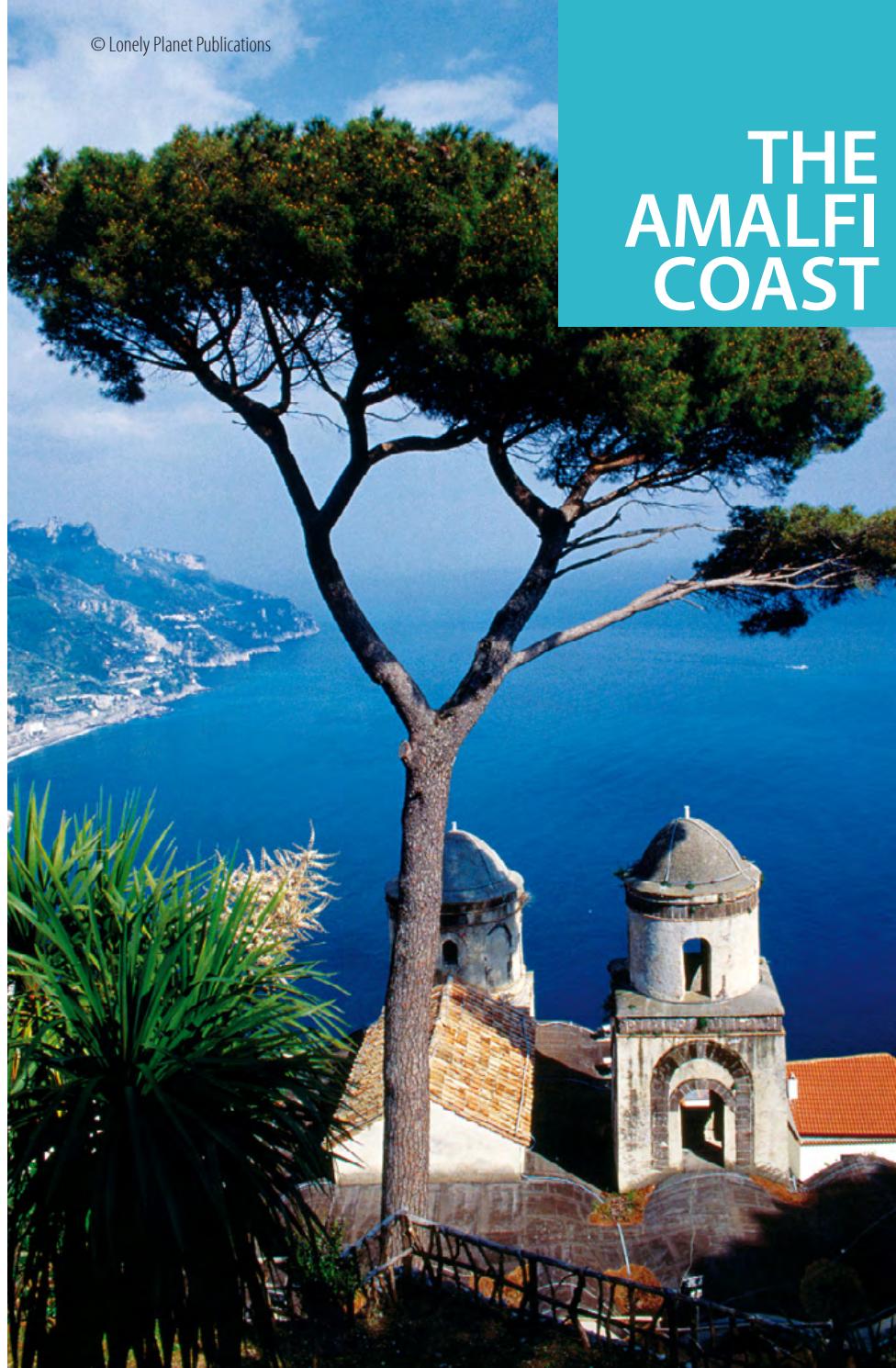


THE AMALFI COAST





Winding seaside path, Capri (p172)

RUSSELL MOUNTFORD

BAY OF NAPLES & THE AMALFI COAST

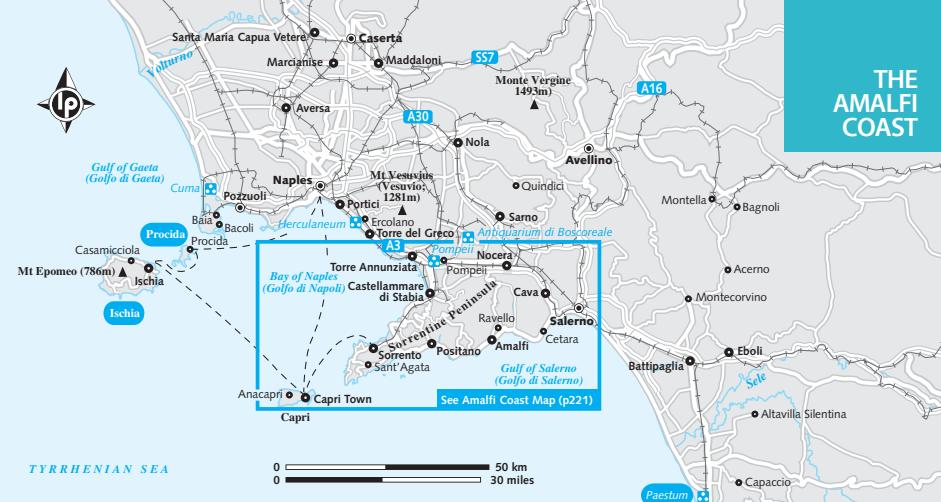
A vertical world of gleaming limestone cliffs and hidden coves, of romantic corners and blue horizons, a world where boats outnumber cars and stairs serve in place of streets.

The Amalfi Coast is the most spectacular stretch of coastline in Italy and, indeed, one of the most entrancing in Europe. The heady mix of stunning scenery, legend and romance has been seducing visitors since Roman times. The contrast couldn't be greater between coast and city: just an hour down the road from the urban mayhem of central Naples and you're in a different world.

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

There are two main entry points to the coast: to the west **Sorrento** and 50km further east **Salerno**. The former, a cliff-top resort whose charm has miraculously survived the onslaught of package tourism, is not actually on the Amalfi Coast but on the northern side of the Sorrento Peninsula (the thin strip of land that divides the Bay of Naples from the Gulf of Salerno). However, it's only a short and spectacular drive away from pastel-hued **Positano**, the Amalfi Coast's smartest and most expensive town.

It's also the nearest point to **Capri**, the most famous and fashionable of the bay's three islands. A day-trip mecca, Capri is an intriguing mix of luxury hotels, designer boutiques



HIGHLIGHTS

- Take the chairlift to the top of Monte Solaro (p177), the highest point in Capri, and walk back down again
- Chill out with a seafront beer at Marina Corricella (p201) in Procida
- Enjoy a classical music concert in the fabulous gardens of Villa Rufolo (p238), in Ravello
- Sample *limoncello* in Sorrento (p204) while looking over the water to Mt Vesuvius
- Hike down to the Bay of Ieranto (p219) for the coast's best swimming

and unspoiled Mediterranean countryside. To the northwest, **Ischia** has long sold itself on its curative spa waters, lush gardens and fine beaches, while a short ferry ride away **Procida** is the smallest and least developed of the islands. Although not totally free of tourism, its colourful fishing villages retain an authenticity that's not always apparent elsewhere.

Back on the mainland, **Amalfi** is a pretty little town with a weighty history of maritime power and commerce. Today, however, its revenue comes mainly from the tourists disgorged daily from the ferries to idle around the Piazza del Duomo, wander the medieval streets and visit the extraordinary cathedral.

Perched above the coast is aloof **Ravello**, famed for its Wagnerian connection and grandiose villas. Finally, and by way of the ceramic town of **Vietri sul Mare**, there is **Salerno**, a workaday port whose appeal lies in its lack of souvenir shops and vibrant centro storico (historic centre).



Waterfront at Marina Corricella, Procida (p201)

DALLAS STRIBLEY



Capri's limestone Isole Faraglioni (p175)

HOLGER LEUE

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wash yourself in the hallucinogenic blue light of the Grotta Azzurra (see the boxed text, p178)
- Give your imagination a work-out in the vast ruins of Tiberius' Villa Jovis (p176)
- Walk the Sentiero dei Fortini (see Stretch Your Legs, p176), the scenic path that runs down the island's unexplored west coast
- Take the chairlift to the top of Monte Solaro (p177) and revel in the unbelievable views
- Treat yourself to a drink in la Piazzetta (p174), the centre of café life in Capri Town

CAPRI

Cliffs, cafés, villas, VIPs and vistas – Capri has charmed Roman emperors, Russian revolutionaries and a who's who of showbiz stars.

Ever since the Roman Emperor Tiberius earned Capri (pronounced *Ca-pri*, with the stress on the first syllable) a reputation as a decadent retreat, the island has fuelled the public imagination. A stark mass of limestone rock that sheers up through impossibly blue water, it's the perfect microcosm of Mediterranean appeal – a smooth cocktail of chichi piazzas and cool cafés, Roman ruins and rugged seascapes.

It's also a hugely popular day trip destination and a summer favourite of holidaying VIPs. Inevitably, the two main centres, Capri Town and its uphill rival Anacapri, are almost entirely given over to tourism and prices are high. But explore beyond the designer boutiques and pointedly traditional trattorie and you'll find that Capri's rural hinterland retains an unspoiled charm with grand villas, overgrown vegetable plots, sun-bleached peeling stucco and banks of brilliantly coloured bougainvillea. All of this overlooks deep blue water that laps unseen into secluded coves and mysterious grottoes.

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

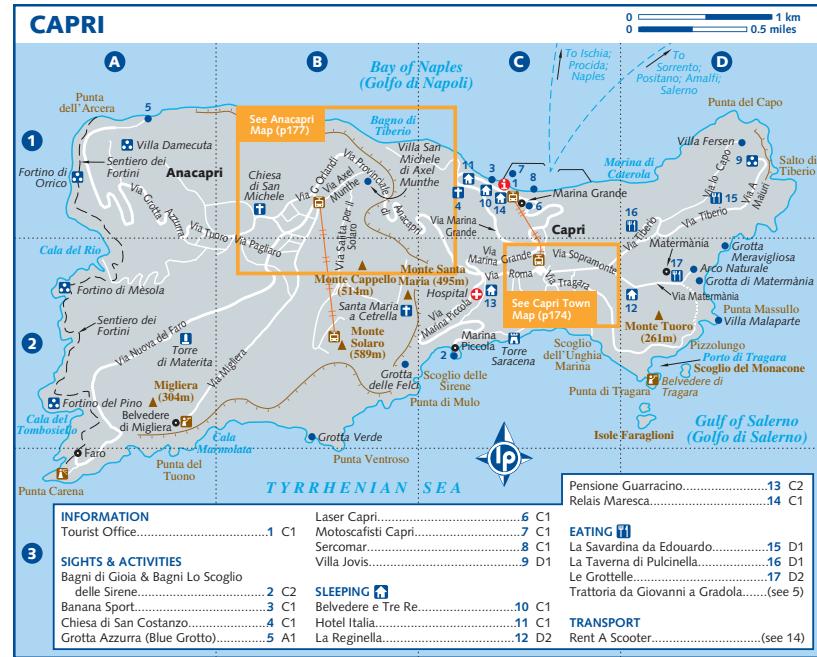
Already inhabited in the Palaeolithic age, Capri was briefly occupied by the Greeks before the Emperor Augustus made it his private playground, and Tiberius retired here in AD 27. Its modern incarnation as a tourist centre dates to the early 20th century when it was invaded by an army of European artists,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

ORIENTATION

About 5km from the mainland at its nearest point, Capri is a mere 6km long and 2.7km wide. As you approach, there's a great camera shot of Capri Town with the

dramatic slopes of Monte Solaro (589m) to the west, hiding the village of Anacapri.

All hydrofoils and ferries arrive at Marina Grande, the island's transport hub. The quickest way up



INFORMATION

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ Anacapri (www.anacapri-life.com) News and information about Anacapri. | ■ Police station (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 42 11; Via Roma 70, Capri Town) |
| ■ Capri Internet Point (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 32 83; Via de Tommaso 1, Anacapri; per hr €4; ☐ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun May-Oct, shorter hours Nov-Apr) Also has international newspapers and some English books for sale. | ■ Post office Anacapri (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 10 15; Via de Tommaso 8, Anacapri) |
| ■ Capri Island (www.capri.net) Excellent website with listings, itineraries and ferry schedules. | ■ Post office Capri Town (Map p174; ☎ 081 978 52 11; Via Roma 50, Capri Town) |
| ■ Capri Tourism (www.capritourism.com) Official website of Capri tourist office. | ■ San Paolo Banco di Napoli (Map p177; ☎ 081 838 21 69; Via G Orlando 150, Anacapri) ATM. |
| ■ Exchange office (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 31 46; Piazza Vittoria 2b, Anacapri; ☐ 8.30am-6pm daily) | ■ Tourist office Anacapri (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 15 24; www.capritourism.com ; Via G Orlando 59, Anacapri; ☐ 8.30am-8.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Sat Oct-Dec & Mar-May) |
| ■ Farmacia Barile (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 14 60; Piazza Vittoria 28, Anacapri) | ■ Tourist office Capri Town (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 06 86; www.capritourism.com ; Piazza Umberto I, Capri Town; ☐ 8.30am-8.30pm Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.45pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) |
| ■ Farmacia Internazionale (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 04 85; Via Roma 24, Capri Town) | ■ Tourist Office Marina Grande (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 06 34; www.capritourism.com ; ☐ 9am-1pm & 3.30-6.45pm Jun-Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) |
| ■ Hospital (Map p173; ☎ 081 838 11 11; Via Provinciale di Anacapri 5, Capri Town) | ■ Unicredit Banca (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 05 11; Via Roma 57, Capri Town) ATM. |

to Capri Town from here is by funicular, but there are also buses and taxis. On foot, it's a tough 2.25km climb along Via Marina Grande. At the top, turn left (east) at the junction with Via Roma for the centre of town or right (west) for Via Provinciale di Anacapri, which eventually becomes Via G Orlando as it leads up to Anacapri.

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

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

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Capri Town

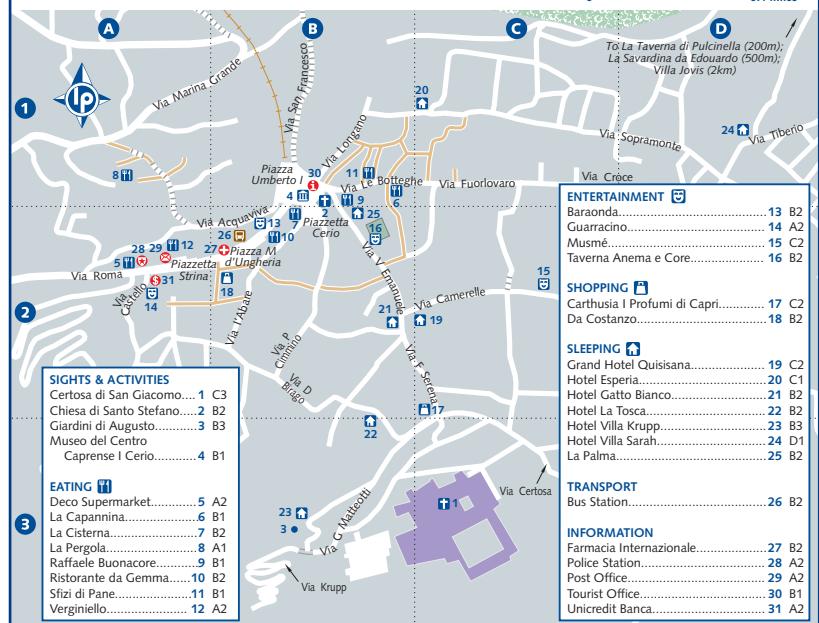
With its whitewashed stone buildings and tiny, car-free streets, Capri Town seems more film set than real life. A diminutive model of upmarket Mediterranean chic, it's a pristine mix of luxury hotels, expensive

bars, restaurants and designer boutiques. In summer its toy-town streets swell with crowds of curious, camera-wielding day-trippers and gangs of the glossy rich.

Central to the Capri experience is Piazza Umberto I (aka la Piazzetta), the showy, open-air salon beneath the town's clock tower. This is the place to sit and watch the world go by, or, more importantly, to sit and let the world watch you watch it go by. When you feel like a little exercise, pop up the stairs to the baroque 17th-century Chiesa di Santo Stefano (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 00 72; Piazza Umberto I; ☐ 8am-8pm daily), with its well-preserved marble floor (taken from Villa Jovis, see p176) and statue of San Costanzo, Capri's patron saint. Note also the pair of languidly reclining patricians in the chapel to the south of the main altar, who seem to mirror some of the roués in the cafés outside. Beside the northern chapel is a reliquary with a saintly bone that reputedly saved Capri from the plague in the 19th century.

Over the road, the Museo del Centro Caprense i Cerio (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 66 81; Piazzetta Cerio 5; adult/under 14yr & over 65yr €2.60/1; ☐ 10am-1pm

CAPRI TOWN



Port views, Capri Town

DALLAS STRIBLEY

FOR THE BEST VIEWS HEAD TO...

- Monte Solaro (p177)
- Belvedere di Tragara (see the boxed text, p176)
- Villa Jovis (p176)
- Villa San Michele di Axel Munthe (p177)
- Villa Damecuta (p178)

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

To the east of the Piazzetta, Via Vittorio Emanuele and its continuation Via F Serena lead down to the picturesque Certosa di San Giacomo (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 62 18; Viale Certosa 40; ☐ 9am-2pm Tue-Sun), a 14th-century monastery generally considered to be the finest remaining example of Caprese architecture. Established between 1363 and 1371 by Giacomo Arucci, a local nobleman and secretary to the Angevin Queen of Naples, Giovanna I, it became the stronghold of the island's powerful Carthusian fraternity. It was eventually closed in the early 19th century on the orders of Napoleon's occupying forces and today houses a school, library and a museum with some fairly forgettable 17th-century paintings. There are two cloisters – the smaller of which dates to the 14th century, the larger to the 16th century – and some fine 17th-century frescoes in the church.

From the gardens, Via Krupp zigzags down to Marina Piccola. Named after the German steel manufacturer Alfred Krupp, the road is now closed for safety reasons. Curiously, there's a bust of Lenin overlooking the road from a nearby platform.

For further views of the Faraglioni, head for the Belvedere at the end of Via Tragara.

STRETCH YOUR LEGS

Surprisingly for such a small place, Capri offers some memorable hiking. A network of well-maintained paths weaves its way across the island, leading through areas that even in the height of summer are all but deserted. The following are the island's four best routes.

Capri to Arco Naturale, Grotta di Maternània & Belvedere di Tragara

This classic Capri walk leads from the Arco Naturale 1.2km along the coast to the Belvedere di Tragara.

From the Arco Naturale, at the end of Via Maternània, backtrack to Le Grottelle restaurant and take the nearby set of stairs. About halfway down you'll pass the Grotta di Maternània, a giant natural cave used by the Romans as a *nymphaeum* (shrine to the water nymph) and dedicated to the Mater Magna (Great Mother). At the bottom, continue down the path as it follows the rocky coastline south. The bizarre red villa you eventually see on your left, on the Punta Massullo promontory, is Villa Malaparte, the former holiday home of Tuscan writer Curzio Malaparte (1898–1957). Carrying on, the sea views become increasingly impressive as the path continues westward around the lower slopes of Monte Tuoro. A few hundred metres further along and you come to a staircase on the right, which leads up to the Belvedere di Tragara and some stunning views of the Isole Faraglioni.

To get back to the centre of Capri Town simply follow Via Tragara and its continuation Via Camerelle.

Anacapri to Monte Solaro

Rising 589m above Anacapri, Monte Solaro is Capri's highest point. To get to the top you can either take the *seggiavio* (chairlift) from Piazza Vittoria or you can walk (about 2km). To do the latter take Via Axel Munthe and turn right up Via Salita per il Solaro. Follow the steep trail until you come to the pass known as La Crocetta, marked by a difficult-to-miss iron crucifix. Here the path divides: go right for the summit and its spectacular views over the Bay of Naples and Amalfi Coast; go left for the valley of Cetrella and the picturesque hermitage of Santa Maria a Cetrella (generally open on Saturday afternoon until sunset).

If you don't fancy the walk up, do what many people do and take the chairlift up and walk down.

Anacapri to Belvedere di Migliera

A lovely, relaxing 2km walk, this leads out to the Belvedere di Migliera, a panoramic platform with spectacular sea views.

The route couldn't be simpler: from Piazza Vittoria take Via Caposcuro and continue straight along its continuation Via Migliera. Along the way you'll pass fruit orchards, vineyards and small patches of woodland. Once at the Belvedere you can return to Anacapri via the Torre di Materita or, if you've still got the legs, continue up Monte Solaro. Note, however, that this is a tough walk graded medium difficulty by the Club Alpino Italiano (CAI; Italian Alpine Club).

Carena to Punta dell'Arcera, the Sentiero dei Fortini

Snaking its way along the island's oft-overlooked western coast, the Sentiero dei Fortini (Path of the Small Forts; 5.2km) takes you from Punta Carena, the island's southwestern point, up to Punta dell'Arcera near the Grotta Azzurra in the north. Named after the three coastal forts (Pino, Mèsola and Orrico) along the way, it passes through some of Capri's most unspoiled countryside.

Villa Jovis & Around

East of the town centre, a comfortable 2km walk along Via Tiberio, is Villa Jovis (Jupiter's Villa; Map p173; ☎ 081 837 06 34; Via Tiberio; adult/EU citizen 18-25yr/EU citizen under 18yr & over 65yr €2/1/free; 9am until 1hr before sunset), also known as the Palazzo di Tiberio. Standing 354m above sea level, this was the largest and most sumptuous of the island's 12 Roman villas and was Tiberius' main Capri residence.

The stairway behind the villa leads to the 330m-high Salto di Tiberio (Tiberius' Leap; Map p173), a sheer cliff from where, says the story, Tiberius had out-of-favour subjects hurled into the sea.

Close to the villa, down Via Tiberio and Via Maternània, is the Arco Naturale, a huge rock arch formed by the pounding sea.

Anacapri & Around

Traditionally Capri Town's quieter and less forward sister, modern Anacapri is no stranger to tourism. But attention is largely limited to Villa San Michele di Axel Munthe and the souvenir stores on the main streets. Get off these – and it only really takes a couple of minutes' walking to do so – and you'll discover that Anacapri is still, at heart, the laid-back, rural village that it's always been.

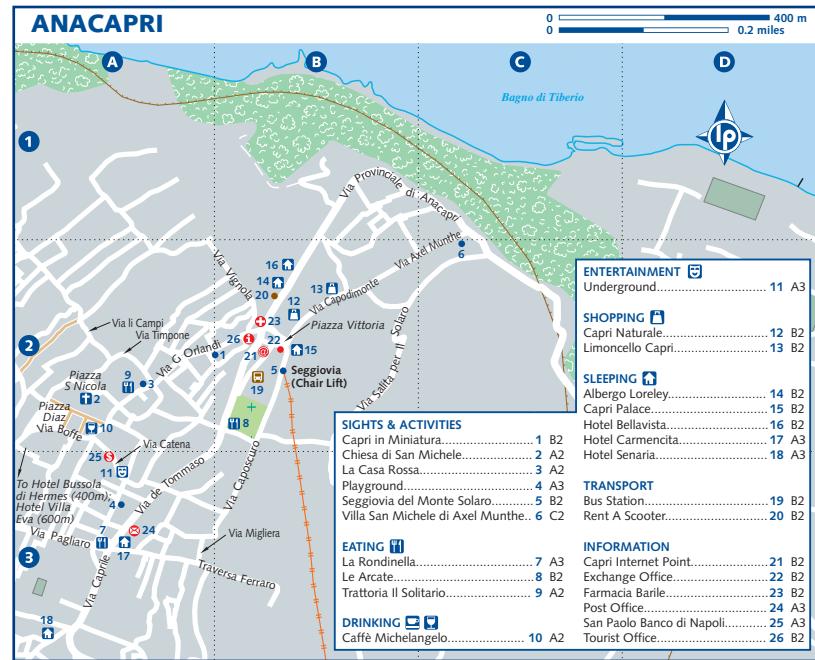
Coming up from Capri Town, the bus (or taxi) deposits you in Piazza Vittoria, from where it's a short walk to Villa San Michele di Axel Munthe (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 14 01; Via Axel Munthe; admission €5; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 10.30am-3.30pm Nov-Feb, 9.30am-4.30pm Mar, 9.30am-5pm Apr & Oct), the former home of self-aggrandising Swedish doctor Axel Munthe. The story behind the villa, built on the ruined site of a Roman villa, is told by Munthe himself in his bestselling autobiography *The Story of San Michele* (1929). Other than the collection of Roman sculpture, the villa's best feature is the beautifully preserved garden and its superb views. In summer, the Axel Munthe

Foundation (✉ 081 837 14 01; www.sanmichele.org) organises evening concerts in the gardens.

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

Anacapri's other great attraction is the Seggiavio del Monte Solaro (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 14 28; single/return €5/6.50; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mar-Oct, 10.30am-3pm Nov-Feb), a chairlift that whisks you to the top of Monte Solaro in 12 minutes. The views from the top are quite outstanding – on a clear day you can see the entire Bay of Naples, the Amalfi Coast and the islands of Ischia and Procida.

Back in Anacapri, the baroque Chiesa di San Michele (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 23 96; Piazza San Nicola;



GROTTA AZZURRA

Capri's single most famous attraction is the **Grotta Azzurra** (Blue Grotto; Map p173; adult/EU citizen under 18yr & over 65yr €4/free; ☎ 9am until 1hr before sunset), a stunning sea cave illuminated by an other-worldly blue light.

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

Measuring 54m by 30m and rising to a height of 15m, the grotto is said to have sunk by up to 20m in prehistoric times, blocking every opening except the 1.3m-high entrance. And it's this that's the key to the magical blue light. Sunlight enters through a small underwater aperture and is refracted through the water; this, combined with the reflection of the light off the white sandy seafloor, produces the vivid blue effect to which the cave owes its name.

The easiest way to visit is to take a boat tour from Marina Grande. A return trip will cost €18.50, comprising a return motorboat to the cave (€10), the rowing boat into the cave itself (€4.50) and admission fee (adult/EU citizen under 18yr & over 65yr €4/free); allow a good hour. You only save a little money and lose a lot of time by catching a bus from Anacapri or Capri since you still have to pay for the rowing boat and admission fee. The singing 'captains' are included in the price, so don't feel any obligation if they push for a tip.

The grotto is closed if the sea is too choppy, so before embarking check that it's open at the Marina Grande tourist office, about 25m from the motorboat ticket booth.

Swimming in the cave is forbidden but you can swim outside the entrance – get a bus to Grotta Azzurra, take the stairs down to the right and dive off the small concrete platform.

adult/child €1/free; ☎ 9.30am–7pm Apr–Oct, 9.30am–3pm Nov–Mar) is memorable for its 18th-century majolica floor, representing Adam and Eve in earthly paradise. More notable than the holy duo, however, are the vivid animal depictions, which include a unicorn, bull, several goats and an elephant.

On Via G Orlandi, **Capri in Miniatura** (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 1082 101; Via G Orlandi 101; admission €3; ☎ 9am–6pm daily) might amuse the kids for a minute or two. A scale model of the island set in a ceramic bath and festooned with bonsai trees, it took a year and a half to carve out of island rock. In the surrounding walls you can also see modelled scenes from Capri's history. If the little 'uns are still playing up there's a playground with swings and a climbing frame further down Via G Orlandi (turn left as you exit Capri in Miniatura and follow the road as it bears left until you see the park on your left).

Still on Via G Orlandi, **La Casa Rossa** (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 21 93; Via G Orlandi; admission €2; ☎ 10.30am–1.30pm & 6.30–9.30pm daily), is hard to miss. The red house was built by an American colonel, JC Mackowen, in the late 19th century and today houses an odd collection of antiquities and paintings.

To the northeast of Anacapri, near the island's heliport, are the remains of **Villa Damecuta** (Map p173; admission free; ☎ 9am until 1hr

before sunset), one of the largest of Tiberius' 12 Capri residences. There's not a lot left to see but it's a lovely tranquil spot, with views over to Ischia and the Bay of Naples. The easiest way to get here is to take the Grotta Azzurra bus from Anacapri and ask the driver to set you down nearby.

Rising above Punta Carena, Capri's rugged southwesterly point, is the **faro** (Map p173), Italy's second-tallest and most powerful lighthouse. The rocks nearby are a popular swimming spot in the summer. From Anacapri a bus runs to the *faro* every 20 minutes in summer and every 40 minutes in winter.

Marina Grande

Capri's main port is a chaotic and shabby place with little evidence of the glitz that awaits up the hill. There's little to see, although if you're desperate for a swim there's a 200m-long pebble beach to the west of the port. Capri's oldest church, the 5th-century **Chiesa di San Costanzo** (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 70 28; Via Marina Grande) is also a short walk away. The whitewashed church is dedicated to the island's patron saint, who settled on the island after escaping a vicious storm en route from Constantinople to Rome. It was originally built over an earlier Roman construction, although the Byzant

tine version you see today is the result of a 10th-century make-over.

The marina is the hub of Capri's thriving water sports business and it's here you should come to hire a boat or book a dive. On the eastern edge of the waterfront, **Sercomar** (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 87 81; www.caprisub.com; Via Colombo 64; ☎ closed Nov) offers various diving packages, costing from €100 for a single dive (maximum of three people) to €350 for a four-session beginners course.

Operating out of a kiosk on the private Pontile beach (to the west of the ferry ticket booths), **Banana Sport** (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 51 88; ☎ mid-Apr–Oct) hires out five-person motorised dinghies for €75 for two hours or €160 for the day (from 9.30am until 5.30pm). You can also pick up a boat to the popular swimming spot **Bagno di Tiberio**, a small inlet west of Marina Grande. It's said that Tiberius once swam here, although

he would not have had to pay €7.50 to access the private beach as you will.

Marina Piccola

Little more than a series of private bathing facilities, **Marina Piccola** is on the southern side of the island, directly south of Marina Grande. A short bus ride from Capri Town, or a downhill 15-minute walk, it has a 50m-long public pebble beach hemmed in by the **Scoglio delle Sirene** (Rock of the Sirens) at the western end and a **Saracen tower** at the other. The swimming's not great, although the two rocks rising out of the water about 10m offshore make excellent diving boards.

You can hire canoes at **Bagni di Gioia** (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 77 02) and **Bagni Lo Scoglio delle Sirene** (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 02 21) for around €12 per hour for a double canoe, €7 for a single.

LAST ONE IN IS A...

Come to Capri expecting beautiful sandy beaches and you'll be in for a shock. There aren't any. There are very few beaches on the island and those that do exist are almost all pebbly. That said, there's some fantastic swimming. Most of the best spots have been monopolised by private bathing clubs, entrance to which typically costs around €8 plus extra for an umbrella and sun bed. Note, also, that Capri is not a great place for inexperienced swimmers – in most places the rocky 'beaches' stand over deep water.

The island's best swimming spots:

Grotta Azzurra (opposite)

Dive off the platform into the deep blue water by the cave's entrance.

Punta Carena (opposite)

Popular with locals, the rocks by the *faro* (lighthouse) get very busy on summer weekends.

Bagno di Tiberio (above)

A private beach where Tiberius is said to have swum.

Tragara (see the boxed text, p176)

Go down the steps by the Belvedere di Tragara to rocks in front of the Isole Faraglioni.

Marina Piccola (above)

A small pebbly beach, much of which has been taken over by private clubs.



DALAS STIBBET



Arco Naturale (p176)

STEPHEN SANS

Tours

Various companies offer island tours. **Motoscafi Capri** (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 56 46; www.motoscafisticapri.com; Marina Grande pier) runs three sea tours: one to the Grotta Azzurra (€10 plus €8.50 admission to the cave, one hour); one around the island (€13, two hours), and one to the Isole Faraglioni (€10, one hour). Tickets are available from the wooden hut near the tourist office in Marina Grande.

Laser Capri (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 52 08; www.lasercapri.com; Via Don Giobbe Ruocco 45) also operates island tours (€11) and will ferry you to the Grotta Azzurra for €8 (entry to the cave costs an additional €8.50). Get your tickets from its office opposite dock 23.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Capri's two main religious events (**Festa di San Costanzo** on 14 May and Anacapri's **Festa di Sant'Antonio** on 13 June) are marked by colourful processions and open-air concerts.

Over the first 15 days of September Anacapri stages **Settembrata Anacaprese**, an annual celebration of the town's grape

harvest, with gastronomic evenings, sports competitions and open-air markets.

To welcome the new year, local folk groups strut their stuff on Piazza Diaz in Anacapri and Capri's Piazza Umberto I on 1 and 6 January.

Try www.capri.com for further details on these festivals.

SLEEPING

Sleeping, like everything else on Capri, is an expensive pastime. The island's accommodation is very top heavy with plenty of four- and five-star hotels but few budget options; camping is forbidden and although there are a growing number of B&Bs, they rarely constitute much of a saving. Standards, however, are universally high, and wherever you stay you're likely to be met with courteous and efficient service.

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

Marina Grande

Convenient if you've got an early-morning ferry, Capri's port is the island's main transport hub and offers little in the way of charm.

