in the door you’d do well to follow suit.
MONDO ARANCINA
Map p312 (Via Marcantonio Colonna 38; arancine from €2.50; 10am-midnight; Lepanto) All sunny yellow ceramics, cheerful crowds and tantalising snacks, this bustling takeaway brings a little corner of Sicily to Rome. Star of the show are the classic fist-sized arancine, deep-fried rice balls stuffed with fillers ranging from classic ragù to more exotic fare such as truffle risotto and quail’s eggs.

GELARMONY
Map p312 (Via Marcantonio Colonna 34; gelato €1.50-3; 10am-late; Lepanto) Sweet-tooths are spoiled for choice at this popular Sicilian gelateria. There’s an ample selection of gelati, but for a typically Sicilian flavour go for pistachio or cassata (sponge cake with cream, marzipan, chocolate and candied fruit).

CACIO E PEPE
TRATTORIA €
Map p312 (06 321 72 68; Via Avezzana 11; meals €25; 12.30-3pm Mon-Sat, 7.30-11pm Mon-Fri; Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini) This humble eatery is about as hardcore as it gets with its menu of traditional Roman dishes, spartan interior and no-frills service. If you can find a free seat at one of the pavement tables, keep it simple with the namesake cacio e pepe (pasta with pecorino cheese and black pepper).

ROMEO
PIZZA, RISTORANTE €€
Map p312 (06 3211 0120; www.romeo.roma.it; Via Silla 26a; pizza slices €2.50, meals €45; 9am-midnight; Ottaviano–San Pietro) This chic, contemporary outfit is part bakery, part deli, part takeaway, and part restaurant. For a quick bite, there’s delicious sliced pizza or you can have a panino made up at the deli counter; for a full restaurant meal, the à la carte menu offers a mix of traditional Italian dishes and forward-looking international creations.

VELAVEVETTO
AI QUIRITI
LAZIO CUISINE €€
Map p312 (06 3600 0009; www.ristorantevelavevetto.it; Piazza dei Quiriti 5; meals €35; 12.30-2.30pm & 7.30-11.30pm; Lepanto) This welcoming restaurant continues to win diners over with its unpretentious, earthy food and honest prices. The menu reads like a directory of Roman staples, and while it’s all pretty good, standout choices include fettuccine con asparagi, guanciale e pecorino (pasta ribbons with asparagus, guanciale and pecorino cheese) and polpette di bollito (fried meat balls).

IL SORPASSO
ITALIAN €€
Map p312 (www.sorpasso.info; Via Properzio 31-33; meals €20-35; 7am-1am Mon-Fri, 9am-1am Sat; Piazza del Risorgimento) A bar-restaurant hybrid sporting a vintage cool look – vaulted stone ceilings, hanging hams, white bare-brick walls – Il Sorpasso is a hot ticket right now. Open throughout the day, it caters to a fashionable neighbourhood crowd, serving everything from pasta specials to aperitifs, trapizzini (pyramids of stuffed pizza), and a full dinner menu.

HOSTARIA DINO E TONY
TRATTORIA €€
Map p312 (06 3973 3284; Via Leone IV 60; meals €25-30; 12.30-3pm & 7-11pm, closed Sun & Aug; Ottaviano–San Pietro) An authentic old-school trattoria, Dino e Tony offers simple, no-frills Roman cooking. Kick off with the monumental antipasto, a minor meal in its own right, before plunging into the trattoria’s signature rigatoni all’ amatriciana (pasta tubes with bacon-like guanciale, chilli and tomato sauce). No credit cards.

DEL FRATE
RISTORANTE, WINE BAR €€
Map p312 (06 323 64 37; www.enotecadelfrate.it; Via degli Scipioni 122; meals €40; noon-3pm & 7-11pm, closed Sun & Aug; Ottaviano–San Pietro) Locals love this upmarket wine bar with its simple wooden tables and high-ceilinged brick-arched rooms. There’s a formidable wine and cheese list with everything from Sicilian ricotta to Piedmontese gorgonzola, and a small but refined menu of tarts, salads, fresh pastas and main courses.

DAL TOSCANO
TUSCAN €€
Map p312 (06 3972 5717; www.ristorantedaltoscano.it; Via Germanico 58-60; meals €45; 12.30-3pm & 8-11.15pm Tue-Sun; Ottaviano–San Pietro) Immerse yourself in the tastes of Tuscany at this old-fashioned ristorante.

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

SNACK HEAVEN
There are hundreds of bars, cafes and takeaways in the Prati area, but for a quick, cheap bite nowhere beats Dolce Maniera (Map p312; Via Barletta 27; snacks €0.30-1; 24hr; Ottaviano–San Pietro), an unmarked basement bakery that serves freshly made cornetti (€0.30), as well as slabs of pizza, panini and an indulgent array of cakes and biscuits.
Meat is a highlight, with cured hams and salamis served as starters, and grilled steaks providing the mains. But before you embark on the colossal char-grilled bistecca alla Fiorentina (Florentine-style steak), try the ribollito, a thick Tuscan soup. Reservations advised.

OSTERIA DELL’ANGELO
TRATTORIA €€
Map p312 (06 372 94 70; Via Bettolo 24; fixed-price menu €25-35; 12.30-2.30pm Tue-Fri, 8.30-11pm Mon-Sat; M Ottaviano–San Pietro)
With rugby paraphernalia on the walls and basic wooden tables, this laid-back neighbourhood trattoria is a popular spot for genuine local cuisine. The fixed-price menu features a mixed antipasti, a robust Roman-style pasta and a choice of hearty mains with a side dish. To finish off, spiced biscuits are served with sweet dessert wine. Reservations recommended.

PIZZERIA AMALFI
PIZZA €€
Map p312 (06 3973 3165; Via dei Gracchi 12; pizzas €6.50-9.50, meals €25-30; noon-3pm & 7pm-12.30am; M Ottaviano–San Pietro)
This brassy, brightly coloured pizzeria-cum-restaurant flies the flag for Neapolitan cuisine with its buffalo mozzarella starters, soft, doughy pizzas and calzones. If pizza doesn’t appeal, you can choose from a lengthy list of grilled meats, pastas, salads and fish dishes. Note that there’s a second branch across the road at Via dei Gracchi 5.

ENOTECA LA TORRE
RISTORANTE €€€
Map p312 (06 4566 8304; www.enotecalatorreroma.com; Via Laetitia, Lungotevere delle Armi 22; fixed-price lunch menu €55, meals €110; 12.30-2.30pm Tue-Sat, 7.30-10pm Mon-Sat; M Lungotevere delle Armi) The art-nouveau Villa Laetitia provides the romantic setting for this refined Michelin-starred restaurant. A relative newcomer to the capital’s fine-dining scene, chef Danilo Ciavattino has quickly established himself with his original culinary style and love of authentic country flavours.

RISTORANTE L’ARCANGELO
RISTORANTE €€€
Map p312 (06 321 09 92; www.larcangelo.com; Via Belli 59-61; lunch/dinner tasting menus €25/55, meals €60; 12.30-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 8-11pm Mon-Sat; Piazza Cavour)Styled as an informal bistro with wood-panelling, leather banquettes and casual table settings, L’Arcangelo enjoys a stellar local reputation. The highlight for many are the classic Roman staples such as carbonara and amatriciana, but there’s also a limited selection of more innovative modern dishes. The wine list is a further plus, boasting some interesting Italian labels.

SETTEMBRINI
RISTORANTE €€€
Map p312 (06 323 26 17; www.viasettembrini.it; Via Settembrini 25; menus lunch €28-38, dinner €48-65; 12.30-3pm Mon-Fri, 8-11pm Mon-Sat; Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini) All labels, suits
and media gossip, this fashionable restaurant is part of the ever-growing Settembrini empire. Next door is a stylish all-day cafe, while over the way, Libri & Cucina is a laid-back bookshop eatery, and L’Officina an upscale food store. At the casually chic main restaurant expect contemporary Italian cuisine and quality wine to match.

**Aurelio PIZZARIUM**

Map p312 (Via della Meloria 43; pizza slices from €3; 7am-10pm; M Cipro–Musei Vaticani) Pizzarium, or ‘Bonci pizza rustica #pizzarium’, as it has recently re-branded itself, serves some of Rome’s best sliced pizza. Scissor-cut squares of meticulously crafted dough are topped with original combinations of seasonal ingredients and served on paper trays for immediate consumption. There’s also a daily selection of freshly fried supplì (crunchy rice croquettes).

**DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE**

The quiet area around the Vatican and Prati harbours a few charming wine bars and cafes.

**Prati**

**SCIASCIA CAFFÈ**

Map p312 (Via Fabio Massimo 80/A; 7.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat; M Ottaviano–San Pietro) The timeless elegance of this polished cafe is perfectly suited to the exquisite coffee it makes. There are various options but nothing can beat the caffè eccellente, a velvety smooth espresso served in a delicate cup that has been lined with melted chocolate. The result is nothing short of magnificent.

**MAKASAR WINE BAR, TEAHOUSE**

Map p312 (www.makasar.it; Via Plauto 33; noon-midnight Tue-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, 5.30-11.30pm Sun; M Piazza del Risorgimento) Recharge your batteries with a quiet drink at this oasis of bookish tranquillity. Pick your tipple from the nine-page tea menu or opt for an Italian wine and sit back in the casually stylish, softly lit interior. For something to eat, there’s a small menu of salads, bruschette, baguettes and healthy hot dishes.

**PASSAGUAI WINE BAR**

Map p312 (06 8745 1358; www.passaguai.it; Via Leto 1; 10am-2am Mon-Fri, 6pm-2am Sat & Sun; M Piazza del Risorgimento) A cozy basement bar with tables in a vaulted interior and on a quiet sidestreet, Passaguai feels pleasingly off-the-radar. It’s a great spot for a beer or glass of wine – there’s an excellent choice of both – accompanied by cheese and cold cuts, or even a full meal from the limited menu. Free wi-fi.

**ART STUDIO CAFÉ**

Map p312 (06 3260 9104; www.artstudio咖啡. it; Via dei Gracchi 187a; 7.30am-9pm Mon-Sat; M Lepanto) This artsy, light-filled cafe is a lovely spot for a light lunch, afternoon tea or evening aperitif ($6 to $8 depending on your choice of drink). And for the artist in you, it also offers a series of mosaic and craftwork courses (p139).

**ENTERTAINMENT**

**ALEXANDERPLATZ JAZZ**

Map p312 (06 3972 1867; www.alexanderplatz-jazzclub.com; Via Ostia 9; 8.30pm-2am, concerts 9.45pm; M Ottaviano–San Pietro) Small, intimate and underground, Rome’s most celebrated jazz club draws top Italian and international performers and a respectful cosmopolitan crowd. Book a table for the best stage views or if you want to dine to the tunes. Check the website for upcoming gigs.

**FONCLEA LIVE MUSIC**

Map p312 (06 689 63 02; www.fonclea.it; Via Crescenzo 82a; 7pm-2am Sep-May; M Piazza del Risorgimento) Fonclea is a great little pub venue, serving up nightly gigs by bands playing everything from jazz and soul to funk, rock and Latin (concerts start at around 9.30pm). Get in the mood with a drink during happy hour (7pm to 8.30pm daily). From June to August, the pub ups sticks and moves to a site by the Tiber.