BELVEDERE E TRE RE MAP P173 HOTEL €€

☎ 081 837 03 45; www.belvedere-tre-re.com; **Via Marina Grande** 264; r €90-140; ☺ Apr-Nov; ☂

Difficult to miss thanks to its rusty red walls, this friendly, old-fashioned hotel is an easy five-minutes walk from the port. The rooms are simple, with white walls, tiled floors and unexciting furniture, but they are all large and the best have small terraces overlooking the sea. There's also a sun-bronzing terrace on the top floor.

HOTEL ITALIA MAP P173 PENSIONE €€

☎ 081 837 06 02; www.pensioneitaliacapri.com; **Via Marina Grande** 204; r €80-120; ☺ Apr-Nov

Offering old-school hospitality and few frills, Hotel Italia is a modest, homely pensione. The reception area is decorated with family knick-knacks and yellowing postcards, while the rooms have high ceilings and old-fashioned wardrobes and beds. The only drawback is the dining room, which looks like an institutional canteen.

RELAYS MARESCA MAP P173

HOTEL €€
☎ 081 837 96 19; www.relaismaresca.it; **Via Marina Grande** 284; d incl breakfast €140-220; ☺ Mar-Dec; ☂ ☂

A delightful four-star, this is the top choice in Marina Grande. The look is classic Capri, with acres of gleaming ceramic in turquoise, blue and yellow, and stylish furniture. There is a range of rooms (and corresponding prices), the best of which have terraces and sea views – if yours doesn't you can always nip up to the 4th-floor flower-filled terrace. There's an internet station for guests and free cots for kids.

Capri Town

If you want to be right in the heart of the action, Capri Town is the place. An easy ride from the port, it's the buzzing centre of island life and correspondingly pricey.

GRAND HOTEL QUISISANA

MAP P174 HOTEL €€
☎ 081 837 07 88; www.quisi.com; **Via Camerelle** 2; r/ste incl breakfast from €300/620; ☺ mid-Mar–1st week Nov; ☂ ☂

One of only three hotels on the island to boast a five-star L (luxury) rating, the Quisisana is Capri's most famous address. A hotel since the 19th century, it's a bastion of unapologetic opulence, with two swimming pools (one inside, one out), a fitness centre and spa, subtropical gardens, restaurants and bars. Rooms are suitably elegant, with cool colour schemes and classy furniture.

HOTEL ESPERIA MAP P174

HOTEL €€
☎ 081 837 02 62; fax 081 837 09 33; **Via Sopravonte** 41; r incl breakfast €120-170; ☺ Apr-Oct; ☂

A short uphill walk from the centre of town, the Esperia exudes a fading air of debonair charm. Housed in a 19th-century villa, complete with peeling façade, handsome columns and giant urns, it offers large, airy rooms with modern furniture and a floral theme. The best (and most expensive) have good-sized terraces with sea views.

HOTEL GATTO BIANCO MAP P174 HOTEL €€

☎ 081 837 51 43; www.gattobianco-capri.com; **Via V Emanuele** 32; d incl breakfast, s €102-158, d €153-220; ☺ Apr-Nov; ☂ ☂

Boasting a central location and a welcoming management, this gay-friendly hotel is an excellent option. The light-filled rooms are

decorated in traditional style with blue and yellow majolica tiling and there's an elegant patio with attractive wrought-iron furniture. Internet access is available to guests for €3 per 15 minutes.

HOTEL LA TOSCA MAP P174

HOTEL €€
☎ 081 837 09 89; www.latoscahotel.com; **Via Dalmazio Birago** 5; s €45-80, d €65-125; ☺ Apr-Oct; ☂

A charming one-star pensione near the Certosa di San Giacomo, La Tosca is one of the island's top budget options. Hidden away down a quiet back lane within easy walking distance of Capri Town's bright lights, it offers 11 sparkling white rooms, some with sea views, all furnished with unfussy simplicity. The owner, a genial, hospitable guy, extends a warm welcome. Not surprisingly, it's a popular choice, so book ahead.

HOTEL VILLA KRUPP MAP P174

HOTEL €€
☎ 081 837 03 62; fax 081 837 64 89; **Viale G Matteotti** 12, Parco Augusto; incl breakfast, s €90, d €125-155; ☺ Apr-Oct; ☂

Housed in the former residence of Russian author Maxim Gorky, this historic hotel oozes old-school charm, with floral tiling, fading antiques and heavy bedsteads. It also commands some fabulous views over the Giardini di Augusto and beyond to the Isole Faraglioni. If your room doesn't have the view (and not all do), simply adjourn to the blue terrace outside reception.

HOTEL VILLA SARAH MAP P174

HOTEL €€
☎ 081 837 06 89; www.villasarah.it; **Via Tibero** 3A; incl breakfast, s €80-125, d €125-195; Easter-Oct; ☂ ☂

On the road up to Villa Jovis – a 10-minute walk from the centre of Capri Town – Villa Sarah retains a rustic appeal that so many of the island's hotels have long lost. Surrounded by its own fruit-producing gardens, it has 19 airy rooms, all decorated in classical local style – ceramic tiles and old-fashioned furniture – and, outside, a small swimming pool.

LA REGINELLA MAP P173

HOTEL €€
☎ 081 837 05 00; www.lareginella.it; **Via Maternània** 36; s/d incl breakfast €70/140; ☺ Apr-Sep

Rooms at this friendly, no-frills hotel are about as basic as they come on Capri. Facing onto a sunken terrace, they are ultra-simple, with a bed, the bare essentials and little else. They are, however, spotless, and all come with

a table and chair on the terrace for whiling away those long, sultry evenings. The upstairs restaurant **La Paletta** (meals around €25) serves decent seafood and a range of regional wines.

PENSIONE GUARRACINO

MAP P173

PENSIONE €€

✉/fax 081837 71 40; Via Mulo 13; s €70-85, d €90-115; ☎ year-round; ☈ ☈

'Value for money' is a relative term when used in connection with Capri and accommodation but if you'll find it anywhere, you'll find it here, at this small, family-run *pensione*. A short walk from the centre of Capri Town and within easy striking distance of Marina Piccola, it has 13 sparkling white rooms, each decked out with a comfy bed, decent shower and independent air-con.

CELEBRITY ISLAND

A byword for Mediterranean chic, Capri has long enjoyed a reputation as a celebrity haunt.

The first big name to decamp here was Emperor Tiberius in AD 27. A man of sadistic sexual perversions, at least if the Roman author Suetonius is to be believed, he had 12 villas built on the island, including the vast Villa Jovis (p176). He also left deep scars and until modern times his name was equated with evil by islanders. When the Swedish doctor Axel Munthe first began picking about the Roman ruins on the island in the early 20th century and built his villa on the site of a Tiberian palace, locals would observe that it was all '*roba di Tiberio*' – Tiberius' stuff.

But more than Tiberius' capers, it was the discovery of the Grotta Azzurra in 1826 that paved the way for Capri's celebrity invasion. As news of the spectacular cave spread so artists, intellectuals, industrialists and writers began to visit, attracted by the island's isolated beauty and, in some cases, the availability of the local lads. An early habitué, Alfred Krupp, the German industrialist and arms manufacturer, was involved in a gay scandal, while author Norman Douglas and French count Jacques Fersen set all manner of tongues wagging.

The island also proved an escape for Russian revolutionaries. In 1905 the author Maxim Gorky moved to Capri after failing to topple the Russian tsar and five years later Lenin stopped by for a visit.

In the course of the early 20th century the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda and German author Thomas Mann visited regularly; British writers Compton Mackenzie and Graham Greene lived here for extended periods; and Britain's wartime singer Gracie Fields retired here.

Today it's the Hollywood stars and international models who keep Capri's reputation alive and its overworked paparazzi in business.



DANIEL STREIBY

Anacapri

Quieter and marginally cheaper than Capri Town, Anacapri is a good base for exploring the island's less-visited western half. On the downside, it's a bit of a slog from the port.

ALBERGO LORELEY MAP P177

HOTEL €€

✉ 081 837 14 40; www.loreley.it; Via G Orlando 16; incl breakfast, d €90-120, tr €135; ☎ Apr-Oct

A welcoming, old-school hotel, the Loreley is the sort of place where telephones and TVs are listed as modern comforts. In other words, a fine place to get away from it all. Rooms, all of which are a decent size, are decorated in styles ranging from granny chintz to Mediterranean classic – cool tiled floors and heavy antique furniture. The location, just off

the main road into Anacapri, is convenient and surprisingly quiet.

CAPRI PALACE MAP P174

HOTEL €€€

✉ 081 978 01 11; www.capripalace.com; Via Capodimonte 2B; s/d ste incl breakfast from €190/295/620;

⌚ Apr-Oct; ☈ ☈

A VIP favourite (Harrison Ford, Liz Hurley and Naomi Campbell have all stayed here), the super-slick Capri Palace is the hotel of the moment. Its stylish Mediterranean interior is enlivened with eye-catching contemporary art and its guest rooms are never less than lavish – some even have their own terraced garden and private pool. For stressed guests, the health spa is said to be the island's best. Note that there's a three-night minimum stay in high season.

HOTEL BELLAVISTA MAP P174

HOTEL €€

✉ 081 837 14 63; www.bellavistacapri.com; Via G Orlando 10; s €80-105, d €120-200; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☈

One of Capri's oldest hotels, the Bellavista is more than a hundred years old. And although you can't say the same for the décor, a makeover wouldn't do the place any harm. The large rooms have 1960s-style tile floors with enormous floral motifs, and ad hoc furniture. On the plus side, it's conveniently positioned near the entrance to Anacapri, and boasts a tennis court, a restaurant with wonderful views and discounted access to a nearby swimming pool.

HOTEL BUSSOLA DI HERMES MAP P177

HOTEL €€

✉ 081 838 20 10; www.bussoladhermes.com; Trav La Vigna 14; dm €27-32, s €40-70, d €75-120, q €120-180; ☎ year-round; ☈ ☈

There's something for everyone at this great hotel-cum-hostel. There's a dorm-style room for students, quads for families and eight recently renovated doubles on the 2nd floor. These sun-filled rooms are modern and comfortable with flat-screen TVs, white walls and blue marble floors. For a sea view you'll pay an extra €10. To get here take the bus up to Piazza Vittoria and call for the hotel shuttle service.

HOTEL CARMENCITA MAP P177

HOTEL €€

✉ 081 837 13 60; www.hotelcarmencita-capri.com; Via de Tommaso 4; s €69-95, d €110-145; ☎ mid-Mar-mid-Nov; ☈ ☈

Near the town bus station, the Carmencita is run by a chatty couple who extend a warm welcome. They'll even come and pick you up from the ferry terminal at Marina Grande if you

phone ahead with your arrival details. Rooms are bright – think mustard-yellow walls and majolica ceramic tiling – big and comfortable. At the time of writing the hotel had just attained permission to start building a swimming pool, so don't forget the costume.

HOTEL SENARIA

HOTEL €€

✉ 081 837 12 23; www.senaria.it; Via Follicara 6; r incl breakfast €120-160; ☎ Apr-Nov; ☈ ☈

It's quite a trek to this delightful family-run hotel in Anacapri's original town centre, but once you've found it you'll be glad of the effort. Housed in a discreet whitewashed villa, the rooms are a picture of elegant understatement, with polished tiled floors, cooling cream tones and the tasteful watercolours of local artist Giovanni Tessitore. It's a very quiet spot and except for Sunday-morning church bells you're unlikely to be disturbed by anything other than the breeze.

HOTEL VILLA EVA

HOTEL €€

✉ 081 837 15 49; www.villaeva.com; Via La Fabbrica 8; s €50-80, d €90-120; ☎ Mar-Oct, ☈ ☈

A veritable rural retreat, Villa Eva is an absolute gem. Hidden among fruit and olive trees (onto which hammocks have been hung), rooms feature an extensive list of original trappings including a tiled fireplace, a model ship, a brick well, domed ceilings and a waist-height boxed radio (room 6). Ideal for families, the hotel also has a swimming pool, snack bar and treetop views down to the sea. The only drawback is that it's not an easy place to get to: take the Grotta Azzurra bus from Anacapri and ask the driver where to get off, or cough up €20 for a portside pick-up.

EATING

Traditional Italian food served in traditional Italian trattorie is what you'll find on Capri. And it's what they do very well, particularly in the restaurants peppered around the island's interior. Prices are high but drop noticeably the further you get from Capri Town.

The island's culinary gift to the world is *insalata caprese*, a salad of fresh tomato, basil and mozzarella bathed in olive oil. Look out for *caprese* cheese, a cross between mozzarella and ricotta, and *ravioli caprese*, ravioli stuffed with ricotta and herbs.

Many restaurants, like the hotels, close over winter.

Next to the police station in Capri Town, the **Deco supermarket** (Map p174; Via Roma; ☎ 8am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun) is a good place to load up with picnic provisions.

Capri Town & Around

LA CAPANNINA MAP P174

TRATTORIA €€€

☎ 081 837 07 32; Via Le Botteghe 12; meals around €50; ☺ mid-Mar-Oct

There's rarely a shortage of celebrity visitors on Capri and most sooner or later will eat here, at the island's most famous traditional trattoria. Set up to look like a Hollywood version of a rustic eatery – pink tablecloths, hanging copper pots and carved wooden chairs – it serves a classic island menu with high-quality seafood pasta, ravioli caprese, grilled meat and fresh fish.

LA CISTERNA MAP P174

TRATTORIA €€

☎ 081 837 56 20; Via M Serafina 5; meals around €25; ☺ closed Feb

Named after and housed in a 2000-year-old Roman cistern, this bustling, unpretentious trattoria is a perennial favourite. Owned by the larger-than-life Salvatore, whose memorable picture adorns the bottles of house wine, it's good for traditional dishes such as pasta with beans, veal cutlets and wood-fired pizzas. Rumbling tummies won't go hungry, as the portions are huge.

LA PERGOLA MAP P174

TRATTORIA €€€

☎ 081 837 74 12; Via Traversa Lo Palazzo 2; meals around €30; ☺ Thu-Tue Nov-Sep

A step up from the average island trattoria, La Pergola is a lovely place to eat. Its vine-shaded terrace and sea views provide a wonderful setting for the delicious, innovative food. The menu comprises all the Capri classics plus a number of more modern dishes such as *paccheri con cozze*, *patate e peperoncino* (large pasta rings with mussels, potatoes and chilli). It's hard to find; persevere and follow the signs.

LA SAVARDINA DA EDOUARD

MAP P173

RISTORANTE €€€

☎ 081 837 63 00; Via Lo Capo 8; meals around €30; ☺ daily Jul & Aug, closed Tue Mar-Jun & Sep-Oct, closed Nov-Feb

You will build up an appetite as you stroll up to this laid-back restaurant in the Capri coun-

tryside. But as you sit down on the open-air terrace and look out to Ischia in the hazy distance you'll appreciate the effort. The food is great too. Dishes are made with local produce and are unapologetically simple. For proof try the *papardelle con ragù di coniglio* (pasta with rabbit sauce) followed by succulent lamb chops.

LA TAVERNA DI PULCINELLA

MAP P173

TRATTORIA €€

☎ 081 837 64 85; Via Tiberio 7; meals around €20, pizzas around €7; ☺ Apr-Oct

Thousands of tourists walk past this down-to-earth trattoria-cum-pizzeria every day on their way up to Villa Jovis. Very few stop off to eat – perhaps put off by the sight of waiters in Punchinello (Pulcinella) costumes. Islanders know better and come here for their takeaway pizzas. And with good reason – they're the best on the island. If you're really hungry go for the Vesuvio, a stomach-challenging combo of ricotta cheese, ham, mushroom and peppers.

LE GROTELLE MAP P173

RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 837 57 19; Via Arco Naturale 13; meals around €28; ☺ Apr-Oct

A great place to impress your partner. Not so much for the food, which is decent enough – think simple pasta dishes followed by grilled fish, chicken or rabbit – but for its atmospheric setting. About 150m from the **Arco Naturale** (p176), it's got two dining areas, one set in a cave, the other, more appealing, on a terrace perched above a wooded hillside falling down to the sea.

RAFFAELE BUONACORE MAP P174 SNACKS €

☎ 081 837 78 26; Via Vittorio Emanuele 35; ☎ 8am-midnight Mar-Oct

Ideal for a quick fill-up, this popular snack bar does a roaring trade in takeaway pizzas, frittatas, *panini* (bread rolls; from about €4), pastries, waffles and ice cream. Hard to beat, though, are the delicious *sfoliatecce* (cinnamon-infused ricotta in a puff pastry shell) for €1.50.

RISTORANTE DA MAP P174

RISTORANTE €€€

☎ 081 837 04 61; Via M Serafina 6; meals around €30; ☺ Tue-Sun Mar-Dec

While there's nothing exceptional about the food here, there's something undeniably appealing about eating in a restaurant where John Lennon once dined. The Beatle's face is one of many featured in the fading photo

collage papered inside the restaurant's entrance. And what would the great man have ordered? *Insalata caprese?* Pizza Margherita? Nonvegetarians might be tempted by the grilled scampi or steak with green pepper.

SFIZI DI PANE MAP P174

BAKERY €

☎ 081 837 61 80; Via Le Botteghe 15; ☺ 7am-1.25pm & 4.45pm-8.45pm Tue-Sun

Let the warm, yeasty odours tempt you and step inside this *panificio* (bakery) for a *pizza al taglio* (pizza slice; about €3) or a delicious savoury tart. Bread rolls are made fresh every day, ideal for picnics.

VERGINIELLO MAP P174

RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 837 09 44; Via Lo Palazzo 25; meals around €20; ☺ daily Apr-Oct, closed Tue Dec-Mar, closed Nov

As near to a budget diner as you'll find in Capri Town, Verginiello caters to an impressive number of hungry visitors. Offering safe, reliable food and grandstand views over Marina Grande, it's a big, bustling restaurant staffed by a hard-working team of harried waiters. Of the pasta dishes, the *ravioli caprese* and *spaghetti alle cozze* (spaghetti with mussels) are worth trying; of the main courses, the grilled steaks are a dependable choice.



Anacapri & Around

LA RONDINELLA

MAP P177

RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 837 12 23; Via G Orlando 295; meals around €28; ☺ year-round

One of Anacapri's most consistently good restaurants – apparently Graham Greene was a fan – La Rondinella has a relaxed, rural feel. The menu features a number of Italian classics such as *saltimbocca alla Romana* (veal slices with ham and sage), *cotoletta alla Milanese* (bread-crumb veal cutlet) and *gnocchi alla sorrentina* (potato gnocchi baked in tomato sauce with mozzarella). For something different try chef Michele's *linguine alla ciambura*, a delicious pasta dish with a creamy white sauce of anchovies, garlic and parsley.

LE ARCATE MAP P177

RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 837 33 25; Via de Tommaso 24; meals around €28; ☺ year-round

Take your cue from the reception folk at the nearby Capri Palace Hotel and grab a table here. An unpretentious place with hanging baskets of ivy, sunny yellow tablecloths and terracotta tiles, it specialises in delicious *primi* (first courses) and pizzas. A real show stopper is the *risotto con polpa di granchio, rughetta e scaglie di parmigiano* (risotto with crab meat, rocket and shavings of parmesan cheese).

TRATTORIA DA GIOVANNI A GRADOLA MAP P173

TRATTORIA €€

Grotta Azzurra; meals around €18; ☺ Apr-Oct

Beyond the swish bathing facilities at the Grotta Azzurra, you'll find this laid-back, lunch-in-a-costume trattoria. The setting is lovely – basic wooden tables on a thin terrace overlooking the deep blue sea – and the food straightforward. Menu stalwarts include *parmigiana di melanzane* (baked aubergine with tomato and cheese), fried fish and *pasta e fagioli* (pasta and beans stew). Better suited to summer lunches than formal dinners.

TRATTORIA IL SOLITARIO

MAP P177

TRATTORIA €€

☎ 081 837 13 82; Via G Orlando 96; meals around €20, pizzas from €4.50; ☺ Apr-Oct

One of the better trattoria in the heart of Anacapri's touristy centre, Il Solitario serves excellent food at honest prices. There's nothing remarkable about the menu, which lists the usual island fare – pasta and seafood,



RUSSELL MOUNTFORD

grilled meat and pizzas – but the helpings are large and the quality high. It's a relaxed place with a young staff, and tables are laid out in an inviting green backyard. Book ahead on summer weekends.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Capri's nightlife is a showy business. The main activity is dressing up and hanging out, ideally at one of the four cafés on la Piazzetta (Piazza Umberto I). Be warned, however, that the moment you sit down for a drink (and the slick waiters stationed on the piazza can be very persuasive), you're going to pay handsomely for the privilege (around €15 for a couple of white wines).

Cafés apart, Capri's nightlife is fairly staid, with few nightclubs to speak of and only several upmarket taverns. Most places open around 10pm, closing late, typically about 4am, and charge anywhere between €20 and €30 for admission.

In Capri Town, celebs like to be seen singing classical Neapolitan songs at **Taverna Anema e Core** (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 64 61; Via Sella Orta 39E; ☑ closed Nov-Mar), one of the island's most famous nightspots. **Guarracino** (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 05 14; Via Castello 7; ☑ closed Nov-Mar) offers more of the same, with guitar-strumming crooners and a well-to-do crowd of TV presenters, models and moneyed tourists.

For something a bit more racy, run the gauntlet of bouncers outside **Musmè** (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 60 11; Via Camerelle 61B; ☑ closed Nov-Mar), a flash disco on Capri Town's elite shopping strip, or join the younger crowd dancing to hip-hop, house and revival at **Baraonda** (Map p174; ☎ 081 837 25 23; Via Roma 6; ☑ year-round).

Up in Anacapri, **Underground** (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 25 23; Via G Orlando 259; ☑ year-round) attracts a mixed foreign and Italian crowd with its funk and house nights and its festive beach parties. Nearby, **Caffè Michelangelo** (Map p177; Via G Orlando 138; ☑ year-round) is a relaxing place to people-watch while sipping on something cool and listening to Village People on the stereo.

SHOPPING

Boasting more designer boutiques per square metre than almost anywhere else on earth, Capri's shopping scene is conservative and expensive. Along the two main strips, Via Vittorio Emanuele and Via Camarelle, you'll find most of the fashion big guns as well as a number of jewellery and shoe shops. If you're not in the market for a new Rolex or Prada bag, look out for the ceramic work and anything lemony, in particular, lemon-scented perfume and *limoncello*, a sweet lemon liqueur.

CAPRI NATURALE

MAP P177

WOMEN'S FASHIONS & SHOES

☎ 081 837 47 19; Via Capodimonte 15, Anacapri;
⌚ Apr-Oct

One of the better shops along touristy Via Capodimonte, Capri Naturale sells a limited range of women's fashions. Expect whisper-thin linen frocks in delphinium blue or dyed lavender and a small selection of handmade sandals. Everything is made locally and prices are reasonable.

CARTHUSIA I PROFUMI DI CAPRI

MAP P174

PERFUMES

☎ 081 837 03 68; Viale Parco Augusto 2C, Capri;
⌚ year-round

Legend has it that Capri's famous floral perfume was discovered in 1380 by the prior of the Certosa di San Giacomo. Caught unawares by a royal visit, he arranged a floral display of the island's most beautiful flowers for the queen. Three days later he went to change the water in the vase only to discover that it had acquired a mysterious floral odour. This became the base of the perfume that's now sold at this smart laboratory outlet.

DA COSTANZO

MAP P174

SHOES

☎ 081 837 80 77; Via Roma 49; ☑ Mar-Nov

In 1959 Clarke Gable stopped off at this tiny, unpretentious shoe shop to get himself a pair of handmade leather sandals. The shop's still going, selling a bewildering range of colourful

styles to a mixed crowd of passers-by and shoe aficionados. Prices start at around €80.

LIMONCELLO CAPRI

MAP P177

GIFTS

☎ 081 837 29 27; Via Capodimonte 27, Anacapri;
⌚ 9am-7pm May-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Apr

Don't be put off by the gaudy yellow display; this historic shop stocks some of the island's best *limoncello*. In fact, it was here that the drink was first concocted. Apparently, the grandmother of current owner Vivica made the tot as an after-dinner treat for the guests in her hotel. Nowadays, the shop produces some 70,000 bottles each year, as well as lemon chocolate, lemon marmalade and lemon honey. You can also buy lemon-motifed ceramics.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Unless you are prepared to pay **Sam Helicopters** (☎ 0828 35 41 55; www.capri-helicopters.com) €1650 for a helicopter transfer from Naples' Capodichino Airport, you'll arrive in Capri by boat. The two major ferry routes to Capri are from Sorrento and Naples, although there are also connections with Ischia and the Amalfi Coast (Amalfi, Positano and Salerno).

The information listed here refers to high-season crossings; if you're travelling in low season check timetables with tourist offices or direct with ferry companies.

All ferries arrive at and depart from Marina Grande.

To/from Naples, **Caremar** (☎ 081 837 07 00; www.caremar.it) operates ferries/hydrofoils (€7.60/12.50, 75/50 minutes, five daily), while **Snav** (☎ 081 837 75 77; www.snav.com), **Neapolis** (☎ 081 837 08 19) and **Navigazione Libera del Golfo** (NLG; ☎ 081 552 07 63; www.navlib.it, in Italian) ensure 25 hydrofoil runs a day. The standard cost of the 45-minute journey is adult/child €14/10.

To/from Sorrento, Caremar operates four daily ferry crossings (adult/child €7.80/4.90, 25 minutes) while **LMP** (Linee Marittime Partenope; ☎ 081 704 19 11; www.consortiomp.it, in Italian) runs 20 hydrofoil crossings (adult/child €12/7.50, 25 minutes).

To/from the Amalfi Coast, LMP runs services to Positano (ferry/hydrofoil €13/15.50, six daily), Amalfi (€13.50/16, seven daily) and Salerno (€14.50/16, five daily).

LMP and **Alilauro** (☎ 081 837 69 95; www.alilauro.it) operate hydrofoils between Capri and Ischia. With the former you will pay

€13, with the latter adult/child €15.50/8.

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

GETTING AROUND

The first challenge facing visitors is how to get from Marina Grande to Capri Town. The easiest, quickest and most popular solution is to take the **funicular** (⌚ 6.30am-12.30am Jun-Sep, to 9.30pm Apr-May, to 9pm Oct-Mar). Tickets (€1.30) are available from the booths to the west of the port or, at the top, from the funicular station.

Once up the hill the best way to get around the island is by bus. Operating from the bus station on Via Roma, **Sippic** (☎ 081 837 04 20) runs regular buses to/from Marina Grande (5.45am to 12.30am), Anacapri (5am to 4.30am) and Marina Piccola (6am to 2am). It also operates buses from Marina Grande to Anacapri (5.45am to 10.10pm) and from Marina Piccola to Anacapri (12.30pm to 7.30pm).

From the bus station on Via de Tommaso in Anacapri, regular **Staiano Autotrasporti** (☎ 081 837 24 22; www.staiano-capri.com) buses serve the Grotta Azzurra and Faro di Punta Carena.

Single bus tickets cost €1.30 on all routes. All-day tickets, valid from 6am to 4am May to September, 6am to midnight October to April, are also available, for €6.70, but unless you're planning a lot of bus travel you're better off sticking to singles.

There is no vehicle-hire service on the island and few roads are wide enough for a car. Between March and October you can only bring a vehicle to the island if it's either registered outside Italy or hired at an international airport – but there's really no need, as buses are regular and taxis plentiful. You can, however, hire a scooter from **Rent a Scooter** Marina Grande (Map p173; ☎ 081 837 79 41; Via Marina Grande 280, Marina Grande; per hr/day €15/65); Anacapri (Map p177; ☎ 081 837 38 88; Piazza Barile 20, Anacapri; per hr/day €15/65).

From Marina Grande, a taxi ride costs around €20 to Capri and around €25 to Anacapri; from Capri to Anacapri costs around €15. For a taxi in and around Capri call ☎ 081 837 05 43 or if you are in Anacapri ☎ 081 837 11 75.



GREG ELLIS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Indulge in a soothing dip and massage at spa park Negombo (p193)
- Get goosebumps inside the macabre Cimitero delle Monache Clarisse at Castello Aragonese (p192)
- Catch a water taxi from Sant'Angelo to the hot bubbling beach at Il Soggetto (p194)
- Explore Greco-Roman ruins in the Area Archeologica di Santa Restituta (p193)
- Enjoy classical music under the stars in the grounds of La Mortella (p194)

ISCHIA

Weary muscles ache for Ischia. Rugged, lush and steamy, its mineral springs and fumaroles have seduced the stressed since antiquity.

The biggest and busiest island in the bay, Ischia is a bubbling concoction of sprawling spa towns, mud-wrapped Germans, subtropical gardens and ancient booty. Spa resorts flank buried necropoli, hillsides are sprinkled with hermitages and jasmine-scented gardens hide restored artists' villas.

While most day-trippers head to more chic Capri from Naples, Ischia pulls a solid summer crowd. Most head for the touristy north-coast towns of **Ischia Porto**, **Ischia Ponte**, **Casamicciola Terme**, **Forio** and **Lacco Ameno**. Of these, Ischia Porto boasts the best bars, Casamicciola the worst traffic and Ischia Ponte and Lacco Ameno the most appeal.

On the calmer south coast, the car-free perfection of **Sant'Angelo** is a blissful blend of twisting laneways, cosy harbour, sunning cats and nearby bubbling beaches. In between the coasts lies a less-trodden landscape of chestnut forests, dusty farms and earthy hillside towns.

The island was one of the first Greek colonies in the 8th century BC, named Pithekoussai after the *pithos* (pottery clay) found there. An important stop on the trade route from Greece to northern Italy, it was renamed Aenaria by the Romans, who followed Pliny's and Strabo's advice and soaked in its salubrious springs.

But this island gem has also seen its fair share of disaster. The 1301 eruption of the now-extinct (and unfortunately named) Monte Arso forced the locals to flee to the mainland, where they remained for four years. Five centuries later, in 1883, an earthquake killed more than 1700 people and razed the burgeoning spa town of Casamicciola to the ground. To this day, the town's name signifies 'total destruction' in the Italian vernacular.

ORIENTATION

Ischia sits 19km southeast of Pozzuoli and 33km from Naples. Ferries and hydrofoils from both ports reach Casamicciola Terme and Ischia Porto. The latter is Ischia's major gateway and tourist hub. The island's main bus terminus is a one-minute walk west of the pier, with buses servicing all other parts of the island. East of the pier, shopping strip Via Roma eventually becomes Corso Vittoria Colonna and heads southeast to Ischia Porto.

SIGHTS

Ischia Porto & Ischia Ponte

Although technically two separate towns, Ischia Porto and Ischia Ponte are bookends to one long, sinuous sprawl of candy-coloured buildings, frappé-sipping beach babes, card-playing old-timers, and palm-fringed shops and hotels.

The ferry port itself was a crater lake, opened up to sea at the request of Spanish King Ferdinand II in 1854. While the story goes that he couldn't stand the stench of the lake, his request was more likely inspired by the prospect of increased shipping tax revenue. The harbour is fringed by a string of restaurants serving fresh seafood with harbour views. Opposite the ferry pier stands the 19th-century **Chiesa di Santa Maria di Portosalvo** (Via Iasolino, Ischia Porto; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4-8pm daily). Just to the east is the former Royal Palace, now a military spa off limits to mere civilians.

While cadets soothe their muscles, armies of bronzed shoppers raid the racks along Via Roma and the more chic Corso Vittoria Colonna. Offering a spot of spiritual respite is the 18th-century **Chiesa di San Pietro** (cnr Corso Giacinto Diano).

INFORMATION

- **Bay Watch** (☎ 081 333 10 96; Via Iasolino 37, Ischia Porto) Accommodation and tour bookings.
- **Pharmacy** (☎ 081 99 40 60; Piazza Marina, Casamicciola Terme)
- **Hospital** (☎ 081 507 91 11; Via Fundera 2, Lacco Ameno)
- **Ischia** (www.ischiaonline.it) Lists hotels, sights, activities and events.
- **Internet Point** (☎ 081 98 15 89; Corso Vittoria Colonna 123, Ischia; per hr €5; ☎ 9am-1pm & 4pm-3am Oct-Mar, 10am-1pm & 5pm-4am Apr-Sep)
- **Laundrette** (☎ 081 99 18 86; Via Alfredo De Luca 91, Ischia; ☎ 8:30am-1pm & 3-8pm Mon-Fri, 8:30am-1pm Sat, closed Sun)
- **Tourist office** (☎ 081 507 42 31; Via Iasolino, Banchina Porto Salvo; ☎ 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat)

Vittoria Colonna & Via Gigante, Ischia; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4-7.30pm daily), with its fetching convex façade, semicircular chapels and elevated terrace sprinkled with flirty teens and gossipy *signore* (women).

Further down Corso Vittoria Colonna, past Via F D'Avalos, emerald-green gates on the left lead into the lush **Giardini Pubblici** (Public Gardens; Corso Vittoria Colonna, Ischia; ☎ 7am-8pm daily). Head further to the east and you will hit the heart-stealing **Spiaggia dei Pescatori** (Fishermen's Beach), a technicolour spectacle of brightly painted fishing boats, bronzed flesh, lurid beach umbrellas and mothers on balconies calling in their chubby kids for lunch.