**AUDITORIUM CONCILIAZIONE LIVE PERFORMANCE**

Map p312 (06 3281 0333; www.auditoriumconciliazione.it; Via della Conciliazione 4; M Piazza Pia) On the main approach road to St Peter’s Basilica, this large auditorium plays host to...
a wide range of events – classical and contemporary concerts, cabarets, dance spectacles, theatre productions, film screenings and exhibitions.

TEATRO GHIONE
Map p312 (06 637 22 94; www.teatroghione.it; Via delle Fornaci 37; Via di Porta Cavalleggeri) The Teatro Ghione is a big 500-seat theatre near St Peter’s that offers a varied program of classic and modern plays, concerts and musicals.

SHOPPING

ENOTECA COSTANTINI
Map p312 (www.pierocostantini.it; Piazza Cavour 16; 9am-1pm Tue-Sat, 4.30-8pm Mon-Sat; Via Cavour) If you’re after a hard-to-find grappa or something special for your wine collection, this historic enoteca is the place to try. Opened in 1972, Piero Costantini’s superbly stocked shop is a point of reference for aficionados across town with an 800-sq-m basement cellar and a colossal collection of Italian and world wines and more than 1000 spirits.

ANTICA MANUFACTORIA
CAPPELLI
Map p312 (06 3972 5679; www.antica-cappellaria.it; Via degli Scipioni 46; 9am-7pm Mon-Fri; Ottaviano–San Pietro) A throwback to a more elegant age, the atelier-boutique of milliner Patrizia Fabri offers a wide range of beautifully crafted hats. Choose from the off-the-peg line of straw Panamas, vintage cloches, felt berets and tweed deerstalkers, or have one made to measure. Prices range from about €70 to €300 and ordered hats can be delivered within the day.

RECHICLE
Map p312 (Piazza dell’Unità 21; 11am-1.30pm Tue-Sat, 2.30-7.30pm Mon-Sat; Via Cola di Rienzo) Search out this discreet boutique behind the covered market on Piazza dell’Unità for secondhand styles and vintage fashions. Designer labels are in evidence among the racks of women’s clothes, shoes, bags and accessories displayed alongside the occasional vintage piece.

CASTRONI
Map p312 (www.castronicoladirienzo.com; Via Cola di Rienzo 196; 7.45am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-8pm Sun; Via Cola di Rienzo) This is a real Aladdin’s cave of gourmet treats. Towering, ceiling-high shelves groan under the weight of Italian wines and foodie specialities, classic foreign delicacies, and all manner of sweets and chocolates. Adding to the atmosphere are the coffee odours that waft up from the in-store bar.

ARTS & CRAFTS COURSES
If the sight of so much art in the Vatican has inspired you, head to the Art Studio Café (p138), a bright cafe that doubles as a mosaic and craft school. There are various courses on offer but if time is tight, the one to go for is a two-hour introduction to mosaic-making (£50 or £35 for children). If you’re in town for longer, you could sign up for an eight-lesson course in ceramics (£300) or for six lessons in drawing and painting (£180).

Note that short courses can be arranged in English.
From opulent five-star palaces to chic boutique hotels, family-run pensions, B&Bs, hostels and convents, Rome has accommodation to please everyone. But while there’s plenty of choice, rates are universally high and you’ll need to book early to get the best deal.

Pensions & Hotels
The bulk of Rome’s accommodation consists of pensioni (pensions) and alberghi (hotels).

A pensione is a small, family-run hotel, often in a converted apartment. Rooms are usually fairly simple, though most come with a private bathroom.

Hotels are rated from one to five stars. Most hotels in Rome’s historic centre tend to be three-star and up. As a rule, a three-star room will come with a hairdryer, a minibar (or fridge), a safe, air-con and wi-fi. Some may also have satellite TV. Note that Roman hotel rooms tend to be small, especially in the centro storico and Trastevere, where hotels are often housed in centuries-old palazzi.

B&Bs & Guesthouses
Alongside traditional B&Bs, Rome has many boutique-style guesthouses offering chic accommodation at midrange to top-end prices.

Breakfast in a Roman B&B usually consists of bread rolls, croissants, yoghurt, ham and cheese.

Hostels
Rome’s hostels cater to everyone from backpackers to budget-minded families. Many offer hotel-style rooms alongside traditional dorms.

Some hostels don’t accept reservations for dorm beds, so it’s first come, first served.

Religious Institutions
Many of Rome’s religious institutions offer cheap(ish) rooms. These often impose strict curfews and are fairly short on frills. Book well ahead.

Rental Accommodation
For longer stays, renting an apartment will generally work out cheaper than an extended hotel sojourn. Bank on about €900 per month for a studio apartment or one-bedroom flat. For longer stays, you’ll probably have to pay bills plus a building maintenance charge.

Seasons & Rates
Rome doesn’t have a low season as such but rates are at their lowest from November to March (excluding Christmas and New Year) and from mid-July through August. Expect to pay top whack in spring (April to June) and autumn (September and October) and over the main holiday periods (Christmas, New Year and Easter). Most midrange and top-end hotels accept credit cards. It’s always best to check in advance.

Accommodation Websites
- 060608 (www.060608.it/en/accoglienza/dormire) Official Comune di Roma site with accommodation lists. Details are not always up to date.
- Rome As You Feel (www.romeasyoufeel.com) Apartment rentals, from cheap studio flats to luxury apartments.
Lonely Planet’s Top Choices

Palm Gallery Hotel (p222) Arty retreat in elegant surroundings.
Babuino 181 (p219) Chic luxury on top shopping street.
Arco del Lauro (p221) Minimalist comfort in Trastevere B&B.
Villa Spalletti Trivelli (p221) Stately style in a city-centre mansion.