From here, Corso Vittoria Colonna becomes Via Pontano, ending at Via Seminario. Recently pedestrianised, Via Seminario is Ischia Ponte's prime *passeggiata* (stroll) strip, attracting the occasional film shoot. Detour left into Via Marina. The sombre grey building at the water's edge is the 16th-century **Palazzo Malcoviti**, featured in *The Talented Mr Ripley* and French film *Plein Soleil*. Originally built as a watchtower, it patiently waits for the next film crew to give it a fresh lick of paint. Further east along the shore stands the 15th-century watchtower Torre del Mare, now bell tower to Ischia's cathedral **Santa Maria della Scala** (Via Mazzella, Ischia Ponte; ☎ 8am-12.30pm & 4.30-8pm daily). The current church, designed by Antonio Massinetti and completed in 1751, stands on the site of two older churches, one built in the 13th century and the other in the 17th century. Inside its peeling interior you will find the original 14th-century baptismal font, Romanesque wooden crucifix and an 18th-century canvas by Giacinto Diano.

ISCHIA**A****B****C****D****SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES**

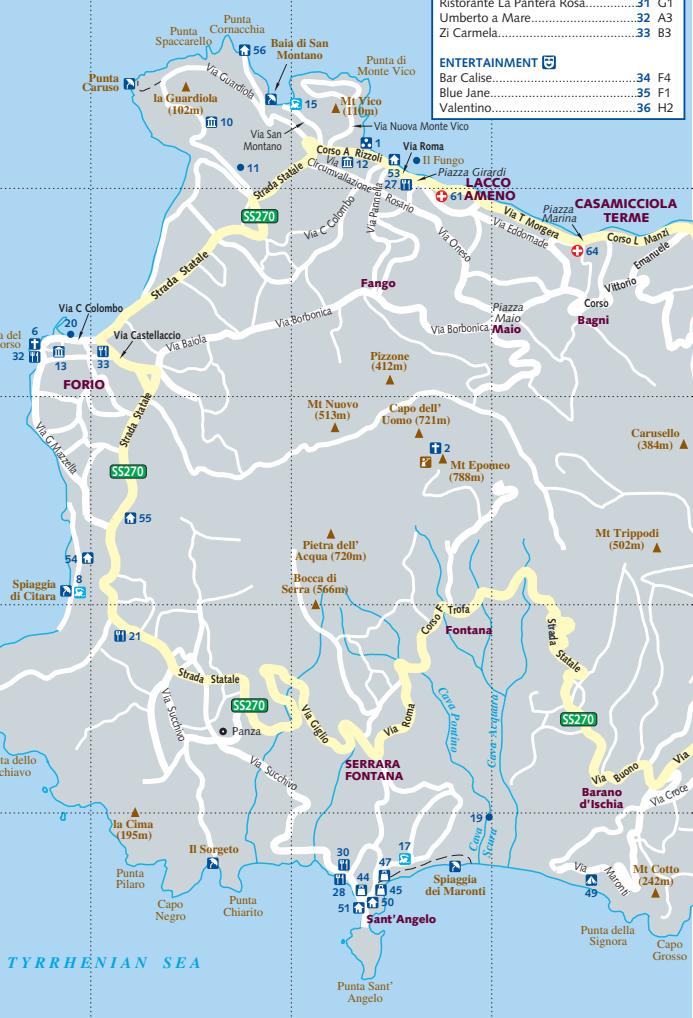
1	Area Archeologica di Santa Restituta.....	1 C2	La Mortella.....	11 B2
2	Cappella di San Nicola di Bari.....	2 C4	Museo Archeologico di Pithecusae & Museo Angelo Rizzoli.....	21 B5
3	Captain Cook.....	3 F2	Museo Civico del Torrione.....	22 G2
4	Castello Aragonese.....	4 G4	Museo del Mare.....	23 H3
5	Chiesa di San Pietro.....	5 H2	Palazzo Malcoviti.....	24 H2
6	Chiesa di Santa Maria del Soccorso.....	6 A3	Palazzo Malcoviti.....	25 E3
7	Chiesa di Santa Maria di Portosalvo.....	7 G2	Il Focolare.....	26 G1
8	Giardini Poseidon.....	8 A4	La Baia il Clipper.....	27 C2
9	Giardini Pubblici.....	9 H2	La Brocca.....	28 C6
10	La Colombai.....	10 B2	Lo Scoglio.....	29 G3
	Westcoast Boat Hire.....	20 A3	Ristorante Da Ciccio.....	30 C6
			Ristorante Il Ponte.....	31 G1
			Ristorante La Pantera Rosa.....	32 A3
			Umberto a Mare.....	33 B3
			Zi Carmela.....	

EATING

I	Cantine di Pietratorcia.....	21 B5
II	Ciccio.....	22 G2
III	Da Roberto.....	23 H3
IV	Gran Caffè Vittoria.....	24 H2
V	Il Focolare.....	25 E3
VI	La Baia il Clipper.....	26 G1
VII	La Brocca.....	27 C2
VIII	Lo Scoglio.....	28 C6
IX	Ristorante Da Ciccio.....	29 G3
X	Ristorante Il Ponte.....	30 C6
XI	Ristorante La Pantera Rosa.....	31 G1
XII	Umberto a Mare.....	32 A3
XIII	Zi Carmela.....	33 B3

ENTERTAINMENT

I	Bar Calise.....	34 F4
II	Blue Jane.....	35 F1
III	Valentino.....	36 H2



SHOPPING	F	Adam.....	37 G2
		Antica Macelleria di Francesco.....	38 G2
		Esposito.....	39 G2
		Capricci.....	40 H2
		Grifo.....	41 G3
		Imagenaaria.....	42 G3
		Ischia Sapori.....	43 H2
		Judith Major.....	44 C6
		L'Isoletto.....	45 C6
		Percorsi Comunitanti in Galleria.....	46 H2
		Riccio Calzature.....	47 C6
		Zeus Faber.....	
SLEEPING	G	Albergo Il Monastero.....	(see 4)
		Albergo Macri.....	48 F1
		Camping Mirage.....	49 D6
		Hotel Casa Celestino.....	50 C6
		Hotel Conchiglia.....	51 C6
		Hotel La Marticina.....	52 F2
		Hotel La Sirenetta.....	53 C2
		Hotel Semiramis.....	54 A4
		Il Gabbiano.....	55 B4
		Mezzatorre Resort & Spa.....	56 B2
		Umberto a Mare.....	(see 32)
TRANSPORT	H	Bus Station.....	57 F1
		Ferry & Hydrofoil Terminal.....	58 G2
		Fratelli del Franco.....	59 G2
INFORMATION	I	Bay Watch.....	60 F1
		Hospital.....	61 C3
		Internet Point.....	62 H2
		Launderette.....	63 G2
		Pharmacy.....	64 D3
		Tourist Office.....	65 G2

Ischia's maritime history is lovingly documented at the modest **Museo del Mare** (081 98 11 24; Via Giovanni da Procida 2, Ischia Ponte; admission €2.58; 10.30am-12.30pm Nov-Jan & Mar, 10.30am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct, 10.30am-12.30pm & 6.30-10pm Jul-Aug, closed Feb). Objects include cult ex-votos from sailors to saints, ancient urns, beautifully crafted model ships and revealing photographs of island life in the 20th century, including the arrival of Ischia's first American car in 1958.

From here, Via Mazzella leads down to the elegant 15th-century **Ponte Aragonese**, which connects the town to the sprawling **Castello Aragonese** (081 99 28 34; Rocca del Castello; admission €10; 9am-7pm Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Mar), perched high and mighty on a rocky islet. While Syracusan tyrant Gerone I built the site's first fortress in 474 BC, the bulk of the

current structure dates from the 1400s, when King Alfonso of Aragon gave the older Angevin fortress a thorough make-over, building the fortified bastions, current causeway and access ramp cut into the rock.

Pick up the free English-language itinerary at the ticket booth before making your way up the ramp. Channel your inner masochist at the **Museo delle Armi** (Weaponry Museum), with its small but curious collection of medieval skull clamp, feet-crushing vice, his and her chastity belts, and kinky illustrations. More substantial is the collection of medieval Italian and German armoury.

Further along inside the complex lie the sunbaked, stuccoed ruins of the 14th-century **Cattedrale dell'Assunta**. Built to replace the cathedral destroyed in the eruption of Monte Arso in 1301, it was restyled in the 18th century before collapsing under British canonfire in 1809. The 11th-century crypt below features snippets of 14th-century frescoes inspired by Giotto. Better preserved is the 18th-century **Chiesa dell'Immacolata** with its Greek-cross plan and look-at-me dome studded with curved tympanum windows. Commissioned by the adjoining **Convento delle Clarisse** (Convent for Clarisse nuns), it was left in its minimalist state after building funds ran out. When the nuns' own lives expired, they were left to decompose sitting upright on stone chairs in the macabre **Cimitero delle Monache Clarisse**. Heading back into daylight and further up the islet you will find the elegant, hexagonal **Chiesa di San Pietro a Pantaniello** and sombre **Carcere Borbonico**, one-time prison pad for leading figures of the Risorgimento (the 19th-century Italian unification movement), such as Poerio, Pironti, Nusco and Settembrini. Finally, check out the **Casa del Sole** with its sharp collection of contemporary art, including luscious paintings by local artists Clementina and Michele Petroni.

Lacco Ameno

In the 1950s and 1960s, French starlets and European royalty came to play at the legendary Terme Regina Isabella spa resort. The stars may have gone but one local icon remains, sprouting out of the sea: the iconic **Il Fungo** (The Mushroom) is a 10m volcanic rock formation spat out by Monte Epomeo thousands of years ago.

top five ISCHIA BEACHES

Spiaggia dei Maronti (p194) Long, sandy and very popular, this strip was a favourite landing spot for pirates, who would bury their loot beneath the sand. Reach it by bus from Barano, by water taxi from Sant'Angelo or on foot along the path leading east from Sant'Angelo.

Il Sorgeto (p194) Catch a water taxi from Sant'Angelo or reach it on foot from the town of Panza. Waiting at the bottom is an intimate cove complete with bubbling thermal spring. Perfect for a winter dip.

Spiaggia dei Pescatori (p189) Wedged in between Ischia Porto and Ischia Ponte is the island's most atmospheric seaside strip – think colourful vintage fishing boats, soccer matches on the sand and a looming castle perched high above in the distance.

Baia di San Montano Just outside Lacco Ameno, this gorgeous bay is the place for warm, shallow, crystal-clear waters. Here you'll also find the Negombo spa park (opposite).

Punta Caruso Located on Ischia's northwestern tip, this secluded rocky spot is perfect for a solitary swim in clear, deep water. To get here, follow the walking path that leads off Via Guardiola down to the beach. Not suitable for children or when seas are rough.

In **Piazza Restituta** you'll find the **Terme Regina Isabella** and pretty-in-pink **Chiesa di Santa Restituta**, rebuilt after the 1883 earthquake. According to legend, the martyred Restituta was washed ashore on nearby San Montano Beach in the 4th century on a boat steered from Tunisia by a seaworthy angel. Every May, residents re-enact her arrival on the beach.

Beneath the church is the must-see **Area Archeologica di Santa Restituta** (081 98 05 38; Piazza Restituta; admission €3; 9.30am-12.30pm & 5-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun, closed Nov-Mar). Excavations undertaken between 1951 and 1974 have uncovered parts of an ancient Greek kiln, Roman temple and street, 4th-century burial amphorae and an early Christian basilica. Rows of cabinets display other ancient objects, from Roman bracelets and votive gifts to a 3300-year-old stove from Procida. The ground-floor collection goes back to the future, with exquisite 17th-century *pastori* (nativity scene figurines), colourful 18th-century ceramics, high camp clerical garb and the 18th-century wooden statue of Santa Restituta still used in the annual procession in the Bay of San Montano. You can borrow a informative, handwritten guide to the excavations from the ticket desk.

The town's other cultural heavyweight is the **Museo Archeologico di Pithecusae** (081 99 61 83; www.pitheciusae.it; Corso Angelo Rizzoli 210, Lacco Ameno; admission €5; 9.30am-1pm & 3-7pm Oct-May, 9.30am-1pm & 4-8pm Jun-Sep, closed Mon), housed in the elegant Villa Arbusto, former pad of Angelo Rizzoli. The villa overlooks Monte Vico, site of the ancient settlement and acropolis of Pithecusae, and its collection features important finds from the island's Hellenic settlement, from imported earthware to parts of the acropolis itself. Older still are the fragments of Mycenaean pottery and Bronze Age vases from Casamicciola.

The collection spans Ischia's development from Neolithic to Roman times. A highlight is the legendary 7th-century Nestor's Cup in Sala (Room) II. The three Homeric verses scratched onto its side read: 'I am Nestor's Cup, good to drink from. Whoever drinks from this cup, straightaway desire for beautiful-crowned Aphrodite will seize him'. The drinking ballad is one of the oldest examples of early Greek writing in existence. The museum also houses the

Museo Angelo Rizzoli, which pays homage to the man who turned humble little Lacco into a celebrity hot spot in the 1950s. Cool paparazzi shots and clippings of a Hitchcock-esque Rizzoli and his famous pals decorate rooms once host to the likes of Gina Lollabrigida, Grace Kelly and Federico Fellini. Equally striking are the villa's gardens, complete with lemon trees, fountain, a children's playground and star-worthy views towards the Campi Flegrei.

Recover from museum fatigue at the nearby **Negombo** (081 98 61 52; www.negombo.it; Baia di San Montano, Lacco Ameno; admission €25 all day, €20 from 1pm, €13 from 4.30pm, €5 from 5pm; 8.30am-7pm daily Apr-Oct). Part spa resort, part botanical wonderland, its combination of Zen-like thermal pools, hammam, contemporary sculpture and private beach on San Montano Bay draws a younger crowd than many other Ischian spa spots. There's a Japanese labyrinth pool for weary feet, a decent *tavola calda* (snack bar) for growling stomachs and enough massage and beauty treatments to keep you *oooh-ing* all day long. Those arriving by car or scooter can park on site (car €3.60, scooter €2, all day).

For a free dip in the bay, follow the signs to the **spiaggia** (beach) out the front of Negombo.

Forio & the West Coast

Long before the invasion of sarongs and sunscreen, Forio was the hapless target of medieval pirate raids. One of the 12 watchtowers built to defend its frazzled citizens houses the **Museo Civico del Torrione** (081 333 29 34; Via Torrione, Forio; admission €2; 9.30am-12.30pm & 6pm-9pm Tue-Sun). Dating from 1480, this former Bourbon prison now exhibits the works of painter and sculptor Giovanni Maltese, who once lived in the tower.

On the western edge of town, perched high above the sea, the **Chiesa di Santa Maria del Soccorso** (Via Soccorso 1, Forio; 10am-sunset daily) is a Tex-Mex vision in white. The church was originally part of a 14th-century Augustinian monastery; its side chapel and dome were added in 1791 and 1854 respectively, the latter rebuilt after the 1883 earthquake. Most beautiful are the 18th-century

mismatched majolica tiles adorning the semicircular staircase out the front. From here, the views are heavenly.

Ischia's own Garden of Eden can be found at **La Mortella** (✉ 081 98 62 20; Via F Calese 39, www.lamortella.it; Forio; admission €10; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun Apr-Nov). Designed by Russell Page and inspired by the Moorish gardens of Granada's Alhambra in Spain, this garden is one of Italy's finest. More than 1000 rare and exotic plants from all over the world thrive here, from luscious lotus flowers to the rare Amazonian water lily. This veritable Eden was established by the late British composer Sir William Walton and his Argentinian wife, Susana, who made it their home in 1949. Ever so civilised, the grounds host classical music concerts in the spring and autumn.

A soothing 10-minute walk down the road takes you to the neo-Renaissance villa **La Colombaia** (✉ 081 333 21 47; www.colombaia.org; Via F Calise 130, Forio; admission €6; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-7pm daily Aug-Dec), former pad of Italian film director Luchino Visconti. Born into one of Milan's wealthiest families in 1906, his 1969 film *The Damned*, about a wealthy German family that turns fascist, received an Academy Award nomination for best screenplay. His recently restored whitewashed bachelor pad now houses an arts foundation, including a documentary library focussing on Visconti and cinema history, as well as costumes, set pieces and stills from his films. It's also a venue for the **Ischia Film Festival** (opposite).

South of Forio, spa lovers can soak and splash at the sprawling **Giardini Poseidon** (Poseidon Gardens; ✉ 081 908 71 11; www.giardiniposeidon.it; Via Mazzella, Spiaggia di Cittara; day pass €28; ☎ 9am-6.30pm daily Apr, 8.30am-7pm daily May-Oct, closed Nov-mid-Apr). Breathe in as you ponder a mind-boggling choice of treatments and facilities, which include saunas, Jacuzzis and baby-blue pools filled with salubrious mineral waters. If it's all too stressful, settle for the dazzling private beach below.

Sant'Angelo & the South Coast

A world away from north-coast crowds, tiny Sant'Angelo is the most chic spot on the island. Quiet laneways spill down the hill, flanked by chic boutiques, galleries, frangipani and sunning cats. At the bottom on Piazetta Ottorino Troia, tanned Italians

sip Campari soda and take in late-night summer music concerts. Keeping an eye on it all is the great hulking *scoglio* (rock), joined to the village by a long sandbar sprinkled with fishing boats, beach umbrellas and lithe-limbed *bagnini* (lifeguards).

From the pier, brightly painted water taxis reach some of the island's best beaches, including the sandy **Spiaggia dei Maronti** (one way €3) and the intimate cove of **Il Sorgeto** (one way €5), with its steamy thermal spring. Sorgeto can also be reached on foot down a poorly signposted path from the village of Panza.

For a fabulously atmospheric spa experience, catch a water taxi to Cavascura (one way €2.50) and follow the signs 300 metres down a rocky gorge to **Terme Cavascuro** (✉ 081 99 92 42; www.cavascura.it; Via Cavascura 1, Spiaggia dei Maronti, Sant'Angelo; basic thermal bath €10; ☎ 8.30am-1.30pm & 2.30-6pm mid-Apr-mid-Oct, closed mid-Oct-mid-Apr). Wedged between soaring cliffs, this historic frills-free outdoor spa is Ischia's oldest. Soak in old Roman baths hewn into the cliff, sweat it out in a grotto, then (for an extra fee) top it all off with a mud wrap (€20), manicure (€13) or massage (€26). The sulphurous waters are reputedly beneficial for rheumatic, bronchial and skin conditions.

A spectacular, if partly strenuous, 2km walk above the coast from Sant'Angelo also reaches the spa, passing on its way the faded luxury of **Parco Termale Aphrodite Apollon** (✉ 081 99 92 19; www.aphrodite.it; Via Petrelle, Sant'Angelo; admission €23; ☎ 8am-6pm mid-Apr-Oct, closed Nov-mid-Apr). Beyond its ivy-clad entrance is a rambling complex of gyms, saunas, lush terraced gardens and 12 differently heated pools, including one for hydro-cycling. Beauty treatments include tailored kinesiology therapies (€60), wine facials (€60) and soothing mud showers (€20). Buffed and balanced, flaunt that new bod at the beach bar below.

Monte Epomeo

A roughly 2.5km (50 min) calf-building uphill walk from the village of Fontana brings you to the top of **Monte Epomeo** (788m). Formed by an underwater eruption, it boasts superlative views of the Bay of Naples. The little church near the top is

the 15th-century **Cappella di San Nicola di Bari**, which features a pretty majolica floor. The adjoining hermitage was built in the 18th century by an island governor who, after narrowly escaping death, swapped politics for poverty and spent the rest of his days here in saintly solitude.

ACTIVITIES

If diving takes your fancy, **Captain Cook** (✉ 335 636 26 30; www.captaincook.it; Via lasolino 106, Ischia Porto) has equipment for hire and runs courses. A single dive will typically cost from €35. **Westcoast** (✉ 081 90 86 04; www.westcoastischia.it; Porto di Forio) provides full- and half-day hire of motorised boats and dinghies (with or without a sailor).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Ischian festivals are all about the good life – food, wine, film and a little laid-back jazz to while away those summer evenings.

Ischia Film Festival (www.ischiafilmmestival.it) Serves up free flicks and exhibitions in star locations around the island, including Castello Aragonese, Villa Arbusto and La Colombaia, usually in June.

Vinischia (www.vinischia.it in Italian) Foodies flock to this four-day celebration of regional food and wine, with free tastings and concerts along the Lungomare Aragonese, usually in June and early July.

Festa di Sant'Anna The allegorical 'burning of the Castello Aragonese' takes place on the feast day of St Anne on 26 July, with a hypnotic procession of boats and fireworks.

Ischia Jazz Festival (www.ischiajazzfestival.com in Italian) Ischia's annual jazz festival pumps out five days of smooth Italian sax with a dash of foreign acts, usually in September.

SLEEPING

Most hotels close in winter and prices normally drop considerably at those that stay open. Prices quoted here are for high season. In addition to the hotels listed here, there are the spa hotels, most of which only take half- or full-board bookings. The tourist office can supply you with a list.

ALBERGO IL MONASTERO

HOTEL €
✉ 081 99 24 35; www.alberguilmonastero.it; Castello Aragonese, Rocca del Castello, Ischia Ponte; s/d/ste incl breakfast €75/110/125; ☎ Easter-Oct

Freshly revamped, this ex-convent mixes vaulted ceilings, crisp white walls and vintage

cotto tiles with chic plush sofas, a sprinkle of antiques and bold contemporary art by the late owner and artist Gabriele Mattera. Rooms are simple but stylish, and sans TV. Not that they're needed – the sea and island views are prime-time.

ALBERGO MACRÌ

HOTEL €
✉ /fax 081 99 26 03; Via lasolino 96, Ischia Porto; s/d/t incl breakfast €46/76/101; ☎ year-round; ⚡

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

CAMPING MIRAGE

CAMP SITE €
✉ 081 99 05 51; www.campingmirage.it; Via Maronti 37, Spiaggia dei Maronti, Barano d'Ischia; per tent/car/person €5.50/9.50/10.50; ☎ year-round; ⚡

On one of Ischia's best beaches, this shady camp site offers 50 places, showers, laundry facilities, bar and a restaurant serving lip-smacking plates of pasta.

IL GABBIANO

HOTEL €
✉ /fax 081 90 94 22; SS Forio-Panza 182, Forio; r incl breakfast €16; ☎ Apr-Oct; ⚡

This hostel is one of the best around. Near the beach, it has bedrooms sleeping two, four or six. Monastically basic, the rooms are, nevertheless, spotlessly clean and all have small balconies with five-star sea views.

HOTEL CASA CELESTINO

HOTEL €€
✉ 081 99 92 13; www.casacelestino.it; Via Chiaia di Rose 20, Sant'Angelo; s €90-110, d €75-100, ste €110-125 incl breakfast; ☎ Jan-Oct; ⚡

On the pedestrian walkway down to the headland, this chic little number is a soothing blend of creamy furnishings, whitewashed walls, contemporary art and terracotta highlights. The uncluttered bedrooms boast majolica-tiled floors, modern bathrooms and enviable balconies overlooking the sea. There is a good, unfussy restaurant across the way.

HOTEL CONCHIGLIA

HOTEL €
✉ 081 99 92 70; Via Chiaia di Rose, Sant'Angelo; s/d incl breakfast €40/80; ☎ year-round

Charming, clean and centrally located behind Sant'Angelo's people-watching piazza, this

humble beachside hotel is excellent value. Rooms are cosy and the kitsch art and plastic flowers add to its raffish charm. The buffet breakfast is generous and is served on the restaurant's waterfront terrace. Ask about special seasonal rates, which can be a steal.

HOTEL LA MARTICANA HOTEL €
 ☎ 081 333 44 31; www.lamarticana.it; Via Quercia 48-50, Ischia Porto; s/d incl breakfast €88/68; ☺ year-round; P ☕

A short suitcase trundle from the ferry, this small hotel has a friendly homey feel and there's a well-established garden with grapevines, tomato plants and a barbecue (available for guests). Rooms are small but well equipped with fridges, TVs and hairdryers. The breakfast buffet is more generous than most.

HOTEL LA SIRENELLA HOTEL €€
 ☎ 081 99 47 43; www.lasirenella.net; Corso Angelo Rizzoli 41, Lacco Ameno; s/d incl breakfast €70/140; ☺ Apr-Oct; ☕

Run by a young smiling team of siblings, this affable address sits right on the beach. Terraced rooms boast sand-and-sea views, freshly tiled bathrooms and a cool, breezy vibe. When the sea air piques your hunger, succumb to pizza at the downstairs restaurant.

HOTEL SEMIRAMIS HOTEL €
 ☎ 081 90 75 11; www.hotelsemiramisischia.it; Spiaggia di Citara, Forio; s/d incl breakfast €75/51; ☺ Apr-Oct; P ☕

A few minutes' walk from the Poseidon spa complex, this nevish hotel, run by friendly Giovanni and his German wife, has a tropical oasis feel with its central pool surrounded by palms. Rooms are large and beautifully tiled in the traditional yellow-and-turquoise pattern. The garden is glorious, with fig trees, vineyards and distant sea views.

MEZZATORRE RESORT & SPA RESORT €€€
 ☎ 081 98 61 11; www.mezzatorre.it; Via Mezzatorre 23, Forio; s €200-300, d €250-380, ste €500-700 incl breakfast; ☺ mid-Apr-Oct; ☕ ☕ ☕ P

Perched on a bluff above the sea, this luxurious resort is surrounded by a 7-acre pine wood. An in-house spa centre and tennis courts crank up the spoil factor. The sitting rooms and some guest rooms are located in a 15th-century defensive tower. Rooms are decorated in earthy colours, some have private garden and Jacuzzi. Check out the infinity pool above the beach for the ultimate film-star setting. If

funds are short, just have a long, slow drink in the adjacent bar.

UMBERTO A MARE HOTEL €
 ☎ 081 99 71 71; www.umbertoamare.it; Via Soccorso 2, Forio; s €75-110, d €110-170 incl breakfast; ☺ Apr-Oct

Tucked under one of Ischia's finest restaurants, with crystal sea below, these 12 quiet rooms ooze understated chic, with cool ceramic tiles, modern bathrooms and a terracotta terrace boasting killer views and sun beds.

EATING

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

CANTINE DI PIETRATORCIA WINERY €€€

☎ 081 90 72 32; www.pietratoria.it; Via Provinciale Panza 267, Forio; meals €30; ☺ 10am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Thu & til late Fri-Sun Apr-mid-Jun & mid-Sep-mid-Nov, 5.30pm-late mid-Jun-mid-Sep, closed mid-Nov-Mar

Set among vines, figs and rosemary bushes, this A-list winery is a foodie's nirvana. Tour the old stone cellars, sip a local drop and eye up the delectable degustation menu. Offerings include fragrant bruschetta and cheeses, hearty Campanian sausages and spicy *salumi* (cold meats). Full dinners are also available if booked in advanced.

DA CICCIO SNACKS €
 ☎ 081 99 13 14; Via Porto 1, Ischia Porto, snacks from €1; ☺ year-round

Just the spot for ferry-weary arrivals, this much-loved bar does cheap, light meals, luscious pastries and dangerously good gelato. Eat in or take away, the *calzone* (pizza folded over to form a pie) stuffed with spinach, pinenuts and raisins (€1) is divine.

DA ROBERTO GELATERIA €
 ☎ 081 98 23 13; Via Luigi Mazzella 28, Ischia Ponte; cones from €1.50; ☺ year-round

Owners Roberto and Eugenia made the move here from Belluno in the Veneto, an area famed for its skilled gelato makers. The proof is in the cone. Utterly superlative are the *gran biscotti*, *crema della nonna* and the Mozart chocolate and hazelnut combo. The *semi-freddi* (partially frozen desserts) are made fresh on the premises and legitimise any gluttonous impulse.

GRAN CAFFÈ VITTORIA CAFÉ €
 ☎ 081 199 16 49; Corso Vittorio Colonna 110, Ischia; pastries €2; ☺ year-round

At the chic end of the port, this elegant, wood-panelled café has been spoiling customers and waistlines for more than a hundred years with its irresistible cakes, pastries, coffees and cocktails, all served by old-school, bow-tied waiters.

LA BAIA EL CLIPPER RISTORANTE €€€

☎ 081 333 42 09; Via Porto 116, Ischia Porto; meals €40; ☺ year-round

Located at the entrance to the port and now run by the second generation, this place sets the scene for romance. Dress up, order cocktails, clink glasses and fall in love. No chemistry? There's always the view and seafood. And the waiters are friendly, the service slick.

LA BROCCA TRATTORIA €€

☎ 081 90 00 51; Via Roma 24, Lacco Ameno; meals €17; ☺ Jan-Oct

Across the road from the beach, this unadorned trattoria serves simple, superlative seafood to in-the-know locals. Mamma cooks out the back, nonna polishes the cutlery and the spunky sun-kissed son serves salubrious seafood straight off the boat. Do not miss the spaghetti with mussels, but tuck a napkin into your collar!

LO SCOGLIO RISTORANTE €€€

☎ 081 99 95 29; Via Cava Ruffano 58, Sant'Angelo; meals €28; ☺ closed Jan-Mar & mid-Nov-mid-Dec

Dramatically located jutting out over the sea beside a picture-perfect beach cove, this is a great place for sunsets and seafood. Mussel soup, grilled bass and buttery noodles with salmon are examples of the fishy fare on offer. The service is brisk and efficient. Sunday lunchtime is a popular weekly event.

RISTORANTE DA CICCIO RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 99 16 86; Via Luigi Mazzella 32, Ischia Ponte; meals €25; ☺ closed Nov & Tue Dec-May & Oct

Sublime local seafood and a charming host make this a heart-stealer. Highlights are *tubettini* pasta with clams and pecorino cheese, and a zesty mussel soup topped with bread and chilli. The wizened man sitting out front was once the chef. These days he spends his evenings with cigarette in one hand, wine in the other, happily muttering to himself.

RISTORANTE IL PONTE RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 90 42 55; Via Chiaia delle Rose 89, Sant'Angelo; pizzas from €3.50; ☺ Apr-Oct

Inexpensive, no-frills grub just up from the car park. The pizzas are good, if unexceptional, the seafood satisfyingly fresh and the salads large and varied.

Order a margherita, a jug of icy beer and laze away the afternoon under the palm-thatched terrace. Popular with the sun-bronzed boys and babes from the beach across the street.

RISTORANTE LA PANTERA ROSA

☎ 081 99 24 83; Riva Dextra, Ischia Porto; meals €28; ☺ Apr-Nov

There are some good choices and good prices for those suffering from black-tie burnout at this laid-back restaurant on the port's savvy supertime strip. The menu has all the traditional pasta and pizza choices, plus meat dishes such as veal with wine (€9), which comes warmly recommended.

UMBERTO A MARE RISTORANTE €€€

☎ 081 99 71 71; Via Soccorso 2, Forio; meals €46; ☺ Mar-Dec

In the shadow of the Spanish mission-style Soccorso church, this sassy waterside number has the choice of low-key café-bar for light snacks, or more formal restaurant for Med-chic dining. Highlights include *ziti* (long thick tubes of pasta) with tuna, fresh tomato and *peperoncino* (chilli) and the decadent penne with lobster and asparagus.

ZI CARMELA RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 99 84 23; Via Schioppa 27, Forio; meals €20; ☺ Apr-Oct

Frequented by locals, here for seafood dishes such as the *fritturina e pezzogna* (a local white fish baked with potatoes and herbs in the wood-fired pizza oven). Dining space is gaily decorated with copper pans, ceramic mugs and strings of garlic and chillies. Undecided taste buds can go for the €25 four-course set menu.

ENTERTAINMENT

Ischia is not Ibiza. That said, the area around Ischia Porto has the best buzz, with a handful of bars and clubs to keep night owls hooting.

Bar Calise (☎ 081 99 12 70; Piazza degli Eroi 69, Ischia; admission €15, incl 1 drink; ☺ 7pm-3am Thu-Sun) draws young and old with its languid mix of palms, cocktails, waistcoated waiters and live Latin, swing and folk.

Clubbing types bump and grind to house and techno at the hyperactive (and hyper-expensive) **Valentino** (✉ 081 99 26 53; Corso Vittoria Colonna 97; admission €30 Jul & Aug, €10 Sep-Jun; ⚡ midnight-late daily).

In the 1960s, docked boat **Blue Jane** (✉ 081 99 32 05; Viale Pagoda 1, Ischia Porto; admission €20, ind 1 drink; ⚡ midnight-late Fri-Sun) was the famous *A Lampara*, floating playground for the likes of Mick and Bianca Jagger, Kirk Douglas and cult Italian singer Fabrizio de Andre. Today it pumps out mainly commercial and house tunes to a friendly, chilled-out crowd.

SHOPPING

Those with the S-word on their mind head to Ischia's Via Roma and the web of narrow streets leading to Ischia Ponte. From floss-thin bikinis to decadent jars of *babà* (sponge soaked in rum), there's enough shopping on these cobbled stones to burn up the plastic fantastic. Done? Explore the tiny boutiques and art galleries in Sant'Angelo and Forio.

ADAM

✉ 081 98 22 05; Via Roma 102, Ischia

Looking for a Renaissance pistol? Pick one up at this offbeat ode to all things vintage Italian. It's all here, from antique Ischian urns

ANTIQUES

and handmade Punchinello dolls to shining armour (knight not included). Take a detour through the leafy back garden, complete with giant lemons, sleepy turtles and one very determined pussycat.

ANTICA MACELLERIA DI FRANCESCO ESPOSITO

FOOD

✉ 081 98 10 11; Via delle Terme 2, Ischia; ⚡ year-round, closed Sun winter

For a perfect picnic hamper head to this century-old deli. Drop in from 8am for fresh mozzarella and wood-fired *casareccio* bread. Fill the latter with a lip-smacking choice of cheeses, *prosciutti*, homemade *peperoncino* salami and marinated peppers. Then wash it all down with a bottle of *falanghina* (dry white wine). *Meraviglioso!* (Marvellous!)