Best by Budget

€
Arco del Lauro (p221) A cool bolthole in happening Trastevere.
Althea Inn (p222) Designer comfort at budget prices.
Beehive (p220) Classy hostel near Termini.

€€
Palm Gallery Hotel (p222) A delightful villa hotel.
Residenza Maritti (p216) Welcoming hideaway near the forums.
Daphne Inn (p218) Boutique hotel with superlative service.

€€€
Babuino 181 (p219) Bask in understated luxury.
Villa Spalletti Trivelli (p221) Live like country-house nobility.

Best for Location

Albergo Abruzzi (p217) Wake up to the Pantheon.
Casa di Santa Brigida (p217) A convent overlooking Piazza Farnese.

Best for Romance

Hotel Sant’Anselmo (p222) Escape to this beautiful Liberty-style villa.
Hotel Locarno (p219) Star in your own romance at this art-deco gem.

Best B&Bs

Maria-Rosa Guesthouse (p221) Your Trastevere home from home.
La Piccola Maison (p218) Quiet comfort near Piazza Barberini.

Best Value for Money

Althea Inn (p222) A hidden gem near Testaccio.
Le Stanze di Orazio (p219) Get your money’s worth at this Vatican B&B.
La Controra (p218) Quality hostel in upscale area.

NEED TO KNOW

Price Ranges
These price ranges are for a high-season double room with private bathroom:

€ under €110
€€ €110 to €200
€€€ over €200

Breakfast is included unless otherwise stated.

Reservations

- Always try to book ahead, especially for the major religious festivals.
- Ask for a camera matrimoniale for a room with a double bed; a camera doppia has twin beds.

Checking In & Out

- When you check in you’ll need to present your passport or ID card.
- Checkout is usually between 10am and noon. In hostels it’s around 9am.
- Some guesthouses and B&Bs require you to arrange a time to check in.
## Where to Stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancient Rome</td>
<td>Close to major sights such as Colosseum, Roman Forum and Capitoline Museums; quiet at night</td>
<td>Not cheap and has few budget options; restaurants are touristy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centro Storico</td>
<td>Atmospheric area with everything on your doorstep – Pantheon, Piazza Navona, restaurants, bars, shops</td>
<td>Most expensive part of town; few budget options; can be noisy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tridente, Trevi &amp; the Quirinale</td>
<td>Good for Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain and designer shopping; excellent midrange to top-end options; good transport links</td>
<td>Upmarket area with prices to match; subdued after dark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monti, Esquilino &amp; San Lorenzo</td>
<td>Lots of budget accommodation around Stazione Termini; top eating options in Monti and good nightlife in San Lorenzo; good transport links</td>
<td>Some dodgy streets in Termini area, which is not Rome’s most characterful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Giovanni &amp; Testaccio</td>
<td>Authentic atmosphere with good eating and drinking options; Aventino, a quiet, romantic area; Testaccio, a top food and nightlife district</td>
<td>Few options available; not many big sights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trastevere &amp; Gianicolo</td>
<td>Gorgeous, atmospheric area; party vibe with hundreds of bars, cafes, and restaurants; some interesting sights</td>
<td>Very noisy, particularly on summer nights; expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican City, Borgo &amp; Prati</td>
<td>Near St Peter’s Basilica and Vatican Museums; decent range of accommodation; some excellent shops and restaurants on the metro</td>
<td>Expensive near St Peter’s; not much nightlife; sells out quickly for religious holidays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa Borghese &amp; Northern Rome</td>
<td>Largely residential area good for the Auditorium and some top museums; generally quiet after dark</td>
<td>Out of the centre; few budget choices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ancient Rome

#### RESIDENZA MARITTI
**GUESTHOUSE €€**
Map p300 (☏ 06 678 82 33; www.residenzamaritti.com; Via Tor de’ Conti 17; s €50-120, d €80-170, tr €100-190; ⚖️; 🏛️; ⚫️ Cavour) Boasting stunning views over the forums, this gem has rooms spread over several floors. Some are bright and modern, others are more coy in feel, with antiques and family furniture. There’s no breakfast but you can use a fully equipped kitchen.

#### NERVA BOUTIQUE HOTEL
**BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€**
Map p300 (☏ 06 678 18 35; www.hotelnerva.com; Via Tor de’ Conti 3; s €70-180, d €90-300; ⚖️; 🏛️; ⚫️ Cavour) Fresh from a recent make-over, this friendly hotel is tucked away behind the Imperial Forums. Its snug rooms display a contemporary look in shades of cream, grey and black, with padded leather bedsteads, hanging lamps, and the occasional art tome.

#### FORTY SEVEN
**BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€**
Map p300 (☏ 06 678 78 16; www.fortysevenhotel.com; Via Petroselli 47; r €170-300; ⚖️; ⚫️; 🏛️; ⚫️ Cavour) Near the Bocca della Verità, the plain grey facade of this classy four-star gives onto a bright modern interior, full of sunshine and sharply designed guest rooms. There’s also a rooftop restaurant and, in the basement, a gym and Turkish bath.

#### HOTEL FORUM
**HISTORIC HOTEL €€€**
Map p300 (☏ 06 679 24 46; www.hotelforum.com; Via Tor de’ Conti 30-31; r €180-300; ⚖️; 🏛️; ⚫️ Cavour) The stately Forum offers formal elegance and inspiring views. From the rooftop restaurant you can survey a sea of ruins, while inside it’s all antiques, woodpanelling and dangling chandeliers. Rooms are small and classically attired. Parking is available for €40 per day.
This small hotel offers a range of handsome, modern rooms in a 15th-century palazzo near Piazza Navona. They come in various shapes and looks, but the most striking feature a showy silver-and-grey design. Breakfast costs €10 extra.