CAPRICCI

LINGERIE & BEACHWEAR

✉ 081 98 20 63; Via Roma 37, Ischia

Fabulous lingerie and men's and women's beachwear by Versace, Moschino, La Perla and Roberto Cavalli. Expect high quality and matching prices for looking this good on the beach and in bed.

GRIFO

CLOTHING

✉ 081 98 37 25; Corso Vittoria Colonna 210, Ischia

Cool threads for fashion-literate guys. Stock up on Burberry, Richmond, and St Tropez

ISCHIA ON A FORK

Ischian restaurateur Carlo Buono gives the low-down on classic island grub:

'Fresh, seasonal ingredients are the cornerstone of Ischian cooking, from silky olive oil to plump *pomodorini* (cherry tomatoes). Like Neapolitan cooking, the emphasis is on simple, uncomplicated home cooking using premium produce. Traditionally, there are two types of Ischian cuisine: coastal and mountain. For centuries, the fishermen of Lacco Ameno and Sant'Angelo would barter with the farmers of Barano and Serrara Fontana, who'd offer wine, vegetables, pork and rabbit in exchange for the fishermen's catch.'

'Indeed, rabbit is a typical Ischian meat and we're seeing a revival of the traditional *fossa* (pit) breeding method, where rabbits are bred naturally in deep fosse instead of in cages. The result is a more tender, flavoursome meat. Leading this renaissance is local Slow Food advocate Riccardo D'Ambra, whose famous trattoria *Il Focolare* (✉ 081 90 29 44; Via Cretaria 3, Barano d'Ischia; meals €25; ⚡ 8-11pm Mon-Fri, 12-3pm & 8-11pm Sat & Sun, closed Wed Nov-Mar, open New Year's Eve) is well known for its rabbit and rustic mountain dishes. Definitely worth eating on the island is a popular Sunday dish called *coniglio all'ischitana* (Ischia-style rabbit), which is prepared with olive oil, unpeeled garlic, chilli, tomato, basil, thyme and white wine.'

'Like the land, the sea is seasonal, so the seafood that we cook depends on the time of year. Typical local fish include *pesci bandiera* (sailfish), the flat *castagna*, *lampuga* and *palamide* (a small tuna). A popular way of cooking it is in *acqua piazzza* (crazy water). Traditionally prepared on the fishing boats, it's a delicate sauce made with *pomodorini*, garlic and parsley. Fried fish is also very typical; a fresh serve of *frittura di mare* (mixed fried seafood) drizzled in lemon juice is just superb. May to September is *totano* (squid) season and a great time to try *totani imbotti* (squid stuffed with olives, capers and breadcrumbs, and stewed in wine).

'Equally wonderful is fresh, wood-fired *casareccio* bread. Soft and dense on the inside and crunchy on the out, it's perfect for doing the *scarpetta* (wiping your plate clean) or for filling with salami or *parmigiano* cheese. If you have any room left, track down a slice of *torta caprese*, a moist chocolate and almond cake. *Buon appetito!*'

label Vilebrequin. The pastel-striped Borrelli sweaters are sublime. Across the street at no. 162 is the women's store.

IMAGAENARIA

BOOKS

✉ 081 98 56 32; Via Giovanni da Procida, Ischia Ponte

Charming and erudite, this little bookshop is also a local publishing house that prints a fetching series of minibooks dedicated to Ischian folklore, culture, history and nature in Italian. The shop also sells rare prints and lithographs of Ischia and Naples at a range of prices. The most expensive date back to the 1600s. Open until 9pm in winter and 1am in summer for some serious late-night shopping.

ISCHIA SAPORI

FOOD & GIFTS

✉ 337 97 24 65; Via Luigi Mazzella 5, Ischia Ponte

This savvy little produce shop is the home of *rucolino*, a local, liquorice-flavoured digestive made with *rucola* (rocket). The recipe is a guarded secret, but the liquid is yours for the taking. The shop also sells its own wines, gourmet food stuffs, *limoncello*-soaked *babà*, olive-oil soaps, and fragrances, all reasonably priced and gorgeously packaged with trademark Italian flair.

JUDITH MAJOR

CLOTHING & SHOES

✉ 081 98 32 95; Corso Vittoria Colonna 174, Ischia

Exclusive stockist of Italian label Brunello Cucinelli, the look here is Polo Ralph Lauren with a sexy Italian twist. Cashmere sweaters, suave shirts, blazers and chic womenswear. Shoes include Prada, Barrett and Alberto Guardiani for men and Stuart Weitzman and Pedro Garcia for women. Everything you'll need for a jaunt on the yacht.

L'ISOLETTTO

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

✉ 081 99 93 74; Via Chiaia delle Rose 36, Sant'Angelo

Stock up on a mouthwatering selection of local produce, from spicy *peperoncino*, rum-soaked *babà* and *cannoncelli* (pastry filled with lemon cream) to Ischian vino and the ubiquitous *limoncello*. Less tasteful – but equally delicious – is a collection of kitsch tourist tack, from seashell placemats to 3-D souvenir wall plates.

PERCORSI COMUNICANTI IN GALLERIA

CERAMICS

✉ 081 90 42 27; Via Sant'Angelo 93, Sant'Angelo

Contemporary ceramic respite from smiling sun platters. This slick little gallery features bold, contemporary ceramics from Neapolitan

artist Massimiliano Santoro. A modest selection of Murano glass jewellery and designer silk kaftans further loosen the purse strings.

RICCIO CALZATURE

SHOES

✉ 081 98 41 99; Corso Vittoria Colonna 216, Ischia

Italian footwear sans the designer price tag. Men's, women's, formal and sporty, last season's stock is slashed by up to 50%. Fashion victims needn't fret. New-season stock is also available, at new-season prices. The choice isn't huge but definitely worth a browse, with names such as Diesel, Richmond, Miss Sixty and Cesare Paciotti in the mix.

ZEUS FABER

CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

✉ 333 760 33 02; Via Sant'Angelo 81, Sant'Angelo

A dimly lit mix of boho chic and local art. Indian pashminas, embroidered sandals, jewellery and handbags sit beside vintage prints, one-off gauche re-creations and owner Rosario De Paola's original paintings of a fiery Vesuvius.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

You can catch hydrofoils direct to Capri (€10.40) and Procida (€4, 20 minutes) from Ischia, as well as to Naples and the Amalfi Coast. See p262 for details of year-round ferries and hydrofoils.

The island's main bus station is in Ischia Porto. There are two principal lines: the CS (Circolo Sinistro; Left Circle), which circles the island anticlockwise, and the CD line (Circolo Destro; Right Circle), which travels in a clockwise direction, passing through each town and leaving every 30 minutes. Buses pass near all hotels and camp sites. A single ticket, valid for 90 minutes, costs €1.20, an all-day, multiuse ticket is €4, while a two-day ticket is €6. Taxis and microtaxis (scooter-engined three-wheelers) are also available.

You can do this small island a favour by not bringing your car. If you want to hire a car or scooter for a day, there are plenty of rental firms, although razor-thin roads and holiday traffic make driving a car here stressful. In addition to hiring out cars (from €32 per day) and mopeds (€25 to €35), *Fratelli del Franco* (✉ 081 99 13 34; Via A De Luca 127, Ischia Ponte) also has mountain bikes (around €10 per day). You can't take a rented vehicle off the island.



GREG ELMS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Lunch on the beach at La Conchiglia (p203)
- Hang out with fishermen in the pastel-hued village of Marina Corricella (opposite)
- Enjoy evening beer and jazz at a humble portside bar in Marina Grande (p203)
- Hire a *gommoni* (rubber dinghy) at Marina di Chiairolla (opposite) for a day of island beach-hopping

PROCIDA

The Bay of Naples' smallest island is also its best-kept secret: a soulful blend of hidden lemon groves, weathered fishermen and pastel arabesque abodes.

Mercifully off the mass-tourist radar, Procida feels refreshingly real. August aside – when beach-bound mainlanders flock to its shores – its skinny sun-bleached streets are the domain of the locals: wiry young boys clutch fishing rods, weary mothers clutch wiry young boys and wizened old seamen swap tales of malaise on *Piazza dei Martiri* (Martyrs' Square). Here, the hotels are smaller, fewer waiters speak broken German and the islanders' welcome lacks that seasoned smarminess.

On *Marina Grande*, colourful cubic houses crowd the waterfront like a row of bright, blunt crayons. Under strung wet washing, fishermen mend their nets while waiters serve their catch in well-worn restaurants. Further exploration does little to detract from this image. Over the hill, sleepy *Corricella* tumbles down to the sea in a riot of yellows, pinks and whites. External staircases adorn stark, wide-arched houses, adding a spicy Arabian touch.

High above the village, the abandoned *Castello d'Avalos* was a prison until 1985. So spectacular are its views that prisoners required a recommendation to serve time here. Procida is also a seasoned film set; the international hit *Il Postino* was partly filmed here, as were parts of *The Talented Mr Ripley*. To this day, Procida is the preferred island retreat of Naples' creative set, who come here seeking solitude, inspiration and the best lemon *granita* (crushed ice flavoured with lemon juice) this side of Sorrento.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Marina Grande is the hop-off point for ferries and hydrofoils, and forms most of the tourist showcase. Here, *Graziella Travel Agency* (✉ 081 896 95 94; www.isoladiprocida.it; Via Roma 117), is your best bet for organising accommodation, boat trips and bicycle hire. It also has a good free map of the island.

ETP (✉ 081 896 90 67; www.casavacanza.net, in Italian; Via Principe Umberto I, Marina Grande) can also organise accommodation as well as tickets to the *Il Vento del Cinema* film festival (right).

Surf the internet at nearby *Call Me* (✉ 081 896 80 33; Via Vittorio Emanuele 3, Marina Grande; per hr €3).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The best way to explore the island – a mere 4 sq km – is on foot or by bike.

Clinging onto Procida's highest point is the crumbling 16th-century *Castello d'Avalos*, former Bourbon hunting lodge and ex-prison. Soak in the dizzying bay views before exploring the adjoining *Abbazia di San Michele Arcangelo* (✉ 081 896 76 12; Via Terra Murata 89; admission €2; ☎ 10am-12.45pm year-round, plus 3.30-6pm May-Oct). Built in the 11th century and remodelled between the 17th and 19th centuries, this one-time Benedictine abbey contains a church, a small museum with some arresting paintings, and a honeycomb of catacombs.

From panoramic *Piazza dei Martiri*, the village of *Marina Corricella* tumbles down to its marina in a riot of pinks, yellows and whites. The bright colours made it easier for fishermen to play 'spot your house' while out at sea.

Further south, off *Via Pizzaco*, a steep flight of steps leads down to sand-brushed *Spiaggia di Chiaia*, one of the island's most beautiful beaches and home to *La Conchiglia* (p203).

All pink, white and blue, little *Marina di Chiairolla* features a yacht-stocked marina, old-school eateries and a languid disposition. From here, head to the heaving *Lido di Procida* beach, where hyperactive water babies, flirting church-group teens and wandering-eyed husbands make for a voyeuristic feast.

The small satellite island of *Vivara* is protected by WWF; it contains rare native fauna and is an important archaeological site. It is currently closed to visitors indefinitely.

The *Procida Diving Centre* (✉ 081 896 83 85; www.vacanzeaprocida.it/framediving01-uk.htm; Via Cristoforo Colombo 6) runs diving courses and hires out equipment. Budget €32 for a single dive, €60 for a full day.

On the harbour at *Marina Corricella*, ask for Cesare, who runs *boat trips* (per 2½ hrs €20) and half-day trips in a galleon for €90 (minimum 25 people). *Ippocampo* (✉ 081 810 14 37, 333 720 01 93; www.ippocampus.it; Marina Chiairolla) hires out *gommoni* and *gozzi* (wooden boats) from €80 per day.

You can charter a yacht from *Blue Dream* (✉ 081 896 05 79, 339 572 08 74; www.bluedreamcharter.com; Via Ottimo 3) from €60 per person, per day.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

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

Il Vento del Cinema (www.ilventodelcinema.it) is an annual five-day festival of art-house cinema and English-language workshops run by prolific film-makers. See the website for festival dates.

SLEEPING

Accommodation tends to be of the small-scale variety – think converted farmhouses and family-run hotels. A good choice of self-contained bungalows and apartments can work out quite cheap if you're in a group. Many places close over the winter and book out in August – so check ahead during these periods.

Camp sites are dotted around the island and are open from April to October. Typical prices are €10 per site plus €10 per person. Reliable sites include *Vivara* (✉ 081 896 92 42; Via IV Novembre) or, on the same road, *La Caravella* (✉ 081 810 18 38; Via IV Novembre).



Spiaggia di Chiaia (p201)

DALLAS STIRBLEY

CASA GIOVANNI DA PROCIDA B&B €

081 896 03 58; www.casagiovannidaprocura.it; Via Giovanni da Procida 3; s €50-80, d €65-100 incl breakfast; ☎ closed Feb; P ☒

This chic converted-farmhouse B&B features split-level, minimalist rooms with low-rise beds and contemporary furniture. Bathrooms are small but slick, with bronze and aqua tiling, cool cube basins, huge showerheads and the odd vaulted ceiling. In the lush garden, chilled-out guests read and eat peaches.

HOTEL CRESCENZO HOTEL €€

081 896 72 55; www.hotelcrescenzo.it; Via Marina di Chiaiellella 33; s €60-120, d €70-120 incl breakfast; ☎ year-round; ☒

Just 10 smallish rooms; choose between a bay view or balcony. The décor is a suitably nautical blue and white. This hotel is fronted by a restaurant, generally bursting with an affable local crowd.

HOTEL LA CORRICELLA HOTEL €€

081 896 75 75; Via Marina Corricella 88; s €70-100, d €90-120 incl breakfast; ☎ Apr-Oct

One bookend to Marina Corricella, it's hard to miss this shocking-pink number. Low-fuss rooms feature modular-style furniture with fans and TVs. The large shared terrace boasts top-notch harbour views, the restaurant serves decent seafood and a boat service reaches the nearby beach.

HOTEL RIVIERA HOTEL €€

081 896 71 97; Via Giovanni da Procida 36, Marina di Chiaiellella; s/d incl breakfast €35/70; ☎ Apr-Oct; P ☒

The downside? It's an uphill hike from the marina, the interiors look a little tired and the

vibe is somewhat anonymous. On the upside, there's birdsong, air-con, clean comfy beds and it's fabulously cheap.

LA ROSA DEI VENTI BUNGALOW €

081 896 83 85; www.vacanzeaprocura.it; Via Vincenzo Rinaldi 34; s per week €320-490, d €390-690, tr €450-750 incl breakfast; ☎ Mar-Oct; P ☒

Perched on a tranquil cliff top, these 18 self-contained bungalows feature private cooking facilities, patios and clean, no-frills interiors. There's a private beach and vineyard, and matriarch Titta cooks up a weekly Procidian feast, eaten under a lemon-clad pergola.

LE GRAND BLEU GUESTHOUSE APARTMENT €€

081 896 95 94; www.isoladiprocura.it; Via Flavio Gioia 37; apt per week €250-950; ☎ closed mid-Dec-Jan; ☎ ☒

Close to Chiaia beach, these fresh apartments feature bright functional furniture, funky bathrooms, stovetops, internet access and a cool rooftop terrace with wood-fired oven, barbecue and views of Ischia. Wheelchair access.

EATING

Prime waterfront dining here needn't equal an overpriced disappointment, with portside trattorie serving fresh classic fare. Several inland trattorie use home-grown produce and game in their cooking. Try the zesty *insalata al limone*, a lemon salad infused with chilli oil.

BAR CAVALIERE PASTICCERIA €

081 810 10 74; Via Roma 76, Marina Grande; pastries from €1; ☎ year-round

Procida's prime pastry peddler will leave you a drooling mess. All the rage is the *lingua di bue* (ox tongue), flaky pastry shaped like a tongue and filled with *crema pasticcera* (custard).

FAMMIVENTO TRATTORIA €€

081 896 90 20; Via Roma 39, Marina Grande; meals €25; ☎ closed Sun night, Mon & Nov-Mar

Get things going with the *alici ripiene* (stuffed anchovies), then try the *fusilli carciofi e calamari* (pasta with artichokes and calamari). For a splurge, go for the *zuppa di crostacei e molluschi* (crustacean and mollusc soup). It ain't the house speciality for nada.

GRAZIELLA

TRATTORIA € ☎ 081 896 74 79; Via Marina Corricella 14; meals €12;

☒ Mar-Oct

Along this unpretentious marina, with its old fishing boats, piles of fishing nets and sleek, lazy cats, any restaurant will provide you with a memorable dining experience. Choices include sandwiches and burgers, spicy *penne alla siciliana* (pasta with a spicy tomato and chilli sauce) and juicy grilled chicken with sweet-chilli sauce.

LA CONCHIGLIA TRATTORIA €€

081 896 76 02; Via Pizzaco 10; meals €25;

☒ Mar-Oct

No, you're not hallucinating, the view is real. Topaz waves at your feet, pastel Corricella in the distance. On the terrace, boisterous fishermen and sun-kissed lovers tuck into gems such as *antipasto al mare* (seafood antipasto) and a knockout *spaghetti alla povera* (spaghetti with *peperoncino*, green peppers, cherry tomatoes and anchovies). To get here, take the steep steps down from Via Pizzaco or book a boat from Corricella.

RISTORANTE L'APPRODO TRATTORIA €

081 896 99 30; Via Roma 76, Marina Grande; meals €12; ☎ Mar-Oct

Preened navy cadets flock here for home-style cooking. Dive into a spicy bowl of *penne alla siciliana* or slurp your way through the *zuppa di pesce* (fish stew). When you're done, sit back and watch the boats dock.

RISTORANTE SCARABEO RISTORANTE €€

081 896 99 18; Via Salette 10; meals €27; ☎ daily Dec-Oct, weekends only Dec-Feb

Behind a veritable jungle of lemon trees lies the venerable kitchen of Signora Battinelli. With husband Francesco, she whips up classics such as *fritelle di basilico* (fried patties of bread, egg, parmesan and basil) and homemade aubergine and *provola ravioli* (€9). They breed their own rabbits, make their own *falanghina* and it's all yours to devour under a pergola of bulbous lemons.

ENTERTAINMENT

People flock to Procida for peace and quiet, so don't come expecting a wild time. Marina Grande has a few low-key options. GM Bar (081 896 75 60; Via Roma 117; ☎ 24hrs Jul-Aug, 5am-2am Sep-Jun, closed Tue Oct-May) features

live jazz, latin or local pop acts on Friday night, and DJ-spun commercial/house and commercial/Latin on Saturday and Sunday night respectively.

Further up the street, wood decking, potted palms and chill-out tunes set the scene for languid people-watching at Bar Roma (081 896 74 60; Via Roma 163, Marina Grande; ☎ closed Tue Oct-Apr).

SHOPPING

Low-key Procida isn't a shopping heavyweight. Good buys include ceramics, wine and local art.

ENOTECA PECCATI DI GOLA WINE

081 810 19 99; Via Vittorio Emanuele 13, Marina Grande

Provocatively called 'Sins of the Throat', this slick little bottle shop stocks the best of Campanian vino and a smattering of other Italian drops.

LUIGI NAPPA GALLERY ART & JEWELLERY

081 896 05 61, Via Roma 50, Marina Grande

Nappa's paintings are fresh and contemporary with a Procidan theme; his sculpture and jewellery are offbeat and original.

SISTERS CERAMICS & SOUVENIRS

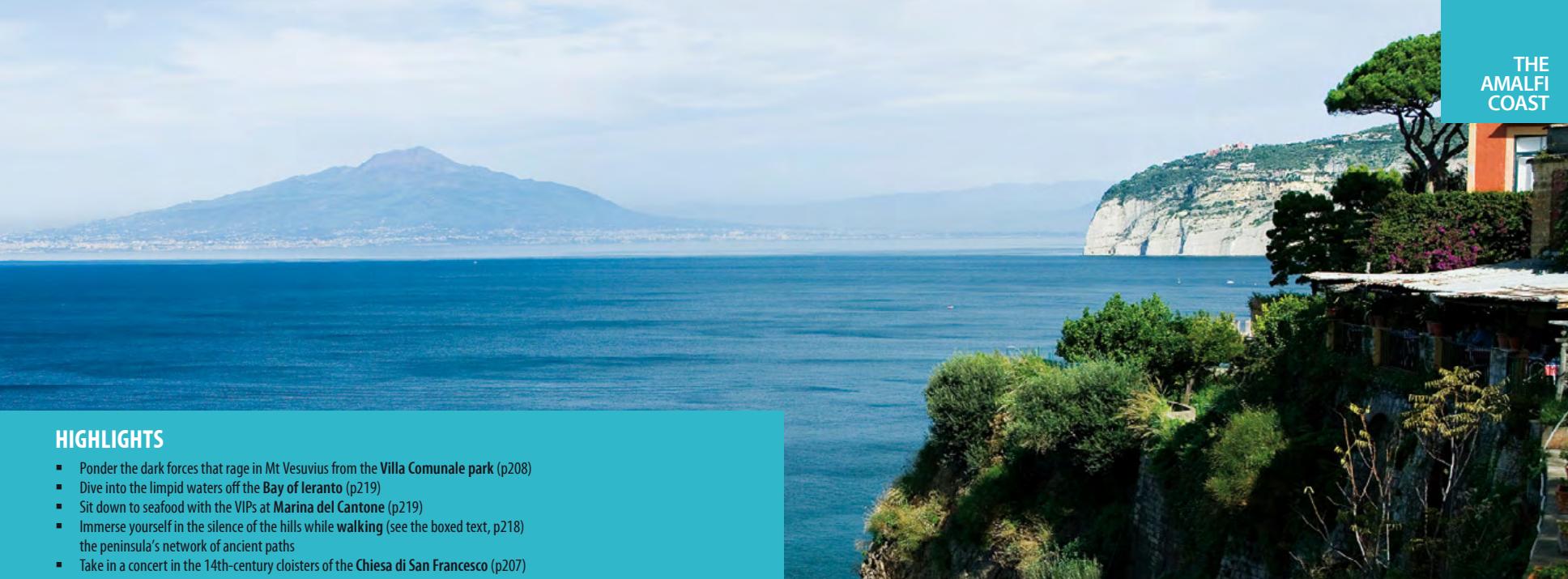
081 896 03 33; Via Roma 154, Marina Grande

Go Med with the hand-painted ceramic jugs, platters, coasters, lemon squeezers and seriously dishy coffee cups. The vintage island photographs make for soulful souvenirs.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Procida is linked by ferry and hydrofoil to Ischia (€4, 20 minutes), Pozzuoli and Naples (see p262). There is a limited bus service (€0.80), with four lines radiating from Marina Grande. Bus L1 connects the port and Via Marina di Chiaiellella.

Small, open micro-taxis can be hired for two to three hours for around €35, depending on your bargaining prowess. Contact Graziella Travel Agency (081 896 95 94; www.isoladiprocura.it; Via Roma 117) for bicycle hire (€5 half day, €8 full day).



Views of the Bay of Naples from Sorrento's Museo Correale (p208)

GREG ELLMS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ponder the dark forces that rage in Mt Vesuvius from the Villa Comunale park (p208)
- Dive into the limpid waters off the Bay of Ieranto (p219)
- Sit down to seafood with the VIPs at Marina del Cantone (p219)
- Immerse yourself in the silence of the hills while walking (see the boxed text, p218) the peninsula's network of ancient paths
- Take in a concert in the 14th-century cloisters of the Chiesa di San Francesco (p207)

SORRENTO

Gateway to the silent land of the sirens, Sorrento is a resort town with a southern-Italian soul.

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

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

In town, the action focuses on the medieval *centro storico*. An attractive quarter of shops, restaurants, churches and piazzas, it gets very busy in high summer, although even in July and August you don't have to walk far to avoid the worst of the crowds.

For an altogether more tranquil scene, head to the green hills around Sorrento. Known as the land of the sirens, in honour of the mythical maiden-monsters who were said to live on Li Galli (a tiny archipelago off the peninsula's southern coast), the area to the west of Massa Lubrense is among the least developed and most beautiful in the country. The best way to appreciate it is to walk the ancient footpaths that connect the sleepy villages and the coast's hidden coves. For the more adventurous, there's some great diving in the Punta Campanella Marine Reserve.

ORIENTATION

Piazza Tasso, bisected by Sorrento's main street, Corso Italia, is the centre of town. It's about a 300m walk northwest of the Circumvesuviana train station, along Corso Italia. From Marina Piccola, where ferries and hydrofoils dock, walk south along Via Marina Piccola then climb about 200 steps to reach the piazza. Corso Italia becomes the SS145 on its way east to Naples and, heading west, changes its name to Via Capo.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Centro storico

The town centre is compact and all the main sights (of which there are surprisingly few) are within walking distance of Piazza Tasso, the town's focal square. Spearing off to the west, Corso Italia (closed to traffic in the centre between 10am and 1pm and 7pm to 7am) cuts through the centro storico, whose narrow streets throng with tourists on summer evenings. In the middle

of the loud souvenir stores, pubs, cafés and trattorie, the 15th-century Sedile Dominava on Via San Cesareo looks uncomfortably out of place. A domed enclave used by the town's medieval aristocracy as a meeting point, it now houses a working men's club.

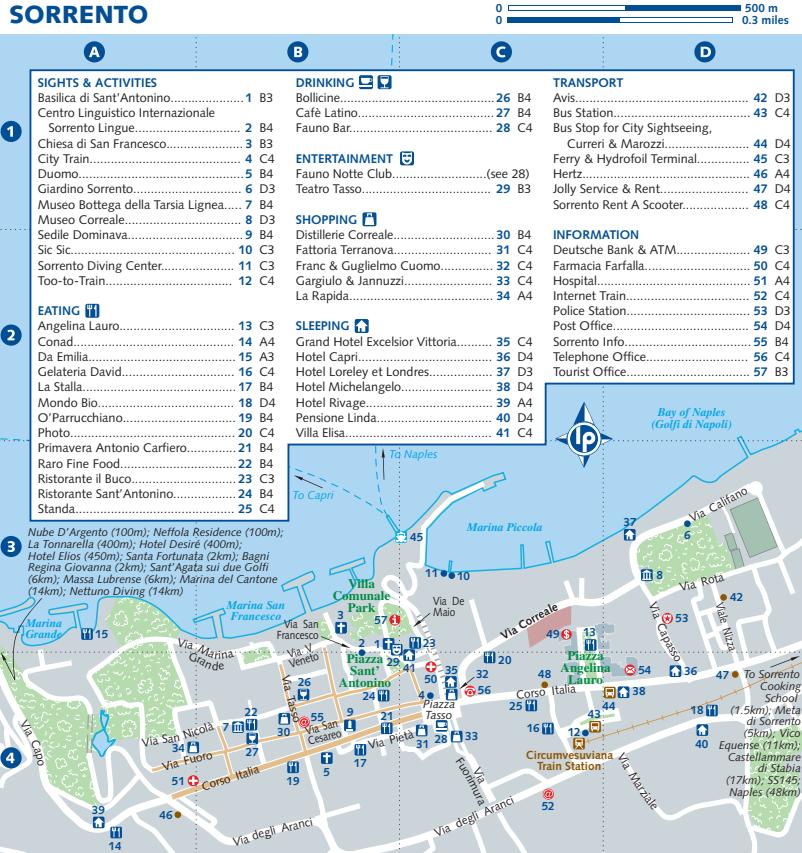


Walking in Piazza Tasso

GREG ELLMS

INFORMATION

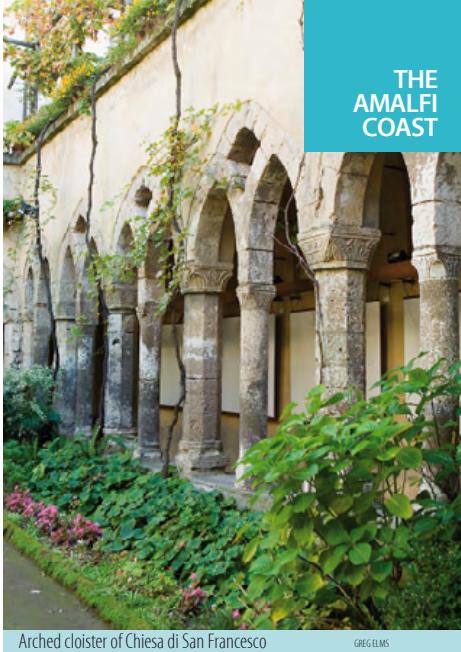
- Deutsche Bank** (Piazza Angelina Lauro 22-29) One of several banks in and around Piazza Angelina Lauro with an ATM; there are others along Corso Italia.
- Farmacia Farfalla** (081 878 13 49; Via De Maio 19; 8.30am-1.30pm & 4-11pm daily)
- Hospital** (081 533 11 11; Corso Italia 1)
- Info Sorrento** (www.infosorrento.it) Extensive website with tourist information on Sorrento and environs.
- Internet Train** (081 878 57 42; Via degli Aranci 49; for 30 mins/1hr €1.50/3; 9.30am-1.30pm & 3.30-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm & 6-10pm Sun)
- Police station** (081 807 53 11; Via Capasso 11)
- Post office** (081 878 14 95; Corso Italia 210)
- Sorrento Info** (081 807 40 00; www.sorrento.info.eu; Via Tasso 19; for 30 mins €2.50; 10am-1.30pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat Nov-Apr, 10am-1.30pm & 5-10.30pm Mon-Sat May-Oct) Office providing tourist information and internet access.
- Telephone office** (081 807 33 17; Piazza Tasso 37; 9am-1pm & 4-10pm daily)
- Tourist office** (081 807 40 33; www.sorrento-tourism.com; Via Luigi De Maio 35; 8.45am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, plus 8.45am-12.45pm Sun Aug) In the Circolo dei Forestieri (Foreigners' Club), it has plenty of useful printed material and provides the free monthly information magazine, *Surrentum*.

SORRENTO**Cathedral & Churches**

On Corso Italia, the gleaming white façade of Sorrento's **Duomo** (081 878 22 48; Corso Italia; 7.30am-noon & 5-8pm daily) gives no hint of the exuberance housed within. Of particular note is the marble bishop's throne (1573) and the beautiful wooden choir stalls decorated in the local *intarsio* (marquetry) style. The cathedral's original structure dates to the 15th century but it has been rebuilt several times, most recently in the early 20th century when the current façade was added. The side door, however, is an original, dating to 1474. A short way to the east, the triple-tiered bell tower rests on an archway into which three classical columns and a number of other fragments have been set.

One of Sorrento's most beautiful spaces, the cloisters of the **Chiesa di San Francesco** (081 878 12 69; Via San Francesco; 8am-1pm & 2-8pm daily) are well worth a look. A harmonious marriage of architectural styles – two sides are lined with 14th-century crossed arches, the other two with round arches supported by octagonal pillars – they are often used to host exhibitions and summer concerts.

Nearby and of note mainly because it houses the bones of Sorrento's patron saint is the **Basilica di Sant'Antonino** (081 878 14 37; Piazza Sant'Antonino; 9am-noon & 5-7pm daily). The much-loved saint is said to have performed numerous miracles, including one in which he rescued a child from a whale's stomach.



Arched cloister of Chiesa di San Francesco

GREG ELMS

This explains the presence of two whale bones in the basilica. The saint's bones lie beneath the baroque interior in an 18th-century crypt.

Museums

Since the 18th century Sorrento has been famous for its *intarsio* furniture, some wonderful examples of which are to be

Frescoes inside the Sedile Dominova depict Sorrento's coat of arms



EMILY RODDELL



8am–midnight mid-Apr–mid-Oct) directly across the Bay of Naples from Mt Vesuvius. A popular place to while away the sunset hours, it's a lively spot, with benches, operatic buskers and a small bar.

For parents with toddlers, there's a pleasant park a short walk east of Piazza Tasso, the **Giardino Sorrento** (Via Califano; ☎ 9am–1pm & 4.30–11pm daily summer, 9am–5pm winter), with climbing frames and games.

Beaches

Sorrento does not have great beaches. In town the two main swimming spots are **Marina Piccola** and, to the east, **Marina Grande**, although neither is especially appealing. **Marina Grande**, a 700m walk west of Piazza Tasso, has a pleasant seafront lined with trattorie and ramshackle houses and a small strip of dark sand. The jetties nearby sport ubiquitous umbrellas and deck chairs, which cost up to €17 a day. Nearer the centre, **Marina Piccola** is popular with young Italians, who crowd the stamp-sized beach like hyperactive sardines. If you want to swim here it's worth paying to access one of the private bathing clubs.

Nicer by far is **Bagni Regina Giovanna**, a rocky beach about 2km west of town. Set among the ruins of the Roman Villa Pollio Felix, it's a picturesque spot with clear, clean water. It is possible to walk here (follow Via Capo) but you'll save your strength if you get the SITA bus headed for Massa Lubrense.

The best swimming, however, is to be had in the tiny coves that dent the craggy coast to the west and south of Sorrento. To search out the top spots, hire a boat. **Sic Sic** (☎ 081 807 22 83; www.nauticasicsic.com; Marina Piccola; ☎ May–Oct) rents out a variety of boats, starting at around €30 per hour or €90 per day (excluding petrol).

Operating out of Marina Piccola, the **Sorrento Diving Center** (☎ 081 877 48 12; www.sorrentodivingcenter.it; Via Marina Piccola 63) organises daily dives (weather permitting) and a series of courses. For eight- to 11-year-olds, a half-day course costs €75, for adults €90. For qualified divers a single dive (up to 45 minutes) will set you back €35, including equipment hire.

found in the **Museo Bottega della Tarsia Lignea** (☎ 081 877 19 42; Via San Nicolà 28; admission €8; ☎ 10am–1pm & 3pm–6pm Mon–Sat). There is also an interesting collection of paintings, prints and photographs depicting the town and surrounding area in the 19th century.