HOTEL TEATRO DI POMPEO
Map p304 (06 6830 0170; www.hotelteatro-dipompeo.it; Largo del Pallaro 8; s €90-165, d €110-220; r €80-200; Corso Vittorio Emanuele II) Tucked away behind Campo de' Fiori, this charming hotel sits atop the 1st-century-BC Theatre of Pompey – the basement breakfast room is actually in the theatre's ruins. Rooms are attractive with classic wooden furniture, terracotta floor tiles, and, in some, sloping wood-beamed ceilings.

DIMORA DEGLI DEI
Map p304 (06 6819 3267; www.panteondimorediglifiei.com; Via del Seminario 87; r €80-200; Largo di Torre Argentina) Location and discreet style are the selling points of this elegant bolthole near the Pantheon. On the 1st floor of a centuries-old palazzo, it has six high-ceiled tastefully furnished rooms. Breakfast (€10) is optional.

CASA DI SANTA BRIGIDA
Map p304 (06 6889 2596; www.santabrigida.it; Piazza Farnese 96, entrance Via di Monsecco 54; r €120/200; Largo di Torre Argentina) Named after the Swedish St Brigid who died here in 1373, this tranquil convent enjoys a superb location overlooking Piazza Farnese. Rooms are simple, clean and decidedly low-tech – entertainment here is limited to a piano in the communal room, a small library and views from the roof terrace.

HOTEL CAMPO DE' FIORI
Map p304 (06 6874 8866; www.hotelmepodefiori.com; Via del Biscione 6; r €90-400, apt €80-350; Largo di Torre Argentina) This rakish four-star has got the lot – baroque boudoir decor, an enviable location, professional staff and a fabulous panoramic roof terrace. The interior feels delightfully decadent with its boldly coloured walls, low wooden ceilings, gilt mirrors and restored bric-a-brac. Also available are 13 apartments.
q €180-450; Largo di Torre Argentina) As locations go, the Abruzzo’s tops the charts, bang opposite the Pantheon. Its recently refurbished rooms sport a smart look with blown-up photos printed on white walls and dark wood flooring. They are small, though, and late-night noise might be a problem.

Tridente, Trevi & the Quirinale

★ LA CONTRORA HOSTEL €
(06 9893 7366; Via Umbria 7; dm €20-40, d €80-110; @MBarberini, MRepubblica) Quality budget accommodation is thin on the ground in the upmarket area north of Piazza Repubblica, but this great little hostel is a top choice. It has a friendly laid-back vibe, cool staff, double rooms and bright, airy mixed dorms (for three and four people), with parquet floors, air-con and private bathrooms.

HOTEL PANDA PENSION €€
Map p308 (06 678 01 79; www.hotelpanda.it; Via della Croce 35; s €65-90, d €85-130, tr €120-150, q €160-190; @MSpagna) Near the Spanish Steps, in an area where a bargain is a Bulgar watch bought at the sales, the Panda flies the flag for budget accommodation. It’s a friendly place with high-ceilinged rooms and simple, tasteful decor. Air-con is free in summer, but €6 in other periods.

LA PICCOLA MAISON B&B €€
Map p308 (06 4201 6331; www.lapicolamaison.com; Via dei Cappuccini 30; s €50-180, d €70-270; @MBarberini) The excellent Piccola Maison is housed in a 19th-century building in a great location close to Piazza Barberini, and has pleasingly plain, neutrally decorated rooms and thoughtful staff. It’s a great deal.

DAPHNE INN BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€
Map p308 (06 8745 0086; www.daphne-rome.com; Via di San Basilio 55; s €115-180, d €130-240, ste €190-290, without bathroom s €70-130, d €90-160; @MBarberini) Run by an American-Italian couple, the Daphne has helpful English-speaking staff and chic, comfortable rooms. They come in various shapes and sizes, but the overall look is smart contemporary. There’s a second branch, Daphne Trevi, at Via degli Avignonesi 20.

HOTEL SUISSE PENSIÓN €€
Map p308 (06 678 36 49; www.hotelsuisse-rome.com; Via Gregoriana 54; s €80-100, d €135-170, tr €180-200; @MSpagna, MBarberini) An air of old-school elegance pervades at this delightful family-run pension. Attractive antique furniture and creaking, polished parquet floors set the tone for the 12 tasteful, modestly decorated rooms.

GREGORIANA HOTEL €€
Map p308 (06 679 42 69; www.hotelgregoriana.it; Via Gregoriana 18; s €120-168, d €150-288; @MSpagna) This low-key, polished art-deco hotel is fantastically set behind the Spanish Steps. Beds have beautiful, circular maple-wood headboards, snow-white linen and lots of gleaming rosewood. Staff are friendly and unpretentious.

MARGUTTA GLAMOUR STUDIOS APARTMENT €€
Map p308 (333 7982702; www.marguttaglamourstudios.com; Via Margutta 54-55; apt €150-180; MSpagna) Four charming apartments on one of Rome’s prettiest streets, which has a village feel despite being in the thick of Tridente. All are decorated with flair, and the two larger apartments, in former artists’ studios, are spectacular, with double height ceilings; the smaller two are charming, with pretty outlooks.

HOTEL MOZART HOTEL €€
Map p308 (06 3600 1915; www.hotelmozart.com; Via dei Greci 23b; r €140-200; @MSpagna) The Mozart has classic, immaculate rooms, decorated in dove greys, eggshell blues, golden yellows and rosy pinks, with comfortable beds, gleaming linen and polished wooden furniture; deluxe rooms have jacuzzis and small terraces.

It also administers the Vivaldi Luxury Suites and several apartments nearby. Look out for special offers on the website, where rooms can go for as little as €80.

HOTEL TAX
Everyone overnighting in Rome has to pay a room-occupancy tax on top of their regular bill.
• €3 per person per night in one- and two-star hotels
• €3.50 in B&Bs and room rentals
• €4/6/7 in three-/four-/five-star hotels.

The tax is applicable for a maximum of 10 consecutive nights. Prices in reviews do not include the tax.
HOTEL BAROCCO  HOTEL €€
Map p308 (06 487 20 01; www.hotelbarocco.com; Piazza Barberini 9; d €160-290; @; MBarberini) Very central, this well-run, welcoming 41-room hotel overlooking Piazza Barberini (the pricier rooms have views) has a classic feel, with rooms featuring oil paintings, spotless linen, gentle colour schemes and fabric-covered walls. Breakfast is ample and served in a wood-panelled room.

HOTEL LOCARNO  HOTEL €€
Map p308 (06 361 08 41; www.hotellocarno.com; Via della Penna 22; s €90-260, d €120-270; @; MFlaminio) With its ivy-clad exterior, stained-glass doors and rattling cage lift, the Locarno is an art-deco classic – the kind of place Hercule Poirot might stay if he were in town. Many rooms have silk wallpaper and period furniture, and are occasionally in need of TLC, but full of charm. There’s a roof garden, a restaurant and an atmospheric bar.

HOTEL MODIGLIANI  HOTEL €€
Map p308 (06 4281 5226; www.hotelmodigliani.com; Via della Purificazione 42; s €100-160, d €100-270; @; MBarberini) Run by an artistic couple, the Modigliani is all about attention to detail and service. The 23 dove-grey rooms are spacious and light, and the best ones have views and balconies, either outside or over the quiet courtyard garden.

BABUINO 181  BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€
Map p308 (06 3229 5295; www.romeluxursuites.com/babuino; Via del Babuino 181; r €240-715; @; MFlaminio) A beautifully renovated old palazzo, Babuino offers discreet luxury, with great attention to detail, a sleek roof terrace and modern, chic rooms with touches such as a Nespresso machine and fluffy bathrobes. A new annex across the street has added more suites and rooms that continue the theme of understated elegance. The same company runs the similarly impressive Margutta 54 (Map p308; 06 322 95 295; www.romeluxursuites.com/margutta/default-en.html; Via Margutta 54; d from €250; MSpana) and Mario de’ Fiori 37.

CASAFABBRI  B&B €€
Map p308 (06 324 3706; www.casafabbriini.it; Vicolo delle Orsoline 13; r €280; MSpana) A beautifully styled boutique B&B that could have sprung from the pages of Elle Decoration, with antique doors as bedheads, coloured-glass lamps and painted furniture.

CROSSING CONDOTTI  GUESTHOUSE €€€
Map p308 (06 6992 0633; www.crossingcondotti.com; Via Mario de’ Fiori 28; r €240-470; @; MSpana) This is one of Rome’s breed of upmarket guesthouses, where all the fittings, linen and comforts are top of the range, and the pretty, though not large, rooms have lots of character and antique furnishings. There’s also a well-stocked kitchen with drinks and a Nespresso machine. The more expensive rooms, recently added, have walk-in showers and a kitchenette, and the top choice has a Turkish bath.

HOTEL DE RUSSIE  HOTEL €€€
Map p308 (06 328 88 81; www.hotelderussie.it; Via del Babuino 9; d €550-850; @; MFlaminio) The historic de Russie is almost on Piazza del Popolo, and has exquisite terraced gardens. The decor is softly luxurious in many shades of grey, and the rooms offer state-of-the-art entertainment systems, massive mosaic-tiled bathrooms and all the luxuries. There’s a lovely courtyard bar.

Vatican City, Borgo & Prati

HOTEL SAN PIETRINO  HOTEL €
Map p312 (06 370 01 32; www.sanpietrino.it; Via Bettolo 43; s €45-75, d €55-112; @; MServita); MOttaviano–San-Pietro) Within easy walking distance of St Peter’s, family-run San Pietrino is an excellent budget choice. Its 11 cosy rooms are characterful and prettily decorated with terracotta-tiled floors and the occasional statue. No breakfast.

COLORS HOTEL  HOTEL €
Map p312 (06 6874030; www.colorshotel.com; Via Boezio 31; s €30-90, d €45-122; @; Via Cola di Rienzo) Popular with young travellers, this welcoming hotel impresses with its fresh, artful design and vibrantly coloured rooms. These come in various shapes and sizes, including some cheaper ones with shared bathrooms and, from June to August, dorms for guests under 38. Breakfast on request costs €6.50.

LE STANZE DI ORAZIO  B&B €€
Map p312 (06 32652474; www.lestanzediorazio.com; Via Orazio 3; r €85-135; @; MLSpana) This small boutique B&B is excellent value for money. It has five bright, playfully decorated rooms – think shimmering rainbow wallpaper, lilac accents, and designer bathrooms – and a small breakfast area.
FABIO MASSIMO DESIGN HOTEL
BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€
Map p312 (06 321 30 44; www.hotelfabiomassimo.com; Viale Giulio Cesare 71; r €89-229; ⊕; M Ottaviano-San Pietro) Walkable from Ottaviano metro station, this sleek design hotel is convenient as well as stylish. From the 4th-floor reception and breakfast area, corridors lead off to nine rooms, each furnished in contemporary reds and slate greys, with flower motifs and hanging lamps.