Sorrento's main museum, however, is the **Museo Correale** (☎ 081 878 18 46; Via Correale 50; admission €6; ☎ 9.30am–1.30pm Wed–Mon) to the east of the city centre. Here you'll find a rich assortment of 17th- and 19th-century Neapolitan art; Japanese, Chinese and European porcelains; clocks, furniture, and, on the ground floor, Greek and Roman artefacts. The bulk of the collection, along with the 18th-century villa in which it's housed, was donated to the city in the 1920s by Alfredo and Pompeo Correale, the last descendants of the aristocratic Correale family. Outside, the gardens offer great views of the bay.

Parks

Another great viewpoint is the small **Villa Comunale park** (☎ 8am–8pm daily mid-Oct–mid-Apr,



HOLGER LEUE

Courses

In the nearby suburb of Sant'Agnello, the **Sorrento Cooking School** (☎ 081 878 32 55; www.sorrentocookingschool.com; Viale Dei Pini 52, Sant'Agnello) offers two-hour cooking classes followed by lunch or dinner for €140 per person. Hotel pickups are available at 9am for the morning session and 2pm for the afternoon lesson. The school also runs courses on pizza making, wine tasting and *limoncello*. For further information check out the English-language website.

Less appetising but no less challenging are the Italian language courses taught at the **Centro Linguistico Internazionale Sorrento Lingue** (☎ 081 807 55 99; www.sorrentolingue.com; Via San Francesco 8). Group courses typically comprise four hours of lessons five days a week in classes of up to 12 students. Prices start at €206 for a basic one-week group course, rising to €760 for a four-week package. Residential courses are also available, with accommodation provided in local homes.

plete with English-language commentary, last about 35 minutes.

City Sightseeing Sorrento (☎ 081 877 47 07; www.sorrento.city-sightseeing.it; adult/6–15yrs €15/7.50) runs a hop-on, hop-off bus tour of Sorrento and surrounding area. Departing daily from Piazza Angelina Lauro at half past the hour, every hour between 9.30am and 4.30pm, the open-top double-decker buses stop in Rione Cappuccini and Cocomella (both northeast of Sorrento), before heading, via Piazza Tasso, to Massa Lubrense, Termoli and Sant'Agata sui due Golfi. English-language commentaries are provided and tickets, available onboard, are valid for six hours.

Operating out of a converted train carriage outside the Circumvesuviana train station, **Too-To-Train** (☎ 081 734 17 55; www.too-to-train.com) offers a range of tours, including trips to the Sorrento Peninsula (€28.50), Pompeii and Vesuvius (€45) and Herculaneum (€27).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The city's patron saint, Sant'Antonino, is remembered on 14 February each year with processions and huge markets. The saint, whose bones lie in the Basilica di Sant'Antonino (see p207) is credited with having saved Sorrento during WWII when Salerno and Naples were heavily bombed.

The Settimana Santa (Holy Week; see p18) Easter processions are famous throughout Italy. There are two main processions: the first takes place at midnight on the Thursday preceding Good Friday, with robed and hooded penitents in white; the second occurs on Good Friday itself, when those taking part wear black robes and hoods to commemorate the death of Christ.

Between July and September, concerts are held in the cloisters of the Chiesa di San Francesco (see p207) as part of the Sorrento Festival (081 807 40 33). Performances, generally of classical music, usually begin at 9pm. For specific details and ticket information ask at the tourist office.

Until recently, the town's November Film Festival was regarded as the most important in the country for Italian-produced cinema. However, it wasn't held in 2005 and its future remains uncertain.

SLEEPING

You shouldn't have any problems finding accommodation in Sorrento, although if you're coming in high summer (July and August) you'll need to book ahead. Most of the big city-centre hotels are geared towards package tourism and prices are correspondingly high. There are, however, some excellent choices, particularly on Via Capo, the coastal road west of the centre. This area is within walking distance of the centre but if you've got luggage it's easier to catch a SITA bus for Sant'Agata or Massa Lubrense.

GRAND HOTEL EXCELSIOR VITTORIA

HOTEL **€€**
081 807 10 44; www.exvitt.it; Piazza Tasso 34;
incl breakfast, s/d €340/390, ste from €690;
year-round;

A hotel for more than 170 years, the grand old dame of Sorrento oozes old-world elegance. Huge potted palms adorn public rooms awash with sunlight and antique furniture. Guest rooms vary in size and style, ranging from tasteful simplicity to extravagant, frescoed opulence. All, however, have views, either of the hotel's lush, colourful gardens or over the sea to Mt Vesuvius. Past guests have included Pavarotti, Wagner, Goethe, Sophia Loren and British royalty.

HOTEL CAPRI

HOTEL **€€**
081 878 12 51; www.albergocapri.it; Corso Italia 212;
s/d incl breakfast €100/150;

A decent three-star near the train station, the Capri has comfortable, modern rooms decorated with lemon-and-blue majolica tiles and functional furniture. They're not the biggest in the world but they come with satellite TV and sound-proofing, something not to be sniffed at given the hotel's roadside location. Breakfast, served in the hotel restaurant, is a buffet of fruit juice, croissants, ham and cheese.

HOTEL DÉSIRÉ

HOTEL **€**
081 878 15 63; www.desireehotelsorrento.com;
Via Capo 31B; s/d incl breakfast €60/90;

One of a cluster of hotels along Via Capo, the Désiré is a top budget choice. It's not so much the simple, sunny rooms (although they're fine) or the facilities (a TV lounge and panoramic roof terrace) as the relaxed atmosphere, friendly owner and beautiful views. The lift down to the rocky beach below is a further plus, even if you still have to pay for the umbrellas and deck chairs.

HOTEL ELIOS

HOTEL **€**
081 878 18 12; Via Capo 33; s €40, d €70-60;

Offering views that many city centre hotels would charge the earth for, the Elios is a great little pensione. Run by a charming old dear, it boasts no frills (unless you count the views), just impeccable old-fashioned hospitality and light, airy rooms. If your room doesn't have a balcony, and few do, enjoy the views from the downstairs terrace.

HOTEL LORELEY ET LONDRES

HOTEL **€€**
081 807 31 87; fax 081 532 90 01; Via Califano 12;
r incl breakfast €95;

The elegance has long since faded but the charm remains. This defiantly old-fashioned hotel boasts one of the best sites in town – on the cliff tops looking over to Mt Vesuvius. And it's for this, more than the pleasantly ramshackle, floral interior, that you're paying for. Some rooms have the view, although those that do have no air-con; conversely (or perversely), rooms without the view have air-con. Outside there's a shaded terrace bar/restaurant overlooking the sea – perfect for an apéritif (€4) at sunset.

HOTEL MICHELANGELO

HOTEL **€€€**
081 878 12 51; www.michelangelohotel.it; Corso Italia 275; s/d incl breakfast €125/210;

Convenience and comfort are the hallmarks of this modern four-star hotel. Situated on the main road into town and near the train station, it's well placed for most things. The marble and terracotta floors, inoffensive artwork and courteous service leave a pleasant impression. Rooms are unpretentious, if a little anonymous, and the swimming pool is a major plus.

HOTEL RIVAGE

HOTEL **€€**
081 878 18 73; www.hotelrivage.com; Via Capo 11;
s/d €88/110;

More often booked by tour groups than walk-ins, this low-rise hotel stands at the western edge of town. Within easy walking distance of the centre, it offers 53 bland, white rooms, all with private terrace. Wi-fi internet access is available, as is parking (€10 per day). There's a reasonable restaurant and rooftop sun terrace.

LA TONNARELLA

HOTEL **€€**
081 878 11 53; www.latonnarella.it; Via Capo 31;
incl breakfast, d €150-165, ste €255-270;

No place for modernists, La Tonnarella is a picture of blue and yellow majolica tiles, antiques, chandeliers and statues. Rooms, most of which have their own balcony or small terrace, continue the classical theme with traditional furniture and discreet mod cons. The hotel also has a private beach, accessible by lift, and a highly regarded terrace restaurant.

NEFFOLA RESIDENCE

FLAT **€€**
081 878 13 44; www.neffolareidence.com;
Via Capo 21; prices on request only;

The 10 self-contained flats in this stone farmhouse are ideal for self-caterers and families. Sleeping from two to four people, they all have their own kitchen area and bathroom and most have private balconies. If not, there's a communal sun terrace with views over the surrounding tree tops and, beyond that, to the sea. Guests have free access to the swimming pool in the adjacent Nube d'Argento camp site.

NUBE D'ARGENTO

CAMP SITE **€**
081 878 13 44; www.nubedargento.com; Via Capo 21;
per car/person/tent €5/10/10, 2-person bungalows €50-
80, 4-person bungalows €65-110;

This inviting camp site is an easy 1km drive west of the Sorrento town centre. Pitches and wooden chalet-style bungalows are spread out beneath a canopy of olive trees – a source of much-needed summer shade – and the facilities are excellent. Youngsters in particular will enjoy the open-air swimming pool, table-tennis table, slides and swings.

PENSIONE LINDA

PENSIONE **€**
081 878 29 16; Via degli Aranci 125; s/d €50/75;

Don't be put off by the decidedly unpicturesque suburban setting or the dark, unappealing entrance – Pensione Linda is a pearl. A homely 2nd-floor pensione run by a hospitable family, it offers spotless, modern rooms with good-sized bathrooms and inoffensive décor. There's no air-con but fans are provided in summer and the showers work a treat. Noise from the surrounding buildings can sometimes be a nuisance.

SANTA FORTUNATA

CAMP SITE **€**
081 807 35 74; www.santafortunata.com; Via Capo 39;
per car/tent/person/tent/car €5/6.50/9, 2-person
bungalows €50-60, 4-person bungalows €80-110;

A large, well-equipped camp site with a range of sleeping options. As well as tent pitches, there are 35 wooden bungalows and 25 mobile homes dotted around the verdant site. Four-person bungalows comprise a double bedroom, second room with bunk bed and small kitchen corner, and bathroom. Unnecessary and annoying is the €2.50 charge to use the swimming pool in July and August. Credit cards are not accepted.

VILLA ELISA

HOTEL **€**
081 878 27 92; www.villaelisasorrento.com;
Piazza Sant'Antonino 19; d/tr/ste €80/100/120;

You can't really get much more central than this small, friendly set-up. The simple rooms, all of which come with cooking facilities, look over a central courtyard where you can sit and eat. Up a steep staircase, the self-contained suite (unavailable between March and June) has a pint-sized living room, bathroom, bedroom and kitchen. It's not a big place and rooms are smallish, but the washing machine's a definite plus and the owner's a very welcoming lady.

EATING

The centre of town is full of bars, cafés, trattorie, restaurants and even the odd kebab takeaway. Many of these, particularly those with waistcoated waiters stationed outside, are unashamed tourist traps serving bland food at inflated prices. But not all are and it is perfectly possible to eat well. If you've got your own wheels there are some superb restaurants dotted around the nearby countryside, including one of Italy's top restaurants, in Sant'Agata sui due Golfi.

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

Self-caterers can stock up at one of the various supermarkets around town: there's a **Standa** (Corso Italia 225; ☎ 8.30am-1.20pm & 5-8.55pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1pm & 5-8.30pm Sun) in the centre and a **Conad** (Via Capo 10; ☎ 8.30am-9pm Mon-Sat & 9am-1pm Sun) on the western edge of town.

ANGELINA LAURO BAR €
☎ 081 807 40 97; Piazza Angelina Lauro 39-40; self-service meal around €12; ☎ daily Jul-Aug, Wed-Mon Sep-Jun

Resembling a college canteen with its metal chairs and bright lights, this unexceptional bar is great for a filling, inexpensive self-service lunch. Simply grab a tray (at the far end of the bar) and choose from the daily selection of pastas, meats and vegetable side dishes. You can sit down and order from a menu but you'll end up paying much more if you do, typically around €6 for pasta and from €10 for meat dishes.

DA EMILIA TRATTORIA €€
☎ 081 807 27 20; Via Marina Grande 62; meals around €20; ☎ year-round, closed Tue mid-Sep–Apr

One of a clutter of eateries along the Marina Grande seafront, Da Emilia is the archetypal family-run trattoria. It's welcoming and laid-back with an uncomplicated menu of seafood classics – pasta with mussels or clams, fried squid and grilled fish. Needless to say, the food is delicious and the portions are huge. Order an *antipasto della casa* (house starter) and you'll be tucking into slices of ham, marinated and grilled aubergines, local *treccia* cheese, marinated salmon, anchovies, olives and salami.

GELATERIA DAVID GELATERIA €
☎ 338 365 06 99; Via Marziale 19; cones around €2.50; ☎ 9-2am daily Mar-Oct

A small, brightly lit gelateria near the train station, David's has up to 30 different flavours. Speciality of the house is the spaghetti ice cream, but if that doesn't appeal there are all the traditional flavours – *straciattelle*, pistachio, chocolate, strawberry and so on – plus *granite* (ice drinks) and crêpes. Outside there are a few tables on the pavement.

LA STALLA TRATTORIA €€
☎ 081 807 41 45; Via Pietà 30; meals around €25, pizzas from €4.50; ☎ closed Wed

Go up the grand staircase to the large, open-air terrace covered by bamboo awnings and flanked by an orchard of lemon and orange trees. Here a small army of black-clad waiters work tirelessly, serving pastas and pizzas, meats and fish. The pastas are fine but it's the pizzas that stand out. Prepared in a wood-fired oven, they arrive bubbling hot, the cheese melted to perfection and the base just beginning to char. Delicious.

MONDO BIO VEGETARIAN €
☎ 081 807 56 94; Via Degli Aranci 146; snacks/pasta €3/6.50; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Sat year-round

Flying the banner for organic vegetarian food, this bright shop-cum-restaurant serves a limited range of meat-free pastas and tofu dishes. The menu, chalked up outside, changes daily but typical dishes include *pasta con melanzane* (pasta with aubergines) and *polpette di tofu* (tofu balls). Seating is limited but you can always peruse the shop's shelves if you have to wait.

O'PARRUCCHIANO TRATTORIA €€
☎ 081 878 13 21; Corso Italia 67; meals around €22; ☎ Thu-Tue year-round

Presumably the TV screen transmitting direct from the kitchen has been placed by the entrance to try to lure customers in. They'd do just as well to beam out pictures of diners tucking into bowls of cannelloni (said to have been invented here) or *gnocchi alla sorrentina*, the ubiquitous Sorrentine speciality. As memorable as the food is the luxurious foliage that adorns the greenhouse-style interior.

PHOTO BAR/RISTORANTE €€€
☎ 081 877 36 86; Via Correale 19-21; meals around €40; ☎ year-round

With its modish look (which changes every couple of weeks) and regular photo projections, Photo is a far cry from Sorrento's traditional trattorie. Part bar and part restaurant, it serves several menus with dishes ranging from sushi-style raw fish to new takes on Italian classics –

think Angus beef carpaccio with rocket salad and parmesan shavings. The wine list is also interesting, with a limited selection of local labels. In winter a DJ adds to the trendy vibe.

PRIMAVERA ANTONIO CARFIERO GELATERIA €

☎ 081 807 32 52; Corso Italia 142; cones from €2.50; ☎ 8am-11pm daily, to 3am summer

Stop off at Sorrento's most famous gelateria for the best ice cream you'll ever have. With tons of flavours to choose from, including vegan-friendly jasmine and the full range of Italian classics, you'll be spoiled for choice. While you eat, admire the photos of Italian celebs who have dropped by for a quick cone.

RARO FINE FOOD DELI €

☎ 081 878 39 20; www.rarofinefood.com; Vico I Fuoro 18; panini/salads €6/7; ☎ 10am-4pm & 5.30pm-midnight daily Apr-Oct, shorter hrs winter

A trendy re-take on the traditional Italian *salumeria*, this modern deli serves light meals (pastas and salads) and some of the best *panini* in Sorrento. Made with fresh bread rolls and traditional fillers (cheese, ham, tomatoes), it makes an excellent lunch, to eat in or take away. You can also order packed lunches and buy a whole range of foodie treats, from marmalades to wine glasses.

RISTORANTE IL BUCO RISTORANTE €€€

☎ 081 878 23 54; Rampa Marina Piccola 5; meals around €55; ☎ Feb-Dec, closed Wed

Even the most disgruntled critic would be hard pushed to describe this Michelin-starred restaurant as a hole, as the name translates. Housed in a monks' former wine cellar, it is a refined restaurant offering far from monastic cuisine. The onus is on innovative regional cooking, so expect modern combos such as pasta with rock fish sauce or *treccia* (local cheese) and prawns served on a bed of caper, tomato and olive sauce. In summer, there's outdoor seating near one of the city's ancient gates. Reservations recommended.

RISTORANTE SANT'ANTONINO RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 877 12 00; Via Santa Maria delle Grazie 6; meals around €23, pizzas around €6; ☎ Dec-Oct

If you can't find anything you like here you're going to have trouble eating in Italy. Running the gamut from pizzas, through pastas and risottos to meats, fish, salads and crêpes, the

menu is surely the longest in town. If you don't fancy scrolling through the whole thing, there are also four set menus (€18/22/26/32). Seating is on a terrace surrounded by greenery and lemon trees.

DRINKING

You can do the whole drinking trip in Sorrento – you can down pints of lager while watching Sky sport on a big screen; you can try local wines in wood-panelled wine bars or sip cocktails in swish cafés; you can people-watch over an aperitif at squareside bars or linger over wine while pondering Vesuvius over the water.

BOLLICINE

☎ 081 878 46 16; Via dell' Accademia 9; ☎ 6pm-1am daily Jul & Aug, Tue-Sun Sep-Jun

An unpretentious wine bar with a dark wooden interior and boxes of bottles littered around the place. The wine list includes all the big Italian names and a selection of interesting local labels – if you can't decide what to go for, the amiable barman will happily advise you. There's also a small menu of *panini*, bruschetta and one or two pasta dishes.

CAFÉ LATINO

☎ 081 878 37 18; Vico I Fuoro 4A; ☎ 10am-1am daily Apr-Sep

The place to impress your partner with cocktails (from €7) on the terrace. Sit among the orange and lemon trees and gaze into each other's eyes over a Mary Pickford (rum, pineapple, grenadino and maraschino) or a glass of chilled white wine. If you can't drag yourselves away, you can also eat here (meals around €30).

FAUNO BAR

☎ 081 878 11 35; Piazza Tasso; ☎ Dec-Oct

On Piazza Tasso, this high-profile café covers half the square and offers the best people-watching in town. It's not, however, the cheapest place to drink or eat – cocktails start at around €8.50, sandwiches at €7.

ENTERTAINMENT

For such a busy resort Sorrento's entertainment is fairly low-key. In summer, concerts are held in the cloisters of Chiesa di San Francesco; otherwise it's the theatre for a good old-fashioned sing-along.

FAUNO NOTTE CLUB

081 878 10 21; www.faunonotte.it; Piazza Tasso 1
A direct competitor of the more established Teatro Tasso, the Fauno offers 'a fantastic journey through history, legends and folklore'. In other words, 500 years of Neapolitan history set to music. Sing along to the Masaniello Revolt (see p29) and other folkloristic episodes.

TEATRO TASSO

081 807 55 25; www.teatrotasso.com; Piazza San Antonino

The southern Italian equivalent of a cockney music hall, Teatro Tasso is home to the Sorrento Musical (€25), a sentimental revue of Neapolitan classics such as 'O Sole Mio' and 'Trona a Sorrent'. The 75-minute performances start at 9.30pm Monday to Saturday from March to October.

SHOPPING

The pedestrianised centro storico is the place to shop. Ignore the replica football shirts and souvenir tat and look out for inlaid wood and *limoncello*.

Unless otherwise stated, the following shops open all day until late in summer and close for lunch in winter.

DISTILLERIE CORREALE FOOD & GIFTS

081 877 46 22; Via Tasso 20

One of many shops selling *limoncello* in the historic centre. Sample a free slug before choosing from the ample assortment of pretty bottles. You can also top up on larder favourites such as pickled mushrooms and artichokes, fancy olive oils and classy jams.

FATTORIA TERRANOVA FOOD

081 878 12 63; Piazza Tasso 16

Fattoria Terranova is an agriturismo (farm stay; p218) near the village of Sant'Agata sui due Golfi in the hills to the south of Sorrento. It produces everything that you'll find for sale in this, its in-town shop – wine, olive oil, preserves and marmalades, vegetables in olive oil, dried herbs. An ideal place for a foodie gift.

FRANC & GUGLIELMO CUOMO GIFTS

081 878 11 37; Piazza Tasso 32

Inlaid wood is the speciality of the house at this intriguing shop on central Piazza Tasso. Alongside a selection of exquisite music boxes you'll find a bewildering collection of chess

sets (costing up to €150) and a veritable zoo of porcelain animals, including a magnificently kitsch tiger.

GARGIULO & JANNUZZI GIFTS

081 878 10 41; Viale Enrico Caruso 1

Dating from 1863, this old-fashioned shop-cum-warehouse is a classic. Elderly shop assistants will guide you through three-floors of locally made goods ranging from ceramic crockery to inlaid cabinets, embroidered lace and pottery. Shipping can be arranged.

LA RAPIDA SHOES

038 877 77 05; Via Fuoro 67; 9am-1pm & 5-9pm Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm & 3.30-8pm rest of year

Walk through the centro storico and you'll find numerous stores selling leather sandals; head to the far end of Via Fuoro and you'll find this tiny cobbler's shop. A bit old-fashioned, it doesn't have the range of sandals offered by bigger places, but the quality's as good and the prices (from €25) are generally better. It also does repairs, so if your bag's broken or you need a button sewn on, this is your place.

GETTING THERE & AWAY
Boat

From Naples' Molo Beverello, Alilauro (081 878 14 30; www.alilauro.it) and Linee Marittime Partenope (LMP; 081 807 18 12; www.consortiolmp.it) runs up to 15 daily hydrofoils to Sorrento. The 35-minute journey costs €9. In August, the Metrò del Mare (099 60 07 00; www.metrodelmare.com) covers the same route. Journey time varies from 50 minutes to an hour and a half depending on the number of intervening stops. Tickets, available on the boat, cost €4.50.

Sorrento is the main jumping-off point for Capri, and ferries/hydrofoils run year-round; in summer every hour, in winter less frequently. Information listed here refers to high season schedules. LMP runs up to 20 hydrofoils daily (€12, 20 minutes), while Caremar (081 807 30 77; www.caremar.it) has four daily fast ferries (€7.80, 25 minutes). All depart from the port at Marina Piccola, where you can buy your tickets.

For the Amalfi Coast, TraVelMar (089 872 95 00; Largo Scario 5, Amalfi) ferries sail to Amalfi (€8, three daily) and Metrò del Mare (099 44 66 44; www.metrodelmare.com) runs three daily services for Amalfi (€7).

Bus

To get to Sorrento from Naples Capodichino airport, Curreri (081 801 54 20; www.curreri.it) runs six daily services, departing from outside the Arrivals hall and arriving in Piazza Angelina Lauro. Buy tickets (€7) for the 75-minute journey on the bus. There are also plenty of private agencies that will arrange airport transfers for around €60.

Marozzi (080 579 01 11; www.marozzivt.it) operates two weekday buses to/from Rome. Leaving Rome's Stazione Tiburtina at 7am and 3pm, they arrive in Sorrento at 10.45pm and 7pm respectively. Tickets cost €17. The return bus for Rome departs from Piazza Angelina Lauro at 6am and 5pm, arriving at 9.45am and 9pm.

SITA (099 73 07 49; www.sita-on-line.it, in Italian) buses serve Naples (€3.20, one hour 20 minutes, twice daily), the Amalfi Coast and Sant'Agata, leaving from outside the Circumvesuviana train station. Buy tickets at the station bar or from shops bearing the blue SITA sign. At least 12 buses a day run between Sorrento and Amalfi (€2.40, 1½ hours), looping around Positano (€1.30, 40 minutes). Change at Amalfi for Ravello.

Car & Motorcycle

If you are coming from Naples and the north, take the A3 autostrada until Castellammare di Stabia; exit there and follow the SS145 southeast.

Train

Sorrento is the last stop on the Circumvesuviana (081 772 24 44; www.vesuviana.it) train line from Naples. From the station, just off Corso Italia, trains run every half-hour for Naples (€3.20, one hour 10 minutes), via Pompeii (€1.80, 30 minutes) and Ercolano (€1.80, 50 minutes).

GETTING AROUND

The best way to get around Sorrento is to walk – distances are not great and traffic restrictions mean that the city centre is closed to cars for much of the day. There are, however, local buses to the port at Marina Piccola (Line B, every 20 minutes between 7am and 11.30pm), to Sant'Agnello (Line C, 7am to 11.30pm) and Marina Grande

(Line D, 7.20am to 12.20am). Tickets (€1 for 90 minutes) are available at tobacconists, newsagents and bars.

If you want to hire a scooter or car you will be spoiled for choice. The big international operators are here – Avis (081 878 24 59; www.avisautonoleggio.it; Via Nizza 53), Hertz (081 807 16 46; www.hertz.it; Via degli Aranci 9) – as well as a host of local outfits. At Sorrento Rent a Scooter (081 878 13 86; www.sorrento.it; Corso Italia 210A) you can pick up a scooter for €45 for 24 hours and cars from €55 per day. Jolly Service & Rent (081 877 34 50; www.sorrentorent.com; Via degli Aranci 180) has smart cars from €60 a day and 50cc scooters from €30.

For a taxi call 081 878 22 04.

EAST OF SORRENTO

More developed and less appealing than the coast west of Sorrento, the area to the east of town is not totally without interest. There's the district's longest sandy beach, Spiaggia di Alimuri, at Meta di Sorrento and, 12km beyond that, the Roman villas at Castellammare di Stabia (see the boxed text, p157). Rising above Castellammare and accessible by cable car (adult/19-26yr/under 18yr return trip €6.71/3.10/2.58; 8 minutes, about 30 daily Apr-Oct) from the town's Circumvesuviana train station is Monte Faito (1055m), one of the highest peaks in the Lattari mountains. Covered in thick beech forests, the summit offers some lovely walking and sensational views.

VICO EQUENSE

Known to the Romans as Aequa, Vico Equense (Vico) is a small cliff-top town about 10km east of Sorrento. Largely bypassed by international tourists, it's a laid-back, authentic place worth a quick stopover. Information on the area's attractions is available from the helpful tourist office (081 801 51 52; www.vicoturismo.it; Piazza Umberto I; 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-1.30pm Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-2pm & 3-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Feb) in the main square.

Vico is on the main SS145 coastal road and is five stops from Sorrento by Circumvesuviana train.

Sights & Activities

From Piazza Umberto I, the town's 19th-century focal point, take Corso Filangieri along to the small centro storico. Here, on a small balcony overlooking the village of Marina di Equa, you'll find the **Chiesa dell'Annunziata** (☎ 081 879 80 04; Via Vescovado; ☐ 10am-noon Sun), Vico's former cathedral and the only Gothic church on the Sorrento Peninsula. Little remains of the original 14th-century structure other than the lateral windows near the main altar and a few arches in the aisles. In fact, most of what you see today, including the chipped pink and white façade, is 17th-century baroque. In the sacristy, check out the portraits of Vico's bishops, all of whom are represented here except for the last one, Michele Natale, who was executed for supporting the ill-fated 1799 Parthenopean Republic (see p30). His place is taken by an angel with its finger to its lips, an

VILLE VESUVIANE

It's difficult to imagine, but in the late 18th century, the 24km of coastline between San Giovanni a Teduccio and Torre del Greco was the place to holiday, an exclusive stretch of shoreline dubbed the **Miglio d'Oro** (Golden Mile). In complete contrast to the urban sprawl that characterises the area today, it was then a semirural area of farms and aristocratic villas.

It was the discovery of Herculaneum in 1709 that resurrected interest in the area after it had been all but abandoned in the wake of Vesuvius' various eruptions. In 1738 King Charles VII decided to build a new palace at Portici, setting off a trend as nobles, fearful of losing the royal ear, hurried to commission their own seaside villas. In the ensuing building boom, 122 villas were constructed by the top architects of the day – Luigi Vanvitelli, Ferdinando Fuga, Domenico Antonio Vaccaro and Ferdinando Sanfelice.

Unfortunately, very few of these Ville Vesuviane (Vesuvian Villas) are open to the public. Of those that are, two are in Ercolano (the modern town built over Herculaneum): **Villa Campoliotto** (☎ 081 732 21 34; Corso Resina 238; admission free; ☐ 10am-1pm Tue-Sun), a grandiose Vanvitelli villa with a graceful portico, and **Villa Favorita** (☎ 081 739 39 61; Via G D'Annunzio 36; admission free; park ☐ 10am-1pm Tue-Sun), where you can visit the sweeping park.

Every July concerts are staged at Villa Campoliotto as part of the Festival delle Ville Vesuviane, organised by the villa's managing body, the **Ente Ville Vesuviane** (☎ 081 40 53 93; www.vesuviane.net).

admonishment to the bishop to keep his liberal thoughts to himself.

Heading back along Corso Filangieri, the **Antiquarium 'Silio Italico'** (☎ 081 801 92 50; Palazzo Municipale; Corso Filangieri 98; admission free; ☐ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri & 3.30-6.30pm Tue & Thu), boasts a collection of 5th- to 7th-century BC archaeological artefacts found in a series of local tombs. Although the museum is officially open at the times given above, it's rarely staffed, so you'll probably have to go to the council's **Ufficio Anagrafico** (in the same building – follow the directions on the door) to get someone to open it for you.

Nearby, the **Museo Mineralogico** (☎ 081 801 56 68; www.museomineralogicocampano.it; Via San Ciro 2; admission €2; ☐ 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Mar-Sep, 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Oct-Feb) has a 5000-strong collection of rock specimens, fossils and meteorites.

Dotted around Vico's surrounding hills are a number of ancient hamlets, known as *casali*. Untouched by mass tourism, they offer a glimpse into a rural way of life that has changed little over the centuries. You will, however, need wheels to get to them. From Vico, take Via Roma and follow Via Rafaelle Bosco, which passes through the *casali* before circling back to town. Highlights include **Massaquano** and the **Cappella di Santa Lucia** (open on request), famous for its 14th-century frescoes; **Mojano**, from where an ancient path leads to the summit of **Monte Faito**; and **Santa Maria del Castello**, with its fabulous views towards Positano.

Three kilometres to the west of Vico, **Marina di Equa** stands on the site of the original Roman settlement, Aequa. Among the bars and restaurants lining the popular pebble beaches are the remains of 1st-century AD Villa Pezzolo, as well as a defensive tower, the **Torre di Caporivo**, and the Gothic ruins of a medieval limestone quarry.

Eating

Vico Equense is worth the stop, if only to do nothing else but eat some of the town's famous *pizza a metro* (pizza by the metre).

RISTORANTE & PIZZERIA DA

GIGINO

PIZZERIA €€

☎ 081 879 83 09; Via Nicotera 15; pizza per metre €12-26; ☐ midday-1am

Run by the five sons of Gigino Dell'Amura, the inventor of pizza by the metre, this barn-like pizzeria (aka the University of the Pizza) produces kilometres of pizza each day in three huge ovens to the right of the entrance. There's a large selection of toppings and the quality is superlative.

Lobra (☎ 081 808 93 80; www.marina-lobra.com) is a reliable operator.

Sleeping & Eating

AGRITURISMO AGRIMAR

FARM STAY €

☎ 081 808 96 82; Via Maggio 9; B&B per person €40; ☐ Easter-mid-Oct; ☐

In a terraced olive grove off the road between Massa Lubrense and Marina della Lobra, this back-to-basics agriturismo is ideal for those who want to escape telephones and TVs. Nestled among the trees are six spotless chalets, big enough for a double bed, tiny bathroom and not a lot else. Hammocks have been thoughtfully hung about the place and deck chairs laid out on a platform overlooking the sea. Dinner is available on request.

FUNICULÌ FUNICULÀ

BAR/RISTORANTE €€

Via Fontanelle 16, Marina dell' Lobra; meals around €23; ☐ Apr-Oct

A great bar/restaurant on the seafront at Marina dell' Lobra. Unsurprisingly, the menu is dominated by seafood, but there are also meal-in-one salads and the usual array of grilled meat dishes. Less predictably, the helpings are huge and the food is delicious. For proof try the *tubettoni con cozze, rucola e parmigiano* (pasta tubes with mussels, rocket and parmesan).

HOTEL RISTORANTE PRIMAVERA

HOTEL/RISTORANTE €€

☎ 081 879 15; www.laprimavera.biz; Via IV Novembre 3G; s/d incl breakfast €70/100; ☐ year-round; ☐

A welcoming family-run two-star with cool, airy rooms and a bright terrace-restaurant. The décor is Mediterranean standard – white walls, floral ceramic tiling and functional furniture – but the bathtubs (in most, not all, rooms) are an unexpected treat. Expect to pay around €30 for a full dinner.

Getting There & Away

By car, Massa Lubrense is an easy 20-minute drive from Sorrento – follow Via Capo and keep on going until you reach Piazza Vescovardo, some five minutes or so beyond the Massa Lubrense town sign.

From the Circumvesuviana train station in Sorrento, **SITA** (☎ 199 73 07 49; www.sita-on-line.it, in Italian) buses depart every hour throughout the day. The 20-minute journey costs €1.

HIKING THE PENINSULA

Forming a giant horseshoe between Punta della Campanella and Punta Penna, the beautiful Bay of Ieranto is generally regarded as the top swimming spot on the Sorrento Peninsula. To get there you have two alternatives: you can either get a boat or you can walk from the village of Nerano, the steep descent forming part of a longer 6.5km hike from nearby Termini.

This picturesque path is just one of 20 (for a total of 110km) that cover the area. These range from tough all-day treks such as the 14.1km Alta Via dei Monti Lattari from the Fontanelle hills near Positano down to the Punta della Campanella, to shorter walks suitable for all the family.

Tourist offices throughout the area can provide maps detailing the colour-coded routes. With the exception of the Alta Via dei Monti Lattari, which is marked in red and white, long routes are shown in red on the map; coast-to-coast trails in blue; paths connecting villages in green; and circular routes in yellow. On the ground, trails are fairly well marked, although you might find some signs have faded to near-indecipherable levels.

SANT'AGATA SUI DUE GOLFI

Perched high in the hills above Sorrento, Sant'Agata sui due Golfi is the most famous of Massa Lubrense' 17 frazioni. Boasting spectacular views of the Bay of Naples on one side and the Bay of Salerno on the other (hence its name, St Agatha on the two Gulfs), it's a tranquil place that manages to retain its rustic charm despite a fairly heavy hotel presence. Information on the village and surrounding countryside is available at the small tourist office (081 533 01 35; www.santagatasuiduegolfi.it; Corso Sant'Agata 25; 9am-1pm, 5.30-9pm Apr-Oct) near Piazza Sant'Agata, the main square.

The best place to enjoy the views is the Carmelite convent of Deserto (081 878 01 99; Via Deserto; 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4.30pm Oct-Mar, 8.30am-12.30pm & 4-9pm Apr-Sep), 1.5km uphill from the village centre. Founded in the 17th century, the convent is still home to a closed community of Benedictine nuns.

Back in the centre, the village's 17th-century parish church, the Chiesa di Sant'Agata (Piazza Sant'Agata; 8am-1pm & 5-7pm daily) is famous for its polychrome marble altar. Designed by the Florentine artist Dionisio Lazzari in 1654, it's an exquisite work of inlaid marble, mother-of-pearl, lapis lazuli and malachite.

Sleeping & Eating

It is possible to walk to the two agriturismi (farm stays) listed here, but a car is highly recommended.

AGRITURISMO FATTORIA TERRANOVA

FARM STAY €

(081 533 02 34; www.fattoriaterranova.it; Via Pontone 10; d incl breakfast €80; Mar-Dec; P) A picture of rural chic – stone floors, dried flowers hanging from heavy wooden beams and big wine barrels artfully positioned – this great agriturismo has accommodation in small apartments spread over the extensively cultivated grounds. They're fairly simple but the setting is delightful and the swimming pool is a lovely luxury. See p214 for details of the farm shop in Sorrento.

AGRITURISMO LA TORE

FARM STAY €

(081 808 06 37; www.letore.com; Via Pontone 43; s/d incl breakfast €55/90, half-board per person €60; Easter-end Oct; P)

A working organic farm, La Tore is a wonderful place to stay. Decidedly off the beaten track, it offers eight barnlike rooms and a five-person apartment, all in a lovely rustic farmhouse hidden among fruit trees. Terracotta tiles and heavy wooden furniture add to the rural appeal. Children between two and six years old get a 50% discount (30% for seven- to 10-year-olds) if they sleep in their parents' room. During winter, a self-contained apartment is available.

LO STUZZICHINO

RISTORANTE €€

(081 533 00 10; Via Deserto 1A; meals around €18; closed Jan

Just down the road from the village church, this laid-back restaurant/pizzeria serves good hearty food at pleasant prices. Using locally grown produce, dishes include pasta with aubergine, mozzarella and tomato and mixed grill. There's outdoor summer seating or a simple interior with wine racks and a TV in the corner.

RIOSTORANTE DON ALFONSO

1890

RISTORANTE €€€

(081 533 02 26; Corso Sant'Agata 11; meals €115-125; closed Mon & Tue, except Tue night Jun-Sep, closed Jan–early Mar & Nov-Dec; P)

This Michelin two-star restaurant is generally regarded as one of Italy's best. Dishes are prepared with produce from the chef's own 6-hectare farm in nearby Punta Campanella; the

dining hall is a picture of refined taste, and the international wine list is one of the country's finest. The menu changes seasonally but hallmark dishes include lightly seared tuna in red pepper sauce and pasta with clams and courgettes. Booking is essential.

Getting There & Away

If you enjoy a walk, there's a pretty 3km (approximately one hour) trail between Sorrento and Sant'Agata. From Piazza Tasso head south along Viale Caruso and Via Fuorimura to pick up the Circumfusco footpath, marked in green on the walking maps available from tourist offices.

Hourly SITA (199 73 07 49; www.sita-on-line.it, in Italian) buses leave from the Circumvesuviana train station in Sorrento.

By car, follow the SS145 west from Sorrento for about 7km until you see signs off to the right.

MARINA DEL CANTONE

From Massa Lubrense, follow the coastal road round to Termoli. Stop a moment to admire the views before continuing on to Nerano, from where a beautiful hiking trail leads down to the stunning Bay of Ieranto, and Marina del Cantone. This unassuming village with its small pebble beach is not only a lovely, tranquil place to stay but also one of the area's prime dining spots, a magnet for VIPs who regularly boat over from Capri to eat here – Bill Gates, Roman Abramovich, Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones have visited in the past year alone.

It is also a popular diving destination. The rich waters, protected as part of the 11-sq-km Punta Campanella Marine Reserve, support a healthy marine ecosystem with flora and fauna flourishing among underwater grottoes and ancient ruins. To see for yourself, the PADI-certified Nettuno Diving (081 808 10 51; www.sorrentodiving.com; Via Vespucci 39) runs various underwater activities for all ages and abilities, including snorkelling excursions, beginner courses, cave dives and immersions off Capri and Li Galli, the islands where the sirens are said to have lived. Costs start at €18 (children €10) for a day-long outing to the Bay of Ieranto.

Sleeping & Eating

LO SCOGLIO RISTORANTE €€

(081 808 10 26; Marina del Cantone; meals around €50; year-round)

The only of Marina's restaurants directly accessible from the sea, this is a favourite of visiting celebs. The setting is certainly memorable – a glass pavilion built around a kitsch fountain on a wooden jetty – and the food is top-notch. Although you can eat *fettuccine al bolognese* and steak, you'd be sorry to miss the superb seafood. Menu tempters include a €20 antipasto of raw seafood and *spaghetti al riccio* (spaghetti with sea urchins).

PENSIONE LA CERTOSA

HOTEL €

(081 808 12 09; www.hotelcertosa.com; Marina del Cantone; r incl breakfast €85-95, half-/full board per person €75/85; year-round;)

A rambling seafront hotel with a good terrace restaurant (meals around €30) and unspectacular modern rooms. The low wooden ceilings and concrete box-balconies are a curious feature but the rooms are clean and so close to the beach that you can virtually step directly onto the pebbles below. Half-board is compulsory in August.

VILLAGGIO RESIDENCE NETTUNO

CAMP SITE €

(081 808 10 51; www.villaggionettuno.it; Via A Vespucci 39; per person/tent €9/13, apt €110-215; Mar-Nov)

Marina's camp site – in the terraced olive groves by the entrance to the village – offers an array of accommodation options (tent pitches, apartments for two to six people, mobile homes for two to four people) priced according to a complex seasonal scale. It's a friendly, environmentally sound place (all rubbish is recycled) with excellent facilities and a comprehensive list of activities. If you feel the call of Sorrento's bright lights, a private shuttle bus runs to and from town, departing from the camp site at 8.30pm and returning at 11.30pm.

Getting There & Away

SITA (199 73 07 49; www.sita-on-line.it, in Italian) buses run 10 times daily between Sorrento and Marina del Cantone (marked on timetables as Nerano Cantone; €1, one hour).



Spiaggia Grande, Positano (p222)

DALLAS STRIBLEY

AMALFI TOWNS

The quintessential Mediterranean coastline, the Amalfi Coast is nature at its most alluring.

Whitewashed villas on improbable slopes, fishing huts squeezed into tiny coves and smart hotels perched above spectacular cliffs – the Amalfi towns are like no other. Cliffs terraced with scented lemon groves sheer down into sparkling blue seas; huge *fichi d'India* (prickly pears) guard silent mountain paths while bougainvillea explodes between stacks of whitewashed houses.

Amalfi, the most famous of the coast's towns, is also the most visited. Once the capital of a powerful maritime republic, it is today a hugely popular day trip destination, its pretty centre an appealing ensemble of gaudy ceramic shops, hidden alleyways and beachside restaurants. Up above, **Ravello** strikes a more sophisticated chord, with its lush gardens and sensational views. More than anywhere though, it's **Positano** that fulfils visitors' visual expectations. Viewed from the sea, its mountainside townscape is unique, a multicoloured mass of precarious pastel-tinted houses clinging for dear life to the unforgiving slopes.

Beyond the big names there are a wealth of lesser-known gems: the tumbledown fishing village of **Cetara**, famous for its tuna fleet and fabulous fish restaurants; **Vietri sul Mare**, home of the area's historic ceramic industry and the best place to pick up a souvenir; **Conca dei Marini** with its haunting sea cave, the **Grotta dello Smeraldo**, and **Marina di Praia** with its fine swimming.

The best time to visit the coast is in spring and early autumn. In summer the coast's single road (SS163) is bumper to bumper with coaches, convertibles and SUVs and prices are inflated; in winter much of the coast simply shuts down as hotels and restaurants lower the shutters until the next season.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Gape open-mouthed at the views from the **Belvedere of Infinity** (p238) in Ravello's Villa Cimbrone
- Sit down to superfresh seafood at the tiny harbour of **Cetara** (p242)
- Mix with the beautiful people on the designer-clad streets of vertiginous **Positano** (below)
- Soothe your soul in the harmonious **Chiostro del Paradiso** (p232), adjacent to Amalfi's landmark cathedral
- Hire a boat at **Amalfi** (p232) and pootle down the coast in search of the perfect swimming spot

POSITANO

The pearl in the pack, Positano is the coast's most picturesque and photogenic town. With its steeply stacked houses banked up like spectators on a stadium terrace and its pretty peach, pink and terracotta colours, it presents a memorable façade. No less colourful are its near-vertical streets (many of which are, in fact, staircases) lined with flamboyant shop displays, jewellery stalls, elegant hotels and smart restaurants.

Look closely though and you will find reassuring signs of everyday reality – crumbling stucco, streaked paintwork and even, on occasion, a faint whiff of drains. John Steinbeck visited Positano in 1953 and wrote in an article for *Harper's Bazaar*: 'Positano bites deep. It is a dream place that isn't quite real when you are there and becomes beckoningly real after you have gone.' There certainly is something special about the place and this is reflected, predictably, in the prices, which tend to be higher here than elsewhere on the coast.

ORIENTATION

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

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

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Positano's most memorable sight is its townscape – a vertiginous stack of multi-coloured houses clinging precariously to the steep mountainside. Rising above the rooftops, the ceramic-tiled dome of the **Chiesa**

INFORMATION

- **Banca dei Paschi di Siena** (Via dei Mulini 4) Has ATM.
- **Banco di Napoli** (Via dei Mulini 20) Also with ATM.
- **La Brezza** (☎ 089 87 58 11; Via del Brigantino 1; per 15 mins €3; ☐ 9.30am-10pm daily Mar-Nov) Small ceramics shop with internet access.
- **Police station** (☎ 089 87 50 11; cnr Via G Marconi & Viale Pasitea)

- **Positano.com** (www.positano.com) Slick website with hotel and restaurant listings, itineraries and transport information.
- **Post office** (cnr Via G Marconi & Viale Pasitea)
- **Tourist office** (☎ 089 87 50 67; Via del Saracino 4; ☐ 8am-2pm & 3.30-8pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar) At the foot of the Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta steps.

POSITANO



di Santa Maria Assunta (Piazza Flavio Gioia; ☐ 8am-noon & 3.30-7pm daily) is the town's most famous sight. Inside the church, regular classical lines are broken by pillars topped with gilded Ionic capitals, while winged cherubs peek above every arch. Above the main altar is a 13th-century Byzantine Black Madonna and Child.

It's a short hop to the nearby beach, Spiaggia Grande. Although no-one's dream beach, with greyish sand covered by legions of brightly coloured umbrellas, the water's clean and the setting is memorable. Hiring a chair and umbrella on the fenced-off areas costs around €15 per person per day but the crowded public areas are free. Boating

isn't cheap, either. Operating out of a kiosk on Spiaggia Grande, **Lucibello** (☎ 089 875 532; www.lucibello.it; Spiaggia Grande; ☐ 9am-8pm daily Easter-Nov) hires out small motorboats for €30 per hour. It also organises boat excursions to Capri and the Grotta dello Smeraldo (see p229). Over on Spiaggia del Fornillo, **Centro Sub Costiera Amalfitana** (☎ 089 812 148; www.centrosub.it) runs dives (€60 for two hours) and lessons for adults and children.

SLEEPING

Accommodation is plentiful in Positano, although if you're on a budget you'll find your choices limited. Most hotels are three-star and above and prices are universally

BLUE RIBBON

Stretching about 50km from Vietri sul Mare to Piano di Sorrento, the SS163 (nicknamed the Nastro Azzurro or Blue Ribbon) is one of Italy's most dramatic roads. Commissioned by the Bourbon King Ferdinand II and completed in 1853, it tortuously winds its way along the Amalfi Coast's entire length, snaking round impossibly tight curves, over deep ravines and through tunnels gouged out of sheer rock. It's a magnificent feat of civil engineering. It's also a severe test of driving skill and courage, a white-knuckle ride that will pit you against the extraordinary ability of the local bus drivers. Originally designed for horse-drawn carriages, it can get very narrow in parts, particularly on hairpin bends. To avoid blocking oncoming buses get used to checking the circular mirrors on the roadside and listening for the sound of klaxons – if you hear one slow right down as it will invariably be followed by a coach. The trick to driving the Amalfi Coast is to stay calm, even when your toddler throws up all over the back seat or your partner tells you to look at the view while you're inching around a blind corner.

terrace views are not, and the apartments are a superb deal – with cooker and fridge they could save you serious euros on dining out.

HOSTEL BRIKETTE

☎ 089 87 58 57; www.brikette.com; Via G Marconi 358; dm €22-25, d €60, apt €115-180; ☐ late Mar-Nov; ☈

Not far from the Bar Internazionale bus stop on the SS163 coastal road, this bright and cheerful hostel offers the cheapest accommodation in town. There are various options: six-to-eight person dorms (single sex and mixed), double rooms, a suite with a big private terrace, and apartments for between two and five people. There's also an extended list of extras, including laundry, CD burning, free wifi, left luggage, Italian and cooking lessons and massage (one hour €30). Curfew at 3am.

HOTEL PALAZZO MURAT

HOTEL €€

☎ 089 87 51 77; www.palazzomurat.it; Via dei Mulini 23; s incl breakfast €120-250, d €150-375; ☈ May-mid-Jan; ☈

Of the upmarket hotels in the town centre, the Palazzo Murat has the most character. Housed in the 18th-century palazzo that Gioacchino Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law and one-time King of Naples, used as his summer residence, it's quite a sight. Through the palatial arched entrance, lush gardens overflow with banana trees, bottlebrush, Japanese maple and pine trees. Rooms, five in the original part of the building (more expensive), 25 in the newer section, are decorated in traditional style with antiques, original oil paintings and plenty of glossy marble. Wi-fi is available in the central courtyard at €5 for 30 minutes.

FLORIDA RESIDENCE

HOTEL €€

☎ 089 87 58 01; www.floridaresidence.net Viale Pasitea 171; d €85-105, apt €115; ☐ Apr-Oct; ☈

A friendly place up from the town centre, the Florida Residence packs a lot of perks for the price – free parking, air-con (in most but not all of the rooms) and even a small (very small) freestanding swimming pool. The clean, basic rooms are fairly forgettable but the

WALK WITH THE GODS

Probably the best-known walk on the Amalfi Coast, the 12km **Sentiero degli Dei** (Path of the Gods; 5½ to six hours) follows the steep, often rocky paths linking Positano to Praiano. It's a spectacular walk, passing through some of the area's least developed countryside and offering breathtaking views. The route is marked by red and white stripes daubed on rocks and trees, although some of these have become worn in places and might be difficult to make out.

A second, more demanding route, the 14km **Capo Muro** (6½ to seven hours) follows a similar route, passing beneath soaring limestone cliffs as it climbs to a height of 1039m. You can walk it either way, but you'll get the best views by walking east to west, starting in Praiano and finishing in Positano.

If you're intent on trying either hike make sure you've got a decent map – the most reliable is the CAI's (Club Alpino Italiano; Italian Alpine Club) **Monti Lattari, Penisola Sorrentina, Costiera Amalfitana: Carta dei Sentieri** (€8) at 1:30,000 scale. Route details are also available in Lonely Planet's *Walking in Italy* guide.

For great views with much less effort, stroll the **Via Positanei d'America**, the cliff-side path that links Spiaggia Grande with the Spiaggia del Fornillo. Reward yourself with a cold drink on the terrace of **Hotel Pupetto** (p224).

HOTEL PUPETTO

HOTEL €€
089 87 50 87; www.hotelpuppeto.it; Via Fornillo 37;
s incl breakfast €80-90, d €130-160; ☎ Apr-mid-Nov; ⚡

Overlooking Spiaggia del Fornillo, this is as close to the beach as you can get without sleeping on a sun-lounger. A bustling, cheerful place, the hotel forms part of a large, rambling beach complex, with a popular terraced restaurant (meals around €25; the food pretty good), a nautical-themed bar (check out the great wall motifs) and, upstairs, the airy guest rooms. These are simple affairs with dizzyingly tiled floors, a blue-and-white colour scheme and lovely sea views.

HOTEL VITTORIA

HOTEL €€
089 87 50 49; www.hotelvittoriapositano.it;
Via Fornillo 19; s incl breakfast €75-90, d €120-140;
⌚ ☀

In the western part of town, above Spiaggia del Fornillo, the Vittoria is a laid-back, friendly three-star with simple all-white rooms. Spread over four floors, they are fairly anonymous – white walls, floral ceramic floors and the bare minimum of furniture – but they do all come with their own private terrace. A private lift carries you down to the beach and car parking is available at €13 per day.

PENSIONE CASA GUADAGNO **PENSIONE €**

089 87 50 42; www.pensionecasaguadagno.it; Via Fornillo 36; incl breakfast, s €50-75, d €65-90;
⌚ year-round

In the tangled upper town, this modest *pensione* offers basic accommodation at honest rates. There are six white rooms all decorated in regional style with ceramic floors, floral bedspreads and small balconies (all but one of which boast sea views). Frills are few and far between but everywhere is clean, sunny and perfectly comfortable.

PENSIONE MARIA LUISA

HOTEL €€
089 87 50 23; www.pensionemarieluisa.com; Via Fornillo 42; s €50, d €70-80; ☎ year-round

A perennial budget favourite, the Maria Luisa is a lovely little hotel. There's nothing remotely flashy about the place, but the quirky old-fashioned rooms, the sunny communal area (with a fridge and coffee machine) and the jovial owner make for a memorable stay. It's well worth paying the €10 extra for a room with a private terrace as there are magnificent views of the bay.

PENSIONE VILLA VERDE

HOTEL €€
089 87 55 06; www.pensionevillaverde.it; Viale Pasitea 338; incl breakfast, s €50, d €60-90, tr €80-123; ⚡ ☀

One of only three one-star hotels in Positano, this homely, old-fashioned *pensione* is good value for money. Its 12 good-sized rooms, all of which come with a small terrace, sport a shocking blue and yellow colour scheme and a relaxing lack of mod cons. Televisions are available on request, although unless you speak Italian you'll probably be happier admiring the views from your terrace. Parking costs an extra €10 per day.

SAN PIETRO

HOTEL €€€
089 87 54 55; www.ilasanpietro.it; Via Laurito 2; r incl breakfast from €420; ☎ Apr-Oct; ⚡ ☀

For such a talked-about hotel, the San Pietro is remarkably discreet. Built into a rocky headland 2km east of Positano, it's almost entirely below road level – if driving, look for an ivy-clad chapel and a red British telephone box by the side of the road. Once safely ensconced, you probably won't want to leave. All of the individually decorated rooms have spectacular sea views, a private terrace and Jacuzzi; there's a tennis court, semi-circular swimming pool, Michelin-starred restaurant and, 88m below reception, a private beach (accessible by lift).

VILLA FRANCO

HOTEL €€€
089 87 56 55; www.villafrancahotel.it; Viale Pasitea 318; r incl breakfast €190-340; ☎ Apr-mid-Oct; ⚡ ☀

An immaculate boutique hotel with a sparkling blue-and-white Mediterranean feel. Unashamedly classical in style, the sun-drenched public rooms are awash with *objets d'art*, impressively potted plants and ornate lamps. The small but sweet guest rooms feature tiled frescoes, balconies and great panoramas. The best views, however, are from the rooftop swimming pool, one of the best in Positano. Downstairs, there's a small bar, plus a gym with high-tech machinery and a Turkish bath. Parking costs €20 per day.

VILLA LA TARTANA

HOTEL €€
089 81 21 93; www.villalatartana.it; Via Vico Vito Savino 6-8; d incl breakfast €140-150; ☎ Apr-Oct; ☀

Only a few metres from Spiaggia Grande, this is one of the more affordable options in Positano's pricey centre. Rooms are spread over three floors and although they are all pretty much of a muchness, with blue floors,

white walls and pretty floral bedsteads, those on the 3rd floor offer private balconies and the best views. To get to them, however, you'll have to lug your bags up the stairs, as there is no lift. There's also no dining room, which means that breakfast is served in your room.

VILLA NETTUNO

HOTEL €€
089 87 54 01; www.villanettunopositano.it; Viale Pasitea 208; s/d €70/85; ☎ year-round

Hidden behind a barrage of perfumed foliage, Villa Nettuno oozes charm. Go for one of the original rooms in the 300-year-old part of the building with their heavy rustic décor, frescoed wardrobes and communal terrace. Rooms in the renovated part of the villa are still good value but lack the character of the originals, their lime-green bathroom tiling and cheap furniture something of a letdown. That said, you probably won't be thinking of the furniture as you lie in bed looking out to the sea directly in front of you.

EATING

You're unlikely to have the meal of your trip in Positano. Most restaurants, bars and trattorie are unashamedly touristy, geared to turning over numbers rather than producing quality food. Which isn't to say that you can't eat well here, just that you'll pay more to do so than you would elsewhere. Needless to say, the nearer you get to the seafront, especially to Spiaggia Grande, the more expensive everything becomes. Many places close over winter, making a brief reappearance for Christmas and New Year.

BUCA DI BACCO

SNACKS €
089 81 14 61; Viale del Brigantino 35-37; snacks around €

This is the most convenient snack bar for sunbathers on Spiaggia Grande. You'll find the usual range of nibbles including well-stuffed *panini* and tasty sweet pastries. Sit down at the upstairs **La Pergola** restaurant, though, and you're into a whole different price league. So unless you fancy paying from €15 for pasta standards and main courses, stick to the downstairs snack bar.

DA COSTANTINO

TRATTORIA €€
089 87 57 38; Via Montepertuso; meals around €20, pizzas from €4; ☎ closed Wed

If you haven't got wheels of your own you'll be real hungry by the time you make it up

to Costantino's, about 300m north of Hostel Brikette. One of the few authentic trattorie in Positano (OK, technically it's in Montepertuso), it serves honest, down-to-earth Italian grub. The house speciality, apart from the quite amazing views, is *scialatielli* (ribbed pasta) served with aubergines, tomato and mozzarella. There are also excellent pizzas and a selection of fail-safe grilled meats.

DA VINCENZO

RISTORANTE €€€
089 87 51 28; Viale Pasitea 172-178; meals around €35; ☎ Mar-Oct, closed Tue lunch Jul & Aug

If you don't usually eat dessert this is the place to push out the boat and go for it – they are, according to at least one local, the best in town. There are all the usual suspects – *babà*, tiramisu, and *crème brûlée* – plus originals such as strawberry and pistachio mousse. If you don't find any of these – the seasonal



menu changes regularly – go for whatever sounds good. For the rest, seafood features heavily, service is friendly and the atmosphere is elegant without being pretentious. Dinner reservations are preferred.

DONNA ROSA RISTORANTE **EEE**

089 81 18 06; Via Montepertuso 97-99; meals

around €38; Wed-Mon Apr-Dec

Locals have long known that if you really want to eat well without paying an arm and a leg, head to Montepertuso. Up in the village, Donna Rosa, once a family-run trattoria, now an elegant family-run restaurant, serves some of the best food on the coast. Particularly sought after are her handmade pastas such as *fusilli al ragù con salsiccia e mozzarella* (pasta twists with meat sauce, sausage and mozzarella) or *ravioli alle melanzane* (aubergine ravioli). The mains and desserts are also excellent and the wine list is long enough to confuse most amateurs. Book ahead.

LA ZAGARA CAFFÈ/PASTICCERIA **E**

089 87 59 64; Via dei Mulini 6; Apr–mid-Nov

Everybody passes this unapologetic tourist trap at least once during their time in Positano. And although not everyone stops off, a whole lot do, drawn by its tempting display of overpriced sweet treats (take the €2.50 giant *babà* and cream) and savoury snacks (pizza slices and *panini* from about €3). The service is predatory, as waiters skilfully manoeuvre you onto their tables, but the food is pretty good and the outdoor terrace, with its red floors and encroaching lemon trees, is redolent of Mediterranean summers.

LO GUARRACINO RISTORANTE **EEE**

089 87 57 94; Via Positanesi d'America; meals

around €35, pizzas from €8.50; Mar-Dec

It's difficult to beat the location of this cliffside restaurant. On the scenic path connecting Positano's two beaches, it's a memorable place to eat even if you are more likely to remember the unfettered sea views than the straightforward food. The menu is seafood heavy, with dishes such as grilled swordfish (€16) and *tubetti al ragù di mare* (small pasta tubes with fish sauce; €16). If those don't appeal there are also pizzas and steaks. It's a popular spot, so if possible book ahead.

RISTORANTE BRUNO RISTORANTE **EEE**

089 87 53 92; Via Cristoforo Colombo 157; meals around €30; closed Thu lunch & Feb-Oct

It doesn't look like much with its unassuming décor and unspectacular venue, but the food here is really very good, a cut above the Positano average. Speciality of the house is seafood, which appears in various guises: as an antipasto there's marinated fish with vegetables, orange and parmesan; as a primo you can try linguine with clams, courgettes and pecorino cheese; while for a main course keep it simple with grilled fish and a wedge of local lemon. The wine list offers an ample choice of Italian labels.

RISTORANTE IL SARACENO D'ORO RISTORANTE **EEE**

089 81 20 50; Viale Pasitea 254; meals around €25, pizzas from €5; Mar-Oct

On the main road into town, the Golden Saracen continues to win plaudits. A busy, bustling place, its blend of cheery service, uncomplicated food and reasonable prices (in Positano terms, of course) continues to attract the punters. The pizzas are excellent, the pasta's tasty and the profiteroles superb – either in chocolate or lemon sauce. The complimentary end-of-meal glass of *limoncello* is a nice touch.

ENTERTAINMENT

Unless the idea of parading up and down with a cashmere sweater draped over your shoulders turns you on, Positano's nightlife is not going to do much for you. More piano bar than warehouse, it's genteel, sophisticated and safe.

CONWINUM WINE BAR

089 81 16 87; Via Rampa Teglia 12; 9am-1am Mar-Dec

A favourite of trendy, well-dressed Italians, Conwinum is part wine bar, part internet café (€3 for 30 minutes) and part art gallery. Just off Spiaggia Grande, it's a snazzy, softly lit place with tangerine walls, a vaulted ceiling and swinging lounge music. There's live jazz on Friday and Saturday night (summer only) and wine buffs will enjoy the daily wine tasting (€10 with appetisers). If you miss that you can always choose from the 900-label wine list.

MUSIC ON THE ROCKS

089 87 58 74; www.musicontherocks.it; Via Grotte dell'Incanto 51; admission €10-25; Easter-Oct

Positano's only genuine disco is dramatically carved into the tower at the eastern end of Spiaggia Grande. One of the best nightspots on the coast, it attracts a good-looking, up-for-it crowd and some of the region's top DJs. The sounds are largely mainstream house and reliable disco. Upstairs, diners sit down to €60 dinners at *La Terrazze* restaurant.

SHOPPING

Whether you're a shopaholic or an only-if-I-have-to shopper, you can't miss Positano's colourful boutiques – everywhere you look, shop displays scream out at you in a riot of exuberant colour. After a while, though, you may glaze over at the sameness of the fashions on sale. The humble lemon also enjoys star status; not just in *limoncello* and lemon-infused candles, but blazoned across tea towels, aprons and pottery.

ARTIGIANATO RALLO SHOES

089 81 17 11; Viale Pasitea 96; 10am-9.30pm daily Apr-Oct, to 6pm Nov-Mar

Run by the third generation of a Sorrentine shoemakers family, this small shop sells an attractive range of handmade leather sandals. If you don't see anything you fancy you can always have a pair made to order. Prices start at around €33.

LOUIS

089 87 51 92; Via Dei Mulini 22; 9am-10pm daily Jun-Sep, 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Oct-May

Positano's most famous shop is a riot of brilliant floral-patterned dresses, shirts, skirts and scarves. These distinctive fashions have been designed and made here for 40 years under the watchful eye of Louis, the doyen of Positano fashion. You should be able to pick up a dress for around €40.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Boat

Ferries all sail from/into the quay to the west of Spiaggia Grande. Between Easter and October, various ferry companies link Positano with towns along the coast and Capri:

Alicost (089 87 14 83; Largo Scario 5, Amalfi) Operates services to/from Salerno (€7, five daily), Ischia (€19, one daily) and Capri (€15.50, five daily).

LMP (Linee Marittime Partenope;

(081 704 19 11; www.consortiolmp.it; Via Guglielmo Melisurgo 4, Naples) Has three daily ferries to/from Sorrento (€7).

Metrò del Mare (199 44 66 44; www.metrodelmare.com) In spring and summer sails to/from Naples (€9, four daily), Sorrento (€6, five daily), Amalfi (€6, six daily) and Salerno (€7, three daily).

TraVelMar (089 87 29 50; Largo Scario 5, Amalfi) Runs to Salerno (ferry/hydrofoil €6.50/7, seven daily), Amalfi (ferry/hydrofoil €5.50/6, seven daily) and Sorrento (€7, three daily).

Bus

Sixteen kilometres west of Amalfi and 18km from Sorrento, Positano is on the main SS163 coastal road. In fact, it's just beneath the road, so if you arrive by bus you might have to ask the driver where to get off. There are two main bus stops: coming from Sorrento and the west, it's opposite Bar Internazionale; arriving from Amalfi and the east, it's at the top of Via Cristoforo Colombo. To get into town from the former, follow Viale Pasitea; from the latter take Via Cristoforo Colombo. When departing, buy bus tickets at Bar Internazionale or, if headed eastwards, from the tobacconist at the bottom of Via Cristoforo Colombo.

ROCCO FASANO



DETOUR: NOCELLE

A tiny, still relatively isolated mountain village, Nocelle (450m) commands some of the most spectacular views on the entire coast. A world apart from touristy Positano, it's a sleepy, silent place where not much ever happens and none of the few residents would ever want it to.

If you want to stay, the **Villa degli Dei** (✉ 089812 35 10; www.villadeglidei.com; r €78-156; ☺ year-round; ☈) has six self-contained miniapartments sleeping between two and four people. All come with a small kitchenette and most have stunning panoramic balconies; if not there's a communal patio with similar views. To get there, go down the stairs from the car park (where the bus drops you off) onto the path and turn left; go past the village shop, past the **Trattoria Santa Croce** (open in summer for lunch and dinner) and into the main part of the village. Keep walking until you see the ceramic sign by the entrance.

The easiest way to get to Nocelle is by local bus from Positano (€1, 30 minutes, 17 daily). If you're driving, follow the signs from Positano. Hikers tackling the Sentieri degli Dei (see Walk with the Gods, p223) might want to stop off as they pass through.

SITA (✉ 199 73 07 49; www.sita-on-line.it, in Italian) runs frequent buses to and from Amalfi (€1.30, 40 minutes, more than 12 daily) and Sorrento (€1.30, 40 minutes, at least 12 daily).

Car & Motorcycle

By car, take the A3 autostrada to Vietri sul Mare and then follow the SS163 coastal road. The problem, however, is not how to get to Positano by car but what to do with it when you arrive. Unless your hotel offers parking you could end up paying between €3 and €8 per hour in a private car park, such as the one at Piazza dei Mulini 4.

GETTING AROUND

Getting Around Positano is largely a matter of walking. If your knees can take the slopes, there are dozens of narrow alleys and stairways that make walking relatively easy and joyously traffic-free. Otherwise, orange **Flavia Gioia** (✉ 089 81 30 77; Via Cristoforo Colombo 49) buses follow the lower ring road every half-hour, passing along

Viale Pasitea, Via Cristoforo Colombo and Via G Marconi. Stops are clearly marked and you buy your ticket (€1) on board. The Flavia Gioia buses pass by both SITA bus stops. There are also 17 daily buses up to Montepertuso and Nocelle.

To hire a scooter, try **Positano Rent a Scooter** (✉ 089 812 20 77; Viale Pasitea 99; per day from €50).