HOTEL BRAMANTE
HISTORIC HOTEL €€€
Map p312 (06 6880 6426; www.hotelandbramante.com; Vicolo delle Palline 24-25; s €100-160, d €140-240, tr €175-260, q €190-300; ⊕⊕; M Borgo Sant’Angelo) Nestled under the Vatican walls, the Bramante exudes country-house charm with its cozy internal courtyard, wood-beamed ceilings and antique furniture. It’s housed in the 16th-century building where architect Domenico Fontana once lived.

★ VILLA LAETITIA
BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€€
(06 322 67 76; www.villaletitia.com; Lungotevere delle Armi 22; r €200-280, ste €300; ⊕⊕⊕; M Ponte Mammolo) Villa Laetitia is a stunning boutique hotel in a riverside art-nouveau villa. Its 20 rooms, each individually designed by Anna Venturini Fendi of the famous fashion house, marry modern design touches with vintage pieces and rare finds, such as an original Picasso in the Garden Room.

Monti, Esquilino & San Lorenzo

★ BEEHIVE
HOSTEL €
Map p320 (06 4470 4553; www.the-beehive.com; Via Marghera 8; dm €25-35, s €50-80, d €90-100, without bathroom s €60-70, d €70-80, tr €95-105; ⊕⊕; M Termini) More boutique chic than backpacker dive, the Beehive is Rome’s best hostel; book well ahead. There’s a spotless, eight-person mixed dorm or six private double rooms, some with air-con. Original artworks and funky modular furniture add colour, and there’s a cafe. Some off-site rooms, sharing communal bathrooms and kitchen, are another bargain (single €40 to €50, double €60 to €80).

BLUE HOSTEL
HOSTEL €
Map p320 (06 340 925 85 03; www.bluehostel.it; Via Carlo Alberto 13, 3rd fl; d €60-150, apt €100-180; ⊕⊕; M Vittorio Emanuele) A hostel in name only, this pearl offers small, hotel-standard rooms, each with its own ensuite bathroom, and decorated in tasteful low-key style – beamed ceilings, wooden floors, French windows, black-and-white framed photos. There’s also an apartment, with kitchen, that sleeps up to four. No lift and no breakfast.

WELCOME HOTEL
HOTEL €
Map p320 (06 4782 4343; www.welcome.it; Via Calatafimi 15-19; d/tr/q €110/148/187; ⊕⊕⊕; M Termini) A small, spotless hotel in a quiet backstreet not far from Termini. Owners Mary and Carlo take great pride in looking after their guests and will enthusiastically advise you on where to eat, what to do and where to avoid. Their seven simply decorated rooms are clean and comfortable. No breakfast but kettles and fridges are provided, and there are plenty of nearby bars for a cornetto (croissant) and coffee.

PAPA GERMANO
HOSTEL €
Map p320 (06 48 69 19; www.hotelpapagermano.it; Via Calatafimi 14a; d €50-110, without bathroom dm €15-35, s €30-65, d €40-85; ⊕⊕⊕; M Termini) Easygoing and popular, Papa Germano is a budget stalwart. There are various sleeping options, ranging from four-person dorms to private rooms with or without bathrooms. It has a family-run feel, the decor is plain and fairly smart, and all rooms are scrupulously clean.

ALESSANDRO PALACE HOSTEL
HOSTEL €
Map p320 (06 446 19 58; www.hostelsalessandro.com; Via Vicenza 42; dm €19-35, d €70-110, tr €85-120; ⊕⊕⊕; M Castro Pretorio) This well-kept favourite offers spick-and-span, terracotta-floored doubles and triples, as well as dorms sleeping from four to eight, all with cheery bedsprads. Every room has its own bathroom with hairdryer. There’s a basement bar, and it runs local tours.

HOTEL ARTOURIUS
HOTEL €€
Map p320 (06 482 11 96; www.hotelartorius.com; Via del Boschetto 13; d €86-140; ⊕⊕⊕; M Cavour) The art-deco lobby looks promising, and the rest delivers too in this 10-room Monti hotel with a family-run feel. Rooms are simple and plain – not large, but perfectly comfortable – and one (room 109) has a terrace. Book well ahead.

DUCA D’ALBA
HOTEL €€
Map p320 (06 48 44 71; www.hotelducadalba.com; Via Leonina 14; r €115-380; ⊕⊕⊕; M Cavour)
This appealing four-star hotel in the Monti district has small but charming rooms: most have fabric-covered or handpainted walls, wood-beamed ceilings and big flat-screen TVs.

RESIDENZA CELLINI GUESTHOUSE €€
Map p320 (06 4782 5204; www.residenza-cellini.it; Via Modena 5; s €100-135, d €115-150; # @ ®; M Repubblica) With grown-up furnishings featuring potted palms, polished wood, pale-yellow walls, oil paintings and a hint of chintz, this charming, family-run place on a quiet road parallel to Via Nazionale offers spacious, elegant rooms, all with satellite TV and jacuzzi or hydro-massage shower. There's a sunny flower-surrounded terrace for summer breakfasts.

VILLA SPALLETTI TRIVELLI HOTEL €€€
Map p320 (06 4890 7934; www.villaspalletti.it; Via Piacenza 4; r €450-620; # ®; M Spagna) With 12 rooms in a glorious mansion in central Rome, Villa Spalletti Trivelli was built by Gabriella Rasponi, widow of Italian senator Count Venceslao Spalletti Trivelli and the niece of Carolina Bonaparte (Napoleon’s sister). It’s a soujourn in a stately home: rooms are soberly and elegantly decorated, and the sitting rooms are hung with 16th-century tapestries or lined with antique books. There’s a basement spa.