FROM POSITANO TO AMALFI PRAIANO

An ancient fishing village, Praiano is the archetypal coastal community. With no centre as such, its whitewashed houses pepper the verdant ridge of Monte Sant'Angelo as it slopes towards Capo Sottile. Formerly an important silk production centre, it was a favourite of the Amalfi Dogi, who made it their summer residence.

In the upper village the 16th-century **Chiesa di San Luca** (✉ 089 87 41 65; Via Oratorio 1) features an impressive majolica floor and paintings attributed to the 16th-century artist Giovanni Bernardo Lama. But it's for the small beach at **Marina di Praia** that most people stop off here. From the SS163 (next to the Hotel Continentale) a steep path leads down the side of the cliffs to a tiny inlet with a small stretch of coarse sand and very tempting sea water; the best is actually off the rocks just before you get to the bottom. In what were once fishermen's houses, you'll now find a couple of bars and a very decent fish restaurant.

Sleeping & Eating DA ARMANDINO RISTORANTE \$\$\$

✉ 089 87 40 87; Via Praia 1; meals around €35; ☺ Apr-Oct

On the beach in Marina di Praia, this laid-back restaurant is great for fish fresh off the boat. There is a menu but you'd do as well just to agree to whatever the waiter suggests as the dish of the day – it's all excellent. The holiday atmosphere and appealing setting – at the foot of sheer cliffs towering up to the main road – round things off nicely.

HOTEL CONTINENTALE & LA TRANQUILITA

HOTEL €

✉ 089 87 40 84; www.continental.praiano.it; Via Roma 21; s €40-60, d €60-85, apt per week €850-1,250, mini-apt €400-800, tent €30; ☺ r Apr-Oct, apt year-round

On the main road just to the east of Praiano, this gay-friendly hotel offers the full gamut of accommodation. There are cool, white rooms with sea views; there are two large self-contained apartments and three mini-apartments (sleeping up to four people); and there's even space for 15 tents on a series of grassy terraces. From the lowest of the camping terraces a private staircase leads down to a rocky platform on the sea. Transport is no problem either, as there's a bus stop just outside the hotel.

Entertainment AFRICANA

✉ 089 87 40 42; Marina di Praia; ☺ Jun-Sep

Locals say that the Africana nightclub is not what it was since the death of its previous owner. But it's still worth an evening of anybody's time, if nothing else for the unique setting – in a series of caves round the corner from Marina di Praia beach. The glass-panelled dance floor looks down into sea water illuminated by multicoloured lights – a potentially hallucinogenic sight after a glass or two too many.

FURORE

It's difficult to imagine that Marina di Furore, a recently restored fishing village, was once a busy little commercial centre. And yet that's just what it was in medieval times, its unique natural position freeing it from the threat of foreign raids and providing a ready source of water for its flour and paper mills.

Originally founded by Romans fleeing barbarian incursions, it sits at the bottom of what's known as the fjord of Furore, a giant cleft that cuts through the Lattari mountains. The main village, however, stands 300m above, in the upper Vallone del Furore. A one-horse place that sees few tourists at any time of the year, it breathes a

distinctly rural air despite the colourful murals and unlikely modern sculpture. It also boasts a fantastic agriturismo.

To get to upper Furore by car follow the SS163 and then the SS366 signposted to Agerola; from Positano, it's 15km. Otherwise, regular SITA buses depart from the bus terminus in Amalfi (€1, 30 minutes, 17 daily).

Sleeping

AGRITURISMO SERAFINA FARM STAY €

✉ 089 83 03 47; www.agriturismoserafina.it; Via Picola 3, Loc. Vigne; r incl breakfast €30-35, half-board €45-50; ☺ year-round; ☈

It's difficult to get more off the beaten track than this superb agriturismo. But make it up here and you'll find one of the best deals on the coast. Accommodation is in seven spruce, air-conditioned rooms in the main farmhouse, each with its own small terrace and views over the lush green terraces below. Meals are served on the central terrace or, in winter, in the light-filled dining room. The food, needless to say, is quite special, virtually everything made with the farm's own produce (which includes salami, pancetta, wine, olive oil, fruit and veg).

CONCA DEI MARINI

Four kilometres west of Amalfi, Conca dei Marini is home to one of the coast's most popular sights, the **Grotta dello Smeraldo** (admission €5; ☺ 9am-4pm Mar-Oct, 9am-3pm Nov-Feb), a haunting cave named after the eerie emerald colour that emanates from the sea water. Stalactites hang down from the 24m-high ceiling while stalagmites grow up to 10m in height. Each year, on 24 December and 6 January, skin-divers from all over Italy make their traditional pilgrimage to the ceramic *presepe* (nativity scene) submerged beneath the sea water.

SITA buses regularly pass the car park above the cave entrance (from where you take a lift or stairs down to the rowing boats). Alternatively, **Coop Sant'Andrea** (✉ 089 87 31 90; www.coopsantandrea.it; Lungomare dei Cavalieri 1) runs two daily boats from Amalfi (€10 return) at 9am and 3.30pm. Allow 1½ hours for the round trip.



CRAIG PERINHOUSE

AMALFI

Fetching as it is with its sun-filled piazzas and small beach, there's very little to suggest that Amalfi was once the capital of a powerful maritime republic boasting a population of more than 70,000. For one thing, Amalfi's not a big place – you can easily walk from one end to the other in about 20 minutes. For another thing, there are very few historical buildings of note. The explanation for this is quite chilling – most of the old city, and its populace, simply slid into the sea during an earthquake in 1343.

Today, although the resident population is no more than around 5000, the numbers swell significantly during the summer months when day-trippers pour in by the coachload. Most visitors stick to the standard tourist programme: a quick stop-off in **Piazza del Duomo** and the landmark **cathedral**, a bit of window shopping along **Via Lorenzo d'Amalfi**, and then a bite to eat at a streetside trattoria. Which is, in fact, pretty much all there is to do in Amalfi. But more than its sights, Amalfi is all about its beautiful seaside setting, which is the perfect spot for aimless wandering and long, lingering lunches.

Just around the headland, neighbouring **Atrani** is a picturesque tangle of whitewashed alleys and arches centred on a lively, lived-in piazza and popular beach.

ORIENTATION

Buses and boats drop you off at Amalfi's main transport hub, **Piazza Flavio Gioia**. From here cross the road and duck through to **Piazza del Duomo**, the town's focal square. Most of the hotels and restaurants are in the tangled lanes either side of the main strip, **Via Lorenzo d'Amalfi** and its continuation, **Via Capuano**, which snake north from the cathedral. On the seafront, **Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare** follows the coast eastwards, becoming **Via Pantaleone Comite** as it bends round to the Saracen tower on the headland. Continue down the other side, through the tunnel and off to the right for **Atrani**.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Cathedral

Dominating **Piazza del Duomo**, the iconic **Cattedrale di Sant'Andrea** (089 87 10 59; Piazza del Duomo; 9am–7pm Apr-Jun, 9am–9pm Jul-Sep, 9.30am–5.15pm Oct & Mar, 10am–1pm & 2.30–4.30pm Nov-Feb), makes an imposing sight at the top of its sweeping flight of stairs. The cathedral dates in part from the early 10th century and its striking stripy façade has been rebuilt twice, most recently at the end of the 19th century. Although the building is a hybrid, the Sicilian Arabic-Norman style predominates, particularly in the two-tone masonry and the 13th-century bell

INFORMATION

- Altra Costiera** (089 873 60 82; www.altracostiera.com; Via Lorenzo D'Amalfi 34; 9am–9pm daily May–mid-Sep, closed Sun rest of year) Provides internet access (per 15 mins €2) and accommodation referral, plus arranges walking and other tours. Also hires out scooters (from €45 per day excluding petrol).
- Deutsche Bank** (Corso Repubbliche Marinare) Next door to the tourist office; has an ATM.
- Farmacia del Cervo** (089 87 10 45; Piazza del Duomo; 8.30am–1pm & 5–9pm Mon–Fri) Pharmacist.
- Post office** (089 87 29 96; Corso Repubbliche Marinare) Next door to the tourist office.
- Toilets** (€0.50) Just outside the tourist office.
- Tourist Office** (089 87 11 07; www.amalfitouristoffice.it; Piazza Flavio Gioia 3; 8.30am–1.30pm & 3–5.15pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–midday Sat, afternoon opening to 7.15pm Mon–Fri Jul & Aug) Has bus and boat timetables and a few maps, but precious little else.
- Travel Tourist Office Divina Costiera** (089 87 24 67; Piazza Flavio Gioia 3; 8am–1pm & 2–8pm daily) Sells bus and boat tickets, organises excursions, books hotels (€3 fee) and provides left luggage (€3 per bag).

AMALFI





Cattedrale di Sant'Andrea (p230)

JENNY JONES

tower. The huge bronze doors also merit a look – the first of their type in Italy, they were commissioned by a local noble and made in Syria before being shipped over to Amalfi. Less impressive is the baroque interior, although the altar features some fine statues and there are some interesting 12th- and 13th-century mosaics. In high season, entrance to the cathedral between 10am and 5pm is through the adjacent Chiostro del Paradiso, meaning that you have to pay an entrance fee of €2.50.

To the left of the cathedral's porch, the Chiostro del Paradiso (089 87 13 24; adult/child €2.50/1; 9am-7pm Jun-Oct, 9am-1pm & 2.30-4.30pm Nov-May) is well worth the small admission charge. Built in 1266 to house the tombs of Amalfi's prominent citizens, it's a model of architectural elegance: 120 marble columns support a series of tall, slender Arabic arches around a central garden. From the cloisters go through to the Basilica del Crocefisso, where you'll find various religious artefacts displayed in glass cabinets, and some fading 14th-century frescoes. Beneath lies the 1206 crypt containing the remains of Sant'Andrea.

Museums

In the town hall building, the one-room Museo Civico (089 87 10 66; Piazza Municipio; admission free; 8.30am-1pm Mon-Fri) contains the Tavole Amalfitane, an ancient manuscript

draft of Amalfi's maritime code, and other historical documents. Ask at the window halfway up the entry stairs for a guide sheet in English.

Amalfi's other museum of note is the fascinating Museo della Carta (Paper Museum; 089 830 45 61; www.museodellacarta.it; Via delle Cartiere; admission €3.70; 10am-6.30pm Apr-mid-Nov, 10am-3pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun rest of year). Housed in a 13th-century paper mill (the oldest in Europe), it lovingly preserves the original paper presses, which are still in full working order as you'll see during the 15-minute guided tour (in English). The stationery sold in the gift shop makes for ideal gifts.

Harking back to Amalfi's days as a great maritime republic, the cavernous Arsenal (Via Matteo Camera; admission free; 9am-1.30pm Easter-Sep) was once the town's main shipbuilding depot. Today it's used to host temporary exhibitions.

Beaches & Boats

For all its seafaring history, Amalfi is not a great place to swim. The town's beach, Spiaggia Grande, about 150m of coarse sand, is not very appealing even if it's highly popular with visitors, who throng to the private bathing facilities off Corso delle Repubbliche Marinare. About a 15-minute walk away, Atrani also has a small, black-sanded beach.

If you're really intent on a swim, you're better off hiring a boat. You'll find a number of operators along Lungomare dei Cavalieri, including da Gioacchino (328 649 41 92; www.amalfiboats.it). Spiaggia del Porto, Lungomare dei Cavalieri, which hires out boats and organises excursions along the coast. Prices start at €50 for two hours' boat hire.

If you've got kids, the nearby merry-go-round and trampoline might provide some welcome distraction. A few metres away, on the other side of the road, there's a rather sorry-looking playground with a slide and climbing frame.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The Regatta of the Four Ancient Maritime Republics, which rotates between Amalfi, Venice, Pisa and Genoa, is held on the first Sunday in June. Amalfi's turn comes around again in 2009.

SLEEPING

Despite its reputation as a day trip destination, Amalfi has plenty of accommodation. It's not especially cheap, though, and most hotels are in the midrange to upper price brackets. Always try to book ahead, as the summer months are very busy and many places close over winter. Note that if you're coming by car, consider a hotel with parking, as on-street parking is horribly difficult to find.

ALBERGO SANT'ANDREA

HOTEL €

089 87 11 45; Via Santolo Camera; s/d €50/80;
Mar-Oct; ☀

Enjoy the atmosphere of busy Piazza del Duomo from the comfort of your own room. Bang opposite the cathedral, this modest two-star has basic rooms that while unspectacular provide little cause for complaint – they're clean, the TV and air-con work, there's hot water and the rates are reasonable. What is a nuisance, however, is the noise from the piazza outside. The same family also runs the Ristorante Pizzeria Sant'Andrea on the other side of the square.

A'SCALINATELLA HOSTEL

HOSTEL €

089 87 14 92; www.hostelscalinatella.com; Piazza Umberto I; incl breakfast, dm €21-25, d €73-83, d with shared bathroom €50-60; ☀

Just around the headland in Atrani, this rough-and-ready budget operation has 10-bed dorms, rooms and apartments scattered across the village. It's strictly no frills, so don't expect much more than a bed and running water, but it has the usual hostel extras – internet, laundry and a kitchen – and there's an upbeat traveller atmosphere. Doors are locked at 2am.

HOTEL AMALFI

HOTEL €€

089 87 24 40; www.starnet.it/hamalfi; Vico dei Pastai 3; incl breakfast, s €60-120, d €80-160; ☀ ☀

In the backstreets just off Amalfi's main pedestrian thoroughfare, this family-run three-star is comfortable and central. Rooms, some of which have their own balconies, sport pale-yellow walls and majolica-tiled flooring, while bathrooms are modern and clean. Upstairs, the roof garden is a relaxing place to idle over a drink. Parking costs between €18 and €20 per day.

HOTEL ANTICA REPUBBLICA AMALFI

HOTEL €€

089 873 63 10; www.antica-repubblica.it; Vico dei Pastai 2; r €90-160; ☀ year-round; ☀

A smart hotel snugly housed in a whitewashed 11th-century palazzo. Inside it's all warm terracotta floors and earthenware vases, floral ceramic tiling and wrought-iron lamps. Upstairs, rooms are tastefully decorated, if not the biggest in town. Breakfast is served on the panoramic rooftop terrace.

HOTEL CENTRALE

HOTEL €€

089 87 26 08; www.hotelcentraleamalfi.it; Largo Piccolomini 1; incl breakfast, s €70-100, d €85-135, tr €125-165, q €140; ☀ year-round; ☀ ☀

For the money, this is one of the best-value hotels in Amalfi. The entrance is on a tiny little piazza in the centro storico but many rooms actually overlook Piazza del Duomo. And fine, fresh rooms they are too, with vibrant blue and yellow tiles, white walls and pristine bathrooms; some even have their own balconies. Additional bonuses include breakfast on the top-floor terrace, and parking, albeit for an extra €16 per day.

HOTEL LA CONCHIGLIA

HOTEL €€

/fax 089 87 18 56; Lungomare dei Cavalieri; d €100, half-board per person €80; ☀ Easter-Oct; ☀

One of the few budget options in Amalfi, this characterful place is a five-minute walk west of the centre on the seafront beyond the marina. It's not in a particularly scenic spot but the airy rooms are comfortable enough, with their cool white walls and old-fashioned furniture. The parking is a definite plus in a town where space is a much sought-after commodity. Between July and mid-September half-board is compulsory.

HOTEL LIDOMARE

HOTEL €€

089 87 13 32; www.lidomare.it; Largo Duchi Piccolomini 9; s/d incl breakfast €50/110; ☀ year-round; ☀

Oozing character, this friendly, family-run hotel is a gem. The spacious rooms have a real air of gentility, with their appealingly haphazard décor, old-fashioned tiles and fine old antiques. Surprisingly, some, such as room 31, even have Jacuzzi bathtubs; others, room 57 among them, have sea views. Among the

general bric-a-brac, look out for the king-sized *presepe* in the hallway.

HOTEL LUNA CONVENTO HOTEL **€€**
089 87 10 02; www.lunahotel.it; Via Pantaleone
 Comite 33; s incl breakfast €160-200, d €180-220;

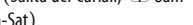

Surely one of the most captivating hotel courtyards anywhere in Italy, the 13th-century cloister at the heart of this historic hotel is quite something. The centrepiece of St Francis' 1226 convent, it's now a delightful spot for a drink. Rooms, many of which are in the former monks' cells, are far from monastic, with bright tiles, balconies and seamless sea views. Some, rather disturbingly, also boast religious frescoes over the beds. Over the road in the Saracen tower, there's a restaurant and saltwater swimming pool. Parking, at €20 per day, is available on request.

HOTEL SANTA CATERINA HOTEL **€€€**
089 87 10 12; www.hotelsantacaterina.it; Strada
 Amalfitana 9; d €250-700, ste from €500; 

An Amalfi landmark, the Santa Caterina is one of Italy's most famous hotels. Everything about the place screams luxury, from the discreet service to the fabulous gardens, the private beach (actually, more a platform than a beach) to opulent rooms. And if that weren't enough, the views are among the best on the coast. For honeymooners, the Romeo and Juliet suite is the one to go for, a private chalet in the colourful grounds, it's a snip at anywhere between €650 and €1300 per night.

EATING & DRINKING

Inevitably most of the restaurants in and around Amalfi's centre cater to the tourist trade. But that shouldn't put you off, as standards are generally high and it's rare (although not impossible) to eat badly. Most places serve pizzas, the best cooked in traditional wood-ovens (look for signs advertising *forno a legna*), and a range of pastas, grilled meats and seafood. The Amalfi drinking scene is fairly subdued, revolving round streetside cafés and bars rather than pubs. It gets a bit more boisterous in Atrani but it's hardly hard-core.

Picnickers and self-caterers can stock up at the *Supermercato Deco* (Salita dei Curiali; 

À SCIULIA

SNACKS €
089 589 36 08; Via Fra Gerardo Sasso 2; granitas €5;


For the best lemon *granita* in town, head for this brightly coloured hole in the wall. You'll also find sorbets, smoothies, yoghurts and fruit salads, all made on the premises and all truly delicious. Yoghurts cost around €4.50.

BAR RISACCA

BAR €
**089 87 28 66; Piazza Umberto I 16, Atrani; pizza/
 bruschetta from €4/3**

Popular with travellers staying at the nearby A'Scalinatella Hostel, this boisterous Atrani bar is about as lively as it gets. Music pumps out over squareside tables as tanned students sip on garish cocktails and bottled beer. Save yourself a euro or two by stocking up during happy hour (between 6pm and 8pm). Pizza and bruschetta are available to ward off hunger pangs.

IL TEATRO

TRATTORIA €€
**089 87 24 73; Via Herculano Marini 19; meals
 around €25; **

One of the better trattorie tucked away in the whitewashed centro storico. Tables are set outside on the narrow lane or in the cavernous interior decorated with black-and-white photos and assorted bric-a-brac. Seafood features heavily in dishes such as *spaghetti e cozze* (spaghetti with mussels) or *farfalle con gamberi e rucola* (butterfly-shaped pasta with prawns and rocket). But there's also plenty of meat and some good vegetarian options, including ribbon-style *scialatielli* with tomatoes and aubergines.

LA PANSA

CAFÉ €
**089 87 10 65; Piazza del Duomo 40; cornettos &
 pastries from €1.50; **

A swish café on Piazza del Duomo, this place serves a great Italian breakfast – freshly made cornettos and deliciously frothy cappuccino. If you don't fancy a cornetto, there are any number of cakes and pastries to choose from, all made in-house and all absolutely irresistible.

LA TAVERNA DEL DUCA

RISTORANTE €€€
**089 87 27 55; Piazza Spirito Santo 26; meals around
 €35, pizzas from €6; **

A popular restaurant with a fishy reputation. Specials vary according to the catch of the day but might include *carpaccio di baccalà* (thin strips of raw salted cod) or linguine with scampi. Steak in balsamic vinegar is a meaty

alternative or there are pretty good pizzas. Tucked into the corner of a small piazza away from the centre, the dark woody interior of this restaurant is lined with dusty wine bottles and paintings. There are a few tables out on the square.

MACCUS

RISTORANTE €€€
**089 873 63 85; Largo S Maria Maggiore 1-3; meals
 around €38; **

An elegant, intimate setting and better-than-average food set Maccus apart. The menu, which changes according to the chef's morning shop, features plenty of seafood, such as meaty swordfish served with tomato and olive oil or *paccheri* (big tubes of pasta) with scorpion fish. Desserts, for which there's a separate menu, are original and tasty – try the Coppa Maccus, a rich mix of sponge, mascarpone, rum, torrone and amaretto. Sit outside on the petite piazza or inside in the refined, softly lit interior.

OSTERIA DA LUISELLA

TRATTORIA €€€
**089 87 10 87; Piazza Umberto, Atrani; meals
 around €30; **

Great food, great people-watching, and an atmospheric setting. These are the three ingredients that make Luisella such an attractive choice. Situated under the arches in Atrani's Piazza Umberto I, it serves excellent regional food with an emphasis on seafood. The menu often changes but if it's on, the fish ravioli is delicious and the *cassuola* (octopus stew) very filling. Vegetarians might go for the *caporalesa*, a tasty baked concoction of aubergines, tomatoes and cheese. The wine's excellent and the service laid-back but efficient.

PIZZERIA DA MARIA

PIZZERIA €€
**089 87 18 80; Via Lorenzo D'Amalfi 16; pizzas from
 €5, meals around €28; **

Just off Piazza del Duomo, at the beginning of the main pedestrian thoroughfare, this cavernous place inevitably attracts hordes of tourists. But that shouldn't necessarily put you off, particularly in the evening when the day-trippers have gone home, as the wood-fired pizzas are excellent. The pastas and main courses are not bad either but are pretty expensive for what they are. Service is fast and English is spoken.

PORTO SALVO

SNACKS €
**338 906 01 69; Via Supportico Marina Piccola 8; ice
 cream/panini from €2/3.50; **

The place for a quick snack. Choose from sliced pizza, *panini*, fried rice balls, croquettes – they are all pretty good. Next door, the ice cream served in the gelateria of the same name makes for a simple pud. Take it away or sit at one of the few outside tables.

RISTORANTE LA CARAVELLA

RISTORANTE €€€
**089 87 10 29; Via Matteo Camera 12; meals around
 €60, tasting menu €75; **

One of the few places in Amalfi where you pay for the food rather than the location. Which in this case is far from spectacular – by the road tunnel on the main coastal road. But that doesn't worry the discreet, knowledgeable crowd who eat here. The food is regional with a *nouvelle zap*, meaning mussels stuffed with mozzarella and prawns on a bed of creamed tomato and capers, or black ravioli with cuttlefish ink, scampi and ricotta. Wine aficionados are likely to find something to try on the 15,000-label list.

TRATTORIA DA BARACCA

TRATTORIA €€
**089 87 12 85; Piazza dei Dogi; meals around €25,
 tourist menu €17; **

With its stripy blue awnings and maritime paraphernalia, its genial waiters and mealtime crooner, this cheerful seafood trattoria makes quite an impression. There are no great surprises on the menu, which includes lasagne and *gnocchi alla sorrentina* alongside pastas with mussels, clams and a variety of fishy sauces. Best of all is the really very good fish soup.

TRATTORIA IL MULINO

TRATTORIA €€
**089 87 22 23; Via delle Cartiere 36; meals around
 €20, pizzas around €6; **

Near the Museo della Carta, this is about as authentic a trattoria/pizzeria as you will find in Amalfi. A TV-in-the-corner, kids-running-between-the-tables sort of place, it's not the restaurant to impress your partner. But if you just want to eat some good, hearty pasta and simple grilled meat/fish, it'll do just fine. The *scialatielli alla pescatore* (ribbons of pasta with prawns, mussels, tomato and parsley) is much recommended, as is the calamari in the *cassuola* (octopus stew). Service is pretty slow but the prices are fair.

TRATTORIA SAN GIUSEPPE

TRATTORIA €€
**089 87 26 40; Salita Ruggiero II 4; meals around
 €22, pizzas from €5; **

Some say the pizzas here are the best in town. Certainly they are good (although not exceptional) with toppings ranging from the traditional margherita (tomato, mozzarella and basil) to marine combos such as clams, prawns and anchovies. Pastas are also served, usually in huge helpings. The back-alley location is atmospheric even if the occasional whiff of antique drains might be a bit too atmospheric for people dining outside. If so, head into the fan-cooled interior.

SHOPPING

You'll have no difficulty loading up on souvenirs here – Via Lorenzo d'Amalfi is lined with garish shops selling local ceramic work, paper-made gifts and the local lemon liqueur, *limoncello*. Prices are set for tourists so don't expect many bargains.

ANASTASIO NICOLA SAS

FOOD

089 87 10 07; Via Lorenzo D'Amalfi 32; year-round

Unless you're flying to Australia, gourmet goodies can make excellent gifts. Here, among the hanging hams, you'll find a full selection, ranging from local cheese and preserves to coffee, chocolate, *limoncello* and pasta. There's also a collection of fruit-scented soaps.

CIOCCOLATO

CHOCOLATE

089 87 32 91; Piazza Municipio 12; Wed-Mon year-round

Wafting out of the door, the enticing scent of chocolate is hard to resist. So why fight it? Treat yourself to a box of delicious chocs, all of which have been made on the premises. You'll not regret it.

L'ARCO ANTICO

PAPER

089 873 63 54; Via Capuano 4; closed Jan & Feb

Amalfi's connection with paper-making dates back to the 12th century when the first mills were set up to supply the republic's small army of bureaucrats. Now little is made here but you can still buy it and the quality is still good. This attractive shop sells a range of paper products including beautiful writing paper, leather-bound notebooks and huge photo albums.

LIBRERIA SAVO ANTONIO

BOOKS & MAPS

089 87 11 80; Via Repubbliche Marinare 17; 7am-11pm

Among the piles of dusty books, comics and international newspapers that crowd this gloomy newsagent-cum-bookshop, you will find a good selection of local maps, necessary reading for anyone touring the region.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Boat

The easiest way to get to Amalfi is by bus or, between Easter and mid-September, by boat. The following companies all serve Amalfi:

Alicost (089 87 14 83; Largo Scario 5) Operates ferries to/from Salerno (€5.50, six daily) and Ischia (€19, one daily)

Alilauro (081 497 22 67; www.alilauro.it; Stazione Marittima, Naples) Has services to/from Capri (€13.50, two daily)

Coop Sant'Andrea (089 87 31 90; www.coopsantandrea.it; Lungomare dei Cavalieri 1) Runs boats to/from Maiori (€2, eight daily) and Minori (€2, eight daily)

Metro del Mare (199 44 66 44; www.metrodelmare.com) Lines MM2 and MM3 stop at Amalfi. Using either of these there are sailings to Positano (€6, five daily), Sorrento (€7 four daily), Naples (€10, four daily) and Salerno (€6, two daily).

TraVelMar (/fax 089 87 29 50; Largo Scario 5) Connects with Salerno (ferry/hydrofoil €4.50/5, seven daily), Positano (ferry/hydrofoil €5.50/6, seven daily) and Sorrento (€8, three daily).

Bus

SITA (199 73 07 49; www.sita-on-line.it, in Italian) runs buses from Piazza Flavio Gioia to Sorrento (€2.40, 1½ hours, more than 12 daily) via Positano (€1.30, 40 minutes), and also to Ravello (€1, 25 minutes, every 40 minutes), Salerno (€1.80, 1¼ hours, at least hourly) and Naples (€3.10, seven daily, two to three hours depending on the route). You can buy tickets and check current schedules at **Bar II Giardino delle Palme** (Piazza Flavio Gioia) opposite the bus stop.

Car & Motorcycle

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

RAVELLO

Sitting high in the hills above Amalfi, Ravello is a refined, polished town almost entirely dedicated to tourism. Boasting impeccable bohemian credentials – Wagner, DH Lawrence and Virginia Woolf all spent time here – it's today known for its ravishing gardens and stupendous views, the best in the world according to former resident Gore Vidal, and certainly the best on the coast.

Most people visit on a day trip from Amalfi – a nerve-tingling 7km drive up the Valle del Dragone – although to best enjoy its romantic other-worldly atmosphere you'll need to stay overnight here.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

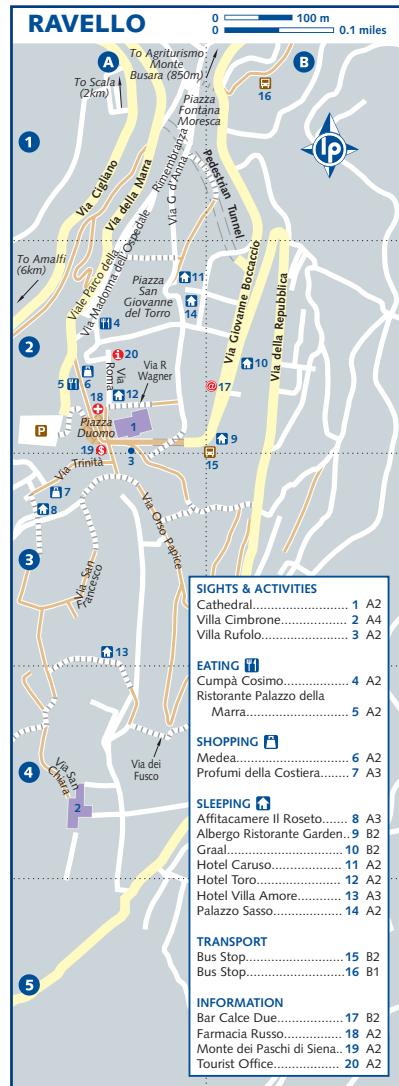
Cathedral

Forming the eastern flank of Piazza Duomo, the **cathedral** (Piazza Duomo; 8.30-1pm & 4.30-8pm) was originally built in 1086 but has since undergone various make-overs. The façade is 16th-century, even if the central bronze door, one of only about two dozen in the country, is an 1179 original; the interior is a late-20th-century interpretation of what the original must once have looked like. Of particular interest is the striking pulpit, supported by six twisting columns set on marble lions and decorated with

INFORMATION

- **Bar Calce Due** (089 85 71 30; Via Boccaccio 11; per 30 mins €5; 8.30am-1pm & 3pm-midnight, closed Mon Nov-Feb) Bar near the bus stop, with internet access.
- **Pharmacy Russo** (089 85 71 89; Piazza Duomo 5) Pharmacist.
- **Monte dei Paschi di Siena** (089 85 71 20; Piazza Duomo 8) Bank with an ATM.
- **Toilets** (€0.50) On the western corner of Piazza Duomo.
- **Tourist Office** (089 85 70 96; www.ravelloitime.it; Via Roma 18bis; 9am-8pm daily) Provides a useful colour pamphlet, *Ravello The City of Music*, with a map, historical background and suggested walking itineraries.

flamboyant mosaics of peacocks, birds and dancing lions. Note also how the floor is tilted towards the square – a deliberate measure to enhance the perspective effect. To the right of the central nave, stairs lead down to the cathedral **museum** (admission €2) and its small collection of religious artefacts.





The beautiful gardens of Villa Cimbrone

GREG ELMIS

Villas & Gardens

To the south of the cathedral, the 14th-century tower marks the entrance to Villa Rufolo (089 85 76 57; adult/under 12yr & over 65yr €5/3; 9am-sunset), famous for its spectacular gardens. Created by a Scotsman, Scott Neville Reid, in 1853, they are indeed magnificent, commanding superb views and packed with exotic colours, artistically crumbling towers and luxurious blooms. On seeing them on 26 May 1880, Wagner was moved to write: 'The enchanted garden of Klingsor (setting for the second act of the opera *Parsifal*) has been found'. Today the gardens are used to stage concerts during the town's classical music festival. The villa itself was built in the 13th century for the wealthy Rufolo dynasty and was home to several popes as well as King Robert of Anjou.

Some way east of Piazza Duomo the early-20th-century Villa Cimbrone (089 85 80 72; adult/under 12yr & over 65yr €5/3; 9am-sunset) is well worth seeking out. If not for the villa itself, now an upmarket hotel, then for the fabulous views from the delightfully ramshackle gardens. Deemed the most beautiful in the world by former Ravello resident Gore Vidal, they are best admired from the Belvedere of Infinity, an awe-inspiring terrace lined with fake classical busts. Something of a bohemian retreat in its early days, Villa Cimbrone was used by Greta Garbo and her lover Leopold Stokowski as a secret hideaway.

Walking

Ravello is the starting point for numerous walks – some of which follow ancient paths through the surrounding Lattari mountains. If you've got the legs for it you can walk down to Minori, or, heading the other way, to Amalfi, via the ancient village of Scala. Once a flourishing religious centre with more than a hundred churches, Scala is now a sleepy place where the wind whistles through empty streets and gnarled locals go patiently about their daily chores. In the central square, the Romanesque Duomo (Piazza Municipio; 8am-noon & 5-7pm daily) retains some of its 12th-century solemnity. Ask at the Ravello tourist office for further walking information.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Between June and mid-September the Ravello Festival (089 85 83 60; www.ravellofestival.com) turns much of the town centre into a stage. Events ranging from orchestral concerts and chamber music to ballet performances, film screenings and exhibitions are held in atmospheric outdoor venues, most notably the famous overhanging terrace in the Villa Rufolo gardens.

However, you don't have to come in high summer to catch a concert. Ravello's programme of classical music begins in March and continues until late October. It reaches its crescendo in June and September with the International Piano Festival and Chamber Music Weeks. Performances by top Italian and international musicians are world-class and the two venues (Villa Rufolo and the Convento di Santa Rosa in Conca dei Marini – see p229) are unforgettable. Tickets, bookable by phone, fax or online, start at €20. For further information and reservations, contact the Ravello Concert Society (089 85 81 49; www.ravelloarts.org).

Ravello's patron saint, San Pantaleon, is recalled with fun and fireworks in late July.

SLEEPING

Ravello is an upmarket town and its accommodation reflects this, both in style and price. There are some superb top-end hotels and several lovely midrange places. But all's not lost if you're on a budget – there's a fine agriturismo nearby and one or two cheapish options in town. Book well ahead for summer – especially if you're planning to visit during the music festival.

AFFITACAMERE IL ROSETO

RENTED ROOMS €

089 858 64 92; Via Trinità 37; www.ilroseto.it; d €80; year-round

If you're after a no-frills, clean room within easy walking distance of everything, you'll do OK here. There are only two rooms, both of which have been decorated in medical white, with white walls, white sheets and white floors. But what they lack in charm they make up for in value, and, if you want colour, you can always sit outside and admire the pretty rose garden.

AGRITURISMO MONTE BUSARA

FARM STAY €

089 85 74 67; www.montebrusara.com; Via Monte Brusara 32; per person incl breakfast €35, half-board €50

An authentic working farm, this mountainside agriturismo is the real McCoy. Located a tough half-hour walk of about 1.5km from Ravello centre (a car is not essential but it's highly recommended), it's ideal for families with kids – they can feed the pony while you sit back and admire the views – or for those who simply want to escape the crowds. The three rooms are comfy but basic, the food is fabulous and the owner is a charming, garrulous host. Campers can also pitch tents here (€12 per person).

ALBERGO RISTORANTE GARDEN

HOTEL €

089 85 72 26; www.hotelgardenravello.it; Via Boccaccio 4; r €110; mid-Mar–late Oct

No longer the celebrity magnet that it once was – Jackie Kennedy passed by with her young family and Gore Vidal was a regular at the terrace restaurant (meals from around €25) – this family-run three-star is still a good bet. The smallish rooms leave little impression (clean with nondescript décor) but the private terraces most certainly do. With some of the finest views on and of the coastline they're well worth the money. If you arrive by bus, you'll save on lugging your bags around, as the hotel's right by the stop.

GRAAL

HOTEL €

089 85 72 22; www.hotelgraal.it; Via della Repubblica 8; incl breakfast, s €75-95, d €130-170; year-round; ☎ ☎ ☎

Nicer in than out (which is lucky because the exterior looks more like a car park than a hotel), the Graal is a decent three-star with tasteful rooms and an excellent panoramic restaurant

(fixed menu €30). The public areas are fairly charmless but the sun-and-sea-coloured rooms, the balcony views and the open-air swimming pool make for a very relaxing stay.

HOTEL CARUSO

HOTEL €€€

089 85 88 01; www.hotelcaruso.com; Piazza San Giovanni del Toro 2; s incl breakfast €446, d €608-743; mid-Mar-Nov; ☎ ☎ ☎

There can be no better place to swim than the Caruso's sensational infinity pool. Seemingly set on the edge of a precipice (in fact the hotel gardens are a few metres below), its blue waters merge with sea and sky to magical effect. Inside the sublimely restored 11th-century palazzo, it's no less impressive, with Moorish arches doubling as window frames, 15th-century vaulted ceilings and high-class ceramics. Rooms are suitably mod-coned with English, German and US plug sockets and a TV/DVD system that slides sexily out of a wooden cabinet at the foot of the bed. Free wi-fi.

HOTEL TORO

HOTEL €€

089 85 72 11; www.hoteltoro.it; Via Wagner 3; s/d incl breakfast €78/109; Easter-Nov

By Ravello standards excellent value for money, the Toro offers comfort, location and history. A hotel since the late 19th century, it's just off Piazza Duomo within easy range of the clanging cathedral bells (a potential sleep hazard). The not-huge rooms are decked out in traditional Amalfi Coast style with terracotta or light marble tiles and soothing cream furnishings. Outside, the grassy, walled garden is a delightful place in which to sip your sundowner. Former guests have included Norwegian composer Grieg and the Dutch artist Escher.

HOTEL VILLA AMORE

HOTEL €

089 85 71 35; Via dei Fusco 5; incl breakfast, s €50-56, d €75-95; year-round

A welcoming pensione, this is the best budget choice in town. Tucked away down a quiet lane, it has modest, homely rooms furnished with whatever the owner had to hand at the time, and clean bathrooms. Some, like room 3, have their own balcony looking towards the distant sea; others have bathtubs; a few have both. The garden restaurant is a further plus: the food's good, the views are memorable and the prices are right (around €20 for a meal).

PALAZZO SASSOHOTEL **€€€**
089 81 81 81; www.palazzosasso.com; Via San

Giovanni del Toro 28; d incl breakfast €192-320, with sea view €312-520; Mar-Oct;

One of three luxury hotels on Ravello's millionaires row, Palazzo Sasso has been a hotel since 1880, providing refuge for many 20th-century luminaries – General Eisenhower planned the Allied attack on Monte Cassino here while later Roberto Rossellini and Ingrid Bergman giggled over dinner in the hotel restaurant. A stunning pale-pink 12th-century palace, its décor couples tasteful antiques with Moorish colours and modern sculpture. The 20m swimming pool commands great views and its Michelin-starred restaurant, *Rossellini*, is one of the best in town.

EATING

Surprisingly, Ravello does not offer many good eating options. It's easy enough to find a bar or café selling overpriced *panini* and pizza but not so simple to find a decent restaurant or trattoria. There are a few good hotel restaurants, most of which are open to non-guests, and a couple of excellent restaurants (listed below) but not much else. These places get very busy in summer, particularly at lunchtime, and prices are universally high.

CUMPÀ COSIMOTRATTORIA **€€€**
089 85 71 56; Via Roma 44-6; meals around €30;
 closed Mon Nov-Feb, daily Mar-Oct

If you're looking for some honest down-to-earth Italian grub, you can't do much better than this popular trattoria. An informal family affair – meat comes from the family butcher, vegetables and fruit are homegrown, and the house wine is homebrew – it serves excellent handmade pasta, tasty gnocchi and some fine main courses. House favourites include rabbit with tomatoes and grilled crayfish.

RISTORANTE PALAZZO DELLA MARRARISTORANTE **€€€**

089 85 83 02; Via della Marra 7; meals around €40, tourist lunch menu €17; Wed-Mon, closed Nov & Jan-Feb

Sit down to innovative regional cuisine under the vaulted ceiling of this tastefully restored 12th-century palazzo. The menu strikes a good balance between seafood and meat with dishes ranging from *paccheri* with sword

fish and prawns to smoked duck with fennel cream and beef fillet in thyme. Desserts are also given a creative touch, as in tiramisu with cream of pistachio. The lunchtime menu, comprising a pasta, main course and side dish, is good value.

SHOPPING

Limoncello and ceramics are the mainstays of the Amalfi Coast souvenir trade and you will find both sold here.

MEDEACERAMICS
089 858 62 83; www.medaeaceramiche.com; Via della Marra 14; 9am-11pm daily May-Oct, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr

If you're after something ceramic but are fed up with the ubiquitous range of gaudy yellow fruit bowls, then look no further. At this gallery-cum-laboratory-cum-shop, you'll find an interesting selection of original handmade vases, lamps, animals, figurines, plates and tiles. Particularly outstanding are the huge red and black vases by ceramic artist Ugo Marano. And if you're wondering, yes, they cost a bomb – for a life-sized vase expect to fork out in the region of €12,000.

PROFUMI DELLA COSTIERA

LIMONCELLO

089 85 81 67; www.profumidellacostiera.it; Via Trinità 37; 8.30am-7pm Apr-Oct, to 5.30pm Nov-Apr
The *limoncello* produced and sold here is made with local lemons (known to experts as *sfusato amalfitano*) according to traditional recipes, so no preservatives and no colouring. And it's not just the owners who say so – all bottles carry the IGP (Indicazione Geografica Protetta; Protected Geographical Indication) quality mark.**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

SITA operates hourly buses from Amalfi (€1, 25 minutes) departing from the bus stop on the eastern side of Piazza Flavio Gioia. From the bus stop in Ravello walk through the short tunnel to Piazza Duomo. Many, but not all, buses stop en route at Scala.

By car, turn north about 2km east of Amalfi. Vehicles are not permitted in Ravello's town centre but there's plenty of space in supervised car parks on the perimeter.

FROM AMALFI TO SALERNO MINORI

Three and a half kilometres east of Amalfi, or a steep kilometre-long walk down from Ravello (tough on the knees going down, murder going up), Minori is a small, workaday town, popular with holidaying Italians. Scruffier than its refined coastal cousins Amalfi and Positano, it's no less dependant on tourism yet seems more genuine, with its festive seafront and noisy traffic jams. There's a small tourist office (089 87 70 87; www.proloco-minori.sa.it; Via Roma 30; 9am-noon & 5-8pm Mon-Sat, 9-11am Sun) on the seafront.

The town's one monument of note is the Villa Roma Antiquarium (089 85 28 93; Via Capodipiazza 28; admission free; 9am-7pm daily Jun-Aug, to 6.30pm May & Sep, to 6pm Apr & Oct, to 5.30pm Mar & Nov, to 5pm Feb & Dec, to 4.30pm Jan), the finest Roman ruins on the coast. Overshadowed by modern housing blocks, the first-century-AD villa is a typical example of the sort that Roman nobles built as holiday homes in the period prior to Mt Vesuvius' AD 79 eruption. The best-preserved rooms are those surrounding the garden on the lower level. By the entrance, there's a two-room museum exhibiting various artefacts including a collection of 6th-century BC to 6th-century AD amphorae.

Before leaving town it's worth stopping off for a quick bite at the Bar de Riso (089 85 36 18; Piazza Cantilena 1) on the main seafront. The outside tables next to the petrol pumps are not the most inviting in the area, but the bar's cakes certainly are (the coffee's very good too). Speciality of the house are the *babà* drenched in *limoncello* (€2) or rum (€1.50).

MAIORI

Continuing east along the coast, you come to Maiori, one of the coast's largest and most modern resorts. Founded in the 9th century and later the seat of the Amalfi Republic's powerful Admiralty, it was almost entirely destroyed by a flood in 1954. Rebuilt and reborn as a resort town, it's now a brassy place full of large seafront hotels, bars, restaurants and beach clubs.

Information on the town and its environs is available from the tourist office (089 87 74 52; www.aziendaturismo-maiori.it; Corso Reginna 73; 9am-1pm & 4-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9am-1pm & 3-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Nov-Mar), next to a delightful courtyard garden on Corso Reginna, the town's main thoroughfare.

Steps by the side of the courtyard lead up to the 12th-century Chiesa Santa Maria a Mare (089 87 70 90; 8.30am-12.30pm & 6-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon & 6-8pm Sun), one of the few buildings to survive the 1954 flood. Inside, in the small Museo di Arte Sacra (admission €2; 10am-noon daily), the 14th-century alabaster *paliotto* (altar covering) is said to be the oldest of its type in Italy.

About 3km east of town the Abbazia di Santa Maria de Olearia (0339 580 34 86, 089 87 74 52; by appointment only) is an unusual 10th-century monastery gouged into the rocks above the coastal road. Consisting of three chapels built one on top of another, it's worth a quick look for its fading 11th-century frescoes, the best of which are in the *cripta* on the lowest level.

CASA RAFFAELE CONFORTIHOTEL **€€**089 85 35 47; www.casaraffaeleconforti.it; Via Casa Mannini 10; r incl breakfast €86-136; Mar-Nov, also open Christmas

This unique hotel defies definition, or indeed description. Housed on the 2nd floor of a 19th-century palazzo, it's an extraordinary monument to the elegance of a bygone age. The nine rooms are all individually decorated but the overall style is the same – frescoes, antiques and gilt-framed mirrors, ceramic tiles and heavy silk fabrics. Curiosities abound: in the Maria Sica suite, there's a stone fireplace and a hidden door through to the bathroom; in the Camera delle Muse the bathroom's actually in a wardrobe (apparently, to protect the frescoes). The welcome is warm and the central position convenient.

LOCANDA AMALPHITANARISTORANTE **€€**089 87 74 39; Via Nuova Chiunzi 9; meals around €25, pizza from €5; closed mid-Jan-mid-Feb
Just off the seafront, this is one of the better of Maiori's touristy restaurants. With a comprehensive menu, it's pretty much got



Maiori at sunset (p241)

JOHN HAY

most tastes covered. You can order from a full range of pizzas or go for a local staple such as pasta with aubergines, tomato and mozzarella. There's also decent seafood and simple, tasty meat dishes. Sit in the bustling blue interior or on one of the few roadside tables.

RESIDENCE HOTEL PANORAMIC

HOTEL €€

089 854 23 01; www.residencehotelpanoramic.com; Via Santa Tecla 12; s €45-75, d €80-130, 2-/4-/5-person apt per week €1050/1500/1600; ☎ year-round; ⚡

Good for self-caterers or families, this is one of the few hotels in the area to remain open year-round. A block back from the seafront, it's a friendly place, with 26 one- or two-room apartments, all decked out in marine blue and white. Each comes with a fully equipped modern kitchenette, satellite TV and, in summer, air-con. The weekly apartment rates quoted above are full-whack August prices; in winter they fall by more than 50%.

CETARA

Just beyond Erchie and its beautiful beach (look for the mass of scooters parked by the side of the road), Cetara is a picturesque tumbledown fishing village with a reputation as a gastronomic hot spot. Since medieval times it has been an

important fishing centre and still today its deep-sea tuna fleet is considered one of the Mediterranean's most important. At night, fishermen set out in small boats (known as *lampare*) armed with powerful lamps to fish for anchovies. Recently, locals have resurrected the production of what is known as *colatura di alici*, a strong anchovy essence believed to be the descendant of *garum*, the Roman fish-seasoning. Each year, in late July or early August, the village pays homage to its main meal tickets in the *sagra del tonno*, a festival dedicated to tuna and anchovies. Further details are available from the tiny tourist office (089 26 015 63 47; Piazza San Francesco 15; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5pm-midnight).

To take a taste of Cetara home with you, there's a fine selection of preserved goodies at *Sapori Cetaresi* (089 26 10 10; Corso Garibaldi 44; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-10pm daily May-Sep, closes 8pm & Mon Oct-Apr) by the small beach.

AL CONVENTO

089 26 10 39; Piazza San Francesco 16; meal around €20, taster menu €26; ☎ daily mid-May-Sep, closed Wed Oct-mid-May

For the money, you probably won't eat better anywhere else on the coast. With tables set on a lovely shaded terrace above Cetara's main street, this is an excellent spot to tuck

TRATTORIA €€

into local fish specialities. You can eat tuna as an antipasto, served smoked with swordfish, or lightly grilled as a main course, and anchovies prepared in various ways. Particularly delicious is the *spaghetti con alici e finocchietto selavatrico* (spaghetti with anchovies and wild fennel). Fish, fortunately, doesn't feature among the desserts. Instead, you could try classic chocolate cake with ricotta and cream.

VIETRI SUL MARE

The end of the coastal road, or the beginning if approaching from Salerno, Vietri sul Mare (Vietri) is the ceramic capital of Campania. Production dates back to Roman times but it took off on an industrial scale in the 16th and 17th centuries with the development of high, three-level furnaces. The unmistakeable local style – bold brush strokes and strong Mediterranean colours – found favour in the royal court of Naples, which became one of Vietri's major clients. Later, in the 1920s and '30s, an influx of international artists (mainly Germans) led to a shake-up of traditional designs. For more on Vietri's

ceramic past head to the **Museo della Ceramica** (089 21 18 35; Villa Guerriglia; admission free; ☎ 8am-1.15pm & 2-3pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) in the nearby village of Raito.

Vietri's small and not unattractive historic centre is packed to the gills with shops selling ceramic ware of every description. The most famous is **Ceramica Artistica Solimene** (089 21 02 43; www.solimene.com; Via Madonna degli Angeli 7; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1.30pm & 4-7pm Sat), a vast factory outlet selling everything from egg cups to ornamental mermaids, mugs to lamps. Even if you don't go in it's worth having a look at the shop's extraordinary glass and ceramic façade. For something more modern try **Klaus** (089 21 04 67; Corso Umberto I 94; ☎ 9am-8.30pm daily summer, 9am-1pm & 2.30-8.30pm daily winter), whose original red and orange designs recall Picasso's surreal patterns. Prices range from €25 to around €500.

For information on accommodation in Vietri inquire at the **tourist office** (089 21 12 85; Piazza Matteotti; ☎ 10am-1pm Mon-Sat & 5-8pm Mon-Fri) near the entrance to the centro storico.

FESTIVE FUN WITH FOOD

Food has always played an important role in local traditions. Over the years, towns have developed their own specialities, many of which are celebrated in annual *sagre* (food-based festivals). These traditional jamborees are usually very well supported, drawing large crowds from the surrounding area, and provide a great opportunity to taste something of local Amalfitana life. Major foodie events:

July

Cetara In the second half of the month, the fishing folk of Cetara celebrate their main catch in the *Sagra del Tonno* (Tuna Festival).

August

Conca dei Marini Celebrates its historic ricotta-filled pastry, the *sfogliatella*, on the first Sunday of the month.
Maiori The *Sagra delle Melanzane al Cioccolato* is the perfect occasion to try the local delicacy, chocolate aubergines.
Atrani The citizens of Atrani pay homage to the humble anchovy during the *Sagra del Pesce Azzurro* (Blue-Fish Festival), usually in the third week of the month.

September

Minori Food-lovers from along the coast congregate here in early September for *Gustaminori*, the town's annual food jamboree.

October

Scala Chestnuts appear in various guises – roasted, in jam, nutcakes and pancakes – at Scala's *Agra della Castagna* (Chestnut Festival).

December

Positano It's time to enjoy *zeppole* (fried doughnuts served with custard cream) during the festive *Sagra delle Zeppole*.

SALERNO

Marking the easternmost point of the Amalfi Coast, Salerno provides something of a reality check after the coast's glut of postcard-pretty towns. One of Campania's five regional capitals, and a major port, it's unlikely to detain you long, but it's not without a certain gritty charm. The best place to hang out is the compact centro storico, where medieval churches share space with neighbourhood trattorie, neon-lit wine bars and trendy tattoo parlours. Salerno is also a major transport

hub and you might well find yourself passing through en route to Paestum (p168) and the Costiera Cilentana.

Originally an Etruscan and later a Roman colony, Salerno flourished with the arrival of the Normans in the 11th century. In 1076 Robert Guiscard made it the capital of his dukedom. Under his patronage, the Scuola Medica Salernitana was renowned as one of medieval Europe's greatest medical institutes. More recently, heavy fighting left it in tatters following the 1943 landings of the American 5th Army south of the city.

INFORMATION

- **Banca Nazionale del Lavoro** (Piazza Vittorio Veneto 1) Has an ATM at the train station. There are also several banks with ATMs along Corso Vittorio Emanuele.
- **Internet Point** (089 24 18 74; Via Roma 26; per 30 mins €2.50; 10.30am-1.30pm & 4.30-10.30pm daily) Also prints digital photos and has a fax service.
- **Mail Box** (Via Diaz 19; per 25 mins €1.50; 9am-1.30pm & 5.30-8pm Mon-Sat) Internet access.

- **Ospedale Ruggi D'Aragona** (hospital; 089 67 11 11; Via San Leonardo)
- **Police station** (089 61 31 11; Piazza Amendola 16)
- **Post office** (089 257 21 11; Corso Garibaldi 203)
- **Salerno City** (www.salerncity.com, in Italian) Website with extensive city listings, ferry times and programmes of local festivals.
- **Salerno Memo** (www.salernomemo.com, in Italian) Online version of the free listings guide *Memo*.
- **Tourist office** (089 23 14 32; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 1; 9am-2pm & 3-8pm Mon-Sat, plus 9am-12.30pm & 5-7.30pm Sun Jul & Aug)

SALERNO



ORIENTATION

Salerno's train station is on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, at the eastern end of town. Many intercity buses stop here and there are a number of hotels nearby. Salerno's main shopping strip, the car-free Corso Vittorio Emanuele, leads off northwest to the medieval centro storico. Running parallel is Corso Garibaldi, which becomes Via Roma as it heads out of the city towards Vietri sul Mare and the Amalfi Coast. Tree-lined Lungomare Trieste, on the waterfront, changes its name to Lungomare G Marconi at the massive Piazza della Concordia on its way out of town, southeast towards Paestum.

The main entrance, the 12th-century **Porta dei Leoni** – named after the marble lions at the foot of the stairway – leads through to a beautifully harmonious porticoed atrium, overlooked by a striking 12th-century bell tower. Passing through the huge bronze doors, cast in Constantinople in the 11th century, the three-aisled interior is largely baroque, with only a few traces of the original church. These include parts of the transept and choir floor and the two raised pulpits in front of the choir stalls.

In the right-hand apse, the **Cappella delle Crociate** (Chapel of the Crusades) was so named because crusaders' weapons were blessed here. Under the altar stands the tomb of the 11th-century pope Gregory VII.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Cathedral

The highlight of Salerno's atmospheric centro storico is the impressive **cathedral** (089 23 13 87; Piazza Alfano; 10am-6pm). Built by the Normans under Robert Guiscard in the 11th century and remodelled in the 18th century, it sustained severe damage in the 1980 earthquake. It's dedicated to San Matteo (St Matthew), whose remains were reputedly brought to the city in 954 and now lie beneath the main altar in the vaulted crypt.

Museums

To the north of the cathedral, the **Museo Diocesano** (089 23 91 26; Largo del Plebiscito 12; admission free; 9am-1.30pm daily, plus 4-7pm Sun) has a modest collection of Norman and Lombard artworks, the highlight of which is a 12th-century ivory *paliotto* decorated with 54 scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

Nearby, the **Museo Archeologico Provinciale** (089 23 11 35; Via San Benedetto 28; admission free; 9am-1.30pm & 2-3.15pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm

Salerno's Harbour



Sun) is the province's main archaeological museum. Among the artefacts dating back to prehistoric times is a 1st-century-BC bronze head of Apollo, discovered in the Bay of Salerno in 1930.

Deep in the heart of the medieval quarter, the small Museo Pinacoteca Provinciale (089 258 30 73; Via Mercanti 63; admission free; 9am-1pm & 2-3.15pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) houses an interesting art collection dating from the Renaissance right up to the first half of the 19th century. There are some fine canvases by local boy Andrea Sabatini da Salerno and an assortment of works by foreign artists living in the area.

A visit to the Museo Didattico della Scuola Medica Salernitana (089 24 12 92; Via Mercanti 72; admission free; 9am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) in the ex-church of San Gregorio is rewarded with a refreshing lack of archaeological artefacts and classical sculpture. Instead, you'll find a collection of documents and illustrations recounting the fascinating history of Salerno's historic Medical School. Probably established in the 9th century, the school was the most important centre of medical knowledge in medieval Europe, reaching the height of its prestige in the 11th century. It was closed in the early 19th century.

Castle

Salerno's most famous landmark is the forbidding Castello di Arechi (089 22 55 78; Via Benedetto Croce; closed for restoration), spectacularly positioned 263m above the city. Originally a Byzantine fort, it was built by the Lombard duke of Benevento, Arechi II, in the 8th century and subsequently modified by the Normans and Aragonese, most recently in the 16th century. Today it houses a permanent collection of ceramics, arms and coins and is used for summer concerts.

To get here take bus 19 from Piazza XXIV Maggio in the city centre. The 20-minute ride costs €1.

SLEEPING

The little accommodation that Salerno offers is fairly uninspiring. Conveniently, though, there are several cheapish hotels near the train station and, in the centro storico, a popular youth hostel. Prices tend to be considerably lower than on the Amalfi Coast.

All of the following are open year-round.

ALBERGO SALERNO HOTEL €

089 22 42 11; www.albergosalerno.com; 5th fl, Via Vicinanza 42; s €45-50, d €55-60; 

Don't be discouraged by the less-than-appealing entrance and rattling lift; this modest two-star is better in than out. On the 5th floor of an unexceptional palazzo, it's got large, high-ceilinged rooms and a bright communal seating area, complete with sofas and glossy mags. Air-con costs an extra €8 but in summer rooms are provided with small fans.

HOTEL MONTESTELLA HOTEL €

089 22 51 22; www.hotelmontestella.it; Corso Vittorio Emanuele 156; s/d/t incl breakfast €70/94/104; 

Within walking distance of just about everywhere worth going, the Montestella is on Salerno's main pedestrian thoroughfare, halfway between the historic centre and train station. And it's this, combined with the competitive prices, that's the hotel's forte. The 45 guest rooms are perfectly adequate – clean with air-con, TV and a dubious orange and brown colour combo – but are hardly memorable.

HOTEL PLAZA HOTEL €

089 22 44 77; www.plazasalerno.it; Piazza Vittorio Veneto 42; s/d/t incl breakfast €65/100/115; 

A short stone's throw from the train station, the Plaza is convenient, comfortable and fairly charmless. But it's not an unfriendly place and the good-sized rooms, with their brown carpet and gleaming bathrooms, are actually pretty good value for money. Those around the back have terraces overlooking the city and, beyond, the mountains.

OSTELLO AVE GRATIA PLENA HOSTEL €

089 79 02 51; info@ostellodisalerno.it; Via dei Canali; dm incl breakfast €14, per person in a s/d/t/q €26/20/20/20; 

Housed in an airy 16th-century convent, Salerno's HI hostel is right in the heart of the tight-knit centro storico. Inside, there's no shortage of space, with a charming central courtyard and a whole range of rooms, from dorms to doubles with private bathroom. Before you leave take a moment to look down into the adjacent church as once nuns did to follow mass without making eye contact with the men. Note the 2am curfew.

EATING & ENTERTAINMENT

Head to the lively medieval centre and Via Roma, where you'll find everything from traditional, family-run trattorie and gelaterie to jazzy wine bars, pubs and expensive restaurants. Stop in at 089 (089 22 18 44; Via Roma 51), a slick steel-and-neon bar popular with the hip apéritif set.

In summer, the seafront is a popular place for the evening *passeggiata* (stroll).

PINOCCHIO TRATTORIA €€

089 22 99 64; Lungomare Trieste 56; meals around €22; 

Ask at your hotel for somewhere to eat and chances are they'll tell you to try this place on the seafront. The food is pretty good, they'll say, excellent for the price, and the owner's a large, friendly bloke called Rodolfo. And they're right: the no-nonsense Italian food is good. Seafood is the speciality but there's also a decent selection of fail-safe meats – sausages, steak and scaloppine (breaded veal). In summer, tables are set out down a side street; in winter action moves into the bubbly interior with its kids'-room clutter of Pinocchio murals and mobiles.

PIZZA MARGHERITA PIZZERIA €

089 22 88 80; Corso Garibaldi 201; pizzas/buffet from €5.50/4.50, lunchtime menu €7; 

It looks like a bland, modern canteen, but this is in fact one of Salerno's most popular lunch spots. Locals regularly queue for the lavish lunchtime buffet, which on any given day might include mozzarella, salami, mussels in various guises, and a range of salads. If that doesn't appeal the daily lunchtime menu (pasta, main course, salad and half a litre of water) is chalked up on a blackboard, or there's the regular menu of pizzas, pastas and main courses.

RISTORANTE SANTA LUCIA RISTORANTE €€

089 22 56 96; Via Roma 182; meals around €22; 

The surrounding Via Roma area may be one of the city's trendiest, but there's nothing remotely flash about the delicious seafood served up here. Dishes such as *linguine ai frutti di mare* (linguine with seafood) and char-grilled cuttlefish may not be original but, cooked here, they taste quite exceptional. As do the wonderful wood-fired pizzas. The laid-

back atmosphere and friendly, efficient service add to the pleasure. Just around the corner, the hotel of the same name has nine basic one-star rooms (singles/doubles €35/55).

VICOLO DELLA NEVE TRATTORIA €€

089 22 57 05; Vico del Neve 24; meals around €25; 

A city institution, Vico del Neve is the archetypal centro storico trattoria. It's got brick arches and fake frescoes, the walls are hung with works by local artists and the menu is as traditional as it comes. There are pizzas and calzoni, pasta e fagioli, pepperoni ripieni (stuffed peppers) and a great *parmigiana di melanzane*. It can get very busy, so be prepared to wait for a table.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Boat

Between April and October, *TraVelMar* (089 87 29 50; Largo Scario 5, Amalfi) runs ferries to Positano (ferry/hydrofoil €6.50/7, seven daily) and Amalfi (ferry/hydrofoil €4.50/5, seven daily), while *Alicost* (089 87 14 83; Largo Scario 5) operates six daily sailings to Amalfi (€5.50, six daily). Departures are from the Porto Turistico, 200m down the pier from Piazza della Concordia. You can buy tickets from the booths by the embarkation points.

From Molo Manfredi at the Porto Commerciale the *Metro del Mare* (099 44 66 44; www.metrodelmare.com) runs to Positano (€7, three daily), Amalfi (€6, two daily) and Sorrento (€8, three daily). For Capri, *LMP* (Linee Marittime Partenope; 081 704 19 11; www.consorziolmp.it) has five daily sailings (ferry/jet €14.50/16).

Bus

SITA (099 73 07 49; www.sita-on-line.it, in Italian) buses for Amalfi (€1.80, 1½ hours, at least hourly) depart from Piazza Vittorio Veneto, beside the train station, stopping en route at Vietri sul Mare, Cetara, Maiori and Minori. Buy your tickets from the office on the western side of the square. The Naples service, however, departs every 25 minutes from outside *Bar Cioffi* (089 22 75 75; Corso Garibaldi 134), where you buy your ticket (€3.20).

For Pompeii, take CSTP (089 48 70 01; www.cstp.it, in Italian) bus 50 from Piazza Vittorio Veneto. There are 15 daily departures and the hour-long journey costs €1.80. For the south coast and Paestum (€2.90, one hour 20 minutes, 12 daily) take bus 34 from Piazza della Concordia.

In collaboration with SITA, **Buonotourist** (c/o SITA; 089 40 51 45; Via Vinciprova) runs four daily services to Naples Capodichino airport, departing from the train station. Tickets (€7) can be bought on board; journey time is one hour.

Car & Motorcycle

Salerno is on the A3 between Naples and Reggio di Calabria, which is toll-free from Salerno southwards.



MONICA MALLON

IF YOU'VE GOT THE TIME...

Occupying the area southeast of Salerno up to the regional border with Basilicata, the **Parco Nazionale del Cilento e Vallo di Diana** is a little-explored area of wild highlands and empty valleys. Italy's second-largest national park, it's the perfect antidote to the holiday mayhem along the coast. You will, however, need a car to get the best out of it.

About 40km southeast of Salerno the **Grotte di Castelcivita** (0828 77 23 97; adult/reduced/0-5yr €8/6.50/free; 9am-10am, 11.30am, 1.30pm, 3pm & 4.30pm Oct–mid-Mar, 10am, 11am, noon, 1.30pm, 2.30pm, 3.30pm, 4.30pm, 5.30pm & 6.30pm mid-Mar–Aug) cave complex is where Spartacus is said to have taken refuge following his slave rebellion in 71 BC. Further east, the **Grotte di Pertosa** (0975 39 70 37; guided visits adult/child €10/8; 9am-7pm Mar-Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Feb) is a 2.5km-long cave system bristling with stalactites and stalagmites.

Continuing south on the A3 autostrada, the village of **Padula** harbours one of the region's best-kept secrets, the magnificent **Certosa di San Lorenzo** (0975 777 45; adult/18-25yr/under 18yr & over 65yr €4/2/free; 9am-7.30pm). Also known as the Certosa di Padula, it's one of Europe's biggest monasteries, with a huge central courtyard, wood-panelled library and frescoed chapels. Inside you can peruse the modest collection of the **Museo Archeologico Provinciale della Lucania Occidentale** (0975 771 17; admission free; 8am-1.15pm & 2-3pm Tue-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun).

On the coast, 75km south of Salerno the Greek settlement of Elea, now called Ascea (**Velia**), was founded in the mid-6th century BC and later became a popular resort for wealthy Romans. The ruins (0974 97 23 96; adult/18-25yr/under 18yr & over 65yr €2/1/free; 9am until 1hr before sunset Mon-Sat) are not in great nick but merit a quick look if you're in the area. Further down the coast, the white-sand beaches beyond Palinuro are among the region's best.

A good base for exploring the area is **Agropoli**, just south of Paestum. A busy summer resort, it's an otherwise tranquil coastal town, with plenty of accommodation. The **Ostello La Lanterna** (0974 83 83 64; lalanterna@clente.it; Via Lanterna 8, dm incl breakfast €11; mid-Mar–Oct) is a reliable option on the northern edge of town, while in the centre, the **Hotel Carola** (0974 82 64 22; www.hotelcarola.it; s/d €62/80;) provides decent three-star rooms.

CSTP (089 48 70 01; www.cstp.it, in Italian) bus 34 stops at Agropoli and other coastal towns en route from Salerno (Piazza della Concordia) to Celso.

Train

Salerno is a major stop on southbound routes to Calabria and the Ionian and Adriatic coasts. From the station in Piazza Vittorio Veneto there are regular trains to Naples (€3.20, 50 minutes, half-hourly), Rome (Eurostar €25, 2½ hours, hourly), and Reggio di Calabria (€31, 4½ hours, 15 daily).

GETTING AROUND

Walking is the most sensible option if you're staying in the heart of Salerno; from the train station it's a 1.2km walk along Corso Vittorio Emanuele to the historic centre. Local orange buses are run by CSTP. Tickets, valid for 80 minutes, cost €1.

If you want to hire a car there's a **Europcar** (089 258 07 75; www.europcar.com. Via G Vicinanza) agency not far from the train station.

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