LA FORESTERIA ORSA MAGGIORE HOTEL €
Map p316 (06 689 3401; www.orsamaggiore.com; Via Arco de’ Tolomei 27; s €72-132, d €132-145; ®; # Via di Trastevere, # Viale di Trastevere) This fab six-room B&B occupies a centuries-old palazzo on a narrow cobbled street. Its gleaming white rooms combine rustic charm with a modern look and comfortable beds. The owners are welcoming and always ready to help.

RELAIS LE CLARISSE HOTEL €€
Map p316 (06 5833 4437; www.leclarisse.com; Via Cardinale Merry del Val 20; r €80-230; ® ®; # Viale di Trastevere, # Viale di Trastevere) Set hacienda-style around a pretty internal courtyard with an olive tree and a smattering of cast-iron tables, this is a delightful oasis in Trastevere’s bustling core. In contrast to the urban mayhem outside, the hotel is a picture of farmhouse charm with rooms, each named after a plant, decorated in rustic style with wrought-iron bedsteads and wood-beamed ceilings.

BUONANOTTE GARIBALDI GUESTHOUSE €€
Map p316 (06 5833 0733; www.buonnottegaribaldi.com; Via Garibaldi 83; r €210-280, closed 7 Jan–7 Mar; ® ®; # Piazza Sonnino, # Piazza Sonnino) With only three rooms, this is a haven: an upmarket B&B in a divinely pretty inner-city villa, set around a courtyard. The rooms are beautifully decorated and there are works of art and sculpture all over the place – this is artist Luisa Longo’s house. Pick of the rooms is Blue, upstairs, which opens onto a greenery-shaded terrace.
HOTEL SANTA MARIA
Map p316 (06 589 46 26; www.hotelsantaroma.info; Vicolo del Piede 2; s €90-225, d €100-290, tr €130-330; @; Viale di Trastevere, Viale di Trastevere) Walk along the ivy-lined approach and you’ll enter a tranquil haven. Surrounded by a spacious modern cloister (a former convent site), shaded by orange trees, rooms are cool and comfortable, decorated in sunny colours, and with terracotta floors. There are some larger family rooms. The staff is professional, and there’s access for people with a disability. Nearby Residenza Santa Maria (Map p316; 06 5833 5103; www.residenzasantaroma.com; Via dell’Arco di San Calisto 20; s €90-190, d €100-230; @) is its smaller sister.

VILLA DELLA FONTE
B&B €€
Map p316 (06 580 37 97; www.villafonte.com; Via della Fonte dell’Olio 8; r €80-230; @; Viale di Trastevere, Viale di Trastevere) A terracotta-hued, ivy-shrouded gem, Villa della Fonte is a romantic choice, occupying a 17th-century building in a street off Piazza Santa Maria in Trastevere. It has five rooms, all of which are simply decorated but have pretty outlooks, good bathrooms and comfortable beds. The sunny garden terrace is a plus.

DONNA CAMILLA SAVELLI
B&B €€€
Map p316 (06 58 88 61; www.hoteldonnacamillassavelli.com; Via Garibaldi 27; d €165-250; @; Viale di Trastevere, Viale di Trastevere) It’s seldom you have such an exquisite opportunity as to stay in a converted convent designed by Borromini. It’s been beautifully updated; muted colours complement the serene concave and convex curves of the architecture, and service is excellent. The priory of the 78 rooms overlook the cloister garden or have views of Rome, and are decorated with antiques – it’s worth forking out that bit extra.

San Giovanni & Testaccio

ALTHEA INN
B&B €
Map p314 (0339 4353717, 06 9893 2666; www.altheainn.com; Via dei Concordatori 9; d €70-125; @; Piramide) In a workaday apartment block, this friendly B&B offers superb value for money and easy access to Testaccio’s bars, clubs and restaurants. Its spacious, light-filled rooms sport a modish look with white walls and tasteful modern furniture. Each also has a small terrace.

HOTEL LANCELOT
Map p314 (06 7045 0615; www.lancelothotel.com; Via Capo d’Africa 47; s €100-128, d €130-196; @; Via di San Giovanni in Laterano) A great location near the Colosseum, striking views, and helpful English-speaking staff – the family-run Lancelot scores across the board. The lobby and communal areas gleam with marble and crystal while the spacious rooms exhibit a more classic style.

HOTEL ROMANCE
Map p314 (06 8929 5106; www.hotelromance.it; Via Marco Aurelio 37a; s €70-140, d €70-200; @; @; Colosseo) A warm welcome awaits at this family-run three-star near the Colosseum. It has quiet, comfy rooms decorated in traditional Roman style and views over a lush garden next door.

HOTEL SANT’ANSELMO
Map p314 (06 57 00 57; www.aventinohotels.com; Piazza Sant’Anselmo 2; s €90-265, d €99-290; @; Via Marmorata) A ravishing romantic hideaway in the elegant Aventino district. Its rooms are not the biggest but they are stylish, juxtaposing four-poster beds, Liberty-style furniture and marble bathrooms with modern touches.

Villa Borghese & Northern Rome

PALM GALLERY HOTEL
HOTEL €€
Map p324 (06 6478 1859; www.palmgalleryhotel.com; Via delle Alpi 15d; s €100-120, d €100-210; @; @; Via Nomentana, Viale Regina Margherita) Housed in an early-20th-century villa, this gorgeous hotel sports an eclectic look that effortlessly blends African and Middle Eastern art with original art-deco furniture, exposed brickwork and hand-painted tiles. Rooms are individually decorated, with the best offering views over the wilderness and thick greenery in the surrounding streets.